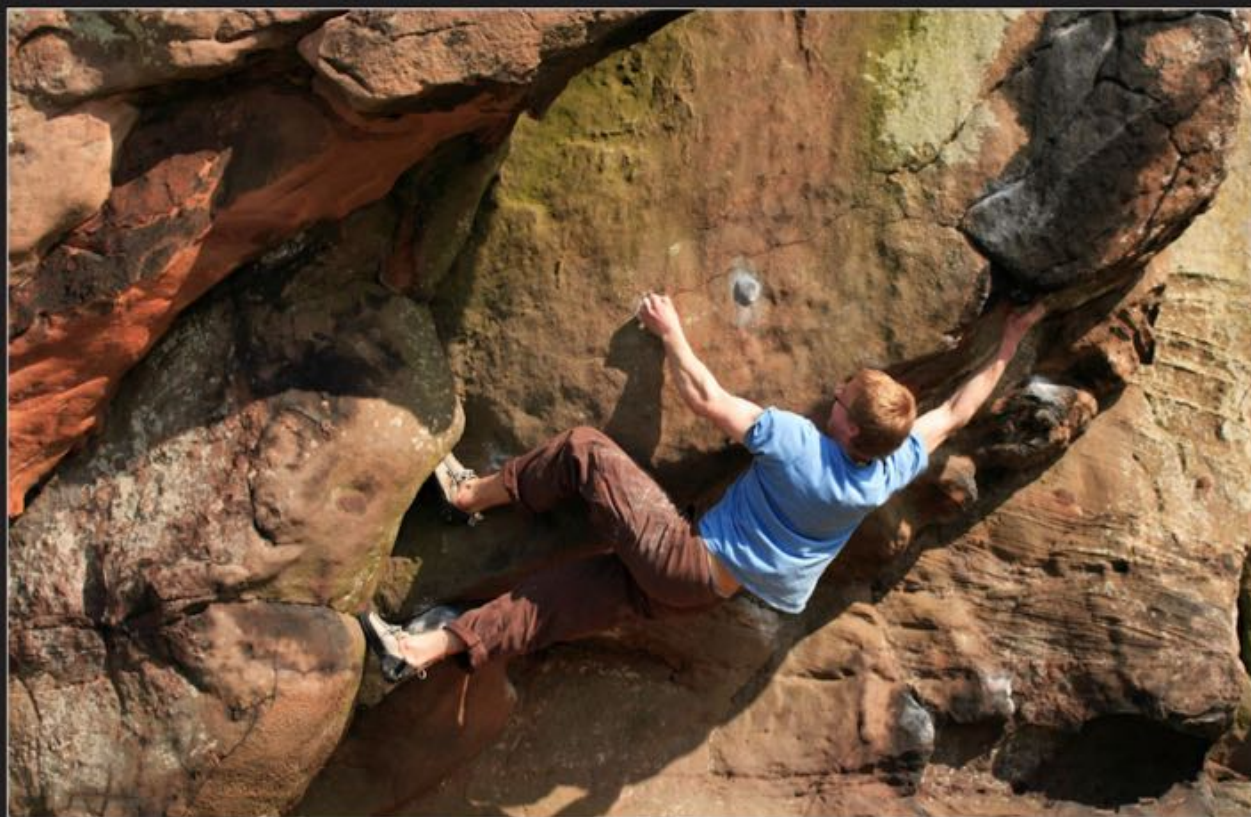


theclimbers'club

# JOURNAL 2017 - 18



THE CLIMBERS' CLUB JOURNAL 2017-18



**FEBRUARY 1983, DYLAN DAWN:**  
**Return from Winter-Milkwood 4am/A5 Road**

By Colin Greenhow

the van headlights glint harshly on the falling snowflakes  
and, bouncing along the dead-froze-road ice  
of the Nant Ffrancon valley,  
flick cats-eyes past the wing mirror as my eyes 'tic with  
weariness.

Passing below the brooding-black Milestone Buttress  
my big hands cup the gently-vibrating, smooth, round wheel  
and the heater sifts warmth along my cold, aching fingers  
like the warm after-glow from your love-exhausted body.  
And now, ahead, through the blackness of morning,  
your-cats-eyes lure me in a crazy, twisting will - of - the - wisp  
dance,

'til rounding the last bend beyond Tryfan  
they whiplash the road straight again.  
My hands grip tighter your smooth boned hips and  
my thumbs press apart your willing - but - protesting flesh.  
My foot forces the pedal to the floor and the van, and you,  
screaming, accelerate, hurling me across the yet-night moor,  
to the M6, a Charnock Richard dawn  
and a waiting Cumbrian school

theclimbers'club  
JOURNAL 2017 - 18



The Editor dedicates this journal to Smiler Cuthbertson  
who made a massive contribution to our Club during his 45+ years of membership.





# CONTENTS

POEM: WARM UP ROUTINE	Andy Clarke	4
AN AFTERNOON IN THE SUN	Simon Laker	6
POEM: SNAKE DIKE	Andy Clarke	8
THE QUICK WAY DOWN	Geoff Milburn	10
ABOVE SECRET WATERS	Dave Williams	14
LLANBERIS ENCHAINMENT	Simon Laker	28
BLUE REMEMBERED HILLS	Sean Kelly	34
POEM: PARTICULAR WINTER	Mark Goodwin	48
WILL THE REAL REINHOLD PLEASE STAND UP	John Temple	49
POEMS: UNTITLED	Mark Goodwin	53
AN INAUSPICIOUS BEGINNING?	Richard Hargreaves	54
A PATCHWORK OF PATEY	Mike Dixon	60
POEM: STONE PEACE	Mark Goodwin	66
EARLY EXPLORATION ON CLOGWYN DU'R ARDDU	Geoff Milburn	67
LA MAURIENNE IN 1963	Tony Moulam	72
IN MELANCHOLY STEPS	Steve Dean	76
THE MAN UPON THE STAIR	Paul Carling	82
POEMS: ROACHES	Andy Clarke	84
BETRAYAL ON THE BADILE	George Gilmore	86
MOTIVATION AND CLIMBING	Dave Hume & Mike Blood	92
OUT ON A LIMB	Sean Kelly	98
POEM: XMAS DAY 2006	Andy Clarke	112
CRUTCH CASSIDY 'N' THE SUNDANCE 'KID'	Colin Greenhow	114
FIVA FEVER	Bruce Woodley	116
MOROCCAN SPRING	Roger Grimshaw	118
DESERT TOWERS	Paul Ross	122
MADONNA ON THE MEIJE	Simon Laker	126
MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON	Rya Tibawi	130
WALKING ZION'S WILD SIDE WITH THE ANGELS	Geoff Milburn	136
POEM: STICK TO WHAT – JOSHUA TREE	Andy Clarke	140

THE COMICI	<i>Simon Laker</i>	141
The Highest Point	<i>Geoff Nicholson</i>	144
THE MAGIC OF PEMBROKE	<i>Emma Alsford</i>	146
CLASSIC SCOTTISH ROCK UP TO SEVERE	<i>Nigel Barry</i>	150
POEM: AS FISH NUDGE CIRCLES	<i>Mark Goodwin</i>	158
21 YEARS AN OFFICER	<i>Steve Andrews</i>	160
“THE CLIMBERS’ CLUB” – THE FIRST TEN YEARS	<i>Ian Wall</i>	166
THE WOMEN MEMBERSHIP DEBATE –		
AN APOLOGY 40 YEARS ON	<i>Martin Sinker</i>	194

## OBITUARIES

ALAN BROOK	1946 – 2017	198
BARRIE BIVEN	1936 – 2016	200
BRYAN GRINYER	1933 – 2017	203
HARRY SALES	1918 – 2017	205
JIM CURRAN	1943 – 2016	207
JOHN DISLEY	1928 – 2016	210
JOHN MERCER	1938 – 2016	212
KEN FORSYTHE	1947 – 2016	214
MIKE BINNIE	1936 – 2016	216
NICK RUSSELL	1988 – 2016	218
RACHEL SLATER	1992 – 2016 & TIM NEWTON 1989 – 2016	220
RICHARD McELLIGOTT	1947 – 2016	224
ROGER CHORLEY	1930 – 2016	226
TONY JONES	1939 – 2016	228

Book Reviews *Chris Harle* 229

Cover: *Transformer Left Hand, Bowden Doors. Climber: Tony Stone, Photograph: Russell Lovett*

Inside Front Cover: *Wind River Range, Pingora in foreground. Photograph: Claude Davies* Flap: *Poem: Dylan Dawn by Colin Greenhow*

Inside Back Cover: *Japanese Alps*, Photograph: Claire Clifton Coles Flap: Poem: *The Cad*, by Tony Pearson

Frontispiece: *Piz Badile, North Ridge and North East Face. Photograph: James Mann*

These Pages: *Karen Vaughn on The Hawk, Stackpole Head. Photograph: Tim Skinner*





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## WARM UP ROUTINE

By Andy Clarke

can't push it today:  
this troublesome injury  
overnight onset

my A2 pulley  
medial epicondyle  
supraspinatus

fingertip flapper  
proprioceptive system  
mindfulness focus

health and safety form  
rock warrior persona  
(tick all that apply)

is somewhat swollen  
affected by cold (or heat)  
a funny colour

in need of caffeine  
still in my other mate's bag  
flash pumped from stretching

completely absent  
(delete as applicable)  
so in conclusion

it looks like your lead



# EDITOR'S NOTE

By Trevor Langhorne

Welcome to CCJ 128, my second volume as editor. I had hoped that working on this edition would be a bit easier than the first but the learning curve still feels pretty steep to me, perhaps it will get easier with practice? Producing the Journal isn't a one person job and I have been ably supported by Don Sargeant (page setting), David Medcalf (Obituaries) and Chris Harle (Book Reviews). Smiler Cuthbertson, Gwyn Evans, David Medcalf, and Cathy Woodhead proof read the manuscript. Several articles were originally intended to be included in Volume 127 but as its page count kept increasing it made sense to hold back a few to this volume; some of these earlier articles were edited by either Ian Smith or Ian Wall, many thanks gentlemen. After some thought I decided not to attempt to group the articles into a series of arbitrary sections, doing so leaves too many articles which couldn't be fitted into the framework leaving few options other than not to use them, which I wasn't prepared to do.

Eagle eyed observers will notice that some authors have multiple pieces within these pages, as has already been noted some have been held over from Volume 127 while others are short stories or poems. Overall, we have twenty nine articles by twenty five authors. I have been particularly pleased to receive such a good selection of poems, some feature here while others are planned to be included in CCJ 129. Sourcing photographs of sufficient resolution has been very challenging although

my newsletter appeals did bear fruit, I offer my apologies in advance should you find the focus is soft or there is a lack of detail, we can only work with the files we have. Many of you have large numbers of negatives, prints and slides which could be included in future Journals, if you would like to offer some photographs they will need to be digitised (scanned), to help you get it right first time some guidance notes are available in the downloads area of the website. Now is the time to get that camera out and take lots of pics, with digital memory being so cheap there is no reason why you need to limit your photography, remember that you don't have to be a great photographer to record your adventures.

Without the efforts of our authors there wouldn't be a Journal, thanks to all of you for giving me such a big job! So, what have we got in store? The wide-ranging activities of our members are reflected in accounts of trips to locations from Ynys Ettws to The Mountains of the Moon. There are reminders of how lucky we are to have so many great climbing venues across our small islands; insights into the character of some great climbers and accounts of aspects of Club life. Rather than putting the poems into one block they have been spread throughout these pages. The sad passing of sixteen members is recorded in the Obituaries pages. I am sure that everyone will discover some interesting reading and, with luck, some of you will be inspired by what you read and will contribute to Volume 129. Happy reading.

Left:

*Unknown climber  
on Piton Route (VS)  
Holly Tree Wall,  
Idwal Slabs.*

Photograph:  
*Sean Kelly*

# An Afternoon In The Sun

*Alpine starts are always a trial of mind over matter, after a few hours of not-sleep in an overcrowded and stuffy dormitory followed an unappealing breakfast you find yourself in the cold dark of pre-dawn. It doesn't have to be like this.*

By Simon Laker

As alarm calls go an explosive storm in the cauldron of the Civetta has a persistency often missing in more traditional awakening tools. Steel pellets of rain pounding shock waves through the camper roof. Inky black sky shocked into light, clouds discharging thunderous echoes to scramble around the cwm.

Then it was gone, the cauldron a friendly bowl again, lit by a starry infinity, caressed by a whisper of breeze.

In the cool pre-dawn freshness, we metronomed up to the Vazzoler, body heat hiding the surprise to come.

Heading for the *Andrich-Fae* we broke out of the trees to be met with an arctic wind that followed us up into the gully, too lazy to blow around it.

Dawn arrived but only to drop the temperature still further, even as the first sunlight flashed across the valley.

On a stony ledge crumbling in the gully we waited, shadow watching.

In the gloom, numb cold, as gradually the plan, first mentally, then physically, slipped away.

Waving goodbye to Messers Andrich and Fae, the day became a recce, a visit to the Tissi.

Reaching the sun, layers gradually peeling off, we enjoyed hot cha on the dramatic terrace, entertained by the magnificent, frozen, Civetta north face.

The arctic in August, surely a blip, an aftermath of the storm, tomorrow another day.

Lightened by gear stashed under the Vazzoler eaves, we steamed back up the next morning, arriving with perfect timing, just as sun lit up the tables.

Less wind and warmer, but still cold in shade we decided to wait for the sun in comfort.

Feeling deficient in caffeine and that vital vitamin D we ordered two coffees, turned into the sun and took our dose.

A busy chattering identified a group gearing up and showing intent. A quick buon giorno exhausted our Italian but fortunately unearthed an English-speaking Catalanian crew.

They were a happy excited bunch and kept jumping around, but we managed to count at least six.

Passing a few pleasantries and playing the usual tip toe game, we gave in and announced the *Andrich-Fae*. Not a big give to be fair with the face still gripped in gloomy shadow and the lesson of yesterday well learnt.

However, the effect on our Catalanians was as if the race to the South Pole had just been announced. Smiles turned to anguish, as they scattered in all directions, picking up bags, filling bottles, repacking food. Then they were gone, a swirl of dust, just an exhausted silence remaining.



We didn't move. Well not quite true, another round of kaffee und kuchen was ordered.

Settling back to our medicinal overtures we watched the procession of haute walkers leave the hut, no doubt wondering what sort of climbers we were as yet another patisserie masterpiece found its way onto the table.

Two hours later, with the sun hitting the Tissi, we stirred ourselves and began the walk up.

Arriving at a still gloomy and cold gully, base camp was set up at the sun-line extremity. Only moving as it crawled round to the face.

Finally we felt brave enough to handle at least a short period in the freezer, but noticing the Spaniards now strung out on a very cold *Andrich-Fae* with the last pair still on the first belay ledge, we changed objectives. The *Ratti-Panzeri* now full in the warm light, looked a much better prospect.

Ten metres of a chilly crack and I found myself bathed in the achingly delightful warmth which stayed with us for as long as we wanted to take.

Traversing out, now alone, a wonderful route unraveled its masterful line. An easy traverse, a downwards step across the void led to serial exposure above the huge overhangs. A move at a plethora of tat suggested a crux, perhaps 5b, reachy with a left foot under-cling keeping balance in check.

The following dièdre an immaculate grey Swanage VS, sometimes in the crack, occasionally on the walls, the odd jam.

Deposited under a steep black wall a search revealed two pegs but clearly a divergence of opinion. Only one way could be chosen, we selected well. Bold, but holds that made it fun, Aliens backing up old rusty pegs, the interface unknown.

Warm in the sun we left fleeces on, suffered too much before, so revelled in the sauna. Yet another wall presented itself, heading back leftwards but as if a map had been drawn, every move could be seen, every hold moulded to perfection. We knew what would be found even before leaving the belay, a delicate move on dimples, reach for an under-cling and a long, long stretch, for a sculpture of Da Vinci genius.

A last draw on the juice brought us to finishing chimneys. Moving together, the occasional friend, the best of friends.

Befittingly we topped out on the summit. It was an evening that made you think perhaps not all shots use Photoshop. The sky a deep blue, sun dazzling off scorched white limestone.

James said to contour to the Gamsband, good advice. Arriving we met our Spanish and their new French friends, though perhaps they didn't look the best of pals. Following up the Cats in a shady *Andrich-Fae* not perhaps the best bonding agent.

We smiled as one of the girls shouted across, " next time I join you for Kaffee ", and I heard the penny drop.

A sequence of homely abseils, not even spoilt by a present dropped from above and a scramble down, led to a cooling path through the trees. The Vazzoler still in sunshine, not a whisper, a wonderful end to a day, the script for once correct.

# SNAKE DIKE – YOSEMITE

By Andy Clarke

cornucopia's  
igneous overflowing –  
a sculpted cascade

of holds from above  
snaking down the windy face  
tumbling through my hands

too many to catch –  
in sports bra and bandana  
pulled over her eyes

the summit goddess  
tips out dishes, knobs and jugs  
pouring her bounty

indiscriminate:  
pillar of pink profusion  
stretching time away

immeasurable –  
the infinite glittering  
revealing its hues

when pressed close for warmth –  
cheek to cheek with crystal pores  
breathe yesterday's sun,

against the chill air  
a bright mineral glory:  
granodiorite

white, black, grey and rose,  
stippled with crazy lichens  
of yellow and green;

and perched in pockets  
are surprising soft rubies:  
red jellybabies,

votive offerings  
left by a previous team –  
we leave only grins

floating in the air,  
borne aloft like Cheshire cats  
climbing for pure joy

finally joining  
transports of hikers on top  
all of us view-struck

panorama-spun,  
dizzy at day's crowning point:  
to worship the wild

unfettered ranges:  
serried domes and monoliths,  
fierce backcountry crests,

sun-tossed meadow golds;  
such singular formations  
make their own weather:

with clear blue above  
a thin diadem of cloud  
surrounds the summit,

its temple circled  
in ragged amphitheatre –  
a sacrosanct space

Fortuna's domain





Left:  
*Snake Dike*

Photograph:  
*Ruairidh Finlayson*

# THE QUICK WAY DOWN

*Nuts and cams have rendered the old dictum 'The leader must not fall' almost obsolete, getting down is however, an entirely different matter. How often have you found yourself on excitingly steep, loose and vegetated ground while following 'the easy way down'?*

By Geoff Milburn

Nearly all articles, books and guidebooks extol the many virtues of getting to the top of a summit or a rock climb and either pay scant attention, or no attention at all, to what happens next. My concern however is more a question of how to get safely to the bottom of something. I'd confidently climb Everest like a shot if it wasn't for the descent which would follow. Just think of the success of Joe Simpson's *Touching the Void*. Does anyone really bother whether or not he got to the top first? In fact most mountain climbers are just cussed Yorkshire lemmings in disguise. The summit is all that they see, who ever cares about the old adage, 'Don't climb what you can't descend'? Most climbers just tend to press on regardless and always assume that things will get better and that, if and when one reaches the top, there will be an easy way off. I'd lead most routes on the Grochan without a second thought but I'm damned if I'm ever going to descend that lethal gully one more time. That in turn reminds me of one occasion while descending a near vertical gully on Toubkal in the High Atlas in 1973, one person started off an avalanche of rocks which nearly wiped us all out.

About 50 years ago at Brimham Rocks, in my youthful enthusiasm and keen to show off when others had failed, I attacked a horrible undercut off-width crack and emerged

triumphantly on top of a very large rounded boulder. There was no way off and I was stuck. My joy at the successful ascent evaporated into the dreadful fear of not being able to get down. Eventually I was ignominiously rescued by those friends who threw me up a rope. There was nowhere to attach it so, when I had tied on, they stood at one side of the rock and lowered me off down the other side. Years later when descending alone from the summit of Cinto on Corsica I had a similar fright. Coming down convex boiler plate slabs and a complicated system of ledges, I failed to locate the one easy way down. Going up it was so very easy and obvious but it was a cunning trap just waiting for the unsuspecting victim. During the descent of both Pillar Rock and Scafell Pinnacle, a raw beginner quickly realises just how terribly hard it is to judge the distance between eye and foothold while looking down.

Perhaps it was Peter Harding's cautionary tale which gripped me up the most. Do you remember how, on one occasion, he had dogged a small Frenchman's steps up a steep ice peak? The size of the Frenchman's sack convinced Peter that, 'If that little blighter can get up then so can I'. Peter's logic did not go beyond getting to the top. He gritted his teeth and kept going. Only on top, after the Frenchman had unwrapped his canopy, did Peter realise the dire

implication. As the words, 'Au revoir monsieur' faded away, the Frenchman sailed off leaving Peter stranded on the summit. Strangely, a similar event took place on Whernside, when a lady with a pack bigger than herself unpacked it in front of my eyes and, after one quick step, gently floated off down to Ribbleshead viaduct.

As to getting lifts down from mountains when one is injured, I don't fancy being swung off a face into space by a helicopter while I am attached by a thin lifeline. Wasn't it Frank Cannings who broke his leg on Lundy, got rescued, and was then dumped into the Bristol Channel when the helicopter broke down? Then at Verbier, while skiing, a friend pointed out a woman in the distance who was out of control. She crashed and was duly helicoptered off. Later, when my friend discovered that it was his wife, she said that the helicopter ride was the best part of the holiday. Sliding down snowy mountains on two long planks may be exhilarating but I could tell stories all day about the near escapes and accidents that I have seen. Why is it that downhill skiers are so attracted to trees, poles, piste-bashers, crevasses, boulders and even to other humans? Doesn't a law of physics even state that any two bodies will exert a pulling force on each other? Mind, when it comes to two humans, there is often a repulsion force at play as well. On one occasion, I made a sharp turn and promptly found myself skiing across a wide slope with a feisty young woman tightly gripped in my arms, her arms clinging round my neck for grim death.... and big panic-stricken dark eyes. However, I am glad to say that we parted bosom friends.

Getting rides down is unethical, such as a piggy back from a porter in the Himalayas when one has broken a few limbs high up on a mountain. Crossing all those swinging rope

bridges in such a fashion can have a disastrous effect on one's gastric and excretory functioning which, in turn, tends to upset the poor porter in question. Even worse is a blood-wagon sledge for injured skiers which stops for no-one, and the roller-coaster ride is utter hell if the occupant is still conscious and lying with their feet uphill. It's much better to be totally unconscious, and dead to the world.

Unlike the skier who lives solely for speed, the climber has few opportunities to emulate the skier, unless for example he steps unwittingly on a patch of treacherous and unforgiving ice. Given the right conditions though, we can have a jolly good attempt at beating them. A teacher friend of mine slipped on ice on Striding Edge in winter and came to rest hundreds of feet lower about half-way across the thankfully well-frozen Red Tarn. He might well have drowned otherwise. What a hoot!

Given the right winter conditions though, the knowledgeable and confident climber can plunge downwards in one long, gloriously exhilarating slide while crouched on haunches and using boots as skis. I frequently tell the tale of such a descent from the top of St Sunday Crag, right down to the valley floor... the time when we overtook a fox. Experts of course will sniff at that as a trivial incident and insist that a slope needs to be sufficiently steep to allow a fast, standing glissade to be made using the end of the ice-axe as a rudder and only in extremis to preserve life as a brake.

Once the snow has melted however, the homeward path down may be made more agreeable if a patch of scree can be found. Nowadays there are, sadly, not enough scree slopes about to ride a moving raft of scree or plunge down in great strides or leaps and



bounds, all the while singing snatches of inane songs from Mary Poppins, shouting, or screaming at the top of one's voice. How undignified.

One Victorian oddity is the popular Alpine sport of coasteering, in which a line of seated climbers, holding onto each other's waists or shoulders, slides down a steep snow slope.

It's curious how the descent of an average mountain can be made in various styles from the loiterer, who never seems to make much progress and gets in everyone's way (you must know one in our club surely?), to the lunatic hurtler who races down jumping from ledge to ledge, slides madly down squelchy, muddy slopes and crashes down crazily through bracken and bushes, to scream to a halt on the valley floor. Impatiently he waits for everyone else in the party and moans about having to wait for hours, and 'Where on earth have you all been? I've been here for ages?'

The stumbler can always be relied upon to find any stone, stick or pebble which he can use to great effect to practise his art, preferably to annoy others who just happen to be passing by. There are those who are so accident prone that they can ball-bearing off just a few grains of sand. I once knew a man who, while strolling, could slip on a flat stone, do an involuntary backward somersault, land on his feet and apologise, all in fewer than five-seconds. He must be in the Guinness Book of Records by now. Such people can be guaranteed to attract falling rocks or bits of climbing equipment and avalanches of all shapes and sizes. Keep well clear of such folk if you value your skin, as they are unqualified experts in the downhill art.

The purposeful plodder will adopt one speed only whether uphill or downhill, whatever the terrain, but may be a better companion than

one who does everything in fits and starts and has to stop to check where he is every so often. Beware the downhill plunger who may, on occasions, get you to the pub just in time for last orders, as your final destination could just as easily be the A&E department of the local hospital. Another type to avoid like the plague is the Mathematician (not to be confused with the Downhill Plunger) who insists that the best and fastest way is the straight line as it is the shortest distance between two points. It may be shorter but when he treats every obstacle in-between with utter derision and as a challenge to be overcome with fortitude, it is bound to lead to some disaster or other. Just remember what happened on the gung-ho descent of Lowe's Gully on Kinabalu. At all costs avoid the whinger, as not only will you probably not get up the mountain but you certainly won't get down it in a hurry. 'I'm not going down there.' 'Does the path really cross that stream?' 'It's getting very dodgy, perhaps we should retreat.' 'My feet are killing me.' 'It's all your fault.' 'I always said that we shouldn't attempt this route.'

Lastly come the various descents of true proud rock-climbers. You must have met them. They cause mayhem by soloing down the easiest route such as on Milestone Buttress, picking their way down past a terrified rope of beginners who don't know their pyjamas from their jumars, or their crampons from their tampons. If leading your first E5 6b on Cloggy, what could be worse than having Ron Fawcett solo down past you just as you attempting the crux for the umpteenth time? Also, why not stand under some abseil ropes on a crowded loose face such as Lliwedd? It's great fun having large rocks bounced off your bone dome. Remember also, for the future, that



abbing is one of the best ways to get an obituary published in the press, particularly if you tend to be forgetful and slide off the ropes before you get down to base. If you reach terminal velocity however, you don't have to worry much about broken bones. For real masochists, why not ignore your descendeur and try the classical style wearing a t-shirt? The rope can burn right into your neck; then, if wearing shorts, you can always castrate yourself in a mere twenty feet of descent. Oh the fun and joy of it all.

Perhaps the most pure and exhilarating way of descending ethically is to fall while soloing, or get swiped off a climbing wall by a passing horse as happened once to my mate, Jim Moran. Unlike myself however, as I am a rank coward at heart, Jim would happily let go and fall while leading a hard route, merely to save his strength and get a good rest before returning to the fray. Priestcliffe Quarry is a good place to recommend the spiffingly exciting practice of falling off, with an ample shower of limestone blocks to keep you company. Although falling is usually in a downward direction, I once knew a leader who actually fell off upwards, owing to the sheer strength of his over enthusiastic belayer whose split-second reflex reactions were second-to-none.

While contemplating a myriad of personal falls which don't bear thinking about as it would reveal my lack of competence, I would like to suggest that base jumping from the top of El Cap is strictly for the birds as far as I am concerned. Far better to go for a bit of deep-water soloing at high tide. Serious masochists will however wait for a few boulders to appear as the tide ebbs, just to make the game more interesting. As to jumping down from pinnacles

such as at Froggatt or Wharncliffe well, that really is great fun.

The thrust of my argument, if you are still unsure about what I am on about, is that I have discovered an exciting new world which has not been fully exploited yet. Only potholers will know instinctively what I have been talking about, as they cunningly use all their skills to get to the bottom of some bottomless hole in order to create a new route. Then the tough part really begins. Always remember that, any idiot can climb a mountain, a boulder or a rock face, then if the going gets tough merely back off to escape. That's why I swapped to skiing to explore the unknown challenge of the downward rush, with the wind whistling round my ears. Then of course, at my age, it is always easier to get down than to get up. Perhaps I'd go even further and change to potholing, apart from one little snag: I suffer from acute claustrophobia, having once been stuck firm in a lift in Sheffield for over two hours, crammed in by about twelve lunatics.

#### POSTSCRIPT:

Just one serious warning from personal experience: Never in a rash moment, attempt to stop a committed jumper, who has for whatever reasons, entrusted himself to the hands of gravity, by placing your body below the person in question to act as a cushion. It hurts.



# ABOVE SECRET WATERS

*These days the development of a new/unknown climbing area is a rarity. One recent development has been the exploration of the previously unfrequented crags in Elenydd or Central Wales. Until now details of the early years of development have been well hidden, read on to find out more.*

By Dave Williams

While undertaking some historical research for the new **Central Wales - Elenydd** climbing guidebook, an intriguing paragraph was chanced upon in an old climbing journal: *“Now that the crags of Snowdonia are covered with tigers and the valleys and mountain tops are swarming with those developing an officially sponsored interest in mountains, climbers for whom loneliness is an essential feature of mountain experience must seek it elsewhere. To them, the Welsh border county of Radnorshire has much to offer – wild, lonely country – an abundance of hill and moorland walking and some fine, though short, rock climbs on widely spaced crags.”* (Climbers’ Club Journal - 1951).

“Rock climbs” and “Radnorshire” are three words that a modern climber would never expect to see in the same sentence, possibly not even on the same page. For most, the old Mid Wales county of Radnorshire is simply part of the ‘Green Desert of Wales’, a tract of land with far more sheep than people, totally devoid of any interest to a climber; a place to traverse as quickly as possible on a journey between the mountains of North Wales and the sea cliffs of South Wales. But it wasn’t always so and, rather surprisingly, Radnorshire has more than just a few interesting little secrets that have remained hidden, in plain sight, for very many years

A landscape of contrasts persists in Radnorshire. Long have many of its remote spots been exploited by man, the evidence of which is most starkly represented in the form of the Elan Valley reservoirs and their deep, dark, sullen waters. Surrounding them, the vestiges of their natural heritage still survive as ancient oak woodlands and rough open moorlands. Amongst the trees, many peregrine-echoing cliffs hide a myriad of secrets as they defiantly lay claim to the steep broken ground between the empty, rugged heather-clad plateaus and the deep inky lakes which solemnly reflect both crags and vast open skies. It is therefore fitting that Radnorshire’s rock climbing should also reflect these contrasts, partly taking place on quarried rocks surrounding the reservoirs and partly on the natural formations hidden away in these largely forgotten, secluded valleys: *“Exploration during the last decade has raised Radnor to third among the Welsh Counties ... Happily situated a long way from any large towns, with rocks not sufficiently steep to attract the super expert, Radnor stands out as a place where the moderate climber can still find sport in pleasantly isolated surroundings and recapture some of the joys of fifty years ago.”*

(“Where to Climb in the British Isles”, E.C. Pyatt, Faber & Faber 1960).

Left:

*Mark Davies on first ascent of The Larch Ascending (HVS) on Creigiau Dolfolau – a crag ‘forgotten’ for more than 60 years.*

Photograph:  
*Don Sargeant*



Below:

*Creigiau Dolfolau  
(the largest crag  
south of Cadair  
Idris) above the  
waters of Carreg-  
ddu Reservoir.*

Photograph:

*Don Sargeant*

High praise indeed. It may be hard to believe, but rock climbing in Radnorshire was heavily promoted in successive Climbers' Club Journals in the early 1950s. The 1951 Journal even carried a five page article entitled "Climbing in Radnorshire", written by EC Pyatt and EH Lane. Edward Pyatt, a very influential character within the Climbers' Club at the time, appears to have been an enthusiastic advocate of Radnorshire climbing, but the architect of development within the former Mid Wales County was his co-author, EH Lane.

Little is known about EH Lane, but what's abundantly clear from present-day repeat ascents of his routes, is that he was an incredibly talented, strong and very confident rock climber, blessed with a very good eye for a line.

He was active in Radnorshire from 1950-1954, during which time he completed nearly fifty first ascents. Many of these were solo ascents and it is a testimony to his ability that a number of these climbs, originally graded Difficult and Very Difficult, are now graded Very Severe and even Hard Very Severe. This is not a case of modern-day grade creep; they most certainly were 'very difficult' rock climbs when first climbed and, for that matter, still are today.

What little we do know about EH Lane is entirely due to an unlikely Irish connection, namely from the writings of James Perry O'Flaherty (aka Joss) Lynam, the famous Irish mountaineer. It may come as a surprise to many that Joss and his wife Nora made a brief though notable contribution to the





development of climbing in Mid Wales as they and EH Lane pioneered many new climbs together over sixty years ago. This story is about the three of them.

But how exactly did an English climber working in a forest on the Welsh Borders ever meet two Irish climbers from Dublin in the back-waters of Mid Wales in the early 1950s? This, in itself, is a rather interesting story of life-chance and circumstance, all of which began with a series of interlinked events a decade earlier.

In 1942, 18 year old Joss Lynam, then living in London with his Galway-born émigré parents, (his father Edward was curator of maps at the British Museum), enlisted in the Royal Engineers. Officer training at Manchester University gave him the chance to climb in Snowdonia and the Peak District with the university climbing club. After completing his training in 1944, he was sent to India to train cadets in the Corps of Bengal Sappers and Miners.

Mainly based in the Himalayan foothills both north and east of Delhi, he learnt to speak fluent Hindi and spent, by his own admission, “a quiet war”. In 1946, not long before being demobilised, he and another Irishman, Bill Perrott, crowned their time in India by joining an army engineers’ expedition to climb Kolahoi in Kashmir. His meeting Bill Perrott would later turn out to be of pivotal importance.

After his demobilisation in 1947, in the first of three seminal acts, Joss’ mother Martha persuaded him to move to Ireland to study civil engineering under a British Government scheme at Dublin’s Trinity College. The other two acts, both with far-reaching and life-long consequences, occurred during his time in Dublin. The second of these was reconnecting with Bill Perrott, who had returned to Dublin after the war. While in India, Joss

had learnt that Bill had a dream of an Irish Mountaineering Club (IMC). The original IMC had folded in 1943 when its last few members left Dublin. Bill had actually given Josh an IMC membership card when they first met in India in 1946, where both had discussed re-founding the Club in some detail. In 1948, when Josh came to Trinity College, he helped Bill do just that. The resurrection of the Club was initiated by means of an appeal made through the letters page of The Irish Times. Joss and Bill were exploring the big granite cliffs at Luggala in Wicklow on the actual day their letter was published and they returned to Bill’s Dublin house to a pile of telephone messages. A meeting in Dublin’s Central Hotel was quickly organised in December 1948; some sixty attended and the rest, as they say, is history.

Joss and Bill had decided that the IMC would have open membership as an all-Ireland (cross-border) organisation. Also, in contrast to many climbing clubs at the time, they also ensured that the new club was open to women: “*At a time when most English and some Continental clubs were male only, we were determined to be mixed sex.*” (IMCJ 1998). The initial address list included the names of twenty women. However, in the early days, the much desired female presence seemingly required some pro-active encouragement.

The first IMC Alpine meet was held in the summer of 1949 and it initially looked as if it was going to be an all-male affair. So Joss persuaded his older sister Biddy into joining the meet on the pretence that another woman was also attending. The trip was a success, but there’s no record though as to how long it took before his sister spoke to him again.

However, the final seminal act to open the IMC to women members resulted in the

Right:

*Tim Sparrow and Piers Nesbitt on the awkward and tenuous 4c start to Cerrig Gwynion's Bramble Buttress, the first ascent of which was soloed by EH Lane in 1951 and graded 'Very Difficult'.*

Photograph:

*Dave Williams*

second defining event of Joss' university years, as he met his future wife, Nora Gorevan, at one of the IMC's first climbing meets. *"My first memory of Nora is of her falling into a river!"*

At the time, she was working as a secretary for The Standard, an Irish weekly Roman Catholic paper. The two married just after his graduation in 1951, the first of many such IMC weddings.

As a student in Dublin, Joss became one of the early pioneers of rock climbing on Wicklow's granite cliffs. Luggala and Glendalough were often visited as Bill Perrott had a car, albeit an old and battered one. A notable early achievement at this time was Joss's lead of Lugalla's *Pine Tree Buttress* on the 26th March 1949: *"... the crux pitch being done while belayed precariously to the pick of a slater's hammer jammed periodically into vegetation by Pat Crean who was simultaneously ascending Crean's Crawl, this pitch being followed by a lengthy fall when the top pitch was attempted straight up."* (MCofI Wicklow Guide 1993). Today, the route is a classic; a five pitch, three star Severe of nearly 90 metres in length. (In 2000, on his 75th birthday, Joss climbed the route for the very last time, almost fifty years after his first ascent.)

After they met, Joss and Nora climbed extensively together, a partnership which included the first ascent of *Feothadán*, a 390 metre climb on Connemara's remote Binn an Choire, which they climbed on the 23rd of March 1951, a few months before their marriage. Joss was already extremely familiar with the mountain as he and Liam Ó Réagain had made the second ascent of the adjacent *Carrot Ridge* in 1949, firmly believing at the time that they were actually making the first ascent; however they later learned that some Cambridge students had previously climbed

it in 1933. It was Joss and Liam who actually named the route '*Carrot Ridge*', as it had remained unnamed after the first ascent.

As in previous decades, many Irish people were forced to emigrate for economic reasons in the 1950s. One of these was Bill Perrott, who left for Canada in 1957 due to a lack of job opportunities and, typically, never returned. But, judging by his unpublished memoirs, rather than being forced to emigrate, Joss decided to work abroad for the experience and, accordingly, he applied for civil engineering jobs located close to mountainous areas so that he could also pursue his mountaineering and walking activities. This calculated decision first took him to Wales for a few months, then to the Lake District for two years before a return to India to work on dam projects.

So in November 1951, 27 year old Joss' fledgling career saw him and Nora emigrate from Ireland to the small, quiet market town of Rhayader in Radnorshire, where he had secured employment as a civil engineer on Birmingham Corporation's Claerwen reservoir scheme in the nearby Elan Valley. It was here that chance and circumstance resulted in their meeting EH Lane on Sunday, the 4th of May, 1952: *"At the beginning of May ... we heard rumours of another mountaineer in Radnorshire. A mysterious phone call to the Resident Engineer ... A gossiping Sanitary Inspector ... Then one Sunday afternoon as we set off on bicycles to explore a cliff I had noticed some time before, we met a cyclist, with a pair of tricouni-nailed boots slung from his handlebars. Lane – Lynam; introductions were made, talk commenced, first in the middle of the road and later, when thunderstorms blew up, round a teapot in Dolgerddon Hall. Lane – "EH" – was a Crown Forester on Radnor Forest, about sixteen miles away, who for several years had been*

*scouring the county for rock-climbs and, mostly climbing solo, had found quite a few short routes.*" (IMCJ 1952). Little did any of them realise at the time that they were soon to enjoy the most halcyon of summers.

This chance meeting in the Elan Valley must have been immensely fortuitous for EH as well. With Joss and Nora's help, he could now turn his attention to exploring the larger cliffs in the area, ones that presumably he had been gazing at longingly for some considerable time. Clearly he was a confident and competent rock climber in his own right and his new-found partners were an absolute godsend as both were skilled, very enthusiastic and competent climbers. As a threesome of 'tigers', they were about to become a formidable and unstoppable force.

Personalities gelled; the Lynamas and EH clearly hit it off from the start and immediately became very good friends. Quite soon, Joss was able to paint a wry and vivid picture of EH: *"To an English climber I would describe him simply as a Rucksack Club man, but for the Irishman, who may not know this peculiar Mancunian breed, I must be more explicit. The Rucksack Club man has generally learnt his mountaineering in the Pennines, which are responsible for two of his characteristics. Firstly, for his unbelievable capacity for enormously long, dull walks over bog land, which, over the years, have become almost sacred, so that the mention of "Marsden-Eadale" will bring an exiled Rucksacker to tears. Secondly, for the filth of his attire, for Pennine gritstone (as I know well, for I learnt to climb on it myself) is the dirtiest rock in these Islands. His third characteristic (and I do not know its cause) is rudeness. Not an abrupt, rather a loquacious rudeness, so that he is never happier than in slanging his friends and racking up all their misdeeds of twenty years – or more,*



*if his memory lasts. To these group characteristics must be added EH's personal quirks: a bubbling enthusiasm, liable to turn to black despair at a moment's notice, an incurable urge to "talk climbing", which, pent up for weeks, would burst in spate upon us when he came for the weekend, and a fortunate ability to laugh at himself – and everybody else."* (IMCJ 1952).

Right:

*Mark Davies on the probable second ascent (in 2016) of Pilaster (Severe) on Creigiau Dolfolau; a bold little pitch originally graded 'difficult' and first climbed by EH Lane, Joss & Nora Lynham in 1952.*

Photograph:

*Don Sargeant*

EH would undoubtedly have been very much amused by Joss' account of him, in particular the scurrilous description of a typical member of the Rucksack Club, something of a rival of the Climbers' Club at the time. Equally amusing is the fact that, despite both his personality and outward appearance, EH wasn't (and never had been) a member of the Rucksack Club!

As climbers in the early 1950s, EH and the Lynamas would have lacked the present day refinement of skills, equipment and footwear. Typically, they would probably have been wearing army surplus clothing and would have had very little in the way of technical equipment, very much in common with climbers from the 1920s and 1930s. As Joss later recalled, the relatively short ropes they used were: *"heavy manila or hemp, of doubtful strength and horrible to use when wet."* (IMCJ 1998). In addition they would have only carried one or two rope slings with heavy steel karabiners for runners or belays and so, all things considered, it was *"pretty obvious why pioneers carried pitons!"* (IMCJ 1998).

At the time, hobnailed boots were still the standard mountain footwear and were undoubtedly very effective on wet, mossy or lichenous rock. EH and the Lynamas clearly experimented with nailed boots in the Elan Valley and found them to be less than satisfactory. Referring to Creigiau Dolfolau, Josh notes: *"The crag is a 'rubber' cliff, for nails would quickly destroy the smaller holds, and clinkers in particular skid badly on the rather soapy surface. The climbing is generally delicate and requires technique and intelligent use of holds."* (IMCJ 1952).

The use of plimsolls or "rubbers" for climbing had been pioneered by HM Kelly with his ascent of *Moss Ghyll Grooves* on Scafell

in the 1920s. On dry rock, changing from tricouni and clinker nailed boots to the far more adhesive and flexible rubber-soled shoes meant that climbers could tackle far more difficult climbs than would otherwise have been possible. On really hard routes, where moves on pure friction was usually required, the very thin, skimpy and unpadded Woolworth's plimsolls or 'daps' were best, but when there was a need to scramble back down to the foot of the climb again, the more substantial Dunlop Green Flash tennis shoes were much preferred. On damp rock socks would commonly be worn over plimsolls in order to provide more adhesion.

When one now climbs the routes they pioneered over 65 years ago, it is abundantly clear that EH and the Lynamas were fit, strong, highly competent and very bold climbers. Equipment to protect difficult moves was largely non-existent and the Victorian mountaineer's adage that 'the leader never fell' was as true as ever.

In all probability, given the physical rigours of everyday life at that time, the three were also fitter and stronger than most people who climb today. Virtually all their climbing was done on Sundays, a reflection of the fact that they were often working a 5 ½ day week, as was normal at the time. As he did not own a car and in the absence of any railway connection or bus service, it is highly likely that EH, by all accounts an obsessive and driven character, would regularly cycle the topographically challenging 20-22 miles, on poor roads, from his home in Old Radnor to the cliffs of the Elan Valley. After climbing all day, he would then cycle back home, gaining and losing over 200 metres in just 5 miles at one point as he re-crossed the Radnor Hills, just so as to be ready for work the following day.



Joss' description of EH suggests that he too had undergone his climbing apprenticeship on the moorland edges of the Pennines and, if this was the case, it is hardly surprising that one of the first crags that drew EH's attention was a small quartzite outcrop above the upper Wye valley near Rhayader. Cerrig Gwynion, is a steep little crag, peppered with overhangs and split by myriad chimneys, cracks and grooves; as such, being very reminiscent of a gritstone edge. Ten routes had been worked out here by EH in 1950-1951, climbing solo, before he met the Lynams. South facing, it is perfectly situated for summer day and evening visits. Later on, EH would meet the couple at the crag, sometimes in the evening after work, but Cerrig Gwynion was not exactly to their liking as "*... the cordée Lynam was constitutionally averse to strenuous climbing ... and had difficulty in dealing with some of the routes without a top rope.*" (IMCJ 1952).

The best of EH's routes here is probably *Tower Chimney*, soloed on the first ascent and graded Very Difficult. At that grade today it would be the perfect sandbag. Realistically, it is good VS 4c, quite bold, sustained and best tackled with a very determined approach.

Having made the necessary arrangements when they first met, a fortnight later EH cycled over after work from his Old Radnor home and stayed the weekend with the Lynams in Rhayader. This was the first of many such visits, which set the scene for the remainder of that summer's climbing as 'new route fever' quickly took hold of all three.

The first weekend's objective was on Creigiau Dolfolau, a strikingly impressive and imposing crag, its towering presence commanding attention as it totally dominates the eastern skyline high above the narrow Carreg Ddu



reservoir. Unlike Cerrig Gwynion, this was no mere facsimile of a little gritstone outcrop. Significantly, it is the only truly large crag south of Cadair Idris and so, uniquely for Mid Wales, Creigiau Dolfolau provides a mountain crag experience. This complex crag, comprising four distinct buttresses – North, Central, South and Triptych - is over 300 metres long and around 150 metres tall. On the first day they climbed together, EH and the Lynams had set their sights on a much bigger prize, a long multi-pitch climb on its slabby Northern buttress. There's little doubt that Joss and Nora would have been on familiar ground, as previous experience gained on Wicklow and Connemara's big granite cliffs would have stood them in good stead here.

And so it was; on the 17th of May 1952, EH, Joss and Nora successfully breached the North Buttress of Creigiau Dolfolau: "... we climbed a route which he (EH) had reconnoitered the day he met us. It was the first climb of more than 200 ft in the county and we named it *Triumvirate* as our first joint effort. It is a good climb, though no more than Difficult ..." (IMCJ 1952). Joss subsequently noted that the climbing was somewhat reminiscent to that found on County Wicklow's Bray Head, possibly because of its slabby angle and the slatey nature of the rock. *Triumvirate* is now graded VS 4b, which is rather more realistic than its original grade.

Before moving to Radnorshire, the Lynams had imagined going for weekends to Cadair Idris or to North Wales. It had never occurred to them that they would find good climbing and an able and committed companion right on their very doorstep. In fact, during their time in Wales, they only managed one visit to Cadair Idris, but when they did, it was with typically characteristic purpose. On the 2nd of June

1952, the Lynams made the first ascent of *Grey Slabs* on Cadair Idris' Twr Du, a three pitch, 65 metre long climb that's never been included in any subsequent definitive guidebook, despite being fully described in the 1953 Climber's Club Journal.

To on-sight this route was an impressive achievement on their one and only visit to the mountain, especially considering they travelled from Rhayader to Dolgellau and back by train in a single day and also walked up to Cadair Idris and back from the town's train station. Such expeditions required much planning and were fraught with unexpected logistical difficulties: "... our expeditions to Cadair Idris, to Plynlimon and to the Brecon Beacons ... all demanded intense study of Bradshaw\* and the Catholic Directory, for Sunday trains and Sunday Mass are the one as rare as the other in this Principality". (IMCJ 1952).

[\* Bradshaw's was a series of railway timetables and travel guide books published by W.J. Adams of London.]

As the summer wore on, their climbing in the Elan Valley became a self-perpetuating cycle of success. Creigiau Dolfolau, in particular, was visited more and more frequently until, quite soon, they were climbing there at least once and occasionally twice each weekend. Joss, in particular, was enjoying himself: "*One of the great joys of the crag is its position, for it overlooks the winding, wooded reservoir and faces into the afternoon sun.*" (IMCJ 1952) Climbs fell thick and fast and by the end of September, the new route tally stood at twelve multi-pitch routes, all led in traditional style.

Below South Buttress, a smaller buttress had been named Triptych Buttress after the three sharp ribs, Adam, Eve and The Serpent, which stand out clearly on it. The latter two had both



been climbed earlier in the summer, but *Adam* was proving to be extremely defiant, a clear challenge to the abilities of both EH and Joss, who shared leads on a number of unsuccessful attempts.

Finally, on the 5th of October, EH made a breakthrough; his dogged determination had finally paid off. Joss takes up the story: *"The rib was formed by the sharp edge of a characteristic slab, but it is a slab steeper, and at its top more holdless than any we had met. In the end the top pitch was climbed, not on the slab, but round the corner, up a rounded and nearly vertical crack which we were on the point of labelling "VS" when Nora came up with great ease, so that we had quickly to demote it to "Severe."* (IMCJ 1952). Their original instincts were correct. Today, *Adam* is graded VS. It is both sustained and challenging to protect; all three pitches are graded 4b, with the crux crack, in particular, being memorably awkward.

By the end of October 1952, the three of them had climbed a total of sixteen, mainly multi-pitch routes on Creigiau Dolfolau as well as a number of shorter climbs elsewhere in

the locality. Unusually for the time, Nora shared leads on a number of these new climbs. She was clearly both confident and very determined (as shown on a notable previous occasion when she wasn't at all deterred when male members of the IMC tried their level best to put her off an Alpine trip they considered to be unsuitable for women). As shown by the ease with which she swarmed up the crux of *Adam*, she was clearly an extremely competent climber in her own right and had, without doubt, been of huge support to both her husband and EH during their joint explorations and many exacting first ascents.

To use the word 'exacting' is not to exaggerate. Even allowing for the idiosyncratic language of rock climbing guide books, the use of the words 'bold', 'exciting' and 'interesting' are taken to an entirely different level on Creigiau Dolfolau. The integrity of the rock is randomly variable – some of it gives good sound holds, some of it is just about adequate, while a lot of it is just friable and loose. Moreover, the rock has poor friction in the dry and becomes very slippery when wet. Its climbing falls firmly under the heading of 'adventurous', of the type that the French generally regard as *idiotique*. All the Lane-Lynam routes were climbed on-sight and from the ground up. Any issues of route finding, poor rock, lack of protection or belays were dealt with as and when they occurred. From a modern-day climber's perspective, the actual achievements of these three poorly-equipped Radnorshire rock climbing pioneers are most impressive. Their climbs on Creigiau Dolfolau are bold, difficult and on often dubious rock. Without doubt, their legacy of climbs is a fitting testament to the undoubted skill and great nerve of three young, equally intrepid and most able rock climbers.

Left:  
*Nora Lynam on one of the climbs (possibly Adam, VS 4b) on Creigiau Dolfolau's Triptych Buttress in 1952.*

Photograph:  
*JPO'F Lynam Collection*



The summer of 1952 had been a most unexpected and eventful one for Joss and Nora and epitomised Joss' growing attachment to the mountains. So it is possible that this may have been the time when Nora first began to realise that, for her husband, perhaps mountaineering came first; virtually before all else.

Unfortunately though, by the close of 1952, the Lynam's short time in Mid Wales was drawing to an end; it was time to move on to another civil engineering scheme in the English Lake District and a new home in Ambleside. As he prepared to leave, Joss recorded that the year spent working and climbing in the Elan Valley had clearly exceeded all expectations: *"The beauty of the countryside was another surprise; the hilltops are dull, but the valleys, with their trees and heather, gorse and bracken, reflected in the bright waters of the reservoirs, have always some new loveliness of light or colour. The drying shores, left as the water level ebbs through the summer, are a pleasing contrast to the wooded slopes, and even the grey, stone-faced dams do not obtrude, though, when the lakes are full and the water is cascading whites over the spill weirs, they are a grand sight in themselves."* (IMCJ 1952).

Despite their misgivings about the crag, the last Lynam contribution to Radnorshire climbing was a very minor route on Cerrig Gwynion on the 1st of November and by December the triumvirate was no more. Climbing talk and friendly banter over tea and cake at the Lynam's house was now but a fond and rapidly fading memory; the door was firmly locked, the house was cold and empty and EH was now in need of a new partner.

The first of EH's new routes in 1953 were two rather insignificant ones climbed on the 19th of January on Craig y Foel, high above the Elan Valley's Caban Coch reservoir. What

is significant though is that EH's partner on both climbs was none other than Edward Pyatt. Pyatt's involvement with editing the New Climbs section of the Climbers' Club Journal at the time would have made him acutely aware of the pace of development during the previous year. One can but speculate that, by the New Year, his curiosity had got the better of him, prompting a visit to Mid Wales. He was clearly impressed by what he saw, as he really hyped up Creigiau Dolfolau later on in that year's CC Journal: *"The discovery and exploration of a crag of the calibre of Carreg Ddu\* in the Elan valley is an unusual event in British climbing these days. Unknown until 1952 it has now yielded more than a dozen fine routes, 150-200 feet long and of a standard to suit the average climber."* (CCJ 1953). [\*The name 'Carreg Ddu' was universally but incorrectly used for Creigiau Dolfolau at the time.]

The loss of the 'cordée Lynam' seemingly had a considerable effect on EH. After his two climbs in January with Pyatt, he presumably continued with his explorations, but now, apparently partnerless, things clearly were not the same. He only managed one first ascent in 1953, a Severe traverse on Creigiau Llandegla, which he climbed solo on St David's Day morning. However, by 1954, he was once again climbing with DB Binns, a scientist and talented climber and an old acquaintance with whom he had climbed some years before. Despite the apparent fact that Binns did not live locally (Lynam once referred to him as *'an outsider'*), several new, although minor, routes were climbed. What is clear is that Binns was certainly a very capable climber as he led quite a few of 1954's crop of new climbs. Climbing with Binns once again seems to have had a positive effect on EH as, apparently re-



motivated, he returned to Creigiau Dolfolau's Central Buttress and, climbing solo, increased the route count by adding a further three climbs.

The impetus, however, for further development was rapidly waning and by the end of 1954, Radnor's flame had burned brightly but all too briefly. The following year's CC Journal noted that: *"the major possibilities of Radnor have now been worked out ..."* The same Journal also carried the following 'health warning': *"In order not to disappoint intending visitors, it is perhaps advisable to point out that there are no crags in Radnor to compare with Clogwyn Du'r Arddu or even with Clogwyn y Grochan."* (CCJ 1955). Why was there a need to state this so explicitly? Had some members of the Climbers' Club been tempted to visit Radnorshire, bedazzled by all the hype and then

been somewhat less than impressed? One can only speculate ....

The 1950s was an exciting period for rock climbing as a sport in its own right and the rapid pace of development by Brown, Whillans, Moseley et al in Snowdonia from the beginning of the decade had already eclipsed all other Welsh climbing. Edward Pyatt, the area's enthusiastic champion within the Climbers' Club, also lost focus at this time, becoming distracted by his exploration of Lundy and the northern coasts of Devon and Cornwall with Keith Lawder from 1956-59. Set against this background, it is perhaps hardly surprising that Radnorshire's rock climbs quickly faded from memory, as did the brief but very significant contribution of an enterprising Crown Forester and a humble young civil engineer.

Above:  
*Climax (S 4b) on  
Creigiau Dolfolau;  
a well-positioned  
Lane-Lynham  
discovery*

Photograph:  
*Don Sargeant*

Below:

*Joss and Nora Lynam at Dalkey Quarry, Dublin, 2004. The photo was taken when Joss climbed Paradise Lost (a classic VDiff) in Dalkey Quarry to mark his 80th birthday as a fundraiser for cancer research. He was undergoing treatment for cancer at the time. In 2011, after a short illness, Joss passed away in Dublin at the age of eighty six*

Photograph:  
*Helen Lawless*

EH Lane was always something of an enigmatic character and what eventually became of him is a mystery. There is no further record of his climbing in Radnorshire after 1954, but he remained employed as a forester in the Radnor Forest until 1959, after which time he ceased working for the Forestry Commission.

In contrast, we know a great deal more about Joss Lynam. He went on to become a respected and highly influential mountaineer, orienteer and writer, the co-founder of the Irish Mountaineering Club, founder of Irish Orienteers and someone considered by many to be the 'Father of Irish Mountaineering'. Nora was always his selfless partner; she supported his activities while rearing their three children and, over the years, always maintained an open door for the steady stream of visitors to their Dublin home.

In his later years, Joss would often reminisce fondly about the companionship, the climbing and the long hill walks that he and Nora undertook in the wilder parts of Mid Wales. For the two of them, they were clearly extremely happy and memorable times. Joss closed the contemporary account he wrote of his and Nora's time in Mid Wales as follows: "*The year taught me something important also; that even when one is working six days a week in the hills, rain, snow or shine (mostly rain), one is still glad to climb on the seventh.*" (IMCJ 1952).

There was no rest, as on the seventh day, Mass or no Mass, they simply went climbing.





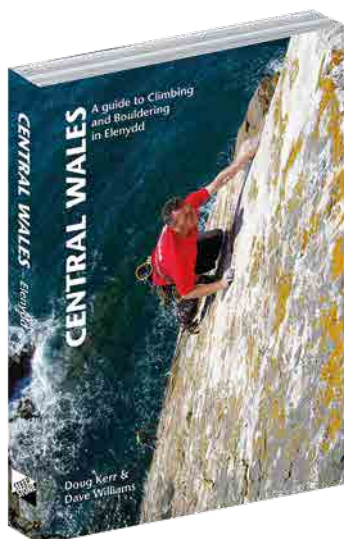
## POSTSCRIPT:

Despite this whirlwind period of early development, Radnorshire largely remained a mysterious land, an enigmatic and forgotten place where the rock climber was but a fleeting, ephemeral presence. Craggs silently guarded climbs that were seemingly destined to be lost in time. So it remained for decades, as the relentless march of time jointly conspired with the fickle hand of climbing fashion to exclude all mention of these long-forgotten climbs from the pages of any widely published climbing literature. As a consequence, all of Radnorshire's 'lost' rock climbs have escaped inclusion in any climbing guidebook for over 65 years; their details long secreted away in the Climbers' Club and the Irish Mountaineering Club archives. I would like to thank Siobhán Quinn of Mountaineering Ireland for her help during my research.



Left:  
*Scott Titt on an  
alternative finish to  
Climax (S)*

Photograph:  
*Don Sargeant*



The new ***Central Wales – Elenydd*** guidebook now rights this wrong. Innovative in design and definitive in nature, it features Trad, sport, winter climbing and bouldering. Published by Steep Stone, this is the first ever climbing guidebook to Central Wales' 'empty quarter', the area south of the Afon Dyfi and north of the Brecon Beacons.

Containing a wealth of previously unpublished information, this comprehensive guidebook details well over 800 climbs and boulder problems on coastal, valley and mountain crags in Central Wales' Elenydd; a vast tract of land encompassing parts of Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and the former counties of Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire in Powys.

# LLANBERIS ENCHAINMENT

*A big day out is always fun, provided you get a decent sleep the night before. Simon recounts an attempted multi-crag link-up where the joys of dormitory sleeping ensured that rest was in short supply. In the postscript the observant reader will note the change of sleeping arrangements.*

By Simon Laker

The timing had an element of uncertainty as we had no idea how long it would take. In the modern world of packaging achievements a sound bite seems to be a necessity.

However, my heart is nearer the George Leigh Mallory era of romanticism rather than the 'youngest, fastest, fattest' slog up the same piece of track. Hence, the motivation was no more than the challenge, wondering what was achievable and enjoying a day in the hills away from the crowds. The latter quite a challenge in itself, since our day was based in Llanberis on bank holiday weekend. Fortunately not many people rise with the larks, particularly the 04:00 hr larks. We did, though preceded by a pretty miserable attempt to get some sleep in Ynys.

Retiring at the not unreasonable time of ten'ish, alarms set for four'ish, we drifted off with warm feelings of anticipation for the day ahead. All went well for the first half hour, then a shape to the right began an irregular sawing and moaning. Shortly this developed into stereo as a body to my left began the same, but cleverly out of sync, so no chance to float away to a rhythmical beat.

Two hours later, eyes still open like storks, a voice began chanting then speaking. A teacher, distinctly unhappy about an event at the school, the people no good and the kids acting the fool. I tried to enter a discussion on the various advantages of state versus private education as it affects children of the 21st century. By the time I had developed this to a five-year plan for the country, leading to a complete revamp of our university system, it became clear, she was still fast asleep. Talking to a sleep talker is not perhaps the most beneficial conversation, although I did win the argument, the clock had moved on and still no sleep.

The old boys still out of sync, the old girl jabbering, left me crying for sleep with pillows providing a poor sound barrier to the cacophony. It couldn't go on like this for ever, it didn't. Things took a definite turn for the worse. At two in the morning another old boy arrived, preceded by a waft of Chateau le Plonk and proceeded by a slamming door that in his stupor he felt was being closed with a whisper. A grunt and a heavy foot on my bunk propelled him to the upper and a

massive sigh of contentment, not particularly reflected by myself. The orchestra was now complemented by the addition of a strong wind instrument. As he fell asleep my newly domiciled companion didn't snore, didn't call out, but began a most impressive release, both in frequency and volume, of a strongly odoured wind. It wasn't quite in rhythm with the stereo boys but he achieved an impressive syncopation with the old girl's chatter.

It was becoming hard to see how the symphony would end, as a crescendo was called for, but with no new entrants it would have to come from the quartet. The school teacher had moved on from the kids and was berating the Head; she was clearly upset and stormed out of the office. Unfortunately she wasn't in the office. So the dramatic exit became a leap out of bed and a thumping landing on the fairly unforgiving fine welsh oak boards of the Ynys bunk room. This succeeded where nothing else had and she woke with a start as her head added a second test, after her knees, to the yield factor of 5/8ths of an inch thick oak. This happened a foot from my own so was becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. One good result was snorer to my right woke up, leaving just mono and wind to continue. The bad news was revealed under my head-torch beam, our educator was expelling not inconsiderable quantities of sticky red goo. Fumbling for the first aid kit resulted in stubbing a big toe, but we got her cleaned up and back in the bunk to continue her discourse that had now moved onto a son's lack of homework.

However often and hard I checked my chronometer, it still said 03:45. I got up at about the same time that our alarms informed us I was correct. Not the best start to a day

we expected to finish not much before the finish of the day. Savouring creamy porridge, sweetened by a finely chopped banana, we picked up our pre-prepared sacs and left. Torches were superfluous in a glorious starlit pre-dawn dark, everything tinder dry we arrived under the Nose before light with dry feet but chilly hands.

The plan said to meet with *Lorraine* which was fine, but taking her direct seemed best. Fortunately a familiar first pitch as the rising sun was yet to appear, just a dull glow below

Below:  
*Ollie Mills on*  
*Lorraine Direct*

Photograph:  
*Sean Kelly*







the horizon, the Cromlech book not yet open. However, as we started up the main event, darkness moved to grey and features took form. For a bold pitch it had a lot of gear and for a steep section on the arête it laid back quite far, at least compared to our usual haunt of a Swanage crack system.

The mantelshelf move still thought provoking, perhaps a little more polished than last time, but we quickly moved on to the *Slow Ledge Climb*. A scrambling first pitch, actually quite exposed, led to a second that traversed out into the dawn light heading for a groove still gloomy. The slow ledge well named but still don't understand why you would want to sit on it, took us to a fine belay below the groove and a long pitch to finish. With a rope running taut and wind blowing a cold frenzy we moved together and found a sheltered hollow over the edge.

Thus came the first boot change and a charge across to Cynr Las, arriving at nine-ish. This was a key piece of the plan, make sure *Main Wall* was started before anyone else arrived. Even a twenty minute delay could scupper the best laid plans of mice and men and it wouldn't have been the first time I'd squeaked.

*Main Wall*, last time was 30 years ago. First week climbing in Wales, first year of climbing. At this point I found out that today was the first day's climbing in Wales ever, for Laura. Not a bad introduction. I hadn't forgotten my feelings of that first ascent, but I had forgotten the magnificent quality of the climbing. Early enough to have it in the sun, we delighted in each pitch as the exposure grew, culminating in a dolomitic edge on the arête and a slab hanging in space, sunlit over the shadowed gully.

Eleven o'clock and the second boot change. Munching on sticky carby goo we arrived at the Ddysgl, surprisingly occupied by a trio looking for the old boys' experience.

On an earlier link up we learnt this crag is not the 'let's-just-nip-up-here' crag that people think it is. The routes are old style, put up by the best of the day at the top of their game. This puts them in a markedly better league than me. Having moved out of the sun and into the dark side, *The Black Gates* seemed a good choice. First pitch

a delightful crack surrounded by good holds, not much gear and could easily be upgraded, but what an insult to George. He thought it V Diff and who are we to disagree. We ran the first two pitches together and halfway through realised why George (Mallory) thought better. *The Black Gates* was a stopper, not obvious, steep and typically awkward, in many ways the hardest move of the day. The modern world is blinkered, we use what is obvious and in front, follow the yellow plastic, link the chalky white holds. These old boys were more subtle. Use what's there but look around, that crack on the right is nearer than you think; right foot in there, left in the other and behind your head a nubbin on the corner's arête. Put it all together and it seems to work, perhaps that's what they meant by "Maintain three points of contact". Climbing at its best is three-dimensional, thought provoking, not obvious, outcome not certain. In one big heave, I pulled up and flowed through the gates, to land in a v-chimney for which the term could have been named. No gear, just a jammed unnatural chockstone ten feet above. Looked like an old boy belay if ever I saw one – a *Central Buttress* model, same mould.

Bridging up to the chockstone brought feelings of empathy with George and his times. Physical distance together, our hands on his holds, only time separating. It continued. A fine thrutchy chimney, a real sac grabber but ensuring the full effect. Some broken ground and suitably loose flakes led to the final slab, so called. In fact much steeper than the steep piece of the nose, with a truly wonderful crack on the left. In fact the best kind, improbable from below but all knitted together once the first stitch was thrown.

The ridge brought us back into sun and the third boot change. As with the last trip up here the Ddysgl and George had slowed us down, still two crags to go and now the clock speeded up. Pushing hard, steamy in the sun, gulping down fuel on the run, we motored to Snowdon and down to Cloggy. Decision time. It was four o'clock, either a quick easy route on the far far side or take in an unclimbed classic and see what happens. If we were sharp we might just manage a jaunt up Llechog, though condemning ourselves to a dark way down. Without really thinking and by now in auto, we arrived under the *Great Slab* and agreed with whatever subconscious brought us there.

No-one around, everyone gone, doing the usual look back as they left, seeing the sun coming round and yet again confirming it the best part of the day, but they will do the same next time. Never understood that.

That tricky dance across the slab, under the roof and over too quickly, led to a crack as clean as it once must have been dirty.

They said a cave belay but didn't really notice; perhaps we were on top of it. They said a normally wet 40ft crack (much better sounding than 12m) but it was bone dry, even the reeds rustled like sun-baked thistles. Our system went into overdrive, quick climbing, fast changeovers, moving together on the upper slabs.

Back in the sun, again. Sheltering on the lee, out of the wind we made the fourth boot change. Five sixths completed, just Llechog left. A little ponder but really not much. We'd had a day in a million, not one to sully with a dark fumble up a scruffy diff, which was all we had time for before our day came full circle. We called a halt, shook hands, fully satisfied. All that was left was all that was left and that

Left:

*Matthew Southgate  
on the outstanding  
final pitch of Main  
Wall (HS)*

Photograph:  
*Don Sargeant*

Below Left:  
*Lee Johnson on the  
first pitch of Great  
Slab (VS)*

Photograph:  
*Sean Kelly*

Below Right:  
*Ian Cartledge on  
the first pitch of  
Great Slab in 1959.*

Photograph:  
*Cartledge collection*

was a forced march back up and over and down. We joined the Miner's Track dropping down to the pass. Darkness descended as we descended, dodging cars as they passed.

Ten' o'clock and back at the hut. We didn't make six crags or even 16 hours. 5/6ths and 17 does not make a very sellable sound bite, but for the romantics amongst us, a day to fuel the soul. Nourish us for a while, leave our heads calm and thoughtful, tired, alive. A delightful, satisfied glow that only the hills and crags can induce. I'd like to say that we slept the sleep of the just that night. We didn't. The orchestra was back. No mind, as next day was Craig Ddu day and the shortest approach in Wales.

A link up of *Lorraine Direct* (HVS) and *Slow Ledge Climb* (VS) on Dinas Mot, *Main Wall* (HS) on Cynr Las, *Black Gates* (VD) on Clogwyn-y-Ddysgl, and *Great Slab* (VS) on Cloggy; 26 pitches of pure delight, in a 17 hour day hut to hut. Simon Laker and Laura Trespidi. 30th April 2011.

#### POSTSCRIPT:

On 4th June 2011, Dean Stockwell and I attempted an enchainment of the six crags again and tried to add one more, Lliwedd. We managed the six but just ran out of time for the final crag. Starting climbing at 04:30 hrs. we ascended *Lorraine Direct* (HVS), *Slow Ledge Climb* (VS), *Main Wall* (HS), *Parson's Nose* (D), *Longland's* (VS) on Cloggy, and *Resurrection* (HVS) on Llechog. However, after walking back up and over Snowdon down to the foot of Lliwedd we arrived at 20:00 hrs and too late for the Sword. This was mainly due to the longer than expected time to get from Llechog to Lliwedd and being held up behind a team on the first pitch of Longland's. However, an absolutely fantastic 19 hour day of constant movement in fantastic weather made even better by hearing rain rattling on the campervan roof the morning after! The plan now is to find a way of gaining an extra couple of hours to leave time for a Lliwedd route on the next attempt.....

Opposite page:  
*Footsteps on  
Aonach Mor*

Photograph:  
*Sean Kelly*







# BLUE REMEMBERED HILLS (AN ASCENT OF ALL THE MUNROS)

*Munroitis is a serious condition leading to an itch you just have to scratch; in most cases eventually the scratching cures the condition. Sadly in many cases serious secondary conditions known as Corbettitis and even Grahamitis can set in. Sean tells us about his 46 year quest for the cure.*

By Sean Kelly

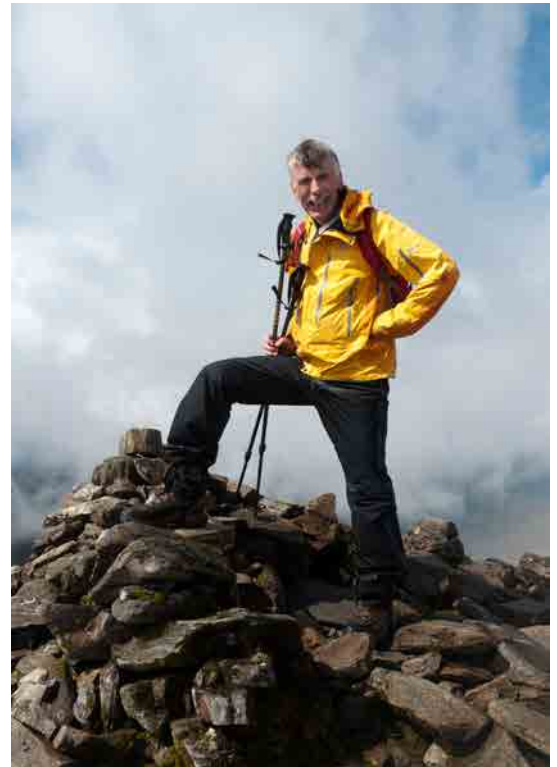
What are those Blue Remembered Hills,  
What spires, what farms are those?  
This is the land of lost content,  
I see it shining plain.  
The happy highways where I went  
And cannot come again'.  
A E HOUSMAN

Right:  
*My Final Munro,*  
*Ben Lui*

Photograph:  
*Sean Kelly*

At about 12.05pm on Thursday 7th August 2014, in the company of several thousand midges... together with hail, driving sleet and wind, I finally grasped the summit cairn on the second slightly higher top of Ben Lui in the Crianlarich Hills. This was a journey that had started on a fine August day some 46 years back when I first traversed Meall Dearg on the Aonach Eagach ridge, in the company of Paul Chapman (son of the artist George Chapman of Monitor fame). At that time there were fewer than 100 who had climbed all the Munros, let alone the multitudes that today throng these hills in pursuit of this obsessive ambition.

It was January 1970 I think, and I was up at Jean's Hut, high in Coire an Lochan. There was plenty of snow and plenty of vile smelling bodies, 18 of them crammed into a bothy with only six sleeping spaces. I surveyed the scene as teams departed with ambitious plans and heavy 'sacks adorned with ropes and crampons.



Condensation was a problem as six inches of water sloshed around the floor. The corrugated iron roof didn't help matters. The reek of paraffin drifted across the room from stoves and little coffee tins, from which a small lace protruded to produce a flickering flame that illuminated this sordid scene. Cunningham appeared shortly on the way up the hill with a group from the Lodge and moaned about the general squalor and ambience of the place. There slowly appeared an amorphous shape from the bunk above, a figure somehow lost amongst the general clutter of ropes, 'sacks and pits. And so we ended up climbing together as two pairs, threading a route up Ewan Buttress in deep powder. I recall a wide step but the way was nothing too difficult and at the top as we unroped I suggested we go to bag Ben Macdui. He apologised but explained that he had to dash off to Hell's Lum, to retrieve a camera that had been inadvertently left behind the previous day. (That was not all he left behind, as a red Cairngorms guide now resides on my library shelf.) Besides, he added casually, I've done all these peaks before. Indeed he really had. He was Mick Geddes and had completed the Munros by the age of 18 (Munroist no.100). In a few days he would make a first repeat ascent of the *Smith-Marshall Route* on the Orion Face with Alan Rouse, a climb that had a mega reputation at the time, and was one of many unrepeated routes for which the Ben and famous 'Clough guide' was renowned. He was to die tragically young from cancer.

What was so intriguing at the time was the fact that 100 people, yes 100 people, could be troubled to climb all of the 3,000ft peaks in Scotland. The Three Peaks, yes. The Marsden-Edale, yes. The Scottish 4s, yes. But an attempt

to climb all the Scottish Munros? Today, it is easy to accommodate this long-term obsession even if not fully understanding it. There were not many books on Munros other than the list of the 'Tables'. So what was the point of all this? Like Mallory on Everest, and Armstrong on the moon, why? Even Robertson (the first Completist of the Munros) did not escape scrutiny, and the deed regarded as rather bad form by the then infant SMC.

Someone once asked the great Louis Armstrong what it was that he got out of Jazz? "If you've gotta ask man, you're nevva gunna know."

It is much the same with Munro bagging. Until you've tried it, 'you're nevva gunna know'. But that was not my intention. I was fresh out of college and winter routes were what counted. Not boring hill bashing. There was no excitement in that sort of activity. No challenge, no tick in the guide. Front pointing was just emerging from an apprenticeship served in the step-cutting tradition, until then a mandatory requirement for Scottish winter climbing. So the idea of flogging up some unpronounceable name of a mountain didn't appeal. Besides, that was only walking and not real climbing. My first Munro should have been Ben Nevis, circa 1964, but terminated abruptly at Knutsford Services on the M6 as a result of mini-bus steering failure. I, finally, managed to reach the Highlands four years later and after traversing the Ben and Mamores (but not taking in any Munro tops) found me at the foot of the Aonach Eagach Ridge in Glen Coe with Paul Chapman. A fabulous day with extensive views across Rannoch Moor served as a good introduction to my first Munros, Meall Dearg and Sgor nam Fiannaidh.



That the idea of actually attempting to climb all the Munros never occurred to me. It came quite late in the plan. It kind of sneaked up on us in the mid 90s when I casually counted up the peaks climbed in a lifetime of travelling north, usually late on a Friday night in the depths of winter. It didn't amount to much because we always went to the same places, the Coe, the Ben, 'Meggy' and the Cairngorms and not much else. Summer was essentially set aside for greater ranges in Europe and further afield. It really began with a failed summer attempt on *Tower Ridge*, on a dreich day of thick mist and heavy rain, when swimming would have been a more suitable technique than climbing. And so in search of better weather, we moved west to Ardgour and the Great Ridge and surveyed an area that was totally new, looking north to Knoydart and unfamiliar mountains by the score. More classic ridges soon followed such as the *Cioch Nose* in Applecross, the Angel's Peak in the Cairngorms, and the Pinnacle Ridge of Sgurr nan Gillian. But all this was not strictly Munro bagging, more a gentle introduction to other untrodden ground. The following summer saw ascents of the Five Sisters and a trip up to the far north to climb Ben Hope. Yes this was a kind of Munro bagging but I was not actually ticking off names on a list or from a book. That would follow in due course when the full realisation of my addiction dawned.

And so over the next few years the total gradually increased and knowledge of secret corners of the Highlands gradually revealed. We paid a gillie to boat us into the far reaches of Loch Mullardoch and were rewarded by close encounters with a Golden Eagle, keenly intent on its prey, a small field mouse

clinging precariously to a thin blade of grass. Another boat carried us into Knoydart and Ladhar Bheinn, accompanied by an inquisitive dolphin. The rot really set in with the purchase of McNeish's little Munro mini-guide cunningly designed to fit into an anorak pocket or 'sack lid. And so the ticking began in earnest, and the planning for that next trip. Any peaks not reaching the magic 3,000ft level were relegated to retirement or even later if necessary. Harold liked the facilities at Ratagan Hostel and so we concentrated on this area initially, which included the superb South Kintail Ridge when seven Munros were completed on a long, hard, hot day. I can still recall the return along a stalker's track, obviously well-used by many ponies that had also been this way. The region to the south of Kintail, which is prime stalking country, also has memorable climbing. On another superb day of endless views, the ascent of Gleouraich was shared with a chap who worked at Kellogg's, and a former pupil of a colleague of mine at work. Mention must also be made of Sgurr na Sgine, surely the steepest ascent of any Munro at 820m in one and a half kilometres direct from the valley floor. Oil the knee joints before you start.

But the real benefit of climbing Munros has been exploring lesser known corners of the highlands, such as Glen Affric, Loch Ossian, Knoydart and the Letterewe Forest. Access to these areas often involves either camping, use of a bothy or remote hostel. Shenavall bothy in Letterewe is a beautiful location and setting for exploring remote A'Mhaighdean and Ruadh Stac Mor, although the unavoidable crossing of the Abhainn Strath na Sealga does introduce an element of trepidation into any expedition

in all but settled weather. To be stranded on the wrong side after heavy rain, after a long, hard day is not to be contemplated, but the Estate has conveniently placed two bivvy bags alongside the crossing, just in case. How thoughtful. The youth hostel at Loch Ossian is another excellent base for exploring the Ben Alder range of hills with about a dozen Munros to go at. More so now that the hostel has been renovated, but not as impressively as Corrour Lodge at the opposite end of the loch. An article in The Times put the final cost of restoration at £19 million. The new owner of the Glen Feshie Estate instructed his workers to remove all wood debris larger than a finger from the seven miles either side of the road down the glen, despite the fact that the next storm would mean starting all over again. Anyhow, I digress. We traversed the Beinn Eibhinn group and stayed at Culra bothy but our planned return over Ben Alder was postponed because of atrocious weather and so we beat a retreat through the Bealach Dubh. Well it took Philip Gribbon five attempts to bag it. The toilet at the hostel recalls early memories of Ty Powdwr and the 'Elsan'. Loch Ossian also had a chemical toilet, fortuitously away from the main building. One evening, Harold was in 'residence', when there was a violent shaking of the toilet door. Thinking that somebody was 'in extremis', he cautiously opened the door to be greeted by one large... stag. The animal was quite tame and was only after food, I think.

Glen Affric is the best base for investigating the charms of Sgurr nan Ceathreamhnan. Heavy rain over several days did not deter us from an ascent of this vast mountain with spurs radiating out over 10 miles or more in

many directions. Mullach na Dheiragain, (we named them Kerryman and Jerryman), is one such spur with its own Munro. The traverse of the twin summits of Ceathreamhnan, in strong winds, is not without interest, as my one hand clutches the map and the other grasps the crest. Two bedraggled souls returned to the cosy little hostel, luckily to be greeted by a warm glowing fire, malt whisky and 20 other hardy souls seeking shelter from the storm. We wanted to include an ascent of Beinn Fhionnlaidh, missed from an earlier foray but it was to prove too ambitious in the prevailing circumstances. I finally, ticked this Munro on a solo ascent from Glen Affric traversing over both Mam Sodhail and Carn Eige on a stunning day, with a carpet of Red Campion under my feet. The only other alternative access to this isolated peak is to hire a gillie to boat across Loch Mullardoch. The path on the north side is truly desperate and best avoided as it traverses a moraine boulder field, some the size of houses. You have been warned. Halfway down is an impressive Swiss-type chalet that apparently is let to rich honeymoon couples. There is another of these 'love chalets' opposite Shenavall. Talk about away from it all.

Jim Gregson had first mentioned that the Fannichs were worth exploration a few years back, so on inspecting the guide it appeared possible to bag all of them in a single expedition. Reality, in the shape of weather and access denied to Loch Fannich, caused a re-think of our plan of assault and it eventually took three days to complete the round. Unusually on Meall a'Chrasgaidh as we cowered in the summit shelter, torrential rain was blasted right over our heads by the extreme force of the wind, so keeping us

completely dry, until we stepped out into the open, that is. There is an illuminating account of Munro spending a night vainly trying to find a way off this summit towards Loch a'Bhraoin, chiefly because they only had matches for light as headtorches hadn't then been invented. Our only misfortune was a long walk back, after failing to thumb a lift along the A835 from Loch Glascarnoch to the car parked at the head of the glen. The walk out from An Coileachan was enough in itself. The ascent of Sgurr Breac, however, was cause for minor celebration as it was my 100th Munro. These landmarks are important, as it is essential to have intermediate targets to aim at. As in Muriel Gray, 'the first 50', halfway, only 100 remaining and so on. Whenever I meet somebody else pursuing the same goal, they always seem to have fewer Munros to climb. Others I encounter are bagging peaks at a rate of 40-50 a year. The longest stint I had achieved was two weeks one April which included only 12 new summits, what with F&M problems, and peaks others wanted to climb, but already bagged by myself. Still more have completed the round and started on the Corbetts. Some bemoan the fact that they now have no direction or aim in their climbing as all has been climbed. For about five years we annually encountered a German teacher who was coming over to the Highlands every school summer holiday to tick off his Munros, and had now graduated to the Corbetts. Rushing down from Stob a'Choire Odhair in the Blackmount, because of the imminent approach of bad weather, we passed Janet Street-Porter also engaged on the divine quest. I am pleased to report that she must have got a right soaking that particular day, as the heavens opened just as we reached the car.

Climbing the Munros has assumed a certain cult status today, rather similar to Everest. Not only the sheer numbers that are attempting the feat, but the diversity within these attempts. We have had them done in one walk, although the Karabiner MC's Ripley brothers were the first to attempt that Herculean task. They have been done in winter by Martin Moran, run by some madman in 50 days, and I recently read of someone who has completed in an overall time span of 70 years. What about the first completion by bicycle, by a blind person, walking backwards, with one leg etc. Joking aside, there is a serious point here and that is the commercialism associated with the task. Many aspirants need to employ a guide to do the Inn Pin. We encountered some unfortunate soul in the Sligachan who had been dragged around Coire Lagan on a really miserable day of low cloud and driving rain, as that was the day that he had pre-booked. He didn't experience any true picture of what the trip was about, no planning, no route finding, and no view. He was no better off than a dog on a lead as he was dragged behind the guide.

There are a plethora of new walking magazines and web sites detailing how to climb the Munros, often accompanied by stunning photographs, with almost pitch by pitch accounts of how to succeed, where to stay, where to buy gear, and including the nearest pub in which to celebrate afterwards. Sitting in the Clachaig one day, after another crossing of the Aonach Eagach, a very, very wet walker entered and sat opposite us, and slowly a pool of water drained and gradually formed around where he was sat. In the course of events, we conversed, and it gradually transpired that he was a party researcher at Westminster, and had been doing his round with the late Labour



party leader, John Smith, who had tragically died earlier that month. He recounted how he had earlier that week, removed all of Smith's possessions from his office, including his Munro chart that was pinned on his office wall. It detailed nearly 200 ascents. The strangest person we ever encountered on the hill, was on an extremely hot day on Glas Bheinn Mhor, after having already traversed Ben Starav (a very steep climb of 1,078m direct from the shore of Loch Etive), and Beinn nan Aighenan. We were stripped to the minimum i.e. shorts & boots, but slowly plodding up the hill ahead of us was a man completely concealed from head to foot in black clothing, with only his eyes and nose visible. It transpired that he

suffered from a severe skin condition, which meant he had to avoid all and any exposure to sunlight. As I said to Harold afterwards, why didn't he take up caving or some nocturnal activity? Legal that is. Even with the vagaries of the Scottish climate he must get a fair proportion of sunny days.

Few ascents pose any real problem for the walker with perhaps the exception being the mountains on Skye. However, it is indeed possible to make an ascent more adventurous by including a climb as part of that ascent. Although the Inn Pin is the only Munro that requires rock-climbing skills, especially in descent, other peaks offer infinite opportunities.

Below:

*Abseil off the Inn Pin, Cuillin Ridge.*

Photograph:

*Sean Kelly*



Below:  
*Coire Lagan*  
*Panorama*

Photograph:  
*Sean Kelly*

Blaven by the tourist route is nothing special, in fact, quite boring if the truth were known. My first ascent included taking in *The Great Prow*, only VS on the first pitch, but certainly 'out there'. See the wonderful picture in Gordon Stainforth's book on the Cuillin. My second ascent via Clach Glas gave a memorable day in perfect weather. Indeed, it was so hot that we set off at six in the morning to climb in the cooler part of the day. The main problem was not so much the difficulty of the scrambling, but working out exactly where the route went. The final Tower is very impressive, with great exposure on all sides. The views towards the main Cuillin Ridge were spectacular and much photographed. Locating the correct chimney line on Blaven is

not without interest. The Inn Pin gave us a fine finale to our circuit of Coire Lagan. We didn't bother with the hassle of carrying a rope as we expected to hitch a lift on someone else's. By the time I summited there must have been six teams in the queue so we elected to reverse the East Ridge, a tricky manoeuvre, which must be the most exposed bit of down-climbing on any Munro.

Obviously the ascent of the Ben via *Tower Ridge* involves much scrambling but my only ascent was completed in full winter conditions and we can't be sure that we actually trod the summit because of the prevailing conditions. On another occasion climbing with Al Metelko on *Ledge Route*, he refused to go to the summit, saying he was saving it to be his



last Munro. I did actually succeed in gaining the summit with Joe Flynn after threading our way through a tight hole in Gardyloo Gully, akin to squeezing a cork from a bottle. When climbing with Paul Harding a few years later, we saw a girl lose her crampon on this very pitch. Luckily for her, Jim Gregson climbed up behind and replaced the errant crampon whilst she slowly fretted whilst perched on a single front point. The Buachaille is another peak with fine routes to its summit, but it was only recently that I traversed the whole ridge to include the recent Munro of Stob na Broige on a splendid April day. Another time on Curved Ridge proved frustrating, as my partner had to return to the hut having forgotten their crampons. To celebrate my ascent, I broke through the ice on the Coupal on our return to the car. The following day we had a magic time on the Aonach Eagach resplendent in full winter conditions with superb views, a sharp wind, and in excellent company. No rope was required. The pace of the party was dictated by the fastest, a classic feature of Karabiner walks. Lochnagar's climbs all finish within spitting distance of the summit. On a summer ascent of the Central Buttress, which did its best to relocate back to the foot of the crag I rounded a rib to be confronted by a surprised Stag. A winter ascent of the Tough-Brown ridge remains imprinted on the memory as I spent a very frigid six hours, tied to a belay waiting for the party in front to make progress, surmounting a short overhanging wall. Consequently it was a little before midnight when we topped out. Most of the climbs on Creag Meagaidh finish a long way from the summit cairn, the location of which is far from easy to locate in typical winter conditions. One

exception was in tandem with John Evans, on a windless clear day, we ticked all three Munros in the group after racing up Raeburn's Gully in bullet hard névé. This ascent, in stark contrast to an earlier attempt with Jim Gregson with chest deep powder and serious avalanche risk; discretion prevailed.

Below:  
*Avalanche prone slopes*

Photograph:  
*Sean Kelly*



As I look back, time perhaps to reflect on the different experiences and character of the different ascents. I am still surprised by the unexpected, an ascent that has more interest than a mere guidebook description. The weather conditions have a dramatic influence on how one might view a climb. Roughly a third of the summits were done in excellent conditions, another third were generally okay with a view from the top, and the rest were climbed on days when it was generally better not to have ventured forth onto the hill. I recall a truly miserable day on Ben Wyvis, when wind and rain did their best to make us retreat.



But we pressed on and despite contemplating turning back at one stage we eventually gained the summit cairn. The weather almost seemed to ease as we retraced our steps. Another day on Ben Eighe in Torridon was equally miserable, with torrential rain throughout the day. The traverse of the mountain, however, was really good, with more a feeling and sense of the imposing close bulk and exposure of Coire Mhic Fhearchair cliffs to our right, as we progressed nervously up the mountain. In spite of the weather, we fortuitously found a large erratic that offered temporary respite, not that distant from the summit of Spidean Coire nan Clach. This proved an excellent lunch stop. Ben Klibreck was especially trying for Harold one very wet, misty day. About halfway there is a small lochan to traverse but at the end there was no Harold. And so after waiting for some time, I assumed that he had passed, and was on his way to the top. When I eventually reached the summit, there was no sign of him. I retraced my way back to the lochan just as the mist lifted, revealing Harold having his lunch and not too concerned about missing the tick.

A winter traverse of the Grey Corries was another 'character-building' experience, complete with a bivi in a snow hole on Aonach Beag, before continuing along the remainder of the ridge in total white-out conditions. The blustery winds and wet snow made navigation testing. My companion succeeded in losing both maps, whipped from the tenuous grip of woolly Dachsteins. Breaking my spectacles did not improve navigation matters. By the time we had descended through the Leanachan Forest, wading through 18 inches of deep slush, I have never been so wet for such a sustained period. Trench foot was a distinct possibility. The crossing of the Allt Choimhlidh via the old dismantled railway, the sleepers of which had either rotted away or been thoughtfully removed, meant a tricky crossing, balancing on the old tracks, with the river in full spate below, ready to ensure a good soaking for the clumsy. Sadly, my other companion, Dave Harries, was killed in the Kathmandu air crash shortly afterwards.

Geal Charn, above Drumochter one February provided another stern navigation





test. I was by myself, and the threatening sky, promising snow. A severe frost and frozen handbrake delayed departure prior to setting out, but a good stalker's track led quickly up to a bealach. A quick check of the map and some easy compass work found the summit cairn, accompanied with large snowflakes, now falling heavily from a gloomy sky. I was not unduly worried as I knew the good path was just below the bealach, so I reset the compass and set off down. As I approached the col, the landscape didn't look too familiar, but all peat hags look similar, so I pressed on regardless. But no stalker's track materialised, only more peat hags in the murk. I pushed on in the vain hope that something would materialise, prospecting along both sides of the col. Eventually, I had no recourse but to return to the summit and reset my compass bearings. At least it would be an identifiable landmark. It was with some relief that I quickly located the summit cairn on what was fairly flat and featureless terrain. So with abundant new confidence and fixed compass bearing, a course was followed, hopefully back by the way I had

originally intended. It was then, with some dismay, it slowly dawned that I had repeated the same navigation error and had descended to the wrong bealach yet again. There was nothing for it but to descend low enough below the cloud ceiling to check my position. If at the wrong bealach, Loch Ericht would surely come into view. I couldn't miss that, as it was 15 miles long. Suffice to say Loch Ericht did appear and that my original plan for the traverse to A'Mharconaich was postponed for the following day. A sensible decision as it transpired, with cloudless blue skies, the sun glinting off new snow, three Munros traversed, and nobody encountered during the entire day. How can two days on the hill be so diverse and yet so challenging?

Another difficult 'navigation day' was a winter ML assessment a few years back. After a couple of days stuck in a snow hole burrowed into the flanks of Ben Macdui, we ascended Cairngorm and Beinn Mheadhoin through misted spectacles and zero visibility. The only clue that we had traversed over Mheadhoin, were enormous granite tors, totally rimed in

Below:  
*Sgurr Eilde Mor*  
*panorama*

Photograph:  
*Sean Kelly*



snow and ice, appearing out of the gloom, that punctuated most of the route. I surmised that Glenmore Lodge instructor Sam Crymble would check our return bearings to locate our snow hole. As I had no idea of the exact location of the snow hole to begin with, I surmised that he would first ask for our present location and duly pointed to this on the map. He then followed with the next half-expected question, the return bearing back to the snow holes. Our present heading I replied, fingers crossed hoping this was correct. He said nothing and proceeded to pick on another candidate. I duly passed. When all else fails, bullshit often works.

Eventually there will come a day when the last Munro will be climbed. Ivan Waller had a difficult time finding his last peak, what with revised tables, re-surveys etc. As I close in on completing the round, I must search out a good bottle of Malt.

Mission accomplished...all the Munros finally ticked

I had 13 outstanding mountains to climb on this stravaig into the Highlands, and with the exception of Ben Lui and nearby satellite peak, Beinn a'Chleibh, they were all remote summits with demanding access problems. However, this was somewhat eased by the judicious use of an old mountain bike, until leaky valves curtailed its use.

The holiday started at Braemar, in the company of Harold, my companion on many Munro sorties. Our first day involved a bike ride along the Geldie burn, and Geldie Lodge (a ruin) the starting point for An Sgarsoch and Carn an Fhìdhleir. An excellent stalker's path cut through the heather and easy ascent to the first summit of Carn an Fhìdhleir. The fine

morning had now given way to heavy clouds and a stiff breeze but relatively easy ground to the adjoining top of An Sgarsoch and extensive views in all directions. A steep heather descent regained the stalker's path and so to a good run down on the bikes back to Braemar, and evening meal at the Bistro. A 40km day.

To reach the stalkers' path in Gleann na Muice it is necessary to actually wade two rivers. The crossing of the Abhainn Strath na Sealga via a shingle bank and boots hanging from my neck was delightful in the early morning sun, but the Abhainn Glenn na Muice was still in spate, and so I mistakenly opted to walk the trackless left bank of the river into the far recesses of the glen. Progress was extremely tedious in wet heather, bracken and peat-hagged terrain, and hopes of dry feet soon a distant memory. A stream issued from the small lochan sandwiched between Beinn a'Chlaidheimh and Sgurr Ban, a stiff 600m climb from the valley, but thankfully much better, drier ground. There was no sign of the others, and so I continued on over Sgurr Ban to the marvellous summit of Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair, clambering across a jumble of over-sized quartzite blocks. I briefly stopped for lunch and to take in the expansive vista from this remote lofty perch. On the descent I encountered the only other person during my round, travelling in the opposite direction. A minor top, Meall Garbh, can be avoided on the right by a traversing path that eventually leads to Beinn Tarsuinn's sloping platform of a summit. Very imposing crags dropped steeply into Glenn na Muice and no sign of any way off the ridge.

Time was pressing as I passed the furthest point of the walk after over six hours of toil

and headed in the direction of a bealach and peat hags below A'Mhaighdean, before a right turn into the infant beginnings of Gleann na Muice and still little evidence of any stalker's path. Five weary hours later I was back at Shenavall as the promised rain arrived. Shouldering my retrieved heavy 'sack, I climbed up the toilsome track that led back over An Teallach's boggy flank to Coire Hallie in a little under three hours. As it started to grow dark and the rain and wind was felt, a minor scare when an unexpected lochan appeared below and no sign of the bulldozed track to Coire Hallie. Had I, like Munro,

walked into the wrong valley? Panic ensues, until a quick reassuring glance at the map and 15 hours after setting out I, finally, made the car, very wet, and somewhat worse for wear.

Lurg Mhor is another very remote Munro, sitting deep within the Loch Monar estate. To attain its distant top, it is necessary to ascend a Corbett (Ben Tharsuinn) and another Munro, Bidein a'Choire Sheasgaich, and both again on the return, a day with over 6,200ft of climbing apart from the 29km of travel. In the morning a dramatic shock to discover a flat tyre when the bike was removed from the bike rack atop the Rav. It was a five and a

Below:

*Near Dundonnell*

Photograph:

*Sean Kelly*



half kilometres trudge up to the repaired wire bridge that spanned the Allt a'Chonais, but thankfully there was an excellent stalker's path that led on to the Bealach Bernais. It was a beautiful day as I progressed along this superb range of hills, only annoyed that the bike fiasco had made me forget to pack my camera. I had thoughtfully taken lots of food and drink and so stopped often to take in the view and refresh. Bidein a'Choire Sheasgaich (known by many as Cheesecake) was guarded by steep imposing cliffs and no way forward seemed possible. However, the solution was revealed by a series of small cairns that led this way and that, until eventually faced with a near vertical rock fissure streaming with water. It was

resplendent in good, clean, sharp holds and allowed access to another rather dirty gully that pierced the upper cliffs. And so the way ahead over several bumps and small lochans to this fine summit and Lurg Mhor ahead. A broad easy ridge, finally, gained this distant top and splendid prospect towards lonely Loch Monar. The adjoining Atterdale Estate owner wants to reintroduce the wolf to these hills to control deer numbers and overgrazing. Attaining the isolated top of Lurg Mhor could be a whole lot more exciting.

The final day saw me parking the Rav beside the River Lochy some nine kilometres to the west of Tyndrum and carefully negotiating the slippery stepping stones aided by ski-poles. The

Right:  
*Spindrift on the  
CMD Arête*

Photograph:  
*Sean Kelly*





previous night in the hostel another walker warned me about the dreadful state of the path through the woods and now after a couple of day's rain everything was dripping, mostly onto me. Previous attempts at climbing Ben Lui had been stopped by my failure to cross the Eas Dalmh that issued from the Fionn Choirein above. Today, however, I was in determined mood and ignored my previous course and continued up the east path which led unexpectedly to a footbridge, not marked on the map. It gave easy access to a forest track and another footbridge and marker cairn designating the required footpath into the Coire. It was a mud fest stumble all the way to the forest gate and escape from the confines of the damp woods. Progress and my mood improved and I made good speed up this much improved path that debouched onto the high col separating Ben Lui and its sister peak of Beinn a'Chieibh. The hills were shrouded in mist with intermittent rain as I pushed on to the twin tops of Beinn a'Chieibh, which fortuitously cleared of cloud as I approached the true summit. Ben Lui still sported a cloud-cap as I retraced my footsteps back to the bealach and a final daunting haul up my final Munro. Now the weather did its worst as rain, hail and sleet battered against my waterproofs and I just put one foot in front of the other and pulled my hood tighter. Suddenly, my concentration was disturbed by a faint sound, rather like a dog barking from somewhere in the vicinity of the North West ridge. But I could see nothing. Head down and ever upwards into the thick mist that hid Ben Lui from view. The end arrived quite unexpectedly as a shapely rocky top with cairn revealed, as the cloud parted for a few brief minutes.

Others also arrived at the same time, which was fortunate as I thankfully passed someone my camera for this rather special moment to be recorded. And then the dogs that I had faintly heard barking earlier, also arrived, two Springer Spaniels. What could be better or more appropriate? Everybody was shaking my hand and congratulations all round from those present.

This was followed by 'What next?' In fact, nearly everyone I have since met has uttered this phrase. There is no next. My intention was only to climb Munros, as they are the major peaks that comprise the Scottish Highlands. They are in many ways the true original list, first defined by Hugh Munro in 1891. That is until the SMC decide to update what constitutes a Munro, yet again.

#### POSTSCRIPT:

There is some dispute as to whether the Rev A E Robertson actually climbed the adjacent peak of Sgurr Dearg and not the Inn Pin, which is actually the higher top. So the real honour of first completist is due to another cleric, the Rev A R G Burn in 1923. And it could be argued that with the present 'List', not including Carn Cloich-mhuillin, the honour appropriately belongs to Munro himself. Unlike Robertson, Munro was a competent rock-climber and no less an authority, Robin Campbell (SMC historian) is of the strong conviction that Munro would most certainly have climbed this remarkable peak during an early SMC visit to Glen Brittle. We can never be really certain, much as with Mallory on Everest. But it's a nice thought with which to conclude this essay.

# PARTICULAR WINTER, Trossachs, January 2010

By Mark Goodwin

late light crumbles  
across Coire Earb

Cruach Ardrain fades  
and crisps and fades  
and cr

isps as

snow-smoke surges  
on gusts' tuning

spindrift-twisters hiss  
grains of glint-sting  
on my cheeks like

radio taking my skin  
I am granular light like  
this gra nular-lit-ground  
could I & land be blown

away on wind  
as frozen smoke

? drift-ridges & ice-clad  
grasses scatter  
light's fast passing  
of pale gold powders

a sheet

of solid lochan holds  
shine tight on ice as  
gauze -spooks of snow

sheesh its gloss  
a moment

of mountain hare fast  
as a statue disintegrates  
to white speed's

furry smoke -light

First published by the literary journal – Shearsman Magazine.

Note: *Cruach Ardrain* is a mountain near Crianlarich, its name means – *stack of the high part*.

# WILL THE REAL REINHOLD PLEASE STAND UP

*Reinhold Messner's achievements cemented his place as one of the greatest mountaineers of all time but his name may not be familiar to many recent converts to our sport. The man was a legend but what was he like as a person? John tells us how he had the opportunity to probe below the surface and what he learned from the experience. Sadly John passed away at the end of 2018, his Obituary will be in CCJ 129.*

By John Temple

“**M**essner and I appeared together on a television programme. I was impressed to meet him. He seemed quite different to the way he is often presented in the media – shorter than one might imagine, hardly taller than the Iceman who was the subject of the programme. Not particularly wiry or muscular, his handshake is firm and confident, his laughter openly hearty. When he thinks no one is watching him, his face seems almost sad” [Konrad Spindler: *The Man in the Ice* p26/7].

One of the pleasures left to a pensioner is having your opinion confirmed. The quote above from the pre-history Professor in charge of the investigation of “Otzi” is significant because Spindler is just Joe Public as far as mountaineering is concerned; he has small knowledge and less experience of the lifestyle. The impression he got from the media was built up over decades. From the 1970 triumph and tragedy on Nanga Parbat when Reinhold’s younger brother died in an avalanche, through

his ultimately successful efforts to clear his name of the vicious defamation alleging that he had left Günther to die, through the repetition of the tragedy two years later on Manaslu; through the flowering and withering of his partnership with Habeler which had culminated in their ascent of Everest without supplementary oxygen. His completion of the fourteen “big 8s” and the Seven Summits in 1986 plus crossing the Antarctic raised his profile further and in 1991 he was in the right place at the right time for the world’s most outstanding mountaineer to meet the world’s oldest while the latter was still where he died.

That was chance. Significant is Reinhold’s recognition that the body was not hundreds but thousands of years old. Wide experience of the lifestyle and artefacts of self-sufficient people such as the Lapps and Inuit ensured his recognition of the clues in the tools and clothing fragments as to his great age. The sharp Messner brain which had so often made a life-saving call in the mountains got it right again.

Before I met him the impression I had of Messner was mixed; respect and admiration for his achievements but with reservations as to his personality. Climbers can be selfish and obsessive, prone to list ticking. Losing your partner is a misfortune but did carelessness contribute? Falling out with Herrligkoffer is normal. Even the reticent, tolerant Whillans managed that but Messner managed to raise the game to the level of the Law Courts. While he was not a media tart, his construction of virtual adventure for the titillation of the couch potatoes meant that he had to be a mega self-publicist.

Without a proper job he had to finance some expensive habits. Three expeditions a year is a high strike rate and generates other costs. Divorce does not often come cheap. Collecting a castle and founding museums is perhaps more appropriate for moguls than mountaineers, points awarded for style though. Election to the European Parliament raises doubts to a new level. A politician? Another Herzog? Not, I felt, someone I would want to spend time with; a non-problem in view of its improbability.

I did flatter myself, (don't we all?) that he may have heard of me. In 1978 he completed The Direct on Kibo's Breach Wall. With Dave Cheesmond in 1976 I had reached the foot of the 80m icicle but for good reasons (four children and devout cowardice) I persuaded Dave that there was a sneaky way to avoid it – to his lasting regret. It turned out that Messner wanted – needed rather - to spend time with me but nothing to do with the Wall.

In 1970 I had spent about a week on Mt Kenya with one of the very select few that Messner regards as friends, Oswald Oelz. That

epic was the turning point in three lives: Gurt Viedmeir, the victim who should have died but did not quite manage it, Oswald who went on to become a world authority of high altitude physiology and myself, who having faded from climbing for a decade (family again), was catapulted back onto the hill.

Recognising that he was not getting any younger but with the same expensive habits, Messner was changing career. Instead of starring in film he wanted to direct. Oswald suggested the Mt Kenya rescue; Austrian TV was interested; Red Bull offered finance with attitude. They needed a suitably hirsute ancient Briton with attitude. They needed me!

In September 2014 I was helping Oswald dispose of some of his stock of red wine (large and excellent) when he asked if I would care for an all-expenses paid trip to Mt Kenya. He had no problem translating "Might do" into "Yes Yes Yes Please!" and a year later it happened. I could cope with a pinch of celebrity dust; I would give a couple of interviews on the mountain. No hardship but I did have the nagging doubts that creep up on you like arthritis. Would I cope with the altitude? I get breathless going up stairs; would I cope with two weeks of Teutonic company? How would my reservations about Reinhold play?

I had never read any of his books - fifty plus and counting - but *My life at the Limit* had been reviewed and I acquired a copy (thanks Cath) and struggled to read it. I like a book with a storyline – a beginning, a middle and an end, preferably happy; not too long with lots of pictures, and large print.



At about 250 pages, "My Life..." is way beyond my attention span. The interview format does not help, I have usually forgotten the question before I have got to the end of the answer. I only laughed once. Asked if he could still climb Everest (at 70) he responds "No problem, I'd have to use bottled oxygen and the prepared trail....I would find it dreadfully embarrassing..." I could relate to that. The photos are few and generally forgettable except for the cover portrait.

He is showing his age and, I think, his internal scars. Furrowed brow, eyes down avoiding contact, arms tightly folded, he is brooding. There is no outreach, no hint of compromise. The only terms are his terms. He has been hurt and expects it to happen again. The posture is defensive. He is guardian of his integrity; ready to react but not by turning the other cheek. The text confirms this. I found it hard but rewarding. He may well deserve the accolade awarded by 'Time' – 'the best high altitude mountaineer, ever'

There have been costs. The loss of toe and finger ends to frostbite on the Nanga Parbat traverse were not the greatest. The death of Günther and the vindictive, acrimonious aftermath hung the Ancient Mariner's albatross around the neck of his driven 'Flying Dutchman' personality until his Everest triumph anchored his hitherto untethered guilt. He has tasted the emptiness of success, not just with the draining experience of hawking his life round the lecture halls to finance the next trip but when he achieved his goals, he discovered that the joy came from the struggle in the uncertainty not the success. He had to handle sibling rivalry of his seven brothers – he is in denial of this I believe.

He had to cope with an uneasy relationship with his unhappy, stern father. The family's material poverty was a background but not a cause of his early assert/revolt against his father's discipline, against the narrow mental horizons of a traditional alpine farming community, against education and the prospect of a 'normal' life. Later he upset many in the climbing world, envious of his talents, resenting his elitist attitude not helped by his vocal criticism of those with a less austere climbing ethic. "I have had to put up with more criticism than the rest of the climbers put together", criticised, he says, "by some bad characters with serious hang ups trying to compensate for their failed ambitions".

I suspect that his purist approach is tinged with puritanism, the conviction that words alone are not enough. He was persuaded to stand for the European Parliament on a green-tinged ticket. This gave him a voice on the issues he cares most about – to maintain environmental protection and the welfare of his beloved Sud-Tirol. One term was enough. His voice had been but one in hundreds.

He has gradually asserted more control over his life. He no longer wastes time after lectures socialising with the sponsoring clubs. His advertising sponsors wanted him to continue climbing. He wanted to go on long wild walking adventures. He changed sponsors. Bus loads of would-be visitors would turn up at his home in the valley. He bought Juval Castle, restoring not only its fabric but also its original function as a refuge against the invading hordes. The spare space he converted into a museum, the first of six, a project that gives him deep personal satisfaction and an unashamed honest ego boost. His name helps

to draw visitors. He promotes mountain education and environmental understanding. He conserves the buildings as well as the contents on display. They boost the economy. What's not to like?

The Kenya trip? Fantastic. The camera and sound crews were a lot of fun; fluent English to oblige a monoglot. The lovely Anita, the Producer's elegant assistant, was persuaded to get into my trousers on the first evening. They were Gore-Tex freebies, too tight to get over my backside but a perfect fit, unlike the pair she had been given which ended halfway down her calves. I walked up to 4000m slowly and, since there was a spare seat in the helicopter, I was then flown about, stunned at the sight of the steep complexities of the mountain, the complete loss of some of the glaciers (was ours the last ascent of the Northey in 1975? It is gone, totally gone). I was back at the scene of my climbs. There was the added bonus that people were not just prepared to hear about the old days but were actually interested in what happened forty or more years ago. The first interview went well. I told it as it was. They thought that my claim to have enjoyed the rescue was English understatement. Not so I told them. I had been so happy to be back on the mountain after a decade of responsible fatherhood, to be leading on good rock in the morning sunshine, without any expectations for me to fulfil. When on a Monday morning I should have been standing in front of a class, I could still do it. Happy days indeed.

The second interview was a disaster. I had to act and ad-lib. Earlier he had clearly been busy, and the body language I had interpreted as him not wanting any hassle. With things going well he relaxed a bit, but I never had the

chance to quiz him why he did it. The book gives some clues. He does it because he can. It is what he is good at. He has an eye for a line. He may be right that he is not otherwise especially gifted but the evidence contradicts that. He combines not just physical and mental strength and endurance but that clear head which produces the right decision at the critical moments. He believes that an inner voice, an instinct, has allowed his survival. He relishes the moments of flow when gravity no longer seems to exist. He relishes the moment when the mash falls away and he can see himself and is content with what he sees. He relishes the danger which changes exercise into adventure. He carries with him that little packet of joy, that zest for life that takes us beyond the routine of sleep, work, shop, eat, die. He is one of us, only better.

PERSONAL POSTSCRIPT: February 2016

Over my long solitary walks and interminable bivouacs I have pondered climbing. How do we get started? Why can't we give it up? What do we get for our investment? Does it change us or merely allows us to express what is there? Why a love affair with risk?

"The Meaning of Mountaineering", an article in the New Zealand Alpine Club Journal 2007 goes further and deeper than most I have read. How did Messner get started? His schoolmaster father had a climbing background. The Geisler Dolomites walled his home valley. He was not burdened with the drudgery of a hill farm life. He had space in his life to conquer the useless

But it was an inner compulsion that had him climbing the walls of the school

playground. He climbed because he must. He needed challenge, adventure. It was genetic.

The Darwin Award, posthumous recognition of the contribution to the human gene pool made by the foolish when their folly (and bad luck) removes them from it, misses the point. The risk taken in prehistoric communities, who explored beyond the horizon, who faced up the threats and sometimes faced them down, sometimes ensured their group's survival. Assessing the risk sometimes ensured their own. They were the ancestors, I blame the parents.



## UNTITLED

By Mark Goodwin

comfortingly rough grit grips  
fingerprints as a climb's shapes

play a person's skeleton with  
a careless solidity old

as hills'

hands

\*

along an arête  
nuthatch-neat a boy scampers  
as sea-shine surges

\*

as a climber clings  
to a rippled quartzite wall  
gulls surf salt-updraughts

\*

three sore fingers hooked  
in a quartzite pocket whilst  
thrift nods un knowingly

*From a poetry and fiction collection titled  
**Rock As Gloss** published by the Sheffield-  
based poetry house, Longbarrow Press*

Left:

*Ruairidh Finlayson  
on Death's Head  
(E1), Cave Crag,  
Dunkeld*

Photograph:

*Clare Clifton Coles*

# AN INAUSPICIOUS BEGINNING?

*Being the son of a legendary rock climber with a penchant for suffering, Richard had a character building introduction to the hills. Did this act as aversion therapy, or did he embrace the sport and pass the experience on to the next generation?*

By Richard Hargreaves

In his article in the CCJ 2013-14, Silver Salvers at the Sligachan, Tony Moulam graciously remembers a climbing friendship of over 50 years with 'the legendary AB'. My father. Thank you, Tony, for a fascinating catalogue of climbing days with AB on many different crags in Wales, the Lakes and Scotland. Many of those days seem to have been in less than pleasant weather, which brings to mind two AB 'mantras' with which I grew up:

Nothing is any good unless it hurts and mountains, especially wet ones, are good for 'mortification of the flesh'. Anyone who climbed or walked with AB will be familiar with that one.

As a boy I was quietly proud of my father's part in the climbing heroics of the 20s and 30s and his link with famous names of the time. I will have known almost by heart the bits about him in Colin Kirkus's still fabulous book *Let's Go Climbing*, how his hands were flayed to the bone as he held Kirkus's fall on Dow Crag. Later in life AB would recount with hideous glee how the doctor down in Coniston poured carbolic acid onto the wound so that his hands 'smoked'. Viz Mantra no. 1 above. It was good to grow up knowing the history of that climbing era and meeting some of the big

names. I was too young to remember Kirkus but my mother remembered him well and his demanding appetite. Yes, being the son of a 'legend' was interesting but, as a parent, AB was intimidating, to say the least. His way of expressing affection was to put thumb and middle finger round the neck of myself or my sisters and squeeze until the digits met, or seemed to. His threats of using 'a barbed wire whip' on us were presumably his idea of a joke but a strong childhood memory for me is of always trying to forestall or appease or keep away from his ferocious temper. Woe betide me if I failed to pick up any stones in front of the motor mower or if I failed to adequately trim the fibre needle on the gramophone as it played his favourite songs by Schubert or Hugo Wolf. My introduction to climbing with AB was in character, and inauspicious.

Tony mentions the Easter weekend of 1949 when Jack Longland's son John and I, both aged 13 with only two months between us, were to be introduced to climbing on the cliffs of North Wales. It's a revelation to me now that Tony was there too, along with Jack and others. He says that John and I were different. Indeed we were, John was confident, loud and, dare I say it, 'cocky', for he'd been climbing



already in Derbyshire. I was 'quiet', according to Tony, probably completely inaudible as well as timid. The meet was at Ogwen Cottage in the care of Mrs Williams. AB drove me down to Wales from Ulverston on the Thursday for a walk, or what I thought was going to be just a walk, the two of us, up Tryfan. I loved the scramble up the ridge from Llyn Ogwen, clattering over the rocks in my nailed boots. But then, at the top, to my surprise I was brusquely tied onto a rope and equally brusquely told: "Get down that hole there, go on." And so I was launched, out into what seemed like sheer space, on my first rock-climb, down what I later assumed to be the *North Buttress*. No sympathy or encouragement as I slid down what seemed a thoroughly scary place, only orders barked at me: "Get on with it." At one stage I was sat beside him on a ledge with my feet dangling over space. *Belle Vue Terrace*, perhaps? "Huh, are you enjoying it, lad?" I was so scared of both the situation and my father that I must have meekly answered: "Yes."

I don't remember anything of the rest of the descent or the walk down to the road and the car. I thought we stayed at Ogwen Cottage, but maybe Tony is right that AB and I stayed at Helyg. That would be more his style but I do remember breakfast at Ogwen Cottage next morning, the Friday, when there was a frantic squeal of car brakes outside and the roar of a powerful engine. "Bloody Ivan" was the roar inside the house. Was Ivan Waller still road testing Bentleys at that stage or was it his Alvis\*?

It was Alf Bridge, calm, avuncular, friendly, encouraging, with a remarkably soft voice from such a powerful looking man, who took me

under his wing for the day's climbing and for the rest of the weekend. *Bochlwyd Buttress* came first, climbing up, not down, thank goodness, followed by a compulsory skinny dip in Llyn Bochlwyd. I think we did a climb on Glyder Fach, maybe one of the *Alphabet Slabs*, but I don't recall it. Sunday was Lliwedd, ever AB's favourite Welsh crag, and *Horned Crag*. Tony says he did Craig Aderyn with the Three Pinnacle start with AB that day. Quite likely, isn't there a stone 'bird' stuck into a level block somewhere on that climb? AB delighted in showing me that some years later. Easter Monday was spent on the Idwal Slabs, in nails, of course, before the drive back to Ulverston.

I don't remember how I felt about the climbing that weekend after the Tryfan episode but I do remember the way Alf Bridge so gently looked after me. Years later I learned that Jack and Alf and others had been appalled when they heard what AB had done with me on Tryfan. They gave him a real bollocking and kept me well away from him for the whole of the rest of the weekend. Maybe Tony and AB did the Craig Aderyn route on Lliwedd while I was safely out of the way on *Horned Crag*. There was a nice sequel too; a book arrived in the post for me, a present from Alf. It was Carr and Lister's *Mountains of Snowdonia*, the 1948 second edition, with an inscription in Alf's miniscule handwriting, 'To Richard from Alf. Good wishes'. It's beside me now as I write this piece and I can see my youthful pencil marks in the margin at my father's and Alf's names in the chapter by Nully Kretschmer at the end, Rock Climbing Between the Wars.

It wasn't all bad news with AB, however. That Easter weekend didn't put me off

climbing and hills for life, only for a while on other days where and when I had to go where I was told. When I discovered how much I did like it I was able to take him up a few climbs myself in my university years and for a while after. I remember leading him up the *Devils' Staircase* on the Devil's Kitchen cliffs above Idwal, sometime in the late 50s. I was in what I thought was state of the art kit: Vibram boots, a Black's anorak, nylon rope tied into a karabiner on a hemp waist line, three or four slings and karabiners around my neck, for belaying or the occasional running belay on a pitch. When I brought AB up to the first stance and my sling belay he was brusquely (again!) contemptuous of my modern method and insisted on tying his own loop in the rope for his own belay. I was quietly shocked by this Luddite attitude but discreetly said nothing at the time. Thirty-five years later I was climbing with my eldest son Ben, then 25 and already climbing hard in the 1990s image. We were in Wasdale, he was taking me up what he called 'some classics' so that I could get used again to steep places before going on a Via Ferrata trip to the Dolomites. On the last of our three days, on the Napes on Great Gable, he allowed me to lead him up the Arrowhead. At the top he said: "Dad, I'll never let you lead me up a climb again. You haven't a clue about modern protection." True, like my father before me I never got to grips with newer climbing technology, Friends and nuts and all the gear that folk gird themselves with nowadays.

I must have inherited a fair number of my father's attitudes and foibles. I was, however, determined to introduce Ben and my other boys to climbing in a much more sympathetic manner than had been my lot on that Tryfan

day in 1949. When Ben was about 13 I arranged a day in Ogwen when Nigel Peacock and his son Roger would join me as I took Ben up his first climb on a mountain crag. We chose the Gribin Facet and a climb which I can't now remember. It turned out not to be the best of choices because as I climbed the second pitch I disappeared out of Ben's sight. I didn't know it at the time but this unnerved him, left alone on a stance on his own with me out of sight. Some years later he told me that I had done my best to put him off climbing forever, whereas I had thought I was introducing him in the most sensitive and caring way possible. Parents can't get things right with their kids, can they?

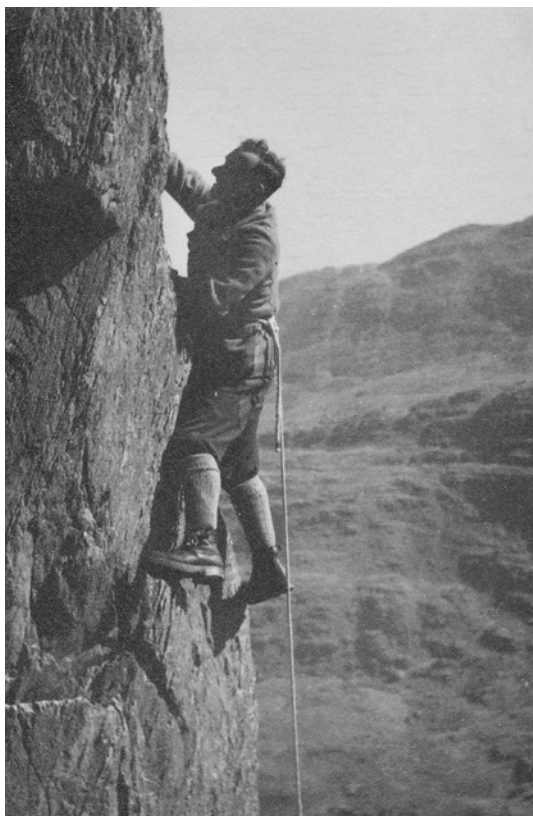
AB's friendship with Tony Moulam was very important to him. Not only did they have all those climbing days together, described in the CCJ article, but Tony kept him going on the hills until wrecked ankles and other infirmities grounded him in his 80s. Then my oldest sister Susan became his 'eyes and ears' helper on cruises to Scotland and Norway so that he could be back, albeit on a boat, amidst the hills he used to climb. Quite a transformation there; until those later and immobile years AB was utterly and loudly contemptuous of tourists on coach trips and cruise ships and here he was, finally, among them.

Back to his active years, there is a photo of him in classic style and gear of the late 1940s or early 50s. He has forsaken his beloved nailed boots for Vibram soles, another big transformation; I think they are a pair he had made for him by the cobbler in Les Haudères near Arolla in the Alps, after a trip there with a Fell and Rock group in 1947. My 21st

birthday present from him was a similar pair of boots made by the same cobbler in 1957. They lasted for nearly 20 years of hard use until they finally fell apart in the Pyrenees. The brown tweed jacket was pre-war, complete with bloodstains. Legend has it that the blood dates from the accident with Kirkus on Dow Crag, but I doubt that. I don't know of AB ever having fallen as a leader but he certainly had to hold falling leaders himself. On one occasion, on the Buachaille in Glen Coe, he had to hold a large man, well over 6ft to AB's 5ft 2". His head and nose were smashed against the rock at the belay but he drove home to Ulverston that evening to be diagnosed with concussion by the doctor next day. The jacket now graces a mannequin in the Ruskin Museum in Coniston in their small section on climbing in the area, adjacent to Donald Campbell's Bluebird. The photo is also in that collection. I don't know where that climbing shot is or who took it. Is it in the Lakes (perhaps on Great Gable with Great End behind?) or Wales? If anyone reading this can recognise the climb I'd be glad to know of it.

It was entirely fitting that it was Tony who led off with the reminiscences at the wake in the Farmers Arms in Lowick, between Ulverston and Coniston, after AB's funeral in November 1996. He prompted a flow of hilarious as well as poignant AB stories and comments that went on for nearly two hours.

I have good memories of the three days in Wasdale which Tony describes. Instead of a week's proper climbing with AB he was landed with 16-year old me. I can't have been much fun for him, but freed from parental pressure I willingly followed Tony to a wide range of crags and climbs. When I walk the



Left:  
*AB in action*

Photograph:  
*Hargreaves  
collection*

Pillar Round nowadays I like to look across to Black Crag under Scoat Fell and its *Tower Buttress*, one of the longest approach walks in Wasdale. He couldn't persuade me to mantelshelf nail-booted up to him on top of The Napes Needle but I think he coaxed me up *Eagle's Nest Direct*. Seven months later, from the 1953 Easter Meet at Ynys Ettws, Tony organised what I remembered as a mass assault on the Moelwyn cliffs above Blaenau Ffestiniog resulting in a bevy of new routes. Checking the guidebook, Tony Moulam again in my edition, 'mass assault' and 'bevy' of new routes are an exaggerated memory, I can only find *Slick* and *Slack* on Clogwyn Yr Oen in the record for

that day. However, we also did *Kirkus's Route* as a warmer-upper and, indirectly, that led me to my first ever climb as an independent youngster finding my own way as a climber. Thanks again, Tony.

It was two years later, 1955. On my National Service in the army I was at the Eaton Hall Officer Cadet School near Chester (prior to spending 15 months of 'active service' in Kenya, including many weeks in the Aberdare Mountains and an ascent of Kilimanjaro from the north as a volunteer instructor at the Outward Bound camp at Loitokitok). The 16-week Eaton Hall course ended with a 'battle camp' at the army firing range at Trawsfynydd in North Wales, opposite where the now defunct nuclear power station was built. It was a Godforsaken place, a wet, featureless moorland on which to practise platoon attacks with deep bogs in the shell holes into which, as our instructor cheerfully reminded us: "Little people like Hargreaves will sink, never to be seen again." We did get a Saturday afternoon off, so with the rope and boots I had with me, I persuaded another cadet to go climbing. We walked from Trawsfynydd, straight to *Kirkus's Route* with its remembered distinctive start. I climbed that day with a confidence, sense of freedom and buzz never felt before, my first lead, on my hero Kirkus's route, on a warm and sunny spring day. I must have floated on a high all the long walk back to the army at 'Traws'.

So, that inauspicious day on Tryfan at the age of 13 turned out not to be the setback it might have been. I've enjoyed a full life of hills and climbing, albeit modestly, with no heroic epics to write about for the CCJ, but the early climbing days with AB, Tony and others of

their generation have led to many great days on hill and crag, even in 'flesh-mortifying' conditions. I don't like to dwell on things not done in life but I do retain a wish that I had done *Central Buttress* on Scafell. I doubt I could have led it; it would have been at my upper limit but I do have a lingering affection for historic climbs and the 'legendary' climbers of my father's era and CB would have capped that. I must confess to also wishing that I'd had the nerve to do that mantelshelf on the Needle and join Tony on the top.

In 1958, after a three-week Alpine season, on a round-Europe journey in an ex-US army jeep owned by another CUMC member, we had to circumvent Albania and its enticing peaks because that benighted country was a Communist exclusion zone as effective as North Korea today. In 2001, I heard of a Balkans Peace Park Project, to establish a cross-border, international environmental protection area in the range of mountains which straddles northern Albania, southern Montenegro and western Kosovo. I'm not a competitive animal but I did rather want to get into those previously forbidden mountains before many other people. On a first visit, on my own, to Thethi in the Shala Valley in Albania, I was captivated by the mountains, the people in them and the dream of the project. I've been back in the region, trekking or cycling between the three countries most years since 2002. Legs and other ageing processes permitting, I have ambitions for further adventures there in years to come.



Maja Ararpit is in the heart of the proposed Balkans Peace Park [[www.balkanspeacepark.org](http://www.balkanspeacepark.org)]

The concrete dome is one of the communist dictator, Enver Hoxja's, 600,000 machine gun bunkers to ward off foreign invaders. They are about the only man-made blots in these otherwise unspoilt mountains and a reminder of the country's recent tragic past.

\* FOOTNOTE:

Before the war the CC used to have the AGM and Annual Dinner at a hotel in Chester, after which AB and Waller, and probably other fast car enthusiasts, would literally race each other to Helyg, sometimes neck and neck on the winding road over the Denbigh moors.

Below:

*Maja Arapit  
(2,217m) and the  
head of the Shala  
Valley, northern  
Albania*

Photograph:

*Jane Hargreaves*



# A PATCHWORK OF PATEY

*Since his tragic death in 1970, while abseiling from the Am Buachaille sea stack having made its first ascent, little has been written about Tom Patey. A collection of his best writing was published as “One Man’s Mountains” – a must read for any keen climber. Mike Dixon has been researching Tom’s life and this article reveals a little more about the man behind the legend.*

By Mike Dixon

All humans are unique but some humans are more unique than others.

Approaching the sprawl of Westhill one Saturday in May 2013, I don’t mind admitting I felt apprehensive. The person I had arranged to meet was only nine when his father was killed. Waiting for the door to open I had a preconceived notion of who I would see. Tousled black hair, lantern jawed, heavily lined face, fag clenched between lips, a young Humphrey Bogart lookalike but without the world weariness. However, my host displayed none of these features though he says he most resembled his father when both were youngsters. He remembers being taken up Ben Mor Coigach by him, an outing he later repeated with one of his daughters for her first mountain in the North West Highlands. During the following five hours I was given a sample of the extensive material he has on his computer relating to his father. Ian is proud of his father’s achievements and so he should be. Few have had such a varied array of talents: academic, climbing, literary, musical, entertaining. Few were legends in their own lifetime. Thomas Walton Patey undoubtedly was.

Thankfully, researching Patey was not going to be a study of ‘phantoms and dust, the mere echoes of echoes.’ Of course, I was too late for some significant figures but there

were four men with intriguing nicknames who Patey crossed paths with: ‘Fred the Ted’, ‘Zeke’ and the ‘Gay Lothario’ were all tracked down and visited. ‘Sticker’ (Alex Thom) has lived in Canada for 40 years so email had to do. A member of the Kincorth Club of Aberdeen, he knew Patey in his student days and made this observation about him: ‘I admired Tom in every way in the hills and the pub he had great talent. Tom was very much a one-man band, so I did not like climbing with him, he was too serious, too driven for me, took chances’.

The next person I met was Joe Brown. His friendship with Patey began on the 1956 Mustagh Tower expedition and was a close one for 14 years. ‘There was no one who came anywhere near him for having a good time whether you were in a pub or on a mountain’. Joe didn’t initially have a favourable opinion of Patey. His maintenance of the medical supplies was slipshod (sand in some of the syringes) and he was not particularly sociable. I spent two concentrated hours with Joe reminiscing and viewing his scanned images from that trip. A four-man team successful on the most technical route in the Himalaya at the time. Joe’s trips to Norway with Patey were new information to me. Whenever they climbed

together the important thing was to try and do new routes with atmosphere, the grade being irrelevant. They were in Romsdal in 1967 when a strong French team including Patrick Cordier established a new *directissima* on the Troll Wall which had taken 14 days of climbing to complete. Joe and Tom passed the jubilant team just as they reached the rim. The French knew about Brown's prowess and thought they must have climbed the British *Rimmon Route* on the Wall, still a big undertaking then and climbed two years earlier. Enquiring what time they started Joe answered '7 am.' 'Which day?' 'This morning,' he replied before they scuttled off, leaving the French speechless. In reality the fresh-looking pair had completed a gigantic scramble well away from the Troll Wall with a pitch of grade III to finish where Brown had to persuade Patey to put the rope on.

Tom Patey's life falls roughly under five headings: pre-university, university, foreign trips to the Alps and Himalaya, time with the Marines and life in Ullapool. The first and fourth were sparse on information. Ninety two-year old Ellon resident, May Forbes, was a saviour for the former. She still attends St Mary's on the Rock, the Episcopalian church where Patey's father was minister. She herself taught Tom at Sunday school. The Reverend Thomas Maurice Patey, according to May, had a caring attitude to all local residents, even cutting logs for one lady not one of his parishioners. This inclusiveness was shared by Tom, one of his nicest features according to Martin Boysen. The musical influences can be traced to his mother who played the organ in church. There is a picture of the 14-year old Tom on Tap o' Noth near Rhynie with a mouth organ in his hand. From the school and



*Left to right I Rettie (complete in kilt), D Haston, A Gill, B Falconer and Tom Patey (aged 16). The picture was taken in pouring rain on the day of departure. The owner of the sullen face protruding through from the bothy is Bill Brooker, one of the best young rock-climbers in Aberdeen (17 years old).*

student days I met Gordon 'Goggs' Leslie who knew Patey at Robert Gordon's College before both entered Aberdeen University together. By all accounts, Goggs was endearingly eccentric and was very keen on the Teutonic dimension in mountaineering. This fed into Patey's creative imagination in his writings. Goggs was also the co-author of Scotland's first grade V, after he and Patey took seven hours to cut their way up the final 200ft headwall of *Douglas Gibson Gully* on Lochnagar, tunnelling a formidable cornice. 'We shook hands. I was very proud. It was so beautiful with a bright moon shining... he knew he had really done something.'

Alan Will, who with Patey and George Macleod did the first big line on the Central Gully Wall of the Dubh Loch, *Vertigo Wall*, remembers Patey's speed of movement. He found it difficult to keep up with him on

Above:  
*ROGOMO*  
(aka Bob Scott's  
"Horrible  
Hielanders") at  
*Luibeg Bothy*,  
7th January 1949

Photograph:  
*I Patey collection*

approaches despite being a champion athlete at Robert Gordon's. He recalls staying with Patey in the delightfully named 'vermin villa' just outside Braemar. Patey arrived with a dixie of boiled potatoes and no other food or utensils whatsoever. 'The way he climbed he was very much an individual, looking after number one. He virtually always led, he chose the line. Anyone climbing with him was just a supporter.' Patey fondly described the mountains and companions that nurtured his skills in 'Cairngorm Commentary' and the song 'Aiguilles des Cairngorms.' The memorable third verse of the latter lampoons the great Chamonix guide Armand Charlet. It was written after an Alpine trip blighted by poor weather in 1954. But Charlet nearly had the last laugh. The following year Freddie Malcolm and Patey were on one of Charlet's most famous routes the *North Face of the Aiguille du Plan* where they narrowly escaped obliteration by serac collapse. 'Patey never eats, drinks, shits till he gets to the top.' After nine hours of virtually continuous effort they reached the summit. 'He was a wonderful companion on the mountain if you could keep up with him.'

Rakaposhi in the Karakoram was a mountain requiring endurance rather than the technical skills demanded of Mustagh Tower. In 1958, Patey was in the Marines and enjoying a free expedition at the expense of the military. Richard Brooke was the only team member I could trace. In March 1962, he was up in Scotland for a profitable week with Patey. It began at Creag Meagaidh with the first ascent of the *Post Horn Gallop* and a failure to straighten out the *Centre Post*. They also attempted the Cuillin Ridge in what

Patey dismissed as not true winter conditions but which, on viewing Richard's slides, I have no doubt modern climbers would accept. In Richard's diary he notes bedding down at the Laggan Hotel prior to another major new route on Creag Meagaidh. No early night for Tom who 'went off to spend a riotous evening at Carrbridge and got back in the small hours – what energy'. The next day they made the first ascent of *Last Post*.

It was John Barry who helped initially in tracking down Patey's peers from his National Service days. John himself is one of the few successors to Patey in terms of being able to write humorously about climbing. He provided contacts for Sam Bemrose whom Patey nicknamed the 'Gay Lothario' and who appears in his two Norway essays. I was curious as to how someone as individualistic and with such a disregard for his appearance as Patey would have fared in the military. I wondered how I'd get on meeting men who were trained to be killers in their day but I couldn't have met a group more hospitable, generous hearted, genuinely interested in people and not afraid to express their emotions. Working as a team when you and your peers' lives depend on it makes most other forms of co-operative work seem shallow. Sam made it quite clear he wasn't gay in the modern sense and said I could have any drink I fancied even including tea.

Sam felt Patey was slightly wasted as he wasn't using his full range of medical skills. The same afflictions kept cropping up in the Marines: bruises, breaks (which were dealt with at a hospital), foot rot, crutch rot and VD. Everybody was very fit. However, Tom was respected as a doctor. On one occasion his quick diagnosis and evacuation of a Marine in



Norway who'd had a brain haemorrhage helped minimise the long term damage to the man. The only time Sam saw Patey upset was when he was leaving the service. There was a speech of thanks for his mountaineering and medical contribution to the unit then the NCOs presented him with a wrapped up vest and underpants which they'd dyed black.

Heading further south I made a diversion to photograph *Wrecker's Slab* at Cornakey on the north coast of Devon. Approaching it in brilliant weather it looks harder than VS. In fact it is technically easy now the current line has been pruned of loose rock. What it must have been for Patey, John 'Zeke' Deacon and Admiral Keith Lawder, was an adventure, a line with atmosphere, a trait highly valued by Tom wherever he climbed. Just south of there is the cliff, Henna, where Mick Fowler, a modern prophet of the Patey school of adventure, found that very essence on the disintegrating shale of these highly unconventional lines. Zeke had a reputation as one of the best Marine rock-climbers of his era with quality lines like *Bishop's Rib* at Chair Ladder, *String of Pearls* and *Green Cormorant Face* at Bosigran amongst his first ascents. His nickname comes from a Zane Gray western character, a sharp shooting, good guy cowboy. He lives in a beautiful house looking down on Sennen in Cornwall, a place he retired to with its many happy associations. I arrived for elevenses which at Zeke's was a couple of Glenmorangies. 'My doctor says I shouldn't but at my age...' As to *Wrecker's Slab* he remembers the holds on pitch 1 coming out like drawers in cupboard. On one occasion on a Scottish winter training course in 1960 he had flu symptoms. They were in tents on

a training stint in the hills. Patey examined him and took his temperature and said I don't think you should go out today. Zeke said he was actually feeling a bit better, but Patey was adamant about him resting for two whole days in his sleeping bag while the rest of his group were patrolling around the Lairig Ghru and Braeriach. Zeke was puzzled as to Patey's insistence but it soon became clear: 'You're not yourself, you're not well but not only that I want you on Saturday.' 'What do you mean on Saturday?' 'I've got something in mind, *North Post*.' Thus a plan was being hatched for another foray to Creag Meagaidh, a happy hunting ground for Patey.

'You never get a day off in a small place like Ullapool,' stated Donnie Smith who was head of the police rescue team based in Dingwall in the 60s. He climbed regularly with Patey and was very aware of how he protected his image and privacy in the community. Patey preferred Donnie to pick him up in Ullapool so his car wouldn't be seen at Inverlael, Braemore Junction or Dundonnell. Patey would cut things fine when it came to surgery timings. They were sitting at the summit of Beinn Dearg at 1.30pm on a winter's afternoon after climbing a gully. Tom realised what day it was, uttered a torrent of expletives and announced he had to be back for surgery at 3pm. So they ran down the ridge above Gleann na Sguuib and got back to Ullapool with five minutes to spare. That afternoon Patey conducted the surgery in boots, breeches and heavy jersey. The latter was several sizes too big and Patey looked on it as a kind of plaid. It had an earthy smell which would have been masked by the fact that back then doctors could perform consultations while smoking.

Patey, the master of comic deflation and characterisation in his articles and songs, was something I wished to explore further. Take Graeme Nicol, a medical student three years younger than Patey. Looking at a photo of the first winter ascent of *Scorpion* on Càrn Etchachan in 1952 I'm reminded of Tom's description of the young man, driven to succeed for the fatherland: 'Graeme was desperate to bivouac on the route'. Of course, it's exaggerated for effect but Graeme gave me some background. The Patey group would address themselves in mock Teutonic manner and discuss routes with the fervour of the Austro-Germanic climbers of the 30s. To express weakness was to invite rebuke. The fact that Graeme is blue eyed and was blond-haired gave more ammunition for Patey's characterisation of him as a fully paid up member of the Munich School. Patey's abilities as musician and entertainer were as important parts of the man as his climbing. A magnet for folk singers and climbers in the 60s was Temple Cottage at Balmore outside Glasgow, still the home of Mary Stewart. It was an open house where Royal Robbins, the Boningtons, Whillans, The Incredible String Band, Hamish Imlach and, of course, Patey all spent time. The main room has a rustic cosiness and in Mary you'd be pushed to find a kinder host. She talks fondly of that era in a gentle voice. Mary commented that musician, Hamish Imlach, and Patey got on very well. The older Imlach was virtually the size of a Munro so mountaineering was not a common link with Tom. Imlach's most famous comic song was 'Cod Liver Oil and the Orange Juice.' The ingredients were certainly two items which never featured prominently in either man's diet.

Surprisingly the SMC has no Patey images in its archive. His peg hammer and doctor's desk from Ullapool are now housed in Mick Tighe's Scottish Mountain Heritage collection. As well as photographs and correspondence another key archive made available to me was the guest book for the bothy behind the house in Ullapool. It reads like a who's who of British mountaineering in the 60s. The first entry exemplifies the hospitality:

29/2/64 Arrived at hut 20.00 hrs. Guardian and family very friendly. Drank Glenmorangie with Guardian until 02.00 hrs. Dr A.G. Nicol was carried to bed by the Guardian and one of the party. Much song.

Some significant first ascents are recorded such as *Penguin Gully* on Beinn Dearg, climbed by Patey, W H Murray and Norman Tennant in 1964 in a style probably never repeated.

The words are Patey's:

*30th March*

*To round off the SMC Easter Meet at Inchnadamph a Presidential first ascent was made with aides de camp Tennant and Patey. This was a 1,000ft ice gully. Still in perfect conditions (despite the poor winter)... Named Penguin Gully from the characteristic attitude of two members of the party throughout most of the climb. Step cutting on hard ice all the way – 5 hours. Both senior members had forgotten their crampons and did not, of course, have any rock or ice pitons, the junior member had forgotten his boots, gloves and anorak. Improperly equipped and poorly shod and clad the party nevertheless forced a passage by sheer SMC grit, classic rock belaying and hewing mighty bucket steps...*

On the day of Patey's accident there were four fellow climbers as well as three female onlookers who went along for the boat trip out to the Maiden stack off Whiten Head: Brian Fuller, Paul Nunn, Clive Rowland and Dave Goodwin. Dave abseiled next to last. Patey gave him a safety rope then followed. The brutality of witnessing Patey's plummet 100ft onto his back on the stack's plinth left 20-year old Dave traumatised. He stopped climbing for three years. Like Dave, one of the women, Di Cundy had met Patey for the first time the evening before at Sheigra and had, therefore, known him for less than 24 hours. On returning to the camp site she remembers the poignancy of seeing his accordion in the tent.

When I started the project the only snatches of Patey's voice I'd come across were from the Old Man of Hoy broadcast in 1967. Joe Brown provided me with a recording of 10 songs performed by Patey in the flat above Joe's first shop in Llanberis in 1967. Three of them do not appear in *One Man's Mountains*. Then Dave Goulder who ran Glen Cottage in Torridon in the late 60s gave me a tape of a radio programme broadcast in 1971 to commemorate Patey, Jim McCartney and Ian Clough. It was a delight to hear the voices of Bob Scott, Bill Brooker, Whillans, Mike Taylor and McCartney. Everyone I've met knew there was something special about Patey. I'll leave the last words to Joe Brown: 'I look back and it's Tom that I always miss the most... Life would be so much better if he was still around'.

I would like to thank Ian Patey for allowing me access to material connected with his father and the SMT for providing a grant towards the research.



Left:  
*Tom tests the strength of a MacInnes ice axe while MacInnes looks on*

Photograph:  
*John Cleare*

Below: *Patey on accordion, Tom Weir on drums, in the Fife Arms, New Year 1955/6*

Photograph: *Ian Patey collection*



# STONE PEACE,

Downes' Crack,

Froggatt Edge, Late September 2016

i.m. Robert O. Downes

By Mark Goodwin

down in  
the climbing  
club hut tucked  
in woods below this  
edge of stone

hung on  
the wall a framed  
photo of a young  
1950s climber  
genius to be a  
house  
hold

name but  
for Masherbrum taking  
his life he  
is looking down  
down Dinas Mot  
he is climbing his  
handsome face calm  
as sun lit stone

I do not know  
Robert Downes  
cannot but do

know he first made  
this ancient flake-crack  
a human place and  
a way

\*  
the gritstone's  
textures are so  
still  
and yet seem  
to ring to hold  
some kind  
of shared

vibration  
\*  
I'm alone below  
the lovely long ragged-flake-line  
evening autumn light crisses  
-&-crosses through  
birches there's the smell  
of leaves

changing  
I had not intended to climb just  
look and suddenly  
my fingers feel the flake's rough edge  
my body levers against my arms & feet  
the rock draws  
me with its intricate  
inevitable solidity and

suddenly in a  
dreamt but wide  
and sharp awake  
passing of  
moments I've made  
my shapes and danced



# EARLY EXPLORATION ON CLOGWYN DU'R ARDDU

(Herbert Carr and the Cheney Connection)

*The history of the early years of our sport is incomplete, luckily there are enthusiastic detectives such as Geoff who are willing to go digging and try to fill some of the gaps.*

By Geoff Milburn

Inhabiting and rooting round scruffy, old, second-hand bookshops may not appeal to everybody but occasionally the pastime pays unexpected dividends of the greatest magnitude as the following research will reveal.

Years ago while researching the early history of Clogwyn Du'r Arddu, the favourite haunt of my youth; I failed to unearth much of real interest. An epic ascent of the Eastern Terrace by the Reverends Bingley and Williams in 1798, was well recorded so, apart from an ascent of *Deep Chimney* on the Far Western Buttress by P.S. Thompson in 1905 and an ascent of *East Wall Climb* by the Abraham brothers that same year, nothing else was done until George Mallory forced *East Gully* in 1912. After the Great War the schoolmaster Herbert Carr, usually in the company of George Lister, made several forays on to the Far Western Buttress where they were attracted by several crack and gully lines which broke through the more easy-angled slabs. Carr noted that the East buttress would one day be climbed and his party in some awe also peered

down into the gloomy depths of *East Gully*. Herbert Carr had no photographs of their historic exploration on the great black cliff and I left the matter to concentrate on other more pressing issues. Then, most unexpectedly, in a second-hand book shop my eye fell on a pile of small photograph albums.

The first album that came to hand I flicked through casually revealing some happy family photos taken somewhere in the country in 1914.



Left:  
*The striking lady at  
the seaside sometime  
in 1914.  
Note the cliff.*

Photographs:  
*Milburn collection*

This page below  
from left:

1 *The family  
soloing in 1916.*

2 *Almost certainly  
David Hewitt.*

3 *Possibly HR  
Cheney or even  
Herbert Carr's  
father.*

4 *Ready for battle.  
A wonderful 1914  
photograph outside  
Pen-y-Pass.*

Photographs:  
*Milburn collection*

Inside the earliest album I could just make out the name Henry R (or H?) Cheney, 1914. Although some of the photos had been moved the captions showed that the family had been in Beddgelert in May and had been up the Glyders, Moel Hebog, and also Snowdon from Rhyd-ddu. The initials H.R.C. and M.E. (or G.) C. were on the captions. Surprisingly the female members of the family had been photographed swimming in the sea. The front of the second album revealed not only the owner's name Mary Cheney, but also the year which was 1916. Several other photos of mountains and valleys were tantalising as they were not captioned but then came two surprises. First a lady with an ankle length skirt belayed on a rocky ridge, then a close up of another lady with very striking features climbing steep rock.

A further two pictures intrigued me even further as the person on the left who had a collar and tie, a sports jacket, leggings and splendid nailed boots looked somewhat

familiar although I couldn't for a minute place his name. The second man looked a real character and I smiled at his floppy hat, his long moustache, a coiled alpine rope and an even more impressive nailed boot. The more that I looked at the pictures the more I was convinced that I recognised the younger man. Surely it was David Hewitt whose address was The Firs, Pont Allen, Beddgelert which was at one time the local headquarters of the Climbers' Club.

Then to my complete and utter amazement, I focused on a picture of three 'alpinists' captioned '25th Start Pen y Pass'. Although the picture was small I could see that there were two older men with a younger man standing between them carrying an alpinist's rope round his shoulder. That excited me beyond my wildest imagination. Who were they? When was the picture taken? As it was Pen y Pass rather than Pen y Gwryd then the odds were that they must be well-heeled and not short of money. For the second time since opening the albums I got the strange feeling that I recognised the young man in the middle. Absent-mindedly brooding I let my



gaze scan my library shelves until my gaze fell on a framed picture of Herbert Carr taken in 1935. Was it just possible that the young man in the Pen y Pass photo could be none other than Herbert Carr aged about 18? It certainly looked like it, but it would need further proof to be certain.

More clues were needed and I returned to the albums which were continued in September 1918 when W.G.C., A.H.C., H.R.C. and Miss Read were seen working their way along Crib Goch. Shortly after that the photographs showed a roped party going up into the Devil's Kitchen.

A day later the party on the North Ridge of Tryfan led by David Hewitt included Miss Cooper, C. Cooper, Gradwell and H.R.C. On the 16th Hewitt was on Moel Ddu with Miss Williams, and Mrs and Miss Hill. On the 24th August T.W.P., Baker Jones, Mrs Phillips and J.B. were on the south side of Y Wyddfa while on the 31st T.B.J., J.B and D. Hewitt were on Bristly Ridge.

Distracted I put down the volume that I was looking at and picked up what turned out to be the 1920 volume. It had David Hewitt on Crib y Ddysgl with C.H., I.C. and Ian. They were up on Crib y Ddysgl scrambling about quite happily unroped.

Returning to the 1919 volume I found for 3rd September a photo taken on the top of South Buttress, Tryfan which had a caption telling me that Carr and two others were finishing *Gashed Crag*. That was what I was looking for, a connection between the Cheney family and Herbert Carr.

There were several pictures of Cloggy taken that 2nd of September. The first was looking up at the Eastern Buttress shot from the west side of the lake, while the second was taken looking straight up at the Western Buttress.

Below:

*5 Lunch on the summit of Tryfan, 14th May 1919. HRC, C Cooper, Miss C and D Hewitt.*

*6 HRC and D Hewitt on Adam and Eve.*

*7 Crib y Ddysgl, 13th May 1920. David Hewitt leading CH, IC and Ian up some rather steep unroped scrambling.*

Photographs:  
*Milburn collection*



From the sequence it is clear that Cheney went up the Western Terrace and photographed the Eastern Buttress from side on. The next shot showed a seated climber which I believe to be either Carr or Cheney who was roped to the photographer who was most likely Cheney. The last photo taken that day was looking down *Eastern Gully*.

The above details give two clear examples that bouldering as an art was already eagerly looked forward to at every possible opportunity. Two days at Idwal and Tryfan saw Carr back up on Cloggy on the 8th ready to renew the fray.

*'With Hewitt and Lister and Bobs. A very fine day. Further exploration of Far West Buttress and ascent of the Slanting Chimney – a good 200ft course. Philips also turned up. We descended the Far West Terrace but the rock here is very inferior. Left 5.30. Home 7.15 (car from farm). This day we kept more to the left of the cwm going and returning.'*

After some cycling and a day on the Glyders Carr still had his mind on Cloggy and where there might be a break in the great cliff for an attack to be made:

*'With Lister. Perfect day. Up from farm as before to Snowdon ranger track and so to top of cliff for photo purposes. Down Eastern Terrace making general inspection of E. Buttress and Abrahams' route on West Wall. Down to Far West. Lunch. Up East Slab, the Deep Chimney and slabs above. Down Terrace as before and so homeward. Another day of exploration and pleasure unalloyed.'*

After a day on Y Garn they were back on the 12th.

*'With Lister. Cold, with a thick wet mist. We got to the rocks in one and a quarter hours from*

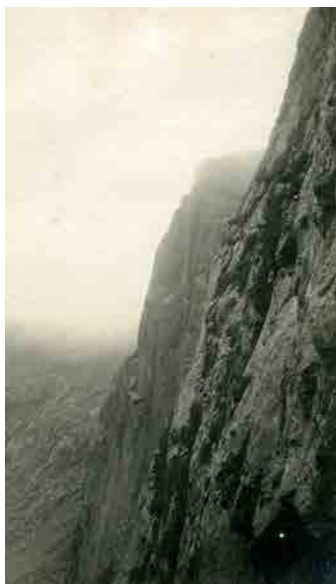
*the Farm. The conditions were not good enough for an attempt on the start of Thompson's climb, but we completed the Slab Climb and then came down the Terrace. After lunch we went round to examine the E. Gully. A long and trying scramble up steep earth and grass took us at last into a cavernous recess beneath impending walls. The pitch above us, a steep, open chimney 80ft high proved repulsive on close inspection so we descended, and traversed to the east, by a pinnacle and found a way by grassy ledges to the summit of the crags. We then parted and I plugged up to the summit for a solitary view in great comfort. Off at 6 to P.y.G. down Zigzags and Pig Track by 7.20.'*

The above extract makes it transparently clear that Carr and Lister although not able to ascend *East Gully* did in fact make their way up and under the Pinnacle until they could escape near the top of the Eastern Terrace. Quite a bold undertaking for the time.

Carr's diary also records that he had been up to Cloggy as early as June 1916:

*'Motor-cycled to Rhyd-ddu and kept up towards Pitts Head track at first, then we contoured round into the cwm below Llechog, cross it and climbed above Llyn Ffynnon-y-Gwas to the col on the Snowdon Ranger Track. Round into Cwm Brwynog and up to Llyn Du'r Arddu for lunch. This cliff is very imposing to look at, though the faces are too steep to climb. We did the East Terrace Climb. Easy rocks at first, one interesting gully pitch where I had to do much gardening; an easy scramble up the terrace and a sensational peep down the sheer wall of the E. Gully. Misty afternoon – on to the summit for tea and down to Pitts Head.'*





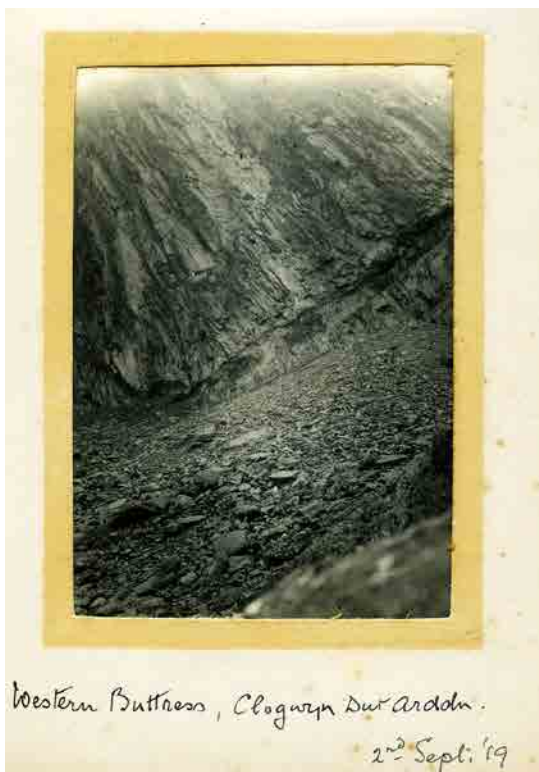
The two companions with Carr that day were Philip Minor and Dorothy Pilley and anyone who has read Dorothy's book *Climbing Days* will realise just how impressed she was by the Black Cliff.

It was from Herbert Carr's diary that in 1988 I was able to put exact dates on the rather under-rated routes of the Far West Buttress the ascent of any one of which is no mean feat, especially if one finds oneself on the slabs with a full rope's length run out and no sign of a runner. Considering the primitive equipment of the time it is amazing that men such as Carr and some women as well were prepared to venture on to big cliffs which at the time were relatively loose and heavily vegetated. One wonders how they would have fared with modern equipment and how history might have been recorded differently given the wealth of unexplored rock that was available before the First World War.

Left:  
*Virgin Cloggy 17th  
September 1919,  
East Buttress and  
Western Buttress*

Below:  
*Herbert Carr in  
1935*

Photographs:  
*Milburn collection*



# LA MAURIENNE IN 1963

*Great climbing trips don't always have to involve climbing at a stratospheric level of difficulty. We all know that once back home what remains are memories of enjoyable climbs shared with excellent companions.*

By Tony Moulam

At the end of my 1962 Alpine holiday I spent some time in Geneva with Geoff and Ann Sutton. This stay included a couple of routes on the Salève and an afternoon browsing the second hand bookshops in the old town. Most memorable was the fusty odour of priceless books but I finally struck gold with a copy of the Atlas guide, *Le Massif du Toubkal* by J Dresch and J de Lepiney. I did not barter but paid the asking price and realised that I had probably overpaid when the proprietor pressed on me a pamphlet entitled *Petit Guide de la Haute Maurienne*. I regret that I never went to Morocco, particularly after the glowing and enthusiastic picture Trevor Jones had painted for me, but the free gift inspired me to persuade AB and Jack Longland to go to this Alpine backwater between the Vanoise and the Val d'Iser.

To refresh my memory before writing this account I Googled some of the places we visited and found that, rather than the quiet ambience I remembered, it now seems to be a thriving ski and summer resort probably impossibly busy and commercialised.

However, I boarded a BEA Vanguard at Manchester and flew to Heathrow, where, after a five and a half hour wait I met Jack and Alan. We proceeded in a Convair Metropolitan to Geneva and booked in at the Hôtel des

Familles in the square by the railway station. Next day we hired a VW Beetle and drove to Annecy, where AB enjoyed a swim whilst Jack and I lunched. We then went on to Val d'Iserre to another hotel, but ate at the Restaurant Edelweiss. I ate Laveret de lac d'Annecy which is a succulent, flavoursome white fish and is still one of the most memorable dishes I have ever had.

Early next day we negotiated the hairpins up to the Col d'Iseran where we parked to take our compulsory exercise. We followed bare slopes and scree to the Signal d'Iseran and enjoyed a magnificent view of the surrounding peaks. On the way down AB lost his much darned and cherished green Dragon School pullover, but after fruitlessly retracing some of our steps we had to abandon the search and continued to Bonneval. We bought supplies and mounted to the Chalet Hôtel des Evettes, in enervating heat. Arrived, and cooling off in the evening sun AB revealed that he had secreted a cantaloupe melon into the depths of his 'sack, and we enjoyed this as an aperitif to the fare provided by the CAF.

There began our first real climbing. The shapely Alberon (3,637m) via the Selle d'Alberon meant we had to unravel a complicated route on the glacier, followed by a rock and snow ridge. In descent, we were

forced to ford a turbulent glacier stream and I chose to take off my boots and socks and endure the cryogenic water, whilst Jack and AB just marched through it in their boots

A good night was spent in the refuge and we set off early for the *North Face of the Grande Ciamarella* (3,676m). It was supposed to be easy to cross a rimaye and then a snow/ice corridor of 45-55 degrees which looked to provide a very interesting route. Unfortunately we found that there was a large and very slow party in front of us and the snow conditions were poor so we opted for the ordinary *South East Route* which was described as ‘superbe ascension, une des plus belles du massif’. We toiled up to the Col Tonini on loose, shaley scree. This was followed by snow and rock (?) to the ridge. A final snow arête brought us suddenly to the summit and a quick descent by the *North Ridge*. We continued our descent to Bessans and the Hôtel des Chamois. I don’t know whether it was the German car, or our obvious Englishness, but an infant son of the hoteliers welcomed us by peeing on the car. It could, of course, have done with a clean by then.

Our next objective was the Chalet Hotel Entre deux Eaux so we drove to Termignan. On the way to the chalet AB missed the path, which was fairly difficult to do as the refuge is accessible by 4x4. However, this meant that we had some retracing of footsteps to do, before our party was reunited and we were able to enjoy the hospitality of the Vanoise. We climbed The Grande Motte the next day by the couloir between it and the Grande Casse. This was a fairly unpleasant ascent on shifting scree surmounted by a great cornice of mushy snow. Only a few blows of the ice-axe were

needed to forge a tunnel for us to emerge on to the summit glacier. Here we found an array of (empty) champagne bottles plunged neck down into the snow. Only after we had by experiment ascertained that they were indeed empty did we realise that they were embedded on the line of a yawning, but hidden, crevasse. We sat in the sun for a little while and reluctantly descended the *East Face* to the col du Lisse. From there it was simple to return to our base at the chalet hotel.

Hoping for a little rock-climbing we set out for the Grand Roc Noir (3,582m). We approached up a combe, fine as any in the Lake District, then a section of easy angled névé which led to a very nasty shale ridge. The final rampart was about 100ft of disappointingly moderate rock to a summit with a magnificent view of peaks stretching far into the distance. We did not luxuriate too long admiring the vista and descended via the Torre de Termignon to that village and stayed in the Hôtel de Doron.

For the last day or two I had been experiencing nagging toothache and, although I had not grumbled much, that evening AB decided to demonstrate a hidden talent for dentistry in my room. Jack acted as his assistant illuminating my mouth with his head torch. AB probed one of my back molars with a device on his Swiss army knife and managed to shift a rotten piece of tooth. This primitive treatment did the trick and I had no more problems for the rest of our holiday.

We went on to La Bérarde and established our base at the Hôtel des Glaciers, where we were joined by Mark Vallance and Martin Sinker. The bar was animated that night as a climbing party had had an accident on the

Tête de la Maye. The rescue helicopter had been summoned for the next day and our augmented party set off on the path to the Grande Aiguille de la Bérarde before it arrived. We intended to climb the *North West Ridge*, classified AD, generally II and III with a pitch or two of IV, and Jack took charge of the party as he thought that we were being dilatory. He set off at a brisk pace first of all downhill, then generally horizontally on various foot (or sheep) paths until we eventually meandered upwards through rock steps and areas of scree. About an hour later we were at the foot of more continuous rocks, and continued solo up mixed ground reminiscent of the upper buttresses of Craig yr Ysfa with verdant patches of bilberry and heather. This was damp from the overnight mists and my cut off denims were soon soaked and uncomfortable.

AB wielded his ice-axe at a particularly obstinate patch of heather, which retaliated by throwing it back into his face, and gashing his forehead so that blood ran down into his eyes and thus we struggled variously on to a rock platform, above which rose the true arête. We roped there into two parties. Quick work was made of the slabs and ledges that led up west of the arête and arrived at a brèche below the gendarmes rouges. Cracked slabs let us re-join the arête, the 'scissors' and the Brèche Zsigmondy. A cunning traverse left under an overhang brought us back to the arête, beneath a vertiginously steep step of sound rock. But the hour was late so rather than attack this pitch direct we slunk off right to traverse the North East Face, on broken ground to reach the *North Ridge* from which the summit was soon at hand.

Darkness was falling so we did not stay long to enjoy the panoramic views at sunset, and, discretion prevailing, set off down the *North North East Arête*, the ordinary way, easy rocks down which we sauntered till dark brought us to a ledge amongst hazel saplings, where we decided to stay the rest of the night. Enticing views of twinkling lights in La Bérarde had to be ignored whilst we four shared a repast from AB's notorious plastic bag of emergency rations. This meant that we had two boiled sweets each, a grubby handful of raisins, an ancient bacon rasher and a mouthful of cognac from a miniature bottle.

Dawn broke on our shivering party and we continued our descent, Tarzan like, swinging from sapling to sapling until we reached the valley floor. Jack had imagined a newsworthy return to the hotel, 'Everest climber benighted on our Grande Aiguille', but it was not to be as the news that the helicopter called to rescue the party on the Tête de la Maye had disastrously crashed and had stolen the headlines in the local paper.

Our travails left us lazy and disinclined for effort, but I did walk up the valley for two and a half hours to try to get a photograph of our 'aiguille de force' but without success, because of mists and adverse light. After a night's rest AB, Jack and I set off up to the Pilatte Hut. The three and a half hour walk was all but accomplished when the heavens opened and we completed the last half mile with a generous but unwelcome soaking. The evening cleared and we were able to watch 'the young' descending from the Tête du Bouefs Rouges, and the distant South Face of the Meije which I had climbed 10 years before, but rain soon closed in again. At 2.30pm next day



Jack and I could stand no more inaction and went out in the mist and rain to conquer the *North North East Ridge* of Mount Gioberney (3,352m). It was an outing reminiscent of wet winter ascents of *Gashed Crag* on Tryfan, with wet snow on most of the holds and I have never understood why AB did not accompany us in the conditions he usually revelled in. The weather improved for our descent to the valley and next morning we drove to Grenoble and on to La Grave. After lunch we set off up to the Carraud Refuge, driving up to the hamlet de Valfroide, where we parked the VW in a rough little lay by. We slowly walked up the river bank to the Lac de Goleon. There we rested for a while before trudging on to the private and unguarded Refuge Carraud, which was reminiscent of the old powder hut beneath Dow Crag, rented by the Barrow Mountain Club. On the way we collected large quantities of mushrooms, which AB cooked for our supper. We had a good night as the hut was otherwise unoccupied, but next day the mist and snow was down to 10,000ft so after a desultory trudge up scree we abandoned our immediate aim of the Aiguille du Goleon. I was going very badly and almost convinced that I had been poisoned by the mushrooms, but as we descended towards La Grave it became obvious that I only had a very bad cold and we wondered at the viciously contorted strata we could see through occasional clearances of the mist.

Our future intention had been to go to the Aiguille d'Arves, and complete a new route Jack had tried 30 years before. He had achieved two-thirds of the traverse of the three peaks, with Lawrence Wager in 1928, but was thwarted by dark and mist. They attempted the

unclimbed West Face of the southern Aiguille a day later, a route he completed in 1931 with Peter Lloyd. Obviously he knew these peaks very well and I was keen to try to finish the business for him, but it was not to be, as our holiday was drawing to its close as the weather closed in to frustrate our plans. We had a date with Geoff and Anne Sutton, so drove gently on to Geneva, and again booked in at the Hôtel des Familles. A sort of Whitehall reunion took place at an excellent Greek restaurant where Eric and Maureen Langmuir joined us, and next day we saw AB off from the airport. It later emerged that he had been upgraded to business class, but was unable to benefit from the food as the malaise that had been haunting us took hold.

We returned to the plage to relax in the sun and plan a lightning visit to Chamonix for next day. We didn't get off as early as we had hoped but caught the téléphérique to Montenvers and traversed a well-marked path to the *Arête des Papillons*, on the Aiguille de la Peigne. This provided lovely rock pitches in the sun and the only hindrance to true enjoyment was frustration with the many slow parties above. The grand finale to our holiday was provided by a fantastic thunderstorm that chased us back down to Chamonix and our drive back to Geneva.

Thus ended a very enjoyable but not particularly aspirational holiday. It had been sybaritical, in part, and all three of us contributed to the party's success. Next year we planned a trip to Austria, to build on the rapport we had established, and exercise ourselves in new hills – at least to us.

# IN MELANCHOLY STEPS

*Avalanches are not normally associated with the Peak District; in fact in the early 60's I am not sure if UK climbers gave them serious consideration in any part of the country. Sadly in 1963 a large avalanche robbed the Peak District of one of its most active pioneers and author of the first guide to the Peak Limestone crags. The site of the avalanche can still project a gloomy atmosphere even after all these years.*

By Steve Dean with supplementary notes by Tony Howard

Winter had arrived in the Dark Peak on a grand scale and it had turned into the coldest period of weather to have descended on us for five or six years. My phone rang one evening and it was John Lumb cajoling me to drive up north for some action.

.... its f.....g freezing up here youth and there is loads of snow. Let's go and have a do at *Wilderness Gully*, it should be in reasonable shape: Now. Although I live in Derby my favourite part of the Peak is the Chew Valley area. It has a grandeur and sense of mystery that appeals to me and is always worth the drive over. John's suggestion made a lot of sense and early the next morning saw me zipping up the M1 towards Huddersfield. It was again a very cold morning, well below freezing and reasonably clear – things looked promising. I collected John and we set off on the Holmfirth/Oldham road. We didn't get very far. Despite the morning sunshine the snow fall had been really heavy that week and just beyond the site of the Isle of Skye Inn the road was blocked by two abandoned lorries unable to get any further. I turned the car around and headed back east to pick up the M62. Leaving the motorway I drove tentatively along

the narrow, slippery roads to Greenfield and parked the car below the Dovestones Reservoir. The car park was almost empty but the hills looked spectacular in their winter mantle, below a darkening slate grey sky.

Stepping out of the car exposed us to a cruel wind from the east, but we soon got boots and gaiters on, shouldered our sacs and set off briskly up the track that leads past Charnel Stones and Rob's Rocks to the Chew Reservoir. There was a great deal of snow on the track that slowed our progress but after about thirty minutes of walking we dropped down to the Chew Brook itself and looked across to the crags of Wilderness Rocks coated liberally in snow and ice. *Wilderness East Gully* is on the left hand side of the crag and rises from just above Chew Brook almost 400ft to the edge of the moor itself, now encased in some ominous looking cloud trying to block out the vague sunshine. From the brook where we sat and had a rest, we got a good clear view up the gully and were surprised (and delighted) to see that as well as being filled with snow, there was a fair amount of ice to contend with. We had bought ice tools with us but had dispensed with a rope, hoping to be able to outflank any major difficulties.



Left:  
*Wilderness Gully*

Photograph:  
*Ciaren Mullen*

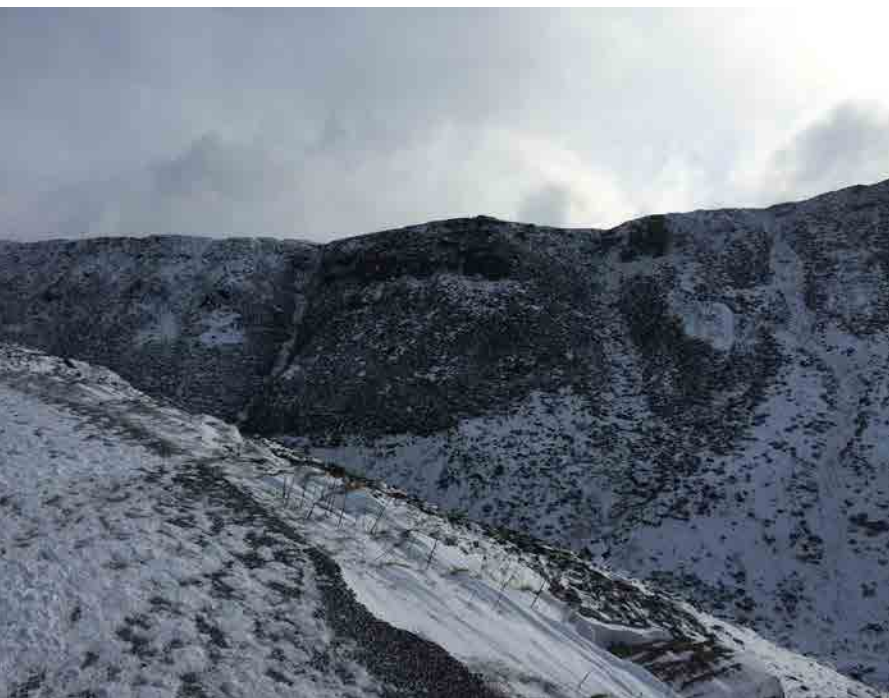
Below:  
*Wilderness Gully*

Photograph:  
*Ciaren Mullen*

The gully gives an entertaining scramble in the summer and, in the conditions we found it, promised a lot of fun. The route is in a grand position high above the valley and leads through some interesting rock features. John led off and I followed him initially. He is quite small with equally small feet and dealt with the various steps in the gully with neat efficiency. I am somewhat heavier than John and proceeded up the climb with rather less elegance. The gully surprised me both with its interest and the quality of the situations. With the large amount of snow on the hills and the increasingly sombre sky, it felt like a trip to the Highlands rather than a Peak District valley only a few miles outside Manchester.

As we gained height, the volume and quality of the ice increased and a direct ascent

up all the steps would give a very good day's exercise with ice tools and crampons. It was in fact the best quality and volume of ice that I have ever encountered in the Peak, far better even than on *Kinder Downfall*. John continued up towards the snow filled basin just below the moor edge and I followed his neat steps, increasingly aware of the wind from the top. Enjoyable as the climbing had been I felt something of a sense of melancholy in visiting this place, a feeling on this increasingly sombre day turning to sadness. It was in this very gully during the incredibly cold winter of 1963 that an awful accident occurred. In February of that year Britain had already experienced several weeks of some of the coldest weather and heaviest falls of snow on record. This had resulted in there being vast amounts of unconsolidated snow on the moors. A group of climbers set off from the valley to walk to the now demolished Chew House, amongst them members of the Manchester Gritstone Club; Graham West, Spike Roberts and Alan Wheeler. As a more interesting variation than the track they decided to climb *Wilderness East Gully* despite the heavy snow conditions. West and Roberts were part way up the gully when the whole upper section avalanched and the three of them were buried by tons of snow. Wheeler escaped with minor injuries but West and Roberts were killed. Looking back down the gully it had been difficult to imagine that such a disaster could happen there, but at the top of the gully is a bowl shaped area that would hold a great deal of snow and a huge unconsolidated amount with ice beneath could easily slide. It seems amazing that experienced climbers could die in such an avalanche in the Peak District but it happened nonetheless.





John and I reached the top of the gully and walked up onto the crest of the moor. It was only then that we realised how sheltered we had been in the gully itself, as a bitter wind screamed across from the desolate wastes of Black Hill. We set off along the crest of the moor and then made for the dam wall of the Chew Reservoir. A couple of well clad walkers there informed us that the ice on the reservoir was at least four inches thick! After chatting with them for a while, we set off down the track heading for Chew Piece and the car park, relieved to be out of the full force of the wind. We were quite alone as we walked down the track and I paused at one point to take a look back at *Wilderness Gully*, looking deceptively steep when viewed head-on. I thought again of Graham West and Spike Roberts. At the time of their deaths West in particular was already established as a major figure in Peak District climbing particularly on limestone. Spike Roberts was also a top quality climber of the day and their loss must have been a huge blow to what was a burgeoning scene in the Chew Valley Area and to the Manchester Gritstone Club in particular. Climbing history is, alas, dotted with such strange occurrences but this incident on such a seemingly harmless hillside has always seemed particularly bizarre and cast something of a shadow on this part of the valley. Avalanches have occurred elsewhere in the Chew Valley and there was another fatality caused by one in 1979 at the Dovestones. It is a poignant reminder to take these low hills seriously in harsh winter conditions.

We continued down to the Dovestones Reservoir in a subdued mood, not helped by a very threatening dark sky out to the west

beyond the vast sprawl of Manchester. It was a relief to get boots, gaiters and gloves off, load the car and set off back for Huddersfield as the snow began to fall again. An hour later we were comfortably installed by a pub fireside reflecting on a most interesting day and a sad piece of climbing history. I was glad that John had phoned, as it had been an opportunity to visit somewhere I had often walked past, and in almost perfect winter conditions.

### **Tony Howard remembers the events....**

The winter of 1962-3 was a bad winter - good if you were a climber. It was known as "The Big Freeze" and was one of the coldest winters on record with lakes and rivers freezing over. At the end of December, blizzards swept across England and Wales. January was the coldest month of the century, and in February there was even more snow. On Sunday the 20th of January, we were down in Wales. We were heading for the Trinity Gullies on Snowdon but never reached the foot, being stopped by waist deep snow. They would have been an avalanche death trap anyway. Instead we played around on some icefalls above Llyn Llydaw, and left early for home in case the roads were blocked. Arriving back in Greenfield in the evening we expected to see others from the Rimmon and Grit in the usual pub, but it was empty. "They've all gone up Chew Valley to *Wilderness Gully*", the landlord said, "There's been an avalanche. Graham West and Mick Roberts were in it. Everybody's gone up digging".

We were horrified. We couldn't believe it. No one had heard of avalanches up Chew before, and what a disaster that people were in it, especially Gray and Mick, the most

respected climbers in the area. Going up Wilderness in mid-winter was something we all did. Regardless of the weather it was a good day out with a brew a short walk from the top at the waterman's house at Chew Reservoir. It was dark and snowing, but we set off immediately following what remained of a trail of deep footsteps up the narrowing snow filled valley alongside the river. When we arrived, the gorge beneath the gully was full of figures digging in the snow.

Gray and Mick had been high up the gully when the avalanche came down. Two other younger lads, John Smith (not the John Smith who I later climbed with) and Alan Wheeler were lower down. John had explained that they "were in pairs with Graham and Mick in front. Everyone had ice axes except me, but we weren't roped. The snow in the gully was deep, but it was packed hard and the footholds were good. We were well on the way up when I saw a block of snow coming down at us. Then I heard someone shout 'Avalanche' and the next moment the gully was full of snow rushing down. I got to one side of it, but Alan got caught. I couldn't see anything at first, but then I saw Alan half buried and helped him out. There was no sign of the other two." They hurried down the valley and gave the alarm.

The search was called off around midnight due to the terrible conditions. By then Gray and Mick had been buried for eleven hours. When Gray was eventually found around midday the next day, he was buried under ten feet of snow high up on the opposite side of the narrow ravine of Chew Brook, carried up by the force of the avalanche. Mick was about fifteen yards away.

This was an unprecedented accident, a huge disaster for Graham and Mick's families of course, but also for their friends and the whole Peak District climbing community. Ironically Gray had written the guide to Wilderness Rocks for the Saddleworth-Chew guide that we had all been working on. When it was published in 1965, Eric Byne dedicated it to "the memory of our late climbing guidebook companions, Graham West and Michael Roberts, who were so tragically overwhelmed by an avalanche of alpine proportions which swept down the *East Gully of Wilderness* in the Chew Valley on January 20th 1963. Both were 'hard men' of considerable climbing and mountaineering ability and with a reputation of toughness and indestructibility that was almost legendary".

In the March 1963 Journal of the Manchester Gritstone Club, Stan Wroe commenced his eloquent obituary of Gray with the words "We always said in crowded bar rooms, in the camaraderie that is climbing, that if any of us got the chop we would want a great wake with singing and shouting and clapping of hands. We would make it a grand occasion. But such was the person of Gray West that his going has made these sentiments seem fatuous and glib; where we wanted to recall him with a smile there is nothing but desolation. For this was the leader of our club". He concluded with, "This was a man, be proud you were his friend". Eric Fairhurst's obituary to Mick was equally moving, "There is a hole in this club we cannot fill, Mike, his wonderful eccentricities and force of character, has gone. We can only wonder at the shame of it all and reflect on the chaos he and his unconquerable companion will inflict on the Almighty".

It was unbelievable that these two lads who had changed the face of climbing in the Peak and had such a zest for life were gone. They were the first climbing deaths in our community. We were all at the funeral, though in the end, despite the shock and the horror of what had happened, life goes on. Being young, your own invincibility returns, shaken perhaps but not stirred. Not long after the tragedy, I was in Dovestones Quarry with Cockney, climbing a new winter route in great conditions. Soon after that I returned with Erg and climbed *Waterfall Direct*. Its V-chimney was heavily verglassed and capped by three cornices giving a great winter climb. The first cornice was the largest. It hung into space festooned with slender sparkling icicles and completely roofed the cleft in. Having scratched my way up the groove I finally managed to get a peg in below the cornice. It waggled about whenever I put any weight on it, which wasn't inspiring. Erg on the other hand was fed up of getting showered in ice and snow and told me to get on with it, so I hung a sling in the peg, stuck the front spikes of a crampon in and stood up. It held.

Eventually I was able to cut holds in the cornice, the sun by now shining across the quarry and brightening up the gloom. Finally I cut a groove though the lip, got my axe in beyond and tried to pull over, slipping back as a snow foothold broke. A second try with my crampons on the iced walls was more successful bringing a good crack into reach for a peg belay. Erg soon followed, complaining about me sending snow down his neck. He led through, over the second and third cornices and up the upper glistening snow slopes to the windswept moor edge above where I

joined him after four hours of superb winter climbing.

Unlike another visit of mine when I was avalanched off the same moor edge above the quarry in the winter of 1978-79. It was another 'bad winter', the worst since '63 with plenty of snow, easterly winds and sub-zero temperatures. Climbing conditions were excellent. I had cramponed up from well below the quarry. Then, having soloed up the left edge of the *Waterfall Climb* I emerged onto the upper slope to discover it looked like prime avalanche terrain. Perforating it like toilet paper by traversing off to escape the drop below seemed like a bad plan, so I went directly to a small rock tower perhaps twenty metres above and reached it safely, cramponing on hard crust covering soft snow. Continuing on, I finally plunged both axes with relief into the easing angle where the slope met the moor. Bad plan! The whole slope cracked off in a big slab avalanche, probably fifty metres either side of me, all the way along the quarry top. I was instantly carried backwards now thigh deep in moving snow and could already hear the roar of the avalanche plunging down the fifty metre vertical cliff beneath me. Due to the pressure of the snow, I couldn't get my body forward enough to get my axes in. Then I went backwards over the five metre rock tower, landed with a thud in the snow at its foot, sunk both axes in and the avalanche continued past, over the top of me and down the crag... and left the world to a resounding silence and to me. Which was all a lot more exciting than the traditional family Christmas I had sneaked out of on a perfect and irresistible blue sky winter's day.

# THE MAN UPON THE STAIR

*If you sleep in Helyg on your own on a wild and windy winter's night you will probably be aware of the ability of the subconscious to conjure up all manner of 'evil spirits'.*

By Paul Carling

*'Yesterday, upon the stair, I met a man who wasn't there.'*

It is over 40 years since the event I am now going to relate. The detail remains uneasily in my mind, whereas so many other days out in the hills leave positive images or have faded from memory. I was around 19 years old and, together with a couple of companions from Leicester University, we decided to climb Snowdon by the PyG Track.

The night before, I had drunk beer with friends in the hotel bar where climbing memorabilia and signatures of famous mountaineers on the ceiling were an inspiration for a young man. The timeless, comforting atmosphere of the hotel does not seem to change as the decades pass but the evening's conviviality did not prepare me for the following day's event. It was a clarty day; otherwise we would have gone rock climbing but, nevertheless, we departed for Pen y Pass at around 7:30am so we could get a place in the small car park.

At Pen y Pass, we mounted the initial steep rocky staircase until the point where the gradient eases. Here a small grassy shoulder provides opportunity for some rough camping. It was often the case that a scattering of small

tents was to be found there. On this day the low cloud began to lift as we topped the initial ridge. Weak sunshine bathed the wet grass in a baleful light. Rather than a group of tents, a solitary one-man tent was pitched on the shoulder. It looked damp and forlorn after the night's rain. I felt drawn to the seemingly deserted shelter but, as we came nearer, I could see there was an individual crouched in the doorway beneath the low fly. The man was trying to prepare a breakfast on a Primus stove in the cramped alcove. I expected to exchange the usual grunted greetings but the wan face of the man just looked at me impassively; so I felt it was not appropriate to say 'Hello'. I had a strange barely perceptible feeling of unease and as we continued along the track, I felt the need to look back on the lonesome scene a couple of times, but the occupant did not emerge.

I kept thinking about the tent and the sad face in the doorway as we continued to the summit. Either because of the weather or due to a lack of imagination, my companions and I returned later in the day by the same route. As we descended, I thought again about the tent and fully expected it to be gone along with its

occupant by the time we reached the shoulder. To my surprise the tent was still there, albeit now struck, and three fellows from the local mountain rescue team were engrossed in sorting out the contents and packing it into rucksacks. Although an inner sense already told me why they were there, I enquired as to the reason for their presence. Whereas two of them continued packing without looking at me, the third merely stated that they were clearing the tent as the owner had died in a fall whilst walking on Snowdon the previous day. Of course I said I was very sorry to hear that and asked what the man looked like. As I received the summary explanation, I recognised in his descriptions the face of a man I had seen before but had never actually met, as we had not exchanged any greeting.

*...He wasn't there again today; I wish I wish he'd go away...*

The title is a variant on a line from William Hughes Mearns' poem *Antigonish* (1899)

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Right: *Rick Sowards and Doug Kerr on Caban Fever (HVS), Elan Valley*

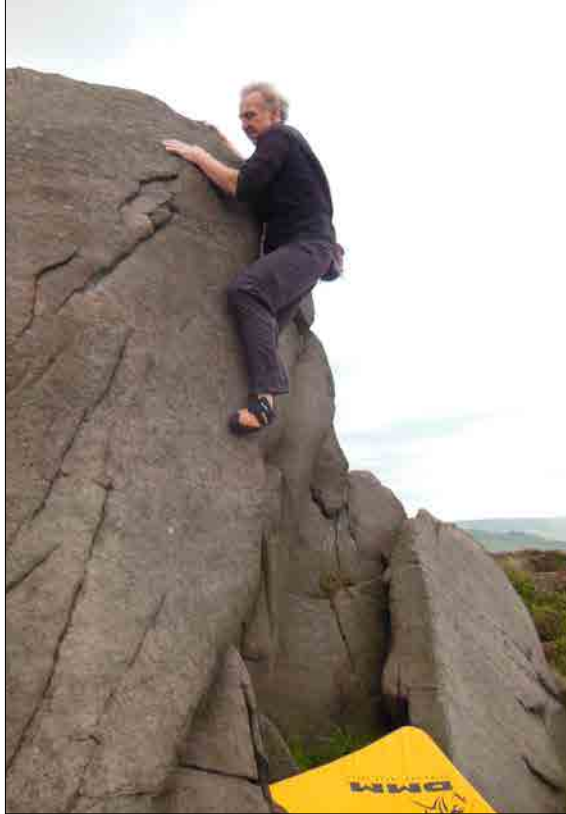
Photograph: *Don Sargeant*





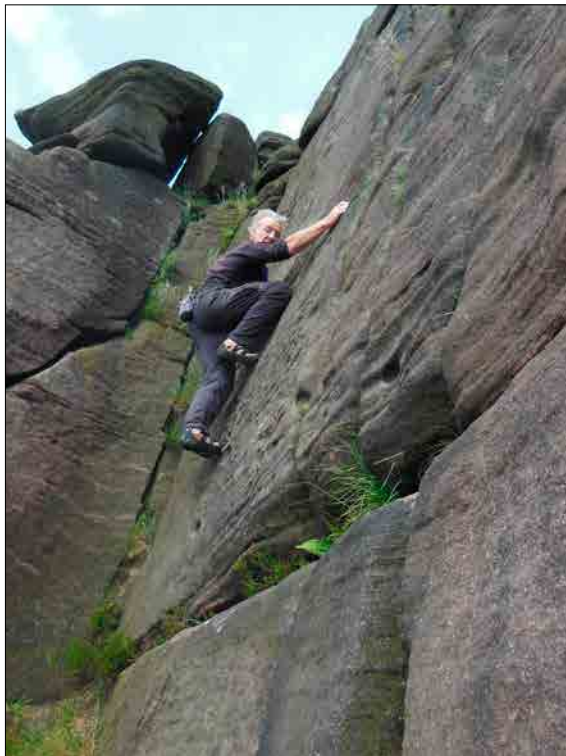
Right:  
*Leek Hills (V4)*

Photograph:  
*Andy Clarke  
collection*



Right:  
*Still posing on  
Formative Years  
(E3 6a)  
Roaches Skyline*

Photograph:  
*Andy Clarke  
collection*



## SPRING BOULDERS – Roaches

By Andy Clarke

first touch of the rock  
after my touch and go fall:  
God's own rough handshake

pulls me back upright  
out of the tramadol clench  
pain curls and uncurls –

pale April colours  
drift these familiar hills  
while my wife watches:

heraldic of spring  
warming dark grit battlements  
a peregrine glides,

quartering the Clouds  
to emblazon crested sky  
with wind-writing wings,

climbing to shield me  
from the long slow surrender  
to oblivion

# PUNTER

By Andy Clarke

weighing up the odds:  
E points for the energy  
accumulated

en route to the ground  
unhindered by any gear  
if it all goes wrong:

broken ankle max,  
evens you stay on the rock:  
time to toss the coin

# SAN MELAS – Roaches Skyline

By Andy Clarke

no weight no friction  
commitment creates the hold  
releases the rush

autumn's rare present  
smears precisely crisp with cold -  
adrenaline grace

in lingering light:  
the Staffordshire plain gone gold  
the fir trees aflame

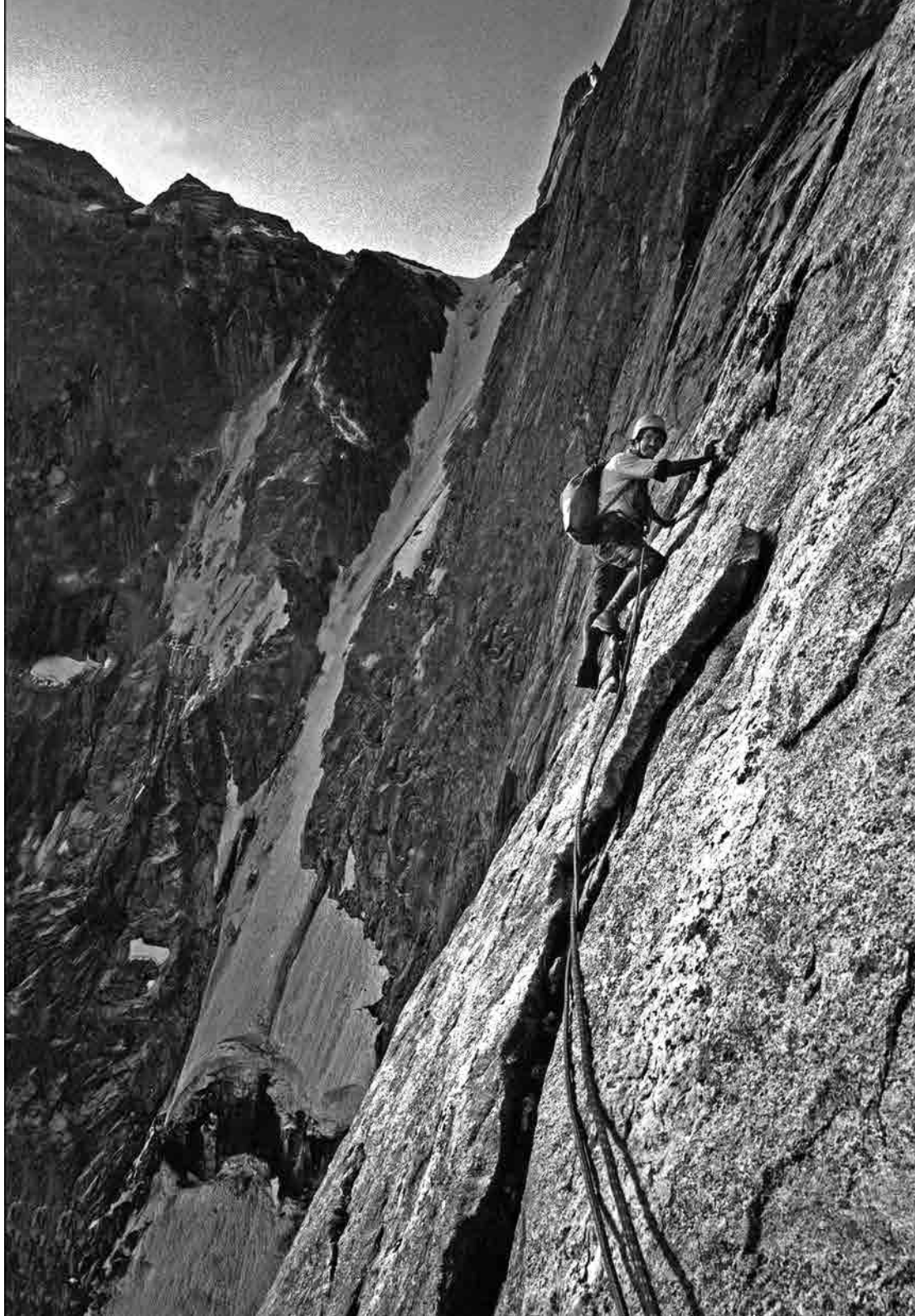
*Ruairidh Finlayson  
on San Melas (E3 5c)  
The Roaches*

Photograph:  
*Claire Clifton Coles*



Right:  
*On the Cassin  
Route, Piz Badile*

Photograph:  
*John Cleare*



# BETRAYAL ON THE BADILE

*There are few sports where participants put their life so completely into the hands of one another, over time they develop an extremely strong bond of trust. This tale (fictional, I hope!) looks at a scenario when that bond is broken.*

By George Gilmore

Barry only discovered that his climbing partner Ken, was having an affair with his wife Shirley 24 hours before they left to do the *Cassin* on the Piz Badile. As is often the case no doubt, the way in which he made this devastating discovery was by mundane means. Shirley had gone to the supermarket but had left her mobile behind. Barry only read the incoming text because he thought it might be about her sick sister in Birmingham. He blinked repeatedly, as the meaning of what he read seeped slowly into his mind. “Darling Shirl looking forward to seeing you again as soon as I get back from the Badile. Love Ken.” Just nineteen words, just seventy eight characters had turned Barry’s world upside down. Shirley, his wife of 28 years and childhood sweetheart, was having an affair with Ken, his climbing partner of 20 years. How could this be?

As they had driven across France heading for the Alps, it was not the challenge of the *Cassin Route* which was on Barry’s mind, wracked as it was in tortuous despair. He fought to retain control of his thought processes, while at the same time trying to piece together what might have happened and when.

Barry and Shirley had met at school some 30 years earlier when they lived in their native Birmingham. They both started climbing together and it was largely because of climbing that they had moved to Manchester some 20 years ago. Ken, originally from Yorkshire, had moved to Manchester 5 years before them. The couple had first met Ken in the pub at the weekly meet of the club they joined. Barry remembered Ken’s blunt Yorkshire friendliness when they first joined the club. “Sithee down lad” he’d said as Barry and Shirley stood awkwardly at the bar on their first visit. As the years went by they’d become firm friends and climbed regularly together. Gradually Shirley lost interest in climbing and ironically it was Ken who replaced her as Barry’s main partner.

They hadn’t intended on getting straight onto the *Cassin* as soon as they arrived at the Bregaglia. However a perfect weather window of just 24 hours, followed by a forecast of more or less continuous storms had changed all that. “Sometimes plans need to change quickly in response to circumstances” said Ken authoritatively. “Too bloody right” thought Barry as he stared into the middle distance not bothering to reply. As they trudged up to the



Sasc Fura hut in the afternoon the day before starting the route, Barry found his mind nose diving into the past. Strangely, he found himself not just asking the usual questions of how long the affair had been going on for and when did it first start? He also found himself thinking about routes he'd shared with Ken in the past and the development of their friendship generally. Barry, three years older than Ken was the slightly better climber, as well as being slimmer and fitter. His thoughts wandered back to the time they'd been breaking into E2 and had done *Left Wall* together. Ken had almost completed the route, before falling from the end of the traverse, taking a massive pendulum in the process. Barry remembered shaking with

trepidation before his attempt, and then wondering how it was possible for anyone to fall off from where Ken had, given the size of the holds. It seemed to Barry at the time that he had the psychological edge over Ken and this gave him a secret pleasure over the years as they moved up the grades. "Who's got the psychological edge now?" thought Barry to himself as they approached the hut. Time will tell.

The string of head torches bobbed ahead of both climbers as, ant like, the Europeans rushed up the pitch black mountainside. It was not until they reached the ridge, that the dark foreboding face of the Piz Badile could be viewed in all its entirety. The dawn light slowly brought the true immensity of the granite face

Right:  
*On the Cassin  
Route, Piz Badile*

Photograph:  
*John Cleare*





into view, including the serrated edge of the summit ridge, which appeared to Barry to be grinning down at them like the mouth of some monstrous Halloween pumpkin. Below the face, grey blue and creaking, lay the enormous glacier, its bergschrund and tumbled down ice pillars watching on, as it made its inexorable slow motion descent over millennia to the valley below. "It's not just humans who have secrets" mused Barry as they descended the ridge towards the start of the route. "Glaciers have them too." Barry thought of all the attempts to climb the Badile over the years which had ended in tragedy. Climbers, their bodies lost to the immense impassive glacier below, only to reappear in two, seven perhaps ten thousand years time.

"Owd rope that" said Ken as he uncoiled his rope at the start of the route. "Needs replacing next year." This had become a standard and running joke over the years, as the worn rope never seemed to get replaced by the tight Yorkshireman. It's baggy sheath made it difficult to pull through the belay device, as Ken led the first pitch of the route. Barry, bleary eyed from lack of sleep, partly due to the early start and partly from four nights of disturbed sleep agonising about Shirley and Ken's affair, had opted to let Ken lead off. As the light improved revealing all the other European climbers at least two pitches higher, he reflected that the plan to go last was working well. As he belayed, his mind continued to agonise about the affair. When did it start? Was it in the last two years when he'd been on the night shift where he worked as a supervisor at the carpet factory? So keen was Barry on climbing that he often came home from the night shift only to go straight

out for a day at the crag. On these occasions Ken came round to his home and he was always there by the time Barry arrived. Could it be that he was there all night?

As Barry seconded the first pitch he barely registered the perfect granite on which he climbed, its crimps and friction allowing for a beautiful flowing motion. He was thinking instead of Shirley. "My Brummie bride" as he continued to call her in moments of affection together. At 48 she had obviously lost some of the pretty looks which had first attracted him to her, but she remained slim, lithe and those piercingly blue eyes would always be beautiful to him as long as she lived. Shirley, a librarian now, was the only person who knew what he was like as a 16 year old at school. To this day on occasion he would break into his Noddy Holder impression, just as he did back then, using his best Black Country accent.

At six pitches up the route they saw another team about four pitches below them. An unexpected late arrival, thought Barry as he peered down the route. "Let's hope it doesn't affect the plan," he mused. Leaning back on the belay, he could see the European teams high above. The direct sunlight had struck the top third of the route, and granite crystals sparkled as a bright blue cloudless sky replaced the ink of early morning.

Even as he climbed Barry's turmoil continued. One theory which he'd been thinking about for two days now related to the fact that three years earlier, Ken had stopped going on climbing trips with him after an unbroken period of some ten years. At the time Ken had said it was because he wasn't getting any younger and had opted for sport climbing trips with short walk-ins. This despite the fact

that he was three years younger than Barry and, as an English teacher, didn't have such a physically demanding job. He had also noticed that Shirley had stopped giving him grief about going on climbing trips but couldn't for the life of him work out whether these two events coincided with each other. He'd turned these two events over and over in his mind obsessively until he became mad with despair. Ken had only agreed to come on this trip after much persuasion and because Barry knew it was such an iconic route, one of the six great north faces, which Ken had aspired to climb for some years.

Eight pitches up. "Slack on owd rope, watch me on new un" said Ken. Barry, leaning back thought perhaps he could see a team on the exit cracks where, during the first ascent in 1937, Molteni had died of exhaustion. Worryingly the team below appeared to be

about three pitches below them now. "You got me?" shouted Ken much to Barry's relief. A combination of eight pitches of climbing and the decision to do the *Cassin* without any warm up route had finally caught up with Ken, who completed the pitch by resting twice on the rope.

As Ken led a long pitch of left facing flakes, Barry's mind returned once more to a question which had first surfaced two days earlier as they parked up their battered Corsa for the night and kipped beside it in Ken's pop up tent. Was he the last one in the club to find out about the affair? Was he the laughing stock of the club now, rather than as he had previously perceived himself to be just four days earlier, an experienced and respected climber? Had Ken actually had a psychological edge over him for years rather than the other way around? Burning with indignation and humiliation at

Right:  
*Looking down the  
upper chimney on  
the Cassin Route*

Photograph:  
*Tom Priestly*



just the thought of this, his whole sense of self was disintegrating before his very eyes.

This was it; the crux pitch, a steep chimney and it was Ken's lead. Barry peered down at the team below, now just two pitches from them. It was now or never. Four days earlier his happy existence had changed forever. How come he couldn't just press delete on the whole matter as he'd done with the text four days earlier in order to ensure Shirley never discovered he'd read it?

Ken was 50ft up the pitch as Barry zoned out completely, oblivious to his surroundings, his jealous rage overcoming all other emotions. The sun glared down fiercely now and its warmth was releasing rocks from the mountain's icy grip to his left. They fell to the glacier below with a frightening clattering sound. The knife, once produced, glinted in the sunlight, its serrated edge appearing to grin

shark like. Stamping red faced on the ropes in order to keep them taut, he wrapped them around his wrist and gripped them in his left hand, with a motion that resembled someone strangling a chicken. Barry slashed angrily first at the owd rope and then at his own. "That's for fucking my wife" muttered Barry as the owd rope sheared into two, "and that's for betraying a friend" as the second rope frayed. Breathing heavily from the exertion, Barry turned his face upwards, as the now useless ropes ran through the belay device for the last time.

"You got me?" shouted Ken

"I've got you Ken. Got you good and proper. That owd rope definitely needs replacing now" shouted Barry as the glacier far below prepared to garner another unexpected secret.



Left:  
*Piz Badile North  
Ridge*

Photograph:  
*David Linnett*

# MOTIVATION AND CLIMBING:

## A PSYCHOMETRIC ANALYSIS

*Magazines and internet sites such as UKClimbing abound with articles describing how to climb better; almost inevitably they focus on approaches to physical training that will make you stronger/fitter/more dynamic etc any or all of which will make you a better climber. This article looks at climbing from a different viewpoint by analysing behaviour patterns. Having read the piece you may wish to try the included self-assessment test. Please note, neither the authors nor the editor can be held responsible for any consequential harm or distress.*

By Dave Hume and Mike Blood

Based on the motivational theories of David McClelland

**T**he Theory: The behaviour of climbers can be explained in large part by their intrinsic motivational drives, of which they might not be fully aware. Typologies are dodgy things, as most of us think we are a bit of one and a bit of another, yet deep down we have some tendencies that rise above others. Here are four stereotypes. Use the descriptions to assess where you (or even better, your climbing partner!) might stand, and if you are inclined, complete the diagnostic to build a 'kite shape' to check out your motivational type, or, if you are a **Type 4**, rubbish the whole process and move on. The authors accept no responsibility for inaccurate or upsetting results and no liability for ensuing therapeutic requirements.

### **Type 1: Praxis**

Praxis climbers are driven by Performance. They really want to succeed, they thrive on getting better, they like to climb or train alone, or with other triers or high achievers, and although they might not admit it, they like positive feedback. Praxis climbers don't like low-risk challenges too much because they're not really genuine achievements, but surprisingly don't want too high a risk of failure either, because getting lucky on a project isn't the same as succeeding through their own hard-won competence. Their risk-taking is well calculated. Praxis climbers are often great technicians - they know lots of stuff about gear, sequences of moves, training tactics for specific routes, and the like. They are very handy to have around if you need one - "You've only threaded one of your harness loops", "You've Z-clipped". "Use the undercut then smear

quickly till you can reach the jug”, and they can certainly build a bombproof hanging belay and can remember how to escape the system and give an assisted hoist. Praxis climbers are about doing it well and doing it right. You can read it in their climbing forum posts, arguing the toss about equipment, knots, training, clothing, styles of ascent, suitable racks, self-rescue and so on. They can be more of an expert than a friend, and are competitive, sometimes only with themselves, and can be impatient or insensitive with climbing partners who don't share their drive for improvement. Praxis climbers are in the game to achieve. If you lend your rope to a Praxis, they'll examine it carefully and ask you how many falls it has taken. In the case of a climbing accident, they will quickly analyse what happened and get on with working out how to deal with it. Some of our best friends are definitely “Praxis”.

### **Type 2: Protos**

Protos climbers are motivated by Power. Not campus board power, but power over others and over situations. Protos needs people around who can be impressed and influenced. They are not shy about giving advice and help to others, they like a good argument and they are pretty good at it. Protos climbers are happy to accept low risk or high risk challenges, because they can easily justify either, and will take on anyone who criticises them. They are proud of their climbing record, justifiably or not. They can be strong and bold climbers, because they are, or behave as very confident people. They are happy to climb with beginners too. They can be fun to be with, because their social energy can be infectious. If their power drive is purely for

personal ego at the expense of others, they can be unpopular, but sometimes their power need is aimed at the climbing, or the trip, and they can be great company as they may push you harder than you thought you could be pushed. Protos climbers who can be bothered posting on climbing forums enjoy stirring other people up, arguing about anything from dry-tooling on summer rock to international politics. You can't ignore a Protos, they are in the game to be noticed. Like the Protos who told us they'd never seen anyone make that route look so difficult. Or another, who couldn't tell us the grade of the route he'd just done, it just looked a nice line. If you lend your rope to a Protos, they'll think that it's only right that you do. In the case of a climbing accident, they will tell everyone what to do and organise them to do it. Some of our best friends are definitely Protos.

### **Type 3: Patria**

Patria climbers are motivated by People, by their climbing partners and peer groups. Patria enjoys being part of a group, even a small group, because it's the camaraderie, the craic, the social buzz they get from climbing that dominates their motivation. They want to be liked, and usually are, by others, and they are happy to help other people succeed in their own climbing goals. They will go along with group decisions happily, provide physical and moral support as leaders, seconds, spotters, chauffeurs and get their buzz from belonging. Patria climbers are real team players; they are open and supportive, sensitive to how others are climbing, give loads of positive feedback and are relatively non-competitive unless being so is part of the group ethic. They are sensitive to criticism, and don't like to be left



Right:

*Patria: left to right,  
Trevor Langhorne,  
Dave Hume,  
Cliff Robson and  
Gary Brosnan*

Photograph:  
*Pete Flegg*



out. Patrias think nothing of spending time responding to climbing forum posts asking for advice on destinations or starting out, and will try to reunite climbers with lost gear. Patrias are often so aware of others that they can fail to reach their best climbing potential. In the case of a climbing accident, they will focus on the casualty, reassuring them and keeping their spirits up. If you lend your rope to a Patria, it's because they've already lent theirs to someone else. Some of our very best friends are definitely Patrias.

#### **Type 4: Prat**

Prats do not know they are Prats. They seem motivated only by being Prats. They are invariably loud, opinionated and wrong. They show off what abilities they may have but they are mainly motivated by showing off their Pratness. They drop names of famous hard climbs, climbing destinations, grades and climbers within your earshot. They tell strangers where they are going wrong. They solo your route immediately after you've fought your way up and say it was pretty straightforward. Or they solo your route just before you are ready to set off. They tell their partner in a loud voice how you should be tackling that move. They start single pitch

classic severes with twin ropes, two sets of nuts, micro nuts, full sets of cams, 20 slings, jumars, and a portable belay ledge which just happened to be on their rack from their last trip to Baffin Island. They set up top-ropes for the day then leave their litter at the crag. They carry ropes on top of rucksacks and leave them on the back shelf of the car. They sign on to forums so that they can willy-wave and abuse people. They have opinions on top climbers and the hardest routes without having been near any of them. They mock beginners, bumbles and the Geriarty. They are like the Prat guide who dragged his two clients up through our ropes in the Dolomites then kicked a boulder down from above us. They are the Prat who pointed up at one of us at Almscliffe and said to the ten-year-old beside him “If that old fat guy can get up it, you’ll have no worries son”.

If you lend your rope to a Prat, you are heading towards being a Prat. They will stand on it, get it dirty, drop it in the sea, run it over sharp edges and forget to give it back. In the case of a climbing accident, they will faff about and tell the press what really happened and

why and they’ll pick up any abandoned gear and shove it in their sack. We’ve never met a female Prat. None of our best friends are Prats.

### **Guess?**

You can quickly see where your tendencies lie from this typology. Of course, the descriptions tend towards the extremes of the stereotypes, and it has nothing to do with how well you climb. We each have a bit of all four in us, but it’s more likely that one of the drives is dominant. This might change with age or circumstance, so it’s not set in stone for life - you may have started out getting interested in technical improvements in performance, going through a Protos phase, and ended up as a jolly old bumbling Patria. Even if you are now well and truly in it for the good company and the banter that goes with it, you may not be able to shake off the Protos or Praxis in you, and can’t quite stop getting motivated by trying to climb better. And although no-one wants to own up to being a Prat, remember that each of us is a Prat in someone else’s eyes.

Below:  
*Carn Mor Dearg  
Arête*

Photograph:  
*Ben Stutchbury*



### How to complete the psychometric test

Get a piece of paper. On it write down the numbers of all of the statements below that describe your likely behaviour.

Item	Statement
1.	I like to do it well and I like to do it right
2.	I tell people where they are going wrong and how they should tackle a route
3.	I regularly and happily give help and advice to others, whether invited or not
4.	I like to get involved in debates and arguments about climbing, and like stirring it up
5.	If I needed to borrow a rope, what's the problem? They'll get it back.
6.	On climbing trips or sessions with my mates, I like to push them harder
7.	It's important to me to be liked by my climbing friends
8.	If I was present at an accident, my first priority would be the well-being of the casualty
9.	I give lots of positive feedback and encouragement to others
10.	If I take risks climbing, they are well calculated
11.	I inwardly like to be noticed when climbing well
12.	I share my opinions about the hardest routes and the top climbers, they set themselves up anyway
13.	If I was present at an accident I would be happy to share my opinions with reporters to make sure they get an intelligent account
14.	I know a lot about gear, and am very interested in the technical aspects of climbing
15.	I like the people I climb with to succeed, and like to help them do so
16.	I am not particularly competitive in a climbing group
17.	Any gear found at a crag, irrespective of the circumstances, is crag swag and I'll have it
18.	I am sensitive to how others in my climbing peer group are feeling and willingly support them
19.	I have little time for others who don't want to improve their climbing
20.	If I needed to borrow a rope, I'd just ask
21.	I seek and like positive feedback
22.	If someone offered to lend me a rope, I'd ask how many falls it had taken and would examine it carefully
23.	I go out of my way to give help, advice and information to other climbers
24.	I am centrally focussed on improving my performance
25.	I'm happy to go along with the group's decisions about where to climb and when to stop
26.	Sometimes I jump the queues and solo routes where other people are climbing
27.	I have little patience with beginners, bumbles and fat, geriatric climbers
28.	I like high-risk challenges sometimes and push the boat out a bit
29.	I think it's perfectly OK to overtake slow parties on multi-pitch climbs and climb through them
30.	I like to train alone
31.	I wouldn't think twice about lending someone my rope or gear
32.	If I was present at an accident, I'd take charge and tell people what needed to be done
33.	I'm keen on climbing mainly because I enjoy the company of the people I climb with
34.	If I was present at an accident, I would quickly analyse the causes and work out how to deal with it

35. If I want to put up a top-rope to work a route, it's my right to do so for as long as it takes
36. I consider myself a bold and confident climber
37. I have no compunctions about pulling down a top-rope if it is hanging unused
38. I really like to succeed and I want to be better than others
39. I carry my rope outside my sack and leave it on the back shelf of the car. Why not?
40. I watch out for back-clipping and check my partner's knots and belaying

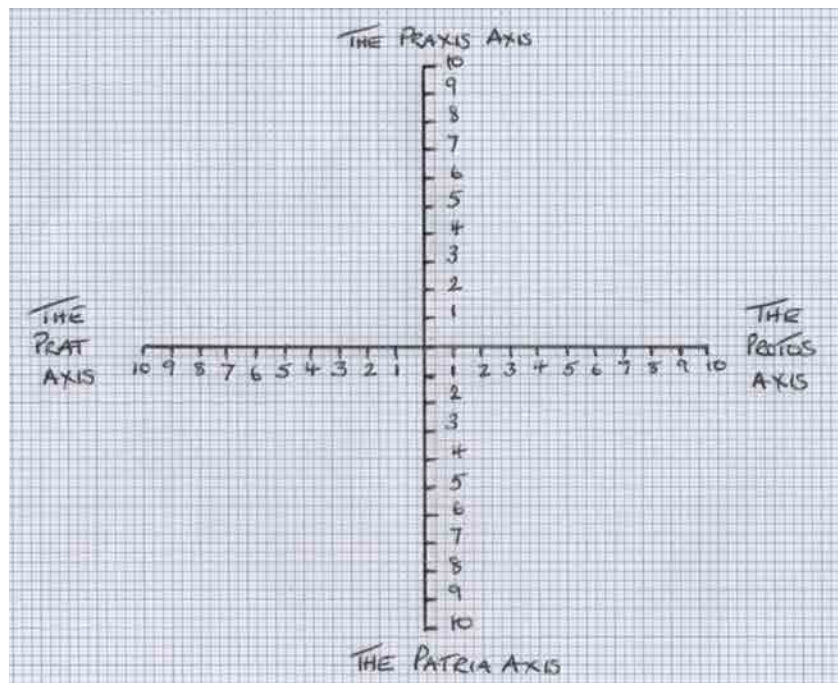
**SCORING:** Add up your scores for each row, and mark your score on the appropriate axis.  
Score one mark for each item ticked and total each line

Question	Total Score	
1, 10, 14, 19, 21, 22, 24, 30, 34, 40		Enter this total as a score on the PRAXIS axis
3, 4, 6, 11, 20, 26, 28, 32, 36, 38		Enter this total as a score on the PROTOS axis
7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 18, 23, 25, 31, 33		Enter this total as a score on the PATRIA axis
2, 5, 12, 13, 17, 27, 29, 35, 37, 39		Enter this total as a score on the PRAT axis

Join up the four scores on your chart and create your kite shape

What motivates you?

This is an extract from *The Bumper Book of Climbing Fun* by Dave Hume and Mike Blood, available from Amazon or on Kindle. A version of this article was published on the UKClimbing.com website in June 2011



# OUT ON A LIMB

*Soloing is always an intense experience and sometimes it is best to wipe the resulting (bad) memories from your consciousness. Sean shares some of his thoughts and experiences on the dark art of soloing.*

By Sean Kelly

*“Observers think I’ve got a death wish. But there’s nothing else that makes me feel so alive. . . When you’re free-soloing, you can’t afford to be distracted. You concentrate on the flow from move to move to move. You exist only in the present. “*  
Derek Hersey\*

**O**n the 30th April 2017, Ueli Steck was killed soloing on his way up to Camp 2 in the Western Cwm, before heading off towards the Nuptse Face, acclimatising for an ambitious new route linking Lhotse and Everest. Steck was not unknown for taking such risks. He had indeed soloed the *Eiger North Face* in a barely conceivable time of 2 hours and 47 minutes. Hardly a month had passed when on the 3rd June, Alex Honnold left all his ropes and gear at the bottom of the 3000ft monolith of El Capitan and began climbing at 5:32am, topping out in 3 hours and 56 minutes. The climb was *Freerider* and has a grade of 5.13a or 5.12d but who’s counting. Unusually for a climbing story, both made headlines all around the planet.

*“With free-soloing obviously I know that I’m in danger, but feeling fearful while I’m up there is not helping me in any way,” he said. “It’s only hindering my performance, so I just set it aside and leave it be.”*  
Alex Honnold

Two contrasting events, one is tragic, the other astounding in its daring and level of total commitment. Both stories were subjected to the full media treatment. Famous climbers were interviewed to elucidate understanding of what motivates such risk within the human soul. To the non-climber such risk cannot be easily assimilated or understood, let alone accepted. Perhaps an extension of the famous question asked of Mallory and his equally famous reply ‘...because it’s there!’ The mere act of climbing a big mountain or rock-climb, and doing it alone is beyond the comprehension of the non-climbing public. Indeed, for the majority of climbers, the thought of untying from the rope and climbing unhindered by such aid is promptly shunned. Surely herein lies the full expression within the human spirit. If adventure has a final and all-embracing motive, it is surely this: we go out because it is our nature to go out, to climb mountains, to reach out to the stars, to plunge into the depths of the deepest oceans. To ‘strike out boldly’ was what made our ancestors climb down from the trees all those millennia ago.



It was with such thoughts in mind that I started to recall my own personal experiences when I too have been 'out on a limb' usually through personal choice. Initially the idea of discarding the rope horrified me, and even with the comfort of the rope to secure myself to the crag, there was still a sense of lurking fear. But gradually as one gained experience and more especially, confidence, so I ventured a little away from terra-firma, at first on small familiar crags such as Hobson Moor, and later on high mountain crags. Climbing *Crew Cut* (VS) might result in a broken leg, but on a solo high on *Flying Buttress* on Dinas Cromlech (VD), a highly polished route, any slip was irrefutably terminal. This risk was accepted. Coming to terms with such risk progressed to winter mountaineering, at first on simple lines but soon steep ice was being sought out. The same can also apply to what are described as 'lonely leads' where a particular pitch is almost or completely devoid of any protection. To the informed climber, such climbs are well known, usually avoided, but then again sometimes shit happens.

**May 1974 *Cioch Grooves* (VS), Sron na Ciche, Isle of Skye. Steve Beresford**

The guide said VS which in Scotland at the time meant any grade from VS upwards. I climbed steadily up a long slab with nothing too difficult, but after 70 feet, realised that a runner would be both useful and welcome, but scan the rock as I did, no runner was forthcoming. I moved up to the peg mentioned in the guide, but there was only a blank crack, and I certainly didn't have any pegs to insert. There now followed a series of sustained moves through a vertical bulge

on mainly precarious fingery undercuts, until I was finally faced by one very hard move. Holding on by fingertips was very strenuous, and my life could now be counted in seconds. No time for delay or indecision. I resolved to climb and imagined I was only a few feet from good protection, endeavouring to climb as neatly as possible. I tentatively executed the moves, only to be confronted by yet another technical sequence, but gradually the climbing and tension thankfully eased and I gratefully sneaked off right to the secure deep cracks of *Cioch Direct* and threw in my largest nut. My second Steve followed and with a loud shriek, promptly spiralled into space at the hard moves. "You're firkin' mad Kelly!" was his immediate retort. The move (5a/b) today thankfully can now be adequately protected by small cams inserted in the under-cling. "*You just see your hands, your ice axe, and your crampons...and they have to just move*".

Ueli Steck

**August 1974 *Petit Mont Collon, North Face* (D). 3556m. Brian Forster**

That evening in the Cabane des Vignettes Brian is expressing doubts about tackling the Ice-face of Petit Mont Collon opposite. It catches the last of the evening sun, and a clear night promised for bon temps for the 'morrow. "I'll go and solo the thing" I retort. My threat works. Brian is now on-board. When we arrive at the foot of the face, my rash threat of the previous evening placed in some kind of sober perspective as I eyed the cavernous bergschrund gaping before our cramponed feet. A quick search reveals a fragile snow-bridge that providentially allows access to the icy north face. The hut

warden had been very negative about our ambitious plans. Indeed the route was not 'in condition' and was unclimbed that season. Now his doubts were confirmed as I inspected the black scoured ice and flinched as my axe rebounded off its bullet-hard surface. Up close however it was possible to discern a slight change in the ice structure and gradually a line materialised as I cautiously tip-toed up the face, digging in my front points to get some semblance of grip. The tension on my calves was becoming extreme and glancing to my left a change of colour within the ice promised easier progress. A more recent snowfall had coalesced into a marginal layer of névé perhaps only an inch or two in thickness, but enough to speed up our ascent. After a short while I suggested to Brian that perhaps we should dispense with the rope as there were few belay opportunities. As a consequence we now fairly raced up the ice-slopes and soon were topping out on the dramatic summit of Petit Mont Collon. We could make out the nearby peak of the L'Evêque, and the Matterhorn in the far distance. On our return to the hut for afternoon tea, there was much back-slapping and special interest in our curved axes, and my 'terror' in particular. Later that week news filtered through that Messner and Habeler had raced up the Eiger in ten hours. The front-pointing revolution had arrived in the Alps!

*"In some ways, climbing in the clouds is comforting. You can no longer see how high off the ground you are"* Tommy Caldwell

**August 1974 The Strahlhorn (PD). 4190m.  
Brian Forster**

A little less than a week later we are in Saas-Fee and our objective this time is the

Strahlhorn. As we crest the Adlerpass, Brian, coughing all the way, is suffering from a chest infection and wisely declines to continue. The way ahead appears straightforward, and so I continue onwards over vast snowfields to the summit, alone. The early morning biting cold wind penetrates my body to the core, and I snuggle more into my thick down duvet jacket. Soon my attention is focussed on a maze of crevasses that unexpectedly appears in front of me. Carefully I prod for a way around this obstacle but eventually I'm through and on my way to the summit rocks. I gaze into Italy and countless other peaks that stretch endlessly towards the horizon. Not another soul is around to intrude on my arrival. However all is not well, as I turn and alarmingly note cloud billowing across my return route to the Adlerpass. How am I going to navigate a way through the crevasse field? My mind races as I frantically scan the slopes for any tell-tale signs of the slightest hollow depressions to indicate this lurking menace. Mist enshrouds my being and I feel I am floating in this surreal world of total whiteness. I prod and probe and thankfully as suddenly as it arrived I am out into bright sunlit snowfields and Forster sitting on the col below. I had somehow navigated through the crevasses and missed them completely. Life suddenly seemed wonderful again as I bounded down the slopes and embraced Brian with renewed optimism. Later we called at a bar on the Furka Pass and learned that Nixon had resigned. To help clear his chesty cough Brian had a few sups of Benadryl and driving back was not without interest, and some alarm on my behalf!

Later in the holiday we travelled to the Salbit area and set our sights on the

*Dammastock East Face.* However our late start was possibly a factor that prevented our crossing of a deep Couloir that was continually raked with stonefall, some blocks ominously the size of coffins. As we started to retreat back down towards the bergschrund we encountered a set of chamois tracks leading across to a considerable drop and there they suddenly stopped. After we had safely negotiated the bergschrund, we again chanced upon the chamois footprints and the impacted snow where the animal had crash-landed after it had dropped something approaching twenty five metres, most probably in its quest to get away from us.

**February 1984 *South Post Direct* (V), Creag Meagaidh, Central Highlands. Joe Flynn**

This was and is a long sustained climb, with at least four ice pitches. It is the third pitch that provides the real meat of the route. After leaving the belay, almost at once I was confronted by a great wall of vertical ice approaching nearly 200 feet in height. It relents only slightly in the upper reaches. I found a runner of sorts soon after leaving Joe and whacked my axes into the near perfect névé. This was quite reassuring, as lower down; the first pitch had been dinner-plating alarmingly. I carried on my way, enjoying the movement in this vertical world of snow and ice and revelled in its beauty. After a while my thoughts focussed on protection, and the very complicated business of inserting a dubious screw. This meant whacking in an axe as far as it would go, clipping into the sling and thus suspended, inserting the screw. However I was feeling strong, confident and still fresh, so elected to continue, shunning

protection until I reached the belay...but the rope was too short! I shouted down to Joe to untie the belay to get more rope but it was still too short, but somehow I manufactured a poor dead-man placement, backed up by my axes in very loose powder. I had memories of replicating Don Whillans, as he was being slowly dragged from his inadequate belay, high on the Marmolata di Penia *South Pillar*, when his partner had fallen off, and thinking that his time was up when suddenly the fallen climber thankfully managed to regain contact with the rock and unweight the rope. I too had little confidence in the holding power of my improvised belay, but optimistically encouraged Joe to start climbing. About halfway I faintly discern among the grunts and gasps, an earnest request for a 'tight rope' float up on the breeze. Joe wanted a 'breather'. As I wasn't too keen to take his weight and test the belay, I casually suggested to Joe that the climbing soon eased and he would shortly be able to stand in balance. Joe duly arrived at the stance, somewhat fatigued and declined an opportunity for leading through. I was okay with that, but casually asked if he could sort us out a proper belay. Displaying great alarm and a dramatic sense of instant panic, Joe proceeded to bury his axes up to his armpits in the soft snow! Another easier ice-pitch followed in the gathering gloom of that February day. Much elated by our success we wandered back towards the Window, our exit from the plateau, with the brilliant moonlight painting the snow a rich pink. Indeed it was bright enough to read the guidebook back at the sacks, where we relished our first drink since beginning the climb.

Below:  
*Post Face, Creag  
Meagaidh,  
February 1984*

Photograph:  
*Sean Kelly collection*

**August 1987 *Javelin Blade* (E1 5c), *Holly Tree Wall*, Idwal. Alan Payne**

It was all Duncan's fault. He categorically stated that there was a good runner at the beginning of the crux sequence and so I was suckered onto this very bold climb high above the Idwal Slabs. My fingers caressed the rock, seeking out some kind of lodgement for a tiny nut, but it was hopeless. Everything I tried didn't work. I looked down to my only runner... a thread fully forty feet away. On the first ascent Longland had felt comforted to have such a good placement, but times change and today anything more than six feet away is getting decidedly necky. Forty feet could be terminal! Originally the climb was graded VS which could mean anything in those far off times. But somehow it was overlooked for years and retained it VS grade. Now it is generally accepted as not only a bold climb, but also quite hard and given a respectable technical grade of 5c. Of course all this history was not

helping my nerves, but it just required a little bit of oomph! Taking a deep breath, I made the delicate moves, tip-toeing up the slabby rock, hardly daring to breath and once started there was no going back, well not in control that is. A few moments later I collapsed by the belay and bought Al up. He rambled on about lovely moves, superb climbing, birds singing but I just needed to sit in a darkened room.

*"If Gravity sucks why do cats always land on their feet?"*

**February 1988 *Centre Post* (V), *Creag Meagaidh*, Central Highlands. Paul Harding**

It's February, so it must be Scottish Ice again. This trip I've partnered up with Paul, a relative novice as far as the white stuff is concerned but he climbs confidently on rock. Besides I'll be at the sharp end. Just how sharp I was soon to discover. *Centre Post*, unlike it near neighbour has only one ice pitch as such, but it's colossal, almost never-ending in its verticality as it reaches up towards the sky. It's bigger than the great pitch on *South Post*. We share the belay with Jim and Sandy but they are soon traversing off right onto the ordinary route at a very amenable Grade Three. I check Paul and the belay and set off. The snow could be better I mutter to no one in particular and plod on. Within fifteen feet or so the ice rears up steeply in front of me and I work the axes to gain more security. But as I slowly progress upwards I notice two new Vertige axes protruding from the ice, somewhat akin to an animal that had been speared. As I inch closer, the snow quality deteriorates alarmingly. I feel as if I'm standing on vertical sugar, but these are much bigger crystals than that found in sugar, but with about much the



same security. I attempt to bury the axes deeper in a horizontal sense to gain more security, but this sugar is bottomless. Suddenly the world moves in front of me, all in slow motion, and more perilously, in the wrong direction. I've slipped, or rather dropped about a foot or so in my crampons. I stand very calmly making the minimum of movement, or else I'm heading for a two hundred-footer. I feared that I too might emulate the American climber, now residing in Fort William General. It was his tools that teasingly glinted at me now. There was no way that I was even going to reach that lovely booty, let alone complete the pitch. I look around and my eyes immediately focus on a large rock spike over and away to the right, and hopeful escape up the ordinary route. Exercising extreme care, I edge carefully rightwards on this precipitous wall of sugar towards the 'Thank God' spike of hope, relief and escape. Eventually, I make it and thankfully drape my largest sling over the exposed rock, and breathe more easily. The rest of the climb is relatively straightforward, as it weaves a wonderful line up this magnificent winter crag, at a more moderate angle and much better névé. The direct ascent will have to wait for better ice or bigger balls. The axes are still there!

**February 1991 *Number 2 Gully Wall (IV/V), Helvellyn, Eastern Lakes. Anthony Marsh***

There was little snow in Wales that winter, but the Lakes made up for this shortfall in buckets. I had first traversed into the corrie with Rick and Lyn, and we couldn't believe the vast quantities of snow that clothed the peaks. Hardly any rocks were visible but the snow far too loose and dangerous to climb on that

particular day, and so we diverted to Swirral Edge, and contented ourselves with a winter walk. I revisit one month later for a return match, and the freeze thaw cycle had done a magnificent job. I had been climbing quite a lot with Anthony that excellent winter, not my first choice for a rock climbing companion, but he moved confidently on snow and ice. Earlier we had climbed all over Great End and also played on *Black Crag Icefall*. Derwentwater had frozen over with ice conditions as good as it's ever going to get. Today we moved up to the big fissure of *Number Two Gully* totally blanketed out with excellent névé. The previous weekend we had watched, horrified, as two lads tumbled the full height of the gully, narrowly missing us by inches, and only stopping as the ground levelled out at a frozen Red Tarn far below. They dusted themselves down to resume the good fight.

*"I'm not thinking about anything when I'm climbing, which is part of the appeal. I'm focused on executing what's in front of me".*

Alex Honnold

Today was different as we both chose to solo and Anthony opted for a line of stepped green waterfalls cascading over hidden rocks, over towards the right of the crag. I however, was attracted by the vertical left wall of the gully. It was perhaps between two hundred and two hundred and fifty feet high, and rose in one unbroken sweeping wall of vertical ice. It cried out to be climbed. I placed the axes and carefully tested their security, and so began to caress the ice and immerse myself in a total experience that is solely within the realm of the soloist. I was wholly focussed on everything within ambit of that small world within reach of my axes. Halfway I realised that I needed



Below:  
*Sean on Helvellyn*

Photograph:  
*Sean Kelly collection*

to pause and take in my surroundings, to experience this elation for longer, for too soon it would be all over. I deftly cut a small step for my boot to be placed sideways, and took in the view of the surrounding fells. I really needed to savour this divine moment. I glanced across to Anthony as he carefully negotiated the frozen ice-falls close by, but we didn't speak. I didn't want to intrude on the solitude. We were both immersed in our own little worlds. I recommenced the climb and before long, I was hacking through the cornice, which had a small concealed crevasse behind. Anthony soon joined me and we relished our experiences on what was a wonderful day in many respects. We climbed together the following week in Scotland, soloing both Aladdin's *Mirror Direct* and *Y Gully* in the Northern Corries. We argued about many things climbing, including the safest way off the 'Ben' in white-out conditions. It seemed ironic that Anthony

was tragically killed soon after, accidentally walking through the cornice whilst descending the North East Buttress of Ben Nevis in poor weather conditions, when trying to locate the abseil posts and the way off.

### **February 1995 the *Parson's Nose/Clogwyn y Person Arête* (III 4), Clogwyn y Ddysgl**

It's Wednesday, midweek and nobody else around so I set off on my own again. The weather couldn't be better as the promised forecast delivered on time. There's not a cloud to be seen unlike the weekend when all it did was rain, snow and blow. The recent snow has survived a mini-thaw and formed up into promising névé and the ascent of *Sergeant's Gully*, a good aperitif for the main course. The water which normally tumbles down these rocks at this time of year is frozen solid, and as I top out into Cwm Glas, the stillness is all pervading. I stop to compose a photograph and gaze in wonder into the cwm. To the right of my intended climb a substantial icicle has formed hanging down from the cliffs. It must be nearly thirty metres in height and begs for an ascent in these frigid times. The entry into *Western Gully* is undemanding in the excellent conditions I encounter, front-pointing up towards the meat of the climb. I had previously tackled the *Direct Start* with Martin Mandel and Bob Anderson in lean conditions one December, and a wake-up call for Martin as he was a winter virgin. I had now arrived at the crux of the route, where the ridge steepens to vertical, but there is a corner groove over towards the right which offers potential further progress. As I step into the base of the groove the exposure becomes glaringly apparent as I look down to the distant screes



far below. This is not a place to mess up, for the consequences would be terminal. I hook my axes into an abundance of cracks trying to determine which will grip best. At the same time I wedge cramponed boots into the corner, heaving and bridging until I make some sort of progress. Gratefully I heave over this obstacle and breathe more easily. Ahead the way offers few difficulties and follows the ridge leading to the top, to join the Crib Goch/Garnedd Ugain traverse. There is a tight squeeze up a narrow fissure, but above I gain the sun, and move along an alpine type ridge and marvel at the quantity of snow and ice on the mountain. As I arrive at the cairn, the Trinity Face on Snowdon reveals itself totally buried under massive quantities of snow, without any rocks protruding. I can faintly make out a pair of climbers as they slowly swim up towards the Spider, the icefield below *Central Trinity*. As I edge closer the whole face shouts avalanche. For such a wonderful day, there are remarkably few people about on the hills. The old railway cafe and railings is thickly encrusted in heavy rime-ice with ice crystals protruding over twelve inches. I turn and make my way back down the PyG track and a warm shower at Tyny Ffynnon, snugly nestling three thousand feet below.

**June 1994 *Chalkstorm* (E1 or E3 5c), Roaches Lower Tier, Staffordshire. Pete Carmichael**

The debate about the true grade of *Chalkstorm* like that of *Three Pebble Slab* will continue long into the night but this mustn't detract from what is essentially an excellent climb. It all depends where you place the protection, by moving over to the left where there is an accommodating corner crack-

line. Purists will argue that this is off-route. The bold however will scorn this detour and balance carefully up the rock, perfecting a delicate touch of balance and friction. I have probably done the climb three or four times over the years, but the summer of '91/2 climbing with Pete took in some marvellous ground, mainly in the Peak and Wales. *Chalkstorm* was one such memorable climb. It involves a little over fifty feet of intense climbing, but requires carefully considered footwork to ensure progress, especially the sequence over the awkward bulge halfway. Today when packed with lots of mats, the seriousness of the route has lessened somewhat, but not the quality. Unfortunately because of continuous top-roping of the climb, and also the hordes that foolishly abseil this slab, it is sadly, gradually eroding the sloping nature of hand and footholds, and slowly destroying what should be a fine lead.

**February 2004 *Raeburn's Gully* (II), Creag Meagaidh, Central Highlands. Keith Williams**

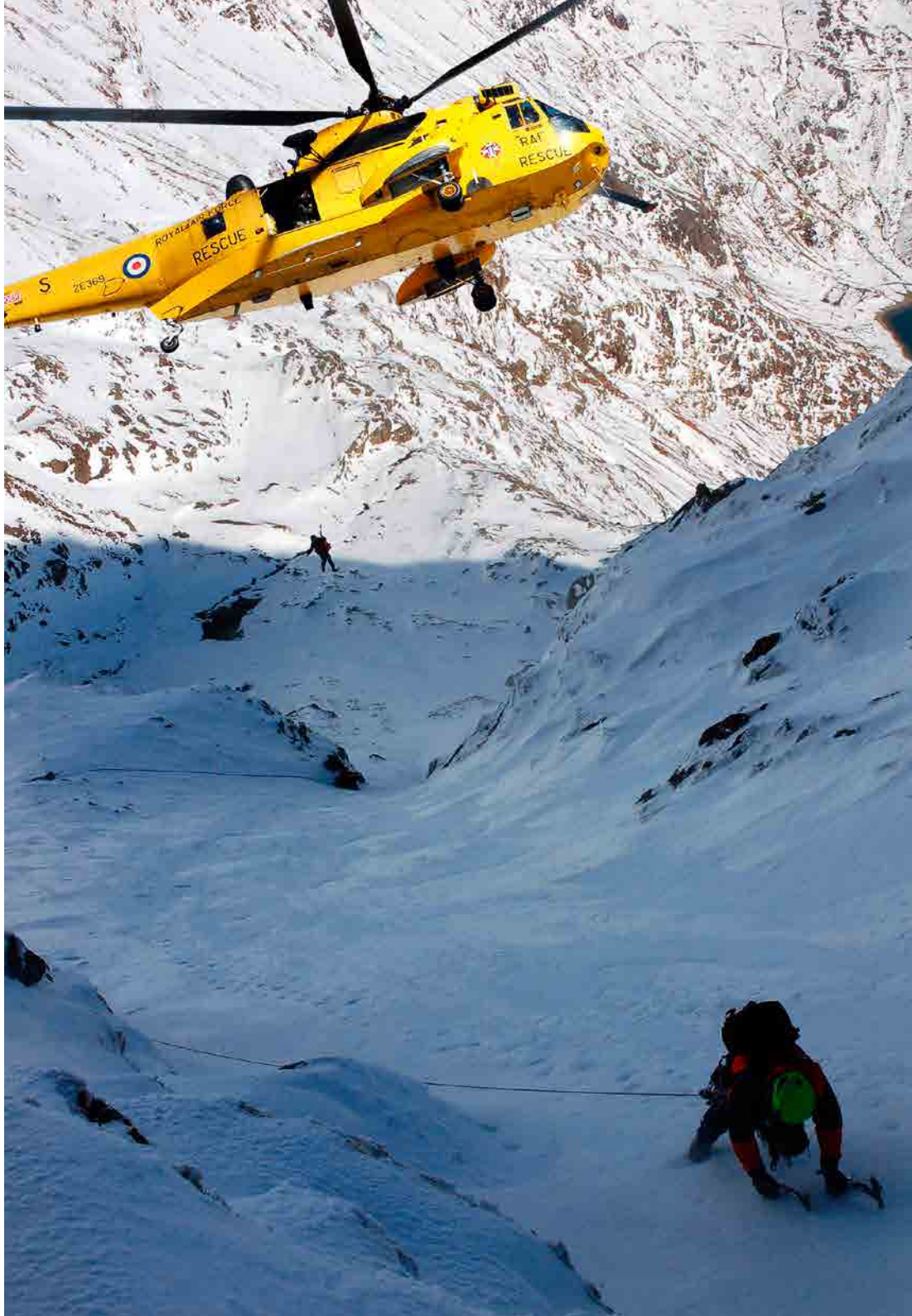
During a week of fine clement weather I managed to tick twelve Munros and on the Thursday our target was the Creag Meagaidh group of three well-spaced peaks. If I had realised that Keith was no slouch on the hills I might have decided to go it alone. All three Munros and a climb on Meagaidh were achieved in less than eight hours; such was the pace of the leader as he raced around the circuit, and me bringing up the rear. We encountered hard névé in the gully itself and raced up the twelve hundred feet to gain the summit plateau in around twenty minutes. No time to rest as Keith was away; off to tick the

first top of the round, as the actual summit of Meagaidh lies some considerable distance from the Coire Ardair cliffs. So it continued, with Keith walking, and me running to catch up. The going was excellent, with expansive views in all directions framed against the arctic blue sky. Neither was there a breath of wind, a rare occurrence in the Scottish winter. We returned to the hut as the cold began to bite, and alarmed to discover the hut-key secreted in a now locked coal-shed. I took out my pen-knife and carefully stripped away the putty from around one of the hut windows and then prized out the retaining nails and carefully removed the pane of glass. Shortly afterwards we had a roaring coal fire to toast our cold limbs!

**February 2006 *Central Trinity* (II), Clogwyn y Garnedd, Snowdon.**

The year was remarkable for Wales with good winter conditions lasting well into April, and the last snows melting from *Parsley Fern Gully* in late May. The best of the snow was encountered in mid-February and so I left Pen y Pass expecting a fine winter tramp across familiar hills, with an entertaining climb to add to the interest. On arrival at the foot of the fabled Trinity Face, I noticed that the initial icefall was fully formed, and so be a good introduction before stepping into the main line of *Central Trinity*. The ice cascades for perhaps over two hundred feet over these introductory rocks and being quite steep, care was required. As I prepared to exit onto the snowfield of the Spider I heard a shout. Something was amiss, and as I pulled over the exit, a woman was sat in the snow on the lip of a considerable drop. I nodded as I soloed past, but her partner, a

male, warned me to keep my head down, and hang on to my axes. What was happening I wondered as I cautiously proceeded up towards the main gully line? My query was soon answered a few moments later when a bright yellow RAF Rescue helicopter appeared out of the blue, and proceeded to lower the winch-man towards the woman climber. I pressed my front-points deeper into the rock-hard névé, and rushed off a couple of photos. It later transpired that they were both moving together to the belay at the foot of the gully when she had tripped over her crampons. He fortuitously had managed to affect an ice-axe brake, so stopping both of them crashing, most probably into me as I was soloing below. It also emerged that they were both members of the Llanberis rescue team, and so were able to summon help quickly on their phones. My ascent of the face was uneventful, and even the 'Narrows' were not bare rock for once, but I was quizzed by various parties when I topped out on the summit. The return across the Crib Goch ridge with local artist Rob Piercy was delightful in the bright afternoon sunshine and the ridge liberally coated with snow. I posted the photo of the rescue on the UKC website that evening and immediately got a response from the injured lady, who had sustained a broken leg in her fall. She asked if I had noticed her camera come flying past. As I was otherwise engrossed at the time, I hadn't, but the next day went back to the Trinity Face with my two Springers to search out the lost camera. Alas, we found nothing, but when I returned home there was an e-mail from the helicopter pilot asking for a copy of the rescue photograph!



Left:  
*Rescue on Trinity  
Face*

Photograph:  
*Sean Kelly*



Below:

*Harry on Diamond  
Rib (HS),  
Meadfoot Quarry*

Photograph:

*Sean Kelly*

**June 2017 *Diamond Rib* (HS), Meadfoot Quarry, Torbay.**

This was a no-show SDMC meet. By that I mean that I was the only one present and after waiting over an hour it was time to place rubber onto rock. *Diamond Rib* is a lovely climb of perhaps 35m, on mostly decent limestone that starts off easily enough, but as you reach halfway, and confronted by delicate moves up the rib, you notice the total lack of a comforting runner. For the soloist this is not really a concern, as it goes with the territory so to speak. The time for introspection arrives at the band of loose rock that caps the route. During an ascent of nearby *Dementer* the previous year I had a dramatic fall after pulling on a quite large loose block, which had appeared sound, but wasn't. With these thoughts very much to the fore, I now cautiously tested each hold as I carefully moved through this near vertical band. I paused

to look around, perhaps now fully ninety feet above the floor of the quarry. A visitor appeared on the viewing platform opposite, and I wondered what they might be thinking as they gazed across at my predicament. The rain which had been threatening for a while, now arrived, as small darker spots materialised on the rock in front of my vision. I stuck my hands and fingers deeper into the cracks that now appeared, and leant back to check for precise foot placements to best advantage. Even the finish over the top required a little care with little trust pulling on the springy turf.

*"Sport climbing is neither."* – Found on a poster on a gendarme at Seneca Rocks.

So to return to the original question, why climb Everest, 'Why solo? Why risk your life? Why do some climbers take on risk and other abhor it? Is this the fundamental difference between Trad and Sport (with perhaps the emphasis on mental)? Today I am amazed at the number of climbs that are top-roped rather than led. Probably understandable on Froggatt's Hairy Slab area, but even relatively easy routes such as *Bachelor's Buttress*, *Three Pebble Slab* and *Sunset Slab*, (all originally S/VS & now HVS/E1) see much top-rope usage. The risk element appears to have deserted climbing. With it too, the excitement, not forgetting to mention the endorphins surging around the bloodstream. To a large extent, the development of 'Sport' and Climbing Walls has encouraged much more involvement into the pastime, but unfortunately at the loss of one of its most essential ingredients, risk.

Derek Hersey summed it up brilliantly when he talked about being in the moment..."that you exist only in the present". The rest of life and all its problems cease to





exist. The only thing that matters are the next few feet, the next move, to make the move or not, to succeed or fail, to become a hero or a coward, to achieve fame or scorn, to live or die. It is concerned with a sequence of moves, changes of body shape and position, redistribution of weight and balance, husbanding depleted strength resources, achieving some degree of recovery from failing arms, and above all, mind games. To a great extent this all depends on the grade that is being challenged, well within the ambit of the climber, or right on the edge of the possible. It has often been described as a 'head game', best summed up by Steve Beresford's "You're firkin' mad Kelly!" Sometimes there is no choice as the climber becomes more committed as they progress up the route. We seek an equation, a modus vivendi between ourselves and the mountain or climb which, hopefully, will be marginally more favourable to ourselves. If this risk was absent, then the charm of climbing would be vastly diminished, and our sport all the poorer. But what degree of risk...?

Tommy Caldwell talks about 'baggage' or rather pushing it to the back of his mind. 'Baggage is not just the negative thoughts. Will it go? I don't like exposure. My fingers/body is/ are cold/weak. The weather is threatening etc. Family are also baggage, especially when there are children. Think Alison Hargreaves. She was slated in the media when she died on K2. Such is the pressure of media baggage it has in the past resulted in false ascent claims (Cerro Torre and Everest readily come to mind). The more that this 'baggage' can be relegated to the background, the better the chances of success. Concentration needs to be 100%.

*"Climbing: an arbitrary game, played for keeps. Not so serious, yet very serious."*

Lito Tejada-Flores

The other charge levelled at the bold or solo climber is the 'Suicide wish!' But is it a wish? Surely it is the exact opposite. It's all about living life on the edge, the adrenaline rush. The greater the risk the longer the good feelings last. After hand-traversing *Sarin* (E1) at Chee Dale on only one manky runner, the adrenalin was pumping for a week. It was certainly pumping when a hold parted company on *Tighe's Arête* at Hobson Moor (E1) and I just managed to retain my balance. Or climbing with Nora who suggested that we discard the rope. After a quick ascent of *Grooved Arête* on Tryfan, it was over to Idwal. We moved gingerly over wet rock on the crux of *Tennis Shoe Direct* (E1), a climb renowned for no runners in the first seventy feet. She tragically died abseiling at Pembroke the following week after trying to retrieve some runners left behind by her novice companion! Occasionally I'm attracted to a particular line on a crag and attempt the climb without any prior knowledge, that is without consulting the guide. Much in the same vein as the pioneers of the route. The only indication of where to go lies in the natural line followed by the climb. On my first visit to Stanage Edge circa 1970 and Dick and myself eye up a blank looking wall, *Hargreaves' Original Route*, graded Severe. At the top I gaze down at the runnerless rope. Today cams fit in the numerous horizontal breaks, and even with 'sticky rubber' it tips the scales at VS. This approach has sometimes resulted in more dramatic underestimation of a climb's true difficulty, but success is all the sweeter when

I've reached the top. For example, *Geireagle II* at Carn Barra looked only about VS but I discovered after the event that it tipped the scales at E2 5c. This caused a novice in the party much concern and even more airtime!

A climb I always regretted not climbing clean (I top-roped it first) was *Great Slab* (E3 5c), at Froggatt Edge. There are no runners on this Joe Brown special, originally climbed in 'Woolies' plimsolls. But even Brown had practised the moves on a top-rope. Somebody then remarked that I should now go and lead it. What was the point as I now knew all the moves? I possessed the key to unlock the door. Surely doing the route without beta was far more rewarding and ultimately much more fulfilling. The rules with soloing are to an extent, much more personal. Others prefer to have beta about the climb they solo. Some climbs pose other problems, such as *Sunshine Superman* (E2 5b), at 'Hobby' which has some dubious 'flakey' holds as you top out. The same is also true of *Brown's Eliminate* (E2 5b), at Froggatt, the tragic scene of Paul Williams' demise. Most of these loose holds have disappeared in recent times, and mats have removed much of the terror if not the consequences of a fall from such a height.

Soloing on snow and ice is a totally different kettle of fish. Any beta is pointless in the sense that climbing conditions are always changing, both from day to day and even during the ascent. There are the added risks of both avalanche prone slopes and negotiating cornices. Most winter routes are much longer than rock-climbs, so the quality of the snow and ice will vary with the height ascended. The time subjected to risk is usually longer. It all comes down to judgement and accessing

the difficulties, and how to overcome such problems. A major factor on a popular winter-climb is the 'trashed' climb. All useable ice has been hacked away. Retreat may not be easy to effect, and so a way must be sought to overcome the missing part of the jigsaw. I always considered that the true benchmark of the skill exhibited by the winter climber is how they cope when the good snow and ice runs out!

*"There are only 3 real sports: bull-fighting, motor racing and mountain climbing. All the others are mere games."*

Ernest Hemingway

In this singular sport, the ultimate penalty for failure is death. Think Tony Wilmott, Tom Patey, Jimmy Jewel, John Bachar, et al. There is no second chance. No going back to have another try. If you place yourself in a high-risk environment and fall or subject to objective dangers such as falling rocks, loose holds, wet rock, bad weather etc. then sometimes that risk is terminal. Statistically, the most lethal aspect of climbing is actually descending, down-climbing, abseiling or moving over easy ground. The analogy is often made that crossing the road or driving a car is more dangerous than mountaineering, but unfortunately personal experience from nearly 50 years in the sport, I have lost more friends because of climbing related accidents than motor related fatalities or crossing the highway. Here, I am talking in double figures. Very few deaths occur because of actually falling off a particularly hard move. Astonishingly, one of the most dangerous sports listed on a US Top 10 Most Extreme Sports website was, wait for it....."Cheerleading". The mind boggles!

So perhaps bold climbing style, roped or un-roped, is a kind of Russian Roulette. For

some it is the ultimate game in town as it was for George Mallory, out on a limb, all those years ago. The line between success and failure can be very fine indeed, as Alex Honnold and Ueli Steck recently demonstrated.

*\* Derek Hersey (Dirty Derek) was one of a group of the unemployed but supremely talented climbers that hung out around Stoney Cafe in the early to mid-eighties and slept out in the old woodshed. I climbed with a number of them at the time, but mainly Duncan Lee (Hippy Dunc) and Gary Thornhill (Gazza). I had the transport and so was always popular. They all existed on*

*what was termed "Maggie's Climbing Grant". Others in the group included Jerry Moffatt, Ben Moon, Quentin Fisher, Stevie Bancroft et al. Others came and went. Derek tired of this small-world climbing scene, and decided to try his luck in America, specifically Boulder, in Colorado. There, and in the Yosemite Valley, he amassed a phenomenal list of climbs, mostly solo, often at the highest grade. It was no surprise that he would eventually die whilst soloing the Steck-Salathé route, a famed Yosemite rock-climb, slipping from a probable damp greasy foothold. There may be old climbers, and there may be bold climbers, but there are few ....well you know the rest!*

Below:  
*Beinn Dearg,  
Glen Bruar*

Photograph:  
*Sean Kelly*



Right:  
*The Roaches –  
stepping across on  
pitch 2 of Valkyrie  
(VS 4c)*

Photograph:  
*Andy Clarke*

## XMAS DAY 2006, Northern General Hospital, Sheffield

By Andy Clarke

our bearded charge-nurse  
in Christmas fairy tutu  
and silver high heels

dispenses good cheer:  
morphine and festive sherry,  
painful cracker jokes –

thanks to my groundfall  
I boast twelve broken right ribs  
and a punctured lung

titanium wires  
hold my flail segment in place;  
beyond the window

on opiate wings  
I glide through hard winter skies  
dreaming of the grit:

too bright thrall of threat  
sharpening the edge of life  
shredding tender skin,

engraved on the grail  
a dazzled intaglio:  
scars, trapped nerves, fused bone...

memory's tattoo  
beats barely heard back of brain,  
dark arabesque pain:

fish-eye faces swim  
pale in drifting consciousness  
watching strange limbs move

blue lights and sirens:  
everyone wants my address –  
pinioned on the grass,

split like a zipper,  
rib cage undone on the rock:  
drowning in slow air,

too heavy to breathe  
till the needle's sweet release –  
field decompression:

MRT medic  
spearing bits of bone aside  
inserting the drain...

while tinsel glitters  
on cardio-thoracic  
conversations drift:

we damaged addicts  
polish our obsessive quests –  
fags, fast bikes, hard climbs –

John with half a lung  
rolls up under the blankets  
and shuffles outside

evensung voices  
fall and rise, fall and rise up:  
carols fade to dream

as twilight gathers  
we lie where the luck landed  
propped up for the night

a few survivors  
from fortune's whimsical wheel  
plotting as we heal





# CRUTCH CASSIDY ‘N’ THE SUNDANCE ‘KID’, MASSOURI MAY 2015, THE OK TRAIL

*Kalymnos has become so popular that a walk down Massouri’s main street inevitably leads to numerous encounters with friends many of whom you are more likely to meet there than in Llanberis or Hathersage.*

By Colin Greenhow

The coach jerked to a halt and she ‘n’ me fell out onto Main St, Massouri. It was hot! High Noon! The town was dead! Bereft of climbers ‘n’ scooters, it felt like Clint had just left town. Inside the shady clapboard of the Glaros Bar Capability Sue welcomed us warmly. Sheriff Steve grinned happily and swiftly moved to provide us with refreshments, the Terry Fergusons ‘n’ liquor slid down our parched throats. Thoughts of Manch. airport and onward travel faded – we were back. Not yet in the saddle but within easy reach of the first hitchin’ bolts. Back on the OK trail we headed west towards the sinking sun. The trail threaded a tenuous way across steep rocks ‘n’ cliffs plunging into the sea but my companion, surefooted and nimble as a mountain goat led us safely to the scattered hamlet of Arginonta, Katerina’s Bar was located by the braying of its donkey and barking dogs. The bar is no longer the wildest haunt of more prosperous times. The whisky – bottle – slidin’ barman ‘n’ gaudy underdressed floozies have long gone but some things never change, the Boss Poppi is one mean cookie; if her pig ‘n’ squid don’t get you them honey-balls sure will. Her guard-dog launched at us.

A long shadow fell across the floor. We turned; a cowboy approached us and dropped his still smoking rack to the floor. His wide brimmed hat shaded his face but I knew it well, CRAGFAST WORNIT! His shifty Northern eyes bore into us. He looked harmless enough. Weather beaten ‘n’ bent through overmuch shucking-steers, Wild Country ‘n’ wilder wimin ‘n’ whisky – but I knew his reputation as bein’ the slickest quick-draw in Pardshaw Hole!

“Did you bring the rope”? - he drawled. Silently Sheila passed it to him. “Which way did you come”? Sensing trouble Poppi stepped forward. Without flinching I replied “We came by the OK trail” He looked puzzled, I elaborated “the trail is named after OK” Poppi burst in “Whose OK”? “Great idea” I replied, “set em up Poppi – big ones”.

## **Key players:**

Crutch Cassidy – newly re-hipped Colin Greenhow

The Kid – Sheila

Cragfast Wornit – Colin Wornham

Right:  
*What a place to  
climb! Ogawayama,  
Japan*

Photograph:  
*Ruairidh Finlayson  
collection*



# FIVA FEVER

*With its vast Troll Wall (Europe's El Cap) Norway's Romsdal valley enjoyed a fairly brief period of popularity in the 70s as Europe's big wall climbing arena. Subsequently the generally wet summer weather and some mega rock falls have made the area less attractive.*

By Bruce Woodley



Rattling along in a whisky-bought Taxi  
Passing sodden hayrows laying flaxy.  
Our own wet hair hanging in our eyes,  
Shivering birch, clouds of biting flies.  
Amidst the bracken we set our domes and awning,  
As looming ancient walls sneer and offer warning.  
Walking by the River Rauma's roar –  
Trollkjerringa glimpsed through a hazy door –  
Wringing misshapen clouds of Pearl  
Her fingers twisted towers curl:  
The Troll Hag beckons through the mist.  
A dark glint in her eyes of phenocryst,  
Seductively she parts her grey white shrouds  
Revealing cold granitic joys high in the clouds.  
Frightened, we still want a short stay room,  
Fiva Fever for the crags which loom.

*Gordon Stainforth's account of his Trollveggen epic had me taking up loft caving in search of this poem, submitted as part of a creative writing module at Sheffield City Poly (Hallam University) in 1984.*

Above:  
*Romsdal, the River  
Rauma, and the  
upper part of the  
Troll Wall 1974*

Photograph:  
*Don Sargeant*

Our own youthful foray up the *Swedish Route* left me feeling a bit strung out on the descent, but ours was not the full-on horror show experienced by the Stainforth siblings. Though for Simon 'two pitch' Lee and his just-made-buddy Canadian '5.11' Tom, there was to be a steep learning curve. As a fellow Devonian I'd stretched all my four brain cells to suggest that since Simon had done a handful of routes in the Peak he

ought to be able to just keep going for a bit longer on *The Rimmon*, after all he'd often had to keep hay baling late into the night, hadn't he? By his milestone pitch 3 (of 33) he'd discovered that Tom's impressive, stateside Big Wall crack skills – weren't. He'd been top roped up one. But then Si's dad was never really that forthcoming on just how many fields he'd cut either.



As the *Svenska Rute* crossed *The Rimmon*, we passed them a day and half in to their 'trip' and a morning into ours. I cursed Tom for knocking a stone down and Si for stealing my comfy boots. Later from our bivi below the Grey Wall we could still hear them shouting at each other late into the Noggy gloaming.

Topping out, our second night was spent in a fortuitously found billberry patch amid a wasteland of scree and snow. Getting up for a pee I surveyed a sea of clag below and stars above; should I wake Steve while there was sufficient light to move on? Being a dozy Janner I let the sleeping dog lie, only to wake up hours later in a pea-souper of Dartmoor proportions. At least for Fur Tor I'd always had a map and compass. I'd yet to learn that in the mountains getting to the top was only half the battle. We scree stumbled for two hours and did two roped stream crossings before deciding that we were heading the wrong way. Weary hours later we hit tracks and, finally, the welcome sight of a five-foot fibreglass troll. Our support team was waiting in the cafe and coppering up the four of us shared two coffees. Our concerns about the others were soon to evaporate with their soggy arrival. Simon's grin said it all, though Tom just swayed gently, glasses askew, lips foam flecked and shivering in wet jeans and wool, lumberjack shirt.

Sixup, we were down off the Trollstigen Pass's vicious hairpins and cruising along Isterdalen before we ran out of petrol, but by then the sun was out and nothing mattered because we were basking in our first 'Big Wall Buzz.'

Later, sun bathing on the summit of The Romsdalthorn, we were woken by a dull

detonation that echoed around the Dale. Two kilometres away a debris cloud slowly grew to obscure the whole of Trollveggen; as if in slow motion blocks the size of silage trailers cartwheeled and became minis crashing down the scree slope toward the oak scrub where our tents lay. In a laconic line worthy of his lecturer, Mr Peter Livesey, Steve said: "I think... we should take up fishing."

POSTSCRIPT: Just as global warming has affected the Alps, 14 years after our ascents, huge rockfalls in 1997/98 affected both *The Rimmon* and *The Swedish Routes*. Arve and Halvor, our men in Andalsnes, tell me the former has only been repeated once in winter, whilst the latter copped for a lot of debris, but has been repeated several times since – go get it done, quick. The 'popularity' of these routes dwindled further after the wall's base was declared a No Fly Zone, following the rescue of an injured climber from the intro slabs and a huge rockfall hitting the spot where five minutes earlier the helicopter had been hovering.

If you're reading this it's highly likely you'll have suffered from one of the many strains of Fiva Fever yourself. Whilst especially prevalent in the teen and 20 age bracket, the affliction can last throughout middle age and judging by the number of 'more mature' climbers I see at our local wall, training and planning trips, there'll be a cure for the common cold long before many of us manage to shake off those unmistakable symptoms of a climberly contagion which 30 years ago I christened Fiva Fever.

# MOROCCAN SPRING

*Acres of unclimbed clean rock, readily available information, good weather, cheap flights and welcoming locals (especially if you wish to buy a carpet) have combined to make Morocco's Anti-Atlas a great destination for an early season trad climbing trip.*

By Roger Grimshaw

**I**t was the dogs that woke me. The feral pack – anything from 10 to 20 animals of indeterminate parentage roamed Tafraout in varying states of humour depending on the last feed – normally worked quietly through the bins on the street. Now they were in full frenzy beneath the light of a bright full moon. Pete got up. ‘Christ,’ was all he said.

I shifted into the chill of the pre-dawn air and looked out from our little eyrie at the top of the Rocher Peintes hotel. There, trotting down the street, was a huge boar. The dogs were not happy but kept well away from those

big tusks. I shivered. We had found a boar nest up in the hills the previous day.

Out on the edge of the Sahara, Tafraout had the air of a frontier town, hills of the Anti-Atlas to one side, the desert edge to the other. Camels wandered disdainfully down the main street, tended by hard-eyed men in blue robes and burnous; orange sellers squatted down, their stalls next to shops selling shoes or satellite dishes. This was climbing in the raw. Only 250km or so from the airport in Agadir, the drive alone is worth the effort on a mix of narrow roads, some unsurfaced and with trucks that take no prisoners.

The climbing is pretty mixed. We had books and maps and we had a secret weapon. Egg had spent quite a lot of time here and knew the district pretty well. He kindly dismissed our early fumbleings and guided us to a secret oasis, a pool hidden in a narrow gorge, sheltered by trees and covered in lush green weed – Palm Tree Gorge. A small frog croaked out a challenge.

Pete shimmied up a VS above the pool and I followed. When next it was my turn, I took the other VS and knocked a sizeable chunk off into the pool, getting a severe telling off from the indignant bullfrog. It was a place for a leisurely day – too hot for real exertion though Egg got on with his new route next door.

Right:  
*Pete Jones on Jarrad  
(VS), Palm Tree  
Gorge*

Photograph:  
*Roger Grimshaw*





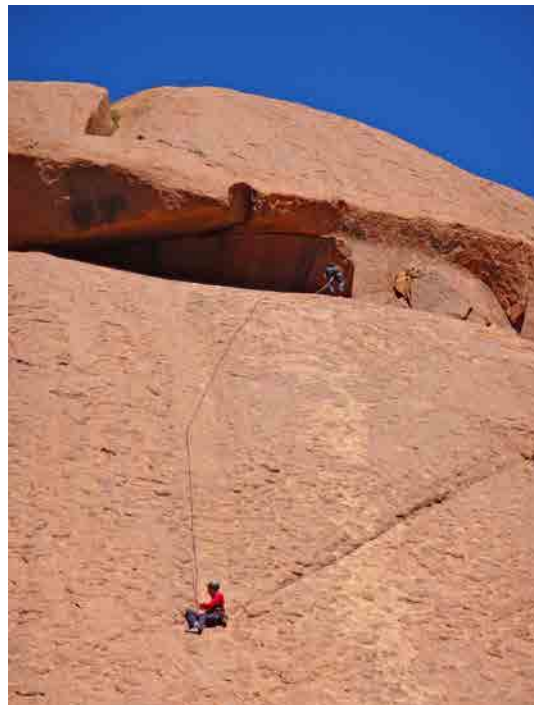
We set out to sample the climbing and the local life. The oranges were mere pence. When I tried to give the guy more money he refused. His price was fair and that was that. We took the oranges down to the granite south of town where a series of huge elephant's arses and smaller boulders rose above the track. The guys took off up some nameless slab towards a bolt, winking in the sunlight some 30 metres higher. I went for a walk in the desert where the amount of rock, presumably unclimbed, is truly awesome. It was hot and I hid in the shade and watched lizards.

The best and easily accessible climbing seemed to be on the north side of Jebel el Kest so we took our dodgy car to go and take a look. I should explain that we had booked a hire car which was supposed to seat four and had luggage space for two bags. As we were three we figured we could get two cases in the boot and one in a seat. Not so and we had to do a deal with the lad and take a larger car. Surprisingly it cost no more and we found out why when we located it off to the side of the car park – rent-a-wreck with the boot secured by a length of wire.

Still it went and we were in no position to bargain and as it had got us over the mountains to Tafraout we figured it would get us to the Kasbah Tizourgane and the valley to its south. The route winds over a long and difficult pass and inevitably we got stuck behind a truck. When we got to the top the guy took off and we followed along the flat. Suddenly he slowed and pulled over and I took the opportunity to get past. Three hundred metres further on I was flagged down by the traffic cops who had witnessed my

manoeuvre, apparently illegal (the road was rather narrow). This did not seem the time to pretend no knowledge of French – the usual tactic – and I slid a 100 Dirham note into my passport. The cops however seemed content to hold us up for 15 minutes, whilst the bastard truck driver disappeared, and gave me a very comprehensive harangue before letting us go on our way, cash intact. Our friends in the other car had stopped to offer moral support and followed us along to the Kasbah.

It is a truly remarkable sight, built up on a hilltop and approached through a series of doors and narrow corridors. A village fortress, it is now part ancient monument, part guest house and is favoured as a base by many climbers. Its downside (apart from the doors and corridors) is that it is dry. You can take your own booze but somehow sitting outside the Amandiers hotel with an iced beer to hand seems to make up for the hassle of the drive. The Amandiers is the only place selling alcohol.



Left:  
*Hannigan and  
Jones alone in a sea  
of granite*

Photograph:  
*Roger Grimshaw*

Below Left::  
*Martin Bennett on  
Ksar Rock*

Below Right::  
*Pete on Sahara (VS)  
Ksar Rock*

Photographs:  
*Roger Grimshaw*

The valley south of the Kasbah has so much rock I am surprised we did not crash whilst rubber-necking. In the event Ksar rock provided a short easy approach and a wealth of great climbing marred only by getting the rope stuck after a lengthy abseil. Much swearing, cajoling and tugging finally freed it.

We enjoyed a series of fabulous meals in Taфраout – the Amandiers was a draw, its wine list being just about adequate and iced beer sublime, but we were fed in what amounted to people's homes, lounging on cushions and, on one famous occasion, in a labourers' shack, behind a plastic sheet at £4 a head including all the orange juice you could drink.

Another day in searing heat saw us seeking a wall high on a hill in the Lion's Face area – we failed to find the wall and spent the day on a couple of crags new routing – no great shakes, you saw a line and then went up it. When we got down we must have looked desperate as we huddled in the shade. A local lass brought out a jug of iced water and some tin mugs, explaining that she could not invite us in as her husband was away. A truly lovely gesture.

The spring weather (this was February) changed and gave us some excitement climbing in the rain – and then it snowed. We had endured a miserable evening and awoke to white stuff on the tops of the Atlas.





The only other adventure of note was when two of our party decided that climbing rocks was ok but climbing Jebel el Kest at 2539m took priority. They summited no problem but got mislaid on the way down and fetched up in some nameless village in the hills. They eventually persuaded a local man to act as taxi driver to take them back to their car. They describe the descent of the valley as the most terrifying incident of the trip, bald tyres squealing and the steering wheel disengaged from anything purposeful through a good 20 degrees of travel. Shutting eyes was deemed a satisfactory way of reducing the stress.

By contrast the drive back to the airport was mostly a piece of cake, being in daylight. The cop of whom we asked the way seemed most amused as he pointed to the road sign that his car was obscuring.

We might go again.



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Right: *Des and Brian new routing*

Photograph: *Roger Grimshaw*

# DESERT TOWERS

*Paul's penchant for extremely bold ground up new routing first became apparent in Borrowdale in the late 50s and early 60s. He subsequently spent many years living in the USA where he continued pioneering bold new routes. Utah's many sandstone towers and walls have provided him with almost limitless opportunities for exciting exploration. Why climb these Towers? Layton Kor famously said "not because they are there but because they might not be there for much longer"*

By Paul Ross

Sandstone towers are always steep and unlike the fashion of today's shorter climbs you cannot come down from above clean it, practise it, fix gear, mark the best holds etc. They have to be faced head-on, ground-up, on-sight, cleaned on lead with protection, both cam and bolt, placed on lead. Most on the sandstone towers in the deserts of Utah have, on their first ascents, been climbed with aid either partially or completely. Later on some of these towers will become free climbs as bolts to link cracks, for example, are already in place and much of the loose rock has been removed.

Since I returned to the States we have climbed 40 virgin towers as well as a number of new routes on a different face on a tower

that had already been climbed. It had been three years since I last climbed a first ascent on a desert tower as we had been concentrating on a vast area of mainly slabs and walls of the Eastern Reef in the San Rafael Swell... to date over 180 new routes. This is the story of one such first ascent on a tower that we elected to do on America's Election Day, November 6th 2012.

The tower is one of a cluster of towers known as Family Butte. The particular tower was named Mother Tower as it was the tallest of the group; it had been climbed to its top by the much shorter north side. A few years ago I had a look at these towers and saw that the South Face of the Mother Tower, and perhaps the most spectacular of the group, was still unclimbed. I mentioned this to my son and he and a mutual friend, Shingo, and I decided we would have a crack at it. The weather was perfect with above normal temps for November of about 70 degrees F but it does get dark earlier and down to freezing at night. They had only two days off work and had about a four-hour drive from Salt Lake City to get there so by the time we reached the foot of the tower it was into the afternoon. We assumed, as did happen, that we would not be

Right:  
*Rising Sons Tower  
First Ascent Team,  
left to right: Paul  
Ross, Andrew  
Ross and Shingo  
Ohkawa*

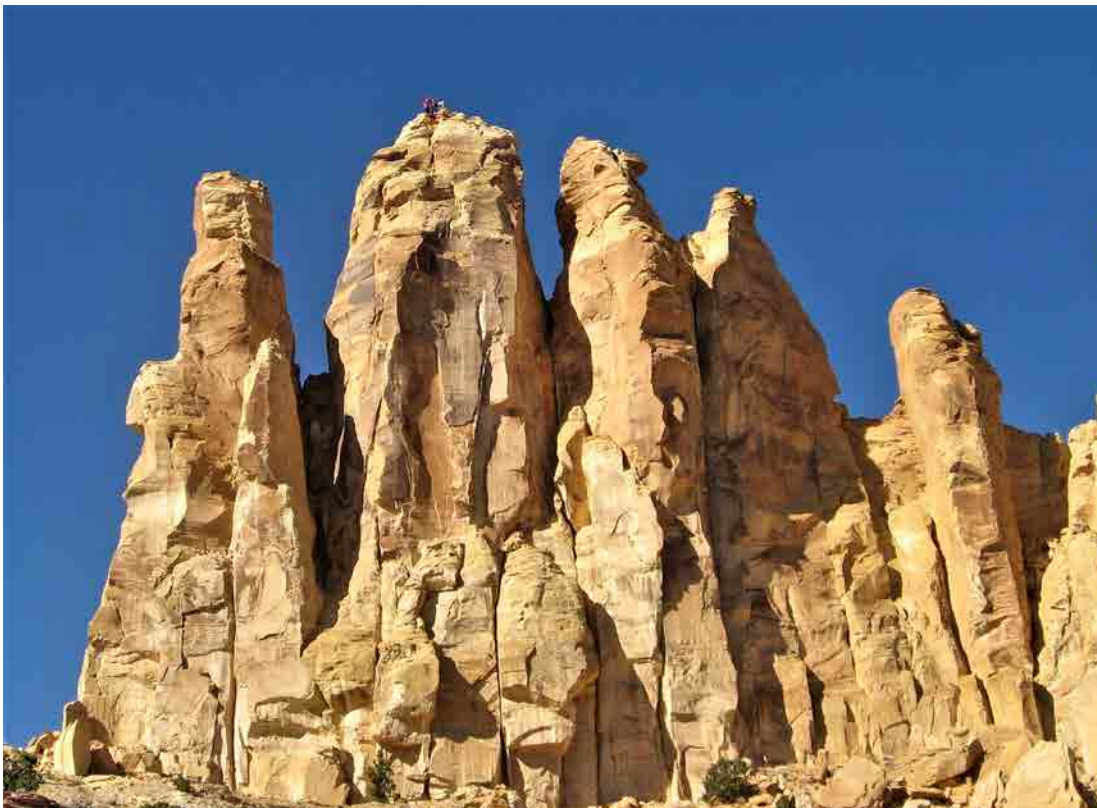


Photograph:  
*Paul Ross collection*

successful that first day so we took along a 60m static to leave at our high point. This we would jumar up on the second day and continue the ascent.

The first pitch was very awkward, overhung and at its base was an off-width crack that was presented to Shingo as this would be his introduction to a first ascent of a sandstone tower. Using 4", 5" and 6" cams he thrashed up the first pitch covering himself with a fine dust from the good but unused sandstone. Andrew followed and convinced him he should also have the experience of the superb looking second pitch. For the time being I wisely stayed on the ground taking photos as rockfall

from the leader, accidental or by cleaning, can be hazardous to your health. Aid climbing can be slow. Shingo was experiencing the difference between aiding sandstone cracks versus granite, cams do at times rip out of the softer rock. We set a time of 5pm for retreat that gave us an hour to set up a descent and the hike back to camp before darkness set in... most importantly it would by then be cocktail hour. Shingo reached, what he decided would be, the top of the second pitch... fixed the ropes and he and Andrew who had still to leave the top of the first pitch descended to earth... an easy pleasant day for me.



Left:  
*Rising Sons Tower  
with the First  
Ascent Team on top*

Photograph:  
*Paul Ross collection*



Back at camp the beer flowed and when my son thought perhaps I'd had one too many suggested that, as I had found the line, I should lead the final headwall pitch. The alcohol-induced courage worked and I sort of agreed. I woke during the night and realised what I had done and spent some time mulling over my fate. I had plenty of excuses, age for one and an injured right arm for another, as well as only climbing about five routes on slabs over the previous seven months, however, I have always climbed off the couch so to speak and on-sight so that would be no real change for this adventure.

I do not know anyone that likes jumaring but it had to be done. Shingo took off first on the static and Andy jumared the fixed climbing rope to clean the cams etc placed on the ascent of the second pitch. I followed

on the static hating every minute. We got organised on the small stance setting me up like a Christmas tree for the final pitch to the top... Many quickdraws, a few cams, drill, hammer, spanner, blow puffer, slings, bag of bolts and trail rope, so much weight it felt like I could hardly get off the ledge, my harness threatening to be dragged off my hips. After an initial struggle the rest of the pitch went smoothly and the top was reached. Climbing a tower has the satisfaction of actually arriving on a true summit. These desert towers always have superb views and often no sight or sound of other people, tranquillity personified. We took the always happy summit photos of the team and abseiled off. Back at camp we sorted out the tangle of gear – time for home after another true rock-climbing adventure that would keep us happy... at least for a while.

Right:  
*Rising Sons Tower*  
*First Ascent*

Photograph:  
*Paul Ross collection*





Left:  
*Pitch 2 Rising Sons  
Tower*

Photograph:  
*Paul Ross collection*



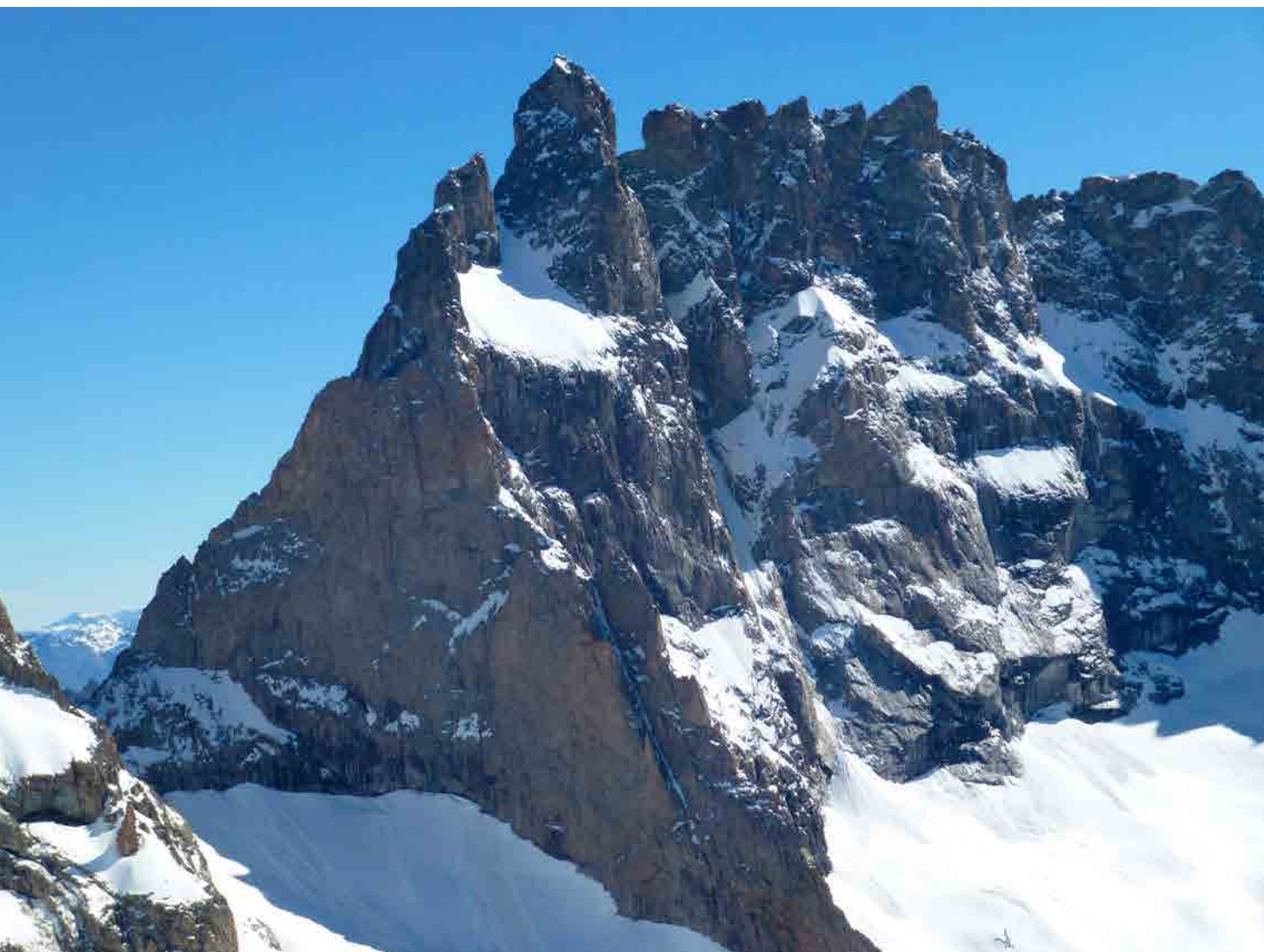
Below:  
*La Meije*  
*Promontoire Ridge*

Photograph:  
*Simon Laker*

# MADONNA ON THE MEIJE

*La Meije is one of the great peaks of the Dauphine offering a great collection of classics and enjoying better weather than the central Alps or Mont Blanc. Even by the “easy way” it still offers a challenging day out.*

By Simon Laker



The walk up was hot and steamy under a cloudless Carolina blue sky, exactly as it had been for weeks.

Re-acquainting ourselves with the bearded, weathered Promontoire guardian, our answer received a very quizzical narrow eyed look.

"*The Voie Normale*, descending the same way – really, pourquoi?" We read nothing into it, even when he said that nine ropes were leaving at three and another three at four, all for the traverse.

A busy Bastille weekend, so we were happy to leave later, go faster.

The usual hot, noisy, sleepless night was helped a little by the Promontoire having the best approach to shutters – that is, none. Why is there always one person (invariably French) who insists on closing them, as if it's only possible to sleep in the blackness of a coffin and the heat of a sauna, neither of which are very good for a claustrophobe like me.

A mumbling breakfast and we were off, unfortunately still in the dark as my new hi-tech head torch had found a way to switch itself on during the walk-in.

However, the first pitch by braille led to fun ridge romping and a dawn sparking crystals, showing the way.

Traversing leftwards we caught up the three o'clock tail end Charlies and moved down into a slabby gully. The Charlie's attempted a more direct line that landed them in trouble and us above.

Mostly moving together, but some thoughtful pitches at about Severe, led up to traversing ledges, a tricky chimney and the famous Pas Du Chat that passed by with a lovely quick step traverse.

A little delay on ledges across to the Carré Glacier but they waved us through as we snapped on spikes, whipped out axes and nipped across perfect early morning neve.

Going into full continental mode, we left our sacs at the Col and stepped up a gear until under the 7m slab, at the top of which an early bird was belayed 'à cheval'.

Pete was having none of this, so tip toed up the delicate slab, took one look round the corner, shouted it looked fantastic, dropped in a nut and we moved together through the final early risers and up the glorious summit ridge.

A keen wind was blowing but the views were stunning. Mont Blanc emerging through a cascade of rolling clouds, peaks retreating into multi shades of blue, merging on an infinite horizon.

Below Left:  
*Pete Finclair with Carré Glacier below*

Below Right:  
*Peaks retreating into multi shades of blue, climber: Pete Finklaire*

Photographs:  
*Simon Laker*





Right:  
*Just before the  
abseils started,  
a long way to go.*

Photograph:  
*Pete Finklaire*

Below:  
*Pete and the  
Madonna*

Photograph:  
*Simon Laker*

We'd made good time, only 9am, but time to go.

As I reluctantly pulled away, from the corner of my eye I spotted the Madonna lying carelessly, abandoned, fallen off her summit perch.

Now as any lapsed Catholic knows, there isn't really any such thing. You may have given up the attendance and practice, but the Catholic guilt and superstition still remain. I couldn't even look; it seemed blasphemous, lying there, as if thrown away. Made of wood, about 2 feet high, the body highly weathered, eyes black as coal, a searing glare that bored into your soul.

I tried to creep away, silent, reverent. Then a shout, "just take a pic of this will you". I stopped, cringed and turned round. Yes, Pete had the Mother of Christ held in the crook of his arm and a massive grin on his face.

I took the picture. As the shutter clicked, for the first time in three weeks a cloud drifted across the sun, the north wind moaned and the temperature plummeted 15 degs.

Maybe coincidence but I wasn't taking any chances.

'Let's get out of here'.

The wind was now strong enough to push us around as we moved down the ridge and were glad to find the first abseil. However, with 1000m to descend, our single rope strategy was immediately debunked. I reached the knot only to find the next abseil station 15 feet away, requiring some tricky down climbing. This set the scene for the rest of the day. Every abseil was short. We lost count but not a single one reached to where we needed.

The Madonna was starting her revenge.

Reaching the sacs felt like the end of our troubles, a quick careful traverse across now slushy snow on the Carré (it's a big drop if you slip) and we found the beginning of the main abseil line – Except it wasn't.

I found myself hanging in space at the knot (again) with absolutely no sign of any further gear. Climbing back up an overhanging, rotten, off-width crack with rubble discharging at regular intervals left me less than comfortable with our situation and really starting to rue the Madonna indiscretion.

A flanking search and we found the infamous, much heralded, guardian's triangular karabiner. This should have been the start of a rapid abseil piste down into the gully slabs.

It wasn't.

A single 25m abseil only got us into more trouble and onto less and less convincing gear. Some required backing up, some required tat changing, pegs with rings looked like something from the 30's, faded 7mm cord apparently stuck into compacted mud. At one point Pete was left tied to a cam in the middle of a vertical sea of granite whilst I took the



rope to find a better line. He didn't say much but the half hour I had the rope and was out of sight must have felt like a very long time.

Certainly the smile when I landed and flicked the cord to his outstretched hand was genuine enough.

Hour after hour of down-climbing, abseiling, tying on, untying, soloing, searching, backing up, eventually led to the final ridge above the hut. Tired now and worried about a silly mistake we slowed further, belayed on terrain that was a romp in the morning but finally arrived at the hut, eight hours after leaving the summit, twice as long as it took to get up. The guardian met us, smile on his face – he knew.

Even though it was heading to evening we didn't really consider staying, so quickly set off for La Bérarde. Night over-took us some way below the Chatelleret and with one torch between us we stumbled on down.

Suddenly a single rumble was followed by sounds of the Somme. Bastille eve was in full swing and fireworks lit up the valley below, a cacophony of sound reverberated around the peaks.

It seemed nice of them to lay on a celebration for us and we completed the descent by cherry bombs and cosmic demons, arriving at the van around midnight.

A fantastic classic, great climbing, wonderful ambience and a few lessons learned:

- a) always pay attention to a hut custodian's subtle view on your intentions
- b) if doing the Meije *Voie Normale* in descent take two ropes – or better still do the traverse.
- c) if you see the fallen Madonna, just quietly walk by, don't disturb her and most definitely don't pick her up for a cuddle.



# MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON

*Many of Africa's great mountains are not generally well known probably, at least in part, due to the political instability of some countries. Here is a little taster of what is on offer for the adventurous.*

By Rya Tibawi

**T**he Rwenzori Mountains of Uganda are known by this intriguing epithet which conjures up in my mind desolation, bleakness and isolation. The latter is certainly true for the mountain range lies on the border between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, so is on the far western edges of Uganda. Getting there from the international airports at Entebbe or Kampala, takes most of a day.

We were a group of four who set out on a trek to explore the Mountains of the Moon. One of our group had been doing VSO for seven months in Uganda and never once saw

the Rwenzori as they were always enveloped in cloud. He was astonished to have a clear view of them as we drove from Fort Portal south to Kasese and then Kilembe. Another of our group is a regular visitor to Uganda as he and his wife support and help to administer a charity running a secondary school and health centre. The remaining two of us had never previously been to Uganda and relied heavily on the prior knowledge and experience of our two companions. For instance, they knew when to haggle, when to tip, and when to check up on arrangements and agreements.

Right:  
*View of the  
Rwenzori  
Mountains*

Photograph:  
*Peter Cusa*





All four of us came on the trek expecting to have heavy rain, poor visibility and extensive bog; such was the reputation of the Rwenzori. However, our knowledgeable friends had selected a period in the so-called dry season i.e. early February and their choice proved ideal. A short-lived thunderstorm and downpour on the first afternoon, and some light rain during the first evening were our only experiences of rain during six full days.

Each day saw us move up from one zone of vegetation to another. We started at 1450m on the savannah with its beautiful brightly coloured large butterflies and moved up into the tropical rain forest. From a distance we could see blue monkeys high up in the trees

eating their fruits and throwing down their large stones which were bigger than avocado stones. After the rainforest there came the bamboo zone, the heather zone and the alpine zone, each with its own plants, birds and wildlife. Mostly we heard the birds but did not see them, except the Turaco in flight showing deep red wings. A few times we saw Duiker, a small chestnut brown antelope.

We expected bogs and sure enough there were bogs but not as extensive or as all engulfing as we had anticipated. Scottish bogs came to mind, as there, we sprang from tussock to tussock and made detours around the worst parts. In places there were branches placed to make our passage easier, in a few places there

Below:

*Lake at night*

Photograph:

*Peter Cusa*





were even planks and boards. On our way up we saw several men carrying huge long planks, one per person, which they dumped at a boggy area, obviously for fixing at a future date, so that the walking will improve in time. Crossing streams was either by boulder hopping or on bridges of branches laid lengthways so we needed to balance our way across. Our very last bridge of the trek was a wobbly bridge, in fact a bridge of connected struts with mesh sides, which we crossed one at a time.

Ladders made out of branches were another feature, with on one occasion a long metal ladder, quite a luxury. We wondered how many people had carried that up. At least branches can be locally sourced! In a few places some very frayed lengths of rope hung down beside the ladders of branches, as though tempting the trekker to pull on them; without a doubt they were well past their expiry date.

Toilets at each camp were of the hole in the ground variety but seated ones were available at two camps and greeted with much enthusiasm! They were always situated at some distance from the sleeping, cooking and eating areas, so night time visits were often an adventurous outing. The descent to the loo at Mutinda camp (more below) consisted of rickety branches forming some sort of a bridge but in the dark none of us braved it.

The camps were like staging posts, each very different from the others but always small. The first, Sine, was a wooden hut at 2596m sleeping 10 people, but we were the only occupants and this continued to be the case and made for a much more pleasant trek. We passed Kalalama camp at 3147m on our way to Mutinda camp at 3685m. The latter was a large tent, sleeping four, under a huge overhanging rock which was always in shadow and therefore cold.

A large rat was sighted here disappearing into the recesses of the rock, its size a testament to an abundance of food. The highest camp was Bugata at 4062m, which comprised three small half-domed structures with some kind of heavy duty synthetic green material spread over them. We had one windy night there and the flapping of this material made us all believe we would be blown away. Two cold nights were spent there in order to facilitate our ascent of Weismann's Peak. The final hut, Samalira, at 3170m was well positioned with views down into the valley. Once darkness came temperatures fell rapidly and we tended to retreat to our sleeping bags. Water had to be brought from rivers and lakes, so one washing up bowl of water had to be shared between the four of us when we wanted to wash ourselves.

Right:  
*Makeshift ladder of  
branches*

Photograph:  
*Peter Cusa*



Fires were made with either dead wood from the surrounding area or charcoal.

There were two peaks on this trek. The first was Mutinda Lookout, 3925m, which we scrambled up early in the morning before breakfast, making a three and a half hour round trip. The views were spectacular; in the far distance and far below was our starting point and all around was the impressive Rwenzori range as far as the eye could see. The second summit was Weismann's Peak, 4620m. We left in the dark at about 6:15 and reached the summit about 10:30. The last one and a half hours were scrambling which made it more interesting. Unfortunately that

day there was swirling cloud on the summit with only occasional glimpses of the view. There was a strong wind, making it feel very cold. A few patches of snow testified to the temperature. A longer trek of ten days could take in higher summits but these would require mountaineering experience, with the use of ice axe, crampons and ropes.

The Rwenzori are a Ugandan National Park and a World Heritage Site, so fees are payable. The ranger who collected our park fees commented on us being a group of senior citizens but said that the oldest person so far had been a 78 year old Canadian woman. I was impressed as our six days were tough



Left:  
*View from the  
camp under the  
overhanging rock*

Photograph:  
*Peter Cusa*

going. The ranger had warned us of both terrain and altitude and both warnings were well founded. Concentration was needed to keep a sure footing at all times, trips and tumbles occurred each day. The altitude was another battle as we ascended relatively rapidly I, for one, was puffing and panting far too much.

We had two guides and a trainee guide with us: Agabo Rauban, Remegio and Daniel, who answered our many questions about plants, trees, birds and animals, and who led the way with surprising surefootedness despite wearing wellies – scrambling and boulder hopping included. We were offered wellies for the bogs but preferred our walking boots.

There was an intriguing use of words by the guides. The way ahead was described to us as “hectic”. We decided this might mean “challenging”. Then we were advised to wear a “headsock” when it was cold and windy. That term was very appealing – it should become a fixture in the English language. On the first evening we were assured that we were “a strong group”; by the fifth day they acknowledged that they say that to everyone. Good psychology was also at play when they would tell us how long the next day was e.g. eight hours, then half way through we discovered that in fact it would take us less and that we were much nearer our goal. This always lifted our spirits.

There were no other trekkers until towards the end when we came across a lone Swiss man who seemed to be attempting too much in too little time and as a result was feeling unwell. We enjoyed this sense of isolation and remoteness, reinforced by the fact that mobiles were useless. If we had been in difficulties,

there would have been no external assistance. The short length of rope carried by our trainee guide was clearly there for psychological reassurance rather than for any practical use.

Two disasters have struck this area of the Rwenzori. One was a huge fire in 2012, so that much of the lower alpine zone consisted of the burnt skeletons of trees. Setting fire to vegetation seems a common phenomenon in rural Uganda but this fire seemed to be unrelated to that practice, being so far from human habitation or agriculture. The second disaster was the great flood of 2013 when water, rocks and earth poured down the mountainsides and smashed a large part of Kilembe. It was shocking to see the extent of the devastation and how it must have affected local people, and still does today.

We used Rwenzori Trekking Services, the organisation that has set up the camps and maintains the trails. We were impressed by our guides – friendly, knowledgeable, keen to please, and by the background assistance of porters who were almost invisible as their duties never coincided with our plodding.

Driving to and from the Rwenzori gave plenty of opportunity to observe the way of life. Shacks line the roads with people often selling their produce, mostly plantain. The staple food in Uganda is matoki, mashed boiled plantain, eaten with a sauce. People on bicycles carried huge lengths of wood at right angles to their bikes, threatening decapitation to anyone in their way or offering themselves as victims if a passing vehicle struck their planks. Motorbikes are the local taxis (known as boda-boda), carrying two or three passengers, mostly without helmets, some riding side saddle, or else transporting all sorts

of goods. These motorbikes weave in and out of traffic in a suicidal manner. Some roadsides have piles of what look like second hand European clothes and shoes, possibly this is the destination of unsold clothes from charity shops? (*Ed. apparently discarded western clothing sent to Africa has destabilised the indigenous African textile industry leading to significant unemployment; so much for saving the planet by*

*recycling*). White mannequins display Western clothes for the Ugandan customer. One stall had the banner “Made in EU (Turkey)”; clearly they know more about the EU than those of us who live within it.

The Mountains of the Moon provided us with a great overall experience and belied their largely negative reputation. They are to be recommended.

Below:  
*Rocky ridges in  
the Rwenzori  
Mountains*

Photograph:  
*Peter Cusa*





# WALKING ZION'S WILD SIDE WITH THE ANGELS

*America's Canyonlands offer some superb but often tough walking/trekking amongst spectacular scenery; just remember that at the wrong time of year expect to get very hot.*

By Geoff Milburn

If ever there was a laid back guide it was Pete. He had met us at San Francisco airport and, after we had tired of the Golden Gate, sea lions and Alcatraz, he got us on the move for Yosemite to eyeball bears, pick our way lazily up El Cap, and revel in the autumn colours around the spectacular falls. Giant redwood forests distracted us for a while until, after Bodie's ghost mining town and Death Valley, we headed off for Zion, the first of many canyons which we were to roam during a three-week grand tour which included the Grand Canyon, Monument Valley, home of John Ford's westerns, and Joshua Tree.

The first surprise was that I didn't quite expect to spend our nights in the bottom of the canyon whose plunging walls blazed like fire in the late afternoon sun. Secondly, I expected to go down into a canyon, as per the Grand Canyon, and then have to climb out. It was Pete who first got me motivated by pointing out a tortuous trail up to the high rim of the canyon. He hadn't actually done that one, but intended to do so the next day. I determined to make an early move to get a head start, he

seemed far too fit and young to keep pace with on the uphill trail.

After the park bus dropped me off at the start of a trail I tightened my boot laces and set off at a steady lope. The first few bends were easy but, as the angle steepened, I started to puff a bit. Looking up, to my annoyance, I spotted a lone figure moving smoothly upwards and promptly decided that it could only be Pete and that he had left early without telling me. That was it, I suddenly had motivation and set off up at a rare old lick. Up to that point I had not really seen the point in having a rim which extended for many miles as a target. Surely it would never be better than a nice shapely peak?

The figure ahead of me seemed to slow up slightly so, with some satisfaction, I redoubled my efforts to zig-zag up the steep path with the endless hairpin bends. As the air was still cool moving fast was no problem. I quickly began to reduce the distance between myself and 'Pete' who hadn't seemed to have noticed that I was bent on catching him up at the earliest opportunity. The closer I got to him the more I began to suspect that it wasn't Pete after all.

When he eventually turned off on a side trail I scanned below me, anxiously, convinced then that the real Pete had kindly given me a head start and was now racing up to overtake me with the smug satisfaction of a super-fit athlete. Not knowing just where he was, I became paranoid and went up a gear. Through a gully the wind sighed gently amongst the trees and I got my second wind, enabling me to head off leftwards up a steep ramp where the view suddenly opened up.

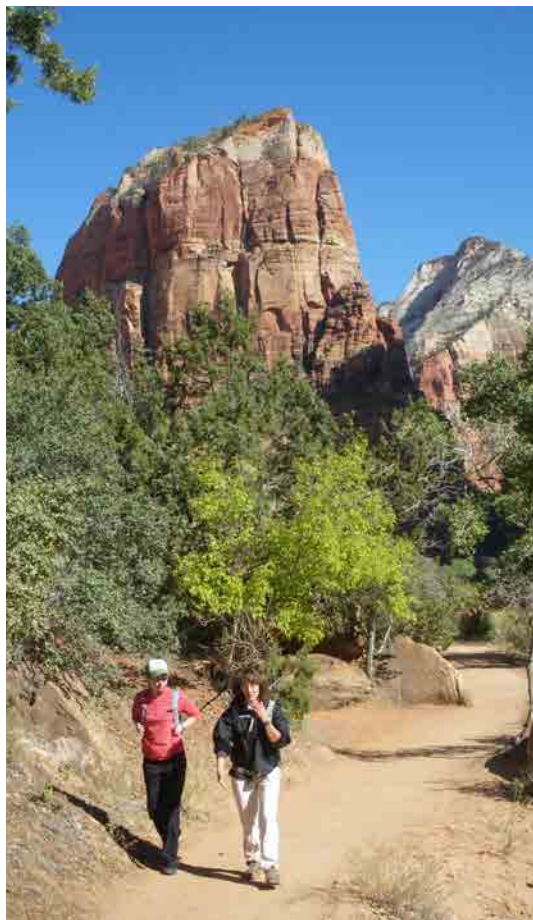
Far below the blue river snaked away through the trees, while all around me white-banded cliffs plunged away in all directions. Once on the rim the going was easy, but it was hard not to stop every few yards to feast my eyes on the glories of such a marvel of nature. It was vast and hard to take in all at one go but, what stopped me in my tracks, was the outline of Angels Landing, across the valley and looking for all the world like some huge crouching lion.

The scale was impossible to comprehend, other than the fact that less than two hours previously I had been staring up at the great cliffs of Angels Landing in some degree of awe. The more I looked, the more I just couldn't believe that the approach to the summit followed the sharp crest and that, from my position, tall evergreen trees looked no more than moss on a boulder. The more that I looked across the canyon, the more I yearned to be on that distant jagged crest where surely no paths could follow. If only I had another day at my disposal. Sadly, I turned my back and began to trot back the two miles along the rim before dropping back down the rocky route. Faster and faster I went, with my heart singing at such a mighty spectacle laid out



Left:  
*Sitting comfortably on the summit is exhilarating until one looks back down at where one has recently come up. Most people panic at this utterly stunning view and start to feel queasy about the prospect of descending.*

Photograph:  
Geoff Milburn



Left:  
*Angels Landing on the left while the rim walk starts near the shadow and goes up on the right and traverses out to the point in the centre of the picture.*

Photograph:  
Geoff Milburn

before my eyes, before I knew it I was back down on the road.

Perhaps I might even have time to take a look at the approach to Angels Landing? I could but try; once over the river, and while loping down a sandy track, I began to search the cliff ahead of me for a possible breach. It looked as impossible as if someone had said that a path crossed the walls of *Cenotaph Corner* at half-height. At that instant, my eyes focused on the slightest movement of several climbers wearing multi-coloured T-shirts and, yes, they were zig-zagging down what could only be described as a vertical wall of rock. At close quarters I could make out a faint possible line leading up to the start of a wooded gorge high above me. That was all I needed to know, the race was on. Gaining height at some speed I kept my head down, letting descending climbers give way to let me through.

Once in the gorge it was easy, and I soon recognised one of my own group who had started that morning coming down towards me. I passed on the comment that I was just going up to the ridge, to have a look at the route which traverses along the dragon's teeth, a wild scramble high in the sky. Just to view it would be deeply satisfying, I forged ahead, climbing ever higher, until I popped out on the very crest of the ridge. I was gob-smacked.

Eat your heart out Snowdon Horseshoe and Helvellyn's Striding Edge which are three-lane motorways compared to this one. Despite the cliff's plunging away on either side the ridge was no razor back, a man was actually starting to traverse it without using his hands. Tiny dots of figures were also there, slowly picking their way back towards me, and was that a metal stanchion that I could see not far ahead of me?

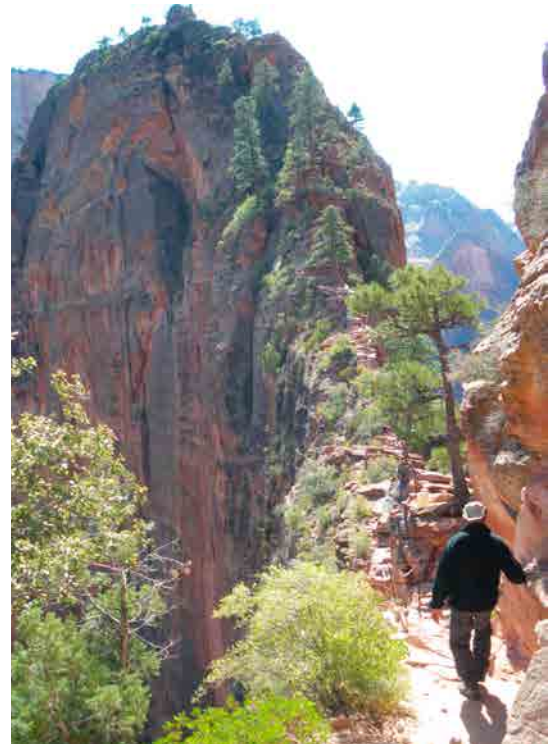
Left:

*The enclosed cool approach to the saddle where Angels Landing begins to show its teeth*

Right:

*The surprise comes when you top the saddle and see the exposure that faces the intrepid climber*

Photographs:  
Geoff Milburn





The afternoon was passing quickly, but I wasn't coming back that way again in a hurry, like a hound released from its leash, I was off and away. This was sheer, gloriously wonderful scrambling in Heaven. I picked my way cautiously along the crest, keeping a wary eye on where it reared up to the summit. Glimpses of people gingerly lowering themselves down the steepest part of the ridge put me on my mettle. I slid carefully along Churnet-like sandstone ledges, picking my way slowly but surely. The chained sections I treated with disdain, but if a wind had picked up or rain had driven in I'd have gratefully accepted their security. In places, however, it was quite hard not to touch the safety chains to which most people seemed to be clinging for dear life.

Once the angle reared up, it was necessary to stick to the line of least resistance and follow the obvious way, which beckoned enthusiastically. After a bit of moderate pulling, with the odd tricky move, the top was suddenly within reach, but the small voice of caution caused me to look round to check the descent line. I nearly had a blue fit, below me all I could see was an impossible, pinnacled arête. Pegs, ropes, slings, chocks, even bolts; I'd need the lot to get back down, or so it seemed. I just couldn't believe that I had just come across there without much of a bother.

Uneasily I crept across smooth slabs to the very top, and sat down in some considerable relief. For two pins I'd have screamed, shouted and yelled into the void, so great was my joy at having achieved what I couldn't have hoped to do in one day if I had planned it. It was the thrills and spills of the roller coaster ride, like hitting the ton on a screaming Harley Davidson and plunging free fall to earth,

all rolled into one. Never in the hills have I been so deliriously happy. An early ascent of *Footless Crow* back home in the Seventies was never like this; neither was topping out from *Cenotaph Corner* when I led it, or even soloing the ton on Stanage in one day.

Finding Maligne Lake in Canada was a deep spiritual experience and crossing the Mackenzie Pass on the Milford Trail was pretty exhilarating but Angels Landing was walking on a cloud in the Seventh Heaven.

Below:

*Angels Landing  
had a bit more  
space than on top of  
Napes Needle!*

Photograph:

*Milburn collection*







## STICK TO WHAT – Joshua Tree

By Andy Clarke

possibilities  
multiply infinitely  
alone on the slab

the rope forgotten  
each move irrevocable  
running further out

precarious smears  
existential unfolding  
small shuffles of faith

scattered on the ground  
all the mean weak foolish things  
waiting down my past

autumn desert glows  
smouldering ochres and golds  
the hot silence hums

tenuous journey  
balanced on friable scales  
crawling to the sun

thinking weightless thoughts  
float on fingernail edges  
exfoliate flakes

that bend to the touch:  
the granite shedding its skin  
endlessly reborn

# THE COMICI

*We join Simon (and Pete Finklaire) on an ascent of the Comici on Cima Grande, July 2010.  
Free except for that one move, but will the author go back to make good his indiscretion?*

By Simon Laker

**T**he Comici festered for years, stewing in the pot of wild ideas. Some stay forever, like treacle in the bottom, never come to the surface but never forgotten.

Others rise a little, but stick to the sides, crazy ideas best left aside.

But a few float on the top, drifting, but seen, waiting to be scooped out and turned from a dream.

*The Comici* was one such, took years to ferment but it all came together, partner, fitness and wonderful weather.

But no cheap dish this, we wanted it free.



Far Left:  
*Henry Castle on the  
first ascent of Strong  
& Stable (E2 5b)  
Cardigan Coast*

Photograph:  
*Don Sargeant*

This Page:  
*Tre Cime*

Photograph:  
*Mark Hounslea*



Up before dawn, chased by two Frenchies,  
friendly, but jostling for places.

Behind us Finns, then English.

Beyond, a vague gathering of nations,  
distant, not really relevant.

A beautiful day, warm and even some sun,  
as the Frenchies yarded up pegs having great  
fun.

Fingery moves on the cruxy first pitch set  
the scene, the rock holding a strange soft sheen.

Moving fast we kept it all free, the sun  
creeping round, flashing off scree.

Moved with the French, Finns fell back,  
even more the rest of the pack.

Steep cracks, plenty of pegs, gear not the  
problem, but sustained, the free uncertain.

The penultimate hard pitch proved to be  
tough, a leaning groove, technical bridging.  
Powerful moves off not very much, legs  
shaking, fingers unraveling.

But the goal of the free kept us clean; it was  
worth the battle, even the pain, with fingers  
and knuckles jammed like squashed truffles.

The end of the dièdre was in sight, just  
needed a move out right.

The belay in view, on the groove's outer wall.  
It seemed pretty simple, rock-over on a  
thimble.

This page:  
*Pete Finklaire*  
*enjoying the early*  
*section of The*  
*Comici*

Photograph:  
*Simon Laker*

Far Right:  
*Simon Laker on*  
*steep ground*

Photograph:  
*Pete Finklaire*



Desperately leaning across, out to the arête,  
to that tiny boss.

Four feet from the belay, the sling hanging  
down, temptation unbearable, the fall  
unthinkable.

One more try, weight shifted over.

Another inch gained but still six short,  
could feel the void calling, rubber deforming.

The rock-over, rocked back, tipping point  
reached.

A grab before realising the deed had been  
done.

The dish cheapened, sickening.

What have I done?

We finished the route up slippery wet  
fissures, no real problem to old Swanage crack  
climbers.

Took too high a line on the traverse above  
space, made the finale spicy, even risky.  
Arrived in the final easy chimney and that's  
where it started.

Intensity now off, mind began mulling,  
fester beginning.

Met the Gamsband, in just less than  
six hours, a fantastic experience climbed in  
control and pretty good style.

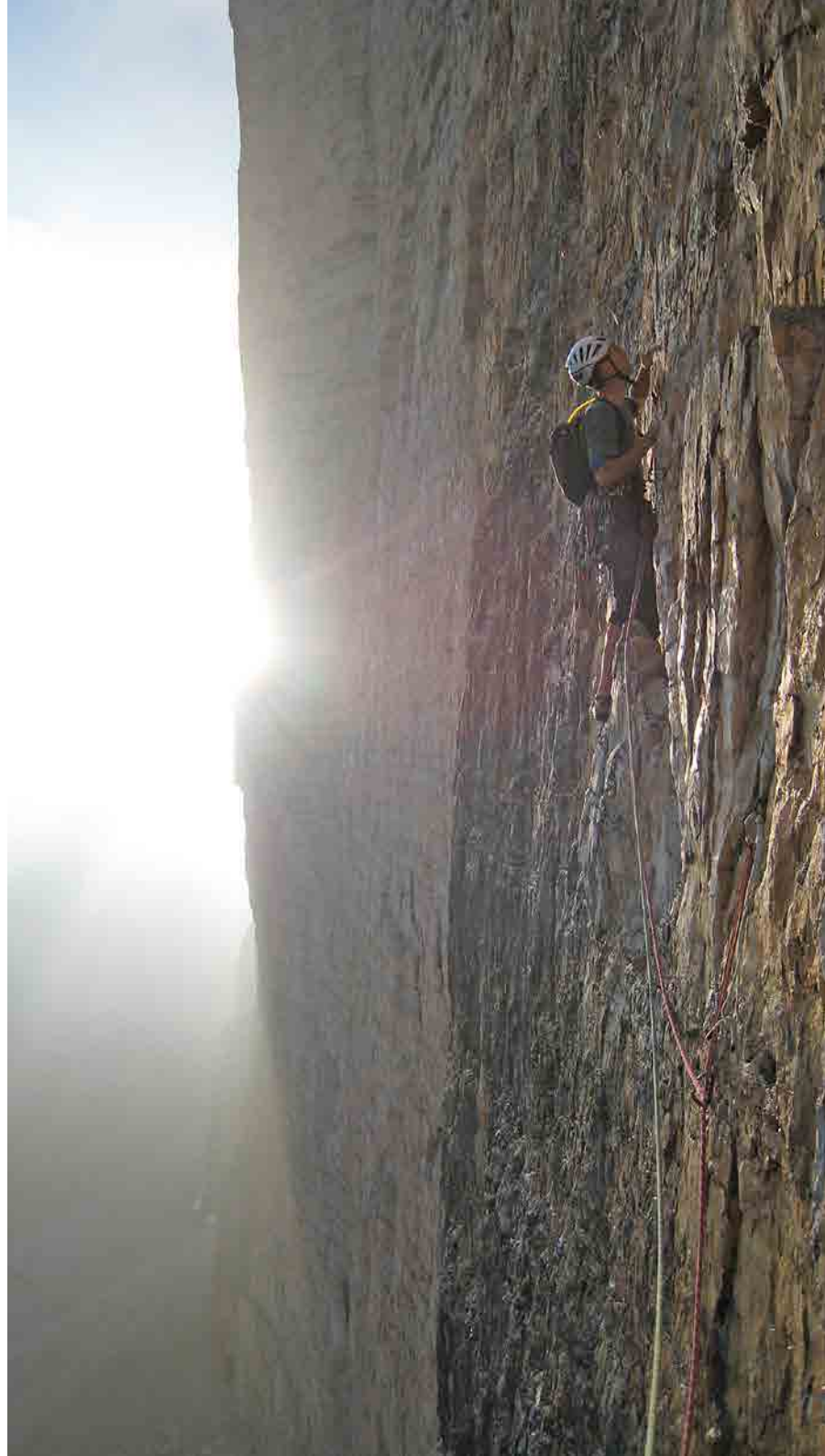
We had a great time; the route was superb,  
company the best.

But deep in the pit of the pot of ideas,  
down in the molasses, barely moving as yet,  
there stirs a desire.

That one move is gnawing, clawing,  
germinating in the dark, waiting to spark.

One day it will rise and float to the top,  
burst into life, impossible to stop.

Then back to the Grande, to visit Comici  
and finish the move that continues to haunt me.





# THE HIGHEST POINT

*Corsica, home to some rough semi alpine peaks which give winter skiing, superb trekking (including the famous GR 20 long distance trek) and good climbing. The highest point is Monte Cinto, 2706m.*

*By Geoff Nicholson*

We were surprised to see snow on the mountains of the interior in June as the plane turned to land. After spending a few days on the coast we climbed one of the mountains in the south, where the only difficulty was the descent of a long semi-circular ridge topped by very large granite boulders. We then decided to climb to the highest point of the island. After driving through vineyards in the coastal strip we stopped for lunch in the foothills at a restaurant, where we had an excellent meal of couscous.

Then we drove north, through the ancient capital, passing the barracks at that time of a renowned fighting force, the French Foreign Legion. The back of our map of the island was devoted to places of interest including the mountain, Monte Cinto. The few lines about it referred to a way up from a valley on the north side. We drove there, parked the car and set off up a path through the forest with the intention of bivouacking near the road. However, swarms of flies about heads forced us to continue. It got dark and eventually we emerged from the forest onto a boulder field. Here we bivouacked, free of flies.

Right:  
*Monte Cinto from  
the Bergerie de  
L'Ercu trailhead to  
the south east*

Photograph:  
*Martin Crocker*



Dawn revealed that we were at the foot of a snowfield. We took out our snow and ice gear, a peg hammer, and ascended the snowfield. Above were gullies filled with snow, which we could not climb, and so we took a rising traverse to the right towards a rocky ridge. The snowfield fell away to the right and at worst there was about 2,000 feet of snow below us. The ridge required only scrambling with the odd harder move and soon there was nothing higher. The descent went well until we were a

few hundred feet above the boulder field when the upper climber, who did not have the benefit of the peg hammer, slipped and started to bounce down the slope. Fortunately the lower climber had played rugby and prevented him from scoring a try among the boulders.

On the way back we stopped for a swim in a river by the road and then made the long drive back to the coast. There are no photographs because we left the camera at the site of the bivouac on the first mountain.

Below:  
*Harold Jepson on  
Monte Cinto*

Photograph:  
*Sean Kelly*







# THE MAGIC OF PEMBROKE

*Driving to Pembroke can be a bit of an epic, especially if you live in the north of England or in Scotland when it is necessary to allow a full day for the journey. Once there we have the lovingly renovated May Cottage as a base and enough quality climbing to last more than one lifetime.*

By Emma Alsford

**T**wenty years ago I wouldn't have thought twice about going to Scotland for a long weekend to get my kicks – an 8-9 hour drive at best – so is it the price of fuel and the negative environmental factor of travelling that puts climbers off making a trip to Pembroke today? During the 1980s the St Govan's Pub in Bosherton was rammed most weekends with enthusiastic young pretenders just chomping at the bit – desperate to jump on the majestic cliffs lining this impressive coastline. We all know that sports crags can go in and out of fashion and seem to have a certain 'life span'. Is the same true of British Trad crags?

For years the limestone cliffs of Pembroke had a fear inducing reputation as a destination only suited to those operating at the extreme end of the grading scale, this should not put off lower grade climbers as there has been a huge development of climbs below HVS in the last decade or two. The esoteric gabbro of St David's Head and the slabby sandstone of the Southern Bays, both in north Pembrokeshire, certainly provide a fantastic alternative to the sheer limestone cliffs further south, and there are sections in Range West which have some of the best lower grade climbing in the country.

*"Pembroke is the unsung hero of modern British Trad climbing – beautiful, leisurely and ferocious – in whatever measure you want. Every time I go there it's like a holiday with fangs – I love it."*

Charlie Woodburn

The main reason climbers make the effort to travel down to Pembrokeshire are the hundreds of three star routes to go at. Described here are just a few of these to tempt you to travel to Pembroke during the spring, summer and autumn.

**Christmas Chasm** (VD),  
Western Walls – Range West

Sometimes the prize is hard won – for this route is in the heart of Range West, a live firing range and on one of the more tidal cliffs in the ranges. It is also necessary to attend a briefing at the Castlemartin army camp in order to gain access although, quite conveniently, these will normally be held on several dates each spring (see the BMC Website, Access and Conservation section, for dates). So if you are willing to combine a trip to Pembroke with a briefing weekend and can also suffer a fifty minute walk in, this cliff has to be one of the premier climbing venues in the country for

those operating from VD up to HVS. This 'big feel' VD is a stupendous, jug infested, yet intimidating journey, up the characterful striated limestone bands synonymous with this area of Pembroke.

**Giltar Slab Route** (S), Giltar Slabs – Stackpole, Lydstep and Penally

Quite simply a gem of a route in an idyllic situation. Beautifully sustained all the way with plenty of gear and lovely moves. This route is a great introduction to the slabbier side of Pembrokeshire climbing.

**Bow-Shaped Corner** (HS), Flimston Bay – Range East

This friendly climb takes the climber away from the central hub of the main areas and into the less frequented parts of Range East. The small slab containing this strong line is tucked away discreetly at the back of the very scenic Flimston Bay, whilst it cannot accommodate a large number of climbers, one is very often the only climbing party there. Lovely rock and a great feature, with nicely sustained climbing and no surprises – one for a calm and mellow day.



Far Left:  
*Emma Alsford on  
the classic Blue Sky  
(VS 4b) Saddle  
Head*

Photograph:  
*Don Sargeant*

Near Left:  
*Karen Vaughan on  
Stackpole Grooves  
Direct (E1 5b),  
Stackpole Head*

Photograph:  
*Tim Skinner*



Below from left:

1 *Blue Sky* (VS 4b)  
*Saddle Head*

2 *Threadneedle  
Street* (VS 4b)  
*Mother Carey's  
Kitchen*

3 *A new route  
on Craig Coetan:  
Stephen Reid on 1st  
ascent of Whiting  
for Cod Oh!* (S 4a)

*Photographs:  
Stephen Reid*

**Act of God** (VS), Craig Coetan – St David's Head Peninsula, North Pembroke

Quite simply a sublime experience on a par with the better known *Blue Sky* (also VS) in the south of the county. On a sunny day the rock here sparkles, quite literally, a sight that wasn't lost on Martin Crocker during the first ascent in 1975... 'Everything sparkled – the sea, the rock, our mood – must have been an *Act of God*.' The picturesque St David's Head peninsula provides a wonderful setting, with the majestic Ramsey Island adding a worthy backdrop. The longer and more involved climbs, on the gritstone-like gabbro of north Pembroke also give a welcome change to the single pitch limestone offerings in the south. A great adventure.

**Heart of Darkness / New Morning** (E1), Mowingword – Stackpole, Lydstep & Penally

One of the better-known established classics, courtesy of Jim Perrin, one of Pembroke's early pioneers, in the early seventies. It's hard to beat the cliff of Mowingword in the late afternoon of a warm autumn day when the setting sun brings a dense orange glow to the perfectly formed limestone. On turning the initial arête this climb takes on a whole new meaning, suddenly your attention is sharply focused – as you disappear out of sight from your faithful belayer all conversation ends, suddenly you are very much alone, dealing with steeper rock than expected, with a watery abyss beneath your feet and wishing desperately that you could jam. By the time you reach the first belay it feels like your partner is lost in another world. Add to this the striking finishing crack of *New Morning* and this combination of routes supplies a mind-blowing experience indeed.



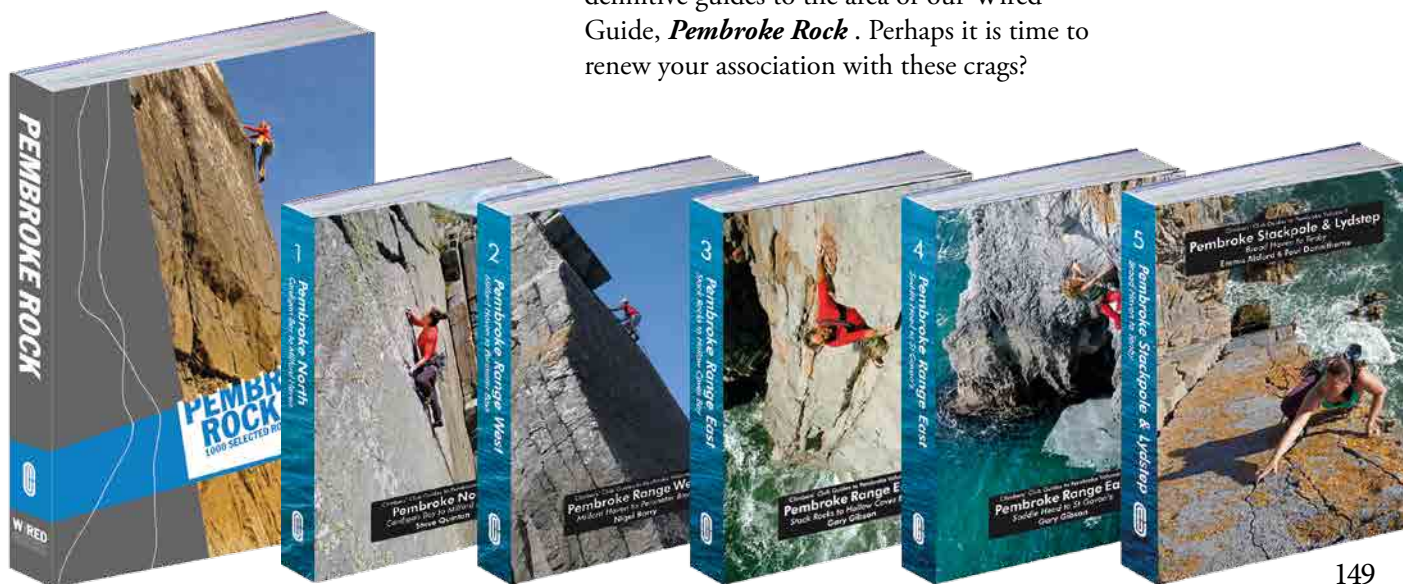
**Magic Flute** (E1), Becks Bay – Stackpole, Lydstep & Penally

Despite not having the towering majesty of some of the cliffs further west, this small crag in the heart of Becks Bay contains some pretty unusual miniature gems. The sea has carved some great features into the rock hereabouts, with plenty of caves and water-worn solution tubes littering this section of the coastline. The moves start straight off the beach and a range of more traditional techniques is required to overcome the difficulties. The one set back is that the experience is over all too soon, but you can be assured that the novelty of the climb takes somewhat longer to wear off.

**Spacewalk** (HVS), Mount Sion East – Range West

Another gem to be found within Range West but thankfully requiring a much shorter walk. This characterful cliff should not be missed on a trip to Pembroke. From the unique square-cut and sheltered gearing up spot hidden within the shattered remains of the expansive cliff-top, to the curious descent through the ‘squeeze hole’ that is the abseil tube, then the scramble across the unique geology on the tilted, tidal platforms at the base of this cliff – the adventures begin before you have even set foot on a climb here. This particular three pitch cosmic classic goes up inside an impressive chimney, always challenging but never desperate, taking the climber on a surprising and memorable journey. As with many Pembroke climbs that venture into caves and zawns dry conditions are essential.

These are only a tiny handful of the routes that are on offer here; check out our five definitive guides to the area or our Wired Guide, **Pembroke Rock**. Perhaps it is time to renew your association with these crags?





# CLASSIC SCOTTISH ROCK UP TO SEVERE

*Scotland is home to a fabulous collection routes in the lower grades, they are often found in beautiful and remote settings. Getting the most from a route bagging trip requires some advance planning, in this article Nigel shares a few tips that might help you maximise your enjoyment of a trip up north.*

By Nigel Barry

Below:

*Cairngorm  
panorama, Ben  
Avon from Upper  
Glen Avon*

Inset:

*Leaving the bikes  
on the approach to  
Binnein Shuas with  
Ardverikie Wall  
just visible in left  
background*

Photographs:

*Don Sargeant*

Based on the “Traditional” SMC definition of Severe which is a fairly loose definition by modern standards! Details of all these routes can be found in the SMC’s Guide ***Scottish Rock Climbs*** (other guidebooks are available).

Many of these classics have triple defences; the length of the approach (walk/cycle or a combination of the two), the variable weather and last but definitely not least, the appetite of the midges. There is nothing you can do about the first of these but the following two websites can help you plan to minimise suffering as a result of the second and third.

**[www.mwis.org.uk/scottish-forecast](http://www.mwis.org.uk/scottish-forecast)**.

Mountain weather forecast for the next 3 days, Scotland is split into five areas.

**[www.smidgeup.com/midge-forecast](http://www.smidgeup.com/midge-forecast)**.

The most important site ever! The midge forecast for the next seven days.

## **Gear:**

My Standard Rack: Wires, quick draws, at least five long slings, at least one 16ft (for metres multiply by 0.305) sling, five Cams, Nut key.



## CAIRNGORMS

### ***Eagle Ridge, Lochnagar***

Bicycles: No real benefit.

Rack: Standard and at least half a dozen quick draws for the many peg runners (a legacy of the route's status as a classic winter climb).

Descent: Best climb with rucksacks then walk straight back to car from the top.

Traditional Grade: S

Realistic Modern Grade: HS 4b

### ***Garbh Choire***

#### ***Squareface***

Bicycles: The approach takes about four hours with a bike so you would be mad not to!

Rack: Standard

Descent: Initially a steep path which is often snow covered.

Traditional Grade: VD

Realistic Modern Grade: VD

Beware; the start of first pitch often has a covering of gravel.

#### ***Mitre Ridge***

Bicycles: As for *Squareface*.

Rack: Standard supplemented with some large Cams/Hexes.

Descent: Initially a steep path which is often snow covered.

Traditional Grade: S

Realistic Modern Grade: S

These routes are on different crags, it is possible to combine them with an overnight camp/bivi.



Left from the top:

1 *Eagle Ridge*

Photograph:

*David Linnet*

2 *Squareface*

3 *Mitre Ridge*

Photographs:

*Colin Beechey  
collection*

Bottom Left

*Squareface*

Photograph:

*Don Sargeant*





Below:

*Dennis Mitchell  
enjoying a Clean  
Sweep, Hell's Lum*

Photograph:

*Trevor Langhorne*

### ***Grey Slab, Coire Sputan Dearg***

Bicycles: Useful if approaching from the south, cycling to Derry Lodge takes half an hour off the approach.

Rack: Standard

Descent: Rock boots are ok for descending the gully.

Traditional grade: S

Realistic Modern Grade: HS 4b

Take care at the start or you might end up on the VS 5a alternative start of *Ferlas Mor*.

### ***The Talisman, Creagan Coire d'Etchachan***

Bicycles: As with *Grey Slab* cycling to Derry Lodge takes about half an hour off the approach.

Rack: Standard

Descent: Follow the Ben Macdui path. Boots/approach shoes required.

Traditional grade: S

Realistic Modern Grade: HS 4c

The overhanging corner at the top of the slab may be 5a for the short, the slab above has some bite as well.

It would be possible to combine *Talisman* and *Grey Slab* with an overnight camp

### ***The Clean Sweep, Hell's Lum***

Bicycles: No benefit

Rack: As much as you can reasonably carry!

The second crux is a 45m corner with sustained jamming and bridging. Sometimes wet but still climbable.

Descent: Rock shoes north of the crag; alternatively leave your sac at the top of the descent gully and save the agony of descending with sore tootsies.

Traditional grade: S

Realistic Modern Grade: HVS 4c/5a!

The first pitch (slab) and the third pitch (corner) are \*\*\* pitches in their own right.

### ***Auld Nick, Hell's Lum***

Bicycles: No benefit.

Rack: Standard

Descent: Rock shoes north of the crag; or leave your sac at the top of the descent gully and save the agony of a rock shoe descent.

Traditional grade: S

Realistic Modern Grade: S 4a

Take care on the third pitch if using a selective guide; the obvious corner off the belay is *Paranormal*, E1 5a.

It would be possible to combine *Clean Sweep* and *Auld Nick* but without the Chairlift you would be in for long day with a tough walk out.

### ***Afterthought Arête, Stag Rocks***

Bicycles: No benefit

Rack: Standard

Descent: Carry sacs and walk straight back to the car.

Traditional grade: M

Realistic Modern Grade: VD

Climbable in boots, a very sunny route that may even be (rock) climbable in winter!



***Savage Slit, Coire an Lochain***

Bicycles: No benefit

Rack: Standard

Descent: If you climb with sacs walk straight back to the car. Alternatively abseil the route to return to the bottom of the crag.

Traditional grade: S

Realistic Modern Grade: S

It is going to be a tight squeeze in places!

**THE LAGGAN ROAD**

***Ardverikie Wall, Binnein Shuas***

Bicycles: Very useful. If you plan to return to the base of the crag leave them where the path leaves the Land Rover track, otherwise leave them at the bottom of the descent ridge.

Rack: Standard including some small wires.

Descent: Down the large grassy gully between the two buttresses (rock shoes ok) or walk back down the West ridge to the track (boots/trainers).

Traditional grade: S

Realistic Modern Grade: HS 4b

One of Britain's greatest routes at the grade. Sustained 4a slab climbing with not much gear, to an exposed 4b crack, then more 4a slabs.



**BEN NEVIS**

***Raeburn's Arête***

Bicycles: No advantage, but getting the Allt a' Mhuillin track key and driving up is sensible.

Rack: Standard

Descent: Continue up *North East Buttress* or scramble back down its approach path.

Traditional grade: S

Realistic Modern Grade: S 4a

Expect lots of 4a grooves/corners.

***North East Buttress***

Bicycles: No advantage, but getting the Allt a' Mhuillin track key and driving up is sensible.

Rack: Standard

Descent: Walk down the Ben Nevis path then to Allt a' Mhuillin via Lochan Meall an t-Suidhe.

Traditional grade: VD

Realistic Modern Grade: S 4c?

A few cruxes keep the interest, The Mantrap, the 40ft (or should it be 12m?) Corner ...



Below Left:

*Graham Williams  
on the long crack,  
Ardverikie Wall,  
pitch 4*

Photograph:

*Trevor Langhorne*

Below Right:

*Climbers on  
Ardverikie Wall*

Photograph:

*Don Sargeant*

Below:

*Chris Brown on  
Tower Ridge*

Photograph:  
*Andy Brown*

### ***Tower Ridge***

Bicycles: No advantage, but getting the Allt a' Mhuillin track key and driving up is sensible.

Rack: Light

Descent: Walk down the Ben Nevis path then to Allt a' Mhuillin via Lochan Meall an t-Suidhe.

Traditional grade: D

Realistic Modern Grade: VD

Approach by the East Gully. Several short difficult sections, i.e. out of the Gully at the start, onto the Tower Traverse, off the Tower traverse and crossing Tower Gap; the rest is grade 2 scrambling.



### ***Castle Ridge***

Bicycles: No advantage, but getting the Allt a' Mhuillin track key and driving up is sensible.

Rack: Light

Descent: Walk down the Ben Nevis path then to Allt a' Mhuillin via Lochan Meall an t-Suidhe.

Traditional grade: M

Realistic Modern Grade: polished D

A 100m crux section which can be broken into short pitches. The scramble (see scrambling guide) up to the start is scarier than the route!

### **GLENCOE**

*Buachaille Etive Mor*

*Central Buttress, North Face*

#### ***North Face Route***

Bicycles: No advantage

Rack: Standard

Descent: Reverse *Curved Ridge* (M) or climb one of the routes on Rannoch Wall.

Traditional grade: S

Realistic Modern Grade: S

#### ***Rannoch Wall***

##### ***January Jigsaw***

Bicycles: No advantage

Rack: Standard

Descent: Scramble up *Crowberry Ridge* before reversing *Curved Ridge* (M), rock shoes ok, or continue over Stob Dearg and down Coire na Tulaich which is often snowy early in season.

Traditional grade: S

Realistic Modern Grade: S

Superb

##### ***Agag's Groove***

Bicycles: No advantage

Rack: Standard

Descent: Scramble up *Crowberry Ridge* before reversing *Curved Ridge* (M) or continue over Stob Dearg and down Coire na Tulaich which is often snowy early in season.

Traditional Grade: VD

Realistic Modern Grade: S

*Aonach Dubh, East Face,*

*Lower Tier, Weeping Wall.*

##### ***Curving Crack***

Bicycles: No advantage

Rack: Standard



Descent: Either serious scrambling on the right (needs care), much safer to continue up Terrace Face.

Traditional grade: S

Realistic Modern Grade: S

### ***The Long Crack***

Bicycles: No advantage

Rack: Standard

Descent: As for *Curving Crack*.

Traditional grade: S

Realistic Modern Grade: HS 4b

Not a crack climb, more of a wall climb with a crack for protection.

Both these routes finish on large ledges (The Terrace), below Terrace Face which holds the next two climbs.

*Aonach Dubh, East Face,*

*Lower Tier, Terrace Face*

### ***Quiver Rib***

Bicycles: No advantage

Rack: Standard

Descent: Down broken ground on the right (S), rock shoes ok.

Traditional grade: D

Realistic Modern Grade: D

### ***Archer Ridge***

Bicycles: No advantage

Rack: Standard

Descent: Down broken ground on the right (S), rock shoes ok.

Traditional grade: VD

Realistic Modern Grade: S



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Right: *Chris Brown on Agag's Groove, pitch 1*

Photograph: *Andy Brown*



Below Left:

*Big Air on  
Cioch Nose*

Photograph:

*Andy Brown*

Below Right:

*Sally Reid on Cioch  
Nose, pitch 2*

Photograph:

*Stephen Reid*

## NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

### ***East Buttress, Ruadh Stac Mor***

Bicycles: No

Rack: Light

Descent: Down the gully with the path used to get to the summit.

Traditional grade: D

Realistic Modern Grade: D

Only one of the best mountain scrambles.

### ***Open Secret, Stone Valley, Loch Maree***

Bicycles: No advantage

Rack: Standard

Descent: Down the gully just north of the route, rock shoes ok.

Traditional grade: N/A, first climbed mid 1980s

Modern Grade: HS 4b

One of the best HS in Scotland, visible from the road. There are other good routes on either side of *Open Secret*.

### ***Cioch Nose, Applecross***

Bicycles: No advantage, walk from Bealach na Ba, descend to the start of the route.

Rack: Standard

Descent: Walk along the ridge and down the road, climb with sacs.

Traditional grade: VD

Realistic Modern Grade: S

Tremendous exposure from the very start as you step off the end of the ledge.

### ***Am Faserine Traverse, Liathach***

Bicycles: No advantage

Rack: Standard

Descent: Down the Munroists' path.

Traditional grade: Ungraded

Realistic Modern Grade: M (SG2)

Even a non-walking ex-president of the CC said this was better than climbing!

### ***Corrag Bhuidhe Traverse, An Teallach***

Bicycles: No advantage

Rack: Standard

Descent: Down the Munroists' path to the Inn and a well-earned pint.

Traditional grade: Ungraded

Realistic Modern Grade: D

The Liathach Ridge on steroids, a D slab to start and then continuous scrambling over many pinnacles to the Munro.



SKYE

*Sron na Ciche*

***Cioch Direct***

Bicycles: No advantage

Rack: Standard

Descent: Moderate scramble or up the Cioch Slab and upper tier (minimum VD)

Traditional grade: S

Realistic Modern Grade: HS, 4b

Take care with some loose blocks, often wet but climbable, The SMC Guide just mentions the pitch to the terrace so its 30m is not included in the route length.

*Sron na Ciche, Cioch Slab*

***Arrow Route***

Bicycles: No advantage

Rack: Small rack of cams

Descent: Moderate scramble/abseil down the terrace to the south, or up the upper tier (minimum VD).

Traditional grade: D

Realistic Modern Grade: S (even the scrambling guide gives it VD)

The best easy slab climb ever, a small number of cams give some comfort on the second pitch.

***Slab Corner***

Bicycles: No advantage

Rack: Standard

Descent: Moderate scramble/abseil down the gully to the south, or via the upper tier (minimum VD).

Traditional grade: D

Realistic Modern Grade: D

Like *Arrow Route* but with runners; not really a corner climb.

*Sron na Ciche Upper Tier*

***Integrity***

Bicycles: No advantage

Rack: Standard

Descent: Easy scramble to summit and down the Sgumain Stone Shoot (boots/approach shoes advised), possible abseil and complicated scramble descent.

Traditional grade: S

Realistic Modern Grade: VS 4c

One of the best VS crack climbs ever, with roofs for variety – three on P1 and two on P2.

It is possible to split P1 at a small ledge half way up.

Below Left:

*Trevor Langhorne  
on pitch 1 of  
Integrity*

Photograph:

*Langhorne  
collection*

Below Right:

*Climbers on Arrow  
Route*

Photograph:

*Trevor Langhorne*



# AS FISH NUDGE CIRCLES (Abridged)

## an Ogwen, a Snowdonia, an August 2012

By Mark Goodwin

we scrambled rhyolite whilst  
flying-ants drank  
our sweat

or at least it felt  
like that as they  
clung to us

those in the air  
dark spark  
-like filaments frenzied  
with lust

black flakes thick  
as blizzard  
haloed Eve & Adam

as I climbed Adam  
I had to sweep  
holds free of ants

Eve's stony skin  
had become  
wriggling black fur  
jewelled with gleam

ing cellophane wings and

as I jumped the gap  
I wondered if I'd  
skid on insects

black flecks plast  
ered my face as  
I passed through  
a cloud of

fibrous beings  
their wings' quick  
ratchety-pitch itch  
ing in my ears as

a strange wiry choir  
entered my brain

after Tradition's jump  
I posed for a photo  
my hair alive  
with crawling angels  
my nape dark  
as Velcro tickling but

not one  
insect bit me

\*

now Tryfan's rugged yet  
delicate mosaic of time-

-&-weather-embroidered-  
blocks-slabs-spikes-  
flakes-&-pinnacles is

fragments of memory behind us

we descend from the bwlch  
salt in our eyes  
our feet hot and tightly-socked  
sweating in mountain-boots

it's six o' clock and  
the August sun  
still has power in it

\*

suddenly Cwm Bochlywd  
becomes a rumbling bowl  
of Welsh syllables

shepherds' commands bounce  
off Glyder Fach

but we see no one

a hundred or so  
metres below us  
Llyn Bochlywd's cool

glitter pulls

pulls us towards to  
wards its smooth

silent finite dialogue  
with vast sky whilst

a man cross

with his dog  
spreads his voice

around the cwm

vivid voice like

smoke blown  
through water hangs

on the crags and colours

the air

\*

peace-&-glee-blend-as  
the llyn's sheen illumin  
ates our faces

momentarily each wear  
masks of jangling light

our feet freezing  
deliciously in blade-clear

llyn-water fish  
nudge circles in  
to expanding  
existences and yet

men & beasts are at  
work noisily

*For Louis & Nikki*

*First published by Poetry Wales.  
From an unpublished full-length poetry  
collection in progress.*



# 21 YEARS AN OFFICER

*The quickest way to empty a hut on a Saturday morning is to mutter the words "the Club is looking for a volunteer to ...." There would be no CC if some members were not willing to step up to the plate, once there it can be difficult to step down. Steve Andrews is one of our serial volunteers, an unsung hero who describes how to get drawn into Club administration and management with all the resulting positive outcomes.*

By Steve Andrews

1993, life had caught up with me and after many very happy years climbing on the UB 40 I now had a job, a wife and a family. The deal was - I could go climbing on Sundays but it was child minding for me on Saturdays. Browsing my CC newsletter I noted an appeal for a custodian at Ynys Ettws. I slept on it and a plan emerged; if I took the job I could hang out at Ynys with my dog and toddler on Saturday mornings, chat to climbers and restock the bog rolls. This could be the next best thing to climbing!

I met with Rod Hewing (HMSC Chair) and he explained how it all worked: "Sort the hut, restock the shelves and ring me if the roof blows off". He slapped the key to the safe down in my hand and said that I needed to clear out the safe every 3 months, reconcile it with the hut log and bank the money. His last aside was that the safe used to belong to Don Whillans - I had visions of Don standing behind the "Pearly Gates" waiting to thump anyone who thieved from it in this life!

One day, my young son Neil, aged 3, was trying to grow up too quickly and he quizzed his mother,

"I want my own house",

"Oh", she replied.

"When can I have my own house?",

"One day dear"

"Why can't I have one now?"

She resorts to a subterfuge "Well houses are very expensive and we can't afford two".

A few minutes later to her horror and Neil's delight I walked through the door with 3 months hut fees in a large pillow case, tipped them out on the floor and started counting.

A few months later it was the occasion of the joint meet with the Fell and Rock. The hut was in good fettle but, come Saturday morning I headed off to check everything was going well. After checking a few things and chatting with a few acquaintances, I was going through the entrance hall where two young ladies were poring over the hut register.

"Are you OK?"

"We're trying to book into the hut"

"What's the problem?"

"Well, we're aspirant Fell & Rocker's and we don't know what to put in the book?"

"Why's that a problem?"

"Well the custodian might throw us out he finds out we're aspirants and not proper members"

I reassured them “Don’t worry; he likes to see the hut well used”.

“How do you know?”

“I am the custodian!”

Some time earlier. We were wandering round Stoney Middleton on a damp day. Tom Proctor was sitting in the back of his van and beckoned us over. “What do you make of this” he said as he pulled out a metal bar with 4 bits on the end. “Someone just gave it to me, it’s called a Friend “. We went looking for a crack to try it in. There are few that reach the ground at Stoney and it did seem to get well stuck and we were converted to the cause that revolutionised protection. I bought a set of the first batch sold - my pride and joy - £20 for a set of 3.

A few months later my Friends are well used and seizing up. The advice in Stoney Café was to go up to the factory in Tideswell and get them to sort it out. I walk up the dale to Tideswell and arrive at the one-up, one down factory that Wild Country started off in. I knock on the door and am greeted by Mark Vallance. By coincidence, both our mothers had taught Physics and Maths together at the girl’s grammar school in Chesterfield, though I did not know it at the time. I am ushered in and explain the issue. Mark is concerned that a customer is having a problem but soon relaxes and explains that a good squirt of WD40 is all that is needed and gets to work. The Friends are fixed and Mark gives me a conducted tour of the fledgling manufacturing facility. The benches are covered in parts and as he shows them to me, I pick up one that I don’t recognise. He quickly grabs it from me in horror, saying, “You weren’t supposed to see that!” I think it was a prototype Rock.

I went to my first committee meeting under President Mortimer and soon met Mark again; he was then a Club Vice President. After the meeting he collars me and tells me that he’s looking for new committee members for when he takes over as President. I happily accept.

Being a custodian I soon met up with Roger Salisbury who became a great friend, he had taken over as hut chairman. As soon as Mark Vallance and Peter Bishop managed to get the Club a Lottery grant Roger sets about the renovation of the Count House and the Downes, I assisted as secretary of the HMSC.

The company I worked for at the time got a contract from Inchcape to upgrade 60 computers in their various motor dealers around the UK. In my travels I had to go to Exeter and then St Ives. Roger is in-situ at the Count House so it’s a good excuse to go down and look at the progress. Having done the job in Exeter I head to St Ives; on arrival I can’t find the motor dealership that I need to visit. I did the only thing I could and phoned them.

“I can’t find your dealership”

*“Are there any landmarks around you?”*

“Well the sea’s on my right” I responded.

*“We’re St Ives in Cambridgeshire!”*

Mark became President in 1995 and came to inspect Ynys. The fridges were old and rusty and we decided that The Club needed to buy a new one. We visited a large electrical shop in Bangor and eventually found a bargain, a wine cooler/fridge which was ideal and over six feet tall. A week later the phone rang, it was Mark in full managing director mode. “Steve, I need you to write a bit for the CC newsletter, about the fridge, email it to me”. Instruction received. Well, we bought a new fridge. What do you say about that? I try to spin it out but

struggle so, after conveying the gist, I added "No doubt this will become known as the Mark Vallance memorial fridge." I emailed it to him so that he could edit it. Weeks later I bumped into Mark, his greeting consisted of, "You bastard, I never bothered to read that article and it got published just as you wrote it!"

1997 and the Club Centenary was looming, we needed to mark it with a big event, but what? Pip Hopkinson came to the committee with a plan - a three line whip on the good and the great of the Club. "You're lecturing at the Centenary 'do'" sounded good but, however at this time, we were holding dinners for the Club at the Royal Victoria Hotel in Llanberis, the room could only cope with 120 and clearly a lot more would want to come. After discussing things with the manager we figured out that we could extend the number to, possibly, 200 by using other rooms. Then, one Saturday morning I was going to visit Malcom Cameron is his caravan near Llanrug. Driving through the gates of the caravan park I was greeted by a huge steel framed marquee displaying holiday homes. I walked around it in awe, realising its potential for the Centenary. On Monday morning I telephoned the Vic. and proposed that we erect a marquee on the hotel car park; thus we ended up with a dinner for 550 people in a marquee in early December to mark our Centenary.

Terry Kenny organised the bookings, a GP by trade. After the event he noted that three of his patients had died during the process. As everyone took their places at dinner I was the last one standing, convinced that someone would be left without a seat. With great relief I sat down, having ensured that all were happily seated. Being the organiser I could choose my

seat, a good view at the front was essential. Ben Wintringham was opposite with the top table behind him, he asked "what am I doing here?" I replied "I needed someone short I could see over". That night was up there, along with climbing "*The Axe*", as one of the best of my life.

I became Secretary in 1998, one night Mike Burt, our long standing Hut Bookings Secretary, phoned me. He had given a booking to a Club (to protect the guilty I have forgotten their name), one month later they still had not returned the key (in those days a metal one). We mused over what to do, the lady involved was never at home and various letters had gone un-answered; there seemed little more we could practically do. Friday night came and my taxi to the pub (Hugh Banner) arrived. We descended on The Heights to discuss our labours and talk of deeds done. Later in the evening, while talking to the Bar staff, we discovered that they were getting ready for a club AGM and dinner the next night. I casually enquired which club it was and was told that it was the very one we could not get our key back from. Even better it was our Welsh dinner in the Vic the same night and Mike Burt would be there. First thing next morning, I phoned Mike, excitedly calling down the phone, "It's their AGM in The Heights at 4.00pm!" He understood immediately what I was talking about. We set our trap and agreed to meet in the Vic about 3.00pm. We assembled our team, Mike and his wife Jean, Marian and I plus a few more members who were in town for our dinner. We marched down to the Heights and found their members assembling, we casually enquired of our 'Lady' to be told; "She is our President; she will be here; she is always dressed in purple

and is always late!” Hanging around with the gathering crowd, 4.00pm came and went, at 4.15 a car drove into the car park and the ‘Lady in Purple’ emerged. She ambled through the door and we cornered her, saying, “We are officers of the Climbers’ Club and we have come to get our key back,” her face was a picture! She stopped in her tracks, started mumbling something and retreated to her car. Fully 10 minutes passed before she emerged with a letter that she handed to Mike with apologies for not having returned it earlier. On opening the letter, the hut key fell out, we returned to the Vic feeling triumphant.

I have had a long relationship with Cwm Glas; it was the first CC hut I ever stayed in. The old toilet block could only be described as a slum. As HMSC Secretary, I supervised its complete rebuild into a fine modern facility, only for two elderly members to complain “You have completely destroyed the character of the place!”

Later, at an AGM, I did battle with what I saw as the forces of reaction over students. I made it clear that I believed we should not discriminate against anyone, especially potential new members only to be told that the custodians would not stand for them using the huts. My response was to take over the vacant custodianship of Cwm Glas, which allowed them back, at least, into Cwm Glas. One trick I learnt was that if you left a bucket and mop inside the door visiting groups always felt obliged to wash the floor before they left saving me the effort. We started to get students back in to Cwm Glas; one Monday morning I felt I should check the hut so I ventured up there. The only thing out of place were several full bottles of beer left behind, my reward obviously!

The biggest problem with Cwm Glas was the fact that the water pipe regularly washed out of the stream in a flood. I had frequent expeditions up the half mile pipe to sort it out, one day, having trudged up the hill, I found the pipe was in its pool but we had no water. I carefully followed the pipe down, opening every joint in turn, only to get sprayed with high pressure, cold mountain water. Eventually the pipe went underground but I was able to follow the line towards the hut as it appeared in places, finally finding a spot where I could hear the water spraying in the pipe below my feet. I had found the blockage. Aided by the CC pick axe, I exposed the joint, a knacker job. On opening it I found a perfectly round stone lodged across the joint blocking it completely. I returned home to my hot bath only to find I had burst a blood vessel in my groin, turning my bits purple resulting in an evening in A&E.

The logistics of running a Club the size the CC can sometimes catch you out. The first time it happened to me was when I offered to print a questionnaire for the Club. I was lucky to have an early laser printer in my office which I felt was perfect for the job. Having set it all up I pressed the button to start the print run. The printer prints 4 pages per minute, we have 1000 members and there are 6 pages. I did the maths and realised that I was going to be standing over the printer for the next 25 hours!

The next time was when we ran the celebrations for the guidebook centenary. As we did for the Club centenary, we organised a big dinner, as with the earlier event, we gave members a print of an original picture, this time of Lliwedd, the subject of our first guide in 1907. The plan for this was to be that



we would buy a tube for every member who needed it posting. We would roll it up put it in the tube, stick a label on it and put it in the post. David Lanceley had kindly offered the use of the large garage at his house, the delivery of tubes was scheduled. The driver phoned as arranged so I could guide him in to the location, to my horror the “van” turned out to be an articulated lorry. We struggled down country lanes to within half a mile of the house until a sharp bend at the bottom of the final road proved impossible. I was out of options, with nowhere to unload the tubes as my house was also down a narrow lane. Cutting my losses I settled on a quiet layby near Llanberis and a 1000+ tubes and Stephen

were off-loaded on to the pavement. I saw the driver off then looked at the palettes of tubes. Nothing for it, I got out my mobile out and phoned every local member I knew, explaining my predicament. Within 20 minutes, a fleet of cars started to appear, much like Dunkirk I imagine, and in dribs and drabs by the boot and back seat load they were finally delivered to their destination. I was particularly grateful for Pete Anderson’s camper van.

From 2009 to 2012 I was privileged to serve as a Vice President. I enjoyed it thoroughly but, towards the end of that time, there was trouble at the PSC as the then chair had just resigned. I had one of my frequent “what are we going to do now” phone calls with Fiona who was

Below:

*Carn Mor Dearg  
Arête and Ben Nevis*

Photograph:

*Ben Stutchbury*



in-situ as President and we agreed that I would have to go and chair the next meeting.

I was in awe as I sat down. The PSC is not like the committee; it consists of many, very long-standing members of great experience and at that time included five Honorary Members of the Club. I made sure that I heard everyone's opinion in turn on the matters in hand and it seemed to go very well. The last item on the agenda was who should be the next chair, I quickly realised that they were adopting me as the new chair and there was little I could do. Thus, I transitioned seamlessly from the Vice Presidency into the PSC chair without any of them realising that I failed my English O Level five times!

My time at the PSC was a great privilege. I doubt there is any other role in a publishing organisation that I could have realistically done. Over time I have moved, and now chair "WIRED"- the co-operative of guidebook producers and, as such, after 21 years, I am no longer an officer of the Club.

I wrote this article for two reasons:

1. It has all been such fun and I wanted to share some of it with you.
2. If you give some of your time to the Club I believe, like myself, you will get far more out than you put in so I wanted you to consider what you could do. My last thought is your contribution may be small to start with but you don't know where it may lead!



# ‘THE CLIMBERS’ CLUB’ – THE FIRST TEN YEARS WITH EXTRACTS FROM THE CCJ

*Would you have joined “The Society of Welsh Rabbits” rather than the CC? I thought not. Our Club is continually evolving; it grew out of earlier and looser associations and continues to develop so it remains relevant in a rapidly changing society. The fact that we have plenty of new members suggests that we must be doing something right. Ian has done a magnificent job of researching those first few years of The Club’s History.*

By Ian Wall

Throughout the late 18th and into the 19th Century the mountains gradually lost their terrifying reputation for being the home of dragons, witches and wizards who hurled their victims down the precipices only to be devoured by the Devil lurking in the surrounding valleys. People were beginning to view the mountains with alternative aspirations in mind.

During the Victorian period the sporting world, especially in the British Isles, was beginning to get itself organised and structured in more formal ways. The Victorian middle-class gentlemen were taking the ancient pastimes of village life, adapting them, codifying them, and organising them into virtually all the modern sports as we know them today. The Football Association was formed in 1863 and the Football League in 1888. County cricket matches were first played

in 1873 and the first Test Match in 1880. Lawn Tennis was ‘invented’ in 1874. By 1885 golf was becoming popular. Rugby Union rules were established in 1871 and boxing had the ‘Queensberry Rules’ by 1880. Was it so unexpected that the adventurous men of the time and only a little later the women, developed organisations for mountaineering, walking, climbing, pot holing, and sailing?

One of the earliest groups to show a specialisation in the ‘technical’ scrambles of the day was the Scottish Cobbler Club formed in Glasgow in 1866. Many of these climbing clubs and associations were chiefly established to provide ‘training’ opportunities for their members interested in further exploring the Alps and in particular the more technical lower peaks that had, up until then, not had an ascent. In 1857 the Alpine Club was formed by several British mountaineers who had been



Left:  
*An early climbing party outside the Pen-y-Gwryd, Mathews left bottom row, Oscar Eckenstein next to him and Robinson right standing. It is thought that the gentleman second in from the right, might be the Swiss Guide Melchior Anderegg.*

Photograph:  
 ©abrahamphotographic  
 / FRCC Archives

particularly active during what is known as the 'Golden Age of Alpinism', 1854–1865. Several of the new clubs were formed, as would have been expected, by a nucleus of Alpine Club members living in Scotland and who were to go on to bring about an awareness of what the Scottish hills had to offer the mountaineer and climber.

One of the founder members of the Alpine Club was a wealthy solicitor from Birmingham and a political friend of the Chamberlain family. C E Mathews first visited Pen-y-Gwryd in 1854 from where in the spring of that year, and for the first time, he ascended Snowdon and like so many of us today, he went on to become a regular visitor, for nearly the next

fifty years, to 'the Gwryd' and North Wales. Mathews, with his experience of the Alps, had made a lot of friends who were foreign 'professional' mountain guides and he played a major role in introducing the Alpine Club to North Wales and in particular 'the Gwryd'.

### **The Society of Welsh Rabbits**

The ranks of British 'Climbers' and 'Alpinists' continued to expand rapidly and in 1870 Mathews formed the 'Society of Welsh Rabbits', the name being synonymous with the breeding habits of those little furry creatures. The object of the Society, whose natural birth was at the Pen-y-Gwryd, was to explore Snowdon in winter and as near to Christmas



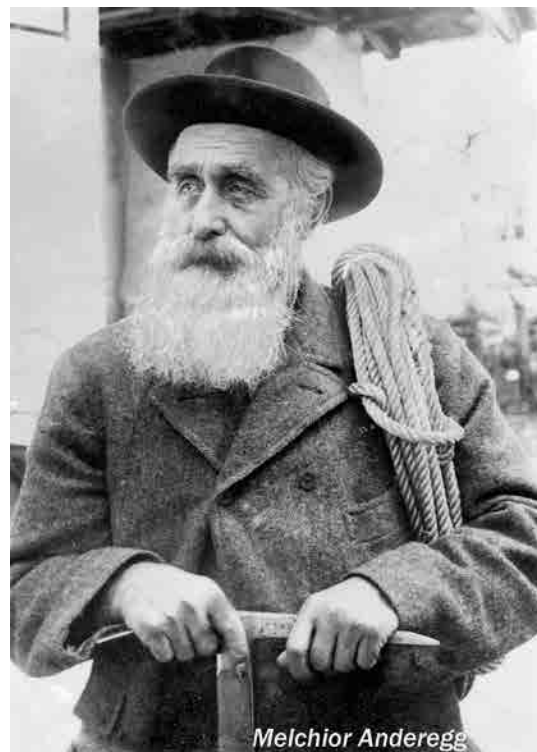
Right:  
*The famous Swiss  
Guide of the time,  
Melchior Andereg*

Photograph:  
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as possible. By then, during August and September, and in most years, a group of men who rarely met anywhere else would gather together to share their mutual enjoyment of the hills and, at the end of the day, after a fine meal, they would sit round the fire and share their experiences, the older men would drop encouraging words to the beginners, difficult 'points' [of a proposed route] would be discussed and located and suggestions were made for the following days climbing. This group of men were well aware of their common grounding for George B. Bryant, in the CCJ Vol. 1 No.1 August 1898 goes on to say, *'In that congenial atmosphere, where conventionalities were not obtrusive, and the bishop or the man of law shared the sofa with the old shepherd and deferred to his opinions, men of various sorts, but united in their love of the mountains, grew to know each other; and there the sense of association, the germ of the Club, struck its first root.'*

This band of explorers rapidly multiplied, as rabbits do, and soon the professional upper-class regulars suggested meetings in the summer as well as during the winter months.

The majority of the higher 'less technical' summits of the Alps had been climbed by 1885, in their entirety as guided parties but with the vast majority of those parties being made up of Englishmen. New Alpine districts, where the lower 'less technical' peaks had yet to receive their first ascents, were now the focus of attention. Many of the young British mountaineers visiting the Alps had aspirations to make ascents of these lower 'less technical' summits and many would employ the same guides and would in fact make recommendations to each other as to who



would provide good service, usually via the Alpine Club meetings. In April 1888 Mathews arrived at the Gwryd with Melchior Andereg, the great Swiss Guide and climbed Snowdon, Andereg wanted to turn back from Crib Goch not expecting to reach the summit in less than five hours but Mathews assured him it would be possible in four. The pair summited in four hours five minutes!

It was generally felt that the Pen-y-Gwryd 'Welsh Dinner' meets were spaced too far apart so a suggestion was thrown out that these intervals should be bridged by a dinner in London. This was met with instant enthusiasm and so the first London Dinner was held on the 19th May 1897 when about forty of the Welsh farm house regulars gathered at the

Monico Restaurant to 'recall old times', with T S Halliday, one of the Club's forefathers presiding over the gathering. At the time it was doubted whether the actual formation of a Club was likely to take place, however there was a strong desire at that meeting to continue with the Welsh Dinner and it was planned to again hold this function in December 1897 at the Pen-y-Gwryd.

By the time the second dinner, and first Welsh Dinner, came round there was a strong feeling from many quarters that the formation of a Club was being welcomed. The proposal was put forward and on the 6th December 1897 the first official Welsh Dinner took place. Unfortunately, as happens even today, this date was not convenient for everybody and several regular and long-standing attendees of the previous Welsh Meets were unable to attend, amongst them C T Dent, Frederick Morshead and F T Bowring. However the general attendance was good and the foundations of the proposed Club were laid down. The resolution 'That a Climbing Club should be formed' was proposed by Roderick Williams and seconded by H G Gotch, both Alpine Club members, and was then accepted by those climbers present under the chair of the Rev. J N Burrows. Those general members present included Roderick Williams, Lord Coleridge, C E Mathews, Arthur J Gale, T S Halliday, H G Gotch, Thomas Rhodes, A O Prichard, C C B Moss, A F Leach, L K Pagden, H A P Genge, J Fildes Pearson, E W Chaplin, G H Chaplin, Astley J Morris, W W R May, Marshall J Smith, Charles Candler, Dr E C Daniel, Henry Candler, Dr T K Rose, C Hampton Hale, Frank Pearson, George B Bryant, E R Turner and William

Ernest Corlett. This collection of climbers were generally referred to as the 'Forefathers' of the Climbers' Club and they then went on to elect C E Mathews as the first 'CC' President with Frederick Morshead and F H Bowring as Vice Presidents, George Bryant as Secretary and Dr T K Rose as Treasurer, the general committee consisted of W E Corlett, Rev J N Burrows, W Cecil Slingsby, E R Turner, T S Halliday, and Roderick Williams. The Club at that time had a membership of forty but there was an assumption that numbers would increase within the first year to one hundred.

### **CE Mathews' Presidential Years 1898 – 1901**

In March 1898 the provisional Committee issued a circular promoting the Club

*The Climbers' Club*                      25th March 1898

*Dear Sir,*

*It has been determined to establish a Club under the above title. The object of the Club will be to encourage mountaineering, particularly in England, Ireland and Wales and to serve as a bond of union amongst all lovers of mountain climbing.*

*The qualification for members will be determined by the Committee, who will have sole power of election.*

*The officers will be a President, two Vice-Presidents, an Honorary Secretary, and an Honorary Treasurer. The Committee will consist of the officers and nine additional members, all to be elected annually at the Annual Meeting. The first officers will be: -*

<i>The President</i>	<i>C E Mathews</i>
<i>Vice-Presidents</i>	<i>Frederick Morshead</i>
	<i>F H Bowring</i>
<i>Hon Sec</i>	<i>George B Bryant</i>
<i>Hon Treasurer</i>	<i>T K Rose</i>

*The Annual Subscription will be half-a-guinea, and after there will be an entrance fee of the same amount after the first hundred members are elected.*

*The Annual Meeting will take place in London at the end of April each year, and will be followed by a Dinner. The First Annual Meeting and Dinner will take place about the end of April next, on a day and at a place, which will be duly notified.*

*The Club will be in no sense antagonistic to any existing institution; but will, it is hoped, gather all those who are interested in mountaineering in England, Ireland and Wales.*

*Should you be willing to join, will you be good enough to return the enclosed form immediately to: Mr C E Mathews, The Hurst, Four Oaks, near Birmingham*

*At the First Annual Meeting the Formal Laws of the Club will be presented for adoption, and the First Annual Dinner will follow.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*C E Mathews*

*Frederick Morshead*

*F H Bowring*

*George B Bryant*

*T K Rose*

[CCJ Vol. 1 No. 1 August 1898]

This circular was sent out to all those people known as 'climbers', whose names could be obtained from various sources, including from those who were already CC members. The response exceeded expectations with exactly two hundred applications for membership being received by the day of the first AGM. Although this doubled the number that the Committee had previously agreed to admit without an entrance subscription, there was no

option other than to admit all two hundred as 'original members' of the Club.

The first AGM was held in the Alpine Club rooms in Saville Row, London on the 28th April 1899 attended by the President and sixty-two members. The rules of the Club were agreed and passed and the officers of the new committee were formally elected; The President, C E Mathews, Vice-Presidents Frederick Morshead and F H Bowring, The Committee, Rev J N Burrows M A, W C Slingsby, Roderick Williams, Owen Glynn Jones, R A Robertson (President SMC), H G Gotch, E R Kidso, E R Turner, W P Haskett-Smith, Hon Sec George B Bryant and Hon Treasurer T K Rose.

In line with the developments being made by the Scottish Mountaineering Club it was proposed that the Climbers' Club should '*have a view to expand its interests in the directions of botany, geology, art and natural history.*' After the AGM the Committee and Members reconvened at the Egyptian Room of the Monico Restaurant where all eighty members were individually announced before dinner.

During the Presidential speech C E Mathews made reference to the formation of the Alpine Club forty-years previously and the fact that its first dinner was attended by only twelve members from an original membership of thirty. He also mentioned that the Alpine Club had published a series of articles, 'Ascents and Adventures', and that the Club, its members, and its publications had received from an '*undiscerning public ridicule, disapprobation and contempt.*' This in the main came from Anthony Trollope in his 'Travelling Sketches' but more viciously was the onslaught from Ruskin who accused the Alpine Club of

*'Making racecourses of the cathedrals of earth, the Alps which your own poets used to love so reverently, you look upon as soaped poles in bear gardens, which you set yourselves to climb and slide down with shrieks of delight.'*

Mathews then went on to add *'The critics did not know much about it. There is a story told of a certain undergraduate, not very well up in his Greek, who told his tutor that he had contempt for Plato.'* *'I should presume, Sir,' said the tutor 'that yours is a contempt which does not proceed from familiarity.'* [CCJ Vol. 1 No. 1 August 1898]. This was a reference to Haskett-Smith who was reading Literae Humaniores at Trinity Oxford when he first discovered Wasdale and who was sat in the gathering to hear the Presidential speech.

*'Criticism is good for all of us, but it is really valuable in proportion to the honesty and ability and insight of the critic. That Club, with a steady rising standard of qualification, now numbers over six hundred men; the great hall at the 'Metropole' is not large enough to accommodate the numbers that flock to its winter dinners; and it comprises within its ranks some of the best of intellectual aristocracy of this country'. He went on 'that a man who only sees what is just before his eyes loses always the best part of every view; but we have neglected too long the binding together of the lovers of the beautiful scenery at our own doors. The Scottish Mountaineering Club first realised the situation; then the Yorkshire Ramblers; and last year; the Climbers' Club had been founded, which embraces England, Ireland and Wales, and yet is open to all lovers of mountaineering in every quarter of the globe. At last our mountaineering ladder is complete, and the youth of England can be reassured. They can matriculate at the*



**Entrance Hall of the  
Wastwater Hotel Easter 1895**

*Climbers' Club; they can graduate in the Alps, and carry off the highest honours in the far-off regions of the Caucasus and the Himalaya. We have begun well. We begin two hundred strong. I will not say every original member has an ample mountaineering qualification. But we have no reason to be ashamed; one-third of our members are also Alpine Club men – a good healthy sign'. Mathews then went onto identify 'seven members from The University of Oxford, seven members from Cambridge, the Bar was represented in great force, Davidson was the legal advisor to the Foreign Office and thirty gentlemen have joined us from what is erroneously called 'the lower branch of the profession.'* *'The Scottish Mountaineering Club, The Yorkshire Ramblers each contributed its president. Climbing literacy is represented by Haskett-Smith and Owen Glynne-Jones; we have authors, journalists, clergymen, members of the Civil Service, merchants, manufacturers and inspectors of schools. I see undergraduates from Oxford and Cambridge here tonight, who, I trust have obtained the usual*

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*permissions from their tutors; and the best bowler in the Oxford Eleven has placed his services at our disposal'. 'Of such excellent materials is the Climbers' Club composed'. [CCJ Vol. 1 No. 1 August 1898]. Mathews concluded, 'And so, I give to you 'The Climbers' Club!' Remember that a Club is an institution towards which every man must contribute his share. May it flourish and prosper!'*

Mr Roderick Williams responded to the toast, 'Our hills and mountains.' 'This 'plain tale' ends for the present with the result of a Committee meeting in June at which it was decided to publish a Journal at the expense of the Club once every three months, Mr E R Turner undertaking the editorship. The membership has now reached 209 and there are several applications to be dealt with at the next Committee meeting.'

[CCJ Vol. 1 No. 1 August 1898]

The Committee had soon realised the importance of the annual meeting as playing a considerable role in keeping the Club together and provided the opportunity for all members to meet together under one roof. To develop the Club's ethos the Committee organised meets in various climbing areas and, as an experiment, designated the mid-August to mid-September period as being an opportunity for members to attend a meeting either based on the Pen-y-Gwryd or in Wasdale. It was thought advisable to avoid a concentration of the membership at any one place so as not to 'outrun the available accommodation'. It was a condition of the meets at that time that a journal or log book would be kept detailing all activities and that at the end of the meet it should be forwarded to the Honorary Secretary

as the property of the Club. Suggestions for future arrangements could also be made through the log which would then be available to the Editor of the Club Journal to be used at 'his discretion'. The Committee also considered a winter or spring meet, with Easter being considered the best choice for 'winter' conditions to be found in the gullies. The next matter the Committee referred to was that of the question of whether or not the Club funds were sufficient to enable the Club to secure permanent rooms for the exclusive use of the Club in London. The outcome, after discussion, was that there were insufficient funds and at that point the question was raised as to whether such rooms were actually deemed necessary?

Oscar Eckenstein, who had a great deal of mountaineering experience by the time he joined the Climbers' Club in 1898, became the first man to carry out a serious analysis of climbing techniques and equipment. He invented and demonstrated the 10-point crampon and also designed a shorter ice axe, just over two feet (60 cm) in length which was considerably shorter than the traditional alpenstock used by all the alpinists of the time. Amazingly his ideas fell on deaf ears, principally because he was a quiet man and shunned publicity; it was not until many years later that the 'new' technology was eventually put to the test. Eckenstein became a close companion of J M A Thomson and for nearly twenty years the latter completed many first ascents, eighteen new routes on Lliwedd and sixteen other climbs on Tryfan, Glyder Fach and Glyder Fawr and fourteen new routes in the Llanberis Pass.

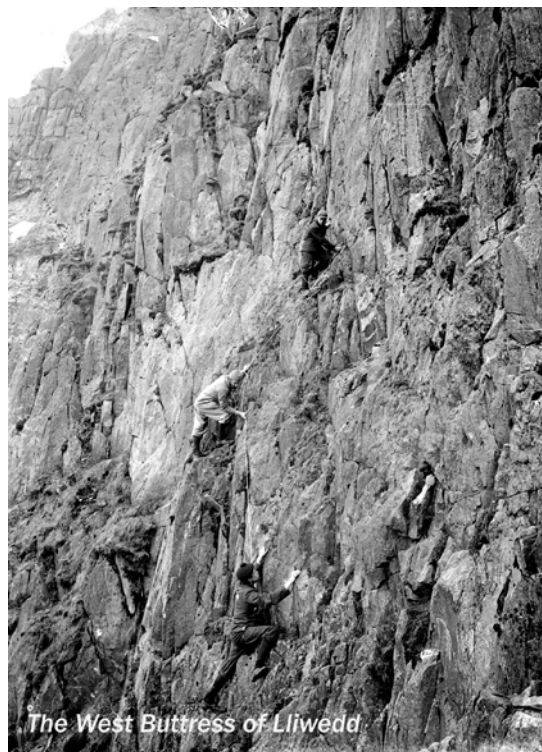
Lliwedd was Thomson's favourite 'cliff' with his notable ascent of Avalanche Route being one of his best achievements, so called because of the boulders knocked down by a young G L Mallory from above during the first ascent. Thomson climbed into his fifties and in 1911 put up a new route on Skye. He suffered two nervous breakdowns and eventually, whilst alone at his brother's house in Surrey, drank carbolic acid, two hours later he was dead.

It is interesting to note that in the second edition of the CCJ November 1898 Owen Glynn Jones states that *'we must be prepared to admit without much qualification that there is no more room, and that there are not many problems remaining unsolved, on high days and holidays, the hotels are overcrowded and the outhouses filled*

*to overflowing. The popular gullies are thronged with visitors. It becomes almost necessary to issue numbered tickets to the waiting throng at the foot of Gable Needle. Orders for the ascent of Kern Knotts may be received two days in advance; this is a fact in my own experience'*. What would he make of the situation today?

Along with Jones' assessment of the state of English climbing he shows a great knowledge and understanding of alpine 'scrambles' comparing for example the traverse of the Dent du Requin to the Ennerdale face of Great Gable or 'the Pillar Rock by the North Climb giving as much rock work as the Portiengrat Traverse, the Zinal Ridge of the Rothhorn, or the Wandfluh Ridge of the Dent Blanche'.

[CCJ November 1898 p 29]

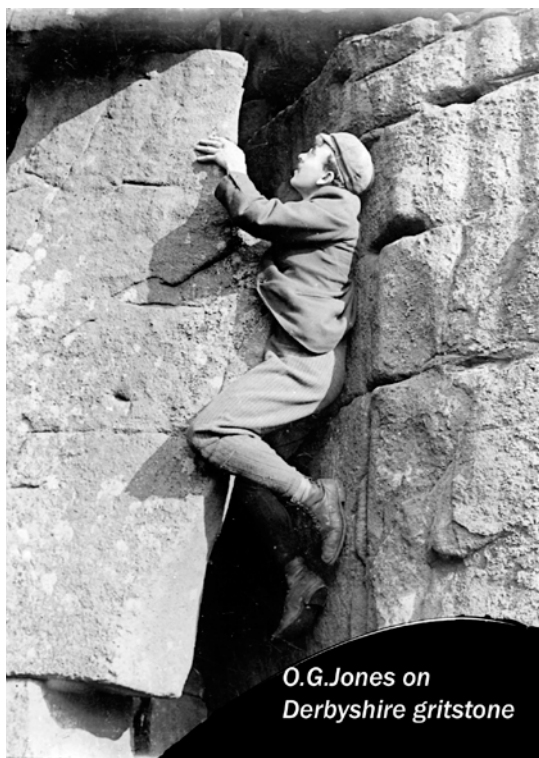


Photographs:  
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From the time of the original concept of forming a Climbers' Club a group of men *'with a mutual and vested love of the mountains'* would meet regularly in north Wales. By the time the second edition of the CCJ was circulated the first 'official' meets had been held, with both the Pen-y-Gwryd and Wasdale being the hubs of activity. A Climbers' Book was started for the use of climbers in January 1890 and kept at the Wastwater Hotel. Today these two hostelrys still feature greatly in the list of any genuine outdoor enthusiasts' must visit venues and with the aid of a small glass of the amber nectar one can still sit quietly and be in the company of other great 'spirits', but as our friend O G Jones stated *'it's best to avoid high days and holidays!'*

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O.G. Jones on  
Derbyshire gritstone

In the report of the first meets of the Climbers' Club it is stated *'the majority of climbers appear to prefer trying some well-known gully or face rather than to strike out new routes for themselves. That this should be the case amongst the Cumbrian hills is scarcely surprising; indeed there where every chasm has received a name, and every needle and pillar is, figuratively speaking, dotted with routes, it is difficult for anyone who is not an expert to make a first ascent. But it is not so in Wales. The Cambrian hills have not undergone the systematic examination that has been accorded to their English rivals. A striking instance to this is Clogwyn du'r Arddu, the magnificent precipice along which the Pony Track zigzags its way up to Y-Wyddfa. If this precipice were situated within easy walking distance of Wasdale Head, it would probably have a literature of its own; but as it is, it suffers from ill-deserved neglect, and is comparatively unknown'*. Little was he aware that many years later Ken Wilson would fill that gap with ***The Black Cliff***.

During the first Wasdale meet, on the 10th September, club members made the first ascent of the *West Wall Climb* of Deep Ghyll and on the 23rd *Great Ghyll* succumbed to the CC onslaught in *'rather damp conditions'*.

Of the two meets it was the Welsh one that drew the greater numbers with members beginning to arrive in early August with the season finally drawing to a close in late September. During this time 'a considerable' amount of climbing was done with exploration taking place in the Tryfan gullies, Clogwyn-y-Person, the gullies up Esgair Felen, Lliwedd and Crib Goch. Snowdon had its fair share of visitors with reports of *'several pitches of very severe'* being attempted.

It is apparent from earlier comments in the journal [November 1898] as to the fact that existing 'traditional' climbing areas were thought to be almost worked out and that club members were actively searching out new parts of the country in which to develop climbing activities.

Ernest Baker begins his article 'Practice Climbs in Derbyshire' by apologising for writing a 'paper' on a series of scrambles of less than a hundred feet in height, *'were it not for the fact that they are in the neighbourhood of some of the most attractive scenery in England, and right at the gates of several of our biggest towns; the man who happens to tumble off a big boulder may hurt himself, but he will not have the luxury of falling through a thousand feet or so of magnificent scenery.'* Baker goes on to wax lyrically about the fact that Northern Derbyshire possesses a miniature mountain-system, amid which many 'capital little scrambles' are to be found. Haskett-Smith adds his voice of approval by noting that *'When it does offer a climb, it ends it off abruptly, just as we think the enjoyment is about to begin.'* He goes on to specifically mention Froggatt Edge, just above the Chequers Inn, *'where there is a remarkably good crack, only giving a climb of 40 or 50 feet though.'* Mention is also made of possibilities to be found in Leicestershire and Nottingham. [CCJ November 1898 p 55]

The chapter concludes *'Although the Derbyshire scrambles are nothing more than practice scrambles, it is not to be forgotten that, like all other climbs, they are to be found amidst delightful landscapes and at the end of inspiring walks. For their purpose they are first-class quality, and a man might serve an apprenticeship here in his off time, which would qualify him*

*to undertake some of the best rockwork in the neighbourhood of Sligachan and Wasdale Head.'*

[CCJ November 1898 p 29]

In line with the recommendation that the Club should broaden its activities to include botany, geology, art and natural history there is a paper researching 'The Glyders and Thermometers and Winter Temperatures on Mountain Summits' by Piffe Brown. In it he documented thirty years of evidence (1867 – 1897) where the lowest temperature was recorded as being -8.0°F with the average temperature being 16.02°F [CCJ February 1899 p80] I wonder how this equates to the global warming temperatures of the 21st Century?

The first ascent of the *Devil's Kitchen* took place on the 3rd March 1895. Although this was before the official formation of the Climbers' Club would be Club members were involved in this winter ascent. Llyn Idwal was covered by seven inches of ice making the approach a straightforward affair. Progress was achieved with the use of a 'hatchet' that enabled Hughes and Thomson to penetrate the wall of ice that they supposed was solid through to the back wall of the chimney. However on creating a hole through the ice it became apparent that the ice was in fact a free- standing curtain hiding a large cavern behind which Thomson estimated to be 10 feet in diameter and reaching 20 feet up from the place of entry and 30 feet down, but owing to the darkness the bottom was not visible and so the last measurement was only a wild guess. As the prospect of a rapid and uncontrolled fall into the cavern loomed large in his conscious mind Thomson continued climbing on the outside of the curtain aware that the ice was



not a particularly solid structure. Hughes initially formed a portable belay ledge from which Thomson could climb but he then felt that in case of emergency he would be better employed as a sheet anchor back down inside the cavern. This must be one of the earliest attempts at steep ice climbing. Thomson went on to explain how difficult it was using the hatchet in such cramped conditions where it was almost impossible to deliver each blow with accuracy and at the same time to protect his head at the moment of impact to allow the ice fragments to glance off his skull as opposed to hitting him full in the face. By the time they reached top of the wall the thickness of the ice had diminished to only about an inch but was strengthened by the icicles forming ribs. At this point it was apparently possible for Thomson to use his axe, which

was presumably considerably longer than the hatchet, so as to reach the snow slope above and to cut a step. He estimated that the angle of the slope to have been 80 degrees. This pitch must have been in excess of 80 feet because Hughes had to leave his belay position to allow sufficient rope for Thomson to reach the end of difficulties. It had taken him three hours to complete the hard climbing. By the time Thomson and Hughes reached the true top it was 7.15pm and intensely cold and dark. The initial choice of the descent route was to go down to Llyn Idwal but due to the increasingly steep ice they decided to retreat over the plateau and down into Llanberis where they reached the Dolbadarn Inn at 10.30pm.

[CCJ February 1899 p85]

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Adam and Eve Tryfan

Halfway through Thomson's climbing career a young fit and muscular man began to take an interest in the hills and, in particular, in rock climbing. Owen Glynne Jones made his first ascent, and solo, of the *East Arête* of Cyfrwy on Cadair Idris. Jones had done much in the Lake District and his book relating many of his experiences and adventures ***Rock Climbing in the English Lake District*** was published in 1897. Jones met two young brothers from Keswick, the Abraham brothers, and introduced them to the wonders of climbing. Early in 1897 Jones took the Abraham brothers to Wales and introduced them to the Pen-y-Gwryd scene. By now George and Ashley Abraham were almost as skilful as Jones and they undertook many exploratory climbs together. On one occasion all three attempted to ascend Slanting Gully on Lliwedd but failed. Jones then had to return to Wasdale to keep a prior commitment, leaving the brothers he warned them to stay away from 'his' route, *Slanting Gully*. Shortly after, on the 27th April, George and Ashley set off reputedly to 'potter around on Lliwedd' and then made an attempt to claim the first ascent of OG Jones' route. Upon their return the Abraham brothers were not made to feel welcome at the Pen-y-Gwryd, the established upper middle class did not like to see them complete a number of new routes on a variety of cliffs, especially if they had been tried by other members of the group. This was partly due to envy but the predominant feeling of disassociation came from the fact that the brothers were not only professional photographers but 'shopkeepers' as well. The Abrahams did not help the situation or the fraternity of the Pen-y-Gwryd when they

published their book on ***Rock Climbing in North Wales***. However both brothers, George and Ashley gained membership to the Climbers' Club by the end of its first year.

During Easter 1899 Jones and a large party of climbers went to Wales to continue their work on the ***Rock Climbing in North Wales*** book. Jones completed the first ascents of the *Devil's Staircase* and *Hanging Garden Gully*. Milestone Buttress was the next venue for the group and although they attempted *Belle Vue Bastion* they failed but did successfully complete what is now called *Cheek Climb* and *Terrace Wall Variant*. At the top of the *Devil's Staircase* Jones and George Abraham discussed plans to go to the Himalaya, sadly this never came to fruition as within six months Jones was tragically killed on the Dent Blanche.

The 1899 CCJ contains an article by H Sommerset-Bullock on the virtues of climbing on Beachy Head. That autumn must have had particularly bad weather conditions for in the 'Notes from Wasdale' it is stated that Borrowdale '*had been the venue of some extreme flooding with the Seathwaite road being under some five feet of water, the path from Sty Head being obliterated*' and in summing up it is mentioned that '*the flood, the severest for thirty years or more had swept the scheme for the Sty Head carriage-road into the middle of the next century, sufficiently far off at any rate for it to remain out of sight and out of mind for many years to come*'. However, by Christmas the weather must have settled as Abraham and Field were led up *Walker's Gully* between Pillar Rock and the Shamrock by O G Jones to complete the first full ascent on the 7th January 1899.

The first article to appear in the CCJ that dealt specifically with a foreign expedition did so in Vol 1 No.4 June 1899 and was titled 'A High Level Walk from the Brenner to the Bernina, Without Guides' edited by Henry Candler. This article deals in some considerable detail with the route, the views, acquaintances and the occurrences of the expedition.

[CCJ June 1899 p 133]

The notes of the AGM held on the 5th May 1899 recalls the fact that Bowring retired from his position as Vice-President due to ill health, this fact gave rise to a feeling of great regret as Bowring was one of the earliest of English rock-climbers, E A Robertson, President of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, was elected to fill the position. All other officers were re-elected. The accounts for 1898 were accepted as audited and showed £73 2s 6p as balance in hand. Guests at the dinner included Sir W Martin Conway, Dr HR Dent, Sidney Lee and C R Canney. In his Presidential speech Mathews pointed out and recognised that *'Boat-racing was practiced by thousands and that cycling had been the saviour of the wayside Inns and that it had restored to the English people the beautiful roads and lanes of our common country which the railways had taken away. Football was not only popular, but its exhibitions are attended by millions. How was it that mountaineering was the noblest pastime in the world? How was it that scholars, and statesmen, bishops and deans, men of science and men of letters, senior classics and senior wranglers, had found the best solace and recreation amidst the gloom or the glory of the hills?'* The reasons he declared were not difficult to see. *'We get renewed vitality from personal contact with our mother earth in her best and noblest form. If we could not reach the Himalaya,*

*the Andes, or the Caucasus, the blessed Alps were within easy reach of us, pure, bracing and invigorating. And if even these were too remote from some of us, remember that Helvellyn and Scafell were only a day's journey from London, and that God created Great Wales!'*

Haskett-Smith responded in lighter tones, E A Robertson, the new Vice-President replied in a more humorous style commenting that *'the government of England had fallen into the hands of fellow Scotsmen the 'southerners' had sought to avenge the situation by making numerous unguided inroads into even the most difficult of 300 difficult peaks over which he presided in the Scottish Highlands.* [CCJ June 1899 p 149] Maybe this was a comment related to the fact that Norman Collie made the first winter ascent of *Tower Ridge* on the 30th March 1894 to which Naismith wrote - *'The Sassenachs have indeed taken the wind out of our sails most notoriously I will say that. This is truly a sad day for auld Scotland. .. Flodden or Culloden was nothing to this'* (undated SMC Archives)

It is interesting to note that Sidney Lee suggested that although he understood ladies had not so far been considered eligible as members of the Climbers' Club it might be advisable, if not too late, to consider the desirability of electing Queen Elizabeth (the Queen Mother), on account of the soundness of her views, as expressed in the well known words with which she replied to the aspirant who *'would climb did he not fear to fall'*. Although this comment was, in essence, made in jest it does support the ideas that in its formative years the Climbers' Club was not opposed to women members.

[CCJ June 1899 p 149]

By the time the CCJ was printed in September 1899 more articles were appearing edited by members who were looking at distant ranges seeking out new adventurous trips. Under the section titled 'Welsh Notes' the author enquired as to when a book comparable to O G Jones *Rock Climbing in the Lake District* was going to be published. It was understood that O G Jones had been preparing a draft and questions were raised as to the whereabouts of such a draft manuscript. It was also suggested that a committee might be formed to undertake the completion of such a book. Could this be the first reference to the forerunner of the PSC or Guide Book Committee of today? [CCJ September 1899 p 47] Although at

that time there was not an Obituary section in the CCJ note was made under Notes and Correspondence of the death of O G Jones on the Dent Blanche. The brief obituary goes on to ratify O G Jones' enthusiasm and strong support for the formation of the Club and for his contributions to the committee and to the Journal. Only a few days before Jones left for the Alps he had discussed detailed plans for a Himalayan expedition and was preparing the production of a book on Welsh Climbing. [CCJ September 1899 p 48]

Under the Committee Notes in the same CCJ a resolution was proposed by the Rev Nelson Burrows, seconded by Haskett-Smith and unanimously passed, *'The Committee desires to put upon record its deep sense of loss which the Club has sustained by the death of Mr Owen Glynne Jones, whose services upon the Committee have always been most zealous and unremitting'*

On the 5th April 1896, O Eckenstein, H Edwards, H Hughes, W A Thomson and J M A Thomson made the first ascent of Lliwedd's East Gully and Buttress. It had been the original object to lower one of the party down the crag to inspect the line of the route so as to place beyond any reasonable doubt the questions, which had been argued over during the previous evening, concerning the line and difficulty of the proposed ascent.

[CCJ December 1899 p 73]

The first of what was to become an account of the last exploits of Club members who had sadly died whilst undertaking climbing activities appeared in the December 1899 CCJ p 81. 'The Accident on the Dent Blanche' by W M Crook describes how O G Jones died at about 10.00 a.m., on the 28th or 29th August 1899. *'Whilst attempting the Ferpectle it appears*



*The Barn Door Traverse  
Dr. Joseph Collier climbing  
watched by A.E. Field*

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*from the description provided by Hill, the sole survivor, that the guide Furrer had been stopped by a difficult move, Jones had provided his ice axe so that Furrer could stand on the axe head. The axe shook under the strain so Jones moved up so as to support the axe by the head, Furrer believing he had a secured hand hold went to move up when his hands slipped. Furrer fell onto Jones and together Furrer, Zurbriggen, Jones and Vuignier slithered and fell down the face. Hill anticipating he would also follow his companions waited for the tug on the rope but the tug never came instead Hill who was left with about 30 feet of coiled rope at his feet watched in horror as the rest of the group disappeared. It is believed that during the initial fall the rope between Vuignier and Hill became jammed between two rocks causing it to snap near to where Vuignier was tied in. Hill managed to avoid the place that proved fatal for his companions and reached the summit shortly afterwards, approximately one hour later. He descended the ordinary route to Zermatt but by the time he reached the last gendarme he was surrounded by a violent storm. In the shelter of a small depression in the gendarme Hill sat out 22 hours before he was able to complete his descent to the valley where he arrived fifty-five hours after the accident. Jones' body is buried in the cemetery in Evolen now by-passed by the road to Arolla. An account of the search party appeared in the Daily Chronicle early in September 1899.*

The CC received notification of another association based in Derby, the Kyndwr Club. There were several dual members of the Climbers' Club and the Kyndwr Club but the latter organisation was identified as a '*club of scramblers*' pure and simple, and so their love of outdoor science, archaeology, and even a congenial interest in literature, enter into the

'*bond of union*', and thus gave occasion for frequent meetings and excursions. [CCJ March 1900 p 135]

The Kyndwr Club Notes made their first appearance in the CCJ June 1900 p 178 which consisted mainly of new recordings of scrambles around the Derbyshire edges. This article appears 19 months after the previously mentioned Derbyshire article by E A Baker, '*Practice Climbs in Derbyshire*'.

The AGM of the 12th May 1900 was held at the Café Royal, London and was attended by about forty members. The President reminded the meeting that he was entering his third and final year of office. The audited accounts showed a balance of £206 3s 6p in the bank. Amongst the distinguished visitors at the dinner were Edward Whymper and A J Butler. The President began his speech with the time-honoured toast '*Success and Prosperity to the Climbers' Club*'. During his speech the President Mr Mathews questioned the circumstances of the 'accident' that befell Owen Glynne Jones. '*Gentlemen, I do not want to dwell upon this particular catastrophe. I do not know what conclusions such excellent authorities as my friend Mr Whymper or my friend Mr Morse may have formed upon it, but, in my judgement, it was not an accident properly so called.*' He goes on in his speech to say '*may be that I am only a voice crying in the wilderness, but I implore you, the mountaineers of the future, to do nothing that can discredit our favourite pursuit, or bring down ridicule of the undiscerning upon the noblest pastime in the world* [CCJ June 1900 p 186]. 1900 saw a longer than usual collection of after dinner speeches with over fourteen pages of the Journal being used to report the events.

In the Wasdale Notes J H Wigner reported that on the Good Friday 1900 several *'unfit' parties set out at great speed, boldly facing mist and rain to attempt the Needle. Only two climbers (one of them a lady) succeeded in reaching the top*'. This lady however, was not identified. [CCJ June 1900 p 199]

Over the previous year many club members had expressed a wish that the Dinner could be held in the North of England, the committee announced that the following dinner venue would be in Birmingham. [

CCJ June 1900 p 201]

In September CCJ 1900 E A Baker describes how, along with the Abrahams and J W Puttrell, they spent some days on Buachaille Etive Mor. It was in fact Puttrell and Baker who were to inform this region of Scotland of the relief of Mafeking, decorating their transport with a pair of crossed ice-axes and assorted handkerchiefs in jubilant celebration of the news. After initially reconnoitering the mountain the team were pinned down by bad weather. A writer in The Scottish Mountaineering Journal Vol. IV p150-1 reported, *'At its lower end also, the rock that forms the crest of the ridge is hopelessly steep, and nearly unbroken for some 300 feet. I will not prophesy that that cliff will never be scaled in a direct line, but before then I think mountaineering science will have to advance to a higher stage of development*'.

Baker describes the first of the main pitches as being about 70 feet long and of an open nature, nearly vertical, and for the most part almost devoid of good holds, those that did exist he reported were as being *'shallow and sloping the wrong way, any upward movement would have to involve sustained balance*'. The

next section required the team to un-rope thus enabling the distance between each climber to be increased from the average 40 feet. George Abraham climbed steadily for nearly eighty feet before he called for Puttrell to follow. Any climb involving the Abrahams would

Photograph:  
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8 climbers on the Needle  
including ladies in longskirts



*Eagles Nest Ridge  
Great Gable*

automatically involve photographic equipment and that expedition was no exception. Having done a hard pitch, the rope was lowered for the photographic equipment to be pulled up to a new vantage point. Ashley Abraham pronounced the climb *'to be at least as difficult as Eagle's Nest Arête on Great Gable'*. After several more exposed and seemingly hold-less pitches the group reached the summit via the original *Crowberry Ridge* route. They then took the opportunity to have some food before they

began their descent arriving back at the Inn twelve hours after setting out.

[CCJ September 1900 p 3]

An interesting article appeared in the CCJ September 1900 titled 'A Wet Day at Wasdale.' This outlined the activities of those members 'trapped' by poor weather conditions in the Wasdale Inn during the previous September, amongst the activities described appears the '*Stable Traverse*', the '*Billiard Room Traverse*', the '*Table Leg Traverse*', the '*Bannister Traverse*' and possibly the hardest of all the antics, in the hall, the '*Chimney Reversal*.' The author concludes assuring the reader that *'there is no lack of amusement to be found at the Inn even on the wettest of days'*. Many of these activities are now regular features at club dinners up and down the country.

In the Committee Notice it was explained that consideration had been given as to how to address the issue of detailing the mountain areas of Wales. The suggestions put before the Club were that the country in question should be divided into sections, namely, the Snowdon Section, the Hebog Section, the Glyders Section, the Carnedd Section, the Arenig Section, the Rhinogs Section, the Arans Section, and the Cadair Idris Section.

It was proposed that a party should be co-opted to explore each of the eight sections working as a group of six to an area. It was hoped that the data collected would relate to geology, botany and physical features of the hills, and all other facts of interest to 'students of the mountains', as well as those who were more closely concerned with discovery, recording, and classifying the actual climbs. If this idea was sanctioned by the general membership it was felt it might in future be

extended to other areas within the sphere of the Club's operations. [CCJ September 1900 p 39] It was also noted that the footbridge over the Glaslyn River near Llyn Llydaw which had been destroyed earlier in the year was to be replaced at the expense of the Club.

There then followed a period of consolidation within the Club, the Journal continued to develop and the breadth of articles it contained, expanded to include reminiscences from members' climbing trips to the far-flung corners of the globe as well as to include their exploits nearer to home. There was also a fair coverage of scientific and geographical data presented by Club members.

The first provincial dinner of the Climbers' Club was held at the Queen's Hotel, Birmingham on Saturday 5th December 1900. C E Mathews was in the chair and for those who could stay over Mathews organised a walk on the Sunday in the Forest of Arden followed by lunch at his residence in Four Oaks.

The last Journal to be published while Mathews remained as President is dated March 1901 and contained an article on the Rhinogs, G Winthrop Young writing on his adventures during a very long winter's day titled 'Benighted on Snowdon', J M A Thomson writes an account of a fatal accident on Tryfan. The interesting point of this article is that the accident occurred just after it had been suggested to Queen Victoria that she might wish to introduce a law to restrict mountain and rock climbing as it was estimated 66 people had been killed at 'lower levels' the previous year in the 'pursuit of sport.' As no journalists were present at the inquest of the Tryfan incident there was an exceptionally high level of inaccuracy reported in the newspapers.



Oppenheimer reported on his ascent of *Stack Ghyll* on the Warningscale side of Haystacks. Of the other five articles published in this Journal, members of the Alpine Club wrote three of them. In the section on 'Club Notes' it is reported that Douglas Freshfield showed a series of lantern slides illustrating his journey in Sikkim and in the Nepalese Himalaya. In 1899 Douglas Freshfield travelled to Green Lakes, Sikkim, accompanied by the Italian photographer Vittorio Sella. Freshfield

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conducted expeditions around Kangchenjunga and set out with his party to trek in a circuit around the Massif from the North. When he arrived safely at Dzongri, he lit a big bonfire, which could be seen from Darjeeling and the Governor of Bengal ordered a Gun Salute to be fired in his honour. Freshfield was the first mountaineer to examine the western face of Kangchenjunga, which rises from the Kangchenjunga Glacier describing it as *"the most superb triumph of mountain architecture and the most beautiful snow mountain in the world"*.

### **The era of W P Haskett-Smith 1901 – 1904**

The third Club AGM was again held at the Café Royal in London on the 31st May 1901. This was to be the last meeting presided over by C E Mathews. The incoming President was to be W P Haskett-Smith, of the two Vice-Presidents, Frederick Morshead retired after his three years in office with George Morse succeeding him. Members of the committee who retired by rotation were Cecil Slingsby and Raymond Turner, they were replaced in office by Professor J A Ewing, an FRS of Cambridge. Dr T K Rose resigned from his position as Treasurer which he had held since the formation of the Club. George B Bryant was re-elected as Hon Secretary, the role of Treasurer was taken over by C C B Moss, the audited accounts were agreed to be true and correct at £256 19s 1d. The after-dinner speeches were again reported in full in the CCJ and cover some twelve pages, those speakers, taken from the ranks of officers and guests at the dinner included, the President Haskett-Smith, the outgoing President C E Mathews, Dr Owen on behalf of the guests, H G Gotch and on behalf of Kindred Clubs, Lamond

Howie and H Bond on behalf of the Kyndwr (Kinder) Club, and Mr Wynnard Hooper.

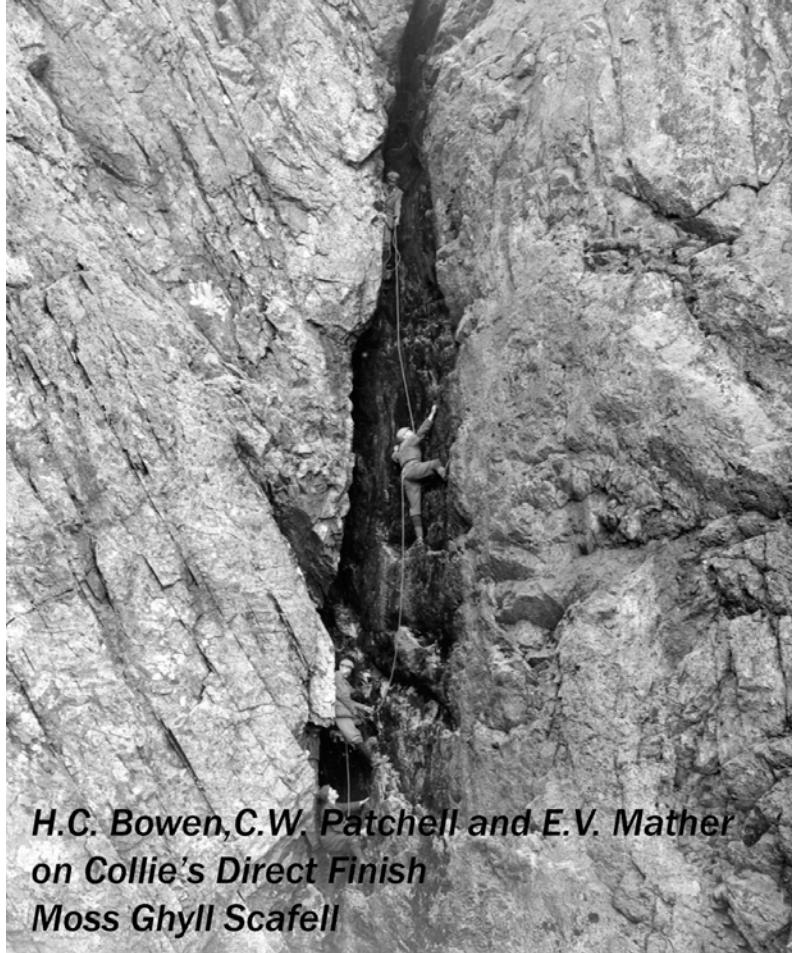
June 1901 saw the first CCJ to be published under the new President W P Haskett-Smith but the editorial responsibility remained with Raymond Turner who by now was serving in his second year as editor.

During early 1881 a twenty-two year old was sitting in his rooms at Trinity College, Oxford studying maps of England. He had been appointed by his groups of friends to locate a suitable summer venue for the 'reading party'. So it was that Walter Parry Haskett-Smith first came to visit Wasdale, reading Plato in the mornings and tramping the fells in the afternoon. It was on his first visit to the Lakeland Fells, lasting two months, that he met F H Bowring, an experienced hill walker who was to introduce the group to the excitement of the fells off the beaten track. Haskett-Smith revisited Wasdale in 1882 with his younger brother on a walking holiday, they explored cliffs and gullies. It was from this point that climbing, as we know it was born. In 1883 Haskett-Smith took his finals and gained a third class in Literae Humaniores, he was back in Wasdale for a productive 1884 summer season but then in 1885 he went to visit friends in the Pyrenees. 1885 was also the year that W C Slingsby first visited Wasdale. At the time the Alpine Club had some scathing views about the Lakeland Fells, often regarding them as only worth consideration for alpine training during the winter months. Slingsby was a member of the Alpine Club and had repeated several of Haskett-Smith's routes and these prompted him to write a paper for the Alpine Journal dated the 6th April 1886 (although it was not published until the following edition), in it he paid tribute

to Haskett-Smith as a '*gentleman who has done much brilliant rock climbing in Cumberland and who, unfortunately, is not in our club*' (The Alpine Club).

The 'sport' gathered momentum and from the outset Haskett-Smith was in the vanguard. There was virtually no competitiveness between the climbers and information was freely disseminated amongst the leading activists. The pioneers became involved in rock climbing because they enjoyed the exercise, camaraderie and danger (adventure). Haskett-Smith explored three main crags from Wasdale where he achieved notable first ascents. On Pillar he discovered *West Jordan Climb* and *Central Jordan Climb* (Aug/Sept 1882) *East Jordan Climb*, *Great Chimney* (March 1884) and Haskett Gully in 1908. He then moved to Scafell and proximity where he ascended *Deep Ghyll* in winter conditions (April 1882) *Central Gully*, Great End (Aug/Sept 1882), South-East Gully, Great End (Aug/Sept 1882) *Scafell Pinnacle*, *High Man from Jordan Gap*, solo (Sept 1884), *Steep Ghyll*, Low Man, High Man (Sept 1884), *Slingsby's Chimney Route* (July 1888). From Gable he continued broadening his horizons, he visited Langdale and Conistone and was responsible for the first ascents of *Great Gully* on Pavey Ark, *North Gully* on Bowfell Buttress and *North West Gully* on Gimmer all within the two months, August and September 1882. He then went to Dow Crag where he completed the first ascents of '*E*' *Buttress Route* and *Black Chimney* in 1886 and Great Gully in 1888.

It was whilst exploring *Deep Ghyll* that Haskett-Smith first saw Napes Needle through a break in the cloud. The Napes Face of Gable was the last to be discovered but once Haskett-



**H.C. Bowen, C.W. Patchell and E.V. Mather  
on Collie's Direct Finish  
Moss Ghyll Scafell**

Smith had ascended *The Needle* in June 1886 it became one of the most popular and best-known routes which was widely publicised by the stunning photographs of the time. Haskett-Smith was very much a rock climber as opposed to being a mountaineer; he wasn't necessarily interested in reaching the summit. His ascent of *The Needle* was done solo in the afternoon after a long walk and without the aid of a rope; it was the first breakaway from the preoccupation with gullies and it was to be three years before it was to receive its second ascent by Geoffrey Hastings.

Photograph:  
©abrahamphotographic  
/ FRCC Archives

In 1894 Haskett Smith published *Climbing in the British Isles: England*. This was an A – Z of rock climbing and crammed with topographical, technical, historical and etymological information. However this volume was of little use to anyone seeking technical route information or descriptions. On the other hand, O G Jones book *Climbing in the English Lake District* published in 1897 gave a much fuller account of many routes which he attempted to classify according to difficulty.

The Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District was formed in 1907 and Haskett-Smith was to become an early honorary member. Although the old guard of the ‘Golden Age’ were beginning to fade from the foreground they were still active. Haskett-Smith climbed his last new route in Cumberland in April 1908 at the age of forty-nine, *Haskett Gully*, described in the guide as ‘*very unpleasant, mossy wet and loose*’, however he continued to climb for many years after that. During its inaugural year the F&RCC lost John Wilson Robinson who died as a result of a medical operation and the Club formed a Memorial Committee under the chair of Haskett-Smith. The Club, through this committee, organised the building of the cairn which still stands on the Robinson’s High Level Route to Pillar and nearby a bronze memorial tablet was set into a boulder over which Slingsby paid a final tribute.

Haskett-Smith shared a flat with his sister near Olympia in London, they lived on independent means but despite being a lawyer Haskett-Smith did little or no legal work. Right up to the late 1930s he regularly joined those members of the F&RCC who lived in or around London. In 1936 he agreed to

mark the fiftieth anniversary of his ascent of *Napes Needle*. He arrived in Wasdale on Good Friday at the age of seventy-six and was met by R S T Chorley (the late Lord) President of the F&RCC and then editor of the Alpine Journal. On the Sunday through cold and gusty conditions and experiencing frequent snow flurries they set off for The Needle. An audience of 300 had gathered around the Dress Circle and Needle Gully and watched as Haskett-Smith led by R S T Chorley up the 1886 original line of ascent, and followed by G R Speaker. Haskett-Smith gained the summit for the last time and when someone called out ‘Tell us a story’ he shouted back ‘There is no other story. This is the top story.’ After a short speech from Chorley and a reply from Haskett-Smith the party descended The Needle and slowly made its way back to Wasdale where Haskett-Smith paid his last farewell to the hills of Cumberland that he had loved so much.

He died eight years later in 1946 at the grand old age of eighty-seven. He was undoubtedly the first to realise the potential of the Lakeland fells as a playground for the pure rock climber as well as a training ground for the aspiring alpinist and he dedicated over fifty-seven years of his life to developing the sport. Haskett-Smith joined the Climbers’ Club and was elected onto the committee at the first general meeting held in London on the 28th April 1898.

In the June 1901 CCJ T H Sowerby takes a long look at ‘Old English Mountaineering’ and revisits some of the volumes and maps used by previous generations. It makes fascinating reading to see just how ‘wild’ so many of the districts were that we now regard as major tourist areas. This is illustrated with

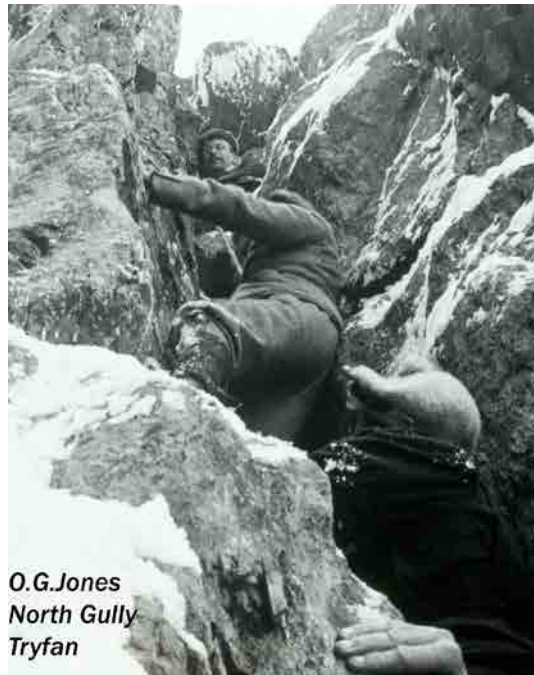
reference to Lyson's History 1816 in which he confirms that the '*white-tailed eagle breeds every year in the neighbourhood of Keswick.*' Sowerby's references go back to John Speed's maps of 1676 and cover the main editions that would have been of interest to the 'tourists' of previous generations. Milton reports on another fatal accident to a Club member, this time the accident happened in winter conditions on the descent from Tryfan. Weightman, it appears, fell down, possibly the NNW Gully of the mountain. Articles also appeared related to *Savage Gully* and concerning the hills of Arran.

In his first speech as President, Haskett-Smith referred to the fact that in the eyes of the continental mountaineering press Britain could no longer produce a 'mountaineer'. This comment, Haskett-Smith went onto explain, was proved by the fact that no British mountaineer had been statistically recorded as summiting Mont Blanc during the previous season. The situation arose because so many members of the Club were by then making guideless ascents and from starting points other than Chamonix. This fact was arrived at as a result of references made to the previous President's Book on Mont Blanc, the Journal of members' activities and achievements.

The Pen-y-Gwryd was closed over Easter 1901 and also, as a result of some very inclement weather, the Club gathered in Llanberis. The low snow line prevented the more traditional areas around the higher summits from being visited so some time was spent exploring Dinas Mot. On Easter Sunday an initial exploration took place up the *Western Gully*, which from the evidence of a cairn on the top proved it had been ascended before,

however C G Brown and P A Thomson then proceeded via a rib to climb onto the upper cliff to continue past ledges and steep slabs to reach the summit some 200 feet above and one and a half hours later. To round the day off the team then walked across to Lliwedd and in full winter conditions made an ascent of *Slanting Gully!*

[CCJ June 1901 p194]



By then the Kyndwr Club were involved in serious cave exploration where they carried out surveying, geological surveys, and photographic work. It was recognised from the outset the valuable contributions that climbers made to cave exploration and this was reinforced in an article which states, '*here (Mendip Hills) more than in Derbyshire, experienced rock-climbers will have the advantage, both in getting at openings of cavities and in underground work.*'

[CCJ June 1901 p 198]

Photograph:  
©abrahamphotographic  
/ FRCC Archives



In an article titled 'British Climbing from Another Point of View' C S Ancherson and H V Reade, both Alpine Club members, discuss relevant points differentiating rock climbing in England compared to mountaineering abroad. This article would appear to be one of the earliest in the CCJ to address issues of a philosophical nature. The article continues *'Indeed it must be borne in mind that an exaggerated estimate of the value of British climbing in the education of the mountaineer, which is prevalent, must have been observed by many. Everyone knows that, despite these limitations, British climbing gives splendid sport, and that the standard of difficulty is very high. But how far is it from reproducing the real thing?'*

The case is argued, by the authors, over the ability of the English rock climbers, who moved individually out of technical necessity as part of a rope, to be able to move quickly and safely over the mixed terrain (as found, for example, in the Alps). *'In a point of 'technical difficulty', the authors go on to point out, 'that there may be little difference between Kern Knotts Crack and the Grepon Crack, but, it does not follow that a man who can do one, can safely attempt the other. The fact that the Grepon Crack can only be reached after some hours of climbing as difficult, or more so, not to mention that a fall from it for the leader would certainly be fatal, makes the comparison fallacious. There are no doubts that certain rock climbs in the Alps, could be paralleled to something that is found in Wasdale or elsewhere in this country.'* Evidence of the well entrenched belief that climbing at home only served as practice for the real thing! The authors go on to expound on the differences between mixed snow and rock routes found in England from Switzerland and

the techniques required to deal with steep open snow slopes. *'There is scarcely a feature of Alpine snow and ice work which can be found in Great Britain. British climbing may teach one to be sure footed, and a safe man on rocks, but on British hills there is practically no danger from stones falling spontaneously. Consequently, the climber attacks cheerfully any rocks that come in his way, and in particular, finds much of his best work in gullies, which often, form the only or chief routes up the cliffs. In the Alps, on the other hand, to act on this principle could only result in disaster.'*

The article concludes, *'Climbing, as it is practiced in Great Britain, forms a small sub division of rock-climbing proper, and consequently a very small sub-section of mountaineering in the full sense of the word. All that is commonly taught by it is the capacity to do a particular kind of short climb, which tends to develop rock-gymnasts rather than all round cragsmen. And, conversely, a man may be a thoroughly good all-round mountaineer without being able to perform some of these gymnastic feats. Real mountaineering is only to be learnt in an Alpine country, by working for several seasons under good guides.'* [CCJ September 1901 p 12]

I wonder what those esteemed authors would make of the level of skill, or is it audacity, with which the young 'tigers' of today achieve their targets and goals, not only on British rock but also in the Alps and the Himalaya, many on their first visits to the Alps or greater ranges?

Members of the Climbers' Club have always been on the right side of anarchy but have not been afraid to take issue with those authorities who take liberties, especially if it involves liberties to exercise one's right.

The 'Right to Roam' issue probably had its first airing in the September 1901 CCJ with an article entitled 'Deer and Deer Forests.' The author, A L Bagley, a member of the SMC, expressed his disappointment in reading that freedom of access was granted to *'allow the climbing and scientific public access as far as possible.'* *'What about those who just want to enjoy the moors and hills?'* he asks. The statement *'as far as possible'* referred to the damage that might have been done by the unwary causing stags to desert the forest and move on to a neighbour's land. What Bagley goes on to ask is *'what will become of the stags on that neighbour's land?'* The article goes on in depth and was to be commented upon over the following months with letters appearing in subsequent copies of the CCJ.

The Staffordshire Roaches are mentioned in the 'Kyndwr Club Notes' and several 'interesting scrambles' are reported to have been found. The *Ben Nuis Chimney* on Arran was climbed for the first time by Baker, Oppenheimer and Puttrell. Under the Editorial Notes mention was again made of the continued persistence of those determined to construct an electric railway from Porthmadog to the foot of Snowdon, also within the article concern is raised over the proposal to intern the Glaslyn River in pipes to generate electricity down the Dyli Falls and that consent had been given in the House of Commons to convert Llyn Llydaw into a reservoir. There also appeared in the correspondence section a request for donations to support the National Trust who wished to purchase a mile of the western shore of Derwentwater.

By December 1901 C E Mathews had collected the climbers' and visitors' books

from the Pen-y-Gwryd and written his article 'Reminiscences of Pen-y-Gwryd.' He describes in great detail the very soul of the 'P-y-G', its people and its structure. Harry Owen, the landlord, took over the Inn in 1841 and was the resident landlord up to his death in 1891. A plaque marking his final resting place can be found in Beddgelert church yard along with that of his wife who died in 1896. Of all the interesting entries Mathews writes about, the most interesting is where he revealed the connection of the visit by Charles Kingsley in 1856 to the P-y-G. Upon leaving after a few days rest, Owens asked Kingsley to sign the book. The Kingsley party then went onto pen a series of individual verses in which each of the three guests, Charles Kingsley, Tom Hughes and Tom Taylor tried to outdo each other's verse. In this article Mathews referred to the 'Rabbits' and their members, one of whom was Adam-Reilly who he recalls meeting in April 1879 when the guest list included twenty-five members of the Alpine Club. Mathew's examination of the visitors' book reveals that people had travelled far and wide to be residents at the P-y-G including Gabriel Taugwalder from Zermatt who stayed in 1887, Lord Coleridge and Gladstone, many famous artists had transferred its local scenery onto their canvas and the names of the masters from the great public schools of the time had left their mark in the book. Many of the inspirational years of the Climbers' Club matured in those walls of the P-y-G.

George Abraham writes about a new climb on Pillar Rock and it is also announced that the Club will take over the publication of 'Alpina', the Swiss journal with twenty issues a year.

Photograph:

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/ FRCC Archives

March 1902 saw a subtle change in the format of the Journal; there was for the first time a greater use of illustrations and photography. There were full-page illustrations of the Great Cave Pitch in the Gully of Craig yr Ysfa, a sketch by A E Elias and also a photograph to accompany J M A Thomson's account of the first ascent. Then there were the Abraham brothers' photographs of the cliffs of Ben Nevis from Càrn Dearg, the Gap in the Tower Ridge, a collection of four snapshots depicting different aspects of Ben Nevis, all to illustrate an article on the history and topography of the mountain. Another two full-page action photographs were used to good effect to accompany an article on Wharncliffe Crag, a crag around which a variety of boulder problems provide a *'hard afternoon's workout'*.



The Hornli Ridge  
Matterhorn

The purpose of the article, C F Cameron informed us, was not to convey that the Don Valley was a rival to Wasdale Head but to publicise the fact that it did provide a variety of short climbs on hard, rough, firm-set rock, and by the experience on them the climber would acquire a skill which would give him valuable aid in his endeavours in the future.

The attitude of the Club towards the Deer Forest question was raised in the Committee Notes and it was stressed that the previous article was purely the private opinion of the writer and not that of the Club.

In January 1902 L F Ryan along with his guide Joseph Lochmatter arrived in Zermatt. Despite Lochmatter's slight dislike of the thought of winter climbing the pair made their way up to Schwarzee and eventually on to the *Hornli Ridge* with serious intentions to climb the East Face. Although the face appeared *'remarkably black'* it was undoubtedly in good condition for winter. They were both of the opinion that they could achieve their goal despite the cold temperatures and the fact that they had to traverse across onto the North Face before reaching the summit. As the pair turned away in the last light of the afternoon sun their eyes shifted to the magnificent Eastern Ridge of the Weisshorn which was highlighted by the setting rays. Lochmatter quickly pointed out that this would be a warmer prospect than their original project, and then as if to add the icing on the cake, mentioned that it had not been ascended in winter before. Ryan and Joseph Lochmatter met up with Alois Pollinger and Raphael Lochmatter. The four reached the summit of the Weisshorn at 2.50pm on the 29th January 1902.

The Club's fifth A G M took place at the Café Royal, Regent St., London on the 9th May 1902, the accounts for 1901 stood at £282. 1s 6½d they were audited and passed by the meeting. Haskett-Smith informed the Committee that Mr W Rickmer Rickmers had donated about 300 volumes as a nucleus to form a Club library. He also referred to the gift in his Presidential speech commenting that it was good that the Club should have its own library as the Alpine Club had their own library. However he questioned whether the books would be read as infrequently as those at the AC! G Winthrop Young replied to the President's speech referring to the fact that he was, at that time, the youngest member of the Club. The formalities of the evening concluded after another six speakers gave lengthy but humorous anecdotal reports on the Club's activities and their own adventures.

The third bound copy of the CCJ contains Volumes V and VI of the journals and opens with a fine and extremely interesting article by Haskett-Smith titled 'Wasdale Head 600 Years Ago'. It is very evident from the article that Haskett-Smith had indeed studied *Literae Humaniores*! Despite routes having been climbed on the more open buttresses, as the description of *Bowfell Buttress* illustrated, the Club was still very much in the gully era and the article 'Two Gullies on Twr Du, Cader Idris' described the first ascent on the 28th and 29th August 1902. The interesting point of this article is in the fact that the photographs were taken by the actual climbers, J Phillips and H L Jupp, as opposed to having been taken by a third party. After the announcement that the Club had a nucleus of a library as donated by Rickmer Rickmers the journal of 1903

contained a catalogue reference of the volumes and by whom they were donated. Those items donated by Rickmers were in the main of foreign origin, whereas those presented by W Maude, A V Valentine-Richards, Godfrey W H Ellis and C W Nettleton, the Honorary Librarian, were of English origin.

Some of our present members living in the London region might find the article 'A Day Down the Dene Holes' interesting. This described a short expedition to the '*rural village of Bexley about 15 miles from Charing Cross*' where there was a series of holes and underground excavations. The team explored the labyrinth with the use of a ladder and Alpine Lanterns and a loaded revolver just in case! No satisfactory explanation has ever been given for their existence, however their antiquity is not in question as Pliny wrote about these chalk extractions in A.D. 70 and other classical writers mention them in their works.

The Club was now entering an era of exploration of the less frequented corners of the planet, an article on climbing in South Africa anonymously written and submitted to the CCJ editor for fellow members to read and the library catalogue was updated.

### **The sixth AGM and the W C Slingsby Years 1904 – 1907**

William Cecil Slingsby was born in 1849 into an old established and well-to-do Yorkshire family of landowners who had reinforced the family wealth by going into the textile industry. He grew up to love the hills and moors around his home in the Skipton-in-Craven area and it was there that he developed his interest for walking and a love of the outdoors. He was educated at Cheltenham



School. In 1872 at the age of twenty-three he visited Norway and was immediately captivated by the grandeur and splendour of the mountains. He returned summer after summer to explore the high peaks, passes and glaciers. Slingsby learned to speak Norwegian and to ski and in fact took the idea of skiing to the Alps. In 1875 he made his first visit to Aak in the Romsdal Valley, he returned the following year and went on to make many first ascents including Kvandalstind, which he regarded as the steepest mountain in Europe.

Two years later he went for the first time to Switzerland and from then on spent his summers divided between Norway and the Alps. Slingsby very much rejected the exclusive attitude of the Alpine Club's 'Old Guard' and was for a more inclusive approach where he could embrace the complete gambit of outdoor involvement of every kind. In amongst his forays abroad Slingsby developed his knowledge of the Lakeland mountains when his first recorded visit to Wasdale was in 1885 with Geoffrey Hastings, who accompanied him on so many foreign trips, they tried to climb, but were defeated by the ice in *Deep Ghyll*. As a result of the experience Slingsby wrote a brief account of the climb in the Alpine Journal April 1886 in which he concluded *'Do not let us be beaten on our own fells by outsiders, some of whom consider ice-axes and ropes to be 'illegitimate' (reference to the Old Guard from the Alpine Club). Let us not neglect the Lake District, Wales and Scotland whilst we are conquerors abroad.'*

Slingsby was a member of the Provisional Committee of the Climbers' Club that met in February 1898 to deal with the practical questions of detail regarding the establishment

of the Club and to draft the notice to attract new members. He then became a full committee member and was elected to position at the first general meeting held on 28th April 1898. Not only was Slingsby known as the father of Norwegian mountaineering he went on to become a widely acclaimed authority on Norway and in 1903 he wrote *Norway, the Northern Playground*.

Sadly 1928 saw the death of Cecil Slingsby; he had continued to climb in Norway, the Alps, Scotland and the Lake District well into the twentieth century. He moved from his Craven home to a house overlooking Morecambe Bay and this continued to be the focal point of many gatherings of likeminded men, including Haskett-Smith, Norman Collie, Geoffrey Hastings, Godfrey Solly, the Hopkinsons, Pilkingtons and many others. Slingsby's last climb was North Climb on Pillar on his seventieth birthday in 1926. The team comprised of Raymond Bicknell, who led, followed by Slingsby with Winthrop Young as last man on the rope. Winthrop Young had lost his leg whilst serving on the Italian front; he was also Slingsby's son-in-law having married Eleanor Slingsby.

The First World War also sadly saw a large group of Club members killed in action. However, the Club did survive and in fact went from strength to strength with many fine Presidents being elected to post over the course of time. Robert A Robinson past Committee member and ex-President of the SMC took up the Presidency from 1907 – 1910, he was followed by Sir John Bretland Farmer 1910 – 1912, Geoffrey Winthrop Young 1913 – 1920, A W Andrews 1920 – 1923 and George Leigh Mallory as the eighth President of the

Climbers' Club 1923 – 1924, he of course met his untimely death on Everest and has left the Club, and the mountaineering world, pondering the everlasting question, did he die before or after reaching the summit?

As can be seen in those early years, solid pillars for the foundations of the Club were laid down and in the main these have not only withstood the test of time but have in fact been developed and strengthened over the last century.

*“Remember that a Club is an institution towards which every man must contribute his share. May it flourish and prosper!”*

CE Mathews, CC AGM 28th April 1899.

All original text has been researched in the Climbers' Club Journals.



### **The photographs**

Two of the best early climbers were also remarkable photographers - George and Ashley Abraham. They were premier members of both the Fell and Rock and the Climbers' Club, and in time the FRCC was presented with a collection of their work created between 1890 and 1934. This collection is one of the most iconic of all old mountaineering images and depicts many unique events in the development of climbing throughout the UK and the Alps.

We are indebted to both the Abraham family (Abraham Photographic) and Fell and Rock Climbing Club for permitting us to use some Abraham photographs in this article. Two excellent collections of some of their images have been published:

***Camera on the Crag***, Alan Hankinson.  
Heinemann Educational Books  
(1975, revised edition 1979).  
ISBN 0 435 86000 3.

This has been out of print for many years but copies can be picked up from second hand book shops, prices start at about £20 for copies in average condition, well worth the investment.

***Capturing the Mountains***  
Privately published by Abraham Photographic  
(2008).  
ISBN 978 0 9558824 0 1.

Sadly this is also now out of print and is more difficult to source from used book retailers, most copies that are on sale cost in excess of £100.

Photograph:  
©abrahamphotographic  
/ FRCC Archives

# THE WOMEN MEMBERSHIP DEBATE - AN APOLOGY, 40 YEARS ON

*Changes to the Objects or Rules of our Club inevitably generate a lot of debate, none more so than the (then long overdue) decision to open membership up to individuals regardless of gender. The motion to change the Rule was proposed by the author who wishes to set the record straight.*

By Martin Sinker

At the AGM of 1975, held at the Maynard Arms, women were admitted to membership of the Club for the first time, after a number of years of highly divisive argument. Enthusiasts will find the full AGM debate starting on page 35 of the 1975 Journal, the second of John Longland's two editions printed at A4 rather than A5 – the splendid recent Journals were not the first to

break the mould on size. As a recently retired Hon Secretary at that time, and having been deeply involved in the preceding years of strife, I was lucky enough to propose the successful motion to the meeting. Re-reading now the case which I put forward then, the words seem so banal and obvious that it is hard to believe there was anything to argue about. However I must now confess, to my eternal shame, that one of the key points which I relied upon was untrue. I just have to hope that this disclosure will not lead to an "Invalid Vote" call and a return to the bad old days of men only. The point in question was my asserted precedent that, some fifty years earlier in 1926, my mother had actually stayed at the men-only bastion of Helyg, thus laying early foundations for our mixed Club.

The true state of affairs is indicated in the extract below, from a letter written by mother Ruth Longland (as she was then) to her parents, following a trip to North Wales in September 1926. The Jack referred to is Ruth's younger brother Jack Longland (John's

Below:  
*Paul Sinker*

Photograph:  
*Sinker Collection*



father) and Paul is Paul Sinker, my father. Jack and Paul had met at Cambridge and took up climbing around a year earlier, with a trip to Wasdale Head in September 1925. On that occasion Paul, seconding, successfully caught Jack as he popped out of the slippery bit of Kern Knotts Crack. Ruth and Paul were on the way to becoming an “item” at the time of the letter; Paul was 21 and Ruth’s 23rd birthday was celebrated at Helyg. They were not able to marry until 1929.

*I never really answered your birthday letter. Wales was the most blessed holiday. It was driving wind and mist and rain all the time, except two days very hot - but it didn't matter in the least. My farm was just under the nearest mountain, and the people were so kind - brought me tea and toast in bed and went out of their way to be nice. I only had breakfast there after the first few days, as there were no other climbers at the cottage. It is a priceless place - a regular man's arrangement, but quite efficient. I wish I had time to describe things to you. I used to go straight down after my breakfast, to find the boys looking very nice after their morning bathe in the stream, just in the middle of cooking and eating theirs. They were all very handy but I noticed that Paul quietly did all the work while Jack took ages fiddling over elaborate dishes. Then we packed up raisins, prunes, bread, chocolate and biscuits, and Paul oiled my boots, and made sure I had enough sweaters, and packed all my belongings in his rucksack, and we started off. The other three climbed on one rope, and Paul and I on another, usually on different climbs, meeting at the top for lunch. He took great care of me, testing the rope and refusing to move until I was belayed strongly enough to hold a*

*house - and he knew just how much I could stand without getting over-tired, so I thoroughly enjoyed all the climbing. He was rather apt to climb down and kiss me when falling stones came too close, for fear of what might have happened, but otherwise we stuck strictly to business till the top. The day generally ended with a bathe in some lovely clear mountain tarn, miles from everywhere. Then we came back and cooked a huge meal at Helyg. My birthday supper was tomato soup made with milk, liver and bacon and fried potatoes, plum pudding and brandy butter, savoury eggs, and cocoa. They would never let me wash up, which was rather sweet of them.*

*One Sunday we spent climbing along the ridge of the Glydders (sic), in such a storm that I was on my hands and knees most of the way. We did the Snowdon Horseshoe, a wonderful walk along the ridges of Snowdon and the surrounding mountains - one part is a ridge as wide as a bench, with precipices on each side, lasting I suppose about half a mile - but the*

Below:

*Ruth, Paul and  
Jack Longland*

Photograph:

*Sinker Collection*





Left:  
*Top of the Glyders*  
*Jack, Ruth, and*  
*Chartres*

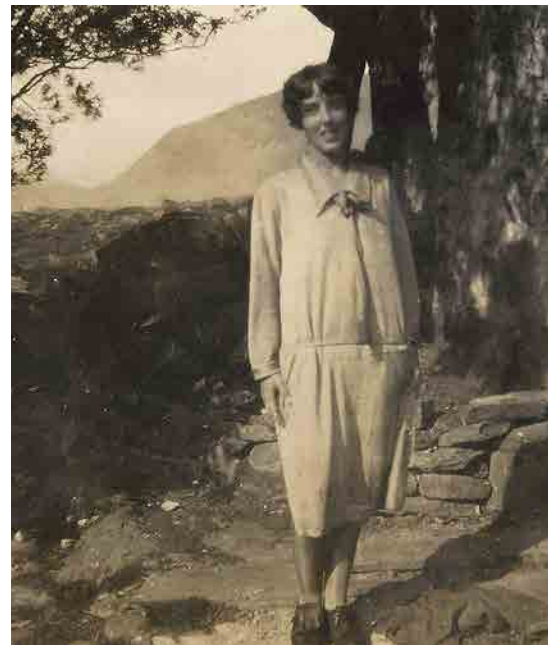
Right:  
*Ruth outside Helyg*

Photographs:  
*Sinker Collection*

*mist and rain were so thick that you could only see a few yards ahead. I only put on dry clothes on two days – fancy me getting up and arraying myself in a sodden smelly mass of stiff and woolly garments! – but it was great. The last day was very hot, and we got a view for the first time – the whole of North Wales, with Cardigan Bay and Anglesey, the Snowdon range, Cader Idris, Puffin Island, and all sorts of things. There were no real casualties – I skinned both hands and Paul wouldn't let me climb for two days – and Jack fell down a small hole, and Paul fell off and burnt Jack's hand with rope-friction, and Paul finished up by hurting his ankle scree-running, but otherwise we were gloriously fit. I look rather weather-beaten now, but it will wear off.*

*After the first few days we got lots of time to ourselves – one lovely day when the others went to Bangor and we cleaned out Helyg – there were various murky corners I had been dying to get at – and then carried the towels, hankies and dishcloths down to the stream and sat on rocky islands, each of us with a cake of Lifebuoy soap, and washed everything. Then we hung them on gorse-bushes in the sun. After that we went up to the mountains and had lunch by a waterfall in glorious sunshine, and a bathe in a little tarn hidden in a circle of hills.*

So Ruth appears not quite to have stayed at Helyg in 1926, but at least she cleaned the hut out. And in my defence it is worth noting Jack Longland's support for the 1975 motion as quoted in the Journal, and I'm glad to say that he chose not to undermine my spurious claim about his elder sister.



# OBITUARIES

ALAN BROOK *1946 – 2017*

BARRIE BIVEN *1936 – 2016*

BRYAN GRINYER *1933 – 2017*

HARRY SALES *1918 – 2017*

JIM CURRAN *1943 – 2016*

JOHN DISLEY *1928 – 2016*

JOHN MERCER *1938 – 2016*

KEN FORSYTHE *1947 – 2016*

MIKE BINNIE *1936 – 2016*

NICK RUSSELL *1988 – 2016*

RACHEL SLATER *1992 – 2016*

TIM NEWTON *1989 – 2016*

RICHARD McELIGOTT *1947 – 2016*

ROGER CHORLEY *1930 – 2016*

TONY JONES *1939 – 2016*

# ALAN BROOK 1946 – 2017

I first met Alan in the spring of 1963, while learning to climb in Wilton Quarries. We were both 6th form students at different schools and he appeared at the top end of the quarry with a nylon rope over his shoulder, always a good sign in those days. We were just beginning to enjoy the adventure of climbing and soon became lifelong friends. A small group of us would meet most weekends to climb on the local quarries and outcrops, almost regardless of the weather. He died in March 2017 of a cancer he had been fighting for some time.

Alan was a friend to everyone he met; if you came across him on a crag you would be more likely to know him by his nickname of 'Koochie'. I shall miss him.

by Ray Evans

The following has been adapted from the eulogy given at his funeral, compiled by Dave and Liz Wilson, his wife Julie and a few of his friends from different walks of life.

Alan (Koochie to his friends) was a man of many parts and known to many people. First and foremost a climber, he was also a sailor, skier, motor cyclist, and real ale enthusiast.

Alan started climbing while at Wardley Grammar school where an enlightened PE teacher took groups

of pupils on camping and hillwalking weekends to the Lake District. He soon started climbing at Wilton Quarries and by the age of seventeen was hitch-hiking to the Lakes or Llanberis with climbing friends, including Ray Evans, Pete Furniss and Malc Berry and doing what climbers did in those days: sleeping under boulders. Later while studying Maths at Manchester University, he joined the University Climbing Club where he was re-christened 'Koochie' and made lifelong friends including Julie who later became his wife.

In 1970 Alan and Julie made their first trip to the Alps during which Alan and Pete Furniss distinguished themselves by using paraffin instead of water to make soup – resulting in the astounding sight of a fireball being ejected from the tent. Only rain saved the situation.

During the 70s he climbed all over Britain: the Peak District, North Wales, the Lakes, Cornwall and in the Alps, mostly with Mike Harris and friends from University days.

In 1978 Alan married Julie and they went on a skiing honeymoon, having prepared with a couple of lessons on the dry ski slope at Rossendale. Then (climbers had no need for fancy lessons) it was straight to the top of the piste armed with the Sunday Times Book of Skiing.

From then on they went skiing every year (sometimes twice). They became accomplished skiers.

In the same year, his Alpine holiday was shortened by an accident on the walk up to the 'M' resulting in a helicopter rescue and a two week stay in Chamonix Hospital.

Alan and Julie moved to New Mills and joined the Mynydd Climbing club, which became a substantial part of their lives thereafter and was the source of long term friendships and climbing partnerships. Alan was to become Treasurer and then Chairman of the Mynydd. He began following the club tradition of sea stack climbing, the most recent being an ascent of *North Galton Castle* in Orkney.

In the 80s he joined up with the 'Team Tuesday' club for evening climbing around Derbyshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire, even getting as far as North Wales on one occasion. The combination of climbing, fast driving and bonhomie suited him and led to him joining the Climbers' Club in 1991. Later in the 90s Alan teamed up with Chris Sutton and together they laid siege to some of the big rock walls of Central Switzerland. He also climbed several times in America with Derek Peterson and Chris Sutton and loved to go for climbing holidays to Kalymnos

(which he and Dick Williams discovered before it became popular).

Meanwhile, a first holiday on the Norfolk Broads in the early 70s set off a holiday pattern for the next 45 years. This led to coastal sailing trips with Bob Bowdler's Lancashire team and then with a group he met while studying for his Coastal Skipper's Certificate. Alan went on to acquire his Yacht Master's Certificate in 2014 and there followed sailing trips with his friends from the Mynydd round the west coast of Scotland and the Med.

Alan's career was in computing. After University he did a 2 year graduate apprenticeship at Rolls Royce Derby and then worked for the Co-op as a computer programmer. In 1973 he started at Fraser Williams as a Systems Analyst where he met Steve Worthington who tells of Alan's participation in a presentation skills course where Alan had to give a talk:

'He chose to talk on the subject of D.P. It was assumed that this meant Data Processing - but it was not - it was about Death Potential! Alan gave a graphical representation of the escalating dangers of his various hobbies, which by now included sailing, windsurfing, climbing and hang-gliding. But at the top of this list was travelling as a passenger in a work colleague's car! This brought the house down! Mind you, travelling as a

passenger with Alan could sometimes be described as thrilling to put it mildly'.

He later worked for Anite Systems before joining CSC as an I.T. Consultant, a position he held until 2011 when he retired.

Alan was small in stature but powerfully built, he was appreciated by many for his ability to not take himself seriously and to take no offence at jokes at his expense. He would always remain cheerful and friendly in the face of taunts regarding his stature and dress sense which owed little to current fashion. His role as Fairy Godmother at the Mynydd annual dinner show will long be remembered.

Quotes from friends paint a picture of a man who was a staunch Lancastrian with entrenched opinions, some of them frankly unpalatable and with no shades of grey, but who continually exuded good cheer; a generous man, warm and friendly, who had a great sense of mischief and fun.



Some quotes:

*'I've never actually seen him angry'*

*'Firmly rooted in the 70s' (as late as that?!)*

*'Reminds you that someone you completely disagree with can be a nice guy'*

*'A genuinely lovable person'*

*'The most amiable reactionary that I know'*

*'Loyal to his friends and completely reliable'*

*'Our perfect climbing companion; telling one of us if we could reach the good hold, and the other how to reach a good pub. Simple pleasures, a true great friend, and many happy shared memories.'*



# DR BARRIE BIVEN 1936 – 2016

Barrie Biven who died on December 12th, aged 79, was by profession a psychoanalyst and clinical psychologist. The younger of the two Biven Brothers who emerged as youthful rock climbing prodigies in the early 1950s, he moved on to become an accomplished if unsung mountain adventurer.

Born in Leicester to a hill-walking father, from an early age the two youngsters were encouraged to go off to the hills on their own, and thus when hitch hiking to Stanage Edge

one day in 1951, coiled rope and rucksack on shoulder, they thumbled down a Rolls Royce. The driver, a small, lean, middle aged gentleman, offered a lift in return for climbing instruction. Trevor Peck, a well-to-do Leicester hosiery manufacturer, was a quick learner and soon became a top-class rock climber himself, while providing the organisation and wise council that the teenagers lacked. Thus began the outstanding *Biven and Peck* climbing partnership; few people however realised that it was a three man team and that there were two Bivens – Peter and Barrie – often mistaken for twins, both tall and lean and both equally proficient, powerful and charismatic. Indeed, though on strenuous climbs Barrie possibly had the edge on Peter, if not his superb technique, many of his finest leads were credited to the older, more flamboyant sibling, who died in a climbing accident in 1976.

Though notable as gritstone pioneers, the trio are best known for their developments in Cornwall where perhaps Barrie's most significant leads were the Bosigran classics of 1955 - *Doorpost*, *Little Brown Jug*, the extremely bold *Suicide Wall* and the fierce *Oesophagus* (1962) at Chudleigh Rocks. He was elected to the CC in 1957.

Barrie and Trevor in particular were early exponents of aid climbing, rediscovering and developing Millstone Edge, typically using hardware invented and made in Trevor's factory workshop, including rustproof, stainless steel pitons for sea-cliff use. This fascination with 'mechanised' climbing resulted in a memorable epic when in 1958 Barrie and Trevor made the first ascent of the *Malham Diretissima* – straight up the 270 foot blank wall at the back of the famous Cove, much of it on Woolworths cup hooks drilled into the stalactite surface; this in the days of 3/8 " diameter hawser-laid ropes and before harnesses. Trevor, as the lighter of the two, led the awkward final pitch over the jutting roof, but was pulled onto his hawthorn bush belay when Barrie fell while de-pegging the roof. He was left dangling in space. Well aware that he would swiftly strangle, Barrie climbed hand over hand up his ropes to regain the rock, a feat he was later unable to replicate experimentally in cold blood.

For National Service in 1956 Barrie volunteered for the Royal Marines, serving in 42 Commando as a qualified Marksman and Parachutist. Within the year he had seen serious combat during the



unfortunate Suez Affair, storming ashore under fire during the hotly opposed assault landing at Port Said. He said later that he had felt no fear, only excitement and pride in being part of history. In due course the British withdrew, but Barrie remained behind in a small Commando team tasked with assassinating Nasser, a suicidal venture swiftly aborted. A subsequent posting to Ulster was spent attempting to ambush IRA terrorists infiltrating the mountainous Fermanagh border before moving down to Cornwall to qualify as a Cliff Leader under the then Captain Mike Banks and his M.O. Dr Tom Patey. It was with Mike and two others from the Cliff Assault Wing that Barrie first tasted the Alps where they climbed new routes on the Petit Capucin du Requin and the Tour Verte and traversed the Zinal Rothorn.

Full time National Service was followed by mandatory five years reserve service – never popular, and although Barrie found the commando uniform useful when hitch-hiking, the annual two weeks training was hard to stomach and he soon went AWOL. Swiftly arrested at Peter's house in Exeter, he was thrown into a cell at the Marines' Lymington barracks to await Court Martial. Here he deployed his climbing skill, for when the guard brought his meal he was bridged

high up in the hut roof, well above eye level. The guard rushed out to raise the alarm and the door was left open. Sometime later Barrie strolled into the guard room and asked what all the fuss was about. Marched before the Colonel he was first severely admonished and then praised for his initiative "*..as can be expected of a Royal Marine.*" He was excused further call-up and honourably discharged. Nevertheless he retained a life-long connection with the Marines, and into his late 70s was a visiting lecturer at the depot of the Mountain and Arctic Warfare Cadre – successor to the Cliff Assault Wing.

In 1962, having failed, as a mere reservist, to join Mike Bank's Joint Services Mount McKinley expedition, Barrie teamed up with Tony Smythe, and having worked their way up to Alaska, the pair were flown by Don Sheldon, the celebrated bush pilot, into the Ruth Amphitheatre. Here they attempted two virgin peaks, making the first ascent of the lower West Summit (2,981m/9,780') of the formidable Moose's Tooth and the first ascent of Mount Dan Beard (3,073m/10,082'). Operating on a shoestring, they decided to walk out to Talkeetna and after five days descending the Ruth Glacier they reached the Chulitna River where they built a raft. Unfortunately the voyage soon ended when they were

wrecked on a mid-river sandbar, lost most of their food and equipment and were now truly marooned. After three days, just as they were preparing for a do-or-die swim, a passing plane happened to spot them and radioed Sheldon who flew in with a floatplane to effect a hazardous white water rescue. Smythe, recently an RAF fast jet pilot, claimed it was the finest feat of flying he'd ever seen.

Biven and Smythe returned to Alaska in 1968 to make the first complete descent of the Yukon River from Whitehorse in Canada to Alakanuk on the Bering Strait. Driving a 13'6" inflatable with a 20 hp outboard motor they accomplished the journey in six weeks, including taking time off at Tanana, where assisted by an airdrop, they explored the upper reaches of the Tokositna Glacier and made an attempt on the *South Ridge* of Mount Hunter (4,442m/14,573').

In New York in 1962, Barrie had become interested in his hostess' work with juvenile street gangs, and returning to Britain he enrolled for a course at the National College of Youth Leaders, got married and took over the management of the Hoxton Café Project.

Essentially this was a coffee bar and meeting place for dead-end kids in a deprived part of London, where Barrie's physique, personality and sense of humour soon won the

respect and trust of young, street-wise delinquents. Among the friends and contacts Barrie called upon to visit the café and chat to the kids was Stirling Moss who arrived in his personalised, gadget-rich, Mini-Cooper, assuring Barrie that it was thief-proof and quite safe parked outside. He was soon taken aback to hear it driving off. Consternation reigned until a scruffy ten year old walked it, grinning from ear to ear, “ Nice mowta’ Stirling “ he said “ plenty uv’ poke but the brakes is a bit fierce “.

In 1966, single again, Barrie took a psychology degree at Sussex University where his art student girlfriend had a flair for fashion and

fabrics. They married and set up a lucrative home business making bespoke men’s neckties under the name tag *Solid Gold*, selling to upmarket stores such as Harrods and Macey’s in New York, and eventually opening their own fashion boutique in the Brighton Lanes. But after graduating, the marriage fell apart and Barrie started seven years training as a psychoanalyst at the Anna Freud Institute in London.

Here he met and married Lucy, an American psychologist, before moving first to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor where they started a family and built up a private practice, and then in 1996 to the University of Cape

Town where Barrie spent many happy days scrambling over the mountains of the Cape. Eventually semi-retiring back to Britain he was kept busy evaluating intractable young offenders for the courts and publishing three books - *Finality of Youth*, *True Pretences* and *Crucible of the Mind*, and *Last Breath* - a small book of poems. Until his final illness Barrie enjoyed long, fast ‘yomps’ on Dartmoor or in his favourite West Penwith, and though he’d not climbed to a high standard for many years, he closely followed rock climbing developments. He leaves a wife, a son, a daughter and grandchildren.

By John Cleare

# BRYAN GRINYER 1933 – 2017

Bryan died of cancer after an illness of over a year on 18 December 2017, aged 84.

He joined the CC in 2004 and had been a member of the London Mountaineering Club since 1968.

After a serious fall on Gogarth, from which he was rescued by helicopter he did not climb again for 15 years. I joined his group of retired but active climbers in 2007. He arranged regular trips to the hills in Britain, where we climbed and walked. Every year or so he arranged trips to the Alps including the Vanoise, the Ecrins, the Brenta Dolomites and the Bregaglia and most recently the Bernese Oberland. His wife and other members of his family came on the latter trip.

He had extraordinary energy and often, after a long drive, would sit down and do the Times Cryptic crossword. In the evenings after a day on the hills he would take out his laptop and do work for the two charities, with which he was involved. He was a senior member of his local Methodist Church in Bradfield, Essex.

His usual climbing partner, Harry, said of him that whatever the weather or the outcome of the climb, whether they got up it or not, he always had an enjoyable day out with

Bryan. He liked a full day on the hills and I had many such days with Bryan.

Retirement without Bryan would have been a much less enjoyable time. The members of his group will miss him and will remember him for all he did for us and for the many enjoyable days we had with him in the hills and mountains.

By Geoff Nicholson

Bryan was an inspiration to and leader of a small group of CC and London Mountaineering Club members. He organised regular meets in Wales, Lakes and Scotland together with yearly trips to the Alps. His quite and friendly approach was infectious and we all looked forward to the next get together in the mountains.

At his funeral, held in the church where he led services, sung and played guitar, a large gathering filled the church and adjacent hall. The various facets of his varied life, loving family, church, charities and mountaineers, gathered to remember him. A very moving event.

We still meet as the Bryan Grinyer mountaineering group and raise our glasses to his memory.

By Tony Scott





# HARRY B SALES 1918 – 2017

Harry joined the Climbers' Club in 1959 and was President from 1975 - 1978, Secretary from 1968 - 1971, and was an Honorary Member.

Harry was born in Stockport. He attended Stockport grammar school and qualified as a solicitor before he was 21, taking his degree at Manchester University while working as an articled clerk to his solicitor father. He eventually became Town Clerk of Aldershot. Later in the 1970's he became a barrister specialising in local government law and Planning law in particular. As a barrister he freely gave advice to the British Mountaineering Council and the charity Friends of the Lake District.

He married his first wife Elsie in 1940 and they brought up four children. After they divorced he married Patricia with whom he shared many adventures in the mountains.

Harry started painting in the late 30s. He became a director of the New Ashgate Gallery in Farnham, Surrey, and the artist-led organisation Free Painters and Sculptors, with whom he exhibited regularly. When his sight began to fail he turned to sculpture, painstakingly sculpting driftwood, (sometimes with the help of a chainsaw), to make human and other

figures. The gift of daffodil bulbs started another enthusiasm and for years he grew the flowers wherever he could find space, competing in shows and developing new varieties.

He was a lifelong climber and joined the Alpine Club as well as the Climbers' Club. In the 1970s, Harry was influential in the Club's decision to allow women to join.

In 1971 he joined a "mini" expedition to Greenland to climb in the Roscoe Bjerge area in Liverpool Land. The team comprised three English and three Scots, Jack Derry, Peter Mould, Harry Sales, Peter Cromer, Stuart Kermack and Malcom Slessor. Various peaks were climbed by the party.

Harry and Pat made a number of visits to the Himalaya to trek amongst the mountains. In 1989 at the age of 70 and with one artificial hip, Harry reached the summit of Mera Peak at 21000ft, in company with John Atherton, Hamish Nicol and Charlie Rose.

Harry had climbed in Cornwall many times before he and Pat came to live near Penzance in 1997. I occasionally climbed with him and I led him up his last climb, *Alison Rib*, when he was 81. He kept his interest in the climbing scene and enjoyed visiting the Count House at Bosigran when there was a meet and he could

catch up with old friends. Harry was always enthusiastic in all he did; he had a great love of life.

By John Atherton

Harry was President of The Climbers' Club 1975-8 and I had joined in 1970 which is how I got to know him as a mountaineer. One day I had a phone call from Harry: 'Bob, do you let out your house in the Lake District? A friend really needs to get away for a week and I thought of you'. I said 'Harry, this friend wouldn't happen to be a lady, would it?' Well, of course it was, and it was Pat. I told Harry that I definitely did not let out my house, but that he was more than welcome to make use of it for a week anyway. Pat and Harry came. When Marj and I returned home on the Friday night for the weekend, the fire was blazing and I knew within minutes that that week had been a defining one in Harry and Pat's relationship and it was likely that nothing would ever be the same again.

Something else I recall was Harry's highly unusual Presidential speech at The Climbers' Club's annual dinner, probably in 1978. He delivered it all in trochaic tetrameters, the style in which Longfellow wrote his epic poem: 'Hiawatha'. Harry's version went something like this:

*'By the Helyg doorway watching;  
Watching weather over Tryfan;  
Stood the climber hairy bearded;  
Draped in ropes with friendly Moacs;  
Chalk in bag and full of hoping;  
Waiting for the rain to lessen;  
For the craggy rocks to glisten;  
Drying slowly on the mountain;.....'*

Well, a few minutes of this was very entertaining, but Harry's speech covered every aspect of the Club's activities during the year! The problem was that we couldn't get him to stop. Impatient members began to heckle, but Harry ignored them and finished his speech/recitation anyway. He showed us all why he made such a good barrister: HE NEVER GAVE UP! Like a dog with a bone, he would worry it until it gave up first.

The Harry I knew was irrepressible, always giggling, highly intelligent, enormously charming, and endlessly patient. In some ways he never grew up, which was part of his charisma. He was very artistic and the house and garden, at least in Old Woking, always had large paintings which were too abstract for me, but his sculptures always seemed to incorporate large ladies with enormous breasts, which I appreciated rather more. He lived a very full and exciting life and I wish I had known him when he was younger. His boat has now sailed over his last horizon, but the glow that he has left behind himself will live on.

By Bob (RF) Allen

It was 1974 when the Climbers' Club Annual Dinner was held in London for the last time. On our table was Colonel Hugh Wright a friend of Harry's who was seeking a crew of predominantly climbers with a view to a sailing trip to Sark and doing some routes on the way. Several of us signed up straight away. Hugh was in the REME and had access to a cadet training yacht - a 30 footer which could accommodate a crew of six. We assembled on board 'Seahorse' at Gosport, and made our way in stages to anchor off Boulder Ruckle and Subluminal at Swanage. The dinghy was used to get us to the foot of the climbs, much to the surprise of climbers who had abseiled in. Several routes were climbed, giving Hugh the satisfaction that his plan was now taking shape.

After this, we crossed the Channel to Cherbourg where Harry and party set about climbing the huge slab beneath the Citadel. This was probably a first ascent and was followed by a celebratory meal in town.

We moved on, through the Race of Alderney, to Sark. We put into Havre Gosselin and explored the area, finding several climbing possibilities. On the side of the Gouliot Cave, Richard and I climbed a nice little groove line which led to the flagpole on top; we appropriately christened the climb 'Seahorse', whilst Harry and party climbed several corner cracks nearby.



During our stay we were joined by John Longland who became a crew member for the return trip.

All in all a most enjoyable trip greatly enhanced by Harry's inimitable contribution.

By Dave Atchison

In the mid 1980's, a mass ascent of *Demo Route* at Sennen which included two presidents and two vice presidents. Harry was second up, Nat Allen led. On his 80th birthday, Ron Chambers took Harry up *Commando Ridge* at Bosigran.

By Ruth and Ron Chambers

I was a young, bold and upcoming climber in the early 70s, when climbing was adventurous and equipment was not as good as it is today. I joined the Climbers' Club in 1972, considerably later than Harry (1959). By then he was well versed in looking after keen new Club members like me. He helped me find an exciting new world of friends and climbing companions, and even went out of his way to partner me on a climb or two in those early years.

He and I were both keen of maintaining the success of our great Club, both of us operating on numerous committees. Harry served as Vice- President (1972 - 1975) and President (1975 - 1978). His nature was consolidation with compromise and I recall many enjoyable meetings where real progress was made, usually into the late hours.

I attended one CC Meet, in Langdale, shortly after recovering from a serious climbing accident. I was eager but cautious to do my first route after my accident; Harry quickly stepped up to the mark and volunteered his time to take me up *Gillercombe Buttress*. We had a superb day out, I was soon feeling good again (on a top rope) and I'd say Harry was fully responsible for my confidence recovery and my getting back on the rock.

I thank him for that and recall that he was so proud of 'leading Smiler Cuthbertson on a rock climb'.

By Smiler Cuthbertson

Harry was with us in 1962, a group from the Climbers' Club heading for Morocco. We flew via Gibraltar, staying for several days in the ToCH hostel. With the help of the navy we got permission (and keys to the locked gate) to climb on The Rock. Harry was in fine form. After the ferry crossing to Tangier we piled into a 'grand taxi' to take us to Marrakech and onwards into the Atlas. One of our aims was to do all the 4000ers in the Atlas and increase our tally to join the Alpine Club. I remember that we did all the classic routes. Eventually we got back to Gibraltar and back to ToCH.

Some fifty years later I was again on the Rock and noticed the sign - ToCH. In I went and there was an old lady at reception. I explained we had stayed at ToCH some fifty years ago. "Yes" she said "I was here at that time running the hostel, I remember some climbers coming to stay." At a club dinner some time later, I told Harry about the meeting at ToCH and he was interested to hear it was still there and still run by the same lady.

By Robin Quine

I feel as if I'd known Harry forever, but I first met him at the end of the fifties or beginning of the sixties when I first started climbing with the Climbers' Club. As I got to know him better, I realised what a remarkable man he was, not only was he a painter and sculptor, but he had also bred daffodils.

After he retired as a solicitor he read law and became a barrister and was instrumental in getting a much needed 10 mph speed limit on powerboats on Windermere. He had a love of music, played the piano and was a bell ringer at his local church until his 90s. And of course he was a keen mountaineer though I don't recall ever sharing a rope with him. I have happy memories of many walks together in Surrey, the Peak, North Wales and Cornwall. And we trekked in Kulu, Lahoul and Ladakh with John and Joy Hunt among others.

He had a wonderful sense of humour and a keen sense of mischief which included him pushing me (the smallest member of the party) through a half open window at Ynys Ettws in the middle of one night - I have no idea why! One of my fondest memories is his reaction to his remarkable 70th birthday cake, decorated with a team of ladies, totally naked except for climbing boots. John Hunt's face was a picture and even Harry almost blushed!

He made friends easily and after his move to Cornwall, the Athertons remarked that he knew more local people in a short space of time than they did after 30 years residence. He bore his increasing blindness with fortitude and humour - I never heard him complain. He was a real character and we will all miss him greatly.

By Sally Westmacott

# JIM CURRAN 1943 – 2016

Jim Curran was a freelance cameraman, writer, lecturer, climber, and artist whose films, books and company were enjoyed by many, not just climbers. The biographical details here were taken from Jim's own website and Terry Gifford adds some very personal remembrances, and a poem, below.

He climbed and filmed on fifteen mountain-based documentaries (including two on Everest), with many of the greats of the British mountaineering scene, including Chris Bonington, Joe Tasker, Alan Rouse, Joe Brown and Peter Boardman. He also filmed in the Andes, Caucasus and Atlas Mountains and China, and nearer home, on the Old Man of Hoy and St Kilda.

His films and books have won many awards world-wide, and he was short-listed four times for the Boardman Tasker Award for Mountain Literature.

His films include *Kongur, K2 – Triumph and Tragedy*, *Barnaj*, and *Trango*,

Book credits include *Trango, The Nameless Tower, K2 – Triumph and Tragedy, Suspended Sentences, and K2 - The Story of the Savage Mountain*, which won the non-fiction award at the Banff Mountain Book Festival in 1996. He wrote the

authorised biography of Sir Chris Bonington *High Achiever - The Life and Climbs of Chris Bonington*.

He filmed and presented a series of climbs in the UK for the BBC's Tracks outdoor oriented strand, as well as climbing and filming on Chris Bonington's expedition to Tibet. He also filmed, scripted and narrated the documentary, *Rock Queen* with Catherine Destivelle, the French climbing superstar, which won him an 'EMMY' award for outstanding electronic camerawork.

He was Artistic Director of the annual Kendal Mountain Film Festival, and completed a sixteen hundred mile bicycle ride from the north of the Shetland Islands to Land's End, writing a book about his adventures, *The Middle-Aged Mountaineer*.

He won The Yorkshire Post Book of the Year Award in 2002 and Best Book on Non-Fiction at the Banff Mountain Book Festival in Canada in 1995. In his autobiography *Here, There and Everywhere* Jim Curran tells the story of two great loves of his life, mountains and art. In the book he travels to many of the world's great ranges describing a life climbing, filming and writing about them. This is in contrast with a long commitment to art education in Rotherham and Bristol. In the book,

Jim wrings humour out of even the most harrowing situations and yet is not afraid to express his grief at the loss of so many of his close friends. In particular, he revisits the K2 tragedy in 1986, when 13 climbers perished on the mountain, giving rise to controversies which have never been resolved. He wrote frankly of his personal life revealing that he suffered from depression and even here the humour was not far away.

How to write the obituary of a writer who has produced one of the best autobiographies in British climbing literature, *Here, There and Everywhere?* Jim said that this was the only book of his about which he had no complaints, thanks in large





part to the design and layout by Ian Smith, and to Jim's boldness in self-publishing. He'd given so much to making a handsome book of great production values, partly to showcase the paintings by which he wished to be remembered, that he'd not realised that it would cost £8.00 to post a copy. He'd invested in publishing his legacy and he was happy with this one last big book of self-deprecating stories and warm memories of his friends and their adventures together, together with frank admissions of failure and also, surprising to those who knew him only as a popular after-dinner speaker, his increasing recurrences of depression. At his funeral, his younger brother Phil, as a kind of MC, kept dropping in misquoted references to the titles of Jim's books and said that at one stage, 'Jim just seemed to be climbing here, there, and all over the place'.

So perhaps Jim's obituarist should open a bottle of red wine and begin with Jim's last joke. The last night I stayed with Jim was just three weeks before he died. The unintended comedy and the warmth of that last visit will stay with me as a memorial of so many lunchtimes, routes, trips and evenings spent in his company. I'd given a lecture in Leeds and arrived at his house to open a bottle of wine and relax with Jim who was fixed in his chair surrounded by the latest exhibition of his drawings and paintings. It was different every time

I visited from Somerset. He was in palliative care and had insisted on being at home in the terraced house in Nether Edge that he loved. It's almost certainly the only house in Sheffield that has a climbing wall down the covered gennel by which the house is entered. There was a grand wall-opening party, of course, with Joe Brown in the company of Rab Carrington and Martin Boysen, Bancroft and Birtles et al, all at various angles of dangle down this narrow gennel. If we were a hundred years hence the Mountain Heritage Trust would open this house as a Curran museum with Jim's films playing on the TV.

Anyway, I opened a bottle of wine, saying, 'It's six o'clock and I've earned this, Jim', to which he replied, 'But Terry, it's six o'clock in the morning!' He was quite concerned for my wellbeing. 'No Jim, it's six o'clock in the evening'. 'Oh', he said, 'I must have slept in this chair all night and all day'. The news was on the TV. 'What's going on in the world?' he said. 'The government want to make all schools into academies, Jim.' Still the sharp old sceptical Jim, he said, 'Is that wise?'

Later the phone rang and he knew who it was, although he said, 'I'm not very well at the moment. I'll ring you back when I'm feeling better'. The voice at the other end said, 'You're in our prayers'. Jim's reply was, 'Well, I need all the help I can get and that

might work'. 'Who was that?' I asked. He mentioned an Oxford don he used to climb with years ago. Jim generated affection because he offered such loyalty to everyone, from every stage of his life.

He dozed a bit and woke up saying, 'You always had a runny nose when I climbed with you'. 'What me?' Jim blinked and said, 'Oh no, that guy who just rang up'. Only Jim could tell his jokes so that they were funny. I told him that I had a beer mat in my desk drawer on which I had written his punchlines from a hilarious Sunday lunchtime in The Grouse above Froggatt. I knew that it was going to be such a memorable occasion that I didn't want to lose it forever. It is now lost forever. It's just an old beermat on which are scribbled things like 'Hilary Fuchs Off to Antarctic'.

Soon Jim said, 'Is there any of that wine left?' I poured him a glass. It remained untouched, but we were back in an old mode of friendship in his house nevertheless. In later life Jim had tested the patience of some of his closest friends with his canterkerousness, except the 'Old Spice Girls' as he named them, who, together with a number of other loyal female companions, looked after his final care between them in Sheffield. He told me that there were two people he'd fallen out with that he now wished he'd been able to make up with. I acted on one

of them when I got home, but was advised that the other was probably beyond reconciliation. (At the funeral Phil said, 'Jim had some enemies, although some of them were not competent to judge him', a brilliant reference to Jim Perrin's accusation of 'incompetence' that triggered a libel case which is fully described, for the record, in *Here, There and Everywhere* pages 225-230. Perrin was not one of the two.)

Jim insisted that I go to bed before him and in the morning I found that he'd made it to his bed in the back room where he was complaining of cold feet. I'd noticed two pied de elephants in a corner of the upstairs room I'd been sleeping in and offered to put them on him. The carers will have had a shock when they peeled back his covers to get him up. He was lucid and wanted to talk. I gave him weak tea with sugar, as he asked, although he could barely sip it. A calendar with a photo of a granddaughter set him off on the story of how each of his grandchildren was progressing. He was immensely proud of his two daughters as mothers and what they were achieving with their children and families. This also should be remembered.

I told him I was still getting mileage out of his best one-liner ever and he scolded me about it. 'You can't still be telling that story!' We'd cycled as far as we could, then walked, into

Carnmore bothy one unusually warm Whitsun to climb Carnmore Butress. At the foot of the climb I'd realised that it was going to be a scorcher of a day, unheard of in Scotland so, unlike Jim, I'd not brought shorts. So I left my trousers at the base of this brilliant climb and at the top, at the end of an amazingly blue sky day, as I dropped my harness, Jim observed, 'Oh look, a sight for sore thighs!' Jim is growling in his grave at me even now for yet another shameless milking of his trademark humour. And when I published an article about our climb in High, Jim was grumbling at me again. 'I see you've managed to sneak in a poem!'

But I've nearly finished the bottle, sadly alone. On what was to be his deathbed, Jim said to me, 'I hear that that Liverpool manager, Jürgen Klopp, has hired a new coach – his brother Klipperty'.

As I shook Jim's hand for the last time, he said, 'When I'm gone, keep an eye on these various women around the place. I suppose I just want them to be happy.' I drove back to Somerset in tears for a friend who I'd only known in the latter part of his life, but a man who just loved climbing and the company of climbers, for which our climbing culture in film, writing, painting and storytelling has been not only richer, but more fun. Perhaps Jim's final final joke was to have us all sing a certain Beatles song at his funeral: 'Here,

There and Everywhere'. And he's left a last book far better than any obituary or any poem for that matter.

### *Two Hander*

*After father's music and mother's milk  
the left hand sucks a pencil,  
the right hand bites the bug  
of rounded rock at Harrison's  
and neither knows quite  
what the other's doing  
out there, obsessively,  
in the wild explorations  
of their elemental extremities,  
laughing, loving, drinking  
it all in for much, much, later.*

*After the rock, the snow,  
after the photos, the films,  
after the films, the books,  
after the books, the speaking  
of the one hand to the other  
from pencil portraits of comrades  
and casualties, to remembered  
mountains - stark, hard playgrounds  
of light and driven mists –  
and monumental crags, coloured  
with a complicated joy.*

By Terry Gifford

# JOHN DISLEY 1928 – 2016

John was a founder member of the informal Welsh Alpine Club, activists in the 1950s based on Harding's guidebook-writing research for the Llanberis 'bumper fun book'. Other members were 'Big' Dave Thomas, Peter Hodgkinson and me with occasional attendance by Mervyn Hughes and John Lawton. This was just before the Brown/Whillans Rock and Ice era and culminated in John's participation in the first ascent of the once ground-breaking *Kaisergebirge Wall* on Clogwyn y Grochan.

About that time we teamed up for *Ribstone Crack*, a long term project I had had on Carreg Wastad. John led the first scruffy pitch and belayed in a comfortable alcove, where I left him and proceeded up the main pitch. At one point I hammered in a peg which

dislodged a five foot long hexagonal column from the cliff and, as it slowly started to slide down, I yelled 'look out!' and John did, as the missile plunged past his ear.

On another occasion we set off up Snowdon by *Schoolmasters' Gully* on Cynr Las. It snowed continually and lay 6" thick on a glacis leading up to the steep crack forming the main pitch of the route. We continued through the snow and reached the ridge where the railway comes near to the edge of the cwm, and where in the early days a locomotive derailed and plunged into the valley. This day the wind rose in a fury and we were unable to face it so backed our way to the railway embankment. A particularly violent gust lifted me off my feet, threw me over the track and dumped me, winded, on the level ground before the drop. I gathered myself and again backed through the bridge to bump into John who had given me up for lost! We decided to give the mountain, or at least the weather, the best and blindly made our way back down to the hut at Beudy Mawr and the warmth of a steaming fire.

This Rucksack Club hut used to have a two storey lounge and the fireplace had a 2 or 3 inch wide mantelshelf above it. The right hand end was marginally wider so, we, in

the know would challenge newcomers to climb on to it. The extra inch or two gave us an advantage and we usually won! John, however invented a jump onto the ledge which must have owed a lot to his steeplechasing expertise!

His sporting success was celebrated by the discovery of *Olympic Slab*, a delicate exercise at Tremadoc, and he was always a much quieter and collected person than his contemporary friend and business partner Chris Brasher.

One final memory is of my stay in the Orthopaedic hospital in Oswestry after a hitch hiking accident. I was immobilised in bed for three months and John, who lived in nearby Gobowen, visited me several times, most notably at Christmas when he smuggled in a half bottle of Scotch to ease my pain! (Better than morphine).

By Tony Moulam

John Disley who was born in Corris, north Wales, is best remembered as a successful athlete who competed for Great Britain in the 1952 Summer Olympics held in Helsinki, where he won the bronze medal in the 3000 metres steeplechase. He also set five British records in the steeplechase and four records at two miles. He also



set Welsh records at six different distances. With his friend, fellow athlete Chris Brasher, he co-founded the London Marathon first held in 1981 and is attributed with being the 'course setter' who established the route still taken by this race, one of the world's biggest marathons.

However, what is less well known about this remarkable man is that he was also a climber, mountaineer and orienteer. He set a speed record for the Welsh 3000' peaks, wrote several climbing related books including *Tackle Climbing this Way* and *The Ascent of Snowdon* and served as the Chief Instructor at The National Mountaineering Centre, Plas y Brenin.

The late Harold Drasdo told me an anecdote concerning Disley, Chris Brasher and his eponymous boot. Chris Brasher, who was another mountain activist best known on the Athletics track, was also a climber and hillwalker. Applying his athletic experience to his hillwalking activities, he came up with the design for 'The Brasher Boot'. This was a lightweight walking boot that utilised fabrics as well as traditional materials and which was waterproof. For those used to hillwalking in cumbersome heavy leather boots, the Brasher Boot was the Bee's Knees!

Brasher and Disley founded Fleetfoot Limited to distribute the Brasher Boot and other sporting goods to retailers. John Disley was then living in the Gwydr Forest near the market town of Llanrwst and, around the time of the launch of the Boot, he suffered a break-in at his home. Amongst the items stolen was one of the prototype pairs. A few weeks later when he was walking around the Kwik Save supermarket in Llanrwst, Disley noticed a local scally wearing a pair of Brasher Boots! Given that the boot had yet to be launched upon an unsuspecting public, a claim that he had bought them in Ellis Brigham didn't carry much weight with the local magistrate!

The rest as they say is history and the Brasher/Disley Brasher Boot continues to be popular to this day although it is now owned by Berghaus.

By John Appleby,  
*previously published in Footless Crow*





# JOHN SHERWOOD MERCER 1938 – 2016

John was the formative influence on my climbing career. I first met him whilst standing shoulder to shoulder waiting to be served in a packed pub in Manchester. He had an arm in plaster. His reply to the obvious question was, "I fell off *Eagle Front*" in Buttermere. I had been living in Manchester for a couple of

years, had discovered climbing but had not progressed beyond doing lots of walking, working my way up to severe on rock and taking courses at Glenmore Lodge and in Austria. John introduced me to Sylvia that evening and I was soon invited to join them on camping trips to the Lakes where I found my climbing standard pushed up.



One of John's hallmarks was research and preparation including careful assessments of the weather forecast and I benefited greatly from this and from his vastly greater experience – to say nothing of more gear, such as was available in the early 1970s.

Born in Edgware he went to Haberdashers' Aske's School in Hampstead, did his National Service as a Signals Officer then travelled in South Africa working as a mining engineer. He studied natural sciences at Christ College, Cambridge then joined ICI in Liverpool where he developed his interest in the mountains. Liverpool was also where he met Sylvia who he married 1967 - they had two children, Clare and Beach.

They later moved to Manchester where John worked as a Plant Manager for Lankro Chemicals and where they were well placed for Wales, the Lakes and the Peak District.

John and Sylvia's first trip to the Alps was in 1968 with a group of friends without any mountaineering experience but who were fit. John, in character, became the leader of the party and they climbed the Dom, Alphubel, Rimpfischhorn and Monte Rosa - a good bag of 4,000ers for first trip. Although not

a great technical rock climber John developed a penchant for snow and ice and learnt how to move together on mixed terrain. The following year John and Sylvia went to the Alps with two friends and climbed the Weisshorn and Zinalrothorn. John then decided on the Zmutt ridge of the Matterhorn. Sylvia reports that she waited for their return to the Hornli hut, but come nightfall they were still not back. They appeared sheepishly in the early hours of the following morning having bivouacked a stone's throw away because there was no light in the hut.

His early achievements whetted John's appetite and he set his sights on the list of fifty-two 4,000 metre Alpine peaks. From 1973 to 1975 he climbed seven more with me, including the 1st British ascent of the NE face of the Bishorn. In 1977 he climbed six more solo. With various climbing partners he secured all but one, the Aiguille Blanche de Peuterey which he finally managed using a route that crossed the Freney glacier under the overhanging seracs. He was the seventh British climber to climb all the Alpine 4000 metre peaks. He was aged fifty.

Before the advent of indoor climbing walls, fitness was kept up by walking and winter climbing in the Lakes and North Wales. John

introduced me to the delights of snow and ice climbing on Great End and Ben Nevis, staying at the CIC Hut. Another winter activity that John cherished, as much for the great characters participating and the conversation in pub afterwards as for the running, was the Cheshire Tally-Ho Hare and Hounds running club where a paper trail laid by the hounds was followed over rough country in the Peak District to the finish in a pub with a few beers, a meal and great conversation.

When weakening knees put paid to running and climbing John turned to cycling and he joined the Ravens Cycling Club, based in Altrincham, for weekly trips. Always looking for a challenge he cycled from Land's End to John O'Groats and joined CTC trips in Europe, South. Africa, India and New Zealand. I recall stories of a memorable solo cycle ride from Melbourne to Sydney which involved a measure of wine tasting en route. He also had a short skiing career in his fifties. As virtually beginners, John and son Beach joined Pete Hammond's group in Chamonix and were taken down the Vallee Blanche. Pete carried a sun umbrella, deck chair and picnic including a bottle of wine to celebrate John's 4,000ers achievement.

John was a man of so many parts. A larger than life character with a wicked sense of humour, massive enthusiasm and a huge range of interests. He was interested in life rather than work and packed a lot into his life. One of his great passions was wine. His knowledge was encyclopaedic and every year he presented a tasting of Rhone wines at the Manchester Wine Society and every Easter the family camped and toured vineyards where John would buy direct from the vigneron.

John was 69 when he had a massive stroke the day after a routine fifty mile bike ride. He lived for another eight years suffering repeated minor strokes until his death in August 2016. He will be remembered with great fondness by family and friends. Those in the climbing community will recall the determination, energy and enthusiasm with which he tackled every project, his wonderful conversation both serious and witty and his astute observations of people and events both inside and outside of the mountaineering world.

By Tony Williams

*With grateful thanks to Sylvia Mercer upon whose obituary for BAMSAC my personal recollections have been grafted.*

# KEN FORSYTHE 1947 – 2016

A personable guy and talented climber Ken Forsythe was a telecommunications engineer by trade. Originally from the South East of England, Ken moved to the Lakes in the mid-1970s to raise his family and to pursue his passion for climbing. He joined The Climbers' Club in 1999. Here his close friends John Adams and Steve Scott recall some exploits from his prolific climbing days.

## **Johnny Adams writes...** ***Il Duce (E5) Tintagel Head*** ***North Cornwall Coast***

14th August 1979 was the date of the disastrous Fastnet yacht race which resulted in 18 fatalities. Over 4000 people aided in the rescue mission, but Ken and I were innocently unaware of what was going on out to sea. We were totally focused on our project of climbing *Il Duce*.

We got off to an early start and climbed over the fence to avoid paying the entrance fee to Tintagel park. When we got to the start of the first pitch, a sea level traverse, we were shocked by the enormous waves and wind. A little further beyond our proposed climb the waves were blasting into the cliff face and then rocketing vertically up for about 80 feet, the noise was deafening. We sat

deliberating for ages, watching where the waves were hitting, eventually we decided to go for it. After doing the traverse we then could see the overhanging groove above us, described as "one of the greatest lines in the South of England". Both of us were now having second thoughts about our reckless decision, but it was too late, the waves were now hitting the traverse. The only way out was up, via three pitches of serious climbing.

Ken set off up the 6a groove, the hardest pitch. What a feeling of relief for both of us when he reached the stance, a tremendous lead as most of the pitch was wet. The weather was worsening and the climbing was atmospheric, not far to our left the waves were shooting up to the top of the cliff. Eventually in strong wind, and wet with sea spray, we topped out with massive relief. Our first thoughts were "let's go to the pub" and so it was, missing out on Tintagel Castle and King Arthur.

I was lucky enough to have quite a few climbing holidays with Ken, all were amazingly good and highly successful in what we achieved. Once Ken got a plan then you knew it would be done. When Ken rang me up from hospital we spoke about our epic ascent of *Il Duce*. I'll never forget it and never forget Ken. Fond memories, John.

## **Steve Scott writes...**

Ken and his wife Pat were sitting enjoying the late evening sunshine outside The New Inn, Yealand, when we first met. Both of us had been bouldering at nearby Woodwell and we struck up a conversation that led to a lifetime friendship. Pat and Ken had moved to the Lakes a few months earlier from Maidstone in Kent, where Ken had been a regular on the local sandstone outcrops; a school trip to High Rocks earlier had introduced him to climbing. Hectic weekend trips to Wales, Swanage or Avon followed, culminating in a steady lead of *The Boldest*, one of the psychological test pieces of the time, and *Great Wall* on Cloggy, which demonstrated Ken's skill and control on difficult, bold ground. Having cut his teeth in the Peak and on Welsh rock, wider afield, a young-Ken climbed the *Cassin Route* on the Piz Badile and, on a trip to the seaside, made *The Traverse of the Gods* in Dorset.

The Lakes 'scene' in the late 70s was competitive, polarised and vibrant. Ken immediately involved himself with the local South Lakes activists who, noting his immense finger strength, soon dubbed him 'Fingers' Forsythe. A committed weekender, he seamlessly and almost routinely climbed hard routes, his puffs for

breath the only indication that any effort was required; we measured difficulty using Ken's 'puffometer'. Leading the meaty main pitch of *Extol* in 1976, Ken arrived at the peg and, as he went to clip it, it just came out in his hand. Unperturbed, he nonchalantly continued up, placing gear in the bottom of the final groove; could this have been the first free ascent? As a member of a rope of three, he made a fast eight hour ascent of *The Lord of the Rings*; other memorable days included *Central Pillar* and the second ascent of *Humdrum* on Esk Buttress, a very cold *Dream of White Horses* and a visit to Almscliff to do the *North-West Girdle* only to be heckled by Ken Wood stalking along underneath us, shouting advice and abuse. On a trip to Scotland in 1978, tortured by midges, we retreated from *Carnivore*, then rain spewed us off Aonach Dubh so we drove to Anglesey stopping briefly at Ken's home for a meal. A few days later, having climbed the classic crumble-fest *Red Wall*, the amazingly convoluted *Mousetrap*, *Resolution* and *The Moon*, the perverse, long and roundabout drive hadn't been wasted.

Before his family came along, his pride and joy was a white Triumph GT6, a car with a huge, powerful straight 6-cylinder lump in front and not much behind. Returning from Yorkshire we had been following Ken along the A65 before he disappeared

up the road. As we entered the tortuous series of bends near Whoop Hall we saw Ken coming back towards us; taking a bend too fast the GT6 had neatly spun around.

Unsurprisingly, whether in the lead or as back-up, Ken became involved in exploration – *White Dwarf*, *PPS*, *Aaros* and the rarely repeated *Cyclotron*. Although controversy was never on mild-mannered Ken's agenda, he inadvertently took centre stage as shot-gun on Andrew Atkinson's epic first ascent of *Sixpence*. In the 80s he faultlessly led *Footless Crow*, a long-standing ambition of his and a massive achievement. Leading the difficult crack of *Controlled Burning*, and climbing *Promised Land* and *Wolfman Jack* were highlights of a week on Lundy and the technical *Wonderwall* and strenuous *Supercrack* gave a productive day in Easter Island Gully, Gogarth. By the late 80s having climbed most of what was on offer in the Lakes, Ken would wait in anticipation of New Climbs in the Lake District, methodically visiting each new clean crag.

He was equally active in winter, regularly climbing grade V, highlights being *Point Five Gully* and *Smith's Gully* in Scotland. On Smith's he broke a front point on the walk in and, frustrated, resigned himself to holding my rope on all the pitches – never did he suggest that we should pack out. On Point Five he stoically waited standing in a deluge of snow

and spindrift as I dug out of the 'rogue' pitch into the deep, unstable upper gully.

In the 90s he was still ticking off classics; *Elder Crack*, *Roaring Silence*, *The Star Gate*. A productive trip North saw Ken's team on top of *The Old Men of Hoy* and *Stoer*. Always one to be tested on hard routes he despatched the 6b pitch on *Midnight Movie*, Gimmer with aplomb. On bolts he was equally content to tackle hard multi-pitch routes or single-pitch technical challenges and he was



a regular and persistent clipper of the Yorkshire drillers' latest offerings at Foredale, Moughton or Giggleswick, always checking and climbing what had been done with regular updates from Dave Musgrove.

Since leaving school at 17, Ken worked for BT, training as a communications engineer, he would remain with them until early retirement at 51. Pat became ill shortly after this and Ken focused his attention on looking after her and

latterly supporting the care home where she went to live. He continued climbing locally, though now with a lot less vigour, although this didn't stop him exploring Brandy Crag in the Duddon Valley with Ted Rogers and, again with Ted, slotting in one last hard climb on Raven Crag High Stile. He made irregular trips to France, Turkey (Antalya), Sardinia, Italy (Finale, Sperlonga and Gaeta), Spain, Kalymnos and Morocco, where he suffered a rock-fall injury

on his first day of climbing. He also fulfilled his long-standing ambition of traversing the Skye Ridge only a few years back.

Although complaining of stomach problems during late summer, Ken continued climbing. His sudden collapse whilst out cragging and rapid regression resulted in his unexpected death from an aggressive, invasive cancer. We will all miss this active, modest, 'hard man'.

Steve Scott

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## MIKE BINNIE 1936 – 2016

Mike was born in 1936 in Mumbai, living there until he went to prep school in Scotland aged 9. He went on to Uppingham School, and then to Oxford to read Law.

Mike joined the CC at Oxford (Keble College) and was an active member of the OUMC of which he became president. Immediately after going down in 1960 he joined the Oxford-Andean Expedition to Peru led by Kim Meldrum. The team made seven first ascents of the remote mountains of the Allinccapacc region, including the highest mountain of the area.

After this Mike took a job at the Ullswater Outward Bound School as an instructor where he lived with his wife and young family for 2½ years.

In 1962 Mike returned to India and took up a teaching post 90 miles NW of Delhi in Paltihala at Yadavindra Public School where he remained for two years. During this time he made a trip to climb in Kashmir.

He returned to Oxford in 1964 where he completed a Diploma in Education.

He subsequently taught in a variety of schools in Lincolnshire, London and Surrey, where he retired in 1992, taking early retirement to enable him and Carol to join VSO in NW

Pakistan where they established and ran a village school in the Hindu Kush.

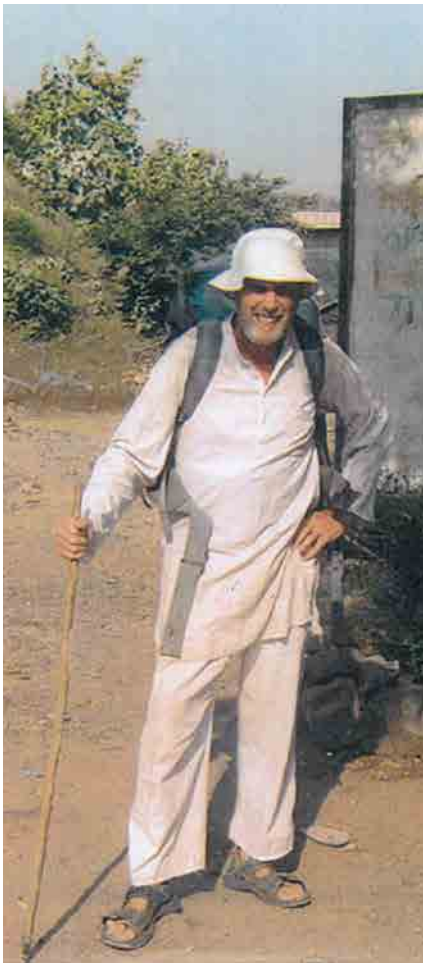
During this time he explored widely the many valleys and mountains leading up to the Afghan border and completed his adventures with a solo trek across the Borogil Pass into the Wakhan Corridor into Afghanistan.

In 1996 Mike and Carol returned to the UK and settled into comfortable retirement at Ockham in their delightful cottage in the woods close to the Surrey hills.

During his retirement, Mike was the head of a trust which ran a children's orphanage in central India - Gwalior Children's hospital - to which he and Carol made several visits.



During his time in Surrey, amongst other projects, Mike carved a 23-foot cedar tree which fell in the great storm of 1987 near his house into a traditional Polynesian canoe. Decorated with carvings by his son Alex and complete with an outrigger and sail, Mike and family sailed the canoe briefly and flamboyantly in the Solent after a launch party on West Wittering beach.



Because of his intense interest in and love for India and its traditions and spiritual life, Mike decided to circumnavigate the sacred Narmada River - a journey of 800 miles which he undertook alone and on foot. This started at its confluence with the Indian Ocean, with a long walk to the source in the forests of central India. This took nine weeks and Mike was entirely dependent on the goodwill of the people who put him up in temples and village houses in the tradition of this sacred pilgrimage. This was only half the adventure; three years later Mike returned to the source of the river Narmada at the temple village of Amar Kantak. He then walked down the South bank of the river for nine weeks to reach the estuary. There, in a small open boat with about 30 other pilgrims, he crossed from the South bank to the North (about 20 miles) and arrived with much rejoicing at the village where he'd started his walk three years before.

Apart from collecting wood to heat his cottage, Mike was a dedicated writer, publishing articles in climbing journals, the TES and the Guardian weekly. He also found time to write poetry throughout his adult life and in 2013 published a collection of his verse under the title *Grieg's Piano Concerto in Calcutta*, which was a reference to his childhood experiences in India.

In 2014 Mike and Carol moved back to Oxford where they'd met some 60 years previously. Mike

was a dedicated family man, and is survived by his wife, 4 children and 8 grandchildren. The photo shows Mike taking a break on his return journey down the Narmada River in 2003.

By Kim Meldrum

# NICK RUSSELL 1988 – 2016

Nick Russell was a good friend, climbing partner, fellow Climbers' Club member and one of the strongest, safest and best climbers I have ever had the privilege of sharing a rope with in nearly 25 years of climbing. It was a very easy task and a pleasure to propose him for the Climbers' Club a couple of years ago, as he was exactly the sort of aspirant any club would welcome with his great all round skills, sense of adventure, modesty and lovely personality.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Nick since 2011 when he started his PhD course in the Quantum Photonics research group at the School of Physics for the University of Bristol where I work and we both realised very quickly that we had a common interest and Nick would often drop by the Physics Stores to talk about all things climbing, occasionally he would even drop by for something work related! Consequently I climbed with Nick on many occasions including day trips to local venues such as the Avon Gorge, Portishead Quarry, Cheddar and the Wye Valley with many weekends away to great climbing venues in the UK such as Cornwall, Lundy, Culm Coast, Peak District and North Wales. I had not climbed so much with Nick over the last year or so because he quickly became a

much better and stronger climber so I could barely keep up with him, even though he would happily drop down a number of grades to accommodate my inferior ability. However some of my fondest memories of sharing a rope with Nick include climbing the classic multi-pitch *American Beauty* on Lundy with his lovely partner Emily and that adventurous 100 metre abseil into Grand Falls Zawn with a couple of seals swimming around by our tidal ledge. Nick led all three pitches of this fantastic route as it was the day after my 50th birthday celebrations in the Marisco Tavern, so I was slightly hungover from having had one too many whiskies the night before.

Nick and I also spent a very enjoyable weekend at the Don Whillans Memorial Hut in the Roaches where we climbed some classic routes together including *Saul's Crack*, *Valkyrie* and *Black and Tans* before retiring to Ye Olde Rock Inn for some much needed refreshment, laughter and a few games of pool. And there was also a great weekend staying near Hartland in North Devon where we climbed *Notre Dame*, *Rite of Spring* and the superb *Sacre Coeur* on Blackchurch Rock with our Spanish friend David on a beautiful day of weather. Nick also joined some friends and me at the CC Helyg Hut in North Wales as my guest and we had an

excellent time soloing *Central Trinity* on the Trinity Face of Snowdon before topping out near the summit and joining the masses on a bluebird day of near perfect weather and views.

Nick also appeared in a number of my climbing videos including *Trinity Face*, *Valkyrie*, *Sacre Coeur* and most recently *Moonraker* from September 2015 which was the most fantastic adventure and will always live with me. Nick, my partner Emma Cave and Sandy Garrity found ourselves stood on St Mary's Beach in Brixham on Saturday 26th September at 7.30 am ready to be whisked away by Captain Bob Watson in his fantastic boat, the inimitable HMS Erin. After dropping Emma off via dinghy at the Coastguard Cliffs to film the long shots, the rest of us chugged our way into the Old Redoubt on mill-pond calm seas and deposited Nick, who was by far the most agile of us, onto the base of the cliff to place a couple of pieces of gear to tether Erin to the cliff so we could belay from the boat. Once done Nick did a superb job of effortlessly leading the route whilst dragging Bob and me up the three superbly steep and delightfully exposed pitches. By the time we topped out early afternoon, the winds had changed to Easterlies and the Erin was rocking around with all the waves and swell. It would be fair to say that

Captain Bob was rightly concerned about the welfare of his beloved boat, so he quickly slid down the abseil ropes and into the Erin where he gave us all a quick blast of her horn to let us know it was safe to come down. So Nick and I quickly rappacked back into the boat and then anchors away and we were off. However the swell and waves were so choppy that we had to sail around to the lee side of the headland where it was far calmer. By the time we arrived and were deposited again via dinghy, Nick and I were greener than a pair of not very Jolly Green Giants due to sea-sickness and it was a great relief to finally reach land. Upon reaching terra firma all I wanted to do was collapse in the sun and relax after the efforts of the filming and climb, but of course Nick had far too much energy to spare and went off to climb the classic E3 *Dreadnought* with his mate Ross straight away!

I feel very honoured to have known and climbed with Nick and aside from his obvious amazing skills as a climber, his personality, warmth and humour always shone through. Nick will be greatly missed by everyone he knew.

By David Linnett

I met Nick a few years back climbing on the crags around Bristol - we were both available odd hours and drifted into climbing together

from there really. He had a keen interest in Trad climbing, especially at the adventurous end, and he was enthusiastic and fun to spend time with - supporting him in joining the CC was a no-brainer. We stayed in touch despite moving further apart geographically, and over time he moved from doing the same sorts of routes as me to doing the routes I hoped one day I would do! From speaking to a number of his other climbing partners it seems this was a common occurrence - Nick was good at getting the most out of all his skills as a climber, but he was just as encouraging, positive and supportive regardless of the level at which you were climbing, so it didn't really matter at all.

The last time we climbed together was a few weeks before his accident, at Swanage. I watched him from the base of the crag looking relaxed and shaking out just before the crux of *Warlord*, and remember getting a sense from watching him that the result was inevitable - the route might be about to put up a fight but there was no doubt as to who would come out on top.

It was a great shock to hear of his accident, and it really brought it home having spent so much time wobbling between footholds on Main Wall relying on those same sorts of

pegs myself. At his celebration of life, one of the comments was that the world would be a better place if a few more people were a bit more like Nick. Certainly I know I've taken some inspiration from his positivity, his approach, and his boundless enthusiasm.

By Andy Morris



# RACHEL SLATER 1992 – 2016

## AND TIM NEWTON 1989 – 2016

Rachel and Tim packed a huge amount into their short lives. The tragedy of losing their lives in an avalanche in *Observatory Gully* on Ben Nevis on February 13th, 2016, is a huge loss to their families, friends and the climbing community and leaves a huge hole in our hearts.

Right from her early years Rachel was hard to keep up with, be it roller coaster rides at theme parks, doing big rope swings, or bombing straight down the hill on her skis at great speed. She had a penchant for thrills and adventures.

In Rachel's early California years we had weekly after-school hikes through the local Trabuco Canyon with her brother Matthew, her sister Jennifer and a small group of other Mums and children. At a certain point Rachel would run ahead so she could cross the bridge over the creek, not on the path, but balancing along the narrow railing of the fence. All we mums could do was watch in fearful trepidation!

*Shall we go for it? Neither of us had done a multi pitch route at that grade before, so where else to start than Gogarth Main Cliff? Psyched! The rope snaked round the rib and disappeared into the unknown. It was meant to be*

*a tough pitch but I had to keep paying out the rope steadily, so Tim was moving fast. Perhaps it wasn't that hard after all? Soon enough it was time for me to follow into a steep world of wrong angled pinches and lactic overdrive on the forearm melting big pitch of Positron. I found it totally withering, Tim found it ok. That's how good a climber he was.*

*By Misha Nepogodiev*

We only met Tim a few times but through Rachel we got to know him. Whilst Rachel's moods could change from thundery showers one moment to bright sunshine the next, Tim was like a strong but gentle breeze, always kind and always caring.

*I could not wait for more climbing trips to come and was super excited for her and Tim to come to Canada and show them my favourite places. With a big ocean between us memories were short, making them even more precious and I will never forget them. I will never stop climbing, skiing and venturing into the mountains and beyond. Without taking risks we have nothing. We can all learn from Rachel that what matters the most is not the number of years you live but the amount of times you've felt really alive from doing whatever it is that you love.*

*By Jennifer Slater*

We were very much looking forward to their visit to Canada this summer and spending more time with them in this beautiful country. Jennifer and her boyfriend particularly wanted to show them their favourite place - the Bugaboos, a very popular mountain park in the Rockies, renowned for its long multi-pitches ascending rocky spires and domes. With its wide glaciers and deep azure pools of glacier melt and icebergs, it is one of the most beautiful places on earth. Instead, on a perfect deep blue sky day, we, and perhaps the spirits of Rachel and Tim, accompanied them as far as the hike-in campground on a rocky plateau above the alpine hut. Like us, Rachel and Tim would have relished its breath-taking splendour but they would also have been keen to go for further adventure, leaving the next day at 3am to hike over the snowy col and climb the formidable 15 pitch classic, *Beckey-Chouinard*.

Meeting at Manchester University Mountaineering Club, where Rachel was an Alumni student and Tim was a first year physics student, Tim and Rachel became a significant part of each other's lives. They shared a passion for climbing. It was a way of life, training hard at local climbing gyms and spending weekends and holidays climbing in the UK and abroad.

*I met Tim in Ynys Ettws once. We were both stuck without a partner for the day. We teamed up and did The Edge of Time in the Pass. Or rather, Tim led the hard pitches and humoured me up the easy ones. It was a lovely day high up in the pass. Gentle banter flowing between us. An honour to have met you and a privilege to share that day with you.*

*By Paul Tanton*

Tim grew up alongside his brother Ed in Leicestershire. As a family they enjoyed holidays full of adventurous outdoor activities, skiing, canyoneering, white water rafting and zip wiring. Tim had an enviable aptitude for all these sports. His mother tells us that faith was always an important part of their family life and this was nurtured in active commitment and involvement in the church community.

Rachel spent the first four years of her life in Sheffield, moved to California, back to Sheffield and then to Canada. The Canada years were a time of growing up, transitioning rapidly from childhood into adulthood. She joined the local junior climbing team, based at the local climbing gym where her love of climbing began and strong lifelong friendships were forged.

Knut, who used to coach Rachel and the Calgary team, and Andrea Morgan, who was also on the team, would like to add these tributes:

*Rachel demonstrated intelligence, integrity, perseverance and talent. As Rachel grew from the kid I met, into the woman we knew, my respect for her continued to grow. Even though I coached her many years ago, we stayed in touch, kept each other informed of our training, our adventures, and our climbing plans. This was wonderful for me, as Rachel was the truest climber I knew from my years of coaching. Climbing to Rachel meant all the things it could offer: travel and adventure; ice to bouldering; alpine and sport. And Rachel excelled at all of them, and did so with an adventurous heart.*

*I watched as Rachel touched many people's lives, and every one of us is better for having known her. Many of her teammates and friends had grand days out solely because Rachel had brought them along through her infectious enthusiasm and relentless force of will. For many people, she was the spark that made adventures start. Those of us lucky enough to have met Rachel will serve her memory best by continuing to have adventures, like the ones she would have suggested, planned, and instigated.*

*God Speed Rachel, and thank you.*

*By Knut Rokne*

*Once or twice in a lifetime we're lucky enough to meet someone who really changes us. These people inspire us. They challenge us, play with us, laugh with us, and cry with us. They're the people who sleep in the back seat of your car in the Walmart parking lot on climbing trips. They're the people who teach you to place Trad gear in the UK. They're the people who almost sacrifice your water bottle to the monkeys in India. They're the people who climb the longest sport route north of Mexico with you, despite neither of you having done any sort of adequate preparation. Rachel Slater, you were my person. Love always. Rest in peace.*

*By Andrea Morgan*

One of Tim's main interests was drama. He performed in some major roles in school, church and local drama groups and had plans to take up drama as a career. He attended the Oxford School of Drama then auditioned for a few acting schools but didn't get in, so he turned to outdoor pursuits. Before university he became a qualified Summer and Winter Mountain Leader. He was an experienced expedition leader, having led trips to India, Mongolia and Peru.

After high school, Rachel studied and achieved a first class degree in Environmental Science at Manchester University. Her passion for climbing developed through the University



Mountaineering Club (where her parents met) and the friendships she forged there. After University, Rachel and her then boyfriend Olli travelled to India and Nepal before she took up a six month contract for an environmental consultancy company in Glasgow. Rachel then spent a couple of years, living the “dirtbag” lifestyle, climbing to 8a sport and E5 Trad, from the *Old Man of Hoy* and Pabbay, to Spain, France and Italy before beginning a full-time job with Mineral Planning Group. She relished the work, enjoyed her colleagues and spent all her free time training, climbing, and more climbing. She won many climbing competitions.

*I first met Tim about five years ago when he was working as an instructor at an outdoors centre in the Lakes. We spent a great weekend climbing some classic mountain routes close to our limit and that set the scene for every other time I got to climb with him over the following years. Imposing lines on mountain crags, choss on the Lleyn, good honest limestone cranking at Pembroke - I usually ended up returning home absolutely shattered but happy to have done some great routes with someone who was super psyched and fun to be around.*

*By Misha Nepogodiev*

We miss Rachel and Tim with every breath we take and the sadness of their passing will never leave us but they leave a legacy that tells us

we should live every moment of our lives to the full. We are deeply grateful to the Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team volunteers and Fort William police, not just for the relentless hours over eight weeks in the search and eventual recovery of Rachel and Tim, but for their big hearted kindness and formidable generosity in spirit. During a time of profound grief, it was a huge comfort to be drawn into their close knit family, talking, sharing food and drinks and receiving warm hugs each day at the LMRT Centre, in the full knowledge that they were doing everything they possibly could.

As stories of the missing couple spread across the far reaches of the Earth with breath-taking speed characteristic of our modern times, the world looked on with awe at the closeness of the climbing community. That is something we can reflect on with pride.

On March 24th, Rachel and Tim were found in Observatory Gully. The LMRT carried them down the mountain. They stood by us as we said our last farewells at a service conducted by Reverend Morag Muirhead at the Duncansburgh MacIntosh Parish Church. They played the bagpipes and carried Rachel and Tim on their final journey, to Glen Nevis Cemetery at the foot of the Ben Nevis. Like big unstoppable tears from heaven, the rain came down as they were laid to rest, but then we felt the warmth of the sun lighting up the slopes and upper reaches of the Ben.

Many tributes and thoughts expressed by those who knew them have brought some comfort to us. Words we have included in this tribute mean a great deal to all who mourn for them and we have added a few more below.

*Rachel inspired me through climbing and showed me how to enjoy life and live every moment. It doesn't matter that it's 3am, why not run up a via ferrata with someone you have just met? Or borrow a stranger's car to sleep in when it's raining. Or sleep right where you are on the pebbly floor of the parking lot because you want to stay and climb one more day. Or drive out of the city to take some star trail photos late at night even though you have to get up to practice at 5am the next day. You cannot wait for another opportunity to come up, it is up to us get what we want and be happy.*

*By Jennifer Slater*

*Absolutely heartbroken to have lost Rachel, not only was she one of the most talented female climbers I have ever met, but she was also definitely the most modest. She essentially put any climb she managed to do down to “luck” and would never take credit for the incredible talent that she had. I can't even begin to put into words just how nice and supportive she was, and how incredible and motivating she was to climb with, I am just so grateful that I got the chance to be around her and see her doing something she loved.*

*By Elena Bunbury*

*The move must have been hard because Rachel paused for thought. She just couldn't reach the decent crimp but that wasn't going to stop her. Cranking off a poor hold, she pulled over the bulge and carried on up the groove of Equus, unfazed by the suspect wires. Seconding, I had the advantage of height to be able to reach the crimp but it was still a tough move; going off the poor hold must have been getting on for 6b for her. The following day it rained so, fuelled by a blueberry tart she had made, we set off for the ever-dry testing ground of Kilnsey. Having settled into full-time work after living the life as a climbing bum, Rach was concerned that she wouldn't be able to match her earlier form. Even so, she remained super keen. She need not have worried about getting weaker - that day, she easily dispatched the massively overhanging prow of Pantomime second go. Having spent the day redpointing an easier route, I wished I had half her 'off form' strength and ability! That's how good a climber she was.*

*Of course it's not about how well they climbed, though undoubtedly they were very good climbers. More than that, they were both great people to know and hang out with. Passionate about climbing for sure but also passionate about life, making the most of their free time and inspiring others with their infectious enthusiasm. Yet they were also very modest about what they achieved out on the crags - and they were just so nice to everyone! Sadness. The memories remain.*

*Rest in peace, Rach and Tim.  
Great climbers, great friends. We will remember you.*

*By Misha Nepogodiev*

May the spirits of friends lost in the mountains, this couple we loved so much and that sense of adventure, those stories told, remain with us forever.

By Rosemary and Nigel Slater

Below:  
*Tim Newton & Rachel Slater*



# RICHARD McELLIGOTT 1947 – 2016

I first met Richard in the Count House in 1974 where he was with a group from the London Mountaineering Club (LMC). They were much more experienced climbers than us – and eating so well that we christened them the London Gourmet Club. We next met in the Peak District after I had moved to London and arranged to meet a group from the LMC on for my first meet with the Club.

After a great Saturday on Stanage (one of his favourite crags) he asked me: “Would you care to join us in a beer? Well not literally IN the beer.” This was typical both of Richard’s sociability and of his precision (on and off the rock).

And so began a long friendship. Richard was a great partner whether it was with another hard climber or a novice club member. He was safe, enthusiastic and always prepared, knew what he wanted to do and what could be done in the weather at the time or the state of the tides.

But he was much more than a rock climber. He loved everything about the mountains. As well as climbing rock, snow and ice he loved being on any mountain or hill – big or small – in any weather.

He first discovered climbing through the Venture Scouts in

Llangollen where his parents ran a Trust House Forte hotel and where he went to school. The climbing passion developed when he was at Durham University.

A move to London in 1969 saw him join the LMC and he managed regular trips to Wales and the Peak District. His climbing standard soared.

His first appearance in the log book in London Mountaineering Club’s (LMC) hut in Nant Peris is for November 1970 climbing half of *Arctic Circle* with Ken Salter and Sally Westmacott. He also regularly partnered Betty Cubby (née Sieffert) and Peter Stokes. In January 1971 he is recorded as doing *Borchgrevinck* / *Poor Man’s Peuterey* and *Scratch Arête* with Ken and Roger Everett. His friendship with Ken and Roger lasted to the end of his life. As well as a passion for gritstone he climbed extensively throughout the UK and had a comprehensive set of well-thumbed guidebooks in which his ascents were meticulously recorded. Much of this climbing was with LMC members on meets or private trips including one to Lundy in 1976 with a group of us who kept in contact ever since. This trip included the first ascent of *Devil’s Honeymoon*, near the Devil’s Slide, with David Langmead, who had been married the week before the trip and was LMC president in the late 1970’s.

Personally, he was greatly supportive of my various efforts to resume my own climbing following a layoff for ten years from the mid 1980’s. One of these involved a family summer holiday trip to the Ardèche. We had hoped to climb, but I was suffering from a frozen shoulder at the time and was a useless climbing partner. He took it all in his stride.

We did some canoeing, and on one short run through some small rapids as a threesome with Anna, my young daughter, he saved a capsized by putting a foot into the rocky water. This caused a gash which became infected and badly swollen, needing antibiotics. The big problem for Richard was that he could not (would not?) swallow the antibiotic pills. These had to be broken open and swallowed with jam – avoiding the swarms of interested wasps. Quite exciting.

Richard was a real mountain enthusiast tackling every project with the same high level of energy. He had several alpine seasons with Angel Vila; amongst their ascents was the *North Face of the Badile*.

He loved Scotland with several great weeks and notable ascents including the *Skye Ridge* with David Langmead and the *Aonach Eagach Ridge* in winter as well as lots of summer rock climbing. A memorable weekend was a trip to the Orkneys to

climb the *Old Man of Hoy* to celebrate his fortieth birthday. There were also a number of years when, with Angel Vila, he did the Karrimor Mountain Marathon, the earlier part of the year being taken up by training to be fit enough to put in a respectable performance in the veterans category.

The level of his commitment to mountaineering is demonstrated by his three trips with LMC groups to Nepal where he was dogged by chest problems and never made a cherished Nepali peak. The fact that he went three times says something about his determination.

In 2013 He moved, with his partner, Marion, to Dunedin in South Island New Zealand to start a new life. It is said that he had only been there a week before he had found a climbing partner and inspected the local rock climbing possibilities. He explored all the local trails round Dunedin and had developed plans for more serious mountaineering in the New Zealand Alps. His capacity for friendship was such that in Dunedin he soon had a wide group of friends and was involved in many local activities. A special passion was a wildlife sanctuary where he was an active volunteer.

In mid-2015 he was diagnosed as having a sarcoma in the rib cage which was operated on in October that year and at the end of November

was told that there were no signs of any secondaries. He seemed to have made a good recovery and was back climbing again by the end of the year. However, in the New Year of 2016 he began to suffer severe headaches and a brain tumour was diagnosed at the beginning of February. This was considered to be a separate primary tumour; as his sister puts it, "How unlucky can you get?" The tumour was operated on, but despite a fairly positive prognosis and chemotherapy his condition deteriorated and he died in November 2016.

Despite living half way round the World, Richard was in regular contact with old friends and returned to the UK for long annual trips with Marion which of course involved as much climbing as could be fitted in, including a foray to a sun rock destination with myself and friends from the 1970s, David Langmead and Peter Stokes. With his boundless energy and enthusiasm, talent for friendship he will be sorely missed by Marion, his family and numerous friends in the UK climbing community and in Dunedin.

By Tony Williams

# LORD (ROGER) CHORLEY *1930 – 2016*

**R**oger Chorley was an especially distinguished member of the Climbers' Club, though his climbing career ended tragically early. He made his mark in the disparate worlds of accountancy, environmentalism and the senior mountaineering clubs where, as Roger's childhood friend Hella Pick told the Guardian: "He applied his considerable powers of low-key diplomacy to the often complex politics of the climbing fraternity."

The notes below are gleaned from the broadsheet obituaries and Tony Moulam adds his own memories of a couple of varied days out with Roger at the end.



From Stowe school, Roger Chorley went to Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he became president of the Cambridge University mountaineering club. At 23 he went on an expedition to the Himalayas and back to Nepal when he was 26. He was climbing in the Himalayas there when he became ill and was paralysed in both legs by polio. Although he could no longer climb, he still loved to visit mountains and associate with mountaineers and climbers. He was honorary secretary of the Climbers' Club (1963-67), a member of the management committee of the Mount Everest Foundation (1968-70) and president of the Alpine Club (1983-85).

He joined Cooper Brothers & Company, later Coopers & Lybrand, in 1955, manned its New York office for a year from 1959 and worked in Pakistan on the Indus basin project in 1961, before becoming a partner (1967-89). Internationalist in attitude, he was sought out for his committee skills by organisations as various as the National Board for Prices and Incomes, for which he was accountancy adviser; the Royal Commission on the Press (1974-77); the Ordnance Survey Review Committee (1978-79); the British Council (from 1981); the House of Lords select committee on science and technology (for periods between 1983 and 2007); the Royal

Geographical Society, of which he was president (1987-90); and the board of the National Theatre, from 1980.

He was the second Lord Chorley. The title was created in 1945 for his father, Robert Chorley, an academic lawyer who was an unsuccessful Labour candidate for parliament in the 1945 general election. Following reforms to the House of Lords, Roger was one of the hereditary peers elected to remain as working peers, and served from 2001 until 2014, when he retired.

Roger was a lifelong environmentalist, especially interested in the role of geography and the geographer in increasing understanding of the environment and also the development of environmental economics – a fusion of his professional skills as an accountant and his passion as an environmentalist. He chaired the government's inquiry into the handling of geographic information (1985-87) and was a member of the Natural Environment Research Council (1988-94).

By David Medcalf



I only climbed twice with Roger. The first time was when we did the third British guideless ascent of the *Ryan-Lochmatter Route* on the Plan. It was my first visit to the Alps and Mac and I had been thwarted by heavy rain as we attempted the *East Face of the Crocodile* and had retreated to our base in the dungeon-like cellar of the (still being built) Refuge D'Envers des Aiguilles. We were drying out and consuming a meagre meal when we were disturbed by people descending the ladder to join us. With relief we realised they were English and not hearty French alpinists and we quickly decided to combine forces for the next day.

Mac and Roger climbed together and I partnered his companion Peter Davies. We left the refuge at 3.40 am and climbed separately and steadily up to the triple rimaye, though in this dry year the last one was easily avoided. As the light improved we gained the lovely rough rock and moved easily up the initial pitches. Soon, it seemed, we reached the impressive 'fissure de la grandmère' and conquered it with our finely honed gritstone hand jamming technique. A little later we came to the hardest pitch on the climb, a nondescript but steep wall which presented a minimal problem as there were two useful pegs in situ.

Still enjoyable but easy climbing brought us to a sort of Monolith crack which was nothing like as restricting as its namesake but led us through the mountain to more easy angled rock slopes, and the summit – after a short tussle with the Y chimney – which we reached about 1.00 pm.

An all too brief laze in the sun boosted our energy level and we slid uproariously down softening snow to the Requin hut, where friends regaled us with tea, before our tedious traverse back to the Envers des Aiguille and a descent to Chamonix and the Biolet.

Our second outing together was bathetic, to Stoney Middleton. This was nevertheless more frightening as the crux of *Aurora* was high up, on loose rock and unprotected! Roger was calmly confident in my lead and offered constant encouragement from his belay on a substantial tree.

Off the rocks Roger was secretary of the club from 1963 to 1967 and was an efficient voice on the committee. I particularly remember him persuading me not to defect to the West Col guidebook team when Peter Crew had written a guidebook to the Tremadoc Area for them and had suggested I join the enterprise.

After penning the above, I looked up the account of the Ryan-Lochmatter by Roger, in CUMCJ 1952 and found that it was the least of

his climbs that season. He also did the *North Face of the Argentière* with O J Bott and R H Dunt (I happened to see this ascent from the Aiguilles d'Oree, when an avalanche swept the face just after his party left it) and the *SW Ridge of the Fou* with Mac, a first British guideless ascent. I think it was only a couple of years later, on a second visit to the Himalaya, that polio affected his legs and put an end to his promising climbing career.

By Tony Moulam

# DR A S G (TONY) JONES 1939 – 2016

Tony Jones was a major influence to Mountain Rescue in the UK and around the world since the mid 1960's. He was born in India, the son of an officer of the British Indian Army. As a young boy he moved back to his mother's home country of South Africa. Having suffered from polio at an early age, which left him with a weak leg, his first choice of sport was diving. However, growing up in the shadow of Table Mountain, as a student he took an interest in the mountains and became a member of the Mountain Club of South Africa. Having graduated in Marine Geology, he moved to the UK in 1963 to further his studies at Aberystwyth University. He joined

the university mountaineering club which had regular meets in Snowdonia and the Ogwen valley.

In 1965 when Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Organisation was inaugurated, it depended upon known and trusted groups of mountaineers to staff the rescue team, especially at the weekends. Aberystwyth University became one of those groups and that was Tony's introduction to Mountain Rescue. Having gained his MSc, he moved to lecture in Marine Geology at University College of Wales, Bangor. In 1966, Tony became a Full member of OVMRO. Shortly afterwards he was appointed as one of the Team Leaders, an office he was to hold until 1998. In 1969 he was elected as Chairman of OVMRO, a position he was to hold for 21 years.

Being a single man and living in university halls, he could devote his free time and studies to Mountain Rescue. He became Chairman of North Wales Mountain Rescue Association, the regional body. Again, he held this post for many, many years. In addition, he became involved with the national body, the Mountain Rescue Committee/Council, later to become Mountain Rescue England & Wales (MREW). He held the post of Vice Chairman for several years.

Tony encouraged innovation. In his early days, his good friend, Dr

Ieuan Jones, the Casualty doctor at the Accident and Emergency Department, Bangor, realised that with better First Aid treatment at the accident site, the better the outcome for the casualty. He devised a series of First Aid courses for Mountain Rescue. These were taught to RAF and civilian teams. Tony embraced this training and was soon teaching these courses to MRT members around the country. Later he was one of a small group who brought the American style of Search Management across to the UK. Soon he was organising and lecturing these courses. He took these around the world including places such as Hong Kong.

Through his contacts in the USA, he established close contact with the USAF PJ Special Forces medics stationed in South East of England. They came to Snowdonia to train. They were to train, climb and socialise with members of OVMRO. In fact, Tony became an Honorary member of the PJ's and was proud to receive their motif of a pair of green feet tattooed on his body.

In 1992, Tony's contribution to Mountain Rescue was recognised by being the star of the TV programme *This is your Life*. Shortly afterwards his work was recognised in the New Year's Honours List when he received an MBE. When Tony resigned as a



member of OVMRO in 1999, he was awarded Honorary Membership.

A book could be written about this unusual and remarkable man. Born in India, brought up in South Africa, he had the Welsh surname of Jones

and wore a kilt of the Stewart tartan at formal events. Whilst he led with single-minded authority, he was a generous man, always willing to help fledgling members and to share his vast wealth of knowledge.

We shall all miss him,  
thank you Tony.

By Chris Lloyd  
*Ogwen Valley Mountain  
Rescue Organisation*

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# Book Reviews

**Tides:** a climber's voyage  
*Nick Bullock, Vertebrate Publishing 2018*

**The Magician's Glass:** character and fate, eight essays on climbing and mountain life  
*Ed Douglas, Vertebrate Publishing 2017*

**Himalaya:** The Tribulations of Mick & Vic, *Mick Fowler and Victor Saunders, compiled and edited by Eric Vola, Lulu Publishing 2017*

**The Ogre:** Biography of a mountain and the dramatic story of the first ascent  
*Doug Scott, Vertebrate Publishing 2017*

Four reviews by Graham Wilson,  
plus a selection of related titles, and new or revised  
guidebooks compiled by Chris Harle

# BOOK REVIEWS BY CHRIS HARLE

Since Simon McCartney's excellent *The Bond* won the Boardman Tasker Prize at the end of 2016 there has been a steady flow of newly published climbing and mountaineering narratives. Autobiographies and climbing memoirs have featured strongly with Chris Bonington's *Ascent*, Tommy Caldwell's *The Push* and Ueli Steck's *My Climbing Life* being the best sellers. This is hardly surprising considering Bonington's enduring popular appeal, the worldwide media interest in Caldwell and Jorgeson's heroic ascent of Yosemite's Dawn Wall and the death of Ueli Steck in 2017.

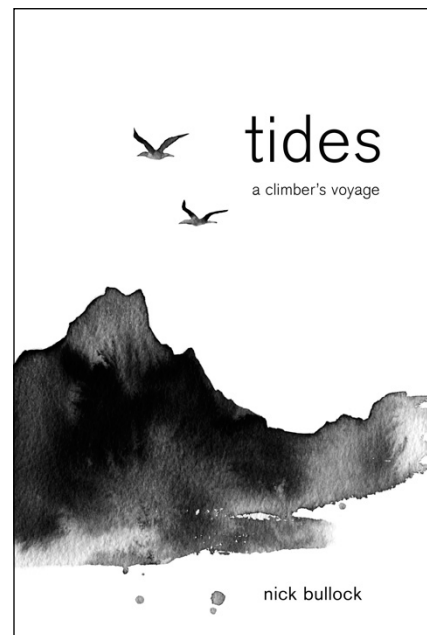
Both Ed Douglas (*The Magician's Glass*) and Andy Kirkpatrick (*Unknown Pleasures*) have had a book of collected essays published by Vertebrate. As you would expect from these erudite authors, they always have thought-provoking and interesting points of view and are well-worth reading.

Apart from Caldwell and Ueli Steck it has been good to read about other overseas climbers, a reminder that there are many world class performers that we often don't get the chance to read about. For example, Allen Steck (USA) 1926-, Erhard Loretan (Switzerland) 1959-2011, Ang Tharkay (Nepal) 1907-1981,

and Voytek Kurtyka (Poland) 1947-, all have books about them that are available here in the UK.

Two books that are less easy to categorize, but have merit, are Doug Scott's *The Ogre* which gives a climbing history of the mountain followed by a shortened version of his own ascent and infamous descent in 1977, plus Jim Herrington's *The Climbers* which presents a series of portraits of influential climbers from the 1930s to the 1970s.

Thankfully there are very few 'expedition' books these days because unless you do an 8000m peak by a new route in less than 24 hours, have a truly epic survival story that makes *Touching the Void* look tame, or can find and climb a mountain bigger than Everest, then it's probably all been said before. However, as Chris Bonington recently commented, "climbing literature and publishing seems very much alive and well." He could well have added, '... thanks to members of the Climbers' Club,' because eight members of the CC have authored or co-authored the following seven books:



## TIDES A CLIMBER'S VOYAGE

Nick Bullock

(Vertebrate Publishing 2018)

The much-anticipated follow-up to *Echoes* from one of our own.

In 2012 Nick Bullock produced his first book *Echoes*. On page one he has a steady job with relatively good prospects and a pension to safeguard his old age. He also lives in his own house, a fact he values highly. At the start of this, his second book, Bullock has no job, no pension and lives with all his possessions in the back of a second-hand van. *Echoes* recounts the struggle of reaching a decision

to abandon the security offered by a conventional life-style and become a full time mountaineer. *Tides*, between making a variety of perilous moves from one climbing hold to another, examines the equally uncertain consequences of his earlier decision. These seem to be, on the one hand, the positives of doing what you want when you want, or as one climbing acquaintance put it “You’ve got it all”. Whereas on the other hand, the negatives of an often-shiftless existence without roots or a meaningful long-term relationship.

The contents of the book reflect this dichotomy. On the face of it, it is the author’s climbing diary from 2003 to 2016 covering exploits that range from the Himalaya to the more modest cliffs of the Anglesey coast. It is, as it were, Bullock’s public record of his mountaineering achievements and there is no doubt that these achievements are impressive. All the more so, as he appears to deliberately stack the odds against himself – completing difficult summer climbs under winter conditions, seeking out rock that is both friable and unprotected, even climbing for two weeks with a badly broken wrist. Or as he, somewhat laconically, puts it, you “need a scare to appreciate life”.

But a closer examination of the book shows it is more than a guidebook to very hard climbs. An important component is the detailed and revealing description of the varied

array of companions who accompany the author on his travels. If the world of ice and rock is Bullock’s stage, then they are the players who make their entrances and (often fatal) exits and give necessary shape and substance to the space the author has had to create for himself. But it doesn’t end there. There is another world outside the climbing Utopia that Bullock has so determinedly constructed. It is the world of his childhood and recent past, a world of more intimate relationships and the responsibilities. The main climbing discourse is punctuated, arguably interrupted, by remembered scenes from these formative years, as if the author both in a literary and personal sense was trying simultaneously to connect and distance this other world from his present life.

Yet even the cocoon of climbing does not offer complete emotional safety. As the references to Facebook show, it is important to Bullock that the outside world is aware of his exploits. But advertising on social media has its downside – the tide of the title comes in and the tide goes out.

Unable to ignore either public or peer group opinion he often seems to be left high and dry, grappling with ‘the deadly combination of ambition and the fear of failure’. Even within his inner self, this tension is evident. At times throughout the book the question of climbing ethics arises. At what point is it permissible to

replace a point of aid? Can you say you have completed a route if you use off-route protection? Were the holds you used the correct holds? The arcane even absurd nature of such questions is illustrated in the section entitled “death of paradise”. There is an argument between the author and Stevie Haston about a route the latter has put up on Craig Doris. This culminated in Haston screaming, “YOU’RE NOT GOOD ENOUGH, YOU ARE NOT EVEN USING THE CORRECT HOLDS, AND YOU’RE USING THE LEDGE: ONE OF THE HARDEST MOVES IS CLIMBING PAST THE LEDGE WITHOUT USING IT.” Perhaps, as the title of this section suggests, this is Bullock’s moment of epiphany. In a world ravaged by suffering, poverty and loss, to feel guilty about using or not using a particular hold is frankly ridiculous.

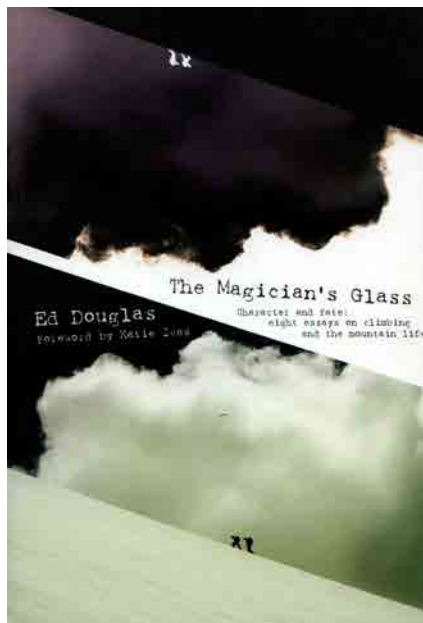
As the book progresses it seems to be less about the author’s climbing exploits and more about the author himself. The self-examination becomes more intense. Questions begin to float nearer the surface. Questions concerning his responsibilities towards his ageing parents, his unwillingness to risk any form of personal relationship outside climbing, even the value of his own created world. In particular, the key question: what he will do when, like his Dad, he can no longer function within it?



The book ends on a different note with a foot in each camp. The subtitle of Bullock's book is 'a climber's voyage' and therefore the final chapter is ironically apt. Juxtaposed with a description of a new route in Tibet, is an account of the author helping his elderly and recently widowed father move himself and his home 'Jasper' from its original canal mooring to its final resting place at Apsley Marina. Initially, he dreads the five-day journey that will force him back into his other world but as the journey progresses he begins to realise things are changing and perhaps he will have to change with them.

This is a powerful book both in content and style, describing not only the intricacies and dangers of the climbs but also the innermost struggles of the climber. It may well take a brave man to retackle *Omega* on the Petites Jorasses, but it is an even braver man who confronts his own inner demons.

*Review by Graham Wilson*  
([www.maccandtheart.com](http://www.maccandtheart.com))



**THE MAGICIAN'S GLASS**  
**CHARACTER AND FATE: EIGHT**  
**ESSAYS ON CLIMBING AND THE**  
**MOUNTAIN LIFE** *Ed Douglas*  
(*Vertebrate Publishing 2017*)  
Thought-provoking essays from award winning author about contemporary mountaineering issues.

Like any good essayist, Douglas selects a topic, examines its pros and cons, and then reaches a reasoned and well-crafted conclusion. However, to describe *The Magician's Glass* as a series of essays is to do it less than justice. The likes of *Searching for Tomaz Humar* and *What's Eating Ueli Steck?* are much more than that. Here are stories that first capture then hold the imagination, reminiscent of the seafarer's yarn spun in Conrad's

*Heart of Darkness* or as the title suggests, Ishmael's tale of Captain Ahab's obsession with his nemesis, Moby Dick.

Some, like *Stealing Toni Egger*, have the elements of a detective story, a whodunit or rather a who-done-what, as the essay tries to unravel what happened to Egger on Cerro Torre and whether his climbing partner, Cesare Maestri, actually made the first ascent of the mountain as he (Maestri) claimed. With others the investigation is more philosophical. The title essay examines the motives that lie behind those who risk their lives climbing routes where the objective dangers mean that death is as likely as not. What makes them do it or perhaps more importantly what makes them, often suddenly, decide the game's not worth the candle. Have they, the author asks, looked into the "magician's glass" and, like Ahab, finally discovered the truth of their "mysterious self"?

Finding a solution to what was *really* "eating Ueli Steck" is far from simple. Whether he fully looked himself in the face has been a matter of much debate. His motives for choosing to solo the South Face of Annapurna are to say the least mixed. With a younger generation snapping at his heels, did he feel the only way to stay at the top of the pile was to take even greater risks? Was there also an over-riding imperative to satisfy the sponsors at all cost? Did

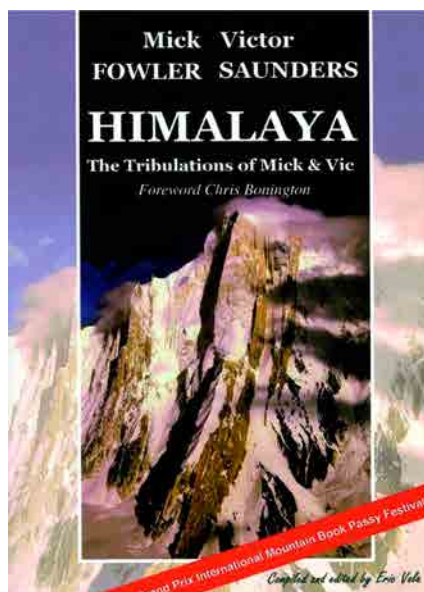
he deliberately drop his camera so he could claim the ascent without photographic evidence? Were the commercial and egotistical pressures so great that he had to distort the facts of what really happened? The battle between supporters and sceptics still rages but as he received the Piolets d'Or in recognition of his 'achievement' only Steck knew what reflection the mirror in the cliff must have thrown back.

Perhaps the most important piece in the collection is *Crazy Wisdom*. In this account of Himalayan climbing the author examines the lot of the porters who make the climbers' dreams possible. For too long the outsider's picture of the mountains of Nepal is of an enchanted land, a Shangri-La, populated by "children of nature" living in "a beautiful oasis" in an otherwise troubled world. At best they were seen as faithful companions who added local colour to the post-colonial ambitions of Western Society. At worst, beasts of burden who were to be chided for their indolence, "discarded, like garbage" when no longer of use. Douglas produces evidence of exploitation of labour, prostitution and poverty, of indifference to suffering and of well-meaning concern that did as much harm as good. Unlike the other pieces, here, the author addresses the reader directly: that as mountain lovers, climbers or trekkers, we are all, to greater or lesser extent, responsible for the "body only half-buried under

wind-blown snow, abandoned so that someone's holiday wouldn't be delayed".

A review of this length cannot but scratch the surface of the subjects covered by these essays, from freeing aid routes to the connections between climbing and art. Nor does it do justice to the depth of research, the lucidity of the prose and above all the sense of humanity that makes up this collection. Without doubt, it should be required reading for anyone who ventures into the hills and, arguably, for many who don't.

*Review by Graham Wilson*  
([www.maccandtheart.com](http://www.maccandtheart.com))



## **HIMALAYA: THE TRIBULATIONS OF MICK & VIC**

*Mick Fowler and Victor Saunders, compiled & edited by Eric Vola (Lulu Publishing 2017)*

A privately published mash-up of four previously published books with a new introductory chapter and epilogue.

In 2015 Eric Vola decided the mountaineering exploits of Mick Fowler and Victor Saunders deserved greater coverage in French climbing circles. To that end he took the books the pair had already published in English, selected what he thought were appropriate extracts and produced for his home market *Les Tribulations de Mick et Vic en Himalaya*. It turned out to have been a wise decision as the book went on to win the Grand Prix of the International Mountain Book Festival of Passy. A year later it was re-translated into English. Even though much of the old material was not readily available, at first sight this seems a rather pointless exercise. Closer examination shows Vola's editorial skills add something a bit special. As Chris Bonington put in his informative Introduction, it was a case of 1+1 equalling not 2 but at least 3. Not only are the pair's accounts topped and tailed with new material but Vola's selection underlies the relationship between the two author/climbers. Saunders, perhaps typically, carries the main burden of the tune, but this is

tellingly augmented by Fowler's laid-back and often barbed counterpoint.

The other contribution Vola makes is the picture he draws, not only of the main protagonists, but the whole ambience of the North London Mountaineering Club and its alcohol fuelled meetings in that "inelegant Edwardian pile", The Globe. It is here we meet the rest of the cast, Lobby, Bollards et al. where beer is drunk and plans are laid. It has always been the case that the driving force that pushed up the standards of British climbing had just such a gathering - from the more or less sedate reunions at Pen-y-Pas or the Wastwater Hotel, to the shenanigans of the Rock and Ice in Llanberis and Langdale. Such meeting places are an intrinsic part in the games climbers play and, although in different eras, there is striking resemblance between the description offered by both Joe Brown and Vic Saunders as they respectively and somewhat tentatively entered The Padarn and The Globe.

The NLMC also introduced a new approach to winter climbing in Scotland. The norm for the English-based climber was to take a week or ten days off work sometime in February, base yourself somewhere around Fort Bill then hope for the best. The problem with that is you are just as likely to end up in the Clachaig watching steady drizzle turn the snow into slush as you are to be front-pointing perfect conditions on

the Ben. Fowler and friends decided on a different approach. Once winter arrived, they left straight after work every Friday, climbed Saturday/Sunday, and then drove back Sunday night to be at work on Monday morning. With four drivers it was possible to get enough sleep to take advantage of the right weather if it should occur and so stay well ahead of the game.

The bulk of the book concerns their attempts on Bojohaghur, Spantik and Ultar, three mountains situated above the Hunza Valley and conveniently near the Karakoram Highway. They took with them the lateral thinking they had applied to Scottish winter ascents. The traditional approach to mountains of such height and complexity was to employ siege tactics, establishing a series of camps linked with fixed ropes then yo-yoing men and supplies up and down until eventually a summit bid was possible. Mick and Vic had other ideas. As they could not afford to spend weeks on the mountain, they adopted an Alpine approach - a small party carrying everything on its back with sufficient food to sit out bad weather if need be. The trouble with this approach was it gave them little room for error if anything went wrong. A telling example of the real dangers they undertook is illustrated by a terse conversation between Saunders and his partner on their retreat from Ultar

where the ropes were continually jamming.

'Steve was up there for half an hour, while I shivered below with cold and neurosis.

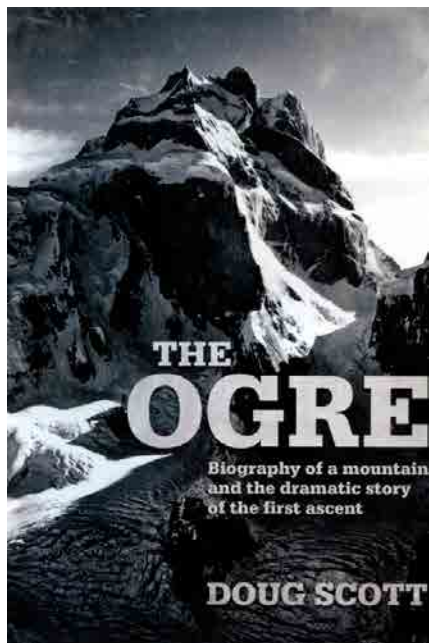
"Victor," came the voice from the dark, "if the ropes go on jamming like this we are going to definitely die. If we abseil down the middle of the face, we'll only maybe die."

"That is incontrovertible logic," I said to myself.'

But all the drama is punctuated, as Bonington puts it, by "a very British sense of humour, sharp and quick for Mick, caustic and sophisticated for Vic ". Indeed, if you weren't aware of the context, the description of a first four, then three-man bivouac on a sloping slab half way up Bojohaghur has all the trappings of an ill-conceived high-altitude stag-do. And even off the hill the stories continue to entertain. Fowler's description of scraping the barrel of London's curry houses in the hope of hardening up his digestive system or Saunders simulating a crevasse rescue for the benefit of Thames TV by being dropped off a bridge, would surely merit inclusion in any anthology of mountain humour. Therefore, it is not surprising, as I read Vola's compilation, I was simultaneously reminded of the irreverent humour of W.E. Bowman's *Ascent of Rum Doodle* and the sense of serious danger that Heinrich Harrer

captures in *The White Spider*. Such a combination would suggest a very good book and should make it a serious contender for your next book to buy.

*Review by Graham Wilson*  
(www.maccandtheart.com)



**THE OGRE: BIOGRAPHY OF A MOUNTAIN AND THE DRAMATIC STORY OF THE FIRST ASCENT:**

*Doug Scott*

*(Vertebrate Publishing 2017)*

Scott's history of attempts on The Ogre including the first ascent by himself and Bonington in 1977.

The Ogre is a book of two halves. The first sixty pages give a concise and interesting account of the history of

exploration in the Karakoram. The remainder of the book is an account of the successful first ascent of The Ogre itself. This combination of old and new is the first of a series where the author links the history of a climbing area with the ascent of one particular peak. Among proposed examples are Kangchenjunga and Pik Lenin.

The history of exploration begins with the commercial activities of the East India Company which, in the interest of profit, wanted to safeguard (and that usually meant lay claim to) its trading territories. Eventually, the colonial ambitions of its competitors became so intense, the British Government decided to take over. What followed is generally referred to as "The Great Game" where, not for the last time, Britain and Russia vied for control of the north-west corner of the subcontinent. As Napoleon found to his cost at Waterloo, the side that has the more accurate map has the advantage and Scott describes the government-sponsored wanderings of such early explorers as Francis Younghusband and Henry Godwin-Austen. They, in addition to the general work of locating and mapping the easiest ways to bring troops to bear on any Russian invasion, were instructed to ascertain the exact position of K2 and whether or not it could be claimed as part of the British Empire.

The line between cartographical/scientific research and exploration for its own sake has always been

blurred and with the opening of the Suez Canal, thus facilitating a relatively quick passage to India, mountaineers began to explore the Greater Ranges seeking new peaks to add to their Alpine conquests. Notorious among these were the wealthy Americans, William and Fanny Workman, who "developed a passion for the Karakoram" and made a number of important first ascents. The culmination of this early exploration came in the late 1930s when Eric Shipton and Bill Tilman were able to correct some important erroneous assumptions made by their predecessors. All that now remained was the completion of the Karakoram Highway to bring into the area a flood of climbers of all nationalities. In addition to the author's own précis of historical events, Scott provides for the reader who wants to know more, a very useful bibliography for further reading.

For the ascent of the mountain itself, Scott gathered together an interesting group of climbers with a variety of social background and experience. Perhaps the most significant choice was Chris Bonington. Scott invited him hoping a) he would bring his vast experience to bear and b) that Bonington would appreciate and enjoy the Alpine style approach that Scott hoped to employ. Unlike the traditional expedition, there would be no crocodile of porters carrying food for porters carrying food for climbers. In fact, there would

be no leader. It was expected each member of the group would respond as necessary. One problem with this democratic approach is how decisions are made when there is disagreement within the team. Bonington and Nick Estcourt made an early attempt on the summit and felt that, by establishing one higher camp, success would be theirs. The remaining members of the party, Clive Rowland and Mo Anthoine, demurred, wanting more time to acclimatise. In fact, as is so often the case, it was events that decided how things were going to pan out. Paul Brathwaite was injured in a rock fall and took no further part in the ascent and the party's early efforts left Estcourt completely debilitated. A snow cave was dug out between the two peaks and from this secure base Scott and Bonington reached the summit without too much difficulty.

All that remained was a return to the snow cave, a possible second ascent by Rowland and Anthoine, and then an orderly retreat over the West Peak to Base Camp and home. But Scott, while attempting to reach a couple of pegs they had left in situ, stepped onto a veneer of ice that had formed from melting snow. In his own words "In that careless moment I lost control." The result was an involuntary pendulum into a rock face and two broken legs. Bonington, with the eventual help of Rowland and Anthoine, managed to get Scott to the snow cave where they were able

to assess the situation. Scott could only crawl or, at best, slide down steep rock on his back. It was at this point the weather changed and the party was marooned at 23,000 feet with no food and only patchy equipment. They had no choice. Despite the weather, they would have to try to get down as quickly as possible. Matters were then complicated when Bonington who had previously fallen without any apparent ill effects now was in considerable pain with what turned out to be broken ribs and had convinced himself that he had pulmonary oedema. Eventually, they reached the tent at Camp III where they were forced to sit out the worst of the weather. Slowly but surely Rowland and Anthoine shepherded the party off the mountain and when they reached comparative safety, Rowland went ahead to procure food. He returned with not only the necessary provisions but the news that Estcourt and Brathwaite, fearing the worst, had returned to Askole to muster a search party.

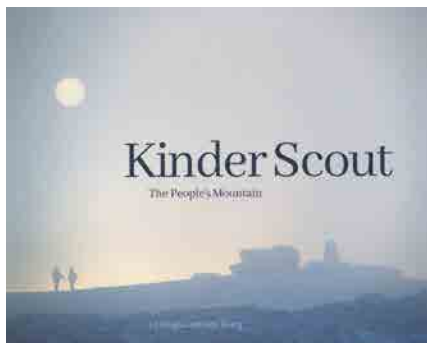
What followed, if it had not been so serious, seemed more like a Brian Rix farce. An already exhausted Anthoine rushed after the departed couple, trying to avert bad news reaching England and to rustle up a sufficient number of porters to help with the evacuation. The helicopter dispatched to bring Scott to hospital crash-landed on arrival leaving Bonington stranded at Base camp. The latter, so frustrated by the turn of events, started to walk

back to civilisation and when the helicopter eventually picked him up it had to land on the eighteenth green of a large international golf course leaving Bonington, "totally emaciated, dusty, dirty and unwashed" to blag his way into the Club House in order to telephone the Embassy for assistance.

Many mountaineering accounts strike the triumphal note of conquest, but this story of the fight against the odds is not so much about reaching the top as about getting out alive. The dozen or so pages of text that describes the actual ascent from Base Camp to the summit is not what distinguishes the book from a score or so like it. If Scott had not slipped and the weather not broken, the author would have been left with a fairly straightforward account of high altitude climbing, punctuated with the almost obligatory anecdotes that surround the Lads' Few Days Away. Instead it is a vivid reminder of how easily things can go wrong and that an Alpine approach to climbing in the likes of the Karakoram is at best high risk. The author might well invite the reader to smile somewhat condescendingly at the belt and braces approach of the Japanese and American parties who were also on the mountain, but Bonington, at least, will remember that, but for the American doctors who carried the extra equipment to administer antibiotics intravenously, he might have lost his life.

*Review by Graham Wilson*  
([www.maccandtheart.com](http://www.maccandtheart.com))



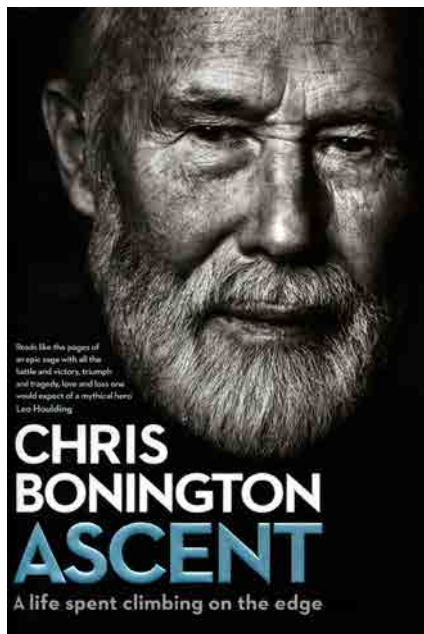


### THE PEOPLE'S MOUNTAIN

*Ed Douglas and John Beatty  
(Vertebrate Publishing 2018)*

Not much climbing but an interesting script and visually appealing.

### ASCENT: A LIFE SPENT

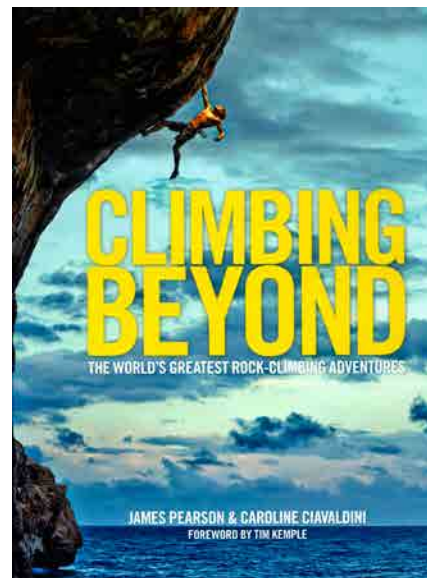


### CLIMBING ON THE EDGE

*Chris Bonington  
(Simon & Schuster 2017)*

Bonington's first memoir since *The Everest Years* was published over 30 years ago. A revealing book that includes his boyhood relationship with his mother, the tragic deaths of his son and wife and his joyous subsequent re-marriage.

### CLIMBING BEYOND: THE WORLD'S GREATEST ROCK

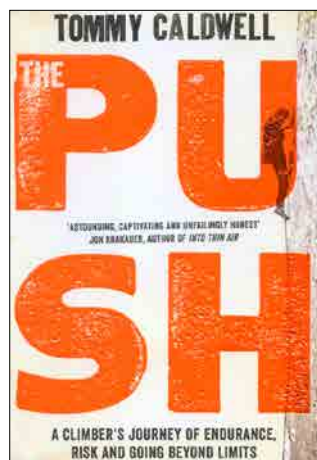


### CLIMBING ADVENTURES

*James Pearson & Caroline Ciavaldini  
(Aurum Press 2017)*

A visual feast of climbing around the world.

Other books that you might also wish to take a look at:



**THE PUSH: A CLIMBER'S JOURNEY OF ENDURANCE, RISK AND GOING BEYOND LIMITS**

*Tommy Caldwell*

*(Penguin Books 2017)*

An inspiring memoir culminating in his heroic ascent of Yosemite's *Dawn Wall* with Kevin Jorgeson in 2015.

**NIGHT NAKED:**

**A CLIMBER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

*Erhard Loretan with Jean Ammann*

*(Mountaineers Books 2016)*

In 1995 Swiss mountaineer Erhard Loretan (1959-2011) became the third person to climb all fourteen 8000-meter peaks.



**THE WHITE CLIFF: EPIC TALES OF LIFE AND DEATH ON THE WORLD'S BEST SEA CLIFF**

*Grant Farquhar (ed.)*

*(Atlantis Publishing 2018)*

This year's must-have book. The story of climbing on Gogarth, Anglesey with many sensational photographs and contributions from over one hundred of the pioneers.

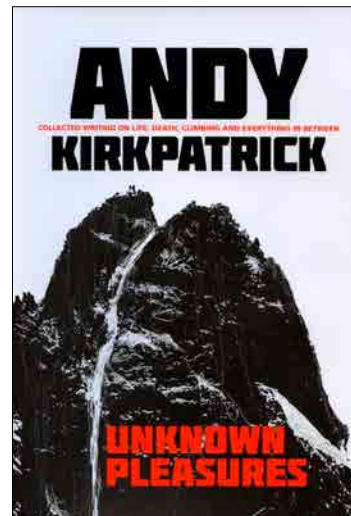
**NORTON OF EVEREST:**

**THE BIOGRAPHY OF E.F. NORTON, SOLDIER AND MOUNTAINEER**

*Hugh Norton*

*(Vertebrate Publishing 2017)*

Written by his son, this is the biography of Edward Norton, the leader of the 1924 British Everest expedition when Mallory and Irvine disappeared.



**UNKNOWN PLEASURES: COLLECTED WRITING ON LIFE, DEATH, CLIMBING AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN**

*Andy Kirkpatrick*

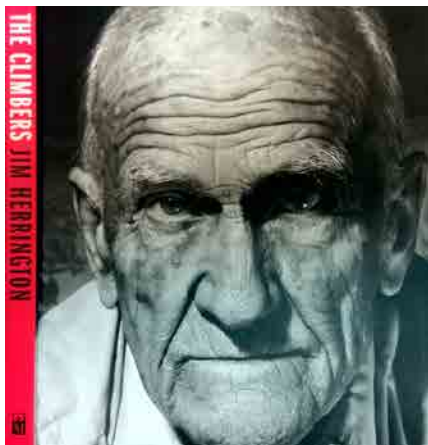
*(Vertebrate Publishing 2018)*

Collected essays from two-time Boardman Tasker Prize winner.

**LIMITS OF THE KNOWN**

*David Roberts (W.W. Norton 2018)*

Part memoir and part history by Roberts (1943-) a pioneering American climber and respected author.

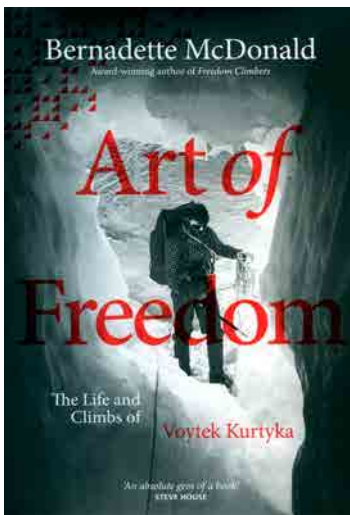


## THE CLIMBERS

*Jim Herrington*

*(Mountaineers Books 2017)*

A series of portraits of influential rock and mountain climbers from the 1930s to the 1970s. Winner of the Grand Prize at the Banff Mountain Literature Festival 2017.



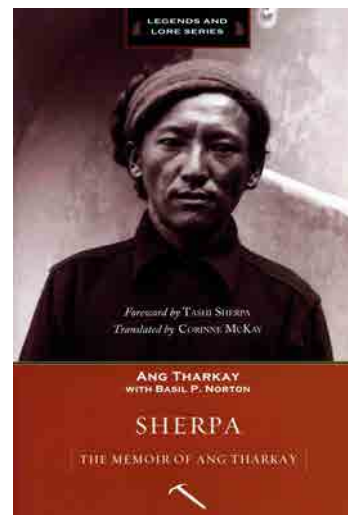
## ART OF FREEDOM:

**THE LIFE AND CLIMBS OF VOYTEK KURTYKA**

*Bernadette McDonald*

*(Vertebrate Publishing 2017)*

Biography of the legendary Polish alpinist. Winner of the 2017 Boardman Tasker Prize.



## SHERPA:

**THE MEMOIR OF ANG THARKAY**

*Ang Tharkay with Basil P. Norton*

*(Mountaineers Books 2016)*

Autobiography of Nepalese mountaineer published for the first time in English, some 35 years after his death.

## A MOUNTAINEER'S LIFE

*Allen Steck (Patagonia 2017)*

Autobiography of American climber Allen Steck (1926-).

## UELI STECK:

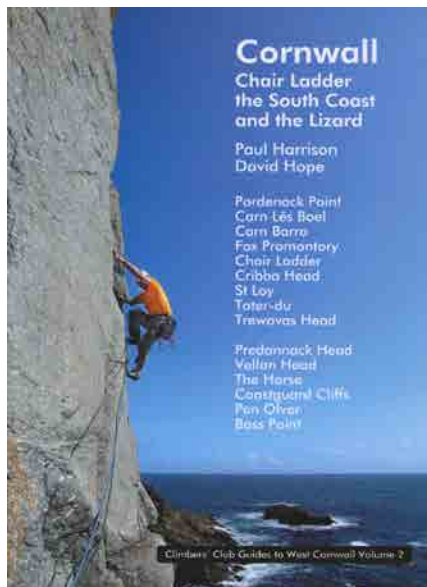
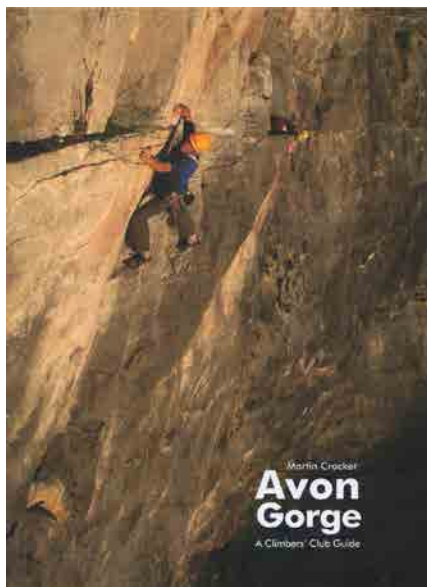
**MY CLIMBING LIFE**

*Ueli Steck with Karin Steinbach*

*(Mountaineers Books 2018)*

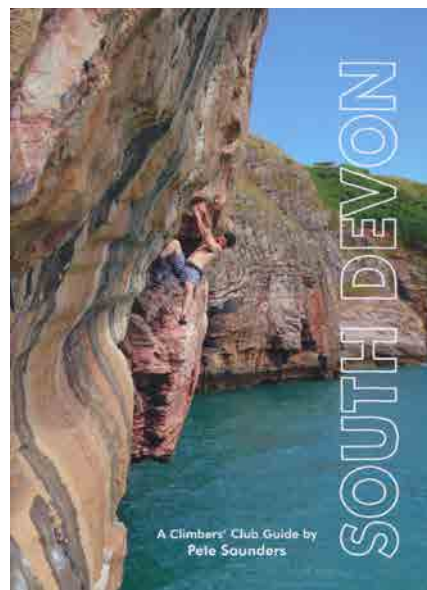
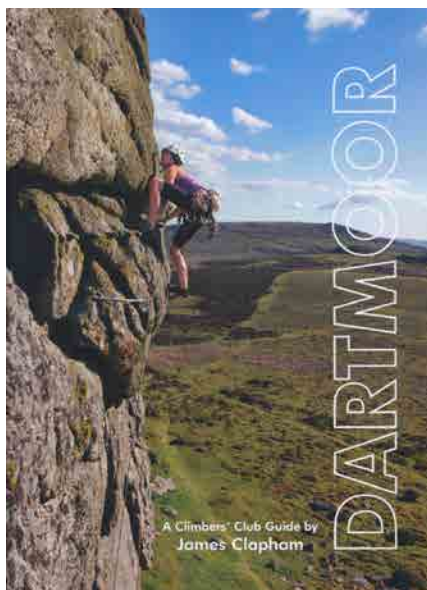
Known for his speed climbing records, this autobiography was translated and published in English shortly after his death in 2017.





## GUIDEBOOKS

The Climbers' Club have also been busy on the guidebook front. Following the publication of *West Cornwall (Bosigran)* in 2016 the CC have published four more guides to the south west of England. All are in the new flapped paperback A5 format.



### AVON GORGE The Definitive Climbers' Club Guide

Martin Crocker  
(Climbers' Club 2017)

### DARTMOOR

Rock-climbing and Bouldering  
James Clapham  
(Climbers' Club 2017)

### WEST CORNWALL: Chair Ladder, the South Coast and the Lizard

Paul Harrison & David Hope  
(Climbers' Club 2018)

### SOUTH DEVON

Pete Saunders  
(Climbers' Club 2018)

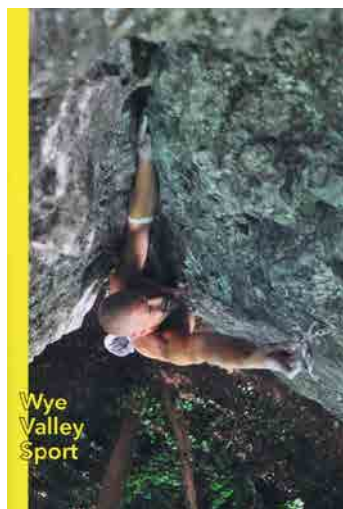
Other new or updated U.K. climbing guidebooks:

### **WYE VALLEY SPORT**

Gordon Jenkin & Mark Davies  
(Great Western Rock 2017)

### **FROME VALLEY SANDSTONE**

Mark Davies  
(Great Western Rock 2017)



### **SOUTHERN SANDSTONE CLIMBS**

Damon Beail (Rockfax 2017)

### **PEAK LIMESTONE SOUTH**

Ian Carr & Gary Gibson  
(BMC 2018)

### **NORTH WALES BOULDERING**

Simon Panton (Ground Up 2017)

### **SOUTH WALES SPORT CLIMBS**

Mark Glaister (Rockfax 2016)

### **CENTRAL WALES: a guide to climbing and bouldering in Elenydd**

Dave Williams & Doug Kerr  
(Steep Stone 2018)

### **SCRAMBLES IN SNOWDONIA**

80 of the best routes, Steve Ashton,  
Carl McKeating & Rachel Crolla  
(Cicerone 3rd edition, 2017)

### **HIGHLAND SCRAMBLES SOUTH and easy rock climbs**

Iain Thow (SMC 2017)

### **SCOTLAND'S WINTER MOUNTAINS WITH ONE AXE:**

Gary Smith (Northern Edge 2018)

### **CHASING THE EPHEMERAL: 50 routes for a successful Scottish winter**

Simon Richardson (Mica 2016)  
**GSY TRAD: A guide to traditional  
climbing in Guernsey** James Burton  
(published by the author 2018)

### **THE OUTER HEBRIDES**

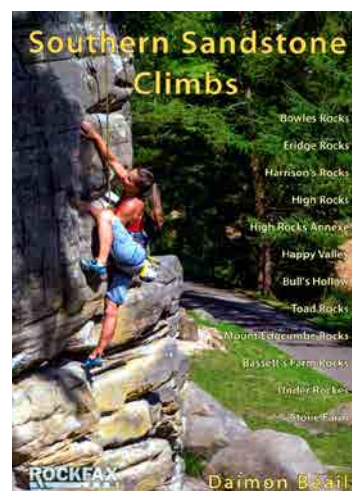
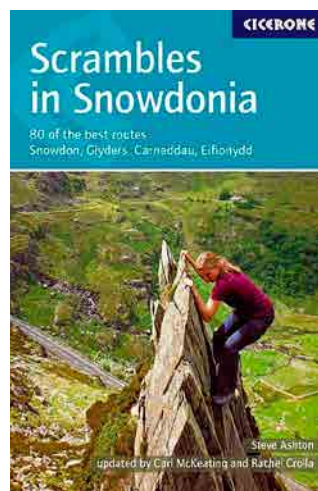
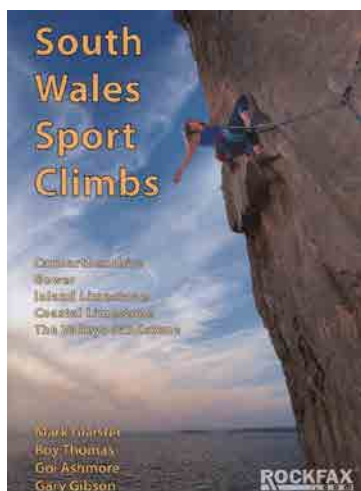
Rab Anderson, Kevin Howett and  
Colin Moody (SMC 2018)

### **BOULDER SCOTLAND**

John Watson  
(Stone Country 3rd edition, 2017)

### **SCOTTISH ROCK VOLUME I SOUTH**

Gary Latter  
(Pesda 2nd edition, 2017)





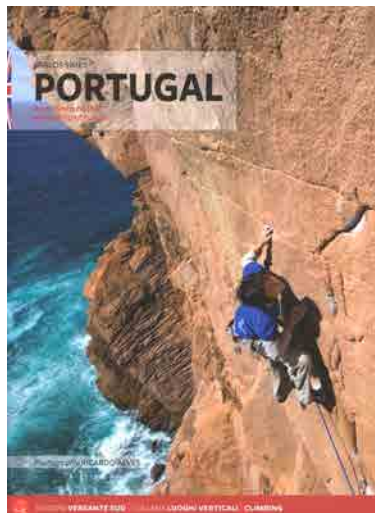
A selection of new or revised and updated guidebooks for overseas venues that are available in the UK:

### **MULTI-PITCH CLIMBING IN EUROPE**

Martin Fickweiler (Dato 2016)

A selection routes between 3 and 22 pitches in 18 different locations.

In English throughout.



### **PORTUGAL: Rock climbs on the western tip of Europe**

Carlos Simes (Versante Sud 2017)

A comprehensive guide in English throughout.

### **MARGALEF**

Joan Ribera, Ramon Lara,  
Albert Ribera & Raquek Galvez:  
(Distribuciones Mor 2017)

Margalef is located in the north-west of the Priorat region of Spain where the Montsant river runs through a narrow steep gorge. In Catalan, Spanish and English.

### **FRANCE: COTE D'AZUR**

Chris Craggs (Rockfax 2017)

Includes the Verdon Gorge, the Calanques and Saint Victoire.

### **CLASSIC ROUTES IN THE ÉCRINS: a mountaineering guide**

Sébastien Constant (Constant 2018)

Summer mountaineering in the Ecrins, Oisans, Valgaudemar and Valjouffrey focussing on climbs of moderate difficulty but encompassing all styles of routes.

### **ESCALADES AUTOUR D'ANNECY:**

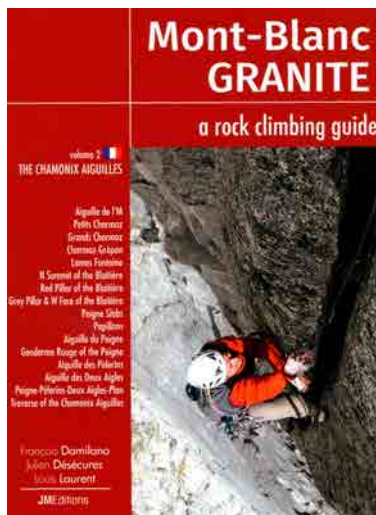
#### **Rock Climbs around Annecy**

Isabelle and Dominique Mesnage  
(the authors 2017)

Multi-pitch routes on 25 limestone crags (7a max) in French and English.

### **7+8: 3,478 STRAIGHT UPS IN FONTAINEBLEAU**

Bart van Raaij (the author 2016)  
Problems graded from 7a to 8c. In French and English.



### **MONT BLANC GRANITE VOLUME 2 The Chamonix Aiguilles**

François Damilano, Julien Désécures  
& Louis Laurent (JM Editions 2017)

The best rock routes on the Chamonix side of the Chamonix Aiguilles from the Aiguille de l'M to the Aiguille du Plan. In English throughout.

### **SCHWEIZ EXTREM JURA**

Sandro von Kanel: (Filidor 2017)  
Routes of 6b and above in the Jura, a region of western Switzerland, extending from Basel in the north down to Lausanne in the south. In German, French and English.

**ALPINE ICE VOLUME 1: the best icefalls in the Alps: France, Switzerland, Italy (Western Alps)**  
Mario Sertori (Versante Sud 2018)

### **PAKLENICA CLIMBING GUIDE**

Boris Cujic (Astroida 2017)  
Sport climbing guidebook to the limestone crags, cliffs and gorges around the Paklenica National Park in Croatia. In English, Croatian, German, Italian and Slovenian.

### **SLOVENIA SPORT CLIMBING GUIDE** (Sidarta 2017)

95 crags and over 4600 routes.

### **BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA**

Igor Vukic & David Lemmerer (Izdavak 2017)

32 crags spread over 4 areas in Bosnian and English.

### **ARCO ROCK: 136 crags**

Manica, Cicogna & Negretti (Versante Sud 4th edition, 2018)  
Situating between Lake Garda and the Sarca Valley in the stunning Italian Lakes, Arco offers some of Europe's best sport climbing on the edge of the Dolomites. In English throughout.

### **FINALE CLIMBING: Sport climbing and multi-pitch routes**

Marco Tomassini (Versante Sud 2nd edition, 2017)  
Limestone crags in the western region of Liguria, Italy.

### **KALYMNOS: A guidebook to the world-class sport climbing on this Aegean island**

Chris Craggs (Rockfax 2018)

### **CLIMB NORWAY: A NATIONAL CLIMBING GUIDE**

Runar Carlsen and Lin Veronica Wagelid (Norges Boltefond 3rd edition, 2018).  
In English throughout.

### **LOFOTEN CLIMBS: Rock climbing on Lofoten and Stetind in Arctic Norway**

Chris Craggs & Thorbjorn Enevold (Rockfax 2nd edition, 2017)

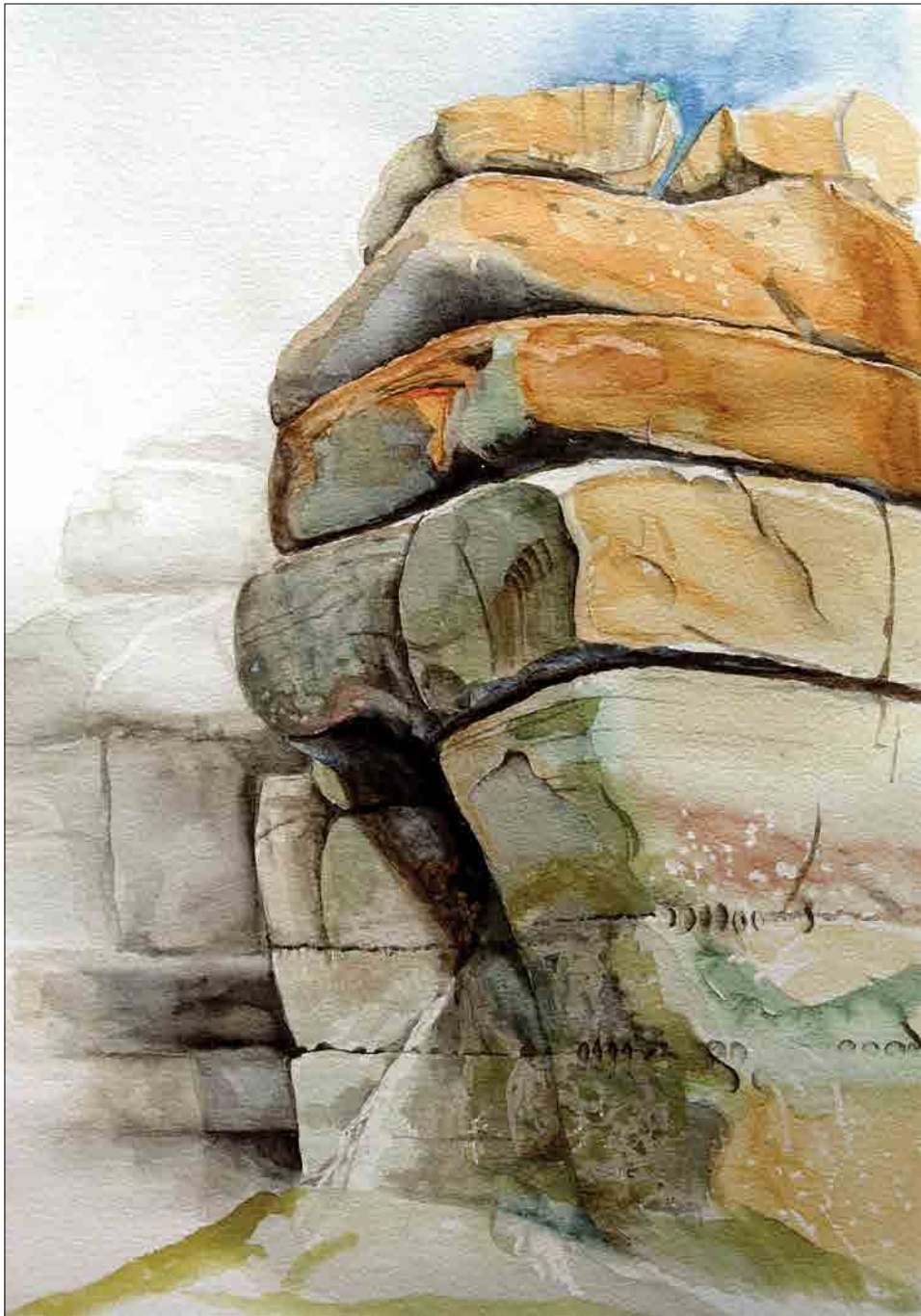
### **JOSHUA TREE ROCK CLIMBS**

Robert Miramontes (Wolverine 2017 3rd edition)  
3000 of the finest climbs plus classic bouldering circuits.

And one more book if you want to add a few grades to your climbing...

### **MASTERMIND: EFFECTIVE MENTAL TRAINING**

Jerry Moffatt (Gimme Kraft 2018)  
With inspiring stories from the current elite of climbing.



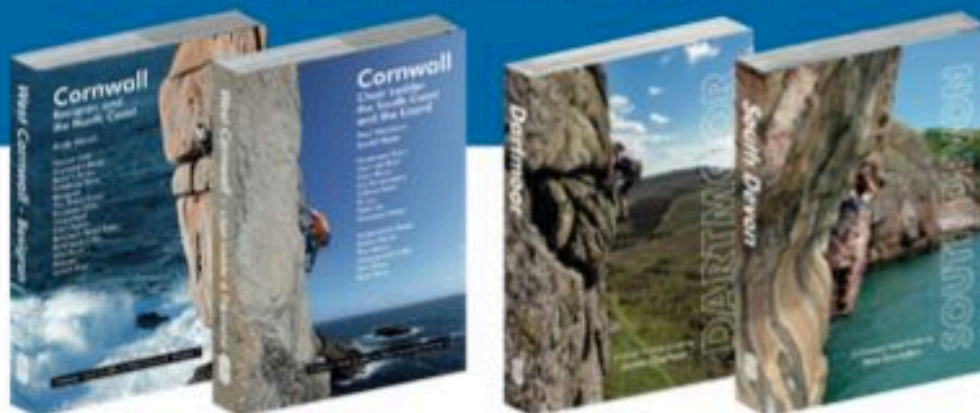
*Sossblitz, Harrison's Rocks – a watercolour by Jim Curran*  
*Jim Curran collection*





## MAINTAINING THE DEFINITIVE RECORD

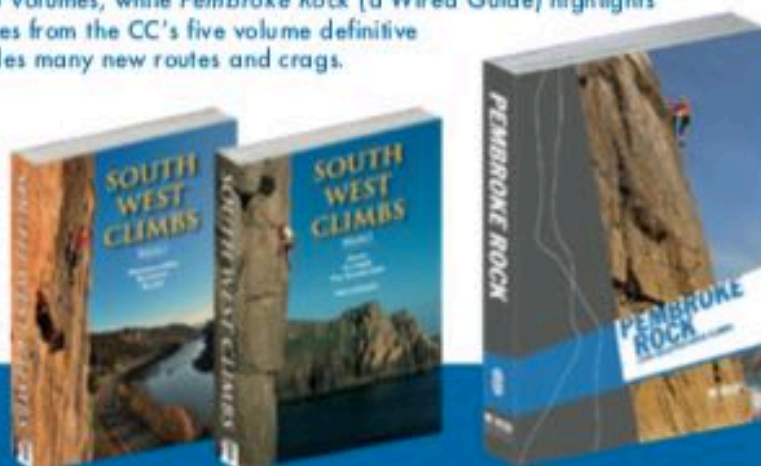
with more than 130 rock climbing guides since 1909



Check the CC website for details of the latest editions of our 30 current titles covering climbing in Wales, Southern and South West England. The full colour A5 format of our modern guides presents detailed, accurate map and photodiagram artwork with inspirational action photography.

Recently published West Cornwall Vol 2 brings our coverage of West Cornwall & The Lizard fully up-to-date; while South Devon (2018) complements its sister volume Dartmoor to document the Trad, Sport, Bouldering, and Deep Water Soloing of southern Devon.

**SELECTING THE BEST** The Climbers' Club also publishes selected climbs guides. South West Climbs is in two volumes, while Pembroke Rock (a Wired Guide) highlights a thousand of the best routes from the CC's five volume definitive Pembroke series and includes many new routes and crags. [www.wired-guides.com](http://www.wired-guides.com)



FOR CLIMBERS NOT FOR PROFIT  
[www.climbers-club.co.uk](http://www.climbers-club.co.uk)



# THE CAD

By Tony Pearson

Insistent he was on climbing it, despite the wind  
And the fast-running progression of the tide.  
Perched on a rock I paid out the rope  
Watching the water splash about my feet.  
O God! I hope he climbs it quickly as I gather up the  
rope  
To save it from the sea. How can I belay swimming in  
the water?  
The tide advance is quicker with the onshore wind, but  
Youthful and confident he makes the moves and is at  
the top.  
I descend into the water to find the footholds  
Start upwards on the climb, water streaming from my  
boots.  
Not so youthful, I struggle upwards fighting it  
Admire his skill and wonder at the long run-out.  
Arriving at the top I see the seals.  
How pleased I am not to have joined them.