

theclimbers'club
JOURNAL 2015 - 16



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The Editor dedicates this Journal to Ken Wilson, a long time champion of this publication.



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Cover:

Inside Front & Back Covers: *Snowdon Horseshoe. Photograph: Trevor Langborne*

Previous Page: *Buachaille Etive Mor. Photograph: Sean Kelly*

These Pages: *Nick Steen on the Via Tomaselli Via Ferrata Punta Fanes Group. Photograph: Trevor Langborne*



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EDITOR'S NOTE

By Trevor Langhorne

When Steve Scott asked me to step into the Journal Editor's shoes I presume he didn't know that the only exam I ever failed was O level English Literature! It was a great privilege to be asked to take on this role which has been and continues to be, a very steep learning curve. It is often difficult to know exactly what to edit and what to leave and I am sorry if any contributors feel that their work has been "over-edited".

From a starting point with about half a dozen articles in early 2016 the number and size of contributions has grown to the point where there is sufficient material to produce two volumes, this is the 127th CCJ and the 128th is due for publication in the second half of 2018. Please note that there is still time and space for your contribution to the next volume, be it literary or visual art!

This Journal has been a team effort. Without a doubt the key team members have been the contributors, no content, no Journal. Without the help and support of the two Ian's (Smith and Wall), Smiler, David Medcalf and Chris Harle the contributions would have not been edited. The Journal has not published itself; when I started I had no idea of the amount of work remaining after the words had been

edited. The style sheets (design templates) that were used for the previous three Journals were not available so had to be recreated from scratch. Godfrey Boulton volunteered for this big task and having completed it he then set all of the content onto the templates, without his dedication and graft you wouldn't have this book. The final and very important stage of liaising with the printers to ensure the best possible outcome was placed in Don Sargeant's very capable hands. I hope that I haven't missed anyone out, if so it is please accept my apologies.

We have a great collection of articles, both long and short, which reflect the wide range of activities undertaken by our members, from big new routes, fun on classics to the development of strong and lasting partnerships. I have tried to group the articles by placing similar ones into sections, this isn't always possible so some links may be, at best, tenuous. Rather than writing me writing any more please just dive into the content; the best compliment we pay our contributors is to read their words and enjoy their images. Remember having read some of the pieces if you get an idea for an article get writing while it is fresh in your mind and you will be in time for CCJ 128!

Left:
Iain Peters
concentrating; at
Screda Point

Photograph:
James Mann

Right:

*Chris Brown age
10 on the top of
the Bregaglia's
Alt Gallo*

Photograph:
Andy Brown



Right:
*So much rock, a
NW face opposite
Corsica's Aiguille
de Falcone.*

Photograph:
Ken Daykin



ADVENTURES - AWAY

2012: Down Under. *By Malcolm Phelps*

Angelus. *By Roger Wilkinson*

Hiking in California. *By Tony Pearson*

Hot Rockin' on The Costa Blanca.
By Smiler Cuthbertson

Granitola. *By Ken Daykin*

Greenland: July/August 2016.
By Paul Seabrook

Tibet's Secret Mountain. *By Chris Bonington*

When we were Young. *By Bob (RK) Allen*

Fear and not Enough Clothing in Las Vegas.
By Chris Hindley

The Last Climb. *By Steve Burns*



2012: DOWN UNDER

One of the great things about climbing is visiting new places with very different landscapes, climbing and cultures. In this story Malcolm gives us a flavour of climbing Aussie style, Barbies, carrot bolts and a vast array of poisonous nasties; enjoy.

By Malcolm Phelps

Australia: Arapiles and the Grampians
with Raz Parmar, Tim Skinner, Karen
Vaughan
“.....cking hell,cking hell”

This was all I could hear as Raz muttered his way up towards me on 20th Century Fox in the Southern Grampians. But it all ended in broad smiles as we shall see.

Tim, his mum Shirley, Karen, Raz and I went to Melbourne to visit Tim's relatives but we also managed to fit a bit of climbing in.

After a couple of days getting over jet lag and admiring the abundant wild kangaroo on Tim's cousin's farm we were off to Arapiles. Darkness fell as we approached Horsham. Apparently there was a fantastic sunset but I was dead to the world. A quick takeaway noodle and pizza session and we were soon setting up camp in Natimuk and.

I woke to the most fantastically musical dawn chorus; it turned out to be Australian magpies who put on an amazing performance most mornings. Emerging from the tents we found we were beside a massive lake. Tim had popped into the same site for the odd shower on his previous visit six years before and the lake had been completely dry. After ten years of drought water was relatively abundant this year and the lake was a real picture.

Arapiles was just visible from the campsite and about five miles away. We set off for a recce in quite hot conditions; Tim gave us a quick guided tour and we then settled for a climb in the shade of Dunes Buttress. South of the equator the south faces get the shade and although the sun rises in the east and sets in the west as it should, it goes the wrong way across the sky, all very confusing!

Raz and I settled for the classic of the buttress, *Dunes* with four pitches and Graded 13, about MVS. The rock is incredibly solid quartzite which normally gives amazing friction and good natural gear placements. I led off up the first pitch, a bold slab then a steep overlap and finally a crack; no dramas, but enough to keep you on your fingers and toes. The route took an impressive line up the front of the buttress and Raz finished it off with a flourish via a technical corner and airy traverse. Tim and Karen's route finished at the same point and we all walked off the back and down the tourist path as darkness gathered. This was a good introduction that allowed us to get a feel for the main crags and buttresses and their associated descent routes, we also identified attractive lines for later in the week.

On day two it was hotter but we were away reasonably early so opted to take on routes

Left:
*Cormorants on
Lake Natimuk*

Photograph:
Malcolm Phelps

Right:
*The author on
Watchtower Crack*

Photograph:
Raz Parmar

in the sun. Again Raz and I knocked off a classic that Tim had done before – *Bard*, Grade 12, about HS. Tim and Karen went for *Checkmate*, Grade 17, about HVS 5a; although being a steep and bold affair Tim felt it was more like E1 5a.

Had they both read the key part of the description properly they might not have been so gung-ho!

“The audacious crux pitch has witnessed plenty of epics as terrified leaders struggle with intricate protection, strenuous climbing and bowel busting exposure. One notorious mega plummet resulted in the leader collecting someone on *Bard*.”

Since Raz and I were on *Bard*, we were grateful that Tim was up to the task! Our route took an intricate line of least resistance up the middle of the buttress via a slab, an airy and juggy traverse and a more delicate crux pitch. More good, steep climbing led to the descent route through Ali Baba’s mercifully cool cave and down-climbing *Alis*. We then saw to *Eskimo Nell*, although only Grade 10 it was full of character with a slippery first pitch, followed by some steep and exposed wall climbing, a bit of caving and finally a tough exit for the grade. This time we abbed off and watched some locals setting up slack lines between the pinnacles; later in the week we watched, awestruck, as they strutted their stuff.

Tim and Karen got down as darkness fell and we picked up cold beers at the Natimuk Inn to accompany our Thai curry. The clear skies set us looking for the Southern Cross which we correctly identified despite it being, in reality, the Southern Irregular Rectangle. Early in the week strong moonlight proved strong enough to hide the Milky Way later in the week as

it waned we could see our galaxy spread out clearly across the sky encouraging the mind to ponder on our insignificance (well mine anyway). Surely, there must be other life out there in all that vastness?

A beautiful cool morning followed with Autumnal mists hiding the shores of the lake and the thin trees mirrored perfectly in the stillness: Quite, quite, magical.

And then the others got up.

Our musical dawn chorus was sometimes drowned out by squawking cockatoos. On other days, a pair of kookaburras went for broke, they are completely barking! In contrast, a posse of cormorants spent all day perched sedately in a dead tree looking very much like the wise cracking vultures in the film of the *Jungle Book*.

Bird life was abundant. Tim also claimed to have seen or nearly seen a possum and there was certainly evidence of their night time rooting around. Grey kangaroo came out under the crag in the early evening and we all managed close encounters. Their bouncing around is wonderful to watch and seemingly effortless, they may be approaching pest level, but we never tired of them. Reptiles we saw less of, lots of little skinks (lizards) and one stumpy tailed lizard but thankfully no snakes. I was reading Bill Bryson’s *Down Under* and the deadly nature of Aussie wildlife came over loud and clear:

“Australia has more things that will kill you than anywhere else. Of the world’s ten most poisonous snakes, all are Australian. Five of its creatures - the funnel-web spider, box jellyfish, blue-ringed octopus, paralysis tick and stonefish - are the most lethal of their type in the world”.



Funnel web spiders were the most likely worry for us but we had no sightings so no scares although Tim was adamant that he saw funnel web nests everywhere, much to Karen's amusement. The midges did get us on a couple of nights however, until I lit my coils. It turned out these coils are also poisonous and should have been kept away from the food!

Day three dawned even hotter. Raz and I wanted to do the mega classic *Watchtower Crack* but the strong sun put us off for the day. We aimed instead for some shorter climbs over on the left of the crag, on the Atridae. The "Atridae" are the sons of Atreus - Agamemnon and Menelaus. See: you get a classical education if you're in the CC.

Continuing with the classics, Raz and I did *Muldoon*, Grade 13. The rock on the lower half of the cliff was the smooth "bum rock" as the locals call it. While fine in the cool, it sweated up in the heat making the first pitch a bit of a trial and quite bold. The top pitch was on the nice rough rock; even in the heat it was wonderful. We abbed off and hid from the oppressive heat for a few hours, hanging out with the skinks. I fancied the Grade 17 *Surface to Air* but the bum rock was off-putting and the sun was taking an age to crawl across the burning sky. We settled for the easier *Hell for Leather* - a juggy Grade 13 that Tim and Karen had done earlier and that was it for the day.

Ice cream was the order of the day from the Milk Bar and our evening meal finished with chocolate tortillas courtesy of Raz: Yummy.

Next day it seemed hotter still but we needed supplies so popped back to Horsham. We were all keen to find tee shirts. There were none in Natimuk although there was a TK Maxx in Horsham with loads of T shirts, they all had

American logos. A real tourist opportunity missed.

We climbed in the shade on Bard Butress in the afternoon doing the route Tim and Karen had done on the first day, *Arab*. Raz got the tough pitches including the three-dimensional start to pitch three where the crucial jug that eases the transition from the steep crack to the smooth slab appears out behind your right ear! Good climbing though. Tim and Karen did a couple of routes on the shady Preludes wall, including a thin and technical crack climb, *Rosy Shy*, Grade 19, which they thought to be E1 5c. They got down from their last climb in the dark to find us waiting fairly patiently!

Next day it dawned slightly cooler so Raz and I went for *Watchtower Crack* which is a fair way along towards the right hand end of the crag. The Watchtower is a massive pillar leaning against the wall with the left hand crack taken by *Watchtower Chimney* at Grade 12 and the right hand by *Watchtower Crack* at Grade 16. As the guidebook has it:

"The most commanding line at Arapiles still echoes with the whimpering cries of a thousand struggling leaders"

Raz led the first slabby pitch which was in the full sun and we wondered about the heat but once in the crack system we had the shade. I led the steep second pitch to the cave and Raz psyched himself up for the first of the two big Grade 16 pitches. The first few steep moves led to a surprising and comfortable bridge across the groove and the first carrot bolt placement. These bolts are unique to Australia and consist of a hexagonal-headed coach bolt that projects from the rock and over which you place a hanger (available from the climbing shop in Natimuk) then clip it with a non-

wire gate karabiner. Then up to a tempting traverse line (on *Skink* - which we will come to later). The crack now turns an overhang which was quite tough for Grade 16, I thought it about 5a. A finger jug on the lip avoided too much gritstone type udging and soon Raz was out of sight and going for the belay. I followed really enjoying the unusual moves on this compelling line. At the belay, I took ownership of the hangers and Tim's Friend 5 and set off. I managed to bridge the moves to the first bolt, after placing the big Friend and my Friend 4; the crack began to ease and soon became a romp to the top. Raz found he had to layback the start of the pitch but was soon up. A stupendous route and the views out over the plain were tremendous. Raz likened it to the Serengeti but there was no sign of either wildebeest or giraffe! What we did see however were either dust storms or rain coming in. It turned out to be both. We got a little thunder on the ab down and real rain at the bottom. Our perfect timing meant we could hide in the cave at the foot of the route.

When the rain had gone, Raz and I nipped up *Arachnus*, Grade 9, on the front face of The Watchtower. Beautiful easy climbing in a fine position finished a six star day!

The campsite had been nearly empty but was now full for the Easter weekend. We had to move down nearer the lake (and the midges). Our evening meal included pancakes which I cooked. I poured water into the ready mix and shook it limply in the dark. A thin gruel appeared in the frying pan and refused to cook. Karen grabbed the container and shook it properly. I had failed to disturb the sediment at all but she was made of sterner stuff. After that they were quite tasty. I'd hesitate to

describe myself as a tosser though, more a gentle flipper-over.

Next day, Raz, and I did *Lamplighter*, Grade 14 on the Pharos Tower, Tim and Karen had done it the previous day. A wandering first pitch was followed by the steep and impressive second pitch but these were just the preamble to the finale. Here was another example of the three dimensional climbing that Arapiles seems to offer on a regular basis. A chimney led out horizontally over the void. It looked improbable but once I started to move, holds appeared and with a few bits of gear to ease the nerves, I suddenly popped out at the stance. The others came up suitably impressed.

Back at the campsite, the Aussies were really getting into their Easter break. They go for the US style pick-ups to transport the mass of equipment they need. Massive tents and gas powered barbies appeared but they still needed real fire. Everywhere we went there were massive swingometers showing the current fire risk (which was low). Despite the ever present fear of fire fuelled by tinder dry eucalyptus bark, as soon as any fire ban is lifted, it is part of Aussie male DNA to build a fire.

The campsites feed this deep seated need by providing metal fire rings. Kids scoured the campsite for fuel and the Bruces then competed to build the biggest fire to stand around with their ice cold stubbies. Most were still well alight in the mornings.

On the Monday, Raz and I went for our big route - *Skink* - which Tim and Karen had done earlier in the week. It climbs the first two pitches of *Watchtower Crack* but then takes the compelling slim groove line out to the right. Before leaving the crack beside it's big overhang I clipped the carrot bolt and

then launched out on the obvious traverse line, which proved a doddle and was easily protected with Friends 1.5 to 2.5. At the end, there was a slightly unnecessary peg. The Grade 18 crux at was now obvious, I just needed to gain the groove. A quick pull up on not a lot for the left hand and footholds appeared - a little reminiscent of *Bow Wall* at Bosigran but, fortunately, a lot easier. Even though it rained as I moved up, the rock was rough enough to make the moves feel secure and I was soon on the 4 inch ledge that passes for a stance, it felt about UK 5a. Excellent, if small, nut placements provided a secure belay and I called on Raz to do his bit. He soon appeared at the end of the traverse initially looking a little concerned but he soon mastered the dance into the groove.

Only minor arm-twisting was needed to persuade him to take the next pitch (Grade 17); after dealing with a groove he was soon grappling with a hollow flake before going out of sight and romping to the top. This great route was easier than we expected.

We probably ought to have grabbed another route as we had a bit of a wait (for a change!) in cool conditions for Tim and Karen. We did some bird spotting instead - crimson rosellas and the like. They had climbed that day on Voodoo Buttress, doing the excellent eponymous Grade 18 and then *Wasp* Grade 20, about E2 5b, the latter climbed steep but well-protected cracks and flakes and featured its own resident wasp.

We probably ought to have tried something a bit harder but were well satisfied with our efforts. The next day we set off for the Grampians which are about an hour's drive to the south. The plan was to meet up with

Tim's Mum and the cousins. Encouraging text messages suggested they weren't far away which was true. However their map reading skills had not distinguished between the metalled and dirt roads so 40 kilometres on dirt roads took them a fair chunk of the afternoon. We all wandered up towards the impressive Taipan wall on Mount Stapylton which has good views back towards Arapiles and some impressive rock sculptures.

We set up camp as the cousins set off to find a motel. This campsite was the haunt of many kangaroo but we only saw them on the first evening. Facilities were few here - a tap, long drop loos and a bush shower (which we would all have had to try if we'd stayed a day longer!). Raz stoically endured this ordeal for the good of the team.

We all met up for a curry at the Big Koala to which Shirley (Tim's Mum) kindly treated us. The Big Koala is one of about 60 similar massive structures all over Australia which are usually placed on the duller stretch of dull highways in a generally successful attempt to get people to stop and put something into the tiny local economies. Examples in other parts of Oz include the Big Lobster, Big Prawn, Big Oyster (with search lights for eyes), and even a Big Lawnmower.

The next day was to be our final climbing day before we turned into tourists. We packed up the camping stuff, had a quick look at the local aborigine cave art and set off for Mount Fox about 40 miles to the south.

We had been given firm advice that if we did one route in the Grampians it had to be 20th *Century Fox*. As the guidebook has it:

“(Chris) Baxter’s magnum opus that will live in the hearts and minds of the foxes for years to come blah, blah, blah...”

I like Aussie guidebooks! Here’s another gem of a quote from back at Arapiles describing *The Good The Bad and The Ugly* (a Grade 20 which we didn’t actually do):

“If you fall from the crux, sever a rope, spear into the ground and sustain major injuries (as Michael Hampton once did), you might want to take away a star”

The black and white picture of *20th Century Fox* in the guidebook is compelling. A tough looking crack leads onto a fantastic wall with ever smaller holds leading out left onto the obviously very thin slab at the top. A full 50m pitch, what a great way to finish the trip; if we could do it.

The walk in was longer than we were used to, about 45 minutes uphill with a bit of a bushwhack on a vanishing track. We tried not to think about snakes. The climb was obvious and seriously impressive.

Tim and Karen would go first. Raz thought we were getting a tow but I wanted to give it a go. If I could get up the jam crack I was pretty sure I would love the rest even though at Grade 20 it was two grades up from *Skink*.

Raz and I settled down on the very convenient viewing platform. Tim powered up the first crack, I wished he’d made it look a little easier! Soon he was at the top of the crack with a good runner and launching out left onto the wall. The first move looked committing and then easier climbing led up via a couple of runners to the first of five carrot bolts. From here the holds got smaller and the climbing more technical and intricate. Route-finding was not immediately obvious but the



Left:
20th Century Fox

Photograph:
Malcolm Phelps

guidebook said that you ended up very close to the crack on the left side of the cliff. Tim talked his way up the blank bits and soon he was back to real runners and whooping his way to the belay. It looked fantastic.

Karen followed, not bothering with jams in the crack and steadily and elegantly dealing with the technicalities. She was soon waving from the top and it was my turn.

I'd asked Karen to leave the first two bits of gear in just in case. Stupidly, I rushed at it and came unstuck, plummeting head first out of the hardest bit onto Tim's second bit of gear (which held, much to our mutual relief). This frightened Karen, who fortunately forgot to take any pictures of the almost mega deck. Second time, I did it fine using my feet properly as well as a few jams. Much to Tim's satisfaction I did have a bit of "gritstone rash" from the first attempt.

Soon I was resting at the top of the crack. I waited for the adrenalin rush left over from the crack to subside and then launched off. I loved it! Although a bit run out, it was all there. Tim took a few photos from the ab and offered a bit of beta. There was a tough mantel onto the obvious foot traverse line and on tippy toes I could just reach the penultimate clip. After the moves left I was below the blank bit that Tim had muttered his way up. Close fingertip inspection revealed tiny sharp edged holds and with those identified it was surprising what you could persuade yourself was a foothold. Soon, I'd clipped the final bolt and one move was left before real holds would be in reach. The thin crux followed and then I placed a big Friend before launching up and over the final overlap - steeper but with holds and gear,

I then qualified for a summit whoop or two; FANTASTIC!

Raz followed steadily. As the holds got smaller and the climbing harder I could hear him talking to himself. "...cking hell, ...cking hell". He was also slowly converting from Hinduism to Christianity with frequent calls to Jesus. Soon he too was smiling broadly and we shook hands. "Good lead" he said. For once I agreed with him despite the flying time I put in. We all thought it about E2 5b.

We abbed off into a nest of biting ants and after group photos whooped our way contentedly back through the bush (and more kangaroo herds) to the car.

We set off for Halls Gap. Tim did all the driving on the trip (thanks Tim). He had to take great care as we approached Halls Gap as squadrons of kamikaze kangaroos hopped across the main road apparently playing chicken. In Halls Gap we found a motel and had a much needed shower. Setting off to find food we were amazed to see loads of kangaroo grazing on people's front lawns and completely indifferent to our presence.

On the Friday we set off south after picking up T shirts at the visitor centre. We set off down the Henty Hwy (Highway) which, from its name, Karen decided must be an aboriginal name for some ancient trail. Henty Hwy subsequently became a new route in Pembroke: First ascent: T Skinner and K Vaughan.

The mountain scenery slowly turned into farmland and we joined the coast at Port Fairy. At Warrnambool we tried to work out why the Dirty Angel got its nickname. Not difficult!

We then turned tourist. Highlights included the ancient volcanic crater at Tower Hill where we had our first sightings of Koala and

Emu. Then we picked up the Ocean Road at Peterborough for the spectacular coastal scenery. The Bay of Islands, the Arch and the Grotto - all were highly photogenic in the evening sunshine. London Bridge used to have two arches but in 1990, just after two tourists had just crossed the first arch it fell down leaving them on the world's newest island! Apparently they were having an illicit liaison which must have taken some explaining.

We stopped in another motel in Port Campbell and next day took in the Twelve Apostles, more Koalas at Cape Otway and the fantastic rain forest at Maits Rest.

After the (roughly) Twelve Apostles, the Great Ocean road hugs the coast past endless little bays and sandy beaches, all too soon we were speeding away towards Melbourne.

All that remained was to fly home.

Thanks to Tim, Karen and Raz for great company.

This article is an edited version of a Chapter from Malcolm Phelps' self-published book "Leading the High Life". Born 1949 he started climbing in the late 60s and his stories will take you around the World from the UK through Europe, (Alps, Croatia, France, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, Spain,), Morocco, Sinai, Jordan, the US and Australia. The climbs are not hard by modern standards but hopefully they will stir memories for those involved and perhaps inspire others. Now in its second edition copies are available at a members' discounted price of £17.50 (inc p&cp in the UK). To get a copy please either Email Malcolm (malcolmdphelps@gmail.com) order a copy via the website highlifepublications.co.uk



Guide books:
Arapiles, Selected Climbs and
Grampians, Selected Climbs
by Simon Mentz, Glenn Tempest
See Open Spaces Publications
www.osp.com.au

Above:
Dawn Mist, Lake
Natimuk

Photograph:
Malcolm Phelps



ANGELUS

Any trip to the hills is likely to result in meeting a collection of passers-by. Roger describes the interesting characters and events encountered on an interesting multi day walk (or Tramp in the local vernacular) in New Zealand.

Dramatis Personae:

Christchurch Jock (CJ), an ex-pat Scot, resident in Christchurch for a decade or so, thoroughly Kiwi-ised:

Liverpool Boy (LB), a Scouse ingénue, touring the world in search of adventure, before embarking on a second degree:

Brunhilde & Isolde (B&I), two German tourists, first seen, wrongly, as mother and daughter:

The Wellington Boots (WB's), a rather over-equipped but nervous pair of tramps from North Island:

Fount of All Knowledge (FAK), another Kiwi tramp:

Korean Kamikaze (KK), an Asian visitor:

Roz, British ex-pat and long-time friend of Rog, & Debbie,

By Roger Wilkinson

IT wasn't the best night's sleep I'd ever had in a hut. About every half hour there was a pathetic mewling from somewhere in the opposite corner, followed by the sound of retching and the urgent whispering of her parents as they sought, in the dark, to find and clear up the diced carrots their five-year-old daughter was sprinkling over the bunks and sleeping bags. Well, I guess such things were always on the cards from the minute we arrived at the Lakehead Hut, thick with youngsters charging round wildly, after our exhausting trek of at least 5 minutes from the jetty where the Water taxi up Lake Rotoiti had dropped us,

The morning dawns still with crystal clear air and a deep blue cloudless sky, not something

we have seen too much of in our three week visit to New Zealand. Various of the actors in this little tale are now known to us. A couple of German women, their ages separated by a generation (mother and daughter perhaps?) are looking around nervously, wondering if everyone else has essential equipment that they are lacking. A tall gangly pale-faced Celtic-haired fellow is removing a pair of garish clinging tights, to reveal equally pale spindly legs projecting from a pair of shorts simultaneously skimpy and baggy. This is presumably making ready fording the Travers River, a rather shocking start to the walk most of us (thankfully excluding the projectile vomiter) are planning to the Angelus Hut.

Left:

*Roz Clayton &
Debbie Wilkinson
on the Roberts Ridge*

Photograph:

Roger Wilkinson

A couple of middle-aged teachers from Wellington, obviously with decades of New Zealand tramping behind them and just embarking on their eight weeks of summer holidays, are packing their carefully measured and organised resources in their well-worn rucksacks.

Soon we are setting off with our old friend Roz (who emigrated to New Zealand) to find the ford of the Travers River. This is not hard to find, as the way is marked with orange markers on poles, of which we are to see many in the next two days. The question then arises - how to ford? Do we just march in, boots immediately filling with cold water which will be with you for the rest of the day, or do we remove boots and paddle? The accepted wisdom is that only wimps take their boots off, and anyway you'll have wet feet soon whatever you do. As we squelch up a quite dry Cascade Track several hours later I wish I'd risked wimp-dom. I look back as we emerge from the ford to see the guy we later christened CJ, who had been slowly packing his sac as we left the hut, about to follow. By the end of the walk, he was to be like a shadow, albeit a pale, Celtic-haired one.

The Travers Valley, at this point, is the archetypal New Zealand glaciated mountain trough, almost level with a meandering braided river wandering through patches of bog-tolerant woodland peppered with grassy clearings. The trail follows the junction of the valley floor with the steep valley side, clothed in thick forest of southern beech, with periodic views out onto the open patches near the river. The walking is easy, but rather monotonous after a while, unrelieved by variety of vegetation or the interest provided

by wildlife, both of which are conspicuous by their absence. An occasional small brown bird, like a robin but lacking distinctive plumage, is all we see

After a while, we reach a bridge over a tributary, which is the stream which we will now follow on a long ascent to the Angelus Hut. A pause to remove excess clothing leads to the appearance of B&I, with Christchurch Jock in close attendance. Signs put up by the Department of Conservation (DoC) indicate the route and as we climb slowly up the path through the forest of southern beech the orange markers on poles make the walk, navigationally at least, a doddle. We soon find ourselves in front again, Roz is younger than us and being an ex-international orienteer she sets a remorseless pace - and our fellow trampers don't seem keen to be in front. Gradually, the gradient eases, the forest thins, and the sunshine begins to make itself felt; we emerge from the forest into a delightful hanging valley, with a bouncy stream, and open grassland relieved by small crags and scree slopes. This is more like it! In front we see two figures walking, the WBs, no doubt, but we decide it is so pleasant here that we will take our lunch early and enjoy the moment. As we unpack, B&I walk on by but CJ decides to stop about fifty metres behind us, taking his sack off and settling down to eat.

I decide to do something about my wet feet. The persistent squelching suggests that, at least, I could wring out my socks, and I realise that the dark rock is getting really warm in the sun. Soon, my damp hosiery is creating small rising clouds of steam, and my inverted boots are draining. We read a little, or doze, according to inclination, CJ sits resolutely on his rock.

After an hour or so, clouds begin to build and suddenly it's quite cool, then distinctly nippy, so we continue. Up ahead we can see the col leading to the hut, and very steep rocky slopes going up to it. As the valley floor begins to steepen, the weather is looking a bit worse—nothing too untoward, you understand, but like a pretty good spring day in Scotland. A few small flakes of fine snow begin to fall from a now leaden sky, and are spun round a bit by a gusty breeze. In the distance, seated by a rock near the path, we see four figures, the WBs and B&I having lunch. As we approach and begin to walk past, we realise they're not eating; they're not really doing anything, except waiting for us.

Mr WBs speaks, "Are you going on?" We look around, puzzled at first. Then it dawns on us that this is a man with decades of N.Z. tramping experience asking us, on our first tramp, whether we think the conditions merit a strategic retreat. As I have said, it's a good spring day in Scotland, and we're on a waymarked path leading to a nice cosy hut about an hour up the hill. All we can think of by way of a reply is "Yes". Brunhilde and Isolde look disappointed; they seem to have been hoping we could all go back down together.

We carry on, and after a few strides look back to see the four following us. The path becomes more interesting, with a few scrambly bits, the odd pull on a tree root and a tricky ford on smooth slabs above a waterfall. Suddenly there was a flash and a clattering of boots on loose rock. It was KK, who had appeared from nowhere with a small sac and only moderately good waterproofs. He didn't seem to speak much Kiwi and as Korean was only my second language at



school, communication was, to say the least, perfunctory. Soon he was disappearing into the distance at a rate of knots.

Before setting off we had called in at the local DoC office, where we took some advice and paid for our hut nights in advance. The word was we'd probably find a few snow patches on steep ground, but probably wouldn't need winter kit. Angelus Hut is about the height of The Ben and the season is the equivalent of late May, so we aren't surprised to find that the last stretch up to the hut is across some soft snow with big buckets and nowhere much to slide to. It isn't long before we're descending a short path to the hut, situated on a spur above a beautiful tarn, the Angelus Lake.

Apart from KK, the hut is empty but, of course, our tail soon arrives and the hut is throbbing to the sound of stoves brewing, and humming with the under the breath curses of those trying to light the heating stove. There's kindling, sacks of coal, dropped by chopper, we assume. A good fug soon develops, and evening meals are prepared and dispatched. Coffee is made and a sense of peace and

Above:
Angelus Lake

Photograph:
Roger Wilkinson

tranquillity is just falling over the assembled company when the door bursts open and a figure stands in the doorway, wide-eyed and trembling. It's the Hound of the Baskervilles all over again! No it's not, it's LB. Unfortunately, I can't really do the accent in speech, let alone in print, so you'll just have to imagine it.

"God, am I pleased to see this place! I thought I was going to die! Several times!" he quavers.

"Come in and shut the bloody door" roars FAK (although we hadn't yet christened him.) "It's snowing out there."

"You're telling me?" LB asks incredulously. "I thought my frozen body might be found tomorrow – if I was lucky."

By this time we two and Roz are doing our best not to collapse in hysterics. LB is not really equipped, you understand. He's wearing a sort of adult-sized version of those little "waterproof" suits that toddlers wear when they're camping in the British summer. His feet are loosely held in a pair of tennis shoes, his rucksack is like something a primary school child might use to take his lunch to school (I'm not sure it wasn't in the form of a little bear with cuddly arms for straps), and the whole assemblage is finished off with a back-to-front baseball cap. He looks, well, sort of incongruous. After a while, it transpires that L.B. had arrived via the Roberts Ridge, which is our planned way out the next day. The guide books make it sound it bit wild and dangerous in wind, etc. (In the event it turns out to be an easy version of Striding Edge, with waymarks about every 10 metres.) He's the only one of the assembled company to have come this way, and as he realises this his descriptions get more and more outrageous. There's lots of; "couldn't

see a hand in front of my face", "hanging on by my fingernails", "above a drop of thousands of feet". He'd never been on a mountain before, and dressed as he was and with poor visibility I'm sure it was pretty worrying. When he realises we were going out along the ridge, well.....

"Honestly, I wouldn't recommend anyone to go that way. You must go the way you came in. It's really dangerous, I've been in Thailand in the jungle on a tiger hunt, and this was much scarier", I notice that the WBs are quietly conversing, worried looks on their faces, they're obviously going to need some encouragement in the morning.

Soon things begin to settle down, LB's audience is reduced to Isolde, who has finally found someone of her own age to talk to and is hanging on to every word her hero utters. It becomes clear that Brunhilde isn't her mum after all, and they had just teamed up for this walk because of shared nationality in a strange hostile land. Brunhilde is deep in conversation with FAK. He is one of those people who is OK for a bit, but just tires you out with his desire to impress. Where hadn't he been, tramping in N.Z.? Not many places! Brunhilde is apparently enjoying her mountain experience more than her erstwhile daughter, who is rapidly looking and sounding to be in need of a bit of clubbing and retail therapy. LB is being quite understanding, as well as heroic. Why don't they go and explore Wellington's nightlife when, or if, they escape this icy hell? It's no surprise when they disappear outside the hut together for quite a while, dark or no dark, snow or no snow.

Brunhilde obviously wants some advice on where to go next. She doesn't notice LB and

Isolde. slipping out, and besides, it's not her business after all. She's in thrall to FAK. Does he know where she should go? Of course he does. He's FAK isn't he? Go here... and there... and here... and there, but don't follow the guide book, do this alternative, Brunhilde scribbles manically on the back of a cigarette packet. She's rapidly running out of space, and besides, she only has a month left!

We tire of people-watching (though it was all very entertaining) and our thoughts turn to the 'morrow. Roz gets the map out, and lays it out on the table. People look round. People stare, open-mouthed! What is this strange object? Amazingly, to us, we are the only people in the hut who have a map of any description with them. We also have a compass. Is this what you get for way marking routes?

What would they do if they lost the waymarks in poor visibility, in a blizzard? I guess the answer is they'd die.

People start thinking about heading bunkwards. LB is looking a bit miserable, we realise he hadn't had anything to eat since had arrived, just tea proffered by his solicitous hut mates. He thought he'd get a meal at the hut. Some one finds some soup for him, and heats it up. People start unrolling sleeping bags, and his recently risen face (courtesy of hot soup) begins to fall again as he realises there aren't nice cosy duvets to be had. Good job he has his love to keep him warm; Isolde's sleeping bag opens all the way down...

Morning breaks cold (ice on the paths) but bright with patchy blue skies. The WBs ask if we're doing the Roberts Ridge, we say why not? We'll be off in ten minutes and they'd obviously like us to wait. There is a cop-out route down a valley into the forest, but it starts

when you've already climbed to the start of the ridge. Might we go that way? Probably not. Can we leave a marker in the snow to show whether we've gone along the ridge or not? We suppose so, but... Why?

The ridge is glorious. A short rocky hillside leads from the hut to the ridge, with little posts with orange markers every few paces. The path is obvious. I begin to feel towards the little orange markers much the same as I do towards the cairns alongside broad paths in the Lakes – murderous and destructive! I contain myself, thinking of how Liverpool Boy might indeed have perished without them. Poor Isolde, she'd still be stuck with middle-aged Brunhilde, with no prospect of a bit of clubbing in the immediate future. I look back, and there he is! No, not LB but it's CJ, shadowing us again. We stop to take off a jacket. He stops to take off a jacket, the requisite 100 metres behind. We stop for a bit of chocolate. Jock stops for a bit of... Roz is desperate for a pee, so stops, waiting in vain for him to get ahead. Eventually, she just squats down, while Jock averts his gaze.

But back to the scenery. It reminds me much of the Glencoe Hills, with fine ridges, shapely corries and comely tarns. The walking is easy, just the occasional bit of scrambling, and for one section quite narrow and on unavoidable soft snow. All too soon we reach the clutter of a ski-ing area, and we meet other trampers, clearly impressed that we've just sauntered along the fearsome Roberts Ridge. It all makes you wonder how on earth your average Kiwi Trumper would get on in the Peak District, let alone the Scottish Highlands.



HIKING IN CALIFORNIA

California's Sierra Nevada mountains seem to hold a limitless supply of great climbing on normally impeccable granite and all under endless blue skies. Lay back and let Tony take you for a short ride.

By Tony Pearson

Over the last year the greeting of, “Have a good walk” or in the States, “Have a good hike” has rung in our ears on a number of occasions. That would have been fine if we had been heading out on a walk, but it really seemed out of place when we were setting off with a pair of ropes and a big rack of cams in order to go climbing. It didn’t worry me too much, but my wife, Ulla, who is two years younger than me was getting increasingly irritated by what she regarded as a patronising attitude and an ageist assumption that a couple of people heading for 60 could only possibly be going for a walk.

Our trip to the States in September 2014 was intended to celebrate my 60th birthday and what I particularly wanted to do was to climb a couple of routes in an area which several friends who regularly visited the US rated as one of the very best areas, namely The Needles in California. We had seen lots of pictures of the area with its beautiful, soaring yellow and orange-coloured granite pillars and the picture that stared back at us from the cover of our mega coffee table book *Stone Mountains* was of a Needles climb: Tony Yaniro on a 5.12 called *Spontaneous Combustion*. This was much

harder than anything to which we aspired, but perfectly illustrated the quality of the climbing. And that is what the holiday was going to be about, climbing some quality routes.

In the last couple of years we had started to move away a little from the bolt-ups that we had so much enjoyed over the last decade or so. While lots of bolted climbs were of high quality, they nevertheless lacked memorability. As Jim Scott writes in *Squeezing the Lemon*, ‘Sport climbing is like eating fast food. The routes fill up the day but most are not memorable’.¹ Consequently, we were now trying to focus our attention more on trad climbs and particularly the sort of classic routes that remain in the memory long after the actual climbing is finished.

So we found ourselves driving from San Francisco to The Needles near the beginning of September 2014. It had been a very hot summer in California and was still very hot in the lower areas when we arrived. Our car thermometer was telling us it was 104 degrees Fahrenheit and it certainly felt incredibly hot, but we reckoned that it would be good for The Needles which are situated at about 7,000ft. For the beginning of the trip, and to celebrate

Left:

*The Needles
Panorama with
Voodoo Dome far
right.*

Photograph:
Tony Pearson



Above:
*Kim seconding
 Ant-Jello Crack on
 Dome Rock*

Photograph:
Tony Pearson

my 60th birthday, our daughter Kim had joined us, and we were, therefore, going to be a rope of three for the first couple of weeks.

On arrival we felt we needed to get attuned to the rock and to acclimatise a bit, so we spent the first couple of days on a neighbouring crag called Dome Rock, from where we had excellent views of the towering Needles. Much less intimidating than The Needles, Dome Rock has some worthwhile routes and certainly merits a visit. *Tree Route*, only 5.6 but with a

run-out slab at the top and the excellent finger jamming route *Ant-Jello Crack* (5.10a) which we found pretty challenging, provided a good introduction and enabled us to overcome the stiffness and jet lag from the flight.

Finally, we were setting out to climb on The Needles proper. A longish drive over a dirt road to reach the parking area was followed by a two and half mile walk up the hillside and through a forest to below the Fire Lookout on the top of the Magician. We had a quick walk up the steps as far as the burnt-out lookout to take in the views of the forest and the crags and then headed along a faintish trail around the side of the Magician to get to the gearing-up area for the Sorcerer and the Witch. *Igor Unchained*, the route we had decided to do, was located on the Witch. Described by Eric Fazio in Mountain Project as the 'best 5.9 sandbag in the world', so we had high expectations. While struggling to follow the path we met another couple of climbers who knew the approach and they steered us to the gearing-up area, pointing out the direction of the descent to reach the base of the climb. Half an hour later, after taping our hands and sorting our gear, an easy scramble took us to the start of the route.

And what a route it was; a beautiful three-pitch crack line with an impossibly steep-looking top pitch. The description of The Needles in Stone Mountains immediately came to mind, 'As you reach the steep shoulder of the needle called Magician, you might notice a change in the warm summer breeze: cold drafts waft up hinting at deep canyons ahead, at a benevolent land changing into something darker, wilder. Inspiration dwindles and new feelings prevail. Respect? Maybe. Wonder? Probably. Terror? Definitely'. Jim Thornburg

adds 'all but the craziest of human spirits realize The Needles is a place to stay well within your limits'.²

The route we had chosen was obviously well-protected and, hopefully, well within our limits, and we had the recommended rack with us consisting of lots of medium sized cams. With some trepidation I set off up the first pitch, which was still in the shade. It was a long, sustained pitch with tricky sections in between good cracks, it was especially awkward for the first 20ft or so until I had reached the crack proper. The pitch was eminently protectable and my rack, which included triples of size 2, 2½ and 3 Friends, was soon looking depleted. The belay, when I got to it, a hanging belay below a small roof, meant that ropework would be awkward. Kim and Ulla were soon at the belay and had the task of sorting the rope out for me on the next pitch. In the meantime, although the sun had nearly reached us, I was shivering from the cold and was glad to get to grips with the next pitch. It began with an awkward section off the belay to get over the small roof and it proved to be the hardest part of the climb. After that it was less sustained but with lots of interesting climbing up corners and cracks leading to a ledge with a block and a comfortable belay. The pitch above looked truly awesome, a soaring crack which was slightly overhanging at the start. Fortunately there were some good jugs to begin with and a heel hook enabled me to take some weight off my arms. Above, the pitch proved to be varied and interesting and was probably all of 55m long, leading to a bolt belay and the top of the climb. Ulla and Kim soon joined me on the top and we agreed that it was one of the best routes we had ever climbed. A 20m abseil

and some slightly tricky down-climbing soon led us back to where we had left our gear.

We packed up quickly and headed back in the direction of the Lookout. By now the light was fading fast and by the time we got there it was dark. Fortunately for us, as we had neglected to take head torches and still had a two and a half mile walk through the forest, there was a full moon and Kim was happy to head off first and navigate the way back to the car. By 9.30 we were there and just needed to drive back along the dirt road to get back to our camp site and complete what had been a truly memorable day.

Our next route at The Needles, and indeed the route that I particularly wanted to do, was *White Punks on Dope*, a 5.8+ on Voodoo Dome, six pitches in length and one of the longest routes at The Needles. After a rest day we headed over to do it but soon turned back, realising that we were going to run out of petrol if we didn't head down to a service station to fuel up, so we drove down to a baking-hot Kernville in order to fill up and get some supplies at the same time. Once back at the road below Voodoo Dome we only had time to suss out the start of the path towards the crag, but were well-pleased to have done so as the departure point was not obvious and we were not going to want to waste any time looking for the route in the morning. The next day was also not to be, as there had been a thunderstorm during the night and unsettled weather followed it. However, the following day began fine, if a bit on the cool side, and we were up at 6.30 to have breakfast, our gear ready and packed to go. The drive to Voodoo Dome on the opposite end of The Needles to *Igor Unchained* was along a good road and we



Above:
*Ulla leading the
slab pitch on White
Punks on Dope*

Photograph:
Tony Pearson

managed to walk up to the base of the route in under an hour, which was in keeping with the guidebook time. We were, of course, very conscious of time pressure, the route was long, we were a rope of three, and we did not fancy getting benighted on the route or to run out of light on the descent.

Fortunately, Kim had decided that we needed some discipline and so she was going to keep a close eye on the time and make sure that none of us took more than 30 minutes

per pitch. But that was easier said than done, the first pitch was nearly 65m and I had to stretch the rope to make it to the belay. It was a superb crack pitch with knobbly foot holds. The second pitch was much shorter, but had a tricky traverse leftwards out of an alcove at its start. Pitch 3 mainly followed a sort of chasm with some crack and chimney climbing and led up to the real meat of the climb, the famous dihedral pitch. From the belay ledge at the base of the dihedral, the groove above looked short but that proved to be deceptive and it gave quite sustained climbing, finishing with an easier but unprotectable off-width; an absolutely stunning pitch. Pitch 5 was a rather sparsely protected slab with four bolts in about 30m. As Ulla was the slab expert and was generally unfazed by long run-outs, she led the pitch and was up it in much less than the allotted 30 minutes. Kim and I were both very glad that we were only seconding it, as although only 5.7 it was far from straightforward and a slip between bolts would be like a slide down a cheese grater. From the top of the pitch a short walk leftwards led to a beautiful splitter crack at about 5.8/5.9. This was quite hard to start but eased up quickly leading to more delightful climbing and the top of the route.

White Punks on Dope or as Ulla renamed it, 'Grey Punks on Oats' was as good a climb as you could wish for. Every pitch was interesting in its own way and there were excellent belay ledges throughout. The temperature was just right and the fabulous views of the ubiquitous autumn forest could be enjoyed from every stance. We knew from our friends, Barbara and Nigel Jones, keen Needles aficionados, which way we had to go to get off the top and a short



Left:
*Kim, Tony and
 Ula on top of
 Lembert Dome after
 completing Direct
 North West Face*

Photograph:
*Tony Pearson
 Collection*

abseil led to the descent walk. Exactly an hour after starting the abseil we were back at the car, which was probably just as well as the descent would have been pretty tricky in the dark since the slopes were steep and rather eroded and slippery in parts. Moreover, fresh bear scat indicated that we didn't have the woods to ourselves.

Two of the most memorable routes I had ever climbed and one of the most atmospheric areas I had ever visited had made a brilliant start to the trip. My actual 60th birthday a few days later was at Tuolumne Meadows, another five star climbing area and one that I had been to a couple of times before. *South Crack* on Stately Pleasure Dome, a few shorter routes in the following couple of days and a trip down to Yosemite to show Kim the Valley and climb a nice route called *Super Slide* took up the first few days, and then we were back to the much cooler Tuolumne for my birthday. The birthday climb was *Direct North West Face* on Lembert Dome. The route, which had a

crux pitch of 5.10c, was about three pitches in length with some excellent crack climbing and a fairly tough crux. The highlight of the route, however, was a tricky slab move on the top pitch which was not my sort of climbing. As I was about to commit to it I looked up to the top of the crag and saw a row of young faces peering at me from the top of the Dome. I did my best to ignore them, quickly made the tricky move and headed up to the final stance only to be met by a round of applause. I felt rather embarrassed by the clapping, especially as the climb was only 5.10, but I must say I did feel quietly elated when one of the young people gave me the American compliment, "You bad ass." Not bad for a hiker, and not bad for my 60th birthday.

¹*Stone Mountain Potlicker Press*

²*Squeezing the Lemon II by Eric Fazio-Rhicard, 2000*



HOT ROCKIN' IN THE COSTA BLANCA

Costa Blanca seems to have gone out of fashion with UK climbers, perhaps it is because southern Europe has a wealth of riches when it comes to sport climbing. Smiler demonstrates that even in a sport climbing area it is possible to have an adventure. He reminds us never to take anything for granted on the crags.

By Smiler Cuthbertson

It had been over twenty years since Clare and I had been on my first and only visit to Calpe. When we had seen the superb de Ifach, the *Via Valencianos* was my most wanted route but I realised it did look a bit too hard for her. However, we had a good time on the formerly named Via UBSA in the Mascarat Gorge, several lines on the Dalle de Ola slab and a couple of good routes at Toix Ouest, but the sea and beaches drew us more for most of the week.

April 12th 2016 - We were heading for Benidorm, me and Richard, a great friend and past client over fifteen years, he lives near Durham. We joined up with Geoff Lowe from Inverness and Ian Innes from my village, Dore, to revisit this fashionable bolt-clipping paradise and see what Hot Rockin' was all about I wondered whether my bodily condition would, with the heat, ease from the chronic arthritis of a long year since. Richard had strict instructions, you lead, OK!

Geoff and Ian had, for several years, taken a week off around April or early May to visit and climb in the Costa Blanca, this year, regardless of whether I could even climb or last the week, I squeezed myself in on their team. I felt even two-two's might be better, hence a phone-call to Richard. The hotel had put an extra bed in the lads' room for me, I seemed to achieve some staying power in the room as our pal, Pete Mayhew, also from Inverness and a previous member of this team, had retired to the balcony for the week because of the snoring. With Richard keen to join us, due to the timing, our hotel was unfortunately full, but the locals put him in another nice place just around the corner.

Day 1

Landing at mid-day in Alicante we followed Geoff and Ian's usual routine; grab the hire car and head straight for Sella. Wow, after Inverness it was hot but a couple of single pitches later we were getting the hang of climbing in the sun. The lads said 'first and

Left:
Smiler ready for the The Magical Mystery Tour

Photograph:
Richard Jolley

every day, around five or six pitches would be the task', and so it turned out to be the case, we had real fun climbing. From the very start standards weren't pushed, 5+ was enough for us.

Sella was great climbing, just a little polished at times. The lads picked out the routes and Richard and I led each climb after them. Mostly 4s, with the occasional 5 or 5+, just getting our daily quota in was nice. Like all bolted climbs one soon forgets some names, but at Sector Marion, *Desbioquea que No* (5) stood out for quality. Everyone belayed each other, the leader lowering off and exchanging leads, often leaving quickdraws in place to get as much climbing in as possible, pausing only occasionally for some water or shade. Yes, superb, just as I remembered my routes with Clare those many years ago.

Around five-thirty pm the lads remembered the cheap but nice nine-story hotel we were booked into in Benidorm started serving meals at half past seven so we all agreed, 'to call it a day and get checked in. I was still surprised but happy with my initial successes on the sharp end and pleased to see Richard going very well. We drove towards the concrete jungle that is Benidorm, the Spanish countryside flashing by. After the rapid dumping of bags in our seventh floor apartment, the consensus was a beer or two was required. I hadn't had any alcohol for a year due to my condition so I stuck to Cola and Richard joined me. The lads were happy to quench their thirst with beers. The bar opposite the hotel in Benidorm is run by a nice Yorkshire couple, who were, as expected, very amenable to us. A bonus was the box of film CDs on the bar for sale, to thumb through, at a ridiculously cheap price (three euros each).

The self-service routine at meal times suits climbers, with an initial urge to gross out on vast quantities of food, but as the week passed by we all tempered slightly and usually it was good three-course food. The breakfasts were equally scrumptious with the added bonus (if one was careful) of nabbing day food off the counters.

Day 2

We decided on Toix Ouest. I only had a faint memory from my first and only other visit but the super climbing didn't let me down. Very similar routes to Sella except more open, on a long ridge of steep slabby faces. Many of the crags were as accessible as Sella, with an abundance of routes of all grades, especially the 5s which we were after and there were even some two-pitch routes. *Green Route 2*, *Espolon Limaban* and *Red Route II* (all 5s) are the only routes I recall from the guidebook. We all were very happy just clipping the bolts and having fun. We'd be back. We again got our quota in and around 6 o'clock the call for the bar was made. Geoff was doing all the driving, and he sped us back to Benidorm.

In his younger days Geoff had spent a few years living here, working as an unofficial rock climbing guide (quite legal in those days). His friend and past employer, Richard Mayfield, still runs The Orange House, a hostel where climbers have, for years, stayed and climbed from. In the past it was possible to have free lodgings in exchange for doing chores each day around the hostel, sadly that's out nowadays. Later in the week we were to meet up with Richard and I instantly took a liking to this guy.



Left:
*Magical Mystery
Tour, Calpe*

Photograph:
Smiler Cuthbertson

Day 3

Marin, a nice little slabby crag, was chosen from the many crags available, its main face has an abundance of, as the guidebook says, 'the best selection of lower grade routes in the Costa Blanca'. Neat routes of our preferred standard, set at an altitude higher than previously, it meant a cooler and very acceptable temperature, at least until the 'midday sun' took over. Even then, the slight breeze cooled us in the warm sunshine. Out of the four or five good routes we did, *Kiki* (5+) stood out as a real classic.

Day 4

Richard and I had plans for the south face route on the Peñón de Ifach; this stunning tower sits proudly on a short peninsula majestically overlooking Calpe and is a great centre piece of the Costa Blanca with some routes around 1000 feet (300m) long. Our chosen route, the *Via Valencianos*, is 5+ and 800 feet (240m) long. We'd been told there were likely to be fewer Brits on the route on a

Saturday as it was a hotel changeover day. I'd seen the tower before, but on my first visit I hadn't wanted to push Clare into trying any of these huge climbs so we just gazed at the impressive walls. Clare was a non-climber when I first met her, but she would soon follow me anywhere and she did so happily on quite a few nice, straightforward climbs at home and abroad. Severes like *Crackstone Rib* in Llanberis (where we both lived) and *Christmas Curry* at Tremadog, fairly quickly she had reached her highest grade *Fool's Gold* (E1) in Bus Stop Quarry, Dinorwic. I usually did all the leading but I know the highlight of her climbing career was climbing with me on a number of great routes, on our West Coast of America rock tour in 1990. These included the fabulous *Snakedike* (5.7) on Half Dome, *The Great White Book* (5.6) at Tuolumne Meadows (this was completely unprotected unless you have a Friend 4, I hadn't); the *Durrance Route* (5.7) on Devil's Tower and several more 5.6s and 5.7s on our tour, which included Joshua

Below:

"I started to gain height. Where does this lead?"

Photograph:

Richard Jolley

Tree and The Needles of South Dakota, as well as down and up the Grand Canyon on a hot day. I'd missed out on the Peñón on my first visit to Calpe, but now with Richard, I could do it! However sixteen years since it was first climbed and hundreds of ascents of this great line, it had become polished. We had two guidebooks to compare routes, mine and Ian's scruffy copy. I originally thought his was much older than my 2005 version, but it was actually from 2013 and well used. Both guidebook

descriptions of *Via Valencianos* do specifically mention how the crux pitch is very polished but, unlike Ian's guide, mine doesn't mention that some aid may be necessary! Richard was offering to lead the pitch so I put that concern out of my head.

The first two pitches went easily enough at VD/S but we were then confronted by a slightly overhanging, curving corner crack, with a single bolt runner. The limestone all around the bolt was very polished. After a



couple of tentative moves above the bolt, Richard discovered a short 9mm perlon sling hidden away in the crack. A high runner. All he needed. He was up! It was a determined effort from him. I followed but I hadn't his strength to free it, so I aided the polished area and put it in the back of my mind. Pitch 4 was my lead. I was still shaking slightly after the exertion of the hard pitch as I walked across an easy ledge for twenty feet to the base of huge slabs, split by cracks. This was the main feature of the route. A steep start would be soon followed by easier climbing up the cracked slab with what looked to be plenty of good holds.

After a fingery start on my first attempt I realised I'd lost a bit of strength after the struggle on Richard's pitch. I felt I'd better step back down, rest and put some gear in! A good solid flake to my right took my Camelot 3. Now I had a good runner quite close to me. After a few minutes break I set off again and pulled on the small finger holds. I could see what to do, lock off and shoot my left foot out onto that sloper and I'd be up!

Bang! I slid off the very polished sloping foothold and ended up a few feet lower, unhurt but hanging upside down by the Cam! Fortunately Richard had smartly stopped me and quickly lowered me the few feet to the start. A few minutes recovering and this time there'd be no messing around with this polished rock. A Rock Three in the crack, a sling to stand in and I had gained the easier angled slab. Fifty metres later, I belayed and brought Richard up. As he was quite a distance below me at the start, I couldn't really see where he was climbing. When he reached the belay, I learned a local climber was also using our route to get to the harder



climb further right, and on reaching where I'd started, this guy had gone out right and into a big corner. This was much less polished and Richard wisely did the same.

The long slabs were all full runouts and we were now hundreds of feet above the sea. The

Above:

"It seemed tough for such an easy grade"

Photograph:

Richard Jolley



Above:
*There was little
 choice but to escape
 up the ladders (if
 possible)*

Photograph:
Richard Jolley

last slab pitch took Richard to the famous horizontal crest, a much photographed place where you look over to the whole of Calpe one way and the ocean the other; a superb sight. When I reached Richard I said that I must have one picture from here so I leaned over the arête using my elbows over the edge with both hands on the camera. Horror! The battery

compartment opened and down the other side of the ridge onto rough grassy ground went both batteries! On a rescue mission I did get one battery back, but I couldn't find the other. Annoyed, I returned to the stance and Richard took the shot.

We were now on easier ground and after a few steep moves it was plain sailing with a couple of easy runouts. We eventually moved together to the summit.

Several tourists had made the long (and slippery) walk up from the town for the views. Now with our trainers back on, we hurried down the tricky and polished rock of the track. It took about an hour or so until we could cut through the suburbia near the base and were soon sitting with cokes and ice creams. A quick call told us Geoff and Ian were on their way to collect us. Stories rang out long and loudly and I remember later having two glasses of wine that evening.

Day 5

Guadalest was next; a quaint little village with a nice café, which gave us lovely morning cafe con leche. The place was not recorded in my old guidebook but Ian's copy did. Richard and I had promised a leisurely day after the exertions on the Peñón. After we all did a few straightforward climbs, the huge tower at the right-hand end of the crag attracted Geoff and Ian. Watching these two lead the route, called *Carabassa* (5+) inspired me as it looked amazing, so Richard and I led it as well.

The usual quota of 4s and 5s succumbed to the team including a prolonged attack on a 6a, *Borrosca de Neu*, which finally gave way to a determined attempt from Ian. He had pulled on some very tiny holds to succeed, so well done to him. Geoff and Richard weren't

interested in top roping doing it, so I did it (badly) just for the tick. I reckoned it was full-on 6b.

Day 6

The Magical Mystery Tour Fiasco. A re-visit to Toix Ouest was selected. Richard and I wanted to do a bit of exploring and decided to try the reputedly easy but good '*Magical Mystery Tour*', a sort of sea-level traverse graded 5. The other team would decide to stick to the upper cliffs. We drove to a café for our morning fix of cafe cón leche. As we sat in the warm morning sunshine, scoffing pastries, Ian suddenly realised he'd left his rock shoes on the veranda of the hotel room. The lads decided to drop us off first at the parking spot for Toix Ouest, but not before we called at a nearby supermarket for some day food and drinks. While we were buying these snacks, who should turn up but Geoff's old friend, Richard Mayfield. He had a lady client that day and was also heading for the same traverse. After introductions and a few minutes chatting and some handshakes, we said we'd follow the pair along the route. This would avoid me taking my heavy Costa Blanca guidebook.

Geoff and Ian duly dropped us off at the car park some fifteen minutes after the Orange House team had gone, Richard and I followed the track along and down to the cliff edge overlooking the sea. We found their rucksacks and the in-situ abseil rope, we were happy to use the prepared descent. I went first, steeply down for some 20 to 25 feet until I came across an old wooden ladder, fixed to the wall. Abseiling past this, I soon discovered the wall overhung dramatically, and I followed an extremely dodgy-looking steel ladder. This rusting pile of steel dropped around eighty to



a hundred feet down the overhanging wall. I now recalled my guidebook indicated that 'some ancient ladders can be found, leading down to ledges above the sea'. I was now hanging quite a way from the rock with a clear view down the full length of this spectacular abseil. Reaching the base ledges I called for Richard to come down, taking a couple of

Above:
*Close up of Smiler
nearing the top of
the rickety metal
ladder*

Photograph:
Richard Jolley

great photos of him in mid-air alongside the rusty ladder.

We sorted the gear out and started the traverse. It was virtually walking country at first but soon I was regretting not bringing the guide book. The climbing got more spectacular, more difficult, soon I was leading some intricate and steeper ground, occasionally following a downward line which, because of the lack of bolts and Trad gear, might prove quite exciting for Richard to second. Now mostly following my nose and the very occasional rusty bolt, the climbing continued to be exciting. After around four lengthy pitches, using rather tenuous nut and Friend belays, I remembered we had to, somehow, somewhere, go upwards. I followed the odd old bolt, and at last a pillar of rock, covered in seagull poo, led upwards. This was not easy but there was a bolt runner. With some effort, and no other gear, I reached an alcove with a rusty bolt. I added in a couple of poor nuts and belayed as best I could. Richard came up and it didn't take long to realise that we were maybe out of our depth and made a rapid decision to retreat. This was serious country indeed; above us a bulging wall looked pretty difficult with just one old bolt visible around thirty feet above the stance. The deciding factor for me was that the very steep wall led into a huge scooped area above which there was some pretty overhanging stuff above. This reminded me of the Cornice area on Derbyshire limestone. I was climbing OK, but not good enough for this. We'd have to go back and escape by those ladders! The ropes snaked down for around eighty feet before hitting some ledges above the sea. I made a mental note that one of our two ropes was destined

for the briny but realised there wasn't much choice. Eyeing up the rusty bolt with some concern, I murmured quietly to myself 'get on with it'. The abseil went without incident and soon we were reversing our approach line. We alternated leads along familiar ground and in an hour or so the steel ladder appeared.

There was little choice but to escape by the ladders. Being lighter than Richard I offered to do the ascent, deep down I was ready for the upper section as well. Richard thoughtfully removed any excess weight of gear I wouldn't need, with lots of conviction I stepped onto the bottom rung. Nothing moved! Ever so slowly and steadily I moved up this vertical pile of rust I even attached quickdraws to rungs every fifteen feet or so with the idea that if the top disconnected itself, the fall would somehow be slowed by a one by one collapsing effect as the ladder broke into sections.

Some hope but I added the runners anyway. Ten fairly serious minutes later and I reached the upper ledge. Tying on to the bottom of the wooden ladder, which at least wasn't rusty, I added as much trad gear as I could. Richard came up without incident. It was now after 4pm so there was little time to waste. Collecting all the trad gear, I climbed easily up the rickety ladder and added a dubious sling to the last rung. What followed was desperate; fifteen feet of steep and careful climbing, some crimps and side holds with only just adequate footholds, led to my only real runner, a Friend Two in a shallow hole. I shoved it in hard, completely unconcerned as to whether it would ever come out again and then viewed the final section. There would be no way back! I could see the moves. Reach across left to the rounded edge of the groove we'd originally

abseiled down, lay-a-way with the left hand, smear with the right foot, push the left foot across into the groove, swing the right hand across and up onto another lay-a-way, and trust there was something to go for after that.

It looked like, and there wasn't, any more gear. I poised for a minute or so and then made the moves. There was certainly no way back but it went like clockwork. I found a small jug high up in the groove and with a huge sigh of relief I pulled onto the top and the abseil point. I was 'too pooped to whoop' but apparently I did let out some sort of expletive. Wow, that was as hard and as serious as I'd led in forty years. Shaking slightly after the effort I fixed the perfect double steel spike belay and sat down gratefully. Richard was climbing well but, as I had expected, he admitted to having real trouble on the lay-away moves. Even on a top rope it would be difficult, pushing at least E4 and 5c (British) on the crux, but with a minimal amount of slack he finally emerged onto the ledge. He gave me considerable credit for the lead. As he neared the top, my mobile rang from inside the rucksack, stashed about fifteen feet away from me. I shouted to him, certainly distracting him but he was almost up now.

"That'll be the lads wondering where we are". It was well after six o'clock now. I had been expecting some concern from them. With Richard now up I returned Ian's call, not mentioning just yet any problems we may have had. We quickly packed the gear. The lads, after retrieving the missing rock shoes, had been climbing at Sella again, with no contact from me all day, they were rightly concerned. After talking things over with the Orange House, they drove back to Toix Ouest and

had just reached the parking spot when they received my call. Forty minutes later and back at the car, Richard and I finally relaxed. After a short résumé of our epic, dinner in the hotel beckoned and Geoff sped us back. There were quite a few stories told over my pints (that's plural) that evening. Of course, the biggest error was not taking our own guidebook with us. We'd have read that after no more than a couple of pitches of traversing from the ladder's base, we should have started to turn upwards, thus finishing with the two final pitches graded 4 and 5. Secretly though, after the year that I've had, I was pretty pleased with the lead on that exit pitch. I still haven't found if it has ever been done? There were no signs of traffic or in-situ protection and plenty of suspect rock that should have gone with time. However, it has been done now, with care, the ladders could provide the escape route someone might need? That last 25 to 30ft though? Well....?

Day 7

With the main adventures over our final day's climbing was back at Sella again. Richard and I were sure we'd just chill and drink some cokes while Geoff and Ian did their quota of pitches. We did get drawn in again to a couple of climbs but in reality, we were happy and the de-mob feeling had started.

Time to go home, but we'll be back!



GRANITOLA

Tafoni sounds like a traditional Corsican dessert; Ken shows us that it isn't. Corsica has a wealth of climbing, from bouldering to major alpine scale walls, unfortunately for many years information in English has been hard to come by. The recent publication of English language guides has removed any excuses – Ken describes some great climbs at attainable grades.

By Ken Daykin

I wipe the condensation from my specs and stare up into the swirling cloud. The slabs above bristle with lichen and to the right and left have a patina of green. Maybe very few climbers come this way? The other two parties climbing today had abseiled off at the *brèche*, three pitches back. There appears to be no hope of any more protection ahead, the wind is increasing and both of us are getting very cold. The mist clears a little and suddenly I spot a lone bolt high on the blank slab, encouraging me to sidle tentatively upward. From its security I can see a pattern of little foot ledges leading up towards the summit groove. Perhaps we will make it after all.

This was an unusual turn in our rock climbing trip to Corsica. Usually the problems were too much sun, too hot, carrying enough water and climbing fast enough to get down before dark.

Climbing in Corsica is very different from the Alps. You have high mountains and big routes but the vegetation is very Mediterranean and the sea is often visible from the summit of your climb. On the walk-in there are the smells of wild herbs, the attack of prickly bushes and you pass under the majestic Larici pines that

grow everywhere above 800m. Corsica is often called 'The Granite Isle' but you can climb on rhyolite, conglomerate and limestone too. The rocks are often eroded into weird shapes called 'Tafoni'. These make the routes look like something designed by Salvador Dali. You meet holes, caves, spikes, horns, ears, mouths,

Left:
*Sun, Mist &
Shadow; Arête de
Zonza*

Below:
Tafoni

Photograph:
Ken Daykin





Above:
Anne Daykin
enjoying the slab
climbing on Petit
Colonne di Maria

Photograph:
Ken Daykin

and drips, in fact all manner of weird shapes. They often allow you to climb very steep rock with ease and provide plentiful protection, provided you carry enough slings.

Rock climbing in a new venue often starts with the search for a guidebook. This proved easy to accomplish as *Grandes Voies de Corse* (2015) is readily available in all the

usual places. This proved very good both for inspiration and information plus it was very user friendly as well; the text is in both French and English, there are photo topos for all the routes and all the information we have come to expect from modern guidebooks is there. The style is chatty, with plenty of humour and there is a short passage to go with each route, giving some history, a tale about the author's ascent or a quote from the first ascensionists etc. In short it proved excellent for our needs. Although it is cheaper to buy it in Corsica it is worth buying in the UK so it can be photocopied, it is too big and heavy to carry up the climbs.

Suitably informed and inspired we visited four areas; so I will briefly cover each of these.

Ascu Stagnu: The Ascu valley has a road all the way to a small ski resort at Ascu Stagnu. It sits in a bowl surrounded by high mountains including Monte Cinto (2700m), the highest summit in Corsica. The valley has an alpine character and there are often snowfields below the north faces, even in summer. Ascu was the focus of rock climbing in the mountains until around 1990 when the rise of interest in bolting moved attention to the Massif de Bavella. The rock is rhyolite and the routes vary from 200m to 500m in length and finish at altitudes between 2000 and 2700m. Grades vary from D to ED, but most of the routes in the selected guide are graded TD. We climbed *Arête Sud-Est of Petit Colonne di Marcia* D+, 5+ max. This is an excellent five pitch route, with each pitch harder than the previous. It has lots of variety with slabs, cracks, corners and a spectacular exposed traverse below an arched overhang. Above this a short section of easy alpine terrain leads to a nice summit amidst very wild and spectacular mountain scenery- a

feature common to all the routes we climbed in Corsica.

Bonifatu: Here the approaches and descents tend to be long but the reward is climbing in a remote and truly wild setting, usually in solitude. We climbed the South West Arête of Aiguille de Falcone, a route known as *Granitola*. It is graded AD+, 350m and 5 max. This was a thirteen pitch marathon on superb granite and our introduction to Tafoni. The route is a mixture of slabs and steeper walls. The steeper parts are mostly climbed using the tafoni. The last belay is the summit block, a point only accessible to climbers and birds. Here we found a small book recording ascents dating back to 1988. The summit is surrounded by a cirque of impressive needles and arêtes, while to the south an impressive rock face catches the evening light. The descent proved difficult for us because half of it took place in the dark and we lost the main way down - contributing to a memorable day out!

Ascu and Bonifatu are in the north of the island, while the Restonica valley, near Corte is more central.

Restonica: This is one of the main sport climbing areas with hundreds of routes spread along the 16km long valley. There are also lots of multi-pitch routes on offer. However routes around VS appear to be in short supply. All but one of the routes in the selected guide are graded at least TD and start at about 6a. This appears to be a consequence of them being opened by the local mountain rescue team, all top climbers opening routes attractive and challenging to themselves.

We climbed the exception, the one selected route below TD. This was a superb route on Punta Spenicazzia called *Candela di Oro* (D+,



200m and 5max). With a one hour walk in, a satisfying summit and an easy abseil descent this partially equipped route provided an enjoyable day out. Five pitches, mostly excellent with a superb, steep and exposed 40m pitch on Tafoni near the top. This was the first time we met other climbers, with three other parties on the route that day: perhaps because it is in the top 20 in the guidebook? We had

Above:
Candella di L'oro,
40m pitch on
Tafoni.

Photograph:
Anne Daykin



hoped to climb at the head of the valley, where granite peaks and slabs crowd around Lac di Capitelto. One of the most celebrated routes here is *Symphonie d'Automne* (TD, 6a+). This route starts with a cable-protected traverse at water level and then climbs smooth granite slabs that rise straight out of the water. However, eventually we had to admit that the weather had won this time and we moved on to our last venue.

Massif de Bavella: This is another granite area in the south of the island that fills an entire guidebook of its own. It is a very wild area consisting of numerous peaks and ravines. The ravines are very popular for canyoning and the peaks, of course, for climbing. The most famous climbs in Corsica are here including *Jeef* (ED-, 7b max) and *Le Dos de L'Elephant* (TD+, 6b max). The very smooth and bold slabs on these routes had to wait for the acceptance of bolts for protection before they could be safely climbed. There are however plenty of routes at a more amenable grade. We climbed the popular *Arête de Zonza* (D, 360m, 5+ max). This is a relatively easy ridge route up until the Brèche de Genevois, where many parties abseil off. However, above here the final tower gives the most memorable climbing and the opportunity to finish on a true summit. We didn't get to see the extensive views because of the conditions outlined in the opening paragraphs of this article.

The weather drove us to sport climbing, of which there is plenty, and then we ran out of time. Bavella takes up 89 pages in the selective multi-pitch guide, an indication of the quantity of quality climbing available here. A fair number of the climbs do not exceed 5+



oblig. and are therefore within the grasp of competent VS climbers.

So how did we get on climbing the final tower of *Arête de Zonza*?

I took a deep breath and set off. It was trickier than I expected at the start but it was no time to hang around and in the end it went OK. Soon I was belaying in what would normally be a comfortable corner. After this the last short pitch is easy and we reconvened on the summit. Here we hastily put on coils and headed alpine-style towards the descent route. This proved to be both easy to follow and to execute and we were soon at the abseil. The ropes hung free and disappeared into the cloud. A leap of faith brought us to a ledge however, and from here an easy scramble lead back to our rucksacks and some welcome food.

I think it is fair to say that if you go to Corsica looking for adventure, you will not be disappointed.

Above:

*Looking for the
abseil anchors on
Arête de Zonza*

Photograph:

Ken Daykin

Left:

*Approaching Punta
Spenciazia, a
typical Corsican
approach walk*

Photograph:

Ken Daykin



Greenland: a personal account of exploratory alpine climbing

July/August 2016

Norseman Eric the Red allegedly discovered Greenland in the 10th Century, he chose the name to entice settlers to follow him and establish new Viking colonies. Greenland might be an agricultural misnomer but from a climber's perspective it is an attractive proposition for inveterate explorers who are willing to get stuck into the logistics. Geoff Hornby bit the bullet, got to the island only to have his involvement ended by injury; Paul describes how the rest of the team had a good time. A version of this article was published on UKClimbing.

By Paul Seabrook

It's January 7th 2016 when a grenade goes off in my email inbox.

It's the post-Christmas / New Year climbing doldrums and I'm sat at work thinking about an ice climbing trip to the Ecrin, when Geoff pulls out the pin and lobs email, text & voicemail at me all on the same day....

Can I commit to a trip to Greenland this summer? Can I commit quickly? Can I commit now!?

I've said it before, but Geoff is one of life's genuine explorers: he and his partner Susie have quietly travelled to and climbed in places you will eventually get to hear about when they sit down and write either their memoirs or the relevant guidebooks. Geoff has a 'little black book' of places to go and things to climb or explore from which, just occasionally, he shares a secret. This sounded like one of those times.

He introduced me to the Trad climbing potential of the Moroccan Anti-Atlas before most had heard of Taфраoute. He had done loads of new routes there – so we went together and did some more, as many of you now know, it's great. He introduced me to Norway's Setesdal Valley ice climbing and wrote the guidebook, have you been yet? We went and did some new routes there, it's great, just don't expect access paths, bolted belays or hooked out routes! He'd introduced me to.....well you get the picture.

So, in the spirit of 21st Century exploration, a trip to an almost unexplored glacier system in the Renland region of east Greenland, to climb new routes in alpine style seemed a perfect way to break out of the winter blues – I said yes – and started the negotiations required to free up the time from work and family. To my surprise, everyone thought me going off-grid and into

Left:

Untouched Big Walls

Photograph:
Paul Seabrook



Above:
*Arrival after 12
hours in the RIBs*

Photograph:
Paul Seabrook

the unknown for five weeks was a great idea, “once in a lifetime opportunity” was said several times. Perhaps their analysis was that I wouldn’t come back!

Fast forward several months and our team of 4 (Geoff, David, Robert and Myself) are sat, whiskies in hand, around a table reviewing the information we have on the region. The now famous Mirror Wall, whilst close in real terms, is in another glacier valley 15km by helicopter away from our target. An American couple had visited ‘our glacier’ in 2012; we had their AAC report and a handful of photos.

They had explored the glacier valleys and done some exploratory climbing, but had retreated from their main objective citing lack of abseil tape: we resolved to take extra! We also had a few photos from Kenton Cool who had visited in 2013 with clients, again mainly exploring the glaciers and judging from the photo’s had scrambled/climbed up to at least one high ridgeline. The entire 8km valley system with alpine scale rock walls and peaks surrounding it and many feeder glaciers was completely unclimbed – imagine the Mer-de-Glace before

the golden age of alpinism – everything to play for!

Interesting peaks were pawed over and potential lines were picked out from the photos, we tried to work out exactly where each of the photos had been taken to help us better understand the territory. Google

Earth gave us additional insight, and possible objectives were identified but, needless to say, and to mis-quote from history, “no plan survives contact with the enemy”. Our plan was no exception.

In-country logistics were organised by Tangent Expeditions. Paul Walker has an

Below:

*David & Paul on
the traverse of Arctic
Monkeys*

Photograph:
Rob Powell





operations base at Constable Point and would facilitate our shipping, transportation, communications, polar bear kit, guns etc. All we needed to do was pack everything we needed for a month and then move it all into place once we were dropped at the end of the glacier – and go climbing. Tangent had done the Mirror Wall logistics for Berghaus/Leo Holding and know the region very well, having operated there winter and summer for over 20 years. Our budget, in both cash and tonnage terms, was more modest than theirs so, rather than helicopter delivery, we were going to be transported by RIBs for the 200km sea transfer from the dirt landing strip at Constable Point to the glacier – 12 to 14 hours in two small inflatable RIBs, each way, at night, oh joy of joys!

Fast forward again to July 21st and we're stood on the gritty beach at the end of the glacier valley, at the edge of the world, dressed in a 14mm thick neoprene survival suit and sweating in the midday heat – it's 71° North in the Arctic circle, but it's summer, 24hr daylight, it's hot, and the survival suit is keeping the mosquitos at bay, just. That evening, having set up a basecamp a couple of hundred metres from the shore, I counted 25 mosquito bites just on the back of my left hand – I would have preferred polar bears I think.

Left:

David & Robert on the slab pitch of Arctic Monkeys

Photograph:

Paul Seabrook

Our plan was flexible, initially we wanted to explore further into the range and perhaps establish a higher ABC from which to operate, only returning to the coast to rest, refuel and resupply for the next route. The first part of the glacier was a straight 4km to a 90 degree left turn, where a subsidiary glacier junction and icefall signalled the start of the difficulties. Our thought was to find somewhere to set up a higher camp at this point. An added benefit was that the satellite images on Google Earth showed the shadow of a large peak we'd nicknamed The Dru on the inside curve of this bend, we all had plans for that peak. There followed several days of load carrying up the glacier, over moraines and boulder fields to a small glacier lake and gravel-flat we chose for our ABC. Unfortunately it was during this phase that Geoff took a tumbling fall through a snow patch and badly twisted his knee, aggravating an old injury and ending his trip before it had really begun – a cruel blow, especially as he had done the majority of the planning and organisation.

Whilst Geoff waited for his extraction we continued to supply the ABC and explore the upper reaches of the glacier beyond the bend.

There were several inviting walls we had observed from the photos, and on which we thought we might do some warm up routes, thinking they were perhaps 250-300m in height. As we got closer and closer we realised our planning needed a rethink as these walls were 900m-1000m tall and definitely 'big wall' territory, and whilst we had one portaledge down at the coast we didn't have static ropes to equip something of that scale – one for the future then.... We did use our time this far up the glacier to good effect though, choosing



a continuous crack/corner feature from a selection of other possibilities on a subsidiary wall and putting up a 10 pitch 420m E2 5b, *Arctic Monkeys* in an 18 hour push tent to tent.

Returning to the coast for a bit of R&R we were pleased to find that Geoff's wait for a lift was over. He'd left us a note saying that he was on his way home having been collected by Inuit locals. We were also pleased that the plague of mosquitos was gradually dying off and that the sea, whilst cold, was still suitable

Above:
*Robert & David
sorting gear at ABC*

Photograph:
Paul Seabrook



for a refreshing dip despite the icebergs in the vicinity!

So, the pattern was established, rest at the coast, head up to ABC at the glacier junction, climb something in a continuous push using the 24hr daylight, crash at ABC, return to coast, repeat till exhausted: and that's pretty much what we did for the remainder of the month.

Next on the agenda was the unclimbed peak our American contacts had attempted on their trip in 2012. They had offered the name Cerro Castillito and it was easy to see why, the peak having substantial ridges and castellation on its upper slopes. We approached the peak, as they had done, up the west facing glacier and 600m couloir above, to the col on the ridge overlooking the adjacent sound/fjord. From there we climbed the ridge for 650m, the three of us alternating leads, by-passing various gendarmes and other obstacles at AD+/D- until a short abseil and re-ascent landed us on the very pointed summit blocks of the peak. We had seen some old tape abseil stations on our way up, but these only progressed so far, beyond that we were clearly on virgin territory. Our descent along the ridge by abseil was long & slow, taking care to clear loose blocks where necessary and slightly hampered by light snowfall during the night-time hours, although it didn't get dark because of the arctic summer sun. Just as well because this 1300m

Left:

Snowy Descent

Photograph:

Paul Seabrook

route took the best part of 23 hours tent to tent, and I for one was pretty exhausted and thankful for a bit of extra 'buddy checks' from my mates when rigging the abseils. "There's no I in TEAM!" was our motivational phrase of the day.

Having ticked off Cerro Castillito, one of our planned objectives, our attentions now turned to the major peak on the inside bend of the glacier. In our whisky fuelled planning sessions each two man team had identified this peak as an objective, and we had drawn virtual lines all over it, however, we were now a three man team, the peak was twice as big as we'd thought, there was water streaking down the approach ramps on the lower part of the NE face and it all looked very hard indeed –we needed to re-evaluate our plan again. Various suggestions were discussed, binoculars and cameras were deployed to scope out the possible lines and eventually a new plan was hatched. The key line was the long arête on the NE corner, but the approach ramps & slabs on the lower section were wet and rotten. An alternative approach was reviewed, using the couloir to the NW as an entry point and cutting back left along broken ledges onto the NE arête. However, even using this alternative approach we could see that we would need to bivi high on the route and also that we should have a well-developed descent plan because coming back down the route of ascent would not be practical.

We felt that a traverse of the peak was the best approach, up the impressive NE Arête, over the summit, then abseiling from the summit to the col at the top of the NW Couloir before abseiling the couloir back to the start point and the glacier. To make this safer

and quicker we decided to climb the whole of the NW couloir as a route in its own right and equip it with Abalakov anchors as preparation for the descent. So that's what we did, climbing *The Double 00 Couloir* 800m AD giving lots of calf screaming 55° to 75° glacier/water-ice climbing and going on for ever! Still, it was for our speed and safety on the subsequent route, so all in a good cause, "No Pain - No Gain!" was our motivational phrase of the day.

Having suffered somewhat in our ascent and descent of the icy Couloir we needed to recharge our batteries, so returned to the coastal camp for a few days' rest, washing, eating and swimming whilst maintaining a constant lookout for the much spoken-of polar bears, but they never did show up. Occasionally we would see a seal, or a family of ducks, and on two occasions a yacht in the distance, but very little is living up there, so in the end there was nothing for it – we had to go and climb 'the big one'.

After a careful sort through and repack of the gear we headed out of ABC, up the true Left bank of the glacier and through the icefall one more time. Once above the icefall we followed our previous track across the glacier to the start of the couloir and again climbed the first section of this until level with the leftwards rising ledges and ramps we had observed previously, crossing these for 4-5 pitches across very broken ground we reached the NE Arête at a level above the first detached tower, and the climbing proper could begin. We had taken bivi gear and food but no stove and wanted to get as high as possible on the route before stopping for a rest, so we hoped to climb quickly and efficiently. Typically the approach on all these routes was for the leader



Above:
*David and Rob in
the “Double 00”
Couloir*

Photograph:
Paul Seabrook

to climb the pitch and then both seconds to simul-climb together, this was our approach here too, however because of the longer route we were each carrying additional gear and all were climbing with a rucksack. Making quick route finding decisions was also essential, and the preparatory work done to scope out a likely line meant we were able to move pretty

efficiently despite the complexity of the terrain. We had identified various key features or milestones from our camp, and this was very useful in helping keep track of where we were on the arête and therefor estimate how long before we would get to the likely bivvi spot. The quality of rock was also quite varied, sometimes excellent yellow granite, up corners, flakes and slabs, sometimes degenerating into brown “Granola Granite”.

We led in rotation and we each had excellent pitches that we didn’t want to end and horror pitches that seemed like they never would. Eventually, after about 13 hours climbing we reached a suitable ledge right on the arête and settled in for the night, watching the partial sunset at midnight /sunrise at 01:00 and both in an almost Northerly direction – weird.

I don’t think I slept, but apparently I snored anyway!

Starting again soon after 7am, we continued up the arête in a spectacular position, gradually able to see further into the range as we gained height relative to the peaks around us. Rob led up a great corner system and Dave took us up around a series of ribs and grooves on the arête to the left and onto the east face. Pitch after pitch continued until eventually we hit the summit ridge and by 13:45 the summit. Rob had suggested we name the mountain after his friend who was recently killed in the Alps, so we took a few photos of ourselves with a card written to Hannes’ parents and call it Mount Hannes.

Given the thought and effort we had put into preparation of the descent we were hopeful of a quick afternoon’s effort to make it back to the glacier, once again, the plan

needed more work. Initially we needed to get off the summit ridge and onto the col, and we knew we would have to descend unknown ground over very steep rock to do so. Rob did a magnificent job rigging and negotiating five 50 metre abseils, several with hanging stances, before we made it to the ice about 25m below the col. Putting my crampons on, mid descent, on a hanging stance is a trick I will remember for a long time, but at least all the Abalakov belays in the couloir below us were in position, so once we reach them we were home free - right? WRONG! As Rob reaches the first set of threads he shouts up – they'd melted.

Disaster! – we had rigged them double, so that we could pull our ropes and still re use them – we knew we'd be back, so how had the tapes melted?

No – not the tapes – it was the ice! Despite digging deep to good ice, despite rigging two equalised tapes, despite the fact it's a North facing couloir, despite the fact it's in the arctic, despite, despite despite.... Over the five days since we'd set them the ice had melted out around the tapes and they were all useless – we'd have to set them all up again! Delay leads to danger - during the long descent there is at least one very close call with rock-fall in the couloir. We're probably half way down, being last man I have cleared the backup ice-screw belay and I'm descending on the ab rope when we hear crashes from high above, there's a cluster of smaller breeze block sized debris, but one larger block hurtling down the couloir towards us. At the last half-second I guess which way the rock will ricochet as it approaches and run horizontally across the ice to pendulum out of its way. At least I was mobile; Rob and Dave were strapped into the

next belay down and could only duck as the blocks flew over their heads. A close call. A long way from anywhere.

Forty hours after starting out we're back at ABC, wasted, and ready for a long sleep. The nights are starting to get more obvious but we're a bit time shifted and feel almost jetlagged. *Polar Daze* seemed an appropriate name, a play on 'days', which also reflected how we felt. Alpine TD-/TD, 1400 metres, 20 pitches up to E2 5b.

It's time to go, we're all a bit climbed out, so spend the remaining time clearing the high camp of any trace of our visit and then exploring the near coastline, bouldering, playing on a slackline, photographing or just chilling before the boat comes to start the long, long journey home.

Climbers: David Barlow, Geoff Hornby,
Robert Powell, Paul Seabrook

Full details including Topo's have been submitted to MEF, BMC and Alpine Club

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Right:
*Rob & Dave on
Polar Daze*



Far Right:
Rob on Polar Daze



Right:
*The Team Bivouac on
Polar Daze*



Far Right:
*Polar Daze on
Mount Hannes*

Photographs:
Paul Seabrook





TIBET'S SECRET MOUNTAIN

By Chris Bonington

This is a chapter from Chris's new memoir, *Ascent* (Simon & Schuster Ltd, ISBN: 978-1471157547)

Between 1996 and 1998 I made three exploratory trips to the mysterious Nyenchen Tanglha Shan mountains, a range previously unvisited by Westerners, in search of the area's highest peak, Sepu Kangri.

On our third trip in 1998, Scott Muir and Victor Saunders came within 150 metres of the summit, but were forced back by thick cloud and high winds.

The combination of exploration and problem solving is what has always fascinated me. Whether it is an unclimbed bit of rock in Borrowdale or a Himalayan peak, that process of discovering the objective, planning the expedition, the journey to the mountain, that real moment of truth - of actually sitting below your peak and working out how you are going to do it, and then getting on to the mountain and doing it - that's the unifying sequence that I find so enthralling. In many ways it's a creative process, with the final route to whatever top it might be something that you want to share with others, in the same way that you want people to enjoy the book you have written or the photographs you have taken.

In 1982 we were flying from Chengdu in western China to Lhasa on our way to Everest, to attempt its unclimbed north-east ridge. From the plane's window a huge range of rugged, heavily glaciated mountains stretched to the horizon where a shapely pyramid rose up, obviously higher than anything else. I was entranced.

It stuck in my mind and seven years later I suggested to Jim Fotheringham that we go

looking for this mysterious mountain. I had discovered the name of the range - Nyenchen Tanglha Shan - and that the peak I had seen, was the highest at 6,956 metres (22,821 feet). I got permission for an exploratory reconnaissance but on 4 June 1989, two days before we were due to fly, the Tiananmen Square massacre took place and all expeditions to Tibet were immediately cancelled.

The idea didn't resurface until 1996, when after several frustrating cancellations of a possible high-profile trip to make the first balloon flight over Everest, I turned to something closer to my heart and asked Dr Charlie Clarke if he wanted to join me in searching for Sepu Kangri as a prelude to a full expedition. Charlie has been one of my closest friends ever since our first expedition together to the south-west face of Everest in 1975. He was expedition doctor on that trip and has filled that role on many more since. A modest and cautious climber, Charlie loves exploring and so jumped at the idea of this trip into the unknown - to a massif that no other foreigners had visited before.

Our explorations of both the north and south sides of the mountain were amongst the

Left:

Beneath Sepu Kangri

Photograph:

Chris Bonington

best experiences I have had, despite the fact that we only went above the snow line twice and did no climbing - a rare chance to enjoy a style of mountain exploration that Shipton and Tilman, or some of the early Tibetan explorers, must have known.

The first full-blown expedition attempt in the spring of 1997 saw our two attempts on Sepu Kangri beaten back by bad weather. Still, the lure of that big unexplored peak drew me back in the autumn of 1998 with a completely

new team, although once again composed mainly of old friends. Battling storms and a series of unlucky mishaps, Scott Muir and Victor Saunders got to within shouting distance of the summit before making the sensible decision to turn around in high winds and terrible visibility.

The near success and our earlier decision to turn around in good weather raised that difficult but interesting dichotomy of mountaineering - whether to push on or to turn back. For me, the actual happiness and unity of the team - the shared experience - had become as important as getting to the top of the mountain. It was a decision made

Photograph:
Chris Bonington

Below:
My first view of the Nyenchen Tanglha Shan range and Sepu Kangri (the prominent peak right of centre on the horizon), while flying to Lhasa en route to the north-east ridge of Everest in 1982.





to some extent out of loyalty to friends, but I'd also become less ruthless with age, partly with maturity but also as my own physical endurance had begun to diminish.

There is no point in regretting decisions taken at the time for what seemed the best

course of action. All that matters is what you can learn from them to take into the future. Importantly, you're alive; your friendships are intact and you can start planning your next adventure. The richness and enjoyment of my recce with Charlie in 1996 will always be

Above:
The north-east face of Sepu Kangri reflected in the waters of the Sacred Lake, Sam Tso Taring.

Left:
Nomads drinking tea in their tent. A family of nomads inside a ba, their traditional tent.



Above:
*The north-east face
of Sepu Kangri at
dawn*

Right:
*Mani wall and
prayer flags at a
village south of
Diru.*

Photographs:
Chris Bonington

with me - it stands out as one of the happiest and most fulfilling adventures that I have undertaken.

In 1996 we were a tiny team - myself, Charlie Clarke, Pasang, our guide, who had never been to the Nyenchen Tanglha Shan so didn't know any more than we did, Mingma, our cook, and Tsering, our driver - all squashed into his Jinbei pickup truck. Shortly before we had left England, an old friend of mine, Ian McNaught -Davis, passed on to me a Chinese book of mountains. Opening it, I was surprised to see a photograph of Sepu Kangri. This provided the only information we had beyond the tourist map we had bought at the airport. In fact the book provided our crucial navigational breakthrough. We had reached





Left:
*Charlie Clarke by
Sam Tso Taring.*



Left:
*The Jinbei pickup
truck with our kit
gets stuck while
crossing the Jiali
river.*



Left:
*Charlie and I with
Pasang, our guide,
and his family in
Lhasa*

Photographs:
Chris Bonington

Left: *Crossing a bridge from the roadhead to
the village of Khinda on our approach to Sepu
Kangri in 1996. © Charlie Clarke*

Right:

Tsimi and her family. She had an ectopic pregnancy and her life was saved by Charlie.



Right:

The team with the monks of of the Samda manastery

Photographs:
Chris Bonington





Left:
*Our Sherpas hold
an impromptu
hopping competition
at Base Camp.*



unclimbed, heavily glaciated snow peak within miles of us. Then suddenly, as we rounded a bend in the valley, laid out before us was a towering mountain range reflected in Sam Tso Taring, the Sacred Lake, stretching five miles towards Sepun Kangri.

Left:
*Entering the
digital era: Jim
Fotheringham
and Jim Lowther
writing emails from
Base Camp.*

Diru, a small town to the north of Sepu Kangri, and showed the photograph of our mountain to the post mistress, Mrs Donkar; she recognised the mountain as close to her family home. With her directions we drove along fertile Yu-chong valley before continuing south on foot.

For most of our approach the terrain reminded us of the English Lake District with the close-cropped grassy slopes stretching up to gentle rolling summits. Every peak in sight was below 5,000 metres in height, and it was difficult to imagine that there could be a major

The next few days were a magical time. First exploring this northern aspect of the mountain, and then, after a rough eighty-mile jeep journey on terrible roads and a hectic two-day walk and ride on Tibetan ponies, we glimpsed the southern aspect of the mountain with its guard of dramatic peaks.

Charlie and I returned in the spring of 1997 for a full-blown expedition, joined by Jim Fotheringham, John Porter, Jim Lowther, Jim Curran as our cameraman and Duncan Sperry as our communications person. We made a first attempt by a route we called the Fotheringham's Ridge, because Jim spotted it, but were turned back in bad visibility. Our attempt on a more direct line up a ridge of a subsidiary peak we named the Turquoise

Photographs:
Chris Bonington



Contrasting images of Tibet: a traditional market (LEFT) and a modern development (RIGHT) in Lhasa



Expedition team members in 1998. L-R: Greig Cubitt, Martin Belderson, Pemba Chhiri Sherpa, Scott Muir, Jim Curran, Ram Krishna Tamang, Graham Little, myself, Charle Clarke, Elliot Tobertson, Pasang Choephel, our liason officer Tachei, our neighbours and, far right, Victor Saunders.

Flower also ground to a halt in continuously poor weather. That year I don't think it would have mattered what line we tried; the weather was terrible.

We switched seasons to the autumn in 1998 hoping for better weather. I returned with a completely new team, but once again mainly old friends - Graham Little, Scott Muir

and Victor Saunders. Charlie continued his exploratory zeal by heading out in advance with Elliot Robinson, a friend of one of his daughters, and approaching from the east. On our first effort, Graham, Scott, Victor, Elliot and I made really good progress, taking the line of Fotheringham's Ridge to reach the upper Yanglung Glacier, finding ourselves poised



Left:
Local children



Left:
The annual dance festival at Samda monastery on our approach to Sepu Kangri in 1998.



Left:
The ITN team sending news back to the UK, Jim Curran in the foreground.

below Sepu Kangri's headwall. We were ready to make the final push when we were hit by a two-day storm. We sat it out but unfortunately Scott and Graham got carbon monoxide poisoning from using the stove in their poorly ventilated snow cave. It was a perfect day but I took the decision for all of us to go down to give them a chance to recover.

On our return to Fotheringham's Ridge, deep soft snow made progress desperately laborious. The day before we set out from the UK, Victor had come up with the idea of taking snowshoes with us. I found three pairs in my climbing store but didn't have time to get any more. In the soft snow the snow-shoes were an absolute necessity, so Elliott and I volunteered to turn back, leaving the stronger three to press on.

Later, Graham also started having doubts, worried about the avalanche risk above. He decided to return to base, but on his way down the glacier he could not resist the temptation of making a diversion to attempt the Turquoise

Photographs:
Chris Bonington



With the hermit who lived at Sam Tso Taring lake. He presented me with a holy flag to take to the summit of Sepu Kangri.



Victor Saunders (right) and Elliott Robertson with heavy loads at the start of our first push.



Coming to the top of the sérac fall just below Camp 2. © Graham Little

Flower, about a thousand feet higher on the other side of the glacier. His climb gave us our only major success - the first ascent of a significant and very beautiful unclimbed peak of 6,650 metres (21,817 feet).

The weather broke the following day, but Scott and Victor fought their way up very close to the summit in thick cloud and stinging ice particles driven up the mountain by the wind.



The snow cave used by Victor and Scott Muir on our first push.

The trouble with the top of Sepu Kangri is it's a bit like Cho Oyu; if you are in a white-out, it's difficult to work out which is the highest point. They very sensibly decided to turn back; if it had been a clear day they would have undoubtedly made it.



Victor traversing across to the start of Fotheringham's Ridge, leading to the upper Yanglung Glacier with Sepu Kangri at its head.

With the weather closing in, Scott took this shot of the summit of Sepu Kangri from his and Victor's high point, agonisingly only 150 metres from the top. © Scott Muir







Left:
*Base Camp at Sepu
Kangri, reflected
in the waters of the
Sacred Lake, Sam
Tso Taring.*

Photograph:
Chris Bonington



WHEN WE WERE YOUNG

With the EU's Schengen Agreement visiting Poland is no big deal. This hasn't always been the case, between 1945 and 1989 Poland was a communist state hidden behind the Iron Curtain. Visiting required invitation and once there virtually every aspect of your visit was regulated by the state. Any Pole who met this particular group of degenerates must have wondered what the "free world" was really like!

By Bob (RK) Allen

The squadron leader (Yorkie's dad) stood up, cleared his throat and surveyed his breakfast table with a look of calculated distaste. Arranged around it, members of the first and possibly only "Keswick Park Shelter Tatra Expedition¹" attempted to subdue last night's hangover with copious doses of a greasy "fat lads" breakfast. Much fiddling with his blazer buttons and a louder throat clearing had the desired result as several sets of bleary, bloodshot eyes focused their attention from their breakfast plates to him. "Now chaps you are all young, intelligent men with bright futures in front of you and visiting a communist country will be a great experience, but I must warn you that if any young ladies offer themselves to you, refuse the proposition and walk away," As this would be a unique experience for most of the team I voiced the obvious question of "Really, why?"

The squadron leader proceeded to explain how a "Honey Trap" worked and that any compromising photographs could prove very embarrassing on our return from Poland. To the assembled team the trip now took on even greater promise: not only a completely new

mountain area to explore but we would also return as porn stars.

1974 had started on a bleak note: shift work in an ancient cloth works, machine minding a clanking, belching steam chest curing floral nylon settee covers that only your granny could adore. It was known as the "John Woods", reputedly after some poor soul who had hung himself there. On a lonely back shift in the wee small hours of a February night his spooky presence was palpable. Fortunately, I was head hunted into a labourer's job by the Cumbrian climbing joiners "Aido²" and "Lambo³". The building site we toiled on became a boulderer's play ground with new problems chipped into the pristine brick work on a daily basis. It has the cruxes of most of the classic Lakeland E2's and E3's buried within its plaster work. Goodness knows what future archaeologists will make of it.

May finally arrived and with it enough money saved to escape for a summer's climbing. I relocated to the lakes (well the Keswick park shelter). That summer Ken Russell was filming "Tommy" - the rock opera, in and around the Lakes and thanks to

Left:

On Rysy, 2503m

Back row: l to r

Pete Bott, Tony

Stephenson

Middle: two Polish

climber's, Andy

Brown, Arthur

Glencross

Front: Bob (RK)

Allen

Photograph:

Nigel "Yorkie"

Robinson

“Mac⁴” I landed a job as Sherpa/extra/drinking companion to the stars. Not much climbing though but a few very pleasant and lucrative weeks passed in the company of rock and film stars, Hells Angels and Keswick grammar school girls (but that’s a tale for another day).

It was Tony who suggested going to Poland; he had met a Polish climber and had (allegedly) wangled an official invite from the “Polish Mountaineering Federation”. So, one hot, sticky July night we abandoned the park shelter for our Polish adventure. After travelling south by bus to Harwich, we boarded a ferry bound for the Hoek of Holland. To our delight, it was crowded with Texan cheer leaders on a European tour, so after a quick visit to the duty free to collect the ingredients for our preferred cocktail (cider and barley wine finished off with just a dash of sherry) we set up camp on the afterdeck. Arthur strummed his guitar a couple of times and next thing I know I’m feeding our exotic mixture to, and getting very friendly with, an enthusiastic, beautiful blonde Houston babe.

When we rendezvoused after disembarkation ready to board the Moscow express, Yorkie was missing. He was finally located, wedged firmly between a Moscow express carriage and the platform, weighed down by his very large rucksack and serious sherry intoxication. Once extricated it was discovered all his travel documents were missing. Furious searching led to a paper trail of passport, tickets, etc. leading to the compartment he was booked to share with a very nice family from Berlin. They refused point blank to allow Yorkie across the threshold; this led to a slight altercation between Yorkie and me. In the friendly scuffle that followed blood was spilt and my precious

“Tommy” T-shirt was ripped. When the Berlin family finally separated us and realised that further argument was useless, they made a compromise and welcomed me into their comfortable couchette. Yorkie retreated into the seated compartment with the rest of the team and snuggled into deep, drunken oblivion in the luggage rack.

A glorious sunrise found the Moscow bound express stationary, directly above the Berlin Wall, waiting to be taken, a single carriage at a time, from the bright lights of West Berlin into the drab grey concrete landscape of East Germany. Each carriage was emptied of its occupants before being thoroughly searched. When it came to our turn, the sight of a group of soiled hippies brought a great deal of unwelcome attention: we were poked and prodded, the discovery of our stash of “noodie books” led to their confiscation on grounds of “decadent western propaganda insulting to East German womanhood”. Unfortunately, this whole procedure led to a serious depletion in our reserves of western currency in the form of fines, taxes, surcharges and general bungs.

Crossing the Polish border in comparison felt like light relief; at least the border guards smiled whilst helping themselves to our western currency. We left the Moscow Express at Poznań. Eager to sample the Polish cuisine, we set up camp in the station buffet and after a couple of beers summoned up the courage to order bowls of soup. Closer inspection revealed ruddy brown liquid concealing lumps of gristle and intestinal villi. Half way through my second bowl a steam train snorted into the station with one of its carriages on fire. The station personnel appeared completely unconcerned. Tony immediately ran onto the

platform with his camera to get some action shots. The inferno was tackled by shunting the blazing carriages under the water spout normally used to top up the steam trains and dousing them with water. This proved surprisingly effective and appeared to be a well-practiced and regular occurrence. The sight of a hippy recording the unfolding drama with a very large camera was not, however, and brought lots of shouting men in uniform with assorted guns which in turn led to yet another diminution of our spondulicks.

The next leg of our journey to Krakow was via a “slow train through Hades” (possibly the same one we had witnessed being extinguished). We travelled at walking pace through a blackened wasteland on a roller coaster of a railway track, the stour and stench from heavy industry made worse by the oppressive menace of an imminent thunderstorm. A combination of seventy two hours traveling, hangovers and the poisoned atmosphere did little to prepare us for our arrival in Krakow on a communist, catholic, Sunday night. The imperturbable Andy, who refuses to be cowed by any situation, bounded up and down the platform trying to “sort things out” with his usual enthusiasm whilst the rest of us just lay in a sweaty, dispirited heap. After about an hour’s intense optimism and cheeriness, even Andy had to admit that the massed bands and flower girls of the reception committee from the “Polish Mountaineering Federation” had failed to appear to meet us off the train. By waving pound notes in front of reluctant taxi drivers, the “Keswick Park Shelter Tatra Expedition” mobilised itself and set off for the address of Tony’s “Polish Mountaineering Federation”

contact. This turned out to be a large grim tower block. A broken lift meant a trudge up too many stairs to a grimy front door to discover a hand-written message pinned to it; “Sorry boys had to leave city in hurry – have a great time”.

Years of dossing had taught us that in times of greatest adversity always head for a bar and then drink beer until your troubles recede and serendipity occurs. Using a combination of mime, facial grimacing and child-like drawings we convinced our taxi drivers to take us to somewhere where English was spoken. They dumped us on the steps of Krakow University student union. It was now about midnight but had a functioning bar. On explaining our needs, we were informed “No place to sleep”. Beer at 2p a pint meant lots of cheap rounds and a few “wee voddy” chasers meant life soon took on a rosy glow. A curtain separated a dining area from the main body of the bar, so one by one we slipped behind it, unfurled our sleeping bags and dosed down. At chucking out time we were discovered. Years of prevarication skills honed in Scottish public bars meant the bar staff were fighting a losing battle. After about twenty minutes a young woman who spoke perfect English arrived and announced they had found rooms for us – and what rooms! I was shown to a penthouse suite on top of a tower block. It had an enormous mirror above a giant bed with the whole of Krakow visible through open French windows. I quickly took a bath and prepared myself for the now inevitable “Honey Trap”. Unfortunately, the only thing that came that night was a huge thunderstorm.

Morning brought the next problem – how to get from Krakow to Zakopane at the foot

of the Tatra Mountains. The nice lady on reception suggested a bus. We held a pound note aloft and were soon taxi bound for the bus station. We now discovered why our pound notes worked so well: buying western goods from state-run PKO shops required western currency and the only way an average Pole could obtain dollars or pounds was to buy it from a state currency shop. So the locals were stung twice, once by the poor official exchange rate and then by the exorbitant shop prices. On arrival at the crowded bus station we were besieged by people muttering “Shhhhterlink” or “Dolleshersh” offering four to five times the official exchange rate. We spent a couple of hours in slow-moving queues trying to buy bus tickets before giving up and waving our trusty pound note at some taxi drivers and were soon on our way.

We arrived in Zakopane and jumped on a decrepit bus to travel up to Moskie Oko, the proposed base camp for our stay in the mountains. Our arrival at the mountain refuge brought blank looks. Once again knowledge of “Keswick Park Shelter Tatra Expedition” had failed to reach much past the back bar of the Odd Fellows in Keswick. We tried the waving pound note trick to no avail. The hut was full of party officials plus the odd university professor and the tiny camp site full of “Masters of Sport⁵”. So we went for beer in the hut and met the “dirrektor” of climbing, a short barrel of a man with an impressive scar resembling a big zip running down the centre of his chest from just under his chin and vanishing into his shorts. We instantly named him “Superscar”. He took pity on us and said “he would see what could be done” but we had

to return to Zakopane and telephone him the following day.

Retreat back down the hill to Zakopane was a terrifying experience; the wheezing, decrepit bus that had crawled up the rough hair pins in first gear now galloped down them apparently brakeless, its rear end repeatedly swinging out over dizzy drops on the tight corners as its wheels scrabbled for purchase.

An overcrowded, scruffy camp site in Zakopane revealed how the Polish proletariat spent their holidays; we squeezed our tents onto a square patch of mud directly opposite a pair of fly blown “hole in the ground” toilets. Miasma from the latrine induced a terrible thirst so off we went on a beer hunt. A pub crawl through a procession of dingy workers’ cafes/bars led inevitably to a dodgy night club where the entertainment consisted of rousing patriotic songs, speeches from men in suits and farm lass strippers getting down to industrial strength bra and pants. Our unaccustomed, new found (but rapidly diminishing) wealth called once more for many rounds of beer and “wee voddies”. It was only when the nights bar bill arrived we discovered that night clubs are similar the world over in two vital respects – the inflated prices they charge and the size of the bouncers. A cunning plan evolved involving a toilet window and lots of running away. This required a disciplined, orderly and discreet approach from the escape team members. It started well but as the number of remaining would be escapees left within the club dwindled, it turned into a rout. Strong drink and running away are never a good mixture, predictably we were rounded up by lots of large, shouting, bad tempered, scary



men and inevitably our foreign currency barrel was scraped until it squeaked.

Morning brought hangovers but also a message from “Superscar” saying we had been promoted to Masters of Sport and could now occupy a Moskie Oko tent. A swift trip to the supermarket for provisions secured us large tins of gristle goulash with some green stuff and then it was all aboard the “death bus to Moskie Oko”.

Our first mountain day was to “get fit” i.e. reduce our alcohol levels and conserve our

currency. We aimed to walk up the tourist path up Rysy the highest mountain in the Polish Tatra. The route of ascent followed an amazing constructed pathway through huge boulder fields. Massive granite lumps had been tossed aside, or perfect sets of steps cut right through them (probably by slave labour recruited from too-pushed-to-pay escapees overseen by night club bouncers). All went well until on the descent from the summit we became involved with an accident. We witnessed a girl being struck by rockfall then swept off the path down

Above:
Masters of Sport: L to R Nigel (Yorkie) Robinson, Pete Bott, Andy Brown, Arthur Glencross and Bob (RK) Allen

Photograph:
Tony Stephenson

steep, rough ground. She had suffered a serious head injury and it was quite obvious she was dying. We quickly sprinted down the hill to summon the mountain rescue team at the refuge. This consisted of a couple of “Masters of Sport” with a First World War stretcher between them and the now inevitable gaggle of shouty, uniformed men with guns. As they ran off up the hill we retired to a very subdued beer in the hut. We never knew her name.

We could prevaricate no more and had to go proper climbing so later that evening we had our pre-climb interview with “Superscar” to determine our competence. Emboldened by drink we regaled him with tales of benightment on “Donkeys Ears” and the lonely VIth grade leads on “Brown Slabs Direct”. Even with his poor grasp of English he recognized bollox when he heard it. So he allocated us to a climb to tan our arses – Variant R on the Mnick.

Variant R was a mixed free and artificial route which, though short, travelled through steep rock above an impressive drop. Tony led a strenuous aid pitch through a sizable roof at half height leaving me to second it with the rucksack weighed down by spare tins of goulash (it was the first route after all and you can't be too careful). I was also tasked with retrieving “all” the gear. By the time I reached the lip of the roof, I had further bulked up with various slings, pitons and nuts. Here Tony had left his home-made, hand-stitched; car seat belt etriers on the last piton before commencing some scary free climbing up to the stance. I moved steadily up the in-situ etrier rungs until I had both feet in the top step. Suddenly a loud ripping sound announced the poor quality

of Tony's embroidery skills as his stitching failed catastrophically. I went burling off, screaming, into space. Fortunately, one of my all-encircling slings caught on the peg and left me hanging precariously on the lip of the roof. Further incompetence and faff got us to the top and down safely.

In the following days the team accomplished some great climbs around Moskie Oko and in surrounding valleys, including freeing some of the easy aid climbs. One in particular, “*Spezyna*”, also on the Mnick, was fantastic, unfortunately we had to abandon some of our hexcentrics irretrievably stuck in a crack. In the hut bar that night when we mentioned our loss we unintentionally started a race between various “Masters of Sport” to retrieve the booty. The next morning it was teeming down with rain, but three or four groups left the campsite early to retrieve the abandoned gear whilst we played the “will the pee can take any more pee without spilling” game in the tent. A triumphant pair of Mistresses's of Sport returned that evening with their prize.

Our final climb was on a wall called *Kazalnica*. We braved a four a.m. start to do the initial easy pitches in the early morning gloaming. Predictably our hand-drawn topo became a useless, soggy lump of goo. Tony and I soon became hopelessly lost and terrified on loose, unprotected, grassy granite slabs. As we climbed higher the rock improved and some great pitches brought us up against a large overhanging barrier. An apparently slabby ramp cleaved the first bulges, providing the only line of weakness. This proved to be a difficult and committing diagonal pitch but led to a good ledge below a series of overhanging grooves. Tony's lead I think, two sky hooks,

followed by several barely biting knife blades (titanium jet turbine blades with a hole drilled through, borrowed from the Poles) led to a corner full of shoogly guillotine flakes. Hard free and dodgy nuts maintained the tempo. Finally Tony vanished out of sight, our only communication the dull sound of poor piton placements filling the early evening air. Eventually the rope pulled tight and with a faint cry of “don’t fall off”, I climbed carefully up to re-join Tony. I wasn’t allowed on the belay foothold because the rucksack (still full of tins of spare goulash) might have proved too much for the anchors. It was emphatically my lead so I hung the rucksack on a vibrating block and confronted the headwall. Its angle was just off vertical but all the promising cracks turned out to be shallow glacial scratches in the smooth granite. I balanced and teetered up for thirty protection-less feet to a sizeable overlap, leaning out on an undercut I could get the fingers of one hand on to a dubious, small, sloping shoebox- sized block. I looked down directly to Tony’s worried, up-turned face, luminescent in the evening light. Nothing for it, I committed to the mantleshef and scrambled over the roof to the sound of Tony’s “f** k, F**k, F**K!....” and my own whimpering. I ended up with my left knee on the block unable to stand up or retreat. Even forty years later I can still remember the texture of that place. My escape involved hand placing one of our turbine blade pegs into the thin crack behind the block and looping a sling over it. Gingerly I stood in the sling trying so, so hard not to put any lateral movement on the peg. Finally I straightened up and stood on the block. More protection-less on-off dithering and wobbling followed but we were soon

reunited at a good belay feeling very stuck and very, very lost.

Glancing over to our left we both had to double take at the human head peering round an arête at us through the gloom. A cry of “bollax to you” (we had taught our Polish hosts that this was a common toast/greeting amongst British climbers) encouraged us that perhaps we would get off this wall in one piece. The bivouac ledge we shared with our two Polish saviours was snug for them. Our accommodation consisted of a fifty degree grassy bank with a single good anchor well over to our right. As soon as either of us dozed off, we would lose our precarious grassy grip and end up skittering off our field. Then would follow a pitch black, bad tempered disentanglement of ourselves and the rucksack, followed by a weary haul up the rope to try to relocate the foot holds we had kicked in the grass. To add to our misery we could see the cozy lights of the refuge way down the valley with its promise of soft, flat beds and beer.

Morning finally arrived and we swore that was the last time we would doss on a glaci. We proffered our Polish guardian angels the last of our water, expecting a reciprocal exchange of fluids, but after two big swigs they returned an empty bottle, so we kept our breakfast goulash to ourselves. Now the climbing became magnificent. We were perched on the very arête of the wall above a huge drop. The route wove its way up a series of grooves, thin cracks and slabby walls of impeccable granite, always under the watchful eyes of our Polish guides. We raced down the descent hoping to slake our thirsts at the refuge but found that the sale of all alcohol had been banned due to a number



of fatal accidents involving the inebriated proletariat falling off various paths.

Our retreat from Moskie Oko back to Keswick went well if you don't count getting arrested by the border police; a drinking competition with some Russian gob-shites (we won); followed by a sleep walking escapade out through a hotel window for a stroll along a narrow balustrade six floors up culminating in a pee into space; close encounters with east German railway and border officials without the necessary western currency to ease our passage and watching Tony get off with a beautiful German blonde and disappearing off the train to satisfy her lusty cravings.

That summer I lost some of my innocence by experiencing a communist country first hand. I witnessed the effects of police state surveillance and fear of reprisal could have on climbers just like me. Our trip coincided with the rise of the resistance movement that led to Solidarity. There were food shortages (strangely no shortage of villi goulash) and riots in

Left:

The author demonstrates his true love

Photograph:

Bob (RK) Allen collection

Gdansk, but if we spoke about these events or any other sensitive issues i.e. Solzhenitsyn; our Polish friends became very alarmed. When they were sure we could not be overheard, they opened up and told us how scared they were that the Russians would invade and impose an even more repressive regime as they had done in Hungary.

I far as I know none of us was recruited as a soviet mole and the only mucky photo's that showed up were of us looking, as usual, scruffy, grubby and rancid. As for our glittering careers, no luck there either, perhaps as porn stars we could have earned more cash! But if you are ever in the Lakes and are after a good doss, the Keswick park shelter is still there and is always a good starting point for a great adventure.

¹Expedition members:

Bob (RK) Allen

Pete Bott

Arthur Glencross

Tony Stephenson

Andy Brown

Nigel Robinson (Yorkie)

²Aido' (Adrian Liddell) and

'Lambo' ³(Jeff Lamb),

⁴Mac' (Ray McHaffie)

⁵Masters of Sport.

Behind the Iron Curtain many countries adopted the Unified Sports Classification System of the USSR. Performance was assessed by competition and different titles awarded such as Third Class Sportsman; Second Class Junior Sportsman (so much for equality under communism); Master of Sport equates to national champion.

Postscript: During the final stages of preparation for printing one of the "stars" of the expedition died. My mate Yorkie is dead. He died exploring new routes in quiet mountains, a thing he loved. We learned our adventurous craft together where his skill, bravery and boldness saved my bacon many times. Now he is gone but his maniacal laugh will forever echo in the hills.

Bob Allen



FEAR AND NOT ENOUGH CLOTHING IN LAS VEGAS

Pulling abseil ropes on a multi rap descent is always a slightly unsettling experience, will it or won't it pull? What if it doesn't? Do we have a plan B or will it be improvise on the hoof as you try to get the ropes back? Chris gives us an insight into one episode of problem solving while trying to retrieve ropes at Red Rocks.

By Chris Hindley

The rope is stretched tight above us, the knot joining the two half ropes annoyingly out of reach. The rope should move. It most definitely won't; without some serious thinking, neither will we. We're still three more long abseils from the base of the wall, far away from our sacks and the chance of sleeping in a bed tonight. Sunset is maybe an hour off and it's getting cold.

Half an hour before we'd been so chuffed. We'd sailed up *Dream of Wild Turkeys*, seven lovely pitches of classic Red Rocks sandstone, not fast by local standards but faster than we had been a week ago. The climbing had been pretty steady, which was fortunate. A cold wind was blowing down Black Velvet Canyon and we'd been grateful for the many finger hugging flakes that coat this fantastic wall. Sure, we'd had to wrap up in all our spare clothing but it had all gone so well. Plenty of daylight left for the abseils and the walkout, maybe even the tortuous dirt track too. What could go wrong?

So down, weighting the rope ends to keep them vaguely on line, down the last two pitches in one long ab. We're both clipped into the bolts, feet sharing a tiny ledge, thread the rope end through the ring ready for the next one, then pull, feed, pull, feed...the free rope end goes whipping off sideways across the wall. Pull, feed. The knot is in sight.

Pull...sticking. Pull...stuck.

It stays stuck, despite our pleas and the expletives, the knot 15 feet up and well away from the curving line of the pitch we'd climbed earlier.

What to do? We're definitely on our own here, no chance of outside help. Three days ago the wall had been crowded in the morning sunshine, today we'd seen only two others and that was hours earlier. So we need action urgently.

We have nearly a full half rope to play with, so I tie on and quickly re-climb the last but one pitch, in full alpine pull-on-the-gear mode.

Left:

The path into Black Velvet Canyon

Photograph:

Chris Hindley



Above:
*Jim Slater on Sour
Mash, Black Velvet
Canyon*

Photograph:
Chris Hindley

At the next belay, I'm back on the same line as the stuck rope but there's still no sign of what's trapping it. Never mind, I'll just bring up Jim and we can carry on up, except, as Jim points out from below, he's not going anywhere. In the rush to set off, we'd missed that the rope was still threaded through the abseil ring, with the other end in the out-of-reach knot; it means it is effectively constrained at that point. Jim can't even get up to me, never mind do the next pitch.

(With 20/20 hindsight there was probably a logical way out of this situation involving us both shuffling up and down with the little

spare rope we had, but at this point the brain was going slightly mushy and all I wanted was to shoot the fox, strangle the goose and get the bag of corn home before nightfall)

"We'll have to cut the rope!"

With what? Having put on our spare clothes and eaten the cheap cereal bars with the stale tobacco after taste, there's very little left in my bag other than an Argos catalogue of errors we seem to have mysteriously acquired; certainly not a knife, that would be far too sensible. From a pitch away, Jim describes a novel rope-cutting method he claims to have once witnessed.

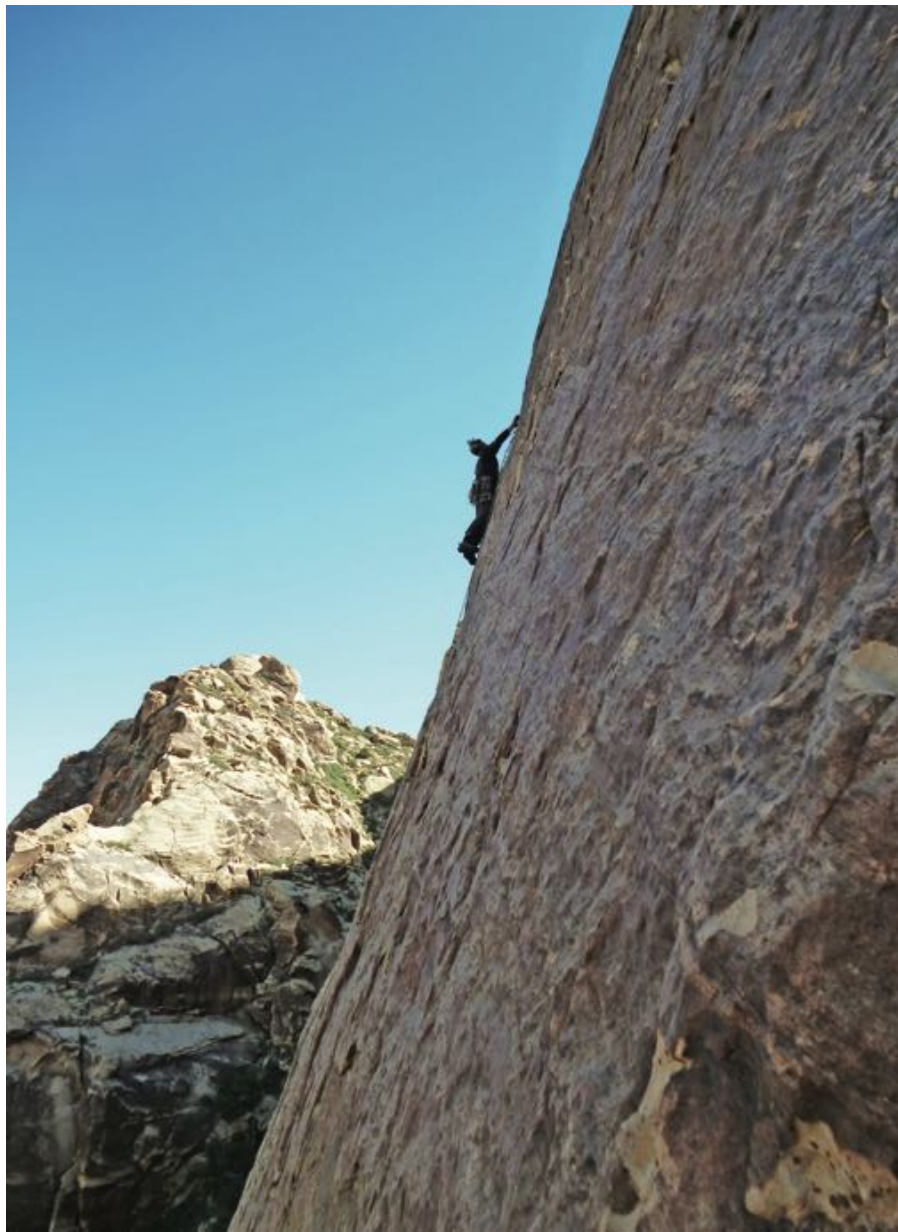
"Wrap a loop of prussic cord around the rope, move it to and fro quickly and the friction will melt the rope.....eventually" The theory sounds right, pure Baden Powell, but the clue is in the last word.

Arms going like double speed windscreen wipers, the rope starts melting quickly, which would be quite alarming in most other circumstances, but then it slows down and... goodness, hasn't it been a long day already? At least I'm keeping warm. Gradually the white core necks down. I'm weighting the rope to keep it taut and, despite the back-ups, have a definite sense of sawing off the branch I'm sitting on. The final polished strand takes forever. It is getting dark. When I take a breather and look east, the lights of Las Vegas are already twinkling. The thought of spending the night in such an absurd position drives the elbows on for one last effort. The thread breaks and the tensioned rope springs away, up and leeward, an expensive discard to provide a mystery for some future traveller.

But now we have a rope and a third, not enough to progress the abseils directly, instead we zigzag to pick up the fixed anchors on neighbouring routes. After some lateral wanderings, we're at the top of the chimney grooves of *The Gobbler*. The route name hints that it's probably not the best line to abseil but the topo, barely discernible in the gloom, shows two 90 foot pitches back to the ground. The first ab confirms one thing; the groove has hungry looking cracks and flakes. Thankfully we can direct the rope away from the threat and it pulls clear. Setting the final abseil, in the near dark we're triple checking everything by touch. The rope should reach but the ends are invisible even from half way down. Carefully does it. The angle relents. I can just make out our sacks close by. A hand width of rope left.

The stars are beautiful. Somewhere in Vegas the fat lady is clearing her throat.

Footnote: Apparently Red Rocks faces are notorious for sticking abseil ropes. Those flakey flanges, such a joy to climb, are ideal for latching a loose rope, especially a skinny one dancing around in the wind. Picture a horse casually tethered to a rail outside a western saloon, simple and maddeningly effective. Experienced locals will be aware of this. Perhaps that's why there were none about on our breezy near-epic day?



Above:

Unknown local on Fiddler on the Roof, Black Velvet Canyon

Photograph:
Chris Hindley



THE LAST CLIMB

Every chemistry student will tell you that rock is held together by strong chemical bonds, while ice is only held together by very weak attractions between water molecules ("hydrogen bonds" – about 1% of the strength of the bonds that hold together most rock). It should come as no surprise to find that ice breaks easier than rock. Steve fell victim to the weakness of ice, getting off the route was challenging, we rarely pay any thought to "what if". Thankfully his arm is now fully functioning.

By Steve Burns

It had been a good few days' ice climbing in the Cogne area. In spite of warmer than usual conditions routes like *Tuborg* and *Patri a Droite* had increased confidence and I felt we could push ourselves a little. During our stay in Lillaz, there was one route in particular that caught my attention; the damoclean ice fangs of *Lau Bij* which leered down at us from the hillside above. Though a relatively short ice fall with only two pitches it looked pretty formidable, at WI 5/5+ was a grade or so harder than anything else we had tried on the trip. But now, although a little apprehensive at the thought of tackling those fangs, I felt ready to give it a go. I put it to Ian, expecting – and maybe hoping for – a convenient objection to the diagonal and unforgiving nature of the second pitch, but no such luck, he was keen to second it. We were ready to go.

And so, our fifth (and coldest) morning sees us heading steeply up through the woods to the foot of the route. Looking up ahead, it becomes clear that we are not going to be

alone on the climb; others are heading up to *Lau Bij* too - disappointing but also somewhat reassuring.

Close up, it doesn't look any less forbidding - the upper part of the climb weaving through and over a series of ice fangs and bulges. We have to wait while a couple of other teams complete the route – seemingly problem free. Feeling apprehensive I try to convince myself it will be ok; "loads of people doing it – will be plenty of hooks" I tell myself.

We shiver in the shade for a while and then it's our turn – so here we go. The first long pitch (40m) starts steadily but steepens as it heads out right. A little serious, maybe, but nothing too concerning. I make steady progress but near the top carelessly drop my last ice screw with another 10m of vertical ice to the belay. This is a worry but an ice pillar on the left (though not really thick) takes a sling giving me the confidence to finish the pitch ok. Relieved, I clip into the bolt belay and rest for a moment. Ian retrieves the dropped screw and seconds the pitch, enjoying the climbing.

Left:

*Steve on Lau Bij
minutes before the
ice block hit him*

Photograph:
Steve Burns

Job half done, so what's next? Oh yes, now it's time to get up close and personal with that jumble of fangs and bulges that makes up the second pitch. Well here goes - out to the right. It's almost horizontal to start with, then up through the bulges, getting in screws as often as I can get in a position to place them (not realising these would soon become a hindrance rather than a help). The initial objective is to reach a niche with an in-situ Abalakov thread. Success, I'm there - clip a long sling on the thread so the rope won't get snagged in the bulges on my right. A huge hanging icicle not far to the right reminds me just how steep the face is but the niche gives a temporary respite. It also appears to contain a hole at the back leading up to the top of the climb but it looks pretty tight so I decide to stick with the main wall. Anyway, on with the show. I go for it out to the right and onto the steep bulges. With my left axe in place, I reach up right - not far from the top now and I feel fine - not pumped.

My axe hurtles out of my right hand and my world is suddenly reduced to an exploding pain in my right arm. I see nothing and I feel that I'm plummeting, but I'm not, just holding grimly on with my left hand, my right axe dangling from its elastic leash with my right arm dangling too and pulsing in pain. People scatter below. A muffled crash. Agh - what to do - need to clip in - try to get a quickdraw but my useless right fingers can't open the krab. As the strain increases on my left arm, I remember the fifi hook I'd taken just in case, luckily already larks-footed into my harness. My pathetic right fingers can just about lift the hook and, thankfully, it falls into the loop on

my axe. I slump onto it as the waves of pain pulse through my arm, then nausea follows.

Well, I'm safe, at least for the moment. My first thought is that I'm pretty close to the top and to my goal of completing the route. Maybe if I rest here a few minutes the pain will pass and I can continue. Such optimism quickly evaporates when I touch my right forearm with my left hand and feel the sensation of something horribly wrong inside, like a grinding feeling somewhere within.

Then I'm aware of something else; Ian is shouting up - "are you ok". "I don't think so," I reply, "can you lower me"?

"No not enough rope to get to ground", wasn't the response I was hoping for.

"What's happened?"

"A big block of ice hit you", Ian replies, before telling me I will have to get back to the belay. Again, not exactly what I want to hear as the belay is diagonally down to my left - 15 to 20m away.

I can't think straight - how am I going to do this? I can't get lowered, I can't climb down. Then I realise if I reach left - with my good hand - I can maybe get hold of the long sling I clipped into the abalakov thread in the niche. I grab it and commit to a grim pull round to the left only to find I can't move! - the fifi hook is still on the axe. It takes a big effort with my almost useless right hand to remove it from the axe and then a mighty pull into the niche - scrabbling on my knees. Fifi hook in to the Abalakov thread and hang there for a moment's respite. Phew.

Now, where's that axe? It's away to my right, the elastic leash stretched taut. I can't reach it with my left hand, and there's not a chance I can get the axe out with my now useless right.

I can't undo the leash from my harness, either, so I'm stuck here. But then a piece of luck – there is a hole in the right wall of the niche and my axe pick is here – I can now easily reach it with my left hand and push it out. I manage it and it falls, dangling by its leash.

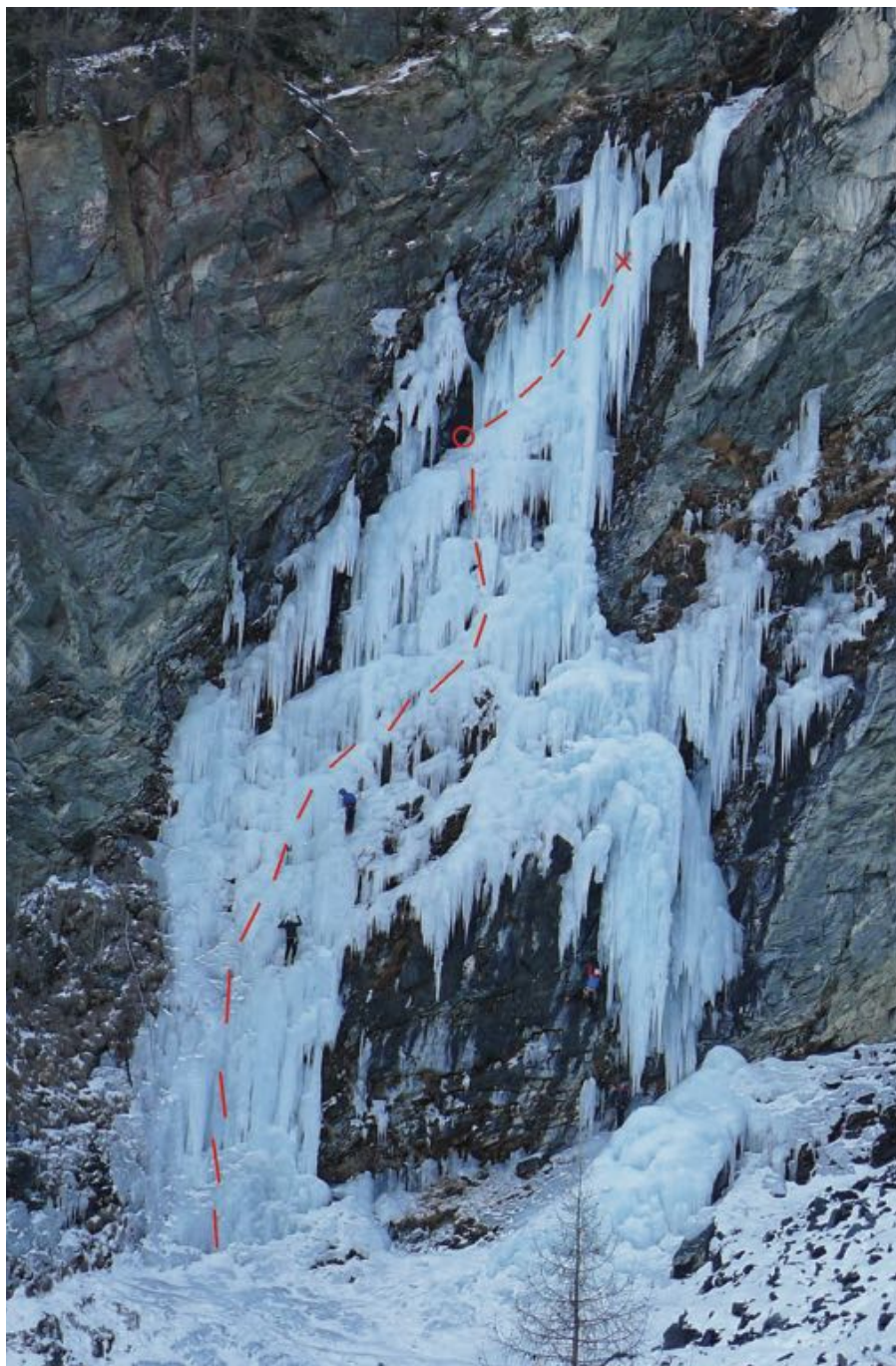
I place two more screws to back up the Abalakov and then begin the lower proper, clipping a quickdraw from my harness in to the rope as Ian takes it tight. Then I knock the fifi hook off and begin the diagonal lower. Down, left – all fine for about 4m until I come to the first ice screw runner. I can't pass it! I can pull on the runner with my good left hand to take my weight off the rope but, with only 1 hand, I can't open the krab on the quickdraw to get it off the rope. So now I'm left hanging, hooked up by the quickdraw jammed against the ice screw. Bollocks!!

Ok this might work. My shoulder and elbow seem ok, so I painfully lift my right arm and hook it over the rope, so that the rope now rests under my armpit. With Ian holding the rope as tight as he can, I can tense my body and take the krab off with my left hand, before re-clipping the quickdraw on the downside of the ice screw runner. Relief. Then more descent and four or five repetitions of the armpit

Right:

X marks the spot

Photograph: *Ian Cartwright*



technique, nicely banging and jarring my arm as I go.

As I near the belay it gets harder and harder to make progress as the rope I'm trying to slide down is now horizontal and lowering gives no further help – another move but my weight pulls the horizontal rope into a dip with the rope going up at an angle to the belay. The only way I can make progress is to try and ice climb along and up with my one good arm. But I can't maintain this with just one arm – crampons alone aren't enough to stop me sliding back into the dip once I remove the axe to get another placement. Ian can't keep me on a tight rope as this is now just pulling me in completely the wrong direction. Aggh - so close.

In the meantime another guy – a French guide – has come up to the belay. He leans out on a sling towards me. "Reach my hand" he says but he is still too far. Another attempt with the axe pulling up left only to slide back. It is starting to feel hopeless but one more go – kick front points hard into the ice – get left axe in. I'm tired now but need to summon some reserves – bend my legs a little then push off, at the same time pulling hard on the axe – up and left. The lurching move gives me a split second as I let go of the axe and I manage to grab his outstretched hand - not sure I can hold on but his hand grips tight around mine and he hauls me into the belay where I'm clipped in to the bolts. I slump in relief and fatigue.

I feel spent and am glad to let Ian and the French guide take over. I'm lowered back to the ground.

Roland, a Belgian guide we had met earlier in the week, unties the rope and takes my harness off. Am I in shock? Feel giddy? Do

I need a helicopter? Well no, but my arm is pretty sore. A sling is placed round my neck and my arm put in it.

In the end I carefully make my way down the icy path through the woods, steadying myself with a pole in my left hand and keep my crampons on. Gerry (the French guide) and Roland between them retrieve all my gear and carry it down for which I am grateful. Later Carlo (our hotel owner) kindly drives me the twenty or so miles to Aosta hospital to confirm the fracture and arm is put in plaster.

My injury required an operation when I got back to Nottingham, so I enjoyed another trip to hospital while they pinned my shattered right radius back together. It's easy to get despondent when looking at a lengthy lay-off – six to seven weeks before some careful seconding on slabby gritstone, four to six months before anything more serious can be attempted – but some perspective is important. If I'd been standing eighteen inches to the right when the ice block hit it could have been a different story. In hindsight, a broken arm doesn't seem so bad.

The day after our own trials and tribulations on *Lau Bij*, we spotted a helicopter extracting another climber from the just below the face. Carlo, who seems to know pretty much everyone, told us later on that an Italian climber had fallen while abseiling. Possibly off the end of the rope, but we didn't get any further details. The climber ended up in intensive care but thankfully his injuries proved not to be life threatening. Dangerous stuff this ice climbing!

Right:
Skeleton Ridge,
Dan Guy
seconding
pitch 6

Photograph:
David Linnett



ADVENTURES - HOME

On Holiday with Howard *By Graham Hoey*

The Goody Gash - Scottish Sea Cliffs at their
Best. *By Mick Fowler*

Skeleton Ridge - It's good to Chalk!
By David Linnett

Well now Mr Evans. *By Gwyn Evans*

Right Angle 50th Anniversary Ascent

Moonraker 50th Anniversary Ascent



ON HOLIDAY WITH HOWARD

What could be nicer than a relaxing trip up a Cornish classic on a nice sunny day? Think again - Carn Gowla isn't for the faint hearted, this article suggests that prior attendance at a Lifesaving course may be advisable.

By Graham Hoey

For a climber there are family holidays and 'family' holidays. The former are characterised by a complete lack of climbing, an obsessive fear of ensuing muscular atrophy and a perceived permanent loss of form. "You'd better lead today, I've been on holiday with the family at Scarborough for a week and I'm as weak as a kitten." In the past, in an attempt to stay fit, I've stuffed a variety of training aids into an already overflowing boot including finger exercisers; free weights and even a Bullworker (remember those?). 'Family' holidays on the other hand involve an arranged or 'chance' joint vacation with a fellow climber and his family. "You'll never guess who just happens to be there when we are darling? I might just pop a bit of gear in the boot."

The south-west, with its excellent beaches, walks, family attractions and (just coincidentally) superb cliffs was the ideal venue for Howard's family and mine. However, part of the deal was that because it was still a family holiday, opportunities for climbing would be occasional and brief. This proviso is responsible for one of the unique aspects of climbing on a 'family' holiday. Having only part of the day or evening

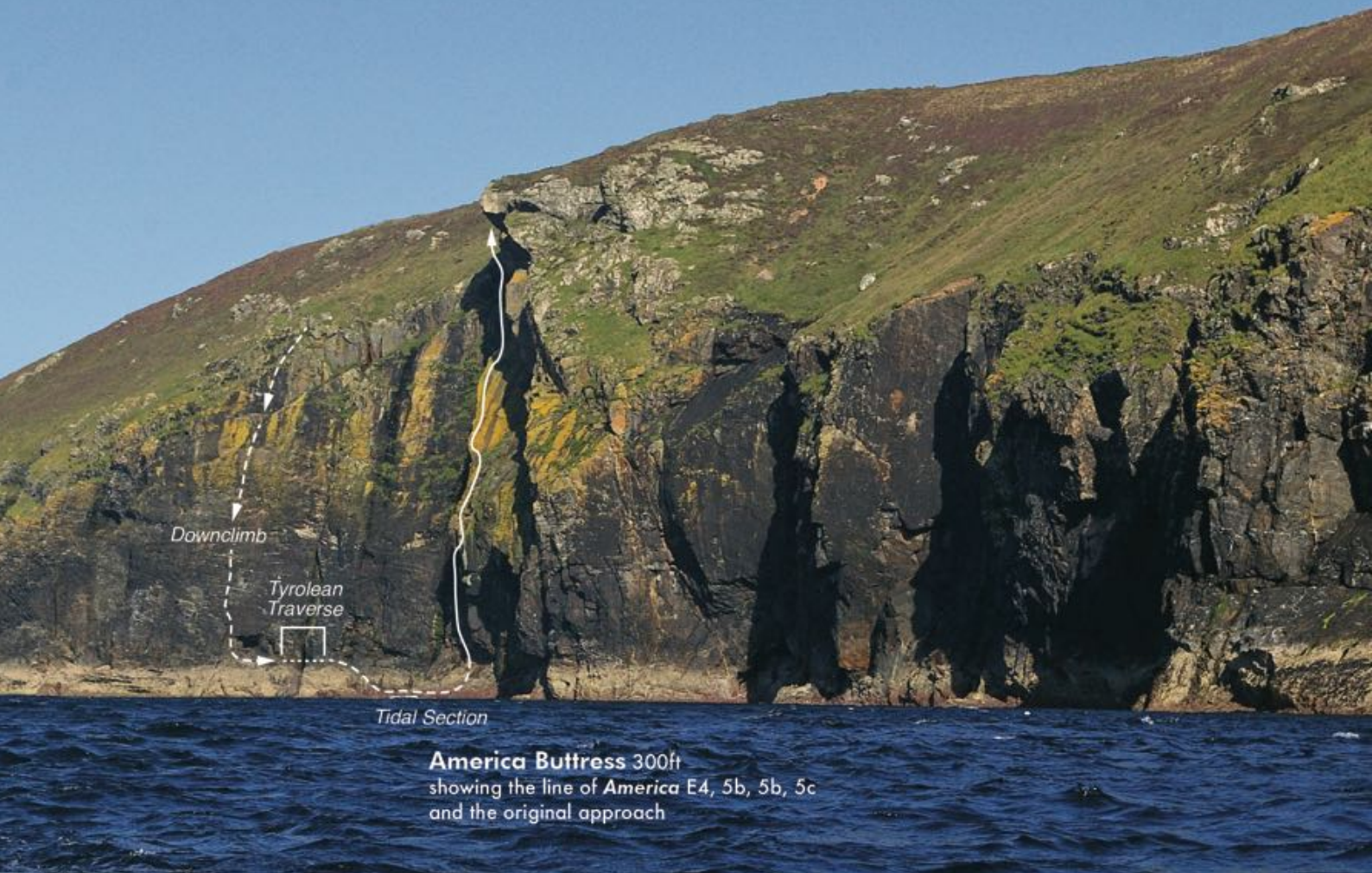
to climb leaves no time for the casual warm-up or two before the 'main event'; no chance to get used to the rock, style of climbing or protection, no psyching up. One minute you are building sand castles or damming streams without a care in the world then shortly afterwards you are abbing into a tidal zawn, about to set off on some classic horror ahead of a rapidly encroaching tide, with just a few hours before sunset. It's all a bit surreal and at times you could be excused for imagining that you are in a dream (or more often a nightmare).

I did some absolutely brilliant adventure classics in the south-west with Howard and most of these went without much fuss. However, the time we did America, the classic E4 on Carn Gowla in Cornwall, was an experience I'll never forget. America was first climbed in 1973 by the master sea cliff explorer, Pat Littlejohn, and ascends the daunting north-facing eponymous buttress by three excellent, exciting pitches. The route soon developed a reputation for seriousness, not least because of the approach to the climb; we were aware of a number of teams who

Left:

*Will Hornby and
Bob Peters on Half
Life at Screda Point*

Photograph:
James Mann



Above:
Carn Gwla
America Buttress
Approach

Photograph:
Don Sargent

had failed to get to the start. We'd also heard rumours of a possible abseil approach, but to us that would be missing out a major challenge of the route, we were determined to climb it 'the Littlejohn way'.

Knowing that a low tide approach was required, I arrived in good time at Howard's caravan. Howard refused to leave without a brew and his ritual wipe round the 'van (inside and out) with his 'signature' yellow cloth (the

first sign of OMD*, according to his wife). Eventually we set off. After an 'interesting' V Diff solo descent above a disturbingly churning sea we arrived at a ledge before a narrow zawn which required a Tyrolean crossing. Things were not looking good, for a start, the sea appeared to be a lot closer than it should have been for the time of day and secondly, there was no sign of the spike you were supposed to lasso on the opposite side of the zawn (which

probably explained the earlier failed attempts). Undaunted, we tied a bight in the end of a rope and threw it across, perhaps hoping that the loop in some way would automatically 'home-in' on the (presumably hidden) spike. It didn't. Unfortunately, we then noticed that between the ledge and the wall behind was a narrow trough and had the bright idea of jamming a knot in this. Unbelievably, at the first attempt, the knot jammed and for some reason I can't imagine, I agreed to go first. The knot held and we were soon assembled on the ledge with the Tyrolean dismantled before we noticed that, far from the expected simple 30m boulder-hop across to the start of the route, the way ahead was now a seething cauldron of white water with just a few exposed rocks. Grabbing one end of the rope I raced across between the gaps, bouncing from boulder to boulder to reach the sloping shelf beyond. This was by now under water and necessitated a quickly assembled hanging belay 20ft up the first pitch. Safe at last, I took the rope in and beckoned Howard to come across. His words were lost in the roar of the North Atlantic, now in full surge, but after a lot of screaming and gesticulations the gist was: "There's no f'ing way I'm coming across there, we'll have to set up another Tyrolean." Unfortunately, setting up a 30m Tyrolean with a 50m rope is not easy and it became sickeningly clear I would have to go back for the second rope. Clipped into the single rope stretched across the gap, I scrambled/hopped my way across, collected the second rope from Howard and eventually made it back to the belay somewhat gripped and completely saturated. I went under several times (carrying a full rack) and thinking of all those snagged runners on descent gullies

still makes me shudder nearly 20 years later. Howard set up the Tyrolean using natural threads in a high cave and eventually made it across to the belay, bone dry. By now I was beginning to feel frozen, and wishing to get moving, set off, shivering my way up the initial section of the route. As if the lack of protection wasn't enough, every time I stood on a hold, water oozed from my boots. I was filled with great relief on completing the pitch, as was Howard, who was on the verge of removing the belay and setting off to avoid being drowned.

Fortunately, the rest of the route went without a hitch with two more superb, contrasting, pitches. The second was a bold slab on the edge of the buttress, which Howard demolished quickly with his typical no-nonsense approach. I was lucky to bag the final one taking a striking wall in a fantastic situation where memories of the earlier epic were almost forgotten. Almost, but not quite, as we decided to abseil in later that week when we did the magnificent Guernica, Howard taking the honours of the crux pitch on that occasion. The following year, some friends of ours virtually walked across a dry beach, the sea an uncharacteristic millpond. You win some, you lose some.

Sometime later, Howard was recounting our 'epic' in the pub with his usual enthusiasm and humour. Not known for splashing his money about, the audience were completely aghast on hearing he had left some slings behind for the Tyrolean. Suddenly turning uncharacteristically sombre, Howard replied: "I tell you what; I'd have left my bloody car behind if I'd had to".

*OMD Old Man's Disease

Right:

*The white blob is
Steve on the last
belay*

Photograph:

Mick Fowler



THE GOODY GASH - SCOTTISH SEA CLIFFS AT THEIR BEST.

Mick's exploits on British sea cliffs that seem to defy the laws of Physics by not falling into the sea are legendary. This article is based on a chapter from his forthcoming book. After this publicity will there be a queue of enthusiasts waiting to repeat The Goody Gash?

By Mick Fowler

IN recent years my once regular Himalayan partner, Steve Sustad, has focused on deriving memorable experiences from activities ranging from horse riding to wild African rock climbing trips. Ever adventurous he is not the sort of man who normally looks uneasy when surrounded by steep intimidating stretches of rock.

But on this particular occasion, despite having bounded gleefully down a dripping parallel sided gully cleaving a 200 metre high Scottish sea cliff Steve was looking disconcerted.

'It's my glasses' he explained as I slithered down the greasy rock and vegetation to within hearing distance.

'They fell off. I think they are down in that grass. But I can't see to see them.'

This was not a problem we used to experience in younger years. Additional challenges confront the exploratory climber as the years pass by. After some deliberation the rope came out and the sighted member of

the party (glasses on) made a tricky traverse followed by some time spent precariously poking about in fulmar vomit splattered grass. If I was unsuccessful then 1,500 miles of driving and accumulated family credit points would have been wasted. But luck was with us. Smelly but intact glasses were recovered and Steve was once again able to get a good look at our intended line.

'Shit! Not sure whether that's better or not!'

We were on the Isle of Hoy in the Orkney Islands off the north coast of Scotland. Hoy is best known for the Old Man, a fabulous 140 metre rock tower that graces the north-west coast of the island. We, though, were at the south end on a remote and infrequently visited headland called The Berry. The Berry is cleaved by a 200 metre deep gully, The Gash, which it is possible to descend to sea level with only a short section needing the rope. In the dark and dank depths the terrain is steep, unstable slimy rocks, slippery grass and, perhaps most disconcerting, enthusiastic fulmars. These birds



Above:
Steve on pitch 2

Photograph:
Mick Fowler

are Britain's undisputed experts at projectile vomiting, but why some chose to live in such an inhospitable place was beyond us. That said I suppose some humans tend to hang out in some pretty odd places. It's a funny old world.

The aim of our efforts was the 170 metre high north wall of The Gash and in particular a dead straight 100 metre crack line which we had spotted piercing the upper section. Viewed from the top of the opposite side the line looked to be on clean, good rock and offered a compelling objective. But now we stood near

the bottom Steve's comments, said in jest as they were, looked to contain more than a grain of truth.

From this position it could be seen that 100 metres or so of challenging activity was necessary to reach the start of the crack line. The rock looked steep, green and slimy and it was not at all clear where to go.

Over the years though Steve and I have found that we derive enormous amounts of pleasure from weaving about on steep, inhospitable terrain trying to escape self-

Left:

*Steve Susted starting
the pitch 4 offwidth*

Photograph:

Mick Fowler





induced commitment. Occasionally we have tended to enhance the degree of commitment still further by choosing lines that necessitate a swim to get to the start. As a non swimmer Steve finds such climbs particularly memorable.

Here, much as it was disappointing that the access did not involve swimming, swooping fulmars and crashing waves in the deep, narrow confines of The Gash were such as to heighten the atmosphere and guarantee an experience which would likely stand the test of time. And the tide was coming in so there was always the possibility that we would be forced to abseil into the sea.

An easy ledge looked to provide an obvious traverse pitch to start. Thereafter it looked to be a choice of challengingly loose and green corners or challenging steep and greasy walls. I led out along the ledge, Steve led the corners and then we were at a point where further walls seemed the only way forward.

It was whilst I was contemplating this that I first noticed that our ropes had slipped off the belay ledge and were resting solidly on a fulmar which was still sitting resolutely on its egg. Fulmars might be unpopular due to their propensity to puke on climbers but they are indeed remarkable birds. Their swooping flights in and out of The Gash were one thing but, in human terms, this bird had the equivalent of perhaps 2000 metres of rope resting on it. If I was a bird I would fly away rather than allow myself to be pinned down in this way. Fulmars though are made of sterner stuff. Having defensively covered both ropes with putrid vomit this one moved on to pecking at them so violently that I felt more concern for our ropes than the bird. It seems to

me that these amazing birds get bolder as the years go by. No wonder their domination of British sea cliffs continues apace.

But above us there were other things to worry about. A 10 metre green and greasy wall looked to guard access to a horizontal break. After several up and down efforts, I concluded that i) the wall was overhanging, (ii) the rock was loose as well as green and greasy and (iii) my ability was going to be severely stretched. Most importantly though I concluded that the protection I had finally managed to place would probably hold a fall.

‘Trying again’

Steve gave me a withering look which I interpreted as a wish that I had got on with it ages ago.

I would never claim to be an elegant climber but as the crack I lunged a jam into began to open at the same time as a large foothold broke off, my movements were indeed less than fluid. Steve seemed to find this very amusing.

‘Thought you were off there,’ he cackled as I arrived at the relative security of a

horizontal break complete with energetic fulmar.

Some more routine climbing led out over the void to our left and up to the foot of the crack which we had by now inexplicably christened the Goody Gash.

Close up the Goody Gash was very different to what we had expected. From a distance we had expected a fist or leg jamming crack tapering after 50 metres or so to a hand/finger crack. Now though we found ourselves peering into a deep, wet chimney which led up through overhangs before disappearing out of sight. Precarious looking blocks wedged in the main overhangs looked likely to add

Left:

Steve on the last stance

Photograph:

Mick Fowler

interest. Steve moved the belay to one side as I hesitantly made progress. The blocks were indeed interesting. Several very large ones were clearly supported solely by a crumbling 10 centimetre diameter piece. Fearing that the consequences of trying to trundle them might be uncalled for I sneaked past as quietly and carefully as possible.

Having taken a fine stance above the overhangs it soon became clear that Steve did not share my concern. Blocks rained down into the base of The Gash, 100 metres below, sending fulmars wheeling in surprise at such a noisy assault.

'Pat spends ages cleaning when he is seconding' wafted up from below as Steve recalled the actions of the legendary Pat Littlejohn, his usual new route partner nowadays. This was an approach I had not considered before. We explored the issue further as an enthusiastic Sustad reached the stance. Some first ascensionists abseil down and clean routes thoroughly before they start to climb. I too had done that on occasion but, logistical considerations aside; it just didn't seem the right thing to do on the adventure climbing scene. Knowing what was coming in advance would, we agreed, destroy the challenge - and it is a degree of uncertainty that gives adventure climbing its appeal. But what about the second cleaning new routes during the climb? Could that deprive future ascensionists of the challenge of dealing with loose rock and thereby reduce their level of enjoyment? We were high enough to just catch the sun now and sat there absorbing the rays whilst contemplating the complexities of the desirability or otherwise of new route cleaning.

'Bummer that I couldn't shift those big ones' announced Steve his disappointment clear.

Conversely I found myself speaking in favour of future climbers coming this way being able to experience such a key feature of the pitch.

Above us the crack cut through an overhang and then, from what we had seen from the opposite side of the Gash, narrowed for a long section leading to the foot of a deep final chimney. But, as we now knew, the scale was deceiving. Everything was so much bigger than it had appeared.

Being half American Steve flowed easily up a desperate looking off width section and plugged into what turned out to be a long section of fine jamming crack. The occasional piece of rock or clump of vegetation would sail past but, judging by the chirpy noises from above, all was well. Soon a shout indicated that I should stir from my sunny slumbers and exert.

The pitch was excellent and led to Steve who was lying down soaking in the sun on a horizontal break, enthusing about the pleasures of Scottish sea cliffs and pointing gleefully up at the final section.

We were perhaps only just over 30 metres from the top but what had looked like a wide chimney from opposite was in fact a gaping gash perhaps 5 metres wide. A crack up the back corner gave some hope but it did not exactly look an easy finish. Steve though appeared to have little concern other than to find the warmest, most comfortable spot on the break he was belayed in.

It is one of those wonderful feelings in climbing when a pitch turns out to be much easier than it looks - and this was one of those pitches. Awkward but well protected



climbing led to a large capping roof where, just as all looked bleak, a hidden, fulmar free ledge to one side allowed an easy exit to a short finishing groove.

Elation!

The rarely visited nature of the cliffs, the challenges of getting there, the uncertainties inherent in the climbing and the sense of achievement in getting up a long anticipated objective all make for the pleasure of such activity to endure well.

Much as it's not very pleasant to be covered in fulmar vomit at the time, when back home it is amazing what great memories the smell can bring back.

Above:
*Steve pulling out of
the groove on the
final pitch*

Photograph:
Mick Fowler





SKELETON RIDGE - IT'S GOOD TO CHALK!

I always thought that chalk was for writing on boards, apparently I am mistaken and some people climb it and of these a few may even enjoy the experience. Skeleton Ridge is a distinctive landmark, the western tip of the Isle of Wight, it sounds like a memorable day out.

By David Linnett

Even though I have always been a climber (and more recently a budding film-maker) of rather modest abilities, I have always been perversely attracted to routes on unique natural features such as sea stacks, sea arches, pinnacle's or a cheeky exposed razor sharp ridge or arête. Basically any route which has an element of adventure, derring-do or dare I say it? A nice bit of spice!

So I guess it was only a matter of time before I persuaded my long suffering partner Emma and climbing buddies Dan and Richard to hop on the Lymington to Yarmouth ferry for the short trip across the Solent to the Isle of Wight for a sortie on one of the great UK Adventure Routes Skeleton Ridge beside the iconic Needles. First climbed by the legendary

Left:
*Skeleton Ridge, The
Needles*

Photograph:
David Linnett



Above:
*Exploring the
approach*

Photograph:
David Linnett

Mick Fowler in November 1984 this chalky and esoteric three star HVS has gained cult classic status over the years and comprises about 160 metres of climbing over six pitches with some of the most outrageously brain melting exposure you will ever find in the UK. Regarding THAT extraordinary sixth and final pitch, ‘The Ridges of England, Wales and Ireland’ by Dan Bailey rather succinctly quotes ‘if there is a more sensational pitch anywhere then you don’t want to climb it’! Which kind of says it all really...

As mentioned I am also passionate about making short climbing videos and I really wanted to film Skeleton Ridge as it looked so photogenic with the backdrop of the ghostly white Needles juxtaposed against the blood red lighthouse. However to climb and film on this route, as it is on National Trust land, you need to obtain permission from the Administrator at the Old Battery. This proved to be very straightforward and huge thanks have to go to Scott and his team for making us all so welcome; we were even invited to have a recce around the Old Battery and abseil point the day before battle commenced!

So on Saturday 28th of May 2016 at 8.15am with my better half Em in position on the adjacent headland on filming and walkie-talkie

duty, Rich, Dan and I make a short abseil from a rusting, bent fence pole into the Battery Moat just to access the abseil stake at the top of Scratchell Bay. Here I was duly volunteered to be the first man down the 100 metre rap into the bay and have the dubious pleasure of sorting out the rope over the crumbling, chalky and chossy cliff on my way down. In retrospect I found this the most worrying part of the whole day as it was so loose and bleedin’ horrible, it was a great relief to finally touch down on terra firma and run away from the danger zone. Covered in white chalk dust and resembling a bunch of dodgy plasterers, our team spluttered, sneezed and scampered along the beach as quick as possible to catch the optimal low tide at 9am, thus negating the need to have a naughty wade to access the start of the route.

Apart from a slimy, green start, the first pitch is a reasonably straightforward 4b appetizer, heading up the obvious crack before traversing left along the flint-embedded chalk slab to an obvious col between two pinnacles where a plethora of rusty pegs and rotting tat, masquerading as the belay are to be found. Once established on the col itself, a rollercoaster ride of buttock-clenching ridge featuring amazeballs arêtes and fantastic fins of à cheval awesomeness on the edge of nothing await. But what is chalk like to climb I hear you ask? Well unsurprisingly chalk is rather a strange medium to climb, but surprisingly it is remarkably hard and solid. For chalk that is!

Pitch two, although very easy it is where the exposure really starts to kick in and the start of the ‘à cheval’ action, before passing left of a big tower to belay beside a large block at the next col. This turned into a bit of a theme for

the day with constant shouts of ‘à cheval’ being directed at a pant-wetting coward like me, whilst super-heroes with ninja warrior skills like Rich somehow managed to Riverdance his way along the ridge with the grace of a gazelle!

Pitch Three is one of two crux pitches with 4c climbing and is an intimidating and imposing shark’s fin with giddyng, gargantuan drops on either side. This was definitely a job for my hero Rich and he duly dispatched this deathly sliver of chalk with effortless efficiency. To my profound relief I found this crux pitch relatively straightforward, albeit with a rope above my head, but there was always the nagging doubt that a hold or ledge may explode at any time. Also a couple of mates I knew who had climbed the route said that the third and sixth pitches were the ones you really did not want to take a fall on, whether on the sharp end or on the blunt. So from the sanctuary of a nice commodious ledge, I watched and filmed SuperDan carefully making his way up the razor sharp fin with the occasional sharp intake of breath and only a small amount of honking, before he joined us with his eyes out on stalks like some Looney Tunes cartoon character. ‘So Dan, how was that pitch then mate?’ ‘Wow’ he responded, puffing out his cheeks, before we all dissolved into fits of laughter...

Pitch Four scuttles its merry exposed way along the knife edged arête with some modest 4b climbing, whilst seagulls circled and screeched overhead and the drops to the beach got ever more vertiginous. Strangely enough I found myself getting desensitised to the extreme exposure and from our lofty perch the boys and I observed a constant stream of pleasure boats taking tourists and their



money for a cruise from Alum Bay out to the lighthouse and back. Unsurprisingly our antics provided much entertainment and a quick wave from any of us would elicit much waving, wooing and not very smartphone photography from the masses in response!

Pitch Five crab-crawls along an obvious foot traverse line before reaching an easy but disconcertingly loose ridge crest which was followed by an uninspiring block belay below the towering steep arête of the final pitch. This was probably the most friable and loose section

Above:

Dan enjoying pitch

3

Photograph:

David Linnett



Above:

*Richard Ive leading
soaring arête of the
sixth pitch*

Top Right:

*A close up of Dan
on the final knife
edge arête*

Bottom Right:

*Elated or relieved?
Dan, David &
Richard*

Photographs:

David Linnett

of the whole climb and just before the belay, I put my hand on a microwave sized meringue of a block and felt the whole thing shift and wobble like an intoxicated Weeble. So without breathing, I gently tippy-toed backwards in reverse gear and found an alternative way around the 'Block of Doom' to join Dan at the belay.

So to THAT sixth and final pitch! Well, Rich duly stepped up to the plate and boldly went where quite a few people had been before. He confidently worked his wily way up the left hand side of the soaring arête, past various rusty pegs of mature vintage to 'protect' the crux, before pulling onto the final wafer thin crest with a whoop of joy! Or maybe it was just terror? So, after some gentle encouragement from Dan and me to our hero that perhaps placing a sling runner on the obvious crest block would be to all of our mutual benefit, some more 'à cheval' action ensued with a face-melting 90 metre sheer drop on both sides, all the way down to the white horses galloping onto the beach. Before you could say 'heart stopping exposure', Rich topped out to some very well deserved applause and hearty congratulations from a group of Old Battery

tourists who had gathered by the in-situ safety face, erected to stop the general public from doing what occasionally a few daft members of the public generally do. Then it was my turn to play, so the record button was started on my Go-Pro to capture the shenanigans. Again the climbing and 4c crux was quite reasonable on the blunt end of the rope and that final crest is probably less than 15 metres long and around 30 centimetres wide, but 'wowser' it was absolutely outrageous and madder than a bag of cross-eyed frogs. So with my thighs clamped tighter than a Black and Decker vice, I udged, à chevalled and udged again for Queen and Country along the chalky razor blade, pausing only briefly to look down either side to capture the extreme and eye-popping exposure on film. Once off the crest a bit of easy climbing remained before pulling over the top, grinning so much it looked like I had a coat hanger shoved in my gob. All that remained was for Dan to perform the Skeleton Ridge samba and join two very happy chappies on top, having gained around 90 metres in height all the way up from Scratchell Bay to the Old Battery in a time of less than 4 hours at around 12:15pm.

After all the excitement and a quick final interview with the boys for the film, we divested ourselves of all our gear and then relaxed in the Old Battery café for a much needed lunch break, reminiscing about the route and our experiences as adrenaline flow levels slowly returned back to normal. After making a donation to help with the on-going maintenance of the Old Battery and saying our 'cheerio's' to the staff, all that remained was a short drive back to our lovely little cottage at Stoats Farm Camping for a celebratory and calorific BBQ with lashings of vino and

champers to assist with rehydration and end what had been a truly memorable day!

It you are interested in climbing Skeleton Ridge please note that you require advance permission from the National Trust Administrator at the Old Battery (ring 01983 754772) and also to notify the Solent Coastguard on 02392 552100 on the day of your climb, both before and after so that a rescue is not mounted unnecessarily. Although the climb is technically not that hard or sustained, with the crux third and sixth pitches graded 4c, it is a serious and committing adventure requiring a 100 metre abseil into Scratchell Bay. The start of route is extremely tidal so make sure you get down well before low tide or you will be in for a wade, or worse. I would recommend leaving a 50 metre rope in-situ at the top of the route due to the lack of anchors whilst most of the belays have an assortment of pegs in varying states of rusting decay which need backing up. Be aware that it is a right faff to get to the abseil stake in the corner of the battery moat and we did a 10 metre abseil from a rusty fence post just to get to it. There is a large block with a big hole about 2 metres away from the stake which we threaded with a sling, to back it up. We all carried ascenders as insurance in case of retreat and used a lot of large slings



WELL NOW MR EVANS ...

Classic Rock is a fabulous book containing the inspiration for numerous challenges and "tick lists", all at an accessible grade. Despite an exciting Classic Rock day on Gimmer with the Hon CCJ Editor (see CCJ 2012) Gwyn wasn't put off ticking the Lakes list as part of his post operative convalescence.

Gwyn Evans

‘Well Mr Evans I have to tell you that you have prostate cancer and it's an aggressive form of the disease’. I'd had a fortnight of sleepless nights after my tests wondering 'What if', well now I knew.

Only a matter of weeks later I was under the knife and the offending gland had been removed. A few days later the physios came to see how I was and I barely made it to the door of the ward towing my epidural. The next day I was taken to a flight of stairs; 'Can you go down?' I looked up from the landing as they stared open-mouthed 'we only wanted you to go down one step'. That was the end of physio.

Three months later Chris Wyatt asked if I fancied a trip to North Wales. I should have known better, we started the weekend near Trawsfynydd speaking to the locals in Welsh, Chris with his English accent but good vocabulary me with a Welsh accent so it flowed a bit better! I always like to lead the first pitch of the day so it was off to Craig yr Aderyn (Bird Rock) and a 5a pitch. 'Not lost it all then'. The following day was a mountain bike ride which entailed at least one tumble off the

side of the track into a bog, completely wet through. All in all a good weekend.

During one of many wet days at Dynamic Rock a couple of years later the idea of a Classic Rock tour of the Lake District was hatched with Mick Learoyd. The plan was that we would start at Dow Crag and do a circuit taking in all fifteen of the routes described in Ken Wilson's iconic book. In the end we were three, Graham Royle joined us.

At Guy Richardson's (SWMC life member) house in the southern Lakes we mulled over the logistics and a few glasses of fine Scotch. The following morning Guy dropped us off at Torver, we were now reliant on our legs. *Murray's Route* on Dow started the expedition and was followed by a route march via the Three Shires stone to Langdale. Here we stayed in the Fell and Rock hut, the joy of being a member of a 'senior club' with fine huts spread over the Lake District – no tents or stoves to carry.

The next day was spent tramping up to Gimmer. Sweaty shirts were spread out to dry in the sun below *Bracket and Slab* and off we went. There had been some thoughts on my part that we should do the routes in the style

of the photographs in *Classic Rock*, mainly wearing big boots. Fortunately we disabused ourselves of this notion and climbed in rock shoes, just as well because *Amen Corner* would have been decidedly tricky in boots! As we got to the top there was a thunderclap and the heavens opened, the descent gully became a torrent in minutes and we had to rescue some walkers by rigging an abseil for them. The sweaty shirts were now wet again and not very pleasant for the return walk to the pub. *Ash Tree Slabs* and *C Route* would have to wait.

The next day was a bit cloudy high up and we weren't sure we'd be able to find Bowfell. A GPS helped and we were rewarded with the superb *Bowfell Buttress*, marred only by the crampon scratches from winter ascents. Then it was over to Sty Head and down to Wasdale and another fine FRCC hut, Brackenclose, architect designed in the 1930s with a fine view down Wastwater.

Napes Needle, the scene of the first recorded rock climb in Britain, was next on the list. It was greasy, there was a party already on it and we'd all done it before so we did *Needle Ridge*. The difficult descent over the back from this fine little route led us below a decidedly unpleasant looking *Tophet Wall*. Again, we'd all done it before, so we carried on to the pub for afternoon tea!

The walk up Brown Tongue is a flog at the best of times, today it was misty and a bit windy; an odd combination surely the wind should drive the mist away? We continued to Scafell Pinnacle for *Jones's Route*. We couldn't even see the crag and the wind blowing through the gap of Mickledore was forceful. Cheated we headed for Scafell Pike, the highest peak in England and sheltered behind the cairn



with bananas. On the way down the weather seemed to be clearing so Mick and I headed back up. We found the crag this time, but it was running with water. Back down to the pub for a pint and a meal.

Mick Learoyd, Gwyn Evans and Graham Royle on Scafell Pike in less than good summer weather

Above:
*Gwyn Evans on
Needle Ride, Napes
on a character
building day*



Above:
Gwyn Evans
emulating the
Classic Rock picture,
carrying boots on
Bowfell Buttress

The wind was still blowing the next morning when we set off for Black Sail Pass with the plan to traverse to the top of Pillar Rock. This was ditched in favour of a jaunt down to the Black Sail Youth Hostel and another steep flog, albeit with lightened rucksacks, to Pillar. *The*

New West Climb and *Rib and Slab Climb* start at virtually the same point, high up on the west side of this complex set of Buttresses. I did ask Ken a year or so later why he hadn't contrived to put in two routes which made a logical links up the buttresses from a low point. It turned out he hadn't done either route and had just asked some locals for a couple of recommended routes! The climb went well with one leader and simultaneous seconds. Unfortunately getting off the top of the crag is a bit of a problem, the guidebook gives an overview of the crag with each gully marked with a skull and crossbones; *Walker's Gully* is not for the walker but is named for the Mr Walker who came to grief in it many years ago. It was a long way around and we had booked dinner, with wine, in the Youth Hostel. Mick, our fell runner, was dispatched to ensure we didn't miss out on this while Graham and I carried the gear down.

After breakfast we talked to some other residents of the hostel who had cycled in on road bikes, one with fixed wheel. They had planned to cycle over Black Sail to Wasdale but our tales of the wind and the rocky trail deterred them – as far as we know. Then it was over Brandreth to *Gillercombe Buttress*, another really fine route, my diary says 'fine day, clean polished rock, long route'.

Now we were in Borrowdale we just had to yomp down the road to the hut (FRCC again) up to Black Crag for *Troutdale Pinnacle* and across to Shepherds for *Little Chamonix*. Well, the yomping went on a bit longer than we might have liked and it was 8pm by the time we got to the top of *Troutdale Pinnacle*. Mick, the runner, was dispatched to the pub to order meals while we the old guard followed on with



the rucksacks. The yomping with three sacks between two of us was getting a bit much so we decided that, as this would be the last day, we could forego the walking. The first car that passed our upraised thumbs stopped and gave us a lift to the door of the pub. Chatting to the driver we found that he was a friend of Donna and Adam, the owners of Dynamic Rock, so the wheel could be said to have come full circle from our first hatched plans.

The next day Mick ran back to Coniston while Graham and I took a double decker bus ride, front seats on the top deck, to Kendal and then went looking for Mick. He was well into his lunch when we found him.

Above:

*The team about to leave Black Sail YH L to R
Graham Royle, Mick Learoyd and Gwyn Evans
about to leave Black Sail YH*

All Photographs:

Gwyn Evans collection

That's just one trip since the big day but there have been many others since. Was I lucky or is it a case of nil illegit carborundum? Just get out there and keep on doing things.

Below:

*Mick enjoying
Gillercombe Buttress*



Right Angle 50th Anniversary ascent

"A classic routea great natural feature..superb situations for the grade". SW Climbs Vol 2

Photograph:

David Linnett





Below:
Graham (Eg)
Everett

Photograph:
Ken Wilson



Moonraker 50th Anniversary ascent

"A classic routea great natural feature..superb situations for the grade". South West Climbs Vol 2



The original first pitch - now part of Goddess of Gloom



The Approach Traverse (part of Magical Mystery Tour)
(Back in '72 the current Journal Editor demonstrated swimming with rope and rack when a hold snapped on this traverse. I have yet to return to finish the route)



*Sun, turquoise sea and steep limestone and all
on The English Riviera!*

Photographs:

James Mann

Climbers Pat

Littlejohn and

Anna Biven

Moonraker, the

final pitch



Right:
*Pabbay; Mike
Hammill on “The
Priest” E1*

Photograph:
Gilmore collection



Right:
*Andy Houseman
on the Eiger
Summit Ridge
after the North
Face*

Photograph:
Nick Bullock



PARTNERS

A Long Climbing Partnership. *By Colin Beechey*

Carrott Ridge. *By Terry Gifford*

Partners in Climb. *By Tony Moulam*

Slave to The Rhythm. *By Nick Bullock*



A LONG CLIMBING PARTNERSHIP

There can be few more comforting sights (apart from bombproof overhead protection) than seeing your rope in the hands of an attentive and trustworthy climbing partner.

Choosing a climbing partner can be a risky and tricky business but once established many successful climbing partnerships can outlast jobs or even marriages.

In this article Colin Beechey examines why his long lasting climbing partnership with Paul Kirk has worked. They were just two ordinary blokes operating at the VS to HVS grade but climbing a tremendous amount of rock over many years and slowly improving their standard to the dizzy heights of, for them, E1/E2.

By Colin Beechey

August 1981, *Lot's Groove* (HVS), Glyder Fach; a route outside my comfort zone at that time. I was trying to make a delicate off balance move right; I looked down nervously at my climbing partner, Paul Kirk, who was making encouraging noises in response to my appeals for him to watch the rope. After several attempts poor handholds allowed me to make the move then swing back left into the main groove; good thread runner and rest. The final overhang seemed easier with wide bridging and good protection. Our admiration for Kirkus was unbounded; he led the First Ascent in 1929 wearing gym shoes with no protection. It was a route I had wanted to do for years, made possible by my complete trust in my climbing partner, Paul.

It had been a long day. We set off from our homes on the Oxfordshire/Berkshire border at 4am on Paul's 500cc Yamaha motorcycle,

had suffered sore backsides, fog and had run out of fuel near Shrewsbury. We finally reached Ogwen at 9.30 and linked up *Faith* (VD), *Saint's Wall* (VD), *Cinderella* (HS), *Upper Staircase* (VD) and the very thin and unprotected *Grey Rib* (then a sandbag Severe) before scrambling to the summit of Glyder Fach and descending to *Lot's Groove*. That day, with nearly 1,100ft of climbing after a 200mile motorbike ride, would have been impossible without Paul being as enthusiastic as myself. To add even more spice Paul became too enthusiastic when driving around the Capel Curig bends on the A5, the centre stand hit the road in a shower of sparks, almost throwing us off. It caused one of our few arguments with each of us blaming the other for the near miss. *Paul: 'This was a typical day for us — we were both fit. A day like this would be planned by Colin phoning me a few days before and relating*

Left:

Paul following the long traverse pitch on Burning Giraffe (HVS) Wintour's Leap

Photograph:
Colin Beechey

his latest climbing research. It usually involved names of climbs with some history. He always chose quality climbs and an adventure was always on offer, usually involving our motorcycles. Before I started to climb with Colin I thought this guy is out of the ordinary and that fuelled my enthusiasm. I had no idea at the start as to how it would develop.'

It all began in 1980 when Paul, the husband of a work colleague, expressed an interest in learning to climb. I was 31 and had already been climbing for many years and was fairly experienced leading up to VS/HVS. I had climbed throughout the UK and Europe, including several Alpine and Scottish winter adventures. I'd had several climbing partners over the years including some who had been very dominant and pushy, trying routes well above their capabilities and taking some big falls.. I realised that if I wanted a long life I should climb with someone with a similar skill level to myself and attempt routes within our limits.

Paul's first climbing trip with me was to Cromford's Black Rocks. We were both keen motorcyclists and the journey to Derbyshire from our homes in Berkshire was exciting enough, Paul on his Yamaha and me on my BSA, both 500cc single cylinder machines. Within a year Paul was following me up VS's in the Wye Valley, Avon, and Swanage and soon began to lead.

Paul: 'These were hard routes for me, I remember regularly getting stuck or frustrated but learned quickly. We didn't waste time as each day we usually did a large number of routes at various grades. Colin was always well aware of the latest

happenings in the climbing world, I could tell he had a real passion for climbing and it was great to be part of it. I had started leading some VS's with the Oxford Mountaineering Club; a range of climbing partners quickly made me realise how important it is to have mutual ambitions. Some of the climbers I teamed up with led things I couldn't do while others talked so much and paid so little attention to the rope while I was leading that I was probably lucky to be alive. It made me realise that Colin and I were doing more than just playing at climbing'.

Paul gradually flourished and became a very safe and competent leader. Within a couple of years he was leading the same grade as me and he always remained calm. Paul was much better at following exposed traverses than me, a great asset in any partnership; seconding traverses such as the last pitch of *A Dream of White Horses* (HVS) or *Heart of Darkness* (HVS) terrified me as, unlike the leader, I was more aware of the distance between runners and the possibility of a big swing into space. We got on well socially and had some great pub sessions during trips, indulging in much mutual flattery about our respective climbing abilities and discussing routes and ambitions in great detail. It was the whole package of our climbing trips that was important, to us; the research, the anticipation, the journey and climbing as many routes as possible on each occasion. Paul was happy for me to choose the routes, due to my interest in climbing history I had a long list of classic routes to go at.

In the mid 1980s we had a reasonable range of small wired nuts, several aluminium wedges made by my engineer father and some large hexes. We did not have Friends until 1989

and although they were available they seemed too expensive. There were no sticky rubber rock shoes, just EBs or RDs, the latter having rubber soles as hard as iron that made polished limestone feel very precarious indeed.

Paul: 'The first few climbs I did with Colin were in gym shoes and while they were great for grip, that was about it. We used to find lots of gear, just as well as money was very limited in the early days of our partnership. I had recently started work and recently acquired a mortgage. It was always difficult getting away to climb, especially as my wife wasn't interested in climbing. Then in the early 90's our first child came along, I remember how hard but rewarding that was and how forgiving my wife was about me being away so much.'

Paul was a teacher and I could often work flexitime so we could usually climb midweek. We planned every trip using the fairly accurate farming weather forecast for the week ahead and often travelled on our motorbikes which meant fast but often freezing cold journeys.

Paul: 'During one trip to North Wales, Colin was in front and I had dropped behind, I thought I should catch up as I hadn't seen him for a few minutes. Out of Shrewsbury there was no sign, so I went even faster, still no sign, I couldn't seem to catch him up. Then, a few miles on, I turned around and Colin zoomed past in the opposite direction, I flagged him down. It turned out that Colin had stopped for fuel unseen by me and I had gone flying past. We laughed about that for years afterwards.'

Now and again we could get the use of one of our family cars and we became adept at sleeping in them, allowing complete flexibility in our choice of climbing venue. This did cause

some hilarious moments such as when we were visited by the police as we slept at Black Rocks, next to a sign saying 'no overnight stays'.

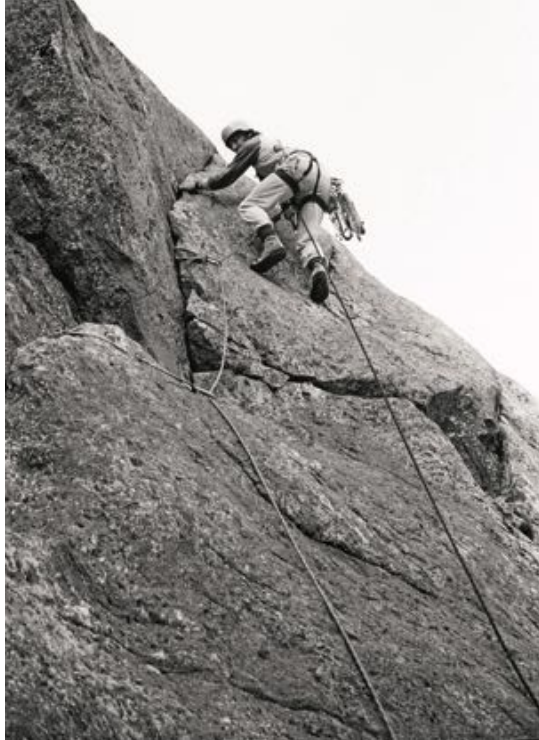
Paul: 'We had just got off to sleep in the car but soon afterwards there was a tap on the window and a flashlight in my eyes. I wound the window down and explained that "we were just climbers," God knows what the policeman really thought. "I see sir, have a good night. At 2am another patrol car arrived, I gave the same explanation but added "your colleagues have already visited us." "Oh I see sir; we'll make sure you're not disturbed again." I wound the window up, and we had a great night's sleep.'

We certainly had some brilliant adventures; in 1984 we tried to improve our grade by attempting *Cemetery Gates* (E1). I failed miserably on the slippery rock of the first few metres due to sweaty hands on a hot day, at this time we were still members of the clean hand gang and did not use chalk. The same day we cut our losses and walked up to Cloggy doing the brilliant *Sheaf* (HVS) and *Pedestal Crack Direct* (HVS); adequate compensation for our earlier failure. Soon afterwards I was privileged to meet David Cox, a retired Oxford Don who, with Chris Preston, did the first ascent of *Sheaf* in 1945. We had a fascinating chat in David's university rooms and I compared our respective ascents in an article for *Climber* magazine later that year.

In 1985 Paul moved to Gower to start his own business, which gave us even more opportunities for midweek climbing. A bonus around that time was Ken Wilson's list of the best VS's in the UK for a proposed new book to be called *VS Rock*, to follow *Classic Rock* and *Hard Rock*. I produced an article and

Right:
1986, Paul leading
Direct Route (VS),
Dinas Mot

Photograph:
Colin Beechey



photographs on Wye Valley climbs but, sadly, the book was never finished. That list, however, proved to be a valuable resource in those pre-internet days and gave us some brilliant climbing over the following few years.

In 1986, we finally succeeded on *Cemetery Gates* using the dreaded white powder. We both found it desperately steep and strenuous, so much so that my fingers were uncurling as I lunged onto the small belay ledge. The theoretically easier last pitch felt just as hard due to tired fingers and arms. Ecstatic with our success we dashed over to Dinas Mot and did the classic *Direct Route* (VS) where Paul led the technical start to the last pitch in great style. Still on a high we finished the day with *Spectre* (HVS). Paul failed to lead the crux crack so I took over and succeeded by throwing myself into the crack and having a desperate struggle.

In 1990 Paul became a father for the first time but somehow still managed to escape nappy changing duties for another trip to Gogarth. We had been climbing together for 10 years and I was secretly hoping we might break into the E2 grade. We awoke from our car bivouac on Anglesey to be greeted by some poor weather. Trying to ignore it we made two frightening abseils to the low tide start of *Wen* (HVS). This lower pitch is often missed, our keenness to do it was almost foiled by jammed abseil ropes; luckily I managed to free them by hopping over slippery boulders to get a better pull. The climb was superb, the first pitch up a chimney proving difficult. Paul led the long middle pitch up the crack and I led the complex last pitch up cracks and over bulges. Afterwards Paul suggested we try *Strand* (E2), a route that had been on my list for a long time, I jumped at the chance, despite having grave doubts that I could lead it. It looked amazing, a beautiful 150ft (45m) crack that is both long and very intimidating. The first section was steep but reasonable, the difficulties soon increased and although well-protected it was difficult to rest. For once every piece of protection went in easily and I just managed to reach the belay before my arms packed in. Paul was chuffed, so much so that he suggested we drive to Ogwen to do *Superdirect* (HVS) on Milestone Buttriss, a route I had failed on 20 years earlier. We found the route as hard as *Strand*. I led the unprotected first layback pitch while Paul, in superb form, led the hard crack up the crest followed by a desperate pull up a blank arête with a good hold at full stretch. My pitch was the dreaded Central Block, the scene of my earlier failure. It is very exposed with tiny flake holds that cross the wall to a hidden

ledge around the corner. It took me several attempts but I succeeded just as rain began to fall. In the pub that evening many pints were drunk to celebrate our best day's climbing so far.

Just two weeks later we had a day trip to Wales, the aim being for Paul to lead *Cenotaph Corner* (E1). I had led it in the 1970's when it was graded HVS with a peg for aid. Unfortunately Paul failed after doing the first hard move at 20ft; I took over the lead, the ancient peg was still there but I managed the route without using it. Paul was disappointed but made up for it by leading the first and last pitches of *Diagonal* (HVS), both with moves that we found harder than the usual crux pitch.

In March 1993 something happened that changed my life completely; my 13-year old daughter Kim was killed in a road traffic accident while cycling with me on a quiet country road. The loss of a child is without doubt the worst loss of all and something from which no parent ever recovers. As time passes you learn to live with the pain and grief, it also is a severe test of friendships as they watch you struggle. Soon after Kim's death Paul organised a trip to Lundy for us both. It was very brave of him as I was in a terrible emotional state.

In our usual adventurous style we travelled to Ilfracombe by motorbike, climbed on Baggy Point in the afternoon doing *Midnight Cowboy* (HVS), *Sting* (VS) and the superb corner of *Urizen* (VS). We caught the Lundy ferry the next day; the crossing was memorable because of the large number of puking passengers, including ourselves. Soon after arriving we dashed off and climbed *The Devil's Slide* (S), the memorable flake crack of *Road Runner* (VS) and *Albion* (VS) on the left side of *The*



Left:
1993, Paul leading
the difficult pitch
1 of *Ulysses Factor*
(HVS) Lundy

Photograph:
Colin Beechey

Devil's Slide. While actually climbing I could briefly forget my grief but whenever I stopped, on a belay ledge for example, I was in pieces. Paul was very understanding, talking when I wanted but also letting me wander off alone with my thoughts.

The next day we did the impressive *Shamrock* (VS) and *Diamond Solitaire* (VS) in the rain, tricky but just possible due to the clean rock. On our third day we were due to catch the afternoon ferry back so we got up at dawn and climbed the brilliant *Ulysses Factor* (HVS). Paul led the traversing entry pitch with a very hard start, while I found the second pitch unprotected and serious. Paul led the last two exposed pitches; climbing as well as I'd ever seen him. There was still time for one more route so we dashed up what proved to

Right:
1994, Paul
following pitch 2
Lithrig (HVS),
Cloggy

Photograph:
Colin Beechey



be one of the best HVS pitches we have ever done, *Formula One*. We just made the ferry and eventually retrieved our motorcycles for the long ride home during which my bike engine suffered a terminal breakdown. I had needed the Lundy trip as a test of my sanity and also needed to be with somebody who could understand my pain. For the next year I constantly pushed myself to the limit with long solo mountain runs, analysing every moment of that fateful bicycle ride and how I had failed to protect my daughter.

We continued to slowly improve our standard, still squeezing in climbs between our work and family commitments. A particularly memorable route was the spectacular and highly adventurous *Moonraker* (HVS) at Berry Head. Following the sea level traverse

approach, laden with gear and the high possibility of drowning seemed intimidating enough but the incoming tide gave added spice to this brilliant route.

1995 was without doubt our big year. In June we finished a long day on Anglesey with *Gogarth* (E1). On the strenuous traverse of the second pitch I started to panic as resting places were absent. To save my strength for the crux last pitch Paul selflessly led the next two beautiful but easier pitches. With great trepidation I set off traversing right to the crux crack, the scene of many an epic. I managed to place a poor Friend then a wire at full stretch. The crack was desperately steep and I went all out to reach a niche which I thought would provide a rest. It didn't but just as my strength failed I threw a small wire into a crack and unashamedly rested on it. I was now too scared to enjoy the easier top section and was very grateful to reach the end of the pitch.

On another occasion in 1995 we drove to North Wales after work, slept in the car in Llanberis, got up at 5am and walked to Cloggy completing both *Llithrig* (HVS) and *Longland's* (VS); we were back at the car by 1:45pm. Just two weeks later we repeated the process, this time ticking *Vember* (E1) and *Octo* (HVS). What an incredible pair of routes, *Vember* being the scene of a fall by Brown that left him suspended by a partially cut rope. The route starts with the Drainpipe Crack, it was dry and I found it relatively easy. I led the long crux pitch up a clean crack then a shallow scoop/chimney climbed by steep moves on elbow jams, we both found it hard but were always in balance. We found *Octo* harder than *Vember* with a terrifying traverse on grass just to reach the start. The long overhanging

chimney/crack was a sweaty struggle and I had an epic trying to clip a peg deep inside the crack. We were overjoyed at our success and although it was still only midday and we had no desire to push our luck on another route so we drove home.

We finished off that great year with *Coronation Street* (E1) at Cheddar. This was an interesting day as we overtook another very slow party whose only other climbing had been on the Mile End climbing wall, hardly good preparation for such a route! Predictably they failed on the second pitch, got their short single rope stuck as they tried to abseil and had to be rescued. We found the climbing very exciting but did it in good style, the long, very sustained and gently overhanging fourth pitch being particularly memorable. Having rewarded ourselves with a cream tea in Cheddar we returned to see the rescue team abseiling down the whole route on one long rope to rescue the crag-fast climbers, rather than climbing up to them. It looked terrifying.

We continued to climb as often as we could all over the UK including Scottish winter and Alpine trips, in 1998 we did *Mousetrap* (E2) on Gogarth, graded HVS in my old guidebook. This was an incredible adventure; we managed to avoid abseiling to the start by getting there at low tide. I led the serious first pitch up the smooth groove to a good nut at the top. After a short descent I traversed rightwards across the strange folded rock, difficult and not well-protected. I did not envy Paul following this pitch but, as always, he did well. The next pitch was sensational but easier, climbing a chimney around the corner to a slab. The last pitch had much better red rock and was steep but well-protected. I only got up it by moving

fast. We were very pleased with ourselves, especially when the route was upgraded to a more realistic E2 5b.

These were certainly our great years and we were now close to 50 years old. We could still climb up to HVS but Paul had some operations in 2001 and had some time off from climbing. We never managed to lead in the E grades again but merely lowered our sights a little and still packed in the routes and adventures over the next few years. These included a Scottish trip involving cycling and backpacking to climb the Cairngorm classics *Squareface* (VD) and *Mitre Ridge* (S).

As I write this both Paul and myself are now in our mid 60s, still friends and still climbing together after 35 years, although less frequently and at a much lower grade. In retrospect our long climbing partnership worked for us as we could both climb at the same standard but with different strengths and weaknesses. There was no jealousy about who led what, we were both keen on the history of the routes we did, shared the same sense of humour and, most importantly of all, had absolute trust in each other.

Acknowledgements.

Many thanks to Paul Kirk for comments and my climbing diaries for accuracy.



NEW PARTNER, LONG CLIMB: CONNEMARA'S CARROT RIDGE

Long routes and big days out are a great test of a partnership, whether newly formed or longstanding. Carrot Ridge sounds like a real adventure where a queue is unlikely, luckily for Terry his partner for the day was more than up to the challenge.

By Terry Gifford

For my first 10 years of climbing I was the second's second. Usually managing to struggle up somehow, reliably remove gear and make it clear that my leader's ability was in a different league from my own, I followed my leaders' agendas and shared the petrol/beer costs. Actually, I had only two partners in those ten years: John Driskell, who was our lodger in our first house in Sheffield, and Norman Elliot (now of the CC) with whom I'd climbed at college. John took me on my first trip to the Alps and Norman, who would never climb anything twice, became my lifelong partner in seeking out esoteric gems to write about for *High* magazine. But in the hot summer of 1976 the unemployed Hamish Hamilton (soon to invent the Buffalo

shirt and start his business supplying Dark Peak fell runners with something to actually purchase) and I began sharing leads with the aim of pushing our leading grades up to VS from a base grade of Diff. We had a list of the soft-touch routes on gritstone at the bottom of each grade in between and clawed our way up towards Sunset Slab on Froggatt. It was a one summer affair for which I'll always be grateful. But then it was back to climbing with Norman who, when we arrived at the bottom of a climb just could not wait to get off the ground before I had him on belay and I'd be so knackered getting his gear out that I'd decline to lead the next pitch.

We had some great times not only ticking *Classic Climbs* but finding the less well-known routes on the back page. We had felt so good about having climbed the delightful *Ardverikie Wall* that anything the next day was going to be an anti-climax. Finding ourselves camping on the roadside verge in Glencoe, waking to a scorching day and remembering pictures in *Classic Rock* of the wet walls of *The Chasm*, we casually set off to find it, not realising that it faces south and we were at the end of a long heatwave. My partner photographed me licking at shallow puddles between the upper pitches where all waterfalls had long ago disappeared. Guess which was the most memorable route of that trip. I had a spell climbing with Tim Noble (Obituary will be in CCJ 128) in the South West until he, quite reasonably, wanted to write about our climbs himself. After moving to the Mendips and the role of Head Gardener at Fairy Cave Quarry I've been grateful to Dave Wynne-Jones and Adele Long for taking me in hand as an Avon Gorge virgin. But sometimes it isn't a regular

partnership that makes a climb special, it's the opposite, the first time of sharing an experience and when that becomes a 12-hour day in completely new territory that is hard to read, the day can be a magical journey of all sorts of discoveries.

It was the Earl of Roden, who had previously done the climb, who suggested it. "Ireland's longest rock-climb — *Carrot Ridge*," he said, "just round the corner from here, up on the Connemara Bens. Come back and do it next year with Lesley." I was staying at his house overlooking the orange-weeded shore of Cashel Bay, the sailing boat he co-owned with Lesley, bobbing offshore on a slight swell. It was to this house that the poet, Ted Hughes, had brought his partner, Assia Wevill, and their three children, three years after the tragic death of Hughes's wife, Sylvia Plath. It had been found for Hughes to rent by his friend, the Irish poet, Richard Murphy, who sailed a boat called a Galway hooker, taking tourists

Left:

Carrot Ridge is the obvious banana shaped ridge (!)

"Named because my second reckoned he got up it because I kept telling him there was only one more pitch, which was like enticing a donkey with a carrot - Joss Lynam"

Photograph:

Adrian Hendroff
www.adrianhendroff.com

Below:

On Carrot Ridge

Photograph:

William Britton



out to the maze of islands offshore. I was also promised a chance to get on a hooker by Robert Jocelyn, Earl of Roden, when I returned. That would be something to tell my wife. Recently, Robert and his wife Ann, have been drawing people from all over Ireland to an annual Ted Hughes weekend at this house, Doonreagan, and I was lucky enough to be invited back in July last year as a speaker about Hughes's work. But this time I booked in for a week at one of their holiday lets in the hope of having just one day dry enough to attempt *Carrot Ridge*, a Diff of 370m.

Also at the Hughes weekend last year was Robert's sailing partner and co-owner of the boat, Lesley Emin, a lovely lady with streaming red hair and a wide smile who offered to do the climb with me as it was on her list too. She had retired early from business in London to 'work from home' just along the shore from Doonreagan and admitted to 'not actually doing much work from home' as Connemara activities: sailing, cycling, fishing, hill-walking and climbing and cultural events between the Galway and Clifden arts festivals, not to mention judging the All-Ireland Dog Show at Roundstone, took up so much time. Of course, judging a dog show and sailing in Connemara were clear indications that Lesley was into dangerous sports. It was in dark December when I asked her for a picture for this article and she emailed me from her phone, 'I know the picture you are looking for and will forward tomorrow or Friday. You catch me aboard a boat in a Force 8/9 with the skipper and three RNLI lifeboat crew, all in our foul weather suits. The boat broke its moorings in a bad storm last night and the wind carried her across a bay and deposited her on a rocky

shore. Now, we're waiting for the tide to float us off the rocks. Conditions not ideal (!) but no one hurt'. Last year she had been about to spend two months in the Himalaya climbing and trekking, a trip in which three of her party were killed by rockfall, so we had to wait for the next year's Hughes weekend anyway for *Carrot Ridge*. A whole year of waiting for a Diff might seem no big deal to many younger people (you can even climb it on You Tube without leaving your chair). But for me the route grew in all dimensions with the long anticipation and *Carrot Ridge* did not disappoint.

With permission from the farmer, we parked below his small house at the entrance to Gleninagh and stepped out into a landscape of the past. Below us were six white stones clearly visible embedded in the patchwork of July green grass and black peat. Tim Robinson's Connemara map marks this as 'SA' for Stone Alignment. At the winter solstice Robert and Ann still stand, aligning the stones, to watch the setting sun roll down the ridge of Bencorrbeg. Apparently Saint Patrick records that he arrived in Ireland to discover a country of sun worshippers. Having experienced the west of Ireland's 'four seasons in one day' on every one of my seven days in Connemara, I can totally sympathise with sun worshippers. In fact, I think I might be one myself. Beyond the stones was an embanked mound and from the climb we saw two fields of south-facing lazybeds that may have been in use for centuries. We were in an eastern bowl of the Twelve Connemara Bens, or Pins as they are known, that held history, myth and wildness (forget footpaths) in a heady mixture stirred by the constant wind.

Carrot Ridge cannot be mistaken. It stands proud of the widest expanse of rock in view, marking its left edge, a white carrot shape that would turn slightly pink if the sun came out. The hour and a half walk-in goes from the track to a sheepfold, down to a river crossing, bog (gaiters are essential for walking-in anywhere in Ireland) of various hues, bleached bog oak roots, peat steps and loose rock. During the approach the carrot had shape-shifted into a banana. It's that kind of country. We started gearing up in sunshine, but by the time we'd tied on to the rope a mist had descended, dampening the rock. Lesley took a bearing to find our way back to the car from there if necessary. (It's the only time, in over 50 years, that I can recall rock-climbing with a partner with a compass round her neck for a possible escape. 'Four seasons ...')

I stepped onto a marble staircase with little steps on its very left edge. It is a Diff designed by Michelangelo in exquisite compact marble reaching into the clouds in the land of sun worshippers. It was strangely difficult to tune in to this rock, to see what was flat and what was sloping and right away my foot slipped off a wet hold. Caution tensed the senses and I found only one runner in the first pitch and two in each of the next two pitches. I had flown over to Ireland with only three Friends (2 to 3½) in my light rack and was very glad of them. We both agreed that the second pitch was the crux in our conditions, when finding flat footholds on which to step without slipping off was the key challenge. Stepping up and ever leftwards at the edge of the buttress was steep, but encouragingly unfolding, until an easing of the angle brought a wide ledge and (not the last) possible escape but the mist

had lifted and the sun made an appearance. Again, wonderfully provided little flat nicks of marble led to another broad ledge and the view backwards over the whole glen which opened like old tale of invisible comings and goings of people and animals, weather and flora, small joys and the great hunger. Looking backwards was a rewarding theme of this climb in this historically rich, now apparently bleak landscape.

At another spacious ledge the mist dropped again and I was getting wet. "It's not really rain, only cloud," Lesley informed me. I pulled from a pouch my lightweight rain jacket, sold to runners as sealed-seam waterproof, which an Irish mist can expose as a lie within seconds. I'd not have been without it, however, as bright psychological encouragement on this long journey — of the mind coping with the body — that was to unfold on this endless route. I consulted a print-out from the guidebook and then found my own way up the everlasting buttress. An apparently smooth ramp leaned leftwards with a promising crack in its spine. Little flat footholds appeared unbidden, but I could not get a runner into the crack until quite high up. Then the buttress leaned back a bit. On following this pitch Lesley preferred to go right of the ramp up a wall and had difficulty getting across left again for my runner. A violent jerk on the rope solved that problem. When Lesley did her own thing, most things fell into place, including lunch. We were apparently above the First Step. The long day, route finding and damp rock built tensions that were immediately defused on belay ledges, where, at some point Lesley revealed a lavish lunch pack that only lacked the lobster sandwiches that the earl had hinted

might be in her rucksack. Again, we relaxed and looked outwards as cloud shadows caressed folds of green.

A traverse left into a recess brought us to the foot of an open corner where bridging led left again onto a platform. Scrambling for 90m on the ridge as it narrowed and levelled out below an easy slab gave momentum and rope drag. Above reared the Second Step, guarded by a wall that narrowed to the left. A pull through and a traverse right brought a groove which took gear and led to a slab of thinner moves and eventually a stance. All that was left was the Third Step that leaned back benignly and the easy scrambling suddenly ended at the top of the buttress. By now I was feeling very tired and had been alarmed by spasms of cramp in my left thigh. We coiled ropes and looked across at the recommended scree descent beside the buttress. The boulders were huge and my knees screamed at the sight of them. Neither of us was drawn to embrace them. So it was over Bencollaghduff on our right to descend to the head of Gleninagh where an ancient path the length of the glen had been becoming more distinct and attractive as we had gained height with each stance. But first there was another 200m of ascent from the col at Mám na BhFonsai, just above *Carrot Ridge*, from which the view south suddenly revealed a sparkling sea.

Lesley was concerned about my body language which was registering 'fairly knackered' but her look around the corner for a traverse below the summit to the col on the other side was unpromising. Actually, the gentle slabs ascending Bencollaghduff were not too bad and, after a huge false summit cairn, the views from the top of sun-shafted

sea and islands off the complex coast around Roundstone were to live a long time in the memory. We needed to go west but the rocky hint of a path dropped south immediately from the summit. It soon disappeared and Lesley was leading the way through grass-fringed rock steps in a landscape I could not read. In English and Scottish mountains a vertical drop off was likely to indicate a crag below but Lesley wove a way over the edge of little walls, down short gullies and round small outcrops. It was pathless, punishing country unlike any other I'd experienced. Quite apart from the inevitable rising and falling mists, this was serious mountain terrain. On the following Saturday, Lesley told me later, a walker died on these Bens — in mid-July. Finally, a long scree run brought us down to the col called Maumina where there nestled a half-circle stone shelter with stone seats and a wall just high enough to cut the wind at the back's cold spot. Across the col, on the path that came up from Gleninagh, there was a stone offertory, a cairn with an inset shelf on which coins had been placed. You need all the saints on your side in these mountains.

We reached the car again at 8pm after 12 hours on the hill. On the TV in the back room of Lough Inagh Lodge, the first bar we came to, the World Cup final was underway. It mattered far less than a simple seat, two pints of Guinness and Lesley's unfailing wide smile. At the restaurant at the back of the Cashel pub the earl was generously hosting a final meal for speakers at the conference from which we'd been playing hooky on its last day. Apparently, when we entered, we looked as though we'd had a 12-hour day on the hill but we were just in time to order food. They had taken all the

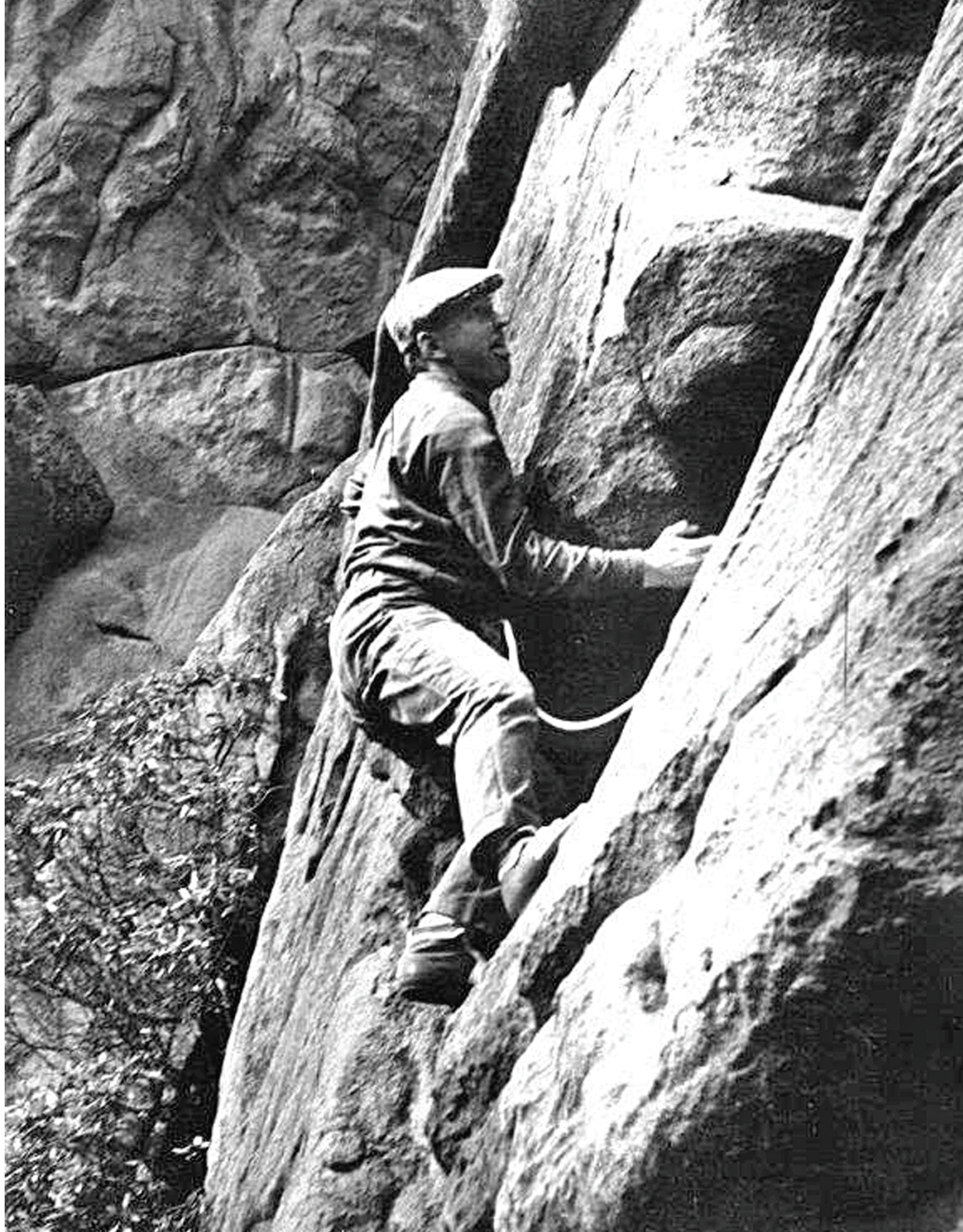


Left:
On Carrot Ridge

Photograph:
William Britton

Right:
Edgar Siddal
following Don
Whillans on The
Mincer (Roaches)

Photograph:
Claude Davies
collection



PARTNERS IN CLIMB

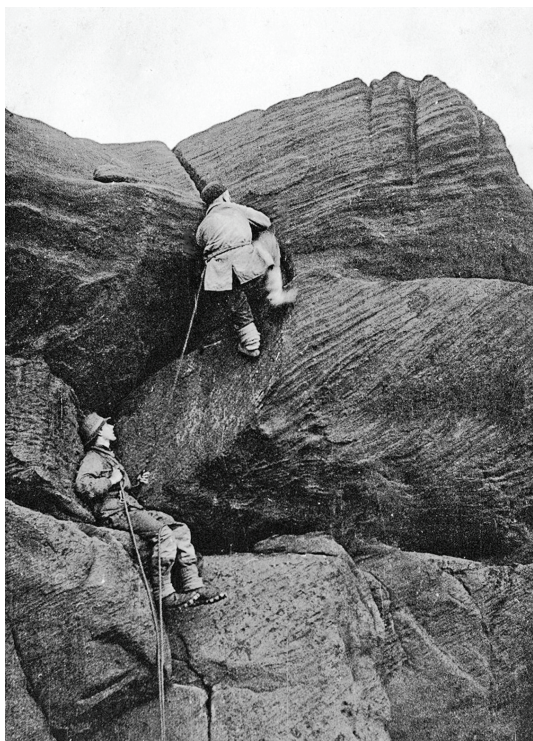
Before UKC, climbing walls and (anti)social media and local climbing clubs it wasn't unusual for people to turn up at the crag to find someone to climb with for the day. Some memorable partnerships were formed this way; here Tony describes how he met and climbed with 40's legend Peter Harding.

By Tony Moulam

Crosse and Blackwell, Marks and Spencer, Rolls Royce and Reckitt Benckiser are all universally known and rattle easily off the tongue. In the climbing world Pigott and Morley Wood, Brown and Whillans, Edwards and Noyce and Crew and Ingle are well-known couplings and even, for a year or two after my climbing started at Black Rocks at Cromford in Derbyshire, Harding and Moulam were a pairing to conjure with.

Ever since I had realised the possibilities of my nearest crag when reading Colin Kirkus's *Let's Go Climbing* in the school library — where I had been supposed to be working on an essay about some boring subject like electromagnetism or binomial theorems — I had intended to visit the Rocks. Eventually I was given a bicycle for my birthday and rode the 15 miles out there from my home in Derby. I could see the scratches on many routes but could not get off the ground on any route in my first few visits. Eventually I tasted success with an inelegant ascent of *Sand Gully* which left me with dirtily sand-stained clothing and a sense of triumph at last.

I persevered, clocking up more miles on my bike than feet on the rock until in January 1945 I persuaded a school friend to go with



Left:

*Tony Moulam and
Peter Harding on
Corner and Crack
(Roaches) First
Ascent*

Photograph:

Moulam Collection

me and together we struggled up a few more routes including *Fat Man's Chimney*, *New Year Buttress* and *South Gully*. Now I cannot recall how I knew the names of these climbs as there was no guidebook available, but they must have been revealed to us by some other visitors

to the rocks. At this time there was no question of a partnerships as I was only able occasionally to persuade friends from school to enjoy my new passion and usually they only agreed to go and hold my rope (an 80ft sisal bought from the local ironmonger) once, so demanding did they find my enthusiasm.

Eventually I met my first climber, Tony Taylor of the Karabiner Mountaineering Club, who led me up *East Crack*, *Central Buttress* and *Lawyer's Chimney* so that I felt as if I had arrived as a mountaineer. A week or two later I met Peter Harding and his girlfriend, Ronni Lee. That meeting was on 17 March 1945, Peter was already an accomplished climber and Ronni was also an exceptionally fine climber, her elegant movement and determination outweighed her lack of height. Peter had left school, where I had known of him as a prefect, and was an apprentice at Rolls Royce, where he met George Bower and Ivan Waller, both names to conjure with and the latter gained him entry to The Climbers' Club elite. The first climbs we did together were *Sand Buttress*, *Lean Man's Ordinary Route* and *Lone Tree Groove*, my first VS's. I was very much a novice but Peter presumably saw some sort of promise in me and from then on we climbed together most weekends mainly at Black Rocks. Rather to my surprise I was the first of us to lead a new climb, *Green Crack* on 16th June. Peter led *Lean Man's Superdirect* on July 7th, but we later found that Alf Bridge and Jack Longland had forestalled us by about 30 years, so Peter's new route debut was the *Promontory Traverse* on July 12th.

Peter was also a keen cyclist and we decided to look further afield as we had climbed so far only at Cromford. We pedalled (with our

racing bicycles loaded with boots and ropes) to Birley Edge Youth Hostel, near Sheffield from where we attacked the nearby Wharncleft Crag. We achieved half a dozen routes of up to Severe standard and returned home tired but well satisfied with our first away games.

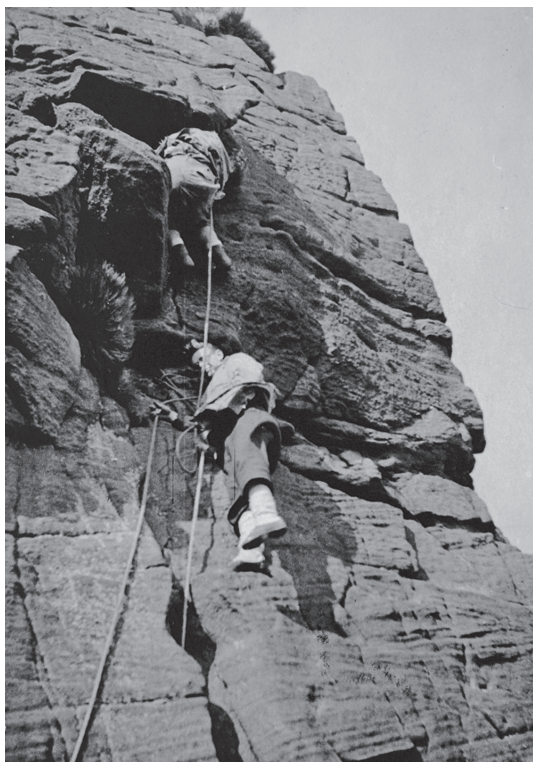
Even more enterprising was our first visit to Almscliff Crag; with door to cliff transport on Peter's 21st birthday present Sunbeam, for which he had conserved his measly petrol ration. This visit was at the end of April with relatively cold weather so we did not achieve very much, but we did meet several members of the LUMC, including Arthur Dolphin, Bruce Gilchrist and Denis Fisher and were given a guided tour of the crag by the local experts. Another weekend at Black Rocks brought the news of Victory in Europe and so on 8th and 9th May the infant Stonnis Mountaineering Club held its inaugural meet at Almscliff, this time with the help of the LMS railway from Derby station with a change at Leeds where we had to rush to another platform to connect with the onward train to Huby. This nearly ended our trip in early disaster as my nailed boots slipped on a metal plate at the end of the footbridge and I fell and was pinned down by the weight of my rucksack. Ken Herbert hoisted me to my feet and we were all able just to catch the local train, after a little more sedate progress.

We camped at the foot of Low Man and did several of the easier climbs before enjoying an enormous celebratory bonfire and sing-song on the summit of the crag. We repaired to our tents at about midnight whilst the revelry continued through the night. In the morning (rather late) we crawled out of our sleeping bags, opened the tent flap and saw a scene

of destruction. The revellers had torn apart the bonfire, as it died down, and had hurled gleaming brands through the air. A particularly nasty looking missile with a charred point and a shaft about five feet long was embedded in the ground only a yard or so from our tent. Rain soon started to fall and we were reduced to boulder problems and considering our mortality, until the time came to abandon the rocks and make our way home.

A week or two later we set off on another train journey from Tamworth, a station near to Peter's home at the Wyggeston Arms in Burton on Trent. We caught the milk train in the early hours of the morning which eventually dropped us off at Carnforth, yet to be made famous by David Lean's *Brief Encounter* and within sight of the Lake District hills. We had to cross a platform and wait for the local train which then chuffed its way importantly round the coast to Foxfield, where we changed again for the final lap to Coniston — a line long since discontinued. A slog up the Walna Scar track laden with our Bergen framed rucksacks led to where an ill-marked footpath left on the right and wound up slowly by the stream falling from Goats Water, Dow Crag's own little lake. With our base established in our ex-US Army bivvy tent outside the door of the old powder hut now rented by the Barrow Mountaineering Club we continued up to the imposing crag and climbed *C Ordinary* and *Lazarus*, impressively long routes compared with our gritstone habitat, before returning for our evening meal and a good night's sleep.

Sunday was disappointing with torrential rain throughout the day. We stayed in our bags with only a foray by Peter to make a brew. Monday proved to be a little better and we



Left:
Leaf Crack
(*Laddow*) first
Ascent

Photograph:
Moulam Collection

did *Giant's Corner*, *Trident Route* and *Hawk Route*, marvelling at how easy it had been to find new ascents in the 1930s. Whilst sitting at the foot of *Hawk Route*, before we did it again with the Direct Finish, a small group of obviously experienced climbers mounted purposefully up the scree and disappeared into the mist now shrouding *D Ordinary*. The third was a diminutive man, who grunted a greeting as he passed us and placing precisely his Number One Tricounis on minute holds he moved smoothly out of sight. Peter muttered to me: "That's A B Hargreaves," of whom we had heard of as a companion to Colin Kirkus, our hero. He was to become a companion of mine, for even longer than Peter. In between

our climbs we found time to jeer at the Leeds University Mountaineering Club team (Bryan Meylan, Bruce Gilchrist and Denis Fisher later of educational toys fame caught in a squall on *Abraham's B Buttress Route*. We returned home and I noted in my log, 'Start of Peter and my teamwork'.

This did not last long but included my first First Ascent, *Green Crack*, several new routes at a new cliff, Dawson Rocks, and our first few attempts at the *Promontory Traverse*, which habitués of the Rocks from the Polaris Club had pooh-poohed with the comment, "Better climbers than you have tried and failed on that." I had volunteered for the army on my birthday, 29th June, and was informed that I should report to a barracks in Bury St Edmonds on 16th August. I was granted an 'embarkation leave' which I took in Wales. We (The Stonnis Club) stayed at the Snowdonia Guest House in Capel Curig where we arrived wearily on our bikes from the uphill ride from Betws y Coed after a tedious rail journey on packed trains. Highlights of the holiday were the *Direct Route* on Glyder Fach where I had an exciting moment or two when my boot jammed in the final crack, I had to pull out my foot after Ronni Lee had climbed up and unlaced it, retrieve the boot, then lead the party up the Winter Finish to safety in the darkness and, on Tryfan, *Belle Vue Bastion* and *Munich Climb*. At the end of the holiday we shared a carriage from Betws to Llandudno Junction with some loud mouthed climbers who proclaimed *Lot's Groove* to be the hardest climb in Wales and we determined to return and do it at the earliest opportunity.

I was reprieved from banishment to the flatlands and rescheduled to start my defence

of the realm at Norton Barracks just outside Worcester. At least there were hills near there above Great Malvern and on my final day of freedom I had a day at Black Rocks when I made my first lead of *Stonnis Crack* and extensively gardened a new climb. Unfortunately my three top-roped cleanings of the crack left me too tired to lead it so I went off to the army, leaving instructions for Peter to climb it the next day; he duly did and called it *VJ Crack*. My next opportunity to climb was an expedition on the bank holiday up the East Face of Hereford Beacon on sun-parched slippery grass, made as taxing as anything I had climbed, by hot sun burning down on my best serge uniform and the slipping soles of my steel-studded and highly 'bulled' boots.

On a weekend leave which entailed me departing camp at 1am on Friday and cycling 25 miles through the night on deserted roads to Bromsgrove and Birmingham, I caught a train to Derby. Another 15 miles pedalling saw me arrive at Black Rocks where I joined my friends in a route or two before bivouacking on the summit. Next day Peter and I meant to try the as yet uncompleted girdle traverse of the cliff and we set off hopefully up *Birch Tree Wall* to easy ground and a scramble to the first ascent of *Lean Man's Eliminate* and the descent of the *Superdirect*. By then it was cold and the wind had risen and we called off the enterprise as I had to leave soon on my return journey. As a consolation prize we did the first ascent of *Finale Wall*, and I left, well satisfied with the accomplishments although frustrated that the girdle had to wait.

My Preliminary Training completed I was put on the Army Reserve and despatched to Exeter University College of the South West

of England (to give it its full title) for my University Short Course. This again meant that my partnership with Peter was interrupted but it gave me the opportunity to search for new crags on and near Dartmoor, which was tolerably well-served by stentoracious old buses around the roads and lanes. I had no climbing companions so most of my expeditions were made alone, although I managed to persuade one or two fellow cadets to go with me occasionally, not of much purpose though as we had no rope.

My Christmas vacation was a revelation. We again went on the train to Betws y Coed and cycled on to Capel Curig. A walk on the first day led to us discovering a new crag on Pen Llithrig y Wrach where we made our first entry in the North Wales' first ascents' list with a Difficult route on the edge of it. The next day we attacked Dinas Cromlech and did the second ascent of *Dives* in nailed boots and torrential rain. *Spiral Stairs* provided a wind down, still in rain, and we decided that *Ivy Sepulchre*, already named by Barford and Edwards, would probably 'go', but that *Cenotaph Corner* was hopeless. Next we experienced our first repulse on Gallt yr Ogof's *Chalkren's Stairs* due to wet and cold. A traditional ascent of Craig yr Ysfâ's *Great Gully* on Boxing Day took us four hours and found Peter and I disagreeing with Ernie Phillips on the way off as he set off in a big circle leading us into the middle fastnesses of the Carneddau. Our holiday finished with a visit to Cratcliffe Tor and, again an aching anti-climax, to Dow Crag, where we stayed in the Barrow Climbing Club's old powder hut, much more rainproof than our tent on a previous visit.

On 24th February 1946, I managed another visit to Derbyshire from Exeter and went out to Black Rocks with Peter, Ronni and Ken Herbert. It was a cold and windy day but we set off on the *Girdle Traverse*, which would become the longest and most taxing route on the crag. The only new pitch was the connection below the *Queen's Parlour* overhang to access *Queen's Parlour Gully* and then cross the Slab. The expedition took four hours and for amusement we included an ascent of *Green Crack*. Despite describing the route in our guidebook I wonder if anyone has ever made a second ascent? We wound down by soloing *Lone Tree Gully*, *Finale Wall*, *Stonnis Crack* and *Lean Man's Ordinary* to prove that we had not shot our bolts. The journey back to Exeter came as an aching anti-climax with a calm satisfaction with the weekend's achievement.

Our next significant outing was a return to Dow Crag, this time walking from Torver to avoid the tedium of the Walna Scar. We found it was just as quick as the other route and certainly much more pleasurable. We dumped our 'sacks at the hut and continued to the cliff where we did *Southern Slabs*, *Blasphemy Crack* and *Broadrick's Crack* as a taster. We descended *Black Chimney* to reach the foot of *Great Central Route* but abandoned it as too cold. We tried again next day but made no impression on it so contented ourselves with Jones's Route and a fruitless search for *Crock's Crawl*.

Next morning we were disturbed at our breakfast by a youth who arrived and stated: "My name is Colin Kirk and I know that Colin Kirkus climbed here," and begged to join our rope. We were not to be deflected from our target and this time we succeeded on *South America Crack* and by Herculean effort hoisted

our new friend onto The Bandstand. Our nails were little help on the hard rock but we finished the route in a hailstorm and brought Colin up *Jones's Route* instead.

This experience had not turned off our tyro and he appeared again early at the hut. This time our objective was *Eliminate C*. Drizzle gradually soaked us as we approached up the easy pitches of the gully. Peter and I had alternate attempts at the first pitch and eventually I managed to do it. I remember seeing my watch on my wrist as the minutes ticked away and I, finally, succeeded after an hour and 20 minutes. By now our companion had despaired of ever touching rock and had retreated down the gully and on to Coniston. We had a few feet of scrambling to bring us to the foot of the next pitch. This proved to be even harder and we were near to abandoning our ascent as we failed, time after time, to lasso the spike at the end of the traverse. Our plaited cotton rope got stiffer and stiffer in the rain but, in a despairing last throw our sling slumped over the spike and we had no excuse but to continue. Peter led out confidently and disappeared from view, but the rope continued to pull out and, after what seemed like an eternity, I heard his muffled cry, "Come on." The traverse was easy, even as numb and as wet as I was and, to be fair, I was glad to be on the move again. I passed the spike and looked up round the corner but could see next to nothing as my glasses were covered with spots of rain. I felt up and my senseless fingers gripped invisible holds as I fought my way up the pitch, determined not to ask for a tight rope. Eventually, after what seemed an age of torment I reached Peter, we coiled the rope and

scattered down the easy rocks and the scree to our haven in the hut.

This was the last serious outing I shared with Peter as I was recalled to the colours, in Catterick which was not as easy to return to Derby or Burton and leaves were less frequent than college vacations. I met new friends and climbed in different places, but Peter proposed me for The Climbers' Club and with Alf Bridge as second I was elected the next year.

SLAVE TO THE RYTHM

Strong partnerships are a key factor in successful high standard mountaineering, in addition to the technicalities of the climbing there are the mental pressures and physical privations that come with the game. Nick lets us into the world of winter alpinism as he recalls great climbs and partners while pondering some effects of becoming a professional mountaineer. This is a chapter from his recent book.

By Nick Bullock

Chamonix. France. Winter 2006/07

The M6 leads to the M1, a blurred passing of white lines and lights. Full to overflowing, cumulous hang in the night sky and behind the clouds I know are stars. The stars are there, I know they are there, burning brightly over a million miles away, another life away. Cones, balustrades, chevrons. Cars, fields, rivers, electricity pylons. One day Kathmandu, the next Ynys Ettws and the day after, the road south. I call into my sister's house to collect ski and mountaineering gear before setting off again and visiting mum and dad. My parents are moored for the winter at a modern marina near the centre of the large town, Hemel Hempstead.

The marina is clean and functional and convenient. There are shops close by and life for them, on the narrow boat, new boat to mum and dad, but a second hand, more traditional and longer boat than their previous boat, Emma, appears ok. Mum is thin and grey but radiant in a tired happy way and pleased to have the convenience of shops close at hand. Dad smokes and drinks tea and reads

novels. Mum hands me a bag of Christmas and birthday gifts including a Christmas cake bought in Marks and Spencer for me to take to Chamonix.

A swan glides toward the boat and taps the hull for attention. Mum opens a small side door, twisting a brass knob with thin, arthritic fingers and with those same fingers breaks bread before dropping it onto the surface of the brown water. Hearing the door, the swan glides across the water and gobbles the bread. "There you go; I'll give you some more later."

They will be moored at the marina for winter. I can tell, being stationary for a while, is welcome. But, no-doubt, once again in March, they will be ready again to begin exploration of the canal system. It's strange seeing my parents, people who were fixed for so long; appear to be so free and transient. I wonder why they waited so long, why did it take a doctor's death sentence for dad to wake them?

This will be my third full winter season in the Alps. I'm sharing an apartment in the middle of Chamonix with my friend Kenton Cool. Kenton asked me if Andy Houseman,



Above:
*Jon Bracey on
Scotch on the Rocks*

Photograph:
Nick Bullock

the young Brit I had last met in Peru, could also live in the house. I told Kenton I wasn't sure, the jury was still out on Andy, but the prospect of the rent going down by a third, and the fact I had a room so I could get away and hide, swayed the decision, "OK Kenton, whatever."

Surrounded by new red brick, white concrete, glass and bright lights, I park close to mum and dad's boat and sleep in my van. Climbing gear is stacked all around and beneath. I lay in the dark and imagine the stars and their energy and power. In the morning, after saying goodbye to mum and dad, I began to drive south once more, this time heading to Dover and the sea and the ferry.

By early evening I reached the outskirts of Chamonix. Exiting the Les Houches tunnel, up above, in the moonlight, the slender spire of the Aiguille du midi is visible. Lights shine through windows that are cut into the slender rock spire and the light pierces the dark. The weather was settled and as I drive, by phone, I arranged to climb tomorrow with Jon Bracey.

"Don't be a slacker Bullock", Bracey had shamed me into action.

The day before, my first full day in Chamonix, Bracey and I had climbed the four-hundred-and-fifty-metre mixed climb on the East Face of Mont Blanc du Tacul called Scotch on the Rocks. Scotch was first climbed by Stevie Haston and Laurence Gouault, the name supposedly came about because Haston said climbing in Scotland was in decline and literally, on the rocks. I didn't know Haston, I had never met him, but the folk tales in Llanberis abounded, he appeared to be a forceful character with strong opinions, some of which I liked, some of which I wasn't so sure. Climbing appeared to be becoming more main-stream, more conforming and I thought it was ok to have someone unafraid to vent, someone who stirred it up and the stories about the aggression and the fights were surely exaggerated?

To climb *Scotch on the Rocks*, Bracey and I skied from the first Midi Téléphérique but we had bailed from above the crux pitch with two pitches remaining. Bracey said it would cause bother at home if he missed the last lift to the valley. I hated not finishing climbs, convenience and comfort always seemed a poor excuse to bail. It made me wonder how a person went from being so free to becoming concerned about getting home on time. Though, maybe this was my problem, maybe this was why I was single once again?

After climbing *Scotch*, un-acclimatised, I skinned back to the Midi on my own. Bracey, acclimatised, fit and in fear of the fall-out should he not make it home, shot ahead. I skinned and accepted that I was in for a cold bivi in the back corridor of the Midi Station.

Strapped to the side of my rucksack, top heavy skis weighed and bent me. Leaning against poles, I plodded the middle section of the steep Midi Arête gasping for breath. I stopped and looked up when a member of staff stood on the bridge crossing from the summit of the Midi to the subsidiary summit and shouted before beckoning. I was in, the staff were waiting for me, but I had to keep going. Reaching the tunnel, my lungs felt like they were about to explode but I caught the bin and made it down to the valley.

Later that evening Bracey called, “Don’t be a slacker Bullock” he said when I suggested a rest and going up again the day after tomorrow.

And here we were, once again stamping into ski bindings on the wind scoured col beneath the Midi Arête. The Grande Jorasses, The Dru, The Verte, snow dusted monoliths, so recognisable to me now, so solid and ancient, but young in comparison to the stars in the night sky and so attainable.

Bracey and I were hoping to attempt a new line we had spotted the day before on Point Lachenal, a small subsidiary rock face near the Tacul’s East Face and after stashing the skis, I follow Bracey’s steps until we stand beneath the intended line – a clean welt cutting through pink granite. A slither of ice, thinning to a dribble at the back of the welt, reminds me of the well documented pitch of the Twilight and Parkin route *Beyond Good and Evil* and above is a slab and the slab is topped by a turret of large and overhanging blocks which leads to the final spire and summit of Pointe Lachenal. At two hundred and sixty metres, the climb was short, but it was December the nineteenth and the daylight is even shorter.



Several hours later, engulfed by dark, torqueing, laybacking, swearing, I almost fall when I’m hit by a cascade of spindrift lifted from the snowfields on the slopes of the Tacul above. I shimmy an offwidth and at the top, stop, clear myself of snow and recompose. I can’t see a bloody thing, my head-torch is at the bottom of our one, almost empty, rucksack, which Bracey is carrying. Bracey joins me and sets off, shivering his way into the night until at last, pulls the top of Pointe Lachenal. I hear a shout of success, and our new route, which we later call *Tentation*, is climbed.

Climbing slows for Christmas – but in the space between Christmas and New Year, on the Petit Jorasses, Omega has a line of devotees as long as the streaks of ice that shine from its blank walls. On the count-down to celebrations, the crowds leave and Tim Neill and I are left alone to clean up in a bitter cold auditorium. On New Year’s Eve, a moonlit ski descent from *L’Oile au Beurre Noir* on the Petites Jorasses – a wave of water-ice leading to

Above:

Jon Bracey about to start P3 Tentation

Photograph:

Nick Bullock

a steep silver pencil compressed by overhanging granite – leads us through heavy, thigh-deep crud in the shadow of the Grandes Jorasses North Face. Searing thighs. Lungs on fire. Two friends in the shadow taking as much as we can from the time we are given, shining bright, burning bright, awake, alive, free, but not for long.

Wind and snow batter the Leschaux's aluminium skin. Fully clothed I wrap thick woollen blankets around myself and dream with open eyes. A shaky forecast and New Year celebrations had no-doubt kept other climbers away and as 2006 slipped into 2007, I thought it fitting that my most prolific and successful year of climbing had finished with such an interesting and unusual route alongside a great friend.

The rock and ice up-high had been generous in 2006, and the crumbling, vegetated cliffs at the edge of the Irish Sea, forgiving. Experiences were packed away, stored like yellowing newspapers – people, places, climbs, countries – they would steal into and out of a mind that infrequently slows. Pulling the blankets around me, flushed with success, warm for a while, the thought of what I had lost in 2006 tempers my contentment. Maybe there are a finite amount of relationships out there that work, that really work, and the rest of us just take whatever comes to ease the passage?

New Year's Day and the return to the valley is a wet one. Driving sleet and rain thrash the glacier. Tumultuous rivers cut gorges through the ice. The wind is almost gale-force. The hail and rain carried by the wind strafe. Climbing the ladders that lead to The Montanvers Train Station, my fingers feel almost frost bitten they are so cold gripping the metal. But after an

hour, Tim and I sit side by side, steaming and warm inside the train carriage. Celebrations tonight will have been earned and the stars in the night sky will appear to shine brighter.

Nervous, competitive glances in the hewn cavernous gloom. Numb fingers fumble crampons. Skis strapped to the side of the sack catch on the blue sculptured ice of the tunnel ceiling. Stepping from the tunnel, brightness blinds, but the open mountain vista always thrills. Clouds scud. Glaciers rippled and rough wrap around the base of the mountains and squeeze. Once again in this settled winter, a winter more suiting to climbers than skiers, Jonny Baird and I set off in aim of *Pinocchio*, another Haston route. Once again, many hours later, after climbing the route and in the dark, Jonny and I bow our heads; the torch beam picks old ski tracks etched by the wind – a hashtag of history. Ice mounds erupt out of the night, now shockingly familiar. Skinning. The winter wind burns our faces. Skinning. Spindrift scrubs like pumice. Skinning. Names of the routes successfully climbed keep time with the edge of the skis cutting the crust: *Pinocchio*, *Scotch on the Rocks*, *Tentation*, *M6 Solar*, *Vol de Nuit*, *L'Oile au Beurre Noir*, and *Slave to the Rhythm* ...

...*Slave to the Rhythm*.

With head bowed, I take my mind from the effort of skinning and recall the day and the night Kenton Cool and I climbed *Slave to the Rhythm*...

Leaning from axes, with picks deep into a crack and twisted, crampons smear against smooth rock. Kenton is belayed in the gully directly below. The wind screams, lifting the snow from the Valley Blanche and slinging it across the East Face of the Tacul. Kenton

screams, but not as loud as the wind. Spindrift and dirt mingle with sweat and fear. I look at the lump of rock sat firmly in my lap. It was as big as a football, though not as round or as light. I look at my cramponed feet skittering against smooth granite and I look at the surrounding rock and the walls and the snow. I wonder my future. Red to pewter to black. The day is once again night. I can feel the pull of the moon and the force of the stars. I sway and swither in the wuthering wind.

“WATCH OUT... WATCH OUT, WATCH OUT...”

Feet skitter. The rock’s weight pushes and gravity pulls. The dark and the wind scream, ‘So you think you’re good, big, a force...’ My stomach sags... I tilt my groin to the side. The rock rolls.

A black comet lost to the dark. Screaming, clinging, waiting...waiting...waiting, waiting for the pull of the rope as Kenton is hit and killed, but thank God, the pull and scream doesn’t come. My calves ignite. My thighs shake. I return to smashing into the loose, smashing and scrattling for something solid. At last, with the smell of desperation, I hook a rock that doesn’t move and crawl above the lip of the corner.

Kenton and I escape *Slave to the Rhythm*, but unbeknown to both of us the crux of the day is still to come.

Two hours of skinning, Kenton and I cower beneath the Midi Arête, a shaft of diffused light bursts from the téléphérique tunnel and loses its battle to penetrate the clouds of wind-blown-snow. Kenton leans close and shouts in my ear, “We need to rope up.”

The wind howls and in the small cone of snow-filled-light from our headtorches, we



struggle to tie frozen rope to our frozen bodies. Once the rope is tied, Kenton crawls into the dark. The wind drags a wave of white over the snow crest. We smash picks into the snow path that had been compacted by a thousand feet. Large lumps of ice fly into the air and reflect in the weak light escaping the tunnel entrance.

When the rope comes tight, I begin to crawl, but the rope had not really run out, we were probably only forty metres apart, but all sixty-metres billow in an air-born-arc over the north face. Chamonix street lights, light-years away, flicker and disappear and flicker. The rope pulls. I crawl. Picks and knuckles smash into compacted ice... knees grow sore. Eyes close. Thunk. Eyes open. Thunk. Eyes close. Two more placements. Two feet crawled. The rope pulls, the wind tugs.

“You have to admire how they have made a living.”

This is what people say when talking to me about people in the business of climbing, people like Kenton who has employed a PR company to raise his profile and make

Above:

*Kenton Cool on
Slave to the Rhythm*

Photograph:

Nick Bullock

a healthy profit and live comfortably and I agree, a part of me does admire this form of drive, but it is not for me. Truth be told, I find the thought of dealing with people from PR companies, people who spray their marketing hyperbole and inflated adjectives and only see cash profit as success rather sickening. After this winter and three future winters living with Kenton in the French Alps, I watch my friend become fully immersed into the professional, high profile, promotional speaker circuit. And I watch as he appears to be climbing only for a profit, a profile, the next talk, the next pay cheque, the next performance and a part of me wonders, if he will regret this path? I read the social media and the advertising from Kenton and many others and it all feels false, lacking integrity, it appears to play on peoples' ignorance. I wonder about my friend Kenton who once had a light and a passion and a need to climb so strong he crawled into the Northern Corries with broken heels. But maybe I'm projecting, maybe my cynical outlook is still with me, maybe our paths once following a similar course, with similar ambition and dreams, have moved in opposite directions and maybe, if this is really what he wants from life, I should be happy for him?

At ten p.m. fourteen-hours since we left the first bin of the morning, we enter the glowing tunnel leading into the warm-womb of the Midi and our climb, *Slave to the Rhythm* is complete.

Later in January, in the dark, beneath the stars, Houseman and I leave the Forche bivouac hut bowed like two aged men wrapped in layers, wearing balaclavas. We head to the base of Mont Maudite fighting snow flutings.

And in the deep snow, ghostly, nine-year-old steps take form...

... Nine winters since the wind blew spindrift and the clouds swirled and Cartwright, with long legs stretched out in front of him, sat on the summit of Maudite wearing a goofy grin and giving a double thumbs-up. We had both sat on that summit burning with life, glittering with emotion, there was no ulterior motive behind our climbing, it was climbing for climbing and the experience of being together in a wild and empty place. But five years down the line, I stood at his wake, tear stung and angry. Cartwright's love and passion for climbing was a force to reckon, but near the end, even Jules was a little affected, I suspect he felt the pressure of securing a future. Are any of us free?

Houseman kicks a weaving trail for us to follow. *Overcouloir*, into *Country Couloir*, a slender icefall flickering at a height of four thousand metres and almost hidden in a deep gully. Later that day, we are joined together by the rope, moving together, living together, trusting together. Down climbing the Tacul in flat light, I reverse an ice-overhang and the edge collapses. Screaming, tumbling, crashing – waves hit Craig Gogarth's green cliffs. Cackling Guillemots bobbing in a line on white shit covered ledges, the old whiskered seal with big eyes... screaming, sliding – the swing of an axe, a tight rope and a firm stance from The Youth braced above, stop my fall. I drop my forehead into the snow and see a single cormorant standing with wings wide.

As the winter continued my attitude toward Houseman is changing. Maybe his attitude to me is changing also, maybe living with

Kenton and I, two older people, is having some effect. Maybe for me the prison effect was beginning to dim and my attitude was also changing – smoothing like one of the pebbles in Mousetrap Zawn at Gogarth?

When there was just the three of us in the apartment, Kenton or I generally cooked and Andy washed-up. Andy's cooking skills were not as honed as his climbing skills and when he offered to make a meal, he usually went out, spent a fortune on ingredients, invited everyone over and then asked me to cook. I suspect his Mum catered for him most of the time he was living in Yorkshire!

One night Kenton and I were cooking. Kenton loved hot food and was making something with fresh chillies. Andy offered to prepare the vegetables and after slicing chillies, rubbed his eyes. Immediately the stinging fire burnt into his eyes. He ran to the bathroom and leant over the bath pointing the showerhead into his face before turning the cold water to full. His legs cycled the floor. Kenton and I still in the kitchen cried also.

The sun sets as Houseman and I burrow into the side of the Nant Blanc Face of the Aiguille Verte. Headlight beams illuminate the road between Chamonix and Argentière and I can see that road, its signs, the tennis courts, the river, the bars, the ski shops... familiar. The blood pumps inside my arteries. My head is bursting. Across the valley the piste-bashers are flashing yellow, smoothing snow for skiers who appear to find peace without discomfort. I can't. Not yet, not yet.

Streaks of glistening ice fill the folds of rock. The snow slope falls beneath our feet. Twilight and Backes, Parkin, Gabarrou and Silvy. I climbed here with Cartwright on a five-day



Left:
*Andy Houseman,
Pic Sans Nom bivvi
slope*

Photograph:
Nick Bullock

hit from Britain. Five new pitches joining the ridge of the *Brown-Patey*, but still only halfway up the face, our crampons blunt from two days mixed climbing and kicking and kicking and kicking... Kicking, Cartwright and I exited the iron-hard runnel of the *Marsigny-Moore*. "I hate fucking ice-climbing" Cartwright screamed and on the abseil descent I remember him leaving cams as back-up, and this is when he said it, this was when he said the words that haunt, "When you do as much as this shit as I do Nick, it's a matter of percentages, you need to cut down the chance of being killed."

The start of *There Goes the Neighbourhood*, leading to the median slope had been in, but the top was dry, so The Youth and I traverse the whole of the Nant Blanc Face with memories as fresh as the ice of the *British Route*

we now climb. The summit of the Verte rises above us like a massive toadstool.

A second night sleeping on snow. Street lights in Argentière quiver as I lie shivering. The helicopter beam swept the north face of the Dru searching for the Slovenian with a fractured skull.

Houseman and I return to town the same day as Prezelj, Anderson and House return from the *Walker Spur* on the Grandes Jorasses. And that night, we party so much that Vince misses his morning flight.

The Difficult Crack, The Hinterstoisser Traverse, The Ice Hose, Death Bivouac, Traverse of the Gods and The White Spider – scraping stacked blocks on the final slopes of the *Eiger North Face* with The Youth belaying from below, I lose myself in the swirling facets and intricacies of the past months. I was changing. I had changed. All of the approaches in the early hours, sleeping in damp clothes, hunger, humility, success, togetherness, these things were honest, they had integrity, they formed me.

Standing on this summit now, this summit with so much history, I know the descent will be from numb-fingers and feet, from the hot-aches and the fear and it will lead me back to warm rock, swaying grass, bleating sheep, birdsong and appreciation. It will hopefully soften the blow of growing old, it will round the sharp and ease passage. My third winter in the Alps was at an end, it was time to return to Llanberis

Right:
Ken Wilson

Photograph:
John Cleare



OBITUARIES

Ken Wilson. *1941 - 2016*

Alison (Ali) Shawcross. *1969 - 2014*

Craig Harwood. *1961 - 2014*

Dennis Bateman. *1920 - 2014*

J.H. Emlyn Jones CBE. *1915 - 2014*

Frank Davies. *1928 - 2015*

Graham Hughes. *1938 - 2013*

Harold Drasdo. *1930 - 2015*

McNaught Davis. *1929 - 2014*

John Chadwick. *1946 - 2015*

John Clegg. *1925 - 2015*

John Peacock. *1931 - 2014*

Jon Trafford. *1958 - 2015*

Martin Harris. *1939 - 2015*

Mike Pinney. *1951 - 2014*

Ralph Atkinson. *1952 - 2014*

Tim Noble. *1950 - 2014*

Tom Fletcher. *1922 - 2014*



KEN WILSON 1941 - 2016

Photograph:
Chris Bonington

I suspect that most of you will have known Ken way longer than me. In fact, my part in Ken's story does not begin until 2005 when I met him for the first time at a Mick Fowler book launch. My apparent enthusiasm for books led to an invite to Ken and Gloria's house the following week where I was shown around the inner sanctum of Ken's publishing world. His library was a place of wonder - books, magazines, journals, newspaper clippings, artwork, I could hardly contain myself. Meanwhile my wife Jane was being shown something equally famous - Gloria's fabulous garden.

Later, drinking coffee on the patio I found myself agreeing to go to the Lake District the next day on a photographic mission. It was the only time I climbed with Ken, but what a brilliant day my mate and I

had with him on *Gillercombe Buttress* and *Needle Ridge*. Like many others who had similar experiences, that day has now been immortalized in the 2nd edition of *Classic Rock*.

In subsequent years Ken and I developed a business relationship through my role as a book buyer for a shop in Hathersage. Ken had said that he was thinking about retiring and needed to shift his overstock of books to boost sales and hence impress potential buyers of his business. But it soon became obvious that there was something else at play and Ken admitted that the driving force was the onset of dementia. From then on, it became a frantic race against time to sell as many new, used and collectible books as possible, and then find a home for his documentary and photographic archives before Ken and Gloria

moved south to live with their son Andrew in London.

Over many visits van loads of material were transferred to my home. Eventually most of the documentary archive was deposited with The Mountain Heritage Trust in Penrith, while I remain the custodian of his photographic archive.

You have seen some of the photographs from the archive on the screen but I'm also going to share with you a few book dedications and letter excerpts.

The first selection of dedications from authors who have presented their books to Ken in appreciation of his help. These demonstrate why so many people are here today.

For Ken, with many thanks for your help and support, Dennis Gray.

Ken, thank you for your support and encouragement, Alison Hargreaves.

To Ken, in gratitude for your huge, huge help over the years opening so many doors for me, Tony Smythe.

For Ken, for whom nothing but the best will do. Thanks for your encouragement over the years, Peter and Leni Gillman.

For Ken, with warmest regards and thanks for all your support over the years, Royal Robbins.

To Ken, thanks for your help, support and friendship over the years, Nick Bullock.

The remarkably consistent message is a testimony to Ken's literary influence.

However, dedications were not always so flattering. Chris Bonington mischievously wrote in Annapurna South Face, "to Ken, you can't climb mountains but you've got the greatest mouth of all. Chris."

Most of the correspondence related to various Club, BMC & expedition controversies are with the Mountain Heritage Trust but I do still have some random personal letters that I can safely quote from. Here is the first one:

Dear Ken, thank you for your letter and returning my script. I haven't replied earlier because I wanted my temper to die down. In case it interests you I will tell you that your letter was one of the most depressing I have ever received. You get excited in the mags and claim to be concerned about the future of the sport, yet you can't even be

bothered to read anything which has words of more than two syllables, sentences of more than three words, and where the argument cannot be summarized in a form every moron can understand in four seconds flat.

PS you're a bit of a bruiser, so I daresay that you appreciate the blunt approach.

The response is by return of post, and of course the recipient will remain anonymous. Ken writes...

Christ, what a savage letter. Was my response that uncaring? I am sorry if I didn't match up to your expectations but I read your text for two hours on the train and found that my third rate mind just couldn't take any more. Sorry I bruised you but trust you will not indulge in public mud-slinging as that could have two results:

1. compel me and other editors to use bland pleasantries, and

2. possibly invoke a backlash of embarrassing support for me, which I could well do without. Of course you could also invoke an avalanche of denunciation from those who would cast me in a Rupert Murdoch role, a publishing Genghis Khan. That would be equally distasteful but perhaps I am due for a bit of bad press. Best wishes, Ken.

Then there is a confession from a Yosemite legend:

Dear Ken, I agree with you 100% about the British leading the way in free climbing in the 50s and

early 60s. When I visited Britain I was daunted by the level of poorly protected difficulty. The grit routes were terrifying and I failed on my attempt of *Cenotaph Corner*.

All the best Royal Robbins.

See if you can guess who wrote this:

Dear Ken, my apologies for this late reply but I went to the SMCs centenary dinner and have been recuperating ever since. Emerging at last from such alcoholic stupefaction I read with real appreciation your letter in High. It was honest-to-God sanity and much needed. I wish you were President of the BMC. Yours Bill Murray.

Here's part of a letter that Ken wrote to his mum in 1972.

Apparently she was a quite a character and did not like her son being referred to as Ken Wilson from Solihull or Birmingham. She would have preferred Kenneth Wilson from Warwickshire:

Dear Mother, I am now running Camp 1 at 21,000' on Everest. Everything is fantastic. The scenery, the huge mountains and the hostility of the climate. Yesterday I walked up to Camp 2. All very exciting. Mind you, illness and acclimatization leave you very weak and tired. The conditions are very harsh and I will be glad to get out of it. Still, in climbing you always have to suffer most for the biggest rewards. Will write again, love Ken.

A series of fiery and intellectual letter's between Ken and Jim Perrin as you can imagine, make entertaining reading. The clash begins with "Dear Ken, why don't you just calm down and stop giving free rein to your incipient paranoia?"

In reply, "Jim, it is tempting to describe your blasts as diffuse grapeshot, but my paranoia detects some rather more targeted ammunition being slipped in."

Letters are volleyed back and forth between these two big hitters. In the final set Perrin finally concedes that he would "love to thrash out the various issues on a 5-hour drive from London with Cookie refereeing." As you probably know, this is a reference to a childhood friend of Ken's, Dave Cook.

I've always struggled to say to people that I'm a friend of Ken, after all I've only climbed with him on one occasion, we rarely engaged in small talk and I've never had a pint with him down the pub. But when Gloria first took me to visit Ken at his nursing home we shuffled around arm-in-arm along the corridors of the 1st floor. He talked non-stop for about 20 minutes. Occasionally I nodded sagely or grunted some form agreement but to be honest I understood very little of what he said.

In four incredibly poignant letters to Ken, Alastair Borthwick (one of Ken's published authors and at the

time in his 90s), describes life in a nursing home. Borthwick writes, "You ask if patients are prone to anecdote? You must be joking. Most of them can't even talk. We all sit dead silent contemplating our navels, bowels and bladders. This is because we are nearly all gaga or worse. We live by ourselves inside our own heads and are perfectly happy with what we find there."

Initially I don't think Ken was at all happy and he was particularly frustrated by his failing memory. However, he seemed very happy to rely on the incredible support given by his family, in particular by Gloria and Andrew who are with us today.

The last time I saw him, back in February the day before his 75th birthday, he looked up at me wide-eyed and in the present for just a few moments. He turned to Gloria and said "look Chris Harle's here." Personally that was a big moment for me and while Gloria had a quick word with one of the care staff, I sat with Ken in comfortable silence. I wiped his nose and briefly held his hand.

I'm proud to say that I was a friend to Ken Wilson.
By Chris Harle

The first and last times I spoke to (or was spoken at?) by Ken were in pubs. The first was in the Crown on Highgate Hill in London in 1969. Ken was wearing a blue Helly Hansen fleece which had apparently been to Everest Base Camp and was probably the same one he was wearing many years later to the Tuesday night sessions in the Peak. The last was in the Royal Oak in Braithwaite. He's been to deposit some of his papers with the Mountain Heritage Trust. It was only later that I heard of his illness and he was obviously putting his affairs in order before it took over. He was his usual combative self, 'What have you done today? Where you going tomorrow?'. 'Buttermere, right do *Eagle Front* I want your views on it'. Was this for the often talked about fourth volume in the Rock series, VS Rock?

At the same time he reminded me of the day in 1970 when we'd gone to the Avon Gorge and done the Old Girdle sadly no longer recorded but let's see what the new guidebook has to say about it. Every time Ken rang me he would, after blistering my ears on some matter of CC policy or his views on how to keep the hut kitchens tidy, return to this topic. 'Do you remember the day we did the Old Girdle at Avon, great route wasn't it? Disgraceful it's not in the guidebook, we need to do something about it'. This had

been the first time I climbed with Ken and I was a bit surprised to see this arch promoter of the pure climbing ethic in Mountain and elsewhere pulling liberally on the

pegs in the first groove. When I questioned the discrepancy between his pontification and reality he retorted, 'Wilson sets the rules for others to abide by, he's not going to

die climbing. Well he didn't and he gave us a lot to think about in the years after, we've lost a real character and force of nature.

By Gwyn Evans

ALISON (ALI) SHAWCROSS 1969-2014

After regularly opposing proposals to admit women to membership of the Club, it was with great pleasure that I proposed Alison Shawcross and saw her duly elected in 1996.

Ali was a member of a climbing family, all active members of the Cleveland MC and with Mum and Dad also in the Fell and Rock. I first met her whilst she was still a schoolgirl when she came with family members to climb with a group of CMC activists on the relatively small crags of the N Yorks Moors. From the start she exhibited both talent and boldness, helped, I used to think, by her small, compact build and tiny feet (size three and a half). Soon she was leading some of the more difficult climbs on The Moors and further afield at Brimham, Almscliff and Slipstones.

Climbing in The Lake District and Wales naturally followed and

it was her great love of Wales and Welsh climbing that led her to seek membership of our club and The Pinnacle Club. At the time she became a member she was climbing well above the technical standard of many of her male contemporaries. She certainly led me up one of the hardest gritstone climbs I've done and she ascended *Dream of White Horses* with her Dad second on the rope. On her fortieth birthday she gave both Mum and Dad a present by leading them up *Eliminate A* on Dow.

Ali loved the mountains and was as happy on a walk or a simple route as she was on a hard climb. She was a competent skier and a keen biker. Fluent in French she climbed widely in Europe, Kenya, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. She had not been in good health for some time when she biked up Alpe d' Huez



and other passes in 2012. Sadly her condition continued to deteriorate and she died peacefully at her home on 5th April 2014.

In addition to her mountain and biking activities Ali played both the piano and clarinet to a high standard and she took her responsibilities of aunt and godmother very seriously. She was special, a real star who is sorely missed by her family and many friends.

By Frank Fitzgerald

Ann Saville writes:

I met Ali through the Cleveland Mountaineering Club in the early 1990's. We were both working as engineers in the Teesside area, we both loved the outdoors and we shared a passion for rock climbing.

We climbed on the local North York Moors, in the Lakes and in North Wales. Ali always had a plan, there was always a route she had her eye on, whether it was something

hard on a sunny day, or a long easy mountain route in the pouring rain. Our trips were well planned; we'd watch the forecast through the week, so by Friday we usually knew exactly which crags and which routes we were going for.

One memorable weekend we set off to North Wales, arrived in time to go to sleep and then walked up to Cloggy first thing in the morning to bag our place on the first route. That day we executed our plan perfectly, we did *Daurigol*, *Pinnacle Arête* and *The Hand Traverse*. As we walked back down to the hut, we shared that happy satisfied feeling that you get at the end of a great day climbing, and talked about what was on our tick lists for the next day.

Another weekend, in the Lakes, we walked up to Great Gable to do

Snicker Snack. That was the plan, but we knew that we needed the conditions to be just right - dry rock and nice weather. By the time we got there, we were reminded how cold and windy Gable Crag can be, even on the hottest of summer days. Sticking to our original plan was out of the question, but Ali had a backup plan up her sleeve; we did *Engineer's Slabs*, and then traversed round the mountain to Napes, did *Eagle's Nest Ridge*, with our sacks on, and arrived at the top of Great Gable in warm sunshine. Ali often insisted on one last easy route at the end of the day, and wasn't bothered about what time we got back for tea!

We had some great trips with some memorable achievements in the 90's. Ali wanted to push herself and do harder and harder things when the conditions were right, but she also loved doing easier climbs in the mountains, whatever the weather. She was good company and was always happy and smiling when she climbed.

By Ann Saville

CRAIG HARWOOD 1961 - 2014

On September 4th 2014 we lost an accomplished runner, climber and adventurer. Someone who had nurtured and inspired many and who was a classic example of giving back to the sports you love. Whilst climbing a route called *Caravanaserai* at Compass Point in Cornwall, Craig Harwood suffered a fatal leader fall. He was 53.

Craig was introduced to the outdoors through Scouting. He gained Queens Scout status and then quickly went on to establish credentials in all sorts of pursuits including rock climbing, mountaineering, fell running and mountain biking. He will perhaps not be remembered by any single accomplishment but by the sheer diversity of what he achieved. By the early 1990s he had been part of the winning team for Tough Guy four years in a row, had climbed in the Alps, Himalaya and Yosemite and had won the Polaris Mountain Biking event several times.

During the 90s he steadily ticked off some major climbs including big wall classics such as the Comici route on Cima Grande in the Tre Cime di Laveredo (1996) and the North Face of Rocchetta Alta di

Bosconero (1998). As a runner he had a very distinctive toe-running style. This produced huge calf muscles that would beset him with problems in recent years but this and his self described “carthorse” physique did not prevent him from achieving a lot - he completed the first of two Bob Graham rounds in 1992. In 1993 he was part of the group of seven who set the still current record for relay running over the Munros in a non-stop effort. He went on to successfully complete the Ramsay Round in Scotland with the narrowest of margins (2 minutes) and won the score class in the KIMM/OMM.

Personally, my greatest memories of him are Easter trips we would take in Scotland - invariably with winter conditions on the summits we travelled as light as possible on 2-3 days forays including a memorable Tranter's Round. He was never the fastest runner on easy terrain but when the going got tough, Craig got going.

He had summited all of the Munros and most of the Corbetts, worked his way through Classic Rock and Hard Rock and was happily ticking away a new list of Classic British Bike Rides having



recently rediscovered a love of road biking with Jane, his partner of the past seven years.

But what of the man? Craig was a “Tigger” personality; bouncy, larger than life and infectiously enthusiastic. You knew if you had ever met Craig! Staunchly against elitism and cliques, he is remembered by many people as the man who nurtured, encouraged and supported their forays into the hills. He was a patient tutor and remarkably sensitive to peoples’ self doubt.

Many others have physical reminders of his talents as Craig was a gifted architect and designed conversions, houses and extensions for many of his friends. An ardent fan of Charles Rennie Macintosh he was one of those rare people

who, even after more than a quarter century, visibly derived pleasure each day for his work and the effect it had on the lives of his clients.

... and for runners and climbers alike, Craig will be measured by what he gave back - he was race organiser for the Charnwood Hills, Fell Representative and overall club Chairman of Macclesfield Harriers for 2 years. In the climbing world his contributions were perhaps greatest: he has been responsible for countless upgrades to huts around the country and chaired both BMC and Climbers' Club committees. In these roles, as in life, he was fearless about tackling what needed to be changed. He developed an extremely

strong "head" from climbing and carried that sure-headed confidence into all that he did.

To many diverse groups and individuals, Craig was a source of inspiration, cajoling and enthusiasm. In his 53 years he managed to achieve several lifetimes' worth of adventure. Whilst his passing has come way too soon, his memory lives on in all those who were lucky enough to spend time with him and his legacy is huge.

One challenge tried by Craig but not completed was the Paddy Buckley round in Wales. This mattered to him because he wanted the "Big Three" of BG, Ramsay and Buckley rounds.

Footnote: On 20th June 2015 Craig posthumously completed the Paddy Buckley round of Snowdonia, the one UK long distance (100km) round which had eluded him in life. He completed the round in 23 hours 11 minutes with a large group of his fell running friends supporting him!

By Mark Hartell

NB - While I was Chair of the CC Huts Committee Craig contributed through his architectural skills to hut refurbishment, he also supported Bob Allen in the purchase of Riasg.
By Ian Wall

DENNIS BATEMAN 1920 - 2014

Count House Custodian 1981 - 1996

I met Dennis Bateman in the early 1980s. I was making the final moves of *Wrist Climb* at Pordenack on the Land's End Peninsula and had exhausted all useful gear among my handful of scrapheap runners. I had been climbing for only a few months and was uncertain as a leader. Dennis appeared above, solicitous, authoritative, smiling. He recognised a minor plight and politely talked me through the final moves. It would not be the first time that Dennis came to my rescue. He was a true familiar on the cliffs.

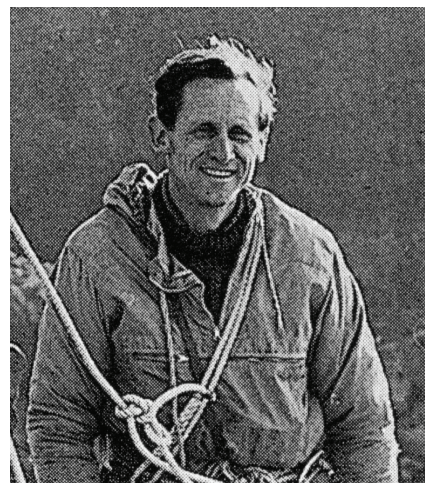
I saw little of Dennis over the next year or two, but by the mid-1980s he and I began climbing new routes; modest affairs, but adventures all the same. I felt greatly privileged to be tackling new routes with a man who had climbed with the likes of Mac McDermott and Hugh Banner. Dennis was an inveterate seeker after unclimbed cliffs. He, with his old friends Les Williams and Paul Murray, had already developed the now popular Trewavas outcrops on the eastern shore of Mount's Bay. As he entered his sixties Dennis turned his eye to the more remote cliffs on

the peninsula's north coast, such as those at Trewellard between the Geevor and Levant mines.

Neither Dennis nor I would ever think of attaching our own names to the name of a new route; but I broke the rule once, on a testing little HVS at Trewellard that I called *Bateman's Boots*. Irresistible that name, given that Dennis was wearing a different make of tattered boot on each foot at the time. The missing, mismatched boots had fallen apart. The logical conclusion for Dennis was to make good use of the surviving mismatch. (Off the cliffs, Bateman was a man who dressed impeccably.)

A pattern developed. Dennis would phone me to talk of a new cliff that he had spotted on his many solitary wanderings. One such was Evening Slabs between Botallack and Kenidjack. We found the slabs to be more modest than a distant view promised, but managed a few easy routes. For a final fling I tackled a steep frowning corner to the left of the slabs until I ran out of decent gear and steam and retreated.

Twenty years later, coincidentally on the day of Dennis's funeral service in September 2014, Andy March



and I had planned a visit to Evening Slabs for Andy to have a go at the still unclimbed line. Instead we went to Dennis's funeral, in part to represent the Climbers' Club and the old Land's End Climbing Club of which Dennis was a founding member. A week later we went to Evening Slabs where Andy led the route, a strenuous E2. I followed, or rather I 'manipulated' my way up, thinking that I had probably made the right decision to retreat all those years before, but thinking also that Dennis would have been pleased to see business concluded.

There were several other cliffs that Dennis and I developed. One was the odd little outcrop of Polostoc Point between Chair Ladder and Porthgwarra, a rough old granite balcony facing the beautiful south, a sunny relief from the black-browed north. One of Dennis's final discoveries, before age and arthritis curtailed his more strenuous activities, was a beautiful cliff of dark granite buried in the deepest recesses of the north coast. To get there was something of a jungle trek. With the late Graham Hobbs we climbed two routes, a Hard Severe, and a HVS, the latter being one of the finest new lines Dennis and I had ever climbed.

I was editing the 1990s Climbers' Club Penwith guidebooks at the time and was reluctant to publicise a cliff that was so embedded in undisturbed slopes above such a remote shoreline. Dennis and Graham agreed, though not entirely happily, and the routes and the cliff remain unrecorded. I have always felt a touch uneasy that I bullied them into getting my own way over the matter. But, it was never the climb or the climbing that mattered most, but the friendships, and the shared adventures on our beautiful Cornish coast. That little hidden cliff of Dennis's will, I hope, remain always in quietude - unique, and full of rare character like Bateman's Boots themselves.

By Des Hannigan

I met Dennis around the time the Land's End Climbing Club, (now Cornwall Climbing Club), was formed in 1972. We were both founder members and Dennis was Chairman for a while. We often climbed together in Penwith and sometimes in Snowdonia and at the Dewerstone on Dartmoor. He was always a mine of information about climbs in West Penwith and willing to take beginners up their first climbs. I know all those that met him at the Count House during his time as Custodian will have fond memories of his gentlemanly manner and sound advice on local climbing.

Dennis was a very private and modest person and did not readily volunteer details of his wartime years in the RAF but, after his wife Eileen died and he was less actively climbing, we sometimes met for pub lunches or small outings together and Jan and I learned something of that time. On his 42nd mission he parachuted out of a Halifax bomber when it was shot down over Belgium. As wireless operator he stayed on board till the last minute to send a position fix in the hopes that the crew could be picked up, and hurt his back on landing by parachute. He spent some time in a German hospital where he had very good treatment but was then sent to a POW camp adjoining the camp of the famous "wooden horse"

escape. He vaulted the horse as exercise, knowing that the tunnellers were busy below, and he helped to dispose of soil from the tunnel by trickling it down his trouser legs while walking around, (Never one to seek the limelight, Dennis pointed out that he was one of many doing this.) As the war was coming to an end, his camp was marched west for some weeks. He recalled this as an enjoyable, almost holiday, episode after two years of camp life even though they were sleeping rough and were strafed by an allied plane who mistook them for the German army. His experiences did not deter him from revisiting Germany briefly in 1950 to help build houses for refugees from East Germany.

On his return Dennis trained as a teacher and married Eileen. They lived near St.Ives and eventually in Penzance. Dennis took an active part in the 1950s and 60s cliff-climbing scene in West Penwith along with Vivian Stevenson, Jim Smith, Mac McDermott, Keith Lawder, Hugh Banner and Don Brown. A trawl through the first ascents list in the Cornwall guides shows his contribution then and in later years. Throughout his climbing years he delighted in cliff-exploration and finding and developing new local areas. In Wales he enjoyed long mountain days to remote, lesser-visited crags - such as Western Gully on the Black Ladders. Opportunities

abroad were limited but he climbed in Spain and in the Dolomites where in 1964 he did a route on the Sella Tower.

In 1981 Dennis took over from Jim Smith as devoted Custodian of the Count House and continued until 1996, sensibly retiring when the big refurbishment was imminent and I stepped in. He continued

to climb until ageing joints caught up with him, when he turned to painting his beloved cliffs instead. Eventually when he no longer had a car, he was always delighted to accompany Jan and me to visit the Count House and to meet old friends there.

Dennis died quietly at home with Fiona, his companion of many years,

soon after a short stay in hospital. When Jan and I visited him, though frail, he was pleased to see us and his last words as we left were "Thank you so much." A gentleman to the end - and thanks to you, Dennis, for your company and the memories of good times. It is a privilege to have known you.

By John Atherton

J H EMLYN JONES MBE, CBE *1915 - 2014*

John Hubert Emlyn Jones, known to all as 'Emlyn Jones', was a high-achiever in many fields. He served as President of the Climbers' Club from 1966 to 1969 and as President of the Alpine Club from 1980 to 1982; he earned an MBE for conspicuous gallantry during the Second World War; he served as High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire in 1967 and, in his post-war profession of Chartered Surveying, rose to high office in the Lands Tribunal for which he was made a CBE. He remained active to the end of his life, climbing Snowdon in his 80s and, until he was 98, travelling from his home near Leighton Buzzard twice a week to play bridge at the Garrick Club in London.

He was born in Wales, on the Gower, where his parents took their

holidays. But he spent his early years in Llandudno as his father was a schoolmaster who had worked and occasionally climbed with J M Archer Thompson, the school headmaster. One of Emlyn's proud possessions was a copy of the original Lliwedd guidebook, given to his father by Archer Thompson and inscribed with a poem by JMAT describing the joys of climbing on Lliwedd in the rain. His father's love of the mountains was the inspiration for Emlyn's own interest in mountaineering.

Emlyn left Wales for school in Dulwich when he was 14 and spent the rest of his life in England. However, he was always a fiercely patriotic Welshman and in his later years taught himself to speak Welsh. On leaving school, he qualified as



a chartered surveyor with a firm in Liverpool, spending his weekends climbing in North Wales or the Lake District and his holidays in the Alps. He joined the Climbers' Club in 1939 and the Alpine Club in 1944.

His early career was interrupted by the war. He was commissioned into

the Royal Engineers in 1940 and appointed to head one of the newly formed Bomb Disposal Units. His engineer's knowledge of explosives quickly developed into the skills required to defuse bombs, though not without some good fortune when he unknowingly tackled a new type of fuse designed to explode when withdrawn: luckily this was a faulty unit and provided essential training in methods of combatting this threat. Emlyn's work on this and other devices earned him the MBE (Military). By the age of 28 he was a major and in command of all the bomb-disposal companies in north-west London. Then, in 1944, the V1 rockets came into use by the Germans: as Emlyn said, 'They gave us no work – they all went off!' He was posted to France after D-Day and was involved in clearing mines, booby-traps and beach obstacles. A significant operation for Emlyn and his team was the destruction of the vast underground complex that was intended for the V3 Long Range 'super-guns' that would have bombarded central London.

After being demobbed in 1946, he resumed his career, joining a chartered surveying practice in Birmingham, and also resumed his Alpine climbing. A notable season, described in the 1948 CC *Journal*, included the *North Ridge* of the Dent Blanche and the long Moming ridge traversing over several summits

from the Mountet to the Weisshorn. In 1950, he joined a surveying partnership in London, but had only been in the post for two days when H W Tilman invited him to join an exploration of the Annapurna region, a recently opened area that had been closed to Westerners since the 17th century. His partners agreed to him taking five months off, telling him that he would regret it forever if he didn't go. He went, enjoyed the exploration, but suffered all the depredations that legend associates with Tilman expeditions, his illness after eating a 'green' banana causing him never to eat the fruit again!

Back in the UK, his rock-climbing was strong: he climbed with many of the leading climbers. In 1952 he went with Tony Moulam and John Churchill to climb a new route on Craig yr Ysfa. Moulam and Churchill took so long to work out the complicated line that it became too late for Emlyn to follow; instead, he went to the top of the crag in order to be able to lower a rope if required, although this proved unnecessary. The successful pair stood at the top of the climb with Emlyn, looking at the mist rolling in with the encroaching darkness, while wondering what to call their new line. Emlyn suggested a Welsh name, *Mur y Niwl* (Wall of the Mists), which the others happily accepted. He regretted not actually being on the first ascent, but was pleased

to have found a classic name for a subsequently classic climb!

Around this time, John Hunt invited Emlyn to join the Everest squad for the 1953 expedition. As plans progressed, Emlyn missed the cut for the main party 'by a whisker', but he was invited to head a reserve team that would take up the challenge again in the Autumn, should the Spring attempt fail. Many years later at one of the Everest team re-unions, he said that the Queen spoke to him about the joy of the nation at the announcement on Coronation Day of the Expedition's. He told her, 'Yes, Ma'am, but I'm afraid there were several of us whose joy was somewhat diminished!'

Emlyn Jones returned to the Himalaya in 1959, when he led his own expedition to the then unclimbed Ama Dablam, in Nepal. Emlyn had married Louise Hazell in 1954 and she was also planning to join the expedition, but became pregnant with their first child, daughter Eiluned, so stayed at home. Sadly, on what was to be the final push to the summit, George Fraser and Mike Harris (both Climbers' Club members) disappeared into clouds on the final, easier slopes. They were never seen again; their loss marked the end of Emlyn's Himalayan mountaineering.

In his later years, Emlyn developed his love of music, playing the 'cello, singing with the Madrigal Society

and forming a 60-piece orchestra in Leighton Buzzard. In his career, through his work with the Land Tribunal, he became an authority on rating values and appeals, for which he was awarded the CBE.

I was privileged to interview Emlyn for the Climbers' Club Oral Archive in January 2011 and was impressed by his vitality, his humour and his memory. Several of his stories are touched upon in the tribute above which, though they cannot do justice to the man, hopefully give

a flavour of his achievements in his long life.

He died, aged 98, in February 2014.

By David Medcalf
(also published in the Alpine Journal)

FRANK DAVIES 1928 - 2015

Frank Davies probably touched the lives of all British climbers in the 60s, 70s and beyond, because of his equipment shop in Ambleside which became a magnet on the inevitable rainy days! It is still going strong today.

Frank was born in Manchester in 1928 and was adventurous and sporting from a young age. He discovered hills, and off-road cycling, as a teenager when he carried his bike over Kinder Scout.

He became a shopkeeper in 1959 when, frustrated by the difficulties in getting hold of decent climbing and mountain gear in the UK, he decided to start importing continental equipment. He opened his own shop in Ambleside and the town became his home.

His interests were many and varied – rock-climbing, mountaineering, skiing, rally driving and sailing – and

he achieved a lot in each of those fields:

- Chairman of Langdale and Ambleside Mountain Rescue Team
- An early British traverse of the Haute Route on ski (with Chris Bonington)
- A long-standing record for the (land-based) Three Peaks Race with Joss Naylor running whilst Frank drove the rally car between the peaks
- Sailing his own boat across the Atlantic
- Winning the (sailing & running) Three Peaks Race initiated by Bill Tilman

He retired from the shop in 1997 and in 2005 set up a Family Trust which receives the rental income from the shop premises and distributes it to third world charities,



most prominently Doug Scott's Community Action Nepal.

His later years were blighted by Parkinson's Disease, but he stayed active on the hills and on the water into his 80s.

By David Medcalf

I think Frank's main claim to fame was founding his shop, in

1959, in the days when he had to go abroad to source gear. I met him in 1972, when I went to work for him, by which time he also had the Mountain Shop in Birmingham and Centresport in Leeds.

Frank tended to second, rather than lead, rock climbs, although he did tell me of one memorable occasion on (I think) Raven Crag, Thirlmere, where he was trying to lead a pitch with Ian McNaught-Davis, who set fire to the ledge he was on «to hurry Frank up»! He was also a Rock and Ice man, being from Manchester, and hung out with

all the usual suspects from that era: Whillans, Joe Brown, Nat Allen, the Greenalls, etc

He did the Haute Route, with Bonington and others, in 1967 (I think), and set the 3 Peaks record of 11 hrs 56 mins., with Joss Naylor running, in around 1971. It was in the Guinness Book of Records, and it still stands, but - because it involves breaking the speed limit and therefore the law - it was dropped from the book.

He enjoyed some moderate via ferratas, walking, and even skiing, until he was eighty, but Parkinson's

Disease - which he developed in 1992 - took its toll, and his last six years were pretty miserable, with several spells in hospital, in North Wales. We eventually got him home at the end of 2013, and his last seven months, living in the garage where he had once kept his rally cars (we did convert it first!) finally provided him with a level of contentment and acceptance of his condition.

I know that he was very proud of being in the Climbers' Club.

By Cate Davies
(Frank's Wife)

GRAEME HUGHES 1938 - 2013



I first met Graeme at an SCC (Sandstone Climbing Club) meeting in February 1987, where he had just returned from a long stint (20 years?) as a civil engineer in East Africa, mainly Kenya. Since he was one of only two people from our old club who still climbed we quickly got to know one another. I was always fighting to lose weight and get fit and he was the perfect answer as he would just ring me on Sunday morning to arrange to climb at Harrisons or High Rocks without giving me a chance to back out!

As I got to know him I found out he had joined the SCC in the late fifties and had been the first to solo some of the High Rocks desperates like 'Pussy Foot' first thing in the morning after staying in the old SCC club hut built into the Hut Boulder, sadly now long since demolished. I also knew that he had done the Corner in the late 50's which would have been quite something then. He was also friends with a lot of people from those days; he climbed a lot on Grit with Don Whillans whom he greatly admired. He was also friends

with Al Alvarez who lived near him in Hampstead and they would often swim in the Hampstead pond! Ian McNaught-Davis would always stop and chat on the rare occasions that he went to Harrisons or High Rocks whilst I asked after Mac's old Laverda Jota (his 1,000cc Motorcycle). I was also introduced to David Atcheson Jones of Jingo Wobbly guidebook fame.

Graeme always seem to be slim and fit probably because of his love of bouldering and climbing walls hence his nickname of Steel fingers Hughes but we did have a few holidays in Wales, one when he brought his young daughter Hetty and three of my children, but the most memorable climb I can

remember was done on Dow Crag in the Lakes in 1994, it was the classic *Great Central Route* done in less than perfect conditions, freezing cold, with water running down the first pitch, we both found the famous *South America Crack* a real 'toughie' and finishing in a hailstorm didn't help either.

It came as a complete surprise to me when after many years in Hampstead he suddenly announced he was marrying a German girl called Ursula and later on they were moving to a small village in France near Pau in the Pyrenees, I think because of the skiing. I thought I would never get the chance to see him there until a few years later my son Bob told us he was going to take

part in a Classic Motorcycle race in Pau. I quickly made arrangements to meet Graeme there and since his directions made no sense at all he had to come and collect us from Oleron to drive back at breakneck speed in his little Suzuki Swift the 20 miles to his beautiful house in this remote part of south west France. Sadly a small family crisis meant he couldn't come with us to watch the race, however we did get to celebrate with Dinner that night because my son won the race!

It's always sad to lose someone you've know so well and seemed so indestructible, but I know he lived his life to the full, and I will miss him a lot, I just wish he was still there to make me get fit!

By Jim Collins

HAROLD DRASDO *1930 - 2015*

Harold Drasdo was in the vanguard of the remarkable post-war ascendancy of working-class Northern English rock climbers. They were activists from the great Northern cities who challenged the previous dominance of the middle class professionals who, in the main, had the field to themselves before the war.

Born in Bradford in 1930, Harold and his younger brother Neville, like so many northern activists, began their climbing careers by exploring the local Yorkshire crags and quarries. Inspired by his fellow Bradfordian the legendary Arthur Dolphin, they soon began to look to the mountain areas of the Lake District, North Wales, Scotland and notably Ireland, where the challenges of the hardest routes of the era were accepted and first ascents began to fall.

As a leading light of the loose affiliation of Bradford-born climbers known as 'The Bradford Lads' Harold began to rack up the number of first ascents in the Lake District with routes like North Crag Eliminate, Grendal, Anarchist and Sostenuto amongst his classic collection.

Despite mainly climbing within his Bradford circle, there was a friendly rivalry and cooperation with climbers from other clubs like the Manchester Rock and Ice club and the Alpha Club. Activists from all over the north would arrive each weekend- wage slaves on Monday, free men on Sunday- to share the same dosses, barns and huts in the main climbing arenas. Swopping tales of gnarly first ascents, irate shotgun-wielding landowners and hinting at recently discovered unclimbed crags of rich potential!

In the early 1950's, Harold and brother Neville became the first British climbers to explore the great unclimbed cliffs of The Poisoned Glen in Donegal in the far west of Ireland. At the time Donegal really was the back of beyond and it took a great deal of planning and effort to just get there. However, their reward was several first ascents on the beetling 1000' cliffs. Their activity piqued the interest of top British climbers like Chris Bonington and Allen Austin who came over and made their own mark on the cliffs.

Towards the end of the fifties Harold, who had trained as a teacher and was by now working as an outdoor instructor in a Peak District

outdoor activities centre, took on the authorship of the Fell and Rock Club's first climbing guidebook to Buttermere and the Far Eastern Fells. A daunting undertaking for someone who usually had to hitch-hike between some of the remotest crags in the Lake District in all weathers and often had to solo the climbs due to a lack of willing partners.

Throughout the fifties and sixties, as working class British climbers began to find the ways and means to extend their orbit to the continent, his explorations included trips to the Alps, the USA and Spain. It was while climbing in the Alps with, amongst others, the legendary Jimmy Marshall that he returned from a successful ascent to discover that his Bradford hero and inspiration, Arthur Dolphin had been killed on a neighbouring mountain. His attendance with a handful of fellow English climbers at Dolphin's funeral was movingly described in his autobiography, *The Ordinary Route*.

In the early sixties he secured a position as warden and chief instructor at The Towers Outdoor Pursuits Centre in Capel Curig and married his lifetime partner, Maureen, with whom he had worked at an outdoor centre in the High

Peak. Despite his demanding full time position, his spare time was still spent climbing and exploring the cliffs of north Wales with first ascents such as Traditional Route and Plato's Cave falling to his advances. During this period he wrote articles and essays for magazines and journals. These were usually works of rare quality and insight, for within a sport which boasts a disproportionate number of cerebral participants, Harold was a true intellectual, a refined scholar and a first rate mind. He devoured Greek classics and works of politics and philosophy as enthusiastically as the latest climbing guidebooks.

During the late sixties and early seventies, Harold was working on the Climber's Club guidebook to Lliwedd. He became the first guidebook writer to pen guides for both the Fell and Rock and the Climber's Club. His guide published in 1971 was, as he liked to boast, the slowest selling guide in guidebook history, taking 30 years to sell out! However the grim, vegetated 1000' Welsh cliff had seen its heyday in the Edwardian era and had long since been considered an esoteric venue. The previous authors, Archer Thomson in 1909 and Menlove Edwards in 1936, had both committed suicide by poisoning. Happily Harold survived 'the curse of Lliwedd' and lived on into old age.



In this period he wrote the highly influential Education and the Mountain Centres. This emphasised the positive value of teaching young people to appreciate and value the natural environment whilst using its natural resources as an arena for learning outdoor skills and appreciating its fragile beauty. A message which was remarkably prescient.

By the end of the 70's he had jointly edited The Mountain Spirit with US climber and academic Michael Tobias. This is an anthology of writings based on philosophical and spiritual interpretations which writers throughout the ages had placed on the global mountain environment.

After retiring from The Towers, he and Maureen threw themselves into

rebuilding their smallholding high above the market town of Llanrwst. A beautiful elevated abode which looked out over the Snowdonia mountains. With more free time, he continued to write, finishing his autobiography The Ordinary Route published by Ernest Press in 1997, and to explore the crags of north Wales. In his mid-sixties, he began a climbing love affair with the sprawling south Snowdonia mountain of Arenig Fawr, a peak which had never had a chronicled climbing history but had inspired a unique Edwardian art movement, The Arenig School, led by Augustus John and James Dickson Innes. Over a short period he established around two dozen first ascents on the cliffs of Arenig and continued to establish new routes on other previously

unclimbed cliffs in remote parts of Snowdonia.

After undergoing a hip operation in his early seventies, his climbing career began to wind down although he still got out into the hills regularly. He and Maureen retired from the country life and settled in the historic north Wales coastal town of Conwy.

Harold was a lifelong political anarchist and environmentalist - his attraction to the movements was based on an intellectual affinity to progressive ideals and a natural distaste for top down governance. Over the years he had penned a number of articles based on his beliefs for political journals.

Suffering a series of niggling health problems in his later years,

his activities were restricted to less demanding coastal walks and his nightly visit to his local pub. He leaves behind a rich legacy of rock climbs, writings and of course the gratitude of thousands of youngsters who had thrived through his enlightened approach and instruction in outdoor education.

By John Appleby
(published in Footless Crow)

IAN MCNAUGHT-DAVIS 1929 - 2014



He was quite a character, was Mac. He was described by Jim Curran as the *clown-prince of British climbing* – indeed. But he was more than that. A native of Wakefield and educated at Rothwell Grammar School, he did his National Service in the RAF before going up to Manchester University where he took a first

in Mathematics and caught the climbing bug. Climbing became the great motivation of his life, he was elected to the CC in 1951 and in the ensuing few years proved himself a powerful alpinist on such routes as The Pear on the Brenva Face, the Peuterey Arête, the first British ascent of the Comici route on the Cima Grande and an early repeat of the Cassin on the Badile. In 1953 he qualified for the new and innovative ACG, eventually becoming its President in 1964.

A succession of unexciting jobs, which including the digging of glaciological research tunnels in alpine glaciers, ended in 1956 when John Hartog co-opted him, Joe

Brown and Tom Patey to attempt the Muztagh Tower (7276m/23,871') in the Baltoro Karakoram. An intimidating chisel of rock and ice, it was a major prize, but all four reached the summit - not without difficulty - via the N.W. Ridge, a few days before a French party ascended the S.E. Ridge. Subsequent expeditions took Mac to Greenland in 1960 with several first ascents and two years later, on John Hunt's expedition, to the Soviet Pamirs when he climbed the Pik Kommunism. Thereafter, until he retired, his career tended to take priority over expeditions.

When first I knew him he was an executive of the computer

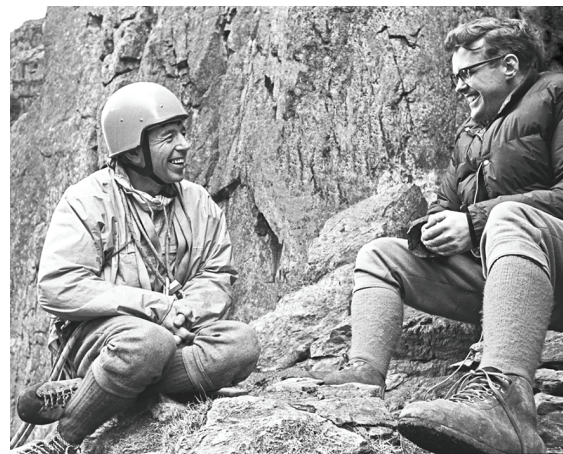
firm De La Rue Bullin in central London, where he did a good turn by employing Pete Crew, a brilliant mathematician, as a programmer, blinking his eye at long weekends in Wales providing Pete completed his work assignments. In 1970 Mac was headhunted by Comshare, a high-tech international firm writing business software. He rose rapidly through the company to become European Chief Executive and MD of the British subsidiary, remaining with the firm until he retired in 1995. Meanwhile throughout the '80s he presented a series of popular computer programmes for BBC TV, achieving a large following completely divorced from his climbing exploits to become a well-known figure to computer buffs.

How did Mac become a BBC 'celeb'? Obviously he knew his stuff about computers while his outgoing personality and myriad connections had much to do with it. As for the television climbing, he'd worked in Paris and climbed regularly at Fontainebleau with the locals, and was thus able to involve a token Frenchman, his chum Paragot, on the first BBC Live TV climb in 1963. This was on dank, mist-shrouded Cloggy and – as they say – there were lessons to be learned. Consequently Mac had been the token Brit' on RTF's Eiffel Tower climb the following Easter, so he was already a seasoned TV climber

when the Beeb scheduled another go. By now they'd realised that live TV climbing was as much circus as climb, and Mac suggested the great roof at Kilnsey as the 'big top' for the July '64 broadcast. Not only was the Wharfedale weather fairly reliable with road access to the foot of the crag, but an evening finale, with floodlights on the white limestone, promised to be a right spectacle.

Thus was the so-called BBC Climbing Circus born, a loose team of technicians and climbers of which Mac was the inspirational catalyst. The series of BBC climbs, televised live throughout the '60s, are now history - the Matterhorn (1965), Red Wall (1966), Old Man of Hoy (1967) and Spiders Web (1970) were merely the famous ones – and did much to introduce our game to the general public. Mac-the-Telly was the constant star, usually climbing with his chum Joe Brown - the perfect foil - and so guaranteeing a lively flow of witty commentary.

Beneath Mac's larger-than-life exterior lurked a remarkably kindly and generous fellow. We first met in 1961 after a club dinner at which I was a guest and he was the guest speaker. Worse for wear the following morning, I'd just started breakfast in an Indian restaurant when in staggered Mac, also in search of a curry cure-all. Recognising a fellow-sufferer, he joined me, discovered that I was a



photographer on a glossy fashion magazine, and more to the point, I had a decent alpine record. He was a keen photographer so we had much in common.

"Are you in the CC?" "he demanded. "Why Not?" "Are you in the AC?" "Why Not?" "We must see about fixing that!"

Despite the exigencies of high-powered business, Mac continued to climb hard on British rock, often with his London neighbour, the critic Al Alvarez, the two of them vying to out-drive the other on the torturous Welsh roads, giving rise to a host of apocryphal stories. Frequently he partnered his old chum Joe Brown, sometimes pioneering new routes on Gogarth; he was 82 when he made his last serious British rock climb. In retirement he expeditioned again and climbed Mount Kenya and Kilimanjaro.

As a true Yorkshireman, however urbane and given to life's pleasures, Mac was never afraid to call a spade a spade, and after a spell as BMC President (1991-1994) he took over as the Presidency of the UIAA for the following decade, where highly respected, he'll be especially remembered for pushing through the

Tyrol Declaration on the ethics and responsibilities of mountaineering.

I have an abiding memory of Mac—then well into his sixties — emerging from Kingshouse, hand in hand with his gorgeous wife Loretta, both clad in immaculate, form-fitting black leathers. Mac swung his leg over a huge black Italian motorbike,

a Ducati I think, Loretta climbed onto the pillion, grasped him round the waist, and they roared off down the track. One of Mac's business colleagues later wrote "Anyone who uses the word Bollocks as his PC password on a live TV programme deserves my respect. " Yes, Mac was quite a character.
John Cleare

JOHN Chadwick 1946 - 2015



John Chadwick was sadly killed in a climbing accident on Helvellyn on 17th February 2015.

Anybody who knew him would not be surprised that he was climbing alone in winter. He was at home in the mountains and spent as much time as possible wandering about on them in all conditions.

John was born in Ashton-under-Lyne on the 4th June 1946 and was brought up in Greenfield. It was on the near by crags of the Chew Valley that he developed an interest for climbing that was to become a life long passion. John qualified as a chemist at Imperial College London. He worked at Phillips research labs in Redhill, but that wasn't for him so he decided on a change of career. He enrolled at Herriot Watt University

in Edinburgh and retrained in town planning.

I became a friend and climbing partner of John when he came to work for Middlesbrough Council as a Town Planner.

Mainly due to John's enthusiasm we were out most weekends and twice a week to the wall. Our climbing standard improved and we did many classic routes in the 70s and 80s. Routes such as Icabod and Nazgul on Scafell, Torro on Ben Nevis, Agony on Etive Slabs, and Shrike, Pinnacle Arête, Vember and Slanting Slab on Cloggy. We also had numerous trips to Scotland in winter and managed many testing routes. John was also a regular visitor to the Alps and Dolomites, and was the ideal partner, always confident

and focused. He also climbed in Russia and Poland and was part of an expedition to Greenland in the 1960s.

In the early 1970s John and Bob Peckam made what was probably the first serious attempt to free climb out of Gaping Ghyll. They got quite high before being stopped by the volume of water.

John joined the Cleveland Mountaineering Club and was a very active member. He was elected president, a role he took seriously and did well. In 1985 John joined the Climbers' Club and again contributed to the running of the club by becoming membership secretary. John was also a member of the Alpine Club.

John regularly skied with his wife Marjorie and his daughter Joanne, he also enjoyed ski touring. Marjorie was always tremendously supportive of John's exploits and was a willing accomplice for the weekend trips to

Wales where their Vango tent was a semi-permanent feature on the Ynys field.

In the 70s we had a family trip to the Verdon, all we had as a guide book was an article torn out of a magazine. The climbing was very scary, as at that time there were no bolts in the crags so the protection was very spaced and also some of the belays were old wooden wedges. John's climbing style was precise and economical. He was a quick climber but never seemed hurried and always gave the impression of being totally in control.

When he retired John and Marjorie moved to Gamblesby near Penrith where he was able spend a lot more time on the Lakeland Fells. Just a few years ago John had major stomach surgery from which he wasn't expected to survive, but he bounced back from that and managed to do the Bob Graham Round. In the summer of 2013

John, Marjorie, Joanne and her husband Richard did what they called "End to End – The Hard Way" an ultimate quadrathlon. They travelled from John O'Groats to Lands End via the highest mountains and the longest lakes in mainland UK. The route featured mountain running over the Scottish 4000s and the English and Welsh 3000s. They also canoed the length of Loch Awe and swam Windermere and lake Bala. They linked them on together on road bikes. There was a last run from Cape Cornwall to Sennen Cove and a final walk to Lands End. An impressive achievement and all in 10 days.

John was a rock climber, walker, alpinist, skier and more recently a fell runner of great ability and talent. He died on the mountains that he loved.

I for one feel privileged to have known him and shared some adventures with him.
By Peter Goodwin.

JOHN CLEGG *1925 - 2015*

John Clegg was one of a group of Sheffield University Mountaineering Club activists who were also members of the Climbers' Club in the late 1940's and early 1950's. Elected in 1946 he resigned from the Club in the mid-70s.

A graduate of Sheffield University Medical School, John moved after his national service to a lectureship at Liverpool University in 1951. Whilst at Liverpool he joined The Wayfarers Club and was invited to join the successful Kangchenjunga Expedition as its doctor. Subsequently, with others from the expedition, he was invited to sign the "Everest Room" ceiling in the Pen-y-Gwryd Hotel. He returned to Sheffield shortly after this Himalayan trip before being appointed Regius Professor of Anatomy in Aberdeen University in 1977. From there he

led a number of scientific expeditions to developing countries before his retirement in 1992.

John was a mountaineer rather than a rock climber. He organised and led the Club's Alpine Meet based in Blatten in the Loetschental in 1954, when members faced poor conditions with frequent heavy rain. Probably his hardest climbing was in Wales, when immediately after Kangchenjunga and with Joe Brown, a friend from the expedition in the lead he climbed a number of classic routes. However he was involved in first ascents on Sheffield grit and helped open up the Grisedale valley in The Lake District after the SUMC secured the lease of Ruthwaite Lodge in 1953.

John was straight speaking and a big man in every way. Whilst in Liverpool he played in the front

row of the scrum for St Helens RUFC and to see him approaching the finishing crack on his favourite climb, Stanage's Fairy Steps before the advent of micro protection gear, caused concern to more than one second safely(?) belayed at the start of the traverse.

We shared the same sense of humour and John was a great raconteur. I look back to the many happy hours spent wandering and talking in all weathers on Peak District crags, on Kinder Scout and whilst exploring the hills and crags of Eastern Lakeland. Memorable events range from a week of superb winter climbing based in Wasdale to a zany unsuccessful attempt by John, with me as co-driver, to take his early Ford Popular car from the road below Stanage direct to Stanage Pole! He will be sorely missed by his friends.
By Frank Fitzgerald

JOHN D.C. PEACOCK *1931 - 2014*

John Peacock died on August 20th 2014 aged 83. He will be remembered as a keen and able mountaineer, a congenial expedition member and brilliant leader, a planner who could think two jumps ahead and a man with a twinkle in his eye. Almost to the end of his life he seemed to be blessed with a lucky star.

John's first experience of the hills was in Lakeland holidays which started in 1945 – the year the war ended. It was love at first sight and in 1947 he did his first rock climbs in Birkness Combe above Buttermere: Mitre Buttress and the Oxford and Cambridge Route – tied to a hemp rope and in borrowed clinker-nailed boots.

His early years were spent in a Gloucestershire village where, influenced by a family friend who was deeply engaged in the development of naval radar, he became fascinated with electronics. In the immediate aftermath of war his rural grammar school had neither physics nor maths teachers and so John was allowed to transfer to Cheltenham Grammar School for his sixth form years. At Cheltenham his world rapidly expanded and he not only won a place at Cambridge

but also was one of twenty five schoolboys from the U.K. (nearly all from Public Schools) to be chosen by the South African Aid to Britain Fund to fly out to Nairobi in a DC3 Dakota and then spend three months trekking to Cape Town by Land-Rover and bus. They sailed home on the Union Castle Line's "Warwick Castle", a ship reputed to be the only vessel that rolled in dry dock.

At that point National Service called and John received his officer training at Eaton Hall before being commissioned into The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. He was posted to a base in Kent. As luck would have it the area fell under the command of a man who at the time was the youngest brigadier in the army. For some reason he took a shine to this young subaltern and said something like, "You are just the sort of chap we need in the army", to which John replied to the effect, "Well, I like it very much, but I do want to take up my place at Cambridge, Sir." The brigadier said, "Well we'll see what we can do".

The result was that John went up to Cambridge in 1952 on full army pay and allowances and then on to at least two years of electronic



research with the General Electric Company. He returned to the army as a captain after five years, never, as far as I could see, having worn uniform! At Cambridge the CUMC was at one of its high points, awash with luminaries such as George Band, Roger Chorley, Geoff Sutton, Eric Langmuir and Bob Downes. They became life-long friends and although John was never a driving leader he was a participant in many fine ascents. I recall he was very pleased with the East face of the Grepon and the complete traverse of the Meije. In 1954 he was elected to the Climbers' Club.

In between times he took to the river with his normal enthusiasm. Hardly of the stature of an oarsman, he filled the back seat admirably

and coxed the Lady Margaret Boat Club 1st Boat (LMBC is the boat club of St, John's College) to Head of the River in both the Lent and May races as well as coxing the crew in the Ladies Plate at Henley. He was elected to the Leander Club. Almost incidentally he was awarded his degree, having read Mechanical Sciences.

John loved telling jokes and seemed to have an infinite reservoir from the crude to the cultivated, and on a British Association of Ski Instructors course insisted on each member producing a fresh joke every morning at breakfast. He also had a few party tricks and one of those was playing the spoons – two spoons held back to back in one hand rattling them over the fingers of the other. Years ago I found myself in Glenbrittle and asked Mrs. Macdonald if she could remember my brother. A moment's thought and then in that lovely west highland brogue, she said, "Oh now, that will be the boy who gets the music from the spoons".

In 1964 John was selected as a member of a Combined Services Expedition to South Georgia. The main aim was to retrace Shackleton's 1916 route from King Haakon Bay to Stromness. This was the first crossing since the original one and had to rely on Shackleton's original description and sketches. The report describes John as "conscientious

and enthusiastic". A more telling comment comes from a Parachute Regiment sergeant with whom he shared a tent; "Here was me, a rough Para sergeant sharing a tent with a Cambridge educated officer. We got on like a house on fire." John's influence led the sergeant to apply for and obtain a regular commission a few months later. In the latter half of the sixties John led three expeditions to Greenland. The first was to introduce some Officer Cadets at Sandhurst (where by now he was an instructor) to the delights of expeditioning. The second was with the Army Mountaineering Association to peaks in West Greenland and the third was a four month Joint Services expedition to Peary Land, the most northerly region of Greenland, which he led with Bruce Reid as his deputy. Every member of that expedition recalls it with great pleasure and amongst the comments I have collected every one mentions his superb leadership. His efforts were recognised by the RGS with the presentation in 1971 of The Ness Award. At a less exalted level he is remembered for having played the spoons at the northernmost land on the globe.

John Peacock was promoted to lieutenant colonel at about that time and there are wry comments about his absence from his desk at the M.O.D. when he joined the party led by Alan Blackshaw which

made the first British ski traverse of the Alps – a route of more than 500 miles starting in Kaprun in Austria to Gap in France. Meanwhile he was recruited to the planning team for the 1976 Army Everest Expedition. The preparation for Everest involved preliminary expeditions to the Himachal Pradesh and to Nuptse. It became apparent that John had problems at altitude and for this reason he became Base Camp Manager on the Everest expedition. Despite health difficulties he was proud to have reached 22,000' in the Western Cwm and thrilled that Brummie Stokes and Bronco Lane gained the summit. It should be added that when Harold Wilson announced the British withdrawal from "East of Suez" a committee was formed at the MOD to consider the personnel repercussions of that policy. John was a member of that committee and pushed strongly for the development of "Adventurous Training" in all branches of the forces – a policy which continues to this day.

Everest seemed a good point to have a change of course (he was 45 by then) and one fair wind blew him towards sailing and another blew Sheila Ralph in his direction. Sheila had been John Hunt's PA at the Duke of Edinburgh's Award office and says she and John P. had had each other in their sights for years. At the time they were

married Sheila was an editor at Heinemann and overnight became the “Colonel’s wife” at Rheindahlen. A remarkable feat in anyone’s book. She tells the tale of a visit to the dentist in Germany and discovered that she was down as, “Colonel Peacock – wife of “. I don’t think that happened again. Sadly John and Sheila had left it a bit late for children – they would have been super parents but John must have a world record for god-children – certainly well into double figures, and he kept in contact with every one of them.

Sailing was his next interest and he went about it with his customary thoroughness helped by Sheila’s background. While in Germany he raced and cruised in the Baltic and when posted back to the U.K. became commodore of the REME Yacht Club and sailed in the waters round Brittany, Ireland, Spain and the Mediterranean. In 1992 he was Mate on REME’s yacht “Master Craftsman” on a voyage across the Atlantic from Canada in which he qualified as an RYA Yachtmaster, Ocean.

By now a full colonel, John’s penultimate posting with the army was as Commandant of the REME apprentices’ college – Princess Marina College. He seemed to me to be in his element here – in charge but with a real concern for the young soldiers in his care. He brought

discipline and enthusiasm and self-confidence into the lives of many young men there who had never experienced such things in their lives. He told me it was the most satisfying job he had in his army career and he was delighted when Prince Philip accepted his invitation to take the salute at one of his passing out parades.

John retired early from the army and, after a brief period as a bursar of a public school, became Director of the RYA Seamanship Foundation, a charity providing sailing opportunities for blind and handicapped sailors. Here he was once again in his element – working actively with young people and, often with the skilled help of Sheila, taking blind crews across the channel. On his final retirement, from the Seamanship Foundation, the Peacocks moved to the village of Lustleigh in Devon. There they threw themselves into village life with John becoming chairman of the Lustleigh Society, and hosting memorable parties where the furniture had to be removed to make way for all the guests. Having found their dream house close by the River Dart they, with Sheila’s brother, bought a Nicholson 31, “Wave Dancer” in which they cruised as far afield as Spain. John enjoyed every minute, whether reefed down in a Force 8 in the summer,

or head down in the bilges doing maintenance in the winter.

Inevitably in time, age made some expeditions less enjoyable and reluctantly the boat was sold and John now turned his eye to fishing. He had caught that bug while posted to Benbecula in the Outer Hebrides where he was involved in testing rocket systems over the Atlantic. In those early days the quarry were trout but in his last years salmon were the goal and, as in everything else, he was determined to succeed. On the Order of Service sheet at his memorial service there was a picture of him - with a wide grin and a thirteen pound salmon. At that service it struck me, a civilian all my life, that rank is, necessarily, an integral part of the military. John, always totally professional in everything he did, somehow transcended that structure. Whether by chance or intention he was just John Peacock in retirement. I think he subscribed to Kipling’s words: If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue, Or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch, If all men count with you, but none too much ...

Ten months before his death John went into hospital for a total knee replacement. A day later he suffered a stroke from which he never recovered. He knew he was dying and had no fear of that. We talked of the old days, of the high

hills and our shared love of Arthur Ransome's books. John's favourite was "We Didn't Mean To Go To Sea" and, struggling to speak, he quoted the words on the title page, "Grab a chance and you won't be sorry for a might-have been."

By Nigel Peacock

John Peacock died in August 2014, having been incapacitated for some months by a stroke that followed a knee replacement operation. He was 83, a charming man, always with a twinkle in his eye, a fine leader, a gifted organiser and a steady companion. An experienced mountaineer on rock, crampons or ski, he was elected to the CC in 1954.

John had started climbing during regular family holidays in the Lakes and made his first rock climbs, aged 16, on Mitre Buttress and Oxford & Cambridge in Birkness Combe, with a hemp rope and borrowed clinker-nailed boots.

By profession John was a soldier. At Cheltenham Grammar School he had been fascinated by electronics and when in 1950 National Service caught up with him he was duly commissioned as a 2/Lt. into REME, two years later taking

up a place at Cambridge to read Mechanical Engineering on an Army scholarship. He was a small chap and found University rowing an interesting diversion, eventually coxing his college's first boat and earning election to the elite Leander Club. But these were vintage years for the CUMC and with climbing companions such as George Band, Roger Chorley, Geoff Sutton, Bob Downes and others, John was in good company and bagged such excellent alpine classics as the Grépon's Mere de Glace Face and the Traverse Intégral of the Meije.

After Cambridge and a spell in industry, John returned to the Army in 1957 now as a full-blown Captain – claiming never to have donned a uniform for five years - and regimental duties kept his toes on the line for a while. Then in 1964 he was selected to join the successful Combined Services team that made the first repeat of Shackleton's epic South Georgia crossing, and ever after John was smitten with 'polar fever'. Subsequently he led three military expeditions to Greenland; the objective of the first, while he was a Sandhurst instructor, was expedition training for officer cadets, but that of second with the AMA was to climb peaks in West Greenland, the prize among the 16 virgin peaks climbed being the exotically named Sukkartoppen Wedding Cake. The third visit

was a four month Joint Services Expedition to Peary Land in the far north of Greenland where his scientific work was acknowledged by the RGS with their 1971 Ness Award.

As a slight diversion in 1970 John was loaned by the Army to the BBC – a ploy engineered by Tony Streather, then a well-connected Colonel, who had himself been recruited as technical advisor for a filmed 'reconstruction' of the 1957 Haramosh epic 'Last Blue Mountain'. John was to take the part of Emery, the climber who had survived thanks to the heroic efforts of the then young Captain Streather – now played by Bill March - while two other experienced Army climbers – Jon Fleming and Brian Martindale – played the parts of the tragic casualties, Culbert and Jillott. The filming took place over several winter weeks on and around the Zermatt Breithorn, with a minimal crew - a courageous BBC Producer/Fixer, John Cleare as Cameraman / Director and two ski bums from ISM as Sherpas. The Peacock arctic experience proved invaluable, especially his ski mountaineering ability and igloo building and snowshoe skills. In fierce weather conditions he was always jolly, always patient, forever practical and however exhausted, always ready to climb up the slope again for yet another take.

He was now a lieutenant-colonel and there were the usual stints in BAOR and at the MoD, where he was a vociferous advocate of the value of Adventure Training for service personal, as well as an interesting posting as Commandant of the Hebrides Rocket Range on Benbecula. Somehow John managed to escape to join Alan Blackshaw's British Alpine Ski Traverse of 1972 on which he doubled as Special Correspondent for the Guardian, and on return to civilisation soon became involved in the planning and preparations for the projected Army Everest attempt scheduled for 1976. There was a shake-down climb on Nuptse but John did not acclimatise well and his brilliant organisational skills were put to good use as Logistics Officer and Base Camp manager on the final successful

expedition, led by Tony Streater, which put Brummie Stokes and Bronco Lane on the summit.

John would always say that his most satisfying posting in the Army had been between 1979 and 1983 when as a full Colonel he was Commandant of the Princess Marina College for REME Apprentices at Arborfield. Here he was commanding youngsters preparing for a career as military technicians, 'I'm as much a Headmaster as a Soldier' he claimed.

A few years later he retired, served for a short time as a public school bursar, and then found a perfect billet for his considerable energies, for he was still a relatively young man although he had heart problems. Over the years John had become a keen sailor; he'd crossed the Atlantic and cruised in most

European waters, often with his wife Sheila, herself an experienced yachtswoman who he had met at the Duke of Edinburgh's Award where she was John Hunt's PA. He was a qualified RYA Ocean Yacht master and had been Commodore of the REME Yacht Club and now he took over as Director of the RYA Seamanship Foundation, a nautical charity providing sailing opportunities for handicapped sailors; once again he was actively working with young people and often skippering blind crews across the Channel. During this time he served on the AC Committee, on the AC Library Council and as Hon Secretary of the ASC before retiring properly to his final billet at Lustleigh on the edge of Dartmoor. By John Cleare

JON TRAFFORD *1958 - 2015*



Jon came into climbing at a relatively late age, initially joining the Northumbrian Mountaineering Club in 2002 and he became a member of the CC in 2007.

In his earlier life Jon worked in the army and police and was married with two children. His fitness and organisational skills were to stand him in good stead latterly in his climbing career and especially as a mountaineering and outdoor pursuits instructor where he also

taught snowboarding canoeing and mountain biking.

Jon proved to be an excellent climbing partner and he moved steadily up the grades being at home on both rock and ice. As well as being competent and well-organised, he was fun to be with and had a good line in self-deprecating humour.

Jon's fortunes changed when, on a trip to the highlands, he met his future wife, Amanda, in the front room of my brother's house north

of Inverness, where we gathered prior to camping on the north-west coast in a gale. They married in Northumberland and on his retirement from the police at age 50, they were able to pursue their dream and move to the Highlands where they carried out an impressive conversion of a barn near Inverness. This served as the base for John's work as an outdoor instructor in the area.

It was a shock to all of us who have shared time with Jon on the mountains and crags when such an able and competent person died following injuries sustained from a fall whilst hillwalking with Amanda, on Beinn Alligin last September. He is sadly missed.

By Bryn Roberts.

MARTIN HARRIS

1939 - 2015

I first met Martin at Ynys in 1968 and in the next few days he had taken me up five of the major hard routes on the big cliffs in North Wales. It was the start of a friendship and climbing partnership that was to last for over forty years. I have largely forgotten what he told me about his early days. Although I was a late starter, I think we both began in 1962 and he had already done some big Alpine routes (the Bonatti, the direct on the Cima Grande stick in my mind) and when we met he had just come back with his wife Flo from Kenya where he had been teaching.

He was a far better climber than I, but somehow our mutual enthusiasm gelled and I regularly partnered him in the Alps for a decade or so from 1971. Among the 25 or so important routes we did together, the Traverse of the Aiguilles with a fun party of three other Brits and a fast ascent of the Badile North Face were particularly memorable, as too an intensive fortnight in 1974 in which we did the Couturier Couloir, the Gervasutti Couloir, Route Major, the North Ridge of the Dent Blanche and the North Face of the Dru: after

which the still insatiable Martin went to the Dauphine and did further hard things. But although determined, strong and technically able, Martin had an innate sense of caution, as I realised when I discovered that both of us had been mistrustful and frustrated by the weather pattern in 1969, when everyone seemed to be chancing it and running up the Walker, until the major epic happened. Finally Martin had to give up the big mountains for family commitments but that in no way damped his enthusiasm. By now he was living in Loughton (near Sheffield), where he was headmaster of Dinnington Comprehensive and had enrolled the local doctor Eric Simpson as his main climbing partner. The two families became inseparable, spending their holidays together, generally on the bolted limestone in the south of France, where I sometimes joined them.

After he gave up the big mountains in 1984, we drifted apart for a while, but I began picking up with him again in 1988 and quickly realised he was climbing ever better on British rock. Limestone was Martin's forte and grit a *pis aller* for short



days or dubious weather. So until I retired in 1997 I used regularly to come up from Oxford for a short weekend, meeting at Matlock or Stoney cafe for a half day's hard climbing followed by a gourmet meal cooked by Flo and Rose, with Eric joining us next day when not on call for a full day, often in the company of some of Martin's many local climbing friends. But the real excitement came in his half term breaks. So for example, on two and a half days at the start of his holiday

in 1991, I garnered 16 E points and 18 stars at Pembroke seconding him, including three routes in the Leap and at the end of the week joined him for a final day at Malham where I added 7E points and 9 stars in our short day's outing. A typical Harris performance: and what he had done in the days between I do not know. In retirement, living abroad I naturally saw less of him, but since he too retired shortly after (1999; a memorable champagne breakfast at Verdon for the day he would have been due to return to school) I was always made welcome by the Harris-Simpsons at their gites. On one occasion however, Martin announced he wanted to do one of the new hard routes on the Pelle (southern Vercors), and it was then I realised that the old fire for something more exciting than one pitch lower-offs had still not quite been extinguished and deep down he longed to climb on bigger things. Once again we started to drift apart as the familiar southern French limestone became exhausted and the new sports venues in the Mediterranean were calling, while I in turn was venturing into pastures new. So while we kept in contact I saw relatively little of him in his last years. His emails showed he was still as fanatic as ever, but towards the end it became clear that intensive sports climbing and walls were taking their toll of his fingers and joints and a certain despondency

became manifest as he began to slip down the grade.

His fall on Striding Edge just before his 76th birthday and a few months before his golden wedding, was naturally a tragedy for his family, and a loss for his many friends, but at least he died where he loved to be, in the hills. A great character, ebulliently enthusiastic, with incredible drive, he nevertheless showed understanding of the foibles and weaknesses of others. In all the time climbing together I only once saw him loose his temper: and that on his first route of the Alpine season after 23 hours continuously on the go when I took what I thought would be a short cut through the Chamonix forest in the dark, except it wasn't. It was an outburst not without humour, similar to the occasion when after spending the day putting up a shed in the garden, it promptly collapsed on him. Loyal to his friends, conscientious in his profession, and above all caring of his family, climbing remained his passion and in more than 50 years he never surrendered to the march of time. They don't make them like that anymore!

John Wilkinson

During our lives we rarely encounter people who become such good friends that our lives and families become aligned. Martin and



his family became so very important to us that I hardly know where to begin...

When we moved to Laughton in 1982 so that I could join the local GP practice, our children went to the local school. It wasn't long before we met other families in the village of a similar age. I started talking to Martin, and discovered a man who had had amazing experiences as an alpinist, skier, had lived in Kenya, played rugby at a high level; on and on it seemed.

Gradually we started going on holidays together, and I became infected with the climbing bug. He took me to places I could never have managed on my own, starting with some walks in the Lake District, then Scottish ridge walks in snow and ice conditions, and then when he had whittled my somewhat corpulent body down he took me climbing. We all went to France on a camping holiday. After a few routes in the Yonne area, we moved to Buis les Baronnies and before I knew it we were on the ridge of Rocher St

Julian! These holidays introduced me to more of Martin's friends and old climbing partners including, of course, John Wilkinson.

After that we climbed all over the UK. Our most memorable and poignant climb was the Old Man of Hoy shortly after the death of my father; that concentrated my mind! But this was just an example of how supportive a friendship we had with Flo and Martin, which has continued down the years.

I was always envious of Martin's holidays as a teacher, as whilst he was away for a good part of the year, our family languished at home; we managed to join him for short holidays in various parts of France which gave us a flavour of what might be. When he returned at the end of the summer holidays as this "sun-bronzed rock god", I dreamed of a time when we could all go to sunny climes for extended trips.

Martin continued to climb with friends from the Nottingham Climbers Club but when the Foundry climbing wall opened in Sheffield we met another group of people. Moving to the Edge we began to associate with John and Cath Graveling, and then the rest of the group. Martin was able to climb regularly and keep his fitness level high. I was still acting mainly as belayer, top-roping all the time. After lots of persuasion I started to lead, and thus found a new dimension

to the sport. Eventually I realised that there was more to life than work, retired, and took the first step to qualifying for the Grumpy Old Men's Climbing Club of Sheffield. I am proud to say that along with the Gravelings we contributed to Martin achieving Head Grump status in December 2013 after being runner-up in the previous 2 years!

Despite advancing years he was still keen to take on new challenges. This has included new climbing areas, most popularly Kalymnos, Corsica, Turkey, Spain and Sicily. During the past few years we have been on some great via ferratas. Seeing a 70+ year old man shooting down a zip wire with great aplomb was something else! 2014 saw him parapenting over Lake Annecy in much better style than myself (I was airsick, much to his amusement).

His "action-man" approach to life didn't stop in the winter. Although his alpine days were over, he was always a keen skier and was particularly pleased that his age meant that he could get a free ski pass to his favourite resorts. I was never a skier, so he had to look further afield for buddies. Imagine his surprise to find a neighbour 50 yards from his house needed someone to make up their little group in February 2015! Thus a new friendship was forged with Barry Platts and his friends, which looked

good for next winter. How fate can scupper your plans...

I still have great difficulty understanding how Martin came to fall off Striding Edge, after all the incredible climbs and serious winter ridge walks that he had achieved during his climbing career. I guess that we are all only a tiny slip away from our own demise when out on the hills and should focus all the time on what we are doing, no matter how "easy" the route or how accomplished we think we are.

I cannot begin to tell you how profoundly this accident has affected all our lives. This vital man was at the centre of our plans for the future; we had so much more to do, despite him bemoaning all the climbs he could no longer tackle from his glorious past. He was planning for the future by becoming a gourmet and oenophile, only so that he could complain about the food and wine in restaurants as "he could get much better at home". All we can take comfort in is that he died whilst being out on the mountains, and not fading away in some nursing home. Monday 20th April will always be in my memory; life will never be the same again.

Eric Simpson

MIKE PINNEY *1951 - 2014*



Mike Pinney was born in Solihull, Warwickshire in 1951 to Gerald and Barbara. In 1954, a sister, Margaret, arrived. Mike spent 1962 to 1969 at Tudor Grange Grammar School, Solihull. In 1969 and 1970, he was a University Apprentice at Lucas GTE, Birmingham. He then attended the University of Southampton from 1970 to 1973 and graduated with BSc in Mechanical Engineering.

Mike spent the whole of his professional career at Westland Helicopters, later to become AgustaWestland, and he retired in 2011. In 1982, he had become a Chartered Engineer and Member of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

Mike died on March 9, 2014 as a result of a climbing accident. He

slipped and fell from a footpath on a hike between Pen yr Helgi Du and Carnedd Llewelyn, in the Carneddau range in North Wales. Mike suffered severe head injuries but initially survived the fall. Fellow members of his local club, in Yeovil, battled in vain to save him, calling the emergency services, administering first aid and CPR. Mike died in the helicopter on the way to hospital.

Andy Blakeley

From an early age, Mike was interested in outdoor activities, using the garden swing as a climbing frame, canoeing and dinghy sailing with schoolmates, hill walking and rock climbing with friends.

Mike was always very good at keeping in touch with people and would make a point of visiting friends and relatives. He would organise and invite groups of friends on hill-walking weekends. On one trip to North Wales, the party included myself and his school friend, Nicholas. One thing led to another, and two years later Mike was best man at our wedding and, later still, uncle and godfather to our son.

But Mike's true passion was climbing, initially rock climbing

and then mountaineering, both in Britain and the Alps. Over time, Mike joined a number of climbing clubs and became an active member, taking positions of responsibility, so that he could put something back into the sport.

Margaret Moore

Soon after moving to Yeovil in 1973 Mike joined with the fledgling local climbing group, then known as the Chequers Climbing Group, after the pub where we met, but becoming Yeovil Mountaineering Club in 1987, and was a central figure in the local climbing scene for 40 years. We went to the Alps for the first time, in his Hillman Avenger, in 1975. We were all in full employment but still there was a need for economy so we took a large supply of cheap food, making the car rather overloaded. His climbing life evolved after this trip and he went on to join the ABMSAC, the CC and the AC. Mike's climbing lives in all these groups appeared, from my viewpoint inside one of them, to be separate but interlinked. If you accepted a lift for a weekend in Cornwall or to the Alps in the summer you moved from one circle of friends to another and were welcomed accepted there as a

friend of Mike. Often the weekend would be at a CC hut, introducing non-members to the joys of hut life and doing the washing up so that you might be invited again. Many people, I think, met other climbing friends through Mikes' introductions in a similar way, and so it was that I myself realised I knew easily enough people to allow me to apply for CC membership, which Mike proposed. He had an amazing memory for names and faces and it not unusual to be out on a hill and meet somebody he knew and could name, know when and where they last met, and chat about future plans.

He was known as a safe climber, but when you climb nearly every week then accidents do happen. Memorably, in 1989 we had a great day at Cheddar doing Mourning Glory, even then like scaling a dry stone wall, then Sceptre Direct, and descending in the dark. Inspired, we returned the following week when he found even looser rock and fell from the 3rd pitch of Utopia, landing fortunately in brambles on soft ground and escaping with only concussion and a broken ankle. After that experience it took the installation of bolts on the lower tiers to attract us back in this millenium!

Swanage was always a favourite area for Mike, and I think it was only his influence that made me go down into Boulder Ruckle (a 1960s negative experience having

put me off). In more recent years the bolted routes at both Swanage and Portland were found to be a safer fun option for training and having a good day out, though on busy weekends abseiling into the Ruckle or Guillemot Ledge (where you could still hear the hordes at Dancing Ledge) meant a quieter day. There were memorable trips to North Devon and the Culm. We did Wreckers Slab at Cornaky cliff more than once, in complete isolation with only birds for company, and always with enough time for one of the other scary outings there. He was an enthusiastic but not obsessive climber and never deaf to the call of the pub if the weather turned bad or we were just tired out.

Mike held various positions on the YMC committee and was chairman 1993-1997 and again at the time of his death.

Gerry Martyn

Mike joined the ABMSAC in 1975, the year that the George Starkey Hut in the Lakes was opened. [del] This started a long association with the Alps and Switzerland in particular. His passion for Alpine climbing soon turned into thinking of completing all the 4000m peaks in the Alps. He completed this fantastic achievement in 2007, but only after a 12year pause after which he climbed the Aguille Blanche with Jeff Harris,

both sustaining injuries in a rock fall on descent. The summer Alpine Climbing Meet has always been a feature of the ABM/AC Meets Programme and in the 1970/80s was largely a family meet, but now everybody has grown up. The Meet developed under Mike's stewardship and over the years he incorporated the CC, FRCC and the Wayfarers and introduced the popular reunion meet in the autumn at the George Starkey Hut. In 2013 at Randa over 60 people spent two to three weeks peak bagging, exploring, rock climbing and meeting up with friends, old and new. Mikes tent was the centre of attention, with him offering advice, making a brew for new arrivals and taking the opportunity to sell guidebooks and AC buffs. He also welcomed new members and first timers and introduced them to potential climbing partners and still found time to go off climbing himself. [del]

In addition to Mike's passion for climbing he was a great supporter of the Climbing Club tradition. His commitment to the ABM over years was immense. After joining the ABM in 1975 he joined the committee in 1977 [del] and a year later he was elected Treasurer – a post he held for 16 years. After joining the ABM Mike also joined the AC and the CC, making good use of the AC archives for his future forays into the mountains. He was unstinting in his

committee work and after standing down as Treasurer was elected Vice President from 1997 to 2001. He always brought a balanced approach to proceedings, and was able to both bring a sense of the club's history and where we wanted to go in the future, to many of our deliberations.

In recognition of his work Mike was elected President in 2009 – the ABMs Centenary Year.

One area that was Mike's passion [del] is the ABM Hut, the George Starkey Hut in the Lake District. He served as a Director for the Hut Limited Company and was the Company Secretary as well as the Hut Booking Secretary. [del]

Mike retired from Augusta Westland in 2011 and some of us who thought they may see more of him in the local climbing scene were soon proved wrong. Derek Buckle takes up the story:
Mike Goodyer

Mike joined the Alpine Club in 1982 and following his retirement in 2011 joined the committee to become the Honorary Treasurer until his untimely death in 2014.

Although I had known Mike for many years through ski-touring and ice-climbing trips to the Alps, it was on expeditions to the greater ranges where our all too short deeper friendship developed. Sharing a tent with Mike in the Indian Himalaya in 2012 led me to fully appreciate

his many qualities. Quiet and shy by nature he enthusiastically endorsed any reasonable climbing objectives, adding sound constructive comments and good judgement. In contrast to many climbers he also knew when to be silent. It was soon evident that the impressive northwest face of Barmal (5879m), our primary objective in 2012, was unsuitable but we still had plenty of alternative objectives such as Oti-ka-danda (5782m) and the plethora of unclimbed peaks at the head of the Sematoli cirque. We began with Kagbhusandi Parbat (5301m) and continued with PK 5515 before Mike climbed PK5120 with Stuart Worsfold in his enthusiasm to get the most out of the expedition – so typical of Mike when in the mountain environment.

Later that year we were again together, this time on the AC expedition to the Antarctic Peninsula. Like the others, Mike endured the long Drake Passage crossing from Ushuaia to become entranced by whales, dolphins, penguins and Antarctica's other abundant wild-life. But exploratory mountaineering was the *raison d'être* of the expedition and this did not disappoint. Exploration of the Belgica Glacier leading to first ascents of Alencar Peak (1592m), PK1333, PK2032 (Belgica Dome), PK1475 and Lancaster Hill were all added to Mike's tally. While poor weather prevented

further exploration we did get the opportunity to visit the Darwin Range in Chile before returning to the UK.

With his increasing free time Mike and I planned a private expedition to the Zaskar region of India with Tony Westcott and Chris Storie in the Autumn of 2013. Our plan was to explore the Pensilungpa Valley where we had identified a number of unclimbed 5000m peaks. It was to be another highly successful expedition where we managed the first ascents of PK5802 (Hidden Peak) and PK5825 (Twin Peak). We narrowly failed on PK5641 when time, distance and increasing difficulty forced a retreat, but safety was always our first concern.

2014 was to have been a bumper year. Mike and I had spent considerable energy organising the Alpine Club expedition to the Cordillera Blanca in the Peruvian Andes and over Christmas 2013 we refined our plans with other team members. Mike's tragic death [del] left a huge hole in the team that was impossible to fill. We had also planned a private expedition to the Spiti Valley in the Indian Himalaya where more exploratory mountaineering was involved. [del]

Mike's companionship, generosity, enthusiasm, self-effacement and compatibility will be sorely missed by his many friends, as too will be his contribution to the organisation

and smooth running of those clubs and organisations to which he dedicated considerable time and energy.

Derek Buckley

After a private funeral in Solihull around 250 people attended a memorial service at the Church of St John the Baptist in Yeovil on 24th March 2014. For me this sad

occasion was brightened by meeting so many people, some having travelled long distances to be there, who I had first met or climbed with because of Mike. Mike was a central figure in arranging for the YMC to use the climbing wall firstly at Bucklers Mead school in Yeovil and later at Sherborne Girls School, now integrated into the Oxley Sports Centre. It is fitting, therefore, that

thanks to the generosity of Mike's sister Margaret and with some funding from the YMC and the Sherborne Girls School a fine new bouldering wall has been created there in his memory. Over 100 people attended the formal opening of this facility on 30th January 2014. I think the plaque then unveiled is a fitting closure.

Gerry Martyn

RALPH ATKINSON *1952 - 2014*

I met Ralph through the local mountaineering club when I moved to Wolverhampton in 1989. Our weekends in Wales and day trips to Matlock and the Roaches became the foundation for extended trips to the Alps. I have fond memories of a fine 6 day ski-traverse of the Chamonix to Zermatt Haute Route in 1991. We knew that we had to combine two stages in order to make it to Zermatt before the bad weather so we reached the Valsorey hut from the Trient Hut in a day, but were so worn out that we couldn't do justice to the meal that was served up within minutes of arriving.

It was on a CC alpine meet that Ralph and I made ascents of the Monch and Jungfrau in 1993.

Descending the Jungfrau in a howling gale we could barely see each other. I slipped in the soft fresh snow and had to self-arrest with my ice axe, aided by the tension in the rope to Ralph. I was soon back on the ridge but, when we dropped below the Rottalsattel and could speak to each other again, I found that he had no idea that anything untoward had happened. He was always a good bet for a photo as we shared an inclination to colourful clothing and I was glad to use pictures of Ralph on the above routes in my book, "4000m. Climbing the Highest Mountains of the Alps".

I recall long journeys by car to climbing venues in Wales and the Peak enlivened by his wide-ranging



taste in music, and the keynote of many outings was his sense of fun. There were long stories, jokes or pithy one-liners. He had an appetite for the mountains that went back to his days training as a teacher in Wales, but he was never “hungry” for an adrenaline fix. When anyone floated a particularly gnarly plan for the day, his response in his residual ‘cockney twang’ was often, “Ang on a minute, I’m on me ’olidays”. This was very understandable in that he had a demanding and responsible job

in teaching; he needed his recovery time.

In later years he had some back problems, possibly the legacy of too much squash-playing, which led to his retirement from teaching in 2004. That and my moves to Manchester, then Bristol, meant that we met less frequently. His focus also shifted after his marriage to Sue in that they spent a lot of time travelling together. It is sad that after finding such happiness the time they

shared should be cut short by his sudden illness.

I last met up with Ralph by chance when I was dropping friends off at the AC dinner in Buxton in 2013 and we had time to catch up over a couple of drinks. I was hoping to get in touch the following autumn, so when I returned from 6 weeks abroad in mid-September 2014 I was shocked to hear that he was terminally ill with a brain tumour. He was always so full of life. He will be much missed by family and friends.

Dave Wynne-Jones

TIM NOBLE 1950 - 2014



Tim Noble, who died suddenly aged 64 of an aneurism at home on 30 November 2014, was an enthusiastic and proud Editor of the *CCJ* for ten years, author of *Great VS Climbs of the Lake District* and a Chair of the Boardman Tasker Award. He will be remembered for his unfailing belief that memorable experiences were to be had, against the odds if necessary, if only we would commit to go along with his projects. And, indeed, many of us will have to admit that this was so, despite the cold, rain and continuous quotations from Shakespeare. Tim was a big

character in every respect and has left a warm presence in the lives of many of us who had the pleasure of being cajoled into both likely and unlikely adventures on the rock. At his funeral he was described as being ‘magnanimous in everything’ and that says it all.

With two sons close in age and of a robust nature, Tim’s parents decided to encourage their individuality, sending them to different secondary schools. Jerry went sea at 15 and was unable to be told immediately of his brother’s death until his Tall Ships Race reached St Lucia. Tim was sent to Outward Bound at Ullswater

and was immediately impressed by rock climbing. Whilst still at school Tim fell off a climb in Skye, typically having gone straight onto the big ones, resulting in his parents being called home from a holiday in France.

Teacher training in English and Drama at Kingston-upon-Hull College of Education was followed by a BEd at Leeds and an MA Ed at Lancaster. His first job at Accrington Grammar School for boys set the twin themes of his teaching career in giving so much of his time and enthusiasm to extra-curricular activities. He set up a Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, leading expeditions of pupils to Skye and the Alps, and created an experimental production of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* involving 30 boys. Whilst at Ilkley Grammar School, as Assistant Director of the Ilkley Literature Festival Tim shared responsibility for commissioning the now legendary first performance of Ted Hughes' *Cave Birds*. At Harlington Upper School, as well as mounting five productions in three years he led Bedfordshire LEA's first schools expedition to Norway.

But it was as Head of English and Drama at St Lawrence School, Bradford-upon-Avon that Tim's leadership produced a huge impact upon the community. His productions, with large casts of staff and pupils, were seen by

over a thousand people and he established the Wiltshire Schools' Mountaineering Association, as well as running a large school D of E programme. As Vice-Chair of the town Arts Association he twice brought Ted Hughes to read to audiences of over 800 pupils, teachers and townsfolk. Somehow he also managed three trekking trips to the Himalaya during this period. If the following five years at Westwood St Thomas School, Salisbury were less hectic in terms of school productions it may have been because Tim had joined the CC, started writing for climbing magazines and worked on his own book project.

Perhaps my most memorable climbing trip with Tim was one in which I rather tested his generosity. We had arranged to camp for a week in Glen Etive and when Tim arrived from Wiltshire to pick me up in Sheffield I asked if we could drive across town to pick up a third member of the party. Tim was unfazed, if a little bemused, to meet the lady who is now my wife. We hung a wine box from a tree at our wild camp at the head of the loch and made the best of a damp week, Tim leading *Spartan Slab* without a dry streak on it and then hauling me up *Hammer*. The highlight of the week - if you don't count meeting a hoard of dirty wild highlanders in a curry house in Fort William, straight

from filming *The Highlander* on Rannoch Moor - was *Red Slab*. After an ascent of *Agag's Groove* I realised that Tim would never knowingly walk down from a route if an abseil was at all possible. Having ascertained from Gill below that the ropes did not reach the deck, Tim bailed boldly over the edge with a cunning calculation about the effect of his large frame on rope stretch. Then came Tim's brilliant *Red Slab*, which I thought an understatement in every respect, and the same abseil again.

Tim and I had two strange disagreements. We had both been inspired by David Craig's coming to climbing and climbing writing quite late in life. I had started to follow David in writing for the magazines and had sent off a piece about a climb with Tim, who arrived in Cornwall next time I saw him to announce that he was likewise inspired and had sent off an article about the same climb to the same magazine. I realised that we couldn't go on like this, so after long frank phone calls we agreed to name the writer before the climb. As a result, when we next met up in Switzerland for the *Miroir Slab*, Tim made me write notes at the end of each of the 14 pitches, for which I am forever grateful.

The second time was on our first visit to Yosemite Valley in August 1990 when, stepping out of the

car, we were awestruck by the heat and the height. We escaped to Tuolumne Meadows and had a great time up there. But Tim wanted to tick something, anything, in the Valley, 'even if it means pulling on everything'. This was not for me. So Tim and Sally took the car down to hopefully pick up a partner in Camp 4 whilst Gill and I stayed to eventually have a memorable walk down the Snow Creek trail to meet up again in the Valley. Having failed to find a partner, Tim was relieved when Larry Giacomino arrived to show us *Snake Dike* and the Sunnyside Bench routes.

Tim's new route in Cornwall should not be overlooked. It turned out that Roland Edwards had cleaned this crack line in the top tier of Zennor Zawn, but decide that the loose and overhanging approach was disproportionately difficult. Tim abseiled in, made a peg belay in a niche and traversed in to the soaring crack above the overhang. He was not to be denied his route name in the guidebook: *Zennorphobia*. His book of Lakeland VSs is similarly playful and conveys the warmth of

companionship he created in the making of the book, as in all his climbing. He became the mentor of a number of pupils, some of whom are now members of the CC. John Baker, for example, found a career in outdoor education and through him Tim was delighted to find recently that he was the mentor of the mentor of a full-time Chamonix guide. Tim is remembered by colleagues, pupils and climbing partners as encouraging everyone to do more than they think they can do, to be more than they think they can be.

He left permanent teaching posts when Assistant Headteacher in 2002 to set up a company, Shakespeare Works Ltd, engaging children with Shakespeare's plays on a freelance basis. When he retired from this work he continued to work as a private tutor in English and to take temporary contracts as an adult education tutor. In the last twelve years, having moved in with Joanna at Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, Tim didn't do much climbing as each summer was spent working on his house, 'La Ferme Roulante', near the hamlet

of La Ramie in the Massif Central of France. From May to September each year just being and working in the mountains of France ('We're higher than Scafell!') gave Tim deep satisfaction and unbridled delight as he entertained visiting CC friends.

Tim's teaching colleagues remember his classrooms as always busy with active learning and that he was a supportive Head of Department who was always there whenever needed. Much the same would be said by his climbing partners about his bustling ambition, enthusiastic drive and encouragement to engage with whatever the mountains offered, whatever their terms. As editor of the CCJ Tim took the time to draw out of people remarkable work which may have surprised themselves. In Tim the love of climbing and the love of literature combined, as in his arts activities, to the benefit of the whole community who will remember his larger-than-life presence with affection. We offer our sympathy to Joanna and his daughters Phoebe, Bryony and Flora. Terry Gifford

TOM FLETCHER 1922 - 2014

I first met Tom in 1949 at a ULMC meet. At that time he was working for a PhD at the School of Tropical Medicine at London University. His thesis was on the chemical effect of DDT on mosquitoes. After obtaining his PhD he went to work at the Malaria Institute in Arusha in what was then Tanganyika. We climbed together on several ULMC meets in Wales and Scotland. He enjoyed rock climbing but was not interested in pushing himself to the limit. His hardest climb was probably *The Nose Direct* on Dinas Mot.

Tom was a very competent motor mechanic and he maintained the old London taxi that the ULMC had bought and used for club transport,

mainly to Harrison's Rocks but sometimes to North Wales.

We kept in touch throughout his stay in Arusha and climbed together when he was back in the UK on leave. While at Arusha he married Billah whom he had known at Nottingham University.

Like Tom, Billah was an enthusiastic explorer and they did many long trips with a special interest in volcanoes. Tom's car repair skills were often required on these safaris.

On leaving Africa Tom worked for the Open University as Registrar for the area centred on Nottingham. He and Billah continued to go on exploratory holidays whenever possible. His best climbing achievement was a trip

to the Ruwenzori Mountains with Jerry Smith (also ULMC and CC) in 1955/6. They were blessed with amazingly fine, clear weather-very unusual for the area. They made first ascents of the *Great Tooth* (On Xmas Day) and the *ENE Ridge* of Albert and a number of second ascents of routes done in the 1930s by parties who were unable to plan a line because of continuous thick mist.

When Tom finally retired he and Billah went to Barnack near Stamford, an area where Tom's family had lived for several generations. He died there early in 2015 and Billah died shortly after.

I will always remember Tom as a great enthusiast for whatever he was doing even it was stamping out a track in deep soft snow or purging a filthy climbing hut.

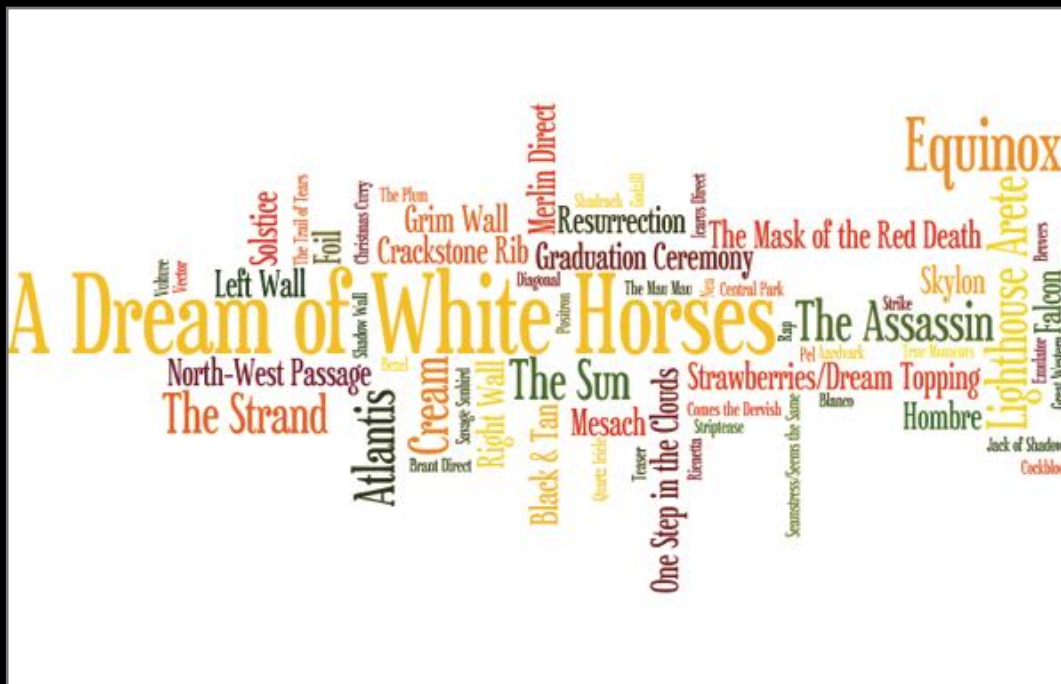
Walter Dowlen

Right:
*Pabbay; George
Gilmore on "Spring
Quill"*

Photograph:
Gilmore collection



Right: *WICM*
Favourite Climbs.



Reflections

Abandoned. *By Simon Laker*

Derek's Peg Hammer. *By Michael Binnie*

How Soon is Now. *By Nick Bullock*

Much Ado About Nothing. *By Aido Garlick*

Strongly Sloughed and a Smack in the Ear.
By Jack Geldard

The Pinnacle Club/BMC Women's International
Climbing Meet (WICM) 2016. *By Alison Cairns*

ABANDONED

If only they could speak old pieces of gear would have some stories to tell. In this piece Simon Laker imagines possible stories that might be told by an old bivvy-bag he found abandoned in the scree not far from Achiane in the Vercors.

By Simon Laker

How did it come to this?
For fifty or more Grande Courses
we weathered the storms, battled the
snows and shared the tops.

It didn't always need both performing but
always together we stayed.

A day on the Frendo turned into darkness,
sharing the ledge, wind whistling around.

As ever not ideal, but certainly bearable,
survival always the game.

A bad slash on the Walker produced no
blood but still needing taping to stop the
gaping.

A steaming hot day on the Combin should
never have led to a problem, but it did and we
coped. The hail and lightning were frightening
but working together we survived all the
weather.

Years went by and still we went out, sunnier
days than before, but still in with a shout.

From Wales and Scotland to Cham and the
rest, our favourite the Dollies, perhaps Tre
Cima the best.

The routes gradually changed from Grande
Courses, to smaller and shorter affairs.

Not so regularly, but I still went along,
enjoying the ride though not all the reasons.

Looking back, it's clear what was happening,
years lengthening, routes shortening, the base
reached easily that day.

Rarely did we see snow now, or crevasses or
ice. The Grande Courses barely remembered.

Then one day in the Vercors on a route
meant for a day, for some reason it went
wrong, again I was in play.

It was good to be needed but that soon
receded.

We shared one last night of support,
remembering the glories before. The bad
ones of lighting and rain, the good ones of
moonlight and breeze.

Then, on this final dawn, abandoned in the
rocks.

The tears and cuts stuck with grey tape, skin
crinkling, colour fading.

It didn't take much, just a light breeze, the
pieces ending up seared on the trees.

Later that year after winter, two climbers
came wandering by, they saw the bright orange
flapping, the skin now ribbons and bunting.

There was nothing to do but they tried, if
not the pieces would never die.

Some they took but the rest were too high;
there they remain, scratching the sky.

DEREK'S PEG HAMMER

Loss in the mountains is always moving; sometimes a physical object can serve as a memento. In this case the item is a peg hammer and Mike finally loses it on his (almost) last climb. Sadly, since penning this tale Mike passed away, his Obituary will be in the second volume of this Journal.

By Michael Binnie

Cue a B&B somewhere in Fort William, evening, March 1958, about supper time. Enter Colin Mortlock, Peter Hutchinson and myself, washed out and played out after the long drive from Oxford in an open top pre-war roadster the property of A N Other, the driver and fourth member of our OUMC party who now seems to disappear out of the picture. We were to join the rest of the meet at the CIC Hut the next day. Waiting for us up there, amongst others, were Bill Wycherley, Treasurer, and Derek Hill, Secretary of the OUMC. Colin, President, had invited us to join him and all of us basked in the glory of being invitees on the annual President's Meet of the OUMC.

So far so good; until the phone rang following which the guest house owner, the hut custodian, came in to tell us that he had news of an accident on the Ben that very afternoon. No, he had no other details. The RAF mountain rescue team were on their way up to the hut as he spoke. As far as he knew, he said, no other parties were staying in the hut. None of us had previous experience of Ben Nevis. We retired to bed sickened, uncertain how to deal with this news.

Next morning there was still no information from up on the mountain. I remember little about the next few hours. We bought food for a week and set off for the hut from straight behind the distillery as we had no idea where to find the main path. We pounded upwards, silent, mostly wondering what catastrophe awaited us. I knew nothing about death in the mountains. My climbing experience was negligible. Climbing had been playing about in mid-summer on sun-kissed rocks. Low cloud blocked out the great dome of the mountain ahead, patches of snow lay about and when we stopped to rest a cold wind swept down from the heights. I kind of knew that something terrible had happened. Huge rocks loomed out of the mist; there was the cawing of ravens, please make everything okay. Then there was the biggest rock of all except that it wasn't a rock but the hut. No one was around but smoke gushed from the chimney and from inside the stone cottage came the warm murmur of a crowded room. Outside the hut a Piggott stretcher was covered in a ground sheet. Protruding from its end was a pair of tiny boots. I knew instantly they were Derek's.

We entered the hut where the RAF men were smoking and drinking tea. Bill sat in a

corner looking dreadful. They told us what had happened. Bill and Derek, after doing one of the gullies, were descending the snowy Coire Leis, unroped, facing outwards, perfectly normal practice, when Derek fell and rolled to the bottom of the face. It didn't seem to be a very steep fall. Derek had obviously bumped his head but seemed reasonably okay, was *compos mentis* but feeling groggy. Bill told him to wait where he was while he returned to the hut to get help. He was soon there, summoned a few of our men with whom he dashed back to the spot where he had left Derek. Except there was no Derek and they searched the area, calling for him. Someone ran down to the valley by torchlight.

They looked for Derek all night, joined in the small hours by the RAF team. Soon after dawn they found him. He was lying curled up in a hollow amongst rocks some 50 yards from where Bill had left him. He had passed away barely an hour before they found him. His trousers were brown, his anorak grey. The RAF men dragged him away down to the valley. We stayed on and climbed unhappily for several days. I knew about mountaineering now. It had become more than showing off to a girl in the evening sunshine on the Idwal Slabs.

Derek was the only son of a man who worked in a Bury cotton mill. He had won a scholarship to read chemistry at Brasenose. He was small, determined, two years ahead of me at Oxford and the dynamo of our club. I had been, if not a little frightened, then always in awe of him. He spoke in a high, rasping accent of his home town and ate and drank climbing with the intensity of a drowning man gasping for air. His ambition had been to climb the Magnone Route on the West Face of the Dru.

It was expected that he would get a First and it was clear that a brilliant career awaited him. He was having none of it. That summer, his finals completed, he planned to hitch out to Chamonix and take the first steps in training to become an Alpine Guide, quite unheard of for a foreigner in those days.

The next term we gathered together in Oxford and decided to sell Derek's climbing gear to members and with the proceeds buy his parents some memorial gift, a plaque, perhaps, I can't remember. For some reason I was unable to attend the little get-together with his mother and father. They knew nothing about climbing. They had lost their only child. I believe it had been an unbearably sad occasion. I had bought Derek's piton hammer with his initials D H scorched into the shaft.

Time passed; a little rescue shelter was erected in the place where Derek had spent his last hours in Coire Leis. Years later my wife, daughter and I climbed the Ben by his descent route. We stopped and had lunch by the bright red shelter. I told them about Derek. I continued to climb, travelling widely and climbing mountains in Peru, Kashmir, Kenya, Ecuador and the Hindu Kush and, all too occasionally, in the Alps. Time passed. I found myself on a meet of oldies in Madonna di Campiglio in the Brenta. It was August 2003. I walked with my wife and friends and managed a few modest climbs.

I met a man from South Africa called Mike Scott. He was about 10 years younger than me, tall, lean, bronzed and disgustingly good looking. He looked like a big game hunter. I had a vision of him, wearing one of those hats, sweeping across the High Veldt of his native South Africa, rifle slung on his back, eyes

narrowed, searching for something to kill. He told me he had a lifetime's ambition to fulfil. He wanted to climb the Campanile Basso and he needed a partner.

"Will you come with me?"

"Um," I said.

Fast forward to a dawn start several days later from the Brentei Hut. (I think that was the hut). I had no business to be there. I had done no serious climbing for years. Scott was not just a very good climber but a very, very good climber. I was marginally younger than most of the fellows on the meet and Scott gauged, quite unreasonably, that I was fit enough to tackle the Campanile. For those unfamiliar with the area the Campanile Basso is probably the quintessentially totemic peak of the Dolomites, a 300m detached spire springing out of its base like a proud finger pointing to Heaven. It is a truly wonderful piece of natural sculpting.

We walked round ledges and reached the base of the climb. The Campanile reared up without apparent ledges straight towards the distant clear, blue sky. I was really pretty frightened. I had never climbed anything like this, so long and so apparently sustained, even in my prime. Mike Scott had arrived in Italy with virtually no gear. He planned to meet a friend, an Austrian Guide, after this climb and so was travelling light. We had borrowed a couple of ropes and were making do with my limited selection of slings and hardware. Dangling from my waist on a leather thong was my ancient piton hammer. No, Derek's piton hammer. Oxford friends sometimes used to ask me, "Still got Derek's hammer?" and I had. But it had never been mine; always Derek's. It had travelled the world with

me, seldom used, but my precious piece of equipment from those student days.

Scott climbed away from me smoothly and softly as a cat and I then set off. I suppose the climbing was about Severe, certainly much harder at one point, but I could manage it, if slowly and clumsily. We were taking the original 1899 route which sort of corkscrewed round the Campanile. Straight up for 250ft, then following a rubble-strewn ledge which took us halfway round the spire, then another vertical section followed by some more horizontal walking till we reached some open chimneys. Another ledge system led to the crux, a slightly overhanging wall which ended on the summit.

I was climbing badly, neglecting my footwork, inevitably I was growing tired. The holds were there but I was getting cramp in my fingers, as pitch followed pitch I became increasingly desperate in my movements. Dear God, get me up and off this mountain safely. Please. Finally, there was the 10ft of overhang. A deep breath and I plunged up, my hammer (Derek's hammer) swinging out into space below me. I grabbed out for the final holds when I felt a little jerk on my waist and looked down to see Derek's hammer twisting and cartwheeling, into the abyss. The leather thong (perhaps it had been a piece of biltong?), threaded through the shaft, had finally given way after 45 years. Mike gave me a tight rope as I turned and watched a piece of my climbing history disappearing into the depths.

I've thought of those moments often. It seems to be happening in slow motion, the hammer's slowly revolving descent, me transfixed on the rock in horror watching, not the hammer, but a piece of Derek gyrating

into his second grave here amongst the wild and dramatic Dolomite mountains so far from his native Bury. I reached Scott and told him about the loss of the hammer. “Ah, well,” he said.

Long, anxious abseils followed. Later, sitting together in the hut, Scott, who was awaiting the arrival of his Austrian friend, looked at me over his glass of beer. “Mike, when you get home I want you to get rid of all your gear. It’s old and useless. Burn it, throw it onto the scrapheap. Never use it again. Promise?”

Some of it, certainly the Cassin karabiners, dated from the day of Derek’s death. I trotted down into the distant valley, much of the time in a wild thunderstorm, past a notice telling me to be aware of bears and, hours later, into the arms of my waiting wife.

I never climbed again. Or almost. Two years ago my friend Paul Ross led me gently up *Little Chamonix* together with my Anglo-American-Japanese granddaughter who climbed it like a dream.

I then went home and threw away all my stuff.

How Soon is Now

Running is a great way to get a blank canvas in your brain, on long mountain runs Nick's mind wanders back through memories of past friends and relationships. Moving. This is a chapter from Nick's recent book.

By Nick Bullock

Llanberis. Wales. February 2008.

The edge had returned to the Welsh hills in February. There was no snow, only frost thistling the yellowy slabs of Rhyolite. Each morning the grass was white and the black slate wore frozen cling-film. I stayed on my own in Tim and Lou Neill's house next to the chapel in the centre of Nant Peris. The sun filled the sky and melted the frost and cast shadowy crosses on the white walls inside the house. When, after breaking my ankle on Omega, and my first winter season in Chamonix was cut short, I returned to Britain feeling sullen having been ripped from the mountains. On that occasion I stayed with my friend Janet, in her house in Quorn, Leicestershire. I counted the hours and days and weeks before I could remove the plaster and return to Europe. I sat inside Janet's terrace house in stasis, inert, stuck – the waves washed over me and I almost drown. Time, that most valuable commodity, was spilling. Now my winter had been cut even shorter, but returning to Llanberis felt like coming home, the town had taken place of my home in Burton Overy; it was somewhere I was starting to become very attached to. Friends that were still in town and

not in Scotland or the Alps welcomed me and I didn't begrudge being back or even the injury.

Every day I ran with the frozen bog beneath my feet. Sometimes my foot would break the crust leaving a dark footprint with a white outline. The hills directly accessed from the house were my favourite, Elidir Fawr, Foel goch, Y Garn – sheep shorn mounds, all frozen and crisp. I ran across the worn track at the top of the Devils Kitchen. Open space. A buzzard cried in the crackling blue. The open Glyder plateau with spikes of rock, like hewn standing stones. On the lee of these jagged monoliths was soft moss, but the rock was as rough as a terrier's coat on the windward side.

One day I ran and scrambled Tryfan's North Ridge. Where it was possible, I jogged, and where it was not, I scrambled. Passing people, they looked aghast when they saw my arm in plaster. I waved, said hello and continued. I climbed direct, the cold friction felt clingy and safe. I remembered climbing the same ground, the same rock and the same features in April, seventeen years before when I trained to be a PE Instructor. I jogged a wide ledge where I could still picture Mark Bentley, my roomy and friend from Bolton, as he crawled

on all fours with the wind snickering at him like a magpie and afterwards I remember him brushing away the sleet that had left dark damp patches on his knees. The air around me now was frigid and empty; it caught images and dreams and carried them over the heather.

Crossing Bwlch Tryfan, I looked once again to my past. I saw a group of trainee PE Instructors trying to remember how a compass worked. My toes crunched on the surface of rock covered with moss and grains. I smiled thinking that some things hadn't changed. On and on and on – panting, chest heaving, deep heaving breaths, the streak of dried sweat. Scrambling Bristly Ridge, swinging legs and pulling. Empty air with blank open space. My broken wrist ached, but not enough to stop me. Then, once again, I was out of the dark and onto the glaring Glyder tops. The rocks and the hills looked like an over-sharpened photograph and in the shimmering distance the sea was a dark green sheet. Jet aircraft screamed across the blue leaving white scars for the buzzard to thread. But eventually the scars faded and the buzzard disappeared into the distance.

I ran from the summit of Glyder Fach, dodging and balancing, my feet catching edges, stubbing toes, 'nnnnrrrgh'... The pain, like a broken heart, was only temporary, although the pain from a broken heart would remain for longer and hurt more.

I stood on the edge of Cwm Cneifon. Skidding feet turned sideways. Rocks bounced and whirled and hummocks of grass broke revealing the red earth beneath. I stopped and stared at Clogwyn Du, the little black crag at the top of the Glyders. Raven coughed. I could see ghosts of winters past.

Running the edge of Llyn Idwal, around the well-worn path, the water sucks and filters through rocks rubbed round. I watch Sam Sperry, my ex-girlfriend from Leicestershire with Blue, the brindle Staffordshire Bullterrier pulling on the end of his fully stretched lead. I see Sam's long blond hair blowing wild in the breeze and her torn jeans with flickering frays and I watch her 'take me or leave me' twenty eight year old attitude catch in the breeze and carry across the ancient water.

I jog onto the Ogwen Cottage car park and see a group, including myself, hucked tightly together on tarmac, cooking in the cold having navigating the Carnedd's all the way from Drum to Pen yr Ole Wen on our summer Mountain Leader Award. I run the roadside by Llyn Ogwen, the water unruffled. Gulls skim the water's clear surface looking down at a version of themselves. Cars speed past, the people inside with heavy right feet and heavy heads, rushing to somewhere from somewhere, going nowhere or anywhere. I can smell fumes and warm worn oily engines. A silver wheel trim lies in the gutter – a plastic starfish washed up and winking.

Whatever happened to Alison Parker?

Alison Parker and I went out for a while when we were both twenty. She had a small upturned nose, short to medium length blond hair, white teeth, tanned skin and an amazing smile, which she wore most of the time. She laughed and she made me laugh and I think for the very short time we were together I loved her very nearly as much as I have loved anyone. She introduced me to Neil Young, Crosby Stills and Nash, Leonard Cohen and The Smiths.

The night before this run I had watched Morrissey on iplayer, he looked similar to how Tom Briggs looked the time we first met and climbed together in Australia. Later in the evening, I watched a YouTube clip of The Smiths on Top of the Pops from 1984. What Difference Does it Make, the song I ribbed Alison Parker about when we first met and stood next to the cooker in the kitchen. I refused to admit I liked it.

The night before, watching The Smiths from so long ago, plunged me into renaissance – swinging my plastered arm and wishing I had a bunch of flowers.

Where the hell did it all go?

It had been twenty-three years since Alison Parker had bullied and cajoled until at last I admitted to enjoying the music of The Smiths and then we moved close and kissed for the first time while leaning against the cooker.

Morrissey gently shuffled around the stage with his shirt buttons tested to the limit by a paunch. Then, with a bit of a shuffle and the occasional arm swing, he attempted to be dangerous. But he wasn't, he was just old and overweight.

His voice and presence were still electrifying even after all of this time, but how time stops for no-one. Not you, not me. Not Morrissey nor Alison Parker nor Tom Briggs nor Mark Bentley nor Sam Sperry. It stops for none of us. Entropy.

The music of The Smiths takes me back – back to an attitude of, what difference does it make and panic at the disco – but while I always panicked at the disco I never did think, what difference does it make, or at least, not until now, not until I could run no farther and wring every bit out of this short life.

The Smiths remind me so much of Alison Parker with her vitality, energy and intelligence, she was carefree, and dangerous and so much fun.

I wonder where she is now and if she has children and if so how many? Does she still have that spark or has life beaten her to grey?

I ran the last few metres until I stood at the side of my green Berlingo, parked at the side of the road near Little Tryfan.

Watching Morrissey the night before made me think that for just the short time you are there – in your prime, a handsome devil with hollow cheeks, bendy limbs and strong muscle – just for a short time, you may not care about the world, or at least the world outside your world, and you think there is a light that never goes out.

But there is a light and one day it will go out...

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

The Peak scene in the 60's and 70's, cutting edge climbing and so much more. Aido takes a warm and nostalgic look at this Golden Age, some of the characters, the fun and not forgetting the climbing.

By Aido Garlick

"Good climbing and good company often go together; each is essential to the enjoyment of the other!"

Tom Patey

Everybody has their special memories and rock-climbers and mountaineers are no exception. I imagine many climbers can remember specific routes and the difficulties encountered, yet my special memories revolve to a greater extent around the characters who accompanied me both on and off the crags.

Sure, the climbs were challenging and mentally satisfying but without my companions, the experiences and enjoyment would be minimal. I was raised in Uppermill, Saddleworth, in the Chew Valley. So it was probably no surprise that, as a young teenager at the start of the 60s, I should develop an interest in the local hills and crags, especially living on Den Lane five minutes from the local quarry.

I actually started at school with holiday walking groups to Wales and generally the Lakes. One of the teachers, Jeff Mason, a Rucksack Club member, took three or four of

us under his wing and we progressed quickly into climbing rocks as a sport in itself. At that time when I started to tie into a rope around 1963, The Rimmon Club was very active in the Chew Valley and the Peak District.

In the early 60s there was so much free rock to climb on, literally on the doorstep. We rapidly got to know members of the Rimmon, especially Tony Howard, Billy Tweedale, (both pioneers of the *Rimmon Route* on Troll Wall), Keith 'Cockney' Chadwick, Paul 'Tur' Braithwaite, not forgetting, of course, the 'infamous' Barry Kershaw amongst the many. Consequently we soon expanded our experience and acquaintances.

From around 1966, there was an influx of hard, young gritstone tigers from Manchester coming on the bus for Rimmon evenings at The Den on a Thursday followed by a drink in The Navigation pub where we would plan the weekend. Ever present were the likes of Jim

'The Gob' Campbell*, Cornelius 'Con' Carey, Pete Oldham, Phil Kershaw, Pete 'The Miz' Heywood**, 'Fred' Finnigan... and so many other great characters, impossible to name them all. Glorious evenings!

With more frequent visits to the Peak, we met up with a host of other characters especially from 'The Tans', 'The Grit', 'The Stoney Cioch' locals and 'The North Staffs'. Eve

ry weekend we'd thumb or cadge a lift off a (rich?) climbing mate with a car over the Snake Pass. We could always guarantee meeting up with a host of 'mates' yet we were such a disparate group from so many backgrounds. Nights in The Grouse or The Moon followed by a kip in the 'Woodshed' or 'The Mansion' in Stoney were never dull. Nevertheless you knew you could always count on each other. True, there was always the 'rotten apple' but they were quickly sent on their way.

I have very fond memories of climbing with such folk as John Yates and Pete 'Trog' Williams of the North Staffs and the many routes with Jimmy Campbell, Con Carey and the local lads, Tom Proctor and Keith Myhill on the gritstone edges. In later years I had the good fortune to share a rope with Malc Baxter, a devout gritstoner, determined to record every bit of rock on the planet. Malc loved 'adventures', simple criteria, a memorable belay of his on 'cabbages' on *Rabble Rouser* on Little Orme did my bowels no good at all.

With so many characters too numerous to mention I look back on this period from the early 60s until the end of the 70s (when gravity got the better of me and brought me to an abrupt halt at Tremadog) as being my 'Golden Age'. As Bernard 'The Human' Newman was



always wont to say: "Falling's easy it's the landings you've got to practise." (Thanks for your compassion Bernard.)

Nevertheless, I think now of the climbs I accomplished and the fun I had with various characters during that time and also the 'social events' i.e. Club Dinners and other 'amusements' we used to enjoy... how on earth anyone survived is a miracle. To live through an 'Um-Gow' attack in the 'Barn' above Stoney when snugly drifting off in an alcohol-induced sleep was akin to a maul by the All Blacks. Without doubt though, it was laughter all the way.

After three years at Aston University I had enjoyed many Welsh and Peak trips with the University Club and the local Phoenix Club with characters like Geoff Tabner, our own 'Smiler', Roger Brooks***, Pete Shackleton (an emigré from the FRCC) and Bob 'Christopher Robin' Millward.

My next level of studies led me to Leeds in 1972. Now, Leeds University was a serious step up and definitely the place to be in the early

Above:
Froggat 1972

Photograph:
Aido Garlick

70s. It was a magnet for northern climbers and soon my mates from over the border came visiting me and Leeds University became the Mecca for aspiring hard men. A youthful Bancroft, an even younger Johnny Allen, 'Con' Carey, Jimmy Campbell, Gabe and John Regan, and Colin 'Choe' Brooks were soon frequent visitors, along with the 'Black and Blonde Nicks' (Colton and Donnelly respectively).

Probably Choe's lasting claim to fame was, on his first visit with me in the Union bar, I introduced him to John (Syrett). "This is John" spoke I. "Are you John Syrett?" enquired a wide-eyed Brooks. "Yeah" spoke the 'Deity'. "I'll have a pint of Tartan!"

Come on... we've all done it at some time or another.

Leeds in the early 70s shades of the Stainforths, 'DA', Chris 'the Flash' Hamper, Mike Hammill (aka 'Harry Mammal'), Dennis 'G', Tim 'Jeppo' Jepson, John 'Did' Powell, Kit-son, Manson, the Berzins... AND... Brian Hall and John Porter who *could and would* carry the world on their shoulders phenomenal power houses.

... and... WOW... not to mention the bevy of ladies who 'joined up' Myra, 'Flick', Gwyneth, Louise, and Cherry and Jan 'Brownsnot'. A very 'up market' group.

But then, I can't leave out the resident 'groupie' our own 'BCN'. The bugger had me for the five card trick on the club's Freshers' Meet on Almscliff. NEVER but NEVER follow Bernard on Almscliff problems. I would have done time for him. He knows every single hold.

Eventually after failing on every problem, I grabbed 'Did' Powell, another fresher, and

tied on a rope and having only PAs. "*Great Western?*" says Bernard, "here, two nuts one at the top of the crack, and one at the end of the traverse." By the time I reached the top of the crack the two nuts were already in place well below and I spent eons hanging on the traverse back and forth with a ground fall the prospect. That day, wisdom ruled and I retreated in good order. What a 'sandbagger'.

So what about actual partners on memorable routes and by 'memorable' I don't mean 'epics'. I mean the fun times the enjoyment. The whole reason for it in the first place. Anyone who says they love epics is lying. I don't do 'in extremis' or at least try not to. Epics do happen but I keep them at the back of my mind.

I also need to marry certain partners to routes so I have to start with Jim Campbell and Tom Proctor on the grit. Tom's strength was legend while Jim was the most competitive around. On one occasion Jim and I arrived at Cratcliffe to find Tom stood in the ditch at the side of the road with his 'Box Viva' half in the ditch with him. He'd inadvertently backed too far off the road. We prepared to lend a hand by which time Tom had literally plonked the car back on the road on his own. Bionic Man or what.

The first time Jim climbed *Sentinel Crack* on Chatsworth he quickly reached the top crack. There, an infamous jammed limestone chock lay *in situ*. Holding his rope, I expected him to thread it. Perish the thought. Jim fiddled around a couple of minutes and the offending limestone was duly cast into the void and mud below. A 'Campbell fist' completed the route. No problem.

Probably my most enduring memory of Tom and Jim together was on Froggatt. By

the mid 60s *Cave Crack* had been deemed impossible after a small 'spike' had snapped off on the lip. In October 1968 Jim went 'for a look' and with me in tow, we promptly killed the myth. The following weekend, again in Stoney, we enlisted Tom (plus his car) to check out the route for himself. Tom duly obliged with a couple of well-positioned fists and as I was tying on yet again, out of the ferns appeared Mr Birtles, hot-foot from the Alps. I climbed up to Tom at the top who then invited Geoff to tie on. Now, Geoff had just got back from France so quite understandably he was having to get back into the demands of 'thuggy grit cragging'. Consequently at the lip he quite sensibly asked for: "A bit of tight watch me." The following seconds were a blur as immediately Geoff found himself on the top wall. The 'Hydraulic Man' had come into his own and in the blink of an eye Geoff had flirted round the lip and been deposited securely in the top crack. Truly amazing. To rub salt in the wound, Jimmy came soloing up behind. Unforgettable!

To watch Jim and Tom on routes was an education. (Tom once told me that he used to solo *Goliath* on Burbage on his way home from work each evening.) They were pure class. Great guys, sadly missed.

Summer 1975 saw me, Con Carey and Choe Brooks camped for a week on South Stack headland. Three crammed in a one-man tent, mine had been ripped to shreds by nightly storms and together with Con's motorbike gear, it was a bit hectic. The only transport available was Con's bike so the pub each night entailed a marathon for Con; eight trips a time.



Left:
*Colin 'Choe' Brooks
at my house in
the Picos having
truly spent a
'Night on The Bare
Mountain'. Flash
cagoule, eh.*

Photograph:
Aido Garlick

The weather during the day was great though and the café had been recently taken over by a couple, aiming to please. The first afternoon we called in for a brew. The lady owner was about to close and offered us some muffin sarnies *for free* which she said wouldn't be sold that day anyway. Thereafter, each day would find us 'yomping' at breakneck speed along the top from the main cliff back to the café in time before she closed. Laughter galore and free butties all week. The problem was, the weather did turn towards the end of the week so Choe set up his Hygena QA kitchen range in the still-ruined Huer's Cottage. It was a step too far for Con as Choe gaily started to fry ba-con on a plank supported by stones with piles of shite all around. Con drove home the following day. But did we crack some classic routes together: *The Strand*, *Rat Race* and *Fifth Avenue* to name



Above:
*The author and
John Yates on The
Glyders - March
1990*

Photograph:
Aido Garlick

just a few. A memorable week although my personal recollection of dangling in space on single 120ft No.3 Viking rope on *Big Groove* is best forgotten.

Finally, as our chauffeur had previously departed, both Choe and I had to thumb. Choe took the tent and I took the poles. I managed to get to Birmingham where my girlfriend lived, while Choe late on, eventually reached White City roundabout in Manchester. He decided to hide in the rhododendron bushes in the middle and kip the night. He later admitted it took him ages to get off the roundabout in the morning rush hour. Smart guy or what?

Choe visited me in the Picos de Europa in Spain in the late 80s. I took him up the hill to a bothy I had a couple of hours' walk away. Bad weather clagged in so we decided to head back down. We'd no gear to speak of but Choe decided he knew a better way home. Clever chappie. *Adiós* Choe as he disappeared into the mist. He duly appeared early the following morning having wandered

aimlessly half the night with no gear at all in crap weather only to, surprisingly, arrive back at my cabin. Having no key, he managed to break in through the roof tiles. Cue fire, food and comfort. Sorry, no matches or sleeping bags to be had and only foam mattresses still wrapped in plastic. A torrid night. He was quite chastened as I gave him a breakfast beer in his designer cagoule. International Guide, eh. High standards in those days?

Who else enters my Rogues' Gallery? I have to mention two stalwarts of the 'North Staffs' John Yates and Ralph Fawcett. Some of my most memorable routes have been in the company of John while my funniest memories always seem to include Ralph. John was an extraordinarily gifted climber both on rock and on Alpine terrain. His record speaks for itself. His rock routes on Staffordshire grit have stood the test of time while his Alpine record in his teens is incredible. I've shared leads with John on many crags over my early years. Easter 1970 found us on Tremadog. John set off on an early ascent of *Itch*, a recent Holliwell route, with me belayed below. After about 20ft he reached a grass ledge. Seconds later he was sat on top of me with the grass ledge on top of both of us. Great stuff John.

On *Pellagra* I was convinced he wouldn't manage the first pitch as the deal was that I would have to do the top pitch. I sat with Pete 'Trog' Williams on the belay as we watched John try for the old tree stump to land on the belay. "Nay he won't do it he's too short," but after countless tries bugger, he suddenly spun and grabbed the stump. 'Trog' just smiled as he prepared to wander off. Oh crikey! It was down to me now. Visions of Crew on pitch 2, in *Rock Climbers in Action in Snowdonia* 'laybacking

on undercut jams'. I got to the same spot only to find there was another roof after that move. Panic stations ensued and I ended up jumping into the top of *Wasp*. Routes like *Coronation Street*, *Park Lane*, *Resolution*, *Fandango*, *Triermain Eliminate*, *The Ghost* and many others have cemented our relationship over many years.

Trog himself had his moments. A dank misty morning saw us on Cloggy. No other idiots in sight. Due to our gear, or lack of it i.e. only a no. 3 Viking 120ft, my RDs, five slings and Trog's *one* PA the other inexplicably still in the car boot he pointed me up *Chimney Route*. Gross! To continue, he suggested: "There's a HVS here *Pinnacle Flake* get up it!" By the skin of my teeth yes, an epic, but the cursing of Trog as he clubbed his way back and forward in bendy boots across the initial traverse, glasses falling off his nose, made my day. It was only later I learned of the reality of the route and Terry Taylor's horror story.

The icing on the cake that Easter was an ascent of *Fandango* on Pant Ifan. Four of us were settled on the belay after the main pitch, a huge ledge with lots of space/air around it. Trog to follow and take out two pegs I'd placed. Again, for some reason in bendy boots we could hear him struggling beneath us. "I'm on the first peg and about to take it... oooooutt!" In flight. Struggle... back on rock... repeat with second peg... in flight... struggle... at last we managed to get him over.

Ralph Fawcett is an altogether different kettle of fish. His dry humour and laconic ur-gency always ensures a cracking day out. We might not get much done, but laughter just doesn't stop. And yet, we accomplished some great routes my first route on Anglesey



was the eponymous *Gogarth* with Ralph, while we teamed up on such test-pieces as *Winking Crack* and many grit classics like the *Eliminates* on Curbar and *Cave Wall* on Froggatt, over 45 years ago. Ralph even snatched the leads on *Shrike* and *Vember* a cunning lad on the quiet. All fair routes in those days. Ralph's parents were the landlords of The Stafford Arms pub in Bagnall village, just north of Stoke. Many happy hours I spent there when they went on holiday and Ralph was left in charge. Enough said! Ralph's swansong was on Wimberry in the Chew Valley on *Starvation Chimney* (Hard V Diff) some 50 years after his first ascent. You can't keep a good lad down, even if he did get jammed in at the top for ages. Brute strength finally prevailed and honour was restored. So many more experiences and characters but all for an-other time.

As I began, my memories are not so much about actual climbs, rather the people with whom I shared the experience. With any memorable climb, you will always remember

Above:
*The author and
Ralph Fawcett
at Dovestones
Reservoir after
an epic ascent of
Starvation chimney*

Photograph:
Aido Garlick

the person you were climbing with and this should always overshadow the route itself.

While I haven't seriously touched rock now for over 35 years I've also had very memorable social gatherings and the occasional climbs during this period. The likes of Malc Baxter, Rowland Edwards and Tony Howard, septuagenarians who thrive on rock and never lose their enthusiasm, have entertained me, on and off the hills. Long-standing friendships all.

I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

* Jim, a greatly respected and well loved companion, so-called due to his passion for telling everyone about his hard climbs.

** Pete, a nickname since he always 'seemed' miserable. He wasn't of course but he still keeps 'Miz' on his email today.

*** Roge was a bricklayer who'd gone to the Alps for a short visit in 1970 and found himself tied on a rope with three Germans on the Eiger North Face. (Second UK ascent possibly and with his trowel?) Just like that. His account to me was so deadpan, it was amazing and not a word of German and very little Alpine experience.

STRONGLY SLOUGHED AND A SMACK IN THE EAR

School day memories interwoven with high standard ice climbing and the odd avalanche provoke thoughts about how people gain and retain acceptance by their peers.

By Jack Geldard

The rush of snow got stronger until it engulfed me and the bright daylight turned to a black nothingness. I grabbed wildly at the rock wall of the gully with my gloved hand as the great weight piled heavier on top of me, trying to pull me down the slope.

After two seconds that lasted an hour, the heaviness of the snow was making movement difficult and I couldn't breathe. I sprang up and started backstroking wildly, instantly reaching the surface and sliding down the avalanche debris for another 30m.

I opened my snow-filled eyes and the sunlit afternoon greeted me, as did Bullock, both cheery and both snow-covered.

"Shall we go see if that other route is free?" chirped Bullock, his curly hair highlighted in a comical white Afro by the powder cloud that had followed the small avalanche that deposited him on the snow slope parallel to me.

I caught my breath and we went to check out the next ice line up the valley which was thankfully busy.

A few days later we were out climbing again.

A friendly Spanish mountain guide topped out on the ice pitch where we were waiting impatiently to abseil in for our turn. He had been quite a long time and we were getting bored.

"Don't go down," he warned. "The ice is very, erm how do you say, it is making strange noises. That's why I took my time." He gesticulated with his hands and made a booming noise.

I glanced at Bullock who had been waiting in the snow for almost an hour and I knew we were climbing it regardless of what this guy had to say. Bullock looked disinterested and carried on sorting the rope.

"It was very... erm... extreme," the guy said to us both, searching for the right phrases to describe what had obviously been a big lead. Again Bullock didn't look up.

"Yes, extreme. I had to climb far on the right. On the left it is very thin. Very steep. Overhangs. You must stay on the right."

Bullock's eyes flashed. I sighed.

Bullock climbed the left side. It was very steep.

I followed the rope through an overhang of ice fangs and struck hard for a placement with my left axe. A toaster-sized piece of ice came off under the impact of my pick. I turned my face away and caught the blow straight on my ear. It swelled up immediately.

The pain, the swelling of my ear, the heavy blow, it took me back 20 years. I'd felt it before. Same pain, same ear.

"Get the ball or I'll snap your legs." Paul Barrett was a big lad. He was rough too, even by Keighley standards. He was built like a brick shithouse. I wasn't. The legs that poked out from my school PE shorts must have looked pretty easy to snap.

"You kicked it." I said. "So you get it."

No warning, he punched me hard on the side of the head. The blow knocked me to the ground and my ear swelled up like a balloon.

I stood up, shitting my pants, and said again: "You get it." I would have happily got the ball that Paul had kicked off field; it would have taken two minutes but – in the complex hierarchy of school bullying – standing your ground was usually better in the long run. Usually.

The PE teacher came over and Barrett whispered to me as he left to fetch the ball: "I've already got a scuffle after school today, but I'm going to fucking smack you tomorrow."

I nodded but didn't say anything.

My climbing has somewhat mirrored my school days. I don't go out looking for trouble. The routes I've done have always been well calculated. Within my grasp. Very rarely have I been strung-out, scared and thinking I have really over-cooked it. Wait for good conditions. Be confident in your ability and everything

should go according to plan. That has always been my way. But sometimes you are just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

I'd had quite a few fights at school, almost everyone had. I didn't start any of them and I had always come out okay in the end. It wasn't really a case of win or lose, more damage limitation, and these 'scuffles' weren't like in films, they were pretty nasty and very undignified. They could last for a long time, with dirty tricks, kicks to the head, and rings of lads pushing you back in so you couldn't get away, but by and large I had got away with limited fighting and that was the way I liked it.

Barrett was big, really big. He had a nasty streak and I was scared. What had started off as just another football match had ignited instantly and without warning in to something very serious. I was in for a proper kicking.

Forewarned is forearmed and so, after school and with my ear still throbbing, I went to watch his fight.

The avalanche of snow had hit us after we had climbed and abseiled the ice couloir; caused by the sun hitting the large expanse of fresh snow poised above the gully we were climbing. Luckily for us we had climbed fast and were back down near the base of the couloir by the time the sun came round. If we had been higher up the route we would have been in a bad situation, especially as we climbed much of it unroped. We shouldn't have been on that route the day after a snowfall. It was an error of judgement, a stupid mistake. But we got away with it, like so many do, and we laughed and brushed it off along with the snow down our jackets, and carried on with our day.

That same day a friend of mine had an accident on the Tour Rond. He was killed.

We were in the Fifth form, Barrett and I. We were 16 years old and both about to leave school with no qualifications and no desire to go on to Sixth form. I wanted the freedom of the hills, I hated the confinement of school. Barrett was simply too stupid to do A Levels. Barrett's fight was to be next to some lockers, under a stairway, and I found out he was to fight someone in the upper Sixth form, two years our senior.

I watched from the small crowd; Barrett saw me there as he waited for his opponent. He looked at me, and I nodded at him. Then the Sixth form lad appears with his mates in tow, quite big and up for a bit of a fight, but not a nasty bastard, you could tell. Barrett wastes no time and just head-butts the guy square in the face as hard as he can. The lad goes down, semi conscious and with a broken nose. Barrett grabs his hair, pulls him rag-doll upright and smashes his head three times in to the right-angled metal corner of the lockers and then drops him to the floor, like he was dropping a wet dish cloth. The lad doesn't move. The fight's over.

Barrett walks past me and says: "You're all right you Geldard." I nod, and say nothing.

I can feel my ear pulsing under my fleece hat and climbing helmet and I swing my left axe again and this time the pick bites solidly into the ice. I push my knee on the lip of the overhang to steady my body enough so I can swing my axe higher and then I bring my crampons up around the bulge. The angle relents a little and I take in the exposure. I use a cheeky heel hook, just for a bit of fun, and I swing right on to the final pillar of vertical ice.

Bullock's on the belay, just a few metres above and to the side. He jokes about me deserving the swing I face if I fall off. I mutter something self deprecating about being quite likely to fall due to my incompetence on ice.

"You're a good ice-climber," Bullock tells me and he means it and it means a lot to me.

It's funny, isn't it, climbing, life? Sometimes you make a mistake and get away with it. Sometimes you're just in the wrong place at the wrong time, and sometimes, inexplicably, Paul Barrett says you're all right.



The Pinnacle Club/BMC Women's International Climbing Meet (WICM) 2016

In 2016 Ynys Ettws was the base for an international gathering of women climbers that was co-ordinated by The Pinnacle Club. By the sound of things having so many women able to climb together, support and inspire one another was a great success would you get anything like the buzz from having a load of men together; I doubt it.

By Alison Cairns

(With assistance from Hilary Lawrenson & Val Hennelly, and incorporating contributions from other meet attendees)

The best disco in the Llanberis Pass rocked into the night of June 19th at Ynys Ettws; the exuberant finale to a week of exciting climbing (everyone), unfamiliar protection (our international guests) and organisational excellence (Hilary Lawrenson, aided by myself and a cast of helpers). Eighty women climbers from 24 different countries Iceland to India, Bulgaria to Belgium, Japan and New Zealand had come to North Wales to take part in the Pinnacle Club/ BMC Women's International Climbing Meet, along with women from all over the UK who acted as hosts, literally 'showing them the ropes'. Some of the foreign guests on the meet

had never before placed a piece of gear, while others had more experience and by the end of the week were climbing hard Extremes. From day one, there was a fantastic atmosphere and a real buzz, with so many women psyched to get out, climb, and push their grade, whatever their starting point.

Inception – the dream

The first Women's International Meet took place in the UK in 1984; as in 2016 organised by the Pinnacle Club with support from the BMC. It was a great success, attended by 40 women and culminating in the first female E5 lead (*Right Wall*) by Jill Lawrence, rapidly repeated by Catherine Destivelle and Rosie

Left:
Parisella's cave

Photograph:
Alison Cairns

Andrews. The resultant publicity and general buzz turned out to be a huge inspiration for a generation of women climbers, not least myself and Hilary, who were then both still in our mid-twenties.

Partly as a direct result of this meet Hilary and I both joined the Pinnacle Club the following year. Fast forward twenty plus years to when I'm Pinnacle Club President and Hilary is our Secretary, we started talking about what a big impact the International Meet made on us and that the Club really should run another one. We were both still working then though and a few more years passed by, until Hilary in turn became President in 2014. About to take early retirement and boosted by our jointly celebrating thirty years of Club membership in 2015, she was brave enough to finally grasp the nettle, deciding that this was going to be THE EVENT of her Presidency, and declaring that 2016 would be the year.

Conception – well let's give it a try shall we?

During 2015 Hilary and the Club committee put together some ideas and produced an application for funding to the BMC. They also approached the Climbers' Club to see what level of involvement/support they wanted or were able to give to the project. As is often the way not a lot happened for quite some time, we began to lose hope.

Birth – OMG this is really going to happen!

Then suddenly, in December, it's Game On! Not only did we hear from the BMC that they would give us funding plus some administrative support, but we also got agreement from the CC that we could use Ynys

Ettws as the venue. The date was set – the second week in June 2016.

This is an appropriate point at which to express our thanks to both the BMC and the CC for their support, without which the meet could not have taken place. The CC not only allowed us the use of Ynys Ettws and provided us with free and discounted guidebooks for the meet attendees, but was also, apparently, instrumental in pleading our case with the powers-that-be at the BMC for funding.

Infancy – hard work and sleepless nights...

Reality kicked in – we actually had to put our ideas into practice. It was hard to know where to start – we knew we needed to get invitations out to the international climbing federations and start publicising the meet in the UK as soon as possible, but first we had to have a basic structure for the meet and, crucially, a budget so that we could set the attendance fee. A hectic month later we finally sent out the invitations. Would anyone come or would the whole thing fizzle out before it had even got off the ground? Becky at the BMC assured us not to worry; she was right, we had twice as many applicants as we could cope with! It was so difficult having to choose as everyone sounded so keen to come – we wanted to accept them all but we had to remain realistic. We tried to get a good spread of ages and abilities when selecting the guests: the youngest was 20, the oldest 63; leading grades ranged from around Severe to sport 8a; some were confident on Trad, others had no experience at all.

Now we had twenty two foreign guests, but hardly any UK hosts – and were running out of time. Publicising an event like this was harder than we expected due to the lack of

an organised structure in the UK climbing scene and the fact that we were targeting a small minority within that, i.e. women Trad climbers. However word did get around and although we extended the deadline and put out some special requests for a few more 'top-end' climbers, we were very happy to end up with more than 50 hosts over the course of the week.

The next two months passed in a blur of spreadsheets, emails, phone calls and more spreadsheets. The WICM took over our lives and we suffered many sleepless nights making to-do lists and writing emails in our heads and having nightmares about spreadsheets...

Finally – it's really happening!

Friday June 10th – I'm at Ynys Ettws two days before the start of the meet to oversee the setting up of the marquee and do some last-minute on-site preparations. I come back from a shopping trip to be met by Katy from Bulgaria – the first guest has arrived, the meet has started.

We head over to Anglesey that evening to meet up with some other early arrivals and join the annual Rucksack Club barbeque meet. What better way to kick off the meet than with a party on the beach? A glorious sunny day climbing at Rhoscolyn - we dream of a whole week like this ahead but know that the rain will arrive the next day. Sadly that was to be the last day of the spring heatwave.

Back to Ynys on Sunday and sure enough, it's wet. The day passes in a chaotic blur – cleaning the hut, a seemingly non-stop stream of people arriving, tents going up, beds being allocated, gear accumulating and filling up the hut and the marquee, too many cars! The noise of so many excited women making new friends and catching up with old ones is almost overwhelming. A few



people go climbing and experience the joys of wet Welsh rock. Finally we all end up down at Caffi Caban who do us proud with a fantastic meal (as they continued to do for the rest of the week). Emma Twyford is here to do a 'welcome to Wales' slide show, but of course the projector won't work – eventually she 'breaks in' to a friend's house in the village to borrow his! Despite our best intentions it's a late night, and back at the hut we make very little inroad into the 'welcome drinks' before falling into bed exhausted.

For me this pattern was pretty much repeated throughout the week – I know I had a fantastic time but I actually remember very little about it! The main lesson we learnt from this is that you'd have to be super-human to be an organiser of an event like this and be able to fully participate in it. So I'm going to let some of the other participants on the meet take over at this point, and describe their experience of WICM 2016. However, after reading what

Above:
Alison Cairns
taking a well
earned break from
organising to enjoy
Brant Direct

Photograph:
Johanna Wernqvist

they have to say, I think I can confidently say that all our hard work was well worth it.

Thoughts of some participants

"Mau Mau in the slate quarries. A beautiful thin finger crack with very good protection, made really remarkable by the incredible surroundings of the old quarry. It was worth being bitten by"

Karolina

"Back at the car I took a last look in the topo and saw that the chalk in the upper part of the route belonged to Dream Toppin (E7 7A) and that Strawberries was more to the left. Damn, I'd been working in the wrong route, now i have two routes to get back for on this wall"

Anieka

"most importantly the ambiance is always motivating, that means full of laughter and a positive pushing atmosphere."

Selina

"I especially like the ethics: no bolts and no hooks, and if there are any, they are so rusted that you do not want to use them anyway"

Franzi

"it was the experience of a lifetime"

Ishani

"Sharing with pretty women older than me, to see them just as motivated that young ... that inspires... encourages ... helps to beleive that my future, like their present, will be rich and full of climbing"

Bi

"Daily rainfall, daily climbing, but without loss of optimism or fanaticism. This has been an awesome experience!"

Bi

"A beautiful traverse that crosses a cliff impossible to climb and whose last beautiful is one of the most beautiful I've climbed in my life. It is a horizontal dance on top of a sea cave."

Fatima

"Beautiful melancholy landscape, moorland and pastures divided by stone walls, roaring sea below the cliffs, climbing own traditions."

Alena

"That was great, because you could climb with many different women and make many new friends."

Ishani

Vedrana Simičević (Croatia)

For a typical climbing geek who always admired the elegant craziness of British Trad climbing movies, coming to Llanberis Pass was somewhat like meeting one of my idols. While the car's GPS was still trying to comprehend the existence of Ynys Ettws I immediately recognised a curvy road with little stone sidewalls and legendary features like *Cenotaph Corner*. The real reason why I wanted to attend the Woman International Climbing Meet was the prospect of becoming a part of something that looked like an important event for the global women's climbing community.

The thing is, as much as the "gender subject" is an unpopular topic in the climbing world, probably every passionate or aspiring woman alpinist can, after a while, identify herself with some if not all the usual gender issues in climbing. You don't have to be a passionate feminist to notice that in this still overwhelmingly macho sport, encouragement from fellow men climbers sometimes goes only to the point where the woman is weaker or equal to them. Most of us have been in that embarrassing situation when even the smallest sign of weakness immediately becomes a good reason for an ambitious male partner to retake the lead and have felt, at least once, that every mistake will be blown out of proportion and turned into a lasting reminder, while in the same time every success will be underestimated or easily forgotten. We all used to remain silent about purely physically gender things like menstrual pain or lower tolerance to cold because we learned to perceive them as the signs of our personal weakness while all the time wondering if that

feeling of gender inequality is just a matter of our own insecurities. But even if that was true most of the time, many of us gradually, almost unconsciously, started to occasionally escape into the more relaxed atmosphere of all-woman climbing parties, not only to share the "girls way" of climbing, but also to feel more satisfied with our accomplishments because nobody will automatically assume that a male partner has done all the hard work.

With that in mind, events like WICM carry this special allure which goes deeper than a simple wish to meet new people and have fun climbing in a famous area. It more than lived up to these expectations proving that with clever organisation the almost impossible can be achieved; successfully coordinating eighty women from more than twenty different countries with different cultures to live, eat and climb together harmoniously for seven days. Later we learned that the detailed planning, led by Hilary and Alison and executed with the help of dozens of volunteers took more than a year. This was obvious in every detail, from the well organised meals (a massive effort all by itself) to the highly functioning concept of pairing UK hosts with foreign guests on a daily basis which was like solving a maths puzzle with eighty variables, grades, moods and acceptable levels of acceptable suffering.

After getting acquainted with the usual British delights; everything is lovely, rain can actually be dry and run-out is always "just a little", and getting used to differences such as belaying from the harness, which for most of us is as strange as driving on the "wrong" side of the road, we immersed ourselves in the demanding, puzzling and strangely enjoyable world of British Trad climbing. The quality of

craggs and the mystical beauties of Snowdonia aren't the only famous parts of climbing in Wales, you can feel history on every route you touch.

Which brings me to the most valuable lesson that I learned by participating in WICM. It wasn't just the friendly female climbing partnership energy that was spreading around Ynys Ettws and on the crags. So many incredibly psyched climbers gathered in one place created an atmosphere of motivation. One could easily feel the excitement in the air every morning after the breakfast, the anticipation of the climbing day that lay ahead and the hunger for the routes, regardless of difficulty. While it was inspiring to see so many strong women operating confidently above E2, E3, even E7 or simply moving one grade higher in only a couple of days, I was even more impressed with the number of hosts in their fifties or sixties who continue to climb regularly and strong. These are women who have respectable careers, who are mothers or even grandmothers yet, neither their busy lives nor social expectations have prevented them from pursuing their climbing passion; it was a privilege to climb with them and to witness the joy and skill which they bring to every route.

Watching all those women from different backgrounds and generations sharing the same lifestyle and connecting almost immediately through the universal language of climbing, it occurred to me that the sheer number of women who are now enjoying themselves in a demanding world of moving the personal limits is the real "equality victory".

Thank you strong ladies from the Pinnacle Club for this great motivational experience.

Alena Čepelková (Czech Republic)

I wanted to climb something at Gogarth; Gillian, my climbing partner for the day, chose one of the popular climbs there, *Central Park*. Despite knowing that I had climbed on the Upper Tier a couple years ago, I did not recognise anything. My surprise was even greater when standing below the start; am I really going to climb the first pitch on a suspicious looking wall where I can hardly see the white rock, for the cover of green vegetation, lichen or something similar? "You did say you like the slab climbing, didn't you?" asks Gillian. "Ye...yes", I answer. OK, then I am going to climb the second pitch, a crack that looked much safer. I don't want to lose face. I take a set of small nuts and friends without much hope that I'll have a possibility to place any and start climbing. Not a very successful start, I am hesitant at the second or the third move nearly giving up but then I order myself to continue. I've been climbing for 43 years, so maybe now is the time to die? The higher I climb, the better I feel, I really enjoy the climbing, it is like a dance between lichens with a beautiful traverse at the end. I am on the stance, life is wonderful! We finish the route and laughing, renamed it "The Vertical Garden".

Later, back at home, finding my old notes, I read: *Central Park* VS+ and *The Strand*, E1, 13.5.1998, leading, with Angela Soper.

Ieva Grauduma (Latvia)

British Trad climbing was a whole new world for me. Before the meet I had been only in countries where sport climbing is the main thing, so it was interesting for me to see a place with such a big Trad climbing history. It's really

unique, that most of the routes in the area are Trad, with a big selection of grades and precise descriptions in guidebooks. My favourite climb was *Grim Wall Direct* at Tremadog. I enjoyed it so much, because it's the highest grade I have climbed on Trad gear and was surprised how confident I was about the gear and how scary the moves I could do. Lots of new emotions.

It was my first women-only meet and my expectations for the meet weren't high, because of my dislike of Trad climbing and the lack of male climbers. I applied because I love climbing so much and don't get that much chance to climb on real rock. When I got here, everything turned out to be much better than I expected - when you trust the gear Trad climbing is almost as good as Sport and women-only company is almost as good as mixed, as long as you have climbing partners who you can trust. So, what do I think of women-only climbing events? I understand how important it is in the UK where you have historic divisions, traditions, and assumptions about women/men climbers which I heard people discussing during the meet. For me, coming from a country with not such a long climbing history, where I've never heard of any difference about women's or men's role in climbing, it's maybe not so important.

Big thanks for the unique experience, this was one of the most memorable events of my life, it was really special for me and different from anything else which I have tried in my climbing experience.

Karolina Oska (Poland)

This was both my first women-only and first international meet and it was one of the best and most inspiring experiences of my life. Such



Left:
Mau Mau

Photograph:
Johanna Wernqvist

amazing people and atmosphere, being able to see the very different ways of being a climber and the different ways that led all these women to the same point in their climbing life. I was impressed by the mental power of girls from the UK who climbed very serious Trad routes compared to their sport climbing level. I was surprised that you often treat Sport climbing only as a way of training for Trad - I have never seen that kind of attitude before!

In Poland traditional climbing is not as well developed as in Britain where you have many very demanding climbs which would have been bolted in other places. It's also amazing to see that almost all British climbers do some Trad climbing and used to that type of climbing. It was great to see women like Angela, who still live in that community of climbers, sharing their passion and experience with the younger generation.



Above:
Snakes and Ladders

Photograph:
Laurence Yernaux

The best route for me was *Mau Mau* in the slate quarries. A beautiful thin finger crack with very good protection, made really remarkable by the incredible surroundings of the old quarry. It was worth being bitten by midges and almost getting lost while trying to get there, to send that route!

Selina Alioth (Switzerland)

For me women's climbing meets are always very motivating and inspiring. Motivating because you meet a lot of women who share the same passion and have similar ideas, they are full of laughter and a positive pushing atmosphere. Inspiring because there are women with similar ideas of living their lives with the

courage not to live like the mainstream and this gives me confidence to change things.

These days climbing has become more fashionable and a lot of people do it just as a sport or for fitness. On women's meets climbing in its entirety is lived; that includes pushing hard on the rock and in nature as well as sitting together and having a good time, with people for whom climbing is more than a sport, it is part of life. The real climbing spirit is still alive and it's so good to be part of this world climbing family and on these meets you realise that this family still exists.

Laurence Yernaux (Belgium)

When I was invited to go climbing in North Wales, I was so happy, it was the first time I had taken part in a climbing club meet, and the first time I was on a trip with so many girls. This was a great experience and very inspiring to see all these girls so keen to go climbing every day, and many times, despite the rain, good spirit. I had Trad climbed in Ireland before and people there told me the climbing in Wales was also very good. I loved the climbing in Ireland so I couldn't wait to try it in Wales. I wasn't disappointed.

North Wales has loads to offer, from beautiful multi-pitches on the sea cliffs and in the mountains, to Sport and Trad-climbing in old quarries. Happiness for everyone! I got to experience these different styles of climbing in Llanberis, Gogarth and Slate, with different partners, including Sadie and Eve, UK hosts on the meet.

With Sadie, we weren't very lucky with the weather, but we surely had loads of fun together! One day we went for *Snakes and Ladders* - a great day out in the slate quarries

climbing up chains, rusted and twisted ladders, walking through tunnels... Quite an adventure.

With Eve we had the chance to climb a beautiful multi-pitch route called Graduation Ceremony on Main Cliff, Gogarth. We both failed at one move on our lead but agreed that it was an amazing route on good rock. We also got to the top at sunset - such a beautiful view. On the last day, we climbed at Dinas Cromlech in Llanberis. I sent *Resurrection* which I found very delicate and beautiful. Eve also climbed this and then on-sighted *Right Wall*; very inspiring!

Ilona Antonovičiūtė (Lithuania)

I think this experience was great because I learned there is a difference between Trad climbing in Europe and the UK, for example gear placements, setting up a belay station and the choice of gear. There are so many ways to make climbing interesting and I have much more to learn. Trad climbing in Wales was so much more than I expected - we visited many different crags, each is special and gives you unique climbing. I must say Gogarth and sea cliff climbing in sunny weather is pure joy.

This was the first women's climbing meet I have been to and it was perfect! After a day of climbing we would sit and talk for hours about the climbs we did that day and sharing the best routes and places to go. I met some amazing women and I think we made some lasting friendships. We were all passionate about climbing so making friends and finding a like mind was easy. I was surprised how many young strong female climbers there are out there but I was even more impressed to see women who have been climbing for 40 years

or more and are still going strong; they were my biggest inspiration.

Aniek Lith (Holland)

On the Sunday morning at the start of the meet I arrived at the airport of Manchester where I would meet two other climbers to drive together to the Llanberis Pass. I walked out the luggage hall and looked around me for climbers. I saw a girl with a big backpack and muscled arms looking around the same way, Ilona from Lithuania. About five minutes later another woman arrived with tanned, sinewy arms and wearing climbing pants: Abi, a host climber from the UK. We arrived in The Pass early afternoon, enough time to touch some rock! Together with Chloe from Ireland I climbed my first route in Wales: a three pitch HVS 5a. During the last pitch it started raining and soaking wet we arrived at the hut again. Welcome to Wales! In the meantime more climbers arrived and the hut turned into a happy henhouse, full of a varied set of women from different places, with different climbing levels and different experience of Trad climbing. What we all shared however, was a big love for climbing and being in the outdoors.

British Trad climbing is rad! I definitely got to love it. I was afraid that it would be very scary, especially with the bad weather but we managed to climb every day, as the grading of the route is an indicator for the commitment you can choose how scary you want the climbs to be. I was amazed by how many different types of rocks were around and I really love that they are not all bolted, it definitely makes the climbing feel more special.



My favourite route of the week was *Positron* (E5 6b). Seacliffs are amazing, I really loved climbing on them, hearing the roaring sea beneath you. *Positron* starts just above the sea then goes up through a slightly overhanging wall. It follows some cracks, some slopers, some crimps, it really has everything. The grassy end gave the whole climb a more adventurous character as you really have to trust the roots of these grasses for holding you. It was also really nice to climb this route with Michaela, it's great how she is such a good boulderer and Trad climber at the same time.

Saturday was the last day of climbing and fortunately the weather was good. High on my wish-list was *Strawberries* (E7 6b). To get to the route you first have to climb three easy pitches (E2 5c). A small crack leads to a bigger crack and after that some chalk was leading further up. I top-roped the route twice and managed to make all moves, but after a week of climbing I felt tired and at this moment the route didn't feel possible. Back at the car I took a last look in the topo and saw that the chalk in the upper part of the route was actually *Dream Topping* (E7 7a) and that *Strawberries* was going more to the left. Damn, I'd been working in the wrong route, now I have two routes to get back for on this wall!

This week was really fantastic, I got to meet amazing and inspiring women. I climbed many cool routes and I enjoyed every single moment. My Trad climbing skills developed enormously, even perhaps the iron nerves. However, the most important thing I learned is how much fun it is. Hopefully this will make more women enthusiastic to get some nuts and cams on the harness and start Trad climbing!

Bi Zaes (Spain)

For me this was the first women-only meet, so much more than just a climbing experience; it let me discover the power of myself surrounded by so many mentally and physically strong women. It was, for me, the best way to grow up as a climber, a woman, and a human being. Being with all of you makes me realise how beautiful life can be at any age and in any culture or place. Wales hasn't Spanish weather but I enjoyed every day! The rock, Trad routes, and environment are all amazing!

Johanna Wernqvist (Sweden)

This was my second women-only climbing meet, the first one being an ice climbing event in northern Sweden last year. It was a fantastic way to get to know a new climbing area by being shown around by locals. There was so much excellent climbing, I really need to get back. My opinion is that if women want this kind of event they absolutely fill their purpose. Maybe when more women climb and have female role models we won't need them anymore?

Ellie Fuller (UK Host)

The Women's International Climbing Meet was an incredibly inspiring week. To me it meant three things: climbing my first E3, climbing and connecting with some amazing women, many of whom I'll remain friends with afterwards and the birth of the idea for the Women's Trad Festival which then took shape later that summer.

The Sun, E3 5c, my first climb at that grade, was a more than just a number, an achievement - for me it marked the beginning of a shift in perception. It was the result of

spending the previous three days climbing with strong, motivated women. Paired with Katerina Petkova, a Bulgarian 'wad,' (Editor, apparently a wad is a 'bumpy boy/girl', strong, hard. Googling the term gives some more interesting results) I was terrified. She could climb 8a or something ridiculous, why on earth had I been put with her? We teamed up with Michaela Tracy and Karolina Oska and headed to Rhoscolyn on Anglesey.

I seconded all Katerina's E1/2 warm-up routes, still more than slightly intimidated but determined not to let her down. Then something funny happened, I realised the crag was dominated by women, most of whom warmed up at around E2. Katerina was now dispatching E3s with ease while Michaela and Karolina had long ago left them behind for E4 and harder. This was a completely new situation for me - E1/2 was no longer 'the living end', but the norm, no big deal and and thus psychologically, far less challenging. Being part of this group had reduced the idea of attempting a new grade, previously not one I had ever considered leading, to something manageable. Of course, it's not a quick fix - E3 is still hard for me but I now see it as a stepping-stone to harder things, which, in turn, seem within the realms of possibility.

'Right I'm doing an E2' I declared, picked one and dispatched it quickly, a little of Katerina's nonchalance clearly rubbing off. Later, stopping to chat with another climber, Chloe, belaying from the top of *The Sun* with a big smile on her face after leading her first E3, a crazy idea occurred to me. I went down and looked at the line. A corner, I like corners. It looked like a good line, a really good line.

Left:

*Rhoscolyn Karolina
Oska on Trail of
Tears*

Photograph:

Dan Howard



Above:
Fatima Gil Uceda
on Dream of White
Horses

Photograph:
Julis Mair

I had done only a few E2s at that point. However Katerina was delighted when I voiced my desire to lead *The Sun* - her ecstatic encouragement was infectious, as were her repeated affirmations that it wasn't at all hard and that I would be fine. I remember feeling a strong sense of trust in Katerina's assessment of my ability, perhaps because I knew she had already both led and seconded this route. Now, I stood looking at it, red rock warming in the sun; it was a beautiful line, one I wanted to climb. I climbed it and sat glowing in the golden late afternoon light, pulling up the rope and wishing to be nowhere else.

It would be great, if I could feel equally as inspired by climbing with both men and women. I frequently climb with men who climb hard and I am inspired, encouraged

and continue to push myself when climbing with them. However there was something special about feeling part of a group of strong, motivated climbers of own my gender for a week in North Wales, which unlocked a little magic in my mind.

At the bottom of the crag again, I was met with a quiet 'well done' and a smile from someone, I'm not sure who, then we all went and jumped in the sea.

Julie Mair (UK Host)

I pulled into the car park to see Ynys full of women - hosts and guests of all ages and nationalities. Tents were being erected and cars unpacked, interspersed with animated conversations as the gathered throng got to know each other. As someone accustomed to being in the minority in huts and on crags this was an amazing change.

The week continued in this theme, despite the poor weather the crags were covered in brightly clad and enthusiastic women climbers. We flocked to the bad weather stalwarts of Gogarth and Tremadog, clambering over each other to find stances and get on our respective routes. Old favourites were repeated and wish list routes ticked as we showed off Wales' finest (and driest) offerings to our guests. I loved the day at Wen Zawn with Fatima, freezing our way across the first pitches of *Dream* to beat the crowds, followed by a warmer ascent of *Quartz Icicle*. Best was the day on Yellow Walls, having persuading my Czech partner Martina that attempting *The Moon* would be the best way to round off the trip. Thankfully her belaying skills were up to scratch when I lobbed off the crux pitch, arms tight with lactic acid; we finished up the day, still grinning,

with a quick, stress-free amble up *Blanco*. Evenings were full of good food, reports of the day's adventures and slideshows about the climbing in various countries.

These events prompt the question "are women's events are needed in this day and age"? Climbing is no longer the male dominated preserve of the past and many of the women at the meet have never experienced the challenges that the female pioneers faced. I have never felt disadvantaged or discriminated against for being female and I found it humbling to meet some of the women who'd challenged the social norms of their day to play in this traditionally male space. However, women are still a minority in climbing, especially Trad climbing and many women don't develop their confidence and independence to climb away from their male partners. Events like these provide an opportunity to climb in an all-female group, which rarely happens spontaneously. Spending a week surrounded by strong, confident women, with a passion and enthusiasm for climbing, inspired me to try harder, to be bolder and to try to help other women feel the same.

Anna Gilyeat (UK Host)

The WICM was both the first women's and the first International Meet I had been on, so I was excited to have an opportunity as good as this! Although I have been lucky to have had a regular woman climbing partner, I still mostly climb with men but I love climbing with women. I generally get more inspired by women's climbing achievements because I relate to them more, a week of celebrating and



climbing in North Wales with women from around the world sounded right up my street!

During the week I climbed with three guests - Katerina (Bulgaria), Selina (Switzerland) and Karolina (Poland). They were all super strong climbers, only Katerina had climbed British Trad before, they impressed and inspired me, not only by how easily they had taken to the delights of Gogarth and Tremadog, but also their attitude towards the style of climbing. They all pushed the boat out on quite intimidating ground. As someone who has climbed on Gogarth quite a bit in the last few years I was more accustomed to the loose rock, tricky route finding and the sea but I still find it pretty terrifying; yet all three of my partners took it in their stride on-sighting up to E5 - impressive! I learnt a lot from them, that a more relaxed go for it attitude can be a lot more enjoyable and less scary experience than building up to do some of the big classic Trad

Above:

Martina

*Kratochvilova on
The Moon, Yellow
Walls Gogarth*

Photograph:

Julie Mair

routes, which can often feel so intimidating to get on.

The best thing about the week for me was having a lot of fun out on the crags and pushing myself in a supportive environment. Additionally I met many other psyched women from the UK and abroad, all of whom are brilliant contacts for now and the future!

Hilary Lawrenson (principal WICM Organiser)

There have been a few significant markers in my climbing career and encountering some of the women on the 1984 meet at Gogarth was undoubtedly one of the earliest; I was so impressed by the standard of their climbing and was sorry not to have been part of the meet. Shortly after I read an article in Mountain magazine called “No Spare Rib”, which included a photo of a climber/dancer with the most awesome muscle definition and described the achievements of some of the top women climbers of the 80’s. I suddenly realised I was treading water and could do so much better. Joining the Pinnacle Club the following year gave me the incentive to up my game and improve my climbing grade, spurred on by the different dynamic that comes from climbing with other women.

Organising WICM completed a circle for me, thirty two years on there are more women climbers, many of them climbing much harder grades than I ever have, but I felt an immense pride bringing together this group of women and hearing how positively they all reacted to an all-female environment. Ellie was not alone, several times during the week I reassured people who doubted the wisdom of pairing them up with someone who so obviously

climbed harder than they did, to then hear their exhilaration the following evening when they had had one of their greatest climbing days. Katerina, for her part, took as much satisfaction from giving encouragement to her UK partners, as equal return for the generosity she received.

Ellie and some of the other young women were so inspired by the week that they determined to host a weekend for less experienced women climbers later in the summer. In a remarkably short timeframe they organised the “Women’s Trad Fest”, based at the Eric Byne campsite at Birchen Edge, as part of the BMC’s Women in the Outdoors Week in July. They brought over sixty five women together to Trad climb outside, many for the first time ever, such was its success that they are already planning a repeat event for 2017. We however, are saving ourselves for the next WICM, which we intend to hold in 2021 to celebrate the Pinnacle Club’s 100th anniversary.

Alison started this article with the final-night party and that seems an apt place to finish. The marquee and field at Ynys were packed out with over 80 people eating traditional Welsh paella, then taking part in a team quiz and silly games organised by Claire Carter. We were joined by an assortment of CC luminaries, plus Emma Flaherty representing the BMC and a team from 3rd Rock selling clothing. Picture this: CC President Steve Scott and VPs Keith Sanders and Pete Sterling all standing on one of the extra-large saucepans from the Ynys kitchen, trying (unsuccessfully) to pull a long climbing sling up off the ground and over their heads without falling off the saucepan! After that all there was left to do was to dance into

the wee small hours and say our farewells the following morning.... in the rain, of course.

Acknowledgements

We received generous support from a variety of places as well as the BMC and CC:

- *Gilly McArthur from DMM organised tours and trad-racks, gave an introductory talk on the first evening and joined us for climbing whenever she could;*
- *Plas y Brenin allocated instructor Cath Wilson to the meet for the week free of charge;*
- *Dan Howard filmed and took photos for the BMC TV film;*
- *V12 gave us a special discount rate at the shop all week;*
- *Rab, courtesy of Anna Clark, donated t-shirts, goodies and raffle prizes, sponsored Bibiana Zaes from Spain and came with Lyndsay McClaren for a couple of days to film;*

- *Helen Howe from Ogwen MRT came with her SARDA dog and gave an informative talk;*
- *Jacqui Wong from Loughborough University designed our t-shirts;*
- *3rd Rock Clothing produced the official meet t-shirts and also came along to the Saturday night party with a clothing stall;*
- *Jessie Leong and Claire Maw spent a few days each at the beginning and end of the week respectively as official photographers;*
- *Mountain Equipment, Mammut, V12, Lyon Equipment, Snowdonia National Park and Awesome Walls all made amazing donations of raffle prizes and goodies. Our raffle raised £450 for local Mountain Rescue teams.*

Right:
*Susan Marvell
at d'Argentière
(with La Vierge
and Plateau du
Jardin, two of the
venues described
in the Mont Blanc
Granite guide)*





Book Reviews

Mont Blanc Granite. *By François Damilano, Julien Désécures, Louis Laurent*

Wild Country. *By Mark Vallance*

Rock Climbers in Action 50th Anniversary Edition. *By John Cleare and Tony Smythe*

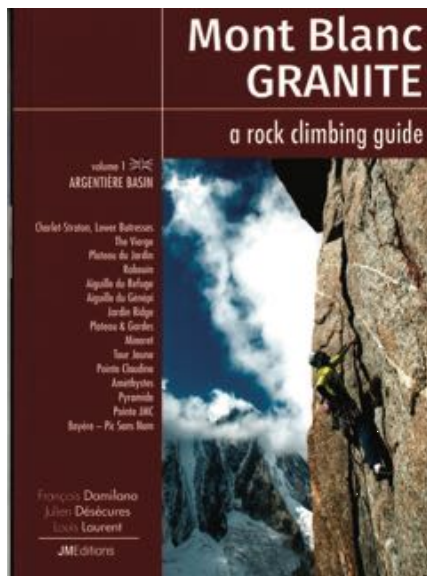
The Grahams & The Donalds. *By Rab Anderson and Tom Prentice*

Punk in the Gym. *By Andy Pollitt*

Alone on the Wall. *By Alex Honnold with David Roberts*

The Tower: *A Chronicle of Climbing and Controversy on Cerro Torre.* *By Kelly Cordes*

Plus a large selection of other recent publications: *By Chris Harle*



MONT BLANC GRANITE A ROCK
CLIMBING GUIDE: VOLUME 1
ARGENTIÈRE BASIN

by *François Damilano, Julien
Désécures, Louis Laurent* €24.90
English edition published by *JM
Editions* 2016

This is a great new guide to routes on amazing rock in the high mountains. Some of the routes are already in other guides but this one provides lots more information and it's the only guide you need for the area. The guide focuses on the Aiguille d'Argentière but includes some climbs in other parts of the Argentière basin. Its aim is to describe the best trad-style high quality rock climbs (albeit that

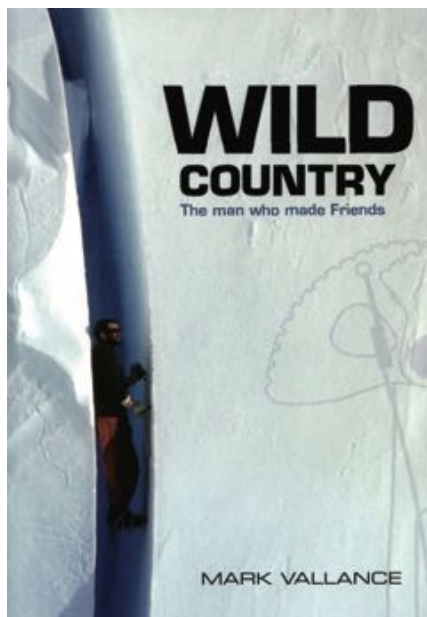
some have a little fixed gear) with straightforward descents on foot or by abseil. The routes range from (French grades) 4c to 7b+ with a good many up to 5c. The majority of routes are in the 6s and include established classics as well as some routes on less visited faces, which the guide says will have a bright future.

Many of the routes described are close to the Refuge d'Argentière, 2,771m. Closest are the 15 routes on the Aiguille du Refuge 3,057m, which include the classic Le gâteau de riz (5c, 230m), with harder routes such as the Bettembourg-Gillet (6b+, 200m). The Aiguille du Généri 3,159m has some excellent mid-grade routes with Un éclat de rire (6a, 200m) noted as possibly the best. Both these faces are around 20 minutes from the hut. The Plateau du Jardin 3,177m, 30 minutes from the hut, is covered with routes of 250m such as Singe blue (6b) or Dièdre central (6a) being typical. Routes on the Minaret 3,450m are an hour from the hut and include the famous Gaston Rébuffat SE Spur (6a, 300m). There are bigger outings such as the Jardin Ridge (5c, 800m) which leads to the summit of the Aiguille d'Argentière at 3,902m. These are just a few examples of the 99 routes in the guide.

This guide provides much more information than the other publications and none of the others have the number of routes or level

of detail, despite this only being a selective guide. The photo topos are clear and mark descents/abseil points. Route descriptions indicate the gear required and whether there's any fixed gear. Photos of the crags mark approaches and glacier crossings and there's a map exert showing the overall layout of the basin and position of the main summits. The guide's a nice pocket size so easily portable on routes. The authors' enthusiasm brings the climbing to life through the climbing shots and history section, as well as in the photo topos. This is a guide to some great adventurous climbing in an area where information had previously been difficult to find. It comes with the added bonus that you can base yourself at a friendly and welcoming refuge on the doorstep of many of the climbs and in a splendid landscape (views over to the Verte, N Face of the Droites and round to the Dolent). The title of the French edition is 'Les plus belles voies d'escalade' - given the exceptional quality of the climbing and its magnificent surroundings, the English translation to 'A rock climbing guide' seems to me, a bit understated!

Review by *Susan Marvell*



WILD COUNTRY - THE MAN WHO
MADE FRIENDS

*by Mark Vallance – Vertebrate
Publishing*

People had been telling Mark Vallance for years that he should write the 'story of Friends' – I know, because I was one of them. And what a story it would be, telling how a somewhat esoteric mechanical engineering concept was explored by a hotshot American climber who, by chance, met a National Park Warden from Derbyshire who was able to turn this into not just a commercial success, but probably the most influential climbing 'gizmo' since the rope was first used.

However Mark, being Mark, went several steps better than that and

wrote the story of Mark Vallance – the man who made Friends. It's a good thing that he did as there is far more to Mark's story than the 'simple' development of Friends as a commercial product.

He is the slightly dyslexic son of a family of Unitarian Ministers – grandfather, mother and father all being in this profession, and all highly intellectual, gaining degrees from Oxford. He failed to match their prowess in his early academic life and didn't 'make the cut' into his father and grandfather's old school, Sedbergh. As Mark notes - if he had gone to Sedbergh, he would have spent his school time unsuccessfully playing catch-up with those to whom academic learning came more easily. Instead, he won a bursary to Abbotsholme school near Ashbourne where an alternative approach to education and an emphasis on outdoor pursuits suited him better. Here he formed a friendship with fellow pupil Nick Longland that is still close today and, through this, an entrée to the social and climbing world that Nick's father Jack inhabited. When Mark applied to join the British Antarctic Survey some years later, the interviewer asked "How the hell did you manage to get references from Jack Longland and John Cunningham?"

His referees and BAS were astute – Mark excelled in the post and completed his time in Antarctica

as Base Commander at Halley Base! His time in Antarctica was followed by work at Colorado Outward Bound School and a meeting and much climbing with Ray Jardine, at that time one of the best climbers in America. Over the next few years Ray fiddled with and tweaked various home-made camming devices as potential assets for improving his own climbing through better protection. It was at this stage that Ray's bag of secret prototypes acquired the name that was to change rock-climbing – a coded "Have you got your 'Friends' with you today?" Nudge..nudge... when met at the crag. A much better name choice than Ray's which was 'Grabbers'.

Mark moved on from Outward Bound to return to the UK, but it seems that he had been the only person who Ray believed to have understood both the functioning of Friends and their potential for changing climbing. Eventually this appreciation led to an offer from Ray of a world-wide manufacturing licence – a challenging prospect for a full-time Warden in the Peak District National Park! What followed would indeed have made a good book in its own right as many technical design problems were overcome, patents acquired, sub-contracts arranged, marketing and sales begun and, eventually, a company name, Wild Country, was selected that,

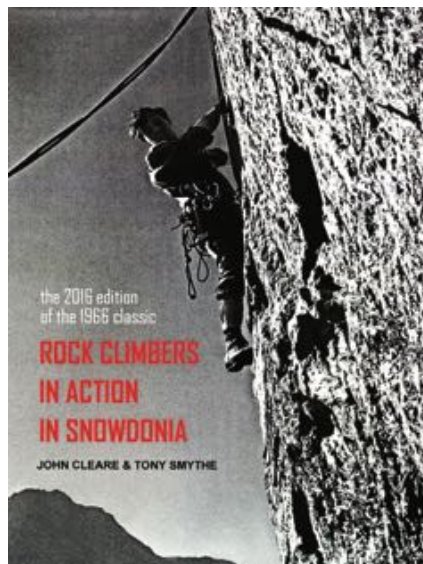
today owned by Salewa, is still one of the strongest brands in outdoor equipment. Other ground-breaking [not literally!] products followed – ‘Rocks’ off-set nuts and ‘Quasar’ geodesic tents amongst them.

But there is much more to Mark’s life than this. Outside the demands of Wild Country, he started Outside gear shop in Hathersage, opened The Foundry climbing wall in Sheffield [the first of the modern walls] and continued to climb at a very high level. His fell-running too was serious stuff and he completed the Bob Graham Round. He climbed an 8,000 metre peak – Shishapangma – and, years after the onset of Parkinson’s Disease, got almost to the North Col on Everest. Later he cycled to the geographical extremities of Britain and Ireland in a one 1,600 mile push in order to raise awareness and research funds for this debilitating disease. Somehow, in between these activities, he found time to serve on the Peak District National Park Board, to become President of the Climbers’ Club for our Centenary year and later to take on the Presidency of the BMC.

Mark writes with fluency and humour, even about the devastating diagnosis and consequences of being diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease at the age of only 54. This, for anyone, would be a crushing disaster and Mark’s sometimes brutal honesty puts his later achievements into a

perspective that none of us would wish to face. The story of his life flows quickly and engagingly – he has achieved much, but attributes his many successes largely to ‘luck’. It is a good inspiring read which covers not just the life of a remarkable man, but gives a unique view of some of the developments in our world of climbing that these days we take for granted.

Review by *David Medcalf*



ROCK CLIMBERS IN ACTION IN SNOWDONIA (RCIAIS), 50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION
by *John Cleare & Tony Smythe*
www.mountaincamera.com

There was a little corner in Carlisle Library where a couple of shelves showed the magic Library Number 796.522, the Climbing Section. As a novice at the end of the 60’s I was a regular visitor reading everything I could about the sport. My favourites were; I Chose to Climb, The Hard Years but towering above them was, RCIAIS. Fast forward 30 years and I bought a copy which is one of my treasured possessions so I may not be the most objective reviewer of this Golden Anniversary Edition but I will try my best.

This book has two complimentary parts, a personal account of climbing centred on the early 1960’s plus a portfolio of awe inspiring images of hard routes all wrapped in a dust cover showing a super image of Brant; this photo ensured that Brant was one of the first routes I did in Snowdonia.

The text is unchanged and by the author’s own admission, dated but is none the worse for that, Shakespeare is dated but no one complains! The writing captures the character of the 60’s hard climbing scene through the eyes of a participant; this is one reason why RCIAIS is an important book. The 60’s were ground-breaking years for climbing, PA’s, nylon ropes and the summer of ’59 had helped to dispel myth of inaccessibility surrounding many Rock and Ice routes resulting in them getting many more ascents, standards rose as

did the number of climbers capable of the hardest routes. Re-reading was a pleasure, like slipping into comfy slippers in front of a roaring fire. A nice touch is the inclusion of thumbnail biographies of the photo models.

The other reason why this book is important is John's ground-breaking action shots; 38 of the original 39 photographs are included (plate 18 on Tensor is missing), the flow of the book has been improved by re-positioning them in the correct place rather than in separate blocks. Photo-printing technology has developed beyond all recognition since 1966 so how do the images compare? In general the new printing seems to have spread the tonal range making everything less "mid tone grey" and more detail has been drawn from the shadows and highlights. Enhancing the tone has made a small number of shots look "over processed" e.g. those of Aries and Pinnacle Arête. The paper is quite thin and it is sometimes possible to see the ghostly image of the text or image overleaf

At times re-framing/resizing have been used to great effect, e.g. Baillie on Suicide Wall but a small number of changes have not been successful, for example that of Crew leading Pellagra pitch 2 has been enlarged to double page with a loss of sharpness while the shot of The Gates from across the corner has been printed

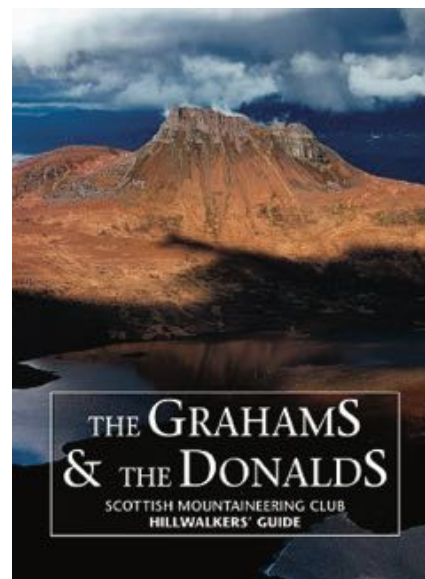
much smaller reducing its impact. A few of the originals seem to have been substituted by almost identical images from the same shoot, e.g. Boysen on Black Spring the replacements usually give better face detail with no loss of quality.

The package is enhanced greatly by the addition of about 80 more photos that couldn't be included in the original, most of which are up to John's usual high standard. The earliest of these were obviously unstaged; I love the shot of Tony on Belle Vue Bastion in 1951 with not a scrap of gear other than the rope. There are several "blow by blow" sequences e.g. on Troach where I particularly like picture of Potts lassoing the spike. The inclusion of photos of easy routes e.g. Flying Buttress and Milestone Ordinary, reminds us that it doesn't have to be hard to be thrilling. Two of the new photos appear to be more recent, the climber on Hope appears to be wearing leg loops while the person on Tryfan North Buttress sports a modern two tone rucksack. I think that the image labelled as High Wind on Sickle actually shows someone on the first pitch of Overlapping Wall Direct. A small number of images aren't up to par e.g. The Devil's Kitchen and those of Noah's Warning and Pharaoh's Wall.

It is great to see this classic available again, at only £25 (£20

softback) if there isn't one in your house there should be!

Review by *Trevor Langhorne*
Jan 2016



THE GRAHAMS
& THE DONALDS
SCOTTISH MOUNTAINING CLUB
HILLWALKER'S GUIDE
Edited by *Rab Anderson & Tom Prentice*
ISBN: 9781907233197
Published: SMC April 2015

For those not in the know the Donalds are all the 140 peaks and additional tops over 2,000 feet in the Scottish Lowlands. The Graham's are those 224 Scottish hills between 2,000 and 2,500 feet with an intervening drop of 150 metres. This excellent new book produced by the SMC and edited by Rab Anderson and Tom Prentice brings them

together. Despite some overlap with the existing volume *The Corbetts* most of the peaks have not been included in any other guide so now have their moment in the limelight.

The format of this guide will be familiar to owners of the SMC *The Munro* and *The Corbetts* guides, with descriptions of peaks and routes being contributed by such well known hill goers as Rab Anderson, Ken Crocket, Graham Little, Andy Nisbet, Colin Moody, Tom Prentice amongst others. It is obvious that this has been a labour of love and represents a huge amount of work. The book has a modern look and would not be out of place gracing your coffee table.

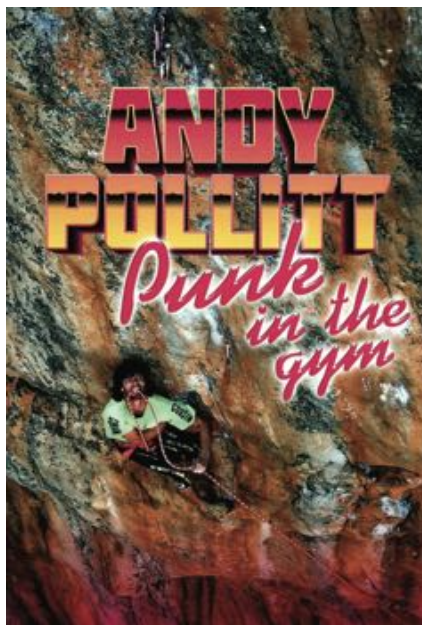
Gone are the terse descriptions from previous SMC guides. Expanded they now provide greater help in finding your way up the hill. The routes seem logical enough and some are changed from the previous Corbett guide.

The maps, an improvement on previous guides, are now in colour with colour graded contours that show the shape of the hills, and your walk, more clearly. Also the symbols showing the type of hill are also clear and stand out so you can easily see which type of hill you've done. Useful innovations are graded symbols showing the type of car parking at the start of each route.

Other features retain the old format. Each hill has a photograph and a grid reference. A time, distance and amount of ascent to the summit, but usefully times are also given for the entire day including the descent.

If you are a peak bagger and you have completed the Munros and Corbetts then buy this book as it opens a new world of Scottish hills. For any hill walker this will be useful in exploring unfamiliar areas such as the Galloway and Border Hills. Overall this is an excellent effort by the SMC publication team.

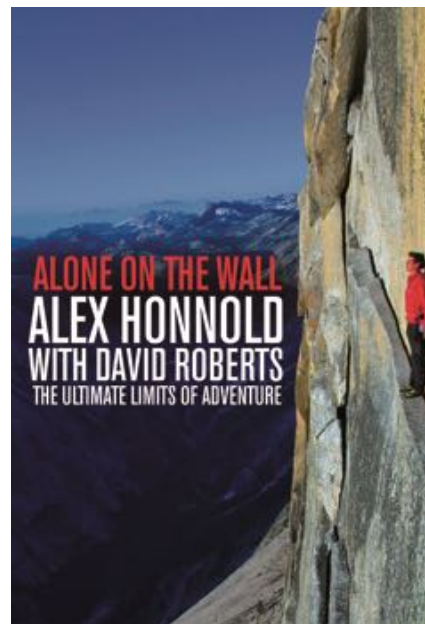
Review by *Dave Carr*



PUNK IN THE GYM

By *Andy Pollitt*

Published: *Vetebrate Publishing, 2016*



ALONE ON THE WALL

By *Alex Honnold with David Roberts*

Published: *Macmillan, 2015*

I was delighted to find the Alex Honnold book amongst my Christmas presents having read his article in the CC Journal 2012(1). This clearly talented and committed climber is living the dream, moving with seeming effortlessness from big walls to free soloing them to Super Alpinism in Patagonia. True enough, his article had raised some misgivings in me about the attitude of some elite climbers towards those less gifted (2) so here was a chance to find out more about the man.

And Andy Pollitt has at last written his story, so we have a chance to compare two of the boldest and

most respected climbers of different generations.

Starting with the Honnold, this has a stunning cover picture with Alex on Thank God ledge, Half Dome. The other shots are of variable quality but some are real stunners. The text is co-authored with David Roberts and alternates between first person narrative by Honnold, most often direct accounts of climbing, and scene setting and conventional biography by Roberts. This is an effective way of sharing the writing load, and certainly puts each of the major climbs discussed in context. Some of Honnold's writing does put you right out there with him and is compelling stuff.

The book is weaker when Honnold becomes a touch grandiose by sharing his philosophy of life with the reader (it turns out to be "carpe diem") or describing himself and a partner "questing into the night". Perhaps there is a cultural difference between the USA and the UK, but one cannot imagine Fawcett or Pollitt ever questing.

The book makes much of the risks of free soloing at the highest level and there is a sad roll call of those who have died following that discipline. Honnold is clear about the risks and embraces them with a confidence in his own ability that is hard to fathom for those of us with so much less talent. He does however make the point that he will always

walk away if he does not feel exactly right about a route, and has often done so. He is honest about the compromises his lifestyle has caused, most notably the breakdown of an off/on relationship over a number of years because climbing came first. This left him feeling both sad and liberated, contemplating new horizons and adventures.

Overall this is an insight into an extraordinary climber, and the modern super star lifestyle with its sponsors, who perhaps do not always appreciate what they are sponsoring. His deal with Clif Bar was cancelled because they find what he does too risky!

The Pollitt autobiography is a totally different animal. There are sections which made me laugh out loud, some honest writing about his bi-polar illness, and real insight at times. He actually tells us why Jerry Moffatt was so good, not just his dedication but his ability to read a move faster than others. The famous house that Moffatt, Pollitt, "Basher" Atkinson and Chris Gore all shared in Sheffield, the hitching with its attendant risks (!), the summer at Tremadog which catapulted Moffatt and Pollitt into the spotlight, it's all here. I particularly enjoyed his account of the Pen Trwyn scene at the time of the great boom there and how it felt like to be there at the centre of it all surrounded by a cast

of cutting edge climbers all hell bent on climbing new routes.

There is a consistent narrative style to the book which makes you feel as if you are sitting down over a pint with the author and he is just yarning. The man can write, and has the classic self-deprecating humour that the best climbing writers have all shared, something sadly absent from too many recent autobiographies in my view.

Pollitt was a committed full time climber at the time when unemployment made this a lifestyle choice for many, that he rose to the top is a testament not only to his ability and enthusiasm, but to his utter dedication. That he did so whilst smoking and drinking as heavily as he did is extraordinary.

There is a good deal of warmth in his writing about friends, his rapport with Atkinson, the father he lost and re-found in Paul Williams who then died so tragically and the new friends he has made in Australia where he now lives. He admits to a couple of times when he let people down, I for one hope that "Yorick" forgives him. You really need to read the book to see why.

The photographs are well chosen and superb, both the black and white illustrations in the text and the outstanding colour sections. Perhaps not surprising when you know that Pollitt worked a lot with both Glen

Robbins and Bernard Newman, two of the finest.

The latter part of the book deals with his protracted attempts on Punks in the Gym, and the realization somewhere on that journey that this climb was to be his last. Why? Pollitt shows the strength of his writing here in that he does not need to tell us explicitly why, yet we understand. That decision to stop is what makes the book a tale of redemption. Pollitt is living with his demons but they are under control, he can laugh at his mistakes and move on to whatever comes next.

To be clear, I rate this as the best book by the Eighties generation, and one of the great climbing books. Why? Because it is funny and sad and rude and nostalgic, it celebrates friendship and climbing, and most of all because it is NOT just about climbing. It is about why we climb, why we are who we are, and how we choose to live. That claim has been made by a few climbing books over the last couple of years, and this one (despite not making those grandiose claims) delivers.

1. A slower, simpler life, Alex Honnold: CC Journal 2012
2. Careering towards, contempt, Nick Hinchliffe: CC Journal 2013-14

Review by *Nick Hinchliffe*

(Alone on the Wall was short listed for the Boardman Tasker Prize 2016)



THE TOWER: A CHRONICLE OF CLIMBING AND CONTROVERSY ON CERRO TORRE
By *Kelly Cordes*
(Patagonia 2014)

Cesare Maestri (born 1929), the great Spider of the Dolomites, has climbed thousands of hard new routes, many done solo. In the Trentino Province of Italy where he still lives he is revered as a heroic god-like figure, and is feted at every possible occasion to celebrate his 1959 first ascent of Cerro Torre in Patagonia. Legendary French alpinist Lionel Terray considered it “the greatest mountaineering feat of all time.” However, with no plausible evidence of success the wider mountaineering community had some doubts, particularly as there was no photographic evidence and

that his climbing partner, Austrian Toni Egger, died on the descent. Perhaps if Maestri had left it there, history would have been kinder, but his return to Cerro Torre in 1970, when he placed 400 bolts to establish his infamous ‘Compressor Route’, invited even greater scrutiny.

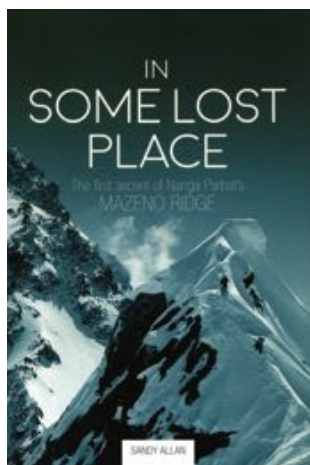
Reinhold Messner’s article ‘Murder of the Impossible’ and Ken Wilson’s ‘Cerro Torre – A Mountain Desecrated’ escalated the controversy around Maestri’s alleged ascent. Inconsistencies in the story began to surface and gradually the weight of evidence would seem to suggest that the first ascent of Cerro Torre is actually mountaineering’s greatest lie. Maestri, now in his 80s, is utterly unwavering in defence of his achievement and his admiring Trentino supporters remain loyal. Respected author and mountaineering historian, Mirella Tenderini sums up their feeling, “We believe Cesare, it is like a faith... for us.”

The author Kelly Cordes was editor of the American Alpine Journal for 12 years, and with Colin Haley ascended Cerro Torre by fair means in 2007. He successfully weaves the Maestri story with Cerro Torre’s climbing history, taking us up to the 2012 ascent by Hayden Kennedy and Jason Kruk when they kept the debate alive by chopping 120 bolts from the Compressor Route.

I highly recommend this well-researched, page-turning detective story; one of the best I've read in the last two years. Cordes attempts to give a balanced exploration of facts and opinions but thankfully does not hold back in his judgement of events. So go and read the book before I am tempted to give anything away.

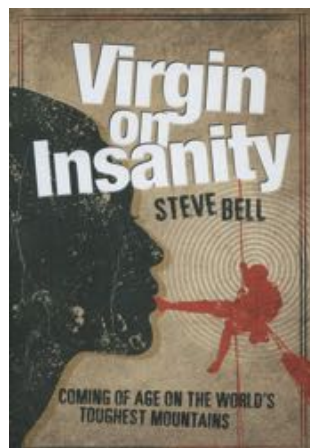
Review by *Chris Harle*

The following is a selection of recently published climbing and mountaineering books:



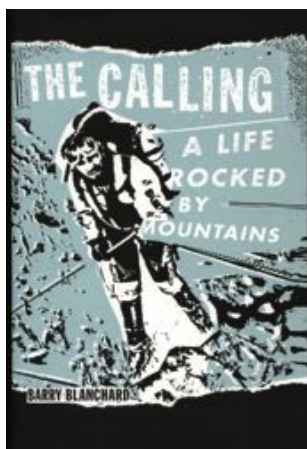
IN SOME LOST PLACE: THE FIRST ASCENT OF NANGA PARBAT'S MAZENO RIDGE: *SANDY ALLAN* (VERTEBRATE PUBLISHING, 2015)

Allan's epic ascent of the Mazeno Ridge with Rick Allen was recognised with the Piolet d'Or award in 2013.



VIRGIN ON INSANITY: *STEVE BELL* (VERTEBRATE PUBLISHING, 2016)

A climbing memoir and coming-of-age story of high adventure, youthful insecurity and immature love from the seven summiteer founder of Jagged Globe.

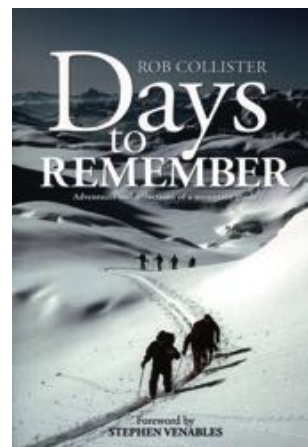


THE CALLING: A LIFE ROCKED BY MOUNTAINS: *BARRY BLANCHARD* (PATAGONIA, 2014)

The autobiography of one of North America's top alpinists. Winner of the Boardman Tasker Prize 2015.

The 9th Grade: 150 Years of Free Climbing: *David Chambre* (les éditions du Mont-Blanc, 2015)

A large format lavishly illustrated history of the world's greatest climbers.



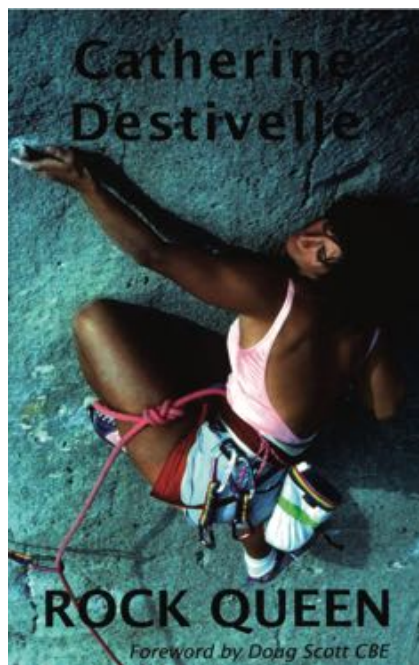
DAYS TO REMEMBER: ADVENTURES AND REFLECTIONS OF A MOUNTAIN GUIDE: *ROB COLLISTER* (BATON WICKES, 2016)

A collection of essays from a British alpinist who has been a mountain guide for 40 years.



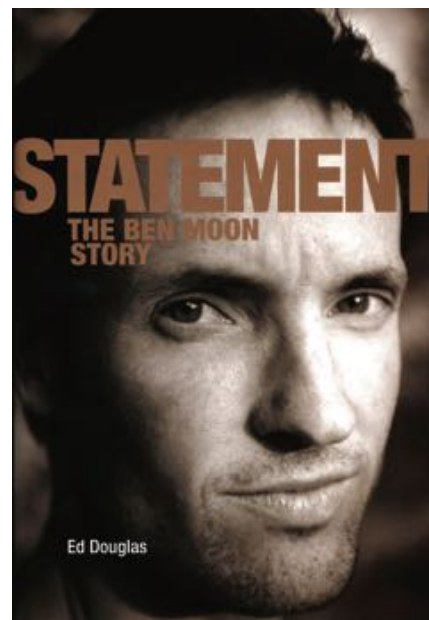
ONE MAN'S EVEREST: KENTON COOL
(PREFACE / PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE,
2015)

A climbing memoir of adventures around the world from a mountaineer best known for his exploits with Sir Ranulph Fiennes and his eleven ascents of Everest.



ROCK QUEEN: MAJOR ASCENTS
FROM THE WORLD FAMOUS FRENCH
CLIMBER: CATHERINE DESTIVELLE
(HAYLOFT PUBLISHING, 2015)

The long-awaited English translation of Destivelle's autobiography.



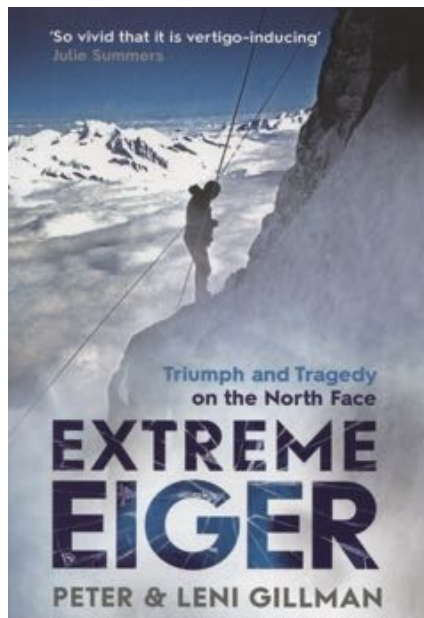
STATEMENT: THE BEN MOON
STORY: ED DOUGLAS (VERTEBRATE
PUBLISHING, 2015)

The biography of Ben Moon who climbed the world's first 8c+, Hubble at Raven Tor.



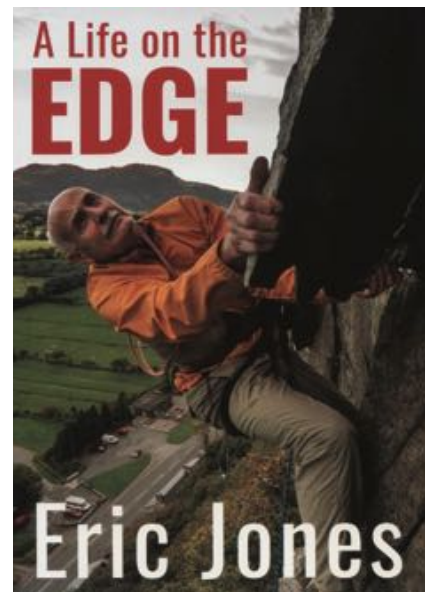
YOSEMITE IN THE FIFTIES: DAN FIDELMAN, JOHN LONG & TOM ADLER (PATAGONIA, 2016)

A companion to the classic Yosemite in the Sixties. First person narratives and archive photos are used to chronicle the historic first ascents of Yosemite's big walls.



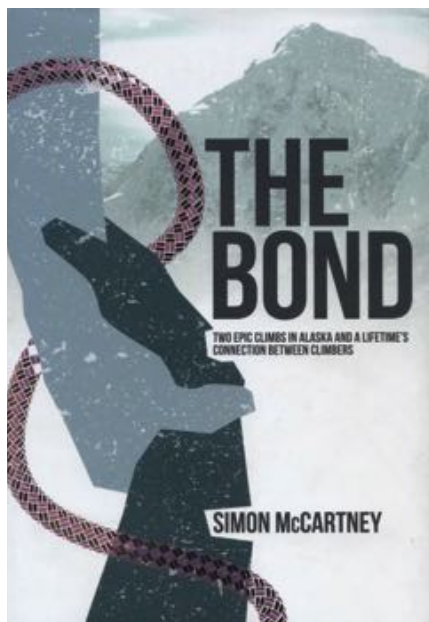
EXTREME EIGER: THE RACE TO CLIMB THE DIRECT ROUTE UP THE NORTH FACE OF THE EIGER: PETER & LENI GILLMAN WITH JOCHEN HEMMLEB (SIMON & SCHUSTER, 2015)

The dramatic race to make the first ascent of the Eiger Direct in 1966 between a German team and an internationally renowned team led by John Harlin.



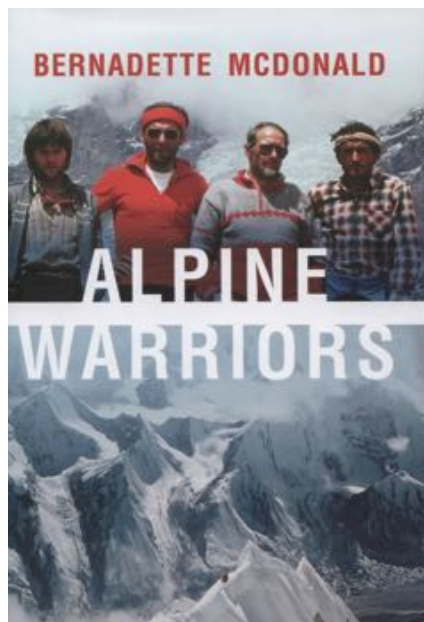
A LIFE ON THE EDGE: SURVIVING THE EIGER, EVEREST, PATAGONIA, AND MANY ADVENTURES IN BETWEEN: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ERIC JONES: ERIC JONES WITH GREG LEWIS (GWASG CARREG GWALCH, 2015)

The extraordinary life of legendary Welsh climber and daredevil.



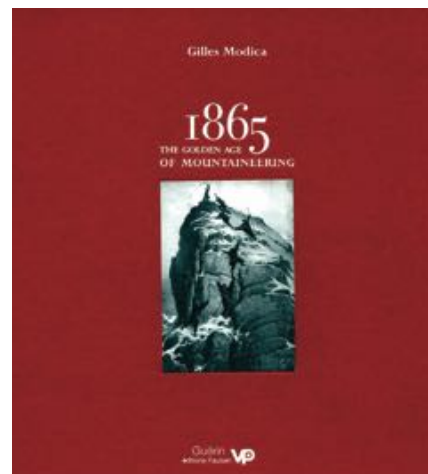
THE BOND: TWO EPIC CLIMBS IN ALASKA AND A LIFETIME'S CONNECTION BETWEEN CLIMBERS: SIMON MCCARTNEY (VERTEBRATE PUBLISHING, 2016)

Two first ascents, the north face of Mount Huntington and the south-west face of Denali, over 36 years ago are central to this epic survival story. Winner of the Boardman Tasker Prize 2016.



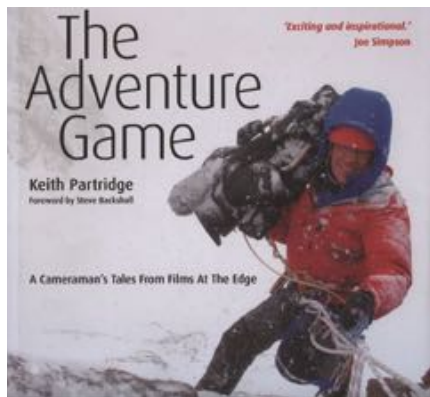
ALPINE WARRIORS: BERNADETTE MCDONALD (ROCKY MOUNTAIN BOOKS, 2015)

Charting the explosion of Slovenian alpinism during the 1990s when they made many dramatic and futuristic ascents in the high Himalaya.



1865: THE GOLDEN AGE OF MOUNTAINEERING: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF ALPINE CLIMBING'S GREATEST ERA: GILES MODICA (VERTEBRATE PUBLISHING, 2016)

A beautifully produced large format history of alpine climbing from 1854-1865.



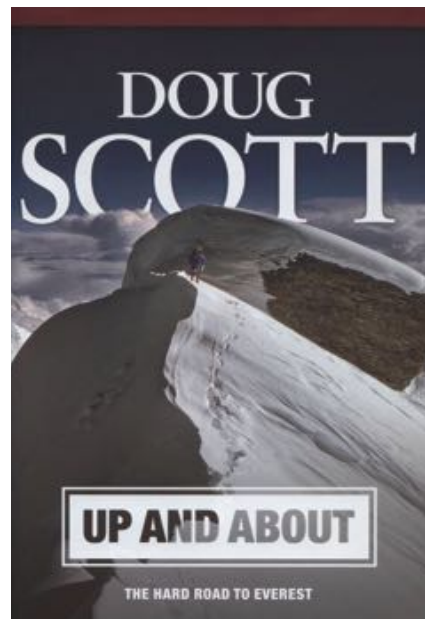
THE ADVENTURE GAME: A CAMERAMAN'S TALES FROM FILMS AT THE EDGE: KEITH PARTRIDGE (SANDSTONE PRESS, 2015)

Memoir of an adventure cameraman from Mongolia, Vietnam and the Arctic to K2 and Alpine summits.



CLIMBING DAYS: DAN RICHARDS (FABER & FABER, 2016)

The author's journey of discovery to find more about his great-great-aunt, Dorothy Pilley and her husband I.A. Richards, both prominent and pioneering mountaineers of the early 20th Century.



UP AND ABOUT: THE HARD ROAD TO EVEREST: DOUG SCOTT (VERTEBRATE PUBLISHING, 2015)

In the first volume of his autobiography Scott tells the story of his life until 1975 when he and Dougal Haston made the first British ascent of Everest. Winner of the Himalayan Club's prestigious Kekoo Naoroji Award for Mountain Literature.

IN THE SHADOW OF BEN NEVIS: IAN SYKES (BÂTON WICKES, 2016)

Autobiography of Ian 'Spike' Sykes, founder of Nevisport, long-time member of Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team and a Director of the Nevis Range ski and mountain biking centre.

MOUNTAINEERING IN SCOTLAND: THE EARLY YEARS: KEN CROCKET (SMC, 2015)

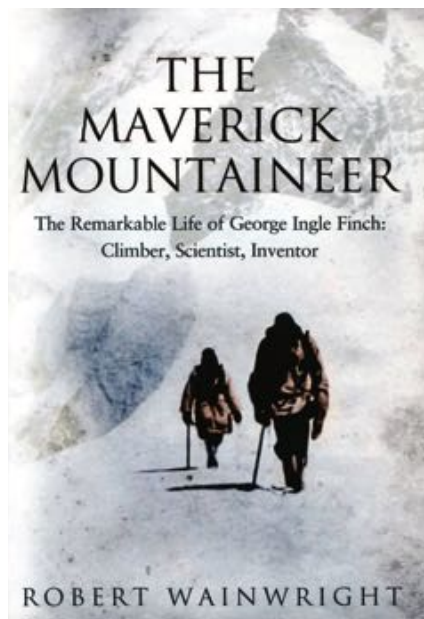
The definitive history of Scottish mountaineering from 1571- 1914.

INSTRUCTIONAL:



ONE MOVE TOO MANY: HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE INJURIES AND OVERUSE SYNDROMES OF ROCK CLIMBING: THOMAS HOCHHOLZER, VOLKER SCHOEFFL & SAM LIGHTNER JR (SHARP END PUBLICATIONS, 2016)

An expanded new edition in full colour from esteemed German sports medicine doctors.



THE MAVERICK MOUNTAINEER: THE REMARKABLE LIFE OF GEORGE INGLE FINCH – CLIMBER, SCIENTIST, INVENTOR: ROBERT WAINWRIGHT (ALLEN & UNWIN, 2016)

Biography of Finch (1888-1970), a renowned Australian chemist and mountaineer, who was part of the British Everest expedition in 1922. This book was short listed for the Boardman Tasker Prize 2016.

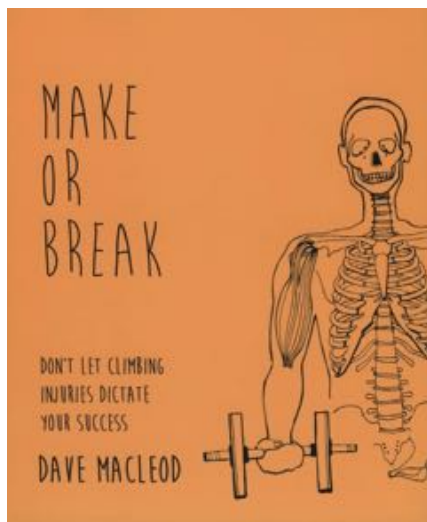


1001 CLIMBING TIPS: ANDY KIRKPATRICK (VERTEBRATE PUBLISHING, 2016)

A massive collection of tips based on 30 years of climbing obsession.

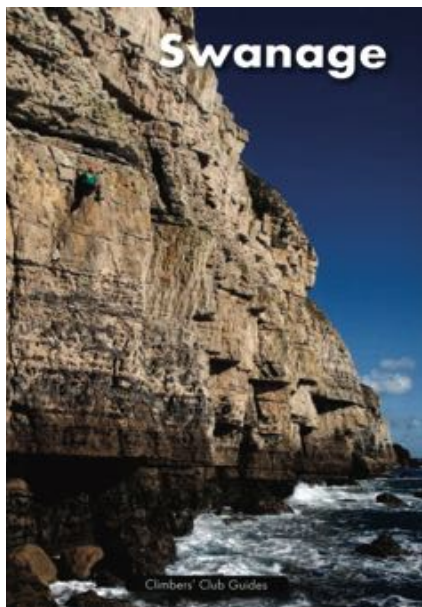
4000M: CLIMBING THE HIGHEST MOUNTAINS OF THE ALPS: DAVE WYNNE-JONES (WHITTLES PUBLISHING, 2016)

The quest of a Climbers' Club member to climb all the 4000m summits.



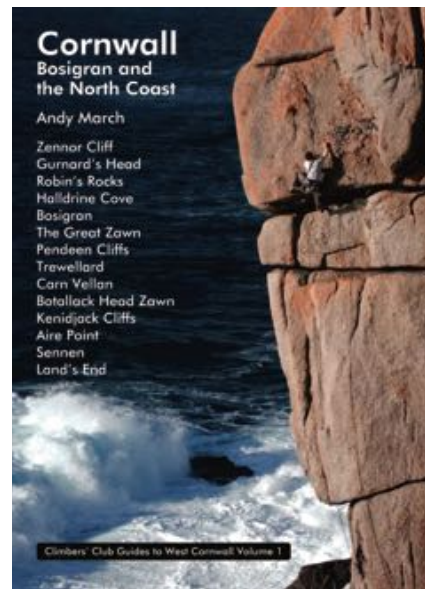
MAKE OR BREAK: DON'T LET CLIMBING INJURIES DICTATE YOUR SUCCESS: DAVE MACLEOD (RARE BREED PRODUCTIONS, 2015)

A handbook on how to take care of yourself as a lifelong climbing athlete.



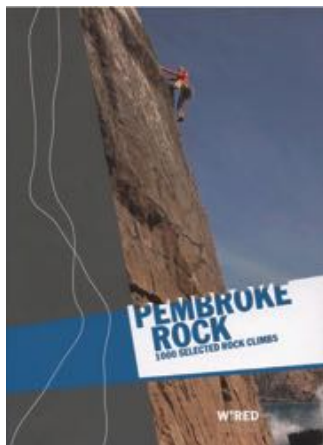
SWANAGE: STEVE TAYLOR (ED) (THE CLIMBERS' CLUB, 2014)

The definitive guide from St. Aldheim's Head to the Lighthouse Cliffs plus Old Harry Rocks, The Agglestone and the Isle of Wight.



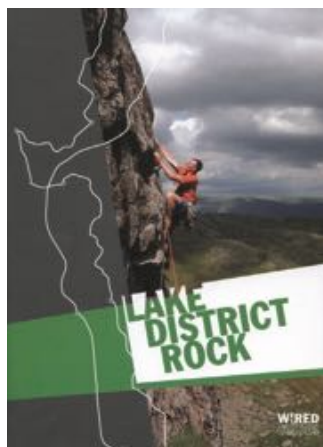
WEST CORNWALL: BOSIGRAN & THE NORTH COAST: ANDY MARCH (THE CLIMBERS' CLUB, 2016)

The definitive guide from Zennor Cliff to Land's End.



PEMBROKE ROCK: 1000 SELECTED ROCK CLIMBS: EMMA ALSFORD & PAUL DONNITHORNE (WIRED GUIDES, 2016)

A Climbers' Club publication of selected routes.



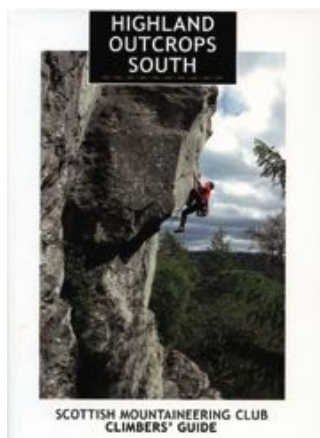
LAKE DISTRICT ROCK: STEVE SCOTT (ED) (WIRED GUIDES, 2015)

A FRCC publication of 1500 selected routes at 85 crags.



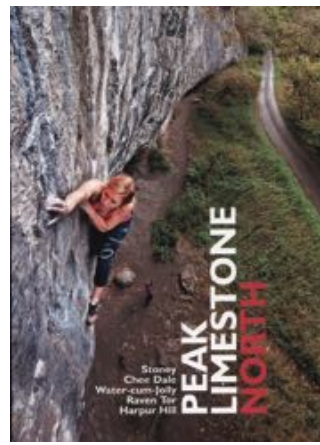
BORROWDALE: JUSTIN SHIELS AND OTHERS (FRCC, 2016)

The definitive guide to the six climbing areas within the valley.



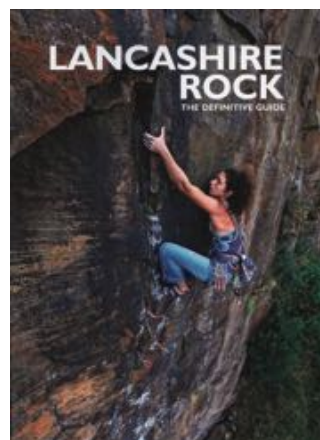
HIGHLAND OUTCROPS SOUTH: ANDY NISBET AND OTHERS (SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING TRUST, 2016)

The definitive guide to 2500 routes in the highland crags south of Inverness and the Great Glen.



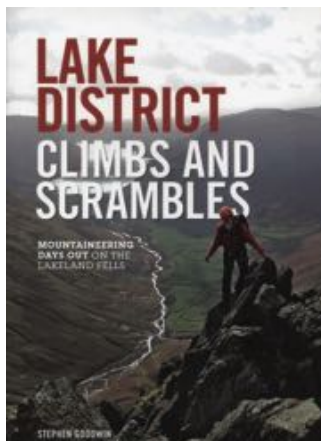
PEAK LIMESTONE NORTH: GARY GIBSON & IAN CARR (BMC, 2015)

The definitive guide to: Stoney Middleton, Water-cum-Jolly, Raven Tor, Chee Dale, Buxton area & Castleton area.



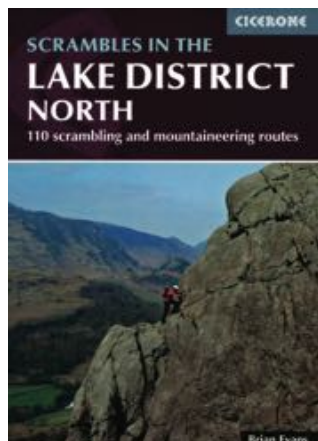
LANCASHIRE ROCK: THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE: LES AINSWORTH, IAN CARR, DAVE CRONSHAW & BRUCE GOODWIN (BMC, 2016)

3200 routes across 95 crags.



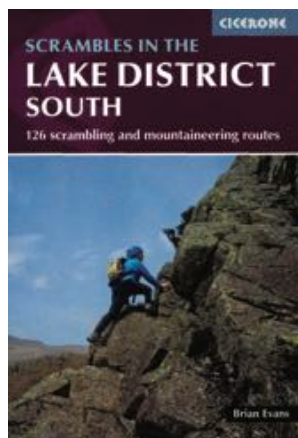
LAKE DISTRICT CLIMBS AND SCRAMBLES: MOUNTAINEERING DAYS OUT ON THE LAKELAND FELS: STEPHEN GOODWIN (VERTEBRATE PUBLISHING, 2015)

20 days out from valley floor to summit via a scramble or climb.



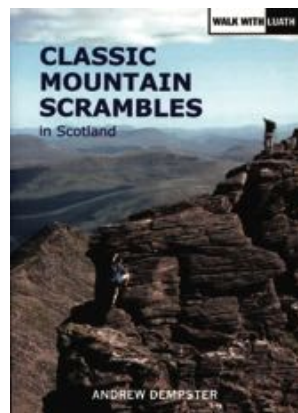
SCRAMBLES IN THE LAKE DISTRICT NORTH: R. BRIAN EVANS (CICERONE, 2016)

A new revised edition describing 110 scrambling and mountaineering routes.



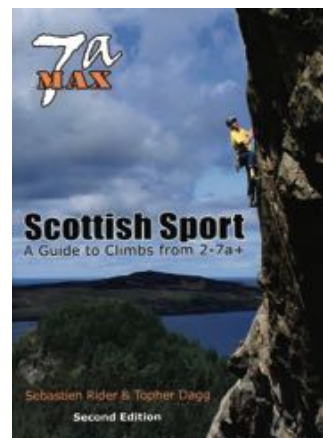
SCRAMBLES IN THE LAKE DISTRICT SOUTH: R. BRIAN EVANS (CICERONE, 2016)

A new revised edition describing 126 scrambling and mountaineering routes.



CLASSIC MOUNTAIN SCRAMBLES IN SCOTLAND: ANDREW DEMPSTER (LUATH PRESS, 2016)

A new edition of a guidebook first published in 1992. A selected scrambling guide covering the whole of Scotland.



SCOTTISH SPORT: A GUIDE TO CLIMBS FROM 2-7A+: SEBASTIEN RIDER & TOPHER DAGG (RIDER-FRENCH CONSULTING, 2015)

Over 1500 routes from sea-cliffs to quarries, and gneiss to conglomerate.

ROCK CLIMBING IN DONEGAL: IAIN MILLER (MOUNTAINEERING IRELAND, 2015)

A select guide to over 100 routes across 25 locations in County Donegal, in northwest Ireland.

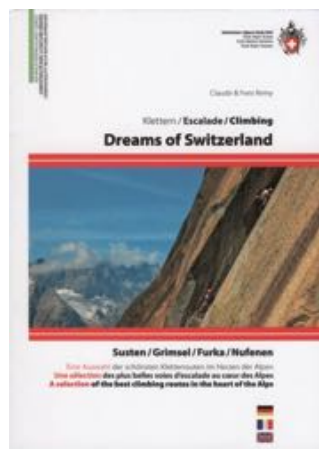
The Club has two new guides both of which are hot off the press and look superb.

AVON GORGE: MARTIN CROCKER
(THE CLIMBERS' CLUB, 2017)

This book arrived the day after I thought I had finished Editing. The latest labour of love from Martin Crocker is a beautifully illustrated and authoritative volume in the now increasingly familiar A5 format. It is time to get re-acquainted with The Gorge!

DARTMOOR: JAMES CLAPHAM (IAN SMITH ED: THE CLIMBERS' CLUB, 2017)

A new area for us and a fantastic looking guide showing that there is so much more to the area than Hay Tor and Dewerstone.



SELECTED NEW GUIDES FROM EUROPE AND THE REST OF WORLD:

DREAMS OF SWITZERLAND: A
SELECTION OF THE BEST CLIMBING
ROUTES IN THE HEART OF THE ALPS:
CLAUDE YVES REMY (SWISS ALPINE
CLUB, 2016)

Multi-pitch routes in the Susten,
Grimsel, Furka and Nufenen areas.

CHAMONIX: A GUIDE TO THE BEST
ROCK CLIMBS AND MOUNTAIN ROUTES
AROUND CHAMONIX AND MONT-
BLANC: CHARLIE BOSCOE & JACK
GELDARD (ROCKFAX, 2016)

The next blockbuster from
Rockfax.



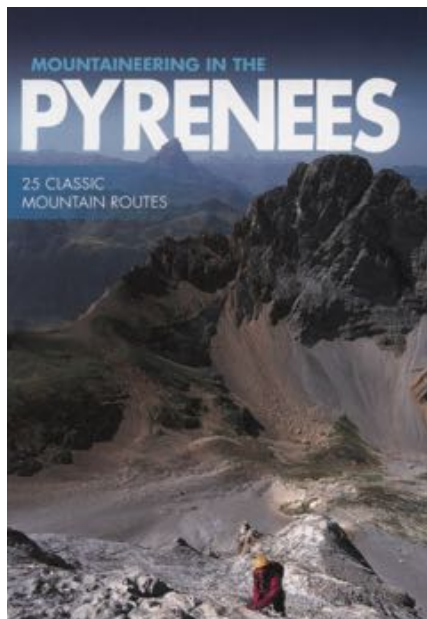
BOULDERING IN LOFOTEN: JONAS
PAULSSON (JONAS PAULSSON, 2016)

A comprehensive guide to
20 different areas and over 500
established boulder problems.

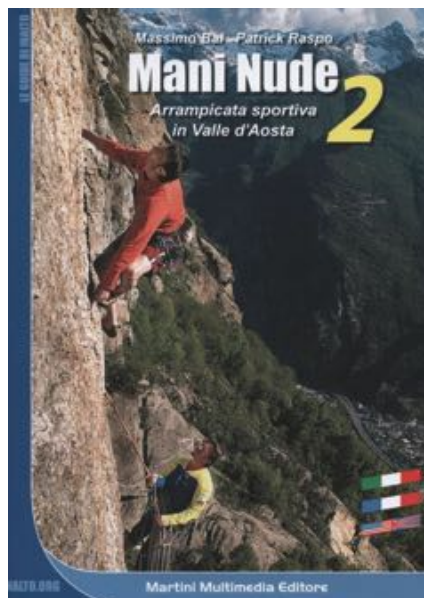


FREE CLIMBING IN PICU URRIELLU:
NARANJO DE BULNES: ALBERTO
BOZA (EDICIONES CORDILLERA
CANTABRICA, 2015)

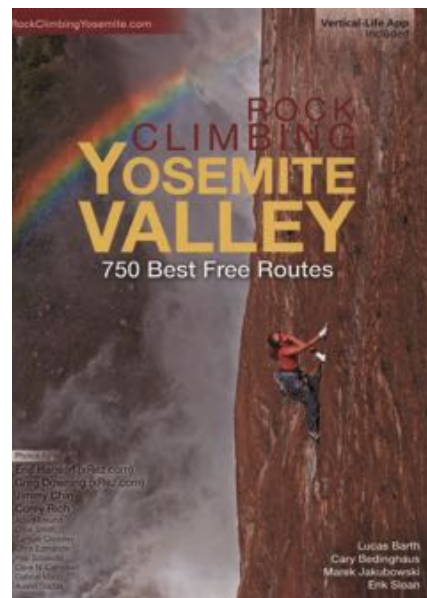
27 routes on Spain's best-known
climbing mountain located in the
Picos de Europa, plus sport routes
around Cabrales.



PYRENEES: FRANCOIS LAURENS
(VERTEBRATE PUBLISHING, 2015)
The first English language edition
featuring climbs along the entire
Pyrenean chain.



MANI NUDE (BARE HANDS) 2: SPORT
CLIMBING IN THE AOSTA VALLEY:
MASSIMO BAL & PATRICK RASPO
(MARTINI MULTIMEDIA, 2016)
127 crags from Cormayeur to
Tavagnasco in the Italian Alps.



**ROCK CLIMBING YOSEMITE
VALLEY: 750 BEST FREE ROUTES:**
LUCAS BARTH, CARY BEDINGHAUS,
MAREK JAKUBOWSKI & ERIC SLOAN
(YOSEMITE BIGWALLS, 2016)
Inspirational guidebook with
dozens of new and unpublished
routes among the established classics.

