



John Robinson, President 2008-2010, contemplating FRCC business on *Left Edge* (HVS), Rivelin (*Gil Male*)

THE FELL AND ROCK JOURNAL



Edited by
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This Journal is dedicated to the memory of Peter Hodgkiss

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Editors' Note

This is the first journal in many years that has not had the benefit of the deft touch of Peter Hodgkiss, our publisher and guide, who passed away earlier this year. Although not a member of this club, his contribution to our endeavours was considerable and will be greatly missed. A flavour of his contribution can be gleaned from Steve Goodwin's obituary in the *Independent*:

'...Hodgkiss's presence in the background of British climbing went way beyond the output of The Ernest Press. Ask about him in the senior clubs – the Alpine Club, Scottish Mountaineering Club, Climbers' Club, and Fell & Rock Climbing Club – and many will know the name without knowing precisely what this modest man did. "I think he helped with the guidebooks," would be a likely reply. ... But to say Hodgkiss 'helped' would be to understate his role. For decades he provided the link between club guidebook editors (often amateur volunteers) and printing firms; advising editors on what was practical in terms of format, paper quality, reproduction of diagrams and photos and so forth, meanwhile negotiating an acceptable price with printers, usually these days in the Far East...'

Secondly, the winter of 2009-10 is a major feature throughout the journal because of its best-in-a-generation conditions (or perhaps not, we live in hope). The Lake District Winter Climbs guidebook has only recently been published, and since who knows when it will be updated, we've made this Journal the only place in which all the reported winter routes from the amazing winter are collated in print. There are a lot, and we ran well short of space so there is a distinct paucity of photos amongst the new climbs section. Apologies for that.

Thirdly, in this Journal we are attempting to link the various media available to the FRCC in order to increase discussion and provision of information. The article on the journey to becoming an Industrial Provident and Mutual Society refers to documents that have been made available on the website. An article that looks to the future of the Club, its direction, strategy and responsibilities, poses questions that are hopefully going to be discussed by you, the reader, in the Members' Forum on the FRCC website. That's www.frcc.co.uk for those who have obstinately avoided it so far.

Susan Jensen

Andrew Paul



Harry Place Farm, Langdale. 28 December, 2009 (*Tony Simpkins*)

Early Drawings of Crag and Fell

Robin Campbell

The art of mountain drawing has featured occasionally in Club Journals. There have been a handful of articles in the *Alpine Journal*, two in the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal*, one in the *Climbers' Club Journal*, but nothing in this *Journal*. Certainly William Heaton Cooper contributed two autobiographical pieces, but there have been no articles treating Lake District art in a general way. We should not forget that long before the climbers the mountains and crags were visited, described and celebrated by poets and artists. This process began in the middle of the 18th century and perhaps reached its culmination in the many drawing-room-table illustrated guides of the early 19th, such as William Westall's four-part *Views of the Lakes of Cumberland and Westmorland* and William Green's two-volume *Tourist's New Guide*, both published in 1819. Wordsworth's own pocket-sized *Description of the Scenery of the Lakes* appeared a year later. We had then to wait 50 years for the first recreational climbers to appear, and 75 years for the first climbers' guidebook – Haskett-Smith's pocket guide, charmingly illustrated by Ellis Carr.

I will attempt a survey here of noteworthy artists who made a particular effort to depict mountains and crags faithfully, rather than those who were content to fill the background of the popular tourist views around Ullswater, Derwentwater, Grasmere, Windermere and Elterwater with unrecognizable pinnacles and precipices, and I will limit my review to artists born before 1850, in pursuit of brevity, and because I am less comfortable in evaluating 20th century work. Most of these travelling artists worked in watercolour: annotated sketchbook pages could be worked up to finished coloured drawings at home, and the medium of watercolour lends itself particularly to the recording of aerial perspective, since layers of watercolour combine additively, making it comparatively easy to achieve the tonal gradients from the front to the back of the scene which produce this important effect. A good watercolour landscape is a magical object: it adds beauty of line and of colouring to the beauty of the scene, and personalizes it with – as John Ruskin put it – the hand, eye and heart of the man who made it.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ARTISTS: Farington, Towne, Abbott, Smith, Sunderland

JOSEPH FARINGTON (1747-1821) was born in Leigh in Lancashire. After a period of training in London, he returned north with the project of illustrating Thomas Gray's *Journal* of his Lakes tour in 1769. This project failed, but Farington remained in the District until 1781, and many of his drawings were successfully published by engraving houses. However, the engravings after Farington seem coarse and exaggerated when compared to his watercolours, which are typically neatly drawn and delicately coloured. In the drawing shown below, the recording of the scene is perfectly faithful to the terrain, the receding tones graded beautifully and the colours subdued and harmonious. It is typical of Farington's most effective watercolour work. Unfortunately, his work is scarce – which is surprising given his habit of sketching practically every day – and comes to the market only rarely.



Joseph Farington. Watercolour; 38.4 x 64.9cm. Inscribed verso 'General view of Keswick, Latrigg, Saddleback, part of Skiddaw &c(?) from Crow Park. Octr. 17th. 1778'. Courtesy of The Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, Cumbria.

JOHN 'WARWICK' SMITH (1749-1831), clearly in want of a distinctive name, was given the place of his birth (Irthington in Cumbria) or more usually the title of his patron the Earl of Warwick as middle name. After his apprentice years, he was sent to Italy by Lord Warwick, and between his return in 1781 and 1786 when he began a series of annual tours to North Wales he made several visits to his native hills. Smith's work varies in quality. He undertook huge commissions, such as over 100 drawings for the Curwens of Workington Hall, and even more for the Duke of Atholl. Naturally, quality suffered under such a press of work. However, he was capable of very fine work under more favourable circumstances, and the drawings from his Welsh tours, done on a small scale, are charming things, characterized by cheerful colouring and a vigorous line. Drawings from his early Lakes visits are hard to come by, but those that turn up are usually excellent, too. The drawing shown below is perhaps Smith at his best. Despite the inscribed title, this is evidently Eagle Crag from Stonethwaite in Borrowdale, not Satterthwaite. Although is undated, the free lines and spontaneous approach suggest that it is an early work.



John 'Warwick' Smith. Eagle Crag from Stonethwaite. Pen, pencil and grey wash. 21 x 40cm. Inscribed verso: 'Eagle cragg and satertwhaite'. Courtesy of The Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, Cumbria.

FRANCIS TOWNE (1739-1816) completed his training in London and left for Exeter in 1763, where he settled as a drawing-master. He made tours of Wales in 1777, and Italy in 1780-81, returning via the Alps with 'Warwick' Smith for company. In August 1786 he toured the Lakes, making the customary traverse from Windermere through Thirlmere to Keswick and Borrowdale with extensions to Coniston, lower Langdale, and Buttermere. Although he climbed no mountains, for several drawings he sought a high position on the fellside. Towne's method of working was unusual in almost every respect. He used pen outlining for landscape features, even for clouds and moving water, with a crinkled or hooped line for foliage. He drew sharp shadow lines, and shafts of sunlight. He laid down pure clear colour washes with limited use of underlayers. Often working with a small sketchbook, he assembled some drawings over several pages and combined the pages in his studio. Most surviving works bear on the reverse the words 'Drawn on the spot' – a point Towne apparently insisted upon. There is a reasonable case for regarding these 50 or so drawings as Towne's best work, even though they are not valued as highly in the market as his Italian drawings. In a less gifted hand, Towne's method would



Francis Towne. Watercolour, pen and ink; 15.6 x 23.5cm. Inscribed verso 'Taken at the going off of a storm/ No 8/ Rydal Water with Mr Jones's and Sir Michael Fleming/ Drawn by Francis Towne/ 1786/ London/Leicester Square/ 1790'. Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

produce caricatures of landscape, but so assured is his use of line and colour that the beauty of the drawings smother any misgivings about abstraction, or lack of naturalness. This is not to say that he misrepresented mountains or crags: everything is in the right place, and has the right shape, albeit with some exaggeration of steepness.

Towne's drawings from this tour are well-known, and many appear in Timothy Wilcox's excellent catalogue for the Tate Gallery exhibition of 1997. The Bridgeman Art Library carries images of several others. The small drawing shown here is taken from high ground east of Rydal looking west over Loughrigg Fell, with the Pikes and Pavey Ark catching the eye beyond.

JOHN WHITE ABBOTT (1763-1851) was an Exeter apothecary who trained with Towne, absorbed his method, and made excellent use of it. His earliest, and perhaps best drawings, were made during an extensive tour in 1791, in which he visited both Scotland and the Lakes. These drawings lack the richness of colouring found in Towne's, but his cool blues and grey-greens are just as effective. His treatment of standing water is slightly different too, and possibly more careful than Towne's. Although his numbering system suggests that his 1791 tour



John White Abbott. Pen, grey ink and watercolour; 190 x 295mm. Inscribed verso 'Helm Crag on Grasmere Lake July 12 1791'. Courtesy of The Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, Cumbria.

produced upwards of 70 drawings, his Lake District drawings appear only very rarely for sale. The drawing shown on the previous page is perhaps not his best, but is included here because it is a mountain portrait, and shows his skill in drawing standing water. Notice that it is drawn on four pieces of sketchbook paper.

THOMAS SUNDERLAND (1744-1828) lived near Kirkby Lonsdale and then at Ulverston after 1782. He was a self-taught artist, and sketched in the Lakes throughout his life. He did not often date his drawings, nor did he appear to change his method, which is a typical 18th century technique, involving pen or pencil work and washes in low tones of grey and blue, with occasional use of faint browns or yellows, and strong and skilful use of tonal grading. His output of drawings was considerable, and his Lake District work can easily be found at auction, and for a reasonable price. The drawing below sits in an old mount lettered 'Wastwater' and has always been catalogued as such. However, Wastwater and Great Gable cannot be made to fit this picture. Wastwater is much too narrow, and from anywhere on the lake much of Great Gable is hidden by Lingmell, and of course while the overall



Thomas Sunderland. Great End from Styhead Tarn. Blue and grey wash, with pen and brown ink over graphite; 32.7 x 44.9 cm. Lettering on mount 'Wastwater Cumberland'. © Trustees of the British Museum.

shape is a reasonable match, the crags and their positioning on the mountain is wrong.

I believe that this is not a drawing of Wastwater at all, not even a bad one. Instead, it seems to me to be a very well-drawn view of Great End from Sty Head Tarn. The summit crags and lower bluffs exactly correspond with that aspect of Great End.

NINETEENTH CENTURY ARTISTS: Cristall, De Wint, Lear, Ruskin, Newcome

JOSHUA CRISTALL (1768-1847) after training in London toured North Wales in 1802 and 1803, the Lake District in 1805, and Scotland in 1818. Collections of sketches from the Northern tours may be found in the British Museum and the Tate Gallery. I have discussed his



Joshua Cristall. Borrowdale. Watercolour; 11.2 x 17.2cm. Courtesy of The Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, Cumbria.

minutely-accurate drawing of Castle Rock of Triermain elsewhere (*Loose Scree* Sep. 2004, 21, 19-22). In general, his mountain drawings in pen or pencil eschew exaggeration, and record mountain features with verve and accuracy. His watercolour work is also remarkable for an

adventurous use of colour, using warm pink and purple washes alongside the usual cool blues and greys. These are rare, and the smaller sketchier drawings are usually more attractive than his larger finished works. The example shown here was donated to the Wordsworth Museum by the late Charles Warren.

PETER DE WINT (1784-1849) trained in London under the portrait painter John Raphael Smith. However, his interest quickly turned to landscape painting. He soon became a successful exhibitor, and attracted the attention of wealthy patrons and pupils. Although the bulk of his work records the detail of lowland rural life – harvesting, cattle, villages, churches, etc., he frequently visited his Lake District patrons at Levens and Lowther to sketch. His Lakeland output is considerable: he exhibited 60 drawings at the Old Water-Colour Society, beginning in 1821 and with most work shown in the early 30s. Unfortunately, his mountain drawings are rather poorly represented in museums.

De Wint's work with pencil or pen is strong and full of character but conventional. However, his watercolour work broke new ground. He drew with the brush, largely avoiding preliminary pencilling, and worked with broad washes of pure colour where possible. He developed unusual brush techniques to achieve his effects, such as dragging a dryish brush across the paper so as to leave small sparkling areas of white showing through. He also used a limited and restrained palette. These characteristics make his work very idiosyncratic, so much so that he never signed his drawings. Unfortunately, he very seldom dated them either. These factors make buying De Wint a hazardous exercise, since only known history of ownership can guarantee authenticity. However, it also opens up the possibility of acquiring a genuine De Wint for a low price to the buyer with a cultivated eye. The beautiful example shown opposite demonstrates De Wint's mastery of pure watercolour drawing. The scene depicted is not known, but Peter Bicknell identified it as a view of the mountains around the head of Ullswater. Perhaps one can make out St Sunday Crag on the left, and Catstycam peeping over the shoulder of Birkhouse Moor. It would be interesting to know what readers make of it.



Peter De Wint. *A View in the Lake District*. Watercolour. 29.2 x 45.5cm.
© The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

EDWARD LEAR (1812-1888), though largely known for his nonsense verse, was a draughtsman and watercolour artist of the first rank. He trained as a zoological artist, then embarked on a series of tours in 1831, sketching as he went, that took him half round the world, settling eventually in Cannes, and finally in San Remo. According to Huon Mallalieu, on his death over 10,000 drawings were found in his home, all neatly annotated with date and topic. Lear toured the Lakes in September and October of 1836, producing a wonderful series of lively drawings on greyish papers, using (mostly) only forms of graphite – see Charles Nugent's *Edward Lear: Tours of Ireland and the English Lakes, 1835 & 1836* (The Wordsworth Trust, 2009). The drawings are in Lear's typical sketching style, with long flowing lines recalling Towne, details of rocks and trees added rapidly but deftly with blunter instruments, and detailed annotation of time, place and colour notes. The weather was described by Lear as 'miserable' but he visited all the usual areas, and also went into Wasdale and Ennerdale. He crossed Stake and Styhead Passes, and from Wasdale climbed to Hollow Stones on Scafell where he made a sketch of the crags of Scafell Pike – possibly



Edward Lear. Pencil and stump heightened with white, on blue-grey paper; 17.3 x 26cm. Inscribed lower right 'T' Pillar, Ennerdale / 29 Sept 1836'.
 Courtesy of The Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, Cumbria.

the first close-quarter drawing of a high crag. In October, he walked part of the way up Helvellyn and drew Striding Edge. According to Nugent (pp. 81-2) the drawings, perhaps 130 to 140 in total, were given by Lear to his friend William Nevill, and many of these have passed by descent into the marketplace.

Lear was certainly the most adventurous of the artists reviewed here, and it is doubtful whether his sketched record of the Lakes, bad weather or not, was surpassed until the heroic efforts of Alfred Wainwright. The drawing of Pillar and its Rock shown here was, like the Crystall watercolour, donated to the Wordsworth Trust by Charles Warren.

JOHN RUSKIN (1819-1900) was taught to draw by A.V. Copley Fielding and James Duffield Harding. By his mid-teens he was already a magnificent draughtsman, and used watercolour with great skill. Like Lear, Ruskin was better known in his lifetime for his voluminous written works. He deprecated his own drawing, but posterity has raised Ruskin's status as an artist to the highest level, and his prices! His drawing style is very like Lear's and he had the same indefatigable habit of drawing every day. Although he ended his life in the Lakes at Brant-

wood, most of his mountain drawings were made in the Alps. In his youth, he visited the Lakes briefly, and made some very fine drawings.



John Ruskin. Graphite, heightened with white, on blue paper; 25.5 x 36.2cm. Inscribed lower left 'The Castle Rock. St Johns Vale. Aug. 16th. 38.', and lower right 'JRuskin. Signed 6th January. 1880.' © Trustees of the British Museum

The Ruskin Library has a stunning watercolour of Castle Rock formerly given a date of 1835, when Ruskin was 16. However, it is clearly closely related to the drawing I have chosen to show – a pencil drawing of the Rock, which is explicitly dated 1838. The inscribed signature and 1880 date was added later by Ruskin to make authorship clear.

FREDERICK CLIVE NEWCOME (1847-94) had the given name Frederick Suker, but adopted Newcome to distinguish himself from his brother Arthur and father William, both painters. He visited many parts of Britain to sketch, but favoured the Lakes. In 1880 he settled in Keswick, eventually transferring to Coniston, where he lived until his death aged only 47. His style of work was typical late Victorian, mixing senti-



Frederick Clive Newcombe. Dow Crag. Watercolour; 48.3 x 71cm. Titled on mount 'The Haunt of Ravens, Goatwater Tarn, Coniston'. Signed, and dated 1878. Courtesy of 1818 Auctioneers, Kendal.

mentality with the strong naturalism favoured by the Pre-Raphaelites. Newcombe's work in the Lakes was adventurous in seeking out new scenes on the higher ground to draw, as did his contemporaries Colin B. Phillip in Scotland, Thomas Collier and Clarence Whaite in North Wales, and Edward T. Compton in the Alps. A very fine drawing of Great End from Styhead Tarn, with the Scafells behind, dated 1876, was bought at auction in 2009, and has now appeared on the cover of the *Best Loved Hotels Guide* for 2010. The drawing shown below, also bought at auction in 2009, is a very faithful drawing of Dow Crag. The left hand part of the drawing has unfortunately been omitted in photography.

COLLECTING MOUNTAIN DRAWINGS from this early period is an activity from which I have derived enormous pleasure and satisfaction, and I hope that what I have shown and written here may encourage other climbers to immerse themselves in this absorbing pursuit, perhaps at an age when – like me – they become tired of doing badly what they once

did well. For a few hundred pounds one can acquire such treasures at auction: a thousand or two more, and a monument of English Art may hang on your wall. The artists of the 18th and early 19th century loved to draw mountains. Not many climbers have been serious collectors: amongst my own acquaintance I can think only of Dick Allen and Charles Warren, and in days past only Martin Conway (founder of the Conway Library at the Courtauld Institute of Art) comes to mind. Yet the number of climbers collecting old mountaineering books is vast. The late Oliver Turnbull used to say that books were better, because it was easy to hide your purchases from your spouse! But why waste money and time acquiring objects that have to be hidden? Stand up to your partners, and let the fruits of your profligacy hang in shining glory on the wall!

Before embarking on collecting, it is wise to look at what others have collected, and to read. For the first task, it is convenient that the galleries of the world – having hidden their watercolours and drawings away in boxes and drawers for fear of light damage – are beginning to display them for the first time – on the internet. The British Museum, the Tate, Courtauld and Whitworth Galleries, and the Wordsworth Trust all have very comprehensive online collections. Galleries without such displays, such as Abbot Hall, will usually welcome researchers or collectors. Go on a weekday, and ask for access to the Print Room. For the second task, there are a number of indispensable works: for general reading, Derek Clifford's *Collecting English Watercolours*, Martin Hardie's *Water-Colour Painting in Britain* (3 volumes), Huon Mallalieu's *Understanding Watercolour* and his dictionary volumes, Kim Sloan's *A Noble Art*, and Iolo Williams' *Early English Watercolour*; and for the art of the Lake District, Peter Bicknell's *Picturesque Scenery of the Lake District* and *Illustrated Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes*, John Murdoch's *Discovery of the Lake District: A Northern Arcadia and Its Uses* and Stephen Hebron's *In the Line of Beauty: Early Views of the Lake District by Amateur Artists*.

I ACKNOWLEDGE the generous assistance of the museums and auctioneers who provided images, and particularly the Wordsworth Trust, which holds an unparalleled collection of Lakeland art. Some of these pictures and about 100 others of Lake District landscapes form

the body of a new exhibition at The Wordsworth Trust in Grasmere, Cumbria. *Savage Grandeur and Noblest Thoughts, discovering the Lake District 1750 - 1820* opens on 1st July 2010 and runs for 11 months. See www.wordsworth.org.uk for more details.

A Lake District 'Hut' Route?

January 7-10 2010 : A Multi-Day Ski Tour Linking the FRCC Huts

Paul Cook

The Lake District isn't the first place you'd think of for a multi-day ski tour. There's lots of scope for skiing in both Alpine and Nordic styles, but surely not hut to hut touring - so how did this come about?

Just before Christmas, with the onset of the cold snap, I was eager to get out in Wasdale and see what conditions were like, but was thwarted just outside Gosforth by icy roads. With little prospect of gritting down the valley it seemed like life was going to be frustrating, staring at a perfectly white, snow covered Scafell under blue skies from the office window. At that point idea number one struck: Brackenclose is within walking range and could serve as an 'alpine hut' after a Friday night walk in, should the cold weather continue.

New Year was spent in Scotland with a similar story: plenty of snow, too much in fact, and access was difficult away from the main A roads. It was suggested that the Scottish Haute Route, a trip from Fort William to Aviemore was probably on, but a quick survey of some maps and memories of nights in bothies showed that a heavy rucksack would be the order of the day and would possibly also call for a tent. Not impossible, but compromises would need to be made on any bagging en route. What was needed were a string of mountain huts in the European style.

Bingo! The Lakes was under a similar quantity of snow and has its own hut network, the FRCC huts. But is a ski tour between the huts possible? A tour was probably more possible this winter than is likely to be the case for the foreseeable future, and there was only one real way to find out. It seemed like a go-er, the questions now were about weather and tactics. A survey of the internet forecasts suggested there was a period of clear skies and, crucially, low winds towards the end of the week. Things were looking promising.

To be a proper ski tour, the journey needed to feature more skiing than carrying. It would be possible at the height of summer to carry planks on your back all day and tramp around the Lakes. The route should also try to visit summits and seek out good descents where the skis would be a positive advantage. With these aims I studied the maps

for lines between the huts, with a plans A and B to match conditions and fitness at the time. It was also clear that weight would be a big issue. Skiing brings extra paraphernalia such as skins, repair kits and tools. The limit was set at 40l in a rucksack with axe and crampons on the outside. Food for the day would be bought locally and in the choice between sleeping bag and belay jacket the jacket won. I took a sheet bag and opted for the rough blankets in the huts.

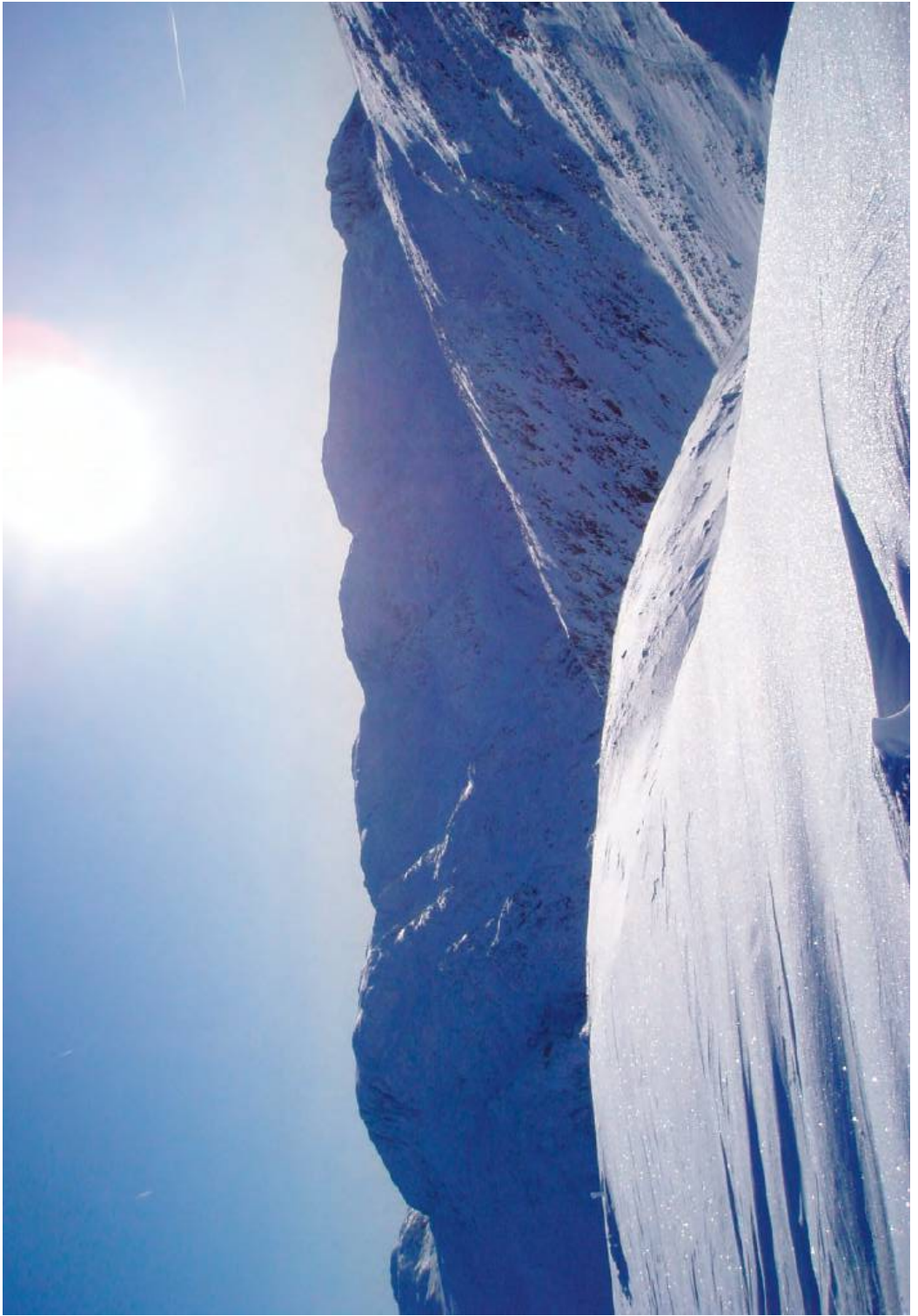
Wednesday 6th, with the forecasts getting better still, I booked two days off work and the tour was on.

Day 1 : Brackenclose - Sty Head - Green Gable - Warnscale Bottom - Birkness - Honister - Salving House

The first challenge was getting down the Wasdale valley. A snow shower earlier in the week followed by continuous freezing temperatures made the road tricky. Without getting into the details it took somewhat longer than anticipated to reach Brackenclose and the tour got underway at 09:30.

Wasdale isn't ideal for a ski tour. It's rocky, tends to funnel the wind and the ground was stripped fairly bare low down. Skis had to be carried until the river crossing on Lingmell Beck, approaching Sty Head. The route continued to follow the old path up to the stretcher box and on to the side of Great Gable. From here I was hoping to make a rising traverse into Aaron Slack and on to Green Gable. I managed it eventually, but there was an early sign that this wasn't going to be easy as the wind and sun had turned the whole face into hard boilerplate ice with a long run out, and the Harschiesen had to be put to use. Changes of equipment were also slowing me down and it was 12:30 by the time I reached the summit, with still a lot to do. Views off the top of Green Gable were outstanding.

First descent was an unknown quantity in snow. When you think of ski descents in the Lakes, Green Gable to Warnscale Bottom via Brandreth isn't one that instantly comes to mind, but it looked OK on the map, in terms of angle and rocks. It was surprisingly good, the snow was the right depth and consistency and I was quickly down to the mine workings. These are the sections where the skier cashes in the



Scafell Pike from Great Gable (*Paul Cook*)

extra effort of skinning up. A foot descent was needed down the narrow path of Warnscale Bottom and into the Buttermere Valley.

In many ways, visiting Birkness was a diversion and off the logical line, but only visiting 4 of the 5 huts didn't seem right. With the late start and slower than expected progress it was a bit late to be leaving the hut for the next leg at 14:30 after a delayed lunch. Plan A was to traverse Robinson and Dale Head for a descent direct into Rosthwaite, but the late hour and general fatigue suggested that a snowed up Honister Pass road might offer the better option. It worked well. The road was shut to traffic so was well covered in snow, but enough vehicles had been up to compact the surface making for steady uphill progress and a smooth descent into Seatoller. A short carry to the Salving House remained and I arrived for 17:00.



During the day I'd been worried about making it to Rosthwaite before 17:30 and the shop shutting. I needn't have worried, the shop is now permanently shut. Evening meal was obtained in the Scafell Hotel but breakfast was limited to a Cup-a-Soup and some handfuls of salted peanuts. You'd normally bank on some free food in the huts, but that day the cupboard was bare. The other weight saving measure also revealed its limitations that night. With an empty hut and chilly outside, no amount of rough blankets were enough to keep the cold out until belay jacket and hat were worn.

Day 2 : Salving House - Blea Tarn - Thirlmere - Grisedale Tarn - St Sunday Crag - Beetham Cottage

Friday, another blue sky day and another challenging leg. The eastern fells are well renowned for ski possibilities and the terrain certainly suits skis more than in the west, but first I needed to get there with an uncertain line to Thirlmere. Looking at a map there are a number of paths that meander from Borrowdale to Thirlmere, either via Watendlath or Greenup Edge, but neither are direct enough for a skier in a hurry to make the shop this time. But this is skiing and the paths are

covered in snow anyway. The solution was a carry from Stonethwaite up Lingy End to Dock Tarn followed by a cross country line to Blea Tarn and finally Harrop Tarn in the forest above Thirlmere. This proved to be a high point of the trip, with fantastic weather, perfect snow and no sign of human passage. I could easily have mistaken the area for remote Norway, not the Lakes near the A591. The undulating ground was also ideal free heel country. After a brief descent, also in powdery snow I reached Wythburn at lunchtime.

Whilst the morning leg had been better than expected, it still took a while and the meat of the day was still to come, with the race for the shop still very pressing. A descent down Grisedale from the tarn was the low risk option, but would have meant no summit on the day. The climb back to Grisedale Tarn needed to go well, but I was aware that the normal path was far from ideal skiing terrain. Things worked out OK. Other skiers had been busy in previous days to the extent that the whole fellside was tracked out down to Dunmail Raise and a good ascent track for skinning was available. I'd still got enough in the tank for a peak. Helvellyn is the ideal ski summit and would have been an excellent point to visit, but it's far from the line to Beetham Cottage and time was pressing. St Sunday Crag is the closest to the direct line and that was the chosen option. The route to Deepdale Hause is tricky under snow. I was surprised to get half way on ski but eventually had to admit defeat and put the crampons on. The summit climb was sapping and I arrived at the cairn with the sun starting to fade and my energy levels with it. Time to get down. What followed was the skiing highlight of the trip. A route down into Deepdale, with around 600m descent on good snow. Bracken tops were showing through the snow but didn't impede progress, only taking 30 minutes down to the road. Fantastic! This did leave a detour to the Patterdale post office, still open fortunately and then the trudge up the road by headtorch to Beetham Cottage, but it had been worth it. Even better, Beetham was inhabited and warm with a good fire.

Day 3 : Beetham Cottage - Dovedale - Fairfield - Grasmere - Silver Howe - Raw Head

Saturday started cold with clear skies again and, in theory at least, this should be another good ski day with helpful terrain at least as far as Grasmere. There was a question of route choice. From Beetham Cottage there are two equally feasible routes on to Fairfield, either the Hartsop above Howe ridge or the direct path past Dove Crag. Viewed from St Sunday Crag the previous day, the ridge was snow covered, but with a carry likely at the end and it was also back along the road towards Patterdale. The Dove Crag path offered a quicker transition to ski but was an unknown quantity. Increasing fatigue probably had a influenced the Dove Crag option, which was a bad choice. The initial track was mucky, there was a steep carry in deep snow at half height and making contact with the main ridge was complicated. To cap it all, my old pair of skins, selected to avoid trashing the new ones were now starting to mis-behave. Things didn't get easier on the ridge, the wind had got up and was strong enough to make skiing difficult. It was a lot tougher than expected. The descent should make up for it though? Wrong again. Study of the map shows a bowl formed by Greenhead Gill as it descends from Great Rigg. Previous days suggested this might hold powder or at least skiing snow. It did have some, but the sun had been at work and boilerplate was the general surface, with the trick being to link occasional runnels of spindrift with traverses on the plate. At least it was quick and made up some time lost on the ascent. Arrived in Grasmere for lunch and shopping at the Co-op.

The next section was another of the fiddly legs to link valleys. I was expecting a carry and generally got one. There's no ideal route into Langdale from Grasmere for a tired skier, but the maps show a number of paths snaking over the fellside. I opted for a relatively low level choice around Silver Howe to Chapel Stile, arriving later than expected but at least I'd got the shopping this time. There was a meet at Raw Head and it was warm on arrival, with a tasty selection of cakes on offer. Great.

Opposite: Langdale Pikes from Esk Hause (*Paul Cook*)

Day 4 : Raw Head - Rosset Gill - Angle Tarn - Esk Hause - Sty Head - Brackenclose

Final day and the weather was on the turn. Clouds had been gathering the night before and were much in evidence as was the wind which was now noticeable at low level. I'd originally had ambitious plans to start over the Langdale Pikes, move on to Esk Hause and then finish on Scafell Pike where the previous Sunday's walk told me there was a descent to be had down Brown Tongue. It quickly became apparent that survival and completion were the main priorities and going high with skis on your sack a poor choice. I knew Rossett Gill would be a carry, but had a vain hope of using the skis down Mickleden. No such luck. The carry lasted all the way from Raw Head to Angle Tarn where I got the skis on. Fortunately, the wind was out of the east and generally helpful. A quick skin to Esk Hause and the finish was now in sight. A ski descent was possible from the cross walls, past Sprinkling Tarn to Sty Head, but here the wind really got going and was now funnelled up from Borrowdale. Skis off and a dash down Wasdale,



through deep windslab to the relatively calm of the lower valley. It was rough up there. All that remained was a saunter back to Brackenclose through an almost deserted Wasdale, still effectively cut off by the icy roads. Finally arrived at 13:08. However, this wasn't the end. I did bump into two friends who took care of my skis and boots but was still faced with a walk back to Gosforth to get my car. It took some time.

So, a ski traverse of the FRCC huts is possible, but is it any good and should anyone else try (if the conditions ever happen again)? I'd hoped for more summits and better descents. St Sunday Crag was unexpectedly good and would Green Gable get on many people's list of ski peaks? But, overall, I'd suggest if you're looking for quality in the downhill skiing, stay east and choose your day and slope carefully, based on recent winds. More summits could also have been added. I was keen to get one per day, but failed at the end, mainly due to weather, another improvement possibility for any future attempt. There was also a lot of carrying; any future attempts might aim to reduce the carries although better conditions might take care of any issues, assuming you can get to the starting point.

What's next? There's a clear challenge in Scotland, but the logistics aren't quite as simple.



Callout

Mike Carter

It was one of those oh so rare end of winter days in the Lakes: not a cloud in the sky, wall to wall sunshine and snow covered tops glistening white as far as the eye could see. It was a day when you rushed out on to Beetham carpark with your first cup of tea to weigh up the possibilities. A day when the choice of route was no choice at all - it had to be Helvellyn by the edges.

Paula agreed. The exhilarating weather added wings to our heels and in no time at all we found ourselves at Hole in the Wall. As the snow was getting harder with ice patches here and there, we cramponned up and set off along Striding Edge. Despite the beautiful conditions, we had the route to ourselves. The compacted snow and ice gave out a reassuring crunch as crampons bit and progress was sure and steady.

After many pauses to admire our surroundings, we arrived at the drop to the col where the Edge joins on to Hellvellyn. To rope or not to rope? No, the snow was good and there was plenty of bare rock too, should be ok. As I moved to start down, there was a loud rumble from ahead, in Nethermost Cove. Looking for the source of it, I saw a huge fan of snow spewing out of Nethermost Gully. A British avalanche! I'd never witnessed one before and was mightily impressed. But as the debris began to settle, I saw something darker, heavier and slower emerge from the gully, tumbling over the scree like a rag doll. Recognisably human, it came to a halt and lay horribly still.

For a long moment, the whole world froze. Accident procedure, how does it go? Tick tock. What's first? Tick tock. Move, for God's sake. After what must have only been a few seconds but seemed like an eternity, I moved and a plan of sorts emerged from my racing brain. Get down to the col, get Paula on top to find someone with a phone then get down to the victim.

We went for it and wonder of wonders, found a couple with a phone on the col eating lunch! They'd heard the noise of the avalanche but hadn't seen it or the aftermath. After quickly explaining what I'd seen, the guy went straight up to the top to contact the MRT while I made

my way very carefully down to the victim, very apprehensive as to what I would find.

It wasn't good. He lay across the slope, face up, wedged against a rock. Face, hands and legs were lacerated and there was also a large head wound. His breathing was very erratic and he was completely unconscious. A rucksack was attached to one arm, the other strap having broken, so using this and my bag I made him as safe as I could on the slope. I made sure his airway was ok and then, as much for my sake as his, I put a dressing on the head wound.

Suddenly, another figure appeared from the bottom of the gully. Severely shaken but relatively un injured, he turned out to be the victim's brother. His account of the accident was understandably difficult to follow but seemed to be this: he was leading the climb, with what seemed to be a very small amount of gear when the cornice at the top fell off. He was belayed at the time behind a rock buttress. His brother was in a narrowing of the gully and was hit by the full concentrated force of the collapsing cornice.

So began the wait. With the only sound that of an injured body fighting for breath and life, how long would it be?

Mercifully, someone was really looking after the three of us that day. It turned out that the Patterdale MRT were on exercise in the area and with a helicopter in attendance! It arrived after about twenty minutes and after spotting me in the Y position, dropped a couple of flares and then a doctor and a couple of team members. Clipping a couple of electronic gizmos on to the victim, the doctor assessed him as being at 2/3 on the coma scale. How does that work I asked? Ten is normal, came the reply, and zero is dead. Right. As the chopper came round again to drop the stretcher, I pointed to a large gash on the victim's thigh. "That's the least of his worries," said the doctor quietly.

Ten minutes later, after a very efficient stretcher drop and lift, the two brothers and the doctor were on their way to Newcastle, the nearest hospital that could provide the necessary treatment. I got a lift down Grisedale to the MRT headquarters and made my report of the incident. Then, bizarrely, I was invited to tuck into a mountain of cakes and sandwiches which were there for the end of exercise party. Some exercise! Paula soon arrived in another vehicle and joined in.

So quite an eventful day. Some months later, wondering about the outcome of it all, I wrote to the secretary of the Patterdale team to see if there was any news. His reply surprised me – no there wasn't. Apparently this is fairly common; people who have a traumatic accident like this and survive tend to shut it out and get on with their lives.

That is the only serious accident I've ever been involved with and I hope it's my last. It really emphasised the need for being well equipped and taking note of the snow conditions. They may have come off in the fall but I don't recall seeing any helmets or harnesses – just a length of broken rope.

In conclusion, thank God for the rescue teams and those wonderful helicopters. To see them in serious action together is quite an experience. Next time you see the team members rattling their tins outside the supermarket, dig deep. They're worth every penny.



Wasdale snow and clouds, 1 January 2010 (*Tony Simpkins*)



Twenty Falls But No Submission

An account of the Langdale Horseshoe 2008 as seen from the rear of the field

Penny Clay

Yes, I had run badly on the previous Sunday and staggered around Coombe Woods at Armathwaite on the Thursday; I was definitely coming down with something. I watched snotty children at work with suspicion. It was inevitable, I was obviously going to BE ILL – aha! I had found an excuse not to run the Langdale Horseshoe on Saturday. Unfortunately, my unrelentingly cheerful mate rang me on Friday night to see if I was running. “Well...”. I muttered about my declining health, the bad weather and then fobbed him off with “I’ll watch the weather forecast and then think about it again”. The second bad moment of the evening arrived in the form of a cracking weather forecast and smiling weather presenter. Really, I couldn’t be malingering at home whilst there was a race to be run. I rang my unrelentingly cheerful mate back: “I’ve changed my mind”. He sounded mildly surprised, obviously unaware of that female prerogative.

In the way that these things happen, I found myself slogging up to Stickle Tarn at the rear of a very large field of keen looking runners. “Ha!” I thought. “They’ll not be looking so fit by the time they get to Pike O’Blisco.” And so, working on the principle that it may well be a long day, I made no attempt to overtake anyone, relishing the fact that the man with the bad leg that I had managed to pass hadn’t yet caught me up.

And so time passed.

As the morning wore on it became apparent that the main feature of the route was going to be bog. Having had our compulsory Cumbrian pre-race 24 hour deluge, the back of Thunacar Knott resembled the Everglades, missing only trees and crocodiles. It was when the chap ahead of us, fetchingly attired in bright orange vest and shorts, had vanished up to his waist that we paused slightly in our downhill trajectory. This gave my still cheerful friend enough time to leap onto a quaking raft of moss. As it shivered gently, threatening to cast him adrift across the fathomless, boggy depths he leapt manfully

from the watery trap. His Ronhills greedily sucked up the moisture, threatening to drag him back in as he staggered, knee deep, at the water's edge. Luckily, his foresight in carrying an empty bottle up the hill to save weight in his bumbag meant that he did not complain one jot about the extra two kilos of water he was now carrying in each leg of his trackie bottoms. Meantime, day-glo man had successfully extricated himself from his sphagnum grave (presumably employing some useful Ray Mears techniques) and was valiantly struggling on, although his ability to fluoresce had taken a spattering.

More time passed.

We reached Esk Hause, we passed Esk Hause, we gained on the orange man struggling in the mud on the way to Bowfell. My unrelentingly cheerful mate kept falling over.

We reached Bowfell and passed a few more people. Then the Crinkles. Considering our position at the rear of the field I was impressed to find a bottleneck of half a dozen people skittering about at the top of the 'Bad Step'. Who cared if you might break your neck – just get down tha' bloody thing. I found myself slipping into dialect as we skipped stylishly past the small crowd, effortlessly downclimbing into the gully below, the whole seamless performance I felt, reflecting well on us. Then my mate fell over again. Having survived the short rock climb he chose to plummet face down with some force onto the rocks in the gully below, startling a number of other runners (however failing to trip or injure any of them). With nobbut a commando roll and a curse he was up again and off.

More time passed.

It was at this point that I started to get really bad period pain. I began pathetically asking random runners we caught up with "Hast tha' any painkillers?", but they shook their heads blankly – either they had no paracetamol or they couldn't understand my accent. This was getting really bad. Normally I would be in bed with a hot water bottle and some very strong drugs – instead I was three hours into a long run and I wasn't near the finish. Worse still, my friend was still smiling, even though he kept falling over. It was downhill but I felt like walking. I wanted to go home, but sadly Pike O'Blisco was in the way.

I was temporarily heartened by the sight of a young man bent double in the stream. "Are you okay?" I courteously enquired.

“Cramp” was the agonised reply. Thus encouraged by the poor chap’s inability to move at all I continued with my slow progress to the final evil ascent of the race. Trying to ignore the fact that the Prize Giving was probably already underway I valiantly sucked the last remnants of Go-gel from my supply and staggered on. Another man with cramp ground to a halt – if only they had periods, then they’d know what real pain was! Heartened by the demise of another competitor I pushed on.

Time passed and then that moment in every fell race you’re waiting for: the sweet call of the final descent. Nothing now lay between me and a long lie down except a quick romp off the hill to the valley. I perked up. I could run through my pain. My pace picked up. I could smell the valley. I was strong. I was invincible. I was nearly taken out by my mate going down yet again, this time in a stylish sliding tackle, embracing the quagmire full on. All credit to him – he just kept on getting up again even though it quickly became obvious he was not going to make it to the finish without fully engaging with all aspects of the slope. Time spent practicing aquaplaning is seldom wasted and it was here that my young friend’s weakness in the standing glissade was revealed. For me though, it was full steam ahead. Looking over my shoulder I admired as he somersaulted neatly, performing a full forward roll over a particularly slippery bit – the man was developing real style.

Finally we hit the tarmac of the valley road and pounded into the taped funnel with only slight confusion, as I was resisting a strong urge to run directly into the bar. There at the finish my mildly bemused parents (from Lincolnshire – no hills) were waiting to carry me off to the prospect of a hot bath, clean clothes and civilisation (okay, at this point I admit I’m exaggerating). I slipped back into dialect: “Hast tha’ any painkillers mam?”.

My Best Climb in the Lake District

Paul Robertson

When I was a lad in Leeds there were no mountain books in the house and no particular interest in the hills, but in a general encyclopaedia I was fascinated by two photographs: one a picture of Gridlewald in winter, and the other a climber of Everest. These two photographs must have tripped some genetic switch!

We used to cycle from Leeds to Borrowdale, and on one outing I met, at Longhwaite Youth Hostel, a real rock climber. I was flattered and excited when he offered to take me out on the hill. "Come on, follow me," he said, and we trotted off to Gable, me in shorts, with sandals on my feet. Arriving at the Needle, my newfound friend proceeded to climb up the Wasdale Crack, only to get his leg firmly stuck half way up. My first touch of Lakeland rock was to climb up, put my shoulder under his ample backside and push: this manoeuvre worked, and we both descended to terra firma.

My friend (I'm not sure that I ever knew his name) was quite unperturbed by this escapade. "Come on, follow me," he said and we proceeded to climb Needle Ridge, no rope and me in sandals, though admittedly it was less polished in those days. The climb continued without further incident but the scree descent in sandals was unpleasant.

Mrs Edmonson's teas at Seathwaite were a memorable feast on returning to the valley, and there was also a book in which to record one's achievements; I proudly wrote, 'Needle Ridge, up'.

Nick Hinchcliffe

Saturday the 19th of June, 1984, would have to rank amongst my most enjoyable days in the hills anywhere. In those days the Fell and Rock was held in awe by most of us ordinary types, and it was always clear that it was not for the likes of us. I had however started doing some climbing with Mick Harris, a fellow Northumberland MC member who was of that elevated body. If he had something special he wanted to do, he would sign me in as a guest at an FRCC hut, and I would know that his mind was then on a project of some note.

We drove over on the Friday, Mick and Morag and myself, and I had my first experience of Birkness barn in pre-modernisation state. Clearly Harris had ideas, but as usual he was splendidly vague when asked what we would do on the morrow. As he had been climbing in the Lakes since he was aged seven or so, was ticking off the old Cram/Eilbeck/Roper guide and almost never repeated routes he had previously done, the list of objectives was clearly short, but I had done very little in the Lakes so did not mind much what we climbed. This was, I suspect, a point in my favour as a climbing partner.

“Oh, we can wander up to Eagle Crag, see what looks dry,” was all he would divulge, so off to bed I went.

Saturday was clear and fine and sunny and all that a good Lakes day was in the Golden Times of one's youth. Morag set off for a walk and up to Eagle we went and Mick suggested we start on *Carnival*: “It's just your sort of route,” whatever that meant. It was cool in the shade, but the rock was dry and all went well until he revealed that I had to do the crux pitch, currently described as “spooky”. I was young and foolish, he was older and a wiser and better climber, so I took a deep breath and set off. I recall it being the sort of thing that was fine as long as you kept steadily at it and didn't think too much about falling off, and was pretty pleased at the top.

So, down and back to the gear, the inevitable salami sandwich and (for Mick) a packet of the cheapest, most disgusting savoury snack he had been able to find. I think he was at the time favouring KP Outer Spacers, lurid coloured things that looked like they were pupating moths and were full of chemicals, but apparently tasted ‘canny’. Looking back now I suspect his enormous energy was chiefly due to all the E-numbers he took in on the hill.

“Right, then” was announced, in the tone which brooked no debate. “Let's have a look at this *Deimos*.”

I looked in the guide, was not very keen (having got my E point for the day) and saw at once that there was no point arguing; there never was. Once he was set on a route, that was it.

So off we went. Or off I went, up easy ground then a short groove to land on a ledge and worry about where we would go next. Once Mick arrived and pointed out the line I felt rather more worried. I had not done many routes at this grade and it was not at all obvious where

the holds were. No matter, Mick set off and proceeded to inch his way methodically across the slab, finding not only holds but some runners too, which allayed my fears somewhat. The route had clearly not been climbed recently as he had to unearth some holds and gear placements from layers of moss and dirt. Eventually it was my turn, and I could enjoy the superb position and intricate moves with Buttermere spread out below. My abiding memory of the pitch is that it was never obvious what you had to do, but it fell into place bit by bit, good sustained climbing and very enjoyable.

The next pitch was a bit like the one I had led on *Carnival*. My diary says “very sustained, poor gear – serious long fall possible from solid 5a moves”. It now gets 5b. Hmm.

One more pitch up a steep crack, albeit with gear this time, and we were up, down and setting off up *Eagle Front* in the early evening sun. This took us a little over an hour, as we were moving pretty well by now.

Even Mick agreed that we could now stop climbing, so we set off down to the hut, him chuckling the while about the huge ‘value’ burgers he had got at a bargain price and which he and Morag were to feast on that evening. We got back to the hut at a little before 9pm and Mick set about cooking with some glee, which faded as the huge plump burgers turned out to be mostly fat, oozing out into the pan leaving six lumps roughly the size of 50p pieces.

I was not late to bed that night, and the next day we went to Pillar and did it all over again.

L. S Wilson

I don't know if it qualifies for “the best” but it was certainly memorable! As a seventeen year old schoolboy I was staying at Bowderdale Farm, near Wasdale Head, at Easter, 1949. The weather was poor: rain, rain, rain. What could be done?

Also staying in what is now Joss Naylor's home were four Cambridge undergraduates, and my partner was Eric Furness, FRCC Life Member and Munroist 339. The combined brainpower suggested the West Wall of the Farm Barn where the first ascent had recently been made by another guest, the famous Swiss guide, Franz Lochmatter. My



The Bowderdale Hayloft: Left, Eric Furness; Centre, David Montgomery; Right, Lyn Wilson

older colleagues failed. So with some trepidation I launched myself upward, unroped from above, solo . . . gym shoes, grab that stone, push



Bowderdale Barn, West Face

here, swing there and surprise, surprise I was up on the crest of the barn. I can not remember the height; say 30ft or so. One of the farm cats met me and, as I descended the vertical face the cat launched itself downwards, lost its footing and crashed to the ground and, somewhat shaken, moped off. So, if the story is right, I'd made a second ascent in the footsteps and handholds of a great.

The following day all the Bowderdale guests visited

Kern Knots Chimney. Eric and I were first up, Below came an anguished squawk from the Cambridge No. 2, “David, get your Dad’s Eighth Army to give me a shove.” Their leader from the Fens was Monty’s son!

I, a youngster, in the shadow of yet another great!



At Kern Knotts. Back left, David Montgomery; far right, Eric Furness; centre with woolly hat, Lyn Wilson.

Ken Fyles

April 2009 had surprised us by being a good, dry month. It was now May and we were going for a long weekend in Wasdale after a two week period of frequent showers.

We were a team of varied experience and age. I was just past my 65th birthday. My Malawian, sponsored son Allan, aged 19, was visiting England whilst awaiting the results of examinations destined to decide what College or University course would be open to him. Heather, an accomplished fell walker and scrambler, wanted to get more experience of rock climbing. Lionel was the fourth member of the team – at 76 years old he could out-pace the vast majority of teenagers on the hills, perhaps testament to the young being heavier and not as fit as they were 45 years ago when I started fell-walking.

The Saturday dawned to the showery pattern we had become used to so we took a walk over Muncaster Fell to Ravensglass returning to ‘the Green’ by the Ravensglass and Eskdale Railway. Sunday prom-

ised much brighter weather and we were keen to get Allan on top of the highest mountain in England.

MY MOST DISLIKED CLIMB IN THE LAKE DISTRICT

We rejected the normal route to Scafell Pike up Brown Tongue as being a trudge and opted to gain height by the equally long trudge up Lingmell. This route offered better views and from the summit allowed us to gaze at Napes on Great Gable which we had thoughts of climbing the following day. The way down Lingmell, with the steep crags of Pier's Ghyll on the left, is a joy and quickly gave access to the Scafell paths below. The weather was getting sunnier now so we decided that a better way to Scafell Pike would be by the easy scramble up Broad Crag. It was here that Allan first demonstrated his youth and agility, and having been brought up in a hilly region. He was winding through the rock at twice our speed and was seen again only at the summit of Broad Crag. An easy walk took us to lunch at the summit of Scafell Pike. Luckily, the mist which had shrouded the summit all morning lifted and we had marvellous views in to Wastwater and the surrounding area.

Scafell beckoned with its wonderful, sheer rock faces but how would we best reach its summit? The scramble up Broad Stand is the most direct route but has a dangerous reputation in wet weather, but we had a 20m rope with us so the Broad Stand problem could be assessed. If it was deemed to be too dangerous we could traverse to Lords Rake, but that was also controversial because of the potential for movement of the large chock-stone in the higher reaches of the gully.

At the bottom of Broad Stand we could see that a fixed rope had been positioned over the first 20m of scrambling. This convinced us that we were on the route to Scafell. The squeeze through the beginning rocks of the climb require no special protection but this leads you to a sloping rock platform with quite difficult rock climbing above, considering it is a 'scramble'. I tied on our little scrambling rope and headed off; I have to admit using the fixed rope as protection on the greasy rock. A belay was made using a piton and one of the small selections of nuts I was carrying for this tiny, insignificant climb. The three members of the party were brought up to the belay amongst various

grunts and groans on the slippery rock, and so the notorious section of Broad Stand seemed to be readily accomplished.

The remaining scramble looked mainly dry so we packed the rope away and Allan led off, quickly followed by Lionel. The rock was getting wetter and greasier but this did not appear to deter Allan, who was nowhere to be seen. Then a major problem - Lionel got stuck on a very greasy section of rock, and in trying to descend to safer ground he actually slipped. I held him by thrusting my arm between his legs but I was in no position to help him to get better holds. This impasse was held for several minutes while better holds were sought, but none were available. Fortunately Heather was on hand and in a relatively safer position. Stretching to the limit of her safety, she opened my rucksack, took out the rope, untied it and gave one end to me as she fixed a belay. My problem was now to secure Lionel onto the rope using the one hand available (the other hand was still firmly up Lionel's nether regions, stopping him from further slippage) whilst Lionel's hands were gripping the greasy rock as best he could. In such situations you invent ways to tie a rope securely around someone's waist with one hand – don't ask me what kind of knot it was, I could never describe it. In the meantime, Heather had managed to secure a belay and we could now attempt to retrieve Lionel from his dangerous situation without risk of a massive slide or fall. The operation went well



Lionel, Allan and Heather on the summit of Scafell, after the epic ascent
(*Ken Fyles*)

and we were all soon on firmer rock. The remainder of the scramble was uncharacteristically greasy so we kept on the rope until we emerged from the top to greet Allan.

“Where were you? We've just had an epic!” Allan couldn't believe it – it was all so easy to him. It was still a practical lesson that a mountaineering party should stay together as you can never really predict what can happen.

The walk to Scafell summit in late afternoon sunshine helped us recover from our epic, and the westerly path over Greenhow to Brackenclose gave a pleasant end to the day.

MY MOST LIKED CLIMB IN THE LAKE DISTRICT

The following day we awoke to clear blue sky. Heather, Allan and I decided to look at Needle Ridge on Great Gable while Lionel accompanied us up to Kern Knotts then continued to Styhead Tarn and various paths around Scafell Pike. I always enjoy the traverse to the Napes rocks, since the path starts so tiny then becomes clearer as you approach Napes Needle. This was to be my first roped climb with my son Allan and I could see apprehension on his face as we clambered in biting wind to the eye of the Needle. The Ridge was sheltered and dry and we roped up almost in silence.

Once we got started, Allan's initial scepticism of his ability to climb rock gradually turned to joy and enthusiasm. He thought the climbing



was easy and even believed he could do it without a rope, but then encountered a difficult passage where he couldn't seem to find his feet without helpful hints from Heather – judging by his grimaces, he may have changed his mind about the rope. Heather was following,

Allan climbing Needle Ridge, with Heather's friend Stu Halford on Napes' Needle (*Ken Fyles*)

alpine style. It was her first long, roped climb and she too was bursting with enthusiasm.

To add to the wonder of the day, two climbers were ascending Napes Needle via Wasdale Crack. Heather recognised them as friends she had known in the long, distant past. While she chatted with them, I was interested to see how they would secure the abseil down.

One of the most satisfying things about climbing the traditional way in boots and with a sack on your back is that you can stop and have lunch in comfort wherever the fancy takes you. So it was on this day and we reached the top of the climb, relaxed again and munched amidst wonderful views of Wastwater and the Pikes.

The well-timed window of fine weather in an otherwise wet period added to the surprise of a really nice day. Allan later confided that his favourite sports before coming to England were football and cycling. His favourite sport is now mountaineering and it's no doubt that Needle Ridge on Great Gable gave him a wonderful introduction. During his ten week stay, Allan did four more rock climbs and also summited Snowdon via Grib Goch and Ben Nevis via Carn Mor Dearg where he stood on snow for the first time in his life.

John Moore

Kern Knotts caught my imagination at first sight in 1954 on a day trip with my father, and has never lost its fascination. As we were walking up Great Gable by Sty Head towards the Napes I had my first view of rock climbers. They were tackling the Crack. I remember this as the moment when I decided that rock climbing was for me. My interest was reinforced by buying an Abrahams postcard of a climber in shirt-sleeves, cap and braces on the route (O. G. Jones?). I still have the card, and a print of this evocative Abrahams photograph hangs on my study wall. Later in the day we encountered Rusty Westmorland and a chatty group of FRCC worthies, making that day my first encounter with both rock climbing and the FRCC.

My personal first attempt at the Crack was made in the summer of 1961. A Scouting pal and I were camping at Seathwaite and, armed with 120ft of Viking No 3, a couple of spliced nylon slings and the Astley-Cooper cloth-bound guidebook, we set about it. The climb is still clear in my memory. It was a sunny day and we used big boots –

self-nailed with clinkers and Tricouni No 5s, more or less according to the diagram in J. E. B. Wright's *The Technique of Mountaineering* which was the source, at that time, of most of my climbing knowledge. Having got into the sentry box by 'the original, and more usual route', my attempts at the crux ("The polished walls of sentry box are climbed with great difficulty until a chockstone in the narrow crack above can be grasped"), began with hopeless struggles and ended with vain attempts to re-insert stones, thrown up from below by my second, to replace the one so callously removed by S. Herford: "I found today that the first chockstone in Kern Knotts Crack, which is usually used for swinging out of the 'Niche', was on the point of coming out. I therefore removed it. It can be had on application at the Wastwater Hotel. This rendered the climb considerably harder but quite safe." (FRCC Journal, 1911). Half a century after Herford, I could have vouched for the first part of his final statement but in 1961 I would not have been quite so sure about the "quite safe".

Changing tactics ("a less arduous method is to ascend the right wall on small holds until a stride can be made into the crack above the sentry box"), I teetered out and up using the small holds on the wall to the right of the niche – no easy task in nailed leather boots. The striding move back left to the crack at the top of the recess looked somewhere between desperate and impossible. We finally achieved a modicum of protection with our two slings by a lasso-ing a chockstone at the top of the Niche. Re-reading O. G. Jones's account, it is clear that I suffered more than he, partly from inexperience and certainly from considerably less competence and many more frayed nerves. Somehow I struggled back across on to the chockstone above the sentry box. The upper crack ("best climbed facing in": 1958 and "best climbed facing left": 1977 guidebooks) is still vivid in my mind – height gain was matched by a commensurate increase in worry, induced by the combination of growing exposure and lack of slings for runners. Gradually things eased until, finally, I flopped out on the top. It was by far the hardest lead in my, until then, limited climbing career. I think it was the first time that I had felt the 'loneliness' of being a long way from both second and safety. In those days, the 'leader must not fall' dictum still ruled and the developing use of artificial protection, usually

old, drilled-out car and lorry wheel nuts, had not yet reached us self-taught schoolboys.

I have often returned to Kern Knotts, walking, climbing and to study the results of the ‘Great Lake District Earthquake’ which caused the collapse of blocks from *Sepulchre*. For a geologist interested in rock mechanics, the joint fractures are fascinating – particularly the crack fissure itself which penetrates to the West Chimney, leaving the outer section of the buttress, capped by an enormous block, balanced on a small boulder, all waiting to topple, perhaps when the next sizable seismic tremor comes. It is not just the rocks and the climbs which make Kern Knotts a special place – the crag architecture itself fires the imagination of any pencil sketcher who admires W. Heaton-Cooper’s wonderful 1950s guidebook drawings.

Since that memorable first occasion, I have climbed the Crack several times. These days I can take it on with the advantages of more experience, a bit more confidence and a lot more protection but have never found it easy. It still retains the mystique and aura which I first felt almost 50 years ago. Fortunately, the chill of nervousness that accompanied that first climb has not returned and I have the consolation by inflationary grade revaluation of having succeeded in rock boots on a Very Severe (4c), whereas with nails, 48 years ago, I only managed a Severe – “suited to plimsolls”.

For me, Kern Knotts remains a place of memories, excitement, fun and the camaraderie which make Lake District climbing such a pleasure. It seems an appropriate climb to quote as my favourite – since, according to the 1907 FRCC Journal, “Brute force and ignorance go a long way here”.

[Editor’s note: These are brilliant, and we want more of your stories! Please send them to journal@frcc.co.uk for the next FRCC Journal]



Heading down to Langdale. February 20, 2010 (*Tony Simpkins*)

Extract From the Diary of George Driver

Easter 1940 - Camping - Seathwaite - Borrowdale KCMC

Bread obtainable from Mrs. Edmondson if ordered before baker comes.

Milk, eggs obtainable without ordering. Camping 6d per tent per night – good spot on edge of path, sheltered 2nd field through Seathwaite.

Thursday 21st March 1940

Left home on 8:10am bus, met K. Jones in Newcastle and got 9:15 bus (Wright's) from Marlborough Crescent. The bus was duplicated & both were full. First stop was Hexham, then Alston where we stopped for 20 mins. Met Bill who was in the other bus & had coffee together (good coffee). We all got into same bus after consulting conductor & it was a bit of a tight fit. B. was going to stay just under Cat Bells with some women at a boarding house & was to come over to Seathwaite later.

Stopped at Penrith about 5 mins & arrived in Keswick on time. A fairly bright day. K.J. had arranged to meet Ned Sparks who was hitch hiking over at 1:30 on the market square but he did not turn up so we went down to Abraham's. In a few minutes we saw a disreputable tramp with filthy trousers, an old rucksack with broken straps, a balaclava helmet & a billy can. He hailed us and J. refused to believe it was N.S. but it turned out to be him alright. We walked to the Lake edge & had lunch on some pies & cakes which we had bought & some sandwiches. Ned alleged that he had walked 32 miles in 4 hours on 2 pints of beer or some such story which was not believed.

We then bought provisions & had a drink at the (milk) bar & got the 4:30 bus up Borrowdale. The lake was well flooded at the S. end. At about Borrowdale it started to pour & had really started when we got out at Seatoller. We had tons to carry so put on macs and dumped half the load over the wall a bit up the road. Carried on up to Seathwaite, interviewed Mrs. E & pitched camp. We returned for the rest of the stuff by which time it was fine again. We had a Maconnochie & went to bed in more wet – K.J. & I were in my tent & N.S. in his. The tents were pitched in a quarry I think; it was impossible to drive pegs in.

Friday 22/3/40 Woke to find mist low & rain pouring down. Our trousers & stockings were soaked from the night before but we put them on & cooked breakfast on the primuses (2). N.S. swore he would light a fire with wood washed down the stream which was on the path about 2 feet from my tent. This fire became an obsession together with a bathe in the stream & was repeated several times each day until it became a matter of course to hear it before, after & between meals. The fire was attempted but was a dismal failure while the bathe never came off, much to our amusement.

We decided in a not-so-wet-spell to go to the top of the Stye & consider Gable. On the top the mist was really down & the rain was coming down in sheets – real Borrowdale rain. We saw the rain gauge on the Stye & it was half full. The Tarn, we agreed, was about twice as wide as the Atlantic Ocean & we all thought it must be flooded a lot. The Stye path was a big bog & got even worse later. It was raining so hard that we spun up and decided to return.

At 1000' mark we met a gent with a tartan golf umbrella and 'natty gents suiting' who asked us in an innocent voice "was it raining on top". The rain was pouring off us, we were soaked liked shipwrecked sailors who had just been washed ashore but we kept our faces straight & admitted it. This senseless gesture was repeated from time to time as we met other parties but there was not many people on the pass. We had lunch & things brightened up & we began to dry clothes in the bright spells. I had put on shorts but it was very cold. The air was saturated & drying was slow but my flannels were dry enough to put on after tea when K.J. & I decided to go across to Seathwaite slabs while Ned preferred to remain & guard the washing. We enjoyed ourselves on the Slabs which are on the left hand side of Sour Milk Gill & well scratched. The climbs range from E to VS & were very interesting. We did a practice abseil but the rope was wet & stiff.

We returned & were met by a torrent of strong language from Ned who, we found, was informing us that the dinner was ready & spoiling. We had a real good dinner & the evening was very promising so we felt much better. We turned in early, Ned changing places with Kenneth for the night which like all others was bitterly cold.

Saturday 23/3/40 Woke to find the weather fine but the mist very low – half way down the pass – had good breakfast – porridge bacon & egg & then marmalade. This breakfast was standard & we stuck to it all the time but the marmalade was not always on the menu. We decided to go to Scafell – why, I don't know. We hit the mist on the pass & it was very thick. There were quite a lot of people on the pass. We turned off on the Esk Hause path from the Stye and we met our first snow here – just a small patch. Having passed Sprinkling Tarn we decided – at least Jones suggested – cutting over Great End which we tried to do, getting stuck on wet-dripping grassy ledges in the thick mist.

The Hon. Sec. was soundly cursed for leading us into such a place on such a day & we had to turn back & down to Esk Hause whence we went up on to Broad Craggs & thence along a path of large boulders to the Pike, whence Jones bolted with the lunch so that we had to follow him to the summit where more curses were cast upon the Hon. Sec. We cut up our hunk of bread with a pocket knife & spread meat paste with our fingers in the midst of natty gents with their packets of sandwiches. The mist was so thick that we had to produce compasses to settle which way we ought to go off the mountain as it was now too late to climb or so Ned and I said. We had dropped about 100' when we began to wonder again. Then an amazing thing happened: the mist lifted from the whole of the Lakes together & in front we could see Gable with wisps of mist lifting off her then Styehed & the Tarn & away out to Glaramara, Brandreth & over Borrowdale to Keswick with Skiddaw & Blencathra easily in view. In the other direction we could see down Wasdale & over to Pillar & the Screes. It was a wonderful sight – the thick mist had given place in about 2 minutes to bright sun. We thought this too good to be true so we hurried down to the path—the Corridor route which we could easily see, after taking a couple of photographs. We reached the path & carried on to the Stye crossing the top of Piers & Greta Gills. We crossed a bit of snow & a snow bridge over a small gully.

It continued to be clear & bright until we reached the camp where we found Dr. F. Moon, Assistant Lecturer in Agricultural Chemistry at Aberdeen University. Ned in his usual fashion commented strongly on the clean flannels he was wearing. We got everything dried at night &

had a good dinner. The Hon. Sec. was declared to be deposed as from the next annual meeting. Frank & Kenneth slept in one tent & Ned & I in the other.

Sunday 24/3/40 We woke to hear that Arthur Mayhew had arrived after midnight. He was on leave from the Searchlights & had walked from Keswick that night. Mayhew was the crack climber of the Club. Arthur & Kenneth decided to go to Seatoller for chocolate but we got tired of waiting & set off for Gable. The mist was pretty thick on top but not too bad. We got along the Traverse as far as Kern Knotts & after some talk we decided to try the Chimney. It was cold & wet & started to rain after the first pitch but not very hard & finally resolved itself into a Scotch mist.

Ned led the first pitch then got stuck & Frank went on & got over the chockstone alright. Then we went under a large poised block resting on a tiny pebble – it didn't seem safe to me however it had been there for ages & was quite stable. This brought us on to the well scratched slab which can be seen above the top of the crack from the path. Arthur & Kenneth had been watching us from leaving the first pitch together with a large crowd. Two girls were following us. It was bitterly cold & wet & on the slab my feet slipped out & I was hanging by my hands in a small hold for some time. We then got out on the top & came down a rough path to the left.

We then had lunch & were surprised to see how warm it was where the people were as it was protected from the wind. We had much to say about Jones & Mayhew not coming up. We then went across Great Hell Gate to Needle ridge which we climbed on two ropes. The mist was so thick as to make it impossible to see the top of a pitch from the bottom of the same pitch. We could vaguely see the Needle on the first two pitches & also people huddled in the Dress Circle watching us. There was not much difficulty apart from the first two pitches which were very smooth steep slabs with awkward holds. A pocket hold is the key to the first pitch. We then had a fine scree run down Great Hell Gate to the path.

We ran down the Pass from the 1000' mark & repeated this performance each night after. We cut across the grass & then over the wall & down a chute in the field & across the stream by stones thus saving

considerable time. People thought we were crazy but it got us down although when we tired it was a painful procedure to jog, jog down the steep slopes. Tea at Seathwaite.

Monday 25/3/40 Went up Styehed – very busy, many people on Pass then along Corridor route to Hollow Stones. It was very warm & sunny & we had several stops en route for rests. Met only 3 people on this path. Arrived in Hollow Stones about 2pm & had lunch there – Bovril, slabs of margarine, raisins & very little bread as our supply had run out. We went up to Steep Ghyll & found 3 people enjoying themselves there with yards of rope festooned all over the place. This party held us up several times on the climb.

Turned off Steep Gill up rocks then slabs to a deep crevasse at the bottom of the chimney. Arthur, Frank & I were on one rope & Kenneth & Ned on the other. A party came up here from Deep Gill & swarmed up outside the chimney in stocking feet while the second man paid out rope from a coil he held in his hand – he was not tied on nor did he belay the first man & the holds were scanty & poor. Arthur had difficulty in getting in the chimney – it must have taken about 20 minutes – he was right off form & had about 4 attempts. He got up slowly & with a struggle. The chimney was very awkward & was really hard work – mostly wriggling with legs right out. It is only possible to get one leg in the chimney & the body was almost all out of it. Frank got up OK, so did I at first attempt. The step off from the crevasse on to some slabs below the chimney was awkward.

We then went along the Knife Edge Arete from Low Man on to High Man. Kenneth & Ned were wisecracking at us from the summit where they were waiting. The Knife Edge was uncomfortable but otherwise very nice. Then up steep rock to the top of the Pinnacle then down the awkward slabs to Jordan Gap then Pisgah. We had a fine glissade right down Deep Gill on to Lords Rake then down the steep snow in a standing glissade to the bottom – it was very fast & exhilarating. Then down a large snowfield that covered the screes down into Hollow Stones. We had to kick steps up here coming up but it was better than climbing the scree.

The bottom of Deep Gill was covered with snow almost to the top of the first pitch. On the last glissade Kenneth put one foot on to a soft

bit & went in up to the thigh & and as he was travelling fast he turned a perfect somersault & landed on his back. He went careering down a good way before he pulled himself together enough to brake. The snow slopes seemed almost vertical – 80°- 90° but of course they were the same as the scree underneath. It must have taken less than 5 minutes to come right from the top to Hollow Stones. We repeated the last bit of that twice for pleasure & then collected the rucksacks we had dumped at dinner time & set off home. Here we realised how tired we were & still managed to run down the Pass. We held a conference & decided owing to bread shortage to have tea at Seathwaite – which we did – arriving there about 7pm. Tea cost 1/3d. Borrowed a loaf from Mrs. Edmondson. Found that Peter Daghish arrived with a tent.

Tuesday 26/3/40 Held a conference & Jones, Mayhew & Moon decided to go to Keswick for a trip out & supplies. Peter wished to have an easy day for his first day & we wanted an off day so we went up to Gable. The weather was clear & sunny. We met a chap on the Dress Circle – the Pass & Gable were deserted by the way – who had been up at King's & was in the same year as Arthur in the Zoo. Dept. We had decided to do Arrowhead Easy (a mod.) & as he knew it he went around and showed it us. We started up & before getting to the Arrowhead we were met by a girl coming up behind. We got on the ridge & thought the climb was finished & then came The Strid which put Peter off for about 5 mins although it was very easy to Ned & I. The other party were stuck, at least the girl was, on the traverse from the Arrowhead upwards. She got over it by the time we had reached the bottom again however. The climb is a really fine one & has no real difficult bits. The ridge looks exposed & is a lovely position. Holds are good & numerous. We came down Eagle's Nest Gully & so home not running down the Pass.

Wednesday 27/3/40 We all went up to Gable again – very cold & windy. Arthur & Ned suggested Eagles Nest & Jones suggested Needle. Peter & Frank supported Arthur & so I was left to do Needle. The wind got worse & was very gusty. We got up to the Step OK by the Arete & Kenneth got on to the top but I dare not step up on to the Mantleshelf because of the gusts which threatened to blow me off. Jones had the

wind up on top so he came off. It took him about 10 mins to get a propitious moment for stepping on to the Mantleshelf then he was spreadeagled on there hanging on by his fingertips to the edges of the block for another 10 mins until he dare get on to his knees & come down. The wind was lifting him off the rock although he was pressed against it. I expected him to come off & so did he I think. We got down OK & went home before the others who went up Eagles Nest & down Needle Ridge – not a Needle day. Bell arrived without any kit at all except a dressing case – much ragging went on.

Thursday 28/3/40 It was rather cold – Arthur & Ned set off for home. Kenneth decided to go to Keswick for supplies & Bell didn't intend to climb I think & decided to go with him. Peter didn't want to go to Gable. Frank & I decided to have a good day as it was to be our last. We went up to Gable. The weather was bitterly cold & a bit windy but not too bad. We decided to do Arrowhead Direct (VD) & then down Needle Ridge as this is a fine climb. We started on Arrowhead OK – it was VD alright the rocks were steep & the holds small. It was necessary to stop & warm ones hands several times in each pitch as the rocks were like ice & it was impossible to trust to handholds when the fingers were cold. We went up to the gap behind the Arrowhead & then back down & under the Arrowhead from the belay below. This bit seemed spectacular, difficult & awkward but was OK once you got started on it. In fact it is a very nice bit. We went over the Arrowhead & stepped in the gap on to the ridge & up this, joining the Easy way on the ridge & so to the top. This was a very good climb & in warm weather will be truly remarkable. Even in the intense cold it was well worth it.

We went along to the top of Needle Ridge by which time the sun had got through & it was much warmer. The ridge presented no difficulty although we agreed that the bottom two pitches are worse to come down than to go up as the holds are awkward & cannot be seen. It was now 5pm & we had tea in the Dress Circle. As it was warm & we also felt on fine form we decided to try the Needle. We roped up to the Step & tied on & Frank went on to the Mantleshelf after about 5 mins – after that he had no difficulty. I got up to the Mantleshelf

easily at first attempt as I'd seen Frank do it & saw the trick of tricks, as it can be called.

I traversed along the Mantleshelf & had to step off it around the corner, with a small handhold to pull at. The whole body had to be raised about 2'. This seemed difficult as balance seemed bad but naturally the hands were not needed as the balance was perfect to step off on to a large foothold & a handhold the size of a fist, smooth & rounded on the top with a faint depression down the middle hence affectionately called the Baby's Bottom. From here small holds got up until it was possible to pull up on to the top.

We sat here a bit & then came down by the Crack this time of course. We felt really fine & fit & not at all tired when we got back & told of our fine day. This was the best day anyone had done & we had each done the same number of climbs in the week which was more than anyone else had done in the week. Peter had been for a walk around by Langdale & had had a good day. He did not want to go to Gable again & was going to Scafell – Pikes Crag – on Friday with Kenneth. More ragging of Bell about women & climbing.

Friday 29/3/40 Frank & I woke up to find it was snowing heavily & the tops about 1000' were all white. We lay in bed & cooked breakfast for everyone. Then we collected our things & packed inside the tent. We carried all grub across to Peter's tent. The tent had about 1/2" of sleet on one side & it was coming down heavily. We started to pack the tent & we heard voices over the wall. On investigation we found that Jones & Bell were packing the small tent (N.S.'s) & were preparing to leave also. Peter decided to stay until Saturday. We left enough grub for about 20. They were wise to pack up as they could not have climbed at all & a day in tents would be hopeless. We left about 10:30 & paid off the farm & there to Seatoller where we got the 11:00am bus. We talked to the driver all the way down & he stopped the bus to show us pictures of the winter they had had.

Got into Keswick about 11:35 where it was not raining very heavily. Dumped our packs in the bus station & went to Storms for a coffee – real coffee served white in an individual pot with cream. Then we walked about a bit & Frank bought postcards of climbs & then had lunch – a good one as we would get no tea. Walked about after lunch

George Driver

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& caught 3:00pm bus – it was now misty & fairly fine. Stopped at Alston for 20 mins & arrived N/C 7:20. Saw Frank off to the White Bull & home 8:15pm.



Scafell crag, 7 March 2010 (*Tony Simpkins*)

Partially Inebriated Eels

Slingsby's Chimney 119 Years On

Richard Hargreaves

When Jane and I booked for the FRCC's Wasdale Centenary Meet at Brackenclose at Easter 2007, we looked forward to a weekend of historical associations and in particular a date with Slingsby's Chimney on Scafell in the company of Mike and Pippa Cocker. As a humble great-grandson of William Cecil Slingsby I had brought three of his great-great-grandsons, in the form of our three then teenage sons, to a meet at Brackenclose in September 1988 to do a 100th anniversary ascent of the Pinnacle and Chimney. The meet leaders had happily embraced the idea but on a miserable Scafell day of mist, cold rain and slippery rock a 'sound mountaineering decision' had been made to abandon the climb. Now, 19 years later, was another chance to do our little bit to link the family into a piece of climbing history.

The activities of Slingsby and his companions on the crags and hills around Wasdale in the late 1880s and early 1900s and the new routes they climbed, in winter as well as summer, were recorded in the Visitors Book and later in the Wasdale Climbing Book in the Wastwater Hotel. Mike's splendid book on that period was published in 2006 as part of the Centenary of the founding of the Fell and Rock in 1906.

In July 1888, Haskett Smith, Slingsby and two others went up to Scafell on a cold, wet day of pouring rain to see if they could find a route to the top of the Pinnacle. Slingsby's generation in their nailed boots would have been less affected by the wet than were their rubber-soled descendants. Haskett Smith's description of Slingsby's climbing in his entry on the 1888 ascent in the Wastwater Hotel Visitors' Book is irresistible:

After a brief war dance on the heads & shoulders of his less dexterous companions the newcomer started on his wild career, gliding up impossible inclines & wriggling over streaming slabs with the swift & sinuous motion of a partially inebriated eel! Nearly 120ft of rope had run out before he paused in an easy chimney within sight of the Low Man, & with the certainty that the climb was practically accomplished. The rest followed in due course & drenched as they were with rain & benumbed by the bitter cold were glad enough to have the benefit of the friendly rope.

To general hilarity, this passage was read aloud in the hut on the Saturday evening. Sunday wasn't a day for eels, inebriated partially or otherwise, when our party walked up Brown Tongue and into the magnificent Hollow Stones.

I don't do any serious rock climbing nowadays but I'll still have a go if people like Mike and Pippa have the rope, equipment and patience to take me up a climb. With us was Sam, our youngest son at 28 and, of course, one of Slingsby's great-great-grandsons. Mike and Pippa took myself and Sam on the climb while Jane watched and photographed the proceedings from a sunny perch on the top of Pike's Crag opposite. All my previous attempts at Slingsby's Chimney had been abandoned because of wet and greasy rock but this weekend the weather was wonderfully sunny and dry. If the sun hadn't caused the eels to become dehydrated the remarkably cold wind would have numbed them, as it did our fingers.

“Moderately Difficult – 335ft – an interesting and very popular climb.”

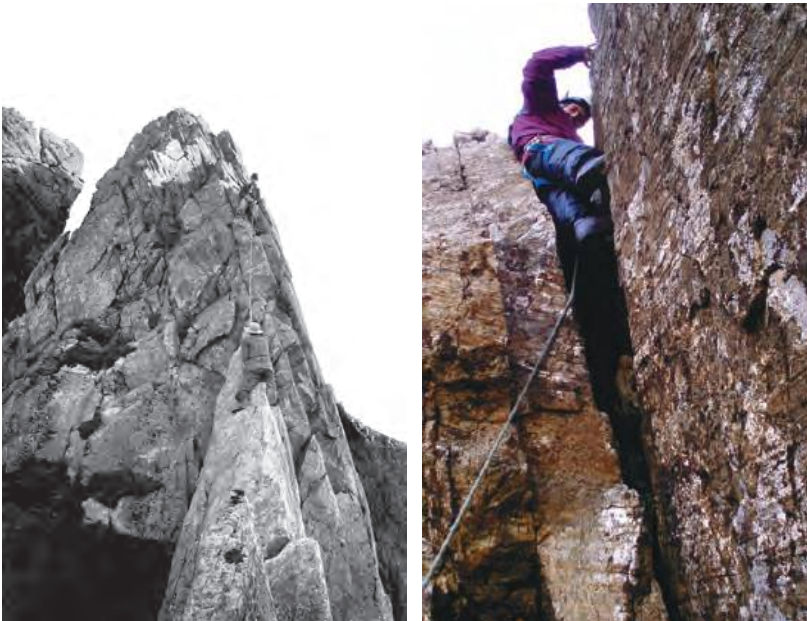
Since we are in historical mode I can quote the above from the 1936 Scafell Guide beside me as I write this, complete with inscription on the fly leaf: To A B Hargreaves (my father) from A T Hargreaves (who wrote the guidebook, no relation). June 5th 1936. The modern guidebook grades it Very Difficult for one or two moves only.

Whichever guidebook you use, the climb starts with a scramble for 200ft up the gully of Steep Ghyll, usually damp or downright wet and unpleasant, but today it was so dry the moss turned to dust as we trod on it. The climb is considered easy stuff these days, but in July 1888 it was a bold thing to do, especially on a cold wet day.

The first real pitch takes off up a little wall with nice big holds on the right of the gully then out onto a series of slabs and steps up to what the pioneers called 'the crevasse', a large block separated from the main structure of the crag by a deep, dark crack. By now we are out on the airy face of the Pinnacle but the block provides a big solid base from which to tackle the rather awkward step up onto the slab above; there's an ample foothold but not much for timid hands or fingers to pull on to lever oneself upwards. While Sam, like me, paused for thought here, I imagined the original quartet clanking around in their nailed boots

and stiff tweed jackets and breeches on this step with cloud, wind and cold rain all around them on that July day 119 years ago. They would all have gathered and squeezed into the tight corner below the slanting chimney above them. This is where Slingsby was summoned into the lead to tackle the chimney, standing on the head or shoulders of his companions in order to get over the undercut base of the chimney and wedge himself within its comforting walls.

As Mike clipped my rope into the array of nuts and slings for my belay I wondered what bit of rock previous generations had wrapped their rough hemp ropes around for security here. No combined tactics needed this time, however, as Mike deftly stepped up to use hidden handholds in the bowels of the chimney and a neat little foothold ledge on the right wall to lever himself up and into the wider recess above. As he waited his turn, while I grunted into and up the chimney, Sam was probably looking more comfortable than he felt, and he could clearly hear the abuse hurled upwards at us from the writer of the latest



Pictures contrasting the styles of about 1890 and 2007 – styles of dress even more than of climbing, not to mention the ‘helmets’!

Scafell Guidebook as he walked along Rake's Progress, the ledge below the climbs. "What are you doing in that chimney? Get out, you inebriated eels!" shouted Al Phizacklea. Slingsby's 'swift and sinuous motion' made more sense now as the chimney gave way to more open scrambling up to the top of Low Man and the ever stunning classic view of the Knife Edge or *à cheval* leading airily to High Man, the top of the Pinnacle itself.

Purists may shudder at the non-historical conclusion to the climb, an abseil down into Jordan Gap instead of climbing down and then even another abseil down Broad Stand but it all added to the feeling of a wonderfully varied, classic mountain day in the company of distinguished ghosts from the past.

North Climb Criticism

Doug Elliott

Whatever minor arithmetical miscalculations between imperial and metric, the true stature of *North Climb* on Pillar Rock is immutable. I repudiate any diminution from the 350ft described in the 1923 FRCC guide, supposedly shrinking to 101m in the 2007 edition; and I reject any contradiction in the minor shift of grade from “Difficult; last pitch exceptionally so” to become “Difficult with a severe finish”. I am encouraged by both editions bestowing praise with the early guide referring to *North Climb* as “A deservedly popular climb” and the latest awarding three quality stars plus a caption of “A superb classic”. *North Climb* is above criticism.

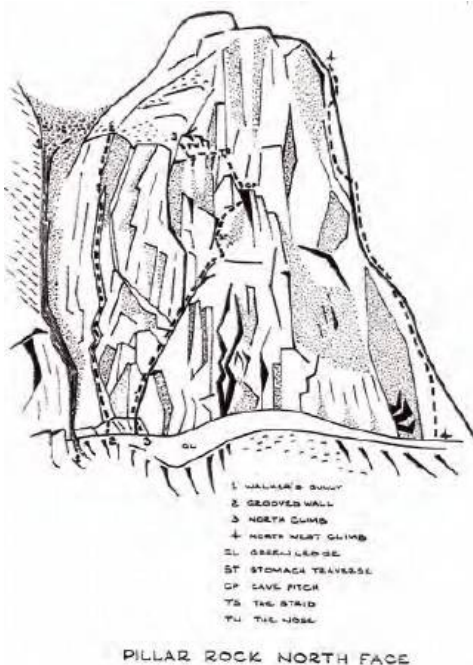
Pillar Rock peeps over the flank of Pillar the mountain when viewed from my boyhood home in Frizington, and it was at age 14 years that I walked there with village friends. Together we solo climbed High Man by what we discovered later was *Slab & Notch Climb* – but at the time information from the oldest member of our group was that there was “an easy way up the back”. It was a late return home and I was criticised by anxious parents. Nevertheless, for me Pillar was transformed into something special, and after *Slab & Notch* I delved into the Rock’s history. It was *North Climb* that initially grabbed my attention, perhaps influenced by its association with the “father of British rock-climbing” and later my own exhilarating schoolboy ascent at the birthplace of climbing – Napes Needle.

Spirit and courage required for tackling the Needle had already been displayed elsewhere. On Pillar Rock the great W P Haskett Smith first attempted *North Climb* in 1882 with his brother when they had a lucky escape as a large block came away and almost plucked them off in its downward plunge. Haskett Smith recorded “It was a near thing; but a moment later I swung into the cleft just vacated by the stone”. This was at the stage Haskett Smith shunned the rope as “illegitimate” and they got no further than the Stomach Traverse. Over the next few years he returned with others but always was forced to retreat, until in the company of G Hastings and WC Slingsby he was rewarded with success in 1891, but unfortunately failed to surmount the final obstacle – The Nose. They finished by descending into Savage Gully and

climbing up to the left; described by a self-critical Haskett Smith as “stooping to conquer”. The next year *North Climb* was climbed by G A Solly and party, finishing by The Hand Traverse, and another year later The Nose succumbed to J Collier and party.

Three years after my *Slab & Notch* initiation and inspired by historical knowledge I was ready for a ‘proper’ climb. By then I had moved on from pioneering solo and climbing into the unknown with Frizington

companions, and I had transferred loyalty for exploratory climbing to schoolmates at Whitehaven Grammar School. For *North Climb* I teamed up with a couple of these friends, and between us we had a second-hand 100ft rope, a long length of waistline, and a few slings and ex-army karabiners. Like the pioneers, we climbed in nailed boots, though ours were tricouni nails fixed to ex-army boots, and theirs would probably have been clinker nails fixed to first-rate hand-made boots. It was decided to climb unencumbered as rucsacks were of the frame type or we relied on war surplus haversacks slung over one shoulder. Sacks, including sandwiches and flasks, were left on Green Ledge and I set off, following the many scratch marks, with a secret weapon hung round my neck – a pair of plimsolls. We had a communal copy of the then current guide *Pillar Rock and Neighbourhood* which warned the bulk of the route may be no more than Diff., but the finish was most certainly Severe by either The Hand Traverse or The Nose alternatives. I led throughout, and until the final pitch no difficulties were experienced, though our thrutching on the classic Stomach



Traverse must have been ugly to behold, and I tested the valour of my friends as they steadied my nailed boots on the Cave Pitch. We traversed easily across The Strid to gather apprehensively on a restricted ledge with The Nose to the left and The Hand Traverse above.

After changing into rubbers and handing one boot each to my valiant companions to carry on my behalf, I set off for The Hand Traverse. I found the first few feet straightforward, and having grasped the top of an excellent flake I could see the remaining section as an obvious traverse left to the top of The Nose. However, after tentative flirtations, I couldn't bring myself to commit. I moved a hand left; I leaned left; I stretched an arm left; I poked left first with a foot and then extended a leg. I lacked 'bottle'. I stayed long enough to provide a palpitating performance of knee trembling before climbing down to security at the end of The Strid ledge. After another couple of half-hearted abortive attempts I switched attention to The Nose. Initially The Hand Traverse alternative was chosen because guidebook advice for The Nose sounded problematic, but plimsolls allowed me to stand tip-toe on a flake abutting The Nose itself, and from there to reach reasonable handholds where in turn these were sufficient to allow my plimsolled left foot to find a hidden hold round the face of The Nose, and so to overcome this final problem. I remember all this came together at a first attempt, and my feelings of joy were a strange mixture of calm well-being and contentment coupled with forceful desire to proceed. I felt a combination of physical relaxation and mental energy that opened a boundless future. From now on nothing was impossible ... I assured my friends – really – I could have done The Hand Traverse! They seemed full of admiration, but criticism came soon after as I was blamed for choice of return route. The major difficulty we found that day was our descent; fine to the bottom of the Old West Route, but below we experienced an epic when soloing down alongside the waterfall under the west face of Low Man to regain Green Ledge.

On numerous occasions since I have ascended *North Climb*, but have never again matched such joy. All ascents of *North Climb* have been fulfilling and provide happy memories, and one in particular I recall is an outing with my seconder for membership of the Fell & Rock. This

was 'Ancient' Syd Wilson, a bachelor, and though past retiring age when we first met, he continued to operate his market-garden and greengrocer's business in Aspatria and Maryport. On a regular basis he would come out late on Saturdays, stay at a Fell & Rock hut and distribute left-over unsold fruit - ensuring everyone else was also on a regular basis. Syd would join in with Sunday climbing, often just walking to the crag, but volunteers were always available to reunite him with Lakeland classics. On this occasion he would not be put off by the long approach to Pillar Rock, and he wanted nothing less than to do *North Climb*. The day evolved into a climbers' 'fun happening' and I have a fond impression of the whole group of us strung out on the North face of Low Man where all went well enough until we congregated on The Strid.

The same dilemma faced Syd as still it would today with the latest guide grading The Hand Traverse as Hard Severe, The Nose as Severe and the Savage Gully cop-out as V.Diff. The latter now carries the warning "Definitely not recommended" and certainly no-one fancied the complicated contortions we knew were involved – now endorsed by the present guide description which starts "Get lowered from below The Nose". Childish chatter on which alternative finish to choose was eclipsed by an old man's rebuke as Syd lectured us on the traditional character of the route and the aesthetics of The Nose. A couple went first and set about hauling Syd up this final pitch whilst the rest of us pushed or proffered heads and other body parts as footholds for easing him over. A moment of alarm occurred as his considerable dead weight came on the rope and we realised this was attached to only a single line waist loop. We had overlooked how in the absence of buttons the flimsy line had a secondary use – to hold his tweed jacket closed. Syd was unperturbed, but an element of criticism could be detected in his assertion that The Nose was the only bona fide way.

This came to mind almost forty years after my own initiation on Pillar Rock when the Savage Gully exit from *North Climb* provided extramural learning for my son Steve with two of his fellow Dundee University students visiting the Lakes and taking advantage of his mother's cooking. Steve and his friends had experienced climbing in bad weather in Scotland, but still they came in for a revelation after we all ignored yet another warning in the latest guide stating *North*

Doug Elliott

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Climb "... is considerably harder in wet weather. It has been the scene of many epics and should not be underrated by novice parties". The weather was foul, being cold and cloudy with alternate drizzle and downpours, and the rock was greasy as only fanatical fans of Pillar can appreciate. It was a few years since I had climbed *North Climb* and we had settled on this route because "it's only a Diff." and perhaps more importantly it was a location I could pinpoint in zero visibility.

It was gratifying to find Green Ledge and to recognise immediately the first few feet before the rest of *North Climb* vanished into invisibility. We remained as two pairs of two for the initial pitches, but then combined into a team of four and slowly battled our way up to Haskett Smith's impasse at The Nose. Partly obscured by mist we trusted Steve as he took sole lead. He was calculating and cautious, yet inevitably slow, and I suspect *North Climb* had never before been festooned with as many runners as he managed to employ. Steve and his friends learnt the meaning of 'epic' and as the old-timer of the group I received a lesson in placing modern gear. The rock was slimy and The Nose was streaming with water so the decision to dismiss this option took no time at all, but it was a lengthy exercise for Steve and myself to abseil into Savage Gully, pull the ropes down, sort ourselves out, climb the opposite flank, and then cut back to drop a rope to the patient pair for use in surmounting The Nose. We finished warily over High Man and slithered down via *Slab & Notch*, roped all the way, and reached terra firma as it was getting dark. This made for a drawn out return to the car in Wasdale and a very late arrival back at Ulverston for some scathing criticism as appropriate from irate wife, or concerned mother, or peeved hostess; and an overcooked meal.

Performances of young and old may continue to attract criticism, but this is a separate issue from the stage on which they play, which remains an aloof and autonomous classic route physically above evaluation, judgement and interpretation of critics. For something as special as *North Climb* is to me I must trust that its significance will never be overlooked, and that forever it will continue to inspire future generations of climbers as it has for me. *North Climb* criticism – never!



Al Davis and Jonathan Eric climbing Beowulf (VS 4c) on Scrubby Crag, a not so scrubby venue in the imminent update of the Eastern Crag's guidebook. *(Ron Kenyon)*

Foul Play

Paul Exley

*The events described below never happened and both climbers are fictitious.
Also, it never rains in Buttermere.*

The low rumble of thunder was comfortably distant. Although vaguely threatening, it seemed to be over Blencathra whilst we were on High Crag in Buttermere. The wind was from over Gable way so should have been taking the storm away from us. Strange, how things turn out.

Andrew and I had been enjoying warm, dry rock whilst climbing the classics on High Crag along with Susan and her climbing partner. The partner had had to leave early to travel back north so it seemed a good idea for the three of us to join forces for a final route. Foul Play was chosen for its two stars quality, 20m length and a difficulty of HVS 5b.

Andrew was keen to lead and was soon tied on, only to realise that he had an inadequate number of small wires for this steep slab with its thin cracks. Susan dashed daintily downwards to the sacks to re-appear with the essential additions. Andrew, now suitably weighted down, launched himself onto the rock. After several protectionless metres he was appreciating the grade but not the lack of runners. He scabbled to put a thin sling over what pretended to be a small flake and then realised that he had an inadequate number of quick-draws. Clipping into the sling, he suggested that we might like to send him up a few extras. Since both ropes were hanging free, that wasn't a problem. Weighted down some more, he resumed progress, successfully ignoring the storm which, against the odds, was moving gradually closer.

After only a couple more moves, he felt the rope tighten abruptly whilst we observed the thin sling sliding down to join us. It's difficult to differentiate between a squawk and a cry of alarm but we did understand that he was now even less happy. Very soon, he managed to fix a more permanent runner and embarked on the traverse leftwards towards the second crack as the first one ran out. It wasn't quite as easy to see him now as the light was failing under the darkening sky. Nevertheless, progress continued steadily but slowed as he reached what

turned out to be the crux. Just above this he stopped, in his own words, “for a gasp”.

I happened to be looking across the valley just as the lightning bolt hit the top of Robinson rather spectacularly. No longer a remote boom, this was a crisp crackle followed immediately by a very loud crash. Andrew’s gasp ended prematurely. He won the Gold Medal for speed of topping out and belaying, then Susan climbed quickly, removing the runners. I sacrificed style for speed.

A hasty descent and we just had time to don boots and waterproofs before the deluge hit us.

Then Again

Jim Rigg

The previous week had seen plenty of snow in the Lakes but investigation revealed that there had been considerable thawing since. Despite relatively high temperatures, I thought the high north faces might be 'worth a punt' and the Mountain Weather Information Service indicated freezing temperatures on the Saturday night. Text-book theory suggested conditions might be 'in'. Determination was put to the test as we drove through Egremont at 8.30pm with the car thermometer registering an outside temperature of +8°C! Finding Brackenclose empty engendered thoughts along the lines of "what do they know that we don't?" Bed followed supper and seemingly before we knew it we were out of the door and heading for Scafell.

Gone are the days of reaching Mickledore in less than an hour. A steady, slow plod saw us hit the snow line at Hollow Stones. Two lads, less than half my age, steamed past bringing back memories of earlier times when I thought I moved with such economic speed. Seams of hard neve led to the base of Lord's Rake. Things were looking up. Although black buttresses towered all around, lines of 'white stuff' could be seen in the gullies. We met the younger generation at a decent ledge and discussed plans. They decided on Steep Ghyll whilst I casually indicated that it was our intention to climb Moss Ghyll. How come we were the only climbers around? Having fed, watered and geared up, we were soon tied on at the bottom of the first pitch sorting out the fankle of ropes.

Trending right up sugary snow within a slight chimney gave a reasonable start. However, the search for protection amid snow-covered rock was less than straightforward. Having secured a runner of sorts, tenuous placements allowed an awkward traverse across snowed up rock that gave access to that quality of snow the winter climber dreams of finding. Above, problematic climbing up a narrow chimney led to more good snow and a secure belay below the Tennis Court Wall. The pitch seemed to take longer and was somewhat more demanding than I expected. Somehow the description had washed over me and re-reading the guide with greater care revealed all. "It will probably feel a

grade harder in lean conditions; then again you may just be climbing badly.”

Good runners at the start and Will safe in the depths of the adjacent cave, the initial steep moves were completed with minimal expenditure of nervous energy. “A delicate traverse leads back left...” Technical 5 mixed climbing I like – especially when it’s well protected. This wasn’t and it was a somewhat beleaguered, subdued leader that eventually reached the belay below the ‘massive chockstone’. I was pleased when Will arrived and indicated that he, too, found the pitch quite demanding. The spacious ledge engendered a feeling of confidence and after a snack of plum loaf with chocolate spread fortified by light banter, we began to think about the next pitch.

Delicate, intricate climbing behind the chockstone led to the infamous Collie step. (‘Exceptional conditions’ did not prevail.) With ropes running round the back of various, large jammed blocks, the traverse through the window to the base of the amphitheatre felt more secure than conditions perhaps justified and good, hard snow allowed one to almost romp (I am, after all, getting too old for this game!) to the belay.

Although clearly visible on the approach, I didn’t know what to make of the thin looking final slab. As Will approached the belay, thoughts of a bail out were repressed in favour of a positive outlook. It didn’t look easy. Icy rock, two decent runners and careful climbing saw the dispatch of the first 10m or so. So far, so good. The traverse left across unconsolidated ground with occasional good turf placements, led worryingly via a half-hearted sling draped precariously over a partially cleared block, to the exit line. I really appreciated my new crampons, Grivel G14s. Described by the Needlesports website as “an excellent steep ice and steep buttress crampon”, the “forged vertical format points” were superb right up to the time when, during a delicate footwork sequence, a front point of the right crampon naughtily managed to get stuck in the heel of its counterpart on the left. A copious flow of expletives supported by levering, twisting and general bugging about enabled me to separate left from right. Oh for a good runner! Clearing revealed a possibility of protection and a small rock was hammered into a reluctant crack. Not far to go. “Panic: sudden fright often without any visible reason or foundation” (Chambers Dictionary). Panic doesn’t quite describe the situation when the prob-

Jim Rigg

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lem was all too clear – sugary snow, poor placements, exposed climbing and a long way to fall! Take it steady, keep cool, climb it, don't lose control. Less steep now, firm snow, feeling better, job done.

“What a pitch!” exclaimed my long-suffering partner. “The placements were best when you needed them least,” pronounced he. I regretted not being able to summon the poise to stop part-way along



Will Tapsfield descending the West Wall Traverse at the end of the day
(Jim Rigg)

the traverse to take a photograph. There's only so much a man can do and I have responsibilities, what with being a grandfather and all.

Once over the top, the full force of the cold, strong easterly wind greeted us to another world. Quite rightly, Will insisted we take in the summit. En route, the only other person we saw on Scafell that day told us that Deep Ghyll was in superb condition. Inspection revealed this to be entirely correct and the descent to Lord's Rake via the West Wall Traverse was absolutely stunning. The Steep Ghyll team were finishing their climb as we passed beneath heading down to a food stop and general sort-out in the shelter of Hollow Stones. All conversation featured expressions of delight, good fortune and solitude – in the Lake District. A special day indeed.

Screwed Up

Graham Townsend

So what do you expect out of this [operation]?" said the axeman.

"To cover 10 - 15 miles with a 30lb sac of gear," I said. His eyebrows took off.

"How old are you?" he asked. "I've got a bus pass," I hedged. "I also must rock climb again."

"Your age is against you," he countered.

"I'm fitter than you," I said, eyeing the fatty cornice overhanging his girth strop. The verbal fencing continued for a minute or so.

"Look at these climbing photos to see what it's about." I had cut some action shots from page 3 of the *Bumbler and Stumbler* which had ceased publication some time back. He eyed them closely and in no haste. Coming from page 3 they were explicit shots with the sprayed-on lycra clearly showing the neat footwork.

"I see what gives you the urge (to climb)."

"It's more than shapely calves, it's the hands-on experience that gives the real buzz."

"What are they?" he asked, pointing at the harness.

"Quick draws" I replied.

"Stop!" he shouted, "I am getting excited!" He sat down, "OK, if it makes an old man happy, I'll do you."

"No protruding screws, mind - I don't want them jammed in a crack."

"F**k, me you're a demanding punter."

Later...

Whilst awaiting the guy with the lethal injection, a small lady in a black dress and a clipboard appeared from nowhere.

"Excuse me sir, but I caught sight of your notes. I wonder if you would like to take advantage of this month's half price offer?"

"For what?"

"Well the 'Anybody Funeral Service' are the Trust's approved contractors for Post Operative Failure Assistance, but you must commit now."

Quickly cutting through the sales pitch, even a half price offer seemed a poor deal on a simple cash and carry service.

“It’s alright thanks, but I’m donating to medical science.”

“ I urge you to reconsider; they only want good condition body-work, not burnt out hulks. FRCC I presume?”

“Also CC,” I offer.

“Ah, that qualifies for a further 5%.”

“Thanks, but no thanks.”

Then the lights went out.

Much, much later..

Axeman: “So how do you feel things are?”

“I’ll be glad to get rid of all this scaffolding.”

“Sure, an x-ray first, just to make sure it’s all in one piece”

Apparently all was as well as could be expected (with age allowance).

“Make yourself comfortable, this will look worse than you expect.”

After rummaging in the locker he produced a pair of pliers.

“Do you not have a spanner? 13mm is what you need.”

“I always do it this way, there’s usually no problems.”

Now stainless nuts on a stainless screw is usually tricky, and with it covered in whatever had leaked (from the leg) it looked tricky indeed.

As expected, the pliers flew off and tested the rip strength of the stitches.

“Sorry about that. No harm done, eh?”

“If you were an apprentice of mine I’d have kicked yer arse, but under the circumstances perhaps you could have another go.”

Calling for his glamorous assistant who washed all debris away with a sort of sterile WD40, the reluctant steelwork came apart on the second attempt.

“How do you get those two rods out of me leg? and will you sterilise them first?”

A pained expression suggested I was pushing his patience.

“I have done this before!”

With surprising ease the final scraps were withdrawn. “And these two holes?”

“I’ll cover them, they will fill in eventually.”

Graham Townsend

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“Thanks for all the work. I’ll drop that 13mm spanner off next time I pass.”

I binned the pills and set off for French bolts.

The rest will be history.



Raw Head Cottage, December 2009 (*Tony Simpkins*)

The Move from FRCC to FRCC Ltd

John M Barrett

On the 1st July 2008 The Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District became The Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District Limited. At first glance this may not appear important or significant; however the inclusion of the word 'Limited' reflects the most far reaching change in the Club's legal position since its foundation. Six years of hard work involving three Presidents, two Secretaries, one Treasurer and many members, finally resulted in the FRCC registering as an Industrial Provident and Mutual Society. Not everyone in the Club was in favour of the change; however their engagement in the process helped to generate a healthy debate throughout the Club. Certainly the Officers and the Committee involved were frequently held to account for their actions and their recommendations were rigorously scrutinised and questioned.



John Barrett, FRCC
treasurer 1999-2009

The following is an account of the six years' work involved in moving the Club from FRCC to FRCC Limited. It is a summary of the issues involved and the actions taken. Relevant documents referred to in this article are to be found in the Club's archive and on the members' section of the FRCC website, under Club Documents - AGM papers and minutes, or under Committee meeting minutes, as appropriate. I hope this account may serve as a useful record.

A question was asked at a Finance and Administration sub-committee meeting in August 2002 as to whether the long established structure of the Club was still appropriate for today's 'blame culture', in particular whether as an unincorporated association the Club provided adequate protection if faced with a major claim not fully met through insurance, given the unlimited liability faced by all the membership. Senior Officers, Hut Wardens, Trustees and others with responsibilities were felt to be particularly vulnerable. These matters were reported to the Committee for consideration. It recommended that extra Professional Indemnity insurance be taken out to protect officers, and that the

Finance and Administration sub-committee be asked to further investigate an appropriate structure for the Club. The debate began.

Many members feared such change would detrimentally alter the ethos of the Club and potentially lead to unwanted external interference in the management of its affairs. Some members, as expected, were opposed to any change. The Committee were very mindful of these fears and from the beginning determined that the Club's ethos and management should remain with as little change as practicably possible.

Several meetings later the unequivocal advice from past officers and our business advisers was to consider the structure of an incorporated company limited by guarantee. This is an increasingly common structure used by organisations to give their members the protection of limited liability of about £1 in the event of a major claim. The 2003 AGM gave the go ahead for the committee to further explore this option. A working group consisting of the President, Secretary and Treasurer was delegated to do the work. Meetings were arranged with Cobbetts LLP (our solicitors), and R F Miller (our accountants) to explore the way forward. After much discussion, correspondence and careful consideration of all the facts, we were faced with several problems. Firstly, it became clear that the management of the Club would have to change in a radical way with a board of directors appointed to replace the Committee. Secondly it emerged that a huge stamp duty tax bill of £120k to £160k would be due should the incorporation proceed. This was because of the necessary transfer of an estimated three to four million pounds of assets from the Club to the new company. The committee considered these conditions to be unacceptable and recommended that this option be shelved, but agreed that others should be explored. This was endorsed by the 2004 AGM.

The next possibility to be considered was the establishing of limited liability trading companies for the huts and guidebooks. The Club would have remained as the FRCC and would have held shares in and appoint directors to the new trading companies. The companies would have operated under agreed terms of reference but as far as possible be separate from the Club. It was important for legal reasons that there should be such a separation. This arrangement would have given limited liability protection to the directors and 'employees' of the

companies. However the more we examined this arrangement the more questions arose. One question led to another as complications became apparent. In August 2005 a meeting was held at Cobbetts to review the situation. Cobbetts and Miller each produced a full report of the meeting including the unanimously agreed recommendation that the Club should not proceed with the formation of the companies. Their reports are included with 2005 EGM papers and give a full pros and cons summary and suggested ways forward. Matters were reported to the September 2005 committee meeting, including the Cobbetts and Miller papers. After discussion the committee agreed to accept the recommendation not to proceed with the trading company route, and to bring that recommendation to the 2005 EGM for consideration. The meeting agreed to the motion 'that we accept the recommendations of Cobbetts and Miller and recommend not proceeding down the route of forming Limited Liability Trading Companies'. However the 2005 AGM agreed the motion 'that the Committee continues its work on Health and Safety matters, reviews the Club's insurances and examines other developments which may help the membership resist any claim made against it'.

When we began the review of the structure of the Club, Health and Safety was not on the radar screen and the review did alert us to this omission. The Club had not given the matter serious thought or taken any formal steps to fulfil requirements. It quickly became apparent that the Club could well be vulnerable because of this omission in its documentation and procedures. Whatever personal feelings people may have had about health and safety matters, the Club had little choice but to show a mature, responsible, yet reasonable approach. We had to be able to prove that we had taken all reasonable steps to fulfil these responsibilities in order to protect members and the Club against claims. The appointment of a Compliance Officer and the excellent work of the Health and Safety Advisory Group have resulted in our present Health and Safety documentation and procedures. These are kept under constant review and form one of the most important lines of defence in protecting the Club.

A second line of defence identified was adequate and appropriate insurances. Following the AGM request, an independent insurance broker was asked to examine the Club's policies and advise whether

they were indeed adequate and appropriate. Thankfully the answer was positive.

The Committee was now left with the task of examining 'other developments which may help the membership resist any claim made against it'. It was thought that the new Charities Act might be a way forward. Charitable status gives limited liability to an organisation without the burden of tax being paid. The new Act was published in November 2006 and did include some provisions which may have benefited the FRCC. However there were major difficulties with other provisions which would have caused difficulties for the Club ethos and freedom. The Committee therefore agreed that it could not recommend seeking charitable status.

The last, and possibly the most promising way to achieve limited liability appeared to be the Mutual Society route under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965. The 1965 Act is fairly old legislation and usually has regard to traditional organisations such as co-operative and mutual societies, housing associations and working men's clubs. It has to some extent been overtaken by the 'Companies Limited by Guarantee' by organisations wishing to restructure. However recently there has been a renewed interest by various clubs and organisations in becoming mutual societies. The Yorkshire Mountaineering Club recently became a Mutual Society. Informal discussions with the YMC revealed that the Mutual route looked very promising and the suggestion was taken to the committee, which agreed to take it forward. (At the time of writing – February 2010 – the Midland Association of Mountaineers has also just become Mutual.)

In May 2007 the solicitors Cobbetts, based in Manchester, were instructed to begin the process to incorporate the Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District as an Industrial and Provident Society. Included in the instructions was a note requesting as little change as possible to the then current constitution.

The Fell & Rock Climbing Club is an organisation run for the mutual benefit of the members with any financial surplus ploughed back to provide better services and facilities. Control of the Club lies with the members based on the principle of one member one vote. The Committee and Officers of the Club are elected by the member-

ship who may also vote to remove them from office. The Club is governed by its rules which should be prudent, clear and well drafted using language which is capable of being understood by all members. An Annual General Meeting is held and audited accounts submitted for approval. We have open membership, subject to agreed restrictions. None of this changed when the Club became a Mutual Society, as this very brief summary of the organisation of the Club contains the essential criteria needed to register as a Mutual Society under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965. To fully meet requirements we needed additional rules governing share allocation, various administrative provisions and some very minor changes to a few existing rules.

As few changes as possible to existing rules were proposed. However some additions and some minor redrafting were needed to meet FSA requirements. Where an existing rule was very specific and may have been subject to regular change at an AGM and therefore regular submission to the FSA, there was some redrafting to make it more general. For example the membership rule would no longer stipulate a maximum membership number. The rule change now allows the Committee to stipulate the number with the membership approving, or not, at the AGM. The rule change also allowed the existing footnote regarding membership criteria to be moved into byelaws outside the rules, agreed by Committee and approved by the membership. Thus the Club would keep control of membership criteria and procedure through the use of Membership Byelaws, as happens with the running of huts through the Hut Byelaws. Rules and rule changes need to be registered with the FSA, byelaws and byelaw changes do not.

Other proposed additions tightened the rule on dissolution and the distribution of assets making it almost impossible for a group of 'carpetbaggers' to get their hands on the Club's assets. An indemnity clause for officers and Committee members and a dispute procedure was also added to the rules.

The Financial Services Authority oversees Industrial and Provident and Mutual Societies in a similar way to Companies House with a Limited Company. In order to become a Mutual Society an organisation has to register with the FSA and submit its rules for approval. We had some warning that the FSA can interfere in the workings of certain organisations. However enquiries were made and legal and financial

advice taken, no evidence of interference in organisations such as FRCC was found. We were advised that so long as our rules were registered and accounts submitted annually we should not expect any further interference. The main obligations for a society once registered are: to keep proper accounts and submit them annually to the FSA; to inform them of any rules changes, registered address or name; to inform the FSA if members no longer wish the society to be registered.

Matters moved quickly during 2007. Frequent discussions and correspondence took place with the solicitors, accountants, the bank, the Committee and the membership. These threw up some interesting issues. For example, for the first time in many years the role of the Bank as Custodian Trustees as well as the role of the Club's Trustees was examined.

The roles were very different from what was thought; thankfully these matters are now clear. The Bank acts as Holding Trustees, our Club Trustees act as Advisory Trustees.

Cobbetts advised during the modification of the Club's rules to meet the requirements needed for registration, advised on legal matters and explored the possibility of future potential mishaps and difficulties. Miller, accountants, advised on financial matters relating to the change, in particular tax issues. It was vital that we had confirmation from them and HM Revenue and Customs that there would not be a tax burden on the transfer of assets from the Club to the new Society. As described above, this was a major problem when the Club considered the Company route.

An Extraordinary General Meeting was held on the 3rd November 2007 at Shap Wells, prior to the usual AGM. The motion for discussion was: 'That the Fell and Rock Climbing Club applies to the Financial Services Authority to be incorporated as an Industrial and Provident Society on the basis of the documentation supplied.' Members were supplied with a detailed paper setting out a balanced view outlining the pros and cons for the proposed change, a copy of the proposed rules on becoming mutual and a table of proposed rule changes.

The main advantages given for becoming a Mutual Society were:

- The management and the organisation of the Club would not change.
- We would gain Limited Liability protection for all members and officers, plus the avoidance of an individual member being named in such a claim, unless there has been gross negligence on the part of that member.

- There were no tax implications for the Club as was the case in becoming a Company Limited by Guarantee.
- Being a limited society the Club would have a legal identity of its own. Contracts would be entered into in the name of the Club and not in the name of an individual, as now.
- Having a legal identity, the Club would have the ability to take legal action against a third party if necessary.

The main disadvantages given were:

- Some additional rules and amendments to existing rules in order to comply with FSA requirements.
- The need to register future rule changes with the FSA before they can be enacted.
- Some limited public access to records.
- In order to deregister, the Club would need to wind up. However it was felt that although this could be expensive, it would be highly unlikely.

Mr Kevin Jaquiss, a solicitor specialising in Mutual Society matters, was invited to the meeting to answer question from the floor and advise on points of law. His contribution to the meeting was outstanding and well received, and is described in the minutes of the meeting, available in archive and on the website. After a long and detailed debate the proposed motion was passed by a huge majority of the two hundred and thirty members attending, only a dozen members voting against.

Having agreed to the incorporation of the Club and the formation of the new Club as a Mutual Society, it was necessary to dissolve the old unincorporated FRCC. A second motion was voted on. 'Accordingly, that upon confirmation of the registration of The Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District Limited, the unincorporated

rated association known as The Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District be dissolved in accordance with Rule 23 of the Club's Rules.' This motion was passed by a huge majority.

Rule 23 stated that a second EGM was needed to confirm dissolution and therefore confirm the final move to incorporation. It was agreed that this would be held at the November AGM 2008.

A third motion was required agreeing the transfer of assets. 'After the satisfaction of any proper debts and liabilities of the unincorporated association known as The Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District, the remaining assets shall be transferred as soon as is reasonably practicable to the newly formed Industrial and Provident Society named The Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District Limited in accordance with Rule 6 of the club's Rules.' This motion was passed by a huge majority.

A requirement of the final transfer of the Club's assets was written confirmation from HM Revenue and Customs that no tax payment would be levied on such a move. On the 7th March 2008 I received final written confirmation from HMRC stating that there would be no Capital Gains Tax liabilities on becoming a Mutual Society. On the 1st May I received similar written confirmation from HMRC regarding Stamp Duty. The way was now open.

The Committee now had the clear go ahead to finalise moving the Club to incorporate as an Industrial and Provident Society. It was agreed that the incorporation should begin on the 1st July 2008, given that our application to the FSA was successful. The 1st July is the beginning of the Club's financial year and made for a clean start for the newly incorporated Club's business.

The FSA wrote accepting our registration in late June 2008, agreeing to the start date of 1st July and also to the Club retaining its existing financial year. There now began the work of closing old bank accounts and opening new, of informing insurances, tax, VAT, local authorities, etc. This proved to be frustrating at times.

As the old unincorporated Club could not be dissolved until the November EGM, the two bodies (FRCC and FRCC Limited) ran in tandem from the 1st July until November 2008. Luckily there were no major incidents during that period to test the legal system!

John M Barrett

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On Saturday 1st November 2008 the final AGM of The Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District was held at Shap Wells Hotel. This was followed by an Extraordinary General Meeting formally dissolving the unincorporated Club; immediately the first AGM of the new Fell and Rock Climbing Club Limited took place and it was a record 15 minutes or thereabouts. Six years after the first questions were asked, hopefully the Club has found the answer; it certainly took a lot of hard work to find.

The Club Library – A Trip Through Wonderland

Maureen Linton

A particular book by a contemporary mountaineering author had been recommended to me and I wished to locate a copy. After searching with little success, it seemed that the Fell and Rock Climbing Club Library would be the most likely source; but would it be worth a round trip of about 130 miles to Lancaster and back – or worth giving our Club Librarian the trouble of posting it to me? A chance conversation with our Librarian one Saturday evening at Raw Head revealed that the opening hours of the University Library, and hence access to our Club Library, included Sundays. He also advised that there were no parking problems on Sundays.

Next morning dawned in downpour. Not a day for the tops but a good opportunity for an early start for home for Don and myself, and a short diversion off the M6 to Lancaster University. It rained without interruption throughout the drive.

The campus was bleak and deserted. Rain fell steadily and bounced back out of the puddles. A signboard, luckily large enough to be read without having to leave the car, indicated the location of the Library and parking was certainly easy as there were no other cars in sight. I parked, but which of the surrounding buildings was actually the Library? There were plenty of windows to be seen but no entrance doors were immediately visible and there was nobody around to ask. Apart from the drumming of the rain, there was a post-apocalyptic stillness over the whole empty campus. Time to get out of the car and start walking. Perhaps I had half expected some direction notices, but saw none, so where to start? The surrounding buildings gave no clue, they stood wet, white and anonymous. Some concrete steps led to a higher level so I went in the hope of finding an entrance somewhere, when a figure appeared on the walkway ahead. So at least there was some life around. Head down and hooded, the hurrying figure paused long enough to tell me that I was in fact walking outside the back of the Library. Unfortunately the entrance was at the far end of the long building so there was still more rain to struggle through.

Inside, having shaken myself dry, I found the hushed and studious calm a welcome contrast to the wind and rain outside. The reception

desk was manned by a solitary gentleman who seemed quite pleased to have his reverie and his newspaper interrupted by an enquiry. My request for directions to the Club Library was met however with a blank stare. He had never heard of it. I explained how long it had been based there but he still had not heard of it. More than that, he had never apparently heard of the Club either and the subsequent production of my membership card had no effect at all. He made a few desultory jabs on the keys of his computer but nothing there enlightened him. I asked if there was perhaps another library building on the campus, he replied that there was the Ruskin but that it was closed on Sundays. He made a phone call but this produced no positive result either. There were long pauses in our conversation as each of us tried to think of the next move. During all this time he was patient and courteous then, possibly in desperation, he suggested that perhaps I had come to the wrong University and should have gone to the University of Cumbria which he added was “just down the road”. I was not convinced and we stood looking blankly at each other, each willing the other to come up with a better idea. Then – inspiration – I produced my Handbook and suggested he log onto our website.

So there he had it, not only information about the Club but clear evidence that our Library was indeed somewhere in his building and probably within vertical yards of where we were standing. But we were no nearer to finding out exactly where.

Just then, help arrived in the form of a lady colleague who presumably was to take over from him for the next shift. She had definitely heard of the Club but had no idea of the whereabouts of our Library, but they both continued to be helpful by trying another route. They asked what book I wanted and suggested that if it was in their collection I could borrow it from them. The gentleman wrote out some index numbers and gave me directions. I was to go up to floor B, turn right, turn right again and follow the index numbers. But before setting off, something made me ask the procedure for borrowing direct from them. It transpired that I would have to be registered as a borrower, given a pin number and subsequently a card which would not be available until the main reception opened the following morning. So no deal.

By this stage I was ready to admit defeat and was preparing to leave but, as they had both been so patient and helpful, the least I could do

was to go and take a look at the books they had directed me to. They pointed out that there was a lift but by now I needed some exercise, so up the stairs to floor B, turn right and right again to enter a labyrinth of narrow walkways between high stacks of bookshelves. Clutching the piece of paper with the index numbers and looking constantly upwards to where the numbers were fixed to the shelves I found the appropriate section which had a few shelves of mountaineering literature but not the book that I was looking for, of course.

Now came the real test of initiative: how to find the way back to the stairhead? Perhaps I should have unravelled a ribbon on the way out or at least left some footprints on the carpet. Wherever I had turned left originally, should I now turn right and vice versa or should I reverse the mathematical sequence of the index numbers? I headed in what I felt was the right direction and found myself passing a partition wall which, while concentrating on the numerical trail, I had not noticed on the outward journey. Set in the wall was a door, on the door was a nameplate, and on the nameplate was written "Fell and Rock Climbing Club Library".

This was pure *Alice in Wonderland*. The door was locked

Back to reception where the lady was now on her own, the gentleman presumably having gone for his lunch or a stiff drink or both. It was a delight to be able to inform her that I had located our Library and did she have a key? No she had no key. Another inspiration, perhaps my hut key would fit. Back to floor B, turn right etc etc. No, of course the hut key did not fit. Back to reception again, this time the lady had the inspiration. She sent for the porter who arrived with a bunch of keys large enough to equip a prison officer.

Back again upstairs. You know the way by now. As with any expedition the walk-in to base camp becomes easier and shorter every time it is repeated and so it was with the ascent to floor B and beyond, for by now it was obvious that the Library was only a few yards from the stairhead. The porter's key fitted, the door opened and I was in. Almost an hour had passed since leaving the car.

For those who do not know already, our Library is a small room built centrally within the main library reading room. Its only window overlooks the reading room so it has no direct daylight from the outside and considering the gloom of the day the room was dark. The porter

and I searched for a light switch. The bookshelves came right up to the door frame so no light switch was found by the door. He tried on the outside but without success. He disappeared, I stayed inside. While I waited, I noticed a narrow space between two books on a nearby bookshelf. Fastened to the edge of the shelf was a small notice. This was more *Alice*. The notice invited the reader to put a hand in the space between the books to find the light switch on the wall behind. If the notice had read "Drink Me" as in Alice's adventures I would not have been surprised .

I switched on just as the porter reappeared. He had made a complete circumnavigation of the outside of the room in his unsuccessful search for a light switch. He seemed quite relieved to leave me. The room was lined with books, the only other furniture being a small table by the window on which was a copy of the Library catalogue and an impressive signing out book. It should be pointed out at this stage that all this was taking place before our electronic catalogue had been completed and the printed catalogue on display was the 1987 edition. The book I sought had been published later than this so the catalogue was of no help and time spent searching along the carefully indexed shelves produced nothing either. Finally I gave up and, on the point of leaving, I was groping for the hidden light switch when, with a last touch of *Alice*, I saw something which should have been noticed earlier, a small card index file in a corner near the window. One last ray of hope.

Success at last. There was just one card for the author I wanted. Of course, it was not for the book I had been seeking but by now I was past caring, at least it was by the right author. I located the book, entered its title in the large signing out book on the table and left. It was no surprise to see that there had been only four other entries in the past two years.

It only remained to have the booked 'scanned' at reception, to advise the porter to lock up and then, in continuing rain, to return to the car where Don was quietly asleep. I had been away for 1 ½ hours.

What about the book? It is a splendid account of various mountaineering achievements, but how did these compare with the expedition to find the Library?

If E stands for endeavour and F stands for frustration I would assess the route as around E6, F7b. Needless to say, the book will not be returned to the Library in person; that will be left to our Librarian. As for the book which had instigated the search in the first place, that was lent to me by a member a short time later.

[Editor's note: The above occurred in 2008; the FRCC Library's contents can now be accessed and searched via the members' section of the FRCC website. Borrowing of books can be in person or by post, as per instructions in the members' handbook.]

Towards 2030

Paul Exley

[Editor's note: We have set up a discussion on the FRCC website members' forum. Please add your 2p to any or all of the article's questions that inspire you to do so.]

On a climbing trip a couple of years ago, I was asked where I thought the club should be in twenty years. Initially I was quite nonplussed, but the seed of that question slowly germinated and I have thought a lot about it since.

We are a long-established club and have developed in many directions throughout our century of history. We now have regular income from subscriptions, sale of guide books and hut fees which, together with donations and legacies, make us financially larger than many small businesses. We also have about 1200 members which makes us bigger than many medium sized companies. All wise companies have long-term strategies and route-plans for the next few years. Should we have a master-plan or a series of mini-plans for the future and, consequently, plans of how to get there?

In our committee meetings and Annual General Meetings, we discuss all manner of subjects, define policy and decide on specific actions. Maybe, if we had a vision of the club and its place in the world well into the future – a long-term strategy – we might react differently and might perhaps discuss issues that currently seem irrelevant.

There seem to be two major areas for consideration; the internal workings of the club and our relationship with the rest of the world. Of course some aspects of our operations straddle the boundary separating those areas.

Let's think about the workings of the club first. We know about the demographics of the population as a whole and of our club. We are aware that the climbing scene is very different from even twenty years ago and we must expect it to change continually. The three cornerstones of the club are its huts, meets and guidebooks though our range of members would put them in different orders.

The objects of the club, as shown in the Rules, include "...to encourage the pursuits of fell walking and rock climbing..." and "...to

serve as a bond of union for its Members and to enable them to meet together...". We currently achieve this in several ways but principally by owning huts and arranging meets. Taking the first of these, where should we be going with our huts?

Huts

The history and development of the club resulted in our acquiring five properties in the English Lake District, all of which have been under constant improvement and which are now very comfortable. More recently we bought huts in Scotland and brought these to the same high standard. There has been intermittent suggestion of another hut, somewhere in France. The problem is that each hut needs a Warden and several Assistant Wardens and enlarges the work load of other officers, particularly the Huts Secretary and the Treasurer.

Most members see our huts as one of the most important purposes of the club and are one of their main reasons for joining. Without huts, how would we achieve the second objective, meeting together? How many members would remain in a club without huts? How many would join? So, given that we almost certainly need the huts, how do we proceed? The Coach House and both Cottages are solidly booked for much of the year, confirming their popularity. Should we be looking to convert more of our huts to this sort of accommodation or otherwise acquire more of it? Should we continue to improve comfort? How? With double glazing now installed, what else can we do? Thinking perhaps of increasing age, stair lifts have been suggested but that was a joke. At least, I think it was.

Meets

Let's look at meets. The second Objective refers to bonds of union and meeting together. How else do we achieve this? Any Rule can be changed, of course; it's only words on paper. But if we were to remove those vital Objects, what sort of a club would we have? If we accept, as I think we must, that we want to continue to meet together, are there other ways to do it? Should we continue to base the majority of our meets in our own huts? Should our meets be spread more widely? The 2010 Handbook shows some thirty huts belonging to Kindred Clubs. Of these, we hold meets in, perhaps, four. If we discount the three or

four huts that are near our own, that still leaves a lot of room for variety. Have we ever held meets in Lagangarbh, the Ling Hut, The Smiddy, Youth or other hostels? Long distance walks? Sea cliff climbing? Maybe each year we should have a couple of meets that are determinedly different.

Guidebooks

One of the most important functions of the club in many people's eyes – members and non-members alike – are our guidebooks which have developed almost into an art form. Do we still need them? After a huge push to garden new crags and produce new routes a few decades ago, many routes – and indeed many crags – are overgrown and are to be omitted from the newest series of guides. Will this trend continue? Will we reach the stage where the (low-level?) crags that are still climbed on can be accommodated in one or two books? Our website currently has details of heaps of new routes. One of our out-of-print guides is on the website for free downloading. Part of our Winter Climbs guidebook is already available as a pdf file on the web, albeit without the prior knowledge of the club. Is this the trend for the future? Recent advances in consumer electronics have introduced devices that are physically tiny whilst having huge data storage, such as the iPod. One such device could comfortably store all of our guidebooks including photodiagrams and maps. A GPS device could no doubt be included to direct the user to the bottom of the route. All guidebook content could be downloaded free or, more probably, for a fee – if we could collect it. Where will be the incentive to pay thousands of pounds to produce hard-copy guidebooks if the routes are on our website (or someone else's website) and downloadable? How would the lack of income from guidebook sales affect the overall finances of the club? If we didn't produce them, would another provider step into the vacuum or would there no longer be guidebooks as we know them? This aspect of the club's future is more volatile, and therefore more unpredictable, than any other.

Club Membership

Turning to membership, we currently have a limit of thirteen hundred. We have always tried hard to make ours a club and not an

association. This, and the capacity of our huts, have always suggested a limit on membership. Do we need a maximum? If so, what should it be? How do we choose whom to admit to membership? Are the current criteria too high or too low? Does it matter that the average age of joining is appreciably higher than we might like? Should we encourage younger members to join? How? Why? When older applicants come forward with very worthy climbing backgrounds and histories, one is tempted to ask where they have been for the last forty years. Do they see the club as a cosy retirement home? Should we have a maximum age for joining? If so, what should it be?

Club Library

Our Library of mountaineering books is said to be the second best in the UK, after that of the Alpine Club. Yet the figures show that the annual number of users from the club can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Maybe, with the library catalogue accessible from our website, usage will increase. If not, we have to ask ourselves whether we need a library. If not, what do we do with the books? If so, is Lancaster the best place? Are we providing it for the research students of the University or for our members? Why not move it to Ambleside or Keswick where members pass regularly? Where would we house it? What would it cost? How would we manage it there? Would it be used more? Does that matter?

Journal, Chronicle and Website

What is the purpose of our Journal? Do we take pride in it and look forward to receiving and reading it? Is it as good as it could be? If not, how do we make it better? Similarly with the Chronicle – what is its purpose? Is it doing all that we want of it? Can it be improved? Does it need to be improved? Our website has changed out of all recognition, so much that it has been chosen by the British Library for inclusion in its records as a ‘brand leader’. Can it be improved further? What could be added? How can we use it further to facilitate the management of the club? Do we have a clear understanding of the purpose of our e-newsletters? Do they fulfil those needs?

Club Archives

We have an established Archive and a developing Oral Archive. Are they input-only entities or do we use them in a way that is advantageous to members? How many members know what is in those Archives? Are the contents accessed by the general membership? Should they be? How?

Relationship to other organisations

The club is not an island, unconnected to the rest of the world. We have many connections to, for example, Kindred Clubs, the BMC and the MCofS. What is the value of these links? How do we benefit from them and what do we contribute? Are Kindred Clubs an anachronism or is there still some mutual value in maintaining these connections? Availability of other huts is an obvious benefit to all. We have recently worked with some of our fellow clubs to put pressure on the BMC in several important fields and these efforts are bearing fruit. Could we have done this alone? What other mutual benefits could we manage?

The BMC is seen by different segments of the club in very different ways. To some it is worth every penny of the subscription that we pay – some £13,700 in 2010 – for its representation of the sport at national and international levels, for its help with local issues like bolting and access and for its insurance. Other groups within the club would happily leave the BMC, seeing the Summit magazine as an unnecessary publication full of things they don't do like bouldering, walls and competitions. They also see the compulsory insurance as being unnecessary. So far, we have chosen to remain affiliated in the hope of influencing its policies from within. To an extent, this could be happening but what would be the drawback of leaving? Does our membership of the BMC help achieve the objects of the club? Who benefits from our membership? The BMC? Our members? Other clubs?

The MCofS, of which we are an Associate Member, has recently re-invented itself and liaises with the BMC on a range of issues including sharing the insurance arrangements. Its quarterly magazine shows it clearly to be a lot more club-friendly. It is seen by many as being much more representative of mountaineers in general than vociferous minorities. Its committee of management is drawn from a range of

clubs rather than being overwhelmingly dominated by members of one Senior Club. Should we try to support the MCofS more? If so, how?

Environmental impact

We cannot be unaware of global warming with its effects on wildlife and in other crucial areas. I remember an article in a Swiss Alpine Club magazine entitled, “Will our grandchildren need ice axes and crampons?”. And that was written thirty years ago, well before present concerns. We also must appreciate that many of our activities only add to this and, at the same time, help to depreciate the world’s oil reserves.

Should we be installing banks of battery chargers for use with the seemingly inevitable electric vehicles that we will be driving in twenty years? Should we embark on a huge energy-efficiency programme? Should we harness solar power? Wind power? Should we continue to burn fossil fuels at our huts or should we require others to do it, by proxy as it were, and just use electricity? Should we continue to keep empty huts warm in winter? Should we reduce the number of huts? The energy-efficiency of huts is probably greatest when they are full – especially so in winter – so should we try to keep them busier? What effect would this have on the work of the Wardens and their Assistants? What effect on transport costs?

Huts, meets and guidebooks encourage members to travel. What is the alternative? Members who live close to huts don’t need to use them so they are generally occupied by members who have travelled by car from some distance away. Foreign meets encourage air travel or long-distance driving. Should we continue to hold meets in Arapiles, the Alps, Kalymnos? Would members go anyway? What is the alternative? Would the planes be full anyway? Would we get a nice warm feeling by denying ourselves the pleasure of travel?

What about longer meets to minimise travel costs per hill day? Meets closer to home? Fewer meets? Would members still go long distances anyway? Should we positively encourage car-sharing? Organise buses, as other clubs do? Can we, and should we, organise meets more energy-efficiently?

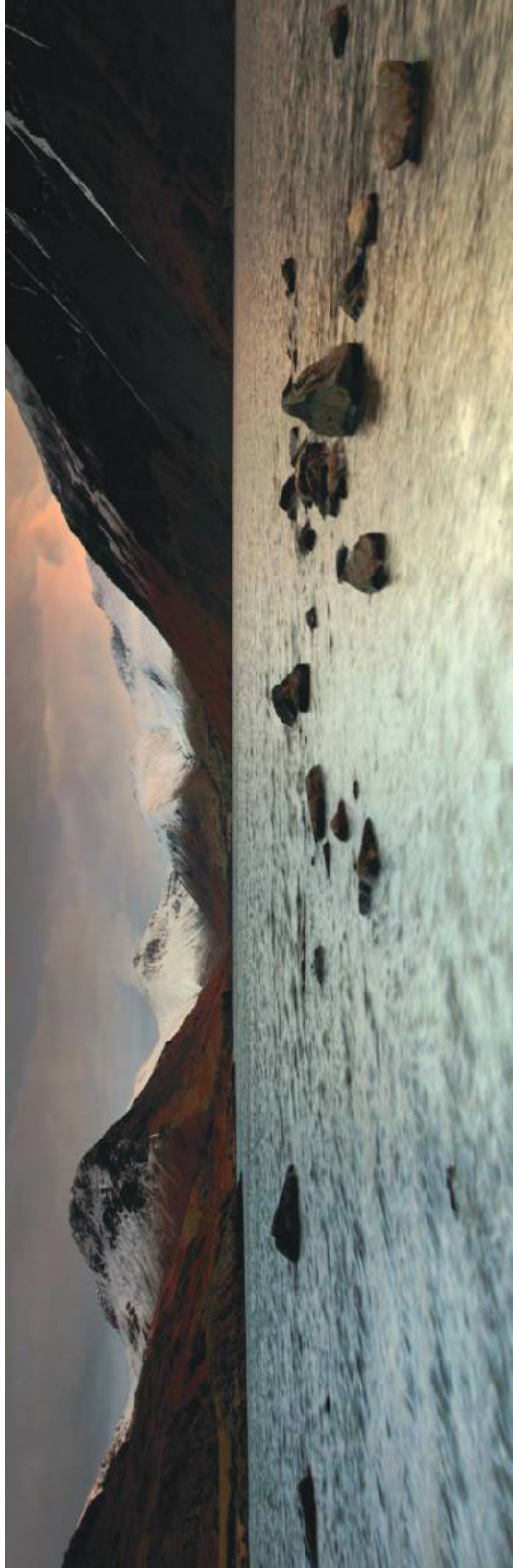
Should the committee be seeking to suggest or, even more dubiously, to impose any moral or ethical rules on our members who, like most

mountaineers, are inherently free spirits? Do we have any duty towards the rest of the world? Perhaps this is more of a philosophical question.

Conclusions?

So where has all this got us? The committee has a stated duty to manage the club in accordance with the Rules but these do not impose any wider responsibilities except the general "...to guard and promote the general interests of mountaineers." Do we have general moral responsibilities within the club and outside it?

Where do we want the club to be in twenty years? Where do we want the general climbing world to be in twenty years? How will we get there? The original broad question poses lots of smaller, often inter-related questions. Do we have the answers?



Wastwater in winter, 1 January 2010 (*Tony Simpkins*)

A Tale of Two Carrots

Mike Cudahy

Their first test was the traverse of the Chalamain Gap. The Chalamain Gap is a crosswise slash through the ridge leading to the Lairig Ghru. It is the best known of a series of glacial overflow channels in the Cairngorms, also called a 'glack' or a 'clash'. I often cycle through the Glacks of Balloch and 50 miles into this circuit it usually seems appropriately named; but I digress. The Chalamain Gap is a jumble of massive, ill-angled boulders. One slip and you could snap your leg like the proverbial carrot. Two slips could leave you entirely carrotless. My two carrots emerged from the gap intact; this was not a trivial matter. A few years ago I had had one snap on me and had been ignominiously carted off the hill. Then two years ago the right carrot had needed a new joint. So, what was I doing here? Well, I was not planning to walk round the Cairngorm Four Thousanders. Not with suspect legs and a start at the disgracefully late hour of 10:30am. Not my fault: it had not been a very encouraging forecast and I need a lot of encouragement in the mornings, also ditto tea. It was only midsummer madness that had briefly tempted me to imagine I might still manage the Cairngorm Fours on tottery carrots. I did however have a yen to get to the top of Braeriach via its seldom visited northern corries. While the 'Norries' (an-t-Sneachda and an Lochain) receive a perennial pilgrimage from the Coire Cas road end, the rather unassuming hollows of Loch Coire an Lochain and Coire Ruadh of Braeriach whisper a promise of solitude and a quiet approach to the summit. I had not visited them since snowholing in Coire Ruadh about 30 years ago.

After crossing the Lairig Ghru I followed the regular path towards Srón na Lairige until the map (the Harvey series only) indicated a cunning little re-entrant which invited me to follow a wee trod. Cunning little swine, more like. After first leading me on, the trod became coy then vanished entirely. Jilted but not forlorn I thought I might as well continue. After all, the corries would not vanish and I was in no hurry.

No hurry indeed! Deep vegetation with holes promised definite carrot snapping potential. Wielding my trusty poles like divining rods

I traversed the rough, pathless terrain with the ease of the practised mountaineer. Actually, I fell into holes, banged my shins on boulders and generally weaved an erratic rising traverse towards my objectives. At least there was no one around to view my progress with either anxiety or jocularity. At last I squirmed squelchily across the burn that gathered water from one of my corries. The map had given me a choice of ascending by either of the two ridges embracing Coire Ruadh. The ground very firmly indicated I should climb the westernmost ridge. I should not have needed telling. This ridge divided the two corries and, suddenly, I glimpsed the grey skirts of Loch Coire an Lochain.

*What would the world be, once bereft
of wet and wilderness? Let them be left,
O let them be left...*

The *cri de coeur* of Manley Hopkins resonated with my spirit and the spirit of this place. Above the sombre, tranquil waters rose glistening black slabs with blocks of old snow still grimly attached. Gazing resolutely north they waited for the rebirth of winter.

But it was midsummer and the ridge carried me steadily upwards. The lonely corries resumed their gaze northwards and, rather more aimlessly, I wandered towards the summit on a curiously eastern bearing. Only at the top did I allow myself to peer South across the plateau to Cairn Toul. I've known and loved the Cairngorms for over 40 years but I still experience that frisson of wonder and delight as I win the plateau rim and raise my gaze. New things are interesting and exciting, but that and those we have loved through long seasons bring us the quiet joy and peace wherein resides our true strength.

Which is why what happened next surprised only my very sane and sensible alter ego. It had taken me 3½ hours to reach here and my watch showed 2pm. Admittedly, it was midsummer with light lingering into the late evening, but elderly carrots totter downhill with care. Getting a snap into their stride is not what they want. A projected arrival time back at Karn House for dinner at 7pm seemed very sensible. So, why did I find myself wandering absent-mindedly towards the Wells of Dee? It was very hot and still in the glens, about 25°C in fact.



(Mike Cudahy)

Up here all was cool and fragrant, gentle airs wafting faint smells of summer. The plateau rolled easily before me. The Wells of Dee and their living waters held the lure of old enchantment. I felt the truth of the words of Nan Shepherd, who also loved the Cairngorms: ‘So simply to look on ... a mountain, with the love that penetrates to its essence, is to widen the domain of being in the vastness of non-being. Man has no other reason for his existence.’ I just could not go down. I had to stay up here, moving and breathing and being. In truth, I could not resist the lure of the plateau.

I sat briefly and ate a little and drank of the waters of the Wells. Then, instead of heading back, I wandered on. I hadn’t been to Angel’s Peak since it had been granted Munro status. I didn’t discern any assumption of grandeur, but I’m sure there were never so many badly placed boulders as were now testing the carrots. Once some hills get on Munro’s list they just don’t care any more. I should really go back from here, but the other side looks better going at last. When I get down to the col I bet Cairn Toul will look quite close. But I shall not go up it if it doesn’t; or if it looks very bouldery (I actually know it is very bouldery). Well, it doesn’t look too bouldery. Here is a patch or two with hardly any. I’ll potter up a bit just to re-educate my proprioceptive wotsits.

Halfway up I meet two young lads toting enormous rucksacks. They had camped high and had miscalculated how much water they would

need. I pointed out that it was probably because their skins were leaking badly. I would have loved to have been able to tell them there was water on the col. Instead, I enthused about the Wells of Dee and the potential for a high camp. They seemed fixed on the fleshpots of Aviemore, however, not yet fully in thrall to the mountain. I was politely asked for my travel plans. "Down to the Lairig Ghru, then back along past the Pools of Dee and through the Chalamain Gap, probably". "Very sensible," they must have thought, but merely smiled encouragingly.

The north side of Cairn Toul is surprisingly bouldery after all. But the side overlooking the Devil's Point is horrendous. I swear I could hear the old villain sniggering. I had a mind to climb up his poxy little hill and commit a misdemeanour on his cairn. First, I had to get off this bloody boulder field. 'He' must have been over here fiddling with the rocks so they all sloped the wrong way. And now I guessed he'd also been interfering with the Angel, with her protuberances anyway. Keep your mind on your sticks, feet, boulder angles and stop muttering 'snap your leg like a carrot'.

Down at last to the blessed relief of some soggy ground. Only another, err, 1000ft of steep ground to the Lairig Ghru. Thankfully, the formerly plumb line eroded 'path' down Coire Odhar to Corrour bothy has been re-graded to a series of zig-zags. The very dry conditions had produced a scattering of granite ball-bearings, very skiddy under the hill. Just such a skid on grass had resulted in my earlier carrot snapping incident. 'Look well to every step and from the beginning think what the end may be.' He was being wise after the event, but Whymper certainly knew about the dangers of things getting snapped; ropes definitely, legs possibly. 'Remember that a momentary negligence can spoil the happiness of a lifetime.' Quite right, Edward, and, talking about a lifetime, it seemed just such a span ago that I'd first made the acquaintance of Corrour bothy. Neglecting not to look well to every step I at last reached easy ground. On the approach to the bothy I mulled over that first visit.

A friend and I had decided to devote a winter half-term break to an exploration of the southern side of the Cairngorms. It was our first visit from the Braemar side. We thought Corrour bothy would be an ideally situated base camp. Accordingly we packed rucksacks with the

gear we would need for nearly a week and thus staggered out from the Linn of Dee bowed under loads of around 70lbs each. As we approached the Lairig Ghru I began to draw ahead, anxious to have a look at our temporary home. The snow was wet and heavy, but with youthful enthusiasm I strode across the footbridge over the Dee, eyes fixed on the square, squat, solid building. Flinging open the door I stepped inside. Light filtering through a very dingy window revealed a damp earth floor partially covered at one end with a couple of torn poly' bivvi bags. Some hopeful soul had strewn these with a few handfuls of wiry heather. The word 'hovel' sprang to my lips but was dismissed as far too flattering. Dank, dark, dirty and dismal. Apart from that it was great.

I thought my mate should be informed. There he was, a solitary, stooped figure half a mile back. As we approached each other I could plainly discern 'the breeze of anxiety playing freshly on the brow of expectation'. "What's it like?" he grunted. "Terrific, Mick. A veritable palace. Wait till you see it!" Even for a Geordie, when he did see it, he was remarkably eloquent. When he'd finished his appreciation of the bothy, which included some quaint dialect words, he turned his attention to my recent ancestors. He then became unnaturally silent, for a long time. In fact he didn't really 'chill out' until 6 days later when we were seated before a large fire in the Fife Arms restoring the corporeal function with alcohol. Even then, 'this man's brow, like a title leaf, foretells the nature of a tragic volume.' It had been a hard week.

What a different place now. Lined inside and one of those earth closet toilets outside. This was situated at the gable end and I mistook it for the bothy entrance. Mounting several steps I walked into it before realising my mistake. 'Do excuse me, madam,' I said politely and retreated. (I do tell fibs, as Mick discovered.) But it was splendid, the whole make-over, that is. My sentiments regarding the tarding up of bothies are equivocal. Generally, I'm against it unless I myself happen to be staying there. Strange that there was no one in residence. I could have been tempted.

Instead I reviewed my 'get back to Karn House' options. The Lairig Ghru stretched invitingly, but I don't much care for this dark tunnel through the massif and it was overpoweringly hot and humid down here. Above me Macdui rose, a heather- and boulder-strewn 2500ft.

The carrots were appalled. So was I. I had begun to suffer from ‘mountaineer’s foot’, defined by Tilman as the difficulty experienced in putting one in front of the other. I thought I would potter along the Allt Clach nan Taillear and see if I could spot a helpful path rising alongside. The Allt is the burn – I soon passed the Clach nan Taillear, the Stone of the Tailors. Legend has it that here died three jolly tailors who had bragged they would dance a reel on both Deeside and Speyside on the same night. Like others before and since, the hungry, hollow gut of the gruesome Ghru devoured them.

‘A hungry feeling came o’er me stealing’ and I crept up a faint trod, found a comfy rock midstream and, paddling my toes, enjoyed my first proper food of the trip. It was a cheese and lettuce surprise butty. A surprise because I thought I had done tuna. The lettuce had gone droopy, but that was no surprise. I gave the legs a treat too (ibuprofen). The trod grew faint and I crossed to the true right bank where there was no trod at all. Plenty of good springy heather, though. When I was too high to use it, I saw my precious trod emerge in pathly splendour to combine with the path from Carn a’Mhaim.

I had never followed the Tailor’s Burn to its source in summer. I had plenty of time to admire the unfolding scenery as I was observing that old hill proverb “Be not afraid of going slowly, be only afraid of standing still”. Any slower and I would be going backwards. The ambience was sustaining however, mossy slabs, sparkling waters, pink granite, no path at all, let the feet find the way that seems best.

And so in due course I found myself on top of Ben Macdui; it seemed as if I was going to do the Cairngorm Fours after all, now, how did that happen? I had only seen five people since leaving the Sugarbowl car park below Coire Cas. Now I received the benediction of the late start and slow progress. It was 8pm and not a soul around and it was a beautiful summer evening. I was almost as high as it is possible to be in the British Isles, the air was still, the light would linger, my road would rise ever before me. I felt a new strength and stepped out with both resolution and regret.

My journey had reached the final stages of its fulfilment. I would soon be able to hold it no longer. Therefore both joy and sorrow mingled in the colours of my dance over the intervening plateau. You will realise, of course, that ‘dance’ refers to my spirit, not my legs.

Around 10pm I stood on top of Cairngorm and turned to survey my journey. In the NW the sun was igniting the clouds and bathing the ramparts of Coire an-t-Sneachda in a warm glow. In symmetrical counter-balance a pale half moon had risen west of south above the distant contours of Beinn a'Ghlo. The sky was a deepening blue shading into the pastel greys of the plateau and mist was gathering in the hollows. Straight across from me the Fiacail Ridge and the rim of rock above the Lairig Ghru lay etched in black. It was the end of the day, a timeless moment of contemplative harmony and beauty.

The refurbished carrots now came into their own as I strode downhill to greet the twilight. A total absence of knee pain testified to the skill of the surgeons and allowed me to continue to savour my journey. I padded across the quiet car park and stole down the path by the Allt Mor. The pines were giving off their fragrance and in the vigorous burn I could hear the mysterious murmur of the water sprites. You think if you stop you can hear what they're saying, but you never can. Night was now truly gathering and I became one with the pines, the water sprites and the shadows. I sometimes think the love we give to the mountains is returned to us but, like the voices in the stream, one should not strain to know.

I got back to Karn House disgracefully late. My journey had occupied nearly 13 hours. I'd forgotten to leave a note of where I was going. I didn't know anyway. I was confident Colin would allay any concerns, which he had. Now, a really good appetite. What would fit the bill? Hmm, mince and tatties and for veg, how about ...? You've guessed!



Looking down into Loch Avon from Coire Raibert, to Stacan Dubha
(Mike Cudahy)

Forgetting the Munros

An ageing Munroist's tribute to "Forgetfulness" by the American Poet Laureate Billy Collins.

First to go is the one whose Gaelic name
 challenged more than its rough carries;
 followed obediently by its sameday partner;
 their location; the weather; the views....
 until they become hills you have never climbed,
 never even heard of.

Long ago you waved goodbye to the names of the Strathfarrar four,
 and sensed the Geal Charns congeal into an unreferenced mass.

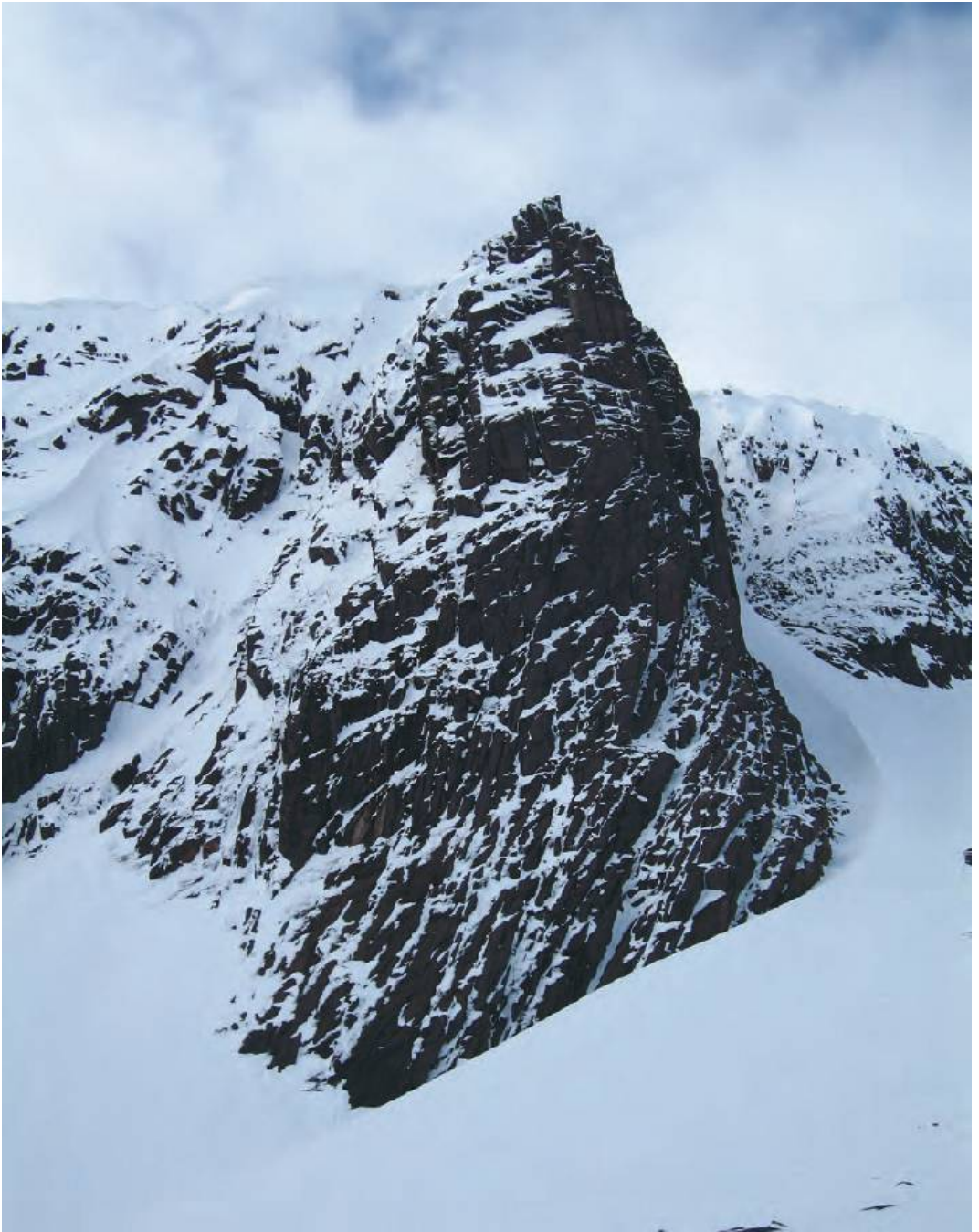
Now the high peaks of your memory, once firm gabbro,
 seem in twos and threes to be crumbling and rolling down
 to an irretrievable rest among the An Stac screes.

Something else is slipping away.
 Was it camp or cave under A'Mhaighdean?
 Who was with you on that long Mamores traverse?

The hill day you are trying to recapture is not on the tip of your
 tongue,
 not even waiting to be tipped out of the bottom of your rucksack.
 It has already been ferried across a dark river
 whose name begins with an S, if you recall,
 where the boatman, (Challum, you think?) is waiting
 to row you over, to join those
 who can no longer remember how to read contours,
 or take a bearing.

No wonder you get up in the night to check in the Bennet guide
 whether the Lochaber Carn Dearg is Mor, Mhor or even More.
 No wonder the mountain skyline behind the curtains appears
 strange
 under the setting moon.

John Lagoe



The mighty Mitre Ridge, Beinn a' Bhuid (*Colin Wells*)

A Great Adventure

Colin Wells

We arrived far too late at Karn House, wearied by the long haul north from Derbyshire, whence we had been lured by the prospect of a glittering prize. Unseasonably late April snowfalls and northerly winds had prompted both Chris and myself – optimists to a man - to jump independently to the same conclusion: that there might be a chance of snatching an ascent of the legendary Mitre Ridge of Beinn a’ Bhùirdh at the very fag end of the winter climbing season. The prospect of gaining such a fabled route as the final climb of the year was too much to resist – we dropped work commitments, visits to mothers, promises to sweethearts, even a middle-of-the-table clash between Preston North End and Ipswich. Everything was gambled on a mad dash north.

The only FRCC resident was a duty-bound Dave Rhodes, who was awaiting the arrival of a new washing machine with all the cheerfulness a condemned man in solitary confinement could muster. Distracted from his cabin fever by the unexpected novelty of company with outlandish ambitions he heartily endorsed our plans as sounding like “A Great Adventure”. Winter guru and general Scottish All-Seeing-Eye and Beard Andy Nisbet was slightly less optimistic when we called by for advice at his house in Boat of Garten next morning (inadvertently interrupting his important mid-morning tea and custard cream break while watching the unmissable *Good Morning with Philip Schofield and Fern Britton*). Nisbet took valuable time out from daytime telly to sagely declare we were likely to have “trouble with deep snow on the approach”. In the event both The Condemned Man and The Sage were right.

Armed with mountain bikes and towing a trailer cruelly laden with bothying and climbing gear, we careened unsteadily down Glen Avon with the intention of spending the night in Faindouran Bothy. As uncannily predicted by The Sage of Strathspey, deep snow halted wheeled progress at the Pony Men’s Hut, still some miles short of our target for the night - which meant Shank’s Pony for us after stashing the gear in the blasted shed. A pleasantly whisky-fuelled if chilly night ensued in the bothy, followed by a brisk circulation-restoring pre-dawn

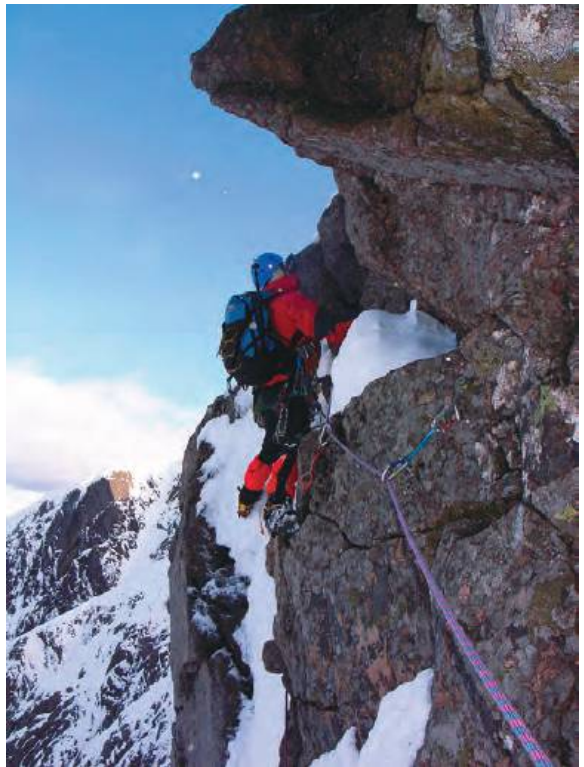
jog back down the now frost-hardened snow back to the Pony Men's Hut and the Garbh Coire approach. This proved somewhat trying, with knee-deep powder much of the way and, at times, an infuriating, exhausting, breakable crust. As a result, we did not reach the base of the route until mid-day.

At last it was gloves off – or rather gloves on – and to the business of the day. We started by traversing in half way up Mitre Ridge's Direct Start, a long slab coated with unconsolidated snow. One of the party, endowed with a sometimes-idiosyncratic route-finding ability, seemed to be much enjoying the precarious climbing and carried on up an even harder variation which took in a desperate off-width chimney, before traversing back left towards more conventional ground. After much cursing, the other member of the party succeeded in somehow following this desperate variation. Unfortunately, having only just regained his breath and composure he faced the next pitch, which was scarcely easier. Short, impending bluffs of granite barred the way and required full commitment of body weight to axes. Even more unfortunately, the snow and the ice above was notable for its shoddy quality. With axes creaking alarmingly and heart in mouth the ascent went on...

If that was bad, the next pitch was worse: a steep ramp of granite loosely artexed with filthy rime that served as decoration only. Luckily, this proved to be the lead of the more athletically-inclined and enthusiastic member of the team, who made short work of it with the use of copious profanities and sundry oaths. The less agile member of the team employed similar vocabulary but still nearly succeeded in falling off when an axe ripped inconveniently. By this stage we were rather hoping for an easing but the route continued in similar vein, with a poorly protected and tenuous corner to follow and then a hideously exposed traverse above barrelling slabs. It was at this point that one of the ropes became hopelessly stuck and in the process of trying to free it one of us got an axe so tightly jammed in a crack he couldn't free it. After forty minutes of extreme faffing, dangling over the abyss and with thoughts of abandoning an axe and/or benightment crossing one's mind more than once, the recalcitrant tool suddenly came free, as did the rope - followed in short order by the person on the end of it, who emitted a startled squeak.

By this stage it had gone dark. Oh the embarrassment – finishing a route in the dark in April! But we had begun to suspect this wasn't just any old route. Consequently, the last (thankfully easier, but phenomenally exposed) pitches were done by head torch, the vertiginous Slochd Wall looming menacing when caught in the thin pencil beam of the lamps. It was all very atmospheric – even more so when airborne powder avalanches suddenly began to kick off to the left, shattering the inky gloom with giant percussive blasts reminiscent of close-range artillery fire. Just when we had begun to relax slightly, it set the nerves back on edge.

The angle finally eased into horizontality at 11pm and we were finally on the snow-swamped plateau. A laborious descent began, made slower by zero visibility and a return to the by-now familiar knee-deep snow. Both of us began to whimper as attacks of cramp afflicted our thighs, unused to the strain of hours of constant post-holing up and down leg-swallowing drifts of powder. Navigating by the magic of GPS we still somehow succeeded in missing the Pony Men's Hut and had to double back, splashing across the Avon without regard to a soaking in our desperation to lie down and sleep. Eventually, the ravaged shell of the hut was located in the pitch



Chris Astill on Mitre Ridge, Beinn a'Bhùirdh, Cairngorms (*Colin Wells*)

blackness of 3.40am. We collapsed gratefully and, after three hours of fitful and draughty kip, we remounted our bicycles wearily and limped back to Tomintoul and eventually the hut at Craig-na-Gower Avenue.

A 22-hour day on the hill. We felt well exercised. As the redoubtable Mr Rhodes remarked, it had indeed been “A Great Adventure”.

Moonshadows in the Cairngorms

Ron Kenyon

I saw a t-shirt in the States some years ago that said “He who dies with most toys wins!” When you go away for the weekend you never quite knows what the weather will throw at you. I put my name down for a trip to Newtonmore with the Eden Valley Mountaineering Club in February 2007, and looked forward to a long weekend away with fabulous ice conditions, or possibly Scottish rain. I arranged with a friend Soo Redshaw to travel together, and it being a long weekend, it left more time for varied weather. We decided to take a mix of ‘toys’ including gear for winter climbing, rock climbing, ski mountaineering, cross country skiing, fell running and mountain biking, which should cover most weather situations. For good measure, I included swimming togs and a good book. Fortunately, we had a Volvo and only two of us travelling in it.

On the Friday afternoon we travelled north with a fabulous full moon in the sky. Eventually Newtonmore was reached and after some of the load was transported into the hostel, we retired to the pub for a drink with everyone else. It was clear that the winter conditions were limited with snow in gullies but bare buttresses and no ice. Creag Meagaidh seemed to be the main centre of interest, although the main Post lines did not seem to be in. Eventually we all went to bed ready for an early start.

A dark morn arrived and we gradually surfaced for the day ahead. What about Meggie! what about the lean conditions! With the buttresses being devoid of snow and ice, what about a rock climb? Thinking of a south facing crag, my thoughts turned to Clean Sweep on Hell's Lum, a classic three star VS, and Soo warmed to the idea. While the others went off in various directions we drove up the ski station at Glenmore. We decided that three types of footwear would help the day: trainers to walk over in, rock shoes for the climb and big boots in case of a snow or ice climb – be prepared. In the trainers we ascended to the plateau and then down Coire Raibert, using axes and ski poles to steady ourselves on some of the icy bits and eventually gained that magical valley containing Loch Avon. Away from the bustle of the ski area, this is a fabulous place and we had it almost to

ourselves. At the head of the valley Shelter Stone and Carn Etchachan crags loomed dark and forbidding and up to their right Hell's Lum - encircled in snow. Snow! This changed matters slightly - rock shoes and snow do not go together - Clean Sweep would be a logistical problem - with boots, shoes, axes, etc. To the right again loomed Stag Rock with some fantastic sweeping slabs at the bottom - what about this? We made our way up to the base and dumped the gear ready to investigate the crag. *The Sand-Pyper Direct* seemed to shout out to be climbed with its two stars and HVS.

We soon set off up the first pitch. A rescue helicopter passed by and then stopped to look at us, either because we looked quite impressive or because they were noting potential customers. Rather rounded rock with limited protection in a superb situation, and with two pitches rolled into one we were soon into the midst of the route. The next pitch entailed an awkward start up a short corner to gain a slab, which was traversed rightwards then up to an exciting move over a roof. A traverse up and left was made to the stance. At the stance the place was getting to us - another pitch of 4c and then the crux of 5a - the day was passing by quickly and we had to regain the base for our gear, although Soo was carrying a sack with trainers and ice axes in. Escape was then considered up the original finish to the right, however this gained green damp rock in summer much less winter, so we followed a traverse left to join the easier Longbow Direct. We scooted up this, however the size of the crag, which is not obvious in the diagram, soon became evident - it is again the height of the diagram!

With a change of footwear and use of axes we made our way onto Amphitheatre Gully which we found impossible to descend, so continued further leftwards to gain a good ledge and abseil point into Diagonal Gully. With some doubt as to whether we would reach the gully, which was fortunately full of snow, and with night quickly approaching I abbed down, passing the half way point much lower than we expected. I fortunately soon gained the gully, tested the rope and found that it was jammed! Soo managed to unjam it and rearrange the anchors and soon joined me in the gully; luckily the rope was retrieved safely. We then descended then snow gully (fell running shoes with runner studs are good for this) and back to the sacks.

Ron Kenyon

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We were not unduly concerned about the approach of night as we knew that there would be a full moon. We sat and enjoyed the evening with food and hot juice. What a great place! The stars sparkled with Orion above and profile of the mountains opposite, with Shelter Stone Crag looking ominous. Looking down at the far end of the valley there was a strange reddish glow on the ground. What was it? Was it a Land Rover or some other vehicle? – no - suddenly the moon appeared with a glorious reddish colour and we just sat in amazement for at least an hour. The moon slowly rose and eventually we had to get up and make our way back.

On with the big boots and crampons, back up Diagonal Gully. Initially aided by the moonlight, then in the moonshadow with our headtorches showing the way we enjoyed working our way up the gully. It was much longer than we expected, didn't seem so long on the way down it earlier that day, and eventually we popped out onto the plateau and the moonlight again. We sat and enjoyed another glass of hot juice and even more so the fantastic panorama illuminated by the moon. Aware that people have died in blizzards near where we sat, we felt very privileged to be there at such a magical time. We wandered across the plateau and made our way back down to the car park, unaware of text messages whizzing round the airways enquiring as to our wellbeing. What a day, and what a night!



Loch Avon Basin, 21 March 2010 (*Susan Jensen*)

Nur für Geübte

David Rhodes

Just before 7am there was a traffic jam on the narrow path outside the hut. Big boots, pink calves, straining shorts: no room for manoeuvre. “Do people fall off here often?” “No, only once!” So, moving on today, with the full rucksac, I was tail-end Charlie. Just be patient. I knew that this party of eighteen-wheelers was soon to branch off. My plan today was to cross from the Hofpürgl Hütte to the Adamek Hütte, high up at 2200m, by a route given in the note on the back of the map as ‘Nur für Geübte: ‘Only for Experienced [Climbers]’. These ‘nurfers’ are often shown on the map not as continuous lines as is usual, but faintly dotted: there is something of a hint of uncertainty. They are only walks, not guidebook climbing routes but there is usually a surprise somewhere.

Off left went the big team. Their route today was to use the first part of mine of yesterday, ascending slabby cabled rock to the Steigl Pass and a nearby summit. Yesterday from the pass I had had a big day, full of mountain space and scenery. My start beyond the pass had gone below the West and North walls of the Bischofsmütze towers, echoing with climbing calls on that dry sunny day, and through the Eis Grube, a rocky defile full of alpine flowers in astonishing profusion. By lunchtime I had reached the Gablonzer Hütte and a welcome bowl of Gulaschsuppe. The second half of the day had been a beautiful high level traverse of the south side of the Gosaukamm massif back to the Hofpürgl Hütte for a second night’s stay. The snake, a black adder curled on an essential foot-ledge on a cabled section, had added a touch of spice late in a long, hot day.

Today, for a few tranquil minutes, the Linzer Weg traversed a level grassy alp leading towards a distant signpost: ‘Reissgang Scharte: NFG’. That was the last of any greenery for the next few days. There had been a nutcracker calling from the Arolla pines on the alp but the next lot of birdlife would be alpine choughs. Goodbye vegetation: now for rock. Backing the alp the limestone wall of the Dachstein main spine, maybe 300m high, here called the Gosaustein, is relatively smooth-fronted except at the signpost where a gully has been eroded

into it, notching the skyline. The gully and the notch, 150m above, are the Reissgang Scharte.

At first it is scree-bottomed and rock-walled, the paint-marked route entering up the right wall over ribs and teeth, well clear of the gully bed. In early season it would be full of snow, hence the ledge route, which has the added merit of staying out of the line of stonefall. There was a bit of cable on the ledges at a place with a seep of water where it would ice up, but it was dry.

Arriving at the headwall, a leftward leading groove crossed the bed to a series of ascending zigzag ledges. I was about to step out when voices were heard above, and a clatter, and a fair-sized stone ricocheted down. With a gunpowdery smell in the air a fair-sized comment, couched in Yorkshire German terms, went straight back up in reply. Mutterings ensued up there: “Shuldigung, ‘shuldigung.’” “Aye, never mind ‘shuldigung’, just get down here.” Two youths came gingerly down: “Excuse, excuse.” “Think nothing of it, old chaps.” Then once the coast was clear I moved quickly up the headwall to arrive breathless at the notch, which was all of a couple of feet wide. Schartes are sharp and this one was no exception. Popping out into the great outdoors like that is usually a surprise. Catch a breath, get hold of something firm. Phew!

The route now ascends the ridge to the right for about half a kilometre. To the left in the scharte is a blank wall. To the right a narrow gravel path disappears round the left of another wall. In front is fresh air and blue water, the Hinter Gosausee, 1800m below. Check out the path while carefully balancing the rucsac. Immediately round the corner is a five metre wall barring the way but it is stuck with rusty wrought iron spikes. Bent and broken, they provide an escape over the left edge up onto an airy platform. ‘Fraught iron’ may be a better description.

Once up on the platform the ridge widens, and higher up there is a gateway in another rock wall leading to a shoulder made of a tiny limestone corrie. I made for that and stepped into a fascinating bit of karst scenery. Whatever the arcane combination of gas-rich snowmelt and rock minerals had been, here were funnel and saucer sinks on a corrie floor and the marked path has been forced from lack of alternative to skirt closely round the lips of several of these, which contain serious-

looking potholes: 'Schlunds'. Once upon another time when I had asked in a hut in the Totes Gebirge what the word 'schlund' on a map meant, someone had said "An entry." He was a potholer. Someone else had laughed hollowly: "Muuu hu ha! An exit!" he had said. That was typical climbers' humour which you could find in any hut in Europe. Here I had both those answers in mind and watched carefully where I was putting my feet. The thought did cross my mind that earlier in summer when these basins were level-filled with old snow there could be a temptation to the unwary to short-cut straight across. "Muuu hu ha!" indeed. Today it was all dried out and visible.

Ahead on the ridge, rearing up more now, were the pyramids of the Hochkesselkopf and higher still the Torstein, the latter peak only just not a 'Three Thousander'. Marvellous features, extravagantly improbable and there was certainly no route in their direction, but there was a second shoulder up on the left. The route went across to the foot of a tall wall with a slanting, wet shelf. This was equipped with a cable which was flapping about loose with its anchors jingling at its bottom end like a bunch of keys. It wasn't really needed. Once upon this second shoulder it was clear however that further upward progress was now definitely mission impossible. The time had come to shuffle off round left, high across the Gosau Tal upper cliffs, somehow; traversing.

The ridge had been fine. This traverse looked interesting. Forward was another half kilometre of snow banked on the wall between upper and lower sets of cliffs. It was very similar to looking along the slate roofs of a terrace of Victorian houses under winter snow from a dormer window, but at a completely different scale. Now well into the summer, some of it had melted back to reveal the rock hollows which it was slowly rotting each winter. The route used this slope: walking the rocks and kicking lines across the snow-roofs. I set off. First was a stone-littered boiler plate, then I tried the first snow. It was soft: the sun had been on it. Also the seasonal melt-back had exposed a rock shelf a few feet wide at the bottom edge which might catch anything which slid down. That was quite comforting in the circumstances. I squashed across.

There were four of these and now there were three left. The second, staying each day longer in the crag shadow, hadn't melted back so much and there was no catch-gutter below. Not that I suppose it would

have been much good if there had been, to be realistic. There was no comforting axe either, or crampons; I was 'travelling light' of course. Tch! I searched around for an ice-axe shaped stone: some spike to fling myself onto in the arrest position just in time to flip the lip. As it happened, this second snow was pretty soft too. I crunched across, high-tech stone axe held ready at the high port. Two done. The last two, fully in shadow, had not softened. It was time for a reality check. I could see stick holes where the two rock-kickers had crossed the frozen fossils of previous steps. One had had crampons: lucky him! I don't like old steps. Get a plan. So I threw the useless lump of rock away, spread my stubby little wings and edged a new line neatly and briskly across both of them, glad of good boots. It was nice to step down into a wider place where another 'nurfer' from the Dachsteinsudwand Hütte joined in. I have wondered since what that one is like. They are only walks.

Escape ahead was by ladder. It was a perfectly normal steel ladder from Homebase or somewhere, anchored vertically up 10m of overhanging wet black wall. I could say I tightened the 'sac straps and waltzed up that but I had already tightened the straps for the snow. Above that led onto the long smooth whaleback of the Schneebergwand, at last nearing the snowfield of the Gosaugletscher. The Adamek Hütte was now in sight on the far side, but the route does not go to it directly as there are couple of hundred metres of space below at this point: the Wand. It has to go uphill on the whaleback to beyond a hanging headwall of valley rock to where the level of firn above it and the whaleback have come close together.

This is a good place to be. It is high, wide and of an impressive mountain scale. Away down left the rock drops all the way to the Gosausee in the valley floor 1300m below, down black, yellow and grey walls of limestone. The Bischofsmütze and the Gosaukamm of yesterday have come into view far left beyond the tiny notch of the Reissgang Scharte. They towered yesterday but are now diminished below eye level. A lot of height has been gained. Hidden directly ahead is the main peak of the Hoher Dachstein beyond its superb twin buttresses falling to my feet. Angled left is a dazzling snowfield, the upper firn of the Gosau Glacier, rising to the North ridge and the Steiner Scharte: the snow route from the Hallstätter Glacier and the neighbouring Simony Hütte. I could hear the clink of gear, and voices, and see

coloured shirts coming down the firn. This is proper stuff: you can see, hear and feel it.

But I was not at the hut yet. I needed to get off the whaleback. The ground marks led up towards a much bigger red and white roundel, painted higher on a rock face near the edge of the Wand. Ordinary ground marks would be covered quickly in a fall of snow but the target had been set to stay visible in those conditions. It was the key marker, then. Reaching it I looked over to see the top of a sloping snowfield but it had shrunk eight metres down. Down there, grinning evilly, was a gloomy randkluft gaping between the lip of the firn and my rockwall. Leading down the wall and deeper into the black depths was a line of battered spikes. "More fraught iron," I thought. "OK, that's it, but think. Get down there and try the step across: it looks a bit wide, could be a jumping job off bent spikes onto a possibly crumbly and certainly slippery landing." Here was not a place to lose one's presence of mind. It was high time for some guile. Out of the 'sac came the secret weapon maintained for just such an occasion - twenty metres of eight mil. I measured up, tied on, climbed down to lip level, got a grip, pushed over and kicked into the downslope. Then it was done. All that was left was a standing glissade to a basin, no longer joined to the upper firn. The gear clink was much louder now as a guided party of four trudged down in crampons from the Steiner Scharte from a day on the glaciers. I felt an irrational pang of envy.

It is a newish hut, the Adamek, built under the sidewall for spring-water and to be above the avalanches. It has its own helipad for supplies and to service its state of the art dry-box toilet units: flying loos, rotated by air. It's not bad, but the food portions turned out to be a bit small. That afternoon I sat paring shavings of dry bread and cheese and drinking beer, with an alpine chough on the deck rail not quite taking crumbs from hand. I traced the route so improbably pasted against the far wall and gazed again and again at the majestically proportioned twin buttresses of the Dachstein soaring out of the firn. It was joyous. It was a day when the beauty of the world was captured.

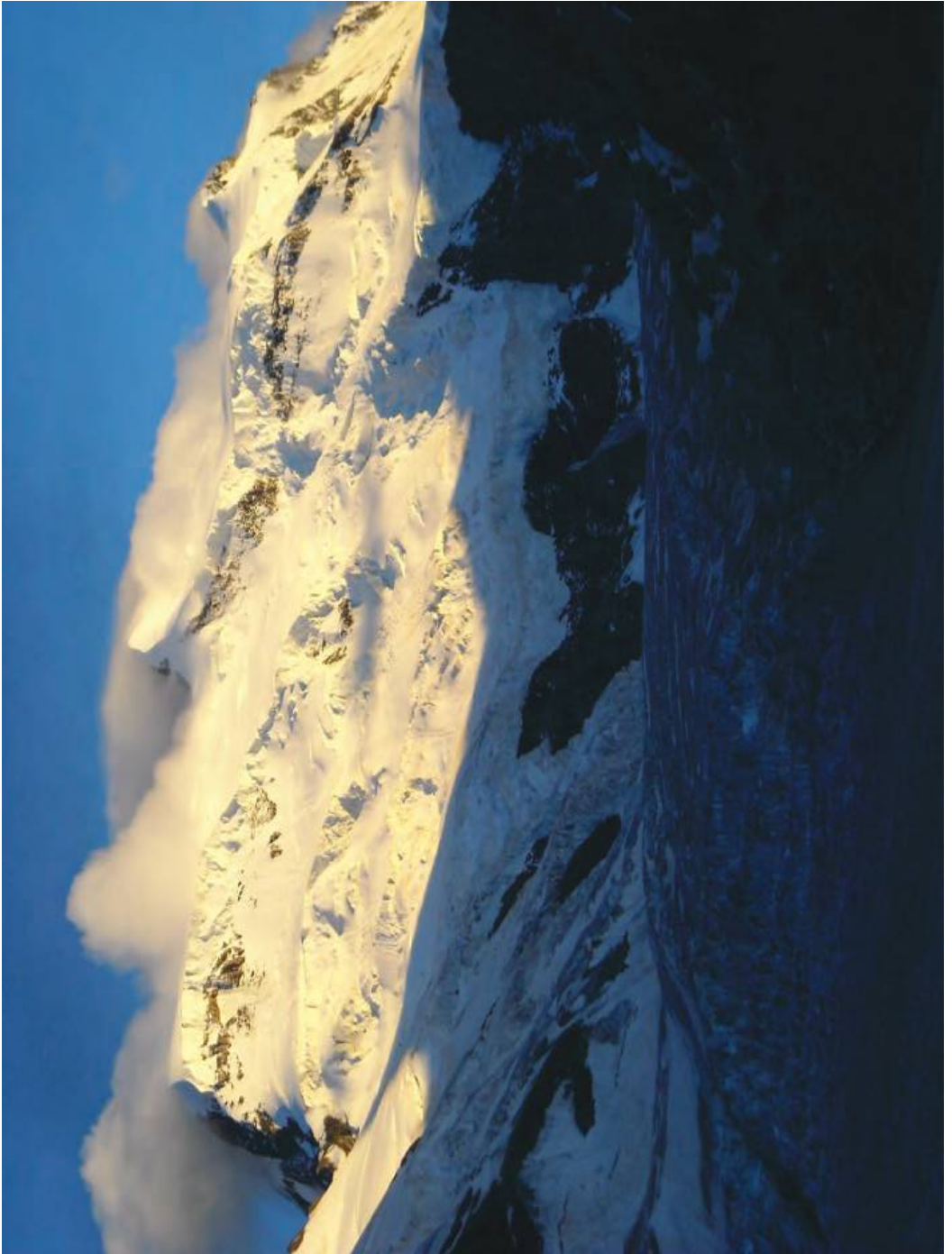
A Grand Day on the Grand Combin

Adam Bannister

Cabane de Panossière, near Verbier, August 2008, and our Alpine summer holiday was coming to an end. From Val de Bagnes it had been a beautiful walk to the hut, contouring across alpine meadows with flowers, long-eared sheep and even edelweiss on the moraine. The recently re-built Panossière is superbly situated, the guardian even came out to welcome all new arrivals with a handshake, a first for us, and his cooking was magnificent. Over the previous ten days my wife, Nina, and I had visited the Bernina, Bernese Oberland, Monte Rosa and Mont Blanc ranges, dodging weather and new snow but managing somehow to get up some of the routes we had planned. Particular highlights had been Piz Bernina from the Italian side, the Mönch in verglas, Nordend in a gale which nearly blew us over into Italy and a 'night patrol' up Mont Maudit with a cast of what felt like thousands, though probably nearer fifty.

The Grand Combin, standing isolated between the Mont Blanc and Valais ranges, promised much in the way of effort and solitude, but little in the way of a quick-fix summit and sounded like a suitable end to the holiday. Its huge barriers of seracs give it a wild appearance and with the Corridor Route largely disused since the 1960s due to frequent serac falls, the North West Face, or 'Couloir du Gardien', is now the Voie Normale. A long approach, complex glaciers and some steep snow climbing were on the cards. Most guests at the Panossière were hut-to-hut walkers, so the guardian introduced us to the only other party planning on the Grand Combin, a Monsieur et Madame from Fribourg, and we agreed to wake them at 2am as they had no alarm. It was a small price to pay for what turned out to be excellent company on our otherwise solitary ascent.

After breakfast by headtorch we headed out into a crystal clear night and off along the moraine, as per guidebook description, only to see two lights already further up the glacier; team Fribourg had left after us, taken a different path and were already in front, clearly they had insider knowledge of the peak (third ascent for monsieur, we later found out). It was a long way to cross the Corbassière Glacier and then to follow the broken terrain of snow bridges and crevasses up its far bank, untracked and in the dark. This in itself proved quite testing, and it is an increasingly rare task on many Alpine peaks to have to put



Route taken on the Grand Combin was from left to right in the foreground, then between the minor peak on the right and the higher peak in the centre. (*Adam Bannister*)

in the first track yourself. Eventually a slope of well frozen névé led onto the intriguingly-named 'Plateau des Maisons Blanches' where a long trek across the upper glacier took us to the base of the North West face. This looked quite steep and the serac band across the top a little imposing, although alleged to be stable.

After negotiating some avalanche debris we headed for a line up the right hand side, hoping to be out of the line of fire of any falling ice. There we climbed in parallel with our new Swiss friends. This turned out to be a good approach as we climbed at a similar speed and we could exchange our views on the climbing, albeit in very basic 'mountain French' in my case; had we been alone I think we would have found our surroundings too daunting to continue so we were glad to have some company. Even so, I suspect our better-halves were silently a little apprehensive, wondering what their respective husbands were leading them into yet again.

The firm snow turned to ice as the slope steepened and the gradual increase in exposure, typical of a north face, suddenly became apparent. At the steepest ice bulge we paused to move separately and belay; fortunately an in-situ ice screw and Abalakov thread gave re-assurance as the ice was quite brittle for a couple of pitches. After that a straightforward rising traverse on good snow led through the serac band, usually the crux, which was unexpectedly straightforward and we emerged into the sun on the upper plateau with relief.

From the saddle between the two Combin summits, Valsorey and the higher Grafeneire, a broad corniced snow ridge led to the summit. In contrast to many peaks, the trickier climbing on the Combin is relatively low down so we could enjoy this final pleasant snow ridge and relax a little to take in the magnificent surroundings. We were rewarded on the summit by a fantastic view in all directions. Team Fribourg were just behind us, two figures on a snow edge silhouetted by the green valley below. The summit was a calm, windless snow dome and it was good to share it with our new climbing friends. The views of Mont Blanc to the west and the Matterhorn and Monte Rosa to the east were superb, I could see why monsieur had come back for more. After flapjacks and Bounty bars, the 'taste of paradise' no less, we reluctantly headed back down towards the North West face wondering how we would fare on what promised to be a rather nerve-wracking descent.



Final steps to the summit, with Combin de Valsorey behind and Mont Blanc range beyond
(*Adam Bannister*)

The traverse beneath the seracs revealed the full expanse of the steep face down to the plateau and demanded concentration. Through a combination of several full rope-lengths of down-climbing, grateful that we weren't on one of those lightweight 25m mini-ropes popular in the Alps, and a welcome solid belay on the treasured ice-screw on the steepest section, we reached a line of steps on the opposite side of the couloir. Directly under the seracs and feeling a little vulnerable, we tried to move as fast as we could but even so it felt like a long time before we reached a safe snow knoll. Down in the sunshine we had the simple pleasure of taking off jackets and hats and could relax a little. All that remained was the homeward march.

The way down the glacier was uneventful, other than for our disbelief at the distance we had covered earlier in the darkness. The glacier seemed endless. I can quite believe it is one of the longest in the western Alps and am glad we didn't know this at the time. After eleven hours for the round trip it was a relief to finally take our boots off back at the hut, sink a beer or two and look back to the distant Grand Combin with a sense of respect and appreciation of a great day. Other than our new friends from Fribourg we had seen no-one all day. While

it's nice to bag summits on your hit-list in quick succession, equally a lonely peak in perfect solitude with a real sense of effort and remoteness can be a timely, if rare, reminder of what the Alps can still offer. Unlike Monsieur however, I think just the once will be enough.

Diversions

Harold Drasdo

This is an account of one of the most popular hill walks in Mallorca: the Archduke's Path from Valldemossa. It is outstanding for its historical associations, for its theatrical changes in terrain, and for its panoramic upper views. For Maureen and myself it is an indelible memory through a rash impulse on my part which held us in suspense for an hour.

It was November 1997 and we were based in the town of Soller on our first visit to the island. Our apartment had been recommended by Peter Hodgkiss, and belonged to an American adventuress called Lou Landreth. She had proved herself an invaluable source of information. We'd not found it useful to hire a car, which would restrict us to returns to starting points, since the bus services gave widespread access. We were using the guide to Mallorcan walks written by a club member, June Parker. Already in its second edition, it had been revised only three years previously.

Any general guidebook will tell you that George Sand and Chopin spent the winter of 1838 in the monastery at Valldemossa. George Sand was the pen name of Aurore Dupin. At eighteen she had married Baron Dudevant, abandoning him nine years and two children later. Moving to the Bohemian quarter of Paris she took up socialist and revolutionary causes, wrote erotic novels, had a succession of famous lovers, and thoroughly scandalised polite society. In 1837 she met Chopin and a liaison developed in which she was probably more carer than lover. Not yet thirty he was already afflicted with the tuberculosis that was to kill him. The Baroness decided that a spell in the warm south would improve his health and in the November of the following year they took the little steamer from Barcelona to Palma, almost the earliest tourists on record there.

Anyone interested should read Sand's book *A Winter in Majorca*, or at least Part III of this fascinating memoir. The island was then in a condition somewhere between feudalism and the England of the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The Government had recently expelled the monks from Valldemossa and was now letting their bare cells to visitors. These

were in demand in the scorching summers by wealthy people from Palma. In winter there were no takers.

In mid-December, 1838, Sand and her small party installed themselves. The only other occupants of the enormous building were a few villagers who had settled in and claimed some custodial function. In fine weather it remained an idyllic spot. In bad spells it was a survival test, a time of privations, of icy winds blasting through cells, corridors and cloisters, with scarcities of food, pilfering of the little they could get, and a general hostility towards them. (They weren't married, they didn't attend the church, the man had a much-feared illness worsened by his stay here, the woman wore trousers and smoked cigars and her children were running wild.) Yet it was here that Chopin wrote the 24 Preludes and when his treasured piano finally caught up with them they were able to listen to the new music.

That was Valldemossa 170 years ago. This is the Archduke's Path. We set off up the Cairats valley, delicious. The track rose steadily through mixed woodland with successions of trees, many of which we couldn't name. We were moving in dappled sunlight, the temperature refreshingly cool. At intervals the evidence of activity from earlier times was on display - the hearths of charcoal burners, a kiln of the lime producers, a pit for compacting snow to produce summer ice supplies. Above the tree-line at the Font d'es Poll the ascent eased and we diverged north-east to take in the western summit of Teix. This, rising only as a cone on the high plateau here, was already occupied by a few groups of contented walkers soaking up the sun. It's the culminating point in this block and looks across toward the high peaks - Puig Major, Massanella. Here we ate our lunches and enjoyed the slight breeze. I noted that Teix is just two metres less in height than Carnedd Llewelyn, the centre-piece of the view from the windows of our own house.

Back on the main path we picked our way generally westward across the high ground. The area was almost bare of trees and the scatters of spiny bushes had the character of desert vegetation. It was the perfect location for a Spaghetti Western. Beyond this the sensational part of the walk begins, the Archduke's masterpiece.

The Archduke was Ludwig Salvator, a descendant of the Habsburg-Lorraine emperors. He first came here in 1867, aged twenty. Shortly afterwards he returned, bought a huge swathe of land and remained

until the First World War called him back, a year before his death. His estates became his toy. Walkers are indebted to him for the marvellous excursions he created. Conservationists are grateful for his protection of old buildings, for his detailed studies of plants and wildlife and for his scholarly enquiries into every aspect of the island's life and culture. He also found time to indulge himself with a succession of local peasant girls so that a trace of the Holy Roman Emperors may run in many Mallorcan veins.

Now the carefully eased and graded pathway follows the spine of the ridge. To the south the wooded valleys wind back to Valldemossa. To the north-west there's the narrow coastal strip, not a mile wide, and the sparkling sea through half the prospect. Two downward steps and the limestone wall drops for what feels a thousand vertical feet and there are no breaks in it, and there are no vantage points from which it can be viewed. I wouldn't want to traverse it on horseback as the Archduke did. It is exposed enough by Shanks's Pony. Along the way we edged past oncoming guided German tour groups who greeted us cordially. Finally the arête ran out in a descent and we arrived at what I assumed to be the Coll de s'Estret de Son Gallard.

It was at this point that we, or I, changed the plan. "There is a path leading down to Deya here on the right," June Parker had written, using the old spelling. We'd only passed it by, one of the most picturesque villages on the island, on the bus. I wanted to set foot there. Nevertheless, I paused. A notice stated that it was private property or private hunting, I can't remember. The entry to the tight little valley was barred by a barricade of cut thorns stretching across to the ruins of an old hut. Beaters drive thrushes, a pest in the olive groves, up the ravines and the hunters pot them and anything else with wings.

June Parker had mentioned the unauthorised closure of old paths and confrontations with new landowners. Rather like the pied-noirs who'd gone back to France after Algerian independence, wealthy settlers from North Africa and other parts had relocated here more recently, buying large closely guarded estates. Gangsters, someone had called them.

However, in fading red paint on the hold shelter the word 'Deia' was visible with an arrow pointing down. A narrow gap had been forced between the barricade and the masonry. We squeezed through and set

off. We found ourselves on a nicely graded path, an old mule track maybe, looping down through woodland as delightful as that of the morning's ascent. Rapidly we lost hundreds of feet until we felt we must be level with the foot of the huge wall we'd passed over. But eventually we saw ahead, stretching from side to side, a ten-foot fence of tight, new, one-inch mesh topped by angled barbed wire. The coast road wasn't a half-mile distant.

A yard or two beyond the fence the track now led into thin air. A quarry had been blasted out and the path's resumption could be seen a hundred yards away. The ravine was quite narrow at this point. To the left the fence ran into steep rock with a vertical wall beneath. On the right it curled around the quarry and the shrubs weren't quite so dense. I followed it until it ended above steep ground. Maureen joined me and we lowered ourselves from saplings and their exposed roots until I was stopped, hanging down the sheared face without any foothold. It was a compacted clay, quite hard with occasional embedded pebbles, almost like a young conglomerate. We were thirty feet from level ground. Fifteen feet below there was a sloping ledge banked up with debris and dust. I could drop and hope I'd stop but I'd be covered in filth and might well damage myself.

Then I saw that Providence had intervened. Within reach of my right shoulder, protruding horizontally from the clay, was the fractured thigh-bone of some large mammal. Five inches of it was exposed and the break had given the end three or four sharp spikes. It wasn't exactly the jawbone of an ass but if I could free it, it would make a good tool for carving out holds. Working it one way and another I extracted it. The joint end made a good palm butt. I hacked away until I'd cut a deep slot or pocket to lower myself further. Then the same thing again and I reached the ledge, balancing myself as catcher. Maureen repeated the moves and moments later we were on the quarry floor.

We regained the track and followed it through the thinning woodland. For some time we'd been hearing dogs barking continuously in the Deia direction but no buildings were in sight. My anxieties returned. We'd heard already that some of these estates were patrolled by loose guard dogs. Pausing under the last tree cover we saw that only four hundred yards of open ground separated us from the road. The path seemed to have petered out on ground tracked by vehicles. then

we saw that a fence like the one we'd circumvented ran along the roadside as far as we could see in each direction. And then, that to our right another fence ran from the roadside back up the slope toward the escarpment. Behind it, with concentrated rage, two Alsatians were howling at us. I'd fenced us in but the dogs were in an adjoining property. There was no sign of life in our compartment.

I studied the fence. A line of spaced trees stood on its further side. Eventually I saw a single point of weakness. One tree had a drooping bough reaching over the fence, curving within eight or nine feet of the ground. We sprinted across the exposed space. I hoisted Maureen, she dragged me, we shinned along in tandem and moments later we were on the public highway. Deliverance.

Sitting on the bank, we composed ourselves, then set off to walk the two or three miles into Deia. There was almost no traffic on the road. As soon as we reached the dogs they began to pace us, barking in a frenzy and hurling themselves furiously high up the fence so that it shook for a long way to either side. That was alright, but what if we arrived at a gap or a hole somewhere? After some hundreds of yards, however, we passed by the imposing ornamental gates of this estancia, some distance up the slope. Soon afterwards, having done their duty and seen us off, they loped back to headquarters with sore throats and tender paws.

Darkness fell before we arrived at Deia. The through road passes above the old village but although we'd ninety minutes to spare before the last bus, we felt like sitting down. Close to the bus stop we found a delightfully seedy bar with provocative murals on the walls and only a half dozen young locals in session. Here, in contented frames of mind we attended to our raging thirsts, talking in the bar and reviewing our day. Then we were in the beaten old bus, grinding over the high ground and straining round the hairpins into Soller. We'd done the best part of the Archduke's Path, we'd taken in Teix, we'd committed a wilful act of trespass or an assertion of ancient rights, depending on point of view, and we'd very nearly been into the old part of the village of Deia. We were ready for something to eat.

My plan on starting this piece was to end with a note on Ronnie Wathen, resident in Deia for many years though he also had a base in London. He'd died suddenly four years before our visit. Now I find he's too big to fit in a paragraph and can't be constrained on a page without a note on the poet and writer Robert Graves.

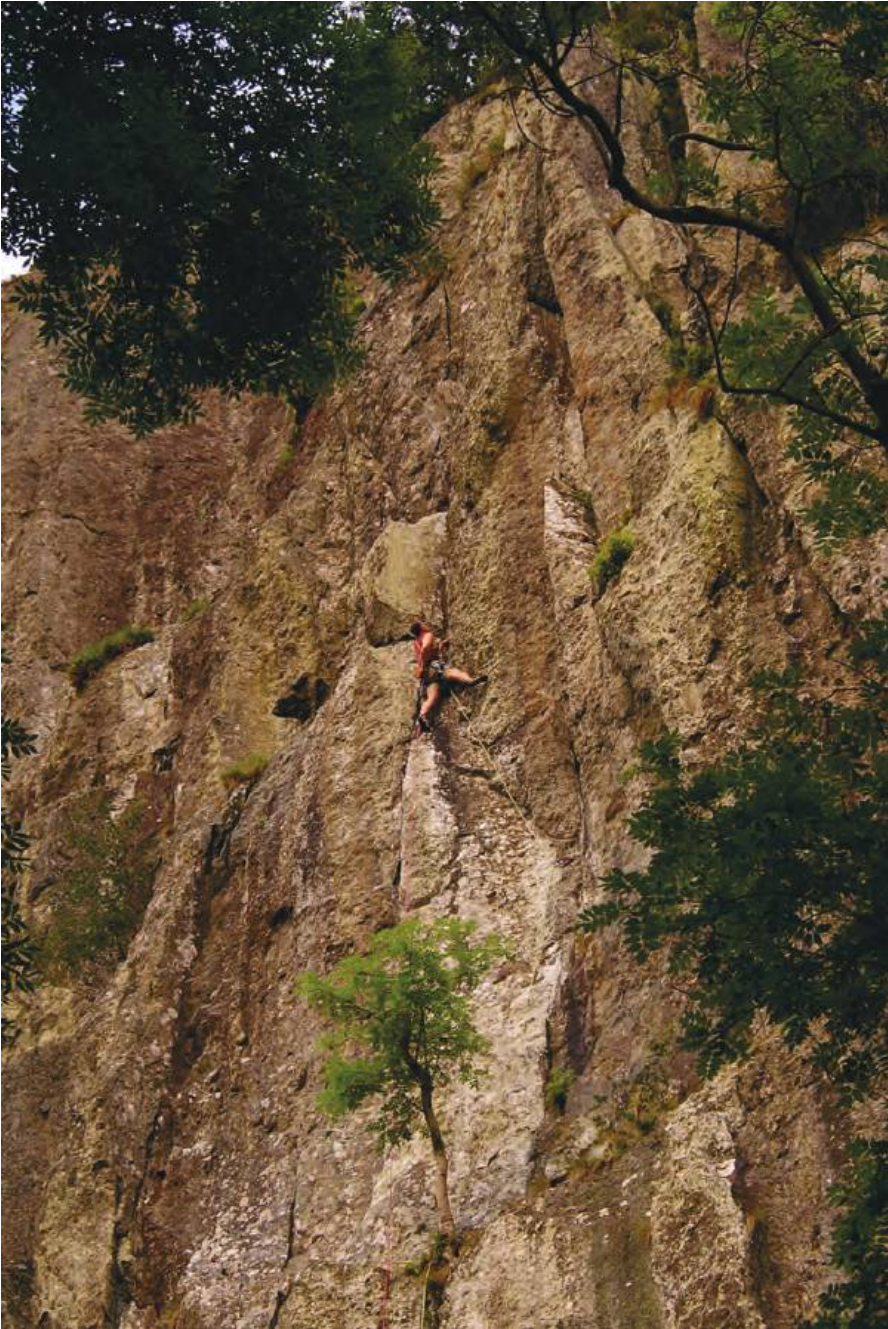
Ronnie was the lucky inheritor of enough income to make working for pay unnecessary. He was a climber, Alpine Club and Climbers' Club, and one of the three founder members of the Newton Club which demanded an 80ft free fall as entry qualification; this at a time when most climbers tied on with a simple bowline. I'd first met him in 1957 when he joined our groups in the Pennines, the Lakes and in Ireland. In that year he made the first ascent of Pumasillo with a Cambridge University MC party. He followed up shortly with big routes in the Western Alps with Chris Bonington, who could recognise a strong porter when he saw one. And he was still climbing in Mallorca in the year of his death. He was a serial traveller, sometimes a nomad moving from country to country, sometimes a householder making regular excursions back to old haunts or out to new lands. On all these journeys he lived very simply, picking up something of the language and making friends amongst the very poor. He was a family man with an Icelandic wife, a son born in Spain and a daughter born in Greece. He was a poet, producing collection after collection in the least orthodox styles and metres I've ever come across. He was a musician, dedicating much of his later life to the mastery of the Irish bagpipe, the uilleann pipes. (Lou Landreth had said that she'd occasionally taken a very early walk into the hills only to hear Ronnie playing the pipes from the summit of a crag a thousand feet higher. That may be the best distance to listen to the Irish bagpipe, an acquired taste.) He was an incurable eccentric, arriving at quite formal occasions in skull-cap or fez. I'd last seen him at meets in Snowdonia not long after we'd been paired as judges on a Boardman-Tasker panel chaired by Livia Gollancz.

Ronnie's reason for building a house in Deia lay in the intensity of his admiration for Graves. Graves was widely known in Britain as the author of *Goodbye to All That* and *I, Claudius* but he was massively productive. He'd long been resident in Mallorca and was greatly respected there, though each of his houses was a vortex of wildly

unorthodox relationships. He'd even been formally declared a Son of Deia. Ronnie wanted to be near him, to make friends, to debate the world with him.

Graves even knew something about climbing. In 1914, in his final year as a schoolboy at Charterhouse, he had fallen under the influence of one of his masters, George Mallory, and a friendship developed which was to continue until Mallory's death. Graves was recruited for visits to Snowdonia and on one of these they joined a well-attended Climbers' Club meet at Pen-y-Pass. There he found himself sharing ropes with the great figures of the period: Winthrop Young, Harold Porter and the O'Briens, amongst others. He climbed some of the most prestigious routes of the era and wrote lucid descriptions in a school essay. Within a few months everything changed and he was in the trenches of the Western Front or in hospitals for the rest of the war. He was critically wounded and became one of the small group of men who were to read newspapers reports of their own deaths in action.

Ronnie's plan succeeded for a while. Unhappily it became clear that the great man's mind was clouding and discussion eventually became impossible. By that time Ronnie had developed a taste for the company of the new expatriates settling in the village and he was still making journeys up and down the bagpipe belt from Ireland to Nepal. All that came to an end in September 1993.



Nick Wharton on *White Dwarf* E3 5c, on Castle Rock of Triermain - one of the many crags covered in the upcoming guidebook to *Eastern Crags and Outcrops*, due out in 2011 (*Ron Kenyon*)

I May Cry

Jim Rigg

Lurking in the archives of my memory was the thought that somewhere to the north of Barcelona was an area viable as a location for summer rock climbing. John's response to my e-mail was simple and direct: Cavallers? Research indicated the area was right up our street – granite climbing comprising anything from single pitch sport routes to multi pitch 'semi equipped' alpine climbs. The relevant Spanish guide was duly purchased and the fly-drive package booked. We were off to the races.

There is much to commend the fly-drive modus operandi. The long drive to a channel port, followed by an even longer drive through parts of Europe is avoided. However, one has to travel light. Years of practice, together with a liberal interpretation of what constitutes hand luggage, has enabled us to carry camping and climbing gear and weigh in at less than 20kg, including my goose down pillow!

Barcelona is the largest airport we've been through in a long time. It took ages to organise the car but, once on the road, the drive to Val de Boi passed without incident. The last section from Lleida up the valley is spectacular and after about four hours we reached Taull where we pitched camp.

Most of the climbing is to be found about 10km further up the road above the Embassament de Cavallers. We started on the sector Afrikan Wall which hosts an abundance of routes across a broad spectrum of grades. In due course we found the splendid *Piskinaries* (6a+, V+, V+). Pitch 1 offers elegant climbing up a series of ramps. Technical, thought provoking moves, avoiding the occasional damp patch, lead to a stiff pull on small holds giving access to the first stance. Pitch 2 is a traditional laybacking/jamming crack. Natural gear placements yield good protection and the corner leads to a bolt belay at the bottom of a 'roof of a house' slab. I do like these bolt protected V+ slabs. All too soon, precision padding, supplemented by the occasional positive hold, leads to the end of the climbing and an abseil descent.

A 90-minute, arthritic knee-trembling uphill walk from the car park just below the dam leads to the climbing on the Agulles de Comallestorres. This has an alpine ambience and climbers are encouraged to

start early in order to avoid afternoon storms. *El Pistacho Asesino* – a route name to inspire. Arrow straight in terms of line, beautifully exposed and demanding the use of a variety of techniques, it is a route of quality. It starts with a 6a slab that seemed quite trying. John's good at this sort of pitch and he managed to get his feet to stick in places I found insecure. I envy his meticulous footwork. The belay allows access to a series of cracks, bulges and corners that lead to the sky. Never hard, but always interesting, the climbing just kept coming. The stance below the last pitch was located at the top of a small pinnacle. This made changing leads complicated bestowing upon John the privilege of leading the final 6a pitch. An awkward start and exposed, delicate moves around an edge led to more amenable climbing and the top. From here, a 40m abseil down the back of the Agulles led to slanting ramps and an easy, though hard on my knees, descent. Local Spanish climbers congratulated us on our ascent and recommended the somewhat harder *Blue* as well as *Elena*, a climb on the Pared del Enanito Duro.

It was at this point that the rot set in. Gut rot to be precise. Whilst John made the best of a bad job and partook of some splendid walking, I was confined to the tent on a diet of bread and water. After three days of listless misery, something had to be done and that something was *Elena*. The strategy to be employed was simple – John would lead and I would follow, as best I could, carrying the sack. We were familiar with most of the approach but failed to find the peg that supposedly marked the start of the route. We negotiated some introductory slabs but failed to follow the topo with sufficient accuracy. However, the conspicuous half-way terrace was merely a pitch away and access was soon gained after a bout of 'off piste' action. A thorough inspection of the area revealed an attractive line of bolts to the left of a prominent corner crack that might have been our route. There being no evidence to suggest that the corner had ever been climbed, we took to the 'bolt highway'. Superb wall climbing with a series of tricky, balance moves towards the top secured the stance. What next? Onwards and upwards to another stance below an area of rock that exuded a certain menace. John went this way and that. Unsatisfactory, unprotected climbing led worryingly upwards. He went right, I said left – I could see a distant bolt. Somehow my concern was transmitted up the rope and after



John leading pitch 1 of *El Pistacho Asesino* (Jim Rigg)

several run-out, testing moves, John reached a secure belay. The climb was taking its toll, and dehydration, as well as a lack of food, began to render my decrepit state even worse. A rope from above works wonders and I am sure the reader can imagine my relief when I reached the stance to see a line of bolts marking the way up a straightforward-looking final pitch. John sped off and was soon taking in the rope. It is at this point that I should mention the fact that we were using two 9 mm ropes. No problem you might think but, one was 60m long and the other 50m in length. A few feet below the stance there lurked a small but stubborn tree root just waiting to entrap the unwary. I was unwary – at least until the rope went tight to reveal a hopeless entanglement with the offending obstacle. Communication was impossible and the rope was well and truly stuck. Having just completed the better part of 300m of climbing with sustenance amounting to a few mouthfuls of water and one half of a ballisto bar, I was in no fit state to cope with such aggravation. Bollocks! What to do? Think! The obstinate root was but a few easy feet below but, above a huge drop, an unprotected descent was unthinkable. Just as I successfully completed an autoblock-protected abseil to free the rope, a thoughtful leader appeared from

above to enquire as to my general state of wellbeing. After this minor epic, the last pitch was a cruise. All I can remember is reaching John and saying “I may cry if this isn’t the top.”

Back at the camp, we decided that we had followed the upper pitches of *El rap del nino* which gave brilliant 6a+ climbing. Some day!

During our stay in the valley, we visited other climbing areas. Only one route disappointed. In every other case the quality of the varied climbing was superb and there is something for everybody. As well as the climbing, the region offers fine walking in dramatic surroundings. White-water rafting and canyoning are advertised by outdoor pursuits companies. Finally, for those interested in the local culture, Val de Boi is a world heritage site and the Romanesque architecture is described as “exceptional, thanks to the concentration of such a high number of churches in a limited area”.

Nordic Ski Tour: March 2008

Bernard Smith

Norway was an itch that needed scratching. Having toured extensively throughout the Alps over many years, always on Alpine equipment, I felt as though the Scandinavian version was, at worst, a new experience, and at best, a whole new world. I had to give it a go. The first problem of course was the new gear; we didn't have any. Not wishing to invest too heavily in this new discipline just yet we put out the word, and scavenging around we managed to borrow or hire what we needed. The skis looked long, rather narrow and straight sided, the bindings were reminiscent of things I learned on some time ago and the boots seemed strangely flexible and unsupportive. It was around this time I was introduced to a mysterious new accoutrement called a waxing kit, the secrets of which were yet to be revealed.

Feeling less than confident, Josie and I teamed up with some Scottish Mountaineering Club friends, the Buchanans, who at least had experience of this form of touring. Dave selected the Rondane area, 3.5 hours north of Oslo by train, as being suitable for Nordic virgins, and had the good sense to organise the entire trip. The Rondane was Norway's first National Park and although several mountains rise to



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2000m the terrain is similar to the Cairngorms in being rolling, wild and windy, but with an ample supply of good huts. We flew Norwegian from Edinburgh to Oslo, which was very convenient and quite cheap. Changing into ski gear at the airport we deposited our 'civvies' in left luggage and, after a visit to the duty free shop, took a train to Otta, where Dave's organisation had even stretched to a waiting taxi. The ride in this taxi was less than relaxing as the driver threw it around snow covered hairpins up to Mysuseter, where there is an excellent budget hotel. All things are relative, of course, and 'budget' by Norwegian standards is not necessarily cheap to a Brit.

We awoke to a windy, snowy morning and a magnificent breakfast. Without going into detail let it be said that there was enough for a very generous lunch as well, and it transpired that this was what was expected. This was followed by our introduction to the mysteries of waxing. Was it to be blue or purple, green or white? Apparently it all depends on the temperature, the age and the nature of the snow. There are many colours of wax and several grades of each colour and we found that it pays to be non-committal but very observant! Hanging around in the background watching the experts proved to be a good policy and eventually we wobbled off into the falling snow. Our objective was the Smuksjoseter Hytta but the learning curve was to prove steeper than the terrain as I struggled with the unfamiliar equipment. The good thing about this sport is that one can always blame one's ineptitude on the wrong waxing advice. We had identified an intermediate hut, the Peer Gynt, for our lunch stop and as we approached it, out of the mist materialised a large party of schoolchildren who glided effortlessly past to occupy all the sheltered positions, and so we also learned that technique is everything. We were following a cut track, as it was our Nordic initiation, which led unerringly through the mist to the staffed DNT (Den Norske Turistforening, or Norwegian Trekking Association) hut. The machines which put in these tracks are the most amazing things. It pays not to get in their way as they cut two parallel sets of tracks, one each way, together with a wide piste to one side for skate stepping. The hut was of superb quality, but at £50pppn you would expect it to be. Incidentally the savings made by joining the DNT more than justify the subscription - currently 495 kronor, or about £55, for an individual.



A lonely skier descending into Steindalen, Rondane (*Bernard Smith*)

Day three took us to the Rondvassbu Hytte and gave an insight into the possibilities of this genre of the sport. The map showed a trail marked by birch wands but it didn't seem to exist, so we blazed our own trail through the virgin snow. Crossing a low col, we paused often for photos when the mist swirled away to reveal ethereal lighting on snow covered, rolling fjells. We even managed a few parallel turns on the descent to the collection of huts. As all the huts are wooden buildings there are usually at least two in case one burns down, which apparently is not uncommon. We spent two nights here with a day tour up the Rondvassdelen, a magnificent, steep sided valley liberally decorated with steep ice. The cuisine was again remarkable and we were fed splendidly with reindeer meat and salmon steaks.

The fifth day to the Bjørnhollia Hytta was again through virgin snow and involved the crossing of a low col, with a challenging descent through birch scrub. By now, however, we were almost in control of the skis and we arrived unscathed.

Day six was the best of the holiday as we crossed some impressive terrain over the shoulder of Blåkollen and down the Steindalen valley, past a collection of idyllic little lakes to the Eldåbu Hytte. The GPS proved indispensable as we headed due south into a whiteout. In between squalls the scenery was magnificent and the silence broken

only by the incessant chatter of camera shutters. This was our first self catering hut and we really appreciated the DNT system of stocking the huts with food and trusting people to pay for what they use, enabling one to travel light. We had one of the huts to ourselves until the arrival of a pair of Norwegian hard men who were averaging 50km a day. We were suitably impressed.

Another self catering hut, the Gråhøgdbu, followed, which was very crowded as it is close to the Troll Løypa. This is a long distance, marked ski trail of 170km from Rondane to Lillehammer. There were several people sleeping on the floor but once the stove was glowing and the reindeer burgers cooking, it was fine. Then came the ski out to Venabu, a resort with some uplift but also has many miles of Nordic trails. It has a fairly good, but expensive hotel with fantastic food for a mere £90pppn. We did a day tour up Svartfjellet, a small peak of 1154m, which was superb on our Nordic mountain touring skis. The downside, on the return down the valley, was being overtaken by fat Norwegians on track skis. It was like competing in the Tour de France on a mountain bike. Dave enjoyed himself so much that he treated us to a beer at about £9 a pint! I think the best time to visit Norway would be in Lent.

An early start at 2.45am the following day saw us in a taxi to the railway station, a train to Oslo, where we finally changed out of our ski boots, and then the flight home. On balance I would say that the trip opened up a whole new world, but a potentially expensive one.



Evening at the Eldåbu Hytta, a typical DNT refuge (*Bernard Smith*)

The Sneeze

Translated from Contes des cabanes et des sommets (Rene D. Jeandre, 1925) by John Lagoe

During my time as a captain in the Valaisan battalion of the Army, I got to know very well my Sergeant-Major Perruchoud Tobie, a tall bony fellow with high cheekbones and a prominent jaw which reminded one of a Sudanese negro. He was an excellent NCO who drew the best from his company, on or off parade, provided his captain didn't interfere. His command of military equipment was unsurpassed: on demobilisation day he handed in more pickaxes, more blankets and more puttees than had been issued to him. This was a point of honour with him, and the mark of a good soldier.

Of course he knew the source of all this surplus, but cared little if other companies were missing equipment; they all did the same, honouring the army dictum that "when everyone cheats, nobody cheats". It was just that Perruchoud was a little more cunning than the rest.

Every time he returned from leave he'd have had one too many glasses of fendant, which made him aggressive, inclined to throw his boots at some subordinate's head. Apart from this fault, which one accepted as an old weekend tradition, Perruchoud was a charming fellow, combining a happy and obliging nature with great strength and daring.

One evening, round a camp fire, I joined a group of NCOs who were telling each other hunting tales. What I heard unexpectedly reminded of an adventure of my own, fifteen years before.

When you are very young and passionate about mountains, there's a mistake you always make at the start of the holidays: to set off on the first day, out of training and loaded with food and equipment, for a distant hut which you will reach very late at night, completely exhausted and incapable of a serious climb the next day.

This time my mistake was even worse, as I had with me my cousin and her younger brother, and since I was the valiant porter in our little

caravan, I'd had on my back, for six hours, a load that a Chandolin mule would have jibbed at.

However, we reached the refuge and were pleased to find it unoccupied. I was literally drunk with fatigue; my head aching and empty, legs lifeless, neck and back curved and shoulders sore from the rucksack straps. For supper I could hardly manage to swallow a few spoonfuls of Maggi soup. But I took the mess tin to the edge of a nearby small lake and cleaned it with some grit and newspaper. It was already night. The washing up done, I started to go back in when I heard stones falling in a couloir. The noise stopped quite quickly, but I remained strangely affected by it, becoming more conscious now of the immense silence around me. I stood still and held my breath. I thought I saw rocks moving in the deepening dark; my legs shook. Wet from hours of sweat, I shivered and felt I was starting a cold. And why hadn't my two companions lit a candle in the hut? A light would have reassured me. It was time to go in. I felt seized by an indescribable fear.

At the moment when I reached the hut door, I stopped, rigid with terror: a distant cry, anguished and furious, worse than a screeching owl, came from a rocky summit; it was followed almost at once by brutish, mocking laughter and the sound of sliding scree.

I waited no longer. Mastering the paralysis, I threw myself inside, dropped the mess tin and collapsed on to a stool, trembling in a cold sweat, "Light the candle!" I said in a shaking voice. My cousin couldn't find her sac. The boy had dropped his box of matches in the wood basket and was groping for it. Now, in an inexplicable anguish, I wondered if it wouldn't be better to stay in the dark so that our presence would be ignored. Those weird, ominous calls coming in total darkness from a steep rockface, what could they be? I didn't believe that ghosts of the damned haunted the summits, but I hadn't dreamed these two sinister cries, and no climber in danger would have called for help like that. Smugglers? We were in the middle of Switzerland, in the Bernese Oberland near the Valais border.

In spite of myself, I began to imagine wild and terrible things, and although my seventeen-year-old reason told me they were foolish, I couldn't get rid of them. It seemed that at any moment the beast - or the man, the madman with his savage cry - would break into our quiet shelter. Ah! I would have been less afraid of an animal!

“What’s the matter?” said my cousin, who had finally managed to light a candle. “You’re as white as chalk. “White as a stork,” added the boy, with his fourteen-year-old wit.

I thought it useless to worry them. “I’ve just twisted my ankle and that’s upset my stomach. Let’s go to bed.”

I looked in vain for a key to lock us in, so I pushed the table, two benches and the wood box against the door. These defences astounded my companions, who immediately put everything back in place in spite of my strong objections. However I got them to gather all our belongings together and take them on to the upper sleeping level, where we snuggled down on the palliasses under a pile of blankets. I kept my boots on, and close beside me the wood axe and my iceaxe. The young lad mocked me: “Afraid of burglars?”

Five minutes after this witticism, he was asleep. My cousin, on the other side of him, was still. I kept watch. My anxiety was fuelled by many questions on what to do for the best. Should we have left the hut and hidden in some nearby hole? Shouldn’t I have warned my companions of what was going to happen? But what was going to happen? Ought I to stay in ambush behind the door, with the axe raised ready to strike?

I was more and more certain that something was going to happen that night. The horrible cries still rang in my ears, intensifying and multiplying my imaginings.

I struck a match: only 11.15. Great heavens, what a long, enervating vigil. I began to wish that whatever it was, would happen as soon as possible. But in my extreme tiredness I struggled to stay awake, and I turned backwards and forwards, half dozing with closed eyes, half listening for the slightest sound.

“Why aren’t you asleep?” said my cousin quietly, her voice making me jump. I must have been sleeping and dreaming. “I’m uneasy” she added. “I feel something bad may happen. We’d better give up our plan to climb tomorrow. Besides, I’m very tired.”

“We’ll see in the morning” I replied, evasively, “but what are you afraid of?”

“I don’t know; I just feel a menace, something bad and imminent, as if an unquiet spirit was wandering in the hut.”

My cousin was inclined to believe in ghosts - and at this moment so was I. Her words increased my anguish. If I'd been able to think clearly, I'd have realised that my strange behaviour, barricading the door and arming myself with the axes, must have had an unconscious effect on her. "It's only one o'clock," I told her. "Try to sleep, like the little one...".

I stopped short. We had both heard steps. At last, I said to myself, it's happening; we'll see what it is. I gripped the axe, without daring to move. I had never been so afraid in my life, not even when I was very small and someone scared me with a horrible picture from Grimm's tales. In my head I muttered a prayer: Help us! Help us! The steps came nearer, hesitatingly; stopped; then slowly moved round the hut. We were surrounded, beleaguered, dry-mouthed, tight-chested, immobilised by our terror. The steps reached the door and stopped again. God! Help us! Save us!

Then I heard a dull sound, like the fall of a lifeless body, the same sound I had heard once when a large parcel of linen had fallen from a post van on to a station platform. Then the latch clicked, the door scraped across the floor; a bit of wood jammed it for an instant, a push of a shoulder, a blast of cold air, the clatter of the door closing, the scratch of a match, a flickering light, and a huge shadow moving against the ceiling.

The man approached the stove and removed the circles of the lid. He muttered something in patois: he must be a Valaisan. I realised that he was surprised to find some embers. He took the candle and looked all round the room. The boy was sleeping so peacefully under his pile of blankets that we could hardly hear him breathing. If he moved, we were lost! As for my cousin and me, we kept a total silence, not even hearing the rapid beating of our hearts.

I began now to recover a little courage. Our man had nothing supernatural about him, and seemed himself rather fearful.

His inspection over, he went back to the stove and from the noise I gathered he was splintering a log with his knife to relight the fire.

It was at this moment that I was seized by the need to sneeze. It began with a tickle in my left nostril, which I managed to control with the knuckle of my index finger. But soon the tickle returned to the attack in my right nostril; then I felt a prickle in the eyes, in the throat,

in the ears; I tried to take short jerky breaths to defuse the imminent bomb-burst, all the time repeating God! Save us! Help us! in my head. There was a terrible minute, a struggle between the reflex and the will, a struggle in which all other physiological activity was suspended. The physical me was nothing more than a pent-up sneeze, the mental me a sprung valve still resisting but ready to yield to the pressure.

Pataratatafiaoux! The reflex had won. Heuh! Patafiaux! Heuh! Patafiaux! Atatachin! Atatachoum! And again.... and more. Without thinking what I was doing, I sat up, axe in hand, hitting my head on the beam, shouting horrible oaths and menaces.

“Calm down” my cousin said at last. “He ran off at the first sneeze. Let’s go and close the door and barricade ourselves in.” Her little brother had merely turned over and said to us “Be quiet, I can’t sleep.”

Using the splinters which had certainly not been intended for us, my cousin and I relit the stove. We felt relieved of an enormous weight. To flee from a sneeze, the good Valaisan couldn’t have been dangerous. However, to keep us secure I fastened the door with several nails. We now felt quite at home. A good grog helped to improve our mood, so much so that we went happily back to our palliasses and fell quickly into a deep sleep.

At eight o’clock we were awakened abruptly, all three this time, by an appalling noise. On the other side of the door a storm of oaths in schwyzerdutsch, rich and violent, ringing round the mountains and rolling joyously in echoes between the rock walls. The increasing vocal tempest was reinforced by a broadside of blows and kicks against the door. We slowly realised that we were ordered to open the door, “in the name of the law” but in our clumsy haste we couldn’t get the nails out. Suddenly, like a whiplash, a pistol shot. Damn! Things were getting worse, the man was losing patience and the rusty nails wouldn’t budge.

I decided to climb out through a window and approach the shouts from behind. To my astonishment I saw the uniform of a Bernese gendarme. I called to the frenzied man who turned and pointed his pistol. “Don’t shoot!” I cried, raising my hands. But the man had lowered the gun in a gesture both pacifying and disappointed. I saw a plump, ruddy face adorned with a shaggy, unkempt moustache, not a very soldierlike aspect. Besides, the representative of the law wore a

crumpled uniform, with the drawn face and swollen eyelids of a man who had just passed a very bad night.

We got the door open at last, and in a mixture of German and French the worthy man told us his misfortunes. A young Valaisan poacher he'd been watching for a long time; he'd stalked him all day yesterday; was just about to catch him when night fell, but slipped in a nasty couloir of loose stones and thought his end had come. The 'damned Valaisan' escaped with a shout of triumphal laughter.

He had spent the night on a narrow ledge, not daring to move. As for the poacher, he'd managed to descend with his chamois on his shoulders – the chamois which he dropped outside the hut door, where blood and hair was visible.

The sight of this brought back the gendarme's fury. He shouted and cursed, shaking his fist in the direction of the Valais. He believed his poacher had barricaded himself in the refuge and was sure he'd caught him, like a rat in a trap.

In spite of his disappointment, he accepted a mug of our chocolate and quickly emptied the little flask of cognac which we'd brought in case of need. We'd not foreseen this particular emergency, but it certainly was one, for isn't a good dose of schnapps absolutely essential for a Bernese gendarme who has had a bad night?

Around the camp fire, Sergeant-Major Perruchoud Tobie was telling his hunting tale. The lurid light of the flames lit up his sunburnt, bony face with its wide and friendly smile. He spoke with a pure Chamoson accent, a little guttural, with a roll to the 'r' and a hiss to the 's' and the 'c'. "When I heard, in that empty hut, such a monstrous sneeze I was so dreadfully afraid that I ran away as if the devil himself was after me."

Ah! Perruchoud, my friend, I was just as frightened as you.

Translation by John Lagoe of "L'éternement", a tale from "Contes des Cabanes et des Somnets" by René D Jeandre (the pen name of a Genevese doctor), published Geneva 1925

The Amethysts

Translated from Contes des cabanes et des sommets (Rene D. Jeandre, 1925) by John Lagoe

*R*ain lashed the windows of the verandah where we were taking tea. The door opened briefly and a gust blew the newspapers on to the floor as Miss Barnes and Mme de Rivaz came in. To occupy themselves on a wet afternoon these ladies had gone out to visit the bazaars of Chamonix, with the firm intention of looking at everything and buying nothing. They returned with their arms full of miscellaneous objects which they tumbled on to the table: photographs, nougat, a paper-knife, an inkwell, a bouquet of edelweiss, a paper-weight. This latter was a magnificent smoked crystal surmounted, debased, by a metal chamois.

As we passed the ladies' booty from hand to hand, Jean Reviol held on to the paper-weight for a long time. Jean Reviol, the celebrated alpinist contemplating a cheap chamois! Was he demoralised by the bad weather and lack of action?

- Hey, Reviol, are you proposing to eat that chamois!

- Leave him alone, he's studying how such animals can climb steep rock.

- It's not the chamois I'm looking at, said Reviol, unsmiling, it's the crystal. It's magnificent. Look how clear it is in spite of the dark interior colouring. It's a smoked crystal, which the local people call amethysts

- Can you still find these around here?

- Certainly. Near the Col d'Argentieres there are many, darker ones. There is a Glacier des Amethystes in the region, and in the Miage massif you can find completely white crystals, usually smaller than this. This...this one must come from... from the Aiguille Verte chain...from the Mer de Glace face of Les Droites. I almost think I can recognise it...yes, from a long time ago, more than thirty years....

All fell silent. Those broken phrases seemed to rise from the depths of his memory. We scented a story. A story from Reviol would be a godsend on a long wet afternoon. Now in his fifties, he was one of the finest French alpinists, with an unsurpassed knowledge of the Mont Blanc massif. When he spoke, which was rarely, he was always interesting

- Come on, you're dying to tell us the tale! said Mme de Rivaz. I promise I won't interrupt you, especially if it's about alpinists. I'm passionate about your mountains.

- As I have been for thirty years, replied Reviol slowly.

There are two errors, *he began*, which enthusiastic novice alpinists commit every year at the start of the holidays: two errors which are really one. They tackle climbs above their capabilities, and do so impetuously on the first day, scorning the proper preparation and the gradual training which city-dwellers need.

That's exactly what we did, my friend Leon Forgier and I, setting off like young hotheads to climb Les Droites. The first ascent had been made by English climbers only a few years earlier, and we were impatient to follow their route or even discover another. Les Droites are a group of summits in the massif which separates the Argentiere Glacier from the Mer de Glace, with the huge Aiguille Verte at its extremity. That is why this fine mountain chain is rarely seen and little known: the Aiguille Verte, directly dominating the Arve valley, has a majesty which completely overshadows its neighbours.

Les Droites are nevertheless worthy of an alpinist's attention: a serrated crest 4000m high. On the Argentière side, the rocks crown a steep face of many couloirs constantly swept by stone and serac falls. On the Mer de Glace side three formidable jagged buttresses of fine red granite rise from the Talefre Glacier. There, full of illusions of success and very little precise information, we were going to attack the mountain.

It was the start of the season in Chamonix, which had not yet become the world-renowned centre which it is today. You arrived on foot or by car, and the Montenvers railway wasn't even thought of. After an hour's walk, having tried a short cut, we were lost in the forest, wading through bracken and fighting rhododendrons. Just at the point of retracing our steps, the noise of broken branches stopped us. A startling figure appeared: a peasant, in rags, descending rapidly with an astounding sureness and leaning on an old-fashioned ice axe, crude and heavy like a pickaxe.

- It's 'Le Sournois' whispered Forgier, who had seen him the previous year in Chamonix

Le Sournois seemed well-named. His wrinkled, mis-shapen face, his twitching eyes, his bony chin with its grey goatee beard, his tobacco-stained moustache and his huge deformed shape made him a repugnant, frightening sight.

In a rough, stuttering voice he pointed our way back to the track. But just as he was about to continue his rapid descent he noticed our rope and asked, with a twisted smile, where we were going. When we told him 'Les Droites' his expression changed and he almost flew into a passion.

- It's a ba... ba... bad mountain; don't get yourselves lost; climb well to the left, near the Aiguille Verte couloir...but you're too young to go up there...better go somewhere else...towards the right it's bad, very bad! People have died over there!

With an unpleasant laugh, he disappeared among the trees.

My confidence in our enterprise was more than a little shaken.

- We might have done well to ask him to come with us, I said, he seemed to know the mountain.

- Oh no! cried Forcier, Le Sournois has a very bad reputation. His real name is Louis Bezancy. He used to be a guide, but was expelled from the Compagnie. It's said that one day he came back without his client or his comrade. When asked to explain he became embarrassed, then angry, and finally offered to resign from the Compagnie des Guides. They took him at his word; but nothing has been learned about the two who disappeared and they've never been found. Le Sournois had to sell his chalet and land and now lives in a miserable cabin. No one is allowed in it, and no one knows what mystery lies there. They say he's a half-mad old miser hiding his gold.

After a rest and food at the Montenvers inn, we finally arrived at the Couvercle where we were to pass the night. Now, under the huge overhanging rock called the Couvercle, there is a comfortable refuge. Then, there were only a few planks, a drystone wall and some prickly hay. We slept little and badly in the penetrating cold on the hard wood. Cracking sounds from the movement of the glacier disturbed us. I was sure I heard footsteps, but Forcier assured me I was dreaming.

Before dawn we set off up the glacier in the direction indicated by old Bezancy; easily until we reached the immense rimaye, which stopped us from getting on to the rock at our chosen point. It was a long time before we found a narrow bridge; the rimaye was so wide that even with our rope at full stretch we had to be both on the bridge at the same time. We wasted no time in leaving the snow for the rocks, enormous granite blocks piled on top of each other, becoming steeper and

steeper. We climbed diagonally, as Forgier who was leading had to clear and throw down many loose rocks: they reached the snow in a few bounds and were swallowed by the gaping crevasse.

It was still very cold. Our fingers were half frozen from the cold granite, and we began to feel the effects of the bad night and the altitude. To justify our increasingly frequent stops, we admired the immense glacier at our feet and the torn precipices; these were fixed and immobile at first, but if we stared at them for too long they began to tilt and wave. We had to quickly look back at our hands gripping the rock to recover a feeling of security, the sense of the vertical.

In these circumstances, when the stomach is nauseous, the heart beats too rapidly and discouragement is near, one must recover one's energies with rest and food. We sat for a while, backs to the granite, legs hanging over the void, but we couldn't eat much and set off again, unconvinced but still trying to approach the Aiguille Verte couloir, according to Bezancy's advice.

On our left we had the terrible faces of the Verte and its companions, the Nonne, the Capucin and the Moine. These summits seemed to rise at the same time as we did, so we could see how slowly we were climbing.

The sun was now high above us and stones no longer held by frost began to fall. A whistling, a pistol shot, then a pebble pulverised when it hit the rock. I was hit by a small stone which left me with a deep wound on the forearm.

Interrupting his account Reviol, as if he felt it necessary to support his story, pushed up his sleeve to show us a pearly scar.

It was dangerous to continue. We must have misinterpreted the advice of the old guide, or else he'd given us false information. In any case we had to retreat.

It is often said that descent is more difficult than ascent, but that isn't entirely true; it is certainly more nerve-racking to lower oneself on an exposed face without being sure where to put one's feet, but the effort is much less than climbing up. In effect we descended more rapidly than we expected, and this change of movement was almost restful. It was still early in the day when we reached the foot of the rocks, feel-

ing stronger and in high spirits. The sun and the lower altitude doubtless helped!

We shouldn't have given up so soon, we told ourselves, forgetting the danger and the tiredness which had stopped us. Forgier particularly was not happy. He claimed never to have been defeated by a mountain. He was twenty years old.

- We should try again by another way, he said. Suppose we explore more to the east?

- But, I objected, Bezancy told us that the ground over that side was very bad. If it's worse than where we've been, it's not worth trying.

- Dammit, said Forgier, he's misled us by telling us to climb this side; perhaps the old fool just doesn't know.

- Well it's true his appearance doesn't exactly inspire confidence.

So we set off on the glacier, roped up at a safe distance, towards the two south-west buttresses of the mountain. We were traversing parallel to the rimaye and well below it when we came across tracks, around two days old but still visible as they had been made deep in soft afternoon snow. The length of stride showed that the traveller had been descending. The traveller? It was clear that there had been just one man. A lone tourist on a crevassed glacier, that was strange enough. A smuggler would have nothing to do up here. It must have been a poacher, hunting chamois. But why had he been looking in this desolate region?

We followed the tracks, climbing obliquely up a large slope which rose in a triangle between the buttresses. They led to a bridge which this time let us cross the rimaye easily. Above stood the steep loose granite face, very similar to the one which had turned us back.

We looked at each other. There was still time to push our exploration a little further and we were deeply intrigued by these footsteps which seemed to have fallen from the blue. Reaching the foot of the rocks, our curiosity was vastly increased by the sight of a veritable track in the granite. It was not, of course, a path, but the route was clear from nailmarks and it had been cleared of all loose stones: a striking contrast with the face we were on earlier. In several places we even found boot nails. Evidently this route was frequently used; yet the Droites had been very rarely climbed up to then

As we climbed on up chimneys, couloirs and slabs, always the mysterious marks showed us the route and encouraged us. Despite feeling tired again, despite the increasing heat, we easily climbed pitches which were certainly harder than those which had seemed so daunting in the morning, simply because we were encouraged and stimulated by the track. We realised that men, – or one man – had often been up there, and that gave us the assurance which was missing, only a few hours earlier, on the untrodden face.

We forged ahead, now hoping to reach the summit, when we were decidedly stopped by a vertical wall four or five metres high. We were in a cleft, surrounded on three sides by smooth, unclimbable walls. All traces of the track ended here.

Surprise, then disillusion, then discouragement. We should try again to eat something! We descended ten metres or so to find a suitable ledge. At our feet the face dropped in a single step to the majestic glacier. Opposite, the jagged Chamonix aiguilles were profiled against the enormous mass of the Mont Blanc. To our left and right, a vertical chaos of huge granite blocks defying the law of gravity.

As we tried to eat a few dry biscuits, we noticed a small pile of stones on a ledge, and saw that the tracks reappeared at that point and led down to the right following a broad line of quartz. A little further, we spotted an iron piton in a crack. Tying the rope to it, we slid down to a platform with a black hole at its back. In front of the hole stood a heap of magnificent crystals!

We stuck our heads into the hole but, dazzled by the brightness outside, we saw nothing at first. Happily we had our lantern. Bent double to get in, we could then stand up in a sort of long fault two metres high,, lined with crystals. We shivered in the glacial cold which seemed to emanate from the thousand reflections from the walls. Our eyes, adjusting to the soft light of the candle, opened wide at the marvellous sight, unequalled in our wildest dreams.

Everywhere the floor was littered with shining fragments from which we could choose fine crystals to replace the few poor pieces we had found on the climb. Suddenly my foot struck a metal object. A chisel, and next to it a hammer! Delighted with this find, we could now cut out fine souvenirs from superb pyramids on the opposite wall. At this point the ceiling was lower; we shone the lantern there. It was then that,

frozen with horror, we saw a man, flat on his face, appearing to grasp the crystals under him.

Forgier was the first to recover from the shock, and approached the man, who was very tall and clothed in brown. From his back there rose the haft of a knife; rips in the jacket showed that the man had been stabbed many times. We steeled ourselves to touch him. His boots were old and hardened. Pushing his trousers up, we saw a brown leg, mummified by the cold and the dry air.

As we tried to turn the body over we discovered a second, smaller body on which the first had fallen. This corpse was more finely clad; a hat decorated with feathers lay by his head, his hair stuck together by dried blood; bony fingers, one with a ring, were clenched tight. When we lifted the first corpse we were surprised by its lightness, but could not bear the sight of the empty eye sockets, the lips drawn back over the teeth. We covered the horrible face with the hat.

A great terror seized us, but before fleeing we had to find out who these two sinister companions were. Feeling in the guide's pockets, Forgier pulled out a pipe, some tobacco, a knife, a carnet and a handkerchief which crumbled into dust. I found a wallet in the tourist's jacket. It seemed our duty to do this, although we knew it would bring us much trouble, questioning and even suspicion.

What a relief to return to fresh air, space and light! As soon as we got outside we looked at the carnet and wallet. The carnet was in the name of Simon Couttaz, Guide. The wallet contained several visiting cards, embossed with a baron's crown and the name Hauptmann Ulrich von Federer, Magdeburg. Behind us the black hole seemed threatening, as if the dead men were trying to drag us back to them.

Loaded with crystals we descended as quickly as possible. It was late now and the snow was soft. We reached the Couvercle rock tired and unsettled, and spent another uncomfortable night there, troubled by nightmares. The wound on my arm, which I had hardly been aware of during the day, was inflamed and painful and I felt feverish.

Awakened by the cold we set off for Chamonix. Below Montenvers we found ourselves again face to face with Bezancy, barring our way.

-Well, h..h..have you had a good climb? He began, good-humouredly.

With a naivety which I find today inconceivable, we started to tell him about our discovery. He changed colour.

- Ah! It was you, he said, shaking with rage. It was you I saw up by my grotto. You have stolen my amethysts; my treasure....and my secret.

He was terrifying. His deformity made him see larger and stronger than an ordinary man. He glared at us, took out of his trousers an ancient pistol, and checked the priming.

- This is for one, and this, lifting his enormous axe, is for the other. And the amethysts will be mine.

We tremblingly offered to give him the crystals.

- And my secret? Can you give me that back?

We were lost. Our quick look down the slope was seen by our executioner, who seemed to enjoy keeping us quivering, half dead already with fatigue and fear.

- Don't try to run away, he growled. I'd soon catch you!

We knew it. We'd already seen him running down the hill. Better to fight than turn our backs on him.

He was slowly raising the pistol when he suddenly froze. Happy shouts rose from the woods below. A huge wave of hope swept over us as the shouts, whistles and calls drew closer and a large group of schoolchildren appeared at the corner of the path.

Quickly Le Sournois hid his pistol in his trousers and threw himself through the woods towards the valley.

The schoolmaster, seeing our pallor, made us drink a little of his cognac, which gave us the courage to continue our descent to Chamonix, though at each turn of the path we feared that Bezancy would jump out at us.

We went at once to the gendarmerie. Our tale was not believed until the door of Le Sournois' hovel was forced and he was found hanged. In his bedroom there was a large pile of smoked crystals.

The Mayor, who had a bazaar, murmured:

- They're easily worth two hundred francs.

He probably got them for less. And I'm sure that among the objects found today in the souvenir shops there are still some from Bezancy's treasure.

Did he really think he had discovered something very precious? I believe he had killed his companions in the first mad moment when he

John Lagoe

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saw the beauty of the grotto and the mass of crystals, and afterwards tried to justify his crime by forcing himself to believe that the amethysts were very valuable precious stones.

At that moment the dinner gong rang. Everyone left the verandah. A woman's voice could be heard:

- If I'd not seen the scar on his arm I wouldn't have believed his tale.

And then a man's voice, asking:

- Did you go back to the cave?

- I tried, replied Reviol, about 15 years ago. I wandered all over that face of Les Droites. I thought I remembered precisely, but nothing resembles a block of granite like another block of granite. All traces had disappeared. I never found the place.



Ullswater from Place Fell, 1 January 2009 (*Ron Kenyon*)

Cham 76

Alan Wright

We had a more tedious trip to the Alps than might be seen these days. Calais was having its annual blockade, causing a detour into Belgium to reach France. It was the winter of 1976; Pike and I fancied a week's climbing in Chamonix and Hubert fancied a ride out in the Mini, which subsequently led on another trip us both him and us, taking up skiing. We met up with Roger, who was resident in Chamonix for the winter and did a deal with him involving a car and a bit of floor space. We went up to the Argentière hut which was fairly new then and sparsely populated during our occupancy. We met a guy on the glacier who was concerned about *clefs* but we couldn't help him. It was a good period to be in the Alps. It wasn't overpopulated and there were early and first British ascents available for the adventurers.

We warmed up on an adjacent hill and Hubert went down to the valley to learn to ski. In the evening we were impressed by the effects of the full moon brightly illuminating the panorama of the north faces which were visible from the hut. We were also impressed by other occupants of the hut being convinced that we were in need of a share of their cauldron of goulash; we didn't argue.

Refreshed, we set out at some early hour across the Argentière glacier to reach the Courtes North face, which we duly ascended, slowly, with heavy sacs, applying the well-tried theory that if you carry bivvy gear you will have to use it. At the summit we found a big ledge and darkness and gave in for the night in some comfort, having had the foresight to include full weight sleeping bags. Come daylight we were treated to an impressive panoramic view: on the one extreme Mt Blanc and on the other the Matterhorn. The descent was uneventful, down the mountain and the glacier to Lognan to catch the cable car.

Our peace was shattered by a chance meeting with Barbara, a Canadian stopping at Roger's. She advised us in a North American drawl that we were about to be really sick! In our absence several incidents had occurred that might have been related: X had smashed Pike's car; X lost his job; X lost his girlfriend; X got drunk; X's boss was his girlfriend's husband. In the end it turned out that there seemed to have been some indecision about which side of the road to take on the level

crossing, and the centre was divided by a raised concrete divider. Some medical attention would be required on the car.

Roger, in our absence, had located a scrapyard with a quality scrap Mini, apparently with a needed gearbox available. The first problem was to get our car down to the scrapyard. In addition to the gearbox damage the brake pipes had been damaged causing loss of brake fluid with subsequent loss of braking. The immediate problem was solved by attaching a campervan to the back of the car to act as a brake, with me in the Mini driver's seat to point the vehicle combination towards Chamonix.

We then spent two and a half February days in a scrapyard, at a temperature of minus numerous. We changed gearboxes, observing that it would have been easier to have just changed the number plates. We borrowed a reamer to fit the idler gear from the French Mini. Working in a three man relay we managed to achieve an acceptable fit in spite of assurances from a German engineer, who visited us on a daily basis (in a supervisory rather than functional role), that it was not possible to achieve a satisfactory fit with hand reaming. We proved him wrong: it was still going strong 24,000 miles later. With the engineering completed all that remained was to pump up the hydrostatic



Fine-tuning in Calais. Supervisor: Pike, chief mechanic: Hubert.
(Alan Wright)

suspension and blast off across France. That shouldn't present a problem because Roger had located a garage with the relevant pump in the valley. The only problem was: where was Roger? We couldn't hang about. There couldn't be more than about ten garages to choose from and the French for "have you got a pump to inflate the hydrolastic suspension?" couldn't be too difficult. At what seemed to be the tenth and last attempt, a Toyota dealer came up trumps.

During our enforced stay in Argentière I was invited by the incumbent to take over his role as Alpine Climbing Group secretary. He was planning to go from Chamonix to Canada and couldn't find anyone else to whom he could offer the honour (I lasted until the next committee meeting, at which time a more suitable candidate was elected). We left as soon we thought the Mini might survive the trip and before any more damage could be done.

Starting home, the clutch failed after about three gear changes and needed topping up. After a similar number of changes the same problem recurred; the decision was taken that rather than squander our limited fluid supplies, the clutch usage was abandoned. It didn't seem necessary until an uphill start was required on the Paris Périphérique. Helpfully, there was not much traffic late at night to hinder us making a dodgy manoeuvre involving Hubert and myself giving Pike a mobilising push and then clambering into the moving car. Reaching Calais we had time to look under the bonnet to find the clutch hydraulic pipe was barely finger tight; no one admitted to having screwed the pipe up, perhaps because no one had.

We arrived back in Sheffield in time for someone's Himalaya fund raising party at the ice rink. After a week playing in the snow I might have appreciated somewhere warmer.



Jonathan Preston on the first ascent of the south ridge of Cornice (Alpine D)
(Stephen Reid)

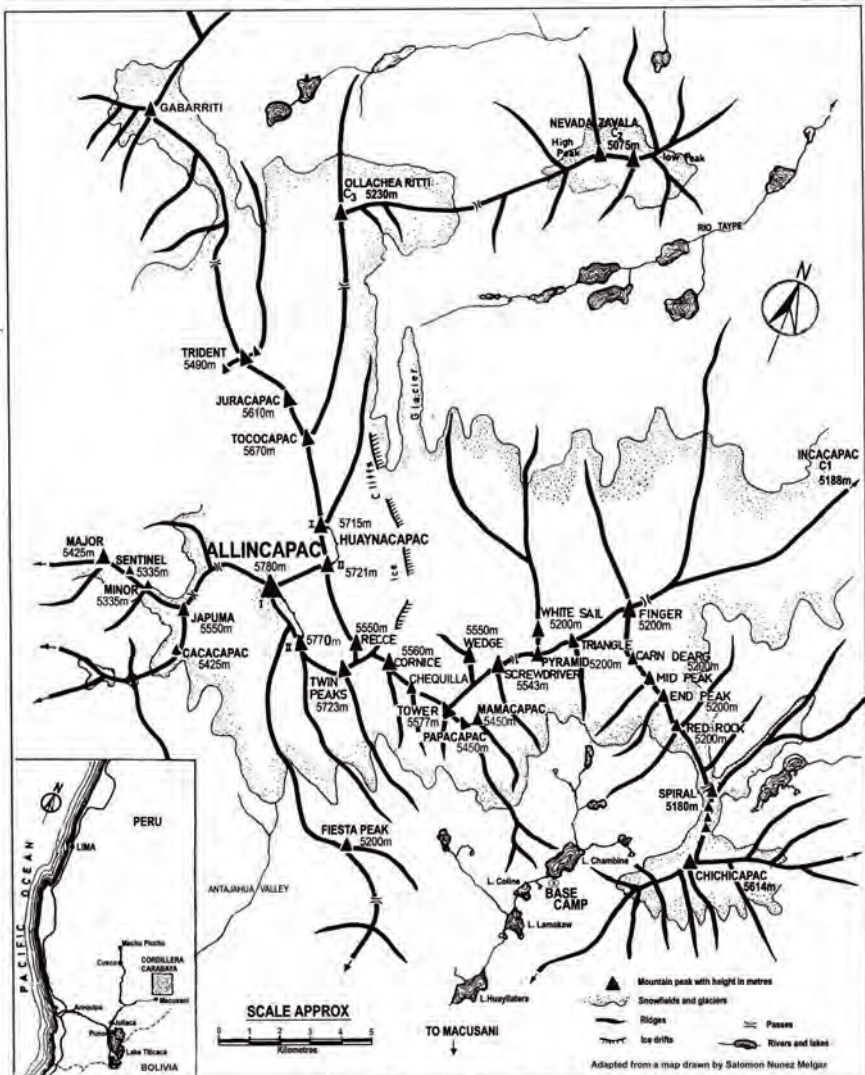
Frost, Dust and Tear Gas:

Exploratory Mountaineering in the Peruvian Cordillera Carabaya

Michael Cocker

At the southern end of the Peruvian Andes lies the remote and rarely visited Cordillera Carabaya, a compact and attractive range of mountains with summits between 5000 and 5780m, an area where the level of exploration and development approximates to that of the Alps at the end of the Golden Age; in other words all the major summits may have been climbed but there is still considerable scope for new routes with a few minor peaks still virgin. In the early summer of 2007 Jonathan Preston, Stephen Reid and I spent 17 days in this area climbing three new routes and one previously unclimbed summit. No detailed maps were available and our primary source of information was a verbal recommendation from South American specialist John Biggar and a handful of old articles published in mountaineering journals. The principle aim of this paper is to provide a summary of the exploration to date, to clarify some of the confusing and contradictory records and to give an account of our own modest endeavours. It should be noted that these mountains have never been properly surveyed and that altitudes given in this article are only approximations: best estimates based on those recorded by earlier expeditions and ourselves.

For millennia, the local Quechua Indians have farmed and grazed livestock in the high valleys below the glaciers. The mountains themselves were (and still are) considered sacred – Apu (deities) that govern the weather and water, and the mythical place of origin of alpacas and llamas. Traditional names exist for three prominent peaks – Allincapac, Chichicapac and Huaynacapac. The highest, Allincapac (5780m), takes its name from a legendary pre-Inca king, Allin, who buried his wife Macu at the foot of the mountain (near the town of Macusani). In Quechua the word *capac* means chief, hence, Chichicapac means small chief. Huaynacapac was the name of an important Inca king. The identities of the first two summits, Allincapac and Chichicapac, are apparent, as they form distinct massifs. However, the latter, Huaynacapac, is in the middle of the range and depending on where the mountains were viewed from, may have referred to more than one



CORDILLERA CARABAYA

peak, leading to some confusion for the late-comer mountaineers who were hoping for clarity on the matter.

Dr Godfrey Francis and his wife made the first survey of the Carabaya with Tim Fisher, in 1954. This was a geological expedition whose purpose was to study, nepheline-syenite, a mass of unusual rock rich in aluminium trioxide, which outcrops in the area. On 9th July they climbed an outlying peak, which they named Japuma (5550m). Francis led a second expedition to the area, in 1959, to attempt the three highest peaks – Allincapac, Huaynacapac and Chichicapac. On

30th June Francis, Simon Clark, Beverley Holt and Julio Cardenas climbed Chichicapac (5614m) by its west glacier and, having assumed this was the first ascent, were disconcerted to find footprints and rope-marks in the snow near the summit. Cardenas, their chief porter, made enquiries and discovered that the Italian mountaineer Piero Ghiglione and a local porter, Fortunato Mautino, had made the first ascent, via the same route, eight days earlier. At the time Ghiglione was 76 years old. He and Mautino also made the second ascent of Japuma and an attempt on Allincapac before moving to other areas where they made another thirteen first ascents. Francis's party also tried Allincapac but, hindered by soft snow, were unable to find a suitable line. In 1960, Francis, who wrote the instructional manual *Mountain Climbing* (1958), was killed by stone fall on Pillar Rock.

The first ascent of Allincapac 1, an imposing flat-topped massif encircled by steep cliffs overhung with huge ice seracs and cornices, was made via a short steep couloir on the west side, by Robert Kendell and Michael Binnie, members of an Oxford University expedition, on 25th July 1960. The other members of the party, (John Cole, Keith Meldrum and Nigel Rogers) made the second ascent, by the same route, two days later. From a high camp west of Allincapac, they also climbed the lower of Huaynacapac's two summits (5715m), which they named Huaynacapac 1, by two separate routes on the same day: the northwest ridge (Cole and Rogers) and southwest face (Binnie, Kendell and Meldrum). The following day Binnie and Kendell forced a track through soft snow up the southwest face, to a col between Juracapac (5610m) and Tococapac (5670m) before continuing up the southeast ridge of Juracapac to make the first ascent. The next day, the rest of the party used their tracks to regain the col and made the first ascent of Tococapac via its northwest ridge. Kendell and Binnie made the first ascent of Allincapac 11 (5770m), climbing 300m of steep snow on the northwest face. Recce Peak (5550m) was ascended by Cole, Rogers and Meldrum in order to inspect the four impressive rock and ice towers which they named Screwdriver, Wedge, Tower and Cornice. They also made a complete north to south traverse of Japuma and included Cacacapac (5425m), a rock peak to its south. Towards the end of the expedition Cole and Kendell made the first ascent of the second, slightly higher and southwesterly summit of Huaynacapac

(5721m). Finally, during the evacuation from their high camp “Pico Carol” (5670m) “a prominent gendarme on the east ridge of Allinacpac” was climbed. The party had their base camp in the Antahoua valley, directly under the formidable southwest face of Allinacpac, and spent six weeks in the mountains.

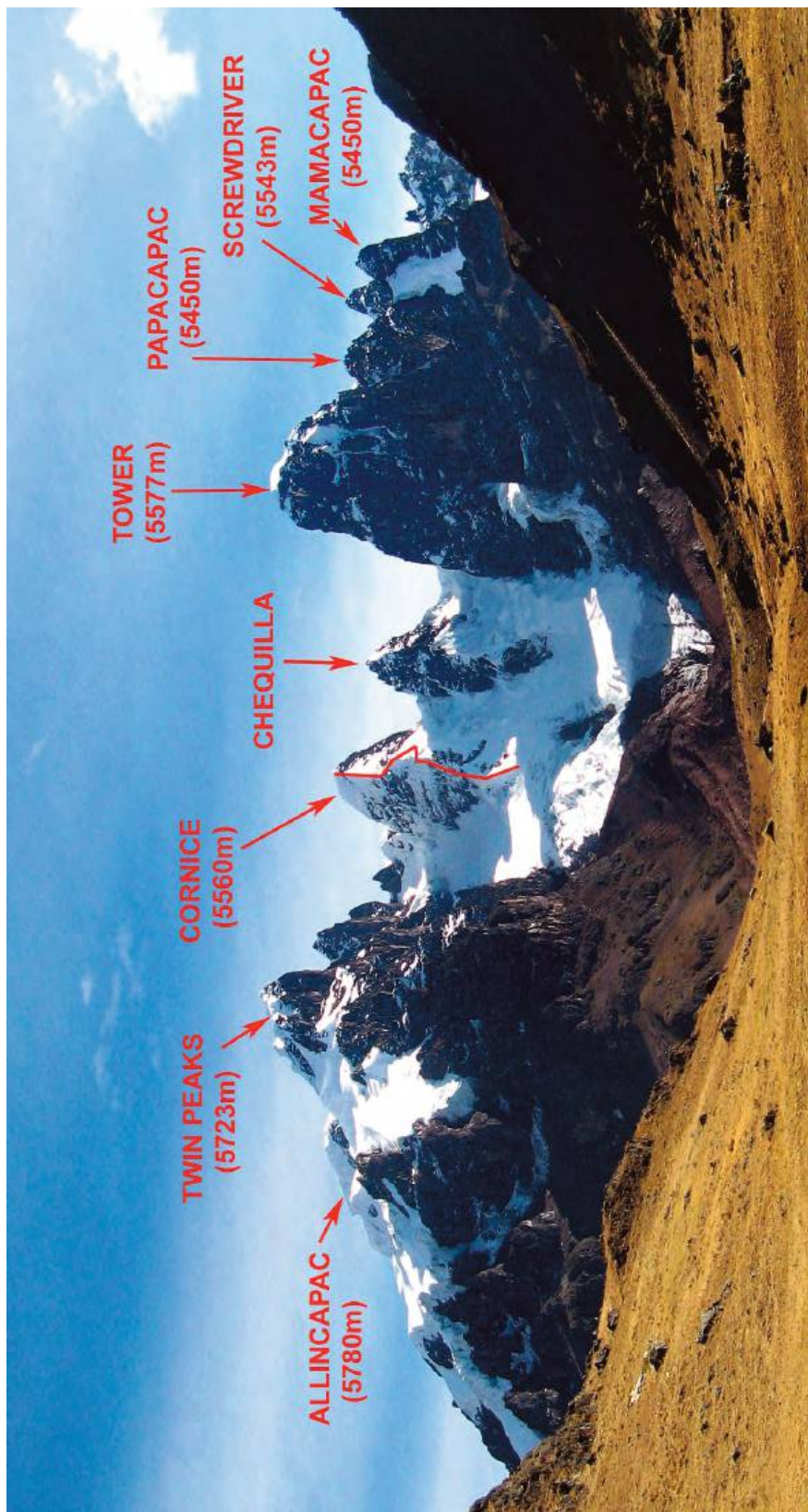
A Keele University Expedition made the third ascent of Chichicapac, in July 1965, following the same line as previous parties, before making the first ascents of Tower (5577m) (which they confusingly and erroneously refer to as Huaynacapac), Screwdriver (5543m) and nine other peaks. It took the best part of a week to find a way up Tower, which Brian Chase, Rodney Gallagher, Geoffrey Bonney and Andrew Tomlinson eventually climbed via “a huge ice-gully” on the northeast side. During their exploration of Tower they named two subsidiary peaks, east of the main summit, Papacapac and Mamacapac, both around 5450m. A spell of bad weather and the theft of some equipment detained them for a few days in base camp before a high camp was established in the glaciated cirque below Screwdriver and Pyramid. From here Chase, Tomlinson, Bonney and Gallagher made the first ascent of Pyramid (5200m) by two independent routes. Chase and Tomlinson followed this with the first ascent of White Sail (5200m), another snow peak, possibly Vela Blanca (on the same ridge and slightly north of White Sail) and, on 16th August, Screwdriver via its north ridge – the latter being a pure rock climb with two Very Severe pitches. Bonney and Peter Floyd made the first ascent of Red Rock (5200m) and a peak “just east of Pyramid” (probably Triangle). Chase and Tomlinson devised “a superb ridge traverse on snow and rock” over the summits of End Peak, Mid Peak, Carn Dearg and Finger Peak, all around 5200m. At the end of August bad weather set in “and only minor rock peaks nearby were ascended”. The party established base camp at Laguna Lamakaw, on 15th July, and departed on 9th September.

The first expedition to approach the mountains from the north was a team from the New Zealand Alpine Club who, in 1967, set up a base camp near the head of the Rio Taype. On 14th June, Alex Parton, Dave Massam, Bryan Dudley and Alwyn Chinn made the first ascent of C2 (5075m), an impressive snow peak overlooking their camp, finding it harder than expected, the crux section being a 100m rock buttress

which was iced in parts. On 18th June a high camp was established on the glacier northeast of Trident. From the lower reaches of this they “climbed steep fluted ice and rock to a ridge” leading to the top of C3 (5230m), the first ascent. Second ascents of Juracapac and Tococapac were made via a long snow couloir, presumably on the northeast face, by Parton, Dudley, Massam, Chinn and Roderick McKenzie, on 21st June. The following day the same party made the first ascent of Trident (5490m), their main objective. Steep snow and ice led to a col between the middle and north peaks where “an interesting rock ridge” led to the summit. After a couple of days back in base camp, second ascents of Screwdriver (repeating the line taken previously), Tower and Huaynacapac 2 were made, both allegedly by new routes. On 4th July they made the first traverse of Allincapac 1 and 2 – third and second ascents respectively of the individual peaks. Massam and Parton made the first ascent of Cornice (5560m), at the end of June, finding it “longer and more difficult than was anticipated”, but left no details of the line taken. Eight other peaks were climbed from base camp, the most spectacular being a subsidiary summit of C2 involving a height gain of over 600m.

Also in the area at the same time, based on the south side of the range, was a British team, led by Roger Whewell; they too had come to attempt Trident, but turned their attentions to Wedge Peak (5550m) after meeting with the New Zealanders. In the event, due to a combination of bad weather and soft snow they failed to climb Wedge, and, instead, made first ascents of three minor peaks on the ridge north of Chichicapac. Whewell returned with his wife the following year and succeeded on Wedge, the last significant virgin summit.

In 1971 five British women – Kate Dilworth, Barbara Spark, Mollie Porter, Carol McNeill and Janet Richards, all mountaineering instructors – climbed Japuma from the north and, on 16th August, made the first ascents of three peaks on the ridge running west from this: Sentinel (5335m), ascending the south and descending the west side, Minor (5335m) via the south face and west ridge, and Major (5425m) via the east ridge and south face. On 20th August, Spark, Porter and Richards made the first ascent of Spiral Peak (5180m), one mile north of Chichicapac, via the southwest ridge, while McNeil and Dilworth made repeat ascents of Triangle and Pyramid.



Allincapac Massif showing the line up the south ridge of Cornice (Alpine D). The smaller peak immediately right of Cornice, Chequillan, is still unclimbed. (*Michael Cocker*)

In October 1973, Steve McAndrews (American), Ian Haverson (Australian) and Michael Andrews (New Zealand) made the fifth ascent of Chichicapac by the normal route up the west face. On 2nd August 1980, from a base in the Antajahua valley, a Chilean team consisting of G. Cassana, D. Delgado, G. Naccicio, and A. Neira made the first recorded ascent of Twin Peaks (5723m) via the southeast ridge. This was the last expedition to visit the Cordillera Carabaya for 25 years as political instability and an aggressive campaign by the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) guerrillas made Peru a virtual no-go area. By the time climbers did return, in the 1990s, the Carabaya, no longer having the lure of significant virgin summits or peaks over 6,000 metres, slipped into relative obscurity.

The first to rediscover these mountains was John Biggar, who led a commercial expedition to the area in 2005. From a base camp at Laguna Chungara, southeast of the Chichicapac massif, they climbed Chichicapac via a new route, the east glacier and northeast ridge, on June 14th; a technically straightforward ascent which they graded alpine 'Facile'. The following day Biggar and two others climbed the minor peak of Chichicapac Southeast (*ca* 5285m), which they believed to be a first ascent by an easy glacier on the south side, followed by rock climbing on the northwest ridge up to British Very Severe. The party then moved their base camp to Laguna Chambine, west of Chichicapac and, on June 19th, Biggar and three others climbed an unnamed rock tower (*ca* 5267m) by two separate routes, the north ridge and the west face. No location for this peak is given. They thought the summit may have been reached before, but were fairly certain the climbs were new as there was clear evidence that they had only recently emerged from the glacier. Ascents were also made of peaks they believed to be White Sail and Red Peak, the latter via a straightforward scramble up the south ridge, possibly a first ascent. Various members of the team climbed Quenamari (*ca* 5294m), which lies south of the main range, Iteriluma (*ca* 5270m), just south of Chichicapac and an unnamed peak (*ca* 5057m) near Laguna Chambine. It's not clear if any of these were first ascents.

Jonathan, Stephen and I arrived in Lima, on 14th June 2007, and the following day took an internal flight to Juliaca and a bus to Puno, on the edge of Lake Titicaca, where we spent four days acclimatising and acquiring essential supplies. A luggage allowance of 20kg each on the international flight had pared our equipment down to a bare minimum and all the food, fuel and base camp kit had to be purchased locally. A minibus and driver were hired to take us the 300 or so kilometres of dirt roads to the unprepossessing town of Macusani at the foot of the mountains where, having no choice, we found a room in a basic hotel, next door to the local brothel.

With no established infrastructure for onward transportation into the mountains we wandered the streets enquiring, in broken and inadequate Spanish, if it was possible to hire a vehicle. No one was forthcoming until we were introduced to Alex, a local wheeler-dealer and likeable rogue, who had spent time working on construction sites in the USA. Significantly, he had a car, a beaten up old Peugeot with bald tyres, that, after agreeing a price, he drove with alarming speed and confidence up a rough track leading to a dam at the road head, so we could recce the start of the trek to base camp. On the way back we stopped at a farm where two rather toothless middle aged ladies, wearing the traditional Derby hat and hooped skirt, agreed to act as porters and lend us pack animals.

The following morning a friend of Alex's arrived at the hotel with a minibus that looked even more of a wreck than the car, but we were assured that it was good for the journey and as if to prove the point, both the driver and Alex brought along various members of their families for the ride. Remarkably, despite living virtually in the shadow of the mountains, they had never been to the lakes at the head of the valley. All went well and a couple of hours later we were met at the dam by the ladies from the farm with two horses and three donkeys. After an hour or so preparing the loads a small caravan, now including not only the ladies and their pack animals but also the driver, Alex, various family members and a couple of children, set off on the two and a half hour trek to base camp, which we established at the edge of the picturesque Laguna Chambine.

The winter solstice was almost upon us and the locals had told us about the 'Allinapac Raymi' or festival that was due to take place at

the head of the adjacent Antajahua Valley, on 23rd June. Thinking the walk would be a good acclimatisation exercise and that we would probably be the first outsiders to participate in this, we set off that morning to join in the festivities. By the time we got to the top of the 5,000m pass that gave access to the next valley, it became clear that we would not be able to get there and back in a day, so instead we decided to traverse the ridge leading northwest towards Allincapac. A couple of hours' easy scrambling brought us to the foot of a rock tower that projected 50m or so from the ridge. Drum beats, pan-pipes and voices drifted eerily up from the valley below as we solo-ed up the tower, finding the final short, loose and technically severe wall, just below the summit, disconcerting in big boots without a rope. There was no cairn on top and as it had no name and didn't appear to have been climbed before we called it Fiesta Peak (5200m).

Base camp was a delightful spot. The sun hit our tents at 7:00am, and for a few hours the air was still and warm; unfortunately, around midday the wind picked up, producing clouds of dust that would deposit their contents over the camp, invariably just as we were about to have lunch, the main meal of the day. We were a little concerned about the wisdom of leaving the tents unattended while we were away climbing, but, in the event, the only visitor we had during our stay was



Base camp at Laguna Chambine (*Michael Cocker*)

Marco, a thirty-something family man from Macusani, who came three times a week on his bicycle to fish the lake for trout, which he later sold in the market. Just after 3:30pm the sun disappeared behind the surrounding peaks and within minutes the temperature plummeted, driving us into our tents for extra clothing or clambering up the hillside to stay in the sunlight a little longer. Being midwinter and just a few degrees south of the equator, days were short and the darkness lasted a full twelve hours with the temperature dropping to around -8°C in the early hours of the morning.

Our original objective was the unclimbed south face of Chichicapac, but a preliminary inspection quickly ruled this out for, although we could see a feasible route up a series of connecting snow gullies, the whole face was overhung by massive seracs and cornices. So we turned our attention to the north side of the mountain where we found a fine rock ridge with three distinct towers, leading directly to the upper snowfields. A chilly bivouac in the corrie below, and an early start, enabled us to reach 'Preston Col' at the foot of the ridge just after dawn, on 29th June. To avoid having to re-arrange the ropes at each stance we had agreed that the leader would climb three pitches before changing the order. Jonathan took the first shift and set off up a chockstone filled chimney, on the east side of the ridge. From an icy belay two thirds of the way up this, a short wall and traverse took us out onto the front of the ridge, where a series of open grooves and corners led to a platform at the foot of the middle tower. We swapped leaders, and Stephen donned the rock shoes to tackle what was clearly going to be a difficult pitch. Technically, it was probably only Mild Very Severe, but the holds were small, the rock friable and only moderately protected. Also, we were all acutely aware of the altitude and the sacks felt heavy. It was an impressive lead and when I came to second it in big boots, I found myself calling for a tight rope on more than one occasion. A couple of pitches of easier climbing took us to the foot of the third tower, which we were able to avoid by a rightward traverse on to the snow. We had noticed a band of ice-cliffs above the ridge the previous evening and had been a little uneasy about the difficulties these may contain but in the event a straightforward passage was found through them and only a few hundred meters of steep snow and the occasional crevasse separated us from the summit, which we reached



Jonathan Preston bouldering at the bivi site below Chichicapac. The north ridge starts at 'Preston Col' and forms the left hand skyline (Alpine D). *(Michael Cocker)*

at 1:30pm. Far below we could see Macusani, a small stain in the khaki coloured altiplano; to the east, a sea of cloud lay over the Amazonian rainforest; to the north the Allincapac massif and, in the far distance, Ausangate, the highest mountain in southern Peru. After a bite to eat we set off down the west face, the start of which would be difficult to locate in poor visibility. This contained one short steep ice section, but otherwise led easily down to a snow col where we veered away from the normal route and abseiled down the corrie headwall to scree and boulder fields back to our bivi site. It was 5:30pm and almost dark, but rather than endure a second night out we stumbled on down for another hour and half to reach base camp utterly exhausted. It had been an excellent day's climbing – a new route (which we thought about alpine 'Difficile'), the first complete traverse and seventh overall ascent of the mountain.

Four days later, and after another cold bivouac and predawn start, we scrambled over exhausting, ankle-twisting moraine to the unnamed glacier below the south face of Screwdriver, our objective for the day. The snow on the glacier was soft, we moved slowly, and it was already 9.30am before we were near the foot of the face, rather too late, we felt, to embark on a major mixed route of unknown difficulty, with no bivouac gear (we had left this below the moraine). Besides this, we



Stephen Reid just below the summit of Chichicapac. (*Michael Cocker*)

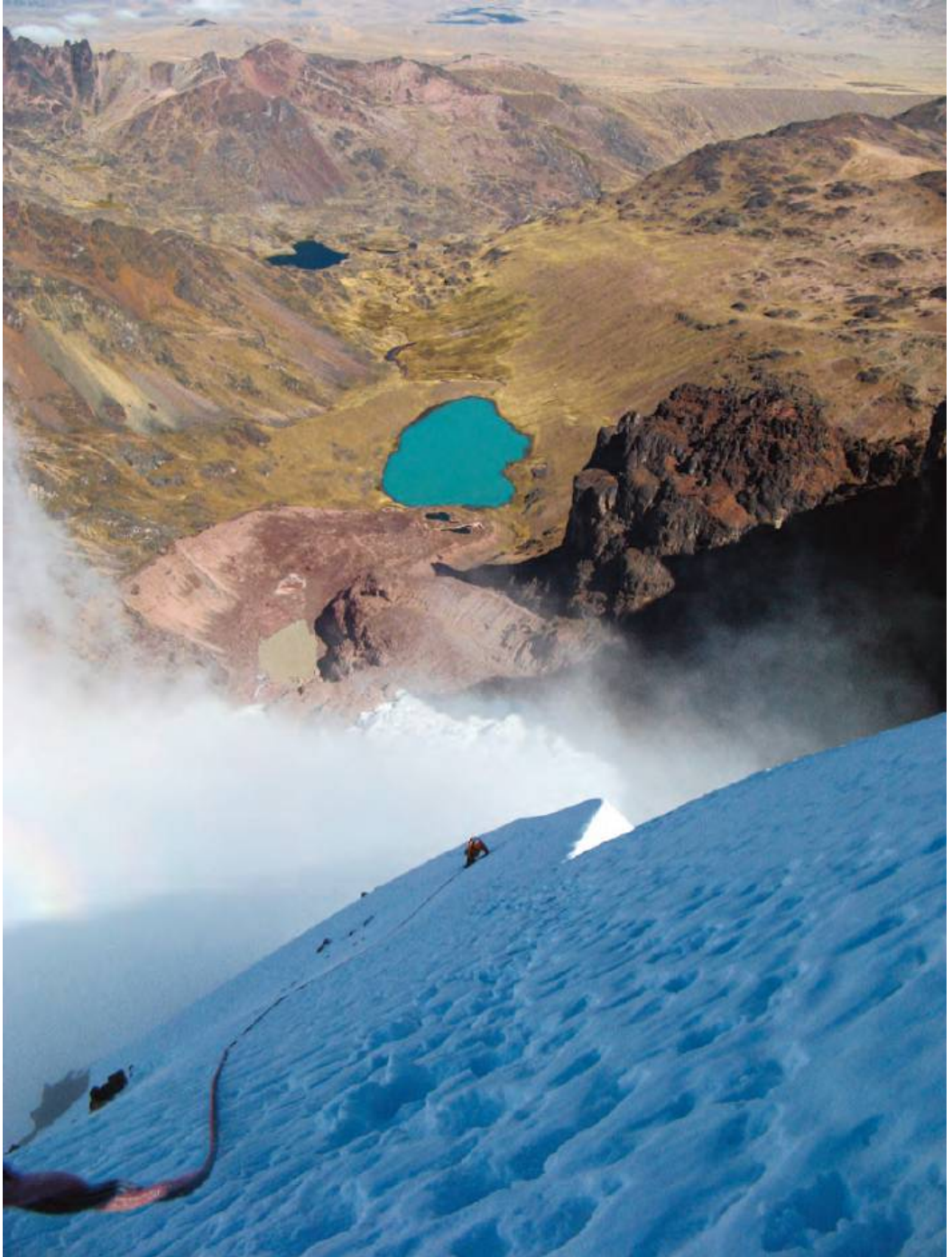
could see no practical line up the face. So, after a brief discussion we opted for the unclimbed, more amenable and impressive looking Mamacapac. A steep snow slope led to a col between the twin peaks, where we belayed and I set off up the shaded southwest face, the rock rather cold on the fingers. After a few moves the angle eased but the rock became horrendously loose and the climbing akin to tip-toeing up a pile of precariously perched roof tiles. Three nerve-jangling pitches took us to the summit where we built a cairn and wondered how we were going to descend. In the event, delicate down climbing and one abseil landed us safely back to the col where we began the long and wearying return to base camp.

With time left for only one more sortie, we decided to explore the mountains at the head of the valley we had crossed on the way to Fiesta Peak; The elegant looking south ridge of Cornice in particular had caught our attention. On the walk in, and just as we were approaching the bivouac site, I slipped on a loose boulder and landed heavily on my left wrist. I didn't think much of it at the time, but the next morning, when we were walking up the moraine to the foot of the glacier, it

was painful every time I put weight on it and I thought it unwise to embark on a long snow and ice climb that was going to require the use of two ice tools for most of the day, so reluctantly dropped out leaving Stephen and Jonathan to complete the route. This, they reported, was superb, with 13 pitches of climbing at about Scottish grade 3/4 that took most of the day, with a descent down the same line. They didn't get back to the bivouac site till 10.00pm and as I had taken our only MSR stove back to base camp, they had a second cold night with only a few mouthfuls of water and some boiled sweets to sustain them. We had all anticipated a return to base camp the same day, so their absence caused me some concern during the night and I was mightily relieved to catch sight of them strolling back up the valley early the following morning. This was only the second ascent of the mountain and the first ascent of the south ridge, which they graded alpine Difficile. The adjacent peak to the north of Cornice, Chequillia, remains unclimbed.

During our time in the mountains the weather remained remarkably stable with only one day of low cloud and drizzle, but on the last evening thunder rumbled in the distance and lightning forked across the eastern sky. We had arranged for our porters and transport to return on the 8th July, but being aware that Peruvians have a rather elastic sense of time we were unsure if our plans would materialise. Our doubts were misplaced and they arrived at base camp early that morning and before we were ready. In the hour or so it took to tidy up the camp and load the pack animals the sky changed from milky high cloud to thick fog and heavy snow, which lasted for the rest of the day.

Back in Macusani there was talk of political unrest and a national strike that would bring the whole country to a halt. As we approached Juliaca, the following afternoon, the roads were already strewn with boulders and makeshift barricades. Early the next morning troops and tanks surrounded the airport attempting to hold back large crowds of protestors, which, while we were there, broke through the cordon and smashed lights on the runway, inflicting enough damage to render it unusable for several days. Avoiding the demonstrators, we returned to the hotel, and were effectively besieged for the next 48 hours whilst slingshot wielding protestors battled it out with troops and tear gas on the streets outside. At the first opportunity we took a bus to Arequipa, where we understood the airport was still operational. Unknown to us



Jonathan Preston on the first ascent of the south ridge of Cornice (Alpine D). (*Stephen Reid*)

the protests were still at full pitch here in the shanty-towns surrounding the city, and the bus driver refused to go any further dropping us 25km short of our destination. With no alternative, we started walking, carrying the gear as best we could. A short distance down the road we came across a number of abandoned vehicles. On the cliffs above, protestors were hurling rocks and boulders down on anything that moved below. Taking our chances, with debris landing all around us, we moved through this section as fast as we could, only to walk around the next corner to find a pitched battle taking place between protestors and heavily outnumbered riot police. The police ordered us to leave the area, but with nowhere to go and the road ahead completely blocked, our only option was to follow the railway line in full view of the rioters. The uncertainty of the outcome during the next few hours, as we made our way past protestors fuelled with anti-government, anti-capitalist and anti-western sentiments, eclipsed anything we had experienced in the mountains, but we survived to tell the tale and that evening wine and dined in style amidst colonial splendour.

NOTE:

The mountains' names may be spelt with a single or double c: i.e. Allincapac or Allinccapac. The author is unsure which is correct.

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The map accompanying this article is adapted from one originally drawn by Salomon Nunez Melgar in 1967.

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Stephen Reid (left), Jonathan Preston and Michael Cocker (right) with the porters, at the road head on the return from the mountains. *(Michael Cocker)*

Aconcagua

or Don't Mention the War

Richard Morgan

In 1990 I was searching for a guiding agency to help me ascend Cerro Aconcagua. At that time I was keen to climb all the highest peaks on all the continents and had done Kilimanjaro, Elbrus and Kosciuszko. My plan after Aconcagua was Denali - or McKinley as it was more often known then - but that's another story. I started my search by writing to Argentinian guides based in Mendoza, near the mountain, but my Spanish was probably not adequate to get my requirements across and I didn't hear back from any of them. The recently formed group Mountain Travel had also been recommended. Based in the US, they seemed expensive, especially as the transaction would have been conducted in US dollars. Fortunately, while looking through climbing press, I found the answer close to home where I live in Harrogate, where Out There Travelling (OTT) were based before they moved permanently to Sheffield. The leaders had an Argentinean friend who they had met in the USA, who was keen to lead a group to Aconcagua. I went with them to Argentina in 1991.

I understood that we were to be the first British group to ascend the mountain after the Falklands conflict. In addition to the general attitude toward the British as a result of the conflict, I was particularly sensitive to the situation as I had a friend who had settled in the Falkland Islands and was helpful to the British military during the conflict especially in the capture of Port Stanley. While our group of 8 or so contained several Brits, we were under the guardianship of our Argentinian guide, and so encountered no trouble.

OTT was formed in 1990 for the 'seriously adventurous', and lived up to that expectation: their first trip was to Pik Lenin in 1990, and it was almost their last. At Camp 2 at 7125m, on 13 July an avalanche wiped out 43 climbers, and to date that is the world's worst climbing tragedy. The people who worked for OTT, even in 1991, were still in a state of shock at the incident. In addition to the leader of the Aconcagua trip there was one other member of our party who had been on the Pik Lenin expedition, which tells a bit about the mood of the party when the trip began. There was a distinct sense of gloom and I wondered why until I connected the stories in the mountain press

to the people on the expedition. Fortunately, the mood lifted fairly quickly.

At 6959m Aconcagua is the highest mountain in South America. Its massive bulk lies wholly within Argentina, rising some 400m above its Andean neighbours, and on a clear day it is easily visible from the Pacific Ocean. Although nearly 7000m in height the ascent is technically straightforward when following the original Swiss route. However there is only one short window for ascent, when there is a break in the gale force winds which blow over the top of the mountain, keeping the summit slopes swept clear of snow for a good proportion of the year. The window is in summer, and being in the southern hemisphere the best climbing is in February. The snowline is around 4400m, but varies considerably according to local variations in precipitation. In winter there is substantial snowfall but the summer is dry.

The Swiss Guide Matthias Zurbriggen made the first ascent of Aconcagua on 14th January 1897, as part of the Fitzgerald Expedition. Fitzgerald conquered many South American peaks in the golden age of alpinism, but alas was indisposed on the day of the summit bid for Aconcagua. The route begins at the Puente del Inca (2933m), on the Uspallata Pass, which takes the main highway from Buenos Aires to Santiago. From here there is a 27 mile mule walk up the barren Horcunes river valley to the base camp at Plaza de Mulas (4260m). The route angles up to the North West ridge, which rises to the Canaleta, a scree slope or snowy couloir (depending on the buildup), and from the top of this, the summit, only a few meters away, is easily reachable.

In February 1991 our party caught a flight to Buenos Aires, where we admired the cosmopolitan city. I was, perhaps naively, surprised to see no South American Indians; the city was very mediterranean in character with its many Spanish and Italian immigrants and colonial history. We enjoyed excellent cooking and kept a low profile. After one day we caught the overnight bus across the Pampas to Mendoza, then spent half a day obtaining the necessary permits to climb the peak, and the rest of the day provisioning at a nearby supermarket. The following day we caught the local bus to the Puente del Inca where we acclimatised for one night while camping in the nearby alpine pastures, with the huge south face of Aconcagua clearly visible. The next day we

set off the Horcones Valley, camping just beyond a spot called Confluencia (3380m), where the two Horcones rivers join. The following day we followed the bleak Horcones Superior valley, with its vestigial glacier and complete lack of vegetation, to the Plaza de Mulas base camp where we found a great number of tents. We found a space for ourselves and occupied a further acclimatisation day by visiting the numerous glaciers in subsidiary valleys, with their characteristic penitentes formations.

We then carried half of the load up to the first high camp at what we called Nido Inferior, as it was below the ridge that contained the Nido Condores camp. The advantage of this camp was that it was the last one with running water; all higher camps are reliant on snowmelt. We followed recogni s e d acclimatisation practice by climbing roughly 400m increments, followed by a return



to sleep. The following day we carried the other half of the load up the same route, but the slept at the high point. Over the next few days we progressed in this stepwise manner up the rubble and boulder strewn slopes to Nido Condores (condors nest) (5570m) at the end of the North West ridge, and then on up to the Berlin Hut at 6000m, our final camp.

A few further days of rest and acclimatisation followed, then we went for the summit in one day. The route followed a large track and we were the only party heading up that day. There was another group, American, camped at the Berlin Hut, but they didn't set off until the following day so we had the mountain to ourselves. We passed the Independencia Hut (6350m), just below the Canaleta, which is reputed to be the highest permanent building in the world. Apparently it is now a ruin, possibly the highest ruin in the world, but at the time it appeared



The traverse below the Canaleta (*Richard Morgan*)

to be quite functional, although not in use at the time. We donned crampons and used ice axes to make the traverse below the Canaleta, which most of our party ascended although a couple turned back at that point, feeling the altitude. About a half dozen of us reached summit of the Canaleta, and so the summit of Aconcagua. We had set off at about 8am and reached the summit at about mid-day. I was one of the first up to the top and the others were pretty quick behind. We were staggered by the views across all of the southern Andes from the comparatively narrow summit ridge. We left our names in the book, and headed down to arrive at the Berlin Hut before dusk.

The following day we quickly returned to the Plaza de Mulas base camp. Because we had climbed the peak so quickly there was a difference of opinion as to how to spend the remaining time. Most of the party returned to the bright lights of Buenos Aires, and one enterprising member even crossed the river Plate to Montevideo. However three of us stayed behind at Confluencia, and the following day ascended the Horcones Inferior valley to stand under the mighty south face of Aconcagua, a truly awe inspiring sight, rising directly from the valley floor to the summit.



The south face of Aconcagua rising from the Horcones Inferior valley.
(Richard Morgan)

The Mountain of God

Dan Hamer

Mention East Africa and I'll wager that an elephant silhouetted against the outline of Kilimanjaro springs to mind. It's a universal image, indelibly imprinted on the collective Western consciousness and I shared it for years. That is until the early 1990s, when I saw a slide show at a Mountain Club of Zimbabwe function about a trip into the Rift Valley to climb Ol Doinyo Lengai. The description of that ascent and pictures of this remarkable volcano radically changed my perception.

East Africa is traversed by dramatic rifts that extend from Eritrea to Mozambique, the surface expression of dynamic forces within the Earth that are tearing Africa apart. Magma leaks to surface along these linear fracture zones creating a string of impressive volcanoes that constitute some of the most striking mountain scenery in Africa. Situated at the north eastern tip of Tanzania's Crater Highlands, Ol Doinyo Lengai is the only active volcano in the Gregory Rift. It is a unique strato-volcano erupting both ash and a rare form of lava derived from natro-carbonatite magma. It has been rumbling away for several hundred thousand years beside the still, soda-rich waters of Lake Natron. Lengthy periods of quiescence have been punctuated by brief, but explosive episodes. The last major event occurred in the mid-1960s leaving a double crater at the summit which has now filled to the brim. Since 1998, lava has been spilling over the lip and scorching the flanks.

The surroundings boast modest herds of game: wildebeest, zebra and several species of gazelle graze the short grasses, giraffe browse the acacia trees and the occasional cheetah can sometimes be glimpsed accelerating into a chase. Maasai roam the floor of the Rift, pausing, stork-like, to admire their beloved herds of cattle. For them, Lengai is sacred, 'the Mountain of God', the simmering cauldron of a primordial race of giants.

However, it isn't only Maasai tribesmen that feature in the foreground of my mental image of East Africa. They are the present offspring of a lengthy genealogy. A few kilometres to the south-west, an ephemeral river slices through the volcanic stratigraphy of the Crater

Highlands. Mammalian fossils were already known to occur here when the anthropologists, Louis and Mary Leakey, made the first of a series of remarkable discoveries of early hominid remains at Olduvai Gorge in 1959. Other revelations followed and in the late-1970s the fossilised footprints of three hominids at nearby Laetoli were widely recognised as the oldest evidence of man on Earth. It seems probable that this area of the Rift has witnessed continuous occupation by man's ancestors during at least the last 4 million years.

The volcano is a few metres short of 2900m. It can be climbed in a day, but the ascent is a strenuous and unrelenting 1700m. Elevated daytime temperatures in the Rift make nocturnal ascents preferable. Joining forces with a group of friends from a nearby gold mine, we settled on the period of the full moon at the end of May and arranged transport through a safari tour operator in Arusha.

Two months later, our Land Rover sped south west along the edge of the Burko-Losiminguri uplands towards the Rift. We paused briefly at an anonymous junction, and then set off northwestwards across the Rift in the direction of Lake Manyara. To my dismay a new sealed highway was under construction from here to the Crater Highlands to improve access to Ngorongoro and the Serengeti. We turned north onto a single track, laterite road that was signposted to 'Loliondo', a small settlement near the border with Kenya. The sun was approaching the zenith and it was significantly hotter than in Arusha. On our left, the brooding mass of Loolmalasin rose above the clouds lining the edge of the escarpment, dissected volcanic uplands hemmed us in on the right, and ahead, the conical outline of Kitumbeine shimmered in the haze.

Lone Maasai, blood red in the breathless heat of the verdant Rift, stood guard over their cattle on the plains between Euphorbia-clad ridges. The sun became hotter. The distance grew hazier. The dust thrown up by our vehicles was denser. We began to gulp down water from the cooler box at more frequent intervals.

Around midday we reached the lip of the Ol Kerii Escarpment and gazed down onto a miniature Serengeti where the Rift Valley opens out and makes a slight angle to the north-west. We got out of the vehicles to take photographs and the searing heat knocked us over. We crossed a flowing stream at Engaruka, an ancient settlement somewhat

reduced in standing, and drove on to the shade of a dried up river bed where we paused for lunch.

When we re-emerged from the thicker riverine bush the panoramic character of the landscape was overwhelming. Immense volcanoes soared into the sky around us. Gelai was now faintly visible to the left of Kitumbeine, but Ol Doinyo Lengai was still hidden behind the inactive, decapitated cone of nearby Kerimasi. We drove northwards across the scrubby flats with scattered groups of Grant's gazelle, zebra, and wildebeest punctuating the shuffling herds of Maasai cattle, and climbed gradually onto the saddle between Kitumbeine and Kerimasi.

The saddle was littered with cinder cones and pock-marked with explosion craters. We stopped by the lip of one, beneath the northern slopes of Kerimasi. It was 50m deep and about a 150m across. A sinister crack snaked across the floor. It felt like we were travelling back in time to an era when the Earth was young and giants paced the Rift.

I couldn't resist a few photographs and it was in my enthusiasm to take them that I bumped into the tree where man was born! I'd been looking for it since we'd paused at the lip of Ol Kerii. Only it wasn't Peter Matthiessen's* celebrated baobab, it was a gnarled and stunted acacia, about my own height. It boasted vicious, elephantine thorns. I walked back to the others, sporting a bloody scratch across my forehead from this brutal encounter, as elated as if I had just crossed the threshold of a Maasai initiation ceremony.

In the middle of the afternoon, the distinctive outline of Ol Doinyo Lengai began to emerge from behind the flanks of Kerimasi. Lengai is an awesome sight up close. It is a near perfect triangle. The slopes on all sides steepen towards the lip of the crater into what seems to be an improbable angle. Was it really just a walk to the summit? The white streaks of recent lava flows spilling from the crater created the illusion of snow in the summit gullies and added to the sense of elevation.

As we crawled across the maze of dried up channels on the northern flanks, the Rift Valley wall beyond Lengai gradually emerged from the haze together with the shoreline details of Lake Natron. Approximately half a kilometre from the base of the escarpment we crossed a strongly flowing river, climbed a low, grass covered knoll and dropped down to a tiny camp site in the shelter of a leafy vale.

Here we unpacked and had a rendezvous with our guide. He introduced himself as Burra Ami Gadiye. He was tall and upright, but I thought he was uncharacteristically well-built and barrel chested by Maasai standards. His English was excellent. Burra was not Maasai, although he appeared in Maasai dress, lived nearby and was well versed in Maasai traditions. At his suggestion, we drove down to the shoreline to see the vast flocks of flamingo for which Lake Natron is justly renowned, and returned to camp as the sun set behind the escarpment. The temperature was unpleasantly warm as I climbed under my mosquito net and I fell asleep with a gnawing suspicion that I would not be setting off in the thermal underclothing I had brought.

I heard two of my companions scrabbling in their tent shortly after midnight. I felt dreadful. I dragged myself out of my sheet sleeping bag. It was every bit as warm as I had feared. I packed my windproofs and thermal gear in my rucksack and decided to set off in shorts and a T-shirt. I had a cup of sweet tea with the others and then piled into one of the Land Rovers for the final approach.

The full moon was partially hidden behind cloud but the light was sufficient for torches to be unnecessary. The upper third of Lengai was capped by a dome of fluffy cloud. The Rift was silent and bathed in moonlight. We re-crossed the ford and headed south along the base of the escarpment passing several clusters of Maasai huts illuminated by the embers of the evening's cooking fires still glowing in the light breeze.

Until a couple of years ago it was possible to drive vehicles to the saddle between Lengai and the escarpment. The rapid deepening of erosion gullies now prevents this and the track stops about one hour's walk short of the saddle. I shouldered my rucksack with a feeling of dread in the pit of my stomach and set off following a narrow but distinct track through knee high grass. It was 01h40. The only sounds were the steady breathing of my companions and the rustling of the grass.

At 02h30 we reached the old trail head beside several scrubby acacias. I fell full length into the accommodating grass and could have curled up and gone to sleep. Ten minutes later we were off again and the ground grew steeper with every step. At the second rest, I was finding it hard to keep up with the others. My T-shirt was saturated with

sweat. I ate a Mars Bar, drank some more water and retched violently. I dropped a place in the line as we moved out of the grass into scrub-bier, pungent vegetation. It was the most frustrating slope to climb. For every three steps upwards, at least one slipped backwards in the unconsolidated, ash-laden rubble. I stumbled into the vegetation and got cross. Ahead of me the others seemed to be making better progress.

When I caught up with them, comfortably munching their snacks at the fifth stop, I was beginning to feel slightly feverish. Two months previously I had been laid out by a nasty bout of malaria coupled with typhoid. I wondered if my discomfort during the night heralded a recurrence. I had been staggering so unsteadily over the last few metres that Burra had offered me his stick. I had taken it gladly and now needed to sit down and rest.

Burra disturbed my self-focussed reverie and suggested politely but firmly that we should go on. The others had set off a few minutes earlier and were already some distance up the slope. Only their winking head torches and the occasional scuffling sounds of boots struggling in loose gravel gave away their position. The clouds had dissipated from the summit. Glancing round I noticed that we were almost level with the rim of Empakai at the northern end of the Crater Highlands. I dragged myself to my feet, hoisted my rucksack onto my shoulders and set off again.

The ascent continued at the same wearisome angle and I started to count double steps. I was well into the fourth hundred when I suddenly realised that the condition of the surface had changed. The vegetation had all but disappeared. The friable, fragments of agglomerate were no longer detached. Sections of slabby solid rock were becoming more frequent. I began to make better progress and returned the stick to Burra.

I could see that we were now keeping pace with the rest of the party. I saw them stop and heard them sit down. Burra and I kept going. A few minutes later, with Burra and me now hard on their heels, they got up again and began inching their way upwards. The friction was excellent and I found I could stand in perfect balance and mount the steep planes of separation without difficulty. This cheered me immensely and as the route began to funnel between two boat-shaped prows of steeply dipping, pyroclastic rocks we finally caught up with the back

marker. "Watch out," I heard someone mumble ahead. "The peloton's caught up!" I breathed easier.

The sky was beginning to grow lighter and this spurred us on to reach the rim before sunrise. A whitish section near the top of the rapidly funnelling shoot proved to be weathered lava from one of the recent eruptions. It had the consistency of soft clay. I kicked my way up it as I would have done up soft afternoon snow. A nauseous, sulphurous stench became apparent, making everyone retch. I could see vapour emerging from the ground in several places.

Shortly before 06h30 we stood on the rim gasping for breath with the most bizarre and alien landscape silhouetted against the dawn before us. Extra-terrestrial landforms cast ghostly shadows across the primeval lunar greys. The crater floor rose away from us in a shallow dome that was studded with strange, conical vents called hornitos, a Spanish term meaning 'little ovens'. They rose to 8m or more in height. From one of these I could see what looked like dirty water gushing as if from an open fire hydrant. Dark streaks radiated across the pallid

Party exploring the lunar landscape of Lengai's active summit crater (*Dan Hamer*)



crater floor, not quite reaching the rim. Somewhere on our right there was a roaring sound like that issuing from a ventilation exhaust on the top of a downtown skyscraper. To our left, an odious vapour emerged from a radial crack.

I took a couple of quick photos and then became aware of a figure in the crater. It was Burra making for the nearest hornito. He turned and beckoned us to follow him. I made my way down to the crater floor and stepped gingerly onto the crusty surface. It was like stepping onto a glacier with a recent covering of new snow. Ominous concentric cracks appeared around each footfall. I expected to sink at every step and missed the security of a rope.

I made my way cautiously up the rising ground towards the first dormant hornito. Half way, I stopped beside one of the darker streaks to the left. On closer examination it looked exactly like a dried up mudflow. I kicked it, it was solid; I poked it, it was warm! The surface textures were unmistakable. I stood rooted to the spot mesmerised by the spectacle. These frozen streams of dark brown sludge that crept towards the rim of the crater were miniature lava flows.

The others had shed their rucksacks against the base of the dormant hornito and the breaking dawn drew us towards a narrow saddle between two larger hornitos. We paused in the gap at the highest point within the crater. The sun was just appearing above the eastern horizon. Kilimanjaro and Mount Meru were both clearly visible. Lava was gushing noisily from a hornito to our left, vapour was roaring from a second on our right and sulphurous fumes hung in the air, clawing at our throats. We shook hands and took a group photo spluttering in the choking fumes.

It was extraordinary to be standing near the equator at nearly 10,000ft, with a freezing cold wind blowing at our backs and the glow of cooling lava flows warming our faces. Several times during breakfast we had to shift location to prevent ourselves being cut off by new streams of lava snaking outwards! Daredevil leaps across rivulets of flowing natrocarbonatite were to become *de rigueur* for everyone.

Natrocarbonatite contains virtually no silicon. It has an extremely low viscosity and erupts at the relatively low temperature of approximately 500°C. The low gas content makes eruptions less explosive. This combination of moderate explosivity and low temperature make

close examination of the activity on Lengai a safer proposition than on many other volcanoes. The lava issues from vents and fissures as black watery streams which rapidly cool, turn brown and then solidify. At night they glow with a dull orange hue. After a period of several days the surface turns white as chemical reactions resulting mainly from the absorption of water occur. Within a matter of weeks the solid flows disintegrate to a pale brownish powder.

We remained on the summit relaxing for an hour, but as the sun's rays began to strengthen we took a deep breath and climbed out of the crater to contemplate the hideous descent. The view outwards from the lip of the crater was dizzying. I could see the line of our ascent from the tiny acacias to the upper slabs in its entirety. I tried to pick out our vehicles but they were lost amidst a maze of gullies radiating from the base of the cone. Every detail of the faulted escarpment that bounds the Rift Valley to the west was thrown into sharp relief by the low-angled, early morning sun. Above it the straw brown, short grass plains of the Serengeti stretched away to the horizon.

On the descent I enjoyed delicately stepping down the uppermost agglomerate slabs. The remainder was quite simply appalling. My

Kilimanjaro dawn from the summit of Lengai (*Dan Hamer*)



thighs were aching before we were two thirds of the way down. At least one member of the party wore out the seat of her trousers.

It was gone midday and uncomfortably hot when I deposited my rucksack in the back of the Land Rover and quaffed some tepid water. Our mid-afternoon snack at the campsite was eaten in grateful silence. The climb to the rim and descent to the vehicles were quickly forgotten. The rewards of the summit dominated everyone's thoughts. We relaxed in the shade during the afternoon and had an entertaining discussion that wavered between nonsense and flashes of philosophical illumination. I fell asleep during the main course of the evening meal and when prodded awake got up and made my way, Douglas Bader fashion, back to my tent, hoping that I wouldn't be scrambled during the night.

I slept the sleep of the weary and was slow to rise in the morning, but we had arranged to trek to pools in a nearby gorge and I had to drag myself out of bed much earlier than I would have preferred. It was well worth the effort. The river was only 3m wide at the entrance to the gorge but the walls rose in stepped terraces more than 400m to the skyline. The river was flowing strongly and was charged with gritty sediment.

The path mounted the south bank for half a kilometre and crossed a spectacular layer of pale orange coloured agglomerate. Above the agglomerate the river cut through a thick layer of columnar jointed lava. We had to cross the river several times and wade along sections of it for tens of metres. Fresh leopard prints ornamented the damp silt beside the rushing water and we disturbed a lime green tree snake beside one of the deeper pools.

After about half an hour we scrambled round a sharp bend and saw the mouth of a grotto framed with palm trees. A curtain of water tumbled across the entrance. The grotto opened into a narrow, partly unroofed chasm. At the upstream end, a water chute brought most of the water down from the next level above and created a splendid, natural jacuzzi.

We spent a blissful hour in the bubbling water and then retreated to pack our kit into the waiting vehicles for the drive out to the Nairobi-Arusha road at Longido. Ol Doinyo Lengai, always visible in the rear

window, became smaller and smaller as we bumped along the dusty track, but before its outline blurred in the late afternoon haze a strange sight appeared on the summit. Three hornitos at the centre of the crater emerged above the rim. They looked like a triumvirate of cloaked giants. For a brief moment I thought about Maasai Gods and the subterranean custodians of Lengai's sulphurous cauldron. But it was the more hopeful vision of the three Laetolian hominids, beginning mankind's journey across the savannah, from the shadows of this extraordinary volcano, that came back to me as we rolled into Arusha in the gathering dusk.

POST SCRIPT:

This ascent proved to be one of the reconnaissance trips for the successful 2004 British Schools Exploring Society's African Rift Valley Expedition. 35 young explorers accompanied by 9 leaders trekked to Lengai from Longido and established a base camp beneath the volcano. From this base, valuable geological, ecological and topographical surveying work was carried out on Lengai and adjacent Kerimasi. A summit camp was manned in the inactive South Crater of Lengai for a two-week period to support the scientific work and enabled most members of the expedition to witness spectacular nocturnal eruptions as Lengai became temporarily active again.

*Peter Matthiessen, travel writer and naturalist, wrote an account of his wanderings in East Africa, including the area surrounding Oldoinyo Lengai in his book *The Tree Where Man Was Born*.

NEW CLIMBS

Ron Kenyon

The following section is taken exclusively from the FRCC website at www.frcc.co.uk/climbs_latest.asp and the credit for this information must go to Stephen Reid.

There have been a few major additions, in particular *Up Hellya* (E8 6c) by Dave Birkett on Dove Crag and *Xander* (E7 6b) by Duncan Booth on Tophet Wall. In 1933 George Abraham, in his *Modern Mountaineering*, wrote that "...there has been a modern tendency to search out all the low and insignificant crags... Doubtless this is an ephemeral craze". Apparently not. Due in particular to Barry Clarke, the number of new routes in the last few years has probably been as many as in any other period; however, the length of routes is often much (!) less than 20m. Put many of the routes together and they would add up to a decent length but with a long walk to and between the various pitches. Some of those routes are given below. On most you will have a good walk, you might have some good climbing and you may even meet the writer of the next guidebook there cursing Barry for his apparent mission.

In 2006 the Cicerone Press together with the Club, in the form of Brian Davison, produced a winter climbing guide to the Lakes. Many felt it might be the most unused guide on the bookshelf due to global warming. The guide sparked a lot of interest and this last winter in particular, that of 2009-10, has been one of classic conditions, and a wealth of new routes followed. The route of the winter was *Never Ever Say Never* (VIII 8), a photo of which was taken in January 1982 by Al Phizacklea, on which he had drawn an arrow and written "THIS IS IT!" (see the start of the Winter Climbs section). The line eventually became complete in 2010, and Dave Birkett, Mary Jenner and Andy Mitchell climbed this incredibly rare winter route. Unfortunately for those desiring to repeat it, there was no description available in the database at time of publication.

Included in this section are virtually all the new winter routes done since the guidebook was published, since it will probably be a while until the next update of the Winter Climbs guidebook but hopefully the conditions will return sooner than that.

ROCK CLIMBS

PILLAR ROCK

Savage Grooves 75m HVS

The obvious line of grooves and chimneys on the wall between the upper pitches of Sheol (route 9) and Savage Gully (route 11), seen on the photo diagram of North Face of Low Man on page 244 of the new guide. The climb is rather mossy and even grassy in places but surprisingly enjoyable in a drought. Start half way up Pitch 2 of North Climb.

1 15m (4b). Move left up broken slabs and follow an awkward V-groove/chimney to a stance.

2 15m (4c). Climb a short crack on the left to a bulge then make a teetery traverse right to the base of a slim V-groove which is followed more easily to a large grassy ledge.

3 25m (5a). The imposing V-corner above is climbed directly with interest to the slabby amphitheatre on Savage Gully. Move up water worn slabs to belay below a pinnacle.

4 20m (5a). Above is a wide square-cut shallow bottomless chimney - this is the top pitch of Savage Gully. To its left is a slim chimney with a bulge at its top. Gain and climb the slim chimney to an awkward exit.

(led on sight without any pre-cleaning etc)

FA: (21/05/2008) C Dale, SJH Reid (alt),

EASTERN CRAGS

IRON CRAG – THIRLMERE

The Iron Man 35m E7

(6c). An awesome route climbing the first half of Western Union ,then moving boldly up a thin groove on the head wall, one metre left of Western, before out there moves left gain Pumping Iron. Follow Pumping Iron to the top, hopefully!

FA: (11/06/2008) Alan Wilson

Amabilite 30m E4+/E5

A significant new route on an excellent, yet under-appreciated crag. The route fills a major gap and provides a great route to complement the other fine routes on offer on this part of the crag. The climbing is steady for the grade but the protection, whilst good is well spaced.

(6a). Start as for Marble Staircase and climb the steep groove, stepping right into the continuation groove where reasonable gear can be arranged. Using a good undercut, move out right and up to make a mantleshelf onto a good ledge. From the left side of the ledge climb the wall above past a slot on the left (possible small cam - first gear since Marble Staircase) to arrive at the niche on the horizontal break of Steel Band. Arrange the next set of gear before making the first moves right as for Steel Band; gain a standing position in the break and make precarious moves up and left across the wall to reach the next break of Marshall Law (disappointing gear in the break). Climb the wall above to the top.

FA: (12/06/2009) Nick Wharton, Chris Gore, Tim Whiteley



Nick Wharton on the first ascent of Amabilite (*Tim Whiteley*)

**EAGLE CRAG, GRISEDALE
SOUTH CRAG****Full Circle** 15m VS

Start from the ledge as for Original Route. An enjoyable pitch with some worthwhile climbing.

1. 15m (4c). Move up leftwards to a grassy ledge below a shallow groove. Climb the groove (delicate), to join Original Route on the Pasture descent path by the stone wall. Belay.

Walk off or finish as for pitch 3 Kestrel Wall (18m 4b).

FA: (23/07/2008) Tony Marr, Mike Tooke

Swoop** 25m E2-

A good climb on excellent rock. Starts from the Pasture 3 metres right of Kestrel Wall [pitch 3].

(5b). Ascend the slab to the obvious groove in the overhang. Climb the groove (crux, poorly protected) to a small pinnacle (junction with High Girdle). Step from the top of the pinnacle and finish straight up the wall.

A recommended first pitch is Raptor HVS 5a** which finishes on the Pasture where this pitch starts.

FA: (02/06/2009) Tony Marr, Mike Tooke.

Hawkeye* 25m VS

An excellent pitch, sustained with good positions. Apart from sharing the first few moves on Raptor the climbing is totally independent.

Start as for Raptor.

(4b). Follow Raptor to the shallow groove at 4 metres. Continue up the groove rightwards onto the rib. Climb straight up keeping to the left of the large perched block (stance on Kestrel Wall on its right side). Finish straight up to the Pasture.

FA: (23/07/2008) Tony Marr, Mike Tooke

Warbird 45m VS

Good, enjoyable, well protected climbing and, apart from two or three moves on Pericles, totally independent. Start just right of Pericles at a V-corner.

1 27m (4c). Climb the corner, step left at the top and gain the ledge. Follow the crack/corner of Pericles for 2m then step left and climb the wall just left of the arete to a small corner. Trend left to a corner/crack above and right of Kestrel Wall. Escape up the wall just right of the crack to belay on the Pasture.

2 18m (4a) Climb the slab 2m right of the stone wall to the upper ledge. Finish up the final wall 2m left of Kestrel Wall (not as hard as it looks and good protection).

FA: (25/09/2008) Tony Marr, Mike Tooke (alt)

ROCK CLIMBS

463

DOVE CRAG**Up Hellya** 35m E8

Climbs the biggest overhanging wall and capping roof left of Inaccessible Gully. Follow South Gully past the base of Inaccessible Gully to where the scramble becomes damp and difficult. Belay in the gully above this, directly below the obvious groove/corner line in the centre of the wall.

(6c). Climb easy ledges to a peg runner. Hard moves lead past the peg and other wires to the base of the corner. Climb the corner with difficulty to gain ledges beneath the roof. Taking great care with what you pull on, move slightly rightwards through the roof to the obvious easy groove above.

FA: (15/07/2009) Dave Birkett

RAVEN CRAG, THRESHTHWAITE**Lady Driver** 35m E5

A dangerous and unpredictable route clumsily parked between Running on Empty and Boy Racer. Start at the foot of the grassy ramp.

1 5m Climb onto grassy ramp and peg belay halfway along.

2 30m (6a) Climb up to the roof and go straight over, just right of the elder tree, into the moon shaped groove. Try not to get flustered as technical climbing leads to a good hold at the top, reach up and right to another good hold then straight up to the break. Rattle up the twisting groove above, totally oblivious to what is going on behind you! Could be done in one pitch.

FA: (25/07/2009) Mark Greenbank, Russell Dicks

DOW CRAG**Jumping Jack Flash** E4

Takes the overhanging wall above Hesperus/Shining Path.

(suggest 6b). There is a peg runner on the left. Clip this first, then step back right and attack the wall directly, moving right to pull over

(RP low down). Step back left at break (thread) and climb the wall directly to easier ground (the dyno slap for sloper is interesting).

The grade is a guess - it was recorded as "Scottish VS"!

FA: (28/09/2007) R Matheson, K Phizacklea

STONESTAR CRAG

Cornered 25m S

At the right hand side of Stonestar Crag, beyond Here Comes the Rain is a holly tree below a dirty chimney/groove. Just right of this is a left-facing clean corner.

Start below the corner and climb it directly until adjacent to a tree/heather ledge on the right. Move up and right onto a slab and continue to the top, scrambling rightwards to finish.

FA: (03/03/2009) Martin Scrowston, Jim Loxham, Paul C Bennet

Under Arete 25m VS

A direct climb with a steep finish up the fine hanging groove.

Start one metre right of Cornered and climb steeply the edge of the buttress overlooking Cornered to a junction with that route level with the heather/tree ledge. Move right 2 metres along the ledge until below a hanging groove. Climb this direct with an awkward move to gain the groove, which is followed to the top.

FA: (03/03/2009) Paul C Bennett, Martin Scrowston, Jim Loxham

The Great Escape** 30m HVS

A fine route with some very bold climbing in the first half. Start one metre right of Under Arete.

Climb the pale, pockmarked wall diagonally up and right to emerge by a large detached slab of rock lying at the right end of the heather/tree ledge. Pass this and gain a right-facing corner. Above, on the lip of the left edge, is an obvious bracket of rock (the ear); using this pull over leftwards onto the slab above and climb directly to the top.

FA: (03/03/2009) Martin Scrowston, Jim Loxham, Paul C Bennet

ROCK CLIMBS

465

Short Cut to Freedom 18m MVS+

An interesting pitch with an awkward start and spaced protection starting immediately left of *An Inside Job* and climbing the right edge of the superb slab of *The Great Escape*. Make an awkward move up the wall to gain the slab and continue to a junction with *The Great Escape*. Follow *The Great Escape* onto the right-sloping gangway. Where *The Great Escape* moves left, continue up the gangway to the top, moving left to finish up the easier wall above.

FA: (23/07/2009) Martin Scrowston, Jim Loxham

An Inside Job** 25m HVS

About 10m right of *The Great Escape* is a dirty vegetation-choked chimney. Another bold but satisfying route, which starts just right of the chimney (minimal protection in the first half).

Climb the wall directly, passing two small overhangs on the left. The wall merges with an open right-facing corner; follow this to the top.

FA: (22/03/2009) Paul C Bennett, Martin Scrowston

Illegal Entry* 20m VS

A fine piece of steep slab climbing, but with a bold start, with adequate protection above. Start just right of *An Inside Job*.

Climb diagonally right and up following the obvious clean slab line, which after reaching half height curves back leftward towards the open corner of *An Inside Job*, to finish about 2m to the right of that route.

FA: (22/03/2009) Martin Scrowston, Paul C Bennett

SCAFELL**EAST BUTTRESS****GREEN COVE BUTTRESS**

GR: 210 059

About 100m high. Described as having a remote feel - and no wonder, the approach takes 3 hours! The wreckage of a WWII aeroplane lies in the cove.

Follow the Cam Spout track towards Mickledore but leave it where it

levels above the falls. Probably quicker from Wasdale. Descent is by a good sheep trod on the right.

Bah! Humbug 90m D

There is a buttress bounded by a gully on the left. The climb takes a broad rib on the right side of this. There is a cairn at the start.

A succession of small walls leads to the base of a headwall with distinctive triple pillars. Traverse left until a break allows strenuous moves onto upper rocks and the summit.

FA: (27/06/2009) John Temple, Stuart Worsfold (alt)

“So called because the first attempt was foiled by soft snow Christmas 2007.”

Homage to Airmen 100m MVS

A quality route taking a good sustained line with varied climbing on excellent rock. Start 2m right of a recent rock fall scar on the left of the lower slabs, below an area of clean, ‘washed’ rock (cairn).

1 25m. (4c). Go up the clean line to hard moves at an overlap at 3m. Finish up a V-groove in the block and trend right to belay at the foot of a corner.

2 25m. Step right onto the edge and climb up on jugs onto the top of a block. Move down left onto a challenging steep wall and ascend to a ledge.

3 30m. Move left onto spikes and climb another steep wall and the arete above.

4 20m. Fun rock takes you to the top.

FA: (27/06/2009) Stuart Worsfold, John Temple (alt)

GREAT GABLE
NAPES – TOPHET WALL

Xander 20m E7

An excellent, steep, bold pitch in an ‘out there’ position. Takes the steep groove directly above Tophet Wall’s last belay.

(6b). Step up and clip 2 pegs (poor). Climb the overhanging groove directly for 25ft until a good hold and flake is reached (gear) make

moves up and left (in an increasingly serious, but fabulous position) until a hard move left allows entry to a continuation groove which is followed to the top.

FA: (11/05/2008) Duncan Booth, Mike Norbury

HODGE CLOSE THE MAIN WALL

Carpe Diem 18m F7a+

Takes the striking and blank looking groove line just to the right of the now defunct route Sideshow. This is the first obvious climbable line as you approach under the archway in the north-east corner of the quarry and to the left of the Main Wall.

Climb the demanding groove until a small ledge/good hold can be reached. Try to mantelshelf onto this with great difficulty before strength wanes - if successful the reward is a partial rest. Step up and move slightly rightwards onto the steep slab, continue up the slab with continuing difficulty and some very thin moves before finally escaping rightwards to better holds and a double bolt belay (9 bolts).

Either lower off or continue up the fine second pitch of Joie de Vivre [35 metres].

FA: (06/09/2009) Alan Towse, Simon Harvey

Joie de Vivre 57m F6b+

Start about 3 metres right of Carpe Diem at a deceptively easy looking ramp.

1 22m (F6b+). Follow the ramp rightwards to a crack-line and climb up past four bolts before moving back left and up to the double bolt belay (9 bolts).

2 35m (F6b+). Follow the obvious groove-line past three distinct hard sections until eventually forced to make awkward moves right, up and then back left on improving holds to gain the final bolt and the top (9 bolts).

FA: (06/09/2009) Alan Towse, Jack Hool, Simon Harvey

Mowing the Lawn 25m F7a

Start 3m left of Oiling the Lawnmower. Follow the obvious line of bolts up the steep wall with some difficulty, with fingery moves first right and then back left, to pass the first bolt. Continue with a slight easing of difficulty to the large ledge above. From the back of the ledge climb the short wall (left of Oiling the Lawnmower) to gain the hanging slab above; continue pleasantly up this to finish at a double bolt lower off.

FA: (29/07/2009) Alan Towse, Jack Hool, John Martindale, Simon Harvey

WINTER CLIMBS

PAVEY ARK**Middling Buttress** III+

Climbed this route following the text description in the guide, via the tree etc but found the route a lot longer than indicated, 70m to the tree and 70m afterwards with some easier ground above.

FA: (22/12/2009) David Bell

Little Corner 75m V

Follow the summer route in three pitches. The route starts from Jack's Rake at the foot of a steep slab below the corner and left of the recessed area.

1 25m (5). Climb the wall past a prominent spike runner and enter the base of the corner. Climb the right of twin grooves for 8m to belay at the top.

2 25m (5). Climb the corner above to a good flake crack on the left wall. Follow this to the left hand rib and a belay ledge.

3 25m. Continue up diagonally rightwards over short walls and ledges to easy ground.

FA: (04/01/2007) B Davison, S Ashworth

Roundabout Direct 75m V

The prominent left facing corner forming the right side of the recess. This follows summer route starting up a steep vegetated fault about 10m lower down Jack's Rake than Little Corner.

1 15m (4). Climb the right hand and lower of two weaknesses that give access to an area of vegetation below the prominent corner. The starting moves are strenuous and poorly protected. Once the angle eases traverse left into a grassy groove and follow it to a juniper bush and belay at the base of the prominent left facing corner.

2 40m (6). Strenuous and technical climbing but thankfully with good protection leads to an easier grass recess below an overhang. Pass this on the right and continue up several short easy walls to a belay.

3 20m. Continue more easily over ledges and short walls to the top.

FA: (02/02/2008) B Davison, N Wharton



Brian Davison on the first ascent of Roundabout Direct (*Nick Wharton*)

Bennison's Chimney 55m IV

(4). High up East Gully this is the left hand and narrower of two chimneys.

FA: (04/01/2007) B Davison, S Ashworth

Gibson's Chimney 55m III

(4). The right hand more open and vegetated chimney high up East Gully. The difficulties involve passing a small rock step 10m below a narrowing in the chimney and passing the narrow overhanging chimney section. This can be done on the right.

FA: (02/02/2008) B Davison, N Wharton

Great Cove, Langdale

GR: 252 047

This is the easternmost cove of the Crinkles and marked as Great Cove on the map.

Curving Ridge 150m III

The base of this route is at approximately 700m and is north-west facing.

(4). Climb the obvious curving ridge line over steps and slabby corners.

FA: (21/01/2007) Steve Ashworth (solo)

Crinkle Picker 150m IV

Start at GR251 049.

(4 with a move of 5). Climb the arête of the buttress on the right-hand side of the gully to the right of Terrace Crag. After a saddle at the top of the first ridge section, make a couple of steep moves through a corner before continuing up the buttress.

FA: (21/01/2007) Steve Ashworth (solo)

SHELTER CRAGS**Shelter Stone** 50m VII

About 5m right of Shelter Corner a turf line leads from just above a large block to a diamond shaped block in the steeper wall with a groove above on its left.

(8). The easy turf runnel reaches the base of the block. Traverse right under the block to a wide crack and make difficult and strenuous moves through an awkward exit to a cramped resting place under an overhang. A traverse left round a bulge leads to the groove and pleasant climbing to the top.

FA: (30/01/2010) B Davison, D McGimpsey

Gimme Shelter 55m V

The obvious right trending ramp line to the right of Shelter Icefall, which leads to Shelter Ridge.

1. 45m (5) Start 3m right of the chimney-groove of Shelter Icefall and follow the ramp delicately rightwards to join Shelter Ridge. Follow this back leftwards to a thread belay after passing a couple of steps.

2. 10m (3) Climb the groove above to the top.

FA: (01/01/2010) B Davison, N Wharton

Air Raid Shelter 70m IV

About 10m right of Morrison and a similar distance left of Thirty Nine Steps is a leftward-facing corner part way up the crag.

1. 40m (4) Start at a spike at 2m and climb up into the shallow corner and follow it to a snow bay. Belay on the right.

2. 30m Follow the continuation of the line through easier rocky ground at the back of the snow bay.

FA: (30/01/2010) B Davison, D McGimpsey

FLAT CRAGS

GR: 249 064

The crag is approached along the Climbers' Traverse on Bowfell. It is easy to recognise by the left-slanting terrace splitting the crag. The crag faces east-north-east and is at 750m.

Conditionalist* 50m VI

The route follows the short steep corner and crack-line on the first pitch of the summer HVS Hanging Corner, but takes a different second pitch, more suited to winter. The route, though short, packs a lot in and is strenuous from the ground, with the technicalities low down.

1) 30m (6). Start on top of the huge block. Climb the short steep corner to gain a crack in the slab above. Gear can be placed from the ground, though will not protect the top of the corner and moves up onto the slab. Once on the slab, deeper hooks and good gear are possible. Climb the right-slanting crack on good hooks and exit onto a sloping ledge. Follow the faint continuation of the crack rightwards for about 3m then finish directly on turf. Trend up and leftwards on easy ground towards the large terrace that splits this part of the crag.

A flake belay is possible just below the terrace.

2) 20m (4). Directly across the terrace, climb the central turf groove of three grooves that leave the terrace. Exit this and belay on the Great Slab. Descent can be made down the Great Slab back onto the Climbers' Traverse.

FA: (20/01/2009) Paddy Cave, Tom Hodgkin (alt)

NORTH BUTTRESS, BOWFELL

GR: 246 066

The crag sits below the summit of Bowfell, faces north-east and is at about 785m. The steepest part of the crag is split by three obvious groove-lines.

Mindbender ** 70m VIII

The summer E2.

1 20m (5). Climb the groove that leads to a good belay ledge between and below the two grooves of The Gnomon and Mindbender.

There is a large spike at half height and then a steep turf finish.

Belay on a ledge up and left, at the base of the main groove of The Gnomon.

2 30m (8). Step round right, climb up a groove rightward and then a ramp leading to a ledge below the main groove of Mindbender.

Climb the groove with increasing difficulty as you gain height.

There is just enough gear to keep you moving; small wires may be useful as well as some smaller sized off-sets. The top third of the groove is the crux, the climbing is on very thin torques and hooks, and is a bit run-out, though some dubious gear might be possible.

Top out on to a ledge, and then climb the crack at the back of the short corner where good gear is now possible. Belay above this in the bay above The Gnomon.

3 20m (5). Climb the gully above, and up the blocky groove to the top. There are some loose blocks balanced in the groove that need care to pass without dislodging.

FA: (06/12/2008) Paddy Cave, Korbi Hort

Fight or Flight *** 58m VII

This route is approached by climbing Cambridge Crag Climb (II) up

to the big ledge to below a tower; the winter climb Riboletto Groove starts from the same ledge. Start by climbing the big corner about 5m to the right of Riboletto Groove.

1 25m (6) Climb the bulging corner line exiting rightwards at the top up a square cut niche. The protection is quite flared throughout. Belay on the big ledge after a pull up.

2 8m Descend to the right down a short groove. Move around into a bay with a steep cracked wall now coming into view on your left. Good spikes to belay.

3 25m (7) This pitch follows the final pitch of the summer E1 Swastika, one of the highest finishing pitches in Langdale in a spectacular position. Climb a crack between the cracked wall and the detached pinnacle on the left arête. Stand on the pinnacle (small wire possible above pinnacle to protect crux sequence) and make a committing move rightwards to gain the crack. Some thin moves are required up the crack before better hooks and gear are reached. Now climb the crack above, with good gear and hooks. It eventually joins another crack coming in from the right forming one larger crack to the top; finish up this to an awesome mountain top finish!

FA: (01/12/2009) Paddy Cave (lead) and Paul Bedford

GIMMER CRAG

D Route

(no description or grade given - check website)

FA: (05/01/2010) Steve Ashworth and partner

Samaritan Corner 40m V

The turfy corner left of Asterix

FA: (20/12/2009) Steve Ashworth, Brian Davison

TARN CRAG

On the approach to Pavey Ark, Tarn Crag is on the right, as per summer guidebook.

Has't ivver sin a cuddy lowp a five bar yat?* 70m IV-

Probably rarely in condition.

1 25m (2). From obvious flat rock on right hand side of crag, follow gully directly above to a belay at the fork.

2 45m (4). Climb the left hand gully/chimney with some good turf - some devious bridging techniques may be required. Trend left as the gully runs out and finish more easily to large boulder and belay.

There is a right branch that one can take also and is quite short, probably about grade 2.

FA: (21/12/2009) Mark 'Dez' Walker, Benjamin Robinson

EAGLE CRAG, EASEDALE

GR: NY298083

Half a kilometre right of Blea Crag is a large steep buttress of rock bounded by much vegetated broken rock (in summer). There is an obvious rake leading leftwards across the upper crag, clearly visible from Easedale tarn.

Henry's Rake** 200m I

This exposed but technically easy snow climb tackles the obvious leftwards-slanting rake high on the crag, following a devious but logical line through steep rock-walls. Start in a bay to the right of the main steep buttress of rock, up and to the left of a short, deep gully which splits the lower right hand side of the crag.

From the bay, follow snow slope up and right over a number of slight bulges. Towards the top of this slope an appealing leftwards-leading ramp, up slightly steeper snow, offers an interesting route to reach the right-hand end of the rake. This inescapable rake is followed as it narrows across beautifully exposed terrain. Enjoy! Finish by cutting back right at the rake's end and continuing to the summit.

(450m altitude, east facing. Conditions - Thawing at the time of FA but thick with snow. No ice build up or frozen turf required since it

follows continuous steep snow throughout.)

FA: (17/01/2010) Maegan Whiteley, Andy Charlton, Henry Bean (solo)

DOW CRAG

F Buttress** 180m III

Start at the right hand side of the buttress and climb broken ground until a steep nose is reached at 70m; avoid this by turf on the left and enter a couple of chimneys, leaving both on the left. The route trends left to overlook North Gully before the buttress narrows to the pleasant upper ridge.

FA: (01/01/2010) Ross McGibbon, David Bell

BRIM FELL SOUTH CRAG - FAR RIGHT END

GR: 277 987

Quick Draw McGraw** 103m V

This prominent upper icefall lies about 150m right of Brim Fell South Crag. A good route to do after Low Water Beck. From the top of the upper slopes of Low Water Beck follow a snowy diagonal break leading down right to the start of the icy slab of pitch 1. The route can also be approached from Boulder Valley by following a snowy ramp or icy bulges direct.

1 25m (3). Climb the steep ice chandelier to gain icy slabs above: these lead to a short snow slope and belay.

2 38m. Follow a snowy gangway up left, then straight up, to a blade peg and thread belay at the left end of a low rock wall at the base of the main icefall.

3 40m (5). Move back right and climb the main icefall direct to a block belay 8m above a sapling.

FA: (09/01/2010) J Daly, S Laheney, M Vogler

STEEL EDGE**Edge Your Bets*** 38m IV

Good climbing up continuous icefalls between Close to the Edge and Further from the Edge. Start just right of stepped overhangs.

(4). Tricky moves give access to a steep slabby icefall, up this to a diagonal shelf at half height. The icy slab/shallow corner above is climbed past bulges to the top.

FA: (08/02/2010) J Daly, N Harvey, R Purdy

Easy Gullies 50m II

The east facing broken summit crag immediately south of Steel Edge contains three easy gully lines (50-60m). The left end of the crag is bounded by a straightforward snow gully (I) with a small cornice, the central gully (II) requires some more tricky moves up rock walls for the first 30m to enter the slanting gully while the right-hand gully has a slight chockstone at one-third height (I).

FA: (28/12/2009) Brian Davison

Cold Steel 75m III

(GR 295 004) Located high on the east facing broken summit crag immediately south of Steel Edge and just right of a prominent diagonal grade 1 snow gully (soloed the same day, but possibly the right hand easy gully written up by B.Davison?). The icefall condition should be viewed from the top of Tilberthwaite Gill as it is not visible on the approach traverse. Approach up Steel Edge to the first steepening rocks, traverse left for 80m then scramble diagonally up left over mixed ground for 50m to the hidden icefall.

1) (50m) Climb the steep 10m icefall and a snow scoop above to belay at the base of slabby icefalls.

2) (25m) Climb the slabby icefalls or icy corner on the left.

FA: (13/02/2010) J.Daly (solo)

Hen Crag

GR: NY 290 008

Broad Gully 200m Grade II

(GR NY 292 007) Equally as good as its neighbouring routes. Climb the broader gully line between South South Gully and South Gully with a short crux gully headwall at half height where the rock walls encroach on both sides.

FA: (6/02/2009) J.Daly (solo)

Skeleton Bob 150m II

Start 40m up South Gully (shares the start with White Spider).

1 40m. As for White Spider.

2/3 110m. Go round the left side of the belay wall and climb directly up the snowfield to its top where it narrows and steepens into a shallow gully leading to the finishing snow slopes. Belay as required.

FA: (23/01/2010) J.Daly (solo)

White Spider* 165m II/III

A good route linking the prominent snowfields and ramps up the left side of Hen Crag. Best viewed from the approach walk where the obvious diagonal snow ramps of the start and finish are clearly visible. (Not visible directly underneath the crag). Start 40m up South Gully.

1 40m. Climb the diagonal snow ramp up rightwards to a snowfield, up this to a belay beneath a small wall with three obvious rock fins.

2 50m. Right of the wall, climb a short gully headwall to gain a snowfield above. Go straight up for about 35m to spike belays just above where a snow shelf leads out right.

3 40m. Follow the shelf out right for 12m, and then climb mixed ground direct to a snow shelf (belay crack up left).

4 35m. Climb the diagonal snow ramp/groove up rightwards to finish at the top centre of Hen Crag.

FA: (25/01/2010) J.Daly (solo)

ESK BUTTRESS**Trespasser Groove VII**

FA: (06/01/2010) D Birkett and party

SCAFELL CRAG**MAIN CRAG****Collier's Groove 75m VI**

This follows left side of Tricouni Slab before finishing up the obvious continuation chimney of Collier's Climb. An early attempt on the route ended in a rescue. However the FRCC series editor incorrectly included the route in the present guide.

1. 25m (6) From the recess at the bottom of Tricouni Slab start up the slab past an old in-situ runner and move left immediately to the arête. Delicately balance up the arête to the ledge at the top of the slab. Step right into a short overhanging chimney which gives access to a large ledge and belay.

2. 50m (5) Climb the gully at the left end of the ledge. Follow this passing under a large chockstone to strenuous climbing up a short V groove to the top.

FA: (06/03/2010) Brian Davison, Dave MacGimpsey

Collier's Left Hand Variant 55m VI

From the point where the Original Start to Collier's Route joins the ledge at the top of pitch 1 a series of grooves runs up and left. The route takes these.

1 12m (6) The original start to Collier's Route offers a hard start to the long belay ledge. A belay was taken a few meters further up the gully at the left hand end of the ledge to gain shelter from the wind.

2 32m (5) Climb up the groove on the left passing several helpful turf ledges. Traverse left along a large ledge at the top of the groove and follow a second shorter groove to the top.

FA: (13/03/2010) Brian Davison, Dave McGimpsey

SCAFELL PINNACLE

DEEP GHYLL BUTTRESS

Xerxes 67m VIII

Follow the summer route. Awkward climbing with hard difficult gear placements.

FA: (03/12/2008) Rich Cross, Andy Turner, Steve Ashworth

Into the Wild** 75m VII

Located on the right wall of Deep Ghyll. Approach up Deep Ghyll until a deep chimney appears on the right with a huge chockstone blocking it. Belay on the snow terrace below this (good spike below chimney). The route is based on the summer E1 Ixodus, and has some brilliant climbing and positions throughout, mostly with good gear.

1 35m (9) Climb the slabby wall towards the bottom of the obvious layback flake on the right wall. Hook the flake and make a committing pull up onto the flake. Follow the flake on laybacked torques and great gear to its top where there is a broken ledge below a hanging niche and chimney straight above. Make a long move up into the hanging niche and a wild position. Gear available on the left wall; carry on up the chimney to its top. Exit through the top and belay on a good ledge on the left.

2 40m (3) Step up left and follow the obvious turfey groove to its top, then follow a ledge system rightwards to the top of the crag. Various other finishing options available.

FA: (12/02/2010) Paddy Cave, Ed Luke

Upper West Wall Climb 70m VI

Follow the summer route, starting left of Great Chimney and immediately left of Into the Wild.

1 30m (7) Start at the base of the corner left of Great Chimney.

Climb a recess for 3m until it is possible to move left along a right-to-left diagonal line which is followed to the left edge of the buttress.

The moves are balancy and protection is difficult to find. Climb a short steep wall to a large ledge running up rightwards. Spike belay.

2 40m (4) Follow the ledge easily rightwards until it levels off and it is

possible to make a step up into the final snowy recess on the left. Take the left hand corner at back of the recess; pass a flake and ledge just below the top. A short step up this gains the top.
FA: (13/03/2010) Brian Davison, Dave McGimpsey

Doctor Grey 90m VII

This climb starts about 10m left of Great Western in the first shallow corner to the left of the edge of the buttress. Starts up the summer route Doctor Death before traversing across a ledge, past a prominent spike to follow the summer route Grey Bastion to an in-situ sling at the second belay. Cracks were iced up on the first ascent making protection difficult to find.

1. 30m (7) Start 3m up from the left edge of Deep Gill Buttress in a shallow corner taken by Doctor Death. Climb this for about 5m until level with a ledge on the arête to the right, which contains a prominent spike. Cross the wall precariously to the worrying looking prominent spike. Strenuous climbing gains the ledge above. Climb up the corner to another ledge then a second corner before moving right to an in-situ sling belay common with the 2nd belay on Great Western.

2 30m (4) Follow Great Western pitches to the two perched blocks on the ledge of the Integral.

3 30m (6) Climb an offwidth crack and wall a few metres right of the perched blocks to finish overlooking Great Chimney.

FA: (07/03/2010) Brian Davison, Dave McGimpsey

SCAFELL SHAMROCK

The Tower Buttress, Winter Variation 200m VI

This variation follows the summer route to the base of the second tower in two pitches, and then takes easy ground to the left of the towers to gain Lord's Rake.

1 30m (6). Climb turf and ledges to the base of a narrow chimney, quite technical. Then squirm up narrow chimney to a ledge.

2 30m (6). Climb the chimney-corner to a chockstone and make bru-

tal moves to a small ledge. Somehow insert yourself into the narrow slot above and squirm in a hopefully upwards direction to easier ground.

3 etc 120m. Easy ground to Lord's Rake.

On this ascent the left wall of the chimney was verglassed and covered in powder. The upper reaches of the summer route were not holding snow, so were avoided on the left.

FA: (27/02/2010) Ian Armstrong, Jeff Graham

Shamrock Icefall 150m VII

An obvious icefall forms down the steepest overhanging section of the Shamrock Buttress. It is present to some degree most years but rarely (if ever) reaches the base.

1. 45m (7) Climb the groove behind the icefall until it is possible to step onto the ice. Climb this to the snowfield above and belay at a large block at the top of the snowfield.
2. 50m (4) A second shorter and easier icefall forms at the top of the snowfield, climb this with a helpful groove on its left. Follow the snowfield above to belay on the left.
3. 55m Easy climbing leads to a descent into Lord's Rake or to the top of the Shamrock.

FA: (06/03/2010) Brian Davison, Dave McGimpsey

SCAFELL EAST BUTTRESS

SOS 66m IX

Mark 'Ed' Edwards writes: "We went to the East Buttress on 25th January 2007 and Dave Birkett led again the hair raising pitch we did last year up SOS (page 143 of the 2006 *Lake District Winter Climbs* guide to the first belay on May Day Climb. He then followed May Day Climb leftwards round the tricky arête and up turf ledges to below an off-width corner formed by a semi-detached pinnacle (approx 12m). I led through and got up the off-width by using a rock chocked in the crack that allowed an axe to be hooked (but was not good enough for protection). From the top of the pinnacle I stepped

up to a higher ledge and climbed a V-groove with OK gear at the bottom. A couple of turf ledges led to the bottom of the slab, with a faint groove leading straight up it that peters out. With gear at about 3m up the slab you then run it out with bold moves left where the groove fades, to reach a turf boss and then a few metres to a long grassy ledge. Here I tried to move right to the end of the ledge to gain a big ice corner but one of the ropes was giving bad drag. I managed to clear out a crack for a belay, above the line of climbing up the slab (approx 24m). Dave led through up the corner to the top (approx 15m). We believed we had done the top pitches of May Day Climb, a route Dave has done a couple of times in summer. However when I look at the diagram in the FRCC Scafell guide I am now not convinced. The diagram which is good and detailed shows a corner to the right of the May Day Corner and I believe we went up this.”

Here is a description:

1 15m (10). The mossy groove adjacent to the walled shelter is followed to the first belay on May Day Direct.

2 12m (6). Climb leftwards round the tricky arête and up turf ledges to below an off-width corner formed by a semi-detached pinnacle.

3 24m (6/7). Up the off-width using a rock chocked in the crack.

From the top of the pinnacle step up to a higher ledge and climb a V-groove. A couple of turf ledges lead to the bottom of a slab with a faint groove leading straight up it that peters out. Run it out with bold moves left where the groove fades, to reach a turf boss and then a few metres more to a long grassy ledge.

4 15m (3) The corner on the right leads more easily to the top.

FA: (25/01/2007) Dave Birkett, Mark ‘Ed’ Edwards

Never Ever Say Never VIII, 8

(no description received, grade taken from UK Climbing website)

FA: Dave Birkett, Mary Jenner (day 1); Dave Birkett, Andy Mitchell (day 2)

Opposite: Line of *Never Ever Say Never*, Scafell East Buttress, taken and annotated in 1982 (*Al Phizacklea*)



Dave Birkett and Andy Mitchell on the top pitch of *Never Ever Say Never* (VIII,8), January 2010. This is a companion photo to the one now on the wall at Brackenclose (*Ed Luke, www.edluke.com*)



PIKES CRAG**Coldplay** 140m IV

1 55m (6). Start at the lowest point of the crag, left of the Nave. Take a direct line up the buttress above. Difficult pull onto a turfy ledge just left of the Nave at about 15m, then steady turf climbing up to and under an awesome steep crack filled with little pebble chocks. Climb this for 10m (critical blob of turf) and up to the big belay ledge as for Grooved Arête.

2 25m. Pitch 3 of Grooved Arête.

3 45m (5). Climb the same crack as Grooved Arête pitch 4, but move right after the crack, then progressively left, heading directly up to the underneath of a big square roof. Turn this on the right. Belay on the ledge.

4 15m (5). Go up to the chockstone in the chimney, pull onto the ledge to its left and directly up on a thin short crack, steep, to the top of the crag.

FA: (30/11/2008) Mark Thomas, Dave Almond (alt)

Grand Slam** 110m IV

This route held a good deal of snow when the buttress routes on either side of it were black.

1 40m (5). Start at the bottom of Right of Centre, move up the snow slope on the right and climb the groove at its top. Follow the groove, initially steep, and then easing slightly, then steep again to a belay in cracks on the left wall below a continuation chimney.

2 40m (5). Climb up a short ramp above and slightly right of the belay, and continue up into the right-trending chimney above. Follow this to a chockstone. Move up to this and then pull out steeply onto the right arête overlooking the chimney. Continue straight up to a large spike belay. (These pitches had great mixed climbing on frozen turf, snow, good hooks and occasional torque, with plentiful rock protection.)

3 30m (3). Climb up and left over turfy ledges to gain a rightwards-facing corner. A couple of steeper moves gain entry to this, which is then followed to the top of the crag.

FA: (25/03/2008) Huw Davies, Nigel Gregory, Mark Holt

Snow Patrol* (no length given) V

(6). A direct line up to the crux crack/chimney of The Citadel (Summer VS, 4c), via a difficult corner step, up to a ledge below the crux.

1. Climb the crack/chimney to a good ledge and belay.
2. Step right 1m and climb the turfy corner capped by small roof on awesome layback torques, pass the roof on the right, and go up 5m to a belay.
3. Step left from the belay and climb the stepped turfy corner between The Sentinel and The Citadel.
4. Easier scrambling to the summit of Pulpit Rock.

FA: (20/03/2007) Mark Thomas, Dave Almond

Southern Cross* 145m IV

The description should read: Essentially a direct line on Southern Corner. The climbing is more in keeping with the first pitch of that route and provides a direct line up this part of the buttress, taking in a groove immediately right of Slanting Groove on pitch 2.

1 40m (4). Start as for Southern Corner and climb the initial groove of that route. Where Southern Corner moves rightwards, continue up and slightly left to a good ledge beneath a steep wall.

2 30m (5). Climb the wall for 3m until it is possible to move left around the edge. Trend leftwards into an open groove and climb this to where it steepens beneath another rock wall

3 25m (5). Climb the wall above for a few metres, and then move rightwards via a series of cracks to gain a precariously perched block, just below the right arête. Follow the arête to good ledge and belay where Southern Corner comes up from the right.

4 50m (3). Follow Southern Corner to the top of Pulpit Rock.

FA: (01/08/2008) (no names given)

SCOAT FELL CRAG

GR: NY 159 115

Twin Ribs Climb Direct** 70m VI

Takes grooves in the arête to the right of East Gully. Start below the prominent groove (approx by the number 3 in the guidebook dia-

gram).

1 40m (7). Climb directly up and into the groove. Follow this until a short wall on the left allows access to another groove. Follow this to a niche below a large roof. Pull round the roof on the left and climb easier ground for a few metres to belay.

2 30m (3). Step back right onto the ridge, follow this to the top (joining Scoathanger).

FA: (07/02/2009) Andy Brown, Dave Fitzsimons

Harlequin Chimneys*** 225m VI-

A superb winter route, following the summer line. The crux section is mercifully short. Start just left of the Great Heather Shelf below a deep chimney at the right end of the rock band.

1 25m (3). Climb directly up steep turfey ground to belay just left of the chimney.

2 35m (6). Grovel up into the depths of the chimney, and then traverse back out of it using a narrow foot ledge on the left wall. When you reach the edge of the chimney turn round and climb its right rib (in situ ice hook in crack). Carry on up easier ground and then step left to regain the line near a Christmas tree. Move up a few metres to a rock belay (large Rockcentrics). A spectacular pitch.

3 20m (5). Climb the short rock wall above the belay, then overcome the next one directly with interest and belay below a third one.

4 25m (5). Overcome the next short wall and gain a hollow under a chimney. Climb the chimney (with more interest) to a Christmas tree belay on the right.

5 20m (2). Climb the turfey wall just left of a wide crack (alternatively climb up rightwards to the highest Christmas tree (under the Diamond Wall), then move up and traverse leftwards round the rib to the same point (3)). Drop down into Shamrock Gully (Christmas tree belay).

6 50m (5). On the far side of Shamrock Gully is a very obvious chimney. Enter this with difficulty and climb it to an awkward though route exit behind a huge chockstone. Belay on the left.

7 50m (5). From the belay, traverse up and right into a corner on the right. Climb this and traverse back left over a bracket and exit into the easier upper gully which is followed to the Shamrock Traverse.

Pitches 1-5 were first climbed by SJH Reid, C Wells (var) on 20th January 2009.

FA: (04/02/2009) Colin Wells, Stephen Reid, (alt)

West Cove Buttress** 90m IV

This route climbs straight up the middle of the buttress above West Cove. It has an alpine feel about it with a big sweeping snow gully below dropping towards Ennerdale and great views of High Man. Looking up at the buttress an obvious wide crack with wedged blocks at its top can be seen. About 5m to its right is a square-cut niche with a small tree below it, and this is the start of the fault-line that the route follows. Start at the toe of the buttress near its lowest point. 1 50m (2). Climb the twisting gully to its top, then climb a short step up a corner and exit rightwards, crossing the ledge to belay at the small tree below the square-cut niche.

2 40m (5). Move up the niche and as it steepens, climb the corner-crack at the back to pull out right onto a turf ledge. Climb the chimney above with a variety of techniques to its top, and then pull up into a snow bay. Move to the top of this and climb up the gully still following the same fault-line. Belay on the big ledge on the left. Easier scrambling leads up a stepped ridge (II) that is followed to an awesome mountain top finish on the summit of Pillar.

FA: (08/01/2010) Paddy Cave (lead), Adam Marcinowicz

North-East Climb*** 117m V

A winter ascent of the summer line. Varied climbing with good positions throughout. Start from the extreme left end of Green Ledge where a short wall leads to a square platform.

1 54m (5). Climb to the foot of a broken gully/groove, up this for 10m to a ledge. Move up, then left across a rib and up a short chimney. Move left round the next rib onto a slab, traverse this to a snow ledge (possible belay). Climb the chimney and slab above up to the base of a long V-groove on the wall overlooking Walker's Gully.

2 30m (4) Climb the groove to its end, where it is possible to drop down 1m into Grooved Wall to belay.

3 18m (6) Climb back up to the end of the groove. The wall ahead leads to a ledge besides a large pinnacle. The steep chimney behind

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Stephen Reid on the penultimate tower of Great Doup Buttress, Pillar Cove (*Colin Wells*)

this leads to a corner.

4 15m (4) The groove line above is followed to its end.

FA: (20/02/2010) Andi Smith, Chris Fisher

PILLAR COVE

Great Doup Buttress 200m III**

Great Doup Buttress is much better (and longer and harder) than the guide suggests. The following description is proposed (Stephen Reid, Colin Wells).

An excellent and sustained outing with a fine airy finish along a knife edge arête to the final summit tower. The buttress is the lowest and most prominent central buttress of the outcrops in this isolated cove. Follow the crest of the buttress in six pitches, overcoming the steepest section (Pitch 2) via a leftward-slanting chimney/groove (4) and moving back right onto the crest above this.



GABLE CRAG

Mid-Winter Madness 70m VI

The next two routes are on the headwall to the right of Oblique Chimney and Summer Time Blues.

The corner-line approximately 10m to the right of Summer Time Blues.

1 50m (6). Start at a line below and in line with the corner. Climb easy ground to a tricky step to gain the base of the corner, level with the belay on Summer Time Blues. Continue up the corner to belay on a ledge on the right. Beware of loose blocks.

2 20m (5). Move up and right from the belay and climb the wall immediately right of a shallow corner to climb through a small overlap near the top.

FA: (24/01/2007) S Ashworth, B Davison

Seasonal Affected Disorder (SAD) ** 40m V

On the right side of the headwall are three corner-groove lines: the left one, starting high on the wall, is Hooch. The middle one, which has a prominent protruding block near the top offers excellent well

protected technical climbing in its upper half.

(5). Climb the wall behind a large flake at the base of the wall, as for Hooch but continue up into the middle corner. Step left and climb the groove to the protruding block at the top of the corner. Pass this to finish.

FA: (24/01/2007) B Davison, S Ashworth

Winterceptor*** 70m VII+

Start up Engineer's Slabs to the sentry box belay, continue up Interceptor. At the overhanging head wall, step right and enter the exposed groove of Mome Rath. Exit the groove and climb the arête to the top.

FA: (02/12/2008) Rich Cross, Andy Turner, Steve Ashworth

NECKBAND CRAG

GR: 256 062

Forked Tongue *** 40m VII

This much viewed and increasingly coveted mixed line tackles and links together a series of steep turfey cracks leading up beneath the main overhang in the centre of the crag. Exposed moves left provided the key to unlocking the overhang and the continuation of the route above to easier ground. Start as for The Gizzard.

Climb The Gizzard for 6m to an obvious thread. Traverse left for 2m past the obvious spike to beneath the steep wall and turfey crack of Adam's Apple. Strenuous climbing tackles the steep wall and turfey crack above, to where it finishes beneath the main overhang. An awkward and exposed step left then leads into the top of Tonsure. Finish up Tonsure over a steep bulge and easier climbing via a right trending ramp line to the belay.

FA: (21/12/2009) Adrian Nelhams, Tim Lofthouse

HONISTER CRAG ICEFALLS**Lower Incline Fall*** 50m III-

Beneath the fourth bridge on the lower incline, descend (to the right as you're looking down) to a fallen tree in the gully some 50 - 60m below. Climb easy angled iced steps to a more challenging finish. We then climbed Incline Fall and thought it was a solid grade 3, not 2/3 (and it was in great condition)

FA: (09/01/2010) Simon Ringrose, John Hodgson, Andy Cannon

Honister Crag Gully** 400m IV

This climb was repeated 11/01/10 by Martin Armitage and Stephen Reid via the right-hand (main branch). It is not known which branch the first ascensionists took. The Direct Start was attempted but was not properly formed. The climb was 10 pitches, more like 400m than the 200m mentioned in the guide. Pitch grades would be 4, 4, 1 4, 2, 3, 2, 1,1,1 for good ice though pitches 4 and 6 were a grade harder in the cruddy conditions. The climb finishes at the top of the new Via Ferrata, which makes a handy descent. A good atmospheric route and worth two stars.

HIGH CRAG, BUTTERMERE**Gatesgarth Chimney*** 55m IV

Takes the deep chimney bounding the buttress on the right.

1 40m (5). Climb directly to the base of the chimney proper, move left into it at a small spike and ascend on hooks and fist jams gradually easing to a block/turf hook belay a few metres below the chockstone.

2 15m (5). Thrutch victoriously over the chockstone and belay well back.

FA: (09/01/2010) J Kettle, S Ozanne

CHAPEL CRAG

GR: NY167 149

Central Buttress Variation to Curving Gully Complete

170m III,4 ***

This route climbs the buttress below where the Buttress variation to Curving Gully joins it. It is the natural start and the route would be more appropriately named Central Buttress Left.

Starting up the buttress right of Curving Gully, from its lowest point, the route climbs the lower buttress and breaks through the left side of the upper buttress through some implausible looking ground for its grade. Frozen turf is critical.

1 110m Starting right of Curving Gully climb the turfy buttress from its lowest point to large block on a ridge overlooking Curving Gully where the buttress suddenly steepens.

2 50m (4) Follow a vague turfy groove above the block; the angle eases after about 20m. An excellent pitch

FA: (31/1/10) B Davison, D McGimpsey

Central Buttress** 160m V

A weaving line up the centre of the buttress traversing across a ledge about 10m above where the upper buttress steepens.

1 120m From the start of Bleaberry Chimney trend left up the lower, easier angled part of Central Buttress to belay at a pinnacle where the angle steepens just below the left end of a ledge.

2 50m (5) Gain the ledge above and traverse it 5m rights to below a right facing corner with a wide crack in the back. Climb this to easier ground.

FA: (31/12/2010) B Davison, D McGimpsey

Bleaberry Buttress 160m IV

Start at the lowest point of the buttress between Bleaberry Chimney and Chapel Crag Gully. Climb the buttress first on the right then in the centre of the steeper top section to easier ground. This route needs frozen turf.

FA: (31/01/2010) B Davison, D McGimpsey

DOVE CRAG, BUTTERMERE**Edge On*** 30m VI

This route is another variation of Dove Crag Gully. The route links a series of icicles on the wall below and through a hanging ice fringe. Climbed under good ice conditions, the big icicle separate and left of Chicken Out was touching down at the time. Some dubious rock protection was available. This route could be much harder and more serious under lean conditions.

Climb Dove Crag Gully to the big bay at the top of the first pitch. Belay on the right on ice.

(6). Start about 8m to the left of Chicken Out. Climb some steep ice bulges on the wall behind and slightly left of the big hanging icicle (the one being top roped in current guide may touch down in good conditions). Climb up the wall behind the icicle for 5m. Traverse the hanging ice fringe on the left for 5m to pull up onto a ledge. Exit through the steep fringe above and right with some steep and footless moves. Climb the easy angled ice ramp and snow above to various belay possibilities. Rock belays possible above right on the big terrace. Rejoin one of the Dove Crag Gully exits to the top.

FA: (03/03/2010) Paddy Cave, Mike Thomas

Cluck It*** 30m VI

The stunning pillar left of Chicken Out was formed to its base.

(6). From a belay behind the pillar a serious delicate start (pillar cracked across base) led out onto the front, followed by very steep climbing up the pillar front.

A really, really good climb. Totally independent and not a variation on Chicken Out.

FA: (01/03/2010) Pete Waiteshores, Owain Jones

GREAT END**Zitternd** 65m III/IV

The route takes a gangway and groove above and right of Cust's Gully.

1 (35m). A scrappy pitch. Exit Cust's Gully to the right at approximately 70m to a snowy gangway, and climb up to a turf ledge beneath an open groove (Hex belay).

2 (30m). Climb the pleasant open grove above and continue past a couple of short rock steps to belay.

FA: (07/02/2009) Donald Willey (led both pitches), Tim Booth

Cry Wolf 80m VI-

Interesting, varied climbing on rock torques, turf and with ice required in places. The route takes the obvious corner ramp line on the left of the buttress between Cust's Gully and One Pitch Gully. Start a short way up One Pitch Gully.

1 30m (6). Climb the ramp with continuing interest keeping a couple of metres left of the corner up a series of grooves.

2 50m (3). Continue direct up the easier ground above.

FA: (12/02/2009) Peter Graham, Ben Bathgate, Rick Graham

GILLERCOMBE BUTTRESS

GR: NY 222 124

Against All Odds** 130m III/IV

A winter route based on the summer line of Grey Knotts Face. The route is best climbed when covered in neve (rare).

1 35m (2). Start as for Grey Knotts Face where the fence line meets the crag. 20 metres to the right is a snowy and icy ramp. Climb this over a few steps to reach a terrace after 30m. Follow the terrace left to below an icy chimney.

2 25m (3). Climb the icy chimney to another terrace.

3 35m (2). On this ascent the rocky chimney above was bare so easier mixed ground on the left was taken to below the final chimney fault.

4 55m (4). Follow the fine chimney fault to the top of the crag, passing several steep sections. An excellent pitch.

FA: (03/01/2010) Adrian Dye, Matt Griffin (both led), Scott Gillespie

Note - Had been climbed after 10 days of heavy frost with a dusting of snow. Climbed Grey Knotts Face in full, without use of tools for

WINTER CLIMBS

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Letterbox pitch. Used tools for rest of route. The steep, iced and frosted chimney above was avoided (IV 5).

FA: Ian Armstrong, Ray Cassidy Nov 2004

FOULE CRAG, BLENCATHRA

GR: NY 324 284

Blunt Gully Buttress 60m II/III

The turfey buttress immediately left of Blunt Gully. A good route when everything else is buried under powder. The initial overhanging wall can be avoided on the left or right, or could be taken direct at an increased grade.

FA: (23/12/2009) W Smith, S Caldwell

CARROCK FELL**Common Courtesy Icicle** 20m IV

Just before the first major steepening in Trough Gully (approx. 20m) an ice bulge forms, with a possible ice screw belay on the left. Directly above this an icicle rears up steeply. Climb this on hollow placements and continue, with a cool head, over heather tussocks to a dead tree belay. An abseil from this is the easiest way down.

FA: (07/01/2010) Cliff Lowther

THIRLMERE**Diclofenac** 20m IV+

The icefall to the right of Shoulthwaite Gill, in a line directly above the bridge.

FA: (10/02/2009) Colin Downer, Cameron Fowler

Brown Cove Crags

Two Grooves Direct Finish** 50m IV

Climb the main pitch of Two Grooves direct to the top rather than stepping out of it at two thirds height into the second groove. This gives more climbing than the original finish but keeps the same grade (6) and stars.

FA: (01/01/2010) Huw Davies, James Bumby, Mark Holt

Fêler Putain* 180m IV-

Start at the base of the left branch immediately left of Central Gully. Climb 50m diagonally up in an indistinct gully, then follow a rock rib up the buttress towards a stepped ridge and onto the ridge, always heading diagonally left to an obvious snow slope. Continue across the snow slope to face a head wall consisting of two tricky steps (4+), the first to a small ledge, then to a larger slope. Continue up easier ground to the summit of the crag, or drop right into the gully for a quick descent. More variations exist up to the tricky step.

FA: (26/01/2010) Tom Gwilliam, Ben Humphris

Far Left Buttress 120m II

Located on the far left buttress past the twin gullies mentioned on p287 of the 2006 guidebook. Start above the rock headwall, slightly below the height where the ridge splitting the gullies begins.

Follow a shallow groove system (ice) passing easy steps.

FA: (01/12/2008) Andrew Dewhurst

Groovy Gridle Girdle III-

A right to left traverse, starting on the right-hand side of the crags and crossing all the gullies to the top of the crag.

FA: (21/01/2008) Mark 'Dez' Walker (solo)

Red Tarn Cove, Helvellyn

Arête Finish, Viking Buttress* 25m VI+

Climb pitches 1 and 2 of Viking Buttress.

3 25m (6). From the base of the groove on pitch 3, step round left to a large flat platform (possible belay). Climb the crack in the corner with the small jammed block (as for the existing variation finish) for about 2m, then pull out left to a thin crack in the middle of the wall with an excellent hook possible. Now make a big move up and left again (crux) moving on towards a small scoop at the top of the left arête, mantle over the top finishing on the top left of the crag overlooking Gully 1.

FA: (15/01/2007) Paddy Cave (solo)

Gully 1 Right-Hand Direct 40m III+

Right-hand side of Gully 1 direct, well right of deep gash of Gully 1, and scraping left-hand side of Viking Buttress. Climb direct over icy turfy bulges and break out right up icy turf to finish on top of Viking Buttress. (It would be possible to traverse into the belay ledge on Viking Buttress Left-Hand Finish).

FA: (12/02/2009) Alan Hinkes

Gully 2, Left-Hand Finish* 100m II

Half-way up Gully 2 is a broad groove, steeper than the main line, which breaks left up a series of turfy steps. Follow these until the groove broadens and becomes less steep onto the summit slopes to emerge south of the summit shelter.

This has been climbed a billion times before but isn't recorded in the new winter guide - so bagsy! (Er, I mean, here it is for the record).

FA: (17/12/2007) Colin Wells

Gully 2 Ice slab – unnamed 20m III+

Prominent slab of ice on left wall of Gully 2. Particularly thick this year and worth recording.

Front point up the ice slab, pull through rocky bulge and follow the left-hand groove.

Climbed it before in thinner conditions.

FA: (10/02/2009) Alan Hinkes and others

LAD CRAG, NETHERMOST COVE**Crazy Torque** 130m V

The obvious double corner in the middle of the right crag, just to the left of Nethermost Gully. 100m of turf steps lead to a large ledge below the obvious corner.

1 (7). Climb the corner to good tricams below the roof. Pull over the roof past hard torquing moves to continue up easier turf to a thread belay.

2 (4). Continue up the corner on the left on good turf.

FA: (18/12/2009) Franco Cookson, David Warburton (alt)

DOLLYWAGON NORTH**Southside** 50m III

Takes the obvious grooved ridge immediately left of South Gully. Start at the toe of the ridge and climb the right-facing groove which is technical in places. Emerge onto a snowfield and a choice of exits - continue up a turfy groove overlooking the gully or, easier, finish left. Please note the route was done on snow of variable condition and frozen turf. It may be harder when lean.

FA: (07/12/2008) Dave Sarkar, Chris Wright

COCK COVE CRAG**Always Leave A Tip** 50m III

Start as Thanks for the Tip.

From the easy ground climb right on the lowest ledges, below Thanks for the Tip. The ledges have interesting breaks with the overhanging crag base just below your heels. Gain Turf Corner and continue to the top.

FA: (08/02/2009) David Bell, Ross McGibbon

Hutaple Crag

Amphitheatre 150m VIII

A brilliant icy mixed line based around the summer line of The Amphitheatre. If it wasn't for a short section of steep and technical mixed climbing in the iced crux groove of Heat Wave this would be a fantastic VI (6) ice climb. Requires a good build up of water ice.

1 50m (3). Climb the broad ice line to the base of the corner and belay on a large ledge.

2 40m (8). Climb the obvious ice formation on the left-hand side of the slabby wall into the corner. The summer line climbs out right on the slab. Continue up the corner into the undercut overhanging groove (part of the summer line of Heat Wave (E2 5b)), and pull right out of the groove to icicle and warthog belay on turfy ledge.

3 40m (6). Step back left off the belay and climb the icy groove. Continue up easy mixed ground to good belays.

4 20m (3). Pick a line to the top of the crag.

FA: (26/01/2007) Steve Ashworth, Stuart Wood

Dove Crag, Dovedale

Hangover* 85m VII

The prominent corner and right sloping ledge system just right of centre of the crag. Start to the right of the chimney line of Extol.

1 20m (5). Climb the wall and traverse right to a ledge at the base of the corner.

2 30m (7). Climb the corner with the crux at the top where you are forced left onto the slab. Belay at the top of the slab.

3 35m (6). Move right along a large flake ledge to a pinnacle. Climb up and right into a V groove which leads to an easy snow gully and a belay higher up.

FA: (02/01/2010) Brian Davison, Steve Ashworth

Heirloom Crag

GR: 377 107 Direction: NE Facing

Gravity and Grace* 55m IV

1 20m (3). Start 15m right from the lowest point of the buttress, below and left of the hanging arête of Genetic Edge, in a turfy shallow groove. Climb this to a good ledge and corner (this is the belay for the start of the summer route Genetic Edge).

2 35m (4). Climb the corner to the left of the corner of Genetic Edge for about 15m, then move right and finish direct to the top of the crag and boulder belays.

FA: (06/12/2008) Mark Thomas (solo)

Silent Torquing** 55m IV

1 25m (3). Start 10m right of Gravity and Grace and climb a turfy/snowy ramp. After 10m, step left into a deep chimney, climb this and down climb the other side on jammed blocks to the same belay as for the top of the first pitch of Gravity and Grace.

2 30m (5). Climb the corner left of Gravity and Grace onto a ledge and recess below an overhanging chimney. Climb this steeply on awesome torques and hooks to a resting spike above. Move right and up turfy cracks to a large dagger of rock. Climb above this and pull out left to a slab. Climb the slab back rightwards to the top of the buttress.

FA: (06/12/2008) Mark Thomas (solo)

Sunset Boulevard 55m IV

1 20m (3). Same pitch as pitch 1 of Gravity and Grace.

2 35m (4). Climb the same groove as for the start of the summer route Genetic Edge, on turfy hooks, heading for the parallel crack in the head wall above. Climb up and over this to the top of the crag.

FA: (06/12/2008) Mark Thomas (solo)

Sidewalk 120m II

Start as for Silent Torquing and continue climbing diagonally right, passing under the start of Heirloom. Continue right until turning an arête overlooking the north side of the buttress. From here climb di-

rectly up and left on steeper turf to the top of the buttress. This whole route can be split into pitches at various places, 3 Pitches.
FA: (06/12/2008) Mark Thomas (solo)

Grooving High 50m III

The higher prominent groove above that taken by Gravity and Grace.

Climb easy, turfy walls to the groove which can be walked up to its back wall which steepens and offers a Grade II right finish and a Grade III left.

FA: (14/02/2010) Brian Davison, Dave McGimpsey

Heiress*** 50m VI

This follows Heirloom until just below the belay ledge on pitch two where the groove on the left is taken.

1. 20m (2). Climb the lower groove as for Heirloom to the ledge system and a belay below the V groove.
2. 30m (6) Climb the narrow groove of Heirloom until it steepens before the easy snow ledge. Move left into a groove and up a few metres until it is possible to step left across the top of a flake for a few meters into a blank groove running up the left wall of Heirloom. Thin climbing gains the top of this groove.

FA: (27/02/2010) Brian Davison, Steve Venables

Heir Apparent** 60m V

From the terrace this climbs the next prominent groove right of Heirloom before stepping across the slap on turf after about 10m to join the summer route of Reunion at a prominent flake on the arête and finishing up a chimney in the left wall of Heirloom's top pitch.

1. 25m (2). Climb the lower groove as for Heirloom to the ledge system and a belay to the right of Heirloom below the groove to the right.
2. 35m (6). Unprotected turf climbing at the start of the groove leads to easy snow. From here a traverse left on turf across the slab leads to the prominent flake on Reunion. Before you do this, climb easy snow to the corner above to arrange a high runner – unless you're bold. Cross the slab to the flake then step round into the easy snow on

Heirloom and go diagonally up to a chimney cutting through the left wall of the top groove. Climb this to exit by the pinnacle at the top.

FA: (27/02/2010) Brian Davison, Steve Venables

SOUTH HEIRLOOM CRAG

GR: 377 105

Approach from Ambleside Fairfield Horseshoe via Low Pike and High Pike. At Summit 792m head due north-east for about 200m to a snowy broad gully. Down climb the gully, keeping the buttress on your south-east flank. Follow the buttress down until underneath a small old yew tree 10m up on the wall above. Shift Switching starts 10m down from this tree in a turfy corner.

Shift Switching 80m I

Start 10m down from the yew tree in a turfy corner.

Pull up on turf into a gully/groove. Follow this into a snow bay. Turn left and take the ramp up and left to the summit of the buttress.

FA: (03/12/2008) Mark Thomas (solo)

Happiness Happening 80m I

Start at the same point as Shift Switching.

Climb to the snow bay. Step right and follow a small gully up to a jammed block. Step right above and follow short corners to the summit of the buttress.

FA: (03/12/2008) Mark Thomas (solo)

Little Big Corner 80m IV

1. Same start as Happiness Happening, up to the snowy bay.

2 (4). Take the first steep groove in the headwall on the right. Quite technical climbing, then corners above to the summit.

FA: (03/12/2008) Mark Thomas (solo)

Silent Prayer 80m III

Same pull up start as Happiness Happening, then take the groove immediately right. At its top, step right and follow the shallow turfgy groove to the top.

FA: (03/12/2008) Mark Thomas (solo)

Come Out Swinging 80m III

Start under the yew tree and pass it on the left side via a big patch of mossy turf into the back of a snowy bay. Exit this by a steep, short groove direct to the top.

FA: (03/12/2008) Mark Thomas (solo)

Forked Gully Left, Centre and Right 50m I

Up and right of Come Out Swinging are a group of 3 gullies, Left Gully, Centre Gully and Right Gully. All are about 50m in length and grade 1.

FA: (03/12/2008) Mark Thomas (solo)

False Alarm 40m V

About 20m up from the 3 gullies is a prominent turfgy corner with a steep finish. A Grade III climb with a grade 7 finish.

Climb the obvious corner to protection behind a flake. On this ascent a tempting line of turf was taken diagonally right to a ledge on the arête. This was to avoid the steep looking finishing corner, and instead it offered a steep undercut, poorly protected move up the arête.

FA: (14/02/2010) Brian Davison, Dave McGimpsey

Far Left Gully 50m I

This is another easy gully left of the Left Gully.

FA: (14/02/2010) Brian Davison, Dave McGimpsey

Easter Gully 60m I

Start at the top of an obvious snow/scree fan, 250m right of the descent gully and follow the winding gully to finish on the summit ridge. Fun.

FA: (24/03/2008) BP Hopton (solo)

SMALLWATER CRAG

Alt: 600m GR: 455 095 Direction: North-East

Cavers on the Crag 110m III

Good mixed turf and rock climbing between large ledges. Start at the obvious icy groove/chimney above a tree.

1 35m (3). Climb the icy groove with some bridging and hooking on the right-hand wall. Exit right at the top and belay at the next rock step.

2 25m (4). Climb the groove immediately left of the belay (crux), continue up the turfy groove and belay at the next rock step below an obvious left-slanting turfy groove.

3 25m (3). Climb turfy ledges to the groove and continue to a ledge above. Belay at the next rock step with a small spike belay and turf placements.

4 25m (2). Ascend the left-slanting turfy groove to gain the arête in a fine position overlooking the gully and continue over the blocky arête to the top.

FA: (10/02/2007) Adrian Dye, Rob Middleton

UNDERHILL GILL

The gill is on the western side of Longsledale and is located to the left (facing) of Hill Cottage and is on the northern flank of Underhill Wood.

Underhill Gill** 150m II+

From the obvious slab area at the bottom of the gill continue up to where it steepens. A series of small steep steps follows at about grade 2/2+ depending on route. The gill then flattens out a little before a couple more steps are found. The gill eventually peters out to rough pasture.

FA: (11/01/2010) Mark 'Dez' Walker, Samantha Forbes (solo)

Glen Coyne

GR: NY359187 Alt 620m

From the car park at NY386188 take the track past the farm and up past a row of miners' cottages on the south side of the valley. Once into the upper valley leave the path which is heading over to Green-side and head directly for the back of the valley; a spoil heap on the north side is located below the North Buttress. South Buttress, the most southerly of the buttresses, doesn't get the sun so retains snow well, offering a Grade I snow gully on its right side and a narrower Grade II gully on its left. The front of the buttress rises to a small pinnacle, which can also be gained from snowy chimneys from the gullies at either side.

Southern Buttress (II, 40m) starts from the lowest point of the buttress and passes the pinnacle before heading up the buttress by the easiest line. Above and right of the pinnacle a prominent groove cuts through the small but steep headwall on the right side of the buttress, reached up easy snow slopes from the right-hand gully: Head-wall Groove (III, 40m).

Central Buttress: The central buttress mid-way between the North and South Buttress. The buttress has a Grade I snow gullies on its right and wider easier angled gully on its left. Central Groove (IV, 50m) is a prominent V groove accessed from 10m up the left-hand gully. Easy turf walls lead into the groove and a hard exit. From the lowest point of Central Buttress (II, 50m) takes a faint depression up the left side to weave through heather ledges to the top. Right Ridge (II, 50m) takes the buttress from its lowest point and climbs the ridge overlooking the right-hand snow gully. Towards the top of the left-hand snow gully is a wall which can become thinly iced. A faint fracture on its left side offers 30m Grade III while 5m further right the wall offers a thinner 30m Grade III,4. The snow ramp under the wall offers 30m Grade II.

North Buttress: Located about 50m above the spoil heap at the north side of the headwall lies a small heathery buttress. Climb a faint heathery groove to the right of a vague arête in the centre of the

buttress (20m II) All routes soloed 13/2/10 Brian Davison – NB:
This headwall has been known to avalanche.



Paddy Cave climbing Moss Ghyll Grooves (*Ed Luke, www.edluke.com*)

IN MEMORIAM

Mr Chris Astill
 Mr George Driver
 Mr Alfred John Gregory
 Mr Edward Grindley
 Mr George Hall
 Mr Richard Ling
 Mr Brian Middleton
 Mr James Gordon Mitchell
 Mr Bill Smith
 Mr Phil Tomaszewski
 Mr George Watkins

CHRIS ASTILL

Walking and climbing in the mountains in winter conditions were things that Chris loved. He did it throughout his life and looked forward to it whenever the chance was there. On 30 December 2009 he was on Liathach Ridge, Torrion, and he was caught in an avalanche. Chris was unlucky to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Tragically, there was nothing that he or anyone else could do about it.



Chris on the summit of Mt Pelvoux

There are many people who will miss Chris dearly. Jo has lost her husband and Rachael and Fiona have lost their father. Their sadness, I hope, will be balanced in time by memories of Mr Fidget who never stopped doing things and seemed constantly to be planning theirs and his next adventure. I'm sure they will not forget the wide variety of places they have visited, the things they've done together and the warm and fun loving company he gave. Personally, I have lost a real friend and so have many others. Chris's loyalty, enthusiasm, wicked banter and irritating ability to never run out of energy will be sorely missed.

Born in Nottingham, Chris climbed a lot in the Peak District. His accomplishments were numerous. He climbed regularly and led routes

on gritstone and limestone up to E4. Routes like *Wee Doris* and *Our Father* on Stoney Middleton and *Quietus* and *Dangler* on Stanage. He also had party pieces like *Valkyrie* and *Chequers Crack* on Froggat and *Suicide Wall* on Cratcliffe Tor that he would solo. No mean achievement.

Chris was a member of the FRCC, Climbers' Club, Alpine Club and Nottingham Climbers' Club. Needless to say, his achievements were not confined to the Peak District. He climbed on the lead with many people on mountains and big walls in the UK, Europe, North America, South America, Africa and Nepal. Ascents on his list include El Cap (Yosemite), Lotus Flower Tower (Canada), Mount Kenya (guess where), Aconcagua (Argentina), the Hironnelle Ridge and Walker Spur (Alps) and Comici (Cima Grande, Dolomites). He also climbed Kankul Peak (5081m) and the previously unclimbed Peak AC 150 (5030m), in the Garhwal Himalaya. The latter was climbed and named to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Alpine Club. Chris was often the one who pulled out the big lead that made the difference between success and retreat; he was also the one who would lighten the air at times of stress with a quick comment or jibe. You always knew that you could rely on Chris and these characteristics made him a great partner in any situation.



In recent years Chris wanted to give back to climbing much of the enjoyment he had from it. He could often be seen climbing with prospective members at new members' meets, was a Climbers' Club committee member and had been hut custodian for the Downes Hut. He extended his interests and joined the FRCC in 2001. The atmosphere in club huts was always enlivened whenever he walked in and he was always one who would get the brush out, empty the rubbish and clean the dishes when it was time to leave.

Now, you never forget someone you've shared a rope with. Nor the banter that was uniquely Chris. He was born with it and honed and refined it when he worked as an Under-manager in the Nottinghamshire coal mines, a role that he rightly held with great pride and that he loved. He was always ready to rib you about something (anything), but he was always willing to accept the same. The climbing

world has lost a talented and accomplished climber who was well known, well liked and great fun to be with.

Chris, there are a lot of people who will miss you. I think I can speak for many of them by saying thanks for sharing your abilities, character and friendship with us. Your passing is particularly sad for your family and a real loss to me, your many friends and the climbing world. You will never be forgotten. Also, I hope that when you stand at the gates of heaven, in front of St Peter, you have a bit of banter but don't give him too hard a time of it.

Gil Male

GEORGE DRIVER

George Driver, born March 18th 1920, died November 18th, 2008. For the last 50 years or so he lived in Higher Poynton, Cheshire. George came from the Northeast and went to Durham University, and by profession was a research scientist (BSc, PhD) with ICI in Alderley Edge, Cheshire. He was married - his wife predeceased him - with one daughter, Elizabeth.

Summing George up is not easy; he was a private man but being blessed with a fine brain was able to turn his hand to most things, and did so throughout his life. He travelled extensively and regaled us with tales of his early travels in Japan and elsewhere.

A talented climber, he was very active in the Lake District. His diary of that time (1940-41) makes good reading and it has been presented to the FRCC for all to peruse. (*see article in this Journal - ed.*)

George later took up sailing and in his last boat, a Cobra 750 called *Trisala*, he cruised extensively single-handed from the Western Isles to the Scillies and South Coast, and all points in between. Having cruised in our own yacht, we know just how difficult these waters can be. He was a member of the North West Venturers Yacht Club, based in Beaumaris, Anglesey and on one occasion we sailed in company up the east coast of Anglesey in thick fog and we lost sight of *Trisala*. We called George on the VHF. He answered he was alright but realised he had not hoisted his radar reflector (homemade). He did so and we

could see him but he immediately took it down again. His sailing was in the period before electronic gadgetry was so readily available.

Living where he did on the edge of the Peak District, he had a great love of the countryside, and was passionate about preserving it and improving community facilities. For many years he represented Rainow ward as a parish councillor; was Chair of the Planning Committee on the Borough Council and was also involved with various other bodies connected with Macclesfield Borough Council. He had hung up his sailing wellies in his 70s, and started to walk in the Peak District and surrounding areas. His small campervan also provided him with access to enjoy exploring and walking the remoter parts of the British Isles, which he continued to do until his sudden death.

His funeral service brought together many, many friends and colleagues who had known him at different times in his life, and it was a fitting end to a man who had achieved so much in his lifetime.

Brian and Sandra Finney

ALFRED JOHN GREGORY

Alf Gregory, or Greg as he preferred to be called, died peacefully in hospital at Melbourne, Australia, on Tuesday the 9th of February, 2010, within three days of his 97th birthday. I first met him in the 1950s when his travel business, which I used, was around the corner from my office in Blackpool. We talked a great deal about mountaineering and photography and he seconded my application to join the FRCC.

A day on the hills with Greg and his friends nearly always turned out to be an epic. If he was not climbing then it included a visit to two valleys and all the tops in between. He was hard, tough and wiry and there was an eagerness in his quick, impatient tread. He joined the FRCC in 1944 and is credited with being involved in several new climbing routes on Lakeland crags. Always approachable I found him to be helpful, friendly and self-effacing to a member with lesser skills.

Due to his photography and publications he was known the world over for the part he played in the successful British Expedition to Everest in 1953. He was chosen for that expedition based on his reputation

as a tough, experienced mountaineer. He had led climbing parties to the Alps before and after the Second World War, and was chosen by Eric Shipton for the aborted expedition to Cho Oyu in 1952. As a travel agent he dealt with the Everest expedition's travel arrangements. John Hunt, the leader of the expedition, asked Greg to be the stills photographer almost as an afterthought. "Now let's see," Hunt said, "Does anyone know anything about photography? Greg, you take photographs, right?"



Alf Gregory on the 1953 Everest Expedition (courtesy of Suzanne Gregory)

Greg had come comparatively late to photography, but he certainly made up for any lost time. As a boy he was a natural artist who wanted to go to art college after he left Blackpool Grammar School but times were hard. Greg's father was killed in the First World War and his mother struggled to make ends meet in the family grocery business in Blackburn. Eventually moving to Blackpool, Greg was apprenticed into the printing trade but what was to be the main purpose to his life took place during his leisure time. He joined the YHA, bought a pair of boots and went off to the Lakeland fells to go climbing and fellwalking. When the Second World War broke out he was drafted into the Black Watch and promoted to Major and served in the North African and Italian campaigns.

Sporting a purple striped bobble cap, Greg carried his gear and photographic equipment weighing about 55lbs up the South East ridge to over 27,000ft, photographing Hillary and Tenzing Norgay following behind. When he was training for Everest his wife would sometimes drop him off at Clappersgate in the Langdale valley and he would jog all the way to Raw Head with a loaded rucksack on his back. On May 28th, 1953, Greg was one of the last five to approach the summit. Leaving camp on the South Col with George Lowe and Sherpa Tenzing, each carrying about 40lbs of supplies they reached camp IX at over 27,900ft, dropped their loads and turned back, leaving Hillary and Tenzing to prepare for the climb to the summit the following morning.

I once stood on the edge of Stickle Tarn with my camera and tripod waiting for light to photograph Pavey Ark when Greg appeared with Dick Cook and John Coupe. “Good lord, Bill, do you carry all that gear up the mountains?” Three years later he was carrying great loads up the South East ridge of Everest. Everest was followed by expeditions to the unexplored: the Rolwaling range and attempts on Khunyang Chhish and Distaghil Sar.

He always said that he went to Everest as an amateur photographer and returned as a professional. Because of his natural artistic talents, photography came naturally. His epic images of Everest went around the world, and Greg amassed a large portfolio of photographs which were used to illustrate many of the books that were subsequently published about Everest. The best of them appeared 40 years later in *Alfred Gregory's Everest* (1993), as well as in the 1953 book entitled *The Picture of Everest*.

In Blackpool in the 1960s, Greg produced hundreds of photographs of the Blackpool scene which he later published under the title of *Blackpool: A Celebration of the Sixties* (1993). After giving up his travel business, Greg worked for Kodak on the lecture circuit. It was during this period that he met his second wife Suzanne, also an accomplished photographer, and they settled in a cottage in Elton, in the White Peak of Derbyshire. Despite operations that fused bones in both of his ankles, he continued to climb in the hills in his 80s.

In 1996 Greg and Sue left their cottage in Elton and settled in Emerald, Melbourne, Australia. About two years ago I remember him sending me an email describing how he and Sue had driven out into the bush and slept out under the stars. He never lost his love of the mountains and the thrill of being out in wild places. He deplored the way that money would buy anyone a passage to Everest using fixed ropes and ladders. In his 2008 book *Alfred Gregory: Photographs From Everest to Africa* he wrote “In 1953 I photographed the silence on Everest. It is no longer there.”

Bill Comstive

EDWARD GRINDLEY

In August 1970, a friend and I came across a figure lying on the pavement outside the Bar National in Chamonix. We were wondering what to do when a French girl came out and ordered us to pick him up and bring him inside. We left the scene with this character sitting in a back corner with the girl sponging down his face and clothes. In this one incident, I learned both the calibre of the people running the National at that time and the fact that Ed Grindley never did anything by halves.

Ed was born in Warrington, Cheshire, on 31st December 1948. He attended St Benedict's Primary, followed by Boteler Grammar School. He went on to Exeter University, gaining a degree in Physics, followed by his teaching Diploma. He first worked as a teacher in Fleetwood in the early 1970's, followed by a spell at St Modan's High School in Stirling. He got married to Cynthia Heape in 1974. In 1976, he left Stirling and moved to Glencoe where he worked on the winter climbing courses with Ian Nicholson and others; Cynthia became the local District Nurse. In 1978 Ed again got a job teaching, this time at Lochaber High School in Fort William. Ed and Cynthia split up in the early 1980's; Ed moved to Fort William and then, in 1994, to Roy Bridge, continuing to work at Lochaber High until his retirement in 2009.

Ed's first steps in climbing were with his sister Sheila and her husband Jack 'Black Jack' Thornton, depicted as the reclining figure in the famous 'Festerat Wallendia' painting in the Old Dungeon Ghyll bar. He became a Lake District and Helsby devotee until his move to Exeter in 1968. His thirst for new routes on rock began in the south-west where, climbing with the emerging Pat Littlejohn and others, he was involved in over 40 first ascents.

I met him for what I thought was the first time in Langdale in 1972, it only dawning on me later that this was the character from outside the National two years before. We were both climbing a lot and interested



Ed Grindley, reproduced from a photo in *Cumbrian Rock*, Pic Publications, 1988. (Mike Mortimer)

in new routes, so we started climbing together from time to time. Ed was involved in the re-write of the Eastern Craggs guide at the time and over the winter of 1972-73 he spent many days checking out crags and climbs in that area. He ruthlessly erased many of them from the forthcoming guide, as he was very critical and was determined that only routes of quality should be in his guide book. His focus and single mindedness extended to his own new routing. His projects were usually intimidating lines requiring strength and commitment, climbed in good style. When climbing well, Ed was a strong and forceful leader. He would rarely 'yo-yo' on climbs, retreating to runners and so on, but would press inexorably on, at his best, unstoppable. Ed was always aware of the legacy passed on by first ascents and recognised that they had to stand the test of time. He was aware of his growing standing in Lake District climbing and knew that the new routes he was doing would be historically significant. Quality was a prime consideration and he took badly any criticism of his efforts.

Ed was never really interested in Alpine climbing at this time as most of us were and would usually spend his summers rock climbing all over the UK. He had a lazy streak in him that maybe didn't square well with the sheer effort needed for Alpine routes. Sometimes he wouldn't climb for quite a long time so that he would put on weight and get out of form. A few weeks later, you would find him fit and light and climbing really well. It was the same with everything he did; drinking with gusto or not at all, lazing about or going running. After not seeing him for a while one was never sure which Ed you would find or what his latest enthusiasm would be. Whatever he was into, he went at full tilt for a while before his interest waned, sometimes completely.

Ed's move to Scotland coincided with mine and we continued to climb together. He ticked off many Scottish classics like *Shibboleth* in the evenings after work in Stirling, such was his enthusiasm for these new venues. He worked his way through the winter classics too, and in 1978 gained his British Mountain Guide qualification. It was a great time, with long icy winters changing in a flash to the endless evenings of summer; spring is a fleeting visitor to the Highlands. Ed became a well known figure in the Coe, joining the rescue team, the Clachaig darts team and running climbing courses. He produced a guide to winter climbing on Ben Nevis and in Glen Coe. He applied his usual

thorough approach to his climbing of *The Clearances* on the north face of Aonach Dubh, probably his biggest contribution on rock in Glen Coe, and was castigated by certain members of the SMC for bringing 'English rock jock' tactics to the sacred crags of Scotland. This probably contributed to his always remaining very 'English', even after thirty five years in Scotland. He had a wicked sense of humour and would openly delight in the reverses of Scottish sports teams to the extent that he nearly got his face punched on at least two occasions. He was articulate and charismatic and was rarely upstaged in social situations. However, at one session at Glenmore Lodge, his continual goading of Mo Anthoine to produce a party trick resulted in Mo plucking Ed's glasses from his nose and slowly chewing up and swallowing the lenses in front of him.

On starting at Lochaber High School, Ed quickly got involved in building a climbing wall there. While running extra curricular trips, he collected rocks from all over the UK to be cemented into the wall as holds. Many of his ex-pupils now climb because of his inspiration and enthusiasm. Outwith work, Ed got involved with the local Labour Party, transferred to the Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team and took up parapenting. He quickly developed a skill for 'flying' and for a while, climbing took a back seat again. When the Aonach Mor ski development opened in 1988 Ed, having distained skiing up to that point, took up the sport and went out to improve his technique whenever the snow and time allowed. He became good at it as one would expect and in later years, as his interest in the Alps increased, he became a dyed-in-the-wool devotee.

Through the late 1980s and 1990s Ed developed a love for the Alps, especially the Chamonix area. He would spend his whole summer holidays camping at Argentière, working on Alpine training courses and for private guiding concerns; with his future wife Rona and her two children, they became a regular part of the summer Chamonix British guiding scene. Ed climbed many of the local classic routes with clients and with friends, becoming the alpinist that he unaccountably wasn't in his early years. He eventually climbed four of the so called 'great north faces', three of them when well into his 40s. In 2002, he bought an apartment in Le Lavancher, between Chamonix and Argentière and latterly, he and his family spent all their spare time there.

Throughout Ed's time in Scotland, he relentlessly pioneered new rock climbs. All of the outcrops around Argyll and Lochaber received his attention. During the 1980s he assembled loyal teams who would drive to Skye with him weekend after weekend, to produce scores of climbs at Neist, Kilt, Staffin and Floddigarry. It was the outcrops at Polldubh in Glen Nevis though, where his greatest stamp was made. He made first ascents at all grades, most of excellent quality, one of them, *Edge Hog*, making the dust cover photograph of the book *Extreme Rock*.

With the opening of the climbing walls in Fort William and Kinlochleven, he became a local father figure to all the young local climbers. Concerned recently that parts of Polldubh were becoming overgrown, he went on a chain saw course, the better to lay waste to the encroaching vegetation. In order to give legitimacy to his proposed gardening activities with the land owners, he carried out meticulous research, coming up with ancient photographs showing bare hillsides around the crags, supporting his argument that he wanted to merely restore the area to its original condition. To add more gravitas, he even started the Polldubh Club with local activists. I like to think of him chuckling away as he thought of more and more ruses to get his way with the powers that be.

In November 2009, a few months after he retired, Ed collapsed and was taken into hospital to be treated for a brain tumour. The treatment failed and he quickly deteriorated and died in February 2010. He will be sorely missed by Rona, Joe, Eilidh and all who knew him for his wit, intelligence, friendship and boundless enthusiasm for any number of things. His memorial stones are the beautiful crags of the Lake District and Scotland, his epitaphs written there himself using his own skill and courage. Ed was right all those years ago; his legacy remains there for everyone.

Peter Long

GEORGE HALL

George Hall, a Club member for 69 years, took part in Club activities up until his death at 95 years of age. Born in Poplar, East London,

on 23rd January, 1913, it was while attending George Green's School that he visited the Lake District for the first time. Charmed by the experiences of his first visit, he became a pilgrim to the District until he died at his home in Weston Turville, Buckinghamshire, on 14th November, 2008.

George joined the FRCC in 1939. Prior to the Second World War, after graduating from Oxford University, he taught at a primary school in Dalston, Essex. He was commissioned into the RAF to serve in the war, and whilst serving in North Africa, after a naked bathe in the



Mediterranean, he would practice rock climbing. After being demobbed from the RAF, he stayed at Brackenclough where he met the 'good-humoured and unselfish' (as described by George Mallory) Bentley Beetham. He and Beetham engaged in much conversation, yet his invitation to Beetham to call him by his first name was declined. Half a century later, George wittily recalled Beetham continuing to address him as 'Mr Hall', and was

pleased that such formality had faded in the Club.

After the war, George re-entered teaching and his career advanced with appointments at a series of grammar schools. At the John Roan School, Greenwich, he led parties of youths to experience the Lake District. His career pathway brought him back to George Green's School as Physics master and Deputy Head.

In 1956, he set up evening classes in mountaineering at a school in St John's Wood, London, which are believed to have lasted a decade. By 1957 the classes led to the founding of the Tuesday Climbing Club. He was elected the Club's first President and held the office until 1982; his zest for giving mountaineering instruction remained acute into his tenth decade. During his career as a school teacher, he introduced a legion of young Londoners to the Lake District, some later becoming members of the Club.

Ian Whitmey recalled George Hall's effect upon the Glan Dena meet in 2004. "On this occasion it was George who suggested, much to my consternation, that we all do the North Ridge [of Tryfan]. Once

on the scramble George seemed to take it upon himself to shepherd several of the party up the difficult parts". The Chronicle featured Ian's photograph of George ascending the ridge on Tryfan with its caption reporting him to be ninety-two years 'young'. Feigning hurt, George rang the Chronicle's editor and protested that he was much younger, being ninety-one years of age.

Those that met him during his nineties were impressed by his enduring fitness, healthy appearance, and cordiality. In the autumn of 2008, he walked in Borrowdale and Langdale. He attended that year's Club AGM and dinner. In conversation, George's sincere manner won the affection of people. So, a fortnight after the Club dinner, a degree of shock existed among the members of the Club who attended his funeral at Weston Turville. A surviving granddaughter who lives in America and enjoys long walks in the hills above San Francisco, reflected afterwards: "This is my legacy from Grand-dad: a love, appreciation and enjoyment of walking in the hills." Her eulogy will draw applause from the many people who also found joy in hill walking due to George Hall.

Patricia Fea, Ian Whitmey, John Finlay and Michelle Batchelor are thanked for their gifts of information.

Leslie M. Shore

RICHARD LING

Richard Ling, member since 1964, died in November 2009.

Memory is fallible. I must have spent hundreds of days on the hills with Richard, all enjoyable but generally blending into a composite pastiche of Richard on an unidentified mountainside, with an expansive but hazy view which somehow embraces the whole of the Lake District and much of Scotland as well. But there is also a cameo of vivid images rather like mountain views momentarily seen through a break in the clouds.

Richard in brilliant sunshine on the Crowberry Ridge of the Buachaille Etive Mor in Glen Coe, and the next day in a thick clag on the Aonach Eagach ridge. Another sunshine image on the Pinnacle Ridge of Sgurr nan Gillean, again followed next day by dense cloud on

the main Cuillin ridge and a missed path giving an epic descent into Coire a' Tairnelear: Richard calm, steady and safe in the face of "Do you think that crag below us is 15 feet or a thousand?!" Richard silhouetted against a blue sky on a snowy ascent of Beinn Eighe (appropriately made from the Ling Hut in Glen Torridon). In the Lake District, swinging across the hand traverse on a Corvus, the rock a virtual waterfall as this climb was always reserved for a short, wet day. Richard cutting steps in hard snow-ice in Cust's Gully in the days before we had crampons. A tragic accident on a snow-covered Bowfell Buttress when we were the first to reach the casualty and kept vigil until the Mountain Rescue arrived. (The Team was, of course, led by Sid Cross leaving Eddie Ling and Dick Cook to carve the geese for the Old D.G. Boxing Day dinner!). Our last day on the hills together, a short but steepish ascent above Bassenthwaite followed by a delightful stroll down through the Grisedale forestry tracks.

Those mountain days did of course have a social side. There were lively evenings in some of those hostelrys beloved of mountaineers: the Clachaig Inn in Glen Coe, the Sligachan Inn on Skye, the Old D.G. in Langdale, the Scafell in Borrowdale, and many others. And of course there were long, companionable evenings in Fell and Rock Climbing Club or Kindred Club huts. Although he lived on the south coast, Richard travelled north regularly with his wife Sandi to stay in the club huts, his favourite being Beetham Cottage – perhaps because he worked hard on the roof and drains when it was first purchased.

Richard was also a member of the Tricouni Club. His father, Eddie, was one of the founder members in 1930 and I believe Richard became a member aged 5. The club has met twice a year at Seatoller House since its foundation and Richard played a more than full part in ensuring the continuance of this tradition with a determination to preserve the house to give future generations of walkers and climbers the pleasure that it has given ours. Seatoller House is an old 'Statesman's' house dating back at least to the 17th century and has accommodated mountain lovers for some 150 years. When, 30 years ago, the last of the Cockbain family decided to sell the House it was bought by a consortium of members of the Cambridge Hunts (the Hunts having held 'hare and hounds' events over the Lake District fells from Seatoller House since the 1880s) and Tricouni Club members.

Richard became a Director of the resultant private company and subsequently Chairman, and played a major role in the sympathetic modernisation and management of the House which has made it one of the most renowned guest houses in the Lake District.

Away from the mountains, his other great pastime was sailing. In his youth he was a great racer of International 14 dinghies and competed at a number of Prince of Wales Cups. I seem to remember one of his dinghies was called *Bloody Mary* and that his mother, Mary Ling, was never quite convinced that this was to reflect the colour of his spinnaker! He progressed to cruising yachts. Perhaps his favourite was *Fiddlers Green* (the sailor's paradise beyond all horizons); this Mystere class yacht had a tiny petrol engine which never ran for more than four minutes without the spark plug having to be removed and cleaned, making for exciting times in crowded moorings with a tide running through them.

In his career, Richard was an accountant, consultant and corporate financial advisor. He was a longstanding member of the Worshipful Company of Saddlers, one of the oldest City of London Livery Companies, becoming a Member of the Court and subsequently Master. Through the Saddlers he became involved with a number of charities and gave freely of his time, particularly to Riding for the Disabled. His contributions and sage advice, especially on financial matters, have been widely praised by these organisations.

David Baggaley

BRIAN MIDDLETON

Brian died on 10 February 2009 in a tragic accident on Snowdon. He had walked up the mountain alone, well equipped for the severe winter conditions. Descending, he somehow slipped near the summit, and his fall was fatal.

Brian joined FRCC in 1999, relatively late in his climbing career. Although he lived in Yorkshire for decades, he was born and went to school in Sussex. He discovered climbing through the Scouts, and became a leading light of Southampton University MC in the days

when Swanage was being developed. He also played table tennis to county standard.

After graduating in mathematics, Brian became a teacher and moved closer to his beloved mountains. He worked in schools in the north of England and in Wales, taking on additional responsibilities such as masterminding maths exams for examination boards. Eventually, though, Brian became disenchanted with teaching, and in 1981 he joined up with an old friend, Dave Gunning, to found the business Todmorden Fine Arts. Dave's expertise in paintings was complemented by Brian's ability to handle the financial side, and Brian taught himself the skill of picture framing. Several FRCC members' own pictures from their gallery, and the geological maps of the Lake District in Raw Head and Brackenclose, were framed by Brian.

He loved his new role, which gave him the flexibility to participate fully in family life and climbing. In 1991 when the Foundry opened in Sheffield Brian was one of the first enthusiasts. His strength was always formidable and on the indoor wall his technique improved to match it, with the result that he was able to climb much harder trad routes than ever before. It gave him great satisfaction to 'tick' famous climbs from *Hard Rock* and *Extreme Rock* and to raise his leading grade to E3.

Brian still enjoyed easier routes and just being in the hills. He would solo around on gritstone and scramble in the mountains, alone or in company. Between Christmas and New Year he would take his tent to some high place and enjoy the peace – or whatever the weather threw at him! He would have several 'sun rock' climbing holidays abroad each year, at places such as Kalymnos, Calpe, Riglos, Finale, the Verdon, and even Geyikbayiri in Turkey. Only recently, Brian said that he was doing too much sport climbing and next summer he was going to concentrate on trad.

His birthday was just before Christmas, and it became a tradition to celebrate at a climbing wall, where he would challenge himself and everyone else to lead the steepest overhangs. He was so fit and keen that it was hard to believe he was 70.

Brian is greatly missed by his many climbing friends. No more will we hear his grunts that accompanied a powerful move, no more will we hear his encouraging 'I'm watching you' when he was belaying.

How much worse his loss must be for his family. Brian was June's 'better half' (her own words), the 'dad' of Emma, Dawn and Stephen, grandfather to budding climbers, and great-grandfather to the next generation. We extend our deepest sympathy to them all.

Angela Soper

Addendum:

I did not climb lots with Brian, but everything we did was top class and loads of fun. The first route we did together was *Extol*, an E2 on Dove Crag, on 20 July 2000. I led the first (easy) pitch and belayed Brian as he traversed round the corner, out of sight, on the big pitch. Eventually the cry came safe, and I set off. Never desperate, *Extol* just trucks along at 5a/b until you are over 30m up the pitch, when you get to the overhang, where Whillans put in the peg. Wow! I really struggled, with Brian chuckling away above me. Up the overhang I went and then nearly wobbled off the mini-arete before the belay. Brian couldn't stop laughing.

The next occasion was down at Gogarth the following year and sums up all that was best about Brian. On 30 May 2001 we did *Resolution Direct* (E2), Brian on the hanging belay at the top of pitch 2. Now I had just come back from 3 months climbing on bolts in Spain and France, so was fit, but, well, I was used to bolts. When I climbed up to Brian's belay I was scared witless: he had 2 pegs clipped, but both were a latticework of rust and his 3rd belay was a loose-ish friend in a crack. I really thought that I was going to die that day. Fast forward to 2007 and I am stood outside the rear of Lambrinos Apartments on Kalymnos when I heard a familiar voice: it was Brian descending from the crag. I don't know who he was climbing with that day, but we all met up later in Steve's Bar and I was relating again the story of the belay on *Resolution Direct*. Brian let me finish and then announced that, in fact, he had two more solid belays in that day but had spent his time hiding them from me, and enjoying my discomfort! Typical Brian - great climbing and loads of fun.

To complete the record, over the next few weeks down at Gogarth, we did *Gauntlet* (HVS), *Emulator* (E1), *The Strand* (E2), *The Ramp* (HVS), *Failsafe* (E2), and *Eternal Optimist* (E2). The last climb we did was *Wen* on 9 July 2001. Great climbs and a great bloke.

John Robinson

(JAMES) GORDON MITCHELL

Gordon was born in May 1932 and died on 15 August 2008. It was good to see over a hundred friends turn up for his funeral. He had no close relatives and the farewell from such a large circle of friends was a testimony to one of the most gentle, sociable and generous people I have met.

He had been an FRCC member since 1965 and Assistant Warden of Salving House from 1968 to 1975. He was also a member of the Northumbrian Mountaineering Club and the Weardale Ski Club. He was tall and lanky, with carefully groomed thick black hair, an immaculate grey beard and huge boots, which, together with his polite and cultured way of speaking, immediately conjured up the image of the family doctor or local landowner.

Gordon enjoyed a lifelong interest in mountains. He was not a man for anything too serious on the crags but he was an avid mountaineer, skier and, latterly, mountain biker. Despite a number of serious illnesses in the last years of his life he still managed to get out when he could and he was still hiking up reasonably strenuous hills until a few years ago and managing trips on the bike to the end.



The most enduring memory of my years in the mountains with Gordon was of a January weekend in the 1960s when we camped near Crianlarich in temperatures that caused fresh eggs (and our boots) to freeze. We climbed Ben Lui, Ben Oss and Ben Dubhchraig in the magical few hours of daylight in brilliant sunshine and with temperatures still well below zero. I still have an ancient 35mm colour slide which reminds me of the trip. A life which includes days like that is not wasted.

He excelled in what these days would be called inter-personal skills. He was a wonderful socialiser and, not surprisingly, made many friends in the FRCC. He encouraged newcomers, drew those he hadn't met before into conversation and entertained all with his wry sense of humour and regular practical jokes, which were never cruel or malicious.

He worked all his life in electronics from his army training, through repairing radios and TVs in Bainbridge's to his final career as an X-ray engineer with Phillips and later in the NHS. Music was his great love and he filled his apartment with the highest of fi equipment, which was rarely silent.

He will be missed by a lot of people.

Norman E. Haighton

BILL SMITH

I first met Bill when we worked on the coal face at Bank Hall colliery in Burnley in the mid 1960s. Bill was driving a huge coal cutting machine that would constantly break down due to the tough working conditions. I was the engineer called on to mend and maintain it, which meant that we worked together in quite challenging circumstances. I happened to tell him that I'd been to the Lake District climbing for the weekend and our friendship grew from there.

At 'bait' time, I would tell Bill of the routes I had done and he would recall some of his early exploits. These tended to involve epic motor bike journeys and flooded campsites! He would recall some of the names of his old mates, many of whom were still active climbers and some of whom I knew: Wilkie, Hartley, Brew, Umpleby, Colin & Flo, the Heys twins, Rod & Cunnie to name but a few. He once showed me his prized pair of Laurie's nailed boots, but by then he'd succumbed to the lure of PAs.

With the closure of the coalfields we lost touch for a while but Bill had started running with Brian Holden and at a training session with Clayton-le-Moors Harriers we renewed our acquaintance and often ran and climbed together. Bill told me that he taken on the wardenship of Rawhead and invited me up for some climbing and "a bit of plumbing". We spent most of the weekend re-piping the cottage before eventually doing Haste Knot in White Ghyll late on Sunday afternoon. We then dashed back to Burnley for Bill to look after his aged aunt and uncle, who had brought him up after he was orphaned.

Anyone who met Bill would be impressed by his tenacity and strength of character but not everyone appreciated his dry sardonic wit. When the Club's finances were a lot shakier than they are now, the hut wardens were asked to cut the costs of running the huts. Bill's solution was to take the fuses out of the electric storage heaters with the remark "Them as wants central heating mun stop at home".

Bill was a stalwart member of the FRCC and made a valuable contribution to managing the club in his roles as Hut Warden, Hut Secretary, & Vice President. With his death on 30th December 2009, he leaves behind his wife Marj, who shared his love of the outdoors, his son David and his daughter Susan and many friends who will all greatly miss him.

Peter Lord

PHIL 'TOMMO' TOMASZEWSKI

Phil died riding his beloved motorbike on 18th March 2010, aged 48.

I first came across Phil in early March 2002 at Raw Head. The weather was beautiful and people were busy packing to go fell walking and rock climbing but I had designs on a late winter route. I had been studying the weather patterns and thought a trip to Great End might prove fruitful, but as a newish member of the club I was not sure if anyone else in the hut might be interested. A word with Dave Dowson and I was chatting to this tall, lean, rather fit-looking chap with a massive grin. Phil it was and he was keen but no kit. No problem! I had spare axes and crampons; no spare helmet though, more of which anon. Plus he had to be back for the committee meeting. During the somewhat brisk walk in, Phil told me of his last trip to Central Gully, a solo effort slightly complicated by the cornice collapsing with Phil just below. A rapid descent of the entire gully left Phil with multiple injuries. The lack of helmet seemed a bit more worrying now but Phil assured me he would be fine wearing his thick woolly hat! Oh well, we were nearly there by now... The gully was in great nick and we



romped along. Just as we were belaying below the left hand route a soloist released a large lump of ice, narrowly missing me on the belay. I shouted down to Phil “Did you see that?” No reply. I looked down to see Phil slumped on the rope – he had been hit on the left temple and couldn’t see properly! Happily this was a temporary affair and we duly completed the route. A race to the committee meeting saw Phil there in time to tell his tale. I liked this bloke and thought we needed to see more of each other.

Over the next 8 years we pursued our enthusiasm for all things wintry and resuscitated the annual FRCC trip to the CIC hut. We shared some brilliant days on Ben Nevis with Phil’s never failing enthusiasm absolutely instrumental to the trips. Often arriving at Waters on the Saturday I would find Phil had already been to the hut to drop off our supplies of wine, whisky and fresh food. No pot noodles for us! Phil was a great team player, always leading by example.

One particular day always sticks in my mind: Phil’s first trip up Tower ridge, with the route in fabulous condition. We romped up in 2 hours, moving together with the odd ice screw runner. Phil’s long legs demonstrated the ability to cross the gap in a big stride, cutting out a lot of tricky climbing. This technique was practised in later years with variable success by other club members, notably The Badger (aka Steve Cade), who ended up dangling off Phil’s rope in Tower Gully. The Badger was, incidentally, awarded this moniker by Phil due to his propensity for being out and about on the hill long after dark.

I hope this small tribute gives an insight into the man for those who didn’t know him, and raises a smile for those fortunates who did. At Phil’s funeral ceremony (on 1 April, fittingly – he was a great practical joker) I learnt how valued he was as a work colleague in his 25 years in the Leicestershire constabulary, and as a local policing officer in Loughborough. He was immensely popular in The Blue Knights motorcycle club and through the police sailing club he had also become an adept sailor. A large number of uniformed officers and the entire Blue Knights were present, many unable to cram into the church so listening on a PA outside.

Above all I learnt about Phil from those who knew him best of all, his family. His daughter Rosie spoke movingly about what a great Dad he was. His older brother gave an insight into how Phil’s adventurous,

independent nature developed: temporarily missing at the age of 3, when confronted by an anxious parent on his arrival home, Phil was told they were worried as they didn't know where he was. "Well, I knew where I was," he replied!

He always did.

At a small ceremony on as wild a day as I can remember on the Ben, Brian Smith, Steve Cade, Peter Kelly, Roger Griffith and I gathered at the foot of Tower Ridge in view of the CIC hut to place Phil's hat and gloves beneath a boulder. I felt sure he would have approved - he certainly would have loved the weather!

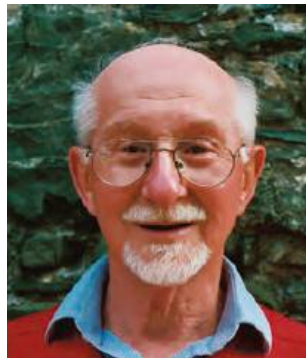
Phil is survived by his cherished daughters Rosie and Zoe, and his wife Janet who encouraged and supported Phil in all his adventures.

Tom Fox

GEORGE WATKINS

Scholar, mountaineer and gentleman. This is how many of his wide circle of friends will remember George who died on 22nd November 2008 at the age of 82, just a few months after being diagnosed with a cruel illness. He was a man of quiet demeanour and dignity, but also a man of action and a notable presence in any company. He will be remembered by all who knew him for his courtesy, his impish humour and for the many interests and activities on which he left his mark.

Born in 1926, George grew up in St Helens, Merseyside, where he attended Cowley Grammar School. He won a scholarship to Cambridge but delayed his entrance to Gonville and Caius College for some twelve months in order to join the RAF as a Communications Officer. After obtaining his degree in English Literature he taught first in Liverpool before becoming English Master at Lancaster Royal Grammar School (LRGS). For some time he was House Master for the boys who boarded at the school but later, after the death of his father he made a home for his elderly mother and his niece who was then a child of five.



He became Head of the English Department but he never sought a Headship for, with the interests of his pupils very much at heart, he preferred the real challenges of actual teaching. Throughout his teaching career he involved himself in all aspects of the school life, he even postponed his retirement by two years in order to design and implement the new school library.

He was a skilful oarsman, was Master of the LRGS Boat Club from 1953-1962 and continued to coach for the Club for the next 20 years or so. Until he reached the age of 70 he was Senior Umpire at the Chester, Liverpool and Shrewsbury Regattas. In 1970 he was invited by St John's College, Cambridge, to undertake a six month research project. While there, he involved himself in College activities and coached the College crews to great success in the "Bumps" races.

A Freemason for almost 35 years, George was provincial Grand Master on two occasions. He became a member of the Manchester Masonic Research Lodge and, in 2007, became the Worshipful Master and President of the Association. Sadly, the research he was undertaking on Scottish poetry was never completed due to his illness and subsequent death.

George's love of the mountains played an important part in his life. He joined the Fell and Rock in 1961 and, in addition to being very active on the crags and fells, he served the Club in many capacities throughout his 47 years of membership. He helped in the preparations for the conversion of Beetham Cottage and was Assistant Warden there from its opening in 1965 until 1978. From 1988-98 he combined the roles of Club Librarian and Club Archivist. He became Vice President in 2000 and was elected President in 2002. He presided with tact and courtesy, did not impose but listened, advised and guided with a quiet firmness.

A keen alpinist, George joined the Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club (ABMSAC) in 1963 and attended virtually every one of their Alpine meets over many years. He also trekked and climbed in New Zealand. In 1990 he became a member of the Alpine Club and while attending that Club's 150th Anniversary celebrations in Zermatt it was apparent that he was re-living memories of past climbs and excursions in the area.

Whatever George undertook he did thoroughly. During his time as Archivist he organised a short “working meet” at Beetham to sift through all the archive material which he had stored in the loft of his bungalow and which he feared was about to buckle the ceilings beneath. Three mid-week days were booked at the hut but the task proved so enjoyable and so interesting as more and more of the Club’s background emerged, that the volunteers carried on into the following week while George commuted between his home and the hut with more carloads of material. The Club scrapbook, which apparently had not been seen for years, came to light but in a very sorry state. I mentioned that it looked as if it would be an interesting archive if it was tidied up “So how long will it take you...?” George said, and he meant it. He was also concerned that young people should be introduced sensibly to the hills and any youngsters whom he accompanied on the fells were certain of sound training in both mountaineering and hut behaviour.

In his later years he had to become less active on the mountains but he certainly kept up his activities within the Club. Clad in blue overalls he was a prominent figure at many maintenance meets, while his readings of both prose and poetry, some of which he had written himself, were memorable features of many hut gatherings especially at the Music meet where the soft cadence of his voice kept us spellbound. He was a talented writer and poet as evidenced by his contributions to past Club Journals but he was also very adept at Presidential cake cutting judging by the photos taken at the opening of Karn House, at the 50th anniversary of Salving House and later at his 80th and 81st birthday gatherings at Beetham.

George will be remembered with respect, with admiration and with affection by those members who had the privilege of knowing him but he has left a special legacy to all of us. After learning the prognosis of his illness he remarked to one of our members “Well, never mind, it could be worse, I’ve had a good life”. An inspiring comment to leave behind and for us to remember him by.

In tribute, and to quote another poet: in Chaucer’s words, George was indeed:-

“A verray parfit gentil knyght”

Maureen Linton

Addendum:

The last Journal reproduced my oil painting of the Matterhorn seen from below the Zmutt Ridge, and I think members might be interested in its connection with George Watkins.

George and I cooperated in delivering things to the Centenary Exhibition, and the 'Matterhorn' landed back at his bungalow. He rather liked the idea of holding onto it for a bit so I lent it to him. Felicia Jane, his niece and frequent companion, told me that he kept it in his dining room, opposite to where he sat for meals, and loved looking at it as a reminder of Alpine days.

After the terribly sad blow of losing George, I suggested to his niece that the painting might be donated, as a memorial to him, to St. John's Hospice, Lancaster, where he spent his last days. I have just heard from her that they have accepted it and will display it in his memory.

Others will have written their tributes to George, but I should like to add that, in all our times together – working in the Library, drawing his portrait for the Journal, going into the hills – George was infallibly wonderful company – kind, knowledgeable, intelligent, witty and jolly. One could add so much more.

Peter Osborne

LEGACY

Livia Gollancz, publisher, musician and mountaineer as well as a member of the FRCC from 1989 to 2008, has kindly bequeathed the club £200.

In Review

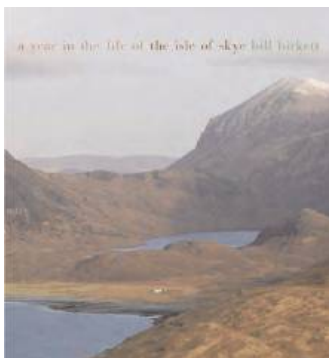
A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE ISLE OF SKYE

Author: Bill Birkett.

Publisher: Frances Lincoln, 2008 Price: £14.99

ISBN: 97807112 26449

This is the fifth book in the series *A Year in the Life Of...* and the second covering an area outside the Lake District. Much has been written over the years about the Isle of Skye and deservedly so, as it is a magical place when the weather is good. Bill's new book coincides with the 100th anniversary of the publication of Ashley P. Abraham's *Rock Climbing in Skye* (1908), a classic that should be on every serious climber's bookshelf. Bill's book is of the coffee table variety. It is a personal photographic essay about the Isle of Skye through the seasons,



focussing on three key areas: the Red Cuillin and Strathaird, the Black Cuillin, and finally the northern region of Trotternish. There are many references to several other areas of interest, including, for example the Isle of Rona, Sleat, Waternish and Dunvegan.

The chapter on the history of Skye is well researched, starting with Mesolithic hunter-gatherers then moving on through the Bronze and Iron Ages, the Celts, the Vikings, the Clearances. It helps us to understand what we can find on Skye today if we make the effort to look.

The flora and fauna section includes several excellent photographs of birds and plant life, taken whilst engaged in sea cliff climbing around the 725 kilometres long coast of Skye.

Bill has spent of a lot of time on the island since his first visit in 1972 and has taken a broad interest in all aspects of Skye, the friendly people are not forgotten. He mentions Willie McCloud, an elderly man who lived on his own in the most northerly house on the island. When I met Willie many years ago he had not left the island for over 17 years. At the top of his drive there was a sign saying "Please come in and

turn around". If you did, Willie would come out to invite you into his house for tea and biscuits, for a chat amidst his 1940's décor and furnishings, including a bakelite radio.

Finally, a brief history of climbing and mountaineering is described starting with Forbes ascent of Sgurr nan Gillean in 1836. Then we are brought up to date with the development of serious modern routes on Skye's impressive sea cliffs. Bill ends with a quote from the words of Ashley P. Abraham, who said "It should be born in mind that Skye is preferred to Switzerland by many climbers who are intimate with both districts. I count myself amongst these. My memories of the Coolin are more pleasurable and lasting than those of the Alps – many there are who would rather forgo forever Switzerland than Skye". Praise indeed, and a hundred years on I am sure many would still agree.

To sum up, Bill's book of Skye contains many excellent and interesting photographs, some of which span a double page. However, I have seen better ones of the main Cuillin Ridge. The photographs between pages 72 – 77 contain large black areas with no detail, which is not to my personal liking. The text provides a good general insight into life on the island throughout the year without going too deeply into detail.

This book will appeal to all Skye lovers and is another to be read by people planning to visit the island for the first time.

Peter Fleming

MEMORIES OF DOLPHIN

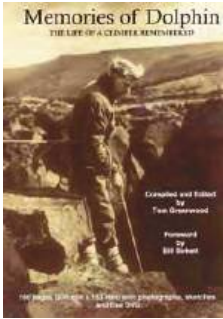
The Life of a Climber Remembered.

Author: Tom Greenwood.

Publisher: Green Woods, 2009 Price: £11.99

ISBN 0-95641530X

The name Arthur Dolphin is synonymous with a whole host of rock climbing routes put up in the 1940's and early 1950's, mainly in Yorkshire and the Lake District, perhaps the legendary 'Kipling Groove' (KG) being the best known. In this book Tom Greenwood has gathered together recollections from the people who knew and shared the enthusiasms of this influential figure in the history of British climbing. In



addition, articles from club journals, diaries and obituaries have been put together and a DVD includes original footage, somewhat grainy, of Dolphin at Almscliffe and on Gimmer from 1950-51, as well as information about the routes he pioneered on these crags.

One gains a fascinating insight into the character, his friendly, modest demeanour, his terrific drive and awe inspiring ability on the rock. All was brought to a tragic end in an unfortunate Alpine accident when he was only 28. The book will appeal to those who were his contemporaries, to anyone with an interest in the history of climbing or to the climber of today who may be repeating such well known classics with the aid of modern equipment and wondering how it was all achieved.

It took 5 years for Tom Greenwood to collect and collate the information in these memoirs and he has certainly achieved his objective in making the reader more aware of just how capable this true athlete was. It is intended that any profit from the sale of the book will go to the 'Jack Bloor Fund' and an 'Arthur Dolphin Memorial Trophy' is planned for the Jack Bloor Race that is held on Ilkley Moor annually in May.

Anne Daykin

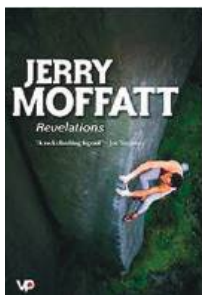
REVELATIONS

Author: Jerry Moffat, Niall Grimes

Publisher: Vertebrate Publishing, 2009 Price: £12.99

ISBN: 978-1-906148195

Why do we read biographies? I suggest that there are two main reasons: one is to find out what happened ("I did this, then I did that...") from an authoritative source. The other reason is that we want to find out something about the person, who they are beneath the surface, the famous 'what makes them tick'. I wanted both of those from this book.



Jerry Moffat was the ever present star of rock climbing during my formative years, always pushing the grades, always in the news. I recall clearly the picture of him in *Crags* magazine aged seventeen having just repeated *Strawberries* at Tremadog, then the hardest route in the country. He was only a year older than me – how could anyone be so good? This book, collaboratively written with Niall Grimes, sets out to answer all of this and

more.

So to the good points, which are many. It is written in a very readable style and skips along chronologically. Moffat is generous with praise for his friends and their abilities and is open about his ambitions and dedication to achieving them. There are some funny stories and it does give one a sense of the lifestyle of the dole climber in the 1980s.

The sheer hard work Moffat put into becoming the best is staggering for most of us who train at the wall occasionally. This really was the start of the full time professional athlete in climbing, and we also get a good account of how Moffat made serious money from his talents.

On the debit side, the photographs contain many that have been seen before, and they feel squashed in, with odd decisions about which to shrink and which to print in a larger format. I would have liked a much bigger image of Moffat climbing in Chad instead of the well known shot of him soloing Fern Hill.

In terms of writing it is hard to see much benefit from using Grimes to set it all out, as the narrative at times seems to be a random collection of anecdotes that with a little thought could have been edited into a better sequence, or located elsewhere in the book. It is hard to agree with the claim that Fire rock boots were “the biggest technical advance in rock climbing history”. Surely there are other more worthy contenders, like nylon ropes or karabiners?

Moffat is disarmingly honest about his ambition and commercial acumen, but we never see very deep into his soul. Compared to the writing of, for example, Andy Cave, there is little that feels like honest self analysis or real emotion. So, buy this as a good read about the good old days, imagine yourself dossing at Stoney and Buoux and

burning off the top American climbers. Just don't expect any real Revelations.

Nick Hinchliffe

STAYING ALIVE IN AVALANCHE TERRAIN

Author: Bruce Tremper

Publisher: Bâton Wicks, 2008 Price £14.99

ISBN: 978-1-898573-75-3



This book, first published in 2001 is now, after six reprints, available in a second edition which is published in Britain for the first time. It is aimed at the many people who ski, snowboard or partake in any other activities off-piste such as climbing, hiking and even snowmobiling. The author refers frequently and irritatingly to people recreating.

I found reading the book's 320 pages, which contain ten chapters packed with information about all aspects of avalanches and illustrated with diagrams, tables, graphs and photos, to be rather tedious. This is partly because it is very much directed towards winter activities in the USA and Canada of which I have no experience or particular interest. However, snow is snow no matter where it is found and it can avalanche anywhere if conditions are right. A good example of this is my own experience of a snow avalanche on the exit from Dove Crag Gully on Grasmoor of all places, when I was saved by the rope. This incident made me realise the power of even a minor avalanche and the hopelessness of being caught in one, in this case while ascending on foot.

The author is an avalanche professional of long standing who has himself escaped from two avalanches and has skied off a number of sliding snow slabs. He can count himself lucky since the statistics that are quoted for people surviving an avalanche are quite poor. The reason is that in the turmoil of an avalanche the human body sinks into the snow despite the fact that large bodies tend to rise to the surface in the granular flow of an avalanche. The victim usually finishes up buried and unable to move, or breathe for very long. The myth that you can create a space to breathe in and can spit to determine which way is up so that you know which direction to dig yourself

out is just not true. Even if you can spit it is most unlikely you will be able to move. As the author says “You can be dug out or melt out of an avalanche”. This piece of information appears in the introduction, but in a later chapter the practical steps you can take to increase your chances of survival, once you are caught in an avalanche, are indicated. For example, as you feel the avalanche coming to rest, grab with one arm across your mouth the strap of your back-pack on your opposite shoulder. This creates a breathing space when you come to rest.

Much is made of the need to know the weather and and snowfall record of the region in which you are ‘recreating’. With this knowledge you should be able to judge the likelihood of avalanches in the region and where it might well be safe to recreate. The advice is summed up in one of several Hot Tips! Today’s snow is tomorrow’s weak layer. Be sure to carefully map snow conditions before each storm. Weak layers are much easier to see before they are buried than afterward. This is especially so for a sneaky, thin layer of surface hoar. This is all well and good if you live in, spend a long period of time in, or frequently visit the area, but obtaining this information on a holiday visit is not so easy and this situation is not considered.

We are told good practice is to carry out a snow profile and look for evidence of weak layers. The only trouble with this is that the profile varies with the orientation of the slope. In most activities on snow you are inevitably going to encounter many different slope orientations in a day’s activity and so profiling each of these is exceedingly time consuming. Good advice is given to at least partly overcoming this problem, for example: test the slope by pushing into it with a ski pole to test for weak layers. If the pole is pushed into the surface and meets resistance, and then on further pushing it sinks easily, the presence of a weak layer is indicated. Several other examples of these less time-consuming tests are given, but with all tests there is usually some disadvantage mentioned.

Search and rescue methods are described, the former being very much dependent on the victim(s) wearing a ‘beacon’ (in Europe what we call a transceiver). The author makes the point very strongly that it is necessary to practise searching technique frequently in as near real search conditions as possible. This is important, especially for the buried victim, as there is a very limited time for survival; in fact most

buried victims will survive for 15 minutes, although some will be brain damaged. After 25 minutes 50% will be dead and much beyond this survival is dependent on having an air pocket. It is also important to check that the transceivers are working, both in transmission and reception modes!

What can you do to improve your chances of survival? When you look at the statistics you will realise that wearing an air bag which can be inflated by pulling a cord increases your chances 10 times as you are almost certain to 'float' on the surface. These are not cheap and they do increase the weight you are carrying. An alternative is to use an Avalung, a rubber tube attached to your backpack which carries a valve to divert expelled carbon dioxide well away from the air you breathe in. One important advantage of this device is that it increases considerably the time you can breathe when buried in snow. The author uses an Avalung, but also bulks out his backpack and hence his overall bulk by stuffing into it a lightweight down jacket and 'puff pants'.

The final chapter of the book is 'The Human Factor' and is well worth reading even if you read nothing else in the book. Amongst the human factors considered are: familiarity, peer pressure, the herding instinct, money considerations, poor communication, 'sheep syndrome', 'horse syndrome' and 'lion syndrome'.

The book is not an easy read, but it tells you all that you are ever likely to want to know about the subject and almost certainly more than you need to know to stay alive.

Les Swindin

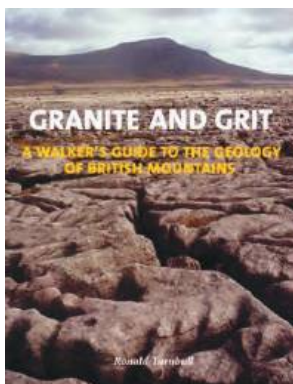
GRANITE AND GRIT: a walker's guide to the geology of British mountains

Author: Ronald Turnbull

Publisher: Francis Lincoln Ltd, London. 2009 Price: £20

ISBN 978-0-7112-2914-3

This splendid A4-format book is aimed firmly at the hillwalker or climber with no previous knowledge of geology and in this it succeeds admirably. Indeed it contains some of the most interesting, entertain-



ing and clear descriptions and explanations of rocks that I have seen aimed at that readership. But this is not a text book; it is obviously a labour of love from an author with both a wide-ranging knowledge of British hills and a remarkable enthusiasm for their geology. So it is best described as a series of essays, each on a particular rock-type or on the rocks of a particular region. Aspects of the appearance, composition and origin of the rocks are woven together with entertaining anecdotes from the history of science and from the author's own walking and climbing experience.

The author's writing style is enjoyable and refreshing. He is not afraid to be informal and even colloquial, and through this he manages to convey some very complicated notions simply and effectively, without any sense of 'dumbing down', without patronising the reader, and very often with delightful humour. He describes the Lewisian gneisses as 'like Harris Tweed, rough and warm and cuddly under the hand' and explains that 'gneiss resembles Scotch broth, in that it's been heated and boiled about for so long that it's irrelevant what the original ingredients were'. The greywacke grits that form the bulk of the Southern Uplands and central Wales are described, appropriately, as 'like a tough concrete mix'; and in the Yorkshire Dales 'the hills rise in flat layers, like a pile of pancakes' – I like it.

The photographs are not only technically and artistically brilliant but also show excellent examples of the features being described. The diagrams are attractive and easy on the eye, though the details from Geological Survey maps would have been better if they had been simplified and redrawn in the same style.

Broad Earth processes, geological history and the work of ice are beautifully explained for the beginner in the first two chapters. The main section of the book then works through the selected rock-types in approximate order of decreasing age, with diversions to explore other themes. The rock-types covered are those that form the major bulk of our British mountains and include gneiss, sandstone, quartzite, slate and schist, greywacke, shale and mudstone, limestone, gritstone, vari-

ous volcanic rocks, granite, dolerite and gabbro. Each chapter extols the virtues and with good humour, bemoans the drawbacks of the various terrains. Many are illuminated by accounts of the author's own walks; those in the Rhinogs and in Coir' a' Ghrunnda particularly held my attention. But what has the author got against granite? Personally I find granite slabs and well-drained granitic gravel delightful under foot and granite is a joy to climb upon. Yet he refers to granite lands variously as 'grim', 'forbidding' or simply 'not cheerful'.

Two additional chapters, Walking the fault and A 200-million-year walk over Dufton Pike, are entertaining essays about specific walks with a geological theme and serve to sum up what geology is all about. As could the neat Conclusion, which presents a most charming personal point of view and could even be seen as a good geologist's creed.

The author is not a geologist and sadly it shows in the numerous geological errors, dated terminology and wrong or misleading interpretations. He clearly has a good grasp of the overall principles of geology and even highlights and explains concepts that are commonly confused or overlooked. So, I am somewhat puzzled as to how so many fundamental errors have crept in. I think that most of these would have been picked up by any competent practising geologist and could very easily have been corrected. Such a check would have added considerably to the value and authenticity of the book for very little extra effort.

So, readers should be warned not to put too much reliance upon the geological facts and explanations. There is a glossary, but this too contains many errors and is not to be relied upon. If their interest has been aroused, as I sincerely hope it will be, perhaps they will turn to the excellent 'Reading about the rocks' section, which provides a list of recommended further reading together with an accurate appraisal of the aims, merits and drawbacks of each publication.

My geological criticisms, although many, could justifiably be seen as quibbles when applied to a book of this type. Its overall concept and execution are original and exemplary, it does what it sets out to do with style and, above all, is a joy to read – even for a geologist.

David Stephenson

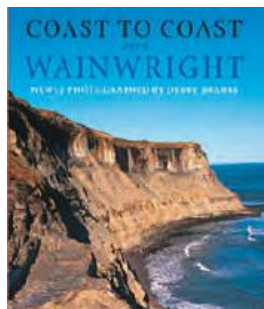
COAST TO COAST WITH WAINWRIGHT

Author: A W Wainwright, with photos by Derry Brabbs

Publisher: Francis Lincoln Ltd, 2008 Price £25

ISBN: 978 07112 29341

Alfred Wainwright requires no introduction. Every-one will be familiar with his inimitable style and pen-and-ink sketches. At a personal level, when I was discovering the Lake District as a teenager I always had a well-thumbed copy of the appropriate Wainwright guide to hand when planning a walk. I must therefore admit to being biased when I pick up this modern reworking of AW's



classic Coast to Coast Walk. Not that this book physically resembles an original Wainwright guide; this is a large, hardback book lavishly stuffed with colour photos, and only a smattering of hand drawn sketches. Only the contents page gives the nod to AW's original style. However, glancing through the text immediately reminds me of why Wainwright became so popular. The writing style, with personal observation and fine attention to detail, gives the book a charm way beyond that of a standard 'coffee table' offering.

Wainwright devised the Coast to Coast walk from St Bee's Head to Robin Hood's Bay in 1973, an achievement of which he was justifiably proud. Much painstaking research must have been required (on the map and on the ground) to link public rights of way from the west coast to the east, avoiding tarmac roads wherever possible. The route passes through three National Parks: the Lake District, the Yorkshire Dales, and the North York Moors, all areas of outstanding beauty and providing much diversity of landscape.

While this long distance walk (some 190 miles) provides an inspiring challenge to the fell walker, it also provides a fine vehicle for Derry Brabbs' photographic journey from west to east. We are used to seeing spectacular views of the Lake District, so it is easy to skip through the fine panoramas in the first section of the book. This does some disservice to Brabbs, who is clearly a skilled photographer, and whose mountain scenes are excellent and varied. A minor criticism would be

that the double-page spreads would be much more effective as fold-outs; the spine of the book distorts the view in an irritating way. However, Brabbs' real flair is not so much to make a good view look great, as to make a mundane view look stunning. A field, a farm, a tarmac lane past a house, even a quarry, are looked at with fresh vision, and even the sections of the walk which a mountain walker might have considered uninteresting now become enticing. Derry Brabbs shares Wainwright's passion for detail, and the resulting book is a fine amalgam of their two talents. It is surprisingly interesting to read Wainwright's precisely worded description of his original journey: an almost blow-by-blow account with personal opinions and observations. It is similarly surprising that Brabbs' photographs of the ordinary remain interesting throughout. The overall result is a beautiful book which is a pleasure to dip into.

Who is this book for? Those who have walked the route will certainly enjoy looking back and comparing it to their own photos and experiences. Those who aspire to walk coast to coast will take inspiration from its pages. Others will discover a motivation to visit some of the areas through which the route passes – perhaps even to undertake the journey for themselves. Lovers of Wainwright will take pleasure in the way his character still shines (somewhat dryly) through the text. It would seem a little eccentric (though tempting!) to carry such a hefty tome in one's backpack en route if walking coast to coast, though obviously not unreasonable if using one of the luggage-transfer services now available.

Since it is an armchair read rather than a field guide, it would benefit from the inclusion of a simple map, showing more detail than the point-to-point line drawing in the introduction. Each chapter (covering a day's walk) has a sketch of that day's route, but I kept wanting to refer to my Ordnance Survey maps for more information. However, this is a minor quibble. This is a very nice book, which will appeal to long distance walkers, lovers of the countryside, and armchair explorers alike.

Anne Daykin

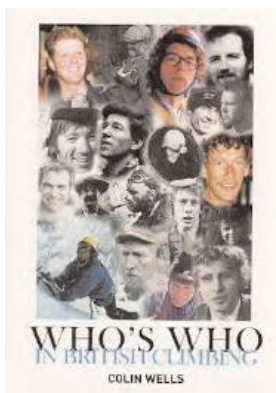
WHO'S WHO IN BRITISH CLIMBING

Author: Colin Wells

Publisher: The Climbing Company Ltd, 2007 Price: £20

ISBN 13: 978 0 955660108

Colin Wells has produced an audacious and remarkable book. He has compiled short autobiographical entries for over 620 climbers of mainly British origin, who have enlightened mountaineering and climbing from the earliest days to the modern boulderer. It is a huge production, wrapped in a floppy card cover which is adorned with photographs of 20 well known climbers, but few readers will be able to name them all straight off.



Colin has managed to prevent this tome from becoming a turgid, staid read by dousing it with pots of humour. The first page contains the warning “May contain nuts!”, and this sets the scene of the book. Some of this humour can only be described as puerile or crude and I can assume that the majority of the readers of this review will be offended in some way.

But what about the choice of climbers within? Any selection of subjects will involve an incredibly contentious choice. There are the obvious stars: Brown, Whillance, Bonington and Johnny Dawes are typical of the list that everyone would choose. I was surprised to discover the large number of Victorian ladies who contributed to the ‘Golden Age’ of Alpinism, and there is also a big selection of ex-pat climbers who have been active in Canada; this last was added by recommendation of Chic Scott. He has also included a selection of foreign climbers such as Rusty Bailey, John Porter and Ed Hillary, but their inclusion largely serves to muddy the selection criteria. To my mortified surprise, I found myself included, but here’s the nub – I was not approached by Colin in any way, and all the information on me was taken from a couple of articles published in journals. I suspect this was his main method of research for the rest of the book.

Colin admits that the choice of subjects will cause the greatest controversy. He jokingly admits that the selection process will generate four groups of people who will hate this book, they are:

- 1] Everyone who is in it,
- 2] Everyone who isn't in it,
- 3] Bearded men in comfortable cardigans who attend mountain literature festivals,
- 4] People who post on internet fora

This self-deprecating humour sums up the book perfectly. I have some reservations on the method of presentation. Most individuals have a full chapter to themselves, and others, who by association must be a second class of climber, only earn a paragraph in a shared entry. For instance, I get a separate chapter, whereas the likes of Les Brown, Geoff Oliver, Ed Cleasby, Martin Berzins and Jeff Lamb, all of whom are superior subjects, merely share a chapter. Several important pioneers are omitted entirely, and I'm amazed to find that Rod Valentine, Bill Young, Dave Cronshaw and Les Ainsworth were left out.

I felt that some of the modern young climbers have been included to keep them happy at the climbing wall. This may be a cynical accusation but what justification can be shown for them, when it seems that Ritchie Patterson's main claim to fame for his inclusion in this book was to appear once on the cover of *On The Edge* magazine?

Many niggly errors creep into the text - too many, really, to take this book as a serious factual place for research. For instance, *Coronation Street* is not at Avon, *If* is not on Raven Crag, and *Super Duper Dupont* is not at White Scar. Paul Ross posted a comment on an Internet forum (showing he was really upset!) which states that there were 16 errors in his entry alone. Some comments are contradictory, for instance Will McLewin is credited for being "the first Briton to climb all 4000m peaks in the Alps in 1992" but then elsewhere Eustace Thomas also "became the first Briton to climb all 4000m peaks", and don't forget our very own Peter Fleming achieved this distinction long before McLewin did. John Dunne is credited as "the only British climber to have made the first ascent of more than 10 routes of E7 and above," an incredible claim when you consider that Dave Birkett achieved a similar milestone with more than a dozen E8s and E9s to his credit.

Overall, this is a superb attempt at creating something that no-one else has ever dared to produce. It would have benefitted from closer scrutiny and checking, but a revised edition without many of the errors would be an indispensable addition to any climber's bookshelf.

Alan Phizacklea, Form 6b+

MOUNTAIN WORDS

Author: Chris Harle, Graham Wilson

Publisher: Millrace, 2009 Price: £14.95

ISBN 978 1 902173 283

Mountaineering literature, with its cast of brilliant eccentrics and everything from high drama to understated wit, is collected almost as eagerly as the routes and summits themselves. For such enthusiasts and collectors, Graham Wilson and Chris Harle have teamed up to produce *Mountain Words*, a book that is an entertaining and informative reference.

The drive behind this book was to produce a bibliography of mountain literature, or more specifically, British mountaineering literature: literature about mountaineering in Britain, not mountain literature by British Authors. The dates are restricted: 1983 to 2008, an arbitrary 25 year period up to the date of publication.



Having set these boundaries, Harle then lists of over 250 mountain and hill books, with the usual bibliographic details and a short description of the content. For a title to be included, Harle and Wilson decided it had to be the sort of book you would settle down to read – including fiction, biography, history, humour. As always with such lists, the choices could be the subject of much bar room debate, which is half the point of lists. The main work is supplemented by the a list of the winners of the Boardman Tasker prize (no controversy here, just a statement of fact), and then two supplementary lists by category and title in alphabetical order, which

I guess could be useful if you are looking for a book which you half remember but can't quite pin down.

All the forgoing is pretty dry stuff, unless you are an aficionado of mountain literature. The book is embellished (padded?) with a series of essays which complement the theme and like the list, provide a rich source of discussion and debate. Essays on mountain fiction, hill-walking literature including long-distance epics and the future of climbing media are covered in interesting and occasionally novel ways. The development of the FRCC Journal is referenced in a discussion on club journals and their role as a seed bed for mountain literature, with speculation as to whether such publications will survive the influence of the internet. There is a piece on climbing biography which is definitely worth a read, not least to prompt us to reflect on our own motivation for climbing and how it sits with the rest of our lives. Perhaps the most entertaining is a chapter on the relative merits of photography and words when it comes to capturing the true nature of a climb. Harle extrapolates from his example photographs to conclusions that are sometimes risible; for example "...the early climbers' efforts were truly co-operative; human pyramids, based on developed understanding of engineering and mechanics...", which naturally leads to "... the metaphor was one on which the empire was built and in which the needless sacrifice of the Great War was rooted". Really?

Without these essays the contents add up to a list which could just as well be published on a website, but with them the result is a compact volume which proved much more interesting than, as a non specialist, I thought it would be when I opened the parcel. If there were a FRCC book club which met in the Fish Hotel, by the end of the evening this book would have provided a lively source of debate.

Andrew Paul

FICTION

EVENING LIGHT

Author: Roger Hubank

Publisher: The Ernest Press, 2009 Price: £12

ISBN: 978 0 948153 93 8



The Hazard name returns to the pages, this time as the grandson of the protagonist in Roger Hubank's earlier book, *Hazard's Way*. During his 60-odd years of life, the younger George Hazard has taken mountaineering to its logical extreme, becoming the "iconic risk-taker intent on getting to the top". From a young age he had been celebrated by press, peers and public for his high altitude ascents, his daring, innovative and single-minded approaches to training and to climbing style that set trends and influenced generations to greater mountaineering achievements. We meet him after an accident has taken away bits of his memory and for a while at least, much of his physical and social independence.

From the hospital in the UK, having been flown home from the Himalaya, Hazard is dropped back into a family never desired, but suddenly seen as valuable. His daughter takes him back, grudgingly at first, then fiercely. The omnipresence of the newfound family's Catholic faith, with its tribal bonds and rituals that emphasise connections to both time and people, is a structure he had avoided but now grudgingly accepts and values.

Hazard takes advantage of the enforced downtime to write another book - autobiographical this time, as befits an esteemed and prolific mountaineer. But memory is a funny thing. Your past is made up of what you remember, tempered by who prompts the memories and in what order. As a result of the accident, Hazard's memory has been diagnosed as swiss cheese until his brain rewires itself, and it erratically puts memories, especially the ones from long ago, forward with a clarity emphasised by the vagueness of the shorter term recollections. The

introspection required for the book encourages (or forces) him to look at all the memories that are coming through, especially while looking for the ones that he can't find. Realisation of what some of them meant, unrecognised by him at the time, often comes like a slap in the face. Regrets haunt in a way that the busy, driven life of a knighted explorer never had to face. Having been plopped into a family structure, a set of connections to people that don't just go away, brings out some of these regrets, but also provides a way of dealing with them.

Hubank doesn't just stop at the impact of Hazard's life and physical disability on how your past can suddenly change. There are other human tragedies, dealt with in an intensely emotional way that both baffle and instruct Hazard in what people can be, the impact of decisions, the impact of justification. Hubank does an impressive job of taking on the voice of female characters in the second and third parts of the book, and travels with them as they deal with "their Annapurnas".

As mentioned in Hubank's note included with my copy of the book, it isn't relaxed holiday reading. It is an encapsulation, practically a compendium, of every question ever asked about our selfish sport by both participants and observers: about its motivations and impacts on ourselves and on the lives of anyone who has crossed our path during our pursuit. It is the questions that have come up at the pub, on long, cold belays, and at funerals, the questions that usually are felt more than articulated, and often pass unexplored. Hazard's exploration of these questions shows that the unexamined life may have been worth living at the time but if you put the examination off until the end you may not enjoy it very much. It does make for absorbing and thought provoking reading, continuously intriguing.

The press release calls on the book's moral: a man is forever what he had been at any time for others and might, at any time, be called on to answer for it. But perhaps more apt is another of Hazard's phrases, if you are going to follow any pursuit in a single-minded and selfish fashion: best to die young before you realise what a bastard you've been all your life.

Susan Jensen

GUIDEBOOKS RECEIVED

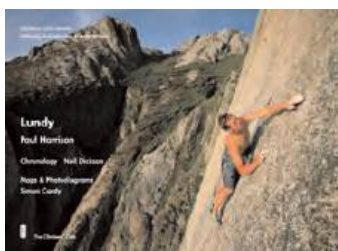
LUNDY

Author: Paul Harrison

Publisher: Climbers' Club Guides, 2008 Price: £19.50.

ISBN 978-0-901601-82-7

Equipped with this guide my first visit to Lundy was in September 2009. With the benefit of ignorance, I followed the first few pages as instructed: straight from the ferry to the Marisco Tavern for a refreshing pint and then a familiarising walk round the island. The 1:15,000 map by Harvey, included with the guide, is invaluable for exploring the very complex collection of cliffs which surround this deceptively small island. On this walk, and subsequently, careful reading of the guide in conjunction with the map allowed us to accurately locate cliffs and climbs with not too much difficulty: a fundamental requirement of any guide book, which some, nevertheless, fail to achieve.



Paul Harrison is clearly a Lundy enthusiast and has created an inspirational guide populated with stunning photographs. It contains the right amount of information on travel and accommodation, and on the geology and natural history of the island. There are also interesting historical snippets

throughout the book. In the equipment section there is a strong recommendation that a spare rope be carried for abseiling. This is very good advice, I wish we had followed it.

Lundy has routes of standards that range from moderate to well into the E-grades. All are given equal prominence in both the text and photographs. The front cover depicts The Cullinan, E5, which I'm told is very good, while on the rear cover is a wide-angle shot of the excellent Albion, VS.

I have one quibble with the historical section. The Devil's Slide is not the "biggest granite slab in Britain". The Trilleachan Slabs in Glen

Etive, first climbed on in 1954 are much larger, as are the Central Slabs of Creag an Dubh Loch.

And one request: a graded list covering all grades. A rather old-fashioned idea, but it would greatly assist the newcomer in planning his trip.

Overall this is an excellent guide to a unique climbing location.

Dave Buchanan

PORTLAND

Author: Steve Taylor

Publisher: Climbers' Club Guides, 2008 Price: £19.50

ISBN 978-0-901601-77-3

Jetting off to sunny climes is now the norm for those who want to clip bolts on sun-kissed rock. We have that on the south coast of England, on the peninsula of Portland as well as at nearby Lulworth Bay and Swanage. This area is also a geologist's paradise with world-renowned geological history and discoveries.

Portland has developed as a climbing venue over the last 40 or so years and has now reached a well-developed state with a wide spread of climbing. It is principally sports routes but also has bouldering, some trad routes and deep water soloing. With its southerly position it usually enjoys much better weather than other parts of the country (though not always). We were there in October climbing at the Cuttings in glorious sunshine and drove over to the Blacknor, a distance of only 2 miles, and arrived in a hailstorm! Guidebooks for the area have been produced by the Climbers' Club, and since 1994 Rockfax have produced a selected guide to Dorset, including Portland. The recent Climbers' Club guide covering Portland and Lulworth Cove gives a comprehensive coverage with many innovative features. Written by Steve Taylor and friends and edited by Nigel Coe, with a lot of thoughtful design and layout by Ian Smith.

With such a mass of routes to include and the knowledge that the guide does not usually have to be carried on a route, the shape and



layout of the guide has been changed: it is the same size as the Rockfax guides but in a landscape format with the binding up the small side – similar to the bouldering guides to the Peak, Yorkshire and Scotland. This feels a little strange at first but the inclusion of three columns of print per page means that the concentration of information is much better and space is saved. The route descriptions are numbered to correspond to the topo on the same or opposite page. A notable change from the last guide is that the sports routes are now given sports grades rather than the trad grades; V grades are given for boulder problems. Each section of the guide is colour coded, the number of bolts on sports routes is given, and there is a tick box for that all important tick or date. The front and back covers have flaps to act as effective page marker – a ribbon marker is probably more expensive. I understand that the bindings have held up and Cordee have not seen any significant returns.



The Cuttings, Portland (*Ron Kenyon*)

There is an amazing selection of climbers in action in the photos including that demon of new routing, Barry Clarke, who has had his share in the action here. Many inspirational photographs are interspersed through the guide to give a feel for the climbing.

The descriptions and lines on the photodiagrams in the main seem alright, though we found one line incorrect being Little Chef (line 21) on page 309 which is, surprisingly, the

popular left end of the Cuttings. Also surprisingly, we had difficulty finding the bouldering below the Cuttings.

I was talking to a prominent climber who is involved with the BMC and lives at Swanage, but has never been to the Lakes. This may seem odd but why should he when there is so much good climbing down in the south of England. The Lakes may have been the birthplace of British climbing but that was a long time ago and the climbing scene has changed totally now.

The guide has taken some time to come to fruition, but I recommend it as is worth getting and then heading south for some sun-kissed English rock.

Ron Kenyon

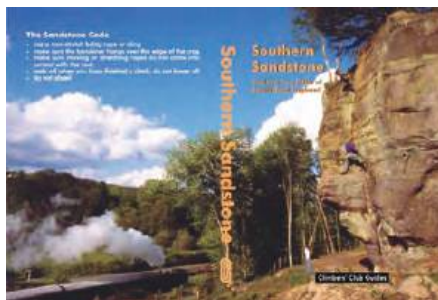
SOUTHERN SANDSTONE

Author: Mike Vetterlein, Robin Mazinke

Publisher: Climbers' Club Guides, 2008 Price: £19.50

ISBN 978-0-901601-80-3

The new edition is an updated and expanded version of this popular guide book in the Climbers Club series. It deals with two very different climbing environments: sandstone outcrops up to 15 metres high, scattered through the sylvan glades of Sussex and Kent, and intimidating chalk cliffs from Dover North Foreland to west of Beachy Head. Both rocks form steep faces and require unusual climbing techniques. Many of the chalk routes are soft enough for crampons and ice axes.



Before the days of climbing walls, the crags of Kent and Sussex were the main playground of many SE England based climbers. The principal outcrops, including Harrisons, Bowles, Stone Farm and High Rocks still attract large numbers of enthusiasts throughout the year. Devotees have developed climbing styles appropriate to these soft sediments. For sandstone, this consists of

top roping on carefully protected (rock as well as climber) routes using fixed, non-stretch belay slings and static ropes.

The sandstone, originally deposited in Jurassic river estuaries, degrades continuously to leave an almost permanent covering of miniscule pseudo-ball bearings on ledges and holds. Climbs gradually become harder as the years pass, holds round and edges break like brittle toffee. The need to protect against rock wear is shown by the number rope-cut slots, cemented by conservationists, which mark the top of many popular routes. Abseiling is forbidden and brushing and chalk bags frowned upon, even in the names of routes viz. 'Take That Effing Chalk Bag Off, or I'll Nick Your Rope and Give It to Terry "The Chainsaw" Tullis and He'll Keep it For Ever and Ever' 6a (Harrisons Rocks)

The book is readable in its own right, as a history of southeast climbing and of the characters who have contributed to its development. Inclusion for the first time of list of first ascensionists, brings recognition to many interesting, talented and eccentric individuals and is a testimony to generations of the famous climbers who have put up some very demanding routes. Among other entertaining sections is one on 'Lost and Found Outcrops' including the rockery of Mr Hanbury's house, observatory and orchid garden at Brockhurst.

The value of this edition lies in both its clarity of presentation, descriptions, photos and diagrams, particularly the increasing number of hair-raising, sea cliff climbs. There is an attractiveness to strenuous sandstone top-roping struggles in a sociable environment on a sun-rock outdoor climbing wall, followed by a leisurely picnic, while watching others flail. Several crags merit a visit even if only for a day en route to Fontainebleau or while stranded at Gatwick airport awaiting a flight to Kalymnos.

Congratulations to the authors.

John Moore

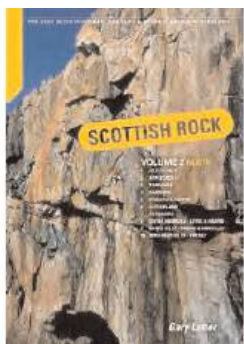
SCOTTISH ROCK, Volume 2

Author: Gary Latter

Publisher: Pesda Press, 2009 Price: £23.00

ISBN: 978-1-906095-07-9

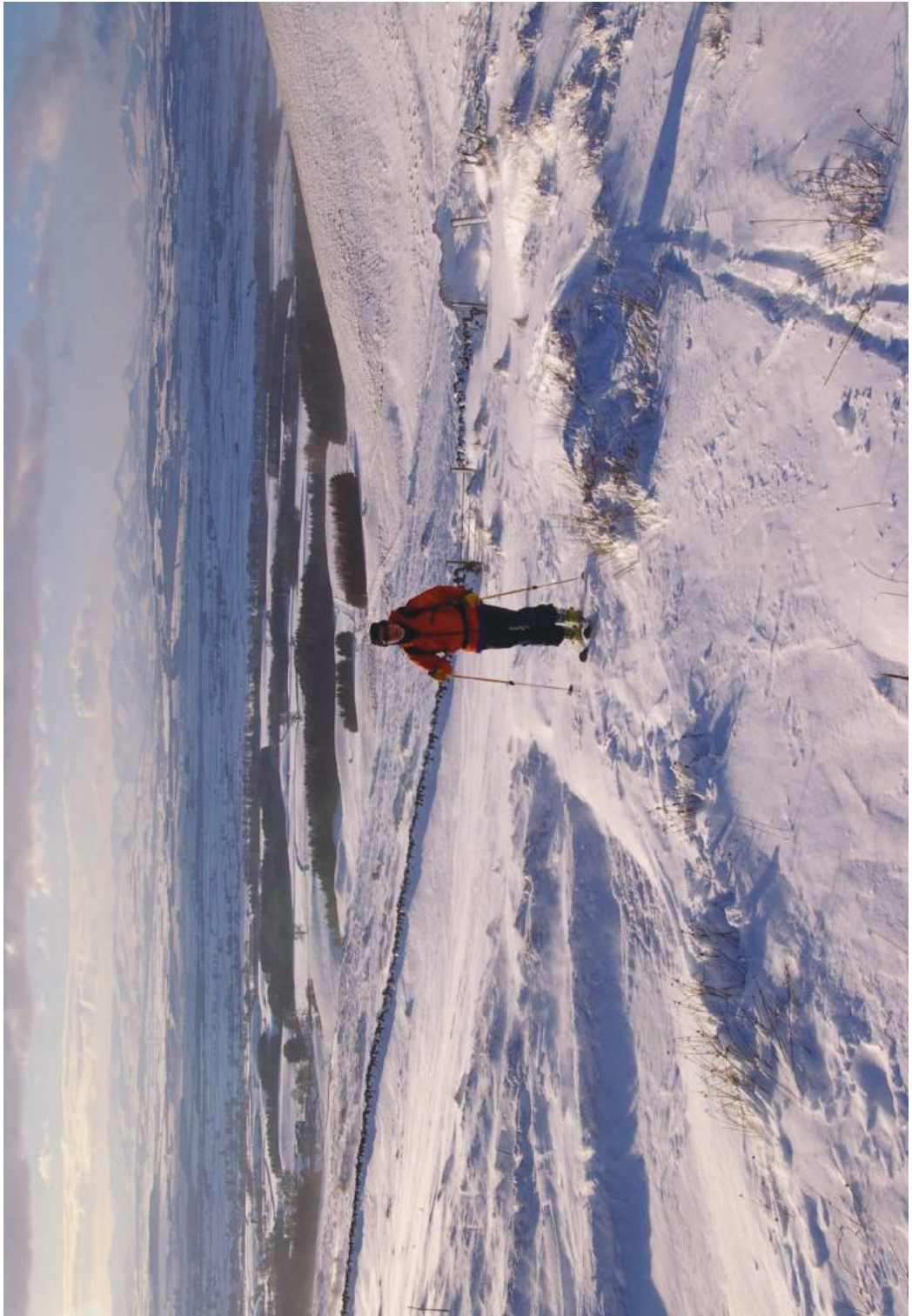
This is the Scottish Rock volume that we've actually been waiting for: the one that covers the areas that the existing guidebooks haven't pulled together yet, the farflung parts of Scotland that belong mostly to the locals who can drop everything and run to the crags when the weather has broken for long enough. This guide has been out for over a year now, and is probably singlehandedly responsible for the crowds on the water-limited Hebridean Islands, and for the firm establishment of Donald the Boatman's retirement nest egg.



The North volume contains Latter's selection of seacliff, sport, low and mountain crags north of the Great Glen, including Orkney, the Hebrides, Skye, and mainland crags. It picks up many of the small gneiss crags in the northwest that make for great exploration when that day on Foinaven just isn't going to happen. The selection of grades is broad, and since there is no index by grade, I can't quantify the distribution but it isn't hard to find lots of E grades dominating the pages. On the other hand, where a crag has some brilliant lower-grade routes, they don't appear to have been ignored in favour of the harder ones.

The second volume follows the same colour coding of climbs by grade, Rockfax-style symbols for aspect and time of approach and excellent use of photo topos as the first volume. The descriptions contain occasional issues (as with the first guide) in confusion between left and right. I find the whole argument about intellectual property of route descriptions to be faintly ridiculous, so won't be drawn into it. Even for the occasional rock climbing visitor to the north of Scotland, having this guide will help make the most of the trip.

Susan Jensen



Steve Goodwin skiing on Melmerby Fell, 9th January, 2010 (*Ron Kenyon*)

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Meets List 2009

Note	Date	Venue	Co-ordinator
	Hogmanay	Waters Cottage	
	9-10 January	Raw Head	Les Meer
	16-17 January	Beetham Cottage	Joe Killick
D	23-24 January	Burns Supper, Birkness (Joint YMC)	Martin Tetley & Dale Bloomer
CM	6-7 February	Raw Head	Michelle Batchelor & Bernie Bradbury
	13-14 February	Karn House	Roy & Dorothy Buffey
W	15-19 February	Ben Nevis, CIC Hut	Tom Fox
PM	20-21 February	Birkness	Cath Sullivan
	6-7 March	Salving House (Joint KMC)	Chris Thickett
	13-14 March	Raw Head (Music Weekend)	Ron & Ruth Cham- bers
BH	4-18 April	Easter France Climbing St Martin de Londres	Rob Smitton
BH	10-13 April	Brackenclose (Easter)	Richard Morgan
PM	17-18 April	Raw Head	Charles Skeavington
MM	17-18 April	Karn House	Gunars Libeks
MM	24-25 April	Beetham Cottage	Barbara Duxbury
W	26 Apr-1 May	High Moss, Duddon Valley	Richard Ivens
W	25-30 April	Skye, Glenbrittle Memorial Hut	Peter Latimer
F BH	1-3 May	Raw Head	Sue Preston-Jones
BH	1-8 May	Pembroke, St David's Camping (Joint MAM)	Hilary Robertson
W	4-9 May	Rum	Ralph Henderson

Note	Date	Venue	Co-ordinator
CM	8-9 May	Birkness	John Robinson
W	11-18 May	Scottish Hotel Meet: Alexander Hotel, Ft William	Pam Pulford, Dave Dowson
MM	15-16 May	Birkness	Norman Haighton
	15-16 May	Beetham - E Fells Guide- book Forum	Nick Wharton
BH W	23-31 May	Scottish Camping Meet, Cannich	Mike Hornby
BH F	22-24 May	Waters Cottage	Peter Cunningham
	29-30 May	Raw Head	Trish Murray & Vince Moran
F	29-30 May	Birkness	Norman Haighton
	5-6 June	Coniston - YMC Hut, Coppermines Valley	Dave Dowson; Dave Long
BBQ	12-13 June	Brackenclose (Joint MAM)	Nick Hinchcliffe
W	13-21 June	Benasque, Pyrenees (Joint AC/CC)	Jeff Harris
W	15-19 June	Glan Dena	Ian & Brenda Whitney
PM	19-20 June	Birkness	Pam Pulford
D	27 June	Coniston - VP Dinner, Crown Inn	Dave Dowson for tickets
	3-4 July	Waters Cottage	
	10-11 July	Beetham-Midnight tra- verse of Helvellyn	John Bradley
	17-18 July	Salving House	Brian & Sarah Smith
W	24 July - 2 Aug	Alpine Meet, Saas Fee	John Burrows
	24-25 July	Brackenclose	Nick & Veronica Millwood
F	7-14 August	Brackenclose	Mike Carter
	14-15 August	Beetham Cottage	
BH	28-30 August	Camping Newton Stewart (Joint CC)	
W	29 Aug-12 Sept	Canazei Sella, Dolomites (Joint AC/CC)	Jeff Harris

Note	Date	Venue	Co-ordinator
CM	4-5 September	Birkness	Cath Exley
MM	11-12 September	Raw Head	Sue Preston-Jones
	11-12 September	Beetham Cottage - Geology North Lakes	John Moore
Y	18-19 September	Raw Head	Chris Watson
MM	18-19 September	Waters Cottage	Peter Cunningham
	25-26 September	Beetham Cottage	Ken Files
MM	25-26 September	Brackenclose	Mike Carter
MM	2-3 October	Salving House	Trevor Morgan
W	4-8 October	Dalesbridge Centre, Austwick	Ian Whitmey & Bill Comstive
PM	9-10 October	Raw Head	Dale Bloomer
	16-17 October	Karn House	Penny Clay
D	31 October	Shap Wells - AGM	The President
	6-7 November	Brackenclose - Bonfire Meet	The Asst Wardens
CM	27-28 November	Raw Head	Mark Scott
	4-5 December	Birkness - Temperance Meet	Ian & Shelagh Dixon
	11-12 December	Beetham Cottage	Jim Gregson
D	31 Dec- 3 Jan	Karn House - Hogmanay	

CM	= Committee Meeting
D	= Dinner
F	= Family Meet
MM	= Maintenance Meet
W	= Mid Week Meet
PM	= Prospective Members' Meet
Y	= Youth Meet

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	Nick Hinchcliffe	Sue Walker
	Neil McAllister	Ian Whitmey
	Pam Prior	George
		Wostenholm

Meets List 2010

Note	Date	Venue	Co-ordinator
D	New Year	Karn House - Hogmanay	
	8-9 January	Raw Head	Dee Gaffney
	15-16 January	Beetham Cottage	Brian & Sarah Smith
D	22-23 January	Birkness - Burns Supper (Joint YMC)	Martin Tetley
	29-30 January	Salving House - Slideshow Saturday evening	Jim Gregson
CM	5-6 February	Raw Head	Karl Nelson
	12-13 Feb	Karn House	Cath Sullivan
W	15-19 Feb	Ben Nevis (CIC Hut)	Tom Fox
	5-6 March	Birkness (Joint KMC)	Chris Thickett
	12-13 March	Raw Head - Music Weekend	Ron & Ruth Chambers
	19-20 March	Waters Cottage	Penny Clay
BH	2-5 April	Brackenclose - Easter	Richard Morgan
MM	23-24 April	Karn House	Graeme Ralph
PM	23-24 April	Raw Head	Malcolm Grout
W	25-29 April	High Moss, Duddon Valley	Richard Ivens
F BH	30 Apr-2 May	Raw Head	Warden
CM	7-8 May	Birkness	John Robinson
MM	14-15 May	Birkness	Norman Haighton
W	15-21 May	Skye - Glenbrittle Memorial Hut	Peter Latimer
W	15-21 May	Scottish Hotel Meet Killin Hotel	Mo Linton & Don Lee
	21-22 May	Raw Head	Pete Kelley
BH W	28 May - 6 June	Scottish Camping Meet, Ullapool	Richard Morgan
BH F	28 May - 4 June	Waters Cottage	Warden
BH F	28-30 May	Birkness	Warden

Note	Date	Venue	Co-ordinator
BBQ	4-5 June	Raw Head (Joint Wayfarers)	Dave Connolly
	4-5 June	Salving House - Lakeland Challenge (Bob Graham Round)	Phil & Helen Elliott
Y	4-5 June	Birkness	Rosie Hart
BBQ	11-12 June	Brackenclose (Joint MAM)	Nick Hinchcliffe
	11-12 June	Raw Head - Dow, Duddon & Slate Guidebook meet	Ron Kenyon & John Holden
W	13-17 June	Glan Dena	Ian & Brenda Whitmey
PM	18-19 June	Birkness	Pam Shawcross
	25-26 June	Waters Cottage	Barry Chislett
D	3-4 July	Coniston VP Meet & Dinner at Crown Inn	Vice Presidents
F	4-11 July	Karn House	Warden
	9-10 July	Beetham Cottage	Norman Haighton
	16-17 July	Salving House	
W	24 July-7 Aug	Alpine Meet-Vicosoprano, Bregaglia (Joint AC/CC/ABMSAC)	Mike Pinney
	23-24 July	Brackenclose	David Armstrong
F	6-12 August	Brackenclose	Warden
BBQ	6-7 August	Cwm Dyli (Joint Pinnacle)	Hilary Lawrenson
	20-21 August	Beetham Cottage	Anne Townsend
F	22-29 Aug	Karn House	Warden
BH	28 Aug-11 Sept	Dolomites Camping Meet, Cortina (Joint AC/CC)	Jeff Harris
CM	3-4 September	Birkness	John & Margaret Skelton
MM	10-11 September	Raw Head	Alan Strachan
W	13-17 September	Italy Camping Cinque Terre, Levanto	Richard Coatsworth
W	13-27 September	Corsica, Bevella Area (Joint CC)	Trevor Langhorne
Y	17-18 September	Raw Head	Rosie Hart

Note	Date	Venue	Co-ordinator
MM	17-18 September	Waters Cottage	Peter Cunningham
MM	24-25 September	Brackenclose	Mike Carter
MM	1-2 October	Salving House	Trevor Morgan
W	3-7 October	Dales Bridge - Yorkshire Dales Meet	Brenda Whitney & Lesley Comstive
PM	8-9 October	Raw Head	Dale Bloomer
	15-16 October	Karn House	Simon Jeffries
D	6 November	Shap Wells - AGM	The President
	12-13 November	Brackenclose Bonfire Meet	John & Barbara Hitch
CM	26-27 November	Raw Head	Hattie Harris
	3-4 December	Birkness Temperance Meet	Jo Flint
	10-11 December	Beetham Cottage	Alan Bradfield
D	31 Dec-3 Jan	Waters Cottage - Hogmanay	

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Sgurr an Fhuarail and the Cluanie Inn, 29th December 2009 (*Susan Jensen*)

Oh the conceit of people who succeed in climbing to the top of a mountain! It is the one moment when the obscure may feel that they are standing on a pedestal.

Ramón Gómez de la Serna, translated by Helen Granville-Barker