Maureen Linton, President 2006-2008

THE FELL AND ROCK JOURNAL

Edited by
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VOLUME XXVIII(1)
No. 81

Published by

THE FELL AND ROCK CLIMBING CLUB
OF THE ENGLISH LAKE DISTRICT
2008

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Editors' Note

Here it is: the first of our series of (hopefully) five FRCC Journals, assuming that we stay the course. Firstly we would like to pass on our thanks to Doug Elliott and John Holden for their assistance during transition, and to Peter Hodgkiss for his unstinting guidance. We would also like to thank the contributors for the breadth of articles which collectively form this Journal.

Our initial ideas and aspirations for this Journal were based in part on our readings of other climbing journals with their glossy photographs and tales of derring-do, although we have realised that this Journal is a reflection of the Club, and that it constitutes an archive of the Club's life. As such, many of the articles are of adventures which do not necessarily rank high in the international, or even national scale of achievement, but are a record of the joys of experience in the hills. From the wealth of articles submitted we have tried to find a balance between memories of past events and current activities, and between activities in the UK and overseas. We have failed in the latter objective, for it seems that we have been sent much more about overseas adventures than those nearer to home, probably in part because the Centenary edition of the Journal nicked all the recent domestic adventures. This Journal does contain several articles and photos from the Centenary celebrations, as well as a rather random scattering of paintings, sketches and photos from the Centenary Exhibit at the Theatre by the Lake in Keswick, which appear between articles throughout the Journal.

Another club event has been much-awaited publication of the new *Gable & Pillar* guidebook in 2007, and the *Buttermere & St Bees* guidebook in 2008. For the former we've reprinted an article of first ascents on Pillar 40 years after its first writing for a magazine.

As always, a plea for continuation of the flow of contributions is submitted to the membership. We know you are doing fun, interesting, atmospheric, thoughtful, photogenic, dramatic and/or entertaining things in the hills. Tell us the story, with photos if possible. Please.

Andrew Paul *Susan Jensen*

When Not to Answer the Phone

Tim Pickles

"We'd like you to organise the Centenary, please" said the flattering voice of the President on the phone, from a safe distance in his Edinburgh tenement. "You'd be just the chap for the job. No need to involve the committee as it's far too complex to consult them about everything; just go ahead and make all the plans; it needs someone like you to drive it and make it happen." It was only five minutes later, after putting the receiver down that I realised this just might not be a compliment.

The initial moves to anticipate the Centenary had taken place four years before, in 1998. A small working group had been formed to come up with some proposals for consideration by the committee. A survey was circulated to all the members and around 400 replies were analysed. They presented mixed opinions: a celebratory annual dinner, a special dinner at another date to the AGM, an outdoor get-together, a legacy project, souvenir items, and an assortment of other ideas. It was at this time that we realised that by coincidence, it might be possible to hold our annual dinner in 2006 on the one-hundredth anniversary to the day of the founding of the club in Coniston on 11 November 1906. The working group presented a report to the committee proposing an anniversary dinner, a commemorative exhibition and celebration, and further provision for a suitable legacy project. These proposals were noted and action was deferred until nearer the time.

Three years later the issue was raised again and George Watkins started to gather more practical ideas as to how the event should be celebrated. By this time one or two older clubs had already achieved this milestone and precedents had been established. It was realised that such a major event could attract a very large number of members and friends. Not only that, but the club would want to put on a show that was memorable and distinctive. Several publishing projects had already been mooted. Investigations were initiated into possible venues together with the costs of hiring marquees and catering teams. The whole thing

was gathering momentum. And that's when the ambiguous telephone call was made.

Realising that whoever shoulders the risk is very much in the firing line, the first task was to spread the responsibility. A small planning group was quickly convened to bring wisdom and gravitas to the deliberations. Past Presidents John Wilkinson and Harry Ironfield were joined by George Watkins and Wendy Stirrup. Several calls were made to the membership for ideas and volunteers and over the next two years this planning group convened informally to review all the various plans and projects put forward for the Centenary. Around 100 people stepped forward with various offers of help. Those who proposed events, projects or memorabilia were invited to take the lead in their development. The steering group provided the celebrations with a distinctive overall shape – one that four successive Presidents have embraced with enthusiasm – and approved or vetoed all the individual projects according to whether they felt they were worthy of our club and this unique occasion.

The distinctive shape of the programme emerged early in the process, and incorporated virtually all of the ideas that had arisen during the 1998 consultation. Unlike our fellow clubs, we would spread our celebrations over several months, commencing with a special Centenary dinner (that was always likely to be expensive) and ending with a participatory commemorative event that encouraged as many members as possible to get involved whilst actually climbing and walking in the fells. In between, certain meets and events would be designated as 'centenary-related' to take our celebrations to all parts of the club. And a select quantity of commemorative souvenirs would be produced, on a self-financing basis, to mark the occasion in a more permanent way.

The very first estimates showed that the net costs of these events might require a subsidy from the club of up to £10,000. Prudent as ever, the Treasurer quietly set about creating a centenary reserve through a £5 subscription levy each year; by 2007 this had produced a piggy-bank of £25,000 which was more than sufficient to cover all of the club's non-recoverable costs in staging all the events.

The Centenary Banquet (as it eventually became known) lasted a mere four hours, taking four days to prepare, and four years to plan.

The club owes a huge debt to Reg Atkins for all the energy he put into the research and planning of this event; it is tragic that his untimely death prevented him from enjoying the fruits of all his work. For two years he visited thirty or more potential venues from Manchester to the Scottish Borders. He looked at indoor and outdoor venues. In an attempt to gauge potential demand for tickets, Reg asked members to indicate their intentions and this suggested that up to 650 people might want to attend. The only place that could accommodate such numbers was Rheged at Penrith – and that would be a buffet format with limited parking and no overnight accommodation. The committee eventually decided on a formal meal to be held in the Lakes. With the exception of the war years, the club's main dinner has always been held in the Lake District. The largest hotel dining room (by far) is the Shap Wells, so a firm booking was made for Saturday 11 November 2006 – the exact anniversary of the auspicious club formation meeting in the Sun Hotel at Coniston. Contingency plans were made for various overflow dinners at outlying locations and the detailed planning commenced.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the issue of the Banquet produced the most heated debate in the planning process. Discussion about an equitable ticket allocation system lasted over 12 months. Some wanted priority to regular attenders; others wanted priority to longer-serving members. Some wanted priority of members over guests; others argued they wouldn't attend without their guest. A member-priority ballot system was devised but never actually required! Everyone who wanted a ticket got one.

The Centenary Meet was envisaged as a showcase event: one that members would not want to miss. Amongst the team, a recurring phrase was heard: "No-one's ever going to make another centenary, so let's make it a good one." The hotel quickly grasped the significance of the event and made extraordinary efforts to accommodate our requirements. When demand for tickets outstripped their dining room, they provided a further 80 place settings in an adjacent room, thereby allowing everyone who wanted to attend to dine under the same roof. They directed members to further overnight accommodation along the length of the M6 corridor (and the club filled every available hotel room in the area). They employed seven chefs to prepare the meal, and they brought in waiters from sister-hotels in Crewe and Rotherham

just for the night. In the event, their most complex menu ever was probably the most successful meal that we've enjoyed in the twenty years of dining at that hotel.

The party was to last all weekend. Jim Curran opened the proceedings with an entertaining mixed-media presentation of his climbing and filming exploits amongst the mountains. On the Saturday morning, a large crowd of around 150 members gathered in steady Lakeland drizzle to overwhelm the facilities at the Sun Hotel in Coniston. What would our founding fathers have had to say at this gathering in their honour? In their absence, Peter Fleming, in period garb, explained the significance of the event and presented the hotel with a framed Abraham Brothers print of the building. Photographs both official and unofficial were taken to record the event for posterity.

Peter Fleming at the Coniston Centenary meet

Back at the hotel, the so-called 'shop' had been doing a roaring trade with members queuing outside the door. Two days before, five large pallets of goods had been delivered to the hotel from Spain, Scotland, London and the Midlands, filling the small dining room to the ceiling. Every one of the commemorative items had been delivered on time.

There were two centrepieces to these souvenirs. Every member received a copy of the Centenary Journal. This was a special tribute issue brought together by Doug Elliot and John Holden in their final year in office. The hardback Journal was lavishly illustrated, given a dustwrapper and page-ribbon, and had a distinctive Lakeland theme. John Wilkinson was the obvious choice to write the feature article on 'the second fifty years' continuing the story from where Frank Simpson

had laid it down at the Jubilee – and what a story there is to tell in his comprehensive historical account. Al Phizacklea brought the record of Lakeland climbing up to date in the fifth part of the series and Maureen Linton researched the entire history of the club's huts.

The second publication was Michael Cocker's facsimile reproduction of the Wasdale Climbing Book. This had been one of the first centenary projects and was to take Mike over four years of dedicated work to bring to fruition. From its beginnings as the 'climbers bible' at the Wastwater Hotel in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the original book, with its on-the-day hand-written descriptions of all the classic rock routes, many illustrated and annotated with drawings, photographs and notes, had become lost after the First World War. Diligent research by Muriel Files failed to find it until it was eventually traced across the Atlantic in the 1970s and finally donated to the club. Mike studied the entire book, identified all the key entries, re-climbed many of the routes, wrote a commentary on the text, and assembled the whole into a lavish book with wonderful facsimile images created by Pippa. This was never going to be a commercial proposition. Early estimates put the printing and production costs at around £15,000. We made a commercial arrangement with The Ernest Press for them to assume the publication and financial risks with the club guaranteeing a minimum number of sales. In the event, 500 copies of the book were printed, of which 150 copies were a De-Luxe signed and numbered edition on special boards. The club provided a small subsidy to the publication costs and virtually all copies were pre-sold before publication; it is now very much a collector's item. The Wasdale Climbing Book and the Centenary Journal will serve as outstanding reminders of the Centenary Meet for a long time to come.

Early in the planning process we had wanted an iconic symbol to serve as a distinctive centenary emblem throughout all the publicity. The Needle has been the club's distinctive logo for over eighty years. A bronze cast had been made for the club's jubilee celebrations and Jill Aldersley had created a special print for the Needle's own centenary ascent. Now I commissioned Jill to paint a fresh image of the Needle

Standing, l to r: Dave Rhodes, Paddy O'Neill, Dave Miller, Rod Valentine. Seated, l to r: Peter Moffat, George Watkins, Hilary Moffat, Alan Rowlands, Syd Clark, John Wilkinson, Eileen Clark, Dave Roberts, Jack Carswell, Harry Ironfield, Jill Aldersley. Current & past Presidents of the FRCC

and it is this which adorns the brochure, tickets, menus, posters, and guidebooks of the centenary. A limited edition print was sold to members and Jill herself donated the original painting to the club. It took pride of place at the exhibition in 2007 and is to hang in Brackenclose. It is another sadness that the Centenary Meet was to be almost Jill's last meet; she died shortly before the end of the centenary year.

Given the enforced levy on members to establish the centenary reserve, several items were created and distributed to everyone. In addition to the special Journal, three compact disks were made. The first, assembled by Iain Whitmey, contains over 150 digital images from the club's Abraham Brothers photographic collection. The second, made by Rod Smith, contains the complete and rare first fifteen issues of the club Journal in scanned digital file format. And the third, recorded by Jill Aldersley, contains excerpts from the oral history archive interviews with past and older members. An engraved wine goblet was presented to every member with the banquet (and subsequently to other members through the huts). Further commemorative items included the fully illustrated centenary brochure, reproductions of two Abraham Brothers prints, engraved beer mugs and a special FRCC Centenary Ale brewed and bottled for us by Hambleton Ales.

All fifteen surviving Past Presidents were in attendance at the Banquet, together with member-relatives of a further five presidents. The longest serving members in this group were Jack Carswell and Betty Cain (both joining in 1936). The formal group photographs are reproduced elsewhere in this volume and serve as the official record.

Only four people knew in advance of the presentations to be made to each of the Past Presidents. Our Presidents wear a badge of office during their two years in the post, but are relegated to the (somewhat elite) rank of 'past-president' on their day of departure. Every President has made a unique contribution to the Club; they embody the very character of the club, sustaining its ethos and traditions and helping to guide it safely into the future. We wanted to mark and recognise their very special role within the club. In great secrecy, a special bronze medallion of the club's emblem had been cast in Birmingham. Each medallion was then engraved with the name and dates of the president, all within a crimson presentation box. With all the 430 diners seated, the Past Presidents and member-relatives were brought from

the official photograph into the formal dining room and presented with their individually inscribed medallion. The event was accompanied by loud applause from all the members and guests present, and set the tone for a truly memorable evening.

It was a five-course meal to savour. Eileen Clark asked members and guests to wear evening dress appropriate to the occasion. "Didn't we all scrub up well", she later reported. There was feasting and drinking, joking and reminiscing. People gathered presidential signatures for their menus. Eileen Clark rose to the occasion in fine form and Alan Hinkes responded in style. The Climbers Club presented us with a slate plaque engraved for the occasion (now installed at Raw Head) and the SMC presented us with a painting of Loch Coruisk (now hung at Karn House). In another surprise, as the banquet came to an end, Caroline Whitehead performed and accompanied a memorable ballad before Auld Lang Syne rounded off the formal festivities. A full DVD recording of the event was made for posterity and is available to members.

Because of the festive activities on the Saturday, it was decided to hold the AGM at Shap Wells on the Sunday morning. This began with a two minute Act of Remembrance at 11 o'clock. By tradition, the President normally leads the silence at the club's war memorial on the summit of Great Gable. Since Eileen could not be in two places at once, Paddy O'Neill bravely volunteered to leave the hotel very early (did he actually go to bed?) and deputise at this important annual event.

With the Centenary Meet behind us, and a house-full of commemorative items duly packaged and posted, attention could return to the other events on the programme. Special meets were held at New Year in Scotland (to mark our two Scottish huts) and at Easter at Brackenclose (to mark the first formal meet of the club on that date and in that valley in 1907). Two long-distance walking meets were arranged, one around all five Lakeland huts, and the other between the two Scottish huts. These were variously promoted as covering 100 miles, 100 kilometres, 100 hours or, in one wag's mind, 100,000 feet of ascent. Pete Smith organised (and completed) an ascent of the 244 Lakeland summits in our festive year.

These diverse activities culminated in the second large-scale event of the festivities. The Mountaineering Festival was held throughout the Lakes, based in each of the club's five huts, during the May Day Bank

Centenary Exhibition: 10 Decades of Mountaineering, held at Theatre by the Lake, Keswick.

Holiday weekend in 2007. Given good weather, this was intended to provide a focus for climbing and walking activity – the real purpose of our club after all! It was also intended to be a 'low-cost' alternative for those who did not want the significant expense of the Banquet yet still wanted to participate. Every hut developed their own home-grown programme of activities – climbs in period costume, hut dinners, barbecues, dancing, fireworks, and more.

Around forty members had been working for several years to prepare different aspects of a major retrospective exhibition of the first one hundred years. The theme for this exhibition had been identified early on as '10 Decades of Mountaineering'. This allowed ten different aspects of the club's life to be illustrated in a series of large multi-media panels, each prepared by a small volunteer group. The panels illustrated early and modern climbing, guidebooks, huts, the war memorial, social life, notable members, Everest, Napes Needle, and modern expeditions. Chris Sherwin worked tirelessly to professionally design and manufacture these panels. A team led by Jill Aldersley gathered and selected more than fifty mountain paintings by members and another team led by Bill Comstive did a similar job with

around fifty photographs, spanning the club's entire history. Geoff Cram selected the literary treasures penned by our members and Iain Whitmey produced a fascinating collection of documents and artefacts from our archives. David Stephenson undertook the mammoth task of editing this material into a fascinating illustrated booklet which Ian Smith designed and produced to an exceptional standard.

The exhibition was assembled and hung in the galleries of Theatre by the Lake in Keswick and this provided an excellent venue for gathering and socialising throughout the weekend. The booking had been made five years before and the Theatre had been somewhat sceptical that we'd ever deliver; in the event, it was one of the most successful exhibitions that they've hung.

Alongside the exhibition, Wendy Dodds organised a day-long programme of lectures by members in the studio theatre. Mike Cocker presented the background to the Wasdale Climbing Book, George Watkins spoke about the Abraham Brothers, Maureen Linton recounted 'Travels with a Gladstone Bag', Nick Wharton showed his excellent climbing photographs, and the artistic work of Joan Tebbutt was illustrated.

On the Sunday, following the precedent set at the jubilee meet fifty years before, Janet O'Neill arranged a centenary service held, this time, in tiny St Olaf's Church at Wasdale Head. This wonderful and evocative mountain setting was just large enough to hold the 75 members and members of the local community for the moving service of hymns, poetry, psalm and address. Earlier in the day, several intrepid walkers from different valley heads congregated on the summit of Great Gable for the Centenary Picnic organised by Richard Morgan. Even the offer of celebratory champagne and birthday cake was insufficient to tempt more than 25 people to brave the weather and join the party. Later that afternoon, Sue Steinberg, grand-daughter of Ashley Abraham, the club's first President, opened their family house in Keswick and entertained many members with family memorabilia.

The Festival provided a fitting climax to our unique centenary festivities. Many more people were able to see the exhibition when it transferred to the National Mountaineering Exhibition at Rheged for a further eight months. The 2007 Annual Dinner returned to the Shap

Wells in somewhat quieter times and enabled Maureen Linton to formally bring our special year to a close.

Did we do everything that we'd planned? More or less. It's surprising just how much of the tentative plan proposed in 1998 was realised in the final programme for 2006/7. One or two projects slipped by. A proposal to make a full-length feature film about Lakeland rock climbing including both old and new routes, was accepted but never got completed. The steering group explored many proposals for a legacy project. We wanted to establish some form of lasting memorial that would be altruistic in nature and benefit all Lakeland mountaineers, not just club members. Many ideas were put forward by the membership including river bridges at both Skelwith and Grange, planting a wood, direction boards, graveyard restoration, a young climbers fund, an expedition fund, another hut, and others. The steering group were, of course, mindful of the earlier war memorial gifts of the high land in the central fells, and later the bridge crossing in Ennerdale. We sought a project that was feasible and which at least attempted to bring similar benefits to the climbing world, as well as engendering widespread support from the membership. Only one proposal really had this potential: delicate discussions were held over several months to see whether it would be possible to buy a particular and popular crag in one of the major valleys from the landowner but in the event this enquiry was unsuccessful. So, apart from the publications, photographs and memorabilia, we have no long-term legacy. It has been decided that, given the considerable interest shown in many of the club's historical archives, we should endeavour to make these far more widely available to the public. As a result, the balance of the centenary reserve funds will be deployed to significantly expanding the digital archive and making this material available to all through the club's website.

For the record – or for the benefit of those with the dubious pleasure of organising the bi-centenary – here are a few statistics from the year.

Overall, the centenary cost £66,000 (plus around £14,000 for the Journal production). Of this, £46,000 was recovered through ticket sales and memorabilia sales. The centenary reserve fund was used to pay for the brochure printing, the free prints, compact disks, glasses and souvenir exhibition guide, a small subsidy for the Wasdale Climbing Book, and the venue hire and professional manufacturing costs of the exhibition.

Around 800 of the 1192 members actually took part in some part of the centenary programme, by attending meets and events or by purchasing commemorative items. Even more remarkably, around 150 members actually helped to make it all happen by volunteering their time at meets, events, exhibitions and other activities. It took over five years to bring these events to fruition and by my calculations, these 150 members spent at least 960 days in aggregate on the planning, preparation and running of them; that's time spent away from the hill. Put into perspective, this is the equivalent of 4 years work for a full-time employee; or put another way, each day of volunteer work cost the club just £20 from the centenary reserve. All-in-all, that's pretty good value and reflects the depth of talent and commitment that we have in this club; thank you to you all.

Now it's time to get back to some mountaineering. Next time you want to spend 5p on a phone call, Ms / Mrs / Mr President, could you please phone someone else?

The Centenary Service, Wasdale

Maureen Linton

It is a great privilege to be holding part of our Centenary celebrations in this very special little church.

According to a locally written guidebook – and the author (the churchwarden) is with us now – a church is believed to have been here for 1000 years. The hills around have been here for thousands and thousands of years; our club has been here for only 100, which puts us into perspective.

But throughout these hundred years, Wasdale has been very special to us: our badge is Napes Needle, our War Memorial is on Gable, our very first Meet was held here at Easter in 1907, and we have just this Easter celebrated the Centenary of that Meet. Our earliest members tramped these fells in long skirts and tweed jackets and breeches. Our climbers pioneered these crags on Gable, Pillar and the Scafells, pushing up standards to grades which were outstanding for their times. In the evenings they returned to the hospitality of this valley, to the Wastwater Inn, as it was known then, to Row Head, and to Burnthwaite.

If they were here now, what would they remember? The glow of lamplight, roaring fires, home-cooked meals and above all the companionship which follows a day on the hills.

Some things have changed.

Seventy years ago we acquired our first Hut – and where was that? Here in Wasdale.

The whole idea of a hut was controversial. Many members asked, "Why do we need a hut when we have hotels and farms?" Committees move slowly, no decision was reached, Brackenclose Wood became available, but the Committee moved slowly. It was learned that the YHA was interested in the site, and the Committee moved slowly. But we had a far sighted President. While the Committee deliberated, W. G. Milligan bought the site saying he would present it to the Club as a campsite if no hut was to be built.

The first turf was cut on Easter Monday 1936, and Brackenclose was officially opened in October 1937, so it will have its 70th anniversary later this year. There were lamps for lighting, open fires and the showers were COLD, then gas replaced primus stoves for cooking, and

eventually in 1977 electricity came to the valley, and eventually microwaves.

But what hasn't changed? Look outside – there are still the same crags and fells. There are more people and there is more erosion on the fells; climbing standards are still being pushed to even greater limits on these same crags. At Easter, the Centenary of our first Meet, repeat climbs were made of Mallory's Slab and Slingsby's Chimney, four new routes were done on the Napes and a new route, aptly named Centenary Slab, was put up on Scafell.

Yes, Wasdale has been very special for us for the last 100 years as can be seen by the commemorations to our members on the headstones outside the church, and the plaques inside.

May it remain so for the next 100 years – at least.

Poems Read In Wasdale Church

1. For our friends who live and work in Wasdale

Wasdale Head

From Westmorland's Cairn the fields are lush,
Segmented beyond count.
Stretched, tight as a drumskin, between
The rough paws of the trespassing fells.
Every patch of pasture hard-won from the obdurate rock
And held fast to earth by a net of walls,
Themselves the gleanings of a constant, bitter harvest of stone.
Cemented by blood, sweat, and the essence
Of nights when knotted sinew and aching bone repelled the
balm of sleep.

From Westmorland's Cairn it makes a pretty picture.
Hercules, flicking sweat from his brow,
Would have considered it a task well done.

Tom Bowker

2. For the climbers who come to Wasdale

The Company of Hills

If I could seal
a wish on younger eyes, then it should be
that they should see hills undisturbedly,
solitary, and in their own design.
For I have seen so much can come between
the heart of hills and mine:
record and route, rivalry, quick report,
all the cloud screen
of human witness, dictionaried sport;

and that these rainbows steal
the selfless joy mountains can make us feel,
the single light from summit and sunshine.

If I could seal a hope for younger time,
climbers to come, then it should be for you
to know of only two
verities, yourself and the hill you climb:
only two voices, the mountain's and your own.
Others are but echoes, of the human pride
would make a sounding-board even of a hillside.
Two voices only. And one,
the serene and still,
magical voice of the hill,
speaks only to you, for you alone.

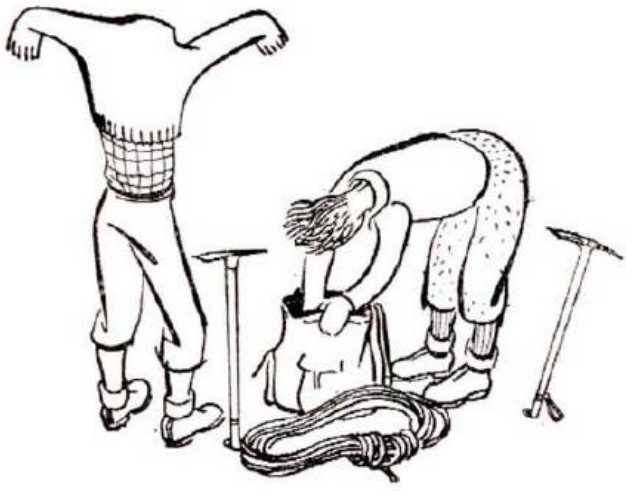
Geoffrey Winthrop Young ©

3. For the Fell & Rock Climbing Club

Our Forebears

All loved this Dale. Some
died in wars, or on fells or
rocks. Remember them.

George Watkins



Getting Ready *(Joan Tebbutt)*

Rewriting History on Great Gable

Iain Whitmey

Many of us will have paused on the summit of Great Gable and spent a few moments looking at the Club's war memorial. This bronze plaque, fixed to the summit rocks of Great Gable on Whit Sunday, June 8th 1924, lists the names of the 20 Club members who were killed in the 1914-1918 war. The inscription also refers to the purchase and donation to the National Trust of 1184 acres of land above the 1500 foot contour for "... the enjoyment of the people of our land for all time."

In recent years research has uncovered that one of the names shown on the plaque was incorrect. This article tells how this came to light and how, 82 years after it was erected, the Club memorial now truly reflects our respects to those members who gave their lives.

The first time we became aware that there might be something amiss with the Great Gable War Memorial was in March 2000 when Sylvia Loxham, then our Secretary, forwarded a letter from the Lancashire and Cumbria Family History & Heraldry Society. They were asking for information on the origin of the plaque and how it came to be there. This enquiry was part of a long-term project of recording memorials on and around the Lakeland fells. Sylvia asked me, in my capacity as Archivist, to respond to their queries.

I replied to the Society quoting the many mentions of the memorial in the minutes of the committee meetings, and enclosed a copy of probably the most detailed article on the subject, written by Harry Griffin and published in Journal number 69 in 1985. In March 2004 I received another letter from the Society in which they mentioned that their research into the war records of all the people shown on the plaque showed there appeared to be an error in the names shown: the name of B.H. Witty was included in error and the name B. H. Whitley was not shown.

I looked up the obituaries of the two men in the Journals and it was obvious straight away that something was wrong. Although Basil Witty had served in the war, he had died from pneumonia following a trip to London in 1922 and was buried in Birkenhead. The obituary for Benjamin Whitley quite plainly showed that he was killed in action in

1916 and was buried in a war cemetery in France. As the memorial lists those who were killed on active service it was clear that B.H. Whitley should be included but that B.H. Witty should not.

So how was the mistake made? This is what I set out to find.

I made several visits to the Cumbria Records Office in Kendal during which I was able to search out much information referring to the memorial project, including a number of preliminary sketches of how the plaque might look, listing the names and suggested wordings. In the correspondence referring to the memorial there are several lists of members who served in the services and a list of those who were killed. On several of these lists the name Whitley is correctly entered but someone has crossed through this name and pencilled in Witty. There is also on record a letter dated May 1923 from George Seatree, then the President to the Secretary, which says: 'Will you kindly have altered the name B.H. Whitley to B.H. Witty and oblige.' There is no explanation as to why he wanted this alteration but this seems to have been the point at which the error became a fact. As Seatree and Witty were both from the Liverpool area they presumably knew each other and as Witty had died recently in 1922 it may be that Seatree got confused by the initials being the same.

So our suspicions were confirmed: the memorial that had stood on Great Gable for 82 years was showing the wrong name.

In February 2005, Eileen Clark, the newly elected president, informed the main committee that we would set up a small team to correct the mistake.

I then consulted as many people as possible about the best way to make the alteration. I discovered that the easiest way would be to erase the wrong name using a grinder and replace it with a newly cast piece. The problem was that there are two more letters in the replacement name than the original. After careful measurement on site, we found that as the name was situated at the end of a line we could just squeeze in the extra letters whilst still maintaining the correct size and font.

I contacted a small bronze foundry in Edinburgh who specialise in memorials and put the problem to them. They suggested that we have a cast made of the new name using exactly the same size lettering and font, with two prongs fixed to the back of the casting which would enable us to fix it in place by drilling into the rock behind. Another

visit to the plaque to try and measure the size and depth of the lettering was not satisfactory as we couldn't recognise the font, so finally we took up a quantity of plasticine and made a mould of the area which was then sent to the foundry, and in early 2006 Alan Rowlands collected our replacement casting.

We now had everything ready to go ahead with the alterations: the research was done, the replacement name cast, the materials collected and a team of volunteers was assembled to do the job.

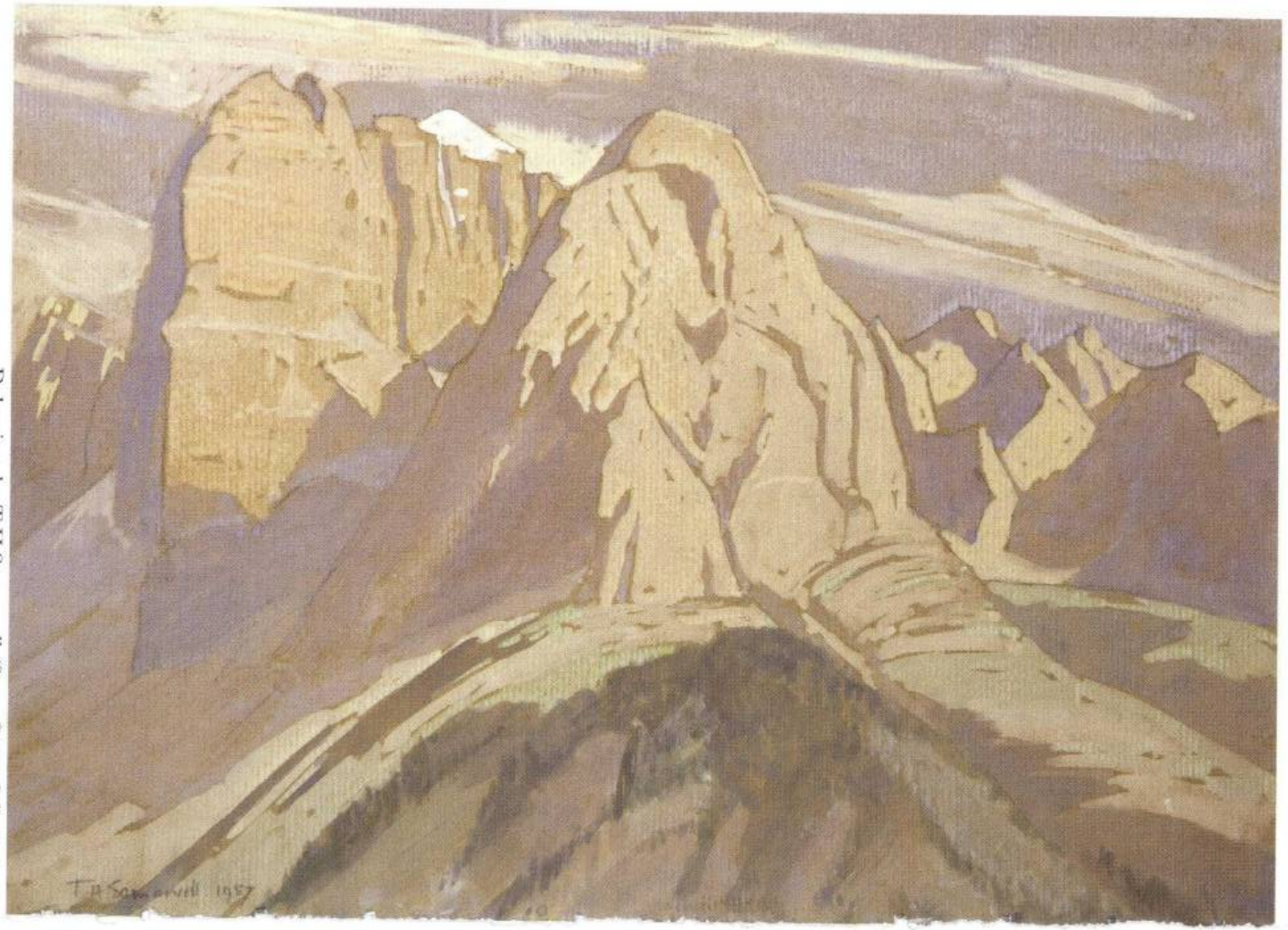
Just one week before we were due to go up and fix the new piece the whole project was nearly upset by a chance remark by a member. Could it be, he wondered that both of the names should be on the memorial. It all hinged on the type of burial that Basil Witty had received in 1922. If he died as a result of his war service then he would have been buried in a military grave and therefore was entitled to be on the plaque, but if he was buried in a civil grave then removing his name was correct. So, with only seven days to go I rang around the council offices at Birkenhead and tried to locate the graveyard where Basil Witty was laid to rest. However just finding the name of the graveyard was inconclusive so finally we travelled to Birkenhead and spent an afternoon searching for the plot, which was eventually located under 80 years of grass and bushes. He was interred with his mother in a civil grave: this settled it and we were back on course.

On the Sunday of the Brackenclose Maintenance meet in September 2006 a party of a dozen or so members and friends carried all the gear including a battery operated angle grinder, a masonry drill and four batteries with other assorted bits and pieces up Gable. Earlier Paul Exley, our Secretary, had written to the National Trust explaining what we were going to do and they replied giving us their blessing. This letter we carried up with us just in case there was any comeback from passing walkers.

This was the part of the operation that I dreaded the most. Here I was about to attack one of the club's main icons with a grinder. What happens if...? Will I go down in the club's history as the man who wrecked the plaque? Can I afford to replace it? I needn't have worried as Mark Scott took up the grinder and started to work on the lettering with skill and confidence. Despite the showery weather we continued and gradually the lettering disappeared to leave a shiny rectangle of the right size. Two holes were then drilled through the remaining metal into the rock behind to take the locating pins, we warmed up the area with a blow lamp to dry the damp rock and were then ready to fix the new piece. This was done by using the type of epoxy resin that cavers and climbers use to fix abseil anchors and belay bolts. Once this was

done and the area was cleaned up it remained only for Eileen to apply her contribution to the success of the day which was a weathering agent (sheep dung) specially brought up for the occasion. As we packed up, Mark handed the bag of weathering agent back to Eileen with the comment, "This is probably the only time that I will be able to hand the President of the Fell and Rock a load of shit and get away with it."

May I take this opportunity of thanking everybody who helped me with advice and practical help.



Dolomites, by T H Somervell *(Steven Gorton Collection)*

244 fells for Centenary Year

Peter Smith

The bright sun lighting up the Acer tree provided a promising start but within an hour off being dropped off at Charlotte Mason College the sunlight and the promise had both faded. Beyond Low Pike the forecast 'severe weather warning' arrived prematurely. I soon lost the daylight altogether and heavy rain, blown horizontally by the strong wind, hampered progress. At times I was hardly able to withstand the severe buffeting and I was grateful for the wall snaking over High Pike, not for any shelter as much of it has crumbled, but for the direct line to Dove Crag. Other animals were evident in the landscape hereabouts: Heron Pike, Calf Cove, Houndshope Cove, Hog Hole, Lion and the Lamb all invoked an expectation of finding Noah's Ark as I proceeded in the deluge to Hart Crag.

There was no intention of completing the Fairfield Horseshoe for I was on a linear route and Tina would be waiting at Bridgend, not at Ambleside, giving rise to my philosophy for the ensuing year of 'no turning back'. Confidently relying on night vision skills, the descending path could just be detected in the darkness for, awash with water, it reflected some faint, distant light. Changing out of my soaking wet hill-gear inside the shelter of the phone box, I pondered the wisdom of the task I was undertaking.

Less than one month previously I had been part of a group drinking champagne on the summit of Pavey Ark. A jubilant Max Sunderland led the celebrations having just completed his round of 'Wainwrights', and I was very pleased to have contributed to it. Even though I completed the Munros in 1999, I was a few hills short of being Max's Lake District equal. I would climb them soon knowing that two momentous events were imminent and I was planning to recognise both of them in a similar manner.

The year 2007 would be the Centenary of Wainwright's birth, and to walk all the 214 fells described by him would be a significant recognition. 2007 would also be the Centenary of the formation of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club, and to walk over all the 244 fells listed by the club would be an equally significant recognition. I had written to the

FRCC in 2002, in response to the request that members contribute suggestions for celebrating the forthcoming Centenary:

> Objective: To encourage members of FRCC to ascend one agreed summit each so that collectively we will ascend all 244 summits listed in the FRCC book The Lakeland Fells.
>
> Method: Go for a hill walk in the Lake District, solo or with a group of friends. It could be of any length and could traverse any number of hills. During that hill walk ascend a specific summit of your choice.
>
> Doing them all? Regardless of previous exploits many members will be tempted to start and finish a full round during the prescribed period.

"Doing them all" was no more than a suggestion for others, yet gradually I warmed to the prospect of being one who might succumb to the temptation.

Determined to set a good example I thought it best to commit myself publicly with a bold declaration. I doubt whether the whole world would be interested yet I had every intention of fulfilling my ambition. Not for me the mumblings of feeble excuses to alleviate the embarrassment of a project that began with high hopes yet fizzled out to nothing so, just ahead of the Centenary Dinner, I issued this invitation to various friends in FRCC, Rotary Club of Hebden Bridge, and Calder Valley Search and Rescue Team:

> 1907 was a very significant year: During that year Alfred Wainwright was born. We are about to celebrate his Centenary. Two months before he entered this world a gathering at the Sun Inn at Coniston agreed to form the Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District which came into being formally in 1907. We are about to celebrate its Centenary.
>
> Subsequent developments: AW listed 214 fells in his seven volumes of *A Pictorial Guide to the Lake District* in which he described the delectable hills at the core of fell walking country in the Lake District. This list was expanded by FRCC to 244 fells providing a more comprehensive coverage within the Lake District.
>
> 2007 will be a very significant year: I invite you to accompany me during my journey to ascend all 244 fells. Many of you may have a desire to become a 'Completer'. Companions should build up on their existing tally of fells and progress until complete. You are not required to complete during 2007 but you should aim to start early in that year.

My starting date of 10th November 2006 had been chosen with considered reverence sandwiched auspiciously as it was between the 9th and the 11th of November.

The Centenary Dinner on 11th marked, to the day, the meeting one hundred years earlier at the Sun Hotel in Coniston where the founding fathers laid firm foundations for our club. During the Diamond Jubilee of the club an entry in *Fellwanderer* recorded the beginnings of Wainwright's field work proper:

> These, then were the things ... that caused me in the evening of November 9th to pen my first page in what I intended to be a series of seven guidebooks to the Lakeland fells, each covering a defined area, and if you are interested, the first page I did depicted the ascent of Dove Crag from Ambleside. ... a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. November 9th 1952 saw my first step. It was a good evening for me. It was a winter's night, but I spent it going up Dove Crag and was lost to all else.

Although his first night was dryer than mine I luxuriated in the comfort of Shap Wells Hotel where I arrived on the eve of the Centenary Dinner in the knowledge that I had begun my hill-work as Wainwright had begun. I could now look forward to my double celebration of two Centenaries for the price of one. My tally of five fells done seemed pitiful compared to the two hundred and thirty nine yet to ascend, although I knew that one year hence my final summit would be Helm Crag and that guests at my Completion Party would have to offer suggestions for that selection.

Many years before those influences of AW and FRCC, my love affair with the Lake District had begun when I attended Outward Bound Mountain School; I planned to recognise that influence by using OB Eskdale as my second base. Two soakings in two days set the scene as 2007 became the wettest year since records began, with severe flooding affecting many parts of the country.

The vernal equinox was spent at Birkness. This venue was chosen so that I could be on top of Haystacks for the anniversary of the placement of AW's ashes. On a warm sunny day I recalled his written word:

> That day will come when there is nothing left but memories. And afterwards, a last long resting place by the side of Innominate Tarn, on Haystacks, where the water gently laps the gravelly shore and the heather blooms and Pillar and Gable keep unfailing watch. A quiet place, a lonely

A calm day on Mellbreak

place. I shall go to it, for the last time, and be carried: someone who knew me in life will take me and empty me out of a little box and leave me alone. And if you, dear reader, should get a bit of grit in your boot as you are crossing Haystacks in the years to come, please treat it with respect. It may be me.

Springtime in the Pyrenees precluded my attendance at the Brackenclose meet in recognition of the club's inaugural AGM on 30th March 1907. However, at the end of April I breathed the fragrance of Spring by the trig point on Gummer's How. The perfect stillness of early morning added poignancy. Northwards, above the blue line of Windermere, rose the Fairfield range. To the south, beyond the moored yachts, was the caravan where a large group of friends should have gathered. Terri Taylor, bridesmaid at my wedding, had planned a celebration for May Day but died of cancer two months before her 50th birthday.

A week later I was at Salving House where Roy Buffey, in the home straight of his ten year tenure as Warden, hosted a splendid meet as part of our Centenary Mountaineering Festival. This was the target weekend for members to ascend, collectively, all 244 summits. Ellie Sherwin and I teamed up with Arthur Salmon, Past President of Yorkshire Ramblers, to take in five tops in a watershed tour of Greenup Gill. Later I was privileged to be invited by Doug Brill to say a few choice words at the excellent evening meal. Lacking time on Monday

I had to forego the ascent of Great Gable where the Centenary Cake was cut amidst a torrential downpour, although I did squeeze in a visit to the impressive Centenary Exhibition at the Theatre by the Lake.

The second most important asset of FRCC is the huts, and the hut-to-hut concept is more than an expedition: it is homage to the huts and to those members who pursued their belief and strove to acquire properties, convert them and subsequently improve them. Out of fourteen hill-days done as linear routes, the most memorable were those done during my hut-to hut traverse and, as someone still working for a living, my outing was later than the advertised club event.

By purposeful design my first hut was, appropriately, the club's first hut, Brackenclose, opened in 1937 and proudly proclaimed by Bill Smith to be "the same age as me". Building work began in 1936 just ahead of Haskett-Smith's 50th Jubilee Ascent of The Needle. No mention is made as to whether any of the party descended to Brackenclose to offer help with the building of the new hut.

Whilst climbing Great Gable I reflected that in 1986 the Club organised a celebration at Wasdale Head to commemorate the Centenary of The Needle's first ascent. Meet Leader John Wilkinson would later have parallel celebrations on The Napes. His 50th Anniversary Climb of Eagle's Nest Ridge Direct was achieved in 1992 which also marked the centenary of the first ascent by Godfrey Solly. It was Solly who had read Psalm 121 at the unveiling of the War Memorial Tablet on Great Gable in 1924. The immensity of the club's purchase "for us and our children for ever" of a huge expanse of significant mountainous terrain was as grand as the mountains themselves and I could explore them freely without let or hindrance.

Less frequented is the memorial for World War II in the form of the bridge spanning the river Liza at the crossing between Scarth Gap and Pillar. I spent the summer solstice at Black Sail, peacefully remote, and on the walk-in from Ennerdale I paused by the bridge. Here I gave silent thanks for the safe-keeping of my father who, at the outbreak of war in 1939, signed up 'for the duration' not knowing that it would continue until 1945.

The last hill-day from the hostel ended on Knock Murton taking my tally to one hundred and twenty two. It marked the halfway point

for my target of fells but mid-summer marked eight months since starting, which left just four months for the second half of my journey.

At the outset I had planned to make good use of my summer holidays and deny myself the frequent trips to Scotland. By mid September I knew that I would not need the 'catch-up' weekends marked on my calendar. Inevitably some hill-days were devoid of any companions.

My final solo outing, out of eleven, was the Kentmere Horseshoe. The first half was memorable for absolute stillness and perfect quietness disturbed only briefly by a skein of geese, one hundred-strong, heading south. At Nan Bield Pass I swapped low cloud for warm sunshine. Back in the village three men told me that they had departed from Mardale Head for High Street intending to return to their car, yet it was not until the lower slopes of Yoke that they realised that the lake in view was Windermere not Haweswater. Too tired to walk back they wilted visibly upon learning that two days would pass before the next bus out of Kentmere.

A month of inactivity followed my penultimate trip, based at Skiddaw House, because I had long since booked Raw Head for my Completion Party on 20th October. St. Luke's Summer is a period of fine, calm weather occurring around St. Luke's Day, 18th October, so

in compensation for the numerous wet days, the invited friends on that 58th and final hill day were blessed with perfect conditions. Scarcely a breeze rippled as we rose gently up the nose of Steel Fell in the warmth of the sun. On the high ground blue sky enhanced the extensive views as we counted down: Calf Crag, Gibson Knott and then, at last, Helm Crag. Suggestions for choosing that fell for my final summit included the predictable "because it was nearest to the pub"; the gratifying "because you are a lion not a lamb": and the worrying "Wainwright never got to the top of the crag and you think you can". I had begun as Wainwright had begun yet wanted to end where he had not stood. In his own words he confessed thus: "Whether the view from the cairn on the summit ridge coincides with the view from the highest point the author will never know, for his several attempts to mount to the rocky pate of the Lion Couchant have all been defeated by a lack of resolution."

After a well-earned drink, appropriately at the Traveller's Rest, we returned to Raw Head. Maureen Linton, President, graced us with her presence, offered her congratulations, and was amazed to discover that I had topped out on Summit 244 at precisely 2:44.

Report from Pillar

by Our Roving Reporters

(Chris Eilbeck, reprinted from Rock Sport, 1968)

Geoff Cram has completed the new Pillar Guide: it is at the printers and should be on sale before the end of the year.

The main mass of The Rock west of Walkers Gully has seen little activity this year, with last year's ascent of GONDOR as a worthy culmination to the explorations in this area. THE SENTINEL has been repeated without aid and is said to be only HVS. Cram has also added a direct start to the NORTH-WEST: a thin 150ft crack at Mild XS.

In contrast, the area to the left of Walkers Gully (Shamrock) has been the scene of great activity. Like Pavey Ark or the wings of Dinas Mot, this part of the crag was, until recently, dismissed as unworthy, but some judicious route finding and gardening have produced many routes of character.

First of the modern routes was ODIN, put up by Crew in the early sixties, a steep but characterless route. Ross and Bonington arrived in 1965, scratched their initials on one of Sid Cross's pre-war routes, added an inferior direct finish and went away.

It was not long before Cram extended his activities to other parts of The Rock; another Pillar classic, ELECTRON (VS/HVS) was discovered as described by his second, Chris Eilbeck:

"Like all the best discoveries, this one was accidental. We were engaged on an abortive attempt at a high level girdle. Geoff got off to a good start with a greasy mantelshelf and a hairy tension traverse, but soon the line petered out into grassy ledges. The Girdle was quickly forgotten when Geoff saw a large layback diedre looming above us. (You see, he gets withdrawal symptoms if he doesn't do at least one layback a week). It was only by pointing out some dangerous chocks*

* During a recent epic ascent by a strong party of FRCC, PC and CC members, several of these chockstones were removed, more by accident than design.

that I persuaded him that a top rope might be best. This was soon done and several stones were dechocked, leaving one or two sounder ones.

On the way down – surprise, surprise – a big 100 ft corner below the layback pitch looking inviting but greasy. Next day saw me lowering Cram and his MacInnes ice axe down the big corner – a sort of suspended Gardening Club – leaving a thin film of mud and dust on all the holds, and a 10 ft pile of sods at the bottom.

Day three saw us climbing upwards at last. The big corner was still dirty, but Geoff had brought his brother's hairbrush to provide the master's touch. After the big corner the layback seemed easy, and several pitches later we arrived at the Ennerdale Bridge in time for a celebration pint.

As usual, one route led to another, and Eilbeck returned in 1967 to climb POSITRON, a pleasant but rather contrived mild VS up the buttress and ribs to the left of ELECTRON. At the same time he noticed a big groove line to the left and returned with a strong party of Pillar MC members to do PHOTON after some heroic gardening. Cram returned to do a fine direct finish to ODIN.

1968 began auspiciously. Cram paid a fleeting visit to Shamrock and climbed NECROMANCER, a thin and delicate climb up the steep slabs to the left of Walkers Gully at HVS/XS standard. Eilbeck returned with a budding tiger from Lancaster University MC, Bill Lounds, to do some prospecting in the rain. A big corner looked attractive: also some other blank areas seemed promising. The next Friday was wet, but the surprise of the year was a dry Shamrock on Saturday morning (the rest of Pillar takes a day to dry). The big corner, capped with overhangs, up the buttress beneath the Great Heather Ledge, gave THANATOS, 200 ft HVS with an awkward crux right at the top. Finishing directly below the start of ELECTRON, the two give a direct and sustained route up the cliff. It was still many hours to opening time, so Lounds started up a promising rib next to PHOTON. It seemed hard, but the worst was yet to come. The rib continued, but steeper. Eilbeck soon found himself 40 ft up with one nut runner, making a committing move for the expected jug. Several hard moves later the jug materialised, 30 ft higher than expected. Another 30 ft of delicate slab and the gibbering leader arrived at a stance below a frightful overhanging groove. The first 20 ft of this took some thought, until Lounds

solved the problem by the novel technique of bridging up and facing out, whilst Eilbeck shut his eyes and prayed. The return to a normal climbing position added further to the difficulties of the pitch. The rest of the groove seemed impossible but eventually the rib on the right edge was climbed with once again the expected jug receding at every move. Easier slabs then led to a junction with PHOTON and for good measure a direct finish to this climb was made. The route was named EROS and graded HVS/XS.

The two climbers returned the next day to a fine line up the nose of the buttress to the right of ELECTRON. Called LEPTON, this climb offers some fine positions and sustained climbing with the hardest pitch about mild HVS. The next week BOSON was added to the right of LEPTON with an interesting transition from easy bridging pitches to mildly desperate HVS wall climbing at mid-height. The girdle was now an obvious challenge and Lounds and Eilbeck did this the next day. A low level line, finishing up NECROMANCER, with eight pitches: THE EIGHTFOLD WAY.

This left only one obvious unclimbed line. In July, Lounds and Eilbeck returned to climb VISHNU, probably the hardest route on this part of The Rock. The crux pitch gives several hard and committing moves at the end of a sustained and poorly protected 100 ft of climbing.

With VISHNU another chapter in the history of Pillar Rock seems at a close. What lies in the future? Only time and the future issues of ROCKSPORT can tell.

Ediror's note: The updated Gable & Pillar guidebook was published by the FRCC in 2007.

Scafell Pinnacle, by Heaton Cooper *(the late Harry Ironfield Collection)*

Filming Birkett

Alastair Lee

I had been playing with climbing and bouldering footage for years, mainly for the slide shows about my travels that I used to do for mountaineering clubs and travel shows, before later progressing into the more lucrative schools circuit. I'd had two official releases before *Set in Stone*, the first being *Twice Upon a Time in Bolivia* which was basically a funny holiday video that won the People's Choice at Kendal in 2004. We then made a comedy sketch show about all things climbing, called *Storms The Movie*. I made both of these films and *Set in Stone* with the help of animator and funny man David Halsted. We had a lot of fun making *Storms* and it was a critical hit but didn't do so well in the shops, so we thought we'd better make a proper climbing film.

I've been climbing for 16 years and have always lived around the Burnley area in East Lancashire, and so I climbed mostly on Yorkshire grit and in the Lakes. The idea for a climbing film started as one about climbing in the Lakes, as it seemed like an area that had received little attention in climbing films and somewhere I knew quite a bit about and was fairly local. I started asking around who was doing exciting ascents and one name kept coming up: Dave Birkett. Over the years that I had been climbing in the area I had heard of Dave Birkett and could vaguely remember a photo of him in a magazine, but he seemed like a bit of an enigma, somebody people in the know knew about, but even they knew little of him. I knew that he would have to be a part of this film, and that I would have to get in touch with him.

I got his number but it took me nearly two months to pluck up the courage to call him as by this time I'd heard so much about his bold and dangerous routes and what a hard man he was I wasn't expecting a friendly reception. Anyway, I finally called him and he wasn't in so I left him a message. To my surprise he called back straight away and was softly spoken and even knew who I was as he was a big fan of *Storms*!

We arranged to meet at the Old Dungeon Gill for a pint. At this point we didn't really know what he looked like and it was a busy evening outside the famous pub. Eventually, this craggy-looking guy got off his motorbike and came over and sat with some friends. I was

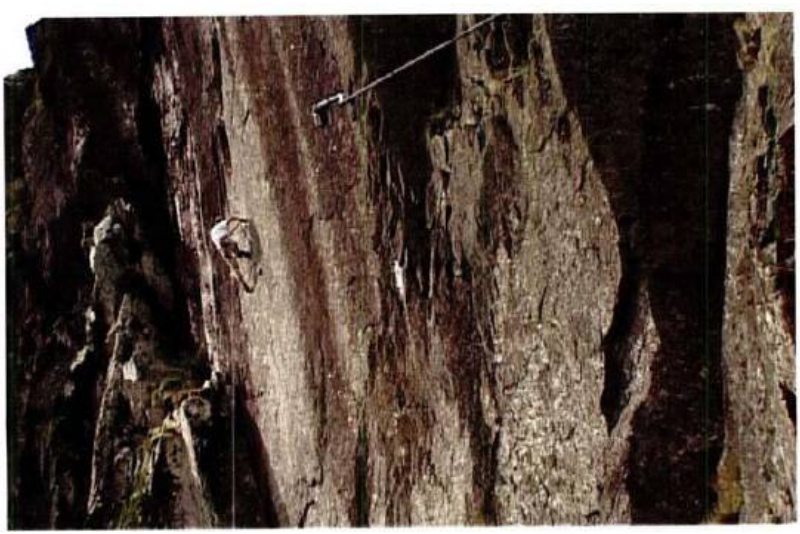
Dave Birkett and Alastair Lee *(Tristan Johnson)*

with Dave Halsted and I said, "That's him!" "How do you know?" asked Dave. "Look at the size of hands!" They don't call him sausage fingers for nothing.

I went out a couple of times filming Dave on a first ascent on the East Buttress, and then filmed some other climbers. It really wasn't the same, was just missing something. Each time I spoke to Dave I'd find out something else amazing that he'd done and it would always be delivered with total understatement. Very quickly it dawned on me that rather than make a film about the Lakes in general the film should just be about Dave and his routes in the Lakes. When I told him that the film would be about him, he didn't give much of a reaction. I hope he took it as a massive compliment, and as he didn't protest I just carried on.

Dave's climbing history is a quiet phenomenon. Dave got very good very quickly. He fell off an E7 and landed on his mate when he had been climbing for just a few months, and he'd only been climbing for three years when he did 'If 6 was 9'. What is really amazing is that that high level of climbing was right at the limit of what he could do; most climbers keep a bit in reserve for bold trad climbing, but Dave put himself right out there. The great thing is that he has just kept going. I filmed him on yet another E9 last year (2007).

Set In Stone documents his routes in the Lakes, particularly his hard first ascents. Routes like 'If 6 was 9', which has 8a+ climbing in a very serious position, was done in 1992 and only saw a second ascent in 2007, due to *Set in Stone* spreading the word. Dave's hard first ascents add up to more than those done by any other British climber, but you could make an entire boxed set of DVDs on the routes he has repeated and all the hard onsights he has done – or you could if Dave could remember them all. Many of his test pieces are high on the fells, and in a way Dave is the only one qualified to do them. You need to have a good knowledge of the crags and routes, otherwise you could easily waste half the day just trying to find them. You not only need to be an outstanding rock climber but you need the all-round fitness and stamina to hike up to the East Buttress with heavy packs (you'll need at least two ropes to practise one of Dave's routes). Then once you've been up and down the hill a few times and have practised the route enough to go for the lead, you need the familiarity with the mountain environment to be able to pull an E9 out the bag. Lots of climbers are physically capable of climbing Dave's routes, but once you throw in all the extra factors of where they are, there are not many climbers with everything you need to do them, as testified by the fact that all his routes on Scafell are unrepeated – three at each of E8 and E9. Condi-



Dave and the boom on Caution (E8 6c); a still taken from video

tions in the Lakeland high crags can be fickle so it is a massive advantage to live there, and you need to be able to climb Scafell a lot, as you're not going to do many of the routes in one day. Personally I'd put repeating one of those routes on the East Buttress above doing a grit E10 or MacLeod's E11 just for the sheer commitment of where they are.

Filming *Set in Stone*, Dave was very easy to work with and I think perhaps he was secretly enjoying the attention, seeing so much interest in him and his routes, as he had never quite been fully acknowledged by the climbing press. The media have always been a bit biased towards Peak activity, and perhaps particularly when Dave was doing these hard first ascents in the Lakes. He possibly didn't fit in with the model climber image that was around in the early 1990s; Dave wearing his wellies and sporting a '50s haircut was perhaps not quite front cover material.

The film I made has helped push him into the limelight, but perhaps people are getting a bit tired of the self-promoting professional climber, so Dave's attitude and demeanour are very refreshing. Even though, ironically, he now has a small sponsorship deal with Scarpa (as a result of the film), after 15 years plus of operating at a top level, his motives and passion for the Lakes and climbing are as strong as ever. I admire his outlook on life, his approach to climbing and love of the mountains, and our working relationship soon became a friendship where going out filming became just like going out with your mates and having a laugh. Dave gladly took days off work to go filming (don't tell his wife!) and would help rig the route for filming, too – he had usually done all this by the time we got to the crag.

The film itself has certainly had a wider impact. It has got the wind up one or two other top climbers, and Dave's routes have seen more activity last year than they have in a long time. A team of Slovenians came over and repeated 'Dawes Rides the Shovel Head' at Raven Crag, Dave MacLeod got a handful of coveted repeats – 'If 6 Was 9', E9 (15 years after the first ascent), 'Caution' E9, 'Impact Day' E8/9. Now there is a young gun named George Ullrich who is making his way through repeats of the Birkett lines. He's done 'Impact Day', 'Dawes Rides the Shovel Head' and is looking at 'If 6 Was 9'!

What effect the film will have on Lakes climbing, I'm not sure. I think the main problem for young climbers taking root in the Lakes and creating an active scene is the cost of living in the Lakes. A lot of talented Lakes-based climbers have moved away, and besides, Dave has bagged a lot of the best lines!

If nothing else, the film has highlighted Dave's routes and what amazing lines they are. I like to think that it would convince people what an incredible place the Lakes is, with a landscape as inspiring as anywhere in Britain, and routes as good as any in Britain.

Photos provided by Alastair Lee ©Posing Productions

Dave Birkett on Nowt but a Fleein' Thing (E8 6c)

Whit Monday *(Joan Tebbutt)*

Two Short Walks with Wendy

Dick Courchee

Most people come to Wasdale from the west, and think Greendale is the residence of Postman Pat. But Joss Naylor had other ideas, a linear route from Ullswater over thirty of the Lakeland tops, involving some 17,000ft. of up and down and some of the roughest and finest hill country that England has to offer. He pioneered this route, the Joss Naylor Lakeland Challenge, 'to encourage those who might be thinking of retirement'. Times allowed vary with age, from 12 hours at 50 to the top category (over 65) being permitted a full 24 hours, Bob Graham style. Up to early 2004, only 40 people had succeeded, including six over 65s.

So it was very presumptuous of me to have a go, but Don Talbot was responsible for a neat manoeuvre. Don was the first to repeat the route and he caught me in a weak moment. I was a guest at the Rucksack Club dinner, and he was my 'minder' for the evening. It soon became apparent that the Rucksack Club regard any walk which can be fitted into the daylight hours as too short, so the 'Naylor' might be just acceptable. I pretended not to hear the President announce that I was a contender, but from then on I was as committed as a parachute jumper on the wing of an aircraft. Schedules were drawn up and endlessly revised, Wendy Dodds and nine other pacers engaged and a date set.

The first half went like clockwork, breakfast at Kirkstone, lunch at Dunmail, both served at a table by Sue, and into the Big Leg, all the way to Greendale without a road crossing. I was handed over to Wendy at Rossett Pike, and our arrival at Bowfell with its broad views to the west was a real high point. We took the cautious way off Great End, down by Esk Hause to Styhead, though fitter men go straight down weaving between the crags. A new team came up from Wasdale to push me the rest of the way, including my doctor friend Tim Goffe.

"There are no hills like the Wasdale hills"; this is true Naylor country – Gable, Kirkfell, Pillar and the rest. At some point in every long run there comes a time of doubt; this was it. I might have to rely on my secret weapon, a can of rocket fuel called Red Bull. Coming off Great Gable I called for it, claiming drowsiness. NO, said Tim, it's very bad

for you, it'll dry you out; just keep going. No option but to do as instructed. Scoatfell and Haycock were a blur, but then oh joy! Below us was a reception party of Joss Naylor, Wendy Dodds and five dogs above the Pots of Ashness, a hideous bog which Joss seemed to know better than his back yard. Time for a second medical opinion. "Wendy, Tim has a can of Red Bull. Would you please ask him to hand it over?"

"CERTAINLY NOT, I can't permit that, it's a banned drug; anyway you're nearly there." Oh well, it was worth a try. Joss looked inscrutable; I considered asking him but feared being subjected to the Naylor Shake, a drastic form of treatment fashionable in the 1970s. So on yet again and the bonus of a brilliant night view over half of Lakeland from that otherwise very boring hill, Seatallan. I was coming home to West Cumberland. And with such a team, how could I fail?

Joss thought the route was 'a grand day out and home for supper'; most people find it rather harder than that! How to preserve the principle of a long high traverse and still make it possible for us ordinary mortals? An idea occurred to me; why not make the section from Gable gently downhill rather than Joss's fairground rollercoaster? Further research indicated a south to north route from Broughton Mills to the famous Moot Hall at Keswick might be acceptable, and so the SDC Cumbrian Traverse was born. It was first completed in June 2005 by a party of nine headed by, you've guessed it, Wendy Dodds, in just

under 15 hours. It has two main support points, Wrynose and Honister passes, and inevitably Sue was there at both with a large team of helpers. It was a glorious sunny day with a real festival air, and it was her swansong.

Since then other teams from Airienteers and Dark Peak Fell Runners have completed the trip, which is almost exactly a half Bob Graham. Times have come down, but that is a minor point; the principle is to complete the 'Cumbrian' without dropping into any valleys en route. So now let Dave Lockwood take up the story.

Opposite: Finish of the first Cumbrian Traverse at the Moot Hall, Keswick. Organiser Sue Courchee is far left; motivator Wendy Dodds is fourth from left.*(Dick Courchee)*

They Don't Come Much Better Than This

Dave Lockwood

I refer to the weekend of the 22/23 July 2006 when a select little group of friends legged it over a lot of Lake District Hills for fun! – the SDC CUMBRIAN TRAVERSE. This was the run devised by Sue and Dick Courchee and includes 21 tops, 46k and 3700m of ascent (ref: *The Fellrunner*, Feb 2006).

Dick Pasley, Alison Shepherd, Alan Yates and me, ably supported at road crossings by Colin Henson and Alison's Dad (Roy), had one hell of a time not only on the route, but also as expected during the more restful pre-event supper, victory dinner and morning-after deliberations.

In the true spirit of adventure the preparations consisted of the best Cumberland sausage in the Lakes (including gravy!) at The Newfield Inn, Seathwaite; several pints of Hawkshead best bitter, a few hours kip in High Moss, the Rucksack Club hut, and then up at 4.30am to Dick's finest hand-made porridge.

The start from Broughton Mills at 6.15am was incredible. The Lakes at its best – early morning light, warm breeze and scenery to rival anything I've seen anywhere. The Broughton Fells are superb, with grand little summits and grassy paths; and, nobody else around. In fact we didn't see anyone else until the Old Man of Coniston. Apart from a brief rice-pudding stop on Caw we maintained a good pace until finally leaving the Duddon Valley views at Great Carrs, we turned and skipped gleefully down to the Three Shire Stone at Wrynose Pass. Obvious signs of supporter revelry were evident; Colin and Roy each with a 'post-fry-up' grin provided us with cups of tea whilst unsuccessfully trying to conceal a rather large frying pan.

The next leg is long – no support until Honister and the day was warming up considerably. Alan took a better line than the rest of us to Cold Pike; we unintentionally circumnavigated Red Tarn but joined him rather embarrassingly to much chortling on the summit some five minutes later. By Crinkle Crags it was stinking-hot and water was getting low. A brief stop before Bowfell then on through the rocky ground to Esk Hause, where Dick left us and went ahead to Great End whilst the rest of us called at Calf Cove to fill water bottles. Styhead

was reached at 2.30pm after over 8 hours of fun. I do mean fun, bizarrely, although quite demanding, it was clearly obvious from the usual inoffensive banter that we were all enjoying this little ramble. Spirits were good then; but the climb up Great Gable loomed in front. Alison and Alan set off without a stop here; Dick and I had five minutes for afternoon tea and scones by the stretcher-box before following.

Meanwhile back at the ranch, or Keswick in this case, Colin and Roy were wandering around pretending to be shopping for the evening meal. Actually, after difficulties with finding a suitable parking space, they did rather well, especially, as it proved later, in the wine department.

After the Gables and along the ridge of Brandreth and Grey Knotts we never saw Alan – apparently he had had the urge to make haste for his tin and a pipe of sardines, or was it the other way round? However at Honister we were met by Colin and Roy and the 'flying' Doctor (Moseley) so at least we would be safe now! Twenty five minute we lounged around; like there was no urgency; drinking tea and eating Nellie Wytkin's treacle flap-jack. Alan didn't find his sardines but was contentedly puffing away on his pipe like a Windermere Ferry whilst accusing Colin of eating them.

Now the doc joined us; obviously fresh and like a coiled spring (I do believe in credit where it's due!) we set off up Dale Head like loonies, round to High Spy and onto Maiden Moor. The doc's knee soon had him back to a sensible pace (the bad knee made it even better). Cat Bells was deserted, the afternoon visitors having gone home: fantastic in the evening light. The views and colour layers of the Sailbeck hills to the left were perfect. On our right was the full length of Derwent Water with Keswick beckoning across the other side. Through the woods now with Colin, who joined us at the road, for the jog through Portinscale, and the run up to the Moot Hall. So, 12 hours, 49 minutes was the time; it could have easily been well under twelve if we hadn't had the rather unusually relaxed interludes – but so what, it was all part of the fun.

The evening meal in Salving House, Rosthwaite, was prepared, cooked and expertly served by Alan. His previously undisclosed culi-

nary skills, the envy of fellow hut residents, was surpassed only by the wine & mirth course which extended into Sunday morning.

So, you may just detect from this brief précis that this modest little tour was fairly OK, and worth the effort.

In fact, I think we all mentioned, at various times – "They (Lake District weekends) don't come much better."

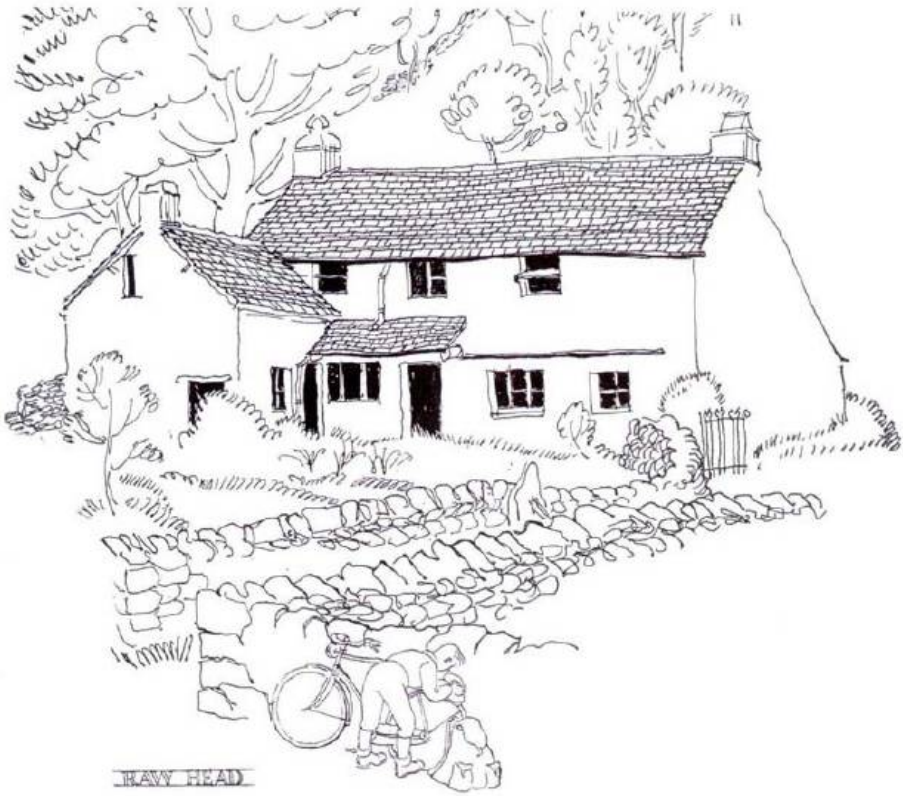
THE SDC PEAKS
START: The Village Hall, Broughton Mills
Great Stickle
Stickle Pike
Caw
White Maiden
Brown Pike
Dow Crag
Old Man of Coniston
Swirl How
Great Carrs

Wrynose Pass

Cold Pike
Crinkle Crags
Bowfell
Esk Pike
Great End
Great Gable
Green Gable
Brandreth
Grey Knotts

Honister Pass

High Spy
Maiden Moor
Cat Bells
FINISH: The Moot Hall, Keswick



Raw Head (exterior) *(Joan Tebbutt)*

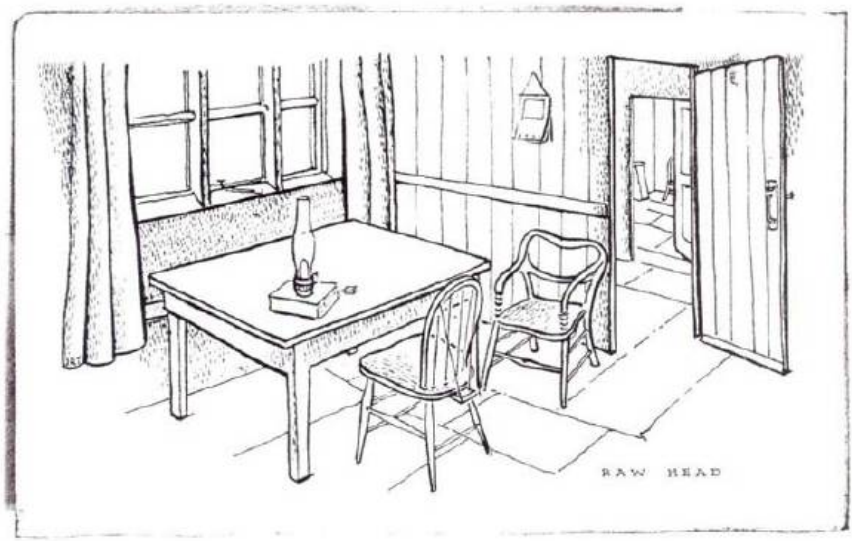
From Lingmell

Colin Shone

On Sca Fell
The crags stood
Wind-scoured, black
Against the grey snow,
Black, invested with
A hostile Arctic air.
A raven, solitary soul,
Slid slily around the crag
To hide his sins
In a secret place.

On Sca Fell Pike
The rocks repelled.
There was no welcome there.
The snow hung shroudlike
On the crag's bare bones
And a keening wind,
The hail-squall in its teeth,
Sang orison
For nature's end
And death.

But on Lingmell
Was sunlight
And green warmth,
Ewes with their new-born
And a skylark in the air.
The snow gleamed,
The bent was golden
and the peaty pools
Opened their eyes
To welcome another Spring.



Raw Head (interior) *(Joan Tebbutt)*

Eagle's Nest Direct

John Wilkinson

Shortly after returning from my first fell walking holiday in the Lakes during the summer of 1941, at age fourteen, I began rock climbing at Widdop, a gritstone crag close to the Yorkshire-Lancashire border. A seven mile walk over the moors north of my hometown of Todmorden, Widdop was first pioneered by that great climber Maurice Linnell in 1928. Widdop was, during the war years, the meeting place every Sunday for climbers from the surrounding Yorkshire and Lancashire towns. There were a few schoolboys like myself, men too old or unfit for military service, those in reserved occupations, university students on vacation and the occasional serviceman. Over the following year it was my good fortune to be taken in hand by four members of the Fell and Rock who were regular attenders at Widdop: David Jackson from Todmorden, Ronnie Jackson from Nelson (one time Birkness Hut warden), Alan Fisher from Nelson, and Bryan Greaves from Halifax (one time Assistant Hut Booking Secretary).

As the summer of 1942 approached, Bryan kindly invited me to join him for a week's holiday at Middle Row Farm, Wasdale Head. Bryan owned a motorcycle and by careful hoarding of his petrol coupons, augmented by petrol supplied for his duty as a Home Guard despatch rider, he had accumulated enough fuel to get himself to Wasdale Head and back. Unfortunately there was no room for me on the bike as the pillion was packed with Bryan's rucksack and climbing gear. A journey to the Lakes by public transport was, during the war, difficult to say the least. However, as a talented draughtsman by profession, Bryan was a methodical sort of chap and supplied me with an itinerary to get me from home to Wasdale Head. This involved departing from Todmorden at 4.15a.m. on the Manchester bound mail train with changes at Rochdale, Bolton and Preston, from whence the Glasgow train would transport me to Oxenholme for the connection to Windermere. From there by bus to The Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel in Langdale, via Ambleside, arriving at 10.30a.m. I then had a walk to Wasdale Head via Rossett Ghyll, Esk Hause and Styhead arriving about 2.00p.m.

All went well until looking out of the window of the Glasgow train I saw Oxenholme station flying past at high speed. Enquiries revealed that two Glasgow trains left Preston about the same time, one a stopping train, the other an express stopping only at Lancaster and Carlisle. It was clear that I was on the wrong train. I consulted Bryan's itinerary; there was no Plan B! I knew that Robbie Burns had expressed his views on best laid plans, but there was no way that I was crossing the Scottish border to find out. I bailed out at Carlisle and hung about until the next southbound train transported me to Penrith where I eventually caught a train to Keswick arriving about 6.00p.m. I handed in my Windermere ticket and legged it out of the station before the ticket collector could check it, and made my way to the bus station. The last bus of the day to Seatoller had departed some time previously. There was no option; I would have to walk to Wasdale Head.

Not having been in Keswick before, I consulted my 1"/mile O.S. map of the Lakes. At a rough guess Keswick and Wasdale Head looked about a foot apart! I shouldered my rucksack and set off up Borrowdale as fast as I could go with sparks flying from my new Robert Lawrie Mark IV tricouni nailed boots. It was a glorious summer evening as I slogged up the middle of the road with not a car in sight, nor many people either. A few wisps of smoke curled into a cloudless sky from chimneys in Grange as I strode past. By the time I reached Seathwaite my new tricounis were beginning to resemble Brigham plates (a wartime nail manufactured by Ellis Brigham of Manchester from mild steel, a copy of the no. 5 tricouni but without teeth!) I pounded over Styhead and rounding a corner below Kern Knots I got my first breathtaking view of the promised land, a triangle of irregular green fields bounded by dry stone walls with a shining lake behind and the white dot of the Wastwater Hotel. It was after 10p.m. as I passed the church, eighteen hours after leaving home and there, leaning over the gate of Middle Row Farm, was Bryan, contentedly puffing his pipe (a pleasure which resulted in his premature demise in 1964, aged 47). A man of few words: "What kept you?" he enquired. Mrs Naylor came to my rescue, took me inside and sat me down in front of the largest plate of lamb stew that I had ever seen. Shortly afterwards I climbed into bed and, enveloped in a vast flock quilt, fell into a dreamless sleep.

Throughout the period of food rationing, during and for several years after the war, a visit to Middle Row Farm was a gastronomic delight. Huge cooked breakfasts, large packed lunches, afternoon teas with scones and cake for those back early from the fell, and superb dinners, were provided at a cost, in 1942, of ten shillings (50p) per day.

There were only two other guests staying at Middle Row Farm: Wally, a card-carrying communist who throughout the week seemed bent on improving my education by instructing me in some of the finer points of dialectical materialism, and Tom, an army glider pilot on leave. Tom expressed an interest in joining the Fell and Rock, but in those distant days proposing someone for the Club was a serious matter requiring careful consideration. Bryan thought it over and decided that it was unlikely that Tom would survive the war and did not pursue the matter further.

The following day Bryan led me up my first Lakeland climbs, Needle Ridge followed by Westmorland Ridge, to a splendid view from the summit of Great Gable. There were no other climbers around, Brackenclose was deserted, and for the whole week we had the crags to ourselves. We had two days on Pillar Rock, a day on Scafell and another two on the Napes culminating in Bryan's tour de force, an attempt on Eagle's Nest Ridge Direct.

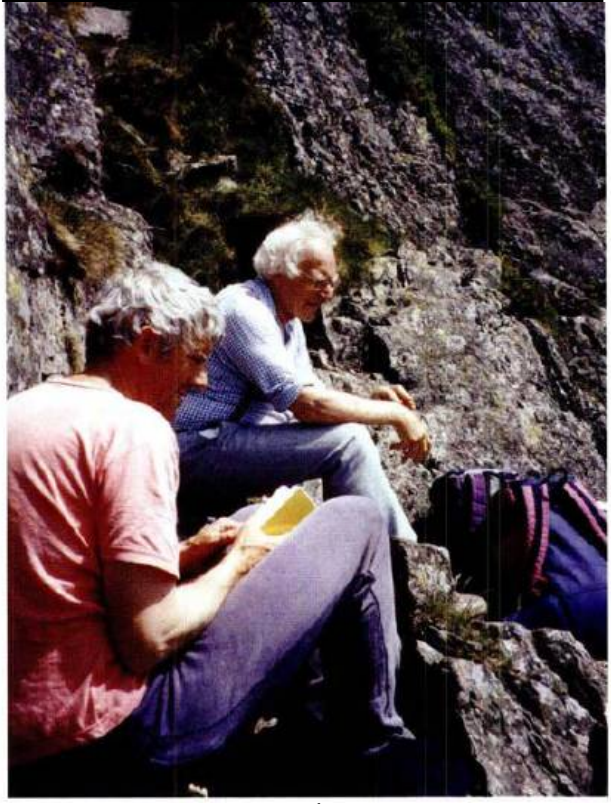
The fame and popularity of a few Lakeland climbs is such that they are invariably referred to by their initials: C.B. (Central Buttress on Scafell); G.C.R. (Great Central Route on Dow Crag); K.G. (Kipling Groove on Gimmer); and E.N.D. (Eagles Nest Ridge Direct on the Napes, Great Gable). First climbed in nailed boots on a cold April day in 1892 by a party led by Godfrey Solly, E.N.D. was without doubt the hardest rock climb in Britain at that time. The crux above the small ledge on the crest of the ridge (the Eagle's Nest) was climbed by combined tactics; Solly brought up his second, Cecil Slingsby, to give him a shoulder. They were sufficiently impressed by the route that they recommended that 'no one should climb it unless he had previously reconnoitred with a rope from above' (Godfrey Solley, Fell and Rock Journal 1909). Owen Glynne Jones made the second ascent in April 1898 and subsequently graded it Exceptionally Severe in the classification of courses in his classic book *Rock Climbing in the English Lake District*. E.N.D. remained the most difficult climb in Britain until Fred

Dress Circle, The Napes, Great Gable; July 1st, 1942. Left to right: Tom, John Wilkinson, Bryan Greaves, Wally *(Bryan Greaves Collection)*

Botterill climbed his famous slab on Scafell in 1903. In 1909 Botterill, one of the most technically gifted climbers of the day agreed to second Thomas J. Rennison who wished to lead E.N.D. In the fashion of the times, Botterill belayed his leader by passing the rope behind a spike (probably the pinnacle known as the Piton at the stance at the top of the first pitch of the route). When Rennison fell, the rope broke on the belay and he was killed: Botterill never climbed seriously again.

Despite its technical difficulty, exposure, and at that time complete lack of protection on the crux pitch, E.N.D. only appeared one third of the way up the graded list of Severes in the in the current F.R.C.C. Guide (second series, C.J. Astley Cooper, Great Gable 1937). This situation was rectified in the 1969 F.R.C.C. Guide (fourth series, P.L. Fearnehough, Great Gable) where E.N.D. was regraded to Mild Very Severe (4b), thereby becoming the earliest route of that grade to be climbed in Britain.

In the Dress Circle, Bryan delved into his rucksack and produced his secret weapon specially reserved for the occasion: a brand new pair of Woolworth's plimsolls with thin black rubber soles. These were the best rock shoes available until P.A's came into general use in the late 1950s. Bryan led off up the sun-warmed rock and belayed on the piton at the top of the first pitch. I followed in my well-worn tennis shoes with their low friction, shiny gristle-like soles. Despite the lack of any protection,



Dress Circle, the Napes, Great Gable, June 6th, 1992. Left to right: Terry Parker, John Wilkinson *(Bryan Swales Collection)*

Bryan continued up the crux pitch in fine style and, with some trepidation, I followed. It was a great route to end my first week of climbing in the Lakes.

Over the years I have always enjoyed repeating E.N.D. Two ascents in particular stick in my memory; the first time that I led it and the last. In 1944, still too young to join the Fell and Rock, I was again staying at Middle Row Farm with a couple of friends. We had a great week's climbing ending with a strenuous day on Pillar Rock. Over dinner that last evening, my friends agreed that we had enjoyed a superb week but were disappointed that we had not managed to fit in E.N.D. The thought struck me that we could still do it! We finished dinner in a hurry, grabbed our gear and set off for the Napes. Gavel Neese with one of Mrs Naylor's dinners recently consumed proved to be a stern test. However, by around 9.00p.m. we roped up in the Dress Circle and I led off up E.N.D. as the evening shadows gathered. The light had almost gone by the time the last man had completed the route

and we descended the West Chimney in a hurry. We blundered our way down Gavel Neese in darkness, not having had the foresight to bring a torch. I still marvel at the fitness and temerity of youth.

In June 1992 I persuaded a group of Raw Head regulars to drive round to Seathwaite and accompany me to the Napes in order to celebrate the centenary of the first ascent of E.N.D. and my half-century. Wearing the latest rock boots with sticky rubber soles and armed with an array of slings, wedges, and a couple of 'friends', I led off up the route, now climbed in one pitch. With plenty of protection, it was certainly a different proposition from the ascent fifty years earlier. As the F.R.C.C. Selected Climbs Guide, Lake District Rock 2003 commented, 'small wires have made all the difference to this once very bold climb'. Surprisingly none of the Raw Head team had climbed E.N.D. previously and thoroughly enjoyed it.

Memories tend to fade with age, but those of my long solitary journey to Wasdale Head and of those superb first days on Lakeland rock with Bryan, to whom I owe so much, are still with me, sharp as they were those many long years ago.

Girls *(Joan Tebbutt)*

Offcomer

Bill Roberts

Out of the mist,
The faint putter of the farmer's quad.
"Hello!" I say; "Aw reet?" nods his reply.
A bright young collie on the back,
Wags his tail, his tongue,
Makes clear he owns this place,
His home, not mine.

Out of the mist,
The skylark floats his local anthem,
While down below a linnet cousin,
Startled by my blundering boot,
Takes off, buff-brown, dark-streaked,
His angry eye claims this his territory,
His home, not mine.

Out of the mist,
A shadowed figure enwreathes, dissolves,
So transient it could perhaps be he
"Who so loved these fells" (so the plaque declares)
From these memorial slabs which, cromlech-like,
Await his leased return, and guard
His home, not mine.

Out of the mist,
A gaping shaft drops black as hell
To levels where they mined bright minerals,
Men, blind to the surrounding heaven,
Who cared for naught save accident, roof-fall;
Marking with legacy of track and spoil
Their place, not mine.

Rebuffed, I doubt the mists will ever clear,
For all my manifold ascents up here;
The restlessness, the homelessness, still will ache;
The mind's confusion a limited content must make;
Accepting that a natural communion will come
At last, if not by birthright, yet by fate, true home.

High Pike 15th July 2004

A Pathway in the Peak

Leslie Shore

Joyce Cosby, who came originally from the Manchester area, told me during a walk around Teesdale that she started her mountaineering career in the Peak. The terrain we met on our way to ascend Teesdales's High Field, she reminisced, was 'like the hills of her youth, Kinder Scout'. We were dodging peat hags at the time, and tripping through thick moorland grass. I had yet to walk in the Peak. However, she seemed reluctant to recommend a visit to her native heath. Perhaps she wanted to keep the secrets of the place to herself. Nevertheless, she left me believing that the Peak was the playground for Manchester's walkers, with its Bleaklow being well trodden by its citizens.

It was not curiosity that caused me to make a trip to explore Bleaklow, but my desire to place a tick next to its name in a list I have of English 2000ft high mountains. Thus, one August Sunday, Steve Riley and I stepped out of my car at Torside Reservoir, to walk up Bleaklow. My car was just the second one that had parked at this spot, and the first one was nearby. The eyes of this vehicle's driver were focused upon us the moment we got out of my car. She walked towards us with a Biro gripped between some fingers of one hand. The Biro moved through the air like the baton of an orchestra's conductor. She introduced herself as a representative of a local municipal authority, and carried a clipboard complete with questionnaire. We were invited to answer the questionnaire's questions, but we declined claiming that we were statistically unrepresentative samples. We were, after all, from south Lakeland.

Soon afterwards we scurried past her, and she was far from our minds ten minutes later as we tackled Long Gutter Edge directly. Pulls on stringy stems of heather aided our ascent up this steep hillside. However, numerous little outcrops of millstone grit frustrated our climb due to having to zigzag around them. Pleasure returned to our conversation when we caught sight of a great space of moorland that Long Gutter Edge had been a barrier to seeing. We reckoned that the day's weather looked set to remain sunny, as we mopped dripping sweat from our faces. The visibility was excellent. The route ahead, across

what the Ordnance Survey map called Clough Moss, promised to be a stroll.

Our first objective was Bleaklow Stones, to the east of Bleaklow's summit. Bleaklow Stones was not immediately visible, but I thought that the way to it was obvious: just follow the connecting ridge between it and the summit. With Steve's agreement, we followed this route. The walk to the ridge was through thick grass. The rustle of blades of grass, due to a breeze, was no balm to growing tedium brought on by what seemed a never ending, and aimless walk. Some impatience, or irritation, set in when we began to consider that the ridge was proving elusive. At one moment, during this stage of the walk, the mechanical noise of a helicopter swooped just above our heads, to make a welcome intrusion. It was the cue for me to realize that although the helicopter pilot knew where he was, and where he was going, we could not say the same for ourselves. We had not found the expected well-worn walker's path that led to Bleaklow, and would link Bleaklow to Bleaklow Stones.

Pangs of hunger, and a wish to quench our thirsts, caused us to halt for a snack and refreshment. Steve lay down on the ground, munched his food, sipped water and watched in silence as I attempted to locate where we were. With the map spread out on the ground, I glanced around me to find that the featureless nature of the landscape mocked at my ambition to find the direction to Bleaklow Stones. Man, though, had littered the skyline with a number of radio or telephone masts, and initially I thought they could be useful for back-sighting purposes. However, the map's mast symbol did not help differentiate them according to their heights. My attempt at navigation had failed. I folded up the map, and stuffed it into my rucksack as waste paper. The situation made exploration the solution, and a foray eastwards became our course of action.

We encountered almost immediately a scene which, for us men of Furness at least, was daunting. High waves of peat hags lay before us with the appearance of no-man's land found at the Somme during the Great War. We both agreed that a trek through such a scene was unappealing. Nevertheless, Steve believed that he knew how to steer us, with the minimum amount of grief, through such a morass.

'Riley's Rut Rule', as I later called it, was put to the test. Steve's plan of attack was to walk up a rut, which I learnt afterwards are known

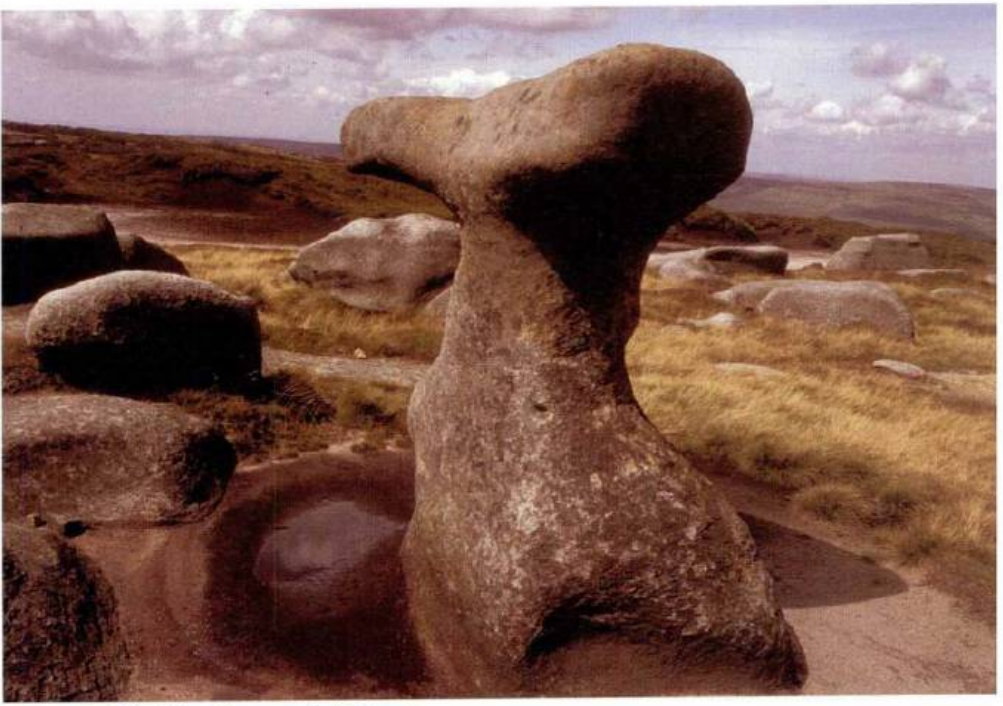
locally as 'groughs', by following a trickle of water to where it appeared to rise, and then switch to another rut, and repeat the procedure. We trod upon a slippery ground of oozy black peat that created a fear of slipping. Strangely, considering that the water ran over peat, it looked clean and pure. One alternative to using Riley's Rut Rule was to proceed like an equestrian cross-country horse rider. The wedge of grass that lay between a pair of ruts could then considered as places to land upon, having leapt across each rut. However, an inadequate jump pitched a person into the peat and a yucky landing. Steve led, I followed, and his rule was proved to my satisfaction when we caught sight of a jumble of rocks, Bleaklow Stones.

We advanced to it, sharing the excitement of the sight of Nature's work as a sculptor of rock. I interpreted one large piece of rock as being the head of a long-beaked bird. In our haste to inspect the bird and other rock shapes, we had rushed past a man sitting on a spar of rock giving the appearance of the mascot on a Jaguar car's bonnet. Our elation must have disturbed the man's peace, and distracted him from his grandstand view of yellow coloured moorland, at a lower level, to the east.

Upon noticing him we walked over to say hello. He cordially welcomed us, and laughed at our confession that as men from 'the Lakes' we had found navigation on Bleaklow to be somewhat testing even on a clear day. He responded by generously telling us about a route that offered a way around the peat hags. We thanked him for his suggestion, said farewell, and turned westwards. He had told us to look for a faint parting in a thick carpet of skeins of deep grass.

Steve and I were both relieved and delighted when we found the start of the suggested route. The vague path continued for seemingly a considerable distance across gently sloping, rough, pastureland. It became evident that walkers rarely used this route. However, as we skipped along the route, the soles of our boots scoured the grass so making the route less secret. Yet, where were the hoards of people I had expected to meet on Bleaklow, including those from the Manchester area?

Gasping for breath, I tried to keep up with Steve as he made his way to the summit of Bleaklow. However, I soon trailed behind. He had



Bleaklow Stones (*Leslie Shore*)

sufficient time to open his rucksack, take out his water bottle, make use of the large cairn of stones marking the apparent summit of the hill as a lounge chair, and swallow mouthfuls of water before I arrived. As I approached I realised that a small stage of peat, with a tiny cairn on it, was the true summit. Upon standing at this place, I looked down upon him and invited him to join me. He declined, and observed that weather and walkers' erosion would make the place where he sat the summit in the near future. He drew my attention to a large group of walkers. The walkers were moving gingerly, in a southerly direction away from us towards a mound marked on the map as Higher Shelf Stones.

This caravan of walkers became hares for us to chase. They seemed to be slow at negotiating marshland that lay in a depression between us, and Higher Shelf Stones. We galloped after them, and almost immediately had to side-step two men carrying huge, bulky looking rucksacks. In the brief exchange of hellos, we learnt that their mission

was the Pennine Way, south to north. Showing a degree of cunning, we ignored the trodden way for a more direct line, and so overtook the caravan of walkers. The price was damp feet. Our prize was to secure the best shelter from the chill of a breeze in the rocks of Higher Shelf Stones. We rested, and took our second snack and drink of the day. The welcome we offered to the leaders of the human caravan that later marshalled near us drew no response. We eventually sidled away from Higher Shelf Stones. We sped off northwards to join the Pennine Way.

Our descent down the Pennine Way's well-worn track brought us to the brink of Torside Clough. This ravine-like cwm, we both agreed, was the most impressive feature of Bleaklow. Nature seems to have elbowed itself with considerable force into the millstone grit, to form this steep sided cul-de-sac. The Pennine Way took an exposed line along this cwm's western side, before plunging downwards to a point slightly above Torside Reservoir and a distance west of our desired destination, the car park.

A convenient way eastwards, back to my car, was along a disused railway line. The route was busy with legions of strolling people. Slaloming around the people we became tilting targets for the occasional cyclist. We stumbled into a jam-packed car park. The lady from the local authority looked weary but happy, thronged by people completing her questionnaires.

A month later, I read a letter in The Daily Telegraph written by Derek Horner of Manchester under a subtitle, 'a vibrant Britain needs both ramblers and foxhunters'. A point he made was that the 'hunting fraternity' had 'every right' to 'hunt on their own land' while the public had the 'right to walk on their land'. The public, he seemed to be suggesting, should only use paths provided by the local authorities 'as an amenity for the local population'. Nonetheless, his proposition was: 'there is no need at all to open private land to the public'. He added that 'the moorland around Manchester is boggy in winter and subject to ignition in summer – [and] anyone wishing to walk across this miserable terrain must be masochistic, or making a political point'. Maybe the political point had already been made as the mass trespass by the 1920s on Kinder Scout. However, according to him, if people dislike discomfort and pain, then it is unlikely that mountaineering careers would ever begin on Bleaklow. One consequence of this, maybe, will

be that in the future its vague paths will fade into obscurity. Another, perhaps, is that Riley's Rut Rule will never become as well known as Naismith's Rule.

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Carn Eighe, by Leo Sharratt *(Michelle Collier Collection)*

Le Com-Ping Gaz *or* Alcohol as an Aid to Mountaineering

John Hickman

There was a time, many moons ago, when three or four of us would assemble in the Scottish hills at Easter to try to get as far from civilisation as was possible in a long weekend. This particular year it was to be the Cairngorms. The permanent ones of the party were Jack Carswell, Charles Tilly and myself.

Each member of the team was responsible for different aspects of the organisation. Nowadays I think it would be called 'logistics' but in those days logistics had yet to be invented.

My duties included the provision of the dreaded Primus stove together with the paraffin, methylated spirits, Meta blocks and matches. Jack was appointed principal victualling officer. I really know not why, as historically his main contribution seemed to be the provision of an inexhaustible supply of what were known as 'Lifeboat Biscuits'. Whether this had anything to do with the fact that his home was not far removed from Vickers at Barrow we never established, but our suspicions were always there. The only positive attribute such biscuits had was that they were so hard that no self respecting weevil could ever bore into them. However, their great disadvantage was that in order to have any prospect of changing them from a rock hard slab into anything resembling an edible carbohydrate diet, a large quantity of liquid (preferably hot) was required and this, as you will see later in this report, was in seriously short supply.

Charles' unwritten responsibility was as supplementary food supplier in the hope that he could relieve the monotony of Jack's biscuits and, although of course we never insisted upon it, we found we could always rely on him to keep us supplied with a modest amount of appropriate liquid refreshment. This year his food duties seemed to consist solely of bringing one of those horseshoe-shaped salami things. You know, about one inch thick and nine inches in diameter, looking a bit like a small horse's collar. "Well," someone said, "if we can't eat the thing it could be worn around the neck to keep out the cold."

A few days before Easter my telephone rang. It was Jack with some surprising information. "John," he said, "no need to bring your Primus."

"Why's that?" says I.

"At great expense I've acquired a new type of stove. It's called Com-Ping Gaz", says he.

"Whatever's that?"

"It's just like a Primus stove but uses gas."

"Don't you mean Camping Gas," says I.

"No," says Jack. "It's French and it's pronounced Le Com-Ping Gaz."

"Okay, but how does it work?"

"Well, it's got a burner on the top like a Primus but you buy these little blue canisters which screw onto the bottom, then you turn on a valve, apply a match, and bingo the stove is lit!"

"What, after all these years, no Primus, no socks or food smelling of paraffin, no Lifeboat Biscuits soaked in meths, and no Meta blocks which even if you could get them to light, never get hot enough to vapourise the paraffin?"

"None of those," he says.

"Marvellous, marvellous," says I. At last a considerable number of pounds could be shed from my rucksack and no longer would we suffer the whims and fancies of my ageing brass stove.

So at Coylumbridge we met, followed by that long trudge past Glenmore Lodge and up through the gaily clad skiers, who clearly thought we were crazy. Off to the right we headed into Aladdin's Gully, which gave us good sport. Then it was over the top and down to the Shelter Stone. The day had started cold with a clear blue sky, but as we descended into the Loch Avon basin the clouds closed in and by the time we were down it was snowing steadily. Ten minutes later Charles announced that he had found the entrance by burrowing under the snow, so in we went onto that lovely bed of dry bracken. (Has Health and Safety insisted on fire doors, sprinklers and central heating yet, I wonder?)

We switched on torches, snuggled into sleeping bags, rolled onto our tummies and in great anticipation waited for the appearance of Le Com-Ping Gaz. Out it came. A little blue canister was screwed onto the

bottom, the valve turned and a lighted match applied. Silence. Nothing. Not a hiss. No comforting roaring Primus sound. No heat! Zero! Zilch!

Not a word was said, off came the canister to be passed round the team. No hiss, no smell, nothing except a few choice anti-Gallic expletives. "Try the other one" (Jack had brought two). Yes, you've guessed it – NOTHING! So no brew, no soup, no dunked submarine biscuits, not even any liquid H_2O to dilute the half bottles of whisky and gin which Charles had thoughtfully provided.

In the middle of this performance, in came four worthy Scots who watched with mounting incredulity and amusement as the drama unfolded. Then, without any consultation with the rest of the team, Charles says to the Scots, "In exchange for a share of this bottle of Burgundy, would you mind very much heating some food for us?" A bottle of Burgundy! "Where's that?" "Warming between my thighs", he says. So for the heating of a tin of soup and a beef stew we had to share what was clearly our only bottle of wine with four very thirsty Scotsmen. A poor exchange, thought Jack and I, but how wrong we were!

(Some weeks later I bestirred myself to write to Monsieur Le Camping Gaz suggesting that it would be wise to print a public health warning on his products along the lines of "Some idiots don't realise that this gas freezes solid at sub-zero temperatures. Those with any common sense will take these canisters into their sleeping bags for a bit before expecting the gas to perform as promised". My suggestions must have been met with a Gallic shrug, as no reply was ever forthcoming.)

Early next morning the Scots slipped away without being noticed, clearly needing to conserve their fuel supply. No tea, no porridge. My breakfast, if my memory serves me rightly, was some uncooked porridge oats mixed with a handful of snow. Oh well, nothing for it but to get going. So it was straight out of the Basin, heading for Ben Macdui. The temperature was low, with a weak sun. Not a burn was flowing, everything frozen solid. The clouds came down and gentle snow began to fall. Navigation was easy – just keep going uphill.

A large cairn was reached. The top of the hill, or so I thought. Lunch was a boiled sweet, a square of Kendal Mint Cake and a suck on a lump of ice. Just as we were about to start heading due west down

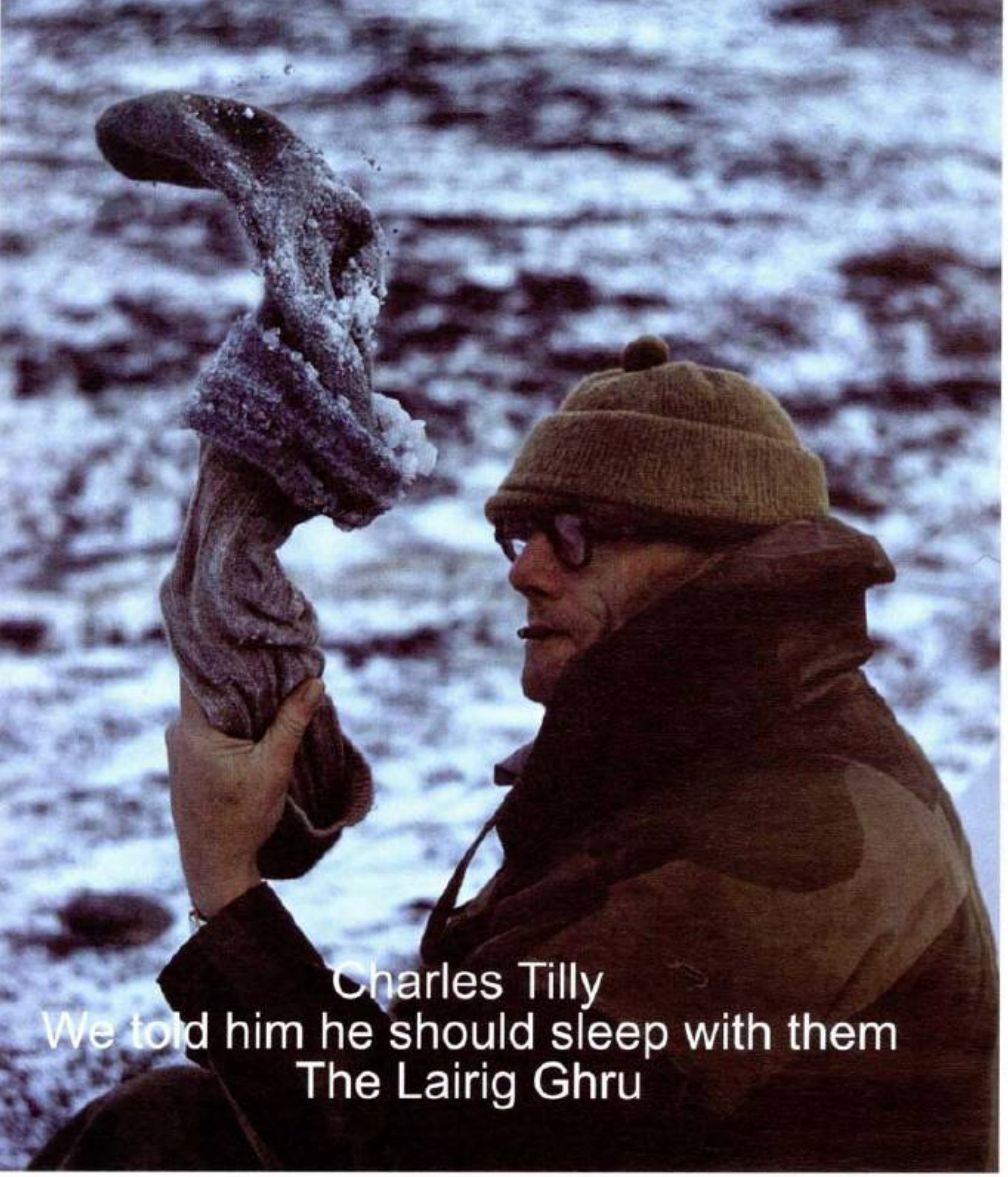
to the Lairig Ghru, Charles found it necessary to visit the other side of the cairn. On returning, he announced in that gentlemanly voice of his that on the other side of the cairn was 'some palpably higher ground'. Now I knew what rocky higher ground, or even snow-covered higher ground was, but 'palpably higher ground' was terrain which I had not encountered. I happened to say so to Charles and received a withering look for my pains. So on this palpably higher ground we went up to an equally unfriendly cairn, not much different from the first, both enveloped in thick cloud and being snowed upon, then (for those who know their T. S. Eliot) 'down we went', to the Lairig Ghru. The snow stopped and the clouds lifted, so we camped and witnessed a superb end to the day, with a hard, hard frost everywhere.

Still no liquid. A little neat Scotch with a lump of ice in it was tried. An attempt to warm it in the hands only achieved the risk of frostbite; something to do with the Second Law of Thermodynamics, they tell me. Next morning dawned clear with high, dark grey cloud casting an eerie light. Everything was in monochrome. My breakfast consisted of some uncooked porridge oats with half a tube of condensed milk squeezed over them, watered (if that is the right term) with a little neat gin. Without something else to wash them down the oats were awful and were cast upon the ground, perhaps to intoxicate some local wildlife when the temperature eventually rose.

So, up onto Braeriach, round the ridge to Cairn Toul, then a plunge down through the crags under Angel's Peak and back to our tents in the fading light. It had been a great day in the hills.

Approaching the tents we became aware that Charles had stopped and seemed to have been reduced in height somewhat. Currently, I suppose, he would be more politically correctly described as being suddenly 'vertically challenged'. When we enquired as to the reason for this strange phenomenon, he very succinctly told us that he had broken through the frozen crust and was up to his knees in liquid peat. Great! we thought. Water at last!

But not a bit of it, unless, of course, we could separate the wetness from the peat and mud. Somewhat reluctantly we settled down to another night without liquid. Those of us still with dry legs advised Charles that he should sleep with his wet socks. All we heard from him was a polite grumble, the import of which was that he could think of



better things to ... etc., etc. Next morning the socks were rock hard. When held up they resembled an inverted L shape and had to be beaten into submission before they could be worn.

So it was out of the Lairig Ghru and the frozen Cairngorms, and into the Rothiemurchus Forest. Spring had come, and there were great tits and chaffinches, the 'chip chip chip' sound of cross bills and a raven croaking from on high.

We arrived at the Coylumbridge camp site and by any measure we had had a truly magnificent long weekend. I unrolled my tent onto the grass and, casting our rucksacks aside, we all flopped down on it. I suppose, although we would never admit it for a moment, we were in fact suffering from just a wee shortage of sustenance and were just a tad dehydrated.

Against the fence was (to be kind to it) a rather well-used caravan and a battered elderly car. The door of the caravan opened and there stood a middle-aged, rather plump lady in carpet slippers, thick wrinkled stockings, a flowered dress and a cardigan, who said in a broad Glaswegian accent which I will not attempt to imitate: "You gentlemen (yes, gentlemen!) look all in. Would you like some bread and bowl of hot tomato soup?"

Aren't some people wonderful?

Traverse of the Black Cuillin of Skye, 18 July 1956

Beryl Yates

On a fine warm evening June, Ursula and I set out from our foreshore campsite to make our way round the Black Cuillin.

June Newby was one of the instigators in regenerating the Oxford Womens Mountaineering club, together with Denise Morin/Evans and Ann Percival/Johnson. June was a born leader with a determined chin, a ready smile, and full of an infectious enthusiasm. In July 1956 she was already a member of the FRCC. Sadly, she died of cancer in her early thirties.

Ursula Brown/Oxburgh, in the same year and college as myself, was reading Chemistry. She was (and still is!) talkative and vivacious. Shorter than most of us at 5'3", her rock climbing ability was impressive. It was Ursula who led on that day, down the Inaccessible Pinnacle, across the Thearlaich-Dubh Gap and up Naismith's route on the Basteir Tooth. In her teaching career, spare time was spent training her students in the Expedition section of the D of E Award Scheme. Now in her seventies she is still competing in Orienteering events and coaching young people to do the same.

I can't really describe myself, Beryl Coates/Yates, but I think I was a strange mix of confidence and shyness. With a friend in my school sixth form I had become familiar with the YHA and had learnt to love scrambling and fell walking. It was the example my friend set by joining her university mountaineering club that led me to turn up for the first meeting of a resuscitated Oxford Womens Mountaineering Club, when the OUMC had a strictly male membership. At the time of this traverse, I had just taken my Physics degree and had a career with Pilkington Glass Research ahead of me.

I had never visited Skye before and was captivated by the beauty of the Black Cuillin. We camped in Glen Brittle on the shoreline.

We had had a glorious time climbing and scrambling in that region in hot, dry, sunny conditions, and our traverse of the Cuillin was made at the end of a fortnight's holiday.

We decided that we would see how far we could go along the Ridge. After all, there were a number of passes by which we could escape if

we wished! Obviously we would need a very early start so we thought we would bivouac on Gars-bheinn at the southern end of the Ridge. On the summit we found very little space to spread out our sleeping bags, but our discomfort was more than compensated by a magnificent display of the Northern Lights, the first time I had ever witnessed them.

At 4.30 a.m. we looked along a mist-capped ridge and agreed to set off. Slowly the mist melted away, unfolding peak after peak until nearly the whole of that amazing gabbro rock ridge lay before us. We noted the time for each summit: Sgurr Alasdair was reached at 7.40 a.m. and the Inaccessible Pinnacle at 9.20 a.m. We met no-one on the entire route, even though our campsite was crowded. Amazing! We could have been in another world!

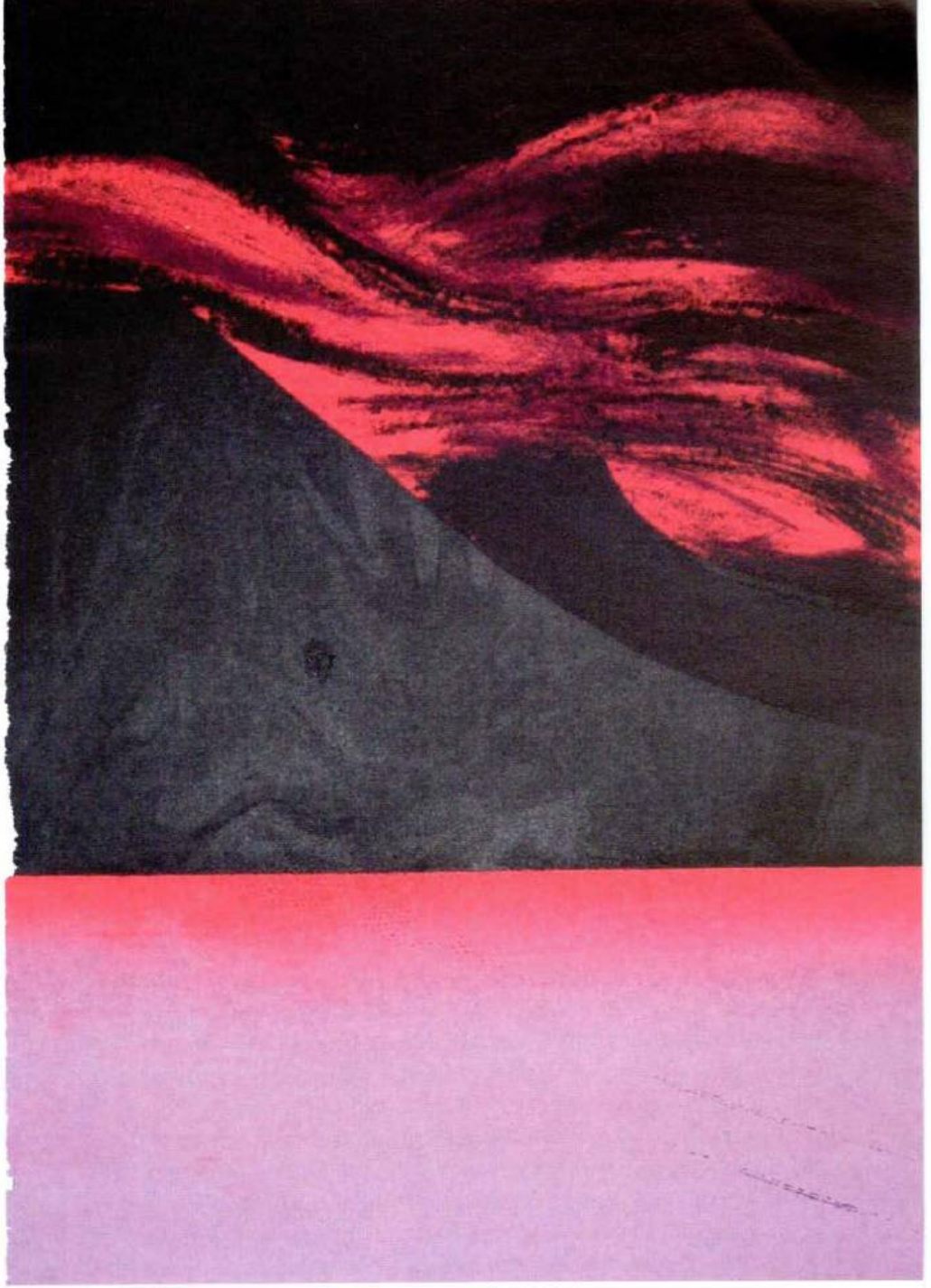
Earlier in the holiday we had surmounted the Pinnacle and crossed the Thearlaich-Dubh Gap. There remained the Basteir Tooth but in the event it was no problem. We finally sat on the summit of Sgurr nan Gillean at 6 p.m. and recorded ourselves on camera. I remember it seemed a long way down to the Sligachan hotel and we were delighted to be met by some young men with cars from our campsite. Never had a lift been more welcome!

P.S. Months later I met Anne Littlejohn of the Ladies Scottish Climbing Club who told me that with two friends, Betty Stark and Anne

Ursula and June on the last peak *(Beryl Yates)*

Clark/Murray (both also LSCC) she had also done the Ridge in 1956. Their expedition was altogether more praiseworthy than ours for they had done the entire round from their base at the head of Loch Scavaig. They thought that they might have been the first all female group to complete the Main Cuillin Ridge within 24 hours. They later discovered that three Oxford girls had done the traverse a few weeks earlier – i.e. us ! Is it possible that we were the first? To be honest I don't really think so. Women had been doing formidable climbs for decades and I don't believe that the Skye Ridge would have been neglected.

It really doesn't matter. Ursula and I have our memories of that fantastic day.



Sky and Sea, Skye, by Paul Hudson

Dodging Death on Les Droites

Peter Fleming

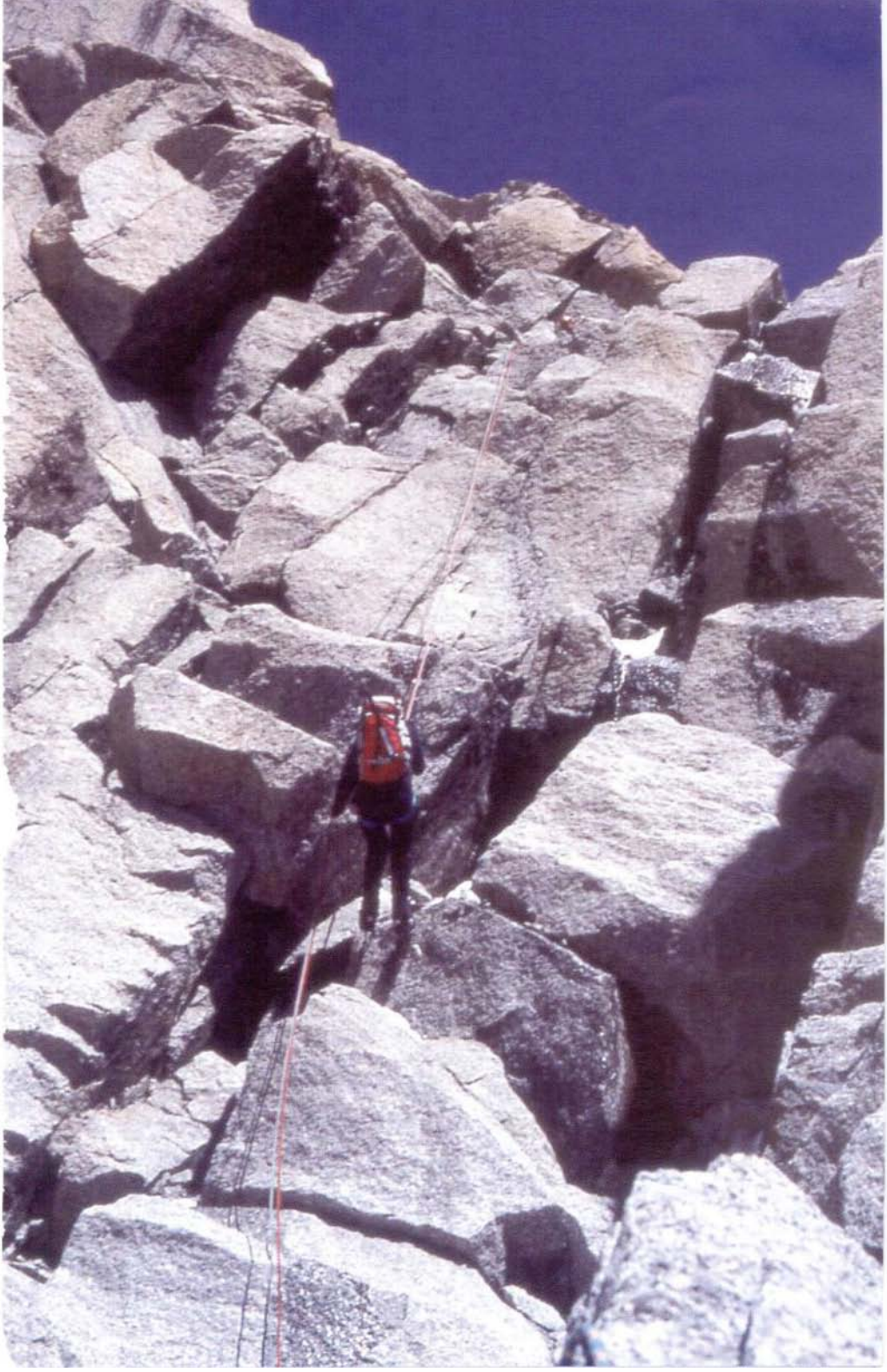
The view from the Couvercle hut must be one of the finest in the Alps, with the North Face of Les Grandes Jorasses dominating the scene, followed by the Rochefort Arête and the Aiguille du Géant. From the south west comes the snowy massif of Mont Blanc. Nearer to the west are the rock spires of the Chamonix Aiguilles. To the north of the hut are the Aiguille Verte and Les Droites.

When the alarm woke us at 2.00a.m. after a few hours of disturbed sleep and little rest, the view meant nothing. We began the usual scrabble in poor light with other shadowy, half awake figures, getting our gear ready and eating a quick breakfast before setting out into cold air and the darkness of the early morning. No one leaving the hut then had any idea of the tragedy and narrow escapes which would unfold within the next few hours.

It was soon apparent that our party of three was the only one planning an ascent of Les Droites. Lights could be seen on the Aiguille Verte. After leaving the boulder fields and the moraine below the Aiguille du Moine, we began the long traverse of the Glacier de Talèfre, our route passing recent aircraft wreckage protruding from the ice like a warning sign of omnipresent danger.

The ascent of the East Peak of Les Droites was the penultimate 4000-er in Barbara Swindin's Alpine mountaineering career. Her husband, Les, and I had already climbed it some years previously. Due to lack of snow in the couloir on the approach to the South Ridge, we decided to follow the alternative route towards the Col des Droites and gain the ridge via the East Buttress. Whilst this climb is only graded AD, it is still regarded as a serious expedition. Rounding the foot of the South Ridge we crossed the bergschrund and commenced to front point up the steep névé and ice towards the col. Conditions were good. There was a clear sky and no wind. As we reached 3500m it began to grow light and we veered left to the foot of the east wall. We climbed the massive granite blocks piled one on top of another that form this

Opposite: Abseiling down the East Buttress of Les Droites (*Peter Fleming*)



150m wall, and I never cease to be amazed at the colossal forces at work in mountain building, which can reduce apparently solid granite to tottering, unstable masses.

It was a pleasure to be on rock and in the daylight after a long approach on ice. As we gained height the sun rose and bathed us in warmth. We soon reached and climbed a short, steep snow slope and then a sharp snow arête, and the summit ridge was not far away. The final few metres consisted of unstable blocks on an exposed ridge. There was no cairn on the summit, and very little room. It was about 8.00a.m. on a beautiful day, and the views were magnificent. It was so clear that even the Weisshorn and the Matterhorn were visible in the distance to the east. Around us, for 360°, the whole Mont Blanc Massif, with all its satellites from the Chardonnet to the Grepon and the Verte, stood out brilliantly in the morning sun. We were all happy to be there, Barbara especially so. We had just been beaten to the summit by two French climbers who had appeared from the Argentière side after completing a long and serious route on the North East Spur. It transpired that they were concerned over their non-appearance in the valley as they should have returned there two days ago but difficulties had forced two unscheduled bivouacs on their route. We were aware of helicopter activity somewhere, but could see nothing. The noise seemed to come from the direction of the Verte and went on for some time whilst we relaxed in the sun on our elevated perch. Suddenly, with a great burst of noise, a red helicopter rose up from the north side and hovered over our heads, changing positions occasionally. It stayed with us for ten minutes or more, observing us closely, and we guessed it was the Gendarmerie de Haute Montagne looking for our two Frenchmen. There was no way of communication with the helicopter, and eventually they must have realised none of us needed rescuing and left us in peace, but we thought something was wrong in the direction of the Verte, as helicopter activity continued somewhere in that area.

We were reluctant to leave our magnificent viewpoint to begin the descent. Abseiling down the granite blocks that made up the East Buttress we regained the steep névé. Les and I were mindful of the stonefall we had encountered on this slope the last time we had climbed the peak and no time was wasted in getting down it. We crossed several

deep runnels in the ice, evidence of the forces that scoured this flank of the mountain from time to time.

We had descended to a point on the slope some 700m below the ridge crest when it happened. For some unknown reason Les looked up and behind him, and it was our good fortune that he did. He gave a warning shout. I looked up and was horrified to see a large cloud of rock dust blowing across the sky towards the Tour des Courtes. Its source was a substantial part of the East Ridge of Les Droites, which had detached itself from the mountain and was heading straight for us at high speed. We were directly in its path, and what ensued was a desperate race for our lives, hard to describe to anyone who has never tried running across a steep, icy and exposed slope, wearing crampons, whilst attached by a rope to two companions!

Without a word being said between us we knew there were only seconds to spare before it reached us and we just had to get out of its path. Midway through our frantic efforts to escape, I glanced up to see enormous sections of rock breaking up during their downward plunge and fanning out on the slope above us. I reached and dived behind a huge boulder, the only one there, embedded in the ice slope. My two companions were still in a perilous situation on the exposed slope above the boulder. I desperately tried to find a secure belay for the rope in case they were struck and flung down the mountainside, but there was nothing. Compared to them I was relatively safe, unless, of course, my big boulder was struck by an even bigger one. I watched, incredulous, as the nucleus of the rockfall completely obliterated the place where we had stood only seconds before. A fleet of car-sized blocks leapt and bounded down, pushing a high wave of snow and ice before it. At the same time scores of boulders and rock fragments were flying through the air above my head, buzzing and whirring as they went. My thoughts and fears were for Les and Barbara who were out of sight. I could not believe this intense bombardment could possibly miss them and I expected they would be carried down with the flying debris and drag me with them. After what seemed an age, the rockfall and the noise it created passed by. The largest pieces of rock were coming to rest on the glacier hundreds of metres below. Then there was silence.

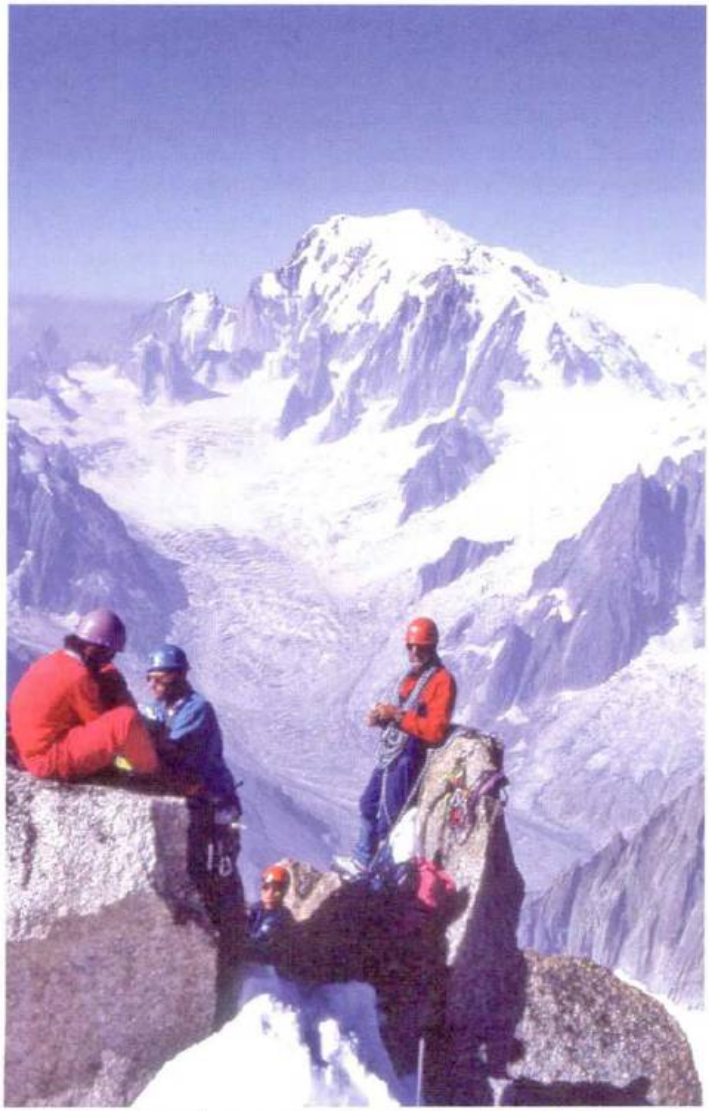
It had happened in the space of a minute, but it was the longest minute of my life.

There was no sound from above. I shouted anxiously and to my great relief there was a reply and Les and Barbara soon appeared around the boulder. They were unharmed. Not even the rope had been damaged. In the circumstances it had been an unbelievable escape. Les had apparently stood his ground, facing the flying rocks and desperately dodging and ducking the ones coming straight at him, whilst Barbara had made herself as small as possible curled on the ice next to a small boulder. They had all missed, and we considered ourselves to be extremely lucky.

After double checking the rope we recommenced the descent as quickly as possible, casting backward glances every few minutes, until we had reached the relative safety of the mainstream glacier before we felt we could relax. The long trudge back to the Couvercle Hut was completed in near silence, each of us preoccupied in our own thoughts about what could have just happened.

We were looking forward to a good brew at the hut before setting off back to Montenvers and Chamonix. On approaching the guardian for hot tea water we were stunned into further silence on learning of a bad accident on the Aiguille Verte in the early hours of the morning, which explained the helicopter activity we had heard. The previous day five Swiss climbers and one French guide had set off to climb the Verte via the Couloir Cardinal. They were very late reaching the summit and decided to wait until nightfall and lower temperatures before risking the descent. They reversed their ascent route in two ropes of three with the guide on the second rope. Towards midnight the guide decided to traverse towards the base of the notorious Whymper Couloir. They had just reached it when they heard a deafening noise as rocks began to break away from the summit of the Verte, dislodging masses of snow and ice. The guide cried out a warning and threw himself under a small overhang. He was saved but his two companions were killed on the spot. The second rope of three was carried down by the rock fall as far as the bergschrund. Two of those died as well. The guide, unharmed, hurried down to the hut to raise

the alarm. The recovery operation did not start until first light when helicopters could take off and reach the scene. We were only too aware who had been the lucky ones on this day.



Mont Blanc from the summit of Les Droites *(Peter Fleming)*

The Great Wildspitze Disaster

John McM. Moore

It was some years ago, in an alpine hut at the end of a long day 'on the hill', with members of one of those clubs whose dinners are 'black tie and decorations' that I first heard this yarn of ski-mountaineering derring-do. The evening was drawing on and as we gathered around the glowing stove, replete and lubricated by a post-prandial glühwein or two, 'C', normally a reticent man, unexpectedly embarked upon his tale. It transpired that C's first ski-mountaineering tour, many years before, had been made remarkable by an epic event, the memory of which is so deeply etched that after a moderate amount of alcohol he feels an irresistible need to unburden his soul by recounting the fateful events of The Great Wildspitze Disaster.

The story concerns a party in the Ötztal led by a now departed and much lamented ski-touring establishment lady of the Belinda, Lucinda, Camilla and Annabel clan. The group was fated from the start. One elderly tyro developed the symptoms of a heart attack before the tour had even begun, by unnecessarily sleeping out on an Austrian station bench when he should, in C's professional medical opinion, have been immersed in feather duvets on the bed of a gemütlicher Gasthof, with other members of the party.

Having thus lost one participant to the elements before the tour began, it was with some trepidation that the rope, comprising more than its share of 'tyros and rabbits', embarked on the ascent of the Similaun under the firm direction of two guides, the senior of whom we shall call 'Fritz'. As the party plodded up the ridge, the wind grew stronger and the already biting cold increased to a point when extremities numbed to anaesthesia. Still they pushed on and it was only on return to the hut, driven back by the elements, that the extent of the frostbite damage to the nose of the guide and the toes and fingers of other party members could be gauged. In one case this was manifestly serious and the man returned to England, subsequently to lose the tips of several digits.

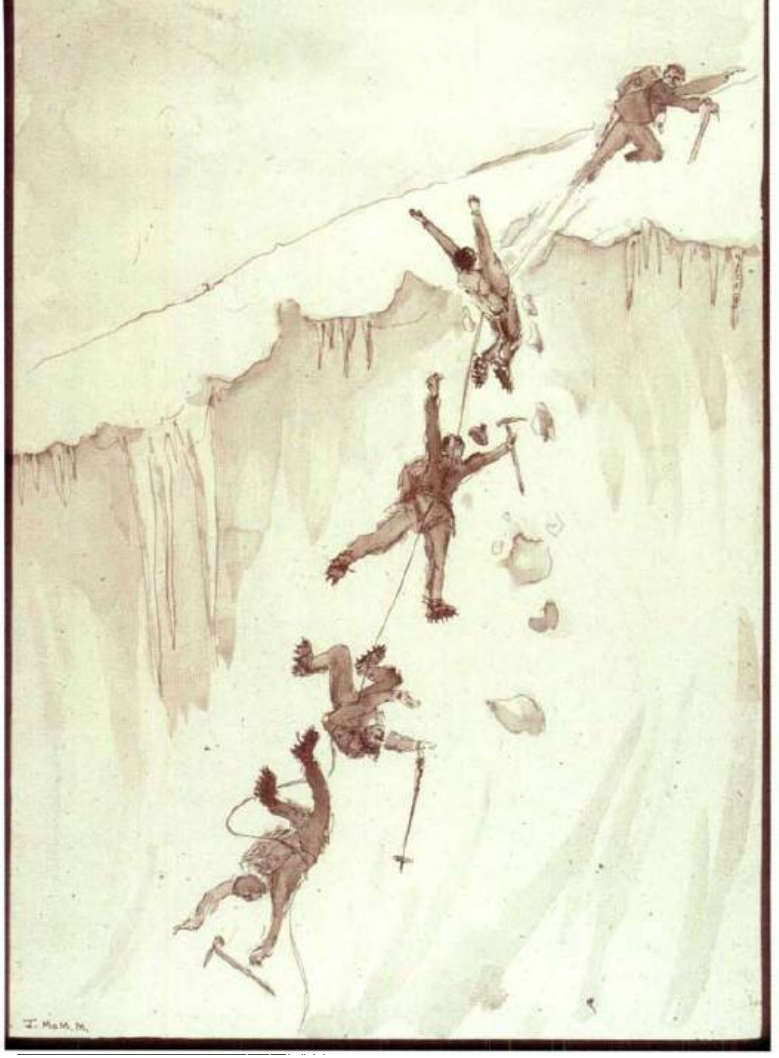
One can imagine the foreboding with which the survivors must have set out for their final, ominous objective, the great Wildspitze, highest

mountain in the Tyrol. Luckily weather was perfect as up snow slopes and corniced ridge they climbed, linked together by the thread of a single rope, like pearls in a necklace draped across the bosom of a dowager. Disaster came suddenly and without warning as, during a pause for recuperation during the ascent, one of the less experienced members probed and poked aimlessly with his ice axe, near the cornice edge. In less than the blink of an eye the cornice had gone and with it the prodder who found himself hurtling down the North face in free fall, at the acceleration rate of gravity. Soon afterwards, the lady leader, who had been occupied in taking photographs of the mountain vista, was disturbed from her reverie by that insistent tug on the rope which arises from the weight of a full-grown man hurtling down an icy cliff, and reluctantly the leader joined her charge in his descent. Like toppling dominoes, the remainder of the party with increasing speed began to disappear one after the other through the enlarging slot in the cornice, until Fritz's turn came.

Guides are trained to deal with dangerous and potentially catastrophic situations on mountains and to protect their clients at all costs. His training and experience should therefore have made Fritz's case different from those who went before him. But, unfortunately, despite valiant attempts to belay, his years in the mountains served to no avail at the critical moment and impelled by the force (mass multiplied by acceleration) of those descending, he joined the headlong cascade of bodies.

C, who still remained on the ridge, had been observing the developing events with increasing interest since he was also attached to the rope. Realizing that a momentous experience had come early in his ski-mountaineering career, but presuming this was a fairly normal event for a beginners' ski tour, he coolly set about making preparations, as the rope tightened, to arrest the by now quite numerous, falling party. He adopted the correct belay brake stance, he plunged his axe haft to the adze in the névé and placed his weight upon it. The tugs came one after another with increasing ferocity but somewhat cushioned by the elastic properties of kernmantel rope.

What happened next apparently came as a surprise to C. In his own words: "One moment I was pressing downwards with all my strength on the axe belay, the next I was airborne, flying through the air in a



The author's impression of the Great Wildespitze Disaster, based on C's eyewitness account of the incident; after the style of Gustave Doré.

graceful arcing trajectory, with with a bird's eye view of events below". C recollected thinking "Godstrewth!" as he skimmed through the air. Not a man to over-dramatise an event like falling off the Wildspitze summit ridge, the word he used to encapsulate the thoughts which passed through his mind while in transit on the ice was "funny".

It is not often, and I speak here from personal experience, that one is thankful to fall into a bergschrund. Nevertheless, it was with gratitude that C re-joined the other members of the party inside the snow-filled crevasse at the foot of the face. Undoubtedly it was the snow-filled

bergschrund which saved the otherwise ill-fated ski mountaineers, aspirant and experienced alike, from serious injury or worse.

Disgruntled, the discomfited guides disentangled themselves and their, fortunately unharmed, entourage, took stock of the results of the fall and gave thanks for a fortuitous deliverance. It was now that the truly resilient character of the British showed itself. As C recounts, 'having 'touched the void' the party dusted itself off, pulled itself together, and re-climbed the Wildespitze, albeit with some reservations about the advisability of taking along the 'prodder'.

At this point, as the hut stove was cooling, the wine carafe empty once again and his audience wiping the tears from their eyes, C enunciated the morals of his cautionary tale – "Think twice before you tie on to a rope with half a dozen people you don't know; being with an Austrian guide does not always save you; remember well the value of that cautionary injunction so beloved of Northern mothers – Come away from that edge!"

Tyrolean Odyssey 1949

Albert Hattersley

After a long cold day on Kinderscout in February 1948, some friends and I were drumming up at the bottom of Grindsbrook. It was about 5.30, late afternoon and we were relaxed knowing that the gamekeeper was off duty at that time on a Sunday. We were reminiscing on the day we had had and making arrangements for the following weekend.

Up until then I had not spent much time with this group. They preferred mostly to walk in the hills, whilst I had recently become a member of the Rucksack Club and spent most of my time rock climbing.

The conversation got around to possible trips abroad. It was just after the war, when it was becoming easier to travel. Jack Peach turned to me and asked if I would be interested in a trip to Austria the following year. I said 'Count me in'.

On the 7th of August, 1949, Frank Bedder, Jack Peach, Jack Reeves, Bill Wilson, Tony Marples (Tonks) and I began a two week holiday in the Austrian Tyrol. We had all joined the Austrian Alpine Club and had arranged with Ingrams to travel out by train. We caught the cross-channel ferry at noon on the Sunday and arrived at Oetztal about 4pm on the Monday. We had time for a few beers before we caught the bus to Zweiselstein, a village about 20 miles from Oetztal. Travelling on, the transport in the mountains proved to be very different, and was not helped by all the gear we had to carry. We had Bergen, or similar, frame rucksacks, hemp ropes, Government surplus ice axes and home-made crampons. Most of our clothing, too, was Government surplus.

After an uncomfortable journey along bumpy mountain roads, which dropped precipitously for about 200 feet to the River Arzl, we reached the Hotel Post, where we stayed the night. On Tuesday we overslept and spent the morning in the bar.

From Zweiselstein we had a choice of taking a bus to Obergurgl or a jeep to Vent. These villages lie about 10 miles distant at the head of their respective valleys. We set off for Obergurgle from where we began a four hour climb, in intense heat, to the Hochwilde Hut (2900m). Being members of the Austrian Alpine Club we were able to use their

huts for a reduced fee of one shilling and six pence (7½ p) per night. We were able to buy limited amounts of food in the huts, which was very expensive at three shillings (15p) for a dish of thick soup with bread and cabbage cooked with caraway seeds. Hot water was sixpence (2½p) per litre. These prices are put into perspective when you consider that the weekly wage for a tradesman in England was about £5.

There was no beer in the hut, just schnapps, and food became more expensive the higher we went.

On Wednesday we had a good day climbing the Hochwilde (3460m) and the Annakogl (3336m). These peaks are joined by a high level snow covered ridge, about 1½ miles long, with steep drops on both sides. The weather had been good for most of the day, although we had to sit out an electric storm for half an hour. We sat some distance away from our ice axes and watched sparks jump from one to the other.

We returned to the hut in the early evening, as snow and mist were blowing up the Gruber Gurgler glacier. An odd looking group of youths and girls was seen approaching the hut. We were astonished to see such unsuitably dressed people at this height; they wore low shoes, shorts and skirts, and as the blizzard was becoming worse it was little wonder they were looking tired and worried.

We learned that they were an English group on a German language course at Obergurgl. The group of about twelve had hired only one Austrian to guide them. That night Tonks got quite smitten with an English girl in the party. He told me later that she wore some thick knickers, which her mother had knitted to keep her warm. How he knew that I will never know.

We had planned a fairly hard day for Thursday, but thick cloud came down, so we decided not to go too far afield and to return for a third night in the hut. We spent some time practising cutting ice steps on a steep ice slope on the glacier. (Can you imagine cutting steps instead of front pointing?) Later Tonks and I took a walk up the glacier to have a look at the Mitterkam, an outcrop of flaky rock rising to 3,200m from the middle of the glacier and looking like a fairytale castle. We did some climbing but felt very vulnerable on such friable rock.

On Friday morning it snowed hard and again the cloud was low. We decided to go to the Ramal Hut about two hours across the glacier.

After breakfast we were preparing to move off when the Austrian guide asked us to accompany him across the glacier ... and would we spread ourselves out among the students and offer any assistance that might be required? Apart from boosting our self-esteem, it had the advantage of saving us from having to rope up; because of his local knowledge he was able to guide us through the crevasses. In one hour we were across the glacier and spot on the path to the hut.

On arrival at the hut our fellow travellers, who were exhausted, revived themselves with cognac and hot soup and hired another guide to take them down to Zwieselstein.

After discussing our plans for the next few days, it was decided that Frank Bedder, Jack Peach and I would stay at the hut and hope for better weather, and hopefully get something done. The others, Jack Reeves, Bill Wilson and Tonks, succumbed to the lure of the fleshpots of Zwieselstein; for Tonks, was it the attraction of 'her of the knitted knickers'? Reading Tonks' diary later, I noted that she with the woolly drawers invited him to go on to Vienna with her, but the appeal of the mountains brought him back to us. Foolish lad.

Saturday started with bad weather, but nevertheless we made our way to the Breslaur Hut and later that day our three friends arrived at the hut, after having a horrendous journey by jeep to Vent. The road was too narrow for buses and in places it had crumbled away on the edge of a 250 foot drop. I understand Tonks averted his eye by talking to an old farmer, Jack jabbered quietly to himself and was prepared to jump at any time, while Bill spent the trip in silent prayer.

We had hopes of a good day in the mountains on Sunday, but it was not to be. Sunday proved to be our worst day, with a fierce storm; the blizzard raged all day.

Monday wasn't much better, so another day was spent sitting around the hut. The hut was full by now. There were about thirty Austrians and ourselves, and we had a pleasant musical evening. They sang a lot of their national songs. Not to be outdone we sang 'On Ilkley Moor 'baht Hat'. They applauded us, but I'm sure it was in sympathy.

The shortage of food became apparent when we saw some of the Austrians staying in the hut were able to bring with them only a meagre

amount of food. One guy, for example, had a loaf of bread, one end of which had been hollowed out and filled with lard. He would cut a slice of bread from the loaf and smear it with a thin coat of the lard. This was the only food he had during his two days at the hut.

Another example of the food shortage occurred a few days later when we stayed the night at a small farm. The breakfast we had next morning was one slice of black bread and a cup of coffee each. Coffee was in such short supply that the lady poured out the coffee and then proceeded to pour from one cup to another to make sure there was an equal amount of coffee in each cup.

On Tuesday we arose to find the mist had almost gone, so after a quick breakfast we set off for the Wildspitze, at 3,700m the highest mountain in the Tyrol.

We eventually caught up with two of the Austrians who had been staying at the Breslaur Hut. We climbed in company with them, and used their rope as a top rope for the ascent of an ice slope. We had magnificent views from the summit. The only difficult part of the descent was a rib of rock which, although it was not more than 200 fe high, was so rotten and flaky that it took us about 30 minutes to ne tiate.

With all the snow we had had in the last two days there was plen of small avalanches, but we came down without any trouble. Afte spending a night in a hotel in Vent, we decided to walk down the valley towards Innsbruck over the next two days, because the weather was not going to improve.

And so for the next two days we had a very pleasant walk by the river, sleeping in hostels and drumming up by the river. Food was in short supply although we had swapped a quarter of tea for a small, fatty ham shank which, with an egg or two, lasted for the two days. Because we were travelling light we had no mess tins with us, so we used a Craven A cigarette tin to cook the ham, and aluminium M & B tablet tins to boil the eggs and make coffee. Some of us, having run out of tobacco, dried our coffee grounds and smoked them in our pipes.

Friday saw us in Innsbruck. At that time the war had been over for about three years and the whole of Austria had been divided into zones. Each zone was policed by different countries. We were in the

French zone. The Black Market was rife and to see armed police on the streets was disquieting. There was also a curfew in operation, which meant there was to be no noise or standing around in groups after dark.

We had a heavy night drinking in a beer keller with some newly found Austrian friends. We found that when we first met Austrians away from the mountains, they were quite aggressive towards us, especially those in their late 20s and early 30s who had been prisoners of war in England. However, after a few beers it was agreed that Austria and Britain were the two great nations of the world.

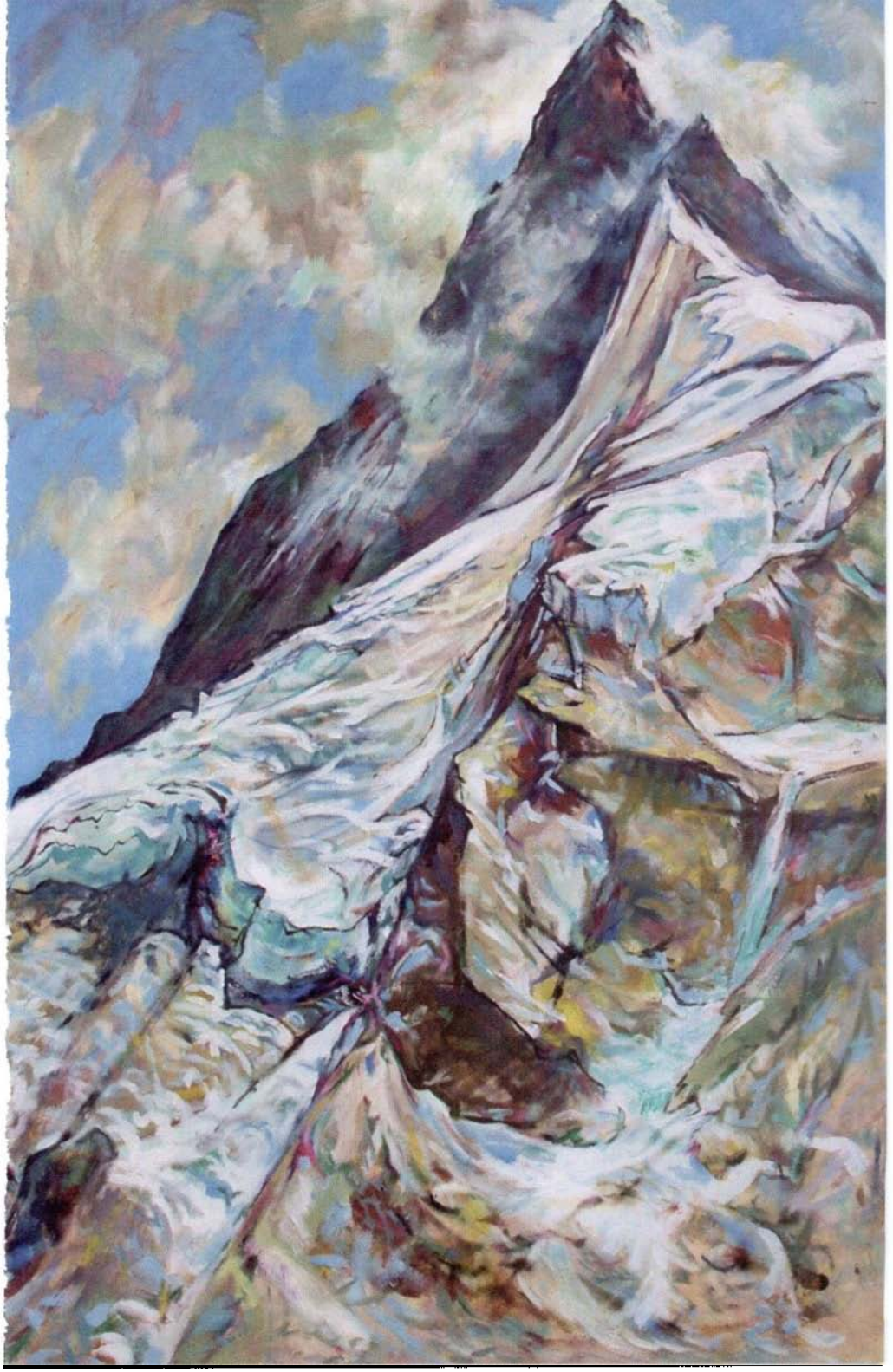
Two of our Austrian friends insisted on escorting us back to our hotel, and one of them fell foul of the police. We were strung out across the road, arm in arm, well after curfew and singing out loudly. Fortunately the Austrians politely declined Jack Peach's offer to drop the policeman into the River Inn.

After reinforcements of one more policeman, one of our friends was frog-marched off.

The whole holiday cost about £28. This was quite expensive, really, but it helped when we were able to sell our remaining money on the Black Market at 50% profit.

My friends all returned to their jobs whilst I, having just finished an apprenticeship, was called up into the RAF.

Opposite: Matterhorn, by Peter Osborne



A Guideless Ascent of Mont Blanc

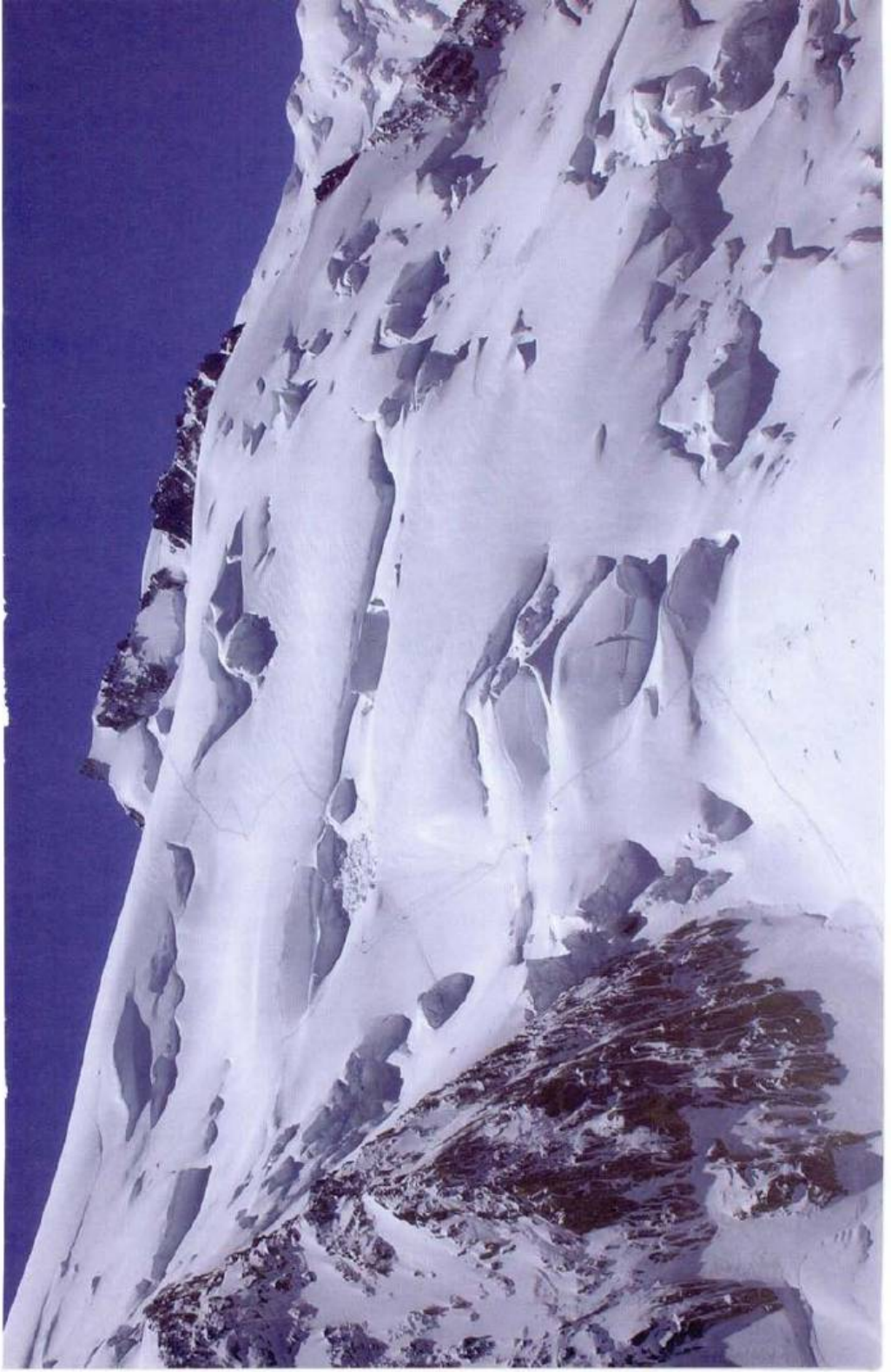
Paul Exley

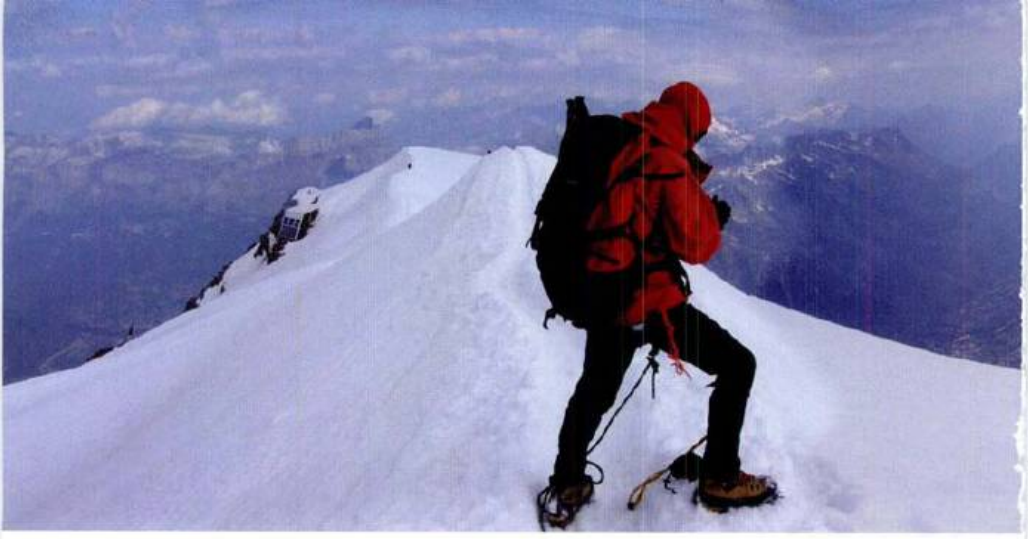
"And will you be using a guide?" enquired the lady with the camera, just as we were setting off from the Midi. "Oh, no", we said, "we've been climbing mountains for a long time. We've always managed fine by ourselves."

When we started Alpine mountaineering we didn't have much money – certainly not enough for a guide. In any case, it was all about adventure with friends, making our own decisions and mistakes, finding our own way. When we reached a summit, it was our party's achievement, not that of someone we'd never met before and with whom we felt no kinship. As our experience had grown, there was even less incentive to employ a guide. The exploits became harder and longer to maintain the degree of excitement and concern. Although there's some comfort in the near certainty of reaching a goal, self-guiding maintained a degree of doubt and anxiety, so success was even more valued.

It was late in our second week in Chamonix and almost at the end of the holiday. The weather had been mixed and we could see lots of fresh snow on the high mountains. Anyone climbing the Walker Spur would have been justified in claiming a winter ascent, and the huge triangular face of the Aiguille du Goûter, usually bare rock, was plastered, and this in mid-July! A few days earlier, on a trip out to the back of the Midi to play in the snow, we had seen the superbly crafted track zigzagging up and across the face of Mont Blanc du Tacul, avoiding séracs and crevasses and disappearing towards Mont Maudit. The guidebook was quite clear that the route over the flank of Tacul was a route to Mont Blanc. Down in Chamonix, we had visited the Maison du la Montagne and, on the top floor next to a scale model of the whole massif, we chatted to a knowledgeable assistant about the route. She described several aspects of it and the details of how it had been climbed in the last few days. All valuable information, presumably culled from the guides. For our ascent, it seemed a good idea to let others make the trench through the fresh snow, particularly the guides who were paid to be there.

Zigzagging trails up the flank of Mont Blanc – people almost visible *(Paul Exley)*





Whilst checking us in at the Cosmiques, the guardienne told us with a bewildered shake of her head that it had been three degrees there at two o'clock that morning. "Plus three," she said, "not minus. Yesterday it was four degrees." And this at over 3600 metres!

Next morning at two o'clock we were all gearing up amid over-loud American accents and, stepping out into the still-soft snow, listened quite incredulously as the several teams of Americans checked out their walkie-talkies. Although in the minority numerically, they seemed to be the only ones talking. Of some 80 people in the hut, all but a handful were heading off towards Mont Blanc. We joined the procession. After losing some height to the Col du Midi, the long upward haul started. An American, leading a rope of four, thought she would overtake us but, after thirty yards of marching through knee-deep soft snow, appreciated why everyone else was staying in the trench. And I'm sure Stewart, my climbing partner, didn't speed up. At least, not much.

Up we climbed, a stream of head-torches in the dark. After a while, one of the walkie-talkies squawked into life to announce that Henry had fallen into a crevasse. No matter that forty people had safely stepped over it, Henry had fallen into it. Consternation. Two teams of Americans just ahead of us decided that they ought to go back and help. We moved up in the queue. It got quieter.

There were a few worrying blasts of chill spindrift on the ridge of Tacul – we had, at last, passed the 4000 metres milestone and into negative temperatures. As we entered the broad, easy basin beyond, it became quiet and the skies started to lighten, which always lifts the spirits, especially with the orange lights of Chamonix over three thou-

Panorama of the Chamonix Aiguilles from the Aiguille du Goûter (*Paul Exley*)

sand metres below. The technical crux of the route (though it wasn't very hard) was the steep slope to the Col du Mont Maudit. More zigzags, more queuing. Lots of tat around protruding rocks; clearly those in descent had preferred to abseil or, being in France, to rappel. Once over the north-west ridge of Maudit, an easy traverse led us to the Col de la Brenva, a huge, flat area beneath the final, long plod to the summit. It's a good place for a bite to eat and a rest.

Climbing the Mur de la Côte was better; the snow was now frozen and it was satisfying to feel and hear the crampons biting into the névé. We had some space around us at last but were in mist and so lost the hoped-for views. At length, we came up behind another guided team who were slowed down by one of the party who was obviously less fit than the rest. They let us pass.

Close to the top, we met a party in descent. They told us it wasn't far. Once on top, we found a couple of other parties standing round in the wind-blown, freezing mist. Surprised at finding mobile phone reception, I couldn't resist a call home. I can't even do that from Raw Head! After a brief stop, we set off down after checking that the latest arrivals had indeed climbed from the Goûter hut. We were glad, despite map and compass, to find ourselves in another trench. Near the Vallot hut another party led (we thought) by a guide, told us that they had started not from the Goûter but from the Tête Rousse hut, a full 650 metres lower.

Once below the mist, it was good to re-establish contact with the layout of the valley and realise that the Aiguille du Goûter is not the pyramid of rock it appears to be from the valley, but a long, slightly undulating ridge, falling steeply to the left. From the hut, audaciously perched slightly below the summit, we followed the indescribably dreadful path down and ran the gauntlet of the glacier crossing to pass the Tête Rousse hut and, eventually, reach the spot where the snow ended.

We must have seemed rather bizarre dressed in several layers and wearing crampons, gaiters and all the paraphernalia, when the tourists lounging at the hut were in shorts and tee shirts. Before long we arrived at the tramway and sat in tired satisfaction as we clanked and ground our way through forests and hamlets.

A long but successful day and, just as we had said, we hadn't used guides. Had we?

Paul Exley

Ski-ing Across the Dolomites

John McM. Moore

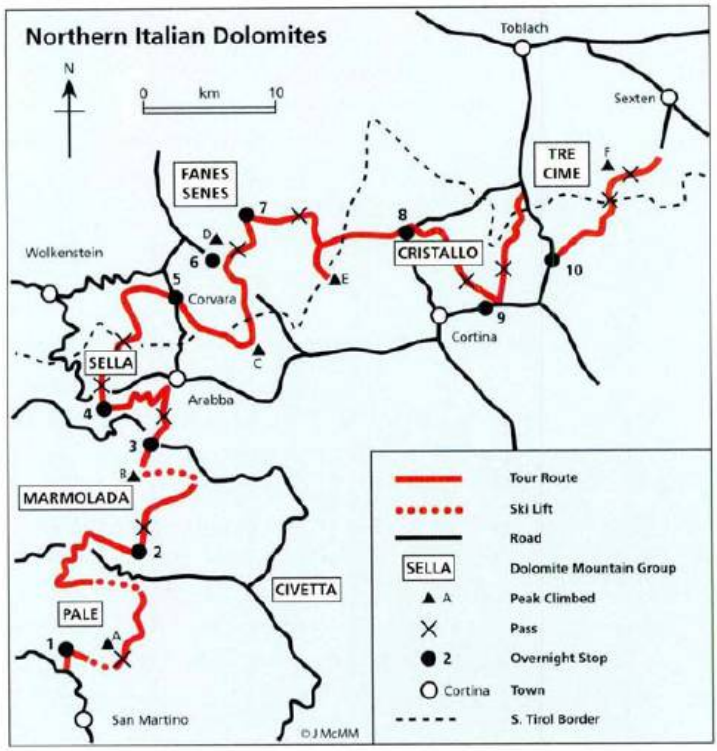
At first glance the Dolomites hardly seem to be ski touring country. The grey and buff coloured faces, pinnacles and towers can be more intimidating under snow than in summer sunshine. Despite the initial impression, there are some spectacular traverses between and through the mountains which, in early spring, are surrounded by snow-covered meadows. The individual, isolated ranges are separated by valleys with pleasant villages where Austrian, Italian and Ladinian languages and cultures mix.

Ski tours follow the routes of several summer 'Alta Via' walks. Best known is the 160 km traverse, which runs northeastward across the Pala, Marmolada, Sella, Fanes-Senes, Cristallo and Sexten groups. The trip is not a single route but a skein of alternative tracks and trails, which can be combined in many ways to make an 8-10 day 'High Level Route'. Fortunately this 'Haute Route' is not as popular or crowded with ski tourers as the heavily congested Chamonix-Zermatt traverse. The Dolomite high route crosses several fashionable ski areas, notably the Arabba and the Sella Ronda circuit and Cortina pistes, where in season, one might encounter some of the 'ski buffs' of our Club.

Our trip began from the southern end of the route, above San Martino di Castrozza, at Passo Rolle in the Pala Group, from where a short ascent on skins in the twilight of a crisp, March evening brought us to the Capanna Cervino. Complete with the kind of carved pine furniture and red check chintz that gives any alpine restaurant its 'authentic' alpine atmosphere, this was the first of many similar huts we encountered during our trip.

It seems that all my ski tours include at least one 'disaster', typified by any of my catalogue of ascents of the wrong mountains. This tour was no exception and while sitting in the Capanna Cervino it was discovered that I had left all our maps in the car 80km away. Undeterred, after buying a lot of his wine, we persuaded the warden to part with his personal copy of the local Tabacco map sheet.

Next morning we set out for Passo Mulaz, pausing only to chase, in vain, the loose-leaf guide book page for that day's tour, which was whisked away to eternity on the breeze. During the ascent to Passo



Mulaz, we discovered another benefit of ski mountaineering in the Dolomites. That is, with initiative, unprincipled ski-tourers like ourselves can eliminate at least some of the uphill drudgery associated with 'real man's' ski mountaineering. Monte Mulaz is accessible by a ridge scramble from the pass. From the saddle, we skied Val Focobon, a steep-walled valley flanked by spectacular pinnacles, which leads to Falcade. Using single trip tickets and piste maps we succeeded in skiing downhill more or less all the way to the Rifugio Flora Alpina, 600m above our starting point at Falcade.

Next morning, a 700m climb up a wide, lonely valley brought us to the Forcella Rossa from where we started down the Valle di Franzecedas. This was the second of a series of valley descents, which begin with steep, sometimes slightly scary sections through rocks and small cliffs, followed by wonderful open terrain and snow-bowls, flanked by rock walls but which culminate in deep, soft, snow-filled trackless forests. As was to happen several times during the next few days, we

emerged at Malga Ciapella with bruised limbs and egos, from forests in which a hobbit would feel at home. Another couple of lifts, a traverse across the Marmolada Glacier and a scramble took us to the Punta Rocca (3309m), the 'ski summit' of the Marmolada. Avoiding crevasses and as the sun was setting, we descended the glacier to the Rifugio Dolomia on Lago Fedaia.

Not always is a lift available and so our next uphill section to Porta Vescova on the Sella Ronda ski circuit was hot and sweaty, but brought the reward of on and off-piste runs to Arabba (where of course, the map shop was closed). After a minor accommodation crisis we ended the day in peace, quiet and good company at the Baita Fredarola piste restaurant-refuge.

Our plan was to cross the Sella massif, using the Sass Pordoi gondola from Passo Pordoi, accompanied (we hoped) by the decorative skiing ladies and fashionable gentlemen of Italy, plus of course an anthropoid selection of snow-boarders. We were frustrated by closure of the cablecar but, undeterred, embarked with crampons and axes on the progressively steeper and narrowing 500m gully that leads to the Forcella Pordoi. It was here that our next embarrassment occurred as Nick, climbing well and ably wielding two axes, on front points in the mist, ascended the icefall that leads to the underside of the outside loo of the Rifugio Forcella Pordoi (luckily not in use during the winter closure). Chastened by this experience, and after a false start in entirely the wrong direction, we traversed concrete-like wind-slab to a chilly lunch stop in the half snow-filled Boè hut. After some searching, in biting wind, and swirling cloud, we finally discovered the entry gully to Val de Mesdi, the Dolomites' most celebrated off-piste run. I have to admit that staring down a 30° icy slope whose basal cliffs cannot be seen and up which a howling gale is peppering you with spicules of icy spindrift in temperatures of minus 16°C, is not conducive to 'sophisticated' ski technique. Nevertheless, after some hapless discussion about retreat and a certain amount of accusatory recrimination, we began, with trepidation, a delicate, sideslipping descent. It is amazing how a steep, icy slope culminating in 50m cliffs, in a storm, can concentrate the attention. Eventually, we emerged on to the valley floor for a run between 1000m rock walls to join the Sella Ronda crowds at Corvara.

From Corvara, via Pralongia, we climbed Settsass (2571m) and enjoyed powder on the north flank, on the run down to Armentarola and a comfortable guest house in St Kassian. From Alta Val Badia, it is a big climb on skins (1100m) – no uplift help here – to Forcella de Medesc and the Fanes-Senes National Park. We took in Monte Cavallo with panoramic views back to the Sella peaks before enjoying a relaxing run across a rolling upland plateau to the Fanes Hut – famous for the stambecco (bouquetin) whose head and shoulders decorate the bar inside while its rear end projects entertainingly from the outside wall.

From Fanes, we turned east over Col de Limo and after a digression to visit the Austrian Great War observation post and gun emplacements on Monte Castello, we once again ploughed down through the usual frustratingly dense Val de Fanes woods to Podestagno. An interesting, incidental, aspect of the tour is that it follows approximately the front line of the Austrian and Italian forces during the Great War. Even in early spring, one gets some idea of the miseries suffered by the unfortunate soldiers of both sides commemorated here and there by plaques in memory of some of the many killed by avalanche during the exceptionally bitter winters of 1915-17.

From Podestagno-Fiammes, a short road walk followed by skinning up the cross-country skiers' loipe (track) along the abandoned railway track brought us to the old Austrian hospice at Ospitale near the South Tirol regional border. From here another old military path takes one through the woods to Passo Son Forcia and then by the Cortina-Faloria pistes to Passo Tre Croci, where we took accommodation at Rio Geré restaurant/lift station. For us the highlight of the whole trip came next day, beginning with the long climb, ending with a crampon gully ascent with skis on sacks to the Forcella del Cristallo, whence a fantastic descent across the small Cristallo Glacier and the mysterious canyon of Val Fonda took us to Schluderbach in Süd Tirol and a ride back up the road to Weizen beers in Misurina.

The final leg of our journey was through the woods from the Lake of Misurina to the miserably cold, bleak Auronzo hut on the south side of the Tre Cime di Lavaredo (Drei Zinnen). To avoid the tree roots, one can opt for a 10 Euro skidoo ride from Lago di Antorno to the rifugio. From the Auronzo we carefully crossed the south flank of the Tre Cime, an area notorious for avalanches, then up to the Paternsat-

tel and once again back into South Tirol. The route to the Drei Zinnen Hut involves crossing a strip of ground which was the scene of some of the futile frontal attacks which took place soon after the war began in early summer 1915. Among the casualties was Sepp Innerkofler, warden of the Drei Zinnen Hütte and one of the most famous guides of his time with numerous first ascents to his name. He was killed while attempting, with a handful of companions, a 7 pitch, Mild Severe (grade 4) rock climb to attack an Italian observation post on the Paternkofel summit. His hut was destroyed by artillery fire about the same time.

After a brief rest for lunch outside the new Drei Zinnen Hut (Rifugio Locatelli) with spectacular views of the north faces of the Tre Cime, we climbed the Sextenstein and then got bogged down in soft snow and temporarily lost among the gullies and ravines, while trying to find our way down to Fischleintal. It all ended happily after a long 'pole' along the flat valley, at the Hotel Dolomiti (closed of course!), where we were collected by the friendly hotelier from Misurina.

As ski tours go, I think this is one of the best both for skiing and views. The whole trip takes about 10 days but can be shortened by missing sections or bus/taxi shortcuts, or extended by detours and inclusion of extra peaks. It is an excellent way to experience spectacular mountains away from the crowds, avoiding at least some of the uphill grinds but still enjoying the culinary pleasures of the valley. There are some wonderful traverses and dramatic off-piste descents in the Dolomites, particularly the steep gullies, but care is needed because many slopes are avalanche prone and have big cliffs beneath them. Frights are not uncommon, as at least one FRCC member can vouch.

I would like to thank Andrew Duxbury for his help in production of the map which illustrates this article.

Maps

Tabacco Series 1:25000. Sheets 022, 015, 07, 03, 010

Modern editions show ski routes which, because of avalanche hazard, do not always follow the footpaths.

Kompass 1:50000 scale maps, although not detailed enough for navigation, show selected ski tours.

Overnight stops

1 Capanna Cervino; 2 Rif. Baita Flora Alpina; 3 Rif. Dolomiti, Passo Fedaia; 4 Rif. Frederola, Passo Pordoi; 5 Corvara hotel; 6 St Kassian –pensione; 7 Rif. Fanes; 8 Albergo Fiammes; 9 Restaurant-Rifugio Rio Geré; 10 Misurina, Sport Hotel

Ski summits en route

A. Mte Mulaz, B. Marmolada –Pta Penia C. Setsass D. Mte Cavallo E. Mte Castello F.Sasso di Sesto (Sextenstein)

Opposite: Crossing the Passo Rolle in the Pale Dolomites (Day 1). (*John McM. Moore*)

Mosoraški

Andrew Paul

Normally I'm not given to subterfuge. But you know how it is on a big trip, especially at the start when no one is familiar with the area. Somebody mentions a climb, then everyone else thinks it's a good idea, and suddenly there are three teams following each other up a route. So this time we kept quiet, questions were met with vagueness – 'see how we feel in the morning', you know the sort of thing. Then in the early morning we crept away, like thieves in the night. Neil, our camp cook, found he had two less for the morning ritual fry up.

We were in Paklenica. Where? It's in Croatia, and it's brilliant. The climbing is in a deep gorge, a gash between the mountains and the sea. You can do a route in the morning, go for a swim and dive for sea urchins, then return for another route or three in the afternoon. The road leads right up to the gorge; from the car park you can walk 50 metres and find sport routes by the side of the track. Then turn right for 20 metres, cross over the stream (dry when we were there), and there are more routes at the other side of the gorge. The guide lists approximately 300 routes, the majority of which are bolted, which should keep most teams busy for a week or two.

When you walk into the gorge it has a happy, outdoor climbing wall feel about it. There is even a kiosk selling guide books and ice creams built into the base of a cliff half way up the track, which is also the entrance to a large underground complex built as a nuclear bunker for Tito. However, there is also a very high cliff (Debeli Kuk, 200m) at the end of the gorge, which gives a strong hint that there can be more to Paklenica than fun and sun. So you walk up the gorge towards Debeli Kuk, and gradually the view unfolds. Up on the right you have your first view of a huge cliff, Anića Kuk. The face is 350m at its highest point, and very wide, but it looks much higher as its base is way above, hidden behind subsidiary buttresses.

The route was Mosoraški, the only relatively easy (5c) way up the centre of the face, following a line of slabs, grooves and corners. All the surrounding lines are for grown-ups only, their grades predominantly starting with 7. The guide book says it is 10 pitches and 350m,

with a time of anything between 3 and 5 hours; add to this an allowance for the approach, British slowness, getting to the top and the descent, plus the fact that it was early October, and seriously dark at 7:00pm, and you will see the need for an early start, hence our stealthy departure. Later in the week we pushed the boundaries of what could be done between dawn and dusk, and ended up with a full 50m abseil, partly free, into the enveloping gloom (thankfully the ropes didn't snag when we pulled them through, which was a miracle), then descending an endless boulder field in the dark. And where were the head torches – yes, you've guessed correctly, they were in our sacks at the bottom of the cliff.

The guide says the start of Mosoraški is indicated by a karabiner. We looked for an old steel krab hanging from a bit of tat; or maybe the outline of a karabiner engraved in the rock. We never envisaged what we found – a giant industrial karabiner, eighteen inches of stainless steel apparently designed for lifting tanks, attached to a peg on steroids. Different.

But then we realised that this trip would be different when, twenty minutes from the airport, we hit a wild boar. Not a cat, or a fox, but a wild boar. The beast rolled over, picked itself up and staggered dazed into the undergrowth. We kept the bristles in the bumper as a memento of our encounter. But I digress …

The day did not get off to a good start. What was supposed to be an easy ramble up the first 50m turned into a sequence of balance moves – rock over, long reach and pull up at 5a at least, then do the same all over again. The moral is, follow the correct line of bolts. Muny was not amused with my route choice, but then he was carrying the sack and the time was ticking away.

This was succeeded by a pitch of cracks and slabs. All very straightforward, slot in a jam and move up, then do it again. But I see what Muny means about the sack, it's strange how they double in weight when you start climbing. At 100m we realise we are definitely on the easy way up the face. To our left rears up the vast heart-shaped wall in the middle of the cliff, very steep and bald, and already there are people on it, above us, having flown up the approach pitches while we blinked. Back down in the gorge there is a route called 'Big Wall Speed

Climbing, 6c+, which must represent the ethos of the area. Later in the week we saw a team at the very top of this wall at midday, which is some achievement.

Back on our route, there was still that big cliff air of uncertainty, as the upper pitches were not in sight, and the guide said 'one has to pay attention to the third length'. Up a little crack, the topo says, then trend L, then R. But how far? There is a way L, and then R above a roof, but it looks mossy, a bit loose and improbable, but so improbable that it could be instantly dismissed. Over to the R there is a shiny bolt winking invitingly, but it looks steep. This proves misleading; another long reach and a big pull, and the rest of the pitch became clear.

The subsequent two pitches bring the top into sight, albeit a long way off, and very foreshortened. The sun is creeping round onto the wonderful lower buttress further right – Stup, site of improbable routes, bridging up flutings – but the sun is still a long way from us. This could be a very cold place in bad weather, the sun only touches it in late afternoon, if at all. Time is passing, my toes are complaining and on reaching the next stance I toy with the idea of taking my rock boots off – very carefully; the consequences of dropping a boot the length of the cliff are too awful to contemplate.

From this vantage point the mountains open up; you are above the confines of the gorge. One enthusiast described Paklenica as a favourite place on a world scale, along with Red Rocks and Tuolumne. Once above the gorge the parallel with Tuolumne becomes clear. The line of the high (well not that high) sierra of the Velebit mountains comes into view. This is wild country, the mountains clothed in beech and black pine as far as the eye can see, and capped by bald summits. The National Park information boards tell us that there are bears and wolves in the forest. Human habitation is infrequent, and usually derelict. In some areas of the park there is an additional incentive to keep to the path, as there are still mines present from the Balkan war.

The crux pitch leads diagonally up a groove of tufa under a roof, and the first bolt seems very distant. This sport-climbing lark is all very well but it can lead you to forget about placed protection and be fazed by the distances between the bolts. Conversely you could argue that it

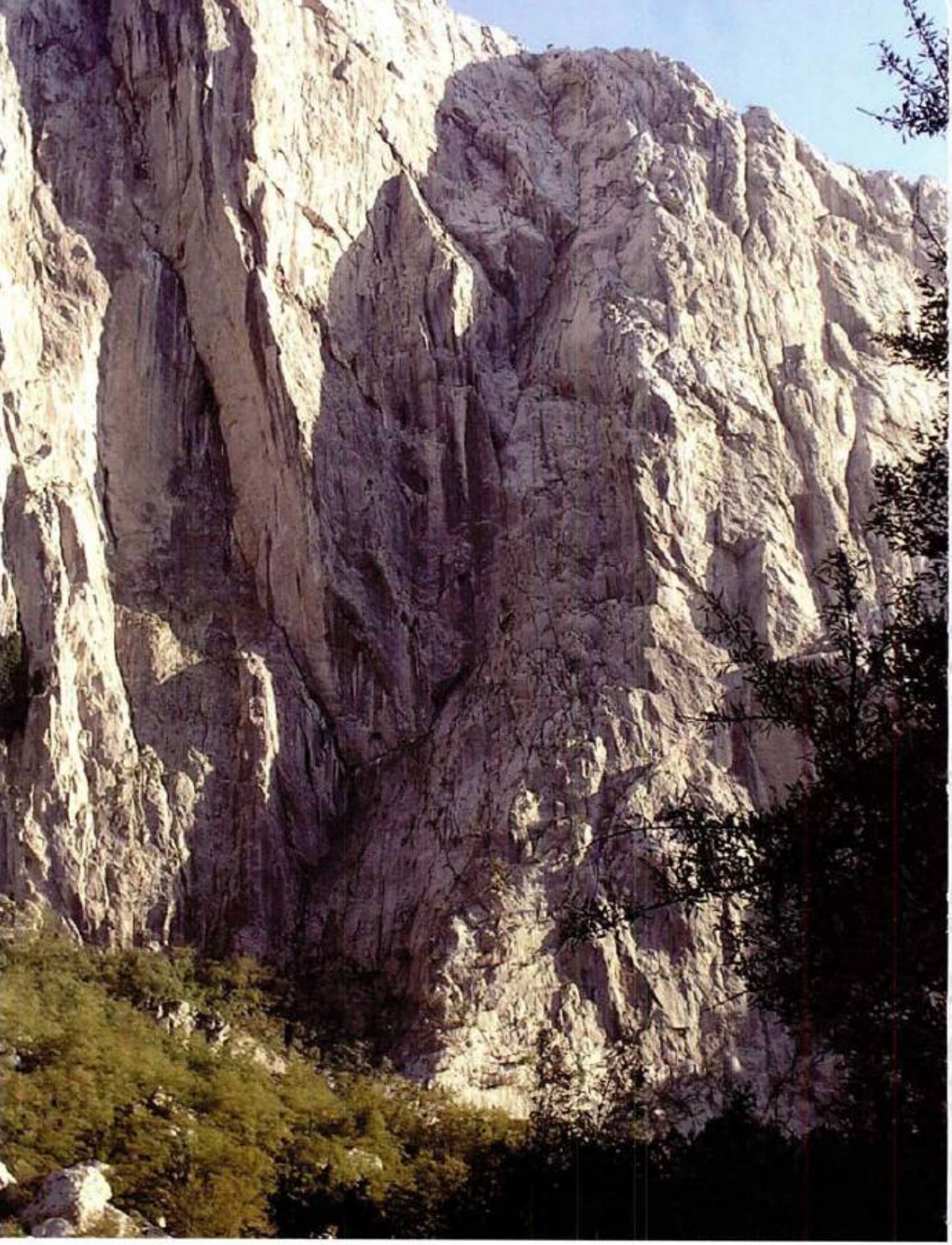
should encourage you to climb faster and more boldly, knowing that there will be a sound bolt every x metres. It depends what x is equal to!

Once at the first bolt a steep but straightforward corner groove opens up. In times past you may have bridged on the right wall, but now this is glassy, it's like being back at Avon, and you have to resort to thuggish jamming up a sometimes overhanging corner; an apprenticeship on grit and Northumberland sandstone pays dividends here. The stance is hanging off a ring bolt, shoving the rope onto a ledge in the crack, so as not to envelope Muny below. Again he gets the short straw, as some sections of the crack are a struggle with a sack and I feel (fleetingly) guilty, as it was my idea to bring a sack.

From this point the grade relents, and a couple more pitches of British 4c crack climbing lead to the top of the cliff, but not the summit, for a new challenge awaits us. I have never seen karst country like this before – razor-edged flutings and yawning slots between each segment, I would hate to descend from here in the dark, it could turn into a real epic. Excellent country for guerrilla warfare, you could hide an army on top of Anića Kuk. The limestone pavement on Ingleborough is as smooth as a sandy beach by comparison. The view from the summit at 712m, when we eventually reach it, more than compensates: the lengthening shadows from the peaks and crags around us point to the Velebit mountains, at 1700m, which encompass the northern horizon; turn the other way and there are the islands of the Dalmatian coast, a string of arid pearls, not in the far distance, but virtually at the bottom of the mountain. A remarkable place, and a cracking start to the week.

Events the following day involved flying lessons, a fractured finger and encounters with Croatian medical bureaucracy. But that's another story – at least we had Mosoraški in the bag!

Summary: An ascent of Mosoraški on Anića Kuk, in the Paklenica Gorge, Croatia, by Muny Baborovsky and Andrew Paul. The gorge contains over 300 routes at all grades. The Guide, Paklenica, by Boris Čujić, can be purchased on the internet. Accommodation is plentiful and cheap, either apartments or camping (see guide book) in Starigrad-Paklenica. We took the Ryanair flight from Stansted to Zadar, which is only 50 km away from Paklenica.



The route of Mosoraški roughly follows the edge of the slab, on the margin between sunshine and shadow, and finishes up the corner for 3 pitches. *(Andrew Paul)*

That Would Have Beat The Band

Dave Gregory

The guidebook to climbs in Tuolumne Meadows has no route descriptions; it is, after all, a topographical guide only. It does however have, hidden away at the back, a list of the climbs arranged by grade. As a further convenience there is by each climb's name its grade, an indication of the protection it offers, and a star rating. Since almost every climb in the Meadows is of top quality, those which carry three stars are absolute gold, even on an international scale. Those with merely two are still worth going the several thousand miles for and that book-end list is worth scrutiny. *Holdless Horror,* 5.7, PG ** had stuck out in my transatlantic reading as one of the two starred 5.7s I had not done. The other was *Left Water Crack*, but since I had had a confidence shattering debacle of a retreat off that some years before, it did not enter my calculations. If you want to experience a thoroughbred American sandbag, go for *Left Water Crack*, 5.7, R ** on Lembert Dome. It's 5.10a at least, but you can believe the R, for run-out.

The huge west face of Medlicott Dome contains a slabby temptation called Dozier Dome, and it is there that *Holdless Horror* lies. As a name *Holdless Horror* holds no charms but the PG for Protection Good and the two stars for quality were a sufficient magnet, besides which Bob had also not done it.

It proved to be a straight-in crack, well enough provided with holds of the jamming variety to delight the heart of any gritstone habitué and this one's Californian rope-mate. The descent too was a pleasure, a few hundred feet of padding southwards along the easy angled summit slabs toward the top of what the diagram in the guide calls a diagonal slash. this is not some complicated evolution connected with the trouser zips, but what we would call a slanting gully. The guide proclaims it to be third class, which means that no rope is needed but that you may have to use your hands to go up or down; often a sandbag situation. We roped up for the descent, leading pitches, three in all, placing gear. It was familiar terrain for me, moist in the back, with moss even, and plants looking very like parsley-fern, a jammed stone

or two to thread, and it smelled just like a home-grown gully. At its foot is a huge flat-topped boulder, a perfect picnic-rock base of operations. Just before I reached the easy ground leading to the boulder I put a Friend in a crack on the gully's right-hand side wall. A perfect placement, and I looked up at the crack's continuation. The crack appeared to carry on above my piece of gear, and when we reached the foot of *Holdless Horror* we examined the topo. No route!

We went back to the picnic boulder for a better look. There were two cracks in fact; the left-hand one wider, but looking easier, ran out after about fifty feet but ripples running rightwards seemed to give possible access into the other crack, and that seemed to go on forever in a left-facing corner through several bulges. Near its top was a definite overhang and with nothing up there to give us the scale we couldn't judge its real size. It could be a couple of hundred feet up and might be huge and the crack at its right-hand side could have shrunk to nothing. That overhang might be difficult to get past, particularly if the crack had vanished and there was no possibility of placing proper gear.

It was nearly a month later when we laid out our gear on the picnic rock; two sets of big cams and, horror of horrors to a gritstone climber, a bolt kit. That overhang had impressed us both and Bob had burrowed in the huge plastic box in which he kept his gear, and come up with this, our insurance policy. Placed on the lead, he assured me, bolts were perfectly legitimate in California, but only if there was no crack to take 'traditional' gear. And only if placed by hand. No battery-driven drills, but in any case we hadn't got one.

We decided to tackle the wider, possibly easier, crack first. As I'd found it, I was allowed first stab. In the thinner starting section there was a jammed-stone thread, which would help to stop any higher gear ripping out in the event of my leaving the wider section involuntarily, and a higher Rock 7. From a stepped ledge on the right of the crack I could layback on a combination of its right edge and a small fluting beyond its left edge. With my left foot on a huge crystal on the left edge I could just get a number 4 Camalot, fully open and rocking, into the wide section of the crack. The crack was too wide to fist jam and I could not get high enough to sprag an arm effectively. There was going

to be a lot more crack to spend energy on and I came down and offered Bob a go at it before we transferred our attentions to the narrower version on the right.

He'd seen how not to do it and managed to get his right foot on the large crystal and his left foot on a sloping hold just beyond the crack. As I watched, tight bellied and dry mouthed, conscious of that pivoting Camalot, he held himself in place with a pinch grip on the fluting and threw his right arm in and found something, a jam in the back he told me later, and was established in the crack. This proved to be the crux of the pitch and when my turn came I tried to replicate his method exactly but my right arm was not long enough to find anything useful in the back. I laybacked the left edge of the wide section, happier now with the rope above me, and followed the awkward wide section of the crack, using crystals on the left wall outside the crack when they offered. Bob had left a piece of gear at the top of the crack where it narrowed just before it eventually closed, and then climbed down to move right across the ripples into the right-hand crack. This was superb, clean and protectable and led to a sloping, wide ledge on the right of the crack. Here Bob was belayed, about 130 feet off the ground, on a ledge which was spacious and comfortable and would, as he pointed out, possibly offer us an escape into our old friend the diagonal slash should we need it.

I thrust that thought to the back of my mind; to be defeated twice was unthinkable. Besides, stretching above us was a classic leftwards-facing corner with a crack in the angle, grass-filled in places but grass, as I discovered, not well rooted and easy to scratch out with the broddler, and bringing with it surprisingly good, black, dry soil. Mary could have done with that to leaven the clay in our Sheffield garden, but here I was merely grateful for its poor adhesion to its native rock. Over two minor overlaps the crack went, gobbling gear until, just below another bulge, there was, curses, a peg, a baby angle. Damn, damn, damn. And there wasn't a krab in it, nor any tat. Not a retreat peg then. It could have been, if they'd had no tat. But they would have had. If they'd bothered to carry pegs they'd have had loads of tat as well, just in case. Still, there was just a chance that they had bailed out on the peg itself. When did ethics hit America? When did they stop using pegs? Twenty-five years ago? Would they still be using nine mil ropes by then? Ropes

which would easily pull through that peg eye. Perhaps they did bail out. Perhaps we still had a chance.

Over the bulge the crack widened unexpectedly from ideal finger width to a hip-and-shoulder-trapping slot. There was ample rope, Bob shouted up, to get past the slot and over the next bulge but a quick check on the gear loops indicated that matters were getting scarce in the protection department. I still had the Camalot 4, which fitted in the back below my feet, and a Friend one and a half which went right at the top of the slot, where it narrowed, and a small Alien beside it. A spider's web of ropes and slings and I was tight in the slot and Bob came up the pitch collecting the mass of gear.

Perched precariously on the slab beside the slot he racked up the gear and eyed the overhang above us. From the ground it had looked much bigger and we had wondered if the crack had closed. This possible closure was why his old bolt kit was weighing down the sack hanging from the belay web. From here the overhang looked smaller, feasible even, and the crack seemed to continue through it, if not at the finger receptive best of the lower pitches. He left the bolt kit in the sack and set off up the crack, only to find that nestled in below the overhang was another peg. Ah well, pipped for certain, probably by about twenty-five years, certainly not at the post.

Above the overhang the angle eased and after a short rope-length Bob belayed and brought me up. To the right across the padding slabs was the top of the slanting gully. Sure now of its innards we soloed down it and sat on the picnic rock. Why were we disappointed? It had been a good route after all, even if the unknown name it carried was not of our choosing. I've had a hand in a number of inconsequential new routes on gritstone and even a couple of minor additions on Cloggy and Scafell, important in nothing in their location, but a new route in the Meadows – now that would have beat the band. Had it got a name?

If it were left to us we'd call it *Blighted Hopes* PG**.

(In America there is an email system called the Mountaineering Board. Bob posted an enquiry on this and an answer came in April 2003 that a Jeff Dozier thinks that he did the route in 1971 with a

David Green. He offered no name for it and commented that much of the climbing had been on grunge. On our ascent it was relatively clean. The guide was published in 1992 with no mention of the route. There has however been time for masses of people to have done and cleaned it. Ah well. Better luck next time.)

Mt Hood

Dave Rhodes

Hood. To Portlanders: 'The Mountain.' They drive out throughout the summer for ski-Sunday on their own private hill, but above the piste is a wholly different dimension.

The Cascades are a long baguette of high ground, dividing Oregon state and extending across the Columbia Gorge in to adjacent Washington. They are a broad band of mountain wildernesses carrying ice and forest to the edge of the eastern High Desert. Pushing up through here came the Tertiary volcanic acne of the Pacific North West; a dozen lava cones, some now broken and eroded, others still in good shape, like Mt Hood. Technically speaking, they are dormant, which means still just hot and gassy but with the capacity to wake up, as did Mt St Helens in 1980 to share half its massive bulk with a city of two million inhabitants. Hood is a Fuji, with cold glaciers and hot vents. The skiing is merely on the skirts.

So, July, midnight, sorting out in the top car park at about six thousand American feet. Axes, crampons, a string, water and sugar-stuff. The route starts up the crest of a moraine: typical chaotic rubble, confusing and as black as pitch under the moonless cloud cover. It would be a stumbling, muttering, head-torch affair. Should we suss it or give it a few hours, thereby squandering hard-snow advantage? We walked across and kicked a tyre or two, sucking our teeth, then spied, almost touching the road, a thin white line of old snow curling into the chaos. "Where's that coming from?"

The penny drops. "Wow, right, lock the Pathfinder." Stepping onto the hard snow we trailed it through invisible banks of whatever there was and sure enough emerged onto the sump of the pisted area. Way to go! Moraine gleefully abandoned we plod-plodded evenly upwards for hours of minutes and thousands of feet, vibrams crunching comfortably.

We turned off the head-torches. We couldn't see what we were doing but it was so uniform that it was either piste or magic carpet and it didn't matter. We just climbed on. "People pay money to use this." "Yes but not to go up and not in the dark."

Some time later we reached the level shelf which is the top of the runs. We reckoned the lift was somewhere over on the left. As we were on the last couple of hundred feet we became aware, down on our left, of a growing roaring noise, headlights and clattering: a machine was coming up the side of the pisted slopes. "Doctor No!" "So I'm Bond?" "Dream on, father."

The tractor stopped and three people got off. Having just walked up a third of the mountain we were not that impressed and wondered how they had managed that. "Must be a guide," I reasoned, thinking like a European. "Money," said Kate, "This is America." The three guys put on crampons and pulled out a rope, tying onto the ends and into the middle; a kind of Argentinean bolas. We dawdled a bit. If he was a guide we could follow him up the next unseen section to Crater Rock. We spiked up and doled out a few feet of string, putting the rest back in the 'sac; may as well try to stay in sight of each other. Off went the trio, shadowed by Bond, but within five minutes it was clear that this wasn't a guide and they seemed to be on a two-day timetable. It was getting lighter by then anyway, so we overtook them. Crater Rock, a huge, cold, once upon a time extruded volcanic plug was visible up there so we aimed for it, then flanked it rightwards over a couple of minor crevasses in what was more névé than real ice, maybe moving on slabby rock underneath.

It is about here that the proper mountain begins. By now, after an altitude gain of eight or more thousand feet in five or six hours, most people are losing their last meal, or their interest, doing the nine-steps-and-gasp routine and gritting their teeth against the headache behind their eyes; pant. But this is where the fun begins.

With Crater Rock behind us we were looking at the mountain across a double corrie, like a settee in a cinema, with the headwall rocks high above us, and the summit snow-slope beyond them. All is snow and ice. The famous Pearly Gates are gullies which break through the rock band. The headwall snowfield falls to the bergschrund which guards it, and leading to the bergschrund from our feet, is the Hogsback. This is a quarter-mile feature shaped like a ridge-tent lying between the left and the right corries. The route follows the Hogsback to the bergschrund snow bridges, then diagonals up below the rock band to

one of the Pearly Gates and gully-climbs that to the upper snows. By July the bridges are often gone. We had heard that they had.

When this happens the alternative is to go round one end of the 'schrund, out on the wall of one of the corries. This can raise the interest level. Hood receives about a hundred feet of snow annually and much more footage drifts into the corries. This keeps it well banked and in theory should develop glacier ice but it doesn't. Both corries have some in-house help with central heating. Make no mistake: this is Fire and Ice. Left corrie has a plain old-fashioned volcanic vent, central, wide and hot. Right corrie is floored with a scatter of fumaroles, gassing warm SO_2 and CO_2. Both of them melt snow down continually, leaving an un-melted central zone. The Hogsback is the result. Some years ago a guy consumed with curiosity wandered into the gas corrie and was really choked up when he found no oxygen. They had to think a bit about how to recover him.

It had snowed hard three days before. Left corrie, an almost perfectly circular snow funnel, quite steep on headwall and Hogsback, had not avalanched and was coated with a complete covering of beautifully delicate ice needles; penitentes. Anything more fragile and unstable was difficult to imagine. Shooting up the centre of this spider trap was a massive shivering column of superheated air at enormous speed, silent and bringing about in us an instant and total respect for that particular force of nature. One slip on that side and a few seconds later a faint puff of black smoke would be the last anyone saw of your carbon footprint. We turned to the right.

Here the bergschrund extended further across the headslope and the slope itself was steeper, but it had avalanched satisfactorily, leaving a safe slope of crampon-hard névé above the slot and the gassy floor. Safe, that is, as long as we stayed connected to it, so we did. Five rope-lengths across then eight up, keeping an eye on the time. The day was clearing up, blue and sunny, and that was part of the problem. The rock band directly above is made of breccia: lumps of old lava stuck in with bubbly stuff and with the consistency of muesli bar but even less good for you. There was some of it lying around below. The sun was creeping slowly towards the wall and we reckoned we needed to be out from under by eight o' clock, and so we were, no two ways about it.

Our chosen Pearly Gate was still in a shaded solid state so we went easily up that – it's not steep, one axe will do – then broke out onto a gentle slope covered in more of the penitentes. Here it didn't matter about fragility, we weren't depending on them, and it was almost with regret that we inevitably ploughed a furrow through them, swiping millions with the rope loops. It was an incredibly attractive surface, sparkling and tinkling and with nothing more than a walk left, time and mind to enjoy it.

It was a clear day too, now, and despite a haze the others in this family of famous names were visible. To the north, in the state of Washington, Mts Adams and Baker, and the frustrum of Mt St Helens. Southwards, first came Jefferson, the hardest one, requiring an often-dangerous traverse below the summit, then Washington, the Sisters' wilderness and Bachelor, the powder mountain above Sun River. And of course there was just being up there. It was brilliant.

So how were we going to get down? The Pearly Gate was mush by then, but going downwards it didn't matter. As expected a rock or two was by now dropping off the wall to the left and the sun was on all of the headwall. No way were we going back the loop we had come, we would almost certainly become a gruesome twosome! Instead we channelled straight down the ordinary route to the Bergschrund. There, the ragged remnants of the old bridges were truly horrible. "What do we do now?" Ah well, I thought, once you've jumped the biggie, the really biggie, below the Col Adams-Reilly on the descent of the Aiguille du Chardonnet, then anything else is Disney. Unfortunately only one of us had. "OK, find a bit with no overhang; pull in enough slack to jump; double it; then skip and jump." "Jeepers!" but then did just that. With one quick bound, Jack was free.

We met the three guys just below. Only then did I remember the important lesson Jack Longland had insisted we take on board as youths: his 'Doctrine of the Wasted Minute'. Their attempt was looking pretty much tattered. "Did you front-point the Pearly Gates?" they asked. "Not coming down," we replied. One of their team was out of it with stomach cramps. We gave him a Rennie and rushed on. Glissades, sitting and standing, took us easily down, finally alongside the Snowboarders' Pod where the most amazing acrobatics were happening. Now, I wish I could do that!

Skier *(Joan Tebbutt)*

High and Wide in the Balkans

Richard Hargreaves

For five years I have been drawn back each year to the mountains of northern Albania, Kosovo/a and Montenegro, partly because hardly any other Brits go or have been there but mostly because I have been closely involved since 2001 in a project to establish the "Balkans Peace Park". This is the dream of concerned and enthusiastic environmental activists in these Balkan countries and in the UK to link three proposed National Parks into one truly trans-national, cross-border park, which would protect its unique but threatened environment and stimulate sustainable visitor activities in the mountains. The area would include what are already notional National Parks, the Theth and Valbona valleys in northern Albania and the Rugova valley west of Peja/Pec in Kosovo/a, and the proposed National Park in the Prokletije mountains of southern Montenegro. It would develop local employment and enable people to continue living in the valleys in their traditional style, with benefit from some modern development. Above all, the Balkans Peace Park would be a symbol of peace and cooperation in a part of the world which has seen little of either for so long.

The concept of a cross-border peace park is not a new one; from Morokulia between Sweden and Norway in 1914, the idea spread to the Waterton/Glacier National Park on the USA-Canada border in the 1930s, then to Central and South America and South Africa. Mountaineers are pressing for a peace park in the Siachen Glacier war zone in the Karakoram between India and Pakistan. In Europe the Balkans Peace Park (BPP) is being seen as an integral part of the 'European Green Belt' proposed by the IUCN, the World Conservation Union, an ecological corridor running the length of the old Iron Curtain, from Finland, down through Eastern Europe until it splits in the Balkans, with one line leading to the Black Sea and the other to the Adriatic. This is a global symbol for transboundary cooperation in nature conservation and sustainable development. A key feature of the BPP, as in other such peace parks, is that inter-country cooperation will lead to relatively free movement for climbers, walkers, cyclists, ecologists, etc. over 'unofficial' border crossings in the mountains.

The BPP is not yet a reality, but there is plenty of activity and enthusiasm at grassroots level among individuals and NGOs in the three countries. In November 2006 this brought the mayors or community leaders of the six towns or communities around the BPP area to a

major international conference in Pristina in Kosovo/a where they all signed a 'letter of good intent' in full support of the BPP project.

It is the combination of this long-term dream with the wonderfully spectacular mountains and valleys, the traditional cultures and lifestyles, the warm friendships in all three countries and the dabbling in the Albanian and Montenegrin (ex-Serbian) languages that has taken me back there each summer. I've been involved in some walking treks visiting each country and in 2004 a great mountain bike ride of 550km through them all. In July 2007 three FRCC members joined me in Plav, Montenegro, for a four-day trek on foot into and out of Albania, then a five day mountain bike tour into and out of Kosovo/a, having prior police permission for four unofficial border crossings over mountain passes. We also managed a significant peak in each country (Arapit 2217m in Albania, Ochnyak 2185m in Montenegro and Hajla 2400m in Kosovo/a) and a walk to the symbolic mountain top where the three countries meet. In 2006 Jane came with me for the first time to Albania, for a week in Theth in the Shala Valley and then a four- day trek from there back to the city of Shkodra via the remote village of Çurraj Eperm.

On one of my early visits to Albania, Petrit Imeraj, from the city of Shkodra in northern Albania, head of an environmental NGO and an ardent proponent of the BPP, said, "Richard, one day you must visit my ecological village, Çurraj Eperm." He reminded me of this every time I met him. It seemed that this was a village in the mountains with no road access which had remained unchanged for years. He assured me that you could walk there from Theth, stay for a couple of nights then another day's walk would bring you to a village, Lekbibaj, very close to the long Drin river gorge, now dammed for hydroelectrics, down which you can get the daily 'draget', a passenger ferry, for the 2½ hour journey to Koman at the end. From there a bus could take you to Shkodra. I wondered if this could make a fitting finale to a pet project of mine, a through multi-day walking trek from Peja/Pec in Kosovo/a, through Plav in Montenegro and over the pass, Qafa e Pejës, to Theth. Normally, from Theth, one gets transport for the four or five hour drive to Shkodra. A walk out via this 'ecological village' might make a much better ending to the trek. So, in July 2006, I asked Petrit to organize it: a guide, accommodation in Çurraj Eperm and Lekbibaj, ferry down the river Drin gorge and a bus back to Shkodra.

It turned out to be a memorable experience but rather more than we had bargained for.

Note that until its political status is decided, it is conventional and diplomatic to combine Kosovo (Serbian) and Kosova (Albanian) as one word, Kosovo/a. Similarly, Peja/Pec is the combined name for the important, mostly Albanian, town on the plain at the foot of the Rugova valley.

Deep in Albania

Jane Hargreaves

After a successful and varied week, we left the Carku family house, perched high on the steep side of the Shala Valley, at 7.30am on the 27th of June, 2006. It was yet another spectacular cool morning of cloudless blue sky against the limestone rock face mountains. Richard and I were full of high hopes and were finally getting off for our four days of travel and exploration over a mountain range and into a secret valley little visited in recent times. All was well as Stak, our guide had arrived from Shkodra the evening before, we had talked over the route and been shown geological maps and he told us that he and his wife had lived in the area. Richard and I showed him a quick way down to the valley floor by delightful limestone meadowland full of flowers and beside a steep stream dry in June. Within half an hour we had crossed the Shala river and were sitting in the shade beside the old Theth church, now covered in scaffolding, being fully renovated with new pine shingles already on the roof. I was reluctant to stop so soon with a major journey into the unknown ahead.

After some time we were introduced to a little elderly man in a straw hat and best clothes who then came with us to the top of the village. Another long wait while the little man disappeared. It gradually materialised that the elderly man was to guide us and to carry my pack on the route to the edge of the Shala Valley territory. Eventually the little man reappeared, so we were off at last and we plodded up in the heat, as by now the sun was well up and it was to be a very hot day. All would have been well with our guide leading along a sometimes visible track with very splendid views back towards Mt. Arapit and Theth, but we had long stops to make GPS recordings for Stak, which broke any

rhythm. We walked up through dense beech wood, clear flat flowery pasture and steep rock ledges to a delightful summer alp, unused this year. Here I was excited by deep blue gentians and high alpine flowers and bare ground rooted up very recently by wild boar. Across the alp we saw gullies filled with long streaks of snow which we approached and climbed across, zigzagging alternately on snow and rock, to get to the col high on the ridge over 1000m above Theth. We had lunch by a melt water trickle, where we refilled our water bottles, though Stak preferred neat 'raki' firewater from his heavy glass bottle.

There was just room on the col to stand and walk a few paces on hard snow. Stak said he had not expected to be here and he had never been here before. Below us was a snow gully extending down for 200m with rock and pine trees either side, then beech trees curving steeply out of sight, down, down, for about 1000m. The valley beyond looked densely wooded with a large patch of dead trees from an avalanche trail. But well out of sight, perhaps 8 to 10 km down, we hoped to find our near deserted village of 200 abandoned houses. The col above the summer alpine pasture, called Fusha e Dhellit, is 1860m high, on Richard's 1940s Russian map. Later in Shkodra we learned from Petrit that this route had not been in use for 15 years. Up to the end of Enver Hoxha's communist regime in 1992 the ancient paths connecting the valleys in these Albanian mountains were well used. Now there are many fewer people living in the valleys and as they have freedom of movement by road these high paths and pony tracks have fallen into disuse or even disappeared.

It was already 1.00pm, having spent precious hours on our slow ascent, and this was where our helpful Theth guide was to leave us. I never considered returning to Theth, surely we could find a track and descent and Stak should know this kind of territory. After all, his wife came from the next valley over at Qereç-Mulli and he himself had lived in Lekbibaj at the end of our walk out. There was much discussion and explanation in Albanian and looking at our photocopied Russian map, which showed a track across this col, and a look at Stak's more recent map, which only showed a track across the higher col a kilometre along a dramatic ridge which he thought we were being taken to, was our preparation for travelling on. We waved good bye to our Thethi village man who remained perched and worried looking

on the col. With Stak we were now in the hands of a companion rather than a guide as we kicked steps in the soft snow down the steep gully.

On we went down towards a rock choke which had to be climbed round then onto steep grass with patches of *Dryas octopetala* (mountain aven), then snow again and swinging on beech branches down over a cliff. Suddenly Stak would rush off to look for a route or take a photograph. He didn't appear to have any concept of time or how tired we were getting. Steep, impenetrable scrub beech several times gave way to a flattish shelf with enormous beech trees. It felt as if we must be nearly down to the valley bottom but these areas were surrounded by steep cliffs so the large beech had not been felled for timber. On down, hour after hour, and we passed a large patch of ancient ice with nasty crevasse holes. Always near water there was talk of poisonous snakes and our local Theth man had killed one on the way up.

After 4 hours of effort we were down to the valley floor and walking between two major rivers, but the one we needed to cross suddenly disappeared for a time – limestone karst country – so one problem was averted. By this time Stak had used the expression 'No problem!' so many times that I now interpreted it as 'we are in grave trouble with increasing problems and hazards ahead'. Even in the valley his sense of route finding was suspect but he tended to dash on when we called to point out a better route. We at last found the first ruined house seen on the map and I would have expected some overgrown pack horse track down the valley from there but Stak dropped onto an old terrace field and then directly down steep beech woodland near to the river. We came across a side river with a magnificent waterfall where we took off our boots and trousers and waded across in our sandals, Richard and I supporting each other in the current. Despite me finding the remains of an old bridge across the top of the waterfall, obviously the track, Stak again tried to lose us. I got in front of the men and read the landscape, thinking where a packhorse track would go. It would never go through a terraced field carefully cultivated in the old days and it would never go directly down a steeps slope but rather contour into a gully and out again. The undergrowth obliterated the track and branches grew over it and the beech leaves were as slippery as they had been all day but we gradually made our way down the valley, climbing higher up the side to bypass the very steep gorge blocking this upper

valley from Çurraj Eperm village. Our first view towards Çurraj Eperm came but now it was 8.30pm.

From high on the valley side it felt good to be looking at a man-changed landscape with houses dotted about once cultivated terraces. Were our troubles at an end and could Stak lead us straight to the occupied house where we were to stay? We descended at speed but realized it would soon be dark and we headed through dense undergrowth to the nearest house as the village spread a couple of kilometres down and across the valley. After all, it was only hearsay that anyone would be in the valley to feed and greet us. The house was well built of stone, two storeys, and although the downstairs had been used by animals there was a portion of unrotten floorboards upstairs which I could sweep clear with a board. There seemed to be no water near and we were far too tired for food, so with head torches on we decided to settle for the night.

But Stak had wandered off, looking for water and shouting for 'Martin'. Having heard an answering call he made us pack up and descend to the river over large boulders with fireflies flitting and our head torches to light us by. There an old woman, dressed all in black, showed us how to negotiate a two-log uphill bridge across a deep ravine with roaring water in the bottom. The woman in black then dismissed us and pointed down the valley, so after struggling through fields of 6 foot high nettles and other lush plants and across ditches we found the next empty house where the door luckily opened. Stak had no torch so even he agreed we should spend the night here.

We settled down on a pile of stripped corn cobs among the old rotten cot-like beds and clothes still hanging on the wall. Stak wanted to lock the front door and put furniture in front of the bedroom door and later we realized he was scared not of animals but of bandits who were said to have come to the village to hide. It was by now 10.00pm and pitch dark, 15 hours after we had set off. I was tired and slept surprisingly well after gradually putting on all my spare clothes and getting into my sheet sleeping bag.

It was well light before we set off down the valley next morning and we were not more than 15 minutes from the school and church well placed above a high bluff overlooking a perfect azure blue river, flowing past the remains of the main village bridge. Stak headed off on an errand, and Richard and I stayed exploring and photographing the

handsome church with an ominous dip in its roof and a bible still on the lectern but no seating inside. (Later we learned the last service had been only two years ago.) The Catholic gravestones of transported stone, which must have been brought here since Communist times, were large and impressive and showed how important this village must once have been. The locked school is a substantial imposing stone structure, built only about 50 years ago. It must have catered for hundreds of children and later we found out that it finally closed only six years ago.

Stak returned having made contact with Martin and we walked through mowed grass fields with haycocks and along pathways with one or two cultivated fields of maize. We approached a substantial stone, three storey, house and were greeted by Martin, about 50, and his two youngest children, Marion (9) and Victor (8). Soon we were sitting outside in the orchard, enjoying Turkish coffee, raki and water and later a splendid traditional breakfast arrived which we greatly appreciated, having not eaten anything the night before. We ate egg and sausage, sheep cheese both mature and young with large hunks of corn bread before being each presented with a large plate full of honey. Martin takes his special honey back to sell in Shkodra. The children swung high on their home-made swings and we seemed to jump into some form of normality after the last crazy day.

Martin had spent the winter in Shkodra as this valley is cut off by snow for 6 months (November to May), and so arrived back in Çurraj Eperm in May. Young Marion was the female of the family so she washed dishes at the continually running water spout and fetched and carried. Her younger brother was apparently not allowed to help in the house, although Stak cooked and Martin provided all the excellent food. Turkish coffee was made over a minute gas burner in the corner of the living room, and water was boiled on a fire of two long logs placed together and lit when needed. Young Victor checked the 20 sheep, collected the eggs, found the horse, fed the dog and watched the bees in the 13 beehives. Both children probably helped in the field of fast growing maize below the house. All the animals had been brought from Shkodra in May to Çurraj Eperm by the route we were to use tomorrow, so I relaxed, thinking it would be a relatively easy journey out the next day.

Jezerca 2693m, Paplukes 2678m, Alisë 2474m (*Jane Hargreaves*)

Hayfields and terraces in Curraj Eperm (*Jane Hargreaves*)

Richard leaving Curraj Eperm over the only bridge (*Jane Hargreaves*)

On the passenger ferry down the Drin Gorge (*Jane Hargreaves*)

Unknown to us, this day and some of the next was to be spent making a video for Petrit to promote this remote village with some thought of getting heritage status. With finance and employment some local people might be attracted back to live in the village, at least in the summer. Martin had the camera, Stak the cassette, so off we went, leaving the children behind. We first descended steeply to the river where we saw the old mill and wicker baskets once used for catching fish and the very old crooked bridge on wire hawsers which crossed the ravine. This was to be our route out tomorrow, the only route across except for the dramatic trunks we had crossed the night before, a couple of kilometres up the river.

After impressing us with tomorrow's first hurdle we continued to explore the village on our side of the valley. With the amazing azure coloured river and the handsome church building, the whole bowl of land, dotted with houses in ancient meadows, had a magic aura about it: a mixture of sinister decay and magnificent and uplifting past history. We were often asked whether we liked it, and there was much discussion about how reasonable access could be obtained by tourists. We explored Martin's home territory and were shown his family's magnificent grave close by the church where Martin put on his traditional costume for the video.

In the evening we were given a large meal of sheep milk products, corn bread, curd and honey. Given a week to eat our plate of melted cheese I would have succeeded but I managed only 10%. I dreamt for days of the bowl of perfect honey after having eaten only two spoonfuls. Two handsome young men appeared, sons visiting their father Shon. They were offered bottled beer and we could not help but see the pistols on their hips. Later we heard that the family were in a blood feud, so all these males, including the teenager, were in danger of their lives until one was killed when again it would be their duty to kill a male of the other family. Later still we learned that blood feuds, usually over land rights, are less organized nowadays, so much more dangerous than in times prior to the Communist takeover of Albania in 1945. Much of the feuding takes place now in the streets of Tirana, Shkodra and other towns and countries where Albanian families have settled.

A bed was made up in the room where the fire and cooking had been done and we had a rather sleepless night on a lumpy mattress with bracken at the base in a hot and airless room. We jumped up

before 6.00am and were all packed and ready but it took two hours after a huge, largely uneaten breakfast before we said goodbye to the children and were off with Martin to video the crossing of the river bridge. In spite of videoing, Martin took us fairly fast up through disused flowery fields to a ridge between the two valleys, the Çurraj and the Qereç.

From the ridge we had views back up the valley to the gorge that blocks the entrance to the upper valley and in the far off distance to the snow streak coming down from our high col. This brought on thoughts of Theth and our friends busy with archaeology deep in the valley beyond. Descending from the ridge to Qereç-Mulli in the next valley we stopped to explore a deserted house, as always fully furnished with everything, including large wooden raki tubs and clothes ready for re-use when the family might return. We walked up the valley to a mill where Richard and Martin played their piccolo and pipe on an island in the river. We stopped by the old mill and Martin and Stak went to visit the house where Stak's wife had been brought up. It was again late, midday, before we started in earnest the long walk out in great heat and it was said to take five to six hours to Lekbibaj.

We said goodbye to Martin on the bridge as he set off back to his home and family in Çurraj Eperm. We had enjoyed our time with Martin, a thoughtful, caring man with a deep concern for the future of the region.

The track was good and I was happy to think that packhorses would have come this way recently and not 15 years ago as on our previous trekking day. It was a long hot walk and at times very dramatic with a sheer drop of 300 metres to the gorge below. Ahead it was never ending steep gorges that we contoured into and then out again and then crept over scree where the route would have to be remade each year. The valley from Çurraj Eperm entered, giving a spectacular view towards where we had come from. Stak told us of a ridge we would have to climb after collecting the first water after leaving Martin at the river bridge. It sounded as if our toil would soon be over after the ridge and descending many hundreds of metres, rather than the actual 4 hours. We zigzagged steeply down but always where pack animals could walk.

All of a sudden Stak pointed to a lesser track and said, 'short cut'. Did this mean a few hundred metres? No, it meant using a track for many kilometres, now disused and made inaccessible by falling trees

which took many minutes to find a route past and undergrowth so thick that the path was almost impossible to see. At last we were among disused terraces, impenetrable vegetation, thorn hedges, gates fixed and unopening, and steep ravines. We heard thunder and saw flickers of lightning and large raindrops fell, increasing to a downpour. When trying to find our way along a blocked path Stak suddenly pointed and said, 'Two of my children are buried over there.' We saw an overgrown graveyard. He disappeared for 10 minutes and then we continued to fight our way down his 'short cut'.

It was late evening when Stak said his house was just 'down there'. I tried to find out if this meant two kilometres or two hundred metres but within 50 metres our wet, bedraggled group landed in the house next to his old, deserted house. The 'professor' and his well dressed family and friends welcomed our exhausted selves and gave us water, coffee, raki and Coke and in 15 minutes we were on our way again, revived and accompanied by most of the family.

We descended steeply down through fields to a road bridge where Stak said transport would await us. A young man was there who led us up through fields to the house of our destination, Petrit's brother's house, now occupied by the brother's widow and her family of two sons, a daughter with a lovely smile like her mother's and a daughter-in-law, the oldest son having married 8 months before. What a welcome from a family that had evidently been waiting for us since early evening. It was now 9.30pm and dark but we were sat down in the yard and our feet were washed for us, biblical fashion, in a big tub of water. Then we washed our face, hands and arms, our first wash in four days.

We changed out of our wet clothes and by 10.30pm we were offered a magnificent meal to which we were too tired to do justice. After a showing of family photographs, beds were made up for us. It was a short night as we had to get up and leave the house by 5.15 am.

Next morning a local minibus took us a few kilometres, then we walked down a steep gravel bank along with numerous other people. Out of the morning mist loomed our 'draget', a ferry to transport us 30km down a man-made fjord produced by the damming of the River Drin for hydro-electric power. We stepped from the steep gravel bank straight onto our 'bus', literally a bus with the wheels removed and an iron body built around it in the shape of a boat, complete with steering wheel and bus seats. The mist lifted and we walked outside onto the

wee deck to enjoy the fjord-like gorge we passed through, occasionally drawing near the side for another local to hop on board, having descended from some hidden location on the steep canyon sides. Within three hours this 'draget' boat brought us to the dam where the rough road starts to Shkodra, 40km away. Petrit was there and drove us to Shkodra in 1½ hours.

Postscript

So why did we go in all innocence to Çurraj Eperm? For years, Petrit had been saying, "Richard, you must go and visit my ecological village", and that he would arrange a visit. We can vouch for it being a fascinating place, worthy of heritage site status. Immediate studies are needed as to how appropriate access for modern times could be developed, part road, part packhorse track and some sort of possible link through a dramatic steep gorge. Preservation, conservation and help in revitalising families, their houses and farming methods need to be sensitively considered while splendid and tough people such as Martin and Shon should be employed to keep the old ways alive and give a lead to the future. And for the adventurous traveller there is wonderful scope in these Albanian mountains. Get all the advice you can, take a few essentials, be self-sufficient and use real local people as guides, providers of accommodation, food and knowledge of the area. The experience will be truly out of this world.

Wrestling with Mount Uhambingetu

Richard Morgan

In January 2005 I travelled to Iringa in the southern highlands of Tanzania to visit some friends who were out there on a church mission. Unfortunately they were not around, having travelled unexpectedly back to England, but they had left me a very detailed set of instructions around the activities that they knew I wished to undertake, including the climbing of Mt Uhambingetu. This mountain is quite a special one in being one of the highest in south central area of Tanzania at around 5000 feet, is difficult to get to, and is only accessible with permission of the local villagers and after paying a fee to the village. I was permitted to climb this mountain because of my involvement in the church that was active in the area, and quite looked forward to the fact that the ascent started from the village at about 4000ft in altitude.

I did not realise it was the rainy season when I arrived at Iringa by the excellent long distance bus from Dar es Salaam, as the weather was quite sunny and the temperatures pleasant at 4000ft. There was, however, sporadic and very heavy rain showers and ominous huge puddles on the dirt roads. The temperature did remain very pleasant, however, as the East African plateau is fairly constant at 25 – 30°C year round. While the advent of the rainy season didn't stop us, it did make some travel a little harder on the remote tracks.

Most people in this part of the world have little English, Swahili being the lingua franca along with the local Hehe language. To circumvent this problem, my friends had fixed me up with a local guide/interpreter named Experius Kalinga. Experius was from Iringa rather than the village of Uhambingetu, but did seem to know many people in the village and in the area. Experius had been well briefed in the fact that I wanted to visit the remote village and climb the nearby eponymous mountain, so we collected provisions from the lively market at Iringa, and then early the next day set off by dala-dala (communal minibus taxi), to Ilula, which was a few hours' drive away.

Once we were at Ilula we were hoping that a local veterinary service Land Rover would take us to remote Uhambingetu, and we waited much of the day with diminishing hope. Eventually we found that because of the rainy season state of the roads, the Land Rover would-

n't be travelling our direction, so Experius tracked down some bicycles and made it possible for us to cycle 3-4 hours to the village. We set off on a helter-skelter journey through potholed, muddy tracks to arrive at the village just before the tropical darkness fell promptly at 6.00pm.

The villagers of Uhambingetu welcomed us royally. They were expecting us but were surprised we had arrived at all considering the conditions. They made preparations for us to climb Mt Uhambigetu the following day. Tourist interest in the mountain is one of the sources of village income, and while it isn't a major tourist hotspot, it does help to sustain this relatively poor and remote part of the East African highlands.

Dixon, the local farming cooperative manager and vicar, was our mountain guide. He knew the mountain very well as he had helped to install the water catchment pipes to provide for cattle dip and the irrigated fields by the village. The dip, the primary recipient of the water, was an important part of a successful cattle disease eradication programme across this part of Tanzania.

Dixon, Experius and I set off promptly at the 6am dawn, together with the local doctor who said that he wished to join us. The first part of the journey was crossing the village fields, which seemed very fertile, no doubt aided by the volcanic soil and recent irrigation. This lasted for about an hour until we reached the cattle dip at the foot of the mist-covered mountain. Fortunately, the mist appeared to be slowly clearing.

We made our way up a few hundred feet of man-high tall grass. This seemed deceptively easy. Dixon then led us up a faint track following the newly installed water-pipe system and we stopped for a drink at the first water collection tank. At this point the vegetation changed to become 20-30 foot long plantains or lianas, the type that entwine themselves around you, especially your boots, making for very slow progress. It was exhausting and dirty work, and the most useful climbing aid was a penknife which could slash these clinging growths. We fought our way up several hundred feet of this vegetation zone until we reached a belt of trees, some kind of tropical evergreen that resembled cedar, and crouched our way under long horizontal branches of them for another few hundred feet until quite suddenly we emerged on the rocky summit ridge.

On the ridge, we scrambled over some huge boulders to quickly reach the summit about two and a half hours after setting off from our initial high point. By this time the mists had cleared and we were rewarded with some wonderful views of this part of the southern highlands of Tanzania, looking across the Rift valley, the enormous East African plains, Iringa and other mountains that I could not name.

We made our way down by the same route, crouching under the trees, wrestling with the lianas and striding through the long grass again until we reached the cattle dip. Travelling back across the fields, the villagers waved at us, making us feel like high explorers. Back at Uhambingetu everyone was elated with our success in the rainy season. Normally there is a church service after the ascent of Mt Uhambingetu, but because we needed to catch the bus to Iringa, they simply gave us all another mighty meal before Experius and I set off to return to Ilula.

Despite punctures on the bikes, we reached Ilula in time for the last dala-dala of the day back to Iringa, thus completing a rather unusual encounter with a remote Tanzanian mountain.

Greenland Reminiscences

P E Brown

Recently, while sorting through old photographs, I came across some taken in Greenland in 1953 which may be of general historical interest. The visit to Greenland was organised by the late L.R. Wager and W.A. Deer in order to pursue their geological work along the Blosseville coast of East Greenland, studying rocks which are related to the basalts and gabbros of Skye and other Hebridean localities.

Wager had been a member of the Gino Watkins British Arctic Air Route Expedition in 1930-31 and had returned to Greenland in 1932 with Captain Ejnar Mikkelsen to work along the Blosseville coast. After going high on Everest in 1933 his main objective was to return to Greenland, which he did in 1934 with Dr Charcot aboard the *Pourquoi Pas?*, followed by the 1935 expedition which was the highlight of his Greenland work. In 1935, co-operation with Augustine Courtauld led to the ascent of the Watkins Mountains (3693m) and the establishment of a base in Kangerdlugssuaq (now Kangerlussuaq) fiord where Wager and Deer overwintered while carrying out their geological work. This resulted in an outcrop of gabbro known as Skaergaard becoming what has been described as the most famous and influential (scientifically) of all igneous intrusions. 1953 was the first post-war opportunity for the two now famous geologists to return and continue their investigations, which they did with a party of four from Oxford (led by Wager) and a party of three from Manchester (led by Deer). I was lucky enough to be a member of the Manchester party.

Wager's ideas on organising an expedition were essentially to make it as simple as possible. He had a deep distrust of anything mechanical. When asked if a radio would be taken to communicate with the outside world during our two month isolation, his reply was that if we took one it would break, and then when people did not hear from us they would want to rescue us and we would not want rescuing. He also believed that if necessary you ought to be able to live for a week on what you happened to find in the bottom of your rucksack. This philosophy was evident in the composition of the expedition food boxes: the ration per day, per man was, in ounces: pemmican 5.5, margarine 4.5,

ships biscuits 4.5, porridge oats 2.5, milk powder 2.0, sugar 3.5, chocolate 3.0, potato flour 1.5, dehydrated veg. 0.5, tea 0.25, total 27.75. I remember being hungry and a lot thinner by the time I arrived home. This is a great contrast to a present day lightweight ration box and on future Greenland trips we always managed to eat with more sophistication, if not more effect. Some of the pemmican taken in 1953 was left over from 1935-36, though not, I believe, from the bottom of Wager's rucksack, and the '35 brand proved to be much more appetising than the later version. Being young and with a sweet tooth I always ate my daily chocolate bar after the breakfast porridge and then had the torment in the evening of lying in my sleeping bag while listening to Deer laboriously sucking his.

The party left Leith for Iceland on the13th of July 1953, and arrived off the Greenland coast 6 days later aboard the Norwegian sealer *Jopeter*. Such boats are excellent in their environment, which is the pack ice, but they roll and pitch in a most upsetting way on the open sea and it was a great relief to enter the Greenland ice.

The outer fringes of the ice pack are typically shrouded in sea mist but on leaving this we were amazed by the transformation. It was brilliant sunshine and clarity with a seemingly endless panorama of jagged peaks, glaciers, occasional glimpses of the Ice Cap and, unfortunately for the ship's freedom of movement, dense pack and enormous icebergs. All of these were travelling in the drift which takes them to southern Greenland and sometimes out into the Atlantic.

Our objective was to enter the mouth of the great fiord of Kangerdlugssuak and establish a base on the Skaergaard intrusion beneath the appropriately named Gabbro Mountain. There we hoped to find the hut built for the wintering party in 1935 still in usable condition, having been informed that it had been left in good repair by an American party who set up a radio station there during the war. Getting far into the fiord proved to be impossible in the prevailing ice conditions and the best the Captain could do was to leave us on the 21st July just inside the entrance to the fiord, close by the impending basalt mass of Hanging Cape. The sight of the ship weaving its way through the ice, leaving us and a pile of gear beneath the cliffs stranded on a patch of basalt scree, was not at all encouraging and the previous Greenland experience of our leaders was an immediate necessity. Dense ice inhibits wave

Camp near South Syenite Glacier. Granite Gneiss mountains across the ice filled fjord.

The sledge. A break in hauling above Kap Edvard Holm. Plank skis visible.

action and the stealthy rise and fall of the tide might easily have caught out the inexperienced.

It took several days of heavy labour to shift all our gear to the site of the 1935 base house, the good condition of which was a testimony to its original construction. Arriving there must have seemed like coming home to Wager and Deer. We had with us two wooden boats, a fifteen footer with inboard engine and a dinghy with an outboard, and these were of great assistance in paddling among the ice along the shore line, and a relief to the tedious job of backpacking. The base house was well positioned and looked out onto an ice-free bay of calm water, contrasting with the main fiord which was packed with large icebergs coming from glaciers draining the ice cap, all driven down-fiord by sometimes fierce katabatic winds. The roar of these winds could be heard and spray and clouds of ice particles could be seen in the fiord when on-shore all was still.

During the summer months the light lasts for virtually 24 hours and the typical Greenland day is one of blue skies and amazingly clear air. In the absence of customary objects such as trees or buildings the clear atmosphere makes it very easy to underestimate distances and judging travel times can be a difficult matter. In sun and calm weather the conditions are very pleasant and it is easy to make the mistake of being lulled into a false sense of being at ease with the environment, but when the sun is absent and the wind blows the arctic feel quickly establishes itself. The lengthy hours of daylight mean that it is possible to travel, climb or work for long periods and therefore to get completely knackered through lack of rest and sleep, though the fact that one is not going to get benighted can be very comforting. We soon found that the most efficient way of working was to establish, as far as possible, a normal work and sleep routine regardless of the daylight hours.

Geological mapping and collecting in East Greenland inevitably involves glacier work and a certain amount of scrambling. Since 1953 there has been a spectacular retreat of glaciers in this part of Greenland. One glacier, known as Connecting Glacier, which ran south of Gabbro Mountain from Kangerdlugssuaq fiord eastwards to Mikki fiord, and over which we pulled a sledge, has now virtually disappeared. In recent years the amount of meltwater running over the surface of the large glaciers draining the ice cap has become spectacular, with

large streams disappearing down potholes to feed subterranean rivers that churned away ominously beneath the glacier surface. Glacier travel can, of course, be dangerous and in 1953, although at lower levels most of the glaciers were bare ice, it only needed a few hundred feet of altitude for snow cover to be present and the expected crevasse adventures to ensue. Looking back on our travels I can only conclude that we were lucky.

Wager strongly discouraged any activity not directly relevant to the geological program, and regarded any suggestions of taking in the odd summit, just because it was there, as highly frivolous. This can now be seen as not unreasonable in view of the expense and effort of setting up the expedition, though it seemed hard at the time. An ascent of Gabbro Mountain was, however, justified geologically and for me even more so by the blue sky and sunny view of an endless panorama it opened up, with fiords and mountains culminating in the distant Watkins Mountains. The completely unspoiled environment and the fact that apart from one's immediate companions other human beings were a long, long way away, made this an experience to be treasured. In 1953 wildlife around Kangerdlugssuaq was completely undisturbed. Nothing, apart from sealing activity in the offshore waters, had significantly

The last food box. Alec Deer on the right, Geoff Nichols on the left. Tricounis preferred.

disturbed the area for many years. Bird life in the fiord was prolific, seals were abundant and other rarer animals such as narwhal were present. Visits in later years have showed a scene greatly changed by human activities, notably the Greenlanders who from the mid-sixties established summer hunting camps in the Kangerdlugssuaq area. Bears which travel south in the winter months become targets as they make their way back north in the summer and have to cross the fiords such as Kangerdlugssuaq.

The Manchester party spent the greater part of the time in the area of Kap Edvard Holm, on the west side of the fiord. This entailed a crossing of more than twenty miles, done in the 15ft boat. This journey was made three times and was undoubtedly the most dangerous and uncomfortable event of the entire trip. For one thing it was cold and the temperature drop on leaving the land to enter the pack ice was numbing. The ice conditions were extremely variable. Wind and currents made the movement of the pack unpredictable and it could be difficult, or even impossible, to return to a shore line camp at the end of a days work. In the inner parts of the fiord the dense distribution of ice dampened down the swell, but the nearer one got to the outer coastline, the ice plunged up and down as well as moving in the currents. If there had been a storm out in the Denmark Strait great icebergs were liable to break up and the smaller pieces eventually finish up as heaving lumps of brash. On one occasion we got mixed up in these conditions while endeavouring to return to base from Kap Edvard Holm in a boat grossly overloaded with rock specimens. A hazardous hundred and eighty degree turn saw us eventually arrive back at our starting point and with great relief put up a tent to sit out the bad weather.

The weight burden of most expedition parties gets less with time as food is consumed, but with geologists this does not apply and the weight of rocks just gets bigger and bigger. At the best, and in extreme circumstances, specimen collecting has to balance food consumption, but I have yet to be in a party with any intention of applying this principle. Over-collecting is the norm and is far more likely to happen if there is a boat for the eventual removal. At one point on that particular fiord crossing I was ready to dump days of hard won collecting over the side.

For some of our travel in the Kap Edvard Holm area we used a man-haul sledge for moving gear. This was, in retrospect, a ridiculously heavy contraption and had two harnesses at the front and handlebars at the back. It was used to get to camps high on the very large glaciers which we needed to traverse, and the prospect of the heavyweight sledge with its three attendants disappearing down one of the numerous very large crevasses was a constant source of enlivenment, if not fear. I remember it as being back-breaking work, not lightened by finding the senior member of the party not pushing on his handlebars but riding on the back of the sledge. On later trips we used lightweight pulka sledges where each man pulls his own stuff, plus a disputed share of the communal gear.

We had primitive skis for working from glacier camps, little more than planks with simple leather bindings into which boots could be thrust. These were of some assistance when traversing soft snow, but were too heavy and cumbersome to be of general use. Gear back then was unbelievably primitive compared with today.

One memorable day saw Deer and myself make an early start to cross a large snowfield in order to reach rocks which he had seen on a winter dogsledge journey on the 1935-36 expedition. The third member of the party did not accompany us because while putting on his skis one had got away and proceeded down a steep icy slope to disappear into a large and very deep crevasse, where it remained. It was late in the day when we finally got to our objective, only to find that it was guarded by a very large schrund. Fortunately a short descent enabled a bridge to be reached, but having got there Deer dropped our only collecting hammer, which could dimly be seen stuck on an icy knob about fifty feet lower in the schrund. The hammer eventually recovered, rock was collected and the return journey begun. Then, on a bridge crossing a gaping crevasse, Deer had the misfortune to stumble and found himself face down with an excessively heavy rucksack (those rocks again) pushing him into the snow. His skis had also become crossed and he could not move his legs until I joined him on the bridge and cut off the leather bindings. Fortunately for the state of the snow bridge, it was late in the evening and freezing hard. Camp was finally reached in the early hours, a twenty hour day thanks to continuous daylight.

The Oxford party spent some time on the west side of Kangerdlugssuak in the area of South Syenite glacier. We used the larger boat to transfer their gear, after which they used the small dinghy with its outboard motor. Unfortunately freezing conditions meant that they had to plate the bow of the dinghy with flattened ships biscuit tins in order to prevent a skin of bay ice cutting through the timber. This was also a problem encountered with the more robust larger boat towards the end of our stay.

It was with a general sense of relief tinged with satisfaction that during the second week of September everybody finally assembled at the base house to await the arrival of our ship. The *Jopeter* duly arrived, rather later than expected, on the 19th September. By then there had been considerable snow fall and the fiord was beginning to ice over. It was definitely time to be moving out. After ferrying all our stuff out to *Jopeter* we left Kangerdlugssuaq on the 20th and arrived in Copenhagen about a week later. My memory from then on is dominated by cream cakes and pastries and hot baths.

I was very fortunate to visit East Greenland in such company and not long after the war, before the area became more frequented. Significant inroads have since been made into the seemingly endless opportunities for exploration of unvisited peaks and glaciers along this section of the Blosseville coast and adverts for adventure trips to East Greenland can be found in the glossy magazines. The base house, which had survived for almost twenty years, caught fire while being used by Greenlanders and there is gold in some of the rocks on Gabbro Mountain which would probably be exploited but for the arctic environment. The area has been overrun by geologists of all nationalities as well as other visitors. Wager would not recognise his 1930s exploration paradise.

Four Weeks on the Big Brother Boat

Ian Arnold

Time and tide wait for no man

It never rains, but it pours

Any port in a storm

Come home safe, come home friends, climb the mountain

If it can go wrong, it will go wrong

Our sailing/climbing trip to the Antarctic Peninsula in Jan/Feb 2007 was conceived two years earlier in Alaska, following a successful trip to the Chugach range. Three of that company managed to see the plan through to its realisation. Originally it was to have been two separate trips, but over the ensuing months these were collapsed into just one. The Welsh mountain guide and organiser, Dean James, had hoped to do a recce trip to Antarctica with experienced climbers as a forerunner to a guided client trip but yacht availability and weather windows changed the game-plan. This meant that the trip I ended up on was nothing like the one I had envisaged. However, Antarctica is not a place that lends itself to independent travel unless you are 'well 'ard' or 'well rich' so getting the right balance of companionship is always likely to involve compromise. The ultimate consequences of this are not always apparent in the planning stages ...

Our port of departure was Ushuaia on the southern tip of Argentina. This is the most southerly city in the southern hemisphere and trades heavily on being the stepping off point for large cruising ships and supply vessels visiting the Antarctic bases. A bit like the university cities of the UK that bustle in term-time and are dead in the student holidays, so Ushuaia comes alive when the big ships are in and is desolate when they leave. Where all those taxis appear from and disappear to I've no idea.

The city sits on the north side of the Beagle Channel which separates it from the mass of Chilean islands to the south, making the

position strategically important for Argentina. These two are like irritable homeowners who argue over the right to rule over the water on their doorstep, much as neighbours might argue over the parking space outside their houses. Just occasionally one or the other will pull a stunt or introduce new rules to throw the other off its stride, which effectively closes access through the channel for all but the chosen few. Cruise ships and big liners are exempt from this as they are obliged to take compulsory pilots onboard from the Chilean and Argentinean navies to traverse the channel. Piloting is an important source of revenue which is not to be compromised. Small boats on the other hand, contributing nothing to the navy's coffers, can be disallowed access at a whim. The wind can be considered 'too strong' for them or the waves 'too big'. Never mind the fact you may be recovering from the white-knuckle ride of a lifetime, having surfed down huge breakers rounding Cape Horn to get to the channel, the Navy officials know best.

Tierra del Fuego is made up of many islands, the most famous being Cape Horn itself. I'd always wanted to 'round the Horn' as described in the sea shanties of old, so the chance to be so near was an exciting one. Many ships actually shelter in the lee of the island waiting for fair winds and moderate seas before rounding to westward. It came as a slight disappointment to me that many of the passenger cruisers actually ferry their hoards of landlubbers ashore to land on Cape Horn and buy souvenirs from the visitor centre there. In my swashbuckling imaginations the only souvenirs a 'real' sailor would bring back from the Horn would be a scar from the cat o' nine tails or a wooden peg leg. Ha Harr Jim Lad!

On our outward journey we didn't so much round the Horn as watch it sink slowly below the horizon as we sailed south from it. We had experienced fierce weather in the four days getting to this point so were quite relieved to find that conditions were not as rough as expected. However, the knowledge that the following four days would see us completely at the mercy of the elements as we crossed Drake Passage to the Antarctic Peninsula was very sobering. It was also the start of our watch system for running the boat while at sea.

This is a good time to introduce our crew.

Our team leader Dean: formerly a geologist, then mountain guide and Everest summiteer. One of 'the' authorities on climbing in Alaska.

Aiden: Dean's buddy and expedition helper; numerous Alaskan trips under his belt.

The Welsh-speaking contingent, Kevin and Del: Kev has been a watersports instructor and parapente pioneer (there aren't many of those who have survived!), Del is a very accomplished fell-runner and fitter than most people half her age. Antarctica was to be the last continent to climb on in their 'a climb on every continent' challenge.

Andy and Clare, our second married couple, have been regular customers for Dean's guiding business. Andy seems to have a perennial urge to attempt Aconcagua and Clare enjoys the life of the mountaineering groupie. Of all the ship's company, these were the only two who alluded to any offshore sailing experience, but it must be said that the credentials receded proportionately to the increase in size of waves and strength of wind.

Lastly, of course, yours truly, the big-eared, bald-headed, four-eyed, southern git.

Our skipper, nicknamed Mono and a larger-than-life beast of a man had, literally, oceans of experience worldwide and in his much fitter prime had been the bowman in charge of spinnakers and stuff in the classic races like the Fastnet and Cowes week. He had also played

Rugby Union for the Argentinean national side so he had shovels for hands. His second in command and recent romantic partner was a mild-mannered lady called Susannah. This was her first big trip onboard with a paying crew and her first experience of the Southern Ocean. Henry Kissinger would have been impressed by her diplomacy and man-management at times when all the world appeared to be going berserk. Between the two of them they managed to speak English most of the time, but the 'fluency' mentioned in the charter brochure was perhaps a little optimistic. We became very adept at steering a course based on grunts and frantic arm-waving as opposed to the "Twenty degrees to port, Mr Christian!" that you might expect.

We also operated a very different watch system to my previous experiences. Watches alternated, with 4 hours on watch and then 4 hours off. We had enough crew to allow 4 hours on and 8 hours off, but we deferred to the Skipper's preference. He and Susannah mirrored these watch times and grabbed whatever extra sleep they could fit in. Sleeping for just 4 hours at a time over a period of 4 days was very difficult for all concerned. The irregular work pattern was compounded by those crew members who became too ill to leave their bunks, and those who couldn't get the hang of steering, thus relying on others to do their spell at the helm. The concentration required to steer a compass course on a sailing boat from within a confined wheelhouse, at night, with restricted vision due to stowage on deck cannot be overestimated. For the novices amongst us (i.e. most of the group) this was far from the ideal way to learn.

Fortunately the use of GPS for finding your position allows you to constantly update your course in the light of any 'steering errors' that might occur. It can also be used to show your track over the ground for the previous hour or so; very embarrassing in certain cases.

During the 4 hour stretches on watch there are other essentials to deal with. Eating and food preparation is always a problem because of the motion of the boat and possible sickness. 'Little and often' is the best policy and nothing that requires a lot of digesting. Drinking is equally important as we all found ourselves increasingly dehydrated. Ready made-up bottles of squash were the solution (no pun intended) and these also helped to alleviate the awful taste in your mouth that comes from bodily neglect. When you're getting up from bed every 4

hours you can only brush your teeth so often! Fresh water is always a preciously-guarded commodity onboard a yacht, but a dehydrated crew is useless without it. Of course, if you get enough food and liquid down you need to attend to other bodily essentials. This would be difficult enough with the multiple layers of essential clothing being worn, but add to that the effects of severe sideways leaning and the G-forces of an erratic rollercoaster ride and you get the picture. You must also realise that these manoeuvres take place in a sort-of poorly-designed broom cupboard and then you really get the picture. The sting in the tail here (again no pun intended) is that a failure to maintain self-discipline and ensure regular bodily functions results in far worse scenarios that I could only justifiably include in a volume of *The Lancet* and not this fair journal.

Our crossing of Drake Passage was a huge learning curve for all and a feat of endurance for some. We were successful, after 4 days at sea, in making the impressive landfall of Smith's Island in the Southern Shetland Islands before carefully navigating our way into a protected cove deep in the bowels of Deception Island. This is a place made famous by the likes of Shackleton, Tillman et al, and we could understand the feeling of security gained by anchoring inside the ancient caldera of a volcano, with its steep walls giving protection on all sides. We also observed the remains of the whaling stations that operated from this desolate part of the globe. We chose to ignore at this point the fact that this island is still considered volcanically active and will one day blow itself to bits. It's amazing how 4 days at sea can numb your sensibilities.

Having arrived at the Antarctic Peninsula and given ourselves some rest and time to reflect we were able to summarise our achievements so far:

Ushuaia reached despite a missed connection in Madrid.

Group equipment collected intact, 24 hours after group arrival in Ushuaia, delay unexplained.

Customs cleared for both Chile and Argentina en route to Cape Horn despite very strong winds and appalling sea states.

A 4 day crossing of Drake's passage in much kinder conditions than expected. Crew tired, but physically intact.

This left us with a 'Things to do list':

Making landfall

Find some peaks to climb.
Climb them.
Return home safely

So, plenty to be getting on with then.

On previous expeditions to other parts of the world, much of the planning in the UK has been from photos, slides, articles and expedition reports. This trip had used similar sources, but also relied heavily on word of mouth from other Antarctic yachtsmen and needed the ability to observe the land from onboard at close range. We also depended upon Mono's ability as skipper to get us in as close as possible to the sections of coast we were interested in. Charts for the Antarctic peninsula are very rudimentary, so this type of navigation is an adventure in itself. While we were anchored at Deception Island, a Norwegian cruising ship had struck a rock, necessitating the evacuation of the passengers to a sister ship by helicopter.

It was around this time that we encountered another hurdle in the understanding of our fluent hosts. Their idea of climbing and our idea of climbing seemed to experience a major mismatch. Our twin ice-tooled, vertiginous ascents of improbable looking faces were totally beyond their ken. They thought we simply wanted to walk up a few hills. When we pointed out the high, spiky, snow-capped things in the

distance, they showed their admiration, but hadn't realised that these were what we had sought to climb. After all, what people in their right minds would want to climb those?

Nature also ganged up on us at about this time. Whether due to global warming or not, we experienced some unusual weather for this part of the world at this time of the year. Rain, mist and low cloud/fog hampered our observations and navigation. Spotting potential climbs and landing places from sea level with zero visibility is an art that none of us have yet mastered. Only after nearly a week of island-hopping in some extremes of wind, rain, hail and fog did we arrive at our first potential climbing peak.

Navigation to a suitable anchorage off the coast was all down to some scribblings on the back of a scrap of paper given to us by a yachtsman who had anchored here before. In these latitudes that information is far more than just water depth and type of substrate on the seafloor. It includes the thickness of kelp that we might encounter and the proximity of accessible boulders that we would be able to tie the yacht to. Too much kelp and the anchor would never manage to reach the seafloor and thus not hold. No supplementary boulders or islets to tie to and the boat might be blown away or swing viciously into shallower water and go aground. We were able to understand why all the yachts we had seen had huge 200 metre drums of mooring ropes readily available on deck for the belt-and-braces approach to keeping your boat in place regardless of weather conditions. Secure yachts here look like spiders sitting in the middle of their webs, twitching nervously lest one of the delicate threads should break or come astray. Only when the wind blows hard do you realise that all the extra effort was not in vain.

After sheltering within the bowels of Deception Island for a few days to wait out a storm we headed south between the South Shetland Islands and the Antarctic peninsula mainland arriving at Trinity Island. A very murky day's sailing resulted in a perfectly still evening with excellent views of the shoreline, coastal peaks and the sound of whales surfacing in the bay. "At last!" we thought, as we eyed possible routes up the nearest peak and the best approaches to get ashore. In a much more buoyant mood we prepared our sacks and gear for an early start the next day.

Two dinghy-loads of crew became two ropes of climbers as we clambered our way up the ice from the seashore glacier. It's almost impossible to say if the leg-wobble was from days on the briny or lack of crampon practice. Both ropes were much steadier when we opted to change to snowshoes. The route chosen was straightforward by alpine standards, but involved a circuitous approach to avoid the worst of the crevasses. No red helicopters with white crosses to get you out of trouble here! Our perfectly clear morning grew into a cold, windy, misty day and we eventually needed the altimeter to tell us when we had reached the high point of our chosen summit. A broad plateau with a pimple on top at 300m was to be our first Antarctic success.

The three members of Druid heritage raised their red dragon flags and we rivalled Japanese tourists for the number of photos we managed to take in the next few minutes. The only reason to curtail our peering into the freezing mist was just that ... we were freezing. We retreated with great care through the crevasses, fortunate that our ascent steps had not been obliterated by the wind. Closer to the shoreline, where the wind was less extreme, the snow had become quite soft. The lazy amongst us had a slippery time reversing the steeper sections with snowshoes, which we had of course ascended with crampons.

While we'd been away our skipper, mate and other crew member had visited an abandoned whaling cabin and had enjoyed a splendid wildlife festival of penguins, seals and all things Antarctic. Our evening meal was a happy one.

Unfortunately our luck was short-lived and we spent the next few valuable climbing days sailing to sheltered anchorages, attempting to find more feasible climbing routes. It took the magic of another blissful calm afternoon to appear out of nowhere to allow us a token shuffle up a small icy bluff off the shoreline of Bluff Island. Though only a beginner's introduction to snow and ice, the position of the summit and the views it afforded of the Antarctic peninsula proper were fantastic. Constantly dive-bombed by the native skuas we sat for a very long time enjoying the sort of views we had hoped would have been our constant companions on this trip. At least three small peaks all looked feasible from this one anchorage and the potential of this sort of trip was at its most evident. As you have no doubt guessed, that was the

last of our brief spells of good weather and the climbing gear never again saw the light of day.

Poor long-range weather forecasts had us dodging about in order to make the safest passage possible back to Ushuaia. No wonder those round-the-world racing yachts have such sophisticated technological back-up and a dedicated land-based team to look after them.

We sailed south in some poor visibility to the Melchior Islands and visited the Argentinean Naval base at Melchior. This was our most southerly point at latitude 64.20S 62.59W and was an attempt to get a fair wind direction for our 4 day journey back north. We were very well looked after by our hosts there and spent a couple of days waiting out yet more storms. When it was time to leave, the predicted weather had changed, so our position to the south was no longer favourable. Something to do with 'Sod's Law' I believe. We were also getting very short of 'spare' time so we had to make some important decisions.

No one wanted to make our return crossing of Drake's Passage any harder than needed so we bit the bullet and sailed through the next day and night to retrace our route back north to Deception Island. This was no easy journey and the entrance to the bay, aptly named Neptune's Bellows, had the crew and helmsman in abject fear. Once back in relative shelter we now had a long waiting game, listening on the radio for reports of other ships and yachts in the area in the hope we could glean valuable information as to the real conditions out in the open sea. It was becoming increasingly clear that even if we were extremely lucky we would be very unlikely to catch our scheduled flights back to the UK from Ushuaia. Our boat was tied up in every possible direction to weather the severe winds including the use of snow stakes buried deep in the sand of the beach. The pressure dropped to 972 mb, the wind increased to 50 knots and horizontal snow and hail flew through the rigging. You can only play so many games of chess and keep yourself in readiness for so long!

Three days of doom and gloom later and finally we had a change of wind direction and enough of a glimmer of hope to make our way home. No longer blowing from the north ("It never blows from the north"), it seemed we would have a fair wind to sail home with. Once out and round the islands and into the ocean we were also pleased that the seas had moderated significantly and were not as enormous as we

Opposite: Descending snow ridge on Challenger Island with views of Antarctic Peninsula. Best weather of the trip. Dive-bombing skuas not picured.. *(Ian Arnold)*

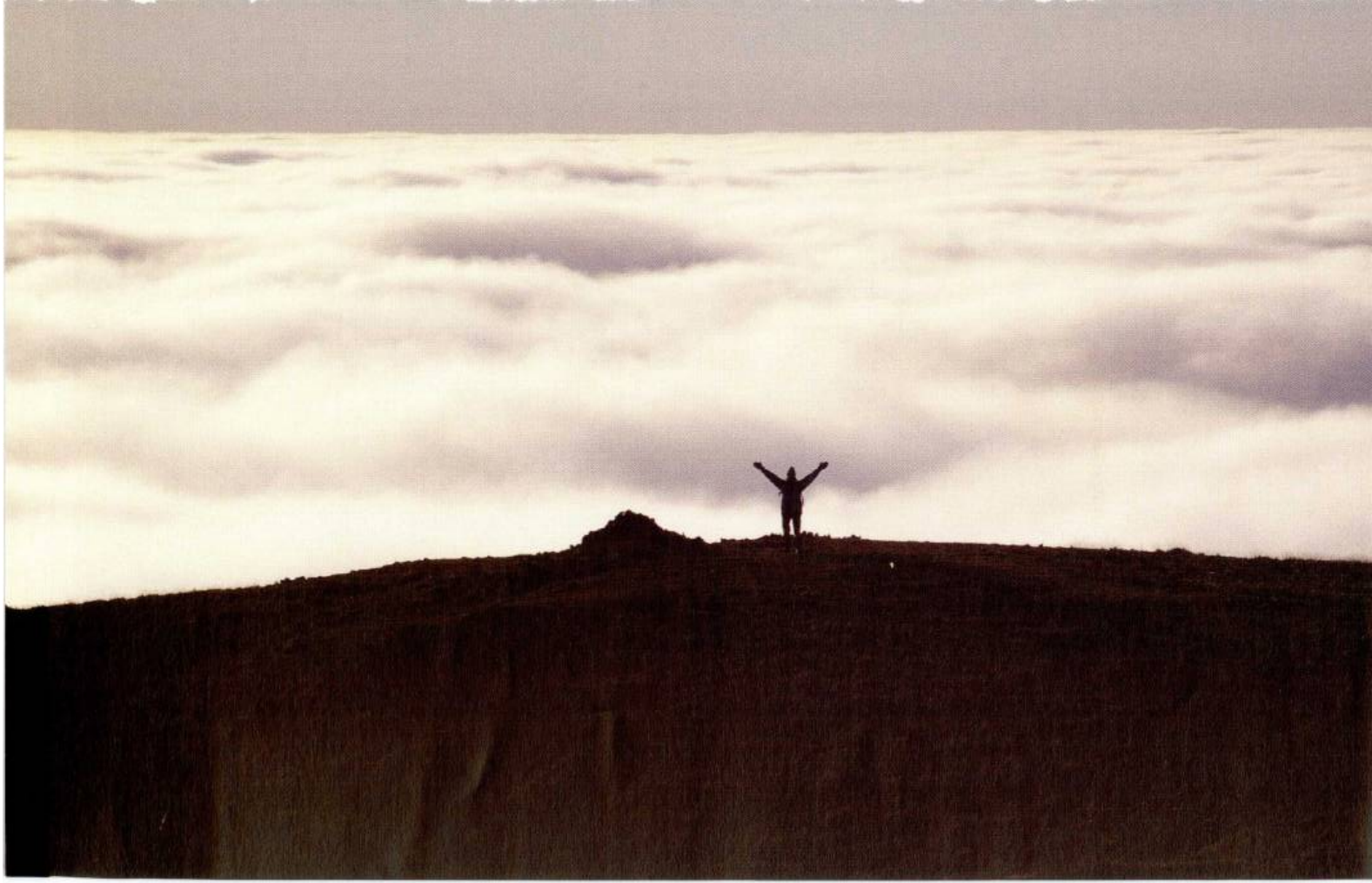
had feared. For the four days of our return crossing we actually had to motor some sections as the wind died totally, or swung back again to the north.

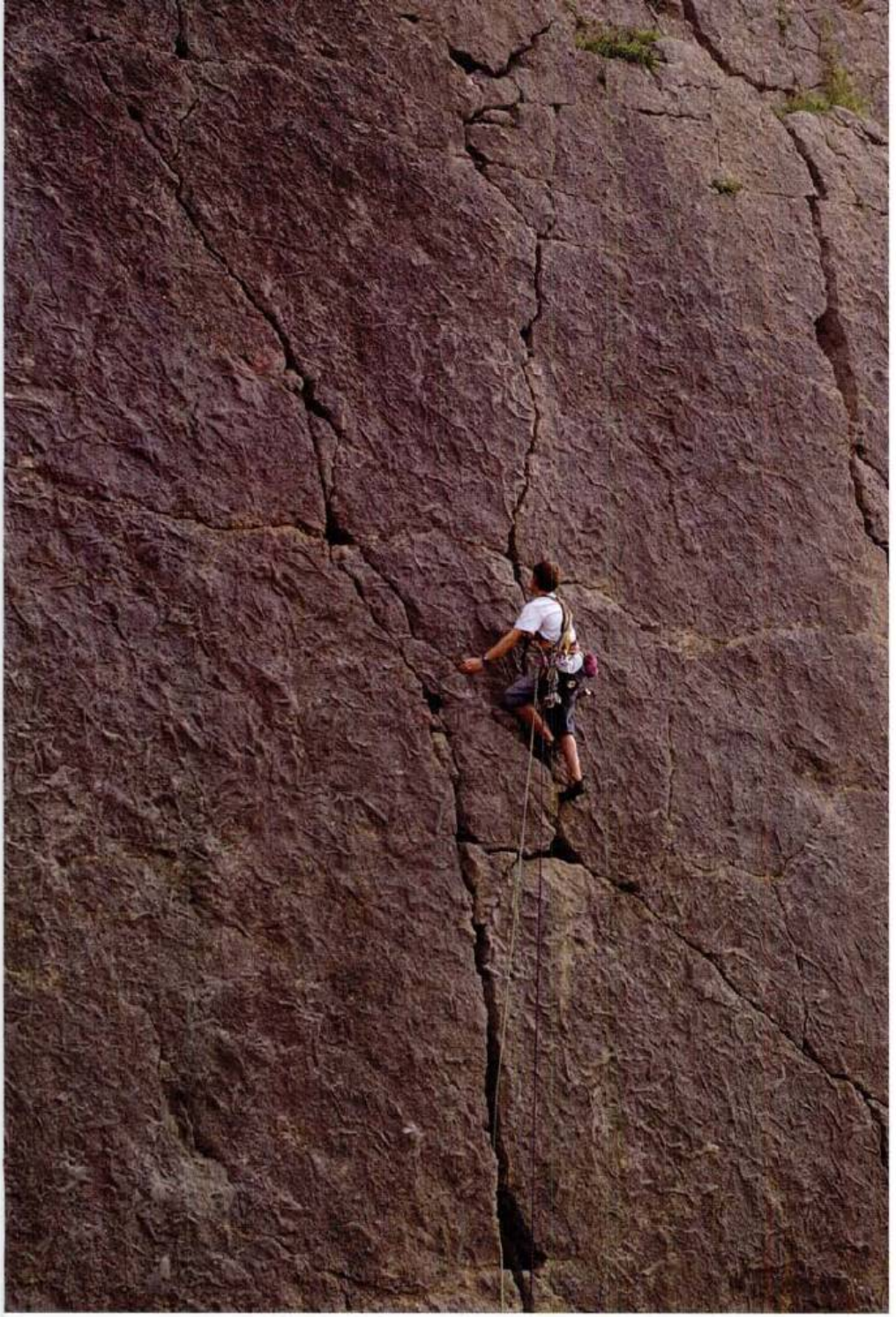
Our final landfall back at Cape Horn was a joyous one and was followed by some exciting sailing as we ran downwind into calmer, more sheltered, flatter water, going like the clappers. At this point there was just a chance that we might be back in time for our flight home, but the Chilean Navy decided otherwise for us. In their considered opinion, the Beagle Channel was too dangerous for small yachts on that day and we would have to take refuge in an anchorage somewhere. Forget the fact we'd just ridden bareback on the frenzied mustang that is Cape Horn after a four day crossing of Drake Passage. This would be like going paddling at the local park by comparison with where we had just come from, but no, the Navy knows best. Strange that the bigger shipping was still allowed passage through the channel, particularly as many of those ships are in far more danger from high winds than smaller boats. It couldn't have anything to do with their pilot fees could it?

Numerous radio wrangles and much wasted time later, we sailed our way back to Puerto Williams to clear Chilean customs and we were sailing our way back to Ushuaia as our plane left overhead. Once finally back, we organised ourselves straight ashore after clearing Argentinean customs and set about rearranging our homeward travel. We got to Buenos Aires for little extra cost but had to buy new flights from there to the UK. Our trip cost increased by £1000 each as the plastic swiped through the machine. Arriving in London on Feb 9th we found the country in turmoil after a freak snowfall had paralysed the motorway network. At Victoria coach station at 23.30hrs, the last bus remaining, yes mine, was cancelled. It took several piggyback rides on other buses and a taxi ride from Nottingham for national coaches to get us people from the North back home. A slushy walk on deserted roads saw a wet, soggy, but very grateful me fall in through my front door after what can only be described as an epic trip.

Would I repeat a similar trip? Would I recommend the same trip to others? You must be joking!

Opposite: Red Screes, Christmas Day 2007 *(Ron Kenyon)*





Mikes Kenyon on Jean Jeanie (VS), Trowbarrow *(Ron Kenyon)*

New Climbs

The following section, as in the previous edition of the Journal, is cribbed exclusively from the FRCC Website at http://www.frcc.co.uk/rock/newroutes/index.htm, so the credit for this information should again go to Stephen Reid. Please note that by the time of publication the link should begin http://www.frcc.org.uk.

The pattern of new routing has also continued in the same vein. On the one hand major routes are still being put up, primarily by Dave Birkett, whose most recent achievement, 'Hasty Sin Oot Ert Hoonds?' (E9 6c, 5.14a X), on Cam Crag, Wasdale, is staggeringly hard and equally staggeringly bold. On the other hand the search continues for unclimbed rock in the deepest recesses of the Lake District, with the length of climb diminishing in inverse proportion to the distance to the crag; the principal activist in this respect continues to be Barry Clarke. In between these two extremes good, independent, long new routes are still being discovered, sometimes in the most surprising of places, for instance Castle Rock,Thirlmere.

The following pages constitute a selection of what seemed to the compiler to be the best of the new routes from the last two years; the intention is to give a flavour of what has been achieved, not chapter and verse on every single crag. In general, for reasons of both space and value, shorter routes which can be soloed have been omitted, though the compiler makes no claims of rigorous consistency in this respect.

NEW CLIMBS

BORROWDALE

Christmas Crag (p177)

Lower Tier

Troika 16m MVS

An interesting and quite bold companion route to Royal Oak. Start 2m right of that climb.

1 8m (4b). Climb the easy-angled rib, then follow the steep left-slanting crack cutting across the ridged pinnacle face.

2 8m (4a). Follow the leftward-trending ramp with some delicacy to a ledge; from where two steep walls lead to the top.
BJ Clarke (solo), 9th Nov 2007

Gillercombe (p307)
Prudence 25m E6/7 ***
The excellent steep groove and diagonal crack 4m right of Caution. (6b). Go up the slab to a bilberry ledge. Climb boldly and directly to a peg (good holds down and left to clip). and continue strenuously up the groove via a large undercut (Friend 1.5) to a rest at the second peg. Pull out leftward onto a flake on the steep headwall (sling and tiny wire) and gain the diagonal crack via a hard move into the undercut. Follow the continuously difficult crack boldly to the top. There is gear in the crack but some is difficult to find and it's all pumpy to place.
Paddy Deady, James McHaffie, 13th September 2007
Note - Cleaned and top-roped prior to first ascent. All gear placed on the lead. E7 for a true on sight but, as the start of the route is most easily approached by abseil, E6 is more applicable.

ST JOHNS IN THE VALE
Castle Rock of Triermain (p126)
Gangway Direct 22m VS
(4c). Follow Gangway Climb to the blocks at the top of the first pitch and then stretch for good handholds on the left-hand edge of the gangway itself and swing round left on to the face at a heather-filled crack. Now climb direct, through Gangway Climb, and up the lichen-speckled wall above to a ledge with pinnacle at its left end. Finish direct.
Frank Wilkinson, Mike Bebbington, Ian Knight, 10th October 2007

North Gully Wall
Diamond Jubilee 22m E2
Climbs the lower left wall, starting near the foot of the diagonal ramp that leads into the dank descent gully. Start below a short, prominent groove in the front of the wall. The rock's not bad, but I

noticed that abseiling sent down a shower of dead heather flowers across the upper wall, which may have covered some of the holds. (5b.) Climb a short dark groove (the right-hand one) and step left to a ledge under the prominent groove. Step up to the overhang (good gear), swing left onto a spike and pull hastily up to a larger spike. Climb diagonally left on good holds (keeping above a sloping ledge) to gain a smaller ledge by a rather unprotected move. Step right on good holds to finish. Tree abseil point in place.
A Phizacklea, JL Holden, 9th September 2007
Note - The name reflects the fact that it's sixty years since Jim Birkett did the last route on this wall - to put this into a historical context, sixty years before that, Haskett Smith had only just climbed The Needle! I'm amazed that such a large area of rock on one of the busiest crags in the district has been overlooked for so long. I climbed the prominent central corner on-sight, in a usual attempt to be wholly ethical, but my intended line, going back right through the bulges, couldn't be done without cleaning. I finished up by battling over a very unaccommodating heather cornice onto the ledge where Diamond Jubilee finishes. There's a good deal of potential left, but it'll need a good clean. Most of the rock is good, but some of the flakes tend to be a bit friable.

THIRLMERE

Sippling Crag (300 195 alt 350m W facing)

Seen across the Shoulthwaite Valley from Iron Crag, this is a rather broken crag amongst the trees, the area developed seemed to have the best rock but there's considerable scope for further development. The routes have only undergone absolute minimal cleaning.

Sippling Groove 20m E2 *
Good sustained climbing, with diminishing protection, up the inverted groove system. Start just left of the crack.
(5b). Move into the base of the groove, and ascend delicately to the half way ledge (peg). The upper wall is climbed direct, there is a finishing jug on the left to gain a ledge. Finish up the flake behind. Tree belay.
A Phizacklea, JL Holden, 26th August 2007

Sippling Rivalry 22m VS *
An interesting route on excellent rock with a well protected crux, start just right of the crack.
(5a). Pull up the lower rocks to a ledge. Climb the left side of the wall to reach a small inverted V, where a hard step left enables a jug to be reached. Finish easily behind to a tree belay.
A Phizacklea, JL Holden, 26th August 2007

Speeding for Fun 23m E1
Rather unbalanced climbing, with an awkward crux protected by a skyhook. (It may be possible to swing right to fix a runner and this might reduce the grade.)
(5a). Start up Sippling Rivalry to a small wire in the first bulge, then swing right to reach a good pocket. Mantleshelf onto this (crux), and fix a nut out right before continuing up to a small niche/scoop. Easier climbing leads to the top.
A Phizacklea, JL Holden, 26th August 2007

LONGSLEDDALE
Buckbarrow Crag (p262)
Low Crag
A Century on the Crags 40m E2
A good, strenuous line, well protected but with a couple of suspect holds. Start at the foot of The Iron Chicken.
(5b). Follow the crack line in the right side of the steep wall that curves rightward through the bulge to reach a good spike. Climb the blunt arête directly above to finish.
A Phizacklea, JL Holden, 8th July 2007
Note - So called because the joint age of the team has now reached 100 (and Al still says he's 39 – which would make John a remarkably well preserved 61!)

EASDALE
Deer Bield
Bed Helmet 25m E3
Not for E3 leaders! Likely to hit the ground if things go wrong! Technically absorbing for a few critical moments.

Climbs the 'unclimbed' wall and steep arête to the left of Idle Breed. (6a). Start just left of the arête and climb the wall on good holds until they very quickly cease. Look for runners. Move rightward with difficulty and grasp the arête. When that feeling of commitment really kicks in, pivot on the right knee and layback up for jugs and the ledge. Pull up the final edge on the left to the top, thread belay. Slabs remain to abseil tree on right.
Rob Matheson & Keith Phizacklea, 29th July 2006

LANGDALE

Raven Crag (p128)

Mendes Wall

Fuzz Face E1
The wall between Bradleys, Damnation and Mendes.
(5b). Start as for Mendes to gain slab over first bulge. Where this heads right into the main corner, keep straight on up the wall – follow a faint line just left of a tiny hanging corner to a final fuzzy rock-over. Good gear, furry rock, needs a shave.
Martin Bagness, John Kelly, 26th September 2007

Bilberry Buttress Eliminate E2
Shares the same belays as Bilberry Buttress.
1 (5b). Climb a slabby rib to gain a triangular niche a few metres left of the crack of Bilberry Buttress Pitch 1. Pull over onto a slab and climb this direct to the belay. The E2 grade is given for this pitch.
2 (5b). Climb the crack as for Bilberry Buttress pitch 2, but continue up it where Bilberry Buttress pulls out right, to reach a small roof on the left. Pull over this leftward on improving holds and continue up the arête.
3. Same as Bilberry Buttress pitch 3 or Pluto pitch 3.
Martin Bagness, John Kelly 18th September 2007

Black Wars (p268)

Black Star 25m E6 ***
The route climbs the thin diagonal crack system in the very steep wall to the right of Furtive Sortie. Start at the right edge of the wall below a thin crack.

(6b). Climb through a slight overlap and move strenuously up the wall on small positive edges to a jug. From here make difficult and strenuous moves using layaways and edges past a peg to finally arrive at a good jug and excellent runners. Pull up onto the hanging slab and then make final strenuous moves up the headwall to pull awkwardly into a groove at the top. Stunning!
Kevin Avery, John Shepherd, 26th August 2007
Note – Abseil inspected/cleaned prior to lead.
Further note – Surely 'Black Wars' should be 'Black Whas' as in Black Walls!

Gimmer Crag (p165)
Note: Early summer 2008 brought a change to the historic flake on 'A' Route. An unnamed (by request) individual in a kindred club had the misfortune of jamming a knee behind the flake. After much effort by the concerned party as well as the local mountain rescue team armed with lemon-scented Fairy Liquid, a drill was produced and the knee freed, leaving a relic of the epic. The new flake configuration is not thought to impact the grade of the route. *Editor*

Topaz 40m HVS 2007
An eliminate, giving fine and bold climbing up the walls delineating 'E' Route. The protection is poor where it matters, necessitating precise route-finding. Start as for Oliverson's Variation.
1 16m (4c). Climb direct to a ledge, then step left and follow the shallow crack/groove line to the terrace above pitch 2 'E' Route.
2 24m (4c). Move right along the terrace and pull up onto a ledge in a shallow recess (situated about 2m right of the crack on pitch 3 of 'E' Route. Move up again, and follow a slightly ascending rightward traverse below a rounded bulge to reach the base of Lichen Chimney. Up this for 4m, then step left to gain a ledge below a scooped slabby wall. Climb this to the rock staircase on 'A' Route, and follow this to an alcove below the finishing corner crack of that route. A stiff pull out of the right side of the alcove leads to better holds and the top.
BJ Clarke (solo), 15th November 2007

The Crimson Pirate 41m VS
An eliminate, giving good, direct climbing up the rib above the ABCE wall. Start as for 'E' Route.
1 18m (4b). After 5m, climb the shallow groove one metre left of the obvious overhang. Cross Oliverson's Variation and continue up a further groove to gain the rib proper. Follow this direct, climbing the right edge of the small crimson-coloured corner, until moves up and right lead to a belay at the top of the Forty Foot Corner .
2 23m (4a). Step up left and climb the leftward-slanting shallow groove to reach the top of Lichen Chimney. Enter the green corner directly above and follow it for 3m, until a traverse right leads to a shallow recess. Climb the wall above to the top.
BJ Clarke (solo) 15th November 2007

Cove Crag, Brightbeck Cove (287 082)
From The Confidence Man, follow the base of the rock up to the right until the last slab before it merges into the fellside. The route takes the slab and 'thumb' of rock above it.

Nobble Nibble 18m E1
(5b). Gain the slab from its left edge and climb it on nice rugosities to reach a ledge. Traverse off here right or left and award yourself (4c). Continue up the steeper thumb above more or less direct trending slightly right towards the top. It may be possible to bail into the slope on the right when the going gets tough. No gear to speak of. Delightful climbing.
Martin Dale (solo, with top spotter, Nick Dalzell – he looked over the top and pointed out holds!), 11th June 2006

Raven Crag, Walthwaite (p 37)
The following routes have been discovered, partly as a result of removing the offending holly branch at the top of Walthwaite Gully, which blocked/spoiled the finish to that route. I am further informed that the offending falling branch also took off an area of bramble which uncovered a new area of rock. With the exception of Demeter, all of the following climbs may suffer from wet starts, as was the case of the weekend of the first ascents and whilst this detracts from

the initial climbing all the routes are possible despite the oft wet starts, and they provide a worthwhile addition to the selection of routes on Raven Crag Walthwaite.

Demeter 27m HVS
Starts one metre right of Walthwaite Gully, to the left of an obvious large groove and provides steep enjoyable climbing with adequate protection.
(5a). Follow the line of the groove, mainly by the left bounding wall and its left arête, to finish to the right of the holly tree.
Martin Scrowston, Mike Hope, 8th November 2007

Phorcys 27m E1
A harder companion route to Demeter, direct and on good rock, with adequate protection. Start directly behind a small hawthorn, 3m right of Walthwaite Gully.
(5a/5b). Climb the wall to the right of the dirty groove to the overhang; pull through this direct via an obvious square-topped spike. Easier climbing then follows keeping immediately to the right of the groove-line of Demeter.
Martin Scrowston, Mike Hope, 8th November 2007

River Boat Gambler Direct 25m VS 4c
Good and well protected direct climbing up the wall to the left of River Boat Gambler's upper groove. Start as for River Boat Gambler.
(4c). Climb direct up the wall, via a bulge and following a vague crack line (seen from below), passing a suspect flake to its right side.
Martin Scrowston, Jim Loxham, 9th November 2007

Flat Crags, Bowfell (p214)
St. Luke 35m HVS
A varied, interesting but serious route taking the easy-looking slabby walls at the left-hand side of the crag. Start 6m left of Mary Ann at the mossy cave.
1 12m (4c). Climb the right wall of the cave and enter the chimney above. Squirm up this to belays at its top.

2 6m (4a). Step right and descend a gangway to gain a grassy bay. Hidden spike belay on the wall above.
3 17m (4c). Move up the steep little wall just right of the belay; then cross the unprotected slabby wall rightward, ascending slightly, to gain a small bay below a short corner. Up the corner to a blocky ledge, from where a short arête on the right leads to the top. Spike and nut belays 5m back.
BJ Clarke (solo), 24th October 2007

Slate Crag, Bowfell (west of summit, 240 064)
The crag is most logically reached via Stool End Farm and The Band. From Three Tarns, contour WNW above Hart Crag, then NW to the crag. About one and a half hours.
This is an idyllic venue in good weather with great views and bivi spots below the crag near Yeastyrigg Gill. It gets all the sun there is from midday onwards. The crag seems to be dry after three rain-free days.

White Balance 40m M
An easy blunt rib towards the left end of the crag. Easily identified by a short rust-coloured streak at its base.
Stuart Halford (solo), 24th August 2007

Snail's Revenge 30m VD
A line which wanders and keeps the grade steady.
Alyn Griffiths, Stuart Halford, 26th August 2007

Did you kill that lad's 'awk? 25m S
A direct line a few metres right.
Stuart Halford, Alyn Griffiths, 26th August 2007

Squeeky Duck 25m HS
Climb direct just to the left of a black moss-streak. Sneak left at the finish up a short rib to avoid some loose rocks.
Stuart Halford, Phil Poole, 28th June 2007

Slug Balancer 25m HS
A direct line between two black moss-streaks. Good gear can be placed under the juniper 'moustache' before stepping through it.
Stuart Halford, Alyn Griffiths, 26th August 2007

Handlebar Club 25m HS
The next line right between black moss-streaks to the left and right. Good gear can be placed under the juniper 'moustache' before stepping through it.
Stuart Halford, Alyn Griffiths, 26th August 2007

Mollusc Juggler 25m S
Start alongside a blunt pinnacle at the base of the crag.
Bridge between the pinnacle and main face, then climb direct avoiding the widening moss-streak on its right.
Alyn Griffiths, Stuart Halford, 26th August 2007

Bulb's Route 25m MVS
(4b). Climb the slab and groove to a wide crack. Finish up this, passing to the right of a pale square of rock.
Phil Poole, Stuart Halford, 28th June 2007

Cricket Route 20m VD
Climb the slab and crack on great rock to a ledge. Haul yourself up the corner to another ledge to finish.
Stuart Halford, Phil Poole, 28th June 2007

Lightning Crag (p266)
The following routes start 15m below and left of Fat Boys Crack, on the wall that has Flash in the Pan up the centre.
The large crack that defines the left end of the crag was soloed by Martin Scrowston but it was not felt long enough to be recorded as a new line. Grade S

Royal Flush 9m E1
(5a/b). Climb the left arête. Steep, delicate climbing; adequate protection

Lightning Crag:
1. Ace High VS 4b **2.** Pair of Kings S **3.** Flush VS 4c
4. Running Flush VS 4c **5.** Royal Flush, E1 5a/b **6.** Unnamed VD

Martin Scrowston. Dave Till, Paul C Bennett, Jim Loxham, 7th September 2007

Running Flush 9m VS
Just left of the previous crack is another crack.
(4c). Climb this direct to the top; well protected.
Paul C Bennett, Jim Loxham , Martin Scrowston, Dave Till, 7th September 2007

Flush 9m VS
(4c). About 2m left of Flash in the Pan is a crack – climb this direct to the top, well protected.
Paul C Bennett, Jim Loxham, Martin Scrowston, Dave Till, 7th September 2007

Flash in the Pan 9m E1 5c *
Start 15m below and left of Fat Boys Crack.
(5c). The thin crack up the centre of the wall is tricky but well protected with the crux at the top.
Karl Lunt, Tony Madden, 9th July 2005

Ace High 9m VS 4b
(4b). Right of Flash in the Pan is a crack going up the wall rightward, follow this to the top.
Paul C Bennett, Jim Loxham, Martin Scrowston, Dave Till, 7th September 2007

Pair of Kings 9m S
Between Ace High and the right arête, climb the wall direct on good rough rock.
Paul C Bennett, Jim Loxham , Martin Scrowston, Dave Till, 7th September 2007

DOW
Dow Crag (p30)
'C' Buttress
Charmer Variation HVS**
No increase in grade, but improves its quality.
pitch 3 20m (5a). Step across from the belay to the base of a prominent corner (Eliminate 'C' continues to the arête) and climb this to a good nut right at its top, then step down and traverse left on good holds around the arête, to reach the belay on 'C' Ordinary.
A Phizacklea, JL Holden, 1st June 2007

DUDDON
Low Crag (p213)
Fair Bird 13m VD/MS
Just left of Pigling Bland, climb a narrow slab with a small overlap about 2m up.
Paul C Bennett (solo), 6th May 2006

Brandy Crag (225 989) Alt 350m SE Facing

One for the Coccyx 15m VD

About 30m across and up left from the bottom left of Brandy Crag is a narrow piece of rock.

Start at the toe of the easy angled slab and climb this direct to where it steepens, then continue up the left, rounded arête to the top.

Paul C Bennett (solo), 19th June 2007

Shipping News 25m E1

Start 4m right of Weatherman at the foot of a left-slanting rib which leans against the crag. Very nice climbing.

(5a). Climb the rib or (better) bridge up the groove to a large jammed flake. Make bold moves up the wall to reach the diagonal crack (runners). Follow the crack in its entirety to merge with the upper section of Weatherman, which is followed to the top.

Paul C Bennett, Jim Loxham, Martin Scrowston, 19th June 2007

Paul Bennett on the first ascent of Curving Crack. (*Jim Loxham*)

Curving Crack 20m MVS

Start 12m right of Weatherman at a thin cleaned curving crack, which is 2m left of Grooved Arête. Well protected.

(4b). Climb the crack direct to the parallel diagonal cracks. Take the lower crack rightward into the corner. Up this onto a rib on the left to a junction with Weatherman; follow this to the top.

Paul C Bennett, Jim Loxham, Martin Scrowston, 19th June 2007

Legends 25m VS

A direct route up this part of the face; starts below and right of Parable at the lowest point of the sweep of easy angled slabs, and just left of Epilogue.

(4c). Climb the slabs direct to a junction with the hanging slab of Parable. Either climb direct the short wall above to a narrow ledge, or more easily, step right and climb a short corner (good runners) and step left onto the ledge. Climb the next short wall direct to a shallow depression in the slabby wall above and follow this to the top.
Jim Loxham, Paul Bennet, 10th June 2007

19:46 33m E2
Fifteen metres left of the toe of the buttress is a rowan by a brown wall. Start just right of the rowan.
1 15m (5a). Climb the wall boldly (no gear) to an obvious ledge at 5m. Swing out right and up to finish. Walk to the back of the ledge to belay.
2 18m (5b). Start below a small V ledge in the centre of the wall. Climb up to the ledge and straight over the bulge to easier ground.
Ed Luke, John L Holden, 10th June 2007

Dwarves' Crawl 50m MVS
Start behind the jumble of boulders at the left end of a rightward-sloping gangway.
(4b). Climb the gangway for 10m to a steepening and move delicately up to a good ledge. Traverse right across a mossy scoop. Continue up the right hand side of the slabs to its top. Step up to more slabs and follow these easily to belay below the large ledge.
John L Holden, Ed Luke, 10th June 2007

Thirty metres up and left from Brandy Crag is a small grey crag:
Wakefield 15m E1
Start at the foot of the easy-angled slab.
(5a). Climb the slab and steeper wall above: one runner at half height.
Ed Luke, John L Holden, 10th June 2007

Lower Brandy Crag (226 988)
The Slab on the Right 10m S
Start right of The Rib in a steep corner. Pull up and over strenuously onto the slab and trend up right to a crack. Move up and left and follow slabs, bulges and overlaps leftward to the main belay block.
Ted Rogers, Ken Forsythe, 28th May 2007

Lower Gaitkins (p281)
Dog's Dinner 14m E2 *
Central between Yeats-Brown Crack and Bengal Lancer.
(5b). Climb the overhanging nose on the right to pull out steeply left, crucial 0 Friend on the left and a 1.5 Friend on the right. Pull over onto the slab and up to a bilberry ledge finish direct.
Ted Rogers, Ken Forsythe, 1st June 2007

ULPHA FELL
Foxbield Slabs (197 990) Alt 380m West Facing
Trosanose 20m MVS
Start just right of Flaky.
(4b). Pull onto a ledge, then climb the spiky wall up and right to a good hold/spike just below and left of the detached block. Finish direct up a shallow groove.
A Phizacklea (solo), 22nd September 2007

The following route is on the steep wall 120m right of Foxbield Slabs.

Vrillis Gimmol 25m VS
Climbs the obvious crack. Start just left of a block embedded in the ground.
(4c). Climb the groove using the pinnacle to reach a heather ledge. Climb the crack past a good hold on a ledge to a grassy pull-out (harrowing on the solo!). Easy rocks to finish.
A Phizacklea (solo), 22nd September 2007

ESKDALE

Hardknott Roadside Crag (Horse Howe Crag) (p308)

Greener Grass 10m E2/E3?

(5c/6a?). About 7m right of Slap Head Goes Happy Slappin', pull up into the small overhang and follow steep cracks to a reach out left for a jug near the top, then continue directly.

Andy Clough, Tom Walkington, 15th September 2007

Great Bank

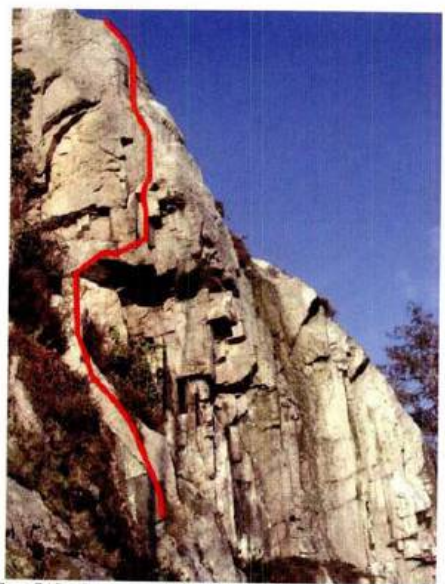
Ten Weeks to Go 17m E5 **

A good route on excellent clean rock. Soft for the grade. Climbs the obvious nose via the roof and groove. Start beneath a long fin to the left of the ivy.

(6b). Climb the fin followed by the left hand side of the roof to gain a large jug by a peg. Move up the groove with difficulty to an excellent wire placement, followed by the thin cracks and grooves, keeping to the left.

Will Sim (unseconded), 8th April 2008

Note - Top-roped prior to leading.



Ten Weeks to Go (E5 6b) Great Bank, Eskdale

ENNERDALE

Black Crag

Lower Slabs

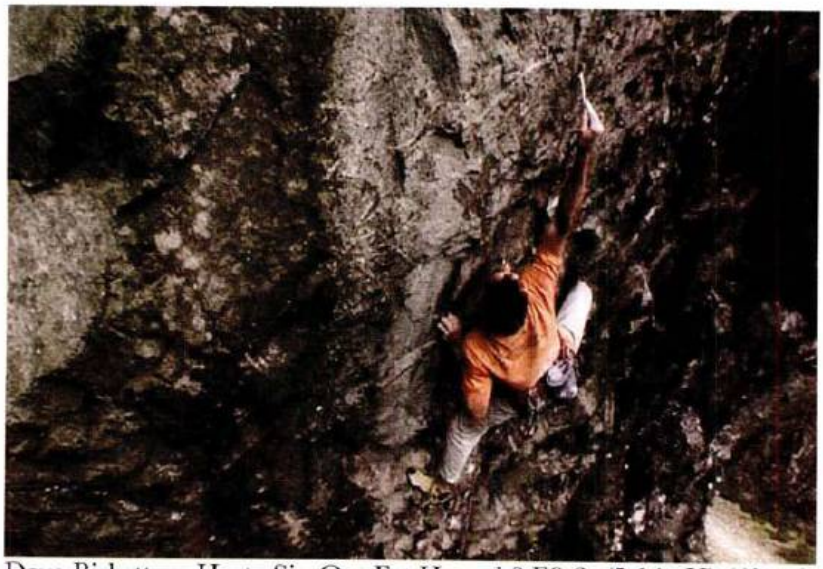
Ellison's Eliminate 30m HVS *

Pleasant climbing on fine rock up the edge of the slab. Start at the right-hand side of the buttress at some mossy streaks, just right of Debutante's Slab.

(5a). Climb the wall on big holds to a ledge. Move up rightward to gain the start of a leftward-slanting diagonal crack (and some gear!). Follow the crack, then step right and up and make an awkward mantelshelf onto a tiny ledge under the headwall. Stride left to join Debutante's Slab and move up to the base of the triangular niche on that route, but then traverse right a metre or so, and climb diagonally rightward up the steep headwall on excellent holds.
SJH Reid, S Baxendale, 23rd September 2006

Middle Buttress

Perfect Day 25m E1- **
An excellent pitch on superb rock up the wall to the right of Central Corner . Protection is good on the crux, but there is a long bold section above this to reach the top. It can be climbed in its own right, or makes a good start to either Limerick or Poetry in Motion. Start at clean rib at the lowest point of the wall: this is just right of the groove of Central Slab Climb, and just left of a wide grassy ramp. (5b). Make a hard move to start the rib and climb it first leftward, then via a step right to a small grass ledge, and up to a small roof. Traverse leftward down a ramp (crossing Central Slab Climb) to a short corner, and go up this, pulling out left at its top. Climb the shallow, blocky left-facing groove above until it peters out, then traverse rightward and gain a slim groove in the arête (good hidden wire placements just below the base of the groove). Climb the groove to gain a good ledge above. Exit the ledge on the left, move up 2m, and traverse horizontally rightward to another slim groove in the arête. A couple more moves up this will allow your heart rate to return to normal. Block belay on right. From the belay, the starts of Limerick and Poetry in Motion lie above and right, or a gully on the right can be descended, or Pitch 3 of Overhanging Central Slab Climb takes the slabs on the left.
SJH Reid, S Baxendale, 23rd September 2006



Dave Birkett on Hasty Sin Oot Ert Hoonds? E9 6c (5.14a X) *(Alastair Lee ©Posing Productions)*

WASDALE

Cam (160 048 alt 400m West Facing)

Hasty Sin Oot Ert Hoonds? 27m E9 6c (5.14a X)

The plumb line to the left of the striking arête of 'Nowt but a Fleein' Thing'. The climb is a very serious affair with only dubious protection for the first half of the line which also contains the hardest climbing in the form of a series of steep, strenuous 6c moves from under-clings, side-pulls and the odd gnarly crimp. Placing the no.4 wire on the lead at about 12m (the first good protection) is as hard as the crux sequence lower down and puts tremendous strain on the left arm. From there the angle eases slightly and the protection is good but well spaced amongst the sustained 6a/b reachy climbing to the top.

David Birkett, 20th July 2007

Buckbarrow (p172)
Killswitch 33m E2+ **
An excellent sustained route which climbs the central stepped groove-line. Start 2m right of the block of Midsummer Madness, below a smooth groove-line.
(5b+). Climb the groove with interest to a doubtful wedged hold at the top (seems to be mechanically sound, though), swing right and move up to good holds below an overhang. Pull into the groove above (useful hold out right) and continue directly until you can step left onto a ledge and a good flake. Climb the upper slabs directly to the abseil point.
A Phizacklea, JL Holden, 15th September 2007

Schweppes 42m HVS *
Pitch 2 is a direct variation of Cadbury, climbing the clean front of the pillar.
Start by the right-hand rowan below the lower wall.
1 12m (5a). Pull into a vague groove just left of the clean slab, and step right and up to finish at a short pillar, with a gorse-filled pull onto the ledge. Move up left to the upper wall. (This is a left-hand start to pitch 1 of Fall Out).
2 30m (5a). As for Cadbury, climb the light coloured groove to pull out right at a spike. Step up, then pull left onto the clean pillar and follow this to its top (runners in the crack on the right). Step left and pull through the overlap on good holds.
A Phizacklea, JL Holden, 15th September 2007

SCAFELL
Pikes Crag
A new winter route!
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, 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 rightward-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. They have plentiful rock protection.)
3 30m (3). Climb up and left over turfy ledges to gain a rightward-facing corner. A couple of steeper moves gain entry to this, which is then followed to the top of the crag.
Huw Davies, Nigel Gregory, Mark Holt, 25th March 2008

Mickledore Buttress
Western Buttress Area
Centenary Slab 21m E1 *
Climbs the clean slab up the centre of the buttress. Start below a hanging flake.
(5a). Climb up to the flake, wire to the left of this, then climb carefully right to gain the slab and good wires. Step left and climb directly past a horizontal break to finish just right of a prominent quartz patch. Abseil descent.
A Phizacklea, J L Holden, 7th April 2007

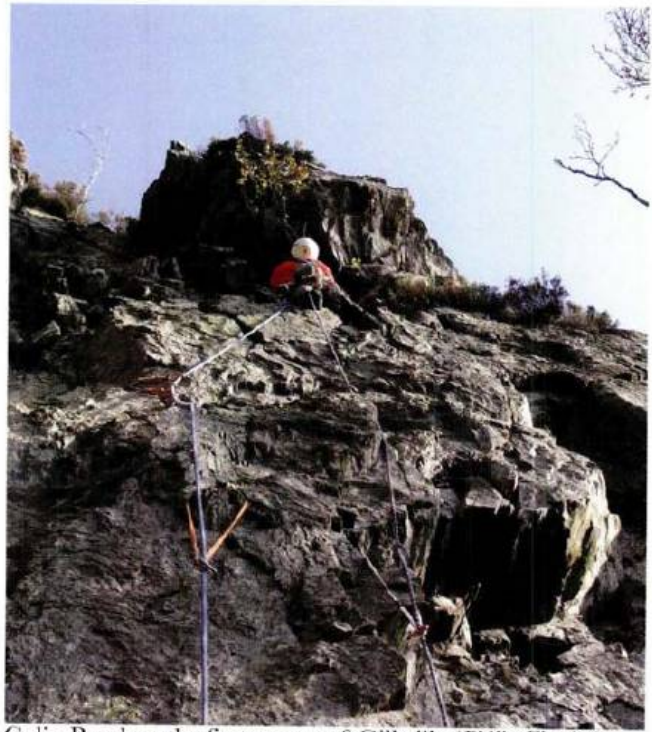
Great End (p143)
Living Will 85m HVS?
A direct line up the highest part of the crag, on excellent rock throughout.
Start on the right-hand side of the continuously steep part of the cliff, and to the right of a very obvious open corner where there is a prominent spur of clean-looking rock directly below the highest part of the crag. The route follows this spur and the crack systems above, clearly visible from below if the cliff is approached directly (rather than by traversing up from the foot of South-East Gully).
1 30m (4b). Climb easily for a couple of metres on the right of the spur, then step left into a groove on its crest. Go directly up until it steepens, then move left into another groove. A thin crack leads up,

exiting right near the top. Move up onto a grass ledge. Follow this rightward to the foot of an overhanging corner.
2 10m (4c). Bridge the corner for a couple of moves, then climb the steep crack in its right wall. Cross a large grass terrace to the foot of another crack.
3 30m. (5a). The crack is steeper than it looks, but eases after the first 5m. At its top step left and climb slabby rock up to a ledge and belay. It may be better to carry on.
4 15m. Easy climbing up slabs and a short wall to finish. Mountaineers are now only five minutes walk from the top of Great End!
WF Hurford, R Hale, 11th June 2007

BUTTERMERE
Grey Crags (p82)
Not Cricket Pinnacle
Middle Wicket 8m E3 *
(6a). The thin crack up the centre of the wall facing Mitre Buttress leads to a jug, easier to the top.
K Phizacklea, A Phizacklea, M Armitage, 6th June 2007

Goat Gills Crag
This small steep crag lies hidden in a delightful setting, perched near the foot of Goat Gills on the flank of Robinson. The handful of routes offer surprisingly steep, exposed climbing. The rock is reasonably firm, quick drying and catches all the afternoon and evening sunlight. It is easily accessed from the lay-by opposite Dalegarth

Paddy Maginty 25m VS
Interesting throughout. Start as for Billy the Kid, beneath the obvious corner, just right of the central overhangs.
(4b). Pull up and rightward onto the wall and continue up beside the corner, as the rock steepens move right, then pull up left steeply to a resting place. Continue up the steep groove above to land on a heather terrace. Cross it and climb a short, steep wall towards its left side to gain a rock ledge, traverse easily right to beneath a tree and belay.
Phil Fleming, Colin Read, 7th October 2006



Colin Read on the first ascent of Gillwilly (*Philip Fleming*)

Gillwilly 25m HVS

Steep climbing, which initially has minimal protection. Start 3m right of Paddy Maginty, below a steep wall and just below and left of a ledge beneath a prominent corner. Both starts have merit.

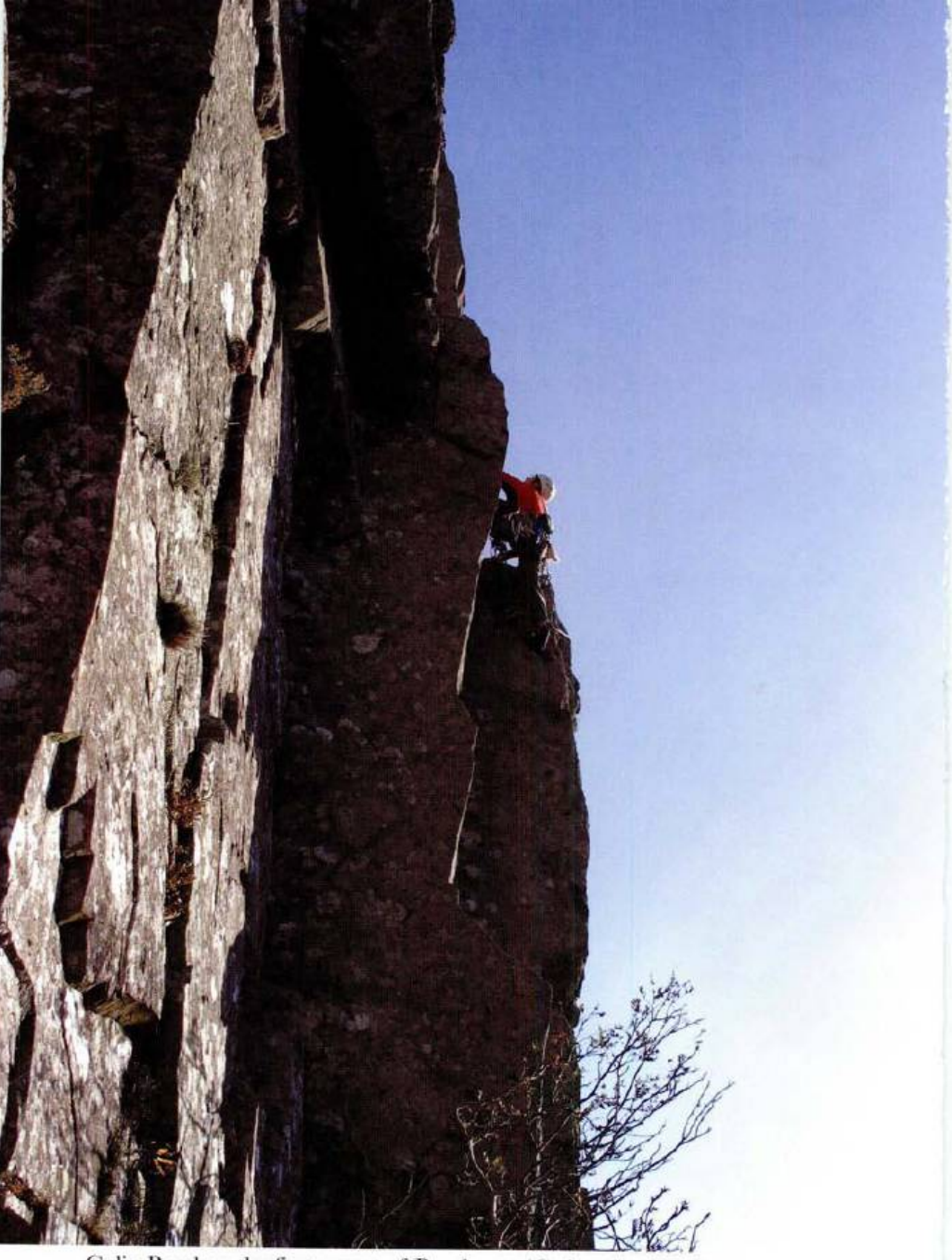
(5a). Just left of the belay crack, climb on small holds directly up the wall (possible skyhook) to reach better holds. Step right to beneath the next steep section and climb it direct to a small sapling, beneath an overhanging prow. Move up left, then step out right to reach good holds and pull round the overhang onto the front of the prow; step up to the heather terrace. Cross it rightward and climb a short groove directly to the tree belay.

Colin Read, Phil Fleming, 15th October 2006

Butt Head 23m E1
Steep and strenuous for 10m, protection is good low down, but diminishes when most needed! Start on a higher ledge 6m right of Gillwilly and 5m left of the right-hand edge of the crag, beneath a very steep wall at a blocky fault line.
(5b). Climb directly on blocky holds towards the right-hand end of a small overhang. Pull up and reach rightward to get established on the wall. Move a little left then up until the angle eases. Continue, trending left, to the heather terrace. Cross it and climb a short, steep wall towards its left side to gain a rock ledge (as for Paddy Maginty); traverse easily right to beneath a tree and belay.
Colin Read, Phil Fleming, 7th October 2006

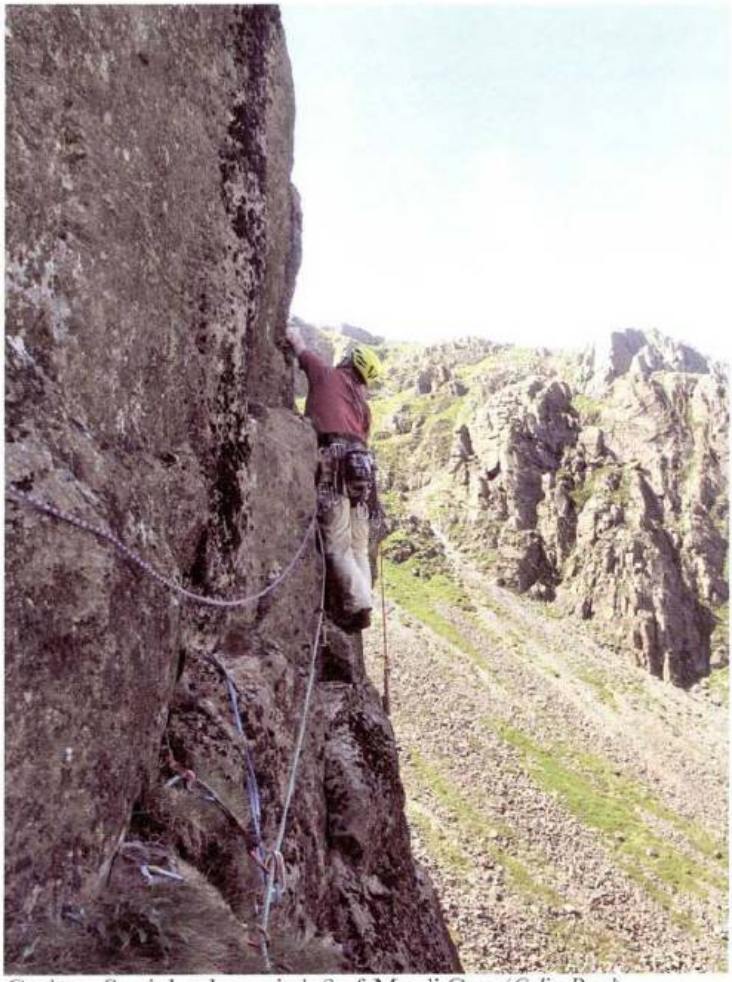
Zorro Buttress (p38)
This steep, rather narrow buttress has an atmosphere more akin to larger venues and an open sunny aspect; it is worth the walk. In the centre are two distinctive left-facing corners, a striking crack on the left and it is split by a deep cleft on the right. The rock is generally firm, but some flake holds need treating with respect.
It lies above and slightly left (west) of Maidenstone Buttress.
Approach as for Maidenstone Buttress.

Zeta 27m E2
Good, steep and strenuous, up the left-hand corner, directly above the tree. Start as for Mark of Zorro, below and left of the tree.
(5c). Pull onto the ledge and ascend rightward into the corner. Follow it, passing the first overhang via a hollow flake, strenuous moves lead up to the lip of the second overhang and with difficulty pull up and round the right arête, to a resting place (junction with Bandaeros). Step up the edge and move back into the corner,
surmount the third overhang and immediately traverse left to the sharply defined arête; follow it to the top. Move down and right to a small cluster of belays, or continue up heather for 15m to an embedded block belay.
C Read, G L Swainbank 14th October 2006



Colin Read on the first ascent of Bandaeros (*Graham Swainbank*)

Bandaeros 25m E1 **
Interesting throughout. Takes the right-hand corner; start directly below it.
(5b). Climb the short steep wall to a ledge in an overhung recess, just right of the tree. Move up the right wall and pull onto the right arête, move back left and up onto a sloping ledge in the corner. Climb the corner (crux) to sharp flake holds and swing out right at the top to a resting place. Move up and step across to the left edge



Graham Swainbank on pitch 2 of Mardi Gras (*Colin Read*)

of the wall (junction with Zeta). Climb the wall above directly, on sometimes alarming but apparently secure holds, to a small cluster of belays a few metres higher, or continue up heather for about 15m to an embedded block belay.
C Read, G L Swainbank 14th October 2006

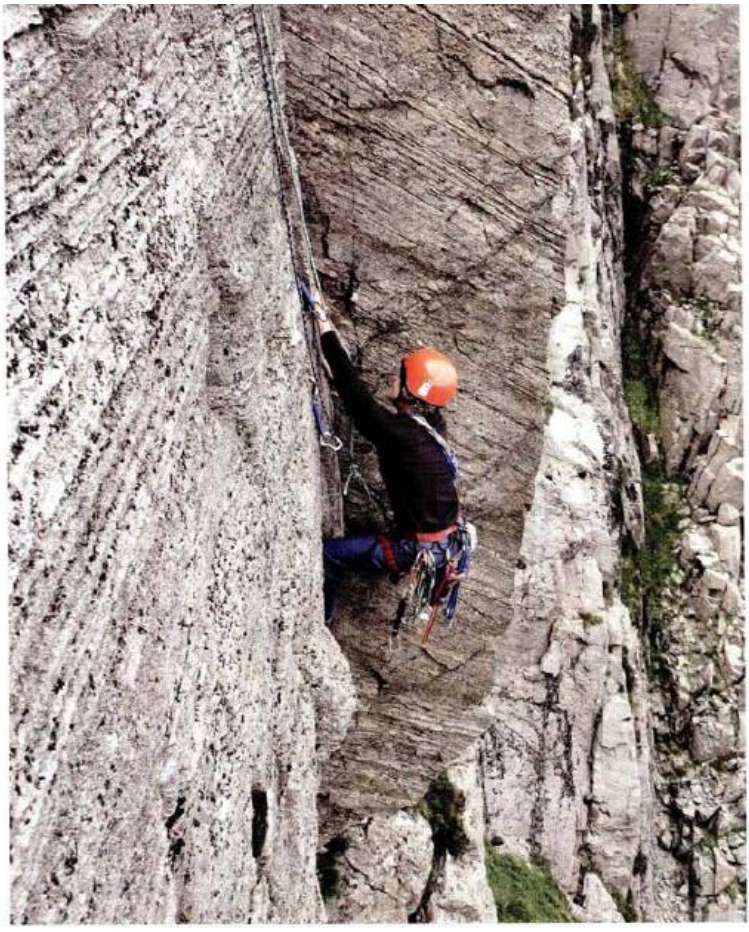
Sabre Cut 23m HVS
This is the prominent chimney/crack at the right-hand side of the face.
(5a). Follow the crack as it develops into a chimney, squeeze up as far as possible to the overhang and step left out onto the wall, then move up to a small ledge. Pull up into the line of the continuation crack and using sharp stacked flakes which form the right arête, follow it to the top and a small cluster of belays, or continue up heather for about 15m to an embedded block.
C Read, G L Swainbank 14th October 2006

Haystacks
The following is not a new route, but was found while browsing the Recent Developments section, and is including for sheer entertainment value.
Y Gully 175m XS (E3 5c/A0?)
Lured by the lyrical description in the Buttermere Guide into repeating this 1941 Peascod Classic. Can confirm that the rock does indeed 'make lego look solid', however would question the 'VS 4c' grade. Even if the slimed rock ever dried out (doubtful) this route would remain a totally traumatising ordeal, with entire pitches of insecure, unprotected vegetation leading to the terminal interminable chimney – a sustained epic of desperate moves on crumbling rock and soil. Accident or injury is only a loose block away, and rescue improbable. Magnificent!

Eagle Crag
Mardi Gras 137m E1**
Interesting varied climbing on good rock. Start 2m left of the blunt arête, which forms the junction of the north and west faces of the

crag, at the foot of an open groove line, immediately left of the V-groove of Birkness Front.
1 32 m (5b). Climb the groove, at its top trend left, move up then follow a ramp leftward until it merges with the ramp on pitch 2 of Eagle Front (old peg runner on left). Step right and climb an awkward, steep and strenuous crack and groove (crux) to a sloping stance at its top, beneath the slabs of Eagle Front.
2 15 m (4b). Traverse right and pull up round the skyline onto a good ledge. Move right and up to a large ledge, traverse to its left end and a large block belay.
3 22 m (5a). Step back right 2m and make a difficult pull up onto a large foothold on the wall above. Step left and climb direct to a grass ledge, or traverse right to join Pigott's Route. Scramble up to the Terrace and a block thread belay.
4 18 m. As for Pigott's Route. Up to the higher terrace, go right and belay on top of the short slab.
5 50 m (4b). From the top of the slab, step up onto the wall above and climb direct, until the angle eases. At about 30m, stay on good rock trending rightward and pass a small spike/block runner. Move up onto the steepening rib, climb it until a move left leads onto the final slab. Block belay on the wall above. This pitch requires the full 50m of rope!
C Read, G L Swainbank (alt), 16th July 2006
Note – Climbed and cleaned on sight, so there may still be a little grime in places.

Mitre Buttress
Sol 36m VS*
Delicate fingery climbing leads to vigorous jamming. It lies in isolation on the top right-hand side of the buttress and can be reached from the scramble path, which leads from the top of Harrow Buttress to the foot of Chockstone Buttress. Start from near the saddle, beneath the blunt rib of a huge boulder, above which stands a prominent left facing corner.
25 m (4a). Step off a block under the right side of the left face and climb the right edge on superb crinkley rock, to the top of the boul-



Steve Pollington on the first ascent of Sol (*Colin Read*)

der. Continue up an easy slabby rib to a ledge beneath the prominent left-facing corner.
11m (4c). Jam/layback up the superb corner crack, to the summit.
C Read, S W Pollington, 17th June 2006

The Knors (Ennerdale Face of Red Pike)
Situated on the Ennerdale face of Red Pike, this group of very small outcrops and boulders has a sunny aspect and rough, firm rock. Routes are described left to right.

Popeye 14m E1*
Pumpy climbing up the narrow face left of the chimney. Start just right of centre beneath the wall, 3m left of the chimney up on a grass platform.
(5b). Pull up and right to a spike hand hold, step up left and climb a short impending groove, make a long reach and strenuous pull up onto a ledge. Pull strenuously and directly over the overhang and continue to the top.
P Fleming, C Read, 8th August 2006

Squeeze Box 16m S*
Interesting climbing up the distinctive deep chimney, which is climbed utilising its left wall, before pulling out right to finish.
Colin Read, Phil Fleming, 8th August 2006

Short Change 20m HS
Interesting climbing. The right side of this outcrop has two distinct rock steps. Start beneath the front face of the first step. Climb onto a ledge, then directly up the front face of the first step. Make a steep pull up left over the next step. Move left to climb up into a groove in the final wall and pull out left to finish.
C Read, 27th July 2006

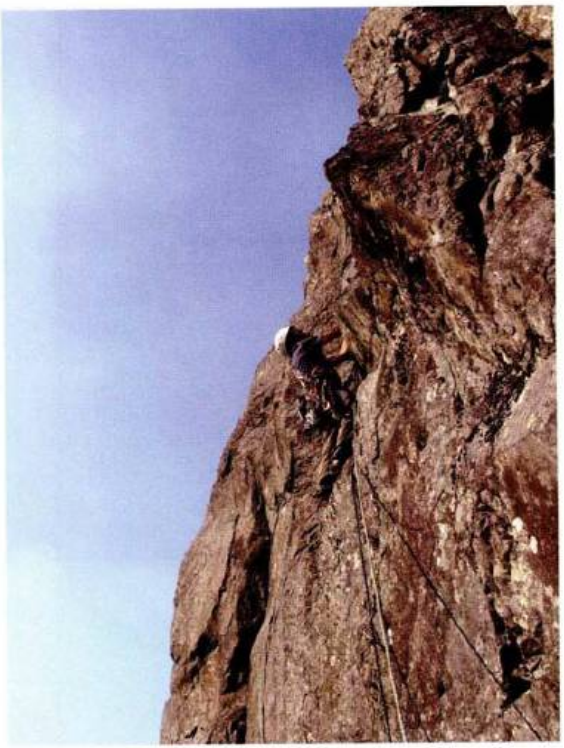
Raven Crag (Ennerdale Face of High Stile)
Alpine Ringlet 30m E3 ***
(5c). Climb the shallow groove just right of the arête easily until it steepens (Gem 5), then up and on the right of the groove is an obvious handhold which takes a good skyhook and an awkward to place RP. Make a long reach for big flat holds on the left and pull again to clip peg (possible RP) before the move to peg. Back up peg (00 Friend). Step left around the arête to join Painted Lady (RP4 and peg on that route can be clipped), step up the arête (RP3 and Friend 3) and make a difficult step right for a small flat spike (possible tape) and gain a jug hold on the arête. Pull up and make a long reach for block hold (tape runner). Climb the crack until a ledge is reached on the left which leads to a no-hands balance move to the arête and

finely positioned move to the top. It is possible to continue up the crack and finish right of the large balanced blocks.
Ted Rogers, Ken Forsythe, 16th July 2006

Knot in Vein 33m E2
(5b). Start at the same point as The Emperor and climb up the crack on Family Plot and continue into the groove above until forced onto the right wall (good small wires). Trend up right (small spike runner) until one can use the bottom edge of a triangular niche to move back left for good runners on the left. Pull up next to the niche to a good finger jug. Move up into the corner of The Emperor and place a 2.5 Friend under the overhang. Traverse the wall on the right out to the arête in a spectacular position. Move up just left of the arête (small spike) to some good footledges. Crucial .5 Friend or Superrock 8 sideways give confidence for the final move up to the good ledge on the arête and over a final block to the summit.
Ted Rogers, Ken Forsythe, 11th June 2006
Note – Dedicated to Ken, who lost his varicose veins recently.

Newlands
El Scorchio 48m E1**
Nice climbing at a reasonable standard with a short crux section. Start by scrambling to the right round the rib on which perches the block of Brandywine, to the foot of a groove, with a large flake belay on its left.
1 20 m (4b). Climb the groove and move up right to a block, pull right and continue up the slabby wall, then trend rightward, to belay as for Grey Slab, beneath the obvious crack.
2 28 m (5b). Move up and traverse left onto a rock ledge. Make a difficult pull up the wall (crux) to gain an alcove. Move up a few metres, then step left onto the fine clean wall, continue passing a flake on its right to gain slabby rock and finish up a short rib on the left.
C Read, C Jones, 18th July 2006

Miners Crag - Terrace Wall



Colin Read making the first ascent of El Scorchio (*Colwyn Jones*)

Devil Woman 47m E1/2 **

Strenuous climbing through steep terrain with interest sustained throughout. Originally climbed in wild windy very cold winter conditions and slotted into the guide at the last minute, hence the uncertainty of the grade. Start as for Bathsheba.

1 21m (5b). Follow pitch 1 of Bathsheba to its stance, and traverse 4m to the left end of the juniper ledge. Belay beneath overhangs in the corner, which is divided by a short prow of rock.

2 26m (5b/c). Climb up the corner on the right of the prow for 3m, traverse 3m right, and move up to a resting place. Step left and up into a short groove, which is climbed via holds on its left to a small overhang, and pull up left with difficulty to good hidden holds. Go straight up to the foot of an impending crack and climb it to gain a sloping ledge above. Move right and up into an impending groove, then pull up using flake holds to gain the top. Move up to good belays.

C Read, P Fleming, 27th January 2007

Colin Read on the first pitch of Devil Woman. The corner line of Bathsheba lies to his right. (*Phil Fleming*)

Harlot 37m HVS**
Good climbing directly up to and through the steep central headwall. Start 6m right of the big right-angled corner of Jezebel, below and just right of an open slabby groove line, where an obvious quartz fault runs down to meet the fellside.
1 20m (4a). Step up and work steeply leftward on good holds to gain the slabby groove, follow this line over steps to a good ledge and spike belays.
2 17m (5a). Climb up and enter a sentry box, pull out left and continue up the fault line, to exit through a V-notch at the top.
G L Swainbank, C Read. (alt) 16th May 2004

In Memoriam

Miss Jill Aldersley
Mr Reginald Atkins
Mr Hugh Banner
Mrs Mary Stella Berkeley
Mr J L Bouet
Mr John D Bryson
Mr Alan Fisher
Rear-Admiral Bill Higgins
Mr Harry Ironfield
Squire Ronald Jackson
Mr CGC 'Gil' Lewis
Mrs Jean Newhouse
Mr Tom Parker
Mr Lewis Proctor Smith
Dr Nancy Heron Smith

Miss Jill Aldersley

There can never be another Jill. Those who knew her well will understand the depth of this statement.

Jill was born in London of Yorkshire ancestry. Her father was a water engineer, and in 1946 the family moved from London to the desolate Pennines at Holmemoss. The family survived the winter of 1947 at 1100ft and in 1949 her father secured a post at Preston Corporation Water Works, eventually becoming Manager.

Jill's early education was at Penwortham Grammar School followed by Manchester Art College where she gained a teaching diploma, and then taught in Aspatria. Her father dabbled in sculpture in his spare time and encouraged her to pursue a career in art. 1967 saw her move to Ambleside and a spell of 14 years at Ambleside Pottery Studio; 1981 was when she became a full time painter, mostly watercolours. She played a major role in the Lake Artists Society, and was President of Kendal Art Society. In the early years of her life in the Lake District she also was a barmaid at the Wasdale Head Hotel.

Her love of the fells of the Lake District allowed her to combine her profession with her hobbies of rock climbing and fell walking. It was all of these passions which took her to Skye, Rum and Eigg; to climbing trips in the Alps and trekking in the Himalaya and Nepal. She also enjoyed the FRCC spring meets to France for "le clipping".

Of course there were the traits that friends found irritating – her cars, including her trusty Hillman Avenger (she was also active in the Hillman Owners Club), were always packed like a midshipman's locker: everything on top and nothing handy. There was time she left her Toyota door ajar for two weeks after being picked up in Newcastle for a trip to the Alps; the chaos inside must have put off potential thieves, as it looked as though it had already been done over. It took a lot of patience to await the packing of her rucksack for a day out. She was aware of her failings and was always grateful for her climbing partners' waiting for her.

In 1994 Jill was elected President of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club, and coped with that role as well as her teaching commitments, demonstrations, and the many exhibitions she was involved in. She was also the Oral Archivist of the FRCC from 1998 - 2007.

Her enthusiasm for climbing never diminished and she always managed a painting wherever she climbed or walked. I climbed with Jill off and on for over twenty years and as she preferred to be second that worked well until one day she had been given for her birthday a new fangled belay device. As I set off up the pitch she had the instruction leaflet in one hand and the device in the other!

Her mother, who was an essential and active part of Jill's business empire, predeceased her by about two years, and Jill never seemed to

come to terms with the loss. Jill's terminal brain tumour was diagnosed in May 2007 and she took the devastating news with brave acceptance, getting impatient with those that didn't.

She spent her last weeks at Holehird above Windermere so she could gaze at her beloved Lakeland fells. It must have given her some comfort to be in the gardens that her mother had had some involvement in developing.

My last visit was poignant in that I was dealing with my own imminent family loss, and to be uplifted I went to see Jill. We did not talk but the knowing smile said everything.

She made friends wherever she went and there will be more than a few whose lives will have been enriched by knowing her.

Graham Townsend

Talented painter, skilful climber, intrepid traveller, keen member and one time President of our Club, it is not these attributes which her friends will recall, she will be much more remembered for her bubbly personality, her kindness and friendliness, her loyalty and her enthusiasm for life. She was always spoken of with humour and with affection.

Jill was both predictable and unpredictable. She was predictable in that we always knew that she would turn up, whatever the time. She was predictable in that we always knew that she would leave something behind when she left. It was the bit in between that was unpredictable.

She arrived quite late one evening at a Scottish camping meet on her way home from Skye. We thought that she had just called in briefly before continuing her journey south but she then indicated that she would have to leave early next morning. As usual her van was packed tight, right up to the roof. "But where on earth are you going to sleep?" I asked. Without the slightest hesitation "In there" she replied, – pointing straight at my small tent. So we uncluttered my gear and she crawled in. We lay chatting late into the night but when I woke next morning she had gone without disturbing anyone.

Those who were at the first Annual Dinner of her Presidency will long remember her Dinner speech which she began by thanking in turn each member who had ever retrieved something she had left behind, anecdotes which became more hilarious as the items mentioned became more personal and intimate.

But true to form, Jill has lived up to her reputation right to the end. Even now she has left something behind. She has left each and every one of us a personal memory of a very special person.

Maureen Linton

Mr Reginald Atkins

Reg died after a brave battle with lung cancer, never having smoked a cigarette in his life.

He was born in Birmingham, the youngest of three brothers, and where he went to primary school. He was in the same class as Trevor (CT) Jones, a life-long friend and with whom he cycled through Wales while still in his teens. Reg was evacuated to Barnstaple during the Second World War and his English teacher at school there was Henry Williamson (author of the famous book 'Tarka the Otter') and others who had a lifelong influence on Reg.

Reg's parents were in the Foreign Service and he was left behind when his parents travelled, which is perhaps one reason why he later became such a fond uncle to the two daughters of his brother Ashley, and was so good with young people generally.

After school Reg did his National Service, a period which produced various anecdotes, although one could never be sure whether they were true or not. He told me how his rebellious nature cost him a spell in the 'glasshouse' and that on leaving the Forces after his two years service, his CO wrote into his passbook 'With another two years training this man might make a reasonable private soldier'. I must admit, that although I was quite close to him, I didn't always know when he had his tongue in his cheek. He acquired a metal plate in his shin around this time, possibly as a result of an Alpine accident or maybe as a result of landing among steel girders when doing a parachute jump with the Red Berets. It was never easy to get the whole truth on anything like that from Reg, because he would always laugh it off.

After National Service he moved into manufacturing industry, working for a series of employers, including British Aluminium, who had a large plant at Kinlochleven. He was in the Gritstone Club by then (to which he introduced me) and he wangled the use of Inverlair Lodge,

near Roy Bridge – little more than a large, decaying bothy at the time – for several Easter meets for the Gritstone Club. I will personally always remember one of those meets for four successive days of climbing on Ben Nevis in perfect conditions, followed by on the Etive Slabs on dry rock, then doing the Aonach Eagach ridge and finally nearly falling off a big ice route on Creag Meagaidh.

Amongst others, Reg worked for British Leyland, for Hopkinsons of Huddersfield and for Dean, Smith & Grace, all of them in engineering of some kind. He lived with his wife Mavis near Belfast in Northern Ireland, and in Cowbridge in Wales, as well as Yorkshire. As a result of his varying experience in metal bashing, production control systems and other aspects of manufacturing industry, he joined Associated Industrial Consultants, who were very involved in work measurement at the time. For the second time, he had quite an influence on my life, because I too joined AIC and Reg introduced me to Associated Weavers; this was the beginning of a very turbulent but rewarding time of my own life.

Consultancy led him to Business Education and, after two terms at Blackburn College, he began working for Preston Polytechnic. He was always very good with students from the Poly and took many groups of them to Raw Head, to RLH and to other places so as to give them experience on the hills. His own enthusiasm was clearly a great tonic and he never stopped being a student himself. He was doing a maths degree with the Open University in his own last months and had earlier acquired qualifications in statistics and other disciplines. He read widely, although always non-fiction, and enjoyed a wide range of music.

The time after his direct involvement in manufacturing industry was possibly the most rewarding part of his business life, for he also became a full-time lecturer in Business Management for the OU, with which he was still involved at the age of 76.

All the time he was walking and scrambling in Scotland, the Alps, the Lakes, Snowdonia. He did climb in his early years, but I never rock-climbed with him personally. He once told me that, while scrambling alone, he had taken a fall down a gully on the Ennerdale Face of Great Gable and had been knocked unconscious. Fortunately, he recovered and lived to walk safely down the hill on his own, but he never told anyone else about it. His earliest hill partner, I believe, was Ron

Stanton, who was also his best man when he married Mavis. She 'didn't do walking' because she was busy bringing up daughter Lesley, but she dropped Reg off at many a lonely place and picked him up hours later after he'd traversed a few bogs and hills on his own.

Reg had introduced me to the Gritstone Club (where we both also first met Francis Falkingham) and I was able to reciprocate by introducing Reg to the Fell and Rock, to which he became increasingly attached over the subsequent years. Apart from the Lakes, with some very memorable Christmas party periods at Beetham Cottage, Scotland featured in a large way in his mountain days. I believe he managed to do all the Munros, although I never asked him and he never told me he had, because he was quite diffident about his own achievements. He certainly went in for long mountain days and once told me, rightly, that everybody had it in themselves to always go just a bit further. However, he planned a traverse of the Cuillin Main Ridge in the 1970s, starting with a bivouac on Gars-bheinn, but his great interest in gourmet cooking for once let him down: he used sour milk instead of soured cream in his beef stroganoff and his stomach rebelled when we were only half way round, so we had to complete it without him. Mind you, he had put so much salt into the water cache that we had previously hidden on the ridge that we nearly had to give up too.

On better days, his was the suggestion to do the Welsh Threes (which we did 3 times over the years) and he also came on the Lakes Threes. He was a capable and strong mountaineer and he was often eventually proved (nearly!) right when he and I had arguments about navigation in thick mist (and before GPS's). He was a valued member of a small, but close-knit group of friends with multiple FRCC, CC and AC memberships, of which I was part, and which was generally known to Reg as 'The Gang'.

With specific reference to the Fell & Rock, I remember that there was a great brouhaha over some aspects of his Wardenship of Brackenclose. Reg, I learnt, was making changes! He was indignant at the opposition he stirred up. The club, he told me, just didn't appreciate all the effort and personal expense he was putting in to improve matters!

He could be brusque and infuriating even to me at times, who knew him almost as my elder brother. But he mellowed with time, he never

held grudges and his impulses were always very generous. His six years as the Club's Dinner Secretary showed him at his most conscientious and efficient best; in a job in which it is impossible to please everybody he did extraordinarily well and it is a great shame that he didn't actually make it to the Centenary Dinner to which he had contributed so much.

After Mavis died he went through a period of emotional uncertainty but then, on Dartmoor of all places, he met Sheila, who became his partner of fifteen years. Theirs was a great partnership; Reg was really happy with her and it was clearly mutual.

Lin and I went to see him about a day before his death and I had a few moments alone with him. Reg knew we were saying goodbye. I was almost choked up but I did manage to say 'Reg, it's been a privilege knowing you'. I meant it. I think there will be others in this great Club who will share that feeling.

Bob Allen

Mr Hugh Banner

Hugh Banner, who died at the age of 73 on April 23, 2007, was one of the finest rock climbers in the country in the 1950s and continued to be an influential and well-known figure in the climbing world in the decades since. I was first aware of him in about 1950 when we were both at Merchant Taylors' School in Liverpool, but as he was a sixth former and I was in the lower school, he would never have known me. I remember he was captain of the school chess team, an absorbing interest he was to keep for the rest of his life.

When I started climbing in Wales in 1956 I would have heard his name but it was when I went to Bristol University the following year that I really heard of his climbing reputation. Hugh had begun climbing while studying chemistry at Bristol and had joined the newly formed university club in 1951. Enormously bold and talented, with Joe Griffin and Barrie Page he had opened up the Main Area of the Avon Gorge with major new routes like Central Buttress, Great Central Route and Desperation, all climbed in black Woollies' plimsolls with minimal piton protection. On Coronation Day in 1953, he made the

first breach of the High Rock of Cheddar with the ascent of the Sceptre, while the rest of the country was watching tiny black and white television screens.

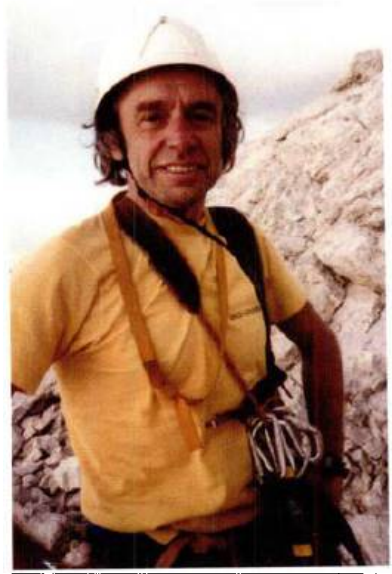
In North Wales Hugh worked through Peter Harding's routes and some of the easier Rock and Ice climbs in the early/mid 1950s, but in 1956 he made the third ascent of Cenotaph Corner (Don Whillans had made the second a year earlier). This was an enormous psychological breakthrough and he then began to repeat some of Joe Brown's hardest routes on Cloggy, starting with the second ascent of Diglyph in 1956. A fractured skull sustained crashing his 1000cc Vincent motorbike in the Llanberis Pass in 1957 halted his progress for a while, but he was soon back making second or third ascents of routes like The Grooves, White Slab, Llithrig and the East Buttress Girdle. Thus Hugh, adopting an almost a chess-like approach to his climbing by moving slowly and methodically on the steepest rock, refused to be intimidated by the Rock and Ice routes and became the first climber outside that close-knit group to break their dominance.

Meanwhile he had returned to live in Merseyside and as leader of a small Helsby group he made a dramatic contribution to his local sandstone crag, adding fierce new climbs like Crumpet Crack, Gorilla Wall and The Illegitimate, whilst also being the first to discover with this group the esoteric delights of the Frodsham Buttresses. He was equally talented on gritstone, succeeding in 1958 on the precarious layback crack climb Insanity at Curbar where both Brown and Whillans had failed before him.

He had already made some good new routes in the Llanberis Pass like Cornix, Ochre Groove and Cross-tie, but 1959 was his finest year on Cloggy. In May he made the first big non-Rock and Ice route since John Streetly's ascent of Bloody Slab in 1952 by climbing Gecko Groove. His defining moment came in October with the ascent of Troach, an inspirational climb and a major step forward being bold, poorly protected and the first climb to encroach onto an extremely blank wall.

His main interest was, of course, in Wales but he did make occasional forays to Scotland, making an early ascent of Carnivore, and also to the Lakes, where he contributed Narrow Stand and Bos'n's Buttress on Scafell with Joe Griffin. He was also involved a couple of

years later in an attempt to be the first to climb the Central Pillar of Esk Buttress, but, like Alan Austin, was beaten to it by Pete Crew. In the 1960s work took him away from the northwest to Wiltshire and then Northumberland, where again he impressed the locals and upped the standards with many new routes on their sandstone outcrops like Thunder Crack and The Trouser Legs.


Hugh Banner

On his return to Merseyside in the mid 1970s I began to climb with him regularly and we were climbing partners for the next fifteen years or so. Gogarth was his special favourite for Saturday afternoon climbing, but Cloggy still figured highly in his priorities. Being a formidable solo climber he loved Tuesday evenings with the "Altrincham All Stars", soloing hard routes on Helsby and in the Peak with the likes of Dave Pearce, Nick Estcourt and Martin Boysen. In fact he remarked that the Tuesday evenings were ruined when some of the lesser "stars" began bringing ropes! Similarly, tongue in cheek, he would decry the fact that modern protection had wiped out the great crack climbs of the 1950s!

When he and his wife Maureen moved to live in Llanrug, this view did not prevent him from setting up his own company in the 1980s, making high quality and innovative climbing equipment, notably HB offset brass nuts, micro-mates and quadcams. The company, initially in a barn at home, grew into a large unit on a Bangor industrial estate and acquired a world-class reputation. He continued climbing at a high standard and in his fifties climbed the Nose of El Capitan with Mark Vallance, and the Philipp-Flamm route on the Civetta in the Dolomites with myself.

Hughie was primarily a member of The Climbers' Club, having joined in 1956 aged 22 and succeeding me as president in 1987. It was at this time that the CC and FRCC had begun to have regular "summit

meetings" to discuss matters of mutual concern, and Hughie played a significant part in these discussions. Like those before and after, he was invited to join the fellow "senior club", and became a FRCC member in 1990.

Although Hugh will be remembered mainly for his great rock climbing ability, his interests and talents went far beyond just climbing. He played chess to a high level and is rumoured to have once taken on all 10 members of the Llanberis chess club! He had a life-long interest in military and natural history and a deep love of animals. He also loved fast motor-bikes and a dreadful 80mph accident in 2000 left him in a coma for a month and caused his left leg to be amputated above the knee. But he continued to ride the Honda Fireblade which he suitably modified, and he once told me that the accident did at least help him to solve one problem he had been putting off – when to decide to stop soloing Belle View Bastion on Tryfan, a route he had done in his teens and continued to solo every year till forced by the accident to stop in his late sixties.

Hugh was diagnosed with a brain tumour early in 2007 but continued working on equipment development almost to the very end. He is greatly missed by Maureen and all who knew him.

Derek Walker

Mrs Mary Stella Berkeley

Stella died on 31/8/2003 after a long illness, diagnosed in 1998, of a rare form of lung cancer almost unique in non smokers

Born in London in 1926, she lived in Beckenham then Oxford. Her brother won a scholarship to Balliol College, Oxford. During the war, despite being underage, she joined the WAAF; being good at science and maths, she trained as a radio mechanic. After the WAAF she worked for Burroughs Welcome on the development of penicillin. In 1946 she went to the London School of Economics obtaining a BSc in Economics before reading law and graduating with an honours degree in 1950. Stella then became Assistant Editor at Sweet & Maxwell Ltd. (Law Publishers) and in 1951 became a District Officer with NALGO.

In 1966 she was awarded a Winston Churchill Fellowship, studying industrial relations and trade unions in New Zealand and Australia.

In 1974 Stella joined the management of the newly formed Yorkshire Water Authority as Regional Secretary and Administrative Officer, being the most senior female administrator in the water industry in the country. When Stella retired, it was from this job in 1993.

Stella's first trip to the Lake District was in 1945, staying at youth hostels, cycling over the passes and walking over many of the tops, including Helvellyn, alone, descending Striding Edge in mist and a strong wind, apparently wearing street shoes rather than boots.

Stella started climbing in 1946 with the LSE MC, joining the London University MC in 1983. In 1950 a small group founded the University of London Graduate MC and Stella, as their first Honorary Secretary, drew up their constitution.

In 1946 Stella bought a pair of boots (boys' boots, as they required fewer coupons) for a trip to North Wales that involved walking over the mountains from Ffestiniog to Caernarfon via Moel Siabod to Capel Curig, over Tryfan, the Glyders, Snowdon via Crib Goch, down to Snowdon Ranger Youth Hostel and on to Caernarfon. While leading a climb on Tryfan in 1947 she fell and injured a knee, never to regain full use of it again. She was back climbing a year later, but it left her handicapped for the rest of her life. She climbed with her clubs on the Cornish cliffs, Derbyshire, North Wales, the Lake District, Scotland and Skye, but frequently did walks such as the Snowdon Horseshoe and Aonach Eagach on her own. During the summer vacation in 1949 she led walking parties for the Holiday Fellowship at Coniston and on her 'days off' climbed on the Dow and other crags with Alec Woods, Jim Cameron, Harry Griffin and Walter Dowlen.

To reach these places she mainly hitch-hiked and her records show that between 1947 and 1950 she hitched 10,263 miles.

I first met Stella at the FRCC Glan Dena meet in 1951. I was the guest of the leader Geoff Barker, whilst she was the guest of a club member who did not turn up. Although Stella and I had jobs far apart, we met frequently after that, climbing and walking together in Wales, where I lived, and also in the Dales, Scotland and Skye. At that time, Stella was working for NALGO in Leeds, so I obtained a transfer to Leeds and we were married in 1957.

The following year we went backpacking north of the Arctic Circle along the Kungsleden. Arriving at Abisco we were told that due to a very late thaw the route was closed, that we could not get through because the rivers were in flood with meltwater and the passes blocked. Stella was still keen to try. When walking one river, dodging ice flows, we were almost swept away; when crossing the pass, the snow was so treacherous that we would have turned back but for the thought of having to wade the river again. More hazards followed on this 45 mile section of the walk before reaching the next hostel. After a rest we climbed Kebnekaise, Sweden's highest point, by the interesting direct route and then walked out to Kiruna

Together we continued to climb and walk in Britain and further afield. After Swedish Lapland we went to the Jotenheim in Norway, the Alps, twice to Iceland, Canada, Alaska and after she was too ill to do much, Spitzbergen. Stella joined the FRCC in 1961, making many great friendships, attending memorable meets and in 1994, to her great surprise, was honoured by being appointed a trustee of the club.

Until she became too ill to attend, Stella only missed one AGM and dinner meet when she was in New Zealand. She enjoyed the social atmosphere of the dinner, making a new evening dress for the occasion, dressmaking being another of her many skills. Being used to speaking in public, Stella was in her element at AGMs where her timely, well chosen words were clear and to the point. To the very end she took a keen interest in the club's affairs and as a Trustee was often asked for her advice and opinion.

After mountains Stella's greatest joy was the sea, sailing our 32ft ketch for thousands of miles and in all weathers, to the south as far as La Rochelle, north on the Norwegian coast to within 200 miles of the Arctic Circle, as far west as St Kilda and most points between. Cruising Association trophies were won for four of our cruises, including the Hanson Cup twice (awarded for cruises of any length anywhere in the world). Stella was a very good sailor, never seasick, an excellent navigator in days before GPS, and had a Yachtmaster (Ocean) Certificate. On the many night passages to places like Norway, she did her share of running the boat on her own. During 12 years, out for 3 months at a time, there was a fair share of rough weather, but it never bothered her. Once on the west coast of Ireland, running before a gale

and taking a short cut through the Blasket Sound, she came up from below and calmly said "don't look back". I did: we were surfing down a wall of water. Then with a bang the kicking strap broke.

Summing up Stella in a few words is not easy. Determined, a decision maker, a very fine brain, a wonderful person and utterly dependable.

Humfrey Berkeley

Past Presidents are unanimous that in the years before she became a Trustee, Stella was the scourge of the officers – a wholesome one, but none the less a scourge. Her questions from the floor at AGMs exposed to public scrutiny anything in the way of muddled thinking, imprecise drafting, or slipshod administration. People used to groan when she interceded, because they knew they were in for what might be a lengthy rattle of intellectual swordplay, but everyone acknowledged that she stood for the rights and interests of the individual members, a real Tribune of the People.

When Rodney Valentine secured her services as a Trustee, the universal first reaction was "Wha-a-a-t?", followed by "What a brilliant idea ... poacher turned gamekeeper." And so it was, for Stella knew the Constitution of the club and its Rules through and through. She turned the lasers of her legal skills onto the exposure of external, or, indeed, internal, influences that might harmfully change the nature of the club. She could smell a rat at fifty paces. By the same token, she could spot a bargain when she saw one.

Stella died during my Presidency. She delivered wise and penetrating counsel, in secure confidence, until she was too ill even to type. I treasure the friendly, amusing personal correspondence that developed out of the official one. She was an example of that indomitable, no-nonsense warm-heartedness that characterises so many of our women members. Stella loved the Fell & Rock.

George Watkins

Mr J L Bouet

J.L. Bouet, who died on 19/10/2007 at the age of 88, spent most of his early childhood holidays in the French Alps. It was after the war that, through the introduction of a colleague who was a member of the FRCC, he attended the Easter meet at Brackenclose in 1948 led by Lyna Kellett, as she was then.

It was at this meet that Peter Moffatt took him on his first Lakeland rock climb. Thereafter climbing became the number one priority – in the Lake District, North Wales, Scotland and the Alps.

After a hiatus of two decades or more, the mountains beckoned again with more gentle climbing being undertaken. To celebrate his retirement from Aviation he did the classic trek around Annapurna in Nepal.

In later years the legs had worn out but not his lifelong love of the hills.

J L Bouet

(This was provided as a 'self obituary', written 25/8/1997, accompanied by a note to Hatty Harris: "I have written something while I'm still able to do so. Probably much too long, but hopefully useful for you or your successor when the time comes!")

Mr John D Bryson

John was born in Ormskirk in 1928, taking up residence in Ulverston with his family at the age of seven.

After National Service in the Royal Air Force, John qualified as a chartered surveyor, working initially with the Barrow firm of Charles and Michael Lowden and latterly in partnership with Dennis Noall and Howard Whitaker.

A true professional, he devoted his charitable services to the Abbeyfield Society, in particular to the extra care home in Dalton-in-Furness.

John's climbing experience with his brother Roy was fostered – as with most Furness folk of his generation – by the late Jim Cameron, making use of FRCC club huts at Brackenclose and Rawhead.

After marriage to Sheila and whilst retaining a healthy interesting in sailing, skiing and fell walking, touring Europe by dormobile became a favourite holiday experience. John was a life member of the FRCC, his membership beginning in 1951.

Sadly his last five years were spent in Hollow Oak nursing home in Haverthwaite, due to failing health after a brain tumour.

To Sheila, their children Anthony, Nicola and Jonathan, with their respective families, we extend our deepest sympathy.

I am indebted to Sheila Bryson for assistance in preparing this tribute to a fellow member.

Oliver A Geere (COG)

Mr Alan Fisher

Born in Nelson of Cumbrian stock, Alan left school at 14 to work in his father's greengrocery business. He developed a life long interest in photography and cameras were often displayed for sale, together with the fruit and vegetables at the greengrocer's. Alan began climbing at Widdop and joined the Fell and Rock in 1940. In the same year he enlisted as a regular soldier in the Border Regiment where he served for seven years as a member of the 1st Air Landing Brigade. He survived the bloodbath of the 1943 airborne landing in Sicily and a year later the debacle of Arnhem where, of the 140 man D Company, only five made it back to safety across the Rhine, Alan the only one not wounded.

I first met Alan at Widdop in 1941 where, as a young schoolboy, I was fortunate to meet several members of the Fell and Rock. Alan taught me to abseil without the benefit of slings, karabiners and the various devices deemed essential by the modern climber. Alan was one of the old school of climbers who carried their climbing boots to the crag in their rucksacks in order to preserve the sharp edges of the nails.

On his demobilisation in 1947 Alan resumed his climbing activities in the Lakes and Scotland and at Widdop where he met Kathleen, one of my sister's friends. They married in 1949 and had a long and happy marriage, raising four children. Marriage and the pressure of work, where he built up his father's greengrocery business until eventually it

was floated on the Stock Exchange as the Albert Fisher Group, put an end to Alan's climbing. He did however continue fell walking in the Lakes and Scotland, bird watching and small boat sailing. He was also an enthusiastic cyclist, which kept him very fit until the end of his life. He especially enjoyed the Fell and Rock cycling meet held at Birkness in 1986. He was proud to receive a certificate to celebrate his seventy five year membership of the Cyclists Touring Club.

Soon after returning with Kathleen from their annual winter visit to two of their children living in Australia, Alan died in April 2006 after a short illness, aged 91. Alan will be greatly missed by family, friends and the dwindling band of former comrades.

John Wilkinson

Rear-Admiral Bill Higgins

Rear-Admiral Bill Higgins, who has died aged 78, defied the Thatcher government as secretary of the D-Notice Committee, a post to which he had been appointed following 40 years of faultless service in the Navy.

Shortly after taking over in 1986 as steward of this discreet body, which exists to issue official guidance to the media over the disclosure of sensitive information about national security, Higgins found himself faced with what became known as "the Zircon affair". This was a row over a television film, made for the BBC by the investigative journalist Duncan Campbell, about a secret spy satellite. In the event, the corporation decided not to show the programme, and Campbell was reduced to writing an article about it in the New Statesman.

Higgins found himself between the media on one side and Margaret Thatcher on the other. The prime minister was furious, and the Speaker refused to let the film be shown in the Commons. Meanwhile, civil liberties organisations showed the film all around the country, raising the prospect of large numbers of prosecutions which might well have failed.

The prime minister had never been enamoured of the D-notice committee, and now she was inspired to an even greater dislike of its voluntary and advisory nature. The Cabinet Office was given the brief

of controlling the flood of articles and books that followed the publication of Spycatcher by the former MI5 officer Peter Wright.

Higgins was told that everything he did had to be run past the Cabinet Office, and that he must follow its instructions. He resisted, recognising that this would destroy the voluntary system that had worked since 1912 and fearing that it would lead to more censorship. Supported by his chairman, Sir Clive Whitmore, Permanent Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, he got his way.

Two years later Mrs Thatcher tried again, attempting to prevent the publication of a book about MI6 by the Conservative MP Rupert Allason (writing as Nigel West). While the Tory party whips applied pressure on Allason, Higgins was told to cease talking to the author and his publisher, to whom he had been giving advice.

He was ordered to communicate only in writing, having first cleared his drafts with the Attorney-General, something which he decided was both unacceptable and unworkable. The law officers were again pessimistic about whether litigation would work, and Mrs Thatcher and her press secretary conceded that the D-Notice system, under Higgins's care, was the most effective way to keep national secrets – as opposed to political embarrassments – out of the public eye.

When the Government amended the Official Secrets Act in 1989, Higgins was able to reassure the media that, whatever else might be to their detriment, it would not affect D-Notices. Subsequently, he negotiated hard with officials to ensure that his promises to the media were kept.

Throughout his six years in the job Higgins was guided by a personal rule that under the operation of the system no individual should ever be put at risk. He did much to improve public understanding of the system and dealt urbanely with editors, who rang him frequently. They usually took his advice, even erring on the side of caution, he recalled. Higgins found himself advising against publication on only about a dozen occasions a year.

Although the existence of D-Notices had been declassified only in 1981, inquirers found him disarmingly refreshing and open. When the political philosopher Moyra Grant rang Whitehall, she was immediately put through to Higgins, who began by joking that presumably none of her students were anarchists, and then surprised her with his

openness. A day later her post brought a list of the D-Notices currently in force, together with an explanatory note from Higgins.

William Alleyne Higgins was born on May 18 1928, the son of Commander Henry Gray Higgins, who had won a DSO in 1917 while commanding a submarine in the Adriatic.

After Wellington, which he hated, Bill entered the Royal Naval College on September 1 1945, while it was still at its wartime location of Eaton Hall; he was therefore one of the last people to qualify for a war gratuity. In his particularly talented term of 55 Special Entry cadets were four future admirals, a commodore, nine captains and 17 commanders.

Four months later Higgins was sent to sea for the first time. He served as captain's secretary in the maintenance carrier Unicorn during the Korean War and then as secretary to the then Captain Michael le Fanu at the boys' training establishment, HMS Ganges. Le Fanu reported that he "envied anyone who is fortunate enough to have Higgins as his supply officer or secretary".

Higgins held increasingly important jobs in the Ministry of Defence. When he was deputy secretary to the Chiefs of Staff, his immediate boss – a fiercely intelligent and fiery senior Army officer – regarded him as a tower of strength. He became secretary to the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Terry Lewin, who appreciated the apparently effortless ease with which Higgins discharged his heavy responsibilities and dealt with people.

On promotion to rear-admiral, Higgins was appointed the last Flag Officer Medway, when the Kent dockyard was about to be closed after 300 years. His arrival at Chatham was greeted with the headline "John Nott's hatchet man has arrived", but he was an inspired choice for the job. Thanks to his natural courtesy and genuine concern, he quickly created an atmosphere of co-operation. In particular he tried to find alternative employment for the civilian staff and to attract new businesses to the former naval base.

Higgins was then made Director General, Naval Personnel Services, and Chief Naval Supply and Secretariat Officer, the head of a branch which had evolved from the pursers and clerks of the sailing navy and now had to develop a new strength as the Navy's logisticians.

He was appointed CBE in 1980 and CB five years later.

Bill Higgins was an accomplished handyman: painting and decorating, repairs to furniture, plumbing, mending antique clocks and restoring vintage cars were all well within his compass. He was offended by the wrongs in the world, against which he would often speak out, and he would make door-to-door collections for charities. Only illness prevented him from joining the march for peace in London to try to avert the invasion of Iraq.

With his brother Bob, a submariner, Higgins started to climb mountains in 1946. The two made their first ascent in the Cairngorms without proper boots or rucksacks and taking a tent which had no fastening door-flap. On Easter Sunday Higgins wrote in his diary that they "breakfasted on iced porridge in a snow squall"; they had modelled their rations on Scott's last expedition, forgetting that the polar party had starved to death.

Higgins was a member of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club for 60 years and one of the founder members of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Mountaineering Club. Aged 74 he climbed three Munros in a day, to bring his total to 259, and was planning to complete all 284 when he died on January 20.

Bill Higgins married, in 1963, Wiltraud Hiebaum, who survives him with their two sons and a daughter.

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Mr Harry Ironfield

Former President Harry Ironfield died in Carlisle Infirmary on June 19th, 2008, aged 84. His heart, which had undergone multiple bypass surgery some 10 years earlier, finally gave out on him.

Harry was one of my oldest friends. We met at Widdop in 1944, and for many years spent most of our free time together on the hills and crags of the Lakes, Yorkshire Dales, the Scottish Highlands and Skye. I proposed him for club membership in 1947. Together with John Jackson and Ken Heaton we had our first Alpine season in 1947, climbing in Arolla and Zermatt. We were lucky to survive, having an epic on the Ferpècle ridge of the Dent Blanche, and a narrow escape on the Lyskamm (FRCC Journal 1998).

At the time I met Harry he was working as an engineer at Howard and Bullough's in Accrington, and studying part time for an HNC, which he found hard going. He was living with his eldest sister, Marjorie, and her husband, since both his parents had died. In 1947 he decided to give up engineering and join his brothers in the family haulage business. This became possible when he failed his National Service medical for reasons which he never troubled to find out, and which never curtailed his subsequent activities in any way.

Harry married Ruth and set up home in Hawkshaw, conveniently situated for Ruth's teaching post in Bolton and Harry's haulage firm in Accrington. Later they bought Riddings Barn in Threlkeld, which had previously housed the Blencathra foxhounds, and spent virtually all their free time for around the next ten years converting it into a splendid second home, to which they eventually retired. Sadly, their happiness living in the Lakes was cut short when Ruth died, and subsequently Harry's health deteriorated.

Throughout his life Harry had many interests other than work, family and climbing. He was fond of classical music, particularly choral works, and he and Ruth's interest in art resulted in a large collection of paintings. He also became skilled in the making of silver jewellery.

Harry had a mordant sense of humour, as on the occasion when, as young climbers, we were just breaking in to the harder grades. We were on the West face of Pillar Rock and I was leading the South West climb. About the start of the third pitch I asked Harry, who was carrying the guide book, where the route went. As the guide came out of his pocket a ten shilling note came out and fluttered away down the crag. Ten shillings was a sizable amount in 1945 (about £40 at today's values). We finished the route, and on top of Pillar Rock I asked Harry how he had enjoyed his first VS. 'A bloody expensive climb' he replied. On another occasion we walked from Brackenclose to Gimmer to climb the Crack. I was on top of the crag bringing Harry up the crux pitch when there were sounds of strife and cursing from below. When a red faced Harry finally appeared he dropped his breeches, tore off his shredded underpants and cast them back down the route. The waist band had snapped at the critical moment, greatly adding to Harry's problems on the overhang.

Harry's ten year absence from the Club's mainstream activities, while he was renovating Riddings Barn, caused a problem for the committee when his name was put forward for the Presidency. Despite having served as Hut and Meets Secretary 1954-60, and Vice President 1964-1966, Harry was unknown to many of the committee. 'Harry who?' asked one member. He was, however, elected president in 1982 and threw himself wholeheartedly into club affairs, attending every meet, and instigating in 1984 a meeting between the Club, the SMC and the Climbers Club, with the remit to discuss matters of mutual interest: the administration of club huts, climbing guides, journals, handbooks and finance. There was a profitable exchange of views and subsequently further meetings were held. Later Harry was elected a Trustee of the Club's funds.

Harry was good company on and off the hills and will be greatly missed by his daughter Janet, his sister Alice, and many members of the club.

John Wilkinson

Squire Ronald Jackson

Ron Jackson who died on the 7th of February, 2008, at age 91 was, in the late 1930's, one of the most powerful climbers in the country. A modest man, his feats on the crags were known only to a few. He was immensely strong, tough physically and mentally, characteristics essential for his preference for solo climbing, and this often in nailed boots. His visits to the Lakes in the pre-war years were mainly Sunday day trips with his younger brother John (Honorary Member of the Club, who died in 2005). Gimmer and Dow Crag were favourite destinations and most of the hardest routes of the day were soloed, often in nails: Hiatus, Black Wall and the Dow Crag Eliminates to name but a few. Central Wall on Eliminate 'B' solo, in nails, must have been mind blowing. His solo first winter ascent in 1937, of Hopkinson's Crack, with John tagging on behind him, was only the second Grade VI route to be climbed in Britain, years ahead of similar grade Scottish climbs (Fell and Rock Journal 2002).

Holidays were spent in Wales, the Lakes, Skye and the Scottish Highlands, where he did many climbs, often solo, and some prodigious walks which sometimes involved bivouacs without gear. Ron joined the Club in 1937. Surprisingly, Ron didn't seriously apply his talents to unclimbed rock, with the exception of an unrecorded first ascent of the North Ridge of the remote Seana Bhraigh in the Ullapool Hills with Derek Maling in 1947, and the first ascent of Largo, a Severe on Sheepbone Buttress, Birkness Combe, in 1953 with Harry Ironfield.

Ron began climbing at Widdop near his home town of Nelson when he was in his teens and it was there, in 1941, that I first met him. A Sunday regular at the crag, he often dismounted from his motor bike to solo up the Main Buttress still wearing his waders! His immense strength was amply demonstrated when he climbed The Flake, a VS layback crack at the top of the Main Buttress with Vince Wiggin of the Rucksack Club strapped on his back.

In the summer of 1944 I met up with him at Wasdale Head when he was staying at Burnthwaite Farm. We both had our first experience of mountain rescue when we had to carry down a couple of Ron's fellow guests at Burnthwaite, who had fallen to their deaths whilst climbing on Green Gable Crag. Later in the week we had a great day on Pillar Rock where Arthur Dolphin led us, in the wet, up North West and Route II (Gomorrah).

In 1951 Ron had his first alpine season in Saas Fee climbing, amongst other peaks, the difficult north ridge of the Weissmies. He had several further Alpine seasons climbing in Arolla, Saas Fee, Zermatt and the Bernese Oberland. Some peaks were climbed solo, some with friends but on occasion he used a guide as in 1961 with Eddie Petrig. They climbed the Triftorn, Zinal Rothorn, Obergabelhorn and traversed the Matterhorn via the Zmutt Ridge, descending the Italian Ridge and returning to Zermatt the same day over the Furggjoch. Ron also climbed in the Jotunheim in Norway. In 1954, together with Fell and Rock members Jack Tucker and Gill Lewis, Ron was a member of the Kangchenjunga Reconnaissance Expedition (Fell and Rock Journal 1955), which provided valuable information for the successful ascent a year later by Charles Evans' Expedition. In 1955 he took on the job of hut warden of Birkness, but due to the pressure of work he only served for a short time.

Born in Nelson in 1916, Ron left school, where as an outstanding cricketer he was captain of Lancashire Schoolboys, at fourteen to begin work as an office junior in a cotton mill. He then went into engineering as an apprentice draughtsman at B. & S. Massey Ltd, in Manchester where he also studied at Manchester Technical College. During the war he worked for Bristol Aerospace at Clayton le Moors and later for Joseph Lucas Ltd, in Burnley, where eventually he became chief engineer of Lucas Gas Turbines and as a company director moved to the head office in Birmingham.

On retiring in 1972 he enrolled at Birmingham University and graduated with an M.Sc. in Thermodynamics. He was also elected as a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society. Ron had many interests other than mountains and engineering, in particular competitive chess. His retirement was spent first in Kirby Lonsdale then in Ambleside, but after the death of his wife Lynne he moved to a residential home in Wiltshire to be near his daughter Karen, and it was there that he ended his days, greatly missed by family and friends.

I am grateful to Ron's son Ian and daughter Karen for information on his early life.

John Wilkinson

Mr C G C 'Gil' Lewis

With the death of Gil Lewis in September 2007, the Club lost one of its last links with the immediate post-war era of Himalayan exploration. Through his initial explorations in the Yalung Valley, and as a member of John Kempe's Kangchenjunga Reconnaissance Expedition in 1954, he made a considerable contribution to the discovery of the ascent route used by Sir Charles Evans' successful expedition the following year.

Born in Tredegar in 1923, Gil was fortunate both in his birthplace and in having a mother who took him out on the Brecon Beacons and the Black Mountains at a very early age, thus initiating his life-long passion for the hills. He gained scholarships for his local grammar school where he was very active in sport and it was here that he lost the sight of one eye as a result of a boxing accident – typically, although

the resultant sight deficiency would have excused him from military service, he later stood firm to his principles and registered as a conscientious objector. He subsequently gained a further scholarship to study mining engineering at what was then Cardiff University College and here, as well as qualifying academically, he started climbing and apparently made his first contacts with John Kempe, later headmaster at Gordonstoun, with whom he climbed in South America before their joint excursions in the Himalaya.

Gil's work eventually took him to India where he seems to have taken short-term contracts in order to maximise his opportunities for reaching the mountains and in 1951, while climbing several lesser peaks in the Kangla Nangma near the head of the Yalung valley, he made a tentative exploration of Talung Peak. Viewing the south-west face of Kangchenjunga from about 18,000ft he came to the conclusion that Smythe's pre-war dismissal of any prospect of an ascent route from this side could be mistaken and felt that it would repay investigation by a stronger party. In 1953 he returned with John Kempe, and from the slopes of Kabru they both had a closer look at the face and decided that it offered some encouragement. The result was the Kangchenjunga Reconnaissance Expedition of 1954, led by Kempe.

With Kempe initially undecided whether to go to Kangchenjunga or to join Raymond Lambert on Cho Oyu, much of the preliminary organisation of the proposed expedition fell on Gil, now back in the UK, and is entertainingly related by John Tucker, an eventual member of the team, in his later expedition account: "The invitation [to join the expedition] was issued by one Gilmour Lewis who signed himself 'Expedition Secretary'... The party was a little on the small side at that stage; it consisted of Lewis. ... Lewis talked me right to the top of Kangchenjunga and it was only by the greatest effort that I managed to retain my sense of proportion." Many Fell and Rock friends of Gil's will be well able to appreciate the elements of persuasive casuistry and enthusiasm that must have been employed during that conversation.

There is no need to relate further the details of the expedition, all fully chronicled by Tucker in his 1955 book *Kangchenjunga*. The expedition succeeded in its reconnaissance objectives, and Tucker's account of the expedition gives full recognition to Gil's considerable contribution to this success, both in terms of the actual climbing accomplished,

mainly in partnership with Ron Jackson, and of the sheer donkey-work of transporting men and equipment across India, maintaining food and supply lines on the mountain. It is significant that amongst Gil's papers are two letters from Charles Evans: the first, early in 1955, thanking Gil for his advice on the best approach route to the upper Talung Valley and the second, written on behalf of the Himalayan Committee, enclosing a token of appreciation of his part in prospecting the 1955 route. As Sir John (later Lord) Hunt noted in his Foreword to Tucker's account, "...it is as well to bear in mind that Kangchenjunga would not have been climbed in 1955 ... but for this modest but spirited first step".

After a period of being based in the UK, during which he climbed in the Alps and the Dolomites and made several first ascents on Northumbrian crags with Basil Butcher, with whom he had a productive partnership, Gil returned to India and remained there until 1968. The following year he moved to Uganda, where he climbed in the Rwenzori range, before returning to the UK and settling in Northumberland. Already a member of both the Himalayan and the Alpine Clubs – his application to join the A.C. being personally supported by Eric Shipton – he joined the Fell and Rock in 1957. Once permanently back in the UK he remained active in Wales, the Lakes and Scotland until well into his seventies. He had a reasonable score of Munros and completed all the Welsh, English and Irish three-thousanders, the last during what sounds to have been a hilarious Hibernian excursion with Dick Morgan. Apart from joint meets which we organised in Wales, I particularly value the memories of a splendid week spent with Gil and his daughter Jane in Coigach in the early 1980s.

With Gil, what you saw was not exactly what you got. The ebullient, argumentative Welshman with a highly provocative sense of humour and a keen sense of the ridiculous also had a sensitive and knowledgeable side as far as the arts were concerned. Gil had a quiet willingness to make new Club members feel at ease and to acknowledge the otherwise unlauded climbing achievements of others. A passionate Welshman, there was a strong Celtic element to his conversation which frequently trod a delicate line between verisimilitude and imagination, and his arguments contained enough suggestions of shape-changing and time-warping to match the best of the Mabinogi. He was rarely at

a loss for words and his arguments were invariably given more gravity by his ability to gaze serenely at his opponent, in Dylan Thomas's words, "... like a prophet who has no doubts". He was good company on and off the hills and will be sorely missed by his family and friends – especially during the Six Nations Championships.

I am indebted for details of Gil's early life to his daughters, Jane and Sarah, both of whom are appropriately Club members.

Colin Shone

Mrs Jean Newhouse

Born into an FRCC family in 1917, Jean was the third of four daughters of Darwin and Bessie Leighton. Unlike her sisters, Angle Tarn was the highest point that she reached on foot due to the congenital dislocation of a hip. A happy childhood was spent in and around Kendal, her home being known for its hospitality. Aged five, Jean walked to school in Grayrigg and later attended Kendal High School for Girls.

Holidays were the highlight of the year, especially the FRCC Whitsun meet at Thornythwaite Farm, Borrowdale. There Jean became friends for life with the Jopson family and followed all their farming activities. Her interest in the farm poultry led her to take a course at Newton Rigg College.

Jean's suffragette mother nurtured her daughter's independence. Jean became an expert swimmer and, as a keen driver of her father's car from 1934, became known to all the FRCC committee members whom she met at Windermere Railway Station and drove to the Langdale meets. Jean became a member of the FRCC in 1938, her life membership being a gift from her father, who was President from 1921-1923. Registered as disabled, Jean's wartime work was with the children of the Chorley and Benn families for a short time and also at home. In 1946 Jean took a cottage at Sadgill and spent a happy year in Longsleddale.

In 1947 Mrs Leighton and Jean went to Canada to visit Mary, Jean's sister, who had been FRCC secretary from 1940-44. After her mother died Jean returned there to work, developing her creative skills and

painting the Rockies. Her paintings of Kendal Fellside are in the Kendal Town Hall collection.

Back in Ackenthwaite in 1954, Jean bought a small cottage and shop and there she met and married Tommy Newhouse. Together they enjoyed rural life, worked their garden, keeping hens and enjoying caravanning in Arisaig and Galloway. Like her father, Jean was a member of the Cumberland and Westmorland Dialect Society. Always interested in life, even in her eighties, Jean used the latest 'Apple' laptop, networking by e-mail to all her friends and relatives.

A lover of Lakeland, its life and its people, Jean remained a very positive person, determined and of great courage, with a deep capacity for friendship. A mystic, it was her inner strength that drew people to her and sustained her throughout her long life. Jean died in 2006.

I am grateful to Betty Cain, Jean's sister, who provided this information.

Audrey R Flint

Mr Tom Parker

Former hut warden of Beetham Cottage, Tom died suddenly on the 30th of December 2006, aged eighty four. He was born and spent most of his life in Todmorden. He left school at 14 and was apprenticed as a joiner and cabinet maker. Later in life he became a clerk of works and during his career was involved in several projects for British Aerospace in Saudi Arabia, culminating in some major works including the Merrion Centre, a shopping mall in the centre of Leeds.

He joined the Royal Navy in 1940 and on D Day, the 6th of June 1944, also his 22nd birthday, he was on a landing craft putting British troops ashore in Normandy. I got to know Tom after the war and we spent a lot of time together, fell walking in the Yorkshire Dales, Scotland and the Lakes. I proposed him for the Club in 1957. He tried his hand at rock climbing but preferred terra firma. He also tried skiing and for a while made regular visits to the Cairngorms until a spectacular fall on very hard snow left him limping for several weeks.

By the time he retired, his wife Margaret had died and since he had time on his hands I suggested that he might consider taking on the job

as warden of one of the Club huts. He became warden of Beetham Cottage in 1985 and did a full ten year stint where, in addition to his ability as a first rate craftsman his detailed knowledge of all aspects of the building trade made him ideally suited for the position. This was particularly evident when on New Year's Day 1991, the hut was flooded due to the Horseman Bridge being blocked by debris; Tom organised the restoration. When his term of hut warden was completed, Tom and his partner Marion Birch (who was also at that time a member of the Club) put a caravan on a site near Sanquhar in Dumfriesshire so that Tom could enjoy fishing on the River Nith.

Tom had a great sense of humour and was an accomplished story teller where his slow delivery with pregnant pauses leading to the punch line invariably reduced his audience to peals of laughter. Indeed some of his tales are legendary in the Club. Marion died in the summer of 2006, followed six months later by Tom. Our sympathies are with his daughter Susan and his two granddaughters.

John Wilkinson

Mr Lewis Proctor Smith

Lewis Smith was warden of Raw Head from 1953 to 1960, a vital period in the early history of one of the club's most popular huts. In that capacity he earned the respect and affection of countless members and guests who enjoyed that desirable but rare combination of great efficiency, apparent casualness and geniality. He made a lasting contribution in that way to the club's development as indeed he did throughout his membership from 1940 until his death at age 87, at his home, Castleys, Thornton-in-Craven. He made many friends through the club including his future wife, Margaret, with whom he shared nearly 50 years of very happy marriage until his death.

Lewis was a Yorkshireman through and through and lived most of his life at the family home, Castleys. He was educated in Cambridge, first at the Leys School and then at Emmanuel College where he read geology. He served in REME and the Royal Armoured Tank Brigade during the war and on to 1946, reaching the rank of captain. His experiences in helping to liberate the camp at Belsen proved so traumatic

that he barely spoke of them for the rest of his life. After demobilisation he joined the family businesses, mainly loom making and velvet weaving, becoming chairman and continuing in that capacity until his death. He was also for many years chairman of Marsden Building Society. He was elected a Preston Guild Merchant, one of the privileges of office being the ability to drive a flock of geese through the city, a privilege which one assumes he rarely exercised.

A man of wide interests, he acquired a connoisseur's knowledge of old silver and porcelain and enjoyed creating a significant personal collection including many fine decanter labels. Good wine and historic buildings, especially ecclesiastical architecture, were studied with typical thoroughness and he liked nothing better in his later years than taking Margaret and his four children on foreign expeditions where he could demonstrate, and get them to share, his knowledge and interests. He was a model family man in every way.

Although he never aspired to be more than competent on the crags, Lewis was a safe, imperturbable leader or second man on the traditional Lakeland routes. His real forte, however, was tackling both our British and Alpine mountains in any season with confidence and obvious enjoyment. He was a bold skier of the old 'stem-christie' school, happy to carry his skis up Cairngorm in the days when there were no lifts and, when snow conditions permitted, to make lengthy tours of the high tops. He completed the Chamonix-Zermatt High Level route in the days when lacquered wooden skis and sealskins were the norm and few, if any other parties were to be encountered. Latterly, when his ankles seized up and climbing or skiing became impossible, he and Margaret continued to enjoy their exploration of Europe's high places and architectural treasures.

Our sympathy goes to Margaret and the family who, like us, will always have the happiest of memories of a generous, lovely man who lived his life to the full.

John Cook

Dr. Nancy Heron Smith

Nancy Heron was born in Otley in the lee of Almsliffe Crag on the 20th of April, 1922. From the earliest age, she could be found climbing trees and as she grew bigger she began to explore the crag near her home and the local gritstone on Ilkley Moor. During boarding school at Hunmanby Hall, she went to Canada with the school cricket team and saw her first real mountains, the Rockies, in 1939. On returning to England that year, she enrolled at Leeds University to study medicine and started rock climbing with Leeds University Climbing Club. In December 1939, on her first meet (in Langdale), she was already leading the lads.

Over the next few years, she climbed in Wales and the Lake District whenever her studies allowed, sometimes, it is said, in the company of the legendary Arthur Dolphin. In 1942, hitching home from Black Sail, she was given a lift by an "old buffer of a driver" who turned out to be Ashley Abraham, and it was he who proposed her for the FRCC, an honour of which she was proud.

By 1945 when she became a House Surgeon in Leeds Maternity Ward, she was climbing with many of the top climbers of her generation. Soon after that she met her future husband, Cym Smith (C.M.G. Smith), a physicist, President of the Cambridge University Mountaineering Club and a great nephew of Owen Glynne Jones.

In 1947, whilst working as a Psychiatrist in a Glasgow hospital, she became an honorary member of the (men only) Lomond Club and put up many good Scottish routes with Tommy McGuinness. It was with him that she had her first Alpine season, climbing the Matterhorn and the Breithorn, and then the rarely climbed Untergabelhorn Ridge with only an 1896 Baedeker to guide them!

In both 1950 and 1951 she went to the Alps with Cym and early in 1951 they got married. Among other climbs, they made the first British guideless traverse of the complete Aiguilles du Diable (see *Cambridge Mountaineering* 1952: In Memoriam C.M.G. Smith, also *Climbers Club Journal* Vol X) and the first ascent of the year of Piz Badile by the North Ridge (see *FRCC Journal* Vol 16, 1952). But tragedy struck shortly after. Cym was killed when returning home one night on his motorbike in a snowstorm when he ran into the back of a lorry parked without lights.

With typical courage, Nancy picked herself up and took a job in Iraq, in charge of a women's gynaecological unit. There she found filthy premises and no equipment provided. Under these circumstances she did not remain long and returned to England to become a House Surgeon in a hospital near Tunbridge Wells. Here she found hard climbing on Harrison's Rocks where she met Nea Morin, who introduced her to the Pinnacle Club – which was to lead in time to membership of the Ladies' Alpine Club.

Towards the end of the 1950s, Nancy found herself increasingly worried by the number of abortions she was asked to perform and decided to go into General Practice. She turned north and became a trainee assistant to a GP in Kirkby Lonsdale. Here she met Frances Tanner, who was to become her receptionist and general factotum when she eventually, after several other locums, opened her own Practice in Darwen. Frances was, of course, roped into Nancy's climbing life and eventually joined the Pinnacle Club.

During the next 20 years, Nancy climbed frequently in Wales, the Lakes and Scotland and most years in the Alps. While being in the top class of climbers, she was also immensely helpful to beginners (such as the author of this piece) and her courage and enthusiasm were an inspiration to all. Many of her Alpine routes were "firsts" for unguided womens' ascents.

Undoubtedly the peak of her mountain life was the Women's Jagdula Expedition of 1962 led by Dorothea Gravina. This was well before the days of commercial Himalayan trekking and the 6 members of the expedition had to make all arrangements for travel, food and equipment, and with their Sherpas and porters and were going into unknown (and in some parts unmapped) territory. Nancy was the doctor on the party and not surprisingly she also summitted their highest peak, 21,500ft, in the Kanjiroba Himal. It was during these three months on the expedition that Nancy's contact with the Buddhist Sherpas was to change her whole outlook on life.

Some years earlier, she had been influenced by an aunt who lived on the Isle of Man and who was a Jungian psychotherapist. As a medical student she had studied the work of Freud but had not been attracted to his ideas. Now she found herself drawn to the work of Jung; eventually realising that many of the patients at her practice needed

psychological help as much as, if not more than, physical medicine, she decided to take time off and go to study at the Jung Institute. Accordingly she gave up her practice and spent 2 or 3 years in Zurich.

On her return, she moved to London and took a job at a mental hospital where at first she was able to use her Jungian techniques but after a time she was instructed to use drugs on her patients, at which point she resigned and shortly afterwards returned to General Practice as a locum – typically in a very run-down area of London. Here she remained until she retired and some years later decided to spend the rest of her life in her beloved Lake District.

Shortly after her return from Zurich, she had made contact with the London-based analytical Psychology Club, a Jungian organisation into which she was to throw herself with all her previous mountaineering enthusiasm. She was to become the Club's treasurer for some years and a big contributor to discussions at its summer schools. She was particularly interested in seeking out what Jung's influence meant to different people and she herself found that it enlivened her attitude to medicine. As she put it, "Jung is a doctor who brought back art and magic to re-humanise science and make treatment healing".

Her last few years, dogged by ill health, were blessed by contact with old friends and younger family. Finally, in hospital in intensive care, when she was told that she had a ruptured aorta and there was nothing more that could be done, she turned to her cousin with the words, "so that's it, then". She died on the 12th of December 2007, and her ashes were scattered on Gimmer Crag.

Livia Gollancz