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Edited by Doug Elliott and John Holden



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EDITORIAL

The word intrepid is frequently used to describe those that go to the mountains for sport and recreation, and there is much debate as to why they do so. Often, although the participants themselves are introspective, they are not reluctant to put thoughts into writing. It has been stated previously that very few activities spawn such a huge volume of literature as does climbing and mountaineering. There is a view that the value of mountain writing increases as a geometric progression related to the increasing height of the mountain and/or the greater the degree of difficulty of an ascent. Rubbish! If this were so then with the highest mountain climbed by many routes, and with the extreme grades of modern climbing there would be nothing of interest to narrate.

In this 2002 edition of the Journal our FRCC members have continued to produce quality writings bringing excitement and enjoyment, showing concern and curiosity, and providing records and references. From a qualitative viewpoint the Editors trust that readers acknowledge the degree of excellence matches the general high standards of previous Journals. From a quantity viewpoint FRCC members have again fulfilled the prime desire to have sufficient commendable material. The value and variety of this material clearly shows FRCC members as intrepid and introspective.

For this edition there has been an improved response to the Editors' efforts to identify subjects and to target authors for contributions. However, when it comes to writing, FRCC members prefer to recount experiences from far away places and there is a dearth of articles relating to the Lake District. A number of suggestions have yet to come to fruition and these will be pursued, particularly as efforts are directed towards a Centenary Journal for 2006. In the meantime the Editors

thank all contributors to this Journal. In so doing they exhort other to convert memories to words, to express opinions, to make suggestions, and to maintain records.

The FRCC Journal is a vehicle for members to inform, to influence and to inspire. There are no limitations due to mountain height or difficulty, and there need be no limits due to geography. Our members will continue to visit mountains in every part of the world, but we are the Fell & Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District. Though small, this is a splendid and spectacular area, it has an eventful history, it is the focus for a present active membership and the future lies partly in our hands. Intrepid, introspective, or otherwise – there is a great deal still to be written.

In seeking articles Editors have raised questions – what is the latest thinking on mountain education, climbing ethics, guide book strategies, and much more. Editors may have evaded responsibilities by claiming that our Journal is the work of members – and so it is – but Editors also recognise needs to strengthen arrangements in such areas as Book Reviews and to streamline measures for such as Climbs Old & New. Comments and criticisms are welcome. So are contributions.

Doug Elliott

John Holden

AN INTRIGUING FAILURE

David Craig

Really it's quite weird, what we do. On Thursday I spent an hour and a half spreadeagled on a mass of wet, mossy rock with my life depending on a piece of alloy a centimetre square and half a centimetre thick while my toes and fingers tried at full stretch to keep their grip on two-inch ledges festooned with moist plant-life. The day before I'd been quite normal, shopping for cauliflower and spring onions at the supermarket, playing bowls with three other retired people. The day after I was correcting an article for a poetry magazine and phoning my son in London. On Thursday I was inching my way to bare safety on a route called Pollux at the wet end of Black Crag, Dovedale.

Usually I take climbing for granted. It's how I want to live – amongst nature – and the balancing and reaching and pulling-up are what the body seems made for. What jolted my vision of rock into new focus was that the crucial part of the day was spent down-climbing – about ninety feet on a so-called Hard V. Diff.

The new (1987) Eastern Craggs guide is jauntily positive about Black Crag: 'its vegetated appearance is off-putting at first sight ... and although the routes to the right of centre tend to be wet, they are not unduly spoiled by this. The climbing is good and the routes deserve greater popularity.' The old (1969) guide is more guarded: 'the ridge behind it is flat-topped and boggy and the routes at the right end take the drainage from this area ... just right of the centre, there are some more grassy routes, often wet.' Is this because, these days, we go in more for promotion, and what is being written about must be presented as great, top of the range, and the consumer must be 'reassured'? At all events, after a wet spring and early summer,

the crag was sopping. Because it is a jungle of ferns, bilberry, juniper, heather, and grass, it holds the water in the dense root-mat of all those flowers and bushes and releases it slowly down the rocks – which are blotched with lichen up to half their surface area.

So why go there? Because it was new to me, and only slightly known to my climbing partner, Chris Culshaw. And because the routes are ‘better than they look’, etc. etc. And because Dovedale is a place of perfect beauty, folding between steep slopes adorned with great tabular boulders. The ashes and hazels are like flocks of furred green creatures grazing up the slopes until they give way to the darkly needled thickets of juniper. Bright threads of beck and waterfall pulse in the seams of the fellsides. And the great crag at the head of it all houses Westmorland’s Route and Extol in its giant elephant brain.

The left or western half of Black Crag is made of short walls and spikes with a Pavey roughness. The rock is clean because it stands proud of the herbage. As you pull up Bilberry Rib, your fingers hook time after time onto nicely serrated edges and apexes. It’s steep and the moves up the short faces are quite technical – about as comfortable and as tricky as, say, Troutdale Pinnacle in Borrowdale, so why is it graded only Diff. and not, say, Mild Severe? But never mind the grades, for the time being.

So we paddled down the steep bog that flanks the crag and went for Pollux on the right, the route the guides call ‘interesting’. A slippery adjective. A slippery crag. The one clear-cut thing about it was the pedestal from which you start, a square-topped little pillar on which you pull up and from which you embark on the fine old English jungle. The 1987 guide does use this word, so why were we so cocky? It must be the elation of exploring, like Jim Fawcett in Amazonia. I

knew roughly where we were aiming, an alleged groove. Grooves, I've found, are vague features which disappear as you get nearer them, leaving only their smile. And serious navigation was fading fast as I followed the only sequence of holds and protection points that seemed to offer amongst holdless bulging slabs freckled darkly with lichen, grassy joints which turned out blind when I broddled them out and exposed their glistening innards, heather tussocks with two-foot stems which did occasionally mask small, earthy ledges.

I said 'protection points'. I found a decent slot for a small hex at 25 feet, then nothing until I arrived at a platform kneedeep in bright green grass at what may or may not have been the end of pitch 2. Probably not. I may well have strayed off rightwards. The platform was a haven and I went for it in a state of edgy thankfulness. It was about 90 feet up. It would obviously provide some sort of security.

Not all that much. The blind quality of this end of the crag was almost complete. No joints deepened into cracks. No rocks separated into flakes. Any holes or pockets were insignificant dimples. I probed and delved. A growthy crack, once I'd spent ten minutes digging it out, widened downwards, not upwards, and every size of nut slithered out. In the end I established a No. 2 Rock, sideways, in a rough-edged slot and yanked my hardest on it. It held. I extended it and prepared to move on up. A pair of footholds gained me six feet. Bridged, I stared upwards, and saw no groove, no positive holds, only a shallow valley between wet bulges which you might have fancied padding up in dry conditions – not today, not this year, not above that run-out and that little sideways-sprouting wire.

Hoarsely shouted conference with Chris. Should he untie, pull the rope through, and throw it me from the top (where "Belays are hard to find")? I'm too far from the top and the

crag is much too overgrown for a clear throw. I'll have to downclimb.

The moves aren't hard. And this is only Hard V.Diff. – isn't it? Each 2 x 6-inch ledge looks impossibly far away as I stretch for it with my toes. If only I could grow longer, like a slug! As I peer downwards, it's oddly hard to estimate height or distance. Gradually I discover, and don't altogether believe, that the points of rock below are always nearer than they look. Still I feel a little spider wafting into space on the end of a frail thread, or possibly a shipwrecked man as the boat turns turtle and he must crawl backwards down the hull, trying to cling by his fingertips to the rivets.

At mid-point I have to thrust my feet through springy heather clumps to rediscover the hidden earthy ledge. Further down Chris can start to talk my toes into slots invisible below little eaves. I can even adjust my one piece of protection, substituting an ordinary krab for the more expensive screw-gate – because all the gear, such as it is, will have to be left in-situ. On firm – well, spongy – ground again, we have a giggly reunion and I find I'm a bit shaky, as I've never been after such epics as I've had, on Harlot Face, Castle Rock, or Cascade on Pavey East, or even Snoopy on Mainreachan Buttress, Achnashellach. It was the forced downward moving that did it, the unnatural spooling backward of the film, the continuous series of moves downward during which the hands couldn't exert full leverage while at same time the feet hadn't yet lodged.

Of course I brought this ordeal, this intriguing failure, on myself. I'd like to have been prepared for it by a more realistic grading than Hard V. Diff. Pollux is roughly as hard as Stoa's Crack on Pavey, which gets Hard Severe. And talking of Pavey, why is Crescent Slabs only Severe when the 'oblique traverse into a shallow groove' on pitch 2 is delicate

4b? And why is Crescent Climb a Moderate and a 'good mountaineering route' when the guts of it is 200 feet of clean Diff. rock and the 'pleasant traverse' is thinnish for the feet and would scare the daylights out of most beginners? My point is that the guidebook sections on the easier routes often simply repeat the grades, and often the very sentences, from earlier guides. Too often this perpetuates old mistakes or misperceptions. Surely the older, easier climbs deserve as careful attention and rethinking as the newer, harder ones?

I don't think it's a case of an ageing climber starting to find things difficult. I followed an E1 fluently enough on Mingulay three years ago, and I wasn't fazed more recently on Dow Crag with Dick Renshaw when we got lost on the 'A' Buttress section of the girdle and had to climb out on unknown rock. Of course grades are subjective, not measurable. They are an agreed code, with numbers defining technical difficulty and adjectives defining how we experience the moves. On those counts Pollux should score harder on the words than on the numbers, because the moves and the angle aren't desperate while the amount of blank rock, the lack of protection, and the besetting wetness make it more formidable than Hard V. Diff. It is about as technically demanding as Dandle Slabs on Buckbarrow, Longsleddale, or Route One on White Ghyll Slabs, or Suaviter on Grey Crag, Birkness Combe, to name but three Severes, and it is a lot less clean than they are. Maybe the best way to tackle the jungly section of Black Crag, Dovedale, would be to rope down from some boulder among the summit bogs and hang comfortably while enjoying its marvellous cladding of conifers and broadleaved trees, and ferns and flowers and grasses.

The Cuillin Ridge on Skye is often considered one of the most challenging group of mountains in the British Isles and, as a consequence, much has been written about it. There are many reports of the fastest traverse credited for many years to Eric Beard for his 1967 achievement. Andy Hyslop improved upon this in 1984 with just over 4 hours. Others including Martin Moran reduced this to less than 4 hours with Andy Hyslop returning in 1994 to regain his record of close to 3½ hours. There have been extensions to the standard ridge traverse and in 1999 Rob Woodall completed the Cuillin round, which, in addition to the main ridge, added the outliers and all the Red Cuillin overlooking Glen Sligachan in less than 24 hours. In 2000, Yiannis Tridimas added a peak to Rob Woodall's round and reduced the time by over 2 hours down to 21 hours 22 minutes. The following account can perhaps best be considered as the slowest Cuillin Ridge traverse in that it took 25 years to achieve, albeit close to 9 hours on the day.

My first visit to Skye was in 1976 with three friends, two of whom were members of the Edinburgh-based Jacobites Mountaineering Club. The idea was for the 2 mountaineers to get Heather and I along the Skye Ridge. Without knowing the implications, this sounded like a challenging day in the 'hills'. Being the old days, with reliance on the ferry, driving from Birmingham on a Friday afternoon meant I was too late to cross that day. After a night in the car, I caught the first ferry and was at Glenbrittle campsite to meet the others in morning sunshine. The plan was to leave a car at Sligachan to be available for us at the end of the day. However, as the prospect of an early start was not available, we decided to do an initial reconnaissance and go for an early start on the Sunday.

We had a marvellous time 'playing' on ropes and experiencing my first abseil somewhere around the Basteir Tooth. This whetted the appetite for the real thing the next day. As is often the case on Skye, we awoke to rain and cloud with no prospect of improvement so we cut our losses and retreated to the mainland for a less challenging outing on the hills.

The following spring, we decided to plan a repeat attempt. Although we were all ready early on Saturday, the weather was not, so it was an even earlier retreat to the mainland where good conditions prevailed and I achieved my first ascent of the Ben (Nevis), (which I have now been up scores of times including 4 times in a matter of months last year).

Careers moved on and it was August, 1982 before I next found myself on Skye. This time, it was at the JMCS Hut at Coruisk with Paddy Buckley, who had an intimate knowledge of the Ridge gained over many years. We had a warm-up day on the South Glen Shiel Ridge en route, which nearly ended the expedition. A stumble caused me to faint and I was seen as a twitching mass, scantily clad, on a summer evening a few hours from roadside help. Fortunately, within minutes, I recovered and we were able to resume our journey. Eventually, we reached Coruisk via the Bad Step, taking a quick visit up Bla Bheinn on the way. Sadly, we had left the fine weather on the mainland.

Each day, we went onto the Ridge from Coruisk ever hopeful. Most of the time, I didn't know where I was, where I was going or where I had been. However, I did make notes of our routes each evening and filed them away for posterity. I do remember going up the Dubh Slabs, being helped by a rope somewhere on the Ridge between Gars-bheinn and Sgurr Alasdair. Some hours were spent below Sgurr Mhic Choinnich sheltering in the hope of better things before descending towards Glen Brittle and taking the coastal path back to Coruisk. It

was this visit that made me want to go back to enjoy the Ridge in the conditions of my one fine day on that first occasion.

A fourth visit in 1991 was strictly for walking. With a friend who was fearful of heights, the most challenging event was the tricky reverse from Clach Glas, which we had thought would provide an interesting route up Bla Bheinn without appreciating what this entailed. In fact, our descent proved much more difficult than had we proceeded (I now know).

I then began Munro 'bagging' and realised that to accomplish the Skye Munros that I had not 'got in the bag', I needed some help. Having by then joined the F.R.C.C., I thought the ideal way would be to join the Club's Annual Meet in Glen Brittle. Thus, in May, 1997, I found myself with 9 men, whom I had never met before, with occasional visits from Jill Aldersley, who was staying elsewhere, and a visit from Angela Soper.

Most of us, having spent the Friday night at Water's Cottage, arrived early on the Saturday afternoon. Jeremy Whitehead, Paul O'Reilly, Ralph Henderson, Chris Fitzhugh and myself and a few others sauntered up to Coire Lagan to get a better view of the Ridge. We thought of going a little further, and a little further, eventually reaching to the north of Sgurr Mhic Choinnich. At this point, I mentioned I was not very good at reversing and one of the hardened climbers in the group suggested we had better turn back. However, he was outvoted and on we went to the summit. We arrived back later than planned to be admonished by our Meet Leader, George Wright, for not letting anyone know where we had gone.

The big challenge for me was going to be the Inaccessible Pinnacle. Bill Herbert, along with Stan Vickers for support, nobly offered to take the two Munro baggers up the 'In Pin'. We were ably advised by that great source of knowledge of the Cuillin, Charles Rhodes, who was in residence as

the Warden of Glenbrittle Hut, to take a scenic route up Coire na Banachdich. We missed the route at one point and I chickened out of a reversing situation to meet the others higher up the slope. The clear blue skies with which we had started had disappeared and by the time we reached the 'In Pin' we were in full body waterproofs. We then descended to the south end and got our harnesses on and joined the queue. Bill ably led us up and I was in the middle of the two men gingerly climbing what seemed like a broad but greasy pole while the rain came down and the mists swirled around us. I actually found this helpful as it meant I couldn't see what was below. Eventually reaching the top, we then queued to abseil off. We watched a guided group with Gerry Ackroyd being pulled up and let down the 'short end', during which Gerry was ringing up his wife for the next day's weather forecast. This was an exhilarating and all too short experience. Stan was waiting with hot drinks to warm us up before we descended to Glen Brittle.

The next day, different groups formed and set off on their varied expeditions. I teamed up with Peter Dyson from Swaledale Mountaineering Club, who regularly came as a guest to this Meet, and we did an anticlockwise circuit over Sgurr Alasdair via the Bad Step and thence via Collie's Ledge to Sgurr Mhic Choinnich. I was then tutored on the finer points of scrambling up An Stac when Peter felt it prudent to keep me on the end of a rope. We then headed back from Sgurr na Banachdich.

Tuesday was another wet and windy day when Ralph announced his intention to look for a second time for Sgurr Dubh Mor, having failed to find it on an earlier visit in bad conditions. I considered that conditions were not fit for man nor beast to be out alone so offered to go in support. I had been there before via the Dubh Slabs from Coruisk and was attracted by an alternative route. We skirted around and up to

Coir' a' Ghrunnda, en route to which we had magnificent views of the Isle of Rum. However, by the time we reach Loch Coir' a' Ghrunnda, a gale was in progress and the water was being blown uphill. We reached the main ridge in mist and, heads down, set off south-easterly looking for the accessory ridge. A minor deviation found us moving down towards Coruisk so, huddled behind the rocks, guide books came out and we relocated, climbing back onto the main ridge, aiming off a bit further on. Visibility was probably less than 10 metres and great cliff faces, or so it seemed, kept approaching us. On one large buttress, we were initially relieved to find two others enabling us to ask if that was the route up to Sgurr Dubh Mor. After a few hastily exchanged and heated words between themselves, it transpired they had thought they were themselves on the main ridge and they headed back from the way we had come, leaving us to our own devices. I did not like the idea of the greasy rock face ahead so we skirted it and found another, seemingly near vertical rock face. There was a potential route off at an angle so I went to explore. Within minutes, the summit of Sgurr Dubh Mor was achieved so I went back to get Ralph. Back onto the main ridge, we had our first break of the day, eating our late lunch before descending.

During the week, there had been lots of talk about doing a traverse of the ridge, whether it was better to spend two days and have a bivi or go with lighter loads to do it in a day. When the next day dawned clear, Ralph decided he would go off to the mainland for more accessible Munros. Peter and I hitched a lift with him to Sligachan and made a very leisurely approach up Coire a' Bhasteir and then onto Sgurr nan Gillean from whence we started our ridge traverse, at the foolishly late time of noon. We happily progressed, planning that if fatigue or conditions overtook us, we would drop down to Glen Brittle. My memory was of a magnificent clear sunny

day, leisurely moving southwards, meeting the occasional person travelling in the opposite direction. We reached the In Pin in the early evening. At the Thearlaich Dubh Gap at about 9 in the evening, we had to wait whilst a party of four was climbing in the opposite direction. Eventually we abseiled off to be followed by some of the other party's metalwork and they had me scrabbling around looking for a karabiner in the dusk. I found the move up the other side a little tricky but once accomplished, we found ourselves in superb evening conditions, still light with a full moon ahead. On what I thought of as one of the flattest parts of the ridge, approaching the summit of Sgurr nan Eag, I was following Peter when I stumbled. I felt myself going down in slow motion and instinctively put my hands out to break the fall. The right somehow went between two upright rocks barely wide enough to take my arm but the effect of gravity and body weight allowed my arm to squeeze between the rocks but as I went forward, the arm did not come out. I heard it crack rather than felt it snap. As I had pulled my arm out and looked at it, I was puzzled by the shape, knowing the crack had been in the middle of the forearm yet my wrist was pointing towards me. I, therefore, grabbed my right distorted hand and tugged it straight. I called to Peter explaining what had happened.

As I lay on the ground with the summit in sight, I remember saying that I must go to the summit, not at that time remembering that I had been there in 1982. With the aid of a sandwich box lid and a crepe bandage, Peter splinted my arm and it was supported in a climbing sling. I was going to get down under my own steam come what may. I couldn't cope with staying there for what could be 6 - 8 hours even though it was a superb evening. I knew from the previous day's outing I would struggle with Coir'a'Ghrunnda. Although it would be good to go to the end of the ridge, I didn't think I could

cope with the descent from Gars-bheinn. Coire nan Laogh, although neither of us had been there, looked the most sensible descent route. However, as I progressed, the arm moved around and I had to keep stopping every few minutes. At this rate, it would take forever to get back to Glen Brittle. Knowing that I had some first-aid kit, it was worth checking so, with help, I delved down to the bottom of my pack and found a triangular sling. In so doing, I was reminded I was still carrying the rope so lightened my load by giving that to Peter who had carried it for the first half of the ridge. With the arm more secure, progress was much hastier. I think I only needed to stop every half hour or so. I did a lot of sliding down rocks on my bottom. Eventually the coast path was reached and we slowly went along what seemed a never-ending journey to Glenbrittle. Arriving there about 5am., I got Peter to secure my arm more firmly using 2 wooden spoons. I had a few mouthfuls of sweetened warm water, avoiding any more, knowing that surgery was required. Peter went off to bed and I lay on the couch downstairs waiting for morning. As soon as it seemed respectful, I rang the hospital at Broadford to check if I should go there or directly to Inverness. I also rang a friend, with whom I was holidaying for the next 2 weeks, and told her not to bother bringing my bicycle. I then packed my belongings, much to the consternation of the Meet Leader, but I didn't really want my dirty underwear exposed in public! Ralph was off on more mainland Munros so I hitched a lift to the hospital at Broadford. An X-ray and examination later, I was in the back of an ambulance shared with a one-legged man who was going to pick up a new leg. Never has a journey seemed so long and winding. After a cursory examination, I was listed for an operation that evening. I realised by then that there was a strange smell, very different from the hospitals I worked in. I realised I had been in the same clothes

for greater than 30 hours, including a very hot day on the ridge, and that that was the origin of the smell. I persuaded the nurses to get me to a shower as I doubted the surgeon would get near me once he realised the origin of the smell. It was with great difficulty that I persuaded them to cut off my clothes as they preferred to preserve them and drag my unstable arm through the clothes. I think having to be showered was one of my most undignified experiences to date. Anyway, pinned and plated, I was back on the hills 3 days later.

Having had a marvellous time on Skye, I was back for the Meet the following year with the ridge beckoning. Conditions were poor, which meant on one day I was persuaded to climb and was ably bundled between Phil Tomaszewski and Peter Dyson on Cioch West. The one fine day, Paul O'Reilly and I had a magic day on the Dubh Slabs. After missing a year, I was back on the Meet in 2000, this time the aim being to complete Ralph's Munros. He thought he had completed the Skye Munros 3 years before but closer scrutiny made him doubt that he had been to the summit of Sgurr a'Ghreadaidh. Being moderately clear on arrival, we set off up Coire an Dorus with conditions getting fiercer with every foot of ascent until we were being hailed upon when we reached the ridge. After reaching our objective, we made a hasty retreat and this was to be the only outing on the ridge that year. We did, however, have a memorable day out with George Wright and Jill Aldersley on Clach Glas. Then the rain set in and, along with others, we left Skye early.

A couple of weeks later I was back, this time at Coruisk to support Yiannis Tridimas in his attempt on improving and extending the Cuillin round. With Paddy, I supported at Bealach na Glaic Moire descending back to Coruisk via Druim nan Ramh. I had a few other outings earlier in the week but there were no opportunities for a ridge traverse and by the

time conditions were suitable, I was conserving energy for a 2-day mountain marathon at Shiel Bridge.

2001 found me back at Coruisk with a group, which included Paddy for the third time. Several of us had come straight from the Lowe Alpine Mountain Marathon at Ardverikie, after which on the Sunday evening, I walked into Coruisk from Sligachan. On arrival at the hut, I found the Team were ready for a 4 a.m. departure for the ridge the next day. I knew I was too weary to join them so slept through and joined Paddy on a leisurely outing to Clach Glas and Bla Bheinn. On the latter, we met Rob Woodall attempting a 'super-extension' to his original Cuillin round (which unfortunately he had to abort during the night because of bad conditions). The Team of six had set out at 4 a.m., arrived back ecstatic having had a magnificent day out, achieving the traverse. Next day, we were confined to the hut as stair rods descended and the Mad Burn was in spate. It wasn't much better the next day and we had to almost swim across the stepping stones at the outlet to Loch Coruisk to get access to Sgurr na Stri and Sgurr Hain. The next day, in mixed conditions, we went up to Coir'an Lochain and then on to Sgurr Alasdair. Just before dropping down An Garbh-choire, out of the mist came Yiannis Tridimas and Steve Cliff, who had based themselves at Sligachan. In a moment's distraction on going up to Alasdair, whilst getting my gloves out as I moved over uneven rocks, I fell and got a nasty bruise, which almost put an end to my antics on the ridge for that year.

There were two days left with possible good conditions, Saturday being the most hopeful. On the Friday, it was clear but not quite settled and it was "shall we, shan't we". At 8 a.m., Ronnie Jackson and I set off up the Mad Burn to Garsbheinn. The day got better and better as we sailed along meeting few people despite the near perfect conditions. I was almost thwarted at An Stac, going a bit too far on the eastern

side but moving back resolved the problem. We contoured west of the TD gap, reaching the In Pin in good form. Having been roped up there previously, it was a question of whether I could solo it. Knowing that six of the team had done this earlier in the week, I had the confidence to go up and down the 'long side' with Ronnie, nobly agreeing to be beneath me for both the ascent and descent (what a brave man!). As we progressed, we met with Yiannis and the pace notably increased so I wasn't entirely disappointed when he dropped off, generously leaving us an extra supply of water, although we did have a supply further along the ridge. The most difficult move was coming off Bidein Druim nan Ramh. Coming off Am Basteir, we overtook two men, who asked a few questions about our route. After they learnt that we had set off a few hours after them (they had bivouac'd below Gars-bheinn) and that we were not climbers and not using ropes, they were overheard to say that they thought they would take up fell walking. From Sgurr nan Gillean, we proceeded to the true end of the ridge at Sgurr na h-Uamha. We descended to the Bloody Stone before the final climb towards Druim Hain descending back towards Coruisk with a quick dip in the outlet before returning to the hut. This had been another memorable day on the ridge but more particularly, the achievement of completing the traverse in a single day, something which I had set out to do 25 years earlier. Nine of us achieved the traverse of the ridge that week and the only disappointment was that Paddy was not with us. He had given me great inspiration over the years, without which I don't think I would have had the confidence to get along it. Indeed all of us there that week have Paddy to thank for our achievements on Skye. I also had additional help over the years from FRCC members.

What next you may ask? This year, I think I will have a year off from Skye but I will be back.

A DOW CRAG MEMORIAL

A. Harry Griffin

On a bright, breezy day in April 2000 we hovered, noisily, about fifty feet above the Cave on Dow Crag while, first, mountain rescue men, and then our heavy loads were winched down to the screens. Through a window in the huge yellow helicopter I had several minutes for studying the well-remembered neat moves on Eliminate C and the constricting pitches of Intermediate Gully, to its right, from a completely new angle – very close and just straight ahead. I could even work out why I had made such a mess of the top of the first pitch of the Eliminate the first time I led it fifty years ago.

Through the courtesy of RAF Boulmer my daughter-in-law Mary and I were watching, from inside the helicopter, the lowering of the new Dow Crag stretcher-box before its bolting on to the crag at the foot of B Buttress. It was a sad day for both of us for the sturdy, bright-blue stretcher box is in memory of my son, Robin Michael Musgrave Griffin, who, inexplicably, had died from a heart attack, at only 58 years of age, in August 1998, just two days after he and Mary had walked over the Old Man and along Dow Crag ridge. Robin, an experienced climber and mountaineer, who had been proposed for membership of the Club and had attended several meets, had been hoping, at the time of his passing, to hear his application had been successful. In a month's time, too, he and Mary were to move from the Midlands, on his retirement, into a new home being built for them in Kendal, his home town. Robin had also agreed to take on the wardenship of the Glen Brittle hut in Skye, his favourite stamping ground, for some months each year.

A plaque on the new stretcher-box, with Robin's name, states: 'These were his first and last hills'. He had first been taken, by me, up Coniston Old Man and along the Dow Crag

ridge when he was four years of age, and a year later took his grandfather, my father, up the Old Man. This had been my father's first visit to the mountain – or, indeed, to any mountain – and Robin, at five years of age, had been the leader. I have a photograph of him, wearing low shoes, shorts and sweater, standing proudly by the cairn. (Later I introduced my father, James Arthur Griffin to climbing and, eventually, he joined the FRCC.) Robin became an accomplished climber, all-round mountaineer and skier and had taken the trouble to acquire mountain leadership and first-aid qualifications. At the age of 18 he and I had done the traverse of the Cuillin Ridge. At that time Robin had been one of the youngest to do so and it was probably the first father and son traverse. I still remember every detail of that joint adventure – one of the finest mountain days of my life.

Four months before his death Robin completed a long-standing ambition by travelling to the Himalaya and taking part in an expedition to Mera Peak. When the professional leader collapsed with altitude problems Robin was put in charge and succeeded in leading three of the party to the summit, the other six being unable to progress further. Robin was, by many years, the oldest member of the team – and, easily, the fittest. In the year or two before his passing he had taken his wife, Mary, up all the two-thousanders in England and they were planning to complete the rest of the Munros together. When he was living far from his homeland hills, he had become a member of the Wayfarers Club but was very much hoping that he could achieve FRCC membership on his return to Kendal and so continue the family association with the Club.

The original Dow Crag stretcher-box had been installed by the Barrow Mountaineering and Skiing Club for the Coniston Mountain Rescue Team in 1966 but had been disintegrating due to age. Besides remembering Robin the new stretcher-box also commemorates those named on the original box.

Delivering the stretcher box *Photo: Malcolm Grindrod*

These were: Jim Shepherd, killed on Dow Crag in September 1952, Ross Porteous, killed on the crag by falling rock in July 1962 and Jack Fisher who died on Helvellyn in February 1972 – all members of Barrow Mountaineering Club. It so happened that I had been the leader of the Fell and Rock meet on Dow in July 1962 and had the sad task of informing Ross Porteous' father in Scotland of his son's passing.

The tricky and hazardous task of lowering the heavy stretcher-box to the foot of the crag was carried out in two flights from Coniston village and Mary and I were invited to take part in the second of these when the main drop took place. Helmeted and securely strapped into our seats we were in radio touch with all the crew, hearing every word that was said and seeing everything that was happening. In charge of the big helicopter was Squadron Leader Peter Martin who had the delicate task of manoeuvring the aircraft, with its heavy load swinging in a net, right up to the face of the crag, and then hovering, for several minutes, above the screes. Also travelling with the crew were three members of the Coniston Mountain Rescue team including its leader, Roy Cooksey, a FRCC member since 1955. They were winched, in turn, down to the screes above The Cave to supervise the assembling and bolting of the heavy box on to its prepared position on the crag. A large contingent of members of the Barrow Mountaineering Club – several of them FRCC members – also took part in the operation. It was a great privilege to be able to watch the proceedings from the air and to study, in close-up at an unusual angle, the crag on which I have climbed since the late 1920s.

Mary recalls that when they were walking up the ridge of Dow Crag, two days before his passing, Robin pointed out to her the blue blob of the old stretcher-box at the foot of the crag, explaining its purpose. He wasn't to know that a new stretcher-box, to replace this one, was to be his memorial.

ISLAND PEAK – 19th CENTURY ALPINE STYLE

John McM. Moore

Having listened to many tales of the Himalaya in FRCC huts, it is with trepidation I inflict yet another Nepal mountain story on the Journal readership. My only justification is an attempt to convey something of the pleasure of an ad hoc trip, organised at short notice and relatively low cost, which gave the satisfaction of climbing a PD+ mountain of more than 6000m, unguided – although not without local assistance.

The idea of attempting a trekking peak unguided, developed last year. Using Bill O'Connor's book as a guide, we considered Naya Kanga (5844m) and Paldor (5928m) in the Langtang and Ganesh Himal respectively. On advice of friends and taking into account the unstable security situation and snow conditions (it had been a spring of exceptionally heavy snow-fall in the mountains of central and western Nepal) the final choice of objective was postponed until the last possible moment.

We were impressed by the flexibility and cooperation of the staff of our trekking agents, Himalaya Expeditions. We are particularly grateful for their help in suggesting an alternative objective to our original, snow-bound, choices, and their efficiency in organising logistics, and travel at short notice. It was only 4 days before departure for Lukla, that we made the final decision, on the advice of a senior HimEx sirdar, to go for Island Peak/Imja Tse (6189m/20305ft), about 7km south of Everest. Luckily for us, despite a couple of last minute withdrawals from the original party, HimEx stretched a point and accepted Gordon Orr and Ruth Foster and myself at the same per capita price as their notional, minimum party.

Our trip began with the dramatic flight from Kathmandu to the notorious Lukla airstrip, which has a 1 in 10 gradient, a cliff at one end and rock wall at the other. From Lukla we set

out with full camping gear and team consisting of sirdar, climbing and trekking Sherpas, cook and assistant, three kitchen boys/porters, two dzopkyos (yak-cow crosses) and a yak driver. We might have been a mid-19th century British party setting out for an Alpine summit.

We took W.E. Bowman's wonderful, expedition debunking saga *The Ascent of Rum Doodle* as part of our library. It proved to be both an entertainment and an education. Bowman's acute observation of character showed itself dramatically among both climbers and support team. We left behind several potential participants who, had they not withdrawn before departure, would have done credit to Bowman's dramatis personae. As on Rum Doodle, we had our porters who, carrying 40kg, could accelerate past us at 5500m with a cheerful smile and a metaphorical kicking of snow in our faces. Our equivalent of 'Pong' the cook, fortunately, did not live up to his fictional counterpart's reputation, except possibly in the matter of his sugared cream sauce for stuffed peppers and breakfast rice pudding. Sadly, the champagne was omitted from the baggage – much to the chagrin of two of the party who had to content themselves with beer, duty free spirits, raksi, chang and tongba, under the disapproving eye of the third.

After a six-day trek up the Everest base camp route, accompanied by the usual altitude lassitude and related symptoms, including a disastrous loss of taste for beer on the part of one drinking member – but fortunately not the other, we arrived at Lobuche (4928m). Lobuche is not the world's most attractive spot and we left it at 4.30am next morning, without regret, to stumble over endless moraines to Gorak Shep. From there we staggered to the first 'pimple' on the Pumori SW ridge, a knoll called Kala Patar (5550m). This dull hill resembles one of the less interesting 'Munros' minus heather but the view from its top, of the Everest south face and the

'ordinary route' is stupendous. This must be one of the most spectacular photo viewpoints in the mountain world. The panorama extends from Everest Base camp through the Khumbu icefall to the South Col, Hilary Step and the summit. Having read Krakauer's and Boukreev's books on what happens to tyros, like us, who pay \$60000 to be taken up the mountain, I suspect Kala Patar is the nearest most of our party will ever get to Sagarmartha.

After climbing Kala Patar, in my case at great expense in terms of bad temper and frustration at my lack of acclimatisation and the seriously strained goodwill of my friends, we rambled around Nuptse to Dingboche and Chukhung (4753m). From there, we walked up Chukhung Ri (5417m), a slightly less painful but energy-sapping plod, but one with great views of Lhotse, Nuptse, Baruntse and Ama Dablam.

Half a day's ramble up the moraines of the Lhotse and Imje Glaciers brought us to Island Peak base camp (5100m) where we stayed for a couple of nights to complete our acclimatisation programme before moving, slowly, up to the impressively termed 'attack camp' at 5500m. It was on the way up to 'High Camp' that our Nepali equivalents of 'So Lo' and 'Lo Too' burned us off while carrying the loads necessary to sustain our 'assault team'. These consisted of full kitchen equipment, food and tents, one equivalent to a decent size Boy Scout mess-tent, which served as dining room and accommodation for two porters, two Sherpas, and Gomba, the 'assistant cook' (his senior had not deigned to accompany us on this outing).

After a full cooked breakfast, we set out at 4am next morning with our climbing Sherpa, Bishnu. It is worth mentioning that Bishnu fashioned his 'harness' under Gordon's instruction, from a length of our spare tape, with help from Bill March's *Rope Techniques* handbook. His boots were a

pair of ancient, plastic ski-mountaineering boots, two sizes too small and having learned the Italian Hitch he was keen to use it later with the DMS karabiner we gave him. These incidentals serve to emphasise the contrast in gear and knowledge of techniques between the well-equipped and experienced 'client' and that of the locals – even a climbing Sherpa.

In proper Alpine tradition, navigation for the first hour was by headlight, a groping scramble up the rocky gully and buttress we had reconnoitred the day before. The rocks led us to the only access point of the sérac-bounded glacier which caps the south shoulder of the mountain and flanks the summit ridge. An hour or so among crevasses and we reached the bergschrund, below the 35-40° water-ice and powder snow slope that leads to the ridge. Up this, initially unbelayed and loaded with snow stakes and ropes, Bishnu set off! We followed, with crampons crunching on water ice, trying to avoid sporadic deluges of powder snow from above.

Arriving, gasping, on the ridge, we traversed around one or two ice domes to the final obstacle, a sérac wall truncating the whole ridge at 6100m. From there the only access to the summit dome required a traverse on the south face and a 40m névé and ice pitch angled at about 40°. For this, a desperately breathless and fatiguing, two axe thrutch served, and we were up!

The descent was memorable – partly for the deteriorating weather as we abseiled through thigh-deep powder to the bergschrund and in one case fell in, and for the way in which we groped through falling snow, jumping crevasses, to the edge of the ice. At this point, we were met by Ang Phurba and Gomba with a kettleful of what had been hot fruit squash at the beginning of their chilly, two hour wait for us. There followed a long, tedious descent of 1100m to base camp to end a tiring 13-hour day. One small pleasure, in an otherwise fatiguing and slightly scary descent through seemingly endless

Final section of Island Peak South Ridge Photo: John Moore

less small crags and gullies, was the schadenfreude of transit through the camp of a somewhat Karakorum Experience guided party, some of whom had yet to face the rigours of an ascent through the, by now, rapidly thickening, new-snow cover.

The return trek to Lukla took 4 days and was relatively uneventful except for the revelation that the Maoists had severed all telephone communication to and from Namche Bazaar and Lukla – a variation on their last visit to Lukla a couple of months earlier, when they shot up and temporarily disabled the air control tower. A bumpy flight to Kathmandu was the end of the trip for us – except for the debriefing gift from the president of HimEx of a bottle of Indian malt whisky ('for defence service personnel only').

Readers will appreciate that one difference between climbing and trekking in Nepal and similar activities in the Alps, is the large, amenable, work force which is provided to make life comfortable for well-heeled, visitors (i.e. those who can afford to pay a porter or Sherpa wages of somewhere between £2 and £5 per day). Personally, I am happy to have someone carry my gear if I can afford it and he (or she) gets a living wage and has adequate gear like footwear and clothing to do the job! That is not say that there aren't larger and more serious ethical questions here. One is that of the profits, made outside Nepal, by some, less than scrupulous companies which provide 'package, guided mountaineering holidays' and in doing so, sometimes drive punitively hard bargains with Nepali contractors who in the present situation, are desperate for business.

I prefer to deal directly with a local company and eliminate one of the middlemen between me and the hard working, cooperative and friendly Nepalis who carry my gear or cook my rice pudding! If you want to do the same, try HimEx or we can provide you with the addresses of one or two other reliable trekking agencies.

Information :

A guideless trip to a Nepal trekking peak is easy to arrange with help from a good trekking agency or individual Sherpa/sirdar.

We tried advertising for participants for our trip, using the FRCC Chronicle and the AC Newsletter. The results were frustratingly unproductive and not to be recommended – it is much better to look for your team among your friends and acquaintances. As part of the organising experience we did, however, encounter, if only by e-mail, some characters for whom W.E.Bowman could have found space in the Rum Doodle team.

Our Dates :

30 March-17th April (This is the very beginning of the season – we missed the crowds but risked the snow conditions – successfully, by good luck.)

Optimum dates: mid-April until the arrival of the monsoon in mid/late June, or in Oct-Nov. Beware of crowds – including many guided parties of Germans, who festoon Imja Tse with ropes, and clients of various shapes, sizes and temperament.

Trekking Agents :

Himalaya Expeditions: www.himexnepal.com

E-mail: info@himexnepal.com.np rajiv@himex.com.np

We found HimEx absolutely reliable and the service excellent. They managed all the logistics from peak permits to heavily discounted air tickets to Lukla efficiently and economically. We recommend waiting as late as possible before making a final decision on area, objective and trek type i.e. camping or lodge accommodation. A low cost, lodge or camp trip can be organised privately, through individual Sherpas. How

ever, private arrangements should involve the sirdar/Sherpa taking full responsibility for the insurance of himself and his team. This is easily done by the sirdar in Kathmandu. Personal responsibility for accident/illness among Sherpas/porters is a dangerous liability for a client to accept.

We recommend Ang Gyalzen Sherpa (sirdar) and Ang Phurba Sherpa as honest and reliable leaders who can arrange their own insurance and teams for trekking and easy climbing trips. (merala88@hotmail.com yulapashi88@yahoo.com)

Maps:

Mahalanga Himal – Chomolongma-Mount Everest: Österreichischen Alpenverein Map 0/2 1:25000 scale: 1957
Mount Everest: National Geographic 1988, 1:50000 scale (the famous 'Bradford Washburn' map): drafted by the Swiss Federal Mapping Bureau.

Island Peak : Himalaya Kartografisches Institut 1:50000 Trekking access map with 1:11236 scale 'sketch climbing map' of Island Peak.

Books:

Bill O'Connor, *The Trekking Peaks of Nepal*, Crowood Press, 1989.
Razzetti Steve: *Trekking and Climbing in Nepal*, New Holland, 2000
Jon Krakauer: *Into Thin Air*, Anchor/Doubleday books, 1997
Anatoli Boukreev & G.Weston DeWalt *The Climb*, St Martin's Paperbacks, 1998.
W.E.Bowman: *The Ascent of Rum Doodle*, Arrow Books, 1956.

Security Note:

The political and security situation in Nepal is deteriorating. The violence is primarily between government armed forces and the insurgents but recently, there have been well-documented cases of armed robberies and extortion of money and equipment from both trekking groups and climbers isolated on the trail - especially in the forested lower parts of the mountains.

INDICATE RIGHT!

Dave Carr

Quite good fun this Nordic skiing we thought as we slowly glided down the bowl of Coire Gorm on the north side of Braeriach. We had hired skis and set off from the road at Loch Morlich on a sunny day, passing through the Chalamain Gap, down into the Lairig Ghru and on up Braeriach. Thick cloud on the top turned us back before reaching the summit, but our return was compensated by a glorious long glide down this remote corrie. Andy impressed me with his attempts at telemark turns, which invariably ended in disaster, in much the same way as were my own. Retracing our route of ascent we dropped down out of the cloud to the revelation of a sunny afternoon. What a jolly day, not like ice climbing at all!

We stayed that night in the palatial youth hostel in Aviemore. The plan was to get up early and drive over to Fort William to climb Indicator Wall high up on the Ben. This had been on Andy's tick list for some time, having been repulsed previously by bad conditions. Its grade and description of (V4) suggested something not too taxing, if a little lacking in protection. My love affair with ice climbing was growing a little weary but Andy's was still fully enamoured. I was carried along, as so often was the case, by his contagious enthusiasm.

Forsaking strong drink we retired to our bunks in the comfortable, four-bedded bunkrooms in anticipation of the rigours of the morrow. Alas, our plans for a good night's rest were thwarted by the return of our inebriated room-mates at 2am. They had obviously enjoyed the hospitality of many of Aviemore's bars and, falling into their beds, proceeded to snore long and loud into the night. Our early start was all the more miserable after a disturbed nights sleep, and we were not much

company at breakfast. Despite our attempts to make as much noise as we could on our departure, our two companions slept soundly on, oblivious to it all. No revenge for us that day.

We were soon packed and heading along the familiar bends past Loch Laggan and Glen Spean to arrive at the golf course on what looked like a promising day. At that time access was still allowed over the golf course, and we were soon toiling up the steep wooded slopes to the dam. The pace, as always, was too quick to be comfortable with heavy packs, but depressingly not fast enough to prevent fitter parties from overtaking. After two hours of peat bashing we arrived outside the CIC hut to take stock of the mountain, our plans and ourselves.

The Ben certainly seemed to be in lean condition. I began to have doubts about our intended route as I had heard that routes high up on Gardyloo Buttress could be relatively easy if well covered in ice, but desperate when thin. Inevitably we went up 'to have a look', as you are bound to do, and were soon trudging up 1000 feet of deep soft snow lying in Observatory Gully – no shortage of snow here anyway. I found a first-aid kit lying in the snow – hopefully not a portent of the day to come ...

We came at last to the upper reaches of the gully and traversed off to the left to a tilted snow shelf above steep cliffs. Turning to examine the route at closer quarters, my heart sank, as the route appeared to be only thinly iced, and would be a good deal harder in these conditions. My companion however was unabashed as well as unconvinced by my concerns, obviously relishing getting to grips with the thing! We dug out a ledge, and performed those dangerous pirouettes that accompany pulling cramponed feet through harness leg loops while perching precariously on a narrow ledge. I hinted that it was perhaps unwise to continue, but Andy studiously ignored

my suggestions about doing something easier and more importantly, in condition. While his body was on the ledge his mind was already way up there grappling with the route that reared above us.

He led off, slowly hacking and moving his way up the steep gully. At least there was some ice on this section. My eyes shifted regularly from him, to our deadman belay, to the bed of Observatory Gully below. At times like these I always worry whether I've placed the thing at the correct angle. In fact, whenever I ice climb, I just worry. He moved slowly upwards. I saw a couple of runners go in and immediately felt better. Eventually the call came to follow, and of course, once committed, with two strong ropes above, the climbing wasn't that bad. I arrived at the stance to see him sitting on a small pedestal belayed to an old bleached sling, which disappeared into the ice, hopefully to some chockstone or old peg. I couldn't see any other possible belay.

We swapped places and looked up at the next pitch. A steep ice-glazed wall jutted out about twenty-five feet, after which it looked to lean back a little and continue rightwards up a steep slab. The route was lightly coated with a shroud of wind-driven snow over ice, which masked its depth and kept us guessing about what lay underneath. From where we stood there was clearly little more than half an inch of cover over rock, but did it look as if it might thicken up higher up the pitch? I couldn't help asking myself what were we doing here – we weren't supposed to be grade VI ice climbers! It was clear that it would be impossible to get any runners in of course, and my eyes wandered to the sling to examine its pathetic condition in greater detail. Would it hold a leader fall? I certainly wouldn't trust it to abseil off. It looked as if we were going up – committed without much choice in the matter.

Our stance was spectacularly exposed, looking out across the yawning drop of Observatory Gully to the profile of Tower Ridge. Whiteness enveloped us in numbing silence, and between the waves of mist we could see the tiny specs of other climbers wrestling with the notch on Tower Gap. So near and yet so far away, they too confined to their own winter world, we were sentenced to the task ahead.

In silent resignation, Andy set off, cautiously moving up the steep wall on the right. He was going ever so slowly, scratching and scraping, and from the terse replies that floated down in answer to my enquiries, it was obvious that it was both very hard and that he was gripped – but possibly not as gripped as I was. About 50 feet up, he confessed that he couldn't see a way forward in such lean conditions and didn't want to go on, but more seriously that he couldn't down climb the thin moves back to the stance either! Seconds later, I heard a cry "Oh no," and the news that the pick on his ice axe had come loose and was now wobbling feebly about and quite useless!

The only possible solution was to slide his axe down the rope to me, and to then tie mine on and pull it back up – if this could be done. It was a dangerous manoeuvre, no runners and balanced on tiny footholds, his position looked pretty precarious, but it was done and he continued. The next fifteen minutes were tense and even more worrying, the rope crept out and with every scrape of his crampons I thought he was off. I'd crouch down in anticipation expecting to see a black shape falling past me with the inevitable tug on the rope, which would see the rotten sling part and both of us tumbling and rolling down the face. I heartily promised never to go ice climbing again.

After a while, I heard the ring of a peg go in, the first runner and perhaps our salvation, but he shouted down it

wasn't very good. I was later able to remove it by hand. His pace began to quicken as conditions improved a little, and 40 feet further up he was able to hammer in half the length of a warthog into a smear of thicker ice. Time drifted on and the rope crept out another 60 feet, I could not tell what was going on above, but eventually he announced that he was safe. Thank God for that!

I heard the call to come on up, and after girding my loins, rattled his ice axe to see how secure it was. I watched with alarm as the pick wobbled. At the first nick into the ice it shot off down the mountain leaving me grasping what now resembled a walking stick! That would make things more difficult! By using my good ice axe and jabbing the ferrule of the other into the ice I was able to make progress up the steep wall by peculiar mantelshelf movements. On reaching the slab I began to see how difficult it was. Each move required full concentration and balance; slotting the pick in very gently otherwise the axe bounced off threatening to impale the adze between your eyebrows! Upward progress continued in this delicate manner. The useless peg was passed and on reaching thicker ice I was able to remove the warthog and use it as an ice dagger. It made me appreciate how hard things must have been for the men of the 1950s and 1960s using ice daggers.

After an exhausting struggle, I eventually arrived at Andy's stance to find him tied on to a huge snow bollard. The rest of the route was straightforward by comparison and an anticlimax after the struggles below. A snowy bay led up to the plateau, and we found ourselves emerging straight out onto the summit trig point, sheathed in cloud. We stopped to eat sandwiches, and struck up in conversation with a local guide and his client who arrived at the summit from their own climb. It transpired that the icefall had not formed on Indicator Wall, and thus had not been climbed that winter, and he was

somewhat surprised that anyone should attempt to climb it!

We stopped to take bearings at the summit shelter and were soon making our way down. Emerging out of the cloud across the plateau, we basked in the amber light of a magnificent sunset and the glow of being alive. The bum-slide down the Red Burn was as good fun as ever, and we were soon flogging past the halfway lochan and on down the moor to the dam and the dark woodlands back to the golf course. After a short stop for pie and chips in Fort William we set off back to the Lakes, the four-hour long drive home the usual battle to keep awake. We arrived back by 1 am very, very tired. A grand day out, and memorable, but maybe I should stick to skiing in the future?

THE BERNINA TRAIL

A walk around the Bernina Massif

Dorothy Buffey

For a number of years Roy and I have enjoyed doing a walk – usually a circuit on one of the G.R.s. We rarely book ahead and we have never had to bivvy. A friend gave us a book of European Treks, and the one which attracted us was the Bernina Trail. As this year's FRCC Meet was based at Pontresina it seemed a good time to do it!

On arrival in Pontresina we found it to be very cold. Our car was iced up in the mornings, and Jeremy Whitehead and others suffered eight inches of snow on their tents one night. Some members including the Meet Leader had deserted camp seeking warmer weather in Italy. We decided it might be warmer in the huts so we set off.

We suspected there would be snow where normally there would not be any – but as it was summer we decided not to take axes and crampons. We knew the snow would be 'soft' so we took two collapsible ski poles each which turned out to be very useful especially on the steeper snow slopes and where boulder fields were covered in snow.

A decision was made to take one or two variants which went higher and all of these turned out to be very different from the route described in 'the' book.

Leaving the campsite at Pontresina we headed for the Rifugio Languard (Georgy Hutte – 20 beds, 3186 metres). From the hutte there is a short climb (15 minutes) to the summit of Piz Languard (3262 metres) – an incomparable spot for views of the rising and setting sun, with the Bernina Range at its most magnificent. At this refuge we were the only guests and the jovial guardian, a former guide, made us most welcome. Here there is only melted snow as no water is available, but

we were warm for the first time in days! Each morning the guardian talked to the steinbocks which came near the terrace – he told us they only came if it was quiet and there were no noisy people about!

Sitting in the sun we waited for the snow to soften then we descended through the snow and rocks to the Languard Valley. The long traverse of the snow-covered valley provided us with crystal clear views as we made our way to the Fuorcla Pischa (2874 metres). This area is the heart of a reserve for the protection of alpine flowers, a botanical garden covering the slopes of Piz Languard and the Val da Fain. Descending steeply we saw more steinbocks, and once below the snowline many flowers were recovering from the recent crushing snows.

Upwards then to the Diavolezza (186 beds, 2973 metres) for the night, finding it to be an hotel with many guides working out of there. The hotel's terrace provided a breathtaking panorama of Piz Palu, the Bellavista and Piz Bernina. Our next day was a descending one through snow to the Laj Nair and Lago Bianco at the foot of Piz Cambrena and Piz d'Arlas. The famous Bernina Railway runs along the opposite shore.

Our overnight stop was at the Hotel Belvedere, Alp Grüm, though accommodation and restaurant are also available at the Alp Grüm railway station, and credit cards are accepted there! The Belvedere's owner proudly displayed photographs of himself taken with Princess Anne, and also with the Thatchers when he was a consultant to the 'Olympic Committee' and did work with the British Army in North Wales. He had also worked as a consultant with Joe Brown on the Sean Connery film 'Five Days One Summer'.

Alp Grüm – Rifugio Bignami

A long day was made longer by nipping down to

Poschiavo to the bank and taking the train back to Cavaglia. Then followed an ascending walk through the woods to Sondoss. That afternoon we saw flumes of spindrift in the air from the séracs which came off the Palu Glacier. We climbed up the Val Ursè amongst rock and detritus to the Pass de Canfinal (2628 metres) and our crossing into Italy.

Descending then we passed through abandoned meadows abundant with gentians and marmots to Alpe Gembre where shepherds' huts had recently been renovated. We traversed and crossed many rivers, with bridges over the five larger ones but many streams without. These flowed in cascades from the tongues of the eastern and western Fellaria cirque glaciers above. We then made our final ascent of the day to the Rifugio Bignami (60 beds, 2401 metres) with warm and friendly accommodating guardians – but a 'cold' refuge.

Rifugio Bignami - Rifugio Marinelli Bombardiere

From the hut we made for the Alpe di Fellaria, crossed the river and climbed out of the valley to the Bochetta di Casoggio gained by a short slabby rock section.

Descending the cirque glacier – well snow covered – to its lateral moraines we took the long winding path leading to the panoramic terrace of the Rifugio Marinelli Bombardiere (180 beds, 2813 metres). As we don't book in advance we were lucky to arrive early, for it was Saturday night and the hut became full – needing 3 meal sittings in the large dining room. This rifugio is only three hours walk from the nearest road and many families come up to spend Saturday night here and take part in the Roman Catholic mass held outside. (The guardian is a 'STING' look-a-like!!!)

Rifugio Marinelli Bombardiere – Rifugio Longoni

This was the wildest and most solitary part of the route.

The visibility was not good, with the cloud coming down as we left the rifugio. Nor is the route well marked and between rifugios we did not see a single soul.

It was raining as we traversed the cirque below the Screeen glacier and crossed several rivers – some with bridges, some without. We continued our descent to a junction in the paths, and we climbed in cloud up what seemed like a never-ending valley to the Forcella d'Entova. The descent on the other side was over a huge boulder field, covered in places by snow that made the going quite awkward, and so to a frozen lake. From here we took a signed path which although well marked was not well walked. The route was spectacular with the odd rocky slabby section. We finished up descending a lengthy ridge to the rifugio rather than ascending from a 'road', arriving damp and weary at the Longoni. Here we were 'stuck' for two days because of thunderstorms, new snow, and rain at lower levels. The guardian was an Alpine Guide and owner of an impressive avalanche rescue dog. Behind the rifugio on a crag the guardian had bolted some routes with lower off points. When asked their grade he stated 6c.

Rifugio Longoni – Passo de Malaga

Initially we descended into the Cirque de Tremoggia with its rivers and waterfalls to the Alp Fora. Then followed a path, at times difficult to distinguish, very overgrown and not well marked, to the Alpe dell'Oro. The going through the forest was very wet after overnight rains, but there were good views of the north face of Mnt. Disgrazia. We then picked up the old military road which became a path up to the Muretto Pass on the Italian/Swiss Border, and then over much snow down Plan Canin, and finally to Passo del Malaga and the road.

We stayed the night at the Youth Hostel, and as we were back in the realm of roads, motor cars and urbanisation we

decided to forsake the walk along the Engiadin Valley. We took the bus back to Pontresina.

Maps :

Engiandin'Ota - 1 : 60000 (Kummerly & Frey)

Carta Turistica Kompass - 1 : 50000 No. 93 (Bernina & Sondrio)

Landeskarte der Schweiz - 1 : 50000 pp 268 Julier Pass

269 Bernina Pass

270 Brusio

278 Mnt. Disgrazia

WADI RUM, JORDAN

Pete Kelly

Looking for somewhere adventurous to climb outside Europe throws up lots of options, the more we learnt about Wadi Rum the more we liked the sound of it; reliable weather, multi-pitch routes on desert sandstone walls, reasonably accessible, but definitely a location that was part of another culture. So for three weeks in October 2000 our tent was pitched on the warm sand outside Rum village, we woke to the sound of the call to prayer, wandered in canyons and climbed in the heat of the desert sun. For my climbing partner Andrew and myself it proved to be a memorable three weeks.

The climbing

Rum has routes of all grades from scrambles to extremes, many are long and committing and there are various levels of in situ equipment from bolts and abseil chains to some of the most sun-soaked and degraded tapes I have ever seen. We found plenty of good quality routes at around VS/Grade 5 and only a few bad ones.

The walls immediately behind the campsite on Jebel Rum Massif are a great place to acclimatise to the heat and get the feel of the rock. The climbs here are 2-3 rope lengths long, face east and are in the shade after midday. *Goldfinger* and *Walk like an Egyptian* are excellent and not too difficult with pitches of 4 and 5; there are abseil chains in place for the descents.

Also on the Jebel Rum Massif is the classic *Hammad's Route*. This route is enjoyable and spectacular, but long, long, long. An initial exposed and friable ridge offers great exposure and is followed by a couple of steep cracks in a south-facing wall. From the top of the wall is an incredible scramble

which starts from a small airy promontory then narrows and winds its way through a sea of sandstone domes and pinnacles deep into the winding passages of the Great Siq and an apparent blind canyon impasse. Escape is by three Grade 5 pitches on the south wall, which climb out of the cool darkness of the siq and onto the glaring heat and whiteness of the summit domes. The views from the domes are marvellous – towers and desert in a hundred shades of orange and pink in every direction. Descent is back down the route and is equipped with abseil rings, but some of these are quite difficult to find and perseverance is necessary. The variety of terrain, quality of climbing, exposure and commitment of the route makes it an undoubted classic.

The tower of Abu Maileh is only thirty minutes from the campsite and has the advantage of having a cool north face, which contains the route *Salim*. Three enjoyable pitches each Grade 5, a chimney, cracks then a corner make this a good half-day option.

Another half hour beyond the tower lies the Wadi Rum classic *Black Magic*, 300 metres mainly Grade 5 walls, cracks and corners with an unprotected grey slab pitch at half height.

South of the campsite in Wadi Shelaali is *Rum Doodle*. The start of the climb is about an hour's walk from the campsite and the route is about 250 metres long. There is scrambling up chimneys and corners to the start. The route is mostly on sound rock but a couple of pitches in the middle involve climbing on big crisps. These formations are a bit like rock toadstools forming massive hand holds but the small diameter of the stem leaves you wondering about its strength. The climbing is mainly lower Grade 5 and descent is by abseil back down the route where the crisps, so useful on the way up, prove to be effective at snagging falling ropes.

Canyons

Although there is a lot of climbing within walking distance of the campsite some routes are further away and for these it is necessary to use a desert taxi. Rum village has plenty of Bedouin drivers with four-wheel drives willing to take you to where you want to go: negotiation skills are an asset.

About an hour's drive from Rum village lies the Barraah Canyon. A couple of kilometres long, full of sand dunes, no habitation, no water and with rock walls on either side, this is a magical place. We spent two nights there sleeping in a cool siq with a view of the desert sky and climbing during the day. We negotiated a taxi price to include hire of a water drum and agreed payment would be on collection of ourselves three days later.

The drive in and out is bone jarring and spectacular. The climbing is good with some compelling lines such as *Merlin's Wand*, a 150-metre crack line cleanly splitting a north-facing wall and *Les Rumeurs de la Pluie* a perfect 250-metre corner. Unfortunately we failed on both of these and had to make do with shorter routes on the Arch tower.

Rum also has some great scrambling days out. The traverse of Rakabat canyon to the red sands of Ishrun, visiting the summit of Jebel Rakabat and returning down Zernouk el Dabar is a great expedition. From the campsite the walls of Jebel Ishrun look impenetrable but there is a series of connecting canyons through to Wadi Ishrun. These canyons contain diverse natural architecture: towers, columns, defiles and boreholes; sandstone in the form of mushrooms and candle wax; hanging gardens and a few man-made Bedouin steps to access the trickier bits. After a couple of hours in the cool of the canyons the red sands come into view, the walk out into the scorching sun saps the energy but the view from the top of the dunes is magnificent, red sand in every direction and towers shimmering in the heat haze.



The summit of Jebel Rum

Photo: Pete Kelly

Jebel Rum

The traverse of Jebel Rum is also a classic day out and we left it for our final day. Jebel Rum is the highest point in the area at 1,754 metres. We got a desert taxi just before sunrise to the west side of the Jebel Rum, followed *Sheikh Hamdam's Route* to the summit and descended by the east domes to *Hammad's Route* which we had climbed two weeks earlier, the trip taking slightly over 12 hours.

Sheikh Hamdam's Route follows a long ledge up the north side of the Great Siq. The climbing is never hard except for one awkward chimney but the exposure is pitiless. From the top of the siq, careful guidebook and cairn following give a magnificent couple of hour's steady climbing on friction domes in what feels like a moonscape to the summit. The summit views are extensive in every direction, range after range of towers in all shades of orange and in between wadis and waves of soft sand, dark cool canyons and seas of domes.

We spent an hour on the summit picking out places we had been and realising how much more there was. The descent required more careful cairn following on domes and a few wrong turns before we found ourselves back on the recognisable ground of *Hammad's Route* and abseils back to the ground.

The now familiar tramp back to Rum village was done in the fading light, with parched throats, the day's water having been long finished. Camels were being tethered for the night, the lights were on in Lawrence's coffee shop, and the stove was soon purring away, the end of another day in Wadi Rum.

SOME FACTS

Return flights from Manchester to Amman, Jordan cost about £360 with British Airways.

Buses are available from the airport to Amman then on to Aqaba and Wadi Rum, although a cheap way to travel, this can take a day and a half.

Taxis will take you straight from Amman airport to Wadi Rum any time day or night in 4 hours and cost 50 Dinars after negotiation.

Camping at Rum village Rest House costs 1 Dinar per tent per night using your own tent or 3 Dinars per night using the in situ tents.

There are a couple of small shops in Rum village selling fresh and tinned food, soft drinks etc. For more variety it is necessary to go to Aqaba.

A multi-fuel stove is necessary for cooking. Kerosene is available in Rum village sometimes but it may be necessary to cook on unleaded petrol.

In October 2000, 1 Jordanian Dinar = £1 Sterling.

During the first three weeks in October, afternoon temperatures were as high as 35° C and night temperatures down to 10° C: there was no rainfall.

READING MATTER

Lonely Planet guide to Jordan.

Treks and Climbs in Wadi Rum, Jordan by Tony Howard published by Cicerone.

We took both the above books, which proved to be invaluable.

OTHER PLACES TO VISIT

PETRA This ancient city carved into the walls of a canyon is well worth a visit; we spent two days and explored some of the less visited tombs and siqs. Buses go direct from Rum village.

AQABA has restaurants, juice bars, supermarkets and even licensed shops selling alcohol. Also swimming in the Red Sea.

THE DEAD SEA has many resorts offering expensive accommodation. To avoid these we persuaded our taxi driver (or did he persuade us) to take us back to Amman via the sea where we spent a couple of hours floating in the saline waters. We were also shown the local fresh water shower naturally regulated at the perfect temperature, taken for a roast chicken breakfast, entertained with contemporary local music and introduced to our taxi driver's best friend, who runs the best low budget hotel in Amman and gave us the best price ever for the best room in the house.

AN EARLY EXPLORER OF ALMSCLIFF

Harold Drasdo

Some months ago, for reasons irrelevant here, I was trying to fit a name to an unattached quotation and first of all, on a hunch, I made a sweep search of the poems of Andrew Marvell. The hunch was wrong but I went through the collection anyway. Finally, in idle curiosity, I glanced at some appended poems he'd written directly in Latin or Classical Greek. I don't have any competence in either but later writers had offered translations. Startling me, one title caught my eye.

Epigramma in Duos Montes Amosclivium et Bilboreum,
Epigram on the two Mountains of Amos-cliff and
Bilborough.

Amos-cliff: but in the first line of the translation, Almiast-cliff. Could this be Almscliff? From what the poem said I felt it must be and I knew that from 1650 to 1653 Marvell had been living at Nun Appleton, less than twenty miles away, as tutor to the daughter of the Lord General Fairfax. Yet I'd once read an explanation of the name suggesting that the present form had been in use for centuries. These variants were puzzling. Might they refer to another, more local feature unknown to me? Furthermore, the poem demanded intervisibility between the two summits. I'd stood on top of Almscliff many times as a young gritstoner without seeing any opposing 'mountain' to the east. I already knew 'Upon the Hill and Grove at Bilborough', in which Marvell describes a prominent, perfectly domed hill capped by a stand of ancient trees and expresses his delight in the ascent – the path wide and grassy, winding pleasantly upward. Where, and how, in the plain of York, could a mountain called Bilborough be hiding?

In a lot more time than it takes to write these notes I answered the questions I asked myself. Only five miles north-west of Nun Appleton, at a village now spelt Bilbrough, Fairfax owned a second manor. The map showed no contour over forty metres in this neighbourhood but eventually I learned that Marvell's hill had gone away, a bit at a time, for use as quarried gravel. And I discovered that the hill had once sported a beacon in direct communication with Almscliff.

Almscliff itself has seen about ten variants in the last eight centuries. (For anyone interested, it's thought to derive from a Middle English feminine name, *Almus*, though this name is unknown elsewhere. And, what's more, the crag then stood within the Wapentake of Upper Claro.) *Amos-cliff* is first recorded in 1695 but must have been in use in local speech before 1650. The translator, the Rev. J.H. Clark, has respected the form *Marvell* latinised in the title but has used *Almias-cliff*, in use by 1822, for his own effort. And I find that the tiny outcrop we knew as Little Almscliff is still named as Little *Almias Cliff* on some maps.

So the poem is in fact about Almscliff, directly up the Wharfe valley from Nun Appleton. Fairfax had a third property at Denton, further still up Wharfedale and opposite Ilkley Moor. If Marvell ever visited that estate he'd have passed close by the cliff but I have no information on that point. So did he actually lay hands on the crag ?

For the moment there's only the evidence of the poem itself. It's of a kind common enough in Marvell's time and earlier, an exercise in flattery, the poet praising his patron or employer. Here he compares the natures of the two landmarks to the two sides of Fairfax's character, the rough and the smooth. (Fairfax was the redoubtable Commander-in-Chief of the Parliamentary forces during the Civil War but opposed the execution of the king and resigned in protest at the planned

invasion of Scotland; he was also a cultivated man, enjoying country life and writing poems and treatises himself). The oppositions between the landmarks are laid out in a series of six couplets, each line alternating between Bilborough (here, this) and Almscliff (there, that). Almscliff, then, gets just six lines. Four of these are what we'd expect for the period. It stands on its mound like Pelion on Ossa, it seems to prop the skies like Atlas, its 'rocky turrets' frown indomitably down; and, more interestingly, it can be seen from great distances 'as a goal' – that is, an aim to be struggled for and achieved. But, as a climber, it was the two remaining lines that made me pay attention.

Poetry has been defined as that which is lost in translation. Sometimes, however, it's the literal meaning that's lost or blurred in the effort to fit it into a new poetic straightjacket. The attempt I was reading was based by a modern editor on Clark's undated effort and the problems were obvious. Some of the Latin words have rather wide spans of meaning and Clark had chosen to recast the lines in English heroic couplets, imposing extra strain. It reads well enough as an English poem but can't be a perfect mirror of Marvell's thought. Here are the crucial lines with the translations offered:

Erectus, praeceps, salebrosus, et arduus ille:
The steep, the rough, the difficult, are there;

This is a surprising assertion. What parts of speech are these? It would be possible to puzzle over this line at length but, keeping things simple, here are just two speculations. First, that the writer seems to have noticed that various lines of access to the cliff-top present themselves. Second, that the writer seems to have realised that each line may present a problem distinct in its nature. Steepness and difficulty can be

independent of each other. Roughness might refer to the rugged character of the rock formations here or might be an allusion to the abrasiveness of Yorkshire gritstone. On the other hand, 'rough' can also suggest punishing work or play, strenuousness, a brutal physicality. If that was intended, Marvell read Almscliff right, and his three categories would amount to a remarkably early analysis of rock climbing problems.

Ille petra minax rigidis cervicibus horret:
There the rough rocks in terrors grim are dress'd,

But (sneaking a glance at a dictionary) Marvell doesn't initially describe the rocks as rough. He says first that they're overhanging or projecting ('minax') and the translators shift this possibility from the end of the line. In passing, might 'terrors' be rendered as 'horrors'? Almscliff's imposing Wall of Horrors had been named long before Allan Austin led it. It had been top-roped by Arthur Dolphin and the first assumption would be that the name came from the fairground. On the other hand Dolphin was fond of poetry (and proud of his ability to recite such lengthy pieces as the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam and 'Kubla Khan' by heart.) Had Dolphin read Marvell?

Marvell had already spent four years travelling in Holland, France, Italy and Spain, seeing the sights no doubt, before he came to Wharfedale; ten years later he was to travel on a two-year diplomatic mission to the courts of Denmark, Sweden and Russia. And this is the man who, "Had we but World enough, and Time", might have been prepared to exercise patience –

But at my back I alwaies hear
Times winged Charriot hurrying near ...

It's hard to believe that such a man could have spent three years watching the sun set behind the principal incident on his western skyline – 'a goal' – without finding time to walk or ride there.

Of the published letters the earliest in the miscellaneous group is addressed to Cromwell. It's dated a few months after he left Nun Appleton and doesn't claim any Roundhead successes at Almscliff. It seems unlikely that we'll learn much more. For myself, I find it impossible to believe that these two lines could have been written from hearsay. They sound like the words of someone who's prowled round the rocks looking for an easy way up, which will not be obvious from every approach. And if he'd seen Almscliff many times from his favourite hill or from the upper floors of Appleton House his actions on reaching the crag would be entirely predictable – to get onto the top and look around at the views; and, in particular, to pick out Bilborough Hill.

For now, I offer the suggestion that Andrew Marvell may have scrambled up more than one of the easiest Almscliff rifts or chimneys three hundred and fifty years ago.

MINUS ONE

Stephen Reid

I own two guidebooks to Ben Nevis. One is new, fat and relatively pristine, the latest plastic-covered SMC version, published in 1994. The other is thin, tatty and dog-eared. It has suffered much from damp and from being subsequently dried out too close to the fire. Its cover is half-obliterated with bearings off the summit scrawled in black biro, worked out by myself on a clear day and a life-saver in a blizzard on several occasions since. Many of its pages are only partially legible and some, I'm sorry to say, are barely attached. It is a *Guide to Winter Climbs Ben Nevis and Glencoe* by Ian Clough, first published in 1969 though my edition is a reprint of 1978, the year I started climbing. I am rather fond of the old thing; for though, like me, it has seen better days and been superseded by many a newer model, it is 'of its time', and even a cursory glance at its pages brings memories of that time flooding back. Thus, when I want to remind myself of my carefree youth, I reread the descriptions in the old guide and remember how bold (and scared) we felt back then in the early eighties, picking out by the dim gaslights of the CIC Hut, the routes we were going to do (some time in the indefinite future), particularly those on the Orion Face. '**Suitable only for the most expert of ice-climbers**' thundered the impressive warning. 'Smiths Route, unrepeated..., Hadrian's Wall, unrepeated..., Point Five Gully, 29 hrs. of climbing over 5 days..., Zero Gully, unusually serious..., Orion Face Direct, unrepeated..., Minus Two Gully, formidable, unrepeated and probably technically the hardest of the Nevis gullies...' Minus One Gully was not even mentioned, even though it had actually had its first ascent four years earlier.

These descriptions related to the days of single axe step

Dave Bodecott on Minus One

Photo: Stephen Reid

cutting of course, and were, even then, well out of date. The advent of Terrodactyls in the early 70s had seen to that. Hell, Nicholson had soloed Zero and Point Five in three hours. Things had changed and we knew it, but nevertheless the descriptions still held us in awe and, initially at least, we didn't dare go near such climbs, just read about them and dreamed and went and did Number Two Gully and Glover's Chimney and Tower Ridge instead. But then one glorious week in April '83 it all came together. Finding myself at the CIC a day early and on my own, I soloed Zero and the Curtain. The next day my partner arrived and we ticked off Point Five. The day after – Hadrian's Wall. On the Wednesday we did North East Buttress and Smith's Route. On the Thursday, Route Major, followed by the rescue of an unfortunate lad who had inadvertently stabbed himself through his armpit with his ice-axe (he survived, despite losing a great deal of blood, and I am glad to say is still climbing). On the Friday a late start saw us on Orion Direct which we finished with one head torch between the two of us at midnight. We went home on the Saturday, we were knackered, and anyway we had ticked the lot, all that is except the Minus Gullies.

Ever since then I have been waiting for the Minus Gullies to form, particularly Minus One which my new guide describes thus: 'VI, 6 ***. A magnificent climb, the hardest of the Nevis gullies. It is not often in condition and consequently it is a much prized route.' Naturally this last phrase is like a red rag to a bull but every year I have been doomed to disappointment until now.

Acting on a tip-off, I'd persuaded Dave Bodecott to stop worrying about the state of the oil industry for a day and drive north with me to Water's Cottage, the FRCC hut at Kinlochleven. We were up at 3am and left the hut at 4, disturbing two deer who were contentedly grazing the lawn. We

quitted the car in the new Nevis carpark at 5 and began the long slow slog up the Allt a' Mhuilinn, cursing the outdoor ed instructors who as we all know are second only to angels and have thus acquired some God-given right to drive higher up the mountain than us poor blighters. "What are we going for then?" said Dave, as if we hadn't discussed it enough already. "Minus One of course," I replied, "Unless there is someone on it, I can't stand ice-climbing when there are people above me, we'll find something else" We ground on in the gloom and it wasn't until the CIC that two youngsters, who had had the sense to doss in their car conveniently blocking the instructor's locked and private gateway and had thus been in a good position to demand passage up to the higher car park, raced past us at about Mach 10. "What are you going to do?" we called after their fleeting figures, "Minus One," drifted back the answer and then they were gone. "Oh bother," I thought, or words to that effect. But they were moving so fast that I convinced myself that they wouldn't hold us up at all, which was almost true. We only lost about three hours.

By some strange logic of Dave's, winning the toss meant he got to lead the first easy pitch while I copped the crux, not that I minded, in fact I was secretly delighted, though it wouldn't do to show it, and I pretended to be suitably daunted. I was surprised to note that I didn't feel it though. What we could see of the route looked magnificent, a great swathe of ice tumbling 'tween the rocks, though the crux wall was concealed in a cleft. After a long wait for the first stance to become vacant, Bodie started up a series of icy grooves leading into the deep recesses of the gully and belayed on a spike. It was great to get moving again and my cold limbs soon came back to life as all the varied and largely indescribable techniques involved in climbing ice, unused since the previous year, came flooding back to me.

From the stance, I looked up at the next pitch with interest. Ahead the gully was completely overhung and impassable. The right wall too was bare and impending, but on the left wall a thin dribble of ice held forth promise of progress. I started up a tower of disintegrating snow in the back of the gully, thrusting my arms down the gap between it and the rock and teetering with difficulty from one semi-detached lump to the next until it ran out all together under an evil-looking mossy headwall. On the left was a rusty peg with a metre or so of bleached tat hanging from it, which at full stretch I managed to clip. Thus fortified, I moved up a bit and stretched out left again to clip the pegs. The top one was a mass of disintegrating flakes but the bottom one looked a little better and, as there didn't seem to be any other gear, I carried on. The ice, which glazed the wall in ripples, was too thin for axes, but higher up there was a thick bulge of the stuff and I bridged up between the moss and the ripples until I could get an axe hooked into it with reasonable solidity. I hung there for a moment, deliberating, but it was too steep to hang for long, and so, in the end, I just swung, axe over axe, leftwards across the steep wall, crampons skating off the verglas, until I was able to pull up onto a little foot-ledge and get a screw in and rest.

The young guns were attacking the third pitch now and several large lumps of ice rattled down accompanied by an almost constant rain of smaller stuff. Praying that they would leave enough for us, I cowered behind a handy rock until the bombardment ceased and then followed a narrow ramp awkwardly upwards towards the upper gully. Bridging out wide across the top of the overhang, I was frantically searching for placements amid the dinner plates above when a huge lump of ice hit me on the back of the neck, almost knocking me off. Later Dave was to get clobbered hard on his leg in exactly the

same spot. Angry curses brought apologies and a cessation of fire for long enough for me to pull up to easier ground where I found that, for some strange reason, the second of the two had attached himself to two ice-screws and an ice-thread, thus leaving me two in-situ pegs and a good crack which accepted a Friend and a wire. Clip in and be thankful – brilliant! I was sure we would do it now, and what a perfect day to do it on. Though the valley was filled with cloud, we were well above it and enjoying blue skies and hardly a breath of wind. Sunlight crept over the Ben, highlighting gleaming white edges above Carn Dearg and casting a Brocken Spectre of the mountain on the vast white sea that hid Fort William. Tower Ridge was a perfect creation of curving snow crests and gaunt black buttresses and here and there a tiny figure gave a Himalayan scale to it all.

Dave's lead up the next pitch took in some desperately steep ice to start (every bit as hard as the previous section I thought) before settling down to a more amenable angle. I found him belayed to a tangle of screws, axes and ice-hooks and wearing a 'whatever you do don't fall off here expression'. The next pitch too looked very steep and my heart sank a little. The guidebook suggested going straight up a fine groove but the ice looked much more reassuring round a bulge to the left that led out of sight. I started up in trepidation but soon relaxed as I discovered incredible ice ripples, invisible from below, that formed a series of small steps which made the climbing a doddle compared with the lower pitches. Dave joined me at a good spike and, after another long wait, set off up the last hard pitch. I was rather glad that it was his lead; the sustained nature of the climbing was becoming wearing. He followed thinly covered, ice-glazed slabs to a better coated groove and eventually another ice-screw belay on a single, hacked-out foothold. The final pitch was steep for a short while

but a nut runner spurred me on and it soon gave way to easy snow and a last few moves up a rocky headwall until I was able to belay on a knife-edge arête on North East Buttress and admire the fantastic sunset peeping over Carn Mor Dearg Arête. Fantastic!

There just remained the small matter of another eight pitches, including the Mantrap and the Forty Foot Corner, between us and the summit of the Ben. But the stars were out and the night, as they say, was yet young. It was two very tired and aching, though admittedly well pleased with themselves, ageing climbers who finally reached the haven of Water's Cottage at 2 am the following morning.

2000 FOR 2000 – A MILLENNIUM CELEBRATION

Peter Smith

For some the hazy recollection of celebrating the Millennium was a prolonged binge as 1999 turned into 2000. After a few wonderful winter days at Beetham Cottage I slipped away quietly to Gretna Green whereupon I married Tina, anvil and all, in the final ceremony of the outgoing Millennium. Several friends insisted on turning up to make sure that it was not the small quiet 'do' that I had envisaged. An early bed was in order so that I would be fit for Schiehallion on Hogmanay. This mountain was chosen by my friend Stewart Logan as a fitting completion to his Munro Round. We had met by chance in the spring and shared a few hill days during the closing stages of my Munro Completion but my efforts paled as Stewart strode through the snow to record the first ever Completion of Ten Munro Rounds. Fireworks brought 1999 to a memorable end.

Ahead of me was a personal Millennium Project. I had declared my intention to do '2000 for 2000' and ascend all the 2000 footers in the Lake District. Like most of us I had climbed some of them many, many times in all seasons and in all conditions. A few of the hills had been done just the once and left abandoned. It was time to turn this vague notion into a workable plan. Easter Sunday would fall upon 23rd April, Saint George's Day, and would be only two days short of its latest possible occurrence in its thirty-five day pendulum. Two weeks holiday from mid April through Easter and on to the end of April would be ideal. I could almost feel the warm sunshine on my shoulders as I visualised clear far-reaching vistas, senses reeling from the fragrant flowers of spring. Foul-weather gear would remain in the bottom of my rucksack along with the compass.

One hundred days after my honeymoon the plan was about to be executed. A small group breakfasted at Salving House in preparation for a circuit of Langstrath. The map shows Rosthwaite Fell to be ever so slightly in excess of 2000 feet so this was going to be the first mountain. From this vantage point, blue skies revealed the high tops plastered in glistening snow. Where to start and where to finish had been problematic. How about the most northerly (or southerly, westerly or easterly)? Such mountains tend to be fringe mountains of modest stature and appeal, from which two thirds of the view is away from the high ground. 'Finish on the highest' seemed to be just right. In that case we would start on the lowest. Continuing clockwise over Glaramara, Allen Crag and Rossett Pike we struck out for the brim of Langdale for Pike of Stickle, Loft Crag, Harrison Stickle, Pavay Ark, Thunacar Knott and Sergeant Man. Returning to the Langstrath watershed we finished this big first day with High Raise and ultimately Ullscarf. Resting my tired body in the Riverside Bar, I wished that I had allowed one recovery day at home after finishing work prior to starting this venture.

[12 mountains, 17 miles + 5,700']

Day two would be a through route from Salving House to Brackenlose leaving Borrowdale for the snowy summits of Seathwaite Fell, Bow Fell, Esk Pike, Great End, Ill Crag, Broad Crag and into Wasdale via Lingmell. I love through routes. You are committed to getting it right. Any friends with transport will have left for the next hut. You have to push on. Is your planning good enough? Is your navigation and mountaineering experience up to it? Do you need to carry extra gear in case you are benighted? On a different outing Scafell would have been included but today it was bypassed thereby reserving it for the final summit.

[7 mountains, 11 miles + 4,100']

I was delighted that Bill Smith joined us at Brackenclose. Bill had been very supportive of my application for FRCC membership. Becoming a member is, for most of us, the opening of a wide door of opportunity and any protégé feels an obligation to justify such support. Companions came and went according to availability and it fell to Bill, as the latest arrival, to provide an evening meal and breakfast for those on site.

Day three took its toll as we headed for those summits West of Wast that form the dividing ridge between Wasdale and Ennerdale. Torrential rain and low temperatures were our lot as we approached Seat Allan. I was in print to the effect that "...it was possible for all the summits to be crossed once, and only once, with minimal backtracking...". This rules out taking in all the summits on a dead end ridge only to repeat those summits when reversing the route. This was solved by flanking across to Caw Fell then following the ridge easterly over Haycock. Soft sugary snow and dense cloud slowed the pace yet these same conditions proved exciting on the eyrie of Steeple. On Scoat Fell, encroaching darkness forced us to leave Pillar until the morrow. How often have you descended from Red Pike and, upon reaching Dore Head, viewed with total dismay the daunting final ascent of the day? Bill convinced us that a 'faint trod', favoured by the Bob Graham lot, took a beeline from the top of Yewbarrow to the hut. Direct? Yes. Faint? Very!

[7 mountains, 11 miles + 5,400']

Striking out on day four from Brackenclose to claim Pillar we knew that a very full day had now been extended to something approaching unmanageable. Some tail end pruning was necessary. Our through route to Birkness continued in intermittent rain over Kirk Fell, Great Gable, Green Gable, Base Brown, Brandreth and over Grey Knotts down to Honister Hause.

[7 mountains, 13 miles + 5,700']

It is always a pleasure traversing High Crag, High Stile and Red Pike and the kind weather on this easy fifth day resulted in a leisurely stroll to the western outposts of Starling Dodd and Great Borne returning via Scale Force and the Bridge Inn.

[5 mountains, 12 miles + 3,300']

The pink granite tops of the Grasmoor range, overlain with typically short grass, ensures a fine outing. Severe pepperings of hail, hurled by very strong winds, continued all through day six. The pull up Whiteside eased as we continued on to Hopegill Head and Grisedale Pike. Crossing Coledale Hause we ascended Grasmoor followed by Whiteless Pike with its superb bird's eye view of Buttermere, Crummock Water and Loweswater. Beyond Wandope and Eel Crag a gradual decline in height took us over Sail, Scar Crag and Causey Pike with time to spare to visit Swinside.

[10 mountains, 13 miles + 4,800']

The aim of day seven was to catch up on those hills omitted from day four. Beset by strong winds we knew that the ascent of Robinson would lead us to the classic route over Hindscarth, Dale Head and High Spy. Extensive views beneath low cloud were possible between the heavy downpours. Descending to Honister Hause it was then an easy saunter to the top of Fleetwith Pike. Our mountain tally had been restored although we were now one day adrift.

[5 mountains, 11 miles + 4,200']

The strong winds had subsided although it was still grey and dismal going up Bowscale at the start of day eight. Topping Bannerdale Crag I reflected on the status of a mountain. Different lists suggest differing criteria for classification. Some would require an all round drop of 100 feet whilst others would

settle for a drop of 50 feet. I determined that my list would have two stipulations. Firstly Wainwright deemed the hill worthy of at least one page and, secondly, the map clearly confirms a contour of 2000'. A soggy plod took us to Mungrisdale Common. In a puddle stood a slate upon which was scratched its grid reference. This lowly recognition of the summit was all that it deserved. Really it is no more than a distant shoulder of Blencathra. Wainwright should have ignored it but instead devoted six pages to it. The sun came out for the latter half of the day as we walked over the more interesting trio of Blencathra, Lonscale Fell and Skiddaw Little Man. Recovering the car from Mungrisdale gave us the opportunity to call in at the Mill Inn.

[6 mountains, 14 miles + 4,500']

Saint George's Day was warm and sunny with good views as we undertook a variation of the Dodds on day nine. Clough Head was followed by Watson's Dodd, Stybarrow Dodd, Raise, White Side and then out to Hart Side. This marked the halfway hill of the Odyssey with 65 behind us and another 65 to do. The remaining top of Sheffield Pike provided good views of Ullswater on our way to Beetham Cottage via the Travellers Rest.

[8 mountains, 12 miles + 4,500']

The warm weather continued for our circuit of Grisedale during the tenth day. Birkhouse Moor was followed by Catstye Cam and the delectable Swirral Edge leading to the ever popular Helvellyn. Nethermost Pike requires very little effort and the punishing zigzags from Dollywaggon Pike were avoided by heading directly for Seat Sandal, that guardian of Grisedale Tarn. A short pull up St Sunday Crag was rewarded with extensive views along Ullswater as we finished the day with the easy top of Birks before soaking up the sun outside Patterdale Hotel.

[8 mountains, 11 miles + 4,100']

Cruising down Ullswater is wonderful. One is blessed with superb scenery without the effort. Docking at Howtown we had managed to ignore the bar but we could not ignore the torrential rain that dogged day eleven. Striking up to the Roman road that serviced the garrison near Penrith from the port of Ravenglass, we squelched the watershed that I refer to as the Martindale round. The ridge rises steadily over Loadpot Hill, Wether Hill and High Raise. The dramatic views of Haweswater from Kidsty Pike were denied us in the murky cloud. Returning to the circuit we took in Rampsgill Head, Knott, Rest Dodd and finished on Place Fell. Navigation 1, Views 0.

[8 mountains, 13 miles + 3,800']

Day twelve saw us parking at the Queen's Head in Troutbeck from where we would work our way back to Beetham. The whole catchment area of the Trout Beck was white with foaming tributaries. A fine ridge takes in Yoke, Ill Bell and Froswick before continuing to that majestic beacon on Thornthwaite Crag. Out and back for Gray Crag, followed by a pull up to Stony Cove Pike, left only the descent over Hartsop Dodd. Retrieving the car allowed us to reflect in the Queen's Head. Today's very wet crossing was a baptism for Max Sunderland. Recovering from a recent hip replacement he signed up for one day "provided that he could drop out if he was struggling". In fine style he clocked up the remaining eight days. Max thoroughly enjoyed getting soaked. So much so that he applied for FRCC membership.

[7 mountains, 12 miles + 4,200']

We were even wetter than Gene Kelly doing 'Singing in the rain' as we set out from Sadgill to thread our way back to Beetham. The eastern outlying twins of Grey Crag and Tarn Crag led on to Selside Pike, Branstree and Harter Fell. One member of the party chose to blob out from the two and a half

mile round trip to Kentmere Pike. Surprisingly we were now in bright sunshine and he could clearly see the way down to Nan Bield Pass. "Wait at the obvious shelter. We will rejoin you in one hour." When we got there the shelter was bare. Hoping to come across him we proceeded to Mardale Ill Bell and High Street. His description was given to several other walkers along with instructions on the route back to the hut via Hayes Water. Much, much later the evening meal was ready yet we refrained from the wine just in case a search was necessary. For reasons best known to him he thought it reasonable to follow other walkers as they wandered all the way down to Kentmere. Someone recognised him from the description and pointed him in the right direction adding that it was a long way and all uphill. Day thirteen can prove unlucky for some.

[8 mountains, 11 miles + 4,800']

Good weather blessed day fourteen on another 'find your way back to Beetham' day. The Fairfield massif is always enjoyable. Heron Pike leads up to Great Rigg which in turn culminates on Fairfield. Striding along that classic ridge route of Hart Crag, Dove Crag, High Pike and Little Hart Crag the group worked its way out to Middle Dodd with its headlong view of Brotherswater. The high ground had to be regained before knee-jarring our way down Red Screes to the Kirkstone Inn.

[9 mountains, 11 miles + 4,800']

Two weeks of pleasurable endeavour had brought a tally of 108 summits. We would regroup a month later to conclude the challenge.

The quest resumed on day fifteen from Raw Head with a group of four. 'The Flying Scot' Stewart Logan had again travelled from Bothwell. Two months earlier he had enquired about the number of days each walker was allotted. Realising that anyone could do as many days as their circumstances al-

lowed he signed up for the entirety. On the hill he always wears the kilt and gets everyone through the day by laughing and joking. Pike of Blisco was followed by Crinkle Crag. Descending the Bad Step I thought "What a great day for views". A strong gust of wind lifted Stewart's kilt and I have the photographic evidence. Taking in Cold Pike on the way to Three Shires Stone we crossed Wrynose Pass and headed for Grey Friars, Great Carrs, Swirl How and finished on Wetherlam. As the meal cooked in the oven we quickly sampled the delights of the Stickle Barn.

[7 mountains, 14 miles + 4,800']

Back to the deluge for day sixteen. The straightforward group of Brim Fell, Old Man of Coniston and Dow Crag was followed by a descent into Dunnerdale. A family group had been up the Old Man and asked us how far it was to Coniston. Oh dear. The dismal day meant that we lost the light early so that Harter Fell was finished in the dark. After a quick shower we treated ourselves to an excellent meal at the Britannia Inn.

[4 mountains, 14 miles + 4,800']

Some sensible progression around the Lake District had been achieved. I had booked the huts in advance so the day lost during the initial week had to be postponed rather than move everything up by one day. Instead of moving logically towards Wasdale for the home straight we now embarked on an outing that was completely out of sequence. The monsoon remained with us during day seventeen as we progressed up that fine edge of Ullock Pike, Long Side and Carl Side as far as Skiddaw. 'Back o' Skidda' included Bakestall, Great Calva, Knott and Great Sea Fell. In the poor visibility we took a bearing for a District Boundary line. If it ever existed at all it was submerged in the gloosh. We overshot and were sucked in to the morass of Miller Moss. Floundering and fed up in fading light and with

failing determination we abandoned the end of a very demanding day before it abandoned us. At times like this you really do appreciate the hot showers and the efficient drying rooms at the huts. We took the easy option of returning to the Britannia for the evening meal.

[8 mountains, 15 miles + 4,600']

Two and a half hours was all that it took the following morning to recoup our losses from what should have been the penultimate day – High Pike and the fortress of Carrock Fell

[2 mountains, 6 miles + 1,600']

We had now used all five hut bases in what may be the longest hut to hut route recorded. When booking the huts I thought it appropriate to invite all the wardens and assistants to share this Millennium Experience. Replies included "We'll be away", "Sorry but we will be on the French meet", "We will be skiing", "Thank you but NO THANK YOU – definitely NOT my scene". My favourite was "Whoever thought this one up must have done so at the wrong end of a good pub session". However, FRCC was well represented by Bill Smith (6 days) David Stansfield (2 days) and Brenda Fullard (1).

So far 24 people had taken part with the size of the hill parties ranging from three to eight. Given a free choice, many of them would have done the full round and felt very strongly that the final day should be arranged to accommodate their availability. By consensus this would be Saturday 10th June.

Eighteen of us posed in the morning sunshine for a photograph outside Brackenclough including friends from FRCC, Calder Valley Search and Rescue Team and Rotary Club of Hebden Bridge. "Have you brought the baton?" This was the symbol of continuity throughout the event. Friends had come and friends had gone yet the baton had done the whole round being passed on by someone departing into the care of a new

Descending Broad Stand on Scafell *Photo: Pete Smith*



Champagne celebration on Scafell Pike *Photo: Peter Smith*

arrival. Designed by David Stansfield the smooth wooden cylinder had been cleverly hollowed. Secreted inside was a parchment scroll upon which everyone, day by day, had signed their record of participation.

In buoyant mood we filed upwards to Slightside without a thought of 'the wettest Spring on record' during what became 'the wettest year on record'. On the top of Scafell the party split. Some chose to risk ankle, tib and fib on Lord's Rake. I followed Bill as he supervised the rest of us down Broad Stand. Everyone approved my choice of final summit. 'Go for the highest not the shyest'. Stewart produced a bottle of Champagne as a joyous group adorned the summit of Scafell Pike. A celebratory buffet awaited our return to the hut and no doubt Tina, my Millennium Bride, was planning some more fireworks.

[3 mountains, 8 miles + 3,500']

[Trip total: 131 mountains, 234 miles + 82,400']

RETURN WITH A VENGEANCE

The Destruction (1972)

& Re-creation (2000) of 'Slabs Ordinary', Birkness Combe

Wil Hurford

Part I – Destruction, 1972

The crag has collapsed, the belay has failed and the second is unconscious in free fall. The leader who finds himself in this situation might not unreasonably conclude, as he is dragged off his stance, that he is having a bad day.

I had a bad day on Saturday 1st July 1972.

The weather was perfect that July morning when the four of us left early from Gatesgarth Farm. It was to be an Alpine Fitness Training weekend. The previous summer Ann and I had done numerous classics abroad including the North Faces of the Dru and Piz Badile, and Alan had succeeded on other climbs of similar seriousness and difficulty. All three of us were regular 'Extreme' leaders. Keith was less technically inclined, but was fit, had had a couple of Alpine seasons and was happy on V.S. rock.

Our plan was simple. In boots, and carrying sacks, we would link together a series of easy classics in Birkness Combe, on Pillar, and finally the Napes, to create the equivalent of a long Alpine route. We'd done similar circuits before and the only problem we'd ever encountered was benightment. The thought that such a day could threaten our very existence never entered our heads.

We all soloed up Harrow Buttress, roped up for Mitre Buttress Direct, and moved across to the foot of Slabs Ordinary on Chockstone Buttress. Alan indicated that he'd like to solo it, but Keith expressed a wish to use a rope. I offered to lead him on their rope, whereupon Ann said she'd tie on as 'third', otherwise she'd end up soloing, carrying our rope, an unfair handicap.

I reached the foot of the final corner where the guidebook mentioned a 'well equipped stance'. The belay, the size of a piano and far too big for any normal sling, was unmistakable. I draped a huge loop of Keith's climbing rope around the base of the block and sat down beside it. This latter action probably saved my life.

I brought Keith up quickly – he found the slab easy – and Alan soloed behind him. The stance was not large so Alan climbed up and sat on the block. To save time, I left Keith standing behind me on the ledge to sort out his own anchor while I took in Ann's rope, breaking an important safety rule. But this is a common enough practice amongst experienced alpinists on climbs of the type for which we were training and we both understood exactly what needed to be done.

Keith had not clipped on when disaster struck seconds later. Breaking that rule saved Keith's life.

"Climb when you're ready". Using a waist belay, I took in the rope as Ann started climbing. (Belay plates were not in common use then). Alan, sitting on the block, leaned forward to get a better view of Ann ... and all hell broke loose. The belay block toppled – the last I saw of Alan he was falling, facing outwards, arms outstretched, with an expression of surprise and disbelief on his face.

"Poor sod, he's had it!"

My thought was violently interrupted as I was whipped off the ledge (My belay loop was round the base of the block, remember). No text book, instructor or previous experience prepares one for this scenario. Reaction is instinctive and unplanned. Abandoning Ann's rope, I clamped both hands on the edge of the ledge, only just in time. There were no useful footholds for my mountain boots. I felt I was going to be torn apart – either my arms were going to leave their sockets or the rope round my waist was going to rip me in two.

Suddenly everything went slack – the block had slipped out of the belay loop – then there was a tremendous and terrifying roar. The whole crag seemed to be shaking. The block had struck a ledge lower down. At the point of impact the buttress cracked open and the **WHOLE SLAB**, some 10 metres wide, about 2 metres deep and perhaps 20 metres long parted company with the mountain. There is now a diagonal overhang right across the buttress indicating the line of separation. The slab then broke into thousands of pieces and poured down the scree slope below all the way to the valley floor.

Ann was on the slab.

Hanging from the edge of the ledge by both hands and marvelling at my lucky escape, I suddenly became aware of a new problem. Ann's rope, which I had previously taken in and piled neatly on the ledge was flying off the ledge at the speed I nowadays associate with bungee jumpers' tethers after they have plucked up the courage to leap. Ann was in free fall. An unwelcome complication.

Keith was on the other end of her rope, not yet belayed, and I was on the other end of **HIS** rope with neither belays nor footholds, hanging by my arms from the edge of a ledge. Oh dear. No text book, instructor or previous experience prepares you for this one either.

If I had had time to plan my next action (which I didn't) the little microprocessor in my head might have reasoned: "If I remain in my present position, Ann's flying mass will catapult Keith off the ledge. She will then hit the deck and eliminate herself from my problem while Keith will fall the full length of his rope at which point his weight moving at close on 100 m.p.h. will be more than my little arms will tolerate. Better therefore to try to slow down and stop Ann **IMMEDIATELY.**"

Which is exactly what I did.

Taking one hand off my precious ledge, I grabbed the

moving rope. The blood and flesh stain on the rope was later measured and found to be twelve feet long, but the rope stopped moving. The buttress, by the way, had not, and the roar, the sulphurous stench, and the all-enveloping cloud of dust and dirt seemed to be lasting for ever. Ann's full weight remained on the rope. My screams in her direction elicited no response. I concluded at best she was unconscious ... perhaps she wasn't there at all any more and I was just holding a huge boulder in loops of tangled rope ... with my left hand stretched high above my head holding myself to the ledge and my right hand somewhere near my knees holding a rope with something very heavy attached to it, I was in no position to turn and look. Indeed I was in no position to do anything useful, and both hands were tiring fast.

"Help me" I pleaded to Keith, who did nothing. He stood rigid with fear at the back of the ledge, his arms spread against the rock in a scary, crucifix-like stance, his eyes saying all. He didn't need a lot of imagination to work out what was about to happen.

"Do something!" I screamed at him, but he still didn't move. I realise now that he couldn't have helped anyway. Hollywood-style heroics, grabbing my wrist or hair, would have been inappropriate here. A belay was what was needed, and fast, but it wasn't available. Recent thorough cleaning of the fateful ledge has failed to reveal anything suitable for a rope loop. There are some good nut placements a few feet above the ledge, but Keith had no nut slings. They were all hanging on his leader's waist belt two metres below the ledge, out of reach. His only other option would have been to climb the last and steepest pitch to good anchors at the top, totally unprotected, trailing the ropes. He would have been at his limit soloing such an exposed pitch in rock shoes under ideal conditions. In the prevailing circumstances, and wearing boots,

any attempt would probably only have complicated the situation and delayed the inevitable.

I had held on when the original block had tried to drag me off. I had held myself with one hand, and Ann's fall with the other, without belay or stance. Nobody was falling now, and nothing was moving, but I couldn't hold on much longer. Despite my efforts it seemed we were all still doomed ... then a miracle occurred.

"Hold on! I'm coming!" It was Alan's voice. But surely Alan was at the bottom of the crag, presumably already warning Heaven of our imminent arrival? No, Alan was not on the deck. He had turned as he fell, grabbed the crag and failed to stop, ripped his leg open from the ankle to the knee, tried again and second time struck lucky. He'd landed on a heathery ledge to one side of the rock fall, ten metres below his starting point and, most importantly, was still capable of climbing.

In no time he traversed across to Ann's rope, took the weight, checked she was still on the end (she was hanging in space, unconscious, beneath the new diagonal overhang), and I mantelshelved with relief back onto the ledge. No-one is ever again likely to sprint up the last pitch of Slabs Ordinary as fast as I did then and no-one is ever again likely to set up such complex and comprehensive belays at its top.

Only then did I notice the torn and bloody mess that was once my palm.

Ann recovered consciousness fairly quickly, but declined to complete the route (which wasn't there anymore anyway) so, tying two ropes together, we lowered her to the ground. While scrambling down to join her, we noted with alarm an enormous number of people sweeping up the combe. There were scores of them. Hell's teeth! It's probably a lynch mob – an angry, blood thirsty conglomerate of mountain loving conservationists: Friends of the Lake District, the National Trust,

the RSPB, the FRCC, the whole damn lot by the look of it, coming to deal with a gang of environmental vandals. We were outnumbered twenty to one, the only witnesses to protest our innocence were sheep, and we'd need an interpreter if they spoke Cumbrian – we weren't even Northerners. We wouldn't stand a chance.

The Cockermouth Mountain Rescue Team had been called out by campers at Gatesgarth Farm. The rockfall had been clearly heard and seen from there, two kilometres away, and someone with binoculars had noted bodies strewn over the crag in an unconventional arrangement. The team was sympathetic. They had lost two members of their group in 1969 during a practice in the same area when a belay block had failed. They did however seem rather disappointed that there were no casualties on this occasion so Ann offered to ride on one of the stretchers since she didn't feel 100%. This was an unfortunate decision because, before we could intercept, she had been transferred to a waiting ambulance which raced off to Whitehaven with sirens wailing and lights flashing. We had no chance of keeping up.

On our arrival at Accident & Emergency, there was a misunderstanding. The receptionist disappeared. She returned, not with Ann, but with three doctors.

"You", she ordered Alan, "in Number 1". "You" (to Keith), "Number 2". "You" (to me), "Number 3".

I tried to explain we were visitors, not patients, but to no avail. The staff all seemed to want to practise their stitching skills that afternoon and the three of us did well to escape by dusk still in possession of our blood-splashed climbing clothes. Ann was held hostage until she talked. On Monday morning the Daily Mail ran their back page big story under the headline: "LANDSLIDE GIRL HANGS ON". She was released soon after the presses started to roll.

'Return with a Vengeance' – in the middle of the 1972 rock scar
Photo: Peter Scott

The rest of us climbed at Shepherds on Sunday, reasoning that it was such an insignificant crag that if we pulled that one down as well, no-one would miss it anyway.

Part II Re-creation, 2000

Fifteen years passed before I even dared apply for membership of the FRCC. After all, if the suitability for membership of an applicant is questioned if he/she fails to wash up, what hope is there for anyone who destroys crags, the vital commodity upon which our sport depends? Even a totally wrecked hut could theoretically be replaced, and if it couldn't, folk could always go back to camping. It wouldn't stop anyone climbing. But a wrecked crag can never be returned to its original condition. Clearly, destroying a crag is a greater sin than destroying a hut!

Despite my crime I was in due course elected, but every time I attend the Annual Dinner I sense members whispering behind my back:

"That's him, the one who destroyed Slabs Ordinary: CC member of course, always causing trouble, keep an eye on him!"

Later, in the Millennium Year, I was introduced to Colin Read, creator of many modern Lakeland classics and Editor of the most recent Buttermere guidebook. Surprisingly he's not an FRCC member – presumably he's useless at washing up.

He was keen to redevelop the area of rock that was once 'Slabs Ordinary' and invited me to join him. Cautiously I agreed. I had serious doubts about the stability of the buttress. Colin however took the view that under the debris we were bound to find solid bedrock sooner or later. So on the evening of Sunday 21st May, twenty-eight years after the original event, the two of us moved stealthily towards Grey Crag, armed with all the usual paraphernalia plus an old ice axe.

This last item was deemed entirely appropriate for res-

establishing an old classic, for had not my wife's Great Uncle, Fred Botterill, used precisely the same weapon on his famous Slab nearly one hundred years earlier? Old family traditions die hard. We dawdled until the last pair left the crag and then started work.

Once again the combe resonated to the sound of crashing rocks. To my relief there was not nearly so much unstable material as I had originally imagined and by nightfall we had unearthed a reasonable route. But it wasn't 'Slabs Ordinary' anymore. Colin's new pitch contained a groove, a crack and an overhang – just about everything except a slab. Four weeks later I returned with Grace and repeated this 'New Ordinary'.

"It wanders about a bit. Why didn't you go straight up?"
Women are hard to please.

"Because straight up is steep and slimy. It looks hard."

But was it? What was under all that oozy black moss between 'Slabs West' and Colin's new pitch?

Back again two months later, but this time with my long time acquaintance, Chris Fitzhugh (FRCC), to repeat the classics. In his seventh decade, Chris still climbs with the enthusiasm of an energetic teenager when the conditions are right. On 30th August I could not hold him back and, after nine routes, including the 'New Ordinary', we were running out of things to do.

"What's that tower above Colin's new pitch?"

"Nothing."

"Shall we take a look?"

Fifteen minutes on a rope removing the most troublesome vegetation and a few loose stones and things were looking good.

"Better start at the bottom".

Combined with the obvious, lower crest of the buttress which surprisingly seemed to have been missed by everyone

else, and Colin Read's new pitch, we now had a pleasant route; on good rock, closely following the edge of the buttress straight up the crag at Mild V.S. Unfortunately, stealing the pitch of an established route in order to improve the line of a new one is not considered good form. Without its own middle pitch though, our latest efforts would be consigned to the scrap heap of 'Variations', a guide-book label guaranteed to ensure that only those who stray off-route by mistake ever repeat them. Colin might not be too pleased either, after the time and effort he'd put into re-establishing the 'New Ordinary'. Perhaps he'd forgive me if I found a replacement for his creation.

It was time to investigate that band of black moss between Slabs West and Colin's pitch, so one sunny September morning, midweek, I plodded up to Grey Crag one more time.

Three hours hanging on an abseil rope and the wire brush is worn down to the wood. I can feel a bad attack of Gardeners' Wrist coming on, but it's been worth the effort. Underneath that luxuriant black carpet lay hidden a splendid slab of perfect rock covered in holds – a V.Diff. pitch par excellence. Slabs Ordinary existed once more, just as good as the original but even more direct.

I was back again two days later with a climbing friend the right side of thirty. Handing over scribbled notes of TWO routes where originally there was only one, the Crag Destroyer of '72 who'd taken up Crag Rehabilitation in his retirement gave the orders:

"Find the starts. Check the descriptions. Lead the routes. Grade them. Be as rude as you like."

Some time later the verdict was pronounced:

"H'm, not exactly E6 are they? Quite good for beginners and oldies I suppose. By the way, what are you calling the Mild V.S.?"

"I think Return with a Vengeance would be appropriate"

ELEVEN DAYS LAST SUMMER

An account of a short trip to the Alps in the summer of 2000

Mark Vallance

It was the wettest summer ever. Twentyfour hours after leaving Derbyshire we arrived in the Lauterbrunnen Valley having decided on the drive across Europe to at least try the Bernese Oberland before giving up and heading for the sun. As we arrived the evening sky was clearing from yet another storm and the imposing row of North Faces that form the Lauterbrunnen Wall were covered in snow. We put up the tent, had a brew and went to bed.

The next morning the sound of hot-air balloons woke us – brightly coloured spheres against a totally blue sky. Coffee, special alpine breakfast-from-a-packet and we were off for the Wetterhorn. We asked permission to leave the car at the Wetterhorn Hotel. Luck was with us from the start – there was no parking fee! Were we really in Switzerland?

I can recommend the path to the Gleckstein Hut. It is a truly great alpine hike. Clinging to the side of limestone cliffs, it offers a degree of exposure that concentrates the mind, until, rounding a corner, you get superb views up to the Schreckhorn and across to the Mittellegi Ridge of the Eiger. The higher you climb the more the views into, and across the Grindelwald valley expand. The path takes you through (!) a waterfall, up zig-zags and deposits you at the splendid hut in time for afternoon tea served by the friendly hut custodienne.

Hut food has improved since my last alpine trip and the red wine that I had smuggled into my pack, unknown to Colin, made it a feast. Colin Foord and I have climbed together for many years but we had never climbed together in the Alps. I suspected he might not approve of alcohol on the mountain so I had judiciously limited our supply to a single litre. Frown

he did. For a two full seconds he refused all the offers I made. Finally, after another long second he said, "OK", and a tense moment was over.

We had chosen the Wetterhorn because it was low, only 3701 metres. We had chosen the 'Wills' route, (remember the judge who sentenced Oscar Wilde?), because the guidebook says it is a good first route. Somehow we failed to notice that it involved 1400 metres of ascent. This trip turned out to be a long trial too.

Despite the fact that it hadn't been climbed that month and that we were the only team from the hut to reach the summit, altitude, masses of soft snow from recent storms, general lack of fitness and the fact that my right knee does not like going downhill very much all took their toll. Colin looked after me like a professional but the upshot was that the descent took us as long as the ascent. The couloir crossing at the bottom of the long ridge that provides the meat of the climb, well frozen when we crossed it that morning, proved exciting on the return, with regular avalanches of wet snow, water and big rocks spewing down from the walls above. We got back to the hut in total darkness, seventeen hours after leaving it; a tribute to our perseverance and endurance if not our fitness. We were extravagantly welcomed by the custodienne, slept in the guides room, and descended to the valley the next day.

It is my experience that at this stage of an alpine trip the weather breaks and you get a good rest – but no such luck in this 'worst-of-all' season. The pressure remained high and the weather fair so the next day we caught the train up to Kleine Scheidegg and then made the serious scramble up to the Guggi Hut, packs pared down to the minimum of ice gear and a litre of red wine, arriving in time for tea.

The Nollen route on the Mönch is as long as the previous

route but a somewhat harder undertaking. My heart was in my mouth as we soloed up sloping ledges reminiscent of a tiled roof, with what in our headlamps seemed like serious exposure. Eventually we put crampons on and soloed up to the Ice Nose, two long pitches of steep ice which Colin disposed of very quickly. An easy snow slope followed by a harder mixed ridge and we were traversing the summit snow ridge and joining the hordes who had come up on the train and the much shorter regular route.

The Mönchjochhütte was seriously crowded so despite the fact that we arrived in time for tea – an appreciable improvement on our last foray – we had to wait for the second serving of supper and sleep on the dining room floor. This meant we had the disadvantage of an early start for the regular route on the Jungfrau which involves a long hike to get to the start of the route. The good news was that there was lots of firm snow covering the loose rock: the bad thing was that, once on the route, we got behind a huge party of Belgians and were just not fit enough to break out of the tracks and overtake them. We ended up smiling though – being a weekend, the train down from the Jungfrauoch was so full that the guard couldn't check the tickets that we didn't have.

We went out for some fantastic 'Rosti', slept late and spent a day shopping, getting cleaned up and doing post cards and afternoon tea. The next morning the elements were against us – blue sky and fine weather. We set out for the Finsteraarhorn, a seriously remote mountain. Up at 5.30 to catch the very cheap and aptly named 'Good Morning' (must descend by 12 noon) train back to the Jungfrauoch. From here we walked for two hours down the long slope of the Jungfraufirn to Konkordia, then up the Grunegggrin Glacier, over the Grünhornlücke and down to the Fieschergletscher which we crossed to the Finsteraarhorn Hut arriving at tea

time. Having been dogged by good weather we ran into some good luck at 4.30 the next morning. Half an hour after setting out, thunder heralded the start of an unexpected storm and we scuttled back to the hut in time to avoid the rain and went back to bed for the sheer luxury of sleeping till noon.

Next day we were the first to the summit but as a result of my reluctant right knee we were last back to the hut, too early for tea. That evening whilst reading about the proposed ascent of our next objective, the Fiescherhorn, I discovered that my great uncle (an honorary member of the FRCC) had made the first ascent of our proposed descent route way back in 1887!

Damnably perfect weather yet again so we had no choice but to climb both the Hinter Fiescherhorn and the Grosser Fiescherhorn. Uncle Hermann's route wasn't so easy in descent starting directly down the 3000-foot ice-slope of the Fiescherwand which we forsook for the tedious North Ridge and a long slog up the aptly named 'Eternal Snow' to the Mönchjoch and back in time for the last train.

We decided that honesty was the best policy and admitted to the young ticket inspector that as it was 6.00 pm our train tickets were not valid. "Never mind mate," a strong New Zealand accent intoned. "Looks like the mountains gave you a hard enough time!" We pinched ourselves but, yes, we were awake and this was Switzerland.

So ended what some would call our holiday. We got back to our tent too late for tea but that evening we ate in considerable style. Our well earned sleep was interrupted by a huge thunder storm and when we woke the mountains were again covered in fresh snow. We arrived home at three the next morning wondering what we had done to deserve such treatment by the elements.

A SHORT NOTE ABOUT HERMANN WOOLLEY 1846-1920

Mark Vallance

I have been prompted by the Editor to write a footnote about my Great Uncle, Hermann Woolley. I remember his sister, my Great Aunt Tabitha, who used to take me to Halle Concerts at the Free Trade Hall and for whom I had to be on my best behaviour. She was eighty-five years older than me and our conversation unfortunately never got round to discussion of her long-dead brother. I have a sepia photograph of him (see opposite), a kindly, characterful, Edwardian gentleman with a moustache. He is going bald in the same way that I probably will.

I have his first edition of Mummery's book, *My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus*, inscribed inside the front cover – 'With the author's kind regards'. His ice axe, made in London by a company called 'Fox', is displayed in 'Outside', the climbing shop in Hathersage. I also have his beautiful pocket aneroid barometer, made in solid brass for the family firm of which he was a director: James Woolley and Sons, Manchester, once an important manufacturing chemist but now long gone.

Hermann Woolley was well known for his photography. I remember my father once showing me his plate camera – polished wood, brass, fabric bellows and glass. I don't know what happened to the camera but I suspect that Uncle Hermann might have envied my somewhat more compact Rollei 35. Colin Foord (my climbing partner) is giving wall space to a couple of his wonderful large format photographs, one of the Weisshorn and an excellent long view of the Matterhorn from Riffelalp which exposes, by comparison with today, the ravages of global warming.

With respect to our descent of the NW Ridge of the Fiescherhorn, the English guidebook credits Woolley with

the first ascent on 31 July 1887. I was completely oblivious to this family connection until the night before our climb whilst looking up the description of our proposed descent. However, the Swiss guide book puts the first ascent as 1890 by a Swiss party. So far I have not resolved this, though I do know that he was in Grindelwald in the summer of 1887 prior to going to the Caucasus.

Woolley became a Caucasus specialist returning in 1888 to make the second ascent of Dych Tau (5184 m) and the first ascent of Mishirgi Tau (4918 m). In 1889 he made the first ascent of Kashtan Tau (5150 m). He returned in 1893 to attempt the unclimbed south peak of Ushba and was back again in 1895 and 1896 when he climbed the eponymous 'Pic Woolley'. (When climbing in the Caucasus in 1990, I mentioned to my Russian hosts that Woolley was my Great Uncle. I was surprised that they knew, not only who he was, but by the kudos that my revelation inspired!)

Hermann Woolley made many first and other early ascents in the Alps, including a winter ascent of the Mönch, and also in Norway and the Rocky Mountains. He was president of the Alpine Club from 1908-11. He was made an Honorary Member of the FRCC in 1907 but was not an Original Member.

Colin and I may have felt pretty cocky with our short alpine season but check this out. In 1881 Uncle Hermann climbed the Breithorn on 29 July followed by the Rimpfischhorn the next day! (How did he do that without the cable car?) Two days later he climbed the Zinalrothorn, the Matterhorn on the 4th August and the Weisshorn two days after that – five major peaks in nine days. In August 1885 he climbed the Bietschhorn, (3934m. '... the most difficult of the big peaks in the Bernese Alps.'). the Petersgrat, Schreckhorn, Eiger, Jungfrau and Finsteraarhorn, also in nine days and without the benefit of any uphill transport!

SPECULATIVE MEMORIES

Bill Comstive

In the absence of access to the hills at last year's Annual Dinner Meet, the President arranged a conducted tour for a party to the Rheged Centre near Penrith. The highlight of that visit for me was seeing the artefacts retrieved from the body of George Mallory.

When I was at grammar school I became interested in two heroes – Capt. R. F. Scott and George L. Mallory. The first because I was in Scott House, and the second because in those days the stories of British heroes were part of the school curriculum. When you were drafted into your House you were expected to find out for yourself something about the person who gave your House its name. I read *South With Scott* by Lord Mountevans – Lt. Teddy Evans on Scott's Last Expedition. The book fired me with enthusiasm for wild places.

The circumstances of the deaths of Scott and Mallory were not dissimilar. Both were striving for an ideal, but they were quite different in personality; Scott the diffident leader striving to come to terms with the thought that he was responsible for anything that went wrong on the expedition; and for having got the polar party into difficulties that resulted in their deaths. Mallory by contrast harboured the thought that he was destined to climb Everest. He who now lies in the snow of the Great Ice Barrier was like Mallory who lies in the snow of Everest. But Mallory was an ardent impatient soul burning with a fire and winding himself up to a passion of effort the higher he got.

After Mallory died on Everest the great debate started, which has never ceased, whether or not he and Andrew Irvine, his summit bid companion on the 1924 Everest expedition, did actually reach the top and die on the return. Prior to an

American expedition finding Mallory's body in 1999 there was little evidence. In 1933 a British expedition had found Irvine's ice axe below the crest of the north-east ridge, but it was a matter of conjecture whether it had been placed there or lost, and most significantly was it on the way up or down. In 1979 a Chinese mountaineer stumbled across a body dressed in old fashioned clothes of what was referred to as an 'English dead' at over 26,000 feet in the general vicinity of where Irvine's axe had been found. Initially it was thought the body was Irvine, but it was found to be Mallory, and the same expedition has continued to look for Irvine in the belief that he may have the camera which might have been used to photograph them on the summit.

I became fascinated with the arguments put forward for and against their possible success. I bought David Robertson's biography of George Mallory published in 1969 followed by a copy of the official report of the 1924 expedition and Carr's 1979 edited edition of the *Irvine Diaries*. I avidly read these searching for any clue that would lead me to believe that they had been successful on that fateful day in June 1924.

Some years ago I had the privilege of talking with Noel Odell who was absolutely convinced that he had seen the climbers on the second step that afternoon, late though it was. I am not a spiritualist, but I have an open mind on such matters. After their deaths most of the leading mediums of their day were consulted and all confirmed that Mallory and Irvine did reach the summit and died on the return to Camp VI.

When Mallory left Camp VI that morning he had two items with him. A photograph of his wife and a small Union flag from the school where he taught, both of which he promised to deposit on the summit of Everest. Neither of these two articles were found on his body. It is known that the 1924 summit pair had a camera, but this remains missing.

I am torn between hoping that the camera will not be found and the intriguing mystery that has caused so much interesting speculation can continue. On the other hand how wonderful it would be to know beyond doubt that they were after all the first on the summit. Sir Edmund Hillary, when asked the question of how he might greet this news, magnanimously said that he would be delighted to hear that Mallory and Irvine had got there first.

As the search for the body of Irvine continues, so speculation continues. Not so for Captain Scott. The bodies of he and his remaining companions were found in their tent by a search party in November 1912. His conquest of the South Pole was confirmed by a letter found in the tent and written by Roald Amundson requesting Scott to deliver it to King Hakkon of Norway.

Scott is still progressing. Recent calculations indicate that the bodies have moved north about twenty miles from the original burial site. One day they will fall into the sea from a berg carved out of the Ross Ice Barrier drifting north and melting. No doubt that is how it should be. There is nothing permanent in this world, not even Mallory, Irvine and Scott and his companions. These are the kind of characters we most admire for their qualities and aspirations which took them to the ends of the earth. There is a wonderful Epitaph by the late Arnold Lunn in his book written to celebrate the Centenary of the Alpine Club which so aptly applies to these men:

There let us leave them; for their shroud the snow.
For funeral lamps they have the planets seven.
For a great sign the icy stair shall go
Between the stars to heaven.

YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN HERE YESTERDAY

Adam Bannister

I'm not a great reader but each winter I come back to just one book and it's always the same one; the SMC guide to ski-mountaineering in Scotland. In there the description of the traverse of the Cairngorm 4000 footers always caught my attention and it reads like a must-do. Penetrating deep into the wildest parts, long and committing and with some great descents, it covers the peaks of Cairngorm, Ben Macdui, Cairn Toul and Braeriach in a 32km round. In good late winter conditions there are only a few parts that can't be either skinned up or skied down. The only requirement seemed to be good weather, good snow and long daylight hours, all coinciding with a weekend: not a combination usually associated with Scotland and the tour had been on the list for some time.

One April a couple of years ago on the seven-hour drive north for some ski touring with my brother, it became apparent from the radio forecast that the next day might just be that 'Four Tops' one we had been waiting for, particularly as there was also good late season snow cover. The skies became clearer the further north we drove, the forecast hinting that the brief ridge of high pressure might, if we didn't speak too loudly, last until the following afternoon before the arrival of a front. Pitching the tent at 2am under a starlit sky, the pressure rising and the temperature down at -3, we were already packing rucksacks in a frenzy of anticipation. Optimists we are; the sunglasses also went in along with the rest of the gear.

Leaving at 7am from an empty Coire Cas carpark we were greeted by sun and a pale blue sky, a welcome change from the dreich conditions we seemed to get most of the time. In fact, that year our arrival in the north always seemed to coincide with the timely disappearance of any reasonable weather and we had begun to think that good conditions only ever occurred

'yesterday'. The skin up to the top of Cairngorm was at a fast pace and at this, the first top, there was already smug talk of enjoying an afternoon beer in the sun down at the tent once we'd romped round and ticked the other three. However, we would later pay the price for this early enthusiasm as, thankfully at the time, we hadn't quite appreciated the scale of what lay ahead. From here, we left behind all the lifts and the 'terrain park' in favour of the uninterrupted white landscape leading on to Ben Macdui. With a sense of some urgency prompted by my brother, never one to miss the chance for a PB, we left the top by a series of long turns, surprised to have a few inches of new snow, and headed down towards the plateau and the start of the long skin up to the second top, Ben Macdui.

The way to Ben Macdui is long but with only gradual height gain and with the day's cloudless sky it was a different world to the navigational nightmares that we had 'enjoyed' here on previous visits. At my request we found a more realistic pace, losing ourselves to the sound of ski on snow, and reached the ice encrusted cairn at the top of a deserted Ben Macdui. Here, the next part of the route is obvious as it is simply the skyline opposite, but is separated from Ben Macdui by the deep slot of the Lairig Ghru, the epitome of Cairngorm wildness. The descent down to the Lairig Ghru is well known for its quality, steepness and reliability of snowcover. With 700m of descent by either of two gullies that see little sun, the steep Allt a'Choire Mhoir or the wider and gentler Allt Clach nan Taillear, the run down is more than ample reward for the effort needed to get there. As with any ski mountaineering in Scotland, you never know what kind of snow you'll find and it's always a relief to discover something vaguely skiable. Sastrugi, deep sog, bullet-proof ice, lightly dusted frozen peat, breakable crud, or other challenging Scottish specialities are usually on the menu but today's offering was for once quite pleasant.

We'd done the Allt a'Choire Mhoir a few years previously

on a shorter tour where, on dropping out of the mist, we were greeted with a descent on windblown powder all the way to the valley floor. Today's conditions were far more springlike and we opted for the corrie further south which was amply filled with firm but grippy snow. Lower down, the gully narrowed to give perfect spring snow, with the occasional hole giving glimpses of the torrent beneath to keep you concentrating on your turns and to remind you of the season's impending end. Short turns generated by now-tiring legs, took us to an abrupt halt in the heather where the snowline ended, winter ceased and spring began.

Time for a breather, some brunch, a bit of ptarmigan spotting and a check on the route ahead. This was all too obvious: cross the river, down the Lairig Ghru for a while, then a slog up Coire Odhar onto the other side of the valley for the northwards return leg. This being April there was little snow in the Lairig Ghru itself so it was a change into walk mode with skis on rucksacks and what seemed like hours later, we arrived on the plateau rim on the opposite side. With the sun now bearing straight down on us, a rarity in Scotland which normally we would have been grateful for, and the price of our 'too fast too soon' approach we started to flag somewhat and to appreciate the scale of the day out. A band of grey cloud was now visible in the west and we were just over half way round.

Back to skis and skins for the climb up Cairn Toul and the change in pace again takes some adjustment. We made painfully slow progress up to the first rise, spurred on only by the superb head-on view of the earlier run down from Ben Macdui. On reaching Cairn Toul we took a break to have a bite to eat and survey the scenery that we would be crossing during the next few hours. Here the route roughly follows three sides of a square, with continuous steep cliffs and corries on one side and tempting but featureless ground leading you miles away from your destination on the other. A mistake in bad visibility

here and the outcome could be either very quick or extremely long, depending on our preference for points of the compass.

The ski down from Cairn Toul on spring snow was very welcome, requiring turns of all types and lengths due to the heavy sun-warmed snow, scattered boulders poking through and legs that now wanted to do anything but turn. Another changeover to skins, bindings into climb mode and we headed up to Sgor an Lochain Uaine, The Angel's Peak. On the plateau we spied two other tourers, the first people we had seen since leaving Coire Cas, who had come up from Gleann Einich. We passed at a distance and acknowledged their presence although our concentration was focused more on the rhythm of skinning. The traverse round the plateau rim to Braeriach is long and featureless and skinning took some mental effort to keep going. In our introspection we had not noticed that the promised weather front was now with us, the sun had long since gone, low cloud moved swiftly in and it started to snow. Oh well, at least we could say we had worn sunglasses in the Cairngorms, if only briefly! We hit the top of Braeriach, the fourth and final top, on a compass bearing as mist and snow enveloped everything around us.

After some gravitational experiments to sort out what was uphill and downhill in the white-out we took the skins off and skied, or rather got down, to the shoulder in zero visibility. Skins back on for the rise to Sron na Lairige and a bearing took us to the cairn where we both sat down and peered in vain into our water bottles; in the spirit of travelling light we had brought only a litre each and it had long since gone. A fine descent down Coire Gorm followed, in snow heavy with drizzle where we were joined by two telemarkers who appeared out of the mist. We had apparently passed within metres of each other on the top of Braeriach without knowing. We skied together down the wide snowfield with long turns down to the lochan, united in the pleasure of descent at the end of a long day,



Skiing from Cairngorm toward Coire an t-Sneachda Photo: Adam Bannister

witnessed by no-one but enjoyed by all. Linking the final snowdrifts we reached the Lairig Ghru once more.

It's always nice to finish a day's ski mountaineering with a great run down to your starting point but today wasn't one of them. From the Lairig Ghru it was a walk out up the bouldery path to the Chalamain Gap and onwards below the Northern Corries. In midwinter you can usually ski, skin and heather hop your way back to the car from here but having put skins on and off innumerable times during the day we couldn't face any more of it. So it was off down the largest drift as far as we could ski in the gathering dark and strengthening drizzle before a final switch back to skis on rucksacks for the walk out, reaching the deserted car park twelve hours after leaving it. The weather was still bad the next day, but for once we weren't on the receiving end of that cruel phrase 'you should have been here yesterday'.

MONT AIGUILLE

Root of mountaineering and mountaineering route

Doug Elliott

My wife, Sylvia, accuses me of being obsessed by mountains. I argue that climbing and mountaineering provide a means of sheltering behind well defined boundaries where complete absorption can be found in seeking the route, determining the moves to get up the next pitch, reaching the summit, and descending safely. I climb by choice for personal satisfaction at my own particular level, and though lots of climbers climb lots better than me, none enjoy it more than me. It is hardly self evident to equate enjoyment with the discomfort and fatigue (and fears) we sometimes endure with climbing and mountaineering, and perhaps the feeling extends beyond enjoyment to exhilaration, or even exaltation.

I have always been aware that my enjoyment from climbing and mountaineering is more than physical effort or gymnastic performance in gaining a summit or overcoming a technical difficulty. With advancing age and open-heart surgery I have learnt that great enjoyment is maintained even though I choose to tackle only routes that are comfortably within my capabilities. For some this may dull their sense of adventure, but many will share my view. When all seems downhill, why do we continue to pursue our climbing? And what prompted us in the first place?

Why we climb may defy analysis, but it is a matter of record how climbing and mountaineering began. There are written records from as long ago as 218 BC when Hannibal crossed the Alps, and 633 AD when the monk En no Shokalu climbed Japan's Mount Fuji. A most important written record is from 1492, the year Columbus sailed to America, when another adventurer, Antoine de Ville, climbed Mont Aiguille (6,880

feet). The mountain is referred to in old documents as Mons Inaccessibilis, and in overcoming its inaccessibility de Ville and his companions made the first ever 'technical' climb in the true sense of the word. For me this is the root of mountaineering.

Mont Aiguille is a gigantic limestone block standing alone and aloof from neighbouring summits on the Plateau of Vercors south of Grenoble, France. The top is a fairly flat grass meadow, but all sides are precipitous with the rock faces about 1,000 feet high. This square-cut monolith immediately demands attention as it rises abruptly above wooded slopes, and it appears stately and splendid when viewed from any angle. Mount Aiguille guarantees to quicken the pulse of any climber and to gladden the heart of any mountaineer. I have long been fascinated by both the impressive shape and the intriguing story of the mountain's first ascent.

The French guidebook 'Escalades Dans Le Vercors' attributes the first ascent of the Voie Normale on Mont Aiguille to 'Antoine de Ville avec 7 compagnons, 26 juin 1492 calendrier Julien' and it grades the route as PD. Records show that de Ville was in fact accompanied by 12 others including carpenters and ladder-men – and 2 priests. The then formidable climb was accomplished by the entire party, in safety and without any need for last rites from the priests. Whilst on the summit de Ville wrote a detailed account of the hazardous ascent, referring to success secured by "subtils moyens et engins", and sent this to the Dauphiny Parliament in Grenoble inviting an envoy to come and witness his achievement. Such a prudent approach could have avoided conflict over first ascents in the present generation, though de Ville had to wait for 6 days on the summit to get his verification.

When considering why we climb it is interesting to learn that de Ville was 'commanded' by Charles VIII of France to climb the mountain. Antoine de Ville was the King's 'Capitaine

des Schelliers', an army officer in charge of siege apparatus and of storming walled cities and fortresses – excellent preparation for an aid climb. The King had been on a pilgrimage and was informed by locals that angels inhabited the inaccessible summit. No angels were found, but it is understood de Ville was well rewarded for his efforts. More importantly, and most illuminating, from his own account it is clear that the honour of his first ascent and the enjoyment of his adventure were most precious to de Ville.

After my heart-op a chunk of my retirement fund was spent on a campervan, and following testing trips to Scotland and Wales, together with Sylvia, I planned a grand European tour for the summer of 2001. I contacted Jonathan Coles, a longstanding friend now living in Grenoble, and we loosely agreed to meet sometime, and Mont Aiguille made a fine objective. I could genuinely reassure Sylvia that there was no need for concern – the mountain is under 7,000 feet high – it was climbed hundreds of years ago.

I like to think I was as well prepared as I could be for the climb, but I was aware that recently I had not done anything as arduous as likely to be encountered on Mont Aiguille. I took daily exercise walks from home, I went onto the fells occasionally, and I did a bit of rock climbing. I was ready, the planning was complete – and the grand European tour began. There was mixed weather in the Black Forest, Lake Lucerne area, Grindelwald and Zermatt, but after a retreat to the Italian Riviera the weather improved and we returned north, taking in some awe-inspiring days at the Verdun Gorge and arriving at the Vercors in what appeared to be a settled period of glorious sunshine.

The climbing on Mont Aiguille is similar to the Dolomites and there are many fine routes of great character. Most of these are beyond my present capabilities, but I am quite content with lowered expectations. I suspected Jonathan wanted

to do something of sterner stuff than I had in mind as when I phoned to finalise arrangements his breezy reply was that he would set off right away and we could decide what he was going to take me up when he arrived. He ignored my explanations on how I could only go slowly, I was off-form, I didn't fancy nasty abseils, and my wife wanted me back in one piece.

Jonathan arrived and we camped together. In contradiction of the weather forecast it started to rain in the early hours, and it rained for the next 40 hours. Sylvia does not fully share confidence in my immortality and harbours doubts about my fitness; she would have been secretly relieved if the rain had sent us back early. It didn't, and we walked up, climbed, and walked down again in continuous rain. Thankfully this prohibited anything too serious and Jonathan agreed on the Voie Normale as we paused on the Col de l'Aupet after a trudge zig-zagging through trees. We were wet but I was not too weary as we had taken it very slowly. I felt great.

The cloud was low but as Jonathan had previously climbed Mont Aiguille a number of times he was almost sure of the start. I rested as Jonathan discussed various options with himself and he moved back and forth at the base of the rock. The starting point was confirmed and we stood there in the rain chewing sandwiches made from what Jonathan described as the worst bread he'd tasted in France in 13 years living there. We decided to climb in our walking boots and take everything with us (including heavy drinks) in a rucksack each. One of mountaineering's most thrilling moments is commencement of a first real climbing pitch after the walk-in, but I was cold and soaked to the skin; the adrenalin failed to flow.

After donning harnesses and helmets, roping up and gearing up, Jonathan set off on a relatively easy section and was soon at a magnificent pin belay. When I came to follow I found plenty of flat top holds but could not feel them properly

and I swam upwards in a most undignified style. It is rewarding to climb a route in as aesthetically satisfying a manner as possible, but I was failing. I pulled on a pair of gloves and hoped to warm my fingers as Jonathan ran out another rope length over similar ground and via a short corner to an obvious set of ledges. Unlike me he seemed oblivious of the cold as he searched around for an expected but elusive belay pin. He eventually placed a nut and brought me up. When I arrived he was spying an isolated bolt higher and to the left and muttering to himself about it being a stupid place for a belay. His grumbling seemed to demand some conspiracy from me, but I had stopped short of Jonathan's ledge and used a piton he missed. It transpires that his bolt is on *Voie Livanos* - a grade V/A1 extreme route (first recorded ascent 1966). He climbed back and went off right across easy ledges, but with difficult rock both above and below, to a belay at the foot of a magnificent rightward slanting and narrowing gangway providing the key to overcoming a fearsome section between the main face and a huge pinnacle known as *La Vierge* (Jonathan suggested that due to its obvious shape this may have been known initially as *La Verge* but with the name changed in response to tourist sensitivity). The gangway was equipped with the first of a series of wire cables appearing on the *Voie Normale* in all difficult and exposed situations.

A couple of French climbers came into view through mist and rain. "Est ce que c'est la *Voie Normale*?" came a cry from below. "Oui - je pense" Jonathan stated. "Oui - j'espère" I whinged. Like us they were looking for a route to match the weather, and they were the only 2 persons we were to meet all day. Our route looked more ferocious than it was, and though the first 3 pitches are straightforward, from below they appear to lead to featureless ground. It is hard to imagine that de Ville would have started at today's *Voie Normale*, not only because

there is no obvious way to make progress, but in keeping with early (later) climbers seeking comfort in gullies, he would have been drawn to fissures such as alongside *Le Grand Gendarme*, some 200 yards to the right where a deep ravine cuts behind another huge pinnacle, and above there is a series of gullies.

The rain had intensified as I joined Jonathan at the foot of the gangway, and he suggested now would be the right time to turn back if that was what I wanted. No way. He swarmed up alongside the cable at great speed and I followed in a more lumbering manner but it was an improvement on the first few pitches. I was feeling less cold, though squelching noises coincided with each move. I took heart, and I took my first turn at the sharp end. Climbing past Jonathan I moved round a corner and via a notch into a funnelled amphitheatre with surreal architecture. There was a deep cleft yawning below me, to my right was the massive frowning *La Vierge* and above were overhangs. I exited back left and made my way via a sort of scoop to yet another large pin belay. Jonathan arrived with ease and he led on. Wherever the first ascent went, it appears certain that our key gangway crossing the face would not be a way for *de Ville* to reach the amphitheatre. As a free climb it would have been too daunting, and for aid its angle makes it unsuitable for positioning ladders.

As I was paying out the rope to Jonathan the first French climber arrived to share my belay above the amphitheatre. Together with his partner they were climbing in rock slippers with one light sac between them. They definitely climbed faster than us, but we attributed this to them being less fastidious about belays. In French I became part of a conversation agreeing that only 'fous et imbeciles' venture out in such awful weather, but at least it meant there were no crowds – and consequently hold-ups or stonefalls were 'pas de probleme'. Jonathan continued up the now obvious exit from

the amphitheatre, moving first left and then right to avoid steep ground, and so to the extremity of the rope. I passed him for a short pitch that took us onto the more open cliff face with a belay at a reasonable ledge, but with tremendous exposure as I now looked down onto the incredibly isolated top of La Vierge. Jonathan resumed the lead and via another fortuitously placed cable he arrived under an overhang at the end of a ledge known as the Passage des Meules. In the amphitheatre below, and now well above, I was unable to see beyond La Vierge, but if de Ville could have reached the amphitheatre by the chimney on its right or even from as far right as Le Grand Gendarme, then he would probably have been able to climb the next couple of pitches. This would also be the case for the pitch where my previous ledge would have provided secure footing for de Ville's laddermen to conquer the link to the Passage des Meules. This turned out to be little more than a walk and I moved easily along the rock-strewn Passage des Meules and then made a series of awkward moves up a groove streaming with water into the final exit chimneys at a belay below a long wire cable that seemed to disappear into the sky. We stopped for a second attempt at eating and let the French pair pass with no initial regrets as they were moving well, but we then had another conversation in basic French and some animated gesturing to reproach them for kicking down a cluster of stones.

Jonathan ascended the chimney, with 2 impressive overhanging sections dripping liquid lace curtains, but always in the presence of a wire cable. Without such the pitch would be about Grade III/IV but much harder under the prevailing conditions and I could not risk a fall. Aware of my limited energy and strength, I would have preferred to free climb this section because use of the cable transferred all weight to the arms and as I did this my body (and rucksack) swung out leaving

my feet tucked underneath to straddle the overhangs. I arrived at Jonathan's belay breathing hard, and no doubt with pulse racing, but we gathered from the French on top that the remaining section was the last pitch; I led through.

The final groove and chimney present technical rock climbing but could have been overcome by de Ville's laddermen as this section is straight up (and down) and it would have been possible to brace between the enclosing walls. The main difficulty in topping out resulted from water draining out of the soil of the grassy plateau, but what a fantastic feeling on arrival. Suddenly it was a different world after limited vision on the rock face. Even though it was cloudy there were gaps that were not apparent within the confines below. It was uncertain at what we were looking, but there were glimpses of the main Vercors escarpment from Rochers Du Parquet to what was either Deux Soeurs or Rochers Du Playnet. The lush, green, almost flat plateau contrasted with the naked, grey, and almost vertical cliffs below. What a finish to a superb route that had been so full of surprises with its twists and turns through lines of weakness. It gave us everything that makes for a proper mountain route as it picked an easy course up an improbable face and arrived on a top. It is over a thousand feet in length and we had done it in 10 main pitches, with 7 by Jonathan leaving me to fill the gaps and with the honour of topping out. The true summit of Mount Aiguille is at the north-east end of the plateau and we could see the French pair hobbling across in their rock slippers. Jonathan strode purposefully in real boots, and I staggered slowly behind to the top.

We returned and moved further along to where a descent starts with some initial rocky steps down a corner. It was reasonable to accept the French being blasé about the descent as they didn't know anything about it. My concern was that Jonathan dismissed it in a mumble that ended with him

admitting one bit of one abseil was a bit steep. I have sympathy with the old fashioned approach that a climber should preferably be capable of down-climbing anything he climbs, and throughout the ascent I was comforted by thoughts that over the full thousand feet I never made a move that I felt I could not reverse safely. No credit was given to such an attitude. We automatically banded together with the French pair, and I took comfort from that. We went first scrambling down loose scree gullies, and the French pair followed, now moving slower than us. I thought of the qualities of Antoine de Ville where harassment by garrisons that he had besieged must have prepared him for fusillades of stones as we now experienced. Visibility was poor and everyone was relieved, including Jonathan himself, when he found the first abseil point on the eastern flank of the first gullies – thankfully safe from falling stones. After an awkward start the abseil went easily down a corner, part groove and part chimney, for the full rope length to a recess at the top of another scree gully apparently plunging into the clouds. As the French part of the team came down our rope Jonathan sent me scouting further east on a traverse below a massive overhang to locate the second and most sensational abseil point – or points – as I discovered a mass of chains and wires above an awesome drop opposite Le Grand Gendarme. While Jonathan retrieved his rope the French pair joined me and set up the second abseil. Again this was a full rope length, but after a few feet it was completely free to a landing on a blocky section only a few feet wide, in the dank, dark and dismal ravine between Grand Gendarme and main mountain. I agree with the guidebook description of the abseil as ‘désagréable’ and it was made more so by the water squeezing up through my descender to meet the water running down the rope. We were told by the French climbers that their main sport was caving, and in both French and English we appreciated

that our day on Mont Aiguille was simulating sensations of wet pot-holing without danger of being cut off by floods.

To me it appears most likely that the first series of gullies we descended was the final section of de Ville's climb to the summit, and though our first abseil was over ground that would succumb to determined laddermen, by no manner of means ('moyens') could any ladder overcome the second abseil. It was an intimidating situation, particularly so in dripping water, and I could not see any tempting climbing line, but to the left, Les Tubulaires (first recorded ascent 1922) follows a series of repulsive looking chimneys, and to the right, Voie Freychet (first recorded ascent 1929) follows an equally repellent labyrinth. Somewhere in the confines behind Le Grand Gendarme a lattice framework could readily have been fabricated, and possibly winched into place by some contraption—de Ville's 'engins' come to mind. Certainly his carpenters and laddermen would have been proficient scaffolders, probably with civil engineering experience of constructing chateaux and castles in rocky places as well as storming (and demolishing) them as military men.

French noses wrinkled and there was a firm "non-merci" to my offer of sandwiches, but my drink was shared as we waited for Jonathan to come down last. Comradeship reaches a peak when combining together, and the teamwork displayed on our descent with consequent increased safeguards demonstrated further why we climb. We followed the ravine north towards its exit, where after some banter the French made a third abseil, but we down-climbed to arrive at the base of the rock face next to a plaque commemorating the first ascent by Antoine de Ville and his companions. As the French pair were retrieving equipment and changing footwear we bade each other "au revoir" and the salutation "bonne route" had greater meaning and significance than usual.

On the day my judgement may have been as cloudy as the weather but I could not make out any obvious link to the amphitheatre from our exit. My judgement may still be cloudy, but I cannot accept that Antoine de Ville deserves to be credited with the first ascent of Voie Normale. I acknowledge readily that many pitches of this route were within his capabilities, and it is indisputable that he made the first ascent of Mont Aiguille, but I believe no part of Voie Normale was used. I think the plaque at the base rightly indicates de Ville's entry into the ravine behind Le Grand Gendarme and his ascent, albeit with lattice framework and ladders, went from there by much the same route as our descent described above. This was in 1492 and I would support any claim for the achievement as the root of mountaineering, and certainly I recognise the way as a great mountaineering route. As it turned out, for us, the Voie Normale was as severe a climb as the weather allowed, and together with our descent we can be satisfied that one way or another (literally) we must have followed the footsteps of Antoine de Ville.

So why did I do it? What possessed me? It had taken 10 hours which is poor compared to guidebook times. I was totally soaked. I was utterly exhausted. I was ravishingly hungry. But I was elated – even exalted. The cognoscenti understand. Sylvia understands, and she can testify to my happiness and satisfaction. She knows I received a transfusion from the mountain. However she retains a nagging doubt that the sole purpose of our grand European tour was for me to get up Mont Aiguille.

The only tangible reminder I have of the day, due to appalling weather, is a single photograph of Mont Aiguille taken as we looked back on our way down; my memories are heart-felt. A stalwart to the end (and beyond) Jonathan returned a few weeks later to provide the other photograph accompanying this article. By this time snow had arrived!

Rheged. *What?* Rheged ... Yes, RHEGED. If you've never heard of it, please read on. If you've been to see it, please read on and tell me whether I'm right. If you've heard but not seen, kindly put your prejudices where they won't hurt for a few minutes, and read on likewise.

I've heard the bellyaches: motorway caff with a cinema ... filling station with a theme park ... shopping mall in a quarry ... commercial enterprise in the National Park ... outrage ... calamity ... woe and desolation.

Well, Junction 40 on the M6 is less than a mile away. Do you never use the motorway? The restaurant and the cafe are hardly cheap, but they are very good. When it opened in August 2000, Rheged's was only the fifth large-format cinema in the UK. If you want to see the *Everest* movie and *Shackleton's Antarctic Adventure* (and if you haven't seen them, it's time you did), you have to go to Bradford, or London, or ... Rheged. These are not the movies you think they are, from 1953 or Channel 4 TV. These are staggeringly, vertiginously powerful and beautiful original modern films accessible only in large-format cinemas like that at Rheged. True, there's also *Rheged – the Lost Kingdom*, a sort of fantasy-history of Cumbria featuring contemporaries of King Arthur, and the Reivers, and Wordsworth, and a knowledgeable gypsy, and an American in search of his Cumbrian roots and a Dark Ages talisman ... not my taste at all. But the photography and sound are breathtaking, and children and tourists with only a casual knowledge of the Lake District love the tale. Go on. See it. Never mind the story, look at the views. If you feel dizzy, help is at hand, and you'll survive.

Now, what about the theme park and the filling station?

You need fuel from time to time. You may as well buy it in the Lake District, and you'll be lucky to get it cheaper than at Rheged. And the theme is Cumbria and the north Pennines. The scenic walkway tells you things you never knew about, say, Maryport, or the Eden Valley, the past industries and present successes like, for instance, breweries. Above all, there's the Helly Hansen National Mountaineering Exhibition, to which our club, its Librarian and Archivist and other members, have contributed so much in exhibits and in time and enthusiasm. Charles Pilkington's ice-axes and Mabel Barker's patent belay are there, and so are Muriel Files's scarpetti, A.B. Hargreaves's dinky boots, and even my green suede feet*. The Abraham brothers have a display all to themselves. The history of mountaineering, especially British mountaineering, is coherently and intelligently presented in a treasure-house of artefacts contributed by the Alpine and other senior clubs and by individual donors, and by interactive displays. The items are displayed in rotation, so that you never see the same show twice.

Personally, I don't take easily to John Peel's pilgrim's progress through time and place to the summit of Everest in company with celebrities like Sir Chris Bonington. I like my exhibitions static, and I like to ramble round them the wrong way and concentrate on two or three things that grip my attention; but it's easy to do that at the National Exhibition, and most other visitors, however sophisticated, seem to be delighted by the 'real' experience. If you smelled the Vikings at Jorvik, here at Rheged you can feel (some of) the cold of Everest in the 'tented' Summit Theatre. We have had to wait a long time for a viable museum of British mountaineering. Now we have it, and it's good.

Don't look for tat when you go round the shops at Rheged: you won't find any. The design of the whole place is

sensitive and imaginative. The materials and workmanship are the very best, and, as far as could be managed, local. The shops themselves are elegant, well staffed, and dedicated to the sale of goods manufactured in Cumbria: clothes, food, ceramics, fine glassware, paper, ornamental and useful articles in stone and wood, and the products of painters, sculptors, and craftsmen, some of whom you can see at work. Shopping malls usually obtrude on a landscape. Not this one: it is tucked into what was once a quarry, and turfed over with the naturally-occurring vegetation of the region. It is part of the landscape. You actually have to look for it if you want to find it. Nor need you worry about being underground: the whole place is suffused with light, most of it natural. The guide-book explains how that was achieved.

"But," you object, "Rheged is a commercial enterprise." So what do you expect it to be? A world-class cinema for free? Shops giving their stock away? Artists and craftsmen working for nothing and living on fresh air? A national exhibition paid for by the National Health? Of course it's commercial, and over 75% of the finance is local. The directors are local people. So are the employees. It is a North Lakes enterprise, attracting visitors and the consequent business to Penrith and district. Go and enjoy it. Spend a few pounds. Support Lake District industry. Not everything will be to your taste, but there's plenty that will be, and everything is the best of its kind.

* See FRCC Journal, 1970

After a short discussion on whether Skye was an option in view of the imminent downpour, a traverse of the Corsican mountains from south to north, seemed a far pleasanter objective. Flights were booked on the Thursday and we flew from Birmingham directly to Bastia on the Sunday. The train journey to Vizzavona, gave some indication of the extraordinary scenery we were going to experience; huge sweeping granite walls, deeply cut gorges through a stark and arid land, offset by remote peaks rising above dense afforestation.

The walk started gently enough winding through the forest towards the Cascade des Anglais and then an easy scramble across granite slabs, on to the Muratellu ridge at 2020 metres. The views towards the north are astounding, line after line of serried mountains, the odd patch of snow and silhouettes of sharp, seemingly inaccessible ridges. The descent towards the Refuge de l'Onda was long and rugged, but very fragrant as you walked across large patches of Corsican mountain thyme. This was the only night we stayed in a refuge, something which Sandy paid for as he was bitten by fleas during the night. After this the tent seemed a far safer option.

An earlyish start the following day took us on a variant of the GR20, up to the Capu a Meta, along the crest, followed by a steep descent, where you needed some rock climbing ability. This was followed by a climb up the Corbini and Murace peaks. The descent to the Refuge de Petre Piano was a delight, threading through easy rock pinnacles, before a drop from the col and an interesting scramble on perfect granite through a stunted beech forest. The sting was a final pull of about 150 metres to the camp site. This wonderful site lies on the only semi-flat piece of land below Mont Ritondu, which

is Corsica's second highest mountain.

Next morning we were the last to leave and savoured the peace, as did a family of wild pigs, which trotted in minutes after the main crowd had left. They snuffled round, foraging for all sorts of tasty leftovers. Interestingly, this wild pig is regarded as a great delicacy, because it feeds mainly on wild thyme, which gives its meat an unique flavour. Perhaps this is the ultimate free range animal, a self-flavouring pig. The walk up seemed slightly easier today, perhaps we had become acclimatised and more used to carrying weighty rucksacks. As the pass was reached, a Royal Eagle, (a close relation of the Golden Eagle) circled effortlessly in the sky, flicking in and out of view round Mozello peak. This next section was idyllic, a small path hugging the side of the mountain, followed by a steep descent and incredible views over two lakes. Both lakes were a deep aquamarine and both formed by glaciation, though in two separate ways. Lac de Melo was gouged out by a glacier and the higher Lac de Capitello existed inside the mountain, but was exposed after glaciers retreated. After a short rest, we followed the ridge, which was awkward in places, with one very exposed section of rock climbing. This was followed by a tight squeeze under a chockstone. It is quite amusing to watch your partner struggle through this squeeze with a large load on their back, but the laugh is repaid when your turn comes. The final stretch to the Brèche de Capitellu, normally holds a large snow field throughout the year and a rope and ice axe are recommended. However, it was clear of snow and a straightforward scramble. The perfume which greeted us here when we peered over the other side was of hot wild goat. This proved an incentive to a fairly rapid descent. Again the landscape changed and after walking along the edge of a small gorge, the land opened out into flat maquis, with slow streams drifting across the high pasture. A short

descent took us to the Refuge de Manganu. Another refuge in a wonderful position and the added bonus of superb Corsican red wine to accompany our evening meal.

We had a very leisurely start at noon the following day as we planned to walk and then camp wild. It proved to be a truly bizarre day. As we passed the first landmark the Bergeries de Vaccaghja, you could not help but notice the flag sporting crisp images of Che Guevara and Steve Biko, flown to show solidarity with the free Corsica movement. We bought some good goats cheese and bread, then set off. The path meandered its way through a mature woodland and came out on the plateau which contains Lac de Nino. Sitting by the edge of the lake and dabbling our feet in the temperate water, swarms of orange and green dragonflies passed us by. Wild horses grazed at the head of the lake and then started to take an interest in our rucksacks. They were gently persuaded that prunes were tastier than Karrimor straps. Having located the spring, we continued up to the col and followed a nice ridge to Tritore peak and a long descent to the Col Saint Pierre. This was a tough descent with a number of fallen trees to cross, the path was also quite unstable in parts. At approximately 8.00pm we entered the wood, assuming it to be a shortish walk to the refuge. Having stumbled and crashed our way through the forest in the dark for a couple of hours, I was beginning to get tired and grumpy. Pitching camp at the next piece of flat ground we found became the favoured option. The next piece of flat ground was a road: and there floating above it was a hotel, I believed my senses had been lost, and I looked again. It really was what it seemed. We entered the bar tentatively, there were very few people around. The barman was an extra from the set of 'An American Werewolf in London' and obviously despised tourists, judging by the snarl with which he greeted us. I asked tentatively whether it would

be possible to eat something at this hour. He shrugged and muttered in French, "Who can tell in this crazy world in which we live," and left the bar. Sandy and I looked at each other completely bemused, while from round the corner an old man shuffled. He wore tattered blue overalls and a weary expression. He asked us in a quavering voice whether we wanted soup and a meal. So at 10.45 pm. we sat down to an excellent home cooked meal. It was then suggested that we spent the night at the Gite where we could have half board for seventeen pounds per person per night. It was an offer not to be refused.

Having had a true rest day and two good nights' sleep the journey continued towards the Tafunatu, a strange peak with many legends surrounding it. A gaping hole cuts through the mountain and the story goes that the Devil was imprisoned within the rock but was accidentally set free leaving this vast hole as a reminder of his power. On arrival at the Refuge de Ciottulu di Mori, the cloud had dropped and there was a stream of thick mist through the hole which seemed to show that the mountain was breathing. It was a truly spectacular sight. We headed on to the pass and began a steep and laborious descent on curious red-hued rock. Looking up to the left as you descended, the teeth of the Grand Barrier smiled unpleasantly at you. Peak after peak mocked our presence. It was a relief when we finally entered the forest and made our way towards the Bergerie de Ballone. Another excellent cafe of red wine revived us as did the very amusing company of two Rucksack Club members.

The following day, my feet had erupted with blisters and despite anti-inflammatory tablets and pain killers, it was only possible to reach the next refuge. While I tried to sort my feet out Sandy headed up Monte Cinto and had an adventure. Whilst laybacking up a steep section with undercut slabs below,

it occurred to him that he shouldn't really be on his own, with nothing but air between him and the lake some hundreds of metres below. Sandy then decided to climb Capu Falu at 2540 metres and saw a herd of 20 or so mouflon (a variety of ibex). In the meantime the cloud had started to descend and he returned in the late afternoon. The Refuge de Tighjettu was perched on steep ground and my favourite site so far, though pitching camp had been difficult as the ground was hard and stony. We both needed a good night's sleep as we were heading for the most serious part of the traverse the following day.

We set off fairly early and climbed up towards the Bocca Minuta at a height of 2218 metres. We paused for a snack and a circus of Alpine choughs surrounded us, entertaining us with their mastery of flight. Nervously, I peered over the edge of the col, into the Cirque de Solitude and the path skittered its way down for several hundred feet and seemed to disappear over the edge of a cliff. My heart gave a little lurch as we set off. The going was very steep and loose and there were far more people here than we had seen during the previous sections. As we approached the edge of the cliff, it was clear that the path went this way as there was a chain over the edge. I took this in my right hand and stepped off. The exposure was breathtaking, but the climbing was straightforward. Often the chains hindered rather than helped, as you needed to keep yourself in perfect balance during the descent. I was only too aware of the risks involved. By trying to keep a steady head and relying on what I had learned over the last twenty years, I reached the crossing of the cirque. In retrospect it is easy to say that this descent was not technically demanding, but it is perhaps one of the most intimidating, as you are subject to regular rock fall from above, and a chasm of exposure below. The climb up on the other side is just as steep and guided by steel ropes and chains, though neither of us used them.

Standing at the col and looking back, your mind refuses to believe what your eyes see. It really does not seem possible that you had crossed such a wild and desolate arena. The walk down to the camp site was mixed, initially wild and rugged, but finally following the valley, with a gentle descent through a wood at the end.

Jays chattered outside the tent from about 7.00am and we rose to make an early start. It was a steep climb up to the Bocca i Stagnì, with a lovely section of scrambling to the col before the Lac de la Muvrella. The descent from here was unpleasant and loose, full of unstable scree. We passed the lake and descended towards the imposing ravine. This section more than any other impressed me with the quality of the rock. Pure unbroken granite slabs reaching up to perfect ridges, stamped themselves on my mind. There could be little doubt that a climbing trip was on the cards in future. The walls of the ravine started to become more imposing and a number of dry water-worn stream beds were crossed. The path strayed close to the edge of the ravine and a wire rope was there for those of a nervous disposition. The metal bridge crossing the river was challenging as it bounced up and down, as well as swaying from left to right. Fortunately the refuge was close at hand. Tibetan prayer flags fluttered in the evening breeze and the sunset was spectacular, a mixture of purples and golds. It was a moment to be savoured.

We started at 8.00am the next day and a long steep ascent took us up to the Bocca Inuminata. This was followed by a spectacular walk through some impressive pinnacles, though Sandy and I took a short detour to climb several of these. Sandy also climbed the Capu Ladroncellu at 2145 metres. The descent looked to be straightforward, but was to take far longer than anticipated, as we had to cross an enormous boulder field which went on for approximately 500 metres.

We came across a spring which flowed out from a small crack in the granite wall. This was so useful as we had used most of the three litres we normally carried. The path then followed the edge of an impressive crag and on occasion it was necessary to cross the slabs. A steep walk up through the forest put us on an escarpment which led towards the penultimate refuge. Unfortunately, there was no wine, but excellent Corsican beer was available. The guardian of the refuge was an outstanding mountaineer with a number of Himalayan peaks to his credit. He was also very interested in Scottish winter mountaineering and may be a guest of ours in the future. The sunset was again spectacular, and we turned in with a little reluctance as this would be our last night in the mountains.

We set off early in the sharp morning air, anticipating that this would be a gentle stroll down into Calenzanna. The day was much longer than first thought, but the character of the route was different; though still rugged, it was less harsh than previous days. The variety of scenery was still incredible: Calvi sparkling in the distance above the Mediterranean, lamageyer cruising in circles above you, blue hills stretching south as far as you could see. This was tempered by the extraordinary fragrances on that section: turmeric, aniseed, thyme and vanilla, mixed with the occasional breath of wind bringing the smell of the sea. As we approached the village, the church bells began to chime and civilisation was upon us once more. A stunning experience.

Any one requiring further information should send a sae or contact Jane Sanderson at sand@frcc90.freemove.co.uk

THE JOSS NAYLOR TRAVERSE

Wendy Dodds

As with a number of established mountain challenges, the origins are reputed to have developed over a pint. A decade ago that Lakeland legend, Joss Naylor, in doing one of his numerous charitable mountain runs, selected a route linking many of the classic areas of Cumbria, which ended on his doorstep. The route starts at Pooley Bridge, covering 47 miles, 16,200 feet of ascent and 20 summits, finishing at Greendale Bridge, Wasdale. Joss Naylor was 54 years old at the time, and the route evolved into a challenge to the over 50s. To stimulate interest Chris Brasher offered to fund tankards with certificates signed by Joss for the first 20 to complete the route – 12 hours being the limit for 50-60 year olds, and various other categories up to 24 hours for age 65+.

I had the privilege of accompanying the first woman to succeed in the challenge, FRCC member Monica Shone, with other FRCC members helping: Linda Lord on the fells with Peter Lord and Colin Shone at the road crossings on Kirkstone Pass and Dunmail Raise, and at Sty Head. Ever since accompanying Monica along this route I have been waiting for my own opportunity. I had to wait a number of years to reach the requisite age. On beautiful Lakeland days, I had thought of doing it on my 50th birthday (as Barry Johnson had done in 2000). However, as this was virtually the shortest day of the year, I wasn't sure that I wanted to spend it in cold, wet, misty conditions on the Lakeland fells. Sue Walsh, the first woman in the 50-60 age group to achieve completion of the traverse indirectly persuaded me that I should not do it on my birthday by persuading me to join her and Dave on a trip to Ecuador. I thought this would be an ideal bit of winter training including exposure to altitude, which would help me in my efforts.

Knowing that two women had completed the challenge, I thought a winter traverse would be something a bit different. Thus the early weeks of 2001 found me looking at the route in winter, having spent earlier summers familiarising myself with all the finer points of the course. On 17th February, 2001, one of these outings found me having difficulty on the climber's traverse on Bowfell as the gullies were filled with very hard, uncrossable ice, meaning they had to be bypassed at a higher level, adding considerable time onto that particular leg. Likewise, the direct route off Great End was similarly affected but it allowed me to try out the alternative route used by a number of people, returning to Esk Hause and down the footpath past Sprinkling Tarn to Sty Head. The following day, I found that there was too much snow in the gully off the north of Kirk Fell, which also added time onto the route. However, having been over all sections of the route in the first six weeks of the year, I was confident that, given the right conditions, I was ready to go for it. Then, on 20th February, life changed for all of us when Foot and Mouth broke out. Although the high tops became open in the middle of the year, the 'Penrith Spur' excluded the section from Pooley Bridge to Wether Hill, this remaining closed for the rest of the year.

The beginning of 2002 found me less fit than 12 months before, and although I still hankered after a winter attempt I knew the conditions would have to be right. I slowly started putting the miles in but had a few set backs and wondered just when realistically I would be ready. Time moved on and I thought there would never be a window of opportunity to get reasonable conditions. I had a few days off before and over Easter and I vaguely thought this might be the time to try. Sunday, 24th March gave a weather forecast suggesting there might be a few days that week with reasonable conditions.

By Monday, 25th March, the next three days were forecasted as being good. The decision was made that afternoon to go for it the following day. Knowing that there was still a bit of snow around and the late decision would mean going solo on the hills, I realised that I would be going close to 14 hours so needed to start at a time which would get me off the hill in daylight. Thus I set the alarm for 3.30am arranging for Ralph to pick me up at 4.00am with the plan of a 5.00am start. I awoke well before 3am so got up and stretched, ate and generally prepared myself. I had chosen to use Sue's schedule, thinking this was realistic rather than going for one more ambitious, which could run the risk of proving disheartening should I fall behind time. I knew that in the middle of summer, in full fitness, I could get close to 12 hours but I was a few months away from that.

At 3.30am I was scraping the ice from my car wind-screen so that Ralph could transfer to this when he arrived. By 4.00am it had refrozen. We arrived at Pooley Bridge where it was clear but frosty and I made my final preparations. At 5.00am I was off via the lake edge using a head torch so as not to stumble over the tree roots. By the time I reached the top of the caravan site, the dawn chorus was beginning. Shortly after hitting the fell side, I could dispense with the head torch but full body cover, hat and gloves were required all the way to Kirkstone. The first leg to Arthur's Pike was magical with the full moon to the west reflected in Ullswater while the sun slowly began to rise over the Pennines where I could see Cross Fell and the ridge to the south. I knew the schedule was generous for this section and predictably I covered the ground in good time, which filled me with confidence. The final route down to the road at Kirkstone had always challenged me and I had tried many variations. Only the week before I had done this section and decided when looking back from Red Screes

that I would go much further along, to just below the climb before the high point on St. Raven's Edge before dropping down the final grassy slope to the road. This comes out at 'Edwin's' Gate (it was Edwin Coope who told me this was where he descended), rather than the traditional crossing place. As expected, I was up on schedule and Ralph was there keeping warm with the car engine on. Having eaten a couple of cereal bars on the first leg, I forced down half a pot of rice pudding in the carpark along with a Lucozade drink, grabbed a tube of condensed milk and set off in less than the scheduled 4 minutes rest. I reached Red Screes on schedule. I took the more easterly line that I had found a week earlier but didn't quite have such a direct route down to Scandale Pass. I saw my first hill walker of the day at this point and then saw a lone tent at the tarn. Skirting west of Dove Crag, I started to see the tourists of the day. I reached Fairfield close to schedule and was relieved not to be going off to Great Rigg, which I had added on the previous week. Achieving Seat Sandal, I realised that I had lost my route card for that section so had to mark my time on the edge of the map. On the descent to Dunmail, I realised I went a little too far south (trying to avoid going too far north as I had done a week earlier). When I saw the road I corrected, in my haste falling over, sustaining the only bruises of the day. After a moment to recover and hoping that I had not been seen from below, I picked up the line for the crossing point. I exchanged an empty tube of condensed milk for a full one and picked up half a block of marzipan, taking down another Lucozade drink. I again carried half a litre of water on this section as I had done on the second section.

I remembered the climb up to Steel Fell had been Sue's low point and, with this in mind, I didn't feel too bad but knew that this leg was the crux of the Traverse. I reached the summit of Steel Fell without too much effort and set off

towards Ash Crag, now familiar with all the contouring on this section, which I knew would save my legs for later in the day. Ash Crag didn't seem quite so relentless as on previous occasions, perhaps because when I had been there 11 days earlier there had been a lot of snow. I hit the cairn spot on and proceeded to the trig point exactly on time. Although not quite such a good line down to Stake's Pass as I had made 11 days earlier, it was far better than other earlier routes that I had tried. I became a bit distracted on the way to Rossett Pike and veered a little wide. Similarly, on going up the climber's traverse, I lost my concentration but being very familiar with the route, knew I could tackle most of the variations. Having not done the direct route off Great End for a couple of years, although knowing it well, I had planned to double back towards Esk Hause and then cut the corner down to the path. However, the boulders were so tedious on the ascent that I couldn't face returning this way so I set off down the band. This proved the right decision although I aimed off the route a little bit too early and wasted a bit of time. I reached Sty Head on time to find Ralph, the reliable, with all the potential clothes I had given him and a choice of half a dozen menus. All I wanted was the other half of the marzipan and water, then off I set.

I had learnt a few bypasses to the zigzags on Gable, having been up there twice in the weekend 10 days earlier. My descent from there was by the third variation of recent weeks. It was comforting to meet a fell runner going in the opposite direction, though when he started to talk, I had to say I couldn't stop and he wished me luck. On Kirk Fell, I felt comfortable. An alarmed tourist, when he saw me writing down my time, asked me where I had come from and how long it had taken. On hitting the gully, I was relieved that the snow of the previous week was no longer there. The thaw had transformed it

into a small stream and I had my first sit down of the day (unintended). I knew that Pillar would be hard and looked upon it as the last big climb of the day. Again I was pleased to gain on a number of walkers by contouring a few bumps but it still seemed to grow an extra false summit that hadn't been there 10 days earlier. By this time, there was a cold wind coming in from the south and balaclava and gloves were back on, along with a cagoule as my final layer. The horizontal sun blinded my vision so I missed the welcoming contour on Black Crag that had stood out like a beacon 10 days before. However, I remained on schedule and even impressed myself in making Steeple in less than the planned five minutes from Scoat Fell. I stayed on the north of the wall all the way to Haycock to shelter from the bitterly cold wind. Having only ever been off Haycock via the scree to the south, I managed to go off line partly because I had been blinded by the sun again. Fortunately I knew of the grassy rake and didn't lose much time. The sun's rays made it difficult picking out the track to the base of Seatallan but I eventually got there and hauled myself up to the top. Approaching Middle Fell, I started to see all sorts of apparitions that turned out to be sheep and rocks rather than supporters on the summit. Having only ever descended on good lines off Middle Fell, I was rather befuddled and kept missing the path but fortunately this didn't matter. I reached Greendale Bridge and the faithful Ralph was there and he had roped in a local with her Collie to give additional applause at the end.

It was another magnificent day out in superb conditions. With hindsight, I wished I had taken a camera to record the day's activities although it might have proved a distraction. Sunglasses in the final part would have been a help. Particular thanks to Monica for her inspiration over many years with regards to the Joss Naylor Traverse.

FOR BIRKNESSE' 50TH ANNIVERSARY – 2 June 2002

George Watkins

“Bugger Bognor,” said King George, and I
Concur; and rubbish Rhyl, and stuff Southend,
And heave a brick at Harrogate-on-Sea,
Beaches? You can keep ‘em. Cruises, too.
I’d rather be at home, and so would you.

But Birkness? Now you’re talking! Pack the car,
Put in some plonk and grub. Best take a cag,
And boots, and gear, and sticks. Oh, don’t be mean!
Take Talisker, not Tesco’s; don’t you think
That fifty years deserves a serious drink?

Sun smiles on Buttermere, you know, and it
Smiles back. In summer, ling on Grasmoor breathes
Such warm and heady perfume, you can sleep
Through mid-day there, and lose all count of time.
In Birkness Combe, Bill Peascod’s *Eagle Front*
Still earns its star ... or make your own new route ...
While picky Wainwright once was moved to call
Hay Stacks his choice for *best fell-top of all*.

And Birkness is the place to start for these,
And come back down to, and to make a meal,
And put your feet up, warm the fire, and talk
And talk, and tell daft stories, down a dram
As Fell and Rock have done for fifty years.
Good folk. Good place. Fill up. “To Birkness ... Cheers!”

SMITH ROCK – NOT JUST FOR HOT SHOTS

David Miller

“Hi, how yer doin’”, said one of the friendly local climbers as we looked up at the impressive corner taken by Moonshine Dihedral. As one of the recommended routes, we were keen to know more about the climb. “Awesome”, said one, and there was no doubt it looked impressive. “Fun”, said another, but we never did understand what to expect from a climb described that way. And then they said the protection was “wicked”. That was enough to put us off until it was explained that meant very good! Suffice to say, when we plucked up the courage to try it a few days later, we found it was a steep, sustained route with good holds and protection, but well worth its 5.9 grade (HVS).

We had come to Smith Rock in Oregon, late in September, when it was said the temperatures were at the optimum for climbing, and we installed ourselves on the attractive, but dusty bivouac site on the edge of the escarpment overlooking the crags. The Crooked River snaked its way under the crags through an attractive valley supporting a few stunted pines and sagebrush. The area lay within an intensively used and managed State Park where approach trails had been constructed to protect the fragile environment and even Rest Rooms (pit latrines) provided at the foot of the crags. We knew that it was a Mecca for top climbers, with some of the hardest routes in the country on its smooth walls, but we understood there were enough easier climbs to justify us visiting.

Our first day on the easier climbs on each side of the south-facing Dihedrals came as a shock. The rock is a fairly soft ‘tuff’ with small embedded harder stones which protrude to give small holds, but on the popular climbs they become polished. Then we noticed that the bigger holds are the least

embedded and consequently the most fragile. We could now understand why the guidebook called some of these routes 'scary'. These problems to adjust to, were then compounded by the build up of heat, as the rock sizzled in the midday sun. Very soon, mentally stressed and energy sapped, we were forced to retreat to the shade.

On the next few days we continued to work on the easier climbs, which included more practice on the bolted face climbs, as well as the naturally protected corners and cracks which we found easier to adjust to. The problem on the bolted climbs was the distance off the ground to the first bolt, which made the starts serious. We had noticed local climbers carrying metal poles and we soon realised they were extendible and were used for clipping the first bolt from the ground. Not to be outdone in the 'cheating stakes', we took to bringing one of our flexible tent poles and soon became adept at hooking the first bolt with a taped on karabiner. We also sampled the basalt rimrock, which formed crags along the edge of the escarpment. This was rather similar in character to smooth-grained gritstone but with the lack of friction, the routes seemed hard and frightening for the grades. It was noticeable that the locals were top-roping the routes here and we soon followed suit. We were not attracted back!

We now felt ready for a trip up the Monkey Face, an impressive, 100-metre high pinnacle, which overhangs on all sides towards the top, to form a head which has the features of a monkey when viewed from the west. Its smooth, impending walls are taken by some awesome routes and the only possible way up for us involved some artificial climbing. Our route took the West Face Variations, which gave us two attractive, long, groove and corner pitches, graded 5.8, to reach the neck of the Monkey. Then followed the Pioneers Route, which initially follows a steepening line of bolts, used for aid

to reach the mouth. Rod had thoughtfully brought two old etrier loops and proceeded to lead this artificial pitch in good style. The etriers were then lowered back down and we used one each for our ascent. All went well to start with but my lack of experience of this style of climbing showed up as the face became more overhanging and my arms began to feel the strain of pulling up on the bolts.

Finally, a few strenuous pulls and a belly flop landed me in the Monkey's mouth, a deep slot giving a welcome respite from the verticality and a chance for aching arms to recover. But not for long! At the end of the mouth, 'panic point', above the ridiculously overhanging east face, is the key to a short, but awe inspiring 5.7 pitch up the overhanging wall on jugs. The almost flat summit, with its fine views of the snow-covered Cascades to the west could be relaxing if it wasn't for the realisation that it takes a 140-foot free abseil to reach ledges on the east face. And so the adrenaline kept flowing until the upper lip had been left and the descent through space had been completed to the ledges on the opposite face.

The small, deep-red coloured buttress taken by Phoenix was recommended, and we were not disappointed. The rock seemed solid, gave sharp-edged holds and technical climbing, akin to many of our home crags. In the afternoon we moved over the Asterisk Pass to the sunnier crags on the west side. Then it was back to 'knobs', but not like before; here the walls were smoother and steeper, and there was nothing but pebbles to use for holds. It was a case of selecting the best to make upward progress but always with the thought in the back of your mind that those that protruded the most were the most likely to fall off when stood on! These routes were described in the guidebook as 'fun'. The writer goes on to say about a route called 'Out of Harms Way' that 'hopefully the close spacing of the bolts will keep you that way'.

Back on the sunny, south-facing, Morning Glory Wall, two areas of large semi-spherical holes provide scope for a number of climbs at reasonable grades. On the left, '5 Gallon Buckets' gives a continuous selection of footholds, side holds and undercuts up a vertical wall at a grade of 5.8; now that is fun! Further right, '10 Gallon Buckets' is a much tougher proposition, giving a continuously steep, 30- metre pitch. After a tricky start on side holds, big holds lead up the steep face to a lower off, for the faint hearted, below the crux. The blank section which follows gives technical, fingery climbing, and we all succumbed to judicious use of the bolts, until further, smaller pockets continued steeply, but more easily to the top.

But the crowning glory of this wall is the magnificent line taken by the four pitches of Zebra-Zion (5.10). The first pitch takes a diagonal line across the bucket wall to a hanging stance at the foot of a vertical, curving corner. The crux comes early on the next pitch, with a smooth section lacking footholds and only a thin, finger crack to layback with. With the sun on my back and the rock radiating heat, I was not relaxed and the holds felt slippery. But it had to be done; a move up and a pull on a friable edge allowed me to scabble onto the shelf above. Afterwards, although the corner sweeps outwards, holds gradually improve and it's simply a matter of going steady and retaining the energy to spread the protection over a long pitch. The continuation crack on the next pitch is easier, but then a thin traverse on knobs leads to a long slab climbed on doubtful sounding holds to beneath the impending head-wall. The solution here is a long, impressive, flake crack, which takes a few bold moves to reach, but then gives a good edge for a steep layback to the top.

So, is it worth a visit? The guidebook says that the climbing at Smith Rock is good in spite of the rock quality, not because of it! And there is no doubt that after a period to

acclimatise, the climbs keep drawing you back each day. There are naturally protected cracks and corners, bolted faces, and crags with differing aspects which give you the choice of climbing in sunshine or shade. Smith Rock lies in the rain shadow to the east of the Cascades, but there are extremes of temperature, and spring and autumn are best for climbing, though it is still cold at night. But best of all is the situation, overlooking the Crooked River, with sparsely developed ranching country extending to the south and west as far as the snow-covered Cascades. Life here is relaxed and seems remote from 21st century America.

THE IRON LUNG

John Jackson

In the late 1930s my brother Ron bought a motor-bike and sidecar for £5. It was an old side-valve Ariel which never went very fast but slogged away all day without any trouble. We called it the 'Iron Lung' and indeed it was a lung, a transport to the fresh clean air of the moorlands and the hills. Ron quickly learned to drive and after a few sorties to such places as Ilkley and Almscliffe we travelled further to the Lake District and then to Scotland. It was on the Isle of Skye we saw our first rope slings and a strange artificial contraption called a karabiner in use by a small team of climbers. We were surprised that such artificial aids and safety devices could be used in a sport we felt depended mainly on personal skill, judgement of difficulties and conditions and assessment of one's own ability. Years later I trained people in the use of such equipment but always felt strange carrying such extraneous gear as chocks, slings, karabiners, harnesses and helmets. However, though we climbed the hardest routes in Britain up to the coming of the war, they would not now rate as hard – but we had a grand time doing them, sometimes in rubbers, often in nails, occasionally solo, but generally the two of us together. Linked by a Beales three red-stranded hemp rope there seemed to be no problem in the whole wide world other than getting up the next stretch of intriguing and alluring rock.

In the 1930s Hopkinson's Crack, or Hoppy's, on Dow Crag above Goats Water was graded as the top severe 'on't crag'. Though not the highest standard climb the big corner crack gave a good natural line full of interest. The day before we climbed the crack on a winters day in 1937, my brother and I drove to Coniston Copper Mines Youth Hostel with the

Iron Lung. In those days powered vehicles were forbidden but Mrs. Mowitt, the hostel warden, always turned a blind eye if you were a climber. This was a piece of vital information passed on to us by Charlie Wilson and the Thompson brothers. The next morning was grey and cold and promised to remain so. Probably ice on the rocks, I thought, and shivered, but warmed up trudging over Little Arrow Moor fortified by a breakfast of Mrs. Mowitt's bacon and eggs.

The crag was strangely silent, no wind, no sounds of running water, and no drip, drip of liquid from the overhangs. As I'd suspected the rocks, normally damp, were now glazed with ice. Ron, as always, was not deterred, his decision brief and to the point. "No sense hanging about today. Leave the rope and we can each solo!"

"Might as well," I agreed, "the hemp rope will soon be difficult to handle," but I felt distinctly unenthusiastic. In Easter Gully we arrived at the huge chockstone that blocks the way to the Amphitheatre and the foot of Hopkinson's. Its left-hand route known as the Cave Pitch was normally easy but this day fingers were quickly numbed and progress slow as with our nailed boots we kicked at the ice knobs to reach the rock beneath. Then at last there was the crack – direct, honest, not long, perhaps 150 ft., but long enough for such a day. Ron found no problems. "He's got methylated spirits in his bloodstream. Doesn't seem to feel the cold at all," I thought. Three or four moves and my fingers were numb with cold, totally lacking in feeling. I beat them, blew on them, stuck each of my thumbs in my mouth feeling pain when the blood came throbbing back.

I was thinking, "Don't hang about here. Ron's kicked ice from most of the footholds but there's still lots so kick again." I did so, each time making progress for a few more feet. At 80 ft the crack became really thin, the rock walls steepened and

the small finger holds were covered with frost.

Finger nails scraped and dug into the verglas and I realised Ron's ascent had looked deceptively easy. Pausing for a re-warm, I looked around and across the gully and noted the rime on the Bandstand Wall.

There was an increasing greyness to the day and between my feet I caught a fleeting glimpse of the fan of large boulders above Goats Water. I failed miserably on my first attempt at the final few feet of the crux.

"Try facing right", advised Ron – and I did. That's how I climbed the crux, but seemed to gain most of my adhesion from my rough tweed jacket freezing to the crag. Once over the crux my spirits rose and we climbed immediately behind each other without pause following the crack to the last steep section but with good holds.

Back at the Youth Hostel we quickly packed, mounted the Iron Lung and sped back home, having had from start to finish twenty-four hours of living life to the full.

THE ABRAHAM BROTHERS

Their Books and Other Publications

Geoff Cram

The Abraham brothers of Keswick were famous for their early rock climbing, alpine mountaineering and motoring. They were also early and prominent members of the Club. Ashley Abraham was the first President of the FRCC, 1907-8, and George was the first Honorary Member of the Club 1907 and Vice-President from 1908-1910. Both wrote several articles in the Journal, see numbers 1-5, 9-14 and 31.

George and Ashley Abraham produced superb photographs, especially those of early climbing, taken with a full-plate camera in the Lakes, North Wales, Scotland and the Alps. The family photography firm was G P Abraham Ltd with a shop in Keswick (the Victoria buildings, later Fisher's) for approximately 70 years. Some members may remember the closing sale of photographs in their shop in 1967.

Their books are very well-known, particularly the Lake District/North Wales/Skye rock-climbing trilogy – essential items for the book collector! However their other photographic publications are less well-known and do not appear to have been documented previously; the chronology can be confusing as many are undated.

For completeness, their classic climbing and motoring books are also recorded below. Many other books also contained their photographs, eg Benson, *Crag and Hound in Lakeland*, 1902; Abercrombie and Kelly, *Cumbrian Regional Report*, 1932 and Humble, *The Cuillin of Skye*, 1952.

Abraham books by other publishers**By Ashley P Abraham (1876 – 1951)**

1908 *Rock-climbing in Skye*. Longmans, Green & Co.

By George D Abraham (1872 – 1965)

- 1907 *The Complete Mountaineer*. Methuen
 1909 *British Mountain Climbs*. Mills & Boon*
 1910 *Mountain Adventures at Home and Abroad*. Methuen
 1911 *Swiss Mountain Climbs*. Mills & Boon
 1913 *Motor Ways in Lakeland*. Methuen
 1919 *On Alpine Heights and British Crags*. Methuen**
 1923 *First Steps to Climbing*. Mills & Boon
 1928 *Motor Ways at Home and Abroad*. Methuen
 1933 *Modern Mountaineering*. Methuen

* Reprinted five times – the 1948 edition was still on sale in Keswick in the sixties for 15/-

** First published in America in 1916 (Houghton Mifflin, Boston). The UK edition was delayed by World War I.

Publications by G P Abraham Ltd, Keswick, Cumberland

The firm G. P. Abraham began publishing in 1900 by reprinting Owen Glynne Jones' classic *Rock Climbing in the English Lake District* (originally published in 1897 by Longmans, Green & Co) and adding a supplement of new climbs. The third edition, with two supplements, appeared in 1911.

O G Jones had been working on *Rock Climbing in North Wales* before he was killed on the Dent Blanche. George & Ashley completed and published the book in 1906.

1900 Owen Glynne Jones. *Rock-climbing in the English Lake District*. (2nd edn). 31 collotype plates.

1906 George & Ashley Abraham. *Rock-climbing in North Wales*. 30 monogravure plates.

1911 Owen Glynne Jones. *Rock-climbing in the English Lake District*. (3rd edn) 31 collotype plates.

1912 Ashley P Abraham. *Beautiful Lakeland*. With 32 full-page monogravure illustrations. A large 4to grey-paper hardback with a mounted photograph (of Buttermere) on the cover, and some plates printed on blue paper. Reprinted in 1920 (without the blue paper). *Beautiful Lakeland* also appeared as a smaller 8vo brown-paper softback, punched and tied, with overlapping edges and a mounted photograph (of Rydal) on the cover. Reprinted 1926.

1913 Ashley P Abraham. *Some Portraits of the Lake Poets & their Homes*. With 29 full-page monogravure illustrations. Smaller 8vo brown-paper hardback with a mounted photograph of Wordsworth on the cover. Also appeared as grey-paper softback, punched and tied, in 1920. Reprinted 1923, 1928, and as late as 1947.

1914 Ashley P Abraham. *Beautiful North Wales*. With 32 full-page monogravure illustrations. 4to grey-paper hardback, with a photograph of the Pass of Aberglaslyn mounted on the cover, and some plates printed on blue paper.

This book also appeared in the same year as a brown-paper softback, punched & tied, with Snowdon from above Nant Gwynant on the cover.

1929 George D Abraham. *Motoring in the English Lakeland*. With 32 full-page monogravure illustrations of all the Lakes & the principal Valleys. Smaller 8vo brown-paper hardback & softback with a mounted photograph of the Kirkstone Pass.

n.d. (ca 1930) George D Abraham. *Guide to Keswick and the Vale of Derwentwater*. With 12 illustrations in photogravure and map. Small 24pp cardback guide, with pictorial front cover of Friar's Crag and map on rear cover.

n.d. (ca 1940) G D Abraham. *Derwentwater Holiday Book*. With 14 photographs. Small 20pp cardback guide, developed from the one above, with similar cover illustration.

Books of Photographs by G P Abraham Ltd, Keswick, Cumberland

In all the following books of photographs, classic early photographs were used (and re-used), including those of Ennerdale with no trees (ie before the conifer plantations) and early ascents of the Needle and Scafell Pinnacle.

n.d.(insec Oct 1917) *The English Lakeland. From a Series of Prize Medal Photographs (Copyright)*. Photographed and published by G P Abraham FRPS, Keswick. Large oblong format, punched & tied, with 18 fine photos printed on high quality paper. The grey thick paper binding has a 'crocodile skin' pattern and a small colour title block on the cover, with a Wordsworth quotation. On the rear cover 'Printed at our works in Hamburg'. This early book was probably printed before 1914.

The English Lakeland title used on at least two later publications:

n.d. (inscr 1937) *English Lakeland – portrayed in 56 de luxe photogravure comprising ALL the Lakes. 22 Prize Medals awarded*. Windermere Lake on the front cover, map on rear. Large oblong format.

n.d. similar, with 52 photogravures, with pictorial dustwrapper showing Friar's Crag, Derwentwater on the cover.

n.d. (insec 1919) G P A. *The English Lake Land* (on cover). Title page starts The English Lake District. Album of 38 views, Green-paper oblong format, punched & tied.

1925 G P A *The English Lake Land*. 'Album of Views' with 36 photographs. Green and grey paper covers, large oblong format, punched and tied. Essentially a reprint of the above, but with a photograph of the Needle at the end.

1926 G P A *The English Lakes*. (On cover – *The English Lake District* on the title page). Album of 15 'nature-colour' photos. Decorative grey paper covers, large oblong format, punched & tied. This appears to be the Abraham Brothers only early publication in colour. The 15 photographs appear to be tinted.

n.d. (insec 1938) G P A *Lovely Lakeland*. *Illustrated by 55 photogravures comprising ALL the Lakes*. (1/- on cover). Paperback with Rydal Water on front and map on rear cover. Reprinted at least three times, with some different photos. An issue with 57 photos is inscribed 1954.

Other publishers also published albums of classic Abraham photographs, eg

1930 *The Beauty of the English Lakes*. (54) Camera pictures by GPA Ltd, Keswick. Selected by William Hodgson and published by The Homeland Association Ltd (No 19).

Small gift photo albums by G P Abraham Ltd

Attractive small booklets, undated and card bound, or in an envelope ready for posting:

Real photographs of Grasmere and District. 8 photos. Early, grey cover, tied.

Real photographs of Ullswater and District. 8 photos. Early, grey cover, tied.

Beautiful Lakeland. 12 Real Photographs. Decorative cover.

Keswick and District. 12 Actual photographs. 1/- (env).

Route from Windermere to Keswick. 12 Actual photographs. 1/- (env).

Ullswater and District. 12 Actual photographs. 1/- (env).

Windermere and District. 12 Actual photographs. 1/- (env).

The Isle of Skye. 10 real photos, for Macintyre, Portree. (ringbound)

Keswick on Derwentwater. 10 'colour-snaps' (ringbound, tinted plates).

Other examples of these tiny albums are likely to exist!

Altogether an impressive total of some 26 book publications; not including reprints and the small photograph albums, or their thriving business in lantern slides, photographs and post-cards.

One further reference with an excellent selection of the Abraham Brothers' photographs is:

1975 Hankinson, Alan. *Camera on the Crag.* Heinemann. (Revised edn. 1979).

THE IRISH MUNROS DUATHLON

Munros with a bike, but without a beard

Mike Browell

Climbing the Scottish Munros requires colossal amounts of time, commitment, and for those of us based south of Edinburgh, mind-numbing tolerance of vast distances of monotonous motorway travel, weekend after weekend. All those car miles make Munro-bagging a very environmentally unfriendly activity. Of course, there is always the green alternative, a continuous Munro traverse by foot and by bike which will just take up the best part of three months, but few of us get that much holiday.

The Irish Munros are a less time-consuming and much greener prospect, and a lot more achievable. For a start there are only seven of them, and rather than being scattered around liberally, they string out to form a neat line across the island, from SW to E. Most of Ireland has been conveniently flattened by glacial activity, with the mountains protruding as isolated lumps, so it's fairly bike-friendly.

As a bike/run duathlon, the Irish Munros offer an excellent short blast across the island, a blast which can be as short as 24 hours from summit to summit!

More realistically and without attempting to break the record (less than 24 hours from summit to summit), they form an excellent four day adventure, with an extra day at each end for travel from Britain.

Cycling in Ireland

Before embarking on this adventure, there are some things you need to know about cycling in Ireland. It's a big country, and a small population, so the roads are relatively empty and some are superlatively over-engineered, for Ireland

has embraced Europe and euro-lolly with enthusiasm, and received massive amounts of cash to improve the underused trunk road system. However, while the main roads are brilliant, the shortest distance on a bike usually means using minor roads. This is not a good idea. The lanes which meander through the Irish countryside have evolved, but not very far, from manure encrusted farm tracks. It is a surprising fact that Ireland has precious few footpaths – anything worth its salt has become a lane. Cattle and tractors are common users, and, what with the things that cattle leave behind, it's no wonder grass sometimes flourishes in the middle. Repairs are effected one pothole at a time – and that's a continuous process; tractors turning out of fields leave dollops of dried mud as a traffic calming rollercoaster. All of that makes for lumpy cycling.

The main roads have their hazards, big fast buses. Beware of buses. There are lots of them, conveying tourists at great speed, or simply ferrying the locals around, those who don't travel by tractor. Now, Irish buses regard bikes as solitary revolutionaries who threaten the public transport system, and their mission in life is therefore to eradicate dissident cyclists. To do this they rely on terrorist tactics; they pass terrifyingly close, usually signalling their arrival on your rear wheel by a spooky whoosh of air brakes, then nudging past a few millimetres from your elbow. And that's in the country! In Dublin, buses are even more menacing, and hunt in packs. On the shared cycle/bus lanes, it's pretty obvious the buses don't want to share, and several queue up behind to form a convoy, then perform some scary synchronised swerving as they overtake.

Weather

We chose late June 2000 for the best chance of settled

weather. However, the spell of good weather came too early, and broke a week before we set off. Consequently we drove west across North Wales through a series of savage squalls which hit at cyclical intervals. Fearing the worst we boarded the ferry with ample waterproofs. And that was the end of it, for the next week. As we arrived in Dublin it brightened up, and the next day saw wall to wall sunshine, blue skies and a heatwave which followed us across the emerald isle.

The Ultimate Irish Duathlon

So our epic Duathlon took place in gorgeous weather in June 2000. Escaping from dreadful rainstorms in North Wales, Stuart Gascoyne and I dumped the car at Holyhead, cycled onto the very impressive Dublin Swift which took under 2 hours to reach Dublin Ferryport, then cycled along the River Liffey to Dublin Heuston station. We were there for lunch, and by late afternoon we were in laid-back Tralee in SW Ireland, enjoying a truly foreign country with late evening sunshine till well past 10.00.

On the way we learnt a bit about Irish uncertainty and probability theory. There was certain to be a wildcat strike on the railways that afternoon, and our train from Dublin to Tralee would certainly end at Mallow. Perhaps we could get the bikes on the link bus? Sure, there'll probably be no problem. In the event, there was a connecting train and no-one looked like striking.

Getting from Tralee to Brandon, our first Munro, required a crack of dawn start and a 70 km cycle ride on virtually empty minor roads. Well, virtually empty, except for the occasional transporter lorry carrying road mending machinery to the next site. Stopping to enjoy the view, well actually to effect mechanical repairs, proved unpopular with us, though very popular with hungry midges. Despite the empty minor

roads we soon came across the ubiquitous road-mending gangs, doing a bit of pothole patching. Again, and again and again.

Brandon Mountain

Wild and windswept, Brandon is the most westerly Munro in Europe, with St Brendan the Navigator's oratory on the summit, gazing west to America. For many, this is a favourite mountain, as only a mountain by the sea can be. Just as in the Cuillin in Skye, so here too there is something magnificent about the close triple juxtaposition of oceanic expansiveness, the coastline's abrupt vertical emergence, and sweeping mountain slopes, together combining all that is glorious in landscape.

And the Pilgrims Path provides a nice green introduction to Irish Munros. The tarmac road leads past a couple of small farms – 'Yes, surely, you can leave your bicycles outside my house. There's no need to lock them' – to a small and newly-built walled shrine, wired up with a large cable. The large cable (another EEC grant?) suggested that it may light up at night!

The Pilgrims Path is remarkably untrodden, and green, but clearly delineated by white plastic posts every hundred metres or so. The posts bear some resemblance to road markers, and I'm sure that's what they were manufactured for before St Brendan called them to a higher duty. The route is broken into the 14 Stations of the Cross, each ending at a wooden cross. The pilgrimage to the summit took 1:10 hours, and a lot less down. St. Brendan may have been a fine navigator and may well have discovered America, if it was ever lost. But I'd swear that the disciples who waymarked his Pilgrims Path have deviated from the straight and narrow line which it surely had at one time. The contemporary translation

meanders in a gently contouring long zig and zag where true pilgrims would never have dithered from the difficult and steep direct ascent. Which we took!

Naturally enough, there was a cross on top.

And a broad rolling summit.

The minor roads of Dingle made the next cycle stint a tad arduous, starting with a long flattish flog along the south coast of the Dingle peninsula to Castlemaine. We wouldn't have given a xxxx for anything except a cold Guinness and this was paramount in our thoughts as we pressed on up a steady uphill grind to the foothills of the Reeks. Fortunately we had earmarked a village close to our intended overnight stay, and surely all villages in Ireland have a couple of pubs ...? Unfortunately, this was the village with no pub whatsoever, not even a shop. Ever seen a mirage shimmer away?

Fortunately, we found a nice lady who was willing to sell her husband's private stock of the black stuff for black-market prices. She was later seen to be laughing all the way to the supermarket ...

The MacGillycuddy Reeks

Featuring in *The Big Walks* as one of the best mountain days out, this was not to be a disappointment. Not quite Skye Ridge or Aonach Eagach quality, but close. The horseshoe around Hag's Glen takes in Ireland's highest summit, passing first over Beenkeragh, then over the highest point, 1039 metres high Carrauntuohill to outlying Caher, then back and along a switchback ridge to Cummeennapeasta. An early start saw us underway as early morning mists rose, and up onto the ridge on a sunny windless day while the rest of the country was waking up from a heavy Saturday night. You might imagine that one of the finest mountain walks in Ireland would be popular on one of the rare sunny days of the year, & a Sunday

to boot, yet we only saw one person, and this was a Scot on the summit of Carrauntuohill!

In fact, he was the only person we saw on any of the Irish Munros.

Makes you think, doesn't it? Can you envisage climbing Scotland's highest summit on a perfect summer Sunday and seeing no-one? More likely, you'd be trodden by hordes of sponsored peak-baggers. But then, like Carrauntuohill and much of Irish legend, this is fairy story stuff. Can you imagine grassy paths up Scafell?

Our circuit from the roadhead in Hag's Glen was clearly not a popular route, as we could neither find a clearly defined path up or down. A tally of four Munros was easily notched up, the airy ridge traverse from Beenkeragh to Carrauntuohill being not too tricky in perfect conditions.

Naturally, there was a cross on top of Carrauntuohill.

And a broad rolling summit.

The MacGillycuddy Reeks circuit took just 5:45 hours, followed by a brisk 50km cycle ride to Mallow for an overnight stay.

Galtymore

After some desperately challenging navigation along very minor lanes we eventually found a promising route which ended at a 'Marie Celeste' farm yard. Looking for permission to park our bikes we found no-one at home, just a solemn-faced dead sheep in the shearing yard and a car with its door and boot open, seemingly abandoned centrally in the farmyard. More spooky!

Again, we couldn't find a path after the first few hundred metres, so it was a bit of a meander across grouchy, peaty moorland towards the inevitable cross on the summit.

Naturally, a broad rolling summit.

The promised streams, which looked so convincing on the map, failed to deliver any water when we reached them, so by the time we reached the farm (still deserted, but an abandoned tractor had now appeared) we were running on empty. In keeping with Brandon, this was also a 2 hour trip.

Another gruelling flog on the bikes in the heat of the day took us 70km to Waterford. We chose this slightly longer detour for the certainty of fast roads and easy gradients, with a minimum of lumpy bits. By now we had grasped that the larger roads had very good hard shoulders which gave cyclists plenty of space to keep away from buses.

Lugnaquilla

A solid seven hours of pedalling was required for this 150km stage, the final 15km taking us up the delightful and remote Glenmalure. We dumped our bags at the very welcome Inn, and resolved to test a couple of Guinneses later. A few more kilometres of cycling were needed to reach the Youth Hostel where we left the bikes and sweated up an unmapped but 'bound to be there' forest road, deteriorating into a disappearing path which we failed to follow to the summit. Another rounded grassy plateau unfolded to meet us as we scrambled up and over the third short sharp slope, like an assault course, and before long we were on the summit, admiring the distant but slightly hazy views and celebrating a cumulative Peak to Peak time of 32 hours of bike/run.

Naturally it was a broad rolling summit.

But no cross?

Without any guilt whatsoever we cracked open a couple of cans of the local brew, by way of a small celebration. Not what we would normally do on the summit of a Munro, but honestly, it felt quite all right in Ireland. It's really green and more laid-back there. Try it.

The Cairngorms area of a United Kingdom weather map, screened on television, was spotted with symbols of bright sun. A weatherman predicted that such an outlook would hold for the weekend. Andy Carlin and I had patiently waited for a walking and climbing outing to Ben Avon and Beinn a' Bhùird in the Cairngorms. Our previous attempts failed when similar forecasts did not materialise. Nevertheless the draw of these mountains had endured in me for years. Smudged pencil crosses on my Cairngorms map marked fifteen mountain tops listed in the Munro's Tables, 1953 edition, revised 1969. Dog-eared pages in a climber's guide marked routes on Beinn a' Bhùird's remotest crags. To do the tops and selected climbs, a long weekend was as essential as settled good weather.

Our weekend's first day, began at Brig of Dee, east of Braemar and south of Ben Avon and Beinn a' Bhùird. Andy and I fled from my parked car to escape the nip of the breakfasting midge. The sun of the 2001 equinox cast short shadows in front of us as we toiled up what is called Fairy Glen. We pitched Andy's tent beyond the glen by a river, the Quoich Water, where a strath narrowed into a valley that separated Ben Avon from Beinn a' Bhùird. At one that afternoon we set out for Ben Avon by first ascending Creag an Dail Mhor, a Munro top. A col to the north of this dome-like hill coupled it to the infinitely greater bulk of Ben Avon. We proceeded to the col and sweated up a hillside to Carn Eas, our next Munro top. A herd of deer scented us and sped off in single file across a long ribbon of snow.

I was the first to spot a descending walker on Carn Eas's plateau. Our tracks nearly crossed and I called out greetings. A large hat sheltered a man's head from the sun's glare and

his dark glasses were fixed on looking ahead. The last person we would see that day did not reply and Andy reported an identical encounter. The stranger though was promptly forgotten at the top of Càrn Eàs.

Tors

We became enthralled by Ben Avon's granite tors. Nature had posted them at salient points upon an undulating plain which spread for miles. There was no other distraction. Lochnagar to the south, was clearly visible but distant. Beinn a' Bhùird's corries shrank back as if they wished to keep their magnificence private. Dinner, we agreed, was going to be a late one. The landscape of Ben Avon, we also deduced, would pose questions about the rulings of the arbiters of tops in the Munro's Tables, beginning immediately with Stob Dubh an Eàs Bhig.

The Munro's Tables, 1953 edition, revised 1969 (for convenience called the 1969 Munro Tables hereafter), classified Stob Dubh an Eas Bhig as a top. Its location had been identified with a four figure Ordnance Survey map reference. Two tors fitted into that square of the map and we visited them. But which one was the Munro top? We settled upon the tor that lay about half a mile south-south-west of the summit of Ben Avon. In our opinion it was the apex of a distinct mountain feature. Our search might be considered a vain effort since the top had been deleted from the 1981 edition of the Tables and forgotten in the 1997 Tables. Little Pap on Lochnagar also suffered this indignity in the 1981 edition. We ascended it in 1996 since it stood out as a prominent hill when viewed from the Glen Muick approach walk to Lochnagar. The 1997 Tables returned Little Pap to its top status. Perhaps Stob Dubh an Eas Bhig will make a similar comeback.

We strolled on to what the 1969 Munro's Tables had identified as being the 'S.W. Top'. This was history since it had been

struck out of subsequent Tables. The place though must be visited to see some of the finest scenery of the Cairngorms – Garbh Choire. The sight of it gave us the joy of anticipation since our next day's climbing lay in that steep sided, large cul-de-sac.

The tor summit of Ben Avon – Leabaidh an Daimh Bhuidhe – became our next stop and after a scramble on it we swiftly moved on to discover its northern side. We surrendered hundreds of feet to arrive at Stob Bac an Fhuarain, a shoulder of the mountain. It gave us the satisfaction of being our sixth Munro top of the day even though it had been dropped from the Tables. We also caught sight of a small bowl of a corrie which decorated the mountain's otherwise dull northern flank. Cupped in the corrie was the 'tarn of the goats', Lochan nan Gabhar. This tarn became a milestone for us to aim for as we contoured eastward to the Munro top of West Meur Gorm Craig before ambling on to the Munro top of East Meur Gorm Craig where we arrived late in the afternoon.

In my opinion some discretion had been exercised to select East Meur Gorm Craig as a top. Neighbouring Big Brae, which we crossed over as we returned from it, appeared to be a touch higher. The top though was ideally placed as the extreme north-eastern corner of the mountain. It gave an aloof sensation of pacing the ramparts of a fortress and we were able to look far to the north, seventy miles or so, to the hills beyond the Moray Firth.

Andy and I then walked south-west to the central, southern arm of the mountain. Two adjacent tors, at its southern end, proved worthy of investigation. The place, Stuc Gharbh Mhor, was a Munro top in the 1969 Tables. Its present erasure from the Tables will guarantee that many walkers will miss the fun of the easy scrambles on its tors. We turned north and scaled a more challenging tor before bouldering up onto the

highest point of Mullach Lochan nan Garbh, a top on the mountain's east to west spine. This won us our day's final top. Was it a hollow result? Mullach Lochan nan Garbh is no longer ranked as a Munro top.

Mist cruised in at eight in the evening as we left the summit area of Ben Avon. The ptarmigan we disturbed were probably happy to see us depart. We arrived at our tent nearly two hours later and marked the day ten out of ten. A superior mark to the five out of five which the 1997 Munro's Tables would score.

Granite

The high diving board for entry into Garbh Choire is known as the Sneck. It latches Ben Avon's western side to Beinn a' Bhùird. Kevin Howett reckoned in his *Rock Climbing in Scotland* that it would take a climber four and a half hours to walk from the Brig of Dee to this col. We took nearly an hour to walk from it to the foot of Garbh Choire's five hundred foot high buttress of granite called Mitre Ridge.

'The famous "unclimbed and ? climbable" Mitre Ridge', was attempted without 'any previous reconnaissance' by a Cambridge University Mountaineering Club party in 1933. Pat Baird, John Crofton, Jock Leslie, Stephen Cumming, and Sandy Wedderburn took fullest advantage of a holiday after their final university examinations. Baird, Crofton and Leslie became physically fit and attuned for adventure since they had enjoyed, 'previous to the visit to the Mitre, three weeks in North West Scotland, where there had been very little rock climbing done previously'. The party's access to Garbh Choire was eased through use of Cumming's strong local ties. 'Stephen Cumming was the son of the minister of the Church of Scotland in Dufftown (twenty or so miles north-east of Ben Avon) ... Cumming's elder sister had obtained permission from Inchroy Lodge (north of Ben Avon) to drive [the party]

up the private road to the Lodge from which [they] walked to the Mitre and camped just below it'. The next day, the 4th of July, was to be 'a truly memorable day' in their lives.

The Mitre Ridge is made up of two contrasting facets of rock. Our approach gave us sight of only one, an upward sweep of slabby rock, which basked under an early morning sun since it faced east. We observed that a pair of climbers had started the Mitre Ridge route. Wedderburn, Baird, and Leslie made the first ascent of this route on the 4th July. The weather that day in 1933 was 'marvellous ... it was 90° Fahrenheit in Dufftown, a rare temperature for the Scottish Highlands'. Mitre Ridge's ascent was only half of the day's local story. On the second facet – a north-west facing, gloomy, large, steep, sheet of Cairngorm granite – another new route was climbed by Cumming and Crofton. All the Cambridge men gathered together at the top of the buttress and 'found close by a little burn in which [they] were able to have a celebratory bathe'.

The Cumming-Crofton Route was our climbing objective. It followed an obvious, vertical cleavage in what is called the West Wall of Mitre Ridge. Andy stood at the foot of the climb impatient to start because the walk had not taxed him. He had crawled out of the tent claiming that he was weary from Ben Avon. I volunteered to carry the day's rucksack outwards as long as he carried it back. He agreed. The initial price that I paid for a rest was to surrender the first lead and so I continued to carry the rucksack. Andy made quick work of the first pitch and my turn came to follow. Having stepped from a platform, some height above scree, I confronted steep rock. I whined as I performed a series of upward balance moves. My feet and legs trembled as a reaction to the mechanical moment exerted by the rucksack's weight. I whinged even more as I swung across into and up a crack on the left-hand side of a hanging flake. Andy greeted my noises with

scorn. My neglect of climbing practice was thus partly penalised and I paid the final instalment by becoming the seconder for the day.

We made a rapid ascent of the climb. Indeed my halts at belay positions saw me breathing noticeably. Perhaps a 1933 university graduate with a medical inclination like John Crofton would have taken an interest in my condition. One of his career's achievements was becoming Professor of Respiratory Disease and Tuberculosis at Edinburgh University. He was knighted in 1977. Conversation has been listed as one of Sir John's recreations. He would have been a pleasure to have met as the stranger on Ben Avon.¹

The climb ended for us in a nook some two arm's lengths of mine away from the final section of the ridge. Cumming and Crofton won this section ahead of Wedderburn, Baird, and Leslie. We did not match that success. The pair on Mitre Ridge climb sat immediately above us in a crammed space and talk became spontaneous. We exchanged reports of our climbs. I thought that our route had been constantly interesting and thus excellent. In addition to the first pitch's problems, I will not forget a short groove, cracked corners and perhaps best of all excursions upon two walls. Its Severe grading was correct for dry granite. Andy and I realised later that the four of us were the only people to climb on the Mitre Ridge that day. This was curious since there were other climbers in the corrie.

A short section of the ridge, which began where Cumming and Crofton's route finished, had yielded an extra challenge since 1933 – Bell's Variation. To have unlocked such a passage demonstrated 'the granite authority of his [J.H.B.Bell's] logic'.² We took the variation and so extracted the last moments of steep exposure which the ascent of the buttress had provided.

Andy and I flitted the top of Mitre Ridge for the base of Squareface Buttress, situated to the east nearer the Sneek. It was an afternoon sun trap. We had observed climbing taking place there from the Mitre Ridge and reckoned that we were the day's seventh party to ascend Squareface, a Tom Patey Very Difficult slab climb of 1953. Its rock was rough. Indeed a 'severe' crack on the final pitch became a snare for my feet when my rubber-soled shoes stuck to the granite. Andy sat at the final belay radiating satisfaction partly due to the speed of our ascent.

"Do you think that climb was a three star route?", he asked.

"Yes," I replied.

"Aye," queried Andy, "But wasn't Cumming and Crofton's route better?"

The tone in his voice clearly indicated that Cumming-Crofton Route was his choice as the better quality climb. I instantly agreed with him. The assessment of Squareface's star quality was in my view based upon a deception. A pedestrian spying climbers on Squareface would gawp at the sight of climbing in an exposed position. Squareface though was an affable climb. The thrill of exposure on Cumming-Crofton Route will be noticed by even the experienced climber and the climbing variety found a pleasure. Since the climbers' guides star system for classifying a climb's quality is based upon personal opinion it is perhaps not surprising to find that Cumming-Crofton Route had been given only two stars. However both these routes had one common factor: the quality of the people involved in their first ascents.

We followed the footsteps of Patey, Cumming and Crofton. Thomas Patey was born in 1932, the year before Cumming-Crofton Route was put up. He was of the same age as Cumming and Crofton when he did Squareface. He, like

Crofton, qualified for the medical profession. 'As a mountaineer, he was an all-rounder of astonishing versatility and international reputation ... in new routes he was prolific'.³ Cumming shone briefly as pioneer climber: 'Stephen Cumming after Cambridge went straight out to work in a shipping firm in Hong Kong. So he did no further climbing. He served most of the [Second World] War as a secret agent behind the Japanese lines in China.' Cumming's bold character becomes evident.

Clues to Crofton's nature and career achievements have already been given. He 'abandoned rock climbing in 1945' and 'has done a lot of hill walking since'. Sir John has nevertheless passed on 'memories of [his] very happy climbing days' with considerable effect. If you ever attempt the Cumming-Crofton Route be ready to converse because you might meet a Crofton. Sir John Crofton informed me that his son, and a grandson 'about a year' before, had done the climb.

Tops

Next day I saw Beinn a' Bhùird being grilled by the sun the moment I opened the tent's door at six in the morning. An hour later Andy followed me to ford the Quoich Water. He protested at my choice of location for wading the river. His dithering wavered and with bare feet he made the crossing. The river's chill rinsed his toes clean of rock climber's cramp. Once we had knotted up our boot laces, we headed to complete all Beinn a' Bhùird's Munro tops.

Our excellent walk on Beinn a' Bhùird contained some displeasure. A heat haze denied us views of other parts of the Cairngorms and the mountain's broad plateau concealed the full magnificence of its eastern corries. We received an appeal for painkillers from two men and could not help. One of them, with a twisted ankle, limped southwards under a scalding sun.

We traversed around the western end of Garbh Choire to Stob an t-Sluichd, the mountain's north top. We were able to eavesdrop the calls of two climbers on Cumming-Crofton's Route. My whimpers of the day before would have caused consternation in a walker. Andy found a graveyard of midges near the top. We felt no pity for the thick scum they had formed upon the surface of a pot of water, the size of a hand basin, eroded into granite. Not far away though we inspected the fallibility of human flight in the form of a crashed aeroplane.

Early that afternoon we broke camp and made our return journey. I advanced with blistering feet listening to Andy's implications that I carried the lighter rucksack. We found that the goblins of Fairy Glen had been busy. Huddles of mountain bikes had been left there chained to trees. An Edinburgh-based walker caught us up as we neared the Brig of Dee. Pressed by our enquiries, he told us that he had done Beinn a' Bhùird and Ben Avon from our destination. We praised his effort. I congratulated him on his walking ethic since he had not used a mountain bike.

Andy pretended to falter a furlong or so from the Brig of Dee, and appealed to me to go ahead and fetch my car to him. The comedy gave me grounds for humour. I offered to do so but added that the journey in my car would invalidate his Munro ascents of Beinn a' Bhùird and Ben Avon. My ruling drew an abusive rebuke. The spit with his words was the worst weather of a grand weekend.

1 Sir John Crofton contributed a generous amount of information to the writer about his 1933 Scottish climbing holiday. Extracts from his information are shown in parentheses.

2 'In Memoriam - J.H.B. Bell, D.Sc.', *The Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal*, Vol. XXXI No. 167 (1976), p. 80.

3 W.D.B., 'In Memoriam - Thomas Walton Patey', *The Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal*, Vol. XXIX No. 162 (May 1971), p. 433.

IN THE CELESTIAL MOUNTAINS

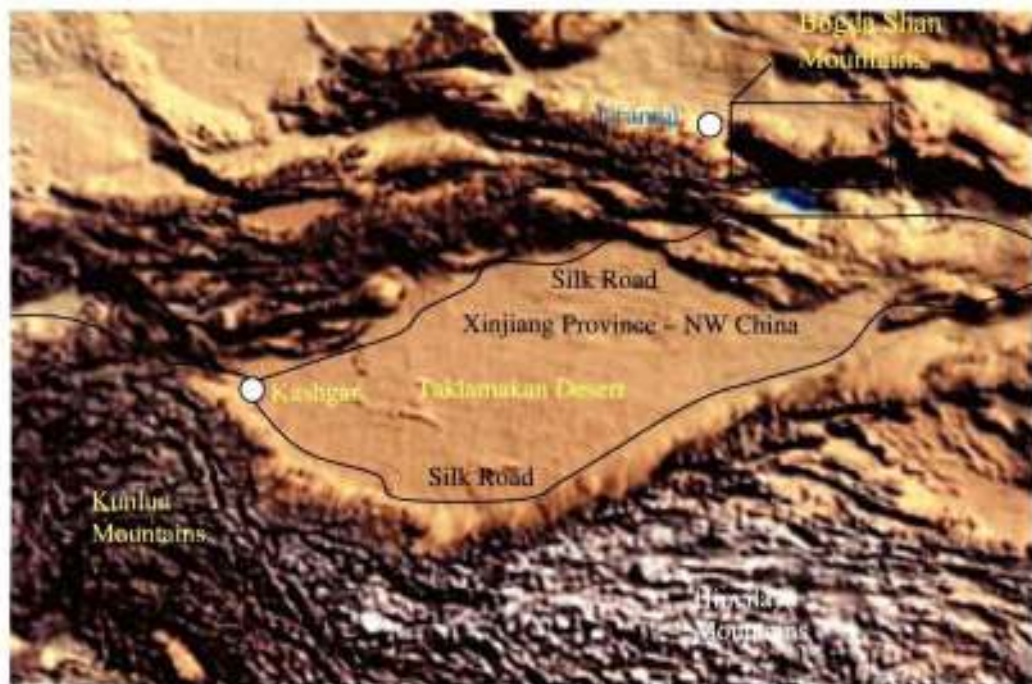
A short walk with a camel

John McM. Moore

One of the 'perks' of the academic life, at least for field scientists, is the chance to visit wild and exotic places – sometimes at somebody else's expense. Such was the case for my first two visits to China which involved a circuit of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region in China's 'wild west' in the search for diamonds, rubies and jade. The journey took me across the Taklamakan Desert, along the southern branch of the Silk Road to Kashgar and back to the Urümqi for a quick, tourist visit to Heaven Lake in the Celestial Mountains. This range, otherwise known as the Bogda Shan, is one of the eastern outliers to the Chinese Tien Shan and is situated east of Urümqi city in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, midway between Kazakhstan and Mongolia.

Heaven Lake is on the north side of the range where most of the rain falls, giving the mountains an amazingly Alpine appearance, with lush meadows, pine-covered foothills and glaciated peaks beyond. The map showed the highest summit, Bogda Feng, to be 5445m – not an unreasonable altitude for my kind of climbing. Indeed the area, which is only 100 km from Urümqi city and accessible by paved road, looked very attractive for Alpine-type climbing without some of the dangers and logistical hassles of Himalayan scale mountains.

During my excursion, a chance meeting with some Kazakh horse herdsman at Heaven Lake revealed that there had been a visit to the area a couple of years earlier, by a group of 'ancient European mountaineers'. The Kazakhs had organised the horse transport and yurt tents (carpets and all!) for 'base camp', as well as providing the cook and support staff. Idle browsing through my Alpine Journals at home



revealed that the 'Ancient Europeans' were none other than Mike Banks and fellow members of the 'Fourth Golden Oldie, Anglo-Irish Mountaineering Expedition' sponsored by Saga Magazine in 1995.* Our Kazakhs were full of praise for the old timers (60-72 years of age). Banks et al were in their turn following earlier visits by other AC members, including the ubiquitous Shipton.**

Following conversations about my visit and a chat with Mike Banks, my young colleague, Alex Atkinson and other of our research students and research assistants set about organising a scientific 'expedition' to make a 'geotraverse' and to study glacial retreat in the Bogda Shan. The expedition was funded in part by various grants from the Royal Geographical Society and Imperial College Exploration Board and had logistical support, (vehicles, 'liaison colleagues' etc) from the Xinjiang Seismological Bureau in Urumqi.

I (and Mark Scott!) ingratiated ourselves with the expedition members (sadly no subsidy for us) and we were allowed to accompany the team as supernumeraries – under strict orders to behave responsibly and do as we were told. In early September

2000, in retrospect rather late in the season for ideal conditions, we flew to Beijing and after the usual tourist visits to the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square, Forbidden City etc, we flew by Ilyushin double-decker jumbo-jet to Urūmqi. We got our first, spectacular views of the Bogda Shan as we banked to land among the Ilyushins and Tupolevs and Yaks.

We took from UK, all the camping and climbing gear we needed to be self-sufficient. This was necessarily limited in quantity, by the baggage allowance of 25kg on our Turkish and Xinjiang Airways flights, and as a result, it became a real light-weight Alpine trip. This proved all the more enjoyable since we had no porters to worry about, no guide, in fact no-one except ourselves, our two academic 'minders' from the Seismological Bureau and, of course, our part-time (two days) Kazakh 'transport man' who with his horse and two camels, moved most of our gear, fuel etc for a party of 8 to and from base camp in 2 x 200kg loads – impressive beasts these Bactrian camels!

As a preliminary to the mountain part of the expedition, we visited various localities on the border of the Taklamakan Desert, to examine the outcrops of recently active faults. This is one of the most seismically active areas in the world and it proved to be an appropriate starting point for a mountaineering trip, since we began from the lowest point in the Eastern Hemisphere – minus 154m below sea level – at a playa lake in the centre of the Turpan Depression.

From Turpan, we drove north across the vast pebble fields of the 'reg' desert, outwash fans which make up the southern flank of the Bogda Shan. Luckily, our students had their wits and their GPS instruments about them and we narrowly avoided embarking on an odyssey up entirely the wrong valley in search of the base campsite we had selected from a combination of Landsat Imagery, the 1:500 000 scale Tactical Pilotage chart, American 1960s Corona spy satellite photos and a set of bootleg photocopies of Soviet General Staff maps supplied by a

shadowy American contact at Stanford and marked, in Cyrillic alphabet, 'Top Secret'. Cyrillic script had a relatively welcome familiarity in a land of 10,000 symbols of which I learned three!

Having finally located the correct valley, 10 km east of our first choice, and travelled as far as possible by jeep, we waded the river and with the aid of our Chinese colleagues, engaged the services of the rather bemused Kazakh and his two Bactrian camels to transport our gear to base camp, a few miles up the valley and about 1000m below the snout of our glacier.

The following couple of weeks were occupied with a mixture of geological walks and scrambles all over the neighbourhood and a 'yomp' up mossy moraines, past herds of semi-wild Kazakh horses, to a camp site on a small moraine platform just below the snout of the glacier named by Shipton, the Chigo, on his sketch map of the 'Bogda Ola Group'**. Using a couple of tents as advanced base, two hardy souls mapped the glacier snout and made GPS measurements of its position for later comparison with computations from the 1998 Landsat image and the 1960s Corona spy satellite photos.

Eventually, unable to resist the lure of the mountains, three of us set off from Glacier camp and climbed an unnamed peak (c4480m) on one of the ridges running south from the E-W 'spine' of the Bogda Shan, east of Bogda Feng peak. In the absence of a name we called it Point Philippa. It is an alpine PD, involving some snow at 35°, a traverse on steepish loose rock around a buttress not unlike the Grand Gendarme on the Ober Gabelhorn and a broad summit ridge – easy stuff but a great view.

Flushed with success, and benefitting from a brief settled spell in the generally unstable and cloudy weather, we tackled the eastern side of the glacier to the pass marked as 13,500 feet on his sketch map and used in the opposite direction to us by Shipton to reach the Chigo Glacier from Heaven Lake, in his attempt on the Bogda Feng-Snow Dome ridge from the south

side. After reaching the pass up lengthy but not particularly steep snow slopes, with a slight feeling of insecurity as we saw the evidence of widespread soft snow slab avalanches, we tackled the ridge to the south of the pass. This gave pleasant and airy scrambling to a satellite peak on the crest (c. 4400m) which we had called Snow Dome. Time, the serrated appearance of the ridge leading to the serious c5000m+ summit ahead, and nervousness about the snow conditions deterred us from further progress. The views towards the south face of Bogda Feng were impressive and we were slightly regretful at having to quit and descend, pausing only for our geophysicist – a born again aspirant geologist to make the obligatory rock collection (serpentine and chlorite schist) before descending to Glacier camp and a welcome mug of tea.

For Mark and me the expedition ended after two and a half weeks and we left the expedition to complete their traverse on the glaciers of the northern flank of Bogda Feng, following in Banks's and Shipton's footsteps from Heaven Lake.

For a 'do it yourself', self-contained, Alpine-scale climbing trip with the excitement of real exploration – even finding the right access valley – the Bogda Shan is a wonderful area. Its mountains are as impressive as any in the Alps, access is easy, the weather (we believe) is better in July-August and the logistics, and bureaucracy, with help from a few contacts are relatively straightforward. We have plans to go back again in summer 2003 for some more serious, but still relatively easy 'Alpine' routes to 5400m – anyone interested in joining us?

* Mike Banks 'At Heaven's Gate' Golden Oldies in the Chinese Celestials, AC Journal v. 101, 1996, p103-107.

Banks' writings led us to Shipton's account of his visit to the area in the 1940s.

**Eric Shipton, *The Mountains of Tartary* Hodder and Stoughton 1951.

DOGON DIVERSIONS

Dan Hamer

Mali is the westernmost of three landlocked countries, dominated by the Sahara Desert, that constitute the scorched heartland of West Africa. This vast, sandy furnace is gradually spreading southwards towards the disappearing forests of the former Gold Coast. During the 1990s, the rainfall was sporadic and there was widespread crop failure across the Sahel from Senegal through to Chad. It was a depressing picture, and as the choking, dust-laden, Harmattan winds continue to scourge the region, the outlook for many rural West Africans is bleak.

However, conditions have not always been so harsh and uncompromising. The southern expansion of the Saharan sands and the desertification of central Mali are recent phenomena. Only a few centuries ago stable populations thrived in portions of the Sahel. Well-developed societies emerged and, unusual in sub-Saharan Africa, left substantial archaeological remains. Timbuktu, for example, was a major trade terminus on the camel route linking the Mediterranean with Black Africa. It became an important centre of medieval Islamic learning.

Today the interior of West Africa consists of a sparsely peopled plateau. The relief is subdued and the rocks are frequently blanketed beneath a shallow cover of aeolian sand. The southern limit of this plateau is defined by a sinuous escarpment, which snakes across the Malian Sahel from the Senegalese border to disappear into neighbouring Burkina Faso.

For much of its length this escarpment is a modest feature with less than 100m relief. Immediately north of Bamako, the Malian capital, the escarpment reaches 200m and contains several climbable gritstone bands up to 30m high.

Further east, it reaches a maximum development of 500m in the Bandiagara Escarpment of the Dogon country. Here a massive, pale orange, sandstone cliff, up to 300m in height, dominates the upper section of the escarpment. It has a lateral extent of more than 130km.

This segment of the escarpment nurtures settlement and has a well-documented record of human occupation stretching back almost a thousand years. It is home to the Dogon people. The Dogon arrived from the west between the 13th and 15th centuries and established communities in the Bandiagara area. Here they successfully resisted the surrounding Muslim influences and retain their traditional animist beliefs and culture to the present day. Their distinctive and attractive settlements at the base of the sandstone cliffs bear a remarkable similarity to those of the Anasazi and Pueblo Indians in the southwestern United States. They represent one of the principal attractions for visitors to Mali.

However, this area was not uninhabited when the Dogon first arrived. Archaeological evidence supporting verbal legends amongst the Dogon confirms the pre-existence of the Tellem people. The Tellem provided the real attraction for me. For a short period, before the arrival of the Dogon, the Tellem climbed to the highest and most precariously inaccessible ledges in the sandstone cliffs and constructed granaries and burial caves. I was fascinated at the thought of an 11th century people climbing rocks on such an impressive and prodigious scale.

I'd been planning to spend a week trekking along the Bandiagara Escarpment from the moment I had arrived in Mali. Two early attempts had failed because of commitments at work. The cooler months of December and January are the best times to trek although this is the worst period for the Harmattan winds. However, this is also the peak period for geological fieldwork in West Africa. Consequently, it had proved difficult

to get away from work for more than just a few days.

In 1998, I had originally planned to spend a much-needed break with the family, over the Christmas period, in Sicily. However, at the last moment a welcome delay to the start of a drilling campaign unexpectedly extended my vacation. This gave me the opportunity I needed to plan a trip to the Dogon country. I contacted my brother-in-law, John, in England and invited him to accompany me. He agreed at once and booked a flight to join me in Mali at the beginning of January.

To complicate matters, two South African climbing friends, Ed February and Andy de Klerk, contacted me to say that they would be visiting Mali over the Christmas and New Year period. They explained that they would be joining forces with a party of North American climbers, led by Todd Skinner. They planned to attempt a new route on the Hand of Fatima, a series of spectacular pinnacles, on the edge of the desert, south-east of Timbuktu. Already committed to my own family plans, I willingly agreed to provide some logistical assistance.

Ed and Andy arrived in mid-December, together with Todd and four others. After two extremely hectic days camped out chez Hamer in Bamako, they packed themselves and about a ton of equipment into one of my field vehicles and a dubious-looking bush taxi and departed for the desert. They intended to spend the bulk of their stay climbing on the Fatima pinnacles but would finish with a visit to the Dogon area at approximately the same time that we would now be visiting.

Two days later, a further addition to their party arrived on our doorstep minus baggage. It was the American climber Paul Piana. Paul had missed a connecting flight in Europe and lost his luggage. He was forced to spend nearly a week with us in Bamako, waiting for his kit, before being able to bus northwards to rendezvous with his colleagues. He weathered the frustrations of his week in Bamako with the stoicism

of a seasoned campaigner, entertaining us with stories and giving our children a refreshingly new perspective on life.

Christmas in the snow on Mount Etna provided a brief but satisfying break from the stifling dust of the Sahel. When I returned to Mali at the beginning of January I focussed my attention on the final preparations for the Dogon trip.

The main problem with organising a trip to the Dogon country is a logistical one. The area is approximately 700km east of Bamako. The infrastructure in Mali is neglected, even by African standards. Mali is one of the poorest countries in the world. There is a reasonable road for the first section to Mopti, a staging post on the Niger River, and principal starting point for water-borne trips to Timbuktu. The Dogon plateau lies due east of Mopti and a badly maintained, laterite road connects Mopti with the village of Bandiagara. The main escarpment stretches north-eastwards from Bandiagara towards Douentza and the Hand of Fatima. A single-track dirt road, leading northwards across the plateau from Bandiagara, provides access to Sangha, a smaller settlement, to the north.

There is plenty of African rural transport, but it is unreliable, cramped and slow. It becomes increasingly so the further you travel away from Bamako. There are many accidents and travelling by vehicle at night is not recommended. However, daytime rural buses can be entertaining, if you are relaxed and not pressed for time. They remain a serious option for the low budget traveller keen to experience Africa. Organised tours or hire cars are ridiculously expensive and should be avoided. They are much in demand by adventure travellers, but the quality and reliability of the vehicles rarely justify the exorbitant prices charged.

My first plan to reach Sangha hinged on the use of a friend's 4x4, but to my horror the night before my brother-in-law's arrival the vehicle developed serious mechanical

problems and I was forced to abandon the idea. During the subsequent nocturnal search for an alternative, I collected a third member for our party, Cosima, a young student from London. She was travelling in West Africa between college courses and had planned to visit the Dogon country. Like me, she was struggling with the logistics. We agreed to pool our resources.

Our subsequent journey to Sangha, crouched in the back of a pick-up, took nearly fourteen hours. The periodic luxury of a seat in front with the driver made the discomfort of the rear just bearable. It was freezing cold for the first couple of hours before sunrise but the temperature climbed sharply through the morning and by 11 o' clock, near San, it was already well over 30°C.

It was a dull journey across the flat and parched Sahel. However, in the late afternoon, the ground suddenly rose before us towards the lip of the escarpment. As we approached Sangha the last few tens of kilometres became more interesting. Nevertheless, it was three weary travellers who unloaded rucksacks and boxes of bottled water at a tiny bush hotel in the gloom of a dusty evening.

Sangha is a small settlement approximately a kilometre short of the escarpment. It has expanded with the influx of visitors and now boasts a couple of primitive bush hotels. We had been advised by French friends in Bamako to choose the smaller of these hotels as this was far less expensive and better value for money. The Hotel Femme Dogon turned out to be a modest, stone building in a walled compound offering basic facilities. The four double rooms for visitors were on the upper floor and had a pleasant communal terrace to catch the evening breeze.

A bucket-of-water-over-the-head shower in the compound below, followed by a huge plate of chicken and rice revived

our spirits. Then it was time to retire. The rooms were stuffy and airless. Probably it would have been cooler on the terrace. However, I was too tired to make the effort and flopped onto my sleeping bag. I suffered a restless and uncomfortable night.

Next morning the outlook was depressingly gloomy. A strong wind was blowing from the north-east and the visibility was less than a kilometre. We pondered the situation over stewed tea and gritty baguettes. The first task was to negotiate a Dogon guide and agree an itinerary with him. There was no shortage of potential guides for our trip. Since the time of our arrival, news had spread and a steady stream of willing guides had begun to congregate outside the compound of the Femme Dogon. Eager for our custom they were shouting their offers from beside the main entrance.

However, we had other plans because we had been warned off the guides at the hotels. Pushy, expensive and uninformative was the Bamako judgement. Instead our French friends had given us the name of an old guide in the neighbouring village of Bongo whose chief attraction lay in his ability to speak a little English.

I left the others exploring the market at Sangha and set off towards Bongo with a trail of agitated guides arguing for my attention and pleading their individual cases in my wake. Gradually they lost interest and I arrived in Bongo with an escort of bright-eyed and curious children. Bongo appeared to be a less spoilt village at the lip of the escarpment. All the buildings were made of stone and clustered together at the top of a small rocky knoll. I asked the children to take me to Mombalo Dolo and they ran ahead to show me the way.

Mombalo's house lay at the far end of the village and his compound comprised numerous separate dwellings. I spoke to his senior wife, passed on the greetings from Bamako and explained my business. Unfortunately, I discovered that

Mombalo had departed with a group of clients several days previously and was not expected back until the end of the week. However, this started an animated discussion amongst the male members of the Dolo clan present. It soon became apparent that they considered it a point of honour that someone from the family should substitute for Mombalo. A younger half cousin finally stepped forward and offered his services. He had no English, but spoke reasonable French and unwilling to face the crowd back at the hotel or incur the displeasure of the Famille Dolo I accepted his offer.

We returned to the Femme Dogon and held a short discussion with the others to agree a suitable itinerary. Finally, we settled on a triangular route that would take us first northwards along the crest of the escarpment. We would then descend the escarpment and make our way southwards via numerous villages as far as Tirelli. From here we could climb back up the escarpment and return to Sangha. We estimated the total distance as the crow flies to be between 60-70km.

Unsure of what we might find in the villages, we had brought dehydrated rations with us. More importantly we had been given to understand that water was a difficulty. Consequently we had brought three large cartons of bottled mineral water. Porters would be required to carry the water and these would be sent back progressively as the water was consumed. Our guide quickly organised three porters from the village to carry our water. Cosima then added to the party by negotiating a deal with a teenager to carry her rucksack. This arrangement opened a floodgate of offers to carry all the rucksacks and it took a great deal of effort to decline.

It was now well after 14.00 hrs and the guide was anxious to start. He explained that the village where we would rest for the first night was 15km away. We shouldered our rucksacks, the porters lifted their loads of bottled water and

resembling Stanley's search party for Livingstone we set off towards the lip of escarpment beyond Bongo. In Bongo we collected about 20 small children and teenagers who pleaded to be allowed to carry our rucksacks. I set my eyes on the skyline beyond the guide's shoulders and refused all comers. John was friendlier but at length couldn't bring himself to unload his enormous rucksack onto a spindly ten-year-old! A kilometre beyond the village the last hangers-on finally gave up and they gradually blurred into the dust and rocks behind us.

The guide set a blistering pace and we were soon perspiring profusely and wondering if our blunt refusals at the village had been such a good idea. The only consolation was that the going was relatively easy across the flat pavements of sandstone at the top of the escarpment. We continued northwards for nearly two hours stopping at regular and necessary intervals to drink water.

I was just starting to get an uncomfortable burning sensation between the points of my shoulder blades when the guide ahead stopped and pointed to our right. The ground fell away north-eastwards in stepped terraces but at the limit of vision the steep shadowy walls of an open canyon loomed. We began to descend, easily at first but then more cautiously as the rock steps between the terraces became higher. The walls of the canyon began to close in on us and we scrambled down the boulder-strewn bed of a dried-up river course. A right-angled bend brought us to the lip of a substantial sandstone band and a view to the base of the escarpment.

Barely visible at the foot of this sandstone band was the first tiny Dogon village. Beyond it lay terraced fields of onions, the shoots incongruously green against the uniformity of the pale grey surroundings. It was an astonishing sight. The organisation, the order and the neatness were immediately apparent. We continued the descent and entered the

village. A narrow stone-paved footpath traced down through the centre. There were several dozen, neatly constructed, stone-built compounds, like miniature medieval castles, on either side. Framed in the entrances we caught glimpses of Dogon families, mostly young children and older women, busying themselves with daily chores. Everyone seemed friendly and responded to our inadequate "Digapo" – good evening – with the enthusiastic staccato ritual of alternate greetings common throughout Mali.

We left the village along the embankment of a drainage ditch lined with huge trees and keeping close to the base of the escarpment headed north-eastwards again. It was tougher going here in the deep sand, but our spirits had been lifted by our experiences in the village, and the final few kilometres to the first overnight stop passed quickly.

At 18.30 hrs we rounded a knot of boulders at the base of a scree cone and a second village appeared ahead of us sandwiched between the foot of the cliffs and the sandy plain. We slept on the roof of a small, mud-walled compound near the edge of the plain. Rice was plentiful and we had no difficulty organising a large helping to supplement our meagre rations. I was disappointed to find bottles of coke and Malian beer on sale. We opted to try the local millet beer instead.

Next day we rose early to explore the village. We climbed a steep, narrow track to the base of the cliffs to view the Hogon's house and the togu-na. The Hogon is an important village elder responsible for maintaining traditions. His house is usually one of the more elaborate but it is considered impolite to make impromptu visits and we made our observations from a discreet distance. The togu-na is an important meeting place for older men of the village but at this hour it was deserted and we were able to examine it at leisure. It is an open-sided structure on posts with an enormous stack of dried millet

stalks for a roof. The wooden posts were carved into figures representing the four original men and women of the Dogon creation story. This one commanded a fine view of the village.

Around 08.00 hrs we set off southwards across the sandy plain at the same blistering pace as the day before. Our objective for the day was an inselberg separated from the main escarpment. The sand proved no easier than the previous evening and a strengthening wind from the north-east blew fine sand into every crease of skin and clothing. About 2 hours later we reached the foot of the inselberg and began the ascent to the summit. The guide explained that there were three villages, Les Trois Villages de Jugo, on opposite sides of the triangular inselberg. He added that the route between them would interest us.

The ascent to the village on the northern side took nearly an hour. There were more men in evidence and most seemed engaged in weaving lengthy strips of textile. However, just short of the village my eyes had caught sight of dwellings in the cliffs and I pressed on to the boulders at the foot of the main cliffs.

Nothing I had read or been told had prepared me for the scale of what I found. The cliffs were festooned with dwellings. From the undercut base to the limit of my vision every ledge and wrinkle in the surface of the cliffs had been utilised. A complex system of cut steps, wooden ladders and vine ropes enabled the Dogon to access their more recent burial chambers in the lower parts of the cliffs.

Above this were the original Tellem constructions. These were almost a thousand years old and access to some of them would try the skills of the most dedicated sport rock climber. I sat there trying to work out which lines the Tellem people might have used for their ascents but quickly gave up and simply gazed upwards in utter astonishment.

A narrow system of defiles, with steps hewn from the floor on the steeper sections, provided access through the cliffs to the isolated plateau above. Here the wind was stronger and, glancing backwards at the lip, the dust in the atmosphere was thick enough to obscure the detail on the plain below. The summit plateau was bare and devoid of vegetation and soil. We threaded a complex route between bizarre wind-sculpted rock formations.

At regular intervals fissures criss-crossed the plateau. They ranged in width from a few centimetres to several metres and crude bridges of wooded poles covered with slabs of thinly bedded flagstone had been thrown across the widest. The track though indistinct was old and well used. On the far side of the plateau the ground dropped away steeply in front of us and the guide led us downwards across the slabby rocks as though zigzagging our way through the upper section of a heavily crevassed glacier. Several times we had to jump across gaping fissures many tens of metres deep.

At length we arrived at the head of a major fissure crossed by a pole and slab bridge. On the far side we followed the lower lip of the fissure for a couple of hundred metres and reached the top of a set of wooden ladders that descended into the darkness. The ladders had the traditional Y-shaped Dogon design. These were tree trunks 3 to 4 metres in length with steps cut into them and a forked section at the top to increase stability.

I paused briefly to speculate the age of the first ladder, a gnarled but well-polished and robust looking trunk of sturdy timber before descending to a narrow ledge at the bottom. Here rough poles had been thrown across the void adjacent the ledge to provide some security in case of a fall. Further similar ladders and then a section of steps cut into the rock brought us to the bed of the fissure. I noted with interest the

watermarks at head height. They indicated that this would be an exciting spot in a cloudburst!

The guide led us along the fissure for another half a kilometre, and then the sidewalls began to open out and the fissure became a gorge. We passed several well-constructed, stone dams with retaining walls up to 2 metres high. They were all dry but no doubt held water for several months after the rains.

Pale sunlight beckoned us onward and at length we emerged at the base of the cliffs, on the south side of the inselberg, in a jumble of Dogon dwellings. The second village of Jugo spread out below us. Many of the higher Dogon dwellings were unoccupied and in varying states of decay but as we descended the signs of habitation increased. The majority of the people seemed to be living in the lower part of the settlement.

At the base of the inselberg we set off southwards again towards the hazy outline of the main escarpment and trudged below it for most of the afternoon in the yielding sand. Midway through the afternoon we reached a shaded section with large acacia trees. In the midst of this pleasant grove we came upon a noisy group of young Dogon women vigorously pumping water from a borehole. The water was deliciously cool and clear. It was one of numerous hand pumps we had seen since departing from Sangha. Probably we could have drunk the water without problems. An efficient hand-held water filter was clearly the sensible solution to the trekker's water problem.

We reached the next village in the late afternoon and the routine of the previous evening repeated itself. We lodged in a small compound and gorged ourselves on huge quantities of rice and sauce. I abandoned my purist thoughts of the day before and willingly quaffed a couple of beers. Sitting on the terrace

of the compound, later that evening, and contentedly smoking a cigar, John's only comment was "I could get into this!"

During the next few days we gradually worked our way southwards along the base of the escarpment, making frequent sorties to the cliffs to examine points of interest. Cosima, her rucksack boy and the spare water carriers returned to Sangha earlier than planned to make a previous engagement when a chance encounter with a German couple procured the offer of reliable transport back to Bamako. John and I continued southwards with the guide.

The villages immediately below Sangha were more commercialised and disappointing. There are more visitors to these villages and the less desirable effects of emergent tourism were evident. Artefacts and textiles were on sale at strategic points in the villages. Small children pestered us for sweets and presents. "Cadeaux, cadeaux!" became an irritating cry. However, away from Sangha, the atmosphere was more genuine and the Dogon content to get on with their lives. The tiny village of Irelli nestling at the base of a particularly impressive section of cliffs was the pick of the villages we stayed in.

Here we were shown a ritual site where an elder regularly consulted the Fennie Fox. An elaborate design of rectangular shapes outlined with small pebbles had been drawn over a few square metres of the ground a kilometre from the village. From time to time the elder scattered a few chicken bones at dusk to attract the foxes. Their nocturnal visits disturbed the patterns in a way that could be interpreted the next day. In this manner many personal and community issues are resolved.

On the final day we were taken to see the sacred crocodiles at Amani. The crocodile is another animal that is sacred to the Dogon. A water hole some 40 metres across contained a number of small crocodiles. Our guide told us that a large, older crocodile lurked in the depths, but it did not oblige us

with an appearance.

We spent the last night in Tirelli and arranged for the dancers in the village to perform a Dogon dance with masks. We expected a couple of dancers and a short display. When we arrived at the platform in the upper part of the village, the rest of the village was already there. The dance troupe consisted of approximately twenty five members and their costumes and masked headdresses were spectacular. Their performance lasted an hour and we were spellbound by it.

I only wished someone could have explained the dance sequences that we watched. To judge by the reactions of the crowd the stories were well known and frequently humorous. Several sequences had the younger children in fits of laughter. At the conclusion we were encouraged to shake hands with all the older men in the village and then retired to the roof of our compound and a cigar.

Next morning we climbed back to the crest of the escarpment and returned to Sangha. The following day we hitched across to Mopti. It was crowded and noisy on the Niger riverbank and there were many more travellers. I felt distinctly uncomfortable after the relaxed atmosphere of the escarpment. It was also noticeable hotter on the humid Niger riverbank.

After a mosquito-plagued evening at a restaurant near the main harbour I packed John off to Timbuktu on an Air Mali flight and took a bush taxi back to Bamako. The return journey was longer and there were frequent stops, including one minor breakdown and another when we ran out of fuel! The taxi finally pulled up outside a hotel in the centre of Bamako a few minutes after 21.00 hrs. I had to get a local taxi back to the house and to my amusement it cost almost as much as the fare for the previous 600km.

On arrival, I was surprised to find Andy De Klerk convalescing from a badly infected leg. He quickly gave me a

run down on the climbing teams' activities. They had succeeded in their main objective and had climbed a 13 pitch route which they had provisionally graded 5.13a. However, the Harmattan and diverse maladies had drastically reduced the number of climbing man-days. They had returned to Bamako several days previously exhausted and mentally worn. They had been organising shorter trips from our house.

Andy had been evacuated the previous week after a minor scratch on the shin had gone badly septic. He had been receiving penicillin injections to control a serious inflammation of the leg. I gathered that he had been amusing himself painting small soldiers and making model aircraft with our children! He was still limping but was clearly over the worst and keen to get to Timbuktu before the team's final departure.

The next few days were a chaotic jumble of comings and goings. We never knew from one day to the next who would be arriving or departing. Sleeping bags would appear on the lawn overnight, impromptu climbing demonstrations and talks to the children at Denise's school were arranged. To my delight all three of our children decided that rock climbing was definitely the thing to do.

I left for the field to go back to work before Ed and Andy's final departure. They had planned a relaxed, bouldering holiday in Morocco to recover from their experiences on the Hand of Fatima. When I returned several days later my wife explained rather sheepishly that a couple of hours before they had left for the airport, Ed had walked into the living room barefoot and stood on one of our son's triple barbed fishing hooks embedded in a deep pile rug. In some agony, he had had to go to the French clinic where the Doctor had been forced to break off the end and withdraw it backwards. I wondered how much bouldering he and Andy would actually do!

WEISSHORN

Hazel Costello

Bzzzz. Bzzzzzzzz. Bzzzzzzzzzz. We were just passing a cowshed on the path up to the hut and a large and unidentified insect was attacking me. I dodged and weaved but it would not give up and I tried to run – not easy uphill with a full sack. Eventually I must have got out of range and the peaceful Alpine plod was resumed. It was a sunny morning, the flowers were beautiful and there were marmots playing on the path. We were on our way to do the Weisshorn, a long-cherished ambition.

Many years before, in another existence almost, we had had an abortive attempt when storms rattling all night on the roof of the old hut spelt the end of our hopes. As we ascended the path, I wondered again why this mountain was so important to us. Not just the failure of 1970, no, this was a mountain we had seen many times, towering as it does over all other peaks in the area, with its beautiful clean ridges and splendid isolation. This was a mountain we had read about – who could forget the tragedy of John Emery's death after so painfully returning to climbing without the fingers and toes lost on Haramosh? A mountain to dream about – and now we were here, in a now or never expedition, for the diagnosis of Robin's ataxia (progressive loss of muscle control and balance) eighteen months before meant that this would be our only chance. This was the reason we had returned to Alpine summer climbing after a break of 25 years, why we had joined the meet at Randa and successfully completed training climbs including the North West Ridge of the Dom, and the East Ridge of the Bishorn. We were feeling strong and fit – but the mountain could hardly have been in worse condition. Spring had brought late, heavy snow to the Pennine Alps and the Weisshorn had

had very few successful ascents, and at least one fatality.

The new hut was comfortable, the warden friendly and helpful. We found beds and then walked up to look at the route. There was a tent on the moraine some way above the hut – nothing unusual, there were Polish climbers camping at every hut we'd visited that year. The contrast between the snow-covered slopes and ridge that faced us and the photos in the hut of the mountain in a 'normal' year could hardly have been greater. We wondered what conditions would be like in the morning, hoping for a cold night and a cool day to follow. Doubtless the other people at the hut – a guided party of three and a pair of taciturn Swiss were feeling equally apprehensive. It did not make for a restful night and we were off early the next morning, closely following the guided party through the moonless darkness. As dawn approached, we reached the first steep ground, a long snow-filled gully. Usually this is climbed on rock at the side; this time there was no option but to ascend the snow. The guide and clients were making good progress and we followed, but half way up the two Swiss started to shout at us from below, telling us we were crazy to go on, stupid English and other unintelligible criticisms. They turned back, leaving us feeling upset and more worried and fearful than before. We all knew that conditions on the mountain were far from ideal and that we were taking a big risk by attempting the climb, but it did not seem necessary to add to the tension in that way. We reached the start of the rock of the East ridge – snow was everywhere and there was no choice but to try to go round the north side in many places, following steps made in steep and unstable snow. Slowly we made our way along the ridge to the end, where, before the summit snow slopes, there was a knife-edge section. I wondered what I could do if one of us slipped – would it be possible to jump over the other side of the ridge, or would there be no time to even think before we both slid hundreds

of feet down the north-east face? Cautiously we inched our way to safer ground.

The final section brought better snow conditions until near the summit. The guided party had reached the top and were already descending. Seeing us approach – we were about 30 minutes behind them – the guide generously stopped and explained to us where he had needed to use an ice screw. We followed his example and arrived, breathless but exhilarated, at the peak. This seemed to consist of an iron cross perched on a bit of ice with a hole in it, through which you looked straight down the west face. The photo opportunity was taken with a balancing act – “move a bit to that side, your bottom is obscuring Mont Blanc” – a bit of food eaten whilst admiring the incredible view and we started the descent. None too soon as the day was turning out to be very hot, far too hot for a snow descent over those unstable sections of ridge. It was then we saw the solo climber, just ending the ridge section. We could not believe that he was attempting the mountain so late, but he greeted us cheerfully in German as we passed.

After that we could only think of getting off the mountain in one piece. All our concentration was needed to negotiate the knife-edge snow ridge and the so-called rock section. We were amazed to find that it could take us two hours to reach the top of the gully. As we stopped for a drink, we looked back to see the German descending the final section of the summit slopes and about to start the knife-edge snow. Then we entered the gully and were out of sight. At five o'clock, after 14 hours on the hill, we arrived at the hut, tired but triumphant. The guided party had long-since descended, but the warden was pleased to see us. When did we last see the German, he wanted to know? We explained and he shook his head, saying that, through binoculars, he had been watching all of us, and had seen

no sign of the German after the knife-edge snow section. The only conclusion was that he had slipped on the softening snow and slid to his death. The warden clearly believed this to be the case and said that he would go up to the tent on the moraine in the morning. In sombre mood we downed several cups of tea before setting off for the valley.

It was almost dark when we arrived at the camp. Friendly and welcoming faces peered at us out of the gloom, congratulations came from all sides, but, too tired to talk, we wanted only to wash and crawl into our sleeping bags. The adventure was over.

MOUNTAIN LIGHT
THORNTHWAITE BEACON, OCTOBER 2000

Martin Cooper

Rain had lashed the fells,
Coffee in genteel Glenridding
Measured the morning in cups and mugs,
Chatter and maps, gossip of lies and crags.

Above Raven Crag we turned to watch
Sun lighting the summit of Arnison
Crag, billowing cumulus lifting,
Shadows of lengthening shade.

High Street, deserted, bathed a while
In glow of yellow on grey of scree
On grass, sloping to Hartsop
Where we would eventually drop.

Like followers of the light, from dale
Escaped, turning to Thornthwaite a glance,
A strong, bright, confident shaft shone,
Straight from the clouds and was gone.

At dusk we sat sipping beer in the dark
At Elterwater, drove through damp leaves,
Switched on Raw Head's fluorescent kitchen,
Lit the flames that lick at an evening's tales.

Next day grey had returned, hardly hiding
The rain that followed cloud and us up
Then down Hall Fell. Driving home
The light still shone bright.

FROM SEEING THE HIMALAYA FOR THE FIRST
TIME

John Jackson

“From here on up the hills don’t get any higher
But the valleys get deeper and deeper”

Folk Song

Up draughts of hot humid air made the aircraft buck and bounce as it lost height and the dark green jungle of Burma seemed to be reaching for the aircraft in which five of us were quietly working. But all was not quiet for every extraneous sound was drowned by the pulsating throb of the two giant piston engines of a DC3 taking us to our rendezvous. Tree topped hills skimmed by and we sank yet lower. Then soon we could see hill paths like snail tracks twisting and spiralling down into the enveloping depths of tropical vegetation. Fleetingly we caught a glimpse of a clearing and of many tiny antlike figures rushing away from newly prepared and clearly marked dropping zone (DZ). The aircraft banked and turned tightly lining up on the DZ and inside there was a great activity as air gunners and navigators heaved and stacked supplies by the open door. These were jute sacks filled with rice or sugar, atta or dhal and weighing 100 lbs. apiece.

Red light on! – get ready – green light on – heave – and the pile of sacks off loaded 100 ft. above the ground hurtled to the earth at high speed. For over half an hour the operation was repeated until all the supplies were dropped to the isolated detachment of a long-range penetration force in the Chin Hills. Finally we made a last flight round the clearing, waved from the door and dipped a wing of friendship and support to the gesticulating figures below. We climbed

higher and on reciprocal course set off back for the air strip several hundred miles to the west in steamy Bengal.

By now down in the dark and deep-cut valleys it was already night but at 12,000 ft. the sun still shone and lit up the surfaces of clouds that in this cooler part of the day were condensing and forming along the ridges of the mountains. Katabatic air currents caused the silvered surfaces of the clouds to curve and flow into huge greying streamers of mist that seemed like gigantic waterfalls, their veils of spray pouring down into the jungle. Over the east, the sky was darkening to a deep Prussian blue with a base of yellow greens and lilaes, whilst in the west the sun sank to the horizon and changed from gold to a blood-red orb that was rapidly being eaten by the devouring earth. At first the propellers and the leading edges of the aircraft wings held a glint of burnished copper, followed by a fiery red that was finally quenched as the sun disappeared and the mountains, valleys, jungle and low-lying mist slipped into the cool embracing arms of night. Very high cirrus clouds still caught the rays of the sun and once more reflected back the colour changes – pale gold, changing to orange and final bloody crimson whilst inside the aircraft a blue fluorescent glow from instrument panels provided a small but encouraging area of light. Following the half hour burst of furious activity at the DZ we again worked quietly, oblivious to the roar of engines, content with the success of the mission, and pleased that back in the Burmese jungle, men would be cooking nourishing meals over tiny jungle fires because of what we had done. I knew that my companions were glad to be leaving the hills behind. For them the hills were not friendly, but a constant threat. They knew that within seconds, they could render our giant craft and its powerful engines of many hundreds of horse-power into a screeching tearing mass of mangled metal.

None of us wanted to be part of that! Even so, I felt sad

that my companions could not feel as I did about the hills. For me, they were friends not enemies and the evening sunset among the Chin Hills had been a beautiful and inspiring end to a successful mission. I found it to be the same on all such flights so that the mountains of Burma became familiar friends that regularly uplifted my heart with their interesting shapes, complexity of ridges and dark mysterious depths of valleys. Time and again they held out a promise for the future and of longed for journeys along dusty trails in unknown lands.

The journeys began for me on September 3rd 1939. Several of us were climbing on the gritstone crags at Widdop on the Bronte Moor when Midgley Barrett, the water bailiff at the reservoir walked across the embankment and called up to us that war had been declared. At the same moment a drone in the sky made me look up to see a lone aircraft heading east. Where was it going? Where would we all be going? That was a question among so many that filtered through my mind and I felt bewildered, wondering if I and my companions were soon to part, never to see each other again. Having discovered the freedom of the mountains and the moorlands it seemed such a waste of time at the age of eighteen to have to go and fight in a war, but I treasured that freedom and so felt defiant. Perhaps that aircraft overhead had been an omen, for early in 1940 I joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve and became a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner.

Eventually, I flew in Burma and on finishing my first tour of operational flying was granted a short leave and went to Kashmir. There I first looked into the Great Himalaya range. My view point was from a 9,000 ft. hill named Chergand from which I looked down on to Dal Lake in the Kashmir Valley and across to the Pir Panjal mountains to the south. North of me line after line of snow-clad peaks stretched far away and beyond Nanga Parbat sixty miles away.

Watching the clouds that in the late afternoon were disappearing below ridge after ridge, I was reminded that in a few days I would once again be flying over the Chin Hills of Burma. These peaks and valleys were different to those jungle-clad mountains but they stirred my mind in similar fashion. Here were areas where perhaps man had never trod and for me there was a strong pull at the heart and in the mind. A cold land maybe where in the evening the snows would be turning pink then suffusing into purple shadows and I longed to trek into them, to get to know their environment and come to know the people who lived among them. That is what it was like seeing the Himalaya for the first time and I knew immediately I must return.

For almost sixty years I have been able to do so many times. On completing a further tour of operational flying at Kohima and the battle for Imphal, I took leave and made a solo crossing of part of the Kashmir Himalaya via Kolahoi – the ‘Matterhorn of Kashmir’. As a result I was then posted to the RAF Mountain Centre in Sonamarg and a short description of that time is written up in the article ‘Kashmir Memories’, FRCC Journal 1952. Equipment was basic, hemp ropes, clinker-nailed boots, long wood-shafted ice-axes, jackets of Kashmir tweed, ‘Aussie’ bush hats, but no crampons. We became very proficient at cutting steps in steep ice! The rock was good and a number of Severe and VS rock climbs varied in length from 700 to 3,000 ft. but no one was ever benighted. Because most of the mountains of Kashmir and Western Tibet (Ladakh) were unclimbed we used the occasional ‘rest’ days we had for making first ascents. Eventually four of us wrote a climbing guide to the mountains. Wilfrid Noyce was the editor whilst Harry Tilly, Gordon Whittle and I (all three Fell and Roekers) contributed different sections.

In 1952 I was climbing in the Garhwal at the same time

as Eric Shipton was leading a team on Cho Oyu. It was a prelude to him leading an attempt on Everest, and by chance I'd met him for the first time some months earlier at the foot of Napes Needle – so we climbed it together. On behalf of Eric Shipton, Alf Gregory included me in a pre-Everest party he assembled for preparations in Switzerland, and though there was a leadership change I was chosen as a 'reserve' for 1953. There was to be a Spring attempt, but there were arrangements for a post-monsoon attempt if this was unsuccessful. Prior to selection, at a medical examination by Lord Horder, he thought my tonsils could be in better shape for high altitudes. Having just had four months in the Himalaya I wasn't too concerned, but being determined to be in top condition for any post-monsoon expedition planned to leave Britain on July 24th I arranged for a tonsillectomy. I was very fit and the surgeon snipped them out without any trouble. Then on June 2nd my wife Eileen came to take me home from the hospital. I could tell she was excited for it was the Queen's coronation day, but there was something else. She brought me a copy of the Times newspaper telling of the coronation but also with the banner headline EVEREST CLIMBED. This was tremendous news and we both felt very proud to have been a part of it in some small way. Then I had a thought – "Who reached the summit and when?" I asked. "Ed Hillary and Tenzing on the 29 May," she said. "Good on yer Ed," I thought, "it's the day I had my tonsils out!" Later in June, Basil Goodfellow, Hon. Secretary of the Himalayan Joint Committee, wrote me a letter, the gist of which was as follows:

'Unlike the rest of us who rejoice without reserve in the achievement of Hunt's party there must be for you a feeling of disappointment when their success has destroyed your own chance of attempting Everest this autumn ... it is perhaps a consolation that there are plenty of Himalayan

peaks left to climb and we plan to send many expeditions to them in the future.' He was right, for in 1955 I was a member of the team that made the first ascent of Kangchenjunga, third highest mountain in the World, and before that was asked to lead an expedition in the Everest area to search for the 'Abominable Snowman' just seven months after Everest was climbed.

Visits to the Himalaya continued, with 1976 being a particularly good year. Though there were only two of us, with my wife Eileen we called ourselves the 'Himachal Expedition'. After a drive from Snowdonia to India we were pleased to revise and re-edit the guide for the Jammu and Kashmir Government. Our peregrinations brought back many memories of previous days in India and the Himalaya. We walked over the Wenlock Downs of the Nilgiris, so well known to Howard Somervell (onetime FRCC President) and researched the lives of the enigmatic Toda people. This was followed by a journey to Darjeeling and Sikkim to see Kangchenjunga again and remember the first ascent in 1955 (FRCC Journal 1957). Way beyond Kangchenjunga were Everest and Makalu, reminders of my journey, the first one ever made, from Everest to the 'Five Treasures'. That was at the end of the 1954 'Yeti' Expedition of which I was the mountaineering leader (FRCC Journal 1955 and 'Thoughts about a Long Walk' FRCC Journal 1996).

Leaving Darjeeling we then spent two months in the Everest area with Dawa Tenzing and many other of our Sherpa friends. After visiting the 'Soldiers on Everest', a successful team led by Tony Streater, we taught Sherpas to ski on the glaciers of Chola Khola and Upper Dudh Kosi then enjoyed making minor ascents of over 19,000 feet. Our nine months of the 'Himachal Expedition' were packed with so many rich and fulfilling experiences and it only cost us £900 each from

start to finish. It would have cost us that to sit at home in a deck chair! Following on from Everest we skied in Kullu with the India-Tibet Border Police on the Rhotang Jot at 13,500 feet and made a major contribution to the running of the first Kullu Summer Ski Festival in the Rani Nullah. Discovering that entry to Lahoul was newly open to foreigners we then back-packed over the Rhotang as far as Keylong and on the day of our wedding anniversary made a 7,000 foot ascent to the Gangstang glacier. However, without any doubt for me, the icing on the cake was taking Eileen to Kashmir then on to the land of chortens – Western Tibet. On her 50th birthday we made an ascent of Vafehead Peak in Thajwas the Valley of Glaciers.

It was shortly after this climb that we drove our 'juggernaut' (a Ford Transit Caravanette) along the newly opened military road through to Leh. The road had brought about many changes from the days when we had to walk all the way from the Kashmir Vale into the Buddhist country of Ladakh and I was determined that Eileen and I would return and try to capture some of the feel of those earlier times. We did so in 1983, trekking through Zaskar with Jeremy and Gillian Naish. Tents, stoves, and climbing gear we took out from the UK but, as of old, bought pots, pans, cooking utensils, rice, dhal, and other food stuff in the bazaar and market of Srinagar.

Two ponies and two donkeys carried most of our gear and we pitched tents, cooked and did all our own chores. It really was a journey in time (with a double meaning) and it did recapture the atmosphere of earlier days. In particular the section via the Shillakang gorge over the Nu Zig La to Spantang and the Sir Sir La. That wild and uninhabited tract of land gave me once again the full flavour of the vastness and loneliness of Central Asia. I don't remember why we missed out going to the Garhwal Himalaya but

five years later we made up for it by going to the outer sanctuary of Nanda Devi and climbed Bethartoli Himal South (FRCC Journal 1983). On Trisul Eileen taught our two doctors to ski at 18,700 feet enabling me to go higher and achieve a dream of skiing at 20,000 feet. From the snow dome on Bethartoli we could see the mountains of North-West Garhwal, a reminder of climbing there in 1952 ('Return to the Himalaya' – FRCC Journal 1953, Tilly and Jackson) when we made the first ascent of Avalanche Peak, explored in the Bangneu and the Bhagirathi Karak then at the end made an Anglo French attempt on Nilkantha - the 'Blue Throne of Shiva'.

Other trips followed, including a return to Kashmir in 1987 as leader of a Canadian expedition when we climbed Kolahoi (5425 metres) and pursued fieldwork on geology and glaciology in the area. Our work on patterns of the Little Ice Age advance and retreat have assisted in establishing some form of global synchronicity. Though not high Kolahoi is a peak of some quality rather than quantity, and in making the ascent and the environmental investigations, the team had much fun and gained great satisfaction – that is what going to mountains is all about.

Finally I think of the millennium year when Eileen and I organised a group to climb Stok Kangri. It was Chewang Motup Goba (well known to many Fell and Rockers) who provided equipment and staff and our son John who led the party. Having seen them off across the Zaskar river at Chilling we two left footprints on the plains of Rupshu. Geographically it is part of Chang Tang or northern Tibet where the harsh winds whip through the dry grasslands creating a very cold environment. We camped at 15,000 ft by the shores of Tso Moriri – a lake that is a glittering blue diamond surrounded by rolling whale-backed mountains of snow and ice. Nearby

was the village of Karzok inhabited by rugged semi-nomadic Changpas. It was mid-September and the start of their long harsh winter so flocks of goats, sheep and herds of Dzo and Yak were being rounded up for shelter. Harvest time had ended and each morning a steady line of Karzokis walked past our tent to visit the local monastery where a visiting Rimpoche gave each of them his blessing for a future of peace and plenty. Once again the Himalaya with its rich diversity of peoples, cultures, religions and environments had also given us its own blessing for the present and the future.

It has always been so. Only in one of the last 22 years have we missed going to some part of the Himalaya and as in those lines of the poet Edward Thomas :-

“Often and often it comes back again to mind, the day I passed the horizon ridge to a new country”.

THE LIBRARY AND COLLECTIONS

Peter Osborne

No climbing club in the UK, except of course the Alpine Club, has greater pride in its history and traditions than the Fell and Rock. This has been recognised by the BMC in the instigation of the National Collection at Rheged. It will be evident to all as we approach our Centenary. Arguably, the clearest sign of this pride is our collections and the years of investment of time and effort, which has gone into them.

Such collections grow and require more space and so the Committee planned to build an archive unit at the back of Raw Head. Members will remember the discussion: was it worth, for example, keeping the great stack of applications for membership made over many decades? Quickly it was realised that this pile was an essential resource for the obituarist and others, and that it contained original signed statements from many famous climbers. The forms, together with other important material will be stored in the new archive.

The new archive is in fact built, decorated and shelved and some of the material put in place. There is a desk and lamp at which members can work if they wish to access material, though the room is not open to all and a key needs to be obtained from the Archivist, Librarian or Hut Warden for entry. The space is heated and dehumidified for safe keeping of the material. The Archivist is particularly keen to receive from members and others more material about the history of the Club, particularly since WW2. Photographs of members and events would be particularly welcome, but anything about events, meets, members or related matters would be valuable.

When the store is complete, for the first time in many years, our main collections will have a safe and appropriate placement. The old Journal half-tone plates are available for

viewing at the Cockermouth Printing Museum. The Files books and journals are neatly shelved in good conditions at the Armit Museum and Library in Ambleside. The Abraham negatives have long been well managed at Abbot Hall in Kendal. The main archive is in live use at Cumbria Council Offices also at Kendal, and the Archivist, Iain Whitmey, effectively answers many related enquiries.

Our collections are extremely valuable both financially and as heritage. The next challenge is the first signs of deterioration on two fronts. Some of the Files books are valuable early editions of rare books. Now that they are on the open shelves of a well-used reference library, there is a danger that fine bindings or book jackets may become worn. We need to improve their protection. Of greater concern is the condition of the Abraham negatives. They are quite well stored but not ideally, and there are signs of abrasion on their delicate surfaces. They were however damaged in a fire before they came to the Club and there is long-standing damage to their edges. We need to improve storage systems still further to prevent further deterioration.

The main library at Lancaster University is now in better condition thanks largely to the support of the University in improving the environment. The rather stuffy room where the main stock is shelved is now better ventilated and more space has been made for expansion by the allowance of more locked cabinet space outside the room. A number of members have made very useful gifts to the Library. Although these do not contain many books new to the collection they include things of great interest. For example old personal copies of FRCC Climbing Guides often have marginal notes, which are a fascinating informal record of our members' climbing activities. After all, the Club is more made up of climbers who are not frequently putting up new routes and its everyday history is shown in records like these. More

such gifts would be most welcome. They are stored in a growing climbing archive in the library stack.

The most important addition to the Library is the Barton bequest, a set of very fine mountain books, many of which belonged to Claude and Guy Barton, who were leading Lake District climbers at the beginning of the 20th Century. Passed down to Claude Barton's son, also Guy, who added to the collection, they were presented to the Club by HIS widow and son. Most fascinating of all is the Barton brothers' own copy of Owen Glynne Jones' *Rock Climbing in the English Lake District*. The marginal notes to this well-used volume, subject of an article in the last Journal, give a fascinating picture of their activities, including their first ascents.

The Archivist and Librarian have continued to answer the many enquiries and requests that come in. Many of these are requests to reprint text or reproduction from our material, and in this way, we provide a service for the ongoing publication of mountain books. Unfortunately under-reported was their major contribution to an exhibition at The Armit Museum of mountain 'Wear and Gear', which was seen by relatively few people because it was open right in the middle of the Foot and Mouth epidemic.

WINTER CLIMBING IN THE LAKE DISTRICT 1870-1941

A list of first recorded ascents and early attempts

Mike Cocker & Colin Wells

An earlier article (FRCC, Vol 26 (2), No.76, p 197 - 213) indicated the extraordinarily high standard of winter climbing which pre-Great War Lakeland climbers achieved (including routes up to Grade V). The intention was to draw attention to the fact that Lakes-based climbers had effectively reached '1950s' standards of 'Scottish' style mixed winter climbing a good half-century before these became commonplace north of the border. What the article was not, was an exhaustive list of first winter ascents of the period, a task which required a considerable amount of further historical sleuthing. Since the original work was published, continued archival ferreting has unearthed a plethora of previously forgotten evidence of early winter ascents embedded in journals, logbooks, and reminiscences, to add to the extant information. The new evidence both confirms the original thesis that the Lake District, rather than Scotland, was the arena in which hard winter climbing was first practised in the UK, and also corrects some inaccuracies concerning the dating of some ascents and *dramatis personae* present in the 1998 Journal article.

The research indicates that a small and tight knit group undertook many of the earliest winter climbs (up to the early 1890's) and, fortunately, recorded their activities quite carefully. So we probably have a reasonably accurate record of the very first ascents for this period. After the late nineteenth century, however, when the numbers of participants start to expand, the data becomes 'fuzzier' and we are sometimes less confident that the 'first recorded' ascents really are 'the first ascents'. Some activists (such as the excessively modest Hopkinsons, for example) took a dim view of recording anything at all, and may have been up to all sorts of things a year

or two ahead of their peers. Nevertheless the data still undoubtedly possess a sufficiently robust general chronology to prove that the standard of winter climbing was very high at a very early period in climbing history, even if the names of the very first ascensionists might sometimes be uncertain.

An opportunity has also been taken in the current review to extend the record up to the Second World War. This has thrown up further surprises, such as the discovery that the first Grade VI mixed climb was evidently accomplished as early as 1919 – decades earlier than previously considered likely. And unlike the Victorian and Edwardian periods, the documentary record for the inter-war era has been augmented by interviews with some of the surviving pioneers from that time. Indeed the authors would particularly like to thank the two outstanding winter pioneers of this period, Jammy Cross and her late husband Sid, for their hospitality and forbearance as they were quizzed about their activities. We would therefore like to dedicate this article in honour of the memory of Sid, one of Lakeland climbing's great pioneers and characters.

Lakeland Winter climbs:

A list of first recorded ascents 1870-1941

1870 Jan 10th SOUTH GULLY - BOWFELL (Grade I)

G.H. Wollaston, A.R. Stogdon, J. Stogdon

The very first recorded winter ascent in the Lake District.

The group set off from Elterwater on a clear morning with a sharp frost to climb Bowfell by 'the great couloir' and then continue on to Wasdale Head. John Stogdon takes up the story:

'The slope got steeper and steeper, steps were always necessary, and at last having come up 350 feet or more, we found ourselves within a few feet of the top on a slope of 63°, with an overhanging cornice of ice above us, and snow nearly up to our waists for a few feet below the top, which I could just reach with my axe. The next few minutes must have been pleasant to my friends below me, as the cornice was gradually tumbling upon their ears in a shower of icy fragments. Then I pulled myself up by my hands on to the

level snow field above, and a short run up easy slopes soon brought us to the top.'

Stogdon, J. 1870, 'The English Lakes in Winter', *Alpine Journal*, 5, 34-38

1873 Mar SHARP EDGE - BLENCATHRA (Grade I)

George Seatree and party

First recorded winter ascent.

'In March 1873 a party of us ascended when the first part of the steep slope from the edge to the summit was snow and ice covered. In those days there were no ice axes or ropes used, and in fact we came very close to a serious accident by reason of the conditions.'

Seatree, G. 1910, 'Reminiscences of Early Lakeland Mountaineering', FRCC, Vol 2, 1, 8

1880 Apr 4th CUST'S GULLY - GREAT END (Grade I)

*Arthur Cust & over twenty members of the Alpine Club
(Who said crowds on Great End were anything new?)*

First recorded winter ascent (but almost ascended prior to this by Cust).

'On Sunday the party ... leaving the carriages at the farmhouse above Seatoller, climbed Scafell Pike by a very interesting chimney or couloir, which, being filled with snow and ice, gave unexpected satisfaction. There is a very remarkable natural arch in the couloir, which Mr Cust claims to have been the first to discover, and he was therefore entrusted with the guidance of the party.'

Freshfield, D.W. 1882, 'Alpine Meeting at the Lakes', Alpine Journal, 10, 45
(A.L. Mumm and J.E. King glissade down Cust's Gully in 1882.)

1881 EASTER MICKLEDORE CHIMNEY - SCAFELL (Grade III)

A.L. Mumm - first recorded descent.

Mumm, A. L., 1924, 'Some Rambling Recollections of Wasdale Head', *FRCC, Vol 7, 3, p 325 - 329*

Mumm's article contains an account of the descent of the chimney, he also comments:

'What we ... were keen about was first finding steep snow slopes, preferably hard enough for us to cut steps in and pretend we were in Switzerland and secondly, getting as long a glissade as possible on the way home. The gullies on Great End provided the largest amount of amusement of the former kind, and I once remember having a sitting glissade down Cust's Gully.'

1882 EASTER DEEP GILL - SCAFELL (Grade I/II)*A.L. Mumm, J. E. King – first recorded descent.*

'In a time of extremely deep snow two men, both strangers, walked down the snow the whole way without knowing they had done anything remarkable.'

Slingsby, W. C. 1903, 'Reminiscences of a Few Days Climbing in the Fell Country', FRCC, Vol 1, 3, p.253 - 260

'I did, in fact, know exactly what I was doing, and had learned enough about Wasdale to be well aware that to find Deep Ghyll choked up with snow must be a very rare occurrence.'

Mumm, A.L. 1924, 'Some Rambling Recollections of Wasdale Head', FRCC, Vol 7, 3, p 325-329

1885 Mar 1st PILLAR (Unknown, but possibly including Great Doup/West Cove Gullies Grade I)*W.C. Slingsby, J.A. Slingsby, W. Evroyd, G. Hastings & C. Hastings*

'Found the snow in most splendid order, were five hours climbing gullies and couloirs around the Pillar Rock.'

Jackson, H.M. 1980, 'Lakeland's Pioneer Rock Climbers' - Based on the Visitors' books of the Tysons of Wasdale Head, 1876 - 1886 (Row Farm)

1886 Mar 27th PILLAR (probably the same gullies as above)*G.Hastings, J. Mason, W.C. Slingsby*

'Had a capital day on the Pillar Fell amongst the snow couloirs, though in thick mist.'

Wasdale Hotel Visitors' Book 1885 - 1891, p. 44

1886 Mar 28th DEEP GILL - SCAFELL (Grade I/II)*G. Hastings, J. Mason, W.C. Slingsby*

First winter ascent and first ascent.

Detailed account in: Slingsby, W.C. 1903, 'Reminiscences of a Few Days Climbing in the Fell Country', FRCC, Vol 1, 3, p.253 - 260

On March 2nd 1885 W.C. Slingsby and G. Hastings had attempted Deep Gill but, 'fail on the first block on account of the ice glazed rock'.

(Second ascent in winter conditions, J.W. Robinson and T.G. Creak 7th January 1887, Wasdale Hotel Visitors' Book 1885 - 1891 p. 107)

1886 MAR 29th BRANCH GULLY - GREAT END (Grade I)*G. Hastings, J.Mason, W.C. Slingsby*

First recorded winter ascent, may have been climbed earlier.

'The same party made a variation on Mr Cust's Gully on Great End. They made first for the great or central gullies up which one of this party and a friend had climbed on Easter Monday 1884, but as during the previous night about four inches of snow had fallen on the old hard snow, it was deemed to be unwise to attempt such a steep and awkward gill so they turned to the smaller gully. A grand glissade could have been made from the mouth of the gill down almost to the footpath below. The party cut their way with axes steadily forward and instead of going up through the natural arch of rock, which looked most weird through the mist, they turned up the right hand branch, and after one short awkward climb over a fallen block of rock, and a fairly steep snow slope they found themselves on the top in a furious snow storm. A few good glissades and a scramble down the side of Grain's Gill ended a most enjoyable mornings adventure.' W.C.S.

Wasdale Hotel Visitors' Book 1885 - 1891 p. 46

1887 Jan 4th WATERFALL GULLY - PILLAR - Attempt (Grade IV)

J.W. Robinson, T. Creak

A near successful attempt on a grade IV climb.

'The deeply drifted snow gave us easy passage over the first fall, and in a few minutes the upper fall was before us, a solid column of hard ice. This was so vertical, and as no opportunity presented itself of gaining support from the wall of the ghyll, progress was no easy matter. Steadily cutting step over step with a deep notch for hand holds, we were able to get within six feet of the top – when down came darkness, and we quickly realised that we must make tracks at once or spend the night in that uncanny place.'

Robinson, J.W. 1907, 'A Novice in Snow', FRCC, Vol 1, p. 16

1887 JAN 4th GREAT DOUP GULLY - PILLAR (Grade I)

J.W. Robinson, T.G.Creak

First recorded winter ascent, but probably climbed earlier (see Slingsby on Pillar, March 1885 above).

'Mountains covered with ice and snow. Ascent of Pillar via Great Doup, very tough near the top owing to frozen snow and the cornice.'

Wasdale Hotel Visitors' Book 1885 - 1891, p 107

'We now decided to try our luck up the Great Doup, for the moon was beginning to show and the light increasing. Formidable indeed, as we looked up, was the steep snow slope at the head of the hollow, surmounted by an immense cornice.

"Shall we want the rope?" I asked.

"Oh no, it's in the sack and it won't help us!"

I did not feel at all sure about this, as, unable for the moment to get any further, I crouched under the great protruding lip of the cornice, and looked into the black and uncertain depth below.

"Can we get out?" I said.

"We must, so here goes, hold my feet on this big step whilst I try to cut down the overhanging edge."

Ten minutes more, a struggle, a gasp, and breathless we emerged into the moonlight of the Pillar – 6.30 p.m. We scurried away to Wasdale, and never were climbers more thankful for their suppers.

Robinson, J.W. 1907, 'A Novice in Snow', FRCC, Vol 1, p 16

1887 Feb 5th **CENTRAL GULLY - GREAT END (Grade II/III)**

G.Hastings and party (including some or all of the following C.Hastings, J. Mason, J.A. Slingsby, C.H. Slingsby, A.E. Preston, H.A. Beeching)

First recorded winter ascent, but may have been climbed earlier. An entry in the Visitors' Book in 1886 March 29th, for example, mentions that Central Gully had been climbed at Easter 1884 by Slingsby or Hastings. However, without a record of the conditions we have no way of knowing if this was a winter ascent.

'Climbed up Great End by the Central Chimney which starts at the head of the long scree close to Grains Gill. The snow came well down onto the scree, and was in good order; we took the left-hand branch and had to take to the rocks to overcome the "block". We then crossed over the Pikes to Mickledore, the rocks of which were very wet. The early part of day was very wet, snowed hard while we were in the "Central Chimney" and did not cease until we got on to Scafell, when it cleared up, and we had a glorious view of the mists rolling up out of the valleys, and disappearing leaving all the hills quite distinct.'

Wasdale Hotel Visitors' Book 1885 – 1891, p 108

(Second recorded winter ascent J.W. Robinson, E. Carr, G.Hastings, E. Peile and W.A. Wilson. 1890 December 26th or 27th.)

'The central gully in Great End took about 2 hours with the help of the steps cut by Mr Robinson's party a day or two before in the magnificent upper ice-fall. Without their assistance it would perhaps have been barely possible within the limits of a winter day.'

R.C. Gibson, 28th Dec. 1890, Wasdale Hotel Climbing Book 1890-1919, p 38

1887 Mar 7th SKEW GILL - GREAT END (Grade I/II)

G.Hastings and party (including some or all of the following "E.L.W.", Haskett-Smith, C. Hopkinson, W.C. Slingsby)

First recorded winter ascent, but may have been climbed earlier.

Ascented by Skew Gill, a very interesting and neat cut to the north face of Great End. We climbed, duly roped together, the western gully on the north face by the snow, and turned up the left of the two forks (Cust's Gully) and after many hundred steps had been cut in the hard snow by our axes, we went through the well known arch of rock and, after one hour forty minutes step cutting we stood in the sunshine on the top of Great End. After a short walk along the top we looked down the fine Central Gully, and Hasting's pointed out to us the steps he had cut on the ascent of this gully on February 5th. After a capital glissade, we made our way over the moors to Stickle Tarn to attempt the ascent of Pavey Ark by the Central Gully.

Wasdale Hotel Visitors' Book 1885 - 1891, p 111

To go by Grainy Gill and this one (Skew Gill), and so up Cust's Gully, has for many years been the regulation expedition for the first day of a winter sojourn at Wasdale Head.

Haskett Smith W.P. 1894, *Climbing in the British Isles*, p 144

1887 DEC 30th SCAFELL PINNACLE - SCAFELL.

Attempt by C. Hopkinson, H. Woolley, H.W.Holder, E.W. Bury

A bold attempt on an indeterminate route that, nevertheless, would be graded at least grade IV today.

Three of the party, led by Hopkinson, made an attempt on the Deep Ghyll Pinnacle from the entrance to Lords Rake. They succeeded in climbing 150 to 200 feet, but were stopped by a steep slab of rock coated in ice. From this point, however, a good traverse was made to the first gully, or chimney, on the left. They forced their way up this gully to the top of the chimney. At the top of which was a trough of ice about 30 feet long, surmounted by steep rocks glazed with ice, which brought the party to a stop. They descended the chimney again and returned to Wasdale, unanimous of the opinion that the day's excursions had afforded one of the finest climbs the party had ever accomplished.

Wasdale Head Hotel Visitors' Book 1885 - 1891, p 168

1890 JAN 3rd SOUTH EAST GULLY - GREAT END (Grade III)

"A.G." (Possibly H.A. Gwynne) and party

First recorded winter ascent, but may have been climbed earlier.

Final pitch, Central Gully, Great End in the 1980s. Photo: Colin Wells

'At the point where the gully forks, less than half way up, we chose the steeper left-hand branch, but finding it very full of hard ice took to the arete between the two branches and crossing this with some trouble followed up the right hand side to the point where the branches reunite, hence over easy rocks to the top. Time 3 hours 20 min: every ledge being choked with ice or glazed snow.'

Wasdale Hotel Climbing Book 1890 - 1919, p 12

**1890 Dec 29th NAPES GULLY (EAGLES NEST GULLY)
GREAT GABLE (Grade II)**

R.C. Gibson and ano

First winter ascent.

'Ascended the gully to the left (as you face the mountain) of the gully coming down to the left of the Needle. This gully does not seem to have been described before and I have no idea how it goes in summer. On this occasion it presented no particular difficulty except, just above a large boulder about one third of the way up, where a smooth slab was thinly glazed. Near the top we passed to the left onto the arete, and then rushed down Hell Gate scree to escape the blizzard on the ridge.'

Wasdale Hotel Climbing Book 1890 - 1919, p 38

1890 Dec 30th SHAMROCK GULLY - PILLAR (Grade IV)

J.W. Robinson, C. Hopkinson, G. Hastings

First winter ascent and first ascent.

'This has only once been ascended previous to the ascent recorded below and on the first occasion 5 feet of snow gave a good start in surmounting the vertical wall on the right side of the stone ...

Yesterday Geoffrey Hastings followed by Charles Hopkinson and John W. Robinson succeeded in passing successfully up the gully and taking the right hand side of the boulder completed the first ascent without the aid of a snowdrift. They afterwards went onto the Pillar Rock which was unusually tedious owing to the iced state of the rocks.' J.W. Robinson.

'Mr Robinson's note above shows what may be done in the depth of even the severest winter. It is hard to imagine rocks in worse condition for climbing than during the past ten days, though the enormous accumulations of ice have probably rendered some waterfalls possible which are very rarely so.'

R.C. Gibson, Wasdale Hotel Climbing Book 1890 - 1919, p 37

(Previously climbed in semi-winter conditions 5th March 1887 by E. L.W. Haskett Smith and G. Hastings with the aid of snowdrift.

Detailed account in: Wasdale Hotel Visitors' Book 1885 - 1891, p 110).

1890 DEC 30th SLAB AND NOTCH - PILLAR ROCK (Grade III?)

J.W. Robinson, C. Hopkinson, G. Hastings

First recorded winter ascent.

'Ice and snow ... up over Notch and down Ledge and Chimney Route. The Slab one mass of ice, Hopkinson led during the ascent and I was last man in coming down, time 1 hr 40 mins in ascent 20 mins coming down. Took one hour to cross the Slab.'

'J. W. Robinson's Climbing Diary', FRCC Archive, Cumbria Records Office. (Semi-winter ascent of Slab & Notch February 6th 1887, by G.Hastings & party. 'Bright sunny day with hard frost. Ascended Pillar Fell by gully direct from Mosedale. Climbed Pillar Rock by easy way and then descended down the gully to the west side and ascended the rock again, descending again by the easy way. The slab on the rock was coated with ice which had to be cut away.'

Wasdale Hotel Visitors' Book 1885 - 1891, p 108)

**1890/91 NEW YEAR GRAINY GHYLL (Grade III) (Now known as
Right Branch of Greta Gill):**

Arthur Marshall and party.

First winter ascent. First recorded ascent of a pure water ice route in the world.

'What is marked Grainy Gill in the Ordnance Map (situated between Skew Gill and Greta Gill, the left hand branch of Piers Gill) is, in reality two water courses, distinct though separated in parts by a very narrow ridge. The right hand branch (facing the mountain) which it has been proposed to call Corney Gill, contains two very fine falls, ascended so far as is known for the first time by Prof. Marshall's party this winter.'

Wasdale Hotel Climbing Book 1890-1919, p 39

1891 Apr 1st CENTRAL GULLY - GREAT GABLE (Grade III)

Arthur Marshall, H.B. Dixon, "A.G." (H.A. Gwynne?)

First recorded winter ascent.

'Up Central Gully on N. side of Gable. Snow in good order.'

Wasdale Hotel Climbing Book 1890 - 1919, p 40

1891 Apr 3rd PROFESSOR'S CHIMNEY - SCAFELL (Grade II)

A.M. Marshall, H.B. Dixon, W.I. Beaumont, "A.G."

First recorded winter ascent, but may have been climbed earlier.

'After heavy snow storm of day before Deep Ghyll was nearly full of soft snow. Had to cut a channel 4 - 5 foot deep through the powdery snow. First obstacle quite easy. Second obstacle just impossible to do straight up. Had to return and go up chimney to left. This was very bad

owing to the rocks being iced under loose snow. Up Professors Chimney which was comparatively easy. Took 7 hours from Hotel to top of Scawfell.'

Wasdale Hotel Climbing Book 1890 - 1919, p 40

1891 APR 19th MICKLEDORE CHIMNEY - SCAFELL (Grade III)

O.G. Jones, W.E. Stimpner, C. Munro

First recorded winter ascent. Possibly climbed earlier.

'This proved to be very difficult the snow being 6 or 7 feet deep and very rotten. At the obstacle we were brought to a stop for the rocks on the left were ice covered and no handholds seemed available. O.G.J. managed to climb up after a struggle and returned by Broadstand, the others descended the chimney again.'

Wasdale Hotel Climbing Book 1890 - 1919, p 41

(There is also a detailed account of this ascent in: Jones, O.G. 1900, *Rock Climbing in the English Lake District*, p 39 - 42.)

(J.W. Robinson and T.G.Creak had also attempted to climb Mickledore Chimney on January 7th 1887.

'We made an attack on the chimney from the bottom and, strange to say, found it full of snow. Beaten back we sat down and glissaded again. Often have I looked since that day at the chimney in Mickledore, and wondered what strange fate it was which enabled us to begin a glissade seventy feet up that usually almost vertical place.'

Robinson, J.W. 1907, 'A Novice in Snow', FRCC, Vol 1, p 17).

1891 Apr 21st NEW PROFESSORS CHIMNEY, SCAFELL (Grade II/III)

O.G. Jones, W.E. Stimpner, C. Munro

First recorded winter ascent.

'Instead of continuing straight up Deep Ghyll, they turned up the gully to the left, from which springs Professors Chimney. (This gully apparently is as yet nameless). There appeared to be too much snow on the rocks in the Professors Chimney so they continued their ascent up the nameless gully and reached the top after cutting through a fine ice cornice.'

Wasdale Hotel Climbing Book 1890 - 1919, p 42

Anne Withers on Professors Chimney, Scawfell where the first ascent was made in the 1891

Photo: Colin Wells

1891 DEC 25th STEEP GYLL.-SCAFELL (Grade V/4)*J.N. Collie, W.L.W. Brodie, E.W. Marshall*

First winter ascent.

There are just three brief references to this remarkable and futuristic climb, the first grade V recorded anywhere in the UK, and probably the world. It has previously been erroneously recorded as having taken place on Christmas Day 1890. Careful scrutiny of the records shows it was in fact, Christmas 1891, and that Collie's partners were Brodie and Marshall and not Hastings and Robinson as previously thought. Much of the confusion is likely to be due to a deliberate policy of Collie not to draw attention to the climb because of its 'unjustifiable' severity.

'My recollection of the latter [Steep Gyll] in snow and ice, is that it is one of the most dangerous climbs I ever made.'

Collie, J.N. 1926. 'Reminiscences', FRCC, Vol 7, 2, 214

'Another party of three strangers – Dr Norman Collie, Messrs. Wilfred L.W. Brodie, and E.W. Marshall had arrived, and on Christmas Day made a desperate climb of Steep Ghyll under frozen conditions, while Robinson's party climbed on Great End.'

Jackson, F.W. 1925. 'Some Early Climbing At Wasdale And An Episode', Rucksack Club Journal, Vol 5, 3, p 302-309

'Norman Collie, E.W. Marshall, W.L.W. Brodie, J. W. Robinson, G. Hastings, W. Wickham King. All or some of the party made the following ascents – The Napes Pinnacle on Gable and the arete-face of Great End above Sprinkling Tarn between Central and Southern Gully (small cairn marking exit at top), ascent of Scafell Pinnacle by way of Steep Ghyll (N.C., E.W.M. & W.L.W.B.) a much better way to the top is by the rock arete between Steep and Deep Ghyll – an interesting climb was had on Black Crag on the Ennerdale side of the Steeple – Ennerdale Pillar and descent by the west side – Buckbarrow was ascended from the Fox's Earth to the Hawks Nest (crag fast sheep was released). A first ascent was made of a fine pinnacle on the east side of the great gully and a stone cairn was erected – Broad Stand and Deep Ghyll Pillar both very much iced amidst a snow blizzard.'

Wasdale Hotel Climbing Book 1890 - 1919, p. 59

(Second winter ascent 1938/39 S. Cross, A. Nelson, A.T. Hargreaves, R. Hargreaves. Believed at the time, and until recently, to have been the first winter ascent.)

1891 Dec 25th SOUTH EAST BUTTRESS - GREAT END (Grade II/III)

J.W. Robinson, G. Hastings

First recorded winter ascent.

Jackson's article (1925) quoted above says 'on Christmas Day ... Robinson's party climbed on Great End.'

'Up S. Gully then out onto right hand face and straight up, built cairn at top with Hastings.'

J.W. Robinson's Climbing Diary, FRCC Archive, Cumbria Records Office

1891 DEC 26th NORTH CLIMB - PILLAR - Attempt

J. N. Collie, E.W. Marshall, W.L.W. Brodie,

J.W. Robinson, G. Hastings

An epic ascent in icy conditions, they get as far as The Nose and Robinson tries the first ascent of the hand traverse and takes a 50ft fall, his hands having become numb with the cold. They then down climb the route in heavy rain.

Jackson, F.W. 1925, 'Some Early Climbing At Wasdale And An Episode'.

Rucksack Club Journal, Vol 5, 3, 302 - 309

1892 Mar/Apr WETHERLAM - unknown route

H.A. Gwynne

'On the west face there is a bold cliff that stands between two steep gullies. The cliff itself can be climbed and in winter either of the gullies would afford a good hour's hard step-cutting. Just now, after the late snowstorm, the mountaineer would have the excitement of cutting through a snow cornice when he arrived at the top. The precipice itself is fairly easy. I happened to find it in very bad condition. All the rocks were sheeted with ice and extremely dangerous. In one part there was a narrow, steep gully ending in a fall. It was full of snow and looked solid. I had scarcely put my foot on it when the snow slipped away with a hiss and left me grabbing at a knob of iced rock that luckily was small enough for me to grasp. This climb in ordinary weather is by no means difficult.'

Gwynne, H.A. 1892, 'Winter climbing in Lakeland', *Pull Mall Gazette*.

(There is a copy of this article in the Wasdale Climbing Book 1890 - 1919.)

1892 Dec 27th GREAT GULLY - WASTWATER SCREES (Grade III)

J.N. Collie, J.W. Robinson, G. Hastings

First winter ascent and first ascent.

'It was on a perfect winters morning, many years ago now, that we started for the

great gully in the screes. Not a breath of air stirred; hoar frost covered the ground; the trees were a mass of silver, glittering in the morning sun... perpendicular walls rose on both sides for several hundred feet; above us stretched cascade after cascade of solid ice, always at a very steep angle and sometimes perpendicular. Up these we cut our way with our axes, sometimes being helped by making steps close to the walls and using any small inequalities on the rock face to steady us in our steps.'

Collie, J.N. 1902, *Climbing On the Himalaya and other Mountain Ranges*, p 254 - 256

'Great help was afforded by the waterfall being almost completely ice and the turf also being frozen hard'.

Wasdale Hotel Climbing Book 1890 - 1919, p 77

(It is interesting to note that this ascent was made the day after the first ascent of Moss Gill, during which no mention is made of ice or winter conditions. This must have been a sustained period of high pressure with hard frosts overnight and little or no snow.)

1893 Jan 6th OBLIQUE CHIMNEY - GREAT GABLE (Grade IV/ 5)

O.G. Jones, H. Kempson, Leo Amery

First winter ascent and second ascent overall. In pure technical terms, one of the two most difficult winter climb undertaken prior to the Great War.

'The smooth walls of the gully were black and shiny with ice,' recorded Jones, but this failed to deter him and he set about the challenge with characteristic gusto - an hour later he emerged triumphant. His partner Leo Amery, was more circumspect about the joys of winter climbing, 'I remember being able to look down between my legs into what seemed a bottomless abyss of writhing snow. It had been snowing all day and by the time we had overcome the chimney and were nearing the top of the mountain it was not only blowing a blizzard, but it was dark into the bargain.'

Jones, O.G. 1900, 'Rock Climbing in the English Lake District', p 119 -130

Amery, L.S. 1941, 'Juvenilia', FRCC, Vol 13, 14-16

1893 Jan 9th MOSS GILL - SCAFELL (Grade IV/4)

O.G. Jones (solo)

First winter ascent and fourth ascent overall.

An amazing tour de force by Jones, arguably his finest hour. Climbed solo despite the encumbrance of a clinometer and broken ribs sustained by a fall from the Collie Step (luckily saved from worse thanks to the backrope he had fixed through a chockstone).

Detailed account described in:

Jones, O.G. 1900, *Rock Climbing in the English Lake District*, p 43 - 53
(2nd winter ascent of Moss Gill, Feb 11 1893 by R. Williams, H. Woolley & W.C. Slingsby.)

'The sides and floor of the ghyll were all coated with ice hence the difficulties, at no time slight, were on this occasion very great indeed. The ghyll ought not to be climbed except when rocks are dry and quite free from ice'.

Entry by Slingsby in Wasdale Hotel Climbing Book 1890 - 1919, p 86

Pre 1894 STRIDING EDGE - HELVELLYN (Grade I)

Haskett Smith, W.P. 1894, *Climbing In The British Isles*:

'In winter it is sometimes an exciting approach to Helvellyn, in summer just a pleasant walk'.

There is no record of when the first traverse of Striding and Swirral Edges was made, it may have been members of the Alpine Club during the 1860 and 70s who occasionally visited the district in winter for practice in step cutting. One of the first was Professor J. Tyndall who sometime before 1859 climbed Helvellyn from Grasmere when 'all the summits round us were white, and it required no great stretch of the imagination to fancy ourselves in the heart of the Alps'. On reaching the summit 'one of us lay down while the other descended to inspect Striding Edge and Red Tarn', but the day was stormy and shortly after they 'scampered down the face of the mountain to the Keswick road'.

Tyndall, J. 1859, 'A Stormy Day on Helvellyn'.

The Saturday Review (Reprinted in The Climbers' Club Journal 1903)

1899 Apr 8th NORTH CLIMB - SCAFELL (Grade III)

Cowley, Davey, G. Barton, C. Barton

First recorded winter ascent.

'The wind had gone due N. & with the snow as well things were moderately alpine ... this was our first encounter with snow and ice ... North Climb proved moderately hard under the present conditions.'

'Barton Climbing Book', FRCC Archive, Cumbria Records Office

1899 Apr 11th SCAFELL PINNACLE VIA STEEP GILL AND SLINGSBY'S CHIMNEY - SCAFELL (Grade V, 5)

G. Barton, C. Barton, Cowley and Davey

First recorded winter ascent. Along with Jones' Oblique Chimney, this was technically the hardest winter route achieved prior to the Great War.

They were three and a half hours on the climb with an 'entirely incompetent

climber' and came to the conclusion that the route 'is no where really difficult barring the 60 ft in the middle of the climb which includes the Slingsby Chimney'!

Nevertheless the Bartons admitted that; 'Our position on the Pinnacle wall was chilling in the extreme ... it was quite by chance we did not get frost bitten.'

'Barton Climbing Book', FRCC Archive, Cumbria Records Office

1901 DEC 26th GREAT GULLY - PAVEY ARK (Grade III)

Two unknown Climbers 'Club members.

First recorded winter ascent.

'The cave and the small climb immediately above were successfully passed; then came a steep snow slope of 40 to 50 feet, and a short vertical climb, beyond which lay another slope terminating in what was considered the Mauvais Pas of the ascent, an almost "A.P." wall of 20 to 30 feet securely incased in ice ...

The leader ... had got up some twenty feet ... when hearing a rush of snow below he turned his head and was astonished and dismayed to behold his companion disappearing down the gully on his back. A bundle of Harris Tweed, enveloped in a cloud of snow, shot over the pitch immediately beneath, and the leader waited for the jerk, which he knew he would be powerless to withstand. But the jerk never came, for the second man, during his enforced idleness, noticing a large rock tooth on the left side of the gully, had swung the rope round it in a loop. When the platform of snow ... gave way ... the rope so jammed that it never even tightened between the leader and the tooth.'

1902, 'Christmas at Langdale Head', Climbers Club Journal, Vol IV, No 15, p 147-148

The climb was successfully finished and two days later repeated by an 'augmented party'.

1905 Feb 1st 'E' GULLY (MARES NEST GULLY) - PIKES CRAG (Grade I/II)

G.H. Almond, E.V. Oulton, C.T. Beecroft,

W.I. Cumberlidge, P.R. Parkinson

First recorded winter ascent.

'Climbed this gully completely in ice and snow. It afforded interesting climbing and has one difficult pitch which was turned by a previous party. The pitch was ascended by backing up the left wall with the aid of shoulders and ice axe from below and jamming the left knee in between this

wall and the chockstone. Probably the gully is uninteresting in summer but in winter it is worth a visit.' P.R.P.

Wasdale Hotel Climbing Book, 1890 - 1919, p 222

**1907 EASTER ENGINEERS CHIMNEY - GREAT GABLE
(Grade V/4)**

C.S. Worthington, J.D. Gemmel

First recorded winter ascent. The third of the quartet of Grade V climbs to be achieved by pre-Great War Lakeland climbers.

'During this Easter holiday the two (Worthington and Gemmel) did nearly all the severe and very difficult climbs in the Pillar, Gable and Scafell Crag. A notable climb was Engineers Chimney with a considerable amount of ice in it'.

Ormiston-Chant, T.C. 1919, 'In Memoriam; Claude Swanwick Worthington', FRCC, Vol 5, 1, p 91 - 93

1907 EASY TERRACE - DOW CRAG (Grade II)

S.H. Gordon, H. Goodier

First recorded winter ascent.

'Easy Terrace. Finish up Intermediate in ice and snow.'

'Coniston Parkgate Climbing Book', FRCC Archive, Cumbria Records Office

**1908 EASTER RAKES PROGRESS - SCAFELL (Grade I/II)
BUTTRESS BETWEEN A & B GULLIES, PIKES
CRAG (Grade II?)**

FRCC parties.

First recorded winter ascents.

'There was an unusually large quantity of snow on the fells, particularly on the North face of Scafell Pike. Ice and frozen snow abounded...Rakes Progress ... presented genuine difficulties, being so choked with ice and ice covered snow that a party of three took over two hours to traverse it, cutting steps nearly the whole way from the foot of Lord's Rake to Mickledore Ridge. At the same time another party were experiencing a good deal of trouble with the buttress between A and B gullies on Pikes Crag'.

1908, 'The Club Meets', FRCC, Vol 1, 2, p 190 - 192

1908 Apr WEST WALL TRAVERSE - SCAFELL (Grade I/II)

A.E. Baker and Rucksack Club members

First recorded winter ascent, almost certainly climbed earlier.

'We slowly and cautiously made our way over the loose and treacherous snow on the West Wall Traverse'.

Baker, A.E. 1909. 'Arctic Conditions in Lakeland', Rucksack Club Journal, Vol 1, No 3, p 185-186

1910 EASTER KESWICK BROTHERS CLIMB, SCAFELL (Grade IV?)

T.C. Ormiston-Chant, E.H.P. Scantlebury

First recorded winter ascent.

'I lost my axe when half way up Keswick Brothers Climb. It was nearly dark and Scantlebury and I spent a weary hour in chipping steps with a wedge of rock in a huge fringe of ice above Botterill's Slab, hoping to avoid a descent. A cheery hail from Hollow Stones brought two good Samaritans to the top of the climb, and the ring of their axes in the hard ice kept us company for another hour whilst they cut down to within a rope length of us. The rescuers were Worthington and Gemmel.'

Ormiston-Chant, T.C. 1919, 'In Memoriam: Claude Swanwick Worthington', FRCC, Vol 5, 1, p 91-93

'Easter 1910 - Scantlebury and I started up Keswick Brothers Climb as dusk came on and found the finish so badly iced as to make it impossible. We were hauled out by two kind hearted companions.'

FRCC Wasdale Climbing Book 1907 - 1938

1910 EASTER NORTH GULLY - BOWFELL (Grade II)

S.F. Jeffcoat, T.W. Oliver, J. Wilding

First recorded descent in winter, may have been climbed earlier.

The party 'set out with the intention of climbing Bowfell Buttress by Oppenheimer's route, but returned with an account of a traverse of the buttress on snow. On arriving at the climb, they were unable to distinguish the route owing to mist. They therefore took to the snow in the gully to the left of the buttress, and by this reached the top ... It was therefore, decided to descend the gully on the right side of the buttress which contained steep snow, in which good steps could be kicked all the way down.'

1911, 'Easter Meet, 1910, Langdale', Rucksack Club Journal, Vol 2, No 1, p 66-67

1911 GREAT GULLY - DOW CRAG (Grade IV/4)

T.C. Ormiston-Chant, Balfour, Smith, Parker, Huntley, Pidcock, Lyon

First recorded winter ascent.

'Fells snowbound, rocks about Great Gully badly glazed with ice ... two thermos flasks were smashed during the climb.' (The start of a great Lakeland tradition).

'Coniston Parkgate Climbing Book', FRCC Archive, Cumbria Records Office

1912 BLACK CHIMNEY - DOW CRAG (Grade IV)

L. Hardy, G. Milligan, H.C. Diss

First recorded winter ascent.

'Black chimney (snow).'

'Coniston Parkgate Climbing Book', FRCC Archive, Cumbria Records Office

1912 WOODHOUSE'S ROUTE - DOW CRAG (Grade IV)

'D.G.M.', Miss Eckland, L. Hardy

First recorded winter ascent.

'Woodhouse's Route of B Buttress (ice).'

'Coniston Parkgate Climbing Book', FRCC Archive, Cumbria Records Office

Another ascent was made in 1913 by a party of three (not named) who climbed Woodhouse's Route on the same day that Rosalind Murray climbed North Gully, so the route was probably in winter condition.

Murray, R. 1913, 'A Blizzard on Doe Crags', FRCC, Vol 3, 1, p 44-47.

**1913 'ELUSIVE GULLY' - NORTH GULLY - DOW
CRAG (Grade III/IV)**

Rosalind Murray and three others

First recorded winter ascent.

'It was only my fourth attempt at climbing, and I had never climbed in snow ... it was I was assured a very easy climb under ordinary conditions ... this time, however, the 'under ordinary conditions' was a saving clause, for our conditions were not ordinary. The rocks were covered with two inches of solid ice: genuine ice that had to be cut through with an ice axe before any hand or foot holds could be found'.

Murray, R. 1913, "A Blizzard on Doe Crags", FRCC, Vol 3, 1, p 44-47

**1913 EASTER OLD WEST CLIMB - PILLAR ROCK (Grade III)
CENTRAL JORDAN - PILLAR ROCK (Grade III?)
NEEDLE AND NEEDLE RIDGE - GABLE (Gr. III)
OVERBECK CHIMNEYS - YEWBARROW (Gr III/IV)**

Various FRCC parties

First recorded winter ascents.

Old West, Needle & Needle Ridge probably climbed earlier in similar conditions.

'Fells covered with snow and ice ... Nearly all rock-work was impossible, but easy routes (of summer) provided good sport, and plenty of step cutting was obtainable. The following climbs were made by several parties: Needle and Needle Ridge, Old West Climb Pillar (required from three to five hours) ... Slab, Notch and Arete, Central Jordan, all affording good practice under the conditions. High Level route very fine. North on Pillar was ascended by a party of two, a very fine performance under the conditions, the same two also visited Overbeck Chimneys'.

1913, 'Easter at Wasdale Head', FRCC, Vol 3, 1, p 108-109

(Second winter ascent of Central Jordan in 1926 by G. Basterfield, T Graham-Brown, and three others also included the first recorded winter ascent by a canine: 'In snowstorm & icy rocks Dinky the dog hauled up Central Jordan in ruesac.' Wasdale Climbing Book.)

1913/14 NEW YEAR WALKER'S GULLY - PILLAR ROCK (Grade V/4)

S.W. Herford, G. Sansom, C.F. Holland

First winter ascent.

The fourth and final Grade V route achieved by Lakeland climbers before World War One. The trio found a steep fearsome gully encased in thick ice. What Holland was to describe as 'a truly Homeric struggle' with the route ensued culminating in a titanic battle with the crux upper pitch. Herford 'commenced a devastating assault on the upper ice-fall ... occasional boulders joined in the bombardment, one of which made a gallant effort to cut the rope. The leader, after much toil, succeeded in attaining a somewhat doubtful position on a slope of ice below the top boulder'. The climbing was so severe that the unthinkable happened - Herford, perhaps the ablest climber in the country at the time, took a leader fall, 'an experience, for him, out of the ordinary'. Holland described the crux encounter with exquisite understatement, 'The first attempt [to surmount the boulder] failed ... and the leader's quiet remark "I am coming off now", was immediately justified'. Despite this he was held and succeeded on a second attempt. The climbers battled up verglased final rocks to finish a magnificent ascent.

Holland, C.F. 1914, 'Walker's Gully', FRCC, Vol 3, 2, p 71-73

(O.G. Jones made the first ascent of this route in semi-winter conditions in 1899. There is a fine account of his epic ascent in; Jones, O.G. (1900), 'Rock Climbing in the English Lake District'.)

1914 Feb 21st VARIOUS ROUTES - DOW CRAG

There is a record in the Coniston Parkgate Climbing Book of Worthington, Herford

and Sansom tearing up (along with A.R. Thompson and W.B. Gourden) and climbing several routes on Dow Crag on 21st February 1914. Jones' Route (Easter Gully), Black Chimney, Blizzard Chimney and South Chimney were all ascended. Although details are not sufficiently detailed to prove that these climbs were in true winter condition, the fact that 'six inches of snow lay on the fells' that day suggests that there was a good chance that they were and given their previous record, the climbers were certainly capable of tackling the climbs in this condition some of which would probably merit grade V today.

1913/14? **BOTTERILL'S SLAB - SCAPELL (Grade V/5)**

G.W. Young, H.V. Reade

Possible first winter ascent?

'A little later another lesson was driven home, when we came upon Fred Botterill, upon whose eponymous slab on Scafell, H.V. Reade and I had just made the first winter ascent cautiously and admiringly, much adrift upon the iced holds of the Professor's Chimney, which gave our Alpine technique no pause.'

Young, G.W. 1951, *Mountains with a Difference*, p 9 - 10

This reference to this alleged first winter ascent is a little puzzling. The mention of the 'Professor's Chimney' which lies at the head of Deep Gill for example is confusing. Also the tone suggests that they first met Botterill shortly after their ascent. It is known that Young met Botterill at Wasdale Christmas 1907 (1908 'The Club Meets', FRCC, Vol 1, 2, p 190 - 192) and may have met him earlier, yet the records credit Herford and Sansom with the second ascent of the route in 1913. Young wrote this brief account many years later, so we may never know what really happened, but the reference remains intriguing. If he really did make the first winter ascent of what is now regarded as a modern winter classic, it would have been a remarkable achievement by England's finest Edwardian alpinist.

1918 EASTER **GULLY-SCOOP ROUTE DOW CRAG (Grade III)**

Mr & Mrs Murray; Mr & Mrs Ormiston-Chant, 'W.A.'

'J.P.R.' and one other.

First winter ascent.

'Easter 1st pitch, traverse west ... S. Chimney... good scramble in hard snow'.
Coniston Parkgate Climbing Book

An ascent indicating the rapid recovery of winter climbing standards in Lakeland immediately after the Great War (unlike Scotland) and also the early participation of women climbers.

1919 INTERMEDIATE GULLY - DOW CRAG (VI, 6)*P.R. Masson, C. Alexander, George Bower*

First winter ascent.

'Very badly iced'.

Coniston Parkgate Climbing Book

Described in the current guide as 'A tough mixed route', and erroneously recorded as being first climbed in 1978, this was first Grade VI recorded anywhere in the country and a major unsung achievement of the veteran Bower and his relatively unknown companions.

(Bower and Borrowman also record that they climbed Intermediate Gully in 1918 'in snow'. Unfortunately, the entry in the Parkgate Book is rather too vague to ascertain whether the gully was in true winter condition, or simply that snow was falling.)

1919 Jan NORTH GULLY - LOW WATER CRAG, (Grade I)*J.J. Bower and R.P. Vickers*

First winter ascent.

'Snow gully from Low Water to Old Man Ridge (gully slopes up to L. just to right of crags). Much step cutting ... Time c. 4 hrs'

Coniston Parkgate Climbing Book

1924 Dec NEW WEST - PILLAR (GRADE IV)*George Basterfield, T. Graham Brown*

First winter ascent.

Ascended with 'frozen snow on the slabs', Basterfield and Graham Brown (best known for his triptych of classic routes on the Brenva Face of Mont Blanc) were also part of a large jolly New Year's Day party in 1926 which included 'Dinky the Dog' who was hauled up an icy Central Jordan Climb on Pillar in a ruseac during a snowstorm – possibly the first ascent of a winter route by a canine.

Wasdale Climbing Book

1925 Jan 4th MITRE RIDGE - GREY CRAG*R.S.T. Chorley, K.C. Hopkinson, M. Barber, G.S. Adair and ano*

First winter ascent.

Ascended 'under snow'. However it seems likely this meant sweeping aside the powder to uncover rock, as the logs record the snow's arrival occurring shortly before this on the 3rd January after three days of gales.

Buttermere Climbing Book

Bowfell Buttress - a futuristic 1st ascent was made by Sid Cross & Alice Nelson (Jimmy Cross) in the winter of 1937-38 *Photo: Colin Wells*

1925 Jan 5th NORTH CLIMB - PILLAR (Grade IV)*R.S.T Chorley and K.C Hopkins*

First winter ascent.

'Ascended under fresh snow'.

Buttermere Climbing Book

1928 January FLEETWITH GULLY - FLEETWITH PIKE (Grade II)*R.S.T Chorley, Kathleen Chorley, G.S Adair and K.C Pilkington*

First winter ascent.

'Climbed under alpine conditions'.

Buttermere Climbing Book

Early 1928 seems to have been one of the few periods of the decade when good conditions obtained, allowing skating to take place on Bleaberry Tarn. Despite this, nothing else of note was achieved during the 20s – a stark contrast to the activity before the Great War.

Winter of 1936/37 DOLLYWAGON GULLY, CHOCK GULLY - HELVELLYN (Grade III and IV)*Sid Cross & Alice Nelson*

First winter ascents.

Sid & Alice also made probable first winter ascents of the gullies above Angle Tarn, Langdale as well as Pier's Gill (II/III) and Pavey Ark's Great Gully (III) and Little Gully (II/III).

Source: Interviews with Sid & Jammy Cross, September/October 1996

Winter of 1937/38 BOWFELL BUTTRESS - BOWFELL (Grade V.5)*Sid Cross & Alice Nelson*

First winter ascent.

This climb, described in the current guide as, 'a technical mixed climb, probably the best of its grade south of the border', and justifiably graded a solid V, is characterised by tricky crack climbing and delicate moves on sloping, thinly iced rock. Cross remembers tackling the crux crack pitch using Nelson's axe as a foothold while torquing his own axe (an ancient implement given to him by the famous Lakes pioneer George Bower) higher up the crack. Later on in the climb (on which the pair led through) he displayed even more prescient technical skills when he used a Scout knife, which he carried on climbs for splicing hemp rope, as an

ice-dagger. The winter ascent of Bowfell Buttress is especially significant in two ways. It regained the heights of technical difficulty which had been achieved before the First World War. Secondly, the co-equal role of a woman is remarkable on a route of this difficulty during the late 30s; it seems likely that with the ascent of Bowfell Buttress, Alice Nelson became the first woman in the world to lead Grade V.

Source - Interviews with Sid & Jammy Cross, September/October 1996

**Winter 1937 CENTRAL GULLY (DIRECT FINISH) - GABLE CRAG
(Grade IV, 4 - recorded as 'The Smart Exit' in the current guide)**

*Sid Cross, Alice Nelson, A.T and Ruth Hargreaves,
Astley Cooper*

First winter ascent.

The route involved delicate cutting up frozen moss on the crux wall and tenuous moves to reach the top. Alan Hargreaves was due to address the Pinnacle Club's annual dinner in the Sun Hotel at Conistone that evening and Cross remembers him practising his speech all the way up the climb - a fact which says much for the nonchalance and confidence with which they were approaching technically difficult and serious first ascents.

Source - Interviews with Sid & Jammy Cross, September/October 1996

Winter 1937 PISGAH BUTTRESS - SCAFELL (Grade V)

A.T Hargreaves, Sid Cross, Alice Nelson

First winter ascent.

A.T Hargreaves led hardest pitches, after they'd tossed a coin for the privilege.

Winter 1937 HOPKINSON'S CRACK - DOW CRAG (Grade VI,7)

S.R. Jackson and J.A. Jackson (solo)

Possible first winter ascent.

Although open to interpretation, John Jackson's description of his ascent of his and brother Ron's solo ascent of a frosty and verglased Hopkinson's Crack (this volume) sounds very much like the condition in which the route might be tackled using crampons and axes in the modern era. If this is accepted, their climb becomes the second Grade VI route to be recorded in Britain, and again it is from Dow Crag (the other being Intermediate Gully).

Source: John Jackson, 'The Iron Lung', FRCC, Vol 27,1

Winter 1938/39 STEEP GILL - SCAFELL - (Grade V,4)

Sid Cross, Alice Nelson, Alan and Ruth Hargreaves

Second winter ascent.

A major achievement of the late '30s, again by the quartet of Cross, Nelson and the Hargreaves. Although the Gill had been ascended by Norman Collie in the winter of 1891, this has only become widely known in the last few years. In the winter of 1938/9 the climbers were effectively entering terrain of unknown difficulty. Steep Gill is today regarded as the most difficult and serious of the traditional Lakeland gully climbs, with sparse protection on the crux section and unthinkable consequences in the event of a fall. Nevertheless the Crosses recall the climb as 'fun' and in fact have more to say about the tricky descent from an iced-up Broad Stand, which Alice ('Jammy' Cross) actually jumped down, such was her confidence. The reason for the hurry was the need to get down to Langdale before the daylight disappeared completely, in order to be able to cycle back to Kendal that evening so as to be ready for work the next morning. Walking 12 miles, ascending 3000 feet, doing a Grade V climb and cycling 20 miles would be a considerable test for any modern triathlete. Doing it for fun and still being at work at K Shoes the next day suggests astonishing levels of fitness and enthusiasm.

Late 1930s/early 40s? INACCESSIBLE GULLY-DOVE CRAG (Grade IV, 5)

J. Birkett

First winter ascent.

An ascent which went unnoticed for many years thanks to Jim Birkett's famously reticent habit when discussing his activities and his opinion that Lakes' winter climbing was 'cold and nasty'. Hence, the exact dating is still vague. An impressive achievement, especially as Birkett climbed this steep, technical route 'wearing tricounis and sporting a single long ice-axe.'

Birkett, B (1983) *Lakeland's Greatest Pioneers* Hale, p. 122

1941 April BIRKNESS CHIMNEY-BIRKNESS COMBE (Grade IV, 5)

Bill Peascod & Bert Beck

First winter ascent.

An astonishing ascent – given that the climbers had brought neither crampons, gloves nor ice-axe! They made the ascent using rocks as ice daggers. 'It had taken us three hours; we had been on ice most of the way. With proper equipment it would have been so much easier – but it would not have been half so satisfying!'

Peascod, B (1985) *Journey after Dawn*, Cicerone, p. 77-79

CLIMBS OLD AND NEW

Edited by Stephen Reid

The climbs listed below are a selection of those recorded since the last Journal. Many older and shorter routes have been omitted for reasons of space. However do not despair should your masterpiece be missing: the entire record is available at www.FRCC.co.uk. Please note that that is also the place to record your new routes because hut log books are no longer checked.

Despite the ravages of Foot & Mouth, the two years since the last Journal have been almost as productive as ever and include a further unbelievable increase in standards: the routes recorded below include several E9s and the Lake District's first E10. Virtually none of these climbs has been checked, and grades, descriptions and, most of all, stars should be treated with extreme caution.

SCAFELL

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

Scafell Crag (p29)

Talbot Horizon E9

The arete r. of Lost Horizons. Start as for Lost Horizons first pitch. (6c). Climb up and clip the first in situ gear in Lost Horizons, step back down and move r. to the bottom of the arete. This first bit of gear only helps you to stop hitting the screens. Bold 6b climbing up the arete leads to a flat hold on the r., only gear - put a sling over the flat hold and pray (crux). Climb directly up the arete to gain sloping holds that lead l. to gain a peg. More 6b and 6a moves up the arete lead to a big ledge on Cullinan, then climb more or less direct to the ramp of Great Eastern.

David Birkett, 28th July 2000

Welcome to the Cruel World 20m E9

(7a). The thin cracks r. of Borderline.

David Birkett, 19th April 2002

Round How (p135) - South Face 219 081 Alt 710m South facing

This is the pleasant wall, which extends up and r. from the main slabs of

Round How. It catches the sun all day; the rock is solid, quick drying and wonderfully rough. The whole area around here is delightful and offers a multitude of excellent wild camping sites; the beck below the crag gushes from a spring, providing clear drinking water.

In the centre of the wall is a prominent flake, with a wide crack on its r. side at head height. The start of the routes are referenced from this point.

Descent. The large belay block can be used as an abseil point. If gear is left, the 20m. abseil can be done on one rope. Alternatively, a short scramble past a small scree patch leads down to the base of the crag. Two routes have an abseil sling already in place.

*** Round the Horn 23m. E2**

A good clean route, with limited protection. Start 14m. l. of the flake, next to a small recess at head height.

(5b). Climb slightly leftwards and up to twin cracks in a bulge, which lead to a ledge with an excellent spike (The Horn). Go diagonally r. to a small ledge in the centre of the face, then climb the rippled wall above directly to a ledge and abseil block.

Al Phizacklea, John Holden 12/5/2002

*** Long Crack 40m. VS**

An entertaining route up the central diagonal crackline which is obvious from afar. Start at the same point as Roundhead.

(4c). Move leftwards to gain a small juniper ledge. Follow the large flake up r. to reach a large ledge, then attack the chimney/crack above to a ledge. A short wide chimney leads to easier climbing and a large block belay.

Al Phizacklea, John Holden 12/5/02

Roundhead 22m. HVS

Rather contrived. Start about 11m. l. of the flake, below a series of cracks. (5a). Climb straight up past a diamond-shaped hole to a small capping roof, then step l. to join Long Crack. Before the large ledge of that route is reached, step l. onto the headwall and ascend this before making a rather pokey move l. to finish. Abseil from the block of Round the Horn.

Al Phizacklea, John Holden 12/5/02

*** A Round Tuit 26m. HVS**

Good, open and rather delicate climbing. Start below the front face of the big flake, 2m. l. of the wide crack.

(4c). Climb the thin crack to the top of the flake. Step up then pull l. into a scoop, then make a bold move into a higher scoop to reach gear in the thin

crack. Climb over the block to finish up the top arete. Large block belay.
 Al Phizacklea, John Holden 4/5/02

*** Get The Last Round In 24m. E1**

A fine route with a battling crack. Start up the wide flake crack.
 (5b). Climb the crack to stand on top of the flake. Pull r. to a sloping ledge,
 then up to a higher ledge crossed by a line of black moss. Step r. and climb
 up to a crack, which is followed with interest, then step l. up a ramp to an
 awkward finish. Large block belay.
 Al Phizacklea, John Holden 12/5/02

**** Rondo 24m. VS**

Delightful climbing up the shallow groove just l. of the r-hand arete. Start
 about 7m. r. of the flake crack, at the foot of the ramp of Round the Bend.
 (4c). A series of delicate steps lead to a sloping ledge below two slanting
 overhangs. Step l. and follow the cracked groove and flake to a ledge. An
 open V-feature above leads awkwardly to the large block belay.
 John Holden, Al Phizacklea 12/5/02

**** Around the Bend 22m. E1**

Sustained, delicate climbing which follows the ramp at the r. end of the
 wall. Start about 8m. r. of the flake crack.
 (5b). Move up to make an awkward pull onto a ledge. Follow the ramp up
 and r., which has just enough holds to aid progress, to a large flake at the
 top. Finish up this.
 Al Phizacklea, John Holden 4/5/02

Undercarriage Wall 217.077 Alt 750m. north-west facing

A small, steep wall lying a few hundred metres above the point where the
 "short cut" footpath to Broad Crag col (for the Scafell Pike grockles) leaves
 the Corridor Route. The remains of an aircraft undercarriage lies at the
 base of the crag, the rest of the aircraft, including two engine blocks, lie on
 the grassy rake above the wall. There are some delightfully rough, clean
 slabs to the l. of the wall, on the wall itself, a broken crack on the l. side is
 the line of:-

***Piston Broke 18m. E3/4**

A thin lead with some long reaches.
 (6a). Climb a shallow groove on the l. of a flake, then step l. to a ledge and
 the last good gear. Step r. and go up to a short crack, where a dubious
 small Tricam can be placed, long reaches above lead to the finishing crack.

Al Phizacklea, John Holden 12/5/02 Top roped first.

**** Wheel of Misfortune 18m. E2**

A superb pitch up the central groove. Unprotected, except where it matters. (5c). Climb easily up to an overhang, step r. and enter the groove (Rock 10 or similar). Climb this precariously, past an RP, where the holds improve slightly with height towards the top.

Al Phizacklea, John Holden 12/5/02

Crash Course 18m. HVS(?)

Start 4m. r. of Wheel of Misfortune

(5a). Climb the r. side of the wall, passing a sloping ledge and making use of a vertical crack - description to be checked.

Al Phizacklea (solo) 12/5/02

The clean slabs to the l. of the wall have the following lines added:-

The l.-hand slab was climbed by starting up a vague rib, completely unprotected, at VD. The steeper slab to the r. of this, consisting of rock that's rougher than a cow's tongue, was climbed directly to a short flake to finish at (5c).

Lingmell (p130)

Pilgrim's R. Hand 100m Very Difficult

From the wall (GR 213 079) which runs from Lingmell Col into Piers Gill, contour round and down to a path crossing Straight Gill. Scramble up the l.-hand side of Straight Gill to enter the gill above the chockstone/cave pitch of Pilgrim's Progress. Continue to where the gully splits. The route takes the slab to the r. of the well-defined chimney and provides a full mountaineering day out.

1. 30m. Climb the clean but unprotected slab to the r. of the chimney to a spike belay on the l.
2. 35m. Continue up the more broken slab above, into the gully, and belay at a notch high on the r.-hand ridge.
3. 16m. From blocks above belay, traverse l. and go up to belay at another notch.
4. 20m. Traverse l. across the gully below a short wall and climb a corner on the l. on jammed flakes to a belay on the l. arete.
5. 16m. Climb the ridge above to finish on a tower.

Eric Ostell, Dez Johnson (alt), 27th July 2000

WASDALE

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

Buckbarrow - Witch Buttress (p172)**Wee Boots VS**

Start as for Pace Maker.

(4b). Follow the first corner of Pace Maker to the bulge. Move r. onto the mossy slab and climb it trending slightly r. on good holds to reach a grassy ledge (block belay). Climb the short corner l. to the top.

Trevor Morgan, Peter Kelly, Heather Morgan, August 1999

Lakeland Pioneers Area - Rusty Wall

Approach as for Witch Buttress to the small buttress below Moss Slab, then follow a sheep track, crossing the base of White Bard Ghyll, then slant up l. to the central scree gully (20 mins). Or descend gully from Lakeland Pioneers.

Hammerite 20m HVS

Climbs the l. edge of Rusty Wall. Start behind the embedded Flake.

(5b). The l. arete is followed over the pinnacle and up to a good ledge. Hard moves up a steep little wall leads to a corner crack and the top.

1a (4c). From the good ledge, traverse r. 2 metres then diagonally back l. to the corner crack.

WE Pattison, DA Barrass, 8th August 1999

Three metres r. of and below Rusty Wall is a steep groove.

Ground Force 25m E1

Varied and interesting.

(5b). Climb the groove and exit awkwardly onto a blank slab. Step up l. and follow the blocky buttress to belay above a dry-stone wall.

C Johnson, WE Pattison, 15th June 1999

Four metres r. of the last route is a clean recessed slab.

Box Car Willey 20m VS

Nice climbing.

(4c/5a) Climb the slab to a large flat-topped flake. Climb the steeper slab on the l. into a groove and up to a belay above a dry-stone wall.

DA Barrass, WE Pattison, 1st June 1999

Seven metres to the r. is a second rust coloured wall with twin oaks up in a dirty corner to the l. A steep crack runs up the l-hand side of the buttress.

Charlie Dimmock 20m HVS

Exciting no pro crux! Start from blocks on the sheep track.

(5b). From the blocks, traverse delicately l. on a small curving ramp and pull over

the bulge into the the crack and welcome gear (don't fall off!). Up the wall and crack and over a second bulge to good belays.

WE Pattison, DA Barrass, 1st June 1999

Fork Handles 20m HVS

Start as for Charlie Dimmock.

(5a). Climb the clean wall to good holds on the r. Go up l. over an overlap and step l. into the centre of the wall. Climb straight up to the roof (peg runner), and then step r. and climb the arete to the top.

WE Pattison, DA Barrass, 25th June 2000

Dolly Parton 15m MS

Short but well endowed!

(4a). Nice climbing up the corner and over a final bulge.

WE Pattison, DA Barrass, 1st June 1999

ESKDALE

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

Castle Knott, Hardknott Pass (GR. 227 011)

Though small, this clean compact face of knobbly rock provides fine climbing of a bold nature. It is only seven minutes walk from the top of the Hardknott Pass, has a sunny west-facing aspect and is ideal for an afternoon's soloing. The crag lies above and south-east of Peat Hill Crag, effectively on the undulating ridge between Demming and Hard Knott Crag and is easily visible from the latter. Park as for Hard Knott crag and follow the path south for 400m towards Demming. On reaching a wooden gate along the l. side of a fenced off bog, head west for 150m to the crag on the west side of a grassy knoll. Routes are described from l. to r.

Maitai 12m S

Start at a rock scar 2m l. of Hot Toddy. Climb the pleasant slab and bulbous arete above.

J.Daly (solo), 30 July 2000

Hot Toddy 12m E1

(5b). Start on a sloping break beneath a rock ledge at 5m. Climb directly to the ledge, step up l. to a mini ledge/slot (possible wires to l.), and pull back r. onto the steep headwall to finish at its highest point.

J.Daly (solo), 30 July 2000

Daquirie 12m E2

(5c). Start just r. From a shallow depression climb up r. to a short broken crack/flake (sideways nuts), continue straight up to finish in a V-nick just r. of the top.

J.Daly (solo with trailrope), 30 July 2000

Rum Punch 11m E3

(6a). A great pitch starting off the blocks 3m r. of Daquirie. Step awkwardly up l. onto the fine knobbly wall and climb it direct passing the only gear (RP/ friend 0) in a horizontal crack at 4m.

J.Daly (solo, but 1 poor in-situ runner for protection), 30 July 2000

Black Russian 10m HVS

(5a). Start off the same blocks. Climb the prominent impending diagonal crack up rightwards.

J.Daly (solo), 30 July 2000

Ginjina 8m VS

(4c). Start by 3m further r. Climb the r. side of the short steep wall using broken cracks on the r.

J.Daly (solo), 30 July 2000

Saki 7m S

The obvious l-facing corner.

J.Daly (solo), 30 July 2000

GABLE

Page numbers refer to the FRCC Guide, Gable & Pillar (1991)

Kern Knotts (p139)**The Cat's Whiskers** 40m E4

Climbs the wall between Caterwaul and Feline Crack. Start directly below a crack 3 metres r. of Caterwaul.

(6a). Climb easy rock to a thin crack in the steep wall. Climb the crack and move rightwards to a ledge. Gain the gangway above (Catwalk) and traverse l. for 2 metres then climb directly up to a good nut runner. Pull up r. to an obvious flat hold. Make blind moves up and l. to gain a standing position on the flat hold. Small holds on l. lead to ledges above. Climb easier rocks direct to the top.

Dave Armstrong, Phil Rigby, 9th July 2000

Grimalkin 44m E4

A bold route on good rock. Start 4m r. of Flake Climb.

1. (6a). Climb the wall and thin crack to an obvious short narrow groove (Pussy) and continue over bulges, with better protection, to grassy ledges.
2. (5a). Climb a short wall to a large glacis then another wall r. of a corner to easier ground and the top.

K Telfer, J Gilhespie, P Morgan, 17th May 1998 (*Grimalkin - an old grey cat*)

This route was also climbed and claimed by D Booth and I Turnbull as Brown Badger at a slightly later date. However there is some doubt about the date they actually did it on and theirs may have been the first ascent.

Nine Lives 33m E3

A short, sustained technical pitch, which climbs a steep hanging gangway on the l. wall of Kern Knotts West Buttress. Start at the toe of the buttress.

- (6a). Climb easy cracks for 5 metres to the start of the gangway. Follow the gangway leftwards with difficulty to a good flat hold. Pull steeply up the hanging crack above and make a hard pull on to the wall above. Climb more easily to a short hanging crack in a rib. Ascend the rib to a large ledge and climb the wall above to the top.

Phil Rigby, John Williams, 29th May 2000

Cat Napping E5 20m

A taxing climb up the thin crack and grooves 3 metres l. of Sylvester. Strong fingers are required. Start below the thin crack.

- (6b). Climb a short wall to a ledge. Boldly climb the wall above past a small bulge to reach a thin crack. Ascend the crack with difficulty to a good hold at the base of a small corner (junction with Pussy). Climb the corner direct and step r. on to a sloping ledge below a short groove. Climb the groove and good crack above to the top.

Phil Rigby, Robert Fone, 22nd July 2000

The Loch Ness Monster 30m E1

Climbs the cleaned rib and groove 3 metres r. of the Kraken. Start at a steep crack just r. of the Kraken.

- (5b). Climb the awkward crack to good flat holds (junction with Kraken). Pull steeply up r. on to a blunt rib. Climb the rib past a good spike runner to a short mossy groove. Ascend the groove and short wall above to a small overhand and roof crack. Pull through the roof and trend rightwards to finish up a slab.

Phil Rigby, John Pattison, 23rd July 2000

Mausoleum 38m E6

A very bold wall climb r. of Innominate Crack, which leads to the fine groove of Sepulchre. Start at a pointed block 2 metres r. on Innominate Crack.

(6b). Pull on to the wall to reach a short diagonal crack on the l. Climb the crack and surmount a small overlap to gain a standing position on two good holds. Make very committing moves up the wall (poor Leeper skyhook beak runner) to reach good jugs 3 metres below the large overhang. Step l. to the bottom of the fine groove. Climb this to the top.

Phil Rigby, Robert Fone, 14th July 2000

Top roped prior to lead after leader took a ground fall and escaped with another near miss!

The Napes (p147)**Tophet Wall*******Breathless 26m E10?**

A death-defying route up the "huge wall" between Supernatural and Incantations, above the traverse of Tophet Wall. The climbing is merely E8 to the good hold but then increases steadily in difficulty, with the final move being the hardest. Start at a belay as for pitch 3 of Tophet Wall.

(7a). Climb the thin crack (2 blade peg runners) to a good hold (2 good peg runners). Climb directly to an obvious loose block (very poor thin blade runner), then climb the unrelenting hard and dynamic upper wall to a 7a crux final move. Don't fall off!

John Durme, 26th June 2000

A definite contender for the hardest route in the Lakes at the time, if not the UK, and which had been inspected by many extremely talented climbers over the previous decade. It only finally succumbed after some 14 visits to the crag.

BUTTERMERE

Page numbers refer to the FRCC Guide, Buttermere & Eastern Craggs (1992)

High Crag (p60)**The Three Kings 45 m HVS**

Climbs the first steep wall of rock at the l. side of the main buttress. Interesting climbing.

Start from ledges 15 metres l. of Rock Table Ledge, at a rock ledge beneath three distinctive triangular niches.

l. 20m (4a). Climb the wall crossing a diagonal crack, continue via the three niches to reach easy slabs above, which lead up then l. to the foot of a steep clean wall, just l. of the capped corner of Artifact.

2. 25 m (5a). From the centre of the wall trend rightwards to cracked blocks (care). Move up and traverse diagonally l. to reach and follow a slightly cracked groove, gain the ledge above (possible belay). Move up and pass the first of two overlaps on its r., pull up and step l., ascend directly up the steep wall to gain the top.

C Read, BR Shackleton, 6th May 2000

Resurrection Route - Direct Finish 20m VS

Start from the belay at the top of pitch 2, the main crack.

(4c). Climb the short groove, stepping r. onto the wall as soon as possible, and follow the less mossy streak up the wall and through a bulge to easier slabs.

S Stout, SJH Reid, 15th June 1999

Close Shave 28m E1

The following makes an excellent sustained route.

(5b). Follow Samson to the good foothold at the foot of the main crack. Step r. again into a thin crack a metre and a half to the r. of Samson. Climb this for 2 metres and either make an awkward step r. and up onto The Philistine or make another move up the crack and hand traverse r. to the same point. The Philistine goes up r. here; move back l. instead and climb the wall to gain a thin crack that slants up leftwards and follow it through the bulges above.

The whole might be better if started via the Direct Start to Samson. The upper section is the r. hand finish to Samson (more like 5b than 5a incidentally) and there is only a short section of new climbing involved. What there is was the work of: Stephen Reid and Steve Stout, 15th June 1999 (AL. - we belayed at half height as the leader was too knackered to carry on! Repeated by SJHR & Colin Read without the hanging stance 26th June 1999). Since climbed with the Direct Start suggested by J & K Arnold.

Grey Crag (p 82)

Chockstone Buttress

Tranquillity 48 m E1

Takes a direct line up the l. side of the slabs. Delightfully delicate climbing, low in the grade, but with minimal protection. Start up the gully just l. of Slabs West Route and about 5 metres beneath and r. of a small grassy bay, which bounds the l. side of the slabs.

1. 28 m (5b). Climb straight up to twin thin lward-slanting cracks, follow these, then continue straight up to a small niche. Ascend more or less in a direct line to a ledge with a pile of perched blocks, under a jutting nose in the headwall.

2. 20 m (5a). Move along the ledge to the r. of the blocks and climb up then

leftwards to beneath a small diagonal roof. Pass it on the r. then ascend directly up, just l. of the r. arête to the top.

C Read, N F Tonkin, 16th July 2000

Brahma 43m E1

Steep, interesting, on good rock, and low in the grade.

Start 4 metres r. of Raven Crack, beneath a narrow buttress.

(5b). Climb directly up the l. side to where it steepens, move up and pull r. into a hanging groove. Climb this to enter a recess beneath the overhang. Move l. and up, climb above the overhang to the top.

C Read, N F Tonkin, G L Swainbank, WAF Gladstone, 24th June 2001

Oxford and Cambridge Buttress

1 Spy 30m D

Good climbing on excellent rock up the grooved rib to the l. of Oxford and Cambridge Ordinary Route.

Start 3m up and l. of the polished chimney of Central Climb at a fine rib to the l. of a vegetated groove. Climb the rib and follow a steep groove through the bulge above to a slab (possible belay). Pull up the steep wall above via a short chimney/crack and climb rightwards to the top.

SJH Reid, CAJ Reid (aged 8!) 14th May 2000

In front and r. of Dexter Wall stand a group of semi-detached pinnacles. The next routes are on these and the walls behind.

Hare Krishna 35m VS

Interesting though escapable, with a pleasant top pitch. Start beneath the l. side of the Second Pinnacle.

1. 18m (4c). Gain and climb a steep l. ward slanting crack, pull up onto a rock ledge. Move to the l. corner of the Pinnacle, step up a slight scoop delicately, move up to gain good holds at the top.

2. 4m. From the top of the Pinnacle, descend to the r. (as for Ground Zero) onto the blocks in the notch behind the pinnacle.

3. 13m. Move up l. into a small l. facing corner, climb it and the crack above to the top.

C Read, N F Tonkin, 16th December 2001

Ground Zero 37m E1

Contrasting pitches of steep, strenuous crack climbing. Start beneath the r. side of the Second Pinnacle, which is split by a jagged crack.

1. 18m (5b). Surmount a boulder and climb a short wide crack on the l. Step r. then move up and l. to gain the crack, follow it diagonally leftwards to the top of the Pinnacle.

2. 4m. Descend to the r. onto the big rock strewn ledge, to beneath the wall which sports a thin crack and just l. of the wide crack of Yorker.

3. 15m (5b). Step l. onto a block and pull onto a flake. Move across r. under the small overlap, step up and pull back l. to gain the thin fingery crack, follow it to the top.

C Read, N F Tonkin, 28th October 2001

The climb was done in damp greasy conditions and there is some uncertainty about the grades given.

Yorker 30m HS

A good second pitch. Start between the second and smaller Third Pinnacle, as for Ground Zero.

1. 15m. Surmount a boulder and climb directly over a wedged block into the cl. between the Pinnacles. Ascend the crack at the back to a rock strewn ledge.

2. 15m (4a). Above a prominent wide crack splits the wall. Move up r. to gain it, go over the chockstone and continue up the wider section, directly over the capstone to the top.

N F Tonkin, C Read, 28th October 2001

The climb was done in damp greasy conditions and there is some uncertainty about the grade given.

Ted Dexter 30m VS

A fine second pitch on excellent rock. Start at twin cracks beneath the Third and smallest Pinnacle r. of Dexter Wall.

1. 15m (4a). Climb the short l.-hand crack and the face of the narrow pillar, step r. to a ledge and climb the crack in the wall behind to a belvedere under the steep headwall.

2. 15m (4c). From the bedded flake at the r. end, climb directly up the centre of the wall to the top.

C Read, N F Tonkin, G.L. Swainbank, WAF Gladstone, 24th June 2001

BORROWDALE

Page numbers refer to this FRCC Guide, Borrowdale (2000)

Goats Crag (p81)

Lower Goats Crag

High Pressure from the West 25m E1

Start between the Niche and L. Hand Route.

(5a). Climb to a spike runner, continue up past a dark scar in the wall to vague cracks. Pass these to reach good but hidden holds. Finish up the slab above.

Charles Pickles, Ian Denton, 23 September 2001

A loose block fell during wire placement, leaving dark scar. The first ascensionists are not sure that the route has not been climbed before but the line is not in the 2000 edition of the Borrowdale Guide and the loose block was the only obvious gear placement higher up. They would be interested to know if anybody else has claimed this line.

Shepherd's Crag (p109)

FootnMouth 16m VS

An infectious dirty little number - would be better if disinfected. Start just r. of Hee Haw under a roof.

(4b). Swarm over the roof, move l. and climb a blocky groove, then step l. and follow a dirty heathery crack up the wall to a ledge. The arete on the r. to the top. Definitely done before but unaccountably omitted from the guidebook.

A Non, AN Other, 10th May 2001

Silence of the Lambs 42m E2

An eliminate line between Brown Crag Grooves and Seamus giving surprisingly independent climbing.

1. 18m (5b). Climb the rib (unprotected) to a resting place and peg runner on l. on Brown Crag Grooves. Climb diagonally up r. to gain an incut block then up the l.-hand side of the wall above to gain and climb a thin groove with a spike to a nut belay on Brown Crag Wall. (Note: High runners above the overlap on Seamus would reduce the grade to E1.)

2. 24m (4b). Climb directly up the slabs above.

M Armitage, J Ursworth, 13th May 2001

Dave Bodecott notes, "Ignore all the diagonal stuff, it's just straight up. A bit gnarly, very worthwhile though."

Lucy Loo 53m E1

Start just below tree 1m l. of Vesper.

1. 23m (4c). Climb up (unprotected) to small grassy ledge with small oak tree (good nut runner). Continue diagonally up and r. to base of bulging rock wall (good cracks for belay).

2. 30m (5b). Gain bulging wall and traverse to the r. for 10m until the groove of Vesper is reached (good nut protection). Carry on the traverse 10m round smooth slab 1m past the arete of American Beauty and into a small overhanging groove. Go directly up here, with tricky little pinch grip, onto easier rock above (good

protection on l). Continue up to excellent tree belay. (Note: Unprotected traverse over slab is slippery with lichen in some parts.)

Craig Miller, Chris Bunker, 3rd June 2001

Quayfoot Buttress (p 198)

Mandrake Direct 40m E1

Start as for Mandrake.

(5b). Follow Mandrake to the start of the hand traverse at 10 metres. Ignore this and climb straight up to below a grass moustache (runner on l). Traverse r. below the grass and gain the break (Friend 2.5 or larger useful). Foot traverse the break rightwards to gain and climb the arete l. of Aberration to the crux of Aberration. Continue directly to finish up Mandrake.

Rick Graham, Peter Graham, 3rd September 2001

Upper Heron Crag (p 258)

****The One That Got Away 28m E2**

(5c). Climb Little Nose to the flake overlap. Pull up l. into the superb flake crack and climb this and short walls to the top.

Jim Arnold, Kate Arnold, 28th June 2001

****Shooting Fish in a Barrel 28m E4 6a**

Good climbing up the obvious clean wall l. of The Question. Start down and l. of The Question, (6a). Pull l. on to the ramp, step r. and climb the wall passed two horizontal breaks making difficult moves l. above the top one to the obvious crack. Step back l. and climb the wall and slab to the top.

Jim Arnold, Kate Arnold, Steve Prior, 23rd June 2001

Black Wall (p 270)

****The Codebreaker 20m? E7**

Takes the wall l. of Satan's Little Helper.

(6c). Start on good holds, move up l. to gear, up r. to a peg, then r. and up to the top (if you make it).

Adam Hocking, James McHaffie, 2001

Satan's Little Helper second ascent by James McHaffie and Adam Hocking, a serious and bold climb but the line of the crag. Graded correctly at E7, 6b. Should be F7b and ***.

EASTERN CRAGS

Page numbers refer to the FRCC Guide, Buttermere & Eastern Crags (1992)

Yew Crag (p.167)

South Buttress (307205)

This buttress can be reached in 10 minutes. Quick drying, except for lower section of Meritoerat. There is some friable/loose rock. Mostly adequate pro.

Bin Laden 30m E1

Takes a line up the l. side of the crag (just r. of broken vegetated part of crag). Serious - loose after crux. Start at a short groove (just l. of a small tree at 5 metres). (5b). Climb up to a thin crackline in the impending wall. Pull up to a sloping ledge (crux), then up leftwards towards vegetated rock (running belay). Climb up r. on loose rock to a ledge with doubtful blocks, then up past the blocks to good holds which are used to swing up r. onto a rib. Climb up into a slab/corner, which is followed to a final short wall.

Tom Walkington, John Campbell, 24th May 2000

President 25m E2

Start 6 metres r. of Bin Laden on a higher grass ledge, beneath a corner with a small triangular overhang.

(5b). Climb to overhang at 5metres, then pull up leftwards onto a steep section. Move straight up to big holds at 10metres, climb up leftwards to a steep wall (un-protected) which is topped by a sloping ledge and hidden incuts. Gain a standing position on the sloping ledge, then pull up r. into a corner which leads to a large ledge. Continue up easier wall above.

Tom Walkington, Nick Evans, 7th May 2000

Two Bit Bombed Butty 25m E2

Start 2metres r. of President, below a steep r.-facing corner.

(5b). Climb the corner (crux with protection not obvious), step r. when above the corner, and follow a vague groove/crackline to the top (passing an unprotected corner at mid height).

Tom Walkington, Nick Evans, 17th October 1999

***V.L.P. 25m E3**

Start 4 metres r. of Two Bit Bombed Butty.

(5c). Climb up to undercuts at 5metres, make difficult moves up l. (crux) to stand on a small ledge at 7metres. Continue up to a short steep l.-facing groove (which is gained from the l.). Climb the groove to gain a ledge and continue up the wall.

Tom Walkington, Eric Barnes, 12th July 2000

***Bossman 25m E3**

Start as for V.L.P.

(5c). Climb V.L.P. for 6metres, then gain the hanging slab on the r. (crux). Move up r. into a small groove, then continue up to a ledge below a leaning corner crack on the r., which is climbed to gain a grassy ledge. Continue up a short undercut wall. Tom Walkington, Nick Evans 7th May 2000

****Aristocrat 25m E1**

Start 6 metres r. of Bossman at a steep corner crack (beneath and l. of obvious overhang at 10m).

(5b). Climb the corner crack, then pull up l. on to an undercut wall (big holds) to gain a small tree, move up l., then up r. to enter a steep corner which is climbed to a ledge. Continue up short juggy wall.

Tom Walkington, John Campbell, 24th May 2000

****Meritocrat 25m E4 6a**

Start 12metres r. of Aristocrat beneath a corner in the upper part of the crag and 3metres r. of obvious overhang.

(6a). Climb steeply up to a projection of rock at 6m. Reach r. (hidden jug), then up for another 6metres, traverse l. to the corner which is climbed to within 5metres of the top. Avoid the vegetated top of corner by climbing the rib on the l.

Tom Walkington (unseconded), 1st September 2001

***Lords 25m E2**

Start at a tree 6metres r. of Meritocrat.

(5c). Climb on to the tree's r.-hand horizontal branch. Climb r. for 1.5 metres, then up for 6metres, and traverse l. for 2metres to move l. under a small tree to blocks. Climb up a short corner to a large block on a ledge up to the r., traverse r. on a grass ledge for 4 metres to a large tree (possible belay). Continue up the wall above the tree or scramble up a lward-slanting gangway.

Tom Walkington, Eric Barnes, 1st August 2001

Monarch 25m E2 5b

Start 4 metres r. of Lords.

(5b). Climb a short rib and make thin moves on to a slab (protection awkward). Step r., then up to a steep open corner. Climb up leftwards to a resting place. Move up (Friend 2 in horizontal break), then step r. on to a wall, then go to good holds up to a rib on the r. Move r. round the rib, then up to the large tree (possible belay). Continue up the wall above the tree or scramble up a lward-slanting gangway.

Tom Walkington, Nick Evans, 16th September 2001

***Nick's Brasher Boots 35m VS**

Start 12metres r. of Monarch (2 metres r. of blocks at foot of crag).

(4b). Climb the clean wall just r. of the vegetated corner. Near the top, move l. on a ramp to gain a groove which is followed to a large ledge. Continue up the wall just r. of the tree.

Jim Cooper, Nick Evans, 5th August 2000

Iron Crag (p162)

James McHaffie reports an on-sight ascent of Western Union (probably the first), and says it is worth three stars and the grade is correct. Also the second ascent (with one fall) of Phoenix in Obsidian, which he reports as being serious with a very dodgy top peg. If the peg goes then the route would merit E7 rather than E6 6b, but in any case two stars are due.

Eagle Crag, Grisedale (p174)

Taliban 37m VS

An interesting little climb. Start 2 metres r. of Grisedale Corner.

1. 12m (5a). Climb a shallow corner to beneath a small overhang. Move r. and up to enter a short V-groove, climb the wall on its r. to a ledge and spike belay.

2. 25m. Climb directly over two short steps to beneath the final headwall. Ascend it directly on fingery holds.

C Read, G L Swainbank (alt), P Fleming, 22nd September 2001

90 Years Young 26m HVS

Start as for Raptor.

(5a). Climb to the ledge and move up l. to below a corner crack. Follow this to gain a small ledge on Raptor, below a rock nose. Move l. below the nose and climb the wall above and short wall beyond to the Pasture.

Ron Keryon, Dave Jones, 5th May 2002

Rydal Cave (p285)

***Monster's Inc 25m Difficult**

From the tree on the l.-hand side at the bottom of the quarry, bound up following the rim of the quarry up to a flake jutting out. Pass this on the r. to another flake which is also passed on its r. From here trend to the l. and then around and up the easy slab to the stake belay. Very exposed due to the drop below which adds excitement.

Martin Panton, Jude Onions, 19th April 2002

First climbed in socks due to greasy slate.

Tourist Attraction Crag

Situated in Troutbeck (near Windermere) on the Kirkstone Pass road half a mile from the Windermere/Ambleside Junction at the north end of the village. The out-

crop is roadside (literally), green and loose, with lots of potential! The following climbs are on a large nose/arete with a tree at the top.

Foot 20m HVS

A technical route with poor gear and loose rock.

(5a). Follow the shallow groove up the r. side of the arete to the tree.

Stephen Ashworth, James Gilligan, Jonathan Smith, 27th December 2000

Mouth 20m HVS

(4c). Climb a rib to a roof, step l. and pull through it. Climb a slab and corner to the tree.

Stephen Ashworth, James Gilligan, Jonathan Smith, 27th December 2000

LANGDALE

Page numbers refer to the FRCC Guide, Langdale (1999)

Raven Crag, Walthwaite (p 37)

Ewborn 22m HVS/E1

Start 3m r. of Route 1. Follow reachy fingerjugs to mantleshelf onto a ledge. Gain the arete and continue with reaches for a good pocket/ledge and then a similar ledge above. Move r. via a small hold to the base of an apparently blank wall. Stand on a large foothold and use small edges to gain a large handhold. Work feet up and rock/mantle for a sloping ledge. Follow a line of jugs on the arete to the top. (Big jugs to l. of crux are not on route).

David Browne, 16th February 1999

A direct line up the arete goes at VS/HVS and was also done the same day

This may well be Enterprize (HVS, 1991)

****Route 66 40m HVS**

This route with its variation finish is in the recessed area between the upper parts of Cliff at Christmas and Alfresco. Start just l. of the toe of the crag just l. of Route 2.

1. 10m (4b). Climb the crack in the wall to join Route 2 at the belay ledge.

2. 30m (4c). Climb the poorly protected wall just l. of pitch 2 of Route 2, trend leftwards and then straight up to saplings and a block runner and some welcome gear at about 10 metres. Go l. for about 3 metres into the recess. Make a high step onto ledges on the l. Climb back r. via an undercut crack into the groove leading to the top. Climb the groove first by holds on the l. wall and then by the slab on the r.

Jim Cooper, Tom Walkington 15th April 2000

Route 66 - L. Hand Variation Finish E2 5c

From the undercut horizontal crack on pitch 2 of Route 66, climb leftwards for 2 metres to gain a steep leaning groove. Follow this to the top.

Tom Walkington, Mick Johnson 16th April 2000

Deuterus Direct Finish HVS

5a/b. Excellent direct way up, better than the cop-out finish described, and not in the guide. After the crux groove, continue easily up to the overhang and pull directly over at the r. side on big holds with excellent gear. Very photogenic, superb.

Dave Bodecott, Colwyn Jones, 15th April 2000

Two of Us 40m E2

1 10m. As for the first pitch of Deuterus.

2 30m (5c). Gain the undercut slab between Route 2 and Deuterus with difficulty and climb it to join Route 2 at the end of its traverse. Climb the wall just r. of the V-groove above, step r. to layaways, then lurch r. again to finish direct through the small roof where Deuterus starts traversing rightwards. A bit eliminate but worthwhile.

Graham Iles, Jenny Tweedy, 22nd July 2001

White Ghyll Crag (p 54)**Clam Joust 17m E2**

(5c) Make a low rightwards traverse from the foot of Rope Not passing a gear slot. Pull into a very shallow scoop and climb just l. of the arete. Starting direct is 6a.

Dan Duxbury, Martin Bagness, 4th April 2002

Pavey Ark (p 85)**Main Crag - Upper Tier****Haardvark (or Aardvark R. Hand) E2**

A worthwhile pitch.

Climb Aardvark to the peg, then launch out rightwards up the wall to an awkward landing on the slab above. Continue up the corner/flake and move back l. under a slanting overhang to rejoin Aardvark at the small bush. Finish up the top arete of Aardvark.

Martin Dale (unseconded), 12th June 1999

Golden Rule 50m E5

Climbs the centre of the wall l. of Book of Reasons. Excellent climbing, but bold. (6a). Follow Book of Reasons, up the flakes and the rib to reach the steepness at an obvious V-shaped runner slot with a hairline crack running up the wall from it.

Arrange protection here (Friend l, large Rock or Hex in the slot, RP2 in the crack.

above and Rocks 1,2 and 5 in the wall on the r.). Climb the wall just r. of the hairline crack to a good edge and pocket after a couple of moves (second RP2 in the hairline crack on the l.). Continue cranking up the wall on small finger pockets until just beyond the steepness then move l. under a slight bulge on sideholds to reach an excellent incut pocket at the base of a faint groove (Rocks 1 and 2). Make a scary rockup onto the top of the bulge, then climb the faint groove with no more gear until a good spike is reached and a junction with Book of Reasons where it pulls through the overhang. Finish up Book of Reasons to the top of its second pitch.

Martin Dale, Dave Wood, Phil Lee, Hal Rzakiewicz, 5th August 2001

Raven Crag, Langdale (p 128)

West Middlefell Crag (L. of Middlefell Gully).

Fifty metres up and l. of the start Middlefell Buttress there is a large tree growing from the base of a crag. L. of the tree is some clean steep rock with the two following routes. 15 metres l. of the tree is a chimney. Just r. of the chimney is an overhang at 5 metres height. 1 - 2 metres r. is a short leaning groove.

*** Two Grooves 20m E2**

(5c). Climb the short leaning groove to a small ledge at 4 metres. From the r. end of the ledge reach up for big holds. Move up, then across r. to a short groove which is climbed to easier ground. Continue up to a crack which is followed leftwards to the top.

Tom Walkington, Jim Cooper, 8th July 2000

**** Catherine Zeta 18m E3**

Start 2 metres r. of Two Grooves.

(5c). A steep pull leads to the small ledge of Two Grooves and on up to the big holds. Move up l. to a thin crack line which is followed as it becomes steeper and wider (just l. of the arete). Easier climbing leads to the top.

Tom Walkington, Eric Barnes, 5th July 2000

Middle Fell

Whisper Slab 11m VS

The clean slab on the r. of the gully above Curtain Wall. Trend l. to the top.

D Wright 21st October 1993

Mendes Buttress

Brown Eyed Girl 30m E1

A good pitch following a very obvious line, parts of which may well have been climbed before.

(5c). Start at the overhanging groove at the r.-hand side of the roof of Power of

Imagination. Climb the groove and the wall above to a more open groove. Up this to easier ground (peg and nut belays - as for Gamekeeper).

Karl Telfer, Paul Morgan, 17th June 2001

East Raven Crag (p 151)

***By Jingo 18m E1 (just?)**

Fine wall climbing with just adequate protection. Start 1m l. of Jingo (and 2m r. of Ophidia) at a vague raggedy crack.

(5a). Climb the crack and then boldly up the wall above directly to finish via the last few moves of Ophidia.

Stephen JH Reid, Colin Read, Colwyn Jones, Ann MacDonald, 16th April 2000

The following route probably covers the same ground.

Horse or Pony 15m E1

Takes the steep wall just to the r. of the scoop in which Ophidia starts.

(5a) Go up and over the bulge to a good ledge, continue up the steep wall directly above the bulge keeping l. of the big holds on the route to the r. Poor protection on an interesting crux, the route is far better than the appearance would suggest and the holds are clean and solid.

Doug Davies (solo), 3rd April 2002

White Crag (p 161)

Rocky Outcrop Low 18m VS

Start 5metres l. of Anne's Song.

(5a). The l. edge of the crag via aretes and walls. The crux is a fingery move up a wall at 9 metres.

Tom Walkington, Nick Evans, 24th June 2001

Upper Crag

***Fidelio 20m HVS 5a**

(5a). Climb slabby arete r. of Langdale Ferrets, finishing to the r. of a large flake.

John Bull, Roland Strube, 11th September 1999

Uppermost Crag

This lies 50m up the hillside above a scree slope. A slab leading to a steep wall lies on the l., while a pinnacle forms the r. side of the crag.

Leave It 20m E2

(5b). The slab needs care and leads boldly leftwards to the prominent r.-facing corner. Gain the corner, then pull steeply out r. to ledges and the finishing.

bulge. A route which will be worth a star when it cleans up.
Roland Strube, John Bull, 11th September 1999

***The Scientists are Baffled 15m E2**

(5b). Climb the pinnacle on good rock from its lowest point via cracks, until bold moves r, gain the groove and summit.
John Bull, Roland Strube, 11th September 1999

R. Uppermost Crag

This small crag lies 30m to the r. of the pinnacle of Uppermost Crag. The small red face on its r. side is obvious from below.

Angkor 20m HVS

(5a). Climb cracks up the centre of the face (actually an enormous flake) and exit r. over the capping overhang. Somewhat loose at present but very worthwhile and should clean up with traffic to become worth a star.
John Bull, Roland Strube, 12th September 1999

The next route is on yet another crag 50m to the r. again. This is really a distinct crag area (the true Raven Crag West?) and lies to the r. of the stream at GR 282064, between Raven and White Crag. The crag has two tiers; the first is an impressive prow rising from the stream bed (invisible from the valley path below), above which is an obvious open book corner (well visible from the valley).

Scat Cracks 45m HVS

1. 20m (5a). Climb the crack in the prow. Belay well back.
 2. 15m (5a). Walk 10m uphill, take a belay below the short open-book corner and climb it, taking care with stones in the corner itself.
- Roland Strube, John Bull (alt), 12th September 1999

Very Uppermost Crag

This is at 281064 above Angkor, forming the skyline as you look up from the valley path. R. of centre, at the highest part, is an attractive silvery tower.

***Silver Bullet 35m E2**

- The pick of the bunch. A lichenous first pitch leads to superb rock on pitch 2.
1. 15m (4c). Climb the lower wall to a rightward slanting rampface, which leads to a prominent arch at the halfway ledge.
 2. 20m (5c) Climb the arch via a crack which leads out r. to the silver face. Climb this in a superb position.
- Roland Strube, John Bull, 12th September 1999

Gimmer Crag (p 165)**Out of the Blue 60m VS**

Pleasant climbing on good rock on Main Wall.

1. 45m (4b). Climb straight up the wall for 4 metres to where it steepens., move l. and continue diagonally to a small short corner and climb it. Continue directly up the wall and rib above to a lward-slanting crack, follow it, then step down l. to a bilberry ledge.

2. 15m. Move l. a few metres & climb directly the fine clean wall on superb rock. C Read, GL Swainbank (alt), 10th June 2001

Repeated by Stephen Reid who notes the start is 2 metres l. of the chimney, below a bulge. Above the bulge there is no need to move l. into the groove as good holds lead up diagonally leftwards to the same point.

****Diphthong Super Direct Finish 17m**

Better than the original finish (which was originally called the Direct).

2a (4b/c). Move up to the r. of the roof and step back l. over the top of it. Climb delicately up a scoop, moving leftwards into a second scoop and up to a point where it would be possible to traverse l. into 'C' Route. Step up r. and finish directly up the hanging rib.

Led on sight: SJH Reid, A Lywood, 29th March 2000

(Diphthong probably deserves HVS due to its desperate start)

***Whitless 43m E1**

A straight-line climinate between 'F' Route and Whit's End Direct, but free of both. Start as for Whit's End.

(5b). Climb directly up the thin wall just l. of Whit's End's initial crack. Pull over the bulge using the prominent flake on Whit's End then directly up the wall to a horizontal crack which leads rightwards to a large flake on Whit's End Direct. Follow the black mossy slab first on the r., then on the l., then pull back r. and up the short groove between 'F' Route and Whit's End Direct and so to the top.

SJH Reid, D Bodecott, 5th September 1999

Eastern Axe E6

Start as for Equus

(6b). Follow the Kipling Groove undercling to a weakness in the overhang l. of Equus. Using sloping undercutts make committing and dynamic moves, using the arete, to a good hold and protection above. Continue up the arete via a tricky move to attain a standing position on a large flat hold. Continue much more easily

James McHaffie, Stuart Wood, 21st August 1998

***Elektra 57m HVS**

Takes a straight line up the obvious well-protected rib l. of Godiva Groove. Start at the foot of the rib as for Godiva Groove.

1. 38m (5a). Follow the rib using cracks and thin grooves on its l. side to easier ground. It is best to move r. and up to spike belays in Godiva Groove.

2. 19m (5a). Return to the line, continue directly up the wall, pulling through the small capping roof at a groove, then onto the l. rib in a fine airy position.

D Bodecott, SJH Reid, (alt), 5th September 1999.

Led on sight. One aid point used for cleaning on 1st pitch; the move was then done free.

Gimmer High Girdle Variation to Pitch 1 HVS

A very airy outing. More logical and less contrived than the original way.

(4c). From the Bower, climb The Crack for 5 metres and then go diagonally up the fine r. wall to the rib of Gimmer String. Climb this to below Gimmer String's final crux wall and launch boldly rightwards on to a small ledge. Swing r. again - and keep going on the same horizontal line to end up with your feet in the Kipling Groove hand traverse. At the end of the traverse line, step down and round to the stance on Pouchet.

Martyn Hopson, Frank Wilkinson, 16th June 2000

Bowfell Buttress (p.229)***Flight of the Ravens 97m E2**

The route is based on the obvious large l. facing corner, which is capped by the central overhangs.

The main pitch gives steep, strenuous, sustained and exhilarating climbing which is well protected. Start as for Silent Witness, 3 metres l. of Bowfell Buttress, at the foot of a short rib which is just l. of a fault line running up into the corner.

1. 15 m. Climb the rib, over a perched block at 3 metres, move r. and continue close to the fault line, (as for part of pitch one of Silent Witness) until a block belay is reached on the edge, just below the start of the corner.

2. 30 m (5c). Move up to enter and climb the corner above. As the corner steepens continue directly until just below its top, where a move can be made to the l. Step up to beneath the overhang and make a move up to the l. to gain good holds at a horizontal break. Hand traverse two metres l., move up and pull over a small overhang via a crack, which forms the r. edge of an embedded pinnacle, surmount this (junction with pitch two of Silent Witness). Continue up the wall for a few metres to an airy stance at the foot of a r.ward slanting groove. Good nut belays a few metres higher.

3. 35 m (4c). From the stance step l. onto a good ledge (as for Silent Witness) Now

move up and l. into a shallow groove near the edge of the wall, continue up until an obvious step r. gains a grass ledge. Climb directly up the rocks above to a good ledge with a thread and small spike below.

4. 17 m (4b). Climb easily up to the foot of the steep rough slab (pitch four of Sinister Slabs climbs the crack in this). Climb it by its r. hand edge and continue directly up the short wall above to the top.

Graham L. Swainbank, Colin Read (Alt), Colwyn M Jones, 17th October 1999

A rest was taken on a nut beneath the top of the corner to facilitate cleaning, it was then climbed free. The rock is good and solid, however there is still some moss and grime in places and we hope to return in due course to brush it off.

Neckband Crag (p 214)

Metroler 20m HVS

Start to the r. of Route 1 at a shallow flake groove. A thin and lightly protected finish.

(5a). Climb the groove to its top, below a "boss", and step r. onto a pillar. Climb the centre of the front face, following a thin crack to the top.

Al Phizacklea (solo) 16th July 2000

So called because Craig Matheson rolled his new Metro the day before.

Black Crag (p 255)

Second Generation E3

Takes the wall and arete just l. of Ann's Agony.

(5c). Climb the wall direct up a series of small edges to an obvious black pocket at 6m (first runners - RP1 and stopper1 - both excellent). Move up and reach out r. to a small slopy layaway, and then stretch out l. to a little nobble on the wall. A better hold lies above. Follow the arete to the top (don't stand on the big ledge - Friend 1 in crack in the arete).

I Tilney, A Tilney, 21st May 2000

Five Drunks go Multipitch at Black Crag! 16m HVD

A good pitch following a very obvious line.

Climb the cracked corner between Glass Slipper and Sharp as Glass without using any holds on the arete. Bomber protection and beautiful climbing. The muddy heather ledge at half height is safer than it looks.

Martin Swithenbank, Michael Vaughan, Chris Hewit, 26 August 2001

Clogs 11m S

Slabs 4 metres r. of Glass Clogs.

Tom Walkington, Jim Cooper, Nick Evans, 30th April, 2000

Blake Rigg (p 272)**Missing E7**

The steep arete to the l. of Crazy Horse. Start 2 metres l. of the l.-hand start. It is best to clip the peg on Crazy Horse. NB: There is an extremely rare species of fern on the beginning of this route so the utmost care must be exercised to avoid damaging or disturbing it.

(7a). Climb a steep crack. Move r. one move to a good Rock 7 and a rest. Move l. to the arete and a peg runner. Hard moves gain good holds but not at first! Climb easy ground to the top.

David Birkett 19th June 2000

Helm Crag (p 289)**Fever E4**

(6b). Follow Astronomic Phenomena to the ledge. Start at centre of the blank wall, climbing diagonally to r. hand arete of the top block, (bold). Place gear in the break and pull onto arete (crux); continue to top, finishing at tree to the l. Mark Thomas, Mark Edwards, June 14th 1999 (May have been attempted before)

Langdale Boulders (p 316)**Stefan Grossman 7a/b (Font 8a)**

The arete above the wall on the top boulder.

David Birkett 24th August 1999. A famous 'last great problem' that David had been working on for seven years.

DOW AREA

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

Sunlight Crag (p104)**Sunday Slab 30m VS**

Start 5m r. of Sunlight Crack.

(4c). Climb the slab, via a short thin crack. Finish by turning the r. hand edge of the slightly overhanging wall.

Dave Hewitt, Mick Cottam, 16th July 2000

DUDDON VALLEY

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

Crook Crag (GR 233 999)

Park at Birks Bridge. Follow the Forestry track over the cattle grid and take the first r. to a locked barrier. After about 50 metres, take a l. turn into the woods and keep straight ahead for 100 metres to the crag. Routes

described l. to r.

Mary's Delight S 30 m

Up a slabby crack to a ledge at half height, then up the corner to the top.

Felony HVS 30 m

(5a). Climb the wall just r. to the ledge then move off the l. end of the ledge up a groove and swing r. to finish.

Ted Rogers, Rick Graham, 6th October 1999

The Old Bill's Crack E1 30 m

(5b). Climb up the crack and proceed strenuously to the top (Friend 4).

Bill Birkett, Ted Rogers, Ken Forsythe, 22nd September 1999

GBH E1 30 m

(5b). Start just to the r. and continue to a big block from this step up and swing boldly l. to finish.

Ken Forsythe, Ted Rogers, 25th September 1999

Arrest Arete E2 30m

(5c). Follow a rampline up l. to join the crack (Friend 4) then swing out l. and gain the arete (RP's). Follow this to the top.

Ken Forsythe, Ted Rogers, 25th September 1999

Panda S 40m

Start at the bottom of Bill's Crack and take a diagonal line across the crag.

Ted Rogers, Ken Forsythe, 25th September 1999

Prime Suspect HVS 30m

(5a). Climb straight up to large block on the r., stand on it and climb corner above.

Ken Forsythe, Ted Rogers, 22nd September 1999

Constable Crack E1 30m

(5b). Climb up faultline to the silver birch and climb the crack awkwardly to top.

Ted Rogers, Ken Forsythe, Bill Birkett, 22nd September 1999

Flying Squad E2 30m

(5c). Climb the wall as direct as possible to gain the upper crack via a horizontal crack. Continue up a steep step via the l. arete (bold) and continue direct up the nose above.

Bill Birkett, Ted Rogers, 5th July 2000

The Villain E2 30m

(5c). Climb up to the obvious hold via the large ledge at 3m. Make a balancey move to stand up and make a move to gain a good hold and spike. Continue in the same line to top.

Ted Rogers, Bill Birkett, 5th July 2000

Arsonist E1 30m

(5b). The obvious groove on the r., climb to the r. end of the big ledge. Climb the wall until it is possible to enter the groove for a couple of steep moves. Take a direct line to the top.

Ted Rogers, Ken Forsythe, 28th August 2000

Larceny E1 30m

(5b). Climb direct up the wall using holds and runners on the r. arete to reach the crack. Finish directly.

Ted Rogers, Ken Forsythe, 28th August 2000

Morse Crack VS 30m

(4c). Follow the crack direct and finish up slabs above.

Ted Rogers, Rick Graham, 6th October 1999

Forensic Arete E1 30m

(5b). Climb the rib r. of the crack until a step r. onto a block. Move up and swing l. onto the arete continue direct up slab and arete above.

Ken Forsythe, Ted Rogers, 23rd August 2000

SLATE

Page numbers refer to the FRCC Guide, Dove, Duddon & Slate (1994)

Hodge Close Quarry (p132)**Chip off the Old Block E2**

The route follows the crack/groove 1m r. of Mad Alice.

(6a). Hard move above second bolt, steady away until 6th bolt, then hard moves on tricky head wall. Keep r. of last bolt on Mad Alice (which is clipped) and do not use the arete. Fred Astair footwork will bring finishing holds, Fred Flintstone footwork will bring disappointment.

I Tilney, A Tilney, 30th August 2000

Cathedral Quarry (p166)*****I Got Horribly Sober 35m F8b**

The blank groove to the r. of Burley Dudes (bolted). Climb the undercut wall to

gain and climb the groove above, joining Basilica high up. Finish up Basilica.

WINTER

Page numbers refer to the Cicerone Guide, Winter Climbs in the Lake District

Gable Crag (p55)

Windy Ridge 75m III

Climb the chimney to the r. of the summer line onto the sloping ledge. Climb any of the turfy corners above this onto easier ground. Follow easy snow to top.

Huw Davies, Ian Vermeulen, 2nd March 2002

Comment from Dave Bodecott: Windy Ridge is very obvious. I have seen people on it before in winter. Must have been climbed at least 70 years ago in Winter.

Torquers are No Good Doors 50m VI (7)

1. 30m. The first pitch of The Serpent. Move r. off the belay onto a slab and steeply into a hanging niche on good hooks. Pull r. out of the niche around a blunt arete on good torques and climb a shallow groove above to a belay.

2. 20m. Follow the continuation crack above to the l. side of a detached block pinnacle. Climb the l. side of this to easy ground.

Stephen Asworth, Michael Taylor 28th February 2002

Arete Direct 70m VI (5)

Brilliant, delicate climbing in an exposed position. A bit thin on gear.

Climb Central Gully until the bay where it splits. The arete leaving the gully directly out of the bay is climbed in two pitches before joining broken ground between the two finishes higher up.

Stephen Ashworth, Pete Rowlands, 20th January 2001

Green Gable Crag (p 60)

Mutley's Icy Wait 2 90m II

Start up the ice on the r. side of the gully wall just below the short rock step at the start of Gully of the Plods, then follow frozen turf which leads to a short cleft at 10m at the back of which placements can be found. Continue up easier ground and climb a short icy chimney at 60m with a large chockstone in it. Easy ground leads to the top.

Adrian Clifford (solo), 2nd January 2002

Great End (p69)

Mutley's Icy Wait 1 25m II

Roughly half way between Briggs Climb (the cave) and the l. end of the crag, an ice fall sometimes forms in a break to the l. of a roughly triangular area of rock. Ascend

this in short steps using frozen turf higher up. A nice little warm-up route or beginners' route, and it could be easily be top roped.

Adrian Clifford (solo), 30th December 2001

Very likely to have had other unclaimed ascents.

North Buttress, Bowfell (p114)

Skint and Single 40m VI,7

The climb is situated on the north-facing wall around the L side of the crag from the Climbers' Traverse. Ascend the scree slope to reach the base of the wall and belays. Climb the icy groove to a block, surmount this to a small grassy ledge. Delicately step L for a metre to a verglassed overhanging groove, crux. Climb this and the broken groove above to the top.

Mark Thomas, Dave Almond, 3rd January 2002

Red Tarn, Helvelyn (p146)

Rape and Pillage 100m IV (6)

1. Follow Viking Buttress to a good ledge.
2. Climb the steep groove to the r. of Viking Buttress, negotiating a small roof at half height. Continue up the groove to a good ledge.
3. Continue up the groove above until it is possible to step r. around the arete. Follow good turf to the summit ridge.

Variation 3b(6). Step L where the groove finishes and continue straight up cracks to the L of the arete.

Steve Ashworth, Doug Davies, 29th December 2001

Repeated 2nd January 2002 Thought to be IV (5), Mark Thomas, Christian Badcock. Variation: Mark Thomas, Christian Badcock, 2nd January 2002.

Thor's Corner IV (4)

1. Pitch 1 of Viking Buttress.
2. Move r. to climb a turfy groove forming the r. hand side of the upper buttress.

Steve Ashworth (solo), 1st March 2002

IN MEMORIAM

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MALCOLM CAMERON

Malcolm Cameron was killed on September 9th 2000, just after completing a superb rock climb, *Le Marchand de Sable*, on the Tour Rouge above the Envers des Aiguilles hut in Chamonix. This area is regarded as being relatively unserious and safe but when Malcolm and his companion Neil Hitchings were a few minutes away from the hut, a large boulder came down the glacier, hit Malcolm and killed him instantly.

This was a freak and cruel accident and deeply ironic and tragic that it should happen to Malcolm who was always regarded as an extremely safe, highly competent and well organised climber.

Malcolm was born in 1946 in Windsor, attended Slough Grammar School and gained his introduction to the hills through the Scouts, going to Wales and the Lakes as a school-boy. By the mid 1960s he was hitch-hiking regularly to North Wales at weekends, linking up with a group associated with the Ogwen Mountain Rescue Team and meeting his future wife Sue. By the early 1970s he had moved up north, married Sue and settled at Pen-y-Ffordd, near Chester.



Malcolm Cameron in the Dauphiné

Photo: Derek Walker

As a member of the Vagabonds Club he climbed with some of their stars like Al Rouse and Pete Minks, learning from them on big routes on Cloggy and Gogarth. From 1966 he made regular trips to the Alps, especially to Chamonix, and over the years achieved an impressive Alpine record and joined the ACG. Among many excellent routes he climbed the *Brown-Whillans* route on the Blaitiere with Bryan Mullarky; the *Nant Blanc Face* of the Verte and the *Gervasutti Couloir* with Smiler Cuthbertson; the *Biancograt*, the *Cassin route* on the Badile and the *North Face* of the Grande Casse with Fritz Sumner.

In 1980 he joined the Climbers' Club and it was from that time I got to know him well, especially after 1985 when he became a highly efficient CC secretary during my presidency and we began to climb together regularly. Later he did a second term as CC secretary and then deservedly became a vice-president and honorary member of that club. As CC secretary Malcolm attended the 'Summit' meetings held in the late 1980s/early 1990s between the CC and the FRCC and worked hard to try and strengthen the links between these major clubs. He joined the FRCC himself in 1989 and attended several joint and other meets over the last decade.

Malcolm's enthusiasm for climbing was always infectious. He climbed most regularly in Snowdonia and his favourite crag was Cloggy where he did over 50 routes. Together we did some magnificent classics in Wales, the Lakes, Scotland and elsewhere. Shared highlights in Wales included *West Buttress Eliminate* and *Lubyanka* and he excelled himself in 1991 when he led Cloggy's *Great Wall*, one of his finest efforts. On his actual 50th birthday in 1996 we did *Memory Lane* on the Cromlech, an apt name for a hard climb which he led in cold and blustery conditions. In the Lakes some of our most enjoyable climbs together included *Saxon*, *Astra*,

the *Central Pillar of Esk and Hiraeth*.

In the late 1990s his own new business allowed him little time for long holidays but he joined me for a week each year, twice in the Dauphiné and twice in the Dolomites where we did some magnificent climbs. Especially memorable were *Aurora Nucleaire*, a brilliant modern rock climb on the North Face of the Pic Sans Nom, *Visite Obligatoire* on the Aiguille Dibona (where he objected, at first, to being overtaken by the world indoor-climbing champion Arnaud Petit but relented when he found out who he was!) and *the Pilastro di Razes* on the Tofana.

In the last years, as keen as ever, Malcolm climbed with many new friends and also renewed his links with the Vagabonds Club. His sudden and tragic death was a terrible blow to his wife Sue and daughter Sally, and was a dreadful shock to all his many friends, old and new, throughout the climbing world. He is greatly missed by all who knew him.

Derek Walker

KATE EGAN

Catherine Egan was born in 1917, the youngest child of farmers, in County Roscommon, Eire. Her father was thrown from a horse and killed when Kate was quite young. Kate came to England to join her elder sister and they worked in St. Anne's Nursing Home, Bowden, Cheshire during the war and later when it became an E.N.T. hospital. Here Ernest Wood-Johnson (FRCC Vice-President 1963-5) was admitted in 1947 for a tonsillectomy: Kate was one of the nurses and thus began her link with the Wood-Johnson family and the Fell and Rock.

Kate was a 'good time girl', fond of partying, and she returned to Ireland annually for the Dublin horse show and a few wild parties. She tried a bit of walking with the Ramblers, but it was her first walk with the Wood-Johnson family which

was a real eye-opener: the walk was leisurely, with time to look at butterflies and plants, as well as fun – not just a rush to the top to say they'd been there! The family always spent Easter at Mr. and Mrs. Grizedale's, Heathwaite Farm, Conis-ton and in the early '50s Kate, now a qualified S.E.N. and theatre nurse, used to join them. Eventually, she was spending so much of her days off from nursing with the Wood-Johnsons that she gave up her hospital room and moved in. In 1952, they all visited Switzerland together (when Kate accompanied them part way up the Mönch) and there were other holidays in Wales, Scotland and Iceland.

When Ernest and Anne Wood-Johnson moved to Arnside in 1959, Kate came too, finding nursing work locally. She became a frequent attendee at Fell and Rock meets, and there were other social activities, like tennis and sailing. She much enjoyed a walk across Morecambe Bay in 1981. After Ernest's death, with Anne incapacitated by a stroke, Kate took over running the house. However, when Anne died, she moved away from the north to be near her sister in Bristol and was living in Devon when she died.

H. Harris

I am deeply indebted to Miss Roonie Wood-Johnson for a delightful memoir of Kate Egan's association with her family, from which the information in this obituary is taken.

A.E. EVENNETT

Tony was born in York and was proud of his Yorkshire origins. The greater part of his life was spent in southern Lakeland from the time he and Gaynor started their married life together.

A day in the hills with Tony would begin with gleeful anticipation followed by infectious enthusiasm as the day progressed. This companionship assured him of many life-long friendships.

I first met Tony on a visit to Zermatt when he was quick to identify a callow youth in need of guidance in big mountains. By then he had already visited many of the summits in the high Alps, including the Matterhorn at the age of 15. In 1957 he was a founder member of the York Mountaineering Club and climbed with them in the Himalaya the following year.

Remote mountains were an attraction. He climbed in the Elbrus and Zagros ranges of Iran in winter. In Africa, he climbed the three highest mountains in the Ruwenzori (The Mountains of the Moon) after a warm-up visit to the summit of Kilimanjaro. This was followed by a trip down the length of the Nile from the Murcheson Falls to the Delta on his homeward journey.

Tony enthused about the places he visited but never boasted of what he achieved. Throughout the middle years of his life he and Gaynor walked extensively in the hills in Britain. Not so long ago he sailed with friends in a yacht to climb Conachair, the highest point on St.Kilda. More recently he and Gaynor have had great pleasure in walking the hills of Majorca, Crete and La Gomera.

To sum up the man and the stoical view of his illness, he said: "I don't care, as long as I can get out onto the hills".

M. V. Mckenzie

JOHN ERNEST GOLDTHORPE

John joined the Fell and Rock in 1989 realising in his retirement, a lifetime's ambition to become a member. He was a conscientious, quiet but humorous club member often turning up to meets and maintenance meets by bicycle, catching the train from his home in Arnside to Seascale and cycling along Wastwater to Brackenclouse, his cycle laden with provisions for the weekend. His great joy was to be out walking in the hills preferably in the winter when there was 'sun on snow'. He was a reliable companion on the fells, navigating with absolute accuracy and pleas

ure, plotting the route with the same meticulous care he'd adopted while on submarines during his war service.

John discovered the Lake District when he was a boy and it remained his first love. There were family holidays to Coniston and throughout his life he never missed an opportunity to explore the Lakeland Fells. In his retirement at Arnside John was an active member and leader of the Arnside Scramblers and later of the Amblers when he was known as Dr. John. In retirement he walked the Dales Way again, the Coast to Coast and round the coast line of the Isle of Man, enjoyed walking in Austria and Switzerland and attended the Glen Dena meets in Wales and the Scottish meets. John's Skyline Project was to climb every peak in the Lake District that he could see from his bedroom window in Arnside. He designed the layout of mountains for the toposcope for the National Trust which is now positioned at the summit of Arnside Knott.

John was a sociologist by profession and author of several successful books on sociology. His last one, "The Sociology of Post Colonial Societies" was completed and published shortly before he was troubled with the onset of Parkinson's Disease.

Whilst he was working in East Africa he was a member of several climbing expeditions to the mountains of the area in the Ruwenzori Range.

He retired to Arnside from Leeds University in the eighties and was a great support to his family. As the darkness closed in during the winter months he loved to serve afternoon tea of rich fruit cake and numerous cups of tea while the large Grandfather clock ticked reassuringly in the corner and there were reminiscences about good mountain days. John Goldthorpe, self-effacing, modest and a lover of Beethoven's Quartets, Brahms and, outrageous games of scrabble died in May 2000 just before his 79th birthday.

Margaret Bromley Webb

MARGARET M. HARRIS

Peggy Harris was born in London in 1914, but her parents came from Northern Ireland and it was through family holidays to relatives in Ulster that she gained the deep love of exploring sea shore and countryside which later led to her enthusiasm for the Lake District.

Peggy Jarnison grew up on a London council estate (where her father was a headmaster) and won a scholarship to Putney High School for Girls, where she came under the influence of an inspiring chemistry teacher, Nancy Irons (later to become Nancy Murray). Chemistry was Peggy's subject: she went to Bedford College, London on a scholarship in 1932 and remained there as research student, lecturer and finally Reader in Organic Chemistry, earning a D.Sc. from the University of London in 1958.

During the war, Bedford College was evacuated to Cambridge and Peggy (a Junior Lecturer) was billeted on the Bicknell family. Peter Bicknell was a notable mountaineer and also researched and wrote about 18th and 19th century prints and paintings of the Lake District. The Bicknells encouraged Peggy to buy herself some boots at Lawries and took her on her first visit to the Lakes, staying at Woodhouse in Buttermere. Another visitor to the Bicknell household was Herbert Harris, also a Lakeland enthusiast, whom Peggy married in 1945.

One New Year's day during this period, Peggy and various of these friends struggled up Rossett Ghyll from Langdale. Arriving at Angle Tarn, Peggy declared that she was boiling hot, stripped off her clothes and plunged into the icy water. The only man brave enough to follow suit was A.B.Hargreaves!

Herbert Harris was Head of English at Harrow School, and from 1945, Peggy managed the dual roles of wife and mother in Harrow and professional scientist in London.

Family holidays were in the Lakes. In 1953, Peggy and Herbert bought some 'derelict outbuildings' at Coniston from Helen Bryan and Evelyn Pine (both Fell and Rock members) who ran a guest house at Gateside. The Harrises worked hard on the 'outbuildings' which developed into Gateside Barn.

Many new friends around Coniston were prominent in the Fell and Rock. John and Eve Appleyard (distant relatives) were within walking distance at Torver; Jack and Audrey Kenyon were close by at Hawes Bank and Ruth Hargreaves was a frequent visitor to Gateside. Peggy and Herbert both joined the Fell and Rock in 1959.

Peggy was a fit though slow and steady walker and both she and Herbert had a very close knowledge of the Lakeland Fells. However, in the same year that she retired (1979), Herbert became a housebound invalid in Harrow and, until his death in 1995, Peggy's visits to Gateside Barn were brief and infrequent. Her spirit, however, never wavered. At the age of 75 she seized the opportunity of a fine Bank Holiday to make a solo ascent of Coniston Old Man: "Everyone I met was so nice to me" she beamed proudly afterwards to the disapproving family.

Happily, for her last seven years, Gateside Barn was her second home once more. She established herself as a familiar figure around Coniston village, which she loved. Many visitors to the Barn enjoyed her warm, witty, hospitable conversation – always with a critical edge from her sharp and lively mind.

George Harris & Hatty Harris

PROFESSOR SIR FRED HOYLE

Fred Hoyle was a household name, not solely for his exceptional contributions to cosmology and astrophysics, but because he had a rare gift for popularizing science, through his science fiction and immensely popular radio talks. As a

Yorkshireman, born in Bingley in 1915, he acquired a love of walking in the open country of the north of England.

Fred went to Bingley Grammar School, from which he achieved a scholarship to Cambridge to read Maths. There he became a Fellow of St. John's College and University Lecturer. During the war, like many other distinguished physicists and mathematicians, he worked on radar. When he returned to cosmology, it was as the leading proponent of the 'steady state' theory of the universe; he nicknamed the opposing theory (with the intent to mock) 'the Big Bang'. His scientific interests were wide ranging and his original views sometimes controversial, but he made significant contributions in many fields, including his work on the origin of different chemical elements through nuclear reactions in stars. In 1958 Hoyle was appointed Plumian Professor of Astronomy at Cambridge. While in this post, he worked to found the Institute of Theoretical Astronomy (now the Institute of Astronomy). He retired early from Cambridge in 1972, but continued to think, write and collaborate in science.

For Lake District walking, Fred was a regular at the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel, often joining Alf Gregory and friends on the fells. A chance meeting with Dick Cook in Scotland established a famous walking partnership. Together he and Dick tackled the Munros (an unusual undertaking in the 1960s) and went for prodigious cross-country walks in the Lakes. At the end of such walks, miles from the start point, Dick's wife would be telephoned and asked to drive to wherever and collect Fred and Dick by car.

In the latter part of his career, Fred bought a house near Ullswater, but he and his family remained firm friends with Sid and Jami Cross of the ODG. Later, the Hoyles moved to Bournemouth, where Fred died in August 2001.

H.Harris

JIM HUDDART

Jim was born in Maughanby, a hamlet near to Penrith. He went to a local school where his father was headmaster, then attended Queen Elizabeth Grammar School in Penrith. A teacher in his school gave him his first introduction to the hills, with Cross Fell being one of his first ascents. During the war years he served in the RAF. His interest in the outdoors saw him walking in the Ochil Hills near to where he was stationed. It was from these hills that he saw a fine conical peak in the distance, Schiehallion, and at his first opportunity hitched to Rannoch to climb it in 1946, his first Munro.

Jim continued his education at Fitzwilliam House, Cambridge University, where he read geography. He joined the C.U.M.C. where he developed his expertise as a rock climber. He climbed with them throughout the U.K. and in the Alps. His most notable alpine achievement was the ascent of the South Face of the Obergabelhorn. During his first visit to Skye in 1949, on a C.U.M.C. meet in the early post war years, he traversed the Cuillin Ridge – an achievement of which he was particularly proud and often talked of. Also in 1949 he went to Norway on a geographical field study course in the Jotunheim when he climbed the Galdhopiggen and the North East Ridge of the Skarstind. Rowing was another interest while at University, where he rowed for the 3rd VIII which won its blades.

Jim started work with the Ordnance Survey then joined the National Coal Board as a Surveyor, largely on open-cast sites where he worked in many regions.

I first met Jim in the early 1950s on a F.R.C.C. meet. He lived locally and we often climbed together. He was Warden of Salving House (1973-75) and Birkness (1975-83). One highlight of each year was going to the Scottish Meet along with Gordon Sayer. We began with the Scourie Meet in 1972

and soon got to know and respect the then 'old timers', who sometimes out-paced us. Many Munros were climbed during this period and Jim, as well as myself got bitten by the Munro 'bug'. In the following years we went north at every opportunity, often staying with David Coupe in his caravan. Jim's spirit of adventure continued with treks to Peru in 1981 and Annapurna in 1983. Jim became a complete Munroist when he climbed Cruach Ardrain in 1991, followed by a celebratory evening in Crianlarich. He also got great pleasure from our annual trips to the Highlands and to Birkness Coach House with long-standing friends. He set about the task of visiting every Tarn in the Lake District and also the ascent of the 2000 foot plus peaks in England and Wales. His other interests were bridge and golf – common to both he and his wife. Crossword solving took up some of his leisure time, an interest in which he was particularly proficient.

Jim suffered a stroke in mid-January 2001, from which he subsequently died on 16th February 2001, aged 74 years. He enjoyed an active and happy life during which he made many long lasting friends.

Our sympathies go out to his loving wife Peggy, his son David, his brother Don and brother-in-law Billy.

Eric Ivison

FRANK KIERNAN

Frank Kiernan of Bowness in Windermere, who died in November 2000 at the age of 95 had a lifetime of activity in the Lakeland fells, but is better remembered for his association with the Rucksack Club than the Fell and Rock. He joined the R.C. in 1926 and later became one of only seven Honorary Members. He served on the R.C. committee for 14 years and was President for 1968-69. Both clubs remember him as a strenuous walker and mountaineer, rather than a climber.

A gentle and delightful man, Frank was also a member of the Lakeland Horticultural Society and was often to be found at Holebird Gardens helping in an unskilled capacity (as he put it) or escorting visitors around the gardens.

Fell and Rock friends included Lyna Pickering, whom he used to take out in later years, and Harry and Ruth Spilsbury, who were neighbours.

H. Harris

(With thanks to B. Cosby, W. and J. Kendrick and others for information.)

FRANCES KIRBY-PARKINSON (née Leighton)

Frances died on Easter Sunday, 31 March 2002, after a long illness. She was the youngest of the four daughters of Darwin Leighton (FRCC 1907-43; Secretary 1912-20; President 1921-23) and Elizabeth E. Leighton of Kendal. Throughout childhood Frances enjoyed the countryside and especially the Lakeland Fells, as well as meeting Fell and Rock friends and their families, who frequently visited the Leightons' Kendal home. In 1937-9 she was many times in Langdale, Buttermere and at Thornythwaite Farm, Borrowdale with her sister Mary (Cockerton née Leighton; FRCC Secretary 1940-44) and other Fell and Rock friends. She joined the club in 1940. In the same year she married William Jackson of Oakenclough, where she loved the countryside and its flora, fauna and birds together with the company of her young stepson, David. William died in 1969.

In 1975 Frances married Harry Kirby-Parkinson of Heversham and although frail, loved to wander the countryside. On holidays she would enjoy birdwatching while Harry took photographs. She was also now living near her sisters Betty (Cain) and Jean. Although unable to attend Fell and Rock meets, she took a great interest in all that was going on,

occasionally meeting old friends.

She leaves her husband Harry and her beloved David Jackson, Sue and their family.

Betty Cain

J. PETER LEDEBOER

Peter Ledebøer was a man who was very reticent about himself in a way that somehow forbade intrusion, yet he had a wide influence in the climbing world. His father was not unknown as a climber and there were family holidays in his childhood in the Alps and the Lake District.

He went from St. Laurence School, Felixstowe, to Causis College, Cambridge, where he took a degree in Modern Languages. His graduation coincided with the outbreak of World War II. He was commissioned into the Hertfordshire Regiment, and then joined Intelligence, where he served until the war's end. Thereafter, his career lay with Unilever's market research department.

Many of his fellow members of the FRCC have remarked on the ever-present cigarette, his 'clubability' and his charm, which hid a core of steel. At a time when the reputation of the London Section did not stand high in the opinion of some senior members of the main club, he worked hard to better it. In particular he strove, with some success, to induce the walking folk of the Section to join the main club. He thus laid one of the foundations of the Club's happier acceptance of new members from the south.

Peter was a capable and charming organizer who had a wide influence, used to good purpose, within the A.B.M.S.A.C. He was also a member of the Alpine Club and its secretary from 1971-73. Successively Vice President and President of the A.B.M.S.A.C., he attended its meet in 1999 at Saas Grund, when his health was plainly failing, but he bravely reached the Britannia Hut.

It was the FRCC's good fortune that Cumbrian mountains drew him early to their sport. He was secretary and twice chairman of the London Section and regularly came to meets in the Lakes, Scotland and Switzerland. A happily entertaining man too, who enjoyed the influential side of administration. Though not a man of great climbing prowess, he was rare in the fusion of his attributes so that he could further the prospects of this country's international scope. At a time when travel horizons were widening, the man and the moment came together most opportunely.

Ruth Gelber.

ROBERT HEYWOOD SEVILLE

I met Bob Seville in the mid-1970s at a maintenance meet when he was attending as a prospective member. He had climbed for many years but did not join the club until over the age of fifty, despite living near Lancaster. His main pre-occupations were always his family and medicine. On first impression he was a quiet spoken man – a natural gentleman. Closer acquaintance revealed a very lively mind and sharp intelligence, and eventually an awareness of his status as a top dermatologist.

My first memorable climbing trip with Bob was to the Muir of Inverey hut with the Falkingham February group. He was a self-contained hill companion who was very determined once the day had started – and there were always his curries and real ale supply for the evenings. The team went to the Milehouse continually for several years, and he was also a regular attendee on summer Scottish meets.

Bob married Hazel shortly before he retired, and retained his combined interest in medicine and the hills for the next twenty years. He died from leukemia after a short illness – notable as he was a total non-smoker.

John Coates

ARTHUR LAWRENCE THWAITES

Arthur was born in Penrith in 1915 but lived most of his life in Lancaster. He was a member of the Fell and Rock for almost 35 years, including a period as Assistant Warden of Beetham Cottage from 1968-1979.

During the war, Arthur served in the RAF, partly based in Belgium and Holland, but mostly in Millom, where he helped to establish the RAF Mountain Rescue Service.

Arthur had many enthusiasms in his life besides the fells, one of which was canoeing and for some time he was a P.G.L. instructor in canoeing, mainly in France. In addition, he was a keen squash player, reluctantly giving up the game at the age of 75. For most of his life, after his time in the RAF, he was an active radio ham, which he kept up until near the end of his life. He was also a skilled craftsman in wood.

As a walking and cycling companion, Arthur was most entertaining, with much humour always in evidence and practical help available when needed.

He and his wife Esther lived in Lancaster all their married life and made very many people welcome in their home.

Margaret Roberts

JOHN R. WHELAN

John Whelan was born in 1943. He climbed a little as a young man, but took up the sport with great enthusiasm at the age of about 40, covering most routes in Snowdonia and the Lake District within his capabilities. However, in the late 1980's, his interests turned to skiing, which became his major sport and he became an instructor at the Rossendale Ski Slope.

In 1983, John joined the Preston Mountaineering Club, with which he went on trips to Scotland and on hill walks. In 1985, he joined the Fell and Rock and was very proud of his membership.

Some years after his climbing days were 'over', he invited a friend out to Langdale for a days walking and climbing: he was training for Mt. Blanc and carried a rucksack full of rocks! His attempt on Mt. Blanc was successful – his first ever Alpine climbing trip.

John died of a brain haemorage at the age of 58.

H. Harris

(I am grateful to John Whelan's climbing partner, Roger Henshaw of the Preston Mountaineering Club, for the information in this obituary.)

LEGACIES AND GIFTS

The Club gratefully and graciously acknowledges the legacy of £1,000 from Francis Kiernan, (see In Memoriam, FRCC Journal 2002).

The Club has previously acknowledged a gift from Mollie Hyde-Parker, (see In Memoriam, FRCC Journal 2000). Our Treasurer, John Barrett, has provided the following note on the Hyde-Parker, Campbell-Bruce legacy.

During July 2000 the Fell and Rock Climbing Club inherited the sum of £216,693 from the estate of the late Miss Yvonne Campbell-Bruce, who died on 18th April 1999. Her married name was Mrs Yvonne Duke. It is understood that she reverted to her maiden name in fairly recent years, although having been divorced many years before. There is no record of her having ever been a member of the Fell and Rock. The link to the Club comes through her long and close friendship with Miss Mollie Hyde-Parker a member of the Club since the 1930's.

Miss Hyde-Parker died in Suffolk on 14th September 1998. Much of her estate passed to Yvonne Campbell-Bruce with the understanding that in the event of her death the Fell



Yvonne Campbell-Bruce (left) and Mollie Hyde-Parker at Birkness in 1996

Photo: John Barrett

and Rock Climbing Club would be a beneficiary. In her Will, Miss Campbell-Bruce states that she has given 'to The Fell and Rock Climbing Club of Great Britain based in Keswick for use in future projects, in the knowledge that this would be the wish of my great friend Mollie Hyde-Parker who was a devoted member of the Club'.

To date the legacy has bought and furnished Karn House in Aviemore; enabled the upgrading and extension of Waters Cottage; built an archive store at Raw Head and is providing new windows and repair work at Brackenclose. No doubt it will fund other 'future projects'.

John finished his note with a hope that Mollie Hyde-Parker and Yvonne Campbell-Bruce would have approved, and without doubt his hope is echoed by all the Club.

OFFICERS OF THE CLUB 2000 - 2001

President	Alan Rowland	
Vice-Presidents	Brian Griffiths George Watkins Stephen Porteus	
Secretary	Jane Sanderson	
Treasurer	John Barrett	
Membership Secretary	Pam Pulford	
Joint Journal Editors	Doug Elliott John Holden	
Guidebooks Secretary	Ron Kenyon	
Guidebooks Editor	Stephen Reid	
Librarian	Peter Osborne	
Assistant Librarian	Harry Robinson	
Archivist	Iain Whitney	
Oral Archivist	Jill Aldersley	
Dinner Secretary	Reg Atkins	
Meets Secretary	Adrian Wiszniewski	
Chronicler	Nick Easton	
Huts. Secretary	Ken Jackson	
Hut Wardens:		
<i>Beetham</i>	Richard Collier	
<i>Birkness</i>	Tony Simpkins	
<i>Brackenclouse</i>	Mark Scott	
<i>Raw Head</i>	John Leigh	
<i>Salving House</i>	Roy Buffey	
<i>Waters Cottage</i>	Barry Chislett	
Elective Members:		
Mike Carter	Dave Dowson	Dave Killiek
Hilary Robertson	Phil Tomaszewski	Mark Vallance
Stan Vickers	Chris Webb	Andy Carlin
Andrew Duxbury	Fiona De Courcy	John Hartley

MEETS LIST 2001

	29 Dec/2 Jan	Waters Cottage	Jane Sanderson
	5/6 January	Beetham Cottage	Nick Easton
	12/13 January	Raw Head (Alpine Planning)	Dave Killick
	19/20 January	Birkness (Prosp. Members)	Malcolm Barton
	26/27 January	Brackenclose	Brenda Fullard
	2/3 February	Salving House	Karl Nelson
W	4/8 February	Waters Cottage	Dave Penlington
	9/10 February	Waters Cottage	Brian Griffiths
C	16/17 February	Raw Head - Committee	Phil Tomaszewski
	23/24 February	Ceilidh (Borrowdale Institute)	The President
	2/3 March	Beetham Cottage	Roberta Cameron
	9/10 March	Waters Cottage	Inken Blank
F	9/10 March	Salving house	Anne & Ken Daykin
	16/17 March	Birkness	Sasha Baggaley
	11/15 March	C.L.C Hut	Iain Smith
	23/24 March	Raw Head	Richard Hogan
	30/31 March	Brackenclose	John Finlay
W	1/5 April	High Moss (Duddon Valley)	Pauline Sweet
	6/7 April	Birkness	Howard Rushton
M	6/7 April	Beetham Cottage	Richard Collier
	6/20 April	France (Camping)	Mr & Mrs Dobson
	12/16 April	Brackenclose (Easter)	Karl Nelson
	20/21 April	Salving House	Joe Killick
	27/28 April	Beetham Cottage	Elen Rees
W	29 April/3 May	Salving House	Angela Soper
	4/7 May	Raw Head (Joint C.C)	Vic Odell
C	11/12 May	Birkness	Stan Vickers
	12/19 May	Brander Lodge Hotel, Taysmilt	A Hall / Farrington
W	13/17 May	Raw Head	Bill & Margery Smith
	18/19 May	Waters Cottage	R Mann & M Griffiths
	20/24 May	Knoydart (White House)	R Atkins & S Croft
	25 May/1 June	Scottish Camp (Blair Atholl)	John & Marion Smith
F	25/31 May	Birkness (Family Meet)	Niel McAllister
	1/2 June	Beetham Cottage	Dave Fletcher
W	3/7 June	Glan Dena	Bill & Lesley Comstive
M	8/9 June	Birkness	Tony Simpkins
D	8/10 June	Beddgelert (London Sec)	Stewart Fisher
	10/16 June	Glen Brittle, Skye	Janet & John Burrows
	15/16 June	Raw Head (Prosp. Members)	Sue Leyland
W	17/21 June	Birkness	Stewart Grant

	22/23 June	Salving House	Brian Davison
F	22/23 June	Raw Head (Family Meet)	Peter & Karen Jessup
	29/30 June	Brackenclose	Deb & Dave Long
D	6/7 July	The Yewdale Hotel, Coriston	The Vice Presidents
	13/14 July	Raw Head (BMC Youth Meet)	Ron Kenyon
	13/14 July	High Moss (Joint Rucksac)	Inken Blunk
	13/14 July	Glan Dena (Joint MAM)	Dave Pierce
	July / Aug	Alpine Meet	Dave Killick
F	27 July/2 Aug	Waters Cottage (Family Meet)	TBA
	3/4 August	Birkness	Roy and Norma Precious
	10/11 August	Beetham Cottage	Andrew Liddle
	17/18 August	Raw Head	Norman Haighton
	24/27 August	Wales (Camping) Joint CC	Stuart Telford
	24/27 August	Wicklow	Paddy Feely
F	24/26 August	Brackenlose (Family Meet)	Wendy & Mark Stirrup
W	26/30 August	Beetham Cottage	Ron and Chris Lyon
C	31 Aug/1 Sept	Raw Head	Dave Dowson
	7/8 September	Salving House	Simon Jefferies
M	14/15 Sept	Raw Head	John Leigh
M	21/22 Sept	Waters Cottage	Barry Chislett
W	16/20 Sept	Brackenlose	Graham Lauder
	21/22 Sept	Salving House (Joint K.C.)	Bob Anderson
D	21/23 Sept	Brackenlose (London Section)	Tony & Liz Hutchinson
	21/22 Sept	Wales (Black Mountains)	Kate Henry
	28/29 Sept	Beetham Cottage	Pam Pulford
M	5/6 October	Brackenlose	Mark Scott
	5/6 October	Waters Cottage	Richard & Barbara McHardy
M	12/13 October	Salving House	Roy Buffey
F	19/25 October	Beetham Cottage (Fam. Meet)	Matt Ellis
D	2/3 November	Shap Wells (A.G.M.)	The President
	9/10 November	Brackenlose	Reg Atkins
	16/17 Nov	Raw Head	Chris Scola
C	23/24 Nov	Salving House	Mike Carter
	7/8 Dec	Birkness	Ian Dixon
	14/15 Dec	Beetham Cottage	Anne Collier
	28 Dec/2 Jan	Waters Cottage	TBA

C - Committee Meeting.

D - Dinner

F - Family Meet.

M - Maintenance Meet.

W - Mid Week Meet

OFFICERS OF THE CLUB 2001 - 2002

President	Alan Rowland	
Vice-Presidents	Brian Griffiths George Watkins Val Young	
Secretary	Jane Sanderson	
Treasurer	John Barrett	
Membership Secretary	Pam Pulford	
Joint Journal Editors	Doug Elliott John Holden	
Guidebooks Editor	Ron Kenyon	
Guidebooks Secretary	Stephen Reid	
Librarian	Peter Osborne	
Assistant Librarian	Harry Robinson	
Archivist	Iain Whitmey	
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Huts. Secretary	Ken Jackson	
Hut Wardens:		
<i>Beetham</i>	Richard Collier	
<i>Birkness</i>	Tony Simpkins	
<i>Brackenclouse</i>	Mark Scott	
<i>Raw Head</i>	John Leigh	
<i>Salving House</i>	Roy Buffey	
<i>Waters Cottage</i>	Steve Field	
<i>Karn House</i>	Meg Griffiths	
Elective Members:		
Mike Carter	Dave Dowson	Dave Killick
Hilary Robertson	Phil Tomaszewski	Mark Vallance
Stan Vickers	Chris Webb	Robin Costello
Geoff Cram	John Moore	Bill Smith

MEETS LIST 2002

	4/5 January	Beetham Cottage	Peter Hay
	11/12 January	Raw Head (Alpine Planning)	Cath Telford
	18/19 January	Birkness (Prosp. Members)	Pete Sibley
	25/26 January	Brackenclouse	Helen Killick
W	3/7 February	Waters Cottage	Dave Penlington
	8/9 February	Waters Cottage	Barry Chislett
C	22/23 February	Raw Head -Committee	Dave Killick
	1/2 March	Beetham Cottage	Pete Sibley
	8/9 March	Waters Cottage	Richard Mann & Meg Griffiths
F	8/9 March	Salving house	Peter & Karen Jessup
	15/16 March	Ceilidh (Borrowdale Institute)	The President
	5/7 March	C.I.C Hut	Iain Smith
	22/23 March	Raw Head	Roger Briggs
	29/30 March	Brackenclouse (Easter)	TBA
	23 Mar / 6 April	France (Camping)	Keith Wright & Andy Carlin
	23 Mar / 6 April	Wadi Rum - Jordan	Sandy Sanderson
W	14 / 18 April	High Moss (Duddon Valley)	TBA
	5/6 April	Birkness	Chris & Ron Lyon
M	5/6 April	Beetham Cottage	Richard Collier
	19/20 April	Salving House	Steve Downing
	26/27 April	Beetham Cottage	Ellen Rees
W	28 April/2 May	Salving House	John & Barbara Hitch
	3/6 May	Ynes Etws (Joint C.C)	Vic Odell
	3/8 May	Galloway	John & Janet Burrows
C	10/11 May	Birkness	Norman Houghton
	11/18 May	Brander Lodge Hotel Taynait	Bill and Lesley Comstive
W	12/16 May	Raw Head	Bill & Margery Smith
	17/18 May	Waters Cottage	Chris Eilbeck
	26/30 May	Knoydart (White House)	Brian Griffiths
	31 May / 6 June	Scottish Camping Glen Shiel	Paddy & Janet O'Niell
	31 May / 3 June	Birkness 50th Anniversary	Peter Moffat
F	31 May / 6 June	Brackenclouse (Family Meet)	Anne & Ken Daykin
	7 / 8 June	Beetham Cottage (Skills Workshop)	Mary Twomey
M	14/15 June	Birkness	Tony Simpkins
D	11/13 June	Austwick (London Sec)	Paul Roberts
	15/21 June	Glen Brittle, Skye	John Robinson
	14/15 June	Raw Head (Prosp. Members)	Sue Leyland
W	16/20 June	Birkness	Angela Soper
	21/22 June	Salving House	Colin & Pam Foord
F	21/22 June	Raw Head (Family Meet)	Anne & Ken Daykin
	28/29 June	Brackenclouse	Ian & Trish Gill
D	5/6 July	The Yewdale Hotel, Coniston	The Vice Presidents

	12/13 July	Raw Head (BMC Youth Meet)	Ron Kenyon
	12/13 July	Salving house (Joint MAM)	D Pierce & Hilary Robertson
	July / Aug	Alpine Meet	TBA
F	26 July/1 Aug	Waters Cottage (Family Meet)	TBA
	2/3 August	Birkness	Ray and Brenda Evans
	2/3 August	Brackenlose (Coleridge Bicentennial)	Richard Harter
	9/10 August	Beetham Cottage	Nick & Veronica Millward
	16/17 August	Raw Head	Brian Middleton
	23/25 August	Wales (Camping)	TBA
	23/25 August	Brackenlose (Joint C.C.)	Neil McAllister
F	23/25 August	Birkness (Family Meet)	Arthur & Malcolm Groult
W	25/29 August	Beetham Cottage	Brenda & Iain Whimsey
C	30/31 August	Raw Head	Judy Wood & Peter Scott
	6/7 September	High Moss (Joint Rucksack Club)	Inken Blank
	6/7 September	Salving House	Peter Johnston
M	13/14 September	Raw Head	John Leigh
	13/14 September	Punch Bowl Hotel Swaledale	Richard Morgan
W	15/19 September	Brackenlose	Grahaeme Lauder
	20/21 September	Wales (Black Mountains)	Kate Henry
	20/21 September	Ty Powder (Joint K.C.)	Mark Garrod
D	20/21 September	Birkness (London Section)	Graham Daniels
M	27/28 September	Waters Cottage	Steve Field
	27/28 September	Beetham Cottage	Gordon Orr
M	4/5 October	Brackenlose	Mark Scott
	4/5 October	Waters Cottage	Simon Brill
M	11/12 October	Salving House	Roy Buley
F	18/24 October	Beetham Cottage	TBA
D	1/2 November	Shap Wells (A.G.M.)	The President
	8/9 November	Brackenlose	Iain Gallagher
	15/16 November	Raw Head	Jenni Mitchell & Terry Fletcher
C	29/30 November	Salving House	Dave Dowson
	6/7 December	Birkness	John Ratcliff
	13/14 December	Beetham Cottage	Barbara Duxbury

C = Committee Meeting.

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