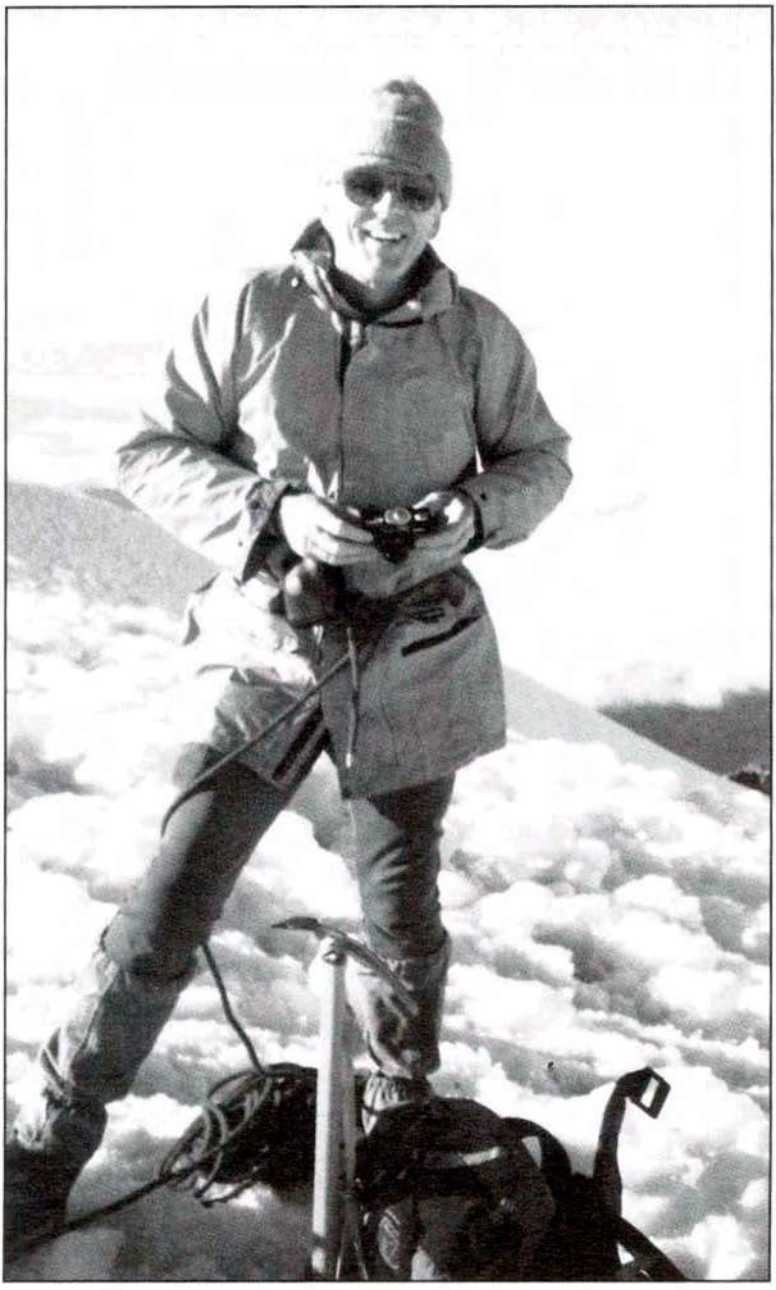

David Rhodes, President 1998-2000

THE FELL AND ROCK JOURNAL

Edited by Doug Elliott and John Holden

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Direct involvement in climbing and mountaineering is of prime importance to the FRCC where members display extremes of both high endeavour and tranquil leisure on the crags and in the mountains. Involvement may start as physical and active before tending towards reminiscent and sedentary, or alternatively it may evolve slowly to build up passions and exhibit obsessive behaviour.

It is a truism that most of those who go to the crags and mountains also read about them. Very few activities spawn such a huge volume of literature as does climbing and mountaineering. Thankfully FRCC members are writers as well as readers. They like to reminisce and they like to record, and they do so in good style.

Our journal is the work of FRCC members produced within a definite timescale, and as recognised with the last issue, the FRCC Journal is not an anthology drawing from all sources. Our journal is more limited, and a first wish of the Editors is that sufficient material is forthcoming, and for this edition the wish has been more than fulfilled. Apologies are due where it has been necessary to discard ruthlessly or leave items for the future. A second wish is that our quality matches the general high standards of climbing and mountaineering literature. In attempting to achieve this, Editors have again been active in identifying as well as seeking contributions, but it is not practicable to develop themes or link articles. A third wish is that the content spans successfully all different aspects from traditional to modernistic contributions presented with differing attitudes in a range including light-hearted and serious. The Editors are aware that many contributions

are inspired by the past, but accept this as inevitable for a club journal.

Members may spot opportunities for improvements in quality and content, and they are invited to make submissions for the 2002 Journal. There is limited scope for edification of contributors, and a final wish of the Editors is that readers appreciate fully the affections and feelings for climbing and mountaineering that flow from FRCC members.

We are grateful to Jill Aldersley for providing the tailpiece sketches which appear throughout this Journal.

Doug Elliott John Holden

COVE HUT AND THE BARROW BOYS

David Miller

In the late summer of 1944, seven young apprentices from Vickers Armstrong (Shipbuilders) in Barrow discussed the prospects of taking over a derelict hut on Coniston Old Man as a base for climbing on Dow Crag. Cove Hut stood in a prominent position, at an altitude of 1500 feet, on the right of the track to Dow Crag, at the point where the crag first comes into view. It was built as a gunpowder store for Cove Quarries which were situated above the hut on the southern flank of the Old Man.

The hut was first rented in 1944 by Don Atkinson, on behalf of the Barrow boys, from Michael George Hughes le Fleming of Rydal Estates, for the sum of £1 per annum. This rent remained unchanged throughout its thirty year life. Originally, conditions were primitive, but with the onset of winter it was necessary to provide a door and a window. Later two bunks were erected, which reduced the pressure of sleeping space on the floor.

The hut was built of slate with a timber lining, secured with copper nails. The eight-foot square interior eventually accommodated three canvas bunks, two World War II steel tubular stretchers (one housed in the roof space), a table and a bench. Primus stoves were used for cooking and were the only source of heating in the winter. Subsequently first-aid rucksacks were provided by the Mountain Rescue Committee and the hut was listed as a rescue post, in the days before the stretcher box was placed at the foot of the crag and Mountain Rescue Teams became fully established. The sole luxury was a wind-up gramophone which played 78 rpm records. This still functioned in the fifties, although its varying speed and the damaged records did little for sound quality!

AITCHISON & PORTER,
CHARTERED LAND AGENTS.

R. E. PORTER, F.S.I., F.I.A.S.

TELEPHONE:
AMBLESIDE 50.

THE ESTATES OFFICE,

AMBLESIDE,

WESTMORLAND.

5th. October 1944.

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of the 3rd. instant and I confirm that I am willing to let you the hut near Cove Quarries at a rent of One pound for the ensuing twelve months and so far as I can see at present, there should be no difficulty in your continuing to have the use of it after the year has ended. I note that you and your friends will carry out certain repairs but I would like it to be understood that this will be at your own cost.

Yours faithfully,

R. E. Porter

Mr. D. Atkinson,
3, Folkestone Avenue,
BARROW-IN-FURNESS

The second World War was approaching its end at this time and these young men were determined to get away for weekends to climb on Dow Crag, even though they worked on Saturday mornings. They were very short of money and had little in the way of mountain equipment and clothing, which were then virtually unobtainable. What they had was home-made, including karabiners, ice axes and converted clothing. They had no personal transport, although Coniston was served by both bus and train from Barrow. However services were limited by wartime restrictions, which meant that to return home on Sunday evening after the days climbing, they had to walk for 3 hours to Foxfield to catch the train back to Barrow.

The wartime rationing of food particularly affected those who were living in 'digs', who had to rely on friends who lived in the family home to supplement their food. Consequently it became the practice for all food and expenses to be shared equally. Rough justice awaited those who took more than their fair share of the common pool, for example the thrilling experience of being rolled naked outside in the snow.

Their climbing mentor was Jim Cameron, the professional Guide who lived in Coniston. He not only climbed with them on Dow Crag but invariably had to rouse them from their sleeping bags on Sunday mornings. Tardy starts was an ongoing tradition with the Barrow boys but they usually redeemed themselves by climbing hard and staying on the crag until nightfall, when only the ravens provided company. The Cove Hut log book describes such a day on 14th October 1945, when Jim Cameron, Jim Fowler and Alf Mullan did Eliminate A, Eliminate C, Black Chimney, North Wall of North Gully, Tiger Traverse and Murray's Route with the Simian exit. As such routes were amongst the hardest on the crag at that time, this was a very big achievement. They climbed on Dow Crag at all times of the year, irrespective of the weather conditions. One

such winter day, an ascent of Intermediate Gully, by a team led by Reg Clucas is recorded in the hut log book :- "bloody cloudburst commenced at foot of third pitch. The remainder was rendered a bit of a bastard but was accomplished without incident – much!" Peter Harding, a visitor to the hut at the time, climbed the gully subsequently and made the following comments :- "Ken and I enjoyed somewhat better conditions, the walls having been dried to a certain extent by the above party's language."

The other practice of the time was to make the ascent of one climb followed by the descent of another. Although descents were not made of the hardest climbs, they were nevertheless, fairly bold undertakings, bearing in mind the lack of protection and the fact that they were often climbed in nailed boots. It seems that their habit of descending climbs came from Jim Cameron, and in those days when 'the leader dare not fall', such experience would have improved their ability to climb safely, and if necessary retreat from harder routes.

By 1946 the group had expanded to include Oliver Geere (Cog), Ron Miller and John Thompson, who were starting to climb. A typical day's climbing would start late and, maybe following a swim in Goats Water, they would warm up on the boulders near the cave shelter below C Buttress. They would then climb up and down routes until late, when they had the crag to themselves. They often climbed in nailed boots, only transferring into plimsolls for the hardest routes. Alf and Ron became experts in nailed boots and even led some of the Eliminates in them. A little later, the youthful Ginger Caine and Jack Lancaster joined the group and activities continued until 1949, when they reached a climax with the ascent on 18 September of Leopard's Crawl by Ron and Ginger. This route had first been climbed by Jim Birkett in 1947 and was a bold undertaking, a grade harder than earlier climbs on the crag.

The overall memories of this group were of happy days; climbing, skating on the frozen Goats Water in winter, and desperate sledging trips down the Old Man on improvised sledges. Fortunately, they suffered no accidents, although they helped rescue many who had done so on Dow. Many visitors were welcomed to Cove Hut, often for tea after the days climbing, and names such as A B Hargreaves and Lyna Kellett are recorded in the hut logbook. The Welsh activists, Peter Harding and Tony Moulam stayed in the hut on a number of occasions in order to climb on Dow.

This first period came to an end in 1950, by which time many of those still active had joined the Fell and Rock as protégés of Jim Cameron. Their horizons had widened to other areas of the Lake District, and they had other, better huts to use. Don Atkinson even transferred his allegiance to become warden of Brackenclose.

Cove Hut stagnated for 5 years, until Nelson Caine and I took the bus from Barrow to Torver and walked up to the hut for our first weekend on 3 January 1956. Although only 15 and 13 years old respectively, Nelson was very independent and I had the experience of having being taken climbing by my brother the previous year. A month later we returned, took a 30 foot length of old cotton rope that had been left in the hut, and went up to Dow Crag. It was a cold, windy day with snow showers and, not surprisingly, there was nobody on the crag. Undaunted, we proceeded to climb C Ordinary, leading alternately, taking what limited belays we could. It felt like a big undertaking, but two days later, our confidence having returned, we climbed the route again in better weather conditions.

For the next couple of years, Nelson and I came up to the hut for weekends as often as we could. We soon acquired a rope and some slings, and slowly worked our way up the graded list of climbs until we were confidently leading severes. As

with our predecessors, we often descended some climbs and soloed others. But vibram-soled boots had arrived and we climbed in those. However, the scratch-marked routes, caused by nailed boots, were still a visual feature of the crag at that time, and rather like modern chalk they showed up the holds and the line of the route. Roy Lawson and others started to stay in the hut and climb on Dow but it was Nelson who used the hut most. He was always a loner and he seemed quite happy to stay by himself and climb solo or roam the fells.

From time to time we suffered atrocious weather, when gales would whip spray off Goats Water and up onto the crag. One such day, going up to the tarn, the gusts were so strong that on a number of occasions we were blown some distance in the air, and we could only make progress by dropping onto the ground as we heard the roar which heralded the next gust. At other times, waking up to find the hut in sunshine above the cloud-blanketed Furness, or climbing snow-filled gullies in moonlight (we had no head torches) was an enchanting experience.

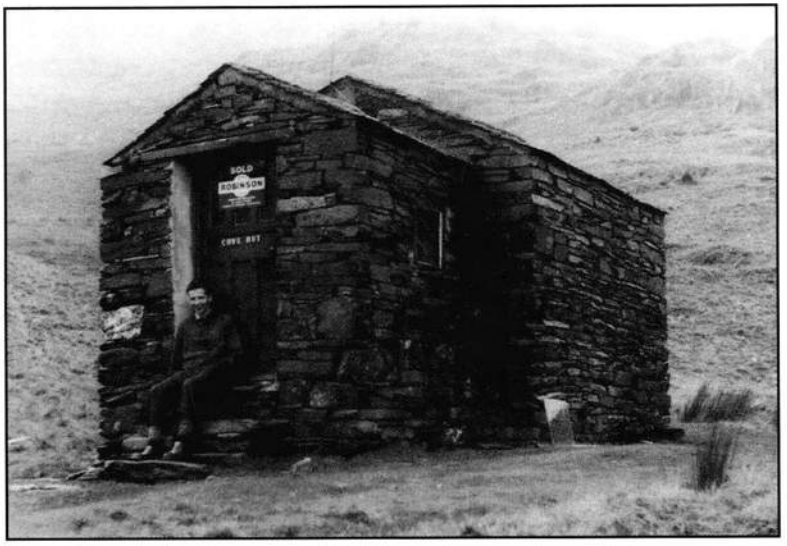
During this time Arthur Brooks, who was revising the Dow Crag guidebook, used the hut with Peter Moffat and it was thanks to him that the dilapidated door was replaced and the hut could be secured again. By 1959, Nelson and I had also joined the Fell and Rock and I acquired an old car, which provided the opportunity to climb further afield for weekends. However, we continued to stay in the hut from time to time, and the approach by car up the Walna Scar track made life easier. Climbing in plimsolls, we worked our way up the Eliminates and the other classic V.S's. The old traditions continued – New Year's Eve was celebrated at the hut with traditional fare, and the high-risk sledging down the fell side on bent up corrugated sheets, was the activity for snowy weekends. When the crag was deserted in the evening, we took the opportunity

to trundle loose flakes and blocks. Although nominally for altruistic reasons, this was also good fun! We also kept a store of tinned food, hidden under the floorboards, which meant that a meal was always available if you arrived without food and it gave a choice of menu at other times. Dehydrated and convenience food was not available, and the choice of appropriate food to carry up to the hut was limited.

In April 1960, I met Dave Kirby by chance at the foot of the crag and we teamed up to climb G.C.R and Leopard's Crawl. This was another step forward in difficulty, but, more importantly, it gave me contact with other Barrovians, such as Tony King, whom I didn't know climbed. And so the group expanded and was revitalised by more keen local climbers. Much of the activity was in other areas, but Cove Hut was still a focus for the Barrow boys until 1962, when Nimrod was first climbed. By this time the group had grown out of using Cove Hut and Nelson had emigrated.

However, 1963 saw replacements from a group who had been friends in a Barrow Grammar School Scout Group. Ron Forrest and "Fred" Wardropper were amongst these and for the next couple of years they stayed at the hut from time to time and climbed on Dow Crag in much the same style as those before. As with their predecessors, having passed through their youthful phase, they too moved on to other areas and more sociable options.

The final team to use Cove Hut was David Geere (Cog's son) and Steve Spence. Their humorous entries in the hut log book of activities on Dow Crag and elsewhere continued until 1971, when they suddenly ceased. Thereafter, Cove Hut became vandalised and deteriorated due to being left open to the weather. The hut walls had been cracking for many years but eventually the elements brought on its partial collapse. Subsequently it was demolished and all that now remains is a pile of stones.



When I think of Cove Hut, I see a teenage escape, a chance to sample adventure without controls and a place to learn about mountains and climbing. In bad weather it was a wild, windswept place and one wondered how the hut survived the battering of the winds. On other days, the sun highlighting the crag and the views over Furness to the estuaries beyond were magnificent. It was fitting for its era, when opportunities for teenagers were limited, personal transport was rare and money was short, but times have changed.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Oliver Geere for providing me with a wealth of information and photos of the early years; and Ron Miller for advice and photos, but particularly for first introducing me to Cove Hut and rock climbing.

AN ALPINE SEASON
Recollections of the 1999 Summer

Pete Kelly

Having decided to take a break from the world of 9 to 5 work this year I was in the fortunate position to be able to plan a full month in the Alps, travelling with an old friend Andrew Milne and attending the FRCC meet in Saas Grund followed by the Barrow Mountaineering and Ski Club meet in the Ecrins. Starting in mid July we arrived in Saas to find the FRCC meet already established on the Am Kappellenweg campsite. Initially the weather was cloudy with the tops in mist but the situation soon improved to give a spell of settled weather with clear skies and light summit winds. We planned to start with a couple of hopefully straightforward 4000 metre peaks to acclimatise and see how we got on.

Acclimatisation

We chose the Lagginhorn and the Weissmies since they are both accessible from the Weissmies hut and have standard PD routes. The Lagginhorn is a rock ridge and therefore the traditional early morning start was dispensed with in favour of a daylight start from the valley campsite. Our intentions for the first téléphérique at 07.30 failed miserably and we eventually got on board at 09.30 with heavy sacks and high hopes. The téléphérique took us swiftly to Hohsaas at 3,100 metres and left us at the start of the traverse to the Laggin glacier with the sun high and bright in the sky. The guidebook described the traverse as crossing two rock ridges and a glacier snout in about an hour.

Acclimatisation involves getting the body used to working on thin air and also learning to take the absolute minimum amount of gear on an alpine route. This first hour made it

clear we had a lot of acclimatisation to do. We arrived breathless and stooped at the edge of the Laggin glacier to see a number of parties coming down after what was probably a 04.30 start. The glacier has no objective dangers and is probably better described as a snowfield, with steepening at the end to form a wide couloir which by this hour contained fairly soft snow. We plodded to the top of the couloir, where we dramatically improved our acclimatisation by stowing the rope and various other excess gear under a pile of rocks. Relieved of this weight we continued more quickly up the rocky flank to the summit arriving at 14.30. We had thought with such a late start we would be alone on the top but met a pair who had come up the South ridge. Cloud was swirling in and out and our views were limited, and after a couple of summit photos we descended quickly to the Weissmies hut.

Next day we had a more conventional alpine start with an early breakfast, and arrived at Hohsaas station at around 05.00, again gear was stowed to lighten our sacks. The Weissmies ordinary route via the Trift glacier and the South West Ridge is a straightforward glacier ascent. There were a number of parties ahead of us and the route was well defined by previous ascents. The route weaves its way up through séracs and crevasses with some fine snow bridges and a few steep bits but on the whole it is uncomplicated. We were on the summit by 09.00, the visibility was good in the immediate vicinity but cloud rested on Monte Rosa and other high peaks. The rounded top was busy with several guided parties and the atmosphere was jolly with hand shaking, back slapping, photography, eating and drinking all carried out against a magnificent back drop. Our descent was a little scarier than the ascent given that looking down into deep crevasses could not be avoided. We were back at the campsite by early afternoon and spent the evening resting and sorting gear, eventually rounding the day off with a large curry and beer.

Lenzspitze ENE Ridge *Photo: Pete Kelly*

The Lenzspitze Nadelhorn Traverse

The forecast now gave continuing bright weather but with an increase in wind speed on the summits: 45 kph was predicted which didn't seem excessive. Feeling acclimatised we decided that the Lenzspitze by the ENE ridge and the Nadelhorn Traverse would be our next objective. This classic AD has a reputation for continuous but not excessive difficulties, spectacular scenery and a suggested guide book time of 11 hours. We packed light but adequate sacks and set off for the Mischabel hut. A short hop in the cable car from Saas Fee took us to a good traversing path, and then an hour of zigzags brought us to the rocky ridge, which leads to the hut. The ridge is fitted with ladders, steel pegs and cables, and provided exciting but fairly strenuous access to the hut.

A 02.30 call woke us and the usual hut breakfast of bread, jam and coffee was duly demolished, and despite our efforts to get away quickly several parties were ahead of us on the rocky ridge behind the hut. At the snowline some of these went of to the Nadelhorn ordinary route and some to climb the Lenzspitze face leaving two parties ahead of us on the ridge. The 45 kph wind didn't feel too threatening but added a chill to the air. A steady hour uphill by the orange beam of our head torches took us to the first of the day's many rock pinnacles, the ridge steepened up and continued with pinnacles and airy corniced sections all of which were quite sound.

Daylight arrived and after another hour we roped up for some of the steeper pinnacles. By 08.00 we were on top of the grande gendarme and after a struggle with the fixed rope abseiled down to an airy stance and eventually traversed to level ground where we had a second breakfast. The next few hundred feet consisted of rotten rock and there was some stone fall from the parties ahead, though our breakfast spot was fortunately out of the fall line. Continuing up the rotten sec-

tion was a bit nerve racking but we soon arrived on the firm snow of the summit ridge. The summit looked close from here but was in fact almost a further thousand feet above us. Below and to our right two parties were working away on the face route which drops a clear uninterrupted 3000 feet to the glacier below. The wind was still with us and its bite penetrated clothing and added an element of unbalance to a difficult step. The summit ridge was fine and airy, the snow being just firm enough to allow steps to be made, we did a couple of pitches each before it levelled off a little, became more rocky and finally the ground was falling away on all sides. It was over 5 hours since we left the hut, the sky was clear and the views magnificent all round. I had the usual mixed feelings of elation at having done a good climb and trepidation at what there was still to do.

The Southern Nadelgrat stretched out before us bathed in sun and looked straightforward, but as is often the case it turned out to be a lot longer and more complex than we imagined. From our position there seemed to be only 3 or 4 large pinnacles but in reality there were many minor pinnacles and snow bridges in between which resulted in several hours more climbing. On the positive side however most of the rock was good, there were abseil rings where necessary and as the day progressed the wind died down. The section from the Nadeljoch to the Nadelhorn proved to be very fine with cracks and flakes falling conveniently to hand on the airy slabs and crests. We arrived on the Nadelhorn at 16.00, ate a little and admired the view.

By now our thoughts were on the Mischabel hut and dinner. The descent of the NE ridge of the Nadelhorn down to Windjoch and back across the Hohbalm glacier was uneventful. Back at the hut it was Saturday night and full to bursting but luckily we got dinner and two of the last remaining bed

spaces. It was a joy to turn over and go back to sleep after the previous morning's 02.30 call and then take a leisurely breakfast at 08.00. Descending to Saas on tired legs, we made plans for our next top.

Moving On

Two days later the weather broke and we departed for the Ecrins. The journey took a day and a half and took us over two St Bernard passes each with more hairpin bends than it is possible to count. We camped at Vallouise but found the unsettled weather was still with us, the daily forecasts giving a consistent succession of bright mornings, rain in the afternoon and freezing levels at around 3,800 m.

The high mountains were out of condition but the excellent rock climbing at Alefroide filled several days. Our first route was on the Draye and called 'Two Hot Men', kind of appropriate we thought! It's graded D+ with fairly continuous V climbing. After 4 pitches the afternoon rain arrived and two hot men quickly became two cold, wet men abseiling back to the ground. On the following day we climbed 'La Palaver des Flots', a fine looking ridgeline with 8 pitches graded III to V. The climbing was very enjoyable but unfortunately we were behind a slow party and didn't make very good time to the top. At the final pitch the first spots of rain arrived, and before long the valley had filled with cloud and there was a regular downpour. The abseil descent of the face to the right of our route was hard work. The ropes stuck on the second ab and spent a tense half an hour before we eventually freed them – it is amazing how a small change of angle can make a large difference! The last few abs were in a gravel-filled gully which left us back at the ground wet and dirty.

Tramping back through the campsite that evening with a rucksack full of sodden gear I passed campers dining and

drinking in large, luxurious tents or relaxing in reclining chairs under extensive porches or cosily watching TV inside mobile homes. My prospect was another curry from the Trangia pan eaten alfresco or in the front seat of the car to the sound of rain drumming on the roof followed by a damp sleep in a cramped Terra Nova. I wondered briefly if I had got the balance right in the way my climbing trips were organised.

The next couple of days were spent on an attempt to climb the Barre des Ecrins. After walking up to the Ecrins glacier we spent a night in bivvy sacs with thunder and rain all around, and by mid morning we were still engulfed in cloud so we plodded back to the valley. The weather slowly improved with longer sunny days becoming the norm, unfortunately the freezing level stayed resolutely at around 3,800 m.

Several more days rock climbing followed. 'Laisser Bronzer les Cavadares' on the Draye is memorable. This route is described as having 17 pitches but finding ourselves short of time we only did 14, an excellent climb with slabs and walls mainly V but with a pitch of V1a. We spent a sunny afternoon on an exhilarating Via Ferrata in the valley at Vigneaux. The route had extensive steep exposed faces and even an overhanging section, all in spectacular positions but all equipped with cables and steel steps. With all this bolted-on safety it was possible to just enjoy the views, the movement and the warm sun.

With the high mountains still out of condition we then climbed the classic 'La Snoopy'. This 10 pitch climb is graded D with pitches of V and had excellent slabs and laybacks and like many other climbs in the valley was equipped with new bolts. The walk-off was by far the most risky part of the whole business. A faint, muddy path wove its way through steep-sided, crumbling, verdant gullies and eventually returned us with racked nerves and muddy feet to the valley bottom.

The Barre des Ecrins

Time slips away when you are enjoying yourself and the realisation came that for me there were only a few days of this alpine season remaining. The Barre would be a fitting finale but the warm unsettled weather was still with us. By way of a reconnoitre to find out what conditions were really like we spent a day crossing the Gl. de Séguret Foran to Pointe des Arcas at 3,478 m. Plodding up to L'Eychauda lake in morning rain with a heavy sack seemed like folly but the forecast had promised us a fine afternoon and the said fine afternoon duly materialised. The glacier was in good condition and there was even water ice in places, the summit although not spectacular, provided a fine viewpoint across to Mt. Pelvoux. We returned to the valley thinking the Ecrins glacier might be OK after all.

Next morning we got the forecast we had been waiting for, beau temps' for today and sunny spells for the early part of the following day, freezing level at 3,200m. The only cloud on the horizon, literally, was the possibility of storms in the afternoon of the following day. So a party of 4 plus myself decided to go for the Barre with a walk up and bivvy that afternoon and be back down before the predicted storms on the following day. The afternoon was hot as we plodded up the busy path to the Rif Blanc. Beyond the refuge the path deteriorated as it crosses the Ecrins Glacier moraine and finally takes the right side of the glacier below the Ecrins Hut. The hut is almost always full and we had all agreed we would prefer a night under the stars so we were now looking for a suitable site to sleep five amongst the rocks above the glacier. A number of other parties were already in residence but eventually we found a couple of sites and established ourselves. Dinner was over all too quickly and darkness fell to give a starry night with a little frost.

Sunrise on the Barre des Ecrins *Photo: Pete Kelly*

Alarms were set for 03.00 but we didn't stir until 03.30. An hour of stumbling around, eating and packing followed and eventually we stepped from our rocky bivouac site onto the glacier. We had decided the normal route via the North flank and the West ridge was the most appropriate. The Glacier was in good condition after the night's frost, several other parties were in front and there were more behind. We made good time traversing left across the lower glacier then up through crevasses and across snow bridges by head-torch light. Daylight came with a spectacular sunrise burning its way through the light clouds and we traversed back right under the west ridge arriving at the Brèche Lory at around 07.00. From here many parties continued up the last short section of glacier to the Dôme de Neige des Ecrins while we established ourselves on the initial rocks of the West ridge to the Barre. The first couple of rope lengths up the face were a little loose but we soon arrived on the fine airy rock ridge which was sound and provided brilliant natural protection on pinnacles and flakes. Our progress was a little slow due to the fact that we were a party of 5. The spectacular views across the whole of the Ecrins massif filled the periods of waiting time, the rock was warm and we were doing the route that had been on our minds for several days so it didn't feel like the speed of progress was a problem. After a couple of pitches we arrived at Pic Lory from where the summit cross was in sight, then followed a slab, a couple of flakes, a short corniced section, a bottomless step, a few more pinnacles and we were there.

Descent

The summit provided a chance to eat, take some photos and congratulate ourselves but as is often the case our thoughts turned quickly to the descent and before very long we were reversing the route along the ridge. Looking across to the

Dôme and down the glacier it was clear most other parties had already descended. We were delayed on the final slabs getting off the ridge by the party in front who appeared to have gone too low.

It was early afternoon before we were back at the Brèche. From nowhere it started to snow, small round crystals settled on the rocks we had just left, then cloud boiled up the glacier and rolled down the ridge to engulf us. The snow became heavier and started running down off the West ridge in whooshing torrents covering the glacier and filling in our ascent footprints. It became clear the glacier descent was going to be a bit tricky and the sooner we got started on it the better.

The trail of footprints was just visible but filling up fast with snow, and at several points the torrents of crystals covered our feet. We remained roped together but looking back I found I could barely distinguish the outlines of my partners behind me, we seemed to be moving too slowly, it almost felt as if we could be swept down the glacier by the volume of snow running down. After several zigzags we got clear of the West ridge and as we got lower the torrents of snow lessened. The crevasses we had crossed on the way up by obvious snow bridges were difficult to find in the poor visibility and their edges were now less well defined due to the fresh snow. A worried French couple stood at the lip of one of the larger crevasses unsure of whether to cross and then opted to tie on with us rather the risking the crossing on their own. Slowly, as we made downward progress, the snow became less crystalline and the visibility improved. Wet snow balling up on our crampons now became a problem, but we were over the worst. Eventually the glacier levelled out, though the wet snow kept falling and the plod back to the bivvy site was long and tiresome. The site was damp and miserable, we found our gear, which was dripping wet, loaded it into our sacks

and continued down the moraine and onto the path back to the valley. The snow turned to rain and stayed with us almost all the way back down to the valley.

For me that was the final route of this alpine season. The Barre des Ecrins is 4101 m. high and the North flank West ridge route is graded PD.

The following day was quite fine and warm; we packed for home. A month had gone all too quickly; it had been the alpine season I had wanted with perhaps just a little too much rain. The memories of heavy sacks, wet descents, thunderstorms and damp evenings on the campsite had already started to fade leaving only images of blue skies, starry nights, warm rock, classic ridges and dramatic alpine scenery.

NOSTALGIA AIN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE

William "Barney" Barnes and Ghost

I've always regarded Scotland as a good alternative to the Lakes at Whit. Let's go to Arran, he'd said. We travelled north with a tank of dirty petrol and hiccups and I thought, nothing's changed since first going to Arran and having to leave a car in Ardrossan for fuel system repairs. Déjà vu ? History was repeating itself. And as before, he nagged me. For how long a period (or how short) can a Half Journal Editor serve. To all those being pursued for Journal contributions I recommend you give in graciously.

This composition is a response to pressure. My only previous contribution was to FRCC Journal No. 62 in 1970. It was an article on St. Bees Head written together with him, one of the present Joint Editors, mistakenly and confusingly then referred to as A D Elliott instead of D A. Was this Anno Domini tag to stress his age and to mark his supposed superiority. It was probably a precursor of pressures over the years on where next to climb, who to go with, what routes to tackle, who carries the gear or what goes best in sandwiches.

I've jointly climbed with him since I first started. He doesn't necessarily get things right, but he can be relied on for memorable events – even epics. Over just the last couple of years I remember the Skye ridge for two of the best mountain days ever, even though he set off for the Cairngorms. I don't recall details of the Puig Campana climb that well, but I remember vividly the multi abseils after he lost the descent route, and I also remember that holiday for when his prediction understated the crux on Via Valencianos by a mere three grades. We are now in the fifth decade of our climbing partnership and it would be a lengthy article if I recounted even a fraction of such similar situations.

It was this recent trip outside our Lakes life experience where the ghost of an idea emerged. Let's go to Arran, he'd said. And then he set about suggesting a Journal subject – 'changing attitudes since starting climbing'. Nostalgia has it that the way we did things is the best way. Indeed. Quite right. Too true. Correct. My climbing is based on an attitude that progress through the grades with peers and mentors during regular outings in all weathers is better than a barrage of advice from certificated instructors on short courses. I use climbing walls for training and fitness, but would I have wanted to be taught on an artificial wall? How would I have responded to today's involvement (or interference) of education with risk assessments and safe systems of adventuring. For me climbing is a shared activity carried out in the mountains without inhibitions.

I'm a great believer that the only rule in mountaineering is that there are no rules. There must always be freedom for mountaineers to set their own levels of risk taking, but they must be accountable for their actions. Freedom for individuals should not impact on others. My recent trip with the Half Editor allows me to record some thoughts, and with nostalgia to demonstrate changed attitudes. We share a similar trust in the other as we have come to respect each of our limits. We believe there is no substitute for experience and judgement. We knowingly make our own rules, we acknowledge everyone may do their own thing and enjoy themselves in their own way, but we question actions that impinge on others and border on the irresponsible.

Let's go to Arran, he'd said. Let's celebrate with a 40 year anniversary repeat of when we did South Ridge Direct on Cir Mhor. Great route he'd said. Can you remember how long it is. "No", I said. The sanctimonious sage referred to his library of guide books (Half Editors have lots of books).

Rosa Pinnacle, Cir Mhor, from A'Chir *Photo: Dennis Mitchell*

All descriptions agreed the best way to enjoy South Ridge Direct was to choose a sunny day, but they differed on how long the route was and on the degree of difficulty. We readily accepted the length as 1,100 feet stated in Hard Rock, and the length of the crux pitch being only a few feet as in his 1958 SMC guide. We ignored the most recent SMC guide giving the crux as 5a nudging 5b. It couldn't be too hard.

We had little choice over weather with only the Bank holiday on Arran. Pity about the absence of sunshine, but attitudes change. We didn't mind the wet ridge walk on Saturday as there were hot showers at the hotel instead of cold tents. On the Sunday there was a full Highland breakfast. Then a leisurely start after man eating midges had dispersed. We put our faith in a drying wind and plodded up Glen Rosa. We were immediately aware that the modern attitude to path construction on special membranes has produced a far superior approach than the bog slog of yesteryear. I must have had a different attitude to fitness in the early days. I remember walking to a nearby pub from the campsite, but reality is that the nearest pub is in Brodick and my nostalgic hostelry does not exist.

It's not surprising that I didn't remember the length of the route, but this is not entirely to do with memory. It was on the walk up Glen Rosa that I informed him it wasn't 40 years since we were together on Arran. It was only 39. And I hadn't done South Ridge Direct. He did it with someone else as at the time – he reckoned I was too young. What an attitude.

That's how things used to be. We served long apprenticeships. We slowly developed self awareness as we gained experience. We unconsciously sensed latent skills that could be called up in emergencies. We learnt to seize opportunities. We hoped to become mountaineers rather

than climbers. This meant we went out when it was wet. We used only one axe in winter. We climbed in boots and took the sack up. We even climbed down. We are from an age when the attitude was that the leader must not fall.

However we also come from an age when climbing breeches automatically provided a loop for your peg hammer. Yes we carried pegs, and naturally we used them, but with the attitude this was to be limited to ground up first ascents or in situations of widespread acceptance by the climbing community. Enjoyment comes in many guises. Perhaps there was an attitude that for enjoyment the climb itself was more important than the quality of the ascent.

For me this attitude prevails and I aim to select my routes and make the most of opportunities. Time moves in only one direction, and I have missed too much already thanks to a motorbike accident. That's why we diverted to Skye because the weather forecast was good from the west, that's why we forced routes and succeeded in Spain. It's about doing what is expedient at the time, and it's about enjoyment rather than about ethics.

This was our attitude to South Ridge Direct. It was too good to miss. The route is a natural line taking the frontal ridge of a Matterhorn-shaped mountain at the head of a wild valley, with an aesthetic finish onto the very summit. We wanted to climb the route in as satisfying a manner as possible, and with most of the pitches at less than the overall VS grade, and with the crux being a crack (my favourite feature) we would get up ... one way or another.

We were late getting to the bottom of the ridge where the number of sacks indicated much activity above. We could see at least two groups with one below and one above the crux area. No need to rush, so we geared up. It was cold. We know about too much clothing restricting movement, but with

little thought about style we pulled on fleeces and anoraks. Unlike those above we shouldered our sacs and clumsily set off. We alternate led a couple of easy slab pitches, and noted two climbers traversing onto the route above us. Our route. My attitude to queuing and queue jumping has not changed over the years, but space is limited and I make no comment. I made no comment then. We took our time. The sun was beginning to make short appearances. Arran must have the roughest granite of anywhere. We caught the rogue pair at the top of the famous S crack pitch at a superb belay below the crux Y crack.

Any reader of climbing books and magazines (and Journals) must be aware of long-running debates on climbing ethics and the progress achieved. Freeing of aid routes and growing lengths of E grade lists demonstrate improvements in performance and higher levels of conduct. But what proportion of today's climbers adhere to codes or principles. What proportion rely on sticky boots, new protection, and a willingness to fall. Activities of the pair in front raise related questions. How long can you rest on the rope. How many times can you come off. How many goes before giving someone else a chance.

After time-consuming and voluble attempts (understood to be inspections), after swapping leads, after five falls between them – I commented. This was not without precedence. I have commented in other fall situations. I am the cigarette smoking older climber who with a mixture of concern and contempt scrutinized Joe Simpson on the occasion of one of his earliest accidents. See his book – *This Game of Ghosts*. If they ever read this I trust my new found falling friends accept my comments in a similar manner to Joe Simpson. More than just comment – I became involved. During a lull in their heated haranguing and as they surveyed bleeding knuckles, I

offered encouraging advice on how an opportunist would surmount the crux and I also offered my secret weapon – a no. 3 Friend. Arguments ceased, the Friend was accepted, placed, pulled on and stood on.

We followed past blood and chalk, and we also relied on direct aid. But it was swift, and without losing contact with rock. It was a style that would not scare witless anyone below. It was an answer to a crux that allowed me with a gammy leg and a partner with a dicky ticker to relish the climb. It was an act between two climbers (hopefully mountaineers) with complete understanding of each others ability and with responsibility for one another. It was climbing together for enjoyment and not ego, and without putting anyone at risk or even impinging on others. We were held up briefly at the 'layback' pitch, but then disengaged from the sparring partners and romped solo up the final section. A superb route. Let's go to Arran, he'd said. As good as never before, I chided.

Attitudes are changing in all areas, and as a final note I record another visit to Arran within the 39 years recalled above. I visited with my wife and my mother after the ending of a 50-year secrecy rule and the Government allowing access to information. This concerned the sinking of HMS Dasher, a converted aircraft carrier, off Brodick on 27 March 1943. With 379 lost souls this was second only to the tragedy of HMS Royal Oak. I was three months old and never met Able Seaman William Barnes.

QUARRYING & TROWBARROW

Ralph Henderson

Since the Stone Age our evolving civilisation has demanded more and more use of stone. Initially for use as tools and weapons, but then massive use of stone in construction works of all types. A result is that quarries are part of our landscape, and they occur throughout the Lakes and elsewhere in Britain. Many of us will have climbed in these quarries without much thought as to why they were dug or what may be their future.

On the fringes of the Lakes is an old limestone quarry called Trowbarrow. In fact Trowbarrow is a small wooded limestone hill, some five miles north-west of Carnforth (M6, J35) and within sight and walking distance of Silverdale Station. It became a quarry when in 1857 the new railway from Carnforth to Ulverston was built a few hundred yards away. Some twenty-five men worked the quarry and processing plant during its hundred year working life. Each man had his pitch along the quarry face, using ropes to work from the top to drill holes for explosives. The broken limestone was processed to become lime for building, industry and agriculture. Some stone was mixed with tar from the Carnforth gasworks producing tarmacadam which was used on Blackpool Promenade in 1904.

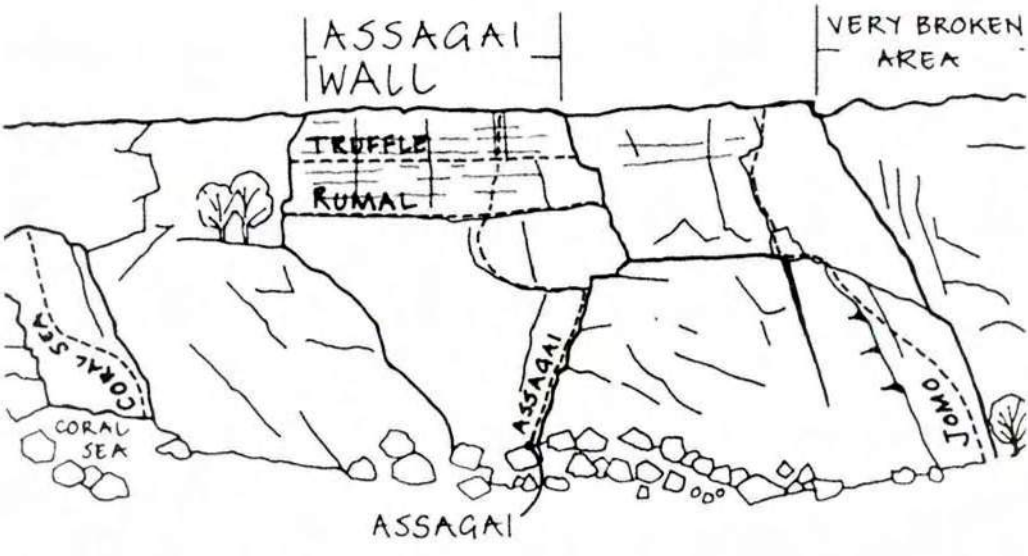
Quarrying ceased in 1959 and the work's buildings were demolished in the mid 1960s, about the time when rock climbing routes were being pioneered. The quarry owners made attempts to stop climbing by blasting some faces, but, ironically, this produced yet more interesting routes. During the intervening twenty-six years the thirty-six acre site become well used by climbers, walkers, botanists, geologists and motorbike scramblers, even though the site was private and no access permissions were given. The final private owner, Tarmac, retained ownership until such time as it became clear that the site could never

Jean Jeanie *Photo: John Sparks Photography, Lancaster*

be used as a quarry again. So it was in 1996 that Tarmac made it known to the Arnside & Silverdale AONB Landscape Trust that they wanted to dispose of the quarry site.

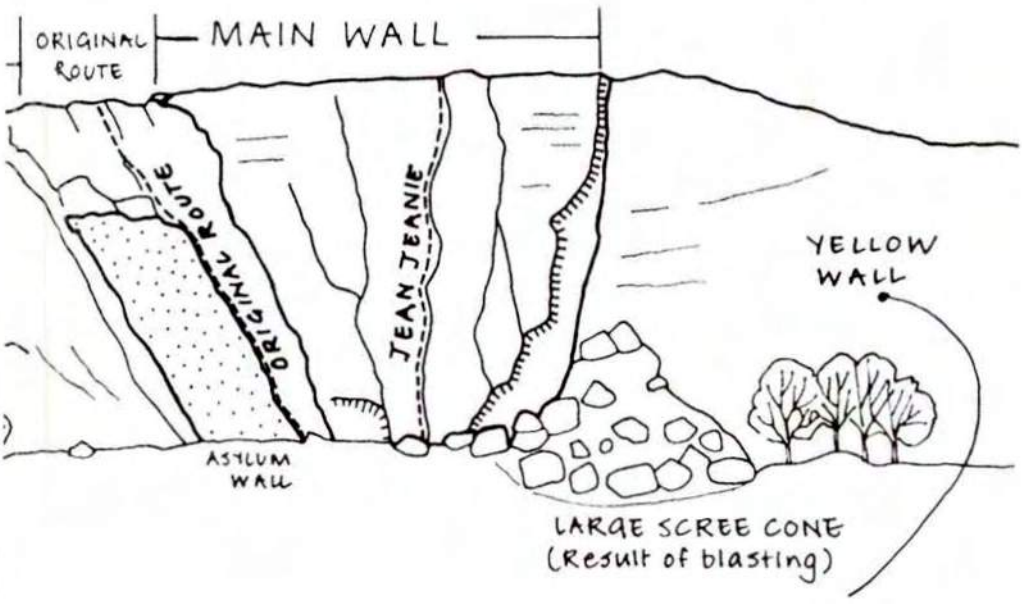
It was, I think I can fairly say, fortunate that two mountaineers occupied key positions in local AONB organisations. One was the AONB's Countryside Management Officer, ex Outward Bound Instructor and rock climber Ian Henderson. The other was myself, ex Local Government engineer and Munro bagger, and crucially, Chairman of the AONB Landscape Trust, a registered environmental charity. It was Ian who led me up the only two climbs in Trowbarrow at my level, and which, combined with some abseiling, awoke old skills and enabled me to confidently complete the In Pinn in difficult conditions.

After agreeing to 'save Trowbarrow' I had to establish rapidly the framework of the campaign because Tarmac head quarters indicated that they wanted to dispose of the site quickly. Tarmac had others interested in purchasing the site whose use



would have resulted in it being fenced off. Fortunately Tarmac agreed to give us first option. My fellow Trustees agreed to act as an enabling organisation but did not wish to own and manage the site. As with all campaigns the first step is to establish the basic facts and objectives. In this case it involved commissioning a consultant to carry out a detailed site survey and costed study. The objective was that the site should be available to the public for the first time and for ever for quiet recreation including rock climbing.

This AONB has an unusual number of organisations which already own and manage publicly accessible land, i.e. the National Trust, Woodland Trust, English Nature, Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Lancaster City Council and the RSPB. You soon learn in trying to persuade them to take a site that they each have their own criteria for land acquisition and rock climbing seems to scare most away – they think it's dangerous ! Eventu ally it was Lancaster City Council who agreed to accept the site



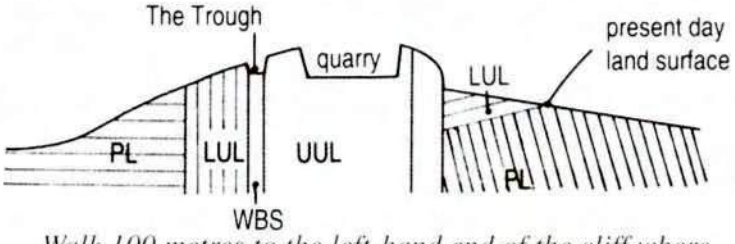
subject to it being fully funded including finances for wardening for the first five years. Part of the agreed permanent management plan was a Liaison Committee upon which the BMC is represented. The wide experience of the BMC with access problems significantly contributed to the successful outcome of this project.

Because of the significant environmental value of the quarry site, there was considerable support from many Government bodies who promised grants if certain conditions were met. So the Landscape Trust had to buy the site and hand it over with maintenance funds thereby enabling the City Council to apply for various grants, a complex situation involving many tight deadlines followed by much suspense awaiting outcomes. The overall costs involved some £50,000.

My initial contact with Chris Brasher resulted in a promise of £10,000 from his Trust (from one registered Charity to another) provided it was matched pound for pound by the Mountaineering world. The Trusts Appeal produced the matching funding from climbing and walking clubs, and folk near and far, and also included £3,500 from the BMC's Access Fund. Once handed over the repairs and safety works were completed by Lancaster City Council. On the 6 June 1997 the site was formally opened by the Mayor of Lancaster as a Local Nature Reserve open to all for quiet recreation.

So what are the various aspects of this site which produced so much support and without which we would not have succeeded in our objective.

First is geology. The following diagram indicates how the quarry was dug with the hilltop removed, and the vertical Ulverston limestone exposed. Beds of limestone were laid down some 340 million years ago in warm and shallow tropical seas just south of the equator. The thousands of long sausage-like shapes (called sticks) which protrude from the face of Main Wall were formed by burrowing creatures.



Walk 100 metres to the left-hand end of the cliff where there is an eroded notch with a thin bed of limestone forming a buttress.

PL – Park Limestone
WBS – Woodbine Shale
LUL – Lower Urswick Limestone
UUL – Upper Urswick Limestone

Those round shapes with spokes are corals preserved where they grew. The hollows on Red Wall were probably formed by tree roots growing in soil overlying the limestone during the Carboniferous period. An eroded shale bed has produced the trough which gives the hill its name. It is all this that gives this site a geological SSSI status and attracts geologists.

Then there is the flora and fauna. Over the last forty years a rich patchwork of habitats has developed with little or no interference. There are some 105 recorded species of plants and 155 different fungi. Digger wasps live in those bare spoil heaps beloved by the mountain bikers and the cliffs are home to bats and a colony of jackdaws. Red and Roe deer and many bird species can be see in the woodlands. Since becoming a Local Nature Reserve, these habitats, particularly the woods, are being managed within a five-year plan. Timber will be extracted, coppicing introduced, and the range of habitats increased which will result in more butterflies.

Finally there is climbing. There are some 113 routes with grades from Jomo (V.Diff) to Diary of a Sane Man (E7). Cracked Actor (E2.5B) and Doubting Thomas (E5.6B) are on

Paul Dearden's tick list. The names Jean Jeanie and Aladdinsane remind us of the inspiration from David Bowie's songs. The latest BMC Lancashire Guide lists the 113 routes including 5 with three stars and 16 with two stars and includes specific advice for visitors to the site.

So without the quarrying of the nearly two hundred foot high hill called Trowbarrow, we would not be able to enjoy the many aspects of what has become Trowbarrow Local Nature Reserve. In Jon Sparks' Crag Profile in *High* magazine (March 1997), he says "there are quarries and quarries, dank little holes with scruffy little climbs, rusting bolts and rusting supermarket trolleys, and the other kind; most of Avon Gorge, large chunks of Froggat and Curbar, Millstone Edge, quarries that feel like crags. Trowbarrow is that kind of quarry". In his book *Classic Rock Climbs*, Paul Dearden recommends some five climbs, and he enthuses about the Trowbarrow setting, but he also warns that "it is still technically a working quarry and so one day the rock faces may be removed !". In the *Rock Climbing in Northern England* guide there is the request that "should the quarry owners ask you to leave then please do so courteously!"

This is already history. The new BMC *Lancashire Rock* tells a different story, and Trowbarrow is now open for all for quiet enjoyment. Thank you to the many of you who helped bring this about. Perhaps we should only allow new quarries if we can ensure that there will be a publicly enjoyable end result, with three star climbs of course.

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6. Trowbarrow, the history, geology, wildlife and rock climbs, an educational guide obtainable from the AONB Office, Old Station Buildings, Arnside, LA5 OHG

POUR MADAME, LE DORTOIR: A CAUTIONARY TALE

Paul Roberts

She said, "I don't like being with just one other person, whoever it is".

It hadn't been a good start to our Tour du Mont Blanc, only the fourth day and the party was down from eight to two: a further reduction threatened.

We cheated by using the Bellevue lift; after a misty plod over the Col de Tricot, the Chalet de Miage was an attractive prospect for the first night, with a comfortable dormitory and a reputation for good food.

"No way" said Hamish, a guest of this Fell and Rock party, "the day is young and we must press on !"

And press on he did, his reluctant host, like Sancho Panza, trundling in his wake.

We were down to six, but the omelette and tarte myrtille justified our decision: we toasted absent friends.

At Les Contamines the rain bucketed down. I reduced the girl in the chemist's to hysterics by asking for sun cream. Chris and David had expressed doubts about this walk, and the weather settled it: the hot rocks of the south were calling, and we were down to four.

We groped around in thick mist and new snow, searching for the Refuge Croix de Bonhomme: it was really not worth finding, a cold cavernous depressing place, closing for the winter, so we went on to the comforts of the Hotel Nova at Chapieux. She wasn't happy: by not crossing the Col du Four in thick cloud and wet snow, we were not doing "the proper route".

Worse was to follow: Les Contamines to Chapieux had been too much for Reg's ailing back: he could go no further

and, with Sheila, departed for the valley.

We were down to two !

A short day to the Maison Longe, where we shared a fondue with the shepherd's family, quite the social highlight of the tour.

Swirling clouds over the Col de la Seigne gave dramatic views over the Mont Blanc, our first sight of the big mountain, me reminiscing about a crossing on skis many years ago.

Not only were we the only two survivors of our party but other walkers on the Tour du Mont Blanc were rare: we had the Refuge Chécrouit to ourselves. Bulldozing of ski pistes made route-finding to Courmayeur difficult, the TMB path being cut away and marked 'no pedestrians'.

Thick mist at the Refuge Bertone, so straight down to the Val Ferret, with more complaints that we were not doing the 'proper route'. The weather at Lavachey was foul and I spent the day with Emily Brontë: my companion had a wet slosh over the Col Sapin, "the way we should have gone yesterday".

Financial constraint committed my companion to the dormitory when there was a choice of that or a bedroom: as the French speaker of the group I had the delicate task of explaining, "Pour moi, une chambre, pour Madame, le dortoir". This produced a predictable Gallic response, with a twitch of a smile, "Ah, les Anglais, quelle délicatesse !"

Champex was like Bridlington in winter, the Fenêtre d'Arpette in thick cloud, an embarrassing moment taking compass bearings up the road at Trient and, at last, a perfect day on the Col de Balme, the Chamonix peaks laid out before us: I sensed that my companion wished to be alone in this orgy and my group was at last down to one as I revelled in the

traverse of the Aiguillette des Posettes and so down to Tré-le-Champ.

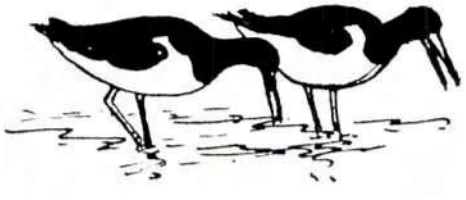
We met up again and agreed that we should complete this walk.

Brévent in thick cloud, so Lac Blanc, Flégère, the lower balcony route and les Houches.

Walking through the hotel door, where the eight of us had bravely marched out so long ago, we solemnly shook hands.

La boucle était fermée !

Supper in a pretentious restaurant was a rather mournful affair. "Say something nice", she said. "We're going home tomorrow," I said.



A DEBT REPAID

Dave Gregory

When I began climbing, a fresh-faced fifteen-year-old, who looked, I have since been told, about twelve, a certain Townsend was the elder statesman of the local club, the Peak C.C., and a man of some reputation. He had done new routes on Stanage, still well-thought-of; Narrow Buttress is protectable nowadays but Townsend's Variation is as frightening now as it must have been then.

Each Friday I used to do my homework in the Central Library in Sheffield and, on its closing at nine, walk to the pub in which the Peak were accustomed to meet and learn where that Sunday's activity would be. On one such Friday no one would admit to having the slightest interest in climbing anything on the following Sunday but just before I had to rush for my bus I was saved by Townsend's materialising at the bar.

Yes, he was going out on Sunday. To Burbage. We met at the Trippet Lane bus stop, usual time, Sunday morning, when the Club's Friday night disinterest was explained. He had had a strict instruction from Eric Byne, the then guidebook editor, to hurry up with the work on Burbage, which was long overdue. He had approached all the other Peak activists and stirred up a surge of apathy. Innocent I was his muggins for the day, I remember pointing out, very tentatively, because he had written the Burbage section, that the current guidebook had three of its routes in the wrong order. I was pointed up my first ever new route; a modest offering which he called, since he didn't offer a name, Still Orange, after my then, and now, favourite tipple.

When a group of the club's younger members went on a

first visit to Wasdale he made a point of telling us about New West, Rib and Slab, and, if we were up to it, South West. This latter had been his first Very Severe lead off gritstone and its quality had impressed him. That trip we chickened out but on a later visit I did savour its exposure over West Jordan Gully. It must have been nearly forty year's later that Ron first dropped a hint that he wouldn't mind doing South West again. A hint which he repeated tactfully more than once. There was no mention of who was going to lead it but I, arrogantly, assumed that it would be me on the sharp end, in view of my one-time mentor's advancing years.

In April my son and his regular rope-mate shepherded me up one of the Ben's winter classics and, while waiting on the stances, I wondered if he was repaying some sort of a debt. Did he remember that superb winter when we lived close to Froggatt Edge, which was covered with an unbroken crust and he, still in single figure years, with the opportunity developed by short axes, first got his taste for the white stuff ?

I too had a debt to repay and the Townsends and I arranged to attend the June Fell and Rock meet at Brackenclose. They were going to collect their daughter after she finished work and so we drove up independently on the Thursday. We didn't suppose that there would be huge queues these days for a route on Pillar, even at the weekends, but it would undoubtedly be quieter on a Friday.

I had driven up during a glorious afternoon and was long fast asleep when they arrived. Friday dawned fine and I had had my breakfast, greased my walking boots, made the sandwiches and packed my sack by the time the Pillar expert surfaced. Not as good as yesterday but fine enough he decided and we drove up to the parking place – you're allowed a little latitude in your declining years – and set off up Mosedale. We set a steady guide's pace up to Black Sail, no short cuts up

the screey steeps for us, and rested a while on the saddle. There was a threat of wind but as yet the sky was still clear and we started the zigzag not-quite-contouring to Robinson's Cairn.

The gully we had to cross before we could rise up to below Pillar's South-west face had us both fooled. We could neither of us remember any difficulty here before. The way to cross seemed obvious but it was wet and mossy and developed an alarming exposure but it led to easy, grassy scrambling to the foot of the West Jordan Gully and our route.

Ron, I thought, could do the little introductory pitch and then I could take over. I loaded him with today's metal necessaries and he turned to the task in hand.

"I wonder how I shall get on?" he said, "I haven't touched rock for nine years."

My unspoken decision to lead the rest seemed justified but he arrived at the first stance without difficulty.

I followed him there, clipped in, and started to take the gear off him and rack it on my bandolier.

"What's going on?" he wanted to know.

"Aren't I leading the rest then?"

"No, I want to lead it all."

And lead it all he did. We did it in more pitches than the book said and he took us up a better finish than the book's, overlooking the Gully. We kept the rope on for the descent to Jordan Gap and worked our way from there to the sacks and sandwiches.

Half way through this he stopped chewing to ask, "Did you enjoy that, then?"

"No," I answered truthfully. "I was scared stiff".

"Why?"

"I kept wondering what I should tell Madge if you fell off and got killed."

I could just imagine it, I should arrive back at the hut alone, suitably contrite.

"Where's Townsend?" she'd say. (She always calls him Townsend).

"I've left him on Pillar."

"Why?"

"Well he's dead. It didn't seem worth bringing him back."

She'd be annoyed. You know what these Fell and Rock ladies are like. Doing away with someone's husband ranks pretty high on the scale of crimes in the Fell and Rock. Not as high as going home leaving the dorm unswept or a pile of unwashed pots in the sink but higher than not washing your saucepans before you eat the meal you prepared in them. But Ron was unabashed. "Besides," I said, "I've never done a route in a team with a combined age of a hundred and forty before."

"I have", he said, between munches, "but there were three of us then."

And, some chews later, "You've slipped up on your sums, Mr. Maths Teacher. We tot up to a hundred and forty four."

"What a gross pair," I thought, and me only sixty five.

We took it slowly back, having the sense to go up the Jordan Gully and over the Gap to join the path rather than cross that lower gully again. We were both a bit lost in thought and made one or two unnecessary excursions up sheep trods on our way back to Robinson's Cairn. I chose to go down the zigzags rather than trail all the way to Black Sail Pass and back, and my intrepid leader followed complaining a trifle about his knees.

Along the relative flat of Mosedale we managed some conversation. About the quality of the route. Whether many people climbed Pillar these days. About the quality of that particular route, and other Wasdale classics. I'd not done Moss

Ghyll Grooves since my callow youth and his ears pricked up.

"It's a lot shorter walk to Moss Ghyll," he said. "Steeper but shorter."

I said nothing.

Madge was relieved to see him and when she found out that he'd led it her face was a picture.

The topic of Moss Ghyll did come up during tea but Saturday it tippled down and climbing seemed to be out for the weekend. But September, "September can be a good month in Wasdale," Townsend said.

Had I got a guidebook to Scafell ?

CARING FOR THE LAKE DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK

Derek Lyon

In these times of specialisation, qualifications and risk assessment it is lovely to contemplate those seemingly far off days when I joined the Lake District National Park's Voluntary Wardens Service and all that was required was for a candidate to be warm and breathing. No-one asked if I could read a map, walk uphill for more than 100 yards (no such thing as metres) or point out, for example, Great Gable from Lingmell. This did lead to folk with some embarrassing gaps in their knowledge being accepted. One of my colleagues who, one day, proved to be incapable of showing a visitor the route to Swirl How from Coniston Old Man, fortunately found that train spotting was a more enthralling pastime.

My 30 years of membership have, however, brought me immense joy and companionship with a bunch of folk who give devoted service to an area they hold in unrivalled affection. Obviously if they are leading a guided walk then they have to be 'up front' but generally they like to carry out their duties as unostentatiously as possible. This does not prevent there being a certain amount of rivalry between the four geographical areas into which we are divided for administrative purposes. This was evidenced by the competitive spirit revealed when we had a nature quiz. In my area team we had a member who was becoming almost combative so we watched with interest as he was blindfolded for the next round where he had to identify an object. He felt it, shook it, tapped it, rolled it, and in the end as he bit into it he said "I know, it's a dried bilberry". It wasn't, it was a piece of rabbit dung.

Our range of duties has provided endless opportunities for injury (self inflicted), gaining knowledge (which end of

the branch to sit on whilst sawing) and hilarity. The latter is quite often unintentionally provided by the wide range of society we meet in our contacts with visitors and residents. I choose to lead quite a lot of guided walks and of course you are at the mercy of chance as to who turns up for a walk. As we walked up Grisedale an American lady asked what sort of wild life could be seen on the fells. I mentioned deer, hares, foxes, types of birds etc, but having learnt that she had been in the Alps, I said that there weren't any marmots. I then went on to say that when my wife and I were doing a high level tour in the Stubai we came across two marmots who were so busy fighting over a burrow that we were able to walk right up to them and take photographs. She remained silent for a pace or two and then said "Are they big enough to pull mules down". I said "Burrows as in holes in the ground, Madam, not burros as in Hee Haw Hee Haw". I think it was Churchill who said that the Americans and ourselves are two nations divided by a common tongue.

Nowadays our trainees are expected to be very competent map readers as you must be able to respond to requests as to location, direction etc. but I was let off lightly this year when I was approached in Glenridding car park. The chap said he was about to set off with his party but he just wanted to check where the footpath on his leaflet left the car park. Even I could understand his difficulty when his leaflet showed the start point as being Cow Bridge Car Park.

We have to have a modicum of first-aid knowledge but I must say that in these most litigious times I feel that a complete course in exclusion clauses is becoming a sine qua non. But I suppose it would not be the right thing to do as one approaches a groaning mass at the foot of a crag to state that one is not holding oneself out to have professional competence in surgery and to require a signature on a form of re-

lease. Years ago at my first course I was asked what should I do on first coming across a recumbent body on the fells? I uttered all the usual conventional responses which were scornfully overridden with the correct answer "Go through his pockets". And of course in these permissive times recumbent bodies on the fells are not always there in connection with expiring life but are more to do with creating it.

The great outdoors brings out the creativity in many of us, and in many different forms but it did surprise one of my colleagues as she pushed through a screen of trees on one of the islands on Windermere in search of litter to find herself viewing a jolly romp being filmed for a pornographic film. There has been no shortage of volunteers to do the boat patrols since. My experiences on the boat on Coniston have not been so interesting but they have had their amusing moments although frequently finding that people have been lighting fires on Peel Island, usually next to the National Trust notice which says "No Fires", is not one of them. It was entertaining though when we picked up an exhausted 10–12 year-old windsurfer and were taking him and his craft a mile or two upwind to his starting point. He pointed out his elder brother waiting on the shore; the relief and delight on his face were a joy to behold when I said "Your brother? We picked him up half an hour ago".

One of our more difficult rescues involved a very very heavy man who, in terribly squally conditions, found himself totally incapable of controlling his Laser speed machine. We watched him go over a couple of times and went to offer assistance which was refused. We retreated tactfully but kept watch and saw some repeat performances and then a significant failure to attempt self righting, so back we went and found a completely exhausted man incapable of further effort. Too heavy to be readily hauled over the gunwale of our launch,

we put the boarding ladder over and he gratefully clung to it and eventually climbed up but his sodden weight was too much for the top rung and it broke. Avoirdupois plus gravity ensured that he broke the next three rungs too, as he returned to the water. Hastily improvised rope strops got him in but we could have done with some prussiking stirrups.

The association with my fellow Voluntary Wardens has been a constant joy and, as in most organisations with a common purpose, we have a bond which unites us and which creates an intense loyalty. This was demonstrated to me when I yet again got home by dawn's light having been seduced by pints of Jennings. I crept in, silently washed and shaved, stuck my head round the bedroom door said "the Wardens' meeting went on but they put me up for the night, must go or I'll be late for work" and fled. My wife thought "I've had enough of this, I'll bet he was in a pub all night". So she got hold of my Warden's diary and rang all 15 members of the committee and said "Did Derek stop with you last night?" and all fifteen said "Yes".

THE ARABIAN TIGER

Len Willis

The Arabian Leopard is considered by some to be one of the most beautiful animals in the world. But it is an endangered species. It still lurks within high valleys of the Al Hajar mountains of Oman and the United Arab Emirates, but is rarely seen any more in its wild habitat.

NOT SO 'The Arabian Tigers.' They are doing well, thank you kindly. And are in evidence on the vertical rock faces of the same Al Hajar (that means *rock* in Arabic) mountains every Friday. You've never heard of them? Well then, you soon will, if you belay yourself into that armchair and read on.

"Hear ye!" "Hear ye!" First ascent baggers, or aspirant baggers. There are thousands of lines on dozens of crags just waiting for you. Drive to the foot of a 250m crag in your car, park it off the road, walk and scramble for ten minutes, and rope up for any length of route you feel like tackling, from a mere boulder of 30m, to as many rope-lengths as you like. Chimneys, cracks, slabs, overhangs, whatever your forte or fixation demands are right there in front of you. Hire a 4-wheel drive, (or use shanks pony for half an hour) and you can pick a line on a 450m high wall that rises above a narrow scree slope and soars up into the azure far above you. The escarpment on the opposite side of the ravine is of similar proportions, and may not be further than a hundred metres distant. This great cleft, slashed into the limestone is a 'wadi' in Arabic. Invariably, it has a dry riverbed running through it, but you'd better beware, that riverbed can turn into a raging torrent in a matter of minutes.

You can find the like of what we've described in a dozen locations in just one relatively small section of this vast expanse of rugged mountain terrain. Chain after chain of jagged

Typical gear requirement *Photo: Len Willis*

peaks follow in rapid succession for well over a hundred miles. Their flanks fall abruptly into narrow gorges, from which branching chasms cut deeply into the massifs on both sides, forming subsidiary ridges and knife-edge arêtes.

The History Lesson Starts Here

The scene described here has been home to a handful of local Arab mountain folk for generations. Some of their villages are unbelievably remote, and demand no mean scrambling ability to attain. They must have negotiated precarious routes, either bare-footed or wearing crude sandals in search of missing goats, or whatever; and we take our hats off to them. (To the shepherds, not the goats!) Most of these tiny settlements are abandoned and in ruins now, but there are actually a few homesteads that are still inhabited, either permanently, by the hardy farmers, eking out a living on a morsel of arable land and a few goats, or only for a few months a year. The ancestral home seems to exert a pull on the older generation, having been persuaded to join their sons, who got a taste of urban life in the coastal cities, and a well-paid government job. They scramble up timeworn tracks, laden with supplies for a week or so, to spend time in the surroundings of their younger days. One must respect the privacy of such stalwarts, because these rarefied wastes are really theirs.

The mountain population must have been much greater at the time when a Royal Air Force base was located at Sharjah. These mountain wilds were used for training and practice in assault, and mountain rescue. That was around 1960 I suppose. The local Bedouins must have had the shock of their lives when their quiet existence was shattered by the raucous clamour of a band of Tommys hob-nailing, clinkering, and tricouni-ing their way up the mountain gully towards them. It says a lot for their tolerance that a corps of the British Assault

Typical rock *Photo: Len Willis*

Force in desert training was never wiped out by an avalanche of well-aimed boulders. (Shades of boulder trundling eh!? You 'Crag Lough' reprobates!) It is far more likely that the invaders would be invited to have a welcoming cup of tea under the shade of a canvas awning in exchange for a cigarette.

After the departure of the R.A.F. a decade or so passed by with no known activity – other than goat husbandry – taking place. Then along came a small group of stalwarts with British-sounding names who put up three dozen or so routes on the crags not far from the city of Al Ain, in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Routes were given names – as routes are wont to be – and typed out on sheets of A4 paper. All grades of difficulty up to HVS were recorded. Although this first crop of first-ascenders moved away from the area, it is fortunate that some tattered copies of their exploits remained, so that they can be given due recognition in a guidebook soon to be published. Names of two of these pioneers are, Dave McKinnell and Bob Jackson. Thanks to the stalwart efforts, and time-consuming research by a dedicated member of the climbing community, Alan Stark, who, ably assisted by nearly all other active members of the loosely-knit fraternity, a comprehensive guide will appear, hopefully towards the end of year 2,000. Many of the routes dating back to the 1970s have been repeated recently, to verify their original grading, and were found to be at the top of their grades. The steepness and exposure of the harder of these routes should push them into the 'E' bracket.

So what's all this about 'Arabian Tigers?' I'll tell you. They live here. And like I said, they're a growing breed. An inauspicious restart of rock-climbing activity in the area took place a couple of decades ago, without rumpus or ballyhoo. Two or three hard men with a love of the vertical, and with experience of British rock behind them, quietly explored the wadi walls close to Ras Al Khaimah and picked off obvious

lines. Hours of effort and buckets of sweat were expended in clearing away loose rock, and some superb routes in all grades from V. Diff, through Severe, V.S., HVS and into the 'Es' emerged. These were well recorded and described, and will be published together with diagrams, photographs and drawings in the forthcoming guidebook.

The delicacies just described are right on their doorstep. On Thursday afternoons they pack the camping gear and pick any spot that takes their fancy for a barbecue and night under the stars. There's no hassle. There's no 'No Camping' or 'Private Property' or 'Keep Out' signs. The wild is theirs to enjoy, unmolested and unbothered. But mentioning bother, one has to be tolerant of the extremely tame goats that will eat your sleeping bag, or your hair, whichever end of you they decide to begin their middle-of-the-night-meal at. If you take refuge in a tent, don't be surprised if they eat through a guy-rope. But I reckon that's a small price to pay for the wonderful freedom one feels in these wilds.

Getting back to those tigers, those with an aversion to goats can drive out on Friday mornings, and by nightfall a new route is in the bag. Or two, if they decide on short ones of say three rope lengths. Or half a route, if its desperate, or a long one, or needs a lot of cleaning. Incidentally, cleaning doesn't mean gardening around here, it means quarry work. They arm themselves with a small crowbar, not a trowel. It dangles from their belt when not in active service, and clangs against the rock face as they move, warning others not to get too close. When in use, the message is plain enough; cascades of doubtful rock prized off the cliff, and adding to the scree below, emphasizes the advisability of making a detour. The second on the rope wears a really serviceable tin hat. Below overhang stances are much beloved by seconds of the Arabian Tigers.

There aren't many of the breed; around twenty perhaps, but unlike the leopard, the tigers are on the increase, and do the name proud. One Arch-Tiger, by name John Gregory, and his climbing companion, the lovely Tigress Dee McEnery are adding to their tally of first ascents at the rate of at least one a week. John's exploits in the Ras Al Khaimah area began about twenty years ago. Dee started about six years ago. In 1984/85 John teamed up with an American climber called Jan Smith. In the intervening years he had several other partners, but everybody here wants to bag his or her own first ascents. At the time of writing, John has at least 200 routes to his credit. He's disappointed if the line that looked so promising from below turns out to be just a Severe. It has to be Hard VS to merit his mild approval. Those in the E category, he counts as icing on the cake. And the duo mentioned above has already confected quite a lot of 'icing' around these dry valleys. There are E1s and E2s aplenty, and a smattering going into higher numbers, not only with JG and DE's initials against them, but also by John's son Ian, and his rope partner Tony Kay. There are possible 'E-something' lines by the dozen on the dozens of crags just begging for attention. That's the rich potential in the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

Other Arabian Tigers entered the fray in the mid-90s and must get a mention. There's Bill Wheeler, Steve Clarke, Tim Richards, Paul Wright and the aforementioned Alan Stark. Incidentally, Alan hails from West Cumbria, and there's no excuse at all for him not being a member of the FRCC. These stalwarts ticked off lines on most of the faces that had previously received attention, and found tempting titbits on hitherto unexplored faces. Things really began to happen in 1997. A hurricane of sorts struck, in the person of the redoubtable, unstoppable, ex-Swiss guide Antione Farbre – "Oui, yez, eet ees serrious, but we shall get haup. O.K." Big, adventurous

routes came into vogue, 12 or 14 pitches got a 'TD' tag. They provide unrelenting, sustained, hard climbing. Getting benighted was not unknown. Some of these babies have no easy way off. They're more akin to Alpine routes than any faces the U.K. has to offer.

The younger generation – not mentioned so far, except for Ian Gregory and Tony Kay – pushed up the standard by climbing a number of technically very hard, traditional routs in the E4 and E5 range. And grading such as E3 6a has been added to the local climbing vernacular. Names like Dominic and Damian Cook, and more recently Karl Smith come to mind. Annie Anderson and Mark Ashton are professional climbing instructors at the Dubai Artificial Wall, and are to be found on the real stuff of a weekend. Boulder problems of unbelievable difficulty became the vogue, and succumbed to this youthful band's attacks. Boulders here, by the way can be as big as houses. Wasdale Head barn wall is a pebble by comparison!

Visiting climbers from the U.K. vow to come back as soon as time and funds permit; and enthusiasts from as far afield as South Africa and the U.S.A. have added to campfire yarning by their accounts, no doubt suitably embellished, of spectacular escapades three hundred metres up a vertical face. "He drove a piton into overhanging sand!!"

Alan Stark deserves a repeat mention, because of having undertaken the responsibility of producing the guidebook mentioned above, and advanced far towards its fulfilment. A daunting task considering the vastness of the area and distance between the climbing venues so far opened up. With new routes being added so fast, it's difficult to draw a line, and send copy to the publisher, but it has to be done.

The Geography Lesson Starts Here.

The Al Hajar Al Gharbi mountain chain extends from the tip of the Musandam peninsular at Hormuz and joins the larger Al Jebal-Al Akhdar chain that extends down into the heartland of Oman. Actually, it keeps going till it empties into the 'Empty Quarter' of Saudi Arabia. Most of the peaks are around 1,500m above sea level. The highest being Jebel Harem at over 2,000m. Most of the climbing areas so far investigated happen to be in Oman, but this is a mere technicality, because all are easily accessible from the U.A.E. They are so close to the U.A.E. that no Oman frontier post is crossed before reaching them. A visa is necessary to enter Oman. At present, British passport holders may enter the U.A.E. without obtaining a visa. Unfortunately, U.A.E. nationals must obtain a visa to enter Britain, but, up till now, reciprocal action has not been taken by the U.A.E. government.

There are four main climbing areas that have received attention, and that the forthcoming guidebook covers. But literally hundreds of valleys have never been looked at from the rock-climbers viewpoint. These four areas are:

NORTH - the valleys, (*wadis* in the local vernacular) within half-an-hours drive of Ras Al Khaimah. 1 1/2 to 2 hours drive from Dubai. To name a few, in geographical order, starting from the north:

Wadi Ghalilah – Breathtaking just to walk up the dry river bed. Overhanging cliffs on either side, of such scale you think you're in the Dolomites. No kidding mind! Come and see for yourself! The whole valley, at least three miles long has at present only about thirty routes recorded. Some of them are Alpine ED+.

One climb is 600m, and of TD standard, sustained. We hasten to add that it doesn't reach the top. There's another tier

above the ledge waiting to be done. Many of the climbs on the lower tiers are overhanging, one overhang after another, if you like strenuous work, this is the place for you.

Wadi Bih – pronounced "Bee." (We think it should be 'Wadi Dee'! To go with 'Dee-lightful Wall' nestling in there!) There are at least ten separate crags in Wadi Bih, all of them large, with a lot of routes recorded on them, and scope for hundreds more. A popular venue, not only because of the superb cliffs, but also because it's accessible by car. (Not after heavy rain however, when the whole valley floor becomes a raging torrent. But that is a rare occurrence.)

Wadi Qada'a – The entrance to the wadi is guarded by the stately 'Sentinel Peak' on which some routes have been done. A more popular venue is further up the valley however, where there are a series of shorter crags lying on both sides.

Over a hundred routs have been recorded. That's because it's only a few minutes drive from the city of Ras-Al-Khaimah, and the lucky so-and-so's who live there can slip away from work early and do a new route on a winter's afternoon. Stable rock and possibilities up to E3 standard.

Jebel Idhn – A small, isolated, but accessible crag, with less than perfect rock. Only a handful of lines done.

DIBBA – This is a town on the East Coast of the peninsula that juts northwards, creating the narrow Straits of Hormuz. It faces the Arabian Sea, which is part of the Indian Ocean. Dibba is at the extreme north-eastern tip of the U.A.E. while Ras-Al-Khaimah is directly across the peninsula at the north-western tip. Both are near the frontier with the part of Oman that forms the point of the peninsula. Oman is split into two

parts, with the U.A.E. in between. Dibba is 80-100 miles from the cities of Dubai and Sharjah over super highways. A mountain road of about 45 miles, with un-metalled surface, but passable with care in normal cars links Dibba with Ras-Al Khaimah. (It isn't passable for *any* vehicle after heavy rain has washed parts of it away.) Actually, although it links two U.A.E. towns, for the most part, it's in Oman, but you wouldn't know it, because the Oman police post is situated on a branch-road some distance north.

Although the U.A.E. has umpteen miles of splendid beaches, Dibba's are the most popular, for camping, swimming, snorkelling, windsurfing and for the climber – why? – festering of course. But in addition, there's Wadi Khab Shamsi not far away that includes:

Wadi Hilti – The steep, overhanging, featureless walls provide an excuse for modern, engineering exploits – that have been exploited. But that's not all, there are good traditional routes, and endless possibilities.

Lower Gorge Walls – A large area offering all sorts of climbing. The Upper Gorge Walls are something else though. The wadi bottom is a favourite route for trekkers, who clamber up the less than 10-metres-wide chasm overhung by great walls of rock. Rock rats dangle on ropes several hundred metres directly above their heads. The comments from both up there to down there, and from down there to up there are unprintable. Definitely.

CENTRAL AREA – HATTA – This climbing ground is the nearest to Dubai, being only an hour's car drive, again over superb highways, and contains Jebel Rawdah. This is different to the other climbing terrain described above. It's more like a crag, or an escarpment, rising from the edge of a rela-

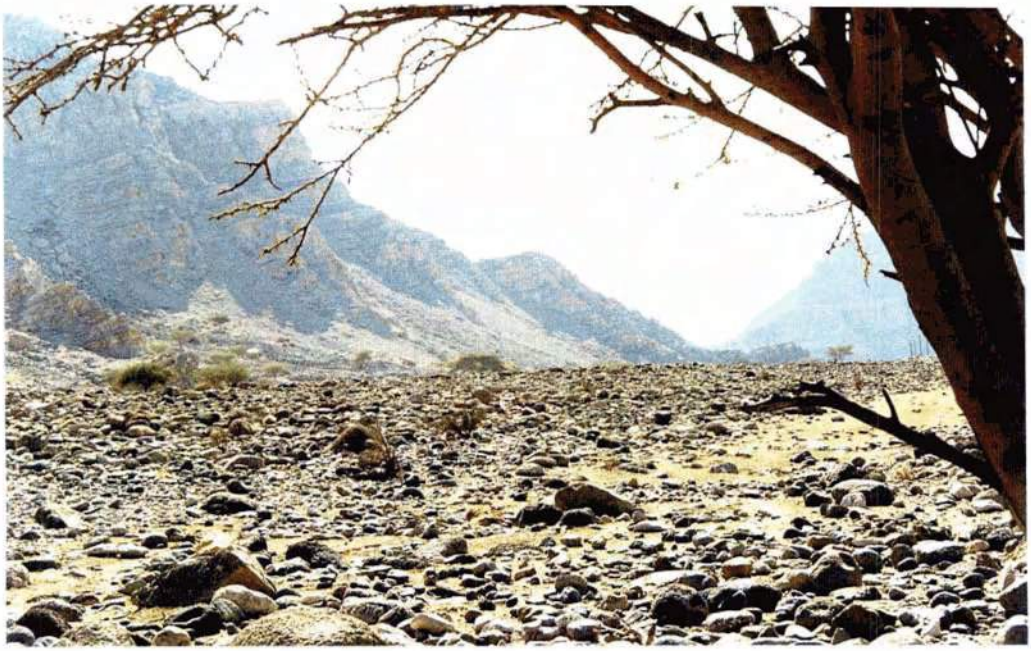
tively flat area of desert. Not unlike the writer's native Crag Lough near to Hadrian's Wall, only four times loftier. And no 'Twice Brewed' half a mile away. You carry your thirst-slake with you in a cool-box.

SOUTH – Near the city of Al Ain, in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, lies the impressive 'Wonderwall'. Vertical faces rise up to150 metres in height, and the whole cliff is almost 1,500 metres long. Around it are several other crags and valleys, but they have more arduous approaches and consequently have received hardly any attention recently. Wonderwall is not so much a crag as a long ridge. It is in an idyllic setting, and has 5 separate areas. The central walls are up to 100 metres high, unbroken, and plumb vertical from bottom to top. Next to it is a venue tailor-made for those who like delicate climbing; it's called 'Wonderslab', 150 m high and pure delight. It's no use trying to describe it; you have to see it.

Dubai has an artificial climbing wall called 'The Pyramids' that is part of a health centre, within an air-conditioned mall. While the diehards keep their fingers in trim on real rock throughout the summer months, those with more sanity can do so here. Aspiring rock rats (but here they're tigers) can learn the basics, and more than the basics, by enrolling in courses. These are at three levels: beginners, intermediates and advanced. The wall was built by a U.K. company specialising in such things. If you visit it, you will recognise some of the names mentioned above in the list of instructors.

Dubai has just about everything else that a modern city can possibly have by way of recreation and entertainment. It doesn't have snow skiing, but it does have sand skiing. Dune bashing in a powerful 4-wheel drive is superb fun. Sailing, karting, paragliding, the list of activities is endless.

We mentioned the summer months a couple of paragraphs



Typical Mountain Country *Photo: Len Willis*

back, and a word on the climate in these parts follows. Die-hards, measuring E6 on the climbers 'Nut-Case' scale go to the crags throughout the year, but by 8.00 am they must find rock that's in the shade, because the rest gets awfully hot. Being exposed to summer sun in these wadis will dehydrate you completely in an hour or so. Even out of the direct sun, the air gets so dry, two litres of water per climber per hour isn't enough to prevent dehydration. That's what the author has been told, and it's eminently believable. He has no first-hand experience. He's not *that* mad. Most, if not all of the owners of those names appearing above *are* that mad. Beginning in October and extending until late April are the wonderful months for climbing, rambling, scrambling and mountain biking around here; or just being in the mountains. You can join a group of ramblers every Friday and on public holidays, and scramble up and down

mountains to your heart's content. All the groups are most welcoming to visitors. It is not advisable to go off on your own though, because there are no Ordnance Survey maps, and although the police and the local armed forces use rescue helicopters, the valley walls shut out cellular phone operation. Anyhow, there's hardly anywhere to land a chopper, so you'd better get used to the idea that you're on your own. Another thing to watch, is that if you think you've found an easy way down, after half an hour of reasonable descent, you will most probably come across a vertical wall, with no way round it, and the only way is up again. Then nightfall, and that happens suddenly here. Travel firms organise many mountain activities such as hiking and biking; but not rock climbing till the present.

If your love is warm rock faces, of whatever grade of difficulty, and you're not really into the snow and ice stuff, with freezing wind, or driving rain, sleet, hail and snow, then book yourself on a trip to Dubai between the beginning of November and the end of March. Bring all the kit you need, because there's no climbers shop here, and get in touch with the writer.

A JOURNEY TO THE "FIVE TREASURES"

John Jackson

In the most northerly section of north-east Nepal one of the wildest and most majestic of mountain ranges borders on Tibet and India. The highest peak, third highest in the World at 8,586 metres is Kangchenjunga. A massive mountain with a descriptive Tibetan name, Kang - meaning snow, chen – meaning big or great, dzo – meaning treasures, and nga – meaning five. Hence the name, Kangchendzonga, usually written Kangchenjunga, translates as "The Five Treasures of the Great Snow". Kangchenjunga has five summits, all of them sacred to the Buddhists of Nepal, Tibet and Sikkim, and as a mountain it has a long history of exploration and mountaineering.

In 1955, just 45 years ago, I was lucky to be a member of the British team that first climbed the highest of the five summits. Twenty-two years later, an Indian expedition made a second ascent by a different route and there have been numerous ascents since then. In 1989, a Russian expedition made a remarkable traverse of four of the five sacred summits. Though climbing expeditions had been given permission to enter this area of north-east Nepal, it was not until 1988 that the Nepalese Government opened up the country for trekking. Since then parties have been going to the Kangchenjunga massif by a variety of routes.

One way is to fly from Kathmandu to Bhiratnagar then bus through the Siwaliks to Dhankutar and Basantpur and from there continue on foot, first over the Milke Danda ridge then down to the Tamur river before ascending to Ghunsa or diverging up the Simbua Khola to reach the Yalung glacier. Another way is to motor along the west-to-east highway from Kathmandu to Phidim and Gopetar near the Nepal-Sikkim border. From the end of the road at Gopetar the trail leads north across western spurs of the Singalila ridge to reach Khebang and Yamphodin

Crossing the Simbua Khola *Photo: John Jackson*

then across the Deorali Danda to the Yalung valley.

I have returned to the Five Treasures a number of times, and in the 1990s, with my wife Eileen, I led a group starting at Basantpur, but having ascended the Simbua Khola to reach the Yalung would recommend that an ascent of the Ghunsa Khola would be more acceptable to trekkers. To reach the Yalung you would then have to cross the Mirgin La and the Sinion La. Probably the most satisfying way round is to start at Gopetar and after reaching the Yalung cross either by the Mirgin or the Lapsongla to reach Ghunsa. I have crossed these passes several times and both are equally interesting. With time to spare at Ghunsa a visit to the northern base camp at Pangpema is possible before a descent to the Tamur and a final trek over the Milke Danda.

These routes and variants on them, all pass through particularly fine country following deep cut gorges or traversing delightful ridges giving superb views of the Everest-Makalu peaks to the north-west and the Kangchenjunga massif to the north-east. It is a fertile and productive land occupied by a sturdy, independent and energetic people. Part of a journey I made many years ago from Darjeeling along the Singalila to the Yalung via Khebang and Yamphodin gives a feel of it and because the year 2000 sees the 45th anniversary of the first ascent of Kangchenjunga here is the story of a trek to the mountain.

Limbus and Tsampa

Though it was still early in the year, there was much life stirring along the ridges and trackways. We saw scarlet minivets, tree creepers, tortoise-shell butterflies, a weasel at Khalipokri and already the flowers of yellow magnolia, pink rhododendron, and mauve primula were beginning to show. The "old man's beard" or Usnea was particularly prolific, glistening with drops of dew that twinkled and sparkled as they caught the rays of the early morning sun. It is always tremendously refreshing to the spirit to be back once again in the foot-

hills of the Himalaya and pleasing to be re-acquainted with the interesting local people. In this instance, some were Chetri but mostly Limbu, a tough and very independent ethnic group of the middle hills in eastern Nepal. At a halting place, tea was available, made without milk but mixed with a liberal amount of 'tsampa'. Tsampa is a barley flour, roasted and stone-ground into a rough mealy consistency and the golden juicy grains are slightly sweet with a flavour that is unique – a flavour produced of the wind, the rain, the warm golden sun and the rich good earth.

Storm Music

For this section of the journey to the Five Treasures, each day at the same time, there was a lightning storm followed by hail and snow. From late afternoon until late evening, lightning streaked hard, sharp and jagged across the sky, or on occasions lilac sheeting lit up the sombre looking ridges. Thunder rolled and reverberated from peak to peak, reminiscent of the roll of the base tympani in a Berlioz symphony. Huge quantities of large hailstones covered the ground to a depth of many inches and as they fell they beat and rattled on the taut canvas of each tent as if buckets of peas were being thrown from the resthouse roof.

Next was a day of contrasts. The morning was cold, misty, dank and uninspiring. Porters who had been carrying barefooted in the snow decided that delay was of little use and the camp was soon a hustle and bustle of ragged figures shouting, gesticulating and roping up their loads. Exhaled breath condensed and slowly spiralled away from each figure silhouetted against a thin mist that was refracting the light from a wan morning sun and a steady drip of melting snow from the resthouse eaves, served to accentuate the slow stirring to life of the day.

We camped by mid-afternoon at Chyangtapu and for some time sat beneath the village Pipal tree sheltering from the hot

sun, whilst our porters relaxed, obviously thankful, amongst clumps of bamboo and wild fig. Our descent from the ridge across the shingle flats of a dried up river bed had been a dusty and thirsty experience so that a refreshing bathe in the crystal clear water of a rock pool outside the village was doubly welcome.

Grain Pounders, Terracing and Fire Lighting

That evening we had another majestic storm and the following morning was cool and fresh. We were away early and had our breakfast three hours later. Early starts make sure you get in many miles of walking during the cool of the day, leaving you with time later to stop and meet the local people, to take photographs, fill in descriptive diaries, and to take note of the ever changing environment. Often the houses were three storied, had thatched roofs with solid eaves and fine gable ends. Verandahs were a common feature and the walls of the houses were either white-washed or a pleasing terracotta as is so often the case in middle Nepal.

Hill slopes were terraced to help prevent erosion during monsoon rains as well as to increase their crops. Each tiny field, carefully hoed, would later grow its crop of barley, wheat or maize. Narrow winding tracks descended the steep terraced spurs for thousands of feet and at the river, having completed the descent, we crossed by a fragile wire and plank bridge.

Soon at a low pass we stopped to talk with a group of itinerant traders and had an amusing time practising fire lighting. The small skinning knives the traders kept in the sheath of a kukri were used in the same way as a Tibetan 'chakma'. A chakma is a small yak hide purse, often covered with brass decorations and with a metal base made of medium-soft iron. Dry kindling and a pebble of quartz, or better still flint, are kept inside the purse. To make a light, the kindling and the stone are held between thumb and forefinger, then struck a long glancing blow with the iron base. This produces a shower of

sparks, the kindling begins to smoulder and soon a fire is blazing. The traders used the blunt iron back of the small skinning knives to strike stone and kindling and produced a light in the same way. Simple as it sounds, several of us tried for a long time without result, whereupon one of the traders lit the kindling with a single blow.

A constant rhythmic thumping could be heard from one of the dwellings on the far side of the pass and investigating, we found two Limbu ladies pounding grain. The method was more sophisticated than any I had seen in other parts of the Himalaya, for instead of using the hand lifted pounding pole, these ladies had a foot treadle to raise a heavy wooden pounder that pounded grain in a hollowed-out stone or quern. This use of the simple lever principle was very effective and must have been much less tiring for them.

Landslips and Education

Because of an exceptionally heavy deluge of rain after we left the traders, we camped early near to a village called Khebang. Our tents were erected on a newly hoed terrace field, the owner of which turned out to be a cheerful little Hindu Chetri.

Close by several Ghul Mor trees were in flower and beyond the rich golden-red blossoms, the view plunged down many thousands of feet to the river then across to the steep partly terraced slopes on the far side. The gorge country of north-east Nepal is most impressive and in the absence of terracing the natural vegetation is a prolific dark green jungle. Ochre coloured slashes of landslips break up the overall powerful green of the sub-tropical landscape at 7,000 feet, which in appearance is particularly reminiscent of the Chin hill country of Burma. Such landslips are becoming more common for the area is very much in the earthquake zone. Natural disasters in the 1960s altered parts of the landscape, then in 1987, a particularly strong earth movement centred in the areas of Dharan and Dhankuta badly

affected the village life in the Arun and Tamur valleys. However, at the time of our arrival in Khebang such happenings lay in the future, and we found the inhabitants to be incredibly happy and friendly people. Local beauties sprinkled water on our heads as we walked beneath bowers of rhododendrons and garlands of flowers were festooned around our shoulders.

The schoolmaster, Lakshmi Prasad led us to the schoolhouse where the children sang songs for us in shrill falsetto voices. After some twenty minutes of the singing in a confined space, two of us went outside for a breath of fresh air and found several scholars also playing truant. They were having a quiet smoke, using an enormous bamboo pipe with the perfect 'cadgers' bowl that must have held about a half pound of tobacco. Khebang was one of the earliest villages in Nepal to have its own school and initially only boys were accepted. We found them taking lessons in Nepali, English, Arithmetic, History and Geography. In later years schools have become more numerous in the Nepal valley and probably because of the excellent example set by Sir Edmund Hillary in the highlands of Sola Khumba, education is increasingly available in some of the more remote areas. Today, though there is still much to be done, it is nevertheless cheering whilst on trek to see young children, both boys and girls, making their way along winding hill tracks to reach some local school. We departed Khebang from the village square surrounded by a throng of men, women and children. As we left, they gave us their blessing – "May the gods be with you".

The Chairman of the school committee at Khebang was also the headman of the village of Yamphodin, the last inhabited settlement on the way to the Yalung valley. There we pitched tents by the river bank. Plumbeous Redstarts, Indian Robins, and a pair of Paradise Fly Catchers greeted our arrival, then an Indian Laughing Thrush added its cheerful call to the general noise and bustle of the camp. Banana trees provided

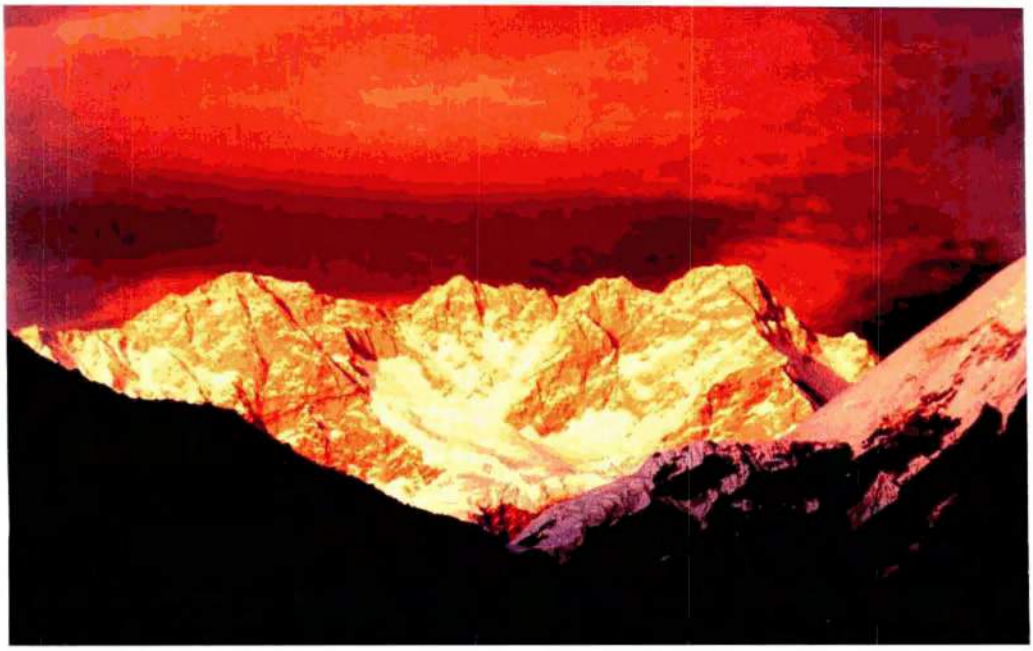
fruit and also part shade for the mud-walled thatched roofed houses which were two storied with verandahs on which the women folk were threshing out barley grain. Chickens scurried out of the doorways of the houses and no doubt would be fed on the corn from some of the hundreds of maize cobs beneath the eaves. These industrious hill people, in addition to growing crops of maize, buckwheat and barley were also cultivating potatoes and a variety of other vegetables. They were most helpful in supplying some fresh food and we found them to be as friendly and accommodating as the other villages we had met in this area of Nepal.

From Yamphodin, we were two days crossing the mountains rising 12,000 ft above this habitation. The trail leads over a high ridge to the Simbua Khola, the river flowing down from the Yalung glacier, which therefore drains the snows of Kangchenjunga.

On the way, the vegetation changes were most interesting for low down on the first day it was still sub-tropical and we saw much of the 'Flame of the Forest'. Later on the journey we reached a more temperate zone ascending through lichen-draped woodland passing by yellow flowered Magnolia, scarlet Rhododendron and trod on dew wet mauve Primula which lay underfoot. Eventually, we came out onto a grassy saddle from which we had clear views of Kang peak, Sharphu, majestic Jannu and other mountains above Ghunsa. The descent from the ridge and down to the river took a couple of hours, the path winding through a peaceful, silent forest of Himalayan Spruce and Blue Pine. A soft cushioning of pine needles lay underfoot and a rich smell of resin permeated the air practically all the way to the swift flowing 'khola' (river). There we camped in a clearing amongst rhododendron thickets at 10,000 feet.

The Yalung Valley and Ramser

The journey to the Five Treasures extended far beyond



Evening light on Kangchenjunga *Photo: John Jackson*

what I have written, but Octong in the Yalung is a neat point to end it, for most treks aim to reach this place. Each year there is a transhumance of the Bhotia people of Ghunsa and Phere to the ablation valley of the Yalung glacier, and Octong is one of their grazing grounds for yak and dzumjok. The mountain scene is breathtakingly magnificent. Boktoh, Jannu, Talung, Kabru and Ratong flank each side of the huge glacier valley and a short stroll from camp to the junction of the Tso glacier with the Yalung brings the massive south-west face of Kangchenjunga into view.

On the day we arrived the weather had cleared and following a tasty meal we sat by a small fire of juniper wood. Blue smoke and sparks spiralled above the flames and lit up the faces of the laughing and chattering porters. Our Sherpas and Sherpanis broke into the soft-shoe shuffle of a zingazing dance, and above and beyond rose the mountains with their glaciers of intense cold. Dominating the whole valley with a covering of eternal ice was the 'Five Treasures of the Great Snow' – Kangchenjunga.

A NIGHT OUT WITH THE LADS

John Wilkinson

"Someone had blunder'd." (The Charge of the Light Brigade. Alfred Lord Tennyson.)

The voice on the other end of the telephone was that of my friend the Home Office psychiatrist, "John Hunt, will be visiting the Castle next week and would like very much to meet you". Dobroyd Castle, a monstrosity erected on a hill above Todmorden in the mid 19th Century by the local cotton baron and currently a Buddhist sanctuary was, back in the 1970s, a Home Office Approved School for delinquent youths. Since I had never met John Hunt, this was an invitation I could not ignore. I duly presented myself at the Castle fully expecting to be sweet-talked into taking teams of bad boys climbing. However, it was worse than that, and I came away having succumbed to Hunt's charm by agreeing to become Vice-President of the British Mountaineering Council. At that time the B.M.C. headquarters was in London and the organisation was in a state of flux. Under the new President Alan Blackshaw's astute chairmanship, there were many meetings of the 'Future Policy Committee' which effectively transformed the image of the B.M.C. as well as transferring the office to Manchester which was more convenient for most of the committee. The meetings were hard going but there was a little light relief when, in September 1974, I was asked to go to Chamonix to represent the B.M.C. at the celebrations for the opening of the new Argentière hut built by the Club Alpin Français with the aid of cash from Britain: the Alpine Club was to be represented by Chris Bonington.

In previous seasons I had dossed at the C.A.F.'s valley accommodation, the Chalet Biolay, or camped at Snell's field

(both now closed) so it was a pleasant change to be booked into a hotel in Chamonix. However an obligatory visit to that favourite watering hole of the British climber, the Bar Nationale, revealed that Chris and a whole crowd of English climbers were camping at Snell's field. The initial part of the C.A.F.'s celebrations went off smoothly: a reception, with medals being distributed to long-serving members of the C.A.F. (it was a pity I had not kept up my membership as I would have qualified!) and many speeches in French, including one by John Hunt, who had walked from Zermatt via the Haute Route, spiking his calf on a crampon in the process. The following day was to be the official opening of the new Argentière hut. This involved an early morning transfer by car or bus to the Grands Montets cable car for an ascent up the mountain followed by a traverse on foot to the hut. Due to a misunderstanding I was not picked up at the hotel, missed the téléphérique and, as a result the whole event. Very disappointing. Somewhat disgruntled I made my way to Snell's field to meet up with several old friends including, Ian McNaught-Davis, Doug Scott, Paul (Tut) Braithwaite, Dave Potts, and others enjoying a bit of late season climbing. Against my better judgement, I was persuaded to forsake the comforts of the hotel for the dubious pleasure of using Mac's spare sleeping bag and a shared tent, still the company was better. There was some idle talk of trying to put up a new route to the left of the Via della Pera on the Brenva Face of Mont Blanc, but fortunately an early season snowfall which plastered the peaks to below Montenvers put paid to that grandiose idea. An alternative climb was soon located when someone produced a copy of 'The 100 Finest Routes in the Range of Mont Blanc' by Gaston Rébuffat (known irreverently in English climbing circles as Ghastly Rubberface). F.R.C.C. member, Colin Taylor and his wife Jane who subsequently joined the club, trans-

lated the English edition, published in 1974.

Our chosen route was the Voie des Dalles on the South Face of the Aiguille du Pouce, 2873m, an imposing 'thumb' of dark-coloured rock on the long ridge of the Aiguilles Rouges, across the Chamonix valley from the Mont Blanc Massif. At that time there were six routes on the 450m high face, all hard. The Voie des Dalles (Slab Route) was the most attractive, a sustained T.D. with pitches of V.sup., one of V1 and A1, which took a slanting line across the great slabs on the right-hand side of the face: a 6-7 hour ascent. This route had the distinct advantage in that it could be climbed in a day from the valley, a positive benefit so late in the season with bad weather about. The téléphérique would transport the climber to within a half-hour walk of the start of the route. A speedy ascent could therefore be followed by an even speedier descent by téléphérique back to the valley.

That evening, the campsite piled into the Bar Nationale with a view to drinking the establishment dry. When eventually Maurice, the owner, stopped the taps, there was a move to continue at a nearby nightclub. We got there just in time to witness one of our party, who had got there earlier, being ejected, having been rendered unconscious by a bouncer (for what misdemeanour we never discovered). Some scuffling broke out at the door and we were all barred by the management.

It was a somewhat hungover group who surfaced early the next morning to catch the téléphérique. Mac and Dave were the first away from the campsite: Doug, Paul and I climbed into Chris's car and followed a few minutes later. When we climbed out of the cable car on to the Aiguilles Rouges ridge neither our friends nor the Aiguille du Pouce were anywhere in sight and, with a sinking feeling, we realised that in our bemused state we had inadvertently taken the wrong téléphérique, the Brévent

instead of the Flégère! Still, it was a gorgeous morning, the snow-plastered Chamonix Aiguilles across the valley a splendid sight, and it was only a three-hour walk along the ridge to the Aiguille du Pouce! We should just have time to do it. It was a wonderful walk, but by the time we reached the crag we could hear cries of derision coming from Mac and Dave who were halfway up the face. I teamed up with Chris who led off up the steep bulging rock of the first pitch. By the time I had heaved myself onto the stance, with Doug hard on my heels, Chris had decided that modern technology was required, and produced a pair of P.A. rock boots from his rucksack and handed me his heavy alpine boots to carry. This was fair enough since he was doing all the leading, but unfortunately I had not had the foresight to bring my P.A.s with me to Chamonix, not expecting to take part in rock gymnastics. The angle of the crag relented a little and beautiful slab and crack climbing followed. I particularly remember one pitch, which avoided some large overhangs high up the crag by making a downward slanting tension traverse. This I would have had to climb without tension, had I not discovered a piton planted high up where I could rig up a back rope. A steep dièdre then a traverse back left led to a stance above the overhangs. Excellent climbing, but by now the sun was low in the sky. Chris sprinted up the crest of the spur and the final pitches, a dièdre then a couloir, which finished on the South East Ridge of the Pouce just short of the summit. Dusk was falling as we reached the ridge. By the time we had unroped and scrambled down the rocky ridge to easy ground it was dark and the last cable car had long gone. We started down the descent track but were soon blundering around in the dark and we had no torch. It had begun to rain heavily and we had little choice but to find what shelter we could below an overhanging boulder and sit it out until morning. Cold, wet, with little to eat or drink and with a steady

drip of water falling on my head, I had ample time to reflect on some of the other uncomfortable, unplanned bivouacs I had endured during previous Alpine seasons.

In 1947, my first Alpine season, on the summit of the Dent Blanche after an epic ascent of the Ferpèclegrat. In 1948, bogged down in deep snow on the Glacier de Corbassière within sight, but not within reach of the Panossière hut, having made an early season traverse of the Grand Combin. In 1951, again defeated by deep snow, on the descent from near the summit of the Barre des Ecrins. In 1953 at the top of the difficult section of the North Face of the Cima Grande de Lavaredo, when Ian McNaught-Davis and I were making the first British ascent, unused to artificial climbing and abysmally equipped with home-made and insufficient gear. In 1958 on the summit of Mont Blanc de Tacul after a traverse of the Aiguilles du Diable; I was with our club members Harry Stephenson and Dick Knight, who, the following year disappeared without trace, together with their three companions, on the ill-fated Batura Mustagh Expedition, which I had fortunately declined to join. In 1969, having climbed the North Face of the Silberhorn we were denied the summit of the Jungfrau and had to retreat in a storm down the Guggi Route; there was temporarily a little light relief when Pat Fearnehough, a man with a tremendous sense of humour, produced from his rucksack a battered parasol, obviously recovered from some rubbish tip, to ward off the falling snow (Pat, writer of the 1968 and 1977 editions of the Gable Guide, was killed in the Karakorum in 1978 when he was swept into the Braldu Gorge by a rock fall whilst making the approach march for his second attempt on Latok II). It was August 1st, Swiss National Day, and from our bivouac site we had a splendid bird's eye view of the bonfire and fireworks in Lauterbrunnen far below. Finally, only five months earlier in April 1974, we were stormed off the Wildhorn, close to

the summit, during a ski traverse of the Bernese Oberland, and had to bivouac on the Col de Sanetsch in the comparative luxury of a deserted shed; the party included Colin Taylor, guidebooks editor of the Alpine Club and treasurer of the Climbers' Club who was killed in August 1974, when a section of the South Face of the Ober Gabelhorn collapsed around him, and Hamish Nichol former president of the Climbers' Club and of the Alpine Climbing Group (Hamish died as a result of a fall on the Cornish cliffs in 1997). How many of these epics, I asked myself were due to bad luck or bad weather, and how many could have been avoided by the exercise of better mountaineering judgement? So here I was, twenty-seven years on from my first forced bivouac and only five months on from the last, in the company of three of the finest mountaineers in the world, at it yet again: perhaps I had put a jinx on the party! One thing was clear however, I was getting too old for this sort of thing. Still as it transpired, this was to be my last unscheduled bivouac.

Meanwhile back in Chamonix, Mac and Dave who had completed their ascent in time to catch the cable car back to the valley, were whooping it up in the Bar Nationale, delighting the beer-crazed clientele with an account of our misfortunes. At closing time Mac led a contingent to the Brèvent téléphérique car park where they formed a disrespectful circle around Chris's car and committed a diabolical liberty on it.

It was indeed a night to remember.

DOWN TO HELL AND BACK

Don Greenop

I suppose it's all part of a free society that we should be at liberty to choose our own method of going to Hell. Personally, I've no voluntary inclination to visit the resort, but for the morbidly curious, or the theologically impulsive, one way that precludes any damage to the soul might well be a pilgrimage to Spain's Barranco del Infierno. Appropriately, it bears the right name, involves a descent, can be an oven in summer, and certainly emanates an extra-terrestrial aura in its fantastic water-sculpted recesses.

Slicing magnificently through the barren uplands south-west of Pego, in Alicante Province, the Barranco is an immense chasm about 1·5 kilometres long, with walls towering up to 500 metres in places, yet at several points narrowing to only an arms-stretch. Described by Roger Massingham in the excellent *Mountain Walks of the Costa Blanca* as 'one of the most exhilarating mountaineering expeditions' in the region, the gorge attracts many Spanish and foreign parties, often inexperienced, who seem undeterred by the lurid tales of death, drowning, and dramatic rescues associated with the place.

Usually well-equipped with haul ropes, hardware, and abseil points, the traverse is, in normal conditions, no more than a scenic, if strenuous, scramble, including, for added piquancy, short rappels and via-ferrata-style aided movement on steep rock. The guide-book's cautions about equipment and a skilled climbing leader still need stressing, though, particularly after heavy rain, or in case fixed aid is damaged or missing.

My own family's link with the gorge began in May, 1999, when my son Mark completed the route with his

brother and three friends, all good climbers, who rated the scenery "quite something" and the descent "lots of fun with no real problems." Mark considered the outing so essential to his father's well-being, in fact, that he vowed to take me down "later in the year".

True to his word, on the morning of 18 November 1999 – a day of warm sun and azure skies – I found myself standing with him on a farmed shelf looking down 400 metres of broken crags and prickly undergrowth to the 'throat' entrance of the Barranco del Infierno. By leaving the pass from Pego just beyond its summit and following a rough road down left for 1·5 kilometres to farm buildings and a clearing with good parking, we'd pruned the guide-book approach from Val d' Ebo, effectively eliminating five kilometres of hot trudging along a stony river bed. Instead, from our car, an interesting way-marked path meandered steeply down west, directly to the valley floor where a pleasant corridor of boulders and trees pointed to the ravine's stately shadowed portals.

Once past these, however, we entered a contracting science-fiction world of bald, convoluted rock. There was a God-endowed symmetry and beauty about the place, an artistic vision of voluptuous curves and pristine surfaces that, oddly, induced a slight tremor of anxiety. For there was, too, a bare enormity lurking somewhere in the background which tended to subdue levity and sharpen vigilance.

From a climbing point of view, the chasm consists of, in general, a series of scrambling/walking stretches between abseil drops into big swirl-holes, often with short ascents (usually aided) out of them to a saddle which serves as the stance for a rappel into the next scoop. Hence the so-called 'traverse' of the rift is actually a descent with shorter and less frequent

Barranco del Infierno *Photo: Mark Greenop*

rises than the drops, at least three of which apparently had thwarted so far any attempts to make a first free ascent of the gorge. Naturally, the last thing on our minds was the latter idea as we eased into a stress-free undulating romp downwards.

And so we found it – until we arrived in one wide pit whose exit wall was furnished with just two slings, half-way up, and a knotted haul-rope, unfortunately hanging totally out of reach down the outer side of the sink. Donning a rope, Mark dragged himself into a standing position in the slings, with fingers ineffectively pawing for support on the glassy wall above. This meant he'd have to free climb the rest – about a metre of smoothness. He briefly composed himself, then suddenly darted up right, slid a little, recovered, and finally lunged left to heave up nearly two metres of reluctant body with his fingertips.

"You'll never do this – it's at least 5B and that's with my reach !"

Not that I'd any intention of following him: I now had an analgesic rope to monkey with, thanks to the thoughtful chap above me. On the saddle we paused, comprehensively attributing the rope-switching to bloody-minded locals, racist Brits, and even Basque Separatists before abseiling down the other side and continuing to the next blockage.

Ever enterprising, our way over this was rather like leaping onto a horse's bottom, using a slender col as the take-off point. Once à cheval and groin damage satisfactorily assessed, the rest was easy – until we met another mis-aligned haul-rope, and more delicate footage for Mark. He likes that sort of thing. I, on the other hand, was becoming increasingly uneasy at the gear anomalies and other details which were at variance with Mark's May recollections. Unknown to him I'd been taking stock of feasible escape routes and irrevers-

ible drops throughout our descent, but felt that comment at this point was hardly productive as we were still pushing forward.

Mark made short work of the barrier, dropped the fixed knotted rope to me, then I was away, swinging in best swashbuckling style (or so I like to think) up to his boot, which I used, without shame, as the only hold on the col that would facilitate a dignified exit. We elders of the climbing tribe regard expediency as a valuable friend.

Fine architecture, though little difficulty, followed until an enjoyable free abseil down a seven-metre overhang brought us into a mini-amphitheatre. Here, easy rocks abutted a small platform on the vertical right wall whose only weakness was a slight crease – a traversing line outwards. Open enough to warrant use of the rope, the pitch looked more serious than anything we'd met up to that point, but its sting was largely extracted by the presence of some linked bolts. Even so, Mark urged me to 'watch' him as he edged out gingerly from his secure ledge and disappeared round a bulge. Then, momentarily, the rope's movement stopped, started again, and, ominously, suddenly seemed to die in my hands. A brief terrible emptiness preceded Mark's strangely disembodied voice as it drifted out of space.

"It's blocked by flood water – we can't get past !"

My stomach lurched, but before I could reply, Mark reappeared, serious and pale-faced, to expand his tense message. The freak deluge that had damaged property in Calpe a week prior to our arrival had not only swept the Barranco's haul ropes out of their swirl-holes (apologies to locals, Brits and Basques) but had virtually filled the capacious hole behind Mark. This could be, he guessed, the very place in which an unfortunate shepherd once perished, being quite unable to escape from such a deep well. Today, its bypass appeared to

be under water, and the glass-smooth walls leering into the pit dissuaded any ideas of swimming and trying to claw a way out.

Even without seeing the impasse, as a newcomer to the gorge, I accepted Mark's assessment with resignation and mounting apprehension, so when he ended with "Any ideas ?" another stillness fell – this time a sort of apocalyptic hush as we locked into each other's gravitational field. We both knew the score, as they say. Roger Massingham's "you are committed to complete the climb as return is quite impossible" was bad enough, but a quick glance back at the unthinkable holdless overhang we'd recently abseiled down, and then at the looming 100 metre cliffs encasing us, just reinforced the seriousness of our predicament. It was like being on the set of a movie in which terror is the dominant theme.

Now like most sensible people, I'm your average coward, and I don't think there's anything demeaning in this when luminaries like Napoleon claimed there was honour in retreat. But in mitigation, I have to add that after over fifty years of mountaineering, meeting crises like these, I've developed, amongst other things, a selective amnesia to the likely hazards of survival strategies. It's amazing, really, how one's natural propensity for self-preservation can draw out hitherto unrecognised personal qualities such as decisiveness, determination, skill, strength, and resourcefulness. There's no hint of self-advertisement in this – after all, the condition does originate from fear and desperation and is a phenomenon identified by many experienced mountaineers. As long ago as 1952, French Himalayan Committee President , Lucien Devies, wrote: "Man overcomes himself, affirms himself, and realises himself in the struggle towards the summit, towards the absolute. In the extreme tension of the struggle, on the frontier of death, the universe disappears ... space, time, fear,

suffering, no longer exist. As on the crest of a wave ... we are strangely calm". At that moment, bizarrely, so was I, but I knew too that the best way to preserve oneself from hopelessness was in an aspic of confidence promoted by positive action.

"Right, let's get out !" I said with as much alacrity as I could muster.

I uncoiled the 50 metre 9mm rope (a providential last-minute addition to our kit), tied a fumbling bowline round my waist, turned to face our last abseil pitch, then charged off up the vegetated gully face on the right – so high it seemed to abolish the outside world. It was easier than it looked – a shaky compound of rock and tangled undergrowth which provided, in 15 metres, access to a fairly substantial tree where I belayed and brought up a startled and dubious Mark.

Concealing my relief that it was his turn, I nodded to our escape route – a 20-metre traverse left across a belt of steep, evil-looking slabs, undercut, and with a clear drop of 15 metres to the ravine bed. Without a word, he took two slings from me and stepped boldly out, palming and padding carefully to his only runner, a laughably slender sapling, before continuing more cautiously to a tree just above the abseil stance of the overhang we had resolutely dodged.

"It's about 4B, nothing definite, and don't rely on that sapling !" was all he said before taking in the rope.

Concentrating on the idea that seeing might be believing, but touching is the truth, I ventured hesitantly out to the steeply-tilted ribbon of slab. Finding that my boots and palms weren't slipping, I rapidly got caught up in the excitement of the present and the promising possibilities of the future. I picked up speed, feeling light in both body and head, and raced across to Mark, pulled up to him, patted him on his hair in a parody of paternal benediction, and scrambled down to the gully channel.

The first big obstacle overcome, our confidence crept upwards, especially as the ravine ahead looked innocuous, even inviting. We stopped talking again as we briskly clambered through cobbled corridors, bridged slick slots, and snaked up smooth constrictions to the 'à cheval' pitch. Reversing this meant sliding on bellies and palms down the rump of our 'mount' to a fleeting moment of panic when gravity accelerated our drop to the hidden thin neck below – with the prospect of increasing our inside leg measurements if we missed the narrow landing and straddled it instead. A short rope would have made the manoeuvre quite safe, but we were now on Devies' 'crest of a wave' and our lively tempo hadn't time for fussy ropework. After further rushed scrambling we became strung out, sharply conscious of the occasional ghostly echoes from crunching gravel and the odd carelessly kicked stone as we forged on upwards in this alien gulf of eerie quietness.

And then, dramatically, the marathon stopped.

We'd descended into a swirl-hole some six metres deep and realised with dread that the only way out was up an impending bowl-side of mind-numbing smoothness, palpably unclimbable by conventional means. I remembered ascribing it mentally to the 'impossible' category on our way down, so it wasn't surprising that we allowed one of the gorge's peculiar and acute silences to envelop us, but this time it seemed to harbour a scream just out of human hearing range.

Like mathematicians working from an incomplete theorem, we assessed our combined heights, about 3.75 metres, against the loftiness of the wall's lowest lip, and arrived at a shortfall of 2.25 metres. But, as one cynic observed, "Truth is relative to the need of its holder," and thus empiricism smartly superseded impotent dismay.

By traversing a little left above the pit base, where the

bowl curved up into verticality, Mark attained a precarious stance at the limit of foothold friction, thereby gaining another valuable metre. Carrying a short rope, I sidled across to him and, insect-like, climbed gently up the right side of his body whilst he struggled to maintain his teetering position, hands uselessly sweeping to find some rugosity or crevice. Compelled to use his head, first as a hauling-point and then as a pressure hold, I somehow crawled on to his shoulders and balanced up to a perilous standing position. Face pressed to the cold rock, I reached up – nothing but a leaning inexorable silkiness. I was well over a metre below the lip and safety.

Tersely appraising my partner of the fact, I was about to prepare him for my imminent precipitation when he suddenly shouted up, " Get ready ! I'll push you !"

Understandably, I wanted to debate this alarming order, but I was given no time – I was already gliding unsteadily aloft, Mark's palms beneath my heels. With a superhuman effort of strength and balance, he straightened his arms to complete a human ladder that was already beginning to totter when I saw the lip was still a metre away.

Now there was no option – the 'ladder' was folding outwards as, with a flickering elastic shift in my bowels, I jettisoned the second word of my lifelong climbing motto 'daring prudence' by leaving Mark's upstretched palms and attempting to stick myself to a surface specifically designed by Nature for shedding. In a burlesque of inefficient motion, finger-nails, pelvic thrusts, and even chin bristle were frantically employed to scrape some purchase on the blank limestone. With at least one point of contact skidding at any given moment, I felt as if I were straining against invisible bonds. But knowing that stopping would mean falling off and that rapid movement was paramount, I went straight into a routine best described as a hybrid between a breast stroke and a distorted

knight's move. Hardly balletic, I admit, but it got me to the well-rounded lip and a lop-sided mantelshelf, before I eventually managed to roll breathlessly and incredibly to security – a shiny bolt. The three main moves were the riskiest unprotected ones I'd ever made.

With the help of slings and a rope, a jubilant Mark soon joined me. After this pitch I knew we would get out. The nuances of self-doubt, the uncertainties, all evaporated before a powerful self-assurance – a certainty of oneself that nothing could shake. It's one of the best feelings in life.

With optimism now transported to an astral plane, we sped on in something of a euphoric haze, taking minor hindrances and dips in our stride and slackening pace only once for a short holdless pitch near the gorge entrance. An acutely overhanging twisted groove on the left wall proved to be the key for anyone who has learned the joys of contortionism. Just wide enough to admit my beanpole frame, the fissure succumbed to unbecoming squirming at about 4C standard. Mark, a purist, and too big anyway, preferred a tight rope and an 'outside' struggle. It was then just a minute or two of weaving along the widening floor of the ravine before we dashed sensationally into glaring sunlight at the start of the track back to the car. Stopping at last, with a sense of wonderment, we immediately gave thanks skywards and thanks to each other in a crushing hug.

"What a team, eh ?" Mark was aglow with triumph and exuberance.

A team indeed, but also a fortuitous combination of dimensions and abilities that luckily matched the strange demands of a gorge ascent. The implications for height, weight etc. at the crux cannot be over-emphasised to parties planning to repeat our climb. Other visitors may well consider leaving a sacrificial line or two down the nasty bits, especially after

heavy rain, or just in case ...

The late afternoon sun was turning scattered cloud wisps into stark luminous streaks as Mark and I raided our rucksacks for hitherto untouched refreshments before marching jauntily (still on an adrenalin jag !) back up the meanders to the car.

We'd been away exactly four hours.

Back in Calpe, ever wary of restrictive reprisals by the ladies, we played down the epic nature of our day. Mark and I were happy to wind down contentedly in armchairs which, that night, felt almost aggressively comfortable.

After all, it isn't every day that you bring a touch of Heaven out of Hell.

INDEPENDENCE MONUMENT

Terry Fletcher

Chipping, that sneaky sculpting of little holds that hoicks the just impossible into the barely probable, is Very Naughty Indeed. No question about that. But what about chopping? You understand, we are not talking sly little nicks here, we are talking blatant wholesale hackery; the kind of dedicated chisel work that straddles the line between landscaping and civil engineering. And what if, on top of all that, the whole enterprise is so old it's positively venerable, an integral part of the very history of climbing itself?

The question posed itself a couple of hundred feet above the Colorado desert just as two of my sweaty fingers stabbed gratefully into a gloriously sharp-edged and perfectly circular pocket but for which I would have already been accelerating back down towards the aforementioned desert and feeling considerably less pleased with life in general and climbing in particular. All things considered, I concluded, there were times when chopping is Not So Naughty After All.

We were on Independence Monument, reputedly the first American desert tower to be climbed and the chiseller-in-chief was one John Otto, the self-appointed Father of the Colorado National Monument. The area is a cluster of sandstone canyons gouged out the desert close to the Utah border and our tower was the most famous of its large family of pinnacles and fins. Otto, a former cowboy, obviously liked to think big. As well as persuading the US government that the area deserved national park status he determined to climb the tower and plant the Stars and Stripes to mark Independence Day. And he achieved both.

This much we knew; but, as so often in life, a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing because we also figured that if an untrained, clearly deranged and probably certifiable, cowboy

could climb it then we, armed to the teeth with sticky rubber and two racks of Friends should not have too much trouble. What we didn't know was that Otto had not only chopped some pretty generous footholds here and there, he had also built his own do-it-yourself via ferrata by hammering steel rods into the rock. The steps are still there. The via ferrata is not.

Our dog-eared borrowed guide promised us three separate cruxes, a steep wall, a capping overhang and, more mysteriously, the hors d'oeuvres of something called a squeeze slot. Having had a gentle upbringing on Lakes rock and Yorkshire grit we had never heard of a squeeze slot but presumed it might be something like a stomach traverse. As I said, a little knowledge ...

Things started quite well with a gentle introductory pitch which allowed us to get used to the rounded rock and the ball bearing-like windblown sand which covered all the holds – especially the big ones. Next came a pleasant crack, all comfy jams and big footholds. We were starting to enjoy this. A short traverse and a big ledge soon put paid to that. We were now in a position to explain a squeeze slot. For the uninitiated it is the bastard child of an overhanging, flared off width and an elephant's backside. And it has inherited all the worst characteristics of both its parents. To make matters worse – much worse – it was too wide for any of our gear. When we arrived an American pair were in situ and had somehow contrived to get a top rope left by a previous party. They were locals and neither of them would lead it! This was not looking good. Watching them flail and thrash their way up on tight ropes did nothing for our confidence. To make matter worse they were too polite to offer us a top rope and we were still not quite desperate enough to ask for one.

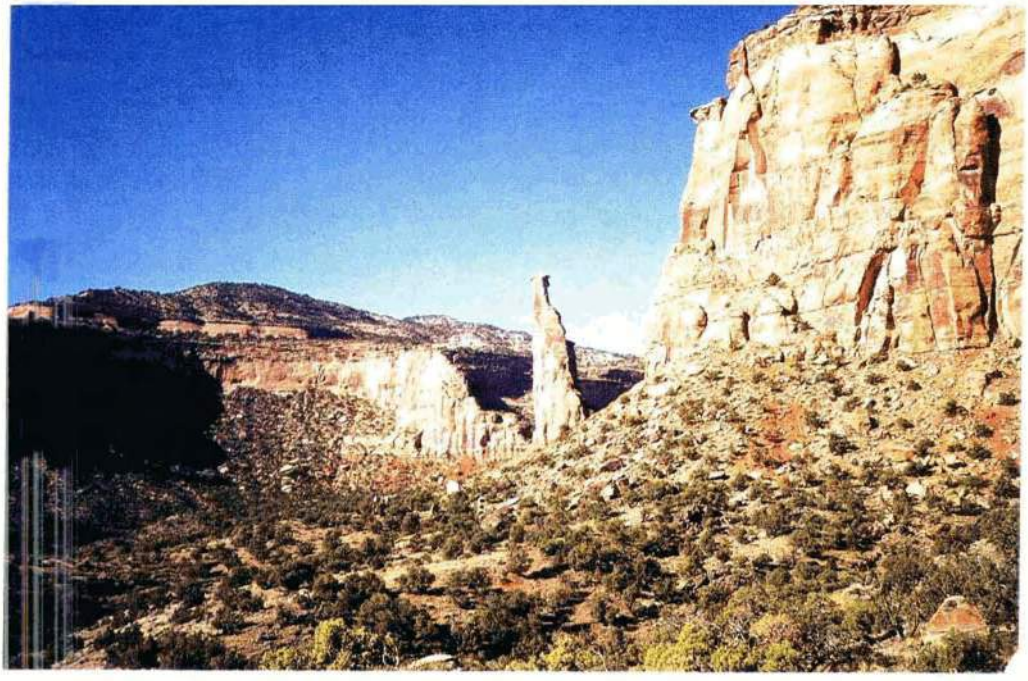
A couple of abortive attempts later we would have been desperate enough to ask but by then they had vanished through the Time Slot, a narrow passageway leading to the other side of

the tower up which the route finishes. The problem was simple. There was no gear and the overhanging, rounded sides of the off width gave little encouragement but there was one of Otto's little round ex-via ferrata pockets tantalisingly out of reach. If it was good all would be well. If it was bad then things could get very exciting indeed as the landing would be a broken ledge – probably with legs to match. While I dithered Jenni decided she could wriggle up the inside of the slot. I didn't think Kate Moss could wriggle up the inside of that crack but if it meant I didn't have to swim up the outside she was very welcome to try. We swapped ends but Jenni discovered that after a fortnight of American breakfasts she was no Kate Moss, or more accurately, a Kate Moss and quite a bit more. Jenni is a decisive leader and quickly decided it was my pitch after all.

There was only one sensible course of action. I lost my temper. Climbing quickly before I exhausted my extensive repertoire of carefully crafted curses the pocket came into reach, it was good, a big pull and things were back to vertical. A bit more wriggling, udging and cursing and the slot was behind us and it was Jenni's turn to lead through onto the sunny side of the tower.

The second crux wall seemed very easy after the slot and every time things looked like they might get a bit untoward one of Otto's perfect little round pockets showed up. The ones that were not used for holds had been hijacked for protection. Every 20 ft or so an angle peg had been driven into a pipe and the pipe then smashed into one of Otto's little holes. The pegs were driven up to the eye all right but, less reassuringly, it was often possible to see several inches of naked pipe. I started to wonder how mechanically sound the whole arrangement might be but then decided not to pursue the matter. We hadn't done that slot to back off now.

The last pitch is a cracker. It begins with a completely unprotected but gentle slab on the very crest of the fin. The holds are more than ample but most are still covered with those



Independence Monument *Photo: Terry Fletcher*

disconcerting ball bearings. Thankfully it then rears up to vertical. Thankfully, because vertical means they smash in three more pegs in quick succession just before the roof. All those summer evenings at Almscliffe meant the bulge did not delay us at all and we were still in time to impress the Yanks who were politely waiting to ab off. The final Otto Hold just over the top really was spoiling us and Jenni was soon leading us onto the flat summit. The Americans had the decency to stop long enough to take our summit pic and then the even greater decency to ab off and leave us in sole tenancy of the summit. But for having to catch that plane we might be still there now.

As Jimmy Cagney once said: "Look, Ma. Top of da woild."

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

A personal reflection upon the search for a Club property in France

John Robinson

I suppose that the germ of the idea of having a hut in France must have originated, by all accounts, at the highly successful Alpine meet led by Pete and Christine Ward at Argentière La Bessée in 1994. Not that I was there, John Leigh and I were getting stormed off the Tatras main ridge in Poland at the time. At the 1995 AGM the Club passed overwhelmingly the motion "that the Club cease its search for premises in France". At the 1998 AGM the Club passed overwhelmingly the motion "that the Club cease its search for premises in France". So what happened in between?

In fact the search for a French hut began earlier than 1995. There had been discussions about a French Hut when Rod Valentine had been President. It was obvious, however, that there would have to be some preliminary research before any sort of motion could be placed before the AGM. Accordingly I wrote to one of the many firms of solicitors who advertise in the magazines that specialise in French property. I had some cursory correspondence of a general nature concerning French property law and then, out of the blue, I received a telephone call from the solicitor I had been dealing with. She said that one of the Barristers, a Mr. Jenkinson, who was a consultant to her firm had expressed an interest in the project and would like to give me one hour of advice free of charge. All I had to do was get myself to London! I visited him in his chambers in the heart of the London legal district. Here everyone spoke French, indeed everyone was French except Mr. Jenkinson who was English but was a French Barrister, a keen outdoor type and thus interested, and anxious to

help us. There's no need to go into the detail but suffice to say that he said that buying a property in France was easy and the chances of success improved with local contacts of whom the most important were the Maire and the local Notaire. The message was – achieve good relations with these people and the job was in the bag, more or less.

Armed with the information thus obtained I consulted with Club Officers, went back to the Committee to describe my meeting, and it was agreed that the matter should go to the AGM for formal ratification. The AGM was an event that had almost proved the undoing of a number of notable projects in the past, and I well remember Syd Clark reeling battled scarred from an earlier AGM after only just pushing the Coach-House project through. However, despite dire warnings, all went well. There was an initial attempt to use the referendum device to stop matters. Referenda have their place, but not in the everyday business of Club AGMs. After all why bother to turn up and hear the arguments when you know it's going to be voted down by several hundred members who aren't going to be there. The motion was amended to "consider the option of leasing rather than purchase", and though that seemed a prudent measure at the time it was to rebound on us later.

So, we had gained the general approval of the AGM and now we could start looking for a French property. I had earlier enrolled Kath Wardropper and Anne Townsend to help with any translation work and several other Club members who either lived in France or who had French connections had written to me with offers of help. It had been informally decided that the Ecrins would be the best location for a property – its combination of high mountains, crags, ski-ing, kayaking, rafting etc would be enough to keep everybody going for years. But how to get started? It was obvious that it was

not going to be possible to swan off to France on Club expenses looking for a property in the way that would have been possible with respect to Scotland for example. It was all very frustrating but illustrated the real difficulties of operating at a distance with the Channel in between – it may have helped keep AH out but it definitely wasn't helping now.

Sometime later, as they say, it was suggested that I contact John Brailsford, who was (and is) working as a guide out in the Ecrins. I wrote to him and received a reply – he would be glad to help but there was nothing at the moment. Later he wrote to me to say that he knew a Frenchman[1] who owned a chalet that was available over the summer and were we interested in leasing it? I conferred with other Officers and it was agreed that we would investigate the matter further. I spoke to the owner of the property, an Anglophile Frenchman, who seemed anxious to let the property if only because it seemed such a waste to see it empty over the summer. I informed him that we were interested but that a number of matters would have to be sorted out not least the terms of the lease. We looked forward to pursuing the matter further. A few days later I received a telephone call from a somewhat miffed Englishman who asked if I was the Secretary of the Wigan Climbing Club! I replied no but I was the Secretary of the FRCC. He then said he was the owner of a ski company that leased the said property and furthermore leased it on a 12-months basis. I explained that I knew nothing of this arrangement but was obviously happy to talk to him about it. We then discussed the matter between the Officers and in Committee and agreed to see the ski company and a meeting was arranged with myself, the then President Paddy O'Neill and John A. Hartley, who had acted on our behalf with respect to the purchase of Waters Cottage and who would willingly help us again. We

[1] It seems prudent not to reveal the names of people and companies involved at this stage.

met on a rainy night in East Lancashire. Unfortunately Paddy was delayed in London by matters nuclear but we had a fruitful and amicable meeting with the ski company and John and I left it excited that this project might actually take off. There were some problems – there was no camping attached to the property and limited parking and there would need to be some sort of booking procedure. But the building would be ours for six months of the year. We needed to consult the membership about whether they would use the building and a questionnaire was duly devised and sent out.

I must admit I was disappointed with the results. Members seemed to regard it as a referendum on the project not a usage survey. Perhaps that was my fault for not making it clear enough. Members thus replied about the property in principle rather than their use in practice. I was accused of creating a project to enable me to spend months out in France when others were working! Tensions regarding use of the hut by families emerged – it was clear there was some antagonism here. The location was criticised and alternative locations ranging from Norway to Spain suggested. The old chestnuts raised about the Scottish hut resurfaced (if that's not too much of a mixture of metaphors). We were the Fell & Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District so why did we want a hut in France? I reflected that the poor old MAM would have to have all their huts within a mile of the Bull Ring in Birmingham if they applied the same criteria. There were some lovely letters from older members who said they were too old to use the hut but wished us well. Finally members pointed out that we were throwing money away on a lease – why weren't we buying! In short, as a usage survey it was a shambles but the key point was that less than 200 members had expressed a firm commitment to using this property. I went back to the Officers and the Committee with the rec-

ommendation that we do not proceed. This went to the AGM in 1998 and you know the rest.

So what of the future? I am sure that if the Club was left a serious sum of money thoughts would again turn to a Continental property. If there was sufficient money to make a commitment without prejudicing our other extensive interests I am sure we could do it. We would need a member out there on the ground to deal with day to day problems – this is not impossible. We would need a camping area and a property capable of being used in the winter for ski-ing/ice-climbing. Having just spent a month in the Ecrins I am convinced it is the best area – and yes – I would be willing to help!

PEEPS INTO THE PAST

A. Harry Griffin

The surprising discovery, from a study of the handbook, that only three members have been in the Club longer than myself, makes me feel very ancient indeed. It's rather like finding, when you're getting on a bit, that even 'diffs' can feel precarious and, occasionally, the negotiation of stone walls or stiles distinctly awkward. These are the depths to which you can sink after giving up climbing. Most regrettably, I had to give up climbing at 78 because of troublesome toes – and skiing two years later – and it's been downhill ever since. Now that I'm in my ninetieth year I can only potter about on modest hills, my mountaineering days over, but this recent discovery that I'm an elder of the Club – although only in years of membership – perhaps gives me an excuse to burble on a bit about the old days and some of our more distinguished predecessors.

Actually, the handbook puts me fifth in years of membership but the handbook is wrong. E M Oakshott O.B.E. of Bridgeport in Dorset who joined the club in 1924 appears as the longest serving member but Mr Oakshott, an active mountaineer, died in August,1998 at the age of 96. I suppose it must be difficult for the club to keep in touch with life members who pay no subscription and live far away from the Lake District. Anyway, Mr Oakshott's passing means that the club's longest serving member, according to the handbook, is really J E Richardson, shortish, sprightly and still fit-looking, although in August 2000 he reaches the remarkable age of 98 years. I've known Jim for many years: he lives not far from me in Kendal and for years was chairman of the local Bench. I remember bumping into Jim Richardson in the street a couple of years ago when he told me: "I'm 96 today and I remember climbing the Finsteraarhorn exactly 75 years ago as if it was

yesterday". Our senior member joined the Club in 1926, his proposer being C H Oliverson (Vice president 1919-21) of early Gimmer fame. Jim was good enough to attend a book launch of mine last October when I was happy to introduce the old mountaineer to an appreciative audience.

Numbers two and three in the membership list are Miss W M Macdonald who lives in Oxfordshire and Mrs Nancy Murray (Vice president 1973-75), widow of Donald Murray (President 1964-66) and mother-in-law of Paddy O'Neill (President 1996-98). Nancy, appropriately, lives in Gosforth on the road to Wasdale Head. Both she and Miss Macdonald joined the club in 1932 – one year before I did.

My good fortune in being introduced in 1929 to the Wastwater Hotel – as it was then – by the wonderful George Basterfield (President 1929-31), a week or two after my first climbs with him on Dow Crag, meant that, quite early in my climbing career, I was bumping shoulders with almost legendary figures. Indeed, on my very first day's climbing on Dow, a very raw novice, I had climbed down Great Gully with A T Hargreaves and Billy Clegg so that, right from the start, I had been hob-nobbing with the great. For George knew everybody in the climbing world and was a deservedly popular figure at Wasdale Head which we visited together on many occasions. Regrettably, however, I never met Haskett Smith, the Father of our sport, and on the day of his Jubilee ascent of Napes Needle, Easter Sunday,1936, I was careless enough to be climbing on Dow or Gimmer, thus missing the whole show. But I saw him once, before the war, in either Wasdale or Borrowdale – a quite large, rather untidy old man, in old-fashioned clothes, with a drooping moustache. He didn't look much like a climber but this was just after his Needle Jubilee ascent – when he was in his seventy-seventh year.

But I knew both the Abraham brothers although Ashley, our first President (1907-8), only slightly – a burly, broad-shouldered man sitting quietly at the annual dinners. The older brother, George (one of our first honorary members and Vice president 1908-10), I came to know quite well and once, nearly half a century ago, I spent several hours with him in his Keswick home chatting about the early days of British mountaineering. George was taller than Ashley, slim, kindly and smiling. Around the walls of his study hung some of the finest mountain pictures ever taken – Alpine peaks, climbers in Lakeland or in Skye balanced on tiny holds above tremendous drops – all taken by George, the earliest, by heavy plate camera. His favourite, he told me, was 'Solitude', a gentle picture of Crummock Water on a quiet, peaceful day, with a rowing boat in the foreground, which had sold all over the world.

We chatted about famous first ascents and big climbs, his memories still needle-sharp, but I mostly remember a discussion about Walla Crag Gully, a vegetatious "diff" in Borrowdale which I happened to have climbed the previous day. George and Ashley had made its first ascent in 1892, making use, for foothold, of the exposed, withered root of an old holly tree, sprouting from the vertical rock, which sagged ominously when their weight came on it, but did not snap. And, immediately I casually mentioned the gully, George's eyes twinkled and he asked: "Is the old root still there?". It was pleasant to tell him that it was, although creaking badly, and likely to remain there for ever. The old man had remembered this incident for something like seventy years and also recalled, in some detail, their very first Lakeland first ascent-Sandbed Gill in St John's-in-the-Vale, climbed in 1890 when George was 19 and Ashley only 14 years of age.

To George Abraham, Owen Glynne Jones was the best climber there'd ever been and a particularly close friend. I

remember he described, in graphic detail, their first ascent, in appalling conditions in January 1899, of Walker's Gully on Pillar Rock – 'the last great gully in Lakeland'. The third man on this epic was A E Field, one of the early climbers I had met, more than once, at Wasdale Head – an old man but still erect, alert and enthusiastic about the crags. He had been, I believe, a professor at one of the universities. I am, therefore, fortunate indeed to have known the two partners of Owen Glynne Jones on the first ascent of this great climb more than 100 years ago.

But my principal interest in A E Field, when we first met, was not about Walker's Gully – about which, in the 1920s, I might not have heard – but, rather, about Eagle's Nest Direct which I hoped to climb soon. For Field was the climber in the splendid Abraham photograph of the Napes climb which hung on a wall at the Wastwater Hotel – a bold figure in old-fashioned tweeds and nailed boots, poised on what looked like the edge of space, but looking remarkably relaxed and composed. I doubted whether I'd be able to get up the same place without dying of fright but, in the event, the first time I did the climb I led it – but only because George Basterfield was my second, explaining every move. And I was climbing in rubber plimsolls on a warm sunny day – so different from the first ascent, in nailed boots, on a cold, April day in 1892 after which Eagle's Nest Direct was regarded as the most difficult climb in England.

Again, I knew the leader of this important climb, Godfrey Allan Solly (President 1919-21) – in later years a solemn-looking, rather austere old gentleman with a big white beard who carried on climbing until his eighties. I'm not sure who perpetrated the famous, slightly ponderous command, "Silence while the leader is advancing" but it might well have been Solly for he possessed exactly the required gravitas for such a remark. Solly, who had climbed with Haskett Smith, died in

1942 at the age of 84.

One of the most interesting characters I climbed with during these early visits to Wasdale Head was C F Holland (Vice- president 1937-39) who had taken part, with Herford and Sansom, in the early exploration of Central Buttress on Scafell, written the first climbing guide to Scafell and seconded H M Kelly on Sodom and Gomorrah on Pillar Rock in 1919 and many other fine climbs. Holland was a shortish man with rather piratical features and a reputation for preserving his sangfroid – and sometimes his pipe – when falling off climbs, which he seemed to do quite regularly. His grin reminded H R C Carr "of a famous gargoyle on Notre Dame" and his laugh as one "that became more and more Rabelaisian after the second or third pint". Which is more or less how I remember him. He had been a schoolmaster and, during the Second World War, when he must have been a good age, served in the Commandos and as an army mountain instructor.

It always seemed to be raining when I climbed with Holland and I especially remember one miserably wet day when George Basterfield, Holland and I went to Pillar Rock, for this was the day when Holland told me a very strange tale about Herford. It was also the day when we met a man with a bicycle on his back on the top of Black Sail and Holland directed him down the steep, rocky path as the "right road" to Whitehaven. "You can't miss it" he said, pointing down into the swirling mists and driving rain.

We did two or three of the Jordan climbs that day and, as we walked down the fellside, back to Wasdale Head, Holland told me, very seriously, how Siegfried Herford, who had led Central Buttress in April 1914, had 'returned' to the area at the moment of his death in France during the First World War. Holland had no doubt about it: his old friend had come back to the crags for a moment to say goodbye. He told me how he

had been walking down from Scafell Crag and, near Hollow Stones, had met Herford, whom he thought was in France. They had walked down together chatting, as friends do. A few days later Holland learned that Herford had been killed in France – at about the time when he sincerely believed they had walked down the fellside together. I'm quite sure Holland was completely convinced that Herford had come back to see his old friend. He told the story without embarrassment and didn't suggest an explanation. George had heard the story before and knew you couldn't talk Holland out of it.

The unfortunate accident to George Basterfield when, in holding A B Reynolds in a fall on Black Crag, Scafell the suddenly tightening rope wrenched off the end of his thumb, meant that I had a week's holiday climbing with George Sansom at Wasdale. George wrote to me, explaining that, because of the accident, we couldn't have our usual week's climbing together but that Sansom was alone at the hotel and prepared to climb with me. Sansom was then probably in his mid-forties – a rather short, neat, sunburned man exuding an aura of quiet efficiency. His great ascent of Central Buttress, with Siegfried Herford, had taken place about seventeen years earlier and he had had a most distinguished career in the war that had killed his closest friend.

George Sansom moved incredibly slowly up steep fellsides like Gavel Neese but, on the rock, was the quickest and neatest climber I've ever known. He didn't seem to put any weight on the holds, almost caressing them, and, in descent, seemed to slide down effortlessly. He smoked a cherry-wood pipe when in the hills and, before a climb, would chew sticks of barley sugar, getting as much as possible on his fingers. This, he said, helped him in the use of small, sloping handholds. George Basterfield used grape fruit in the same context. Sansom and I did most of the climbs on Kern Knotts,

the Napes and other crags around Wasdale Head and, one day, had a memorable day on Pillar Rock where we did the North-West Climb. For hours that day we talked – or rather, he talked – about Herford and the great climbs they had done together and, also, I remember, about climbing techniques. This was many years before modern safeguards and such things as hand-jamming, but Sansom, even in these early days, was fascinated by the engineering possibilities of the sport.

A year or two later, in 1933, I was elected a member of the Club, my proposer, of course, being George Basterfield while George Sansom seconded me. Sansom and I kept in touch over the years and once he sent me some prints of photographs of the first ascent of Central Buttress. I wish we could have kept up our climbing association but we were a generation and the length of England apart. His last letter, at Christmas 1973, when he was in his eighty-sixth year, spoke of his "very happy memories of Wasdale". He rarely climbed anywhere else.

The first time I saw Geoffrey Winthrop Young, (Honorary Member 1919), the distinguished alpinist and poet who had lost a leg in the First World War, was on Dow Crag before the last world war. He had had himself fitted with an extraordinary metal attachment on the end of his 'peg' leg which enabled him, no doubt with considerable discomfort and difficulty, to get up to the crag, and he then announced he wanted to do a climb. I watched him do it – either Hawk or Raven for I remember a steepish wall. George Bower, George Basterfield's son in law and one of the best Lake District climbers at the time, led the route and there was a third man who helped G.W.Y. get the contraption on to the holds. Many years later, just after the first ascent of Everest in 1953, I had the pleasure of meeting Winthrop Young at the Outward Bound mountain school in Eskdale, together with Sir Edmund Hillary, the hero of the hour.

Another old climber, coping bravely with discomfort, was the first Lord Chorley – R S T Chorley, (President 1935-37), in the guidebooks, who had been on the first ascent, among others, of Eliminate B on Dow in 1922. I climbed with him, several times, when he was quite elderly with failing eyesight and barely able to see his feet when he was stumbling up the screes. But, once he had his fingers on the rock he could see the holds all right and just romped up. When he travelled up from London to preside at Westmorland Quarter Sessions he would often telephone me to arrange a day's climbing: perhaps I was the only climber in Kendal he then knew. We would go to Dow or Gimmer, where the approach up the steep fellside must have been purgatory for him, but the climbing itself always straightforward and enjoyable.

"Rusty" Westmorland (President 1950-51) also quietly coped with health problems, continuing to climb into his eighties and walking the fells in his nineties. He had put up his first new routes as far back as 1910 and had known the very earliest pioneers. He and I climbed and skied together in Lakeland and in Scotland and it was "Rusty" who first introduced me to Shepherd's Crag. One day in 1950 he told me that Bentley Beetham had just shown him an entertaining new climb, Corvus on Raven Crag, which we then proceeded to do together – probably its third ascent and, for years, a favourite climb of mine. 'Rusty' was always a neat, precise climber who, I think, liked to look the part-the spruce, elegant, military figure scanning the rock ahead.

I remember, too, Bentley Beetham (Vice President 1937-39), the devoted, but, occasionally rather scruffy-looking explorer of out-of-the-way crags, kindly opening a gate on the Wasdale road for a motorist and being rewarded with a shilling. And Lawson Cook (President 1939-44) conducting a sing-song in the smoke-room at Wasdale Head while beating time with

the fire-irons. Then there was old Millican Dalton, the self-styled Professor of Adventure, loading his groceries on his bicycle outside Plaskett's shop in Rosthwaite before tramping up to his cave on Castle Crag in Borrowdale for the night. Two memories, also, of Graham Macphee come flooding back – the first of him demonstrating to me, years before the war, a sort of early anorak he had made out of an old coat and, secondly, of him dragging me out of bed one moonlight night for a wonderful midnight trip up Helvellyn by way of Striding Edge.

But, mostly, remembering early days, I think of dear, old George Basterfield, master climber, guidebook writer, mountain poet, dialect teller of tales, philosopher, Mayor of Barrow-in-Furness, and Honorary Freeman of the town, with schools and buildings named after him, who, besides showing me the ropes, first opened my eyes to mountain flowers, sheep trods, stone walls, birds, Brocken Spectres and the hundred and one things that make up the mountains that mean so much to all of us. Mostly to him, but also to others of our early predecessors, I owe a thousand great days and a long lifetime of mountain beauty and adventure.

A DAY (AND A HALF) IN THE DAUPHINE

Kim Meldrum

We'd been to the Dauphiné several times before so we knew what we were doing – or did we ? Rebuffat's book on the 100 best climbs seemed excellent, it even recommended classic routes with grades as low as PD, which was just what I wanted. Not wishing to be too ambitious too early in the season our first climb began with a sedate walk to the Châtelleret Hut followed by a traverse of the Pic Geny – up the East Ridge and down to the Soreiller Hut. All the guide books suggested 4 to 5 hrs up and 1·5 hrs down so we didn't really need to start too early and had the prospect of a good long rest at the other end. Alarm bells should have rung when the charming guardienne at the Châtelleret suggested we start at 4 a.m. When quizzed about this she just said it was quite a long way. Our apprehension should have been further aroused by her suggesting, in the most persuasive way, that we should pay for a phone call so that she could be certain that we'd arrived safely.

Anyway, 4.30 a.m. saw the three of us, Robin, Juliet and me descending from the hut; what a delightfully relaxed way to start the day. The faint ribbon of track picked its way through a meadow of edelweiss leading to the first hazard of the day. Crossing the alpine torrent wouldn't have been difficult except that the guidebooks made great play of a fatal accident at this point. It was still bitterly cold with verglas everywhere, so I took precaution of putting on a crampon; one seemed quite enough. The east ridge, visible all the time, was bathed in the coppery light of dawn but for a couple of hours it didn't seem to get much nearer; a close encounter with a group of chamois gave some excuse for our slow progress. Robin, as always, pounded up the névé and we laboriously plodded behind until we reached what was described as a horizontal rock ridge.

The ridge was like a saw blade but Juliet engaged the problem and about half a mile later we finished at a large terrace.

It was at this point that we made our only serious route-finding error. From the terrace the route traverses right, into a broad gully which leads to the top; the ridge above the terrace appeared so obvious that we didn't even consult the book. It didn't take Robin long to realise that this was more than PD; a series of steep open chimneys with a few steeper and overhanging bits between led straight up the left-hand crest of the ridge for about 600 ft. There was magnificent exposure on the south side and wonderful solid, rough and untouched rock on the ridge. In spite of these delights we were becoming concerned about our slowness; it was already 6.00 p.m. and we hadn't even reached the anticime; it was also starting to get threateningly dark with suspicions of snow in the air. Fortunately the anticime and the summit are very close so we still had three hours of daylight to get down.

The descent was supposed to be easy but this was only if you found the right way which wasn't immediately obvious. Eschewing what seemed to be well-worn and simple tracks leading straight down you have to make a long gently descending traverse over innumerable gullies and ridges until you reach the main couloir between the Tête Rouget and the Pic Geny. We followed the right bank over steep and very loose ground and in steadily darkening dusk until one last long abseil got us off the mountain. Another hour stumbling and cursing amongst the chaos of boulders in the Soreiller basin led us to the hut.

After this 17-hour day we were too tired to do justice to the special dinner the guardian presented to us at 10.00 p.m. The next day we just sat around and wrote up the description for the E Ridge Direct of Pic Geny ... the Voie de la Haute Tension !

REDPOINTS IN THE SUNSHINE

An introduction to rock climbing in Zimbabwe

Richard Hamer

"See you at the Boulders!" said the familiar Midlands voice.

"OK, I'll be there" I replied. And with those few simple words I signalled the start of my rehabilitation into the rock scene and a painful initiation into the delights of rock climbing in Zimbabwe.

My secondment to Anglo American in Harare had started on a promising note. The first day I had made contact with the Mountain Club of Zimbabwe and to my surprise discovered a climbing friend from Birmingham teaching at a local school and putting up new routes galore. I'd lost touch with Pete years ago after a short but enjoyable spell together on Peak Grit. He'd left to study granites in California and I'd envied him the climbing opportunities that had afforded. He brought me up to date by explaining that he'd returned to the UK in the early eighties and had married and settled down to teaching. However, he and his wife had recently resigned their jobs and decided to head for Zimbabwe. He was clearly in good form and I had a lot of ground to make up.

On that first afternoon's climbing at Hatfield Boulders, on the outskirts of Harare, I scraped the skin off my finger ends so quickly that I didn't realise how far out of condition I had got. Nor did it strike me at Hurungwe, the next weekend, when the elation of multi-pitch climbing blinded me to my shortcomings. I came down to earth at Clevedon Quarry the following Wednesday evening.

The Quarry is a great place. I can say that now and not feel embarrassed. I couldn't for a long time. Situated 10km to the east of the city centre, it alternates with the Boulders as a

mid-week venue for Harare's climbers. Steep, uncompromising and pumpy. It's one of those depressing places where the locals breeze up everything and the would be initiate has a tough time. On my first visit, I couldn't get off the ground on any of the routes that I tried and I went home thoroughly miserable. Not since my first visit to Almscliffe had I felt so inadequate!

But worse was to follow. I took some colour slides to a Mountain Club social evening later that month. I don't have many climbing shots but there are a few taken on the first F & RCC meet to Gogarth that I'm rather proud of. One shows a picture of sonny boy on the traverse of Pitch Two on Rat Race – I was going well that day. I flashed it onto the screen expecting a few appreciative gasps, but all I got was a wry comment from the back, "Christ! – look at that seventies gear rack!" That did it! It was one thing to be unfit. I could handle that. It was quite another to have my Moacs insulted!

Of course I was aware of the tremendous breakthrough in standards and the emergence of sport climbing. However, it was apparent that my whole approach was rooted in the past. I didn't know what an 'on sight flash' was, my middle-class upbringing made me self conscious at the thought of 'cranking' and my dilapidated Canyons simply refused either to 'edge' or 'smear'. It wasn't going to be easy to step back onto rock after a lengthy sabbatical. Desperate measures were needed if my rehabilitation was to proceed.

The first step was clearly to get fit. So, thinking wistfully of the next season, I hurled myself into a disciplined training routine. I began by joining a local gym with the intention of doing their lunchtime aerobics class. However, I only managed ten minutes of my first beginners session before being forced to retire, red faced and puffing, to the solitary isolation of the weights room. Undeterred, I trained in seclusion and after a month

of furious activity I returned to that dreadful Quarry. Alas, to my horror, there was still no improvement!

Sheer pigheadedness took over. I decided to abandon my past and make a conscious effort to imbibe and exude the modern approach. I persevered with aerobics; started yoga; controlled my eating and drinking habits; made a finger board; updated my gear and vocabulary and threw away the track suit bottoms that I'd first climbed in, in 1967, and replaced them with a pair of my wife's lycra tights. I even contemplated a nose stud but there were nasty rumours about piercing in Zimbabwe and I chickened out at the last minute!

At length, there came that heady Wednesday at the Quarry when I finally cracked the 'Descent Route'! Gradually it all started to come back. During the next six months, I cranked myself into a stupor at the Quarry, ripped my fingers raw at the Boulders and noticed with satisfaction that the silver letters 'Je t'aime' embroidered on the waist band of my lycras had excited considerable approval. Once again I came to appreciate the pleasures of rock climbing and at the same time the delights of Zimbabwean granite.

Rock climbing and granite are synonymous in Zimbabwe. True there are flakey quartzite crags in the Eastern Highlands, where the climbing is reminiscent of Gogarth; a spectacular ironstone gorge in the Midlands, with steep, well protected crack lines and some dodgey sandstone edges in the south east, on the Mozambican border, that make St Bees Head look as solid as Esk Buttress, but granite dominates the scene. And the potential is staggering. The central third of the country is composed of an elevated plateau of mostly granitic rocks. The flanks of this plateau have been dissected by erosion into the distinctive ngoma terrains where nest-like clusters of granitic domes rise to 500m above the surrounding bush-covered plains.

Zimbabwe doesn't feature prominently on the world rock

scene. It should do! Rusty Baillie is still probably the best known local climber but he left a long time ago when the country was called Rhodesia. Climbing flourished on a moderate scale in the sixties but the declaration of UDI heralded a turbulent period as the liberation struggle gathered momentum. The resultant bush war placed severe restrictions on climbing activities. Since majority rule in 1980, the mass exodus of Rhodesians, coupled to the internal focus of the new administration and the little known 'dissident problem', added greatly to the problems which faced the few remaining active climbers.

Throughout this difficult period, the Mountain Club of Zimbabwe stolidly continued to organise regular meetings for both climbers and walkers. Posting sentries while climbing, or carrying a Webley in your rucksack may seem extreme measures to F & R members used to a quiet day on the Fells but they were standard practice for the MCZ during the bitterest years of the struggle. That the club survived at all, is as much a tribute to the determination of the individuals concerned, as to the irresistible attractions of Zimbabwean granite.

The rock itself is coarse and abrasive. It provides excellent friction. The holds are fingery but positive. There are numerous creaky flakes and chicken heads but crack lines are surprisingly rare and a good selection of camming devices is essential. The majority of the described routes are between 25 and 150 metres although there are a handful of longer climbs on the bigger ngomas which exceed 200m. Access to the crags is variable and generally easier in the dry season (April to September). There are at least a dozen venues within an hours drive of Harare. However, some of the more remote ngomas, with longer routes, are difficult to get at and require more planning.

Lack of adequate natural protection is the chief limitation for new routes. It's not unusual to run out a full rope's length, on the easier pitches, without any gear at all. On the

harder routes the protection is generally better and someone may have had the patience to hand place a bolt. But Pete told me a sobering story about repeating an old classic. He had just led the main pitch and his mate was strung out on the runnerless top pitch above. Pete fiddled with the belay – a single 6mm bolt – and to his horror pulled it out with his fingers. He tapped it back in place, offered up a quick prayer and held his breath.

Later, I had a similar experience. During 1993, efforts were directed towards replacing critical bolts on worthwhile classics. I joined a team detailed to sort out the climbs on a 130 metre wall at Ngomakurira, half an hour's drive north of Harare. My task was to replace the bolts on a relatively unprotected route, with a bad reputation. When I chopped the initial bolt it sheared off at the first tap of my hammer and pinged away into the trees below me. In the past, this bolt had frequently been used as an intermediate stance to reduce rope drag and I remember shuddering at the thought. I replaced the ageing, homemade assemblage of ironware with 10mm stainless steel throughout! The route is still a serious climb, but at least the belays and scanty protection are no longer suicidal!

Local grading has its limitations too. The MCZ favours a simple system of Grade 1-VII with sups and infs from V onwards. It was originally modelled on the UIAA system. It lacks an indication of the route's seriousness. Thus, a Grade VI can be anything between HVS 5a and E3 5c and there is at least one Grade III that rates as one of the most frightening routes I've ever led.

From 1990 onwards, the opening up of the Zimbabwean economy brought a handful of expatriates into the country, amongst them a mixed bag of climbers, chiefly North Americans and Europeans, the latter including a few British. This produced a ripple of enthusiasm for the harder lines on the walls between the existing routes. More recently, the acquisi-

tion of a cordless drill resulted in the development of a number of easily accessible, single pitch, sport climbing venues near Harare.

Nevertheless, the top standard is some way behind the rest of the world. But at least that gave me the opportunity of opening a few routes. However, egos were regularly dented by visitors from the outside. On arrival, they would announce that they were "... not fit at the moment", or had "... just come to see Victoria Falls". They still managed to flash the test pieces and then usually added a few routes of their own for good measure! I don't recall any who went home unimpressed by Zimbabwean granite.

Beyond all the hype and the heated controversies about bolting ethics, the simple pleasure of climbing good quality rock, without another rope in sight, had much to recommend it. The problems of the last thirty years may have done little to improve the lot of the people of Zimbabwe, or the economy, but they have contributed to preserve a climbing potential that one colleague described as akin to that which stretched before the inter-war climbers in Wales and the Lakes. The comparison is apposite and likely to remain so for the immediate future.

Sadly for me, at the beginning of 1995, I began to hear rumours of an impending relocation. The focus of mineral exploration was shifting towards West Africa. Mali was mentioned and a brief vision of the Fatma Pinnacles near Timbuktu wavered before my eyes like a mirage. I dreaded telling Pete. Finally, the move was confirmed and I broke the news. He listened in silence and then to my surprise announced his own imminent departure for a position at the Outward Bound School in the Chimanimani Mountains. I needn't have worried after all.

Eight months later, gazing out of my office window in Bamako at the pale, wintry sunshine of the Sahel, Zimbabwean

granite seems a long way away. To date, commitments at work have prevented me from getting anywhere near the Fatma Pinnacles but a couple of kilometres from where I sit a 20 metre gritstone band, in an escarpment overlooking the Niger River, provides adequate compensation.

Post script: If you're fed up with indifferent weather and yearn for some dry sunny rock, think seriously about Zimbabwe. There are regular flights from Europe and welcoming hosts in the MCZ. There are few published guides but the club maintains an up to date, computerised data base of climbing descriptions which is available, on request, from the Secretary, for a small fee.

The MCZ can be contacted through:
The Secretary,
Mountain Club of Zimbabwe,
P0 Box 1945
Harare
Zimbabwe

Editor's note: This article was written prior to the distressing situation in Zimbabwe.

SICK HEART RIVER

A New Climb on Napes Needle

Stephen Reid

"The task of finding anything either new or interesting to say on the subject of Napes Needle is one which is vastly easier for a light-hearted editor to set than for an unhappy contributor to perform"

WP Haskett Smith FRCCJ 1914

"You took a big risk ..."

"You're over Jordan. The Sick Heart is where you come to when you're at the end of your road ... I had a notion it was the River of the Water of Life, same as in Revelation ..."

"... Well, it ain't."

John Buchan, 'Sick Heart River', 1941

Napes Needle – to quote the 1923 Gable guidebook – is 'easily the best known climb in the Lake District'. Recently upgraded from V Diff to Hard Severe, it is the symbol of the Fell & Rock Climbing Club and its first ascent, solo, by Walter Parry Haskett Smith is considered by many to mark the birth of rock climbing as a sport independent of mountaineering. The routes to its summit read like a Roll of Honour of Lakeland Climbing – The Wasdale Crack, Haskett Smith's 1886 tour de force – The Lingmell Crack, 1892 (Collie, Jones and a Mrs Commeline, that one) – The Crowley Route, 1893 – The Arête, 1894 (Fowler) – Slingsby's Crack, 1904 – The Obverse Route, 1912, (Herford and Brunskill, and if it's Hard Severe, I'm a Hottentot) – Direct Obverse from the Gap (HVS), 1928 (Knight, Kelly and Standring), the last route recorded, with the exception of a low level girdle in 1941.

First attempt on Sick Heart River by Stephen Reid *Photo: Colwyn Jones*

Hallowed climbs, hallowed names: Napes Needle seemed a most unlikely place to find unclimbed rock. Yet, having enjoyed an ascent of The Lingmell Crack with my wife, Jill, I peered idly over The Shoulder, as I belayed her back down, and noticed holds on an undescribed arête between The Obverse Route and The Gap. A very quick (as usual we had somewhere we should have been half an hour earlier) abseil inspection revealed that there were maybe enough of them to climb the arête but that it certainly would not be HS and there looked to be little or no gear on it. I duly filed the information away in my mental equivalent of a little black book to be disinterred at some unspecified future date when I might be climbing a little better (a long-standing but I fear never to be realised hope), and we hurried off to whatever it was that we were late for. That was in 1995.

Over the next four years numerous reasons kept me from having a serious look at the route, but the real one was quite simply that I doubted I was climbing well enough, and I'm not sure why 1999 was any different in that respect. I had, as usual, led a few E1s and backed off a few E2s, no different to most other years, but one of the E2s was The Cayman, just across Needle Gully from The Needle, and I was keen to have another crack at it. Thus it was, on a beautifully hot and sunny Sunday, I found myself up at the Napes as one member of a party of four and, whilst the others teamed up to do Eagle's Nest Direct, I abseiled down the arête. I was encouraged by the rock which was superb and remarkably clean, but discouraged by the angle and the lack of protection. Judicious prodding with my nutkey revealed a shallow RP3 placement as the last gear some considerable way below The Shoulder. Several feet below this, a decent wire placement should just about prevent contact with the huge platform on the Obverse Route which lay directly below the crux moves. Horizon-

tally left of this I cleaned out a crucial spiky pocket and a few feet below it a reassuring wire slot. There was no doubt it would go, but would it go for me? I retrieved my ropes and hurried round to find the others who had completed their climb and were busy consuming an early lunch.

As we descended from The Dress Circle, my chocolate Labrador, Rolo, followed us and, on shooing him back to the sacks, I watched in horror as he missed his footing on the polished rock, tumbled down a steep grassy depression, and then plunged in a totally free fall, some fifty feet, to land with a horrible thud on the gully bed below. Beside myself with anguish I almost fell down the gully in my haste to get to him, convinced that he was dead or severely hurt. Incredibly he appeared not to have a single broken bone and within a few minutes was walking again, albeit stiffly. I cradled him anxiously as Colwyn Jones gently examined him and then shook his head in disbelief at his apparent lack of injury. We moved him to a shady spot under Needle Ridge and I sat and held his proverbial paw whilst Dave Bodecott, Colwyn and Ann MacDonald climbed The Cayman, a fine lead by Dave in the stifling conditions.

By the time they had finished, Rolo was looking significantly better and I felt that in another hour or so he might be able to walk a little, perhaps even as far as Styhead, where we could always commandeer the MRT stretcher. We left him in the shade and went to try my line. Colwyn belayed, Ann sunbathed and Dave made suitably disparaging remarks as I clambered a short distance up The Gap, launched along a leftwards hand-traverse (The Needle Perimeter in reverse), and swung awkwardly onto the platform. Here I rested whilst Dave soloed up and removed my first runner in order that the run of the rope would not create too much drag. That done, I bridged up nervously between the huge poised flake of The

Obverse Route and the wall to its right. I placed the good nut and a small Friend, then a poor nut and finally a skyhook (borrowed at the last minute off Dave) in the spiky pocket. Then I retreated to the platform for a rest and to give myself a serious talking to. Twice more I made the pocket, and twice more the rest and more pep talk, before I finally committed myself and traversed rapidly rightwards to the nose, placed the crucial wire, swung way out over The Gap, and somehow powered through the moves to end up standing in balance where my hands had been only seconds earlier. In balance it was true but without handholds. It all felt very precarious and it was several minutes before I could even bring myself to look around the arête to my right. I had forgotten about the RP and in fact it took several looks round the arête before I noticed the placement and tenuously managed to transfer my microwires from my harness to my left hand to my mouth to my right hand to place it (I dared not tug too fiercely for fear it might pull out and unbalance me), then repeat the procedure with a quickdraw, and finally with the rope. Whew ! Clipped – but it still took five minutes for my heart to stop pounding.

Only a foot or so above the nose was a decent sized foothold. The problem was the lack of handholds. But if I could stand on the foothold then I could reach the edge of a substantial but totally flat and overhung ledge. I sidled round and up ..., and back down again ..., back to the nose, heart going like a sledgehammer. I looked down and immediately wished that I hadn't. The Gap was a very apt name and the space beneath my feet was vast. Calm down and one more try ..., scuttle back down again. Recover. Third time ..., and a tiny layaway high on the arête proved the key ... Got It! Hands slapped the flat ledge. Surely I had cracked it now.

But no, there was another move, indeed a series of moves,

to gain a standing position on the ledge. Even more precarious moves than the last as I soon discovered. The problem was to move up high enough to gain a small sloping undercut layaway and, leaning way out over The Gap, somehow get one's feet up onto the ledge. The undercut was poor and offered little assurance and there appeared to be high potential for barn-dooring round the arête to the left if one muffed the footwork. I hastily scrabbled back down to the good foothold. It was hard to rest on the flat handholds with the single foothold and the almost certainty of an unpleasant collision with the platform should I let go, and some fifty minutes of half hearted attempts later saw me still trying to rest – on a left foot which had by now gone to sleep and with arms that were pumping rapidly. "Dave, I really do need rescuing," I pleaded for the third time, whereupon Bodecott with obvious reluctance, finally tore himself away from chatting up the bronzing MacDonald, soloed The Lingmell Crack, and after what seemed like hours, lowered me a top-rope. It's amazing how easy that final move suddenly became.

Rolo and I retired gently down to Seathwaite to lick our wounds. Even more amazingly, he walked the whole way.

Monday was a day of bright sunshine, another heatwave. On Scafell, young James MacHaffie made an outstanding lead of Shere Khan, and John Campbell and Richard Kidd had a great day on some classic VSs. I only learnt this later because I was stuck indoors at work all day though I was happy resting my tired fingers, having made arrangements to return to the Napes on Tuesday afternoon. It was total chance that made me glance at the forecast as we locked up and note to my horror that the morrow promised rain by noon.

I raced home and spent a frantic half hour ringing up any potential partner I could think of who would not mind going up to the Napes for an evening. It was not a long list. I

rang Ron Kenyon. "No, no, sorry, I've got too much work to do." I broke with tradition and confessed the secret purpose of the request. He wavered, but not enough, still too much work, no he really shouldn't, couldn't, wouldn't, mustn't ... Reluctantly I put the phone down and the kettle on. Ten minutes later and the phone rang, it was Ron – did he need to bring any gear ... ?

We left Seathwaite at 7.30pm, without Rolo, but with the fells gilded in evening sunlight and the air like champagne. Our sacks were pared to a minimum and hope lent wings to our feet as we skimmed up the Styhead track. Here we passed John and Richard on their way down bearing tales from Scafell. They must have wondered why we hardly paused for a chat but seemed happy with our barely plausible explanation that we were just going for a quick sprint up The Needle because it was such a beautiful evening. Likewise Adam Wilde and Mandy Davenport who were ensconced on the final moves of West Buttress and harried our shadows with suitable banter as we raced past Kern Knotts. All along the Climbers' Traverse I rehearsed the moves in my mind until, by the time it actually came to gearing up at the foot of The Gap, I had reduced myself to a nervous wreck.

The sun dipping behind The Sphinx shot forth crimson rays that cast deep dark shadows the length of the Napes. In the shade under the East Face of The Needle the air was cool but the rock was still warm from the heat of the day. The coolness condensed the sweat from my body as I took my time gearing up and lacing my rockshoes while Ron uncoiled the ropes. Blood racing, I forced myself to climb slowly across to the platform, trying not to rush it, trying to stay calm. Snowflake, chance and hell were the words that came most often to mind in this respect and yet there I was bridging up the flake, placing the thinnest of line slings instead of the skyhook,

launching myself across the wall, laying away over The Gap, standing on the nose and suddenly back at my high point, left foot and forearms still aching from the memory of the day before. The handholds were as flat, the foothold as small, and the RP was once again no higher than ankle level and no more firmly seated, and under my toes was a most impressive view of Wasdale, its greenness enhanced by the low evening light and the vast moody depths of Wastwater softly rippled with gilt reflections, though there appeared not to be a breath of breeze to cause them. In fact nothing stirred the stillness save the pounding of my pulse, though even this had nowhere near the same sense of urgency as on last occasion, for in the intervening twenty-four hours I had, in my mind, worked out another runner, and mentally that made all the difference.

Adjacent to the flat handholds was a pimple of a tiny spike, which I had discovered previously was too small for a sling, but I had come prepared. I had a Rock 0 with the nut pushed down the cable all ready and looped this over the spike, clipped in a quick-draw and the rope, and breathed a little more easily. Reaching down, I dabbed tiny crucial footholds with chalk so that I wouldn't miss them in the gloaming, and then stepped up. The poor, high layaway for my left hand, a wide reach for a hidden side-pull with the right, and then I delicately moved my feet up, an inch at a time, until my cramped left made the ledge. Next, not daring even to think about it, my right hand arced up for a tiny nick in the rock above, pinched it between thumb and forefinger, and I stepped onto the ledge. On my left a blunt chisel-shaped spike took a miserable excuse of a sling, but I didn't care; one move round the arête and I was on The Shoulder and talking nineteen to the dozen as I set up a belay. Ron followed with many an exclamation of awe, bless him, and we settled on a grade of E2/3-ish, 5b/c-ish (maybe). There was just the top to do.

The Wasdale Crack starts the top block with an awkward mantelshelf and traverses left and The Obverse Route starts with the same move and traverses right, but I had noticed that nothing was described going straight up. It made a fitting finish to our climb and we took it in turns to stand proudly on the summit before descending via The Arête, threading The Needle and returning in deepening gloom, exhausted but ecstatic to Seathwaite and the safe plush haven of Ronnie's new Volvo. It was only half past eleven.

I have to admit that I feel a bit of a fraud, joining the small select band of Needle pioneers along with Haskett Smith, Jones, Herford, Kelly and all. They are, after all, all well known names in Lakeland mountaineering, experts who were climbing to the limit of what was then thought possible, whereas to call my standard on rock average would be polite. Certainly no-one could ever accuse me of pioneering at the limit of what is thought possible today. But ... , one cannot get away from The Needle as something rather special in the history of British climbing, and, with having made the first new route up it since 1928, there comes that rather joyous feeling of having pulled a plum out from right under everyone else's noses. No doubt the euphoria will wear off in time, but meanwhile you will have to forgive Ron and I our somewhat smug and self-satisfied expressions!

BIRD HOW

Tom Price

As you go up Eskdale the last farms you pass before getting into the wilder upper reaches of the valley are Brotherilkeld on the right and Taw House on the left.

In the thirties Taw House was a youth hostel as well as a sheep farm, and the first time I ever went there it was as a schoolboy and a hosteller, walking from Black Sail Hut via Wasdale and Burnmoor. At the end of the day as I left the road and started on the cart track that led to the farm I felt dead tired and resigned myself grimly to plodding that final mile.

I was heartened after a few minutes to see ahead a chimney and a roof. The end, I thought, was in sight. But it was not the farm I saw, it was a tiny cottage. Taw House was half a mile further, and I still remember the struggle I had making it. In youth one gets quickly exhausted. Fortunately one recovers just as fast.

The cottage was Bird How. Two rooms over a stable or cow-byre. It belonged to Mrs Symonds, the wife of H.H. Symonds, who wrote *Walking in the Lake District*, the first of what was to become an avalanche of such books.

Bird How had escaped renovation. It remained a humble farm-labourer's cottage. Water was taken from a nearby beck. There was one fireplace. Oil-lamps provided light.

Some ten years later, just after the war, we of the L.U.M.C. were discussing the Christmas vacation and where to go. We wanted somewhere different, quiet and above all cheap. I suggested Bird How. It was a long shot. Mrs Symonds would probably be none too keen to let it to a bunch of students but I found her number in the phone book, and asked her, diffidently, if she would hire her cottage for one week to our very respect-

able climbing club, whose president was none other than George Graham Macphee.

Without hesitation she said yes.

"How much would you charge?"

"Well, let's say ten shillings for the week plus your estimate of how much coal you use. There's coal in the byre."

Since we were a group of twelve, that worked out at just over one shilling each the week. There were four beds, all with iron bedsteads, so there was a choice of places to sleep: either on a mattress, on the bare bedsprings, or on the floor.

The party reached Bird How by various means. There were one or two cars and motorcycles. Some of us hitchhiked. Some walked over the passes from Ambleside. Bird How was built on the side of a rocky mound and was what is now called a split-level building. The lower floor was the cow-byre, the upper floor the living space. There was no way of getting from the byre to the rest of the house except round the outside. You came out of the byre, turned right and followed the house wall in an upward spiral until you reached the front door. If you carried on past it your progress was halted by a dry-stone wall which enclosed a tiny space on this side of the house, forming a little yard in front of the door. From this yard you looked down into a field which fell away below to the River Esk. If from the byre door you turned left to go round the house, you got into a downward spiral and finished up in the field below. Before I knew any of this I went out for a bucket of coal in the black dark of our first night and tried to return the other way, groping along the wall. I finished up totally bewildered, half way along the wall of the field. A very late arrrival made a similar mistake. His plaintive voice came to us through the rain, and when we opened the door and shone a torch down over the wall he cried, "I could see a light in the window but I couldn't find any way up."

It rained the whole week. January rain, as cold as snow, only wetter. Heavy rain-clouds made the short days even shorter; in fact twilight seemed to last all day long. But youth and good company - mixed company at that - made it a happy time. Every day we went out and sloshed about the fells, and every night we came back and hung our wet clothing on make-shift clothes-lines all about the house, which soon resembled Fagin's den in *Oliver Twist*. The coal fire, enthusiastically stoked, produced the humid warmth of a tropical rain forest, the clothes on the lines assuming a uniform dampness.

On our last day the weather looked as though it might relent, and for the first time we left Bird How in dry though cloudy conditions. Now was our chance to make the Eskdale Horseshoe, over Crinkle Crags, Bowfell, Esk Pike, Scafell Pikes and Scafell. But by the time we got to Bowfell the rain was with us again, and we continued in worsening weather over Esk Pike, across Esk Hause, and eventually on to the top of Scafell Pike. It was already getting dark, and the prospect of getting the whole party up Broad Stand on to Scafell was so unattractive that we were forced into the application of a bit of common sense. We abandoned the Horseshoe objective and picked our way down through the rain and darkness into Upper Eskdale. We descended the rocks that flanked Cam Spout, the dashing water re-sounding in our ears, though only faintly discernible to our eyes, 'pouring a constant bulk uncertain where'. When we reached the sheep-fold at Sampson's Stones we paused in its shelter and reviewed our position. We were all becoming tired and cold. We knelt in a tight circle on the sodden turf and placed everything we had left to eat on the ground between us. By the light of a fading torch that one unusually provident member had brought we divided the food up and devoured it. It included, as I recall, a large slab of butter

which we cut into chunks and ate like chocolate. All is grist that goes to the mill.

The River Esk beyond this point drops into a gorge through numerous waterfalls and deep pools. An alternative route down the valley is via Silvery Bield, through two or three boggy hollows, to rejoin the Esk at Cowcove Beck. Following the river one could hardly get lost, but there was a danger of falling into the gorge, whereas the only real hazard on the Silvery Bield route was losing the way.

We chose Silvery Bield.

I knew there was a path that skirted the boggy hollows, but I recommended heading straight across them. It was one of the darkest nights I can remember. The sky, with its great weeping raincloud, was as dark as the land, and all we could see, apart from an occasional gleam of water under our feet, was a faint band of lesser darkness between the raincloud and the horizon. This enabled us to pick out a slight dip towards which to aim.

As we splashed across the springy bogs I had in mind that through most boggy hollows there meandered a stream of some depth, and after a while a faint gleam indicated we'd found it. It was too dark to see how wide it was but we launched ourselves into the void hoping to fall forwards rather than backwards.

Most of us were across when we heard a startled yelp.

"Help!"

"Where are you?"

"I'm down here."

We felt about and grasped the hands of one Peggy Sloan, medical student, who was up to her chest in water, laughing. We hauled her out.

"You should try it," she said. "I was getting really cold before and that warmed me up no end."

Fortunately we were not far from home now. When at length we sloshed through Taw House farmyard, the barking of their dogs was music to our ears, for it told us that Bird How was close at hand.

We stoked up the fire, brewed endless hot drinks, devoured a meal of huge calorific value, and enjoyed a long last evening of warmth and well-being.

Bird How is still there, property now of the National Trust. It is let to National Trust holiday makers for sums very different from what we paid. But now of course it has the amenities of civilisation, which we were very happy to do without.

THE BARTONS' OWN OWEN JONES

Peter Osborne

The year 1906, in which the FRCC was first formed, was also the year in which Claude Barton ceased climbing. He was a member of the Club, but only briefly. Not only was this the time that he moved away from his earlier job at Grasmere, to become Manager of the Farrer Estate at Clapham, but it was also the year of his wedding. The lady he married, Dorothy Cunliffe of Clappersgate, in spite of, (perhaps because of), her own family connections with climbing, promptly required that he give up the sport.

Claude and his brother Guy are clearly noted in Club guides for their first ascents: August 25th 1901 Dow Gully North, Ordinary Route and August 27th 1901 (with L F Meryon) Pillar Savage Gully. On May 26th 1901 Claude had been with the Abrahams and J H Wigner on the first ascent of Pillar New West.

In spite of the Wasdale Head Book it is difficult to form a broad picture of the climbing career of climbers like the Bartons at this time. The Club already holds in its archive their fine hand-produced 'Climbing Book', with a photocopy in the Library. Now I have the privilege of access to a previously unpublished source which offers another, and complementary, picture: namely Guy Barton's annotated copy of O G Jones's *Rock-climbing in the English Lake District*. This book, which still belongs to Claude's daughter-in-law, Mary Barton, was given by him to his brother Guy 'In memory of Moss Ghyll and other climbs'. Strangely, because it is a second edition only printed in 1900, the inscription is dated September 1899'. This may be a later mistake because the original inscription, in pencil, had no date. The annotations, in Guy's hand, date from after August 1901 as is shown by the first, and very

interesting set of notes.

On pages lxi-lxii of his Introduction, Jones included his famous graded list of "Courses" or climbs. Against these, on the left, Barton has written a list of dates headed "First Ascent". These are the list of the BARTON'S own first ascents, being later than the first ascensionist dates. Moss Ghyll 'Sep'98', for example was first climbed by Collie's team in 1892, but the Bartons' own climb is confirmed by a marginal comment on page 51. The written dates therefore give the first ascents in the Bartons' climbing history from its beginnings to 1901. We may assume that in most cases the brothers climbed together. The list mentions exceptions when (presumably) Guy climbed with "EMD", Edith Davies, in September 1900, and when in September 1898 the initials "CWB" against A Gully on Pikes probably means that Claude but not Guy was involved.

With these exceptions in mind we can see the careful plan of progress in the brothers' climbs:

Aug. 1893 Needle Gully, E (Jones Grade)
Slab and Notch, E
Scafell Chimney, M
Pillar West, M
Aug. 1895 Broad Stand, E
Deep Ghyll, M
Scafell Pinnacle (Short), M
Walla Crag Gully, M
Aug. 1897 Pavey Gullies, M+
Sep. 1898 Deep Ghyll (W.Wall Trav.) E
Custs Gully (GT End), E
D Gully, Pikes, E
Gt.End Central Gully (Ord.),E
C Gully, Pikes, M
A.. ... M
Penrith Climb, M
Professor's Chimney, M+
Needle Ridge, M+
Arrowhead RidgeTraverse, M+
Deep Ghyll (W. Wall), D
Doctor's Chimney, D
Moss Ghyll, Direct finish, D+
Gable Central Gully (Ord), D
Pillar Great Chimney (Dir), D
Keswick Bros Climb, D+
Deep Ghyll variety routes, D+
Shamrock Gully (ord), D+
Descent Oblique Chimney
Shamrock Gully (New), ES
Sept 1900 Gable Crag Traverse, E
Gt End SE. Gully, E (with EMD)
Bottle Shape Pinnacle Ridge M(..)
Arrowhead Branch Gully, M
Eagles Nest Ridge (Ord), M+
Arrowhead Ridge (direct), F)
Eagles Nest Ridge, Ling Chimney, D
W.Jordan Gully, Pillar, D+
(Note "3rd Ascent")
Engineer's Chimney, Gable, D+, (..)
Screes Great Gully(direct), ES
Walker's Gully, ES ("3rd Ascent")
Dec.1900 Gable Westmorland Crag, M

Gable Needle, D
Kern Knotts Chimney, D
B Chimney, Pikes, D
Moss Ghyll(Branch Exit),D+
April 1899 Pendlebury Traverse, M+
Pillar right Pisgah, D
Pillar left ... D
Oblique Chimney, D
Pinnacle by Steep Ghyll, D+
Pillar N. Face, D+
Gable Raven Crag Chimney, M
Aug.1901 Dow Crag Great Gully, D
Dow Crag North Gully, D+
(note "1st. Ascent ?")
(added) Deep Ghyll, Great Chimney)
Collier's Climb, Scafell, D+
Dow Crag, Intermediate Gully, ES
(note "3rd ascent")
Dow ... Central Gully, ES
Dow ... Easter Gully, ES
(note "2nd Ascent")

The Jones grades are roughly similar to ours, though less differentiated. The Bartons' early seasons were spent on Easy and Moderate climbs, though Walla Crag Gully ('95) is now Difficult as is Pavey Great Gully of '97. The 1898 climbs are predominantly Difficult, and several of the 1899 climbs, well down the Jones list, are now V. Diff. Progress was interrupted in 1900, when climbing with Edith Davies, but, by this time the Bartons were tackling climbs now rated Severe, (Jones classified these as "more difficult" or ES). They are aware of being closer to the game, noting 2nd. and 3rd. ascents. By 1901 they are climbing mostly at Severe and putting up their Savage Gully VS first ascent.

Scattered through the text of the book are marginal comments and some longer pieces of writing. Some of these are small additions to Jones based on experience. For example of Wastwater Screes Great Gully Barton writes 'it is advisable always to bring the second man up to the cave where there is good anchorage, but in the cave the second man must lead out by the crack on the left as there is no room in the cave'. Only the larger and more important comments are recorded here.

A drawing (p.43) based on that by J.M. Marshall in the Wasdale Head book explains the Bartons' special interest in Moss Ghyll. As Barton emphasises on his key and on p. 44, the Collie party 'never re-entered the gully after having passed the Collie Step'. The Bartons, in 1898, exited at the same point but worked a

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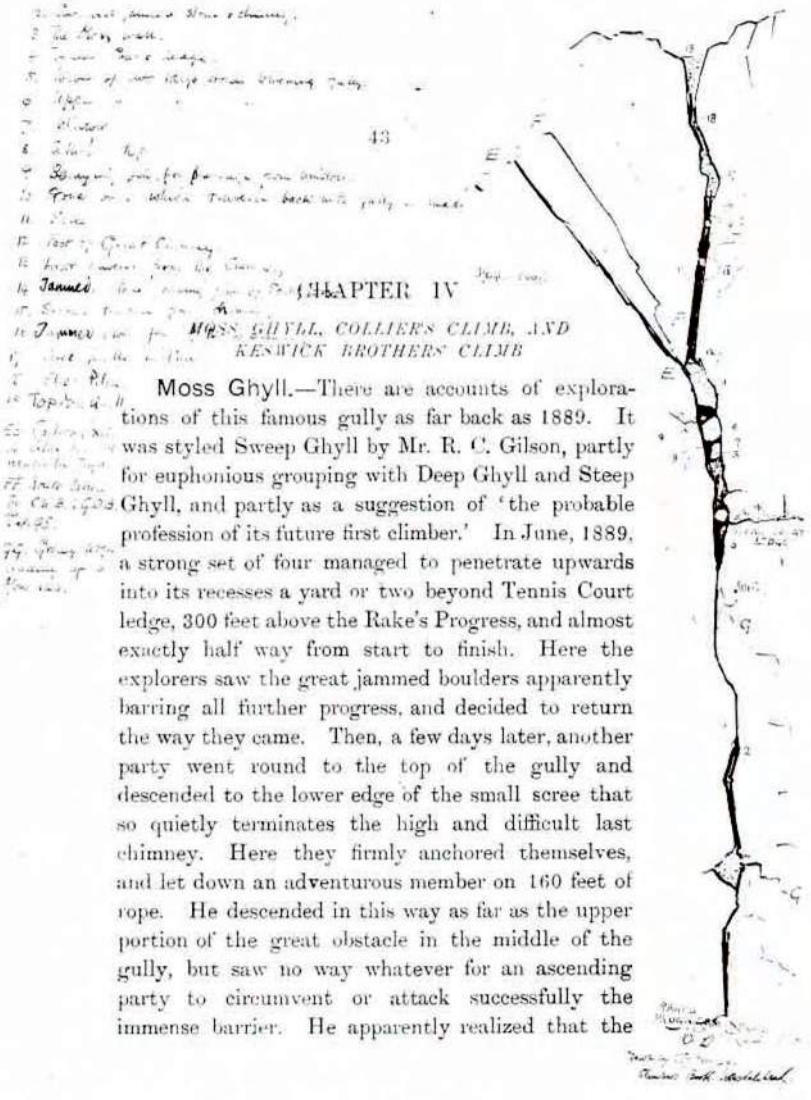
CHAPTER IV

MOSS GHYLL, COLLIER'S CLIMB, AND KENWICK BROTHERS' CLIMB

Moss Ghyll.—There are accounts of explorations of this famous gully as far back as 1889. It was styled Sweep Ghyll by Mr. R. C. Gilson, partly for euphonious grouping with Deep Ghyll and Steep Ghyll, and partly as a suggestion of 'the probable profession of its future first climber.' In June, 1889, a strong set of four managed to penetrate upwards into its recesses a yard or two beyond Tennis Court ledge, 300 feet above the Rake's Progress, and almost exactly half way from start to finish. Here the explorers saw the great jammed boulders apparently barring all further progress, and decided to return the way they came. Then, a few days later, another party went round to the top of the gully and descended to the lower edge of the small scree that so quietly terminates the high and difficult last chimney. Here they firmly anchored themselves, and let down an adventurous member on 160 feet of rope. He descended in this way as far as the upper portion of the great obstacle in the middle of the gully, but saw no way whatever for an ascending party to circumvent or attack successfully the immense barrier. He apparently realized that the



Barton's drawing of Moss Ghyll

'somewhat higher exit' on a diagonal line above Collie's, 'keeping to the angle of the Buttress' which was 'difficult

in 1898'. In April 1899 they continued up Collier's Chimney but found difficult ice in it. We note two things: the normality of exploratory variations, and the frequent encounter with ice at Easter when a lot of climbing was done.

Dow Crag, where the Bartons climbed often, is the subject of a series of notes. At the head of the chapter Barton gives a chronology relating to the key of the line drawing opposite page 235. This confirms known first ascents but adds re Intermediate Gully: '2nd. ascent 1898 Messrs. W.J.Williams and O.G.Jones; 3rd ? Messrs. C.W. and G.D.B (without leaving the gully)' adding on p.232, and challenging Jones, 'It is unnecessary to leave the Gully at all. Aug.'01'. Similarly re e...e , relabelled Easter Gully (Note 1) '1st ascent direct 1895 Messrs. C. Hopkinson & O. Koecher who missed bottom pitch', '2nd. ascent direct 1901.Aug. Messrs C W.and G.D.B. who took bottom pitch on left'. These notes show increasing pride in their ability to climb through previously avoided sections and to simplify routes.

The North Gully First Ascent claim is made at the end of the chapter on p.236. 'Apparently a 1st. ascent was made of this Gully by self and CWB. on Aug. 24. 1901. We had spent the morning in Koecher's crack in the Easter Gully & after lunch moved up to this very fine Gully with its one immense pitch. This pitch is formed by 3 huge boulders, the top being the largest. The leader climbed the left wall till 2 broadish little ledges were reached, with just steadying holds for the hands, by means of an angular crack – this led right back over the pitch. The holds for the next 6 feet are very scanty & lead directly horizontally till the left wall begins to break away & affords holds for an upward route. Eight or ten feet more bring one out. The climb presents one of the neatest and longest traverses I can remember in the district.' Later FRCC Guides of this Severe route continue to mention unsatisfactory fingerholds on the traverse.

A further set of notes relate to Walker's Gully on Pillar, starting with '3rd Ascent Messrs. GD and CW Barton, Sept 18 1900'. Whereas Jones had led off up slabs on the left of the water 'we took the buttress on the right and finally traversed into the upper part of the first pitch. The traverse into the gully from a narrow, sloping scoop which leads from a grassy platform below is difficult, & in winter would, I shd. think be horribly dangerous.' Jones was shouldered through the hole behind the great cave, but there is no need for a shoulder here a all', writes Barton, perhaps forgetting that Jones led it on a snowy 7th January.

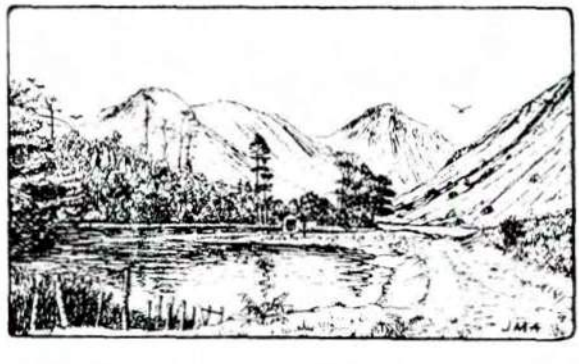
On the steep, partly iced, section above Jones led with assistance up on the left. Barton writes: 'On the 2nd and 3rd. ascents, I believe, this route was severely left alone – it looks very desperate. CW led up the right wall till his left hand gripped the sharp upper edge of the lowest of the 3 jammed stones. This enabled him to swing his right back onto the opposite wall and so to lower the upper part of his body onto the side of the Gully. The rest was backing up. The difficulty alone is to swing across correctly.'

The account reflects a change in climbing practice: the shift from ready shoulders and backs to more considered movements. Indeed this is reflected in many of Guy Barton's comments. At first reading of them there is a slight feeling of primness if not of conceit, but I found this, upon consideration, to be unfair. The key to the comments is a wish for precision about the best possible way to approach pitches and moves. The impression is of planned and careful climbers who contributed significantly to the development of poise in climbing. Any sense of conceit is dispelled by the account of their first ascent of Savage Gully, copied from the Wasdale Head Book onto the page opposite the Index. There Guy concludes that the rope held from the nose would be of

practically no assistance and that the first ascent was made by Mr. Thompson.' This was generous: Thompson had climbed the route in all essentials but not completely before them. Few are the climbers willing to allocate their first ascent to somebody else.

The rest of the Bartons' climbing career, in which they became more interested in gritstone routes, is recounted in the 'Climbing Book'.

Note: The Bartons were probably right that Jones' Plate vii.i, is wrongly labelled. The oblique view implied by the boulder under 'D' Buttress means that 'e. ..e' is probably Easter Gully not North Gully, which is almost off the drawing to the right.



SPLENDOUR AND SQUALOR

Leslie Shore

You will find a contender for the finest walk in England by tracing a line on a Lakeland map around the rim of upper Eskdale. A brief spell of sunny October weather gave me a reason to experience it. I rose before sunrise and drove alone in my car to Eskdale. Upon the moorland part of the Ulpha to Eskdale Green road, a rich autumnal day announced itself. Shallow-angled beams of sunlight penetrated mauve-rinsed stratocumulus clouds and played upon the landscape to create a pageant of variegated browns, greens and blacks.

The world of radio simultaneously captured my hearing. Paul Guinery, on BBC Radio 3's Sunday programme 'Sacred and Profane', ushered in Bach's Cantata 180 by saying:

"The soprano has another, more extensive number later on, 'light of light, light of the senses'."

His words gave rise to a profound coincidence.

Eskdale's Woolpack Inn was my choice for my walk's starting point. Vanity as well as geography had played a part in this decision. I understood that the Inn kept a log book of 'completers' of what Tony Greenbank had written about as the Woolpack Walk, my day's ambition. The log book's existence though was forgotten at eight twenty-five that morning when I turned my back on the Inn and headed for the fells.

Harter Fell was the first hill which I ascended. An icy breeze at its true summit forced me to shelter when I arrived there at around ten in the morning. My private moments were brief. A chorus of joy sounded as a party of four women of the Penrith Ramblers arrived at the fell's trigonometrical point. Eventually they spotted me and invited me to take their photo-

graphs. Standing before them and juggling three cameras, I satisfied their requests. The horizon of fell tops in the scene behind them was my planned walk: Hard Knott, Crinkle Crags, Bowfell, Esk Pike, and the Scafell range.

One lady volunteered to be my photographer and I handed her my camera. With one of her eyes snug behind my camera's viewfinder, she arranged my pose. She kept silent about my red and green harlequin jacket and red trousers which clashed with the greys and greens of their garments. My red Balaclava hat though captured her attention.

"Take that hat off," she ordered, which I did.

"Ah!" she merrily observed. "The real man."

My camera collected and thanks exchanged, I bid farewell to the ladies. Our journeys then divided. They headed easterly towards the Duddon valley. I stepped out in a northerly direction.

Having walked up Hard Knott a couple of times before, I located its summit cairn on its tor-like plateau with ease. Privacy and solitude. My western gaze took in the Isle of Man; it lay as a stationary kayak. I reviewed my progress and realised that I had spent too much time on Harter Fell's summit. As a result I guessed that I would arrive at Esk Pike later than my target time of two in the afternoon. This introduced some doubt into my mind about completing the walk in daylight and I contemplated alternatives to my day's plan. I nevertheless decided to carry on to Crinkle Crags.

My Hard Knott seclusion was short lived. Nearing the saddle point of Hard Knott, Mosedale and the Lingcove Beck valley branch of Eskdale, I heard incoherent bawling. A man was its source. He stood some way up Crinkle Crag's west-facing hillside, frantically waving a white flag. His shouts were answered by barks of excited collie dogs. The noise caused an avalanche of sheep to tumble from high fell pas-

Upper Eskdale *Photo: Leslie Shore*

tures. Baaing angrily, they protested at having to surrender their summer home. They were probably unconcerned that their hillside's beauty was being revealed. The southern position of the sun highlighted the terraced nature of the hillside's rock strata as thin horizontal lines of yellow and, through shadow, bands of purple between them.

My journey from Crinkle Crag's first cairn to the loftiest point on Scafell Pikes took me just under three hours. During that stage I moved as quickly as my hillwalking fitness allowed. Stepping up to the top of Bowfell, my physical effort was recognised by a darkly dressed man.

"What a fine sweat you're in," was his introductory remark.

"What's that lake ?" he asked, pointing to the Duddon Estuary.

"Where's the Old Man of Coniston ?"

He fell silent with an abruptness which seemed to me to be a demand from him to me to give him an instant reply. If so, he would have been annoyed by the time I deliberately took to give an answer. Initially I wondered if his questions were a ruse and I thought that some condescending reply of mine would have caused him to laugh at me. I then caught sight of his map which was essentially a printed thumbnail sketch. My suspicions then waned and so I came to believe that he did not know where he was. This in my opinion was the case since he greeted my answers with a benign look of doubt. When I gestured to the north and told him that he could also see the south-west of Scotland, he refused to look.

In some respects this encounter made me realise that I had become somewhat ambivalent to the sights since Hard Knott. The act of walking had concentrated my eyes upon my feet and on the terrain over which they walked. Nonetheless my memory of the day has retained a compendium of sights: the shadowy

horizontal line of the north Wales coast, the blue streak of Windermere, Langdale's straw-coloured U-shape, Borrowdale, Derwent Water, a turquoise Skiddaw and a blackening Great Gable.

I arrived at Esk Pike an hour later than my target and conquered some of my earlier doubt. The prevailing fine weather encouraged me to proceed to the Scafell range. Nevertheless it was with some relief that I touched the two summit cairns of Great End. I felt after these gestures that I had turned the corner for the home stretch. Soon afterwards my pace gathered speed and I bounded across the rocky surface of Scafell Pikes to descend into the col of Mickledore in good heart.

Scafell's rocky rampart of Broad Stand stood before me. I felt confident of ascending it since I had slithered down it countless times before, en route from Scafell's highest ground having rock climbed on Scafell's crags. To a man, sitting by a green coffin of a first aid box, I delivered what was intended to be a witty aside. "Its easy but if you hear some screams it's because I have slipped on wet rock."

A chastening experience lay ahead. I climbed steadily up Broad Stand to stand beneath a slimy, nine feet high wall of rock. Along its uppermost, horizontal edge, I knew that there were some large holds which could be used to pull up on. The puzzle was finding a safe sequence of moves to get to them. My exploratory moves found my fingers and feet skating off greasy holds. I eventually gave up with a thumping heart. Broad Stand has been graded as a Difficult rock climb. I had previously scoffed at hill walkers attempting that wall. They were better rock climbers than they thought.

With my feet settled on Mickledore's ground once more, I was both rueful about the time I had wasted on Broad Stand and concerned about the imminence of dwindling daylight. It was

quarter to five in the afternoon. I weighed up the wisdom of ascending Scafell. My rock climbing friends have obtained amusement from coaxing me up or down rock climbs during a day's dusk so as to save me from becoming stranded. I suffer from poor night vision. Even with a head torch in my rucksack, I decided to descend east to upper Eskdale and began to do so. My completion of a Woolpack walk would have to wait for another day.

A brief meeting with a lady walker, attired for a cross-country training run, caused me to change my mind. She signposted me to Scafell via Fox's Tarn route which proved to be a pleasant ascent. My prize was to complete the Woolpack Walk's summits. However my private exultation perished rapidly. I realised that the light's splendid hold on the day was slipping away at a rapid pace. Cloud cover had begun to dominate the sky. In dull light, I anxiously looked at the Ordnance Survey map and surveyed the land to the south. My exit plan emerged: on to the Slight Side top, down to Quagrigg Moss; then Stony Tarn for the Eskdale Youth Hostel.

Plans can go awry. My descent after Slight Side felt slow. A brief sunset marked my arrival at the peat hag of the Quagrigg Moss. Navigation then became progressively more difficult because of the featureless lie of the land. Dusk fell. I stumbled on with mounting impatience. Time seemed endless. I located what reason told me was the wrong tarn but I hoped otherwise. In the gloom I found a path and followed it to a silhouette of a ruined barn-like building. An ink-black Eskdale lay below me with the occasional lights of motor cars moving along it. I spotted, relatively close to me, that a car had taken a route at right angles to the general line of Eskdale road traffic. An electric light, on a building's exterior, was switched on close to where the vehicle stopped. I wondered,

was the building the Youth Hostel? I decided to find out.

The building's light became my objective. I descended to it with many curses. Drooping ferns tripped me up. Shin hurting boulders waylaid me. I did a number of somersaults. Eventually a sense of relief built up in me as I got within a stone's throw of the light. Then some shadows startled me and I distinguished the backsides of several large cows. Skeins of their coats' hairs hung coated in silken muck. The light glinted off a pond of cow slurry. Life found me standing on the edge of a midden. This made me realise that my escapade was not going to end well. A world of darkness hung behind me. My direct escape route involved crossing that pond to a farm gate.

My mounting dread might have been eased through recalling some other words of BBC Radio 3's Paul Gunnery:

"So, here's Bach's Cantata number 180, beginning with the chorus exhorting the soul to adorn itself and 'leave the dark cavern of Sin: come forth into the radiant light and begin to shine'."

Instead, in contrast, my destiny under the light promised squalor. My first stride placed me tottering on a glossy brown boulder. I judged what my next step would bring, collected myself ready and moved. My right leg sunk into a porridge of slurry up to and above the knee. I then swung my other leg through into the morass. There was a slurping sound as I pulled my right leg out of its trap and I felt the rear of my jacket being splattered with slurry. Several identical paddles followed with the same effect. My wife was later to describe my clothes' smell as sickening and I had to strip them all off before I was allowed to enter my own back door.

Upon closing the midden's gate, I encountered a woman unloading items from the car that had led me to the light. She showed no alarm since I must have given early warning of

our likely meeting. My appearance gained a look of approval from her. I opened conversation by apologising for trespassing.

"They hang people for less round here," she said humorously.

I invited further humiliation by asking her for directions to the Woolpack Inn. She mutely pointed in a direction which confirmed that I had made a navigation error. However I still felt a little lost when I met Eskdale's main road, its apparent narrowness in the dark caused me to wonder if it was another farm's access lane. I regained confidence by getting down on all fours to find that its surface was macadam. The walk up Eskdale to the Woolpack Inn went without mishap.

The barman of the Woolpack Inn bowed his head to me as he pulled me my celebratory pint of beer. I believe that I had good reasons to ignore the Inn's customers who greeted me with sniffing noses. They had not experienced the splendour and squalor of my ten hours fifty-one minutes walk from the car park to the bar. It had involved fourteen and a half miles of walking and six thousand and six hundred feet of climbed ascent.

Grasping a filled glass of beer and looking for a pen to enter my achievement, I proudly asked:

"Do you keep the log book of people who have completed the Woolpack Walk ?"

"Yes," he replied, "It's only for the Inn's residents."

The writer thanks the BBC Radio 3 Programme 'Sacred and Profane' for the use of extracts from Paul Guinery's script of October 12th 1997.

DEATH AND THE MAIDEN

Colin Wells

Sabrina chomped loudly on a large organically grown carrot. It startled me out of the drowsiness into which I'd been lulled by the wartime bomber drone of the van's engine as we putted towards Braemar. We'd been travelling for an age now through endless snowed-up market towns with their identical 1950s main streets, every one a perfect set in which to revive Dr. Finley's Casebook.

"Want some?"

Sabrina had finished masticating the carrot and was now cramming dried apricots into her Bardot-like mouth.

"No thanks".

Rather than join in the orgy of vegetarian gluttony going on beside me I was already anticipating the knockout dose of a slug from a bottle of Famous Grouse which I proposed to administer to my head on completion of the 6-hour drone drive from Lancaster to Lochnagar. Sabrina, however, was unlikely to join me in the ensuing alcoholic oblivion. A bout of stretching exercises and meditation before lights out was more her bag, perhaps followed by a little session with Kierkegaard to settle the mind before the night's rest. She was vegan, into Tai Chi, Yoga and deep, deep philosophy. All of which is understandable when you've survived a 1000-foot fall in the Italian Alps like Sabrina had. She had tumbled down the east face of the Ago de Sciora in the Bregaglia after an abseil anchor (set up by her absent-minded partner, Derek, around what turned out to be an inconveniently loose spike) gave way, pitching her down 1000 feet of rock and ice.

Several major stomach and lung re-organising operations later, minus a kidney and with enough stitching to make a Mr. Zippy pyjama case feel overstretched, and you might have been

forgiven for assuming that crochet or major league tiddlywinks might provide exciting enough challenge. But not our Sabrina – she was back on the rock in 6 months and out in the Alps the following season. Asked what had gone through her mind during the rapid descent down jagged rock and flesh tearing scree, she said she'd, "just tried to relax". Tried to relax. Small wonder then, that she'd earned the sobriquet, 'The Ice Maiden'. She wasn't that keen on abseiling though.

We rolled into the giant carpark at Spittle of Glenmuick. It was eerily ablaze with a halogen starkness produced by the headlamps of several university club Transits. Travel-numbed students were plunging from their cosy, steamed-up minibuses into a shocking Arctic night. But before the van had rolled to a halt Sabrina bounced out the door and dashed into the scrum of milling, chilling students. "What the ..... ?"

It turned out she'd spotted Derek. By pure coincidence the inadvertent cause of her former downfall had turned up with Dundee University MC. I can well imagine the thrill of horror which must have run through him as a woman he'd nearly killed two years previously (and hadn't seen since) suddenly lunged out of the icy darkness of a Highland night like some avenging Valkyrie. He probably expected to be cleaved in two by a sickening blow from a Simond adze or at least stunned by a blow from a Stubai knuckle-duster. But, luckily for the anxious Derek, The Ice Maiden was slushy enough to possess a forgiving centre and merely wished to enquire after his health. Nevertheless, you could see in the glow from the bus lights that he'd turned quite white.

The Famous Grouse anaesthetised me pretty efficiently, while the problem of Wittgenstein's dialectical paradox had the same effect on Sabrina. That and the tedious night's journey took its toll and we overslept. It was light when we

came round and many pairs of heavily laden climbers were already wallowing in the soft snow towards the cliffs.

Now if there's one thing Sabrina hates it's being behind other people. I knew I was in for an energetic morning. There was time only for a quick swig of lukewarm tea (for me) and tepid water (for the incorruptible Ice M) and we were off in hot pursuit of the straggling line of climbers. Ice Maiden despatched parties No.1 through No.5 without a fight. Pair No. 6 put up token resistance but gave up the unequal struggle after two minutes, collapsing under the weight of superior willpower. I panted sweatily, attempting to maintain contact as The Ice Maiden's long limbs threshed with machine-like efficiency, threatening to put distance between me as well as the opposition. Parties Nos.7 to 19 were utterly routed and then there were only a couple of unwitting victims ahead of us.

A large Ironclad, festooned with numerous Deadmen, ice screws and snow stakes was surging through the powder followed by a smaller vessel, wallowing in his wake like a medieval serf behind a Crusader. The Ironclad glanced behind and was startled to see the advancing torpedo that was the Ice Maiden at full tilt. A look of disdain crept over his face. He was thinking: "My God, a woman". You just knew he was the kind of guy – macho, full bearded, Aberdonian Big Man – who wasn't going to let some girlie overtake him on the hill. He speeded up, increasing the revs like a truck driver desperately dropping gears and piling on the acceleration to block the advance of a female in a Fiesta. Sabrina very sensibly pulled in behind the lumbering leviathan, tailgating his tatty rucksack and saving energy by following the trench created by straining size 12 Asolos.

You could see the Big Man was rattled by the competition. There he'd been, at the front of the queue for Lochnagar, cruising on impulse power and then this tall, long limbed lass

with a cascade of auburn hair was snapping at his heels like a demented Afghan hound. "They shall not pass" was obviously engraved across his heart. He continued flogging upwards, breaking trail in the calf-crucifying powder, puffing and panting, urging his body onwards. He staggered up the last few feet of the rise to the col of Meikle Pap.

The Ice Maiden struck with devastating timing. She pulled out right and accelerated just before the crest, leaving the panting Aberdonian dead in the water. He looked on, anguished, and knew he had nothing in reserve. He was beat. Never one to overlook an opportunity to kick a man when he's down, I pulled out from behind the cover of the Big Man's floundering second and sprinted past, chasing the receding dot, which Sabrina was rapidly becoming. The Big Man followed our progress despairingly through hollow eyes, a mighty Oak felled by a light but craftily dealt axe blow.

We swooped down, making for the elevator shaft rift that forms the first pitch of Parallel B Gully, stopped – and immediately froze. A biting wind was whipping spindrift everywhere, into eyes, down necks, filling pockets. Fingers turned waxy and rigid as I battled to fit harness and crampons. Metal equipment stuck fleetingly to skin as krabs were snapped onto harnesses. "It's cold," said Sabrina. The Ice Maiden's use of language was as Spartan as the rest of her lifestyle.

I set off up the first pitch of Parallel B. It was steep, perhaps 70-80°, and a crust of slabby, brittle ice forced concentration-sapping climbing for 90 feet or so. I was now in the square-cut shaft of the chimney proper and got anchored to a good belay from which we could reach the top of the crux pitch. Sabrina was climbing steadily up to join me when, wumph – I felt like I'd been struck on the head by someone wielding a futon. I made the mistake of craning my neck round to see what was happening and was hit square in the face by another

blow. Through a mist of mild concussion the cause became clear.

Parallel B starts with a thin chimney slot and then opens up like an hourglass into a large basin above. Powder was being gathered by the shifting winds above and funnelling into the chute provided by the chimney. Here it became concentrated into the head-banging slugs of snow. On the belay I formed a convenient stopper to these airborne powder avalanches and was receiving the full force of them, on average about one every 90 seconds. Whoosh, another hit with breath-taking violence as Sabrina reached the belay.

There was a short discussion – punctuated by further avalanches – as to the wisdom of continuing. However, Sabrina's Weltanschauung was honed on the concept of 'Will to Power' and she wasn't going to be put off by a few avalanches. Grabbing the gear she clanked up the first ten feet of steep ice as another thunderous downpour began. When it subsided she was still hanging on and I was up to my waist in styrofoam. The next hour was a fight for survival. The stiffened rope inched out agonisingly slowly and stopped moving altogether during intense vertical blizzards. Piles of freshly deposited snow had to be heaved continually from behind where they threatened to push me off the belay. I stupidly took off my mitts to sort out a rope fankle and they became filled with powder. Fingers became useless and I was reduced to paying out the rope using thumbs and palms.

Every so often you could hear snatched shouts from disembodied voices echoing into the chimney from somewhere out left. "I don't know why I'm doing this": "Watch me here". Others were evidently similarly engaged in desperate manoeuvres on adjacent routes. It was obviously a rough old day to be on the hill, but the unseen companionship of a pair fighting their own battle round the corner made us feel less isolated.

Sabrina tenaciously fought her way up the final bulge and disappeared to a belay. More avalanches were followed by a muffled yell – which I hoped was encouragement to get climbing. I didn't need much. It was astonishing how difficult the climbing was. How on earth had Sabrina clung on? The ice was terrible. It was peculiarly aerated so that a couple of blows would produce a shattering of ice cubes and a large hole, behind which lurked bare rock. Odd patches of slightly better material were embedded in this shoddy matrix and it was these you had to painstakingly seek out and trust. All the while avalanches continued to pound over and around. 100 feet of uncertainty ended with a final bulge of truly horrible snow. The pick slithered through uselessly, while crampons desperately flailed for good purchase. I thanked God for the taut rope and somehow willed myself over to easier ground.

It had been an impressive lead. "Not bad for a girlie" I gasped to an impassive Ice Maiden. "No time for chatting, get a move on". She shoved a couple of snargs into my furiously hot-aching hands. A stretch of easy snow reared into a steepening of brittle, bulging ice. Halfway up the splintering tower I tried – and quickly gave up – trying to place an exhausting snarg. Just beyond the top of the steep section I was jerked stationary due to the reality gap between the rope's actual length, and my exaggerated hopes of progress. I tied into a half-driven peg and an axe optimistically embedded in the snow.

Sabrina's eyes momentarily widened when she spotted the belay but she passed no comment. We could sense the top of the cliff was not far away but a hoary mist obscured the way ahead. On the next pitch Sabrina also ran out of rope and was in turn marooned between two Grade 3 steepenings in a shallow gully. The sound of muttered profanities was followed by a protracted period of banging and clanging worthy of a Wagnerian blacksmith. It suggested she was engaged in construct-

ing a substantial belay. On following the pitch, however, it was my turn to glance alarmed at what we were depending on. All that effort for a wobbly Warthog projecting from an inch of smashed ice and frozen Sphagnum moss.

Worrying, however, was not an option. We had half an hour of usable light left and an unknown distance to the top. 50 foot out from the euphemistic belay I fetched up hard against a small overhang. Great. But what was this? A slot in some projecting granite ideal for a Hex. Great! With a bit of solid protection I enjoyed the climbing for the first time that day. The joy was short lived. Nowhere to belay – again. I carried on up in the familiarly ridiculous hope that the rope would stretch magically all the way to the top.

About 160 foot out the snow, which was already steep and poor, got steeper and poorer. Tantalisingly, 6 feet above this the angle eased off and led to a ridge running to the summit. However, there was a short but utterly unconsolidated 65° section in the way. I bravely stepped up, heart in mouth, and promptly slid back down a foot. I spluttered as the heart in my mouth missed several beats. This was a desperate position. Although we were so near to safety, there was no way round the impasse, and a fall from here would undoubtedly result in a ripped belay and a plummet to the base of the mountain. Although I didn't have the first-hand experience of The Ice Maiden, I was convinced I wouldn't enjoy the ultimate bum slide.

Oh well, there was nothing for it. Grit teeth, hold breath and think levitation. I udged uneasily up, frantically plunging axes, arms and anything else as deep as possible into the fluff. 30 seconds of anxiety-racked swarming produced the desired result. I was on less steep ground and 10 feet from the ridge and safety. Then the rope went tight. If I hadn't been so frightened I would have been irritated. As it was, fear rendered pique

irrelevant as an emotion which wasted valuable adrenaline – and I concentrated on panicking instead. This is how I discovered that communication at the end of a taut 170-foot rope is possible by frantically straining at the leash. My footholds began to crumble. My composure already had. The Ice Maiden answered the long distance call down the wire with characteristic coolness, unfussily detaching the comedy belay and releasing me from the trap just in time. I threw my body over the snow arête and set up the biggest, soundest, safest belay you ever did see. Except that you couldn't see it, because a thick, spindrift-laden fog was howling about the summit massif of Lochnagar. We stumbled around the rapidly darkening corrie rim, gripping map and compass like a talisman against the buffeting from the advancing storm. Two hours later we collapsed, steaming and shattered back at the mobile bothy. I fell asleep brewing up.

In the morning, with all the tension released, we giggled about yesterday's daft adventure. No, it probably hadn't been that serious really. It had all been a good laugh. The radio, murmuring quietly in the background, interrupted the mirth by reporting the deaths of two climbers on Lochnagar. The unseen voices we'd occasionally heard yesterday had belonged to a party which had fallen from Parallel Buttress. It suddenly didn't seem so funny any more. Outside streams of Ironclads were heading for the cliffs.

I turned the engine on and we headed for home.

RIDGES, PASSES AND CLIMBS

In the Footsteps of Kim Meldrum on the Costa Blanca

John Robinson

Introduction

It is the Sunday before Christmas and I am flogging up to Sty Head tarn on my way to Brackenclose. The sky is clear and blue and, even better, there is no one, but no one, about. I am going to meet Kim Meldrum to discuss with him some of the pioneering he and others did out in the Costa Blanca in the early 1970s.

This all started because, in 1998-99 Ann McWatt and I spent 3 months 'wintering' in the Costa Blanca. A grand total of five days rain in three months means day after day of sunshine and it is possible to climb 5, 6 or even 7 days per week, subject to finger joints holding out. In these circumstances it's amazing how quickly sports climbing palls. Unless one is prepared to travel long distances, the repertoire of good, bolted, single pitch climbs is soon completed and then repeated. One begins to yearn for the adventure of the multi- pitch route unfolding pitch after pitch and the frisson of being twenty-five feet above some gear rather than four feet or, as is often the case, no feet.

It was with such thoughts in mind that I popped into Ifach Sports on Avenida Gabriel Miro in Calpe and bought the new Carlos Tudela Guide (1998) to Monte Ponoig. Monte Ponoig is that considerable crag that can he seen when travelling south from Calpe towards Benidorm on the autopista. It is about 400m. high and 2km long and I looked forward to checking out some multi-pitch adventures from amongst the 60 or so routes in the guide. Spanish climbing guides are very easy to translate into English once the more esoteric climbing terms have been mastered so back in the apartment I started reading the historical section. It begins thus: "De esta forma admirada describian los

inglese Brian Royle y Kim Meldrum su impresion ante las paredes del Ponoig tras su primera visita en 1970," which roughly translated means: "This is the admiring description given by the English Kim Meldrum and Brian Royle of their first impression of the cliffs of Ponoig after their first visit in 1970." Whaaat!! Kim Meldrum?? 1970!! In my naivety I thought that British climbing started on the Costa Blanca sometime in the 1980s! Chris Craggs, in his brief mention of Monte Ponoig in Costa Blanca Climbs (1990) refers to Via Valencianos as being the first route on the crag and makes no mention of Brits. So, imagine my surprise to find that not only was Via Valencianos not the first route but that the actual first route was climbed by Brits and furthermore by an FRCC Member! I determined to do the route and furthermore to find out from Kim Meldrum what on earth he was doing on the Costa Blanca at a time when most Brits were probably climbing in Scotland in winter.

Hence my trip to Wasdale which in retrospect seemed a bit of waste of time: I managed to forget the guidebook which contained the honourable mention of Kim and Brian but I had a great social weekend and came away clutching a small piece of cardboard with Kim's scribbled notes regarding his activities thirty years ago. Amongst the readable bits were references to Monte Ponoig, Paso Tancat and Bernia Ridge. I had already done Espolon Inglese on the Ponoig and had explored each end of the Bernia. If this exploration could be completed and maybe Paso Tancat looked at there would be the basis of a Journal article. Even better, it would be good fun!

Espolon De Los Ingleses, Monte Ponoig

The route to do was obviously the route that Brian Royle and Kim Meldrum climbed in 1970: Espolon De Los Ingleses V+, **, 200m., 4 pitches, 2-3 hours. All the belays were equipped but the topo showed pitch two to be 6a. This must be a move of 6a, I reasoned or the route wouldn't be graded just

V+. Another plus was that the route was easy to find and easy to descend from.

The next question was who to do the route with. Vic Tosh was available but had relatives staying at the time, but Gil and Gail Male were arriving next week; maybe they would be interested in doing it? Gil and Gail are both English 5c leaders on their day, Gil in particular seems to remain very strong despite a desk job and (because of ?) training on Marstons Pedigree. Gail had, a long time ago, given me a hard time when leading me on The Golden Tower at Anglezarke. In short, they were just what was required for the job. Next week duly arrived and Gil, Gail and their daughter Joanne were greeted with rain on the Sunday and gales on the Monday. However, sunny days at Gandia and Sella activated their enthusiasm and by the Friday they were ready to do the route. We left Calpe and arrived at the 'waggon wheels' where the car is parked some 45 minutes later. We set off up the broad path and then struck off rightwards following the blue arrows but found that we were driven back leftwards and arrived at the bottom of the cliff at the start to Eclipse, a very impressive route until you read that it is A2 – and then you are still very impressed! A short traverse along the bottom of the crag led over a couple of outcrops to the start of Espolon De Los Ingleses. We dropped our sacks and commenced our preparation. As usual, I was in my manic state of nervous anticipation as I suggested that I lead the first V+ pitch and Gil would lead through for Pitch 2. Gail would lead Pitch 3 and Pitch 4 could be anyones.

I started up the first pitch, passed an awkward step (V) and pulled up to small a orange peg not referred to in the guidebook. Looks good I thought optimistically, if there are pegs here there must be pegs on pitch two. A few more moves led me to a foot-wide ledge on rotten rock and to the right the sun bleached remains of the sling on the first official peg. I leaned across right determined to clip the peg directly but was unable

to because of the amount of tat in it. "Pity I haven't got my Russian titanium krabs" I thought, as they have a slightly narrower diameter than British krabs, but I clipped the tat anyway and moved on. Above me I could see a series of small cracks leading upwards without too much difficulty so I pressed on placing gear every few feet; after all you can't trust this limestone, so get it protected! (So much for the frisson described in paragraph one!) The difficulties increased and started to force me leftwards. As I looked across in that direction I saw a Spectra tape complete with krab hanging of a small flat topped pillar. Whoever had bailed out from that had (a) been English and (b) been in dire straits. Things were getting harder and one desperate heave saw me semi-mantel on to the top of an obvious belay point. Except that it wasn't, mainly because there were no bolts or natural belays. It was also not the correct belay because the rock both to my left and ahead was like red, rotten, fruit cake and straight above me was a 3 metre slim pillar that looked as though it would snap off if I tried to climb it. I cast around and saw, about 5 metres away, a perfect continuous crack where I should have been – shit! Moreover, I had now run out of quickdraws and medium nuts. After much pratting about whingeing and moaning to a patient Gil and Gail below, I decided that I had no alternative but to get to the crack on the right. I fiddled a rigid 1·5 Friend in to a crack low down and clipped one rope directly into the krab. Then stepped down and leaned across and by dint of some desperate (to me) moves managed to get back on route. I slammed a 3·5 in the perfect crack and heaved a sigh of relief. The ropes now ran up then down and across and then up again in a perfect zig-zag. "I can't go up and I can't go down" I announced. "Stay cool" advised Gil, thinking naturally, that I was panicking. "I am cool" I thought, "but I'm also stuck". Above me in the crack was a small stone so after much more fiddling about I managed to get a tape round it – "At least I'm not going to die" I thought. Above

the chockstone was a giant, Sword of Damocles-type flake which formed a small crack on its right-hand side, which would take a small nut. I pulled hard on the ropes and when there was a metre of slack bridged up and placed the nut clipping it directly into the karabiner. By climbing up it felt easier so I pulled hard again until I could bridge and jam up and eventually stand on the flake and drop a sling round it. More heaving on the rope and I was up to a spacious stance and two shiny bolts – yes! I clipped in with a mixture of elation for having done it and exasperation for having got off route and taken so long. I had used just 50 metres of rope. Gil followed my route rapidly and Gail romped up the proper pitch. Gear was exchanged and sorted out and Gil traversed right out of sight. "Find the correct groove" I warned, anxious not to have another epic. "No sweat youth" he replied as the rope ran out steadily then stopped then ever so slowly again and finally rapidly. "I'm up" he shouted, "Whose next?". "Me" I replied and, after untying from the belay, moved slowly right. A move of 4 led to the bottom of two grooves, with gear indicating that the left was the right route if you see what I mean. The climbing was steep, sustained 6a climbing for about 20 metres then it eased to a vegetated groove that led to a cramped stance. "I don't know about a move of 6a" I said. "More like a groove of 6a" said Gill. Gail, naturally cruised the pitch and took the gear and after making a tricky move down to the right, polished off the third pitch. I followed, the climbing being easy after the first few moves but consisting of fairly unstable looking rock that was alright if treated with care. My friend, the Austrian, Wolfgang Stefan, doesn't bother about loose/rotten rock on limestone, believing it to be part of the character of the rock and merely requiring another one of the repertoire of mountaineering skills – I wasn't so sure. Anyway we were now up to the fourth and final pitch and it was my turn to lead again. By now I was getting used to the character of the topo which really had to be confirmed by mountaineering judge-

ment or should I say sound mountaineering judgement. There was a traverse right across easy ground to a rib which ran up to the skyline then it was anybody's guess. I tried to climb but it seemed harder that IV+. "Whoa", I thought, "lets work this out". By traversing over the rib onto the face on its right the situation eased and I could climb up, at the grade, for about 28 metres to a notch on the skyline. The rock deteriorated again but by moving right into a groove one could keep on the good quality rock with oodles of runners. I moved on up and rapidly the angle eased – we had done it! I belayed on some massive boulders, brought Gil & Gail up, and then noticed the two nice new bolts about 5 metres farther on against the steepening. The descent from the route was easy. A short ascent led to a cairned path which led right, then down, then back left (true right) to two excellent rappel rings leading to a 25 metre and then a 35 metre rappel. The ropes came down without any problems and we were soon back at the sacks.

Bernia Ridge

No one can fail to be impressed by the Bernia, especially if you're travelling south on the N332 on a clear evening in January with the sun setting behind the ridge creating a picture so reminiscent of the northern end of the Cuillin Ridge from Sligachan. The one big problem in the 1999 season had been the lack of knowledge of the route, combined with the fact that Charlie Vigano had been killed on it. Stories abounded of the Spanish bivouacking before the start, of loose rock etc, etc. In 1999 Ann and I had traversed the western end and had dropped down into a gap, we had then followed the paint marks over a tiny col that bypassed the huge overhanging peak referred to by Bob Stansfield as the Basteir Tooth. But from that point on we judged that ropes were required. Later that month we topped out on the eastern summit and looked down a loose rotten gully that ended in fresh air and a 200m drop. Whatever else happened I was determined not to go down there. We also spent a

lot of time walking round the ridge checking out various rappelling points and descent routes. Then the bombshell struck. Alf Robertson published an article in *High* Magazine describing a traverse of the Bernia Ridge and what's more describing it as a doddle! We had a plan however, which was to do the ridge in the reverse direction from Alf Robertson. This would have two advantages – firstly, it would be different and secondly, we would be climbing up the loose gully at the end rather than down it at the beginning.

We returned to the Costa Blanca in February 2000 and implemented our plan. Our team was John Leigh, Ann McWatt and myself and we parked the car at the Sierra Bernia Restaurant at 10.00am. John and I determined to do the complete traverse: we would meet Ann at the half way gap which we had reached last year and the three of us would complete, hopefully, the rest from there. We were at the west summit spot on 11·00 am. There was some mist and cloud and a fairly strong wind which was giving us concern but we pressed on after entering our names in the log book on the summit. By 12·15 pm we had met up with Ann and had a break for lunch.

The next section was unknown territory but it all went surprisingly easily – broad easy sections which belied the huge overhanging drops we knew were on either side. The weather had picked up by now and we had spectacular views across Altea towards the Sierra Helado and Benidorm, right round via Cabezon D'Oro to Sierra Aitana. The red paint marks led us down off the top of the ridge on the southern side in a steepening descent to two tapes which indicated the first rappel point in about 18 metres. The climbing which would be encountered at this point on the reverse trip looked both interesting and exposed. Onward ever onward in an easterly direction led to two pegs marking an exposed section and then a short rappel to a col and the ring marking the rappel in the reverse direction. This rappel descends below our route enabling a traverse to be

Central Section of Bernia Ridge *Photo: John Robinson*

taken to avoid the difficult section we had rapped. Carrying on we encountered two easy but very exposed narrow ridges on which we used our ropes before climbing up a Jacks Rake-type rightward ascending traverse and gully (with protection peg at the top) before the col at the base of the final loose gully. We put the rope on for this as well – the constant refrain in my head had been Charlie Vigano was killed here – and then all of a sudden it was all over, the eastern summit was reached at 4·01pm. A scrambly type descent passed a rock arch, followed by a scree run and led back to the car in another tedious hour. All in all a delightful day for which we had been over equipped but not over prepared. The best traverse on the Costa Blanca.

Paso Tancat

The last of our Spanish triptych was in fact a barranco or gorge, which is a bit like ridge in reverse, if you think about it, except that you can rappel off a ridge but you have to climb out of a gorge if you get stuck – not quite as easy. Tancat is Valancian for closed and Bob Stansfield describes it as being only suitable for skilled rock climbers half an hour from the entrance. Its start is located about 1·5 kilometres up a new road running north-west from the Callosa D'Ensarria Tarbena road. This new road, probable built as part of EU infrastructure improvements leads up to Bollulla Castle. Our first sortie was on 2 March 2000. Ann and I walked up into the gorge following a small track used by hunters and their prey. Following the main gorge, at this point very innocuous, after about 30 minutes we came to the first obstacle a smooth tricky little gully which we both climbed and then descended but not before Ann noticed a shiny new bolt to aid the descent – not that we had a rope of course. Before my descent I continued on but couldn't see anything too tricky – our appetites were definitely whetted. Less than a week later we returned strengthened in numbers by Vic Tosh and Peter Fellows. Vic and Peter present a contrast in mountaineering

personalities. Both in their early sixties Peter has only just started climbing whilst Vic has over forty years of mountaineering experience. This probably accounted for the fact that Peters sack reminded one of Bonatti's when he started on the first ascent of the eponymous pillar while Vic looked prepared for a walk round Altea Market.

We soon reached our previous high point and continued on upwards and inwards scrambling up some more easy passages passing the odd peg *en route*, until we turned a corner and were greeted with a massive overhanging wall about 30 metres high. Time for lunch and a think. The overhang was impossible without a bolt gun and bullets but there looked to be a way on the right where a ramp ran up under a large overhang. We decided to gear up except that Vic announced that he had no harness, or rock boots! He did however have a peg hammer and a set of pegs but the peg hammer didn't have a loop on it. Peter, having only just started in the game hadn't either (what did he have in that sack?) but Ann had, so we scrambled up to the start of the ramp and Ann belayed me. I geared up, stuck the peg hammer down my T-shirt and started climbing up and out leftwards and made good progress for about six metres until I noticed an old ring peg nestling under a little overlap by my feet. It was old, but this rock never received rain due to the overhang above. Could it have been put in by Kim Meldrum 30 years earlier? Anyway I clipped it and carried on. The ramp steepened and I could see that there was a tricky balance move upwards – the sort that are difficult to reverse – before a smooth runnerless section leading to where the ramp ended against a smooth waterworn arête. There was little in the way of runners in that distance but there looked like a bolt on the edge of the arête. On the other hand it could have been a piece of the ivy that covered the crag below the ramp – I just couldn't tell. I reviewed the situation. If I climbed on I might not be able to climb back, if I fell off I would take a nasty swing. Vic didn't

have his rock boots, Peter was a novice, Ann had bags of experience but her fingers were knackered. Then the peg hammer fell out of my T-shirt and landed balanced on a blade of grass. All these thoughts passed through my head in the time it takes for a Spaniard to hoot after the traffic lights have turned green. I climbed back down, we packed our sacks and walked out. Paso Tancat 2 climbers 0.

Later that week Peter met his German friend Barne, who told him that the gorge was impossible to ascend because there was 50-metre overhanging wall. One could however descend it. This we resolved to do, and a couple of weeks later we checked out the start. Our team was slightly different. We had Vic's mate Paul Tweddle with us, giving us two cars to make life easier. The start is innocuous enough, commencing at the far side of a cultivated olive grove. We met the farmer, who gave us permission to cross his land, but recommended the broad track we had walked up on as that was much easier! He had never heard of Paso Tancat! We scrambled down the gorge, which was a broad valley at this point, using the screes on the true left to avoid the thick maquis in the river bed. Then crossing some large boulders we found a new bolt to facilitate a short abseil – we knew we were on the right path. We trudged on, the valley sides now becoming steeper and more gorge like. Eventually we came to a definite steepening with one bolt and a peg protecting a descent into a smooth half tube that disappeared over what looked like an overhanging cliff. Two bolts connected by a length of line could be seen just above the point of no return. I abseiled down to the two bolts and immediately realised that I was at the top of the ramp I had turned back on previously. The descent from here was only 30 metres, there was no 50-metre pitch. If we could crack the ascent of the ramp we would have climbed the Paso Tancat!

In the event we didn't climb it. Vic and Glinda left Calpe on 31 April and we really needed strong team which we didn't

have. It remains as a challenge for the future.

Postscript

I had originally intended this article to be an exploration of the history of climbing on the Costa Blanca but soon realised that this was going to be much more complicated that I first thought and anyway I am a geographer rather than an historian. I did speak to Harold Drasdo who had also spent some time out there. He expressed doubt that Kim had done a first ascent of a route that was 6a. Kim seemed to think that his route was on the left-hand side of Monte Ponoig but thought that it was unlikely to be the exact line as it was too difficult. When I spoke to Mike and Marjorie Mortimer at the joint FRCC/CC meet at Rawhead on the Millennium eve they were certain he did not do the route. The interpretation of climbing history was too complex and would keep me off the crags for too long! At this point I decided to change the article to cover the three adventures detailed above. They show the breadth of fun that can be had on the Costa Blanca apart from sports climbing and provide the answer to members who asked have we not done everything on the Costa Blanca by now!

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SURVIVAL

Dave Wynne-Jones

It was at a roadside diner in California that the resemblance was first recognised. A few fans turned lazily without disturbing the air too much as the pair took a break from driving. A couple of scruffy Brits, they were seeing some country on their way to Yosemite. Stuart was checking the route with the guy behind the counter while Ken sat at a window table, sipping coffee. Stuart nodded and grunted over the map, taking in the local knowledge, as a native American Indian, in jeans and checked shirt, sidled over to take a seat at the next table to Ken, looking at him closely. After a few moments he leaned across, flicking a plait of long grey-black hair over his shoulder, and said a few words. Ken nodded and smiled uncomprehendingly which led to more comments from the Indian and more nodding and grinning from Ken.

"Aren't you going to introduce me to your friend?" asked Stuart as he returned with the map and more coffee.

"He's not my friend. I canna understand a word of what he's sayin'," Ken replied tersely while the Indian was smiling and nodding at Stuart.

"Get away...you two seem to be getting on like a house on fire to me," Stuart countered.

The Indian meanwhile had fired a couple of questions at the uncomprehending Ken who was looking increasingly flustered.

"I think he wants you to introduce us, too," said Stuart, enjoying Ken's discomfort.

At this Ken rounded on the Indian with, "I don't know what you're on about. Me...No ...Understand!"

The Indian looked puzzled and asked, "You Navajo? Apache?"

"What?" said Ken, thrown as much by the shift to English as by the question.

Stuart was quicker on the uptake; "I think he thinks you're an Indian."

"No...No! Me no Indian," blustered Ken emphatically.

"Yes..Yes! What tribe?" insisted the Indian.

Stuart came in to support Ken, but the Indian could not believe it and kept coming back to his question after lengthy silences, staring hard at Ken: "You sure you're not Navajo?"

"Mind, I can see why he thinks so looking at the two of you," Stuart reflected. "Those high cheekbones, and that hooked nose, plus the tan you've picked up here: there's not much to tell you apart really."

He was right. Only Ken's iron-grey close-cropped hair really made any difference, and with a couple of long dark plaits framing that face anyone else would have shared the Indian's assumption that Ken was a Native American. The Indian too must have come across some of his people who didn't like to advertise their origins. It was all very understandable.

The pair had been climbing a long time together and had reached that stage where they were secure enough in the partnership to be able to make jokes at each others expense. This became one of the best, to be resurrected at odd times with telling effect – Ken the full-blood Navajo – but it was years before the story found its ending.

They were having a day out at one of their local crags. The weather was unsettled and they'd been in two minds as to whether it would be worth it, but the rock was drying quickly after showers in suddenly strong sunshine. They had climbed most of these routes before, and returning to them was like

renewing an acquaintance with an old friend, memories jogged by the not-quite-remembered, shared experiences.

"I knew there was a good jug somewhere hereabouts," muttered Ken as his fingers curled around a sharp incut, which unlocked the difficulties of that sequence of moves.

Not many people visited the little quarry at the best of times. There were other, more exciting venues with better views, but it was sheltered from wind, the routes were generally clean and none were long enough to be serious if it came on to rain while they were climbing.

Their isolation encouraged them into ribald comments upon each other's performance.

"Well that was elegant! If those feet had been scrabblin' much longer, yer rock boots'd need a resole."

"Well, we'll just see how stylish you can be in a minute won't we.....and mind you don't get yer knee stuck in that crack for I'll never be able to haul you out."

So they were surprised to see a couple of lads in camouflage ex-army kit appear through the trees, which masked the entrance to the quarry for the uninitiated. They had just finished a route and sauntered back to their sacks for a drink.

The lads wandered over as Ken and Stuart swilled some tea from their flasks and tried to decide which route to do next.

"Now then, lads, how're y'doin'?" Stuart greeted them.

"Aw reet...We didn't know this place was here.....You climbin'?"

"Naw, we're water-skiin' but it's dried up a bit lately! What're you doin' here? You look like a couple of deserters. Are you on the run?"

"Oh no, we're Survivalists."

"You're what? Survivalists? What does that involve?"

"Well, we go off for the weekend like surviving."

"Don't we all....but what do you mean surviving?"

"Well we set out to live off the land for a couple of days, with just our bit of kit and what we can find. Back to basics like.....survival of the fittest."

"Sounds a bit harsh to me. You mean you can't even go for a pint on a Saturday night?"

"Well no, not really, not unless we've packed it in by then...but usually we try to stick it out. And ...well.. we don't do this every weekend."

"It doesn't sound much like fun to me," chipped in the more taciturn Ken.

"Yeah, I can understand how important home comforts would be at your age!"

"Hey, watch the cheek, lads! It's been nice talking to you but we've another climb to do while this weather holds," concluded Stuart.

"OK, but can we watch you for a bit?" asked the taller of the lads, squatting on a boulder without waiting for assent.

"Aye, if you want, but it's not exactly spectacular stuff; at least we hope not! Right Ken off you go... and no screaming lobs!"

Ken led the pitch smoothly, belayed and had brought Stuart half-way up when he caught a furtive movement at the edge of his vision. The two survivalists were disappearing back into the trees, carrying the rucksacks, which he and Stuart had left on the quarry floor.

"Hey, what d'you think your doing? Hey, you pair! ..Hey just bring those sacks back, you bastards!

They had been climbing with minimal gear so there was a lot of kit to lose in those sacks.

"Lower me off! ... Lower me off!" yelled Stuart, who was soon untying at the base of the climb, while Ken extricated himself from the belay, tied off the rope, and abseiled down.

"I'll bloody kill them!" swore Stuart. Ken nodded grimly in agreement and they chased off after the thieves. The Survivalists must have thought they would easily outrun this pair of old farts, but, burdened as they were, were surprised by the turn of speed of their intended victims.

Despite losing sight of them at times in the woodland, it was clear that Ken and Stuart were gaining. Then suddenly there was no sign of them.

The survivalists had vanished in an area of woodland where there had once been a boulder slide. Tumbled, jumbled, shed-sized rocks and smaller, overgrown with bracken, provided good cover, and the lads seemed to have gone to ground, trusting in the disruptive pattern marking of their camouflage clothing. Stuart and Ken were faced with the daunting prospect of checking this wide area without any guarantee of discovering them. But their luck was in. Unfortunately for one of the survivalists, the stolen rucksack which he shouldered was bright red. Despite his efforts to hide under a boulder, the colour signalled his presence to his pursuers who hauled him roughly out.

Ken silently trod on his neck, pinning him to the ground as he calmly disarmed him and weighed the large combat knife speculatively in his hand. It was like a scene from a Vietnam movie, and as he dragged the sorry looking figure to his feet, Stuart's imagination engaged a higher gear. He pulled the lad away from the glowering Ken, speaking to him low, urgent and private.

"Now look, you've really made a bad mistake here. You've made him angry and I'm not sure I'm going to be able to keep him under control. He's a Navajo full-blood you see and there's no telling what he'll do with that knife if the mood takes him."

The lad's eyes rounded with horror as his overactive im-

agination explored the sophisticated agonies that might be inflicted upon him with his own knife. He knew exactly how sharp it was.

"Steady Ken! Now steady!" shouted Stuart as Ken took a step closer. Then he turned to the lad again. "Now we'll take this sack and we just need the other from your mate and we can all get off out of it before Ken loses his rag. Go on, give the bugger a shout or I'll have to take you to the police station for protective custody. I've no way of telling how short a fuse he's on at the moment or what sorts of nasty traditional punishments he's dreaming up while we waste time here. Go on shout the bugger!"

"Darren! Darren! For God's sake, can you hear me? Come on down. Give them the sack back and we'll get out of this mess. Come on or I don't know what might happen. One of them's a bloody Indian, and he's got my knife."

"Aye, come on Darren! Pack it in and we'll say no more about it. Otherwise it's the police for your mate while he's still in one piece."

The shouts echoed around the woods and died. There was no response.

Ken moved forward menacingly, the lad caught his breath with a little squeak, and Stuart stepped between them.

"Steady now, Ken. We'll just take him in and he'll lead the police to his mate."

Ken remained silent but stopped moving. Only the twinkle in his eye betrayed any hint of response and it was easily missed. A bead of sweat trickled down the temple of the Survivalist.

"Right, looks like your Darren is just leaving you to face the music on your own," snapped Stuart. "OK, where are you buggers camped?"

"Just down that path on the left.... There's a bit of a clear-

ing," he stuttered.

Reaching the campsite Ken started poking around the tent, sniffing the ground.

"Reckon your mate is near?" asked Stuart.

"Not if he's any sense," muttered the Survivalist.

"Well, we'll just get this lot packed up and up to our car at the quarry, then we'll take you in." Stuart's voice rose to a shout, "You hear that, Darren? We're taking your mate and your kit in to the police."

Back at the quarry, they gathered the last of their kit from the abandoned climb, loaded up the lad like a beast of burden and drove him down to the car. It was a cowed and beaten man who cast anxious looks at the grim and silent Ken at his heels, meeting those looks with a piercing stare and hefting the combat knife thoughtfully in his hand.

As they wound through the lanes towards the main road, Stuart, who was driving, suddenly spotted a flash of yellow in the potato field that they were passing. He pulled over rapidly and leapt out.

"It's that bastard with my sack!... Keep an eye on this one and I'll have the bugger!"

"No... please, ...don't go...," begged the Survivalist, from the back seat.

"Too late, mate. You'll have to take your chances. See you later...with any luck!" and he was off.

Ken turned stone-faced to the back seat where the survivalist shrank into the far corner, trying to squeeze his body into the boot through the seams in the upholstery.

Stuart may have seen the wrong side of 40, but he was built like a whippet, and the clumsy lad with the rucksack who had been so confident of escape only realised he had no chance as his legs were taken out from under him. Stuart prudently removed a second combat knife from his winded

victim, and marched him at knifepoint back to the car.

"Hands on the roof and spread those legs.... You too!" Stuart motioned to the lad in the car, re-enacting another favourite scene from law enforcement in the movies.

Darren's mate emerged from the back seat with curses. "You bastard! I thought you were my mate but you just left me, left me in the shit! Anything could have happened!"

"No I didn't.... If you'd kept your mouth shut we'd have been all right. Anyway what were you worried about?"

"This one's a bloody Indian for God's sake! He kills people!!"

"Just Indian will do," Ken said quietly, and there was silence.

Stuart checked the sack then turned on the sorry pair. "Right, nothing's missing, so no real harm done, and I really can't be bothered with the hassle of turning you in to the police in the circumstances. Here, take your kit and just bugger off." He paused in handing them their kit bags. "Mind you I'd watch my back for a couple of days if I was you." He dropped his voice and turned away from Ken. "There's no telling what he might do if he gets worked up and takes it into his head to track you."

The lads grabbed their gear and backed off hastily as Ken stepped in and took the other combat knife from Stuart. He faced the pair, a knife in each hand, unsmiling.

"For Survivalists you're not very good at surviving, are you?.... I suppose you'll be wanting these?"

They nodded then shook their heads, uncertain of the risk they were taking, undecided and scared.

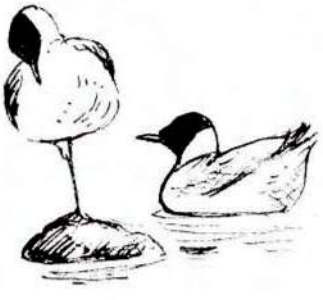
Suddenly the two pieces of bright steel were each flashing in a high arc far into the potato field.

"Think of it as a kind of initiative test," said Ken, biting off each word.

He and Stuart climbed into the car and drove off leaving the bedraggled pair looking lost. It was a minute or two before they began to chuckle then Stuart almost lost control of the car as all the pent up laughter burst out of him, and he and Ken reeled with mirth.

Later that day as they recounted the tale in the pub, a friend asked, "Why didn't you turn them in to the police then?"

"Well," said Stuart, reflectively, "it was a bit of a sticky situation really. I mean mebbe we'd have ended up facin' assault and kidnappin' charges. You never can tell. Besides, I canna remember the time I've had that much fun from an afternoon's climbing."



FIFTY NOT OUT

Bill Comstive

Only a mountain,
But all the world to me,
Up there between the sunset and the sea.

It is my good fortune in this pre-millenium year to have celebrated half a century of mountaineering. I cannot clearly remember the first stirrings that led me into "the great game" but I think it originated from my parents, particularly from my father who loved the mountains of Lakeland. They spent many holidays at The Old and New Dungeon Ghyll Hotels in Langdale and The Winander Hotel on the esplanade at Waterhead, Ambleside, which is now part of the Ambleside Youth Hostel. My father bought and adapted an old upright pushchair complete with a strap to secure me in it which was dragged up Jenkins Crag and Wansfell Pike. I would have been no more than two or three years of age at that time but I must have gazed at the surrounding fells and the memory was etched on my subconscious mind to be resurrected years later when I took my first steps towards the hills which I love so much and which changed me as a person forever. On these family holidays I struck a bargain with my parents that I was happy to accompany them on their wanderings provided I was allowed out after dinner to pursue my interest in fly fishing on the River Rothay for the evening rise.

On one occasion I clearly remember looking up at Todd Crag and seeing a figure etched against the setting sun and wondered what it was like to be able to see from this height. The following evening, after dinner, I set-off as usual for the Rothay but on my way out I took a stick from the hotel hall-

stand. Storing my fishing tackle behind the joiners shed, which is still there, I scrambled up Todd Crag. I stood on the top and was quite awe struck by the beauty of what I saw. It would be a good few years and many miles on a cycle before I repeated that top. I joined a group in the Palatine CC who became known as the "pass stormers" because on one week-end we stayed at Patterdale YH and took our bikes over Sticks Pass and cycled back to Blackpool. These week-ends constituted part of our training for time trialing and racing on the track but as far as I was concerned the mountains were not going unnoticed and I began to walk on some of the lower fells. This was the beginning of the transition from cycling to fell walking.

I had a very strong minded stubborn mother and her equally determined brother both of whom had long before decided that when I left school I would enter my uncle's office as an articled clerk with a view to qualifying as an accountant. Within the limits of my freedom of thought and action at that time I decided otherwise. In the end all was redeemed as I joined the firm, inherited the practice when he died and enjoyed many happy years in the profession until I retired in 1997. As it turned out my mother had been proved right but I had an awful struggle in the first seven years between studying for exams and spending every available weekend and holidays in the Lake District. What, may the reader ask, has all this to do with mountaineering? A great deal as far as I am concerned because it illustrates the incredible influence that mountains can have on an individual who is inexorably drawn to them. I am sure that many of my readers will no doubt have had similar experiences. These turn of events shape ones life from the time you become involved for the rest of your life. Comradeship, exposure to danger, the joy of physical expression, health and fitness etc have all played their part without being particularly aware of them. In writing this article I am mod-

estly endeavouring to illustrate the influences that I have experienced and these must, I am sure, be common to others in varying ways.

I have recently read Alan Hankinson's excellent biography of Geoffrey Wynthrop Young. In that volume he has illustrated, far more eloquently than I can, the incredible influences that mountains exerted on GWY'S life. I bought a copy of Mountain Craft by GWY very early on followed shortly afterwards by On High Hills; these two books became my Bible. Even to-day they make first class reading and ought to be included in any library of a discerning collector of mountaineering literature.

So much for the rather more serious side of the first fifty years. The next part of this article might be on the lighter side, but throughout is woven a web of influences that have all played their part.

I grew up in a post war Britain traumatised by six years of war, death, destruction and shortages of food but rich in surplus ex-WD equipment. There were some rich pickings to be had and most of us at that time walked around the mountains looking rather like Dad's Army. My mother fashioned my first pair of breeches from the bottom half of a parachutists jumping suit dyed a suitable colour of brown and secured at the knee with a button. A camouflaged cotton anorak with hood and four pockets, a thick khaki shirt and an ex-commando balaclava, which could double-up as a scarf, completed the basic outdoor apparel. An army bergen-type framed rucksack contained a camouflaged cape which could double as a bivi-tent, an American issue mess tin and a small Primus stove completed the lot. My parents bought me my first pair of Hawkins boots. The sole was fully clinkered and they weighed a ton. Along with my friend AB (not the more illustrious former F&RCC President) from cycling days we climbed our first

mountain, Bowfell, in July, 1951. That is how it all started.

We were raw recruits unattached to any club and for the first two years we learned from our mistakes. In the meantime the Fylde Mountaineering Club had been formed and we joined in 1952. We bought our first rope from the Blackpool Rope and Twine Company. It was far too heavy and when wet with a fifty foot or so runout it threatened to pull the leader from the crag, but with this rope we managed our first routes on Middlefell Buttress and Tarn Crag. At this time my family not only feared for my life but they considered that I was spending far too much time away from my studies. For tactful reasons the climbing gear was moved from my house to A.B.'s. Neither of us proved to be outstanding rock climbers but we thoroughly enjoyed the long Diffs and V Diffs and tended to use these to gain height, coil up the rope and set-off along the ridges.

The club did some pot-holing which we had a go at but both of us preferred the wide open spaces of mountain country than wading, often thigh deep, in underground passages. We did however manage the through route from Lancaster Pot and one Whit week-end a group joined the Lancashire Caving and Climbing Club at Gaping Ghyll. It was 2/6d to descend on the bosun's chair - a hair raising experience. The brake was released and down you went at a great rate only to be arrested near the bottom which bounced you up and down like a bungee jumper. There must have been a mark on the cable when the brake was to be applied.

Skiing was beginning to take-off again after the war and AB and I bought our first pair of ex-army skies. The measurement in those days was from the ground to the wrist of a raised arm. Being over six feet tall mine were enormous, or seemed to be. They had the old style Kandahar bindings and once strapped in there was no escape. The skis tended to take

me down the slope with numerous snowplough turns to arrest the rate of descent. There were no lifts of course so you had to walk back uphill as far as you were able. We had no fancy boots. Mine were a pair of army boots with a groove fashioned in the heel with a red hot poker to take the spring of the binding. We had no lessons and learned from a library book. Whenever it snowed we were out on skis with other FMC members. In mid-week, after a snowfall, we practised on North Shore golf club by the aid of street lamps. We skied in the Lake District mainly above Langdale and on Raise. The Lake District Ski Club had been re-formed so we joined and used their tow. Once, returning from High White Stones a gale blew up and with the skis and sticks over my shoulder I was rather like a windmill. Traversing above Dungeon Ghyll on steep snow was hair raising but we usually removed the bindings and left our skis under a large boulder at the top of Mill Ghyll to be used the following week-end. AB and I once left a tent pitched high up Mickleden under Rossett Ghyll to be used the next week-end; it was still there when we needed it. We began to sleep in Wall End Barn on a regular basis and mingled with the great and good of that era, Ginger Cain, Black Jack, The Mouth, The Toad, Peter Greenwood, Arthur Dolphin etc. We sang in Sid's bar often to the accompaniment of Joe Dellaporta. When he was around he acted as master-of ceremonies.

If you preferred to sing something else then he would stop playing his guitar and say "you no sing Joe's songs then you get out." Sid got wind of this and things changed. Sid and Jammy were often short staffed in the hotel and if the weather was bad A.B. and I would do whatever was necessary to help. Most of all I enjoyed setting the tables for dinner in the evening. We met one or two notables who stayed at the hotel in that era among them was Geoffrey Wynthrop Young and

members of the successful 1953 Everest Expedition. We fashioned a mountain tent from an ex-army ridge tent by adding a sewn-in groundsheet and valance. A.B. made two aluminium A poles at the factory where he was employed as a toolmaker. I think we both took to climbing snow better than rock so we added ex-WD crampons and ice axes. We climbed several well known gullies aspiring to Central Gully on Great End on a beautiful day with hard snow after overnight frost and no one ahead of us. Taking the easier route out at the top we emerged shaking a little but fully satisfied with our effort. To us at that time there was nothing better than a cold mid-winters day with a good covering of hard snow, icicles hanging from the crags and in the gullies, shimmering reflections on the myriads of snow crystals from a sharp sun in a clear blue sky; a slight north-westerly breeze, great vistas of snow covered mountains fading into the blue haze of an early February day and hardly a soul in sight to remind us that we were mortal.

The crunch crunch of cramponed feet,
pounds per man,
Not enough pemmican or biscuit to eat,
Up tent lads - outspan.

Oh how the memories of those days come out of the past; oh where have those long snowy frosty days gone? Now there is little distinction between autumn and winter and it seems to rain incessantly from October of one year through to February the next. Now, if you are lucky, you have to go north to the Scottish mountains to find solace.

When I first started work at the office in 1946 I often went to the central library at the end of the day to browse. At that time they had a very comprehensive polar section. I picked

out volumes and read odd chapters until one of the assistants came to remind me that closing time had arrived. I mainly read from volumes relating to the heroic age of Antarctic exploration - the Scott and Shackleton expeditions in particular. I then started my own collection and through my membership of The New Zealand Antarctic Society my interest in the polar regions has never diminished. I often wish I had the opportunity to climb a mountain in Antarctica. The great vistas of remote peaks sticking out of the ice, the complete absence of human habitation, the air free from pollution, the colours in the ice, the vastness of it all - what an experience that must be.

A.B. and I found an outlet for our love of solitude in the mountains of Scotland and the Cairngorms in particular. For four Easters at the end of the 1950's we took ten days holiday and either stayed at Aviemore YH or camped at Loch Morlich. It was of course all completely undeveloped in those days. Aviemore consisted mainly of a railway station, the Cairngorm Hotel and a row of wooden shops. The made road only went as far as Coylumbridge: after that it was a rough track to the stile into the Queens Forest. At Loch Morlich there was Glenmore Lodge occupied by The Scottish Council for Physical and Recreational Education and the old Norwegian huts used by the army, with Norwegian instructors, for mountain warfare training. Frank Smythe served a period as an instructor based in these huts, which were dismantled some years ago when the re-development (or despoilation, whichever views you hold) commenced. We bought some ex army skins for our skis, hired cycles in the village and travelled to and fro each day from the hostel or the tent. We had never done any ski touring before so we just learned as we went along. Skins were used to travel uphill from the snowline and then taken off to go downhill. In this way we explored the plateau between Cairngorm and Derry Cairngorm,

Glen Einich, Sgoran Dubh Mor, Carn Ban Mor and through the Larig to the Corrour Bothy.

On one occasion we used the Shelter Stone at the head of Loch Avon because we were caught out in fading light. One day in particular was memorable. We started off on skis for Ben Macdhui on a cold clear morning with snow down to 500ft. By the time we reached Cairn Lochan the sun was obscured and low clouds began drifting in from the north west. Our eyes were set south towards Ben Macdhui so that a shift in the wind direction and strength went unnoticed. At the summit cairn the wind was much stronger and colder so out came the primus stove for hot soup and biscuits. A.B. said to me that he felt that Ben Macdhui was rather a strange place, and remarked about an odd feeling that came over him. Neither of us at that time had heard of the Old Grey Man. Frank Smythe had a similar experience on Ben Macdhui. I photographed A.B. standing on the summit cairn which was only just above the snow line and turned for base. Looking west the Spey valley had been obliterated and it started to snow. At Cairn Lochan we were in a roaring blizzard with visibility down to a few feet. We took a bearing to march on, roped up and tried to follow our outward tracks but they were disappearing. Progress was slow and the light began to fade. Without saying a word we were both of the opinion that we might have to consider a snowhole for the night, or worse. We had not seen anyone all day so there was no hope of any help at hand. Suddenly we came to what was obviously an edge curving down to the left. We very carefully edged our way down in the teeth of the blizzard when suddenly there was a small clearing in the clouds in the cauldron below us and we briefly caught sight of what appeared to be a small hut. It was Jeans Hut and we then knew that we were on the edge of Coire Cas and safety. Tension had eased by the time we reached the tent

but it had been a close run thing. Here ended the first lesson.

Meanwhile the tent had suffered a constant battering in those first few days and it leaked rather badly through many small holes in the roof and a pool of water had gathered on the floor which we could only get rid of by making a hole in the sewn-in groundsheet. We had to abandon the tent in a deluge of rain and hail and dashed for the door of the Norwegian huts - it was open. We got permission from the head forester and spent the remainder of our stay in comparative comfort. In the main room there was an old iron stove with a flue through the ceiling, a trestle table and bench. We made a mattress from woven fir tree branches over which we spread the camouflaged ground sheet. There was evidence of unwanted guests so we found two wooden boxes which we attached to the wall in which we stored all our dry food. Our only source of light was the paraffin lamp from the tent which we suspended from the roof on a piece of string. We fuelled the stove from logs dumped outside by the forestry people. When the stove was in full cry it was warm in its vicinity and we cooked hot meals on it. We had a great time, I shall never forget those happy carefree days out there in our wilderness.

Some twenty years elapsed before I went back to the Cairngorms to ski. I was appalled by the damage that had been done by the new road to the huge carpark, the ski lifts, restaurant and ancillary buildings. Even worse were the developments at Aviemore. It had grown from a cluster of cottages, a few shops and a hotel into something like the purpose-built villages on the continent. Views differ widely on this subject and even I realise that sentiment has to be put aside sometimes but when you consider the impact that skiing facilities have had on the landscapes of Britain and Europe one asks the question - is it all really necessary? Huge areas of natural landscape have disappeared for what in the

end only amounts to money. I appreciate that the developments in the Highlands might well have improved the economy of the regions but a large part of wild landscape, which was the remains of the great arctic tundra, has gone for ever - ah well not much we can do about it I suppose.

In the meantime the FMC, like most clubs, was enjoying expansion. The office of secretary became vacant, I was invited to take it and gladly accepted and loyally served the club for ten years. The chairman at that time was someone whom I shall refer to by his initials JJ. He and I worked very closely together, in fact I have worked with few better in any voluntary job. He was intuitive, far sighted and liked by everyone. He realised early on that if the club was to succeed, then it needed a base. He and I scoured the valleys as often as we could and eventually Newhouses in Little Langdale was bought from The Lake District Country Cottage Association. All three cottages were for sale but number 2 was the larger and most suitable to be converted into a club hut. The club treasurer along with a small clique were vehemently against the idea but the proposal was carried at an EGM. Finance was a problem so numbers l and 3 were sold-off to members and a bank loan raised to pay the balance. The club never looked back, in fact it went on to erect a purpose-built hut at Stair in the Newlands valley.

Alas the swinging sixties had its effect. We had an influx of a small group who flouted club rules at will, coupled with a chairman at that time who, to save his popularity, did little to apply the hut rules. When we arrived on a Friday evening it was usually necessary to wash pots and clean up the mess left from the previous week-end. Pin-ups appeared in the men's dormitory, members were being accused by the landlord of the local pub of stealing chairs from the bar to chop up for firewood. There were other incidents that annoyed the local villagers - it was time to

get out. Reluctantly my wife and I resigned membership together with a former treasurer and several of the old committee members. This was a lesson to be learned, if you have hut rules then rigorously apply them - it was the troublemakers that should have left, not us.

A very happy and successful era had ended for me. Four years of being unattached were followed by my application to Associate membership of the F & RCC. Alf Gregory and Sid Cross had suggested sometime earlier that I should apply for membership. I regret not having applied to join earlier than I did. I don't think I have ever been so happy in any organisation. In the FMC there had been an awareness of a division between most of the climbers and general mountaineers and walkers. Although it may be fair to say that in the F&RCC the hierarchy mostly consists of climbers, yet there is no division socially, certainly not on meets and in huts. This I think is one of the reasons why the club is such a happy one.

My wife and I became somewhat addicted to downhill skiing although I felt some guilt about this after all I had written and talked of wild unspoilt mountain country. We were lucky to be able to have two weeks skiing in February and visit the alps in summer for a number of years. The best skiing to suit our standard we found in Grindelwald. This recalls memories of the long run from the Mannlichen down to Kl.Scheidegg under the Eiger and down through Alpiglen to Grund. It's about ten or twelve miles, I think, and takes-in some of the finest views of the snow-covered wall of the Oberland from the Jungfrau to the Wetterhorn. We had a season split between Saas-Fee and Zermatt. We climbed several of the lesser peaks above Saas Fee and walked up to the Weissmies hut with a fair load and food for three days, the SAC did not provide meals in their huts in those days. It was

dark when we left the hut the following morning and we planned to follow a guided party ahead of us. By 4-00am the summits of the Oberland from Monte Rosa round to the Sudlenspitze were glowing red descending into deep purple and total darkness in the valley. A light or two flickered way below us otherwise there was not a sound except the odd groan from the glacier above. We lost contact with the guided party and took the obvious well worn path which ended in an interminable moraine. We descended to the glacier just above its snout, put on our crampons, roped-up and started up the ice to reach the new path across the glacier higher up. We had gone about half a mile when I crossed a dubious hollow and fell into a crevasse. I finished sat astride a bridge with my head just below the surface of the glacier. A heave on the rope, some back and knee work and I was out to discover a nasty wound to my shin which we bandaged and returned to the hut, disappointed but relieved at my lucky escape. Here ended the second lesson.

When we arrived at the hut we were greeted by a six foot American. Apparently he was on honeymoon; having left his wife and mother down in Saas Fee he had teamed up with a Yorkshireman for a few days mountaineering. When we arrived home we saw the obituary in Les Alps; they had both been killed on the Dent Blanche. From Saas we moved over to Zermatt with a view to climbing the Matterhorn by way of the Hornli ridge. We sensibly went to the guides office in Zermatt to discuss it with them and were told that the Matterhorn was out due to a mass of new snow. We walked up to the Zinal hut and climbed the Mettelhorn and its neighbour, the Oberothorn from the Flualp hut and the Cima de Jazzi from Gornergrat. It was our first introduction to the higher mountains of the alps and being guideless we treated them with caution.

Under the Eiger *Photo: Bill Comstive*

Over the years the practice developed of using a package holiday as a base, leaving surplus baggage in the hotel and moving up to huts as the weather permitted. We gradually progressed to hut to hut walking and climbing peaks on the way. On a visit to the Stubaier alps we climbed the Wilder Freiger and Wilder Pfaff from the Nurnberger hut. The summit ridge of the Wilder Freiger takes a sharp left-hand turn. On the return we decided to cut the corner. We had taken off our crampons and strapped our axes back onto our rucksacks for the easy part of the descent. We had made what could easily have been a fatal mistake. The sun had not got to the snow slope on the left hand side and as soon as we stepped off the ridge we slipped on very hard snow and took off. Although the slope was quite steep, we managed to release our axes, rolled over, dug in the pick and came to a halt. There we were hanging on to our axes out of sight of the ridge above us. I remembered from the ascent that there were some crevasses below us large enough to take a bus and not know that it had gone down. We shouted and used our whistles to good effect. A head appeared over the top of the ridge. A belay was secured round an axe, a rope lowered and we were soon back on to the route again. We had both suffered slight burns and worn breeches from the friction of the hard snow but otherwise we were unharmed. It had been another close shave. Here ended the third lesson.

Meets with the FRCC, visits to the Alps and walking in Scotland, the Yorkshire Dales and the Pennines continued. In the meantime I had been elected to the Committee in 1974 and also served on what was then the Financial and General Services sub-committee. A keen debate, which still continues, is the need to attract new young climbers. I have never seen the necessity to concern ourselves too much with this. It is an historical fact that most members join the club a little later in life, having already been members of their local club.

I think it is psychologically linked with the fact that we were founded in 1906 and looked upon generally as being a somewhat senior club and I really do not think that with all our efforts this will change much. This issue and the one relating to the view expressed that the BMC were at that time advocating combining all clubs into what would have been The British Mountaineering Club, dominated the debate. When Charles Pickles was elevated to the Presidency I was approached to take over as Dinner Secretary. I considered this to be an honour and accepted. It was a wonderful and very interesting ten years. Soon after I retired I contemplated writing an article for the Journal entitled "Ten Dinners and Five Presidents - not all eaten at once." It was most interesting to work with five Presidents who were so totally different. Most left me to organise the whole evening but two did not and one was so exacting to detail that I got rather cross and nearly resigned. Two or three of the Committee expressed the view that the Executive was too large and I proposed that the Dinner Secretary need only attend one meeting - just prior to the AGM. It was defeated after a good deal of debate. I wonder what the Secretary at that time would think of the size of the present Officers and Committee. Increased administration and the proliferation of paper work seems to me to lead to running the Club rather like a business. Are we not losing sight of the whole purpose of a club - a group of people brought together by a common bond, the love of mountains and mountaineering. I do hope that those who look after our interests are not losing sight of this.

In the mid eighties the debate raged as to whether or not the club should establish a hut in Scotland. I was against it for two reasons. Firstly I felt it broke faith with the founding fathers and was contrary to rules 1 and 2. Secondly I was concerned as to how the funds would be raised to achieve it. There

was talk at that time of raiding the guidebook account and I was totally opposed to that. Secondary considerations related to where it should be situated, how it would be wardened and maintained at such a distance. There was a great deal of lobbying prior to the vote. At the meeting held in the Battersby Hall at Keswick the majority of the no's formed a solid block in the gallery whilst the yes's and others occupied most of the stalls. When it came to the vote up went the hands with a considerable number in favour, including all those surrounding us I was flabbergasted and tackled a number of them after the meeting. "Oh well" most of them said "we changed our minds." "But" I protested "you have always been against the project from the very start." Personally I am of the opinion that when the hands went up they did not have the courage of their convictions and went along with the popular front. I am pleased to say that the Scottish hut has of course been a great success and I initially was wrong. Here ended the fourth lesson.

I have always been interested and concerned myself with the huts. My wife and I love "hutting", it is one of the great pleasures of membership. There is nothing better than to have enjoyed a good day on the mountains and return to the hut to have a mug of tea and a slab of cake thrust into your hand. And the conversations round the dinner table and afterwards in front of the fire. You learn more from listening to members tales and make their acquaintance in this way . It is the stuff that good clubs are made of.

At the first AGM held at The Shap Wells Hotel, under the heading of AOB I made a short speech in which I proposed a scheme for the annual inspection of each hut in turn linked to a five year programme of maintenance/capital expenditure and a budget to support it. I also suggested that due to shortage of space perhaps the Committee should be empowered to look for a larger

property in Borrowdale and then dispose of Salving House. There was uproar over the suggestion of selling Salving House, but it was all taken out of context. I clearly stated that the sale of Salving House should only take place if and when a suitable replacement was found. The establishment at this period were cautious about any radical proposals but that short speech cost me dear. For some time after I became known as "the seller of huts" because of course each time the matter was talked about it became more and more distorted. One senior member came to me after the meeting and said that he agreed with the proposal, in fact several people voiced this view afterwards, most seem to think that my proposal was going too far too quickly. Here ended the fifth lesson.

The club has grown to the point where if a ceiling on membership numbers is not set then there is the danger of it becoming an association. To stop this possibility in 1991 a young lass took over the job of meets secretary. With ingenuity and foresight she considerably increased the number of meets and introduced mid-week meets, mainly for retired people. It was a bold move but it has certainly paid-off. It has played an important part in keeping the club together as an active unit and there is now a wide range of choice of meets to suit all tastes.

My continuing love of mountains has been sustained by regular visits to various ranges. As my age has advanced I have naturally had to lower my sights a little but visits to the Austrian mountains, the Tatras and the Dolomites interspersed with Scotland, the Pennines, the Yorkshire Dales, Derbyshire and Wales have been a regular pattern for the past thirty years or so. The Tour of Mont Blanc and the Tour of the Vanois rank as the most enjoyable of my treks and I can thoroughly recommend both. The former because each day you are never very far from mountains on a grand scale and the latter be-

cause of its softer landscape and the richness of its wild flowers.

What are the most important changes I have witnessed over the past fifty years? I would say the unbelievable improvement in equipment and clothing resulting in the growing confidence of mountaineers enabling them to climb the worlds remotest and highest mountains in ever increasing numbers. The divergence of rock climbing into a sport in its own right and the split in recent years into those who climb solely on indoor walls, those that do not and some who enjoy both.

I would like to thank all those members who have helped in one way or another to make the past thirty years with the club such a happy period in my life. There are many names I would love to quote but suffice it to say that since the following members died they have been greatly missed; my loyal friend Alan Brown, Dan Hamer, Charles Pickles, Neville Morton, Heaton Cooper, Francis Falkingham and Sid Cross. All of them in their own way have added much to the richness of a full life. There are still many of you left whom I count amongst my friends that are still adding to that rich tapestry, may they continue to do so for many years to come What plans for the future? To complete all the English two thousanders and there are not many left ...

There is much comfort in high hills,
And a great easing of the heart;
We look upon them and our nature fills
With loftier images from their life apart.

The following information has been collated from information edited by Steve Reid and published on the FRCC web site at www.FRCC.co.uk

Note: The routes described here have not been checked and all gradings should be treated with caution.

DOW CRAG

Page numbers refer to the FRCC Guide, Dow, Duddon and Slate (1994).

'A' Buttress

'A' Ordinary 55m E7

A direct line between Eliminate 'A' and Isengard/Samba Pa Ti. Start 2m right of Isengard.

1 25m (5c). Climb directly up the short wall to ledges. Weave first right then left between the bulges on the blunt rib below the giant detached flake. Belay.

2 10m (6c). From the top of the flake, an explosive start enables the ledge above to be reached. Belay here.

3 20m (6c). Follow Samba Pa Ti to the roof. Pull over this and traverse leftwards towards a peg. Powerful and technical climbing above (peg) leads to sanctuary over the bulge. Climb the wall moving slightly rightwards over a bulge into a short finishing corner.

C Matheson, R Matheson, 10th August 1999

'B' Buttress

The project left of Issel Roof has been led by Stevie Whitall with a vital pre-placed runner at a French Grade of F7c+ . It is thought that it would be E7, 6c for an on sight.

'D' Buttress

The Cage Direct Start 30m HVS

(5b). The flakey crackline immediately left of the groove of Snibbo is climbed to a ledge. The overhang above is attacked at its weakness to gain the groove of The Cage.

K Phizacklea, C Matheson (on sight), 21st August 1999

Soggy Beer Mat 34m HVS
This route passes through some impressive ground at the grade but is marred by one stopper move. Small wires are essential. Start 5 metres right of intermediate gully at the Snibbo/Cage ledge.
(5b). The strenuous crack is climbed to a large ledge. Pass the overhang of The Cage Direct and continue to the first barrier overhang. Surmount this to gain an airy balance position beneath the next overhang. A step left into a corner allows the technically minded to gain the huge jugs at the back of the gangway. Traverse rightwards along this and ascend easier ground to a belay above.
C Matheson, K Phizacklea (on sight), 21st August 1999

DUDDON VALLEY

Buzzard Crag (p257)
This is the first crag above the right side of the tarn, 10 minutes from the dam. Although broken in appearance most routes on the crag provide surprisingly good climbing. The first rock reached is a boulder like wall offering three routes. Behind this is a grassy terrace and the main part of the crag which consists of a band of slabby pillars and cracks. The first three routes are on the lower 'boulder' wall starting with a corner with a juniper at its base.

Big Bird 13m E2
(5c). Delicately climb the right facing corner in its entirety.
J Daly (solo) 22nd August 1999

Reservoir Dogs 14m E2
(5b). Start just left of Big Bird. Climb the right side of the wall via a tiny right facing corner, up right to a thumb nail spike, step back left, then up the headwall above to easy slabs.
D Geere, J Daly, 30th July 1999

The Bouncing Bomb 14m E1
(5c). Start just left of Reservoir Dogs. Climb the wall via a faint depression and the right side of a tiny roof, stay on the steep rock and pull up right into a scoop then up to an easy slabby groove.
J Daly, D Geere, 30th July 1999

The next routes are on the main crag . The first route starts just right of a dirty chimney/groove (probably Musvac).

Tallboy 20m MVS
(4c). Pull up to and over an obvious hollow block at 4 metres, step left and climb the slabby headwall above.
D Geere, J Daly, 30th July 1999

Dambusters 20m HVS
(5b). Starts 3 metres left of the chimney/groove. Climb the right facing corner crack with an awkward pull out at its top. Continue up the crack line to a ledge, traverse 2 metres right then finish up the slab above.
J Daly, D Geere, 31st July 1999

617 Squadron 20m VS
(4b). Just left is a pair of cracks. Climb the prominent left hand crack until forced into the vague right hand one, up this to a ledge. Climb directly up the wall above trending left to finish.
J Daly, D Geere, 31st July 1999

Lancaster Bomber 20m E2
3 metres left is a fine pitch up a thin finger crack. Start beneath the crack.
(6a). Step up leftwards onto a small glacis at 3 metres then pull back right to gain the strenuous finger crack, climb it to a heather ledge. Easier slabs above to finish.
J Daly, D Geere, 30th July 1999

Fatboy 20m MVS
Start beneath a scimitar shaped crack high in the arete left of Lancaster Bomber.
(4b). Delicately climb a vague ramp line up left to the arete. Climb the crack above, step left to cross the heather ledge, then follow easy slabs above.
D Geere, J Daly, 24th July 1999

4 metres left is a recessed stepped slab with a block leaning against its base.

Path Finder 20m VS
(4c). Climb the recessed slab to a delicate crux by the juniper. Continue up the centre of the slab to the upper overlap, surmount it on the right

then follow easy leftward grooves to finish. Belay on ledge down right.
J Daly, D Geere, 30th July 1999

Left again is a steeper pillar of rock.

Chastise 14m HVS
Start up the right edge of the pillar.
(5a/b). Pull into a shallow scoop then climb the right edge of the pillar until a curving weakness can be followed left across the face. Finish up the left edge.
D Geere, J Daly, 30th July 1999

100 metres up to the right of the main crag is a pleasant slab. Eder starts just right of the central wet streak.

Eder 14m S
Boldly climb the centre of the slab.
J Daly, D Geere, 31st July 1999

Mohne 14m HS
From a flake, climb the blunt left rib of the slab.
J.Daly (solo), 22nd August 1999

Upper Buck Crag (GR 226993 approx) Alt 350m S.E Facing
A fine steep buttress with good natural lines which gets the sun until late in the afternoon. Climbs are described from left to right.

Carte Blanche 45m S
Start at the open 'V' groove just left of the toe of the heavily quartz marked rib at the left end of the crag.
1 20m. Pull up into the open groove and then move right passing a thin crack to the easy angled slab trending leftwards. Follow this to belays on a grass ledge. (It is possible to traverse off rightwards at this point.)
But better :-
2 25m. Gallop up the enjoyable slabs to the top of the crag.
Mike Lynch, Dave Kay, 6th June 1999

To the right of the quartz marked rib is a slabby open bay of ruddy coloured rock with two steep corners bounding its right side.

La Fee Verte 21m S
Approximately 2m right of the quartz marked rib, at the left end of the ruddy slab is a small, rightwards leaning corner.
Climb the short corner then traverse up and left to gain the right trending crack line. Follow this to the top.
Mike Lynch, Dave Kay, 31st July 1999

Bete Noire 21m E1
Takes the stepped left hand of the two corners bounding the right side of the ruddy slab.
(5b). Start up the short 'V' groove at the right hand side of the slab and climb directly up the stepped corner to finish on good jugs.
Mike Lynch, Dave Kay, 31st July 1999

Cordon Bleu 23m VS
Excellent climbing up the right hand of two corners at the right edge of the ruddy slab.
(4c). Start about 1m right of Bete Noire. Pull steeply on to the slab and follow the steep corner directly above. Pull out rightwards at the top and follow the crack in the slab above.
Dave Kay, Mike Lynch, 6th June 1999

3m right of the left end of the ruddy slab is another corner. The next route takes this line.

Vin Rose 21m VS
(4c). Climb the corner to the roof and then pull out right to climb the crack in the slab above. Swing out left to finish.
Mike Lynch, Dave Kay, 31st July 1999

Moulin Rouge 21m HS
Takes the obvious corner line towards the left edge of the crag.
Climb the deep corner directly to the top.
Mike Lynch, Dave Kay, 31st July 1999

Maillot Jaune 22m MVS
Just right of a deep corner line which splits the crag, approx. 10m right of the slabby open bay from which Cordon Bleu rises, is a rounded rib with a steeply undercut base. This route starts on the less steep left side of the rib.

(4b). Start on the left of the rib and climb up over a large, squarish spike before traversing right to the rib and climbing this to the grass ledge system.
Mike Lynch, Dave Kay, 6th June 1999

Eminence Grise 25m E1
Approximately 3m right of the undercut base of the rib of Maillot Jaune is a steep leftward slanting crack/scoop line.
(5b).Pull up into the leftward slanting crack and follow it leftwards into the shallow scoop. Climb the scoop, still slightly leftwards, and the crack above to finish near the top of Maillot Jaune..
Mike Lynch, Dave Kay, 6th June 1999

Buck Crag Harter Fell, Duddon. (GR 228 993) Alt 290m.
The best approach is from the Birks Bridge forestry car park (15 mins walk). Take the left hand forestry road towards Grassguards until the junction for 'The Birks field study centre'. Now climb the fell to the right of a beck, trending right behind a rocky knoll. The crag lies across to the right several hundred metres directly below Dropping Crag. The main part of the crag is a slabby pear shaped buttress of superb rough rock, split in the lower half by a prominent diagonal overlap in the shape of an inverted V. A tree on a ramp above the crag base provides a convenient reference point. The routes are described from left to right.

The following two routes take broken twin grooves on the left of the main slab.

Spooky Tooth 20m VS
Spooky!
(4c). Climb the left hand groove/rib to a hanging slab. Step left and climb the steep upper groove making liberal use of the huge poised fang (which seems thankfully to be more solid than it looks).
SJH Reid, S Stout, 5th May 1999

Finders Keepers 20m VS
(4c). Climb the well scrubbed right hand groove (as for Bull Run), and step left onto the hanging slab. Move up right through the blocky break.
SJH Reid, S Stout, 5th May 1999

Bull Run 27m MVS
(4b). Takes the stepped corners at the left end of the buttress. Start 4 metres left of the tree. Climb the initial corners to the bulge and pull out right to a ledge. Follow a right facing corner above until it fades out, move left to the arete, and finish up the right hand side of the slab.
D Geere, 8th October 1998.

Yahoo 26m HVS maybe only VS
An eliminate starting just right of 'Bull Run' (3 metres left of the tree).
(5a).Climb delicately up the slab to the left hand end of the overlap, then the short awkward crack above to the ledge on 'Bull Run'. Surmount the bulging rock on the left then follow the centre of the slab above.
D Geere, J Daly, 20th February 1999

One Trick Pony 28m E2
A good pitch taking a line above the overlap to finish up a short groove through the left side of the bulging rock above. Start 3 metres left of the tree (as for 'Yahoo').
(5c). Climb delicately up to the left end of the diagonal overlap then move right to a ledge. Gain a standing position in a pocket above the overlap and traverse delicately right along the lip to better holds. The short groove above is then followed to a ledge where easier slabs trending right lead to the top.
D Geere, JJ Geere, 4th October 1998 (Repeated 5th May 1999, SS, SR, thought to be E1, 5b)

Sweetheart of the Rodeo 27m E2
Another good pitch taking a thin groove line above the right end of the overlap, immediately above the inverted V. Start 2 metres left of the tree.
(5c). Climb an obvious diagonal line up beneath the overlap to its right hand end, pull out right to a hollow flake, then step delicately back up left into a groove line which leads through the bulge (crux) to a ledge. Easy slabs then lead to the top.
D Geere, JJ Geere, 4th October 1998

Sweetheart 26m E2
An excellent pitch starting just right of the tree.
(6a). Climb the short wall up to the inverted V overhang, surmount this direct, then climb the groove line through the bulge above as for Sweetheart of the Rodeo.
J Daly, unseconded, end of April 1999

The next 2 routes start from the lowest point of the crag directly beneath the tree

Bronco 38m VS
A fine pitch.
(4c). Climb an easy slab and scoop to the tree, then follow the right edge of the ramp to its top. Step right, then climb the slab past a hollow flake to an obvious V groove/niche in the bulge above. Surmount this direct, step right, and follow the obvious crack line above to the top.
J Daly, 6th December 1998

Pass the Buck 38m VS
(4b/c). Follow 'Bronco' to the top of the ramp. Traverse 4 metres further right then climb more steeply past a tree/stump to where a tiny flake crack and pockets lead to the ramp line above. Follow this to its right end where a flake crack and short corner above lead to the top.
J Daly, D Geere, 5th December 1998

The crag now turns to the right and becomes more broken. The next routes starts beneath a prominent arete, with a corner/groove to its left.

Horse Latitudes 20m HVS
(5a). Easily up a rib to a ledge beneath an overhang. Climb a short steep crack up the right side of the arete, then swing left round the arete to gain the prominent corner, up this precariously to the top.
D Geere, J Daly, 24th April 1999
(Repeated 5th May 1999, SR, SS - thought to be top end of grade.)

Buckaroo 20m HVS
(4c). Up an easy groove to a ledge beneath the arete's overhang. Climb a short steep corner crack up the right side of the arete to a sloping ledge. Continue up for 3 metres, step left into a scoop then left again onto the arete which is climbed direct over a bulge to finish.
J.Daly, unseconded, end of April 1999.
12 metres further right is short steep reddish wall.

Lonesome Pine 15m VS
(4c). Climb the wall direct using a crack system and scoop to gain the top. Scramble up easy rocks on the left for 4 metres to a good flake belay.
J Daly, D Geere, 20th February 1999

Dropping Crag (226 993) Alt 400m E Facing
Due to a printing error the following three routes were inadvertantly missed from Recent Developments 1997 - 1998

Drop Kick 15m S
From the top of the block step right or to the wall and make a rising traverse right to a ledge. Then straight up to a block belay.
Mike Lynch, Dave Kay, 24th May 1997

Birk Crack 20m HVS
(5a/b). Climb the crack at the left hand end of the crag.
Ted Rogers, Ken Forsythe, 14th June 1997

Wobbly Wall 20m E3
(5c/6a). Gain a ledge with difficulty and follow a vague groove until a hidden finger hold on the right is used to gain a good jug on the left followed by a rounded finish.
Ted Rogers, Ken Forsythe, 14th June 1997

Dropping Sideways 30m VS
A girdle traverse of the right-hand two thirds of the crag. Start just right of the left-hand steep section at the bottom of the waterworn groove.
(4c). Make an ascending traverse rightwards to the top of a blunt pinnacle, descend slightly past a good runner, and continue traversing right until the end of the crag where an ascent rightwards leads to a big white belay ledge. Finish either up or down.
John Robinson, Andy Carlin, Paul O'Reilly, 3rd October 1998

SLATE

Hodge Close
Variety Show 35m E4
Well protected climbing on The Main Wall. Start just left of Ten Years After
(6b). Climb the short black corner to gain the main slab with difficulty (four bolts). Above this, the good ledge on The Main Event can be reached (Rocks 1, 3 and 7), followed by the unprotected easier flake above to the upper ledge (twin bolt belay on the Girdle). Step right and cross to a bolt which is passed with extreme difficulty to a side-pull. Then move up and right again to reach small wires on Ten Years After. Finish up the top 8 metres of Ten Years After.
A Phizacklea, K Phizacklea, S Hubbard, 5th May 1999

The lower section had been climbed by A Phizacklea, J Holden, A Towse, 25th May 1997 finishing via The Main Event – a bolt was placed in The Main Event – this has now been removed. This gave an easier climb of more consistent standard.

SCAFELL

Page numbers refer to the FRCC Guide, Scafell, Wasdale & Eskdale (1996)

Scafell Crag (p29)

Original Sin 43m E6

A technical and strenuous route up the impressive crackline on the front face of the Great Flake. Well protected.

1 18m (4a). As for Nazgul pitch 1.

2 25m (6c). The thin crack to the right of Nazgul is climbed with a desperate start to reach a good hold. Strenuous moves above finally bring a belay on top of the Great Flake within reach.

A Phizacklea, D Kirkby, 17th June 1990. With an indirect start to the main pitch and a rest point.

Climbed free and following the direct line by C Matheson, 1999. Repeated by David Birkett the following day and said to be an excellent route.

ESKDALE

Page numbers refer to the FRCC Guide, Scafell, Wasdale & Eskdale (1996)

Great Crag (GR. 186 979)

Alt 300m South West Facing

15 mins walk across the moor from the view point on top of Ulpha Fell the outcropping is plainly visible. The climbs are described from right to left. Just left (and below) of the obvious grass rake cutting the crag is a square corner.

Pleasant Enough 30m D

Start at bottom of the easy angled rib which bounds the very righthand side of the crag.

Climb the slab. A pleasant outing.

Cokie van der Velde, Dave Kay, 22nd March 1999

The Stroll 27m HS

Starts 10m right of the bottom of the grass rake at the right end of a glacis

slab which abuts the foot of the crag.
From the right end of the glacis pull up on to the diagonal fault line running leftwards across the crag and follow this to belay in a bay.
Dave Kay, Cokie van der Velde, 22nd March 1999

Route 51 18m HS
The obvious corner/crack rising from the back of the bay in the upper wall half way up the grass ramp.
Climb the corner, mainly on the right, to good belays
Dave Kay, Cokie van der Velde, 3rd April 1999

Another Five Months Gone 18m VS
(4c). Start about 1m left of the foot of the obvious corner of Route 51 at the back of the grassy bay and climb the steep crack direct to belay well back.
Dave Kay, Mark Evans, 29th August 1999

No Rolling Stone 20m S
Start half way up the grass ramp to the left of the bay and just left of a large triangular block.
Climb the slab left of the block to the leftward slanting crack line, follow this, pull on to the slab and finish up the obvious crack above.
Cokie van der Velde, Dave Kay, 3rd April 1999

The next routes start in the square corner below the grass rake.

Airstrike 12m E1 5b
(5b). Start at the foot of the steep rib bounding the right side of the corner. Pull up strenuously and climb to the grass ramp.
Dave Evans (solo), 2nd April 1999

Slobodan Slab 14m E2 5c
(5c). Takes the wall right of the corner to the same belay as War Crime. No Gear!
Will Wilson (solo), 2nd April 1999

Milosevic 25m HVS
(5a). Pull on to the short gangway at the left edge of the corner and then climb directly to the obvious 'V' groove above. Enter the groove with

difficulty and follow continuation cracks to the top.
James Kay, Dave Kay, 2nd April 1999

Mothers Day 22m D
The left bounding rib of the obvious corner gives a pleasant route.
Cokie van der Velde, Dave Kay, 22nd March 1999
About 100m left (towards Eskdale) is a very steep short wall with a rightwards slanting gangway on its left.

I'll Be Calling Roo 15m D
Start at the toe of the little subsidiary rib which abuts the wall on its left. Climb the rib and follow the rightward slanting gangway to the top.
Mark Evans, Dave Kay, 29th August 1999

100m left again from the steep wall and well down on the end of the knoll of Great Crag is an easy-angled rounded buttress. The following routes take the buttress.

One-2-One 20m S
Takes the slab at the right side of the buttress.
Pull on to the slab and follow a thin crack directly to the top.
Mike Lynch, John Lynch, Dave Kay, 28th August 1999

Friends & Family 20m S
Start at the same point as One-2-One but pull on to the slab and immediately traverse left to a foot ledge. From here climb directly up the edge of the rib into the obvious crack line above and finish up this.
John Lynch, Dave Kay, Mike Lynch, 28th August 1999

Cable & Wireless 20m VD
At the left edge of the buttress is a pleasant flake-crack line.
Start at the toe of the rib and follow the crack to good belays in a grassy bay.
Dave Kay, John Lynch, Mike Lynch, 28th August 1999

Foxbield Slabs (GR. 197 990) Alt 380m West Facing
Below and left of the summit of Great Whinscale is a fine slabby buttress with a steeper right wall and a steeper shorter upper tier. Climbs are described from left to right.

Reynard's Rib 40m MS

On the left edge of the crag is a wide broken scoop with a slabby rib bounding its left side. This rib has a thin crack line running up it. Start at the toe of the rib and climb up to the crack. Follow this and the continuation corner to the slabs above. Follow these to the top. Belay well back.
Cokie van der Velde, Dave Kay, 1st May 1999

Lazy Dog 35m S
Start in the centre of the buttress just left of the grassy crack line.
Climb the smooth slabs just right of the grassy crack to a ledge below the cleaned crack in the steeper, middle section, of the crag. Climb the crack on good holds and follow continuation cracks to the top.
Dave Kay, Cokie van der Velde, 30th April 1999

Flaky 20m HS
The steeper right edge of the buttress, as it runs up to the bottom of the wide grass rake, has two obvious lines either side of a worryingly large and apparently detached block high up. Flaky takes the obvious crack left of the block. Start at the foot of a wide crack formed between a discontinuous rib and the main wall. Climb the crack to the bottom of a steep rake running leftwards and then step right to follow the crack-line up the main wall to finish on the grass ramp.
Dave Kay, Cokie van der Velde, 30th April 1999

Lower Green Crag (GR. 199 983) Alt 400m S.W. Facing
A fine little crag about 15 metres high with a lot of slanting cracks and ribs. Routes are described from left to right. At the left end of the crag, just before it becomes broken and loses height is a clean cracked rib slanting slightly rightwards.

'D' Notice 20m MVS
(4b). Start at the foot of the rib and climb the cracks until easier rocks lead to good belays in a grassy bay.
Dave Kay, Mike Lynch, 10th July 1999

'V' Sign 20m MS
1m right of the clean cracked rib bounding the left of the crag is a rightwards slanting chimney.
Climb into the chimney, surmount the bulge and then pull out on to the rib on the right to finish.
Mike Lynch, Dave Kay, 21st August 1999

'B' Special 20m VS
Approximately 5m right of the left bounding rib and 2m left of an obvious 'V' notch at the foot of the crag are two parallel recessed crack lines slanting right.
(4c). Climb into the recessed crack lines and follow them to the top.
Dave Kay, Mike Lynch, 10th July 1999

'G' Force 20m HS
Start at the 'V' notch below the right hand pair of recessed cracks.
Climb into the notch and follow the recessed cracks until a couple of moves left bring good belays.
Mike Lynch, Dave Kay, 10th July 1999

'T' Bar 20m HS
1m right of the 'V' notch is a rightwards-slanting groove line with a small holly at about 6m.
Start below the holly and follow the slanting line to finish up the chimney.
Mike Lynch, Dave Kay, 21st August 1999

'H' Block 20m VS
10m right of the 'V' notch is a slab with a thin curving vein running up it.
Start in the corner below the perched blocks at the left end of the slab.
(4c). Climb the left side of the slab and finish up the obvious small chimney at the top of the crag.
Mike Lynch, Dave Kay, 21st August 1999

'U' Boat 20m E2
(5c). Follow the curving vein in the slab with runners where it matters until a move left at the top of the slab can be made to a resting place. Move back right from here and pull steeply into the cracks above. Follow the cracks moving left to finish.
Mike Lynch, 21st August 1999

'P' Company 20m E1
About 1m right of the curving vein is a steep, right slanting line leading to a 'blocky' ledge.
(5b). Climb the vague, right slanting, crack and pull on to a small ledge on the right at about 3m. From the left end of the ledge pull up to the 'blocky ledge' and then make some hard moves to gain a left leaning line

in the headwall on the left. Follow this line more easily to the top.
Mike Lynch, Dave Kay, 29th May 1999

WASDALE
Page numbers refer to the FRCC Guide, Scafell, Wasdale & Eskdale (1996)

Overbeck (p148)
Ga'n Yam 35m HVS
A direct line up the clean wall to the left of *The Gargoyle*. Start as for *The Gargoyle*.
(5a). Climb *The Gargoyle* corner for a metre or so and then pull leftwards into a steep groove. Climb it to the top and trend rightwards to a big spike runner and a junction with the traverse line on pitch 2 of *The Gargoyle*. Climb directly up the wall to the overlap (Friend °). Pull directly over this and ascend the narrowing wall.
R J Gordon, A Swann, 18th April 2000

MOSEDALE
This is the valley running north from Wasdale Head, which is well known by those taking the popular path up to Black Sail Pass. The steep, rugged eastern face of Red Pike forms the left-hand wall of this valley, and it is on this face that the following climbs are found. There are many short crags and broken outcrops along the length of the valley, these were first mentioned in Haskett-Smith's *Climbing in the British Isles* (1894). Most of the crags contain poor quality rock, especially around those accessible areas close to the summit of Red Pike, and this has contributed to an erroneous impression of the area as a whole. There are outcrops of excellent quality rock to be found, but their development has been slow. There is scope for over a hundred new routes of all grades here, what this area needs are inquisitive teams who are prepared to do a bit of cleaning. By the time the new guide to Pillar comes out, this should be a venue worth seeking out. The crags are described in order as you walk up the valley.

Mosedale Needles
A group of three pinnacles at 177 094. The routes are on the main pinnacle (The Crooked Pinnacle), the one attached directly to the mountain.

The Crooked Pinnacle 10m VD
Climb easily up the northern side until a more awkward pull onto a slab on the right just below the summit.
Andy McNaughton, Graham Uney, Easter 1998

Slab Happy 10m VD
Climb the slab above the col that connects The Crooked Pinnacle to Yewbarrow, with a difficult start. Gain the Crooked Pinnacle climb at the top.
Graham Uney, Andy McNaughton, Easter 1998

Black Crag NY 169 100 Alt. 590m. ESE facing
This is the first concentration of outcrops high on the eastern face of Red Pike. The crags are arranged in several disjointed tiers, the rock type varies between friable and mossy to excellent.

There are two ways to get to this crag, both require quite an expenditure of energy The shortest approach is up the valley from Wasdale Head, where the path across the old packhorse bridge is taken up the left side of the beck. About half a kilometre beyond the washed out scree chute of Dore Head, follow a beck which issues steeply from a rather indistinct combe. There are many outcrops high in this combe, the most prominent one from the valley floor is a vertical wall on the left, Bull Crag, but on closer inspection this is extremely mossy. This is a steep and strenuous approach.
The easier approach is from the car park at Netherbeck Bridge, half way along the shore of Wastwater. Follow the steep ridge running up towards Yewbarrow, but, before the crags on the ridge are reached, follow the good path rising leftwards which eventually meets the top of the Dore Head scree run, overlooking the lower end of Mosedale. Walk up leftwards, towards Red Pike, passing the first projecting shoulder on the ridge, before contouring across the steep fellside to reach the crag. Either approach should take less than an hour.

Lower Buttress
This is the lowest collection of slabs and steep walls in the centre of the comb. The first route starts at the lowest point, 100m below and right of a prominent perched boulder.

Black Panther 20m E2
The clean left-hand arete of the wall, with climbing rather reminiscent of its Pink namesake on Dow Crag.
(5c). Pull into the short corner and step right onto a ledge on the arete. Move up to a good nut in a small triangular niche, then move up to an

undercut in the centre and pull over this using a crozzly pocket. Finish directly up the apex of the rib. An abseil point lies 6 metres behind.
A Phizacklea, J Holden, 18th August 1998

Blackness 24m S
A rather broken route starting just left of Black Panther.
Climb a short rib just left of a heathery patch and continue to a heather ledge (spike).
Follow the arete above to a second block spike at 20m, then either traverse right to the abseil point on Black Panther or continue up broken rock and heather to a belay at 40m.
A Phizacklea, J Holden, 18th August 1998

Black Diamond 25m E3
Good sustained climbing which is spoiled by a chossy start, up the diamond-shaped slab 10 metres up and left of Black Panther.
(5c). Climb a short dirty corner on the bottom left-hand side to a ramp. Climb the slab directly, following a thin crack, to reach a block belay.
A Phizacklea, J Holden, 18th August 1998

Upper Tier
The wall right of the gully above the previous routes which leads onto the summit ridge. There is a distinctive chockstone high in this gully, the routes start 30 metres below this. The easiest approach is from the ridge above, the chockstone can be passed on its right side (looking out).

Wobbly Bob 35m MS
Pleasant clean climbing up the slabs just right of the gully. Quite exposed, but well protected.
Climb easily up the stepped lower slabs till the corner on the right merges, and continue to a steepening. Step delicately left to gain a groove on the edge overlooking the gully, and follow this delicately to a blunt pinnacle at its top. Step right and move up to a ledge, continue up the walls behind to the top.

Stag Party 48m S/HVS
A fine first pitch up the arete right of Wobbly Bob, followed by a steep and dirty second pitch, which can (and should) be avoided. Start at the foot of Wobbly Bob.
1 33m. Climb the right side of the slab for a couple of metres until the

grass gully can be crossed to the foot of the arete. Follow the crack right to the crest and climb this with increasing delicacy to a large ledge.
2 15m. (5a) Step onto a flake behind the big block and make a fingery pull up to pockets, which lead to a small spike hold. The blunt rib right of a steep and dirty groove leads to the top.
A Phizacklea (solo), 6th September 1999

Two Tier Walls
These lie about 250 metres right of the Lower Walls. The area consists of several isolated buttresses formed into two tiers. The rock is generally good, but it displays more striations on the upper tier. The only route recorded so far climbs the prominent central pillar at the lower end of a grassy gully, there is a conspicuous corner crack to its left.

Route X 23m E1
A chossy start leads to excellent climbing higher up the pillar.
(5b) Start up the corner and pull out right onto a juniper ledge. Move across to the right-hand side of the upper arete, and dry your boots! Step left onto a sloping ledge, and move up on good holds to a flake crack which leads to a block. Step left onto the arete and follow this to the top.
A Phizacklea (unseconded), 18th August 1998

Enigma Pinnacle NY 165 103 Alt.750m E facing
This area has only been viewed from a distance Is it a detached pinnacle or not? What is certain, however, is that this is a prominently striated area of steep rock. How solid this is, who knows?

UPPER MOSEDALE

This area can only be reached by following the left-hand path up the valley from Wasdale Head, and continuing past a prominent split boulder (The Y boulder). A few hundred metres past this landmark, cross onto the right side of the main beck to avoid marshy ground. Soon the crags of the upper combe (Blackem Head) come into view. The light coloured slabs towards the head of the valley is Elliptical Crag. (This has been given the wrong grid reference in the guidebook). High to the left of this are a series of outcrops just below the summit ridge, the highest point being the pronounced Summit Buttress. Below these crags, and slightly below and left of Elliptical Crag are two areas of rock separated by a deep, wet gully. The right-hand buttress is called Hanging Corner Crag, & the left-hand but-

tress is called Damparse Crag. The approach is 3km and takes 75 minutes.

Damparse Crag NY 165019 NE facing Alt 590m.
This is a steep rounded pillar of clean, solid rock, which displays a spectacularly steep wall overlooking a large gully on the right (**Damparse Gully**, 90m VD, insecure grass pitches interspersed with scree). The base of this gully is always wet and it is this wetness around the bottom which gave the crag its name. The crag itself dries quickly. All the routes start from the foot of Damparse Gully.

Thoroughbred 58m E3
A delightful route up the left side of the main pillar. Only the start of pitch 2 is dirty.
1 6m (4c). Scramble onto a large grass ledge on the left.
2 30m (5c). Pull into a hanging groove above the belay from the right (Friend 0 and 1.5), and continue strenuously to a ledge on the left. Trend right above the groove and move up delicately, following a shallow scoop to a ledge. Climb the slabs above, keeping about 5 metres right of a corner, to an awkward finish onto a large terrace. Walk right and up onto a higher ledge overlooking the gully.
3 22m (5c). Climb a thin flake crack in the wall (5 metres left of the gully arete) to a ledge. Continue up, trending slightly left and follow the best rock to the top.
A Phizacklea, J Holden, 20th June 1998

Dercajia 52m E4
A good route up the steep wall right of Thoroughbred. The grade assumes that a cheating stick is used to position the crucial runner!
1 6m (4c), As for Thoroughbred.
2 32m (6a). Climb a thin slab on the right to gain a blocky ledge. The thin wall above leads precariously to a shallow groove (crucial RP4), pull up (poor peg) and use the right rib to reach a ledge. Step left to a poor spike runner, then go back right through a bulge using a flake to another ledge. Amble up the arete above until 3 metres below the grass cornice, then traverse delicately right to a short finishing groove.
3 14m (4c) Pull leftwards into a hanging groove and finish out on the left.
A Phizacklea, K Phizacklea, 23rd September 1998

Dampers Crack 42m E4
A sustained, strenuous pitch which follows the obvious diagonal crack on the right wall of Damparse Gully.

(6a). Pull onto the first ledge of Pedigree then step right to below a groove. Difficult moves, protected by small wires, lead to better holds where the crack runs rightwards. Superb climbing follows on flakes and cracks to a spike below a steepening near the top, step left to a wild finish onto the big ledge.
K Phizacklea, A Phizacklea, 23rd September 1998

Blackem Headwall NY 164 112 North facing Alt.720m
About 400 metres beyond Damparse crag, lies this final steep wall of immaculate rock. It is above and left of Elliptical Crag. The remoteness of this wall will deter all but the most determined of explorers. The main eye-catching feature is a shallow vertical corner up the centre of the wall. A lonely peg high in this groove indicates that this is a desperate project.

Only the Lonely 16m HVS
Start above a rock step to the right of the corner.
(4c). Climb up to a groove and follow this, then step right and rnove up a rib to a grassy finish.
A Phizacklea, D Kirby, 2nd May 1999

PILLAR

Page numbers refer to the FRCC Guide, Gable & Pillar (1991)

Pillar Rock (p56)
West Face of Low Man
Charysma 80m HVS
An eliminate taking a direct line up the arete between Charybdis and Goth. Start as for pitch 3 of Charybdis either reached as for Goth or by climbing the lower pitches of Charybdis.
1 30m (5a). Cross the Glacis, move up right and ascend just left of the undercut arete. Make a long step right to gain a slim groove in the arete. Climb the groove and easier rock to belay as for pitch 4 of Charybdis.
2 25m (5a). Climb the groove to the right of the Green Groove of Charybdis and continue up to an overhang on the arete. Turn this on the left then step right onto the fine arete and climb it to a good stance and block belay.
3 25m (5a). Climb the right arete of the groove of Charybdis (pitch 7) then up into the left slanting crack. Move up and pull out right to finish up the rough slabby rock of Goth.
Bob Bennett, Maggie White, 22nd August 1999

Gorre 75m E1
An eliminate line following the fine series of aretes between Goth and the upper pitches of Charybdis. Probably the most photogenic climb on Pillar! Start as for Goth.
1 25m (5b) Follow Goth for about 5m and then step down left and traverse horizontally left on small holds to pull awkwardly into a hidden groove in the arete. Follow the groove to a rightwards sloping ramp and up this to a narrow ledge. Climb the black mossy groove (as for start of Goth pitch 2) to a hanging belay below the steep wall.
2 30m (5b) Climb the steep wall, as for Goth, and make a strenuous pull up to gain a standing position on the hand traverse holds of that route. Move leftwards on to the fine arete and follow it (mainly on the right) to a ledge. Climb up right 2m to a stance.
3 20m (4c) Climb the wide crack and step right to a short arete. Up this to a flake ledge. Step off the left side of this and follow the arete to the top.
SJH Reid, J Campbell, 12th June 1992

West Face of High Man
Alternative Finish to New West Climb 30m HVS
Start at the foot of the chimney at the top of pitch 3.
4 30m (5a). Climb past the chockstone into a cave/recess (possible belay). Pull strenuously over the roof and finish direct on the rib above.
Peter Hill, P Hodgson, Paul Hodgson, 26th June 1999

GABLE
Page numbers refer to the FRCC Guide, Gable & Pillar (1991)

Boat Howe, Kirkfell (p111)
Keel Haul 50m E3 (high)
Start just right of Dehydroepiandrosterone.
1 25m (5c). Climb the thin crack to rejoin Dehydroepiandrosterone after 6m and follow it for a few moves before stepping right onto the steep wall. Climb through the bulges above by strenuous lay-backing and undercuts.
2 25m (5a/b). Climb the slab and rib between Final Voyage and Dehydroepiandrosterone.
Ted Rogers, Rick Graham, 22nd August 1999

Numenor with Direct Finish 50m E2 (high)
(5c). The obvious continuation crack over two more bulges, well protected throughout.
Rick Graham, Ted Rogers, 29th July 1999

Voyager 40m E3 (med)
Start from a hanging stance about 15m up Numenor.
(5c). Traverse sensationally rightwards at the level of the second peg on Flagship. Two hidden right facing ramps provide holds and runners. From the peg climb delicately upwards to gain the base of the groove (Var finish to Fanghorn). Finish up this.
Ted Rogers, Rick Graham, 29th July 1999

Jolly Roger 20m E2 (med)
(5c). Obvious (the only) groove line between Fanghorn and Trim and Incline
Ted Rogers, Rick Graham, 29th July 1999

Poseiden Adventure 50m E4 (med)
Start 5m right of Trim and Incline.
1 25m (6a). Climb the shallow groove/chimney and exit left at the overhang. Move left to the "second skyhook placement" on Trim and Incline (which takes two wires). Climb directly up the wall above andto the apex of the roof and pull over this on dramatically improving holds.
2 25m (5a). Climb the rib defining the edge of the North and West Faces, gainig it from the right.
P1: Rick Graham, Andy Jones, 28th August 1999
P2: Ted Rogers, Rick Graham, 22nd August 1999

The Napes - Napes Needle (p147/160)
Sick Heart River 22m E3
A sensationally exposed climb that gains and follows the fine arete between The Obverse Route and The Gap. Protection is marginal in the upper section, and having a backup party on the shoulder in a position to effect a top-rope rescue if required would possibly reduce the grade to E2. Start on the eastern side of The Needle at the foot of the polished groove of The Gap.
1 18m (5c). Climb up the groove towards The Gap for a few metres, until a hand traverse line leading left to the huge platform on The Obverse Route is reached. Traverse this and gain the platform (if a runner was placed at the start of the traverse, it is a good idea for the second to remove it at this point). Bridge up between the huge flake on the left and the steep wall (good wire and Friend Half) until a sharp pocket (Troll 10mm flat tape sling) is reached. Traverse horizontally right to the arete and

swing round a nose (good wire) and make hard moves to stand up on it. Sidle round and up the arete (RP3 in shallow placement on right) to a good foothold and flat handholds on a ledge (loop of a microwire can be placed over tiny spike adjacent to ledge). More delicate moves gain a standing position on the ledge and a sigh of relief. Step left and up to The Shoulder.
2 4m (4b). Mantleshelf onto the ledge on the top block that overlooks Needle Gap and move up directly to the top.
SJH Reid, R Kenyon, 12th July 1999

Cannon Stone 75m HVS
A direct eliminate with an interesting second pitch finishing up the slim pillar to the right of Amos Moses. Start as for Amos Moses.
1 25m. Climb the small rib and the wall above - left of the crack of Amos Moses.
2 50m (5a). Climb the crack on the right of the pinnacle (as for Crinklers Cracks - omitted from 1991 guide), the slabs above and the short groove to the top of the large block. From the top of the block pull up and left onto the face of the pillar which is followed past the obvious cannon stone to the top.
Note: Runner recommended before loading the cannon !
Martin Armitage, Tessa Kennedy, 11th July 1999

Crocks' Crack 37m VS
This follows the obvious broken crackline between Eagles Nest Ridge and Eagles Crack. Start at the bottom of Eagles Crack.
(4c). Enter the Groove and gain the obvious hold on left Swing left onto the face and gain and follow the crackline until it becomes grassy when a step left gains a wall of excellent rock which is followed to belays on Eagles Nest Ridge.
M Armitage, J Unsworth, 19th September 1998

Cracked Crocks 37m HVS
This starts up Crocks' Crack route and gains and follows the diminishing crack immediately on the right of Eagles Nest Ridge. Contrived but gives good climbing. Holds on the ridge itself are not allowed at this grade!
(5a). As for Crocks' Crack to gain the face on the left. Continue up and left to gain the crack on the right of the ridge. (Junction with Eagles Nest Ridge Direct) Follow the narrowing crack to the top of the wall and belays on Eagles Nest Ridge.
M Armitage, J Unsworth, 19th September 1998

BUTTERMERE

Page numbers refer to the FRCC Guide, Buttermere & Eastern Crags (1992)

Grey Crag - Oxford and Cambridge Buttress (p 87)
There seems to be some muddle about the routes on the left hand side of this crag, with descriptions of Oxford & Cambridge Ordinary, Central Route and Oxford & Cambridge Direct varying considerably over the years. The best start for Central Route would seem to be the obvious well-climbed shallow chimney, on the left side of the left hand wall, that leads directly to the overhung groove. That being so there is an obvious gap between Central Route and Oxford & Cambridge Direct which has now been filled with:-

Oxbridge Entrance 40m S
Start at the centre of the left hand side of the crag, in between the shallow chimney of Central Route on the left and the stepped groove of Oxford & Cambridge Ordinary Route on the right.
Climb a grassy crack to a shallow right facing groove and on up grassy slabs to a possible stance beneath the bulging crack at the start of the second pitch of Oxford & Cambridge Direct. Climb up to the foot of the crack and then avoid it by traversing left (at hand or foot level) along a crack in the slab on the left until it is possible to move up to a ledge. Climb rightwards up the wall above to a pronounced crack, midway between the crack of Central Route on the left and the arête of Oxford & Cambridge Direct on the right, and follow it to the top.
SJH Reid, JE Reid, 23rd June 1999 (It is impossible to be sure whether this is a new route or not, and it is quite likely that it has been climbed before though not recorded. It is however a good pitch, and that is undoubtedly more important.)

EASTERN CRAGS

Page numbers refer to the FRCC Guide, Buttermere & Eastern Crags (1992)
Harrop Tarn Crag (307134 - 1997-1998 FRCC Supplement)
This is the clean wall visible on the Fellside from Harrop Tarn and described as a nice spot with good solid rock. Also known as Fairview Dome.

Idle Vice 15m HS
Start as for Lucky Streaks.

Climb the shallow groove and step up to a ledge. Step back left into the corner and jam it to the top.
SJH Reid, D Bodecott, 10th July 1999

Carrock Fell (p171)
Weeping Wall
This short wall, beneath Snail Shell Crag, is far better when dry than its current guide book description suggests. The rock is excellent and liberally endowed with incut holds. Protection is poor on some routes but there is a good tree belay above the centre of the crag. Routes are described from right to left.

Flying Sods 10m D
The broken groove on the right of the crag moving left onto a rib and finishing up this. Quite well protected.
Stephen Reid, Ingram Reid, Jill Reid, Sam Shimmin, Robert Shimmin, Tessa Kennedy, 12th September 1999

Weeping Wall 10m VD 1936
The original route of the crag and its variations are poorly protected.
Start just left of centre of the crag. Climb up the rightward slanting line and make a long stride right and up into a bottomless groove (just left of Flying Sods). Finish up this.
CR Wilson, D Thompson, E Tweddle, Feb 1936.

Sodding Flies 10m MS
Start just left of Weeping Wall at the left hand side of the crag.
Climb the thin slab just right of heather to a small roof which is overcome on excellent holds with good protection.
Stephen Reid, Ingram Reid, Robert Shimmin, Tessa Kennedy, Jill Reid, 12th September 1999

Eagle Crag, Grisedale (p174)
Raptor 25m HVS
A superb pitch which climbs a complex looking wall at a reasonable standard. Sustained and delicate with good protection. At the top end of its grade. Start from the broad ledge to the right of Original Route, below the left end of a large chamfered bulge about 4m up.
(5a). Climb straight up the left side of the bulge into a shallow groove.

Cross the wall leftwards past a rock scar to a higher resting place. Trend right and follow the shallow corner direct, cross a ramp, and continue directly to The Pasture.
Tony Marr, Mike Tooke, 25th July 1999

Grand Day Out 37m VS
Superb, well protected climbing, with good positions. High in the grade.
Start as for Sobrenada.
1 15m. Climb the slab.
2 22m (4c). Gain a higher grass ledge, then step right and climb a steep rip/groove (to the left of the cave of Sobrenada) to pull leftwards onto the slab. Trend left beneath a small shelf and gain this direct or slightly to its left. Pull out left and follow a steep shallow groove direct to the pasture.
Tony Marr, Mike Tooke, Frank Fitzgerald, 24th June 1999

Thoroughbred 40m E1
Follows the most obvious natural line on the lower tier. Exellent climbing with good protection except for the first 5m of the second pitch. Start as for Heavy Horses.
1 15m. Climb the slab to the belay on Sobrenada.
2 25m (5b). Step back down the slab a couple of metres until just right of the obvious V-groove. Climb directly up to gain a layaway flake which is followed boldly to a good resting place. Follow the diagonal fault to its right end and then pull up to a small platform (junction with A Grand Day Out). Climb the awkward tapering groove on the right to pull out leftwards at the top and follow easier rock to The Pasture.
Tony Marr, Mike Tooke, 25th July 1999
(The start follows Heavy Horses. A logical continuation would be Nexus (E1, 5b) giving 65m of E1 climbing on good rock)

Nexus 25m E1
Excellent climbing throughout, well protected with fine positions. Start from the Pasture just to the right of the piled blocks (same point as Sobrenada pitch 3).
(5b). Climb directly up the black streaked slab into the triangular niche. Step right then climb shallow cracks with interest, to join Sobrenada. Step right again (above the chimney of Sobrenada), and climb the fine corner directly to the top.
Tony Marr, Mike Tooke, 8th July 1999

Birk Crag, Haweswater (p249)
Groove Central E6
Takes the obvious "challenge for the future" mentioned in the current guidebook.
(6c). Climb the title.
Nick Dixon, Sheila Ashworth, Mark Bond, 5th August 1999

Gouther Crag, Swindale (p251)
Incision 27m E4
A good route that requires a bold approach. Takes the wall between Vasectomy and Castration Crack.
(6a). Climb the tricky wall (no runners) to gain a scoop. Move up this to a good ledge and runner. Climb the steepening wall leftwards (runner in Vasectomy). Pull back right and climb the narrowing diagonal crack to a good jug over the bulge. Climb the easy rib on the right to the top.
Phil Rigby, Mark Hetherington, 31st May 1999

Surgical Cut 30m E3
Another good route which takes the obvious diagonal crack across the lefthand side of Truss Butress. Almost a girdle of this fine wall! Start four metres left of Vasectomy at a grass shelf.
(6a). Pull into the niche (peg runner on The Gelding), and follow the crack rightwards across Vasectomy. Make a hard move into the top of Castration Crack and follow this to the top.
Phil Rigby, Mark Hetherington, 31st May 1999

Mist Arete 25m E1
Takes the arete just left of the corner of Sam. Start below the mottle wall, 5 metres left of the start of Sam.
(5b). Climb the wall to gain the easy slab. Continue up to the left of the arete. Place some gear above the large block (of doubtful stability). Move up the wall (small RP) to gain the arete (further RP) and follow the arete more easily to the top.
Ron Kenyon, Clive Rhodes, John Davis, 20th May 1999

Keep out of the Kennel E1
Blinkers job-- but some good climbing – for those not wanting to commit on Blood Letting.
(5b). Start as for Bloodletting - but keep up the left of the slab, placing gear in Kennel Wall but not using its crack. Ascend the shield to the left of

the flake on Bloodletting/Bloodhound – to join and follow Bloodletting. At the top, climb the wall between the two cracks.
Ron Kenyon, Clive Rhodes, 20th May 1999

IN MEMORIAM

MARJORIE MARY ALFEROFF (NEE CAIN)

Marjorie, who died in London in November 1999, was associated with the Fell and Rock for most of her long life, being the daughter of Herbert (President 1925-27) and Florence Cain, sister of Billy and Tommy Cain and wife of Basil Alferoff – all of whom were club members.

As the President's daughter she enjoyed going to meets with him – which she described in her reminiscences in the Journal of 1992 (No.73). After his sudden death she became Librarian from 1927 to 1935. She married Basil Alferoff in 1931 and for their honeymoon they went to Cape Wrath – quite a feat in those days when the main roads where like lanes! Soon she was taken up with child rearing and later opened Lightbeck Vegetarian Guesthouse near Kendal.

Although in later years she was less active, she attended Fell and Rock dinners and continued to visit the Lakes on regular family holidays at Birkness. The last of those was her 90th birthday party at the Coach House – not so far from the waterfall in Buttermere village where she and her father and brothers used to leap in the icy beck every New Year's Day over seventy years before.

As I write, we are planning a family expedition to sprinkle her ashes somewhere near Buttermere – her favourite lake.

Valerie Alferoff

NORMAN ARTHUR BAGGALEY

A most agreeable and delightful companion in the hills. This is how Norman will chiefly be remembered by most 'Fell & Rockers'. We who had the good fortune to walk and climb with him over the years recall his impish sense of humour and his remarkably extensive knowledge and experience of the mountains of Scotland and of the English Lake District, particularly in winter conditions.

Norman was engaged in business as an Hotelier in Black-

pool, and this meant that his business interests prevented him from walking and climbing as much as he would have wished during the summer season. He made up tor this during the winter, and he was always at the forefront in planning winter excursions to his beloved climbing grounds in Scotland or on the Lakeland fells. He realised how lucky he was in having the whole-hearted support of his wife and family. Kit, Norman's wife, and their two daughters, Elizabeth and Rosemary, shared Norman's enthusiasm for the mountains, and were careful to ensure that no obstacle should impede his winter climbing activities.

Norman himself had a remarkably resolute side to his character – surprising perhaps in one who was so light-hearted on the fells. On one occasion when climbing with Alf Gregory in Skye (during a period of leave from the R.A.F) he broke an ankle when at a high point on the Cuillin ridge. Although Alf Gregory hastened down to Glenbrlttle for help, Norman did not care to stay inactive, or to cause undue inconvenience to his helpers, so he discovered that a descent from a rocky ridge is feasible for a one-legged man, using the one sound leg and an equally sound posterior. He had almost completed the descent when the helpers reached him.

His constancy is also revealed by the fact that he always kept his friends. All his friends, even from earliest youth, always remained his friends for life.

With later middle age there came an abrupt change in Norman's health. He underwent some neuro-surgery which left him unable to climb and able to undertake only mild fell-walking. He found it necessary to dispose of the Hotel at Blackpool, and so became technically 'retired'. Again he refused to be inactive, so he played tennis for as long as he could and thereafter he played 'elderly golf'. He never gave up. He also found time to take a degree with the Open University. In all this he relied heavily upon the unwavering support of Kit, who was unstinting in her continuous efforts to enable Norman to extract some enjoyment from the

difficult years.

Time took its inevitable toll, and Norman died on the 17th March 1999, although it could still be said "He never gave up".

Joe Renwick

JOHN BECHERVAISE OAM, MBE

John Bechervaise was born in Melbourne in 1910 and died in 1998 at the age of 88. He was educated as a classicist and began a career in teaching, with a post at Geelong Grammar School. In 1937 he and his wife travelled to Europe, where, after travelling around, he took a job teaching art while studying at the Courtauld Institute. His wife returned to family in Australia with the new baby, but John was unable to join her because of the outbreak of war.

In the early 1940s he was making trips to the Lake District. George Driver writes: "On January 4th (1940) I was crossing Styhead Pass with some friends, long after dark and *en route* to Brackenclose. It was very cold and there was a good covering of snow. As we approached the Tarn we saw a faint patch of light across the tarn and a second light detached itself and came ... to meet us. It was John Bechervaise. He was camping by the tarn to test equipment and had been there for some time. He invited us across for a brew and we spent some time in his tent. He was well equipped with stacks of food, sleeping bags and two camp beds. He had recently been joined by ... an experienced Cambridge rock climber. Bechervaise had transported his mountain of equipment by hiring a packhorse! He had recorded 20 degrees of frost on the previous day. He talked of his days in Australia, as a schoolmaster, and the expeditions he had organized for his pupils. He had also been climbing solo from Styhead." Bechervaise joined the Fell and Rock in 1941 and remained in good contact with the Club, writing for the Journal, until at least the 1960s.

He returned to Geelong at the end of the war, but not for long.

After a few years editing the magazine *Walkabout*, he was invited to lead an expedition to the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition base on Heard Island. More Antarctic expeditions followed, including two to the mainland base at Mawson. These gave opportunities for mountaineering in Antarctica, and he made a number of first ascents of Antarctic peaks. One of his most testing climbs was an attempt on the 9,000 ft Big Ben, rising at the centre of Heard Island, when he and two companions were driven back by atrocious weather. His Journal account of this hazardous trip (which included near-asphyxiation in a snow-sealed tent) is illustrated with outstanding black and white photos: the explorer retained the artist's eye. For his polar work Bechervaise was awarded the Polar Medal with Antarctic Clasp, appointed M.B.E. and awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (O.A.M.).

Bechervaise went back to Geelong until retirement, but continued with interests in polar affairs and in travel. He led expeditions to the Himalaya and China: Neville and Betty Moreton went with him on a trip to Nepal.

After retirement he wrote and published on a wide range of subjects.

H Harris

WILLIAM ELDRIDGE

William Eldridge died in January 1997 after a lifetime enjoying the hills of Wales and the Lake District, and later, the Scottish hills.

Born in Liverpool, he first came to the Lakes with a school trip, and the following year aged 15 he brought his parents on bicycles for a week's tour. Qualifying from Liverpool Medical School in 1926 he soon met C.P. LePage of the Rucksack Club, and for 20 years they walked the hills together: during this time they both contributed to the formation and development of the Mountain Rescue scheme.

Working in the field of public health, he was employed by

Lancashire County Council for nearly thirty years, having much to do with the setting up and running of special schools for maladjusted children, and having a life-long interest in the field of the deaf. With a huge capacity for work he was president of the Liverpool Astronomical Association in the 1930s. He filmed the final years of the building of Liverpool Anglican Cathedral between 1928 and the mid-1950s and, moving to Ambleside with his wife and four children in 1948 and travelling to Preston to work, enjoyed the hills of the Lake District and the companionship of the Fell and Rock Club, which he joined in 1942

I recall as a child often being off walking with him before five in the morning in order to fit in a full day's walk before he went to an afternoon meeting in Kendal or Keswick. His great delight was to be able to stop on a high ridge or plateau like High Street or Great End or some of the Cairngorm hills and sit and name the hills in sight, or to lie and enjoy the skylarks' and meadow pipits' constant songs.

In his 60s he revelled in the longer walks in the Scottish hills, with or without a tent, like the Lairig Ghru and from Poolewe to Dundonnell. In his 80s he was still going to stay in a croft in Sutherland, and in his 90s I would take him to the Roman camp on Hardknott and, overlooking the valley and facing north-west, he would positively drink in the air of upper Eskdale.

Julian Eldridge.

GEORGE BEATTIE ELLIOTT

George was born in Copley, on the outskirts of Stalybridge, Cheshire. He spent most of his time as a young man exploring the local moors and crags of the area, sometimes with his younger brother, Robbie. When he acquired a motorbike he began to visit the Lake District, where he developed a deep love of climbing and walking. With his many friends he spent as much time as he could exploring the area. One of the favourite places to bed down was Zeke Myer's barn at Wall End Farm, in Langdale, which they called

the Hog House.

When married, his wife Hazel (also an excellent climber) joined him on many first ascents; Cook's Tour, with his friend Jack Cook, was one of these. As a result of doing a new climb on Bowfell, Right Hand Wall Traverse, he was encouraged to apply for membership of The Fell & Rock by Alan Airey and Frank Simpson. They arranged for him to meet the President, who at that time was Mr. Speaker, at Brackenclose. On arriving there, he met up with a party of climbers carrying a stretcher on which was the body of the President. He had fallen to his death on Great Gable. Speaker's wife ensured that George became a member, which was something that he was proud of right throughout his life.

George was a staunch socialist and was by profession an aircraft designer. He worked for many of the major aircraft companies at that time. Eventually he became employed at British Aerospace at Warton and remained there until his retirement in 1980.

He was also very interested in archaeology – especially the Stone Age period. He became an expert on cup and ring markings and megaliths. This began as a result of finding a stone axe near Gimmer. He gave many lectures on this subject during his retirement.

In 1994, George went on what turned out to be his last walking holiday. He went to Scotland and while out walking in the hills suffered a major heart attack. He managed to sit himself up against his rucksack and lay there for some hours before recovering enough to get himself back to Plockton, where he was staying. From there he was taken to hospital in Inverness. Although he never recovered his strength, he was able to take a last holiday with all his family at Birkness in the summer of 1996. The weather was perfect and he treasured the memories of those days until he died.

George's final ambition was to live long enough to see the end of the Conservative Government. He got his wish and eventually he died peacefully at Preston Royal Hospital in July 1998.

George left a large number of hand-written journals, about

the many events that took place during his lifetime, which deserve to be published in the future. They are a wonderful and sometimes amusing account of his life and are treasured by his son and family.

Bob Elliott

ARNOLD ENGLAND

Arnold England died at the end of January, 1996, aged 85.

In 1938 he was invited to join a Liverpool Wayfarers' Club party in Arolla and with them climbed the Pigne d'Arolla. He was later joined by Alf Gregory and together they climbed the Dent Blanche and traversed the Aiguilles Rouges d'Arolla. In August 1939 Arnold and his wife Jessie joined Dot and me in Zermatt. The weather was unsettled and the only peak of note that we climbed was the Wellenkuppe. Stalin and Ribbentrop had signed the infamous pact that made war inevitable and Zermatt was rapidly evacuated. We had a tedious, very slow and somewhat dramatic journey across France and managed to get a ship from Dieppe to Newhaven. War was declared a few days later.

In 1942, Arnold joined the Fell and Rock, which enabled his family to enjoy walking holidays from the cottage at Birkness. Arnold and Jessie were also members of Preston Mountaineering Club.

When Arnold retired from his profession as a Chartered Gas Engineer, he and Jessie moved to Oxenholme to be near the Lake District. Jessie died some years ago and Arnold eventually moved to Natland and still wandered the byways of his beloved Lakeland.

Arnold was a devoted fellwalker and a most agreeable companion in the hills.

Arthur Robinson

GEORGE FISHER MBE

George was born at The Nags Head Inn, Wythburn on January 15th 1925. With the family home situated at the foot of Helvellyn, it was perhaps predictable that the Lakeland Fells would be so

much a part of his life. Helvellyn was his first mountain ascent, at the age of four, with his father and twin brother, Richard.

When the level of Thirlmere was to be raised, the old coaching inn had to be demolished and the Fishers moved to Keswick. During his school years, George joined the local Scouts where the leader, Morley Dobson (FRCC 1941-84), introduced him to rock climbing and camping on the hills; cycling to Seathwaite to climb on Napes was not unusual. George and his brother would spend much of their spare time, either on the hills or developing their climbing skills on the Castlehead Quarry.

After two years of War Service, George returned to Keswick to work as an electrician. He climbed widely with other local enthusiasts and made many first ascents on the crags of the Borrowdale Valley. He became a registered BMC Guide and started a climbing school in the town. His experience in the Scouts was not forgotten and he was always available to help and encourage young people interested in the mountains. When the Outward Bound Mountain School was opened at Ullswater, George was one of the first instructors.

Fifty three years ago Rusty Westmorland asked for volunteers to form a Mountain Rescue Team in Keswick and George Fisher was among those who came forward. His knowledge of the Lakeland Fells and his mountain skills made him the obvious choice for Team Leader, a position he held for thirty six years. Later he continued his association with the Team as its President. George was involved in almost one thousand incidents with the Keswick Team and in recognition of these services he was made an MBE and was awarded the Distinguished Service Certificate of the MRC.

George was interested in all aspects of Mountaineering and was an early member of the Lake District Ski Club as well as joining the Fell and Rock in 1949, being a life member.

Married and with a young family, in the nineteen fifties he opened a small shop in Lake Road, Keswick, at a time when equip-

ment for climbing and mountaineering was virtually unavailable in this country. The venture was so successful it was soon relocated to a larger premises part of which was built by George and Ashley Abraham and used as their photography shop. George Fisher pioneered the retailing and mail order supply of mountaineering equipment, importing a wide range of equipment. He sold the business at the start of the nineties to retire.

In recent years he became less able to walk on the fells which had been such an important part of his life. His knowledge of the local hills was unrivalled and he took great pleasure in recalling mountaineering experiences with his many friends. On January 10th 1999, a clear winters day, he enjoyed a flight in a light aircraft, over the fell tops of 'his' Lakeland. Shortly after returning to Carlisle Airport, George collapsed and died.

Ken Brannan

FRANK GRUNDY 1918 - 1997.

I had known Frank since we boys together. We shared an outdoor life, cycling, fishing and bird nesting from which we graduated to bird watching, thence to hill walking, getting to the hills by cycle.

We joined up with Alf Gregory and climbed in the Lakes and North Wales, so that by the outbreak of the war we had completed a good covering of the Lakeland mountains and had quite a knowledge of North Wales.

After the war Frank went skiing in Switzerland and Scotland and later, after retiring from business, toured the Scandinavian countries and America, but Scotland was his principal climbing ground when he completed the Munros. I recall one trip: we reached Altnaharra within 24 hours and put ourselves in position to ascend Ben Hope the next morning using a bothy just 50 yards off the road. When the next morning dawned the car would not start. We had just moved it about 10 yards using the starting handle (it was an Austin 10 of about 1935 vintage) when we were rescued by a

group of Estate employees going off to work. We completed Ben Hope and afterwards Klibreck. We made for the coast and eventually arrived at Lochinver. We stayed with a Mrs. Mackenzie who strongly denied any association with Compton! Mrs. Mac said she had no meat to give us. I had some steak bought on the way up in Callander. It was a magnificent steak and we asked her to cook it 'rare' but unfortunately she stewed it.

The following day we got permission from the gamekeeper to go to Suilven and Canisp. I recall going to Loch Hourn. We, Frank and I, Dick Cook and his son David arrived at Loch Quoich where we borrowed the use of an engineers' hut for the night. We intended to use a bothy en route for Loch Hourn but Dick would not descend with his car to the bothy on account of the snow. We took the path to Barrisdale where we were offered tea etc. at the gamekeeper's cottage. He put us on the right track over the hill for our return to the bothy. We arrived there about 7 p.m. and to our amazement found the best room of the bothy occupied by a group from Gordonstoun. The next morning we knocked off a couple of Munros on the north side of the road. We moved to Mallaig where Dick knew a chap who kept a cafe on the dock side. However it was closed and I suggested we should call at the Victoria Hotel where we enjoyed a magnificent tea in front of a blazing fire.

On another occasion we ascended An Teallach. Going up through cloud we saw a perfect Brocken Spectre. Oddly enough we saw it again in Wales on the way up a crag before ascending Snowdon by way of Crib Goch. I have to say that on both occasions it was in winter conditions.

Frank spent the last few years climbing with his daughter, Frances. Frank was an ideal companion on the hills.

Norman A. Baggaley

JOHN HODGSON

John's love of walking and mountains began during his schooldays at Giggleswick, in the Yorkshire Dales, where the boys were

encouraged to explore the surrounding hills (and caves), including the Three Peaks, Ingleborough, Penyghent, and Whernside. From this developed expeditions to the Lake District, where his family had a holiday house, and John finally achieved membership of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club in 1956. My first Lake District expedition (I come from Suffolk) was to the Salving House, in Borrowdale; alas, we had inadvertently chosen a maintenance weekend, and I spent the first morning washing greasy pillowcases by hand in none-too-hot water!

When our children were growing up we often rented Fell & Rock cottages – our favourite being Birkness. As the boys became older and friends joined in, whisky tended to be an important feature of the trips, together with porridge cooked overnight on top of the wood stoves. Later on John became very adventurous, and twice went on trips to the Himalayas; he returned from the second of these expeditions a stone lighter (and he was a thin man), after having lived for almost a month on only bowls of rice, eaten with the hands! After his retirement we made a memorable trek in the High Atlas, sleeping on the floors of Berber houses in villages accessible only on foot. John's love of mountains also showed itself in numerous skiing expeditions; he usually abandoned his skis on at least one day, to take a 'proper' walk up a mountain.

Not long before he died he bought a tumbledown cottage in County Kerry, surrounded by great mountains and overlooking a glorious river estuary. He climbed his last mountain on the Dingle peninsula in April 1999, a few weeks before his final illness was diagnosed.

Christine Hodgson

LORD HUNT KG KT CBE DSO

The ironic tragedy of a single great achievement is that it can seem to render the rest of life an anti-climax. That was never

a possibility with John Hunt, who died on 7 November 1998. Though he will always be inextricably linked in the memory of the public - and many climbers - with the successful Everest expedition of 1953 his 88 years were filled with adventure and service.

His leadership of the Everest expedition was initially controversial, coming about only after the original appointee, Eric Shipton, had been deposed in a way that tested the loyalties of several expedition members. A faction of the joint Everest Committee of the Alpine Club and the Royal Geographical Society, dismayed by the failure of Shipton's expedition to Cho Oyu in 1952, concluded that the great mountaineer of the 1930s was not 'a finisher' and engineered his departure. Col. John Hunt was drafted in as a 'thruster' or, in his own words, "to supply an element of military pragmatism". It says much for his management skills that the ensuing expedition was not only successful but happy.

But the unfortunate manner of his arrival should not obscure Hunt's own credentials for Everest nor his life-long passion for the mountains. Boyhood holidays had been spent in the Alps and he had some respectable climbs to his name while still at Marlborough. After Sandhurst, where he passed out first with the King's Gold Medal and the Anson Memorial Sword, Hunt, a career soldier, went to India in 1931 and while there took part in several Himalayan expeditions. On Everest, at the age of 42, he carried loads in poor weather to 27,500ft, paving the way for Hillary and Tenzing's summit success three days later. He joined the Fell and Rock in 1935, being made an Honorary Member in 1953.

War service took him to Burma and then to the Commando Mountain and Snow Warfare School before he rejoined his regiment, winning the DSO and ending the war in Crete. He left the army in 1956 and became the first secretary of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, which fitted ideally with two of his main

interests – mountains and training young people. Two of his expeditions, which he described in later FRCC Journals, were taking young people to first the Arctic and later to Greece. He also led expeditions to the Caucasus and Pamirs in what was then the USSR, where the decorated British soldier made firm friends among the Soviet mountaineers. Other expeditions included the Polish Tatras, Alaska and Greenland yet he could be just as enthusiastic about a day out in the Lakeland Fells or Welsh hills.

Outside the world of mountaineering John Hunt held a bewildering array of public positions. He was at one time or another chairman of the Parole Board, Rector of Aberdeen University, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Police in Northern Ireland, a member of the Royal Commission on the Press, President of the Council for National Parks, the Council for Volunteers Overseas and the National Association of Probation Officers and envoy to Biafra to establish the relief requirements after the war there. He was created a Life Peer in 1966, having been knighted after Everest in 1953.

Despite theses many public roles it is fitting that his place in history should come from the mountains which he loved and to which he always returned.

Terry Fletcher

R.E.H. KENNEDY M.B.E.

R. Kennedy, who died in 1997 at the age of 91, had been a member of the Fell and Rock since 1933. He was an active rock climber in the 1930s. His first climb in Cumberland was Kern Knotts Chimney, Great Gable, in 1933. Over the next few years he climbed on Dow Crags, Coniston and Raven Crag, Langdale both in summer and in snowy conditions. On an expedition to Scotland in August 1933 he and his party had a narrow escape when climbing Gardyloo Gully on Ben Nevis. There was a small rock fall which resulted in Mr. Kennedy, who was roped to two others, clasping a heavyish boulder to his chest, thereby arresting his progress either

up or down! The friend below was particularly disconcerted by this turn of events, but disaster was averted when Mr. Kennedy heaved the offending rock into space, missing his friend by a good three inches! Around this time, he also climbed in Wales on Crib Goch, Tryfan and the Glyders.

He remained a great lover of mountains and fells all his life and his family shared many hours of pleasure with him rambling in the hills of Derbyshire, the Lake District and Wales over many years.

(I am most grateful to Mr. Kennedy's daughter Ruth Backhouse for these recollections of her father. H.H.)

SYLVIA LOXAM.

On Easter Sunday, 23rd April 2000, a special lady, Sylvia Loxam died of liver cancer, aged 56. Sylvia had been a member of the Club since 1992.

Sylvia in her earlier years had been involved with her other love – that of horses. 25 years ago she purchased a young Arab Palomino Stallion called Dante, which is still alive today. She competed in both dressage and show jumping events with him, achieving a high level of success. Not without its mishaps though as she took a serious fall and badly dislocated her collar bone, an injury which was to bother her in her later climbing years.

During these horse years she managed to fit in several summer trips to the Austrian Alps for medium level walking activities, together with trips to the Lake District which she loved so much.

In 1988 she hung up her horse competition spurs and teamed up with myself to get involved in serious hill walking in this country. Her love for the hills and anything to do with the outdoor life was immediately apparent as was her spirit of 'if it is there lets go for it'. Sylvia's favourite season of the year was the winter as she was never happier than when wearing crampons

Sylvia Loxham

and having an axe in each hand on a snow and ice climb. Due to poor winters in the Lakes activities soon moved north of the border to her beloved Scotland in search of proper snow activities where she quickly became competent at Grade 3 routes.

In 1990 Sylvia joined her local Kinder Mountain Rescue Team as a way of helping other mountaineers and putting something back into the hills she loved so much. Sylvia served 6 active years on the team, her natural conversation abilities making her the ideal person to console casualties during carry-offs. During this period she was introduced into rock climbing activities which again she thoroughly enjoyed, provided the routes were not too difficult and her nails would not get damaged. By profession she was a PA to both the Managing and Financial Directors of a large engineering company so her appearance on a Monday morning after a weekends activities had to be A1, particularly the nails.

Sylvia's off hill mountaineering activities saw her in-

volved with the BMC Lancs Area Committee and in 1992 she became the Secretary of that Committee and also a representative on the BMC Committee of Management for 5 years. She was well known at the meetings for making her point on issues she felt strongly about. Sylvia soon acquired a high level of respect in the administrative side of mountaineering activities and in 1993 was part of a small working party that drew up the current Memorandum of Association of the BMC.

In 1990 she completed her first Munro, Ben Nevis, and embarked on her aim of completing them all in 2004, her 60th birthday. This would be Sylvia's way of seeing all the areas of Scotland and being able to walk the hills as well. She had achieved a total of 195 at her untimely death. Her big regret was that she had not completed An Teallach, having been turned back on three occasions due to bad weather. But on the plus side one of her biggest thrills was attending the Clubs Knoydart meet in May 1998 as co-leader. Again Sylvia's attention to detail came to the fore when on the hills as she was able to pronounce the names of the Munros, not just those that she was doing that day but any she was lucky enough to see from the summit. To Sylvia that was all part of being there.

1997 saw Sylvia elected as the Club's Meet Secretary and a year later she was elected as the Club's Secretary. Both these positions she enjoyed as it allowed her to exercise her other great pleasure in life, that of meeting and talking to people, and she was already beginning to establish a reputation as a strong ambassador for the Club and strengthening its links with the BMC.

A day on the hill was never dull in Sylvia's company as she had such a wide range of knowledge on all topics and even managed to hold in depth conversations while going up hill, though she did stop talking during her stops to take her many photographs.

Sylvia was a very caring person who was at times quite lonely and needed to be involved with people. She certainly found that with her involvement with the Club, and the last 8 years of her life were her happiest thanks to the wide circle of friends and members of the Club.

Always one of the last people on the dance floor at the AGM her voice in conversation and that distinctive laugh will be missed around the Club huts and outdoor activities. Sylvia will be a sad loss to the Club.

Sylvia had done so much for the Club in the few years of her membership: who knows what she might have achieved if she had been spared.

My thanks to all the Club members for their tremendous support that they provided to Sylvia during her short illness: rest assured it kept her going.

Epitaph.
Special people make favourite memories that are the same as mountains. They'll last for ever.

Clive R. Beveridge

DEREK HYLTON MALING

Derek Maling was born in 1923 at Corbridge, Northumberland, where his father was the owner of a large pottery. He was sent south to Felsted School in Essex, but his early walking and camping experiences were in the Cheviots and other Northumberland hills. His journal records the practical difficulties of wartime camping, such as obtaining food during rationing and the need to observe blackout regulations while cooking. In March 1940, he went on his first walking and climbing holiday in the Lake District.

In 1941, he joined the RAF, and was sent on a short course at Durham University in Physics and Maths. He then trained as a navigator and was posted to Italy. Flying in a Wellington

bomber over Yugoslavia, he was shot down over German occupied territory, but managed to evade capture and was helped by partisans to return to Italy. His flying career over, he trained as a meteorological officer and served as a forecaster for the RAF until he was demobilized in 1946.

He returned to Durham University to read for a degree in Geography and a year later embarked for Signy Island, one of the South Orkney Islands on a scientific expedition. Derek was primarily concerned with meteorology, but his interests were wide and he also made a geological map of the island and studied the glaciology. Another member of the three-man expedition was Richard Laws, whom Derek had met and climbed with in Borrowdale a few years previously, who was studying seal biology. Laws remembers the expedition as thoroughly inadequately equipped "but we had a marvellous time". Maling's sense of humour and fund of experience were invaluable. Maling returned to England after two years in the Antarctic to complete his first degree and then take a PhD in Geography at Durham.

During his RAF years, Derek Maling's walking and climbing activities had expanded in the Lake District and Scotland and he joined the Fell and Rock in 1942. Companions on a Christmas and New Year visit to Raw Head were Bentley Beetham, Lord Chorley, L.H. Pollit and T.R.Burnett. The weather that week he described as poor with wet snow, but they skinned and skied as far afield as Wasdale Head, Boot and Ennerdale. A contribution to the FRCC Journal in 1953 describes walking in Tierra Del Fuego, where he had briefly disembarked while returning from the Antarctic.

Maling continued his career at University College, Swansea, as assistant lecturer, lecturer and senior lecturer in Geography. His academic work was predominantly in cartography. He is remembered as an independent-minded individual with a great capacity for hard work. His home at Tredustan Hall in the Brecon Beacons was crammed with books and papers as well as

some items from the Signy expedition: skis, snow shoes, a sledge and clothing. Sadly his health deteriorated in later life and he suffered from arthritis. He died in 1998.

H. Harris

(I am indebted to Doug and Sylvia Brill, to Derek Maling's daughter Heather Hornung and to Dr. R. Laws for the information in this obituary)

MOLLIE HYDE PARKER

In the late 1930s Mollie and I met on Buck Pike of the Coniston Range. We were both alone, chatted, and decided to ascend Coniston Old Man and descended into the village. She was very attractive, blue-eyed, auburn-haired, and had a great sense of humour. She was kind and generous and a delightful companion. Our friendship lasted until 1998.

Mollie Hyde Parker was born at Smeetham Hall, Smeetham Hall Lane, Bulmer, Sudbury, Suffolk, on 19th March, 1908. Her father was estate agent for Kentwell Hall, Edwardstone Hall and also the family seat of Melford Hall, where she met Beatrix Potter on one of many visits there. She was a first cousin to Sir William Hyde Parker of Melford Hall and first cousin, once removed to Sir Richard, the present owner of Melford Hall.

In her early years she helped her mother and father on the family farm. She had no formal education until her early teens when, thanks to a relative in Sussex, she was privately educated. Despite having no skills and against her parents wishes, she then moved to London and found a job as a desk clerk. In the late 1930s. she joined the WAAF at the same time as her youngest brother Tony joined the RAF.

Based in the Midlands, she was climbing with friends in the Lake District almost every weekend. We were fortunate in knowing most of the Lakeland, Scottish and Welsh mountaineers. She was agile and a wonderful walker, a good

rock climber too, though latterly she preferred fell walking. She was a member of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club from 1938 and attended many meets of the Club. She seldom missed an Annual Dinner, a great gathering of members and guests, until the last years because of hip troubles.

In the late 1930s, she was climbing in the Lake District with Jack Diamond, a member of the Fell and Rock Club. Her favourite climbs were on Dow Crag, Gable, Pillar and Gimmer, where she was climbing many of the classic routes of that era. During the same period she was also climbing in North Wales. In Scotland she climbed several Munros in the Cairngorms and Lochaber regions including summer and winter ascents of Ben Nevis.

In 1940 she made a trip to climb peaks in the Swiss Alps, including the Matterhorn, and as this was at the time of the return, via Dunkirk of the expeditionary force, she was lucky (with the help of a few champagne bottles!) to find a boat back. She drove straight to the base where her brother, Tony, was stationed and saw him for the last time before he was lost. He was on a 'visual' mission, due to low cloud, in a Spitfire (without a parachute) to assess German invasion barge positions.

Mollie remained in the WAAF and was promoted to Squadron Officer and sent to Northern Ireland. On her return she spent the rest of the war in Bomber Command Headquarters and was mentioned in dispatches. After the war, she was flown in a Lancaster to find out more information about Tony, as the MOD were secretive on specific details of his mission.

After the war, in 1947/48 she resumed her climbing holidays in the Alps. She also climbed the Mönch, the Jungfrau, Wetterhorn, and Shreckhorn, the Blumlisalp, Finsteraarhorn and Balmhorn with P. Egger, a Grindelwald guide.

On her return she joined the Royal Corps of Signals in London. She was asked to stay in the Service for a short while to assist with the care and rehabilitation of returning P.O.W's. This took much longer than expected and she remain there for the rest of her

working life, under the Official Secrets Act, and during that time she helped many people, young and old, and not necessarily in the Services as she once mentioned having to find a safehouse for a Ugandan President's wife. She was awarded the MBE for these services.

All her holiday time over the years was spent climbing or walking. In 1949 she spent three months walking and camping in the Scottish Islands of Arran, Mull, Skye and the Outer Hebrides. Between 1950 to 1969 she was mountain walking in the West of Ireland, in Skye and Ross & Sutherland. In Europe she walked in Austria, Bavaria, Andalusia, Andorra and the Central Pyrenees, visited Breuil, Courmayeur and Macugnaga in Italy, where she also climbed the Gran Paradiso. She also went mountain walking in Sweden and Norway. In 1952, with a guide, she climbed Mont Blanc de Seilon, the Pigne de Arolla, and the Nadelhorn.

She was still very active in the early 1970's, walking and climbing in Sweden, Norway, and Chamonix, and spent numerous weekends mountain walking in the Lake District, North Wales and Scotland. She became a member of the Ladies Alpine Club in 1972.

Mollie loved the mountains more than anything else. The FRCC Huts were a great attraction and she stayed in them as often as she could. In later years despite her hip trouble, she spent many weekends at the Salving House at Rosthwaite, Keswick, and so was able to take gentle walks, and visit Keswick for shopping and attending functions.

She was a 'people' person – always taking an interest, in young and old alike. She died in the Walnuttree Hospital at Sudbury in Suffolk on the 14th September, 1998.

Lyna Pickering

JUNE PARKER

June was born in Didsbury in 1927 and began climbing at Liverpool University. Graham Mcphee was President of LUMC and took a great interest in members; he fired June's enthusiasm

for climbing, as also did Dorothy Pilley Richard's book *Climbing Days*. Tom Price, a contemporary of June's in the LUMC, recalls how she loved to repeat these routes.

She became a member of the Fell and Rock in 1947 though her climbing activities were soon interrupted by marriage and the birth of the first of her five children. Whilst away from mountains, her deep concern for humanity and the preservation of the environment led her into politics, including participation in the 1961 Aldermaston march – with at least one child in a push chair. Later in that decade she resumed mountaineering and now with Alan, enjoyed several holidays in the Alps climbing Disgrazia and peaks in the Bregaglia, the Dolomites and the Romsdal region of Norway.

She loved Corsica and Scotland where she enjoyed many Munros. She had a great love of the Hebrides, visiting Skye, Rum and the Outer Isles many times.

June spent most of her working life as a librarian, first in Manchester, then at Lancaster University. She had a break of two years to complete her studies, begun with the Open University, to obtain her degree at Lancaster University. When she realised there were no openings for a mature female geologist in Antarctica she returned to librarianship at the University. She was the Club Librarian from 1978 to 1988 mounting splendid exhibitions and producing another *Catalogue of the Library*.

After retirement in 1982, her second career as a writer of walking guides began. She first visited Mallorca in that year and realised its potential. With Alan, she spent several months on the island working out the best routes as well as researching its history, geology and plant life, learning both Spanish and Mallorquin. Whilst at first dismayed by Valerie Crespie Green's pre-emptive guide, they later became great friends. There was plenty of scope for two guides and June's, published in 1986, is now in its third edition. The Pollensa tourist authorities pre-

sented a silver plaque in recognition of her services. She was a member of the Outdoor Writer's Guild, contributing to several magazines. *Walking in the Algarve* was published in 1995 to be followed a year later by *25 Walks in the Western Isles*. Her meets in both Mallorca and the Algarve were always greatly enjoyed.

June's last major work was her co-editorship of *The Lakeland Fells* (1996) to which she also contributed many photographs and routes. More recently she learnt to use the internet and was proposing a website for this guide.

June had many interests including gardening, music, and cooking; she was an able painter of landscapes in both watercolours and oils. She died suddenly on 18 August 1998 whilst in hospital for surveillance of the heart problem from which she had suffered for some time. Hers was indeed a life to be celebrated and she will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Irene Farrington

LYNA PICKERING NEE KELLETT

Lyna died on 31 July 1999 aged 86. Her parents registered her as "Evelene Thomasine" to conform with the wishes of her maternal and paternal grandmothers for her to be named after them, but her parents' choice of Christian name at her birth was Lyna and thus she was called for the whole of her life.

She was born in Belfast of Barrow-in-Furness parents, who early in Lyna's life moved back to Flookburgh near Cartmel. Lyna went to school in Flookburgh and Holker and then in Barrow, when her mother moved to Barrow on the death of Lyna's father. Whilst in Flookburgh her father had encouraged her to walk for pleasure on the fells. It became a way of life, and of course eventually led to her years of service to the Fell and Rock.

From school she went to Barrow Technical College and obtained a qualification in accountancy. Her first job was as secretary to an ophthalmist, which included, as she wryly remarked, the maintenance of his car. In 1934 she obtained similar work as confiden-

tial secretary in a doctors' surgery, where she worked until she retired. The doctors in the practice jocularly called their surgery "Pill Hall". Their staff followed them and Lyna always referred to her place of work as Pill Hall. Her employment led her to become a foundation member of the Medical Secretaries Association.

Outside her work her sister and brother-in-law Joan and Alan Richards tell me that "she developed many interests, becoming quite accomplished in watercolour painting, amateur dramatics and Scottish dancing. She learned to ski and was a keen collector and avid reader of books but her greatest interest was rock-climbing". Her rock-climbing was a follow-on from her fell-walking. Apparently Lyna made use of the railway that then ran to Coniston and afforded the means of a day's walking on the Coniston fells. On one such occasion she fell in with two men walking to Dow who offered to take her climbing. They were A B Hargreaves and Eric Arnison. She accepted their invitation and thereafter was a devotee of the sport.

At that time the pre-WWII 1930s climbers were not as numerous as they are now and were known to one another in each locality. Lyna soon began climbing, not only with A B Hargreaves and Eric Arnison, but also with Bill Peascod and Jack Longland, and later with Peter Moffatt. With Bill Peascod she explored Birkness Coombe. Her favourite climb was Eagle's Nest Direct, which she would lead. She climbed mostly in the Lake District, North Wales and Scotland. Her visit to Skye on one occasion included the Cuillin Ridge and a surreptitious visit to Rum, in a week of continuous rain.

In her day, Lyna was probably one of the outstanding woman climbers. It should be remembered that today's aids had not been invented. It was the age of boots with tricouni nails, plimsolls if the rock was very dry, and manila ropes, which were heavy and stiff when wet.

Lyna joined the Club in 1938. She was Hut Meets Secretary 1944-1949, Secretary 1948-1958, Dinner Secretary 1959-

1962, Vice President 1959-1961 and Honorary Member 1969 She was in continuous office for 17 years, at a time when there was a surging interest in mountaineering after World War II. The Club was acquiring new huts: Brackenclose was already established when she first took office, but Salving House, Birkness and Raw Head Barn were still to come and were within her time of office. At that time the Secretary also undertook responsibility for the arrangements for the Annual Dinner and the maintenance of the Membership List, when there was little more office equipment than a typewriter and files.

Prior to all this activity Lyna had had two road accidents, that reflect her tenacity and courage. In 1939, returning on her motorcycle from a day on the fells she ended in Keswick Hospital for six weeks with a fractured skull. On being discharged, her doctor, in a letter to her mother, urged that "she lives a very quiet life". In wartime blackout near Lindale a horse reared on to the windscreen of her car and left a permanent scar on her forehead.

Lyna's passion for the fells impelled her to live outside Barrow. Firstly she acquired a pied- a-terre at Broughton Beck; secondly, in about 1951, she bought a cottage, High Beanthwaite, above Grizebeck with superb views over the Duddon and Coniston Fells. In 1953 she married George Pickering – a F&RCC member. Together they repaired and renovated the cottage and rebuilt 200 yards of stone wall to widen the approach road to High Beanthwaite. This work was carried out with meticulous regard for the local building vernacular.

Then misfortune came to Lyna in double measure. George died of cancer in 1973 and a year later their only child, Richard, was killed on his bicycle a few days before his 14th birthday. Her sister writes: "She soldiered on alone for 25 years, never in bitterness but often in pain and increasing disability, very reluctantly leaving Beanthwaite and her beloved hills in 1985 to live in Barrow. Always resolutely independent, refusing family and nursing home accommodation to the last, she was alert and managed her

own affairs but became very frail before dying of heart and lung failure".

This Club has been served devotedly and successfully by a succession of officers. Surely Lyna was outstanding amongst them.

In writing this obituary I wish to thank Lyna's eldest of three surviving sisters, Joan Richards, and her husband, for their help, also Peter Flerning and Jill Aldersley, who made a transcript of a recent interview with Lyna and Ruth Harland for the Oral Archives available to me. Lyna came to see me some seven years ago to ask me whether, if I did not predecease her, I would write her obituary. I had to agree to such a complimentary request from a long and old friend of my wife and myself. I regret, however, that she did not choose a member who could write adequately about her qualities and the service she gave to the Club.

Bill Kendrick

KEN RICHARDSON

Although Ken was based all his life on Tyneside, he made an early acquaintance with the Lake District through attending school at St. Bees. From there he made many half-day excursions by bike to nearby valleys, enjoyed a brisk walk and then pedalled back to school for evening prayers. These outings fuelled a love of the hills which never diminished.

After National Service Ken studied law at Newcastle University and became an active member of Kings College mountaineering club, dividing his time between climbing, social life, academic studies and working in a solicitors office. Characteristically Ken gave these matters considerable thought and developed some wonderful algorithms for assigning priorities. It was delightful to hear him debate the rival merits of two more routes on Shepherds Crag compared with the increased chance of 'scoring' by arriving early at Keswick dance.

Ken's heyday as a climber was in the late 50's and early 60's (joined FRCC in 1955, Assistant Warden at Raw Head 1960-2). His approach to rock was typically cerebral and was much influenced by Arthur Birtwistle's article, 'Thoughts on Leading Up Difficult Rock'. He became a very competent leader pushing well into the harder VS's of the time.

A spinal tumour in the 1970's ended his rock climbing, but in a twenty year period of remission he was able to enjoy hill walking and scrambling in Scotland and the Lakes, before further illness curtailed his outings to smaller hills.

Sadly this ill health deprived many members of Ken's company. He was a wonderful companion both on and off the hills.

H Harris

PETER SHOTTON

Pete Shotton died suddenly in January '99, sitting comfortably in the Stickle Barn, just about to enjoy a pint: a fitting way to go, though sadly premature, for one who delighted in doing things the neat way.

It was appropriate that he should die in Langdale. On my retirement in 1986 I was able to introduce him to the Fell and Rock and in particular to the Raw Head scene. From then until his death he spent many days in the valley which he loved in his youth, to which he returned after spells of living abroad and which he regarded as his spititual home.

I first met Pete in 1950. A mutual friend had aranged for a group of us to spend Guy Fawkes night at Stanage, bivouaking in the Hermit's Cave. Pete and I met on the train to Hathersage and by the time we got to the crag were already well acquainted. By the end of the weekend we had discovered many interests in common: music from Classical to Blues, literature from Chaucer to Steinbeck via the works of Beachcomber. We also shared that *fierce egalitarianism* which was the spirit of the times (or perhaps it was our ages),

but Pete never lost his youthful idealism. His prejudices changed with age less than anybody I know. Half a century of rising incomes and an ever-increasing consumerism has seen most of us caught up in middle-class lives: among the upmarket metal in Raw Head car park, Pete's Lada stood as a statement.

Pete was my main climbing partner in those carefree early years before Real Life impinged in the form of National Service. He was a fine steady climber who led up to HVS-Mild Extreme standard (Eliminate Girdle on Dow, F Route, Harlot's Face, Kaisegebirge Wall, Diagonal, Ivy Sepulchre and Sheaf, and a fine collection of Cloggy classics in Wales).

All were done in pumps and trailing a half weight, laid nylon rope, with perhaps four or five slings and karabiners for a 'full rack'. One climb done with Pete after our stint in the RAF stays in mind: I finished the first long pitch of Fifth Avenue on Eagle Crag, Buttermere to find the 'belay ledge' was totally without a belay. I brought Pete up and he led the next pitch so calmly and competently, no runners, as I knew he would; totally serene and un-dramatic. His motto was "if it doesn't go easily it won't go at all".

In the late 50s he went to Canada for an extended holiday and in the 60s he returned there to work on the big engineering projects for dams and hydro-electric projects of the time in Alberta and British Columbia. A serious back injury, not helped by surgery, brought him back to England in 1976 ... from the wilds of Canada to the wilds of Mallerstang.

Apart from climbing and wild places, Pete's abiding passion was for music. His intrests ranged through the classical spectrum from Monteverdi to Tippett to Blues, Folk and Rock music, from Elvis to Oasis. He read widely and deeply and was one of those rare individuals completely devoid of cultural snobbery. His formal education ended at eighteen when he left school to become an engineering apprentice: he was one year too old to benefit from the 1944 Education Act; I have often wondered what path his life would

have taken if he had been born just one year later. His father, who worked for the same engineering firm for his entire life thought that classical music was a middle-class conspiracy against the working man.

Peter was an intensely philosophical person and was as critical of the direction of late Twentieth Century culture as I am, but without my high curmudgeon quotient. Though extraordinarily self contained (he was happy to keep his own company for weeks at a time) he was highly gregarious, with a benign and inclusive approach to new acquaintances of all ages. He had a firmer grasp of the meaning of life than anyone I have ever known. I find his core belief more valid with each new absurdity: Millenium Dome, call centres, downsizing, the pay TV channels. Pete thought that most of the things that people do would be better left undone.

Terry Parker

RUTH MACFARLANE SPILSBURY

Ruth Spilsbury will be remembered by all those who knew her for her indomitable spirit, her energy and her wide interests.

Born in Annan in 1891, the eldest of eight children, Ruth graduated from Edinburgh University in 1912. Following her father's early death, she took on the responsibility for financing her siblings' further education; she taught French at the Bowerham Schools, Lancaster and, from 1916, at Oulton School, Liverpool.

As a pianist, L.R.A.M., Ruth accompanied Gilbert and Sullivan performances in Crosby where she met Harry Spillsbury, whom she married at Langdale Church in 1941. The musical partnership gave pleasure to themselves, and to Fell and Rock members when she accompanied Harry and John Hirst in lively duets at the Annual Dinner meets in Keswick. Ruth's practice of music continued into extreme old age; she finally sold her piano in her very late nineties.

Ruth loved walking and ski-mg in the mountains.In 1930

a walking tour in the Dolomites and the Tyrol took in nine huts including the Venezia and Ciampedie. She learned to rock climb in Langdale. In 1945 she joined the Fell and Rock. In later years, she and Harry attended many Scottish (Hotel) meets, until his death in 1970 on Beinn Alligin.

Apart from being Vice President 1953-1955 and President 1958-1960, Harry was renowned for his wood-working skills which he put to excellent use in the fitting out of Club property. After his marriage he was supported in his work on huts by Ruth, especially when heworked on the Glen Brittle Hut which was opened in 1965.

In spite of failing eyesight in her 90s, Ruth continued with her local walks and coped with her house and garden (with a little help when she reached 99). She even began to teach herself Italian from a copy of the Bible in that language. Eventually, aged 101, she moved to a local nursing home. Ruth died on Christmas Day 1997 in her 107th year. Her ashes were scattered at her 'Secret and Special Place' in Langdale.

Alison and Richard Williams and Audrey Plint.

MARY STARKEY

Mary Starkey, who died in September 1998, aged 94, would perhaps be little known to FRCC members, though a life member since 1932.

I first met Mary in 1975, through the ABMSAC, whose hut in Patterdale is named after Mary's husband George. It was not at the actual opening of the hut on 4th October 1975, but at that first Christmas, when she came to deliver a card to wish all well who were staying in the hut. Quiet and reserved in manner, yet interested to hear the climbing exploits of others, I knew not to underestimate this slight lady, modest in talking of her own feats.

Born Mary Files at Kearsley, near Bolton in 1904, Mary was the eldest of three children. She was educated in Bolton and then at Manchester University, graduating in chemistry. She

taught for a time and married George Starkey in 1934. Until George's death in 1974 the two climbed together in Britain and in the Alps.

Her first Alpine season was in 1933, climbing five Zermatt peaks, including the Dom on August 1st and the Matterhorn on the 5th. Mary and George visited the Alps every season after that, until the outbreak of the war prevented further travel; the Ötztal in '34, the Bernese Oberland in '35, Arolla in '36 and '37 and Chamonix in '38, when they traversed the Grepon by the Mer de Glace face, a traverse of the Dent de Requin by the Dibona-Meyer route (alleged to have been the fifth ascent) and a traverse of the Grand and Petit Drus. 1939 was the Dauphiné. They climbed together either guideless or, when members of a larger guided party, George led a separate rope with Mary an equally competent second.

After the war they returned to the Alps in 1947. With George a keen member of the ABMSAC and President of the Association from 1957 to 1959, the two tended to support those meets. However Mary, with her formidable list of Alpine climbs, had been elected to full membership of the LAC in 1939 and was soon heavily involved in that club. It was not long before she was elected on to the committee and then became Secretary from 1945 until 1959, and President in 1967.

Living near to London, first at Ilford and then at Chorley Wood, she was able to attend regularly the evening lectures of the LAC and later the AC when the two clubs amalgamated.

George's death, after an enjoyable day on the Fells near Patterdale with Mary, ended the mountaineering partnership and Mary became more involved in the Church and W.I. She remained active and into her eighties travelled to the USA, Iceland and Norway.

Known locally as 'the old lady who walked everywhere', I remember her as a kind, self-effacing lady, part of a unique family treble: a younger brother, Bobby Files, President of the

Fell and Rock, a husband President of the ABMSAC and herself President of the Ladies Alpine Club.

Suzanne Strawther

J. G. THOMAS

Jimmy Thomas died on 17th July 1998 at the age of 79. He was found to have leukaemia in 1996 and although treatment brought remissions from this cancer, he eventually succumbed to a lung infection. It was characteristic of Jimmy that during a remission he climbed all the 3,000ft. mountains in Snowdonia. He regarded life over 70 as not only living on borrowed time, but believed that any goodly experience thereafter was a bonus.

He was a native of Barrow-in-Furness and grew up there. From school he sat one of the open competitive public examinations for entry to the Civil Service. He was successful and was posted to Scotland in the Customs & Excise. World War II soon cut short his tenure there and took him to the Middle East in the R.A.F., where he claimed he had an easy war. By this time his love of mountaineering, and for the Scottish Highlands in particular, ran deeply. He was a member of the Etchachan Mountaineering Club while living and working in Aberdeen and he joined the Fell & Rock in 1947 following demobilisation. He returned to the Customs & Excise and for a while was on detached duty in the North West of England before being posted to Liverpool. Whilst there he climbed in the Lake District, but also and more often in North Wales. His companions in the former were Peter Moffat and in the latter the late Dr George Manson, who was a hospital medical consultant in the Liverpool area and who was also a member of the Fell & Rock. Peter recounts that he and Jimmy climbed the 'classics' regularly, including Scafell Central Buttress. Meanwhile Jimmy was keen to leave Liverpool and was fortunate to be able to transfer to Porthmadog in close proximity to all the mountainous areas of North Wales. He lived in a house in Borth-y-gest with Pip Styles as a near neighbour. The two climbed together and spent

one holiday in the Pyrenees, which was later featured in Styles' book *Climbing in the Pyrenees*. Whilst at Porthmadog Jimmy was secretary to a local climbing club. By this time Jimmy had married a Welsh-speaking girl from Llanwrst and he himself had learnt to 'get by' in Welsh. His work later took him to live in Holyhead, whence he retired to Llandegfan, Menai Bridge, with its glorious views of the mountains of Snowdonia.

In retirement he made almost weekly visits to the mountains for walking, usually solos. All this time there were regular visits to Scotland, where he again climbed the peaks, mostly alone, staying in hostels.

Encouraged by a master at school to value literature, Jimmy not only read widely, he also acquired books and when he came to leave his large house in Holyhead for a smaller one in Llandegfan there were many books for sale and giving away. As well as reading he enjoyed classical music and kept a store of 'discs' to be played on an up-to-date hi-fl apparatus. He was a kindly, soft-spoken man who observed his fellows humorously and tolerantly. He was a very faithful friend; only within a month or two before his death he had driven to Dorset to visit an old ex-R.A.F. colleague. His friends will miss him greatly. Thereby they can measure the greatness of bereavement felt by his wife, Elizabeth, his three children and his grandchildren. To them we give our condolences.

William Kendrick

JOAN P. WHALLEY

Joan Whalley was born in Waddington, W. Yorkshire. In 1926, she trained as a physical education teacher, and held teaching posts in England and Switzerland. Later she became a lecturer in P.E. at St. Katherine's College, Liverpool. Her career thus complemented her love of outdoor sports, mountains and the countryside. She became a very proficient rock climber, and joined the Fell and Rock in 1945.

Joan was a close friend of Joan Tebbut and Phyl

Wormell, and frequent climbing visits were made with them to the Lakes, in particular to Raw Head. There were also holidays in Scottish mountains. Her climbing partners included Rusty Westmoreland and Morley Dobson. In addition to the Fell and Rock, she was a member of the Ladies Alpine Club and the British Ski Club: she continued with frequent skiing visits to Arosa until she was over 80.

In 1969, she retired to live permanently in Windermere. By this time she had given up climbing, but continued to enjoy walks in the fells, often with Priscilla Johnson. She also became very active in the local community, as a member of St. Martin's Church, with various charities and, as a reflection of her love of English literature, at Rydal Mount. She is remembered as a generous and helpful neighbour to the elderly, even when well over 80 herself.

Joan Whalley died in January 1999 at the age of 91.

H Harris

RON WORMALD

Ron Wormald died suddenly in December 1999. He joined the Club in 1964 and was Assistant Warden at Beetham Cottage from 1979-1994.

Ron lived and worked in Kendal for most of his life and played an energetic part in many outdoor activities. He was a member of the Kendal Mountain Rescue team in the early days and was active in Lakeland YHA and subsequently for the National body, on which he played an important modernizing role. He was one of the first to become a Voluntary Warden of the Lake District National Park and over the years was a keen worker in all types of Park activity.

For many years, Ron was a leader for Ramblers Holidays and in retirement spent many weeks every year leading walking holidays abroad, especially in France and Morocco. However it is for his work as Ramblers Association Footpath Secretary for the Lake District National Park that he will be best re

membered by many. His dedication and attention to detail had a significant effect on the footpath network of the area.

Ron was a serious man, a music lover and a keen Scottish dancer and is missed by many friends.

Irene Farrington

LEGACIES AND GIFTS

Marjorie Alferoff - donation of bench for Birkness

Bill and Lesley Comstive - donation of bench for Brackenclose

Molly Hyde Parker - donation towards landscaping at Waters Cottage

Jane Spreadborough - donation of barometer for Rawhead Barn

OFFICERS OF THE CLUB 1998 –1999

President	Dave RHODES
Vice-Presidents	Stephen PORTEUS
	David STATON
	Jim SUTCLIFFE
Secretary	Mrs Sylvia LOXAM
Treasurer	David MacGILLIVRAY
Membership Secretary	Paul EXLEY
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Meets Secretary	Adrian WISZNIEWSKI
Huts Secretary	Ken JACKSON
Hut Wardens: *Beetham Cottage*	Richard COLLIER
Birkness	Dave LONG
Brackenclose	Mark SCOTT
Raw Head	John LEIGH
Salving House	Roy BUFFEY
Waters Cottage	Barry CHISLETT

Committee Members:

Clive Beveridge	Andrew Duxbury	Gordon Higginson
Lynn Breen	Beverley Field	Richard Hogan
Andrew Carlin	Tony Field	Sue Logan
Neil Dowie	John A Hartley	Stephen Porteus

MEETS 1999

	8/9 January	Beetham Cottage	Peter Simcock
C	22/23 January	Raw Head	Jason Baggaley
	5/6 February	Raw Head (Prospective memb's)	Tony Field
	12/13 February	Waters Cottage	Steve and Bev Field
	19/20 February	Birkness (Alpine Planning)	Chris Webb
	26/27 February	Ceilidh (The Borrowdale Institute)	The President
	5/6 March	Waters Cottage	Dave Staton
	19/20 March	Salving House	Liz Kirk Snowdon
	28 March / 1 April	C.I.C. Hut	Gary Hill
	1/4 April	Brackenclose	Caroline Whitehead
	16/17 April	Raw Head (Joint Karabiner)	Bob Anderson
	1/7 April	France (Camping)	Howard Lancashire
M	23/24 April	Beetham Cottage	Richard Collier
W	26/28 April	High Moss (Duddon Valley)	Bill and Lesley Comstive
	30 Apr / 3 May	Raw Head (Joint CC)	Pip Hopkinson
	30 Apr / 3 May	Scottish Camping - Arran	Steve and Bev Field
W	4/6 May	Waters Cottage	John Snowdon
	7/8 May	Birkness	Paul Tweddle
	22/28 May	Hebridean Sailing	Bill and Lesley Comstive
C	14/15 May	Birkness	Sue and Rab Carrington
	22/29 May	Glen Brittle, Skye	George Wright
	22/28 May	Scottish Hotel Meet - Ullapool	Roy and Norma Precious
	29 May / 4 June	Scottish Camping - Newtonmore	Vee Withers
	29 May / 4 June	Birkness (Family Meet)	Simon Adams
	11/13 June	London Section - North Yorks	Anne Hartley
M	11/12 June	Birkness	Dave Long
W	14/17 June	Glan Dena	Stan Vickers
	18/19 June	Brackenclose	Pam Foord
	25/26 June	Raw Head (Family meet)	Ann and Ken Daykin
W	29 June / 1 July	Raw Head	Sue Logan
D	2/3 July	The Yewdale Hotel, Coniston	The Vice Presidents
	9/10 July	Brackenclose (Prosp. Members)	Niel Dowie
	16/17 July	Raw Head (BMC Youth Meet)	Dave Staton
	16/17 July	Glan Dena (Joint M.A.M.)	Dave Pearce
	26/28 July	Birkness	Peter Wiliams
	July/August	Alpine Meet	Chris Webb
	31 July/ 7 August	Brackenclose (Family meet)	Pat Higginson
	13/14 August	Beetham	Eric Wright

W	24/26 August	Brackenclose	Inken Blunk
	27/29 August	Birkness (Family Meet)	John and Kath Harvey
	27/29 August	Wales (Camping)	Roberta Cameron
C	3/4 Sepember	Raw Head	Peter Johnston
W	13/15 Sepember	Salving House	Grahaeme Lauder
	17/18 September	Yorkshire Dales (Camping)	Dave Dowson
M	17/18 September	Raw Head	John Leigh
M	24/25 September	Waters Cottage	Barry Chislett
D	24/26 September	Beetham Cottage - L'dn Section	Paul Roberts
M	1/2 October	Brackenclose	Mark Scott
M	8/9 October	Salving House	Roy Buffey
	15/16 October	Derbyshire	John & Maggie Skelton
D	5/6 November	Shap Wells (A.G.M.)	The President
	12/13 November	Brackenclose	Reg Atkins
C	26/27 November	Salving House	Marion and Bernard Wright
	3/4 December	Birkness	Deborah Long
	17/18 December	Beetham Cottage	Fiona and Dave de Courcy
	31 Dec/1 Jan 2000	Raw Head (Joint CC)	Pip Hopkinson

C = Committee Meeting:
D = Dinner:
M = Maintenance Meet:
W = Mid Week Meet

OFFICERS OF THE CLUB 1999 - 2000

President	Dave RHODES
Vice-Presidents	Stephen PORTEUS
	Alan ROWLAND
	Jim SUTCLIFFE
Secretary	Mrs Sylvia LOXAM
Treasurer	John BARRETT
Membership Secretary	Paul EXLEY
Joint Journal Editors	Doug ELLIOTT
	John HOLDEN
Chronicler	John BURROWS
Guide Books Secretary	Ron KENYON
Guide Books Editor	Stephen REID
Librarian	Peter OSBORNE
Assistant Librarian	Harry ROBINSON
Archivist	Iain WHITMEY
Oral Archivist	Miss Jill ALDERSLEY
Dinner Secretary	Mrs. Pam PULFORD
Meets Secretary	Adrian WISZNIEWSKI
Huts Secretary	Ken JACKSON
Hut Wardens: *Beetham Cottage*	Richard COLLIER
Birkness	Dave LONG
Brackenclose	Mark SCOTT
Raw Head	John LEIGH
Salving House	Roy BUFFEY
Waters Cottage	Barry CHISLETT

Committee Members:

Andrew Carlin	Beverley Field	Hilary Robertson
Neil Dowie	John A Hartley	Jane Sanderson
Dave Dowson	Richard Hogan	Phil Tomaszewski
Andrew Duxbury	Sue Logan	Chris Webb

MEETS LIST 2000

	31 Dec / 1 Jan	Raw Head (Joint C.C.)	Pip Hopkinson
	7/8 January	Beetham Cottage	David Killick
C	14/15 January	Raw Head	John Ratcliffe
	21/22 January	Birkness (Prospective Members)	Jane Sanderson
	28/29 January	Bracken Close	Paula & Mike Carter
	4/5 February	Salving House	Karl Nelson
	11/12 February	Waters Cottage	Dave Bodecott
	18/19 February	Birkness (Alpine Planning)	Stewart Grant
	25/26 February	Ceilidh (Borrowdale Institute)	President
	27 Feb / 2 Mar	C.I.C Hut	Phil Tomaszewski
	3/4 March	Beetham (Austrian Planning)	Rod Smith
	10/11 March	Waters Cottage	Inken Blunk
W	12/16 March	Salving House	John and Barbara Hitch
	24/25 March	Raw Head	Jeff Harrison
	31 Mar / 1 April	Brackenclose	Tony & Suzanne Strawther
W	2-6 April	High Moss (Duddon Valley)	Bill and Lesley Comstive
	7/8 April	Birkness	John Smith (Buxton)
W	9/13 April	Brackenclose	Grahaeme Lauder
M	14/15 April	Beetham Cottage	Richard Collier
	14/28 April	France (Camping) – Gorge du Tarn	Sue Logan
	21/24 April	Waters (Easter)	Andrew Duxbury
	29 April / 5 May	Galloway	Pauline Sweet
	29 Apr / 1 May	Ynys Ettws (Joint C.C.)	Pip Hopkinson
	13/20 May	The Killin Hotel	Maureen Linton
	15/20 May	Isle of Rhum	Ralph Henderson
C	19/20 May	Birkness	Tim Wood
	26 May / 2 June	Scottish Camping (Ullapool)	Stan Vickers
F	26 May / 3 June	Birkness (Family Meet)	Kevin Barrett
	27 May / 3 June	Glen Brittle, Skye	George Wright
	21/26 May	Knoydart (White House)	Jeff & Lynne Breen
M	9/10 June	Birkness	Dave Long
	9/11 June	Montreuil, France (London Section)	Annie Graal
W	11/15 June	Glan Dena	Dave Bateman
	16/17 June	Raw Head (Prospective Members)	Sarah Lewis
	17/21 June	Sustrans , Scottish Offroad Cycling	Tim Pickles
W	18/22 June	Raw Head	Sue Logan
	23/24 June	Salving House	Nick Millward
F	23/24 June	Raw Head (Family Meet)	Hillary & George Hartley
	23 Jun / 7 July	Austria (Camping)	Rod Smith
W	25/29 June	Beetham Cottage	Roy & Norma Precious

D	30 Jun / 1 July	The Yewdale Hotel, Coniston	The Vice Presidents
	7/8 July	Salving House (Joint Rucksack Club)	Inken Blunk
	14/15 July	Raw Head (BMC Youth Meet)	Ron Kenyon
	14/15 July	Glan Dena (Joint M.A.M.)	Dave Pierce
	21/22 July	Raw Head	Andy Carlin
	8 July / 5 Aug	Alpine Meet	Stewart Grant
F	28 July / 5 Aug	Bracken close (Family Meet)	Niel McAllister
	11/12 August	Beetham cottage	Sylvia Loxam
	18/19 August	Raw Head	Carol & John Barrett
	25/28 August	Wales (Camping)	Paul Selley
	25/28 August	Brackenclose (Joint C.C.)	Pip Hopkinson
F	25/28 August	Birkness (Family Meet)	Pat and Gordon Higginson
W	3/7 September	Birkness	Bill Smith
C	8/9 September	Raw Head	Michele Hart
M	15/16 September	Raw Head	John Leigh
M	22/23 September	Waters Cottage	Barry Chislett
D	22/24 September	Salving House (London Section)	David Hill
	29/30 September	Birkness	Pauline Richards
M	6/7 October	Brackenclose	Mark Scott
	6/7 October	Waters Cottage	Richard Morgan
M	13/14 October	Salving House	Roy Buffey
	13/14 October	Ty Powdwr (Joint Karabiner Club)	Bob Anderson
F	20/28 October	Beetham Cottage (Half Term Family Meet)	Matt Ellis
D	3/4 November	Shap Wells (A.G.M.)	The President
	10/11 November	Brackenclose	Chris Scola
	17/18 November	Raw Head	Chris Gostridge
C	24/25 November	Salving House	Neil McNabb
W	26/30 November	Waters Cottage	Sheila Croft
	1/2 December	Birkness	Dave Dowson
	15/16 December	Beetham Cottage	Gordon Orr
	29 Dec / 2 Jan	Waters Cottage	Jane Sanderson

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EVENING ROCK CLIMBING MEETS – 2000

Date	Crag Venue	Grid Ref.	Meet Leader (telephone number)	Pub afterwards
April				
26	Birkrigg	(282747)	Les Shore (01229 587514)	The Globe
May				
3	Shepherds Crag	(263185)	Dave Bodecott (017684 83388)	The Pheasant, Keswick
10	Humphrey Head	(390740)	John Holden (015395 30095)	The Engine, Cark
17	St Bees	(940145)	Chris Sice (01946 692046)	Lowther Arms, Sandwith
24	Scout Scar	(486915)	Nick Wharton (01539 727014)	Punch Bowl, Underbarrow
31	Castle Rock/Raven	(322197)	Steve Reid (017687 72193)	Kings Head, Thirlspot
June				
7	Twistleton Crag	(716763)	Hilary Robertson (015395 63518)	Hill Inn
14	Buckbarrow/Wasdale	(135057)	Tim Wood (01946 810574)	The Strands
21	Cathedral Quarry	(314028)	Rob Matheson (01229) 472538	Three Shires Inn
28	Black Crag/Wrynose	(274037)	Max Biden (01539 821743)	The Three Shires
July				
5	Wallowbarrow Crag	(222967)	Brian Cosby(01229 869146)	New Inn, Seathwaite
12	Reecastle Crag	(273176)	Phil Rigby (01228 548729)	The Pheasant, Keswick
19	Hodge Close	(316017)	Dominic Donnini (01539 729126)	Black Bull, Coniston
26	Swindale	(515127)	Ron Kenyon (01768 864728)	Crown Inn, Bampton Grange
August				
2	Burnt Crag	(243991)	Keith Phizacklea (01229 812104)	New Inn
9	Raven Crag/Langdale	(285064)	Dave Staton (01539 734880)	O.D.G
16	Black Crag/Brrwdale	(263172)	Bill Freeland(017687 79667)	The Pheasant
23	Chapel Head Scar	(443862)	Rick Graham (015394 41127)	Derby Arms
30	Trowbarrow	(481758)	Pete/Cherie Chapman (01539 728070)	