

The
Climbers' Club
Journal

1997

The Climbers' Club Journal

Edited by
Tim Noble

1997
The Climbers' Club

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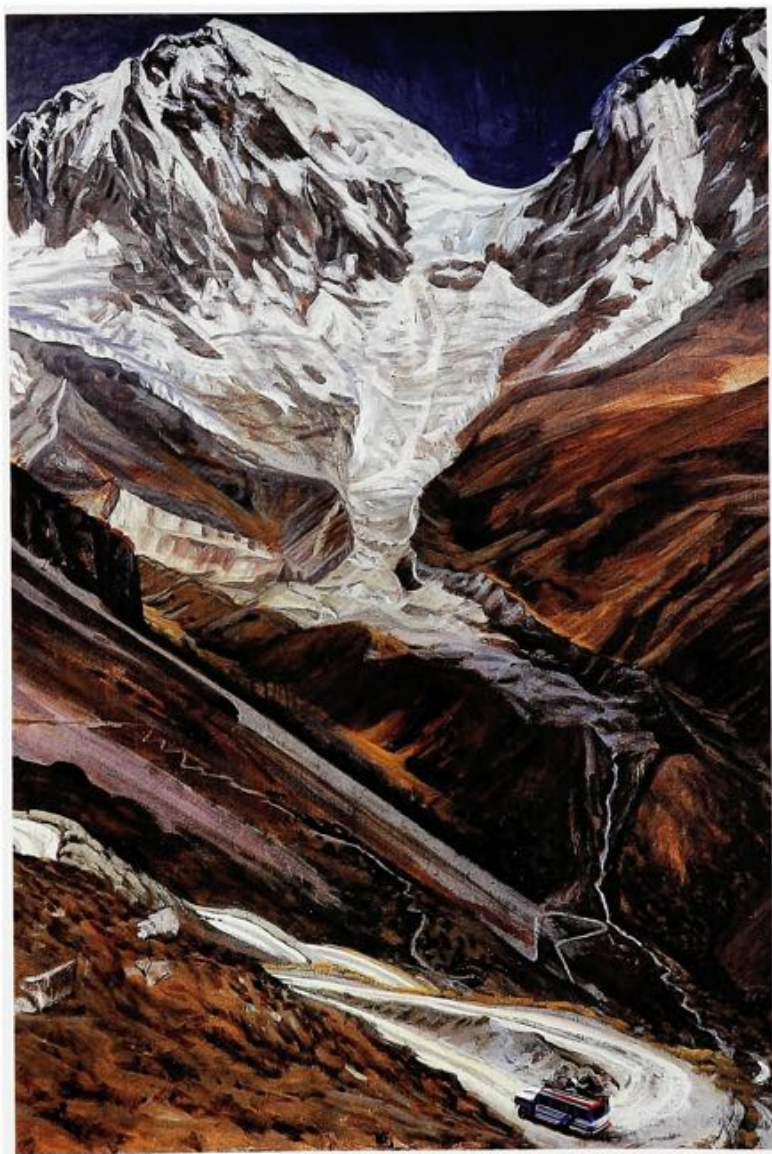
The Climbers' Club Journal

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*HUASCARAN & THE BUS TO YANAMA', Julian Cooper, 1995
(oil on canvas, 81 x 66 ins)*

Editorial

'What is Honour? A word' (Falstaff, in Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1*)

West Penwith, Easter 1998: hail fell in swathes and the wind was polar. Nothing for it but to get down to editing *The Climbers' Club Journal*. Following the Club's Centennial Celebrations, I had been honoured to receive many articles of real historical importance; but I was still trying to understand my new title of 'Honorary Editor'. How does one edit 'honourably', I wondered? Is it akin to climbing and writing 'honourably'?

I like reading 'honourable' writing which embodies three principles of respect: for the integrity of rock; for the unalloyed spirit of adventure and for the uncorrupted element of risk. Climbing with these principles in mind seems like a prerequisite for writing about that climbing, 'honourably'. Cheating is the opposite. Cheating in climbing writing is much the same as cheating in climbing itself — you don't cheat the mountain but yourself — and though self-deception on a climb is everyone's private prerogative, writing which uses cheap sensational effects to buff-up or cover-up a cheating should be excised. This, surely, is an 'Honorary Editor's first task.

But editors face a crisis. As creeping commercialisation and 'professionalisation' of climbing leads to the bolting of great adventures like *The Zmutt Nose* of The Matterhorn, other alpine classics and miles of precious British rock, so 'honourable', authentic writing which takes real risks and celebrates adventures, may become an endangered species. If a leading climber is now claiming that, 'a wealth of easier routes have been stapled up (at Portland)...', what sort of 'honourable' writing can come out of climbing these manufactured 'routes'? If Portland may now be 'the best place for beginners to progress in sport climbing', it's no place to learn to write authentic tales of Dorset-derring-do. Set on-sight, ground-up next to clip-up on a page and which reads best? Curtail risk in wild climbing, and we'll lose the feral writing, too; so let's not give up the jungle for the zoo.

Penned on these pages, though (in its natural habitat), is the unbridled animal itself, the 'Tyger burning bright'. Its markings are: precision, elegance, wit, research, humour — also, modest pride ('Remarks'); complete commitment (Bob Allen and Ben Bransby); vision in adversity (Harold Drasdo); polemic (Wilson) and uncompromising honesty (Littlejohn: 'Rock is like any other finite resource'). *Surplomb Jaune* — a small, imperfectly-formed holiday adventure — is an implicit plea for limiting the risks.

Thanks to John Cleare for the original photographs from *Rock Climbers in Action in Snowdonia*; they are precious images celebrating raw adventure and risk. Did you know his photo of Rusty Baillie on *Cenotaph Corner* inspired the young Paul Piana (famed for the first sieged free ascent of Salathé Wall) to take up climbing? Now that's 'honour' for you; there's so much more to it than a word — as there is to 'Honorary Editor' perhaps?

The Centennial Celebrations: a Digest of Perspectives

(i) An exhortation masquerading as a eulogy

By its very nature, a climbing club's Centenary has a piquancy for its celebrants that is nothing to do with the dinner itself but everything to do with being there: for upon those who attend is bestowed the enviable privilege of exclusivity. Now this is not one of those crass and commonplace exclusivities of rank, sudden wealth, fame or landed heredity (since none of these are truly privileges, but merely expediciencies): it is the privileged exclusivity of companionship in history.

What does this extravagant concept actually mean? Well, it may further be explained as the opportunity — and one that comes rarely, if ever, in a club member's lifetime — to formally recollect, reflect upon and re-describe a mutual climbing past of momentous moments, partnerships and tragedies at a pivotal point. In short, The Climbers' Club Centennial Celebrations provided those of us who came and listened, organised or spoke, with privileged access to heightened feeling and ordered fraternity at a significant moment in the impressive history of a national club. Being part of such a unique celebration we were part of all that is and has been our great club and, quite literally, re-living history as we were also reviewing and re-shaping it.

Now this may be a matter for some pride, for like the motley army before Agincourt in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, we might perhaps congratulate ourselves because we were there when others were 'in England...abed'. But pride in being there can never be sufficient a reward for members of a climbing club such as ours, because ultimately, it is too divisive and does not serve the greater good. So, by way of payment for this privilege of exclusivity, we who were there now have an obligation to the club which should remain in force for as long as we continue to draw upon the solace of the memory and which will be demanding of both time and energy and require in us some zeal. We must carry the history of the club's first hundred years, carefully, into the big adventure of the future in whatever ways we can, and attest both the great achievements and weaknesses of our own generation for the benefit and education of the next.

Our club — already older than us all — will, we hope, outlive us all, but only if we help it live and grow as we through it and climbing have lived and grown. We who were there and shared at the Centenary must now give back much more than those who were not. For fellowship's sake and the enrichment of the club we must at once seek out and take up the challenges of what now remains of this, our Centenary Year, by supporting our huts, meets and official meetings. We must make new friends and engender new climbing partnerships — old with young, expert with novice; we must

bring new members within the compass of the club and forge the 'quick perspective of the future'. Then, after all's been said and done, and for the delight of all, we must take up a pen and write about it for this Journal.

However, there is an ambivalence in this delight and challenge, for the enviable privilege of exclusivity conferred upon everyone at The Centenary brings with it the unenviable equality of loss. We who were there are doubly united in this: first, by the passing of dear friends who we could no longer see, and secondly, because there will never be another such chance to talk and cry and laugh with so many other members and our own climbing friends and companions. We shall not see its like again in our age — nor shall we see the next CC Centenary.

(ii) Notes on the Weekend

If it was nothing else, the Centenary Dinner weekend of the 6th-7th of December 1997 was a remarkable feat of organisation. For three years, a small committee of the club, comprising Steve Andrews, Pip Hopkinson and Terry Kenny met regularly with Graham Sutherland, the Manager of The Royal Victoria Hotel in Llanberis (which was dedicated to hosting the celebrations). None of them can remember the number of times they met to plan and discuss the arrangements for this, the biggest and most ambitious project the club has ever undertaken; but, as an indicator of the magnitude of their task, get this: their last joint meeting before the event — when there was nothing actually left on the agenda to discuss — went on for three hours. For 'The Vic' which has hosted many of the formal activities of the club, this was to be a bigger undertaking even than their entertainment of Prince Charles at the opening of the Dinorwic project: they went into the catering equivalent of supercharged-overdrive.

Now if on a winter's night, a traveller arrives in Llanberis looking for a cheap bed, he or she might normally expect to find a dozen round the town. This December weekend, though, was like that infamous Augustan census in BC Bethlehem: there was no room at any inn for miles around and even stables, it was rumoured, were overbooked. Two hundred beds — all that they had — were spoken for in The Victoria Hotel alone and every hut and B & B was full to overflowing. The denizens of Deniolen opened all their doors and floors to the multitude; friends and relations as far out as Anglesey got out the futons and the Karrimats; tented villages sprang up around every hot tap and public toilet within ten miles of 'The Vic' (it being easier, of course, to change into a gown or dinner jacket in a damp loo than in a wet tent); and the proprietors of 'Pete's Eats' unfroze every sausage in their freezers and opened every can of beans (nor was this a wasted effort either, since at least three teams were known to have crammed down breakfasts at both hotel and café).

Our devoted committee deliberated; whole hard drives were filled with bulging files of letters, memos, orders, counter-orders and suggestions; nothing would be left to chance. After long discussion, a short list of speakers —

the great, the good and the not-so-good — was booked eons in advance to sing the praises of the Club and dust off the history books. For some, unfortunately, even this sort of notice proved too short; but such was the detail of the administration and the quality of support from reserves, we hardly noticed a hiccup. The logistics of maintaining wall to wall lectures was awesome: since when have so many chairs been gathered together in one place in our name?

But the biggest challenge facing our committed Centennial Committee was not really the effective management of climbers sleeping or climbers talking, but of climbers eating: how were they to feed the five hundred who had come to hear the word, much more than loaves and fishes at dinner and all at the same time under one roof? The solution they found — a vast marquee, sited in the car park just opposite the Snowdon Railway Station — was both elegant and appropriate. What better way to entertain such a motley crew (who between them had probably clocked up a hundred thousand nights of ill-prepared freeze-dried food, cooked beneath the stars in windy camps and bivouacs), than with a five course meal in a silken tent?

Now this 'tent' was something else again: no bender or igloo dome, but a full-framed Tithe Barn with lots of French Windows and a roof; waterproof to kite mark standard, it was fifty by one hundred and thirty feet and decorated with hundreds of scalloped shells of extra material. Designed to withstand gale-force winds (and given the weather forecast for the weekend, this was very reassuring), it was a designer's dream and a tent-erector's nightmare. But if wind was stopped, then what of rain? Would we be flooded out? That, too, apparently had been prepared for: twenty lorry loads of stone were dumped — some forty tons of road-scrapings — and then raked out to form the firm and water-filtering foundations. Wandering outside the stately pleasure home in a vague time after the meal, I found one of the scores of tent pegs round the back. Longer than the Helyg poker and second cousin to a snow stake, it must have taken yonks to hammer in through those chippings. Two attachments, thirty by forty feet, housed the bar and kitchen. There was even carpet underfoot and mats on which to wipe our feet. A row of chandeliers hung down its length. At key points, industrial-sized fans, connected to warehouse-heating flame-throwers (sited sensibly outside the tent) filled the billowing country life-like canopy with

The 'Tithe Barn': all lit up with no place for snow. Photo: Keith Sanders



more hot air than even five hundred wine-imbibing climbers could produce. Branson would have been bemused; Leo Dickinson was spotted taking measurements. It oozed staff. There was someone whose sole task was apparently to talk reassuringly and often to the posse of generators that formed a noisy and protective diesel ring around the tent.

Unsurprisingly, the wind got wild during dinner and the awnings flapped and whipped; but reassuringly, as our President pointed out, not one of the organising committee was seen to do the same. By the Sunday, though, I noticed one of the glass shades had fallen in shards of ice and the Himalayan lectures could do without any artificial wind noises. Some stalwarts held the screen for Andy Perkins's exuberant and sound-enhanced lecture (thanking their lucky stars no doubt, that they didn't have to hold his ropes in similar circumstances). But the marquee/tent *did* do sterling service and its scalloped drapes will forever be preserved as the backdrop to a thousand formal and informal photographs.

Some facts now: Graham hired a temporary kitchen with six ovens, eight hotplates and boiling tables to help Derek Roberts, the Head Chef, the Executive Chef and five other chefs co-ordinate dinner for five hundred and fifty place settings. In truth, this was a case of the cook, his chief, his wife and her mother all helping out. Llandrillo Catering College provided twenty-six waitresses and waiters over and above the normal hotel staff, to give us seventy people waiting on our every need far into the night and early morning. Was there a spare white apron to be had for love or money anywhere in North Wales on Saturday the 6th?

In bibulous addition, there were (at least to begin with) two hundred and eighty bottles of wine on the tables; but if Pip is reputed to have carefully counted the empties, it has not been recorded if we subsequently drank

"One hundred and three..."



the hotel cellars dry or broke the Llanberis bottle bank. Sunday breakfast — coming only an hour after the last revellers had reluctantly gone to bed — was a muted affair: the chink of crockery and clink of cutlery clearly distressed some stalwarts who were quite obviously still tired and emotional. Amidst the conviviality, a sense of communal suffering was almost palpable.

As for the events and speeches themselves — well, they beggared all description. The inauguration of the Trevor Jones Memorial Bench at Helyg on the Friday afternoon was moving and unforgettable (as indeed will be the man and his achievements). Ex-Presidents won the climbing trivia quiz that evening (which is just what you would have expected); and Jim Curran and Doug Scott filled in with lectures to cover for the inexplicable absences of Jim Perrin and Johnny Dawes (which is not what you would have expected).

Ken Wilson maintained his reputation for reducing strong climbers to tears (in this case, tears of real suffering as, fixing every one of his huge audience with the eye of an ancient mariner, he dared them wordlessly to leave the prescence and relieve themselves). Speaking about a history of climbing in the 60s the Wilson way, he simply threw away the clock. To the consternation of the committee, only too aware of the politics of English exploitation of Welsh Water, the sound of flushing filled the hotel for almost an hour after he'd finished speaking.

Nearly sixty years after the Nanda Devi 'picnic', Charlie Houston was lionised again when his lecture was received with a standing ovation. He seemed as surprised as his audience by the spontaneous warmth of this response: not all Englishmen, it appears, are as dour as Tilman was reputed to be. Before and after him, Band, Banks, Bonington, Harding, Perkins, Roscoe — the great and the good — lectured and spoke for our delight and their supper.

Then there were the in-between hours — those essential bar-proping, preening, posturing and big-name-spotting times. As you would expect at such a gathering of ageing prima donnas, has-beens, been-theres and wannabees, there was enough bombast, bravura and braggadocio going on — both spoken and seen — to fill at least fifteen journals (most of it unprintable, of course). If you yearn for anecdotes of dubious provenance, I can record only two: who was spotted fifteen feet climbing up a drainpipe in his DJ, but without trousers; and which famous climber, very late at night, is alleged to have missed the washbasin with the bulk of his substantial and expensive dinner and filled instead his recently-cleaned climbing boots? Well, there are no answers to be found between these sober pages, I'm afraid: this is *The Journal*, after all; and anyway, it's all CC history now — all the riotously profound hundred years and a weekend of it.

Tim Noble

(iii) The Centenary Dinner Blessing

For the high hills, and views long enough;
For steep places, and holds just large enough;
For the world You've made and for heart to enjoy it;
For appetite, and the means to employ it;
For our Founders past and for friends present;
For food and drink and company present;
For these and all your mercies, O God,
Your holy name be praised,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

Reverend N.J.Monk

(iv) The Centenary Dinner Speech

It is entirely appropriate that we should be gathered in a tent, here in the Welsh mountains, to celebrate our centenary. I must admit, though, that the prospect of this accommodation has given rise to some anxiety and some of you may have heard the 'valence' flapping. But there has been no flapping from the person who comes first on my list of those to thank: Pip Hopkinson, the chairman of our Centennial Committee. Like the man himself, the preparations for this event have run like a well-oiled machine.

Pip has been ably assisted by Terry Kenny, who has organised tonight's dinner and by Steve Andrews who, as always, has made himself available wherever and whenever necessary. Pip has asked me to thank the rest of his many helpers — especially Frances Carr for her last minute help with the menus. This team has put in hundreds of hours of work to make the occasion a success. In addition, Pip has taken on the role of Meets Secretary for the many celebratory occasions planned for what is going to be a very eventful 1998.

None of this would have been possible without the unstinting co-operation and hard work of the staff of the Royal Victoria Hotel and I would like to offer a very special vote of thanks to the staff, and particularly to Graham Sutherland, the manager, who has made it his personal mission to ensure the success of this weekend.

I want to thank Terry Gifford for editing *The Centenary Journal* and his team of readers, who between them have reviewed all of our journals, searching for the cream. I think you will all agree that we possess a very impressive memento of this occasion. There are many others, too numerous to mention individually, who have also contributed and to whom we owe our thanks.

I have received much advice over the past few months from many members of this club regarding what to include in this closing speech. Were I to include it all, I would, no doubt, keep you enthralled for the next two hours. The committee, however, has given me strict instructions to keep it down to five minutes; but there is just one rather nice snippet that I would like to include which came from our member, Dr. Mike Ward. He suggested that I should check his facts, but because it reflects so particularly well on The Climbers' Club, I have had no intention of doing so.

Mike pointed out that of all the members of the successful 1953 Everest Team, five were members of The Alpine Club, but eight were members of The Climbers' Club. This has given me cause to contemplate why I am here tonight, honoured to be speaking to you as your President at this, our Centenary Dinner. Is it because I am a famous climber? Unfortunately not; and it concerns me that the image of the club may suffer as a result. However, tonight I can reveal that I am about to become a famous climber. You only have to take a quick look around this room (well, tent) to know that to be a famous climber you have also to write a book. Ergo, if I write a book then I will be famous. But my main claim to fame is even more tenuous than the

foregoing logic — a claim based on commercial activity rather than mountaineering endeavour. However, my book will reveal, amongst other things, that I am the exact twin of Reinhold Messner: we were both born on September 17th, 1944. Not many people know this.

Messner may have climbed the *North Face* of the Eiger in eight hours, and climbed all the 8000-metre peaks, but unlike Messner, I have the distinction of having climbed the 'lowest' mountain in every continent. This may seem like a wild and extravagant boast, but in support of this statement I can prove that I have climbed the lowest mountain in Antarctica: there is a picture of me climbing in Antarctica on none other than the front cover of that most prestigious of publications, *Mountain* — a picture taken at sea level. When it comes to serious mountaineering, you cannot get any lower than this and still have had your picture on the front cover of *Mountain*!

I have been toying with ideas for the title of my book. Because of its subject matter I could modify the title from that classic, *High Adventure*, changing it to 'Low Adventure'. There is already a *Thin Air*, why not a 'Thick Air'? But, no! My book will have a classic dignity — the epitome of all my highest endeavours, and it will be called: 'The Ascent of Kinder Scout' You may laugh; but Reinhold Messner has not climbed Kinder Scout. I, on the other hand, have climbed it several times. I sometimes boast that I summited Kinder Scout on my very first attempt. (Kinder Scout, as you will recall, was recently twinned with that great Himalayan peak, Rum Doodle — a joint effort between Derbyshire County Council, the BMC and the Nepali Government.)

Now I realise that nowadays 'Kinder' — as it is affectionately known — has, like its partner in Nepal, had many ascents. Some would seek to reduce its stature by referring to the *South Face* route as the *Yak Route*, or more correctly, the *Sheep Route*. I have climbed Kinder from the south and from the east. I once made a particularly fast ascent of the *West Ridge* and I have even climbed the *North Face*. Perhaps the most remarkable fact is that not once have I resorted to expedition tactics, always choosing to climb in alpine style. I have climbed it solo, I have made winter ascents, I have climbed it at night. I have climbed it solo, in winter, at night; yet Messner has fought shy of this challenge.

Yes, the fact is that your President is not just a tradesman, but can hold his head high and proudly ask you to stand and raise your glasses in a Centennial Toast to The Climbers' Club; to the first hundred years and to the next hundred years.

Ladies and Gentlemen: to 'The Next Hundred Years'.

Mark Vallance

(v) Centennial Quotations

(Overheard at the Centenary Dinner, or related)

Charlie Houston	"You even hired a wind machine to make it more realistic."
Anon	"Why do I have to wear a Dinner Jacket for a meal in a tent in Llanberis?"
Anon	"Ken Wilson's lecture was brilliant...but about an hour too long."
Charlie Houston	"I'm just a small town doctor; you can call me anything you like. I'll even answer to 'Your Highness'." (Charlie is an Emeritus Professor of Medicine.)
Dick Isherwood	(After sitting next to Doug Scott in the bar for an hour) "It's Doug Scott, isn't it? You've had your hair cut!"
George Band	(To Terry Kenny after the Dinner) "You've come up from nowhere, haven't you?"
Charlie Houston	"Emeritus Professor means one totally lacking in merit."
Bonington/Scott	(Taking coffee after Charlie Houston's lecture) "Which one of us is going to follow that?"
Bonington	"Derek Walker never looks any older, does he?"
Anon	(<i>But allegedly, Dr Terry Gifford: Ed</i>) "I'd like to be seated next to Lord Hunt, Chris Bonington and Charlie Houston."
Bob Allen	(After Andy Perkins's Lecture) "I'm glad I'm too old to be invited on that kind of expedition."

Centennial Celebrations

Terry Kenny

(Letter to Pip Hopkinson, January 1996)
'A marquee would be a possibility, but I foresee problems with gatecrashers, adverse weather and lack of ambience suitable for the occasion.'

Pip Hopkinson

(During discussions regarding catering arrangements, Summer 1997)
"I don't care if Prince Charles did go up and collect his own buffet dinner, The Climbers' Club is going to be seated!"

Peter Brooks

(Letter to Steve Andrews, December, 1997)
'I think we've given Ian Roger — who was 'spying' on behalf of the Fell and Rock — something to report back on...they will certainly have a job to get anywhere near it.'

Liverpool Daily Post

(December, 1997)
'And yesterday...one of the world's greatest climbers, Sir Chris Bonington...sipping a glass of bucks fizz and surrounded by club officials, said (the Club's) membership, past and present read like a mountaineering who's who.'

Terry Kenny

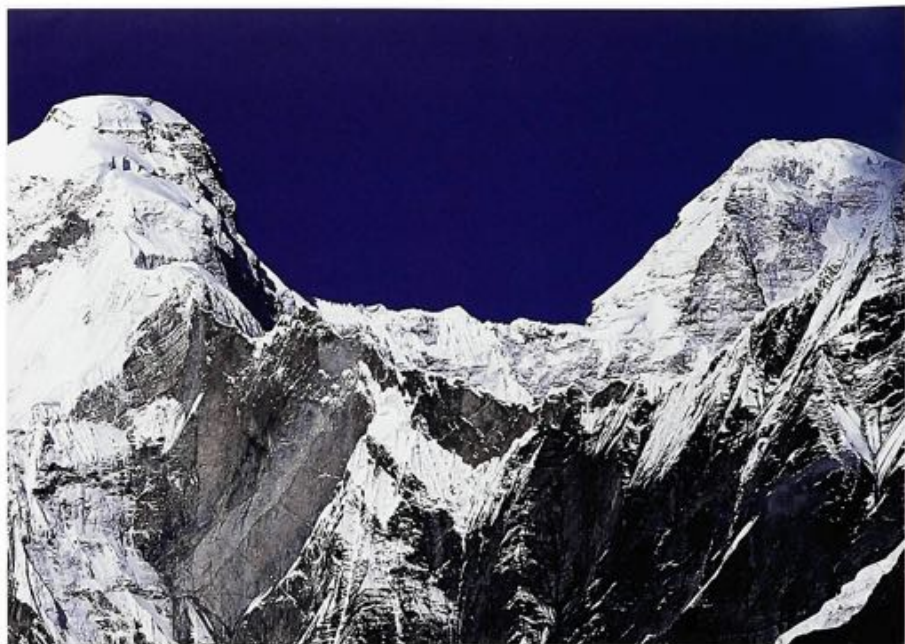
A 'mountaineering who's who' at Helyg, Friday 5th Dec.1997 for the dedication of the Trevor Jones Memorial Bench. Photo: Keith Sanders





'The Master's Touch', or 'Two Elders, just here for the crack'? Steve Andrews, Jackie Birtles, Joe Brown and Loretto McNaught-Davis enjoying themselves at Curbar and the Centenary Dinner, respectively. Photos: (above) Simon Cardy and Keith Sanders





Nanda Devi East (left) and Nanda Devi summit, seen from the Pachu valley. Photo: Julie-Ann Clyma

'The Lions in Winter': Andy Perkins, Charlie Houston, Chris Bonington and Doug Scott at The Centennial Celebrations. Photo: Keith Sanders



Remarks at the Hundredth

Charles Houston

It is an haunting honour to address my betters on this historic occasion: I feel like the 'Ghost of Climbers Past' as I reminisce about an expedition that took place more than sixty years ago; and true enough, I am getting along in years. But if it is not true that Jacques Balmat took me up Mont Blanc, and that I did not climb The Grêpon with Mummery, I did know Geoffrey Winthrop Young and Tom Longstaff and I was once chided by Colonel Strutt for saying the word 'piton' in mixed company. Tilman has told this story much better in his book *The Ascent of Nanda Devi*: mixed in with his sharp and witty observations on Americans are a few grains of truth; but I welcome this chance to set the record straight.

Contrary to what you've read, the 1936 Nanda Devi picnic did not originate in Britain, but in Cambridge — that is, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Inspired by Terry Moore's talk about Minya Konka in 1934 and excited by Paul Bauer's struggles on Kangchenjunga, we four Harvard youngsters decided to finish off *The Bavarian Ridge* on the latter mountain. We had done a good bit of climbing here and there and we had learned all about expeditions in Alaska with Brad Washburn. We could do anything.

First, we sent Loomis to England to buy equipment — after I'd introduced him to Graham Brown (with whom I had done a good season in the Alps and who had climbed Mt. Foraker in Alaska with me). He showed Loomis around and soon Loomis cabled me, asking if we could invite a few Brits to join us. Ad Carter, my co-conspirator and I agreed. Art Emmons joined us — despite having left half of each foot in Western China, after frostbite on Minya Konka.

Quietly recognising that we were completely unfit for Kangchenjunga, Shipton and Tilman offered us a shot at Nanda Devi — which they had first reached through the famous Rishi Gorge in 1934. Shipton would be off elsewhere, so we invited Tilman to join us. Then we told Loomis to invite Noel Odell, Graham Brown and the rising star, Peter Lloyd. So it began — and with what fantastic cheek.

Loomis bought gear in England while Carter, Emmons and I packed food and stuff for Kangchenjunga, just in case. We arranged to meet in Ranikhet in early July. Tilman, his heart really set on Kanch, went out to India ahead; but found the bureaucracy more difficult to penetrate than the Rishi Gorge. So, fortunately for all of us, he gave up Kangchenjunga, collected eight Sherpas in Darjeeling and met Loomis in Ranikhet in late June. The rest of us were set to arrive in Bombay by ship in early July, while Carter would be coming later from China.

To while away the time, Tilman, Loomis, two Sherpas and a ten pound cheese hired twelve porters to carry food to the Nanda Devi Sanctuary.

Characteristically, they pushed right along, not being slowed up by falling rock (which cracked Tilman's ribs), or by Loomis's multiple tropical ulcers. Tough but tired after double marches, all but the cheese met us in Ranikhet for a slightly-belated Fourth of July celebration — which the Brits viewed with distant amusement.

Our first test came when Tilman saw the mound of supplies that had just arrived: with few words (none were needed), he began 'bagging and scrapping' — a euphemism we would become more familiar with as time passed. I helped, awed at first, but soon getting into the spirit of things. Somehow this early non-confrontation did much to start our 'togetherness'; but except for Odell, who had taught at Harvard, the Brits didn't know what to make of us Yanks scurrying eagerly about like puppies. They also had some difficulty understanding the language we were supposed to share.

After giving away, bartering or hiding a great pile of scrapped goodies, we made up eighty-pound loads for thirty seven porters who met us at the roadhead in Garul, sixty miserable miles by derelict bus from the delights of the Forest Bungalow. It was raining — as it would for most of the next few weeks; but for some of us with the optimism of youth and ignorance, rain made the occasional sunlight doubly sweet. I especially remember Odell striding beneath fragrant Deodars along a ridge to Gwaldam, repeating over and over: "Gad it's good to be back."

Well, yes, there were leeches. We soon learned that shorts, sneakers and no socks were better than trying to keep the leeches out and so stopped for inspection every few miles. Tilman segregated our tents after watching Sherpas find fleas in theirs. We had brought Logan Tents — standard for Alaska — but their weaknesses soon became apparent. Tilman said in short unmistakable words what he thought of them. He insisted that leeches went through the fabric as easily as the rain and that it was drier outside than in. We cut holes in the floor to drain out the water, but it was not until deep snow on the mountain that he conceded their value.

We walked and talked and sniffed each other, slowly building what would be, and remain, true friendships. Despite what Tilman wrote later, we never claimed the mosquitoes in Alaska were as big as birds or that the bears were like elephants (though we might have made a few misleading statements).

Tilman smoked his pipe and said little. It was impossible to be sure what he was thinking of this strange group, but he did not seem overjoyed. Half the party had a pipe sticking out of the mouth; some tried 'Bidis' a few times; one of the porters — called 'coolies' in those days — made 'pipes' in the wet earth and smoked anything that would burn. We handed out the coolies a few Indian cigarettes to supplement the twenty-five cents we paid them each day. Despite religiously drinking only tea and boiled or ionised water, many of us were introduced to the 'squitters'. We ate mostly what we could buy in the villages.

Odell was determined to 'do some geology' and despite Tilman's scowls,

we (the porters) carried a long and heavy glacier drill all the way to base camp. It was never unpacked, but brought home virginal. I was eager to collect some data about altitude sickness and distributed small diaries to be completed every day. That idea didn't last long. Graham Brown took scores of mini-photographs, recording them and every factual detail in his diary; but when I read this decades later, there was little excitement in them. Surprisingly, Tilman also kept notes: spare, lean and unemotional. Carter's and my diaries are full of superlatives. Emmons concentrated on walking — his first long trek since the months in hospital in China. Loomis was trying to regain weight and strength and heal his painful tropical ulcers (which I treated with the ignorant enthusiasm of a first year medical student).

The rain accompanied us — except on the beautiful Kuari La, where we saw the whole great range of unclimbed peaks, a backdrop to incredible masses of alpine flowers in full bloom. We sat there bemused for a long time and then went down into Buddhist country, camping near an old stupa. We crossed raging torrents on dubious bridges and finally climbed up the Mana Valley, over a high pass and down into Dibrugheta, a garden spot where summer flocks of sheep had not yet arrived. Then on past the Outer and the Inner Curtains and onto the walls of the Rishi Gorge. Everything was going like gangbusters.

I'm talking so much about the march in, not only because it was so enchanting, but because such a 175-mile walk is unusual today, when most parties appear to fly or jeep to base camp. Doing it this way, they miss the shared joys and sorrows, the chances to talk and learn about companions. Yes, perhaps it's old-fashioned, but so am I — and so most of us felt then. Anyone can climb a mountain and then babble-on about how difficult or dangerous it was, or how brave and expert they were; but the march in is surely something special?

Just before entering the inner and steeper Rishi Gorge, we were halted by the Rhamani River in full spate. Somehow, we got ourselves and the baggage across without drowning anyone (despite disgraceful ropework); but the Dotials refused to cross, quite understandably. So we were left on the other side with ten Mana men, six Sherpas and ourselves. Inevitably, this meant more 'bagging and scrapping' with double carries for all. Many favourite foods were abandoned: "Bloody chemicals," snorted Tilman; "Might as well eat a boiled shirt," was his verdict on our special rice. For several meals a day in one form or another we gradually became quite fond of tsampa, roasted barley: good value for weight.

At last we climbed a final ledge — 'Pisgah' — and looked down across the rolling Sanctuary to our mountain; it was even more awesome in the real. The Sanctuary, however, was disappointing: thousands of acres of brown fields with few flowers (except when we imagined them later), and little wild life except the ubiquitous Himalayan Partridge. A number of deep gullies slowed us and we camped half way along. Finally, we reached a flat

outwash above one of the glaciers falling from the mountain. From this base camp we would start the climb. The Mana men left with mutual words of esteem and admiration and we examined the route which Shipton and Tilman had thought the best. Emmons would not go on the mountain, fearing frostbite in his remaining feet, but would map parts of the valley.

We looked up at a very steep wall of rock and ice, but to the left was a nice ridge, the obvious choice. Though we did not have enough supplies or people to carry them to make this into a regular siege, we all packed loads to establish each new camp and repeated this pattern higher and higher. The weather was mostly bad with lots of snow and fog. But the occasional hours of blinding sun on the great snow rim of the Sanctuary were fantastic.

The route was steep — even dangerous here and there, and hard work. Our ropework along a steep cornice was as bad as that crossing the Rhamani River. In those days, one or more sahibs accompanied the Sherpas, for whom we felt responsible. In fact, they did very well indeed — especially Pasang Kikuli who had survived the awful tragedy on Nanga Parbat in 1934. He would be my friend on K2 in 1938 and die there in 1939, trying to save a sahib's life.

The first blow came at Camp One when the entire supply of tea fell into the Khud. Frantic searching was unproductive and the Brits were dismayed. There was even talk of going home; but we Yanks were quite happy with our Ovaltine. Some Sherpas came down sick. Pasang Kikuli, climbing in dense snow and fog without sun glasses, developed snowblindness. Above Camp Three we carried everything ourselves, finally settling in a comfortable site at about 21,800 feet. We felt the altitude a little, but Graham Brown — who considered himself the best — was quite badly affected.

We hadn't really had a leader, because things just seemed to work themselves out.



'The way we wore': (l to r) Tilman, Loomis, Brown, Houston, Lloyd, Odell, Emmons, Carter.

Photo: Houston collection

Looking back, it's clear that Tilman, saying nothing, had guided our progress. In the process he became more amiable, even smiling once or twice. One memorable evening, lubricated by a celebratory bottle of apricot brandy, he talked about his travels. Our stories about Alaska dwindled to dust. But

there we were: seven of us within reach of the summit, with fourteen days of food, most of us fit and well and by now, true friends. Who should have first crack at it?

It's worth mentioning here that I don't believe any of us lusted for the summit; we had done summits before and this trip was different. But don't misunderstand me: we all hoped that someone would get there.

That night, by a secret ballot, we chose Tilman as leader and asked him to name two summit teams. He did; and next day, in promising weather, the party moved Odell and me up to a microscopic ledge and left us at dusk to scratch out a 'tent platform' at 23,400 feet. It was a pretty skimpy space. Next morning we started up, making slow going over deep snow and steep rock. By mid-afternoon we clearly would not summit, so returned to camp where we celebrated with a rare tin of meat. My half, however, was certainly rare and within an hour I was wishing myself dead. I spent all night crawling in and out over Odell. Fortunately, the weather was calm and beautiful — even if I was not.

In the morning, Odell shouted down a few thousand feet to the others: "Charlie is ill!" This became the great semantic error which led Carter to believe me "killed". The others rushed up in six hours and seemed rather annoyed to find me alive. I was trundled down. Tilman had brought his kit and so, next day, Odell and Tilman moved camp a little higher and then went for the summit. After narrowly escaping an avalanche, they stood on the top where, as Tilman famously wrote: "We so far forgot ourselves as to shake hands."

Early on we had agreed never to tell who made the top and so later dispatched a telegram to Longstaff saying only: 'Two reached summit, August 30th'. The secret could not be kept of course, but we knew that success belonged to us all. There was no question but that Tilman had steered the ship: however, we all had rowed. So how did a group of such very different and strong personalities achieve success in such a harmonious socialist democracy? Well, try it for yourselves; you might find out what happens when no-one is over-ambitious.

Our route wasn't very hard or dangerous: it was the logical way. Here and there it was a bit sticky and we were new to altitude. I can't guess what it would rate in the obligatory mathematics used today to polish ego. Those who come to climb it again will no doubt call ours 'The Ordinary Route' — as they have the *South Col Route* on Everest or *The Hornli Ridge* on The Matterhorn. Looking back, we did it well, safely (well, most of the time) and without hurt. But would such a climb be without one or two self-effacing tales of a near miss or of a stopped fall on the edge of a bottomless drop?

We emptied camp in stages with me, the so-called doctor, helping Graham Brown down, neither of us being very steady. Graham Brown had been badly-affected by the altitude and became a little paranoid. He didn't fully recover until Base Camp. This was my first experience with what today would be called High Altitude Cerebral Oedema. However, we all got down

safely to find, unfortunately, that Kitar had died of dysentery. Emmons had nothing to give him. This was the only blemish on a happy time. We marked his grave with a cairn and a great slab, bearing his name and then it was time to leave. Tilman, Pasang and I had agreed to go over what we would christen 'Longstaff's Col', hoping to cross Traill's Pass next to Nanda Kot and go into the Gori Ganga valley. The others would return the way we had come, down the Rishi.

Climbing to the col turned out to be the most difficult and dangerous part of the expedition with wet, loose snow and steep ice. We fumbled our way over in the dusk, bivouacked, abandoned Traill's Pass (which in any case we couldn't see in the snow and fog) and slid down twenty miles to Martoli. From there we had a hard walk for 100 miles to the roadhead; a ride to Ranikhet and for me, a flight home to medical school. The others straggled in later.

The 'retrospectroscope' gives a brightly-coloured view which selects the good and deletes the bad. Even allowing for this, Nanda Devi was an extraordinary experience. There must have been some bad times, but they've been forgotten: we lived and worked together unbelievably well. We certainly wanted to reach the top and one of the two teams did; but the top was only the icing on a delicious cake. Peter Lloyd and I are the ones left now — though when we join the others, we'll have a bottle of apricot brandy with us. Let Tilman have the last word:

'It was but a short three months that we had met, any of us as strangers, but inspired by a single hope and bound by a common purpose. This purpose was only achieved by team-work, team-work the more remarkable on account of the two different nationalities; and though these two nations have a common origin they are for that reason more critical of each other's shortcomings — as relationship leads proverbially to ill-feeling. The Americans and ourselves do not always see eye to eye, but on those rare occasions when we come together to do a job of work, as for example in war, or in the more serious matter of climbing a mountain, we seem to pull together rather well.

Where each man pulled his weight, each must share the credit; for though it is natural for each man to have his own aspirations, it is in mountaineering, more than in most things, that we try to believe:

"The game is more than the players of the game,
and the ship is more than the crew."

Hamish Nicol and the Alps in the early 1950s

George Band

Hamish Nicol was a natural choice as one of the speakers over the CC Centenary weekend: CC President 1972-75 and one of the foremost British Alpine climbers in the early 1950s. He had been billed to speak about his climbs with Tom Bourdillon, which re-established the post-war reputation of British climbers in the Western Alps.

Instead, after his sad death in May 1997, following a Cornish climbing accident, I was asked to take his place. There was no way I could describe his climbs in detail; he and Tom took very few action photographs, but fortunately many articles flowed from his pen into the CC Journal, Alpine Journal and even the British Medical Journal. His wife, Mary, kindly provided what was available — which I supplemented with my own largely personal account of the climbs undertaken by Oxford and Cambridge and other University undergraduates at that time. These early ascents led to the formation in 1954 of the Alpine Climbing Group, of which Tom and Hamish were successive Presidents and which was modelled on the prestigious French *Groupe de Haute Montagne*. One of its most useful roles as a 'ginger group' proved to be the publication in English of selected climbs from the French Vallot Guidebooks (with permission) and their dissemination to a wider British climbing public to encourage them to tackle the harder modern climbs as well as repeating the classics.

Who were some of the names associated with this student revival in the early 1950s? From Oxford: Bourdillon, Nicol, Westmacott, Rawlinson, Viney, Cunningham, Saxby and, a year or two later, Blackshaw. From Cambridge: Cym and Nancy Smith, Chorley, Wrangham, Fisher, Francis, Streetly and, later on, Sutton, Downes and Langmuir. Others from the north were MacNaught-Davis, Patey, Slessor, Stuart and Vaughan. One should also not forget the slightly older immediate post-war generation of fine performers, mostly on the more classical alpine routes: Hunt, Cox, Goodfellow, Charles Evans, Emlyn Jones, Barford, Noyce, Murray and Ward. My apology for other worthy names which I may have unintentionally omitted.

I never climbed with Hamish in the Alps. We really only first linked up for a week's climbing in the far north west of Scotland in June 1973 which was so successful that, with a handful of like-minded friends, we repeated the exercise annually for twenty one years until, much to our surprise and delight, his son married my daughter in June 1994. We parents decided to recuperate from the wedding by climbing in Corsica

instead. The Scottish pattern continued and we had already booked a cottage in Skye for June 1997, but sadly he could only attend in spirit.

To complete this article, I would like to quote excerpts from Hamish's own account of his three most important climbs with Tom Bourdillon in the western Alps: *The North Face* of the Petit Dru in 1950; the tenth ascent of the *Ratti-Vitali* on the West Face of the Aiguille Noire de Peuterey, and the fifth ascent of the *East Face* of the Grand Capucin — these latter in 1955. To prepare themselves for the Dru, a serious 850m TD and for other harder climbs, they practised artificial climbing with pitons and rope stirrups on a tree in Tom's garden in Buckinghamshire.

'On July 25th Tom and I walked from Montenvers to the foot of the North Face of the Dru, and bivouacked on the rognon, with our backs to the huge and frightening cliff. I will never forget that night we spent huddled together on the cold rock. It was (a) clear and starlit (night), and the town of Chamonix was a blaze of lights at our feet. It was my first bivouac, and our plan was to leave the sleeping bags there and climb over to the Charpoua Hut where our friends would be waiting for us. At that time the *North Face* of the Dru had a tremendous reputation. The first ascent had been in 1935. By 1949 there had been something like 30 or 35 ascents. For us it was a complete mystery. We did not even know if we could climb it. Tom and I left the bivouac at 5 a.m. the next day. We had a double nylon rope, with a spare rope for hauling up the rucksacks. We wore vibram soled boots. My ideas had had a good shaking up since 1949. We had some rope slings, some karabiners, a few pitons, a hammer each, one ice-axe, and one pair of crampons. Luckily the rock was dry and in perfect condition. We hardly noticed the Fissure Lambert, which is regarded as the first major difficulty. I had certainly led part of it before I realised what it was.

This time there were to be no errors in route finding as I had memorised the relevant pages of the Vallot guide parrot fashion. When we got to the hard bit, the Fissure Allain, there was no argument: we climbed the Fissure Martinetti which is a lot easier, and much more sensible. The last 500 feet were steep and covered in verglas, which made them rather serious. We got to the summit without any difficulty at 1.30 p.m. having taken eight and half hours altogether. We finished off our food, and slept on the summit for an hour and a half. Our earlier plan to traverse over the Great Dru came to nothing. There was a thick fog, and the weather looked bad. Instead we descended the Petit Dru by a long series of tedious and difficult abseils. Viney and Saxby were waiting for us in the Charpoua Hut. They gave us a tremendous welcome.

I was all for doing another climb but my companions would have none of this. We must return to Chamonix and have a celebration.'

This was the climb that particularly established their reputation, and with it, the realisation that many harder climbs were within the grasp of that generation of British climbers who previously would have stuck to the old classics or might never even have thought of visiting the Alps. Three years later, in 1954, Joe Brown and Don Whillans made the third ascent of the *West Face* of the Petit Dru (ED) and followed it up with a new ascent of the *West Face* of the Blatière, including the famous off-width 'Fissure Brown'. British climbers had truly arrived in the post-war Alps. Bourdillon and Nicol's climbs in 1955 rode on the crest of this wave:

Thanks to our earlier recce, and some handy steps across the Fréney Glacier left by a descending party, I was already starting up the West Face of the Noire at 6.45 a.m. It was steep at first, and one has to aim for a little ridge which is a feature of the middle section of the face. The ridge is quite easy, and we could move together carrying coils of rope. The end of section was marked by a snow-filled gully. Tom pulled the ice-axe out of his rucksack and cut steps across it. On the other side of the gully the climbing suddenly became more serious, the rock blacker, steeper and more greasy. It was very cold. I was looking for the grade-six crack which was going to take me up to the great bivouac ledge. The crack was wet, and here and there were patches of ice. Then I was struck clean on the forehead by a drop of water. Another followed. The water came from the lip of the great overhang, and fell a clear distance of 200 feet. Somewhere up there was a space where the bivouac ledge must be.

I turned my attention to the crack. It was 2 to 3 inches wide and for eighty feet I jammed it, laybacked it, and was sometimes forced to bridge across the corner. I emerged onto the Ratti bivouac ledge. Quite a few important climbers had spent the night here. They had left their cigarette packets and sardine tins behind as mementoes. It was wide enough to lie down full length, but its chief merit was the huge overhang which acted like a roof. One might have been indoors.

From the ledge a crack could be seen running up the overhanging wall, and in it were placed half a dozen pitons. Tom hitched the doubled rope to his waist, and then the single rope for hauling up the rucksacks and set off up it. By 5 p.m. we were both up, and could see the summit quite easily, about 1,000 feet away. At 6.45 p.m., exactly 12 hours from the glacier we reached the summit of the Aiguille Noire de Peuterey. Tom pulled out the zinc box from the summit cairn and wrote a laconic message in it. We bivouacked on the East Ridge, a few feet below the summit, and made Courmayeur quite easily the next day. The washerwomen at Entreves turned and stared as we walked past. My trousers had a huge tear in them, and I wondered if Francesca would be able to mend them.

For 5 days it rained, and Tom and I sat in our tent in Chamonix. On the 5th day it cleared enough to make an attempt on the East Face of the

Grand Capucin possible. This climb is so steep that it clears rapidly after bad weather. Our rucksacks contained food for three days, bivouac equipment, 35 pitons and wooden wedges and 370 feet of rope. It was a hard flog up the glacier in soft new snow, sometimes wading thigh deep. The bivouac platform which is well placed within 50 feet of the first grade-6 pitch was covered with two feet of soft snow. It was 8.30 p.m. and it would soon be dark. After a bit of shovelling with piton hammers an area 9 foot by 3 emerged with a gravel base, much better than one might have expected. Tom lit the petrol stove, I cut a few lumps of ice from the cornice behind me, tipped our 20 hard boiled eggs out of the saucepan in which they had travelled protected, and started to make soup.

Our bivouac gear was quite primitive. There were two reasons for this, we were too poor to buy any, and if you carry a lot of stuff you will almost certainly have to use it, because it slows you down. We each had a cagoule and an eiderdown jacket, and nothing else. A bad storm would have caused serious problems.

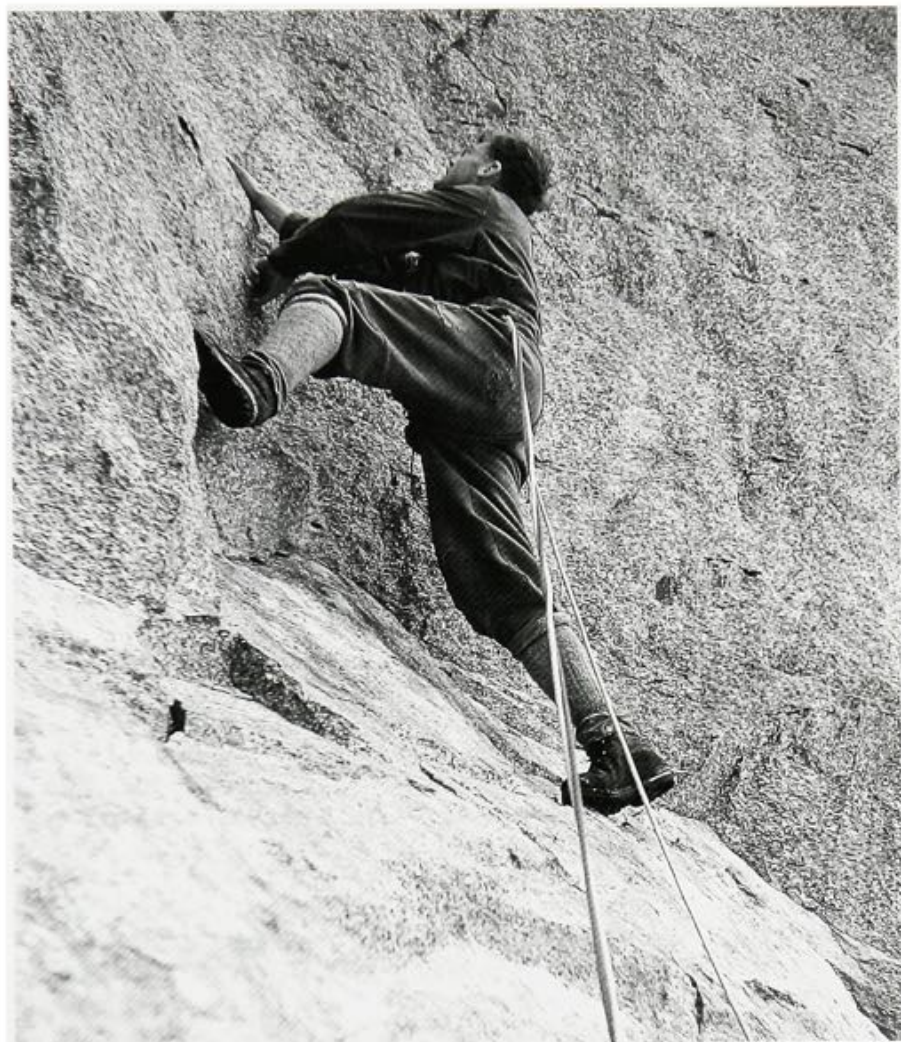
At 3 a.m. two little lights could be seen crossing the glacier. Competitors! So, breakfast was a hurried affair and we started climbing at 6 a.m. At this point two French parties appeared and we exchanged greetings. "Qui êtes vous?" they said. We told them our names. Tom and I pressed on upwards quite slowly, at a rate of about five feet per hour. Each pitch needed ten or fifteen pitons or wedges and few were *in situ*. By 4 p.m. we had reached the forty-metre wall which is said to be the crux of the climb. This wall is continuously overhanging and has to be done in two sections with a stance in the middle, standing in etriers, most precariously. It took us four hours to climb the wall, so that it was 8 p.m. by the time we reached the second Bonatti bivouac. This was the largest ledge on the climb so far. It was covered in three feet of snow but a lot of vigorous stamping and sweeping produced a sort of cave, just big enough for two people to sit down but not stretch out. I had a cigarette and waited for dawn, chin on knee.

Breakfast was eggs, soup and super milk concentrate, pretty nauseating, and took two hours. It was still too cold to move off, but by 7 a.m. I was into the seventy-five foot sinuous crack which in those days had not a single piton in it. I put in fifteen, and it took an hour to lead. Shortly above this, Bonatti spent his third night. He must have been standing on one leg. At 5 p.m. we reached the summit, abseiled down into the gap behind the Capucin, and rejoined our rucksacks by descending a snowy gully. We made the Requin Hut after midnight in the dark.'

After the cruel accident to Bourdillon and Viney on the Jagihorn on 2nd July 1956, which robbed Hamish of his main climbing partner, his medical studies and career intervened and he never climbed again at the same high level. The epitaph on Bourdillon and Viney's grave in Visp applies equally to Hamish:

'They are most rightly reputed valiant, who, though they perfectly apprehend both what is dangerous and what is easy, are never the more thereby diverted from adventuring.'

'...for eighty feet I jammed it, laybacked it, and was sometimes forced to bridge across the corner.' Hamish Nicol on the Grade-6 crack, West Face of The Noire, 1955. Photo: Tom Bourdillon



First Ascents on Gritstone

Peter Harding

I want to start this reminiscence on the old *West Buttress Girdle* of Cloggy. Gordon Dyke and I did this route in 1949 after inspecting *Sheaf* for the guidebook. Now you may wonder what this route has to do with gritstone first ascents. Well, whilst we were still on *Sheaf*, enshrouded in thick morning mist, I could hear (but not see) another party arriving at the foot of the cliff. On the stance almost a hundred feet below me, Gordon was obviously visible from the scree, for a shout came up: "What are you on?" Always the humorist, Gordon replied: "Clogwyn D'ur Arrdu!" After laughter and a precise answer as to our route had been given, I recognised the voice of John Lawton, a well-known activist of the time. He enquired who was leading and Gordon's straight reply elicited the rhetorical exclamation (which almost had me off my holds): "Not the bloody gritstone man!". Sadly, just two weeks after this encounter, John fell from *Spectre* and that was virtually the end of his climbing career.

Though my subject is first ascents on gritstone, perhaps the title should have been: 'Rock Climbing in the Middle Ages', for most of the routes I want to highlight were done in the years exactly between the late 1890s and the present day, in the middle of a century which has seen the full development of rock-climbing as a sport. Of course, as everyone knows, it was on gritstone that climbing rock for its own sake really began. Indeed, one of the Climbers' Club's original members, Jimmy Puttrel, was truly the first 'No.1 gritstone man'; he was sometimes referred to as 'the lamplighter' because he so often showed the way up difficult rock. It was on grit that my own career as a climber commenced.

As a young boy I'd scrambled on the igneous rock of the Lake District and on limestone in the Derbyshire Dales, but it was at Cromford's Black Rocks, the nearest crag to my home in Derby, that I started rock-climbing properly in 1943. There was a war on at the time and military service or long hours of essential work and study restricted most people's leisure activities. Transport was also limited to trains and buses or cycling and walking, so it was unusual to meet or even see anyone else on the crags. In 1944 there was perhaps a dozen climbers who visited Black Rocks regularly; most, like myself, were beginners. One of them, an enthusiastic teenager still at school named Tony Moulam, soon became my regular climbing partner.

Early in 1945, a small group of these Black Rocks regulars, including my then girlfriend, Veronica Lee, and Ken Herbert, a colleague from Rolls Royce, where I was then an engineering apprentice, formed themselves into the Stonnis MC ('the Stonnis' is an old local name for Black Rocks). Although most Stonnis Club meets were at Black Rocks, a few were held

on distant crags such as Wharnccliffe, Castle Naze and even Almscliff in Yorkshire. There is an early photograph of me getting my leg over (and onto) a Yorkshire 'Virgin' — that well-known but misnamed Almscliff boulder. These distant meet venues involved long, laden-up cycle rides or tedious, sometimes overnight train journeys; but when the war in Europe ended, a motorbike with its rationed petrol allowance made most grit and sandstone outcrops more accessible and I soon came to be regarded as the Peak's 'No.1 gritstone man'. My pillion-passenger girlfriend, Ronnie Lee was certainly gritstone's leading lady — especially after she had been on the first ascent of Cratcliffe's *Suicide Wall*. But more of that later. First, a quick glimpse of climbers' fashions and foibles in the 40s, for clothes were very important to successful first ascents.

In the photo below, taken in 1946, I am wearing some home-made canvas climbing breeches and an acquired American Army combat jacket.



Peter in his Lawrie Mark Vs.
Photo: Harding Collection

But note the 'magic boots' of the time — Robert Lawrie's hand-made Mark Vs. with soles edged in Tricounis and Clinkers round the heels. I recall being surprised when I learned that Arthur Dolphin, an erstwhile friend and occasional climbing partner, had his Mark Vs nailed with clinkers all round. When I enquired why, Arthur gave me one of his enigmatic smiles and replied: "Clinkers make your fingers stronger." Note, too, the thick hawser-laid manila rope, tied around the waist with a bowline and the doubled sling, spliced rather than knotted, clipped with my one and only karabiner. You can see we knew a thing or two about safe climbing in those days — with that sort of gear one was too bloody scared to fall off!

Even after the war, clothes rationing, like that for fuel and food, remained for quite a few years. One needed coupons as well as money to buy new clothes, so patched up old togs were very much the order of the day. Under my old cycling plus - fours I often wore a pair of black tights, because in the early forties I was a keen racing cyclist and black tights with a black alpaca jacket or sweater were mandatory dress for anyone competing in time trials on public roads. Occasionally, and much to the amusement or horror of my Stonnis pals, I would solo around dressed only in these tights and a sweater: I reckoned it raised my standard by at least two grades — much as multi-coloured tights must have done in the mid 80s.

My climbing boots were unfortunately much too big and required several pairs of socks to fill them. A better solution was to wear one pair of socks and my rubbers inside the boots. I had a party piece which was to

start up *Tower Face* at Laddow, solo, in nails; then, above the crux, balance on each leg in turn, remove my boots and drop them down before completing the climb in the rubbers. By the end of the 40s, though, I was quite immaculately dressed as a Dolomite Devil in plus-fours tailored from 'King-size' corduroy and sueded-topped Kletterschuhe, all purchased from Italy. I'd also graduated to 3 or 4 necklaces of thin nylon slings, each with its own karabiner: protection, like clothing, was improving.

Back at Black Rocks, the *Birch Tree Wall* routes put up by those CC giants, Ivan Waller and Jack Longland in the early 20s, held pride of place for twenty years; but by the spring of 1945, Cromford's up-and-coming 'Cream Team' of Moulam and Harding, having done all the existing routes many times, started looking at new lines. Tony opened the

score with his fierce little *Green Crack* and I followed suit with *Lean Man's Superdirect*, only to find a year later that Alf Bridge has led it fifteen years before me! His second, Ivan Waller, had considered it unjustifiable and left it unnamed and recorded only in his diary. But our interest was centered on a complete girdle traverse of the crag; and that tall, gaunt buttress, 'The Promontory', then unclimbed in any direction, was obviously the main problem. It had stopped talented gritstoners such as Fergus Graham and Eric Byne and was said to be impossible. But Tony and I noted that if we could traverse the western side to reach the overhung frontal ledge known as 'The Toad's Mouth' on the other side, we should be able to gain a good knob of rock from which we could abseil into *Left Promontory Gully*. So having first inspected it on a rope, Tony and I, accompanied by camera man Ken Herbert, cycled out one fine Thursday evening in July to make the first ascent.

Half way along the west side of 'The Promontory', at the back of a short, wide, vertical crack (the niche) I found the site for my lunch time purchase: a twelve inch silver steel bar, half-inch diameter. With my only krab clipped, it made a fine runner — not one that might limit a fall, but which would aid retreat: you see, my climbing career has always been based on the philosophy that those ultra-thin nylon slings were never meant to hold a fall, but simply as points to which I might return or retreat from.



Tower Face, Laddow.

Photo: Harding Collection



A 'reclining Egyptian' or a 'contortionate back move', Promontory Traverse, Black Rocks. Photo: Harding Collection

I managed a 'contortionate back move' in the wide horizontal crack before a fiendish finger-and-toe traverse and a difficult move up to gain the frontal ledge. With no natural means of belaying myself there, I simply crouched to bring up my second; but I made Tony promise on Scout's Honour not to fall off.

Three days later he and I repeated our trip along the Prom, deciding as we climbed, to complete the entire traverse of The Promontory itself. The last few feet were the most difficult, thirty years BC (before chalk). Nowadays, modern protection can be arranged hereabouts and most leaders seem to go directly upwards, thus missing the true ending of the route. But the thrill of a lifetime is to do it the original way — especially if the last runner is a simple sling on the crucial spike and it is just about to lift off as you move up.

In our first guidebook, Tony and I rated *Promontory Traverse* as a very exposed VS; nowadays it gets a more realistic E grade. We managed the complete crag girdle in February 1946, when Tony got back on military leave; in far from perfect conditions, it took us four hours to do the full 660 feet.

At Cratcliffe Tor — that fearsome grit crag set in a sylvan setting — the big 100 foot wall, like its counterpart in Cwm Idwal, was known as *Suicide Wall* well before the 40s. Both these Suicide Walls are off the vertical, but the Cratcliffe wall is the wrong way: its top overhangs the base by six feet. It was supposed that Frank Elliott, the 'No. 1 gritstone man' of the 30s had done it on a rope; but Frank told me some years ago that his only contribution to Cratcliffe's development was that eponymous *Unconquerable Crack* — a brilliant effort in 1933 (modern grade: HVS 5b).

By 1946 I was a full time student again, at Loughborough College, where Saturday morning lectures threatened to restrict climbing week ends. The answer was a much faster motorbike — and one of those flat' ats with a peak at the back instead of the front. On early visits I made one or two abseil inspections of the 100 foot wall, cleaning a crucial finger hold

beside a significant patch of non-stinging nettles and placing an ice peg to steady me while gardening. It was time for a lead. Early in May, Veronica Lee and I sped over to Cratcliffe from Black Rocks. On my new Triumph Speed Twin, this was barely a ten minute ride. Ronnie then gave me a top rope on *Suicide Wall* so that I might retrieve the ice peg. Unfortunately, an adjustable spanner from the motorbike's tool kit was no substitute for a peg hammer and I only succeeded in busting the peg's brazed ring.

Later in the afternoon we set off to reach the Bower by a new line that I had climbed with Moulam earlier. I had doubts about asking Ronnie to second me — Arthur Dolphin sometimes used to pull my leg about climbing with such a tiny slip of a girl, reckoning that with her as a second, I was virtually soloing — but although Ronnie was small, she had great ability and reliability. With Ronnie firmly ensconced in the Bower, then, I traversed right, leaving a thread under the overhang. As I committed myself to the wall above, grasping my recently-cleaned finger hold, the rope jammed back at the runner. Ronnie untied her belay and pluckily traversed out to free it. As soon as I felt the slack, I went up like a rocket, past the nettles and the broken-ringed peg to reach and rest in the niche. On my previous top-roped ascent, I had noticed an empty bird's nest here: it now contained 5 newly-laid eggs. So that day I wasn't the only one having eggs on *Suicide Wall*.

I made short work of the layback flake to get my hands on those lovely finishing jugs; and despite never having been on the wall before, Ronnie climbed it in truly magnificent style. As she came over the top, a group of Polaris M.C. members who had gathered below to watch us, gave her a great cheer.

In later years, Cratcliffe's *Suicide Wall* was hailed as a breakthrough — the start of modern British rock-climbing according to some pundits. I have repeated it a few times since, managing to extract my broken peg to keep as a souvenir. Now of course, there are no nettles and apart from the chalk, the wall's as clean as a whistle. With so many opportunities for modern protection it has the modest grade of HVS 5b. There is a sad postscript to this story, though. Almost 40 years to the day of our first ascent, Veronica Lee, then the wife of my old climbing pal, Ernie Phillips, herself committed suicide.

Another of the classic ascents in 1946 was on the tall pillar at The Roaches, Raven Rock. Led on-sight during a joint meet of the Stonnis and Karabiner Clubs, it was called *Valkyrie* because all the while we were on it, my second man, Bowden Black was whistling Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries'. Some years ago I went back to try and get some photos of the climb and was fortunate to find two young lads on the route. Meeting them at the top to congratulate them and thank them for the photo opportunities, I shyly mentioned that I had done the first ascent. At this they both went wide-eyed; the older one seized my hand, shook it vigorously and said: "You must be Joe Brown." Then looking at me askance, he added:

"But I always thought you were short and stocky with teeth like tombstones." Well, what else could I do but stay silent, try to look smaller and give the toothiest smile I could muster?

Having joined the CC in 1946 and moved to Shrewsbury early in 1947, my climbing became more and more focused on North Wales; trips into the Peak were less frequent. But newly-discovered gritstone crags were still a great attraction: one such was Shining Clough on Bleaklow. Ernie Phillips and I first learned of its existence in 1947 when we attended a Rucksack Club lecture in Manchester. We met Arthur Birtwistle and Johnny Lowe there — both well-known names from the late 30s and early 40s. They had pioneered some of the first climbs at Shining Clough and enthused



about a tall buttress split by a fierce-looking crack with a curious pot-hole or pocket half way up. As was usual for the times, they were completely unpossessive of the line, insisting we should go and have a look.

The Phoenix, Shining Clough
Photo: Harding Collection.

Ernie and I were staying with our mutual friend Norman Horsefield and spent next morning trailing round the sports shops of Manchester in persistent rain looking, unsuccessfully, for genuine Tricounis. By afternoon the rain had stopped; so notwithstanding the absence of nails, we took the train to Crowden and walked up to Shining Clough. Our on-sight ascent of the striking crack provided a cracker of a climb. We called it *The Phoenix*, because it had arisen from the sodden ashes of that miserable morning in Manchester. Nowadays, with plenty of placements for protection, *The Phoenix* is a reasonable VS 4c; it's still a splendid route on a crag with a real mountain feel about it.

Another High Peak crag which emerged at this time was Yellowslacks on Bleaklow, above Glossop. Arriving there for a Stonnis meet late in 1947, after a college staff meeting, I discovered I'd forgotten my climbing gear; so, borrowing long socks and plimsolls, I became probably the best-dressed climber in the Peak that day, leading a strong Stonnis party on the *Yellowslacks Girdle*, a really good VS outing. In the pockets of my smart grey slacks I discovered pieces of blackboard chalk — the detritus of a lecturer. So, just to amuse my followers, I started drawing silly signs on the rock: a skull and cross bones here; an arrow there and so on. The possibilities on a girdle are immense. I soon discovered that chalk gave one's fingers a better grip, but instantly dismissed any serious thought of

using the substance. Introduction of such a blatant aid to rock-climbing fifty years ago would surely have got me cashiered from The Climbers' Club, removed from the Rucksack and axed from the A.C.

Some weeks earlier, on my first visit to Yellowslacks, I had led Norman Horsefield and Geoff Pigott up a sixty-foot groove which we named *Qui-Mai-y-Pense* (partly because of its evil-looking top overhang); and it was here, that had he wound on his film quicker, our cameraman might have recorded rock-climbing's first explicit heel hook. Perhaps it's just as well he didn't: such disrespect for difficult rock is almost as damning as using chalk.

During 1947 various Stonnis and CC members helped Alf Bridge run weekend climbing courses for the army. Alf was one of those CC members who gave a lot of encouragement to many generations of climbers — my own as well as the following one led by Joe Brown. One of these courses was held at Stanage and after it had finished, David Sampson, a friend of Alf's from Sheffield, led a group of fellow instructors along the edge to point out a striking groove. David had managed it on a top rope, but was quite certain I would be able to lead it. As usual, Ken Herbert was ready with his camera.

The bottom crack of *Goliath's Groove* is so badly polished now that it's probably the crux; but at the bulge, where the crack narrows to finger width, I needed to combine a half layback with half-bum-and-foot technique. Reaching the horizontal break, I looked for something to tie into. Finding nothing, I signalled to the support team for something suitable and was soon hauling up a lump of millstone grit. It fitted perfectly and, tied on, I brought up 'Nobby' Millward before tackling the overhanging crack above. David Sampson, the instigator of the adventure, still wearing his Deerstalker hat, then laybacked powerfully all the way up. This display and both his names reminded of Biblical strong men and prompted the climb's name. *Goliath's Groove* soon became an acknowledged test-piece, much-photographed and epitomising the hardest and best on Stanage. I have done it many times since — perhaps the most auspicious being a memorable ascent following Chris Bonington during film-



ing of his television series, 'On Pennine Rock'.

I conclude these ramblings of an old gritstone man, by racing back to Cromford Black Rocks — to Black Friday, the 13th May 1949, to be precise. Tony Moulam and I, both based in Shrewsbury then, had cycled most of the ninety miles to Cromford to check some of the details for the CC's very first gritstone publication — our jointly-authored booklet guide to Black Rocks and Cratcliffe Tor. As well as two other climbs that evening, our visit produced one which was destined to be rated the hardest climb in the country: modern grading, sticky rubber, chalk and protection still allows *Demon Rib* an E4 5c grade. In our days though, short, single pitch routes, however difficult were not regarded as such serious undertakings as long hard climbs on a big cliff, so Tony and I simply graded it VS.

A good sixty foot, none of them easy, the climb takes the clean rib between *Birch Tree Wall* and *Lone Tree Groove*. The first move really needs one of those wacky warning signs: 'Get ready to jump!' Nowadays a 'dyno', in 1949 I had a 'magic' foothold which made such antics unnecessary: it was called Tony Moulam's head. Watching a young lad called Bernie do the route recently, I noted that even with the assortment of gear he managed to fiddle into the narrow crack that follows the hard start, none would hold a 'flier' from higher up.

On the steeply-sloping ramp that follows a thin step up, Bernie started to falter. I knew his problem only too well: on the first ascent, my rubbers had started to 'treadmill', slowly but continuously. Panicking, I had yelled for Moulam to go round with the rope. But just as he got round near the top of *Lone Tree Gully*, I had to make my move. It was 'a damned close run thing', as the saying goes. Bernie made the same commitment and then looked down at me. "You've done this bugger before," he called.

"Well," I replied shyly, "the last time was ages ago when climbers usually wore rubbers and I followed its second ascent." Still looking down, Bernie smiled and said: "The bloke who led the first one in rubbers must have been a bloody nutcase." I didn't answer him then; but when I last did *Demon Rib* at the age of sixty five, wearing sticky rubber boots, I remembered his words and simply had to agree with him.

The Good Lads Always Have Two (A Personal View of the Rock & Ice)

Don Roscoe

I started rock-climbing at the age of 15 with my school friend Eric Price. There was no formal instruction to be had in those days and we learned by trial and error and watching other people. Ropework was rudimentary to say the least and kit was minimal: an old sisal rope, old clothes and a pair of thin leather boots, nailed with hobnails and steel toe and heel plates. There was only one climbing shop in Manchester — Brigham's little shop in Conran Street; in any case, as working class lads just leaving school, we had little money. I made my first karabiner by bending a piece of quarter-inch mild steel into an oval with the ends overlapping to form a slot into which the rope could be inserted. Fortunately, this karabiner was not called upon to hold any falls before it was replaced by an ex-army one. Thus attired, we set out to discover rock-climbing and along with Alan Taylor we formed a climbing trio which lasted for many years.

Alan was about 6' 2" and had the biggest feet I have ever seen, taking



Don Roscoe on an early ascent of The Mincer, The Roaches. Photo: Roscoe Collection

size 14 boots. When, several years later, he paid his first visit to Chamonix, he went into Schnell Sports to buy a pair of Terray boots and Msr. Schnell looked at his feet and asked him if he would have two pairs of sevens. Surprisingly, Alan was very good on delicate routes; to see him lead a route such as the very thin and unprotected *Dorothy's Dilemma* on the Roaches in his huge bendy boots was awe-inspiring. Climbing in boots was the norm then, rather than the exception and climbs were graded for nailed boots.

A route considered too hard for boots would be graded 'VS rubbers' or perhaps 'Hard VS rubbers, but

not easy of this class'. Rubbers meant gym shoes and the best money could buy were to be had from Marks & Spencer. They had thin black rubber soles and cost the princely sum of four shillings and six pence (23p).

I started with one karabiner and sling, which remained more or less permanently round my waist. One day we were travelling out to Greenfield on the bus and we met a lad who asked if he could join us as his mate had not turned up. This lad was Les Wright and his mate, we later discovered, was Don Whillans. Les was physically a full size version of Don. In his army paybook was written 'exceptional physique' but Les, unlike Don, was a mild and gentle person, very slow to take offence. On the day we first climbed with Les we noticed that he carried two karabiners and slings, one round his waist and the other round his neck. Neither saw much use during the day and over a pot of tea while waiting for the bus home I asked him why he had two. "Oh," he said modestly, "the good lads always have two." The next week Eric and I both went out and bought a second krab and sling.

As we walked out to catch the bus to go climbing we had to cross a 'croft' — a patch of waste ground resulting from the war-time bombing. Often we would come across two sets of tricouni nail footprints and we would speculate as to who had made them. Eventually, we did meet up with the two climbers, who turned out to be Ray Greenall and Ronnie Moseley. It transpired that Ray lived about half a mile away from us and Ronnie actually lived in the street opposite mine, only two or three hundred yards away. Both became firm friends. Ray was renowned as the best second in the world. In the event of a leader fall — a far more serious matter in those days of sparse protection — he could be relied upon never to let go of the rope. His reputation was really made when he sustained serious rope burns to both hands and forearms while holding Don Whillans in a fall from the crux of *Peapod* on Curbar Edge, breaking his fall sufficiently to land him gently and unharmed on the ground. He also had other most useful attributes, as we shall see.



Joe Brown and Don Roscoe on Peapod
Photo: Roscoe Collection

Ron Moseley was a brilliant, if somewhat erratic, climber with *The Left Wall* (of *Cenotaph Corner*) and *White Slab* on Cloggy among his major first

ascents. He was also a first class commercial artist, probably the only white collar worker in the early years of the Rock and Ice. At the time of this meeting the embryonic Rock and Ice was coalescing from the Manchester



Joe Brown: 'Arms like a gorilla and teeth like tombstones...'

Photo: Roscoe Collection

element of the Valkyrie and other disparate climbing teams such as ourselves, the Greenall brothers (Ray and Pete) and the Salford-based Don Whillans and Les Wright.

Eventually, the club consisted of about fourteen of us with two major things in common: we were all fanatical rock-climbers and we climbed to a high standard. The Valkyrie was formed in the mid 1940s by a group of mainly Derby-based climbers. This club had a fairly short existence and petered out about 1949, but from its ashes the Rock and Ice emerged in 1951. The Rock and Ice had a mainly Manchester-area membership including, from the Valkyrie, Joe Brown, Slim Sorrell and also the Derby-based Nat Allen. Although officially a club the Rock and Ice was in reality a close-knit group of friends and consequently obtaining membership was not easy if the prospective member was not known to and approved of by the majority of members. Doug Belshaw was the first secretary and held this post for many years. No-one ever paid fees, so a treasurer was unnecessary and as no-one wished to be president this office was drawn from a hat at the annual dinner. Once a member had been a president his name was no longer included in the draw.

Joe Brown, at the age of twenty one, was already becoming a legendary figure with many hard routes on grit to his name including such classics as *The Right Unconquerable* and *Brown's Eliminate* — the first ascent of which was led by Joe in nails. He was also starting to make his mark on the Welsh climbing scene with his impressive first ascents of *Diglyph* and *Vember* on Cloggy and *Hangover* on the Grochan. Even at this stage many rumours circulated about him, the most popular being that he had very long gorilla-like arms and fingers like bunches of sausages. Lack of transport kept us confined to Derbyshire for most weekends; places further afield were reserved for longer holidays. However, there was plenty to keep us going on the grit and it was here, on the fierce gritstone cracks, that Joe perfected the hand jamming techniques which were to open up a new era of British rock-climbing in the 50s and early 60s.

Joe was always Alan Taylor's great hero in the early days and I would



*Don Whillans on the first ascent of
The Cromlech Girdle, April 1956.
Photo: Roscoe Collection*

dismiss him by saying that it was all brute strength. This view was dispelled on the very first occasion on which I saw Joe climb. He was leading the very delicate *Great Slab* on Froggatt and just made it look so easy that I became an instant convert.

The other truly great climber in the Rock and Ice was, of course, Don Whillans. For quite a long time his genius was overshadowed by that of Joe, but in fact there was very little to choose between them. Don was built like a miniature Charles Atlas and really did have arms like a gorilla; there was no appreciable thinning at the wrist, the solid muscle just merging into the hand. This forearm development was a result of his apprenticeship as a pipe fitter which involved much tightening of huge nuts on large pipes. Don, too,

was surrounded by legend —most of which centred around his ability as a fighter, but in the many years of our friendship I never once saw him hit anybody. Usually a threat was sufficient, thanks to the legends. Like Joe he revelled in steep and strenuous cracks and overhangs but he too was equally at home on delicate routes. Don had his own ways of inspiring confidence. The first time I tried to lead *Right Unconquerable* Don was watching while I made a half-hearted attempt and retreated to assess the situation. To demonstrate that I was making a fuss about nothing Don, who was wearing shoes with very thick crepe rubber soles commonly known as 'brothel creepers', proceeded to solo the route with ease.

Both Joe and Don were past masters at appearing to be completely relaxed in the most difficult situations, often resting or arranging runners in places where the second would find himself desperately trying to stay in contact with the rock while removing them. Not that there were all that many runners to be had in those days; nuts had not been thought of in the 50s, consequently runners could only be placed on natural spikes and threads. These were often in short supply so we did not need many karabiners and slings. Eventually, someone hit upon the idea of inserting chockstones as runners and we started to carry suitable small stones around in our pockets. Small pieces of gritstone had a tendency to crumble and so, on our infrequent visits to Wales, we would collect a selection of igneous pebbles.

I often wondered what future geologists would make of these pebbles lodged in the millstone grit.

Discussing pebbles reminds me of what I consider to be one of Don Whillans's most daring leads. Going out to do the *Left Wall* of *Cenotaph Corner* he discovered that he had left most of his gear at home. Nothing daunted he set off carrying three karabiners and slings and a hammer and a couple of pegs. *Left Wall* in those days relied heavily on aid and high on the wall, where one starts to traverse towards the arete, Don found himself standing in one sling round a pea-sized pebble with another sling round his neck and the rope hanging free to the ground a hundred feet below him while he tried to place the third sling round an equally small pebble. At this point he realised that the pebble supporting him was beginning to crumble and quickly hammered in one of his pegs, which stayed there for many years.

It was not long before several groups of climbers began to experiment with artificial chockstones. In the Rock and Ice, Ray Greenall, trained as an aircraft fitter, was our star metalworker and he filed out the threads from a variety of nuts and other objects. We usually carried several of these on one sling. From this point it was but a short step to purpose-made nuts but it was quite a long time before the first good one appeared. In about 1966 while John Brailsford and I were lecturing at Loughborough, he designed the nut which was to become the famous 'Moac'. We got a keen craft student to cast a dozen of these nuts in a sand mould and we split them between us. Some we filed down to give a nut half the thickness of the original, which, with its very shallow taper, became a universal favourite. The advent of good nut protection set the stage for another leap forward in rock-climbing standards, but that is another story.

The ever resourceful Ray Greenall was also responsible for the Rock and Ice ceremonials. It was Ray who made and awarded the famous 'Brewmaster Certificate'. This certificate was awarded to outstanding tea makers and was traditionally written on the back of a Woodbine cigarette packet. He also made the Iron Cross, the highest Rock and Ice award for valour, awarded for taking a long leader fall without screaming. I won this award outright one cold, February day with a ninety-foot fall when my numb fingers uncurled from the very top of *Cenotaph Corner*. This fall left me slightly bruised around the waist, as we did not have harnesses then, but otherwise unharmed.

Ray also crafted beautiful alloy pegs for our aid-climbing sessions. One day at Stanage, Ray's talents for improvisation really came into their own. When he came to erect his tent he discovered that his tent poles were six inches longer than they were the previous week. Obviously there had been some sort of a mix up but, nothing deterred, Ray produced a hacksaw and took six inches off the bottom sections of his poles. He had just got his tent nicely erected to his satisfaction when Charlie Vigano, the only man ever to be a member of both the Rock and Ice and the Creag Dhu,

arrived and said: "Oh, by the way, Ray, we got our tent poles mixed up last week." Shortly afterwards, Ray was to be seen putting his engineering skills to further use in cutting and fixing short lengths of tree branch to Charlie's poles. Much of our gear was modified or home-made and Ray and Pete Greenall did not endear themselves to their mother when she discovered the sleeves missing from her fur coat: they had been taken to make much needed hats and gloves.

It is not possible to introduce all the early members of the Rock and Ice in an article of this length; legendary characters such as Harry Smith and Nat Allen merit articles in their own right. However, no account of the Rock and Ice would be complete without a mention of Morty. One day my mother said that a neighbour's son was interested in rock-climbing, and would I take him out. I correctly interpreted my mother's request as a command and the lad was duly taken out.

Joe Brown asked him what his name was and he said "Joe Smith." To which Joe replied: "We can't have two Joes in the club; you're Mortimer." And the name stuck. An amusing incident occurred very late one night when Joe and Morty were returning from a winter weekend armed with ice axes and looking decidedly disreputable. As they walked through central Manchester they were stopped and questioned by a policeman. "What's your name?" he asked Joe.

"Joe Brown," came the reply.

"And what's yours?"

"Joe Smith," replied Morty. The policeman looked at them thoughtfully for a moment and then said: "It doesn't matter to me if you don't tell me your right names you know."

Morty had the difficult task of holding his own in a group of very competent climbers who did not see themselves in the role of nursemaid. Like many teenagers he was incredibly clumsy and while he learned the 'ropes' we also learned to avoid disasters by keeping boiling billies of water and other potential sources of mayhem well out of his range. Fortunately he had a great sense of humour — which was virtually a prerequisite of Rock and Ice membership — and he was very strong and a quick learner.

His confidence and resourcefulness became evident when he hitched to Chamonix with £16 in his pocket for a fortnight holiday. While there he purchased the obligatory pair of Terray boots (£7) and returned home with £2 in his pocket. Soon he was leading the fierce gritstone classics and appeared all set to be a top class leader but an unfortunate accident put paid to his aspirations. While trying out a friend's motor cycle and side car combination, (tricky to drive if you are not used to them), he lost control of it outside Plas y Brenin and fractured his femur on one of the iron posts which used to surround the garages. This accident effectively marked the end of a very promising rock-climbing career.

Winter for the Rock and Ice meant business as usual; rock-climbing interspersed with long walks and some snow and ice work. Skiing was to-

tally frowned upon as a sport for sissies. Basically, we could not afford even the simple ski gear of the day and I am sure that this coloured our view of the sport to a great extent. Though to be fair we were totally obsessed by rock-climbing. Winter was, in fact, the ideal time to practise aid climbing with an eye to the big alpine routes. Until we started to attempt aid routes on Derbyshire and Yorkshire limestone, nobody had attempted any serious aid climbing in Britain or faced the challenge of the overhanging limestone crags.

To attempt an aid climb we had to pool all our gear to enable the leader to tackle a long pitch and the subsequent sort-out at the end of the weekend was when the day was really won or lost. This gear sort-out led to everyone purchasing name stamps with which to stamp karabiners and other valuables. The simple idea of coloured insulation tape did not occur to us at the time. Much of our gear was home made: Ray made his lovely, alloy pegs at work; Joe had a batch of wrought iron pegs made by a blacksmith; I made wooden wedges and etrier rungs from oak and we also improvised with various lumps of metal of suitable shape to be hammered into cracks. At first we did not use etriers and clipped a sling to each peg but quickly discovered the disadvantages of this system.

Winter was also the social season. The nights were longer and climbing was not pursued quite so rigorously although we did have sudden inspirations which could easily lead to demanding situations. One such occasion occurred one winter evening, just about dusk. We were ensconced in our winter quarters, 'The Grand Hotel', which some of you will know as the cave formed by a huge rectangular boulder below Stanage Wall End area, when it was suggested that we go out and climb *Goliath's Groove* alpine style. A party of about five or six of us assembled at the foot, Joe leading in nails. I think Ron Moseley, Doug Belshaw, Eric Price, myself and maybe Don Whillans made up the remainder of the team. We roped up a few feet apart and set off each carrying a few coils. When we were well strung out up the crack there came an ominous scraping and a shower of sparks from the crucial overhanging section where Joe, barely visible in the gloom, was having a little trouble staying in contact with the rock. I had visions of the headlines 'Climbers Die in Alpine Tragedy on Stanage Edge', but fortunately Joe was equal to the task and we all arrived safely on the top to feel our way down in the dark.

On another occasion, staying this time in the Roaches barn, someone suggested that we go and bivvy under the *Sloth* (all these epics seemed to be centred around misguided practice for the Alps). Eventually, Ron Moseley, Pete Greenall and I left the comforts of the barn and climbed the first pitch of *Pedestal Route* to the ledge beneath the *Sloth*. Pete and I opted for sitting on the broader part of the ledge and Ronnie lay down on the narrow part with the rope tied around the outside of his sleeping bag. It was certainly a good introduction to how long and cold a bivouac can be and the winter's night passed very slowly indeed only briefly enlivened when Ronnie

fell off the ledge with about four feet of slack in his belay and had to be hauled back aboard as, with his hands tucked inside his sleeping bag, he was unable to help himself. At first light we lost no time in finishing the route and heading back to the home comforts of the barn.

One of the great unsung heroes of the club was Nat Allen. He was full of fun and always willing to pass on his vast experience of climbing to others. We always looked forward to hearing his cheerful "Eh up youth, how's it going?" as he arrived at the weekend venue. Nat, being a member of Derby Mercury cycling club provided our entré into the social event of the year: the Derby Mercury Bonfire and Pantomime held on the nearest Saturday to bonfire night at Ilam Youth Hostel. This riotous affair was followed, on the Sunday morning, by the Dovedale Dash, a cross country run of about five miles. The competitors would line up outside Ilam Hall, many with a sausage 'butty' in one hand and a cigarette in the other. There was some rivalry between the fitter participants but basically it was a fun event intended to shake off the cobwebs from the revelries of the previous evening. Inevitably, and unfortunately, fit-looking chaps with smart running vests soon started to appear on the scene and when the first six places began to be filled by international cross country runners the event started to lose interest for climbers.

As we became more affluent we began to acquire motorcycles and eventually old vans and cars. There are probably more stories about the motorcycling epics of the Rock and Ice and of the Cromlech Club, with whom we have always had a very close relationship, than there are of our rock-climbing exploits. Fortunately the roads were considerably quieter back in the 50s and few of our accidents were serious. No longer reliant on public transport, weekend visits to Wales and the Lakes became possible. Consequently the motorbike era heralded a flurry of new routes further afield. The Alps were also much more accessible and for our early alpine ventures we had to equip ourselves with state of the art survival gear: ladies' plastic macs (only ladies' macs had hoods). Ray Greenall relates the story of travelling out to the Alps with Fred (Count Fred Neddygough) Gough, The first proud Rock and Ice owner of a car. Fred would drive all day and on arrival at a camp site would consider his day's work to be done, pick up a book and read while Ray made camp and started the meal. After a day or two of this routine Ray decided that a change was due. As Fred picked up his book Ray handed him the water bucket and told him to get some water. Fred looked up stricken, total surprise and horror written across his face, and said plaintively: "What, me? I don't speak the bloody lingo!"

Trips to the Alps were always a great adventure: Eric Price, on his first trip to the Alps, found himself with Joe, Nat and Don, climbing as two ropes in a party of four attempting the first British ascent of the *North Face* of the Grand Charmoiz. Eric, a strong and gifted climber but with a preference for seconding, is normally quiet and reserved. On this occasion, very much overawed by the situation, he was staying very quiet indeed and said virtu-



Brown's and Britain's most famous climber
Rusty Baillie near the top of
Cerotaph Corner. Photo: John Cleare

ally nothing throughout the first day and the subsequent bivouac high on the face. On the second day conditions quickly started to deteriorate but the team pressed doggedly on. Don was leading across steep *névé* when Eric, uttering his first words of any note in two days, shouted across: "Hey, are you keen on this?" at which both teams turned and retreated to the valley.

Nothing is to be gained from listing the achievements of the Rock and Ice in Britain or abroad: many are already well-known and virtually all are to be found in the new routes sections of the guidebooks. In this article I have endeavoured to convey the fun and joy of being a young rock-climber in the 50s when rock-climbing as we now know it was just in its infancy. J.M.Edwards, a climber way ahead of his time, had already pointed the way with his audacious routes on The Three Cliffs. Peter Harding, ably assisted by Tony Moulam, pushed the standard in the 40s and re-introduced the grade Extremely Severe for the first time since the Abraham brothers graded rock-climbs Easy, Moderate and Extremely Severe (a system which holds a great deal of merit). With these examples of what was possible, the Rock and Ice arrived on the scene, spearheaded by Joe and Don and with the collective ability to take climbing into a new era. The rest is history.

Rock-Climbing in Wales and the South West in the 60s

Ken Wilson

Readers of the erstwhile *Mountain* and books like *Cold Climbs* will be familiar with my penchant for lists. This is a habit that I picked up from the German magazine *Alpinismus* which examined all aspects of mountaineering in a range of seductive tabulations. Another notable example of the list is the Halliwell film guide with its star ratings — a procedure that Audrey Salkeld, Rosie Smith and I utilized in the fiction omnibus *One Step in the Clouds*. The problem with stars and lists is when people treat them as definitive: at best they can claim to be merely an indicator of possible quality — crude and shamelessly subjective — but they do have value in arousing new areas of interest and rekindling curiosity about old themes, be it climbs, films, music or novels. It was therefore natural that I should resort to the list as a device for giving myself a quick teach-in when I was asked to summarise the 60s for the recent Centenary junketings.

I decided at the outset to concentrate on the hard climbing that took place. Obviously, there were many other aspects of the Club's history that also merited attention, not least its political and organisational turmoil, but these were minor details. I believed that this was a momentous decade in the evolution of Welsh climbing that had widespread reverberations around the country. At the time, it was difficult to place things in perspective but it is now clear that the discovery and development of Gogarth and South Stack added a tremendous new vigour to British climbing at a critical moment. At the time we were aware that something important was happening, but unclear about just how important it would prove to be. To select explorations that were initiated solely by CC members was also invidious — it is surely the Club's task to stay in touch with each new generation of activists, not the other way round? As it happened most, but not all, of the key pioneers of the decade became members of the club, but then, as now, strenuous efforts had to be made to attract into the club (as one of the key institutions of the climbing world) a significant proportion of each new generation of activists.

Welsh climbing had received a massive boost during the 50s by the attentions of Joe Brown, Don Whillans and others from the Rock and Ice. They in turn had followed and greatly expanded the achievements of the gritstone-trained Peter Harding, who counterpoised, in the Peak and Wales, the perhaps even more important dynamic provided by Arthur Dolphin in Yorkshire and the Lakes. Any study of climbing history cannot fail to conclude that each of these pioneers was building (some with dominant skill and confidence, others less so) on traditions that went right back to Haskett-

Smith, Owen-Glynne-Jones, Archer-Thompson and their contemporaries at the very beginnings of rock-climbing in Britain. To highlight the 60s in this empirical development is therefore somewhat arbitrary, but my studies led me to conclude that perhaps it was indeed a decade of major significance in which the bold exploratory endeavours of all those previous generations reached a climax. Once good protection techniques had been perfected a totally different era followed — less impressed with on-sight pioneering of major lines and far more preoccupied with technical difficulty, often on quite unassuming cliffs that would barely have merited attention in earlier eras. The 60s may thus come to be seen as the final, busy, frenetic and somewhat untidy end to what we might usefully title the 'Exploratory Era'.

In this survey I have concentrated on the traditional CC guidebook areas plus other regions that seemed naturally linked. Peak activity on either Grit or Limestone is not studied and sandstone climbing and the Dartmoor Tors are similarly left out. Clearly, all these outcrop genres played a major part in training those who went to the bigger cliffs, but in those days the perceived commitment involved in tackling the bigger cliffs was far greater — although harder climbs were done on the outcrops, they were thought less serious at a time of rudimentary protection as a hastily arranged top rope could usually be supplied to get a leader out of difficulty. Nevertheless, very high levels of gritstone expertise had been achieved by the end of the 50s and Peak and Yorkshire Limestone was poised to emerge from its aid-climbing beginnings to a semi-aided interregnum that finally flowered into such climbs *Sirplum*, *Carnage*, *Debauchery* and the momentous *Our Father*.

My review, dictated to some degree by what I could easily discuss and illustrate in a lecture format, thus left out the Peak and concentrated on Wales and the South West. Indeed this article should be treated as a transitional comment as others will doubtless have much to add.

I scoured the guidebooks and tried to identify the really key routes, selecting those that seemed to push forward standards of difficulty or audacity, but also those that opened up new areas of possibility (John Cleare and John Rees-Jones making the first formal rock climb in Pembroke for example, and Cleare again, this time with Rusty Baillie adding a modern spin to the A.W. Andrews sea-level girdle craze with *Magical Mystery Tour* at Torbay). Years later we are less interested in the standard pushers and more interested in the discoveries of cliffs, styles and climbs of real quality (Drummond and Pearce's *A Dream of White Horses* having steadily gained in stature despite its modest difficulty).

One point that caught my attention was that 1966 was a very big year with a host of major climbs pioneered in all the main areas by ambitious teams. Is it merely a coincidence that this was also the year when the 'swinging 60s' reached its zenith of confidence in Britain (in fashion, music, films, literature and of course sport — with the World Cup success)?

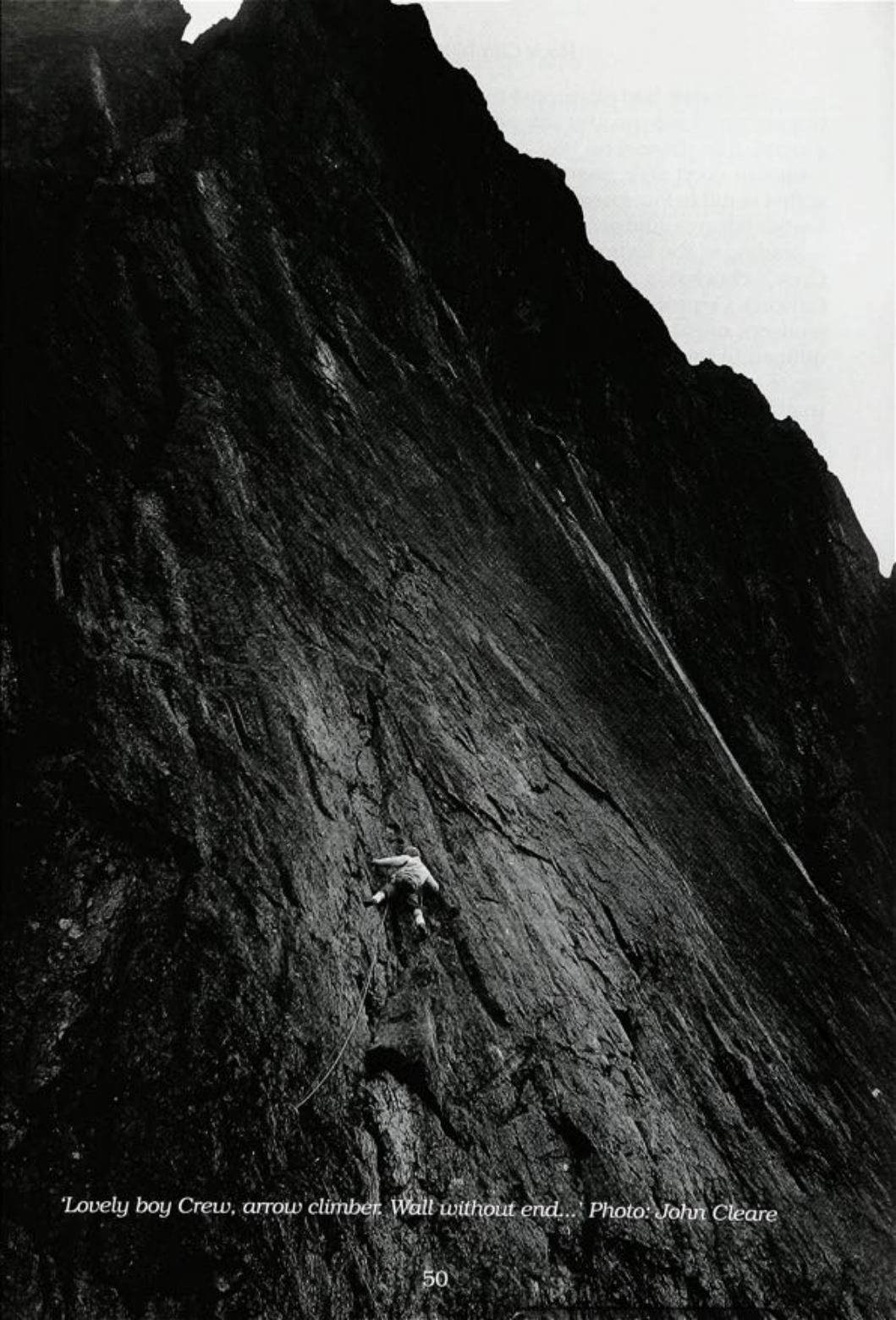
After the Centenary dinner my list received careful scrutiny from Frank Cannings and Pat Littlejohn who made a number of suggestions — Pat prompting the addition of *Vulture* on Cilan Head — a climb he felt to have particular significance. The list begins with a quick summary of the highlights of 1959 in Wales — a very dry summer (hence the attention to Creag y Rhaeadr) during which ambitious young climbers repeated many of the main climbs of the Rock and Ice period. It was also the point where the Cloggy walls came under scrutiny, future trends being indicated by Hughie Banner's important lead of *Troach*. All the climbs that were done free at the outset are underlined. It will be noted that most of the harder climbs employed some aid. It is important to differentiate here between aid that genuinely had to be pulled on to overcome a hard section, and aid placed to consolidate an advance on a loose or overgrown route, or where decent protection was obviously essential prior to further difficulties. With climbs being, in general, pioneered from ground up such aid was often inevitable. A good example was on *Dinosaur* where, once the second pitch had been fully cleaned up, free ascents soon became the norm, but in the loose state encountered on the first ascent the pioneers had to climb and clean as they proceeded and the cleaning had, perforce, to take place from an anchorage of a solid piton. The same might be said of *Central Park*, an overgrown route that involved much pioneering effort but became, after a few ascents, relatively easy.

The degree to which aid was employed in those days was nevertheless a very serious and contentious matter that invoked much debate. Later commentators have given the impression that this was an essentially unethical period. I do not believe this was true. With big and dangerous cliffs to climb with only rudimentary equipment, the traditional British desire to climb ethically was still widely respected. There had been a national crash course in aid climbing (practising for the Dolomites), but this had taken place mainly on agreed limestone cliffs. Everywhere else climbers did their best to climb ethically — though then, as now — there were a few who chose to ignore ethical rectitude. Sometimes this was because they lacked the requisite skills, but more often because of a stubborn desire to act differently, striking what they mistakenly believed to be 'modern' or 'anti-establishment' attitudes.

There were also the ultra purists like Dave Bates who contended that if Harding had not used aid on *Spectre* and *Ivy Sepulchre*, they would have been climbed free by Brown, and that if Brown had not used aid on *Cenotaph Corner* it would have been climbed free by Crew, Ingle or Boysen etc. In practice, on such steep cliffs and with the poor protection techniques that existed at that time, these views though shiningly laudable were, perhaps, a trifle unrealistic. New-route ambition was intense and all we could ask was that our most able climbers did their best to make the big first ascents in the best possible style in order to retain some link to the purist ethos demonstrated by the likes of Kirkus, Edwards and Birtwistle.

Joe Brown had attempted to put a limit on pitons by his no more than two per pitch dictum and this was seen as giving a clear ethical lead. As a general rule those who had not led most of the main existing test-piece routes in good style were thought to be seriously out of order if they resorted to aid to force new climbs. This tended to award the top climbers free licence (always guided by the Brown doctrine) to do what they thought best — leading to the Banner lasso and peg on *Troach*, Brown's aid on *Trango*, Crew's chockstoning activities on *Great Wall* and crisis management on Cidwm's *Central Wall* and the Boysen tactics on *The Skull*. Whether these pioneers might have tried harder and done their climbs in better style is difficult to say. At the time their climbs were not repeated easily thus tending to indicate a creditable degree of effort. Protection points were another matter. The odd protection piton was frowned on but tolerated, whereas Crew's placing of a protection bolt on *The Boldest* was thought (by the many observers) justified in view of the manifest danger of the lead, though others (notably Austin) considered it a highly retrograde step. Subsequent critics of this have failed to note that the better protection discovered later was excavated by Cliff Phillips while protected from above by the bolt runner and that Ed Grindley's bolt-free ascent came at a time when the nature of technical difficulties above the bolt site had become reasonably well known.

In the 60s those who embarked on pioneering activity who were not seen to be in the top rank (having failed to impress on the main testpieces) had to be on their best behaviour. An excellent example was Lew Brown whose *Crucifix* on Dinas Cromlech was thought a notable achievement by a climber who had previously been seen merely as a worthy chorus member. When their routes involved considerable aid, they were less well-regarded. An exception was *The Groove* on Llech Ddu where the overgrown and powerful character of the project was felt to have justified the aid, though it might not have been so kindly received if it had been on Cloggy (or, possibly, had the pioneers been less well-known). Other notable lines on Tremadog and in the Pass were considered prematurely 'forced' by climbers who were perceived as lacking the necessary ability. These climbs held scant cachet, and there was little protest when the subsequent free ascenders used re-naming to indicate a snub and rejection of the earlier flawed ascent. Such snubs had to be very precisely and fairly applied to gain acceptance as shown by the recently revived *Black Mamba/Times Past* controversy. A compulsive pioneer who (in the mid 60s) had not been seen to dismiss the main existing testpieces was Rowland Edwards. His big Cloggy climbs were so big and bold that they silenced critics (e.g. *Mynedd*) but his employment of a bolt ladder on the West Buttress mega-girdle was considered crassly untraditional and unsuitable. Rowland has of course continued a climbing career studded with similar mixed notices. Doug Scott was a Peak limestone pioneer whose appearance using aid on the main Gogarth new route scene was criticised. His subsequent 'conquest' of the hard aid climbs of *Parliament Cave Overhang* and *The Scoop* of Strone Ulladale was thought a



'Lovely boy Crew, arrow climber. Wall without end....' Photo: John Cleare

far more constructive use of his audacity and talent. Jack Street was similarly thought 'out of order' for his use of etrier rungs on *Citadel*, whereas his involvement on *Vulture* (as Littlejohn has now indicated) is attracting belated rave notices and of course his *Adjudicator Wall* in Derbyshire was later a very important event.

Tony Willmott was another whose ambition and audacity was marked by an excess of neo aid-climbing at the start but whose later climbs indicated a maturing talent that was sadly cut short by his early death. Willmott was one of a number of pioneers who were mainly active in the South West at that time. There was an isolated group tackling the low but extensive and very serious sea cliffs at Swanage. Army and Bristol University teams were among those at work on Avon Gorge. Peter Biven was the mentor of a small but very powerful team of Torbay activists who also made contributions in Cornwall, ending the lull that followed *Bow Wall* and the great Royal Marine advances of the 50s. Lundy and Pembroke and their first tentative discoveries, Wintour's Leap in the Wye Valley and Cheddar Gorge also saw some notable activity with Chris Bonington's lead of *Coronation Street* being another startling example of his amazing ability to be involved in major climbs in a wide range of locations. Nor should we forget the activities in Central Wales where the Mountain Club hut in Cwm Cowarch formed a base for Cloggy-style activities on the local cliffs.

Apart from Willmott, the deaths of Laurie Holliwell and John Clements also robbed the climbing world of two highly innovative climbers at the peak of their powers. It is interesting to speculate what they might have achieved, in sprightly competition with the likes of Ed Drummond, Ray Evans, Pat Littlejohn, Rowland Edwards and Frank Cannings, had they remained on the scene.

The main historical commentary on this period is currently provided by the Trevor Jones's and Geoff Milburn's book *Welsh Rock*. This gives a generally critical assessment on the achievements of the 60s, implying that many of the climbs employed excessive aid that was subsequently removed by the better trained and motivated pioneers of the 70s. I feel that this may be a trifle simplistic assessment of what was actually quite a subtly evolving scene that involved many pioneering performances of real distinction. Climbers had to battle through the early years of rudimentary nut runners which appeared to give them access to steeper cliffs but, in practice, were slow to place securely. The result was that having struggled to establish secure protection climbers were often then forced to use it for resting. The later appearance of good wired nuts and Friends greatly facilitated more rapid placing of protection and thus allowed a better standard of performance. It is also important to understand that the ground-up ethic (without pre-cleaning) was also a prevailing theme and as a result climbers frequently had to contend with areas of loose rock and vegetation during their ascents.

By the 70s, the practice of pre-inspection and cleaning had become more prevalent. This, of course, gave first ascensionists a preview of the

difficulties and, more important, the protection possibilities — such advance knowledge greatly facilitating bolder performances. Given the ground-up ethic and the rudimentary protection I believe that the main 60s pioneers put in some very notable performances, though, as some less than satisfactory efforts were mixed in, the undiscerning observer could gain the impression that the whole 60s repertoire was flawed.

The Jones/Milburn commentary was particularly harsh in its assessment of the pioneering Anglesey climbers: Joe Brown and Pete Crew, for example, came in for heavy criticism for the use of what is termed aid on the first ascent of *Dinosaur* leaving the impression that this was a flawed and premature ascent that later pioneers might have done better.

This, I feel, is a misleading oversimplification. The *Dinosaur* ascent appeared to me (as an observer) to be a *tour de force* of determined climbing in the face of daunting difficulties. Aid was employed but merely to consolidate each advance and provide a secure base for cleaning the loose blocks that typified much of the second pitch. Far from being a flawed ascent, I feel it should be hailed as one of the most important on-sight ascents on British rock in which two outstanding performers (with a critical audience) sought to excel in very intimidating circumstances. Similarly 'pushy' efforts were made by others (e.g. the Holliwells, Clements, Bell/Potts, Boysen/Williams/Jordan, Ingle, Perrin, Evans etc) and their achievements have, perhaps, been subsequently talked-down in a catch-all critique of the whole period. I have no doubt that the big Torbay, Swanage, Cilan Head, and Avon climbs had to contend with similar difficulties — steep ground, 5b/5c technical difficulties, loose rock and rudimentary protection— and the climbs of this ilk that are highlighted probably all deserve comparable credit.

Other factors that came in during the late 60s and early 70s should also be taken into account. Ropes evolved from hemp through to various thicknesses of nylon and PA-style footgear steadily replaced the kletterschuhe. The figure of eight abseiling device came in during the second half of the decade but harnesses and belay plates did not appear until the 70s. The appearance of chrome-moly pitons from America allowed far safer stances and runner points to be established where pitons were the only option. The ability to remain climbing fit during the winter months was a new factor made possible by the greater use of suitable cliffs like Tremadog, Avon Gorge, Swanage, the more sheltered Peak Limestone cliffs and, later, the Anglesey cliffs themselves. Climbing walls started to make an appearance in the late 60s adding to these training options.

Transport also improved through the decade. Hitch-hiking, motor bikes, mini-buses and club coaches were, for young climbers at least, the main transport options at the start of the decade but cars and vans became steadily more common as the economy improved. The final factor was better information as guidebooks appeared more regularly and monthly magazines became the norm. The Club also published a New Climbs Bulletin during the late 60s exploratory boom period, a publication that ironically

attracted a major hoax with scores of bogus climbs being added to the 1968 issue by one very ingenious dreamer. Writing this some thirty years after the events one cannot help but reflect on what has happened since. The 70s and 80s, with the huge improvements in equipment, knowledge, technique, fitness, transport and affluence, saw a spate of impressive climbing exploration during which our uniquely British sport, that tried to accept the cliffs on their own terms, perhaps reached its apotheosis in the main mountain and outcrop areas. I was lucky enough to be able to chronicle this period in *Mountain* and in a number of books.

In *Extreme Rock*, the appearance of the power drill and its attendant, sport climbing, was considered. The bolts were then being used to tackle very overhanging and crackless cliffs and thus allow some startling technical advances. It was observed at that time that though these climbs were manifestly impressive, elsewhere climbers surely had a duty to 'build' on the hard won traditions that had been fashioned by our predecessors going right back to Haskett-Smith and Archer-Thompson? Some fine climbers have clearly matched up to that responsibility and in areas of the country (e.g. Anglesey, Pembroke, Gritstone and the Outer Hebrides) there have been some very magnificent advances. Elsewhere the picture is far less heroic. There was a spell of puzzlement, as, like the citizens of Troy, the climbing world examined the sparkling new edifice of sport climbing (with its attendant bolting, safety, competitions, etc.) that had been rolled into its midst. Tentative developments took place in various quarries and places like Portland and Pen Trwyn to see what the beast had to offer.

Now on a growing number of areas, most notably a selection of natural limestone outcrops, there are a group of what we might politely call 'new route constructors' who equate 'progress' with the energetic application of the power drill — plastering the cliffs with bolts in a clear aim to plug every blank space between the normal rock climbs which are correspondingly polluted. Then, in the fullness of time, a follow-up process of sly retro-bolting on the established routes will doubtless follow along the lines established at Horseshoe Quarry. At the same time there are ominous developments in mountain training that seem likely to result in new pressures (matching those that rapidly swept France) to 'equip' the easier training routes in a similar manner. Climbing-wall managers also face problems thrown up by this type of climbing that might easily be solved by the application of proficiency certificates for all.

How mundane these activities seem when compared to the swash-buckling confidence of even the recent past. Are the sport climb constructors, the weasily pirate guidebook writers, the fellow-travelling journalists, the trainers, the competition organisers and their eager supporters and the climbing-wall managers to be accepted as the true apostles of things to come? It is for all of us to decide. Will the millennium mark the end of the meaningful history that we have all taken part in and enjoyed? Climbing appears poised to be steadily subsumed by a cancerous spread of the clip-

ping culture turning it into merely an extreme form of safe outdoor exercise, a sort of — in Pat Littlejohn's term — 'Theme Park' extension to athletics. 'Sex,' as Larkin observed, 'began in 1964'; will climbing end in 2000?

This is a bleak scenario, possibly over-pessimistic for very commendable adventurous activity is also taking place. Paradoxes are everywhere, confusing the picture, making the best future course unclear. We may be merely witnessing an 'evolution of tension', where the good is matched creatively against the bad, and where finally virtue will triumph. Yet I fear that the forces of virtue will, this time, be outnumbered by the massed ranks of safety mongers, good-sense merchants, those seeking commercial advantage, educationists, single-pitch leaders, opportunist guides and instructors, schools and outdoor centres, trendy advertisers, equipment manufacturers, deluded sport-for-all advocates, climbing-wall novices, insurers, litigators, parents of precocious competing prima-donnas, sponsors, landowners and local authorities. To this disparate alliance of vested interest and misplaced do-gooding should be added those from our own ranks who, after 'careful heart searching and much deliberation', will conclude that 'we have to come to terms with the inevitable march of progress'. They will look back with nostalgic respect to the great deeds of the past — the *Munich Climb* incident and the debolting of Pembroke, Cornwall and Lundy — they will make pious utterances about the inviolability of gritstone and give soothing assurances that the mountain crags will never be bolted; and then, having swathed themselves in these diaphanous ethical vestments, they will slide as imperceptibly as possible into the comfortable bed of sport climbing. All these, when the crunch comes, can be expected to bend in favour of an equipped and processed sport. Will this be how things evolve? Only time will tell.

1959 (a sampling in the Pass and on Cloggy)

Llanberis Pass

The Wall Joe Brown, Ginger Cain and Trevor Jones (1pt) FFA?

Chequered Wall Ginger Cain and Trevor Jones (AL)

Clogwyn D'ur Arddu

Woubits Left-Hand Joe Brown and Martin Boysen (3pts) FFA?

Gecko Groove Hugh Banner and Bob Beesley (1pt) FFA?

Troach Hugh Banner and Rodney Wilson (1pt) FFA?

1960

Tremadog/Hyll-Drem/Cidwm

Primus (2pts), *Leg Slip*, *First Slip* (1pt) FFAs? Joe Brown and Claude Davies

Dwm Joe Brown and Harry Smith AL (4pts) FFA?

Hardd Joe Brown, Geoff Roberts and Nev Drasdo (1pt) FFA?

Vector Joe Brown and Claude Davies (2pts) FFA?

Vertigo Joe Brown and Brian Wright (1pt) FFA?

The Wasp Joe Brown and Claude Davies (5pts) FFA?

Clogwyn D'ur Arddu

Hand Traverse Hugh Banner and Trevor Jones (1pt) FFA c.1968

1961

Tremadog

The Grasper Joe Brown and Dave Thomas bach (5pts)

The Fang Joe Brown and Claude Davies

The Neb Joe Brown and Dave Thomas bach

Nimbus Joe Brown and Colin Goodey (1pt)

The Plumb Ron James and Dave Yates (2pts)

Llanberis Pass

The Mole Joe Brown and E.D.G. Langmuir

Carneddau

The Groove Mo Anthoine and Ian Campbell (sundry aid) FFA?

Crafnant

Astoroth Baz Ingle and Paul Nunn (3pts) FFA c.1970s

Connie's Crack Ron James and Johnnie Lees (HVS/A2) FFA 1978

Clogwyn D'ur Arddu

Scorpio Jack Soper and Pete Crew (2pts) FFA 1968

Pinnacle Girdle Jack Soper and Pete Crew VL (some aid) FFA?

Serth Baz Ingle and Pete Crew AL (3pts) FFA 1968

Avon Gorge

Zombogies (4pts), *Lich* (1pt), *Maltravers Left* and *Right*,

Old Girdle Barry Annette and Mike Thompson

Lich Gates (5pts) Barry Annette and Gunn Clarke FFA?

Lundy

Gannet Front Jim Logan and Robin Shaw

A notable opening (HVS) to new-route exploration on the island.

Devil's Slide Keith Lawder and Jim Logan. The route that gave Lundy its early allure.

Cornwall

Excelsior Vivian Stevenson, Zeke Deacon (AL) and B Wake

Pembroke

Sea Groove John Rees Jones and John Cleare

The first new route in Pembroke (VS ★★) extending Cleare's earlier Gower explorations.

Rock-Climbing in Wales and the S.West in the 60s

1962

Castell Cidwm

Trango Joe Brown and Chris Bonington (several pts)

Clogwyn D'ur Arddu

The Shadow Pete Crew and Baz Ingle VL (1 pt) FFA?

Daurigol Baz Ingle and Martin Boysen AL (3pts) FFA 1971

Bow Right-Hand Jack Soper and Pete Crew AL

Haemagoblin Baz Ingle and Pete Crew VL (2pts) FFA 1970

Great Wall Pete Crew (unseeded) (6pts) FFA 1975

(with better gear, the aid was whittled down progressively from the early seventies).

Naddyn Ddu Pete Crew and Baz Ingle VL (2pts) FFA 1968

Llanberis Pass

Trauma Grooves Baz Ingle and Pete Crew AL (1pt)

Yellow Wall Dave Yates and Dave Potts

Epitaph Ron James and Mike Petrovsky (top-rope first, several pts) FFA 1965

Plexus Baz Ingle and Pete Crew, AL (2pts)

Swanage

Ashes and Diamonds Gunn Clarke and Peter Bell (2pts)

1963

Llanberis Pass

Tremolite(1pt), *Rosy Crucifixion* Pete Crew and Baz Ingle AL

Great Buttress Baz Ingle and Pete Crew AL (1pt) FFA 1964

Nexus Martin Boysen and Paul Nunn (1pt)

Gollum Barrie Webb, Al Harris and Vic Cowley (2pts) FFA 1966

Beorn Barrie Webb and Dave Ruby (1pt) FFA 1965

Cwm Idwal

Suicide Wall, Route 2 Pete Crew and Baz Ingle

Cwm Silyn

The Crucible Baz Ingle and Rodney Wilson (1 pt)

Clogwyn D'urArddu

West Buttress Eliminate Baz Ingle and Pete Crew AL

Gael Barrie Webb and Brian Griffiths (2pts)

Pinnacle Arête Martin Boysen and Colin Mortlock (3pts) FFA 1968

The Croak Dave Yates and R.Phillips (1pt)

The Boldest Pete Crew and Baz Ingle

(free but with 1 bolt for protection! Bolt removed in 1973, good protection for the crux having been located earlier).

Lundy

Albion Pete Biven, Vivian Stevenson (AL) and Clifford Fishwick

Swanage

Thunderball Peter Bell and Terry Goodfellow

1964

Carneddau

Griseofulvin Alan Bell and John Clements AL (1pt) FFA?

Clorus Marshall Reeves and Jack Ball (aided) FFA 1970s

Tremadog

Mangoletsi Hugh Banner and Baz Ingle (1pt) FFA 1977

Tensor Joe Brown and Claude Davies (2pts) FFA 1976

Pellagra Joe Brown, John Cheesmond and Kim Meldrum (2pts) FFA 1976

Diadic Eric 'Spider' Penman and Al Harris

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Zukator Pete Crew and Al Harris (7pts) FFA 1976

Castell Cidwm

Glwm John Clements and Alan Bell (some aid)

Cidwm Central Wall John Clements and Alan Bell (2pts) FFA 1977

Cwm Silyn

Desifinado Baz Ingle and Alan McHardy (1pt)

Anglesey

Gogarth Baz Ingle and Martin Boysen AL (1pt)

A bold, epoch-making, first route on the Anglesey Sea Cliffs.

Pentathol Pete Crew and Baz Ingle

Avon Gorge

Pink Wall Direct (4pts) Barry Annette and Chris Jones

The Corpse (1pt), *Kranz* (3pts), *Malambo* (1pt) Chris Jones with (variously) John Wooton, Jerry Lovatt, Dan Davis and Howard Bussey

Cheddar

Sceptre Direct Barry Annette and Mike White

Cornwall

Kafoozalem Frank Cannings and Pete Badcock (aid) FFA 1977

1965

Castell Cidwm

The Erg John Clements and Bob Beesley (5pts) FFA 1966/1980

Cidwm Girdle John Clements and Dave Potts (6pts) FFA 1983

Sexus Martin Boysen and Arthur Williams (3pts) FFA 1977

Llanberis Pass

Black Spring Martin Boysen and Arthur Williams

Black Foot Brian Fuller and Dave Alcock AL (1pt)

Gallt yr Ogof

Black Maria Martin Boysen, Arthur Williams and Dave Little

Cwm Idwal

Synapse Ray Evans and Tom Herley AL

Devil's Bastion Tom Herley and Dave Blythe (1pt)

Carneddau

Elliw and *Endor* John Clements and Alan Bell (4pts on the latter)

Plumbagin and *Great Corner* John Clements and Dave Potts (AL)

Clogwyn D'ur Arddu

Trapeze Tom Herley and Dave Blythe (3pts) FFA 1976

Avon Gorge

Malady Chris Jones and Jerry Lovatt (2pts) FFA?

Howard Howard Bussey and A. Livingstone (1pt) FFA?

Hell Gates (1pt) and *Earl of Perth* (1pt) Ed Drummond and Hugh Drummond

Cheddar

Coronation Street Chris Bonington, John Cleare and Tony Greenbank (2pts ?) FFA?

West Route Chris Jones and Bob Dearman (A2 - progressively freed 1974-8)

Wintour's Leap

King Kong Terry Taylor and C.Tanner

1966

Llanberis Pass

The Crucifix Lew Brown and Eric Jones

The Skull Martin Boysen, Arthur Williams and Judd Jordan (6pts) FFA 1974

Nexus Direct Pete Crew and Dave Alcock (4pts) FFA 1974

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Carneddau

Venom Laurie and Les Holliwell (1pt)

Crafnant

Phoenix John Ball and Marshall Reeves (HVS/A2) FFA 1980

Tremadog

Geireagle Rowland Edwards and J.Edwards (2pts) FFA?

Erebus Rowland Edwards and Dave Blythe (4pts) FFA 1976

Itch Laurie and Les Holliwell (1pt) FFA?

Carreg Hyll-Drem

The Burner Ray Evans and Ian Esplin

Poker Laurie and Les Holliwell

Cwm Silyn

Brutus Baz Ingle and George Barrow (3pts) FFA?

Eureka Laurie and Les Holliwell

Clogwyn du'r Arddu

Spartacus Rowland Edwards and Al Harris (5pts)

Mynedd Rowland Edwards, Ray Evans and Malcolm Eldridge (2pts + prussik)

Anglesey

The Rift Claude Davies and Al Coburn This triggered the Gogarth boom.

Heroin and *The Ramp* Pete Crew and Jancis Baldock

Fail Safe Pete Crew and Dave Alcock AL (1pt)

Wen Joe Brown and Martin Boysen AL

Central Park Pete Crew and Dave Alcock (6pts)

Cordon Bleu Geoff Birtles and Pete Crew

Winking Crack Joe Brown and Al Coburn (6pts)

Big Groove Pete Crew and Dave Alcock (1pt)

Dinosaur Joe Brown and Pete Crew AL (10pts) FFA 1980

Rat Race Malcolm Howells and Barry Whybrow (1pt)

(with contributions from Birtles, Brown, Crew, Jackson and others.)

Red Wall Joe Brown and Pete Crew

Wendigo Joe Brown and Tony Moulam

Mousetrap Joe Brown and Pete Crew (2pts, soon freed)

The Sind Joe Brown and Pete Crew

Resolution Pete Crew and Gerry Rogan (1pt)

Central Wales

Aardvark Martin Boysen, Arthur Williams and Dave Little

Avon Gorge

Preter, *White Elephant* (2pts), *The Equator* Ed Drummond and Oliver Hill

Last Slip (1 pt, FFA 1969), *Spinor* (3pts FFA 1979) Ed Drummond and Chris Woodhead
(both routes top-roped first!)

Wintour's Leap

Kangaroo Wall Fred Bennett and Paul Lennard (some aid)

Pembroke

Barad Barry Webb and C.Baker (the first major climb - HVS ★★★ on the north coast.)

1967

Carneddau

Scarface Laurie and Les Holliwell

Great Gully Wall Dave Potts and Martin Boysen AL (1pt)

Carreg Hyll-Drem

The Prow Ray Evans and Eric Jones (5pts) FFA 1983

Anglesey

Ormuzd Joe Brown, Geoff Birtles, Pete Crew (1 pt)

Britomartis Dave Alcock and Gerry Rogan

Nightride Joe Brown and Gerry Rogan

Mammoth Pete Crew and Ed Drummond (6pts) FFA 1973-1984

Left-Hand Red Wall Joe Brown and Pete Crew AL (2pts) FFA 1976

Strand Ed Drummond unseeded (1pt) FFA?

Yellow Scar and *Park Lane* Laurie and Les Holliwell

'The Great Gogarth Hoax' a number of suspect routes identified here and elsewhere.

Avon Gorge

Krapp's Last Tape Ed Drummond and Chris Woodhead

The Blik (1 pt), *Last Gasp* (1pt) FFA 1976 Ed Drummond, Chris Woodhead and P. Morgan (Drummond amassed 19 major new climbs and also showed a mastery for self advertisement during his three years at Bristol.)

Lundy

Stingray J.Barraclough and M.J.Leutchford

(The hardest of the 56 Lundy new routes in the '60s - mostly modest and exploratory.)

Portland

Vesuvius Bob Shepton and Steve Jones

(The first route on Portland - a tough VS with no bolts!)

Torbay

Moonraker Pete Biven and Pat Littlejohn AL

Barbican Frank Cannings and Pete Biven (5pts) FFA 1977

Magical Mystery Tour Rusty Baillie and John Cleare

(Sea-level girdling moves from Swanage to Torbay and thence to Anglesey)

Cornwall

Boldfinger Frank Cannings and J.Davis

1968

Llech Ddu

Herostratus Laurie and Les Holliwell (3pts) FFA 1978 also *Skid Row*, *Gytrack* and *Cupid's Inspiration*

Cwm Silyn

Codswallop Ray Evans - unseeded (1pt)

Anglesey

Deygo Tom Proctor and Geoff Birtles (5pts) FFA 1973

Hypodermic Laurie and Les Holliwell (1pt) FFA?

A Dream of White Horses Ed Drummond and Dave Pearce

Quartz Icicle Ed Drummond and Ben Campbell Kelly

Spider's Web Joe Brown and Pete Crew (c.3pts)

Citadel Jack Street and Gordon Hibberd (9pts) (also involving Geoff Birtles and Brian Molyneux) FFA 1977

Cilan Head

Vulture Jack Street and Chris Jackson (1pt of aid, 5 peg runners)

Avon Gorge

Peryl Chris Perry and Dave Pearce 4pts FFA 1977

Swanage

Elysium Richard Crewe and Ken Winkworth (2pts)

Torbay

Cocytus Ed Grindley and Pat Littlejohn AL (2pts) FFA 1976

The Mitre Frank Cannings, Pete Biven and Pat Littlejohn (1pt) FFA 1979

Goddess of Gloom Frank Cannings, Pete Biven and Mark Springett

Rock-Climbing in Wales and the S.West in the 60s

Cornwall

Vulcan Martin Jones and Mark Vallance (some aid) FFA 1981

also important to note:

Peak Limestone

Our Father Tom Proctor and Geoff Birtles. (The high technical grades soon to sweep the Peak announced by this epoch-making climb.)

1969

Carneddau

Flanders Pete Crew, Ian Lowe, Dave Alcock and Joe Brown VL (1pt)

The Great Arête Ben Campbell-Kelly and Ed Drummond AL (4pts) FFA 1975

Idwal

Hebenwi Dave Alcock and Martin Boysen AL

Anglesey

Wonderwall Laurie Holliwell and Dave Potts (2pts) FFA 1973/74

Left-Hand Red Wall Girdle Joe Brown and Pete Crew (5pts)

Mantrap Laurie Holliwell and Dick Isherwood (1pt)

Tyrannosaurus Rex Ed Drummond, Laurie Holliwell, Dave Pearce AL and Janet Rogers (2pts) FFA 1971

Red Haze Joe Brown and Pete Crew (1pt) FFA c.1976

Falls Road John Gosling, Eddie Thurrell, Brian Sullivan and Boyce Cardus (6pts)

FFA c.1974

Atlantic Wall Dave Barton and Jack Firth

(Sea level girdling popular. 163 climbs discovered on Anglesey 1964-69)

Avon Gorge

Exploding Galaxy Tony Willmott and Mike Spring (A3) FFA 1973

The Bilk Pat Littlejohn and Graham Skerrat (3pts) FFA 1972

Wintour's Leap

Big Brother Pat Littlejohn and Frank Cannings AL

Pembroke

Necropolis Jim Perrin and T.Lowry

A HVS that brought to an end a decade of fundamental yet modest exploration in Pembroke South. 54 routes discovered by, mainly, Colin Mortlock, Lyn Noble and Jim Perrin.

Portland

Muscleman Direct Ian Kestin and Steve Jones. One of the harder climbs of 10 discovered here in the 60s.

Swanage

The Buccaneer Richard Crewe and Ken Winkworth (7pts) FFA 1978. 115 climbs found on the Swanage cliffs during the decade.

Baggy Point

Pink Void and *Heart Of the Sun* Tony Willmott and Mike Spring (aid used on the latter) FFA 1977

Torbay

Dreadnought Frank Cannings and Pat Littlejohn AL (aid) FFA 1977

Cornwall

Behemoth Pat Littlejohn and Steve Jones

Zarathustra, *Desolation Row*, and *Omen* Frank Cannings and Pat Littlejohn (VL)

Cornish Perspectives

Mike Banks

Of all our club huts, Bosigran is arguably the jewel in the crown. A handsome building of weathered granite which harmonises with the evocative ruins of the neighbouring engine house of an old tin mine, maintained by The National Trust, it has no rivals in the area and its situation is breathtaking. It also generates more income for the club than any other hut.

The Club owes an enormous debt of gratitude to the late Arthur Westlake Andrews, the 'father of Cornish climbing', who not only pioneered the first routes in West Penwith, but through a series of articles in this *Journal*, firmly established Cornwall as an important climbing area, with its own unique aura.

It was astoundingly far-sighted that on Andrews's initiative, the Club rented the Bosigran Count House in 1938, for at that time, a mere thirty one routes had been recorded in Cornwall — hardly a booming climbing scene. The Club later purchased the property after World War Two; Andrews himself announcing the purchase in the 1939 *CC Journal*. 'It's a far cry to Bosigran,' he enthused, introducing the house to the Club, 'but it's a good place when you get there.' He goes on to describe the layout — which will contain a place of sorts for ladies: 'There is an upstairs portion which has been separated from the rest, with its own entry. It is proposed to admit ladies to this part.'

Andrews was a poet who was very sensitive to the environment. He noted with pleasure: 'It is a sanctuary for wild birds, such as the raven and the buzzard. The peregrine falcon is a visitor and occasionally nests'. Of course the ensuing tide of climbers and walkers was to alter all this — a development shrewdly predicted by Andrews. Soon after World War Two, he wrote these lines:

*Will there be ravens on Bosigran still
And has the buzzard got his usual nest
In the Great Zawn, or will they too have passed
To other hunting grounds with all the rest?*

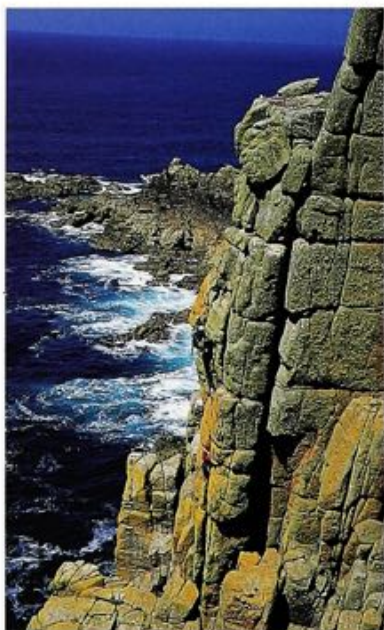
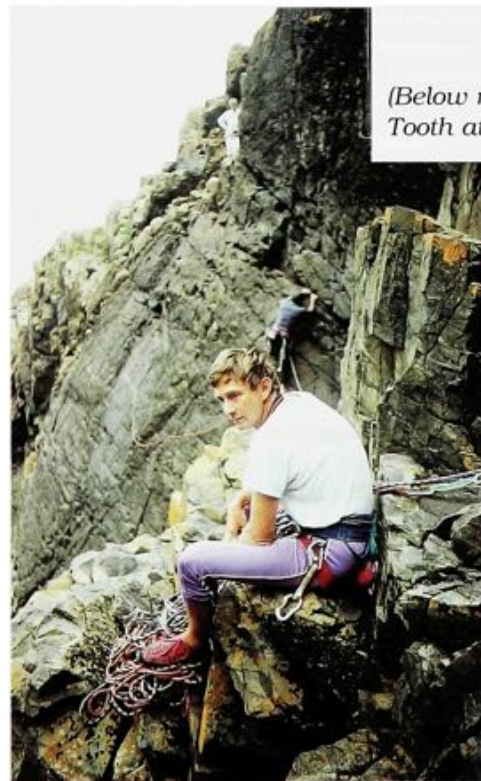
From 1939 the war changed everything. In 1943 the situation was that Nazi Germany controlled the whole European coastline down to the Spanish border and had erected massive defensive works on every likely landing place. They called it their 'Atlantic Wall'. The Commandos were therefore charged with finding chinks in this armour. Accordingly, in St. Ives, they formed the Commando Cliff Assault Centre, whose mission was to land on a rocky coastline at night, scale the cliffs and carry out a raid.



Great South West climbs and climbers:
(above) 50 years since Doorway: Jim
Cortland-Simpson after a hard day at
Sennen. Photo: Harry Sales; (right) Ben
Bransby on the crux of Bow Wall. Photo:
Tim Noble; (below left) Iain Peters,
reflecting on the 25th anniversary ascent
of his own Right Angle. Photo: Tim Noble.



(Below right) The incomparable Terrier's
Tooth at Chair Ladder. Photo: Jim Rubery



Special boats and equipment were devised and cliff climbers trained. There is no space here for a war history; but suffice to say that raids were carried out and these techniques were used very successfully by the US Rangers on D Day when they surmounted a cliff and, after a bitter fight, immobilised a gun battery at the top. The Commandos were to stay on in Cornwall for decades after the war and made a major contribution to the development of cliff climbing. They climbed in tricouni-nailed boots — which pretty well limited them to the 'Severe' grade; but they put up a considerable number of today's standard routes, particularly at Sennen. Their lasting memorial is of course *Commando Ridge* at Bosigran. Three Commando instructors were pre-eminent: Zeke Deacon, Mac McDermott and Vivian Stevenson. They climbed in the friendliest of rivalry with Peter and Barry Biven and Trevor Peck; the guidebooks are witness of their rich harvest of routes. When they started climbing, few routes had been done at either Bosigran or Chair Ladder and Carn Barra was virgin territory.

Cornish climbing really blossomed in the 50s: I look back on this as a golden era. Nylon ropes had become standard; rock boots had been invented and climbers were beginning to use car wheel nuts as rudimentary protection devices. But the flavour of the era — which opened up entirely new vistas — was artificial climbing, using pitons and etriers. Wherever there was a crack, there lay the possibility of a route.

Following the development of the nut, the climbing wall and modern training methods, the predictable tidal wave of formidable new routes has washed over the honey-coloured granite of the Cornish cliffs. Many rock stars have made their contribution, including Joe Brown, with his still highly-respected *Bow Wall*. The most prolific of these has undoubtedly been Rowland Edwards and his son Mark, who between them have added a thousand or so new routes.

Inevitably, the dream-like quality recognised and bequeathed by Andrews has long vanished: perhaps it was only an illusion. Neither has Cornwall escaped the venom of the bolt controversy (on which subject, far too much has already been said and continues to be said). I for one, find the whole debate increasingly resembles a medieval dispute about how many angels danced upon the point of a needle. In any case, I am old and it is the young who are at the cutting edge of climbing; they must call the shots now.

Cornwall still remains a very, very special place where, on a languid summer's day, your dreams and fancies can take wing. Leave the guidebook behind and wander where you will. Take some of the questing spirit of A.W.Andrews with you, when he wrote:

*We are the pilgrims of a bygone age
Who traverse on the shore from stage to stage
In lust of seeking what no man has seen
Between Bosigran Head and far Pendeen.*

The Count House over sixty years. Photos: (top) Andrews collection and (centre and below) Mike Banks



Arthur Westlake Andrews

(1868-1959)

John R. Andrews

I am writing this short biography of my great-uncle on the occasion of the Climbers' Club Centenary, as a memorial to him, as I am in the process of transferring the copyright in his literary estate (principally his poetry) to the Club. I hope eventually, also, to pass my collection of his memorabilia to the Club's archives for their preservation.



A.W. Andrews. Photo:
Andrews Collection

Arthur Westlake Andrews gave much to the climbing world, but he is also remembered as a polymath: a classical scholar; an innovator in geography teaching; a photographer; an athlete winning gold medals in the European games; a tennis player whose span ranged from playing at Wimbledon when he was twenty one to a veterans' tennis tournament when he was eighty one; and perhaps most lastingly, for his love and delight in West Penwith, Cornwall, expressed so lyrically in his poetry, written late in life during World War Two when, as he says, 'cut off from all my normal occupations I had to devise some method of detachment'.

Various biographical accounts of his life have been published, notably his obituary 'In Memoriam' in the *Climbers' Club Journal*, 1960, by E.C.Pyatt, and in the editorial of that Journal; by P.O'Sullivan in the *Climbers' Club Guide* (Cornwall — West Penwith, 1984; and D.Hannigan's *Bosigran and the North Coast*, 1991). His brief autobiographical notes in the *Author's Prologue* in his single book of poems *Selected Poems on West Penwith and Reflections*, Vol. I, 1957 gives a personal record of a long and varied life, published when he was almost ninety. I hope I can link these strands together and perhaps enlarge them from my records and family reminiscences.

As the CCJ Editor said in 1960, 'A.W.A. took an active part in the affairs of the Club throughout a membership of fifty eight years, and filled many offices...to most he will be remembered for his pioneering work on Lliwedd and in Cornwall, and his invention of climbing in rubbers'. The Editor recalled that he also 'produced more numbers of the Journal than any other Editor throughout the Club's history'.

Arthur's family remember him as an enthusiastic eccentric, always taking cameras and radios to pieces, kindly, loyal and hospitable. As a child I recall him teaching us about the different heathers on Tregerthen Hill, his love of wildlife, and his excitement at the discovery of a hoopoe blown off

course in West Penwith. We had honey, scones and cream for tea, candles in the bedrooms and the smell of oil lamps on the stairs in his home, Tregerthen, near Zennor. Only now do I more fully appreciate my great-uncle's zest for life, his tremendous activities and interests, and his original contribution to climbing and to the Club.

Arthur Westlake Andrews was born in Hastings on the 12th December 1868, where his father, the Reverend William Ryton Andrews, was an Anglican curate. Later William was Rector of Teffont Ewyas in Wiltshire for about twenty years, and a keen amateur geologist. His mother, née Marian Hare, was reputedly rather a formidable lady who produced about thirty books, historical biographies and novels, mostly under the *nom de plume* of Christopher Hare. She is said to have produced these to help pay for her sons' education, and in a later one the photographs are by A.W.A. himself.

Arthur's elder brother Launcelot, my grandfather, was a doctor at Bart's Hospital but sadly died aged thirty-one. His sister, Marion Elizabeth ('Elsie') was about twelve years younger than Arthur, but she accompanied him on many of the early climbs near Bosigran.

A.W.A. first went to school in St. Leonard's on Sea, where even at the age of ten he showed early promise, winning a book of *Cook's Voyages of Discovery* for obtaining good marks ('Bene merito'). He went as a juror scholar to Charterhouse near Guildford in 1882 aged fourteen, later becoming a senior scholar and winning a leaving exhibition in classics, mathematics and French at the end of the 'Cricket Quarter' in the summer of 1887. (Curiously, the shortest term at Charterhouse, the spring term, was known as 'Long Quarter'). He became a senior classical exhibitor at Magdalen College, Oxford, with a 2nd in Mods. in 1889, a 2nd in Greats (Lit. Hum) in 1891, and was awarded his B.A. in 1891 and M.A. in 1894.

He writes, in a rather self deprecatory manner, in the *Prologue*, 'the only real distinction I ever obtained was a mention for Latin prose in the Hertford [Prize]. My individual taste was for literature not grammar and I resented time wasted in trying to write Greek or Latin verse. I read all the books I could get hold of both in Classics and English prose and having a good memory stored up many treasures', and this served him well all his life. In *Poems on West Penwith*, for example, he uses quotations from Greek and Latin, French and German, and from Chaucer and the Old Testament.

On leaving Oxford A.W.A. took up teaching a variety of subjects: Classics, French and German, Geography, History, and Mathematics. He taught in various schools, among them King's School, Canterbury, Clifton College, St. Olave's in Southwark, and Rugby, and also as an extension (i.e. external) lecturer for Oxford and London Universities. He collected glowing testimonials, such as this one from Oxford: 'an amiable and obliging person and a thorough gentleman, and he would be a great addition to any staff'. But he stayed only long enough in each school to earn some money for his next climbing expedition.

He gave up full-time teaching and with B.B. Dickinson, a master at

Rugby, he set up the Diagram Company in the early years of the 20th century, to supply maps and lantern slides for teaching purposes. In 1903 its office was near Clapham Common in south London and later at New Malden. Together they designed *Philips's 'Diagram' Hand Atlas*, published by George Philip & Son Ltd. (no date), and published a slim booklet *Notes on the Orographical Map of Europe* in 1908. A.W.A. published *A Text-Book of Geography* in 1913 (655 pages, illustrated with many maps, with a revised edition in 1922).

He was elected a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in 1896, and gave lectures and wrote papers for their journal, and became a fellow of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society in 1910. According to E.C.Pyatt he joined the Alpine Club in 1899 and the Climbers' Club in 1901 (Obituary). He was also believed to have been both editor and contributor to *The Geographical Teacher* (Journal of the Geographical Association) and *The Journal of Geography*, during the 1900s.

My great-uncle's service in World War One has been difficult to trace. He wrote in his *Prologue*, 'I went to France in the first war', but despite searching Army Lists in the National Army Museum and writing to the Ministry of Defence I have found little except a photograph of him in uniform among family papers. A cutting from *The Times*, however, gave his appointment as a temporary 2nd Lt. on 16th June 1918. No war medals survive which might have given his number, rank or unit.

He was about forty five when the war broke out and he would have been too old for initial enrolment in the services. However, as a dedicated teacher of geography and its links with photography and several years as a professional map-maker, together with his linguistic skills, I feel he may well have been involved in war activities before June 1918. A few panoramas of desolate battlefields, including Passchendaele, were found after his death, and are now in the Imperial War Museum. Although apparently he did not talk of World War One, I just wonder whether he might have been involved with early aerial photography and mapping in the Royal Flying Corps — but wouldn't he have reminisced about it?

Today, soldiers' and officers' records from the war are becoming accessible at the Public Record Office, Kew. Some, however, are still classified as 'burnt' records having been damaged in bombing raids in World War Two. But my researches have finally shown, in an unlikely source, (the Charterhouse Old Boys' Lists), that he was in the '4th Field Survey Batt., R.E.' although no dates are given. My intuition seems to have been correct but more research is necessary. I still wonder what he was doing between 1914 and 1918?

I always feel family history research is like a combination of a detective story, a crossword puzzle and a jigsaw puzzle. We start with a brief statement 'I went to France in the first war' and then gradually, over a long period of time the picture becomes clearer, but there is always more to discover.

World War Two is easier to trace. Aged 70 at the outbreak of war in 1939, he soon joined the special constabulary to guard his beloved part of west Cornwall from possible German landings from sea or air. He knew every rock and every track, every field and hiding place. Despite his age he was still agile and alert, moving silently in gymshoes, and watching sharply in the night. But, as he wrote in the *Prologue*, There was very little to do except 'watch unexploded bombs that did not go off, or wait for parachutists who did not drop'. Nonetheless, he was well prepared with a revolver — which fortunately he did not need to use in anger. After his death, about 15 years later, his revolver was found under his bed still loaded; the local police were a little surprised when it was returned to them.

A.W.A. was always a very active person; skilful in his climbing, successful in his athletics and involved in tennis for more than half a century. At Charterhouse he won a silver cup for 'Double scratch tennis ties' in 1886 and in his last term there in the 1887 sports he won the one mile steeplechase 'with great judgment', and the obstacle race 'easily' (*The Carthusian*, by courtesy of the school archivist). At Oxford he continued his athletic prowess, saying in the *Prologue* that he represented the University in high jumping and cross country running. Details are not always well-documented at this distance in time. Pyatt in his Obituary says A.W.A. reached 5 foot 8 inches in the high jump; a silver medal I have seen records his win of an Oxford University 2nd prize for the high jump in 1890 at 5 foot 5 inches.

But inches are not significant now. His most noteworthy athletic successes were at the Berlin games in 1893, two years after leaving Oxford. The 4th International Athletic Sports were held in Berlin on 20th August 1893. I haven't been able to research these yet, but, described as 'The Continental Championships', I think they were the forerunners of the present European Games. A.W.A. won the 2nd prize for both the hurdles and the high jump, and finished by winning the gold medal for 'one English mile'. He modestly dismisses this in the *Prologue* as 'an extraordinary piece of luck as there was a poor field through the failure of the best English runners to compete.'

From this trip to Germany I have found the first photograph of his interest in tennis. He visited the Jena lawn tennis club in 1893 and posed with four other young men and four ladies, with unusually shaped rackets, the men in long trousers and the ladies in hats and long skirts. Perhaps it was just a social photograph and not the start of a match. A.W.A. sadly remembers those days fifty years later in a poem 'Jena', written about 1940:

*A song that vibrates still in memories
Of that old kindly Jena, where we played
A football match against Leipsic, the first,
In Germany, or nearly first...my dream
That I may find old friends again, and wait
For freedom to come back to Jena's stream.*

Throughout his life my great-uncle was an enthusiastic tennis player, principally in Cornwall and at St. Ives. Cartoons of the twenties and thirties show him with an outsize racket which he apparently used to lob the ball high in the air to land behind his opponent. He built a practice court behind his house at Tregerthen and spent many hours practising there. Reports (Obituary) say he played, too, for Cornwall in the twenties.

Perhaps the most entertaining story is his career at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships. One report (W.Noyce in *The Alpine Journal*, May 1958) says he reached the quarter-finals. E.C.Pyatt in the Obituary goes one better and says he once reached the semi-final of the men's singles. Perhaps an old man's memory faded? The Honorary Librarian of the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, Mr. Alan Little, kindly resolved the matter. A.W.A. did indeed play in the Championship Singles; for eight years between 1889 (while at Oxford) and 1913 (probably the last competition before World War One). But unfortunately he lost in the 1st or 2nd round on seven occasions. His only success was in 1909, when he won in the 2nd round, only to be beaten in the 3rd. In the Doubles he only won one round, in the same year.

Tennis continued to be his great activity until his old age. He regularly played in the veterans' tennis tournaments, and his crafty drop shot came in useful against his elderly opponents. Among his papers I found a brown, tattered newspaper photograph of A.W.A. playing with his oversize racket in his 80s. I was asked to trace its origin — another family history problem — but eventually found it had been published in *The Daily Graphic* on 15th September 1950.

Three houses in the Zennor area of West Penwith were closely associated with Arthur Westlake Andrews and his family. In the latter half of the 19th century (in 1873, according to the *Prologue*), his uncle Professor John Westlake and his wife Alice, (née Alice Hare), bought Eagle's Nest, high above the road from St. Ives to Zennor. There, for about forty years, they held regular house parties, bringing together their nephews and nieces, the members of the Hare, Andrews, and Clayton families (although the Westlakes themselves had no children) for holidays of rambling and walking, climbing and cycling, tennis on the lawns of the big house, and exploration of the moors, cliffs and sea. Arthur went there first as a young boy of five or six, starting a lifetime's love of West Penwith.

When Alice Westlake died in 1923 (a tall cross marks her grave in Zennor churchyard with her husband John, who died in 1913), Eagle's Nest was sold. It was bought by Will Arnold-Forster and he constructed there one of the most spectacular Cornish gardens; by using cleverly-sited walls, shelters and hedges as protection against the Atlantic gales, he grew an amazing selection of exotic and tender plants. The gardens have been continued and looked after by the present owner, the artist Patrick Heron.

The next door house, known as Tregerthen by A.W.A., was bought by him and his sister Elsie in 1922, having previously also been owned by the

Westlakes, and used as an overflow dormitory for the younger visitors. Today, owned by a daughter of Patrick Heron, it has reverted to its historic name, 'The Poor House'. Arthur Andrews lived there for over 35 years, enjoying its solitude and simplicity. From 1924 to 1944 he had as factotum and housekeeper Captain and Mrs Monahan and their daughter Mary. When they left, Mary remembers that he gave them a silver cup he had won in Sussex for badminton in 1908. At other times he was there on his own. He built a workshop or shed — the 'Bungalow' — just below the house, where in latter days he potted with photographic chemicals, fragments of radios, and making marmalade. In the 30s he experimented with early colour photography, of which I have a few examples. During the war he burnt peat from the moor on the fire in the house. When he was lonely in his old age (or so my story goes), he fed the rats which thrived in the house, and spoke to them in classical Greek. I wonder if there are still any Greek-speaking rats?

Near the end of his life his sister, then in her seventies, uprooted herself and three friends from her home in Eastbourne to look after him, helped by a devoted Cornish housekeeper, Mrs Daisy Martin. A local author, Alison Symons, affectionately recalls the household in *Tremedda Days*, (1992), describing the 'entourage of elderly ladies with ear-trumpets and walking sticks'.

Below Treggerthen House on the coastal plain, is the farm of Treggerthen itself. During World War One the writer, D.H. Lawrence was staying in the area with his German wife, Frieda; they were accused by suspicious neighbours of being spies and contacting German agents and were forced to leave. But for a while I think they had also lived in the Bosigran Count House, now the Climbers' Club Hut.(1) I have been told, but have not confirmed, that it was there that they were arrested by the local police.

The Bosigran Count House got its name from the days when Bosigran mine was flourishing, in the early part of the 19th century. It would have housed the mine offices, and would have been used for weighing and counting the mineral ore and paying the miners. Like so many Cornish mines its prosperity rose and fell according to the price of tin and copper. A tithe map of 1841 shows the engine buildings, smith's shop and the Count House buildings; the property of Bosigran, in the parish of Zennor, belonging to Henry H.C. Phillips and stretching from Carn Galva to the cliffs, similar to the present ownership of the National Trust. Only the Count House building survives, now linked to mains electricity, and the ruins of the other buildings. (2)

My father, J.L. Andrews, purchased Bosigran farm and the property shown on the 1841 map in the mid-1930s. At that unsettled time investors were advised to divide their capital between shares and property, and we had a long-established family interest in West Penwith. By using the Count House as a centre for climbers, my father's Uncle Arthur, then about sixty five, had a renewed interest and activity, and was appointed Custodian. The

house was later sold to the Climbers' Club and the rest of Bosigran and Carn Galva was bought by the National Trust after my father's death in 1968, as part of Enterprise Neptune.

I started this account as a memorial to my great-uncle Arthur. To the members of The Climbers' Club, the main interest will be in his pioneering and widespread climbing — of which, I'm afraid I know nothing. But even by 1905 he could write in the *Journal*, (Vol. VI 1/29), in an article on climbing on the Cornish cliffs, 'for more than twenty five years I have examined the district which lies on the north coast of the Land's End Peninsula...and have not nearly exhausted its possibilities'. His interest continued for another fifty years — truly a lifetime devoted to climbing and West Penwith over seventy-five years.

He climbed, too, in North Wales, producing a guidebook with J.M.Archer-Thomson, *The Climbs on Lliwedd* (1909), and I have records that he climbed on the continent, in the Alps and Norway, and in north and southern Africa. In Norway he is said to have made the first ascent of the East Ringstind in the Horunger in 1891 (*Obituary*) and I believe this climb was named after him. In 1950 he wrote one of the most entertaining guidebooks with E.C. Pyatt for the Climbers' Club, on Cornwall — an individual and idiosyncratic description of climbing, interspersed with accounts of natural history, legends and his own poetry.

I am not a poet, but I delight in his verses. He expanded his writing in the bleak years of World War Two, and put together various home-made albums of verse — of which I have 1940 and 1941. Sometimes he used his verse in greetings cards, with photos, and eventually he decided to publish. *Selected Poems on West Penwith and Reflections*, Vol. 1, appeared in 1957. (Volume 2 was never produced). Its gestation was a long period of chaos; drafts, re-drafts, additions, excisions and a delightful mess and muddle of poems, honey and brown paper. But the outcome was a great achievement at eighty nine years of age, and as his next of kin I am pleased to transfer his literary copyright to the Club, who may even gain a little financial advantage. Perhaps we could even consider a reprint, adding some of his photos and looking at some of the unpublished verses in the 1940 and 1941 typescript albums. Two of his poems have recently been reproduced in other works: 'Granite' in *Tremedda Days*, (1992), and 'West Penwith' in *Speak to*



Tim and Sally Noble exploring Wicca Pillar, nearly a century after A.W.A.'s first ascents. Photo: Noble collection.

the Hills, (edited by H.Brown and M.Berry, 1985). I can only end by commenting on his short three-line poem 'A Traverse', sub-titled 'Mislykete Forsog. Lost endeavour'.

*Tide coming in too fast and on our left
A cliff we could not climb and on our right
Nothing but sea, America and night.*

This was one of A.W.A.'s favourite pieces and he used it in a longer poem in 1940.(3) He also chose it to be embroidered on a family cushion which I put together in 1952. Following the query about its origins in *The Centenary Journal* I have consulted with a retired English literature lecturer here and together we have searched. *A Concordance to the Poetry of D.H.Lawrence*, (edited R.Garcia and J. Karabatsos, University of Nebraska, 1970). We searched about 500 entries, under the headings of 'tide', 'cliff', 'climb', 'sea', 'America', etc., unsuccessfully. I still have an open mind, although family pride prickles at the suggestion of plagiarism. It's possible, but I'd like to see the definite evidence.(4)

12th December 1868 to 22nd November 1959: Arthur Westlake Andrews lived through six reigns. He saw climbing develop from scrambling in rubber gymshoes to the complexities of today.(5) He enjoyed life and A.W. Andrews. Photo: Andrews Collection helped many people, and many people loved him in exchange. He lies buried in Zennor churchyard, not far from his god-father and uncle, John Westlake, who first aroused his love of West Penwith and whose name he was given. I am happy to prepare this memorial to my great-uncle which I hope will bring his activities to life for present members.

I wonder if the Greek-speaking rats only appear now, after a few pints at the local hostelry?



Editor's notes:

(1) See *D.H. Lawrence and The Count House*, Terry Gifford, *High Magazine* No.12, 1983.

Also, in a letter to her brother John, the writer of this article, A.W.A.'s great-niece, Anne writes: 'The cottage lies on the field path between Zennor and Tregerthen Farm, parallel to the main road. It is on the coastal plateau and would be on the normal pedestrian route from Zennor to St Ives, linking the farmsteads.'

(2) See, 'The Carn Galver (sic) Mine', John and Ruth Neill, *CCJ* 1962.

(3) From the poem 'A Prentice Hand':

*On traverse, in the evening, on the coast
Of Cornwall, with a cliff upon your right
You cannot scale, and on your left
Nothing but sea, America and night.*

(4) The issue of the origin of the memorable last line of this poem (raised as a challenge in the Centenary Journal by the editor, Terry Gifford) is also addressed by Anne:

I think it most unlikely he (A.W.A.) borrowed from D.H. Lawrence without acknowledging, in the verse you (J.A.) quoted, for the following reasons:

1. He was very meticulous in quoting the sources he did use (see numerous poems);
2. It would have been psychologically unlike his normal attitude;
3. The concept 'nothing between here and America' is one I have heard often quoted in Cornwall: as a warning not to swim too far out from the shore; as a reason for the intensity of local storms etc. It is quite possible that both A.W.A. and D.H. Lawrence used it independently.' (op cit)

Like Terry Gifford, my own reading and teaching of Lawrence's novels and poetry inclines me to support John Andrews's researches (though I cannot claim to have examined the issue as closely as Terry, Al Alvarez or John's retired lecturer friend). Certainly, one can find many independent references to Cornwall and the Cornish summer in Lawrence's writing — particularly in the short stories and in the novel *Kangaroo*, but they never coalesce into the striking cadence of A.W.A.'s line.

Could it be, though, that A.W.A., reading Lawrence and immersed in the verbal traditions that his great-niece was later to learn about — traditions that Lawrence may even have helped himself to in his own writing — made a superb little synthesis out of these disparate but circulating words? If so, then that is that: for of such stuff is poetry made. On balance, therefore, I am inclined to claim that with this research done by John Andrews, the mystery of the origin of this famous line of poetry — 'Nothing but sea, America and night' — has been solved; but, in the absence of Peter Biven, I suspect only Al Alvarez can settle the issue finally. Over to you Al?

(5) Anne writes: 'The reason he (A.W.A.) climbed in plimsolls rather than boots was that he planned to traverse all the way round the cliffs from St. Ives to Land's End between high and low tide marks. Plimsolls dried out quickly when they got wet with sea water, which boots didn't...also they gripped reasonably well on the granite even when wet.' (ibid)

On Unplanned Bivouacs, from *The Ordinary Route*

Harold Drasdo

There was an Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman. And there was a Pole, but the Pole died. His name was André Kopczinski. The Irishman was Peter Kenny, the Scotsman was Jimmy Marshall, and I was the Englishman. We'd met by chance. Through changing circumstances I'd lost touch with earlier friends and I'd come to Chamonix at short notice in hope of finding someone in a similar position. Marshall, who was working as an architect in Geneva and perhaps concurrently dodging the draft, was also without a companion. Kenny and Kopczinski were already a team. Kenny was one of the enterprising Irish climbers I'd already encountered but the other two were strangers to me. Marshall had met none of us before.

We were perhaps known to each other by name, however, in the small world of that time. André had, I assume, travelled westward by the mysterious routes of the displaced person. He'd spent a spell in England where he'd climbed with the Cromlech Club. Then he'd moved to Ireland. At some point he'd paired up with a legendary German girl, Ruth Ohrtmann, a long-haired blonde who was said to have accomplished some very hard rock climbs in bare feet. What I'd heard of him hadn't prepared me for his vivacity and charm. He had an old-fashioned courtesy, a candour and directness of sympathy and attention I've sometimes seen in eastern Europeans. He was excellent company. At the same time he was charged with such a volatile enthusiasm that legends of Polish cavalry officers charging sabre in hand through squadrons of German tanks rose irresistibly to mind.

By contrast Jimmy Marshall was as solid as a rock, so judicious that he wasn't easy to read, secure in himself and perfectly at home in the mountains. Though Scottish climbers hadn't yet ventured onto the most serious Alpine climbs, the winter climbing of Marshall and his circle was already giving them an experience of atrocious weather and variability in snow and ice conditions matched perhaps by few Continental alpinists. I'd noticed with amusement the refusal of the Scots to be intimidated by scale. One Scotsman, setting off alone up the vast ice-flow of the Mer de Glace, explained to me that he'd arranged to meet someone at the top of the glen. A party about to ascend Mont Blanc said that they felt like a hill walk as a break from rock-climbing. The weather at the time was unsettled. With Hamish Nicol, Jimmy and I set off for the *Bionnassay Arête* of Mont Blanc but we were drenched by rain by the time we reached the refuge and we were told that worse was promised. We returned, Nicol went home, and we met the Irish party. Then the four of us managed to snatch an early British and first Irish ascent of the short but steep *West Face* of the *Pointe Albert*. A

couple of days later another brief improvement offered itself and we fixed on the *Grutter Arete* of the *Aiguille des Pelerins*. As on the earlier route Jimmy and I would climb as a pair, followed by André and Peter. I've sometimes wondered whether what followed was related to the fact that we'd no idea who were Chiefs and who were Indians. We were extremely polite and kept agreeing with each other. The climb, taking the hardest options, went very smoothly though I'm not sure we improved on guidebook time. At the summit the sky was overcast but unexpectedly a short debate began. The normal descent seemed to André an anti-climax and without much discussion his proposal was accepted: just for the hell of it we'd abseil down the north-west face into the top of the *Peigne couloir*. As it happened, Jimmy already knew the couloir. It was then regarded as a standard descent but has since been abandoned as unacceptably dangerous.

The system adopted was for each pair to fix alternate abseils. Jimmy and I would set one up and we'd see down André and Peter, who'd immediately prepare the following abseil. We'd rope down, retrieve our ropes, descend theirs and fix ours. The face was exposed and consisted of steep smooth slabs with narrow snow-covered ledges at good rope-length intervals. The cloud had closed in further, the wind rose a little from time to time, and the situation seemed impressive. But within a quite short time Jimmy and I were retrieving our ropes from the last of perhaps a half dozen rappels, while Peter and André were hurrying across easy ground to the trifurcation at the head of the couloir. Here, a barrier of rock, split by an easy but very wet chimney, suggested a final abseil. This was the old way off the *Col du Peigne* and an anchor bollard held a mess of slings, mostly ancient and half rotted. On the face we'd cut new cord for abseil loops. Now, André had simply passed the ropes through a single, apparently substantial existing loop. In retrospect it seems probable that this was simply cotton rope, in use for abseil anchors until about that time and tending to bleach to the glossy appearance of the full-weight laid nylon ropes we were now using. My sense of certainty wavers. Had we exhausted our supply of abseil cord? Surely I asked aloud why the rope shouldn't be passed through the whole bunch? Did I only think the thought and say nothing? Did the idea come by hindsight, 'the most exact of sciences'? Was it pointed out that André, who'd be descending last, was the lightest of the four of us? And does it matter now?

Jimmy went first and, on familiar ground, set off rapidly down the couloir, easy here. It was getting late and it was important to locate the point where the descent used a fixed rope to climb the right bank, avoiding the lower outfall. I followed and was some hundreds of feet down when I heard cries, a confusion of sounds, Peter shouting that André had fallen. The loop had broken. I relayed the news to Jimmy, almost out of earshot, and went back up. Trailing the ropes, André had come down the wall and tumbled a further distance down the slope beneath. Hunched up and groaning, bleeding through his anorak, he was tightly bound in a daunting net of

rope. We freed him with difficulty and tried to make him as comfortable as possible. Again, Jimmy and I set off hastily down as darkness was falling.

Finally, we had to halt for fear of overshooting the exit. We could find only a narrow chimney for shelter, a tight slot into the base of which we wedged ourselves one behind the other. A little waterslide was splashing down the back. We'd left our few spare bits of clothing with André. I was wearing a string vest, a threadbare second-hand track suit and a thin unlined cotton anorak. Jimmy had no more garments than I, though he was in much more robust mountain gear. During the night, at just above freezing point, it began to rain and quickly we were wet to the skin. We crouched back to back for warmth, changing places at intervals Jimmy timed. The inside position seemed, by contrast, a bath of comfort. On the outside we called on what stoicism we could muster and the night seemed endurable. But every so often, closing a still period, a wind, not strong, would move gently up the couloir and from the moment of its first slight touch the body shook uncontrollably with cold. Overriding our discomfort was our anxiety about André, who had in fact already died.

First light came very slowly and our surroundings, unseen in the last of the evening's gloom, started to reveal themselves as presences rather than as detail. Banks of cloud would hang immobile, obscuring large quarters of the scene and then, unexpectedly, would be driven at high speed hundreds of feet up the huge ravine as the wind rose. Just as suddenly they'd halt, having unveiled new features and cloaked the ones already glimpsed. Snow had fallen to just above our height and on slabby flanks below us. Great sheets of wet rock, towers, jagged aretes and subsidiary gullies seemed to advance and withdraw, a slow dramatic circling dance of Titans.

The power of this dawn was tremendous. As I took it in the thought came to me that it was an artist's vision of hell, the tiny world of human consciousness observing one aspect of a vast indifferent universe in which it has no permanent place. And yet I looked at it with eager curiosity, as primitive men must have looked at strange new landscapes. And these impressions were quickly flooded in a surprising and apparently inappropriate emotion. What I felt developing in clarity and certainty through a few minutes was — awe? wonder? — no, it was something like delight. The whole scene was immensely, stupefyingly rewarding. But while I was gazing at the magnificence of the place, and as we began to exercise our stiffened limbs, Jimmy was judging whether it was light enough to move. The night hadn't slowed his wits and he was thinking ahead. This was the sort of crisis for which Scotland had schooled him. Flesh chilled, hands and feet numb, we set off to find the fixed rope.

Whatever the situation, it seems to me, when we sleep without shelter the coming of the day has new dimensions. To watch the dawn through a house window, to waken and crawl out of a tent to inspect it, robs it of some final intimacy. In the bivouac there's no moment of preparation. Eyes and

skin are the only interface. We know our animal natures, stir, ease residual aches, stretch our limbs, and see everything around us as fresh and real.



*Martin Crocker on the first ascent of Fax Wars, E6,6b
Huntsman's Leap, Pembroke Photo: Simon Cardy*

Poems by Terry Gifford

Collecting Stars

First the comet's flaring tail
at 5 a.m. 'I used to pee in great arcs
before the war', Roper had quoted
last night. 'Now that's poetic!'
said Steck. Back in my bag
'Hale-Bopp, Hale-Bopp'
is a new mantra for sleep.

Woken by the howling of coyotes
close to camp and then, at dawn,
the cactus wren calling us to rise
with hats (and gloves in Kelsey's case
for walking his dogs in the desert).
It's my first day at Joshua Tree —
'Ah, a virgin!' observes Roper.

So we begin with Mike's Books
where I grunt and sweat in the sun,
see snow on a far mountain
from the granite monolith's top.
Then Toe Jam to Lazy Day
(which isn't) and seeking shade
by now, Lickety Split's finger-locks.

The afternoon's light breeze allows
A Walk On The Wild Side, three
slab pitches of pressing granules
and crimping credit-card edges.
'Heels down!' shouts Roper above,
'And stand up like a man!' as I start.
Pitch two's traverse steepens. I'm off-

on-off-on and whimpering, apparently,
with effort. 'Don't scream, just fall!'
Roper's voice drifts down. 'Ah, full-
body friction, eh?' I slap for a ledge
and heave. Roper leads on until
the rope runs out. 'Don't fall,' he says
finally, braced in a bowl, unbelayed.

Next day at Dairy Queen Wall
all we see are ice-cream comets
shooting up: Scrumdillyshus has us
stemming into sky (Steck starts
with one shoe untied). Frosty Cone
has beautiful brackets to pinch
and Double Decker, steep delight.

In the shade of Hidden Valley
below Sail Away, we meet travellers
collecting three-starred climbs
they name. 'And this one's like
champagne.' It is. We head back
for the Headstone's Left Edge.
On top, I listen to desert silence,

see from above that these stones
are in circles enclosing space
as space encloses us and we
people it with names for stones.
During my last night committing
stars to memory, weekend stargazers
people the camps with telescopes.

On the drive out I accept
the totem gift of a Golden Eagle
atop a telegraph pole. On the flight
home to Hickory I see the night sky
in scattered farms and highways
as the ancients saw their land and
experience laid out above them.

The Sound of Stone

Joshua Tree, March 1997

Hidden from the sun and other climbers
in the Hidden Valley, under a leaning
wall of chalked little ledges a single
taped voice echoes from the wooden
choir stalls and stone vaulted roof
of some European cathedral. I'm drawn
through the scent of the lone pinyon pine
and find this boy with battery-powered
tape deck, slippers, shorts and chalk.
He is almost voiceless, speaks little
to my questions. Empty-eyed, he's wintered out
here with the desert stones and joshua trees.
He turns away to pump his traverse again,
panting so much he can't hear the calm
of this cathedral, its stilling single voice.

Boxing Clever

Tony Moulam

This year is the Jubilee of The Royal Signals OCTU Mountaineering Club, which held its first meet on the 20th July, 1947. There appears to be only two other members of the CC who were in it: George Band and Norman Haycock. I formed the club after returning to Catterick from Basic OCTU in Aldershot. One of my achievements whilst there had been to avoid being put on a charge for having dirty hands on parade by my excuse, to the terrifying CSM Parnaby, that they were stained by the rock I had been climbing at the weekend. He wanted to know where this had happened so I said, "Near Groombridge, in Kent", as I didn't think that he would have heard of Harrison's Rocks. His scornful response was: "Rock-climbing, in KENT?" But he obviously believed me and thankfully I fell-in again, whilst he went off to torment some other unfortunate cadet.

The regular weekend practice on the sandstone playground had strengthened my fingers sufficiently to enable me to join Peter Harding on the 24th February 1946 and make the first complete *Girdle Traverse of Black Rocks*, which had eluded us in September the previous year, when a high wind and lack of form made us abandon our attempt after descending *Lean Man's Superdirect*.

However, the most significant event whilst my military skills were honed at Aldershot was my first lead of *Slim Finger Crack* (previously top-roped by Chris Fenner), at Harrison's. This was on my birthday, 29th June 1947 and I was recently gratified to see it referred to as 'Probably the country's first 5c' in the article 'A View From the Sand-Pit' by John Horscroft in May 1996 *Climber*.

Unfortunately all good things come to an end and I was posted to Catterick, as mentioned earlier, for my Corps training. The Commanding Officer of the OCTU, Lt. Col. Gardner was particularly keen on boxing. I wasn't. This I demonstrated in one particular bout by being violently sick over the three judges (including the Colonel) as I was viciously hit on my Adam's Apple by my usually gentle opponent. Luckily I was able to persuade the CO that rock-climbing was a sufficiently dangerous sport to be supported by the army and so the RSOMC was given lorries, drivers and the services of the adjutant, Captain Malcolm (Gazelle) Scott.

At our inauguration Keith Johnson and I had a personal meet, when no-one else could attend. We rode on his Matchless motorcycle, (which had two pillions and had got us into trouble with the Military Police when we rode to the NAAFI in Camp Centre three up) to the Dungeon Ghyll Old Hotel. Here we warmed up in front of the bar fire but eventually tackled the slope to *Middlefell Buttress* in the pouring rain. Although it was Keith's first climb we accomplished it in alternate leads, and then I took him up *Raven*

Crag Butress, the only other route recorded thereabouts in those days. Our secret weapon, and probably the first multi-layered clothing to be devised, consisted of two sets of Denim fatigues with a gas cape worn in between. As it was very cold this combination kept us warm and dry, until we had to drive back to Catterick in a constant downpour, and to be on parade at 0600 hours, all bulled up.

A week later we stayed in Wall End Barn and did *A, C and D Routes* on Gimmer, finishing up with *Main Wall*. Keith Johnson, John Williams, Mike May and Keith Sayer were my companions this time, all founder members of the RSOCTUMC.

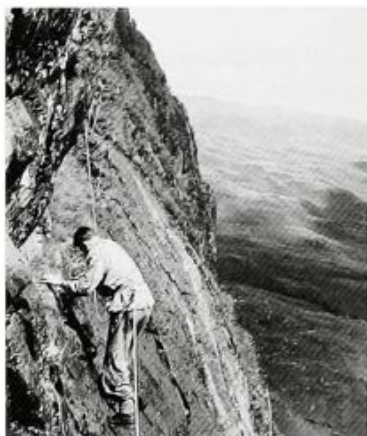
Hitch hiking had hitherto been my only method of transport and I had started going to Crag Lough on the Roman Wall. There I met Basil Butcher and Charlie Gossman and was allowed to stay at the Northumbrian Mountaineering club hut at Once Brewed. A series of Club meets followed when routes like *Tarzan*, *Centurion's Crack*, *The Helix* and the various Organ Pipe and Main Wall routes were done. As a culmination I led Alf Mullan up *Impossible Butress* using, at the stance below the difficulties, pitons made by the Aysgarth blacksmith. RSOMC members at this time included Peter Snell and John Darrah as well as those mentioned above.

The first meet attended by our adjutant was at Almscliffe Crag and whilst we enjoyed ourselves on *South Wall*, *Bird's Nest Crack*, *Green Crack* and other classics, he set off on an exploration of his own. Eventually, when we noticed he was missing, we sent out a search party and found that he had managed to slide down into one of the chimneys below the summit. We had a difficult job (more appropriate to Engineers than Signallers) extricating his corpulent figure from this confinement but eventually succeeded. He was very quiet on the way back to barracks, and never came out with us again.

On other occasions we were able to use Nissen Huts at the army camp in Glenridding. On our first use of this facility we made a visit to Dow Crag but our drivers convinced us that they were not allowed to take the vehicle up the Walna Scar track, so we had to walk all the way from the centre of Coniston (The Black Bull). Eventually we did *Murray's Direct*, *Eliminate A*, and with Bob Caukwell (who was already an officer in the Royal Artillery and hence present in an honorary capacity) *Broadrick's Crack* and a new second pitch to *Hyacinth Route*. As I swung into the steep crack its contents of insecurely wedged chockstones moved down onto my chest (I didn't then have a stomach) I lurched upwards and inadvertently dropped this mini-avalanche onto the guide, Jim Cameron and his party, who were descending *Easy Terrace*. Jim sportingly forgave me when he realised that we were grappling with a new pitch.

One November we arrived late at the Glenridding site and were so entranced by the brilliant moon glinting on the snow that we set off at 2235 hours and made a wonderful expedition in snow and ice round Striding Edge and Helvellyn, finishing by Swirral Edge and Catsye Cam. We were

unofficially accompanied by a local dog which seemed to have adopted us. John Williams, J.T.Lewis (I don't remember him) and the dog all returned safely by 0230 and slept the sleep of the very tired. Later in the day we went round to Dovedale and did all the routes on Dovedale Slabs, in wonderful



Tony Moulam in 1947 on
Crescent Climb, Pavay Ark.
Photo: Moulam collection

sunshine, before an ascent of the icy Hartsop Beck and on to Hart Fell. This was probably the best weekend meet we ever achieved.

The 1948 New Year meet was at Wall End Barn. We left Catterick at 1345 and arrived there at 1700 hrs, only to find that our army field cooker refused to work. However all was not lost as we traded rations for the use of RLH's kitchen with some of its occupants for supper, and breakfast the next day. There was no rush to the hill as, once again, it was pouring with rain but we did manage *A Route, Bracket and Slab, Gimmer Chimney and Main Wall*, all in nailed boots.

About this time I thought that it would be worth trying to find if there was climbing anywhere nearer to camp. Accordingly one weekend, when the scheduled Lake District meet was cancelled because of the weather,

John Williams and I bussed out to Reeth, where we stayed at the Black Bull. We climbed Calver Hill and crossed Cringley Hill to Surrender Bridge in deep soft snow, slush and drizzle. The weather improved a bit, after we had had our 'Compo' rations and we went on over Feetham Pasture. Here we found a short limestone edge and did one or two little problems before setting off on a marathon walk to Muker for tea.

The next reconnaissance I made alone on January 14th. I was allowed a military motor bike — an old side valve BSA — and went out in the usual rain to Roseberry Topping. There I did four routes which I named in my log: *Central Rib, Central Chimney, Chock Groove and Chimney 1*. I remarked on the poor gritstone and never went again. Nor have I been able to identify these climbs with the current guidebook. Perhaps they have all fallen down.

Now there was a hiatus in our activity as the Passing Out Parade took our attention. The cadet CO (a post awarded to the best cadet) was a man called Hart, and second in command was gazetted as Mootham, an ex paratrooper. However, about half an hour before the parade he and I were called before the real CO. I wondered if we were to be returned to the ranks as one of our colleagues had the night before. He had been picked up by the MPs at The Fleece in Catterick somewhat the worse for drink. What made it a capital offence was that he was singing 'chips tonight, pips tomorrow'; but it was not to be.

Nothing as serious as that was in store for me and I was pleasantly surprised when the CO told me that there had been a terrible mistake: my name had been confused with that of Mootham, and I was really the second best cadet and Mootham would be relegated to my lowlier position. However, the CO dampened my delight by telling me that I would have been the best cadet if it had not been for my scruffy turnout. But I really could never be bothered to press my uniform and shine my boots to the mirror finish that was *de rigueur*.

We all left Catterick in the next few days and I went to a transit camp in Thirsk. None of the other RSOMC members came with me and in a day or two I was on the train to Vienna where I was put in charge of the military telephone exchange, an operating troop and the MT section. Skiing (badly) took the place of rock and mountain climbing, but that is another story; now George Band takes over to tell why the RSOMC did not stay in existence to celebrate its Jubilee.

A Signal Success

George Band

I must have arrived at the Royal Corps of Signals Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU) in Catterick, Yorkshire, in Spring 1948 shortly after my nineteenth birthday. I had just complete eight gruelling weeks Basic OCTU at Mons Barracks, Aldershot, including square bashing under the intimidating voice and eye of Regimental Sergeant Major Brittain, senior RSM of the British Army. "That tall cadet in the spectacles has no idea of rifle exercises; put him in the rear rank, Sergeant Major Parnaby."

I was burning to begin rock-climbing, but in those days with no like-minded family or friends or outdoor pursuit centres it was not so easy to find a sympathetic climber who would offer you a spare end of hemp rope to tie onto. So far I had managed to solo the Idwal Slabs in winter and get lost in the mist and snow somewhere above the Holly Tree Wall and then come down the wrong side of the Glyders, walking back to Idwal Cottage Youth Hostel in the starlight just in time to intercept the Warden as he was going to the telephone kiosk to call out a search party. Clearly, I needed taking in hand.

In Catterick, I was delighted to discover that an informal mountaineering club existed at the OCTU. It was started, I found out much later, by Tony Moulam. After drill on Saturday morning we were entitled to take out a 3-ton truck, with two volunteer drivers, and not return until Sunday evening. The Colonel himself signed the 'works ticket' authorising this exceptional use of recreational transport. We understood there was some official letter from War Office backing the scheme at a time when petrol was still rationed for the general public.

Our weekend destination was usually Wall End Barn at the head of Langdale. There would be seven or eight of us. Before leaving we would pile our blankets and 'biscuits' (segmented mattresses), folding chairs and a table into the back of the truck. Our last call was to the cookhouse where we loaded pots and pans and a field cooker together with the rations we would have eaten had we stayed in Catterick.

Arriving at Wall End Barn we shared floor space with the regular weekenders who had probably hitch-hiked over from Huddersfield with a can or two of baked beans to last them for the weekend. Their jaws gaped as we threw down the tailgate and pulled out sacks of potatoes, whole cabbages and cauliflowers, strings of sausages or shoulders of lamb. The petrol cooker shot out a four-foot tongue of flame into the darkness; a metal contraption was bridged over the flame to support a row of saucepans on top. Later, as a messing officer, I learnt that it was part of the field kitchen catering scale for 125 men.

What did we climb? We made very tentative steps, because we were mostly beginners and there was a rapid turnover as cadets completed their six months training and were posted elsewhere as fledgling second lieutenants. Continuity was provided by John Lewis, an NCO with one of the training regiments. He could actually lead V Diffs, so we all tied on behind until we felt confident enough to launch out on our own. Luckily, I found I could lead almost immediately, but we worked up slowly from Scout Crag to the safe confines of Gwynne's or Rake End Chimneys on Pavey Ark and the classics on Bowfell. Gimmer was the height of ambition; gradually we succumbed to the exhilaration and exposure of *Main Wall*, *Oliversons*, *Bracket and Slab* and the easier alphabet routes. On Sunday mornings we stood ecstatic in our belay niches, taking in the rope over shoulder belays or gazing out across the valley to Blea Tarn. We felt like gods or saintly statues on some cathedral's west front, in comparison to our earthbound comrades in arms, who would be lolling on their beds in Catterick reading *The News of the World*.

Descending tired out, sweat soddened, but exultant to the Old Dungeon Ghyll, Cyril Bulman, the landlord, was kind enough to give us pints of still warm milk for free before we quenched our thirst with his shandy or beer. Then, sitting in the late evening sunshine, we would listen to the



George Band in 'Brigham Plates' on Scout Crag, 1948. Photo: Geoff Exell

accounts of those who had been climbing on the 'gentleman's side' of Gimmer. A lean pale laced, straw haired, climber with prehensile hands was pointed out with awe: Arthur Dolphin, who had just put up the ultimate line on Gimmer between *F Route* and *The Crack*, which he had christened *Kipling Groove* because it was 'ruddy 'ard'.

One grey Saturday we were speeding along in the three-tonner across the Pennines somewhere between Bowes and Brough when a sand-coloured staff car cut in and waved us to a halt. Out stepped a self-important officer in civvies: "I am the Deputy Assistant Director of Supplies and Transport for Northern Command. What are you doing in that vehicle so far from your base?"

"We're on our way to the Lakes for the weekend. It's all official. Here's the works ticket signed by our Commandant." He took one look at it. "Doesn't your Colonel know that recreational transport is restricted to within 30 miles of your base? I'll be calling him on Monday morning."

That was the end of our idyll. There was no formal permission from War Office. The Colonel, God bless him, had done it off his own bat because he approved of our, or originally Tony Moulam's, initiative. It really only amounted to the cost of the petrol and the vehicle, but those were the days when they might have spent rather more on a golf tournament for Generals, long before they had thought of 'adventure training' for the troops.

Soon after the demise, I completed my training. We were allowed to express three preferences for where we might be posted. Keen to travel at His Majesty's expense, I put down first choice Far East, second Middle East, third Near East. In the event, I went 400 yards west to the School of Signals, possibly because I was in one of the Northern Command sports teams. Thereafter, my outdoor pursuits were restricted by limited public transport: a marathon walk round the head of Swaledale; a day on gritstone at Almscliffe, or the Three Peaks walk over Ingleborough, Whernside and Pen-y-Ghent, where I remember having to walk a further thirteen miles in the drizzle to catch the only bus.

My closest climbing partner, Norman Haycock, had been posted to Chester, and together we resolved that on being demobbed in July 1949 we would spend our release leave in Scotland. It was a great success. On the way to Skye we met up with two girls. Norman ended up marrying one of them. We got drenched in *Waterpipe Gully* and on *Cioch Direct*. I lost my amateur status at the Portree Highland Games. Finally, we climbed the *Crack of Doom*, our first VS and, in those days, the only one in the Skye guidebook.

We came back via Langdale to see if our new found ability could be transferred to Gimmer. We dared and steeled ourselves to lead through on *The Crack*. I still remember the right hand jam and exultant pull up over the final overhang. A cluster of ramblers watching from the summit of Pike o' Stickle sent over their leader to interrogate us: "Was that *Gimmer Crack*?" he asked.

A Signal Success

"Yes, it is a fine route," I replied without telling him it was only my second VS. Swelling with silent pride, I felt we had at last graduated with honours from the Signals Mountaineering Club. Tony Moulam and John Lewis would have been proud of us.

Rock-Climbers in Action in Snowdonia

Peter Harding

This was the exciting title of a book published in 1966. A seminal text of the time, it now prompts a question: who were the climbers involved in most of the action in Wales during the years before the book came out? Despite one or two glaring mistakes and misconceptions, the text was amusing and well-written by Tony Smythe. However, after mentioning a number of climbers, it settled on highlighting just three or four names, thus tending to give the impression that these activists of the late 1950s and early 60s were responsible for most of the significant ascents. This was understandable, of course, since current idols always supersede yesterday's; but the book was also 'clearly' intended as a showcase for John Cleare's talents as a climbing photographer as much as it was a potted history of rock-climbing in Arfon. This is why it commands such a good price today as a collector's item. It was, dare we say, the forerunner and trend-setter for those dedicated photographic climbing books — Ken Wilson's magnificent tomes *The Black Cliff* (his joint effort with Peter Crew and Jack Soper), *Hard Rock* and *Classic Rock*; and the routes depicted and detailed there eventually became as collectable as the book itself.

But what of the question I have posed? What criteria can we use to find an answer? Who were the rock-climbers most in action in Snowdonia up until 1966? Let us look back through the first ascent lists in various CC guidebooks to Snowdonia, ignoring minor variants and fancy finishes, recording only the names of climbers who frequently appear on first ascent credits throughout these years; and let us indulge in a little competition.

So who's first in the frame? Well, for starters, there are the CC guidebook writers from far-off days, led by James Merriman Archer-Thompson, a true master of college and cragsmanship, who started his rock-climbing career more than a century ago. He is followed by two great names from the inter-war years: Colin Kirkus and J Menlove Edwards. C.H.S.R. Palmer also figures frequently as a new route pioneer. Then, after World War Two, two new guidebook writers arrived on the scene to pick up the threads left by their famous forebears: during the late 1940s, 'Moulam an' Ardin' (as I would often refer to my earliest climbing partnership in good Nottingham vernacular) proceeded with intensive crag exploration.

This exploration created a spark that set off the first 'Big Bang' — that huge explosion of rock climbing activity in the 50s and 60s. It was recorded, too, for my own 'Bumper Fun Book' — the first Llanberis Pass guidebook came out in 1950 and Tony Moulam's magnum opus, the Carneddau guide,

quickly followed.

The scene was set, then. At the heart of the explosion that followed was a legend in the making: Joe Brown. Partnered by another (now) legendary figure, Don Whillans, these two were the earth shakers. Add to these two the names of several younger men — Trevor Jones, Claude Davies and, to complete a dozen first ascensionists, a couple of names from the book in question: Pete Crew and Baz Ingle.

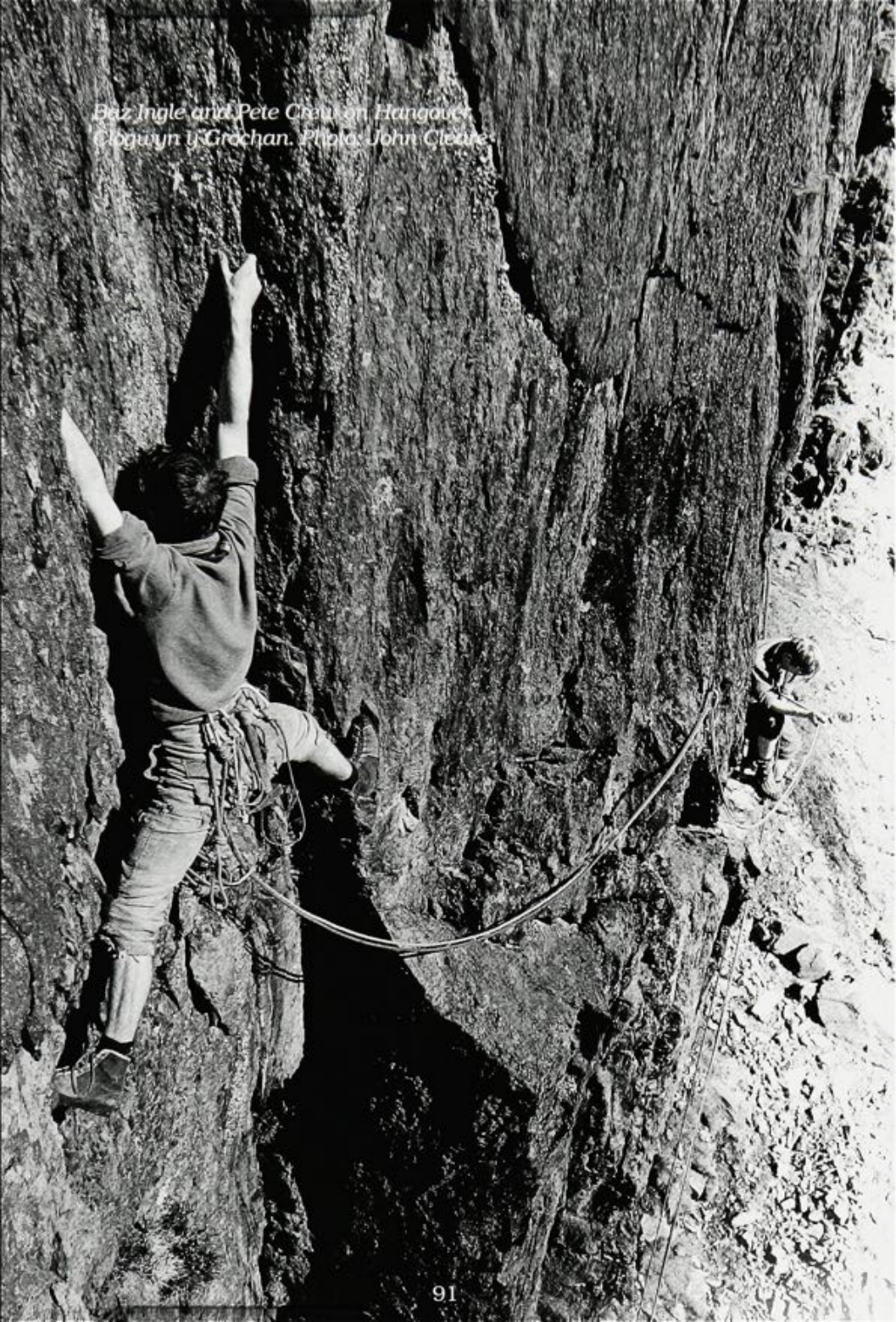
Before I proceed with this competition, though, I must admit to a feeling of guilt. Whenever I look back at those halcyon days, I realise I was trying to protect the newer, harder climbs for a selective posterity in the 'Fun Book' by grading them as Extreme or Exceptionally Severe. Trying to deter young tearaways from these routes was, with hindsight, doomed to failure. A year or two after the guide was out, Joe Brown (or so I am told), used to go round telling his youthful followers that the VSs were only moderately difficult and the V Diff's were ridiculously easy. Of course, the verdict about the VSs was quite true: this was a well known fact to the few who then climbed at the top standard of the time. But to blow the gaff was sure to lead to trouble; and some of Menlove Edwards's V Diff's were diabolically hard. Think of *Chalkren Stairs* on Gallt-yr-Ogof, for instance — certainly a very severe V Diff.

But to the competition again. Starting at 1965 and going backwards in time through the first-ascent lists soon reveals that Pete Crew and Baz Ingle were involved, together or separately, in 24 and 26 new routes respectively (they continued to do many more in the years that followed, of course). A little earlier, Claude Davies notched up a creditable 37 routes, while the ubiquitous Trevor Jones managed a gradely 47. Earlier still, and therefore somewhat surprisingly, Don Whillans clocks up only 27 (most of them with Joe Brown). Joe himself, by the end of 1965, comes in with a score of 85 new routes. Perhaps this is less amazing, however, than Menlove Edwards's total of 102. J.M.E.'s contemporary, the hugely influential Colin Kirkus, did just 39 new climbs (though this is probably because he died in the Second World War).

Now that I have leapfrogged back to pre-war years, it can be recorded that C.H. (Stewart) R. Palmer came in on 29 new climbs — the first one, done solo, being *Needle's Eye* on Glyder Fach which was mistakenly believed to be *Hawk's Nest Buttress*. Palmer's most famous first ascent was *Belle Vue Bastion*, on which he seconded Ivan Waller's brilliant lead. Considering C.H.S.R.P. spent so much of his time abroad, helping the Colonial Office manage various parts of the British Empire, his score is very noteworthy for the years before and during World War Two. Prior to World War One, though, J.M.Archer-Thompson turned in a total of 67 first ascents before his suicide in 1912.

However, it's now time to declare the winner of this little competition. The rock climber 'Most in Action in Snowdonia' before 1966 is... Tony Moulam, with a magnificent total of 107 routes. As for the missing candidate (yours

*Baz Ingle and Pete Croun on Hangauer
Clogwyn y Grachan. Photo: John Cleare*



truly), I'm down there with a mediocre 37. But should anyone suggest that to be truly comparable, each first ascent total ought to be divided by the number of years active in Snowdonia, then I might punch the air with justifiable glee. For to finish in front of Joe Brown and Tony Moulam would be fantastic — even though this is as daft and misleading an assessment as the results of all climbing competitions can be.

The celebrated and very exposed traverse on the crux of Tony Moulam's Mur y Niwl — one of Britain's finest VS climbs. Climbers: Duggie Baines and Barbara Spark. Photo: John Cleare



The 'Scottie'

Ken Latham

During the summer of 1972, I was managing the Ellis Brigham shop in Capel Curig. On the staff at that time was George 'Scottie' Dwyer. I can't remember now if he was just helping out as a favour, or working there on a regular basis; but from what I recall, he was retired from guiding and just came in to sort out the hire equipment. He hadn't climbed for many years — indeed, a hip replacement had curtailed his mountaineering activities somewhat (remember in those days, hip jobs really were a bit of a nut and bolt affair).

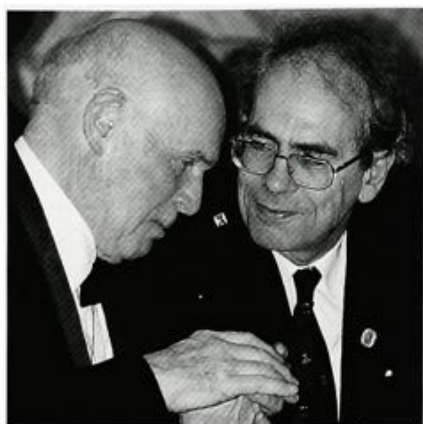
It was during a quiet day that we got talking. Generally, he kept himself to himself most of the time, so it was a real bonus when he came through to the rear of the shop, carrying a couple of brews and began telling stories of his exploits. Some of the expeditions in the forties and fifties, driving overland to the Himalaya, seemed fantastical: encounters with hoods and bandits were commonplace. He also talked about his climbing in this country and of course, his first ascent of *Central Route* on Llech Ddu.

As the day wore on and Scottie became more forthright, he handed me a metal wedge on a thin piece of line. He seemed to hold back as I examined this crude bit of gear, but asked me for my thoughts about it. I was used to Moac and Clog wedges that were then on the market and I remember being fairly unimpressed at first. It was only a while later that this encounter took on a special significance. Scottie told me he had been working on some ideas for protection devices for rock-climbing, but did not have the means to get them made up. The nut he showed me was a rough mock-up of one he had made in 1946. I was astounded. He said that he had never used it on a climb and was unsure of its holding properties. The line available then was hemp and would in all probability not have withstood the stress of a leader fall. Scottie told me he had re-discovered the nut as he was clearing out some old equipment and had promptly forgotten about it. He asked me to keep it as he had no use for it anymore. I returned to Liverpool and sadly, Scottie died soon after, while still only in his sixties.

Almost twenty five years later I was having what everyone will recognise as one of those loft-cleaning sessions in which everything must go, when I came across a long forgotten 'sack. Rummaging through the gear it contained — Moacs, Leeper pegs and Peck runners — I found the 'Scottie' nut. I considered what to do with it. Reluctant to show it around at first, though interested to find if anyone could shed light on other bits of its history, I took it to the CC Centenary Dinner. Many eminent members looked at it, and when they heard its story, commented that it seemed entirely possible it did indeed originate in the year Scottie claimed. It may well be that Scottie couldn't countenance introducing such a piece of equipment in



The 'Scottie' Caption Competition.
'Many eminent members looked at it.'; but what did they actually say about the nut? (Best quotations published in next Journal.) Photos: Tim Noble.



1. ? and Robin Campbell.



2. Ken Wilson, Bob Moulton and Ken Latham.



3. Bob Allen and Derek Walker.



4. Dr. Terry Gifford and Sir Chris Bonington.



5. Ken Wilson, Ken Latham and Doug Scott.

the 1940s; it would no doubt have been seen as unethical. Then he mislaid or forgot about it for years until he told me about it.

If Scottie had found a maker for his nut in the 40s and launched it on the growing market, who could say how the history of British rock-climbing would read today? The design — combining variable, sliding camming and multi-faceted placement — was at least fifteen years ahead of its time. I showed it to Joe Brown recently and he was convinced of its authenticity; he also commented that he hadn't used any machined nuts himself until about 1961, as he thought they were unethical. Slings on pebbles were still in widespread use.

If any member can throw more light on this unique nut — which I'll continue to call the 'Scottie'— I'd be delighted to hear from you.

Live from Snowdon, BBC 1963

Dave Thomas

My descent stopped abruptly as, with a painful tug, my hair got trapped. The heavy transmitter was pulling me backwards; my harness was cutting me painfully; my forehead was burning and I was locked into a pre-natal crouch — and this was all down to a rope running through a very hot descendeur. Buying the descendeur had seemed a brilliant idea when I first saw it in Pierre Allain's shop in Paris; and I'd made many long abseils with it through the fifties. It was a hand-sized fork of aluminium alloy with a hole at one end of its five-inch shaft. The shaft divided into three arms, one curling inwards to hold the 'up' rope (which was wound twice round the fork end). Held firmly by the right hand while the left hand controlled the 'low' rope, it was reliable, light and strong. I still have it somewhere. But of course, it really needed two hands to operate it properly; and in those days, none of us wore anything more protective on our heads than a balaclava — abseiling or climbing. Hence my scalp-challenging predicament.

I was marooned some hundred and ten feet above the ground on *Piggott's Climb*. Every move drew me into a tighter bundle as the seventy-five pound BBC box of tricks hung out. Below me was my 'Sherpa', Ray Greenall; Ray's job had been to carry camera and transmitter up the Green Terrace to the top of the East Buttress. We were on the first BBC Outside Climbing Broadcast — 'Live From Snowdon' — to be transmitted on Saturday 28th September, 1963; but it was now Friday 27th September and it was looking very much as if one of the camera teams would be *hors de combat*.

I relaxed as well as I could, shifting my bottom and searching for a way to free my hair. Unfortunately, Ray couldn't reach my feet. Across the lake to my right, the BBC was installed in a wooden hut. The main camera with its big telephoto lens was pointing in my direction. This was pause-time in the Friday rehearsal, between second and third broadcast, but still being recorded by the engineers. We were unable to talk to control just then and the engineers looked at us over the distance, incuriously, unaware of my predicament. I wondered if anyone would be able to read my lips if I shouted for help. Ray offered to climb down unroped and get a long top rope lowered to me; but this was not practicable. Time was running out. I recalled how Edgar Wallace's hero was saved each week by 'a mighty leap'; but that didn't seem to be a solution either. I reflected on my early enthusiasm to help the BBC and wondered if I had been wise.

It had all started when Chris Briggs introduced me to Alan Chivers, a BBC producer, who was staying at PYG some weeks before the Outside Broadcast, planning the whole event. "What we want," he'd said, "are some experienced climbers to carry and operate our light-weight cameras during

the first climbing broadcast, 'Live From Snowdon'." The BBC's own riggers would set up a platform for a large camera position near the cliff-edge overlooking the upper part of the East Buttress. His next comment hooked me: the BBC cameramen could not be expected to involve themselves on the rock face — "Much too dangerous," he said. There would, he outlined, be two teams of two: one to point and operate the camera (which would be connected to the transmitter by an eight-foot cable) and one to carry the transmitter and make any running adjustments. The back of the transmitter was hinged and could be opened, exposing a mass of electronics. If anything didn't work, the cameraman could focus the camera on the opened back of the transmitter and the engineer below could direct me by the camera radio link. I envisaged the worst: "Turn third pot adjuster on the top row, but watch out for high voltage." We came to a gentleman's agreement that if in an emergency we happened just to drop it, they would 'understand' — but would I please remember that each transmitter cost £2,500. I had recently returned from a geological and glaciological expedition to Jan Mayen Island and was feeling fit at forty — even if I had just got engaged; so I joined up.

I recruited in my turn, Eric Herbert, Terry Heatherly and Mike Dixon. We spent a day at BBC Engineering in Wembley Park, London, doing a crash course. It was stressed that we should never point the camera directly at the sun, otherwise the image-orthicon would melt. Nor should we point the camera vertically up or down, otherwise dust in the vidicom tube might degrade the image. It was advice that Neil Armstrong ought to have heeded when he stepped onto the moon's surface, waving his video camera around. He pointed it at the sun and the tube failed.

These preparations we were party to were only a small part of this broadcast, costing some £70,000 — a substantial sum in those days. We were based in Llanberis, having use of the Snowdon Railway each day. Starting on the Sunday, the BBC 'circus' arrived in force to set up the broadcast. The heavy gear, railway sleepers, cables, generators etc. were transported on railway flatcars to near Clogwyn Station and from thence to a point high above Cwm D'ur Arrdu. Despite my best geological advice, the Fiat Caterpilla driver managed to bury it deep in a totty-bog: it took all day to extricate itself.

Each day of the preparation was spent sorting out viewpoints on the crag. We, of course, were only the foot soldiers: Joe Brown, Don Whillans, Ian McNaught-Davies and the Frenchman, Robert Paragot were the stars. We were all paid notional amounts. One day, walking up to the crag, we met Gaston Rebuffat, who unaccountably was visiting Wales; the niceties of Gallic welcomes were preserved:

Paragot: "Bonjour Guido — to a professional on holiday."

Rebuffat in reply: "Bonjour amateur."

On the Thursday, we carried out a rehearsal on an untimed basis. There had been a lot of rain earlier in the week, but Thursday and Friday

were sunny. We shot and recorded the traverse across the East Face, in the first of what were to be three hour-long transmissions with half hour breaks, which were to be fitted into the Saturday afternoon sports programme. Each hour was recorded on huge rolls of tape and at the end of filming, the recording was driven to London to be set up in rough 'sync' on the Saturday, just in case of accidents or bad weather. The stars had to wear the same light-coloured clothes on each day of filming. Being in black and white television, the colour of the clothes didn't matter.

By now, I had been hanging by my long and curlies on the horns of a dilemma for too long: the only solution was to pull my hair out, a clump at a time, until I was free and, very probably, prematurely bald. This was painfully done and within a few minutes we had roped to the ground and I was heading for a cup of tea. I had tears in my eyes and a bright red lump on my forehead that felt like an eagle's egg. My diary for the day of the live broadcast reads as follows:

'Left Ruth to watch on TV. Up by the 8.30a.m. train, walking from Clogwyn Station. Some cloud about the upper crags. Waited until the radio camera had been checked. Jessie James carried the pack up to Green Terrace with a top rope. He fixed hand-rail ropes. Eric and I set up our camera, transmitter and spare batteries below the famous chockstone on *Piggot's*. Set up by 12.10. but camera not working! Total panic as we must go live at 12.25. Despite long-range twiddling, it did not function until the second session. Trouble traced to a faulty aerial plug.

Later, we shot the two ropes traversing across the sheer wall of Vember and past our stance, then up *Piggot's*. The radio camera worked perfectly — though very tiring for Eric holding the heavy camera at a high angle (mindful of instructions) without a tripod. Quite a large rock fell from high up at 3.00 p.m., just missing a fixed BBC camera on the scree. It was probably dislodged by sightseers to show that climbing really is dangerous. As soon as Paragot, the last climber, reached the Green Terrace on time, we packed up the gear and followed — this time up a wire caving ladder. With a top rope this time but still carrying the seventy-five pound transmitter on my back, I struggled up the pitch. Don Whillans' cheery voice accompanied me: "You shouldn't be here, Dave; you're not a rock-gymnast, you're an alpinist now." Then up to the top position for the last relay from Pinnacle Face, but with cloud obscuring all. The climb continued, invisible to cameras.'

In the actual broadcast, the recording we'd made the previous day was transmitted instead. Chris Brasher was there, too, commentating. I have an abiding memory of a disembodied voice coming from the mist in response to a query from Chris: "Joe to Mac: hey Mac, speak to this idiot."



Dave Potts on Pinnacle Arete, Cloggy. Photo: John Cleare

Days with Don

John Streetly

Don Whillans and I met for the first time in Chamonix in 1952 when Ted Wrangham introduced me to him and his wife, Audrey, in the Bar Nationale. As we shook hands, we were eyeball to eyeball. Don drew himself up. I drew myself up. He drew himself up again. We both grinned then, and our friendship began from that moment.

A few weeks later we met again in Llanberis and started a week of fast and furious climbing. The first route was *Ochre Groove*, the story of which Don relates in his autobiography. We then toured around ticking off a large number of exciting and very hard climbs in fast times. With smooth rope work, we were climbing some of these routes in minutes. One I remember perfectly, though I've still never seen it. We went up into Cwm Silyn, parking the car in driving rain and zero visibility. We followed a path, still in driving rain, between two barely visible tarns and up some scree. Slithering leftwards across this, we arrived at the base of the cliff. Don examined the foot of the wall minutely, trying to find the start of the climb, which I think was *Ogof Direct*. Visibility was still zero, but eventually he set off up a sheet of water. I followed, virtually blind in the conditions, to the top of the cliff. Still in torrential rain we made it back to the car, utterly drenched, as if we'd simply walked through the tarns. To this day, I have never actually seen Cwm Silyn.

When the weather eased, we went round to Idwal to do *Suicide Wall*. Don led the first pitch and belayed in the little niche. As I passed him to lead the second pitch, he said loudly: "If you're going to fall off, yell!"

"Why?" I replied.

"So I can jump," he called back, "this belay is no good." He pulled out the belay piton and waved it at me. "No bloody good," he repeated, pushing it back by hand into the crack. I felt as if I'd passed some sort of initiation test; and later that evening, celebrating at the Pen-y-Gwyrdd, we achieved a 'double-whammy'. When Chris Briggs, the landlord heard that we'd just done the third ascent of *Suicide Wall* and the second ascent of *Suicide Groove*, we got two free drinks to match our two good climbs.

My next chance to climb with Don was after three years abroad, on a quick dash to Chamonix to climb *The Walker Spur* under adverse conditions. The hardest part for me after a long lay-off was the walk in to the route. We had a very nasty bivouac in stormy weather near the top. Don and I huddled either side of the lanky Les Brown who acted as tent pole for Don's little bivvy tent.

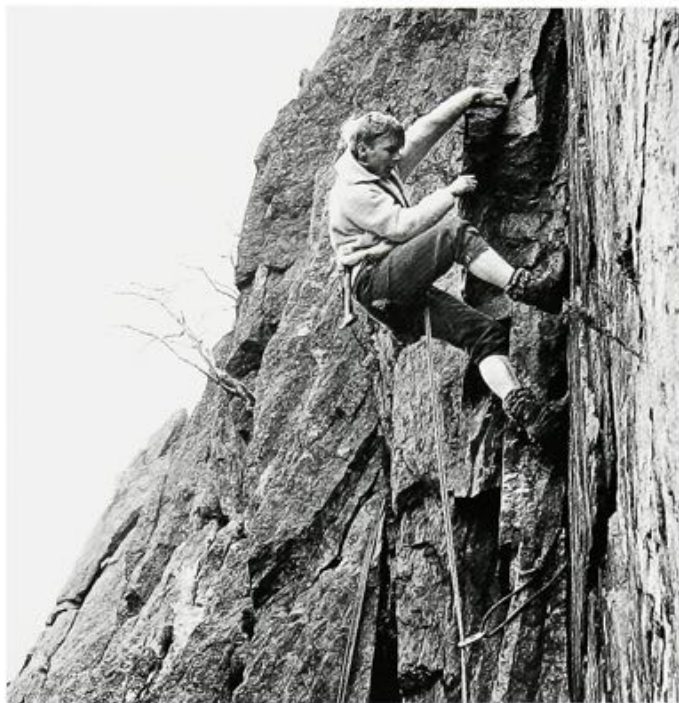
We met again after some years, briefly in Patagonia, when we climbed the Central Tower of Paine. Here Barry Page and I had virtually to fight off an Italian party, while Don and Chris Bonington made it to the summit.

Fortunately, the Italians got there next day, so couldn't claim it as a joint first ascent. It was just below the Central Tower that Don and I spent another terrible night together, wrapped in the wind-blasted remains of our tent. As a result of this experience, Don was prompted to develop the idea of the 'Whillans Box' — the prototype of which we began to construct the very next day. Eventually, two of us ended up awaiting the final assault on the Tower inside this box. I advise, however, that four people should never ever try to sleep in a 4ft x 4ft Whillans Box.

Climbing with Don was always fun and we never exchanged a cross word. He was a very safe and efficient climber who was always in control and imperturbable. In the pub he could show an aggressive side to his character; but later he became a friend to my entire family and we had great times when he and Audrey visited us in the West Indies. They both developed a keen interest in snorkelling and he became a great fan of our parrot. One day Don returned from the shops with a typically 'wry' present for her in the form of a large box of polyfilla.

All we need now is Jim Perrin's long-awaited and much-heralded biography of my old friend: perhaps this will give us the 'Full-Monty'?

Pete Crew leading Whillans's ferocious Direct Finish to Erosion Grooves — still 'a tiger's pitch'. Photo: John Cleare



Poems by Kym Martindale

Tigers and Summits

It is better to live as a tiger for a day than a thousand years as a sheep

Tigers and summits
carry the same tawny light
and charged silence.

Their symmetry
is the symmetry of focus
with narrowed eyes
and squared palms
sinews and heart coiled,
tigers consider
the warning plume;

and summits
frame them,
model their passion
and clean-limbed ambition.

Tigers and summits
fool you,
one minute clear-eyed and whole,
holding you in the eye
of their own storm,
then lost
without drama
while you were looking away.

Tigers,
summits —
a dangerous faith.
Above the soft meadow,
the sky crackles;
I think of the electricity of arriving,
the fire in my fist
for a live, silent moment.
My mind stretches
awake
to summits
leaping with light.

New Season

That's the jangle of last year's triumphs and losses you hear,
but,
the hard-eyed glitter catching the new sun —
that is now,
and all the bold summer.

Today in the Avon Gorge,
the musk of sun and chalk on rock
fresh in the senses,
one foot in the grimy traffic,
one stepped ready,
heart and arms daring
lines and cracks,
the adrenalin dazzles.

The charm of the beauty of sequence,
the lure of possibility
shines
and shines.

Errata, Corrigenda and Addenda

Dave Gregory

In the 1989/90 Journal (a fine journal), edited by Ian Smith (a fine editor), was a fine article by one Tim Noble (a fine fellow, and the present editor, in whose good graces one hopes to remain) entitled 'Gone Domeing' in which reference was made to *The Hobbit Book* (an extremely fine climb). So fine a climb in fact, that readers may find benefit in some amplification of the original comments.

The arcing groove is plainly visible on Mariuolumne Dome, well above Drug Dome and the trees which hide many of the valley's classics from a viewer on the road. The temptation to approach it directly should be resisted; in fact, the guidebook (*Rock Climbs of Tuolumne Meadows* by Don Reid and Chris Falkenstein) indicates that one should park at the west (down-valley) end of Lamb Dome and walk up between that and Drug Dome.

This is good advice for Drug Dome — although directly below, the wall on which *The Hobbit Book* lies open, contains only climbs high in the algebra. To its immediate left is a long slope of talus. "That's a lot of useless sweat," I was once told, was the derivation of talus and this is. Scree is a slope of blocks and rocks which move when you step on them: one step up and two slides back. Talus, however, is a slope of fixed stable blocks — very useful if they are less than half-leg height, a stairway almost. The Drug Dome talus is not this, though. It consists of huge blocks, irregularly faceted with leg-trapping gaps between them and huge oubliettes below them in which a year's searching might not find an unfortunate prisoner. Go left, well left, almost onto the side apron of Lamb Dome, until above you and on your right, a barrier of crags runs rightwards up the hill.

Follow the track under this series of Curbars until at its end a huge gully splits the mountainside above. Note this gully: a huge blade of rock splits it in two. The right-hand side (facing up) is blocked by one of those blocks of talus which did not make it to the horror show below. The left-hand side is a way through and you should use it on the way down.

Once below the gully, start to traverse rightwards across the slope. The diagram in the guide is of small use, giving merely an optimistic arrow indicating a traverse across the top of Drug Dome (Drug is not a dome in the usual Tuolumne sense; it has a steep front face and an almost flat top which rises into steep slabs running up to *Hobbit*). There is no clear line across the slabs and it is worth roping up. The access, after a fight with a tree, lies across an improbable and exposed traverse before the comparative safety of the shelf below *Hobbit* is reached.

Why all this fuss to reach a climb of a mere four pitches, and the hardest three rated at only 5.7 at that? Why? Because they are only 5.7 and a Tuolumne three-star 5.7 is high quality indeed, worth about double on

Stanage say. The prime pitch of the four is the third, tersely labelled on the topo, 'golden 5.7'. If you are into wedding rings and the study of sunsets the word golden may bring warm, even aesthetic feelings, but to the writer it brings another — fear.

The Tuolumne Valley was created by glaciation but much of the ice-planed granite has suffered sufficient weathering since to give the almost prehensile friction and protruberant felspar crystals for which the area is famous. Many of the other sections of the rock are still characterised by the relatively unweathered smooth grey areas left by the ice but which, surprisingly, have very good friction. There are, however, lying in wait for the unwary, sections of shining gold polish. Here the effect of the glacial grinding and pressure has been to metamorphose the outer layer of granite into this gold skin which, even when dry, has the friction properties of a skid pan.

We have a curiosity then — a 5.7 pitch labelled 'golden' (presumably smooth and slick) and there is one further item to be taken into account: an R. The full route title is *Hobbit Book 5.7 R(★★★)*. R stands for 'run-out', meaning that on a sizable section of the route no natural opportunity of protection is available and the provision of bolts has not been liberal. R, then, is a blatant nod to a keen-eyed horse.

The first pitch gives some indication of what is to follow. Although only rated 5.6 the initial easy moves up a groove are followed by a sketchy move right across a slab and an equally thin groove leftwards back to a belay in the main groove. Altogether worth 5.7. The second pitch belies the R designation: it's a crack in a groove — almost a runnel, actually — which gradually steepens, but which has more possible placements than you could carry gear for, to a comfortable belay from which the entire maverick third pitch can be seen clearly.

This has not the 24 carat gold skin of one's earlier fears, but a fairly liberal series of yellow patches stuck on the steep granite face as though the huge block which once filled the dihedral had been attached imperfectly to the base rock by the yellow material of a dyke and when the block went to join the talus nightmare below, only these remnant pieces of dyke glue remained.

Climbing the pitch is a masterpiece of navigation between the islands of gold. The only bolt on the pitch proves, when one reaches it, to be a bean-tin special of a hanger held on by no more than a substantial drawing pin. Some forty feet above it, a sling can be hung over the raised edge of one of the patches. Two pieces of gear, both suspect, in a rope length warrants more than R, runout, I suggest: it merits X, the American designation of death if you fall.

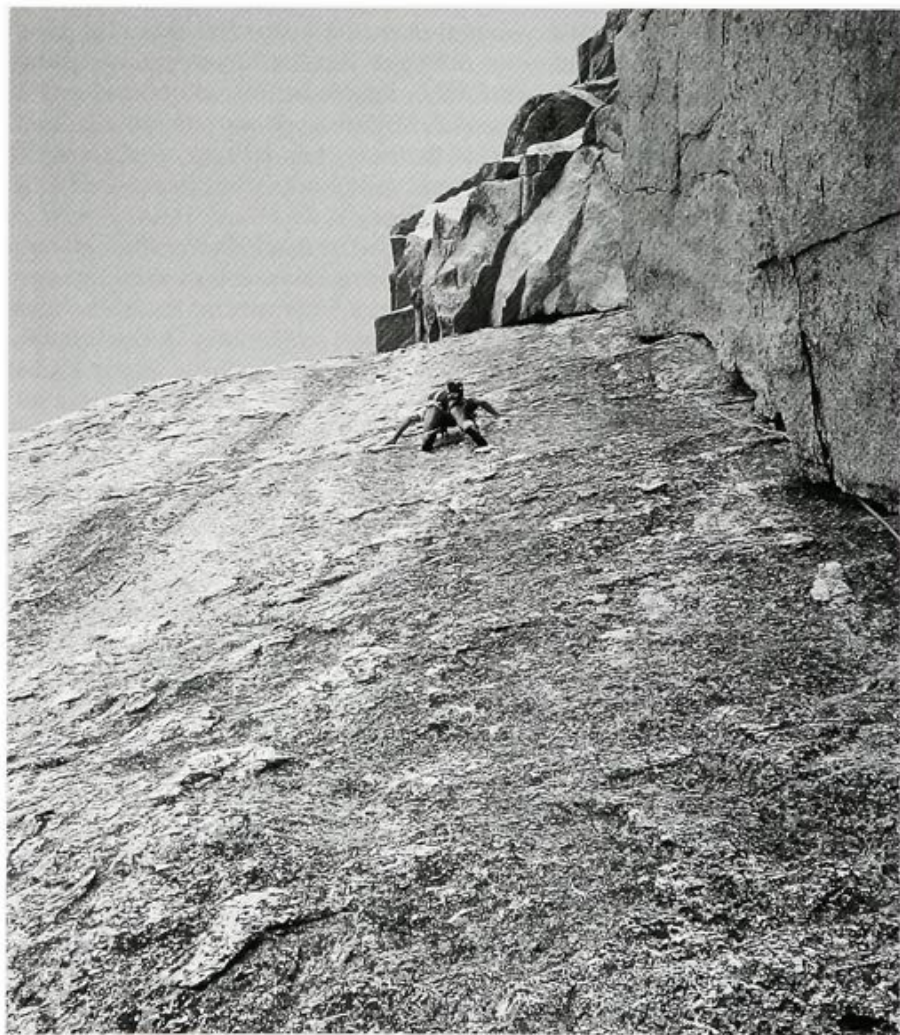
The actual grade of the climbing probably warrants 5.7, with a move or two, no more, of 5.8; but by the time a leader — even one capable of much higher standards — gets high on the pitch, he will feel very lonely.

The fourth pitch is a welcome anticlimax: steady, well-protected progress up the groove is followed by an excursion left onto the wall and

a finish up a crack to the top of the dome.

All that now remains is to walk easily, and with some relief at the release, leftwards (facing in) towards the head of the huge split gully; to avoid the potential cemetery of the uninscribed headstones of the talus, and to keep remembering the top grade metal of that golden pitch and the mettle needed to lead it.

'The Shining': Larry Giacomino navigates his lonely way through 'the islands of gold' on The Hobbit Book, pitch three. Photo: Tim Noble



Expedition to Sikkim, 1996

Phil Bartlett

In October 1996, Phil Bartlett was part of the first foreign climbing expedition allowed into northern Sikkim for fifty years. The expedition was led by Doug Scott.

Chombu's North Face, drenched in powder snow and bordered by cornices of white meringue, rises above us. Lindsay and I have ploughed a deep trench across the glacier to reach it. We have also reached a point of decision. I poke around with my ice axe, irrationally hoping for some miraculous change, but the situation is really all too clear. After weeks of unsettled weather followed by a major storm, the mountain is in a very dangerous condition, and descent the only sane option.

We are camped in northern Sikkim, a narrow zone of mountainous territory sandwiched between the Himalayan kingdoms of Nepal and Bhutan. Tibet is only a few miles to the north, and hems us in to the east too, where the Chumbu valley pushes down from the north, squeezing Sikkim and Bhutan apart and reaching almost to the Indian plains. The whole area was absorbed into the British empire in the late nineteenth century, but for most purposes continued to be independent, run by the hereditary Chokyal or king and a small ruling elite. It was remote and difficult of access, home to the peaceable and restrained Lepcha people, and like several other small enclaves along the three-thousand-mile sprawl of the Himalaya continued to support a rich and archaic Buddhist culture until astonishingly recently. Partition in 1947 had little immediate effect. Then in 1975 India invaded, and the Sikkim/Tibet border became another frontier of the Indian/Chinese stand-off.

The northern areas in particular have been off-limits for years. We are the first foreign expedition allowed here for fifty years, and it has taken all of Doug's name and experience to achieve it. But the result is an extraordinarily strong sense of history. Only half a mile up the valley from our camp, hot sulphurous water bubbles out of the ground, turning the stones a vivid green. These springs were on the itinerary of every traveller and political agent who ever came here, and are described in all the classic works on Sikkim. They are just as popular now; it is an odd experience, in the supposed isolation of it all, when well-to-do residents from Gangtok, Sikkim's capital, or Indian tourists from further afield, trail through our camp in the early morning light, intent on sampling their delights.

The mountains invite similar thoughts. From the Sebu La, the pass to the north of Chombu which separates the Lachen and the Lachun, the two great valleys of northern Sikkim, we look out to stunning landscape and an overwhelming sense of others' adventures. Shipton, Tilman, Kellas — all

the great British explorers of the pre-war years were here. Much of what they achieved was done lightweight and fast, almost on the spur of the moment, chances taken whilst on the trek to or from the north side of Everest. In the '20s and '30s all Everest expeditions had to approach this way, following a great loop east and north to avoid Nepal, then a closed country. Now, of course, it is Nepal that is open and Sikkim closed. To the west the great peaks of eastern Nepal lie magnificently across the horizon, the North-West Face of Kanchenjunga, the biggest unclimbed face in the world, dominating effortlessly. Doug made the third ascent of the mountain, the first in lightweight style, and is particularly glad to see this hitherto forbidden side.

We follow a high valley north to the Donkya La, an old trade route and weakness in the main Himalayan watershed. Politically the border is still ten miles further on, on the low barren hills above the headwaters of the Teesta river, but geographically this is it. Below the pass a vast brown tableland stretches away, marked only by two great azure lakes and tiny snowy peaks on the horizon. Tibet. Lhasa is only two hundred miles away, Kampa Dzong, the spectacular fortified monastery where the Everest expeditions would stop to recover and acclimatise, less than thirty. The panorama reminds me unmistakably of the small but superb paintings Theodore Howard Somervell, one of the most polymathic of those early explorers, used to do on old bits of expedition packing case — the only thing he had to hand.

To the west, the watershed rises up in the squat bulk of Mount Gorudongmar, first climbed by Eric Shipton in the 1930s. From our eyrie we can watch the battle being fought over its summit snows. Not a political or military battle, but something even older. The laden clouds of the monsoon, pushed up the forested valleys from the plains of Bengal, must eventually meet the dry air off the Tibetan plateau, and for many months the front line lies just here. The cloud curls up the southern slopes and ridges and over the summits before descending to the arid desert ahead. And immediately, it starts to thin and break up. Only two or three miles to the north it has dispersed completely. Tibet stalks endlessly away under a clear blue sky.

We turn and descend back into the cloud, hoping that soon the monsoon will weaken and those blue skies start to spread south. It's mid-October, but it seems that even this is too early. There's no perfect answer, because if you wait too long, the colds of winter will have set in, and on the high peaks that means deep snow and avalanche. In the Himalaya in autumn one is looking always for a weather window. And sometimes it doesn't arrive.

We have had one narrow escape already, climbing to the summit of a virgin peak in a gathering storm, which in a matter of hours dumps quantities of new snow onto already laden slopes. On the way down we know it's dangerous, but know we have no choice. Back on the glacier we are relieved to have escaped unscathed, and beat a hasty retreat as the snow continues unabated.

This is too beautiful a place to die in; and we're really too old. At forty one, I'm the youngest. Mark Bowen our American, Skip Novak, four times round-the-world professional sailor and Antarctic expert, Julian Freeman-Attwood, forester and professional mountaineer, Lindsay Griffin, whom I have known and climbed with for twenty five years — and of course Doug — are all older. So is Balwant Sandhu, our Indian liaison officer, at sixty one a veteran of many Himalayan expeditions — including the first ascent of Changabang with Doug and Chris in 1974.

One morning I set off with Balwant into new territory, hoping the cloud will lift and marvelling at how Scottish these high valleys seem. Wreathed in cloud, a damp wind behind us, we could be in the Highlands in August. On a gravel flat a mile ahead we see animals and dive for cover behind boulders. They're Bharal, blue sheep, shy and usually very hard to see, as despite their considerable size their camouflage against the broken hillsides is almost perfect.

I carry on alone as Balwant returns to camp, climbing up onto deserted hills, breaking through the cloud into the sun, and finding cat tracks in a ravine where the snow has gathered more deeply. With blue sheep around I think immediately of their great predator, the snow leopard, and hurry on, elated, hoping against hope to see the animal, and knowing that one careless step on these snow-covered slopes could spell disaster. Chombu rises magnificently through the cloud sea, until incoming bad weather covers it and I return through gentle drizzle to camp.

Southern (dis)Comfort

Ben Bransby

The plan had been ideal: a week's climbing in Devon and Cornwall to tick lots of classics with the additional bonus that my parents would receive my GCSE results while I was away. This was essential, since they would have a full week to calm down and I would have time to think up excuses.

But the climbing didn't go quite as well as we'd hoped, with steady drizzle for most of the time. However, we did manage to work out some tricky boulder problems on the side wall of the Count House and we had an afternoon climbing from a nudist beach — which was fun, even if the beach was deserted because of the rain.

On the Tuesday, after two hours driving looking for a dry area, we found Tintagel Head had escaped the rain, so walked into the Head looking like backpackers (remember, the climbing is by permission only) and struggled up *Il Duce*. The crux second pitch seemed very hard — especially with it dripping wet from earlier rain.

Wednesday, we needed more of an adventure to relieve our frustration about the weather. The rain stayed in furthest Cornwall instead of following us around, so we decided to try *America* at Carn Gowla. Low tide would be at 5.00 p.m. which would give the route plenty of time to dry — provided the rain didn't find us again.

We passed the morning walking around in waterproofs looking at 'Fowler horror shows', arriving at the top of the America Buttress at about 4.00 p.m. We looked down the route. Then, ignoring all our own comments about wet rock, early nightfall and late starts, we climbed down to 'have a look'.

The major problems started with the Tyrolean traverse: neither of us seemed to be able to throw with the right combination of power and direction. We could manage to get the rope the distance of the spike, but some fifteen feet to one side, or in line with the spike, but only half way across the zawn. We spent an hour on that lasso: using the peg hammer as a weight; standing higher on small ledges; even climbing ten feet up the crag behind. Eventually, we decided we'd failed the lasso and John swam for it. The sea had been rough earlier, so to protect himself from rocks he wore all his clothes. I belayed him, then swung across on the fixed rope.

By now the tide had risen appreciably and the next section, the wade, looked impassable except by another immersion. Though we were both beginning to get cold, we decided we needed a boost to commitment, so pulled the rope from the Tyrolean. John was obviously good at swimming in full climbing kit, because he swam this section very quickly. I wanted to keep my gear and clothes in a semi-dry state, so I stripped and then pulled all my gear across on a rope suspended above the waves. Keeping the rope very

tight to keep the gear out of the water, nearly had me falling in several times. It took five journeys to get the gear across and then it was my turn to swim.

Now, I am much more competent on rock than in water and with visions of being swept out to sea, I attempted first to traverse round. After ten feet came a blank section and I realised I'd have to swim. I clung to the rock for ten freezing minutes. The waves were getting bigger and buffeting me. I set off. Part way across — half swimming, half being dragged by the tide — I clutched hold of a sea-washed rock. I had to cling hard to avoid being sucked into the water. Eventually the inevitable happened and I was dislodged. A panicky thrashing ensued before I found myself swept onto the rock-platform and John.

By the time we were dressed and geared up, we were really getting worried about the ebbing daylight. John having had his share of heroism on the swim, voted that I should lead the route to save time. My excuses about never having placed a peg before were ignored, so I set off up the first pitch. I was still very rattled from the swim and found the climbing very committing. I passed the normal belay and whacked a couple of pegs into a thin crack before bringing John up. The second pitch was equally committing; the only gear I got was a couple of tied-off blades. But at least the pitch was fairly dry and water had stopped dripping from my trousers onto my boots. John, getting seriously cold by now, seconded rapidly: time was running out. His clothes were still wet and water was flowing freely down the sodden ropes onto him. He liked my peg placements, but urged me to hurry on the next pitch.

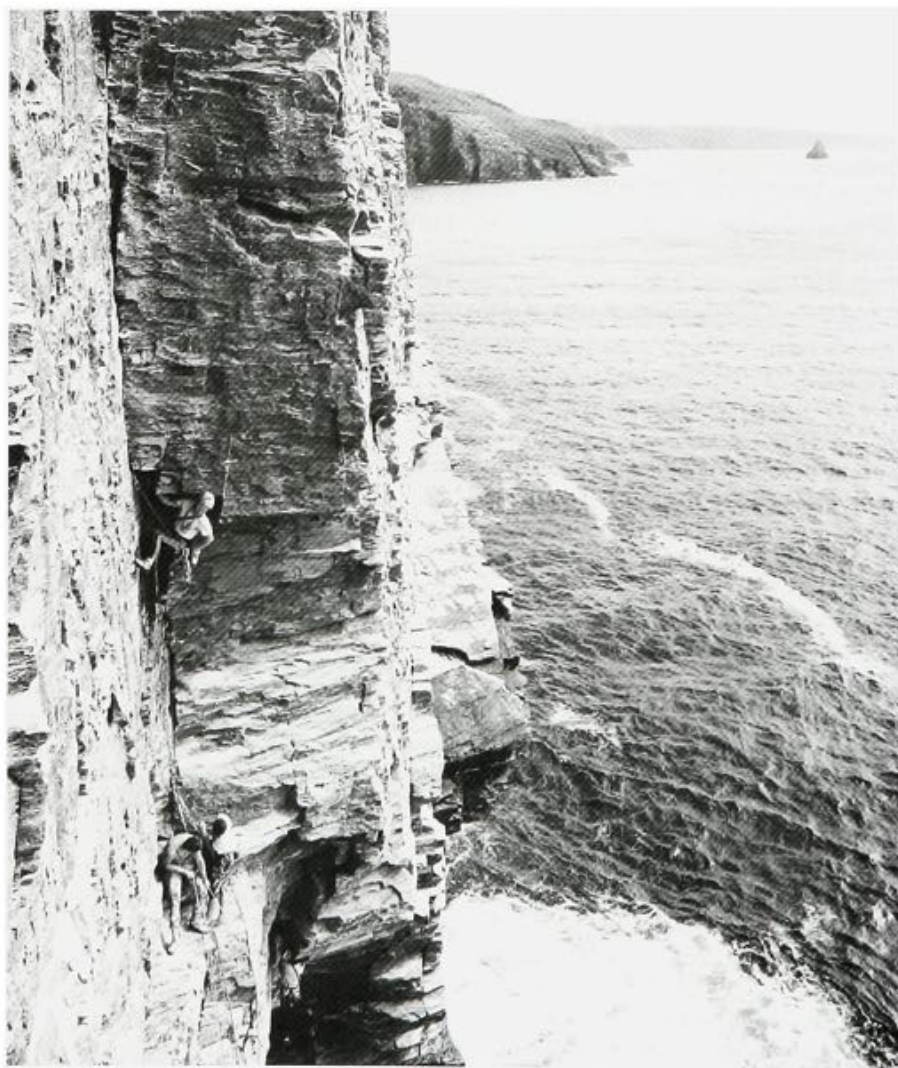
I had no idea where the climb went; all the rock was overhanging and I could barely distinguish any features in the failing light. A few guidebook readings helped me work out where the pitch started; but we still had no idea where to go in the upper section. I set off, climbing an easy groove with little gear, before a struggle to place a peg one-handed. The way above looked desperate, so remembering something about a traverse hereabouts, I scuttled off rightwards and got into a bottomless groove. I could see John below me: he looked as if he was freezing, so I shouted down some encouragement and delight about the quality and amazing position of the pitch. He replied that it looked steep and bloody hard. It was; but there was good gear, good holds, big locks and lots of 'Egyptians' — just like the climbing wall. I moved back left and then the rope jammed under a roof. This was a worrying tussle. I placed one more peg, climbed some more steep and friable rock into the final crack and an easing of the angle.

At the top, with all the biggest hawthorns tied to the old wobbly stake, the sun went down. Things were going to be tricky for John. He seconded, but I knew hardly anything about how: I couldn't see him or hear him and the rope drag was huge. When he arrived, we got into dry clothes from the 'sacs and began to feel our feet again — which was just as well because we kept stumbling on the way back to car, falling into rabbit holes and being

blown over by the wind. Our legs were so tired. It took a few chocolate bars in the comfort of the car before we felt human again.

The next day we woke to heavy rain. Having climbed two of Pat Littlejohn's superb routes (Pat, we were not worthy) and deciding that my GCSE grades were probably good enough, we drove back home to face my parents.

Where rock is the dictator: on the crux of pitch three, Il Duce. Climbers: Nigel Birtwell, John Baker, Dave Webster & Derek Toulalan. Photo: Tim Noble



Poem by Kym Martindale

Sunday Best

The congregation stands, leans, pulls,
occasionally crouches,
but never kneels — knees are unethical.
The congregation in leggings and T-shirts
gazes upwards with the fervour,
fast hearts and clear minds
of gospel.

The other church waits in its own wings.
Sometimes I stumble against it
where an arch soars bravely from behind the plywood;
where the Virgin hunches, face to the vestry wall,
the small black hole in her plaster back
an accusation to the lanky boys
flexing their grip in the toilet queue;
where the altar stripped of linen is strewn with rucksacks
below the saints in the glass
who wait to glow in the morning sun;
where the pews bide time scarred by buckles
and chalk dust silts the prayerbook racks;
where the cold old stone still seeps through the planking;
where in corners the sweet scent of worship lingers,
snuffed candles, musty hymn sheets, heavy wine,
beneath the smell of sweat and coffee;
where a silence thick as smoke
and redolent of the shuffle and rustle of prayer
clings to the beams
above the clatter,
far above;
clipping in at the lonely top of a route
I take in lungfuls and listen
for the muffled legend of the bells
and the faint creaking of the grave pendulum
which can be heard by believers on Monday nights
as the bellringers practise anyway.

As the new congregation does,
disciples for the love of it.

The other church is stilled by the shock of the gatecrash
of arêtes in the chancel,
overhangs in the nave,
but restless with recognition
of a fire it hasn't seen in centuries.

The 1997 S(c)illy CC Meet

Harry Sales

Oh the drama and adventure of it: from the start a deafening noise — the eldritch shrieks of children, drowning the head wind and throb of rotor blades — and anxiety, dropped short of our base, separated by an arm of The Atlantic. Would there be a boat? At last a safe haven was found, nestling under the most prominent peak of Bryer (all of 50 metres high). The hardy ones camped at a col below the 'summit'; the sybarites took B & B.

The expedition team was the right size and consisted of tough, seasoned mountaineers: Hunt, John and Joy; Atherton, John and Janet; Sales, Harry and Pat. However, faced with the prospect, it was a struggle to remain undaunted: there were unknown hazards from the start. To land on a small, under-populated island with place names like 'Hell Bay', 'Badplace Hill', 'Hangman Island', 'Stinking Porth' and 'Droppy Nose Point' was truly daunting. Rightly was 'Fraggle Rock Café' named and no surprise that Joy and John preferred the quieter stretches of 'Rushy Bay', protected (if the wind was in the right direction) by 'Samson Hill'. But the wind was rarely in the right direction and was always strong — though not strong enough to deter our team: incessant action was the order of the day. We walked around Bryer, Tresco, St Martin's and even St Agnes (thoroughly explored by an Atherton/Westmacott/Sales expedition two years earlier), but didn't bother with St Mary's because of the lack of adventure and the prescence of cars. This was no ordinary walking, though; there was more than enough granite to conquer as well. It is prolific on the west of Bryer and all in miniature. Joy and the rest were up and down like monkeys. It was the same with the caving — but the notorious cave at the northern end of Tresco is full of slime, treachery and a hidden pool.

Traversing the ridges was made more exciting because Pat had invested five pounds in a Mickey Mouse kite; in the consistent winds, it travelled the high paths with us. Dropping down to the end of some of the islands, we could add to the peril by crossing to various other islands accessible only at low tide. It was difficult to keep Janet and Joy out of the water at these times.

The sea is constantly interesting: seals abound — as do sheerwaters, razorbills, oystercatchers and kittiwakes. Inland, thrushes almost get under your feet; one can see the odd hobby and, at water's edge, eider drake. But it is the flora which is really impressive: exuberant flowers and tumescent succulents.

We discussed and reminisced interminably; from the safety of Bryer, the world can be dealt with. The Himalaya, Greenland, Africa, America and every area of Britain came nearer as we talked and enjoyed ourselves.

The Corinthian Question

Harry Sales

I came across this illustration in a moderately old Bible (King James version); it is placed on the same page as the opening of I Corinthians, Chapter 13. Clearly showing early rock-climbing technique — first ascent soloing in Sinai, perhaps — and somewhat different from that of two millenia later. I wonder if it is meant to illustrate I Corinthians, Ch. 13, verse 2: ‘...and if I have faith, so as to remove mountains’?



The Editor comments:

Perhaps the illustrator, ‘HK’ — who was clearly a mountaineer of wide experience, and possibly even a writer of guidebooks — spotted a chance at the end of I Corinthians to proselytize his readers.

Given that the illustration is also on the same page as the end of I Corinthians, Chapter 12, and that the climber is gazing heavenwards rather than at the rock or his limbs, might it rather be referring to I Corinthians, Ch 12, verse 21: ‘The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you”?’ If so, perhaps Fyffe and Peter may have had this in mind when they wrote in the first edition of their *Handbook of Climbing*: ‘the ascent of rock...generally requires the use of hands for progress or for safety’.

The question remains, however, which climb and crag has HK depicted? Is it the *Milestone Ordinary*, or could it be somewhere in Morocco, perhaps? Speculation or answers welcomed.

A Terrifying Encounter with Mohammed J. Brown

Derek Walker

We Moroccan devotees were half way through our annual spring holiday in TafROUT and had already climbed a dozen or so new routes between us — many of superb quality, as has been the norm on these trips. On this particular day, the old master, Joe Brown and his life-long partner, Claude Davies, decided to climb in one of the gorges. Les Brown, Pete Turnbull, Roger Salisbury and I, meanwhile, decided to re-visit the big roadside cliff we had discovered a few days earlier, whilst climbing a splendid pinnacle above the village of Souk al Khemis, an hour's drive from TafROUT.

Les and Pete tackled the best and obvious line on the left of the cliff, while I tried a start some 50 yards to the right. After half an hour I was stopped by steep, loose rock some 60 feet up and climbed back down to Roger, leaving a sling for protection. We then decided to follow Les and Pete, who had completed their 150ft first pitch.

Meanwhile, a number of children, perhaps returning from school, had wandered along the dirt road. They were clearly intrigued by our antics and were chatting and shouting exuberantly.

That first pitch offered splendid climbing — steep but never desperate, of perhaps 4c/5a with modest protection. At 150 feet I arrived, quite relieved, at a ledge and reasonable belays. Pete and Les were by now over 100 feet ahead.

Once belayed, I began to bring up Roger. Suddenly, to my absolute horror, I saw a small child of about 8 years old, some 40 feet below me and therefore 100 feet from the ground. Wearing baggy pants, a loose jumper and yellow pumps, the little wretch was soloing nonchalantly up the crag, not pausing to contemplate the awful predicament he was climbing into. If those old buggers can get up there, he must have thought, then so can I. "Roger," I shrieked, "there's a little kid climbing up towards me!"

"Oh, God," he shouted back, "he must have traversed in from the gully on the left. What can we do?"

By now the boy had stopped, cragfast, at the steepest part of the pitch where a little traverse led leftwards towards the stance. I was horrified. Les, above, hearing the commotion and our frenzied shouting, bellowed to me to tell the lad to climb down. Some chance. In my best French, I tried to explain to the kid to stay where he was. Terrifying visions went through my mind, of him crashing to his death. "Roger," I breathed, "get to him quickly, please." Roger, of course, was equally terrified that the lad would fall and knock him off as he tried to get to him.

After seemingly an age, while the lad clung motionless and silent to the tiny holds, Roger reached him. He managed to put a sling around the lad's waist and attach one of the ropes with a krab. The ordeal was not over yet, however. As I began to pull the boy towards me, I realised the sling was too loose and if he raised his arms too high, he might slip out. The tension remained unbearable: what if he did fall? The ultimate horror show kept playing through my mind: certain death for him — a young life needlessly wasted — Moroccan gaol for us and court cases, for we would surely be blamed.

Whispering to him to climb carefully ("Please, God, please God!"), he at last made it to the stance where I clutched him tightly round the shoulders while bringing Roger to join us on the second rope. Once he was belayed, I tied the boy onto the rope to lower him off — though he made it clear he preferred to try and climb down. Ten minutes later he was back on the ground and waves of relief flooded over us. Certainly it had been one of the tensest half hours in both of our climbing careers, which span some 90 years.

Resisting Roger's suggestions to ab off, we continued the climb. An easier slabby pitch led to an overhanging groove, supplied however, with good jugs. Then there was a necky 'traverse of the Gods' through steep and loose-ish rock with minimal protection, before a final delectable groove led to the top. Overall the climb had been brilliant — Hard VS — and yet another testament to Les Brown's superb route-finding abilities.

We scrambled back down to the road, still bubbling and buzzing with the tension of the incident and the climb. As we arrived at the bottom, a car pulled up with three Moroccans and three little kids inside. One of them was our tiny climber. They were all smiling happily. I tried, in English and in my halting French, to impress upon them the desperate seriousness of the situation earlier that afternoon. They appeared singularly unconcerned. "Oh," one said, "he is doing this all the time; Insha Allah."

Just around the bend were Les and Pete waiting in our car. "The little lad was here, looking for you," said Pete. "Was that blue sling he had yours?" Crestfallen, I realised that the lad must earlier have climbed to the high point of our original line to retrieve the sling I had left to protect my retreat.

We drove back to Tafout full of excitement and animated conversation. None of us could recall an incident potentially so harrowing and disastrous as this we had experienced; and we subsequently decided it would be quite appropriate to re-name the child 'Mohammed J. Brown'.

Just An Old-Fashioned Classic

Bob Allen

In March 1996, there were road-mending vehicles and barriers at the usual parking place and so for our approach, we had to use one further west than usual. Frost sparkled on the heather; our boots crunched on frozen tufts and shattered the ice of the little puddles as we struck across the moor towards the Buachaille. Reaching the waters of the Coupall River we had to seek shallows where we might ford and so struck upstream towards the lonely hut of Jacksonville, crouched black and squat on the far bank. Using the doubtful technique of making a dash for it, on the principle that if you move your feet fast it doesn't give the water enough time to get into your boots, we scrambled across somehow and managed to remain dryshod. Just as well: wet feet on an ice route are not advisable. We concluded that visitors to the hut must use wellies.

Having a crack at *Crowberry Gully* had been Roger's idea: "It's a great classic, of course, three stars, grade 3 or 4; but I did it two or three years ago and it was a doddle. We'll piss up it; only take us two or three hours. There seems to be plenty of snow higher up and it must be consolidated by now. Get this done today and we can knock off something harder tomorrow." We hadn't looked up the guide-book and we hadn't disagreed for a second. Senior members like Derek and me easily raise enthusiasm for routes like this. We are slowly running out of time — and we know it; so we have to pack in as many as we can.

Beyond the river-crossing, Derek and Roger set a cracking pace and as the slope steepened I began to feel that pain in my chest again. At least I knew now what it was — and it was not my lungs as I had originally thought — so I watched for a level patch on which to stop until the pain faded.

"I just need a little breather," I gasped out to Derek. "If I push it too hard first thing, I might just give myself a heart-attack." He looked at me as much as to say: "What the hell are you doing here then?" so I added, "It's angina; I'm to have an op. in a few weeks. Apparently it's all because of my genes. The pain is always worse on a cold morning, but it normally goes away after a short stop." Roger was more sympathetic: he'd already had his emergency pacemaker for a couple of years.

We all used the delay for a pee and to put on crampons. Then, carefully now, as the terrain became more awkward, we picked our way towards the deeply-cut shadowed cleft to the right of *Crowberry Ridge*. Snow on the ledges masked the approach route and initially we went too high and too far to the left. This became obvious as we heard shouts and realised that we could see a guided party at work on the lower part of *Curved Ridge*. However, a short abseil into the bed of *Crowberry Gully* soon left us in silence, with only the huge walls towering above to echo our own voices.

The way ahead was perfectly obvious and, as the one with the most ferocious-looking ice tools and reputation as an ice-man to maintain (having done both *Zero* and *Point Five* years ago), I was delegated to lead the first pitch. Deep powder snow in the bed of the gully led to a huge chockstone with a slabby wall on its right side; if progress was to be made at all, that was the only way. Fifteen minutes later, having scratched and scabbled, trying to find the slightest bit of ice in which to hook a pick or lodge a crampon point, I backed off. It seemed as though there simply was not a good enough build-up of ice at all, or else it had all been chopped and kicked off by earlier parties. The rock itself was smooth and polished. Reluctantly, I handed over the lead. Roger had a go, managed a few inches higher but then also retreated.

I remember thinking that this was it: we were knackered already and had not even started. Derek rose to the occasion: "I've got a couple of pegs," he said, "let me have a look." From the sloping ledge that both Roger and I had used, he reached really high and managed to whack a peg into the frozen stones and tot that had accumulated on the upper side of the chockstone. Dangling a sling from this, he used it both for a runner and as a handhold and, with infinite care, managed to pull up and crawl, on hands and knees, into the recess above. Once he had taken an axe belay a little higher, we joined him. The snow on the belay was deep, but if there was ice below, it was hard to find. Retreat might not be so easy and the peg had come out with one slight tap.

We ploughed upwards, knee deep, to the next obstacle, another chockstone. Roger hurled himself at this, bridging and thrutching between the narrowing walls and, almost *in extremis*, managed to fix a thread runner. He was, however, unable to find any good ice to get over the bulge and so was again forced to retreat. I don't quite know how I managed to dodge the job of trying to complete the pitch; perhaps Derek was thinking I might just pass out if it was too strenuous, but again he stepped into the



The first chockstone crux of Crowberry Gully, well banked-out. Photo: Tim Noble

lead himself and indulged in a bit of torquing above the runner. This was a new side to Derek: we knew plenty about his ability to talk — the hot-air variety — as a result of all those loquacious years with the BMC — but to 'torque' as well? To our delight, as a result of the few extra inches of height gained, he succeeded in finding enough ice just beyond the lip to whack in the other axe and, with an enormous heave, overcame the problem. Morale began to rise even though, looking out beyond the confines of the gully, we could see wisps of cloud obscuring the tops of the hills beyond. The weather was clearly deteriorating and we pressed on in long pitches now, alternating leads, but without any particular difficulty that I remember, towards the junction of the *Left Fork* with the main gully. The awful truth was beginning to dawn on us now that not only were we not 'pissing-up' the climb, but that we would be lucky to get up it at all.

According to the guidebook, the pitch beyond this gives the first crux, 'a rightwards rising traverse from the foot...of the *Left Fork*'. We thought we could see clearly enough where it might go; we could also see clearly enough that there wasn't a snowball in hell's chance of it going today. The rising traverse we were looking at was across a surface swept bare of anything other than a thin film of verglas. As I watched in dismay, an eddy of wind swept little powder avalanches dancing down and across it, leaving not a trace on the rock. A light snow began to fall, obscuring the depths below and blotting out what had remained of the friendly sunlight. Perhaps the *Left Fork* itself might provide an escape route? It is very deeply-recessed, a chimney indeed, but there was a snow-streak rising up its right side, very steep. It was most certainly nothing like a 'rising traverse' but, at last, the snow was more like the *névé* found on the Ben in good conditions. I also seem to remember a good rock belay.

It was our hero's pitch again. I hunched my rucksack onto the top of my shoulders in case he came off, feet first; without its protection his crampons would puncture me like a fork in a sausage. We listened to the muffled curses from above: "Oh shit!" as a claw skidded and a lump of stone whizzed past my helmet; "Slack! slack!" quickly followed by "Take in! Take in!" (urgently) as he thought he'd found a good runner.

"What do you think, Derek?" (equally urgently from below.) "Can you get up it?" Silence. Obviously he didn't think anything yet. Then came more scrabbling from above and the response: "I bloody well hope so, 'cos I'm bugged if I can get down!" The ropes moved up again. From the way they were curving up to the right into the gloom he was moving up the rib between *Left Fork* and main gully.

For several minutes (which seemed like hours) the ropes only crawled, while the sweat on my tensed body cooled and I shifted uneasily, trying to shrug some warmth back into my chilling carcase. Roger peered past me but said nothing. Sometimes it is the waiting that is a real pain. All at once "Oy! Oy Oy!" from above. The ropes started to move, quickly now. We followed, impressed, to reach a good stance. A short slither led back into the

main gully and we hurried, fighting up through more deep snow to reach a big cave. "Good lord. Look at the time!" It was after five o'clock. "Right mate, your lead," said Derek to me, belaying himself to a fat peg. "You've got to get up that wall or it's a bivouac job."

'Junction and Cave pitches may be all but impossible with only a thin veneer of verglas' is what I read in the guide book — but that was later. And: 'The cave will usually give the crux of the normal route, climbed by the right wall which is invariably of green ice and 10/15m in height.' I don't know about green ice. But I do remember looking at a wall of smooth rock, skimmed with white *névé* about a quarter of an inch thick, if that. It was probably not even vertical but it felt overhanging. Derek had led thin pitches below, Roger had made enough ground on the second pitch to keep us in with a chance and there was no way, short of falling off, that I could dodge this lead.

Making sure my boots were really tight around the ankles and anxiously taking a surreptitious and critical peep at Derek's belay, I craned my neck backwards to peer into the gloom above, then tentatively felt about with the picks of my axes to see what sort of holds I might find. There was rock skimmed with verglas, but no usable ice at all to the left, so I had to reach on tiptoe to hook a pick into a thin boss or plaque of *névé* out to the right and then move up on front points that touched rock after penetrating only about half an inch, knowing perfectly well that the move put me in a position where, if I came off, I had the full length of the gully directly below me. It is the sort of position in which it is not good to have too much imagination.

'Get a grip; get a grip of yourself. Come on now. Steady, steady. Now you've got a bit of height get your left axe high up there, go on, a bit higher, maximum reach; there's another thin ice plate just there. Don't bang at it, the whole damn lot will come off and you with it! Just place the tip and put the weight on gently. Bloody hell! It moved. No, no, don't flap, it's all right, it's holding, it didn't move at all. Shuffle front points up a few inches and now try to dislodge the right pick while transferring weight to the left one. You're about five feet off the deck and already it feels like fifty. *Shit!* The damned thing, won't come out and it's only in half an inch. Wiggle it carefully side to side and I feel it release and I've gained enough height to replace it, with infinite caution, in another smear of vertical white ice. Shuffle feet upwards one at a time, and for Chrissake, don't knock any ice off, keep your legs from fluttering.' Dead silence from below. Just as well; I'm too gripped to answer anyway. Repeat the moves; somehow, each time just enough ice appears to make it possible; thank heavens I've got these fancy tools. No bloody chance of a runner here, even if I could hang about long enough to get an ice screw in; just have to wind my neck out and keep going. *Jeez!* Somewhere between thirty three and forty eight FEET (stuff the metres!) without a single runner — and it's nearly in the dark now — is a bit worrying. Once more I reach up, hook in, rise just a few extra inches and can see that the apparently overhanging gives way to the merely vertical; a

rush of exultant emotion surges through me because I know we've cracked it. The ice is slightly thicker on the slightly easier angle, while front points and picks at last feel as if they are biting into something solid before hitting the rock beneath. I can feel my pulse pounding, but not a trace of pain in my chest. A great moment; this is why we do it.

We tottered the last hundred feet or so up the exit slope and then up easier ground, reaching what we must assume was the summit cairn on Stob Dearg, as snow flakes began whirling at us from all directions and the last of the light faded. I had descended the Buachaille by way of Lagangarbh Corrie on numerous occasions over the years, but always in good visibility. This was a different situation, we could see sweet FA, but we had guide-book, map, compasses, headtorches: we would have no difficulty.

Consulting the guidebook (just finding the right page under those conditions was a minor triumph): 'From the summit, follow the fairly level ridge for 300 metres (250 degrees Grid) then change course...' We did not merely take forward and back bearings (remembering to add the 5 degrees for magnetic), we walked out the rope-lengths with the ropes in our hands and when we'd done that twice we definitely reached a good cairn at 300 metres. So far so good. The next bit was nowhere near as precise. 'Change course to 270 degrees Grid and descend to reach a shallow cairned col at the head of Lagangarbh Corrie.' Descend how much and how far, and in which direction do you go then? Easy when you can see. 'This section can be particularly difficult in white-out conditions.' How very true! I do not criticise the guide-book writer; he got us at least some of the way. We couldn't see the contours on the map to get an idea of the slope, or even the distance; but could just about make out that we should turn north when we reached the 'shallow, cairned col'. The good book also warned that 'Care should be taken not to stray too far to the north too early as there are some large crags at the head of the (Lagangarbh) Coire.' Ominously: 'The most common mistake is to continue too far south-west and descend into Glen Etive.'

Needless to say, we never did find the top of *Lagangarbh Gully*, despite our 135 years of combined active experience on the mountains. Or if we did, we didn't recognise it. Caution took charge and we stuck to the easiest line of descent, but it was over an hour before we could be certain that we were definitely heading for Glen Etive. It was quite a relief when, out of the darkness ahead and after about two or three hours of stumbling down an endless boulder slope, we spotted something that could only be a telegraph pole beside a road. And it was a bloody long walk back out of Glen Etive to the car and almost midnight when we reached Waters Cottage in Kinlochleven.

"Effing good route, mate," said Roger. "Told you it was good, didn't I? Can't beat these old classics."

Ma Lowe Investigates: The Secret of the Helyg Rat

Moira Viggers

It's a dirty job, but someone's got to do it. I was filling in my tax return and wondering how many bottles of bourbon to put through as deductible expenses, when the dame arrived at the office door. Fiftyish, slight, with dark curly hair and the sort of weather-beaten, outdoor complexion befitting farmers and navvies. She was obviously extremely distressed; but half an hour and a bottle of bourbon later (boy, could that dame drink), I had the full story.

Her name was Allison Janus, and she was a long time member of The Climbing Club — probably the most historic climbing group in Great Britain, although notoriously unwelcoming of the fairer sex. Not only had Allison breached the barricades to become the first female member, she had in fact risen, through time, effort and other things, to the princely office of President of the Club, being the only woman ever to do so.

"And that's the problem, don't you see? The Old Guard never wanted me there — they were just waiting until my term of office finished. Call it feminine intuition if you will, but I knew there was something different about my presidency. Certain documents were never available; files went missing; committee members blocked my questions and, most damning of all, there was never a Presidential Inauguration for me ..."

I must have looked as puzzled as I felt, as she proceeded to enlighten me, while also enlightening the bottle. "It's not official of course, but I knew it happened. Shortly after his election, each President is taken to a secret inauguration in the Custodian's Room at the Helyg Hut, by the previous President. Details are understandably sketchy, but the ceremony involves a leather apron, a rubber duck, two screwgate karabiners, a tub of cold custard, and an oath to be sworn on an old and tattered copy of the original Lliwedd guide. But whenever I raised the subject I was met with a wall of silence, or the sort of gruff blustering that old men use to patronise younger women. I was never inaugurated. After my Presidency finished, I admit that I became somewhat obsessed — I knew there was something wrong in the Club, and I was determined to find out what it was. I commissioned John Doe — you may have heard of him, he's a well-known climbing author and journalist — to investigate what was going on. It just so happens that this weekend the Climbing Club celebrates its Centenary, and had asked Doe to lecture at the Royal Victoria Hotel at 9.00 am this morning. It was the ideal opportunity for him to report what he'd found out, and we'd arranged to meet but...", she paused to down the last of the bourbon with a shaking hand, "...he never

turned up. He's vanished completely. I couldn't think what else to do, so I came straight here. Mr Lowe, you've got to help me... please... I'll do anything..."

Deciding that discretion was the better part of valour, I left this tantalising offer hanging in the air, and proceeded briskly to business. This was not the first time I'd had to sort out dirty dealings involving the Climbing Club and it looked as if my previous experience as 'Ma Lowe' running a teashop in Pembroke might stand me in good stead.

"An intriguing mystery, certainly, and the solution to it lies at the heart of The Climbing Club. This sounds like a job for Ma Lowe — no-one ever notices the hired help. How fortunate it's the Club's Centenary Dinner tonight." Fortunate indeed that every unemployed female in North Wales, nubile or otherwise, had been pressed into black stockings and white pinny to wait tables at the Club Dinner. Fortunate also that I've always had the legs for stockings...within the hour I had presented myself at the catering section, seams straight, high heels clicking, make-up carefully trowelled on. I may have even simpered a little — I've always been a believer in the 'method' school of acting.

Needless to say, some hours later, I was in place at the top table, serving the President and his honoured guests, including the world famous Sir Heathen Bassington who, as the Dinner drew to a close, hoovered a few remaining savoury crumbs from his beard, and, preparing for his after-dinner speech, downed a large glass of port. The President relaxed with a brandy while his trusty aide, 'Merry', organiser of the Dinner, red-faced with honest outdoor exertion(or was it the Club's vintage claret?), held forth loud and long, basso profundo.

The moment seemed ripe. At my gesture, Allison leapt to her feet. Gallantly, her escort assisted her to stand straight. Grain and grape don't mix.

"Mr President, a point of order. This morning we were promised a lecture by John Doe but instead we saw two showings of the film, 'The Dormouse and the Wicked'. Fascinating though that is, it's not good enough. What happened to Doe? Surely only some disaster could have kept him away." This was my cue; before the President could begin to bluster an excuse, I minced forward.

"Not so fast Mr President. Some disaster did indeed befall John Doe — he met with YOU and your friends." I took advantage of the stunned silence to introduce myself. "Lowe's the name, Philip Lowe, but you can call me Ma Lowe. I know what happened to Doe, and why it had to happen. Yes, Mr President, I know everything, including...the secret of the Helyg Rat."

The President blanched visibly. Beads of sweat broke out on his angular brow, and his hands shook as he raised his glass to his lips. Tension was such that one of the nubile serving wenches fainted and had to be revived, a trifle over-enthusiastically I thought, by the Serious

Editor for North Wales (we'd met in a previous case). Emboldened by this dramatic success, I continued: "You discovered, through your numerous dubious contacts, that Doe was investigating Allison's non-inauguration as President. Fearful that he had found out too much and might reveal all at the Centenary Dinner, you decided he must be waylaid and eliminated."

As I paused for breath, stout 'Merry' spoke up, his bluff, ruddy countenance flushed with surprise (or was it the Club's unoaked Chardonnay?) "It can't be true. The President is a slightly built man; he could never manage a fight to the death."

"He didn't have to," I replied. "He recruited a couple of his burly low-life, ex-committee chums to help him — the Pedant, and the Cameraman. "There was a slight flurry at this point, as when the audience swivelled to look at the two named gentleman, the Cameraman staggered to his feet and made a rush for the door, only to be tripped by a famous balloonist, muttering "It was never like this on the Dhud Khosi" as he did so. His escape thus foiled, the Cameraman sank back into his seat, and I resumed my story.

"They didn't need much persuading, did they, Mr President? The Cameraman got to show his film twice, instead of once, and as for the Pedant — well, his lecture was based totally on the Club's historic ethic of adventure climbing, and he knew, as you did, that ethic was FALSE!"

A mass gasp of horror rippled through the audience. Glasses were drained, brows were mopped. Bold 'Merry', his cheeks suffused with horrified colour (or was it the Club's Napoleon brandy?), placed a restraining arm on the President's shoulder as he attempted to rise. The Pedant, for once at a loss for words, sat silently as I continued, uninterrupted.

"The Club's historic traditions date from the 1920s and its most famous member, indeed: ex-President, Fred Mollary. Considered the foremost climber of his day, he disappeared on Everest in 1924, but not before establishing the ethics of bold adventure climbing the Club still espouses today. Various 'relics' of Mollary are held in the Club archives, and indeed are on display today in the Royal Victoria Hotel. But ladies and gentlemen..." I paused for dramatic effect. "Fred Mollary was a murderer, a cad and a cheat!"

I turned to confront the President. "You knew that no-one looks very closely at archives as they're so boring, so you felt safe in displaying Mollary's effects. However, when I inspected them today I noticed, tucked away at the back behind half an ice-axe and the tattered sleeve of a Grenfell jacket, a bag of gymnast's chalk and a prototype Hilti bolt gun. No wonder Mollary appeared ahead of his time — he proclaimed an adventure ethic, but he was cheating. I also took the precaution of reading Mollary's diary, returned to the Club from Everest base camp after his disappearance, and the final entry reads:

'Must get rid of Irving tomorrow. If I fix it right, the debt collectors will reckon I'm dead too, and I'll be in the clear. No-one will ever suspect I'm still alive. Now is the time to boldly act.'

"Not only was the man a cheat and a murderer, he split his infinitives too — the mark of a cad if ever there was one. What happened next includes the little known secret of the Helyg rat; but there IS someone here who can tell us all about it, is there not, Mr President?" I pointed an accusing finger as the President sagged back in his seat and brave 'Merry', his doughty visage crimson with anger (or was it the Club's vintage port?), cried "It can't be true. Tell us it's not true, Mr President."

In the silence that followed, the President rose slowly to his feet. He seemed to have aged ten years and spoke in a tremulous whisper.

"Yes, it's the truth. Mollary murdered his companion and faked his own death. He returned to England after a year — it takes a long time to walk home from Tibet — and realised that the Club had built him up into a hero. Desperate for money, he decided to blackmail the Club by threatening to reveal the truth about its 'adventure ethics' and thus totally discredit it. The committee, fearful of disclosure, sent the President to meet Mollary at the newly purchased Helyg Hut, to hand over the first instalment of cash, and subsequent payments were made at regular intervals. Unfortunately, on one such occasion, as Mollary emerged in the night from the Custodian's Room, where he had been hiding, members staying in the hut heard the noise, and the President had to quickly invent a story about a rat. Mollary took advantage of the story of the alleged rat to steal members' food, and avoid doing his washing up, and so the legend grew. There was a Helyg Rat all right, but it was the two-legged variety. Eventually Mollary tired of his secret life at Helyg, changed his name and emigrated to New Zealand, where he got a local girl pregnant and took up bee-keeping, leaving 'Rattus Norveticus' to face the music with A.B.Hargreaves.

Throughout the years, Presidents of the Climbing Club, aided and abetted by the committee where necessary, have kept the ghastly secret of the Helyg Rat, being sworn to secrecy during the intricate ceremonies of the presidential inauguration. Imagine the consternation among the initiates when a female President was elected. Everyone knows how women love to gossip. They simply did not dare reveal the secret, and could only wait until Allison's presidential term was over, and they could entrust it to a male."

The President paused. The silence was so profound you could have heard an ice-axe drop. As he resumed, his voice began to falter.

"When I realised Allison had hired John Doe, I knew we were in trouble. After all, he was a well-known investigative journalist. As he arrived to give his lecture, the three of us met him and after a brief struggle managed to subdue him by hitting him over the head with a number 4 Friend. Then we dragged him to Vivian Quarry, tied two large lumps of slate to his feet and threw him off the top of Nikki's Leap..."

The President's voice finally gave way to harsh, racking sobs as he collapsed into his chair and wept, face down in the remains of his trifle, a broken man.

Gently, I raised his face from his plate and wiped it with my pinny. "Come, come, my dear Mr President — things are not as bad as you think. At least you are not a murderer. The local diving club was on manoeuvres in the quarry pond and rescued Doe from his watery grave; whereupon he immediately fled to the south coast vowing never to return to North Wales, for fear of his life. I spoke to him not two hours ago, on the telephone."

A good job well done is always satisfying. As I carefully folded my pinny and stockings away, I wondered just how grateful Allison might be to the person who had discovered the real truth about the Climbing Club. If I could separate her from her escort, I had a few ideas about a little 'inauguration' of our own. I like a dame who can hold her booze; even better, one that can't...and I've always had a penchant for cold custard...

Surplomb Jaune

Phil Grierson

Sports climbing on the continent can be so much more than the ultimately tedious and memory-numbing process of yo-yoing up and down the first twenty-five metres or so of rock which has rarely been chosen for the intrinsic quality of its climbing potential. True, there are some wonderfully memorable single pitch climbs to be found, but for every one of these there is a myriad that fade from the memory almost as soon as you've lowered off and untied.

For me, the real joy of gear-free climbing is to be found in the ever-increasing provision of bolted multi-pitch routes, especially in the much-favoured Haute Durance region of France. Many of these routes are new climbs; some are older ones that have been re-equipped — often with bolts replacing pegs and other rotting tat, whilst, usually in the higher mountain areas and not without controversy, others of an originally traditional nature have effectively been retro-bolted. However this may be, such routes come close to matching, if not at times going beyond, the quality of experience found on the very best traditional routes. On-sight leading on big alpine cliffs, notwithstanding the bolts, can be every bit as exhilarating and demanding in terms of total climbing experience as anything the ordinary mortal is likely to find on more traditional routes.

What follows attempts to describe just one such experience, with two simple purposes in mind. First, to share the sheer exhilaration and pleasure of a wonderful route and explore some of the similarities and differences between traditional and sports climbing; and secondly, hopefully to persuade some of those steadfast bolt-virgins (including some old hair-shirts, maybe, who are still to be found lurking around in the darker recesses of our huts), that even if, like sex, the first time isn't always the best, you haven't really lived until you've tried it.

Looking upwards from the foot of *Le Surplomb Jaune*, on Le Ponteil cliff in Val Durance, the eponymous overhang some fifty metres or so above is obvious, massive and, in its lightness of colour, curiously unthreatening. The route, according to the topo, skirts circuitously off and round to the left — though the jumble of higher grooves, corners and overhangs gives no clear indication of quite how.

Immediately undercut, the first pitch starts nervily with awkward moves left on flaky holds. A rightward-leaning groove then leads to steep and reachy moves as the groove turns back leftwards. Already an arsenal of techniques has come in to play: bridging, smearing, laybacking and jamming. It's that kind of route — hidden, like some climbing equivalent of a lucky-dip bran tub. At every twist and turn of this remarkable climb, there's a seemingly endless range of quality and type of hold and degree of friction: here sinking

jugs matched by marbled and polished nothingness for feet; there, finger-ripping sharp and water-worn tongues of compact grey licking up amidst a surrounding glow of yellow crumbling walls (through which, and not thankfully on which — save for a few metres on the third pitch — the route weaves its intricate way).

An easy slab leads to the first belay on a broad ledge, and the next section moves off angularly on a leftward traverse. Stepping over a large block leaves the climber balanced precipitously on the lip of a huge overhang with nowhere to go except blindly around a sharply defined arete. Whilst on a bolted route there is obviously a sense of security lacking on a traditional climb; much of the climbing on this, and many other multi-pitch routes, demands positive route-finding and the ability to make sound climbing judgments about where to go next. There is no shining pathway of gleaming bolts at comfortable three-metre intervals hereabouts. In this case, the nerve to move out into space, pushed beyond vertical by burgeoning rock with a small hidden foothold for the left foot and a high flat right hand-hold, brings the sought-after reward for good, if bold, climbing judgment. Clipped in once again, with the possibility of a probably irretrievable pendulum now just a distant heart-thump, and then it's back on the right side of vertical, with sharp grey incuts providing good security and steady movement to a semi-hanging stance.

Julie's white helmet swings into sight and she joins in mutual amazement at the position and audacity of the moves — and all this at a very amenable 5+. The next lead draws her up through the already-mentioned band of shaly and shaky yellow, with generous but less than secure hand-holds and a curiously melted-looking agglomerate of shiny, slippery, orange for the feet. A balanced swing right reveals a series of grooves twisting upwards, with a further series of massive roofs and corners beyond. Again, the rock demands each and every move to be measured and assessed. If reasonable in standard everywhere, the level is sustained — with the exception of a short traverse on the penultimate pitch that provides the only occasion where leader and second remain in visual contact.

Following up, I find Julie camped leisurely on a flat, open and ample platform. I look, as always, for where the route will take us next. A bolt, generously placed in reach above steeply undercut moves, shows where, and illustrates one clear advantage of such routes: if you rarely know where a pitch is going to finish up, at least you know clearly where it starts. In this respect, bolts substitute for guidebooks and all the attendant confusion, uncertainty and argument which often circles around them at crucial points on traditional routes.

Time, anyway, for a breather, a little water and a verbal résumé on progress so far. It's wonderful: real climbing with such a variety of technique, brilliance of position, and the fundamental requirement of a sound and honest testing of climbing intelligence. All of this is here, and

on many other similar climbs on big cliffs like Fréssinières, Tete Colombe and those up at Ailefroide, in a way you simply do not find on the single-pitch bolted valley crags. You start at the bottom and you finish at the top, and there is no certainty until the final move is completed and that exhilaration of completing the fashioning of a truly memorable climbing experience bursts forth.

Surpomb Jaune has an overall alpine grade of T.D.; retreat would be possible, certainly, but tricky. There is no fixed abseil down this part of the cliff, and the complexity of rock architecture would make reading a descent quite problematic.

There's been a significant cloud accumulation since we began, which has given the welcome benefit of coolness and shade as well as bringing some small anxiety. I look up to assess the likelihood of rain as it begins to loom more darkly above. Memories of an earlier epic in a cloudburst on the huge falaise at Présles in the Vercors flicker across the edges of consciousness, perhaps prompting me away from the re-assurance of the stance and the stunning vistas out across the Durance eastwards into the Queras and southwards towards the mountains around Vars, Risoul and beyond.

A bold swing up clips the bolt and gymnastic moves rightwards across a steep wall bring me, gobsmackingly, to the bottom of a huge, and previously-hidden, square-cut corner. Half-way up it bulges out alarmingly, but what I can see from below suggests good layback possibilities.

As previously implied, the bolting of a route like this makes route-description as such redundant. You have a topo, which gives an indication of the number of pitches, the degree of difficulty and a very sketchy outline of terrain, much of which is often either confusing or downright misleading, especially with regard to scale. Even the grades are suspect technically, often never having been revised since the original assessments of the first ascencionists. Whilst, therefore, you choose routes which you believe you have a reasonable possibility of successfully completing in honest style, each invariably offers the delight of both genuine climbing surprise and unpredictability of ultimate outcome.

Here I move round a corner, and there is this magical, sheer, sharp, cut of nature's hand soaring clean towards a cathedral-like edifice of tiered and jagged overhangs above. The layback is there as I'd hoped, with good, solid edges for the hands and sufficient friction for feet on the smooth left wall to make progress sure and satisfying. It reminds me for a moment of that great, classic, layback on *Anvil Chorus* — even with the final twisting reach to secure hand-holds on the right at the very top. And what marks me out as a traditionalist is that here, in this wonderful sequence of airy movement, even with the adjacent steel hanger, is a healthy fear of falling.

On a sensationally-positioned belay, I draw up the slack and watch

the pink and purple of our ropes swinging vertically below. The loop of dead rope is perhaps 10 metres in all, and I estimate that to where the live end disappears out of sight at the bottom of the corner is approximately thirty metres, leaving another ten below on the wall above the belay. Most topos give a route length but no pitch lengths. This throws us both, as Julie takes the one easy lead, with a couple of moves at 5 after a simple, if tremendously exposed, traverse rightwards out of the corner and away from the impending rock above. She finds an obvious belay anchor, but we're only about twelve metres apart and, uniquely on this climb, still in sight of each other. She can see an obvious continuation upwards, but to where and for how far, is impossible to judge. In bringing me across she notices I've left a screwgate behind, so I tiptoe back to retrieve it, wondering about dying brain cells.

If we are right this should be the last pitch — which I'd logged at 6a. Are we and is it? A steep slab slants off left above the almost obligatory undercut start. It's fine technical climbing: all in balance, with neat, small, incut holds for hands and good friction for feet. Higher up it turns abruptly right out of a groove and up over a small overhang. Above this, a further steepish slab, knobbled with wood-like protuberances offer wonderful positive edges. Then, suddenly (as suddenly as the rain drops have started to splash and darken the rough grey rock), it is all over in a final rough scramble up gritty and earthy ledges to the top. The joy of achievement is dampened by the increasing downpour and the thought of Julie having to friction up wet water-worn limestone. I clip the belay bolts, give the agreed three tugs on the ropes and start taking in.

Our first visit to the cliff a couple of years previously to climb the easier, but equally rewarding *Le Nid D'Aigle* had led to the discovery of what was now giving me cause for concern: two nearly full-length abseils, which the French describe with graphic appropriateness as a 'rappel en fil d'araignée', being roughly translated as 'like a spider hanging from a thread'. The description was actually for a descent from a route at Ailefroide, but it fits perfectly for the experience here, which was made all the more alarming first time round by the fact that there was nothing to indicate what was in store for us.

There's a sturdy and knurled tree with the usual accumulation of tape and rope securing a huge metal ring. About 10 metres down is a wide and vegetated ledge. It's best to drop the ropes onto this, re-sort them and carefully move out to the further edge. The cliff drops away alarmingly, as do the ropes when thrown. They're well wet by now and a thin mist of spray zings around the descender as the cord is squeezed and tensioned. Hands are wet as well, and I'm thankful for the shunt's additional protection as I spiral down towards the intermediate anchor which is fixed on a broad sweep of steeply angled slab below. I call up for Julie to follow and watch as she backs out into space off the huge lip above.

I start feeding the spare rope through the abseil ring and watch it disappear again. With Julie secure I 'pull pink', relieved to see the joining knot appear over the edge, followed by the purple rope arcing out and down. Back into the system and off again, out into space again beyond another enormous overhang. There's a postcard you can buy down in Argentiére, with a climber, 'araignée-like', on a free abseil silhouetted against the sun, and caught between the impending rock above and the distant mountains across the valley. It's taken on this abseil, and with a little ingenuity and the sun in the right place you could get your own snap of it. Today, though, is not the time. I slither down the last few feet of slimy rock, get some slack through and unclip.

There's that inevitable sense of relaxation and release, as we gather up the sodden coils and step gingerly down the rock-stepped path and back round to the beginning again. The 'sacks are safely dry, shoved beneath that very first undercut wedge of rock and the rain slackens anyway as we sort out the gear.

Best Feet Forward

A Selective History of the Listing and Ascent of the English and welsh 2000ft Summits

David Matthews

Prologue

In his article 'Best Boot Forward' in CCJ 1966, Geoff Milburn wrote a brief outline of the history of long distance walking and peak bagging in the UK. A table of those who are known to have completed 'a list of 2,000ft summits of England and Wales' beginning with Edward Moss in 1951 is given as an Epilogue. This list is taken from the Long Distance Walkers' Association Register, and contains additional comments from. Alan Castle, the Association's Recorder. Inevitably, Geoff's article has raised awareness of this largely neglected subject (unlike the attention given to the Scottish Munros and Corbetts). Comment is implicitly invited from other, little known participants.

Arthur St. George Walsh (1893-1992) and the early Lists

I first met 'Mr. Walsh' when a schoolboy in the early 1950s. I remember him as a kind and cultured gentleman with an extensive knowledge of the hills and a complementary interest in ornithology. My father took me along on his walking parties, made up mostly of ex-King's School Chester men. Walsh was Maths Master at this school from 1925.

This small group under Walsh's leadership was methodically checking virtually every closed contour ring above 2,000ft in England and Wales, to ascertain if the enclosed ground was a definite, doubtful or not a top. Tops are precisely defined as 2,000ft+, with 50ft re-ascent on all sides. The need to check various tops with only one closed ring was due to the 1" OS maps of the time having contours at only 50ft intervals, and well known to contain errors from experience on the ground. Two closed contour rings over 2,000ft made for a definite top, but one ring may or may not have the necessary 50' of ascent.

What is now known of these early hill walkers and Arthur Walsh? According to my father, who was a pupil of Walsh's at King's School in the 1920s, Walsh lived most of his life in Chelford, Cheshire. He was unlucky enough to be called up to the First World War, and served in France, the Middle East and finally the Dolomites. I visited Walsh at Chelford in 1986 when he was 93 years old and he recounted that being transferred to the Dolomites probably saved his life, as well as providing some great climbing experiences.

Between the wars, Walsh ascended all of his 370 definite English and Welsh 2000ft tops. He would also have climbed many of the 'doubtfuls'.

It is likely that if anyone else at this time was also compiling lists of the tops, Walsh would have been aware of this and compared notes. (We know that he shared notes with Elmslie.) When paths did cross it was normal to exchange the time of day with another party on the unfrequented hills of this era. It would soon have become apparent if others were attempting a complete set of tops, and notes and experiences exchanged.

In his 1950 *Wayfarers Journal* article, 'The 2000 Footers of England (and Wales)', Walsh demonstrated his awareness of other lists drawn up by Moss, Simpson, Elmslie and Dodgson.

During this inter-war period, Walsh is known to have accompanied Elmslie on many hill days. It is possible that Elmslie may have been the first to climb all the tops, but we may never be certain now. Elmslie, who was a Methodist Minister, was killed in his London Church by a V2 rocket during the Blitz. A comment made by Walsh in his 1950 article would indicate that whilst Elmslie was probably the first to ascend the English 2000ft tops, he had not completed the Welsh tops before his untimely death.

Thus it is very likely that Arthur St. George Walsh was the first person to climb all the English and Welsh 2000ft tops, based on a methodical and carefully checked list of tops with 50ft of re-ascent on all sides.

The Post-War Years: Tidting up the Lists

During WW2 Walsh found work of national importance with the Forestry Commission, outside of his teaching. It is quite probable that he found some time to check the occasional tops, but I have no record of this.

From the 50s through to the 70s, all the doubtfuls were checked out 'on the ground'. My father confirms that Walsh personally visited them all — 867 tops according to the 1950 list of which 370 are definite; 138 doubtful and 360 not a top. (868 tops in Walsh's personally revised copy).

The King's School parties continued through this time. The people I remember as the core group are Walsh, my father, Walter Matthews and Ken Renshaw. Renshaw worked shifts at a Warrington Brewery. His participation could be erratic, for one reason or another.

I was taken on many of the group outings from the age of seven years. The group must have been very patient waiting for a child to catch up, as I have no recollection of any of them complaining at my slow progress.

One of my earliest memories from these walks is of one lunch time on a misty Welsh hill, sheltering in a boulder field. After ten minutes or so: panic. All the party had vanished, and there I was alone, completely lost on this rocky hillside. Suddenly, to my amazement and intense relief, five of the 'boulders' stood up and walked away. All my companions had been dressed in Army surplus camouflage capes, which wore only too effectively.

Walsh was still walking the hills in his 80's, but by this time tended to stay more in the valleys and indulge his interest in ornithology. He passed away peacefully at the ripe old age of 99 years.

A Personal History of the English and Welsh 2000ft Tops

My father led me up the first top, Rhinog Vawr, in July 1948 at the age of 3yrs and 10 months. I can still remember my determination to walk all the way, in spite of the waist-high heather being a real struggle. Returning from this walk, I found a dead viper and insisted on taking it to the holiday farm at Llanbeder to proudly show to my mother. Her comments can only be imagined.

After early ascents of Snowdon and Ben Nevis, I was taken on most of the Walsh meets and other frequent hill walks by my Father. We were working through Walsh's lists, and by June 1961 I had reached 149 of the tops. It was around this time that the rock-climbing bug bit, and hill walking took something of a back seat for the next fifteen years. In 1968 I visited the Isle of Man on my old Matchless 350 single to watch the Manx TT. During this trip I took the opportunity to walk up Snaefell in motor bike gear and wellies to the weather station at the top.

For some time I had been thinking of repeating all my tops, as memory of the early ones was rather hazy. As Snaefell is such a grotty summit, I decided there and then to re-commence the lists from that point and not have to venture on Snaefell again.

In 1973 Bridge's *The Mountains of England and Wales* was published. This volume used the same criteria as Walsh for the tops, listing 408, with the advantage of outline maps to assist route planning.

Bridge also categorised mountains into separate mountains and tops, using a separation/height formula. Personally, I think this works very well and is a useful contribution to the classification of the hills.

Bridge lived in Sale, Manchester at the time of publication; coincidentally a near neighbour of mine. I met him a few times at the Sale Mountaineering Club, which was started by John Mercer of the CC. Bridge's list was produced by meticulous searching through map contours, and only a limited amount of checking was done in the hills. Thus, a few revisions are suggested in the summary of tops accompanying this article.

Due to the ease of use of Bridge's tables, and the careful work that had gone into them, I personally abandoned Walsh's lists at this point and used Bridge's tables. However, still under Walsh's influence, I kept a wary eye out for other likely looking tops. Walking over these helped preserve a sense of being in the hills, and not becoming 'a slave to the lists'.

During the mid 70s to mid 80s, I walked over these English and Welsh hills, mostly at weekends. Holidays were reserved for the Scottish hills, ably supported by my wife Margaret. She managed to look after our two young children and still cheerfully turn up to collect me at the far end of some distant hill traverse.

Many of the weekend walks were with Keith Rhodes, also a CC member. One of our exploits was the winter traverse of the Pennine Way in 25 mile chunks. The classic route was bent to take in as many 2000ft summits as possible. We were occasionally joined by Trevor Jones, usually dressed

for the occasion in a thin anorak, nylon socks and kletts. The chance nature of this attire became all too apparent in a winter blizzard on the summit of Cross Fell, which Trevor likened to his experiences on Nuptse.

My completion of the Bridge tops was arranged as a family outing to Lovely Seat in September 1985. The weather was fairly grim, but I'd finally got round all the tops in 37 years and 2 months. To the best of my knowledge, this is the second completed round of the Walsh group of hill walkers, as my father still has Pillar Rock and Snaefell to complete.

Epilogue

The following can be offered to the list given in the Epilogue of Geoff Milburn's article: Completers of the 2000ft Mountains of England and Wales

No.	Date completed	Name	List used
1	In the 1930s	Arthur. St. George Walsh	Walsh
18	22-9-85	David Matthews*	Walsh & Bridge

*This may well also be the youngest start and slowest completion.

Finally I would like to dedicate this article to Arthur Walsh and my father Walter Matthews who always showed by example that 'list ticking' is an incidental pursuit to experiencing the magic of the hills.

A. St WALSH-SUMMARY OF TOPS IN ENGLAND AND WALES OF 2000Ft., RE-ASCENT ON ALL SIDES (1950)

KEY

/ - Definite ? - Doubtful X - Not a top

AREA	/	?	X	Total Investigated	Moss	Simpson	Elmslie
Lakes	141	44	107	292	152	225	137
Wales	156	59	92	307	235		
Pennines	73	34	161	268	226		211
TOTAL	370	137	360	867	613	225	348

LIST OF 2000 FT. SUMMITS - ENGLAND AND WALES

Commentary on Bridge and Walsh

Dubious and missing Tops in Bridge list 1973

SECTION	TOP	HEIGHT	GRID REF.	ISSUE	IN WALSH?	DWM RESOLUTION
High Street	Kidsty Pike	2,560	447126	No Mention	No	Top
Buttermere	E.Hopegill Head	2,300+	194220	No Mention	As?	Top
Gt.Gable	Grt. Scoat Fell	2,750+	153111	Not a Top	As??	Not a Top
Carneddau	Bera Mawr	2,604	675683	No Mention	Yes/	Top
Glyderau	Carnedd y FiliastNNW Top	2,360+	618632	No Mention	No	Top
Moel Siabod	Top S. of Ysgafell Wen	2,150+	665481	No Mention	Yes/	Top
Cader Idris	Craig Lwyd	2,251	7714118	A Top??	As? --but deleted in 1973-letter to WSM	Not a Top

Thus, to the original "Bridge" total of 408 Tops (2000 Ft. + --50Ft. clear all round), delete 2 but add 5 --- giving a total of 411 Tops.

Pete Livesey Remembered

Al Evans

What can you say about Pete Livesey? He was a brilliant climber, but not a natural and not quite the best. A man whose influence on world rock-climbing was almost as great as Joe Brown's, say, but not quite. His stance on ethics and the free-climbing of old aid-routes was high profile, but in practice, some of his first-ascents fell short of the high ideals he espoused, leading to criticism and controversy. At times he appeared to others as arrogant, adopting a policy of 'Do as I say, not as I do'. A private man, he was also a great self-publicist — though I was never quite sure why. He was always something of a chameleon; when you were with him, he could be shy and reticent about his mountain achievements, but when the mags came out, they would be full of Livesey quotes lauding the attributes of his climbs. Then he would smile and, with a mischievous glint in his eye, give a little hint that really the thing about climbing was that it should be fun: this was eventually more important to him than ethics.

The first climb I did with Pete was a first ascent — so was the second and the third: they were ethically flawless and hard. The fourth was a second ascent of one of his own routes which had a controversial genesis and he wanted to allay the ghosts. I duly did my bit, saying all the right things about how he cruised it — and it was true. But I didn't know what the actual first ascent was like. To become an accepted climbing partner of Pete's it was almost as if one had to go through this apprenticeship, tackling the big routes.

The next climb we did together, *America* at Carn Gowla, was established by someone other than Pete. There was no guide at the time and all we had was Pat Littlejohn's scribbled-out description. The crag was shrouded in mist and the view down *America* was terrifying: the wet lichen was glowing fluorescent green on the only stance we could see and the rest of the route disappeared into Stygian gloom. I was appalled but, knowing Pete's reputation for single-mindedness, resigned to attempting the route. He turned to me then and said: "Fancy a pint instead?" In that moment, Pete became a mate and not just a climbing partner. Later that day we returned to Bosigran and did the second ascent of 'Hot' Henry Barber's *Deja-Vu*.

Pete could (and would) adapt his personality to the person he was with at the time, often mischievously changing his stance as and when it suited him. But his views were always relevant and he made people think. He cared passionately about the ethics of the sport and recognised (in private at least) that he and others made mistakes. He was a maverick — certainly one of the most significant forces in modern British rock-climbing. His legacy of routes and ideas on training will be felt for generations to come, and he will be sorely missed by all who knew and climbed with him.

Poem by David Craig

Melanoma

Now he is out in the open, I can see him
Waving his pincers at me. Cancer the Crab.
Nothing to do with spellbound constellations
This is the luck of flesh.
Some crumb of my red marrow
Flinched as it formed,
Quailed as the weakness sealed itself in,
Began to bide its time.

The miniature time-bomb ticked,
Decades not minutes trickled through the glass.
As the Sahara masses outwards,
The Dead Sea dies some more,
The dark-brown marks on my back
Wake from their lifetime's sleep
And busy themselves. 'How now, old mole,
Dost work in the flesh so fast?'
The surgeon's cuts are shallow. Good prognosis.
Now they will see me regularly
Four times a year until...
'If need be we will chop away some more...'

My moves along the rock-face
Over the drop
Have usually been irreversible.
The rope is there, the gear
Moulded from adamant alloy, the company
Of another breathing body.
Now I am soloing. My limbs, mine alone,
Will see me right. Or not.
My mind spectates, enthralled,
As the slow-motion fall accelerates.

AGM Dinner Speech, 1998

Mark Vallance

Once again I would like to thank Dave Atchison on behalf of all of us for organising another splendid dinner — I believe that this is the twenty fifth time. Also the staff of the Royal Victoria Hotel for providing it.

If there is one thing I might have wished to achieve over the last three years, it is, that at the Annual Dinner, the speeches come first and the dinner afterwards. This is the one hundredth annual dinner and therefore the one hundredth presidential outpouring. It is, thank goodness, the last one for me. I would dearly love to have the easy, off-the-cuff delivery of that Jeremy Clarkson of the climbing world, Ian MacNaught-Davis, and be able to savage all and sundry: the famous can tell the truth about deeds they have done; the familiar can tell intimate details to embarrass their peers and old climbers can reminisce and be forgiven for being boring.

About two years ago, I finally realised that despite all my efforts, despite all my training and the visits to the wall, I was not, ever, going to be the best climber in the world. So what can a middle-aged, not-quite-was say? Three years of being your President has aged me; the mind has started to go.

In September, Roger Briggs and I were coming to the end of an excellent climbing trip in America. We were camping in Zion National Park and after a good meal and bottle of wine (or was it two?), it was time to turn in. Roger went off to the bathroom and after clearing away a few thing I followed. I did not realise that Roger had only got as far as the first big tree, and seeing a pair of large trainers protruding below the screen of the toilet stall I continued our dinner conversation. Yes, I would be interested in a trip to Switzerland next summer. There was a grunt from the stall. I'd really like to do some of the harder routes on the Sailboat Towers. Another grunt. I continued chatting incoherently whilst cleaning my teeth until the stall door opened and a total stranger walk out. "Hope you enjoy your trip to Switzerland," the stranger said.

Well my mind may be going, but I can still pass on a few words of advice to the younger and less experienced members (the older ones amongst you have heard it all before). I would have done anything not to have got hooked on climbing. Climbing is a really stupid thing to do in your spare time, being both debilitating and dangerous, and not too good for personal relationships. For proof of its awfulness, just look at how much time we spend talking about it rather than doing it.

The main thing is that when you have been out there; when you have put yourself at risk, been uncomfortable, scared and vulnerable, you have to make it count. You have to be in a position to do that most important thing in all of climbing: be able to talk about it and impress

your fellow climbers when you are comfortably back home. The best advice I can give you (apart that is, from selling your gear and taking up golf) is to do a very prestigious or a very hard route. If you manage to do this, do not tell anyone, but make sure everyone finds out about it. This advice also goes for any half-way respectable climb. Never say right up front what you did; always wait to be asked. Bide your time. When asked what you did today (especially if someone within earshot saw you do a respectable route) answer: "Nothing much".

Make sure you at least attempt a very hard route but know the right cop-out phrases. "The vital hand hold came off"; "I got bored" — but never, ever, believe this line. If you can't do a prestigious route, rescue someone — preferably someone famous. This way if someone asks "Have you done the *North Face* of the Eiger?" you say, "No, but I once rescued Messner off it. Descending the Second Ice-field was hell."

Climb Alpine routes very fast; this impresses people. If you can't climb fast, climb very, very slowly. Bivvy, bivvy several times. This makes it look as though you have stamina. If you succeed on a route, always say you enjoyed it however much you hated it. "...well, we might have taken three days, but we really enjoyed ourselves. The second day we didn't get up till mid-morning/noon/tea time." If you are asked about a route you failed on, say, in a hushed voice: "I don't like to talk about that route." When talking about a route that you *did* manage to get up, say you hold the record for it. There is no reason to say which record. You won't impress any one by just saying you did it, but you might get a pint by saying you were the oldest/youngest/fattest/first female/first blind-fold/blind drunk.

Never use an up-to-date guidebook. The grade is usually going to be harder in an old book. The *Isle of Skye* guide by the Abrahams has the grades: Moderate, Difficult, and Exceptionally Severe (that's my kind of guidebook); and attempt climbs in bad conditions: "Failed on *Right Wall* — too much ice." Write up your routes in the hut log book. There was a great line in the Ynys log book by Marjorie Allen/Mortimer (I don't know which president's name to use). Talking about Jerry Frost she wrote. 'Jerry failed on *Right Wall* and the washing up. At least he attempted *Right Wall*!'

Have epics; they are very easy to have so long as you have an incompetent partner. Make sure you write about them in the Journal. Write imaginatively (lie). Talking of entries in hut books, the CIC hut book in 1958 had this great one-liner: 'Have just smoked our last cigarette — for God's sake take care of our families.' Never go on holiday — always go on expeditions. Break both legs and crawl down to base camp. Eat your partner.

Before I conclude this, my final presidential duty, I do have a few, final things to say: I would like to thank all those who have helped the club over the last three years. I particularly want to mention Bob Moulton for his incredible work in various roles on the Publications Committee

over twenty five years. Also, Ian Smith and all the members of that very hard-working and beneficent committee. Roger Salisbury for his dedication to our huts and for his encouragement, and also to his committee, along with Mike Burt, for being the unsung heroes of the club. All the members of the committee who have been most supportive and forbearing — especially our retiring secretary and retiring treasurer, Pete Brooks and Mike Waters. I would like to pick out Pip Hopkinson, but not just for his work for the Centennial committee; and of course Terry Kenny, Steve Andrews and all those who helped to make the Centenary Dinner the triumph it was. Finally to Steve Andrews for always being there to do whatever had to be done, whenever it had to be done. Good luck with the new job, Steve.

Two years ago I made a comment to the effect that, 'when members phoned, or wrote, it was not usually to tell you how well the club was doing.' The Centenary Dinner, changed all this. It was an event that I am very proud to have presided over. Afterwards many members wrote the most supportive and positive letters. The theme that kept recurring was how proud they were to be members of this club.

The Climbers' Club, in its centenary year, is in great heart. It is difficult to know what a climbing club has to do to make itself as attractive to young climbers as the CC was when I first joined, though we do have some very active young members. The CC continues to be very attractive to active, mature, climbers. There seems to be no shortage of such people wishing to offer themselves for membership.

The Climbers' Club is financially well-placed: over the last four years it has received or has in the pipe-line, over £120,000 of Foundation for Sports and the Arts and Lottery money. This is reflected in the improvements to all the Welsh huts; in the electrification and ongoing complete overhaul of the Count House, and the planned work at the Bob Downes Hut. I believe we have the determination and the competence to acquire a Scottish hut.

The club is well-organised by competent officers, and members should have every confidence in their ability to achieve this. I wish them, and especially our new president, well. If the club has a weakness, it is in communication between the committee and members, and between members generally. We have made some progress in this respect and there are plans afoot to improve this aspect further.

The club has come a long way in its first hundred years; it is well-placed to make an even bigger impression in the future. I am sure that in the next Millennium, the Climbers' Club will influence the course of climbing, not only for the benefit of its own members, but for the benefit of the whole climbing community.

Please join with me in a hundredth anniversary dinner toast to the mountains that we love, to climbing, and to The Climbers' Club.

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The Centenary Photographs: Officers and Committee



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Hon. Secretaries: (standing l to r) Harry Sales, Martin Sinker, Malcolm Cameron, John Burrows, Peter Brooks. (sitting l to r) Mike Browell, Roger (Lord) Chorley, Pip Hopkinson, Robin Prager. Photo: Keith Sanders.



Hon. Treasurers: (standing l to r) Richard Morgan, Richard Carter, Max Biden, John Burrows, (sitting l to r) Claude Davies, Les Hughes. Photo: Keith Sanders



Hon. Journal Editors: (standing l to r) Ken Wilson, Terry Gifford, Tim Noble, Ian Smith, Smiler Cuthbertson (sitting l to r) Geoff Milburn, Sir Alan Pullinger. Photo: Keith Sanders



Publications Committee Members: (standing l to r) Smiler Cuthbertson, Max Biden, Bob Allen, Peter Hatton, Ian Smith, Bob Pettigrew, Mike Mortimer, Tim Noble, Dave Viggers, Ken Wilson, Simon Cardy, Mike Pearce, Mike Rosser, Nick Longland, (sitting l to r) Geoff Milburn, Alex Jones, Bob Moulton, Geraldine Taylor, Mike Ball. Photo: Keith Sanders



Officers and Committee: (standing, back, l to r) Robin Neath, Dennis May, Mike Pycroft, Derek Wiggett, Chris Donne, Mike Burt, Peter Newman, Craig Harwood, Tony Chatterly, (standing, middle, l to r) Roger Salisbury, Steve Andrews, Les Hughes, Ken Latham, Dennis Ibbotson, Henry Adler, Richard Sykes, Dave Thomas, (sitting l to r) Smiler Cuthbertson, Ray Handley, Robin Prager, Tony Moulam, Keith Sanders, Rex Nieto, Edgar Siddall, Bob Enwright. Photo: Keith Sanders.

OBITUARY

Hamish Nicol

1929 (1950) - 1997

Hamish Nicol — Stratford's Dr Hamish— inexplicably fell while leading *Economist's Climb* on Pordenack near Land's End on Easter Sunday 1997. He was helicoptered to hospital in Truro where, after almost seven weeks in intensive care, he finally succumbed to his injuries on 17th May, aged 68.

Hamish was a totally devoted member of the Climbers' Club: elected 1950; Committee member 1966-69; Vice President 1969-72; President 1972-75 and made an Honorary Member in 1978. During his Presidency, he put the guidebook publications on a sound business-like basis and saw to it that women were admitted to the Club. Throughout, he was a regular attender and organiser of meets and initiator of the 'Ton Up' club which he ran for a decade.

In his professional career, for thirty-four years he was a much-loved and respected general practitioner in Stratford upon Avon, but his boundless energy overflowed into numerous other roles: mountaineer, writer, editor, choral singer and Fellow of the Royal College of General Practitioners.

Hamish Gordon Nicol was born on the 6th January 1929 in Hong Kong where his father, a civil engineer, was interned by the Japanese during World War Two. Hamish joined his mother in Canada, then after the war the family returned to Edinburgh where he went to Fettes and Edinburgh University to read French, Economics and to indulge his growing passion for climbing. After National Service 1947-49 when he was commissioned in the Royal Artillery, he went up to Balliol College, Oxford, where he switched from geology to medicine (and roof climbing, placing a white bow tie on top of the Radcliffe Camera to celebrate the Coronation).

In the *Alpine Journal* 1990/91 Hamish Nicol wrote: 'When I first saw the Alps in July 1949 I nearly fell off the train with excitement... I was just twenty years old.' His reputation as a mountaineer was made in the early 1950s, particularly by his climbs with Tom Bourdillon, some four years his senior, and a predecessor as President of the Oxford University Mountaineering Club. They first climbed together on an Oxford meet led by Tom in Langdale in December 1949, and to Hamish's surprise and delight Tom invited him to climb with him in the Alps in 1950. In this period continental climbers were doing much harder climbs in

the Alps than the British. To prepare themselves, Tom and Hamish practised artificial climbing with pitons and rope ladders on a tree in Tom's garden in Buckinghamshire.

Their first climb was the *West Face* of the Aiguille Purtscheller, the first Trés Difficile (TD) by a British party in the Western Alps. Although a short climb, its importance lay in the fact that it allowed British climbers to realise that they too could do climbs of this standard. Hamish then led the famous *Ryan-Lochmatter* route on the *Plan* and they followed this with the *North Face* of the Petit Dru, a serious TD which at that time had a tremendous reputation. Their success had a marked effect on British alpinism over the next few years; Oxbridge climbers dominated initially but then in 1954 the Rock and Ice Club, in the form of Joe Brown and Don Whillans, made the third ascent of the *West Face* of the Petit Dru and a new route on the *West Face* of the Blatière, including the famous *Fissure Brown*. British climbers had at last arrived in the post-war Alps.

1951 was not a good season for Hamish, but in 1952 he and Dan Stewart had tremendous plans. These came to naught when Dan tripped on an ice-slope, fell and pulled off Hamish who broke his jaw while Dan was uninjured. This was a disaster as Hamish himself related: 'A successful 1952 season would have strengthened my claims for a place on Everest in 1953. As it was, I could not possibly be considered, having suffered two falls in quick succession, one on *Zero Gully* of Ben Nevis with Anthony Rawlinson in 1951, and now this...I was written off as dangerous, and given a place as a reserve.' The notorious ice runnel of *Zero Gully* was unclimbed at the time, when technique on steep ice was a much more precarious than today.

Lord Hunt recalls meeting Bourdillon and Nicol in Chamonix on return from their climb on the Petit Dru and remembers the impact which that achievement made on the international climbing community. He paid the following tribute:

'The competition to join the attempt on Everest in 1953 was fierce; I finally invited Hamish to be one of the reserves, who would fill unforeseen gaps in the team, or who would join us if, failing in the spring, we decided to launch a second attempt in the autumn. From that time onwards, Hamish became a member of the Everest 'family' which — alas diminishing — has met to climb and trek, with our families, ever since. During those reunions, whether in Britain, the Alps or the Himalaya, I came to appreciate the true qualities of this remarkable man. He was a very human, caring person but at the same time possessed with dynamic energy and enthusiasm, great physical strength and technical skill, which invigorated his companions'.

So instead of going to Everest in 1953, there was another superb Alpine season with various companions: Michael Cunningham, Alan Blackshaw, Pat Vaughan and Ted Wrangham. Seven splendid routes were done, including the short *West Face* of the *Pointe Albert*, the first

Extremement Difficile (ED) by a British party in the Western Alps. His entire six weeks' holiday, including transport both ways, had cost £42.

In his last big alpine season, 1955, he again linked up with Tom Bourdillon making the 10th ascent of the *Ratti-Vitali* on the West Face of the Aiguille Noire de Peuterey, and the 5th ascent of the Grand Capucin, graphically described by Hamish in the 1956 CC Journal.

In 1956, his final medical examinations were his first priority, but Tom persuaded him to come to the Alps. Hamish had seen his future wife, Mary, off on a train to Venice and, arriving up at the hut, learnt that Tom and Dick Viney had not returned from their climb on the Jagihorn. They had fallen, and their deaths ended the golden age of Oxford mountaineering in the 1950s. Hamish did not climb again for five years and never again at the same high level.

From the second half of the 1950s, medicine demanded higher priority: clinical work at St Thomas' Hospital in London, then obstetrics and gynaecology at Odstock Hospital, Salisbury. In 1958 he married Mary Walker, also a doctor, and in 1960 they came to Stratford, joining Dr Archibald McWhinney's practice in Rother Street. He loved his work and his patients and often said 'being a GP is the best job in the world.' His partners and colleagues speak endearingly of his wisdom, wit and way with words, and of his lecture on 'Risk Taking'. He became involved with the Ambulance Service. It was his firm belief that Ambulance men, being first on the scene of an accident could and should be given training in advanced life-support skills. Against strong opposition in 1976 he devised a training programme and implemented it; those who passed were awarded green arm bands. His 'Green Bands' saved many lives in South Warwickshire. Since 1986, a decade later, the role of the paramedic has become universally recognised.

Although Hamish Nicol never climbed again to the same high standard as in the 1950s, it remained his all-absorbing recreation whenever he could legitimately take time off from a busy medical practice. There was the Apline Ski Traverse in 1972; other ski touring expeditions (including the time in the Vanoise when Bob Allen had a nasty fall and had to be rescued); several Himalayan trips to 'trekking peaks' such as Paldor in 1984; he and Mary were most valued members of the Everest team's anniversary treks in 1978 and 1993. He celebrated his 59th birthday climbing Mt Tasman in the New Zealand Alps in 1988. Nicol family holidays with the two children, Helen and Andrew, were always active — skiing, canoeing down French rivers or through the Canadian wilderness. Back home, he was a long-standing member of the Stratford Choral Society.

In the late 1980s, Hamish developed osteoarthritis in the right hip which made walking difficult, so he took up mountain biking and became a familiar figure exceeding the speed limit on the byways of the Cotswolds. After the hip was replaced in 1990, he seemed determined to

wear out the artificial joint in record time, particularly when retirement from General Practice in 1994 gave him the freedom to do so: completing the long distance GR20 walk along the mountain spine of Corsica; the tour of Mont Blanc and, only last July 1996, a hut-to-hut traverse of the Dolomites including a dozen Via Ferrate. A high priority since 1973 was the annual week in the far North-West of Scotland with the same small group of increasingly older friends for climbing, camping, fun and fishing, with liberal doses of whisky to keep the midges at bay. Skye was already booked for June 1997. The very moving funeral in Stratford, attended by over 600 colleagues, patients and climbing friends, was timed so that we could still maintain our plans for Skye — as he would certainly have wished. We sorely missed his warm companionship and infectious enthusiasm, but felt he was there in spirit with us, impatient as ever to get the very most out of the day. He leaves his wife Mary and daughter Helen and son Andrew to whom we offer our most sincere sympathy.

George Band

'...never the more thereby diverted from adventuring': Dave Atchison and Hamish Nicol, West Buttress, Corrie Mich Fearchair. Photo: George Band



Hamish Nicol: a personal view

It was at the Wayfarers Hut (RLH) during their annual 'Winter Meet' that I first met Hamish Nicol around the beginning of the last decade of his life. He was particularly fond of both that Hut and of being a member of the Wayfarers' Club. In fact, it was at RLH during an Oxford University MC meet in 1949 that he first met and climbed with Tom Bourdillon and no doubt the plans were seeded that weekend which were subsequently to revolutionalise the face of hard British Alpine climbing.

But who was this character in the crumpled off-white raincoat and cap with a truncated, fluffy red climbing rope and weird range of climbing gear — ranging from the antique to the modern — in the back of his car? He had arrived at the hut from Stratford upon Avon at crack of dawn and was impatient to be away, in search of hard ice. He found it that day with Rick Reeve and returned at night, face blood-spattered and happy: "Bloody fine day, bloody fine day."

The 'Winter Meet' weekend usually coincided with his birthday and I remember at that first encounter his slightly ruddy countenance and benign smile as the assembled sang 'Happy Birthday' at dinner that evening, with addendum fit only for the male ears present.

I had flicked through the Chamonix guidebooks over the years and seen his name in the pages often enough, so knew his reputation. But what struck me immediately at this first meeting was his combination of confidence and modesty, with obvious lack of concern for the superficial and trivial. One could hardly fail to get on well with this robust character and I was soon recruited to his team of regular climbing companions — an event which was to have a profound effect on my own climbing career.

Every trip with Hamish was fun and invariably became an adventure in some way or other. He always had a good 'eye' for a day out and supreme confidence. It never seemed to occur to him that a venture might not go. If he said we'd go and do something, then we did and would usually succeed.

One winter day, most had gone home in disgust with the weather. But Hamish would never waste a moment, so there we were up on a scramble on Craig Lloer, adjacent to *Kirkus's Route*. The rock was verglassed and I was struggling on the crux with the rope in my 'sack and him above in the mist. And to think I had offered to carry the rope to preserve his by now degenerating hip. I found him in a sheltered spot on top, already having his lunch: "Glad you made it, dear boy; do have one of Mary's baps". The latter were to become my staple diet on Hamish trips for the remainder of our encounter.

He loved mixed climbing and later that winter we were descending from a route on Snowdon when he stopped to look at the Trinity Face. He pointed out all the routes without reference to the guidebook and it was clear he had climbed most of them over the years.

Hamish was not always modest and benign, however; incompetence or idleness invariably drew short shrift. One June day, following a Plas y Brenin barbecue, we stood under a crag in the Nantlle Valley. Unfortunately, despite an outrageously early start (for which he was notorious) we were not the first to arrive. The other party were making tediously slow progress and Hamish became impatient and began to mutter a lot. Finally, he could stand it no longer and asked the leader if we might go through, but was refused on the grounds that they wanted nobody ahead. Hamish was furious and shouted in his deafness-enhanced voice: "When Bourdillon and I climbed this route in 1956 we didn't have to tolerate this kind of nonsense." The other party's expressions were priceless.

The same weekend, even though in considerable pain with his hip, he demonstrated his prowess as a rock-climber on *Kirkus's Slab*, amongst other routes, on Cwm Silyn. We had such a long climbing day that I arrived home late that night to be greeted by Mary on the phone enquiring as to his whereabouts.

An invitation to join the annual June week in Scotland soon followed and, true to form, Hamish facilitated my introduction into that group of his close friends. I had heard of their exploits in previous years — which included not only rock-climbing and disgustingly long mountaineering days but also the consumption of extraordinary quantities of whisky and questionable fishing practices with Hamish playing a major role in the latter two activities.

On my first trip with them to Scotland, he had only recently undergone hip replacement surgery, but was already making a remarkable recovery — due as much to his own determination as medical expertise. We all walked up to Binnein Shuas, Hamish still leaning heavily on a walking stick. Then, at the bottom of the route, he cast his stick aside, like the cripple in the parable, put on his rock shoes and waltzed up *Usquebaugh* with Mike Westmacott, as nimbly as ever.

The following year, we made our trip into Carnmore to climb *Wisdom Buttress* which was an adventure from start to finish (CCJ 1994). Who else but Hamish would have contemplated that kind of expedition? I had never even heard of the route but Hamish had been there years before with George Band.

There followed many other summers in Scotland with Hamish playing a pivotal role and always the life and soul of the party. His replacement hip seemed to have given him a new lease of life. He was particularly keen to revisit Rhum, where he had landed illegally by fishing boat at the age of seventeen with Malcolm Slessor. At that time, they had climbed on Trollaval, with the young Hamish being pointed up mainly unclimbed and some unclimbable lines.

Our Scottish week took us to Rhum in 1994 and he was keen to visit Trollaval, just to have a 'look'. But I suspected otherwise, so packed a climbing rack for the trek half way across the island by way of Dibidil

bothy. Viewing the Harris Buttress of Trollaval from a distance, we saw this great corner, which must surely be the line of *Archangel*, a route Ward and Murray had climbed in 1948, the year after Hamish's visit. "We must go and climb *Archangel*, dear boy," he shouted, fired by enthusiasm, "I just need to borrow some rock shoes." Al Ferguson was obliging as ever and, leaving the others, we set off towards Harris Buttress. It was an experience I will never forget: just the two of us on a hot June day at the bottom of a big cliff which is seldom, if ever, visited. It was almost half a century to the day that Hamish had first stood there on his illegal trip. I speculated in my mind as to what he might have been thinking at that moment and about the numerous adventures he had survived over those intervening years. I wondered if he would say anything — a bit of insight perhaps, but he was just his usual jolly self.

In typical style, the guidebook said 'climb the route' and after a number of false lines, the hardest parts of the route, we found the way and were generally disappointed. But it was the ambience of that place, not the quality of the rock climbing, that haunted us both.

Hamish was keen to visit Canada again so in summer 1995, we went to the Rockies together on the General Mountaineering Camp of the Alpine Club of Canada. Alongside thirty mainly young, fit Canadians, who climbed and walked most of the summer and skied most of the winter, Hamish was at first a little apprehensive as to how he would fare. A short day on the GMC might typically be twelve hours but Hamish acquitted himself well and was soon the talk of the Meet. Karl Nagy, one of the top Canadian climbers and a collector of mountaineering memorabilia, was intrigued by Hamish's fifi hook, which he had bought in Bolzano in 1965, the year Karl was born. Hamish wanted to give him the device but Karl insisted he take two ice screws in return.

Long climbing days in the Rockies were followed by communal evenings in the mess tent, or around the camp fire, and Hamish held a captivated audience in his hierarchical position with tales of far away places and dubious jokes. He made many friends in Canada and will be sorely missed.

Many other trips followed to Wales, the Lakes, Scotland and Cornwall, every one a different adventure. I never ceased to be amazed by his tremendous physical strength and endurance, his will power and confidence.

In winter 1997, he finally invested in some new, step-in crampons which proved a revelation to him. On the joint CC/Wayfarers' meet at Ynys Ettws that February, the weather was mild and most rock-climbed or walked. Hamish, however, needed ice to test his new toys. Against all expectation, he and Peter Newman found a long pencil of ice in the back of *Parsley Fern Gully* and had a magnificent day.

His enthusiasm was now unstoppable. Smiler's Loch Morlich meet was looming up and offered the perfect opportunity to further test these

new fangled devices. Hamish was furious to find he was booked to lecture at a medical conference that weekend so was unable to participate. By way of consolation, he arranged to have four days' climbing with Smiler in the Cairngorms a few weeks later. They had a wonderful time, climbing four routes on Coire an t' Snechda, Coire an Lochan and Hell's Lum; Hamish was full of himself.

It was as well he had enjoyed himself, because tragedy was soon to follow. He had made a magnificent start to the Easter week meet in Cornwall that year. On the way down, he had climbed *Wrecker's Slab* with Mike Burt, followed by *South Face Direct*, *Red Wall* and others later. Then disaster struck out of the blue.

Terry Kenny

Mike Banks narrates an anecdote about Hamish Nicol and Terry Kenny

A couple of winters ago, doctors Hamish and Terry were descending a mountainside at dusk in Langdale when they heard a faint shout for help. Hamish was going slowly because of a recent hip replacement, so Terry hurried off in the direction of the voice. He duly came across a man who had fallen whilst trying to solo a frozen waterfall. He had fractured his leg so violently that the bones of the tibia and fibia were sticking out through his trousers. He had been lying there for a long time and was in a state of considerable shock. If undiscovered, he would probably not have survived the night when the temperature plummeted down to -8°C.

Terry gave him first aid and made him comfortable. Then he explained: "I'm a doctor and I'm going to run down the valley to alert the rescue team. In the meantime, my friend is coming across to you; he's a doctor, too."

Despite his trauma, the casualty mustered a faint smile. "You doctors are like buses," he replied, "there isn't one when you want one; then two come along."

Brendan Murphy **(Character Building Climber)**

1963 (1987) - 1997

Climbers often take on the characteristics of the mountains and cliffs that they love — or is it vice versa? Anyway, Nick Dixon's routes are certainly thin, John Dunne's are large in character and stature and Johnny Dawes's are quirky, bold and slightly insane. In mountaineering terms, the extraordinary climbs of Brendan Murphy rank alongside the achievements of these leading stars mentioned above yet, like the mountains he climbed, they were relatively unknown to the wider population. Amongst the tight knit group of mountaineers operating away from the 8,000m circus — at the very highest levels on steep technical terrain — applying the techniques of Scottish winter and Alpine face to the Himalaya, Brendan was a legend in his own out-to-lunchtime.

Even amongst that small family, Brendan rarely talked of his own achievements. Much of the material for this obituary has come from its other members: Rob Durran (with whom Bren did the first Irish winter ascent of the *North Face* of the Eiger), Dave Wills (first complete winter ascent of *Divine Providence* and two attempts on the *North Ridge* of Latok), Andy Cave (first ascent of the *North Face* of Changabang) and of course, his long standing partner Kate Phillips (with whom he made the first Irish ascent of Ama Dablam).

If he was reticent to talk about his own achievements or difficulties with his peers, amongst strangers he was modest almost to the point of secrecy. Some climbers met him this winter, reading a book in the cafe in Fort William. Asking him what he'd done elicited the response "Oooh, you know, had a good day." Further questioning revealed that this 'good day' involved driving solo from Cambridge overnight, dossing by the roadside, then soloing *Mirvus One* and *Astral Highway*. The following day he soloed *Galactic HitchHiker* and then drove back to Cambridge.

His steady solid climbing style was ideally suited to the uncertain world of snow and ice climbing, yet he was no slouch as a rock-climber either, having incredible strength and stamina 'for a mountaineer'. For instance: he was once established just below the crux of *Lord of the Flies* when a party arrived to do *Cenotaph Corner*. They duly completed the route and abbed off two hours later, with Bren still hanging at the crux making absolutely sure the key sideways hex runner was placed to his satisfaction before committing himself (successfully, of course) to the crux in incredibly hot and greasy conditions.

This resistance to poor conditions was a legendary Murphy trait — though it more often applied to extremes of cold and wet than heat. He

would simply appear to be unaffected by conditions where the rest of us would be seriously worried about long term survival. During his first winter ascent of the Eiger, the weather conditions went completely pearshaped on the third day. He and Rob Durran pressed on, with Brendan producing brews by holding the stove between his knees inside a bivvy bag. On Ama Dablam, it was his apparent lack of concern at the snowfall and poor visibility which gave Kate the confidence to push on to the summit. To this day, I cannot decide whether he felt the same discomfort, pain and fear as the rest of us in those marginal situations that mountaineering so often presents us. I rather suspect that he did, but his equanimity, calm and positive approach enabled him to chill out in situations that he liked to refer to as 'good sport' or 'character building'.

Whether on the hill or off it, this strength of character made him a unique person to be with, as his semi-detached (from reality) attitude would result in all sorts of excitement. He was so often late in turning up from down south for rock-climbing weekends that the phrase 'The Late Brendan Murphy' still makes me laugh; and when he arrived, he would always have a daysack full of lager with him. He frequently ran out of petrol — the last time being on our way back from the Alps at Christmas — yet for Murphy, this was just another opportunity to build our characters.

He was always losing things: his wallet and passport falling out of a rucksack strapped to the back of a motorbike on the way to catch a flight to Spain; his watch on the floor of a base camp shelter. Every hour it would bleep, followed by a frantic couple of minutes searching in the darkness. Kate tells a classic Murphy story in which, after berating her for leaving her keys and wallet in the Grindleford cafe, he then left his trousers in Outside, lost his car keys at Froggatt and then locked both his spare key and his pit in the car. Throughout all these minor epics, he remained totally unfazed, as if he knew that, whatever happened, it would be all OK.

This faith in a positive outcome to problems extended to his dealings with people, and earned him respect from a wider community than just the people with whom he climbed. In all the years that I climbed with Brendan, I never heard him utter a bad word about anyone — even Captain Camembert, the 'liaison officer from hell' on our Gasherbrum 4 trip in 1993. His rapport with the porters and other locals was obvious, evidence of a deep concern for their welfare. He provided many novice climbers at the Cambridge University MC with heaps of encouragement, enthusing them through his own positive approach. Good looking and charismatic, he attracted lots of attention from women, and people of all ages, genders and walks of life found him easy to talk to. Even London yuppies, focused on the complexities of financial dealings in the City found him 'almost human, with very nice teeth'.

Bren's own finances were remarkably uncomplicated. His tastes were simple and unpretentious, his gear was always well-worn and he was happy to live on cheese toasties, coffee and wine. His money went on trips to go

climbing, whether by motorbike to the Lakes, by car to Scotland, or by plane to the Himalaya.

It is those very special climbing days which will endure, above all the time we spent together on the North West Face of Cerro Kishtwar in autumn 1991. Lost rucksacks; an approach through Ladakh to avoid the unrest in Kashmir; an encounter with a psychotic American trekker in Zanskar, and 17 days of the most technical mixed climbing imaginable in capsule style made this the most enjoyable trip of my life. Throughout the entire expedition, even when we made the desperately difficult decision to turn back on day fifteen, just 150m from the summit, he retained that perfect blend of determination mixed with calm in the face of adversity.

I am convinced that he retained this inner peace and calm approach even as he was struck by the avalanche that carried him to his death. It is the one comfort that I can take from this appalling loss.

Like artists whose work only becomes valuable after their deaths, Bren's achievements were just starting to be recognised at the time that he left for his second attempt on the North Face of Changabang. Climbed in pure alpine style, it epitomised his approach to mountaineering and the character traits demanded by such an outrageous route, climbed in weather conditions that could only be described as character building. It will remain as a monument to one of the finest mountaineers of the last decade.

Andy Perkins

Brendan Murphy. Photo: Andy Perkins



Clifford Fishwick

1923 (1957) - 1997

Clifford Fishwick was a talented polymath — both a climber and accomplished painter of high repute, he also had a life-long passion for sea and mountains. Cliff's love of wild places was first awakened whilst at Chester Grammar School, during school trips to North Wales, the Lake District, Scotland and Norway. These explorations continued during the war when on leave from the Royal Navy and the trans-Atlantic convoys. It was during this time, when based on the Clyde, that he managed a winter ascent of Ben Nevis with equipment borrowed from a local policeman.

Fishwick returned to Liverpool College of Art in 1946 to complete his training and take an Art Teachers' Diploma. He then moved to the South West to take up a teaching post at the Exeter College of Art where, in 1949, he married Patricia, herself an artist, whom he had met at college in Liverpool.

Cliff visited the French Alps for the first time in 1948 and in Pralognan la Vanoise he met Paul Pittier, a young guide who offered to guide him in exchange for a visit to Exeter (Pittier became President of the Syndicate of Guides in 1967). A close friendship developed and they climbed together almost every summer in the French and Italian Alps until Paul's death from cancer in 1980.

Early in the 1950s, Cliff met the Biven brothers, Peter and Barrie, and Trevor Peck at Bosigran, Cornwall. Lasting friendships were made and he joined them in exploring the then largely untouched cliffs of Devon and Cornwall. He was on the first ascent of *Variety Show* in the Great Zawn and was involved with many first ascents on the main cliff of Bosigran, Wicca Pillar and Cam Clough. Perhaps his best route in Cornwall is the excellent and much underrated *Hellwa Slab* at Porthgwarra.

Cliff, together with the Bivens and Peck, climbed extensively in the Alps and Dolomites. During 1957 Cliff, Trevor and Peter did the first ascent of the *North Face* of the Vallette in the Vanoise (*CC Journal* 1958 for Peter's account and *CC Journal* 1959 for Cliff's poems). He also drew the beautiful and evocative sketches of Bosigran and its routes for Biven's 1968 guidebook.

Cliff loved sailing and often took to exploring the south coast of Devon aboard his yacht 'Freya' — indeed it was he who spotted the Old Redoubt sea-cliff at Torbay and informed the Exeter climbers that 'it might be worth a look'.

In 1956 Cliff met the well-known writer, poet and climber Al Alvarez at Bosigran. They became firm climbing partners, often climbing in the Italian Alps, based at Al's house in Tuscany.

It was not until he retired as Principal of Exeter College of Art in

1984 and acquired a camper van, that Cliff became a keen Munroist. The van gave him and Pat the freedom to explore remote parts of Scotland. He did most of his Munros alone — except when joined by members of the family. Two of his most satisfying ascents were of Ladharr Bheinn in 1994, when he sailed into Loch Hourn from Skye on his son Mark's boat 'Temptress' (Account in *CC Journal* 1996), and in the next year, an ascent of A 'Mhaighdean from Kinlochewe with his second son, Simon. During his last summer he did ten Munros culminating in Sgurr na Ciche at age 73: a remarkable achievement.

Cliff kept in training all year by long walks on Dartmoor — a place he knew intimately and loved. The bleak and dramatic landscape of ever-shifting colour and light provided the inspiration for many of his paintings. He was a prolific painter and had many solo exhibitions.

He was a modest man; he did not pretend to the self-promotional circus and he had a wise and steadying influence on many people. He acted as a father figure for younger climbers — from the Biven brothers in the mid 1950s, to present-day climbers (and former students) Nick White and Dave Thomas.

I have known Pat and Cliff Fishwick all my life and have many happy memories of shared family holidays and golden summers spent camping in Pralognan and Bosigran with the Fishwick daughters, Kate and Sophie. Cliff had the rare ability to successfully combine climbing with such holidays. He was a much-loved family man, admired and respected by his contemporaries, colleagues, students and friends. His gentle sense of humour coupled with kindness and patience endeared him to all whose lives he touched.

N.P.Biven

Across the lip we stop and wait
Silence shouting in the dark and shouting in our eyes.
A hundred minutes wait for ten
And just for two of us, while one is gone.
Ten steps
A clip
A loop, and mouldering earth.
Handfuls of helplessness grovelled in despair
'Til we three are together in the air
Of that cold night
Ledge safe of clouds — and waiting for the day.

From a poem entitled 'Vallette' by Clifford Fishwick, 1957. In Nov/Dec 1998 there will be several national and local exhibitions celebrating Cliff Fishwick's paintings.

Timothy John Snaith

1962 (1986) - 1997

I first met Tim in 1984 on an unseasonably warm October day at Tremadog. He had just taken a huge pendulum out into the sky from *The Atomic Finger Flake* whilst seconding George Smith. Both were resplendent in white loons — they being the required wear at that time. As Tim was lowered to the ground, the first things I noticed about him were his fence-post forearms, followed shortly by his large grin. He talked animatedly, in an Irish brogue, about the moves and how pumped he was.

I got to know him better over the years, climbing or canoeing together in North Wales. He had a wonderfully acerbic wit and was always ready to shoot down the foolish and pompous. He was one of the few people able to make me really laugh aloud and he excelled at taking the edge off serious situations with his humour.

Tim was often misunderstood by people who didn't know him. Some saw him as arrogant and this sometimes caused him problems in his professional life when he aired his sometimes strongly-held views. However, once you got to know him, he was unfailingly generous, supportive and at times acutely sensitive. He was always ready to help those less experienced than himself and made an excellent teacher. With his large and boundless enthusiasm, he instilled confidence and technical competence in his charges in an enjoyable way.

It was this verve for his next project — be it river or route — that was infectious and it was hard not to get drawn along with him: he loved adventure. "You've gotta have epics, man, you've gotta have epics" was one of his favourite sayings; and he did indeed have perhaps more than his fair share of epics. But they made him stronger and wiser. Gogarth was one of his favourite crags and now, when I visit, I can hear: "Yo, cheese! Climb when you're ready. It's effing desperate, youth! Effing desperate."

Tim died on Ben Nevis — a place he loved dearly — as a result of a simple technical error. He was a big man with a big heart and loved by many. His family and friends will miss him greatly.

N. P. Biven

R. F. Jones

1928 (1948) - 1997

I first met Ralph Jones in the early 50s when Mike Harris and I spent most weekends climbing in North Wales. Ralph was a junior officer in The Gunners at the time, stationed at Kinmel Park and he and some of his fellow officers (Jerry Harrison, Tim Bordass) also came to Snowdonia to climb at weekends.

Ralph recorded his earliest climbing — based some of the time at Helyg — in an article in the *CC Journal* 1965 under the *nom de plume* of 'Spike'. We first met him in evenings at P. Y.G., but he soon joined us for climbing. We did a good deal together — including second ascents of new climbs (though the hardest climbs at that time were a bit above our class). We three climbed together in the Alps several times; but the first time we went in 1953, each of us in turn was smitten by a severe stomach disorder.

In 1952/3 Ralph spent some time at the RGS in London assisting with organisational work for the successful 1953 Everest Expedition. At this period, we spent much time discussing the possibility of climbing in the Caucasus. This finally came about in 1958 when the three of us were part of a party of nine members of the Club who went to the Caucasus. Ralph made a film record of the expedition. His main climb there was the *Schwarzgruber*, up the North Face of Jangi-Tan, with John Hunt, Alan Blackshaw and Chris Brasher; they were turned back by exceptionally dangerous snow conditions.

In the mid 50s, Ralph left the Army and in due course worked for a management consultancy, living in Manchester, Derbyshire, then Flintshire and marrying Margaret Brasher, Chris's sister. He served on the Club's committee from 1959-1963. We saw a lot of each other when we were both working in Wolverhampton in the 60s. In 1969 he was co-opted onto the Club committee to lend his management know-how to the Club in connection with guide-book production. He served as chairman of the Publications Committee from 1970-1973. In these later years, skiing was an interest.

In later years we lost contact, until the early 90s. While walking in the forests above Ludlow, my wife and I unexpectedly encountered him with his (new) second wife. He was walking with difficulty. He had heart trouble and was recovering from operations to counter it. He mentioned that the Club had completely lost touch with him, so I took steps to put this right. Latterly he moved to Cumbria, and this is where he died.

John Neill

REVIEWS

The Ordinary Route, Harold Drasdo.
Ernest Press, 1997
£12.50

The front cover of *The Ordinary Route* is printed in ochre-brown. Why, one wonders, show the author and his brother Neville engaged with the crux of the beautiful *Red Slab* on Rannoch Wall, and print the picture in sepia tones rather than in rich colour? The answer began to come to me after my fifth reading of this remarkable book. *Fifth?* Correct. Like F.R. Leavis, the Cambridge literary critic, who, for solace and inspiration, carried a copy of Milton's works in his knapsack whilst driving ambulances during World War One, I have taken *The Ordinary Route* into a war zone of sorts, too — through GCSE National Curriculum English Literature lessons (but with Chief Inspector of Schools and Avon-activist of the 70s, Chris Woodhead giving it a public accolade, I felt I was at least behind the lines.) Of its kind, it is a book quite out of the ordinary: in equal measure demanding, sustaining, and delighting. That it was not even considered for the 1997 Boardman Tasker Award is little short of scandalous.

Ostensibly, this is Drasdo's autobiography — an account of his ordinary route through life — but apparently, it refused to sit easily even in that most flexible of genres, for 'the book would have nothing to do with it'. Instead (and more like a novelist describing his art), Drasdo tells us that he was surprised by 'the shape of the book', and by 'silences'; he was troubled by 'insistent voices' and had no choice other than to 'copy out what they said'.

So what is the shape of the book? It is divided into four sections which contain twenty-two essays — several of which have appeared in 'earlier drafts' in journals and magazines. Somewhat surprisingly however, he includes none of his highly-praised writing for the CC Journal; and his seminal paper on the philosophy and aesthetics of mountain education, *Education & the Mountain Centres* (which is almost impossible to find now), appears only as an assimilated echo. There is neither index, nor bibliography

and there are no footnotes or photographs. So, has Drasdo deliberately set himself at a huge distance from the traditional autobiography and given himself a handicap to start with? And if so, why?

Well, to start with, this is not a book which places its author's experience sequentially from playground swing to climbing sling. Nor does it offer us the author delving self-consciously into his own psyche or those of his friends and relations, seeking for causal explanations of why he chose to climb (if there are several apocryphal Peter Greenwood stories, for example, no attempt is made to examine him under the microscope; and the most personal and in some ways, most moving of revelations about Drasdo's relationship with his parents closes the book rather than opens it). Yet, despite discounting these obvious parameters of the genre, *The Ordinary Route* is one of the most quietly-challenging and profound of autobiographies ever written by a British climber.

Drasdo claims he is a very ordinary author: 'an alternative historian, a village philosopher, a man who's kept his head above water more by luck than judgement'. The subtle qualifications — 'alternative', 'village', 'luck' — are characteristic of his style, definitive of his intention and the source of much of the wry, often self-deprecating humour in the book. There is no parade here of the big-tick routes or big-tick partnerships; and the very coat hooks upon which a standard climbing autobiography would normally be hung — 'My highest mountain, my nearest miss, my most agonising decision...(my most) deeply satisfying alpine ascents' — have 'resisted inclusion'. Why leave out these obvious mountaineering touchstones? Well, Drasdo's intention is gradually revealed as much more ambitious and analytic: it is to subject his own climbing experience itself to scrutiny and thus find 'the unacknowledged value in what we take as commonplace'. The change of pronoun to 'we', here, is telling: he seeks to generalise from his own experience and offer us all, 'the ordinary as rich and strange'. The Shakespearean metaphor from *The Tempest* is also deliberate: he wants to transform his ordinary experience using 'imagination and reading' and a 'long time-span of en-

gagement with a variety of terrains and conditions'. This is the considered agenda of a man who has spent 50 years thinking through his climbing by writing about it.

Drasdo is much more than a good descriptive writer, though: he is a shrewd political commentator; a practised defender of the public right to roam (c.f. the essay, 'Access': 'What we wanted...the freedom to walk anywhere on uncultivated land') and a well-read and active conservationist (c.f. the major 18 page essay entitled 'Conservation'). He's also much more than a 'village' philosopher in these pages (perhaps, with the possible exception of Phil Bartlett, he is the only British climbing writer with the credentials to be a philosopher of climbing), scrutinising many of the most contentious issues that currently beset modern climbing with rigour and relish. It is worth reading *The Ordinary Route* for these reasons alone.

He is particularly good, for instance, at teasing out all the inconsistent and counter cases in an argument and he can take a subject that is potentially rather dry — such as guidebooks and, because it is dear to his heart) as a writer and climber, show its essential characteristics and significance with wit and clarity of thought. What is written in guides, he tells us, conditions our responses to cliffs and climbs and therefore to ourselves as writers and climbers. As we learn the relief and detail of a crag, for instance, we quite literally 'harness it with words'. The history of our sport is thus very much the history of climbing language itself. Drasdo loves reading maps — as you would expect — devoting a chapter to 'On Getting Lost', in which language itself is the map whereby we find both where and who we are in relation to the mountain map. 'We could find no object to which we could attach a few words to say where we'd lain down'.

Though the autobiographical details pop up unchronologically throughout the book, Drasdo's more personal 'attempt to make sense' of his own experience begins on page 63 — the last page of an essay entitled 'An End'. This essay, marking the death of Drasdo's contemporary, Arthur Dolphin, when Drasdo was himself in Courmayeur, stands as a marker. Before it, in the first five essays, are many of the

details of early life and climbing in Yorkshire and The Lakes. Packed with vignettes of those men and women who made up The Yorkshire Climbers (Mountaineering Club) and The Bradford Lads — those days when climbing was 'an oral culture' — memories of National Service in Greece and of hitch-hiking, they complement chapters in Dennis Gray's *Rope Boy* and Don Whillans's *Portrait of a Mountaineer*, if you want a comprehensive social picture of the time.

But it is the transformative power of language upon experience which excites him most. Each essay contains an 'epiphany' (definition: 'a moment of manifestation of supernatural reality'); but there is nothing of the supernatural in his recollected experience. His observations are very much rooted in our reality — the mountain reality of closely-observing climbers, everywhere; and with Eliot, he knows that 'the business of the poet is not to seek for...new emotions to express, but to use the ordinary ones...'

A good example of this, and of his distinctive style, is to be found in the extract from the essay 'On Unplanned Bivouacs', published in this edition of the *CC Journal*. An apparently commonplace story of death in the mountains, it opens with a deliberate leak of the narrative tension before modulating, via a focused revelation about the power of nature (the epiphany) into a profound generalisation about (our) experience of a bivouac. Here, in Eliot's words again, is 'neither emotion, nor recollection' but a 'fusion' of both. We can see, too, how a photograph would not help him — here or elsewhere: the pictorial qualities of this and other pieces would be diminished by the singularity of an image. For the power of that 'ordinary' dawn to provide a lasting effect on both writer and reader, the imagery must be preserved by words alone.

Drasdo saves his best work for his most treasured experiences — which clearly still continue to exercise his imagination and memory. The essays at the heart of the book are akin to sustained meditations in their measured and studied intensity. Always with some rock at their heart, they are refined recollections which unite dream-time with the reality of intense experience. Here, where we get as close to the ideal forms as Plato will allow

him to, the act of climbing loses the foreground, giving way to a deeper engagement with mountains, to a sort of spiritual search for the reverberating heart of things. Drasdo writes of these places as he apprehended them and as they are now, in memory; thus he offers us 'the real remembered thing'. So, an 'ordinary' walk up Gebel Musa (reputedly, the Mount Sinai of Biblical fame) leads him to the 'miraculous sanctuary of Elijah's hollow', the discovery of a 'climber's paradise as perfect as any I've seen'; but also the realisation that to 'work out routes, here, over the pilgrims' heads, would be an act of the grossest insensitivity'. Another of his 'most memorable days', on Bon Echo Rock in Canada, ends with a discovery of 'sermons in stones' (Algonquin Indian pictographs) which counterpoints the later near destruction of his canoe by a falling rock and a night paddle home that might have been fatal. He writes then of several visits (pilgrimages?), over the years, to The Poisoned Glen in Ireland, where climbs on Bearnas Buttress, in 'the hills...robed in mystery', lead to 'dreams...in a west impossibly displaced, (where) there was another area we hadn't yet looked at. And beyond that...'. He concludes, close to home, on Arenig Fawr, where he is still seeking experiences in and out of the ordinary.

The Ordinary Route is a demanding read at times. Some of the trains of thought Drasdo follows, lead him into empty stations; and there are moments when one wanted more of the active, personal voice. But his seriousness of ambition, intent and skill in writing mark this out as one of the most inspiring books of recent times.

If Ken Wilson is right, and we are at a crossroads in our sport, let's learn to trust the 'difficult' writer or visionary artist to help us apprehend 'The Seen Climb, the Known Climb, the Dream Climb', and find new meanings in climbing; for as Drasdo points out, 'Climbing is substantially an activity of the imagination'. Not 'fashion' or 'fancy', note, but 'imagination'—the precursor to adventure. Long may it be celebrated as such by such adventurous writers and by such visionary publishers as The Ernest Press.

Tim Noble

**...and one for the crow, John Redhead.
A Serious Clowning Publication, 1997
£37.50**

This is an easy book to describe or to talk about but a difficult book to categorise or to value. It's a sumptuous large-format production which would show handsomely in the book displays of the art galleries the author despises. It consists of text, artwork and photographs. It's loosely centred around forty of Redhead's first ascents in North Wales, 1979 to 1989, all near or at the limit of the time. The lifestyles of the hero and of the climbing community in Llanberis provide a background. The author's thoughts as climber, artist and moralist range more widely.

First the photographs. They're black and whites, one for each climb, and they're mainly the work of Ray Wood. They're the most interesting collection I've seen for years. Apparently they're posed, or at any rate staged, on repeat ascents but that's irrelevant. It's only when the photographer is clearly under the direction of a poseur that we register amusement and few of these bothered me in that way.

I'm familiar with only one brilliant book on the meanings of photographs, *Camera Lucida* by Roland Barthes. (Haven't tried Susan Sontag.) Barthes deconstructs a selection of black and whites from Niepce to Mapplethorpe with luminous clarity. Might the terminology he appropriated and invented be extended to handle climbing and mountain photographs, and could any collection survive so close an inspection? Possibly, this one might.

Redhead is an artist but calls himself an image maker. His thirteen reproductions are preliminary sketches for large screens, chalk pastel on cartridge paper. They feature humanoid caricatures or plucked battery chickens with human genitalia. They're no doubt designed as bitter satires on society but to me they're just obscure cartoons. On the other hand, tiny stick-like figures dance in glee across the Contents pages and elsewhere. These motifs resemble early rock paintings and they're quite endearing.

The text opens with a Foreword by one of his pals, a Commentary by another, and an Introduction by the author; then there's a piece for each climb, though these often

forget what they're about, with a dozen lengthier declarations inserted and poems by one of his ladies interposed. Before considering the book as a whole I'll attend to two large obstructions.

To begin with, this is not polite literature. Aside from the language, the content is strongly Rabelaisian. But the author doesn't want a fair trial. I have the feeling that if the book were banned, Redhead would be at once outraged and delighted. (Memo to the DPP: For God's sake don't ban Redhead's book. We'd never hear the last of it and you'd regret it. You'd wake next morning to find those monstrous copulating chickens painted all over your outside walls.) A strong anxiety is evident: the reader has to be shocked. So I'll look now at the book's private parts which are ostentatiously displayed.

The controversy started twenty years ago with the naming of Redhead's climbs. Examples: *Menstrual Gossip*, *Menopausal Discharge*, *Cystitis by Proxy*. This awkwardness has a long history (Kelly and the FRCC; Haworth and the SMC) but Redhead feels wounded and here explains what the words meant to him. What he doesn't explain is why he used them for rock climbs. Or why a half of his climb names are loaded or suggestive. This sensationalism was reinforced by his top-roped but naked ascents of two difficult routes, the rope attached to his genitals; and by the notorious acrylic, painted in place of the flake he dislodged on *Indian Face*.

The revelations about sexual mores in his circle are entertaining. The tales related aren't (I imagine) more startling than those most of us could offer, were we so indiscreet. They seem spicy simply because he names the cast — and what's a nice girl like Freda Lowe doing in a book like this? — the cast, apparently, being gratified to have its exploits recorded.

Other elements may be thought more distasteful. The author shares, with his lurcher, a keen interest in the bowel motions of his companions, who often have to halt on the path to the crag and scorn concealment. (If this nauseates the reader, and before he declares it an impermissible subject, he should try *The Deptford Trilogy* by Robertson Davies; here a great novelist shows how a similar scene can be turned to moral purpose). This ties in

with Redhead's obsession with the animal nature he sees in man and with his reverence for the ancestral savage in us. The dog kills a squirrel in the quarries, he takes it home, cooks it, and the pair of them share it. He blows the brains out of his fattened pig and slits its throat not without grim satisfaction. His view of the place of women is somewhere between the Victorian and the Palaeolithic. At this point I'll save space by listing key words frequently used: 'blood', 'entrails', 'primal', 'rite', 'ritual', 'rutting', 'shaman'.

It might appear by now that Freud or Krafft-Ebing would have fallen onto the book with joy as a case-study in morbid psychology. Actually, although there's much that's disagreeable or bizarre, I can't find a lot to shock. From time to time he names all the ills of civilisation, but these are too familiar for simple listings to stir us. His difficulty here is that he agrees with us. (If challenged for my latest book-mark for shock I'd cite Jill Paton Walsh's novel *Knowledge of Angels*.) But, in fact, it's not Redhead's aim purely to shock. His declared aim is to heal us — especially those of us who don't want to be healed or didn't realise we needed healing. This can only be done by first shaking us awake.

The second obstruction is the incoherence or stridency of some of the author's voices. He opens with the announcement 'I am not at ease with words'. In fact he's very free indeed with them, slapping them onto the page like paint. The problems partly stem from his satisfaction with the self-image he's constructed, typified in his view of his art: 'It is the nature of my work to challenge moral and spiritual values...' (p22); 'My work is not in the world to entertain' (p38); 'Expect to be bruised' (p150). When he's not clowning he takes himself very seriously.

From this range of voices I'll pick out a few. Sometimes he comes over as a crazed and sinister prophet, speaking in tongues or projecting such a barrage of wall-to-wall abstractions that only a generalised sense of his message comes through and neither assent nor dissent is possible. In more lucid moments he talks to himself or upbraids the reader. 'Never falter from the dictation of the thrusting need to consummate,' he tells us.

He can be cold or bitter and assess-

ments of contemporaries, outside the inner circle, are often disparaging. The dead — Mo Anthoine, Jimmy Jewel and Paul Williams — are handled badly; those still around — Johnny Dawes, Rowland Edwards and Jim Perrin, amongst others — are carefully undermined. Writing an Open Letter to Care in the Community (the known villain who attacked him with a crowbar has been released on bail) he sounds like an aggrieved and indignant old age pensioner.

Periodically he offers murky dreams and weird fantasies or moves into experimental styles. These didn't move me. He admires the innovators and extremists in the arts. His climb names make allusion to Bosch (neatly), Baudelaire, Dylan Thomas and, he says, Van Gogh. The selection is significant. The writing, though modern in reference, sometimes seems derivative in style and mood. (This is a friendly review.)

I'll pass over idiosyncrasies in punctuation, carelessness in spelling and spectacular collisions in grammar and logic. By now the reader may be wondering why the book justifies so long a discussion. I'm coming to that.

To begin with, *...and one for the crow* is a work of absolute originality. I can only set it beside *Tsa* by Michael Tobias, with which, as Menlove Edwards would say, it is not comparable. Its effect rests partly on its good looks. Redhead is a brilliant designer and knew exactly what he wanted. There's no reason why an inexpensive book on poor paper shouldn't be attractively designed but most book-lovers would feel great pleasure in handling this opulent production.

Further, the determined reader will find some excellent writing half-buried in the text. When Redhead forgets his missions — when he concentrates on the moves on one of his desperates or notices the outside world — his perceptions become organised. (His diary recording the salvaging and carrying of two thousand slates from an abandoned shed high in the Llanberis quarries will hit anybody who's shifted timber or building blocks for weeks on end alone.)

When he's not attacking the ethics of other contenders he's sharp and interesting on climbing style. His contempt for the consumer society is pointedly expressed,

though it's a little odd to meet it in this expensive book. He can be extremely amusing and his picture of the Llanberis climbing community in the eighties is fascinating and, I think, valuable. Surprisingly, he sometimes permits his friends to upstage him. Those climbers who've repeated any of Redhead's prestigious routes (and who, beginning with the class of '79, must by now amount to a substantial company) will, of course, find the book fascinating.

In fact it's so various that it's not possible to assign it any fixed place. It's full of absurdities and yet its energy and inventiveness, together with a vein of poetry and an appalling honesty, are notable. I felt by the end that although he didn't sway me I couldn't help liking the author. I'd offer to help but know he'd resist help angrily so instead I'll caution him. Maybe he should be just a little bit more discreet. This island is a redneck outpost where healers and prophets are always at risk. He should remember Auden's epitaph on three of his precursors:

'Lawrence, Blake and Homer Lane, once healers in our English land;
These are dead as iron for ever; these can never hold our hand.
Lawrence was brought down by smut-hounds, Blake went dotty as he sang,
Homer Lane was killed in action by the Twickenham Baptist gang.'

Harold Drasdo

**Eric Shipton, Everest and Beyond,
Peter Steele. Constable, 1998
£18.99**

Did anyone really know Eric Shipton? The reviewer, having met him on numerous occasions and been his Hon. Sec. at the Alpine Club for a year, is inclined to doubt it. But any reader of this admirable book will understand Eric a lot better at the end. For what is clearly a labour of love, Peter Steele has carried out exhaustive research, both into Eric's varied and adventurous career, most of which is a matter of record, and into more private matters. He has talked to very many people who knew Eric, and has gained access to extensive and very personal correspondence with a string of girl friends. This throws a lot of light on

the man behind — not the mask, but the genial, modest, apparently somewhat detached, mountaineer that casual friends and colleagues knew. Peter lets Eric's interaction with other people tell its own tale; he does not stray into psycho-analysis or himself examine Eric's character in any depth.

As I read, I felt that I would like to hear more about the real Eric, rather than just what he had done. But at the end, I was glad to be left with a portrait of a remarkable man, with many clues, but without a judgement that I would probably have doubted. Shipton's tremendous exploratory achievements on Mount Kenya, in the Himalaya, Karakoram and Patagonia, and his time as a diplomat in Kashgar, are well summarised and illustrated by sketch maps drawn by the author. Shipton's own books are the main source, but having all the accounts in one slim volume makes one appreciate even more what a life dedicated to adventure means.

It is a pity that Peter Steele's efforts to find out what Shipton was really doing in Eastern Europe after the war were frustrated. He seems to doubt that he was employed solely on agricultural business, and quotes a Russian mention of 'Shipton, the well known spy'. But in paranoid countries, wheat yields may be state secrets, and in any case his former tenancy of the consulate in Kashgar would be enough to earn him the title in Russian circles.

Fairly extensive treatment is given to the expeditions in 1951 and 1952, the Everest Reconnaissance and the attempt on Cho Oyu, leading up to what was for Shipton, the debacle of the change in leadership of the 1953 expedition. Peter Steele has had access to Alpine Club and other records of the goings-on at that time. Again, he makes few judgements — other than to record that most people agree with the then Director of the RGS that it was 'the right thing done in the wrong way'. At first, the Himalayan Committee unanimously appointed Shipton, brushing aside his modest remarks about his own suitability. They were not then able to handle in an open manner a situation in which they gradually became convinced, not without reason, that a more single-minded and organised leader was desirable. They were embarrassed, and he perhaps appeared on the surface rather more de-

tached from the decision than a properly committed leader should have been. Some weeks later, and without warning, they proposed to him a form of joint leadership which, on consideration, was clearly impractical and which Shipton immediately rejected. His subsequent letter to the President of the ROS was a dignified protest at the way in which his dismissal was effected, but contained hardly a hint of the deep disappointment he felt and which coloured his life for some years afterwards.

This depth of feeling, underneath a calm and diffident exterior, was characteristic. Likewise his enthusiasm and total commitment to mountain exploration was concealed by the apparently casual organisation and conduct of some of his expeditions.

In ordinary life, he could appear quite detached from his surroundings. But his attachments to his girl friends seem to have been life-long (and theirs to him); and he commanded respect and loyalty and affection from almost all who were with him in the mountains. He was a great man, whose name will live and whose achievements are an inspiring part of mountaineering history. One feels that perhaps someone, some day, will write a biography that will probe more deeply into Eric Shipton the man, but Peter Steele has written a very good and worthwhile book.

Mike Westmacott

**Dark Shadows Falling, Joe Simpson.
Jonathan Cape, 1997
£16.99**

Dark Shadows Falling is a book of two parts: it opens with a discussion on the current state of ethics and morals in mountaineering at the highest altitudes, then concludes with a description of Simpson's own frustrated efforts as expedition leader to Pumori — a beautiful peak facing the Western Cwm and the increasingly accessible summit of Everest.

Simpson weaves an intricate and absorbing story — and who better to do it? With five books successfully published, Simpson can be considered a veritable authority on climbing and climbing writing. As if to prove this, we are reminded throughout the book that he is often con-

sulted on the latter subject, by the non-climbing media and public whenever there is a mountaineering catastrophe.

On the face of it he nobly attempts to bring to our attention the dark heart of climbing. The 1992 Dutch Expedition to Everest bears the brunt of his criticism and illustrates the decline in acceptable behaviour by a minority of climbers, whilst examples like the tragedy that befell Alison Hargreaves are used to highlight the spin used by the media for their own sensational reports about climbing tragedies. The story has everything going for it to make it a best seller; many of the recent and dramatic epics of others are recounted here. There is death, betrayal, heroic deeds, egomania and superhuman effort. In the introduction there is even a hint of the paranormal. For the lovers of gore and readers of male life-style rags, there are photographs depicting a corpse on the South Col, and a Sadhu abusing himself — all laddish stuff and desperately topical.

Dark Shadows Falling is Simpson's own spin on a story a lot of people have been in a rush to tell. But commenting on other people's actions, he is often the victim of his own arguments. Whilst some of the actions of those he describes are saddening and incredible — such as the refusal of the Dutch to help and comfort a dying climber, yards away from their tents on the South Col; and the Japanese treading over dying climbers on the north side — there are also passages and comments from Simpson which are irritating, such as his arrogant stance on educating others about the virtues of 'British Alpinism'. Sometimes, too, his views about the motives of others who climb are dismissive and elitist and his ethical arguments about reporting, guiding and other commercial aspects in the chapter 'Profit and Loss' left me bored as the narrative degenerated into a typical pub argument or harangue. However, there are some gripping reads in the book. The well-balanced and honest account of the 1996 scrum to the top of Everest is an impressive piece of journalism; the effort that went into researching all the facts of that horrendous May clearly stands out.

But it is the penultimate chapter, 'Running on Empty' that is classic Simpson. The first-hand description of his attempt

on a new route up the South Face of Pumori with Ray Delaney left me with the same satisfaction I derived from reading Patey's *One Man's Mountains*. It is such a shame for all concerned — reader as well as climber, that they had to bale out on the route due to illness. They obviously felt cheated of a great climb, and with some empathy the reader feels deprived of what could have been another good story.

Despite being a rather gloomy and depressing book, it is nevertheless a worthwhile read. Not only is it another example of good-quality journalism about the recent high profile events of the big 8000ers, it lays Joe open as a writer to such an extent that his vulnerability is more apparent than in the physical and mental challenges that he faced in the events of *Touching the Void*.

I don't agree with all of what he has to say; far from it. I was often left seething — sometimes by both what he described and his subsequent comments. But on closing the book, what one is left feeling is a shared sense of passion for the game and a desire to confront the threats bearing down upon it in what now must be considered to be 'the commercial age' of climbing.

John Baker

**Deep Play, Paul Pritchard.
Baton Wicks, 1997
£16.99**

Deep Play is Paul Pritchard's first book. It is an eclectic collection of autobiographical essays covering some of the author's most notable adventures and a sumptuous pointillism of people, places and 'the games climbers play'. From first experiments with life in a compromised family environment to compromised early Himalayan expedition, and from the technicality of the Dinorwic slate quarries to the ridiculously dangerous and brocoli-inspired routes of Left Hand Red Wall, Pritchard draws deeply on his own unique kind of play time.

As a writer, he is clearly experimenting; the style evolves with the chronology of the essays. Much is refreshingly original, but at times the writing is a little raw and lacking the sophistication and ease of

the mature writer. That he hasn't trawled the thesaurus is one of the book's strengths: the style is 'on sight' and more often than not, he pulls it off. His use of language is constantly interesting; I particularly liked the metaphor 'strain of thought' which brilliantly evokes those streams of tortured internal dialogue forced up from within on a tough climb.

The title is apt: it describes a man boldly exploring the boundaries of what is possible. Pritchard appears almost unconcerned about the possibility of a sudden end. Perhaps he intuits from the beginning what he confirms in the best chapter in the book, that the process of dying can be incredibly peaceful. He takes an early bath on *The Direct Start to Games Climbers Play* — an event which may have given the book its haunting title; but the irony is that almost being taken away for eternity brings him closer to humanity. We are, he realises, all equal in death.

Such is the depth of Pritchard's commitment to his climbs, he forces the reader to confront his or her own commitment. To this commitment and ability to endure suffering, he has added a carefully nurtured technical ability and a portfolio of tremendously impressive first ascents.

Though 'In Deep Shit' might be a more appropriate (though less philosophical) title, Pritchard rarely conveys his fears or dwells on the trauma of climbs; and this is my main criticism of the book: I am left wondering just what is required of a human being to make such audacious forays into the vertical. What is it that makes a great climber? Unfortunately, Pritchard gives away few clues. As a climber of some little ability (I hope), what hits me straight away with this book is that all these years I have actually been indulging in "Shallow Play"; I simply don't measure on the same scale as Pritchard. Perhaps if I was told I could model myself on the man; but there again, nature is stronger than nurture and I am probably simply deficient in the right genes.

I think that what finally defines Pritchard (and perhaps what both Paul and my brother, Johnny share) is a love of challenging established authority and a healthy disrespect for the values of society. I believe herein lies the maverick personality that is at the heart of the seriously good climber. To constantly challenge

for those lines that defy the ordinary cragsman requires a little more than the ordinary. This is what *Deep Play* is ultimately about: it is the expression of Paul's anarchic and open-minded personality. We see it in his upbringing, then assimilated in his climbing and now, thankfully, in his extraordinary writing. I think he will make a very good father.

Deep Play is an uplifting read; may it lift you up, too, and tempt you into climbing something outrageous.

Mike Dawes

**Into Thin Air, Jon Krakauer.
Macmillan, 1997
£16.99**

In *Into Thin Air*, Jon Krakauer, one of the participants, chronicles the tragic events on Everest in May 1996 in which a violent storm killed the mountain's most celebrated guide, Rob Hall, and 7 other people. It is a story which has had enormous media attention and I came to it having already read two other accounts: those in Matt Dickinson's *The Death Zone*, and in Joe Simpson's *Dark Shadows Falling*. I was therefore feeling somewhat jaded. Bearing in mind that it is written by an American journalist, I expected to dislike its English; given that it is about commercial climbing, I expected to dislike its characters.

The Dramatis Personae and the various expeditions to which they were attached are listed at the beginning of the book — itself unusual — and this alone is enough to show unequivocally that we are entering a whole new ball game here. Besides the Adventure Consultants expedition of Rob Hall and the Mountain Madness expedition of fellow guide Scott Fisher (snapping closely at market leader Hall's heels in the competition for rich clients), there's the MacGillivray Freeman IMAX/IWERKS expedition making a wide screen format movie with American ace Ed Viesturs in the starring role; the Johannesburg Sunday Times Expedition (undoubtedly the most dubiously depressing, and the one that Mandela himself was unwise enough to give an approving nod to); a mad Norwegian on a solo attempt at the south-west face; a bunch of frighteningly motivated Taiwanese; and several others. Members who are not guides

or clients are journalists, cinematographers, film talent (what the hell does that mean: 'rugged good looks?'), photographers, screenwriters, snowboarders or, of course, Sherpas. The clients are mainly pathologists from Dallas, heart surgeons from Seattle, or tall glamorous blondes whose fathers control large portions of the world economy. I exaggerate. But not much.

This is a world of people whom one senses have rarely, if ever, failed at anything, for whom the world has obligingly opened its doors at every turn, and who now wish to climb Everest for no better reason than because it is there. It all generates a kind of can-do confidence and enthusiasm that I could only take in small quantities. I found it increasingly difficult to stick with it as the personae approached the mountain, chatting away to their wives and children by satellite phone, apparently unaware that neither they, nor even their children, are actually the centre of the Universe. Fischer declares his views that: 'I believe 100 per cent I'm coming back...My wife believes 100 percent I'm coming back. She isn't concerned about me at all when I'm guiding because I'm gonna make all the right decisions. When accidents happen, I think it's always human error. So that's what I want to eliminate. I've had lots of climbing accidents in my youth. You come up with lots of reasons, but ultimately it's human error.' (p.65.) This sounds uncomfortably like the philosophy of the Texan pathologist Beck Weathers, who sits at the camp table riling against the waste and molly-coddling of the welfare state. Everything that goes right is your own achievement. Everything that goes wrong is your own fault. Very nice; very simple; very wrong.

This book has hit the commercial jackpot in America like no other and ultimately that has to be the most interesting thing about it. My own feeling — and here this review enters the realms of wild speculation and perhaps foolishness — is that rather as the astonishing over-reaction to the Princess of Wales' death in 1997 said something very fundamental about Britain and what is lacking there, so this book's success is a reflection of fundamental doubts about American culture and what it believes. It is a very American book.

It questions the assumption that money, hard work and determination can overcome anything. It questions whether, when things go wrong, it always has to be somebody's 'fault'. It questions whether the good life really does mean doing it all — a brothel in Bangkok today, Indian Ashram tomorrow, Everest summit at the weekend. It reminds us that reward does not necessarily follow the Godly. People die on Everest in 1996 performing acts of huge selflessness and care, whilst others emerge to triumph after being the biggest bastards of all time. It's not fair; but that's the point. Human hubris forgets too easily that Everest just doesn't give a damn.

This is very difficult to say correctly; but though the deaths which occurred were all tragedies which no decent person could wish for, it is also true that this developing scenario of New York socialities and the like being dragged to the top of the world whilst a train of helpers follow on behind with satellite phones and internet notepads at the ready is one that no mountaineer would wish for (God, how I hated that Sandy Hill Pitmann woman). Back at Base Camp, meanwhile, where 300 tents generate enough sewage to block up every meltwater stream within reach and indiscriminate humping disturbs one's beauty sleep and embarrasses those not involved, the more devout of the Sherpas look upwards to the ghostly silhouette of Sagarmatha, 'Mother Goddess of the Snows' and worry whether if all this goes on much longer she's not going to start getting very angry indeed.

But a worried Sherpa, even an ill Sherpa, must hide it. Job prospects depend on an unblemished c.v. Any weakness, and it's retirement.

A guide's position is hardly more enviable; new operators are entering the market all the time, and you're only as good as the percentage of clients you get to the top this year. Its a nightmare, really.

Into Thin Air is no literary masterpiece, but it is a very skilled piece of journalism. In the context of such a powerful story the American English that annoyed me so unreasonably will be a minor irritant to most readers. Krakauer's history is sometimes a little shaky, but his judgments are impressive. Though he was on

Everest as a client, his fees being paid by the American magazine *Outside*, he is a considerable mountaineer in his own right, and it shows. This is a book by an insider, and it commands respect.

It could be said — it has been, many, times — that Krakauer wrote it to assuage his own guilt at rushing for cover as the storm developed, leaving less strong colleagues to fend for themselves. This itself seems American. I couldn't help comparing it to the altogether more tight-lipped style of Stephen Venables in *Everest: Kangshung Face*; though admittedly, no-one died on that occasion.

But if he does feel guilt, on the basis of the information presented here it is unwarranted. In the penultimate chapter he sets the whole affair in context, pointing out that in fact 'the gale of May 10th, though violent, was nothing extraordinary; it was a fairly typical Everest squall. If it had hit two hours later, it's likely that nobody would have died. Conversely, if it had arrived even one hour earlier, the storm could easily have killed eighteen or twenty climbers — me among them....In fact, the murderous outcome of 1996 was in many ways simply business as usual. Although a record number of people died in the spring climbing season on Everest, the 12 fatalities amounted to only 3 percent of the 398 climbers who ascended higher than Base Camp — which is actually slightly below the historical fatality rate of 3.3 percent. Or here's another way to look at it: between 1921 and May 1996, 144 people died and the peak was climbed some 630 times — a ratio of one in four. Last spring, 12 climbers died and 84 reached the summit — a ratio of one in seven. Compared to these historical standards, 1996 was actually a safer-than-average year.' (p. 272-274)

It's not that things are now going wrong more often, but that people will no longer accept them going wrong at all.

Phil Bartlett.

**Chomolungma Sings the Blues,
Ed Douglas. Constable
£18.95**

Chomolungma is the Sherpa name. Sagarmatha, as we learn, the Nepali, for what we call Mount Everest, and the book

is an account of the treks of the author (a C.C. member) in that once glorious region and his dismay at what its opening to the West has wrought. Anyone who is thinking of adding to the Western presence there should read this book and ponder. For those who like to follow his travels exactly, there are two maps: one to place the region on the border of Nepal and Tibet (never part of China to him, nor me, nor, I hope, to you) and another, larger-scale map of his wanderings in Nepal to the Ngozumpa and Khumbu glaciers. A map of Kathmandu and its surroundings (which must have been feasible) would have been helpful, and there is no map to his Tibetan travels. Draw your own conclusion about that.

Usual expedition books are diaries of journeys, concentrating mostly on the vertical — and so is this, but with the emphasis on the journey, the details of people he meets, the conditions, social and political in which they live, and the effect upon all these of the flood of rubberneckers from what we loosely call the West (although Japan has provided more than its share to the degradation of the finest inhabited mountain area in the world). The attraction of the book lies in his interest in the incidents and details of his journeys. He has, for instance, winkled out the names of the degrees of interbreeding between yaks and cows and the uses of yak hair. Maybe because of his keen interest in people and their problems and a realisation of the effects tourism is having, the book is almost a catalogue of despair.

Ed Douglas — an evident fan of *The Ascent of Rumdoodle* — is aware of the openness to parody of the books about the once usual heavily-manned expeditions. He has not however gone to the other end of the spectrum, the suicidal solo expedition a la Maurice Wilson. He has taken the nearest he can get to inflicting least destruction to the environment he has been obsessed with and is 'investigating'. This laudable aim cannot be achieved in Tibet. To gain access to, and travel there is difficult and Ed went with a trekking company, Himalayan Kingdoms, based in Bristol.

The Tibetan trip, following exactly a journey-plan laid down by the Chinese authorities, involved a charabanc trip from Kathmandu to Lhasa. Charabanc — a

word from the past for a journey into the past. The rigid itinerary which these official trips follow, ensures that there is no conflict with or delay by local officials but gives the travellers no scope for individual decisions on variation in their journey or contact with the indigenes. This must have troubled Ed with his overwhelming interest in people. Even the official support cannot ensure that the hotels are clean or at all well run, except rundown. The unfriendliness of the Chinese whom Ed met he found striking in comparison to the attitude of the Tibetans but, after all, the Chinese were officials and officialdom can be unpleasant almost everywhere, even without the excuse of totalitarianism. The world already knows, that the Tibetan culture and religion is being crushed, despite protestations to the contrary from the Chinese authorities. They may be instituting local, 'civic', construction projects intended to improve the amenities of Tibetan villages but even these cause resentment. Local Tibetans work on them without pay but Chinese labour brought in to bring the work force up to strength is paid. So much for the People's Republic's democracy.

The treks in Nepal give him more scope for he has access to the locals he meets through his Sherpa, Dachhiri, who is, from his photograph and mentions in the text, an engaging, stoical companion, tolerant of the weaknesses of his European mindee. I particularly liked Ed's representation of Dachhiri's partly disguised laugh. 'Sheesh, sheesh, sheesh,' — worthy of Dick Dastardly's Muttley. (I hope you have catholic artistic interests).

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the journeys of our earthy, earthly comember are a form of the stations of the cross; no, not stages, staggers, from foetid dungpit to rancid, overflowed, toilet floor, because, as with most Westerners, unaccustomed to the food and indigenous bug life, Ed spent most of his stay deeply troubled in his interior as well as his conscience.

He rescues us from all-pervading do-lour by being able to write and maintain out interest thereby. He is something of a master of the off-hand two or three liner, such as this about the Chinese border town: 'Zhangmu is not the most desperate place I have ever been in but I bet it

has a similar post code.' Ponder this: it does not make sense but it sounds good and gets his message across (one of the arts of the communicator). And this about modern local music: 'Squawking ballads by Whitney Houston-wannabes with their manager's hands apparently round their throats.'

This second comment gives weight to his assertion that radio and TV have had and will have a bigger impact on Nepal and Tibet than tourism. China will already have realised this. What price satellite dishes being designated illegal? There are other more insidious effects upon Nepal. Two hundred thousand girls are estimated to have gone to act as prostitutes in India. Tens of thousands are thought to have returned affected by HIV. The holy river Bagmati is still filthy thirty miles south of Kathmandu. In rainy weather the leaky pipes mean that sewage and drinking water are mixed 'as the cholera wards testify.' The atmospheric pollution linked to vehicles may be the worst in the world. What have we done? More to the point what can we do? There has been aid, perhaps 50 per cent of which has been absorbed by corruption. What happens to the fees the expeditions pay? Do they, or their benefit, reach the people? Does the situation need an Ataturk or a Stalin; should the borders be closed again?

The many problems of the region are complex and perhaps insoluble. Paying porters a realistic (to Westerners) wage may seem fair but undermines the portering structure for local people. The availability of Russian helicopters is reducing the need for expedition porters anyway. The inadequacy of the Nepalese sewage systems to cope with the influx of foreigners is a separate problem from that of the mountains of garbage which the expeditions leave. The Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee, with limited resources, is trying to organise the clearance of garbage. Can not expeditions be forced to clear the mountain of their refuse? Who can ensure that part of the expedition fees go to establishing collection and recycling systems? Who has the right?

Despite being brought face to face with these difficulties, most of the trekkers are happy with their experience; but the majority of the climbers the author met appeared to be sullen and morose. As great

an authority as Greg Child put this down to their being out of their depth. One suspects he had it right. Should the less than capable be allowed to go?

Do not be put off by my repeating part of his catalogue of squalor and oppression; no social change ever occurred without someone's bringing the state of affairs to the public's attention and we should be grateful that Ed Douglas is pointing out the appalling effects that western 'tourism-imperialism' is causing.

If you feel with me, that 'Everest Weeps' might have been as good a title to go back to page 63 and read the quote from Dervla Murphy's *The Waiting Land* (1965).

Perhaps nowhere in Asia is the contrast between a dignified past and a brash, effervescent present as violent as in Nepal; and one knows that here too, eventually, the present will have its shoddy triumph. Yet even when the Nepalese way of life has been annihilated, the Himalaya will remain — occasionally being invaded by high-powered expeditions — but preserving an inviolable beauty to the end of time. Read that and hope.

Dave Gregory

**Escape Routes, David Roberts.
The Mountaineers
£15.95.**

An American reviewer complained that David Roberts uses big words. 'I wish he remembered that he wasn't at Harvard anymore', wrote Mark Synnott in *Climbing* 171. Oh dear. Perhaps it would be better if Roberts were not such a thoughtful and intelligent writer about mountaineering — not the sort of writer who asked what I thought of the quality of Menlove Edwards' poetry at a reading at the Banff Mountain Book Festival, for example, nor the sort of writer who questions the Himalayan risk-taking he admires in Ed Viesturs, and questions the Outward Bound philosophy he earned his living by for so much of his life, as he does in this new book of essays. Sorry about that long sentence, if you're still with me. I'll try to remember I'm not at Sheffield City Training College any more. But Synnott likes a 'salty personality'. I don't think I do.

So let me get my gripes out of the way

first so that I can engage with the ideas here. Roberts opens this book with a challenge to himself: how, these days, does he answer the question, 'Do you still climb?' *Moments of Doubt*, that classic of US climbing writing, included climbs made up to his forty-third year. One answer is, 'I go out three or four times a year with old buddies and do moderate stuff.' Sure enough there's a lovely piece here called 'The Gunks Revisited' which recalls the spring days of youth with the legendary Vulgarians. No gripes there. Another answer to that opening question is, 'I've kept my life adventurous'. So this is a book of 'adventure journalism', about a quarter of it concerning climbing.

Now, maybe it's an English thing, but I cringe at the admission that these essays are all 'adventure travel assignments' 'First Down the Tekeze', a tributary of the Nile, to tracing the remote ruins of the Anasazi in the US Southwest. Yet the TV film crew in the former and the National Geographic photographer in the latter firmly give away the agenda as one of 'photo ops'. I cringe even more at the constant reminders of grand old hotels, fine wines and the Land Cruiser waiting in the morning. This is expense account adventure writing. Do I really want to read about a wheeze in which the adventure writer sells the Editor of *Men's Journal* the idea of a week's golfing together in the Tirol? Great work if you can get it. But don't expect me to pay money to read in 'Wandergolf in the Tirol' about the Editor disappearing in the early hours, 'winsome maidservant in tow'. (At the Boardman Tasker Award this year I met one of the 'winsome maidservants' from Mountaineers Books who are publishing this stuff. She didn't strike me as a believer in 'Winsome maidservants' herself.) Next chapter I have to swallow Roberts in judgement of Jeff Lowe's personal life whilst on an Eiger-watching assignment in the 'Victorian masterpiece' of that hotel at Kleine Scheidegg. Lowe was stabbed in the back by the pen of his 'support team', pronounced morally bankrupt over a 'four-course repast'. This is the nadir of 'adventure travel assignment' writing. Lowe climbed a new route in winter, solo, without bolts, then 'crawled back into the conundrum of his life' and a character assassination from Roberts. If this is a personality at work, I don't want his book.

But what would I lose? Roberts' profile of Ed Viesturs, written after Viesturs had walked past the bodies of his friends Scott Fischer and Rob Hall, to climb Everest in 1996, is sympathetic but rigorous. 'In a Seattle restaurant', of course, Roberts puts it to Viesturs and his wife that his chances of death in attempting to be the first American to climb the 8000 metre peaks are statistically 50/50. Roberts remains sadly sceptical about the answers he gets as the couple discuss whether they can wait five years to find out before having children. This is poignant journalism.

'Outward Bound Reconsidered', despite statements like 'at twenty I was an experienced mountaineer', is a touch self-critical of judgements the author made in charge of other people's children. This essay concludes: 'Like anything complex, nature is no mere school of character. The moral principles we try to derive from its challenges tend to be vague homilies. If nature has her lessons, she poses them as dark conundrums.' These, he says, take adventurers the best part of a lifetime to unravel.

When he leaves the Land Cruisers behind, in 'Rambling through the Winds' and 'Quiet days in the Brooks Range', Roberts gets closer to these 'dark conundrums'. But nowhere, in this book, as close as in *Moments of Doubt*. Perhaps expense account journalism should stay where it belongs - American magazines. A bunch of 'assignments' do not make a book.

Terry Gifford

**The Alpine Journal 1997. Vol. 102,
No. 346. Edited by Joanna Merz. The
Alpine Club & The Ernest Press,
£18.50**

What? Absolutely appalling. I couldn't believe my eyes. Was this REALLY the A.J. which has been a bastion of the Establishment since the last century? Within seconds of casually opening this year's volume I was spluttering cornflakes across the kitchen table in utter indignation. Did fate dictate that the book should fall open at an article on 'Bolting in the Alpine Environment'? The first words which I read seared into my brain: 'I find your [British] continued resistance to bolts perplexing.'

Are we British really so insular and at odds with the other Europeans? Long ago some of them might have been surprised and perplexed by our objection to the invasion of Poland, but it didn't mean to say that WE were wrong. And make no bones about it BOLTS are an invasion of OUR precious environment...The article went from bad to worse:

'I try to make MY new routes basically safe.'

'I avoid long runouts.'

'I calibrate very exactly the protection that I need'

'I can achieve more pitches in a day because of the quicker drilling [using a power drill].'

What a hotch-potch of selfish arrogance. The more I read the more depressed I became. How dare a young Italian, with a mere sixteen years of climbing experience and no sense of mountaineering history try to dictate that everyone should follow HIS example — or suggest that his standards are the norm. Just because the Alpine environment has been trashed into a junkyard of ski lifts, ladders, fixed ropes, pegs and bolts (all designed to drag the mountain down to the level of those who must go up it at all costs) there is no need for the malaise to be wilfully spread. Too many of us have stuck our heads in the sand for too long, or bent our standards in the face of the ill-wind of change. Two years ago I finished a review of the A.J. mournfully deploring an article which referred to 'the triumph of the Bolt in Britain' and yet we are still having our climbing ethics eroded by a flood of foreign pornography which has gradually helped to seduce many of our climbers.

Reading on a bit I was delighted that Pat Littlejohn is helping to redress the balance by taking a clinical look at the reasons for bolting. At a time when I am asking myself why should the whole of Chee Dale be going under the bolt (against democratically agreed policy as recorded by the BMC), Littlejohn makes it very clear. He highlights that most of the the bolters are either: 'Greedy New Routers'; 'Misguided Philanthropists' (the retro-bolters); or 'Ruthless Professionals'. He also gets close to the heart of the issue by arguing for containment to slow the spread of the disfiguring rash of bolts. It is also interesting to see that Littlejohn is worried about the fact that sport climbing is now

starting to envelop traditional climbing areas.

At this point I should declare that normally I disapprove of reviewers who jump on a bandwagon just to push some personal point of view, but this is a matter of grave concern to British climbing. We have gone to war and the battle is being lost. British climbers have caught a pandemic disease for which a cure has not yet been found.

Reviewing the A.J. one would normally do a pleasant world tour, comment on some of the interesting articles which deserve to be read by others (such as those which extol the splendours of Antarctica) and give the Editor a pat on the back for keeping up the usual high standard. This year, though, I have suddenly realised (and yes perhaps I should first have read the Contents) that we are being confronted with a section entitled, 'The Big Issues'. Well backed up by Ian MacNaught-Davies (whose writing always entertains and provokes) Trevor Braham spearheads the attack for the 'goodies' with a fine article, 'The Effects of Change on Mountaineering Ethics'. Pointing an accusatory finger at the mountaineers of the late thirties he pronounces, 'The age of Western pollution — material, moral and social — had begun.' That hit me hard and reminded me of what I am struggling to come to terms with. At present there is a malaise spreading throughout the climbing world.

At a time when a gory picture of a dead climber has been published in a national magazine for all to see, and when climbers ascending a mountain can pass and ignore dying or injured climbers (what price the good Samaritan?), there is something drastically wrong with our attitude to life. Braham, however, does offer a glimmer of hope when he states that: 'There is recent evidence to prove that George Mallory's 'first principle' of mutual help is still very much alive.'

Jon Tinker's understated and one-sided article on 'Commercial Expeditions' reminds us of the help that we can expect — if we have enough money to buy it. More realistically, read what Mac writes: 'Want to climb Everest? Pay your \$65,000 and we will put you on the summit. No experience? Doesn't matter, we will teach you all you need to know as you go up.' It occurs to me that when bellowing ham ac-

tors with no experience decide that they want to be hauled up Everest while playing the role of Mallory it would be a 'blessed' relief if real climbers would tell them to go away and 'start at the bottom' to learn the trade. Photo 74 shows a plump Dr Janssen ascending Mont Blanc on a litter carried by four guides. He didn't climb the mountain though. And what about the instructions to a climber in Audrey Salkeld's report, 'Ed keeps up the encouragement. "Rob turn the oxygen full on and start crawling. Crawl and PULL your way up the rope." ' Just who are we kidding?

Audrey's article set me off again, 'Since I was last on Everest, it has become de rigueur to have satellite phones, e-mails, web sites and a battery of lap top computers. Is it so appropriate to speak to our nearest and dearest via a mobile phone just as we are about to die? One paragraph reads: 'A total of five people are dead or missing', while in the following paragraph we learn that, '...importantly, the 481b Ima camera reached the summit.'

Perhaps in an attempt to prove my underlying theme about preserving hallowed standards we might let a few of the dead speak for themselves and point the way — such as one afternoon in 1971 when Jack Baines and a couple of friends casually planned an expedition to Carstenz Peak — and later climbed it. Then there was the day when Ivan Waller followed Colin Kirkus up *Mickledore Grooves* with virtually no protection, or skied down the front face of Helvellyn. And dear old Trevor when one night he fixed me with a steely gaze and pronounced earnestly, "You know Geoff, history IS important...and so few people know that it is." He was intensely proud of the pioneers who had shown the way — without bolts.

For those who would follow let them read Bill Murray's books, *Mountaineering in Scotland* and *Undiscovered Scotland*; then follow in his footsteps. Let him be your guide and inspiration. You don't have to agree with the A.C. Vice-President who views guides as being an 'essential' element of mountaineering; fight your way up a wet Scottish gully and you achieve far more than being hauled up Everest.

Geoff Millburn

**Alps 4000, Martin Moran.
David & Charles, 1997
£9.99,
(Hardback edition 1994 £17.99)**

When the editor asked me to review this book, my initial expectation was of another coffee-table book of glossy pictures. Nothing could be further from the truth. Save for the cover, it has no pictures at all. The book is an account of the author's traverse in 1993 with Simon Jenkins, of all the 4000 metre peaks in the Alps, the first time this had ever been done in a *single push*. (I have not seen the hardback edition, but I understand that it does have a good set of photos. That and the binding are the only differences).

This is the alpine equivalent of Munro and 8000 metre peak-bagging. Pursuits of this sort have always struck me as being rather childish. But I suppose all climbing and mountaineering are childish to some extent, and I cannot claim myself to be totally immune from the route and peak-mentality. As the author points out, such projects of working one's way through a list of peaks or routes, contrived though such a list may be, do provide a focus and sense of purpose to one's climbing, if that is not naturally present already. The problem of defining the Alps 4000 task is similar to the Munros definition. Martin has taken as pre-established the definition of 50 'major mountains', and included 25 'subsidiary summits' with height separation of at least 35 metres all round, as well as a few others which did not meet this criterion.

Any doubts I might have had about the worthwhileness of the enterprise were rather cast aside as I got into the book, and realized the enormity of their achievement. The 75 peaks were climbed in a total of 52 days, which would be an average of almost one and a half peaks per day. But the 52 days included 11 days walking up to huts and between peaks etc., 6 days cycling between different ranges, and a mere 3 rest days (2 enforced by the weather), leaving only 32 days for the actual climbing. That puts the batting average up to over 2.3 peaks per day. Most alpinists, including myself, rarely manage more than one 4000 metre peak in a single day, let alone 2 or more per day, for

day after day, with so little rest. Moreover, they had below average weather and many of their ascents were done on days when most climbers would be sheltering in the valleys.

They used no cable-cars or mountain railways, and no motor transport on the road links. They did allow themselves the minimal luxury of support teams to deliver and collect their bikes, and carry food/supplies/tent to strategic points on the main sections of the traverse.

Sadly, this paperback edition sacrifices the photos from the hardback; but happily, it retains the sketch maps, which clearly explain the route-linking.

The book is a splendid account of a great mountain adventure. The writing is good, and flows well. The sometimes harrowing account of the mountaineering is well balanced by interesting, historical snippets, and stabs of dry humour at their absurd predicaments and the reactions of more conventional parties they meet. The inevitable tensions with valley-bound wives, and support teams, all seem to have been amicably resolved. Later on, the account does become a little monotonous; I suppose that is unavoidable with so protracted an enterprise. But that monotony makes its own contribution, as a build-up to the climactic episode on the Mont Blanc group. The two final outliers, the Gran Paradiso and Ecrins, rightly appear as an anticlimactic postscript.

Dave Wilkinson

**The Handbook of Climbing,
Allen Fyffe & Iain Peter. (Revised)
Pelham Books, 1997
£ 27.50
(First published 1990).**

This is a textbook on climbing and mountaineering, covering equipment and techniques relevant to most aspects of our game. I do not often refer to such books, nor have I seen the original edition of this one, so I will have to review it as a one-off, rather than comparatively.

One of the authors, Fyffe, was the so-called 'expert witness' in last year's much publicised court case involving our previous Journal Editor. I understand Fyffe's

testimony was the key to the court's finding against Smiler. The crucial point was Fyffe's insistence that two screws are essential for a belay on ice — whatever the circumstances — whereas Smiler had, in the prevailing emergency, used only one. On p.238 of this book, in the section 'Snow, Ice and Winter Climbing' we are instructed always to use two screws. This is no doubt sound advice in the less urgent Scottish winter context — which is Fyffe's sphere of greatest expertise. Later on, on p.277, in the 'Alpine Climbing' section, he does stress the need for speed in a general sense, but has less to say on how that need influences ice-belaying tactics. His main point seems to be '...try to move together whenever possible.' (roped or unroped?), but 'If you feel a belay is necessary, take the extra time required to construct a good one.' Fyffe is, at least, consistent on this point, but his advice begs the question: 'what if you feel the need for a belay, but can't afford that extra time?' Although Fyffe has done some excellent routes in the big mountains, I understand he has little or no guiding experience outside these islands, so the court may well have been ill-advised to take his judgement on Alpine guiding issues as the last word.

However, I was really supposed to be reviewing a book, rather than re-opening a court case. So, having said what I have said, perhaps I can now try to put my prejudices aside, and give an impassioned review. There is, of course, another author who cannot be blamed for this now infamous judgement. One would have thought that a book with two authors would be less error-prone, as each author could check the other's contribution. This, unfortunately, has not been effective here.

The book is written with 29 chapters, arranged into 4 sections: Rock Climbing; Snow, Ice and Winter Climbing; Alpine Climbing; and Appendices. The 'Appendices' section seems rather full and arbitrarily defined — much of this would more sensibly fit in the main sections, e.g. the final chapter 'Sports Climbing' could have been included in the Rock Climbing section.

There is much that is good in this book; a wide variety of techniques is described. Many of these deserve to be better-known, such as buried/T-axis anchors on snow (p.201/2), and ice-screw threads (p.233/

4). Amongst those new to me are saddle-shaped stances in snow (p.194) and figure-of-eight knots in the rope on a glacier (p.266/7). I may even try these out.

The book does not claim to be all-inclusive. However, the title starts with the definite rather than the indefinite article. This might be seen as a little pretentious, or at least an implicit claim to authoritativeness. In the introduction, the authors point out that 'Often there is no single correct way to do something...' (belaying on ice screws is apparently an exception to this!) 'Because of this,... we have tried to describe the most useful techniques...'

So they are clearly selective, but I would have thought their selection would be an appropriate one, including all methods which might be best in some not-too-rare situations, and omitting those of only minor interest. Too often, in my opinion, they fail to do this adequately, with a flawed judgement of what is and is not important. For example, when joining abseil ropes together (p. 120), the double over-hand knot (version with the ends together) is not mentioned. This is perhaps the best knot to use when the ropes have to pass over the rock, as it reduces the risk of the knot jamming when the ropes are pulled down. For belaying (p.71 etc.), when paying out the ropes, they do not mention the advisability of paying out the rope a bit in advance, to avoid pulling off a leader who moves up quickly. In ice climbing, they seem totally sold on the advantage of the second pair of crampon points also being inclined forward (p.218 etc.), but do not mention the danger of their levering out the front points if you drop your heels slightly. There is too little discussion of the sharpening of picks and crampon points.

I could bore you by going on in this vein for many pages; I have a long list of similar omissions and inadequate discussions. Their inclusion would, of course, enlarge the book a bit. But the marginal cost of a few extra pages is, I understand, small, provided an extra volume is not needed (the 390 pages of this book are nowhere near the limit for a single volume). And some unnecessary items are included: the sheet bend and single fisherman's knot may be good in a Boy Scouts' book of knots, but in 30 years of climbing, I have never needed to use them.

The tortuously detailed description (p.213/4) of how to walk French technique (flat-footed) in crampons is long-winded to the extent of being unreadable. In describing how to take-in the rope (starting on p.74), the otherwise excellent diagrams are unnecessarily repeated. One diagram is repeated almost identically four times (figs. 5.12(a), 5.13(a), 5.14(a) and 5.17(a)).

Omissions are many; but there are, fortunately, fewer gross errors, but still too many. On p.61, we are advised to tie the ends of a Kevlar sling with a double fisherman's knot. This sort of material has low frictional properties, so a triple fisherman's is normally recommended.

We are told on p.319 that cornices only form if the windward slope is below 42° to the horizontal. I'm sure I've seen them with steeper slopes than 42°, and the beautiful photo opposite p.279 seems to show some.

The book is plentifully illustrated in three ways: colour photos, black and white photos and drawings. These are mostly good, especially the colour photos and drawings. But some of the black and white photos used to illustrate techniques do so inadequately — good drawings would be better than poor photos, e.g. those on p.72 (direct belays) and the second one on p.204 (standing axe belay). Some even contradict points made in the text, such as the cornice one already mentioned. In tying the tape knot, we are advised on p.42 to leave long tail ends (approximately five times the tape's width). Unfortunately, the diagram to illustrate this (fig.3.19c) shows a shorter end than that. A similar conflict occurs with the two-door snow hole shown on p.325.

The glossary is plagued with minor errors and inconsistencies, I'll spare you the details. I found a few misprints, but not very many. The general style of the book is (like this review) boringly pedantic and uninspiring.

Perhaps this is inevitable with such a book, but it is not offset by any great authoritative accuracy. In any case, I would have liked to have seen more light relief in the form of humour. There is precious little of that, except where unintentional, such as the descriptions of ice formation on p.314. The authors describe blue ice as having 'little air trapped within', then they go on to mention its 'high ... air content'. They also state that white ice 'rarely

forms above 70°C'. Little ice does.

Not a completely worthless book, but generally disappointing.

Dave Wilkinson.

**Above the Horizon, Rosemary Cohen.
Allison and Busby, 1997
£7.99**

This is a straightforward and undemanding novel which is fine for whiling away an evening or two. The plot centres on ambition — the sort of hubristic ambition that seems to fuel climbing in all its aspects, and the personal cost of that hubris to all those who are touched by it themselves tackling their first Himalayan expedition with the legendary veteran climber, Tom Ormerod. But this, as they say, is no ordinary expedition, their combined aim being a repeat of one which Tom made thirty years previously. That first attempt on the Himalchandra has become as legendary as Tom Ormerod himself, a myth in the making, due in part to the death of one of the 1953 team, Hannah Kemp.

Kemp and her tragedy, and Tom's relationship with her haunt the 1980s expedition both figuratively and textually (in the form of excerpts from Kemp's expedition journal). For the entire team, and especially for Petra Merriman and Tom, their expedition is ostensibly to the summit of Himalchandra, but it is also an inner journey that involves a reckoning with old ghosts.

The blurb announces that this novel marks a powerful debut. Well, yes it is a debut, but Cohen is not yet a powerful writer, and her debut is flawed. Her characterisation, for instance, at its best, is quirky and almost convinces, but it is let down by stereotyping as in the case of Tom Ormerod. This unfortunate is a Professional Yorkshireman, which is shorthand for 'strong silent type', taciturn, but really warm and kind when you just get to know him — oh, and he's blunt of course! Like most stereotyping, this lazy method of characterisation offers the reader nothing when looked at closely. What, for example, does it mean to say, 'Tom's tone of voice was as diffident as would have been possible for a Yorkshireman'? Precisely nothing if you grew up in Yorkshire sur-

rounded by the usual variety of diffident noisy, direct, and shy Yorkshire folk. And for such a self-consciously White Rose man, Ormerod is a distinctly Red Rose moniker. To be fair, Ormerod's character does develop, and towards the end of the novel is just strong enough to be engaging without being what is, in effect, parody. Cohen's lack of experience or confidence is also evident in the homogeneity of voice: Kemp's journal extracts do not stand out from the 80s narrative in tone or personality. But, a much more serious flaw is the novel's setting, that is, the Himalayan expedition, a setting which immediately circumscribes any fictional narrative having an already clear narrative of its own. Read any expedition account and you have the frostbite, the tedium of bad weather, an epic, the porters, the avalanche... probably. The components and an order of telling exist, even the outcome is implicit they will or they will not survive/make the summit. All you have to do is slot your characters in, coloured to suit your purpose and message. Cohen's strategy of trying to leaven this rather formulaic dough with the sub-narrative of the 1953 expedition is a bold try, but ultimately is simply more of the same.

These problems aside, Cohen shows good pace and an energy that carries the plot (which never sinks into sentimentality and melodrama); nor, to her credit, does she provide either her reader or Petra with comfortable answers. The past, she seems to suggest, is not so easily exorcised. In addition, she writes confidently about climbing, yet is sensitive to readers who do not climb — and it is no mean feat to speak to both of these audiences without boring one and alienating the other.

So, while this novel does not reveal any startling new talent, it is competent enough, and a reasonably pleasant holiday read. And Cohen, I feel, could write something powerful if she applied herself in a less obvious setting with more rounded characters.

Kym Martindale

**A Dream of White Horses,
Edwin Drummond.
Baton Wicks, 1997 (reprint)
£8.99**

It is a matter of regret for me that the demands of studying for a PhD and teaching have prevented a thoroughly good read of this beautiful, erratic book, for the little I have read is tantalisingly brilliant, as well as awful. Drummond is in a league of his own — at his best writing like an angel (which is to say when he is imprudent or clichéd, he is a fallen angel). He himself 'introduces' his anthology with the claim that disclaims, 'There's the best and the worst of me here', and, this could stand as a summary of the book.

There is meat and muscle, both intellectual and poetic, to his writing, for whatever he is or saying Drummond writes with a heightened sense of his own exposure, and of the problem of that exposure never really responding with answers. He seems aware that he can never dig deep enough, or get far enough with himself, climbing, language or relationships. There is always more to be done, climbed, said and written, and always the question: is he the one to do it? Indeed, he writes as a man who knows there isn't quite an answer, but who, nevertheless, can't give up hunting — and so he persists.

His critique of Jim Perrin's biography of Menlove Edwards is a case in point: Drummond argues cogently against the allowances that Perrin makes for Edwards's inability to analyse and 'heal' himself emotionally; yet, despite his frustration, Drummond is never less than compassionate, and consequently the Edwards he draws out of Perrin's grasp is somehow a sadder figure in his failure to face himself. It is as if Perrin's accommodation of Edwards's poor self-analysis is demonstrably founded on the unstable notion of there being an answer, a reason, for everything, and as if Perrin's need to account for Edwards has looked too readily to the obvious. But as Drummond concludes (and this really would serve as his own epigraph I think):

'... who knows, you say? But then I say who can this who who knows be, but you, but I, sticking our noses in where they belong, in wondering about this turbulent nature we find in and around us from

dawn to dusk everyday of our lives.' The essays and the short stories are equally challenging—even when Drummond's fine ear for language and his eye for an image or metaphor delight, he is throwing ideas at his reader. Enjoy this image: '... the sky today semaphoring sun and shadow at the same time, confusing the insects, brushing the dust from the ledges and uncurling the fingers of ferns and climbers...' ; hear this and feel this: 'Two climbers, a rubble of muscles/and rucksacks, between a rock and a dark place' — climbers become the thing they seek. Then, read 'To Climb or Not to Climb': questions, always questions; and play with the contradiction of a language which speaks so eloquently of its failure.

This is a beautiful book, despite the odd cringe (for example, 'The Heretic' with its blatancies). Here is the fallen angel writing, the Romantic outlaw who has forgotten the orthodoxies he interrogates elsewhere. But, that is Drummond; he provokes, writes to readers who think, who reflect; he engages with a reader who talks back, and that is part of the glory of this anthology — why you would want to keep it and return to it over and over again. I am still reading *A Dream of White Horses* and expect to do so, on and off, for quite some time.

Kym Martindale

Rescue! True stories from Lake District Mountain Rescue, John White. Constable £16.95.

Like lambs to the slaughter they go up into the hills, unsuspecting, not knowing what lies in wait for the foolish, unprepared and inept. It isn't danger of course...just the dreaded 'Rescue', a mere word which strikes fear into the heart of competent mountaineers. Better to die a clean death than to be subjected to the rigorous manhandling of the 'Rescue'. Pity the poor conscious victim, strapped tight and helpless in a stretcher, who is lowered off some sombre cliff while a cannonade of falling stones whistles past his ears.

And yet they still hit the slopes, the sandalled picknickers in flimsy dresses... docile day trippers heading who knows

where... casual walkers and earnest mountaineers. From the heat of summer and the gales of spring and autumn to the chilly depths of winter they forge on upwards like lemmings — in dramatically bizarre fashion they either slip, slide and fall, or merely get stuck while emulating stupid sheep which have homed in on some remote lushly vegetated ledge which has unsportingly laid a cunning trap.

Meanwhile far below going through the motions of pursuing a boring normal life is a highly predatory animal which is ready to respond instantly to the demanding call of a shrill 'bleeper'. The race is then on to locate and claim the prey whether it be woolly sheep or hairy human...alive and kicking...willing or unwilling...stridently bleating or comatose. It is of no concern to the 'Rescue'. At one time there was only one 'Rescue' but so competitive has the sport become that there are now highly territorial and well-equipped teams instantly ready to go into action...no matter whether they are working, playing, eating, sleeping or loving. The race is on.

I have a recurrent nightmare of being stuck high on a big cliff. Benighted we wait and watch while the bobbing headlights get ever closer. With nowhere to hide escape is out of the question and it is only a matter of time before a web of ropes hiss down through the darkness. Swooping and shrieking figures get ever closer. Then begins a bloody and desperate battle in which hairy giants wield their great ice axes, to fight to the death to claim their victim. "He's OURS," snarls the brutish leader triumphantly. There are even apocryphal stories of climbers who have fallen great distances and are lying almost at death's door, broken-boned and bleeding. Then a grief-stricken friend only has to utter the immortal words, "Don't worry mate, the rescue team is on its way. They'll be here soon." In an instant a muscle twitches and one eye opens. Then the corpse springs to life miraculously cured. "What! The Mountain Rescue? Not blooming likely. Let's get to hell out of here." As choppers fill the sky the team sprints off down the hillside zig-zagging frantically to avoid the sweeping searchlights.

When such a dedicated band of volunteers is on the fell sniffing about eagerly like bloodhounds only one thing is certain, like the Mounties they WILL get their

man...or woman...or sheep. Not even a romantically-inclined moth is safe if the headlights catch it in their beam and believe me EVERY stone will be turned during the search. The lengths to which creatures will go to avoid being rescued is well spelled out in this book, although the 'Rescue' might put a different interpretation on the 'facts': 'if the sheep tries to leap into oblivion, the chances are it will try to take the rescuer with it.' There's gratitude or desperation, for you.

John White follows in the steps of such worthy rescuers as Gwen Moffat (*Two Star Red*) and Hamish MacPitton (*Call-out*, 1973); (*High Drama* 1980); and (*Sweep Search*, 1985). He weaves a pleasant story interspersed with lots of entertaining anecdotes from his fifteen years with the Langdale Rescue Team. Here and there are some little gems such as confrontations between Hell's Angels and irate farmers. Although interest is maintained throughout the tale comes through as being more light-hearted rather than macabre. Certainly the book seems to be aimed at a more general audience than one might expect from the subject. We pass from dark and stormy nights and winter epics to getting crag-fast and rock-climbing incidents. Here the author digresses to extol his own soloing exploits (not that this reviewer has a leg to stand on at this juncture). Perhaps it is to point a finger at our own stupidity and suggest that it is not fair to get the 'Rescue' all revved up and ready to roll in the hope of adding another notch to their stretchers.

Searches and Sea King helicopters figure prominently and we wind up with a chapter on 'Setting the Standards' — a reasonable enough ethical ending considering that the book is written by an ex-National Park Ranger who runs a mountaineering school and pontificates to the media.

At this point it must be said that the eleven photographs not only rather reduce the credibility of the text but also cast doubts about the 'skilled' volunteers who man rescue teams. One photo shows the author climbing *Saxon* on Scafell. What message goes out when one sees his bare arms, bare legs, and no helmet? Is it that if one is proficient enough then accidents will not happen? Or perhaps it should have been given a caption to ask the reader to

spot why the 'Rescue' is likely to be on the scene soon?

The absolutely classic howler must be the photo entitled, 'A typical sheep rescue'. The sheep in question looks the picture of health with enough food for a month or two, while the rescuer...oh dear me. The good looking bearded 'rescuer' (or is that the sheep?) is striking a dramatic Victorian pose several feet BELOW the sheep. But hang on a minute, where is his rope?... his slings and karabiners? ... his helmet? "Boing!" said Zebedee, "What a plonker. It's time for the 'Rescue', but don't worry about Baaasil the sheep. He's quite happy where he is." Is this the book which decrees that, 'The first and foremost rule is always to be tied on to a rope from above.'?

Another picture captioned as 'up-skiing' shows an apparently air-born skier with an inflated parachute. Is there no lengths to which people have to go to avoid the 'Rescue'? One other pertinent question must be asked, however. Is John trying to pull the wool over our eyes or is he merely sheep-faced after the publishers perhaps' cobbled together a few photos at the eleventh hour in a big hurry? Sadly the credibility of what should have been a worthy addition to the literature on the Mountain Rescue story has now been blown. Someone should have rescued this book. Bleep ...bleep.

Geoff Milburn

The Complete Doctor Stories,
G J F Dutton
viz: The Ridiculous Mountains
and: Nothing So Simple As Climbing
Baton Wicks 1997 (reprint)
£9.99

Very occasionally life relents and offers you a golden vista in the midst of drab despair. Christmas had gone; the freezing level in Scotland was 4,500 feet; the entire country was swathed in mist; I had already walked the local moors in mist and rain. When there remained only gloom and perhaps the climbing wall, there dropped through the letter box a satisfying parcel which proved to be *The Complete Doctor Stories*. A conscientious reviewer should

after all actually read the book he is sent; may the weather not change until I've finished.

Regular readers of the review section of the Journal will realise that some of these stories have appeared in the Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal, and all of them in separate books, both under the Diadem imprint (which was an earlier embodiment of Ken Wilson, the driving spirit behind Baton Wicks) and as such were reviewed in the Journal, (1984 and 1993). The first edition of *The Ridiculous Mountains* was not illustrated; its section of this compendium now has drawings by Albert Rusling who illustrated *Nothing So Simple as Climbing*.

Since then the 'Doctor Stories' must have secured a niche in the heart of any reading climber or hill-walker and, assuming that the individual printings have sold out, the appearance of this volume was an absolute necessity lest new generations miss the chance of meeting the Doctor and his hill-friends and realising that there is more to climbing than the Simpson/Pritchard school of bone breaking, much more — fun, in fact. And in this I understate the case. Read the rear cover before you buy it: Reviewers the world over—America, New Zealand, Oxford, even Yorkshire praise: 'the funniest outdoor stories I have read'; this 'wicked rogue with an eye for fun'; 'classics of wit and humour'; 'laughter flowing from every page.'

It must be hard, wherever you live and read, not to have come across a praising review of Prof. Dutton's stories. They take place in Scotland but could as well have occurred anywhere — anywhere that a writer with an acute eye for the foibles and idiosyncrasies of his fellow man and woman walks the hills and observes the myriad activities which they engender. My own favourite is 'Once in a While', a beautiful catalogue of the Scots skiing scene from the point of view of an old man of the hills who was sliding his eight-foot planks over grit and gravel before ever the chair lifts held their captive rainbow-hued clients suspended in arctic gales above the sweeping spindrift of a typical Cairngorm day. You will certainly find, whatever your mountain activity, your own favourites among the forty one stories.

At a more mundane level, look at the price; this is value you seldom meet. The

book is soft-backed, just over A5 in size and over three hundred pages of quality writing and, often forgotten, the illustrations by Albert Rusling. There is a corrigendum slip. Part of a line was missing. An error which must have given severe pain to Ken Wilson, the perfectionist, but the rest of the book is up to his usual superb standard.

I suggest that you buy two copies. We all have friends who, recognising quality but too mean to prise open the purse, borrow one's best books for an unconscionably long time.

Dave Gregory

**Wye Valley, Edited by John Willson.
Climbers' Club, 1997
£13.50**

In the beginning there was Wintour's Leap, a precipice too huge to miss. Then Wyndcliffe was spotted glinting through the trees, along with the elusive Ban y Gor. Shorn Cliff was discovered and laid bare to reveal its many delights, then the rock sleuths took to the forest (of Dean) to find an unsuspected wealth of climbing in quarries scattered across the area. Now the Wye Valley has reached maturity, and there can't be many more pleasant places to climb — sheltered, sylvan settings with a choice of sun or shade; all seasons, most weathers. A far cry from the noise and traffic pollution of Avon Gorge or the tiresome restrictions of Cheddar.

The guidebook covers a vast amount of limestone climbing ranging from very friendly, one-pitch routes at Wyndcliffe and Shorn Cliff the major undertakings on GO Wall at Wintour's Leap (which compare in size, severity and quality to just about any in the South West). Sport climbing and traditional climbing seem to co-exist fairly amicably, and the 'minimalist' bolting ethic, potentially a charter for cheats, has indisputably produced some mega routes which retain a healthy level of commitment. More about bolts later.

It is fortunate for us that the Wye Valley has a passionate devotee in the person of John Willson. An active explorer and pioneer himself, John has been diplomatic enough to avoid the fierce rivalries and infighting of the new route scene, managing

to stay on good terms with all parties — quite an accomplishment given some of the characters involved. This even-handedness, coupled with an almost hold-by-hold knowledge of Wintour's Leap (the predominant cliff has produced an outstanding guidebook, a minor masterpiece of clarity and accuracy. So, if you haven't already bought it, do so).

There are a couple of issues which I hope John won't mind me airing. In the CC guidebook general policy we read: 'This guide attempts to provide a definitive record of all existing climbs', and further: 'The inclusion in this guidebook of a crag or routes upon it does not mean that any member of the public has a right of access to the crag or the right to climb upon it.' And yet this guidebook deliberately excludes descriptions of a considerable number of climbs to which access, for the moment, is denied.

Properly-conducted climbing shouldn't threaten the environment or people's privacy. It can take place within an SSI on appropriate and agreed terms, and it can take place where clifftops adjoin people's property as long as the right arrangements to avoid disturbance are in place (as it seems they are at the top of GO Wall). John appeals to the BMC to do something about access to the Forbidden Walls, but arguably plays too safe by suppressing information about the climbing there. John may be right — he knows the local situation better than I — but lack of any progress since the guidebook of twenty years ago (which followed the same line) suggests that this approach needs revising. Perhaps it should come into line with the stated CC policy.

Secondly, inevitably, bolting. There is now a 'policy' (of sorts) for the Wye Valley agreed in 1996. Before that, when the vast majority of recent routes were done, the approach seems to have been that you only put a bolt in wherever and whenever you want to put a bolt in. This has enabled certain people to consume new rock like never before (not just in the Wye but in all the limestone areas around Bristol) and I question the legacy it has left for the future. The top national standard today is E10, while the hardest routes in the Wye Valley are E6, and the guidebook writer strongly suggests that the area is fully developed. Could it be that the Wye Valley

crag simply don't possess any lines harder than E6? No, of course not. What it means is that a lot of potentially harder lines have been subjugated using bolts down to the grade at which the principle activists are, or were, operating. In 1977, *The Jackal* (E4) was a grade below top national standards. *Big Bad Wolf* (E6) came a bit closer than that in 1983. Since then, every potentially harder route has been bolted, freezing the top grade at E6 and seemingly exhausting every significant unclimbed line.

Rock is like any other finite resource — you can exploit it all now or you can just take your due and leave something for the future. In climbing, the power drill changed the game to encourage exploitation, and in many areas traditional climbing/adventure climbing (or whatever we are supposed to call it these days) has been denied the routes which would herald a real advance by 'pioneers' armed with Hiltis. The current 'Wye Valley drilled gear policy' only effectively renounces bolts on the crags where nobody is allowed to climb (Forbidden Walls) but concedes that even here there may be a change of policy should access ever be permitted. Such a change would be regrettable.

I recall a chill day in November 1977, the day of the jackal. Pete Boardman and I turned up at the bottom of GO Wall. The glaring challenge was the line of *The Jackal* but I was apprehensive — conditions were not ideal. I asked Pete what he thought we should go for, hoping he'd say one of the classics. "Well you know what the French say," he replied, "Toujours le plus difficile!" It would be nice to think that some future leader, perhaps able to climb E8 on sight, could have as exciting a day as we had on the remaining unbolted rock in the Wye Valley.

Pat Littlejohn

**Pembroke, Edited by Ian Smith
Climbers' Club, 1996
£18.95**

To give a critical assessment of a guide of this importance is no easy task — a fact borne out, I understand, by the erstwhile reviewers who have fallen by the wayside in pursuit of a balanced review of this weighty tome. If reviewing it is a task,

producing a guide to an area as extensive as the South and North Pembrokeshire sea cliffs is truly daunting. Quite clearly, the days of one person tackling a massive guide have gone; this one was the work of some 12 people. Hats off to all of them. Editor Ian Smith's input cannot be underestimated; the guide reads like the work of a single author and that is down to him doing a sterling and highly professional job.

This Pembroke guide follows in the footsteps of several recent CC guides: two slim(ish) volumes, packaged into a sturdy plastic-sleeved back. I must admit (and I've said it before) I don't particularly like the concept or the way such guides handle; they are a fag to get in and out of the covers and the plastic or the spine tends to split. Of course, this system has been used to great effect in the Ogwen/Carneddau books to 'piggy-back' a poor selling guide on the back of a good seller. But I do not see the real need for this with Pembroke as both volumes contain heaps of great routes. I would have been happier with two 'proper' guides, but inevitably, the question of economics has to be addressed. It also has to be admitted that the individual North and South Pembroke volumes do fit comfortably into a pocket — fortunately so, because the thought of ending up in the briny with all 800 plus pages attached to you is not a savoury one.

The tale of the evolution and production of the guide and the delay between editions (ostensibly to allow for the full inclusion of Range West) is now all ancient history. With the benefit of hindsight, I feel it would have been better to bring out the eastern area when it was ready (thus pissing on the chips of the pirates who were waiting to make a fast buck), and then bring out the western volume when it was complete. Of course, no guide will ever be definitive and the fact that a new Pembroke supplement is due out shortly, containing over 400 new routes since this guide was published, suggests there was little point hanging on trying to squeeze every last route in.

Anyway, enough of raking over the ashes. How is the guide? Well, at 830 pages split 415 per volume this is a work of gargantuan proportions — the largest guide-book ever? The history, all 42 pages of it, is exhaustive. The 34 colour photos are

varied and inspirational, despite the occasional out-of-register printing. There are 18 superbly detailed (and they need to be) maps with 32 diagrams — drawings or phototopos. The 3,600 routes here recorded should last most mortals a lifetime. For avid route tickers, there are 160 three star routes and a further 310 with two stars which would get three anywhere else in the country. There at least, is a couple of years' climbing.

I first started climbing in Pembroke back in the 80s at the height of the new route goldrush and I've continued to visit that wonderful land, where sea meets sky at a blinding barrier of brilliant limestone whenever possible. This latest CC guide continues the tradition of being both functional and inspirational; so go west, young men and women and take a copy of this indispensable guide with you. You'll not be disappointed. See you in Pembroke.

Chris Craggs

**On Foot in The Pennines, Roland Smith. Photos John Cleare. David & Charles, 1994
Paperback £9.99
(Hardback also available.)**

**On Foot In Southern Scotland, Terry Marsh. David & Charles, 1995
Paperback £9.99 Hardback £15.99**

**On Foot In The North York Moors, Alan Hall. David & Charles, 1997
Hardback £15.99**

These books are three volumes from a series that now includes The Lake District (2 volumes), The Peak District and The Yorkshire Dales. The presence of a Peak District volume would explain why only 4 of the 38 walks in the Pennines book lie in the Peak District.

Each book is similar in size to a CC Journal laid sideways, with appropriate colour illustrations on the cover.

At first sight, the expectation here is of another series of 'Walks for Motorists' with a nice set of photographs to supplement the home video. Diligent searching of the contents and covers finally reveals that the

target audience, at least according to the rear cover of the South Scotland volume, is those who would receive inspiration from the walks 'from those taking their first tentative steps as well as a challenge to seasoned walkers'. Well, that should cover most of us.

The series format allows for a brief introduction to the area and its walking/access history. Then follow descriptions for between 35 and 40 walks with an outline map, the usual fact file and a narrative to guide you around. The narratives contain a fair amount of incidental historical and local information, which undoubtedly adds interest for the casual visitor. The fact files appear to be sufficiently prominent and explicit to prevent our first and last few tentative steps being taken over the rim of High Cup Nick in winter.

Of the three areas, I am personally least familiar with the North York Moors. Would this book encourage me to go and explore, or spend equivalent petrol money going to the Lake District? Well, I like the bit about 'one of England's premier walking areas — prized for its ability to absorb visitors whilst retaining the traditional solitude and wilderness appeal'. Sounds a lot better than Ambleside in August!

The routes vary in length from 3 miles to 13 miles, with the majority in the 6 mile to 10 mile range. Titles such as 'The High Road To a Remarkable Dale' and 'The Roak Moors and Smugglers Coast-A Grand Yorkshire Canyon' whet the appetite. The many colour photographs give a visual flavour of what the walks have to offer — but is the area really so green? The photographs exhibit a green tinge reminiscent of 1970's Agfachrome. Come to that, so do the maps. Is this to demonstrate ecological rigour?

On balance, a competent guide to the area with sufficient information for family walks or as a taster for the dyed-in-the-wool bogtrotter. An appendix of longer walks from 16 miles to 63 miles should cater for the hedonistically challenged among us.

Until recently, Southern Scotland has been very poorly supported by hill walking guides. For many years I relied on the dour, mapless 1972 S.M.C. guide to the Southern Uplands as the only comprehensive source of information.

Southern Scotland is a very big area, 10 times the size of the Peak District, with

very few people. Much of its appeal lies in the solitude, lack of paths and devising cunning flanking manoeuvres around massive plantations of conifers.

Some years ago I lived just south of Edinburgh, on the slopes of the Pentland hills. Had this book been available it would have received extensive use as a guide to areas to visit—these to be a springboard for other explorations into the hills and hidden valleys beyond.

The photographs vary in quality, but so do the views in this area. The photograph of Cairnsgarroch on p.38 is evocative of starting another boring flog with a hangover. In contrast, the landscape of Clatteringshaws loch on p.33 with delightfully contrasting water, rocks, hills and clouds makes me want to visit the place. If one view were to sum up hill walking in Southern Scotland for me, it would be the gentle Bodesbeck ridge shown twisting away to distant low hills, just clear of the cloud cover. (p.39)

And finally to the Pennines volume. This contains 38 walks of similar distance to those in the other two books (unless one follows the erroneous advice to start Bleaklow walk I from Monyash — a tasty little afternoon stroll of 70 miles). The text and maps give useful information and lots of interesting historical snippets. The introduction to the book states the walks indicated avoid the Pennine Way; this makes a lot of sense as this is more than adequately covered elsewhere.

Whilst the text is good, the glory of this book is in the outstanding set of photographs by John Cleare. After 40+ years of walking the Pennines in all weathers and seasons, these photographs are the best I have yet seen giving the varied scope, feel and attraction of this area. More ethereal artistic studies have been published, but here you get the walker's eye view of what the Pennines is really like. Buy this book for the introductory text and maps, but treasure it for the photographs.

David Matthews

Sublime Inspiration

Sublime Inspiration: The Art of Mountains from Turner to Hilary' was the title of Abbot Hall Art Gallery's 1997 summer show.

It was organised in conjunction with the Alpine Club and set out to reveal just how much work of real quality is usually hidden away from view in London. Great idea. Paintings, photographs, Whympers' tent and de Saussure's compass were also on display where they should be — in the heart of Kendal, the art centre of the Lake District.

But in his Introduction to the catalogue, Edward King, the Director of the gallery, made the first of a series of remarkable statements: 'There is surprisingly little great art inspired by mountains'. Glancing up from the catalogue my eye was caught by what David Hill, in his book *Turner in the Alps* (excluded from the catalogue's Further Reading) calls Turner's 'most developed statement of the view' of the Pass of St Gothard from Devil's Bridge. Two other versions are in the Tate and Birmingham. Where does this magnificent painting reside? The Abbott Hall, Kendal. The curator continued, 'This is particularly true of the Lake District'. And here was Turner's famous rainbow over Buttermere on loan from the Tate. It is true that there was nothing in this show of Francis Towne's progressive Lake District watercolours such as can be seen, among other places, in the Wordsworth Museum. Are loans from Grasmere difficult to arrange? Did Edward King perhaps miss their 1990 show 'Wordsworth and the Alps' (reviewed by Janet Adam Smith and Peter Bicknell in the *Alpine Journal* Vol 97), when 20 Townes were brought together, mostly from private collections?

The magnificent big singing Turners were in danger of drowning out the delicate Ruskin watercolours. But Ruskin's deft way with light, in an impressive group of paintings from the Alpine Club, is as mesmerising in its technique as Turner's elusive poetry. Watercolours by Whympers and Howard Somerville were fascinating for their inventive play with colour in quite different ways. The collection of photographs by Bisson Freres, Donkin, England and Sella loaned by the Alpine Club were given recognition as fine works of art. Beside them, the Fell and Rock's contribution of Abraham Brothers' work stood up well.

It was in making the claim for photography that Edward King made his third denigration: 'There has been little artistic

merit in mountain painting this century.' So although the exhibition actually displayed the work of certain local painters who were reading the catalogue incredulously at the opening, neither the title of the show nor its catalogue gave them any recognition. They were presumably of little merit. For the Director of the Abbot Hall, Kendal to thereby write off the entire work of three generations of Heaton Coopers for starters is remarkable. He must surely have seen Alfred's Norwegian waterfalls, William's 'Esk Buttress', or Julian's 'The Bus to Yanama'? They are up the road in the mountains again at Grasmere.

These points would just be criticisms of a show that has passed if it were not that the future Museum of Mountaineering is to be located at the Abbot Hall. What is at issue here is a sense of continuity with the present. Why did the title and the catalogue ignore the presence of more recent painters actually in the show? Ruskin's handling of ice and mist should be compared with that of contemporaries and they should be able to take it. The few artefacts on display that will presumably be at the centre of the museum were unimaginatively captioned. A tent is just a tent. Captioning and a catalogue should look forwards as well as backwards, to relate equipment to contemporary debates. From the piton to the bolt, for example, is a short step, but a significant one for the mountain environment. A museum should inform and excite rather than denigrate and deny as the curator of this exhibition has done. A Museum of Mountaineering, like this show, should have less apology and more confidence.

Terry Gifford

Errata & Apologies

In the *CC Journal*, 1996 the photograph of A.B.Hargreaves on p.124 was taken by Harry Pretty, not by Tony Moulam. The photograph of The Cuernos of Paine is printed the wrong way round. In Derek Walker's Obituary for Trevor Jones, p.127, for *Vember* read *Vector*; and on p.128 Trevor's quarrel with Chris Bonington on Nuptse was over a tin of *pears* not *peas*.

At the time of going to print, our South West correspondents have been unable to compile the Area Notes. They will appear in the next *Journal*.

AREA NOTES

North Wales 1997

Last summer was hot and very sultry, and many crags in full sun and by water were pretty unpleasant places to be for much of the summer. Having said all that, plenty of new stuff still got done — both by the sea and in the mountains, but predictably the same names kept cropping up: Pat Littlejohn, George Smith, Martin Crook and Nick Dixon. Fortunately, one or two fresh names are beginning to creep in, such as Patrick 'Patch' Hammond and Leo Houlding. Both are still teenagers but climbing harder than most of us will ever dream of — and not as you'd expect on the bolted limestone.

Anyway, lets start in the Spring. Just as the new, pocket-sized Lleyen guidebook came out, a brief flurry of activity ensued with a small number of people, (ending, I think, once they had scared themselves sufficiently, and there was even more crag lying on the beach and somewhat less in the vertical plane).

Pat Littlejohn was straight in there, warming up with a repeat of *Rust Never Sleeps*, an E5 (7a+?) which was controversially and multiply pegged by Chris Parkin after several well-known bold climbers had given up due to its seriousness, having made ground up attempts in the more usual ethic for the area. However, Pat reckons the climb is reverting to its bold status, since, as the climb's name suggests, the Irish sea shows no respect for what was once a shiny line of iron pegs.

In an age where shorter and shorter new climbs appear to be the norm, Pat's still having none of it, and felt a need to do **War and Peace** at Craig Dorys on the Lleyen. Just like the book, it seems to go on for ever, and if you ever get around to doing it (when the bird ban comes off of course), you will have done an E4/5, sixteen pitches and roughly 1,240 feet, mostly sideways.

The young'uns were down there too; Adam Wainwright and James Harrison on sighted the corner system left of *Rust Never Sleeps*. Called **The Gross Clinic**, the only

good rock apparently was on the belay between the two pitches. Its rapid second ascent by Steve Mayers and Matt Ingham confirmed the looseness and the E6 grade. A number of new routes were also climbed in Keyhole Zawn, from E3 to E5 by a variety of people, including George Smith, Martin Crook and others.

The Gogarth area had a fair spatter of new climbs. George Smith did his usual trick of spying out obvious George-like lines. For example, **The Flying Shed** at E5'ish. You get a bit suspicious when a climb gets described thus: 'bridge out across the forty foot roof'. Now I know George is pretty tall (everyone's tall to me), but has he really got a 20 foot- long leg? Pull the other one, George. This climb was done in the little-known Thunderbird Zawn. Penlas Rock didn't escape George's attention (that huge lump beyond Yellow Walls). Here he ascended **Pre-Cambrian Wrestler** (it's one of those names again), an E7 which follows a line through roofs to a 'frenzied top-out situation'. Hmm. Also on the Rock, **Grond Plie and Twtn Horn**, a very descriptive name for the E5 which was accidentally printed as **Grand Pile** in OTE, but apparently that describes it just as well. His other major line on the Rock was **Rock of Ages**, E7, which follows a crack from the gloom of a sea cave upwards and backwards towards daylight. This climb was unseconded, because all his potential seconds were the 'wrong shape' to climb the wide crack.

Skull Zawn is another little known area of Gogarth with, until last year, only one route — **Sea Witch**. Glenda Huxter and Howard Jones decided to change that with **Who Dares Whinge**. Glenda climbed it on her second visit and graded it E5 6b, and on its second ascent it had a tired, debilitated and exasperated Adam Wainwright throwing a bunch of runners into the sea, deciding it would be better to just concentrate on the climbing.

Wen Zawn gained a major new climb last year. Most climbers won't know the Back Wall, but Nick Dixon and Noel Craine are now pretty intimate with it. They took three visits to find a way up (**It's**) **A Broad Church**, E7 climbed without pre-inspection or pre-cleaning (but this wasn't possible anyway). Nick's route name demonstrates his own attitude to climbing new routes, having in his time: top-rope prac-

tised hard, bouldery technical mini-routes before the lead; head-pointed mega-routes such as *Indian Face*, but in every case, he's approached the climbing of a route pragmatically, doing whatever feels right at the time.

Other activity around Gogarth saw Anne Arran on-sighting *The Cad*, E5 with the bolt. Unbeknown to her, someone called Simon Witcher came along a few days later, having decided to chop the remaining bolt on this climb with such a chequered history. The importance of this act was soon to be realised, as Anne was about to return with a BBC filming crew to repeat the route. However, Anne was unfazed by this, and climbed it without the bolt. I personally feel that after all this time the bolt could have been left to rot away completely, especially as no local climber felt the need to remove it. Unfortunately, a joke of mine about the bolt being chopped because too many women were climbing the route fell a little flat with one of Simon's friends, who disparagingly called me a 'quasi-feminist' in a letter to OTE. Maybe he's right.

Rhoscolyn saw a little attention with some routes as yet unfinished and some others not well described — although after the historic May election, Howard Jones and I traversed landward into an unclimbed little zawn close to the look-out. Apparently un-named, we felt justified in naming it Election Zawn, and climbed two routes: **Drink Your Hemlock**, **Mr Portillo** had the advantage of being in the shade, and the two pitch **From Arrogance to Impotence** had an interesting belay.

In the mountains Pat Littlejohn was active in the Nantlle area. With Tim Jepson he tackled the steep walls left of *Angel Pavement*. **Voice in the Wilderness** is 400 feet of bold climbing on immaculate rock, giving a four pitch E5 led on sight. Pat believes this crag deserves greater popularity, since it gets plenty of sun for a big mountain crag, has many routes on good rock and is only 35 minutes walk from the parking spot at the end of Llyn Cwellyn.

Another major event of the year was the passage of Hale Bop, and to mark this event, climbers Ian Wilson and Dave Ferguson walked up to Craig Lloer in the Carneddau, and climbed a route on the

tler above *Moonrise*. They named it after the famous comet and graded it a more accessible HVS. Across the way, in the Ogwen Valley, Nick Dixon ascended a much more humble-sounding **Gribin Wall Climb**, which takes the arete and wall right of *Angular Chimney*. Graded a hefty E8/9 6c, it is dangerous and the protection — if it can really be called that — consists of a couple of walnut 00s, a RURP and an RPO. Nick placed these on abseil, needing both hands to place them, and a 1" Peck and 1" Rock were also pre-placed. The bottom two-thirds were extensively top-rope practised; then the whole route 'headpointed'. John Dunne made a rapid second ascent of the climb — again after top rope practice, and was enthusiastic about its quality. Young Leo Houlding climbed the arete to the right, naming it **Rore Lichen** and grading it E8, another scary headpoint with the crux at the top.

A whole new little crag in the Gwynant valley was furtively developed by a merry band of climbers. This nameless outcrop was dubbed Craig y Ria in fond memory of a cragging dog, and Leary, Sturgess, Keightley, Huxter and Eade climbed a number of routes graded from around VS to E3/4. Al Leary also spied a couple of new lines in the Clogwyn y Bustach area.

Many new mini-routes were also climbed in the Cwm Glas Bach area of the Pass, the most avid new routers being Norman Clacher and Tony Shelmerdine. These are pretty impossible to describe without the aid of a map and topo, as anyone who has visited this extensive area of outcrops and boulders will understand, but perhaps the most notable ascents were those done by Neil Gresham, who climbed **Gravediggers**, an E8 with a huge bomber runner on it, **Down on my Knee** was climbed by Tim Emmett recovering from an embarrassing bouldering injury (he did it in Bangor), but he was still able to climb E7, and Leo Houlding did **The Cushion**, E6, while all the time nipping in to snatch second ascents of all the other hard new routes. Down the road by the Cromlech bridge, *Beginner's Mind*, Nick Dixon's short but worrying testpiece had a rash of ascents. This climb was graded E8, which, not to detract from the undoubted technical difficulty of the climb and the high standard of climbers around, makes me feel a little uneasy about the comparison

of climbs of the same grade but of such different scales of apparent seriousness. The most obvious comparison to make is with *Nightmayer* on the Cromlech, ostensibly the same grade but not right by the road, and is very long and very scary — in fact a completely different kettle of fish, with only two ascents in about 5 years.

Patch Hammond, a mere boy like his mate Leo, went for an enthusiastic on sight ascent of the difficult (E7 6c) *Gram-ve*, a short overhanging arete climbed first by Tim Emmett. Tim top-roped the route before his ascent, but off Patch went, placing a couple of skyhooks to protect the crux, which he completed successfully, and just as he was about to clip the peg above he fell off, ripping one of the skyhooks in the process. The other arrested his fall inches from the ground. Undaunted, he started again and did the route. Not so lucky was Dave Musgrove, who lost a few fingers after a rockfall on *The Skull* up in Cynr Las.

Most recently, some long standing testpieces on the slate have received second ascents. The most controversial is John Dunne's go at *The Quarryman* Johnny Dawes's four pitch mega-route made famous by the Stone Monkey video. Dunne did climb the crux pitch, the first person to do so since the first ascent, but has not done the whole climb in one. The nearest to this has been Neil Gresham, who was climbing one pitch after another (as you'd expect), but had to use a point of aid on the crux pitch because he was pretty tired. Neil didn't try to claim any notoriety, but Dunne's publicity machine appears quite vigorous. Uncontroversially, *Bungle's Arete*, E8, high on the Rainbow Slab has had a second ascent by Leo Houlding. Excruciatingly awkward, it was first climbed by Sean Myles ages ago, and has thwarted a few other hopefuls. Another of Dawes' specialities, *The Very Big and the Very Small*, E8 on the Rainbow recently had its second ascent by 'foreigner' Steve McLure — again after so many years waiting. I get the feeling plenty more long-awaited second ascents will get done this year.

Gill Lovick

Lundy 1997

This was another relatively quiet year on the Island on the new route front. This follows the trend in recent times for activists to adopt the 'I'm on holiday,' mode, content to make one or two hard ascents in amongst some quality pitches in the lower grades. All very tranquil non-competitive stuff.

I'll start at the south end and work North beginning with Montagu Buttress. Here Paul Harrison, along with Tony Sawbridge, and Simon Cardy returned to an old project that had defied previous attempts. The big left facing groove left of **Cable and Wireless** became *Montagu's Harrier* E4 6a. Paul has since suggested E5 6b. Bi-secting **Cable and Wireless** Simon Cardy climbed *Hartland Point* E2 5c just to the right.

A lot of attention was paid to the landing craft bay area which saw the assault of Dave Barton's **Wet and Wild** HVS 5b right of *Wall St. Shuffle*, and Adrien Berry's **Small is Beautiful** E5 6b (after top-roping) to the left. Helen and Neil Hearnnes found a couple of lines on the left of Second Buttress North, **Toni's Little Head Fit** VS 4c and **Dreaming of St. Katherine's** (not Swanage or even Portland), an off-width, went at E3 5c.

A new buttress, named Jemima Buttress after one of the Island staff, was opened up just North of Lifeboat Buttress with the aid of a 90 metre ab. rope which solved the access problem to this area. Once down on the beach a three pitch cracker was spotted: **The return of the Dalmations** E3 5b,4b,5c Harrison, Sandy Wilkie, Mike Snell, and D. Rickerby.

Several wet days saw the further development of the Dead Cow Point area which became quite a trendy place to do your new routes this year. This was largely due to the fact that the point is very quick drying and accessible after rain. Some of the recent routes down here have been on the short side but never the less the quality is good. On the descent to Dead Cow Point Simon Cardy and Mary Niklas played their hand with **Montana Red Dog** HVS 5b having earlier shuffled Roman Niklas's **Outdoor Tomato Plants** V.Diff just right of *Shattered Experience*. Paul Harrison

then went to **Kick Some Wrasse** E3 5c down in the Wrasse Hole out towards the point before deciding to **Mullet Over** E2 5c the crack to the right. It is worth noting, for all you Dead Cow Point anoraks, that Neil Harrison's *Frottage Cheese* VS, from last year, has suffered a rock-fall near the start — now there's something you didn't know. The large through sea-cave under the point, provided Dave Viggers, Ben Bransby, and Mark Hopkins with an all weather route. The line was spotted from the water with the aid of wet-suits and lifejackets, that is until a large bull Seal sent the team splashing onto dry land. **Tunnel Vision** which takes a traverse line across the back wall at E3 5a,5b/c. First ascentionists reported this would be a good route in a heat wave or the pouring rain as it is completely under cover. On a more somber note, the same team climbed **The Rob Parker Memorial Crack** E2, 5c opposite *Suki Yaki*, named after their good friend who lost his life a few days before in a diving accident. Rob was due to have been on Lundy but took the diving trip at the last moment.

An addition was made to Benson's Buttress called **Scam Monster** E1 5b, taking the right-hand inverted 'v' to the right of *Skullduggery* by Harrison, Snell, and Sawbridge. This team then made the short step across the boulders at low tide onto St. Peter's Stone to have a somewhat intoxicating afternoon. Paul got **Rat-arsed** VS, and while Mike got stuck into the **Merry Monk** Hard Severe, and Tony downed **Pale Rider** VS left of Vernon Martin's *Home Brew*. All three were seen later in the Tavern continuing the session.

There were a few interesting developments in and around Arch Zawn. On the arete opposite the southern descent Simon Cardy found **Ultramarine** E1 5b and someone climbed the wall and crack right of *Arch Enemy*: **Architypal** VS 4c. A variation finish to the top of *Stop Press* was climbed up the left arete by Steve Atkinson, **The Zawn Decker Finish** E3 6a, so called after a lunatic jump into the sea from the top of the first pitch. Out on the fine seaward face, Harrison meanwhile hot-footed up **Scorchio**, also at E3 6a, just right of *Bulletin*.

Finally, in and around the North End of the Island, Brad Jackson served up **Plenty More Fish In The Sea To Fry** HVS

5a on the first buttress south of Rock Pool Buttress whilst over on First Knight Templer, Mike Hunt, Dave Glover, and Jane Livingstone found **Infidel** E1 5b right of *Saladin* and had a **Knight Cap** E2 5b left of *Fat Freddy's Cat*.

Simon Cardy

Pembroke 1997

An access agreement for climbing in Range West was reached over 5 years ago and ever since there has been a gradual decline in interest from climbers — at least that's what the statistics show. The truth, however, is that the 'open' season has gradually been curtailed and the winter months are not so conducive to sea cliff climbing in the west. Add to this the increased restrictions to Range West since the initial agreements, and the result is 10 times as much new-routing activity east of the perimeter fence for this year.

These factors did not deter Steve Mayers from adding a fine line to Mount Sion Central. Together with Grant Farquar he climbed out leftwards from the top of the first pitch of *Land of The Giants* to create **Planet of The Apes** at E5 6a,5c,5c. The same team also added a couple of steep climbs to Greenham Common's leaning wall. Mayers went **Courting Disaster** at E7 6b up a line 20ft right of his earlier route *Wolverine*; and Farquar's **Chemical Straightjacket**, E6 6b, was based on the rock just left of *Tasmanian Devil*. Ben Bransby also added a line in this vicinity - **Bikini State Black**, E6 6b, which may well share some common ground with the previous route. But just before you start thinking that no more routes could possibly be squeezed onto this wall (at least not below E7), the girdle has now been climbed courtesy of Trevor Messiah and Ian Parnell at E6 6a, named **Sion Train**.

At Perimeter Bays, encountered just before leaving the range, Dave Wright and Fran Kendan ventured onto the wall opposite *Your Grace* and teetered up the right edge to give **The Men in Black**, with an interesting XS 4a grade.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the viewing platform, in Range East, Bransby climbed the crack left of *Isambards King*.

dom on the Green Bridge. **London Bridge** fell at E4 6a, the top 20ft of which is loose enough to warrant a pre-placed top rope. **Madman's Stack**, first climbed in 1996, received its second route this year, also on the south face. **The Nutty Professor** at E1 5b, 5a takes the obvious line right of *The Old Mad Man* and was climbed by John Hornsby and myself. Whilst in this same area we must say goodbye to two major routes in the Cauldron — *Bat out of Hell* and *Gate of Horn*, which have collapsed into the sea; they will be sadly missed. Although there is some compensation in the right arete of *Solar Quest*. Although Rob's greatest achievements in this area must be **Traverse Tea**, E5 6a, and **Un-named**, E6 6b, which both traverse the back wall of Breakfast Zawn and then take parallel lines to top. Paul Twomey eventually succeeded on his project on Rusty Walls — The left arete of *Solar Quest* is now **Black Love**, and at E8 6b is amongst the most serious routes in Pembroke. The right arete of Fear and Loathing gave Viggers and Parker **Easy Skanking**, E2 5c and the buttress to the right became **Reynard**, VS 4c, and was climbed with Moira Viggers, who also proceeded to put up **The Urban Fox** at HS 4b.

Bosherston Head's west face saw two more additions from myself; firstly with Stefan Doerr to produce **Sunny Corner**, an esoteric HVS with some exciting situations for the grade, and later with Steve Findlay to climb **Off The Wrist**, a deceptively steep E2 5b. Both routes are situated in the hidden corner area 40ft left of *Quoin*. I then went on to Stennis Ford with Emma to discover a *Preposterous Tales* style cave. **A Room With a View**, at E1 5a, 5a, starts in the south-facing chimney left of *Bypass*, and emerges from the rock platform behind. A route either side of this chimney was climbed, producing **Off The Cuff**, E1 5b, to its left and **Back to Health**, HVS 5a to its right. On the opposite side of the Ford, Twomey climbed **Excession**, E4 6a, up the crack 50ft left of *Stennis the Horror*.

The Parnell and Arran team (John and Ann) have been demonstrating how much scope there still is on and around Trevallen. **Pub Logic** E1 5b, weaves up the arch in Chapel Cove and **Wall Woman** E1 5b, is the arete 50ft right of *Aggression*

Statement (the latter being soloed on sight by Ian). **It takes All Sorts**, E2 5b, is the obvious oversized slot left of *Not Tonight Josephine* and **It Does your Head In**, E6 6b, is a diagonal line across the recess right of *Once More Into The Furnace*.

Surprisingly there were still same gaps at St Govans that needed eliminating! **Broken Arrow**, E4 6a, left of *Poison Arrow*, from Twomey, and **Soul Train** E7 6b, 6c, between *War and Peace* and *Crimes of Passion* from Twid and Louise. **Under The Floorboards** is a unique E1 which emerges in *Zodiac's* cave floor and **Shangel**, E3 is similar in nature and starts as for *Room Full Of Ghosts*, both quirky contributions from Parnell. At St Govans East, eliminates are still the name of the game where Bransby powered through the roof to give an E5 6b direct start to *Hidden Secrets* and Twomey filled the gap between *The Vicar's Goat* and *Silent Running* at E4 6a.

The return of Damien Carroll was noticed with his seven new routes on Saddle Point, just east of Broadhaven Beach. Those range from Severe to E3, and by far the most outstanding is **Ride Of The Valkyries**, which tackles the spectacular overhanging wall at E3 5c.

For the connoisseur of overhanging offwidths, there is now a route to enjoy taking the left arete of *Onion Eaters* at Mowing Word. The finishing crack is all too obvious, even from Gun cliff: **That Shallot** is E3 5b, 5c and comes courtesy of Emma and myself. In contrast to this, however, my **Rose In Bloom** is a fingery E3 5c just left of *Cormerant Flake*. This was climbed with local boy Alun Richardson.

The final areas to receive attention are the far-eastern sectors of Becks Bay and Giltar Walls. In Becks Bay, I climbed a direct line through Hang Dog to give the appallingly named **Swing Cat** at E1 5c. Steve Mayers ascended **Miss Piggy**, E4 5c, a strenuous line right of the grossly underrated *Chimera* an Giltar Walls.

That broadly rounds up '97, but still plenty to go at for '98. Perhaps some returned enthusiasm for North Pembroke and Range West?

Paul Donnithorne

