



THE CLIMBERS' CLUB
JOURNAL 2021-23



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The Dater Glacier, Antarctica 📷 Ru Finlayson







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 James Mann
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 Paul Winder
Frontispiece: *Swiss Route*, TD+, Grand Capucin
 Jane Gallwey
Opposite: Christopher Brown leading *North Face Route*, Severe, Buachaille Etive Mòr
 Andy Brown





The Climbers' Club Journal No. 130

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Editor's Notes

By Andrew Kitchen

When I agreed to take on the job of Journal Editor in July 2023, I imagined that the job would be challenging for someone with no journalistic experience. Whilst I was not wrong with this assumption, I had underestimated what fun it would be. This is probably the best job I have had! In the eleven years of being a CC member I have always enjoyed reading the journal on a winter's evening and dreaming about what I might do the following summer. It has been a privilege to be involved in producing this journal and I would like to thank Hilary Lawrenson, our President, for offering me the opportunity.

Many thanks to all our contributors who have produced a wide variety of entertaining articles. I appreciate the time and effort that must have gone into each piece.

We have divided the articles into those that are based on climbing in the UK and those that take place abroad. In the UK section there are accounts of the lives and climbs of Peter Harding, Joe Brown and Alan Rouse; key figures in the development of British climbing in the second half of the twentieth century. In Scotland we feature a narrow escape while Munro bagging and the perils of producing a promotional catalogue. Outside the UK there is an account of an ascent of the *Salathé Wall* on El Capitan and the friendship which developed during the climb. There are articles on visits to Namibia and Australia and the unique climbing environments in these countries. Helicopter rides feature in an account of climbing in Kyrgyzstan and an attempt on the *American Direct* on the West Face of the Dru. Both these pieces are excellent adventure stories.

We include a variety of poetry throughout the journal. Andy Clarke makes interesting use of the Haiku form to describe the sensations of alpine rock climbing. In *Rock Climbing for Novices* Mark Goodwin explores the experience of someone new to climbing, whilst offering advice on avoiding the perils of consumerism.

One of the best things about working on this journal is being part of a great team. As someone new to the job of editor, I have benefited from the help and advice of Trevor Langhorne. His experience has been invaluable, as have his proofreading skills. Bryan Maloney's design skills help enhance the work of our contributors. The journal would not be what it is without him. You will notice a large number of obituaries in this journal, which David Medcalf has compiled with the utmost care and sensitivity. Thanks are also due to Chris Harle for his work on the book reviews and to Cathy Woodhead, Gwyn Evans, Jim Simpson and Pete Wright for proofreading.

I hope you enjoy reading there articles at least as much as I have. I also hope that you will be inspired to write something for the next journal. We are interested in any aspect of climbing and would like to include articles from as wide a range of members as possible. It is pleasing that we have more contributions from women than in any recent journal and we would like this trend to continue. More contributions from younger members would also be welcome so that the club membership is fully represented.

I think I have said more than enough now.

Happy reading!

Opposite:
Alasdair Kirby,
The Indy 500, E1,
Lundy
Bryan Maloney

Tizgut Crack, E2 5b, 5a

Anti-Atlas, Morocco

— *A Tribute to Joe Brown*

By Paul Donnithorne
Photographs by Don Sargeant



As a keen schoolboy climber from the word go in the late 70's, it was many years before I really took an interest in who climbed a given route first. Living in west Devon, I would merrily climb routes on the local granite of The Dewerstone and the Dartmoor tors. Then, as knowledge and equipment accumulated, schoolmates and I would move further afield to the Chudleigh limestone and the pristine granite of Cornwall, where there are also many curious other rock types, Killas slate and the strange greenstone, to mention only two. The quarried and precarious Avon Gorge was a long way to hitchhike as a schoolboy back then. As I grew and progressed I travelled further, eager to experience different areas, but looking back, it was many years before I spared a thought for those who pioneered the climbs I was repeating. I didn't even know that Joe Brown had put up *Cenotaph Corner*, the most famous climb in the country, a quarter of a century before I had begun, or even heard of rock climbing.

Many decades on and I have had countless climbing adventures and done hundreds of first ascents myself. I now understand more about what's involved, what goes on, and take much more interest in who put up a particular route. There are plenty of climbers who take an interest in this, but many who appear not to. For myself, when standing at the foot of a great climb I'm about to attempt, I tend to imagine what it must have been like to be stood there with the virgin cliff above – a handful of choices of where to go and questions about what tools to be armed with. However, after many successes and failures, learning evolves and an 'eye for a line' develops.

Joe Brown obviously developed such a great eye for a line and, coupled with that, went huge talent and ability. Throw in tenacity and audacity and a sizeable and admirable portfolio of world class climbs was established.

Over the years I have done many a Joe Brown route, but more recently have had the pleasure and fortune to repeat one of his better known routes in the Anti-Atlas mountains of Morocco. This winter sun venue has, in recent years, become a hotspot destination for 'trad' climbers from all over the world. One of Joe's most famous routes in the UK is *Cenotaph Corner* in North Wales and *Tizgut Crack* in Morocco bears some resemblance, despite *The Corner* being a perpendicular open book and *The Crack*, less straight and whose side walls are mildly shelving in nature. Both are features that draw you like a magnet and are obvious objectives. You simply can't help yourself but to walk straight to the foot of them and start climbing.

On a still day, as you tramp and meander in, through a few berber mountain dwellings, some inhabited, some perhaps not (it can be difficult to tell) and weaving up over ancient and long gone productive terraced slopes, the wildlife will have hushed as you enter the lower gorge. The stealthy, however, may be rewarded with sightings of reptiles, rodents, and raptors or the flash of a Bee Eater or Hoopoe. On rare occasions, after a downpour, a reborn gurgling stream plays host to an orgy of splashing frogs, whose chorus is such a memorable treat! This vast landscape may give the impression of desertion, but don't be surprised if you're passed by a gaggle of chatting and giggling girls, all brightly attired, village bound and heavily laden with the morning's foraging from high on the summits. This merry berber brigade may well be accompanied by a small and very cute and lavishly decorated donkey clad in colourful woven baskets and leather.

Cenotaph is a striking right-angled dark brown corner 35 metres high, which will gobble up protection (nowadays) at regular intervals, always in the corner crack itself, sharing it with curling fingers. *Tizgut*, although called a crack, is also a corner (well at least the first pitch is), but the

Opposite: Paul
Donnithorne leading
Tizgut Crack.

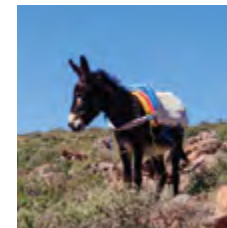
protection isn't as straightforward. However, the gear will come with perseverance – some medium size and some large – and then some very large. The towering bronze walls look many shades of brown from the stream bed below, but turn out to be hues of ochre and grey close up and herein begins the relationship between climb and climber – there is romance in the stone!

From below, the slicing corner-crack looks wide enough to be intimidating, as you question whether or not you have enough large pieces on your rack. Fortunately, I was frugal with the largest cams, by fiddling in creative and technical smaller

pieces into the pockets and horizontal fissures, unexpectedly lurking outside the main cleavage. So when I reached the first belay ledge I was still carrying my cam 5 and 6! The side walls of this first pitch appear blank on first acquaintance, but closer inspection reveals smears and slopers, and, if time and stamina permit, the cunning climber can make upward progress to surmount a bulge. I also remember performing at least one chicken wing! cursory glances suggest the slick surfaces will deny purchase, but the rubber soles stick fast with decisive bridging and laybacking, pushing and pulling. The climbing is so absorbing and enjoyable that I lost track of time and didn't want it to end, but simultaneously was relieved to heave onto the small but perfectly formed stance, still accompanied by my mechanical ballast. This flat foot-ledge houses a two metre high spike, which provides an anchor and accommodation for several families of lizards. There are now 60 more metres of dance to indulge in to reach the top.

Tizgut was originally done in 3 pitches, but my partner (Tony Madden) ran 2 and 3 together to make one mighty extravaganza, necessitating good rope skills and involving all styles of climbing where a standard 'Morocco' rack will suffice. An overhang to leave the belay, then a delicate sequence to gain the upper crack which ploughs on up through more bulges, on exquisite rock throughout. One hundred metres of pure joy to reach perfect nut-belays on the rope stretch. The scramble descent down parched, rocky cactus slopes completes the experience.

Both *Cenotaph* and *Tizgut* are graded the same – E1, or are they E2? Some say *Tizgut* is E1 if you've got huge cams. Debatable for eternity probably! Either way, the quality is of the highest order, as is the purity of line and I would bet my Camelot 6 that Joe didn't have one on his rack back in 1993 on the first ascent. How would he have felt when gearing up below that soaring, beckoning crack about to embark on its maiden voyage? It is impressive to think that the first ascent of *Cenotaph* and *Tizgut* were 40 years apart as well as thousands of miles from each other. However, both routes are now established classics just 30 minutes from the car. The similarity of approach ends there. The Cromlech is a short sharp shock up rain-lashed, runnelled scree and, in contrast, *Tizgut* Gorge has a gently undulating approach over ancient, decaying terraces, stitched together with scattered and scorched argan trees, starting from, and enjoying, an elevated parking spot in the village of the same name.



Opposite: The East Wall of Tizgut Gorge with Tizgut Crack centre left. Right: Tony Madden on Tizgut Crack.



A Desert Playground

Namibia is relatively unknown in the UK as a climbing destination. Adele Long recounts a visit she and her friends made to Spitzkoppe, a mountain region in the Namib desert.



Spitzkoppe, Namibia... think of a giant lava lamp, globules suspended as huge granite eggs; some melded together to form mountains, others rendered apart to reveal vertical walls like mini Half Domes, all worn and textured by the wind and searing desert heat. Golden during the day, deep red at sunset. All in all, the most dramatic scenery. A day's drive from Windhoek, the capital of Namibia, Spitzkoppe provides the enthusiastic rock climber with a multitude of possibilities and problems to challenge even the best.

Our trip to Namibia in June 2023 was always meant to be a mixture of climbing and sightseeing, and in 4-wheel drive Toyota Hilux vehicles we took in the sand dunes of Sossusvlei and Deadvlei, the Skeleton Coast and Etosha National Park as well as Spitzkoppe. All of them were well worth a visit.

Ten of us, under the paternal wing of Richard Nadin, spent seven days at Spitzkoppe. A note about the camping and the park itself; there is a main entrance where you pay for entry and camping, here there are showers (free), water and a bar/restaurant. (We drank the water straight from the tap the whole time we were in Namibia and had no digestive issues). The camping areas are well spaced and each one has a drop toilet and barbecue area, making them feel very private and secluded. We chose to stay at the same site all week, which meant the walks to the climbs could be quite long and the walk to the entrance was approximately 3km, but felt much longer. The whole area is fenced in and, apart from the Spitzkoppe Lodge (Dinner Bed and Breakfast £180 pppn; camping was only £5.00 pppn). The area is now owned by the community. The land is of spiritual and cultural significance to the San Bushmen and evidence of their society and culture can be found in the cave paintings which were used to direct the nomadic tribes to the nearest water.

We were woken each morning by the starlings, and yellow-billed hornbills were regular visitors.

One evening we were visited by a genet (wild cat), drawn by the smells of the barbeque. We didn't see any snakes, scorpions or other less welcome fauna. The vegetation can be spiky but generally less abundant than in Morocco for example.

Even in June, the cool, dry season, the temperatures were in the high twenties to low thirties centigrade in the middle of the day, making the walks and scrambles to climbs quite arduous. On day one, armed with an old, and dare I say it, somewhat rudimentary guidebook, we attempted to scope the area and plan our climbing for the week. The granite can be quite smooth and worn or very crystalline and crumbly on the surface, but is mostly good with excellent friction. This is handy as there are frequently no holds.

A good, sensible place to start would have been the Boulder Area, which also happened to be close to our Secret A campsite. However, we (Gill Radcliffe, Derek Buckle, Steve Humphries and I) didn't start at Boulder A. Instead we walked 3km to Bushman's Paradise and round to the base of Pontok 4, the furthest most peak from where we were camped, to try our hand at *Alte Sau* – grade 15 (HS - VS) with a three star rating. Once at the base of the rock, we were faced with 200-300m of grade 1 scrambling from the south to the north side of the Pontoks and up to the start of the route. (Note: It is much easier and quicker to go through the gap in the gate to the Lodge if climbing on the north side, but we didn't know that then). By the time we found *Alte Sau* it was getting late and was extremely hot. The route looked good, but the described descent was overgrown with trees and we were unsure of finding a place to abseil. We abandoned any attempt to climb and returned to camp defeated. Still, we had gained some local knowledge.

Acclimatising to the heat, finding our way around, interpreting the guidebook and understanding the grades became the order of the week. Eager to get a

Opposite:
Spitzkoppe
Richard Nadin

Right: Gill Radcliffe on *Bonsai* at Dinosaur Rock.
 Below right: Derek Buckle and Steve Humphries on *Sudweg*,
 Adele Long



climb in, the following day Gill and I climbed *Com-miphra* (grade 17, four stars) on the Klipdachswand. This was a three-pitch sport route with only a very few holds but relatively kindly spaced bolts. With that under our belt we went to Honeymoon Rock to find *Sudwestriss*, a trad route at grade 15, two stars. We spent a good hour walking around to establish which rock was indeed Honeymoon Rock, then more time scrambling around to find the start of the climb. Eventually we found several possible starts but couldn't see the bolts of the adjacent sport routes that were described in the guide and which would give us a lower off after the climb. Reluctantly we abandoned yet again, although Gill went back later and did the route with Roy Harris – the bolts were there, we just couldn't see them.

Determined to have a day of climbing we then did the sensible thing and went to Boulder Valley.

This area comprises a series of large boulders (surprise, surprise) rising to a height of around 20m and providing some good sport routes which give a feel of the grades and the type of climbing one is likely to find in Spitzkoppe. We had a fun day at Lion Rock on *Cub*, (grade 15, three stars) and top-roped *Mane*, (grade 21, four stars), going on to do *La de Tots*, (grade 19, two stars) at Dinosaur Rock and then *Jumbo*, (grade 16, one star) and *Tusker* (grade 18, one star) at Elephant Rock. All were single pitch routes and mostly, thankfully, in the shade.

Now with a few routes under our belts, we set out for the Felsenteich to do *Sudweg*, a five-pitch, two star, grade 14, trad route. The challenge here was not the climbing but route finding. It felt very easy to climb into difficulty since route descriptions are minimal and can be ambiguous. We were constantly checking to make sure we could reverse the route. After a few blind alleys and deliberations, we negotiated our way up *Sudweg* and happily chalked up another success. As we were having our lunch at the base of the climb we noticed a rather splendid crack in the rock behind us. It wasn't in the guidebook but with one bolt and a lower off at about 25m I suggested Gill gave it a go. It was certainly harder than it looked, (possibly grade 19 / HVS 5b), and Gill made a magnificent effort



without the requisite large cams to protect the crack, while I grovelled and heaved myself to the top.

For some the Gross Spitzkoppe itself at a height of 1,728m was the main climbing objective. Several of us went to explore the route with a view to climbing the 'approach' to get some beta on doing a full ascent. The approach is 4-5 pitches at around grade 14, while the climbing proper is 5 pitches, apparently easier and less awkward than the approach, although graded harder (grade 16/17). From our campsite it was approximately a 1km walk followed by an hour of grade 1 - 2 scrambling. We dumped our sacks at the start of the approach, and geared up. After several pitches and three hours since we had started out, we called it a day. The descent took as long as the ascent and we had done less than half the climbing. We (Gill, Steve and myself) didn't return. However, showing more grit and determination, Richard Nadin and Roy Harris (the latter's second attempt) planned their assault carefully. By leaving their sacks at the base of the approach the previous day and setting off at 5am they successfully made the summit and back in around 12 hours. Arriving at the approach relatively fresh and still in the cool of the day seemed to be the key to success.

An ascent of the spectacular route *Watersports* (grade 20) was attempted by Nigel Bassam and Naomi Bourne. Apparently the usually calm,

confident and composed Nigel could be heard swearing several kilometres away, which probably says it all. Pitch 3 was left unclimbed.

In summary, the landscape at Spitzkoppe is stunning and the rock is generally excellent. There is limited climbing in the lower grades and even these require a good head and a spirit of adventure. The bolts can be very spaced on easier climbs and it is prudent to take some tat for an emergency lower off on the trad routes. The heat definitely impacted on energy levels and careful choice of aspect was important. Preferably take someone with you who has been before or hire a guide for a day. That said the new guidebook might offer more detailed descriptions and topos to the popular routes, making it all a whole lot easier. Namibia is definitely worth a visit.



Top left: Richard Nadin on the Summit of Grosse Spitzkoppe.
 Roy Harris
 Left: Adele Long on *Mane* at Lion Rock.
 Gill Radcliffe

Autumn in Australia or ich sterbe tausend Tode

In this article Tony Pearson describes a trip to Australia and adventurous ascents at a variety of venues; some well known and one or two that will be new to most readers.

Our climbing trip plans for Australia were not going entirely to plan. The start to the trip had been inauspicious, as all our hold luggage had been left in Dubai and we had had to wait two days for that to arrive. Then the weather had failed us: a forecast of rain for the Sydney and Blue Mountains area for at least several days. We had therefore decided to head to an area I had always been trying to avoid but which my wife Ulla was very keen to visit, namely Booroomba Rocks in the Namudgi National Park near Canberra, which is several hours drive south of Blackheath in the Blue Mountains. Our old climbing friend John, from Germany, who was going to meet up with his wife a couple of weeks later, would be climbing with us.

So it was that a day later we were walking up to Booroomba Rocks and in the absence of any guidebook to the area we had a print-out of a file with information on climbing on the Northern Slabs. From the top of the rocks we eventually located a wide gully which took us down to the bottom. As we walked and scrambled along towards the base of the slabs, I spotted a route that I recognised from Simon Carter's excellent coffee table book *Climbing in Australia*: namely *Integral Crack*. If we could get started on that then it would save me from the slabs, so we stopped at its base and I gave it a go. But the start to the route was rather slabby, involving moves up on small granite holds and friction, and I was soon backing off realising that I needed to get used to the rock a little before tackling a grade 20 pitch on granite. So, we carried on round to the base of the Northern Slabs which looked every bit as uninviting as I had imagined them to be, and possibly a bit more so, as even the three-star routes looked as if they had not seen any climbing for a good many years.

At that moment we heard some other people approaching. Given the general state of the rock, it seemed highly unlikely that anybody else would be

climbing here, but sure enough two climbers, one of whom was equipped with a machete, emerged from the scrub. And with the quicker powers of observation of people more than 20 years younger than Ulla and I, they realised instantly that we had all met the previous year at the rather remote area of Moonarie in South Australia. Damian and his partner Sarah lived in Canberra, and Damian was one of the main activists at Booroomba. They explained that they were doing a bit of clean-up work at the crag and that Damian was going to take a week off work in order to concentrate on the new guidebook that he was involved in writing. They offered to show us some other areas of the crag which had rather better routes than the ones we had been gingerly eyeing up.

Soon we were looking at some cleaner-looking rock, though rather too slab-like and holdless for my liking and clearly not overly-protectable. However, the rain, which had been threatening for a while, and which seemed to be following us on our trip, had caught up with us. An hour later we were heading back to the campsite soaked to the skin. Two days later though, after some welcome hospitality in Canberra from Damian and Sarah and

The essence of Australia: Sandstone escarpment in the Blue Mountains in good weather.
📷 Tony Pearson



Right: Ulla on the thin slab pitch and, below: John seconding the slab pitch on *Closer In*.
 Tony Pearson



after a good day's climbing at a steep sandstone crag called Red Rocks, courtesy of Damian, we found ourselves back again at Booroomba, looking up at some steep walls and slabs. Damian and Sarah had pointed out a route to us called *Closer In*, which we seemed to recall was graded 19, and the main slab pitch of which Ulla was very keen to lead.

As the first pitch started up a crack I was handed the gear. I managed to gain entry to the crack from the side as the overhanging base looked highly uninviting. The crack continued then more easily up to the top of a small pillar where there was a bolt on the steep wall above. The starting move was desperate, with a reasonable hold just out of reach, and eventually I had recourse to pulling on the bolt to reach the hold to get established on the wall above. This was followed by a steep slab/wall with some bolts and nice climbing on small flakes.

From the last bolt it was not clear where I would get the next protection and I eventually placed a number one RP. Luckily a few metres further on I managed to get two small nuts and a small cam: not inspiringly good gear but preferable to the RP. Several metres higher up I could see the bolts on the stance, but in between there was a friction slab. After a few deep breaths I smeared my way up and was relieved to arrive on the belay. Or rather, I was relieved for the first few minutes until I noticed that I was in the middle of a very busy ant trail. For the rest of the time on the belay I had to put up with being crawled over by numerous ants. Additionally, I was subjected to a horse fly attack until I managed to swat the offending insect and have the satisfaction of seeing it temporarily become the main attention of the ants.

An hour later both John and Ulla were on the belay and Ulla was keen to vacate it with all possible haste to escape the ants. The pitch was a long one and the main protection consisted of bolts, which to me looked well spaced. Supposedly the route had been named *Closer In* because the distance between the bolts was not so great, but I was not very convinced by that explanation. Luckily it was not me on the sharp end, as thin slab climbing with spaced bolts was definitely not something that I relished. Fortunately, Ulla was made of sterner stuff, or perhaps had not read the warning in the old guidebook print-out, that falling off a route is not at all recommended as the granite would almost certainly shred you. Anyway, Ulla climbed the pitch with considerable confidence and much finesse, and after a relatively short time she was on the next belay. I climbed next and knew instantly that I would not have been happy leading. It was necessary to smear between sections where the main holds were tiny crystal flakes and the run-outs were considerable – up to about 7 metres between bolts. I just about managed to get up the pitch without falling off. We

both then had the pleasure of watching our friend John coming up the pitch. To our delight at one point he shouted “Ich wurde tausend tode sterben”, the essence of which indicated that he would have died of fear if he had been leading it – a feeling I could easily empathise with.

From the top of the slab pitch there was supposed to be another hard pitch, but the weather was not looking promising, so John led what was effectively an escape pitch – more than 60 metres, but not too difficult. Soon after getting to the top the rain did indeed start and we had another thorough soaking.

A week later after a few days in the Blue Mountains climbing with John, the weather turned rainy again. He was to go and pick up his wife Marianna from the airport in Sydney and we decided to head off again in a southerly direction in the hope that the weather there would be better. On route we travelled via Canberra, which of course was not very far from Booroomba Rocks, so we just happened to end up going there again. Unfortunately, the weather still looked unsettled, but we headed up to the rocks and clambered down the gully to the base of Integral Crack. This time, having done a reasonable amount of climbing in the meantime and having had an initiation into the granite climbing there from the previous visit, we were better prepared for the route. The start was on the thin side, but the friction felt better than the time before. Above, the wall climbing was still thin but there was the odd finger jam. It started to rain as I was about half-way up, but luckily the rain eased off and I was able to finish off the pitch – brilliant, sustained and interesting climbing. Ulla quickly seconded it, and just as she reached the top it began to rain in earnest. We scuttled back down to the base and tried to shelter from the rain under an overhang near the bottom of the climb. Soon there was a waterfall cascading past us. Later the rain did stop, and we headed back to the campsite,



Integral Crack at Booroomba.
 Tony Pearson

glad to have climbed such a brilliant route despite the inclement weather, and with that I felt that I had done enough climbing at Baroomba and was happy to head a bit further south in the direction of the sandstone crags of Arapiles, the Grampians and Moonarie.

However, before we could head to some of my favourite crags, there was Mt. Buffalo! We had visited it a long time before, back in 1984, on our first climbing trip to Australia, but we had not climbed there then, only taken a brief look. Once again Ulla was particularly keen to climb there, as there were granite slabs (as well as plenty of cracks and steep walls). The camping situation there was not ideal as the pricing in the National Park close to the crags charged \$48 dollars per night and seemed to be based on the assumption that people would be staying there in groups. You had to pay for a

site big enough for several tents, even if you only had one tiny tent. We decided to opt for a cheaper commercial campsite option at Porepunkah down in the valley and then to drive up.

Our introduction to climbing there proved to be interesting. We opted to do a grade 18 climb called *The Initiation*, but we had difficulties right from the start. The description of how to get to it was somewhat vague and it took us quite a time to find the top of the cliff. We found what we thought was the abseil point and set off down the crag only to find that we were at the wrong end of the cliff, and that the bottom of the crag consisted of a huge field of massive, jumbled boulders with no easy way through or across them. To get to the other end of the crag involved crossing some extremely awkward terrain including an abseil off one of the boulders and we had to rope up twice, but we did

eventually make it to the base of the climb. Luckily the route proved to be worthwhile. The first pitch, which was the crux pitch was up a corner/flake, was quite tricky with awkward finger jams. Pitch 2 was straightforward, while pitch 3 involved a thin traverse and some carrot bolts for protection, feeling distinctly hard for the given grade of 15. The last part of the climb was another grade 15, a splitter crack, which Ulla led: not her favourite style of climbing, but she managed it without any problems. It took us three hours to climb the route, but we had needed rather longer than that to get to the bottom of the climb in order to begin it. Of course, the first day climbing at new crags can be challenging, but that is all part of the what makes trad climbing so memorable.

Eventually we did get to climb again in the Grampians and at Mt. Arapiles. We had an exciting time on *Hard Times* at Mt Rosea in the Grampians and should perhaps have taken note of what the guidebook, amusingly, had to say about the route: “Many have fallen on hard times, probably because they got lost on the climb”. We didn’t fall but we certainly got lost, had a pretty hard time and only just made it back to the car park before it was pitch dark. We should have known better! We did quite a few routes at the ’Piles and a few more in the Grampians and we managed a couple of good 21s. Towards the end of our stay in the Arapiles area I thought I should attend to some unfinished business from our first visit to Arapiles in 1984. Whether I would be up to it was another matter altogether. The route was *Orestes*, a rather harder proposition, graded 24 in one guidebook and 23 in the other, but certainly not straightforward. The route takes a stunning line up a distinct corner in a steep wall and then negotiates a roof at the top, traversing out right to reach a lower-off. It is a trad route with plenty of gear on it if you can hang around to place it. I had wanted to climb the route from the first



Left: *Orestes*
Mt Arapiles and below
left: the roof traverse
at the top.
Tony Pearson

time I set eyes on it in 1984 but as it was hard, I had put it off until just before we were due to leave Arapiles. I had managed to climb the groove in good style but unfortunately had been forced to take a rest on the top traverse, something that I had not forgotten.

I seemed to remember that I had not had too many problems with the initial groove, but either the climb had changed, or I had changed, or my memory was playing tricks. Now the start looked desperately thin. There was a poor finger lock in the back of the groove and some awkward to use footholds relying on friction and good technique. After several attempts I decided that it was simply too hard, and I was about to give up. However, I made one final attempt and somehow managed to get up to the next finger holds. A desperate series of moves eventually led to a piton which I managed to

clip, but I didn’t have enough strength left to pull past it to some good footholds, so I had to hang. As usual after a hang it is difficult to regain momentum and I had to take another couple of rests before reaching the roof. At the roof I managed to place a cam and then made it across the route to the lower off. I couldn’t believe that I had climbed the groove so easily the first time! John had intended to second the pitch to clean it, but after seeing my struggles he thought better of it and offered to treat us all to coffee and cake in the café in Natimuk if I cleaned it myself. So, I then had to do the climb again to retrieve the gear. This time I somehow managed to make it as far as the roof before falling off, but then had quite a problem getting back on and making it to the lower off. So, my unfinished business was still unfinished, but it seemed unlikely, short of reincarnation, that I would be able to sort that.

Ulla on the top pitch
of *The Initiation* at
Mt Buffalo.
Tony Pearson





High point on
Kachoong Mt Arapiles.
📷 Tony Pearson

The following day, there was another route that required my attention, but I was feeling a bit burnt out from the previous day's efforts. However, since it was John's last day at Arapiles and he particularly wanted to climb *Kachoong*, one of the most well-known routes at Arapiles, I needed to get on the climb. It was a route that I had not climbed on my first visit to Arapiles, although I had climbed *A Taste of Honey* next to it which is supposed to be harder. Indeed, my second on the route had fallen off it and taken a monumental swing. *Kachoong*, graded 21, was a similar proposition involving a rather impressive roof.

After a while trying to locate the route, which we were doing from the top of the crag, where you

cannot see the imposing line, we finally found the starting point. The route was quite powerful right from the start with some awkward climbing to get up to the prominent and very intimidating-looking roof. I placed a couple cams in the roof and set off, but soon scuttled back. Finally, I went most of the way across the route but bottled out at the very end. I just didn't have the necessary push to finish it. John too had a go at the roof but was also unable to do it. So, we ended up in the café eating the promised cake. It was good, but I felt rather disappointed about that part of our trip. It did, however, mean one thing, and that was that we would need to return to Australia once again. *Kachoong* needed doing, even if *Orestes* was perhaps too hard.

Rébuffat-Bacquet

Aiguille du Midi

still warm to the touch
never let finally cool –
orogeny's fire

bright granite aiguille
burning through millennia
of Chamonix sun

our needle of noon
rushing from the glacier
emptying the air

in high summer Alps:
struggling from boots to rock shoes
stork-like on the snow

canicular heat
irradiates brain and bone
exalts rock and sky

so beauty dazzles
crystalline, imperious
orange and cobalt

but granting passage
to suitors from the snowline
treading now softly

through their doubts and dreams:
up sinuous cracks and flakes
layback, bridge and jam:
hours merge, shadows shift
ticking round the Vallée Blanche –
but at last we bask

complete at the top:
the Alps arranged for our gaze
horizons unfurled

briefly eternal...
and now the long looming abs
to pick up our gear

and catch a late 'phrique:
mist phantoms gather and dance
along the last ridge –

clumsy with fatigue
back to the sun decks and shops
threading the summit

still in harnesses
clanking with ill-sorted gear
and dying for beer

long holiday queues
and two hours' wait for the 'phrique –
but mountain sense tells
at the info desk,
flashing unpacked cams to win
the magic tickets

alpinists only
and straight to the next car down:
lift attendant smiles,

touches hand to brow –
mock salute or shield against
the sun from our eyes

Andy Clarke

Opposite:
The upper reaches of
the Peuterey Ridge.
📷 Pero Kalugeroevich



A Dream Too Far

In this piece John reflects on trip to the Chamonix made early in his climbing career. He looks back on a trip with both humour and sadness.

By John Lumb

Nineteen sixty-eight feels so long ago now, looking back to when two callow teenagers urged a smoking mini into Chamonix. My next-door neighbour was a mechanic and had told me he would buy me a pint if this car made it to Wakefield, let alone France. Over seven hundred miles later, I reckoned that he owed me a few gallons! Mind you, it was a close-run thing and getting the car back home was going to be a problem for the future.

Since leaving Geneva, we had increasingly started to realise how bloody big Mont Blanc was, as it gradually reared up before our eyes. I kept wondering what was going through my mind. We were two kids with big ideas and no brains. Maybe I wouldn't have to worry about getting the car home after all!

As we rattled into the squalor of the Biolay Campsite, our spirits rose as we spotted the Burgess twins and Big Bob. It was almost a Phoenix Club Huddersfield meet, home from home. Our spirits sank somewhat as we were press-ganged into the slog up to Montenvers. "You'll enjoy it you! It'll get you fit!"

After a twenty-four hour drive, the walk up felt like a triple slog up Scafell, only steeper. I don't know what anyone else's first impression of the Alps were, but for me it was the sight of The Dru. This

golden Granite Citadel took my breath away and made me ponder. What was alarming was that it was on Barry's list, though looking at him I suspect that he was now revising it!

Odd now to think that three weeks later we would have been on The Dru as a foursome with Doug Scott and Dave Nichol if the weather had not broken badly. That first night in the tent I ended up puking for England, probably due to exhaustion, what with the long drive and the slog up the hill – or maybe it was seeing The Dru!

Nineteen sixty-eight was a bad season in the Alps, but in between storms we managed to get up the Albert with only a minor epic and we had a delightful trip up the beautiful *Rebuffat Route* on the Midi, with azure sky and warm, golden granite. However, the weather then closed in, so Bill Hepplewhite and myself took to the Guides Crag down the valley to try and show the French how to climb!

At the foot of a fine crack running through two overhangs and obviously used for pegging practice, stood this stunning French girl Barry and I had previously met on the Midi. "Watch this love!" I said, as the moves went free and easy for me, until a slippery hand-jam pulled and was followed by a rapid thirty-footer that found me upside down

staring into her face. Thus were my hoped-for sleeping arrangements scuppered!

Still there was always the Bar Nash, which was where we spent the next two weeks while the mountains hid in the clag. To be honest, it was OK. The craic on the polythene campsite was special. There was amazing company to be had; the good, the great and the downright suspicious. Among them were two Czech lads, Peter Janes and Victor Micouch, diamond blokes with barely a Franc between them. They would often come over to our tent, and in some incomprehensible language we found a common bond.

On the night of August 20th Russian and other Warsaw Pact countries rolled their tanks into Czechoslovakia to crack down on reformist trends in Prague. Dubcek, the Czech leader, had pushed too far, too soon.

It is hard now looking back over fifty years, to realise how naive we were about politics, and the devastation events had caused for our new-found friends. Our short lives (I was only eighteen at the time) had been centered around climbing and its seeming innocence. We tried our best to console them, without a lot of understanding of the magnitude of their plight. That night we all drank long into the early hours, knowing that for them the future would never be the same again.

It was now obvious that not only had the good weather run its course, but we had also run out of money and drunken bullshit. It was time to return home and I was facing the sack from my job, not that I cared much. The night before we left, our two Czech friends came over for a last drink.

"Please could we borrow your stove? We must do one last climb and the weather is improving. We will post it back when we return home."

We replied; "Don't worry about it, we don't want it back. Just make sure you come back safely."

For Barry and me it was a long slow journey home. The car kept overheating, but it was going to make it, so I could shove it in the face of Eric the mechanic. The following morning I walked nervously into work and nobody said a word, not a squeak. Perhaps I was indispensable after all?

Twelve months later climbers found two bodies on the *Peuterey Ridge* at the top of the Eckpfeiler. Had they been avalanched or just frozen to death?

Who knows, but for three weeks they had been our friends, good guys who, despite their own sorrow, had a dream. More than fifty years on, I often think of Peter and Victor and the lives they might have had.

The Dru



In the shadow of Monte Viso: Rifugio Giacoletti

by David Wynne-Jones



You wouldn't believe that such a climbing gem would be virtually unknown in the UK, but then again the whole area seems to have dropped off the UK radar since sometime not long after William Matthews made the first ascent of Monte Viso in 1861. I was introduced to it when representing the Alpine Club at the 150th anniversary celebrations of that first ascent and was immediately impressed. The local people were friendly and hospitable with a strong attachment to local traditions of Occitan music and dancing (very Celtic). Whole families walked up to celebrate mass on the satellite summit, Viso Mozzo, as part of the celebrations and there were many quiet backwaters that reminded me of the Alps 30 years ago. We made a flying visit to the Giacoletti hut to climb with our hosts from CAI Saluzzo section and immediately realised this was an ideal place for mountain rock routes, so that a return visit was inevitable.

A long ridge about 3,000m high stretches north from Monte Viso to Monte Granero and the rifugio nestles under Punta Udine, at 2,741m on the east flank. It's just a two hour walk from the roadhead at Pian del Re where there is another rifugio if you arrive too late to walk up on the same day. The Rifugio Giacoletti is run by Andrea Sorbino and his wife Laura, with their children often in residence creating a welcoming family atmosphere. Andrea and his aides have bolted the climbs in the

economical Italian tradition, including double bolt belays, and you could get away with a week or two climbing from the hut with no more than a dozen quick draws although nervous leaders could make use of a clip of rocks and a few friends (not that there's any guarantee that you'll find placements in what tends to be a compact gabbro.) His advice on the routes is generous and invaluable.

The nearest climbs begin just five minutes-walk from the hut, although you'll have to walk for ten minutes to access those on the North-East face of Udine. That's where I first encountered *Tempi Moderni* a 300m D+ modern classic with a short, fierce 6a crack to start. The climbing continues at no more than 5c via steep slabs, delicate steps and cracks to finish within a short scramble of the 3,027m summit. The descent, as with most of the climbs on Puntas Udine and Venezia, is by the Col de Porco, an easy via ferrata, taking 30 minutes from the top. Just to the right of *Tempi Moderni*, *Alice 120-80* offers an easier alternative start to *TM* before traversing well right onto a parallel 320m D+ line at the slightly easier grade of 5b. Both routes are crossed by an easy ledge at the top of pitch 6 leading directly to the pass on the right, a handy escape route if the weather turns nasty, although it is possible to rap the routes if they aren't busy. It's always worth making an early start as the mist can roll in from the plains in the afternoon.

Above: Monte Viso from near the hut.

Opposite: Approaching the Rifugio Giacoletti.

David Wynne-Jones

On the way back to the hut you'll pass the foot of a big scree-filled couloir and I risked the unstable treadmill and possibility of rockfall to establish that the belay for *Dièdre Raffi-Rattazini* is located on a rocky spine in the middle of the couloir. It's a stunning open-book corner line that soars up to join *Tempi Moderni* at the easy ledge but I couldn't tempt anyone else up the screes to climb it. Access is probably easier earlier in the year when the couloir is snowy: it's possible to rap back down the route.

The approach to *Cresta Est*, is given as three minutes 35 seconds but you'd have to be racing another party for this classic 400m AD+ route that follows the ridge immediately above the hut at no more than 4c. Chimney cracks lead to fine slabs on the flank of the ridge before an awkward crack corner takes you onto the crest. There things get easier and there's a scrappy link before a superb pitch follows the narrow crest on great rock, and in amazing positions for the grade, up to the summit.



Ingrid Crossland
on *Cresta Est*
© David Wynne-Jones

A traverse track from the hut leads under the southeast face to a collection of single pitch climbs that offer quick-drying options for short days. Some longer, harder routes break through above and *Risiko* offers seven pitches up an obvious crack system to intersect with *Cresta Est*. From there you can either continue up that route or traverse left across the 'Traverse of the Angels' to finish up *Vista per il Peru* which is more in keeping with *Risiko*'s TD-, 6a grade. We opted to rap back down as the belays are well equipped with ring bolts. Particularly memorable was the crux off-width: the translation engine's first attempt rendered the guidebook description as "get into a fireplace and stop the plane landing!" Most of the time route-finding is just a question of following the bolts, which are colour-coded if routes intersect. This is invaluable on such big faces where the routes follow the best rock and most interesting climbing rather than just lines of weakness that may be unpleasantly eroded.

It's 20-30 minutes' walk to the start of the routes on Punta Venezia with *Via dei Torioni* rising above a snowfield that this year had melted back to ice. This required a borrowed ice axe to cross safely before starting the 350m 11 pitch route that goes at D+ 5b/c although there is one strenuous move of 6a, (fortunately protected well enough to slip past with a quick tug on the gear if necessary.) A big, overhung chimney provides some amazing bridging situations en route to the easy terrace, just a short scramble from the 3,096m summit. There is an emergency bivouac shelter that can come in handy in a sudden afternoon storm and the descent is another walk-off to the Col de Porco.

The right-hand skyline of P. Venezia is the line of *Cresta Perotti*, a 400m PD 3c, with *Dimensione Quarto* tracing a parallel line on a rising traverse across the face to the left, searching out good pitches at AD+ 5a/4c. The retro-bolted line of *Erika* is left again starting at a small cairn and goes at 6a+ with

strenuous crack climbing and some delicate reaches.

Punta Roma lies to the south of the Rifugio and just 1½ hours' walk over the pass into France, the west face offers two good 300m routes; *Trois Rivières* AD+ 4c and *Ti' Punch* TD- 6a. These weave their way up a sea of slabs tackling steep, sometimes strenuous, cracked steps until finally reaching the Madonna on the airy 3,075m summit. A 40-minute scramble and walk, following red paint marks from the Madonna, brings you back to the hut.

A short descent to the north of the Rifugio Giacoletti puts you on the Sentiero del Postino, a 'postman's traverse' to join the historic trade route over the Colle delle Traversette which is reputed to be the route taken by Hannibal and his elephants to attack Rome. An interesting diversion leads to the Buco di Viso, the first tunnel of the Alps, constructed in 1482 so that trade could continue when the pass was blocked with snow. Head torches are vital and the French entrance has fallen in so there is a bit of a scramble to get out that side. Back on the Italian side there is the fine *Mai dire Block* starting from the couloir to the right. This offers five pitches at D+ 5c although the top pitch is quite loose so that it's acceptable to rap back down from the 4th belay.

A little further to the North lies the South-East face of Monte Granero 3,171m. To the left *Lo per Te*, 250m TD- 6a, climbs to the South-West ridge then more easily on to the summit whilst *Via Michelin-Masoero*, 250m TD- 5c, takes the centre of the face more or less directly to the summit. The latter route crosses the *Via Normale* (incorrectly marked on some topos) before the longest pitch takes a superb steep wall with sustained technical moves and spaced bolts. The descent is down a couloir to the French side before crossing the ridge to the left and following paint marks and bolts across the SE face to Col Luisas.

All these peaks including Punta Gastaldi (3,214m) have scrambling routes to their summits providing

non-technical ascents. Also less technical are two classic alpine rock ridges: *Cresta del Colonello* PD 3c from Passo Giacoletti to the summit of Punta Roma and *Traversata Gagliardone* AD 5a from the summit of Punta Roma to the Colle del Porco. They are mostly scrambly traversing with short sharp pitches although the exposure makes them feel quite serious and the latter worthy of the AD grade. I recall one long bridging move over a chasm in a notch that felt quite poky but it could probably have been rapped.

Just two hours walk to the Rifugio Quintino Sella, and an ascent of Monte Viso (3,841m) itself can be attempted, either by the *Via Normale*, PD or *East Ridge*, AD, with views of the Mediterranean and the Matterhorn possible from its summit. The hut-to-hut circuit of Monte Viso, known locally as the Giro, offers yet another option for a 'mixed-ability' party, so that a week or two based at the Rifugio Giacoletti would provide plenty to go at. Finally the medieval city of Saluzzo that dominates the Po valley is well worth a visit for those sated with the mountains or to round off a visit with a bit of luxury as we did. The food is superb!

USEFUL INFORMATION

Travel: Flights to Turin (BA) or Cuneo (Ryanair).

Train and bus transfer to Pian del Rei at the head of the Po valley, or arrange a minibus from Saluzzo for a group.

Information on the Rifugio Giacoletti and its climbing:

Guidebook: (French) *Escalade et Alpinisme en Queyras – Pays du Viso*. S Pusnel & G. Vallot ISBN: 2-9526818-0-5

Maps: IGN 3637 OT Mont Viso 1:50,000
IGC Carta dei Sentieri e dei rifugi 1:50,000 no.6 Monviso

IGC Carta dei Sentieri e dei rifugi 1:25,000 no.106 Monviso, Sampeyre, Bobbio Pellice.

Cold Climbing in Kyrgyzstan

Exploring the 'Mountains of Heaven' in the depths of winter.

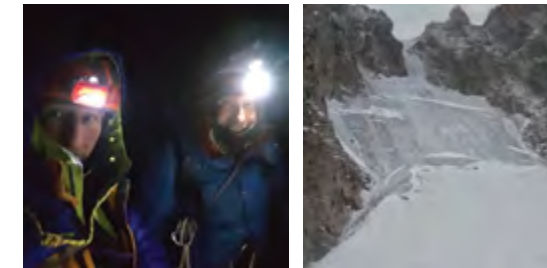
by Lewis Preston



It is 03.30hrs on the morning of 9th January 2019, the date from which other days will be counted for the next six months or more.

Russian Andrey Golovachev, Scot Iain Easingwood and I are silently 'layering up' in the dark and confined space of a tiny tin off-shoot of the Ratsek Hut, shared with another dozen sleeping climbers and alpinists. Our basic refuge, situated at 3,300m, provides protection from the elements. It lies not in the European Alps, but in the Kyrgyz Alatau Range at the northwest extreme of Central Tian Shan, itself forming the North West end of the Greater Himalayan Chain.

Pulling the hut door closed, we step out into the night, shoulder rucksacks, and with head torches penetrating the black, begin our approach up the moraine ridges and confusing snowfield dips to find the place to breach the defences of the Uchitel Glacier. Unlike other night skies we're experiencing here, when billions of densely-packed star worlds have silhouetted tons of rock and ice, tonight we can only guess at the gradient of the massive curving ridge system connecting Semenova (4,895m) to the crenellated Pik Korona (4,860m).



Opposite: Iain Easingwood and myself at 4,000 metres.
Above: At the ready. Right: The ice fall of Akimova.
📷 Andrey Golovachev

Nine weeks later

Consciousness: the moment of awareness of one's continued being. We all go through it every morning, usually refreshed and rejuvenated after the blessing of a good night's sleep. Yet, for some reason, in the unfamiliar interior of a recovery suite adjacent to the pristine and sterile environment of a hospital operating theatre, the consciousness regained after a general anaesthetic has an even sweeter taste.

This was my second operation under general anaesthetic (GA) in Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary in two weeks. I felt none of the delirium or cognitive dysfunction sometimes associated with 'waking up' from the effects of the drugs that had rendered me 'asleep' earlier in the day. Over the past few weeks, January, February and now much of March, I had developed a sense of respect and awe at the skills and caring demonstrated by the clinical team in whom I had placed my faith in making a full recovery from the frostbite in my left foot.

Nine weeks after the incident that caused the injury, this operation had involved removing an area of skin from my left calf and stitching it over a porcine dermis implant graft that formed the soft tissue reconstruction of the outer side and small toe of my left foot two weeks previously. The advantages of the 'Pelnac Dermal Substitute', my surgeon explained, were that it was many times thicker than the 'potato peeled' human skin, and would help fill in the depression left by the removal of dead tissue, as well as act as a matrix to stimulate granulation and aid regeneration of blood vessels. Additionally I discovered the artificial (first) grafting had proven to be robust, important if the foot was going to be stuffed back into a boot in the future, stable, infection-resistant, prevents evaporation loss, and, important for our cash-starved yet wonderful NHS, affordable.

The intervening weeks from initial admission on return from Kyrgyzstan had involved treatments with manuka honey aided by lattice scalping of the hard ‘tortoise shell’ encasement of dead material, followed by debridement (removal of dead tissue) with application, over two weeks of two legions of 100 aseptically-produced living larvae of the green bottle fly, *Lucilia sericata*. Most importantly these larvae – aka ‘maggots’ – do not digest living tissue but achieve wound cleansing and reduce the chance of bacterial infection. For two weeks following the larvae treatment I was also fitted with an airtight dressing and integral tubing leading to a rechargeable suction pump and tank which sucked away at the mess day and night, emitting a pressure-equalizing ‘farting’ noise at seven-minute intervals. By this time I was released back into the community in a Red Cross wheelchair (Thank you Alison Jones!) and able to attend a play at the Live Theatre, discreetly muffling the embarrassing farting pump with a blanket!

More weeks not load-bearing nor wearing shoes were to follow, but how did this all come about?

In October 2018 Nick Smith, Meets Coordinator of the Alpine Club, contacted me with the proposed AC trips list for 2019 and asked if I would like to climb together. We had met previously on a joint Alpine Club / Climbers’ Club trip to the Anti-Atlas Mountains. Of all the proposed trips, the one that most appealed was first on the list: winter climbing in the Tian Shan. I accepted Nick’s offer, contacted Andrey, the meet coordinator ‘on the ground’, who on return from two weeks skiing in Siberia accepted my climbing CV, and sent me information and topos. Flights were booked for 2nd January and a training regime implemented. On 29th December I received a call and X-rays from Nick as he sat in A&E in Dumfries having badly injured his ankle while running; he would not be climbing for some time to come. And so on the 2nd I flew out alone, meeting other team members in Istanbul en route to Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan (during the Soviet era known as Frunze).

Kyrgyzstan is bordered by Tajikistan to the south, Uzbekistan to the west, vast Kazakhstan to the north, and to the east, Xinjiang Province of China. I had not been this far east since working in Papua New Guinea and Malaysia in the 1990s. Kyrgyzstan is just smaller in land area than the UK but 90% of the country is mountainous, with an average elevation of 2,750m. The main range is the Tian Shan, three-quarters of which is under permanent snow and glacier cover. The Pamirs, Hindu Kush and Karakoram lie to the south, and the eastern border with China culminates at Jengish Choqusu, also known as Pik Pobeda, 7,439m.

The ethnic majority are Kyrgyz (55%), the rest of the population comprising Russian Slavs, Uzbeks, ethnic Germans, Koreans, Tartars and Dungams (Chinese Muslims). A fascinating Central Asian history has been traditionally passed down through songs, poems and stories. The superhero of these poems is Manas. Heroic, warring histories continue

to fascinate, as recent Western-produced blockbuster series prove, but at twenty times the length of *The Odyssey*, it is a shame the national Kyrgyz Manas epic is not more widely known.

There was little time to explore Bishkek before reporting to ‘Ak Sei Travel’, the mountaineering agency which would facilitate our transfer to the Ala Archa National Park. Our small team, just six of us without Nick, board a coach with around thirty Russian and Kyrgyz climbers for the journey to the base at 2,200m where we ate and slept in a backpacker hostel. Next morning I was glad of the option to pay for assistance portering our loads for the 1,200m climb from the valley. Firstly through wooded slopes, dropping into cross-ravines and the moraines of the glacier, before tricky, exposed traversing and scrambling into the hidden upper valley system carved out by the retreating glacier.

The age range of our team quickly showed in the progress at altitude. Some members were in their 20s, some 30s and 40s, one in their 60s and one mid-seventies. I for one was pleased eventually to crest the lip of the upper corrie and find the

old stone refuge, followed by a supplementary aluminium-clad shelter that would be the shared accommodation for our adventure.

We are shown to a bench-style, double-bunked room of the Ratsek Hut, dump rucsacks and take in the barren environs outside. After an hour of recovery, Andrey leads us, with emptied rucsacks, over and down the lateral moraine to the glacier. Here we hack into the steel-hard ice with our axes, fill our rucsacks, and return to the hut, depositing the ice in a pile next to the kitchen annex. This will be melted as required by a team of Ak Sai cooks who will prepare Kyrgyz porridge, soups and stews for the combined climbing teams for the duration of our stay.

Meals are served in three sittings round a long table with benches, a twenty minute maximum turnaround, in a timber-clad hut with a hatch through which steam, bowls and flasks emanate from the cupboard-sized space. Around the walls, wood-cut framed engravings of Soviet-era expeditions of the past look down on the present day aspirants.

After our evening meal there is a pitch-black, clear sky vaulted above us with a myriad of distant galaxies beaming starlight directly upon us. At 3,300m it is intensely cold and after a last visit to the tin cubicle long-drop toilet balanced over the far side of the moraine, it’s time to wriggle into sleeping bags on the bottom bench.

For an acclimatization climb, Andrey, Derek and I head next morning up a steep scree slope onto a shoulder leading to a ridge with widening views as altitude is gained. Derek is suffering the cumulative effects of three Himalayan expeditions in the last 12 months and rests before returning to the hut. Andrey, less than half Derek’s age, is fit and, before long, we can see the full extent of the ridge leading to a snow-covered dome. Descending teams of climbers offer advice (in Russian) as to summit conditions, and we stash axes, spare flasks



Left: On the screes, acclimatisation day. © Andrey Golovachev

Steps to recovery. Clockwise from top: My frost bitten foot during the night. In Bishkek. Three days after my return to the UK. Six days after the second op. © Author's collection



and excess layers, and continue at speed into a snow trench forming a traversing ramp over a minor rock outlying top before the final dome of Uchitel (The Teacher) and a brilliant 360 degree prospect from the 4,527m summit. Andrey soon joins me and is able to point out surrounding peaks and great walls of ice we propose to attempt. A challenging spired ridge, reminiscent of the Chamonix Aiguilles, leads away towards the cumulating summits of the region. The hut is out of sight but below is the great chasm of the Uchitel Glacier. Across it rise is the combined ice and rock tower of 'Boks' Peak for which Iain and Tom made a 4am start for their 'acclimatisation' day.

I am brimming with well-being as we retrace the route to our gear and drop steeply back to the upper valley. I feel fit, with no altitude problems. I can manage the temperature, with constant movement, and my hired Ak-Sai outer boots in combination with my own inner boots are warm and comfortable. Back at the Ratsek Hut before dusk we share a meaty broth together with the hardy-looking men and women comprising the Russian-Kyrgyz teams, followed by tea and boiled sweets, and to bed before 10pm.

Our six-man team set off as one the next morning to trek up the giant and elevated lateral moraine known as The Crocodile. Relatively static compared with the creeping glacier hundreds of metres below, it is still unreliable terrain. I had looked up at it as we traversed below on the first evening to collect ice. Huge boulders ranging in size from fridge to truck hung, suspectly cemented into a matrix of mud and gravel, immediately above our heads as we scurried the gauntlet. Various tracks up The Crocodile involved precarious negotiation of the edge of this crumbling cliff. Slippery snow had frozen to ice between the boulders but crampons remained in rucksacks to ensure sharpness for the real sport to follow. When The Crocodile meets the Uchitel Glacier as it trips over the hanging valley

edge, we crampon-up and venture out into an area of weird seracs. We spend the day practising skills of tool and ice-screw placements in the brittle glacial ice, very different from the more accommodating hard névé of a Scottish winter climb.

Alarms rouse us at 03:30hrs, and an hour later, after porridge, we are heading back up The Crocodile by head-torch. Tom and Iain, the faster team, move ahead of Andrey and I. Derek and Rafal have stayed at the hut. Beyond the seracs – unseen in the dark – we rope up to move together on the Korona Glacier, tight-roping each other over crevasses into which head-torches plumb hidden depths. After three hours' toil we rest briefly at the Korona bivvy shelter. Inside I count eight sleeping bags, half of them on a bench, half on the floor, all covered in hoar frost. Andrey whispers in Russian to one down cocoon, all remain motionless. We continue at first light, steeply, to another hidden valley and glacier which we cross to the foot of the icefall of *Izyskatel* (c 4,400m). We gear up on a ledge inside a giant cave that has formed in a widening of the bergschrund that balances above our heads.

Andrey leads out over the overhanging roof of the cave, finds good ice for a screw and hacks upwards and out of sight. I am left alone in my icy tomb admiring the weird stalactites and straining on my belay to plumb its depths beneath my boots. I am very conscious that, unlike the hundreds of limestone caves I have explored which change almost infinitesimally over millennia, this bergschrund cave is very much a temporary space, with millions of tons of ice balanced at a very steep angle immediately above my head. Sixty metres of rope pay out. I have shouted a warning but we cannot see or hear each other. It is my turn to move. Once out of the tomb and onto the face, I'm in sunshine. It is well below freezing but I warm up climbing and tingle with pleasure at the incredible situation we are in. I lead the second 60m pitch,

a constant 55 degrees on ice kinder than that of yesterday's serac. From my belay I have only a foreshortened view of the route above – two or three more pitches to the summit? We have radioed Dmitri, the Kyrgyz coordinator on even hours – 10, 12, 14 – to report our position and status. We make the decision to retreat while daylight is still good. Iain and Tom on the mixed rock and ice ridge to the west of our face have also started to reverse their route. I build an Abalakov belay: two full-length ice screws are driven in at 60 degrees, then removed; the meeting point lies approximately 75mm into solid ice facilitating the threading of a piece of 6mm cord, tied with an overhand. It is backed up with a temporary ice screw for the first person in case the belay fails. Having built it, I offer to test it, and abseil down, crampon front-points barely leaving a mark. Once my weight is off the rope Andrey removes all the screws and uses my Abalakov to abseil down to join me without the backup. We repeat, and on the third ab are able to jump the bergschrund and continue down until the angle eases enough for us to de-gear. We descend down and across the glacier to reach the bivvy shelter by dark. We still have the lower glacier and the dreaded Crocodile to negotiate and I am happy to see headtorches near the foot. Iain has returned with Rafael, and offers to carry my sac. I don't argue and stumble on down to the Ratsek Hut.

Everyone in our team needs a rest day. We chat about our different life experiences. Derek has a long CV of mountaineering expeditions across the World's greater ranges. Iain's brand new La Sportiva double boots have a jammed tensioning cable that will not release. He makes a bespoke tool with his ice axe file and I help him over several patient hours render the boot once more usable. I use the long-drop toilet, the contents of which have frozen into a stalagmite that has reached the hole in the floorboards!

We enjoy a sociable meat broth dinner with the Kyrgyz-Russian teams. Their organisation and discipline are impressive. Dmitry – who insists that each pair or team radio in every two hours – requires each man and woman to queue up every night to be checked over and assessed as 'fit to climb' by a team medic. We Brits are not included in this ritual and are left to our own judgement to determine our next ambitions in the harsh environment. So far, the weather is holding. I feel my body can also continue.

After a short sleep, Andrey, Iain and I are up at 03:30hrs for the three-hour trek up the Uchitel and Nauka Glaciers to the foot of *Akimova* (The Hourglass) named for its recognisable shape and profile: starting wide and a steady 55 degrees, narrowing and rearing to its steepest for two pitches before again spreading, to a col. Andrey had pointed it out to me on our acclimatisation day. We gear up at a boulder and Iain breaks trail in thigh-deep snow to the bergschrund. As Andrey leads the first pitch, I have time to reflect on our position at the foot of our most serious undertaking to date. Tension builds. I am reminded of an apt description of this waiting time by the famous quadruple amputee climber Jamie Andrew. He recalls an electric charge of apprehension stored in one's gut, like a capacitor, reserves of nervous energy that are released and dissipated as axes are swung and balancing front-points begin a progression into the vertical ice-world, leaving only frozen fresh air below.

Andrey builds a belay. When the ropes come tight Iain and I simul-climb a few metres apart. We cut a ledge mere millimetres wide to half-rest straining calves, and all lean back, trusting the screws. We repeat for the next pitch, and belay at the narrowing of the hourglass. I volunteer to lead the two steep crux pitches where the sands of time rush through. Yet strangely time stands still as I mentally concentrate on getting this right. The ice is brittle and must be tested for each axe placement

before one's weight can be transferred from one limb to another. Minimise the number of trial plants of tools, each showering shards of exploding ice particles onto belayed partners directly below, while ensuring no pop-outs of tools, or slip-offs of crampon points.

The angle rears up to 70-75 degrees and I am in my element. Despite the steepness I feel secure with three points of contact between moves. Movement keeps blood circulating and I try to minimize stops to place a screw protection at roughly 6-8 metre intervals conscious that a slip could still result in a 15m fall. At 60m, in the narrowest part of the hourglass, I fix a double-screw belay to bring up Iain and Andrey. The buttresses either side of us contain stacks of shattered balanced rock, detached from the mountain by endless cycles of freeze-thaw aggression. I lead another 60m pitch into the widening couloir before Iain takes over and leads up to the brèche to top-out our route.

The view is 'gob-smacking', with harsh grandeur and isolation that rewards the effort involved.

We share a flask, snacks, bear hugs and big grins,

then belaying from reasonably fresh-looking 'tat' over a solid rock pinnacle, the other two take turns to descend. For some time I am alone with my thoughts and the wind whistling across the col. It is somewhere near minus 30 degrees centigrade, with the wind-chill penetrating my clothing. I shiver.

It comes to my turn to abseil from the pinnacle. Andrey has built an Abalakov belay which we all three share while we bring down the ropes and Iain descends further, to repeat. All moving separately downwards means lengthy waits at each belay. Each time I am the last to descend after removing the back-up screws, trusting only the 6mm cord threaded through the ice. The sands of time slow. It becomes dark and the descent continues, our headtorches identifying our relative positions on the face. Eventually, at the boulder we coil the ropes and begin the trek back down the glacier. I seem much more affected by exhaustion than the others, stumbling in the deep snow on the moraine, and snapping my walking poles between unseen rocks. Iain lends me one of his and encourages.

Aware of our delayed return, Dmitry has requested

the cooks leave three meaty dinners in the mess hut and has stayed up to greet us. After 19 hours, it is bliss to slide into the bench bunk between shivering bodies and drift into the blackness of sleep. I am cocooned in my down bag when our team's youngest pair, Tom and Rafael, leave at 05:00hrs to attempt the multiple rock towers of the Uchitel-Baichechekey Ridge. They return early citing extreme cold making climbing impossible. Tom still has badly blistered and frost-nipped fingers from his first day with Iain on 'Boks'. My fingers are not blistered but are very sensitive as I rest away the day in the main hut. Mid-afternoon Iain and Andrey set off to the Korona Bivy Hut at 4,100m for a planned early start next day for Korona Peak. Derek, Rafael and I plan a relative rest day rock climb up Ratsek Peak (3,972m). The Russians and Kyrgyz climbers have their oxymetry tests and Dmitry checks their hand-drawn topos and signs their logbooks.

A bad night, loud snoring two bodies away prevents sleep. I feel inexplicably far too hot and pull down my sleeping bag. I reach down to check an odd sensation in my left foot and my fingers

slide into a gap in the skin on the outer side. In the dark I use a headtorch to examine but wait until morning to determine what's happening. I show Derek before dawn and excuse myself from the Ratsek climb. Both my small toes are purple and the left one is a pussy mess and devoid of feeling. Later in the day Dmitry has found the medic who assures me, through interpreter Daria, that it is not frostbite; he cleans the pus and applies antiseptic gel and dressings to both feet. In the evening the procedure is repeated and this time the interpreter is Nina. Both are great company, broad smiles, grace, smooth-skinned fresh faces belying an inner toughness made obvious as they describe a multi-day, high level expedition to the 7,000m Khan Tengri, one of the most shapely and beautiful peaks in the world, and certainly the jewel of the Tian Shan Range. Interesting insights also with the older, rougher-featured Russian men discussing the post-Soviet freedoms to explore and climb in Nepal and South America after the restricted yet super-hard exploits within the former state between the 1960s to the 1990s.

Right: Ascending steep ice on *Akimova*.

Far right: The *Akimova* Ablakov abseil.

📷 Andrey Golovachev



Right: At the belay. 📷 Andrey Golovachev



A strange acceptance of enforced inactivity settles over the next days without any expected ‘cabin fever’. However, the altitude of 3,300m and the sub-zero temperatures make recovery of damaged flesh and blackened toes unlikely. Perhaps my body is in shock for I find myself wearing six layers, including duvet, hat and using hand-warmers within fleece mitts INSIDE the hut! I’m also worrying how to get back down the challenging approach-march return to the valley, as my feet refuse to be booted. Dmitry asks if I have rescue insurance and I show him my AACUK membership card. He expresses doubt as to whether there are any available rescue services in this part of Kyrgyzstan, but walks up the moraine with his radio.

Without warning, 20 minutes later, there is a throb of ‘chopper’ blades booming above the hut. Iain offers to stuff a rucksack as I pole myself painfully up to the flattened moraine top to be squeezed as a fifth person into a four-man cabin. The pilot refuses the rucksack on weight limit grounds, and within seconds has eased the helicopter off the rocky terrain, and aiming momentarily at the icefall of the glacier, performs a 180 degree turn within the canyon and is then dropping past great rock walls into the valley below. In just five minutes we pass over the base camp hostel from where our five hour approach march started, and continue onwards

towards Bishkek. I find I am squashed up against Kyrgyz Begimai and Kadyr who have chartered the helicopter to enjoy an aerial view of the mountains. They were not expecting an unscheduled landing on a glacier to share their ride with an unshaven and scruffy climber! We land on a private helipad and are offered coffee and cakes in a warm and cosy lounge. I can hardly believe my deliverance.

Begimai is enjoying a rest-day before flying to Milan to model on a fashion catwalk. I don’t know what I’m doing next, but I’m hoping it doesn’t involve the trek down the mountain. Timur, manager of Ak Sai Travel, arrives and I realise he is giving up his Sunday afternoon to drive me back to Bishkek to find a staffed hospital, which we eventually do. I am glad to have Timur’s support, nothing is straightforward. To enter we must first purchase sterile overshoes, but are then directed back outside, round the back of the hospital to the bin yard, up four flights of stairs – a challenge – and persuade a staff nurse to find two doctors. They look at both of my feet, discuss, find instruments and cut away more dead skin, certify second degree frostbite burns and re-bandage. They ask for 1,000 som (~£11.50), I ask for a receipt but this is impossible ‘because it is Sunday’. Timur drops me at Central Hostel where a shower and clean sheets await.

The following day the team arrives, and, in inner

boots and with poles, I venture out to explore the immediate environs of the capital Bishkek, including the Dubovy Park, the main Ala-Too Square, the Stalinist White Horse, statues of the mighty Manas and, demoted but not destroyed, the former Soviet icons of Vladimir Lenin, Mikhail Frunze and, whispering together (with names removed) Marx and Engels. When my feet complain, Derek, Iain and I ride an ancient Ferris Wheel in the otherwise deserted Panfilov Park. In the evening the whole team assembles for a farewell traditional Kyrgyz meal.

The next day at the airport I am happy to be allocated three seats on which to curl up for the first leg to Istanbul, before a less comfortable four hour flight to Stansted. Derek helps me to a train connection north, and John Spencer delivers me directly from Central Station, Newcastle, to the Royal Victoria Infirmary to commence what becomes a five month journey of recovery.


During the train journey north, through the flat lands of England, I have time to reflect on my Kyrgyz adventure and the experience of frostbite. Derek, who lost a finger to frostbite in Norway, has put me in touch with two of the UK’s foremost experts in damage prevention and long-term treatment of frostbite but John Spencer, a retired medical professor who knows the best treatment options available, assures me the Burns and Plastics Department in Newcastle’s RVI will be the best place to receive the expert attention required. Reality is only slowly dawning that such injuries take time to heal. Mountaineering literature reminds us of achievement followed by suffering: Maurice Herzog on Annapurna (1950); Hermann Buhl on Nanga Parbat (1953); Herbert Tichy on Cho Oyu (1954); and more recently Stephen Venables, Ranulph Fiennes and Jamie Andrews. Over the next few weeks and months patience and submission to incapacity will be lessons I must learn.

Throughout my hospital treatment, pre and post-

operations, I am thankful for the great support, both practical and psychological. Despite the ugliness of the messed-up foot, and the frustration of prolonged non-load bearing, I am encouraged to stay positive. The wheelchair is discarded after two weeks, two crutches are replaced with one, strapped to my bike crossbar and, with cycling, comes the sweet taste of independence and speed! At one happy out-patient appointment I surrender the second crutch and walk/cycle home. Next I try pull-ups on the fingerboard over my stairs: not possible, I am completely out of condition.

Sensing my claustrophobia, John Spencer whisks me off to Crag Lough. The great Whin Sill atop beneath Hadrian’s Wall. The walk-in is a challenge. The Severe *Face Route* has comfortable ledges on which I can stand up in John’s borrowed climbing shoes, four sizes too big to allow room for padded bandages. It is 123 days since my foot became frozen.

A few days later we repeat the test with a first visit to Stanhope Ashes Quarry, but the vertical sport venue spits me out as pumped arms fail and oversized shoes cannot smear. As Jesmond Dene walks become tentative daily runs I feel ready to return to the Saturday morning Park Run on the Town Moor, with a turnout of 700 others for company. My Tuesday evening biking pals welcome me back on Day 139, and in early June I join the Climbers’ Club trip to the Outer Hebrides for some Lewisian gneiss sea-cliff climbing. Approaches and abseils are difficult but the climbing is safe, in spectacular surroundings, with Atlantic rollers smashing into the cliffs beneath our feet. Bryn Roberts and I fly a kite on the extensive Traigh Uige beach near where the Lewis Chessmen were discovered. Each evening we huddle round a wood-burning stove outside the campervan, exchanging stories with other CC friends. For contrast we go bike-touring through Harris and Berneray, and swim with seals off Camastianavaig on Skye.

Right: The rescue and a view from the chopper.
 Author’s collection



Left: Mobility assistance c/o 'Team Young/Spencer'. Right: Back in the game in the Outer Hebrides.
 Author's collection



The six month anniversary of the frostbite incident is the same week as the NMC Annual President's Meal Meet in Langdale. I set myself the target of poling up to Gimmer Crag, and enjoy leading *Bracket and Slab Climb* (Severe). The trek back down to beautiful Langdale takes its toll, but the reward is good company, a meal and a pint in the Old Dungeon Ghyll.

Some (non-climbing) friends have asked me if the Kyrgyzstan experience has helped me see sense, and will I, from now on, stay at home and be safe? Some were even so insensitive to suggest "at your age you should be slowing down"!

The very reverse is true, on both counts. I no longer set credence in being a certain 'chronological' age for this presumes a misplaced importance on what we have done (in the past) with our lives to date. Better, rather, to project time forwards in terms of active and meaningful life yet to come. Some gerontologists now subdivide 'old age' into 'young-old' and 'old-old'. NMC members John Vaughan (70) and Alan Mitchum (76) have, this summer, completed ascents, respectively, of the *Frendo Spur*

on the Aiguille du Midi and the *Grand Couloir/Bosses Ridge* ascent of Mont Blanc. The outcome for each, in good physical condition, is a sense of self-esteem and well-being that can only be registered as 'off the scale'. As the columnist and novelist Lucy Kellaway recently observed "...life begins (to get interesting) at sixty!" I for one am happy to put myself in the category 'aged adolescent' and get on with planning the next adventure!

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The unforgettable cold of Izyskatel.
 Andrey Golovachev

Visite Obligatoire

Aiguille Dibona

granite cleaves the sky
 low mist drifts about the blade
 shreds of cut silk fall

soaring arrowhead
 set above a nave of slabs
 in wild cathedral

invoking old gods
 of height and threat and beauty
 the echoing cwm

cold fingers, watchful
 morning light descends the spire
 warming bitter rock

each intricate step
 freeing a form from the stone
 carving a vision

scattered on the face
 budget michelangelos
 jangle, peer and scratch

fragile creations
 these fragments of transcendence
 outside time and self

plucked at by the breeze
 caught on flakes of memory
 drifting down to earth

Andy Clarke

Bryan Maloney

Alouette ~The Lark

Chris Gibson recalls his early experiences as a climber in the south west and goes on to describe an alpine adventure on the American Direct Route on the West face of the Dru in 1980. Chris died from cancer in 2021 and wrote this article when looking back on his life.

✈ In the mid to late 1970's the South West climbing scene centered on an eclectic assemblage who would meet behind Boots the Chemist in the very centre of Exeter at 9am every Sunday morning. The leading catalysts there created epic lore on almost a weekly basis, as completely untouched stretches of coastline were visited for the first time, with vast teetering cliffs all along the North coast being pillaged, often via coasteering reconnaissance; sea traversing that today has embraced the vertical and become the sub-sport of deep-water soloing.

Without doubt not enough has been written about these adventures and the mythology that the luminaries were involved in, both at the climbs and getting there. The 'wealthier' climbers had nice cars, while those in employment, but with more basic means had less reliable vehicles. Either way, the destination for the day would be agreed and car-less student members of Exeter University CC and hangers on like myself would pile in for a day of extreme adventure. I'd always bag a ride in a 'nice' car. Biven, Cannings, Littlejohn and John Fowler would always squeeze me in somehow, as I had the important sacrificial role of being the zawn swimmer, to set up dry Tyrolean crossings while coasteering. Often returning home in a state of hypothermia, they would kindly let me off paying my petrol share!

Occasionally events would transpire to snare parts of the convoy well before a rope was uncoiled. For example, following Keith Darbyshire's Mini-Traveller at breakneck speed, sandwiched between high hedges, we suddenly lost sight of his car. We were surrounded instead by a sea of horn-mad Friesian cattle milling around in a state of great agitation. As the chaotic scene opened out, the low slung mini revealed itself. The car had taken both back legs off a poor beast, its arse pushed through the windscreen and, to the horror of the car's occupants, it had emptied its bowels all over them. Keith's risk taking was legendary. Later in the same week, he crashed and wrote off a second car belonging to the family, this time into his father's Range Rover on the drive leading to their farm. Keith claimed it was the only time he had ever heard his father, a devout Quaker, swear, and the F-word at that!

Summer heralded the 'great escape' to the Alps. The University emptied and if funds allowed, pairings of climbers would head for Chamonix by bus and train, joining west country climbers who had driven, what was then a long arduous journey, to camp illegally in the woods around the town. Before sports climbing, bouldering, competitions, and festivals, mountaineering in the high alps was the only accepted natural progression, the pilgrimage of the faithful being the year's high point in more ways than one.

The van's suspension shook heavily turning sharply uphill for the last few metres of its thousand mile odyssey. Bounded by a white glacial cascade to the right and a fragrant pine hillside to the left, the air-cooled engine of the orange campervan spluttered some final triumphs before turning onto the grassy glade filled with a small, poorly planned city of canvas and tarpaulin. Welcome to the Biolay: hidden, without any of the usual amenities, and most importantly 'Free'. Towering above, and it doesn't matter how many times the driver has seen this sight, were shafts of impossible brightness slicing down between sensationally serrated granite peaks. Real eye candy for climbers.

The canvas coterie seemed empty of the usual band of unshaven Pan-European climbing bums. "Where is everyone?" I asked Pete, an acquaintance from Exeter University. Apparently, word of a perfect five day Meteo forecast had got around and just about the whole campsite had made off to bag their intended routes after recent storm cycles. Head and arm strong, I managed to convince Pete we should do something together to take advantage. Pete was a lean, strong climber who had just climbed the *Frendo Spur*, seemed up for anything and was fortunately relatively naive!

Our 'lark' was to be the *American Direct* on the West Face of the Dru, 1,000 metres of soaring granite, at ED, said to be the most exceptional big wall climb in the range. After climbing the *Bonatti Pillar* as an 18 year old the season before, I had become fixated on the idea through the winter months.

The mid-morning train running up steeply to

Montenvers was an unusual luxury for us. The grind down and across the glacier, up the other side to the bivouac on the Dru Rognon less so. Rucksacks bloated, we toiled in direct sunlight up the broken, eroded paths to a point on the moraine directly under the west face. Nothing was unpacked. Sacks became perches. Necks contorted skywards in reverence to the foreshortened basilica. The silence and the emptiness of the place strangled conversation. Private apprehensions filled our thoughts. It's big, very big and the line isn't easy to trace from here.

Late afternoon ebbed away. No sign of contenders. Good. All to ourselves. Purring pot. Countless brews. Pasta Roma, crusty baguette; you know the drill. Logistics toiled over and over again, taking the evening past dusk. We each slip into our own intoxicated stupors wondering what the day ahead would bring.



Chris below the Dru Rognon, 1980.

Joining the rock climbing just above the bergschrund.

📷 Gibson Collection

Looking up the Ninety Metre Dièdre from the first bivouac site.
Gibson Collection



Woke in the first murkiness of predawn. No need to set the alarm. After breakfast and brew and packing, fifteen minutes of steep calf aching snow to the bergschrund. Sacks on, I followed. Onto some nice ledges. Crampons, boots off, rock shoes on. Orange radiance touching the top of the Brevant. Pitches of 4, some cracks of 5, steady progress. Sack is heavy!

Mid morning, moving easy leftwards on a kind of big apron, cool dawn air exchanged for warm air gently rising. Calls and shouts, a delightful echo chamber in the vertical desolation. Stopping, arriving below towers of steepening terrain, view foreshortened, distances impossible to judge as a tangle of angles gave nothing away.

Cracks and corners, getting harder and pumpy. Too strenuous with the sack. Well, we will sack haul then... Impossible, just didn't work, time wasted. Pete pushes my rucksack in front of him while carrying his own. Progress made but slow. I have all the enjoyment. He, meanwhile, thankfully seems happy servicing progress, pushing and shoving my rucksack in front of him. Cracks, corners, then overhangs and pegs. No chance now of free climbing. Peg. Clip on it, pull on it, because the rucksacks should have been left on the moraine. In hindsight everything makes sense except the decision made at the time. No going back.

An incredible eight hours, possibly the best. Heaved onto a ledge with jumbled stone, sat beneath the Ninety Metre Dièdre. Made it. Day's work done. Brew up. Pasta on. Fresh snow for water, but paradise lost as each stone turned to expose more ledge reveals human detritus of the worst kind.

There was no moon. The silence of space reached down to crowd the high edges of the earth. No one can tell you what these heavens look like unless, like you, they have slept at altitude and gazed at that expanse, a chaotic, infinite, myriad of tiny light sources not seen by those mortals populating valleys below. Snug in down, resting, aching, waiting... For sleep or tomorrow's judgement day to unfurl? Big wall climbing at its best.

The calm waters of the vast void we view are suddenly swirled, a crack of noise, a rumble and descending commotion. An avalanche in a far off basin pierces the tranquility, but this place is safe between uneven surfaces and the litter of boulders resting here. Ever so slowly the night returns to silk soft silence as dawn closes in. Time to slumber, rest those aching limbs, raw hands and fists. Mind uncoils, thoughts begin to drift.



I'm not sure if it was the first greys of dawn, or muscular pain which woke me. Raw scratched hands fumbled the toggle on the sleeping bag, followed by a gasp for cool air. Awareness of our situation grows out of my trance like state:

"Oh yes," I spoke to myself, "*American Direct*, best day's climbing ever."

There was no hurry to get going. The rock above right now would be cold, and there would be a need to be mobile and dexterous with what lies immediately ahead. Breakfast followed brew, brew followed breakfast. Eventually bags were packed

and ropes checked through. Pete led off up the first pitch to ensure the ropes pulled through without tangle for the two aid pitches which would take us to the top of the Grand Dièdre

Big wall climbing requires a strangely assertive dimension of self-belief. Not the actual strength of muscle and stamina a climber has, but what he or she believes about that strength. After the climb Pete admitted: "Maybe I didn't think I could climb it, but when I decided I'd give it a go, I also decided that I was one of the best climbers in the world."

The climbing that day surpassed the day before even. The Dru became a series of corners, roofs and steeply cracked walls, each feature piled outward over and above the last, multiplying exposure and demanding refined ropework. Pitches of A1 and A2 followed grade 5+ and 6 sup., but the grade and intensity of climbing was consistently high without relief. Youthful self-belief allowed us to toil upwards throughout the day, until the angle of climbing relented by a few degrees at the very edge of the North Face. A pitch of 4+ led to a junction I knew well. The place where the *Bonatti Pillar* route joined our own and the North Face routes. Thirteen hours of sustained graft. Completely burnt out, but elated, the 'quartz ledge' seemed like a dance floor. There was no point in continuing to the top that evening. Here we would be collapse and bed for the night; it was the right decision as twilight and oblivion beckoned.



Pete started slowly the next morning. Maybe a hangover from the labour of the last few days, he moved deliberately, seemingly disinclined to pack his rucksack as I tied onto a single 9mm to protect us across the ledges. Frustrated by his torpid approach I ran across the gently rising pavement without waiting for him to take a belay. A nice spike at twenty metres

took a thick long troll sling. Another ten metres and I was enthroned on a belay in powerful sunlight looking down towards the Refuge de la Charpoua, Job's a good 'un, route finished.

Rope came taut. Classic belay.

"That's me."

"Come on then."

Pete cornered slowly into sight, inching towards the sling. A wobble, a curse, he's off. Just enough time to take in an arms-length before Pete's weight comes onto the rope.

Pete groans.

"You ok?" I inquired.

"I don't know. I think I'm hurt," came a terse response.

"I think I've broken my leg!" he continued.

Doubtful, it looked like a clean fall of about four metres to me. I felt a bit impatient and wanted Pete to get going.

"Can't be, you'll have to climb back up to the ledge," The classic waist belay was starting to pinch me with the weight of Pete and his rucksack.

"Chris, I've broken my leg!" exploded Pete.

"I can't help you down there. You'll have to get back onto the ledge somehow," I maintained.

Pete's left leg hung limp as he made a sustained effort to regain the ledge he had fallen from, eventually slumping with his back to the face next to the tape runner I had placed.

I urged him to come across to the belay, but he insisted that he would not move and that he had broken his leg in the fall.

Still not wanting to believe him, and by this time becoming irked by the shenanigans, I tied him directly into the belay and used a prussik to get across to him. He looked strangely off colour, even greenish. I rolled down his gaiter to find his lower leg 25 degrees off angle at half height.

"Yes Pete, it's broken," I announced with some contrition.

Totally surreal. 7:30am in still bright alpine sunshine, another perfect day and we were marooned 50 metres from the very top of the Petit Dru. Pete syphoned super human reserves to get across to the belay I'd made overlooking the Charpoua where he lay uncomfortably propped. We considered our fate. Stupidly we didn't even have a whistle between us. Pre-mobile phone, we were stranded and isolated. Unlike many mountain dramas, the situation lacked adrenaline. There was only the practical to consider: making Pete comfortable and getting rescued.

Like the ancient mariner of yore, I surveyed the Charpoua Basin looking for signs of life;

*'At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.'*

Two specks of movement climbing upwards a few hundred metres out from the hut:

"Help!" I bellowed.

"HEEEELLP!" louder still.

First, one dot stopped, Then the one a few paces behind.

Now waving and animated I screamed once more. There seemed to be a split second of conversation, then the two, whose name and nationality we will never know to thank, turned quickly back to return to the hut and raise the alarm. I felt genuinely elated, we would be saved. Pete slumped further down as symptoms of shock engulfed him.

Sometime later in the silence of the high mountain air scanning steeply down towards Montenvers, an almost imperceptible engine drone floated up.

"Yes! Here we go Pete," I confirmed.

Annoyingly, the tiny blue helicopter continued up the Mer de Glace out of sight, before returning skimming low, down the glacier 20 minutes later. Half an hour later and our hopes rose again, but inexplicably the helicopter took the same track, this time returning down even later.

Pete seemed just about conscious, yet I could not open out and share my fears with him that somehow the wrong location had been shared with the rescue teams and we were lost to the mountain again.

In reality, what was going on was three simultaneous mountain rescues: On the North Face of the Tour Ronde, three climbers had died when a pair in free fall had caught another rope and tumbled all the way to the glacier. On the Grand

Jorasses, *Walker Spur*, stone fall had seriously injured a British climber the day before and he now required urgent evacuation; both accidents took priority over us.

An hour later and suddenly loud engine noise overhead became deafening as the helicopter turned the corner above us and traced a line around the ledges we had traversed. Overshooting us, a single figure was lowered by winch to a broad platform some metres away. Detaching the cable, the helicopter, a tiny French built Alouette Mk. 3 or 'the lark' as it was affectionately known, banked and swept back towards the Mer de Glace at pace.

A flood of relief swept over me. We were going to be rescued, I would be back in the Biolay or at the patisserie before lunch for sure. The Mountain Gendarme self-belayed across to us introducing himself as Jean-Paul. He spoke very little English. Why should he? I spoke less French, but Pete, grammar school educated, managed truncated conversation with him, but no painkillers were offered up as I pleaded to get Pete some morphine. Jean-Paul made a short radio telephone call to base, checked Pete's pulse, then settled into picnic, as if it were lunchtime in a Paris park. I took from this that things might take a while; Jean-Paul had decided that Pete was to be 'nulle par voie orale', but kindly offered me fresh bread, cheese, chocolate and coffee.

Late morning turned to early afternoon and the tiny blue helicopter commuted up and down the Mer de Glace with industrious regularity but with no sign of returning to our perch on the very top of the Dru. At 4pm the radio phone crackled and another short conversation ensued. Jean-Paul became animated, bags were packed and ropes coiled, Then, Pete was stood up and taken across the fixed rope to the ledge where the Gendarme was dropped earlier. Within two minutes 'the lark' appeared again level with the ledge. A winch was dropped and attached to Pete's harness. He was



The cockpit and controls of the Alouette III
 Wikipedia (Creative Commons)

winched bootless into the helicopter and within seconds disappeared, plummeting downwards into the Charpoua basin. Truly amazing efficiency, I remember thinking, in awe of the speed, skill and professionalism I was watching. Jean-Paul settled down again. We sat together in silence and the afternoon wore on.

Everything packed in anticipation. Jean-Paul adjusting something on the radio set. Pete had disappeared hours ago and the sun had traversed halfway across the sky since I had arrived at this point in the early morning. The drone of 'the lark' grew louder before it could be seen again, this time rising vertically from the Charpoua basin. It came close but rose above us some twenty five metres, I presume to avoid downdraft, before the winch wire descended towards us. I tried to stand, but was immediately pressed down by Jean-Paul as he caught the winch wire with his other hand. He clipped me and attached a sling trailing our rucksacks lower down, before clipping into the winch wire via another sling a metre below me. As 'the lark' hovered heavily above us, the final bits of the belay system were detached and stored neatly onto the harness of the Gendarme. A yellow helmeted winch man peered out from the helicopter door and a gesture was exchanged.

Eventually the 'Lark' arrives to reconnoiter the situation

The Gendarmerie Nationale rescuer stands over Pete with a visibly broken lower leg.

Pete taken by short winch into the 'Lark' before evacuation to Chamonix Hospital.

Gibson Collection



The wire suddenly went taut and a massive leap of adrenaline shot through me as the bundle I was part of shot, two, four, six metres upwards surging up from the ledge. The Alouette banked away from the mountain I had been attached to for three days and two nights in a sudden plummet which swung us white knuckled outwards. At the same time the winch reeled us swiftly upwards towards the hatch. The kaleidoscope of movement was more frightening than anything I had ever experienced, a fairground ordeal 'sans comparaison'. I tried, feet first, to enter the tiny cabin, about the size of a Citroën Dyane, but was pushed back out to be loaded facing out. Jean-Paul and the rucksacks suddenly bundled into the remaining space. 'The lark' was full. The winch man pushed me back hard and without ceremony into the centre back seat.

Swooping low I saw a brief apparition of the Charpoua Hut before the helicopter again screamed over a void and plummeted still further towards the main Mer de Glace.

Now as if the sheer fear I had experienced in the last two minutes had not disordered and confused me enough, what happened next was simply terrifying. 'The lark' filled with a deafening two pitch alarm, and the dashboard flashed eight to ten bright red caution lights in unison. I was surely about to die in an air accident. This is it! The end.

With my senses driven to overload, I heaved on my seatbelt, braced and waited for impact. The pilot and crew seemed oblivious to the impending doom, behaving coolly and professionally to the last, I remember thinking. Glancing at the dashboard again I saw at least two of the red flashing lights labelled with the word 'carburrent'. We were out of fuel! What a stupid way to die. 'The lark' followed its set trajectory, never more than 20 metres above the glacier racing downwards at a steep pitch, tail up cockpit facing into the ice, terrifying. I just couldn't work out why it didn't just hover and set us down.

Instead, the terror just continued.

Then, totally unexpectedly, the roller coaster vista of broken ice and moraine disappeared and green alpine meadow abruptly appeared. The helicopter, still full with the kaleidoscope of sound and light, lurched to a low hover before belly flopping the last few metres to earth. The rotors slowly unwinding, as the pilot flipped switches. Waves of emotion overpowered me. I was alive.

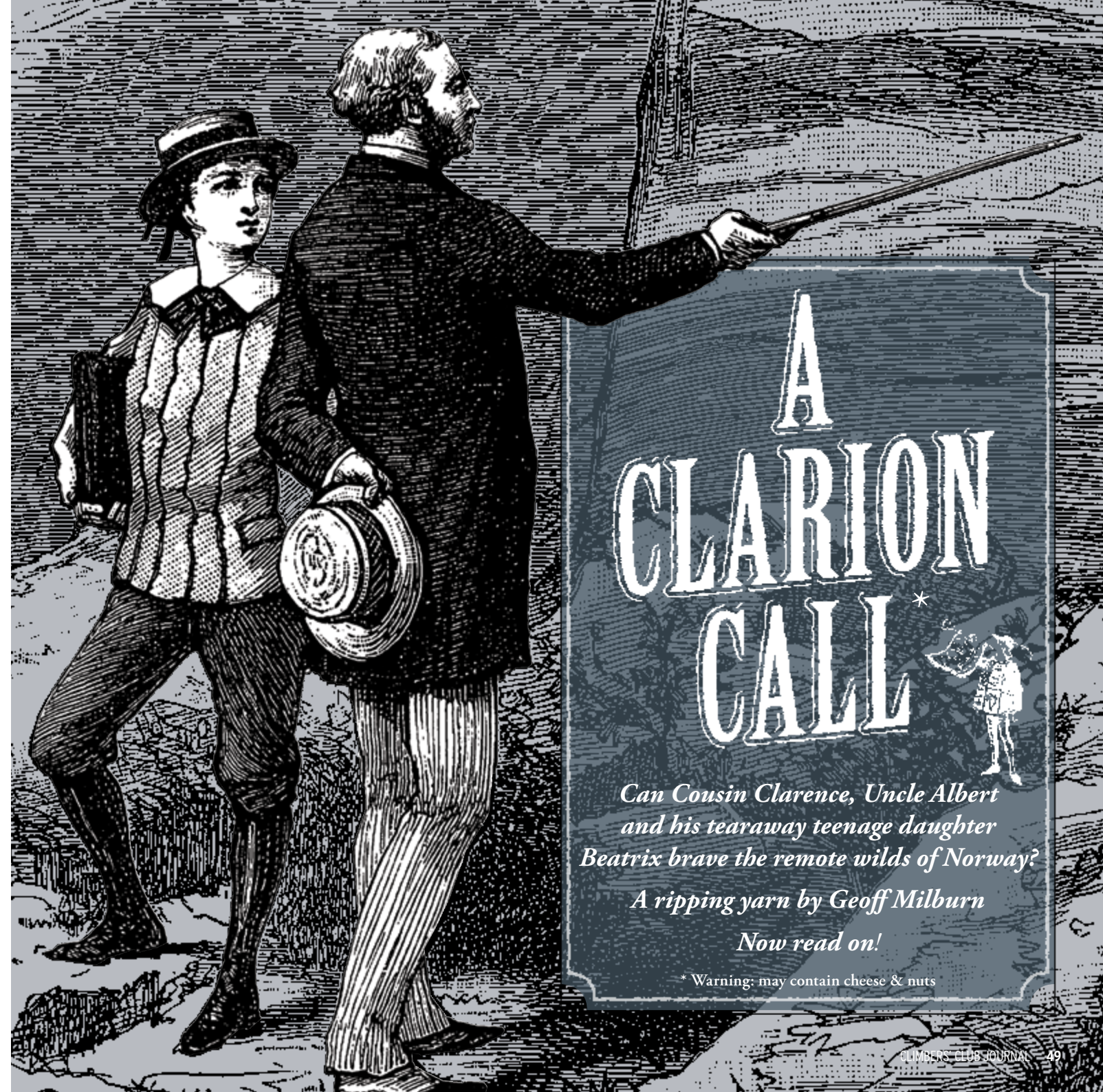
In front of us some 80 metres away, a gate into the meadow swung open. A 4x4 with two 40 gallon drums of aero fuel and pumping apparatus approached our now still bird.

Apparently I had just experienced a standard flying procedure on a busy air rescue day.

What a lark!



The Alouette's last job of the day. © Gibson Collection



High in the cavernous loft of a rambling old house, I parted the veil of sticky silken cobwebs to reveal a veritable treasure chest of Victorian furniture, old ropes, climbers' boots, ice skates and wooden skis from a bygone age. A small dust covered book, protruding from a jumbled pile, caught my immediate attention and as my hand wiped across its grey surface it revealed 'Mountain Diary, 1872, Albert Penstock'. It was a name that I instantly knew as a distant relation who, as a member of the prestigious Alpine Club, belonged to the Golden Age of mountaineering. In his day he was renowned as a mountain painter and landscape artist. His exploration in mountainous areas was, at one time, legendary as he was a contemporary of Whymper, Wills, Tyndall and co.

It was rumoured in our family that a twenty-one year old mountaineer had perished in a crevasse and that his remains had been preserved in their icy tomb for sixty-two years before the glacier gave up its grisly secret to the frail 81 year old lady to whom he had been engaged to be married. That, however, is well trodden ground in the annals of mountaineering.

Returning to Albert, it may cause some amusement to know that at family gatherings, when I was very young, I caused much hilarity by persistently referring to the venerable old gentleman as 'Grey Tumble Halibut'. However, it did stick in my little mind that, during his many painting trips, Albert had experienced many close shaves in the mountains of the world. Perhaps the most traumatic of which had been so poignantly recorded in the little diary, which had been consigned to the attic by some uncaring hand. Taking the diary across to the dormer window I removed the dust cover from an old armchair, sat down, and began to peruse the contents which were written in a somewhat spidery but quite charming scrawl.

Great Uncle and his wayward teenage daughter Beatrix had set off to explore a remote region of Norway, far beyond Softanger in the Trollheim area, with the intention of painting and scaling a virgin rock peak which was reputed to have repulsed all previous assaults. This must have been long before Cecil Slingsby began to bag peaks in that wild area. The mule which had been acquired to transport all their equipment proved to be an obstinate creature, extremely loathe to carry out its assigned duties. At the most perilous places it was wont to wilfully dislodge some of the more essential bits of its load, such as the tents and wooden camp beds.

Without the necessary overnight protection, a derelict hut at Hairligcortage was located which, although lacking most of its roof, provided a somewhat damp base for the great adventure. Beatrix, with her womanly touch, busied herself making the rude hovel as respectable as she could under the somewhat unhealthy and sordid conditions. At least she found a

copious supply of clean water in the icy cold, glacier-fed little lake which almost reached up to where the front door would have been if it had not already been kicked in, and used for firewood, by persons unknown. In no time at all she had satisfied herself that she had done all that she could and promptly pondered on her appearance. Her long dress almost brushed the floor but she solved the problem by tucking a quantity of it into her knickerbockers.



Before setting off, Beatrix had gazed at herself in the tortoise-shell-handled mirror which she always carried in her portmanteau. She adjusted her collar carefully, smoothed down her dress past her trim young waist, pulled up her rough hose stockings and slipped on her delicate shoes which were the height of fashion at that time. Finally she had placed her straw hat at exactly the right angle, and nodded in satisfaction at her image in the mirror. If truth be known the young girl was totally inadequately dressed for the mountains, but she was too excited at the prospect of the next few days to be unduly worried about trivial matters such as the suitability of her dress. Far more important was it that she met with the approval of her older cousin, Clarence, who was sporting a newly grown moustache which he proudly attempted to twirl at every opportunity. Eventually, after a last approving glance at herself in the mirror, Beatrix picked up her trusty fell pole and went off in search of her father whom she had last seen disappearing with his knapsack, easel and painting equipment. She found him on top of a small knoll, puffing his old pipe contentedly and without a care in the world. His hands moved quickly as he sought to capture the

wild and wondrous scene which was spread out before their very eyes, and Beatrix nodded in loving approval at the picture which was developing on the canvas before her very eyes. A worried frown must have passed over Beatrix's face as she looked upwards and saw the looming mass of a mountain above her. She tried in vain to pick out a possible route from what appeared to be lush, overhanging alpine vegetation to a tumbling glacier which was forcing its way through smooth rock buttresses which soared high into the sky. Later the same day they descended slowly in great glee as, so far, things had worked out reasonably well and the good weather was holding out. Over a smoky fire they made a rich stew of lamb and vegetables which they had carried up from the valley far below, before wrapping themselves up in blankets and letting sleep overtake them.



At first light, after a somewhat miserable cold breakfast, the party set off. Their spirits soon picked up as they passed a whole host of glorious alpine plants with the bright blue of the gentians capturing their hearts. At first it was not necessary to rope up and the heavy hemp ropes were easier to carry round their shoulders but, all too soon, the angle



increased and it was necessary for the whole party to be joined together. Albert forged ahead with great enthusiasm, but of his arms nothing could be seen for most of the time they were plunged deep into Mother Earth. When his position became all too worrying, he shook his head and came down to lick his wounds.

That night Albert woke with a start and shouted, "I've got the answer!" He promptly dressed and disappeared outside, and the rest of the party listened intently until the sound of his boots faded. At breakfast he reappeared joyfully brandishing a sharp scythe that he had borrowed from a reluctant peasant a long way down in the valley. There was also a gleam in his eyes as he took from his knapsack several pairs of what the local peasants referred to as 'iron creepers' which they said that if strapped to the feet would allow a purchase to be made on vegetation. Albert, having a fertile mind, had immediately grasped that this instrument could be used to get a grip on snow, and perhaps even ice. Note: this was long before Eckenstein first invented modern crampons. It has also long been known that the troops of Nordic countries used a form of primitive crampon hundreds of years ago.

How Albert managed to use that scythe one-handed no-one knows, but he cut a swathe up horrendous vegetation for the rest of the party to follow. However, that was merely the start of their troubles as, below huge shattered buttresses, the next obstacle to be surmounted was the great gleaming glacier, the blue depths of which caused much admiration from the wide-eyed party. Many was the slip and slide which caused great hilarity, but after much bragging about his perfect balance, Clarence promptly tripped over his pride; Beatrix said that it must have been the reason, as pride always comes before a fall. Eventually though, the glacier was safely crossed and the party began to make their laborious way up the shattered buttresses.

Thus far the expedition had proceeded reasonably smoothly but, just as things seemed to be improving, a small dark cloud on the horizon rapidly got bigger and bigger until, after a blinding flash of lightning, they were encompassed in a raging tempest. Flash followed flash, and they cowered as best they could but there was no real shelter, neither did the storm let up. After an hour or more, and after one particularly blinding lightning bolt, there was a deep rumbling and the whole mountain seemed to be on the move. A great avalanche of snow, rocks and ice plunged down from above and a great white whirling cloud of snow enveloped the party. Almost immediately all was silent.

Most of the party, fortunately, emerged unscathed apart from a few cuts and bruises, but of Albert's young daughter there was not a sign. It was as if she had vanished off the face of the Earth, snatched from their very midst. Shocked beyond words, the survivors huddled together and wondered what to do for the best. Then, with hardly a word, they began to slide tentatively down the mountain until they were halted by a monstrous crevasse which had swallowed up every vestige of the avalanche.

Every anxious shout into the void was lost and echoed away into the very bowels of the monster. Not believing that such a beautiful young creature could be snatched from them so cruelly they began to discuss their options. Fortunately, a group of Albert's friends, who were sketching far below, gathered up some ropes and began to race up the mountain, ready to lower themselves into the depths to go in search of Beatrix.

Meanwhile the youngest member of the party, Clarence, who dearly loved his cousin, heroically offered to go down into the abyss in the forlorn hope of discovering where her remains lay. The problem was how was this to be achieved? Albert hit on the novel idea of knotting a rope and dropping it down, and after Clarence had driven an axe-shaft into the

ice to secure the rope, in no time at all the young man was perched on the very lip. Having grasped his trusty piolet, he thrust the shaft down the back of his jacket and began to lower himself hand over hand. Foot by foot he descended while the anxious voices above him called down to enquire about his progress, and whether or not he could see anything yet. The lower he went the darker it became and Clarence had to squint hard to peer into all nooks and crannies that he passed, but with no result. Three rope lengths had to be negotiated before he could vaguely make out the uneven floor of the crevasse not far below him. Suddenly he gave a start for there, just to one side, was the prostrate body of his dear cousin.

It was just like the story of the Sleeping Princess as she lay there white, beautiful and serene, without a mark on her. Clarence could not believe his eyes and he bent down to examine his cousin more closely. "Send me down a bottle of brandy," Clarence shouted up to those above him and, within a short time, the required bottle came drifting down on a line. Instantly Clarence had the top off and after pausing to look at his cousin he thrust the bottle into his parched lips and gave a hearty swig. Only then did he suddenly remember the poor girl

lying beside him. After a few drops had passed her lips, she stirred and, dreamily, one eyelid fluttered. "Where am I?" she muttered almost as if to herself, "Clarence I've had such an awful dream." Clarence remained speechless for an eternity and suddenly, as the enormity of the situation began to clear in his mind, he swept his cousin into his arms and hugged her until she laughed and told him not to be so rough. Clarence lifted his voice and screamed his joy to the heavens. In return, as those on the surface realised a miracle had happened, they joined in the mad, exultant cacophony of joy.

Eventually Beatrix managed to get to her feet and, after Clarence had lit two candles, the couple

managed to scramble over blocks of ice in order to gain height towards the end of the crevasse.

"Throw us the end of a rope uncle," cried Clarence. A rope, with a belt attached, duly dropped down and Clarence quickly buckled it round Beatrix's slim waist. Then with his left arm encircling her, with his right hand thrusting the piolet into the ice, he cried, "Pull with all your might Uncle!" The ascent was slow and painful, surrounded by a thousand precautions, but was crowned with full success, and in no time at all Albert (or Al as he was usually called by all his friends) was pressing his daughter close to his heart.



That night in the hut the little band celebrated gleefully and the toasts rang loud and clear, but Clarence having jumped to his feet with his glass raised high brought the roof down. "Here's to the greatest mountaineer of all time. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you a toast... here's to trusty Al Penstock".





The Salathé Wall

El Cap's Most Natural Line

In a race against time Tim and Andrew complete a memorable ascent of the Salathé Wall, one of Yosemite's classic big wall climbs.

By Tim Larrad

As we entered the Valley and El Cap came into view we pulled over and got out of the car. The dry heat of the day filled our nostrils and bit the back of our throats. We stared at the huge 1,000 metre monolith of granite and absorbed its grandeur. Not wanting to lose track of its features we spoke directly towards our objective, "That's Heart Ledges, isn't it? Oh my god! That's never the Hollow Flake crack is it? Wow no way!"

This wasn't the first time either of us had been in the valley but reacquaintance never fails to impress. We surveyed our intended route further, possibly, as Royal Robbins one of the first ascensionists, dubbed it "the greatest rock climb in the world."

It's amazing how climbing brings together like minded people and a chance meeting then unfolds into a full-on adventure.

Andrew and I first met in Bishop, California. Andy Clark and I were licking our wounds from an unsuccessful first attempt on *The Nose* and Andrew and his friend Walter were in a similar situation, having not even had the chance to get on their intended route *The Salathé Wall*. We spent the remaining time of our trip in each other's company, climbing and socialising on the camp site in Bishop.

Saying our farewells at the end of the trip, we exchanged contact details. Andrew and Walter then returned to Germany, where they lived and Andy and I went back to the Midlands. Andrew and I kept in contact and it wasn't long before the big question arose! You see, I just couldn't get El Cap out of my mind. So, I asked the question, "Andrew, would you consider going back and climbing El Cap?" I knew Andrew had climbed the Nose fifteen years before, so I was expecting him to say no. The reply that came back took me a little by surprise; "Yes, but it has to be *The Salathé Wall*, and you need to lead the Hollow Flake crack." Without any further thought or knowledge of the Hollow Flake crack, I agreed. I thought to myself, "I can crack climb and if it's that hard I can just aid it, can't I?" We lost no time in committing and quickly booked flights and three weeks annual leave.

Always keen to get started, I started researching the route. I soon came across many pictures on the internet and established that the Hollow Flake crack held quite a reputation and stopped many parties. It was also the scene of some epic falls. This crack is in fact a dreaded off width 5.9R, with the R standing for runoff.

Tim leading the Hollow Flake crack.
📷 Tom Evans
Yosemite Photographer

I began my preparations by going on one of Peter Whittaker and Tom Randall's crack courses and made regular trips to the grit to practice off widths, whilst finding time to develop my aid skills. Only a few elite climbers free *The Salathé Wall*. I also had a trip to Valle Dell'Orco with Andrew to practice these skills in a mountain environment.

Time flew by and it wasn't long before September arrived and we were directly confronted by the grandeur of El Cap. "Phew it's hot!" was probably the most used phrase in the first week as we arrived in a heat wave. We soon turned things around though and found shaded crags where we practiced our hauling, aiding and free climbing.

We were soon into our second week and had just about found and done all we could in the shade, including some gnarly off widths. Our next plan was to catch as much shade as possible but try and get some multi-pitch mileage, so we climbed the *Northeast Buttress* on Higher Cathedral Rock. As good as it was, it wasn't what we had come for and we started to get anxious about the lack of time left.



Grappling with *The Crack of Desperation* El Cap, showing the *Salathé Wall*



The weather pattern finally broke and we hatched a plan. The next few days were to be unsettled with one dry day followed by a wet day and then more settled, cooler weather. You could almost feel the anticipation in the valley buzzing away like the build up to a storm, as climbers prepared to make their bid for glory.

The Salathé Wall has two main parts to it and the lower 11 pitches are quite often treated as a route of its own. It is called *Freeblast* and takes you up to the Heart Ledges. Then the remainder of the climb takes you to the top via the Hollow Flake, The Ear, El Cap Spire and the Headwall. The well known *Free Rider* that Alex Honnold amazingly soloed, goes off left avoiding the headwall. To get a head start on other teams we decided to climb the *Freeblast* section as light and fast as possible and then fix ropes down to the valley using the abseil points used for the descent from *Freeblast*.

We arrived at the start of the route using head torches in the last hour of darkness. A climber was seconding the first pitch as we arrived and there was no sign of anyone else behind us. We geared up in silent anticipation and Andrew led off up the first pitch leaving me with our water and other minimalistic items to carry up in a light rucksack. Right from the start the climbing is amazing and the cracks unforgiving. Andrew made a brave attempt at the 5.10c section ending up French freeing a couple of moves and linked the two pitches together to take up a stance at the beginning of pitch three. I then joined him as quickly as possible, feeling clumsy due to cold fingers. The next 5.11b section I led, traversing under a roof and then aided the hard section to reach easier ground, where I free climbed to the stance. Suddenly we found our rhythm and pretty much free climbed our way up to pitch 8. Andrew did a fantastic job of free climbing the hard slab section, which was very thin and required the use of balance and tenuous smears. With sparsely

positioned bolts and some long run out sections it was a real mind game. After much cursing and a few nervous moments, he climbed through to the stance. The slabs were a joy to second with the security of the top rope and every move felt like you would slip, but somehow you managed to save it before committing again to the next marginal foot placement and small crimp.

Now we were looking up at the infamous *Half Dollar* off-width chimney. We had agreed that I would lead the off-widths seeing that I was to do the Hollow Flake and any experience, according to Andrew, was somehow supposed to prepare me. An exposed 5.10b start to get into the chimney, around a corner and out of sight saw the start of an epic grovel. It was probably just as well I was out of sight and sound, as the profanities that accompanied my efforts were very colourful. At one point you're pushing with your legs and your back is against a leaning, open wall, which gives you a view straight down to the valley. After I clipped the belay bolts, Andrew jumared his way up to me and gave me the thumbs up for getting the pitch done. We then free climbed the next easy but enjoyable pitches to arrive at the top of Mammoth Terraces, where we found an abseil rope in place. We got in descent mode, pausing at Heart Ledges for food and water and my first close look across to the Hollow Flake crack. At this point I didn't want to get psyched out so I decided some psychological games were appropriate. In my mind I just said "Wow that looks amazing! Looking forward to getting on that!" and left it at that. The descent down to the valley was quick due to fixed abseil ropes being in place. Just before we set off, I looked at my watch and was amazed to find it was only just after 15:00hrs. We congratulated ourselves on a good day and the feeling of confidence between us had grown. I thought "Do you know, I think we can pull this off."



Left: The first pitch of *Freeblast*

Below: On the top of *Freeblast*.

On the stance of the slab pitch of *Freeblast*.

Tim Larrad

The next day the forecast was for the weather to break by late morning. So we lugged our haul bag full with enough provisions for three days to the Heart Ledges abseil, where we had come down the day before. We hauled the bag, weighing at least 80kg, up the 250m sheer face and climbed and fixed two pitches to the start of the Hollow Flake crack. We then secured everything and returned to the valley. The weather broke as predicted and was quite stormy for a short while. By the evening it had cleared and the forecast prediction was for a clear period of at least three days with reasonable temperatures. We got to bed as early as possible and laying in my tent, I re-visited in my mind what the guide book said regarding the Hollow Flake crack; "No feature terrifies aspiring wall climbers more than the Hollow Flake. To protect the crack requires numerous six to ten inch pieces and results in hideous rope drag. The alternative is to not bring any pro for the entire pitch and run it out for 80 feet. Opinions vary on which method is scarier. Either way, the best bet is to be in solid shape for off-widths and squeeze chimneys."





Andrew and Tim on
the top of the Hollow
Flake crack.
📷 Tom Evans
Yosemite Photographer

Our head torches bobbed around from side to side as we walked the now familiar route up to the fixed ropes leading to Heart Ledges. In silence we geared up and methodically jumared our way up. We arrived at the Hollow Flake stance. The crack appeared dry and the morning sun was already casting its rays on it. Before we could say much Andrew was lowering me down to the tension traverse where I could establish myself in the off-width section of the crack. The only gear I had on my harness was a number 6 Friend attached by a long sling to my belay loop. I lowered someway down to an obvious entry point at its base and got established. I started with a right shoulder jam, my right leg in a slightly bent position with my knee up against the opposing side of the crack. My right arm was bent in the same fashion with the elbow acting as a brace against the wall, the left leg was on the outside of the crack pushing against the wall to use what friction was available. As I started to push and jam my way up, I used the large cam as passive protection, pushing it up as I gradually made progress. At this point things didn't seem too bad. The fall factor would mean a swing to the right and the rope at this point was above me. The physical effort needed in off-widths always seems more than open face climbing, mainly I think because of the constricted position you're in. I was moving up gradually getting more level with Andrew's stance far out right. The swing factor started to get greater and the cam lobes barely bit the sides of the wall. As the cam became redundant, I let it hang below me and things started to get hard. Occasionally I slipped back down after pushing up with the chicken wing arm, despite trying to trap the upwards movement with the pressure from the knees and feet.

I tried to ignore the drop to the valley and the rope arching alarmingly beneath me. The crack got wider and things got marginally easier, I had a little more time to catch my breath and recover, but this in turn allowed me to ponder the situation I was in

and the potential fall factor straight onto the belay. I couldn't help looking down and across to the valley floor over 300m down. I got further up where the crack got thinner and I could no longer get any part of my body satisfactorily enough embedded in it to make progress. I was momentarily puzzled as to what to do, then my brain sprang into action and shouted back "layback it!" Somewhere in the back of my mind there was a warning I had heard about getting into a layback position on the Hollow Flake crack. Something about once you started laybacking it was difficult to get back in and the subsequent remaining layback would then be massively strenuous and the fall potential very high. I couldn't see another way around it so I started. The sudden exposure of being in that position made my heart race and I felt my strength drain away.

The reluctance in letting go with one hand to place it above the other was a mental battle, but after the first view moves, I started to make smoother progress and gained height quickly enough so that my confidence grew. The crack widened again and I resisted the temptation to continue laybacking and with some awkward movements somehow got back into the crack. The belay anchors were now tantalisingly in sight, but this upper part, although easier, seemed more insecure than it should be as the crack flared out and the walls became more angled. It became harder to push with the feet without them slipping. I buried myself deeper, ignoring the urge to come out into the flared section. The result was reassuring as I managed to get better jams and I was suddenly able to get an arm above me onto a flat part at the end of the crack. I pulled hard and got both hands above me and with a final surge of adrenaline emerged onto the platform and stance. Clipping the belay, I let out a yelp and celebrated. I could hear Andrew below me joining in. Yes, I had done the Hollow Flake crack. I had lived up to my side of the bargain. Now surely, we could do the climb!

We led through the next two pitches which took us to pitch 18, 'the Ear', called as such because it looks like an ear stuck to a wall of granite. We had a bit of a chat about who was going to lead this pitch. Andrew's hate of off-widths meant that he was not keen to do it. After more discussion and some rather shallow encouragement from me, Andrew set off, not looking too happy, disappearing into the Chimney. It took Andrew some time until he emerged at the stance and shouted rope fixed. I set off and was soon to discover why it had been difficult as I got into a battle trying to jummar in a ridiculous constricted position. At one point I somehow almost ended up upside down trying to get back down to retrieve a big cam buried deep in the crack. I could see why Andrew had taken so long as it was typical, awkward, under graded, Yosemite chimney climbing.

Our plan was to bivy on El Cap Spire two pitches up, having elected not to have a portaledge on the route. Hence we were committed to getting to the variety of bivy ledges on the route. As we recovered from the surprise of the last pitch, the light started to fade and in a resigned silence we found our head torches. At this point I was to the right of Andrew and kept hearing a faint animal noise. I honed into it and heard it again this time more distinctly, 'ribit'. I got Andrew to stop what he was doing and listen. After what seemed a long pause, we both heard the sound again. We started a closer search and astoundingly found a small frog in the back of the crack. It was rather surreal as there we were miles off the ground, surrounded by sheer rock and being serenaded by a frog!

I set off on the next pitch in the dark. I had already accepted that climbing in darkness was going to be a potential part of climbing this route. So there was no panic or feeling of despair as the fingers of darkness took hold and squeezed away the remaining light from the day. The 5.13c or for us

C1+ (a clean aid grade) pitch was tough with small, fiddly placements. Around a corner out of sight and in my own world of silence, with the darkness reflecting my thoughts, I made slow, methodical progress. The head torch sometimes made shadows that obscured all the details of the crack, which made placing gear difficult. At times I felt like I was standing up on gear that was no more than marginal, having the feeling of being suspended in a moment of pure hope and faith. The intensity continued, holding me in the moment. Then, suddenly I was flying through the air in a downward rush, instinctively shouting "hold!" A flash of torchlight dancing erratically in front of me as the wall raced past at an alarming rate. A surprisingly gentle jolt bought me to a halt as a piece of gear held my fall. Andrew shouted "are you alright!" I took a moment to take stock and replied with a grunt. Seemingly trapped in my own bubble, I continued, placing a better bit of gear and continued my slow progress.

The alcove below El Cap Spire finally arrived and after hauling the bag and cleaning the pitch we decided this spot would suit us just fine and the aesthetics of being on top of the spire could wait until morning. We got our food bags out and I found a hole in a bag where my energy bars were. I opened the bag to discover one of the bars had been nibbled on. Luckily all the other bars were intact. Somehow a mouse had got into the bag and had an energy charged snack at my expense! It must have been when the bag was on the wall overnight and on its side. I have since heard quite few accounts of food being eaten by mice on El Cap. Sleep hit us both fast, but just before drifting off I had this vision of a super charged mouse running up the Hollow Flake crack.

After what seemed like a blink of an eye, I awoke to the first signs of light and a silence that was magnified by the small perch I was on, wrapped up in my sleeping bag enjoying the warmth looking

out, like a bird on a nest, viewing the start of a new day. Conscious that we needed to get going as soon as possible, I started the stove and got my artic, dried porridge soaking and gave Andrew a brew. It didn't take long before we had sorted ourselves out and I climbed the chimney pitch to emerge on the spire. The sun was out and the position was amazing. The view down to the valley was breath taking. The weather was perfect, not too hot or cold and I found myself smiling. I felt we deserved to be here after what we had achieved so far and we were indeed big wall climbers. We climbed the next few pitches without incident and without seeing anyone. It appeared our tactics of getting a head start after the bad weather had paid off. At pitch 23 we came across a lone person on a rope working a section move by move, trying to get it dialled for a free ascent. It was strange to see the opposite tactics being used to ours and felt like a bit of an intrusion. I'm sure he felt the same about us! He soon finished for the day and jumared up his ropes, wishing us luck. As he pulled up his ropes we were once again left in our isolated position.

Andrew was looking steady as he aided through a section on the next pitch, only to suddenly be airborne and take quite a long fall, spraining his thumb. He lowered to the stance and for a moment there was a question mark over whether he felt he could continue. However, once we had taped up his thumb he returned to the pitch.

The next pitch is known as 'the sewer' due to the constant water and slime on it, and described as the worst pitch on the climb. The task to get this done was down to me. It was by no means dark, but the end of the day was around the corner. We studied the topo and it appeared you could link the pitches with a 60m rope. However, you had to be careful of rope drag, due to a roof that forced you out left on a traverse, before then negotiating the overhang at its weakest point. I set off with as little gear as I

dared, with the intention taking advantage of the easier climbing lower down and freeing as much as possible. Luck was also on our side as the long heatwave had dried the slimy, wet section to a point where I was able to free the harder upper section to the traverse point. I aided this part and then back cleaned (taking gear out I had previously placed below me) as much as I dared to allow the ropes to run as freely as possible. Darkness was closing in as I finally belly flopped onto the sloping ledge that was to be our bivy. So engrossed in what I was doing I wasn't aware of four pairs of eyes looking at me through the now gloomy conditions. In what almost appeared to be an orchestrated chorus, they all asked at once "where you sleep?" With as much conviction as possible I replied "here." I fixed the rope and Andrew started his ascent whilst I hauled the bag. At the same time, I chatted to the climbers, who I had now established to be Koreans. They were very chilled about the whole situation and luckily quite small and accommodated their larger European climbers without a murmur of a complaint. In the end it turned out to be five Koreans and the two of us on a sloping bivy ledge that according to the guide would take two people! It appeared that they had sat out the bad weather and were supporting one very good member of their team who was trying to complete a free ascent. His fingers were in quite a state and he had almost given up due to the difficult climbing conditions they had encountered.

The seven of us spent a cosy night squashed against each other, but before we all drifted off, a very loud American group of three climbers came through the bivy and continued in an attempt to do the route in 24hrs. The lead climber was very vocal and stopped to roll up some concoction which he smoked and offered around, before he headed off with his mini speaker blaring adrenalin inducing vibes. I also noticed his rack was almost non-existent; his harness looking forlornly empty with



Andrew bag hauling en route for the El Cap Spire.
© Tim Larrad



a handful of cams and a few nuts. His companions didn't stay long as they started to climb together. During the next hour their yelps accompanied us as we ate and prepared to sleep.

My night was a restless one, initially falling to sleep due to total fatigue only to awake up periodically to stare into the depths of darkness as the cold air from the drop below blew up the sheer rock wall below me into my face, making me very aware of my sleeping position on the edge of the ledge. I was of course tied in, but this acute awareness of my position did nothing to aid my sleep. Thankfully morning came quickly and I was awoken by the quiet, respectful hustle and bustle of the Koreans. It was still dark, so I decided to stay put and let them organise themselves. Their efficiency was impressive and they were soon on their way.

We were keen to make an early start to the day and Andrew led off as the first rays of light appeared. We established ourselves at the start of pitch 27, an impressive ledge with great views out to the valley. The view above to the Salathé headwall was also impressive and so steep you couldn't look up for long without feeling the strain on your neck. The Koreans quickly made progress and went out of view to the left to join *Freerider*, a different finish to our route. It was my lead and I decided to link the next two pitches together. I really enjoyed the challenge of these two pitches, even after getting stuck at one point and eventually making an enormous teetering reach on the top step of my aiders to finally reach the corner. I clipped the belay bolts and standing on my aiders hauled up the bag.

I was now able to focus on what was below me as Andrew was joined by a group of fast moving Spaniards. I was slightly annoyed to see that Andrew had only just set off jumaring. Once he joined me, he told me of the predicament the three Spanish climbers were apparently in. Having run out of water and taking longer than they had thought, they

were now desperate to top out as quickly as possible. Andrew had agreed to let them climb through and to help with this process had taken their rope for them to fix at our stance. We were now stuck at what wasn't the most comfortable of hanging stances, waiting for them to get to us and then lead through.

Eventually Andrew was able to lead off, leaving me stuck on the belay for god knows how long! He jumared the short section of fixed rope and then was able to continue leading/aiding up the impressive 5.13d headwall crack. This is when the American word 'awesome' really can be used to best effect. It was at this point I realised I was also now left with a free hanging, desperate looking, jumar too, due to the previous fixed rope now going directly above me and no longer out to the right. I lowered myself out triple checking everything I was doing, aware that I was getting tired and the consequences of a mistake at this point would be serious. As if dangling free over the valley on a strenuous jumar wasn't enough, Andrew started hauling the bag which then entwined itself around my rope. A struggle ensued!

Eventually I got up to the aid section and was no longer hanging free and so was able to strip the route. Arriving at the stance with the haul bag and me safely docked we viewed our position, both agreeing that this part was scary. The stance was a surprise too, as up to now the stances consisted of three bomb proof bolts. However this one was not so impressive with old bolts. Andrew had made a good job with backing them up with gear and we agreed given the setup, it would be quicker for Andrew just to lead the next pitch to 'Long Ledge', our next bivy. Darkness was quickly approaching so Andrew quickly got on with the job in hand. It was an impressive lead with Andrew being forced to make some hard free moves with long run outs.

I arrived at the ledge and Andrew had sorted the handrail out and was already unpacking the haul bag. We organised hot food and talked about the

day. Getting into our sleeping bags to keep warm we soon drifted off to sleep on yet another narrow ledge. I slept with my helmet on as I found that this supports the head nicely. I awoke on one occasion and opened my eyes to gaze at all the stars your eyes and mind could possibly take in.

Dawn arrived and stiff limbs were uncurled. It's surprising how quickly you adapt to being in this vertical world, on a narrow ledge clipped into the handrail, with your legs dangling over the edge. Andrew revealed that it was his birthday! As a present, I promised to lead the first pitch of the day.

Feeling the effects, both physically and mentally, of the last few days of climbing I set off. I stepped awkwardly to the right leaving the security of the ledge around the corner and out of sight. After establishing myself in a thin, hidden crack and making some strenuous, precarious aid moves, my consciousness was suddenly jolted, as I became aware of the 900m drop to the valley. I think that knowing that there were only four pitches between us and the top had lulled me into a feeling that this was all over.

I continued finding the aid tricky, taking an age to make any upwards progress. I eventually got to a point where all options of aid stopped and I was faced with what looked like a blank wall. I looked at it forlornly thinking out loud "surely this can't be 5.8 free climbing?" I warned Andrew of my predicament and placed another small cam next to my last placement and tried a variety of free moves which quickly led to me falling off. I repeated this for some while, trying to unlock some hidden sequence that I seemed to be missing. Although the falls were short, they were beginning to eek away at any mental resolve I had left and with Andrew out of sight, I started to feel that I just couldn't do this.

I explained the situation to Andrew, but it didn't change my dilemma though. Surely I wasn't going to be defeated at this stage of the climb. I tried to look again at the moves with a fresh pair of eyes

Opposite: On the sloping bivvy ledge on the last day.
Tom Evans
Yosemite Photographer

and knew that if I could just get one move higher I might stand a chance. I looked at my gear loops for anything that might give me a few feet. In front of me was a very thin crack that was no more than an inch long which I had already tried to get gear into. I took a cam hook off my gear loop (a thin blade of metal designed to be hand placed in cracks and torqued at an angle as you place weight on it). I couldn't get it to go fully in, but on one of the attempts to fiddle it in, it stuck on something. I gingerly weighted it and felt the crunching of granite crystals as it struggled to hold its precarious torqued position. In a flash decision I jettisoned as much gear as possible onto the last carabiner and warned Andrew of the potential longer fall coming up. I stood up on the cam hook and managed to grab a sloping hold. At this point, thankfully, my mind and body worked together to throw together a physical sequence that included a high heel hook on the back of the sloping hold that in turn allowed me to tickle the bottom of a good jug. The cam hook fell out tinkling down to the now distant placed gear. Stretched out and fully committed, my fingers somehow, walked up the base of the jug to catch the top. I pulled hard and moved up to the security of another crack to the left. I was now only a couple metres below the belay bolts. Common sense said put some gear in, but I was starting to shake with the effort of what I had done. I lunged upwards and used the remaining adrenaline to good effect, clipping the bolts. I slumped down on the stance and kept repeating the sentence "fucking hell" at least three times before telling Andrew I was safe. I later read an account of the climb online and it was interesting to read that they were defeated by this section and had to retreat from the route.

Andrew joined me at the stance and we were now able to see the top of the wall. We were both getting excited at the prospect of topping out, Andrew was soon enjoying the great looking 5.10d finger crack

of the next pitch and reached the belay without any dramas. The next pitch fell to me, a 5.9 overhang was speedily sent. As Birthday Boy Andrew now had the privilege of the final pitch, a 5.6 slab. He padded away out of sight and before I knew it, he was hauling the bag and I was chasing it, jumaring the final rope length. Pitch 35 led to a tree which Andrew insisted I touch to signify the end of the climb. We spent some time celebrating and taking Go Pro footage, whooping loudly in the manner apparently suited to topping out on El Cap. We lounged around for a while, drinking and eating, celebrating both our success and Andrew's birthday.

After organising our gear for the descent, we made our way over to the East Ledges. Knowing this to be the scene of quite a few fatal mistakes as tired parties tried to negotiate a tricky descent, we took it steadily and double checked each other before committing to each abseil. The effort of descending with the bag, even though we had split some of the gear and emptied the remaining water, was taking its toll on us and we were relieved to arrive at the car park where we had left the car a few days ago.

The next day we left the valley to catch our planes back home. Andrew's plane left earlier than mine so sitting in San Francisco Airport, I had plenty of time for reflection. I couldn't believe how close we came to not completing the route, with just two days to spare at the end of the three weeks.



Right: Andrew on the summit.
📷 Tim Larrad



El Cap, Yosemite
📷 Claire Clifton Coles

Endgame

A climbing adventure in America provides interesting insights into the distinct and different culture of the Cochise Stronghold in Arizona.

By Tony Pearson

Whenever we leave the Stronghold it is with some relief: still in one piece, not cheese-grated falling off a slab with spaced-out bolts, not bitten by a rattlesnake. And yet when I pick up one of the guidebooks to Cochise Stronghold I immediately ache to return there again, and I think of all those routes still waiting for us to climb.

My passion for Cochise Stronghold began on a solo trip to Arizona in 2013. I was in Tucson looking for somebody to climb with and had turned up at the Le Buzz café near the base of the Mt. Lemmon Highway, supposedly a good place to find a partner. After an hour in the café with clearly no climber to be seen, I went out to the car park to see if I would be luckier there. I asked a young guy, clearly a climber, if I could climb with him, but he said he was already fixed up. Feeling somewhat despondent I returned towards the car, thinking I could perhaps drive up towards one of the Mt. Lemmon crags and try to find somebody there. With me I had a copy of Eric Fazio Ricard's guidebook *Squeezing the Lemmon*, so I could at the least identify some of the routes. Back at my car, there were cars parked on both sides and three climbers outside them in the process of sorting gear, including a bolting kit. Desperate to climb and without thinking twice, I immediately asked if I could climb with them, and without hesitation they said I could join them.

I had a great day climbing with them, and they even let me have a shot at doing the second ascent of a new route they had bolted, although that proved a little too hard for me. One of them, known as Jimbo, invited me to swap camping on Mt. Lemmon for a room in the house he and his wife had in Tucson, while Eric (the author of *Squeezing the Lemmon*, and the most prolific activist in the area) offered to take me down to Cochise Stronghold to climb *Endgame*, supposedly one of the classic climbs there.

I spent a couple days at Jimbo's house having an excellent time climbing with him on Mt. Lemmon, where he introduced me to some of the very best routes including one called *Lizard Marmalade Direct*, which was brilliant, and I visited a very interesting local nature reserve. After that I was supposed to climb *Endgame* with Eric. However, on the day we were due to climb there, the wind had got up and Eric rang me early in the morning to say that it wasn't a good idea to climb the route in the wind, as rappelling down from the top would be a nightmare. Instead, we ended up going to Millagrosa Canyon, a low-level crag near Tucson, where we had a good day climbing single-pitch bolted routes. My time in the States came to an end and I had to save up Cochise Stronghold and *Endgame* for another day.



End Pinnacle on the Rockfellow Domes
Tony Pearson high on pitch 1 of *Endgame*
© Pearson Collection

A couple years later I was back in Arizona with my wife Ulla, my regular climbing partner, and she was as keen as I was to climb at Cochise, particularly because it had some good slabs. Our friend Jimbo came down to Cochise to show us around the Stronghold and pointed out some of the routes, including the magnificent-looking *Endgame*, described in the Arizona guidebook as “a wild airy line”. A few days later, after having climbed some introductory routes, we headed up to do *Endgame* – a good hour's walk with some scrumbly sections and a not-obvious approach. However, when we arrived at the foot of the dome there was somebody on the first pitch who was climbing very slowly and clearly struggling. Not wanting to get stuck behind another team, and possibly benighted, we went off to a different area and climbed lots of chicken heads on an easier but worthwhile route called *What's My Line*. Once more our time in Arizona came to an end and we had to leave.

In November 2017 we were back in Arizona again and by the middle of the month we had made our way back down to Cochise Stronghold, just a couple of miles from the Mexican border. After having done two wonderful climbs on the West

side of Cochise: *The Peacemaker* and *The Climb Too Tough To Die*, we drove around to the east to be able to more easily access *Endgame*.

This time we did not leave anything to chance. We were up at 5.30 in the morning to make sure we got to the base of the route before anybody else, and since we were familiar with the approach, we were able to get to it a bit more quickly than the previous time. And indeed, there was nobody else there when we reached the base of the climb, although another team did arrive a little later, after we had got started.

I led the first pitch, which proved to be brilliant. A stiff move off a boulder to start, followed by a thinnish traverse back left led to beautiful sustained but not too-hard climbing using the edges of alligator-plate flakes. A small overhang then allowed access to the belay to complete a great 50 metre pitch. The second pitch was almost as long but much easier, taking a slabby wall up to an alcove. Pitch three proved to be sensational: bridging up and out to the right enables you to clip a bolt and gain a seam. Some awkward undercut moves then lead to bomber in-cut plates and more amazing climbing – “joyous” as Tanya Bock's excellent guidebook describes it. Pitch four is slabby face

The "joyous" pitch 3.
Typical slabby wall
climbing at Cochise:
pitch 4 of *Endgame*
Ulla in the dish at the
top of *Endgame*.
📷 Pearson Collection



climbing, quite thin in parts, given 5.9, but we found it as hard as anything on the route. The rule of thumb is that the slabby climbing on Cochise feels harder for the grade than the steeper stuff where there are holds. Ulla led the final pitch which included a bit of chimney climbing, followed by a wall and slab – the only place on the route where the rock was less than perfect. This took us to the top of the dome, an atmospheric place where you can sit in a water-sculpted dish in the rock. Four rappels down an impressive route called *Magna*

Veritas lead back to the bottom of the climb.

Thanks to our early start we still had a bit of daylight left, so decided to drive out of the Stronghold to a place called Apache Creek in order to see the Sandhill Cranes. If *Endgame* is one of the greatest routes of its grade anywhere in the world, the sight of thousands (sic) of Sandhill Cranes coming into roost against the backdrop of the desert sunset must be one of the great sights of the natural world. To experience them both in one day has got to be as good as it gets.

Sandhill Cranes
at Apache Creek,
Arizona.
📷 Pearson Collection



Kathmandu April 2006

smoke drifts in soft air
tinctures of tropical dawn
pale pink hints of heat

women washing clothes
children tending roadside fires
in pre-curfew light

dew clings to the skin
of a parked-up armoured car
beading olive steel

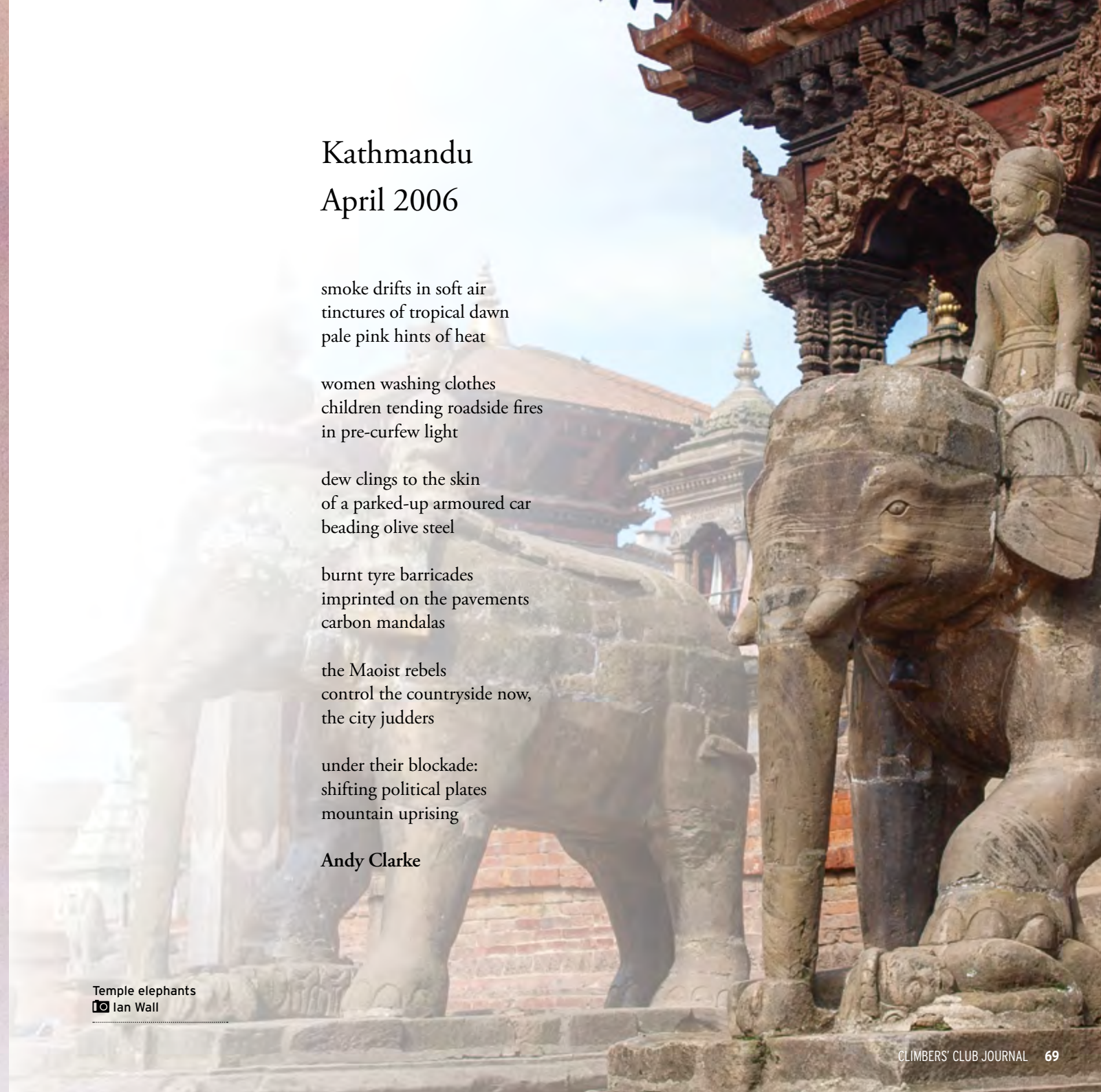
burnt tyre barricades
imprinted on the pavements
carbon mandalas

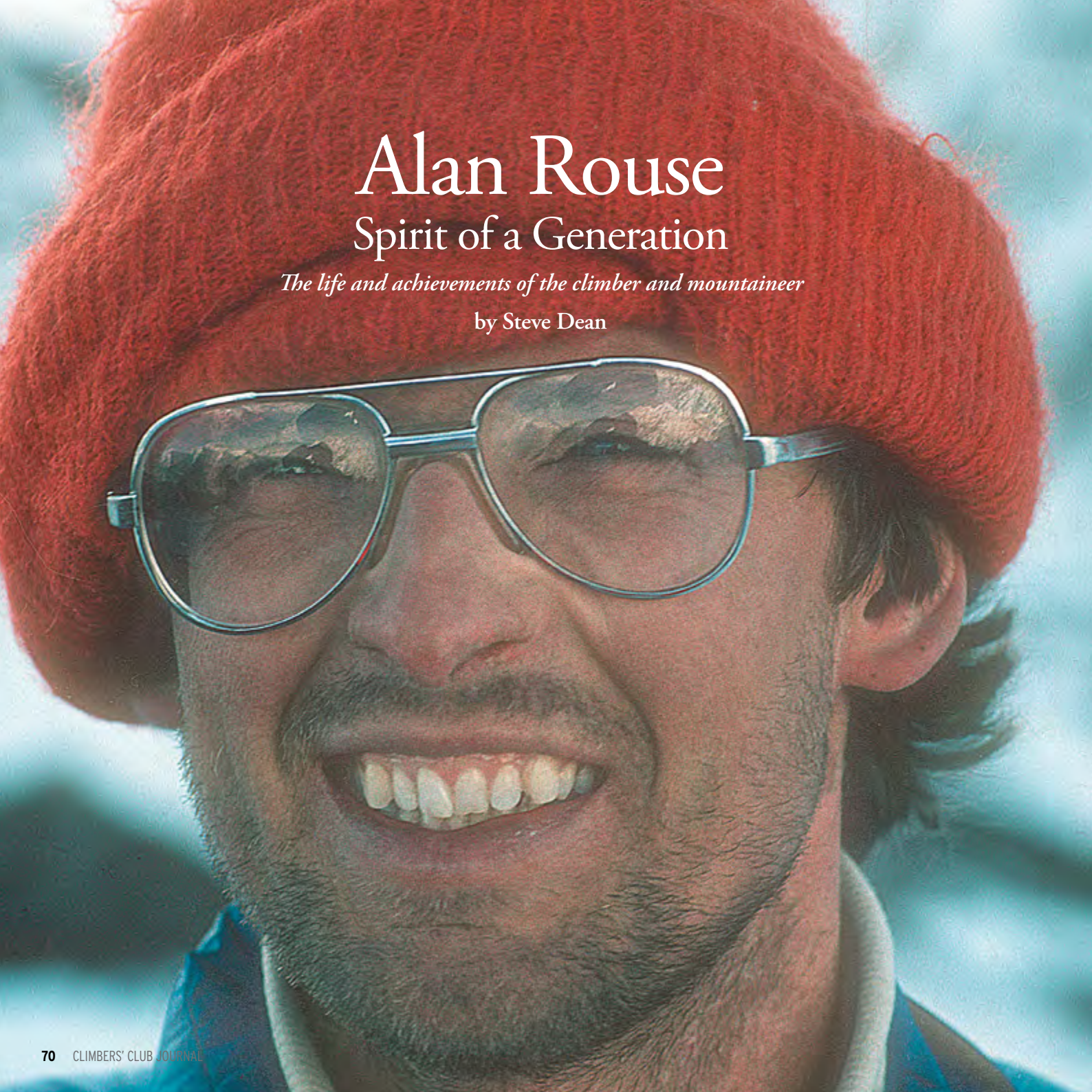
the Maoist rebels
control the countryside now,
the city judders

under their blockade:
shifting political plates
mountain uprising

Andy Clarke

Temple elephants
📷 Ian Wall





Alan Rouse

Spirit of a Generation

The life and achievements of the climber and mountaineer

by Steve Dean

“He was always the boy wonder of British climbing, even at the end. There was in him an eternal youth, endless enthusiasm and in his everlasting grin that wonderful gift to laugh at himself”

Geoff Birtles

“Winning was important to Al, which he managed without excessive self interest. I always found him generous, a man who hardly ever spoke ill of others, never burned bridges and had an enormous number of good friends who both liked and admired him.”

Geoff Birtles

“Al brought light to many darkneses and glittering gifts to dull days. Faults he had in plenty. But these were small things, seeming smaller now.”

John Barry

For climbers of a certain generation, it is hard to believe that almost forty years have passed since Alan Rouse died on K2, shortly after making the first British ascent of the mountain. It is also over fifty years since Alan, partnered with Pete Minks, made the first ascent of *Positron* at Gogarth, one of the truly great Welsh routes and one that pointed the way forward to the huge breakthrough in the mid and late seventies. Alan would have been seventy-two this year (2023), and now seemed an appropriate time to recall some of the very considerable climbing achievements that led to him being regarded as one of the outstanding mountaineers of the 1970s and 1980s, and one of the great characters of British mountaineering.

Alan Rouse was born in December 1951 in Wallasey on Merseyside. His early life gave little or no indication of his future prowess as a climber. He was a very bright boy academically, was an outstanding chess player, but was a self-confessed weedy kid with no interest in sport at all. He had however discovered rock climbing, by virtue of the fact that a scruffy sandstone quarry, The Breck, was situated close to his parents' house. At the age of sixteen Alan,

together with his mate Nick Parry, started to climb there regularly and rapidly acquired a high level of technical ability. By the end of 1968 Alan had joined The Gwydr, Mountaineering Club and had led *Cemetery Gates* and *Vector* in Wales. Geoff Birtles once told me, that the early days on The Breck had released Alan's natural ability, “He could cruise 6a problems before he started climbing properly!”

In 1969, Alan, while still at school, established an impressive list of Extreme routes in Wales as he rapidly gained experience. These included *Suicide Wall*, *Winking Crack*, *Left Wall* and *The Thing*. He became involved with the Vagabond MC and started to climb regularly with Leo Dickinson, Pete Minks and Brian Molyneux. Pete had met Alan at The Breck and quickly realised his considerable potential. Over the course of 1970 Alan would emerge as one of the best rock climbers in the country. A meeting with Eric Jones had introduced Alan to the then vogue among some of the top Welsh climbers for soloing hard routes. Characters such as Richard McHardy, Cliff Phillips and Eric himself were soloing at a level that seemed quite amazing to most of the climbing community. I remember watching Alan and Pete Minks soloing

Opposite: Alan Rouse, Karun Koh, Karakoram, 1984.
© Bonington Collection

Cenotaph Corner climbing only about ten feet apart and making the route look easy. Perhaps the most startling solo in the early days was Richard McHardy's rapid ascent of *Vector*. Alan adopted this approach with enthusiasm.

In May 1970 Alan was in Wales and went up to Cloggy with, among others, Leo Dickinson, Pete Minks, Cliff Phillips, Richard McHardy, Tut Braithwaite and Paul Nunn. On a slightly overcast morning Richard wandered off alone and made a hugely bold, on-sight, solo of *Woubits*. Later that day Alan astonished everyone by soloing Pete Crew's route *The Boldest*, still regarded after seven years as one of the hardest and most serious routes in Wales. Alan moved smoothly up the route and to quote Leo Dickinson:

"Alan seemed to linger on the crux, working it out, but the slight breeze whipped his trousers and hair adding to the illusion of insecurity. Everyone held their breath. He did the hard move, turned and laughed. Everyone relaxed too. It was a moment of worry, the aspirant's time had come."

Geoff Birtles commented: "Alan's solo of *The Boldest* stunned the established climbing elite of Britain and immediately put him centre stage, with many scratching their heads in disbelief at this outstanding and audacious achievement."

The Boldest had first been climbed by Pete Crew in 1963, and prior to that day in 1970, had had very few ascents. Earlier that day Paul Braithwaite had led the route with Paul Nunn, ahead of Alan's solo ascent. Despite the climb's reputation for difficulty, Alan seemed to find it quite reasonable, I was in Wales at the time, and in the evening we were drinking in The Vaynol when word got out about Alan's climb. People were totally astonished; here was one of the (then) hardest routes in Wales seemingly soloed with ease by a skinny school kid. Times were changing so it seemed. The following month, making only his second visit to Cloggy, Alan returned with Leo

Dickinson to put up a bold new route between Joe Brown's *The Boulder* (from 1951) and *The Boldest*. They named the new climb *Gemini* and at E4 with two long 5c pitches it still commands respect, although it is regarded as perhaps less frightening than *The Boldest*. At the time of these two climbs on Cloggy, Alan was only eighteen and still a Sixth Former. He had only been climbing for two years.

Back in the early seventies, there were virtually no indoor climbing walls and the term 'sport climbing' did not yet exist. Alan was to follow the traditional pattern of most serious rock climbers, leading to snow and ice climbing in Scotland and the Alps in the summer. Alan was to extend this further in due course, as from 1975 he became a very keen advocate of winter climbing in the Alps.

Alan started at Cambridge University in the autumn of 1970, and I think it is fair to say that he did not shine there academically. Even at the age of eighteen it would seem that climbing was already the key element in his life.

That first winter at Cambridge Alan climbed *Our Father* and *Wee Doris* at Stoney Middleton (two of the hardest routes in the country at that time) and made a very quick ascent of *Point Five Gully* on Ben Nevis with Mick Geddes. Mick was one of three significant friendships Alan started at that time, the others being with Brian Hall and particularly Rab Carrington. It was Mick Geddes who got him interested in Scottish Winter Climbing, at a crucial time when new equipment was rapidly increasing standards on snow and ice north of the border.

In the spring of 1971 Alan soloed *The Beatnik* at Helsby, a very bold outcrop route still graded E5 6a. However, his most significant action on rock that year occurred in April on the Main Cliff at Craig Gogarth. Together with Pete Minks, Alan looked at a line in the huge area of steep rock between *Rat Race* and *Dinosaur*. On the first attempt Alan managed with some difficulty, to climb two pitches

to the junction with *Rat Race*. Above him was a very steep unclimbed wall. He and Pete decided to call it a day. In Alan's own words:

"During the next week, I gained confidence to the extent that I was prepared to have a go at the top wall. It is surprising how frightening enterprises become attractive prospects after a suitable break. Thus it was that I arrived next weekend at the desolate cafe at South Stack.

The mood of the team was distinctly festive, despite a prolonged session the previous evening. Minks had brought his radio/cassette recorder for a long spell on the stance. The initial problem was how to get back onto the route. Pete had conceived the rather frightening scheme of soloing across from Gogarth to reach the stance of *Rat Race*. Since no actual route took this line, it would certainly be interesting. We arrived below the chimney pitch of *Rat Race* fully psyched up for some exciting climbing.

Pete took the radio off his waist harness and hung it from a convenient nut in the crack above the stance. I swung round the corner using a huge spike, and tried not to look at what was above. Curiously, an old piton was in place, which, I suspected, had originated from Drummond's explorations.

After resting I tentatively moved higher only to find myself unable to climb down or up, or even place a nut. There was a perfect nut placement right in front of me, but I couldn't take a hand off the rock. I shouted to Pete "I'm going to jump off!" A voice from round the corner replied: "Hang on a minute, there's a good bit on the radio. It's Steptoe and Son." "I can't hang on – my fingers are opening out!" I shouted back. "OK, you can jump now."

The minute I let go, I regretted it. I tried to snatch the holds as I toppled backwards but to no avail, of course – the will to survive is a strong one. I went down head first, facing out to sea. Twenty feet lower I stopped, out of reach of rock and gently spinning.

I climbed hand over hand back to the last runner, where I took a long rest. On the next attempt I carried a Moac between my teeth pirate fashion. The nut went in well and I rested again, though I was careful not to gain any height by it. The final section into *Dinosaur* was great climbing; further and further away from the last runner, but getting easier all the time. I got a tremendous kick from solving the moves quickly as each hold slotted into place. It is not often that I climbed to that standard or enjoyed myself so much. The route was named *Positron*."

Alan climbed the route without abseil inspection or cleaning and five rest points were used on that first ascent. Notwithstanding that, *Positron* was a very big deal indeed for 1971, in terms both of technical difficulty and sheer audacity. Writing this now as a seventy year old, it is very difficult to convey clearly to younger climbers just what top-level rock climbing was like fifty years ago. Alan would have been shod in EBs, probably had no harness, and would have had no chalk, no camming devices and only an array of primitive nuts and slings. Almost all his training would have been in the pub and he and Pete would have had a skin-full of beer the night before the climb; it was a different world, far away from the current scene. Alan didn't even particularly like Gogarth.

Positron gained a huge reputation and it stopped a lot of good climbers over the years. Alan was extremely proud of it and its thrilling situations and level of difficulty were extreme even by Gogarth standards. Today with consecutive pitches of 5c, 6a and 6a, it is one of the finest E5s in Britain. To quote none other than Pat Littlejohn:

"Perhaps it is that moment when you swing left from the second stance to a great spike, and look up at the awesome wall that seems to overhang forever. This is the moment to think of the first ascensionist, way back in 1971, and ask yourself would I have

dared? For a short time Alan Rouse was in a class of his own in British climbing.”

Fourteen years after Alan’s first ascent, *Positron* was soloed by the very talented Stevie Haston, an astonishing effort and a clear indication of how standards had rocketed by the mid 1980s. Following on from his solo ascent of *The Boldest* the year before, *Positron* fully established Alan’s reputation as one of the best rock climbers in the country.

That summer Alan paid his third visit to the Alps and had an adventurous time. He soloed the *North Ridge* of the Cengalo in under four hours and then with Pete Minks made a rapid ascent of *The American Direct* on the West Face of the Dru. The pair then climbed the *North Face* of the Triolet. Alan’s alpine trip then came to a close: he attempted to solo the South Face of the Aiguille du Fou, but a short fall resulted in a broken ankle. Undeterred, he hopped down over twenty abseils and met the rescue team on the glacier.

In 1972 Alan began to get seriously interested in Scottish winter climbing. He and Mick Geddes made the second (and long awaited) ascent of *Orion Face Direct* on Ben Nevis. They followed this up with *Right-Hand Route* on Minus Two Buttress, and the first ascent of *South Pillar* on Creag Meaghaidh. That summer in the Alps with Rab Carrington they climbed a route to the right of the *Direct Route* on the North East face of the Gletscherhorn, and made a rapid ascent of *The Walker Spur* on the Jorasses. A post alpine trip to Yosemite resulted in a fall five pitches up on the *North Face Direct* on Half Dome. Alan’s ankle was fractured again and although it mended, it troubled him for the rest of his life.

Geoff Birtles once described Alan’s life in his twenties as having “an element of university rag week about it”, and certainly there is some truth in this. He did manage to get a modest degree at Cambridge, but in the main regular employment was avoided, and many schemes were hatched to make

serious money, usually impressively unsuccessfully!

In 1973, aged twenty-one, Alan was invited with Rab, to attend the International Meet at École Nationale in Chamonix. This was followed by a brief and generally unsuccessful visit to Patagonia. One major route he did do that year was the second ascent of the *Zapelli/Bertone* route on Mont Maudit with Mick Geddes. Some years later, Alan together with Mick, nearly made a winter ascent of *The Croz Spur* on the Jorasses but were thwarted by bad weather. Mick Geddes’ early death from cancer in 1985 was a source of great sadness both to Alan and to a great number of friends. Mick played a major part in Alan’s progress from a rock climber to becoming an established mountaineer.

Alan continued to climb at a high level in Wales at this time and told a self-deprecating story about how things move on. By 1974 the new hotshot on the Welsh scene was Alec Sharp, and Alan tells it from an article that appeared in Crag Magazine:

“One Sunday I ended up down Easter Island Gully at Craig Gogarth in company with Brian Hall, Alec, Leo Dickinson, Brian Molyneux and Steve Humphries. Alec had come to climb the crack opposite *Wonderwall* (*Supercrack*). Brian Hall and I were suffering from appalling hangovers, and we looked a sorry team compared to Alec and Steve. Brian was wearing his top hat, so he lent me a knotted handkerchief to keep my hair out of my eyes.

Alec was soon powering up his *Supercrack* while the rest of us felt sick with the smell of seaweed and the swell of the sea. Alec had recently free climbed *Wonderwall*, but I had no such honourable intention towards it.

The first section was much easier than it looked and I was soon hanging from the aid point. My push had dwindled to nothing and strength I had once had seemed irretrievable.

Obviously I had become a mountaineer at last!”

At the time this happened Alan was all of twen-



Opposite: The Grandes Jorasses, Walker and Croz Spurs.
John Cleare

ty-two. In the summer of 1975 Alan with Rab Carrington paid a visit to Cloggy and climbed Ray Evans' excellent route *The Leech*. They added a variation third pitch at E3 6a, taking the steep rock to the right of *Serth*. Over the years it has become quite popular.

1975 was a very fulfilling year for Alan in the Alps. In the January along with Rab Carrington, he made his first winter visit to Chamonix. It was a time when Britain's top alpinists were increasingly looking at the challenges of winter climbing there as suitable preparation for climbing in the Great Ranges such as The Himalaya. Alan and Rab took to winter alpinism with alacrity, and made some fine ascents including the *Gervasutti Pillar* and the first winter ascent of the *Rebuffat/Terray* route on the North Face of the Aiguille des Pelerins, now regarded as a top class winter route.

Back in Chamonix in the summer, the pair of them made a very rapid ascent of the *Bonatti/Zapelli* route on the Eckpfeiler, and an early repeat of the fine *Sandri/Perenni* route on the Aiguille Noire. Later they returned to the Eckpfeiler and climbed the superb *Cecchinell/Nominé* route in a quick time and then made the second ascent of the *Lesueur Route* on the Dru. By the mid-seventies, Alan had accumulated an extensive background of alpine climbing over seven years and it's fair to say that he and Rab were in the vanguard of British Alpinists. This body of experience would serve him well in the years ahead.

In December 1976 Alan along with Rab Carrington, Brian Hall, the Burgess twins, John Whittle plus various girlfriends embarked on an extended trip to South America. Alan and Rab had visited Patagonia briefly in 1973, but now with solid experience of Alpine winter climbing they had a major objective in the 7,000ft West Face of Fitzroy. They made three attempts on the face, but were finally driven back by verglassed rock and savage

weather conditions. As a consolation, they did climb the West Face of Poincenot, and then travelled to Peru where their main objective was the West Face of Nevado Rondoy. Due to very obvious avalanche danger, the route they went for was the Left Flank of the West Face leading to the col between the mountain's north and south summits. The climb turned out to be both arduous and dangerous, with retreat probably impossible from high up on the route. They had three bivouacs on the route itself, and then suffered a long and hazardous return to Base Camp with a further bivouac. The ascent of Rondoy was a particularly fine achievement, and was followed a couple of weeks later by an ascent of the South Face of Yerupaja. The experience gained on this trip was to prove invaluable for Alan, as over the next two years he would visit the Himalaya, and perform well there.

January and February 1978, provided particularly good conditions for winter climbing in Scotland. Alan was involved in two important first ascents that have become sought-after modern classics. One was *Route 2*, on Càrn Dearg on Ben Nevis, which he climbed with Mick Geddes, while the other was up in Torridon. Beinn Eighe's *Central Buttress* had been looked at by a number of teams, but Alan together with Alex MacIntyre succeeded in making the first ascent in winter. A superb route in a wonderful location, it does not come into condition every winter, and is high on many hit lists. Alan's account in Cold Climbs makes for a gripping read. Later that winter Alan with Rab Carrington made a three-day ascent of the *North-East Spur* of Les Droites.

Later that year in the post monsoon season, Alan together with Rab Carrington, Brian Hall and Roger Baxter-Jones headed for Nepal. Their objective was to climb Jannu (7,710m) alpine style, by its huge East Face. In the event, circumstances required a change of plan, and they climbed the

mountain by the original French route of 1961 but in a lightweight fashion. The ascent and return to Base Camp took five days, and was a fine effort in face of particularly dangerous snow conditions.

The following year Alan returned to Peru, with Brian Hall. There they made a number of fine ascents, including the first ascent of Tsacra Grane Oeste with Nicholas Jaeger. In the autumn Alan and Brian travelled to Everest Base Camp and together with Doug Scott and Georges Bettembourg climbed the North Face of Nuptse (7,861m). At that time the mountain had only been climbed from the south, by the British Expedition in 1961. The ascent of the North Face went remarkably smoothly, to quote Doug Scott: "The actual climbing from the Western Cwm went so well it only required six days up and down, there were no epics, struggles in storms, no illnesses, no incidences or accidents of any kind on the climb – we climbed our route, and returned as friends."

In 1980 Alan joined Chris Bonington in a reconnaissance trip to China to assess the possibility of climbing Kongur. While there they made the first ascent of Sarakyaguqi (6,200m). Alan formed a good relationship with Chris, and plans were made to return to Kongur the following year.

With the experience he had gained with ascents of Jannu and Nuptse, Alan organised a team to attempt the West Ridge of Everest in winter at the end of the year. He put together an all-star team of Joe Tasker, the Burgess twins, Brian Hall, John Porter, Paul Nunn and Pete Thexton, but the combination of poor conditions and savage weather, took its toll. By mid February Joe Tasker and Adrian Burgess had reached 24,000ft on the route but by that stage virtually everyone was either ill or exhausted and a retreat was made. In his book "Everest the Cruel Way" Joe Tasker recounts the brutal conditions they faced. Both Joe and Alan lost almost two stone on the expedition.

Later that year Alan joined Chris Bonington, Joe Tasker, Peter Boardman, Jim Curran, Michael Ward and Charlie Clarke to return to China to make an attempt on Kongur (7,719m). Despite Alan's initial view that they 'might not need to use a rope', the climb itself turned into a protracted struggle hampered by bad weather, high winds and by the fact that being further north of the Karakorum / Himalaya, bitter cold. A first attempt failed and when success came it was hard won. Four nights were spent stormbound high on the mountain in tiny one-man slots, known as snow coffins. Most teams would have given up, but when the weather cleared, they made for the top. This was followed by a long and dangerous descent and a fifth bivouac. Both Alan and Joe had a particularly hard time on Kongur, both clearly having not recovered from the winter visit to Everest only a few months before.

While the team was in China, plans were hatched to make an attempt on Everest from the north. Alan applied for and obtained permission to climb the North-East Ridge, but promptly handed the leadership to Chris Bonington. However, a problem had emerged on Kongur. Jim Curran comments:

"It was obvious on the return from Kongur that, despite the four's success on the mountain, some relationships were strained, particularly between Pete Boardman and Al Rouse. Pete found Al's incessant bullshitting irritating (though it has to be said that many people thought he raised it to an art form) and he was unimpressed with Al's high altitude performance. Al seemed unaware of the tensions, but, as an observer, I could see that something was afoot."

In the end, Chris chose to not include Alan in the Everest team, which initially caused Alan considerable bitterness. It would seem however, that perhaps he dodged a bullet; on the 1982 Everest expedition Dick Renshaw suffered a stroke and tragically Joe Tasker and Pete Boardman died high on the mountain.



The North Face of
Nuptse, 7,861m, Nepal
John Cleare

In 1982 Alan made his first visit to the Karakorum when he joined Paul Nunn, Brian Hall and Andy Parkin to attempt an ascent of Baintha Brakk 2 (Ogre 2) (6,960m) in Pakistan. The climbers faced hard technical climbing and frequently dangerous conditions and Brian Hall was forced to leave the expedition after dislocating a shoulder. Paul Nunn was particularly aware of the impact of the deaths of Pete Boardman, Joe Tasker and Alex MacIntyre that year: “It left Al highly ambitious, but alone, faced with the problems of personal objectives which he could not fully share as he had usually in the past. It placed him on a dangerous trajectory.” That trajectory would ultimately lead to K2.

Around this time Alan rekindled his interest in British rock climbing, climbing frequently in The Peak and in Wales. Jim Curran recalled: “I was always hugely impressed that Al could consistently operate in the E4-E5 level right up to the end of his life. He was an absolute natural.”

In 1983 Alan made a major visit to the Karakorum in an expedition organised by Doug Scott, initially with K2 in mind. Also on the trip were Roger Baxter-Jones, Don Whillans, Pete Thexton, Andy Parkin, Greg Child, Jean Afanassieff and Steve Sustad.

The intention was for the team to attempt a number of peaks, but tragically early on Pete Thexton died from pulmonary oedema while attempting to climb Broad Peak with Greg Child. Alan with Andy Parkin had a failed attempt on Lobsang Spire due to bad weather, but later together with Roger Baxter-Jones and Jean Afanassieff made an excellent Alpine style ascent of Broad Peak. Alan together with Andy Parkin and Steve Sustad also made an attempt on the *South Ridge Direct* on K2 but progress was halted when the mountain was hit by an earthquake. Later that summer Roger Baxter-Jones almost made the first British ascent of K2, climbing to 8,300 metres on the *Abruzzi Spur* with a Spanish climber. For Alan, the trip had been a

success: by the age of 30 he had climbed Jannu, Nuptse and Broad Peak all in the best Alpine style. Along with Doug Scott he was probably Britain’s most vociferous apologist for the purist ethic of Alpine style climbing in the Greater Ranges.

In 1984 Alan spent most of the year in Britain, rock climbing at his usual high level. Two notable new routes he was involved with were *Reagent* (E4 6a) at Stanage and *Quality Street* (E5 6b) at Millstone climbed with Phil Burke. Jim Curran recalled how Alan had developed a fondness for the crags on Kinder’s North Edge. That summer was particularly dry and he recalled a lot of happy days out cragging in Derbyshire.

That Easter Alan travelled to Jersey, together with Jim Curran, Ian Smith, Richard Haszko, Phil Burke and Bill Dark. To quote Jim Curran:

“We had the opportunity to run amok in an area where hardly any climbing had been done. It was the equivalent of going to Cornwall in the 1940s and there were routes of all grades waiting for the first ascents. Ian, Bill and Richard and I went for the easy and middle grade options, while Al and Phil competed for the hardest. Al won, with his masterpiece, the three star *Tax Exile* at E5 6a; but at different times we all climbed with each other and in the week or so we spent in Jersey we climbed twenty plus new routes between us. Two other notable ones that have become classics, were *Perihelion* (HVS) and *Citizen’s Edge* (E2).”

Later that year Alan returned to Pakistan with Chris Bonington. Despite his exclusion from the Everest expedition in 1982, Alan had remained on friendly terms with Chris. On the Kongur climb Chris had seen a fine looking peak on the Pakistan-China border, which turned out to be Karun Koh (7,350m). To quote Chris:

“Since Al and I had first seen the mountain on our reconnaissance in 1980, I asked him if he’d join me. It’s a tribute to his forgiving nature that he accepted.”

They looked at a number of possible routes up the mountain and opted in the end for the West Ridge, but then a huge storm settled on the mountain for ten days and momentum was lost. To quote Chris again:

“There was a slight stab of regret that we hadn’t grabbed the first ascent, but the five weeks I shared with Al were great fun, without stress or serious disagreement.”

Alan spent most of 1985 at home in Sheffield climbing (frequently with Jim Curran, Neil Foster, Richard Haszko, Simon Wells and Geoff Birtles) in the Peak and in Wales. He did visit New Zealand later in the year for a lecture tour and took the opportunity to visit the New Zealand Alps. That year he was also elected Vice President of the British Mountaineering Council. This was however an increasingly difficult period for Alan. Plans were afoot for a major visit to K2 the following year, but there were financial problems in his own life, and a long-term relationship with girlfriend Hilary had ended. According to Jim Curran this had devastated Alan and he had become deeply unhappy.

Although he was a central figure in the hotbed of the Sheffield climbing scene and could piss-take and bullshit with the best, Jim felt that Alan was becoming increasingly under pressure. Jim felt that Alan was starting to stake an awful lot on success on K2. Added to this, at the end of the year Alan discovered that his new girlfriend, Deborah Sweeney, was pregnant with the baby due the following summer. In the early months of 1986 he must have had a great deal on his mind.

The 1986 British K2 Expedition was sponsored by Fullers Brewery and was a grand affair with a team comprising the top British alpine talent of the time. Alan was the leader of the team and the team was: the Burgess twins, John Barry, John Porter, Brian Hall, Phil Burke and Dave Wilkinson. Jim Curran was there as filmmaker, Jim Hargreaves was

base camp manager, and Bev Holt was expedition doctor. It was a team of great talent and experience, but they had gained permission for a formidable goal on K2, the unclimbed North West Ridge.

From the outset the team faced considerable problems, both in the conditions on the mountain and the often poor weather. They pushed the route up to 7,400m but then severe weather conditions resulted in no progress for three weeks, while elsewhere on the mountain there had been four deaths. By the end of July some of the team had departed, but Alan, the Burgess twins, Dave Wilkinson, Phil Burke and John Barry were all considering an (albeit unauthorised) attempt on the *Abruzzi Spur* as consolation for withdrawal from the North West Ridge. K2 had still not had a British ascent and Alan, in particular, was determined to make an attempt. After an initial recce poor weather returned and all of the British team apart from Alan decided to leave. Alan teamed up with the Polish woman Mrufka Wolf, to make a final attempt and Jim Curran agreed to stay at Base Camp to support them. There were already a number of climbers on the route and Alan and Mrufka set off early on the morning of July 30th in promising weather. Amongst the climbers already on the route were Kurt Diemberger and the British climber Julie Tullis.

By August 2nd Alan and Mrufka had reached Camp 4 high on the mountain, but a day behind their schedule. On the following day, the weather began to deteriorate slowly, but on August 4th Alan reached the summit of K2 together with two Austrian climbers Willi Bauer and Alfred Imitzer (Mrufka had not made it to the summit and Alan helped her get back to Camp 4.) Later that day Kurt Diemberger and Julie Tullis also reached the top, but by then Julie was struggling. A total of seven climbers became trapped at Camp 4 as a huge storm settled on the mountain. They had been perilously too long at over 8,000m. On August



The southern flank of K2, 8,611m, Karakoram
📷 John Cleare

6th/7th Julie Tullis died at Camp 4 and in a slight break in the weather on August 10th Alfred Imtzer, Hannes Wieser and Mrufka Wolf died as they tried to descend from Camp 4. Alan was by now delirious and was left in his tent and it is presumed that he died that day. The two remaining Austrians, Kurt Diemberger and Willi Bauer, made it back to Base Camp on August 11th, but were barely alive, both having severe frostbite. Their descent in those conditions must have been horrendous. When Kurt was able to communicate clearly, Jim Curran was able to get a fuller idea of what had happened. Jim's account is indeed poignant:

"Kurt suddenly volunteered the information that Al had indeed got to the top, and on the 4th he had led most of the way, until he was overtaken by two of the three Austrians with only about a hundred metres to go. He had told Willi Bauer and Alfred Imtzer he was relieved that someone else could break the trail for the last section. On the summit day, Kurt thought that Al had been the strongest of them all. As he told me, I couldn't help the tears falling. Of course it was important that he'd done it at last, and I could just visualise his big wide grin of triumph as he stood almost on top of the world on his own. For a few short moments, all his dreams would have been fulfilled, his problems solved."

The epic story of K2 in the summer of 1986 is covered in detail in Jim Curran's book *K2 Triumph and Tragedy* and it makes for grim reading. That summer nine expeditions converged on K2, 27 people climbed the mountain, but Alan was one of 13 killed. Seven people died having already reached the summit, eight of the deaths occurred above 8,000m. When Alan died, he was still only thirty-four, but he had been above 8,000m for nine days without the use of oxygen. K2 did not receive another British ascent for seven years, when Jonathan Pratt climbed the mountain in September 1993 with the American climber Daniel Mazur, and returned safely.

For Jim Curran, the experience was deeply traumatic and particularly so as Alan was a very close friend. Jim talked to me frequently about Alan, but found it difficult to talk about the latter part of the K2 trip. He despaired at the scale of the loss of life and the awful impact it had on friends and loved ones. Jim himself had had considerable misgivings about going to K2, but in the end had found himself at the heart of one of mountaineering's greatest tragedies. Alan had pinned great hopes on succeeding on K2, but sadly he was never to return.

At the end of the summer of 1986, Alan's girlfriend Deborah gave birth to a daughter Holly, sadly a child he would never know. Alan had a large number of friends in the climbing world, and was widely liked and admired both for his friendly nature and his wide-ranging achievements. He was excellent at all levels of climbing from bouldering, crag climbing, snow and ice climbing and alpine climbing through to climbing in the Great Ranges. At the time of his death Alan was Vice President of the British Mountaineering Council, and he continues to be commemorated by the Alan Rouse Mountaineering Collection, housed at Sheffield Central Library. This is a major mountaineering library collection and contains all the books submitted each year for the Boardman Tasker Award for Mountain literature. At present the collection contains almost 4,000 books and documents.

Alan would have been seventy this year (2021). To many of us he was the very spirit of his generation, a brilliant talent that was tragically lost at the age of only thirty-four. In the history of British Mountaineering he remains one of the most prominent figures in a period when a number of talented young climbers were rapidly pushing the boundaries of alpinism in the Great Ranges, although with sometimes tragic outcomes. The drive and courage of these people were admired throughout the mountaineering community. It was

a golden period for British Mountaineering and Alan was one of its central figures.

At the end of April 1987, on a freezing cold day, Johnny Dawes and Mike Raine walked up to Cloggy and (onsight) produced a thrilling and very hard route traversing the East Buttress at E6, with three pitches of 6b and one of 6a. They called the climb *Rupert Road*, in memory of the on going social scene at Alan's house in Sheffield's Nether Edge. In June 2018 Rab Carrington and Brian Hall unveiled a Blue Memorial Plaque for Alan, at The Breck. Also present were friends and members of the Gwydr Mountain Club and the Vagabonds Club. To quote Chris Bonington:

"Al, mercurial, brilliant in so many ways, warm-hearted and kind, was one of the great characters of British climbing and it is very appropriate that he is remembered in this lovely, peaceful park where, for him, it really all started."

Particular thanks to: the late Jim Curran, Leo Dickinson, Brian Molyneux, Ian Smith, Geoff Birtles, Paul Braithwaite, Mike Browell, Mike Mortimer, Graham Desroy, Tim James, John Lumb and Andy Boorman.



FURTHER READING

Alan Rouse

A Mountaineer's Life

Compiled by Geoff Birtles

Thirty-one essays by a wide variety of authors, covering many aspects of Alan's life. The book wonderfully recreates the feel of the climbing world in the 1970s and 80s.

Geoff Birtles: *"Everyone who contributed to this book did so for free and the royalties the book generated went towards funding the Alan Rouse Collection in Sheffield Central Library."*

Geoff's book is highly recommended.

K2 Triumph and Tragedy by Jim Curran

K2 Savage Mountain, Savage Summer

by John Barry

Here, There and Everywhere... by Jim Curran

Everest the Cruel Way by Joe Tasker

Kongur; China's Elusive Summit

by Chris Bonington

The Burgess Book of Lies

by Adrian and Alan Burgess

The White Cliff edited by Grant Farquhar



Far left: Portrait of Alan Rouse, 1980.
Left: Alan Rouse on Kongur, 1981.
Bonington Collection

A Spring Trip to Morocco

And other tales of climbing in the post Barbie world

Liz Fowler

In this article Liz reflects on 2023 with a focus on a trip to Morocco and the fine adventures to be had there. She then looks back to some trips in the UK and some of her most memorable days out. She also has some interesting insights into modern climbing culture from a woman's perspective.

The best trip of my year so far was getting back to Morocco this spring on a CC trip where I actually got to climb some starred routes that were in the guidebook, after the two previous new routing adventures with *Morocco Rock's* own Paul Donnithorne. Paul also organised this particular trip. Do look up my new routes when you go on his future trips. Both the trip and the routes are highly recommended

To hold my ropes (and put them up harder

itches) I managed to tempt Dave away from the Orme bolts by the promise of sunshine. Dave had cheated by getting in an early season sport trip to train, so I knew I might have to try a little bit.

The highlight route for me was *Fantasia* on Dragon Buttress – I'd be keen to do more in this area – especially given the road improvements in the Samazar Valley meaning that the driving is no longer the most stressful part of the approach anymore.

It is a rather understated crag from below, but perseverance gets you to the higher excellent pitches. This is followed by a descent which turned out to be unexpectedly adventurous and brilliant, with a scramble up and along a knife edge ridge like Crib Goch on steroids, and then a long bit of bushwhacking down gullies and the hillside. What a great day out!

Possibly even more exciting than the climbing was the day when there was some sort of hunt in the valley, with men with guns everywhere, taking time out from the marquee set up in the village for them to watch football on a big screen. As with CC huts, times are also changing in Morocco with regard to technology and mobile phone signal availability. I was a little sad to see this, as it has felt so unspoilt there previously, but things quite rightly change and it is selfish to put personal feelings before progress that benefits many. Hopefully this will also help with recovery from the recent earthquake.

It was lovely to experience the hospitality of the Kasbah once again, where the food was plentiful and outstanding. Moroccan logistics are pretty easy and this time no flights were missed, although Jesse

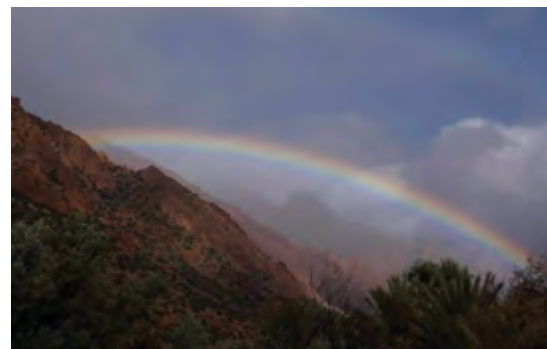
and Molly's car did have to wait while they did 'one more route' on the last day – but then they do have an advantage in airports with their own brand of fast track boarding.

In Morocco, as in the CC, as a woman I've found a really warm welcome. Those who like me have had the (mis) fortune to see the Barbie movie will know that this is not always the case. As some women prefer to mostly climb with other women, and we want to improve our diversity of age and gender in the CC, it is positive to see that there are now meets focused for women. Personally, I prefer to climb in mixed company, so it is also equally important to recognise that everyone is not the same and have something for all our members. I volunteered at an aspirants' meet in summer and it was great to see a mix of age and gender in those interested in joining. It was good to be involved in ensuring our new members are welcomed into a club where being safe and trustworthy is highly valued.

I'm definitely keen to go to Morocco again, although I'm finding it harder to reconcile flying with my enjoyment of climbing trips given the current climate (and biodiversity) emergency where

The Kasbah
Tizourgane, Anti-Atlas,
Morocco
📷 Bryan Maloney

Right: Landscape near the Kasbah Tizourgane, Anti-Atlas, Morocco
📷 Bryan Maloney
Far right: Anti-Atlas rainbow.
📷 Liz Fowler



tourism as a contributing factor. However it is also a vital part of the income that can also help to protect beautiful places. A tricky balance.

A trip to the Lakes with Mark during the early summer hot spell indeed felt more like Spain or North Africa as everything was so dry and arid which is a reminder that our recent weather heralds a change in the 30-year averages that make up our climate.

In contrast on a trip to Pembroke in August, where the weather had tendencies back towards traditional British damp, I learnt that my definition of dry rock is different to Misha's. Although to be fair I did feel quite strong after a week climbing Extremes I would normally have deemed wet. Despite the conditions Misha and I both angered the Gods of Unfinished Business (and probably the CC Onsite Purists reading this) by ticking off things that had previously seen our airtime.

Despite the conditions I only had to prusik once due to ending up in free space, although I was not the only CC member to find themselves in this predicament seconding the tax advisor. Here I am withholding names to protect the innocent. Going back in the sunshine the following weekend to revisit an E1 that repelled me (Misha said it was merely greasy) I found it hard to locate the route as the rock was a different colour – and it felt surprisingly easy with its friction mode enabled.

My standout UK route of the year overall (on the subsequent drier Pembroke weekend where no one fell off) is a 'little' E1 called *Wishful Thinking*. I've climbed a lot harder, but this one really is audacious, ridiculously steep, improbable and intimidating and therefore brilliant! Thanks to Ian for finding the right abseil, providing a reassuring level of competence, and making sure I wasn't allowed to back out of leading it.

Luckily Pembroke approaches are quite straightforward in the main – drop a rope and go down it – so long as it's in the right place, and the tide is behaving. Although mistakes are easily remedied by jugging out or alternatively skipping the waves and roped soloing on a micro traction to maybe something like the right belay. (Yes, there is another story here!)

However, I've recently discovered that North Wales sport approaches can count as adventurous, and can retain a certain spice in the climbing, even if they are bolted when you get there. I definitely recommend a trip to Craig Pen y Gogarth if you like that sort of thing. Do the sensational *Third Dimension* – just try not to crimp the guano.

There so much to explore and do. My main thought for this year is that work gets in the way and I have so much envy of all those full time climbers in the CC who have reached that fabled retirement stage of life and successfully denied the call of other sports.



A Toe in the Water – First Trip to Tajikistan

Visiting somewhere completely different is an exciting and stimulating experience. This summer Val visited the little known Fann Mountains and describes her journey through a beautiful landscape, together with what she learnt about the local culture. She offers some advice to anyone planning a visit there.

Val Hennelly

I wasn't going to turn down a free trip to a 'Stan', even if I didn't know where it was. Jessie Leong invited me to join her on a Tajik tourist company/ USAID sponsored trip designed for her to create some showcasing images and articles about the country to improve knowledge about the trekking and climbing opportunities in the UK market and to increase penetration. I was sold to them as an influencer in the climbing community and a representative of the older traveller...

The itinerary involved arrival in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, visits to some forts, museums and archaeological sites, a 12 day trek through the Fann mountains and a few days in the Pamirs.

Tajikistan is one of the countries that gained independence following the breakup of the USSR in 1991. It had a civil war from 1992 to 1997, between the eastern end of the country and the rest of it. They have had the same president since 1991 so you can tell which side prevailed, but the Pamirs seem to retain a degree of autonomy, although additional paperwork and checkpoints are needed for the autonomous region of Gorno-Badakhshan.

Dushanbe, previously Stalinabad, is at 1,000m and in the seven percent of land mass not designated as mountains. In general, the weather is hot and continental in the summer and cold and harsh in the winter, particularly in those mountains. The population is around 11 million, concentrated in the cities of Dushanbe, Panjakent (the previous capital), Khujand and Khorog. The main languages are Tajik, with various dialects, Russian and Shugni in the east. Signage is generally in Latin and Cyrillic alphabet in the west of the country, and just Cyrillic in the east, which meant it took longer to read road and shop signs, though we got to recognise 'grocery' and 'pharmacy'.

The younger generation are pretty multilingual with passable English, as well as Tajik and Russian. We benefitted from being guided by Borbad, a 30

year old graduate and historical linguistic researcher whose family were big in archaeology and museum administration; his English was excellent and he was a passionate advocate for his country, culture, history and people as well as a font of knowledge.

Our main sponsor was an outfit called Rasul Tours which specialised in Fann Mountains and cultural tours; Faridun Hamroev, its proprietor, was our excellent liaison contact and itinerary mastermind. He picked us up at Dushanbe airport at 3am in the morning on arrival and ran us the ten minutes to our hotel and was back again at 8am to brief us for our first day's orientation – tours of historical and cultural sites in 40 degree temperatures.

Dushanbe was interesting with lots of development and huge imposing buildings and an atmosphere of pride and dynamism. The parks were well kept and punctuated with statues of Tajik historical figures and the third highest flag in the world. It used to be the highest but then Turkey trumped them before Qatar erected an even taller one. The Navruz 'teahouse' (meaning new day) is a celebration of Tajik craftsmanship; erected after independence within three or four years. It showcases spectacular wood carving, mosaics, culture and crafts. The superb museums cover a huge timespan of human activity, culture, religions, and invasions that occurred at a crossroads of the Silk Road.



Right: Sleeping Buddha statue in the National Museum of Tajikistan in the capital Dushanbe.
 Val Hennelly
 Previous page: Jessie takes a dip at Dushokha Lake.
 Jessie Leong



After our whirlwind tour of Dushanbe, we were off on our travels to the mountains, initially to Panjakent via the very beautiful Iskanderkul lake with its Niagara waterfall outflow. The lake is named after Alexander the Great who is reputed to have called in here on his eastern campaigns. We continued via the seven lakes of the Shing Valley to the start of our trek.

The Fann mountains lie in the east of the country sharing a border with Uzbekistan. Relations between the two countries have improved since the death of the first post-independence Uzbek leader, but there are still border posts in the mountain passes. The Fann are not enormously high, although there are some snowy peaks with very Soviet names over 5,000m and they benefit from an extensive network of paths linking the villages in the valleys with the summer pastures and temporary villages (Uvols). On the whole there are plentiful water supplies in streams and glacial lakes and so, while the actual upper pastures are arid limestone type environment

and the grazing quite scrub-like, the margins along the rivers and irrigation channels are intensively micro-farmed and managed, and far greener.

There is little serviced accommodation in the mountains themselves; at two of the entry points (Alaudin and Artuch) there are Soviet era complexes called Alpagers, and in the valleys there are a range of homestays which have developed to meet the tourist trade. The homestays are fairly basic accommodation, generally with private rooms, a shower and western style toilet; they often provide food as well.

Our trekking team included the local guide, Karamat, four donkeys, their wrangler Fasli, and Borbad, whose family had hailed from these valleys and he encountered relatives at every village, pass and Uvol. Karamat and Fasli both had nigh on 40 years of experience of the mountains and seemed to have climbed many of the peaks supporting Soviet era alpinism, and were embedded by familial ties in the mountain communities. They were all very keen to make sure their guests, Jessie, Hendrik (Jessie's friend from Finland and another outdoor journalist) and I had the best of experiences and suffered no mishaps.

All this made for a very convivial trek with no dramas or epics to create a ripping yarn; just 12 sauntering days through gorgeous mountain scenery keeping pace with the donkeys (easier uphill than down) in mostly very fair weather. The days were always bright mornings with some clouding over and occasional rain in the afternoon. Temperatures were around 25 degrees centigrade in the day and nights were not that much lower.

Jessie had acquired the 2019 Trekking in Tajikistan guide book which details several routes in the Fann and we used this to orient ourselves as we travelled. We had used Google Earth to try to research our outlined route before departure, but divergences in spelling and a general dearth of hard

Right: Borbad at Hazorchashma Lake, Shing Valley.
 Val Hennelly



Above: Tavasang Pass
Right: The Igrok Pass, with perched Uvols, left, and in the middle distance.
Middle right: Hendrik at lunch in the home of Karamat and Chamzia.
Val Hennelly

copy maps about the region meant we had been none too sure of exactly where we were going before our departure. In the country we had acquired two useful maps, the first by chance in a museum in Dushanbe was a tourist map of the country which gave a great overview, and the second a photograph of a wall map in one of the guesthouses of the Fann which had actually been created by Faridun.

Our route for the first three days took us from Kiogli, a village above Murgazor, over the Tavasang Pass and down the Sarymat river to the home village of Karamat, Ghazza (pronounced with a guttural sort of Ghrrr). Hendrik with his German heritage had the best rolling Rrrs, but generally our pronunciation efforts triggered great mirth for our team and the locals. Our trek up to Ghazza was delayed for a couple of hours in an idyllic apricot

grove as we awaited conclusion of a funeral taking place in the village and we had the only heavy rain of our holiday on that stretch, which was a shame because it was Karamat's home village and a fine example of a terraced mud brick settlement. It was however far too wet for the planned tour that afternoon. We did manage to enjoy a fantastic lunch spread hosted by Karamat's wife Chamzia

Tajik hospitality was consistently generous and spectacular in its presentation. Most days in the mountains involved a stop at an Uvol where we would be welcomed into the home tent and seated on the low cushions around a woven table cloth which would be laden with Non (unleavened round bread), sweets, nuts and dried fruits and served Choi (Sior, black or Kabut, green tea) and yoghurt made on site in huge cotton sacks.

The spread was always far more than we could eat and payment was frowned upon, even though we knew we were consuming our hosts limited supplies. Borbad explained that for Tajiks hospitality is their honour and our role was to graciously accept and be good guests. We did our best, trying out our limited Tajik to entertain, contributing some of the items we had purchased in Panjakent market, or gifts of pens and buffs celebrating the Pinnacle Club's recent centenary. The Cicerone guide indicates that travellers might benefit from this hospitality, but our passport was definitely Karamat who knew everyone along the way.

From Ghazza we dropped down to Vori where we stayed at two different homestays; this was Faridun's home village and he has been developing the tourist infrastructure and integrating stays and excursions here into adventure tours in partnership with a Canadian operator.

From Vori it was uphill again to the Igrok Pass on a very hot day; this felt like one of the hardest ascents, a 1,200m climb to 3,500m, but we had the incentive that every pass greeted us with more brilliant views. From the top we had a gradual descent to a perched Uvol, a late lunch, and then down to Chukurak Lake, a green blue Jewel at 3,000m. This was Jessie's first swim spot. However, I didn't even put a toe in the water of this one. Chukurak was a busy spot

being just up the hill from the Alpager of Artuch which is being reinvented as a tourist destination. There was also evidence of rock climbing. There were numbers painted along the pretty solid looking cliff at the entrance to the lake and bolts on the smaller cliff behind. While Karamat knew climbing had taken place there he could shed no light on how we might learn more.

From Chukurak had a long pull up through a juniper forest to the Chukurak pass; this was made interesting with speculation about the rock ridge on the left, the continuation of the lower numbered wall. The ridge itself looked like it would be a good outing and the walls bounding the ridge were featured and solid looking. The top of the pass presented one of our best views over the several turquoise Kulikalon lakes with a backdrop of rock walls, hanging icefields and Mirali Peak, named after a female Russian climber who had died there. The descent to the lakes was short and sharp before a delightful walk through meadows and junipers. As an aside, felling trees is prohibited for the communities living in the mountains. They are allowed to collect brushwood and fallen branches, so for the Uvols, cooking is by dried dung and other burnables, such as plastic bottles. This means the juniper trees do survive and improve the stability of the land, although of course the livestock grazing takes its own toll.

The trees here at Kulikalon were sculptures in themselves, twisted and gnarled and it felt like the perfect landscape for filming scenes from the Lord of the Rings or the like, magical in a special way. We had a stop in an Uvol where the matriarch of the family was a sprightly 85; she had recently suffered from something that might have been angina but declared her health had been restored by coming up to her mountain home. We deployed one of our key phrases as we left – salomat bor shi – bless you with health.

Left: Borbad by yoghurt sacks at an uvol.
Val Hennelly

It was then more magical forest and bubbling brooks for a couple of miles before our night's camp at Dushokha on an extensive green meadow above another glacial lake. This was our favourite campsite for comfort and views. Jessie braved the water with another swim and I did manage an invigorating paddle after taking the requisite shots of the water nymph with snowy mountains behind.

Our night here was the chilliest with frost on the tent in the morning, and it was surprisingly unquiet; we had the regular whoosh of serac falls from Mirali combined with the on the hour braying from cold donkeys and a particularly barking dog down the valley, so not all was peace.

We broke camp once the sun had dried the tents and made our way uphill to our last big pass, the Alaudin at 3,900m. Again, the day was good and the pass was busy; we were disconcerted by a couple of very large dogs (not wolves but big enough) who were following us up. We later discovered they were attached to another trekking team, but you do need to be wary of dogs. Borbad divided them into sag bad and sag nagz (bad is the same in Tajik and English, nagz is good) and steered clear of all of them.

Teams were going both ways across the pass but I think the way we went, West to East, was the pleasantest; it was a steep descent on the Alauddin lake side, ameliorated by the grand views and more speculation as to the rock climbing potential. From the pass itself, Karamat pointed out the alpine peaks of Chimtarga (highest in the Fann at 5,500m), Zamok, Energia and more.

Alauddin lake is another honeypot, and ex-Soviet Alpger; another turquoise jewel of a lake with a summer camp run by Ali, who had purchased this small piece of land early in independence and created a thriving service enterprise of campsite and restaurant. He is also one of the rare custodians of the landscape employed by the state.

We however camped wild again on the other side of the lake; this wasn't the greatest of spots for the donkeys as foraging was marginal and the best camping sites had already been occupied by another trekking group, resulting in our being perched on a less than ideal spot, albeit with an idyllic view. We rounded off the day with a swim in the warmer water (I ducked my shoulders under) reflecting that we were swimming in the water we would later be drinking! Boiled but possibly not enough...

Our final day in the hills involved an out and back trip to Moutniy lake at 4,200m. Both the books and itinerary made this sound like a dull excursion to a brown lake, but it was an interesting outing up a long gone glacier valley with snowy peaks rising and lateral moraines to pick through. The brown lake was in fact a milky blue with heavy sediment loading from the peaks around. We lunched above the lake and wandered out into a wide flat bowl to admire the Dolomite-like shaped peaks. On the way up we had passed a cheerful group of Russians in descent, carrying enormous alpine packs. They had been camping at the lake for a few days, evidenced inevitably by fresh rubbish when we got there, and had climbed several of the peaks. To my not very alpine orientated eye, they looked like exciting piles of tottering rock.

The last day of walking involved a gentle descent from 3,200m to 2,400m over eight miles to a glorious meadow campsite at Sangi Safed meaning White Rock. While we were essentially on the public road to Alauddin Alpger, it was a very unmade affair, lined with micro agriculture of potatoes and maize and colourful fields of flowers. It was a very mellow and beautiful valley and the donkeys enjoyed snatching at the green field edges before the camp was reached and they had a proper feed. They had not enjoyed our stay at Alauddin. We didn't hear a peep from them that night.



Logistics

The camping in the mountains congregates at regularly used sites, generally in the proximity of beautiful lakes with grazing for the transport donkeys. This has its pluses; great views and tranquil settings and its minuses; land under pressure, no ablution facilities bar trees and rocks and consequently a fairly battered and polluted landscape just beyond view. A combination of trekking and wild camping industry and local visitors to some of the more accessible spots, along with farmers and families at their summer pastures, has led to a stressed and potentially toxic environment. We were fastidious on our hygiene and water consumption, but were still variously affected with disorderly bowels. The best tactic is care, chlorine or filter water, together with antibiotics in your kit.

We fed back about the water supplies and the scatological detritus to our sponsors. It's a difficult issue insofar as many of us have trekked and travelled in places without any facilities, but from my perspective, the problem here is simply the density of people and activities at some of the honeypots, as well as a general lack of awareness on rubbish. Our guides had the approach that anything burnable should be put in a neat pile so that the Uvol families could collect it up for burning. This included plastic bottles. I ended up with a crushed-

up stash of bottles in my luggage as I hated the idea of them being left behind, but I suspect they were probably destined for burning or landfill back in Dushanbe. It wasn't clear anywhere that there was a culture of waste reduction and recycling. Neither was there any concept of 'pack out your toilet paper', so it remained decorating the woods and the rocks.

Tajikistan is an easily accessible destination with regular flights from Istanbul to Dushanbe and has a burgeoning tourist industry providing access and facilities in the mountains. The Fann are around a day's travel from Dushanbe, with the first half of any journey on good tarmac and the second on super bouncy dirt tracks. The Cicerone book provides a wealth of detail on logistics for both the Fann and Pamir ranges and there are a plethora of local guides and agencies on the internet.

We had researched online before we travelled and while there is information on the Alpine peaks there is little on recreational rock-climbing. We have since been told there is a climbing guide to the Artuch area, but that it is old and only available as a book in Moscow. This may or may not be true. Internet searches give a patchwork of information including climbs in the Varzob valley close to Dushanbe. Our visit was in July to coincide with mountain passes opening. However there was very little remaining snow anywhere below 5,000m and it was difficult to tell whether this was because they had had a dry winter or whether it all melts very quickly. Climbing in the mountains and the crags from the high valleys would be comfortable in July, but you would want to be earlier or later if you were looking to climb near Dushanbe.

Culturally, the main religion is Muslim with a smattering of other beliefs. The government seems to have encouraged a tolerant and diverse approach to dress code for women. While it is polite to have a head covering at the ready, particularly in the mountain villages and Uvols, to reflect the



Left: Moutniy Lake
Jessie Leong.

sensitivities of your hosts or location, you generally do not stand out if you are bare-headed. We kept an active eye on the locals and adapted as seemed appropriate. Borbad was an effective and subtle guide to best practice. If you want it, there is alcohol in the city hotels and restaurants.

From a finance perspective, the cost of living on a day-to-day basis is very reasonable. Markets are good value for food stuffs, including the plentiful 'Non', the delicious local bread. Bartering for non-food stuffs was possible, but in the main, the Tajiks were straight with their prices and not that interested in the game. The final practical tip is that gas for light weight stoves seemed hard to come by. Karamat used a stove with a ten litre heavy gas bottle and we didn't find anywhere with supplies for more portable stoves.

The alert among you, if you have made it this far, may be wondering about the Pamirs leg of the trip. Suffice to say, it was a fleeting visit and not one I would recommend until works have finished on the Chinese financed Pamir Highway, or unless you have several weeks to make the three day access trip worthwhile. The mountains are dramatic and big with a super friendly capital of Khorog which is incidentally home to a great Indian restaurant. There are also some attractive looking rock peaks near the town of Rushon. Access is sensitive due to its proximity to the Afghan border, but possible if you have all your paperwork ducks in a row.

I am contemplating a return visit. We fitted in a day trip to Samarkand and were amazed by the archaeological site of Sarazm, but there is a lot to explore more thoroughly, including the hills...



Above: Jessie and Val.
 [Icon] Jessie Leong
 Right: (from left to right), Donkey wrangler Fasli with three of his charges, Val, Hendrik, Jessie and the local guide, Karamat.
 [Icon] Jessie Leong



Walking the Walk

In memory of Daphne Pritchard

Years ago, camping in the Alps,
a stranger looking for a climbing partner
dropped in on the meet – “What do you reckon,
Daphne, any good?” I asked in case she knew him.
“Oh yes, he’s a tiger!”
“How d’you know?”
“The way he walks, like you and Denis, Mike.
You can always tell.”
Surprising me; I’d never thought about it.
So, all that balance and co-ordination
learnt on all those climbs found expression
in the simple everyday act of walking
with the poise of a predator.
Really?

I remembered the supermarket where
one of my armful of bottles slipped into the air
to be caught by my free hand as all the rest
settled into a safe embrace again,
while the shelf-stacker froze, mouth open, unbelieving,
still waiting for the crash of broken glass,
until I winked and she laughed.

Now I remember Daphne in her eighties
still moving fluently from hold to hold
at the opening of the memorial climbing wall
dedicated to Mike, the marvelling kids
sidling over to ask how old she was
and her grin when I told her as she added,
“It doesn’t get any easier!”

David Wynne-Jones

Daphne Pritchard’s obituary is on page 212.

World’s End

In memory of Ken Wilson

World’s End, late November,
A dry Saturday,
Not a soul else on the crag.

A rockface which leaks
Smears of slime:
Drips turn into trickles
Off overhangs,
But there are some dry routes
And we opt to top-rope.

Loose rock rattles and shivers
As warm air is cut
By cold breezes,
Chilling the feeling out of fingers
Shaping for a fall.

We take turns to struggle
Up climbs we wouldn’t lead
Before our fingers fail
In a shared solitude,
Suddenly broken

By a tapping hammer
And clatter of falling stone.
Around a corner
A figure dangles on abseil
“Cleaning a route;”
Later wire-brushing
And more chipping,
And bolt fixing.

Someone is creating a route
Up improbably blank rock
With perfect protection
And carefully manicured holds.

Birdsong has ceased
And bitter rock dust
Soils our tongues.

David Wynne-Jones



Peter Harding – an Appreciation

John Lumb recalls the climbing achievements of Peter Harding, the leading climber in Wales and the Peak District before the advent of Joe Brown. He also recalls the climbing partnership and friendship he later formed with Peter.

By John Lumb

On the 5th May 1946 Peter Harding and his girlfriend Veronica roared up from Derby to Cratcliffe Tor on a huge 1,000cc Vincent motorbike (due to rationing the bike was running on lighter fuel!) They were there to attempt to climb the imposing wall soaring above *The Bower*. It had been eyed by many in the past; including the great gritstone pioneer Frank Elliott, whose *Unconquerable* route nearby still impresses.

Although Peter had inspected the route previously, it must have taken all his nerve to launch onto its daunting verticality. After a minor epic when the rope jammed and Veronica had to untie and climb across to free it, Peter powered on to create one of gritstone's finest climbs on *Suicide Wall*.

Despite only having climbed for just over a year, this ascent placed Peter as one of the top rock climbers of the day, perhaps only John Cunningham, Arthur Dolphin and Jim Birkett could be compared with him. This was a position he would hold for maybe four years until the arrival of an astonishingly talented lad from Ardwick in Manchester, namely Joe Brown. However, this ascent of *Suicide Wall* would place Peter on a path of pioneering that would lead to what might be regarded as the first true modern rock climbs. These routes involved sophisticated protection techniques and

a strong desire to push into steeper territory that others had considered impossible without resorting to excessive aid.

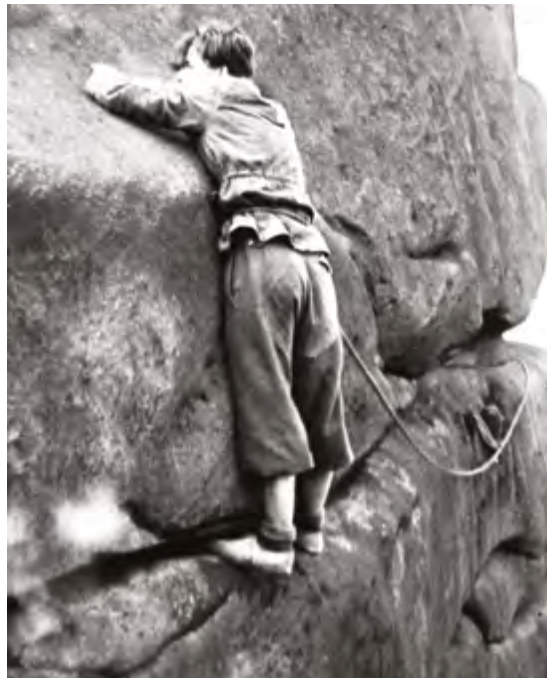
Around this time (1946/47), Peter teamed up with a fellow climber from Derby, the gifted Tony Moulam. Like Peter, Tony had developed an appetite for new routes and later would be the creator of *Mur y Niwl* on Craig yr Ysfa, perhaps the finest VS route in Wales. Together Peter and Tony brought the Cromford crag into the modern era with *Promontory Traverse* and the astonishing *Demon Rib*. In the past Peter had been Moulam's prefect at school in Derby.

With other partners Peter continued to make fine first ascents in the Peak. These included *Valkyrie* at The Roaches, the *Superdirect* finish to *Cave Innominate* at Stanage (described by Jim Perrin as 'the most sensational five metre VS in Derbyshire') and the one he always described as his favourite, *Phoenix* at Shining Clough, a windswept bastion above Longdendale.

A career posting, to work at Rolls Royce in Shrewsbury opened up Peter's horizons, and the crags of North Wales became a focus. As the Vincent roared down the Llanberis Pass, Peter's eyes must have been drawn to the great central corner of Dinas Cromlech and although it would prove too big a step for the time, the desire must have

Opposite:
Peter Harding, 1995
© Gordon Stainforth

Peter Harding,
Promontory Traverse,
E1, Black Rocks
© Rucksack Club



simmered away. There are photographs from this period showing Peter dressed in what look like rags, with nailed boots and a beret jauntily worn above mischievous, glinting eyes.

Peter's pioneering on rock entered a new phase, and there was relatively little competition in North Wales at that time, apart from perhaps John Disley and John Lawton. His major climbs from this period include *Ivy Sepulchre*, *Spectre*, *Unicorn*, *Lion* and *Kaisergebirge Wall*. Although no harder than other routes of the time in the Lakes and in Scotland, they were certainly impressive and steep. *Kaisergebirge Wall*, with its aid designed to annoy the straight-laced conservatism of the Climbers' Club, would in time become the most fallen off route in the Pass for a decade.

Peter's friendship with Wilf Noyce, resulted in a request from the Climbers' Club for him to write the 1950 Llanberis guide, which became known as the *Bumper Fun Book*. With the typical

flamboyance Peter introduced two new grades, Extremely Severe and Exceptionally Severe. Little wonder that many climbers of the time were left scratching their heads, wondering what horrors lay hidden in the book! However, for Peter it would be the end of the great days. Guidebook work had taken up a huge amount of his free time and gradually the new routes dwindled. A final flourish resulted in the *West Buttress Girdle* on Cloggy in May 1949. To quote the late Paul Williams:

"Harding's new outlook on the use of pegs enabled him to raise the standard of climbing above the pre-war level and to lay a foundation for the future."

Peter's last flourish in Wales was a bold attempt on what later became known as *Pinnacle Flake* (climbed by Joe Brown and Don Whillans in 1952.) Peter had got some way up the first pitch but was called down by Ivan Waller as rain threatened, and he never returned.

After his last hurrah, family and work commitments took hold and Peter seemed to vanish from the climbing scene, no doubt not helped by the emergence of the youth from Manchester who produced a series of climbs that changed the perception of what was possible. However, Peter was still around. A move through work up to Yorkshire had rekindled his enthusiasm for gritstone, and he could frequently be seen out on his favourite crags, Widdop, Wharnccliffe, Black Rocks and especially Woodhouse Scar, above Halifax. It was at this fine outcrop where I first met Peter. It was 1993, and I'd been asked by Steve Dean to return some photographs he had borrowed while writing his biography of Colin Kirkus. I was somewhat nervous wandering along the foot of the crag, basically looking for an old man, who had been responsible for my own downfall on *Kaisergebirge Wall*! I wondered how we would get

on, but I needn't have worried, Peter and I hit it off straight away. Looking back, it seems somehow appropriate that my first sight of him was soloing *Fairy Steps*, a Yorkshire VS (and we all know what they are like!) It was of course one of Peter's party pieces, but I was still impressed. I think we did one route together and then sat and chatted for a couple of hours. Little did I know then that it would lead to thirteen years of climbing and friendship.

Whilst working for Ferodo Peter became involved in the design and manufacture of disc brakes. This led to him being sent out to steep Alpine passes to test them to the limit. I can picture him rather like Graham Hill, hurtling round hairpin bends, lapping up the adrenalin, perhaps being reminded of those long, bold run outs on rock in the past. During his time working in the Alps, Peter took time out to sample Dolomite climbing with friend Richard Mayers. A love of the Alps continued for the rest of Peter's life. Every year he would head out to Zermatt or Saas Fe and I would always get a postcard enquiring about conditions at Woodhouse Scar! After a solo ascent of the Matterhorn, an American couple asked Peter how long it had taken him. His answer of "Forty-five years" had the desired effect of ending the conversation!

I always looked forward to the midweek phone call "Do you fancy a route tomorrow?" which heralded a day of classic rock. The venue had been decided and though Peter would always ask where I fancied going, the car would inevitably arrive at his pre-chosen crag! He converted me to Black Rocks, a crag I had always been in awe of! *Lone Tree Groove* and *Birch Tree Wall* after four pints of Marstons! I thought we'd finished for the day, but Gordon Stainforth wanted to take photos for his Peak book so we did more. Great times!

Apropos of Peter's rally driving days, he had a favourite back road route to Cromford, his own Mille Miglia. One day we pulled up at the traffic

lights in Bakewell in Peter's souped-up Vauxhall Viva. A large, black BMW convertible driven by a large, gold bedecked gentleman pulled up alongside. He looked across and revved, though the engine gave out less of a cacophony than the awful house music booming from his stereo. "I think his big ends have gone John!" said Peter. There was a glare from our friend, and then we raced, heeling and toeing it and arrived at the crag laughing like children, having left him far behind.

One day I got a phone call from Peter, would I come out for a day on Stanage? I smelt a rat as we rarely went there. It was only once we got to the crag that I was informed that he needed to check he could still do *Goliath's Groove*! It turned out that a few days later Peter was scheduled to perform on television with a certain Chris Bonington. He waltzed up the route of course, in far better style than my bumbling cycling window cleaner act in following. The day for television action arrived; Chris stood at the bottom of the route and commented that the last time he did *Goliath's* was in 1962 with Ian Clough. Jim Curran spluttered "The lying bastard, we did it yesterday!" Peter and I laughed.

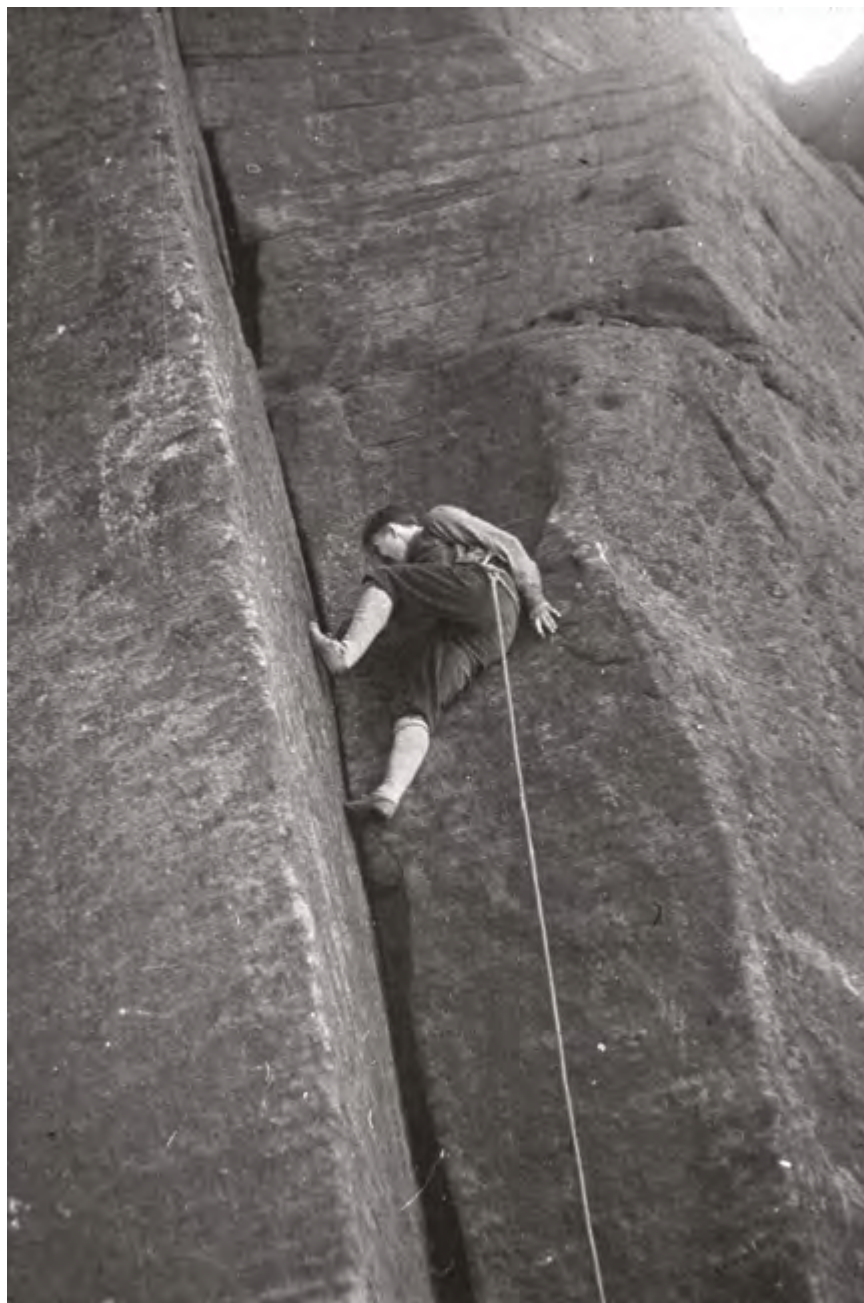
A final memory. One day at Black Rocks Peter asked me if I wouldn't mind following him up Sand Gully. I was rather surprised, but assumed that there must be a reason. At the top he thanked me and explained "Well John, it was the first route I did all those years ago." For the first time I saw a sadness in his eyes. Nobody owns nostalgia, and perhaps that sadness is in us all.

I last saw Peter at his home in Batley as he was lying in bed nearing his end. We talked about the windswept vastness of The Peak, the joy of solid hand jams, wonderful Celtic crags and a life lived to the full. As I got up to leave for the last time he reached out, smiled and squeezed my hand.

The climbs and the memories remain.



Peter Harding,
circa 1947.
© Rucksack Club



Peter Harding, first ascent
of *Goliath's Groove*, HVS,
Stanage 1947.
📷 © Rucksack Club



Johnny Dawes on *San Melas*, E3,
The Roaches. 📷 Claire Clifton Coles

Joe Brown: Legend

The 100 Finest Routes

A celebration of the life and climbs of Joe Brown, reminding us of his contribution to British climbing and bringing some of his most famous ascents to life, with a suggestion for a new coffee table book based on Joe's one hundred best routes. How many have you done?

By Sean Kelly

Misleadingly attributed to Ernest Hemingway is the famous quote... "There are only three sports, Bullfighting, Motor Racing and Mountaineering, the rest are merely games!"

Well, I don't know about the death of any bullfighters, but we have lost two mountaineering legends, Joe Brown and Doug Scott, in recent years. However, they didn't die in the midst of some risky endeavour but at a grand age, peacefully in their own beds. Reading all the tributes on social media it is immediately apparent that Joe Brown holds a special place in British mountaineering. The words 'legacy' and 'legend' are repeated time and again. But Joe's legacy was certainly no myth. Over a long expansive lifetime, he really did leave a wealth of outstanding climbs. Climbs that many climbers have on their own wish list or have proudly ticked. Indeed, it has been calculated that he added over 1,000 new routes to his personal CV and the guide-books we scan so avidly. So what precisely is it that consolidates his reputation which is so unique among other climbers and mountaineers? In my lifetime of mountaineering there is no other British climber who is held in such high regard. Perhaps Bonatti or Messner come close, but they are from

more distant shores. No, with Joe it was a combination of two qualities that have endeared him to the climbing fraternity. Firstly the outstanding calibre and difficulty of his climbs, and secondly his quiet unassuming manner, although he sometimes displayed a razor sharp wit. He did not need to boast of his achievements, his climbs speak for him.

It has often been said that Joe was born to climb. Where others struggled, he casually sauntered up all difficulties, often with scant protection. We recall his 1951 ascent of *Great Slab* at Froggatt Edge, climbed in Woolworth's best plimsolls and no runners, no top-rope practice, and the crux at the top. Today, protagonists line the base with mats! *The Boulder* on Clogwyn Du'r Arddu, another much more serious expedition also climbed in the same year, left his seconds unable to follow his 200 feet runout which was completely devoid of any protection. And so it continued, one quality route after another, usually exceeding the topmost difficulty of the day. He always seemed to gravitate towards either cracks or corners. On cracks he could display his masterly use of the hand-jam, whereas with corners he demonstrated his flexibility and bridging skills. With the latter we tend to think of *Laugh Not*



Joe Brown leading Cemetery Gates, E1, Dinas Cromlech
© John Cleare

at White Ghyll, *Great North Road* at Millstone, and *Atlantis* at Gogarth.

But if Joe had led only one climb, it was his ascent of *Cenotaph Corner* in 1952 that propelled him into the climbing stratosphere. When I first ventured up to North Wales in the mid-sixties I can recall meeting up with some climber in the Vaynol reciting all the ascensionists of 'The Corner.' Such was the reverence which such an ascent bestowed. My own ascent with Barry Lindsey, 19 years after Joe, was a bit of a disappointment however. Perhaps I should quickly explain that we had ascended *The Corner* on 'Cloggy' the same week. Another Brown route of course. The difference between the two climbs was the utterly unrelenting nature of the climbing on the latter route. Every single move was 5a or 5b and it didn't relent until I heaved over the top exhausted from all the effort. *Cenotaph Corner* by contrast had really only one testing sequence and that right at the top. Joe had climbed both routes when they were very wet and vegetated, necessitating much gardening. At least I had clean, if not dry rock on my ascents.

Before the formation of the now famous Rock & Ice climbing club, the Manchester climbers would meet at the YMCA in the town centre, but circumstances meant that more often than not, they would meet up in each other's houses on a Thursday night to plan their weekend's activities. Sometimes it was Norman 'Plum' Worrall's house in Levenshulme. 'Plum' fancied himself as an artist and had recently re-decorated his front room so that it was resplendent with an Alpine mural that circled the room. As an afterthought he added a gritstone wall in front of this dramatic alpine panorama! Shortly afterwards Joe became one of the inaugural members of the now infamous Rock & Ice, a nucleus of outstanding mountaineering talent that went on to dominate British climbing for the next decade. Aside from Joe's regular climbing partner Don Whillans,

it also included Ron Moseley, Nat Allen, Don Roscoe, Dennis Gray, Trevor Jones and Joe 'Morty' Smith. Morty, so named by Brown because it was confusing having two Joe's in the club.

As they walked through central Manchester one dark night carrying their ropes and ice-axes, this suspicious attire aroused the interest of a local bobby. They were stopped and questioned...

"What's your name then?" he asked Joe.

"Joe Brown," was his reply.

"And yours?"

'Joe Smith,' retorted Morty.

The policeman looked at them very thoughtfully for a moment and finally said: "It doesn't matter to me if you don't tell me your correct names you know!"

Many years later as Sylvia and I were both busy working, we employed a cleaner and housekeeper. She obviously noted my guidebooks and climbing equipment strewn around the house and casually mentioned one day that her son had also been a climber. He was none other than Morty, and his niece Debbie was Sylvia's secretary. When Debbie got married we were invited to the wedding, and whilst waiting at the bar a stranger tapped my shoulder. It was Morty. He was now living in Llanrwst in the Conway Valley. I immediately offered to take him climbing, suggesting perhaps *Cemetery Gates*, another Brown classic. Regretfully for me his climbing days were over, but he had been an important part of this historic development in British climbing. It was only later I discovered that a motor bike crash and resulting leg injury had done for his climbing.

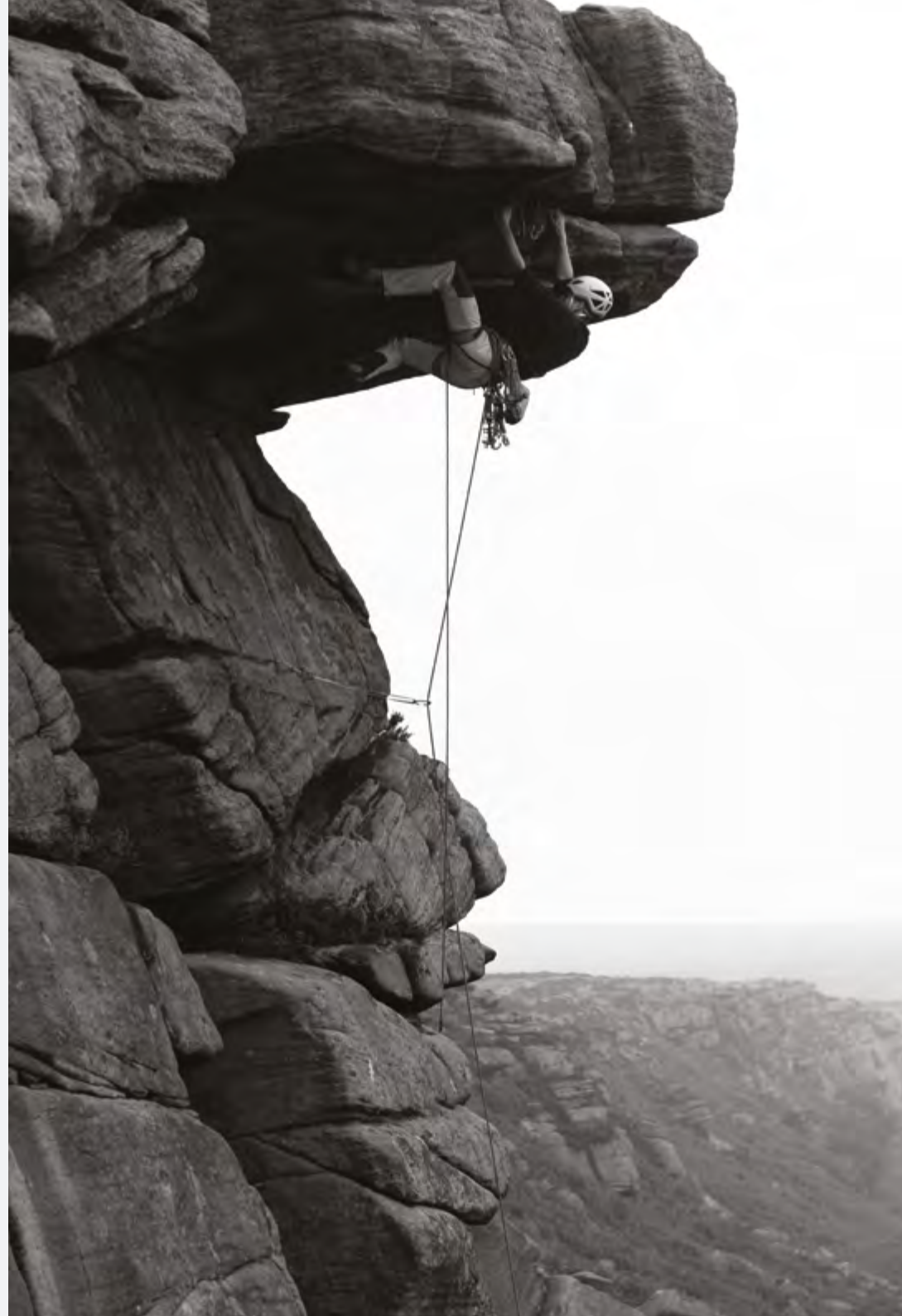
Another stalwart of the infant Rock and Ice was Ron Moseley who also climbed together quite a bit with an early Karabiner Club member called Walt Beckett. In late October 1951 they were both fresh and buzzing from the first unaided ascent of Harding's *Kaisergebirge Wall* on Clogwyn y Grochan

the weekend before. They had all talked previously about trying *The Boulder* on Cloggy and decided to go and do it. Joe was also going along. The climb is relatively easily for about 40 or 50ft and then there is a rising traverse that goes right across the Boulder, almost into the Black Cleft where it goes up and takes a stance just outside the fissure. However, when Joe arrived at the belay, neither Ron nor Walt fancied the traverse, realising that if they fell off, they would just almost certainly take a tremendous swing and smack hard against the wall of *The Black Cleft*. There were no runners to protect the traverse as Joe's solitary sling on a spike parted company with the rock as he pulled up the ropes. Equally Joe didn't fancy reversing back down, especially on this unprotected traverse. As he was climbing with double ropes, he told the others to untie from one of the ropes, which he then pulled up and knotted it to the other one. Joe then proceeded up the remainder of the climb but not without interest, running out over 200 feet of line in the process. He climbed carefully as falling was not an option. Eventually he arrived at a tricky overhang, near the top of the pitch, but once over this final hurdle it was an easy scramble to the top of the crag. When Joe pulled all the ropes up, his other runners immediately came off which saved having to worry about retrieving the gear. Joe always maintained that Ron and Walt were both capable of doing the climb as it was much easier than their recent free ascent of *Kaisergebirge Wall*. And so the story arose that hardly anybody, excepting Whillans, could follow the hard new routes Brown was pioneering at this time.

A recurring theme when recounting Brown's great climbs is the experience for those repeating these classic routes. One of his earliest climbs was *Saul's Crack* at The Roaches circa 1948. My own first ascent in the early 70's was not a saunter but a tough struggle. However, on later repeat ascents

I marvelled at the beauty of the route, the sinuous movement, the use the body for balance, and careful application of both hand and finger-jams, techniques that had been much developed by Joe. The other development that came from Joe's creative mind was his application of initially small pebbles, and later drilled nuts for protection. *Saul's Crack* is ideal for such protection methods. His party piece was to hang upside-down on some desperate problem and when everybody would be expecting him to struggle and fall, he would emerge from the crux and calmly roll up a cigarette and proceed to puff away!

One of the attributes of Joe's routes is that they are so good that climbers all want to repeat them, often any number of times. A good example is *Vector* at Tremadog, possibly one of the very best of his first ascents. It is masterpiece of vertical chess. Initially it was the topmost pitch which gave the most trouble as it was a rounded overhanging layback, but the loss of some rock has made it an easier proposition today. The quality is reserved for the middle pitch which encompasses almost every technique in the climbing tool box: a steep wall, a crack, a steep slab and a corner, all within its 90 feet. An utterly brilliant piece of route-finding by the 'Master'. During my first ascent of this climb, my companion Frank was experiencing real pain from new rock-shoes and proceeded to toss them off the cliff before laybacking the top pitch in bare feet. I should perhaps add that there was snow on the road that particular morning and there is another tale of my driving off the road into a ditch earlier that day. Another ascent with Keith Bolton was uneventful, except for the buckets of chalk that now liberally coat all the holds on this steep climb. Jimmy Jewell loved the route, so much that I watched agog, belayed on *One Step in the Clouds*, whilst Jim casually proceeded to solo *Vector* twice within the space of half an hour. As he said to me afterwards, "Well it's that good!" Special treatment indeed!




A unique aspect of Joe's climbs is that they continue to evoke memorable narratives from ascents by other climbers. The memory of climbing one of his routes is etched deeply into the consciousness. In the late sixties the general feeling was that Wales was worked out and then suddenly everything changed when Gogarth was found. Initially it was Pete Crew and his friends that uncovered this gem of a cliff, but before long word reached Joe in nearby Llanberis, who then added his own quota of outstanding climbs. Two that stand out were *Red Wall*, famous as the subject of one of the very early outside television broadcasts, and the great Wen Slab, completely bypassed by the original pioneers. Joe initially thought he had missed the boat, but soon a plethora of classic lines fell to the 'master'. Great climbs such as *Winking Crack*, *Dinosaur*, *Red Wall*, *Wendigo*, and the amazing *Mousetrap*. Climbing mostly with Pete Crew, altogether he accounted for over forty new routes in this lightening blitz of Gogarth, such was the hectic pace of his exploration. One of these climbs was *Atlantis* at Castel Helen, a great corner which providentially provided an escape route when I parted company from the rock way above protection on *True Moments/Freebird*. He also pioneered *Sind*, the first route up the outrageous Yellow Wall, overhanging, loose and not over endowed with protection. As Pete Meads commented at the time of his ascent... "It is surprising it is still standing!"

There exists in the BMC archives a faded film of Joe and Don Whillans motoring down the Pass on an old motorbike to climb *Cemetery Gates* which they had pioneered together some years earlier. The climb follows an obvious crackline on the right edge of the great corner of the Cromlech, but you have to be on the climb itself to appreciate just how steep it really is. On the first ascent Joe split the big pitch just above the long gone Holly, and belayed Don in slings. No harnesses in those times, his

position on the face was truly sensational. As Don arrived on their minuscule improvised stance he muttered hoarsely, "Christ, this is a gripping place!" Today it is often done as a mammoth single pitch with 60 metre ropes, a steep fingery climb that maintains interest all the way to the top. I've led the route twice over the years, but always belayed at the Girdle Ledge, an astounding viewpoint to providently witness all who are struggling below, on what is arguably the most magnificent of climbing venues. In the filmed re-ascent of 'The Gates', as Joe continues up the climb, he is struggling to make any progress, experiencing desperate rope-drag, until that is Whillans cheekily remarks it might possibly be because he was standing on the ropes!

Joe himself didn't record his climbs, other than basic route descriptions and so it was left to others, notably Nat Allen and Trevor Jones, to fill in the narrative. The latter had a minor epic attempting to second Joe on *Vector* parting company from the rock, and consequently landing like a struggling fish out of water. Although Trevor's climbing had a certain comic quality to it, he was actually a strong climber. We met up a few times at the Professional Colour Labs in Manchester when processing our films, and one winter weekend arranged along with Alan Payne to climb on Shepherd's Crag in Borrowdale. I can't recall who exactly suggested *MGC*, innocently graded as HVS in the guide. First, I had a go at placing some gear (no cams in those times), then with frozen digits and quite exhausted by the grim struggle I passed over to Trevor. He looked overweight, out of condition and most unlikely to succeed, but with a determined flourish he sailed over the difficulties. Today in the latest guide it weighs in at E2, 5c!

A continual topic of debate is exactly what is the best Joe Brown climb? An impossible question to answer without arousing much controversy. Everyone has their own opinion. Not an easy task either,

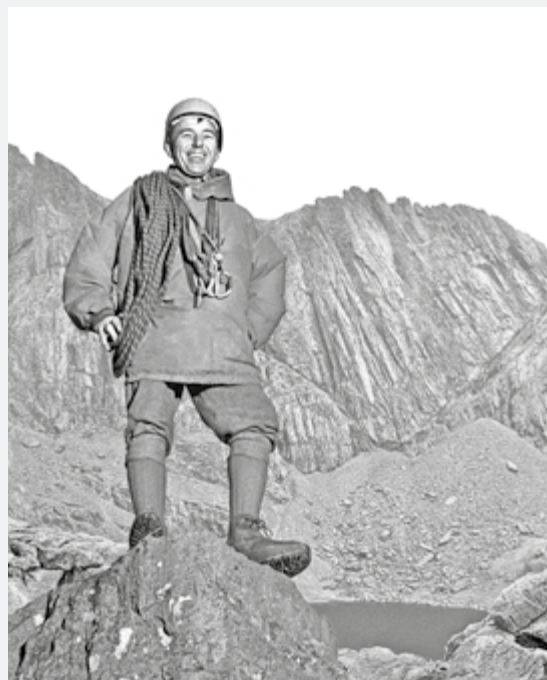
Opposite: *Quietus*, E2, Stanage.
 Sean Kelly



Top right: Joe Brown leading *Right Unconquerable*, HVS, Stanage.
Bottom right: Joe Brown, Cloggy
Below: Joe Brown by Keith Bowen

with over a 1,000 new-routes recorded. He had an uncanny ability to find the crags and the quality that defines his climbs, mainly in Wales and the Peak, although he also foraged in the Lakes (*Laugh Not* and *Triermain Eliminate*) and Scotland (*Sassenach*) and even further afield. He even discovered the potential of Bosigran in Cornwall with *Bow Wall*, an audacious route that wanders boldly up the most imposing part of this magnificent cliff. To think that at the time he was essentially away for a fishing holiday. What a catch! Two other areas he explored away from the mainstream were Cynr Las and the Wings of Dinas Mot. *The Grooves* is a monumental route, building to an exciting climax on the final overhanging headwall. I did it with Keith Bolton when it was too hot to climb anywhere but in the shade. It comprises three incredibly sustained pitches at 5b and is often wet. The middle pitch is distinctly unrelenting with few rests, one hard move followed by another. Truly exhausting! The final overhanging chimney suffers from frightening exposure, fully testing tired arms and the weary climber who has made it this far. An amazing first ascent and still arguably the best climb on the south side of the Pass. North of the border along with regular partner Whillans, Brown prospected on Carn Dearg's imposing north buttress, and managed to steal the wonderful *Sassenach* from beneath the noses of conspiring Scottish climbers. As Whillans cracked the crux pitch the cry of 'English bastards!' echoed across the glen.

Thinking about the Ian Parnell's recent update to Ken Wilson's *Hard Rock*, it might be an idea to produce a similar book of text and photographs of his 100 best climbs as tribute to his outstanding climbing career. The penultimate route might be the *British Route* on the Aiguilles de Blaitière, complete with the desperate *Fissure Brown* at F6b/c. The final route would undoubtedly be Kanchenjunga. Like *The Scoop* in *Hard Rock* this would preclude most from achieving the complete tick!



JOE BROWN THE 100 FINEST ROUTES

THE PEAK DISTRICT

- 1 Hawk's Nest Crack VS 4c *
- 2 Sunset Slab HVS 4b *
- 3 Sorrell's Sorrow HVS 5a
- 4 Terrazza Crack HVS 5a *
- 5 Valkyrie HVS 5a *
- 6 Three Pebble Slab E1 5a *
- 7 Tody's Wall HVS 5a *
- 8 The Right Unconquerable HVS 5a *
- 9 Delstree HVS 5a
- 10 Saul's Crack HVS 5a *
- 11 Great North Road HVS 5a *
- 12 Plexity HVS 5a *
- 13 The Peapod HVS 5b
- 14 Freddie's Finale HVS 5b
- 15 Matinee HVS 5b
- 16 Hen Cloud Eliminate HVS 5b *
- 17 The Mincer HVS 5b *
- 18 Chequer's Crack HVS 5c
- 19 L'Horla E1 5b *
- 20 The Trident E1 5b
- 21 Left Unconquerable E1 5b *
- 22 Elder Crack E2 5b *
- 23 Brown's Eliminate E2 5b *
- 24 The Rasp E2 5b
- 25 Hanging Crack E2 5b
- 26 Original Route, E2 5c (Rivelin Needle)
- 27 Quietus E2 5c
- 28 The Dangler E2 5c
- 29 Count's Buttress E2 5c
- 30 Cave Crack E3 5c
- 31 Great Slab E3 5c *
- 32 Right Eliminate E3 5c
- 33 Emerald Crack E3 6a
- 34 Ramshaw Crack E4 6a

ERYRI (Snowdonia)

- 35 The Boulder E1 5a
- 36 The Corner HVS 5b *
- 37 Vember E1 5b
- 38 Octo E1 5b
- 39 Llithrig E1 5c *
- 40 Pinnacle Flake E2 5b
- 41 Woubits E2 5b
- 42 The Mostest E2 5c
- 43 Shrike E2 5c
- 44 The Black Cleft E2 5c
- 45 November E3 5c
- 46 Woubits Left Hand E3 6a
- 47 Taurus E4 6a
- 48 Canol E1 5b
- 49 Black Wall E2 5c
- 50 Hangover E1 5b
- 51 Surplomb E2 6a
- 52 Erosion Groove Direct E2 5c
- 53 Cobweb Crack VS 5a
- 54 Noah's Warning VS 5a *
- 55 Cemetery Gates E1 5b *
- 56 Cenotaph Corner E1 5c *
- 57 Jericho Wall E2 5a
- 58 The Thing E2 5c
- 59 The Cromlech Girdle E2 5b
- 60 Grond E2 5b
- 61 The Mole HVS 5a *
- 62 The Link/The Chain E1 5c
- 63 Subsidiary Groove E1 5b
- 64 The Grooves E1 5b *
- 65 Ferdinand E2 5b
- 66 Vertigo HVS 5a *
- 67 Dwm E3 6a
- 68 Television Route (A1) E4 5c
- 69 Wen HVS 5a *
- 70 Winking Crack E3 5c
- 71 Dinosaur (A1) E5 6a
- 72 Red Wall E2 5b
- 73 Mousetrap E2 5b
- 74 Wendigo E2 5b
- 75 The Sind E3 5c

- 76 The Concrete Chimney HVS 5b
- 77 Left-Hand, Red Wall E3 5c
- 78 Spider's Web E2 5b (some aid, but E5 6b free)
- 79 The Neb E2 5c
- 80 Grasper E2 5c
- 81 The Fang HVS 5a *
- 82 Vector E2 5c *
- 83 Leg Slip E1 5b *
- 84 Barbarian E1 5b *
- 85 The Wasp E2 5c *
- 86 Tensor E2 6a
- 87 Pellagra E3 6a
- 88 Hardd E2 5c
- 89 The Hyll-Drem Girdle HVS 5a *

FURTHER AFIELD

- 90 Laugh Not HVS 5b *
- 91 Dovedale Groove E1 5b
- 92 Triermain Eliminate E2 5b
- 93 Bow Wall E2 5b
- 94 Sassenach E1 5b

THE ALPS & BEYOND

- 95 Aiguilles de Blaitière, West Face, (c/w Fissure Brown) ED F6b/c Brown & Whillans
- 96 Aiguilles du Plan, West Face Direct, TD VI, Brown & Patey
- 97 Aiguilles Sans Nom, North Face, ED VI, Brown & Patey
- 98 Muztagh Tower, British Route
- 99 Trango (Nameless) Tower, British Route
- 100 Kanchenjunga, 8586m FA J Brown & G Band

Note: Some climbs such as 71 *Dinosaur* (10 pts) required some aid but are today essentially climbed free, others such as 11 *Great North Road* (A2) had previously been aided but free climbed by Brown.

* Routes climbed by author



You've Got to be Joking!

Empirical research during an ascent of the Baggy Point classic Kinky Boots and the unusual challenges the leader and her companions encountered.

By Hilary Lawrenson



Just what is the definition of 'short' in climbing terms? At a smidgin' short of 5'4" (162cm) I think of myself as short-ish, as most of the women and all the men I climb with are taller than me. I shy from leading routes with 'long' or 'reach' in the description; if your average guidebook writer thinks you need to stretch a bit, I am quite likely to find it necessitates the kind of telescopic manoeuvre where you can't actually breathe because your ribs are so extended. I do remember though, years ago, a 6' friend asked how I was able to climb *Billingsgate* at Millstone Edge, as he found it reachy; my response was that I just climbed in-between the holds.

The publication of the Culm and Baggy guide brought back memories of a pre-Lundy (make sure you get to the ferry on time) trip to Baggy Point some years ago; memories of a route where there is no 'in-between.'

Trepidation, then, as a trustworthy friend recommends I do *Kinky Boots*, one of those classic Devon routes everyone should do, but no-one could ever assure me I would be able to manage (and it's not the grade I'm talking about). You know the one with the fall across the zawn 'which small climbers may well miss.' I think: "You've got to be joking!" My beta is that instead of falling with both hands you can reach with one hand, follow with one foot and the second hand, then 'just step over', except for me

the holds I can reach are not the large, chalk-covered ones, but some about eight inches lower and to the right and rather less useful; and once one toe is (just) touching the opposite side my balance is quite wrong for 'stepping over'. It's going to have to be a definite upward pull using side-holds at full-stretch – all over that sea-churning gap.

After several teetering retreats, either succumbing to nerves or needing to relax the overstretched groin, I eventually fling caution to the wind and launch myself across. Surprisingly, I find I do, in fact, stick to the rock and the rest of the pitch follows enjoyably. However the next problem is finding someone to second the pitch. The first contender is only 5'1" (155cm) and, despite having the annoying habit of out-bouldering me on moves I say I can't reach, is literally doing the splits when her foot is across the zawn, so she can't move to reach anything to pull across on. In fact, the only way she gets back is courtesy of a heave on a back-rope. Eventually conceding defeat, the rope is passed on to contender no. 2, towering above her at a lanky 5'3" (160cm). Those two inches prove decisive, as she can just get her hands on the same holds as me. She makes the move and the route is in the bag.

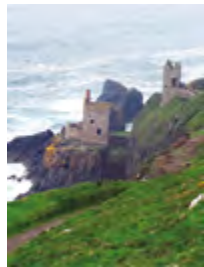
So there you have it, the minimum height for *Kinky Boots* is empirically tested as 5'3" and Climbers' Club hopefuls of lesser stature needn't bother tying on the rope. (Sorry, no.1)

Opposite:
Hilary Lawrenson
stretching for holds
on *Kinky Boots*, VS,
Baggy Point.
Hazel Jones


Cornish Summer

Reflections on the way the mercurial weather and Cornish landscape affect one's state of mind. Whilst he was staying at the Count House in August 1979 the Fastnet Yachting race was hit by an unexpectedly violent storm. Five Yachts were sunk and fifteen sailors died.

By Geoff Milburn



Opposite: Neil Foster on *Rainbow Games*, Carn Gwla E2.

Above: Ruined mine buildings, Botallack.  Bryan Maloney

After a week of fairly bad weather, one gets to reminiscing in an evening, as the last feeble rays of light fade gently away. It is at such a time that Gogarth, quietly but compellingly, calls from afar and it's hard to ignore the insistent cry. Sitting in the Count House on a wet evening I wonder what it is about this strange Cornish coast which makes a climber's soul feel so ill at ease?

The wispy white blanket, enveloping this low-lying peninsula for days on end, is gentle and caressing: as if apologising for its very presence. Likewise the rain, which drifts silently in as a faint and almost imperceptible drizzle, is here one minute and gone the next. Even the more persistent rain showers, which elegantly sail in from the sea, refresh rather than attack and it is hard to take them seriously. This impotent rain is damp, but never wet and, in the warm southern air, it evaporates slowly and lazily. It surrounds you until the sticky humidity begins to sap your energy, and creeping lethargy infiltrates every hopeful muscle fibre. The brain is soothed, repressing all enthusiastic hopes and aspirations, and leaving nothing but a dull, indifferent ache.

The wind remains silent as it touches the cheek, gently and lovingly, before whispering a faint message, barely audible to even the most sensitive

of human ears. Surprisingly, the sea also seems reluctant to converse and the sullen, rippling surface hides all bare emotion until, in some exposed cove, it suddenly loses control and finally snaps, angrily, to taunt and threaten a line of bobbing surfers.

Fields of contented cattle graze happily on the lush vegetation which carpets this land of plenty. Every field wall is clad with a riot of colourful blooms: purple foxgloves, vivid blue squills and gaudy yellow gorse, which add their subtle fragrance to the laden air where farm-yard smells hang heavily, almost overpowering the senses. In the countless little coves and inlets of this jagged ancient coast silence reigns supreme, as if nature herself has been inveigled into a life of casual indolence. Perhaps the season of death will never reach out its icy fingers to carpet this Garden of Eden with a wintry coat.

When at last the sun bursts out, throwing aside the gently sleeping blanket of cloud, the dazzling rays impale the human race to the coarse-sanded beaches, where lethargy strikes the final coup-de-grace. Faced with this unusually peaceful side to nature, how can a climber with fire in his belly go into battle when the opposition fails to stand and fight? Even the tourists seem listless and uneasy, and within this green land there is little sign of the hustle and bustle of normal life. All along the coast

the derelict and decaying chimneys of the old tin mines, point to man's past battlefields – perhaps man himself has, at last, given up the fight against his old enemy and settled back to a more leisurely but dissatisfying way of life. Overhead a casual gull floats by with wings outstretched, scanning the coast with keen and hungry eyes, while down below a lone and well-fed cormorant cruises idly across the little bay, rising and falling in time with a gentle swell. Where are the hordes of screaming seabirds which usually wheel and dive while filling the air with their harsh strident cries?

The hut itself, so close to the cliffs of action, makes a stroll down to set foot on rock hardly worth the effort. Perhaps the sun is too hot or the mist is lowering rapidly; the thoughts of a warm drink, a comfortable chair, and a night of stories from bygone days are all too compelling and, after all, there is always tomorrow.

But out at sea, great billowing cloud masses, newly arrived from the brooding Atlantic, are on the march northwards to do battle with Snowdonia's ramparts. Clearly there is another side to this sleepy coast, and just when one least expects it, the sea begins to heave and swell, and the first tell-tale choppy waves chatter in to smack against the unyielding granite. A short while later, as dusk falls, the murmuring wind begins to rattle the windows, gently at first, then angrily as it shakes them harder, as if trying to force an entry.

The first spots of rain spatter sharply on the pane, heralding the storm's approach, and within seconds a wall of driving rain is lashing the land and drumming on the well-slatted roof. In front of a glowing coke fire it is warm and, while dozing off, snuggled deep in a comfortable old armchair, it is better not to think of those out on the turbulent sea.



All night long the storm rages, vibrating and banging the windows and doors, but by dawn the rain dies away as if spent – the battle however is far from over. The wind, which has gradually increased in strength, is driving mountainous seas into the waiting coastline and the constant booming roar of crashing breakers can be heard a great distance inland. Disorderly ranks of Atlantic shock-troopers roll in without a pause, breaking far out in the bay, but never expending their whole energy. Each wave in turn curls over in a lazy roll of foaming white-water and then spontaneously explodes skywards in all directions with an angry roar as it collides with some hidden reef. Even now there is no holding such a persistent force and a raging maelstrom of instant death crashes in to expend itself on the waiting beach, where the sand has been churned

up to turn the water from a somewhat sickly green to a dirty brown. Farther along the battle-line the headland, which juts out proudly into the sea, is taking the brunt of the enemy's attack and colossal waves stretch ever higher as if trying to surround the enemy on its exposed flanks.

Then, just as suddenly as it all started, the waves decrease to an almost playful level and the wind, the cause of all this savage destruction, once more quietens down like a temperamental child whose energy has been spent in an uncontrolled outburst of petulance. As the weary helicopter crews continue to quarter a boundless ocean in search of the Fastnet victims, and in the remote possibility of finding a faint surviving spark of life, the splintered wreckage of a once proud flotilla spreads out ever farther to distant shores.

Atlantic rollers on
a Cornish beach.
📷 Bryan Maloney



The Boulder

Clogwyn Du'r Arddu

mind clean in the shade
rinsed in morning rhyolite –
smeary transience

of thought stains the rock
no more than summer's dry moss
brushed from cool dark holds;

down on the Terrace
my multiple personas
wait with the rucksacs:

pale wraiths in debate
waving their shimmering hands
nodding see-through heads,

the sombre waters
of the black lake undisturbed
by their reflections –

occasional notes
of agreement or dispute
float up to me here

tangled with the cries
of raven and ring ouzel,
some distant hooting

from the Snowdon train,
the spherical vibrations
of the hidden sun

and rock's austere tones
hummed to what's left of myself
questing out across

the airy traverse
unnoticed till I belay:
Schoenbergian rows

by strange agency
from places unknown set free,
synaesthesia's

tune of charmed shadow...
peeled senses slowly settle,
John joins and leads through,

we top out and watch
the Snowdon massif stretch out
its limbs in the sun

soon left to descend
back to packs and waiting selves –
caught part way by sharp

tendrils of old scent:
blue and brown threads in still air:
pipe tobacco smoke –

we seek out the source
but there's no one else climbing,
no one else around...

except for the ghosts,
pioneers returned to watch
the world for a while:

spectral Jack Longland
in baggy sweater and pumps
sits on a boulder

and taps out his pipe
cascading sparks and remarks,
exchanging ideas

and burning for change
with my educator wraith,
swapping over eyes

to scan the landscape,
straining to detect some sign
the mainline express

to reach the new world
promising fair shares for all
is somewhere on track –

busy Snowdon train
gallantly whistles belief –
I gather my selves

and pull them back on –
trails of phantom smoke and steam
weave the mountain air –

no one else climbing,
just us and the pensive dead
contemplating life

Andrew Clarke





The Island of Adventure

By Aeneid Blyton

Val Hennelly recalls the adventures of the Famous Twenty Three' on a recent Climbers' Club meet to Lundy which focused on preparations for the forthcoming guide. In this homage to Enid Blyton, names have been changed to protect the guilty as the weeks events are retold in a light hearted and humorous style.

Chapter 1

The Great Departure

Aunty Quentin (AQ) had sent out the umpteenth email to the 23 intrepid explorers with more advice about the upcoming adventure to support Operation Guide Book (OG). Some of them were obviously so over-excited that they couldn't read the instructions and kept asking questions about things they already had been told about several times over.

But now the day was upon them. Departure from Ilfracombe was nigh and all they had to remember was which boat they were travelling on, what time it was departing, where they had to take their luggage (different instructions for different travel arrangements – all very straightforward if they read the instructions in the emails) and arrival deadlines.


AQ hurried into Ilfracombe with minutes to spare on the Friday afternoon to drop off the team inflatable castle with the Ferry company. At 70kg and ten cubic feet (uninflated) she was relieved to get it out of her car in preparation for the next stage of the operation – the assembly of the excess luggage for despatch with the advance invasion boat from the people who were travelling on the package ferry. There were good reasons for this, too complex for this simple tale.

Over the course of the evening a ragtag of explorers rolled into town and found AQ enjoying lashings of ginger beer in the local hostelry. AQ's wagon was increasingly stuffed. By the morning she could barely fit in and rolled gently around the corner from the Backpackers' Inn to the port, peering through twelve inches square of windscreen and trusting that no one else was up at 5.25am. Despite much careful planning, she was late. The invasion boat was keen to depart ten minutes earlier and a rapid transfer of three tonnes of equipment ensued. AQ tried to count the number of CC members on the boat but they kept moving about and she had left her list of who should be there behind... were there twelve or not? AQ went back for a coffee with the Duke of Dartmoor and hoped all would be well.

The next stage of operation was the assembly of the remaining eleven for the package boat. Siwel was the last to arrive on his foldable bike at the precise hour of 8.30, just before the rain started to lash down.



Opposite:
Cath Sullivan and
Val Hennelly on
Partridge Slabs.
📷 Mark Hetherington
Previous page:
a climber on the
Flying Buttress.
📷 Michelle Hickson

Putting up the communal tent.
 Cath Sullivan



Chapter 2

Crossing and Arrival and First Explorations

The crossing on the ferry was a taste of things to come – raining, windy and unsettling for some; many of the team were glad of the damp walk up the hill to gain their legs.

There was no sign of the advance luggage or party on arrival at the camp, but evidence suggested they had got their own tents up. Eventually all the remaining camping and other kit was discovered in a shower cubicle. It was very wet but this was not because some wag had turned the shower on. The soaking was the result of their very speedy and bouncy crossing; a combination of wild weather and the keenness of the boat crew to get back to Ilfracombe for another client pick up; every wave was taken head on, or so it seemed.

With weather slightly improving, people were keen to get out climbing but AQ was keen that the CC castle should be erected before the forecasted evening showers. This was a surprisingly short job with eleven hands on the pump and people were allowed to disperse and AQ could relax as her bit was done. It was now over to the Photographers to set the agenda of who had an adventure where, what they should wear and how they should pose.

This was easier said than done. The Photographers knew they wanted exciting locations, bright clothing and a better photograph than any of their friends might get, but they weren't so hot on actually communicating that to the explorers. An alternative version of this truth is that the Photographers were perfectly clear about what they wanted; it was just the explorers who were disobedient. In any event, the explorers often set off with their own agendas, often in dark clothing and without telling anyone where they were going. It took a couple of days to iron out these issues and we gradually got into better planning, which in turn produced better results.

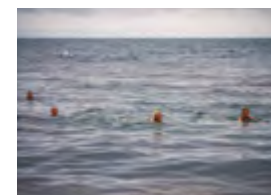
No adventure is without risk and the most serious incident happened on day one, involving the near decapitation of the newest member of the club. Having survived a twelve hour journey to Ilfracombe with Sewil, the Youth had an uncomfortably close shave with an airborne boulder. Due to good practice (without the prussik on the abseil he would be no more) and luck (a serious graze and bruise) he was but lightly scathed.

Otherwise, given the weather and the complex nature of the island and approaches, we got away lightly. Many of the explorers found the descents over steep wet grass and sea-thrift tussocks on the wrong side of exciting. Sewil was especially relieved to be excused an expedition to the Devil's Chimney. Adventure teams flexed according to Photographers' plans and somewhat to his surprise Sewil found he was destined for some coveted photographic opportunities at the bottom of one of the more intimidating approaches. AQ didn't see the expression on his face after the Fireman had juggled back up the ab rope and declared baby seals were obstructing the approach to the stack, but he still looked like a man who had won the lottery that evening. Gutted he was not, though Tigger the Photographer was, and had to make do with action on Immaculate Slab instead.



Classic lines were climbed; Bristol Filmstar declared *Destiny* an on-sight HVS, (E3 6a in the new guide) but had a harder time on the *Devil's Slide* where he was relieved to place a firefly on the airy traverse. The Lakeland Photographer obediently polished off the *Original Route* on the Constable with style in afternoon sunshine. Anne, George and AQ got to know the layout of Atlantic Slabs close to the campsite better than it warranted and spent much time checking out descriptions and new lines.

The Goat ranged up and down the island getting drone shots and sharing his years of experience. AQ still doesn't believe some of the descents he describes are practical unless you really are a goat, but he did lead the Lakeland pair into *Cableway* on the Montagu Steps and they firmly declared the climb was not a Severe and that the descent description needed much more clarity...



Chapter 3

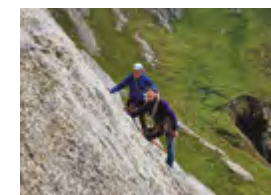
Other Mysteries and Adventures


Amid all the climbing and the weather life at the camp was good. The IT Specialist and Man in Black cooked spectacular and smelly breakfasts every day in the castle, while others constructed cooking platforms at their tents. The main challenge off the rocks was sharing one extension lead and the island's slow electricity to charge up 23 people's phones and camera packs. There was much surreptitious charging going on in the pub.


But on the third day there was a cry of rage! Someone had stolen the Publisher's Laughing Cow Cheese, which had cost as much as a pint of ginger beer! He had so been looking forward to his soft cheesy triangles and interrogated all the folk in our party but to no avail. Unsatisfied, he then asked the few other people on the camp if they were the guilty parties. No one would have dared to lie to him so intense was his distress. It remained a mystery for 24 hours before the Journal Editor's Lady 'fessed up that she had confused the one in the fridge with the one in her tent... (*Shome mishtake surely!?* Editor.)


There was also a lot of walking in various levels of wind and rain; the Bristol Filmstars walked the length of the island several times, and the Publisher's gizmo said he had completed 38 miles in the week which was impressive considering the island is only three miles long.


The President and ACVP mounted an exhibition to Rat Island to secure a letter box stamp missed on past visits. They declared the rock ridge of the island as a worthy ascent.



Above left:
 Mark Hetherington
 and Simon Cardy
 spotting the line of
Cableway.
 Cath Sullivan

From left:
 Creatures of the sea.
 Mark Hetherington

A hairy local.
 Mark Hetherington
 Andy and Diane
 Kitchen on *The Devil's Slide*.
 Cath Sullivan

In the Marisco Tavern.
 Tim Whitaker

Chapter 4

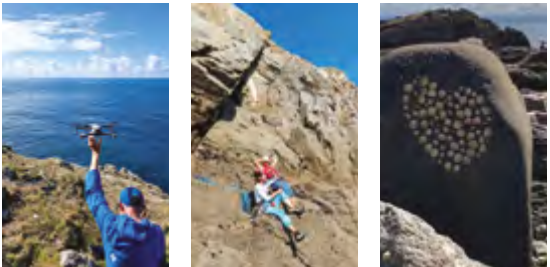
Sunshine at last

The weather finally started to come good on Thursday with a spectacular sunset which had everyone in a frenzy of photographing, searching for the best image of the nippy ponies and lighthouse against a lurid sky. By Saturday the Photographers took a day off and made a mass ascent of Albion. The ferry team were all on time for the 17.00 ferry and the invasion team had an 18.30 departure. Siwel arrived at 18.25 having had his own epic seconding *Destiny* (that well-known HVS). He was last seen by AQ outside his camper van desperately looking for his keys.

Overall, the weather was not as kind as it could have been, but the explorers climbed every day, gathered to cook and shelter in the CC castle or drink the super ginger beer in the pub and a good time was had by all. On some days the Photographers were happy, declaring they had got the shot.

However, their default setting was frustration: the trials of being artists and perfectionists as well as being extremely competitive. The next guide book will benefit from the efforts of all the attendees and photographs including drone shots. If you see a shot of the Devil's Slide with the lucky Youth dropping a knee, this will be the 'got back with 10 seconds of power to spare' drone shot from Magazine Man.

Thanks to all the explorers who may or may not recognise themselves or any element of truth in this account. Let's hope we see some of you at the new Lundy guide launch party in the not too distant future.



Right (R to L):
Getting a crag shot of
Cableway.
📷 Cath Sullivan
Adele Long and Hilary
Lawrenson on Atlantic
Buttress.
📷 Tim Whitaker
Lundy: love it or
limpet?
📷 Bryan Maloney

Base camp rainbow.
📷 Mark Hetherington
Opposite:
The Old Light
📷 Mark Hetherington



A Trip to The Moon

Who'd envy Elon Musk and his billionaire chums and their sci-fi off-world fantasies when you can freak out in your very own Moonage Daydream right here on mother earth?

Alison Athroll straps in for the ride and tackles a Gogarth Yellow Wall classic...

"Fancy *The Moon* Ali? Only the best route in the world"... .

This was the text I received from Tony Madden a few days before my 2009 Gogarth meet with my local climbing club, the LC&CC.

A quick check in the guidebook – *The Moon* is E3 5c, low in the grade, and indeed, described as the best route in the world. First pitch 4c and last pitch 5b – maybe a chance for me to lead a pitch or two as well? I was looking forward to it.

I didn't do any more research – it was Tony's route and I knew he would be psyching himself up for it. I just had to follow up and collect the gear. Easy peasy...

On the day we headed off early, full of anticipation, senses heightened. We quickly found the abseil block and I fixed the ab rope directly to it using a bowline. Foremost in my mind was to have as few links in the chain as possible. Tony abseiled first. He was a while – and those of you who know Tony also know that he usually doesn't hang about. Just as I was beginning to wonder what was up, I heard him shout up and it was my turn. As I abseiled down, Tony came into view. He was anchored awkwardly to the cliff face and standing on the very steepest bit of grass you could imagine. I thought it strange, but it all made sense when I saw that the ab rope didn't reach the ground and, due to the steep nature

of the rock, the end was hanging in mid air. "Mmm, wish I'd used that long sling on the belay block now," I thought. Tony had a rope waiting for me to tie into so that I could down climb to a safe position and then return the favour for him. As I looked back at the ab rope dangling forlornly, I worried more about another party using it than the fact that we, most certainly, hadn't got it as an option of retreat. I rationalised my worry about another team using our rope by concluding that they would be more than capable of sorting themselves out as the easiest line out of this area was E2 5b.

It was while we were coiling the ropes, before making our way over to the start of the route, that I took in the surroundings. It seemed as quiet as a church and I felt I should talk in hushed tones out of respect. The sea was calm and far below and wasn't a distraction. For a moment, I was disappointed at this. I find the crashing of the waves and the occasional soaking an energising aspect of sea cliff climbing. However, as we studied the rock over and around us, looming high above, I decided it was better that the sea was far away. Tony was eager to get started, so I set off on the 4c pitch. Almost immediately I was stumped – I kept hoping that the route didn't start by taking the hand traverse out left on the overhanging quartz lip and then making steep juggy moves upwards – all

without protection. But that was where it went! I eventually decided I wasn't made of stern enough stuff and disappointingly handed over the lead to Tony, who made short work of it (although I'm sure I heard a few grunts of effort – which made me feel slightly better). The ledge at the start of pitch two was nestled right into the rock face and the walls seemed to be overhanging on all sides. I hoped the way through the steep rock was obvious. We took a moment to record the occasion with a self portrait. Tony was looking relaxed and confident while I was looking crazy with excitement.

Rack sorted, Tony set off moving rightwards and upwards onto the wall and eventually out of sight. I knew he was finding it OK because I was paying the rope out regularly, sometimes with a handful and a half every now and then for clipping gear. When Tony was on the slab I heard him shout about the amazing exposure and how you didn't want to fall off. It made my heart flutter at the prospect. It was a 35m pitch so it took a while. Eventually, I heard Tony shout "safe". I was just the right level of nervousness – enough to be totally focussed on the climbing but not so much that I was going to fumble and panic. I was only seconding, but there was a traverse across a perched slab followed by a down climb to the stance, so the comfort of a snug rope was out of the question on this pitch. And a fall would result in some spectacular mid-air action, probably no injuries, but a whole heap of faff in order to recover. The same would have been true of Tony's lead – I'm glad that he climbed it without incident.

I set off and it immediately felt steep. I pushed my body into the rock as far as possible, trying to conserve every bit of energy I could while I retrieved the gear. Soon I could see the wall above and Tony far over and up to the right. I pushed on until I reached the slab and stepped right reaching out with my right hand, frantically searching for something, anything, that would allow me to move my body rightwards.

I could sense the exposure but didn't look down. I focussed on calm breathing and felt around a little more. Tony shouted encouragement letting me know that there was a good pocket there somewhere. Got it! Phew! I took a few seconds to relax and take in the situation. What a climb, what a position, what an adventure! Great lead by Tony! The last difficulty was the down climb to the belay which Tony made easy by leaving some gear above me.

By comparison pitch three looked relatively simple compared to pitch two. It went up a wall to a small overhang and then continued up the groove above to the top of the cliff. Tony set off and paused a short while at the overhang before making the move and scuttling up the groove to the top. This was still a 30m pitch but Tony finished it off in a much quicker time than pitch two. I found the move through the overhang to be a tough, weird, technical move which took me ages to figure out. Eventually I managed to contort my body in such a way that allowed me to make upward progress. The groove line above was enjoyable all the way to the top. A huge grin was waiting for me – Tony was pleased as punch. I grinned back. We'd made it without event. A truly memorable trip to The Moon.

Tony and Alison at the start of pitch two



Clogwyn Du'r Arddu – Early Times

Many climbers today may feel that some of the best days of their lives have been spent on Cloggy. This piece explores the early development of the pre-war pioneers on this dramatic cliff and describes the challenges they faced without today's sophisticated equipment.

by Steve Dean

“When one is not immediately climbing, there is the magnificent beauty of these crags and of the Llyn, unvarying, never the same, at all times, and in any weather.”

John Menlove Edwards, 1942

“Clogwyn Du'r Arddu is a big enough memorial for any man, and without any sort of doubt or threat of rival claims Du'r Arddu is Colin's cliff.”

Jack Longland

in his Obituary for
Colin Kirkus, 1942

“It cannot be said that this imposing mass possesses much interest for the rock climber. It has been truly said that the easy places are too easy and the difficult places are impossible. However, a splendid day can be spent here exploring the faces and revelling in probably the finest rock scenery that Snowden affords.”

George Abraham, 1905



In the opinion of many climbers, particularly those of a certain age, Clogwyn Du'r Arddu remains perhaps the finest of all British Crags. The combination of its history, its awesome atmosphere and a huge range of wonderful climbs across the range from VS to E8, makes Cloggy a deeply loved venue. Climbing here is not easily accessible, requiring a long walk up from Llanberris or from Snowdon Ranger on the A4085 to the west. In addition, the crag is situated at more than 700m above sea level and most of it is north facing. Consequently, for much of the year the crag remains out of condition, and this means that dry spring or summer days spent there give any routes done a particular value, I think it is fair to say that some of us have spent some of the best days of our lives there, when a visit coincides with dry rock and warm, settled weather.

Clogwyn Du'r Arddu is a complex and majestic cliff that forms the southern wall of Upper Cwm Brwynog on the northwest flank of Snowdon. For much of the year, the crag is subjected to heavy rainfall and strong winds from the north and west. In winter after a heavy fall of snow, the place is particularly striking, and a still winter day there has a strange atmosphere. The modern history of the crag can be said to begin in June 1951, when Joe Brown, fresh back from National Service in Singapore, made the first ascent of Diglyph with Merrick Sorrell. The rest as they say is history, and the modern era up to the present day has been well documented. What has always particularly interested me is the early history of this wonderful and inspiring place and the courage and determination of the early explorers.

The rocks that form Clogwyn Du'r Arddu are complex and the predominant one is a form of Rhyolite laid down between four and six hundred million years ago. Huge amounts of folding and uplifting some twenty million years ago created the

landscape we recognise in much of Scotland, The Lake District and Eryri.

Glacial activity in the British Isles peaked around 18,000 years ago. The glaciers had a very dramatic impact on the landscape creating the U-shaped valleys and cwms so readily visible today. At the height of the ice age Wales would have been uninhabitable and as the ice age retreated, the first evidence of habitation in Snowdonia was around 15,000 years ago. Some 2,500 - 3,000 years later the climate improved and the population of Wales in general rose as a result. This period (the Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age) lasted until the gradual introduction of farming around 6,000 years ago. The warmer climate resulted in much of Wales becoming a wooded landscape apart from the higher mountains. It is likely that in this period, trees would have been more prolific even well into Cwm Brwynog.

Ancient man's life would likely have been coloured by folk tales, legends and in some cases a belief in fairies and the supernatural particularly in relation to the high and often forbidding places. In his excellent book Visions of Snowdonia, Jim Perrin recounts such a story.

“A folk-tale which perhaps pre-dates even the Arthurian material attaches to Llyn Du'r Arddu (Black Lake of the Black Height) on Snowdon's northern flank below Clogwyn Du'r Arddu, the most magnificent of all British rock-faces. A fairy woman comes out of the lake, marries a mortal, brings cattle as her dowry, is struck by iron three times unwittingly, and at the third blow returns with her cattle into the lake. The story has parallels throughout the Celtic realms, many scholars believe its basis to be in conflict between Bronze Age settlers and Iron Age invaders, and in this instance cite in evidence the proximity of Bronze Age settlement in Cwm Brwynog.”

For many centuries the land below the crag and in Cwm Brwynog would probably have been generally

Opposite: Clogwyn
Du'r Arddu
Sean Kelly

avoided by man, and offered at best rough pasture for cattle and sheep. Some variations in climate may have resulted in a limited degree of habitation but the early visitors to these parts would have been ordinary hill farmers tending their animals, digging for peat and hunting. It is very likely that generations did pass on knowledge of plants and herbal medicines and the earliest visitors to the crag would most likely have been plant gatherers. Clogwyn Du'r Arddu is one of the best locations in Snowdonia for mountain plants, in particular the area at the top of the Eastern Terrace which was greatly valued by botanists and apothecaries from a surprisingly early period.

The earliest recorded rock climb in Snowdonia was in 1798, when two clergymen, the Revd. W Bingley and the Revd. P. Williams visited Clogwyn Du'r Arddu to search for plants, and made a gripping ascent of the Eastern Terrace. Given the local knowledge regarding the range of plants on the crag it is quite likely that others had gone before them, but their account of the adventure is a joy to read and leaves no doubt as to the level of excitement they experienced in awesome surroundings.

As the interest in mountaineering grew in the Victorian period, so too did the desire of tourists to climb to the summit of Snowdon. A path of sorts up from Llanberis had come about as a result of the establishment of the copper mines below the crag, but by the 1830s, it was already a popular route up the mountain and a hut serving refreshments at Snowdon summit was established by 1838. Walkers on the path would have enjoyed a superb view of the crag, as would the men toiling in the copper mines. I have often thought of those men, perhaps at the end of a winter's day, gazing up at the great crag above them, never imagining that one day it would be a vertical playground for so many of us.

The Victorian climbers would certainly have

been aware of the cliff although it was not so readily accessible from Pen y Pass. However, I would be surprised if James M Archer Thompson had not at least visited the place. Their attention might have been drawn to the easier angled area to the left of the crag, which often offers good winter climbing in a fine setting. A big change in the character of the area came in 1895 with the construction of the Snowdon Mountain Railway. Amazingly, using little more than picks, shovels and primitive explosives, the work was completed in fourteen months. Climbers have often sneered at the railway, but I must confess that having climbed on Cloggy for more than forty years, I have grown rather fond of it. The echoes of the trains across the cwm are a memorable part of a day on the crag. My wife and I travelled on the train once, and I was surprised how close it seemed to be to the crag, with great views of The Far East! The railway predates the major climbs on Cloggy by over thirty years.

In July 1905 P.S. Thompson led a party up a chimney to the western end of the crag. *Deep Chimney* is over 350ft in length and still gets two stars in the current guide, where the V.Diff. is described as 'a vintage climb'. In September of that year, the Abraham brothers, George and Ashley, visited the crag and produced a short route, *East Wall Climb*, that breaks out of the Eastern Terrace to gain a hanging gully line above. This slight route is now rarely, if ever, climbed. Later that day the Abrahams made their way to the top of the Eastern Terrace and gazed down into the tremendous Gully Face of The Pinnacle. Writing in 1963 Jack Soper described their visit:

"Lying full length they peered over and found, as many have since, that a stone dropped at arm's length falls free for well over two hundred feet." It would have been beyond George and Ashley's comprehension that the superb wall they looked

down would be climbed fifty-three years later by Joe Brown. The route he produced was *Shrike*; destined to be one of the best loved routes in the whole of Snowdonia.

In September 1912 George Mallory was climbing in Wales with Ralph Todhunter, a man in his forties well known for climbing wearing white gloves! Together they climbed *Adam's Rib* in Craig Cwm Du, and the following day they walked over to Cloggy from The Snowdon Ranger Hotel. They spent some time fruitlessly looking for ways up the East Buttress, and in the afternoon they made the first ascent of the *East Gully*. It must have been quite an adventure as parts of the gully are quite steep and riddled with huge amounts of loose rock and vegetation. Over eighty years later, with Mike Pearce, I made the mistake of using the gully as an approach to do *Shrike*. It was very unpleasant and still full of loose material. However, winter can change all that. A good dump of snow followed by a freeze, and the East Gully can give an enjoyable climb (Scottish Grade III) taking in some spectacular scenery and situations.

In 1919 Herbert Carr and George Lister climbed *Primitive Route* on the Far West Buttress, and a few days later added *Slanting Chimney* and *Slab Climb* nearby. *Primitive Route* is particularly worthwhile and gets two stars in the current guidebook. Years later in 1973, Geoff Milburn and Dave Gregory visited this part of this crag and produced *Slab Climb Right Hand*, a Hard Severe route of 166 metres that is highly recommended and well worth seeking out. In September 1921, Frank Smythe visited the crag with Ernest Roberts having walked up from Rhyd Ddu. They spent three days exploring the area below the West Buttress, and the Far Eastern part of the crag. They produced two routes of no great significance, *Non Such* and *Giant's Trod*, but Cloggy made a great impression on Smythe and he returned a number of times


to admire the magnificence of the place. He did however help to spread the word about the crag, notably to friends in the Manchester Rucksack Club and the Climbers' Club, and this would result in very significant developments between 1927 and 1930 when the first major routes were climbed on Cloggy.



Great Slab (VS).
© Steve Ashton

The great breakthroughs on Cloggy on both the East and West Buttresses were the result of the gradual improvement in climbing standards throughout the 1920s, and the emergence of some outstanding and ambitious climbers. For many years the overall standard of Welsh climbing had fallen behind that of the Lake District but that situation was about to change. The first major route on Cloggy was known initially as *The East Buttress Route*, but we now know it as *Pigott's Climb*. A

Rucksack Club team led by Fred Pigott and Morley Wood climbed a line of cracks and grooves on the East Buttress in May 1927. Fred Pigott was an outstanding rock climber of the period, and the successful ascent was the result of a number of previous attempts. It is perhaps the first time in Wales that the full influence of gritstone climbing resulted in a major new route. *Pigott's Climb* soon acquired something of a rogue reputation and was not repeated frequently until after the war. Much of the route is rarely, if ever, dry, and many a VS leader has struggled on it. Graded a modest Very Severe in the current guide, it was perhaps the most challenging of the pre-war routes on the crag.

Right: Morley Wood, Lindley Henshaw and Fred Pigott (the latter, presumably, disappearing up the notorious crack on pitch 5 of *The East Buttress Route*, later to be known as *Pigott's Climb*, (VS).

 J F Burton, from *The Rucksack Club Journal*, 1928, account by Lindley Henshaw of the first ascent. Reproduced by kind permission of the Rucksack Club.

Far right: Jack Longland and Colin Kirkus

In the spring of 1928 a Climbers' Club team led by Jack Longland and a Rucksack club team led by Fred Piggot both attempted a line on the then unclimbed West Buttress, and both were thwarted by heavy rain. At Whitsun a combined team led

by Jack Longland together with Fred Piggot, Frank Smythe, Morley Wood and Bill Eversden climbed the route to the right of the Black Cleft. It was a very bold lead by Jack Longland as he encountered loose rock and vegetation, but the climb they produced, now known as *Longland's Climb*, was a fine one destined to be a classic, and one of the most popular routes on the crag. It must be stressed what good climbers Jack Longland and Fred Pigott were. Protection back in those days was poor or non-existent, and the West must have looked a daunting proposition. Two years later at Easter 1930, Jack led *Javelin Blade* at Cwm Idwal, by far the hardest route in Wales until after the war.



1930-33 was something of a golden period in the history of Cloggy and ten new routes were established on the crag. The key character in this period was a young climber from Liverpool called Colin Kirkus, together with his friends A.B.Hargreaves, Ted Hicks, Graham MacPhee, Maurice Linnell and Alf Bridge. Colin paid his first visit to the crag in the spring of 1930, when he was only nineteen. Together with A.B.Hargreaves he made the second ascent of *Longland's Climb*. A few weeks later having made the first ascent of *Mickledore Grooves* on Scafell's East Buttress and the

fourth ascent of *Pigott's Climb*, Colin returned to Cloggy with Graham MacPhee. After a rapid ascent of *Longland's Climb*, Colin turned his attention to an area of the West well to the right of *Longland's Climb*. What followed was an audacious and highly dangerous ascent of *Great Slab*. The 100ft first pitch was full of loose vegetation and Colin's struggle with it are well documented. He found no runners on the pitch, and it was thought at the time to be of the boldest and most exposed piece of climbing yet done in Wales. A week later Colin made the first ascent of the superb *Direct Route* on the Nose of Dinas Mot. A new star had arrived on the Welsh scene.

Over the next two years, Colin produced a further seven new routes on the crag, the most notable being *Chimney Route* and *Pedestal Crack* in 1931 and *Curving Crack* the following year. These crack lines contained a considerable amount of vegetation and loose rock, and the ascent of *Chimney Route* with Menlove Edwards must have been particularly hazardous. *Pedestal Crack* and *Curving Crack* were to become particularly popular; a fine direct start was added to the former by Colin climbing with Maurice Linnell. Maurice led the fine layback crack that starts *Curving Crack* and then handed to lead back to Colin. Maurice added his own route with his ascent of *Narrow Slab* on The West Buttress, climbed with Fred Pigott. Colin meanwhile was away in the Gangotri Himalaya where he and Charles Warren made the first ascent of Bhagirathi III, a fine effort that involved some of the hardest rock climbing yet done at altitude. The friendship and partnership of Colin and Maurice promised so much as they were two of the finest climbers operating at that time. Tragically at Easter 1934 they were avalanched climbing *The Castle* on Ben Nevis and Maurice was killed. Colin was still only twenty-three and recovered after a long period in hospital, but never climbed at a high level again and blamed

himself for Maurice's death. He died in September 1942 in an RAF bombing raid on Bremen.

No major routes were added on Cloggy until June 1937 when David Cox and Robin Hodgkin together with the Mallory sisters Clare and Berridge, climbed *Sunset Crack* on The East Buttress. That same week they also added the thin *Top Traverse* on *Great Slab*. At this time a small number of climbers were starting to repeat routes on the crag, notably Jake Cooke and Leslie Roberts (who made the first ascent of *Main Wall* on Cynr Las) who climbed all the existing routes by 1936. Bob Frost of The Wayfarers' Club often seconded by Colin Kirkus, also repeated them all. In 1937 Arthur Birtwistle climbed the 'Drainpipe Crack' on The East Buttress (later to become the first pitch of *Vember, November* and *Jelly Roll*.) This was an audacious lead for the time, but Birtwistle was a very talented climber with a number of hard first ascents on gritstone to his name. Perhaps his most notable first ascent was *Diagonal* on Dinas Mot climbed in 1938 and quite outstanding for the pre-war period. Arthur also made an early attempt at what became *White Slab* on The West Buttress, climbing some 30ft. above 'Linnell's Leap'.

The limitations of the War years descended on Snowdonia in the autumn of 1939, and for some years few climbers were able to visit Cloggy. David Cox was stationed in Llanberis during the war and made some visits, and Wilf Noyce (on leave from the army) soloed a couple of the Kirkus routes in 1942. The most notable activity at this time was the first ascent of *Bow Shaped Slab* in 1941 by Menlove Edwards and John Cooper. 'The Bow' became quite popular in the fifties and sixties, but is now usually combined with the long first pitch of *Great Slab*. *The Great-Bow Combination* is one of the best VS/HVS routes in Britain. In 1942 Menlove and Barford, produced the first proper guidebook to Cloggy. It was published in the Climbers' Club

Journal and lists 13 routes. It is an interesting read if only for its unusual grading system.

The war came to an end and climbers became more numerous in Snowdonia and new faces emerged. In October 1945 Jock Campbell and David Cox produced a fine new route on The West Buttress called *Sheaf*. This was a route finding masterpiece starting below the start of *Longland's*, and finishing up the slabs and grooves to the right of *White Slab* giving over 450ft of pure delight: to my mind, the best of the early routes on Cloggy. The following year Arnold Carsten and Graham MacPhee added another route to The West Buttress with *Central Rib*, a 300ft line to the right of the upper part of *Great Slab*.

A key figure in Welsh climbing in the late 1940s was the Derby based Peter Harding, who had already put up some fine new routes in the Peak on gritstone. Working on a new guidebook, Peter climbed extensively in The Pass and on Cloggy itself. His comments about this period are most interesting:

“My generation were the caretakers really, carrying on with keeping the hills alive until the war and its aftermath were over. No one had much money, and visits to Clog were rare. However we were much influenced by the example of Colin and Maurice and the linking context of people like Alf Bridge, AB and Graham MacPhee who were all still active. Clog was still very much the preserve of the expert and it was still, unusual to encounter another party there.”

Peter climbed all the routes on the crag while working on his 1950 Guidebook, but perhaps surprisingly only added one new route of his own. In May 1949 with Gordon Dyke he added The Girdle of The West Buttress. Peter did also make a spirited attempt at what became the bold *Pinnacle Flake* a few years later.

In June 1949 a young climber from Manchester

called Merrick Sorrell, together with his even younger friend Joe Brown paid their second visit to Cloggy, having previously climbed *Longland's*. Over three sunny days Joe led all thirteen routes in the 1942 guidebook. In one sweep, Joe obtained a familiarity with the place that would yield great returns in the future. National Service took him far away to Singapore, but when he returned in 1951 the modern era commenced on Clogwyn Du'r Arddu, but that is another wonderful story.

To conclude, a quote from Jack Soper who wrote so eloquently about Cloggy and its history.

“And although Arddu is after all, only an unfeeling piece of rhyolite and the scratchings of the last few decades irrelevant to the larger scheme of things, there is an air of tradition about the place, of great deeds wrought in the past. On silent days when the cwm is deserted and the crags loom strangely through the mist it is easy to imagine the Abrahams peering in amazement down Shrike Wall, or one of the great teams of the nineteen-thirties at work with the grass up on the West, or a young man from Manchester uncoiling his hemp rope below *Vember*.”

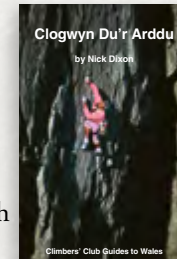
I was hugely fortunate to have long conversations years ago, with some of the key characters in the early development of Cloggy. These were Jack Longland, AB Hargreaves, Guy Kirkus, Arthur Birtwistle, Peter Harding, John Disley and Joe Brown. Their stories about the early days on the crag were fascinating, and left me in no doubt how serious and frankly how dangerous climbing was before the emergence of reliable protection many years later. What was so significant was the awe they felt for the place, coupled with a deep affection and a delight in having had great days there when they were young men.

Opposite: Maurice Linnell. Maurice led the fine layback crack that starts *Curving Crack*. 📷 The Rucksack Club Archive.

FURTHER READING

Clogwyn du'r Arddu
by Nick Dixon

The current Climbers Club Guide (2004) is excellent and contains a wealth of historical information, written with warmth and humour.



The Black Cliff

by Crew, Soper & Wilson,
(Kaye Ward 1971)

Snowdon Biography

by Geoffrey Winthrop Young, Geoff Sutton
& Wilf Noyce, (Dent 1957)

Welsh Rock

by Trevor Jones & Geoff Milburn
(Pic Publications 1986) .

Menlove

by Jim Perrin (Gollancz 1985)

Visions of Snowdonia

by Jim Perrin (BBC 1987)

Snowdon

by Jim Perrin (Gomer 2012)

Hands of a Climber

by Steve Dean (Ernest Press 1993)

My Father Frank

by Tony Smythe (Batton Wicks 2018)

Still More of Arfon

by Jack Soper
(Fell & Rock Journal 1963)

A gem worth finding

Some of these titles are out of print but may be available through second-hand book sources such as Jarvis Books (Mountain Books), Glacier Books or AbeBooks.



Squareface, VDiff,
Beinn a' Bhuid.
Don Sargeant



“a sad, neglected sort of place...
what better introduction to
Schottlandish hospitality?”

Ich bin ein ‘Wolfie’ Wäscheständer

The days of climbers turning up at the crag dressed in army surplus trousers, crushed velvet Loons or Ron Hills are long gone. Visit any crag today and you will see a fashion parade of models sporting designer label clothing such as Patagucci. In the early 90s German firm Jack Wolfskin entered the UK outdoor clothing market place. To support their sales pitch, they needed a glossy catalogue with photographs of their products in use here in the UK; this is the story of the photoshoots.

By Bob (R.K.) Allen

My outdoor gear, like myself, has seen better days but it wasn't always so. For a brief period I swanned about in the very latest German outdoor fashions and accessories: from undies to rucksacks to tents. If Jack Wolfskin made it I, or my wife Fiona, flaunted it. This was our reward for being location scouts, fixers and erstwhile models for the Wolfies' 93/94 winter catalogue jolly.

I have always assumed that the appearance of the iconic red telephone box located at Pennan in the film *Local Hero*; coupled with the Scots' reputation for parsimony when setting the production budget, led to the Wolfies' top brass choosing Schottland for the catalogue photo-shoot. As I live in Scotland and Tony Stephenson (in 1993 the UK's lone Wolfie) and myself have history, he invited both Fiona and me to join the jolly. Our first task was to seek out photogenic red telephone boxes of a Celtic persuasion.

For a time there was a website to help with this quest, but in 1993, when the internet consisted of Compuserve, AOL and porn (allegedly) all accessed (slowly) using the clicks, burps and hisses of a dial up modem, it was not at all easy. OS maps were searched for T's and collective memories scoured for the elusive 'Reds.'

Our 'production team' assembled at Glasgow airport. It consisted of, from the UK: Tony Stephenson, Stuart Miller (aka 'der Bergführer'), Fiona and myself, and from Germany: a Wolfie marketeer, a Wolfie ad agency art director, 'Esel' the photographer and his lovely female assistant.

Esel's most recent assignment had been to illustrate a rubber and bondage fetish exposé for one of those odd German magazines. I can only assume the rubber experience prepared him for Scotland's weather, and that a perceived need for a good dose of Calvinism had some bearing on his inclusion in the team. 'Esel' is the German word for donkey and he did look remarkably like one, particularly his ears. His lovely assistant later revealed a more singular bodily resemblance i.e., 'he was hung like an Esel'.

Our travelling circus set off up the A9 in its search for the perfect 'Red' phone box. Camp 1 was the Kinlochleven Hotel. In those days it was a sad, neglected sort of place: damp sheets, tepid baths and surly staff; what better introduction to Schottlandish hospitality? I began to suspect the Wolfies were less than impressed with their first experience of my 'fixing' abilities.

On the first day of our search, we drove under leaden skies to Diabeg, then followed the coast road to Applecross, over the Bealach na Bà to Gairloch and finally back to Kinlochleven, but none of the 'Reds' at these locations proved alluring. Next day I 'fixed' up a visit to a salmon farm. The Plockton shot was ticked with assistance of a bewildered passing granny who "didnae want ony o' them fancy jurmon ganzees."



Opposite: Meeting a local at one of the 'Reds'.

Above: Bob on the pinnacle.

Far left: Preparation and the catch.

Left: Fiona horsing around.

That afternoon a fast RIB ferried us out to salmon cages on Loch Torridon. The deal was if you let Esel take your photo wearing Wolfie kit then you got to keep the items you modelled. Very soon 'shots were in the can' thanks to a couple of very bemused salmon farmers plus a wee yappy dog.

Northern Scotland is very narrow, as the crow flies less than 30 miles from the Atlantic at Ullapool to the North Sea at Bonar Bridge. This together with another dismal hotel evening encouraged a move to Speyside. A quick tour of the Aviemore 'Red phone boxes' introduced our German colleagues to some of the more unsavoury uses they seem to attract.

In order to provide a wholesome ethos to the catalogue other outdoor activities were to be included. First off, fishing!

One of the other benefits of Speyside was that Fiona's brother, Alastair, lived and worked there. He is a fisherman so next model sorted! In addition, one of his jobs involved assisting in the distribution of EU regional development funds. A better way of gaining friends and influencing people is hard to imagine.

The preferred image was to be Alastair wrestling with a monster Spey salmon and landing it. After about 20 minutes of fruitless splashing of his string in the river without a nibble, it was the fishmonger in Aviemore who provided the catch for the photo. Next up came horsey stuff.

This location came from Alastair's little black book of contacts; a farmstead deep within the Nethy Forest where the Capercaillies roost. Various members of the farmer's family and livestock stood in as models who assumed poses imagined by the creatives. Finally, it was time for the horse photo. Fiona was selected as the model. She was to stand alongside the saddled horse by its stable. The horse was meant to gaze serenely at Fiona, but in her proximity the horse exhibited 'frisky' behaviour (I know that feeling). Stuart was tasked with

crouching down inside the stable to hold the horse's bridle and prevent any sudden moves. To greet its new stable companion the horse rasped its rough tongue across Stuart's pate, his howls of shock and displeasure echoed through the forest.

After a bit of golf, it was mountaineering next. We walked into a wintry Corrie an t-Sneachda and erected a tent. The 'Bergführer' did his guidey stuff with ski/climbing gear around the tent: job done? Well not quite; a 'proper' mountaineering photo was required. In this winter mountain environment Esel and his lovely assistant were well out of their comfort zones and when shown the substantial névé slope leading up to the next location on the Fiacail ridge they retreated into the tent and wouldn't come out. Soon they were joined in the tent by the other Wolfies and a heated discussion in German regarding T&C's, fee structures, etc. followed. Finally, a cowed Esel emerged from the tent resigned to his fate. It was my job to short rope him and his lovely assistant up the névé slope. Progress was hesitant and nervous to start, but our crampons bit well and with height, confidence was gained. As the slope steepened just below the ridge crest glorious panoramas opened up and the magnificence of the situation got Esel's creative juices flowing; he started to take photos. Unfortunately, his divided attention meant he tripped over his own feet and the three of us started rapidly accelerating back down the hillside towards some nasty looking boulders. I ice axe braked us to a halt. My rope companions thought this all part of the game and jolly good fun, so much so that the lovely assistant tripped next time and off we went again, downward bound. I halted us once more just a bit too close to the threatening boulders. From above, German shouts outlining yet more T&C's about H&S had the desired effect and we trudged up to join the rest of the party.

It was my turn to be the mannequin. I was

dressed and perched precariously on top of a windy and exposed pinnacle. It was freezing but photos were snapped. Just when I thought I was done, a cursing Wolfie scrambled towards me, grabbed my trusty Chouinard bonnet from my head and hurled it into the corrie. We had to repeat the photos all over again.

Lochaber became our next hunting ground for 'Reds'. We based ourselves in the Clachaig Hotel, a place that has featured much in my climbing life. Most recently as a roadie for a cracking, reasonably priced, all girl Ceilidh band my daughter plays in. (I recommend a search for 'Full Floor Ceilidh Band' on Facebook – a shameless plug).

Back to '93. To provide balance to the catalogue's wholesomeness, pub bar shots were required. The Wolfies spotted 'character-full' faces amongst the Clachaig bar customers and I, as recruiting sergeant, used promises of free gear and drink to enlist the models. Judging by the size of the bar bill the Scots' parsimonious reputation for spending other people's money lay in tatters.

Next morning came, and what better place to cure hangovers than a distillery? A west coast one provided the location and some cheery bondsmen acted as models. In order to add realism a cask was cracked and half a litre of whisky drawn off. At the culmination of the shoot we enjoyed this 'Angel's Share', and as a wee pick me up it worked wonders!

We eventually ran out of equipment to photograph for the catalogue jolly. Its conclusion, at Glencoe's Meeting of the Three Waters, featured Tony's very wet abseil down the waterfall (first ascent/descent?) The team's last evening was spent adding to the Wolfies' Schottish cultural education with a tour of seedy Glesga bars and night clubs, and with a "Gute Reise" they flew back to Germany.

As stated at the start of this ramble my outdoor kit could do with a refresh. So, any manufacturers looking to appeal to the grey climbing pound here

are some ideas to put into product development.

A harness with long extensions between leg loops and waistband so the waistband can sit comfortably on top of a chap's paunch instead of clinging precariously to its lower convexity. In addition, buttons for braces, front and back.

I appear to have mislaid my hair over the years and heated exertion generates torrents of perspiration. My eyebrows however remain surprisingly hirsute, so what about a gel/stiffener to mould them into gutters to divert the flow away from the eyes? I also suspect this fluid contains the nutrients that fed my once long, glossy, flowing locks. This causes any remaining hair to grow at an alarming rate, particularly nose and ear hair. A spray containing a nutrient suppressing agent would be most welcome!



Top: "Action shot" at that Distillery



Below: Preparing for outdoor action.



'Mr Jack Wolfskin' (UK) - Tony Stephenson abseiling down the Meeting of the Three Waters waterfall, in full spate, Glencoe.

All in a Day's Walk...

The Munros in winter present mountaineers and climbers in the UK with unrivalled opportunities for adventure close to home. Short days and harsh weather heighten the seriousness of objective dangers and make route planning, winter skills and hill sense essential ... but even the best laid schemes gang aft agley... and the ablest and most experienced can be caught out, as one team discovered on an outing in the Drumochter hills.

By Paul Donnithorne

The Highlands of Scotland are magnificent to look at and to get engrossed in, on any level, in a multitude of activities. Not only the largest cliffs in the UK presenting challenges, but just to stop and look in awe at the craggy slopes rolling into the sea with infant white streams cascading into big blue lochs at an angle so pleasing to the eye. The mature rivers and vast expanses of wild moorland are just a few of the magical qualities which draw the tourist and mountain enthusiast alike. Thus I head north regularly for my fix of excitement and escapism to get metaphorically lost in their majesty. These days with weather forecasts more reliable and much more general information readily available, I tend to make the long journey from the south when the weather and conditions look favourable to enjoy the wonder of the highland wilderness.

A few years ago a long term climbing buddy and I were up for the winter climbing around New Year. This time of year is normally slightly early for good fat ice to have built up, but we always had the option of going for the occasional walk, if conditions got a bit gnarly. I had the campervan so we could move about with ease, finding the optimum conditions, north, south, east or west.

So there we were, in the middle, luxuriating for a couple of nights at the Climbers' Club hut in Roybridge for a bit of warmth and comfort and be well placed to use the key to the Ben Nevis track to make life easier, should we choose to climb on Britain's highest and finest mountain. Driving the initial few miles up the bumpy road is such a time and energy saving privilege and welcome perk at the end of a big winter day out.

The weather hadn't been kind so our ice tools hadn't properly come out of mothballs yet, but we had braved the December storms and managed a

couple of reasonable walks. Dave, who had gotten the 'Munroing' bug a few years previously was always keen to head high and bag a coveted summit or two if possible, whereas I knew very little about Munros, other than they were Scottish mountains over 3,000 feet above sea level. I was always up for any action going though and walking in the Scottish mountains can be an exciting and serious game. In fact, we had been out a few times in the past few days with varying degrees of success. One day that springs to mind initially, is when Dave wanted to do a couple of Munros by Loch Treig, east of the Grey Corries, quite local to Roybridge. To cut a long story short, we reached the first summit, *Stob a' Choire Mheadhoin* without too much drama, although there was a lot of uphill snow plodding, the axe and crampons were dusted off for only one steep section. The annoying thing was though, that the weather clagged in big time as we headed on through raging wind, thickening cloud and increasing snowfall towards the invisible second summit, which was separated from the first by a narrow ridge. How narrow, we couldn't see and although only a kilometre away that second summit, *Stob Coire Easain* eluded us on that day. We justified our retreat by stating more than once that we'd have done it if we had a rope and a pair of axes, also the hill wasn't going anywhere. Winter days out in the mountains always feel big and serious so we were well deserving of the seasonal celebrations in the pub in the night to come. We had more than earned our beer, whisky and dancing!

We woke the next day (not early) to miraculous clear blue skies and frosty trees glistening in freezing white temperatures. A perfect picture postcard, Scottish winter morning, ideal for driving south, as our time here was up and this was our day to

Opposite:
A' Mharconaich
© Richard Webb
cc-by-sa/2.0
geograph.org.uk

go home. However, I got thinking, staring into my coffee and after a short while, avoiding the temptation to mispronounce any Gaelic hill names, came up with a cunning plan.

“Are there any Munros you haven’t done on the way home?” I volunteer a suggestion over the kitchen table to Dave, who is engrossed, devouring the full monty breakfast, mingling stale booze breath with the lingering smell of sizzling bacon, amongst other things. A heady mix of aromas not to be dwelled on for longer than necessary. “I’ve done most of them down the west” comes the chewy, snorting reply, through the steam of the Nigella Lawson special.

“What about those hills you can see from the A9 driving south from Aviemore” I retort without much knowledge of what hills actually are, or aren’t Munros. In contrast to Dave who seems to know where all the Munros are and can name them all with correct pronunciation, annoyingly. He also, even more impressively knows the English translation and there are hundreds of them!

“Well, there’s the Drumochter Hills”.

I reach for his Munro book to look these hills up and discover there are actually a group of four Munros just west of the A9. Not bothering to read out their names, I take a quick look at the picture map illustration, which gets me thinking that we could bag all four if we get our skates on.

“The sky is blue and the hills are twinkling enticingly white” I comment rather enthusiastically and looked through the window at the perfect, white Grey Corries, framed in a cobalt sky. and within a minute or two we are packing the van with haste and boyish excitement, despite a combined age of over 100.

The drive was spectacular, twisting and turning, straight out of a Swiss chocolate box of icicles and trees and by about lunchtime we arrive at the starting point: a windswept beauty spot carpark on the west

side of the fast and furious A9 trunk road, adjacent to the curiously named Balsporran Cottage. So we gear up and set off doggedly for the first Munro. The purest crisp white snow is everywhere and this winter wonderland is absolute joy, with a biting cold, but gentle breeze. The low golden orb sun is magnificent and the entire landscape is whiter than a Persil advert.

Without discussion or much thought we’ve headed off in an anti-clockwise direction, with four hills as the objective. We are both aware however, with the late start and all, that this walk could be shortened if necessary and just the two Munros closest to the road could be put in the bag. Uphill and more uphill and while crunching over the frozen world a song enters my mind, as is often the case during relentless upward exertion. Almost marching in time to the tune in my head.

*“Imagine there’s no heaven, it’s easy if you try,
No hell below us, above us only sky...”*

It is the perfect remedy for a hangover and underfoot the surface is hard and crisp so the going is good. In fact it’s just a couple of hours until we reach the crystal clear top of a pristine *Gael-Charn*, the little bump of hard snow hiding, but indicating we’re at the summit cairn. I point to a small collection of rime-encrusted tall pillar cairns in the near distance, likening them to being people-shaped from where we’re stood. Quite odd we agree, marvelling at the incredible uninterrupted views beyond and in every direction across the rolling white wilderness. What a special treat! It’s days such as these that stay with you forever. However, it’s too bitterly cold to stay here for more than a minute or two so we head south for the second hill and noticing that the weather is also on the move, we decide to skip lunch and opt for plan B, the shorter version, bagging just the two Munros. Half an hour later and we’re down at the col between the two peaks and what a difference half an hour

can make. Clouds have appeared out of nowhere and as they encroach are growing into a billowing thick blanket. The wind is picking up and snow is beginning to swirl and flurry from all directions. After a few minutes we are experiencing near whiteout conditions. Dave points out that a plan C could be on the cards, which is to head north east down the valley between the two peaks and regain the road in a couple of hours. I’m keen to bag that second Munro (even though I’m not ‘doing them’ and don’t actually have the Munro Book) and point out that it could be hard work breaking trail in the deep snow in the valley and much easier walking up and along the easy ridge.

So up we head up to confront Munro number two, still in a southerly direction to gain the west ridge of *A’ Mharconaich*. Once attained, the plan is to turn left and walk east along the ridge towards its summit. Conditions worsen, visibility deteriorates even further and pretty soon we are the walking blind and forced to adopt the leapfrog navigation technique. I walk on the compass bearing, Dave, stood still confirming my correct direction of travel, until after a few paces he struggles to see me through the crazy mirk. I stop and wait for him to catch me up and repeat the process, counting paces all the while. A laborious technique and not without its own challenges across the kilometre of tundra. From the map we know we’re on a broad ridge/plateau, running west to east, which terminates abruptly at its eastern end in very steep terrain, like a truncated spur, flanked by cliffs. On a clear day it would be a splendid view point for The Cairngorms, but this afternoon we are denied that spectacle. After some time we stop at a point where we think the summit of *A’ Mharconaich* should be. Or is it? Conditions make life quite demanding now and despite being just a couple of feet apart, we can barely see each other. Perhaps an illusion but here the ground is level, if not gently sloping

away in every direction, but it’s impossible to be sure. There is however a blunt nipple under my feet. “It must be the summit cairn”, I exclaim. We can’t see anything in the thickness of the snow and cloud apart from whiteness. I can only just make out my snow plastered boots in these impossible conditions. There’s a westerly wind blowing snow horizontally onto our turned backs, not strong enough to knock us off our feet (as is sometimes the case) but chilling the body sweat and the situation is intimidating and plenty serious enough for us. Now, raised voices are required to communicate and we both know it’s time to put on crampons and get an axe out rather sharpish. Hands already getting cold. We can’t spend long here, we’ll freeze. A quick restricted look at the viciously flapping map and we agree a due north bearing is correct and that as a safety precaution we should subtract two degrees, so to avoid the steep slope and cliffs dropping away to our right (east) and down to the A9 two thousand feet below.

The tactic next is to keep on the agreed bearing for seven hundred metres, until we are past the danger zone, then bear right and switch to a north east direction and head more easily and gently rightwards down the mountain’s north east ridge to safety. We’re getting colder now and we’re in the ‘type two fun’ category with zero visibility. We’ve navigated off Ben Nevis many times in similar conditions after completing a winter climb on its north face without too much difficulty, usually staying roped up for the initial fifty metre leg from the summit, then having negotiated past the gullies to the right, marching off down on the second bearing to safe ground. But alas, today we are out for an easy walk so didn’t pack a rope. All that’s required is to employ the same leapfrog technique, so we set our compasses at 358 and off I stride, counting paces.

Ten paces and stop. We can’t see each other now but Dave soon joins me. Regroup, ten paces and

stop etc. Batches of ten are easier to work with. We do this four times and then counting the paces on the fifth leg, I get to four and I'm suddenly flying headfirst, downwards into an invisible white void on an endless arc of chaos. Panic. Panic. What the...

A timeless nosedive and my head smashes into the snow slope with an explosive collision and my back arches into a cartwheel propelling me like a human windmill, a slingshot into an orbit of somersaults.

"Is this real; is it a premonition?"

"Must ram pick into slope next time I face in". Ram in pick! Ram it in!

I come to face the mountain again. The pick rips through the soft snow so easily and I'm still airborne, spinning down to oblivion. An explosion of velocity and powder as I hit the snow cliff again.

"Smash the adze into the slope, if there's another chance".

More cartwheels and then I get a second go, when I'm facing inwards again.

The adze just pulls uselessly straight through and I twist upside down again. A crampon point catches something and my right leg is wrenched outwards sending me into a whirling hell-bound star jump.

"Impact with something is surely imminent?"

I wait for the body-breaking blow, but no, I get a third chance at stopping, when in all the chaotic spinning, I come face to face with the bitter slope once again.

"The shaft, the shaft, punch it in, punch!"

This is it. Shaft or bust. Surely there won't be another chance.

Everything I've got goes behind the head of the axe as I bury the shaft deep,

up to the hilt. Flying snow crashing, but there is resistance and the shaft bites into the mountainside.

"Keep it there, hold it, hold it, don't die, you mustn't die".

Miraculously I'm slowing down, still sliding now, though but getting slower until eventually my deceleration ends and I'm clinging motionless, face in the snow, gripping my axe with both hands. The 18 inches of cold steel forced inwards by the weight of my chest has saved my skin.

Immediately, I look down, up, and to both sides. Blankness and white everywhere, but I can't stay here, on this 70 degree slope of fresh soft snow. This side of the mountain has accumulated a significant amount and has to be prone to avalanche. Not knowing what's below, the only way is up. I must have fallen a few hundred feet in those eternal vital moments, but now the game has changed. Yarding upwards, crushing the tumbling slope under me, I make it to a point where everything rears up vertically above my head. It's the cornice and it's too steep to climb with one axe. I stop some distance below the overhang and hear the windless and menacing silence, cocooned in my clouds of hot breath. The stillness so different from what has gone before and I'm now aware of my thumping chest rising and falling against the wall of hostility facing me.

As I try and drum up a plan of what to do next, I hear a muffled voice shouting, but the words are blown away by the blizzard into the universe above. It must be Dave. He must be desperate up there.

"I'm ok" I shout and wait for a reply.

"I'm coming down". Comes a muffled reply.

"No", I scream, but it's too late. Dave hasn't heard me and lowers himself over the cornice feet first and slides swiftly and soundlessly, but under control with his deeply buried axe, down past my side.

"Brake", I yell and he grinds to a halt below me.

"Fucking Hell, where are we?" are the words of reunion.

"I couldn't see where you'd gone" he says.

I give him a brief account of what happened and suggest we get out of here, but then realise that we have to ascertain where we are. What could have happened? Did the compass go wrong? Is the rock magnetic? Were we even where we thought we were? Had that really been the summit? We can just make out a rock wall a few metres to our left, which adds to the confusion.

Speedily, we get the map out and have a closer look, but can't come up with any other possibility than we had summited and had then headed too far right of the bearing. Then, I walked straight over the cornice above the east face of the mountain. We agree that our only option is to traverse rightwards under the cornice, across the slope until we merge with the ridge. Axe stabs, fists and kick stamps rightwards and see what happens. Let's hope the dotted line of our toe-kicks don't cause the snow slope to release its freshly dumped load and take us with it. A few hundred metres of determined, yet tentative sideways movement, trying to keep our impact as low as possible and eventually we emerge on the gently sloping ridge to sanctuary. A much safer place to be but it's not over yet. We still can't see very much and darkness has fallen upon us, but we are clear of the cliffs. We descend the broad and easy ridge and pretty soon we're below the cloud-base and at last, can see the snow slopes silhouetted all around us. It is now that I feel a weight has been lifted and I relax from my heightened state. I notice a digging twinge in my lower back and a tearing pull in my right knee.

As we make the torchlit hobble down towards the safety of lower ground, we turn, like two bedraggled ice warriors and pay a farewell glance towards *A' Mharconaich*, shrouded in a ghostly winter cloak. The frozen burn is negotiated without much trepidation, then with crampons removed we trudge back to Baisporran.

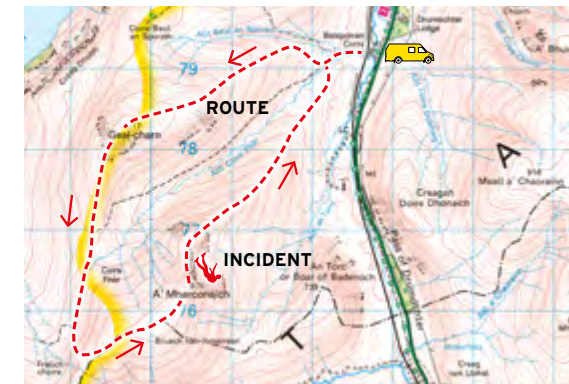
"Imagine there's no countries, it isn't hard to do, Nothing to kill or die for, and no religion too..."

We cross the river towards the shelter of the van, the final few hundred metres of limping being particularly challenging for me.

We're inside and shelter never felt so good. The kettle goes on and soon we're warm and cosy, drinking hot tea and eating a belated packed lunch, reflecting on our little epic. Then at last I curl up safely in my very welcoming bed to drift away.

"Imagine there's no mountains, no point to lose or win, No one to give the orders, and no such word as sin, You may say I'm a dreamer..."

The drive south the following morning was another battle, with my back in spasm and a balloon knee. But that's another story.



Postscript

Some years later and those injuries have diminished and I've well and truly got the Munroing bug (and the book). Having adventures and bagging hills whenever I get the chance to get away and generally keeping out of mischief. It can be quite inspiring, leafing through a guidebook, planning the next trip from the comfort of one's warm kitchen. So I'm reading *The Munros* by Cameron McNeish and as I turn a page, I choke on my Sugar Puffs. The photo staring up at me smacks me in the face. It's a stunning

Above: left: Map of the route, showing the location of the fall.

Opposite: Paul Donnithorne in winter garb. © David Turner, 2013.



shot taken from the summit of *A' Mharconaich* (the very mountain I fell down), looking north over the descent ridge to the distant mountains beyond, and there; there in the foreground is the remnant of a spring snow cornice clinging to the curved indent of a gully biting into the rim of the plateau. A crescent-shaped gateway to doom. The man-size mousetrap. That portal to the other side. It's the very gully I blindly walked into all those years ago. It slowly dawns on me that this particular photograph, taken from this exact angle from the summit cairn has been used to illustrate and point out the danger zone. A warning and favour to the winter hill walker. It's crystal clear to me now, what went wrong, that whiteout day. I scrutinize the OS map again and yes, the cliff forming the eastern edge of the plateau is marked, but not the indent of the gully. Only one thing for it...

A return visit!... On a perfect sunny summer day, there I am, absorbing the infinite azure skies adorning Scotland in all its enormity and entirety, enjoying a leisurely lunch on the summit of *Sgairneach Mhor* (one of the 4 Munros in our original plan A) and feasting on the huge views to the west. I can see the western highlands, heralded by their flagship, *The Buachaille (Etive Mor)* a shining golden pyramid silently standing there fifty miles away in the morning sun, everlasting and utterly astonishing!

This afternoon's plan is to do *Beinn Ullmain* (two more Munros and all 4 in the group in the bag) and then a detour to revisit *A' Mharconaich*. Yes, a rematch, but this time the contest is different as I can see where I'm walking. Superb hill walking across a few kilometres of firm grass and *A' Mharconaich's* stony summit plateau is reached. The cairn is small but obvious and perched on the very eastern edge of the plateau and crucially, not where the spot height sits on the OS map, several metres to its west. I savour extended moments, soaking up the sun in



just a pair of shorts. The views are magnificent and there's absolutely no pressure from the elements to move on, but I am eager to continue. As before, I head almost north on a bearing of 358 degrees and low and behold, the compass leads me straight to the gully's edge. I stop and teeter gingerly closer for a peer over the precipice. Gulp, that's where it all happened. So different today. Just rocks, scree and a few random clodges of turf clinging pointlessly to the side of the rotting cliff. All quite ugly really. A minor side step of just a couple of paces to the left and I skirt the jaws of the gully. Simple. Mystery solved!

But it's not really over as I relive those winter moments all over again, this time dressed only in a pair of shorts and approach shoes in the heat of the afternoon sun. All in a split second of hyper cognition.

A gentle bimbble down the easy ridge and across some boggy terrain leads me to the straightforward river crossing and back to the van. So, with *A' Mharconaich* (Place of the Horse), pronounced 'A Varkaneech' well and truly in the bag, the Munro quest continues. Hundreds more adventures still await and nowadays I'm armed with a GPS! As I tread, songs come and go and I wonder if others have had close encounters with that gully, or...

"...am I the only one?

You may say I'm a dreamer..."

Thinking back to the position of that summit cairn and a valuable lesson has been learned. Never assume that a summit cairn is actually on the very highest point of a mountain or indeed on the location of the spot height on the OS map. Incidentally, spot heights are not always plotted centrally in the smallest summit contour ring on OS maps and are sometimes absent altogether. Cairns themselves are not built by The Ordnance Survey or any other cartographic organisation, they appear or become established over time and while they can be a useful navigational aid, or as in this particular case can be misleading. Cairns can also be a form of refuge, as some are very elaborate and have had stones irresist-


ibly added by countless walkers over numerous years and have grown to the size of a small building. Some have even morphed into large domes or even circular semi-igloo-type shelters. Very welcome in horrendous weather conditions. Conversely, some Munros, due to their geology or vegetation cover, simply and naturally have a stone free summit and thus no building material for a cairn, which can create an enhanced atmosphere of extra remoteness. Summit cairns can offer a little reassurance to some and perhaps be intrusive or even an eyesore to others.

So in the case of navigating off the summit of *A' Mharconaich* in whiteout conditions, had we been stood on the exact location of the spot height as opposed to the cairn, perched as it is on the edge of the precipice, we would have avoided the edge of the plateau and missed the jaws of the gully by several metres.

The quest continues to complete all 282 Munros and these days The Corbetts (mountains between 2,500 and 3,000 feet) are on my radar and are included in my travels if feasible. There are 222 Corbetts, many of which are extremely remote and more involved than many Munros, so plenty of adventures remain...



Opposite: Views of the summit and of the corrie below *A' Mharconaich*.
Top:  © Hill Walker and licensed for reuse under Creative Commons.

Left: Heading south off Geal-charn and looking towards *A' Mharconaich* with the cornice to the left of the summit and west ridge to the right.
 © Russel Wills and licensed for reuse under Creative Commons.

Rock Climbing for Novices

To begin notice,

with a tinge of fantastic, cracks in pavements,
gaps between bricks. Uneven-
natured surfaces. Ignore,

on the outset, outdoors-sports shops
that sell the greatly-varied, bright ways of knowing
the ropes.

All journeys have narrators;
shapes, fragrances, textures
(things that first spored words) pronounce
silent dialects of signposts. Take this crack, close
its edges
over your eyes; give yourself rhyolite eyelids. Push

your mind's nose into mineral-cool zing tinged
with moist fluffs of dead plant and insect; heavy
with potential weight of life. Open
your eyes;

feel them in your sockets smooth
as raindrops. Look

with water. The crack
is habitat of surprise. Ferns
stick out frond-tongues at intrusion: imp

-ertinent little girls of greenery; harmless but
so powerfully intimidating. Forget

tilts of the odyssey above; you must
navigate massive intricacies – a mass
of stimuli jumbling in an area of inches
(or if it's your preference –
centimeters). Yet remember

you can't measure any of this. As air drips
as moss-slime, as moss-slime swirls
as wind, so this
entire continent of cliff shrinks
to meet endless expanses of slabs that facet
minute granules. How this crack

contains a sensation of pressed flesh. Let,
if you're seeing insides of rhyolite eyelids,

sun's light shine through rock.

Now, if you must, go to the shop.

Mark Goodwin
1996

A version of this poem was first published
by the literary journal *Staple*.



Reflected reeds, Loch Morlich
📷 Bryan Maloney

Climbers' Club Easter Meet, April 17th - 23rd 1930

Geoff Milburn provides a meet report from 90 years ago, which give a flavour of club culture in the 1930's – a reminder that Helyg is approaching its centenary in 2025 as the first CC hut. It is interesting to compare and contrast every aspect of this meet with its modern day equivalent.

By John B. Allan

Left London by the 8.30, Chester 12.39, Bangor 2.30. No bus up the Ogwen valley until 3.40 and on this we met two other climbers who are also staying in the valley at a nearby farm.

Helyg turns out to be just what I had imagined, but the key is not in the 'cache' and I eventually find that it has been on the summit of Tryfan with two men, who turn out to be the remains of the Cambridge Mountaineering Club who have been staying at Helyg. I have tea with these two at Mrs Williams' farm and then make myself comfortable at Helyg. Two girls call for Bell. I knew one of them but we cannot think where we have met. Then I helped Marples and his little 'Petite' to pitch their tent in a biting wind. They had walked from Capel with all their kit. Bell arrived about (10.30, a very decent chap, a Cambridge running Blue, Caius). We have a little meal and about 11.30 the Liverpool party arrive, Chantrell, Tilby, Slater, Deakin, and Ward.

We spend the next hour or so getting the cars into the garage and the monstrous quantity of food into the cottage. We eventually turned in about 1am. I had been warned that the beds were cold, and they were, but being the first arrival, I had got plenty of blankets and slept very well indeed.

Friday April 18th

Wakened by the postman on Friday, as no-one goes to the door. J.B. opens it and lets in with the postman a cold wind and not a little snow, but is rewarded for his bravery by receiving a letter from Duck and the promised life of Charles Kingsley. Breakfast is excellent and Norman Ward shows what a magnificent cook he is. After some discussion we decide to go to the Idwal Slabs for an easy first day, especially as the weather is not too promising. We start on *Faith* and this is J.B.'s debut in the noble art of rock climbing. On the first rope are Ward and Deakin. Tilby leads No. 2 with J. second and then Slater. I leap up the first pitch, fear being my chief incentive, then we arrive at 'Treecoonee Corner'. John Tilby of course goes round it easily but J. gets into a rare mess as there appears to be only one foothold and no handholds. While clinging in this very precarious position there comes up to me from far below the voice of Chantrell, "Change your feet." This very excellent advice seems to be of a suicidal nature. I retired and then once more approached the breach. Getting the right foot on this time I was soon round and heading for the end of the pitch. At the top of *Faith* we have our lunch and then decide to try *Holly Tree*

Wall on a rope of six. After this decision the last three of us (I was number six) gradually freeze while numbers 1, 2 and 3 give a wonderful exhibition of gymnastics on the rocks above. We eventually decide to unrope, but the rope refuses to leave the belay and we provide amusement to those below in our efforts to get it off. We then depart to the facet of the Gribin and have some fun in *Monolith Crack*, but both Chantrell and Slater tear their hands so we decided to return to Helyg.

We all partake of a very good dinner and then Tilby and Chantrell depart to spend the next morning in their offices.

Slater and I go down to Cobdens at Capel and Deakin and Ward announce that they have a very important engagement in Bangor. We all unite later in Capel and return to the cottage.

Saturday April 19th

We wake up to rain, snow, wind and all that is bad. What are we to do? Slater suggests a scramble over Tryfan and the Glyders. We set out in rain and snow, Deakin leading with an ice-axe. It is very hard going and half way up Ward and Deakin decide to turn back. Slater, Moss and I have good fun in the *Nor' Nor' Gully* and finally reach the summit. Very cold we decide to go down to the bwlch and have lunch there. Real winter weather, snow swirling round the rocks and giving some idea of what Switzerland must be like. In spite of the bad weather, we decide to go on to the Glyders. As we climbed the storm got worse and, on the summit, a cutting wind made life almost unbearable. Moss's neck was so frozen that he could not move a muscle and we feared that we were going to have serious trouble. We were very near the summit but the blizzard and the wind were so bad that we decided to descend... but which way? Slater said one way and I said the exact opposite. We were eventually helped by a party of Lancastrians who had a compass, and also let it be said two

females! We forced our way down against the wind and snow, and eventually reached Helyg, drenched to the skin for the rain was coming down in torrents in the valley. We found Ward and Deacon hard at 'vingty' (vingt-et-un, the former having won 15 shillings and this he soon turned into 25 shillings. The two others arrived back from Liverpool and after a meal we started a game of bridge, but first Bell and Balfour arrived back from climbing with their females. We turned in fairly early and my face continued to glow until I fell asleep.

Sunday April 20th

Easter Sunday dawned cold and miserable, but I fortunately got into the first breakfast and so had: Porridge, Kippers, Bacon and Eggs, Bread, Marmalade and tea. The second sitting did not fare so well, and they never let us forget it. Ward's story of what he heard from the loft made up in wit for what it lacked in veracity, and it was noticeable that the next morning he appeared early in pyjamas and carried off with him to the loft a very fine plate of porridge.

Chantrell and most of the others decided to play about on the facet of the Gribin, while Slater, Tilby and myself, the weather being bad, prefer to go for a good walk. We climb up Twll Ddu to the chock stone, the whole thing being covered with ice and snow, and glorious icicles hanging to the rocks. Then it was up on to Glyder Fawr the same route that K.M. and I took the last time that I was in Wales. Snow was very deep on the summit. We then descended by the Gribin, which in its wintry condition provided good scrambling. On arriving back at the Facet we find that Clarkson led up the *Monolith* and that Ward following came off on the rope, for being too large to get into the crack. He then attempted to scale the wall. We decided to climb the Zigzags where John Tilby leads, then W. Slater, then J.B. The first pitch was satisfactory, the

next chimney a brute which quite saps my strength. Then comes the final one which all but beats me, but I go on and wrestle and fight and pray and at length arrive at the top.

The cook is in wonderful form and we have a super meal: Tomato Soup, Chops, Potatoes, Peas and Onions, then Fruit Salad.

After dinner we all proceed to old Cobdens and proceed to break the Welsh licensing laws and listen to the old man talk. W. and D. have their usual business arrangement in Bangor but they eventually join us at Cobdens and the party continues until a very late hour. On arrival back at Helyg we find a garage full so a smart gang sets out to remove the undesirable cars, amidst shouts, oaths, orders and counter orders. Two cars are damaged and all are moved in and out of the garage once or twice. The squad then goes in for a feed and Norman Ward in inimitable style acts the true tomato sandwich cutter to a delighted audience. Balfour and Bell then arrive. They having been to a show at Pen-y-Pass where Geoffrey Young is holding a party of the elite of the climbing world. Balfour remarks that he is going to put away his car and wonders why everyone laughs... the car in question being a large Daimler. He manages to get the bonnet in and that has to suffice.

Monday April 21st

The plan for the whole party on Easter Monday was the *Gambit*. Slater had led this the year before and Deacon was thirsting to show him that he could do it a good deal better... in fact he said that no-one could have done it worse. As ever though the weather decided the question and Deacon's lead is yet to be performed. The clouds were low and there was every sign of an abundance of rain, so S.D. And W. with Alan Jones and his new rope tied with red ribbon proceeded to the Milestone Buttress on Tryfan, while Chantrell, Tilby, Clarkson and I set

off for the Parson's Nose. We motored to P.Y.P., and leaving the car there set out along the side of the Crib Goch towards the Parson's Nose. The way however was long and the day sultry, so that by the time we came in sight of the Nose we found that we had neither the time nor the energy to climb it. So while Chantrell and Clarkson made an ascent of a new chimney on a nearby crag, Tilby and I set out to climb Crib Goch by the north ridge. This proved very good fun as the last part is quite a sensational scramble along a knife edge. On arriving on the summit we had the most gorgeous views of Snowdon, Lliwedd etc. and I was glad that I had bothered to bring my camera. We descended by the usual route at John's colossal pace, and as a result, had once more to break the Welsh licensing laws by downing a pint each at P.Y.P. The two Cs arrived a good half hour after us, and likewise found occasion to visit the back premises.

On returning to Helyg we found the other party were already back and preparing the meal. They accused us of 'selling them a pup' in Alan Jones, but we pointed out that Alan Jones had of course insisted in being in the same party as 'Mr Deakin'. After supper the Liverpool party had to make their departure. They all left in great style and I returned to the cottage. Later in the evening Balfour and I went up to the farm and had a chat with a friend of his there who had done a considerable amount of climbing both in England and Switzerland, and was most interesting. During the night two new members of the club made their appearance, but I was too weary to hold any converse with them.

Tuesday April 22nd

Balfour departed early to have a last short climb with the two damsels at Ogwen Cottage, so I set out for the Idwal Slabs with the two new arrivals, Richardson and Morland. We started by climbing Charity which proved very good fun, especially as

our route was a little wild owing to the fact that no-one was very sure which was the correct way. Richardson then, despite my warnings, tried the first pitch of the *Holly Tree Wall* and, as I had feared, came out like a rocket, but fortunately did not hurt himself. We then had lunch in the sun and dozed for a short time, the day having got out most wonderfully fine. We then proceeded to the Milestone Buttress on Tryfan and delighted a small crowd of motorists and pedestrians by our very noble ascent, my spread-eagle work on the last slab especially seemed to fill them with joy., and I hope with reverence, though, I may say, that it looked a good deal more sensational and exposed than it really was. On the way down Morland amused us by a super lone ascent of an unknown pinnacle of rock, and got himself into some wonderful positions before we threw him the rope.

We got back at Helyg at about 5.30 for the tea and found a new arrival... Peaker (another Cambridge cross-country runner and Alpine climber of some considerable experience. I had heard from Chantrell that he never brought any food and just lived on the odds and ends left by others. One party had found him living merrily on old pieces of dry bread and stale cheese). After tea Peaker proposed some mild exercise and as the other two seemed tired, I decided to accompany him. Having driven to the foot of the Milestone Buttress he said that its ascent would make a good start. "But I must lead," I protested. I had never led and had only been climbing a few days. To this he replied that the sooner I learned to lead the better, and this being a very easy climb was the obvious place to start. We roped with 'Frost' and I led on, more or less successfully, until the Corner Chimney where I slipped (though without damage) and Peaker took over. We then set off for the Heather Terrace to do another climb to the summit. We came out however above this and so P. decided to strike straight up for the summit by

what was, I am sure, quite a new route. The pace was colossal and I was rather tired, but P. kept on telling me that speed was the most important thing to acquire before climbing in the Alps, and sped on up what was a very useful scramble. He remarked that he wished he had his 'little girl' with him, and I for her sake was very glad that he had not. We emerged on the summit as the sun was setting and were rewarded for our toils by a most glorious sunset over Y Garn. I revelled in the beauties of nature and Peaker was immersed in thoughts of the fiancée he had that day left... 'chacun a son gout'. Darkness was falling as we literally dropped over the West Face, and I was distinctly pleased when we were once more within Helyg's walls. Peaker announced that he had a tin of beans which would make an excellent supper, and as I was too weary to cook anything else we both made our meal off these. The amount of water consumed was prodigious! After chatting about mountain ghosts and the Helyg tragedy of 1928 we departed for bed.

Wednesday April 23rd

P.M. and R. decided to do *Hope*, the *Holly Tree Wall* and something on the Glyder, but as this meant a very bad night journey for me, I decided to catch the mid-day train, and after packing up my things I was taken by R. to Bethesda in his car, and so to Bangor and back to London. On Crewe station I met Marler who was in very jovial mood and stood me a taxi across London and told me many interesting things about Geoffrey Young and the Club.

FINIS

N.B. Two things of great moment during the meet were, the crease in my climbing bags, and Moss's bathe in the stream on the coldest day after his ascent of Tryfan, the only bathe of the meet.

Three Go Off to Wales

(With apologies to Enid Blyton and her *Famous Five* children's stories.)

Remembering a time when climbing was more boozy and blokey, and when climbers trained in pubs rather than at indoor walls.

By Aido Garlick



By June 1979 I was coming to the end of a one-year PGCE Teacher Training Course at Trinity and All Saints Colleges in Leeds. I had also just secured my first teaching post in Birkenhead for the forthcoming autumn term. The future looked bright.

Saddleworth on the boundaries of Yorkshire and Lancashire is the home of Brass Bands and so it was at that Whit Friday Band Contest in Uppermill that I chanced upon a fellow Rimmon Club mate – Keith ‘Cockney’ Chadwick.

Cockney was one of the more ‘unpredictable’(!) members of the club, but his suggestion of an early start the following morning to climb in Wales

for the weekend seemed a sound idea, given that I had already consumed a fair amount of liquid refreshment.

Saturday dawned clear, clearer than my memory of the night before, so I thought it politic to drive over the hill to Cockney’s in Marsden and confirm details. I jumped on my newly-acquired gleaming 250cc Honda and quickly arrived at Cockney’s.

The house was a modern sand-bricked terrace with a raised garden leading down to the kitchen. The door was open and as I walked down the path a pair of eyes gleamed at me from within.

Barry Kershaw!

Whoops! – but too late!

I’d worked on and off with Barry on the demolition (a.k.a. destruction) of walls, outhouses, etc., and, of late, huge mill chimneys – the latter being a *very* lucrative business. Consequently, I was forewarned, so to speak. (The following conversations give a general feeling of the actual events.)

“Hi Aido, we’re off to Wales climbing!” Barry snarled. Cockney sat smiling.

Now, it had been years since Barry had devoted his energy to hammering gritstone crags into submission, his attention being more directed of late towards chimneys and human beings.

I made the excuse that I was on my motorbike and couldn’t leave it there as clearly their plan was to drive down in the flat-back Datsun pick-up which we used on the demolition jobs.

“No problem”, said Barry, “We’ll throw it on the back!” – My pride and joy!

We settled on my returning home with the bike and they would pick me up later in the van at The Commercial pub in Uppermill.

I duly arrived home, borrowed a tenner off my dad, got my gear, and nipped down to The Comic (the pub). I’d just ordered a drink when Cockney rushed in and announced – “Come on – We’re off!”

Of course, silly me with my memory... Barry was banned from all pubs in Saddleworth so he couldn’t even come in the pub, never mind ‘try one’. In addition, he had a multi-year vehicle ban so Cockney was driving.

I squashed in between the two in the cab, with Barry in customary vest and rippling tattooed muscles hanging out of the van window... rucksacs were thrown on the open back among odd shovels, bits of scaffolding and rubble.

The trip began well. Well, sort of. After three miles at County End, Lees, we pulled in at The Railway pub. We emerged around 3pm at closing time, totally wrecked, carrying a large crate of

strong lager, and me just left with loose change in my pocket.

I lapsed into a deep doze fuelled by the thick alcoholic atmosphere of the cab. The rapidly emptying crate was stuck between my legs. I suddenly awoke to see signs for Bolton and Lancaster. We were on the M61, heading north!

Curses and more curses were followed by Barry’s sensible (?) solution – “Turn round Cockney at the next available... !” – which proved to be a swerve through a series of cones at a gap in the middle barrier! Third lane to third lane – my sphincter working overtime. Total disbelief!

And yet, incredibly, this lunatic manoeuvre was repeated as we ended up Liverpool-bound on the M62. My fault again, according to Barry, for nodding off. Words just could not express my thoughts!

Peace and calm ruled as we once again headed, this time correctly, along the coast road through Mold towards Ruthin.

Peace and calm? – Don’t be stupid, – no such luck!

With very few lagers left, a thirsty Kershaw was keen to stop but was temporarily dissuaded. A car appeared in front at an acceptable speed but Barry was in a rush to get to the next hostelry so instructions were given to Cockney to overtake – “Ignore the white line on the bend – plenty of room!”

It was tight as we swayed round but fortunately nothing came the other way – although a little blue and white minivan with a flashing light on top appeared from nowhere. Hey Ho!

A fresh-faced youth with clipped moustache and pointy helmet approached Barry’s side of the cab, while another young constable followed.

Barry’s rapid solution – “Cockney – I’ll get this one, you sort the other out!”

My heart sank – all my hopes of finally becoming a fully-fledged professional member of society lay with these two psychopaths in the cab.

The young bobby came to the van door and looked at Barry... or rather, at Barry's beefy arm draped casually out of the van. The arm displayed a variety of crude, no doubt self-inflicted, tattoos, most prominent being a dagger with 'SAS' scrawled above it. (Of course, Barry had never been anywhere near the SAS but who would argue with him?).

"What's up?" growled Barry. [By now my panic level was 'critical']. It was amazing that the bobby could see either Barry or the empty beer crate and bottles through the haze of alcohol in the cab.

(At this juncture I must point out that Barry, apart from an overpoweringly muscular body, by nature possessed very imposing, almost immaculate, features. His dark, penetrating eyes were very close-knit and he usually sported a tight dark beard to complement his short curly hair. He was also very tanned. If he chose to cast you a glance, you knew 'toilet-time' was imminent. I think the bobby noticed all these little points).

"Erm... you crossed a white line... erm....and... erm... your tax disk is out of date!"

"Sorry about that... and the tax is in the post!" Stalemate for a few seconds until the bobby broke the silence with "Well, be more careful in future and get the tax disk sorted soon." And away they went, and we gaily carried on to Llanberis. Totally mind-shattering!

By late afternoon, driving down the Pass, Cockney felt we ought to at least touch rock, so we left a thirsty Barry to chance his illegal driving skills down to Nant Peris while we headed up to The Mot. We decided on *Ten Degrees North* but our hearts weren't really in it, (I was still staggering about under the influence), so we aborted early on and returned to the road where a quick thumb dropped us at The Vaynol.

Barry was in full flow with his mentor, Mr Whillans. Audrey was sat in a corner with half a shandy. As she later informed me "He only brings

me along so I can drive him back when he's pissed!"

The pub was relatively uneventful and the plan was to return with 'Mein Host' to Penmaenmawr, to the Whillans's small 'B&B' to spend the night. On arrival we found a young couple and small child as guests watching television. Barry livened up proceedings, creating havoc by trying to grab Don's tropical fish in the tank while they both emptied a bottle of whisky.

The guests went to bed and Cockney and I escaped to a small caravan at the side of the house to sleep.

Some hours later I was roughly awakened in the dark by Barry grabbing my feet. "You've got to be on your toes, Aido!" he growled... and then... silence. Next second a hand from behind pulled my head back! He'd crept round. "You're not fit, always be aware – you'll never be SAS material. Come on – we're off for a run to get fit!"

Cockney lay with a demure grin as Barry 'helped' me from my bag. Thankfully as we stood outside in the cold and damp the idea of a run lost its appeal to Barry so I quickly returned to my kip. Happy days!

The following morning we bade farewell to our hosts and Barry decided we'd go to the Little Orme. Eventually we got out to the headland but had no idea how to get to the bottom of the cliffs. Cockney disappeared and a short time later we saw him below, indicating a steep descent to us. We had no gear, the idea being just to have a look. I got down the steep grassy slope but Barry didn't seem very keen. Nevertheless, we both arrived at the water's edge but couldn't see much of the crag as it was away round to our left.

"No problem," grinned Barry, "We'll swim!" My quick-witted response fell on stony ground. "I can't swim." – "Well, now's the time to learn!"

Holy Mother!! We began to strip off and Barry jumped in – and thankfully out – too cold! My prayers had been answered.

Returning to the van on top of the cliff Barry amused himself by creeping up behind some unsuspecting sheep. You may well imagine his true intentions! Anything for a dare?

As we drove into Llandudno with no real destination in mind, the whole raison d'être of our trip now became apparent. Barry was on the look-out to 'acquire' a compressor for the chimney business!! Thankfully the search proved fruitless and we returned to Saddleworth.

Well, not quite! We drove straight to The Gardener's Arms at Waterhead in Oldham for refreshments. I was totally broke, both financially and spiritually. I managed to use the pub phone to call the cavalry who came to pick me up.

"Had a good time?" my dad asked as we drove home.

"Interesting," I mouthed.

My first teaching post was superb.

Postscript

While the previous account may suggest otherwise, in all my many dealings with Barry, I never once had a serious problem. With me he was always straight and fair. He only ever hit me the one time, hard in the stomach, while having a drink with him in The Cloggers in Uppermill. "Just testing your reflexes, Aido" he'd said smiling as he helped me stagger to my feet. Very considerate of him.

Barry Kershaw was a hard-living, larger than life character, afraid of no-one it seemed apart from, I suspect, the devils inside himself.

While still in his prime, Barry sadly succumbed to leukaemia in May 1987. To many it represented the passing of an era. While I found him to be great company and good friend, I suspect a slight sigh of relief floated around Saddleworth. Barry died just a year and a half after the demise of his mentor, Don Whillans. The man had called the boy!



☒ All Barry Kershaw photos from author's collection.





Terry Tullis
by Ian Smith

The Guardian of Southern Sandstone

Terry Tullis, who died in 2023, literally was the guardian of southern sandstone. He was known to generations of CC members, though never a member himself (his son Chris is a member). Ian Wall, who knew Terry and Julie and also Kurt Diemberger, paints a picture of Terry's hard-working and successful life in the background to his more famous wife who died on K2 in 1986.

By Ian Wall

Terry was born in Clapham, southeast London, in 1935, however, during the war years his family moved to Tunbridge Wells, Kent. From 1953 to 1955 he served in Malaysia as an army 'Sapper', but as an unwilling soldier, his aim was just to survive. As for many, when he left the services he had no clearly defined career path. First he became a photographer's assistant in Fleet Street, then worked for Anchor Butter near London Bridge. Later he secured a position as a sales assistant at Thomas Black and Son on the Gray's Inn Road in the golden age of British Himalayan Exploration. He met, and supplied equipment to, members of big expeditions, including those to Everest and the Polar Regions and he eventually rose to the position of Manager.

He met his future wife, Julie, on a cold dark night at High Rocks, near Tunbridge Wells. Julie had travelled from London on her Vespa to meet her sister, Zita, at High Rocks to go climbing, but unfortunately Zita did not arrive until much later than planned. Terry had been in the The High Rocks Hotel, and at closing time he came across

Julie standing outside looking very cold and lost. Terry and friends took her to their camp fire under the outcrop feature known as 'The Brenva Boulder' at High Rocks. They were married on November 7th 1959 in Streatham, London, and then returned to East Sussex to start their married life. They were two peas out of the same pod, both sought the freedom from routine, and whilst working to earn a living was a necessity of life, both looked for a solution to match their intended life styles, often working for lower wages to allow them the freedom to climb.

Seeing an advert announcing the sale, for £400, of a disused pig farm located near another local outcrop, Terry and Julie put in a bid. Although they were unsuccessful, they did end up working there for the new owner; clearing the site of pig carcasses and tons of scrap material, with the aim of turning it into an outdoor centre. Two years later the Bowles Outdoor Centre became operational. However, Terry and Julie soon left over differing opinions with the owner and they purchased a house in Tunbridge Wells.



Amelia Randall on
Banana (6a) at Bowles
Rocks by Ian Smith

In 1962 Christopher was born and in 1964 Lindsay arrived; by then the family was living in a 12ft-long caravan while Terry worked in the Wood Protection and Pest Control industry. But soon everything changed as they bought a small grocery store with an attached café in Groombridge so that they could be nearer to Harrison's Rocks. When Kent County Council offered climbing courses to school groups, Terry and Julie took up the roles of Climbing Instructors.

Harrison's Rocks had gained in popularity with local and London-based climbers using and abusing the outcrop in their masses at the weekends; the environment was taking a hammering and it was then that Terry and Julie decided to do something about it. Terry became the voluntary warden at Harrisons and they set about clearing the mountains of litter and encouraging the use of 'Long Slings' when top-roping – this allowed the karabiner and moving rope to hang over the edge of the soft sandstone rock thus minimizing the rope erosion and the grooves that were beginning to degrade the top of the outcrop. It took many decades of educating climbers to adopt this practice; a method that is now accepted as best practice in this country and possibly worldwide.

Over the following decades, 1960-1990, Terry and Julie worked tirelessly to protect the southern sandstone outcrops. Terry and friends from the 'Festerhaunt', as the café was then known, got the car park built, not on top of the rocks as the council wished, but a short distance away, thus providing greater protection for the crag. Terry became the official warden for the BMC and continued to work for Kent County Council running climbing sessions.

As with most things in life that turn out to be a success, they do so because of the amount of effort that goes into making them so, and this was the case with the grocery shop and café. It became so successful that it impinged on the Tullis's climbing

time. Despite having the responsibility of parenting two young children, it was time for a change. The grocery shop lease was sold and the family moved to Leyswood and into what was to become known as 'The Bothy' in order to enable them to develop their ambition to become freelance climbing instructors. In those days there were no indoor climbing walls, so generating an income depended very much on the weather; during the good spells there was sufficient work, but when it rained bookings would get cancelled and earnings dropped. Terry was working as a self-employed landscape gardener to help supplement their income when he had a life-changing accident that resulted in his femur, tibia and fibula being badly fractured. The doctor suggested amputation but Terry was having none of that. However the surgery still resulted in him losing several inches of his left leg with a consequent reduction in mobility and the end of his climbing career. The savings from the sale of the house were rapidly dwindling and at one point Julie thought she would lose her husband as a result of the accident. Juggling the eighty mile round trip between The Bothy and the hospital, looking after the children and her work commitments created enormous pressure on Julie, and, being self-employed, they were not entitled to financial welfare support. She managed to get Terry transferred to a local hospital so as to be nearer to their home and she put her life on hold for five months, keeping house and family together while Terry made a slow recovery. Surprisingly, one day the lease holders of the grocery shop in Groombridge decided to sell and the property owner offered the lease back to Terry and Julie. Three months later 'Terry's Festerhaunt' was developing into a hugely successful café and climbing shop frequented by climbers from all around. Slowly the climbing equipment side of the business was built up, initially with climbers pre-paying for their new equipment. With the



café opening only at weekends, it allowed Terry and Julie time to focus on their climbing activities during the week.

By the time Terry had virtually recovered from his accident, Julie was mentally and emotionally exhausted. Then, out of the blue, she was offered the opportunity to take a short break to go climbing with Dennis Kemp. Terry whole-heartedly supported the idea, and so Julie got back into the swing of life and started to recharge her batteries.

Terry and Julie first met Kurt Diemberger in 1975 while he was giving a short lecture tour around the UK, after which they took him climbing. This fleeting encounter led to Diemberger making a phone-call to Terry in 1976 on, by chance, Terry's birthday. He announced that he had arrived back in

the UK to help to sail his brother-in-law's catamaran to France and he invited Julie to accompany them in return for the hospitality they had shown him during the previous year. While Terry was 100% supportive, Julie was hesitant and declined the offer. In 1977 Terry and Julie went on an expedition to Peru with Norman Croucher. Once again they sold the shop to finance the trip, but this time with the security of knowing they had at least The Bothy to return to. In 1979 Terry and Julie attended the Trento Film Festival, representing the BMC, where they again bumped into Diemberger at which time he suggested that Julie should climb with him in the Alps. And so in 1980 Julie headed to Salzburg, while Terry was heading in the opposite direction to the Telluride Film Festival in Colorado. The weather was not conducive for climbing so Diemberger asked if Julie, who could speak German, would help him to update several chapters of his book *Summits and Secrets*. So it was that their working relationship evolved.

Between November 1981 and 1986 Julie received many invitations to join Diemberger on various 8000m expeditions to assist in the making and recording of expedition films. Terry always provided all the support that Julie needed to prepare for them. They both had previous experience of film-related activities, having been involved with various BBC and film unit productions that had used the southern sandstone outcrops as a back drop, so this was not a big issue. In December 1982 Julie received one such invitation that would send her career on another trajectory, to go to K2 with an Italian expedition. Terry, as usual, was 100% supportive and took everything in his stride. Julie, as a member of a recognised film union, was on the verge of becoming a full-time Himalayan mountaineer, moving from one expedition to the next supporting Diemberger. This life style is not cheap and to help finance the family (although by

Robin Mazinke on *Celebration* (5c), at High Rocks. © Ian Smith

Right:
Terry Tullis
Unknown



now the children had left home), Terry turned his practical skills to making large-scale timber replicas of Elizabethan and Tudor houses and selling them to collectors. Julie, as an established professional, was virtually self-financing her own career as well as contributing to the family finances.

In her own book *Clouds from Both Sides* Julie admitted that “even though Terry is the most understanding husband anyone could ever want, every time I go away we have problems with our relationship”. This situation was a reversal of the norm in which it was usually the man who would go off on business trips or expeditions while the wife or girlfriend remained behind. Both Julie and Terry found regaining a normal adult relationship was difficult after Julie’s return from expeditions as they were sharing two very different lives.

Christmas 1985 saw Terry and Julie heading to New York on holiday; it was a relaxing time playing at being tourists, but once they returned home Julie was back in the throes of planning lectures and trying to complete her book. For Terry all this seemed to suggest that, after him providing a large measure of financial support over the previous six years, they had at last reached a plateau of security. Julie and Diemberger had already made the first part of their film about a Nepali village high in

the Himalaya and were due to complete it early in 1986, after which Julie would be travelling directly to Pakistan for another filming assignment on K2.

Terry left The Bothy first, as he was involved in taking a school group skiing in Austria. Julie drove him to the station and they said their very tearful goodbyes; three days later Julie left for Nepal and then Pakistan. It was a busy season on K2 with ten expeditions in Base Camp. After initial weather problems, several parties set out on their summit attempts. Unfortunately avalanches still raked the mountain and after one of these Julie was involved in rescuing an Italian climber, who later died, from a crevasse. Julie wrote to Terry saying that she had decided against making another attempt or doing anything on K2, and that she “had no more pleasure to climb my mountain of mountains”. The weather continued to remain unsettled and Base Camp emptied, then suddenly the weather improved. Julie hastily and finally wrote to Terry saying that she and Diemberger were setting off for one more attempt to film at Camp 2; their real intentions were never disclosed, not even to Jim Curran who was filming the British expedition, but they were both equipped for a potential summit attempt should the weather hold.

It didn’t, and the storm of 1986 went down in the annals of climbing as one of the most tragic events in the history of K2. Julie passed away high on the mountain, on the night of August 6th 1986, as a result of altitude and frost bite problems. Six weeks later Terry held a remembrance gathering for Julie at High Rocks, where he and Julie had first met and climbed together. Five hundred people attended the event, many with trees and shrubs that would be planted at Harrison’s, High Rocks and at The Bothy; there would be no plaque to mark the occasion. Terry spoke briefly and emotionally about Julie’s life.

Throughout their marriage Terry supported every

step of Julie’s journey, emotionally, financially and physically; they shared the same expectations from life and both worked hard to achieve them. For Terry, Julie’s frequent expeditions put a strain on him, he often had to deal with journalists who wanted to know what was happening on expeditions, but, due to the lack of a reliable mail service, Terry usually had to answer “I don’t know”. He undoubtedly missed her terribly while she was away, but upon her return it was difficult for them both to immediately get back into a normal marriage relationship; both needed time to adjust to ‘being back home’ by which time the next expedition had come along. Their final goodbye to each other at Eridge Station on March 12th 1986 was a very loving, tearful and emotional event.

Terry always preferred to remain in the background and would quietly beaver away with whatever had to be done. In a similar manner he had expressed the wish that when his time came, which it ultimately did on February 3rd 2023, he wanted a simple cremation with no one present, not even his family and in keeping with his request, this has taken place.

Climbers in the southeast owe a debt of gratitude to Terry and Julie Tullis – the guardians of southern sandstone.



Bowles Rocks and High Rocks. Unknown Charlie Pickin



Quick Draw



Solitude at Rydal Lone Tree
📷 Mark Hetherington



Langdale Pikes from
Lingmoor Fell
📷 Mark Hetherington

We Are Eternally Grateful to Beatrix Potter

She found contentment here,
and held the place so dear
that endowments were made
to keep it from developers' greed.
Safe from cotton barons' lust
her lands passed to the National Trust,
and then a National Park created
and so the Lakes were consecrated.

Thus planners, lawyers, FCA's
could meet and sit and strategise.
Across the land went the refrain
"All aboard the gravy train,
for mighty quangos such as these
pay very generous salaries.
And we deserve, do you not think,
A decent pension index linked?"
Developmental strategists,
bean counters and ecologists
learned experts every one
and a Chief exec who earns a ton.
Visitor centres and campsites closed,
the budget will not stretch to those.
Is the spreadsheet showing strain?
Put up parking fees again!

In Keswick, Grasmere, Ambleside
see the Goretexed tourists glide.
so readily from shop to shop
from pate stall to coffee stop.
Sweaters, pastries, farmers' marts
jams and jewellery, crafts and arts.
Tasteful relics of your visit,

where retail fires the local spirit.
Bed and breakfast, restaurants,
boutique hotels and gourmet haunts
will any glutton's greed assuage,
staffed by those on minimum wage.

On a hill farm in Ms Potter's day
the annual clip was known to pay
the yearly rent, and yet today
so little value has the wool
it might as well be thrown away.
Economic change like this
might be expected to decree
a change in farming strategy.
Yet tenant farmers are required
to stick to sheep, and subsidised
to work in these outmoded ways.
The fells it seems must be embalmed,
farms frozen to preserve their charm.
So that tourists' hearts can leap
on seeing grazing Herdwick sheep.

Monbiot wants us to re-wild
But there's another problem child
Re-wild to what, and when, and how?
Are we bringing wolves and bears back now?
And who shall pick the point in time
where ecologists will draw the line?

The risk that comes with preservation,
clinging to the picturesque
and half imagined rural idyll,
is that it can become stagnation.
We make by trying to endure
a palimpsest of days before.
That which our ancestors well served
may not best suit the modern world.

And set in crystal now the valleys
by any progress are unsullied.

So tenant farmers struggle by
while property prices shoot sky high.
And out-priced locals who can never
hope to buy the cheapest house,
are driven out by wealthy bankers,
and retired professional classes.
Teachers, nurses, council staff
Face a dreary daily tour,
while tourists ponder “Don’t these roads
seem busier than they were before?”

Would Beatrix now be satisfied
To witness such a clumsy mess?
It’s easy sniping from the side
and yes, the problems are complex,
but can’t we make a better fist
of such a splendid legacy?
No modern farming practices,
just retail opportunities,
homes for just the richest handful,
zipwires flying through the trees.
Stuff what Ms Potter wanted,
she’s long dead and she’s not here.
Welcome to theme park Cumbria,
the gift shop is just over there.

Nick Hinchcliffe



OBITUARIES

John Willson
Doug Scott
Nick Allen
Pete Anderson
Alan Atkinson
Richard Brooke
Mike Burt
Phil Davidson
Claude Davis
Tony Edwards
Norman Elliot
Chris Gibson
Malcolm Howells
Mike Jones
Jim Milledge
Daphne Pritchard
Don Roscoe
Mike Snell
Dick Sykes
Andy Vine
Jeremy Whitehead
Mike Yates
John ‘Zeke’ Deacon
Steve Findlay
Ed Hammond
David Holt
Tony Moulam
Jon Pearson
David Roberts
Jim Swallow
Roger Withers



Left to right from top, following the order of the list on the previous page. Photography credits, where known, are provided next to the personal obituaries on the following pages.



John Willson

1937 - 2023

John Willson was an extraordinary force in the world of Climbers' Club climbing guides; over nearly thirty years he worked as guidebook writer, editor, page-setter and Secretary of the PSC. He was made an Honorary Member of the Club in 1999. John Shaw, a former pupil and long-time climbing partner writes about John's long involvement in climbing and Bob Moulton and Don Sargeant remember his commitment to guidebook work.

Above: John Willson, March 1977, John waiting to second *It's a Beautiful Day*, Wintour's Leap.

Below: Courtesy Chris Rumsey

John Shaw writes:

John was a Music and Latin teacher at Rendcomb College and this is where I first met him in 1981 as a fresh-faced 11 year old in my first ever Latin lesson. Rendcomb was a boarding school that was mainly all boys, but accepted girls in the 6th form. John was the senior house master in the main building. I did not excel in either music or Latin so soon gave them up. However I really got to know John at the age of 14 when I decided to give up cricket and take up climbing.

John had a love for Wintour's Leap and drove down every Saturday with a minibus of 14 to 18 year olds for climbing days. That summer John was finishing the 2nd edition of the Wintour's Leap guidebook (published by Cordée) and we spent every Wednesday afternoon checking routes on Fly Wall. In the summer holidays we went to Bosigran for a week where he taught me to lead. At the end of the week we stopped off at Berry Head and, as a result of his skill at teaching, I led *Moonraker*. Talk of a new Wintour's guidebook in preparation led to a resurgence of new routing, mainly led by Gary Gibson, but as John knew the crag so well, he also spotted new lines, cleaned them and then pointed me in the right direction to claim a number of first ascents with him as my second.

Before I started climbing John had led a school expedition to the Alps with the aim of climbing the Eiger. Unfortunately they failed and

returned home. However, sitting in his apartment at Rendcomb with one more week of summer holidays to go, John decided to catch a train back to the Alps and soloed the Eiger on his own. He led school expeditions to the Alps during most summer holidays and we went twice while I was at school. John was also the coordinator for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, leading school expeditions all over the UK doing practice walks ready for our final assessment.

In 1988, aged 50, John retired from teaching and bought a house at the top of Wintour's so he could climb more. At the age of 50 he was climbing at his best and led the first ascent of *Yesterday's Dreams* (E2 5c). He soon got bored and started to foster children. This was a rude awakening from managing well-mannered public-school boys to kids off the streets of South Wales with their many issues.

John always said he couldn't understand people owning dogs, but one day a foster kid came home with a dog and this was soon followed by two more. John became a true dog lover and spent many days camping and walking with them, mainly in the Brecon Beacons, but he also travelled far and wide with them. His new love of animals led him to become a vegetarian. He also became a very keen gardener and was almost totally self-sufficient with fruit and veg from his garden.

I kept in touch with John and we used to climb as much as possible. John was always available for anyone

on the UKC website looking for a climbing partner at Wintour's. Our final week of climbing was at Bosigran in 2013 with my wife and son. John, who was 76 then, still managed to be dragged up *Anvil Chorus*.

John was a lover of music and played the organ at St Mary's church in Chepstow. He was a quiet gentleman who kept himself to himself and was never one for large social gatherings.

In 2017 John was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and soon had to give up climbing. He struggled on in his house in Woodcroft and, with the support of climbers there, got through the Covid pandemic, but dementia associated with his Parkinson's was taking over. At the end of last year John was moved to a nursing home in Bridgwater, a two minute walk from my house. I visited John nearly every day and although most conversations were confused, he was still happy and contented. He could still remember our climbing experiences together until his death on 17 September 2023. He will be sadly missed.

Bob Moulton writes:

John joined both the CC and the Publications Sub-Committee in 1990, serving as one of the guidebook editors. He had already co-written two Wye Valley guide editions published by Cordée. He remained on the PSC for twenty-seven years, editing a total of seventeen guides and a number of

supplements for the club; for four of these guides he was also one of the authors. The early guides he edited were for areas in the South West but when Ian Smith was President, John took on a number of the North Wales titles. In his early days PSC meetings were long and at times quite turbulent, but despite some decisions going against him, John took it all in his stride. He got on well with all the authors he worked with and he was particularly good at setting up and coordinating teams (the largest having nine people) to write guidebooks. He required high standards from the authors he worked with, which led to his writing a 'Guidebook Author's Manual' to replace the somewhat rough and ready, much shorter, version that I had written some years before. He may well have corrected some of my spelling and grammatical mistakes but was too polite to point them out to me! Together with Ian Smith, he pioneered the typesetting of guidebooks in-house. He also took on the role of PSC Secretary, to which he brought a high standard of minute-writing and record keeping.

It took me some time to get to know John, but when I did we got on very well. I formed a great respect for his abilities and there was much that we agreed about. The last time I saw him was at the launch party for the 2017 Avon Gorge guide, the last that he edited for the club, but I kept in touch by phoning him every two months or so after his diagnosis of Parkinson's disease.

Opposite: John Willson on *The Ring*, E1, Wintours Leap. 📷 Don Sargeant

Don Sargeant writes:

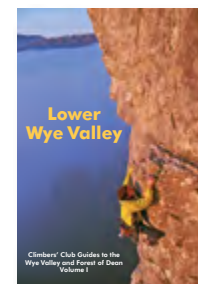
John was a wordsmith; he loved language and the nuance of grammar. An author, editor, typesetter, and team co-ordinator, but in particular (during my involvement with CC guidebooks) John was a thorough and precise Secretary of the Publications Sub-Committee (PSC), and he was my first port of call for queries about club protocol, writing style, and punctuation. He rarely needed to consult his detailed notes and minutes. I still have (and use) his style notes and re-read his 'Write it Right' article which was published in the Climbers' Club Guidebook Centenary Journal (2009).

With other photographers and designers, I worked closely with John when, as typesetter, he was also responsible for the layout of guidebooks and producing the finished PDF for the printers. He was very modest about his own design skills and tried to accommodate his 'creatives' when they suggested ways to present photos and artwork. On those rare occasions when it could not be done, he would calmly explain his reasoning. I remember once talking to him about editing a large diverse team of writers ... 'You can trust x to provide an almost perfect text, whereas y needs careful proofreading and rewriting'. It was during John's tenure in the PSC that production of CC guidebooks transferred to fully digital technology. One person (usually John) could now produce a complete guide on their home computer. He

was involved in the introduction of full colour printing on all pages and with our later design development of A5-size guides; his work has had a major impact on climbing guidebooks.

John hosted numerous teams of guidebook volunteers, action photo selection sessions and PSC meetings in his house. It could get quite crowded but he catered for us all with flans and fruit tarts, usually homemade, with produce from his own garden.

Living at Wintour's Leap, John's home was above his favourite crag. With only Offa's Dyke footpath separating his garden from the cliff edge, he lived, literally, a stone's throw away; not that he would ever throw anything off 'his' crag (or anywhere else, of course). John was involved in arranging and maintaining access agreements for climbers; he also advised SARA (Severn Area Rescue Association). This deep knowledge of the area and his ability to co-ordinate teams of local authors and focus them on deadlines and consistent standards of presentation helped to promote the Wye Valley as a popular climbing venue – *Lower Wye Valley* (2007) was one of the CC's best-selling recent guidebooks. Thank you John.



Douglas Keith Scott

1941 - 2020

In a career spanning six decades, Doug Scott was recognised worldwide as one of the greatest mountaineers of the post-war era. The statistics speak for themselves: over forty expeditions to Central Asia, countless first ascents all round the world, the first British ascent of Mt Everest – but what made Doug special was not the height or difficulty or number of ascents; no – for him what mattered was how you made those ascents.

Like all the best people he was a jumble of paradoxes: tough guy rugby player fascinated by Buddhist mysticism; anarchic hippy with a deep sense of tradition; intensely ambitious one day, laid back the next. He was as egotistic as any climber, but was also demonstrably generous and compassionate, admired universally for his philanthropy. In his Himalayan heyday he resembled a beefed-up version of John Lennon; in latter years, presiding over his gorgeous Cumbrian garden in moleskins and tweed jacket, he looked more like the country squire.

He grew up in Nottingham, the eldest of three brothers, and started climbing at thirteen, inspired by seeing climbers at Black Rocks when he was out walking with the Scouts. The bug took hold and he developed into a strong rock climber and alpinist. Throughout his life he would staunchly defend the British traditions of free climbing,

but he was also fascinated by the aid climbing pioneers of the Eastern Alps and by Californian big wall culture. By the early seventies he was publishing regular articles in Mountain magazine, and what an inspiration they were, illustrated with his superlative photos. I remember particularly his piece ‘On the Profundity Trail’ describing an early, and first European, ascent of Salathé Wall with Peter Habeler. There was also an excellent series on the great Dolomite pioneers – research for his first book, ‘Big Wall Climbing’ – and a wonderful story of climbing sumptuous granite on Baffin Island with Dennis Hennek, Tut Braithwaite and Paul Nunn.

For an impressionable young student, dreaming of great things, this was all inspiring stuff and I lapped it up. But it was only much later, when Ken Wilson published Doug’s big autobiographical picture book, ‘Himalayan Climber’, that I realised quite how much he had done in those early days. As well as Yosemite and Baffin Island, there were big, bold adventures to the Tibesti Mountains of Chad, to Turkey and to Kohe Bandaka, in the Afghan Hindu Kush. And closer to home there was his visionary ascent of the giant overhanging Scoop of Strone Ulladale, on Harris. Now, of course, there is a free version. Back then, filmed in grainy black and white for television, it was a visionary demonstration of aid-climbing craftsmanship, complete with copperheads and RURPs – the art of Yosemite granite transferred to Lewisian gneiss.

“... he was a jumble of paradoxes tough guy rugby player fascinated by Buddhist mysticism; anarchic hippy with a deep sense of tradition; intensely ambitious one day, laid back the next.”

Opposite: Doug Scott on Everest, 1975.
Overleaf: Doug Scott on Everest, 1972.
📷 Bonington Collection





All the while, Doug had been working as a schoolteacher in Nottingham. I have no idea whether he planned all along to give up the day job and go professional, but it was Everest that made that possible. The lucky break came in the spring of 1972, with an invitation from Don Whillans and Hamish MacInnes to join them on Karl Herrligkoffer's European Expedition to the Southwest Face. The expedition failed, but in the autumn Doug was back, this time as part of Chris Bonington's first attempt on the face, defeated by the bitter post-monsoon winds. It was two years later, in India, during the first ascent of Changabang, that a message came through announcing a surprise free slot in the Everest waiting list for the autumn of 1975. With little time to prepare another Everest blockbuster, there was talk at first of a lightweight attempt on the regular South Col route, but Doug was instrumental in persuading Bonington that they should go all out for the Southwest Face. That was the great unclimbed challenge. Why repeat a well-trodden route when you could be exploring the unknown?

The rest, as they say, is history. I can remember the palpable excitement at the end of September 1975 when the news came through that they had done it. It seemed inevitable that Doug should have been chosen for the first summit push with Dougal Haston. In a team of big personalities, he was the biggest personality of all. Perhaps, like Hillary – who incidentally, had

reached the top on Doug's twelfth birthday in 1953 – he wanted the summit more than the others; in Bonington's eyes he clearly had that extra something – that sheer bloody-minded strength, determination and ability to push the boat out.

The BBC stated in Doug's obituary notice that Scott and Haston 'got into difficulties' in 1975. Complete piffle. Supremely confident, they made an informed decision to continue right to the summit, even though it was almost dark and the oxygen was nearly finished. On returning to the south summit and seeing how dangerous it would be to continue down in now pitch darkness, they agreed very sensibly to bivouac right there, higher than any other human being had ever previously spent a night, and wait for the morning. It amazes me to this day that Doug was not even wearing a down jacket, yet still managed to avoid frostbite. 'The quality of survival', as he put it, was exemplary.

Success on Everest was achieved on the tip of a beautifully constructed – and by all accounts very happy – British-Nepalese human pyramid. Even its architect, Chris Bonington, seemed at times slightly embarrassed by the sheer scale of the operation. Both he and Doug realised that the way forward lay in scaling things down. For Doug surviving a night in the open, without oxygen at 8750 metres above sea level, opened a huge door of possibility. Ever curious, now he could really find out what humans might achieve at altitude.

To my mind, his finest climb was

Kangchenjunga in 1979, with Peter Boardman, Joe Tasker and, initially, Georges Bettembourg. It was only the third ascent of the mountain, and the first from the north. For Doug the historian it was a vindication of pre-war predictions that the North Col might be the best way to the top of the mountain. Ropes were fixed judiciously on the lower, technical face. Up above, they cut loose and went alpine style, without oxygen. Messner and Co. had already shown it was possible to climb to the highest altitudes without oxygen, but they had done it on well-known ground with other climbers around should things go wrong. This was a big step into the unknown and Doug's photos of the summit day are some of most evocative mountain images ever made.

It would take too long to list all the other Himalayan achievements, but it's worth mentioning some themes. What was impressive was the way Doug was always re-thinking expeditions. It was his idea to transfer the concept of the extended alpine summer season to the Himalaya, with loosely connected teams roaming far and wide on multiple objectives, with the family sometimes coming along too. It was he who introduced new young talent to the Himalaya, bringing Greg Child's big wall expertise to the beautiful Lobsang Spire and East Ridge of Shiveringling, and Stephen Sustad's stamina to the gigantic Southeast Ridge of Makalu. They didn't quite pull off their intended traverse of Makalu with Jean Afanassieff but, my goodness, what a bold journey it was.

In fact, despite several attempts, Doug never quite summited Makalu, nor Nanga Parbat, nor K2. But that is not the point. He didn't give a damn about summits for their own sake: unless they were attained in an interesting, challenging way, they held little appeal. Or he might just decide that the omens – or the I Ching, or his particular mood that day, or whatever – were not right, as happened in 1980, when he left the slightly exasperated Boardman, Tasker and Renshaw to continue on K2 without him.

When the mood was right there was no stopping him. Amongst all the climbs I would most love to have done (and had the ability to do!), the first ascent of *The Ogre* in 1977 must be the most enviable: HVS and A1 rock climbing on immaculate granite, 7,000 metres above sea level, at the heart of the world's greatest mountain range – the Karakoram. Less enviable was the epic descent with two broken legs, with Chris Bonington, Mo Anthoine and Clive Rowland. Another visionary climb was the 1982 first ascent of the Southwest Face of Shishapangma with Alex McIntyre and Roger Baxter-Jones, beautifully executed, with acclimatising first ascents of the neighbouring peaks of Nyanang Ri and Pungpa Ri, in the process scouting out a feasible descent route, before committing to Shishapangma itself, discovering the most elegant direct route to any 8,000 metre summit.

Several of my friends have been on expeditions with Doug and knew

him better than me. I only climbed with him once, when we were both speaking at an Alpine Club symposium at Plas y Brenin. We were not on until the afternoon and it was a beautiful sunny morning – far too good to be shut indoors – so we sneaked off over the Llanberis Pass for a quick jaunt up *Cenotaph Corner*. Doug said the first time he had done it was on his honeymoon. It was now 1989, so he must have been 48 – middle-aged, but definitely still in his prime. He led with powerful ease and then suggested we continue on the upper tier of the Cromlech, up that brutal creation of his old mentor Don Whillans – *Grond*. In the absence of large cams to protect the initial off-width, he grabbed a large lump of rhyolite, explaining cheerfully, “This is how we used to do it, Youth,” shoved it in the crack, hitched a sling round it and clipped in the rope. As soon as he moved up the chockstone flew out of the crack, narrowly missing my head, but Doug carried on regardless – blithely calm, assured and fluent, supremely at ease with the rock.

There were other meetings, occasionally sharing a lecture platform, once having the unenviable task of having to keep Doug confined to a strict timetable dovetailing with the arrival of the Queen for an Everest Anniversary. Conversation, like his lecturing – or indeed his expeditioning – could be enigmatic, discursive, elliptical, often veering off the beaten track into untrodden side valleys, but always with an undercurrent of humour.

And never pulling rank: he was a humble, approachable man, happy to talk with anyone. The meeting that made the biggest impression on me was in 1987 in the village of Nyalam in Tibet. It was the end of an expedition and we had just put a new route up Pungpa Ri, which Doug had climbed five years earlier. Also staying at the Chinese hostel were members of Doug's current team who had been attempting the Northeast Ridge of Everest.

Doug himself turned up later, just back from a gruelling road journey from Rongbuk, across the border to Nepal, then up to Sola Khumbu, then all the way back across the border to wind up the expedition in Tibet. The reason? A young Sherpa man who had been helping his expedition had been killed in an avalanche near base camp during a huge storm two weeks earlier. Doug had taken it on himself to travel all the way to the man's family in Nepal, to tell them personally what had happened and to ensure that they received financial compensation.

That empathy with the people of Nepal came to fruition in his remarkable charity, Community Action Nepal. There was a precedent in Ed Hillary's Himalayan Trust, but what I like about CAN is that it does not concentrate its efforts exclusively on the most popular region of Sola Khumbu, but also has projects in other regions such as the Buri Gandaki near Manaslu. Most impressive of all is the way Doug financed it over the last two decades. At an age when most people

in his position would be happy to rest on their laurels, perhaps accepting the occasional lucrative guest appearance, Doug travelled the length and breadth of the country on gruelling lecture tours – often only just out of hospital, after yet another operation on the old Ogre injuries that had come back to haunt him – pouring all the proceeds into his charity. Lecture fees were topped up by sales of Nepalese crafts and auctions of Doug's most classic photographs. Doug the auctioneer was a force to behold, as he mesmerised and cajoled audience members into donating ever more astronomical sums for a signed photograph.

As if running a charity were not enough, Doug also managed in recent years to complete a fine history of *The Ogre*, and finally to publish the long-awaited autobiography for which Hodder and Stoughton first paid an advance in 1975. His history of Kangchenjunga was published in 2021. For a man who had once been a bit wary of institutions, he made an enthusiastic and much liked Alpine Club President. He also stood for election to the BMC presidency, asking the journalist Steve Goodwin to help with his manifesto. Steve phoned me in despair to say that the opening paragraph was all about Doug's compost heap. Myself, I also have a profound relationship with my compost heap, and I can see exactly where Doug was coming from. But in the shiny corporate world of modern convenience climbing it



“... paramount in that ‘how’ were notions of curiosity, personal responsibility, risk and a willingness to embrace – even seek out – uncertainty.”

wasn't going to be a vote winner. Alas, Doug did not get the presidency. A great loss to us all, in my opinion.

He was a man of principle – visionary and adventurous, but in some ways quite conservative, rooted in traditions which he valued. One of those traditions was the notion that if we climbers are going to spend our lives doing something that has no ostensible practical purpose, then it is important how we carry out that pursuit. And for Doug, if I have understood him correctly, paramount in that ‘how’ were notions of curiosity, personal responsibility, risk and a willingness to embrace – even seek out – uncertainty.

It is always inspiring to see someone happy in their work. Despite the frenetic pace he set himself and his devoted third wife Trish, Doug seemed in recent years to have achieved the

kind of contentment that many people only dream of. He had a genuine sense of purpose and an assured legacy. He was a man who seemed at ease with himself and the world. He will be missed hugely in the UK, in Nepal and all round the world, but most of all by Trish and by the five children of his first two marriages. I feel honoured to have known him and glad that if I should ever have grandchildren I will be able to tell them, “I climbed *Cenotaph Corner* with Doug Scott”.

Stephen Venables

A version of this obituary also appeared in the 2019 *Alpine Journal* and is reproduced by permission of the AJ Editor).

Above left: Doug Scott in Nepal, 2015
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Nick Allen

1939 - 2020

Nick started climbing with Oxford University Mountaineering Club in the late 1950s, influenced by his mother who had done some serious climbing in the Alps. He studied Medicine and left Oxford with a BM, BCh and BSc in neurophysiology and completed his medical training at St Mary's Hospital in London. It was at this time that I met him at Harrison's Rocks in 1962, and we struck up an immediate friendship which lasted for the rest of his life. Later that year he joined me a couple of times for a few days in the Llanberis Pass, where I was camping for most of September. It was for me a typical experience of mixed Welsh weather, with one tent being flooded and another being flooded and blown down. Nick was in my tent for the former. On the first occasion we got in three days of

excellent climbing. I climbed a bit with Nick during the following year, twice on St Mary's Hospital Mountaineering Club meets in the Lakes. We had agreed to climb together in 1964 in the Alps, and much of our climbing together in the first part of that year had been with that in mind. We started off with a damp January day of aid-climbing, when we spent all of five hours on the 70-foot *Poem Wall* at Swanage, in the Tilly Whim area that was soon to be banned for climbing. Then there was an Easter week trip to Lundy; on that occasion we came to the conclusion that we wouldn't be going back, although I did go back 14 times and Nick once, in 1975 when he gave a name, *Aspara*, from Indian mythology to a new climb! We had a very successful month in the Mont Blanc area, doing nothing very hard by the standards of the day when aid-climbing was common. All of the routes which we did with some aid have now been climbed free. This was Nick's first season in the Alps and my second. I like to think we gained from my experience, which had included one involuntary bivouac, the year before. This was my best season in the Alps but Nick went on to harder and greater things. Our choice of wet-weather reading was a thick paperback novel for me and a book of Italian poetry for Nick, a hint for me of what I was later to learn about him. Nick described his climbing as being 'muscular' rather than technical.

After that we didn't climb together much for a few years although Nick did propose me for the Climbers' Club. I

now realise that the time between 1966 and 1973 was very important for him.

He changed his career from being a doctor, a profession with which he'd never been quite at ease with, to Anthropology, obtaining a BLitt (equivalent to an MSc) and then a DPhil in the subject. He had two good seasons in the Alps with Hugh Woodland (who writes below), doing harder climbs than he had with me. He also went on an Indo-British Expedition in 1969 to the Western Himalayas, when he led the first ascent of Duphao Jot (20,011 ft). To quote Nick, "Of course by Himalayan standards it was a mere pimple." He was the expedition doctor, in a role that Martin Sinker described him as, "qualified but somewhat lapsed", and when confronted by health issues (fortunately all non-serious) would tend to gaze into the distance, saying "Now let me see what I can remember...". At the end of the expedition, Nick moved on to a remote location not previously visited by westerners in East Nepal to spend 20 months of anthropological fieldwork as part of his DPhil dissertation. I remember being very impressed when he told me that as an appendix to his dissertation, he wrote up the previously unwritten Thulung language! He also met and married his wife, Sheila, during this time.

Nick spent the rest of his working life and much of his retirement as an Anthropologist, for three years at Durham and then at Oxford as Reader in 'Social Anthropology of South Asia'.

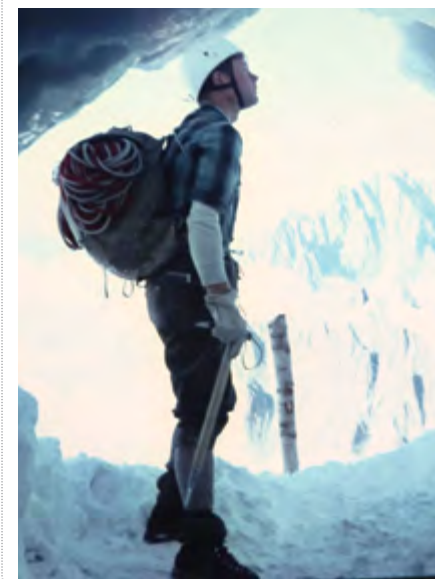
He had over 60 of his papers published, some written in French and in other languages. I was always amazed by his ability with languages, as in addition to speaking Nepali and Hindi, he could read Greek, Latin, Sanskrit and six modern European languages. He ended up specializing in Comparative Mythology and, three months before he died, his book, *Arjuna-Odysseus, Shared Heritage in Indian and Greek Epic*, was published by the well-respected academic publisher Routledge.

After his return to the UK in 1971, I kept in touch with Nick, and we climbed together off and on for the next 35 years. We managed to get in a day's climbing at Crag Lough while he was at Durham, but otherwise I picked him up at Oxford for trips to Wales or the West Country. At one time this involved my trying to keep up with him on a bike borrowed from the family collection when we went to buy a Wintour's Leap guide at an Oxford climbing shop. I was increasingly involved in editing CC guidebooks, which at times led to my dragging Nick off to help me see what was involved in a guide that I was editing at the time, and thus to our finding and doing a number of somewhat esoteric climbs. One example of this was the easy 600-foot *Waved Slab* on Carnedd y Filiast, which we climbed in the rain and cloud. He continued to climb with others, but increasingly his academic life was taking up more of his time, though he did take the opportunities to fit in some climbing when he went to conferences around

the world. He climbed with some Polish climbers in the Tatra. On one occasion in the mid-1980s when I asked him whether he had done any climbing since I'd last seen him, he said no, but then just happened to remember that he'd climbed Mt Kenya after calling in at the Nairobi Mountaineering Club to find a climbing partner.

Nick was always a delightful companion both on climbing trips and socially. He had a self-deprecating sense of humour and his wide-ranging knowledge meant that conversations with him were always interesting. Academically he put his outstanding intellect to good use, and his modesty was such that he was always happy to share his knowledge with non-academics such as myself.

Bob Moulton



... by Himalayan standards
it was a mere pimple...

Hugh Woodland writes:

Nick and I climbed in the Alps in 1965 and 1967. In 1965, we did a number of routes in the Dolomites, of which the most memorable were the Hasse-Brandler, also known as the Buhleweg on the Roda di Vael and the Andrich-Fae route on the Civetta. Later we climbed the *South Pillar of the Petit Dru*. In 1967 we had a lot of storms, but did the NW Ridge of the Sciora di Fuori in the Bregaglia and in Chamonix the *SW Ridge of the Pelerins* and the *Gervasutti Pillar* on Mont Blanc du Tacul, under rather snowy conditions. Nick was at that time developing his interests in languages and read a novel in the language of each country we visited. While having a somewhat distracted air in the valley, he was a very determined climber on the mountain. On the Civetta we had difficulty in finding the correct routes in the summit chimneys and I had to dissuade him from heading up the outer wall. Had he succeeded it may have advanced Dolomite rock climbing by several decades, but probably not! It is sad that he is no longer with us and I look back on our partnership as a happy and successful time.

Steve Town writes:

I first met Nick on the AC/CC/ABMSAC meet in Grindelwald in 1980; he was returning to climbing after a long break, when the pressures on him from establishing a career and having a young family were starting to ease. We had a very pleasant season on some of the classic routes in the Oberland, and subsequently climbed together in the UK and elsewhere in the Alps. Nick was an academic by calling and to most climbers was from a different and rather esoteric world which he would patiently explain, if asked. In turn he professed to find the trials and mendacities of the more conventional careers that most of us followed curious but interesting to hear about. He had a rather laid-back and unworldly air, until it came to actual climbing when focus, skill and commitment revealed themselves. We had some very good times. Whether through absentmindedness or modesty, he was rather vague about his earlier (and main) climbing career. Occasional hints came through, such as (on skimming the Chamonix guide book) “I think we did a good route on the Dru – can’t remember which side it was.” For Nick, it was the experience of climbing rather than the name on the route that mattered.

Previous page: Nick Allen before the *Gervasutti Pillar*, Mont Balc du Tacul.



Pete Anderson

1948 - 2020

Pete was born and brought up in the town of Rugby in Warwickshire. His interest in outdoor activities began whilst in the Scouts, notably on a trip to Stanage Edge with an overnight bivouac in Robin Hood’s Cave. Later during his double Engineering and Draughtsman apprenticeships at English Electric, he joined the works cycling club and with others began exploring all over the Midlands staying in Youth Hostels. It was during this time that his lifelong friend, Ted Griffiths, got into cycling too and joined Pete in some of these cycling adventures.

During a summer Youth Hostelling trip around the Peak District, Pete and Ted happened to be cycling under Stanage Edge, which was smothered with climbers on that sunny day.

Wandering up to the crag they were amazed and excited by the scene before them. Watching the action and speaking to a few of the climbers to find out a bit more, they were so impressed that they decided to have a go themselves.

Pete, meticulous as ever, read all about the sport and as a result, with the help of their ‘Saturday Job’ earnings (Pete at Woolworths and Ted at the International Tea Stores) they bought, between them, a length of Viking hawser-laid rope, a Blacks Mountain tent, hemp waistlines, carabiners, etc. Their first foray into this new world was back at Stanage with an ascent to Robin Hood’s Cave, which Pete had got to know from his earlier scouting visit. Further experiences were gained climbing in some of the nearby Leicestershire quarries.

Now, as ‘experienced and hardened climbers’, Pete and Ted presented themselves to the Rugby Mountaineering Club (RMC) and became members. The RMC at the time (as it remains) was a small but active club and contained several CC and AC Members, such as Robin Prager, Richard Bond, Pip Hopkinson, David Manderville, Jim George and Dave Atchison in the CC, and, in the AC, Keith Miller and John Tyson, most of whom offered help and advice. Another Rugby-based climber, Bud Metcalf (Rock and Ice), was influential to Pete and Ted, being very generous with his time especially on the Peak crags. Robin was also very helpful to these new recruits, fixing lifts for them

on trips to the Peak or North Wales for most weekends, with North Wales becoming their firm favourite venue.

It was on one of these regular weekend tips in the spring of 1968, once again back at Stanage, that I recall meeting Pete for the first time, though I was unable to climb with him on that occasion because of a shoulder injury sustained in a recent car crash! Robin Prager, with Pete and another new RMC member Clive Cotton, who too became a lifelong friend of Pete’s, warmed up on Plate Glass, followed by another couple of dozen routes before finishing on *Cave Innominate* and *Harding’s Direct Finish*.

Eventually Pete and Ted acquired their own vehicles and took to the Friday evening race to the Padarn with aplomb! Eventually though, these regular thrashes to Wales and all-weather camping became a little too much to bear, so both began looking for a property to purchase. They found two derelict properties next to each other in the woods of Fachwen, with Ted buying, with the help of a loan from his girlfriend Alis’s sister, the old water mill, Pen yr Allt. Sometime afterwards Pete was able to purchase the neighbouring smaller cottage of Pen yr Allt Isaf. It was during his renovation of Pen yr Allt Isaf that Pete met his future wife, Sarah.

Away from work, Pete had also learned carpentry from another RMC member, Cec Burton, through evening classes at Rugby Technical College, which were attended by several other RMC members in those days. Cec was

a highly skilled cabinet maker having worked directly for the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens for many years before moving into teaching. Pete discovered that he had a natural feeling and flare for the wood he worked on, and this new-found skill changed his life.

Naturally, he used this skill in the renovation of his house in Fachwen, but such was the quality of his work that he kept receiving requests for other projects from friends and acquaintances.

So, he began to build kitchens to order, all made from pitch pine reclaimed from the beams of demolished Victorian warehouses in Liverpool. These kitchens were, and remain, visually stunning and were constructed purely with classic joinery techniques, no nails or screws being used in their construction.

The quality of his work lead to projects for Gwynedd County Council building reception counters for the police station in Caernarfon, Plas Tan y Bwlch and the ITEC in Bangor. In the early 1990s he won a prestigious contract to build all the interiors of the two new Magistrates Courts in Llandudno.

He was elected to the Climbers’ Club in 1998 and took on the custodianship of Cwm Glas Mawr the following year, running the place until 2013. With his carpentry skills he also built the bunk beds for Riasg and put in a new cupboard at Helyg, as well as other CC hut related tasks too numerous to mention here.

Throughout these busy years he still

climbed now and again, passing on his love of climbing and the mountains to his three children during their many mountain holidays in the UK and the Alps, and subsequently to his two grandchildren who now have a climbing wall in their parent’s garden.

In 2003 he rekindled his passion for cycling, this time together with his wife Sarah. Over these later years Pete and Sarah toured extensively throughout the UK and further afield. Notably, they toured Northern India and the Himalayas for 6 weeks, cycling the Manali to Leh Highway as well as the tour from Spiti to Kinnaur. Even when Pete was ill with Myeloma, he and Sarah took a couple of winter holidays to southern Spain where, whilst he was in remission, Pete insisted on doing lots of mountain biking. As his health deteriorated further, he still found rides in the lesser hills of Cheshire, Dolgellau and Anglesey. Pete simply never gave up!

Pete packed a lot into his life, and he will be remembered for his personality, his permanent smile, the legacy of his fine pieces of carpentry that are dotted around, his fluid, calm and unflappable climbing style and as a great climbing partner. He will be missed by his many friends and, of course, by his wife Sarah, their children Joseph, Zoe and Caroline and their grandchildren Pip and Indigo.

By Tom Chatterley

(with input from Sarah Anderson, Ted Griffiths, Cliff Mathews and Clive Cotton)

Alan L Atkinson

1936 - 2019

by **Jeremy Frost (and Carl Spencer)**

I first met Alan (known to many as Ackers) when I started at Lancashire County Council Surveyors' Department in 1983. He was the Department Safety Officer after having been a Civil Engineer for most of his career. He was involved with building the M6 and M65 during the motorway building heyday. He had no previous safety experience or qualifications. Apparently, at his interview for the Safety Officer post, he showed the panel some slides of a Dolomite trip he had been on. He convinced them that surviving that meant he was more than qualified – it worked!

Alan was part of the Wall End Barn crowd in Langdale and had a few first ascents including *Gormenghast* with Les Brown, and *Pluto* on Raven Crag with Roy Warner. He also took a long fall on what I think became *The Vikings*. He badly broke his ankle which caused him recurring problems. He took time off from climbing during the 1970s but had restarted by 1983 and, boy, was he enthusiastically making up for lost time. He was a very definite character on the local climbing scene and he was a great raconteur, with an extensive set of epics to mine for his stories. He was an active member of the Preston Mountaineering Club, organising trips to Lundy, Verdon, Spain and Yosemite.



"B" Route, Gimmer. State of the art in 1954 – Woolworth's pumps, one sling, hemp waist line and Tarbuck knot!

In addition he lobbied Preston Council to build a climbing wall, drawing up plans, and speaking with leisure centre managers and councillors. The wall was built at West View Leisure Centre.

He was also a gifted photographer and having seen some slide shows set to music, he replicated the concept for various climbing dinners. Everyone who climbed with Alan has an epic to recount, including: rescuing a guy with a dislocated shoulder from the flake pitch on *Central Buttress*, Scafell; taking several long falls on *White Slab* in 1984 (on the day of the magnitude 5.4 Llyn Peninsula earthquake); trying to run down *Swastika* on the Etive Slabs around 1986, breaking his hip, getting

helicoptered out and being annoyed that his new Firés were damaged; topping out on the Peñon d'Ifach, Calpe by the light from the lighthouse.

Unsurprisingly Alan also had many non-climbing stories and epics, albeit most are really not suitable for publication. However, a couple do spring to mind: evading the police after a motoring incident in Manchester by scaling a building and spending the night on the roof; on a trip to Yosemite, going to war with a Cicada beetle and wandering around in a motel car park, in his Y-fronts in the middle of a the night, smashing every bush in sight with his shoe.

His boating adventures in the UK and Greece beggared belief as he was a non-swimmer. He did like speed, though, and his variety of exploits on motorbikes and in writing off cars (and cows and horses) were eventually topped by a flight in a Russian fighter plane, exceeding Mach 1, the sound barrier.

Sadly his last years were affected by his damaged ankle and dementia, but he left a lot of happy memories.

Richard McHardy writes:

Les Brown, having got his degree, went to work at Windscale nuclear plant. Les was the most experienced mountaineer in our group, the Alpha Club. For Les, now based in the wilds of west Cumberland, the Alpha was history. A co-worker called Pete Turnbull introduced Les to the Langdale Lads.

There were several strings to this bow, the Bradford Lads, the Blackpool Lads and others. Many could hardly be called climbers; like Idle Geoff who spent one summer sat on the fellside. Others, who never had ambitions beyond the grade they felt comfortable with, climbed all their lives. And then there were the memories of past extreme climbers of previous generations including Jim Birkett, Arthur Dolphin, Pete Greenwood, Eric Metcalfe and, of course, there were 'the jobs'.

That summer in the Envers des Aiguilles Refuge I must have been rambling on with some story when Ackers turned on me saying, 'how I had never lived,' that 'I had not known previous generations of the Langdale Lads such as, the Moon, the Pale Man and the Drake.' Fittingly, the Drake drowned not long after getting out of jail.

It was Les who introduced me to Ackers. At the time Ackers was thin with a mop of ginger hair. When happy he would hop from foot to foot rubbing his hands together. Alan's regular climbing mate, Roy Warner, was away doing his national service.

Our first climb together was *Samarkand* in Anglezarke Quarry. Just after passing a peg runner, a flake handhold came off and I followed. Alan held me on his waist-belay, no problem, though I was probably two stone heavier. On the bus home that January Sunday night I was aware that I was at the start of something different and that Ackers would be the main



player. Ackers was very focused and determined and was really chuffed when he achieved whatever goal he had set himself. Given to outbursts of panic, but he would usually recover quickly. Our first alpine route was the West Face of the Pointe Albert, the smallest of the Chamonix Aiguilles. A comparison is like comparing East Raven to Gimmer.

The previous year Alan and Roy had climbed the *Spigolo Giallo* (Yellow Edge) in the Dolomites. This was a big deal at the time. While training for the Dolomites they had done some big peg routes in Yorkshire such as those on Gordale Scar. On the Pointe Albert Ackers decided that I would lead the free pitches and he the artificial.

The last pitch of the climb was artificial, it was getting late and really thick mist had reduced visibility.

Alan's feet were in etriers doing a dance. Clutching a peg he screamed, "The next ****ing peg – it's ten foot away." Big time panic, but when he calmed down there were three or four more pegs in between. Steely resolve returned and with it the top.

When he got really focused the panic stakes vanished and he would be a steady climber. We were up on Cloggy and Ackers said that he wanted to lead *Gargoyle*. Although only HVS the crux is a jamming crack. He didn't have much competence at jamming so I was surprised when he just walked up it.

He had a vivid imagination so could easily be put off by other peoples' epics. One such route was *Sword of Damocles* on Bowfell (now E1); he had me lead it and was so chuffed that he bought me high tea in the

“We are going to drown,
I have read about this!”

Dungeon Ghyll. These are some of my reasons for wanting to contribute to Alan's obituary. I have never climbed with anyone who expressed so much pleasure in a good day climbing. In the summer of 1961 five of us travelled to the Dolomites in Alan's old second-hand ex-Post Office van Bev Stevens, Handsome Harry, me, Paul Nunn and Ackers. It was a bit cramped. Our first climb was the *Demuth Arête* on the Cima Ovest (14 pitches 5+ A0). Climbing as a three, Paul, Ackers and myself took all day. Near the summit it was going dark and had started raining. A mistake in route-finding had us abseiling down a chasm. Paul disappeared under an overhang. He was sheltered, but we had what was left in the water bottle. Meanwhile Ackers went into full panic mode, “We are going to drown, I have read about this!” Gullies becoming waterfalls. Possibly but we could always scramble out leaving Paul sitting under a waterfall. It dawned fine. Ackers dreamed of climbing the *Comici Route* on the Cima Grande, having seen a lecture years before. Me and Paul did not fancy climbing as a three again so a few days later Ackers teamed up with Barry Webb. When they returned well after dark we had to carry him into the refuge. Back at the tents he suddenly had cramp from head to toe, we rolled him out of the tent into a star-lit sky.

Knowing that he was chuffed but knackered and guessing that he could not eat his dinner; we ate it for him. On the way home Ackers with his usual resolve had us driving through France in the middle of the night. The French were in the height of their Algerian crisis. In the middle of nowhere we came to a road block. Seriously I am not inventing this – a machine gun poked through the window, which Bev had luckily opened. They waved us on. Having dropped me and Paul off in Manchester, Bev, Harry and Ackers pulled up by a chippy in Blackpool and Alan's van died. Our paths parted, but my time with him was precious.

Roy Warner writes:

In the early fifties, our rock climbing and footwear were black plimsolls bought from Woolworths. Alan changed that by sending Pierre Alain, a French man who made climbing shoes, an order. Alan took the measurements of our feet by drawing around them onto cardboard. Hence our first rock shoes, referred to as PAs, arrived by post. Towards the end of the fifties he organized a group to go to the Dolomites. He hired a large van. The deposit on the van was lost as it was crashed into the Wall End Barn at the beginning of the trip. The holiday was fun and full of incidents. An ascent of the *Spigolo Giallo* (Yellow Edge) on the Cima Grande was achieved. One climbing incident recalled is Alan's

accident on Swastika on the Etive Slabs. After Alan was lowered off the slabs, he was lying on the coffin rock awaiting the rescue helicopter. A Glen Coe rescuer appeared to help him only to be accused of being a Scottish thieving **** when he tried to remove Alan's rock boots to relieve the pressure and make him more comfortable. When the rescuer came down from the helicopter, he suggested to Alan it was time for him to stay home and play with his grandchildren. In the early fifties Alan was one of a group of enthusiastic Blackpool youths, keen on the outdoors and centred around the Lake District, mainly Ambleside, Langdale and Dungeon Ghyll. All arrived on Friday nights by various modes of transport, motorcycles or hitchhiking, meeting at the Royal Oak pub in Ambleside. Then making their way to Dungeon Ghyll to find a place to stay – hence the origins of Wall End Barn. Alan's enthusiasm and eccentricity made him stand out as a noticeable character. His early pioneering efforts were to climb the overhanging Raven Crag in Langdale and Gordale Scar in the Dales by artificial means. He also had a considerable list of the Lakeland ascents. Alan joined Lancashire County Council from leaving school and achieved Civil Engineering status, an example of his drive. In his later working career he was Safety Officer for the county. This brought amusement to everyone who knew him, knowing the many accidents that he had had.



Richard Brooke

1927 - 2020

In the mid-1950s, Richard Brooke completed a unique hat-trick of landmark expeditions to both north and south polar regions and to the Himalaya, including the British North Greenland Expedition, the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition led by Vivian Fuchs and the Combined Services Expedition that made the first ascent of Rakaposhi in 1958.

Richard was a member of the Climbers' Club for 66 years. He first went to the Alps in 1947 on leave from the navy and had three more seasons, quickly building his experience and climbing many routes, including the

Kuffner Arête on Mont Maudit and the *Ryan-Lochmatter* on the Aiguille du Plan, both big undertakings at the time. He was one of the last surviving British climbers from this post-war period, having climbed in the 1950s with such brilliant mountaineers as Wilf Noyce, Geoff Sutton, Tom Patey, Mike Westmacott and Mike Banks. This group started to repeat the harder Alpine climbs; Richard and Mike Banks for example climbed *Route Major* on Mont Blanc in 1951, the first guideless ascent since its first ascent in 1928 by Frank Smythe and T Graham Brown. They climbed it by moonlight, an experience well described in Mike Banks' book *Commando Climber*. In August 1955 Richard climbed the *Couturier Couloir* on the Aiguille Verte with Noyce and Sutton. This was before the days of curved-pick axes when the route was still an undertaking. He described his traverse in April 1956 of the Bernese Oberland with Chris Stocken in the 1956 Alpine Journal. Around this time Richard was elected as a leading alpinist to the Alpine Climbing Group. And he spanned the generations, taking a very young Nick Estcourt up the *Marinelli Couloir* of Monte Rosa.

Richard had gone to Dartmouth Naval College during the Second World War at the tender age of 13 because, as he said, ‘the magic of the sea inspired me and there was a sense of adventure.’ He joined the battleship Warspite about a month before D-Day, seeing action off the landing beaches by manning a

four-inch gun. In 1948 he joined the ship John Biscoe, taking stores from the Falkland Islands to bases on Graham Land. Three years later he joined a naval reconnaissance expedition to Greenland, a precursor to the major British North Greenland Expedition of 1952-4, which Richard joined and on which he made his first dogsled journeys. He was away for two years and awarded the Polar Medal. Mike Banks was on the same expedition, described in his book *High Arctic*, and they became lifelong friends. It was on this expedition that Mike saved Richard's life after spilt fuel from a petrol-stove set their tent alight. Mike rescued Richard by cutting open their tent with an ice axe. Later, under the pretext of surveying, Richard and Mike Banks climbed five virgin peaks in the Barth Bjerger, including a peak named as the Matterhorn by a German expedition in 1869.

In 1956 Richard joined the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition, which finally achieved Shackleton's goal of crossing the frozen continent via the South Pole, but mainly by using motorised vehicles (detailed in *The Crossing of Antarctica* by Fuchs and Hillary). Richard was allocated to the New Zealand dog teams, laying depots and spending much time on remote dogsled journeys surveying and also climbing mountains to make survey stations. He even had a mountain named after him, Mt Brooke at the head of the Mackay glacier, which he climbed with Murray Douglas. Another achievement was the

first ascent of Mt Huggins (3,800m) during a 1,000-mile dogsled trip. Many years later Bernie Gunn, who was a fellow expedition member, wrote of Richard: “he was prepared to travel hard, perhaps harder than any Polar explorer before or since.”

Richard had been away for 16 months yet somehow persuaded the Royal Navy (in which he was still a Lieutenant) that he should join the Combined Services Expedition to attempt the unclimbed Rakaposhi (7,790m) in the Karakoram. Richard joined the expedition via New Zealand on his way home from Antarctica. Tom Patey and Mike Banks reached the summit with Richard and Dicky Grant carrying supplies to the high camp at 7,300m. An old and unreliable tent thwarted Richard’s own summit attempt a few days later (Alpine Journal 1958). Patey recalled how during the course of the expedition they narrowly avoided disaster when a wind-slab avalanche swept down the face he and Brooke were climbing. Richard, with typical sangfroid, simply said: “This place is distinctly dangerous. I propose that we turn back.”

Richard married Valerie in 1965, later having two sons, David and Patrick. He finally left the navy, having been passed over for promotion to commander, probably due to his many expeditions. He briefly took over the Mountaineering Association, a training body that employed some well-known instructors such as Hamish McInnes and Ian Clough. Richard realised the MA was in financial trouble so left

to take up a post with the Electricity Council, where he remained until retirement. His responsibilities never came between Richard and the hills. Before an important board meeting in South Wales, Richard took the opportunity to do a long run over the Brecon Beacons but during the meeting got cramp, leaping up with a howl of pain. ‘Been up mountains again, Brooke?’ his CEO drily inquired.

I first met Richard in 1974 after expressing an interest in joining the Alpine Club. As I knew no Club members, Richard had been appointed to see if I was made of the ‘right stuff’ for membership. Due to his remarkable reputation, it was with some trepidation that I arranged to meet Richard at Wyndcliff, a crag in the Wye valley. I was warmly greeted by a lean and fit-looking Richard already aged 47 which was 22 years older than myself. We did some great climbs around the VS level and I must have passed muster as Richard and I subsequently climbed together in the Alps and the UK for many more years, remaining friends until he died. After every Alpine climbing or walking trip, Richard always wrote wonderful detailed letters that I still have, often analysing our performance. He was a kind, modest man and never boasted about his incredible achievements.

After our first meeting Richard asked if I would join him and Mike Banks on a winter climbing trip to Scotland in early 1975. I took along my climbing partner Dave Viggers.

We had a fantastic week that included *Observatory Ridge* (IV), *Comb Gully* (IV) and *NE Buttress* (IV) in a fast time allowing the oldies, Richard and Mike, with a combined age of 100 years, to descend *Tower Ridge* (IV), an impressive effort. Later that year, the same party, but with Jeremy Whitehead replacing Mike Banks, went to the Alps. Richard wanted to attempt the *Hirondelles Ridge* (D+) on the Grandes Jorasses. After acclimatising with the *North Ridge of the Grivola* (AD), we based ourselves at the Gervasutti bivouac hut above Courmayeur from where we climbed the *South Ridge* (D) of the Petites Jorasses and two days later the Hirondelles, after one failed attempt.

We had one failed attempt then next day climbed the route. We reached the summit in an electrical storm, with gear and axes buzzing, and started the unfamiliar long and complex descent, staggering into the Boccalatte hut exhausted after more than 20 hours of climbing. This route in particular reinforced my impression of Richard’s steely determination, fitness, steadiness and good decision-making (See the Alpine Journal 1976).

In the following years we climbed together in the Scottish winter, including classics like *Crowberry Gully* (IV), *Glovers Chimney* (IV), *Italian Climb* (IV, 4) and *Castle Ridge* (III). In Wales we climbed the difficult *Western Gully* (V) on Black Ladders in superb icy conditions and *Chock Gully* (IV) in the Lakes.

In the 1960s Richard had climbed

with Tom Patey, including first ascents of *South Post Direct* (IV), Last Post (IV) and *Post Horn Gallop* (IV) on Creag Meagaidh, in those days still cutting steps. Richard and Patey also had a spirited attempt at the Winter traverse of the Cuillin Ridge. Richard was also a solid leader on rock, always modest but capable of leading at HVS and above. His footwork was a joy to watch, probably because he had started climbing in nailed boots when careful footwork was a necessity. We climbed together on rock for 20 years, visiting virtually every climbing area in Britain and climbing many classic routes up to HVS.

We had an excellent Alpine season in 1979, warming up on the *Frendo Spur* (D) of the Aiguille du Midi and then attempting the two-day *Traverse of the Rochefort Arête* (AD) and *West Ridge* (D) of the Grandes Jorasses via the Canzio bivouac. All went well until after the Aiguille Rochefort and the Dôme de Rochefort. Descending towards the Canzio bivouac, we followed the wrong line of abseils, too far to the west. Totally committed, we had no option but to continue down steep ice into France with only one axe each and no ice screws. At the bergschrund I watched terrified with no belay as Richard downclimbed carefully towards me. His calm competence under difficult circumstances was always impressive.

Despite this failure, and only two days later, we felt ready to try Richard’s long-held ambition of another major

climb on Mont Blanc. Richard was now well into his second half-century and felt this was his last chance for a really big route. We chose the *Peuterey Ridge* of Mont Blanc via the Aiguille Blanche (D+), described in the guidebook as ‘the epitome of all Alpine routes’. Intending to make only one bivouac, we left the valley in the afternoon, crossed the chaotic Freney glacier and bivouacked near the top of the Schneider ledges. After a cold night with little sleep we traversed Pointe Gugliermine along loose ledges on the Brenva flank. The weather looked superb and as the sun rose, it turned the rocks a magnificent red colour. Having miraculously reached the ridge at the correct spot, we traversed snow ridges across the summits of the Aiguille Blanche until we overlooked the Col Peuterey. Having abseiled down, we followed the rocky edge of the Eckpfeiler towards Mont Blanc de Courmayeur but progress was slow: it was not until after 5pm that we reached the foot of the final snow ridge leading to the summit of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur. Richard led, while I was just glad to follow in his steps.

Over the cornice it was a different world: wind, snow and swirling cloud with a dark and threatening sky to the west but Richard was pleased as punch, holding out his hand in congratulation. The desperate cold brought us back to reality. We found our way over Mont Blanc to the Vallot hut in poor visibility, arriving at 8.30pm. We had taken 16.5 hours from our bivouac. At last in the hut we could relax and in a euphoric

mood fell into a deep sleep despite the storm raging outside. Richard wrote how the Peuterey “gave me more pleasure to look back on than any other climb I have done and that includes *Route Major*”, (see the Alpine Journal 1980). In subsequent years, instead of the Alps, we had several summer trips to Scotland, climbing most of the routes in Ken Wilson’s Classic Rock.

Richard continued to enjoy ski-mountaineering expeditions, traversing the Jura in 1983 with Mike Banks. He went twice with Alan Blackshaw and others to Sweden and Norway, writing: “I am completely hooked on this type of ski touring which reminds me strongly of the Polar regions.” He went on four more such trips with David Ford, quite often in epic weather conditions and covering large distances. In 1985 Richard decided to show me the joys of Nordic skiing in a snowy North Wales. The A5 was blocked before Corwen so we bivouacked in the car, digging it out in the morning. The road was deserted and we skied along it, stopping at the Berwyn Arms before heading into the hills. Richard thought he would ask the landlord if he would serve us coffee. From an upstairs window he told us to bugger off. Richards dry comment was “I think coffee is off”! We soon discovered that the strong wind was blowing snow off the Berwyn tracks so we moved south to the Long Mynd, getting some odd looks skiing up High Street in Church Stretton with large rucksacks. It was desperately cold and windy when we camped on the ridge:

even our camping gas froze. In the morning we struggled on to the north edge and I noticed Richard's nose had turned white. Richard mumbled that he had last suffered this in Greenland.

Aside from climbing and ski touring, Richard's other great talent was for fast long-distance walking, relying on his phenomenal stamina and perseverance. For example, in an organised 47mile walk over the Brecon Beacons in 1981, he finished an hour ahead of the field. Similarly, he soloed the round of Lake District 3,000ers in 16 hours in 1984 and later ran the Dorset Doddle, 33 miles along the Jurassic coast in five and a half hours.

In 1985 Richard completed his first 100-mile nonstop walk organised by the Long-Distance Walkers Association and including the highest peaks in Yorkshire. The weather was atrocious but Richard finished in 37 hours, albeit with trench foot. He did two more 100-mile walks, one covering most of south Wales and the last when he was 60, through much of North Wales from Llanrwst to Porthmadog, Harlech, Ffestiniog and back to Llanrwst. This included 3,700m of ascent achieved in 32 and a half hours. Richard also enjoyed mountain marathon events, competing in the Saunders Marathon in 1988 with David Ford when they finished 12th in the expert class. With John Daniels, Richard competed in six Karrimor Mountain Marathons between 1981 and 1988, winning the veteran class in Snowdonia in 1987.

In 1989 Richard, John and myself

had another Alpine holiday, with Richard, now 62, leading his son David and a friend. We climbed Mont Dolent from Courmayeur, followed by Ciarforon and the Gran Paradiso, with Richard still climbing strongly. Richard's last Alpine season was in 1990 with his old friend Mike Banks, when they climbed several mountains around Arolla. In 1991, despite reservations, Richard joined a 'golden oldies' Himalayan expedition to Jaonli (6630m) in the Garhwal, sponsored by Saga. It included Mike Banks, Mike Westmacott, Jim Milledge, Joss Lynam and Paddy O'Leary, all aged well over 60. Their high point was around 6,100m when they stopped following a huge earthquake that made their mountain unstable (See the Alpine Journal 1996).

In 1993 I was surprised to get letter from Richard, now 66, to say he was giving up serious rock and ice climbing. His reasons were many but he felt he was not as fit and had various back, knee and shoulder injuries. He was more conscious of the dangers and felt he owed it to Val, his wife, to spend more time together. He was also deeply committed to his local church, studying to become a lay reader. He wrote: 'I find this difficult to write because inside I am torn both ways. The urge to climb is no longer there and other things have taken precedence in my life.' We had climbed together for almost 20 years so I was deeply saddened but understood his reasons.

Despite this, Richard continued

walking in the hills for many more years with John Daniels and less frequently myself. Richard and John also enjoyed several week-long mountain holidays in Scotland, still with some strenuous days. Even in his 90s Richard continued walking around his home in Bath and the local hills. Only a few months before he died, we enjoyed a slideshow of our earlier Alpine holidays, rekindling old memories.

Richard died on 29 June 2020 following a stroke. He leaves his wife Val and sons David and Patrick and their families. After 46 years of friendship it seems almost inconceivable that he is no longer here. I will miss him deeply.

Colin Beechey



Michael Burt

1930 - 2023

Editor's Note: Mike Burt joined the Climbers' Club in 1972 and was a member for over fifty years. He served as Hut Booking Secretary for a remarkable 28 years, between 1978 and 2006. He was made an Honorary Member in 1991.

Mike Burt was a long-standing member of the Climbers' Club and the Wolverhampton Mountaineering Club, and was liked and respected by everyone in the climbing world who met him.

As with others of his age, the start of his climbing career was curtailed by the Second World War. Shortly after the war, he was called up for National Service, where he was employed for two years in a bomb disposal unit of the army. Being obliged to do such work would not have been entirely to his liking, but he had the innate courage for it, and it was excellent training for the future perils of climbing and mountaineering.

After a few years instructing in the Lake District, he moved to Wolverhampton where he spent the rest of his working life teaching in schools. I met him through our membership of the WMC. He spent a number of years as Hut Booking Secretary for the CC huts. During this period, he also became Booking Secretary for the WMC's recently acquired hut. This arrangement had an ulterior motive: if Mike received a booking request for a CC hut which he could not accept, he would ask the club if they would be interested in trying another hut he knew of: the WMC hut. This benefited both clubs, the CC did not have to disappoint the visiting club so they would be more likely to try again next year, and the WMC got an extra booking.

I fondly remember many climbing trips with him on British mountains and crags, and hugely enjoyed his company. His physique was tall and ram-rod straight, with a fine moustache, giving him a military bearing, which was belied by his easy-going manner.

On one occasion on Stanage he led

me up a stiffish VS jamming crack in impeccable style. I knew I would struggle with this, so I followed in an over-aggressive jam-heaving style, otherwise I would scarcely have had the strength to finish it. On reaching the top I thanked him in a breathless sort of way, and reached down to untie the rope only to find the rope threaded through my harness loops, but no knot! Mike looked at this, but said not a word, giving me a look which somehow combined the stern condemnation of his mouth with the sparkling amusement of his eyes.



Top left: Mike in the Écrins.

Above: Mike Burt at Dinorwig quarries.

On a trip to Glencoe, we went as a team of three, the third member being Mark, a young student. I had asked Mark to get food for the whole trip, as he had time to spare being a student. On mentioning this to Mike, his reply was, “Can he be relied on not to just buy twenty tins of baked beans?” We climbed on Crowberry Wall, Aonoch Dubh and Gharbh Bhein of Ardgour.

When it came to winter climbing, I got my revenge on him by taking the lion’s share of the leading, including on the Ben: *Comb Gully*, *Gardylloo Buttress*, and the first direct ascent of *Observatory Buttress Left Edge*. These were spread out over twenty years or more.

On a trip to Creag Meaghaidh, we found an idyllic camp-site on the shores of Loch Laggan. Mike had agreed to provide the breakfasts. On the first morning I asked, “What’s for breakfast, Mike?”

“Well, we’re British, aren’t we? It’s bacon and eggs of course!” This traditional meal was served every morning. We climbed *The Pumpkin* and *The Wand*.

Of course, all things come to an end, but Mike remained active to the last and, when over the age of 90, he could still be seen cycling on the roads of Wolverhampton. During his very last year he rediscovered climbing at the Wolf Mountain climbing wall, where the younger climbers stood and watched with amazement and delight ... but sadly no longer.

Dave Wilkinson

Phil Davidson

1959 - 2021

It began with a message from Phil back in August 2018. Typical Phil, he just came straight out with it, no beating about the bush. “You’re going to have to write my obituary” was how it started, and then he went on to explain that he’d been given six months to live. Kate (Phil’s wife) says that he described the next two and a half years as “living with a terminal illness” and he continued to live normally, never complaining or feeling sorry for himself. In fact you’d never believe that he was ill at all, as he set about packing in as much as he could – he was a man on a mission.

I’ll do my best to honour his original request. Here is the story about a remarkably talented, dedicated, single-minded and sometimes brash person who became possibly one of the best climbers in the world for a few years back in the early 1980s. His name is little known as he tended to operate under the radar; he didn’t put up first ascents or live in Sheffield. However he should be regarded as a hero for his no-fuss on-sight approach to hard trad climbing back in the day. This obituary is a celebration of Phil’s wonderful life.

Phil was born in Manchester in 1959 and was adopted at birth by his doting parents, Sid and Jean Davidson from St Helens. He started climbing at Pex Hill, a sandstone quarry nearby, with Dougie Gardiner and Gaz Healey in 1975. Ken Latham recalls: “We

climbed a lot together at Pex in the early days, all of us there as a gang of mates, plenty of banter, piss taking, and pushing each other on the routes. There was Phil, Gaz, his brother Joe, Robbie Mallinson, and Chris Hunter.” He quickly developed incredible finger strength and perfect technique, enabling him to use the tiny holds. He also worked hard on his upper body strength and flexibility, doing lots of pull ups, press ups and leg stretching (he could do box splits without warming up). Soon after that he was taken on several trips to North Wales by Hugh Banner. Apparently it was obvious at the time that Phil had great potential, but he had a long way to go regarding acquiring the vital skills of rope work and placing nuts before he was able to start pushing himself. (In fact, I don’t think Phil fully mastered the art of placing gear. He never seemed to spend long fiddling with runners, he simply preferred to keep going and his ability and confidence always got him up.)

I first met Phil in the Llanberis Pass during the incredible summer of 1976. The weather was amazing; all the crags were dry for months. It was a wonderful time to be a teenager feeling the call of the mountains after a hard week at work (Phil was an apprentice at BICC). There were a few keen teams around at this time, working their way through the classics in Pete Hatton’s ‘Three Cliffs’ guidebook. John Roberts, Brian Jones, Pete White, Sandy Dobie, Mike Griffiths and I made up a group of climbers based in North Wales. Andy

Sharp, Steve Lewis, and Pete Lewis from South Wales were around most weekends. And of course there were Phil and Gaz Healey, who we called ‘The Psychos’ due to frequent bouts of outrageous adolescent behaviour. Whilst it’s fair to say that we were all climbing well, Phil quickly became much better and left us all behind when he nonchalantly strolled up *Right Wall*, thus making the fifth ascent in 1977. It was an amazing ascent to witness, by far the most impressive piece of climbing that I’d seen up to that point.

Soon after Elaine and I moved to the Merseyside area in 1980, we went round to see Phil at his parents’ house. We were surprised to see an immaculate, shiny black and gold Ducati 900SS parked in the corridor between the back door and the kitchen, which his mum used to regularly dust and polish! He briefly introduced us to his lovely mum and dad, quickly gave us a mug of tea (not full, which we referred to afterwards as a ‘Davidson measure’), turned off the TV his parents were watching and then put on The B-52’s. It was such a surreal experience sitting there listening to *Planet Claire* at full volume in his mum and dad’s living room.

As spring arrived, the weather improved and the days got longer, we joined the local climbers at Pex in the evenings. There was a really great scene with lots of ruthless banter and lots of encouragement too. Regulars

My Piano, EB, Nesscliffe 📷 Ray Wood





included Joe Healey, Willy Simm, Al Stewart, Steve Foxley, Eric Rooseberry, Pete Chadwick, Ewan McCallum, Steve Tonks, Mark Hounslea, Steve Boote, Lew Brown, Jim Hewson, Pete Trewin and Buzz. Phil would arrive on his motorbike and park it above the Dateline Wall. He'd then step through a gap in the fence and announce his arrival with a humongous burp! Then he'd down-solo *The Dateline* in his motorbike leathers, with his helmet in the crook of his elbow. We used to fondly greet each other with all kinds of insults and swear words which were then a regular feature of climbing banter. Once EBs were laced up and he was on the rock, everybody admired

and envied his climbing ability. Ken Latham recalls: "Phil was soon searching out the blanker walls of Pex and produced outstanding problems such as *Black Magic*, *Main Wall* and *Catalepsy* as well as repeating Joe's *Monoblock* and *Staminade*, while we mere mortals looked on in awe and sulked over to the naughty corner". Phil always had an infectious smile and was a joy to have around, always having a tale to tell but never boasting; watching him move on rock was mesmerising but scared the heck out of you. Climbers like that come around very rarely, they light up the tight-knit climbing community and leave you wondering "What the f***, how did he do that?". He never said he was better than the next guy and would give you a nod of confidence if he knew you were capable but unsure.

In the early 80s, Phil went across to Germany with his great friend Jim Jewel, with the intention of finding some work. He didn't actually stay very long but made a lifelong friendship with Uwe Hofstädter. True to form, he made early ascents of some of the hardest climbs in the Frankenjura at that time, such as the classics *Chasin' the Trane* and *Hitchhike the Plane*.

During the next four years Phil climbed with a number of 'belay slaves', including me. I remember watching Ron Fawcett climbing *Sardine* at Raven Tor on the TV, the evening we arrived home from a two week holiday in Corfu in 1982. As soon as the programme ended, the phone rang. I knew it was Phil before I picked it up. I knew what

he wanted. Next day he walked up *Sardine* whereas, being unfit after two weeks of sunbathing, I got dragged up it. He even lowered me down into the nettles as he was far too busy chatting away with a young hotshot called Jerry Moffatt. Incidentally, sometime later, Jerry lent Phil his Firés so he could do *Narcissus* at Froggatt.

Around the same time, Phil repeated (on-sight of course) one of Britain's first E7s (Pete Gommersall's very bold *Death Wish* at Blue Scar), and also on-sighted *Cave Route Right-hand* (then known as *Tiger Mountain*) at Gordale. Having found *The Cad* and *The Long Run* at Gogarth both fairly straightforward, he made an on-sight attempt on what would have been the second ascent of *The Bells! The Bells!* but lowered off the peg. Not surprisingly he made mere E5s look like 'paths', for example *Golden Mile* at Chee Tor and *El Coronel* at Malham. One day at Craig y Forwyn, after leading a load of E3s and E4s, he soloed *Great Wall*. As if that wasn't enough, we then went to Pen Trwyn where we both led the soon-to-become classics *Axle Attack* and *The Bloods*.

Phil was on top form in 1984 when I held his rope on *Obscene Gesture* at Raven Tor (on-sight of course). A few days later he rocked up at Chee Tor to do *Tequila Mockingbird* with Jim Hewson. Jim recalls that Phil had to wait his turn, as there were a number of very strong Peak climbers trying it that day. He refused to have the first bolt pre-clipped and set off. Apparently, as he climbed higher and higher,

reading the moves quickly and climbing perfectly, the jaws of the onlookers sagged lower and lower. Unfortunately a foot slipped right at the top and he was off (to the sound of much cursing). One of the onlookers (a young Ben Moon) says that he was sure he was going to do it. Phil lowered off straight away, pulled the rope, tied back in and quickly climbed the route. Pretty impressive or what? That was the same year he soloed *Right Wall*, not once but twice! The second time was for photos. Who remembers that iconic poster? Who still has it? I'm sure that it has inspired many climbers over the years. Other gobsmacking solos included *Cockblock* on Clogwyn y Grochan and *Linden* at Curbar (both on-sight).

Later that year Phil started a degree in Outdoor Education at I M Marsh Teacher Training College. He stopped climbing, just like that. He suffered the embarrassment of being bottom of the class in everything apart from climbing. So he rose to the challenge (as to be expected) and set about getting better, much better, particularly at white water kayaking. Within a few months he was out there with the best, literally 'pushing the boat out' (one of Phil's favourite expressions) on the most difficult rivers in Snowdonia; the Dee, Conwy, Ogwen, Glaslyn and the Fairy Glen. He also enjoyed late-spring trips to the Alps, to kayak the snow melt with a tight-knit group of friends including Dave Howard, Steve Priestley and Ian Walsh.

Phil really loved jazz. Charlie Parker's



E8 at 58, Phil on *My Piano* at Nesscliffe
 © Mike Hutton

Famous Alto Break was one of his favourites which he aspired to play. That was no problem to a bloke who never did things half-heartedly. He learnt to read music and taught himself to play both the alto and tenor saxophones, so that he could play it too. Phil also went on to play in a local soul band, Brass Roots, which several of the Pex Hill faithful turned up to watch one night in Widnes. He was also a very stylish skier whose knees seemed to be permanently welded together. We went away on several trips together over the years; the week at Les Arcs with Tim Lowe was one of the most

memorable, filled with loads of hard-core skiing and constant banter.

In 1990, after a couple of years teaching, he made a comeback (not 1992 as he has logged on UKC). However, the sport had changed in the six years since he'd hung up his boots. Climbs had got steeper and it had become acceptable to 'work' routes before a 'red-point' ascent. Not surprisingly, Phil adapted quickly, though he often had problems memorising moves and I usually had to shout up the beta mid-crux. It was almost as if every attempt was like an on-sight attempt. Nonetheless, he flashed *Obsession* at Malham. The 'draws were in, but it was a big shock when he arrived at the belay to find there was no quick-draw to clip. Even worse, finding that the gate of the belay karabiner was stiff and wouldn't open! With an arm painfully locked in the belay chain, he eventually managed to open the gate enough to clip his harness belay loop in and finally thread the rope through. As you can imagine, there were lots of loud Davidson expletives.

That same summer, we camped for ages at Gordale Farm and Phil ticked loads of the Yorkshire limestone classics, such as: *New Dawn*, *Mescalito*, *L'Obsession*, *Defcon 3*, *Pierrepont* and *Man With A Gun*. Unfortunately *Zoolook* at Malham proved too much for him and the magic 8a grade sadly eluded him. It was the first time I'd ever known him unable to do something but he took it well. He did prove that he was still very



handy on bold trad, though, when he made a very controlled, on-sight ascent of *Souls* in Huntsman's Leap (Phil mistakenly logged that ascent as *Ghost Train* on UKC).

Soon after he met Kate in 1992 other time-consuming interests took over. He raced two-stroke karts and mastered the art of clay-pigeon shooting. Parker, their adored black Labrador, joined the family and was 'trained to the gun' by Phil. But there were occasional rumours filtering through that he'd been spotted at Pex or Helsby (where he was still able to solo *Beatnik* despite having not climbed for ages). No doubt he was keeping himself fit and maintaining his low carb, low fat, sugar-free diet.

More recently, social media enabled Phil to get back in touch with lots of his old climbing friends and ultimately he got back into climbing. With his friends Daz Devey and Dave Greenald he appeared to be making up for lost time and was as keen as ever. Daz recalls: "Phil has been a fantastic climbing partner and became my closest friend over the past few years. Never any drama with him, just turns up and climbs everything with ease. And the odd time he doesn't climb it first go, he is back until he gets it done". Dave Greenald summed up Phil's inspiring ascent of *My Piano* at Nesscliffe in 2017: "E8 at 58". Once again Phil proved that he was still up there with the best. Total respect.

The last time Elaine and I saw Phil was when he came, with Kate, and spent a week with us here in the Gorges du Loup in 2019. In many ways it was just like old times, he hadn't changed (though he'd finally caught me up and lost his hair). The wonderful thing about the climbing community is it's like we're all part of an extended family, despite not seeing each other for years it's always fantastic to catch up with the new and relive the past. That's exactly how it was seeing Phil again. For one week we were almost transported back to our teenage years, sharing banter, laughing and having fun, we even managed to climb every day.

Phil was still climbing hard and tearing up the tarmac on his latest Ducati until just a few months ago. Unfortunately, he'd had to stop

kayaking and skiing a couple of years ago as he couldn't cope with cold temperatures anymore because of his treatment. True to form, he didn't moan about it, he just carried on doing what he could. Eventually, his illness finally caught up with him and it was time to say farewell to a true legend who set the benchmark for us all to follow. The world is going to seem a sadder place without his infectious laugh and radiant smile. Listening to Wayne Shorter's sax playing won't ever seem the same to me.

Now my friend, it's time to set off on that last lonely lead, there's no gear and I can't give you the beta this time...

Many thanks to the friends who have helped me compile this celebration of Phil's life.

Mike Owen



Claude Davies

1938 - 2019

Claude was known to some as the author of the first climbers' guide to the Anti-Atlas in Morocco whilst others will know of him as the regular partner of Joe Brown on many great climbs in North Wales. They made a superbly balanced team with Claude the second who inspired his leader and best friend by his attention to detail, especially in matters of safety. He was a multi-talented individual who achieved much in his professional life at the same time as being an enthusiastic golfer, fly-fisher (he and Joe were members of a syndicate that held beats on the Tweed, just east of Coldstream!) and, above all, a mountaineer and rock-climber.

He was educated at Salford Grammar School where he teamed up with Colin Andrews, the two of them taking to the crags of Llandudno's Great Orme for the purpose of collecting birds' eggs (!). Fortunately, this led to an interest in rock-climbing for its own sake. At that time Claude's best friend was Albert Finney (who became an actor and winner of many Academy and BAFTA Awards) who did not share his interest in such adventurous pursuits. They died within a few months of each other. After school he graduated in Civil Engineering at the University in Manchester.

Pete Turnbull recalls a tragic incident in 1953 which he believes had a profound effect on Claude and his

whole approach to climbing. Pete, as part of one of Sid Cross's ad hoc Langdale rescue parties, participated in the recovery of a body following a fatal accident on the south west face of Gimmer Crag. The victim had fallen almost the full height of the route after the rope was cut on a sharp flake, landing close to where Claude was watching. He was required to give evidence at the inquest in Ambleside.

Claude joined the Cromlech Club in 1954 at the age of 16 and he remained a member until 2013, serving on its committee for some 17 years. He subsequently joined the Climbers' Club in 1959, becoming its Treasurer in 1982 and Vice-President in 1987. Like many others he served his climbing apprenticeship on the gritstone crags of the Peak District before moving on to recording new routes, mainly in Snowdonia where his tally was in excess of fifty. Initially he climbed with a variety of friends, often as leader, but subsequently he seconded Joe on a sequence of impressive routes. Many of these became very popular classics, amongst which *Vector* stands out (See CCJ, 2011, pp78-81). *Vector* continually changes direction

...author of the first climbers' guide to the Anti-Atlas in Morocco ... the regular partner of Joe Brown...



as it seeks out the line of least resistance. Its perfect name comes from Claude who, at the time of the first ascent, was studying vectors for an exam!

Claude was a regular visitor to the Alps, usually with his wife Betty and their two boys. Nigel remembers childhood adventures with his father on idyllic campsites such as the one at Vicosoprano. With such luminaries as Ian McNaught-Davis, Jo 'Morty' Smith, Allan Austin, Trevor Jones and Les Brown, as well as Joe himself, Claude climbed a variety of routes such as the *South West Face* of the Aiguille de Géant, the *North Face* of the Tour Ronde, the *North Face* of the Königspitz, *The Yellow Edge* and the *Cassin Route* on the north face of the Piz Badile. On the latter he and Morty stopped to assist two Germans, one of whom was seriously injured. They were only able to continue when the Germans were lifted off by helicopter.

Further afield he had two trips to Kenya, making an ascent of Mt Kenya as well as doing a fair amount of rock-climbing in the Rift Valley. Claude spoke fondly of two trips to the Wind Rivers in Wyoming where he greatly appreciated the unspoilt wilderness and 'backcountry' climbing of the Cirque of Towers. He made classic climbs such as Mitchell Peak North Face and Pingora North East Face. Pete Turnbull remembers the evening meals being supplemented with fresh trout caught by Claude and Joe.

I got to know Claude (and Joe) well when, for one winter holiday in the

early '80s, Marjorie (my wife) and I shared accommodation in Benidorm with Les Brown. We teamed up with them in various combinations exploring the mountain tracks of the Costa Blanca hinterland, which invariably involved treating the old hire-cars (thankfully they were old) as if they were off-roaders. Claude was the ringleader in this, never fearing the glutinous mud or the potentially sump-wrecking rocks we encountered, all in the search for new crags or even just to get to a favourite mountain restaurant in double-quick time. We were soon drawn into the Joe-Claude culture of keeping discoveries secret and not recording routes. Every now and then Claude would put together the accumulated knowledge and draw a map indicating the location of the various crags that they (it was usually them – they had much more time than us) had discovered. One particular obsession of theirs was the Castelletts, a serrated knife-edge ridge some 5 or 6 kilometres in length with many sections involving technical climbing and a few (h)airy abseils. Because of its length the completion of the ridge required many days and several holidays; the problems involved getting off the ridge and then returning for the next section were often quite formidable. A few of their routes eventually appeared in the Rockfax guides to the area and, many years later, Claude produced a mini-guide describing all the routes that were done in this period. It was never intended to be published, but he circulated it amongst his friends.

I am not sure how long this lasted, but I certainly remember that after 1992 they had moved on to another idyll, so each winter we were regaled with tales of a new climbing paradise in Morocco. Claude and Joe had started exploring the Anti-Atlas region near to the essentially desert town of Tafraout in the wake of Les Brown and Trevor Jones, who had visited the area as a substitute for an Easter holiday in Wadi Rum which had been cancelled, force majeure, by the Gulf War. From then on, the hotel of Les Amandiers at Tafraout became the base for forays into the impressive mountains of the Jebel el Kest massif. So began a remarkable and significant period in British climbing, featuring a quite elderly bunch of grandparents. For more than twenty years they, with an expanding group of friends which included Pete Turnbull, Derek Walker and Chris Bonington, developed many of the quartzite crags of the massif which were readily accessible from Tafraout, thus establishing an important centre for traditional multi-pitch climbing (the granite boulders in the immediate vicinity of the town were ignored in the main). Early retirement allowed Claude to spend increasing periods of time at Les Amandiers and it could be said that he was the 'presiding spirit' of the 'team'. Needless to say, he revelled in driving up the exciting unmetalled roads that gave relatively easy access to many of the crags. Claude's growing knowledge of the area along with the establishment of a new routes book in the hotel



Above: Claude with Sir Chris Bonington
Below: Claude and Joe Brown
Pete Turnbull

enabled him to produce *Climbing in the Moroccan Anti-Atlas* (Cicerone, 2004). On retiring I joined them. Fitting in was made easy by Claude, who knew all the staff of the hotel by name, and by the fact that British climbers were honoured guests who stayed for extended periods rather than one or two nights as did most of the visitors. The availability of the new guide inevitably attracted more and more climbers who made repeat ascents of the team's routes, some even pioneering routes of their own. New crags continue to be discovered especially on the north side of Jebel el Kest with the result that the Anti-Atlas is now a major attraction for climbers from all over Europe.

Claude was a consultant structural engineer who became a partner in the very successful company Shepherd and Gilmour that built hospitals, schools and bridges in the north of England.

His professional advice was given freely to, and much valued by, the Climbers' Club with its large portfolio of old huts that constantly need attention. My experience of Claude was that he was extremely risk-averse (probably essential given his responsibilities) with a forensic eye for weaknesses. One amusing illustration of this was in Spain when I was admiring a large and, to me, impressive 10m high wall that had recently been built. However, he explained the defects in its construction and, with considerable relish, predicted its early demise. The following day, much to my amazement, this beautiful wall had collapsed becoming nothing but a heap of rubble. Maybe it was his civil engineering expertise that led to his involvement with the Old Man of Hoy

TV extravaganza (1967) when he rigged up a cable from the summit of the stack to the mainland along which Hamish McInnes did a Tyrolean traverse.

Claude's last visit to Tafraout with Pete Turnbull in 2010(?) marked the end of his climbing career. He continued to play golf and died on 31st August 2019 after a short illness. He was laid to rest in the beautifully situated grounds of St James' Church in Taxal, Derbyshire where he was born.

I am indebted to the following without whose considerable help the writing of this obituary would not have been possible: Betty and their son Nigel, Barry Grantham (Hon Secretary of the Cromlech Club) and Pete Turnbull.

Mike Mortimer





Norman Elliott

1945 - 2021

With my first student grant money (yes, they actually gave us money) I bought a duvet from Norman Elliot, who was a year above me in Sheffield City Teacher Training College's Mountaineering Club. It was red, bulky and filled with kapok. It felt good. I was from the flat lands of the Fens, thrust into an abrasive Northern student culture, and I was immediately grateful for Norman's apparent generosity. Wearing that duvet made me feel closer to being a real mountaineer. That is, until the first club outing to Scotland when the thing became a soggy, lumpy, embarrassment.

Norman had come to college with the formidable reputation of association with the luminaries of the Yorkshire Mountaineering Club. He might have even met Allan Austin. He climbed way

harder than I ever would, but he liked a joke, obviously, and was the life and soul of the college mountaineering club. It wasn't until he settled down with Elsie and adopted two girls that I became his regular climbing partner. It was that way round. He came up with ideas for climbs, I held his rope and tried my cheating best to follow. And I have been forever grateful for his looking after me on the crags for nearly fifty years. The cruelty of vascular dementia resulted in his spending his final years in a care home close to Rivelin Edge where I had first climbed with him on the Freshers' Meet and where he had kindly offered to sell me a first-class duvet. When I visited him there, in his more lucid moments, which had always been hard to identify, he was still on the lookout for an opportunity for a joke.

Norman was a PE teacher in 1970 when seven of us Sheffield teachers drove two A35 vans to Morocco on the trail to Marrakech in our summer holidays. We climbed along the way. I remember a striking anonymous pinnacle in a pass in the Pyrenees that Norman declared had to be climbed. We were wild then. Petrol was cheaper on the Spanish side so we filled up frugally in France, but I miscalculated so that we ended up pushing my van, a telegraph pole at a time, over the summit of the pass to free-wheel down to the first village campsite where, as Norman sought midday shade under the other van, he discovered dripping oil. In those days AA insurance covered the sending out of a replacement axle,

so we were confined to this campsite for a week. It had a pool and here Norman taught me to swim with his professional expertise in teaching 'water confidence' which involved, first, sitting on the bottom for as long as possible. I've been forever grateful for this skill. I put it to good use on the other side of the Atlas Mountains in the last swimming pool facing the Sahara before we turned around.

So I came to belay Norman every Sunday for decades. A CND socialist, Norman was a natural democrat who would regularly say, "Who's going to lead this first pitch?" and regularly he would be on the rock before I had him belayed. When he came to a particularly challenging crux he would sometimes put in a runner and say, "Just hold me there, youth". By the time I had struggled to follow the pitch I'd be so knackered and frightened that I'd decline the offer to follow through. I was a happy second for years. When, very much later, I decided that I needed to do more leading, I realised that I had to climb with others to make sure that it would happen. But Norman's searching of guidebooks for what he called 'esoteric gems' led us to some amazing places, such as the sandbag Severe *Spinnaker* hidden in Yorkshire's Eavestone Crag, or the wonderful *Adam Rib* on remote Craig Cwm Du, climbed in the light of a summer's evening before falling asleep below it without bothering to get into our tent. We'd been chatting in our sleeping-bags, drinking a

little wine, and then – what do you know? – it's morning! Camping with Norman was always eventful. On one of our camps high in a cwm Norman slept in Kev's Saunders *Spacepacker* tent which has four doors. Kev complained that in the night Norman had exited by every one of them.

Norman's perusal of Classic Rock's list of 'Other Good Routes' at the back of the book saw us shooting up to Scotland at the end of one summer term to do *Ardverikie Wall*. It was so hot that, since I'd by then graduated from sitting to strokes, I actually swam with Norman in the lochan below it. Waking next morning from our camp beside the Glen Etive road, having achieved the objective of our trip, we cast around for an inevitable anti-climax of a route on what was promising to be a burning hot day. Norman remembered a photo in Classic Rock of a cool waterfall drenching a climber and that very route was right in front of us. Thus it was that, with a 'let's just take a look' attitude, we found ourselves in the jaws of *The Chasm* on Buachaille Etive Mor. We completely underestimated this long route and failed to notice that it faces south, holding all the heat in a narrowing journey, on and on, sometimes horizontally, inside the mountain. With little food or water, our casual approach unravelled. Norman ever afterwards delighted in telling the story of looking down at me trying to swallow my only Mars bar by licking at a fly-flecked puddle – all that remained of the famous waterfall. The 4b crux

is reserved for the last pitch of 1,500 feet of climbing. Yes, climbing with Norman was always an adventure.

Norman worked in special schools with kids who had been expelled from other schools whom he took climbing, keeping them well tied down at the top as he brought others up. He became a headteacher and a caring, if eccentric, team leader. But at times the strain took its toll. I only realised how much when I looked again at the photos I took of him at the top of *Nightwatch*, above the Vale of York, to which we'd escaped one Boxing Day. His face is screwed up with more than the cold. By the time he finally retired I'd moved down to the southwest. But Norman spent all the time he could climbing, going on trip after trip with youngsters he met at the wall, playing the elderly joker, looking out for everybody, as ever.

It was Norman who cajoled me into trying to turn the articles I'd been writing for High magazine and this Journal into a book. He had, after all, been the architect of most of its contents. I think of *The Joy of Climbing* (2004) as a tribute to Norman, its title representing, despite all his unpredictable, wild foibles, a real summary of what he has given to me and many others. At his funeral I discovered that he'd characteristically given his own copy to one of the younger climbers who was also upset by losing a generous friend who loved a joke.

Terry Gifford



Chris Gibson

1958 - 2021

Born to a traveller mum in 1958, Chris was adopted by a Christian couple and brought up in East Devon. He attended Sidmouth Community School, moving on to do his A-Levels at the King's School, Ottery St Mary. A good runner, he held school middle and long distance records. And try though we might in Antony Morley's white escort van, we couldn't beat Chris's Triumph Herald's record for the freewheel from Halden Hill to Chudleigh.

His first climb was *Long Lay Back* at Harrison's Rocks, led by a church friend. He was hooked and soon fell in with the Exeter University club, climbing with the likes of Frank Cannings, Pat Littlejohn, Pete Biven



and John Fowler. His first alpine trip included the *South Ridge of Salbitschijen*, the Aiguille d'Argentière and the Aiguille Dibona and getting into bother for losing John Fowler's car keys in Fontainebleau. He joined the Climbers' Club aged 19. His second season saw him doing the *Bonatti Pillar* and holding Steve Bell on a full rope-length fall off the direct finish to the Triolet North Face. Shoulder belay, bent ice pegs and rope burns notwithstanding, they finished up the easier right-hand finish. Subsequent alpine trips included the *Mitteleggi Ridge* on the Eiger, the *Zmutt Ridge* on the Matterhorn and the *American Direct* on the Dru.

Through not being in a network of equally talented souls, he 'enjoyed' several epics with 'over-faced seconds'.

Chris did his teacher training in Geography and PE at the college of St Mark and St John, Plymouth. His aggression on the rugby pitch and his competitive drive lead to him being asked to drop the PE component. I recall a school trip to the Dewerstone when, having been turned away from the pub, the under-14s were left with a bottle of cider, whilst Chris took the staff and older pupils to a college disco, returning very late to drag us all up to see the dawn. He left us gobsmacked by a tale of how, whilst escorting two young women home, he was accosted by two villains. He saw no reason why he should give them his warm jacket and wallet, so knocked one out and watched his accomplice run off. Fully embracing the punk scene, he would always take his gumshield and ensure he had his back to the wall when gigs 'kicked off'. Once when playing pool in a Devon dive, we ended up surrounded by a local chapter of Satan's Slaves bikers. While Chris calmly played shots around them and their molls, I desperately wondered if I could squeeze through the bars of a back-alley window. Showing brinkmanship beyond our ken, we were mightily relieved when he admitted that there was 'something of an atmosphere in here', scooped up our remaining coins and ambled out. I had been dreading him suggesting that 'the winners stay on, alright?'

Days later they glassed someone and emptied the pool table cash box.

After a partner was killed whilst retreating from the North Face of the Dru, Chris focussed on his young family and work; he ended his 35-year teaching career as a senior vice-principal and was a favourite with his students in the rough and tumble of an East London community school. In the early 80s, impressed by his pedal-powered commute, members of Wandsworth Cycling Club asked him to join their club. Very soon he gained an 11th place in the 1984 National Time Trial rankings. Later, on a family holiday, the lure of Monte Rosa proved too much, so, hiring an axe and crampons, he made a come-back solo ascent. Soon he was back in the Picos de Europa with three families of east Devon alpinists. And undeterred by pouring rain, we found ourselves shoehorned into the Naranjo hut, on what proved to be the centenary of the Naranjo de Bulnes first ascent (1904). *Murciana 78* (ED-) proved fun, although the helicopter filming a soloist on the Rabadá-Navarro traverse was slightly off-putting. At least he apologised and pointed out our next pitch. Chris was so taken with the hill that he took his fourteen-year-old daughter up another route the next day. The following summer he took Roshan up Mont Blanc. Turning 50, he visited the Old Man of Hoy, Ben Nevis and made a return to Southern Sandstone with Sarah.

Brought up within the Pentecostal faith, Chris moved on via punk and

socialism to take on Islam when he married Yaz. Though turning 60, he caused issues with an Orthodox Greek solicitor when trying to buy a Kalymnian post-retirement pad with a 666 email address!

Sadly his short idyll with Sabine was cut short by cancer, and despite the intervention of Kalymnian and Austrian doctors, he found himself having to find his way back to London mid-lockdown. His final months must have seemed like the most protracted alpine descent imaginable. Although at the end he managed to get back to the island for some final sunsets, making it a last resting place, far more fitting than a loaned room in central London.

Though increasingly ill, he could still stoically quip that everything he climbed seemed to fall down, from crucial holds on southern sandstone, through Palace Quarry (scene of his first new routes with Steve Bell), on to chunks of Big Picket Rock in south Devon, thence to north Devon, where he was on the first ascent of *Earth Rim Roamer II*, Pat Littlejohn's attempt to hold back the erosional force of the Atlantic. Heck, even parts of the alpine classic *Bonatti Pillar* collapsed after Chris's ascent! 'Something's gonna get you in the end,' he grinned.

I once overheard the two Bristol Steves, Finlay and Monks, label him a 'nutter' for dragging a beginner up *Bow Wall* at Bosigran. But Chris noticed things in people and could both nurture and create sparks. In my case, he saw a 14-year-old who had led his first Hard

Severe, so he just poured on petrol.

Chris's passion touched many and our thoughts are for Aisha and Roshan, his daughters who nursed him at the end, and for Yaz, Sabine and all those climbers, lovers, teachers, pupils and others who will miss all the buzz that was Chris.

Footnote

Following Chris's Covid-delayed wake, the route *Mukdab's Wall* E4 at Daddyhole, Torquay, named after he took on the Muslim faith prior to his marriage in 1984, was 'restored' and reclinbed by Simon Woosters, Bruce Woodley and Kevin Pritchard. A new line to the right was named *Last Respects* E4. Chris would have approved.

Bruce Woodley

Opposite top: Glencoe ice ☑ Steve Bell
Below: Chris on Kalymnos



Malcolm Howells

1942 - 2021

Malcolm Howells died of pneumonia on 24th November 2021 in Berkeley, California where he and his wife Mary Anne had lived for many years. He had been suffering from Alzheimer's for quite a while – a cruel disease.

Malcolm was born in Brighton on 23rd September 1942. He attended Patcham Junior school and later Varndean Grammar school for boys. In 1962 he went up to Hartford College Oxford to study physics, spending three formative years as an undergraduate and was a member of the University Mountaineering Club. After graduating he decided he wanted to teach and took a teaching diploma at Leeds University where he met Val who would later become his wife.

Malcolm moved to London and began teaching at a North London



grammar school but he soon became disillusioned with teaching, deciding his true passion was for physics. He studied for a PhD at Westfield College London. For the rest of his career, he would work in the field of high energy physics, travelling the world from one synchrotron to another – Oxford, Grenoble, Barcelona, New York and finally Berkeley in California.

I first met Malcolm in the 1960s in London where we shared a house together with a group of climbers, one of the leading lights being Ken Wilson. There was a close-knit social scene of climbers who would drive up to North Wales or the Lakes each weekend. We would meet on Wednesday evenings at the Crown pub on Highgate Hill to have fun and arrange weekend transport. While this was a very London-centric scene, any climber finding himself in London on a Wednesday night would likely find their

way to the Crown. Malcolm joined the Climbers' Club in 1966 and served on the Committee in the early 1970s.

In January 1968 Malcolm and Val were married and I was their best man. They bought a house in Crouch End, which became a late-night extension to Wednesday evenings at the Crown. It was during this period that Malcolm and I began climbing regularly together, managing a number of new routes on Craig Gogarth, including *Hustler*, *Ipsa Facto*, *Phaedra* and *Rat Race*. We also made a number of early ascents, one in particular nearly ended in disaster, an attempt on the second ascent of *Naddyn Ddu* on Cloggy. Malcolm was on the main pitch and after dispensing with the aid peg that Pete Crew had used on the first ascent, he took a rest on a nut. 'What's the nut like?' I shouted up to him. Before he could reply, he was flying through the air falling about sixty feet into the retaining wall. Luckily a runner held, but he still shattered his patella and gashed his head quite badly. Fortunately, Dave Yates, who had a lot of mountain rescue experience, was above us on *The Mostest* and abseiled down to lower me, with Malcolm on my back, in two 150-foot rope lengths to the bottom of the crag and to the waiting official rescue team.

Around 1972 Malcolm began work at the Synchrotron Radiation Facility at Daresbury, necessitating a move north where Val and Malcolm set up home in Altrincham. At the time there was a large group of climbers living in the area; Chris Bonington, Martin

Boysen, Nick Estcourt, Dave Potts, Dave Pearce, John Yates and Malcolm, to name just a few. This group became jokingly known as 'The Altrincham All Stars'. At this time Malcolm climbed regularly with Dave Pearce making some difficult climbs on Anglesey. In the summer of 1974, they went to Yosemite in California where they climbed the *NE Face of Half Dome*, *The Nose* on El Cap and *Salathé Wall*.

In August 1973 his first daughter Lucy was borne. Sadly, Val and Malcolm separated in 1976 and soon afterwards he went to live and work in the States. I know he felt wretched about leaving Lucy and made every effort to see her whenever he could. Sometime later he met Mary Anne and they married in 1983 and, not long after, they had Laura, Malcolm's second daughter. Although he lived and worked in the States, he always maintained strong links with family and friends in Europe. He was a frequent visitor to Oxford and had a second home in Montpellier in France.

Malcolm was not just a very good rock climber, he was also a fine mountaineer. He climbed extensively in the Western Alps and we made a number of ascents in Zermatt and Chamonix together. His first Himalayan expedition came in 1974 with a trip to the Langtang Himal. In 1977 he went to Flat Top (6103m) in the Kishtwar Himalaya and in 1978 to the Karakorum to climb in the Choktoi Glacier region. However, his most significant mountaineering exploit was



in 1976 when he was invited to join Mo Anthoine's expedition to climb the Trango Tower in the Karakorum. Other members of the team included Joe Brown, Martin Boysen, Tony Riley and Jim Curran. Curran made a film of the expedition and later wrote a book. Mo and Martin reached the summit first, followed a day later by Malcolm and Joe – a significant mountaineering achievement.

Malcolm was also an enthusiastic skier. Together we made attempts on the winter Haute Route between Chamonix and Zermatt, but were thwarted by bad weather. We skied the Vallée Blanche on a number of occasions and Malcolm skied in many other parts of Europe and in North America until quite recently, when his illness made it no longer possible.



Malcolm was great fun to be around! What first comes to mind was his patience, generosity and unflappability.

He could be quite argumentative though, usually egged on by friends, and he was painfully logical with an underlying dogged determination. One time, when skiing with a group of friends, his jacket zip kept jamming holding everyone up in cold windy conditions. At lunch time he was ordered to buy a new jacket. Malcolm returned wearing the same top, but when challenged produced a pair of pliers – typical Malcolm! Another anecdote that powerfully demonstrates his famous unflappability concerns climbing *Shibboleth* on Buachaille Etive Mòr in Scotland with Dave Pearce. He was leading the difficult traverse high up on the climb when, to Pearce's horror, Malcolm's rope just dropped off him. Dave had to make the unenviable decision, should I tell him? He decided he should and Malcolm's cool response was "Oh shit, I think I can make the peg." Fortunately, he did and was then thrown a rope from above by Nick Estcourt.

His wife Mary Anne and his two daughters, Lucy (on Zoom) and Laura, were with him when he died. He will be very sadly missed by his family, but also his many friends and colleagues all over the world.

Farewell old pal!

Barry Whybrow

Opposite top: Malcolm on the first ascent of *Phaedra* in 1966.  Ken Wilson
Above (from top): The Choktoi Expedition 1978, with Malcolm on left.  George Lowe.
A bivvy on Trango Tower. Left to right: Malcolm (possibly), Martin, Joe and Mo.

Mike Jones

1948 - 2020

Mike was a truly selfless, humble man who possessed a generous spirit and an iron will, with incredible inner determination undoubtedly cemented from his time in the Parachute Regiment. He was always putting other people's needs well before his own, a true gentleman. He was gentle, generous and considerate, but also, we all agreed, a tough cookie and someone you'd most definitely want with you if you were in a tight spot...be that on the wilds of a mountain, or outside a pub in downtown Bodmin on a Saturday night!

He had an infectious enthusiasm for wild places and he was at his happiest when out there, on one of his long hill walks, running, or boldly climbing with his meagre rack. He was economical to the extreme when placing gear, although he always claimed it was to save his seconds the bother of taking it out. To tell the truth, this unnerved even the most experienced climbers among us!

He was brought up in Birmingham and joined the Parachute Regiment at an early age, serving with distinction, including in Northern Ireland. He was badly injured when the Landrover he was travelling in was blown up by the IRA and, while he applied his usual drive to his recovery, this ended his army career. He settled in Cornwall, raising his two children, Daniel and Sam as a single dad.

Mike came to climbing late, he



was in his 40s, fashioning himself a home-made harness and developing his rope skills by practicing in the trees in an orchard on the farm where he was living down in Cornwall.

He honed those skills out on the Cornish sea cliffs with his regular partner, Rob Bennett. He liked telling the tale of his accident whilst attempting his second E2, *Broadstairs* (described in the guidebook as ‘strenuous and intriguing’), down on Bosigran. Sam, his daughter (13 at the time), who was belaying Mike, lowered him down to the ground after he fell, and ran off to get help. He had broken his ankle quite badly in the fall, and the only help Sam could find nearby was Shane Ohly. Shane, who was belaying on another climb, swapped himself out for Sam on his belay and went to help

to get Mike to hospital. Who knows what Shane’s leader thought when he looked down to find a 13 year old on the other end of his rope! Shane had rushed over only to find Mike brewing up using his stove whilst he was waiting. It was just like him to make himself a brew while Sam went off to the rescue!

In the early 2000s he moved to the northwest, living in both Staffordshire and Cheshire. He became a regular part of the Frodsham ‘old boys’, joined the Climbers’ Club in 2012 and more recently became an integral and active member of the Chester Mountaineering Club.

Even though he was retired and in his 70s, he was never content to be sitting down. Never happier than when he had work – gardening, building, anything he could do to help out.

He had a rich vein of stories, many of which featured his children, Sam and Daniel, and their extremely adventurous days out when growing up. In fact, many of his stories featured his family because they were the most important thing in his life. He was especially devoted to his grandchildren, Jacob and Ruby, and step-grandchildren, Mitchell and Zak, regularly taking them out on adventures.

Over recent years Mike had to deal with a number of health problems. He had successfully overcome prostate cancer, which he had fought with his usual ‘Attack Attack’ approach and he fought hard to regain his fitness after that, remaining incredibly fit and active.

Sadly, the lung cancer was the one final illness that he could not overcome with his ‘Iron Mike’ approach, although he gave it a good go.

Mike was not a materially rich man in any respect, but beneath that soft-spoken and respectful skin lay a great wealth. He had experienced the very worst and the very best of humanity. He lived for the deep beauty of the outdoors, and he survived all that had been thrown at him with an unpretentious modesty.

As he would say himself whenever we were out on one of his long walks “Look at the beauty – it just makes you glad to be alive”.

Paul Drew

Mike Jones  Paul Drew



James Sibree Milledge

1931 - 2022

Jim Milledge, researcher and physician, died at the age of 91 on the 9th February 2022. He joined the Climbers’ Club in 1974. For many years, Jim was a leading figure in the field of high altitude medicine and had undertaken countless expeditions to the Greater Ranges in order to pursue his research. He is regarded as ‘the father of mountain medicine’ by those working in this field.

His love of the mountains was fostered from a very young age. At the outbreak of war in 1939, Jim and his family left Merseyside and settled in the Welsh village of Penmaenmawr. From here, Jim and his brother Terry divided their free time between the

local beaches and surrounding hills. At Rydal School the pair joined a Hill Walker’s Club and Jim later wrote, ‘almost every trip we made into the mountains was memorable.’ This included an ascent of the Carneddau in the bitter winter of 1946/47. On approaching the summit ridge Jim noticed how, ‘snow had built up on the posts forming fantastic gargoyle-like structures, 3-4 feet in all directions.’

Jim’s climbing career began during his second year at Birmingham University. He made steady progress through the grades and would later pick out ascents of *Longland’s Climb* and *Curving Crack* on Clogwyn du’r Arddu, as well as a rather damp climb of *Main Wall* on Cynr Las as being amongst his most memorable days on rock. His affinity for Snowdonia grew quickly and by his penultimate year in medical school, he had spent no fewer than 30 weekends in North Wales. Much of this was while working as a handyman for Chris Briggs at the Pen y Gwryd Hotel. This afforded plenty of opportunities to get out into the mountains. One evening Jim announced to those gathered around the bar that he planned to complete a round of the Welsh 3,000 foot peaks the following day. A poor forecast led many to dismiss his plan and Briggs to ‘bet’ the hotel that he couldn’t do it. Jim took up the wager and put up his own stake of Yyns Ettws in case he was unsuccessful. Alone, wet and hungry, Jim returned late the following evening with all 14 mountains climbed. A hero’s welcome and a large fry-up

were his reward. However it was never clear whether the bet was honoured.

After graduating, Jim spent three years as a medical officer in the RAF. Based in Hong Kong, he joined the local mountain rescue team and continued to climb on the nearby crags. During periods of leave, Jim and his wife Betty, travelled widely throughout Asia. Towards the end of their stay in 1957, news reached them of Nepal’s decision to open its borders to tourists. The following spring the couple hired porters in Kathmandu and were amongst the first Westerners to make the journey on foot to Pokhara. This would prove to be the first of Jim’s many visits to the Himalayas.

Three years later he returned as part of the 1960/61 Himalayan Scientific and Mountaineering Expedition. Led by Sir Edmund Hillary, their objectives were to complete a winter of physiological experiments in Solukhumbu before crossing the Barun Glacier to make an ascent of the world’s fifth highest mountain, Makalu (8,470m). Preparations went well at first, with a laboratory, the Silver Hut, being established at 5,800m and the completion of a series of extraordinary experiments. First ascents followed, including that of Ama Dablam by Barry Bishop, Mike Gill, Wally Romanes and Mike Ward. However, poor snow conditions the following spring meant Makalu’s summit remained just out of reach. Unfortunately, the mountain took its toll and expedition members suffered a number of injuries

and illnesses. Ed Hillary suffered a stroke and under Jim's care had to slowly descend the mountain. On arriving back in Solukhumbu and now fully recovered, Hillary was able to supervise the building of a school in Khumjung – the first of many projects supported by the Himalayan Trust. Jim later wrote of his experience, “For many of us, the experience of being members of this unique expedition turned out to be career changing in a most positive way.” The work carried out on the now-famous ‘Silver Hut Expedition’ still forms the basis of mountain medicine understanding.

Over the next 50 or so years, Jim would divide his time between research and work as a respiratory physician, both in the UK and overseas. Amongst the many adventures that followed, two expeditions in 1981 really stand out. The first, led by Chris Bonington, was to make the first ascent of Kongur (7724m), gave Jim an opportunity to explore Tibet at a time when access had previously proved difficult. Then just ten days after returning, Jim set off back to the Himalayas as a member of the American Medical Research Expedition to Everest (AMREE). Here, he spent several weeks in the Western Cwm conducting ground-breaking studies on exercise and sleep at high altitude.

Jim's was a life that was well lived!

He leaves behind his second wife Pat and two children from his first marriage, Margaret and John.

Jeremy Windsor

Daphne Pritchard

1934 - 2021

Daphne was one of the early women members of the Climbers' Club, joining in 1977. Her love of mountains, however, had bitten much earlier. I am not aware when she first visited the Alps but it must have been in the early 1960s as she joined an Austrian Alpine Club (AAC) ski tour to the Ötztal and Stubai in 1965. She must have been a useful skier to be allowed on the tour.

I first met her in the summer of 1971 on an AAC Rock and Ice Course in the Ötztal and Stubai and I recall her being at ease in the hut and mountain environments. We met a few times in the following years on AAC meets, but while she loved to be in the hills, her main commitments at that time were car rallying and hockey. After I moved to London in 1975 we started to climb together and she made rapid progress through the grades, becoming a regular VS leader.

She was, as many know, of “less than average height”. This was how AB Hargreaves described her at a party at the Pen y Gwyrd Hotel after she had told him about her failure to make a move on *Pigott's Climb* on Cloggy that afternoon. He commiserated, with the words, “I agree, that move is difficult for a man (sic) of less than average height.” AB would have known, he was not much taller than Daphne! She made up for a lack of inches with determination and climbed with precision, balance

and had a great power to weight ratio. By the late 70s and early 80s she had ticked off some respectable routes, including *Diagonal* on Dinas Mot and *Barbarian* at Tremadog. There were not many women climbing at that standard in those days, so her achievements were relatively unusual.

Her regular participation in meets and dinners led to the accumulation of a wide group of friends in the Climbers' Club establishing an easy rapport not only with currently active members but also many of the old guard including Ivan Waller (see CCJ 1996), AB Hargreaves (see CCJ 1999/2000) and Hamish Nichol (see CCJ 1997) and she was always interested in and supportive of younger members.

She was Meets Secretary from 1983 to 1990 and served on the Huts Management Sub-Committee. For several years she took on the thankless task of drawing money out of members who had stayed in huts but left no payment. She contributed to many hut working parties where her practical approach to problem solving was much appreciated. Through her involvement with the BMC London and South East Area for a number of years and attending meetings in Manchester, she developed a network in the wider climbing community.

She had an extensive list of Alpine and other foreign trips, up to the year



2000. She noted that she had been to the Alps at least once every year from 1975. Her list contains the best part of 40 routes with some great achievements, including a traverse of the Matterhorn from the Italian side in 1991 with Dick Sykes and an ascent of Mont Blanc in 1992 with Robin Quine, to name but two. She was still climbing to a very high standard into her 70s both in the UK and in the Alps, a tribute to her fitness, persistence and, of course, good technique. There were two trips to the Himalayas, two to Jordan and one to Kenya. She and I visited Yosemite in 1979 and in 1982 we explored France visiting the Verdon Gorge (very scary), the Calanques (fun and pretty) and the fabulous Cormot in Burgundy. There were very few bolts in those days, only a few manky pegs – a far cry from the protection in the sun-rock destinations today – and it felt very exploratory.

Sea cliffs, in particular Cornwall, were a major love and she was a regular visitor at the Count House. Her nephew Nick and niece Karen recall being taken climbing on Bosigran by Mike Westmacott during a holiday at the Count House. That Mike would take Nick and Karen climbing was a reflection on her contribution to helping the children of other members on the family meets and her deep friendships in the CC. She was always ready to help other people, offer lifts and support new members to the CC, especially women. She often

Daphne Pritchard on *Heart of Darkness*, 1984



put herself out to help others in the mountains. One such occasion was on Cloggy when someone at the top dislodged some rocks which struck a climber below her. She promptly had herself lowered to see what she could do in what was a desperate situation. Sadly the climber who was injured did not survive, but his partner kept in touch and visited Daphne when she went to a care home. There are many more stories of her helping others in their time of need. Her help took many forms. On more than one occasion she assisted an injured climber back to safety in the Alps and was known to help a less confident climber to complete a route when others would have been less patient.

She was also good at persuading other members into supporting projects she was involved in, such as persuading a fellow member to help carry a disabled lady she knew up and down Scafell for the Spinal Injuries Association and later taking the same lady up Ben Nevis and then Snowdon. She had a reputation

for always being there to help others.

Then there was her loquacity. Many are the tales that have come out in discussions since her death, such as seeking warmth and conversation on a cold campsite in a campervan of an evening and her reluctance to return to her tent when the owner wanted to go to bed. Or kneeling by the table in the hallway of the Count House for a quick chat and still being there nattering away an hour and a half later. Her cheeky sense of humour also will be missed. Such as the wet night at Ynys, slamming the door in the face of an aspirant member telling her to “Sod off” or words to that effect, only to reopen the door seconds later with an, “Only joking!”. The two became good friends.

Daphne was a woman of many talents. She joined the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) in Teddington after A-Levels and worked there in the field of radiocarbon measurement. She co-authored at least two research papers at NPL and was clearly well respected in the field. She was very clear thinking with a great capacity for solving problems. This was demonstrated early in her career, when her department had taken delivery of a computer workstation long before they had become a part of everyday life. Her scientist colleagues and managers did not want to touch it, but Daphne was undeterred. She read the manual, taught herself how to program the machine and became the department’s IT expert, setting up computerised systems to calibrate and drive their scientific

experiments. Nick, her nephew, who is a programmer, described it as impressive stuff, even by today’s standards.

She demonstrated an adventurous spirit from a very early age with some intrepid tree climbing exploits reported when the family was evacuated to North Wales during the Second World War and activities with the Guides. Her parents were involved in the foundation of the Civil Service Motoring Association (CSMA) so it is no surprise that she took to driving with great enthusiasm. She maintained her own cars, became a spirited driver and successful competitor in CSMA rallies. Rally successes included lifting the trophy in a two day event in mid-Wales as part of the NPL team – she is almost dwarfed by the trophy in a photograph of the prize-winning ceremony. She was also a fearsome hockey player for the Civil Service at County level.

She remained very active well into her 80s, though slowing down as a result of an arthritic hip which she eventually accepted needed replacement. She bounced rapidly back from the hip operation in 2017, soon returning to wall climbing and driving out to France to help her sister. She continued to remain active and had expected to live out her days in her own home. However the symptoms of dementia began to develop in 2018 and eventually she was forced to accept that she needed to move into care. Thanks must be given to the staff at Silvermere Care Home for supporting this still active lady, including finding a way for her to



go climbing at the Craggy Island wall to get some exercise and to feed her climbing obsession. Unfortunately she contracted Covid-19 early in 2020 but, although she managed to recover from Covid, she had to relearn to walk. But worse, around Christmas 2020 she was taken to hospital with a broken femur.

Recovery was slow even after she returned to the comfort of the home, surrounded by people she knew. The restrictions imposed by the lockdown sadly prevented her from moving freely around the home or talking to her friends, two activities which were so important to her and sadly her health deteriorated rapidly. She died peacefully on 25th January 2021.

I am grateful to Daphne’s family for assistance as well as the memories of members on the Club’s website in the preparation of this obituary.

Tony Williams

Opposite: Daphne at Porthguarnon, 2008.
Above: Lundy, 1976.

Donald Thomas Roscoe

1934 - 2021

Don Roscoe, founder member of the revered Manchester-based Rock and Ice Club and a respected member of the Climbers’ Club since 1955, died peacefully on 15th June 2021, thus fulfilling his oft-declared intention to leave his house on Anglesey for the last time ‘in a wooden box’, rather than to move into a care home. Don outlived his second wife, Barbara, by two years, but is survived by his first wife, Jean, and their two sons.

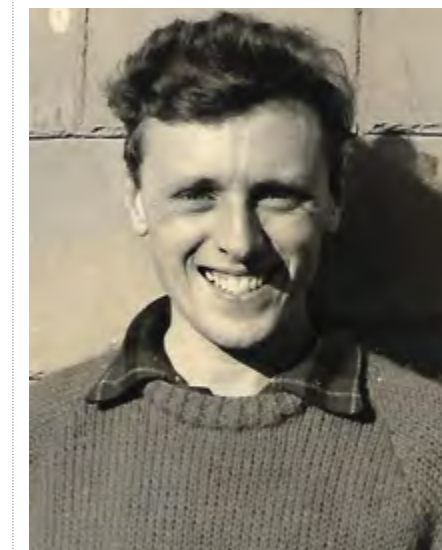
Don had started to write an autobiography, but dementia during the last few years of his life conspired to rob today’s climbing community of a rich array of fascinating stories, and myths, which would have offered a fresh perspective on the early exploits of Don’s Rock and Ice friends, and now rock-climbing legends, such as Joe Brown and Don Whillans.

His early years living in Longsight, a working-class suburb of Manchester, would not have been easy for Don. The vicar who married his parents, and who soon afterwards christened Don, then had to bury his father who died of Tuberculosis only a few months later. This left Don’s mother, a seamstress, to cope on her own until she remarried when Don was five years old. However, during the war Don saw little of his step-father, who was posted to the far-east with the RAF, or of his mother when he was

evacuated away from the dangers of the city. As an evacuee staying in a pub in Fleetwood with his grandmother, the smell of stale beer apparently put him off drinking for life. Unlike most of his thirsty climbing contemporaries, he always preferred a cup of tea!

Leaving school at 15, Don joined the GPO as a telephone engineer and was then able to exploit his love of being outdoors at weekends by cycling, fishing, exploring old mines and, eventually, climbing around the local moors.

After National Service and another spell with the GPO, Don decided that becoming a teacher would give him more time to climb and on completion of his teacher training at



Alsager College, he taught woodwork at a school in Wythenshawe.

But climbing had become Don's preoccupation and whenever he could he would travel to the Peak, North Wales or the Lakes, by some combination of hitching, bus and motorbike, to camp or doss in a barn with his climbing mates. During one such trip to Wastwater, he met Jean, who later introduced him to the staff at Plas y Brenin (The National Mountaineering Centre in Capel Curig) where she was volunteering at the time. In need of an accomplished rock climber to join the instructional staff (no qualifications required in those days!) Plas y Brenin offered Don a permanent job and so began a new phase in his life.

It is fair to say that Don was not necessarily the best climber of his generation, but he was dedicated to his



climbing and the job at Plas y Brenin gave him the opportunity to channel his enthusiasm into areas where he had other complementary skills. He used his love of words to write about climbing, and his quiet confidence and fluid movement on rock to inspire his students when teaching in the outdoors.

Don wrote several instructional books, but will be best remembered for his 1961 'Llanberis North' Climbers' Club guidebook. That guidebook is a classic of the genre with its evocative portrayals of world-famous climbs, typified by a line from this description of *The Thing* on Dinas Cromlech: "Difficulty is sustained, protection poor, retreat beyond the crux uninviting, and the ground below nasty to land on!"

For over twenty years, Don taught outdoor activities on the rock, on the hills and on the water, to students at Plas y Brenin, at Loughborough College and finally at Bangor University, alongside his wife, Barbara. His educational philosophy was one of quietly letting students learn through their own experience, intervening only to introduce a pertinent fact here, or to calmly offer a word of advice there, always tailored precisely to the needs of the individual. At his funeral, several appreciative ex-students cited humorous examples of such laconic help. However, that light-touch instructional style did not extend to the maintenance of equipment in Don's stores where he insisted on ropes being coiled precisely, tent pegs being carefully straightened,

and maps being correctly folded.

By the age of fifty, Don (and Barbara) had benefitted from a generous university early retirement scheme and he was then able to further develop his many interests and talents in fishing, cycling, woodwork, artwork, writing, travel and of course climbing. He also realised a long-held ambition to study for a degree in Biology and follow this up with a PhD researching how spiders cling to walls and ceilings. Don also started, but did not finish, an Art foundation course. He cycled with Barbara, from Land's End to John o'Groats and later from John o'Groats to Lands End. They travelled round the world visiting friends and relatives, climbing, and searching for reliably sunnier climes than were available to them during a Welsh winter. Don never bothered to disguise his dislike of being cold or wet.

When symptoms of dementia reduced Don's independence, he progressively had to give up trips away skiing, climbing outside, driving and craftwork, but he was well-looked after, he kept his sense of humour to the end, and he retained memories of, and a pride in, his climbing roots.

Don Roscoe made a significant contribution to the rock-climbing history of the UK and he has left a legacy of understanding in the lives of all his students and readers of how to skillfully enjoy the cliffs and the hills in safety.

Tim Jepson

Mike Snell

1955 - 2022

'Black Mike' was a kind, generous spirit, as laid-back and unassuming as they come, a real gentleman. Born in Wolverhampton, his two great passions in life were Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club and his rock climbing.


I first met Mike through the Wolverhampton Mountaineering Club, a real mixing pot of like-minded, talented individuals. Fittingly, our first route together was a first ascent on an obscure cliff on Lundy Island, a combination that was to see us regularly climbing together for the next 40 years. Mike was a lover of the esoteric and nothing appealed more than an obscure route on an offbeat crag away from the crowds ("Stannington Ruffs anyone?"). It wasn't always so; on escaping Wolverhampton, he gravitated north towards Sheffield where he began climbing with the Doncaster Mountaineering Club. Long, exhausting soloing sessions on the gritstone edges were commonplace and to a high standard, particularly on Stanage. The mountains of North Wales, the Lakes and Scotland were regular destinations and the classic routes were duly ticked, although not always without incident. A gear-ripping ground fall, off *T-Rex*, was a narrow escape and typical of Mike's go-for-it attitude at the time. There were trips to evermore remote areas including Cape Wrath, Hoy and Shetland, Mike could

never resist a sea stack although the fulmars could never seem to resist him!

Mike travelled and climbed extensively in Europe (in the Alps and on sun-rock) Australia, Canada (a productive trip to The Bugaboos), and there was even an abortive trip to the Himalayas. He visited the States many times, often with his great mate Tony Sawbridge, where long road trips took in the likes of Domelands, The Needles, Owens River Gorge, Donner Summit, Indian Creek, New River Gorge and many many more. Joshua Tree was memorable for me. It was no secret that Mike liked a lie-in, and despite being there for a month, I was more than a little concerned about just how much climbing we would get done. So I made sure that our tent was pitched on one of the sunniest spots on Hidden Valley Campground, as soon as the sun got up, we had to get out the tent or be cooked! It proved a great trip and we climbed every day!

Mike's real climbing passion was sea cliffs. Pembroke and Cornwall were favourites, but it was the small island in the Bristol Channel that really captured his heart. Mike loved Lundy! Since the early eighties a small group of us (dubbed 'The Boys from the Black Country') would make an annual pilgrimage across the water, often for two weeks at a time. Basing ourselves in Tibbetts, the remote Admiralty



 Simon Cardy

Lookout towards the north end of the island, the classics were repeated before exploring zawns and buttresses where new routes and outrageous repeats were the order of the day. They were halcyon days. Mike could pull out the stops when required, testified by early repeats of *Stalingrad*, *Milky Way*, *The Exorcist* and *A Widespread Ocean of Fear*. I will always recall two glorious weeks in the summer of 1995; it was coming towards the end of our trip, we were climbing well, the sun shone, everything was dry

and *Antiworlds*, Pat Littlejohn's tour de force in Deep Zawn, was calling. But we had spotted this amazing new line that was just crying out to be done, so we flicked a coin for the lead and off we went down the free abseil into Starship Zawn. Mike led up *Space Bandit*, took a hanging stance, then followed me across what was to become *Solaris*. We were fired up! The next day was the last of our trip and there was only one place to go... Deep Zawn and *Antiworlds*. Mike's calming influence helped me up the intimidating first pitch, he then led seamlessly through on the second and we finished the top pitch bathed in the orange light of a Lundy sunset to round off what was an incredible trip. My goodness, the beer tasted good in the Marisco Tavern that night!

We returned to Lundy year after year for the best part of 35 years, the pace inevitably eased but the climbs, the ocean and the friendships remained. Latterly Mike became a Friend of Lundy through the Landmark Trust, his way of giving something back to the island.

Mike passed away suddenly in 2022 from a subarachnoid haemorrhage. It was great to see all his old mates at his wake and, of course, the 'Boys from the Black Country' were all there. His ashes were scattered on Stanage Moor by friends and family. He will be greatly missed by his close bunch of climbing friends; there are many great memories reawakened at just about every crag we visit.

Paul Harrison

Richard (Dick) Sykes

1932 - 2021

Richard grew up in Bristol where his father was a clergyman. The Sykes family consisted of five children including Richard who also had a twin brother. Following Bristol Grammar School, where he played on the first teams for rugby, cricket and hockey, he read Classics at Cambridge. He was an active member of CUMC. He gained a PhD at Princeton in 1959 and further developed his keen interest in mountaineering. Earlier, he was a member of the 1957 Manchester Expedition attempting the first ascent of Masherbrum from which Bob Downes sadly did not return. (See *Alpine Journal* 1958, pp169-184).

Richard was a member of the British Alpine Ski Traverse led by Alan Blackshaw which went from Kaprun in Austria to Gap in France. A feat requiring over six weeks of serious endurance. (*AJ* 1973, pp13-22).

He spent considerable time climbing and skiing in the Alps and regularly led ski tours for the Eagle Ski Club and Ski Club of Great Britain often using his British Association of Ski Instructors qualification to offer instruction. He was a member of the Climbers' Club as well as the AC and was a fine rock climber both in the Alps and throughout Britain. His climbs included The Old Man of Hoy a couple of times.

I remember an occasion in Skye when Richard took a day off from climbing and was asleep in the hut



when the call came for help with an accident in Coire Lagan. This was in the days before formal rescue teams so anyone who was around was called on to help. Richard got up quickly and was to spend the rest of the day on the cliff helping to get an injured climber down. Several rescuers were still on the face at nightfall and Richard spent an uncomfortable night on a ledge before helping to retrieve a body the next day. So much for his rest day. At that point another couple of climbers were reported missing and a fresh call went out for search parties. Richard went to bed. By then it was Sunday

with no ferries running. After two days with just volunteers involved, the RAF Mountain Rescue arrived to assist.

He climbed regularly all over Britain as well as Spain and the Alps, latterly concentrating on Pembroke where he had a flat.

For a short time he worked in the City, but that was not really for him. He trained as a social worker and worked in the Manchester area before moving back to Bristol where he founded a couple of charities, Bristol Home Plus, supporting families with children under five, then Westcare which provided support for those suffering from ME. He researched Myalgic Encephalomyelitis, (also called Chronic Fatigue Syndrome or ME/CFS) and sought to educate medical professionals who had, for many years, dismissed the condition. He was among the first to take ME seriously, and set up a National Task Force on the illness which reported in 1994: its conclusions were included in the Chief Medical Officer's report on the illness.

Richard had considerable unassuming charm. He lived a simple life and became a regular attendee at Quaker meetings. I last visited him in his residential home just before the pandemic as he was starting to write his memoirs which are unfortunately unfinished and unavailable.

Robin Quine

Andy Vine

1978 - 2020

Andy joined the CC in 2018 after attending an Aspirants' Meet. Val Hennelly recalls that "he was a very pleasant person, enjoying mountaineering at a steady grade but keen to widen his climbing network and contribute to the Climbers' Club". Just two years later he died in an avalanche on Aonach Mor.

Andy was also a very active member of the Karabiner Mountaineering Club – the following tribute was first published in a KMC Newsletter and is reproduced here by permission of the writer and the KMC.

Memories of Andy Vine, Mountaineer (1978 - 2020)

Ginger beard split by that wide grin, with those searching blue eyes above, delighting in that moment of topping out in a wild and beautiful location, Andy looked over towards where Stuart and I were divesting ourselves of slings and gear. Moments later Steve and Emily followed. We had all just completed the uber-classic mountaineering Diff of *Cyfrwy Arête* on Cadair Idris after a blissful night's wild camp in an idyllic location.

"That was one of the most interesting Diff's I've ever climbed. What a journey."

"...I also enjoy lower grade climbing if it's an interesting journey" was his final statement in his application for Karabiner Mountaineering Club



(KMC) associate membership. For Andy, 'interesting journey' was part of his life, his history, his present and part of what made him who he was.

It was May 2020 and we were on the build-up to the KMC 75th anniversary expedition to the Pamirs in Kyrgyzstan. In the space of three months we had wild-camped as a group in the Ben Alder massif, the Lakes, and now in Wales. On every trip Andy was in his element and this had been no exception – he had been his usual knowledgeable self, totally tuned in to the environment, to his kit and, perhaps most importantly, to his friends. Andy was kind, he was humble and he was

razor sharp – not surprising for a man with a PhD who designed cutting edge turbine systems for a living.

Chair of Imperial College Mountaineering Club in 2000, Andy made his first foray into the greater ranges as leader of a MEF sponsored expedition to the Himachal Pradesh, making a successful first ascent of Tagne (6,111m) in 2001. The Kuiluu Range of the Tien Shan in Kyrgyzstan came next in 2016, where with Miles Gould he made two further first ascents of Fox Peak (4,605m) and Crow Peak (4,714m). In the intervening years he made eight summer trips to the Alps, climbing classic routes such as Mont Pelvoux, Dent du Géant, the *Lyskamm Traverse*, and the Barre des Écrins and, in the touring season, routes such as the five-day ski-traverse from Verbier to Zermatt.

I met Andy in the summer of 2018. We hit it off instantly, and became

firm friends, bonded by our love of mountaineering, Scotland and expeditions. Although we had only recently met, Andy was an obvious choice to be included in the group for the KMC 75th anniversary expedition to Kyrgyzstan, and our journey to Osh began and then ended with Steve Graham, Andy and his wife Alia, sharing my car to and from Heathrow.

On day two, in the local National Park a two-hour drive from Osh, we drank mares' milk together – fresh from the horse. That night we ate some awful kebabs. The next day the results were a catastrophe! We were both confined to the same sick room, taking it in turns to visit the bathroom every fifteen minutes for ten hours. It's amazing how well you get to know someone in those oddest of circumstances!

Once out of the sick room, I really bonded with Andy on the rest of the expedition. When we arrived

home, we plotted a Scotland week together; we drove up in terrible weather, with an even worse forecast; we were full of hope, but also full of realism, pragmatism, and both with our heads firmly on safety. After three days of the most appalling winds, and with six days left – but with barely any let-up in the forecast – we made a safety call and headed home. It was the 17th February 2020.

Just eleven days later I lost a good friend in a terrible avalanche. Alia lost her husband and soulmate of twenty years.

Andy was a lovely man with a kind gentle soul. Strong as an ox, with a heart and head to match, the world is a sadder place without him. I hope that his soul has an “interesting journey”, wherever it now wanders, and that it comes to rest in a truly beautiful place.

Andy Stratford

Memories of Jeremy Whitehead

1931 - 2020

I knew and encountered Jeremy Whitehead sporadically in the mountains for nearly forty years. Jeremy was an unusually private person and in all those years, although he was notoriously talkative, I never heard him speak about anything except mountaineering, ski-mountaineering, rock climbing and mountains. Jeremy was close to the definition of an ‘obsessive’ in the most sympathetic

use of the word. He organised and led alpine ski-tours for groups, including complete novices, for the Ski Club of Great Britain (1970s) and subsequently, after that club abandoned member-led touring, for the Eagle Ski Club (1970s – 2012). Many SCGB and Eagle Ski Club members who would not be competent to ski-tour without a guide, owe their experiences to Jeremy's self-styled, ‘amateur guide’ status. He was of his

time and many of the things he did in terms of leading parties of novices on serious alpine ski-tours would be unwise in these bureaucratic and litigious days. Sensibly he retired from leading serious tours after miscalculations and incidents began to occur during his outings.

Jeremy enjoyed clubs and was a member of the Climbers' Club (1955), the Alpine Club (1969), the Alpine Ski Club and the Fell and Rock Climbing



Jeremy in the Écrins

Club (1992). He was also very active in the Preston Mountaineering Club where he was for some time Chairman. He was a lifelong bachelor with no obvious social interest beyond his mountaineering activities. He apparently enjoyed classical music, though he never spoke of this.

I think he was brought up in Lytham St Annes and spent the later stages of his life living in a mobile home in nearby Garstang. Jeremy spent his working life as a science (physics) master in public schools – notably Monkton Combe in Somerset.

Jeremy continued to take part in the Alpine Ski Club day-touring meets in the Alps until his last meet at Reschen Pass on the Austrian-Italian border in the spring of 2018. Even then, he asserted his independence by leaving a party which had ‘run out of steam’ in a whiteout, to attempt the summit

alone – a sign of the wilful aspect of his character. This characteristic was shown by his reputation for never staying with someone else's party but frequently ‘jumping ship’ to make his own way up or down. However, he was a martinet in making members of his own party follow everywhere in his footsteps.

I owe Jeremy a debt of gratitude for his warm welcome to me. As a new member of the Eagle Ski Club who knew no-one, I joined a Lake District meet in the early 1980s. After everyone else had chosen their company, decided their objectives and begun to depart for the hills, Jeremy volunteered to climb on Gimmer Crag with me who was almost a stranger – I will always remember him for that.

In belated appreciation, a friend and I invited Jeremy, then in his 70s, to tie on with us for the *Portjengrat Traverse*. He acquitted himself superbly in a

rope of three. He kept up despite it being a physically demanding outing. Jeremy also tied on when I climbed *Central Buttress* on Scafell by the Flake Crack classic route and *Tophet Bastion* on Gable with Peter Kaye.

Jeremy wrote two short privately published ski-touring guide books to areas in the southern French Alps. He also contributed to several books on ski mountaineering.

Jeremy was a law unto himself in terms of his tour leading, but he helped many to enjoy and engage in ski-mountaineering through his personally guided tours on behalf of the Eagle Ski Club, of which he was Vice-President from 2003 - 2008.

He was a remarkable and memorable character, being one of those members of the mountaineering community for whom the hills are everything and who devoted himself without distraction and with monkish commitment to his credo.

John Moore

Nick Danby writes

What a sad day when we lost Jeremy. He was an inspiration to so many lucky skiers who enjoyed touring with him. He acquired his mountain craft through personal endeavour and countless sorties into the high hills in true amateur style over a long life, and many of us have much to thank him for.

I was privileged to join him on his successful quest to climb a 4,000m

mountain on both his 75th and 80th birthdays. After an ascent of the Piramide Vincent on his 80th birthday there was a moving tribute at a supper in the Mantova Hut, where the cutting of his birthday cake was accompanied by a standing ovation from the international gathering. A just tribute.

Nigel Edwards writes

Like so many others I am deeply saddened that Jeremy Whitehead is no longer with us. For me, he was an inspirational ski-tour leader in whom I had complete confidence. Many of his Eagle Ski Club tours remain fresh in the memory – such as the early Alpes-Maritimes tour when the Hale-Bopp comet crossed the skies, and the Haute Route, and many more. In the summer of 2019, at the ESC Langdale Meet, Jeremy and I had two vigorous walks from the Wayfarers’ hut in Langdale, one to Grasmere (back by bus); the other up Side Pike and back via Little Langdale. Jeremy was fit and walked vigorously. I shall miss him greatly.

Bernard Smith writes:

I recollect a couple of occasions which reflect Jeremy’s character to some extent. When David Medcalf was elected to the Alpine Club, Jeremy spotted his Garstang address and suggested that they should meet in a local pub. David contacted me, as another AC member,

and asked me along. “How will we recognise him?” I asked. “Oh, he will be wearing the AC tie,” David replied. “What does that look like?” I enquired. Neither of us knew. However, when we got to the pub it was obvious that the weather-beaten chap in the corner was our man. When we confessed to our ignorance regarding the tie he replied “Yes, it’s green with a streak of yellow.” We both survived his grilling about our mountain experience. On another occasion, when visiting Jeremy in his strategically positioned caravan on the A6 route to the Lakes, I mentioned that I was planning a ski-tour to the Örtler Alps. His eyes lit up as he expounded on the delights of the area. He then revealed that he had written a guide book to ski-touring there. I couldn’t believe my luck until he revealed that he hadn’t published it yet. “No matter,” he said, “I’ll do you a copy.” When I returned to collect my copy, it transpired that he had cycled to the Post Office to photocopy his hand written text, assembled it with treasury tags and had it waiting for me. I still treasure it. I remember arriving at his caravan to pick him up and take him to Scotland for a Fell and Rock meet. It was like the Bodleian Library for mountaineers, completely insulated with journals from his many clubs. After the FRCC meet I had to drive across Scotland to drop him off at an Eagles meet before he moved on to a CC meet elsewhere. He never owned a car, but it never hindered him from spending as much time in the mountains as he could.

C.E.M. ‘Mike’ Yates
1939 - 2020

He always referred to himself as ‘Mikey’, but there was a gravitas about Mike that everyone recognised. Locally, we called him Prof. Mike Yates – an enthusiastic, friendly, jovial person who you knew had substance. Born in Manchester, his family moved to Penmaenmawr on the North Wales coast when his father, the Rev John Yates, became a theology lecturer at Bangor University. Mike and his two brothers took to exploring the mountains of Snowdonia from a young age, which led to rock-climbing in due course. At school he excelled at Maths which he then studied at Manchester University, obtaining a First Class degree. He went on to do his PhD on ‘The degrees of Turing unsolvability’ – here’s a quick explanation for those not this way minded. “The Turing degree of a set is a measure of how difficult it is to solve the decision problem associated with the set, that is, to determine whether an arbitrary number is in the given set.” Take from this his continuing association with Alan Turing (of Enigma fame) for now. Mike joined the Climbers’ Club in 1967 and served the Club in a number of roles. On an early visit to Cwm Glas Mawr, Mike had a moment of mathematical inspiration and had to sit down at the table to put pen to

paper or, in this case, literally the back of a tatty envelope, in order to record it. The next week, to his horror, the envelope could not be found anywhere and he had to phone the custodian of Cwm Glas to try to retrieve it. “Oh I found it”, was the reply, “When I looked at it I realised it had to be important, so I didn’t throw it away!” In 1963 he became a Fulbright Scholar and moved to Cornell University and the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, but his main field of interest, once on the other side of the water, was as one of the first Brits to discover Yosemite. He returned to Manchester University, a decision that I think he later regretted, but he moved swiftly up through hierarchy of the Mathematics Department and in 1978 became Professor of Mathematical Logic as a successor to Alan Turing. He was Alan Turing’s mathematical biographer and, as such, became an expert in ‘all things Turing’ – from how to crack Enigma code, through to the mathematics of a Zebra’s stripes! Whilst he loved the academic side of Manchester, he could not stand the bureaucracy and confided that his greatest regret was not getting a decent salary for the Maths Department secretary. In 1971 he co-authored the Cwm Silyn and Cwellyn Climber’s Club guidebook with Jim Perrin. In that period he was on a number of first ascents including *West Arête* and *Jabberwocky* on Craig yr Ogof and

Guardian Angel on Craig y Bera. He lectured frequently to climbing clubs about his trips to Yosemite and he was instrumental in raising its profile with British climbers. He left the university in 1989, but continued his research alongside working as a computer programmer for a multi-media company. In 2001 he edited and published the final volume of the collected works of Alan Turing, focused on Mathematical Logic. He had a great interest in popularising mathematics and felt the public perception of maths was poor, so he worked on overhauling the website for Bangor University’s Centre for the Popularisation of Mathematics (www.popmath.org.uk) to make it more accessible. One amusing insight was when I was talking to him one day and he confided that he had just had a bit of a shock. “What’s up Mike?” “Well, I have just found out that my brother has a bigger computer screen than I have.” “Is that a problem?” “Yes! He’s a monk!” He took on much financial administration for the Club, working as Finance Secretary and, as you would expect, he was very highly organised and efficient. He then took on the custodianship of Helyg, which I thought was a strange choice, but he just applied his organisational mind to everything there and ensured it was running properly. He loved to come to my office

and talk to the young computer programmers. He took a great interest in both of them and the work they did. They realised I held him in very high regard, but it took a very long explanation of what the significance of an ‘Emeritus Professor of Mathematical Logic’ was, let alone the Alan Turing connection! He was married to Judy Yates, a well-known North Wales climber, and latterly to the ebullient Pat Mowbray Yates. His son in law, through Pat’s daughter, is one “John Redhead”. **Steve Andrews** **Gwyn Evans remembers...** I was in my first term at Manchester University and went to my first ‘climbing lecture’ (as we used to call them in those days). Mike Yates was telling us about his climbing in the US – he’d recently returned from a year or so of research in California. One thing that stayed with me from that (nearly 60 years ago now!) was when he talked about the US grading system “US rock climbing grades are 5s subdivided into 5.1, 5.2 up to 5.8 and 5.9. They are now suggesting a grade of 5.10”. You could sense the disdain in this mathematician’s voice at such an adulteration of the decimal system. I wonder what he made of 5.14 in his later years?



John 'Zeke' Deacon

1929 - 2022

Born in Leicester, John joined the Commandos at 17. He was sent on a climbing course in Cornwall where Joe Barry and Mike Banks were instructors. During this initial course John showed a great aptitude for rock climbing, even making an ascent of the still-awkward *Genge's Groove* at Sennen under the encouraging tutelage of Joe Barry.

A request from Mike Banks for a climber to join him on Cyprus led to an ascent of a new route there. Shortly after this came an invitation to join the instructional staff of the Commando Cliff Assault Wing.

During his time as an instructor in the CCAW, John developed his climbing and was encouraged by his fellow Marine, Rawdon Goodier, to scout for new routes. The first of these was the aptly named, *Zeke's Route* at Pordenack Point in 1955. Over the next months, the Goodier/Deacon partnership really got going with new routes at Carn Barra, Sennen and elsewhere. During this period, in 1956, John joined the Climbers' Club.

On returning early from a bad weather season in the Alps, a quick flick through the 'Cornish climbing bible' that was the Count House logbook revealed the exploits of the Biven/Peck team at Bosigran and a hint that they would be returning to complete the girdle of the crag. Deacon and Goodier climbed *Doorpost* and then

made the second ascent of *Suicide Wall* before making the girdle traverse from right to left. It was completed over two days and they named it *String of Pearls*. The pair returned a few weeks later to repeat their route in a single push after a suggestion that their ascent might be invalid. Due to the great reputation that it later gained, this was the new route of which John was most proud. The tough *Raven Wall*, climbed with only a few points of aid, was completed after a break to smoke a Senior Service (cigarette) in the raven's nest with Goodier posing the question, "Are you getting broody, Zeke?"

Over the next few years, John continued to break new ground in both the difficulty of the climbing tackled and with the exploration of new crags. Chair Ladder and Sennen received the Deacon treatment. During this period the Land's End crags were virtually John's alone, with serious routes such as *Death Rattle Gulch* climbed on sight and with little meaningful protection. John's nickname of 'Zeke' was coined early in his Cliff Assault Wing days due to his love of Westerns (cowboy films). Later, rumours abounded among those on climbing courses that his nickname was actually due to John using his service revolver to shoot holds off routes which he considered too easy. This story is unfortunately utterly apocryphal!

Back at Bosigran in 1957, John twisted Mike Banks' arm and persuaded him enter the depths of Great Zawn for a crack at *Green Cormorant Face*. He had read A.W.Andrews' guidebook

description of seabirds sitting on ledges on the face. "If there are ledges, this could be climbable". Mike wasn't too happy about this plan and, as procrastination, insisted on making the first ascents of *Ding* and *Dong*. John later spoke of the commitment required to embark on *Green Cormorant Face* with the difficulty of the climbing leaving the outcome in doubt. Aid was used on the second pitch but the climbing was predominantly free. He said "I only ever carried up to three pitons and used these sparingly. I would often run out up to sixty feet at a time. Two nylon line slings were carried and could be draped over a spike for a running belay if required. It was considered bad form to place extra equipment for protection as well as aid. This was all part of the game."

John remembered sea birds wheeling around the pair and Mike Banks cursing as he struggled to remove the pegs. This ascent laid the foundations for the later development of the Great Zawn by others during the 1960s and 1970s.

John was involved in the production of the 1956 supplement to the A.W.Andrews guide which gave detailed descriptions of the activities of the Biven/Peck team and those of the CCAW, thus publicising, for the first time, the modern development of West Penwith as a serious climbing ground.

John climbed with Tom Patey in Scotland; the pair making the first ascent of *North Post* on Creag Meagaidh. After a call from Admiral Keith Lawder in 1959, Mike Banks

dispatched John and Tom to the Culm Coast to make the first ascent of *Wreckers' Slab* and *Smugglers' Slab* at Cornakey Cliff. Deacon and Patey led with Lawder directing proceedings from the middle of the rope.

Leaving the Marines in 1960 and forced to find civilian work, he moved away from Cornwall only returning to Sennen in the 1970s where he lived until his wife passed away. He moved in with his daughter in Cambridgeshire in 2016.

His climbing was built on Joe Barry's principles of, 'as few pitons as possible, long run outs and a pure precise climbing style.' He sought out excitement, "I would only consider the day a success if I'd managed at least three adrenaline rushes."

John's legacy of routes is fantastic; undertakings that follow superb natural lines up strong features in wild positions. I feel certain that he was an excellent teacher of climbing. His reputation as the best climber in the CCAW was well deserved.

Next time you climb in Cornwall, follow a 'Zeke' route.

James Mann



Opposite:
John Deacon
on Tryfan.

Left:
John Deacon in
CCA uniform at
Sennen.

Tony Edwards

1942 - 2020

Tony was a big man, standing at over 6' 4" and with a shock of dark hair, he exuded power. I only knew him during the 1980s when he was a regular attendee at the Tuesday night meets with his usual climbing partner Sandy. These informal CC meets were held all over the Peak District, and were loosely based on climbers in the west, centred on Estcourt's in Altrincham, meeting up with teams from the east, centred on the Wild Country business. Many of the luminaries of the climbing world attended these meets – Martin Boysen, Dave Pearce, Ken Wilson, Tom Leppert, Mark Vallance, Mike Mortimer, Hugh Banner, Dick Turnbull, Colin Foorde and the late Roger Withers. Happily, these meets continue to this day, though I no longer attend.

I never climbed with Tony on Tuesdays but got to know him in the pub afterwards and on some shared journeys to the crags. We found that



we had a similar taste for the longer traditional climbs and commiserated with each other in that we both ran small businesses that involved Saturday working, making weekend climbing difficult. Thus it was that a midweek day found us at the foot of *Great Gully* on Cadair Idris. Sadly it was out of condition, but we found a two pitch frozen waterfall which gave us some excellent entertainment. Eventually we managed a longish weekend together for an early May Bank Holiday and Tony provided me with one of my finest Welsh weekends. Arriving separately at Ynys mid-afternoon Tony promptly took me up *Black Spring* on Dinas Mor. On the Saturday he led me up *Slanting Slab* on Cloggy (minus one of the pegs) whilst Roger Withers was simultaneously leading *Bloody Slab*, and on the Sunday we led through on *Dream of White Horses* at Gogarth. At this point Tony was obliged to return home for business reasons, but I found some other climbing friends and on the Monday was finally able to tick off *Mur y Niwl* and *Pinnacle Wall* on Craig yr Ysfa.

Tony was excellent company and a strong and steady leader on both rock and ice. He was obviously a mountaineer of vast experience of which, sadly, I know very little.

Richard Carter

Steve Findlay

1954 - 2023

My old diary gives just the bare bones of it, our first climb together: “*Il Duce*, Tintagel, with Steve Findlay, 30th June 1979”.

My recollection of that day is hazy now, more than 40 years on, but the memory of the feelings and emotions it invoked are still with me: the trepidation of the early morning sneak across the Tintagel headland; the wariness of traversing an unfamiliar, wave-washed cliff; that internal tightening as we stared up at the unmistakable and daunting line.

As our friendship and climbing partnership grew it became clear that, for Steve, the essence of climbing – of life itself really – was so much about the feeling, the moment, the joy of a shared adventure. From our base in Bristol, the sea cliffs of the South West – far less known and explored in the 1970s – were the perfect forcing ground to stretch the limits of our abilities and our appetite for adventures.

Steve was the epitome of a natural climber. Blessed by the luck of genetics with a Ben-Hur physique and a liberal splash of hedonism, the idea of training for climbing was something he openly scorned. But with innate ability, energy and the confidence of youth compensating for any possible lack of discipline, he quickly came to throw himself at some of the hardest and boldest routes of the time.

On a return visit to Cornwall a year later, after warming up on *Dream/Liberator*, Steve made an early ascent of *The West Face* in Bosigran's Great Zawn, then one of the hardest routes in the South West. A month later, after another early repeat of *Right Wall* on the Cromlech, my meagre diary reminds me of a big day shared together on Cloggy with ascents of *Daurigol*, *Taurus*, *The Hand Traverse*, *The Axe*, *West Buttress Eliminate* and *Curving Arête*, all after walking in direct from Ynys Ettws in the Pass.

Of course there were some near-misses along the way too. A ground fall at Cheddar could have spelled an early end had he not miraculously missed the ugly, protruding rocks that he landed amongst. A pendulum point failure while big-walling in Yosemite saw him take a huge fall, held only by the grip of his ascenders on the jugging line. He would forever afterwards sing the praises of the strength of CMI ascenders. In the Alps, our bivouac ledge beneath the *Walker Spur* was raked by rock-fall during the night. Scrunching our bodies up beneath the protection of a tiny rock overhang, our sleeping pads and bivi gear were trashed, but somehow we survived completely unscathed.

In the early 1980s Steve and I took part in two Himalayan expeditions. The first to the (then) unclimbed *East Ridge* of Cho Oyu in Nepal and the second to the highest peak in Bhutan, Gangkar Puensum – still unclimbed to this day. Although both expeditions were ultimately

Steve Findlay on the *Totem Pole*, Tasmania, in 2004. 📷 © Steve Monks



unsuccessful in their climbing goals, they did leave Steve with an enduring love of the Himalayan countries and their people – together with a passion for photography. He came to develop a great eye for candid shots of the people he met on his numerous trips around the globe and for capturing the colour and essence of the landscapes.

Steve had an engaging interest and curiosity about the people he met and he loved nothing more than to talk long into the night, with friends old or new, especially if there was a glass of red or a whisky or two to hand. Later he would lead more than 30 commercial treks and expeditions for the businesses Himalayan Kingdoms and Jagged Globe. His easy, outgoing friendliness made him a popular leader and brought him some enduring friendships with his clients. Earlier in his career, his empathy and patience were clearly expressed in his care for the small group of profoundly autistic children that he taught – and, throughout his life, in the effort, knowledge and skill he devoted to his gardens and his beloved orchids.

At the end of the 1980s Steve was living in Bristol and starting a family with his wife Angela. Our lives diverged as they moved for work opportunities and I left for Australia. Steve moved back to Bristol some years later, re-establishing himself at the heart of the climbing scene. Mid-summer parties in his tiny, beautifully tended garden in Boswell Street became an annual, not-to-be-missed tradition and overflowed with climbers, friends

and acquaintances old and new. At that time the Pembrokeshire sea cliffs had become a major focus of activity for many South West climbers – Steve included – as an explosion of new cliffs and new climbs were found and developed. Again it was the joy of exploring that beautiful coastline with great friends that had so much appeal for Steve. It was also one of the places he loved to spend time with Ben and Hazel, his two children. As Hazel came to excel in the climbing world herself, his fatherly pride was palpable.

Steve was climbing in Thailand in 2004 when the Boxing Day tsunami capsized his small boat. He survived, swimming in to shore and saving the life of his boatman in the process. The aftermath of this tragedy saw him build a strong bond with the country and its people and he spent some extended periods there. With Trevor Massiah he helped to develop new climbing areas on Lao Liang and Koh Yao Noi. His fascination with the original climbers on the islands, the Thai bird nest collectors, inspired him to make a short film about them. *Bamboo Climbers* produced by Marcus Taylor with Steve's input and inspiration, is a fine tribute to Steve and a great reminder of the person he was.

In 2003 Steve visited Australia. We climbed together in Tasmania and much enjoyed reasserting our old climbing partnership exploring the sea cliffs and sea stacks of the Tasman peninsula. Camping out at Fortescue Bay and rapping in to climb the remote and committing *Golden Pillar of Fortescue*

took us right back to our early days. Steve also spent some time at Arapiles and in the Grampians and, predictably enough, very much fitted in with the laid-back climbing community there. Some years later he decided to sell up in Bristol and move to Australia.

Steve took to rural life in Australia very naturally and quickly integrated into the local community, but a growing problem with his mental health gradually became apparent. The nature of the disease – and a certain stubbornness – made it difficult for him to acknowledge that anything was wrong and this undoubtedly played a part in his refusal to accept the help that he needed. As his psychosis developed, he cut himself off from friends and family who tried to intervene and his condition culminated in him leaving Australia abruptly to return to Thailand. Isolated there, his physical health also deteriorated. Trevor was one of the few friends that managed to maintain some contact with him. In Trevor's words: "He settled on a beautiful part of a small island Koh Yao Noi near Phuket. The house he shared with his dog Nati – whom he loved and had had flown over from Australia – backed onto the sea and was a great place to sit and watch the many stunning sunsets. Steve was fortunate enough to have a few kind locals to keep an eye out for him when he needed help. There was also some improvement in Steve's mental health in the last few years. His outlook was more positive and he also found it easier to maintain

relationships with friends. His passion for photography, growing orchids and seeing the natural beauty in the world never waned. When visiting Steve on the island in the later years I was both surprised and relieved that much of the old Steve I knew was still present. He maintained the ability to be an engaging story teller and never lost that sparkle in his eyes. He had found some peace and settled in a truly wonderful place to start his final adventure."

At the end Steve was able to re-connect with his daughter, Hazel. She was at his side when he died. Hazel shared a reflection on her father:

"My father gave me almost everything I love most – climbing, travel, adventure and the natural world. We were closer than father and daughter, we were great friends. He had a real duality to him; he was very warm, sensitive and sentimental and yet also very brave, strong, stubborn and even intimidating. Unlike the majority of people, Dad lived entirely on his own terms, he did what he wanted to do and didn't compromise much with the norms of society that often become barriers to many people's dreams. This made him a wild, interesting and loveable character who lived life to the fullest. It also cost him a lot, especially in later life. I adored him and already miss him immensely."

Steve Monks, with Trevor Massiah and Hazel Findlay

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Edwin Hammond

1938 - 2021

Ed Hammond joined the CC in 1969, but resigned his membership in 2005 when he realised that his climbing days were over. He spent his later years in Switzerland, cruelly handicapped by ill-health, but as his friend and fellow climber David Draper records below, he had some remarkable achievements on and off the hills.

Memories of Edwin Hammond

We first met at a British Mountaineering Council AGM in 1963 in London, where the BMC was based in those days. He was quite involved with the running of the BMC at that time and was Guides Secretary for some years. Over the next

few years I became a wandering outdoor instructor moving between Plas y Brenin, Outward Bound and the various Education Authority Centres. Ed and I would meet up now and then, do a route or two, have a drink or two and annoy Chris Briggs at the Pen y Gwryd.

Ed was always the fellow who got things done and it was he who found and arranged the purchase of Waenhir cottage which in 1971 became the climbing hut for the Yeti Club, of which he was a member. His property dealing became an important aspect of his later life.

In 1966, four of us set off in Ed's Landrover (plus loaded trailer), headed for the Hindu Kush. Ed had organised another Ed – this time Ed McCreery, an American living in Kabul – to act as our host and 'guide to life' in Afghanistan. We climbed in the Meer Samir area and then went over the Anjuman Pass to climb our first 20,000 footer in the Panjshir valley.

After this, Ed and Carolyn moved to North Wales so that he could get more done in this part of the country. 'Getting more done' included buying the iconic Waterloo Hotel in Betws-y-Coed. This massive 'pile', with its monstrous extension holding over 120 bedrooms, was the first thing to be seen when driving into Betws over the Waterloo Bridge. Ed planned to demolish and rebuild the hotel, but first he wanted to hold a party there. Ed was already famous for his parties, but this one was simply amazing and covered all three floors and the cellar.

“I was dressed
as Dracula and
hidden in a coffin.”

Arriving guests were told that the only way to the party was from the top landing where they duly went – the main electric had been turned off and only odd lights here and there led folk on their way through various strange rooms, climbing over beds and through wardrobes to get to the next room and onwards. When they came to the stairs, they slid down sheets of polished wood which covered the steps and landed on a huge pile of mattresses at the bottom. I have little recall of the rest of the journey they took as I was dressed as Dracula and hidden in a coffin in one of the cellars, with an ‘Open Me’ sign on top. As folk lifted the lid, I sat up and handed them a drink. From here they proceeded to the main hall for a rather drunken gathering.

With one expedition and one hotel chalked up, Ed then decided that it would be a good idea if we all did it again. So in 1971 the grandly titled ‘Anglo-Welsh Expedition’ climbed another 20,000 footer north of Jumla in Western Nepal. After this it was time for another hotel. He and Carolyn moved to the Lake District and bought the even more iconic Wasdale Head Inn, which was in a sorry state internally. The occasional parties there gave some folk the opinion that Ed

intended it to go the same way as the Waterloo. Not so, it was saved from the flames. The building is still recognisable from the old photographs, but the interior is now up to modern standards. Water always appears when you turn the tap on and the electricity is not provided by generator anymore.

It was after the expedition in 1971 that Edwin decided that I should be a Climbers’ Club member and I joined in 1972. Edwin cancelled his membership in 2005 as ill health prevented him from climbing any more, but his notorious parties for friends, reduced to a select few known as The Wasdale Thirteen, carried on for quite a few more years.

Edwin passed away at his home in Verbier on Sunday 25th July 2021.

David Draper
(known as *Strag* in the halcyon climbing years)



Wasdale Head Inn, Cumbria
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David Holt

1951 - 2022

David Holt, known to all his friends as Hughie, joined the Climbers’ Club in 1979, but I first knew him back in 1972 when he appeared on the Nottingham Climbers’ Club radar. That first weekend he got a lift to North Wales with Dave Wark and, as they were driving past the Bala junction, he piped up “Drop me here”. When asked where he wanted picking up on Sunday, he replied “Here at 8pm” and disappeared into the night with his rucksack and a crate of ale. He didn’t turn up at 8pm and was off-radar until the following Thursday night in the pub in Nottingham.

He became a prominent member of the Nottingham Climbers and everyone loved Hughie – we never told him this – though, according to Hughie, so did half the female population of the city! He didn’t do a great deal of climbing - he just loved the social scene and was more of a ‘bon viveur’. He had a great circle of friends and the Moon at Stoney Middleton, along with all its acolytes, became his second home. It was during this period that one day he announced

that he had perfected ‘Fire Eating’. Alas this did not go to plan – he walked into the Moon the following lunchtime with a very red face, no eyebrows and half a beard. It was obvious something had gone radically wrong!

He did visit the Alps (Chamonix and the Dolomites), the USA and Canada. He completed some easy classics, but his main successes were in the Yosemite Valley. He tried winter climbing with a few friends in Torridon and ended up getting benighted on Beinn Eighe. They were met by the Rescue Team whilst descending the next morning and they all ended up in the Kinlochewe Hotel Bar.

His next winter visit to Scotland ended up with Hughie and the lads in court before the Procurator Fiscal in Inverness. Typical Scottish weather had driven the lads to an all-day session in the pub in Dornoch. On leaving the pub they were confronted by the ramparts of Eilean Donan Castle. They were never ones to turn down a challenge so, somehow borrowing some ‘props’, they scaled its mighty walls waving claymores and muskets. The headlines in the Scottish Daily Express read: “Sassenachs Scale Scottish National Monument”. It cost them all a hefty fine, huge embarrassment and Hughie lost his gun license for a few years.

He visited Yosemite a few times, knocking off some classics such as *Snake Dike* and *Royal Arches* – it was on the latter that he got benighted with some CC friends, but it was far more pleasant

than his Scottish winter experience. We were all staying on Camp 4 and some French climbers who were leaving gave me a load of food. They warned me to check it out - some pork chops smelled bad and had a green tinge. So I washed and repackaged them and, along with a note ‘Enjoy supper, love Debbie’, placed them on his table. (Debbie was his Ranger girlfriend and this would have been his first real meal for weeks.)

A crowd of us gathered around the fire that night as he was cooking the chops. “Keep your hands off!” he said, and stuck his knife in the table. “Are you going to tell him?” came the whispers. “In a minute” I said, picking up his knife. Then I stabbed one of the chops, sniffed it, told him it was ‘off’ and threw it in the fire. His jaw dropped! I stabbed and sniffed the second one and threw that one in the fire too. Then I told him the score. “You bastard!” he shouted and chased me round the campsite. The next day Debbie arrived carrying a bag of food. We all get our comeuppance on occasions!

Before our visit to Lotus Flower Tower in 1978 he came to lodge with us so he could earn some cash for the trip. The plan was for Hughie to go out two weeks earlier than the rest of the team, to Colorado where he could organise someone to drive a friend’s nine-seater Chevrolet from Estes Park to Seattle to meet the UK contingent. (Hughie didn’t drive at the time.) We waited at Seattle for three days and he didn’t turn up, so we caught the bus to Vancouver.

After much phoning around, we discovered he had set off, driving by himself, a week before – he was off-radar again! A few days later I contacted Jeff Upton in Calgary and discovered that Hughie had just arrived. A week later, with three hired vehicles and a drive over the Rockies with nine pissed-off people, we arrived in Calgary many dollars down. When we all sat down to sort out the cost to date, Hughie chimed up “I got a speeding ticket in the States, can I add that in?” The unanimous reply was “You can F... off!”

Being a very accomplished target shooter he was put in charge of the Browning .303 rifle which we had to take, as there were Grizzlies in the area we intended to climb in. This made him feel proud and wanted again. But he never took kindly to being slipped the odd roll-up stuffed with marmot shit.

He was a great club man in later years and he was a regular on the Family Meets at the Count House – always to be found with a frying pan in hand organising the pancake sessions.

One of my last memories of Hughie is from Kalymnos just before the pandemic. He came out with Dave Wark and we even managed to get him up a couple of climbs, but as always it was the social scene that he fully embraced.

Great times and even though he was the butt of many pranks, he loved the attention and we loved him. He will be sadly missed!

Guy Lee

Tony Moulam

1927 - 2021

David Medcalf writes:

Tony Moulam, who has died aged 94, was an exceptional climber, and an exceptional member of the Climbers' Club. A 'proper' obituary from Tony's daughter Clare follows, but here are a few observations about Tony as a climber and a CC member. The roles he took on for the CC were many – Custodian of two of our huts, Cwm Glas Mawr and Helyg; Member of the Main Committee for several years, then Vice-President followed by the Presidency from 1969 to 1972. And, of course, he worked as a guidebook writer in Ogwen and in the Carneddau. During his CC Presidency he also became President of the British Mountaineering Council in 1970, guiding it through some fraught negotiations with the Central Council for Physical Recreation, achieving funding for the first paid employee of the BMC, Dennis Gray.

Tony was more than just a climber, he was an avid note-taker recording just about anything he was interested in, such as butterflies, wild flowers and, above all, his scrambles and rock-climbs. He learned to describe his climbs from memory, after the trauma of losing his notebook to a gust of wind, high above Ogwen. He down-climbed and managed to find it, but never took it on the hills again, relying on his phenomenal memory instead.

This fascination and skill with written detail led him naturally into guidebook writing. In the late 1940s he was working simultaneously on two guides – Black Rocks and Cratcliffe for the Stonnis Club and The Carneddau for the CC. ADM Cox reviewed the Black Rocks guide for the CC Journal and declared that it was so comprehensive and well-written that neither the guide nor its route descriptions would ever need to be modified!

Tony was also a prolific writer for the CC Journal and his articles, plus his ever-growing list of first ascents, probably make his name the most common to occur in the Journals – over 440 entries over 50 years! His articles for the CC and the Oread Club are being brought together in a compilation by his daughter Clare, but it's worth digging into the CC Journals to seek them out. One of these articles titled 'What's in a Name?' gives an insight into the wit and imagination of new-routers in the middle of the last century. However, the name that he gave to his initial first ascent is purely descriptive – it is *Green Crack* at Black Rocks, climbed in 1945 (just six months after he started climbing).

In 1944 Tony volunteered for the army and graduated from his Officer Cadet Training Unit as the 'second best' cadet. His CO told him that he missed out on the top spot because his uniform was always scruffy! (In later life he made a point of dressing smartly!) After being posted to Catterick he formed a climbing club there and managed to

persuade the commanding officer that, as climbing was a dangerous sport, it was good training for soldiers to take part in – he was allocated a lorry and a driver to take the Catterick Camp climbers wherever they chose to climb!

After leaving the army he found that the government would pay for him to study Electrical Engineering at Manchester University where his roommate was Ian McNaught-Davis. Tony reckoned that they spent more time climbing than studying, but both managed to graduate and have successful careers. He said that his focus on North Wales climbing was just because the roads from Manchester were better than the ones up to the Lake District.

Tony leaves a great legacy to climbers, through his writing, his guidebook work and, above all, his pioneering of very many classic climbs. We will all have climbed an AJJ Moulam route!

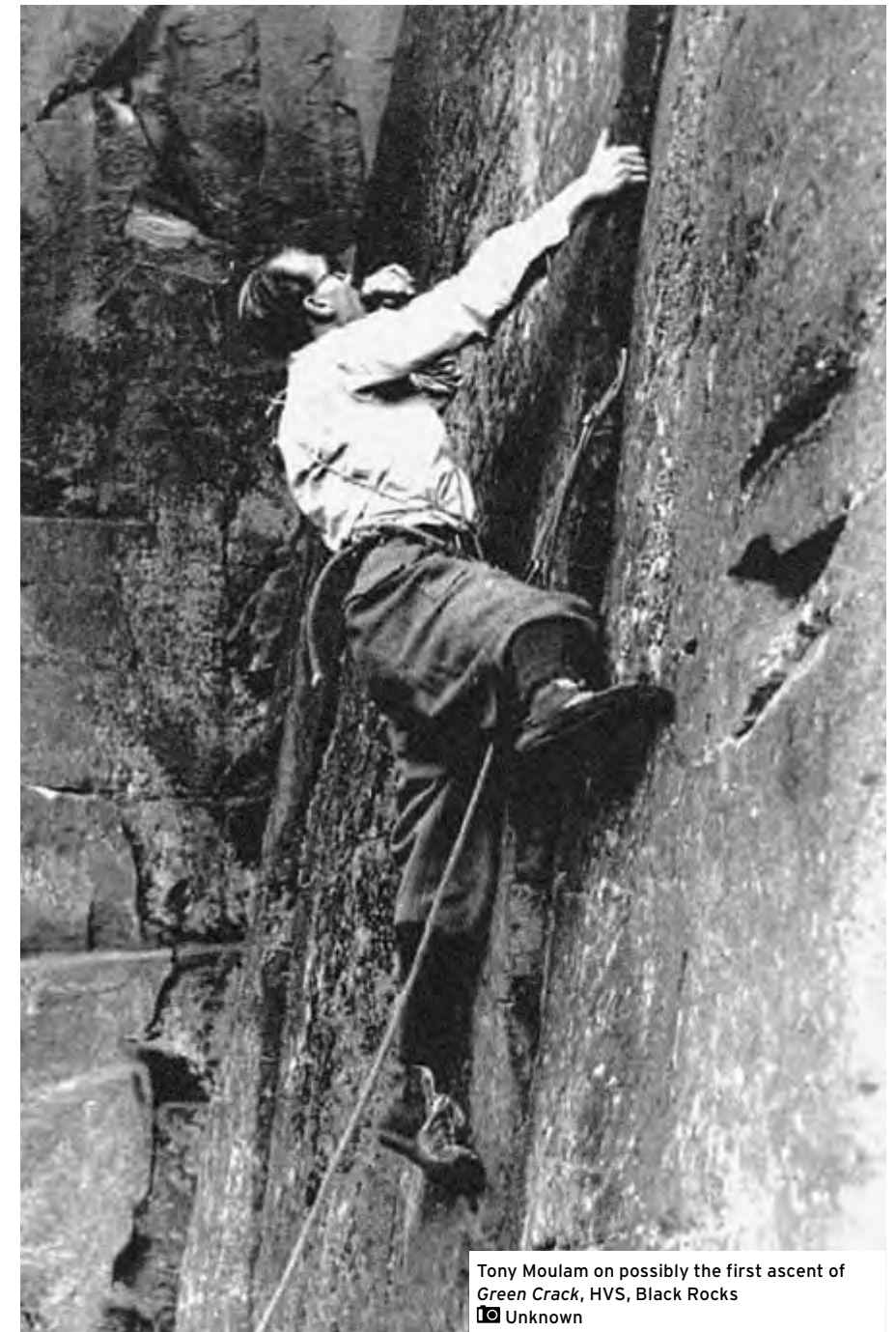
Clare Westrop writes:

Anthony Moulam, my father, was born in Derby in 1927. As a solitary child, he spent much of his adolescence cycling to the Peak District on the Claud Butler racing bike that his parents had bought him for his 12th birthday. His parents suggested that he make lists of the flowers and birds he saw to keep his mind occupied, but he soon realised that scrambling up gritstone boulders was more exciting. He would spend his evenings writing notes on the routes he had climbed.

In the library of the Bemrose School in Derby, he would sit reading Colin Kirkus's book *Let's Go Climbing!* instead of revising and this encouraged him even more to seek out scrambling when he explored on his bike. One trip took him to Black Rocks where he found a 'real climber', Peter Harding. This was the start of an amazing partnership, with Tony soon becoming an equal to Peter as they found new crags and new routes. And new techniques, as Harding amazed Moulam when he levered himself up a rock face simply by jamming his hands into cracks. Tony recalled introducing a young Joe Brown to this developing gritstone art, along with Chris Bonington, who remembers Tony as "hugely important" in inspiring his passion for climbing.

Demobbed in 1948, Moulam published his first climbing guidebook, to the Black Rocks in the Peak District, with Harding the following year. In the spring of 1949, he was hitchhiking to Snowdonia to go climbing with Harding when he was injured by a lorry. The boredom of his three months at the orthopaedic hospital in Oswestry was relieved when Harding sneaked into his ward and convinced him to go for a stiff-legged climb up Tryfan, in the Ogwen valley. "This escapade was soured when we got back to hospital," Tony recalled. "I had to spend some time begging a dragon of a sister to find and make up a bed for me."

It was, perhaps, his greatest regret that in the same year he turned down



Tony Moulam on possibly the first ascent of *Green Crack*, HVS, Black Rocks
📷 Unknown

the chance to join an expedition to Cho Oyu, the sixth-highest mountain in the world. Had he proved himself on that expedition, the Joint Himalayan Committee might well have invited him to join its Everest expedition the following year.

In 1954 he met Pauline Chapman in a pub in Keswick. They went climbing together and married two years later. They separated in 1984, though never divorced. The following year, having parked on double yellow lines, he managed to charm the traffic warden not only into not giving him a ticket, but also going for a drink with him; such was the beginning of his relationship with Annie Price that would last until her death in 2017.

Tony climbed in the Alps, Scandinavia, in Grand Teton National Park and, in 1976, ascended Kilimanjaro. Although in later life his health no longer allowed him to scale crags, he remained a regular hiker and kept extensive notes of his expeditions. He made his last entry in his walking diary in 2006. He would not talk much about his mountaineering achievements unless asked about them, but when he was asked, his eyes would light up.



Jon Pearson

1970 - 2020

Fifty is no age, is it? Jon's funeral was affected by the Covid restrictions, but it was lovely to see his immediate family and close friends in attendance. Jon was as far from attention-seeking as one could get, so a subdued affair was perhaps apt. We promised ourselves a more 'elaborate' event, in the hills and involving alcohol, as soon as possible.

Jon was a lifelong lover of the uplands, from his childhood hillwalking and climbing trips with his family to his more recent fell running and bouldering exploits in his adopted Yorkshire. Outdoors is where he loved to be, often alone or with close friends, and ideally somewhere peaceful or grand. Trips to the Lake District and the Highlands were frequent, and he had occasional adventures further afield (Himalayas, North America, Europe), all usually resulting in stunning photographs – one of his great interests.

He was an accomplished and modest climber with many bold classic and hard climbs throughout the UK to his name. He was usually accompanied by one or more of his close friends from Yorkshire or from university (he had a PhD in Chemistry from Bristol University). Put him on something thin and technical and he was away!

Jon established the yorkshiregrit.com website which documented Yorkshire's burgeoning bouldering scene in the 2000s. The site (sadly no longer active)



is remembered fondly by many and is considered something of a classic of the times. Jon was instrumental in developing, recording and repeating problems throughout Yorkshire and will be remembered for his creation of numerous modern classic problems and, of course, his website.

His modesty, considerable intellect, selflessness, wicked sense of humour, varied interests outside climbing (including classical music, photography, astronomy, geology and technology) made him easy company and an irreplaceable friend to many.

Mike Gray



David Roberts

1937 - 2021

David was born in Shipley and lived there until he moved to the Newcastle area in the mid-sixties. He was introduced to climbing during National Service in the army, and on his return to Shipley he met with Yorkshire climbers and continued climbing on the local gritstone outcrops.

David had something of a military bearing, was confident, well spoken, and smartly dressed, unlike most climbers. He had a newish car at that time and drove at speed on tortuous roads, like so many climbers of that era.

I first met him in 1962 when he was already a very competent climber. We met at weekends in Fell and Rock Club huts, together with other Yorkshire climbers, including Allan Austin, Ian Clough and Geoff Grandison, and we climbed regularly together for a num-

ber of years. David was a very reliable second on the hardest climbs, but was also a determined and safe leader, doing serious routes such as *Hell's Groove* on Scafell. During this time a small group of us, including David, started regular visits to Scotland for the Whitsuntide holidays. We selected different areas each year and climbed many of the big, hard routes on Ben Nevis, in Glencoe, on Skye and at Carnmore. I do not know if he had climbed any major alpine routes, but we did climb two big rock routes together, the *Laliderwand* in the Karwendal range and on the *Schüsselkar-spitze* in the Wetterstein Mountains.

David was always determined to go out climbing, whatever the conditions, and would drag friends out when they would rather have stayed by the fire! He became known to us as the 'Bergführer', but you could only admire his enthusiasm. He particularly liked to climb big mountain routes and was disdainful of valley crags that he thought were only for bad weather.

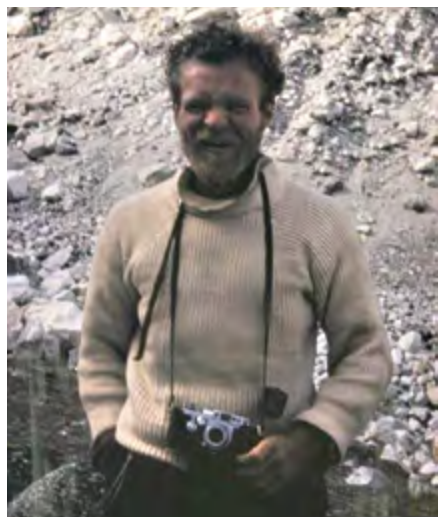
When he moved to the north east and married Cynthia, he climbed

increasingly with her, and later as a family with son Stephen, on summer holidays in the Alps and more locally. He encouraged his son into climbing, with high expectations and little sympathy, and Stephen became a top-class climber. Stephen summarises his memories of David; "Determined, stubborn, sarcastic, blunt, but you knew where you stood with him, and he earned great respect. He was loyal and kind to the friends he had made over many years, especially in the north east. He climbed extensively in Northumberland and enjoyed winter skiing holidays with Cynthia, often with groups of fellow CC members.

David suffered with diabetes but he managed it, even when climbing, by eating sweet food when he felt he needed to balance the insulin. When the disease advanced he had to give up climbing and took up mountain biking with many of his friends, finally using his motor scooter to join them in the pub."

David Miller





Dr. James Howard Swallow

1928 - 2023

Jim Swallow was one of the Climbers' Club's longest serving members. He had a distinguished medical career and an equally distinguished mountaineering career. The tribute below is compiled by his three children.

James 'Jim' Swallow was born in Yorkshire in 1928. He went up to Queen's College, Cambridge in 1946 where he achieved first-class honours in Medicine. He then went to The Royal London Hospital for his clinical medicine studies. After a period as a post-graduate fellow in Physiology at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, he was appointed as a Consultant Physician with a specialist interest in Gastroenterology in Chelmsford in 1965. There he set up one of the

country's first Medical Academic Units in the UK. He was an excellent clinician, extremely perceptive and with a wide experience of other sub-specialties. He was a brilliant teacher with an amazing memory; doctors who trained with him remember him fondly. He retired in 1990 and went back in to education as a student. He passed his German O and A Level GCEs at Braintree College then joined the Open University from which he graduated with a Mathematics degree at the age of 77!

He started climbing rocks in Ilkley at the age of eight and went on to join the Cambridge University Mountaineering Club. He obviously had a real talent – we have a letter from someone he once climbed with who described watching him “drift like smoke up some impossible grease-ridden slot”. He was a regular at Harrison's Rocks in Kent, and he also climbed in Wales, the Alps, the US and most significantly the Himalayas.

In 1961 he was part of the first successful ascent of Nuptse. At nearly 26,000 feet (7,800 metres), it was one of the highest unclimbed mountains at the time. The two previous attempts had ended in tragedy, so it was a very serious undertaking. He was one of the party to make it to the top, summiting with Chris Bonington and a Sherpa.

To our great regret he was always reluctant to tell even us about the climb, modest man that he was, but at the time it was literally front-page news. We have now found his expedition diaries

and his original expedition kit bag marked 'Dr Sahib JH Swallow'. We also found his letters home to our mother (whom he was to marry five years later) and a collection of press articles from that time. One of these, from the front page of the Daily Telegraph, included a photo of him extracting a Sherpa's tooth. We did not know most of these records existed so we will enjoy reading all about his remarkable exploits.

He carried on climbing and in 1963 had his one climbing accident whilst climbing Les Petites Jorasses near Chamonix., which he told us about when we were skiing the Vallée Blanche together and he pointed it out. He was airlifted to hospital; the accident was reported in The Guardian, which was the first that our mother and his family had heard about it. We found a letter from the British Consulate General in Lyon to a friend which described his injuries. The Consulate General wrote that Jim had 'fractures of the vertebrae, forearm, skull and right thumb; but his life is not in danger'. Very reassuring! However, he was not one to like a fuss being made of him; he sent a short telegram to his mother which said 'had a small fall but all ok; on my way home now'. He discharged himself from hospital and travelled back to England by train, clearly in no fit state to do so. He was made of tough gritty stuff.

In 1964 he went off to spend fifteen months of research in the US. He chose the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota not only because it was the most prestigious medical centre in the

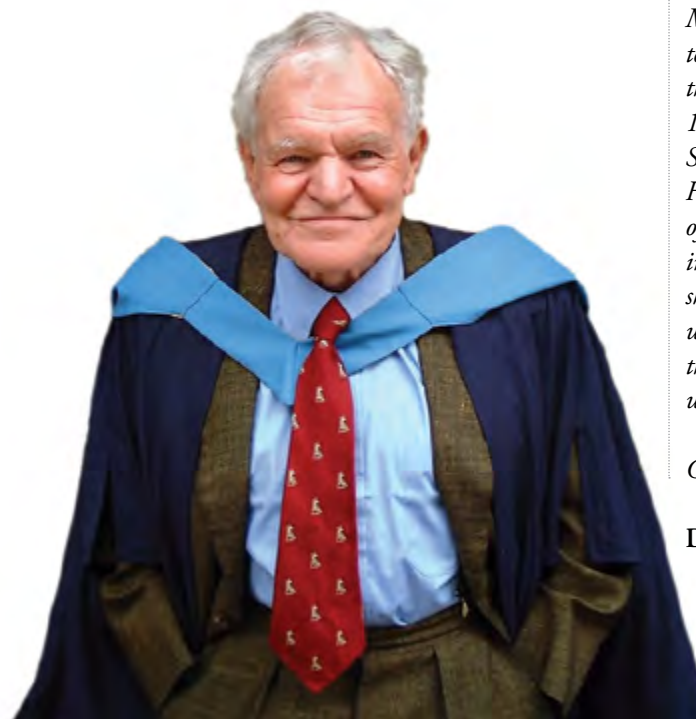
world, but because it was close to some excellent climbing areas. From there he climbed in the Grand Teton, Yosemite and Monument Valley National Parks.

He skied until the age of 83. He was a good rugby and squash player and he also played tennis, water-skied and windsurfed.

He was an avid cataloguer, a student of the stock market, a Saab enthusiast, a pianist, a scientist, an astronomer, a gardener and a juggler. He was a true polymath.

He died at home in June 2023 at the age of 95. He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Diana and his three children Richard, Rosie, and Elisabeth. He had seven grandchildren.

Richard Swallow, Rosie Swallow, Libby King



Roger Withers

1943 - 2022

David Medcalf writes:

Many members will have benefited in some way from the work that Roger Withers has done for the Club during his 52 years of membership. He was a Main Committee member from 1979 to 1983 and followed this by becoming the Membership Secretary through the 1980s. He was Custodian of Grange Old School from 2010 until his death in 2022. He also took on the role of Hut Finance officer – a 'behind the scenes' role which involves processing the hut registration sheets, after first deciphering the many ways in which members managed to get things wrong. A tough and unsung role which, being Roger, he just got on with.

The Club has planted a tree at the Grange Hut in Roger's memory.

Dave Jones, Dave Atchison and Dick Turnbull pay tribute to his climbing and professional life.

Dave Jones writes:

I've been racking my brain to think of the first time I met Roger. Things are a bit sketchy here, but it must have been in the late eighties when I was tasked with the setting up the Outside shop in Hathersage. Roger was working at Wild Country at that time.

He had worked with leading brands such as MacInnes-Peck and at Wild Country (manufacturers of Friends and Rocks) he was also involved with Simond (who made Barracuda and Chacal ice axes), and Boreal (who imported Firé rock boots). All these brands were at the forefront of rock climbing and mountaineering development.

He was very approachable and helpful to all which shines through in the comments in his Book of Condolences. His knowledge was second to none and his string of contacts was admirable. On trips abroad he was guaranteed to bump into someone he knew. Roger loved these encounters. He was also very fond of his female partners and loved to impress. On one occasion on a weekend climbing and camping trip to Creag an Dubh Loch he managed to carefully squirrel away two wine glasses and a full bottle of wine, pulling them out from the bottom of his rucksack at the appropriate moment with great affect. I accused him of being a 'bloody smoothie'. Roger was certainly a bit of a dark horse and didn't give much away. On the Tuesday night gatherings, when the Altrincham All Stars were at their

most active, he used to hover around at the back of the pack until everyone had failed or had a problem with a certain climb, then would step forward to ‘send it’ in his own steady and careful style. *Calvary* on Stanage being a fine example of this approach. This filtered through to later years when we had regular visits to the Kendal Wall. By this time we had morphed into all-weather climbers as in ‘whatever the weather, we were down at the wall’ – rain or shine! Whilst on the wall he earned the nickname Captain Cling-on; this is what he did, and it was so annoying at times, I can tell you.

As mentioned he enjoyed the company of his female partners, and on one occasion I made a deal with him that he should visit his old friends in Scotland and that he could borrow my van to sleep in if need be. All he

had to do was to give me a lift to Oban where I would take my bike over to the Outer Hebrides to cycle the Hebridean Way. He could carry on visiting his friends on the mainland, whilst I would ride at a decent pace to meet him in Ullapool a week later. Bags packed, we waited for a weather window. This arrived in early June, so off we went, but in his car as he preferred to drive his Audi. When we arrived at Oban, we went our separate ways as planned. After three days or so, I thought I would give him a phone call to see how he was getting on with his trip. “Hi Roger, how are you doing? Have you seen many old friends?” to which he replied “Errr, I’m in the Yorkshire Dales – Ronnie phoned me up suggesting I spend a few days with her!” He would have done anything for a lady!

Nonetheless, he agreed to meet me at Uig, if he could find it. “Where is Uig?” Now Roger was well travelled and had visited the likes of Australia, Mexico, United States, Kalymnos, Verdon, Croatia and Spain, yet he didn’t know where Uig was on Skye!

The following year, 2022, we had a great trip together to Harris and Lewis, both of these places were a ‘first’ for Roger. The weather was great again and I completed the ride I had started in 2021. We had taken along the climbing gear and a spare MTB for Roger. This trip was laid back and unstressed, something we had become accustomed to as we got a bit older.

Miss you mate, see you on the other side.

Dave Atchison writes:

I first met Roger back in the early sixties when he was with the Leicester Club and we climbed together extensively over the ten year period into the seventies. Our main venues were Wales, the Lakes and the Peak and we climbed generally at HVS with the odd foray into E routes. *Tremolite*, *MPP*, and *Plexus* (where we first met Smiler) were memorable routes.

During that time he worked for a while with Mark Vallance at Wild Country. On one occasion, knowing I was an engineer, he presented me with a prototype axe head (actually a MacInnes Terrordactyl) asking me to do a stress analysis of the fixings.

Roger was neat and tidy to a fault both in his climbing and manner. He was strong and thoughtful and quite cool in dealing with the technical stuff when leading, moreover he insisted on being ethically correct with aid. I can recall having an early attempt at *Pincushion* at Tremadog. I had already clipped a protection peg below the overlap and suggested putting in another above, further up on the slab. Roger said “No”, so we retreated.

One sunny day on Stanage we were with Martin Harris and Robin Prager. I had just led *Cave Innominate* and brought the others up, then Martin stumbled badly in the descent gully. He called for assistance as he was in some pain. Roger immediately sprang into action to fetch help. However, almost at the same time, just along the

way we met Al Harris who was also seeking help. This was for Al Rouse who had dislocated his shoulder trying *Flying Buttress Direct*. Roger brought all the complexity together and we transported the patients to A and E in Sheffield General Hospital. Al got his shoulder put back in place and Martin had treatment for a couple of broken ribs. Excitement indeed.

In the Alps we visited Andermatt and did a classic Salbitschijen ridge. We went on to the Vicosoprano to do the *Bügeleisen* and La Bérarde a couple of times. Later we climbed the Aiguille Dibona and followed this with the *Traverse of the Meije* and the Grand Pic by the *Direct Route*. We had some great times together enjoying our sport.

He contributed so much and I miss him a lot.

Dick Turnbull writes:

I worked with Roger in the mid-1980s at Wild Country after I was asked by Mark Vallance to move from London to Tideswell to be Wild Country’s sales manager. Wild Country was at that time the most exciting and dynamic climbing gear company in Europe, only rivalled by Chouinard Equipment over in America. Roger was Wild Country’s ‘admin lynchpin’ and as such he was right in the crossfire of the various competing forces trying to match production to sales, product development to real market requirements etc. Roger

was a calming and rational lacuna in the over-enthusiastic atmosphere that pervaded the whole place!

Roger was calm – sometimes too calm! As others have written, he was always understated, methodical and neat. At work he was often bent over his desk handwriting notes, using his ruler to keep everything in a straight line. At Wild Country he generally kept his head down but was always a quiet presence with whom one could rationally discuss all of the projects whirling around the place. He was the one with the most experience both technically and of the market in general and, although he was never afraid to voice his interesting thoughts and concerns about product design and marketing, he was always measured in his comments!

Roger had previously worked in making technical climbing gear with MacInnes-Peck and was involved in the production of the iconic Terrordactyl ice axes (Terrors as they were better known). I remember him showing me a pair of Terrors that he had had made at Peck with slightly longer reversed curve picks, thus predating the advent of Simond’s Chacal! His experience suited him to the developmental environment at Wild Country as it produced and distributed the four most significant, game-changing climbing equipment products of the last century: Friends, Rocks, Boreal Firé rockboots and Simond Chacal and Barracuda ice tools. His meticulous character could be frustrating though, as when the factory occasionally produced cosmetically-

damaged seconds-quality Friends; he wanted them to be reworked so he could put them through to be sold on at full price to the trade whilst I wanted them as discounted seconds to be sold to the nascent Outside shop!

As a climber he was very like his work persona; careful, neat and very technical. I only climbed on grit with him and I was always a bit miffed that he had led the bold and technical E4 *Calvary* on Stanage – a route I had tried but had failed at the first mantelshelf. He was not convinced when I told him that it was my old broken wrist damage that stopped me!

I was surprised when Roger went up to Keswick to work in retail at Needle Sports as I never thought of his character as suited to the rough and tumble of life on the shop floor, but he managed very well and slotted into becoming a valuable and well-liked member of the Lakes climbing community.

I remember Roger with affection. He was very welcoming when I arrived from ‘down south’ at Wild Country and we worked well together. He was quiet and calm but no pushover and, as I have said, an enviably good rock climber!

Game-changers: MacInnes-Peck Terrordactyl axes and Boreal Firé rockboots



Creative Commons



Carrot Ridge, D, Benncorr, Eire
 William Britton

BOOK REVIEWS

Like the previous issue of the CCJ (2019-20) a selection of the climbing and mountaineering narratives and guidebooks that have been made available in the UK has been listed. With three years of publishing to consider only short descriptions have been added rather than longer critical reviews. My apologies to any authors of books that have been missed. Their exclusion reflects my ignorance and not their readability or merit. Congratulations to the following members of the Climbers' Club and their co-writers who have continued the club's rich heritage of authoring books and CC guidebooks: Emma Alsford, Paul Donnithorne, Tim Hoddy, Graham Hoey, Pete Johnson, Mark Kembball, Kevin Roet, Alan Rosier, Don Sargeant, Terry Taylor, Roy Thomas, Matt Woodfield, Dave Wynne-Jones.

Chris Harle

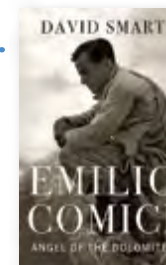


Robert Lee Charles

NARRATIVES

**Emilio Comici:
 Angel of the Dolomites**

David Smart
*Rocky Mountain Books
 (Canada) 2020*



Biography of the pre-eminent Italian climber in the Eastern Alps from 1925 to his death in 1940. The fact that it won the Boardman Tasker Prize, and the Banff Climbing Literature Award in 2021 should be recommendation enough.

**The Great Sea
 Cliffs of Scotland**

Guy Robertson
Scottish Mountaineering Press (UK) 2020



An anthology of climbing adventures from a renowned list of contributors including Dave MacLeod, Grant Farquhar, Simon Nadin, Steve McClure, Karin Mago, Mick Fowler, Simon Richardson and many others. The book is lavishly illustrated by images that capture the drama and scale of these magnificent seascapes.

**Through Dangerous
 Doors: A Life at Risk**

Robert Charles Lee
WiDo Publishing (USA) 2021

Robert Charles Lee was a risk scientist, who now likes to test his own limits, in life, love and in the mountains.

A Feeling for Rock
 Sarah-Jane Dobner
Dob, Dob, Dob (UK) 2021

A collection of poetry, cartoons, photographs, essays and interviews from a Bristol-based climber. Winner of the Banff Climbing Literature Award 2021.



**Imaginary Peaks:
 The Riesenstein Hoax and Other Mountain Dreams**

Katie Ives
Mountaineers Books (USA) 2021



The former editor of Alpinist magazine charts the cartographical mystery of the 'Riesenstein Hoax' within the larger context of climbing history and the seemingly endless quest for newly discovered peaks and claims of first ascents.

**How Hard
 Can It Be?**

Nick Wharton
Self-published (UK) 2021

A collection of stories and insights from over 40 years of climbing escapades from one of the UK's boldest climbers who also happens to be a Health and Safety consultant.



**Structured Chaos:
The Unusual Life of
a Climber**

Vic Saunders
Vertebrate (UK) 2021



A memoir from a former President of the Alpine Club, a mountain guide who has summited Everest on five occasions, and a previous winner of the Boardman Tasker Prize in 1990 with *Elusive Summits*.

**Life Lived Wild:
Adventures at the
Edge of the Map**

Rick Ridgeway
Patagonia (USA) 2021



Autobiography of an American outdoor adventurer, writer and advocate for sustainability and conservation initiatives. In 1978 with three companions, he was the first American to summit K2.

**The Mountain Path:
A Climber's Journey
through Life and
Death**

Paul Pritchard
Vertebrate (UK) 2021



Memoir from a hemiplegic adventurer, a two-time winner of the Boardman Tasker Prize with *Deep Play* (1997) and *The Totem Pole* (1999).

**Hamish MacInnes:
The Fox of Glencoe**

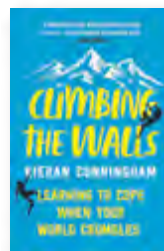
Deziree Wilson (ed.)
Scottish Mountaineering Press (UK) 2021



A collection of memoirs from MacInnes (1930-2020), a pioneer of mountain safety and rescue, an inventor of climbing equipment, and a climber of many first ascents and other mountaineering achievements.

**Climbing the Walls:
Learning to Cope
when Your World
Crumbles**

Kieran Cunningham
Simon & Schuster (UK) 2022



A memoir about mental health and the power of nature and exercise. Cunningham is a Scottish journalist and climber who lived in Italy during the global pandemic.

**Time on Rock: a
Climber's Route into
the Mountains**

Anna Fleming
Canongate (UK) 2022



A journey of self-discovery from an Edinburgh-based climber and writer who is learning the craft of traditional rock climbing, together with a developing appreciation of the natural world.

**BOARDMAN TASKER PRIZE
JOINT WINNERS 2022**

**A Line Above the Sky:
A Story of Mountains
and Motherhood**

Helen Mort
Ebury Press (UK) 2022



A Sheffield-based author and presenter fuses memoir and nature writing that asks why humans are drawn to danger and how we can find freedom in pushing our limits.

**High Risk: Climbing
to Extinction**

Brian Hall
Sandstone Press (UK) 2022



The outrageous adventures of Hall's climbing friends, who risked and too often lost, their lives to stand on some of the world's highest peaks during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Hall is a mountain guide and a film safety and logistics expert in extreme locations.

**Unraveled: A Climber's Journey
through Darkness and Back**

Katie Brown
The Mountaineers (USA) 2022

Memoir of an American climber – a competition phenomenon in the '90s who disappeared from the scene in her late 20s. This book answers the question, "What happened to Katie Brown?"

**Born to Climb:
From Rock Climbing
Pioneers to Olympic
Athletes**

Zofia Reyech
Vertebrate (UK) 2022



A cultural history of rock and competition climbing focussing on some of the pivotal moments and outstanding individuals, interwoven with her own climbing journey. Reyech is a Polish-born climber and journalist based in Fontainebleau where she is the founder and director of the Women's Bouldering Festival.

**Valley of Giants:
Stories from Women
at the Heart of
Yosemite Climbing**

Lauren DeLaunay
Miller (ed.)
Mountaineers Books (USA) 2022



An anthology with almost 40 female contributors, from Bea Vogel who forged her own pitons to Molly Higgins who participated in the first all-female ascent of *The Nose* on El Capitan, plus Liz Robbins, Lynn Hill, Steph Davis, Beth Rodden, and many others.

Beth Rodden



Towards The Ogre

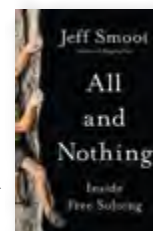
Clive Rowlands
self-published / McRay Press (UK) 2022



Mountaineering memoir from a Yorkshireman known for the rescue of Doug Scott and Chris Bonington following an accident on their descent of *The Ogre* in 1977.

**All and Nothing:
Inside Free Soloing**

Jeff Smoot
Mountaineers Books (USA) 2022



The history and psychology of free soloing with a fascinating cast of characters from across different cultures and generations.

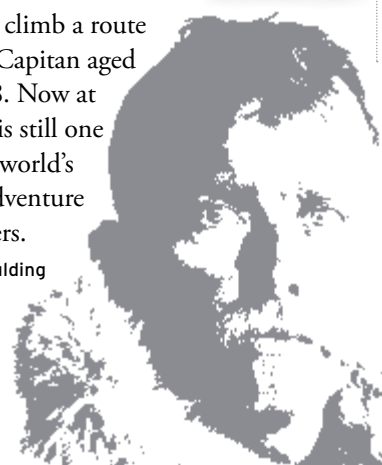
Closer to the Edge

Leo Houlding
Headline (UK) 2022



Autobiography from a climbing prodigy who became the first Brit to free climb a route on El Capitan aged just 18. Now at 43 he is still one of the world's best adventure climbers.

Leo Houlding



**Tom Patey:
One Man's Legacy**

Mike Dixon
Scottish Mountaineering Press (UK) 2022



Biography of a renowned Scottish climber, doctor and writer who died in an abseiling accident aged just 38. He made many notable first ascents including a winter traverse of the Cuillin Ridge, the Old Man of Hoy, and the Muztagh Tower and Rakaposhi in the Karakoram.

**Sherpa: Stories of Life
and Death from the
Forgotten Guardians
of Everest**

Pradeep Bashyal and
Anlit Babu Adhikari
Cassell (UK) 2022



The story of how Sherpas have become key players in the mountaineering world by a BBC journalist and a science researcher, both based in Kathmandu.

British Mountaineers

Faye Rhiannon Latham
Little Peak Press (UK) 2022



A unique re-working of F.S. Smythe's original 1942 work, *British Mountaineers*, using the processes of erasure, curation, and collage to create a reframed text in a contemporary form.

More: Life on the Edge of Adventure and Motherhood

Majka Burhardt
Simon and Schuster (USA) 2023



Memoir from American rock and ice climber, exploring the emotional, career, marital and self-identity rollercoaster following the birth of twins.

The Hidden Fires: A Cairngorms Journey with Nan Shepherd

Merryn Glover
Polygon (UK) 2023



Intertwining her own personal experiences of the mountains with Shepherd’s own observations, this book is an ode to a unique landscape. Glover was born and raised in Nepal, India and Pakistan and now lives in the Scottish Highlands.

Mountain Guru: The Life of Doug Scott

Catherine Moorehead
Birlinn (UK) 2023



Biography of Doug Scott (1941-2020), the first Englishman to climb Everest, and a prolific Himalayan expeditioner who dedicated his later years to helping the people of Nepal.

UK GUIDEBOOKS

Snow & Ice: Winter Mountaineering Routes of Great Britain

Lina Arthur
The Oxford Alpine Club 2021



100 of the best routes from Grade I to Grade IV, the ultimate tick-list for the aspiring winter climber.

Ben Nevis and Glen Coe Winter Climbs: Selected snow, ice and mixed routes

Mike Pescod
Cicerone, 8th edition 2022



Grade I introductory ascents to extreme test pieces, including the hardest traditional winter climb in the world. Plus, advice to help you select an appropriate route for the prevailing conditions.



The award-winning **Scottish Mountaineering Press** works in partnership with the **Scottish Mountaineering Club** to publish hillwalking, scrambling and climbing guidebooks.

Scottish Rock Climbs

Kevin Howett
SMC Wired 2022



Showcasing 1,700 of the best trad and sport routes across Scotland.

Scottish Winter Climbs West

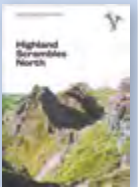
Neil Adams
Scottish Mountaineering Club 2022



1,300 snow and ice routes across western Scotland including the Southern Uplands, Arrochar, Bridge of Orchy, Glen Coe, Glen Etive, Glen Appin, Lochaber, Ben Nevis, Ardgour, Glenfinnan, Knoydart, Glen Shiel, Arran, Mull and Rum.

Highland Scrambles North

Iain Thow
SMC 2022



Some of the best scrambles and easy rock climbs in the NW Highlands, the Outer Hebrides and Rum. With 200 routes stretching from Sutherland to Glenfinnan and from Uist to Caithness.

Lowland Outcrops

Topher Dagg
SMC, 2nd edition 2023



From Ayrshire, into the Central Belt and up to the Stirlingshire hills, the Lowland regions of Scotland are within easy travel distance of its two main cities. With over 1,900 trad, sport, and bouldering routes, from esoteric gems to world-classics.

Glasgow Bouldering

J.S. Watson
Stone Country Press 2022



Including the classic collection of problems at Dumbarton Rock and featuring sandstone venues such as Craigmaddie, the outdoor boulder park at Cuningar, and new venues such as Cochno, Croy, and Craigton.

Moorland Grit: New routes and bouldering in the North-West Peak District

Paul Durkin
Vertebrate 2021



Featuring 340 routes on lost and hidden crags often overlooked around Glossop and the north-west Peak, from Mod to E3, plus 425 boulder problems.

Peak District Gritstone: Over 2,000 Classic Trad Routes on Eastern, Western and Moorland Grit

Graham Hoey
Vertebrate 2021



A comprehensive guide to trad gritstone climbing covering the whole of the national park. A worthy challenger to Rockfax hegemony.

Sport Climbing in England and Wales Vol. 1 North

Steve Broadbent
The Oxford Alpine Club 2022



Includes more than 4,700 sport routes (predominantly aimed at those climbing from F5 to F7b) on 89 crags in the north of England and Wales, including Cumbria, Lancashire, North Yorkshire, the esoteric Filey sea cliffs, Peak District, Cheshire, Clwyd limestone, A55 and North Wales coast, as well as Llanberis slate.

Eastern Grit

Chris Craggs & Alan James
Rockfax, 4th edition 2022



Covering the eastern gritstone edges of the Peak District, this has been a best-selling guidebook since it was first published in 2001.

Grit Blocs: 100 of the Finest Boulder Problems on Pennine Gritstone

Dave Parry
Vertebrate 2022



A selection of the very best boulder problems on the outcrops, edges and quarries of the Peak District, Yorkshire, Lancashire, and north-east England.

Gritstone Circuiteering

Saul Taylor
Future Primitive 2022



10 circuits within the Peak District combining speed, strength and map reading skills. Routes include circuits around Burbage, Chatsworth, Stanage, Cratcliffe, Crowden, Kinder Scout, The Roaches, the Nine Edges, and the 216-mile multiday ‘Peak 170’.

Adventures for Kids (in the Peak District)

Saul and Henry Taylor
Future Primitive 2023



10 walks combined with some easy climbing and nature watching. Go unicorn spotting at The Roaches, swim with jellyfish at Cratcliffe, bury treasure at Birchen Edge or blast off into space over Derwent Edge!

Peak Bouldering

Alan James & Adrian Berry
Rockax, 3rd edition 2023



A massive 672 pages of a completely re-worked and extended edition with all the new developments in the Peak District.

Northern Rock
Wired Guides /Yorkshire Mountaineering Club, Northumbrian Mountaineering Club, Red Rose Definitives and the Cleveland Mountaineering Club 2022



The best trad and sport climbing and bouldering in Yorkshire, Northumberland, Lancashire, and the North York Moors, with a selection of over 3,500 climbs and problems.

Scrambles in the Lake District: North
 John Fleetwood
Cicerone 2021



100 routes (from scrambling grade 1 to climbing grade V Diff) in the north of the Lake District, covering Wasdale, Ennerdale, Buttermere, Borrowdale, Blencathra and Thirlmere.

Scrambles in the Lake District: South
 John Fleetwood
Cicerone 2021



106 routes in the south of the Lake District, covering Langdale, Conistone, Eskdale, Patterdale and High Street.



Duddon & Wrynose
 Justin Shiels & John Holden
Fell & Rock C.C. 2021

Over 1,300 routes in the Duddon Valley (including Wallowbarrow Crag) and the popular crags accessed from Wrynose Pass, some of which were previously covered in the 2013 Langdale guide.

Dow & Coppermines
 Justin Shiels & John Holden
Fell & Rock C.C. 2023

Comprehensive coverage of all the routes on Dow, neighbouring Blind Tarn Crag and, for the first time, five adjacent outcrops, plus a selection of twenty-one crags in the Coppermines valley.

Dorset

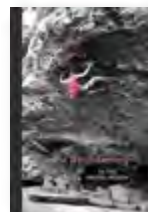
Mark Glaister & Pete Oxley
Rockfax, 5th edition, 2021



Trad, sport and new developments at Portland, Swanage, and Lulworth

Esoteric Bouldering: In the Bristol Region

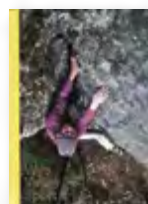
Mark Davies
Great Western Rock 2021



Bouldering within an hour's drive of Bristol city centre, including Bristol itself, the 'Costa del Severn', the Mendips, Wye Valley, Forest of Dean, and the Cotswolds.

Wye Valley Sport

Gordon Jenkin & Mark Davies
Great Western Rock, 3rd edition, 2021



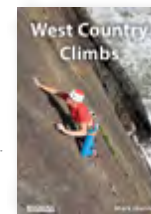
A comprehensive guide to over 400 climbs (over half of which are graded F2+ to F6b) in the Lower Wye Valley.

Culm & Baggy *
 Mark Kemball
Climbers' Club 2022



The first definitive climbing guide to the north Cornwall and Devon coast for nearly 20 years. Includes Baggy Point, Blackchurch, Hartland Point & Quay, Marsland, Lower Sharpnose Point and Bude areas.

West Country Climbs
 Mark Glaister
Rockfax, 2nd edition 2022



A selective guide featuring over 1,000 routes spanning the full spectrum of climbing styles and grades, covering the Wye Valley, Avon and Somerset, North Devon, the Culm & Atlantic coast, inland Cornwall, West Penwith, The Lizard, inland Devon, and Torbay.

Gower Rock: Selected Rock Climbs
 Stuart Llewellyn and Matt Woodfield
Pesda Press, 2nd edition 2020



A fully revised and updated edition with 14 new crags and 208 new (mostly sport) routes on the peninsular west of Swansea.

Snowdonia: Mountain Walks and Scrambles
 Mark Reeves
Rockfax 2020



All the best mountain walks and scrambles in and around the Snowdonia area, from long link-ups like the Snowdon Horseshoe, steady ridges like Bristly Ridge and full rock climbs like *Grooved Arête* on Tryfan.

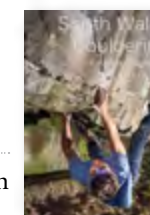
* *Moelwynion: Y Moelwynion & Cwm Lledr* and *Culm & Baggy* CC guides are reviewed in greater depth by Andrew Kitchen on pages 253 - 256.

South Wales Rock
 Matt Woodfield, Alan Rosier, Roy Thomas & Tim Hoddy
Climbers' Club 2020



A selected guide to crags on the edge of the Brecon Beacons, the sandstone quarries of the Valleys, and the limestone coastal cliffs of South Wales, featuring trad routes from Diff. to E6, sport routes from F4 to F8a+, plus bouldering and deep water solos.

South Wales Bouldering
 Eliot Stephens
Self-published 2021



Over 1,000 problems in Pembrokeshire, Gower, and the south-east Wales coastline. Includes sandstone, limestone, dolerite and even a little grit.

Moelwynion: Y Moelwynion & Cwm Lledr *
 Pete Johnson & Terry Taylor
Climbers' Club 2021



A comprehensive trad and sport guide to 800 routes on the cliffs and crags surrounding Blaenau Ffestiniog and Dolwyddelan.

Right: Aedan Rosier, first ascent of *Scurvy Rubber Ducky, Arrrr!, F4*, at Taffs Well Pinnacle, featured in *South Wales Rock* 📖 Alan Rosier

North Wales Bouldering: Vol. 1 Mountain Crags
 Simon Panton
Ground Up, 3rd edition 2021



New areas, such as Llyn Ogwen, Cwm Craig-las and Castell Cidwm have been added and existing areas, such as Creigiau'r Garth, Cwm Dulyn, Fachwen and Clegir have seen extensive new development. **Note:** *North Wales Bouldering Volume 2 Coastal Crags and North-East Limestone*, is a work in progress.

Ogwen
 Mike Bailey
Climbers' Club 2023



This is a straight reprint of the 2010 guide which has not been available for some while.

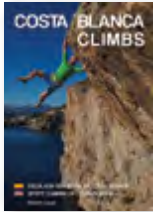


FOREIGN GUIDEBOOKS

Costa Blanca Climbs

Roberto Lopez
Distribuciones Mor
2020

656 pages of sport climbing covering a wide area from Orihuela in the south to Gandia in the north, plus inland venues around Alcoy and Petrer. In English and Spanish.



Tarragona

Pete O'Donovan & Dani Andrada
POD 3rd edition 2023

Selected sport climbs in the Spanish province of Tarragona, Over 4,800 routes in 11 areas: Siurana, Margalef, Montsant, La Riba, Els Cogullons, El Penitent, Mont-ral, La Mussara, Vilanova de Prades, Arbolí, and Masriudoms. In English, Catalan and Castillian.



Swiss Bloc: Vol. 1

Ulrich & Harald Roker
Gebro Verlag,
5th edition 2023

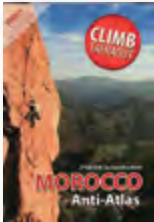
Nearly 2,200 problems at 12 major bouldering areas in Switzerland including: Magic Wood, Kandersteg, Engelburg, Gotthardpass, Sustenpass & Grimselpass.



Climb Tafraout:
Moroccan Anti-Atlas

Steve Broadbent
Oxford Alpine Club,
2nd edition 2020

1,900+ rock climbs around Tafraout.

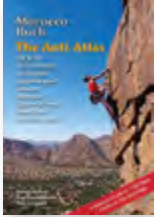


Morocco Rock:

The Anti Atlas

Emma Alsford,
Paul Donnithorne
& Don Sargeant
Crack Addicts,
revised edition 2020

1,700 routes on over 100 crags including developments in the mighty Amaghouz Gorge on the western fringes.



Chamonix

Charlie Boscoe
& Luke Davies
Rockfax 2nd edition 2022

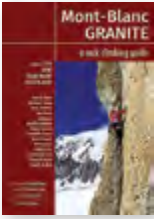
A guide to the best rock climbs and mountain routes around Chamonix and Mont Blanc.



Mont-Blanc Granite:
Vol. 4 – Géant, Cirque Maudit, Vallée Blanche

Francis Damilano,
Julien Desecures & Louis Laurent
JM Editions 2021

Selected rock climbs in the Upper Vallée Blanche, the Cirque Maudit and the Dent du Géant (in English).



Mont-Blanc Granite:
Vol. 5 – Val Veny

Enrico Bonino,
Francis Damilano,
Julien Desecures
& Louis Laurent
JMEditions 2023

The best climbing in three basins overlooking Val Veny on the Italian side of Mont Blanc (in English).



Easy Alpinism in
Trentino – South Tyrol:
Vol. 1 Western Valleys

Diego Filippi & Fabrizio Rattin
Versante Sud 2022

133 routes from 19 mountain groups to the west of the Adige valley.



Easy Alpinism in
Trentino – South Tyrol:
Vol. 2 Eastern Valleys

Diego Filippi & Fabrizio Rattin
Versante Sud 2023

116 routes from 24 mountain groups to the east of the Adige valley.



5+6 Greater
Fontainebleau

Bart van Raaij
Self-published,
2nd edition, 2023

5,286 boulder problems, graded between Font 5- and 6c+. 70 different areas around Greater Fontainebleau.



Bleau Blocs

Stephan Denys
Vertebrate 2022

100 of the finest boulder problems in the Fontainebleau Forest.



Buoux

Francoise Lepron & Jean-Bastiste Tribout
Editions CQFD 2022

A comprehensive guide in French and English covering around 800 sport routes. Also includes the boulders around Buoux, as well as the crags at Oppedette, Pont Julien, Fetide Beach, Oppede le Vieux, Oppede Brecugne and Rocher des Abeilles in the surrounding area.



Ceuse

Rolland Marie & Laurent Girousse
Vertical-Life,
2nd edition 2023

Sport climbing in southern France at a world-renowned venue featuring over 700 routes.



Écrins: Selected
Ice Climbs

Steve Broadbent
Oxford Alpine Club 2020

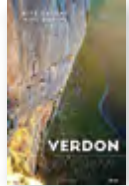
560 routes in the Écrins and Queyras regions situated close to the Italian border in South East France, offering some of the best valley icefall climbing in the Alps.



Verdon

Bruno Clement
Editions CQFD 2021

215 sectors in the world-famous Verdon Gorge, plus 15 other sectors outside of the Gorge. In French and English.



Bouldering in Sardinia:
Pietra di Luna

Filippo Manca, Maurizio Oviglia and Giorgio Soddu
Fabula 2022

The first complete guide to bouldering on this popular island, covering 31 sectors both on the coast and inland. In English throughout.



Yosemite Big Walls
Select

Erik Sloan
Yosemite Big Walls 2021

The ultimate guide to the best 140 big wall routes in Yosemite.



Climb Norway

Runar Carlsen and Lin Veronica Wagelid
Norges Boltefond, 4th edition 2021

Includes climbing in: Østfold, Oslo & Akershus, Oppland, Buskerud, Vestfold, Telemark, East and West Agder, Hordaland, Sogn og Fjordane, Møre og Romsdal, South and North-Trøndelag, Nordland, Troms og Finnmark.



Croatia

Boris Cujic
Astroida, 9th edition 2022

Sport climbing at 72 locations, a fully revised edition in English, German and Croatian.



Slovenija Sport

Sidarta, revised and updated edition 2023

Over 5,000 sport climbs covering the coastal, Osp and Misja Pec areas, the Julian Alps plus the crags of north-east Slovenia and six completely new climbing areas.



Kalymnos
Aris Theodoropoulos &
Katie Roussos
Vertical-Life 2023



A new edition with over 600 pages of sport climbing on the Aegean islands of Kalymnos and Telendos.

Leonidio & Kyparissi
Aris Theodoropoulos
Terrain Cartographic 2021



Leonidio, a Greek town in Arcadia, Peloponnese, has become a major climbing destination in recent years.

Lillehammer:
Selected Ice Climbs
Steve Broadbent
Oxford Alpine Club 2022



Lillehammer is less than two hours' drive north of Oslo and one of Norway's best winter climbing destinations, catering particularly well for low to mid-grade climbers.

Paklenica
Boris Cujic
Astroida, 8th edition 2022



Sport climbing guidebook to the limestone crags, cliffs and gorges around the Paklenica National Park in Croatia. In English, Croatian, German, Italian and Slovenian.

Patagonia Vertical:
Chalten Massif
Rolando Garibotti and Dorte Pietron
Sidarta, 3rd edition 2022



This region of southern Patagonia in Argentina is home to some of the most iconic peaks in the world, including Cerro Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre – the definitive guidebook.





THE CLIMBERS' CLUB SHOP

FOR CLIMBERS NOT FOR PROFIT

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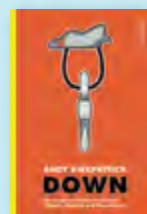
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TECHNIQUE AND TRAINING

Down
Andy Kirkpatrick
Self-published 2020



An encyclopaedic descent manual for climbers, alpinists, and mountaineers.

Climbing Psychology
Kevin Roet
Self-published 2021



Mind training for dealing with the fear of falling and achieving optimal climbing performance.

Beastmaking
Ned Freehally
Vertebrate 2021



A fingers-first approach to becoming a better climber with insights from some of the world's top climbers, including Alex Honnold, Shauna Coxsey, Adam Ondra, Alex Puccio and Tomoa Narasaki.

The Zen of Climbing:
In the Moment
Francis Sanzaro
Saraband 2023



Climbing inspiration and philosophy from the author of *The Boulder*.

An Expedition Handbook: with Mountaineering Case Studies
Dave Wynne-Jones
Whittles Publishing 2022



Expert advice based upon years of alpinism and expeditionary mountaineering, including leading more than 20 expeditions. The author shows that a systematic approach can avoid logistical and personnel problems by thorough preparation, with practical tips that will cut the climate cost of travel and help bring back an appreciation of wild places.

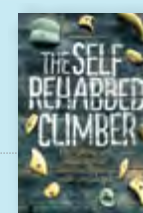
The Climbing Bible: Practical Exercises
Martin Moberäten & Stian Christophersen
Vertebrate 2022



A companion volume to *The Climbing Bible Technical, Physical and Mental Training for Rock Climbing* published in 2020.



The Self Rehabbed Climber
Andrew McVittie
Self-published 2023



Everything you need to treat climbing injuries with confidence. Includes flexor pulley sprain, golfer's elbow, sub-acromial pain, long-head of bicep, rotator cuff related pain, wrist injury, mid-back/postural pain and hamstring/adductor injury.

The Science of Climbing Training: an Evidence-Based Guide to Improving your Climbing
Sergio Consuegra
Vertebrate 2023



Top Spanish climbing coach Sergio Consuegra has analysed our sporting needs from the perspective of exercise and sports science to provide an evidence-based approach to training for climbing.



IN-DEPTH GUIDEBOOK REVIEWS

Culm & Baggy:

A Climbers' Club Guide to The Culm Coast & Baggy Point

Mark Kembal

The Climbers' Club 2021

Every picture tells a story in this guide book. James Mann's end piece photo of Mark Kembal topping out on *Wrecker's Slab* (VS) conveys the adventurous nature of much of the climbing in North Devon. We see the climber escaping from the cliff via a narrow ridge, with the sea in the background some four hundred feet below. This is just one of many inspirational photos used to portray the climbing in this area.

How well does the guide do the job of getting the climber down to the routes, up the routes and off the routes safely? Firstly, there are maps for each section of the cliff indicating both the location of the cliffs and the descents. The use of long distance drone shots taken out to sea is something I haven't seen before and will make the first time location of crags and descents significantly easier. Finally, to support the visual images, each cliff has an individual verbal description of the descent and approach, including crucial information on the impact of different states of the tides.

The well known crags such as Baggy Point, Blackchurch and Lower Sharpnose are covered in detail. I have been to Baggy Point many times, but was interested to find



“long distance drone shots will make the first time location of crags and descents significantly easier.”

things in the guide book that I had not done. Next time a visit to North Cellar Zawn in on the cards. The guide is effective in highlighting less frequented areas for the visitor, such as Vicarage Cliff, Screda Point and Dyer's Lookout. The fact that this is a comprehensive guide means that there are almost certainly many less frequented crags even for 'locals' to

visit for the first time. Whilst the area's bouldering is not comprehensively covered, areas such as Hartland Quay and St Catherine's Quay are described. Chiselridge Beach offers some problems in the lower grades.

The historical section provides a detailed account of climbing development, starting with Dr Tom Longstaff's ascent of *Scattling Crack*



Above: Dave Turnbull on *One in Every Port*, E2, Screda Point.

Opposite: Mark Kembal topping out on *Wrecker's Slab*, VS, at Cornakey Cliff.


📷 James Mann



(VD) in 1898, and culminating in James Pearson's *Walk of Life* (E9) and Dave Birkett's *Once upon a Time in the South West* (E9) climbed in 2008 and 2010 respectively. The written narrative gives a strong sense of the adventurous nature of the pioneering and the camaraderie which accompanied it. The photos begin in black and white and change to colour as the late 1970's are reached, marking the passing of time.

Is it worth producing comprehensive guide books such as this at a time when selective guides are becoming increasingly popular? For local climbers the answer must be an unequivocal yes! Living over three hundred miles away, I still value the comprehensive knowledge and love of the area that the writers have put into this guidebook.

Andrew Kitchen

Above: Tom Pearce on *Sacre Coeur*, E2, Blackchurch.
 James Mann

The Scafells: A Grand Tour

Guy Richardson
Lakelandviews

As befits a Grand Tour this is a perambulation, a wander, through the massif of the highest mountains in England, from Wasdale to Eskdale.

It doesn't describe a high speed trip through the area, more a considered walk with time to stop and mull over the story of these mountains.

For those who want to dip in, the various chapters are colour coded; orange for walking and green for 'interesting bits'. These 'bits' cover the visitor experience, the geology, the early visitors, the Great Gift and the naming of these hills.

The book ends with a look back and a look forward; a look back from Mosedale at the panorama of the range and a look forward



with the Lake District National Park's Management Plan.

Easy to read and with a fine selection of photographs, winter, summer, old and new, this is a handy little book for dipping into or perhaps taking on a walk in the area. It provides some interesting material for those times when you just have to sit down and look around you.

Gwyn Evans



Moelwynion: A Climbers' Club Guide to Y Moelwynion & Cwm Lledr

Pete Johnson and Terry Taylor
The Climbers' Club 2021

The cover photo of this guide is a fine advert for climbing in the Moelwynion. Mike Pycroft is shown on the steep wall of *Ectoplasm* on Clogwyn Yr Oren with a dramatic view across Tanygrisiau Reservoir to the mountains of Mid Wales. It looks a great route in a great setting and certainly makes me want to go there.

How well does it do the job of showing climbers where the routes go? The map on the inside cover shows the areas covered. As well as the well known area of Y Moelwynion, the guide covers Cwm Lledr, Cwm Teigl, Y Migneint, the Manod and the Town Crag area. Each area begins with a map of where the crags are situated, together with the page number in the guide book where crag photos and descriptions can be found. It seems to be a user friendly guide to a complex area.

It is not only the cover shot that makes the area appealing. There are great photos throughout the guide.



These range from Rachel Pearce on *Meirionnydd* (E7 6b) on Moelwyn Bach to Nina Stirrup on *Africa Rib* (VD) at Craig Y Clipiau. A quick flick through reveals many appealing pictures at all grades.

The history of climbing in the area is well documented, looking back to G B Bryant and G D Abraham who put up new routes in 1894 and 1919 respectively. Development in both the 20th and 21st centuries is covered in detail. Photos are used to effectively illustrate this section, with many of 'the usual suspects' featured.

The history section is finished off





with Peter Whittaker's account of the first ascent of *Koselig Hour* (E8 6c). "Anyone who likes weird and wonderful roof trickery climbing will love this route," Peter tells us.

Many modern guides just tell us where the routes go. This one not only does that, but gives us a background to the landscape and its history which adds something to a day spent climbing there. We learn that the Blaenau mines are some of the largest in the world and that for every ton of finished slate, at least ten tons of waste was produced. Barbara Jones' notes on conservation remind us that the Ffestiniog woodlands are an unusual feature in the landscape of Snowdonia. She tells us about many of the unusual plants and animals that live in this area. Dr Mike Hammill gives us a scholarly account of the geological history of the Moelwynion. When you are patiently belaying your partner on a cold day, it is interesting to remember that the area would have looked out over a tropical sea in the Early Carboniferous Period.

Overall I would say that this is a great guide to a great area. Buy it and go there!

Andrew Kitchen

Previous page: Jenny Dart on *Slack*, Severe, Clogwyn yr Oen. 📷 Sam Leary

Left: *Ci Ddu*, E6 6a, James McHaffie FA. 📷 Alex Riley



The never setting sun, Antarctica 📷 Ru Finlayson



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