JOURNAL 2012





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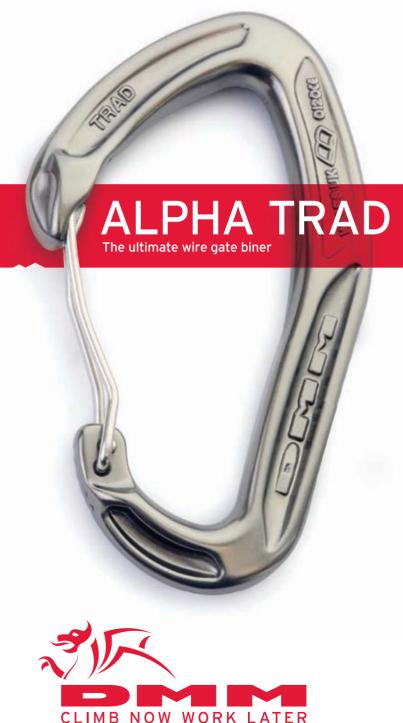














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Cover: Hazel Findlay on-sights Fawcett's The Cad (E6 6a) during the making of Paul Diffley's film Odyssey. Photographer: Paul Diffley

Inside Front Cover: Great Wall and the West Butress of Clogwyn D'ur Arddu. Artist: © Phil Gibson

Next to Inside Cover: On the summit of the Tacul, the Grandes Jorasses in the distance. Photographer: Jon Griffith

Inside Back Cover: Cwm Idwal. Artist: © Phil Gibson

Rear Flap: Alex Honnold solo in the late evening light at Smith Rocks, Oregon. Photographer Ben Moon.

These Pages: Bob Barton attempting an unclimbed 6400m peak in the Karakoram. Photographer: Jon Prosser

Sunset on the Mont Blanc Range from the Cosmiques Arete, Chamonix. Photographer: Jon Griffith



The Climbers' Club Journal No.125

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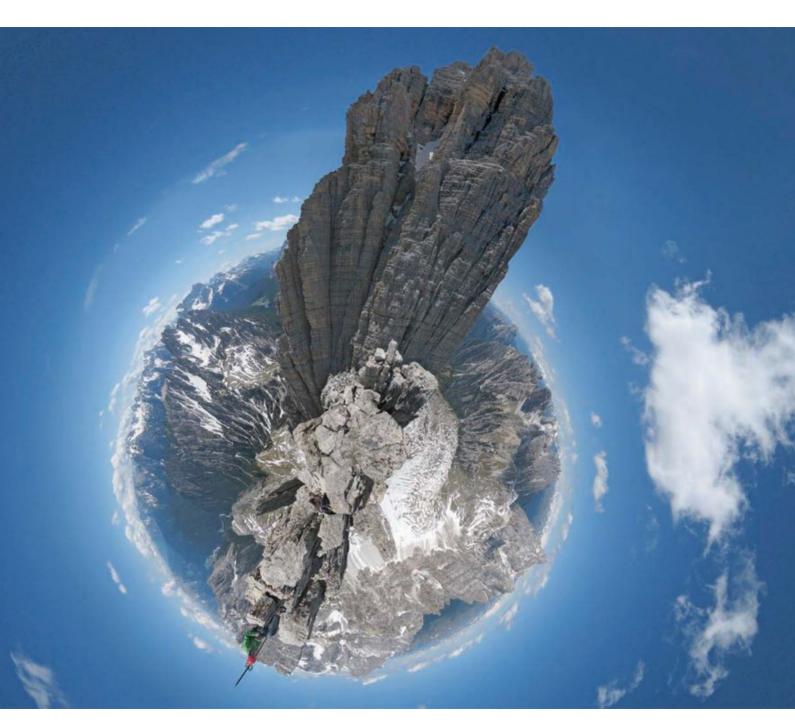
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Editor's Note

By John Yates

ost climbers at some point in their careers have dreamt of going on the road in pursuit of their dreams. Artist and designer, Phil Gibson, set out on the road shortly after leaving Art School in the late 1970s only to find that the highway led directly to Yosemite. Travelling alone, but with a list of routes inspired by the exploits of the Stone Masters and the photography of Galen Rowell and Glen Denny, Gibson teamed up with an American climber and had the time of his life. His essay, Arrow Climbers, wonderfully captures the sense of adventure and freedom that comes with cutting loose and going with your heart. In writing the piece he was inspired to return to an artistic medium in which he excels his ink drawing of the Lost Arrow Spire with Upper Yosemite Falls in the background and giant sequoia trees in the foreground is one of the highlights of this year's Journal.

His piece makes a fascinating counterpoint to lames McHaffie's account of the second ascent of the formidable PreMuir on El Cap. Accompanied by Hazel Findlay and Neil Dyer, the three were on the route for five days armed with little more than a photocopied topo and a thirst for a big adventure. Never one to blow his own trumpet, Caff's account often underplays the difficulties they encountered. With pitch after pitch of E6/7 climbed in the relentless California heat. the three arrived at the really hard pitches feeling beaten and exhausted. On pitch 33, the crux dihedral near the top of route, Caff, Findlay and Dyer came within a whisker of defeat as water supplies, food and energy were running dangerously low. That they pulled off such a route, and in such good style, is a testimony to the hard trad-climbing skills that still exists amongst top-flight British climbers.

One of the forging grounds for these skills over the last 60 years has been Clogywn D'ur Arddu, the rocky template on which some of the world's boldest climbers have carved their mark. Perhaps the most prolific of those climbers is Joe Brown who, at the age of 82, is as passionate as ever about the culture and ethics of our sport. Only recently he went up to the slate quarries with Claude Davies to chop bolts that had been placed in one of his routes.

This passion for climbing in what is now known as a ground-up or traditional style has been an abiding characteristic of the British scene. But it is constantly under threat, as Tony Penning powerfully argues in his contribution to this year's Journal. He rightly argues that The Climbers' Club should be the custodian of that tradition, and warns against us dropping our ethical guard against the constantly encroaching presence of the expansion bolt.

This tradition for bold, ground-up climbing is well reflected in Phil Bartlett's account of his almost accidental first ascent of a route which is now widely regarded as one of the country's first E6s. In researching the background to the Cloggy section of the Jounal, I had a conversation with guidebook author and master of thin climbing, Nick Dixon. In passing, he mentioned that he had climbed Quiver on a top rope and found it to be desperate. With each succeeding year it seems that the route's reputation only grows, as its combination of hard, technical climbing above minimal gear deters all but the most proficient.

Three of the most compelling pieces in this issue are written by women. Adele Pennington's account of her ordeal on Makalu is all the more gripping for the understated and matter of fact way in which it is told. That she survived is testimony to her inner resources and resilience; that she returned to the mountain to stand on its summit shortly after her narrow escape only adds to the perception that those who are drawn

Left:
The world in the round: panorama from the summit of the Cima Piccola with the Cima Grande summit on the left.

Photographer: Dan Arkle Photography to the Greater Ranges are a breed apart. Lucy Ham's account of a trip to the Dolomites is fascinating both for its candour and its depiction of how our best days often come unexpectedly and against the run of events. As each day passed, the prospect of climbing her chosen goal, the Comici Route, seemed only to diminish. I will not spoil the ending of the story, but suffice it to say that Lucy and her partner, had a massive day out. Finally, Hazel Findlay's essay on the romance and reality of life on the road is wonderful affirmation of what it can mean to follow the leanings of your heart. With few material resources, other than an abundance of good friends and talent, she set off on a European tour that ranged from pocket pulling at Ceuse to making the first ascent of a mixed route in the Alps. And, as Caff's piece acknowledges, this was topped off with a visit to Yosemite in which the 'dihedral diva' proved that being small in stature is no barrier to having big ambitions. Her father, CC member Steve Findlay, must be proud indeed.

But living on the road is not always easy, and not always fun. American climber, Alex Honnold, when he is not travelling abroad, has spent much of the last eight or nine years living in the back of a Ford Econoline van. It is a spartan existence, but one that gives Alex the freedom to follow his instincts. the weather, and the migratory habits of his many climbing friends. We are delighted that Alex took the time to write about his experiences and the reasons for choosing to live this way. That three world class photographers - Ben Moon, Andy Burr and Jimmy Chin – generously contributed their images to the piece is all the more humbling in an era where cash seems to be king, and a growing number of 'sponsored' climbers seem unwilling to write or contribute without the offer of personal gain.

Richard Haszko's ascent of Pik Lenin at the age of 60 is also an inspiring piece of writing and climbing. His honest account of the personal doubts and uncertainties that dogged him mid-way through expedition will strike a familiar chord with many readers. That he grappled with these demons, and

eventually bested them, must have made the thin air on the summit taste all the more sweet. As with Colin Beechey's account of his season in the Alps as a pensioner in last year's Journal, Richard's tale is a timely reminder that with good luck and good health it is possible to fulfil the dreams of youth in later life.

The publication of the Journal, I have been told, is central to the life of the club. But for me, this is putting the cart before the horse. It is the life of the club that is vital to the Journal. Indeed, the success of the Journal depends upon the willingness of our members to contribute to its pages, either in the form of articles and photographs, or in the suggestion of ideas and topics. But for now, I would like to single out a number of people for particular thanks. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to David Medcalf and his partner, Cathy Woodhead. Once again they have proved to be an invaluable asset to the Journal team. From the compilation of the obituaries to the detailed proof reading of articles, the 2012 Journal would not have been possible without their knowledge, experience and commitment. Vice-President, Richard Wheeldon, has not only secured valuable advertising revenue for the 2012 Journal, he has also moved heaven and earth in his last minute efforts in compiling the guide book reviews. His support has also been crucial to our success.

Outgoing President – in more ways than one – Fiona Sanders is largely responsible for inviting me to take over the helm of the Journal. It was her courage and vision that has led to such a bold redesign in the look and feel of the Journal. Her willingness to engage the doubters and sceptics has gone a long way to making this journey possible.

Jack Geldard, based now in Chamonix, was an endless source of ideas, inspiration, and intellectual stimulation. His positive energy and passion for the sport, always lifts the spirits. Last, but most definitely not least, I must thank Marcus Wray, not only for his skills and talents as a graphic designer but for his endless patience in putting up with an increasingly grumpy old man.

Right: The breathtaking view from the summit of the Cima Piccola.

> Photographer: Dan Arkle Photography



Mountains

A Massive Day Out. By Lucy Ham

Bife de Chorizo. By Richard Isherwood

The Power of Love. By Ali Taylor

Crossing the Maginot Line. By Geoff Bennett

A Dream Realised. By Richard Haszko



A Massive Day Out

For many climbers the elusive Holy Grail is often to be found on routes that are long, sustained and challenging but never utterly desperate. Here Lucy Ham tells us how she found the Grail against the run of events on a Dolomite classic, the Comici Route.

By Lucy Ham

knew very little of the rock climbing in the Dolomites until about two years ago when I read an article about an ascent of the classic Comici Route. The first thing that caught my eye was an amazing photograph of the author, James Rushforth, leading up a steep, seemingly blank, and outrageously exposed sheet of limestone. The route looked absolutely outside my grade range. Over the next few months, however, my interest in the climb only increased as a number of my friends returned home having done both the Comici Route and its harder big brother on the same face, the Brandler-Hasse, All came back with tales of epic adventures and breathtaking photos.

Both routes are on the North Face of the Cima Grande, the largest of the iconic towers of the Tre Cimi, situated above the lovely town of Misurina. All those who described the face to me did so with a wild glint in their eye, full of excitement; they seemed to have been totally transfixed by the size and steepness of the face. Add to this the remarkable history of the climb, and the fact that a number of those who had found the route epic and hard but had got to the top were also climbing a similar grade to me, and it is was not long before I was hooked on the idea of doing the route myself.

The following summer I succeeded into talking my long-suffering, bike-racer boyfriend in to a trip to the Dolomites for a BPH (bird pacification holiday). Although he had agreed to the trip, he was not psyched and if I was being harsh I would describe him as behaving like a sulky teenager. I tried to explain that it could be worse: many BPHs involve nothing

more than lying on a beach in Tenerife. Despite my arguments he remained unconvinced even in the run up to the trip. But his mood changed completely when we arrived and first set eves on the mountains. What a place! It is hard to describe what is so impressive about the Dolomites but it is definitely totally different to anywhere else we had been. There is something about the steepness of the summits and the sheer amount of steep rock that is humbling and inspiring in equal measure. On top of that, the dramatic light and afternoon thunder storms really reminded us that we were in a very special place indeed (being in Italy also meant that the coffee and ice cream are pretty good too!).

That aside we were going to need to get on with some climbing. We had decided to start by camping in the peaceful village of Misurina high on the hill above Cortina as it was supposedly quieter (and cheaper) than the apparently glamorous honey pot below. We had been recommended the Yellow Edge (Spigolo Gallo) on Cima Piccola as a good warm up route in the area so we settled on that as our first objective. Cima Piccola is the easternmost of the Tre Cimi towers and is otherwise known as the little peak. However, at 2,857m and with the route being a 350m, 14 pitch, grade VI+, we were certainly not expecting to be home by lunch.

Apart from the early start, it was feeling pretty cruisey on the whole with the 30 minute flat walk in and the jaw dropping alpine sunrise. This all changed very quickly with the first two pitches which felt much harder than expected (tying in at 5.30am may not have helped) followed by a number of loose wandering

Left: Taken from the Brandler-Hasse with Iames Rushforth leading the 6th bitch of the Comici Route.

Photographer: Rich Kirby



pitches which were very hard to protect with challenging route finding. Over the next few hours we watched guidebook time be totally obliterated and the top did not seem to get any closer. The exposure was truly mind-blowing, in a good way (I think). I had one particular belay that involved my feet hanging free above hundreds of metres of clear air to the ground; as Jake said 'you would have a long time to think about what had gone wrong if you screwed up!'

We had prided ourselves over the years in moving quickly together in the mountains, climbing and swinging leads efficiently. But, in the late afternoon sunshine, we were unceremoniously dumped back at the car a bit overwhelmed by how hard we had had

to work on our warm-up route and having nearly doubled guidebook time. It had been an absolutely awesome day and it was so good to be climbing in such an unbelievable place (not to mention great to be climbing with Jake again!) but I think we both had the slight sense that we had bitten off more than we could chew with the current trip plan!

Over the next two weeks we did loads more routes of similar lengths and grades. The Dolomites are made up of many stratified limestone spires which are characterised by steep climbing and (by alpine standards) short walk ins. In my limited experience of the area, it would seem that long run-outs, challenging route finding, and loose rock are a dominant feature

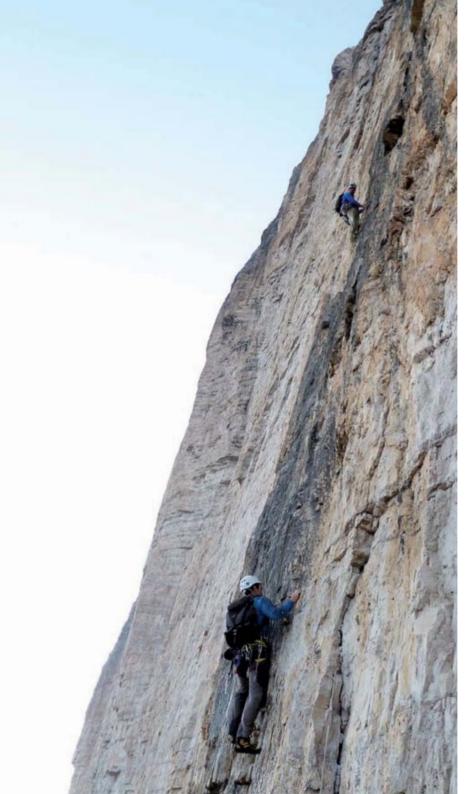


and not generally reflected in the grade; a calm leading head is very much an asset. One of the most consistent features of the routes we did was the gut wrenching exposure. I have done similar length routes in many parts of the world, including many in Yosemite and the Western Alps, and I have never felt anything like it. I am not really sure why the exposure is so ever-present (in some cases from as soon as you leave the ground) but it may be something to do with the fact you are usually climbing on towers. It gives a real three dimensional sense of space around you and can feel a bit like arête climbing all day! The steepness of the faces also probably plays a part and this is exaggerated by the steep hillsides running up to the

towers; the valley can feel a very long way away. Towards the end of the second (and last week) we did the much recommended Messner Route on the second Sella Tower (11 pitch grade VI). The route was renowned for being under graded and serious, both of which I would agree with. Despite it being scarily bold in places (think four runners in forty metres on steep ground) it was nevertheless fantastic climbing. We were getting quicker and more confident for sure, but we were still a long way from guidebook time and a long way from wanting to increase both the grade and length significantly. It would seem the Comici was not going to happen for us this season; but we had still had a fantastic trip.

Above: Panorama from the summit of the Cima Piccola with the Cima Grande summit on the left.

Photographer: Dan Arkle Photography



Then, as often happens, chance dealt its hand. We had run into two friends Dave and Havden near the Sella towers whilst we were headed for an ice cream after doing the Messner Route (did I mention how good the ice cream is in the area!). It seemed that they had been having a similarly exciting time on their adventures over the past couple of weeks with lots of bold routes on loose rock. We all then hooked up with a mutual friend, Tania, in Cortina who we knew had done most of the classics at our grade in the area (and harder). With only one full day of climbing left we were generally coming around to the idea of an easy day having already had a number of full on, long days. Whilst sitting around the camp in Cortina that evening I asked Tania a direct question: how much harder than the Yellow Edge is the Comici? 'Not at all', she replied without even drawing breath. Hayden then said 'we had wanted to give it a go too but just haven't managed to commit'. Ten minutes later the plan was hatched, the hut booked and all was settled.

So, on the last day of the trip, our alarms went off at 4.30am and we were on the way in to the biggest, steepest North Face I have ever seen (or so it felt). By 5.30am we were on the first scrambling pitches with Dave and Hayden half an hour ahead of us as agreed. and by 6am the first crux was in front of us. I love the moment when you realise that the time for debating whether you can do something has passed; you just have to get on and do it. No more worrying about weather forecasts; route plans; escape routes; whether you have done enough training; are strong enough or brave enough. You just have to get on and do it. For us the climbing was hard, steep and sustained. But the route was obvious and the rock solid, so we were able to knock the first six pitches on the head in about 2.5 hours. Jake strung two of the hardest pitches together as the mountain-biker found his arms again: a seriously impressive lead. Just following this mega pitch was outrageously pumpy and I arrived at the

Left: Comici Route - First crux with Dave and Hayden. Photographer: Lucy Ham collection



belay shaking, scared and totally overwhelmed by the whole thing. I have no idea if Jake did it on purpose but there was no acknowledgment of my trembling and whimpering. He simply handed me the rack bandolier and pointed to where the next pitch went. I am not an especially bold climber and am often guilty of over-thinking a lead, but there is something about being in the big mountains, alpine style, that really works for me. I stop thinking about what I have to do and just get on and do it. And so it was that I took the rack and set off, and as soon as I was climbing I was totally focused and it all came together. I am still really proud of that lead even though it was not necessarily that hard compared to what I had led earlier on the route or elsewhere. We were amused, however, when Jake arrived at the belay and told me that the crucial peg I had clipped on the lip of a small

roof had, in classic Dolomites style, simply pulled out as he unclipped it. Glad I didn't know it at the time! With the Comici Route all the first seven pitches after the initial scrambling are difficult and steep but the grade (and angle) for the final eight eases a lot, backing off to around HVS in UK money. By mid-morning we were out of the hard ground and really starting to feel like the route was going well. But then the last few pitches slowed us significantly. I think we were getting tired, and though we were on easier ground, as we had found before in the Dollies. the rock became much more stratified leading to hard route finding, bad gear and loose rock. That said, by 2pm Jake reached me at the final belay and the route was done; all that was left now was to get down. An exciting terrace traverse; two abs; endless rope-less scrambling down the 450m "normal route" and a 20

Above: Comici Route: Teetering around the summit terrace.

Photographer: Lucy Ham collection



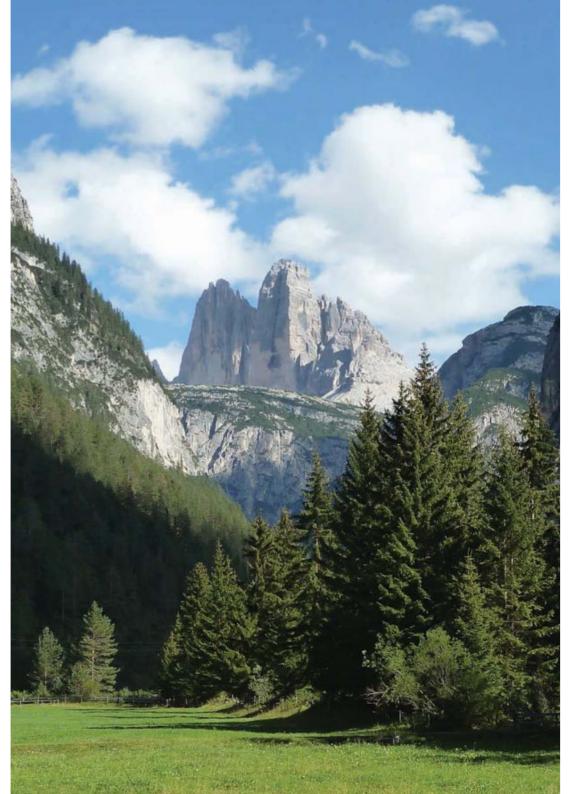
Above: Starting the descent of the Comici Route.

Photographer: Lucy Ham collection min walk and we were back to the car. The deed was done.

What a day! What a route! What a trip! I often think that, for me the Holy Grail of climbing is to be found when something feels hard, long and challenging without being desperate, too long or terrifying. That is why, for me, there can never be a best route at whatever grade as it all depends how you are climbing on the day. This route, on this day, was exactly that. I am sure I could go back another time and find it utterly desperate and terrifying and fail to complete it, and I suppose it is possible to think I could go back another day and find it really easy. On the day we did it we had to give it everything we had and were deposited back at the car totally exhausted and wide eyed but we were never stretched too far. The route was utterly audacious when done by the prolific Emilio Comici and his team in 1933 and took

three days and two nights, but it is by no means a hard route for most by modern standards. For me it was a massive achievement and I enjoyed every minute of it (apart from belaying in Gollum's wet cave). It was made even sweeter by the fact that we had thought it was out of our reach just two days before. It is a rare thing to have one of the best day's climbing of your life; it is even more rare to realise you are having one the whole way through. I never felt for a second that the route was a given or that it wasn't going to be hard but I felt the whole way up that it was going to be a massive day for me one way or the other.

The Dolomites lived up to their reputation completely. Long steep routes dripping with epic history; loose rock, poor protection and hard route finding; amazing scenery and technical climbing; fantastic coffee and ice cream; and a truly memorable experience.



Left:

Tre Cime: view as seen from the valley

floor.

Photographer: Lucy Ham collection



have had a general interest in climbing in South America for some time, but had never done anything about it till last year, when I saw an offer from Simon Yates in the Alpine Club newsletter. His objective was Monte Bove in Tierra del Fuego, 2,150m or maybe a bit more, just north of the Beagle Channel, first climbed by Eric Shipton in 1962 and not often done since. The trip offered an interesting boat approach in a totally new part of the world, but nothing too hard on the climbing front, which suited me well. I thought.

We were a party of six – Simon, whom everyone knows by repute, Hugh Alexander, a fellow Alpine Club member, and three Australians, Geoff and Sue Robb and Steve Shrimpton. Sue does not climb and came for the ride, about which she may at times have had second thoughts. Geoff has the Seven Summits under his belt, and a few more big peaks besides, while Steve revealed that he had never done a roped climb before.

We met in Ushuaia, at the very bottom end of Argentina and the jumping off point, as you could say, for tours to Antarctica. These have become very popular in recent years and Ushuaia is accordingly a boomtown. It is also something of a ski resort in the southern winter. You might expect it to be expensive, given where it is, but the Argentine government in its wisdom has made it a duty free place, so you can buy whisky at ten dollars a litre, even for known Scottish brands – admittedly blended! The bife de chorizo (rump steak) and red wine are good value too.

Simon introduced us to the Belgian boat captain and owner, Marcel de Letter. He has been down in the far south since 1994 in his steel hulled 39-foot boat which he built himself apart from the basic hull. He has a piratical air about him and clearly knows the best and most economical watering and eating holes in Ushuaia. His boat, Iorana, had an astonishing capacity for food and, perhaps more important, drink.

Left: Simon and Geoff near the summit of Monte Bove. Photographer: Isherwood collection

One of the problems with climbing in the Cordillera Darwin from Ushuaia is that the mountains are in Chile. The Chileans do not get on too well with the Argentinians, in this area at least, as the Argies, around 1980, tried to seize a Chilean island of distinctly limited economic potential in the Beagle Channel. The Chileans chased them off but have been suspicious ever since, so the border formalities are a little prolonged. (After failing in the Beagle Channel the then Argentine government had a go at the Falklands).

Having imagined that all was peace and harmony down here I was a little surprised when it took us almost three hours just to check out of Argentina. Since no one starts work before ten am, it was then lunchtime. Marcel, who is well used to this, took us off for a bit of bife de chorizo, washed down with more than a little Malbec. He knew that there was no way we could reach the Chilean immigration port of Puerto Williams, 25 miles east – that is, in the opposite direction to the mountains - before they shut their doors for the night.

We proceeded to Puerto Williams, mostly downwind, and actually sailed quite a bit of it till the wind died.

Below: Camp on Monte Bove.

Photographer: Isherwood collection





Above: Approaching Monte Bove across the Glacier Frances.

Photographer: Isherwood collection

We saw an albatross or two and some spectacularly unimpressive little penguins. We arrived just before dark and tied up with a host of other boats at the Club Yates, not named for Simon, and distinctly informal it is an old motor vessel, firmly attached to the bottom of a creek, and offering toilets, showers, and if you're lucky hot water. We rafted up to a large catamaran owned by a homely Dutch couple who had been living on board for over 20 years and had just sailed around Cape Horn. Chatting to the wife, a plump and sociable lady, it was hard to believe that she had spent most of

her adult life doing this: sailors are a different breed.

By the time we were organised, dinner beckoned. Marcel's friend down the road had assembled a massive asado (barbecue). No one, apparently, minds you walking about town before you have dealt with the immigration and customs. There never seems to be any shortage of meat in this part of the world, or of charcoal to grill it on. I do not know how you would survive down here as a vegetarian.

Next morning we had to deal with the Chilean bureaucracy. Again they don't start till ten am, and



it takes a few hours. Again Marcel was master of the situation, and after signing our names a few times, and looking respectfully at photos of Chilean admirals, we left it to him and wandered the dusty streets of Puerto Williams till he had the papers organised. Then – guess what? – lunch before we depart. Again it was past 2 pm before we got moving. This time the wind, which typically blows from west to east in the Beagle Channel (and in lots of other places too), was against us. We motored into it till progress became a bit futile, then Monsieur le Capitain said, with a wicked grin,

'We will not make it. We must wait.'

He hove to, put the boat sideways across the wind in the middle of the channel, heeling at 25 degrees or so in three foot sloppy waves, tied off the wheel and went below to peel potatoes for the dinner. Sue was seasick and I barely escaped myself. The wind abated after a couple of hours and we bashed on. The Chilean navy was dying to know where we were all the time, and eventually as it got dark we anchored in a bay short of where we told them we would be. Marcel made various excuses and they seemed happy enough. By now, after

Above: High on Monte Bove.

Photographer: Isherwood collection



thirty hours or so, we were just about back opposite Ushuaia.

The following day we motored west up the Beagle Channel in calm weather and anchored in a beautiful sheltered bay, Calleta Olla. It was 5 pm and more or less opening time, so I was a little surprised when Simon said 'Let's carry the first loads this evening.'

This, we had been told, was Wellie country. It is indeed very boggy in the lower parts, and some of

the bogs are quite steep. I was impressed by Simon's routefinding. We tried to avoid peeling too much vertical sodden grass off the wet rock below, and in only an hour and a half we were at the 'base camp', a sheltered spot in the beech forest which Simon and others had used before.

I abdicated after three carries, feeling I had done my share, but the others did several more. I found out why so much was needed when we got established. Simon had definite ideas about food, which for the base camp included tinned peaches and large quantities of raw potatoes and carrots. The logic of this was that you might have to sit out a week's bad weather here, though as it was less than an hour down to the fleshpots of the boat one would be tempted to retreat there.

The following morning was fine, so it was time to go, leaving the potatoes for later. We battled past a beaver dam and its associated swamp (the beavers were introduced by some clever person and are wreaking havoc), climbed some bald slabs, still in Wellies, and at last put our boots on by a striking glacial lake below a large and obviously retreating glacier.

We were carrying over 40 lbs, and I felt the weight just on the steep grass above the tree line, but then we got to the rock. Two short pitches, nothing more than severe, Simon said, and I'm sure he was right, but it was nearly too much for me. I realised I hadn't done a roped rock climb for a good long time, and hadn't done one with a pack this size for maybe 30 years. Hugh led both pitches with ease but I struggled mightily. The scree and snow slopes above seemed to go on forever, but we made a camp on a nice flat shoulder, all of 1000m above sea level. Two huge Andean Condors came to have a close look at us, claws hanging down, perhaps thinking some of us were no longer fully alive.

We were now on serious mountain rations, very different from down below, so dinner comprised instant mash, flavoured with – well, nothing, as our leader doesn't believe in salt. At least we had enough tea bags, and as an admirer of Shipton and Tilman I had brought plenty of sugar.

The next morning, again in perfect weather, we climbed easy frozen snow, over the shoulder of Monte Frances and on for over two horizontal miles, above the impressive icefalls of the Frances Glacier, to the foot of Monte Bove. The obvious route led up a ramp below some rather threatening seracs, but nothing seemed to have come down for a few days at least. We went up to a large flat shoulder in a very striking position below the rime covered summit block. Steve had opted out lower down, and Hugh and I decided we had done enough

too at this point, so we watched Simon and Geoff work their way up the steep bits to the top. The views were magnificent – there really is a big area of snowy mountains down here, many of them untouched and rather inaccessible, and the glaciers are more extensive than I, at least, had imagined.

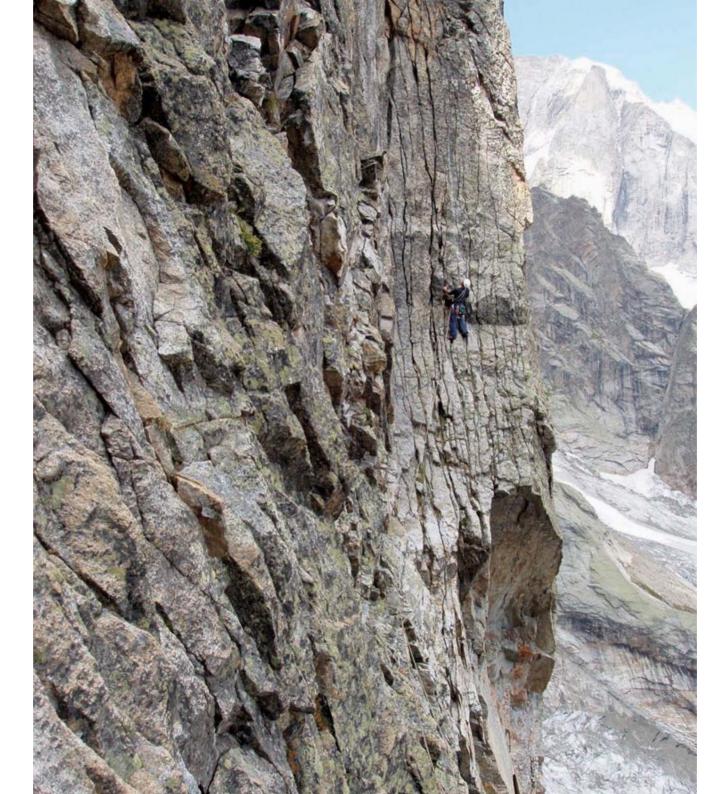
It was a thirteen-hour day by the time we got back to our camp, and I for one was beat. The next day we descended slowly to the base camp, abseiling the two rock sections, and changing back into Wellies for the swamps below. We had been very lucky indeed with the weather. At this point I developed a rather nasty bronchitis, which at least gave me an excuse to minimize my role in the reverse load carrying back to the boat.

The rest of the trip was essentially tourism. A 147-foot 'super yacht' anchored by us and we were invited aboard for cocktails and canapés, served by two young ladies in short black dresses. It had a full time crew of seven to look after the owner and her five guests, each bedroom with attached bathroom and shower, all powered sail controls, two desalinators, two washers and dryers, bow and stern thrusters — in short, the lot. Since they were over a hundred feet in length they had paid the same port fees in Ushuaia as the Antarctic cruise ships, but this didn't seem to be a concern. The owner and guests were very nice people, and seemed quite intrigued by a group of unwashed climbers. Seven of us in a 39-foot boat was distinctly cozy by comparison.

We went a bit further west up the Beagle Channel, past the impressive sea level snout of the large Roncagli Glacier, watched Marcel catch a few large and very tasty spiny crabs, then returned, via friends of his at the Estancia Yendegaia and a lot more bife, before sailing past Ushuaia to repeat the leisurely Chilean immigration routine, and to restock with beer. The following evening we got back to Ushuaia just in time, at dusk and barely ahead of a strong westerly. The Argentine immigration officer looked at our passports the next morning and said 'Ho Ho! You left Chile before you entered it.' The Chileans had forgotten to advance their rubber stamp from February to March. No one seemed to care.

Left: Lenticular cloud formation above Monte Bove.

Photographer: Isherwood collection



THE POWER OF LOVE

Ali Taylor first took up climbing in 1989 but it was not until 2005 that she discovered the magic of the Alps and a partnership with Tony Penning who led her up a series of often bold and adventurous new routes. Here she tells us of what she learned from that experience.

By Ali Taylor

love affair with the Alps started eight years ago and began in a rather accidental way. Tony Penning, my climbing partner at the time, had returned from an Alpine trip with a prolapsed disc. The doctor advised rest and recuperation and gave him some very powerful painkillers. Whilst he was moaning about missed opportunities, I suggested we could always go back and within 24 hours we were driving down to Italy and I was just about to do my first new Alpine route.

I'd been in some wild and wonderful places before but nothing had prepared me for my first experience of the Alps. The mountains were incredible: big, pointy and covered in lots of snow. We took a couple of days to acclimatise, plan our campaign and pack our gear. We would be bivvying at the foot of a route next to a glacier in the Val Ferret on the Italian side of the Mont Blanc range. I was anxious and excited in equal measure.

The way in was intricate and difficult. What began as a gentle walk, quickly progressed to steeper terrain, then scrambling, and finally climbing at HVS: and all with a full pack. When we reached the bivouac the situation was spectacular: a crystal clear night sky dotted with millions of stars. We watched this scene to the discordant background music of avalanching ice. I actually slept really well.

The day began with a trek across the glacier. I had no crampons, just my approach shoes, a peg and a prusik. It was slow progress with lots of swearing as I fell over many times. I have since developed the technique of kicking steps and using a peg and a nut

key: anything to save weight on the approach.

The route, which we named *The Power of Love*, was 10 pitches and involved around 1700 feet of climbing on the east face of Point 3019 of the Eveque. The climbing was fairly easy to start, but the belays were few and far between, which I found a tad unnerving to say the least. Arriving at a stance 800 feet above the valley to see the belayer braced on a small ledge attached to not very much was a little beyond my comfort zone and experience.

The difficulties began with a tricky 5b traverse to the bottom of a hanging face. The crux pitch followed this and took us through a series of grooves at E3 5c. From below it had looked relatively easy, but the holds were pinch like and difficult to use. Although we were above a sheer drop to the glacier below, the rock was solid and the climbing absorbing.

Once at the top, a spot of short roping on a steep grass slope 2,000 feet above the glacier below, led to the abseil line of a previous foray by Tony. Eight full rope lengths later we were back to our gear; but the fun wasn't over yet. The way out followed a steep scramble along the valley side to a 200 foot abseil down a wet chimney which had several chopped ropes in it.

We returned the following year with three climbing friends, Nick Gillett, Nick and Gavin Citlaw and had another very successful trip. Our first objective was in the Val Veny, in La Feuteuil des Allemands, which is accessed using a Via Ferrata. Once in the armchair of the Germans you can stay at the Borelli Hut which is very civilized, except for the snoring and farting erupting from several male occupants during the

Left: Tony Penning, leading the first ascent of The Power of Love.

Photographer: Ali Taylor collection



night, including Tony. We did two routes in this area, *Kingfissure*, which was approached by a 1,000 foot solo above a bergschrund, and, although not difficult climbing, the exposure made it more alarming. The crux pitch of E3 5c gave the route its name and was very difficult to protect as it needed very large gear.

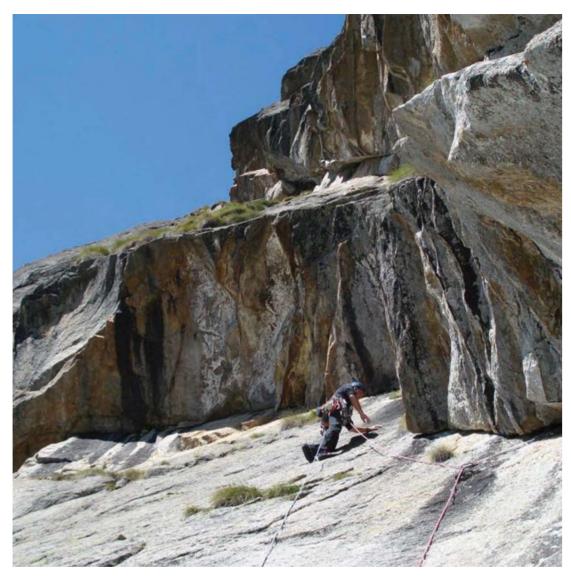
Castello Rosso was a little more accessible and nearer to the hut. The lower pitches had some loose awkward moves and the crux pitch was wet, but the third pitch consisted of a huge corner and was brilliant climbing at E3 5c. The mini summit presented an excellent photo opportunity.

The weather bummed out for the next two routes. Spur of the Moment, on the east face of the Brenva, had to be abandoned before the summit as it began to snow, which made our next objective more difficult than it should have been. This was a small peak which is named Gian Carlo Grassi and gave nine pitches, much of it scrambling, but with some good climbing, including a challenging overhang and some crack and slab climbing. The closer we got to the summit, however, the deeper the snow became, the protection more difficult to find and the rock more difficult to climb – we were only wearing rock shoes and were soon soaked to the skin.

In August 2007, we were back with Nick Gillet and Gavin Citlaw and climbed four new routes. Two were rather modest affairs, *Francy Vale* and *Sexy Beast*; both are in the Val Ferret, and approached via scree, and moraine which was very heavy going. *Sexy Beast* was the better of the two routes giving some excellent pitches, the best of which was an overhanging corner on wet holds at E3 5c.

The big event of the trip was *Fiesta de los Monsters*. The route, in the Pra Sec area of in the Val Ferret, was a three-day adventure: a day to get in; a day to climb; and a day to get out. The approach via the glacier was impossible due to crevassing and avalanching ice so we had to contour above the

Left: The Borelli Hut is a welcome sight after a hard day. Photographer: Ali Taylor collection



Left: Tony Penning on the sharp end negotiates the overhanging corner of Sexy Beast.

Photographer: Ali Taylor collection

glacier on its east side. This became so difficult and serious that we had to gear up and place protection. The climb was an exciting mixture of techniques, and involved a tortuous and complicated task of route finding. The crux pitch, a chimney and groove system at E3 5c, was climbed in four different ways!

Finding a way out of the area also proved difficult,

and meant down-climbing at VS above the glacier when there was no abseil possible. The approaching darkness halted our descent and we had an impromptu bivvy on a ledge overhanging the glacier. We were kept awake by magnificent thunderstorms and torrential rain. The following day dawned misty and imposing, fingers of cloud reaching and engulfing us.



Fortunately the descent proved easier in full daylight and we were soon off the contorted glacier and on more solid ground.

It was during this trip that Tony and I returned to point 3019 of the Eveque, for probably a final route in this area. It had the usual glacier start, although this had shrunk a little since August 2005, and took us through the first three pitches of The Cresswell Route. the next three pitches of The Power of Love and then four pitches of new climbing at E3 5c, Checkmate. The way off proved to be very testing, with 400 feet of diagonal scrambling, 200 of which were down and 200 back up the other side to reach the abseil descent. I can honestly say I was terrified.

The summer of 2008 was a washout throughout the Alps, and bad weather led to many deaths. We wanted to do the Geneva Pillar on the Eiger but settled instead for an ascent of the Comici Route on the Cima Grande in the Dolomites before heading home early with our tails between our legs and not even a sniff of a new route.

By the summer of 2009 we were back in Courmayeur in what was to be my 'Fifth Season' and probably my last doing new routes. We looked for possibilities on the East Face of Mount Noir de Peuterey, an area never explored before, but were very disappointed with the quality of the rock. We did see lots of chamois and even found a pair of chamois horns. Two routes on two separate occasions - Zig Zag, which wouldn't let us in and kept forcing us onto grassy ledges away from the rock and Sorgente Pepper which gave the best quality rock (but only two pitches) and the hardest climbing at E4 6a. Having never visited this area before, we had to create new abseils to safeguard our descent and got through rather a lot of tat.

The adventure of this trip was a foray into the south face of the Eveque, an undertaking only done by Tony in the past, and an area avoided by the Guides. I was about to find out why. Our approach took eight and a half hours, 3,500 feet vertical feet but 5,500 feet in reality, scrambling, climbing on loose dirt and

grass and traversing above sheer drops without any protection. Even Tony thought it was a 'little serious'. The bivvy was not what I expected, a stony mound next to a 300-foot slab of ice, which took two hours to dig out even a remotely flat spot. We crossed the ice the following morning, Tony in instep crampons and me with my advanced technique of kicking steps and using a peg and nut key to make steady progress in good style. The route was adventurous rather than good quality.

The best pitch at E3 5b followed a leftward curving undercling before being forced into a thrutchy, gritstone like holdless groove. This pitch joined the route Tony had opened in August 2004 which led to the Tronchev Ridge. Six abseils and 200 feet of scrambling got us back to the bivvy site and a welcome rest. The descent the following morning was worse than the ascent. A maze of bottomless gullies and sheer grass slopes to the valley below. Fortunately we had built a series of small cairns to guide our way back and we managed to find the abseils of Tony's previous foray. Unfortunately we abseiled down the wrong side of one face and ended in a dead end of loose rock, with no possibility of a belay and had to solo up to a tree 1,000 feet above the valley floor. It took six and a half hours of constant movement and concentration to reach safe ground.

Although tired with aching shoulders from our heavy rucksacks, the main priority was to quench our thirst, having run out of water several hours earlier. and stick our feet into the cool waters of the stream.

My five seasons in the Alps gave me a great respect for the mountains, although inanimate they often feel alive and potent with power. It moved my climbing in many ways and made me a bolder and more careful climber – climbing on loose rock does that to you. I've always loved wild, beautiful places but the Alps are uplifting and set you free in so many ways. I sometimes thought we wouldn't make it back, and was often terrified, but all you can do is dig deep and find what out what you're really made of. I think I did OK.

Left: Tony Penning making the first ascent of Checkmate in the Eveaue.

Photographer: Ali Taylor collection



Crossing the Maginot Line

History teacher Geoff Bennett, found himself an unlikely volunteer, joining Chris Parkin to establish one of the longest and most intricate of winter routes in North Wales, the more than 2,000 foot long Maginot Line.

By Geoff Bennett

blame Chris Parkin. It was completely his idea and I only went along for the ride. In fact, if I hadn't had that extra pint - during George and Noel's quiz the night before - I'm sure I wouldn't have agreed so readily. I have heard some people rather ungenerously suggest that it was only because 'Big Tim', 'Longy', 'Baggy' and the other eponymous local activists weren't available that I was roped in at all: I would happily concur. Friends humorously point out that it was about time I contributed something worthwhile to 'beris climbing folklore, having been safely ensconced on the periphery of events for so long.

I'm not even sure why he asked me, I didn't have a reputation as a new route activist, unless you include a Direct Finish to Left Hand Y Gully on Clogwyn Du Ymhen yr Glyder, (which takes just about as long to say as it does to climb) and we'd barely climbed together in summer, let alone in winter. With hindsight I can see it was, in the words of Captain Blackadder, 'a cunning plan' which enabled Chris to make a more detailed survey of the crag's possibilities and the other available unclimbed lines. All I'm saying is, it wasn't my idea; don't blame me.

It was, however, a challenge that had clearly bugged Chris for many years and one of the benefits of the hour and a half walk-in was the chance to divine more about the climb and his projected line of attack. I was amazed to discover he had some A4 black and white photos of the crag with the possible lines highlighted in yellow. I was less surprised by his indepth knowledge of the existing routes, their belays, the main obstacles on the cliff he thought we'd have to negotiate and what our options were. He had, after

all, been establishing new routes on Ysgolion Duon for over 20 years. However, in all that time, the winters had never been cold enough for long enough for the cliff to come into such perfect condition, and yet late enough in the season to maximise the daylight available. He knew both these factors were crucial if he was to accomplish his cherished dream of the first winter traverse of the Black Ladders. That was why we made what qualifies as a Welsh alpine start and left the car at a very reasonable 7am to trudge up the Afon Llafar.

Time passes quickly with Chris: you only have to mention pet topics like the Gogarth guidebook or elitism in the CC – or rather his perceived lack of it – and an hour's gone in amusing anecdotes and powerful arguments. In any case, all too soon we were surveying the crag and he was pointing out his Plan A (and B and C) using the highlighted photo. My head began to take in the enormity of what I'd agreed to: this was going to be a long day and probably quite a bit of the night too (just as well I had two head torches!).

Still, I told myself, I could tag along and let him lead the hard bits, if needs be taking a stance just before any perceived crux. Except that on a traverse there are no easy bits because neither person gets a top-rope and both parties are equally in danger of big swings. Oh well, in for a penny, in for a pound! Presciently Chris said the two areas of greatest difficulty would be on the right side of the cliff, around Polar Bear, and in the centre of the cliff, entering and leaving Western Gully. Having done neither route this meant little to me but I nodded purposefully, too ashamed to admit my lack of familiarity with such an important cliff.

We began by soloing up the easy approach pitches

Left: Black Ladders in the Winter

Photographer: Chris Parkin

Right: Chris Parkin negotiating the Maginot Line

Photographer: Geoff Bennett

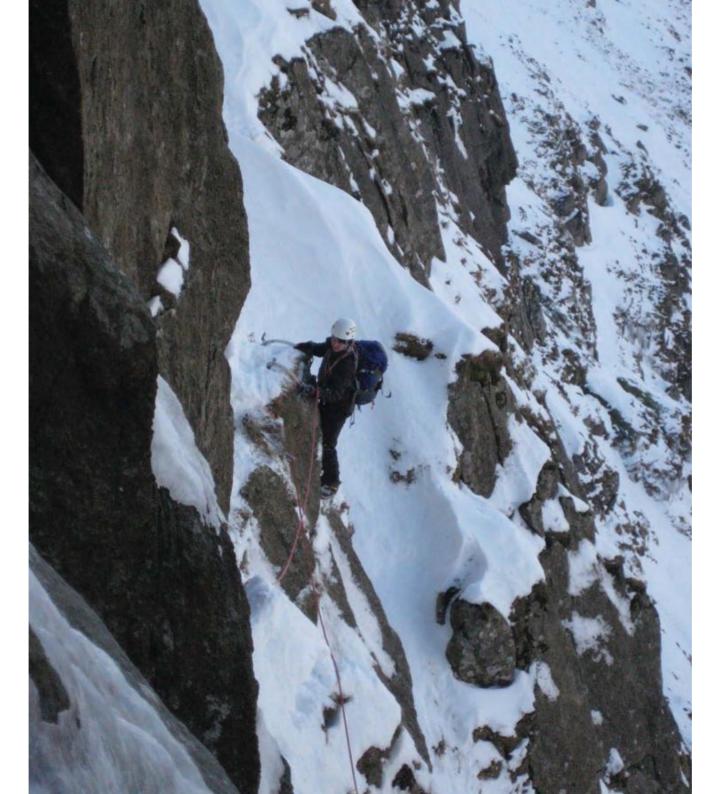
of *Icefall Gully* before roping up for the first difficulties. It was only as I reached 49 metres on this initial pitch that I realised our choice of 50 metre ropes was a poor one, as I needed another 10 metres to get to a belay. Simul-climbing on grade 3-4 ground was not my idea of an easy start and with three ice screws between us for gear, I felt we were somewhat skimping on protection too. A good ledge and rock belays were very welcome. Chris headed up and leftwards over steep rock bulges and turfy ledges, following a vague groove and aiming for that all-important horizontal line of weakness he had in his mind and upon which the success of our venture would largely depend.

The next four horizontal pitches were quite reassuring, a couple of easy snowfields, albeit with big drops below them, a perplexing mantelshelf to get on top of a ledge covered in a variety of large, perched blocks and delightful, well protected, torqueing moves to descend and cross various grooves and routes, the names of which Chris kept yelling at me, but which left me none the wiser. More important, we made fast progress and quickly had several pitches under our belts.

By midday I'd realised I'd left my lunch at the bottom of Icefall Gully but, more worryingly, the first crux had appeared, uncannily where Chris had predicted it would be and coincidentally on my lead. I gazed over at the steep slab to our left: it had an overhanging wall above and was completely holdless, unless that is you counted a tiny clump of frozen moss. I got a piece of gear in, torqued an axe and lowered myself down the groove to the left of the belay to see if I could get past the slab from below, but there was no chance. I went back up towards the gear and looked again at a crack running along the top of the slab; if only I could get an axe in that, but how? I spotted a hold the size of a five pence piece on the lower right edge of the slab: could I reach it? Was it solid? Only one way to find out: leaning off the torqued axe, I reached out with the front point of my crampon and got it. At full stretch I was then able to put my left pick in the horizontal crack above; it

hooked perfectly. I pulled across and waited for the rock to crumble: it didn't. I contemplated what to do. I had to keep swapping feet to prevent my calves aching but at least I was vaguely in balance. With both axes above me, I pulled up to see what the crack had to offer: a perfect large hex placement. I was made up and, hanging off one axe, the hex was quickly hammered in. That was the turning point because now it was safe to fall. It looked like I'd have to keep swapping the axes along the crack whilst my crampons skittered across the blank rock. Then a cunning thought occurred: why not use my knees? They would provide extra stability, allowing me to traverse left without taking all the strain on my arms or teetering front-points. No three points of contact for me where six would be better. Maybe this was what Patev had in mind when he named the infamous Crab Crawl? I inched gingerly across until I was able to stretch a pick to a turf ledge at the end of the slab and a degree of security and balance. A steep exit led to a rest but more technical moves followed, teetering across on small turf edges with little gear, until very relieved I found a solid belay.

Chris came across very impressed and stuffed me full of jelly babies. I'm not sure if they were a reward or if he thought I needed them after burning up so many calories from fear. In any case I wasn't about to refuse. He sped across a relatively easy pitch with one or two awkward moves and I joined him gazing at a very thin looking line leading into Western Gully: just my luck. Still, no point in waiting around, so off I teetered again, only this time the gear was nearly non-existent. Whilst I had relatively generous turf placements for my axes, my feet had to link together a series of meagre turf edges and thin rock ledges, protected by a poor bulldog, a bottomed out blade peg and an ice screw in turf. I thought this was inventive: Chris wasn't quite so impressed (it was his screw). I should have been massively relieved when after 40 metres I reached the rock gear on Western Gully but I looked across the gully and wondered if we'd reached a dead end. Still the cave belay gave me a chance to relax



and drink my soup in comfort as Chris made his way carefully across.

Once again he'd got it exactly right, the next crux was the exit from the cave and much to my relief it was his lead this time. The fact that the crux, with a potential factor two fall onto the belay, was protected by a poor bulldog was not exactly comforting. Chris made balancev moves up and sketched around for good placements but the turf was thin and at full stretch. Eventually he could delay no longer and went for it. An awkward step up, especially for a man with restricted leg movement, saw him up and around the crux, onto good ledges and better gear. He quickly made his way down to a good belay on Flanders and I followed hoping that the turf would last for another move. Chris was sure the route was in the bag. However, it was now 5pm and darkness was imminent and we still had a way to go.

The next three pitches were thankfully relatively easy: unprotected snowfields interspersed with tricky moves around or under the occasional rocky buttress. The belays were very welcome and often fortuitous as they appeared at 40-50 metres distance and were often the only gear on the pitch. Thus the moves may have been easier but the knowledge of a long swing and consequent plummet over the steep cliffs below helped to keep our minds focussed as the light gradually disappeared.

By 6.30 it was pitch black though there were torches in the cwm and the lights of Bethesda and the Penrhyn Quarry twinkled enticingly. We had completed 12 pitches, or at least I thought so, but my mind was getting confused and they were all beginning to run into one another. By now we knew the end was within reach. One more pitch should get us to the top of *Gallipoli* which we both knew well. Chris began to head upwards to a groove; at last we were done with the horizontal. There was however a sting in the tail: the moves looked awkward and unprotected. Luckily this was his forte and further steady progress brought huge chock-stones and an easing in the angle. Before I knew it the rope was fully

out and I was heading for the groove. I remember the chock-stones and little else other than my desire to top out. From the stance we both knew it was a 100 metre romp to the top, so I set off as fast as my tired legs would carry me, Chris following on as soon as the rope went tight.

At 8.30pm we were on the top, exhausted but elated. 16 pitches and 750 metres of new route completed, a long cherished project finally achieved. There are not many new lines of that length available on our crowded cliffs these days. Furthermore there was no wind and the sky was clear: navigation would be a synch. Food and water downed, gear packed, we headed off to the slight bwlch below Carnedd Llywelyn and the descent into Cwm Llafar. As we wove our weary way back to Gerlan we tried to count the pitches and discussed possible names. War of the Worlds was Chris's suggestion until Maginot Line popped into my history teacher head. This was the long line of fortifications traversing the French border with Germany, which the Germans avoided by dint of simply going around it. It seemed somewhat appropriate for an arguably pointless traverse across a cliff littered with Great War references.

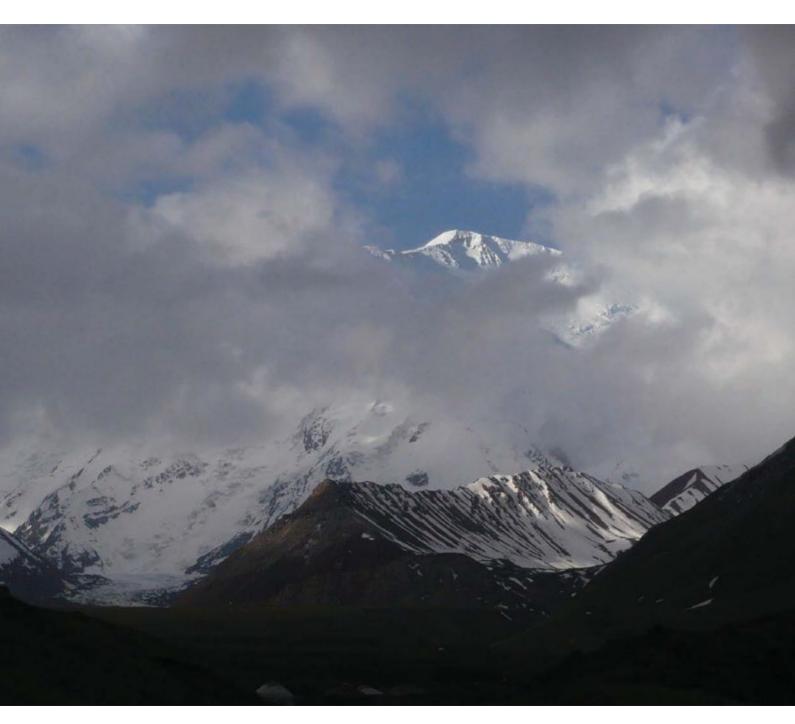
By 10.30pm, tired but content, we were back at the car to find the local copper had put a note under the wiper blade asking me to phone him about parking in a passing place. At least he hadn't towed my car away: that would have been a grim walk home! Indeed only a month previously Chris and Steve Long had completed a new route, Hedd Wyn, topping out at 8.30pm in a whiteout. They ended up mistakenly descending into Cwm Caseg and deep, trackless snow, emerging exhausted in Gerlan at 1.30 in the morning. I'm not saying that on that occasion Chris was to blame but I counted myself very lucky!

So, for those climbers who prefer the journey to the destination, *Maginot Line* at VI 7, one of the longest winter routes in North Wales, still awaits a second ascent, but I would strongly recommend taking plenty of lunch, an extra torch and preferably someone who knows their way around the cliff.



Left:
Darkness beckons:
Chris Parkin showing signs of fatigue
near the end of the
Maginot Line.

Photographer: Geoff Bennett



A Dream Realised

To celebrate his sixtieth year, Richard Haszko wanted to do something special – climb a 7,000 metre summit with his friends. In this wonderful account of his ascent of Pik Lenin he tells us how close he came to giving up on his dream.

By Richard Haszko

say we were impressed would be more than a slight understatement. Tom Richardson, his wife Janet, and my work colleague Iames Slater, were standing on the road next to our four-wheel drive gazing at an extensive range of high, snowy mountains across the plains. It was an inspiring sight, but then the drifting clouds slowly revealed a mountain impossibly higher than the rest.

This alluring but daunting vision was Pik Lenin, its summit almost 5,000m above us. The range was the Pamir in Kyrgyzstan and we were there because 18 months previously I'd had the idea of climbing a 7,000m peak as part of my 60th birthday year. Pik Lenin, at 7,134m fitted the bill perfectly: it's easily accessible, can be done in the school holidays, to which I was restricted, and it's very cheap with no peak fee and no Liaison Officer needed.

Three hours later we emerged from the Land Cruiser at Base Camp which was situated in a lush meadow at 3,500m. Smoke curled lazily up from scattered yurts as horses grazed and small children played nearby. It was a delightful place to be and we tried not to feel too intimidated by our objective, some 12km distant and dominating the head of the valley. Fortunately, by the morning, we couldn't see it as cloud and rain blocked our view.

We went for a walk to the top of the meadows where a narrow, rocky gorge allowed access to a higher, narrow valley. Fastened to the rocks at the entrance to the gorge were several plaques: memorials to those

Left: Pik Lenin: a break in the cloud from Base Camp Photographer: Richard Haszko collection

who'd died on the mountain. Particularly poignant, and somewhat sobering, was the one to the 43 who had died when an avalanche destroyed Camp 2 in 1990. In addition to this, there was another to the eight Russian women who were killed by a fierce storm on the summit ridge.

Climbing slowly up the valley, we noticed wild onions growing in profusion amongst the flowers, and marmots popping their heads from their burrows. We stopped at the base of Travellers' Pass – which we'd have to cross to get onto the mountain – to take in our surroundings before ambling back for a splendid lunch at Base Camp. The afternoon was spent organising the loads which we intended to send to Camp 1 by horse rather than carrying them ourselves.

Below: Camp 1.

Photographer: Richard Haszko collection





Above: Camp 1 panorama.

Photographer: Richard Haszko collection

Standing on the top of Travellers' Pass a few days later we looked with dismay at what lay below us. We'd been expecting an easy descent to the glacier then a short walk to Camp 1. Instead, there was a steep, narrow, crumbly winding path with no obvious way onto the ice. Of Camp 1 there was no sight. It rapidly dawned on us that the information we had read which said the distance from Base Camp to Camp 1 was 10km wasn't a misprint. Still, there was nothing for it, so down we went. There was indeed no way onto to the ice, the edge of the glacier having retreated to leave seriously steep sides and huge crevasses. The new path followed a small ablation valley before climbing up an unlikely-looking spur some way above the glacier, our horses passing us as we climbed slowly. Beyond the spur vast slopes of fine scree swept down to join a raging, dirty grey river 500ft below.

We moved slowly, the path getting narrower until it finally vanished altogether in a shallow gully, down which small rocks and soil tumbled. Crossing this was going to be interesting. Tom went first, digging his feet in to make steps which very rapidly disappeared as the shifting scree filled them. Janet and James followed quickly. By now my heart was pounding, sweaty palms barely able to hold onto my ski poles. Trying hard not to look down at the horrible death that seemed to await a careless step, I launched onto the crossing, breath held and chest about to burst. I was still shaking five minutes later, well out of immediate danger. At least the rest of the way looked alright.

It was, but we were a tired group when we finally arrived at Camp 1 after five hours walking. Our new home consisted of a large cook tent with two smaller ones for us. It was on the moraine a little way above

a somewhat larger camp with several yurts. Beyond lay a stretch of glacier then more moraine with even larger camps set up on it. We were now at 4400m with only slight headaches to show for it. It was snowing on and off and we could hear the odd avalanche falling so we decided to take the next day off and gain more acclimatisation.

After heavy overnight snow we spent the morning arranging for two porters to carry up to Camp 1 and after lunch went for a foray. Passing through the large camps we crossed the more or less level glacier and set foot on the start of the face. There were no signs of crevasses and when James sank up to his waist we thought it was just deep, fresh snow. Little did we know. Next morning, under cloudless skies, we set off again, this time intending to go rather higher. I didn't tie on the rope with the others; foolishly preferring to forge ahead as, for some odd reason, I was feeling very strong, which was most out of character.

I waited for the rest of the team at the bottom of the steep section of the face and then we went up together. crossing some easy, open crevasses until we reached a bit of a levelling at around 4,800m. We decided to call it a day, dripping with sweat but well satisfied with our performance. We'd been warned about the heat on this part of the mountain, in fact this area was known as The Frying Pan and we could see why: the face was effectively a huge bowl just reflecting the sun. We couldn't help but feel a little sorry for people going up carrying monster loads and realised we would need an early start to avoid the worst of it. Back at camp we discussed what to do next. Tom and I reckoned we wouldn't need a night at Camp 2 for acclimatisation, which seemed the normal thing to do, but would be alright with a night at Camp 1 and some time going above. We settled on that and also to have another rest day before going up.

Two days later, at half past five in the morning, we were crunching our way across the glacier, feeling the lack of sleep after a very windy night. We gained height steadily, passing through 5,000m with views expanding rapidly in the crystal clear air. We were all

going well, moving very slowly and not needing to stop, but it was starting to feel like hard work as we came to a more level area from where we could see the tents at Camp 1.

Cloud drifted around us and wind started blowing spindrift, rapidly covering the track. This was a little worrying but at least this kept the temperature down and it wasn't bad enough to stop us being able to find our way through a crevassed area where the glacier began its plunge down the face below. The last 200m up to the camp was, for me, a nightmare of exhausted lifting of leaden legs and I was beginning to think this was a game I didn't want to play any more. Arriving at the camp I just wanted to get the tent up and collapse inside but the realisation soon dawned that there wasn't a ready-made platform in the snow available: we would have to make our own.

Fortunately someone had left a snow shovel and a saw behind a tent and, as Tom and James cut and shovelled, Janet and I collected snow to build up our platform and to melt for tea. It was a slightly worrying place to be, looking up at some serious seracs knowing this was where the big accident had taken place that claimed so many lives. We rationalised that we were a bit above where the camp had been and would – probably – be alright if a serac decided to part company with the mountain.

Later, lying in the tent and worrying about how hard I'd found the day I more or less decided I'd had enough: I wasn't strong enough for this sort of thing and would just wait at Camp 1 when the others made a summit bid. I'd go up a ways tomorrow and I would be happy with that.

The morning was flawless; bitingly cold but not a cloud to be seen. We were off before seven, climbing steadily up the wide gully towards a ridge 150m above the camp. We soon reached the ridge, fingers and toes wooden with cold, and climbed slowly up to a small hump at 5,800m.

What a view greeted us: the wide, brown Alai Valley far below, and range upon range of snow-capped peaks in the far distance. The summit, 1,500m higher at the



end of a long ridge looked enticing but an immense distance away. It was just the most perfect mountain morning and I began to feel quite emotional, which was unfortunate as any extraneous moisture instantly froze. My resolve not to go any higher was beginning to waver.

We descended rapidly, meeting Simon Yates with a group of clients on their way to Camp 1, and were soon back at Camp 1. After some discussion about tactics we decided to descend to Base Camp in the morning for two days rest before going back up.

Next day I was reading in my tent at BC when Tom came over and announced that he and Janet had decided to return home, Janet not wishing to make the crossing of the scree slope to Camp 1 again. I felt for her and completely understood as I was really worried crossing it again myself. However, I didn't want to let James down, and I'd run away from so many mountains before I wanted to get up this one if at all possible.

So, it was to be just the two of us setting off for a summit attempt three days later. I'd made up my mind to have a go as I'd never pass this way again and felt I wanted to go as high as I could, even if it was only as far as Camp 2 at 6,100m. The idea of there being just the two of us now certainly appealed; in my youth I'd often fantasised about being high up on a big mountain with only my climbing partner and it seemed this would finally happen.

We'd heard that someone had finally made the summit after several earlier attempts had been defeated by deep snow and strong winds, so we knew the way was open. The weather had been very unsettled, but we reckoned it must be improving as the afternoon storms were now not arriving until four o'clock.

It only took us four hours to get to Camp 1, being acclimatised now and able to move much more quickly. I certainly moved quickly over the scary scree slope, once again utterly terrified. James had strolled across nonchalantly, seemingly oblivious to the

Left: Steep climb ahead - Richard leaving Camp 2. Photographer: James Salter



horrible fate snatching at his heels. I put it down to his youth, a mere 35 year-old. We spent the afternoon in the tent as a big thunderstorm crashed around and heavy snow fell, continuing for most of the night. We woke to a winter wonderland of fresh, sparkling snow and glorious sun but it was to be a day of getting prepared and making plans. There was more snow in the afternoon and we were becoming concerned. Where was the settled weather that should be here by now?

We were away at five in the morning, the night's high winds having stopped. Deep, fresh snow had almost completely buried the track but an early-rising team was in front so we magnanimously allowed them the honour of breaking trail. It was a lovely morning, with just a few small, puffy clouds building. The climb to Camp 2 was a hot, hard grind, especially the final

slope to the tents but at least, once there, we found a ready-made platform for our tent.

We had a lazy afternoon, drinking and eating and looking nervously at the seracs above, hoping they didn't have our names on them. They'd probably have trouble spelling mine anyway. We met Simon Yates again but his team were the only other Brits on this mountain: mostly it was East Europeans and Russians. We were both feeling quite well and I felt confident we would at least get to Camp 3 if the weather held.

It did hold and we were off before 8 am, soon passing our high point and starting the climb up to the camp. It was steep, the steps just too far apart to use comfortably and the heat didn't help. I found it desperately hard work, making each marker wand a target to aim for before stopping to gulp in air and gather strength for the next few steps. James was going

Above: Admiring the view: Richard at Camp 3.

Photographer: James Salter



Above: Summit day - steep climbing nearing the top.

Photographer: Richard Haszko collection

well but I was utterly spent when I arrived at the camp, perched on the broad summit of Pik Razdelnava at 6,100m. Looking at the summit of Lenin, still 1,000m above and some five kilometres away, I doubted I would recover in time to get there tomorrow, my age beginning to catch up with me. However, once the tent was up and I'd had a cup of tea. I felt a bit better. The view from the camp was spectacular and we could see all the way down to Base Camp, 2,500m below.

A chap from Azerbaijan came to join us for tea, saying the forecast was good for one or two days more before storms returned so there was no chance of a rest day, we'd have to go in the morning. We talked about what time to leave, reckoning that the seemingly traditional 4 or 5 o'clock start was much too late and we'd go much earlier so as to be back at camp by early afternoon in case the usual pattern prevailed and the weather turned bad at around 4.

We couldn't really sleep and, thinking he could hear people starting out, James had tea ready at 1.30. By 2.30 we were ready to go, but not before I had answered a call of nature, a distinctly unpleasant activity in the seriously sub-zero temperature. Fortunately there wasn't a breath of wind, an

extremely rare occurrence on this mountain. We moved off unroped with just walking poles, downhill at first, passing more tents on a col, then on to a spur of mixed rock and snow. This was quite steep and a little unnerving in places with an inky void suggesting great exposure on our left. The spur seemed to go on forever and each time we thought we'd reached the top another steepening revealed itself. Climbing higher and higher we were both feeling tired but neither of us suggested we give up and go back. If either of us had done so our resolve may well have wavered.

Finally, at around 6,300m the angle relented and we could begin to move a little more easily. As we emerged onto a gently rising plateau, the eastern horizon slowly turned pale grey then orange, and we could see where we were. The sun washed across the mountain, revealing the upper slopes and mountain upon mountain stretching to the horizon. We climbed steadily at a nice, easy angle, passing a solitary tent at 6,400m in the place where the eight Russian women climbers died in 1974. It was a sobering moment and made me think about the reality of what we were doing. There was no-one else in sight but the weather was perfect and we were both feeling OK, which was great as we were both now higher than we'd ever been.

The plateau ended in a steep buttress and we could now see two other climbers on this, moving up slowly. We were soon there, finding a rope fixed in place at the steepest section. By now I was imagining that this mountain was my personal Everest and this bit would be my Hillary Step so I was pleased when I got up it quite easily. The Hillary Step led to a very exposed rising traverse above the North Face, taking us into a huge snow bowl at the far end of which rose the summit plateau. It didn't look at all far now and I made a radio call to Camp 1 to say we were about 45 minutes from the top.

We slowly passed two Spaniards on the steepening at the end of the plateau an hour later and still couldn't

Right: James and Richard on the summit of Pik Lenin. Photographer: Richard Haszko collection





Above: Crossing the evil scree one last time.

Photographer: Richard Haszko collection.

see the summit. Onwards and onwards, passing crest after crest that looked like the top. After another hour I was beginning to feel this mountain didn't actually have a summit at all, it was toying with us and time was getting on. Wearily lifting my head once more I saw little lump of rock with some tattered flags sticking out of it. We stepped onto it and the realisation came that we'd done it. We were on top of Pik Lenin: 7.134m.

It was a great feeling and I thought I should be bursting into tears with relief and satisfaction but I simply felt right so I pursued my Everest fantasy by getting on the radio to Base Camp and saying 'We're on the summit.' It was 12.30 and it had taken us nine and a half hours from Camp 3. I'd imagined during all the arduous training walks and runs I'd done, that I would get here on hands and knees after a grim battle. But I felt absolutely fine. Walking around, I was able to take pictures and revel in the stunning views across the Pamirs, with Muztagh Ata and the cloudy Karakoram in the distance. There was only the gentlest of breezes but cloud was starting to build below us so, after 45 minutes, we reluctantly left the summit and started on our way down.

Getting down to the bowl didn't take long and there

we met Simon Yates again, with just two of his clients. 'About half an hour to the top?' Simon enquired. We couldn't help but feel for the clients as their faces fell when we gave them the bad news: 'Sorry, more like two hours.' Leaving them to it we pressed on, down and down, always wary in the knowledge that accidents happen on the way down when concentration lapses and tiredness takes over.

Going down the spur I began to feel a strange detachment from reality, almost as if I was watching someone else doing the descent. I remembered the feeling from a trip to Mera Peak some years before, so wasn't unduly concerned simply reminding myself that this was real and I couldn't jump off the edge with impunity. I told James about it and he replied he was feeling the same. We put it down to lack of oxygen. On and on, down the spur, being very careful not to trip and then we were back on the col. All of a sudden I started to feel utterly drained. It was no more than 70m up to our tent but it took me nearly 30 minutes to get there, completely finished. I'd been leading the whole day and my mental reserves were exhausted. James had made it fairly quickly and I was immensely grateful when he handed me a cup of tea. Too tired to feel much, we crawled into our sleeping bags after a quick meal and more tea.

The weather was holding in the morning and it didn't take us long to get back to Camp 2, scurrying across a very flimsy-looking snow bridge, and then on down to Camp 1 as wispy clouds began to wreathe the summit. Next day we left for Base Camp, crossing the evil scree one last time. By now the weather had broken big time, storms following us all the way down.

Back at Base we learned that someone not far behind us had fallen down a crevasse, probably the one we'd been worried about near Camp 2 and been killed: a sobering reminder of what could have been, but we didn't dwell on it as we partied into the night while the mountain was being lashed by a ferocious storm. We were very glad indeed that we weren't up there now and could enjoy being warm and safe. The longheld dream had been realised.

Right: Great Wall and the West Buttress of Cloggy catch the late afternoon sun.

> Photographer: Jack Geldard



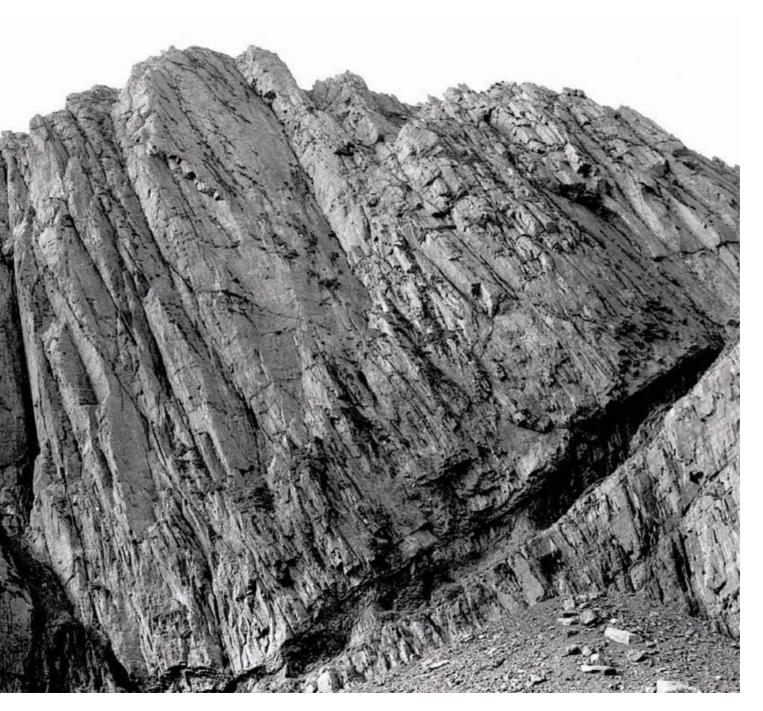
CLOGWYN Du'r Arddu

Quiver for a Bow. By Phil Bartlett

Grace Under Pressure. By Terry Fletcher

Cloggy and the Brave Dwarfs. By Harold Drasdo

Woubits - in the Footsteps of Whillans. By Steve Dean



A Quiver for a Bow

In the three decades since Phil Bartlett made the first ascent of Ouiver on Cloppy's West Buttress, each subsequent ascent has confirmed its reputation as one of the boldest undertakings on the crag. if not the country. Here he tells us how he and Andy Brazier pulled off what is now regarded as one of the first E6s in the country and a brilliant addition to a totemic crag.

By Phil Bartlett

was going to begin this reminiscence by remarking that, like everyone else, I have always thought of a good day on Cloggy as the archetypal rock climbing experience: that this is climbing at its best, its most complete. But do people still think this? Attitudes change, including climbing attitudes. The place is undeniably a bit of a walk, and there is a fair chance of getting there and finding one's intended climb wet, dirty, or the wind too biting. I get the impression that modern climbers are less willing to waste time – if waste is the right word – than previous generations; they demand greater efficiency in what they do. And then there's the question of difficulty. Cloggy has some high grade climbs, but is there enough that is of sheer technical difficulty to satisfy young gymnasts trained on climbing walls? The grade often resides in the seriousness more than the technicalities.

There are many people in our club more in touch with current mores than I, and who will be better judges of all this. But whatever current attitudes, Cloggy was certainly the epitome of climbing for me and my friends at University in the 70s. And our dreams were fed crucially by the publication of that marvellous piece of work, The Black Cliff, in 1971. I remember Ken Wilson observing rather ruefully that the second-hand books dealers will have made more out of his first book production than he ever did; undoubtedly true I'm afraid, and a common experience for anyone who creates a classic. I also remember him telling me of the pride he felt that he had got David Cox to write the foreword. David was the eminence grise of Oxford mountaineering at this time, and I had

many wonderful meetings with him in his rooms in University College where he puffed away on his pipe in the semi-darkness whilst I gazed awestruck at the large black and white photograph of Machapuchare over the fireplace. David was the man who, with Wilfred Noyce, had come within a whisker of the summit in 1957. It would be absolutely typical of his self-deprecating and utterly civilised persona to protest – as apparently he did – that he didn't really think he was up to penning the introductory essay to the book. Needless to say, he produced a wonderful piece, bringing out in particular the fabulous architecture of the place. Joe Brown was presumably equally affected by this characteristic, judging by his well-known remark that he would rather just sit and look at Cloggy than climb on many another cliff.

It says much for my ignorance that I didn't realise at the time that Oxford climbers had played a part in the development of Cloggy – I thought it was all a Rock and Ice creation, from start to finish. In fact, when I read the quote from Robin Hodgkin at the head of one of the chapters in The Black Cliff - 'The OUMC had a bit of a thing about Cloggy' - I felt embarrassed. Wasn't this rather presumptuous? Well of course it wasn't. Robin had made two important variations to existing climbs, and David had made the first ascent of Sunset Crack and partnered Jock Campbell on Sheaf. Sunset Crack was climbed on the last evening of a famous holiday during which he and Hodgkin camped below the cliff with the Mallory sisters. It is just one more small indication of how civilised David was that when I asked him if anything had 'transpired' - and I

Left: The slanting architecture of the West Buttress where the rarely ascended Ouiver traces a line close to the edge of Bow Shaped

Photographer: Nick Dixon

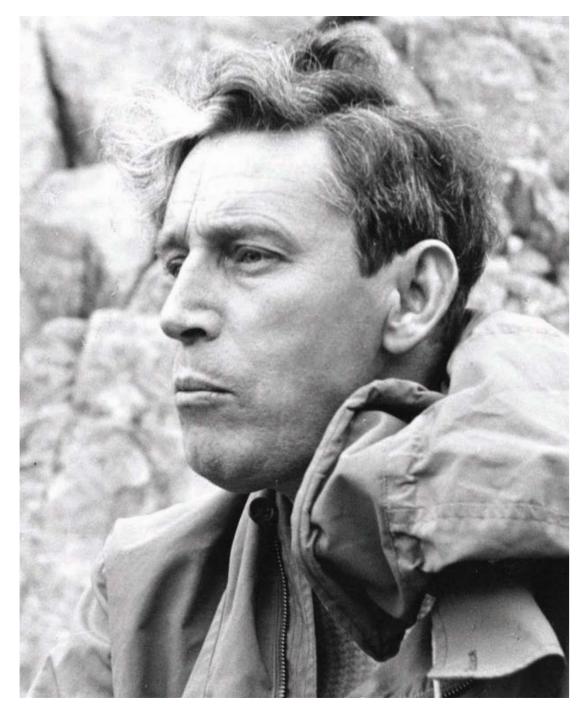
Slab.

don't suppose I put it as sensitively as that – he puffed away in silence for a few minutes before pointing out mildly that it is actually possible for men and women to enjoy things together without sex being involved. He could very reasonably have told me to mind my own damned business. It reminds me a little of Jim (Perrin) asking Bill Tilman about his involvements with women - again, Iim was given a most civilised reply, though I suspect with a sharper undertone. David's great contribution to Cloggy was the Sheaf adventure, and I remember climbing it and revelling in the intricacies of route finding with my main climbing partner of those days, Andy Brazier, Andy was something of a gentle giant, much physically larger and stronger than I, as well as more caring, and many of my best climbing memories are of days, epics, and bivouacs, with Andy. He was generous enough to let me choose our objectives, whether in Britain or the Alps, and to let me lead them – with the one notable exception I'm coming to. Endless evenings were spent plotting our campaigns in the Lamb and Flag and wondering whether we could put one over on the club's premier performer – Roger Everett, often partnered by my brother, or by the enigmatic and talented Paul Beney, who was tragically killed in an abseiling accident on one of the club's extended alpine trips. Andy is also gone, dying very suddenly of an undiagnosed heart defect in 1986. In the early '80s he made a name for himself as a climbing photographer, but earlier, when I knew him, the emphasis was absolutely on the climbing. As well as Sheaf we did other classics, and often looked across at Great Wall, which we thought beyond us. My own involvement with that particular piece of rock had a degree of ignominy. Not that there was anything wrong with my ascent of the Brown/Crew line: I did it with a young American I met in Humphrey's Barn, and managed – just – to make the last few strenuous moves before my fingers uncurled, all the while accompanied by Ken's timeless images of Ed Drummond climbing it. The whole experience brought to mind doing Ed's Gogarth classic, Strand, and not just because Ed was in my

mind on both occasions. On both climbs I resolved to climb slowly with the maximum of technique and the minimum of strength, so as to preserve my arms for those last difficult moves, and in both cases the strategy worked - just.

For a number of years I was rope boy to Ed Drummond – an immensely egocentric man, always something of an outsider, but rarely a bore. I seconded him on his foray onto the rock to the right of the Brown/Crew route that eventually became the first pitch of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Ed put a bolt in, and with youthful boldness I defended him in a letter to Mountain. Ken produced a short, critical and entirely fair reply, though I still think Ed tended to be singled out for criticism in British climbing circles. Crew had put a bolt in the Boulder whilst pushing standards forward. One crime is hardly an excuse for another, but what should and should not be done can be a hard call when someone is trying to push the boundaries. But the main thing is that the whole episode has ended well. In the end, the right hand side of Great Wall was climbed by a man who was arguably the most talented British rock climber since Ioe Brown. I sometimes wonder what would have happened if there had been a couple of footholds up there just big enough, say, to rest on and put in bolts. Would Ed have done that? Well, it's plausible that someone would have. In retrospect, thank goodness no-one did and it was left for Dawes, the man who deserved it.

But all this post-dated my most memorable day on Cloggy to date. Climbing there with Andy had culminated in a surprising experience. One summer's day he had cajoled me up to the stance below the Bow-Shaped Slab, despite the fact that we had already climbed Bow-Shaped Slab, Bow Right Hand, and a couple of other things in the vicinity. How he did this I don't recall, but he must have told me some cock-andbull story involving, perhaps, some esoteric variation on Great Slab we hadn't done. Anyway, not until we were there did he show his cards; a new route rearing above us, which he now announced he intended to



Left: David Cox – the eminence grise of Oxford University mountaineering who penned the foreword to The Black Cliff.

Photographer: Joe Brown collection

Right: Relaxing in the sun -Phil Bartlett having no need to quiver.

Photographer: Lindsay Griffin

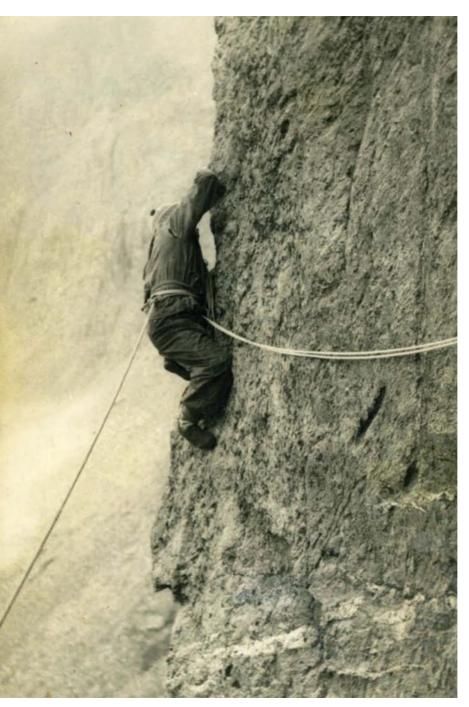
lead. He was right about the new route, and he was certainly entitled to lead it, so I had no choice but to watch, with a mixture of excitement and horror, as he made a start. He got about ten feet up the left side of the slab quite quickly, and then ground to a halt. And at this point, I am ashamed to say, a degree of hope began to dawn. He wasn't going to do it. There was still a chance for me. So I started shouting discouraging comments to bring him back down. Things like: 'I don't think you're going to get up this Andy; let's be realistic. Do you want to come down and let me have a go?' Not surprisingly, given such discouragement, he did; and we quickly swapped ends. Andy had put a peg in at his high point, and getting past it required levering up in a semi-mantelshelf. The slab soared above, not blank but delicate. I remember taking stock, aware that this was decision time. There would be little chance of retreat from any higher. But then I didn't want to retreat: way above I could see a ledge hanging out over space on the left edge of the slab, and my whole mind became focused on it, not because there was no alternative but because of ambition. So I climbed slowly on. It was balance climbing – my thing. Ten years earlier my brother and I had been taken climbing for the first time by Iim Cameron, one of British climbing's first professionals, and absolutely one of the old guard. Hawser laid ropes, no harnesses, two slings for belaying. No protection. We got very frustrated after a while, always doing climbs we felt were too easy, but maybe it taught me something. At least I had some technique to draw on now, some muscle memory that intuitively distributed the weight in the right places. Edging upwards and drawing closer to that hanging ledge, I passed a couple of horizontal breaks, very shallow, that I tried, and failed, to get gear into. Talking to Ken afterwards he said Alan Rouse had looked at the climb, but dismissed it as having holds leading away rightwards to easier ground, thus making it rather artificial. If there were such holds, I don't remember them.

Eventually I arrived with my nose level with the ledge, knowing I was close now, but needing a rest

rather badly. And there was a nasty shock: the ledge seemed to have a crack down the back of it. There was nothing underneath it but space, and no-one, to remember Winthrop Young, had ever before stood on this little piece of Wales; it might collapse under my weight. Beneath my excitement, I knew the situation was serious. But if I didn't risk it then sooner or later my calves would tire, they would begin to shake, and I'd lose control. Eventually I stepped up, desperately willing my weight to be elsewhere. The ledge stayed where it was, as I frantically pawed the rock above. Two minutes later, still no gear, I climbed the last few feet to the junction with Bow-Shaped Slab. I put in a belay to hold an elephant and felt the sweetness of it all. An acquaintance on another route – a much better climber - shouted across to ask what we were on, so I was even able to indulge that: 'dunno; haven't named it yet!' Of course, Andy had the name all planned: The Ouiver. I removed the definite article to give the name a frisson of fear. It's not a route for weak calves. More than I did then, I now feel tremendously privileged. Quiver isn't a major route, and I feel a bit like a man given access to an elite coterie he doesn't deserve. There is something very satisfying about having done a new route in an arena with such historical resonance, and where some of the surrounding climbs were done by people one not only admires, but in some cases had met. And if Quiver is not a major route, it's quite a line. It shows up very satisfactorily on evening photos of the West Buttress. And finally, I can't not be pleased that its reputation hasn't declined, as so many people's creations are fated to do. Rather the reverse. I'd always assumed that sooner or later modern gear would tame it, that those breaks I saw would give ground and change the name of the game. But apparently they have remained sullenly uncooperative throughout. I have to be pleased.

And it was all luck. Luck to be there on a day I was climbing well; luck to be there at all. It was Andy's creation as much as mine. He saw it: he masterminded it. Dear Andy.





Grace Under Pressure

Few men have contributed so much to British rock climbing as the legendary Joe Brown. Here he talks to Terry Fletcher about how Cloggy still holds a special place in his heart, and of the mental coolness and technical skill needed to climb the hardest routes in the best of styles with limited, if any, protection.

By Terry Fletcher

he history books – including his 1967 autobiography, *The Hard Years*, tell you that Joe Brown's long love affair with Cloggy began with a cruised ascent of *Curving Crack* during the Easter of 1949. While that was the first meeting, the seeds of this productive relationship were sown on an altogether different route some distance from The Black Cliff.

As a keen student of climbing lore Brown was all too aware of the crag's intimidating reputation long before he laid a hand upon it. Now 82, Brown still remembers a day in the Peak District when he was still a teenager and a stranger arrived at the crag. Someone whispered that the newcomer was a 'Cloggy climber'. Brown says: 'I knew all about Cloggy from reading Colin Kirkus' book, '*Let's Go Climbing*' and everyone knew that to have climbed there was something special.'

However, a little later during a visit to North Wales, Brown and friends from the Valkyrie Club

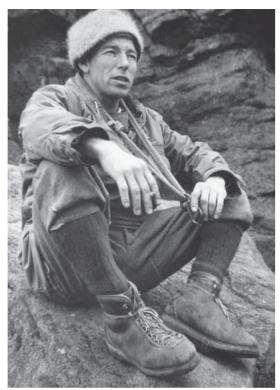
Left: Joe Brown runnerless on an early attempt at White Slab which was eventually led by Ron Moseley. Photographer: Joe Brown collection

climbed Lot's Groove, a classic VS on Glyder Fawr. 'The guide said it was the roughest rock in Wales with the exception of Cloggy. We thought, 'Blimey, if Cloggy's rougher than this you must be able to climb it anywhere.' That may have been overly optimistic, but for Brown at least it was the first chink in the frightening aura of impregnability that surrounded the crag and which had so stunted the ambition of previous generations that by the middle of the 20th century they were still little more than a dozen routes on one of the biggest and yet relatively accessible cliffs in Britain.

Not that the knowledge left Brown and his friends entirely immune to the atmosphere surrounding the crag. When he finally set eyes on the Black Cliff the atmosphere was gloomy with mist creeping round the buttresses. It is perhaps a mark of the attitude of the Valkirie and later the Rock and Ice that they considered such unpromising conditions suitable for a first visit to the most feared cliff in the country.

'Our feelings that day were probably the same as almost everyone I know. The build up of excitement was absolutely incredible and we talked a lot. It was very atmospheric with mist hiding parts of the crag and we did Curving Crack. It was a whooping-withexcitement sort of feeling. For years afterwards just walking over Maen du'r Arddu you got this fantastic feeling of the atmosphere. Whether that's the same for modern climbers I don't know but in the 1940s you were in the same position as all those who had gone before – no gear, just a rope. The thing about Cloggy in those days was that you hardly ever saw anyone else there. It was frequently misty and there was just the croaking of the ravens and the hooting of the trains that never seemed intrusive because they were just such a part of the place.'

Later that summer Brown and his regular climbing partner, Slim Sorrell, camped below the cliff and in three days climbed all thirteen routes on the crag. In a matter of days then had learned the secrets it had taken generations of climbers decades to tease from the rock and they were already scouting new lines.



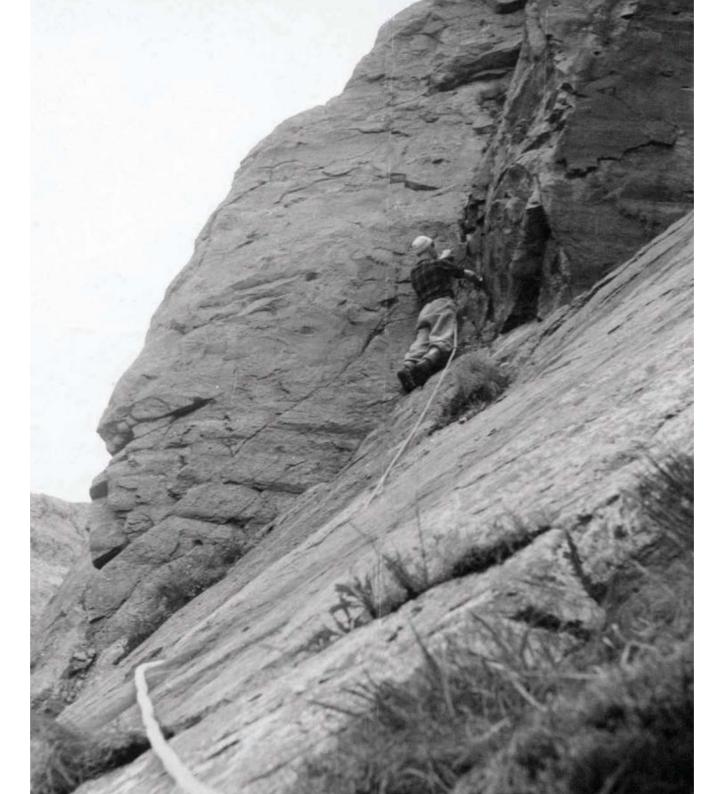
Left: The Baron in contemplative mood.

Photographer: Ioe Brown collection

But Cloggy did not give up without baring its teeth and on their last route, Bow-Shaped Slab, Brown, who had led all the previous pitches, belayed on a large flake. Because of the difficulty of swapping belays Sorrell led through and when Brown laybacked up the flake to remove the belay the whole block peeled away sending him somersaulting backwards. He landed face first on a grass bank just as his weight came on the rope. 'That was a bit of luck because it was hemp rope and they were always suspect,' he muses.

National Service provided a final lull for the crag as Private Brown soaked up the sun in Singapore but as soon as he returned to Britain he was back on Cloggy ready to begin a period of exploration unrivalled before or since.

Brown recalls: 'We camped by the lake and the weather was awful but we climbed every day anyway.' Most of the time was spent trying the line that would



eventually become Vember. That, in those conditions, the Rock and Ice should tackle an E1 which even with modern gear still represents a landmark in any young leader's progress speaks volumes for their approach: a willingness – and the ability – to take on the hardest routes in conditions that would see most modern cragrats lurking in the cafes or mooching round the gear shops.

Brown shrugs: 'I've been on Cloggy hundreds of times in bad weather. I'm lucky in that my hands still function even when they're numb, which might be a bit of a cheat really. Once I was there with waterfalls all over the place, the wettest I've ever seen it but we probably did Chimney Route or something like that. Even in my 60s and 70s we would climb in all weathers. One day you might be doing an E1 and the next you might be defeated by a Severe. It's all part of climbing. We spent two or three days trying it. It was ridiculous but that's what we did because there was nothing else to do that was as much fun. It was something that we did by choice because sitting in your tent getting wetter and wetter was pretty miserable anyway so you might as well go out climbing. You might climb in socks over gym shoes but I preferred just socks. In gym shoes you might find yourself sliding off because you did not realize you had worn through the socks and were climbing on rubber.' On the final attempt Brown managed to fix a runner round a chockstone and tried to climb the wall but his hands were chilled and he fell. The rope scraped down an arête and was almost cut through. 'Looking at it later we could not understand how it had not cut completely so after that we gave it up for a while.' His first new route on Cloggy, Diglyph, came in 1951 and would bring another close shave. The crack on the second pitch was choked with mud and needed cleaning out as he went so Brown was climbing with a peg hammer dangling from his wrist. At a vital moment it jammed between his knee and the crack and he could not move. In a phrase that seldom passes his lips he says: 'It was almost a moment of panic situation because there was no runner. Finally

I managed to free myself and get onto a ledge and bang in a peg. After that it was back to being totally in control.' Brown may have been in control but the incident so unnerved his second that he refused to follow and Brown had to wait for the ever-reliable Sorrell to finish another climb and even he demanded a knotted rope to pull on!

In the summer of 1951 Brown met the equally talented Don Whillans and the pair formed a formidable partnership. Their first new route together on Cloggy took Brown back to try the still-unclimbed line of Vember. Brown recalls: 'I actually found it harder than I would have liked but Don cruised up it. We were doing so many new routes on the grit that we were running out of names but we had already called this one Vember after the daughter of Mrs. Williams who ran the Halfway House on the way up Snowdon. She was like a mother to us and had helped us find extra food during rationing.'

Then, unlike today when the video of a new route may be on YouTube before the chalk has washed off the holds, information seeped out slowly and details were sparse. Some accused the Rock and Ice of deliberately holding back information to foil competitors, not that there were many of those. Myths grew quickly and nowhere more vigorously than around Brown and Whillans. Not that that prevented criticism of their methods and particularly the use of aid. Brown is unapologetic. 'People talk about how much aid was used in the past but we were doing ground up ascents with no pre-inspection, little protection and cleaning as we went. On cracks often the protection was from inserting chockstones which was hard work. You would be hanging on for ages trying to fiddle it in and by the time you had placed it vou were ready for a rest.'

It was not just leaders who were troubled by the scant protection. The lack of gear meant that on traverses the rest of the party frequently faced almost as much danger as the leader and it was not unusual for them to refuse to follow. Despite being an early adopter of double ropes, which could make it easier to

Left: Joe Brown explores The Steep Band, HVS 5a.

Photographer: Ioe Brown collection Right: Two climbing legends Joe Brown and Tenzing Norgay at a reunion party in the Pen Y Gwryd

Photographer: Ioe Brown collection protect the second, Brown found himself in just such a position on The Boulder.

This time his second was the mercurial Ron Moseley. The previous weekend Moseley had made the first free ascent of Kaisergebirge Wall. This time things would not go so smoothly. Brown found a traverse, initially difficult to start and impossible to protect, eventually belaying in the Black Cleft. Faced with hard moves and the prospect of a 100ft pendulum to smash into the lower section of the Cleft Moselev and a friend both declined, leaving Brown stranded with the option of either abseiling off or pressing on alone. His solution was an ingenious piece of improvisation.

He told Moselev to tie another rope to the climbing rope and carried on up the Cleft, the rope weighing ever more heavily on his waist. To ease the drag he tied knots in the rope which could be used to take some of the weight by resting on karabiners attached to spike runners, which would in turn be lifted off as the knot moved up the crag. It solved the weight problem but only at the cost of limiting his options for protection as the knots meant he could not use chockstones. Nor was he certain the system would hold him if he fell.

All went well until he reached the overhang. Face the right way and a line of holds makes things relatively easy. Choose wrongly and it can be desperate. Brown, for once, chose wrongly. Things were looking serious and suddenly got worse as his anorak hood caught on a downward pointing spike. 'I was in a horizontal position, looking down a probably 240ft run out and thinking this is not where I want to be. But somehow I managed to free it,' he said. Another new route was in the bag and another chapter of the Brown legend created.

Climbs of a whole new level of difficulty were being etched across the buttresses of the Black Cliff but Brown believes the step forward was as much mental as physical. He had a different philosophy to his predecessors, one that is deceptively simple to articulate but devilishly hard to achieve. 'I had a

different feeling about the crag because quite early on I had decided that I would not be put off by the way things looked. As long as you can climb back down what you've climbed up you can go anywhere and try anything. That way of thinking allowed me not to get gripped out of my head. It was just an awareness that other people may not have had but it made me feel comfortable and not like I was pushing the boat out all the time. That took off an enormous amount of pressure.

'Cloggy was never just another cliff to us but we were definitely not psyched out by it in the same way that some others were. I knew what I could do and how far I could go because of all the climbs we had done on gritstone. I had seen people get so nervous that they were in danger of shaking themselves off the rock – and sometimes they did. I got the message very early on of just staying cool. I was able to relax on a climb and think of the positive things you can do to get out of a situation.

'We liked new routes. Tom Patev once said that people thought you did it for the glory but that's got nothing to do with it. It's that the adventure on a new route is so much greater than on an ordinary route that is known and graded. On new routes you feel your senses are heightened. The whole way of thinking is different. You are totally aware of the possibilities and what might go wrong so you can react without thinking.'

Over the next five years the new routes fell thick and fast with the crag almost a Manchester fieldom and Brown himself featuring in almost every major new ascent despite occasional significant incursions by others, notably John Streetley's Bloody Slab in 1952. By 1958 other names began to appear, including Hugh Banner, and 1961 saw the first contribution by the upcoming generation of Pete Crew and Baz Ingle with Serth. Yet even before that Brown did not have things all his own way, missing out on one of the juiciest plums. Much has been made of the rivalry of Moselev and Whillans over the first ascent of White Slab but Brown too had been among the suitors and



had climbed much of the route before succumbing to a tainted sandwich and finishing up Sheaf instead. Brown was on the Mustagh Tower expedition when Moselev completed the route.

An even more sought-after prize was the Great Wall. Though it had not been climbed Brown's eventual triumph was seen as such a foregone conclusion that it was widely known as The Master's Wall. It was not to be. He had tried it as early as 1952 in black gym shoes. He got within five feet of the first stance before deciding it was too hard for the moment. Protection was also a problem. He had a self-imposed limit of two pegs per pitch. 'Nuts on wire still had not come in and it was incredibly difficult to find protection. The difference between fiddling in a pebble and slotting in a wired nut is incredible. And you know a nut won't crumble whereas a stone might.'

Ten years after that first attempt and several others the wall fell not to The Baron but the thrusting young Crew in May 1962. It was a defining moment. Brown recalls: 'Pete was a fantastic explosive star. He was young, dynamic and incredibly aggressive about burning people off. I loved climbing with Pete but I never understood that attitude. Why worry about burning people off when you can just go climbing and think that this is great? The incredible thing to me was that someone who had got so much pleasure from climbing suddenly just gave it up and thought it had been a waste of time.'

Brown has had no such doubts, continuing climbing well into his seventies. He puts this down partly to continually finding new places to climb. First his attention moved away from Cloggy to the sunnier crags of southern Snowdonia and then to the new route bonanza of Gogarth, where two new routes in a day was nothing unusual. Later he shifted his attention to Spain, where he put up countless new routes and Morocco - all carefully recorded by his friend and climbing partner, Claude Davies. New gear, training and sticky rubber may have moved standards on well beyond those classic Brown routes but that does not overly concern the Baron, still living in Llanberis, hard under the skirts of Snowdon and he professes little jealousy for today's stars.

'Climbing is not about doing the hardest route in the world. It's about enjoying yourself: it has to be if you want to carry on climbing all your life. And you have to think about the ethics and what's right for you. For me it was about two pegs and no more and adventure. People sometimes talk about the amount of aid used in the past on routes which they now find straightforward but they should go back without gear or sticky boots or chalk and do the routes in the condition we did them in with mud in the cracks and loose rock everywhere.

'Today the ethics seem to allow anything; abbing down, brushing it, cleaning it, practising the moves, checking the gear, racking the nuts in order and marking the holds with chalk. When you have abbed down, cleaned all the loose rock and put every bolt exactly where you want it you've not really climbed a new route, vou've constructed something. Much of what makes climbing what it is is the commitment and putting yourself in a risky situation. If there's no risk you are climbing at too low a standard.'

Yet lest anyone should think these are just the sour grumblings of an aged tiger overtaken by younger and fitter climbers the fierce commitment to adventure still burns brightly. Even though Brown has given up climbing he recently forced his octogenarian limbs to the top of the Llanberis slate quarries to strip the retro bolts an over-eager would-be new router had put into one of his climbs.

Even now, sixty years after that first visit, new routes all over the world, the first ascent of Kangchenjunga, the world's third highest mountain at 8,586m (28,169ft) and more recently explorations in North Africa and the jungle of Central America, Cloggy still holds a special place in Brown's heart.

'The other day we were driving back from Bangor and the sun was on Cloggy and I said: Doesn't that bring back memories of fantastic days? It's just a thrill to be there. The evening sun lights up the crag in summer and it's the best place in the world for me.'

CLOGGY & THE BRAVE **DWARFS**

A new breed of climber, forged in the conurbations of Manchester, was to emerge during the early post war years and stamp its trademark on one of the most intimidating cliffs in Britain - Cloggy, Diminutive this new breed may have been, but its leading lights were the giants upon whose shoulders subsequent generations have stood in the quest for bolder and more adventurous routes.

By Harold Drasdo

his is an attempt to re-live days on Cloggy in the early fifties and to say what it felt like to climb there in those years. We weren't without information. Menlove Edwards' slimline guide had appeared in 1942, despite the war effort and the paper shortages. We - my brother Neville and I – must have owned or borrowed a copy and probably knew it by heart. Two of the older Yorkshire climbers had already made an ascent of Longland's, narrowly avoiding a bivouac. And Arthur Dolphin, our local hero, had once led a memorable summit push up Great Slab as darkness fell. In 1950, however, we hadn't yet made his acquaintance.

Our first visit was in late 1950 or early 1951 but I can't write about the cliff without mention of The Gatekeepers. We discovered that the lower slopes of Snowdon were inhabited. We spent the night of arrival in an unoccupied building, possibly an old

Right: Drowned dwarfs - Don Belshaw, Nat Allen and Joe Brown after a close encounter with Cloggy Corner. Photographer: Joe Brown collection



chapel, later demolished I think, near Hebron Station. The following night we were installed in a dry loft in some ruined cottages on the other side of the tracks. On returning from the intervening day on the cliff we found a narrow strip of an old roofing slate has been laid across our sleeping bags and bore a brief pencilled message: 'Do not be afraid. You will be safer here. A Friend.' We were encouraged by this gesture, having felt a distinct sense of unease in our previous quarters. but we were also a bit puzzled.

Some way further up the hill was Halfway House, supplying refreshments to the steady stream of Snowdon aspirants. At that time the house seemed like a half-buried bunker, part rusted corrugated iron. part wood, with stone revetments to buttress it against the weather. It was occupied by the hospitable and talkative Mr and Mrs Williams and their attractive but almost ethereal daughter who went by the unlikely name of Vember. She would soon be immortalized by a climb with that name, though there's no letter 'v' in Welsh. The Williams family seemed fascinated by the large group of Manchester climbers who'd been occasional visitors to the cliff during the previous two or three years and were in the habit of bivouacking somewhere amongst the boulders near Llvn d'ur Arddu. We'd quite recently begun to meet them, the Rock and Ice team, ourselves.

On the first day, approaching the cliff, we saw to our surprise that we'd be sharing it with another party. They were at the foot of Sunset Crack, which had been our objective and they turned out to be Climbers' Club types, very posh and self-assured. I think I identified one of them later as Ted Wrangham; the other, a black-bearded giant, may have been Tom Bourdillon.

We decided that rather than form a queue we should try Curving Crack. There, we were entertained to see a sizeable crater in the lush grass at the foot of the first pitch. The rock was cold and slippery and repulsed both of us. We trailed back to Sunset, where the CC team was now grappling with the exit so we steamed up in pursuit, not finding it particularly hard.

On getting onto the Green Gallery we saw that the leader was now high up on the face of the Pinnacle. Reaching some block overhangs, he called out in surprise. A rusty old peg was in place. Who'd been here already? The mystery and romance of the place swamped us. But we couldn't see any obvious future above so we made an alarming descent of the East Gully on peeling grass and insecure rock. It's possible that we also climbed Longland's that day, or certainly during this initial raid.

My only secure date from this period comes from notes left by Peter Greenwood. On 15th August 1951 I led Nev and Pete up Sheaf. This was to become my favourite route on Cloggy in those years. In fact most of our successes that week were on the Three Cliffs and included Spectre and the third ascents of Hangover and Kaisergebirge Wall. Pete, our main man, usually went first.

Pete was quick to recognise the absolute ascendancy of the Rock and Ice. Was this before or after he was repulsed by Diglyph? I can't work that out. However, Pete's own climbs on Scafell in 1952, when he teamed up with Arthur Dolphin, would bring the top standard of Lakeland climbing much closer to that of Wales.

Essentially though, we were still ticking off the routes of the Harding years while these short-arses from Manchester - Joe Brown, Don Whillans, Ron Moseley, Joe Smith, Doug Belshaw and their ilk-had broken into a staggering new dimension with a dozen intimidating lines by Joe himself.

In calling these Lancastrians 'the brave dwarfs' - an expression borrowed from the American poet Robinson Jeffers – I'm indulging in the light-hearted banter climbers have often enjoyed. (For instance, this was Joe to Allan Austin: 'I always said you were the best climber to come out of Yorkshire, but then they're never any good, are they?") The affection was qualified by resignation as the stupendous lines succumbed. It would be a long time before the advantage returned to Yorkshire with the arrival of Pete Livesey, and then Ron Fawcett.

Our problem was that as West Riding climbers we

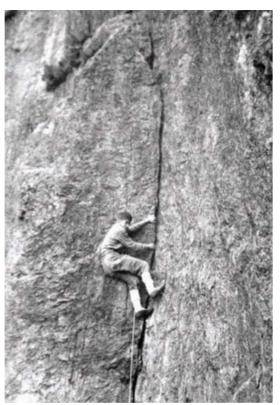
were Lakes-centred. Hitch-hiking, or later on old motor-bikes, the A65 took us straight up there without the pain of negotiating the Lancashire conurbations. We were only occasional visitors to Wales.

Bradford, however, did produce one really gifted climber in the early fifties though his name remains almost unknown. This was Stan Hardisty, who was to join us for a short time before emigrating to New Zealand where he is alive and well. He began to climb on gritstone with my brother and impressed all companions with his speed and composure. 'The best climber I ever saw,' Peter Biven said. I introduce him because we spent a few days together on Cloggy in 1953.

At that time I was on the verge of a decisive change in my life and I didn't think I'd have much chance of climbing for a couple of years. (I was wrong.) I had a week available and Stan happened to be free so we seized the chance. During that spell we climbed all the pre-Brown routes on the West Buttress except the Girdle, climbed by Harding and Dyke four years earlier. Unlikely to have any route-finding difficulties now, we decided to finish off with it. The rock was wet in places but we hoped it would be dry for the crucial traverse by Bow-Shaped Slab.

How clear a visual image can you hold for sixty years? I know that we were wearing the washed-out khaki ex-WD smocks most of us used, ordinary cast-off working flannels, thin black plimsolls, no headgear. We had old socks to be worn over plimsolls on difficult wet moves. We had a half dozen quarter-weight and a number of heavier slings each and we were using a medium gauge laid nylon rope. I'd climbed in the Alps the previous summer so I may have had one or two items of good mountain equipment. It's possible that we were carrying a hammer and a few pegs for security on the unseen area beyond Central Rib.

I can remember very clearly making the critical moves, a sketchy toe traverse along a poor crease, the kinaesthetics of extreme caution. And just as strongly I remember standing anchored and safe on the far side and watching with riveted concentration



Left: Claude Davies elegantly climbs Curving Crack equipped with little more than a hemp rope, plimsolls and a rather fetching pair of socks.

Photographer: Ioe Brown collection

as Stan steadily felt his way across. But this is more than memory. After sixty years I still see it perfectly and still feel the slow release of tension as he drew closer. And then we were repeating the forty-foot corner, wet, and then marching up Central Rib, and then making our way over unseen slabs with odd awkward bits interposed. As we reached the crest of the ridge someone hailed us and we saw a figure on the shoulder beyond Llyn du'r Arddu. It was apparently Mr Williams who'd been watching us and wondering whether we'd finish in daylight.

Later we were brought down to earth in the Road Menders' Hut by a Rock and Ice man who let us know that all we'd scored was an undistinguished sixth ascent or crossing. Still, we were contented enough at that. And we'd got formidable cliffs in the Lakes that Manchester hadn't yet heard about.



Woubits - in the Footsteps OF WHILLANS

When Steve Dean found himself on one of the remoter parts of Cloggy climbing a classic route of the Rock and Ice era he marvelled at the men from Manchester and contemplated how changing fashions are giving nature time to turn their climbs back to their original condition.

By Steve Dean

ike many climbers. I have to admit to a particular fascination with the complex cliffs ✓ that make up Clogwyn Du'r Arddu. I first climbed there some 35 years ago and my delight in revisiting this mysterious and atmospheric place has not diminished in that time. Such feelings are not unusual, of course. To many of us, Cloggy is the centrepiece of traditional climbing not only in Wales but in the whole of Britain. Many fine words have been written about Cloggy over the years, and it was even the subject of an entire book, The Black Cliff, in 1971. The last two guidebooks to the crag were produced by the late Paul Williams and Nick Dixon respectively. Both are hugely enjoyable reads and demonstrate a deep love for the place, recalling great times with good mates and a clear appreciation of the crag's role in the evolution of climbing in Britain.

One of my favourite pieces about Cloggy was written almost fifty years ago and was published in the Fell & Rock Journal. Jack Soper's Still More of Arfon is highly evocative and the concluding comments succeed in capturing the atmosphere of the place and something of the rhythm of its history:

'And although Arddu is, after all, only an unfeeling piece of rhyolite and the scratchings of the last few decades irrelevant to the larger scheme of things, there is an air of tradition about the place, of great deeds wrought in the past. On silent days when the cwm is deserted and the crags loom strangely through the mist it is easy to imagine the Abrahams peering in amazement down Shrike wall, or one

of the great teams of the 1930s at work with the grass up on the west, or a young man from Manchester uncoiling his hemp rope below Vember.'

One of the best things about Cloggy is that it is really a collection of six different crags, each with its own character and each with a different play of sunlight at various times of the day. The Pinnacle, for instance, has a totally different feel to The Boulder; the atmosphere of the East Buttress could not be more different to that of the great slabs of the West. Many of us have treasured memories of particular parts of the crag and the great classics of all levels of difficulty are highly desired for good reason. Some of my recent memories of the place are as dear to me as any: just making it to the top of the superb Silhouette as a huge storm broke over us; and a winter ascent of the Eastern Terrace in deep snow when the air was utterly still in the bitter cold, lending the setting a particular majesty. On the latter, we saw no-one all day and later watched the sun set from Snowdon summit as the temperature plummeted.

Having been fortunate enough to have climbed on most parts of the crag, there was one notable exception. I had never been up to the Far East. Somehow, whenever we visited the place, there always seemed to be something more pressing to do on the more accessible parts of the crag. Woubits and The Mostest got mentioned from time to time, but somehow we'd never get round to making the extra effort to get up there. The relative inaccessibility of the Far

Left:

Don Whillans steps out in to the unknown on the second bitch of Woubits during the first ascent in August 1955 with Ioe Brown.

Photographer: Loe Brown collection

East, tucked away high up to the left of the rest of the crag, meant that only a few people made their way up there. During one particularly dry period Mick Wrigley and myself finally decided to go up and find out what Woubits was all about.

Getting to the Far East is more tiring than the normal approach to Cloggy from Halfway House and involves going almost to the summit of Snowdon and then traversing across grassy slopes to the top of the crag. We were there midweek and the weather was pleasant enough if a little overcast. Having sorted out the gear and the ropes we descended the Far Eastern Terrace which ends abruptly above a huge drop. The position is impressive, already very exposed, and this forms the starting point for Woubits and Mostest. The crag loomed above us, gloomy and unwelcoming, and we were not a little intimidated. The Far East is certainly no place for the faint hearted.

Woubits starts very abruptly: there is no gentle introduction. The climber is immediately confronted by a mean little overhang that has to be tackled using slippery holds with only mediocre protection. It is one of those situations that calls for a confident, focussed approach when the last thing you feel is bold. The rock is dark and unfriendly, and it is with some relief that you arrive at the foot of a groove. Much of the rock is dirty with the odd snappy hold: clean Tremadog dolerite this is not. The situation in the groove is impressive and the climbing steep, but better holds arrive and lead over a bulge to a stance and good belays, and a good place to get your breath back. Mick and I re-grouped at the stance and were well impressed by the oppressive nature of our surroundings. We did however agree on the quality of the first pitch – a steep and exciting piece of climbing. Mick sorted out the gear and got ready to lead the second pitch. I watched as he moved up the steep groove to our left, muttering about the difficulty and awkwardness of the moves but managing to place some solid runners. After a rest he moved quickly up to the left and after a few rapid moves he was out of sight.

The stance on Woubits is an isolated spot and once

Mick was out of sight, a lonely one. I could see or hear no-one else, and the outlook was wild and austere. It brought to mind the words of the Welsh poet Idris Davies:

And I braised the unknown Artist Of crag and fern and stream For the sunshine on the mountains And the wonder of a dream.

Gradually I worked the ropes through the belay plate as Mick steadily worked his way up the pitch. Looking down from the stance. I realised just how steep the first pitch had been and acknowledged Ioe Brown's bold determination in forcing that loose initial overhang on-sight back in 1955. After a while the ropes went tight, I heard Mick call out and it was my turn to get moving. As I looked up the pitch on which Mick was now engaged I thought of the first ascent photo that Ioe had taken of Don Whillans starting the second pitch. It appeared in The Black Cliff and seemed to me to grasp the sinister atmosphere of this remote part of the crag. Jim Perrin describes it particularly well in his autobiography of Whillans, The Villain:

'There is a photograph taken by Joe of Don as he contemplates the start of the sequence. A thin line runs out to him through a messy runner. In breeches and knee-length stockings, black rubber pumps on his feet, he's dark-clad, white balaclava'd, peering up into the groove above with his left knee dropped for balance. There is a suggestion of mist, the rock sombre and steep, without obvious holds. It has a certain chill and a certain mystery about it.'

It is one of the most atmospheric images I know of climbing in Wales and it was on my mind as I started the pitch. Needless to say, the big pitch on Woubits was one I had not only wanted to climb for years, but wanted to climb well. Alas, it was not to be. Having cruised up the first pitch without much trouble, I moved up with some confidence but soon struggled to remove a couple of awkward runners and once the steep and sustained nature of the pitch kicked in, I

soon found that I was well pumped. The situation is very fine, but on the day I was glad to have a rope above me rather than be on the sharp end facing such bold climbing. It does not surprise me that Woubits retained a great reputation for a long time after its first ascent in 1955. Of the ten routes Joe and Don put up together on Cloggy between 1951 and 1956, it is to my mind the finest. As I struggled on the crux moves and then felt some relief as the difficulties eased. I thought of our mate, Richard McHardy, climbing the route solo in 1970: he could not have chosen a lonelier spot in Wales and it was an extraordinarily bold ascent. On the same day Al Rouse soloed The Boldest and emerged as one of the outstanding performers of his generation. Halcvon days indeed.

Mick was sitting at the top of the pitch wearing a huge grin and we were both delighted to have bagged an absolute classic, although in my case it had been something of a struggle and it had certainly felt tough for E2 5b, as well as seeming neglected and dirty in places. Certainly this was not the clean rock of the East Buttress. As we coiled the ropes and sorted the gear out, I thought of Joe and Don on the first ascent more than fifty years ago. They were young men in their early twenties and at the top of their game. Joe had just returned from making the first ascent of Kangchenjunga in the Himalayas while Don had earlier that year made the first ascent of the very serious Slanting Slab on the West Buttress of Cloggy. I felt a huge gratitude for the great changes in attitude and the improvements in footwear and equipment over the years that now enabled Mick and myself to enjoy such an excellent climb when we were both aged almost sixty.

The ascent of Woubits opened up this huge area of rock and Joe was obviously drawn to its powerful atmosphere. He later returned to make first ascents of Mostest, Woubits Left Hand, The Key and Sinistra. Mostest probably still has some regular ascents, but I wonder how often these other routes see traffic as fashions in climbing alter. Years ago in the dark, grim depths of The Bull in Deiniolen through the customary haze of WEM bitter and fag smoke, I remember two of the Burnley lads recounting in detail their day on Sinistra and saving what an excellent route it was. The modern additions either side of Woubits, Archaeoptervx and Hazy Days look superb (and extremely hard) but again I wonder how often people make the long pilgirmage up there to do them.

It was good to laze in the sun on the flat grass at the top of the crag. In indolent mood, the idea of a second route was swiftly dismissed and we packed the sacks and set off down towards Clogwyn Station and the path. By now it was a warm, hazy late afternoon and there was little desire to hurry. As we ambled along I thought back over the day's activities. In a strange way, notwithstanding that Woubits had always been a route I'd hugely desired, today had been not so much about the actual climbing as about the almost overpowering atmosphere of the place itself. There had been a sense of loneliness, isolation and neglect about the Far East and a strong awareness that nature is rapidly reclaiming it in its dark, shadowy setting. For some reason my mind drifted back to the chapters in Herbert Carr and George Lister's wonderful book The Mountains of Snowdonia, describing the profusion of alpine flora and fauna to be found in the more remote parts of the area. In truth, places like the Far East on Cloggy would be an entomologist's and botanist's paradise were so much of it not so inaccessible. It is indeed the haunt of the raven, the buzzard and the peregrine falcon and long may it remain so.

The sense of neglect I felt on the Far East set me thinking about the seeming shift away from the higher crags in recent years, an indication of how the sport is developing. Perhaps I'm there at the wrong times, but these days Cloggy always seems to be quiet. The Boulder and The Pinnacle particularly so. Go up to Cyrn Las and chances are the only climbers there (if any) will be on Main Wall or The Grooves. The two wings of Dinas Mot and Craig v Rhaeadr seem rarely visited these days and a few people seem to take the lovely walk along the Afon Llafar to the Gothic splendour of Llech Ddu. That crag in particular was the subject of

an epic amount of cleaning by the Holliwell brothers back in the late sixties to produce a number of bold extreme routes. I wonder how often, if ever, those routes see traffic as vegetation slowly claims them back. Don't get me wrong, this is in no way a criticism, more an observation of how things seem to have evolved. I suppose the real problem is that unless the routes on the remote high crags continue to be used by climbers. they will continue to fall into poor condition and warmer weather conditions certainly don't help. In time many fine routes may be lost to us. Looking back on the day, I'd been astonished at the poor condition of Woubits and how dirty much of the climb was.

As we walked down the hillside next to the railway track, I glanced back at the crag and up to the Far East and the striking upper groove of Woubits. Joe Brown once described it as 'one of the finest lines on Cloggy' and I would agree wholeheartedly. We paused awhile on the ridge by the railway as cloud billowed down from the top of Snowdon. I have to admit that over the years I have grown rather fond of the Snowdon Railway. Like most climbers, I have never travelled on it, but it does form an integral part of the climbing experience on Cloggy. The regular chuff chuff of the train echoing across Cwm Brwynog, the sound fading then returning on the wind is something that most climbers will remember about the place. The railway opened in 1896 and was well established long before climbers turned their attention to the mysteries of Cloggy. I like the fact that when Fred Pigott, Jack Longland and Colin Kirkus put up the first major routes on the crag in the period 1927-1932, they too would have heard the trains chugging along less than a mile away.

I took a last look at the crag and then we crossed over the railway and dropped off the ridge down the hillside to Nant Peris. Of all our crags Cloggy is perhaps our greatest treasure and it has touched many lives deeply. I even know of people whose ashes are scattered there. Mick romped off down the hill ahead of me, while I nursed a sore knee and gradually dropped behind. Away to the west the sun was going down in a

blaze of red and orange; it looked like the following day would be fine as well. Today had been a strange one. I had set off from Llanberis that morning with little on my mind but the likely technicalities of a much desired climb, yet the day had given us far more to remember than simply the physical act of climbing. To be honest I hadn't carried that out particularly well, but it didn't matter. To my mind, what sets the hills and crags in Snowdonia apart is a wonderful sense of mystery or as the Welsh say dirgelwch. Up on the Far East, Mick and I certainly sensed something of the mystery of the place and the way in which nature is steadily claiming parts of it back. Good old Wales, a constant source of delight and surprise even after a lifetime of climbing there.

I looked on down the hillside to where Mick had already reached the fields at the bottom of the valley. I felt a cool breeze on my face, as the sun in the west pushed through the cloud and bathed the hillside opposite in low ochre light that picked out every boulder, tree and crag with startling clarity. I thought of the gentle words of R.S. Thomas in his poem The Small Window:

In Wales there are iewels To gather, but with the eve Only. A hill lights up Suddenly; a field trembles With colour and goes out In its turn; in one day You can witness the extent of the spectrum and grow rich

With looking. Have a care; This wealth is for the few And chosen. Those who crowd A small window dirty it With their breathing though sublime. And inexhaustible the view.

I caught up with Mick and we walked across the fields to the road and Nant Peris. That first pint of Double Hop in the Vaynol was going to taste good.

Right: Ioe Tasker and Pete Boardman below Kangchenjunga 1979.

Photographer: Doug Scott



People, Places & Polemics

Thirty Not Out - The Boardman Tasker Prize. By Chris Harle

Hymn to Kali. By John Appleby

Five go New Routing in Albania. By Fiona Sanders & Alvin Wood

Marching to the Sound of the Drill. By Tony Penning



THIRTY NOT OUT - THE BOARDMAN TASKER PRIZE

The Boardman Tasker Charitable Trust was established by the friends and families of Peter Boardman and Ioe Tasker following their death on Everest in 1982. Its purpose is 'to promote literature by providing an annual award to authors of literary works, the central theme of which is concerned with mountains. Books with a mountain, not necessarily mountaineering, theme whether fiction, non-fiction, drama or poetry, written in the English language (initially or in translation) will be eligible.'

By Chris Harle

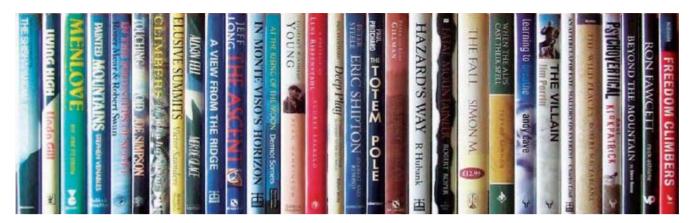
¬ he £3,000 prize is awarded for an original work that has made an outstanding contribution to mountain literature. Boardman's The Shining Mountain (Hodder & Stoughton 1979) and Tasker's Savage Arena (Methuen 1982) are acclaimed examples of mountain literature.

In spite of its international reputation the award has remained endearingly attached to the Boardman and Tasker families with Joe's brother Paul continuing to host the award ceremony. This event has been greatly enhanced by its move to the Kendal Mountain Festival in 2005 and by the appearance in person of most of the short-listed authors who have been interviewed prior to the winning announcement. The only rival to the BT Prize is the Banff Mountain Book Competition in Canada although the Grand Prize may not necessarily be mountain literature. Not including 2012 there have been 31 winning books (there were joint winners on three occasions and in its first year no book was deemed of a high enough standard for an award to be made). Six climbers feature in winning biographies - Menlove Edwards, Geoffrey Winthrop Young, Eric Shipton, George Mallory, Willi Unsoeld and Don Whillans. Another biography is about Leni Riefenstahl who will be better remembered for directing Nazi propaganda films during the 1930s. Two collective biographies each highlight the lives of several mountaineers:

Braham (When the Alps Cast Their Spell) focuses on six of the leading British 19th century mountaineers whilst McDonald (Freedom Climbers) tells the story of several Polish climbing legends. There are six autobiographies – Paul Pritchard (two books covering the pre and post Totem Pole accident), Andy Cave, Andy Kirkpatrick, Steve House and Ron Fawcett. Three of the four expedition memoirs are based in the Himalaya but Joe Simpson's Touching the Void based in South America is perhaps the most well known mountaineering book of the modern era. Remarkably seven winners are fiction; novels or collections of short stories. Of these Climbers by M. John Harrison seems to have attracted most attention and even led Iim Perrin to suggest that it should have won the Booker Prize. The remaining winners defy simple categorisation but it does highlight that a wide diversity of genres have won the prize, perhaps due to the constantly changing panel of three judges. In general I can appreciate why the judges have made their decisions and most books have been worthy winners. However I was baffled as to why certain books were short-listed let alone chosen as the winning entry. This is not a reflection on the quality of the book but a question over their relevance. In The Footsteps of Scott by Roger Mear & Robert Swan is an honest account of an epic Antarctic journey. There is a short chapter describing a solo ascent of

Left: Peter Boardman and Ioe Tasker. Kangchenjunga.

Photographer: Doug Scott



Above: A long line of winners - the complete works of the Boardman Tasker award.

Photographer: Chris Harle

Mount Erebus by Mear, but the rest is essentially a polar expedition to the South Pole. A Portrait of Leni Riefenstahl by Audrey Salkeld is an interesting biography with early chapters about Reifenstahl's roles in some pioneering mountaineering films, but the central theme is clearly her association with the rise of the Nazis and her relationship with Adolf Hitler. The Wild Places by Robert Macfarlane is another excellent book but it is not about wild places in the mountains - beaches, woods, islands, rivers and meadows all get equal billing. It is no coincidence that these are the only three winners that have no image representing climbing or mountains on their front covers. Of course, it could be argued that there is no mention of a mountain in Ron Fawcett: Rock Athlete but it seems sensible not to take the term 'mountain' literature too literally by assuming that this includes climbing. Earlier this year I noticed that in Ed Douglas' blog, The Ones that Got Away he highly recommends Ed Drummond's A Dream of White Horses (Bâton Wicks 1987) and Kathleen Jamie's The Golden Peak (Virago 1992). Whilst I personally did not share the same enthusiasm for these books it led me to thinking about what I would recommend. My pick would be Feet in the Clouds by Richard Askwith and On The Ridge Between Life and Death by David Roberts. Short-listed Feet in the Clouds was an obvious 'winner' in 2004. Its story of fell running legends and the author's attempt to complete the Bob Graham Round was

so inspirational that I even made my own attempt on the BGR in 2009. Renowned American author David Roberts' revealing autobiography was not even entered in 2005.

The awards ceremony is a highlight of the KMF but from my point of view the 2011 presentation ceremony sorely challenged the credibility of the BT Prize. The chairman of the judges made the announcement: 'And the winner is... Freedom Climbers by Bernadette McDonald.' There was a short respectful round of applause, but I was miffed. Freedom Climbers may well have won the recent Grand Prize at Banff and now the prestigious Boardman Tasker Prize but I had not read it yet, and worse still I was not about to. This book had not yet been published or distributed in the UK and thus there were no copies to buy at Kendal or anywhere else. As a book buyer in the retail trade I was frustrated at the missed opportunity and as a bibliophile of mountain literature I felt let down. Surely I had a right to be allowed an opinion, if only to be able to agree or disagree with the judges' verdict. So for the second consecutive year I could not read the complete short-list and enjoy the debate to pick a winner. What would have happened if the judges had awarded the 2010 prize to the shortlisted The Hut Builder by Laurence Fearnley, which to the best of my knowledge has never been published or distributed in the UK before or since? Thankfully in the 30th year of the award there

was no question of relevance or eligibility in the 2012 short-list. All six titles have strong links to the mountains and all are readily available to buy in the UK. Kirkpatrick is a previous winner and Curran, Stainforth and Yates have all been previously short-listed. These books offer a broad spectrum of mountain literature and would be an excellent reading list if you needed some direction:

here, there and everywhere... the autobiography of Jim Curran by Jim Curran (Edgebrook Publishing). Into the Silence: The Great War, Mallory and the Conquest of Everest by Wade Davis (The Bodley Head).

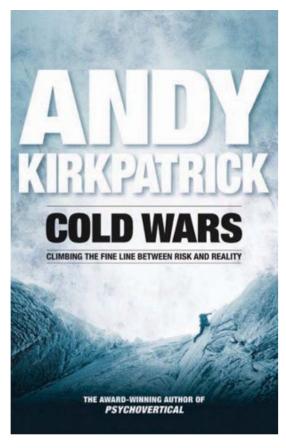
Cold Wars: Climbing the Fine Line Between Risk and Reality by Andy Kirkpatrick (Vertebrate Publishing). The Challenge of K2: A History of the Savage Mountain by Richard Sale (Pen & Sword).

Fiva: An Adventure That Went Wrong by Gordon Stainforth (Golden Arrow Books).

The Wild Within: Climbing the World's Most Remote Mountains by Simon Yates (Vertebrate Publishing).

It seems that very few publishers are now willing to take the risk and publish mountain literature so many authors now resort to self-publishing (and therefore self-financing) in order to get their story read. Whilst I applaud their commitment and resolve I suspect that a few of this year's self-published entries may well have had a better chance of making the shortlist if they had been taken on by a publisher with full editing and proof-reading capabilities. Having said that both Iim Curran's and Gordon Stainforth's books are to some degree self-published but they have clearly not left the editing and proof-reading to chance. It is unlikely that a book's commercial fate and the writer's publishing future will be determined by the outcome of the BT Prize because many of the winning entries have never been reprinted in hardback and some did not even make it to paperback. However the BT Prize will continue to motivate and inspire prospective authors as the £3,000 award is a significant reward for their efforts.

I have a strong bias for the tactile nature of printed



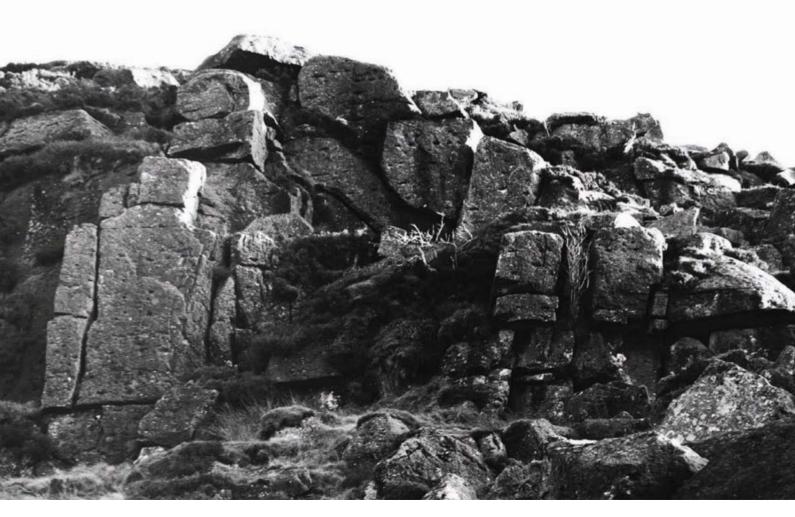
Left: And the 2012 winner Andy Kirkpatrick' s Cold Wars.

books and their presence on a bookshelf but the BT Prize will have to embrace the latest e-book technology because presumably not all future books will have a printed version. Perhaps it will also need to widen its horizons and encourage even more overseas entries because presently there are a disproportionate number of entries from outside the UK. However, two of the last three winners have come from North America and this year there was a strong contender from Canadian Wade Davis (who recently won the 2012 Samuel Johnson Prize, the UK's leading non-fiction prize worth £20,000). Next year sees the welcome introduction of a Young Writers Award the winner of which will receive £250 and get publication in the BMC's Summit magazine.

Hymn to Kali

The mysterious moorland outcrops dotted like gritstone edges on the hills south of the Moelwynion are the perfect place to experience the pleasures of solitary climbing. Here John Appleby recalls a day when such pleasure turned to pain and how he narrowly escaped a serious mishap.

By John Appleby



he incredible weather which had brought two months of wall-to-wall blue skies to the normally rain washed Celtic fringes was still holding fair. Four days into May and the bedroom shutters were pushed open to reveal yet another day of elemental splendour – albeit tempered by a cooling breeze which had hung around for three or four days. It was my last day off before work and the perfect opportunity to get back to the relatively isolated western flanks of Arenig Fawr. I had been there many times during the 1990s and had made the first recorded rock climbs on the isolated gritstone like edges of Ddaer Fawr, Pen Tyrau and Craig Hyrddod which look out across the wild and generally uninhabited rough bounds of the Migneint.

The area had inspired the Edwardian 'Arenig School' of artists whose members included Augustus John and James Innes. For more than two years they had holed up in the little cottage of Nant Ddu in the lee of a mountain whose contorted face, bristling with outcrops and boulders, had been their inspiration in oils, pencil and ink. A frenzy of cascading rock features set against a fuscous canvas.

Even today this is a quiet land: a poor sour void of rough pasture that has been fleshed clean of inhabitants, their former dwellings now lying empty and broken to the sky. It is, however, rather beautiful in its sombre, washed-out way and the perfect place to while away an afternoon or balmy evening wrapped in the joys of stone play.

As it had been so dry, I thought it would be a perfect opportunity to indulge in a bit of bouldering and to solo some easier listed climbs. It would also give me the opportunity to check out some of the lower grade routes which had been put up more recently and recorded in The Climbers' Club new routes list.

I arrived mid-morning and parked up just outside the tiny hamlet of Arenig and took off with my Springer, Fergus. Together we zig-zagged up the track which

Left: The obvious deep crack of Kali. Photographer: John Appleby

threads its way skywards through a huge abandoned basalt quarry which hasn't been worked since the 1950s.

As the track peters out, it reveals a ribbon of edges which seem to have more in common with the gritstone landscape of northern England than the mountains of North Wales. Small, steep outcrops and buttresses curl across the mountain's northwestern face. Beginning at the fearsome dark ramparts of Ddaer Fawr (Great Earth) and extending westward to a scattering of outcrops of which Craig Hyrddod (Crag of the Rams) forms the crown.

Picking my way through the jumble of boulders and hidden watercourses which frothed unseen beneath my feet, I came to a small un-named outcrop containing a few listed routes. Slipping my rock boots on and taking a dip of chalk I soloed a couple of Severes before tackling a VS which was more interesting. I then shifted up a gear to a HVS of my own which I had called Letrechaun. This went quite easily, prompting the thought that perhaps I had over-graded it. Next I found myself attempting what I thought was a new line. At the halfway point I was

Below: Reading the guidebook an hour or two before the accident.

Photographer: John Appleby





Above: Threatening skies John and Fergus approaching the crags.

Photographer: John Appleby

stonewalled when the tenuous flakes melted away leaving just a vague suggestion of ripples. This was too much of a technical no man's land for someone of my modest ability. Gingerly I began to down climb before twisting around and leaping down. Rolling head over heels on the damp green carpet I acquired a moorland patina of moss and dung.

Checking the guidebook I discovered that I had been soloing an E3 which was way outside my comfort zone. After wandering up to the upper tier of Hyrddod and repeating a couple of new easy lines, I descended and had a quick poke around the cavernous boulder

caves beneath the face: perfect wild dosses for the ascetically inclined or those who might have a body to hide.

I went across towards the Arrowhead Buttress of Pen Tyrau not really planning to do anything else but thinking that it wouldn't hurt to take a look for old time's sake. Winking at me on the western edge of the buttress was the deep jagged crack of Kali, a route I had put up with one of my sons on a cold day in early March 1997. At this point a little voice in my ear said: 'Go home, you've had your fun.' But the devil on my shoulder was quick with a reply 'Go for it. The day is

warm and dry, what can go wrong'?

With Fergus bouncing around under the buttress. I was more concerned about pulling a rock on his head or tossing a giant sod over my shoulder, which he would inevitably try to catch, than on what might happen to me. Fixed in my hound's eyes, I climbed up the first few feet and was immediately concerned at just how lichenous it was. No one, but no one, climbs here these days. The rounded pockets that abound hereabouts were crusted and filled with dry moss and lichen. The sharp little edges felt brittle. It was wrong: so why did I carry on? Twenty feet up, with my right arm rammed in the ragged crack and the fingers of my left hand curled around the edge of the slab, I shifted the weight off my right toe which was rooted in a dirty pocket. With all my weight now on my left foot, which was purchased on the little edge, I was dangerously out of balance: I should have listened to the sage advice in my head and gone home when I had the chance.

Was it a lichenous slip or did the flake snap? Whatever the cause, I was off. I tried to steer my fall towards a ledge just six feet below me, but that just cartwheeled me out from the face and away from what would have been the yielding base of the slab. I crashed against the deck with my heels and somersaulted backwards. The final part of my body to touch down was the back of my head which impacted upon a small jagged rock protruding through the earth. I swear I heard a loud crack accompanied by an electric blue flash: then nothing.

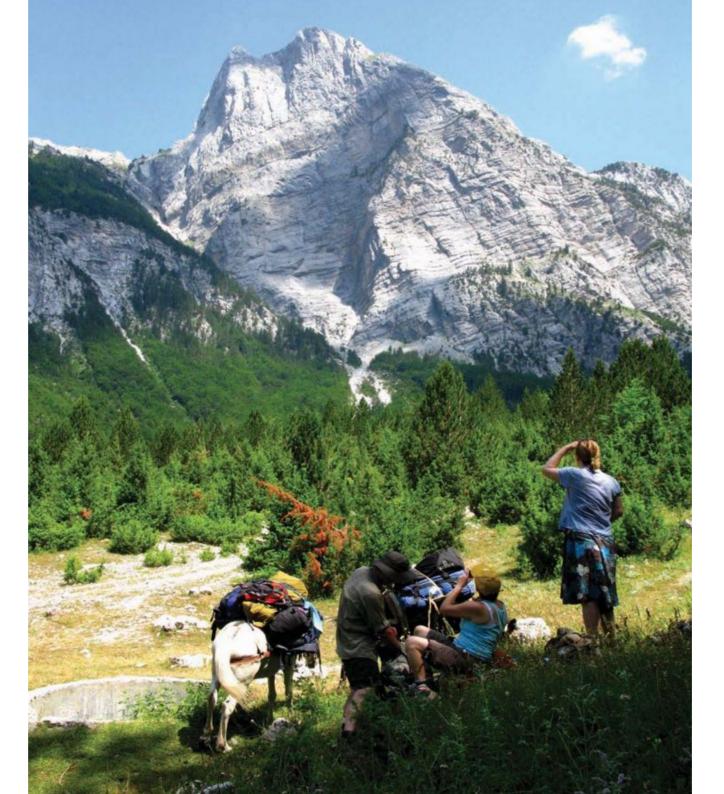
My first thoughts as I came to my senses were that this was serious. Then I became aware that I was deaf. I rocked forward and felt my head. It appeared that I had landed on my rucksack and a grapefruit had attached itself to the back of my head: no, this is warm, this is me. I looked at my hands. There was no blood. But hang on? there was blood on my pants. Sitting down and acting on autopilot, I carefully took off my rock boots and pulled on my walking boots. Dazed and confused I packed my rucksack and tentatively stood up. There was blood inside my

rucksack. How did that get there? I began to catalogue my injuries. My left knee had twisted when I hit the ledge (an injury which still affects me to this day). My chest was tight, my elbow had been skinned and bleeding. I was OK. Well not OK. In truth, I felt like I'd been set upon by a pack of ravenous dogs. For a moment I felt calm and in control and knew that I should phone my partner to tell her that I'd had a bit of a fall and where I was as no one had a clue where I was heading that day. I took my mobile from the pocket of my sac and gazed at it. I knew what it was for, but the problem was that I didn't have a clue how to use it. After randomly pressing buttons in the hope that somehow it would magically connect me to the outside world I gave up. Looking back, I realise now that I had fallen prey to that most dangerous of tricksters: concussion.

I heaved my rucksack onto my back and wheeled around under its weight. Arresting my drunken stagger, I straightened up and took in the vast rolling moorland where I knew my escape and salvation lay. Fergus was still rooting around for sheep bones amongst the speckled band of peaty earth while to the west, a hawk hung on a westerly updraft, its crooked frame bent to its prev.

In a dreamlike state I wandered over the moor and switch-backed through the old quarry. The little hamlet of Arenig came into view and a kind of familiarity returned. Somewhere a chainsaw rasped and I watched a chorus of bleating ewes follow a Land Rover. It was still there. Everything, just as it was when I left. Still there. Still here.

John sufficiently recovered from his adventures to blog a version of this essay that very evening. He called it When Kali became my Nemesis. One of those who commented on the piece at the time was the artist and pioneer of bold Welsh routes, John Redhead, who praised it as a 'fine hymn to Kali. almost beak in rib and hoof in skull, far away from the snares of the world and into the fangs of life.' So the reworked version here was transformed into a Hymn to Kali.



Five go New Routing in ALBANIA

A small but perfectly formed team of elite CC members found themselves being tortured by the Albanian heat, confessing only to the difficulty of the routes and to a pathological distaste for walking.

By Fiona Sanders & Alvin Wood

iving in our safe and settled land it is difficult to comprehend the social convulsions that ✓ have shaped the character and cultures of those who inhabit the Balkan Peninsula. The past 300 years have seen the ebb and flow of Communism, Nazi occupation, and the controlling influence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Ottoman governance. Before these regimes, there had been Byzantine, Roman, and Greek domination.

Since the crusades, the Balkans has been the ideological borderline between East and West, between Islam and Christianity. In consequence 'the powers' often had irresistible and utopian schemes to form national, cultural and religious boundaries that exacerbated latent tensions and differences, invariably resulting in violence. It was this ethnic tinderbox that was ignited in Bosnia in 1992 and later in Kosovo, with the mountains and valleys of Northern Albania bearing witness to this historical maelstrom.

After 50 years of totalitarian rule, Albania emerged from revolution, upheaval, economic collapse, ethnic warfare, banditry, and refugee crises to become an increasingly stable and economically viable country. To quote Alan Bennett 'history is just one fucking thing after another'.

The CC meet to this interesting and uniquely adventurous 'land that time forgot' consisted of Fiona and Keith Sanders, Jo Farrington, Alvin Wood and Richard Toon. We arrived at our basecamp after a whirlwind of activity from Tirana Airport that took us by minibus to a vibrant Shkodra to buy two weeks'

provisions and then by four-wheel drive to Thethi. The initial walk up to the campsite from here was testing. Though we had three horses to ease our load the trail was hard for our sluggish bodies, which were unfamiliar with the unprecedented heat and the steepness of the terrain. Crosses and holy shrines scattered along the path were not surprising given the multitude of fairies and demons the 'folk' told us live in these mountains. It was tempting to seek divine intervention.

The estimated five-hour hike took us seven before we could unpack and take stock of our situation – a flat pasture set amongst spectacular Dolomite-like peaks. As we slumped to the ground, Keith puzzled as to how people could walk for fun, and explained how 'it's just one foot after another' giving a demonstration for the hard of understanding. Richard and Alvin, being over sixty, couldn't remember why they'd come up here in the first place. Alvin suddenly remembered and began frantically building a dry stone wall and Keith, another Yorkshireman, stirred by genetic memory, joined in. This structure became our permanent kitchen enclave.

Our tents were near to the barracks and pillboxes that had supposedly guarded the pass against the Yugoslavs during the communist era. Our 'in country agent' Pavlan laughed and assured us that these 'defences' were more designed to stop the Albanians getting out than to prevent the Yugoslavs from coming

To the south of the campsite was Arapit (2217m) still dominant though not as imposing as its 1000m Left: Looking up at the crumbling south face of Mount Arabit.

Photographer: Keith Sanders



Above: Energy sabbing heat: sluggish bodies on the path up under mount Arapit.

Photographer: Keith Sanders

south face which we'd ogled during the walk in. From the plateau a few minutes walk above our campsite, we looked north down a long valley into what was, in the aftermath of the Bosnian war, Greater Serbia and is today simply Montenegro. This plateau also served as our toilet with magnificent views from the comfortable clints and deep grykes. As far as the authors know, each member had his or her own well-spaced en suite facility and there was little or no evidence of sharing.

To the left of this valley was Maja Magojveta and its neighbouring towers and the largely unclimbed steep ridges of 300m to 800m. Ron Kenyon, who had visited the region the year before, suggested we climb or explore this area. Unfortunately, the ferocious heat kept us close to the base camp and the only water source. So our eyes and bodies were inevitably drawn to the nearby Saddke (2,205m) south west of the camp, with its 300m face.

Our days were a mixture of exploratory trips to other crags where there seemed to be the potential for long routes on mixed quality rock, and routing on Saddke where we did all of our climbing. The routes on Saddke proved harder than they looked: we learnt that, if it appeared to be a 4c, it would probably be a good two grades harder, with the result that we retreated off three lines on the first day. We had aimed for a cleft that split the middle of the crag. Jo, Richard and Alvin attempted a line to the left of the cleft leaving fixed ropes 70m up two pitches of an E1 5b that they would eventually name Ottoman. Keith and Fiona retreating from mystery belay bolts from the first pitch on a flying buttress to the right of the cleft. They then tried a line to the left of Ottoman but had to down climb a second false start.

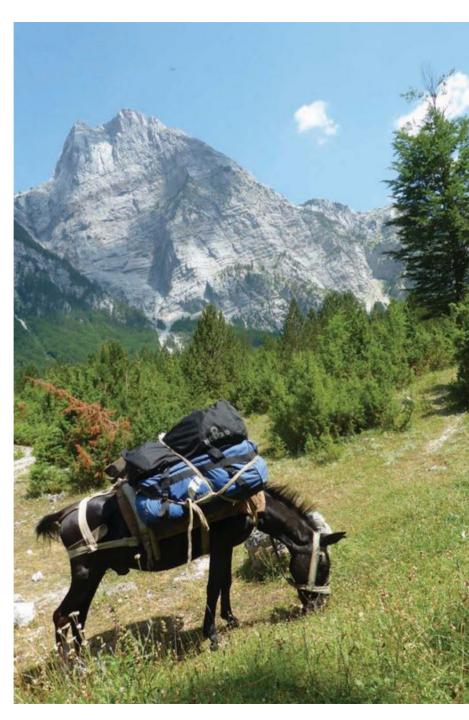
Richard, Alvin and Jo returned to the campsite to lick their wounds, whilst Keith and Fiona determinedly tackled a line recommended by Ron: a large imposing crack to the left of the crag. Being hoodwinked by the crag again, this imagined three-pitch route turned into six stout 50m pitches and a somewhat interesting hourlong descent past caves and snow plugs via a rather steep scree slope. All great fun when you don't take any water or comfortable shoes to get down. Keith and Fiona called Ron's route Byzantian which took a great line up the deep crack, then moved up a quite chossy face to finish on a magnificent fluted slab.

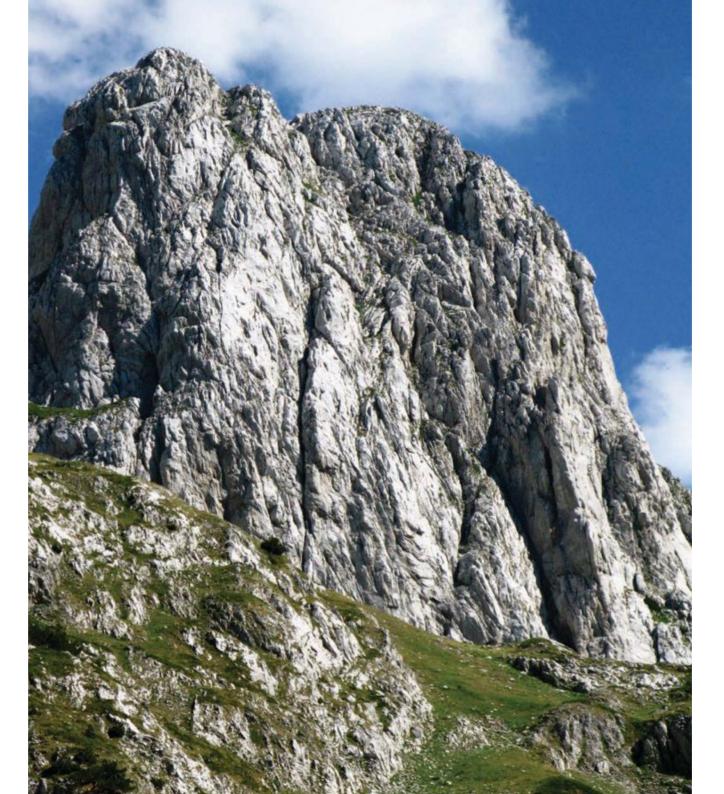
Next day, whilst Alvin and Richard returned to complete their route. Fiona and Keith went to recce some of the other major crags in order to recover from heat stroke and sore feet. Jumaring up to the high point on Ottoman, Alvin and Richard again faced the reason for retreat, a complicated pitch that led Richard up several false lines before he unravelled the puzzle. This third pitch of 5b opened the route to three pitches of at most VS climbing up chimneys interspersed with dirty gullies leading to the summit.

We found signs of previous passage on Ottoman; some antique pitons and a steel crab. Later research pointed to activities of the Albanian Commandoes about 50 or so years earlier. From our belays we looked across mountains and unclimbed rock walls stretching to the horizon. Looking down we could see the campsite 700 metres below and the mountain pass that connects the Catholic valleys of northern Albania with Orthodox Montenegro. These passes were used for trading and buying supplies for Thethi before the road south was built in 1936. It is suspected that the Ottoman army came this way to invade the northern Albanian valleys between 1466 and 1479 when they decimated the Christian population. The pass also offered brigands a more heroic way of making money and up to the end of the Second World War and the advent of Communism a blind eye was often turned to these gangs of robbers and sheep stealers in return for being frontier watchmen.

Towards the end of the trip, and our only bad weather day, Richard, Fiona and Keith completed Illyrian. By now we had worked out the rock was

Right: Doing the donkey work: Fiona and Alvin hand the load to their four-legged friend. Photographer: Keith Sanders







more easily protected by cams than small rocks so we were thankful we had taken a spare rack between us. Another 300m line of around E1/E2 provided some very interesting climbing on mostly solid rock. Each pitch had its own style, each testing the leader in different ways, spitting Fiona off at one point as the team tried to move into ground untouched by belay bolts and showing her that cams do work, even in this far off place.

Pressure from below came trembling up the ropes from the boys as the race against the weather increased. The team topped out just before the heavens truly opened and showed us who was really the boss. Even the shepherds who had been regularly visiting camp, or sat around watching us 'crazy climbers,' seemed to disappear as the weather turned. The campsite was alluringly close as we slithered towards it, soaked to the skin to arrive to some very

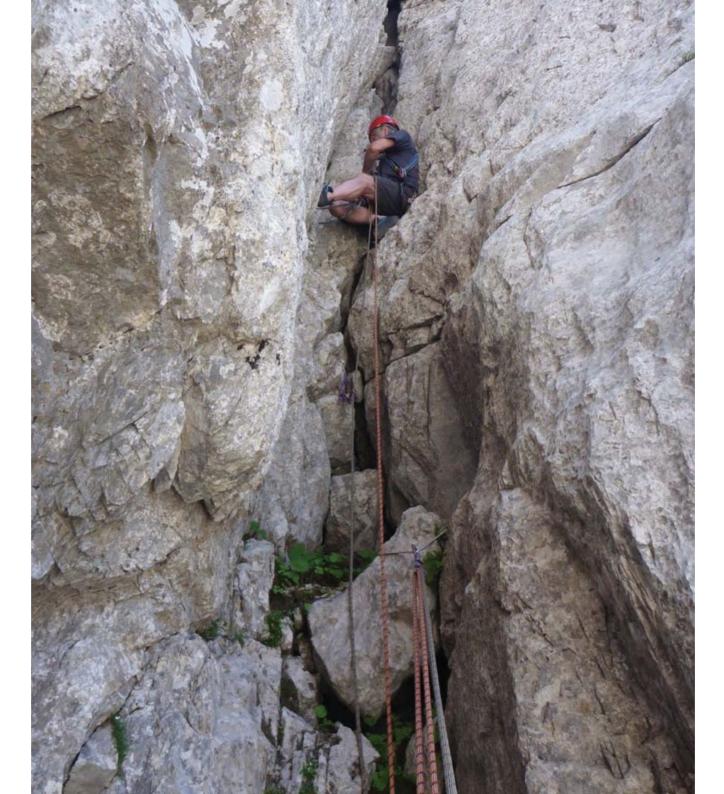
Left: Mount Saddke: Photographer: Keith Sanders welcome guests. Neil Mullinger and his partner had taken a rather long detour from their Balkan peninsular road trip to spend a night with their fellow CC members. We eagerly shared in some rather suspect home made Vodka they had kindly brought along with exciting stories of their journey.

One of the reasons we had been enticed to the area was for new routing. Unfortunately, no matter how obscure the route, there was invariably evidence of people having travelled before us, either in the form of an old peg or, on *Illyrian*, double bolt belays in the lower sections.

We had decided not to take a bolt gun and climb in traditional style. However, the best rock was the first 100m and being limestone, often difficult to protect, and sometimes friable. We had a couple of instances when a seemingly solid handhold snapped. Also, as can be expected on untravelled limestone, ledges and gullies were piled with rubble and teetering blocks. Given all of this it is only a matter of time before sports climbing ethics are used on the lower 100m.

Above: Ridge above the valley of Maja Magojveta.

Photographer: Keith Sanders



We eventually climbed some five lines mostly around 300m in length and all around HVS/E1. The last day we chose to climb two shorter crack lines we'd spotted up on the right wing of Saddke to the left of a deep cave. Both routes aimed for a good abseil tree at about 70m. Alvin, Richard and Jo tackled the left line. A good jamming first pitch to a flying column was followed by a second pitch with an unprotected crux that entailed five metres of thin face climbing followed by a leap of faith to a jug. We called it Communism, E2 5b. Keith and Fiona tackled a very probable looking but steep crack line just to the left of the cave. They learnt once again that lines are not always what they seem and the steep crack proved beyond them.

As the pasture was the main source of water for miles around, we had a few other overnight visitors apart from Neil Mullinger and his partner. We had the secret hole-digger, grunting and snuffling, that seemed to enjoy nocturnal visits leaving us with rather deep craters for inspection in the mornings. As you will know, getting out of your warm pit in the night for a pee is difficult enough, but made extra exciting with the prospect of facing some hellish barguest, some lupine fiend with blood spattered teeth. It was a long run to the nearest holy shrine.

At the same time we were visited by another Englishman, a high plains drifter who kept to himself, carried only a tiny rucksack and slept in the old barracks wrapped in a thin blanket. We noted that his visit also coincided with the presence of the nocturnal beast. Strange. There was a party of four young lads (well young to us) from Israel who annoyed us greatly by disturbing our sanctuary with loud music being played late into the night. Ironically, Bob Marley's Stand Up For Your Rights was a favourite tune. We also spent an entertaining evening with a group of seven Montenegrin men who were hiking a 'few' of the nearby peaks all in one day. We wondered about these men but didn't pry, there are issues in these parts of the Balkans best left unspoken.

In a country with a population less than Leeds – in an area considerably smaller than West Yorkshire - it seemed unlikely that these fifty-something-year-old men had not been to some degree witness to, or the victims of, the terrible atrocities inflicted on the minority Muslim population on the northern border. Yet in this wilderness we shared drinks and heard the passion for their country's independence, their history and culture.

We were also woken one morning by an English speaking teacher from Thethi who had 'nipped up' for a quick walk before starting work at 9am back in Thethi as a volunteer for the Balkan Peace Park Project. We had already heard about the Peace Park project via our very own Richard Hargreaves who is deeply involved in helping the project which aims to create a trans-national, cross-border park in these adjoining mountain areas of Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro. Richard was instrumental in helping us get our bearings and finding Pavlin who made our logistics run like clockwork.

We were also visited by thousands of blue butterflies which, though beautiful by day, were a pest at night. We'd wake in the morning to find our Thermarests and groundsheets spattered with squashed pupae. We were also visited by midges that Fiona had assured us wouldn't be at this altitude and on their first appearance she and Jo ran to their tents and reemerged festooned in mosquito netting: very funny! Finally our time was up and our horses arrived to carry a much lighter load down. For us the descent to Thethi was both quicker and more pleasant than the initial walk-in, and gave us time to prepare ourselves for the rough road out in what was even more tremendous heat. We came down a day earlier than planned in order to explore the scenic and fascinating village of Thethi and to enjoy the hospitality of Pavlin's family home, Albanian cuisine, the local Reki and irresistible cheeses. The day was spent with camaraderie and laughter, soothing our aches and pains by swimming in the rock pools of Nderlysa surrounded by alpine peaks and drinking river cooled beers sold by an enterprising local. A perfect ending to a grand meet in a remarkable country.

Left: Richard Toon on Ottoman

Photographer: Alvin Wood



88 PEOPLE, PLACES & POLEMICS

Marching to the Sound of THE DRILL

When the first bolted routes appeared in Britain more than three decades ago they were greeted with almost uniform hostility from the mainstream. Over recent years, however, attitudes have changed and the bolt is becoming accepted as legitimate fixed protection. Wye Valley and South West activist, Tony Penning, disagrees and makes and a powerful and passionate case for The Climbers' Club to defend the great traditions of free climbing in Britain before it is too late.

By Tony Penning

July 2012 and I was back in the Alps. My love affair with the Italian side of the Mont Blanc range had lost none of its passion. This time I was with Mike Mitchell, a strong climber who could (luckily) carry more than his share. I especially enjoyed our chats over beer and crisps on the meaning of life.

We were flogging up a steep, vegetated, rocky hillside trying to get to our third new route of the trip. We had seen this big, beautiful lump of rock a week earlier when we had climbed a small, (750m) previously virgin, rock peak. This new lump was about 350m in height with a great looking groove line running up it. I hadn't been able to think of anything else since we had first seen the cliff and was now wishing that I could run.

After three hours we arrived below a good-looking wall of about 100m that had several striking lines on it. My friend Luca had told us that there was a bolted climb somewhere in the area, but the only wall I could think about was this one and I couldn't imagine anyone wanting to bolt a wall like this.

We stared at the wall. Eventually Mike shouted, 'there they are'. My eyes followed to where he was pointing. Sure enough, there was a line of bolts running up the wall, just an arm's span from a crack system. It didn't make sense. Why would anyone think this was a good idea?

To drill holes in the rock must have hurt and the noise

in this incredible area would have been horrendous. I stared in disbelief. After 10 minutes Mike reminded me why we were here and we continued towards our objective. I was now in a black mood which Mike must have sensed as he stopped talking.

Bolting on this side of the range was becoming common. In 1988 I had climbed a route on the west face of Mont Gruetta with Pete Cresswell that had taken us three attempts spread over a fortnight. I have since learnt there is now a climb to its left with 80 bolts. In 2005 I climbed a route on The East Face of a satellite on The Jetoula. There is now a fully bolted climb to its right. There are others. As we drew nearer to our beautiful lump my mood lightened again. We climbed easily for about 50m to a ledge and prepared our kit. We then climbed another easy 50m (Severe) to the cave-like overhang and uncoiled our ropes. The next pitch, VS, took us across a fine slab to a belay under an overhang below the groove line. We couldn't climb the overhang but there was a ramp above us leading out rightwards that might be the key. It was. The ramp took us out right but then the rock allowed us to take a circular route back left to below our groove line. This pitch was E2 5b, and we were getting there. A climb like this is a courtship: I had to take my time.

Just before I had left for the Alps I discovered that one of my climbs at Ban-y-Gor had been retro-bolted without my

Right: Would you spoil this beautiful alpine wall by drilling bolts?

Photographer: Tony Penning

consent. In this state the climb was written up in the new Climbers' Club Wve Valley supplement, and, to add insult to injury, a photo was included of someone climbing it after it had been bolted. I spoke about this with John Harwood who had seconded me on the first ascent, but otherwise I kept my own counsel. I was hurt. I'm guessing, but at least two, maybe three, CC members will have known about this before it was included in the guide. Didn't they care about how I would feel or had they no respect for the tradition of the climb? The policy statement at the front of the guide states amongst other things: The CC supports the tradition of using natural protection and that it's opposed to retrospective placing of bolts. I decided to give myself time to think and the Albs would be the best place for me to do that. I had spent several years working on the parent guide to The Lower Wye Valley and had sat on a working party to decide how best to move forward with regard to fixed gear and best practice. I started to feel I had wasted mv time.

The groove line was barred again by another overhang so I traversed rightwards to below two narrow grooves. The left groove wouldn't let me in but the right did, but only for a move before it pushed me into the left groove. I climbed this for a few moves but it rejected me too and I was forced into the right groove again. Although I had a couple of good nuts in by now, I was feeling the strain. I climbed just a few metres before the right groove sent me left again, over the top of the left groove and onto an arête where I could get in a good cam and take a hanging belay. I brought Mike up to my airy position and we looked over at the main groove-line still eight metres away. While we thought this pitch would weigh in at E3 we had a feeling that the rock wanted more from us before it would let us in.

About 12 or so years ago I attended a bolt debate in South Wales and was surprised at some of the comments from the pro-bolters. One of them taunted the defenders of traditional ethics with the claim that: 'you've had your day, it's our turn now'. Separately, an aggressive young sport climber from Gloucester said, after hearing of my routes in the Albs, that I was a dinosaur. These comments – and

others when I've chopped or spoilt bolts at Wintours Leap - made me re-consider my position. Perhaps I was out of step with the rest of British climbing? An excuse I often hear for bolting a trad climb is that the route wasn't getting climbed and that with the addition bolts it suddenly becomes popular. Is that a fair point? Another reason for bolting is, 'it's not natural limestone it's just a quarry'. But that doesn't really explain Dinas Rock, Ban-y-Gor and by the way, what's happening at High Tor now?

From our hanging perch I sketched leftwards onto a steep slab and then moved up and right to two thin cracks in an overlap. I was in a very uncomfortable position and using Mike's eves as a guide managed to select and place a small cam into the crack. I couldn't climb direct but had to almost drop into position in the crack and then layback it furiously to a thankgod hold. The main groove was no nearer and I had to climb up and right to find some gear. The only placement I could get was a medium sized nut slotted down into some loose rock. I then put two long slings on it and moved left to look into the groove. Between the groove and me there was a blank looking wall, and I started to wonder if this was the end. Above, the rock bulged and was featureless. I looked across the blank wall again: this had to go. In the middle of the wall was a good hold but how to get there and what would I do if I could? Between the hold and me was a small crimp. I reached for the crimp, it was rough. I stepped out onto a smear, moved onto the crimp, matched and reached for the good hold. It worked, but I was scared so reversed and tried to calm down. I put my ear to the rock to listen to its heartbeat. It was much slower than mine. I stayed like this until my heart slowed to the same beat as the rock. Once calm I took the crimp again, danced on the smear and took the good hold with both hands. Still only smears and tiny crystals for my feet, I would have to be guick now. Above and left were some handholds. I tried to use them but they were wrong for my body and I retreated onto the good hold again. My arms were tiring. One rope stretched off right out of sight to a dodgy nut in loose rock, while the other snaked





lazily down to Mike who was also out of sight and unaware of the game taking place. Above and slightly right was a thin, fragile looking, vertical edge. I could just reach up and touch it with my right hand. If I went for it with both hands the commitment would be total. I stretched up again and let my fingertips settle. I smeared up and took it with my left hand as well, it didn't snap. I moved again: no going back now. I wanted my left foot on the good hold but I was facing the wrong way. If I fell now, no regrets, this is where I was supposed to be.

By the time I arrived back in the UK I had made my decision with regard the retro-bolting of my climb at Ban-y -Gor. I think the bolts in that nice looking wall in the Albs had been the final straw. I e-mailed a CC committee member to ask if they could contact the person who had blaced the bolts and ask them to restore the climb to its original state. I didn't want to cause any trouble and I thought they might have more success than me. They replied that they didn't think the person concerned would be able to, as they don't live nearby. We exchanged a few more polite e-mails and then I received an e-mail from another CC committee member. They explained that it wasn't their responsibility. I replied that I thought it was. given the CC policy statement, and suggested that perhaps they should remove the statement from future publications if nothing was being done to uphold its principles. They replied and I quote (I've still got the e-mails) that: 'we don't want to get involved.' They also suggested that I contact the BMC. I did and spoke to someone who said they would get back to me, but they didn't. I then received an e-mail from another CC committee member who had contacted the person who had placed the bolts. The committee member said that the bolter had given his blessing for them to be removed. This e-mail, even more than the others. demonstrated a complete lack of understanding of what was happening and how I felt. Why on earth should we have to seek the permission of the retro-bolter to remove the bolts, when the bolts were drilled in to the rock without the consent of the first ascentionist and against the policy of the Club? By now I was feeling a bit of a nuisance. I must be out of step with everyone else. I was at a loss as to

what to do next. I work and play on the cliffs of the Wye Valley, they mean a great deal to me. Perhaps it was time for me to accept retro and factory bolting even though it now threatens the foundations of British climbing heritage. A week or two went by and I received an e- mail from the first person I had contacted to say the climb would be restored to its trad state. I'm grateful but wary now. When two climbs I had seconded Pat Littlejohn on were retro-bolted at Taffs Well. Pat drove down from North Wales and spent the day with others trying to restore the climbs. They only managed to restore one and the other remains bolted. When they were first climbed they were very important routes. They still are. The manner in which they were first climbed was amazing.

With regard to retro and factory bolting I promised myself not to get upset unless it involved Wintour's Leap or Langattock in South Wales. In September 2012 I heard via Facebook that there was to be a BMC area meeting at Boulders in Cardiff to discuss, amongst other things. bolting at Llangattock. There is an agreement in the local guidebook that there will be no bolts at Llangattock, but the sports boys are running out of rock to bolt. It was bound to happen. I realise everything changes so I attended the meeting with an open mind. There was a good crowd and the event was chaired by a BMC area rep, with a full time rep in attendance. When it got to Llangattock the first proposal (there were others) was to put in bolted lower offs. Before anyone knew what climbs these would be above, or why they should be there, the chair asked for a show of hands. The full time rep spoke and said that he thought Llangattock should have a separate meeting and fortunately this was agreed.

The meeting went on to discuss other bolting matters and the BMC rep chairing the meeting put his hand up in support of most of the bolting proposals. The full time rep at one point reminded everyone of the free bolts available from the BMC. We then went on to discuss placing a bolt on one of Martin Crocker's routes. At this point I asked the chair: 'Why don't you ask Martin'. He replied 'We don't need to if we get enough votes'. I couldn't understand what he had just said and sat for 10 minutes trying to work it out. In the end I asked the person on my right what the BMC area rep

Left: Mike about to traverse to the airy belay position.

Photographer: Tony Penning

Right: Tony engulfed by the crack.

Photographer: Tony Penning collection.



meant. He said that in South East Wales and Gower there was now an agreement that if you get enough votes you don't need the first ascentionist's permission to retro-bolt a climb. This has national implications and, if this was agreed at a BMC chaired meeting, I would have expected the BMC to contact every climber in the land. After the meeting I spoke to the two BMC reps and asked 'should the chair be voting at BMC meetings?' I'm not sure they knew. Should they?

Climbers believe that trad climbing in Britain is in a healthy state. I don't. Except for a small minority, trad climbing is dying out. The quarries are often busier than the trad crags and the bolted climbs at Cheddar are becoming polished after just a few years. The mighty Crow looks on with no signs of wear after 42 years. If someone puts up a bolted climb in Woodcroft Quarry it's being repeated before details are released. Climbers turn up with their cheat sticks and move bolt to bolt. It's safe and, with a few mates, I guess it's fun. At Wintour's Leap there is a popular E2 5c with two bolts. The first bolt is on the lower crux and that move has become polished. I suggested once that the bolts

be removed to preserve the climb and the grade changed to E3 5c. I was told that this would be elitist. The problem is that if the bolt stays, in 20 years it won't be do-able even with the bolt at E2 5c. This climb has already had several ascents without using the bolts for protection.

Why don't we leave the rock alone? If we can't climb it because we can't protect it, why not leave it in its virgin state? What better legacy could we leave future generations of climbers in our crowded islands than unspoilt and unclimbed rock, waiting for the next wave of adventure climbers to rise to the challenge? As I get older I want to give the rock more chance. Now I would rather fail on a new route than bring it down to my level. That hasn't always been the case but I'm learning.

Avon could be next to fall. There are meetings taking place now to discuss the rotting fixed gear. They will agree that the pegs cannot be replaced, we won't change the grade, and the minimalist bolt ethic will move in. That's how it starts. Climbers will say this is great, that the advent of bolts has made the crags busier than ever as they blindly march, lemming-like, to the relentless sound of the drill.

Right: Warren Harding: the undisputed king of Yosemite in the late 1950s.

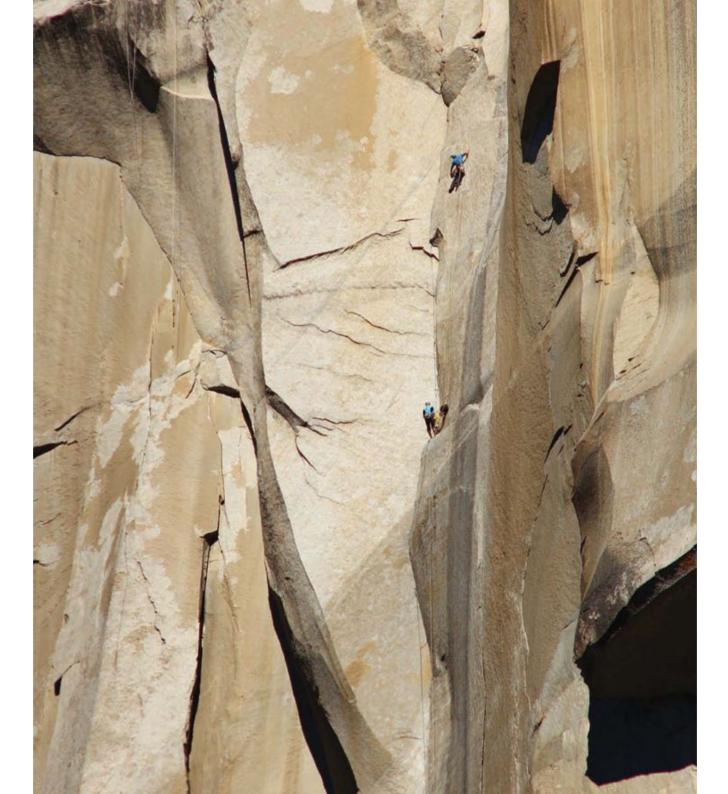
> Photographer: Galen Rowell



California DREAMING

Rolling on the Stone. By James McHaffie

Arrow Climbers. By Phil Gibson



Rolling on the Stone

After a disappointing trip to Yosemite in 2011, James McHaffie was determined to even the scores in 2012. Teaming up with Hazel Findlay and Neil Dyer, the trio made the second ascent of PreMuir, one of the most coveted prizes in the Valley. James also came within a whisker of a day ascent of Golden Gate.

By James McHaffie

his was a considerably different trip from last year – when everything that could go wrong, did go wrong – although we still left a regrettably large carbon footprint. The highlights. for those with short attention spans, included freeing every pitch of PreMuir with Neil Dyer and Hazel Findlay after some abortive efforts to get going due to weather and hold-ups. Also up with the best moments was watching Dan McManus and Callum Muskett climbing Golden Gate over five days and me trying Golden Gate in a day with Dan. The most satisfyingly sadistic moment of the trip was the sight of a young friend stuck in/on the Hollow flake chimney.

The Medal of Honour though has to go Hazel whose performance on the *PreMuir*, each and every sun-baked day, was of the highest order: some of the best climbing I have seen. It didn't surprise me when I heard a top American climber suggest that she is probably the best female trad climber in the world. Although Dyer, the third member of our team, missed out a few of the easier pitches, which were awkward in a rope of three, he was without doubt the strongest member of the trio and could easily have freed it all. Neil's climbing became more and more of an enigma to me as we gained height: I could see the limits of his climbing ability nowhere in my sights.

Despite a great trip, things didn't look too good when we set off. After losing my partner, Ben Bransby, to a rare form of labrynthitis, I was left with vague messages from potential partners hurtling down from Canada in a 'car of chaos'. Filled with philosophers and waifs their ETA was unknown even to them. Messages about how hot the weather was weren't

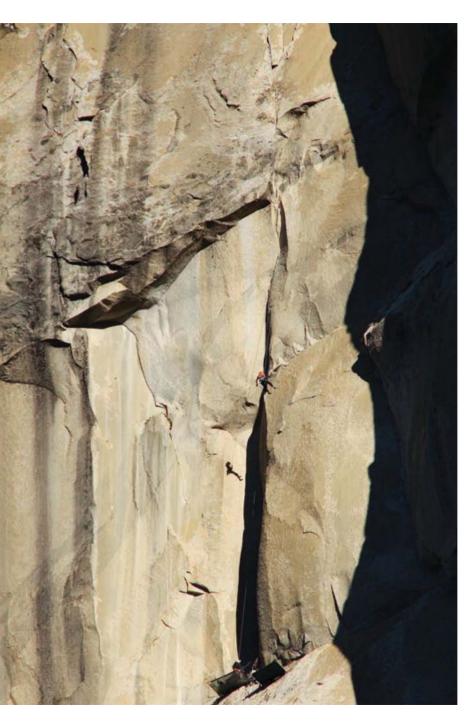
sounding optimistic either. I'd written off using my new haul bag and was going to try persuading Dyer into making day hits on Freerider and some other big routes.

But things quickly picked up. Climbing with Dan and Callum on the first few days was ace. We started off on Astroman. With just a litre of water between us, this meant that the last five pitches were climbed with syrup-like mouths. After Astroman, Callum was keen to go pulling on the knobs in Tuolumne Meadows. hoping for cooler conditions. But Dan and I persuaded him that the hot cracks of Yosemite were where it was at. As they began their preparations for Golden Gate, McManus was probably the most psyched person in the Valley at that point. Just before they set off I drove to fetch Dyer from Merced. We passed under El Cap at midnight to the sound of the Rolling Stones. The moonlight made the perfect stone glow in the dark and Dyer was instantly stoked for a look at the Muir Wall. Impatiently, we make plans to try the first quarter of this face called the Muirblast.

After a day of rest we get up at 2.00 am and climb Moby Dick by head torch followed by two 5.12s, before a third pitch is climbed as dawn lights the wall. This means we arrive at the 5.13b traverse well before the sun hits the face, as the weather is still baking. Having seen a piccy of Kurt Smith undercutting across the roof on this pitch, I set off doing the same and, after a quick tussle, fall off. Realising that shorties like me need to palm across it, I take a quick rest at the belay and it goes. Three more great pitches lead up to Heart Ledges where we abseil off, talking about the best day's climbing we've ever had.

Left: James McHaffie on Pitch 23 of the PreMuir – a 5.12c corner and face typical of the demanding climbing on the route. Caff says this one pitch alone would weigh in at E6 6b/c in old monev.

Photographer: Tom Evans



Hazel tells us that her potential partner hasn't made it to the Valley, but Neil and I think she's blown him out as Neil is way better looking and I've a much greater fashion sense. As the idea of *Muir Wall* on El Cap was Hazel's it was natural that we should form a team. Neil and I haul a bag containing 60 litres of water and other such crap up to Grey Ledges, which is about 16 pitches. The day after, I set off on the *Muirblast* with Hazel whilst the legendary Dyer stoically hauls a bag of food on his own.

We arrive at the 13b traverse at first light. Hazel had been saying all sorts of self-deprecating stuff on the way up, but when she mentioned the word 'flow' I was concerned about her sanity let alone her climbing ability. When she set off quite slowly across the easier bit I settled in for a long belay stint. I'd told people I wouldn't be surprised if she flashed it. But when she elegantly waltzed the crux in the same, slow, effortless way I was impressed. We reach Heart and give Dyer a hand hauling to beyond Mammoth. On the way down we have a panoramic view of McManus who, having built the Monster Offwidth up the last month, was adamant he was going to do it in the shade. Unfortunately Salathe was as busy as it gets and he was forced to do it in the sun. It was great to hear the Welsh language in full flow on the Cap.

Callum: 'Iawn Dan'

Dan 'Cae dy Geg ****'!

Dan did a great lead in the midday heat.

Going back up a day later, Hazel leads 12b(E5/6) by head torch and I lead through linking a 12d and 11d as the aid belay is in the middle of the crux. Arriving on Grey Ledge my heart sinks as two really nice aid climbers, Mike and Mike, are climbing the *Shield* which makes a fankle probable. By the time they've polished off the 13b corner it's in the sun and mission

Left: Hazel Findlay lowers off the beautiful 5.13c/d crux corner to portaledges after working the route. The team spent the next eight or so hours hiding from the sun before finishing the pitch that evening.

Photographer: Tom Evans

shutdown ensues. I have a burn and after two falls reach an impasse. Hazel does a superb effort breaching the impasse via a heinous move only to fall high on the final corner. I second, but realising that time is getting on I suggest to Hazel that she presses on to the next belay anyway she can. When I arrive beside her it's very cold and neither of the two pitches we'd wanted to have in the bag are completed. On top of this the forecast was shit; we couldn't communicate with Dyer; and aid climbers were coming up to use the good bit of Grey Ledges.

Feeling gutted I suggest we bail as thoughts of the Sierra Nevada in the beer locker to commiserate our efforts became prominent. We fix down to Mammoth and have a beer. After a couple of days getting impatient in Camp 4 the forecast is for it to shit out at 11.00. As Dyer had done no climbing, and these pitches were awkward in a three, we head up and do the corner and slab first go before patching the haul bags up to weather the rain. Dyer does everyone a favour by replacing three of the fixed lines down from Heart.

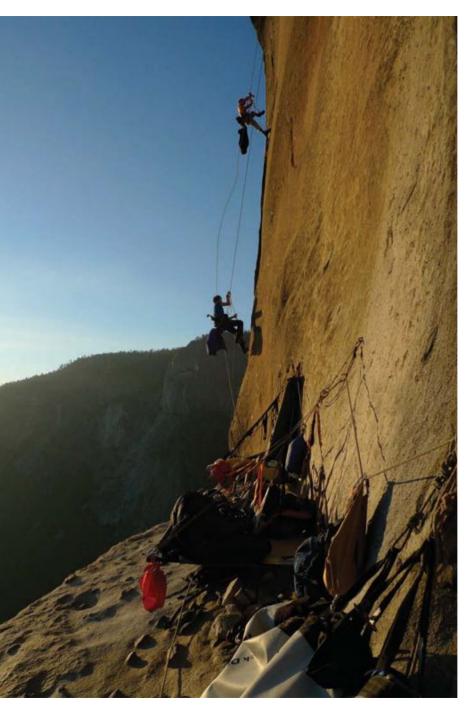
At Camp 4 another prospective member of the team arrives briefly and having mentioned 'ballistic' and 'ethics' many times in a conversation I am slightly relieved he isn't coming up Muir as I associate neither of these things with our current efforts. We are keen to do it in similar style to the Caldwell/Shaft ascent. That means, up to Heart, have a rest day on the deck, and then go. With the weather being a bit shit, an extra rest day or two was had.

Nico Potard and Paulo set off on the Friday in the turd weather and we join them at Grey ready for a final push. Hazel does the 13b corner first go and Neil follows through climbing the 13a slab first go with Hazel making short work of it too. We do two easier

Right: Neil Dyer stretching for the so-called 5.12b reach move which Hazel found impossible and was forced to find an alternative more, direct way. Many of the so-called easier pitches caused the team real problems.

Photographer: Tom Evans





pitches and bivvy on the *Triple Direct* just down left 150ft of the Great roof on the Nose).

The next day is a big one in the sun. An 11d link into a 12b, a 12a/b layback, a 12c layback and hauling may not sound much, but it felt it. Hazel laybacks up the 11d leading to beneath the crux and pulls out of sight onto what had looked like a ledge from the Meadow in the Valley floor. I hear her moaning about it being hard. I manage to hold my tongue wanting to tell her to get on with it which is lucky as it is an awful and desperate pitch when seconding. It felt like a 12c slab with very loose flakes making climbing across it feel like the old game 'operation' as the flakes would decimate teams starting the *Nose* 2000 feet below us (although we were acclimatising to the exposure, there were times when it really grabbed you by the throat).

We make a base beneath the crux which looks incredible and find that Nico and Paolo have been kind enough to leave three pegs in place. Keen to save time, I aid the corner that night and lower down to climb it with two rests and sleep more happily in the knowledge it was doable. The next day is quite fierce. We all warm up with a burn up the corner on a rope; then me and Hazel check out the top crack which has a boulder problem sting in the tail. We wait out the heat, and in the evening I have a burn on a rope in the dying sun to save time and Dyer blasts the corner looking like Samson pulling the temple apart and almost flashes the top crack. Hazel, Little Ms Patience, makes an awesome ascent. Pulling the ropes, she leads it easily on her first go. Under pressure, I was well happy to second this pitch before darkness fell. I was so close to falling off the top crack it felt like a stiff breeze was the only thing that blew me into the final finger locks.

The next day is another big one in the sun. After

Left: Neil and Caff jugging up Pitch 33 in the evening light, the second of the big 5.13 pitches and the one that almost stopped them. The team were bivvied for two nights on the spacious Chicken Head Ledge.

Photographer: Hazel Findlay



Left: Stace below their feet - Neil and Caff reflecting on the pitches they have climbed and hard corner still to come. The team were on the route for five days and came close to running out of food and water.

Photographer: Hazel Findlay

losing an hour to mincing we arrive on a 13a traverse involving a burly down climb of an arête to a dyno for a jug where your feet run out, necessitating the swift execution of two quite filthy moves before a much easier lip traverse. Racing the sun as it creeps across the face makes for a frantic effort. After falling near the end on my first go I get it next time, thinking it quite reachy. I was super impressed with Hazel who quickly worked out a shorty sequence in the full sun. The next 12b gave us all some grief, but Hazel coolly improvised a midget variation. I knew some of my friends back home like Pete Robbins would be well suited to the brilliant 12d pitch beyond: involving some hot knob pulling, it led to some great ledges where we had some porridge and grub.

Dyer led the next traversing 12a dyno pitch which took us to a fantastic ledge above the shield wall. As the others were setting up the ledges, I quickly fix the 11d above the belay ready for the next morning; this involved using shrubs to reach a chicken wing to gain a layback. As I abbed to the belay I was thankful that I didn't have to climb this choss pitch in the morning.

The next day starts badly. I can hear strange noises coming from Hazel on the 11d as I'm belaying. At first these sounds are amusing, but after ten minutes they become more worrying. It seems that Hazel has gone the wrong way on the layback and become stuck in a chimney. It was seriously close to a 999 episode and I was concerned both for Hazel and myself. How would I explain this to her dad when he paid me the inevitable visit? Luckily our dihedral diva extricated herself, and we continued via an ace 12b to the penultimate pitch which was a 13c corner. Me and Hazel check it out before Dyer pulls a blinder flashing it easily on second. In euro money this adds up to 7c laybacking to half height and then gets really hard for the last 10 metres. We hang out, trying to hide from the sun. Just before dark I give it three burns in 15 minutes slipping off the easier bit each time. I was pissed off and knew the evening was going to be long. Hazel has a sterling first



burn, almost catching the ledge post-hard climbing. On her next few goes she is more tired and things begin winding down with Dver having belaved the both of us for three hours by headtorch. I ask for one last go and manage to slither to a high point, pasting my feet wherever I slap the ledge, mantel and spin round to look down at the vast sweep of El Cap below me and crow with delight at my friends. Hazel quietly sends it on her next go and we have a very tired final feast on our ledge. Topping out the next day was fantastic and I was more than happy with how we'd climbed it with Neil and Hazel being great company on the wall: Neil giving the strength: Hazel the next gen' talent; and me the impatient edge. Almost every pitch was as good as it gets. My sense of happiness and relief at having finished the route is tinged with sadness as I realise that we might never climb in the same team again. The moment passes.

The first rest day doesn't go too well, losing a forfeit in cards with McManus to decide who would have to lead the Monster Offwidth on our first one day-bid on Golden Gate which, with the weather due to pull in, unfortunately had to be sooner rather than later. Dyer and Callum are going for Freerider the same day and. with Naomi and Gareth on the Nose there were jokes about a mass Brit rescue as the weather was due to go bad at 23.00. After two days rest we set off at midnight and things don't start well. Falling low down I realise I've put the dud batteries in my torch. As I'm blocking to Mammoth, Dan kindly lends me his torch. Chatting to him about how much better life is, I fall again on a 4b move cursing into the night. There is no excuse for climbing without due care and attention and I feel ill, knowing that Dan would be thinking 'what am I doing on the cliff with this clown?' Not wanting to let Dan down I pull myself together, re-climb it, and things go fast and smooth from here to 'the Move' pitch. Dan hasn't fallen to here and having grabbed a good sidepull he needs only to get his right foot up. He has two goes, getting achingly close each time. With grey clouds closing in around us, time is no longer on our side. I get close on the second, twice in ten minutes.

Dan tells me later he found it horrible to watch as my fingers uncurled on the finishing holds. We hit the Tower for the People (pitch 30, with just eight to go) zonked and anxious about the weather: some of our friends have abbed off to escape the gathering storm. Going French free, and getting a little lost in the night, we top out around ten and stagger down east ledges to Camp 4, both of us more knackered than we had ever been. The heavy rain comes down an hour or two later.

If Dan had got through 'the Move' pitch I'm pretty convinced he'd have polished it off or would have gotten deadly close. Dan has been one of Britain's best trad climbers for a decade now and has been going very well the last two years: if any companies would like to give him free gear (like Scarpa and DMM) he'd be a great ambassador. When I next go to Yosemite, Golden Gate in a day, with a bigger weather window, will be top of my list. The effort I'd put in to that attempt left me unable to open my eyes for more than 20 seconds for two days, looking like Moley from Wind in the Willows enviously at everyone with 20/20 vision.

Dyer cooks up a mega feed round a fire in Camp 4 on the final night in the Valley. Me, Dan and Callum finish the holiday hanging out in San Francisco eating loads. The Fort Mason YHA overlooking the Golden Gate and Alcatraz must be one of the best-located YHAs in the world.

A mega trip.

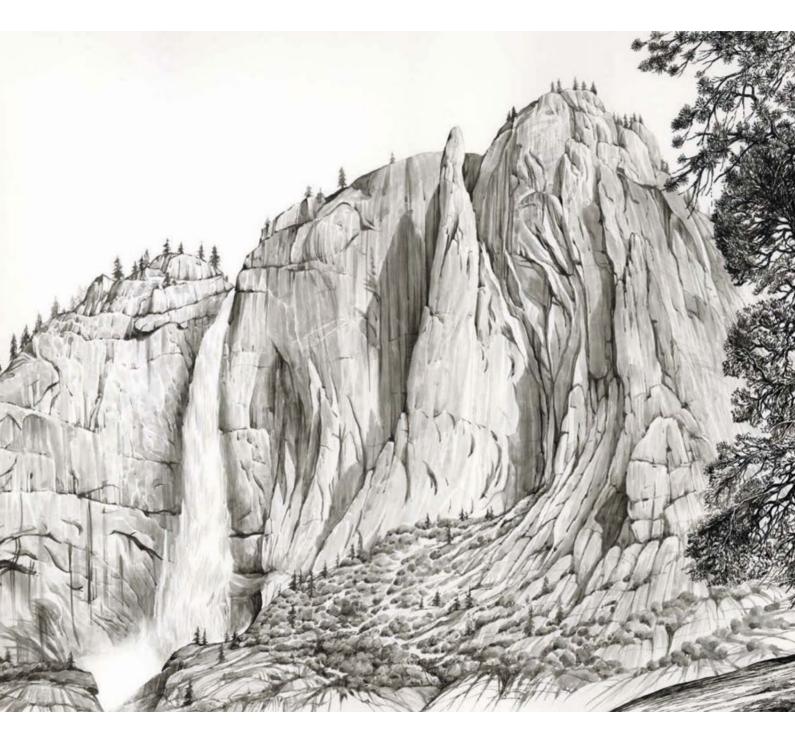
Thanks a lot to my mega partners: Pete Graham for helping haul gear to El Cap's base; Justen Sjong for ace beta; Scott Cosgrove and Kurt Smith for being bold enough to find the line and placing the belay bolts for our horrifically heavy haul pigs; Nico and Paulo for the begs: and Will Stanhobe for not just bicking up the bags, but for ferrying Neil and Hazel from the picnic car bark.

Thanks also to Sophie for not having too many parties while her devious partner was away, my Sponsors for ace gear to try and trash and the 'Brenin for the time off.

Left:

Too tired to sing or dance but elated to have succeeded - three of Britain's strongest climbers on the second ascent of the PreMuir on Yosemite's El Cap.

Photographer: James McHaffie





Arrow CLIMBERS

Like many climbers in the late 1970s the artist and designer Phil Gibson was inspired to make the pilgrimage to Yosemite. Here he recounts his first visit to the Valley and a gruelling and sometimes surreal ground up ascent of the Lost Arrow Spire by way of the rarely climbed Lost Arrow Chimney.

By Phil Gibson

rian shouts up: echoed Americanisms in the deep, dark chasm. 'Good job, Phil'.

'No Brian, I'm bloody terrified', I bawl back. 'These old bolts are rotten and I'm 20 feet from my last runner'. There was no reply. What the hell, he can't hear me against the roar of Yosemite Falls which muffles the sound of my surging panic.

I continue to back and foot up the perfectly dimensioned shaft running vertically through the bowels of the Lost Arrow, trying to hold back the vision of my body rattling down the inside of the chasm to be pressed and mangled into the narrows below him.

Would we get out of here? As an abseil retreat would be impossible down eight pitches of twisting, contorting, ropetangling chimney, I have to press on.

It is seven in the morning, September 1978, and I am asleep in Euston Station. A voice on the tannov interrupts my dreaming with an announcement that my train to Stoke is about to depart. Jumars, bongs, and pitons pierce my back through the bedraggled haul bag as I awake, arched, across the cold mirrored floor. I am on the final leg of my journey home from The Trip and am jet lagged; my mind echoes to the thunderous roar of water, and memories of scraped knees, torn elbows, a thirst-wrenching throat, the

Left: Ink drawing of Yosemite Falls, Lost Arrow with Giant Seauoias.

Artist: Phil Gibson

Right: One year after success on Lost Arrow Gibson returns to the valley.

Photographer: Gibson collection searing heat, and soaring granite walls under cobalt skies.

But I am inconsolable. After only a few hours back in the UK, I have had my films, expensive Pentax camera, sketchbook and hand luggage stolen as I slumbered. The only thing they couldn't take, ironically, was the huge hardware laden sack now pricking at my dream.

Poignantly, I remembered the words of Aleister Crowley: 'I had done it myself and found not only that the pearl of great price was worth far more than I possessed, but the very privations of the quest were themselves my dearest memories. I was certain of this at least: that nothing in the world except this was worth doing'.

Only a few months earlier I had just completed six years of training at art school, and was yearning to make the pilgrimage to one of the most beautiful places on earth: the Yosemite Valley. Like so many climbers of my generation I had read many books about it, and as an artist had seen those stark monochrome images by Ansell Adams. For me he had portrayed it all.

But it was Galen Rowell's Vertical World of Yosemite that had intoxicated me and fuelled the desire to struggle up those huge black and white granite walls in the searing Californian heat. Rowell's book is a collection of pioneering adventures by Nelson, Steck, Sherrick, Robbins, Pratt, Chouinard and, above all, Warren Harding. Rowell had photographed Harding sitting in a folding chair below the Firefall Wall wearing a cowboy hat apparently dropped by tourists from above. It summed up the mood of those times.

I was sure my long gritstone apprenticeship and fitness training would serve me well. Five days after my graduation I would be in 'The Valley', deposited by Greyhound transit from San Francisco. I had taken one of the cheap long haul flights familiar to many of that era, a 'Standby' ticket, secured after an overnight pavement campout in front of TWA's London HQ.

Determined to get my ticket, I had inspected the various airline check-ins with my brother the day before to make sure I was first in line. Other climbers

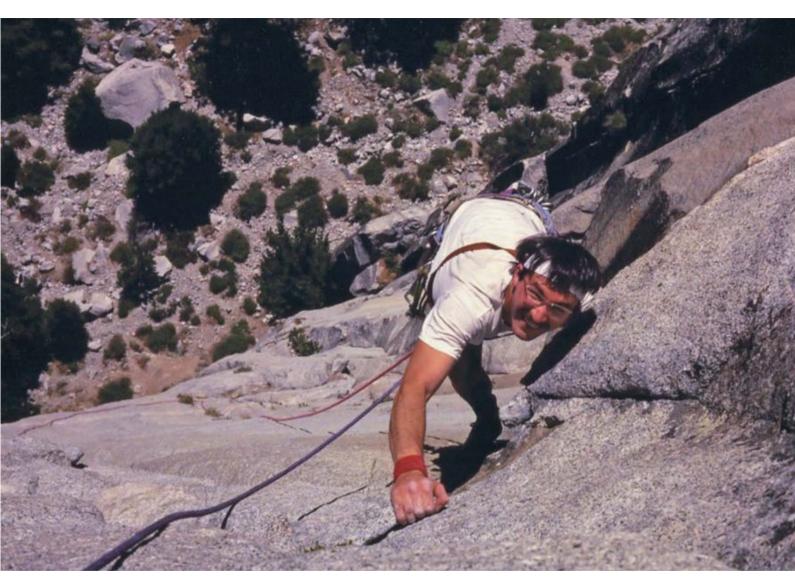
I knew had opted for the longer, more adventurous Route 66 from Chicago to Los Angeles before hitchhiking the final leg from LA to Yosemite. Freddie Laker's 'Skytrain' also opened up the 'American Dream' to many climbers. To the uninitiated it was the 'no frills' airline business model that has since proven to be very successful, but it was better and more honest than today's operations.

Arriving at Camp 4 I felt like a kid on his first day at school. I stood in a short queue to take a plot assigned to me by an important looking Park Ranger sat inside a little cabin. There was a little noticeboard advertising all sorts of American climbing paraphenalia. I pinned my name and plot number up in the hope of recruiting another ambitious spirit. I remember writing in pencil from a torn piece of my sketchbook: Need a climbing partner, Phil, British, Site 21. I also had a natty little Union Jack sewn to the top of my haul sack which I hoped would entice some American climber.

Stavs at the camp were limited to a week and were roughly a couple of 'bucks' per night, but I soon learnt that there were many ways of dodging the system. I simply moved from camp to camp during my time in the valley, and, during the later days when I needed more rest, I preferred to stay at Muir Tree camp: just a short walk away across the Merced River.

Jet-lagged, I wandered through the camp. All was quiet as most people were either out climbing or, equally likely, recovering from an all-night party, high on weed. My tensions were eased by the relaxed and carefree surroundings: the make-do shelters, open camp fires, slack lines stretched between tall pine trees, and the make shift gym apparatus. Above all else, there was the wonderful aroma of the trees. To this day, whenever I find myself amongst pine forests. I am reminded of those golden days in the Yosemite Valley.

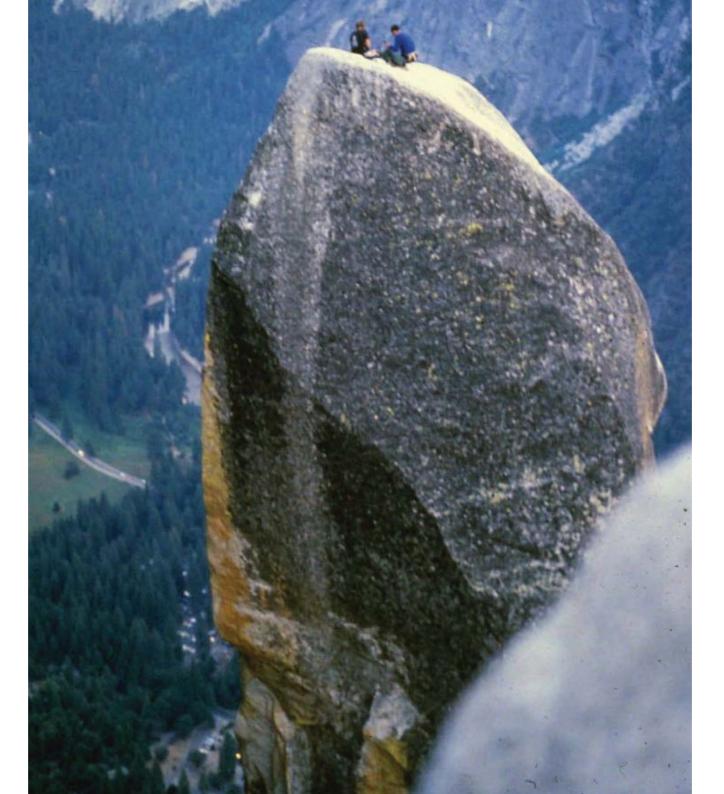
Later that afternoon, after making camp, I wandered over to the visitor centre to get my bearings and see the layout of the valley. Although I knew it well from all the stories I had read, no book can prepare you



for the breathtaking scale and vastness of the Valley. The sheer height of some of the granite walls, rising vertically above forests of giant sequoias, was aweinspiring and inconceivable.

I approached the little kiosk in front of the Yosemite Visitor Centre and asked the neatly dressed Park Ranger if he knew of any climbers who were seeking

partners in the valley. His voice didn't have that wilder Californian drawl, but was a much broader midwestern accent. 'Yep, I get off work mid-afternoon if you wanna go climb a rock,' he said. From that point on Brian became my climbing partner for much of the trip. He was from Denver and we quickly formed a solid climbing team. Friendships happen like that.



Our first climb was Monday Morning Slab (5.8) culminating in Patio to Coonvard (5.10b) on the slabs of Glacier Point Apron. We both thought that this would be a good introduction. Switching leads we had a lot of fun, with Brian taking the inevitable fall or slide on the final section. It was quite comical to see him come skidding down past me in a fixed crab-like position: grimacing as the heat of the friction slide built up on his fingers and boots. It was somewhat akin to climbing on the Etive Slabs, but without the midges.

As the days and weeks rolled by I climbed with a variety of folk from the camp. I got to share a rope with some really slick Californians who showed me some of the tricks of direct aid climbing with stacked nuts and micro wires. Sack hauling too was a new discipline and very hard work, particularly when loaded with water on routes like Washington Column South Face (5.9/A2) and the Steck-Salathé (5.9) on Sentinel. Although I was aching to do Salathé Wall and The Nose on El Cap, the big wall cognoscenti warned me that I would be fried.

Brian had to break from his work programme in the Valley for a brief stint up in Tuolumne Meadows and he invited me along, dropping me at a small campground by Tenaya Lake. It seemed customary for the locals to help the late arrivals pitch their tents and then offer some weed. Most convivial I thought. We got a chance to sample The Yawn (5.9) on Medlicott Dome and many of the other Higher Sierra delights.

As our climbing partnership cemented we both wanted to do one of the more famous classics that would be within our reach. Most days we found ourselves staring up at the Lost Arrow. It was impossible to miss. It was even displayed on postcards and posters everywhere. Brian suggested we hike up, as most teams do, and abseil into the 'notch' to do the Arrow tip. But that would cheat the route, I

Left: Sorting gear on top of the Lost Arrow with the lights glimmering in the valley below. Photographer: Lawrie Parsons



said. Audaciously I suggested we combine it with the esoteric Lost Arrow Chimney (5.10b). It had assumed classic status in Rowell's book and had hooked us both. My thick green Roper guidebook warned: 'Its popularity has waned recently, perhaps due to the sobering knowledge that in 1964 it was climbed without artificial aid by Chuck Pratt and Frank Sacherer'. The problem with this route, however, would be how to get back to the rim once completed.

Brian had a cunning plan. Lawrie, his girlfriend, was due in camp any day. She and another Ranger, Mark Butler, who was also a climber, would hike to the top and engineer a fixed rope at the notch as we exited the chimney. It was a perfect solution, but just to be sure we checked out the start of the approach trail behind the visitor centre the day before. We sorted a varied rack of the largest hexentrics we could lay

Above: Tools of the trade 1978. Chouinard hexentrics. Strawberry Mountain chalk bag, Royal Robbins hollow crabs and Troll sewn tapes.

Photographer: Phil Gibson

Right: As darkness falls we set up a Tyrolean to get off the spire.

Photographer: Lawrie Parsons our hands on and packed a small haul sack to drag our jumars, water and other equipment and supplies through the chimney.

He had arranged to pick me up at 4.30am from Muir Tree campground, but I was awoken in the middle of the night by a tremendous clanging and crashing. It was a group of brown bears rummaging in a nearby waste skip. I dared not move. These 'dumpsters' were a special type of night safe designed to prevent bears from eating our leftovers. All fresh food was stored in bags and hauled up into the trees on cables by the camp occupants to thwart the bears. But that night I had made the potentially fatal mistake of keeping a little grub with me just to get me going in the early morning. When the sound of grunting and sniffing moved towards my tent, believe you me, I made a very sharp exit.

Hiking up in the dark to the base of the Lost Arrow was a real bushwack through sandy forests of scrub oaks and prickly pines. We got completely lost in a dense mist which clung to us as we scrabbled around to find the foot of the chimney. As the light dawned I could just see the silhouette of the spire searing through the mist above. The first few easy pitches of 3rd and 4th class went quickly as we climbed solo. But then Brian got stuck for nearly an hour below an obstinate 5.9 roof somewhere around the third roped pitch. This deposited us, flailing, onto Horseman's Ledge. It was a bad start and I was shouting up to hurry, but we couldn't hear a damn thing with all the noise from the falls.

The crux as I seem to remember, and it turned very nasty, was around pitch 8. The climbing followed a crumbling, gently overhanging groove scarred with pin holes. It felt desperate and dangerous in equal measure. I pulled on some sketchy looking friable flakes in the wall of the chimney where the cleft opened up before everything went blank – very blank. It was a precarious back and foot, chimneying affair. The consequences of a fall were all too obvious – you would go down a long way into a narrow rough chasm which closed very quickly. Without today's modern

camming devices it was almost impossible to protect, and how I wished for knee pads which would have taken the bite out of the rough walls of the chimney. The steepness of the route became evident when I hauled the sack: it never touched rock.

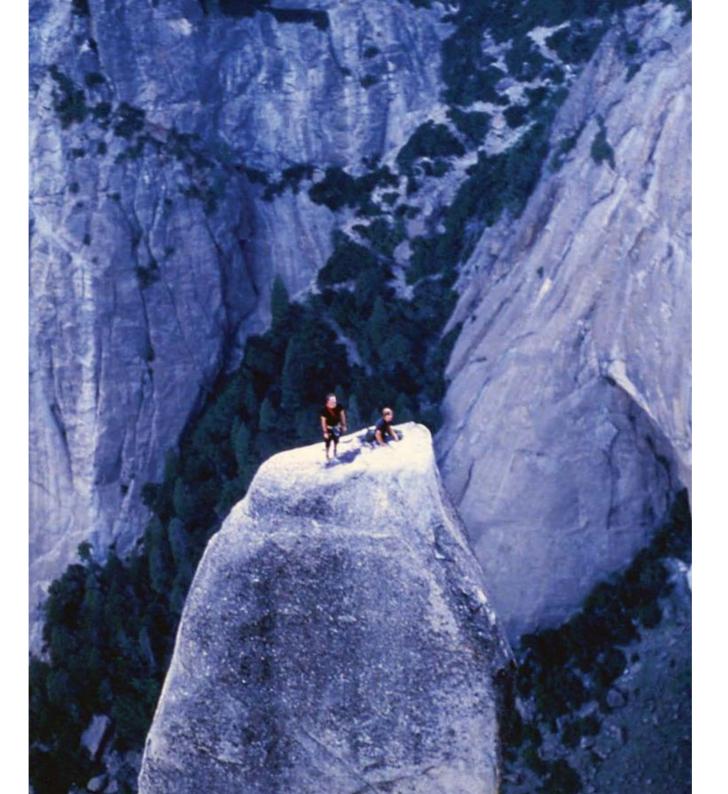
This crux section, which had been aided by earlier parties, was probably A3/4 and was littered with what could be best described as museum relics. Even so you had to put the whole thing into perspective: Salathé had got up the thing in work boots back in the 40s. And here was I in a fancy pair of 'Eddie Merckx' cycling pants which were totally trashed when I reached the notch.

Pitch 9 was the Squeeeeeeze chimney and was like three Elder Cracks in quick succession. It was savage, brutal and totally physical deep in the blackness of this gut of the climb. The whole place had a sinister air and I recalled reading about a tragedy that had happened hearabouts*. We relinquished the Harding Slot as we were both 'big chaps' and opted instead for the alternative pitch 10 finger crack culminating in a small roof. Warren was tiny back then. The hole or slot is a short cut to the notch which pops out above a massive void. It's historic by all accounts. But I didn't fancy caving at 1,400 feet.

Brian was grateful for my gut wrenching lead. We both emerged from that impudent cleft, euphoric, to a wonderful place filled with light and silence.

The final plan was for Lawrie and Mark to drop us fixed ropes so we could climb the Spire connected to the rim and thus set up the tyrolean. No such luck. Either they were delayed, or buzzed out on weed, somewhere on the trail on the way up. We shouted for what seemed an age before giving up and drinking the final dregs of our warm water. At this point we were so delirious with exhaustion that I suggested we should crash on and try throwing the rope across to the rim. Brian was up for anything by now and set off linking the two pitches up to the Salathé ledge. The final pitches were to be mine for the taking and I had delusions of grandeur of leading it free at 5.12b.

Before I set off, however, Ax Nelson's comment



about leaving that ledge came rushing into my brain. It was, he wrote: 'like stepping out the window from the hundredth floor of the Empire State building onto a window ledge'.

All was going well until I hit a series of bolts minus their hangers at the hard section. Free climbing was off the sports plan as I hooked stopper wires over what remained of the corroded hangerless bolts. The exposure was everything Nelson had said and I became spooked by the panoramic drop rotating around me. It was 1,600 vertical feet to the base of the falls. The last 20 feet were on flint-hard, flawless granite, and I arrived at the top screaming in elation.

By now Lawrie and Mark had arrived and were shouting and waving across on the rim. Brian quickly joined me on the very tip and I remember his comment, 'Good job, Phil'. We added our names to the small notebook kept inside a little alloy mess box bolted into the middle of the spire.

From this point on things became surreal as I attempted to 'chuck' the rope across the void to the rim. I tied my peg hammer to weight the end of a good byte of rope and then coiled a tidy loose handful. Giant, whirring arcs of rope circled upwards and then downwards as I attempted to build momentum to bridge the gap. Brian flattened himself against the rock to avoid being struck by the peg hammer as it came whizzing past. Pathetically the hammer and rope dived into the abyss barely making half the distance. I quickly realised that there was no way I could throw a rope 90 feet horizontally. It was hopeless.

After some time Mark yelled across with a solution. The crazy Californian would abseil into the notch and then jumar up the full 150 feet of rope we had dropped down with the jumars attached. His abseil ropes would remain connected to the rim for the tyrolean back.

Absolutely outrageous I thought, as he jugged the overhanging void swinging backwards and forwards. I think he really was high as he whooped in a crazy yell! With all three of us established on the tip Lawrie engineered the rope as we pulled it back to double it up. I was first man out, quickly sliding and diving into

the void as the ropes stretched. Then using the jumars for a 45 degree upwards jug to the tree. I was home free and received a welcoming hug from Lawrie. The American team soon followed, now by moonlight.

Mark and I left the two lovers to spend the night on the rim. As we paused to look from the belvedere we could see a marvellous panorama of the whole valley with many of the falls lit up by the moonlight. Finally we went down into the darkness like battle weary warriors. I still found it hard to accept, as we hiked the eight mile trek down ankle breaking switchbacks, that we had done one of the most gruelling climbs in the Valley in a day.

As one American wrote: 'The day you do the Lost Arrow Chimney is the day you do more work than any other day of your life'.

Lost Arrow Chimney (5.10b) with Lost Arrow Tip (5.10d/A1), 15th August 1978. Free with some aid near the tip. Alt. Leads: Phil Gibson and Brian Parsons.

The following year the route appeared in Fifty Classic Climbs of North America by Steve Roper and Allen Steck. Over the coming years Gibson returned to the Valley to enrich his life with further adventures with his American partners. It would deepen friendships for years to come.

*We will never know what exactly happened. Steve Roper in his 'Recollections of a Yosemite Rockclimber', pp. 110-111, gives the following account of Irving Smith's death in 1960: He may have rappelled off the end of the rope; perhaps the rope knocked a loose rock down onto him. More likely, however, is that he had reached the notch and was making the transition from rappel to the shattered granite gap when he lost his balance or grabbed a loose rock. He plunged into what I regard as one of the most sinister places in the Valley: The Arrow Chimney. His body ricocheted down this dreadful crack for 500 feet, lifeless long before he smashed onto a chockstone ledge.

Right: Cooking on gas: Alex Honnold at home in his rig.

Photographer: Ben Moon



On the Road

My Life with Vera. By Jack Geldard

A Slower Simpler Life. By Alex Honnald

An Obscure Object of Desire. By Hazel Findlay



My Life with Vera

Although he is still a very eligible bachelor and a much sought after companion on the Chamonix dinner circuit, UKC Editor Jack Geldard gives us a private insight into his three year love affair with Vera and how the two of them have toured Europe together in search of new crags and exotic experiences.

By Jack Geldard

era came in to my life in 2009, and I guess I moved in with her as a matter of course. It was just practicality really, an older relationship had ended, leaving me without a place of residence, and, as we got to know each other better, I figured that moving in was the obvious choice.

Vera's got style. She's the strong, powerful type. She's sleek, with no frills, and though she has slightly hippy tendencies and pedigree that goes back to surfing in the 1960s, she has her feet firmly on the ground. Vera is my love. She's a 2006 Volkswagen Transporter van – the partner of choice for so many climbers.

Before we met, she was betrothed to Gavin Jones Ltd and served him faithfully as a tool van. If you look closely you can see that she still bears the imprint of that relationship: the signage on the doors is just visible in the right light. But the last vestiges of her solid working class roots – empty burger wrappers and faded copies of The Sun – have now been replaced with rock shoes, ropes, coffee pots and sleeping climbers.

As soon as Vera and I got together I set about changing her to suit my needs, which is something that is much easier to do with vehicles than it is to do with girlfriends I find. I've always liked converting vans, Vera being my fifth. I'm not going to count my girlfriends though.

A shelf for guidebooks, a comfortable bed, a set-up that allows coffee to be brewed without folding the bed away and a good stereo have always been the hallmarks of a well-designed van in my opinion. Vera ticks all these boxes, and now, after a few years together, she's got that special something too – the

warm patina of shared experiences. We've been to nine different countries together, and with the help of lots of different language CDs pumping out of her stereo, we've bought replacement parts for her in French, German and even Welsh.

'The boats in the harbour slip from their chains, head for new horizons, let's do the same.'

Despite the comforting familiarity of your own van, life on the road can be a strange place. A couple of years ago I was attending the Outdoors Show near Birmingham, in my capacity as climbing journalist. There was a climbing competition at the event, and in-between taking photos and looking at trade stands, I entered the competition and amazed myself by getting though the qualifying round, which meant I had to return the following day for the semi-finals.

This also meant I had to find a spot to park up, in an industrial area on the outskirts of Birmingham. I found a large car park, full of trucks, and nestled in to a leafy corner. A few minutes later, as I was sat in the back of the van playing my guitar and generally conforming to all the van-dweller-hippy stereotypes, there was a knock at the door.

At first glance, Graham (his name has been changed to protect the innocent) looked just like any other large hairy trucker. Then I noticed he had his nails painted, and his eyebrows plucked. Anyway, I accepted his offer of a cup of tea. We had a chat, but I had to tell him that I wasn't interested in sex (not with him at least), so he sauntered off to the next truck, where he had much more luck. The Polish chap was also very friendly, and the pair of them cooked me a bacon sandwich the following morning 'to get my strength

Left:

Another van night: Chess and German Weiss Beer, this time at Ceuse, France.

Photographer: Jude Spancken



up' for the competition that afternoon. It didn't really work, and I failed to get to the finals. It was a nice bacon sandwich though.

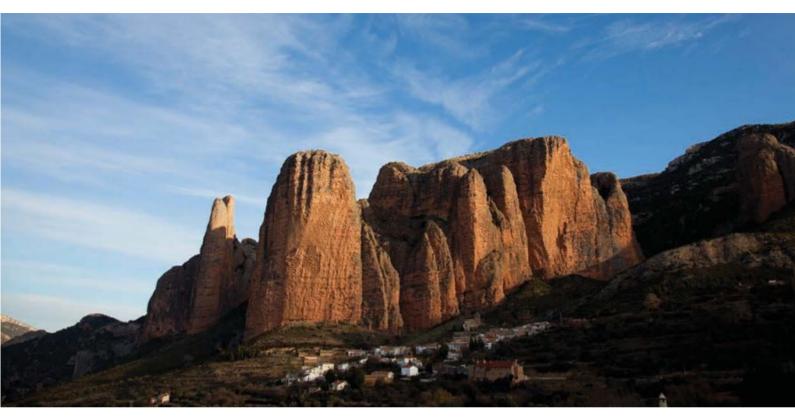
I find that while the day-to-day trials and tribulations of being on the road can often be overcome with a little bit of forward planning, they are an inevitable part of van life. The big three issues for me tend to be toilets, showers and internet connections (or rather the lack of any or all of these things).

As a I'm a bit of a techie geek, I have been able to set up a high power internet rig, which means I can get online in most places. But for the toilets and showers there's no easy solution. More often than not it boils down to a bit of bush-craft; a willingness and capacity to hold it in; or an unscheduled visit to a cafe or campsite.

These things can become a bit of a pain quite quickly, and it is all too obvious for the long-term van dweller that the whole 'on the road' existence is only possible by piggybacking on those who live a more conventional lifestyle: a little bit like our western world, which is only viable because we live on the back of third world poverty and low-cost labour. It would be easy to pour scorn on the semi-detached, Mondeo estate driving, nine-to-fivers, but I'm glad someone pays council tax, or who would empty that bin that I just squeezed my rubbish bag into? And I know that all too soon, I'll be moving in next door. 'Now you're at the wheel, tell me how, how does it feel, so good to have equalised, to lift up the lids of your eyes.'

For the travelling climber, there is definitely a 'world circuit' of venues that are busy with similar climbing bums, and for those who don't have set partners or climbing buddies, these are the places to go, to grab belays, share car parks, and pretend that the climbing bum lifestyle has some meaning or importance. It's funny how, surrounded by the right set of people, talk

Left: Jack following high above the van on the stunning limestone wall of Balme, Arve Valley, France. Photographer: James McHaffie



of grades, rest days, skin and conditions can replace talk of politics, economics and religion with almost the same zeal. But ultimately, for the long-term vanner, these scenes become a little stale, and climbers with other topics of conversation beyond where you can get free wifi need be sought out. But knowing where you can get free wifi is also important.

I picked Sarah up from Barcelona Airport one October evening, and we drove straight to Riglos, home of the famous Conglomerate towers, and arriving late at night, positioned the van in the car park. We'd never been there before, and hoped the crag would be easy to find. The sun rose, gently flowing under the silver window covers and lighting up the duvet in a golden glow. We got up slowly, the towers in full view through the windscreen, almost a stumble from the van door, and we had a leisurely breakfast of coffee and

eggs. The route 'Fiesta de los Biceps' flowed by in a gentle afternoon of pebbles, jugs and fun. We swapped leads, smiling and laughing to the top of the route. The walk down was easy and the views of the rock towers and surrounding landscape, peppered with small but beautiful houses and churches, will stay with me forever.

Back at the van we ate a simple meal of vegetables and pasta, drank most of a cheap bottle of red wine and sank back in the bed after one of the most fun climbing days of my life, the sun setting over the towers as our evening backdrop, and the Stone Roses playing as our evening soundtrack. The next morning we visited the neighbouring refugio, bought two coffees, used the bathroom and filled our water bottles. Then we drove on.

Another day, another crag. Life on the road.

Above: Riglos at sunrise.

Photographer: Jack Geldard





A Slower, Simpler Life

From the dark, still nights of the Utah desert to the bright, incessant neon of the Las Vegas Strip, life on the road can mean sitting round a campfire trading stories with friends, or grumbling exchanges with security guards. After close to a decade on the road, Alex Honnold has sampled both, but feels the freedom van life gives him justifies the trials and tribulations of parking lot confrontations.

By Alex Honnold

nock, knock, knock! I was woken from a deep sleep by the sound of someone banging on the side of my van. For a moment I forgot where I was; I'd been sleeping in a different parking lot every day or two and it was hard to keep track. As I sat up and unzipped my sleeping bag I remembered that I was in the Caesar's Palace parking structure on the Strip in Las Vegas. The knocking resumed and I knew I was about to go through the same hassle as always. I opened the van door a little in order to talk to the security guard outside. 'You can't camp here like this,' he said irately, as if I was doing him personal harm by staying in a van overnight in an oversized parking lot. 'Oh sorry,' I said, 'I thought it was alright since I was in the casino last night.'

'You have to leave,' he added with enough disdain in his tone for me to know what he thought of me and anyone else who would deign to desecrate the sanctity of his Palace.

Under the constant neon lights of Las Vegas I had no idea what time of night or day it was, but I figured I could just move on and find somewhere else to park for a few hours. I assured him it was the last he would see of me and I left the lot.

The exchange took less than a minute but for some

Left: Breakfast in the forest

Photographer: Andy Burr



reason it has stuck with me and really grates at me. I think it's because I could tell how much he was looking down on me and how disgusted he was that someone would consider living in a van. In retrospect I wish I'd laid into him, asking how someone who spends 40 hours a week riding around a parking structure on a neon bicycle has any place looking down on my lifestyle choices.

I'd been climbing around Vegas for the last month and that was my only time venturing all the way down to the Strip. I'd been invited to the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition premier party by a journalist from CNN with whom I'd filmed the day before. It was convenient timing, because I also needed to be near the Strip the next morning to record a short piece at a news studio for Australian TV.

Such events are very unusual for my life, yet both promised to be an adventure, so down I went. The only hitch was the silly security guard, though it turned out it was early morning when he woke me so I just drove to the news studio and napped another few hours in their parking lot.

I bought my van in 2007 because I wanted to be able to travel and climb all the time and I was sick of relying on my friends' cars and riding my bike all the time. My first winter in Bishop was spent with a bike and a 3 seasons tent, despite the fact it had dumped 3 feet of snow on the valley floor. It was not an experience I cared to repeat, and factored greatly in the purchase of my 2002 Ford Econoline. At the time I debated between a smaller passenger car, a truck, or a van. They each have their benefits; small cars are fuel-efficient, trucks have 4-wheel drive, but ultimately the liveability of a van trumped anything else for me. I would love to have lived in a house, but since the rocks are all so far away I chose to drive my (rather limited) house to them.

I bought the van simply to climb more. At the time

Left: The book of dreams: Honnold flicks through his spiral bound journal of life on the road.

Photographer: Ben Moon



it seemed like the simplest way to manage travelling and climbing all the time, and so far I haven't found a better alternative, at least for travel in the States. Hitting the road for me was a purposeful decision to pursue the thing I loved most: climbing. And I think that's part of why I find the Vegas security guard's condescension so irritating. He is most likely living the life that he's fallen into; at least I'm living the life I choose, even if it is unconventional.

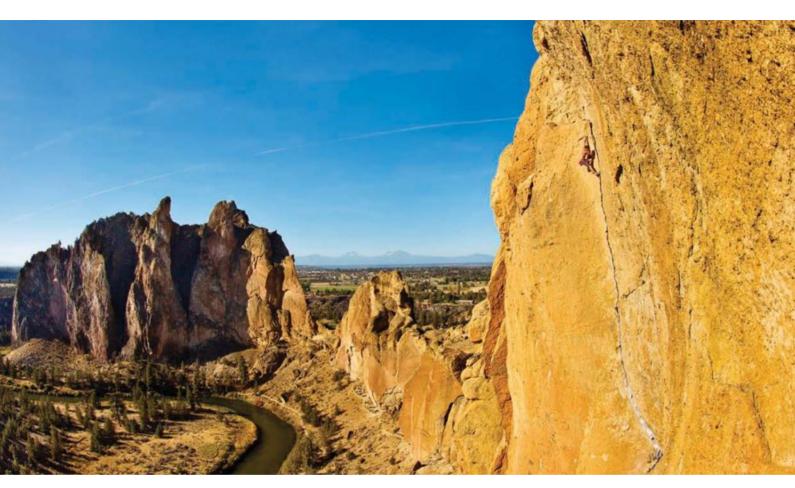
And unconventional it is. While my life in the van has most of the features of normal life in a home – I sleep in a bed, cook my own meals, and have power – sometimes they take a slightly different form. In

Vegas, for example, I used the Wholefoods' parking lot for my internet service. As a premium grocer, their free wifi is strong enough to cover the whole of the surrounding lot, so I would park as close as I could to the building and settle into the back of my van for email sessions. In fact, I used the Wholefoods' bathrooms at least once a day as well, though I also bought a lot of their over-priced organic food so I felt like it all balanced out.

Las Vegas represents the urban side of van life. There's no real convenient camping around – the Red Rocks campground is ridiculously overpriced and underwhelming –so I spent my nights split between

Above: Flat out: Honnald takes a break inside his 2002 Ford Econoline.

Photographer: Ben Moon



Above: Soloing in the sun: Honnold enjoys the golden light of Smith Rocks, Oregon.

Photographer: Ben Moon various hotels, 24-hour grocery stores, and the streets in which some of my friends live. Each option was always well lit and surrounded by the sound of traffic. And I was frequently rousted by security and told to move along. But that's all part of the game, and being in a place like Vegas for a month or more really makes me appreciate moving on to somewhere like Indian Creek which lies at the other end of the spectrum.

Where Vegas is annoyingly bright and bustling, the Creek is almost oppressively dark and sometimes lonely. The night sky is full of stars and the only sounds are the animals – and occasionally drunk climbers. The word 'quiet' doesn't really do justice to

the deep, peaceful calm that settles over the desert at night. The camping is unregulated, you basically just find an empty spot in the desert that suits your fancy and you post up for as long as you'd like. It's the exact American West experience that foreigners always imagine, a vast barren landscape that you can explore freely. I've spent weeks at the Creek and marvelled each day at how beautiful the landscape can be – it really never gets old.

But what does get old is having no showers, no cell service, and no food. A lot of people, especially Americans, get all excited about 'going camping', about how cool it is to be out in nature with nothing

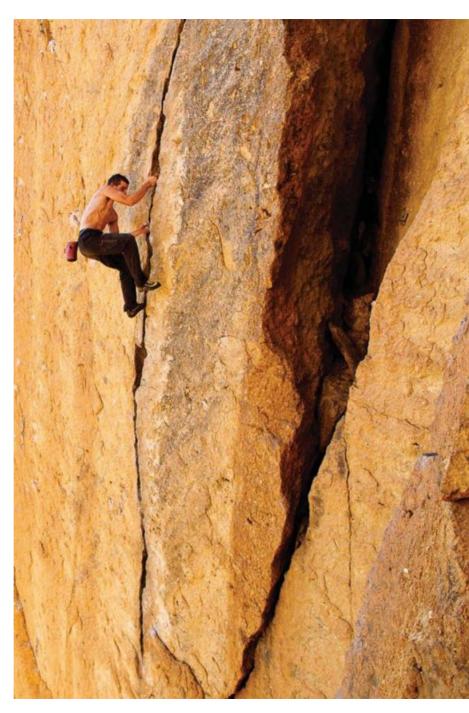
around you. But I think that camping holds an extra appeal for those who don't do it routinely. I like showering, I like eating out, and I like being able to call my friends or check my email. And as beautiful or romantic a place like the Creek might be, I eventually tire of camping – even when it's in a van. In some ways complaining about not having enough amenities makes me feel very soft. But there's a reason most people live a normal life in cities: because it's comfortable and easy. I like that comfort as much as anyone else, even if I choose to circle it from the fringe in my big white van.

What Indian Creek lacks in amenities it makes up for in community spirit. There is no other climbing area with such a relaxed atmosphere, where people consistently gather by a fire every night to exchange stories and play music. I suppose it's because there's nothing else to do there at night; the only thing around is empty desert. And I suppose in some ways it's necessitated by the style of climbing. Pretty much everyone needs to borrow gear from the neighbouring climbers since who actually owns eight .75 Camalots?! The climbing requires huge, homogenous racks, which requires you to befriend everyone in the area that might have gear the same size as your project. But that's one of the finest aspects of staying at the Creek – making new friends from all over the world.

Probably the most luxurious climbing area in the States for van living is Yosemite, though that may seem counterintuitive considering its restrictive stay limits and vigilant rangers. But once you know all the rules in Yosemite, and how to work around them – and that doesn't mean breaking them – it's paradise. When things go right, I have free internet, free showers, free camping, and several restaurants to choose from in the evening after a day of climbing any one of a veritable cornucopia of big walls. Not to mention pretty good cell service. How often can you check your email

Right: Close up and personal: Honnold with boots and a chalk bag, nothing more.

Photographer: Ben Moon





Above: Tools of the trade: Honnold's hands show signs of wear and tear.

Photographer: Ben Moon on your phone while free climbing a 3000 ft wall? Yosemite represents the most deluxe van life available, though at the price of literally millions of tourists doing the same thing.

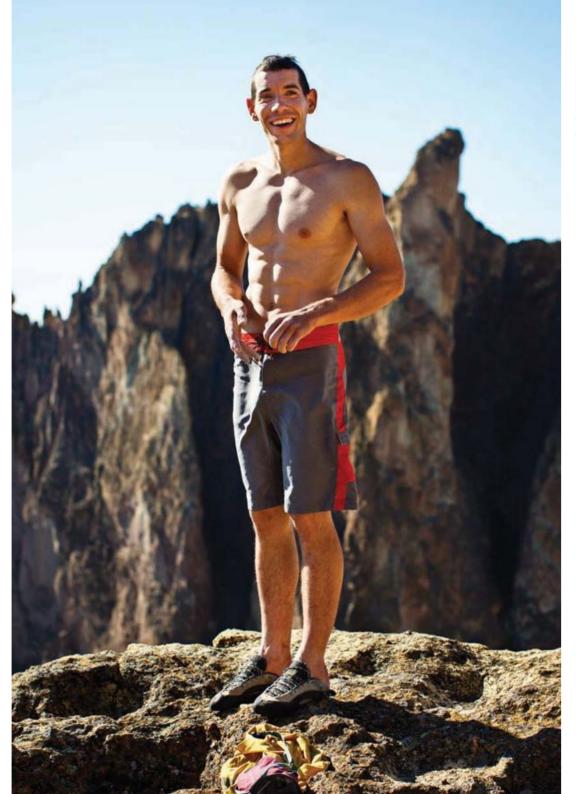
On weekends the park is flooded with people from the surrounding cities coming to enjoy nature, though that often means never straying more than 100 yards from the car. In fact many people don't even bother to leave the car, they just park in the road whenever they need to take a photo, which generally means they stop every time they see an animal. It's a problem that might be unique to Yosemite, getting stuck in traffic while driving to the base of a big wall. The seeming zoo of humanity serves as a contrast to my chosen van life. Rather than work a normal job in a city, buy lots of things, and occasionally escape outside, I get to live in the places I love and climb every day. The only downside is that I can't fit or afford many possessions in my van, if that can even be considered a downside. In fact, I think the enforced simplicity of living in a confined van has served to focus my attention more

on the things that really matter, like living a rich experiential life among friends.

I'm from the suburbs of Sacramento, California, a city whose only real distinction is that it's the closest city to where the gold rush started in 1849 and is therefore the capital. Over the 20 years my family has lived there I've watched the suburbs creep further and further into the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Street after street of new McMansions marching relentlessly from the city centre in an effort to keep them affordable for new home owners who absolutely need that three-car garage to hold all the things they want to buy. Working 60 hours a week is no object if it means being able to buy a new boat to display on the driveway, and thankfully at the end of the hard workday people can sink down in front of their 60 inch plasma flat screen to unwind.

This is the new American Way: working more hours, buying more things, and disengaging from the world. And this is the anathema of van life, which is all about engaging the world in the way I find most meaningful, which is travelling and climbing. I have few things, but I work very few hours and most importantly I'm engaged in the world around me, constantly exploring and enjoying new things. It's certainly not the life for everyone since most people, even most climbers, probably wouldn't find climbing satisfying enough to devote their full energies to it. But I can't think of anything I would rather be doing.

Everyone has to choose what's important to them in life. Some people never really make a choice, drifting instead into random jobs in random places. Maybe they wind up working night security in some parking lot somewhere, condemned to bike around every night hassling sleeping motorists. Or, more commonly, in America at least, they choose to work too many hours and buy too many things, caught up in a race to constantly consume more products. Life on the road lies at the other end of the spectrum. There are no things to buy, only places to go and friends to climb with. It is a slower and simpler life, but one that I find infinitely rewarding.



Left: Smiling at Smith: Honnold relaxes after another day without a rope.

Photographer: Ben Moon



Everything You Desire

Having completed a philosophy degree at Bristol University, one of Britain's most talented young climbers, Hazel Findlay, has taken to the road in pursuit of her passion for climbing. Here she tells us where the road has taken her over the last twelve months and where it might be leading.

By Hazel Findlay

became a full time climber just over a year ago. During that time I have travelled by car to Spain and back twice, to France and back once, by plane to Newfoundland for a month, to America for two months, and to Morocco for three weeks. Along the way there were detours to Switzerland, Italy, Belgium, Mexico for five days, Frankfurt for a day, the Lake District for too long, and at that time of writing this I'm on my way to North America.

For me, life on the road isn't a love of convenience it's a love of necessity. Perpetual road-life is obligatory for any full time climber, especially if you enjoy variation: I can't climb all the different things I want to climb from my Mum's living room. So yes, I love the road as a means to an end – the end being climbing. But, unlike many loves of convenience, there is certainly a large helping of romance. The road is a magical place because really the road is any place you want it to be: today the road is France and tomorrow, if I feel like it, it can be Spain. In this sense you can never be freer than when you are on the road. Romance is not romantic without the element of surprise and the road is not lacking in this department either since you never know what is coming around the next bend. A life on the road is an adventurous one, it's a rich one and it's one full of wonder. In the words of Bilbo Baggins: 'you set out the door and if you don't keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to'.

Since Bilbo's time, however, they've invented cars;

Left: Hazel and Maddy with Desire in the background. Photographer: Steve Findlay

and as cars travel a lot quicker than feet, I decided to buy one. The only one I could afford on the day I wanted to buy one was a white Citroen Saxo Desire. She seemed to be in good shape and didn't have too many miles on the clock. Although I'd passed my test a year before, I hadn't driven since. It was now February and I wanted to go sport climbing in France and Spain and more importantly, I wanted to leave in exactly three days. In those three days of 'preparation', every time I got in the car it felt comparable to trying to on-sight E8 in terms of fear, adrenaline levels and not just perceived but actual risk. After witnessing my attempt at parking, my friends tried to talk me out of going; 'spend more time in Bristol, get some more driving lessons'. But I couldn't, I mean I could have it's not like I had to be in France at a certain time - I simply felt the pull of the road and I couldn't stay in Bristol a minute longer. The night before I set off for

Below: Lost Desire: off to the scrapyard.

Photographer: Hazel Findlay





Dover I had dreams of dying in a horrible car accident. In Chamonix, seven months later I watched a gleeful French scrappy pluck 'The Desire' casually into the air and lift her onto his flatbed truck. Both the car and I had travelled a lot in those months, each of us sustaining our fair share of bruises, but luckily for me it was she and not I who ended up dying in a nasty car accident. It was a classic fan-breaking, overheating, head-gasket-blowing incident which ended with my friend and I stood by the side of the road in Switzerland, whilst the car spewed smoke and a German road biker exclaimed 'Scheibe', 'sehr heibe' over and over.

But the car had done her job, if only for seven months. In the winter of 2012 I had spent a few months in Europe sport climbing with friends from Sheffield and then later with my friend Alex. The Desire did me proud when she managed to get three of my friends, plus their baggage, plus my stuff and me, from Barcelona airport to Terredets, even though I had failed her by driving around in circles, horribly lost on the way to collect them. When money got thin, I actually lived in her, putting a bouldering mat over the folded down seats. She was actually pretty comfortable, although I'm sure my five foot two inch frame helped out somewhat.

That trip was a 'I should get fit and climb 8b+' trip', but each one I tried was too hard or I didn't like it. One day I travelled to an obscure venue near Tresponts in order to try one potential 8b+. Half way up this monstrosity of a route, battling with invisible holds, gross rock and dusty foot holds I realised that I wasn't actually having that much fun. So, instead, I chose to redpoint an 'easy' route, a mere 8a+, but a really good one at Oliana. I knew the lesson, I'd preached it many times before: 'it's not about the grade', 'you won't have fun if you only climb for a grade', 'you won't climb anything hard unless you enjoy the process'. Yet there I was, hanging on the

Left: Two finger pockets: climbing in Ceuse.

Photographer: Alex Haslehurst



Left:
Hazel on the Aiguille
de Saussure after
completing the
Findlay-Geldard
route 600m E5
Scottish VI. 6

Photographer: *lack Geldard*

grossest route in all of Spain, in a dusty little cave, because I wanted to climb 8b+. Just like all those girls in those cheesy films that spend all their time in bars searching for love, I was searching for something that really you can't look for, but instead comes to you. On my return home, boasting well-honed forearms, I was eager to punch holes in my long UK trad 'to-do' list. The Desire proudly took me up and down the country in search of dry rock. In May I found it on Pavey Ark. Too psyched, I ended up impacting off the aptly named route 'Impact Day'. I had wanted to be on those finishing holds sooner than they wanted me to be there. On my eighth day on the route, skin as thin as tissue paper, cold muscles and fading light, I had said 'yes' when everything else, including my gut was saying 'no'. With a little more patience, with a little more respect for the process, I may have seen myself hanging the final holds. Instead, with me in an extremely bruised state. The Desire ferried me back

to Bristol to lick my wounds. A month later when I finally accepted that Pavey Ark was quickly becoming Noah's Ark in Britain's wettest summer since records began, my friend Maddy and I packed the car up and set off for Chamonix.

Maddy and I had a great summer, climbing on the granite of the Mont Blanc massif, sport climbing at Ceuse and single pitch granite climbing in Italy. I felt like I had really experienced and enjoyed the different aspects of climbing. In Ceuse I had really grown to love the two-finger pockets, and I mean it, even thinking about them now makes me feel happy. I had found an 8b that was hard, but that suited me, covered in the most lovely of two finger pockets. But I had also tasted a little adventure. With my friend Jack, we established a new line on the little but aesthetically pleasing Aguille de Saussure. In a week I had gone from worrying about whether my shoes had passed that critical stage of being stiff enough for the almost



Above: Rock Star: Findlay at Terradets, Spain.

Photographer: Jack Geldard invisible foot holds on the crux of a 25m 8b, to making a bivvy in the snow before climbing a new multi-pitch rock route in the Alps.

You could almost say they are different sports, but I really like both of them and I really wanted to succeed in both these endeavours. But I try to remind myself all the time not to get too attached to rock climbing, or at least not to the 'ends' in rock climbing; to the achievements; to the 'ticks'; to the hard 'sends'. A hard sport climber and good friend of mine once told me that every time he clips the chains of a sport climb, even after weeks of battling with self-doubt, the first thing he thinks is 'I can climb harder', and so it begins again with the next project. And I know what he means. I don't know anyone who, after putting a lot of energy into a hard route, finds contentment and doesn't want more, doesn't want to keep trying to climb harder. And it's not just about climbing hard, it might be having an adventure, you have one epic and if that's your thing, you want another one. You have one teeth-chattering adventure in the mountains, one

hard push and you think 'never again', but of course there is always an 'again'. In this sense it never ends and in this sense climbing, like most pursuits in life is a road to nowhere.

As summer was slowly ending and my time in Europe coming to a close, my attention turned to The Desire's rapidly deteriorating health. The exhaust was the most immediately obvious thing, coughing and spluttering like a hardened smoker in the morning. Eventually it completely detached from the body of the car and fell to the ground with a death rattle. I remember pulling in to a bivvy spot in Chamonix, tunes blaring to cover up the noise, I looked at Maddy and burst out laughing. Yes the car had to be hot-wired to start, ves the exhaust was hanging on the ground and yes the boot failed to close and yes we were annoved to be driving around in such a wreckage of a car, but we both realised that firstly; neither of us had enough money to do anything about it, and secondly: if this was our biggest worry in life, then really we were doing well for ourselves.

It was one of those moments where I was completely aware of the fact that I am not really a real person of this world. A real person of this world has to get up every day and go to an office, they have to hang their shirts on those little hooks in their cars, they have real problems like feeding their kids, or not getting made redundant. Sometimes I feel like I want to roll the clock on, to a time where maybe I actually have a little money and a little bit more of a real life, with a car that works and a place with a bed that I could call my own. But in moments like this, I have an inkling that someday I will look back on these years of my life and I will say 'those were the days' and I will wish with all my heart to be where I am now. So really if I do end up being a 'real person' I owe it to a later self to make the most of what I have now. For me, that means embracing the road, both literally (well not quite literally) and metaphorically. It means embracing a life of living on the road out of a suitcase, and I think it also means embracing the 'now', the today instead of tomorrow, the roads in life instead of the destinations.

Right: To the rescue: A sea King helicopter takes to the skies.

Photographer: Matt Cox, Patterdale Mountain Rescue



Downward Spiral

Third Time Lucky. By Trevor Langhorne

Two's too Serious. Three's an Epic. By Terry Gifford

No More Tears. By Adele Pennington



THIRD TIME LUCKY: A CAUTIONARY TALE IN THREE ACTS

Trevor Langhorne has always enjoyed climbing on Gimmer Crag, the combination of superb clean rock, a grand sunny position overlooking the head of Great Langdale and a suite of brilliant routes from V Diff to E-irrelevant guarantee a super day out. This cautionary tale chronicles his last three visits to the crag. The identities of those involved have not been fully disguised.

By Trevor Langhorne

ACT ONE:

This act takes place on a typical mid-June day; it is dry but cloudy and breezy. Bradders, Bob and I slowly toil up the path beside Dungeon Ghyll; every time I walk this way I swear it gets steeper. We agreed that the classic VS combination of Northwest Arête and F Route would be a suitable target. This added to the walk as we dropped down from the regular gearing up spot to pass the toe of the crag before scrambling a little way up NW gully to below the former gentlemen's side of Gimmer. The leisurely approach ensured we were not first in the queue. As virtually every route was occupied, a relaxed lunch was the order of the day. High above, out of sight but not earshot, there was scuffling sound followed by 'oh (expletives deleted) no'. As there was no further commotion, lunch was resumed.

A little later a climber appeared on the skyline. He was being lowered down. The angle between his foot and leg, and the way his foot swung around wildly, suggested that he might have hurt his leg. Soon he was beside us; surprisingly cheerful considering the leg bones projecting through his skin. I recognised him as a regular on the Sunderland Wall. Immediately Bradders sprung into action extracting his first aid kit from his sac and dressing the open wound while I got

the mobile out and rang for Mountain Rescue. It was not long before the team appeared in the valley below and began the brutal sprint up the gruesome hillside towards us. As they tended to the casualty they said a Sea King helicopter was coming. The clattering and throbbing announced its arrival. Down came the winchman and soon the casualty was ready to go. Innocently he asked the winchman which hospital he was going to, Whitehaven or Carlisle? 'Neither' came the reply. They had come from RAF Valley so it was Preston or Liverpool. For the first time he groaned as he realised he was heading further from home. After the show we only had time for NW Arête.

Act Two:

I received an unexpected invite to join Ann-Marie and her friend Kathryn for a couple of days climbing in Langdale. Having nothing else to do I headed for Rawhead and unknowingly stepped into a larger role in Act Two. Next morning we were on that damn path again: at least the May sky was wall-to-wall blue and the wind was pleasant. The target was to be A Route. Having done the second half of the alphabet routes it was about time that I started on the first half. I was to be a passenger, getting the gear out while the girls

Below: The gentleman's side of Gimmer Crag.

Photographer: Max Biden

enjoyed sharing the lead.

The scramble up to the ledges below the main face is always scary but soon enough we were roped up and Kathryn disappeared up the first pitch. The crag was almost deserted and the wind was springing up making communication difficult. Later, I thought I heard a distant voice shouting 'help.' I wandered around the base of the crag but could see no-one, so I returned to the bottom of our route. The rope was stationary for ages. Eventually I became concerned and began to solo the first pitch. Before I got to the ledge I could see Kathryn, she looked distressed and said that she had got her leg stuck.

Once I reached her I could see she had her knee stuck behind a block. Easy enough to sort that, thought I. Brute force and ignorance (my speciality) didn't work; setting up a three-in-one hoist to hold her body weight off the knee didn't help; nor did the extra bodies and ideas of the two Pinnies who abseiled down to us. Removing the trouser leg with scissors didn't free up enough space. With no other obvious options I soloed down to the sacks, got the mobile and, once again, phoned for Mountain Rescue. The team and a Sea King arrived. The chopper flew some of the team to the top of the crag and, eventually, two of the team were slowly lowered to us with a bottle of Fairy Liquid! Surely this will be the problem solved? The winch man came down to help. With the leg suitably lubricated we tugged, pulled and pushed. But all to no avail.

The rescuers conferred, 'what we need is Cave Rescue: they are used to freeing stuck people'. Thus the helicopter was dispatched to Clapham and returned later with two experts and a big bag of tools. First out of the bag was some kind of extra slippery liquid which was liberally applied to the offending limb – more heaving and ho-ing had no effect. Next a red two-ton rated hydraulic jack appeared and was fitted in the crack; the lever was cranked the jack widened, a sense of expectation then, oops! (or words to that effect); the piston on the jack began to bend. One of the CRO team suggested they try some feathers. I wondered how feathers would work if a big jack had just bent. A large Bosch Bulldog drill was then lifted from the bag and the CRO boys started to drill bolt-holes in the sacred rock of Gimmer. Knowing that cavers have a liking for bang (dynamite) to remove the immovable, I casually asked if they were going to blow the block up.

The negative response was heartening; instead they hammered metal wedges into the holes causing a flake of rock about an inch thick to split off the inside of the block. The flake was lifted out, and incredibly Kathryn stood up and lifted her leg from the crack. There wasn't a mark on it and she was able to walk down from the crag. The whole escapade from calling out the team to freeing the leg had taken roughly eight hours during which time Kathryn had remained extremely calm and composed. I wondered if I would



have reacted in the same way had it been me. ACT THREE:

Gwyn had a few spare days so we met and headed to Rawhead in the company of an indifferent-to-hostile weather forecast. Rain and wind greeted us although we managed a couple of routes on Raven Crag Walthwaite. Next morning dawned with a perfect blue sky; Golden Slipper on Pavey Ark was the target, another tick on Gwyn's list.

Next morning normal service returned and we woke to wind, rain and low cloud. We had been so lucky the day before. After a leisurely breakfast and discussion we agreed, despite the circumstances of my last two trips, on a classic rock day on Gimmer. By ignoring the omens I had stumbled catastrophically into the central role of Act Three.

The ever-steepening path led into the mist and rain, leaving us pretty wet by the time we arrived at the crag. The first item on the agenda was Ash Tree Slabs, the opening pitch of which was running with water. But I was soon belayed and bringing Gwyn up. He was climbing in mountain boots and didn't look to be enjoying himself. On the stance he changed to rock shoes before racing up the next pitch to Ash Tree Ledge. Traversing right along the ledge I belayed below the next agenda item, Oliverson's Variation and Lyon's Crawl.

A strong and gusty wind was cutting across the upper crag. The first pitch went quickly and I set off on the steeper second pitch. The holds were positive which helped offset the steepness and soon enough I had reached the next stance – a small sloping ledge. The belay on this ledge was not obvious, but looking around I found a good flake and a nut crack. Suddenly my left foot slipped sideways, I tensed my right arm on the good flake to re-establish my balance: then everything went wrong.

Tensing my arm sent a bolt of pain like an electric shock through my body. I yelped (Gwyn later said that this had woken him up), my arm felt weird, I couldn't grip or pull and had to let go. Tipping off the ledge I took a short fall. I had a runner at my feet



and no harm was done. I knew instinctively what had happened: my shoulder had dislocated and I was pretty helpless. Communication with Gwyn was very difficult due to the wind, but he eventually lowered me to a good ledge that I could see about thirty feet below me. As I settled onto the ledge my heart sank when I saw a block with drill holes in its top: I was back on 'stuck knee ledge' where I had previously waited for eight long hours. An easy traverse line led to my ledge from Gwyn's stance and he soon joined me and sorted out belays. I told him what had happened and suggested a five-minute breather. We could then abseil back to the sacs and I could walk/stagger out. After five minutes it was clear that I was in no position to abseil or walk. Luckily Gwyn had his phone and summoned the rescue team.

When the rescuers rang back, Gwyn turned to me grinning and told me I was getting a helicopter ride. Great, I've always wanted one said I. Pretty rapidly we heard the throb of rotors, the Air Ambulance appeared but was clearly unable to perform a cliff based evacuation. They did, however, transport some rescuers to the top of the crag. About an hour had passed since my shoulder went: the combination of the shock plus the wind and wet clothes made me shiver with increasing frequency and violence. Gwyn did everything he could to keep me warm, making me lie on the ropes and sheltering me from the worst of the wind. Then we heard an unmistakable throbbing roar and a yellow RAF Sea King came into view.

Down came the winch man with a cylinder of Entenox just for me. It made things more comfortable. Gwyn was winched off in a strop, not the mood variety but a dubious looking kind of harness; he was told to keep his arms down and did not look impressed. After leaving him on the valley floor they returned for me. The suggestion was that we abandon the ropes. I protested – they were on only their third day of use - and though I won the argument I still lost a load of gear on the pitch and stances.

Once in a bosun chair off we went. The view of the crag was incredible, I wish they had winched more

slowly! Pulled into the aircraft I was given a window seat and a nice big warm blanket. A quick medical check-up and I was offered a tea and chocolate bar. you don't get that for free on Ryan Air! The view from the window was brilliant, the Entenox allowed me to enjoy it. We flew over the tops, down Borrowdale and past Keswick before skirting the Northern Fells and heading to re-fuel at Carlisle. In line with the more patient responsive NHS I was offered a choice of two hospitals, Carlisle's Cumberland Infirmary or Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary. The food in the former is dire while the latter is closer to home: so the RVI it was.

The flight to Newcastle took us right along Hadrian's Wall giving super views of the various defences on either side of The Wall. Approaching Newcastle the hospital came into view, the new multistorey building had a flat roof with a big H painted on it. Fantastic, I always fancied a roof top landing. Unfortunately we touched down in the local Park and attracted a good crowd of onlookers. Apparently when they had previously landed a Sea King on the roof the whole building creaked and groaned with the weight. So the roof is for Air Ambulance only.

In A&E I finally got some morphine and the pain faded a little. X rays were taken, then some more morphine administered: finally something to relax me. The next thing I knew I was back in X ray, the pain had reduced a lot and the shoulder was back in. Soon I was ready to go home. In those missing minutes the doctor and nurse had wrestled to get the shoulder back in. Next morning I had two perfect handprint shaped bruises, one on my upper arm and the other on my chest.

A week later I had surgery to repair the humerus where a muscle had ripped from the bone, taking a good sized lump of bone with it, they also had to stitch up the 70% of my rotator cuff that had ripped. Luckily the summer weather was poor; rehab is expected to take about eight months.

Act Four I hope not.



were cruising up this wonderful E climb and stopped for range.

seven pitches on a big ledge below

couple on our hee the crux. We could afford to let a couple on our heels go through. They deserved a break. They told us that whilst they were on the two-pitch Marion, a popular route on our local Sella crag, they had had their rucksack stolen with their car keys in it. As we talked I noted, with a smile, that she was in 'pain management' in Edinburgh. So nothing was stopping them from one more wonderful adventure in the Easter sun of Spain. But I was thinking what a useful person she was to have on a crag and hoping that we'd not put her skills to the test.

Our loads lightened of butties and oranges, we were now eager to complete the remaining six pitches before the long descent which first traverses the south face and then slides down the big scree gulley to Finestrat. However, our potential saviour from pain was now experiencing a little of it herself on the crux above us. Well actually, more than a little. The sun was searing. Patience and water were called for. The bandana under my helmet was needed now as a neckerchief.

I'd climbed this route in a team of three before, on a long January day when, with my fourteen-year-old son Tom and regular partner Norman, we had seen the sun's orange slowly surf up the great white screen of the south face as we scrambled over terraces towards it and

Above: Puig Cambana: home to the classic long route -Espolon Central.

Photographer: Gill Round

then seen the face turn pink in the late afternoon as we walked off below it. It had been a dream climb on our first visit to the Costa Blanca. We fell in love with the area and then started coming at Easter as well as New Year.

Now, ten years later, my partner Gill and I were parttime locals from Sella, climbing with Pat, a full-time ex-pat and ex-army instructor of climbing, now in her sixties. Ever generous, Pat and her partner Gilly had given us advice and support when we bought our little village house, and I had reactivated her interest in climbing. Pat had become my village climbing partner, together with Terry Lee, father of the Peak District's prodigious Lee brothers. Terry, a former climbing partner of Frank Davies (of Ambleside shop fame), had been Head of Fine Art at Sheffield Art College, living as a tenant on the Chatsworth estate, as one of his sons does today. Now he is a full-time ex-pat living in a converted barn in the mountains above Sella with his wife Pam, also a climber and landscape painter. The work of both of them hang in our Sella house, bought with money we'd put aside for 'house improvements'. As both Pat and Terry have now stopped climbing I've had to train up a taxi driver from Bognor Regis. Martin, to become my climbing partner. A month's nocturnal work in Bognor buys two months sunshine in Sella, where his wife Angela stays, looking after their rental house.

This wonderful community of local climbers has really enriched our lives in Sella, and with much more than the climbing alone.

I like climbing in a threesome, not just for its sociability and conversation, but for the counterpoints in making judgements on the climb. Appreciating this dimension of climbing is a learned skill, now much neglected. I remember climbing with Gill and Harold Drasdo on Lliwedd on a cloudless bright summer's day when Gill was complaining from within her hat and hood about my exposing her to a freezing day in the bone-searching sunless wind. 'Well, he's just a man', explained Drasdo. I didn't get it at the time. I still don't. I somehow feel our President would. But

here with Gill and Pat, waiting for our go at the crux, the necessary patience was, I suppose, eased by their tolerance of being on the mountain with 'just a man'. whatever that is.

When the time came to ascend the thin parallel cracks in the steep little wall, two small wires defused the thin moves and my two lady companions were not delayed by the delights of thoughtful movement. In fact, we got back into a cruising rhythm of pleasant route-finding and catching up on time, although our pain manager was long gone ahead of us. The sun was suddenly lower and the light was in its last intensity. The ridge just kept coming. This was not right. We must have overlooked the paint sign marking the descent traverse. It's easily overlooked because it's a faded red dot that's on a wall behind a belay. Rushing to arrange a belay I had completely missed it and took us too high up the ridge. At the headwall, realising my mistake. I wanted to intersect the descent from the Edwards Continuation which speaks vaguely about making a descent into the famous notch. So I traversed up right in that general direction, but soon realised that the technical difficulties were going to delay us further and the day was already beginning to close down. In front of my nose was the possibility of a thread, if I could excavate the dirt and needles from bushes above. So we came to be all hanging from a threaded tape, arranging the ropes for an adventurous abseil into the great bowl of the centre of the mountain with its walls undercutting slopes of untrodden screes.

By now the sun had set and Benidorm was waking up from its siesta below, blinking and stretching its long arms skywards. Down there the signs must be illuminating the uninitiated to 'A Pound a Pint', 'All Day Yorkshire Breakfast', 'Happy Hour Cocktail's' and even 'Spanish Beer Sold Here'. By now we knew we had our own nocturnal adventure ahead of us and at this stage, plan in place, dress adjusted, preparatory drinks shared, checking each other for embarrassing oversights, there was a certain group frisson of anticipation.

Pat peeled away first with a smile and a joke, rather relishing, I suspect, all those years of teaching army recruits the subtle arts of abseiling safely. The ropes took her over little cliffs to a long slope of small stones. Gill soon joined her, sacrificing speed for safety. Glad to be leaving behind this old knotted tape from my earliest gear, I then lost height, grateful to be using two 60 metre ropes. Delegating the rope-coiling, I explored a delicate diagonal route over this scree above a huge drop in the direction of a tree. And here was a knotted hank of red climbing rope encircling its base! Climbing is one large nomadic community, a shifting global village. I've raced to the base of a classic climb on Beinne Eighe against another pair who turned out to be people I had talked to at Stanage the week before. I'm glad now, as I'm writing this, to remember that the last time I saw the late Ben Wintringham's irrepressible smile was in the pizza place in Finestrat. Pat arrived at the tree and thought that this rope sling must be from the epic descent a few weeks before of a group of Yorkshire firemen who had dossed in her basement. So at least we were now on a regular route of epic descents.

This abseil brought us to a red dot on the traverse of the face. Ropes coiled, we were caught in the crepuscular velvet darkness of a Spanish dusk/night. We scrambled along the dotted line, rounding ridge after ridge, until what appeared through the gloom to be a diagonal downclimb into the long scree gully bounding the face. Here I wanted no final risks in the rush to be off the rock, so I set a belay on a big block and roped Pat down to stand in the trees on the edge of the scree. As Gill followed her down into the blackness I remember marvelling at the view from the belay. A domed aura of strange mauve light hung above Benidorm's twinkling blocks. I heard Gill shout that she was down and then say, 'Pat? Where are you?' 'Right in front of you!' came the amused reply. We thought that was the hard part done. Travelling light-headed and light-hearted, we'd no head torches, of course. But now began hours of slow sliding, ankletwisting, prickly bush grabbing, tumbling, bum-sliding



descent of the exceedingly loose path at the side of the scree. We kept stopping to gather ourselves together, share our bruises and complaints, reassure ourselves that we were losing more height than skin and that, ves, we thought it went this way. When we reached woods we noticed shadows. A full moon had risen. Tired, we tripped over tree roots and sweating, we snaked through bushes on the white trail that twisted on and on. None too soon houses appeared on each side, a slide down onto a roadway, a bridge, a barrier and, finally the tarmac road of Finestrat. But our car was up the road. Up!

At this point I was in such a state of exhaustion that I could barely speak. Looking back on it, I think it was a kind of 'rescue collapse' at the relief from having carried the responsibility, in my mind, and its suppressed tension of getting us off the mountain suddenly released at meeting the road. Gill and Pat heroically went uphill for the car and reassured the caring community in Sella. (In those days we left our mobile phones in the car.) Gilly had been cooking a spag bol for us at 8pm and it was now 11pm. She had rung Terry Lee and he was preparing to come on a search with one of his visiting sons. I was left in a heap by the road to ponder again the shared resources of climbing as a three and those enigmatic words of the Third Man, Harold Drasdo.

Above: Terry Gifford below the scene of his epic descent.

Photographer: Gill Round

No More Tears

Sometimes success on a Himalayan expedition is measured simply in the ability to have survived. In this vivid account of her initial attempt on Makula, Britain's first female double Everest summiteer, Adele Pennington, describes the pain and fear of being alone in the death zone and the courage needed to endure.

By Adele Pennington ©



he world was spinning out of control and the spindrift swirling as I crawled towards the prominent boulder at the top of the French Col. 8,300m high on Makalu – and just 160m short of its summit. By now I had lost power over my body and was cowering beneath the boulder's icy bulk, shivering and shaking. Crouching down exhausted I realised that it was all going horribly wrong. I signalled to a Sherpa high above to indicate that I was going down but it seemed to have little effect. Suddenly I felt alone and exposed in the rarefied atmosphere of the 'death zone' as I desperately tried to suck air into my lungs as if through a straw. My limbs were no longer mine to command. They moved in the strangest of ways as if my body was trying to extricate itself from the position my brain had got it into.

Fumbling with my figure-of-eight I had to concentrate to work out which hole I needed to feed the rope through: a simple action usually achieved almost on a subconscious level. Now the device with which I was so familiar had become some incomprehensible piece of technical wizardry. Check, check, collapse for a minute, abseil after abseil, the pain, the sheer desperate effort, 'My God what was happening?" Unaware of the passing hours I finally stopped as I came to the end of the fixed rope instinctively knowing that if I moved any further no one would ever find me. Now paralysed by this demon I crumpled closing my eyes and took up the foetal position I had been resisting for so long. The spinning world became dark and silent as I fell into sleep.

From the summit of Everest in 2009 I had looked across to Makalu and admired its grandeur. Having had only ten British ascents at that time, the mountain lured me as my next challenge as this was definitely going to be my last time on the big E. At 8,848m the world seemed to be at my feet. I was ready to break free from the security of a full-time job and to challenge myself on something different. With three 8,000m peaks under my belt, I felt confident this was the way forward. My resignation from perhaps the most perfect job in the world – as expedition leader for

Jagged Globe – had been planned but was nevertheless difficult to bring to fruition. Nervous, but very excited. I left for Makalu on the 29th March 2010, my 44th birthday.

Our team was an international group of seven climbers. We gathered in Kathmandu and ate the customary pizzas and drank beer in the 'Fire and Ice', a favourite haunt of many European mountaineers. As disparate in our lives as we were in our reasons to embark on such a climb, we departed and were soon trekking in from Tumlingtar. Ron, who I had met as a client on Shishapangma in 2007, was now a friend and we trekked together, only meeting the other team members at overnight camp. Each evening the air would fill with the banter and discussions that mountaineers trekking to base camp frequently have. There were differences of opinion and, as the days passed, personality clashes became evident. As the only woman, I engaged in little of this masculine banter but had to bear the brunt of many of the jokes.

By the time we had reached advanced base camp at 5,700m, I was in my element and was soon making journeys up and down the mountain, carrying loads, stocking camps, and preparing myself physically and mentally for the challenges to come. Fit and strong, I was no longer the brunt of the male jokes: as one of the strongest members of the team I was the equal of any of the men. They were: Tunc, a quiet Turk who was an amazingly talented climber and fitter than anyone I had seen at altitude; Guntis, a fun-loving gentleman from Switzerland; Arnold, the Dutch leader who had a good pedigree of leading 8,000m peaks; Harris, a doctor we thought hailed from Greece and who exhibited the strangest of habits; and finally Mor, a quiet Israeli, soft and gentle who kept himself to himself.

The days went by as we fixed ropes on the mountain and painstakingly carried loads up to each camp. I had acclimatised well and was feeling strong having climbed well above 7,000m towards the Makalu La. By the middle of May we were now ready for our summit push but it was evident that the Jet Stream was still in

Left: Makalu lashed by the let Stream winds.

Photographer: Adele Pennington collection

Right: Adele between C3 and C4, 2011.

Photographer: Robert Anderson

residence, powering just above the mountain. At night we would listen to the winds that sounded like express trains tearing through the tent and each morning we would have to clear more fresh snow from our camp. Other teams left the safety of base camp in the hope they could sneak to the summit but they soon returned, beaten back by the severe weather high on the mountain.

We waited and waited and day by day my health deteriorated at this advanced base camp perched at 5,700m. I developed the dry cough that tormented most of us at these altitudes; feeling inexplicably tired and emotional I often cried myself to sleep, coughing and burrowing into my sleeping bag desperately trying to keep warm as my mind flicked from one thought to another as to why I was here. I sought comfort and sympathy from the others, little of which was forthcoming: not even from my buddy Ron, who was also struggling to endure this harsh environment.

Guntis kindly introduced me to a young French doctor from another team who thought I had a urinary tract infection that was causing the pain in my lower back. Every six hours I swallowed Ciproxin, a general antibiotic, and slowly began to feel a little better. Being tent-bound I was unaware that Ron had decided to leave the expedition and had asked his Sherpa to bring down his equipment which was stashed at the various camps. Ron's decision only became apparent as he politely handed back my kit that the Sherpa had mistakenly brought down with his. All my hard work to take everything up the mountain had just been demolished and I was angry and in despair. Ron and I argued before he walked out of camp without a backward glance. Angry and emotional, I was now even more determined to climb the mountain.

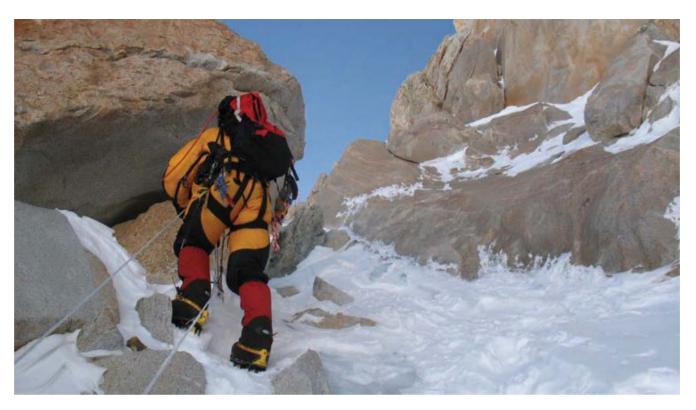
When our short weather window came I was still not firing on all cylinders but I quietly prepared myself to leave on our summit bid. Harris and Mor left a day earlier to take in Camp 1 en-route. Carrying 20kg and cursing Ron I started my ascent to camp 2. Arnold and Guntis left a few hours after me, and Tunc the superstar left a day after us all. Gathering at Camp

2 there were two other teams in position for their summit push. With little space high on the mountain for tents we waited another day before reaching the Makalu La by which time Harris and Mor were in position at Camp 4. That afternoon a French team returned from their summit bid, some were elated at summiting, others disappointed at failing to do so. The weather had changed and was not looking good so we held our position at 7,300m for another night. We used minimal oxygen to sleep and keep warm as we were unsure of exactly where our other bottles were and how long we would be held at this our Camp 3. With very little desire to eat or drink we whiled away the hours dozing, three of us crushed in one tent and sharing two sleeping bags. Watching the winds and clouds swirl around us, Arnold desperately tried to source weather forecasts on his satellite phone to enable us to make a decision on when to move. Finally at 9pm on May 23rd 2010 we left the Makalu La for the summit at 8,460m

My legs felt heavy and I was no longer in second place behind Tunc, a position I had held throughout the expedition. I was struggling with a new oxygen system that I had on trial after being assured it was more efficient than any other system. Stopping to check the regulator, I was shocked to see the cylinder was half empty after just a few hours. I wondered where all the oxygen was going as it felt as if I was on the lowest flow rate possible and nothing was fuelling my body. We continued and the other team members drew away from me as I struggled up each pitch to the boulder in the French Couloir.

'Adele! Adele! Wake up, what's the matter?' Arnold shouted through the wind. My eyes took time to focus on him and I was vaguely aware of another person by his side. 'I don't know,' I replied as I made an effort to raise myself from the ground. My oxygen cylinder was now close to empty and Arnold unselfishly swapped my bottle for his partially full one and fitted me with his mask. We both struggled to get some dexamethasone (a drug given to relieve the symptoms of cerebral oedema) from our packs with hands numb





Above: Negotiating the boulder in the French Couloir, 2011.

Photographer: Adele Pennington collection

with the cold. Arnold carefully filled the syringe with the life saving drug, only for it to freeze in the narrow bored needle as he pushed it into my thigh. We had more success with the second injection. The other person with Arnold then injected me with something else, but with what I do not know.

Suddenly I felt a little warmth and strength in my limbs but as I tried to stand I was soon reduced to my knees again. Arnold tied a rope around me and shouted directions as I crawled on all fours. Dragging me, pushing me, shoving me, Arnold and the other climber struggled as they were both exhausted from their own summit climb. Every so often we would all lie in the snow wondering which way to go as the clouds condensed into a white room and we desperately tried to get more oxygen to feed our minds and bodies. Eventually, after several hours, we reached a small, lonely tent perched on a serac which belonged to the climber who had accompanied us.

It was now dark and twenty-four hours since we had left camp 3 the night before. I was squeezed in with Arnold and his new found friend. Barely conscious and still with no control of any bodily function there was little I could do. I knew I was close to death as Arnold and the other man (now revealed to be a doctor) tried to cannulate my shrivelled veins to insert liquids and more life saving drugs. They gasped and looked at each other as they took the readings on the pulse oximeter which measures how much oxygen there is in your blood. I was thirsty, so thirsty, but was unable to force my brain to make the sounds to speak and ask for fluids. The long night passed, hands in spastic formations and my chest tight and sore.

Early in the morning a Sherpa from a camp below came up to assist me. He was obviously scared and tired himself and he simply pointed the way to Camp 4. Back on all fours I crawled on alone, my radio was babbling and I was only vaguely aware that Harris was crying for help high on the mountain. There was no sign of Guntis. Even in my deteriorating condition, I could sense a disaster unfolding.

As more oxygen became naturally available I managed to walk for a few steps before crashing down. Partially snow blind from the previous day's epic I struggled to find the ropes. When I did, the descent was slow and painful, my hands frozen and knees sore from their constant contact with the deep snow. At last, I spotted the tents of our Camp 4. Surely some of Ron's redundant oxygen and my other cylinders would be there? They were, but all of them were empty.

And then I saw him: Guntis was alive. Staring into space we communicated in a garbled, almost drunken language, but were so pleased to have found one another. He then showed me his hands, fingers already blackened by frostbite after spending a night outside. Guntis showed the way and kept glancing around at me as I slumped in the snow after every ten steps. Progress was haltingly slow but each step brought me closer to Camp 3 which we reached in the early afternoon. It was now 34 hours since we had left camp 3 for our summit push.

A Sherpa sat outside the tents crying and scared. Harris was still lost but the Sherpa was ill too. Blood stained sputum was indicative of his pulmonary oedema and it was essential that he descended urgently. As my brain was now functioning a little more normally I was able to source some Nifedipine used to treat pulmonary oedema. Tashi the Sherpa reluctantly swallowed the tiny brown tablets and went on his way back down to camp 2. Arnold and Tunc had also made their way down to camp 2 as had another Sherpa who had made a last vain search for Harris.

Guntis and I had no energy or reserves left and desperately needed water, food and sleep before

Right: Guntis and his severely frostbitten paws, 2010. Photographer: Adele Pennington collection





attempting to descend further. I rummaged around our camp looking for discarded oxygen cylinders and drained the dregs out of each one. Unable to eat we melted snow to make warm drinks and slept fitfully trying to regain some strength. Harris called on the radio but without knowing his position we couldn't help. Although the weather closed we felt safe in the comfort of being together, and shared what warmth we had to offer each other.

Waiting for the morning sun to heat the tent, I fought with the stove to prepare some hot tea. Guntis, whose hands were now bound in crepe bandages to prevent further damage of his fingers, struggled to hold the mug between his aching paws. He succeeded only in spilling the desperately needed warm drink down his front. I held the remnants of his drink to his mouth as he slurped the nectar of sweet black tea. We smiled at each other, secretly knowing there was only one thing we had to do and that was to leave the warmth of the tent, face the elements and abseil down from the Makalu La. Help was not going to be forthcoming: it was time to go.

Taking several hours to pack only the essential items for our survival we stuffed our swollen feet into our frozen boots and reluctantly left camp. By now my vision was impaired by snow-blindness, and the pain was excruciating but now I was able to take at least twenty steps before hitting the ground again. The 500m traverse seemed endless as we edged towards the top of the buttress and the fixed ropes that marked our descent. Elated at finding the ropes I abseiled first, struggling to wrench out the ropes that were now buried under several inches of fresh wind slab snow. Each abseil seemed to take hours: resting frequently to regain some energy, I knew I mustn't give up. At one stage the red rope I was carefully descending came to an abrupt end, I crawled around like a blind mole searching for the next fixed rope, feeling really guilty and sorry for Guntis who was waiting patiently,

Left: Between C4 and the summit of Makalu. 2011. Photographer: Robert Anderson

huddling to keep warm as I moved in slow motion. At every belay point we would apologise to one another for our pathetic attempt to descend.

Abseil after abseil led down the 1000 metre of descent to an easing of the angle which allowed us to move on our bums to enable forward progress. We joked about our desperate situation as the darkness fell and we negotiated the crevasses above camp 2. More than elated to see our tent we collapsed into it, flat on our backs, our boots sticking out in the porch. I was sure I could hear the roar of a stove. Shouting out, muffled voices answered back. We were not alone and some warm tea was soon shoved under the fly sheet of our tent. Not wanting Guntis to spill any of our shared mug I helped him drink, making sure we didn't waste a drop. I pulled off our boots and we lay back and fell into a deep sleep.

With just one more day of effort left to get ourselves back to advance base camp we both knew there was a glimmer of hope and that we were going to escape from Makalu. I was feeling slightly better but was still struggling to breathe even at this lower altitude. Guntis was physically stronger, but helpless with his two useless hands. The next day we repeated the routine of getting ready, collapsing backwards and sighing after each item of clothing was pulled over our bodies. Despite everything we maintained our humour and talked about going for a night out once we returned to Kathmandu. Guntis struggled to do up his zips and was very appreciative of my assistance especially when he was desperate to go for a pee. We giggled again at our situation and promised that what happened on tour stayed on tour – sorry Guntis. In the past we had reached base camp from camp 2 in just three hours but now hampered by our disabilities it took three times as long. We arrived at advanced base camp just as the light was fading. Stunned at our arrival, the Sherpa base camp team hurried around to comfort us. No food would stay down but the endless

Right: Fixed roped rapelling near the summit, 2011. Photographer: Adele Pennington collection





Above: Adele on the summit of Makalu, May 17th 2011.

Photographer: Robert Anderson supply of hot drinks was welcomed. Arnold took care of Guntis's hands and I went back to my tent still scared that something was wrong. I cried into my sleeping bag so the boys could not hear me and selfishly experienced very little emotion that there had been no communication from Harris who we now presumed would be dead.

Mor had gone back to Kathmandu after abandoning his summit push and Tunc was ready to leave. Arnold was involved in arranging helicopters to take a final look for Harris and in dealing with the numerous porters that were now arriving to dismantle our base camp. Guntis and I, desperately in need of medical attention, decided to walk out to the lower base camp where a helicopter could land and fly us back to Kathmandu in less than an hour.

Sobbing uncontrollably, I packed my kit. My neck was too weak to hold my head which forced me to lie down every few minutes. The stabbing pain in my lower back had now migrated all over my left side. As soon as I started to walk, I was short of breath, making it a huge effort to drag myself down the 15km back to lower base camp. Every small rise left me panting for more oxygen. Alone, fighting an internal battle

against stopping and giving up, I finally found myself stumbling into camp in the darkness.

Hopefully I would have to endure only one more night, shivering, shaking and cold. In the morning we waited and waited before the purr of the helicopter could be heard, it came into sight and touched down perfectly. Leaving most of my equipment behind we were scooped up one by one and flown down to a lower altitude from where the pilot was prepared to fly with the weight of three people on board. On arrival at Kathmandu Airport we met Harris's family who had come on the first flight from Greece: they were angry, upset and shouting.

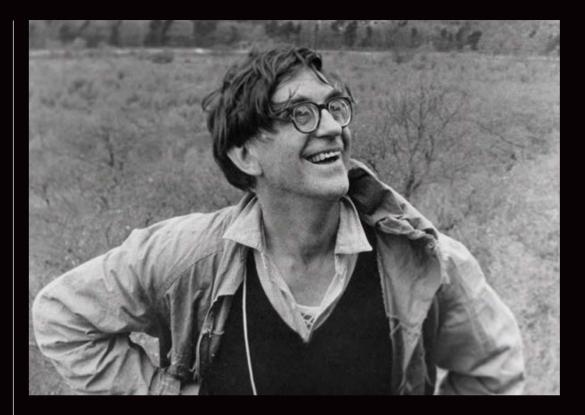
Unfortunately I had little time to talk to them and took myself down to the clinic familiar with receiving ill or injured climbers. Pneumonia was diagnosed. I changed my flights and flew home, only managing to stop my partner of the time as he boarded a plane at Heathrow. People stared at me: face red and burnt with frost-nipped cheeks. I had no energy for conversation and finally crawled into my own bed. Two days went by with two visits to my GP. He told me I would be ok, but I knew otherwise.

On the third night home I screamed and rolled on the bedroom floor, knives were being stuck into me everywhere. I was completely soaked in sweat and screaming 'get me to hospital.' My partner manhandled me down the stairs and drove at speed to the nearest casualty department. This time there was no waiting as I collapsed on the floor. Once again my limbs were moving uncontrollably and it went dark: this time I knew I was in a better place.

After a long time in hospital and several visits to intensive care Adele was finally operated on to remove an abcess empyema that had crushed her left lung. Six weeks after her operation she went back to the Alps and climbed to 3,600m to test herself, this was followed by a visit to Ecuador to climb some 6,000m peaks. Finally, at 11.00 am on May 17th 2011 Adele stood on the summit of Makalu having truly faced her demons.

Right: Michael Westmacott: enjoying a day out at Froggatt.

> Photographer: *Ian Roper*



OBITUARIES

Michael Westmacott. 1925 - 2012

Roger Payne. 1956 - 2012

Graham William Rawcliffe. 1946 - 2012

E.H (Ernie) Phillips . 1922 - 2011

John Goodier. 1929 - 2012

John (Jack) Derry. 1926 - 2012

GWS Pigott. 1926 - 2012

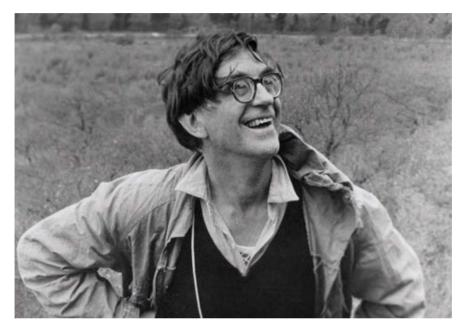
MICHAEL WESTMACOTT 1925-2012

A pivotal member of the successful Everest expedition in 1953, Mike's interest in the mountains ranged from his beloved Lake District to the Greater Ranges. He joined the club in 1949 and went on to become its President in 1978. Mike was the moving spirit behind the creation of the Himalyan Index with the Alpine Club.

Anyone who has warmed his frozen limbs in front of the fire at Helyg in the Ogwen Valley will have come across the name of M H Westmacott. His name is carved on the oak tablet fixed above the hearth, along with 25 other members of The Climbers' Club who pioneered high altitude mountaineering in the Himalaya between 1921 and 1953, culminating in the successful ascent of Everest in the year of Oueen Elizabeth's Coronation.

The membership of this fellowship of adventurers reads like a Who's Who of Mountaineering and includes George Mallory, Eric Shipton, H Tilman, George Band and Wilf Noyce and demonstrates the central role that the Club played in pushing back the boundaries of the possible in the Greater Ranges. Mike, who joined The Climbers' Club in 1949, played a central role in the evolution of its activities and rose to become its Vice President between 1975 and 1978 before being elected to the Presidency from 1978 to 1981.

He was born on the 12 April 1925 in Babbacombe, Torquay, where his first tentative climbing ventures were spent scrambling on the limestone and sandstone cliffs behind the local beaches. But it was not until he gained a place at Oxford to study Mathematics, and later statistics, that he discovered the joys of rock climbing. His days at Oxford had been preceded by service as a junior officer in King George V's Bengal Sappers and Miners, building bridges in Burma with 150 Japanese POWs



under his command. Ironically, it was this wartime experience of bridge construction that was to serve him and the successful Everest team so well in 1953 when they had to forge a way through the chaos of ice cliffs and crevasses that guarded access to the Western Cwm.

At Oxford, Mike joined the university mountaineering club, initially, it has been reported, more for the fellowship than to deepen a passion for climbing. Indeed his first foray on rock with the university could only have convinced him that it was a cold and inhospitable activity as he ascended Napes Needle wearing poorly fitting tennis shoes on a frigid December day in 1947.

But Oxford and Cambridge during this period were emerging as forcing grounds for the climbing elite of the early post war years, and Mike was to be a key player in that development. His contemporary, and fellow Everest team member, George Band, played a similar role at Cambridge, and both men became the presidents of their respective university mountaineering clubs.

By the time John Hunt was looking for members of his Everest team, Mike had established his credentials with an impressive season in the Alps. Along with Anthony Rawlinson and Dick Viney, Mike had climbed the 2km east ridge of the Dent d'Herens, one of the longest arêtes in the Alps with 'sustained, exposed and committing climbing.'

The route had taken the trio almost 24 hours to complete and demonstrated not only their technical competence, but also a remarkable ability to perform well over a sustained period. Never one to blow his own trumpet, Mike waited 40 years to chronicle these early alpine exploits, and he did so only to support an Everest anniversary edition of the Alpine Journal (Mike had joined the AC in 1952, three years after the CC).

In his commemorative article he quotes his climbing partner Dick Viney as saying: 'We've had a marvelous day climbing, Mike. Nothing like in the Himalaya – all slog, slog, slog – but wouldn't you give anything to go on Everest next year.' Indeed he would. On his return, Mike completed his Everest application and was asked to attend an interview at the Royal Geographic Society. John Hunt was impressed with the young man's alpine achievements, but he was also interested in the skills he had acquired in Burma. His selection for the Everest team included responsibility for structural equipment code for the ladders that would be needed to bridge the deadly crevasses guarding the mountain.

Photographs on the walls of Helyg show Mike and Rawlinson testing oxygen equipment below Tryfan just before the team went out to the Himalaya. Mike, along with Hillary and Band, traced a route through the treacherous maze of crevasses with features whose names came to reflect the dangers involved. One such hazard, was known simply as 'Mike's Horror' and its navigation won Westmacott praise from Hunt for a 'fine feat of icemanship.' Once

these obstacles had been overcome Mike helped push the route, ferrying loads on the Lhotse Face until, struck with sickness, he was compelled to retreat having reached a height of 7,000 metres only a short distance from Camp V1. Not one to idle, Mike spent the following days working tirelessly to keep the route through the Icefall open. By the time Hillary and Tensing were returning from the summit, Mike was back at the Western Cwm camp.

With no time to spare to get the news of the success back to an expectant England. Mike guided the Times journalist Ian (then Iames) Morris down through to file his report. With speed being essential, Mike was later to comment that their descent 'was not the most sensible thing I have done in mountaineering.' By the time they got to the bottom it was dark and the two men were close to exhaustion. Morris, who wrote brilliantly of the expedition, had already remarked on the ever-changing nature of the Icefall. It seemed, he wrote, 'to be messier and crumblier than ever before....its ice bridges soggy and ominous. Michael Westmacott had been working inside this horrible place for 10 days...I have often thought of Westmacott since. immured in the icefall and marveled at his tenacity.'

Mike was not the kind of man to shout about his achievements, but fame of a sort brought him invitations to a number of events one of which resulted in him meeting his future wife, Sally Seddon, who was then studying at the Royal College of Music. The two had a long and happy marriage that would often find them climbing in the Alps, North American and across the United Kingdom. While working in the USA, Mike and Sally joined

a lightweight expedition to an untraveled range of granite peaks in Alaska, the Arrigetch, where they made no fewer than eight first ascents.

Three years after Everest, Mike joined George Band on an expedition to Peru which culminated in the first ascent of Huaguruncho, a 5748 metre peak. In 1968 he and Sally went to the Hindu Kush to make the first ascent of Wakhikah Rah (5681m). Mike was later to write of this adventure that these 'were rock pinnacles on a beautifully sculptured snow ridge. It was one of the most beautiful summits I have known.'

Mike retired as an economist with Shell in 1985 and five years later he and Sally moved to the Lake District to be close to friends and some of the finest rock climbing in the world. Stephen Goodwin, the Alpine Journal editor notes that perhaps Mike's most public legacy to mountaineering was to be the Himalyan Index. With the support of a small but dedicated team, Mike created a digital database of more than 4,000 peaks of above 6000 metres and their climbing histories.

Mike died on 20 June 2012 after more than two years of a debilitating illness. With Mike's passing, and that of George Band the year previous, the commemorations for the 60th anniversary of the Everest ascent will be missing two of its most illustrious members. Family and friends of the 1953 team will be meeting at the Pen y Gwryd Hotel, the scene of many happy reunions. The absence of Mike Westmacott and George Band will be deeply felt, but the bonds of fellowship and the strong memories that hold them together will not be broken.

By John Yates

ROGER PAYNE 1956 -2012

Few men have played such a pivotal public role in the evolution of modern rock climbing and mountaineering as Roger Payne. His energy, drive and canny political skills steered the BMC through many difficult issues giving it a clear sense of direction and purpose. Here David Medcalf looks at the man and his legacy.

The death of Roger Payne in an avalanche on Mont Maudit in July 2012 was a chastening shock to mountaineers all over the world. Few people, if any, other than Roger have combined such a career of high standard mountaineering, exploration, guiding and environmentalism with a parallel career as a modernising bureaucrat and organisational leader in the national and international mountaineering organisations.

This obituary can only be a brief summary, but Roger's life and many achievements have been well documented in obituaries in all the major broadsheet newspapers, even in the Economist. The BMC website gives links to these and more.

Roger was born in Hammersmith, west London and never lost his distinctive cheerful London accent. He was introduced to climbing through the Scouts while he was at Holland Park comprehensive. His 'apprenticeship' continued in Scotland and then the Alps whilst he trained first as an Outdoor Instructor at Dunfermline and then as teacher at Sunderland, gaining both his B.Ed. and his Guide's qualification in 1983. After this he worked as a teacher in Washington, Tyne & Wear, whilst continuing to add to his range of outdoor qualifications, such as kayaking and sailing.

In 1989 he joined the British Mountaineering Council as National Officer. Doug Scott, who was on the interview panel, says that Roger stood out as the obvious choice - he listed everything that was wrong with the BMC and everything that was needed to put it right! He worked there for twelve years, becoming the General Secretary (Chief Executive) in 1995. During this period he was involved with almost every aspect of climbing at a time of rapid change. Many developments – from climbing walls and competitive events to a new national mountaineering museum at Rheged, in Cumbria – were enabled by his administrative zeal. He oversaw the BMC's evolution from being a club of clubs into an enterprise that attracted a surge of individual members and better reflected the modern era.

In 2001 he left the BMC, and a year later took on a similar role at the UIAA in Switzerland, as the Sports and Development Director, working with Alan Blackshaw and Ian McNaught-Davis in their terms as President of the UIAA. He helped to promote climbing with the International Olympic Committee, UN agencies and the World Conservation Union. Through the latter he became involved in publicising the dangers of climate change, leading a United Nations Environment Programme film project to highlight glacial melting in the Himalayas, resulting in the film 'Meltdown'.

He left the UIAA to return to full time guiding and consultancy, but tempered his



withdrawal from the bureaucratic side of mountaineering by becoming a popular and reforming President of the British Mountain Guides where he served from 2007 to 2011.

Throughout his time working behind, and often in front of, the scenes for British and world mountaineering, Roger kept up a high=energy involvement in practicing the sport, along side his wife, the New Zealand born guide Julie-Ann Clyma whom he met on an expedition in Peru in the 1980s. Together they made more than a score of expeditions to the Himalaya,

Alaska and the Andes, with many first ascents including a new route on Broad Peak and the first ascent of Mount Grosvenor, 6376m, in China which Roger rated as perhaps their finest achievement. Over the years they became very knowledgeable of the mountains of Sikkim and worked with the Sikkim Amateur Mountaineering Association to help train its members and to promote sustainable tourism. Roger believed strongly in minimising environmental impact and in assisting local people with projects such as micro-hydroelectric schemes alongside his drive to climb.

Throughout his life there were few areas of the mountaineering world Roger didn't influence – and for the better. The overriding impression he always created, though, was of an unwavering and infectious enthusiasm for the mountain life. "So many mountains, so little time" he told me the last time we met. How sadly true.

Our sympathies are with his family and in particular his wife, climbing partner and fellow CC member, Julie-Ann.

By David Medcalf

I first met Roger in October1989 two months after I had become General Secretary of the BMC. Roger was applying for the National Officer's job and came for the interview wearing a bright red sweater and a winning smile. The others, I think, wore suits. We appointed Roger. 'When can you start?' I asked him 'Is Monday, next week possible?' He looked at me and replied: 'Well actually Julie-Ann and I are going to the Himalayas for five weeks, is it alright if I start when I get back?' Of course it was.

When he did start I remember that 10 days later we had an early example of the Payne vision when he presented President Chris Bonington and myself with a long paper on 'how to reform the BMC'. Chris recommended that 'some wise old heads' look at the paper and, for the time being, we heard nothing more of it.

As National Officer he was my right hand man and he serviced a number of committees including international, technical, climbing walls and the infant sport of competition climbing, where he played a major part in the organisation from the early 1990s. He also had to answer the dozens of queries on all kinds of mountaineering matters, and I remember the short-hand typist Joan asking if it was a record after typing 40 letters for Roger in a day.

In those six years until I retired in 1995. Roger was a great source of strength and support to me. We had found a new larger headquarters in Didsbury in 1995 and Roger was the natural successor to me. I forecast that with a new HO and a new younger General Secretary the BMC would take off – and this is what happened under his inspired leadership. Membership grew at a rapid pace, partly because of his introduction of Summit in 1996 which gave members a quality quarterly magazine for their subscription. Also at that time Roger played a major part in persuading the Sports Council that the national mountain centre, Plas v Brenin, should be managed by the BMC and the training bodies, rather than their earlier choice of a company specialising in land management and grass cutting. At PyB one of his inspired ideas was to organise an international meet for disabled climbers

which was a great success. A caring man, on his many trips to the Himalayas and Karakorum, he initiated schemes to help the local people and actively supported projects aimed at sustainable development in mountain areas.

I returned to the BMC as President in 1999 and so worked with him again until we both left in early 2002. So how do I remember him? Tremendously hard working, a visionary, always wanting to move things along – and this was too fast for many of the voluntary committees for whom Roger had a reputation of talking them into submission.

The last time I saw him was about three years ago when we did two classic routes at Craig yr Isfa. He had never been before and we had a great day, full of enthusiasm and fun.

By Derek Walker

Edward Addison Wrangham OBE 1928 -2009

In last year's Journal Edward Addison Wrangham's obituary should have been dated 1928-2009. We apologise for any confusion this may have caused.

Graham William Rawcliffe 1946 - 2012

A luminary of The Grumpy Old Men's Climbing Club and a grande fromage of the Mynnydd Club, Graham Rawcliffe was both an astute businessmen and an outdoor polymath. He joined The Climbers' Club in 1992. Here two of his friends, Mike Mortimer and Dick Turnbull reflect on the life and tragic death of one of the fittest and most active climbers of his age.

On a visit to the crag near Alcalali on the Costa Blanca a fit, sun-bronzed fellow kindly offered to show me round what was clearly one of his local crags. We had a nodding acquaintance but shortly afterwards I joined a disorganised group of retired climbers known as The Grumpy Old Men's Climbing Club. Graham, along with many luminaries of the CC - too many to list here – was an active member and so I got to know him much better. Somewhat taciturn, but a talented and steady climber, he was great to be with on the crags. He and his wife Sheila had bought a house in the village of Castel de Castelles on his retirement and he was a dedicated new-router who had put up a fair number of sports routes in the area even discovering a new crag close to his home. Staying with them was a great experience with their warm hospitality and Graham's enthusiasm. I have fond memories of a mid-winter's day on the magnificent south face of the Ponoig (Ponoch) when we climbed the 500m Las Hadas with Graham climbing the key pitch on decidedly dubious Spanish-style bolts. His propensity for plain speaking was held in check when I struggled to find the start of the descent. but eventually all went well and we just managed the last abseil before it went completely dark.

Trained as a pattern maker, most of his working life was spent at Beard and Cornall in Marple where his strength of character and business acumen took



him all the way to the post of Company Director. He was a major factor in building an extremely successful company, the sale of which enabled him to retire at the age of 53.

He was a dedicated member of the Mynydd over many years, serving as Hut Secretary and as a very hard-working and dynamic Chairman. During that time the Mynydd had a mission to climb as many Scottish sea stacks as possible. Of course the Old Man of Hoy was high on the agenda and they actually chartered a boat to take them from the mainland. Other stacks climbed included Yesnaby Castle, Am Buchaille, the Old Man of Stoer and North Goulton

Castle.

In addition to climbing in most parts of the U.K. and many in Western Europe, Graham made several forays to the United States where he discovered sports climbing and ticked off several notable routes, including the East Face of Mount Whitney. A visit to East Africa resulted in an ascent of Mount Kenya.

Graham was an outdoor polymath. In addition to his activities on rock he was an experienced fell-runner who completed several Karrimor Mountain Marathons and was also a competent skier and ski-tourer making the classic high level traverse from Chamonix to Zermatt. He was a

keen mountain biker who made extended trips such as the Tour de Mont Blanc and various trails in the States including the White Rim near Moab, Utah on his 60th birthday. More latterly he became an almost obsessive road cyclist. Not content with all this he was an ardent coarse fisher both in Spain and the UK, and he had been a keen member of the Morgan Owner's Club.

Graham and Sheila had been married for 42 years and on their extended holidays in Spain Sheila was his ever reliable 'belay bunny' and companion on many adventures during their retirement. He was a devoted family man and when their granddaughter Beth arrived on the scene their trips to Spain were somewhat curtailed in order to spend more time with her. Mention of her name was always capable of lifting his mood.

The news that one of the fittest and most active people we knew had been diagnosed as having an inoperable tumour of the oesophagus was greeted with complete disbelief. The chance of a new chemotherapeutic regime offered a glimmer of hope and though extremely unpleasant and debilitating this seemed to be succeeding to the extent that Graham and Sheila held a party to thank his friends for their support. He managed to get back to fishing, had a few cycle rides and even joined us at The Edge for some climbing. It proved to be a false dawn and soon Graham was feeling the pain that he knew to result from the growing tumour. Accepting the inevitable he refused the offer of further chemotherapy. He found eating caused him great discomfort and family and friends had to watch helplessly the inexorable decline as that dreadful

disease destroyed him. Sheila and his daughter Elise nursed him to the end and our thoughts go out to them and Beth.

By Mike Mortimer

I first met Graham about 20 or so years ago. Our new climbing shop in Hathersage had been open for a short time and so far it had all gone pretty smoothly despite me being very obviously not a local. I remember my first encounter with Graham, as when I breezily asked this compact, tough looking character if he wanted any help I was met by a forbidding, direct and silent stare. 'Here we go', I thought as I knew that here was the authentic face of the flinty-eved North. I can't remember what I said but I remember being intimidated by the silence and the frosty look and probably just blustered for a bit before he sauntered off obviously thinking 'bloody southerner, what does he know?"

It wasn't long before I started to bump into Graham on a more regular basis on the Tuesday night climbing scene and around the local crags and learnt that he was a big wheel in the Mynnydd, a good climber and, as it turned out, a good bloke – and to top it all – a good customer! I can only assume that both I and the shop had somehow passed the test – whatever that was – as I began to see Graham more regularly in the shop where he showed his discernment by only buying good products from the best brands – a then unheard of habit for a member of the Mynnydd.

For a long time that was as well as I got to know him – in that casual way climbers know each other from brief conversations at crags, occasional sessions in the pub and, of course, from talking to him in the shop where he became a much-valued customer.

I knew when he came in there was a good chance he'd buy something good but that I'd definitely have to work hard and sell it to him and then give him a good deal into the bargain! He was a man who understood and respected hard work and expected to see others doing their job properly and sticking at it. That was what made him such a successful hands-on businessman. someone who knew what's-what and understood that effort and constancy were vital to success both in business and family and someone who could spot bullshit from a mile off! Because of his business experience it was great to hear his point of view as he was one of a few of my friends who ran his own firm, so, as I got to know him better, we could exchange gripes and groans about business, Manchester United and the world at large as well as bang on about climbing.

It was really when he retired that I got to know him well and to appreciate the softer side of his character. To be honest, up until then I had always been a bit scared of Graham, knowing that I would have to 'man-up' whenever I saw him in order not to fall below his tough 'northern' standards. With his business sold and his future assured Graham seemed to relax and become the Graham that I got to know and value as a good friend, great climbing partner and valued member of the Grumpy Old Men's informal climbing group. His and Sheila's hospitality in their lovely Spanish house when the Grumpies descended on the Costa Blanca crags was above-and-beyond the call of duty. Not only that but his determination to ensure that we went to the best crags and did the best routes - many of them his, of course - made our Spanish trips very memorable.

Indeed he was elected as Chief Grump, an honour despite its title, more than once. When he was back in the UK his regular presence with the Grumpies at The Edge climbing wall ensured that there would be good competitive banter on the wall and in the pub afterwards. In these years he seemed to me to become a more rounded, complete character assured by his own achievement and in the strength of his family and his commitment to his friends. Like many of us once the cut-and-thrust of

careers, jobs and 'getting-on' is done and out of the way, Graham could concentrate on the really valuable things in life like family, friends, and of course, climbing. Some would say biking as well but, as we all know, that's really only a pastime! However, whatever I might think about biking, it certainly kept him mega-fit and the 'butcher's dog' never got a look in when Graham was around.

Like all things of value I felt that I had to work hard to gain Graham's respect and

friendship. But like all things of great value it was well worth it. Nowadays I remember him for his great smile, his astute and intelligent conversation, admirable moral values, strong climbing ability and for his friendship rather than for being that laconic northerner that I first met over 20 years ago.

Life isn't always fair and at the end it wasn't fair to Graham, nor to us, as we shall all miss him greatly.

By Dick Turnbull

E.H (ERNIE) PHILLIPS 1922-2011

A gifted rock climber who established some of the hardest routes in Snowdonia at the time, Ernie Phillips was also talented photographer. His iconic image of Joe Brown's first ascent of Right Unconquerable wonderfully captured the spirit of the time. He joined the The Climbers' Club in 1946. Here, long time friend, Arnold Carsten, pays tribute to a remarkable and generous man.

One day, when Menlove Edwards dropped me off at Ogwen, I took a short stroll and came across a chap, alone, half way up a boulder. His name, I later learned, was Ernie Phillips. We got to talking about the



holds and routes and hit it off immediately. We went on to climb together. By the late 1940s we had climbed most of the then known routes in Snowdonia and almost all the VSs in the Lake District including a new one. Our equipment, back then, was just a hemp rope, nailed boots and rubbers. Socks served us well on wet rock. There was no hardware in those days, but being an innovative, hands-on engineer, Ernie later designed pitons and had them made by a local blacksmith for some of his friends.

Ernie chose a career in telecommunications and developed a keen interest in science and engineering. He joined The Climbers' Club in 1946 and later teamed up with Peter Harding and other pioneers on such notable ascents as Ivy Sepulchre, Spectre, Central Gully on Lliwedd and others. He also

participated regularly in our meets at Bosigran. Living in Derbyshire, Ernie climbed extensively in the Peak District and for many years took a very active part in the Oread Mountaineering Club there. He also visited the Alps, the Rockies and trekked in the Himalayas. Not only was he an accomplished rock climber, he also excelled in other outdoor activities. namely canoeing, caving and skiing. He served as senior instructor in Jack Longland's Open Country Pursuit Centre Whitehall and as a mountaineering and canoeing instructor at Plas v Brenin. His contemporaries will always remember him as a most affable, enthusiastic and competent mountaineer. Ernie's article in the CC Journal of 2001 reflects his character.

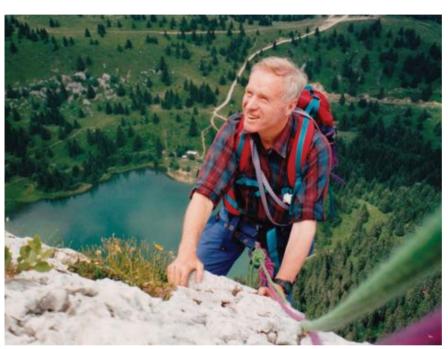
By Arnold Carsten Help from John Fisher, Oread M.C.

JOHN GOODIER 1929-2012

A familiar face among Midland climbers, John Goodier was the kind of man who could not grow old quietly. In later years his enthusiasm and passion for the hills only seemed to intensify – he did the Grossglockner (3798 metres) when he was 74. He joined The Climbers' Club in 1992. Here one of his close friends and a companion on many shared adventures, Mike Burt, reflects on a life lived to the full.

John first visited Helvg in 1949 with a university party and began a long and affectionate association with the hut. In the same year he went to the Alps and climbed the Matterhorn: a feat he was to repeat some 50 years later. I got to know him when he came to Wolverhampton in 1973. His career had not allowed him to spend much time in the hills but his enthusiasm was unbounded and his stamina and endurance outstanding. He did a number of alpine routes during his holidays from work and many Welsh routes with Brede Arkless. Never did he miss a chance to climb. If there was no one to climb with, he would walk alone. He had made several visits to Cadair Idris before his move to Wolverhampton. He enjoyed the Cyfrwy Arête particularly. We did Obsession together on that ridge and, on the other side of the mountain, Great Gully in average winter conditions. After a misfortune on Purgatory on Lliwedd that required him to take some time off to recover, he was soon back on the crags.

We made many visits to North Wales climbing such things as Bow Shaped Slab, Creagh Dhu Wall and various scrambles. He drove up to Skye alone to join me for a few rock routes and walking on Sgurr Nan Guillean, Blaven and Clach Glas. He was a regular on our local club meets at Bosigran and he revelled in the joy of the beautiful granite and the magic Cornish



atmosphere.

Our most memorable route was The Old Man of Hoy, which we did with Robin Quine when John was 65. There is a complete account of that ascent in a previous journal but the miles of travel on land and sea, together with the daunting aspect of the stack, made it an experience to look back on. Doing Ardverikie Wall on the way back helped to make an exceptional trip.

Being in his sixties when he joined The Climbers' Club and climbing with me, who was just behind him in age, also having known Hamish Nicol when he was at university, he naturally gravitated towards the company of older members. Like me, he found the spirit and ambience of Richard Huddy's winter meets at Helyg to be welcome and fitting with the pleasure he took in the hills and crags.

John's alpine routes included two ascents of the Aiguille Verte via the Whymper and Couturier Couloirs and the Dent d'Herens. He soloed the Breithorn but dismissed it as not being of much consequence as a ski lift took him up much of the way. He did the Grossglockner (3798 metres) when he was

74. His original intention was to solo it, but there had been some alteration in the standard route and he allowed prudence to intervene and sought company on the ascent.

He went twice to the Himalaya, doing Mera Peak on his first visit and attempting Cho Ovo later. He alarmed his companions by the unsparing energy that he put into the walking sections and it was only with difficulty that he was persuaded to slow down a bit.

It was late in his mountain experiences that he found how much he enjoyed skiing, sometimes going three times in a winter. He threw himself into it with his usual enthusiasm, charging into lines that deserved more cautious treatment. Fate caught up with him on one such descent and he ended up damaging his arm. The subsequent operation was risky but he was determined to preserve the overhead smash that he used when playing squash and went ahead with it regardless.

John was a man of many parts, being a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society who made a very successful career in the aircraft industry an enthusiastic squash player, a Times Crossword solver every day and a canny bridge player. After an illness that, for long enough, defied diagnosis John died on 10th June 2012. He had become such a permanent and regular companion it is difficult to accept that he is no longer around.

By Mike Burt

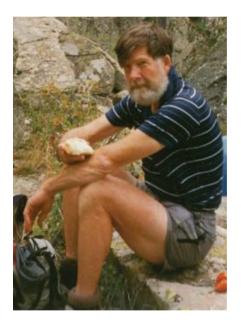
JOHN (JACK) DERRY 1926 - 2012

Arctic explorer, Jack Derry, also enjoyed successful adventures in the Alps and the Greater Ranges. He joined The Climbers' Club in 1952. Here one of his longstanding friends. Harry Sales, recalls a man with diverse interests and talents, ranging from a passion for medieval manuscripts to his skill as a sculptor.

Jack Derry was a very friendly man, a dentist by profession. He even practised his dentistry on me at a height of 15,000 feet in the Himalava. He and his wife Muriel lived in an old house in Surrey village of Shamley Green. Pat and I walked regularly with them and other friends in the Surrey Hills and other parts of Britain and Europe. As a climber Jack's activities ranged far and wide. We often travelled together to CC meets and to rocks in Southern England. Pat and I shared trips with Jack and Muriel to the Alps and the Himalaya. Once, going round Annapurna, we tried an assault on Chulu East. Jack trudged manfully up, his relatively small boots failing to keep him on the crust of the deep snow, only for us to be finally defeated by a great vawning crevasse below the summit.

Our trip to the Arctic was memorable and was written up in the 1970-71 CC Journal. Three CC men, Jack, Peter Mould and me and three Scots including the nominal leader Malcolm Slessor. I say nominal because he kept us on a loose rein.

We flew from the North of Iceland to the tundra north of Scorsby Sund in Arctic Greenland. Between us we climbed nine unclimbed peaks behind the east coast. We had landed on the tundra and, once we met the snowline, we used skis to traverse the mountain passes though lack was not used to skis. Once we got above the snow line Malcolm gave Jack lessons: he made progress, but when we eventually came down he had difficulty in keeping up with us on the long rocky descent He brayely persisted and it was a very happy team



back in base camp.

Jack was adept with his hands and became a meticulous sculptor. But even greater was his interest in old medieval manuscripts.

Jack is survived by his wife, Muriel, and his two children, Giles and Clare.

By Harry Sales

G W S PIGOTT 1926 -2012

With new routes in both the Peak District and North Wales, Geoff Pigott followed in his father's footsteps. Here his sometimes climbing partner and fellow poker player, Tony Moulam, recalls the life and fast times of a bold and adventurous rock climber.

Peter Harding was a lecturer at Shrewsbury Technical College and I was a student there when he took me on the train to the Rucksack Club dinner at the Engineers' Club in Manchester on 3rd November 1948. There, amongst many other members, I met Geoff Pigott and his father Fred, who had first breached Clogwyn du'r Arddu's defences by climbing its East Buttress in the year I was born! Fred had climbed extensively on gritstone and had developed techniques and stamina to subdue the varied problems of his climbing. He instilled his son with his determination and pioneering instincts and he became a worthy bearer of his name.

Geoff first teamed up with Arthur Birtwistle, of Diagonal fame, and made his first entry on the new route lists with the steep and exposed Pisa on Shining Clough. Moneylenders' Crack at Nether Tor was another taxing effort and a handful of worthy routes at Agden Rocher completed his early contributions in the Peak.

I did not climb with Geoff until 9th July 1949, when we joined forces on Narrow Slab followed by Great Slab and Birthday Crack on 10th. These two routes completed our joint ticking off of the 'old' routes on Cloggy, and led to an unforgettable party in the Pen-y-Gwryd smoking room that evening! It carried on until the early hours and the noise of shaking poker dice kept awake at least one unfortunate guest who next day complained to Chris Briggs, the landlord,

that he could not sleep for the sound of bones clicking!

When I went up to Manchester University in 1949 Geoff introduced me to the esoteric sandstone quarries at Alderley Edge, where our search for new routes was foiled by Council-dumped sludge at the foot of potential climbs and a choking smoke screen from burning rubbish. We did, however, succeed in a long and muddy stomach traverse of a sill, which semipermanently altered the colour of our clothes to a murky off-red. Geoff was an elegant but forceful climber and we gave some serious attention to the Roaches in March 1950. Most of the routes fell to our combined efforts, but one notable exception was the unclimbed Saul's Crack - which we knew as Brindley's Buttress. Its first ascent came a few weeks later when Joe Brown solved the problem. After one of these outings I stayed at Hill House and was fed and entertained by Fred and Frances, Geoff's mother. Part of the meal was pigeon, shot with an air rifle by Geoff from his bedroom window. The food was delicious and Fred's polite interest in what we had done, and hoped to do, helped to form our plans.

The main outcome of that weekend was an assignation to climb Pigott's Route together. We had both done it before and argued about where we found the difficulties, and on 1st July we decided to settle the matter. Geoff insisted that I should lead, as it was his father's climb, although I did not really see the logic in



his reasoning. Anyway the cliff welcomed us into its grassy mysteries and we made quick progress for a pitch or so. It all seemed much more enclosed than on my earlier ascent and we, seemingly suddenly, found ourselves at the foot of the final pitch. I remembered it as quite a brutal effort and expressed my trepidation. Geoff, however, assured me that it would go easily and volunteered to place a sling round the chockstone that had providentially been left in place. The hemp sling and ex WD karabiner in place, I moved up the crack and on above the protection with slimy hand jams and the odd layback

move. Soon I was able to reach the top and pull over gasping onto the ledge. I was inordinately pleased at having succeeded on this test piece of the time.

Next year we began to get our act together, with Geoff leading the second ascent of Ribstone Crack and then inventing Bole Way, an underrated climb on Carreg Wastad. In those unreconstructed days we both smoked and inadvertently set alight the dry grass at the foot of the final tricky groove. Geoff topped out and I had to follow him with flames licking at my heels, which inspired us to call the new route we did next day at Tremadog, Shadrach, of the burning fiery furnace.

Another year passed and, on the day I should have received my degree at Manchester University, we stood by Geoff's parked Citroen Light 15 by the last gate on the track up to Cwm Silyn. It was a warm July day as our large party set off for the cliffs, and I, for some unknown reason, was carrying our selection of pegs and karabiners in a straw shopping basket. As we mounted the slopes the weight began to take its toll on my fingers and I regretted not using the usual rucksack instead. We reached the lakes and half of the party chose to swim there, whilst Geoff, Bill Bowman and I continued to the preliminary assault on the several times ascended approach rib. Established on the grass ledge below the cave, I quickly drove in a peg, tied myself immovably to it and pointed Geoff at the groove we had previously tried, up to the left of the cave.

A bold forty-foot ascent and then Geoff pounded at our earlier peg and replaced it with a better one. He leant precariously out to the right and reached a sloping ledge, on the edge of the buttress and all things! Despite a stirrup, he decided to abdicate responsibility and descended by abseil, leaving a rope looped through the peg at the top of the groove. Protected from above, I made quick progress up to our previous high point and on to a bulge and an unsatisfactory thin crack into which I tapped the tips of two pegs. Delicate moves brought me to a long ledge below another forbidding overhang. Geoff moved off to the right and circumvented this last problem, so that Ogof Direct was ours.

On our several journeys to Cwm Silvn and the Tremadog rocks we had noticed the steep profile of the cliffs that dropped from Yr Eifl to the sea. Geoff made the first visit there and discovered the original route of Eifl Tower. Soon after this we went to tackle the main ridge on the edge of the biggest buttress and, after a four-hour siege, succeeded with Avernus. I remember being belayed to a ledge below a recalcitrant wall and picking at bulbs buried in the soil. Geoff called to me sharply to look to the rope, which slowly fed out as he overcame the exposed and holdless groove, the key to the wall above. This made a route in unique position. which is still a serious undertaking, and pointed the way to future developments on the peripheries of Snowdonia.

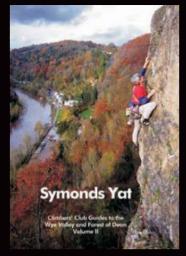
Another contribution to Welsh climbing popularisation was made on 1st June 1954. ITV wanted to make a film about rock climbing and their first choices of lead actors were Joe Brown or Scotty Dwyer. Neither were available so Kevin FitzGerald approached me and Geoff, on behalf of Wynford Vaughan Thomas. My boss at ICI was Ernest Wood Johnson, a climber, who

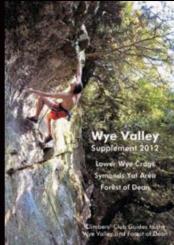
easily granted me permission to promote climbing on TV, and, of course, Geoff worked for his father's spice business and also got leave of absence. I think it was a Thursday when we gathered in the bar at Pen-y-Gwryd and, after some refreshment, went to reconnoitre the climb. The venue was somewhat restricted as it had to be near enough to a road for the TV vehicles to be close and they had to have a line of sight connection to a relay station on Snowdon's summit. The chosen site was the Dyffryn rocks, now known as the Racks and Cribs and we spied out a likely line up a steep bluff. I led up the first section and, where the angle eased, placed a peg to ease the pull over into the final groove. Half an hour later we went live and Geoff climbed the line elegantly, which aptly became Lime Groove! Named after the then television centre.

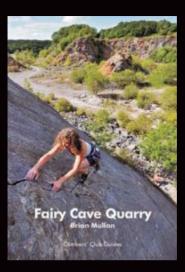
Soon afterwards Geoff became deeply involved in skiing and, after his marriage, we never climbed together again, though we had enjoyed many high points together on the Welsh and Peak District crags.

So Geoff, with a brief meteoric career on the rocks, fulfilled his promise as a rock climber, denigrated by his father's quip in a speech at a climbing dinner when he said that Geoff's hopes of being the fastest driver, the best rock climber and the greatest lover looked likely to be fulfilled in the last respect at least, if the number of intimate female garments he had found in his car were anything to be judged by!

By Tony Moulam







Guide Books

Ogwen. By Mike Bailey

Tremadog. By Steve Long

West Cornwall Supplement. By Andy March

Symonds Yat. By John Willson

Wye Valley Supplement 2012. By John Willson

Fairy Cave Quarry. By Brian Mullan

Pembroke Range East Vol. 3. By Gary Gibson

Pembroke Range East Vol. 4. By Gary Gibson

Pembroke Stackpole & Lydstep. By Emma Alsford & Paul Donnithorne

South West Climbs Vol. 1. By Paul Robertson

Boulder Britain. By Niall Grimes

Skye: The Cuillin. By Mike Lates

Skye: Sea Cliffs & Outcrops. By Mark Hudson

Best Climbs: Denver & Boulder. By Stewart Green

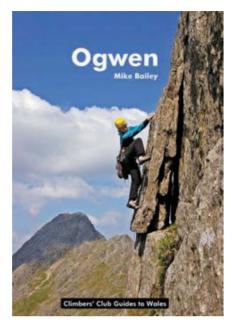
Morocco Rock. By Emma Alsford & Paul Donnithorne

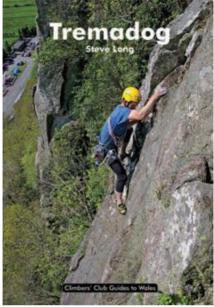
Tarragona Climbs. By Pete O'Donovan & Dani Andrada

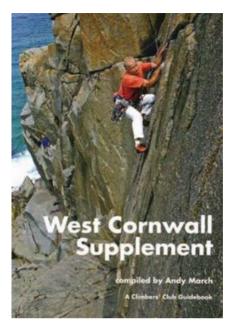
Plaisir Selection. By Sandro Von Kanel

Yorkshire Gritstone Vol. 1. By YMC

Di Roccia di Sole. By Massimo Cappucio & Peppe Gallo







OGWEN by Mike Bailey Edited by Bob Moulton Artwork by Simon Cardy, Don Sargeant ISBN 978-0-901601-83-4 440 pages

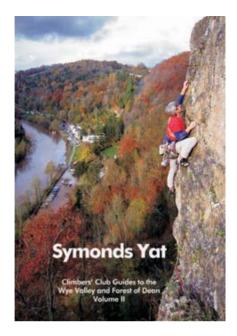
This guide offers a thorough reassessment of the climbing on the south side of the A5, based around the ever-popular Tryfan and Cwm Idwal areas, including some 140 new routes climbed since the last guide (Ogwen and Carneddau 1994) and many 'rediscovered' older climbs. Similar in format to the Llanberis guide with many action photos, all-colour photodiagrams, and photoplans and a selective bouldering section written by Simon Panton. The guide also has a chronology (a combination of the historical and first ascents sections), which includes short biographical notes on the leading activists over the years.

TREMADOG by Steve Long Edited by Pete Sterling Artwork by Don Sargeant ISBN 978-0-901601-88-9 378 pages

This latest definitive Tremadog guidebook published at the end of 2010 is a complete modern revision incorporating a number of new and colourful aids to help climbers select their climbing adventures. The guide contains a full set of colour phototopos, colour mapping coverage of all crags documented in the guide; it also features a complementary online database of routes and first ascents plus a graded list of climbs on Craig y Castell, Craig Pant Ifan and Craig Bwlch y Moch. Finally, and much to the relief of many, this new edition sees the return of 'stars' attributed to selected routes.

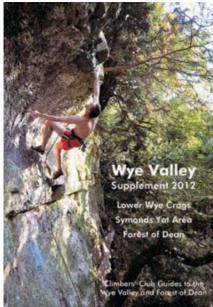
West Cornwall Supplement Compiled by Andy March Edited by Ian Smith ISBN 978-0-901601-92-6 128 pages

This new supplement has been published to use in conjunction with the West Cornwall guide published in 2000 and covers the same area. Most new routes have been included as well as information on changes to existing routes where known. The information contained in this supplement has been collated primarily to aid the authors of the next series of climbing guides to the West Penwith area currently being worked on and which will comprise three volumes: Bosigran and the North Coast, Chair Ladder and the South Coast and finally a small guide covering the Lizard.



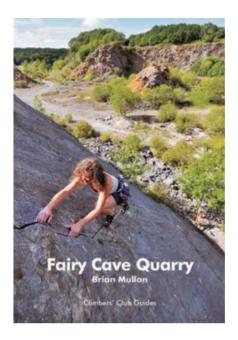
SYMONDS YAT Edited by John Willson (2010) Artwork by Mark Davies and Don Sargeant ISBN 978-0-901601-87-2 320 pages

This book completes the three-volume series of guides to the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean. As well as taking a fresh look at the popular Symonds Yat cliffs, the guide includes the central Forest of Dean quarries and the Cotswolds. A new crag and several quarries have been developed, and the Yat cliffs have been subjected to a radical grade reappraisement; in addition, the handful of 80s-bolted routes have been cleaned and have had recent bolt-free ascents. The book is lavishly illustrated with maps, detailed photodiagrams for almost every crag, and many action photos.



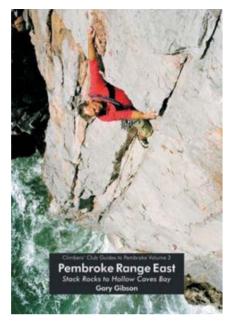
Wye Valley Supplement 2012 Edited by John Willson Artwork by Mark Davies and Don Sargeant ISBN 978-0-901601-91-9 128 pages

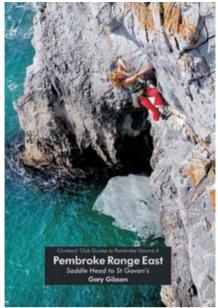
This supplement pulls together all known or reported developments that have taken place since the publication of the current series of definitive guides to the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean started back in 2006. Four new crags, with well over 100 routes between them, are described: Mounton Valley Rocks near Chepstow; Plumweir Cliff above Shorn Cliff, and Bailey Quarry and the Celestial Walls near Symonds Yat. Woodcroft Quarry has recently been worked out and the sport climbs decently geared, and the section has been completely rewritten, replacing the one in Lower Wye Valley. Fully illustrated.



FAIRY CAVE QUARRY by Brian Mullan (2012) Artwork by Mark Davies and Don Sargeant ISBN 978-0-901601-95-7 70 pages

Since its relatively recent development, Fairy Cave Quarry has rapidly gained popularity, and is now the area's Mecca for 'trad' slab climbing. Access problems have now been resolved. A lot of vegetation and dust accumulated during this period but the climbs have in the last couple of years been cleaned up, and another new-route blitz has followed. Although there is still a fair amount of choss, there are extensive areas of high-quality limestone slabs to be found. These slabs, which reach a height of 40 metres, provide good, solid climbing, free from pegs and other fixed gear. This mini guide, replaces the section in the 2004 Avon & Cheddar guide.





Pembroke Range East Volume 3: Stack Rocks to Hollow Caves Bay By Gary Gibson Edited by Gwyn Evans Artwork by John Eales and Don Sargeant ISBN 978-0-901601-89-6 334 pages

Pembroke Range East Volume 4: Saddle Head to St Govan's by Gary Gibson Artwork by John Eales and Don Sargeant ISBN 978-0-901601-90-2 342 pages

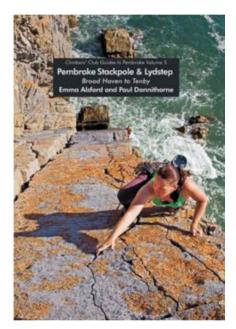
These volumes cover probably the most popular section of the Pembrokeshire coat and are part of a series of five published by the Climbers' Club to provide a definitive record of rock climbing in the county. Such a huge task would have been daunting to many publishers, but the Club not only accepted the challenge but have now set the new standard for definitive guidebooks and the whole team must be congratulated. From the very first acquaintance, these guides look the business, with their inspiring cover pictures and eye-catching spines. Pick them up and they actually feel good too; the material used for the covers, the weight, the size, the thickness; all feel right. Even when closed they scream quality and you get the feeling that you're in for a treat and you'd be right. Immediately on opening them the attention to detail in the design is apparent; the design team have done an outstanding job. Even the front-end paper maps, so often taken for granted, show care; being clean and simple, yet full of information. And straight away an innovation: the front cover has been

extended to produce a useful flap which folds out to provide a combined contents/ area map and a key to the various colour codes and symbols used to describe the routes' properties. As a regular climber on sea-cliffs, I was particularly pleased to see the introduction of a symbol to identify those routes which rely on insitu protection, just one example of the thought that has gone into these guides. Indeed, throughout the text it is clear that a great deal of thought has gone into not only making the guides attractive, but also on how to make them as user-friendly as possible with colour being used to good effect in identifying key sections of the guide. Even the introductory sections, so often boring and predictable have been brought alive by the use of images and well-researched material; the detail about the lifetime of discarded 'litter' being very welcome. The history section maintains the quality, being well-illustrated and not afraid to take an objective and critical look at the role played by the guides' author, Gary Gibson – a man chosen for his encyclopaedic knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, the area. And then into the meat of the guide where Gary has put this knowledge to good effect, supported by the rest of the team, to produce concise, accurate and inspiring descriptions. Approaches, descents and abseil points are clearly described and identified, supported by images and diagrams. Once again the contribution of the design team is evident with outstanding photographs, topos and clear photodiagrams throughout (unfortunately the source of the only major error in one of the guides - I know it will still hurt!). Finally at the end of the guides there is an unexpected bonus. Tucked

away, alongside the rear end papers, is a high scale map of the area – the final icing on the cake.

With these publications, The Climbers' Club have raised the bar on what can be expected from definitive guides in the future. Gwyn, Gary and the rest of the team have done us proud.

Review By Graham Hoey



Pembroke Stackpole & Lydstep

By Emma Alsford and Paul Donnithorne Edited by Helen Barry Artwork by Mark Davies and Don Sargeant ISBN 978-0-901601-93-3 440 pages

This is the third guidebook in a planned five volume coverage of arguably the UK's finest climbing area – Pembroke.

The authors, Emma Alsford and Paul Donnithorne are the area's pre-eminent current activists with hundreds of new lines to their names and their in depth knowledge shines through this superb guide.

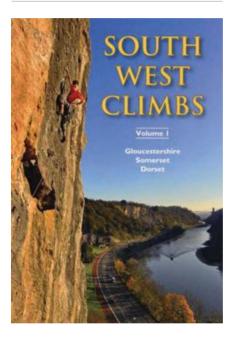
Not only does the reader get route descriptions and photo topos for 1,100 routes but the approach time, aspect, tide issues, bird bans and abseil points are all detailed. But that's not all, there are sections on ethics, accommodation, access, flora, birds, seals, geology, archaeology, deep water soloing advice plus suggestions for when it rains.

The guide is a neat package with a manageable size suitable for carrying en-route and its clean layout avoiding the information-clutter plaguing some modern guides (I liked the addition, over the first two volumes, of the route number next to the photos so once inspired you can easily locate the description). The coated paper and glued spine I suspect could prove a little flimsy however.

Visually the guide is a triumph with a mass of previously unpublished high quality action shots - the majority of them the first I've ever seen of those particular routes. A great touch is that the photos aren't all of the usual suspects – for example the double page spread of The Jackdaw a no star HS is so good it makes me want head down there right now. And there lies perhaps the greatest success of this guide not only does it clearly get you efficiently to the base of Pembroke's myriad of three star classics but it showcases a wealth of alternatives.

Having spent many months of my life exploring this coastline I thought I knew Pembroke pretty well but this guide has opened my eyes to another lifetime's worth of routes, even whole new crags. As a result I've a new ticklist – the dramatic traverse of Dragon Slayer, the soaring corner of Firestreak and the 'magical adventure' of Soup Dragon – I can't wait for the next bank holiday.

Review by Ian Parnell



SOUTH WEST CLIMBS: VOLUME I

Edited by Paul Robertson Artwork by Mark Davies and Don Sargeant ISBN 978-0-901601-94-0 464 pages

South West Climbs – if ever there was a guidebook to inspire, Pat Littlejohn's seminal 1979 work was it, gathering in one modest volume a lifetime's ambitions for the aspiring adventurer.

One reason Littlejohn's original was so iconic was that many of the routes were still relatively unknown. It felt like he was lifting the lid on a secret world, and providing those who signed up with access to somewhere truly special.

12 years later, Diadem published a second edition, fully updated and presented in an even more appealing format. This one seemed just as inspiring, as it once again covered a whole host of unpublicised climbs, though this time they were largely in the Bristol area, courtesy of prolific local pioneer Martin Crocker.

Picking up this latest edition of South West Climbs, this time published by the CC after the original publishers were unable to continue the series, I was first struck by the sumptuous presentation. I dug out Littlejohn's original and looking at the two editions side by side dramatically demonstrates just how far guidebooks have evolved in the last 33 years.

This, the first volume of a 2-part celebration of South West climbing, is a visual delight. Printed in full colour, the design is pleasing and crisp. The printer has also done an excellent job, with the photos and maps looking really punchy.

Don Sargeant's maps which first appeared in the recent definitive guidebooks are reproduced here along with some new maps for areas like Portland and Swanage. I'm pleased to see these re-used, as I think Don's maps are amongst the clearest and most visually pleasing to appear in any recent guidebook.

Some of the extensive colour phototops originally appeared in the definitive guides, but many are new, and they provide an excellent overview of the lines. As usual with most modern guides, there is a bumper collection of action photos, with many of the double page spread shots being striking images, which often defy the difficulties of their subject matter – ie. a vegetated cliff shrouded by trees! As I leafed through the guidebook, I checked the photographer responsible for the most striking images. Time and time again the same name appeared – Mark Davies.

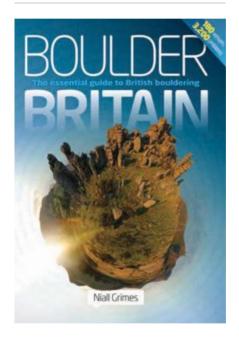
Volume 1 covers the pick of the routes from 3 areas already covered by definitive CC guidebooks – The Wye Valley, Avon and Cheddar, and Swanage and Portland. That leaves a second volume due sometime later, which will cover the real jewels in the South West crown, the seacliffs of Devon and Cornwall.

Inevitably with any selected climbs book, one of the first things I look at is what has been included, and more importantly, what has been left out. This book certainly covers a huge number of routes making it far less "selective" than its predecessors. Nevertheless, I was puzzled to see that two of my own favourites from the areas covered, did not make the cut. And it is not as though they are too hard, or too dirty, or too obscure. Routes far harder, dirtier and more obscure than Changeling on the Main Wall at Avon, or Polaris at Swanage are included!

But that is really nit picking, since anyone in the market for a selected guide to these areas will have more than enough to go on with this book, and if they run out of options, there is always the definitive books to fall back on.

Perhaps one of the key differences compared to the earlier editions, is that there is little that is really new here – no major new cliffs, or routes of national importance appearing in a guidebook for the first time. Of course this merely reflects the state of development, and the timing of this new book in relation to the definitive editions. But perhaps this is why for all its advances in design and layout, and the terrific job done by Editor Paul Robertson and his team, the 2012 South West Climbs can never be truly iconic, something the modest black and white 1979 original most certainly was.

Review by Neil Foster



BOULDER BRITAIN by Niall Grimes ISBN 978-0-957057-80-7 448 pages

Whilst most modern guidebooks are highly effective but generally formulaic affairs, every now and then a guidebook comes along that stands out as a genuine one-off. Great examples of such books include Gaston Rebuffat's glorious selected volume The Mont Blanc Massif: The Hundred Finest Routes, Pat Littlejohn's much-celebrated South West Climbs, Paul William's passionately loquacious 1987 Llanberis and Nick White's South Devon & Dartmoor (1991).

Firmly in that tradition of boldly inventive and original books that each, in different ways, redefined what a climbing guide could do is Niall Grime's spectacular new book Boulder Britain, the first selected bouldering guidebook to the whole of the UK. The result of Grimes's huge labour of love is an exceptionally stylish, distinctive, and uniquely informative book that only months after its release is already widely regarded as the premier text on UK bouldering.

The author travelled the length and breadth of the UK to research all this country's known bouldering areas, from the famous venues of the Peak District and North Wales to ultra-obscure pooks such as the craglets of Leicestershire and some of the best (and previously undocumented) boulder-playgrounds in Scotland such as Skye, Glen Nevis and Loch Katrine - he also made countless enquiries with local climbers to create accurate topos of virtually all the areas described, and spent hours writing and designing to compile this gigantic guide. The final result is without doubt quite what it claims to be, the 'essential guide to British bouldering'. Whilst my personal climbing interests are more focused on larger rocks demanding all that annoying metal paraphernalia shunned by the boulderer, I will still throw my copy of Boulder Britain in the car whenever I'm going away climbing in the

UK from now on, such is the books value as a point of reference for the real measure of this country's climbing potential.

Whether you use it as an escape clause for when rain stops play on a trad climbing weekend, or as a treasure map for all your—double V-grade dreams, this intriguing and inspirational book requires a space on every British climber's bookshelf.

Review by David Pickford



SKYE: THE CUILLIN Edited by Mike Lates ISBN 978-1-907233-13-5 324 pages

The recent publication of the SMC's Skye Scrambles guide marked the beginning of

a three-pronged strategy to overhaul the documentation of climbing exploration on the most alpine of all the British islands. Arriving close on its heels is this definitive guide to technical climbing in the Cuillin; a final instalment will concentrate on the island's coastal climbs.

Three cheers for the SMC, who continue to insist on using the correct name for the mountain range (even the BBC these days talks about 'The Cuillins'). Pedantry apart, such rectitude sets the tone for the rest of the book, giving the user confidence over its accuracy and thoroughness.

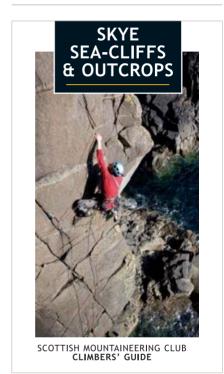
The Cuillin are notoriously complex, confusing sometimes even to the aficionado. But the copious use of full-colour topos, allied to local expert Mike Late's clear and unambiguous prose, helps nullify the background noise generated by its chaotic concertina of hard-to-pronounce peaks and corries. These improvements, partly enabled by the enormous advance in colour printing technology, mean the current volume marks as enormous leap forward compared to the last edition published 15 years ago.

Not only are there far more climbs recorded, in better, clearer detail than ever, but the guide remains slim and lightweight (still just 390 grams) ensuring it can easily be carried up into the remote mountains. But it also works well in its secondary role - as an armchair research tool - thanks to an array of colour action and landscape shots peppering the text.

Last but not least, bolstered by Lates' not inconsiderable familiarity with the range, the book contains the most authoritative blow-by-blow description of how to tackle the Cuillin Ridge Traverse (Standard and Greater, summer and winter) - a factor

that alone might make it desirable in many mountaineers' eyes. It's difficult to see how any climber might think of visiting Skye without a copy from now on.

Review by Colin Wells



SKYE: SEA CLIFFS & OUTCROPS By Mark Hudson ISBN 978-0-907233-14-2 336 pages

The final volume in the SMC's 'Skye Trilogy' describes the climbing to be found on the sea-cliffs, outcrops and sea stacks on the Isle of Skye - it is an up-to-date and fully comprehensive guide to what is a beautiful island and is a fine companion the Skye: The Cuiliin (2011). The main

author, Mark Hudson, is a graphic artist whose diagrams enhanced the Skve Scrambles guidebook, as well as the Ben Nevis guide and who has an intimate knowledge of the island including an active role in developing many of the areas included in the book. With a team of knowledgeable enthusiasts he has produced a well-written and researched guidebook with an easy to use design complete with detailed photo diagrams - having worked on guidebooks for many years, I know how much work goes into a guide like this; it becomes all encompassing and there's a great desire to make it the best you can and Mark and his team should be applauded for doing an outstanding job.

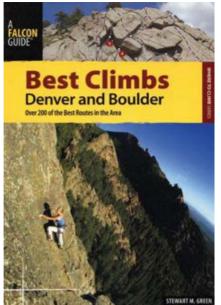
One thing that is clear to see is the vast amount and sheer variety of climbing now documented in this new book, with a significant increase in routes on offer and many of them of a first-rate quality. There's hardly a corner or crag that hasn't had a thorough going over; not only does it cover rock-climbing but also includes the recent winter climbing developments on Corie Scamadal and The Storr to bring things bang up-to-date; personally I would have included these in the Cuillin volume but this is only a minor gripe.

Regarding routes, some are now on my radar, including the quality sounding climbing at Carn Liath on the Trotternish Ridge - the excellent looking E2, Bengal Lancer and climbs around 'The Blade' area of Carn Liath as well as on the 'Main Cliff' look to be just the ticket. The opening description to Bengal says it all: "This fine route climbs the prominent arête of Thief Buttress. There are abundant runners on the thought provoking first pitch, but sparse protection on the second".

The photographs are, in the main, excellent with a lovely cover shot by Mike Hutton and if a photograph were ever to make you want to climb a route, look no further than Gary Latter's fantastic image of India a brilliant E3 at Suidhe Biorach in the Elgol area.

In summary this is a great guidebook and a testament to the hard work done by the author and his team. It's been a while since I was last on Skye but this guide has had the desired effect and re-ignited my desire to return to the area, what more could you want from any guidebook....

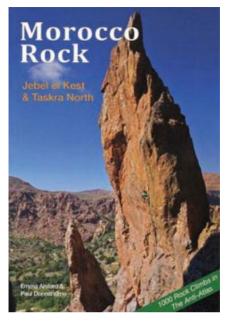
Review by David Simmonite





Over 200 of the classic routes (rarely rating above 5.11), written for non-local climbers who have only a limited time to visit the area. Colour topos, action photos, contemporary design and a very reasonable price make this select guidebook of Eldorado Canyon, the Flatirons, Boulder Canyon, Golden Cliffs and Castlewood Canyon an attractive purchase. Others in this series of popular climbing destinations include Rocky Mountain National Park, Moab and Grand Teton National Park.

Review by Chris Harle



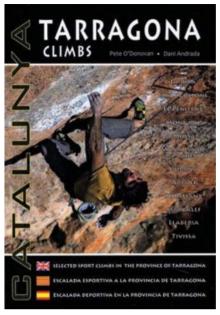
MOROCCO ROCK - JEBEL EL KEST & TASKRA NORTH: 1000 ROCK CLIMBS IN THE ANTI-ATLAS
By Emma Alsford & Paul Donnithorne Crack
Addicts 2012

ISBN 9780957366602

£27.50

This is a definitive guidebook to this part of the Anti-Atlas, close to the busy market town of Tafraoute. Guaranteed winter sun, easy access, beautiful and rugged mountain terrain, adventurous mountain days on multi pitch routes, roadside single pitch cragging, predominantly on perfect golden quartzite and new routing potential should be enough to inspire anyone.

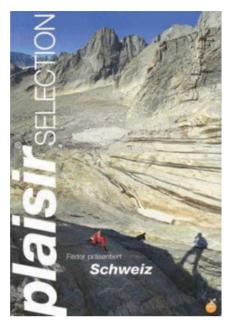
Review by Chris Harle



TARRAGONA CLIMBS — CATALUNYA: SELECTED SPORT CLIMBS IN THE PROVINCE OF TARRAGONA By Pete O'Donovan & Dani Andrada, Pod Climbing 2012 ISBN 9780956700612 £29.95

A selective guidebook to over 2,500 routes at one of the finest sport climbing venues in Europe: magnificent routes set amidst spectacular scenery, at climbing 'meccas' such as Siurana, Margalef, La Mussara, and Montsant.

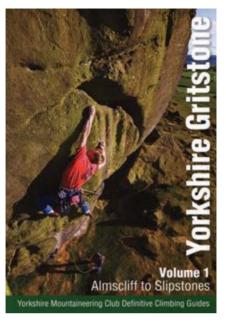
Review by Chris Harle





This is a comprehensive selected guide to the best plaisir (fun) routes in Switzerland (plus Dauphine and Haute-Savoie in France, and Valle d'Aosta and Bergell in Italy). In English, French and German with symbol information and some photo topos.

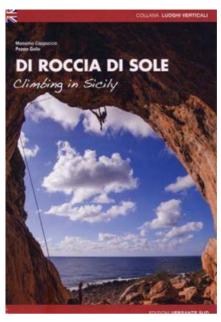
Review by Chris Harle



Yorkshire Gritstone Volume 1 - Almscliff to Slipstones By Robin Nicholson, Yorkshire Mountaineering Club, 2012 ISBN 9780951526750) £24.00

The definitive rock climbing guidebook to the routes and bouldering of the northeastern sector of Yorkshire Gritstone. Featuring over 50 crags, over 2000 routes from Moderate to E8 and 2000 boulder problems from Font 1 to Font 8b+ including Almscliff, Caley and The Chevin, Brimham, Great Wolfrey to Eavestone, Barden Fell to Hunter's Stones (inc. Simon's Seat), The Slipstones area and Hetchell. (Vol 2 due early 2014).

Review by Chris Harle



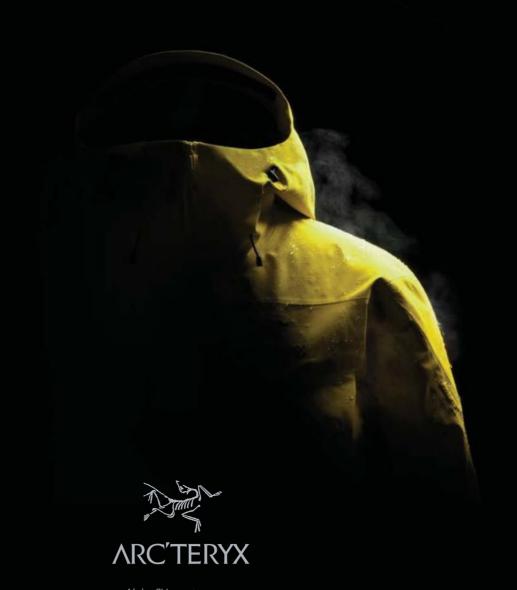
DI ROCCIA DI SOLE - CLIMBING IN SICILY

By Massimo Cappuccio & Peppe Gallo, Versante Sud, 2012 ISBN 9788896634530

A third edition of this English language climbing guide to Sicily. This island has become one of the favourite destinations of climbers from all over the world with the number of cragging areas having doubled in recent years. New developments include San Vito Lo Capo in the Trapani region, Contrada Alfano near Syracuse and the crags in the Ragusa region.

Review by Chris Harle





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