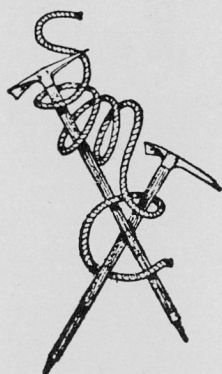


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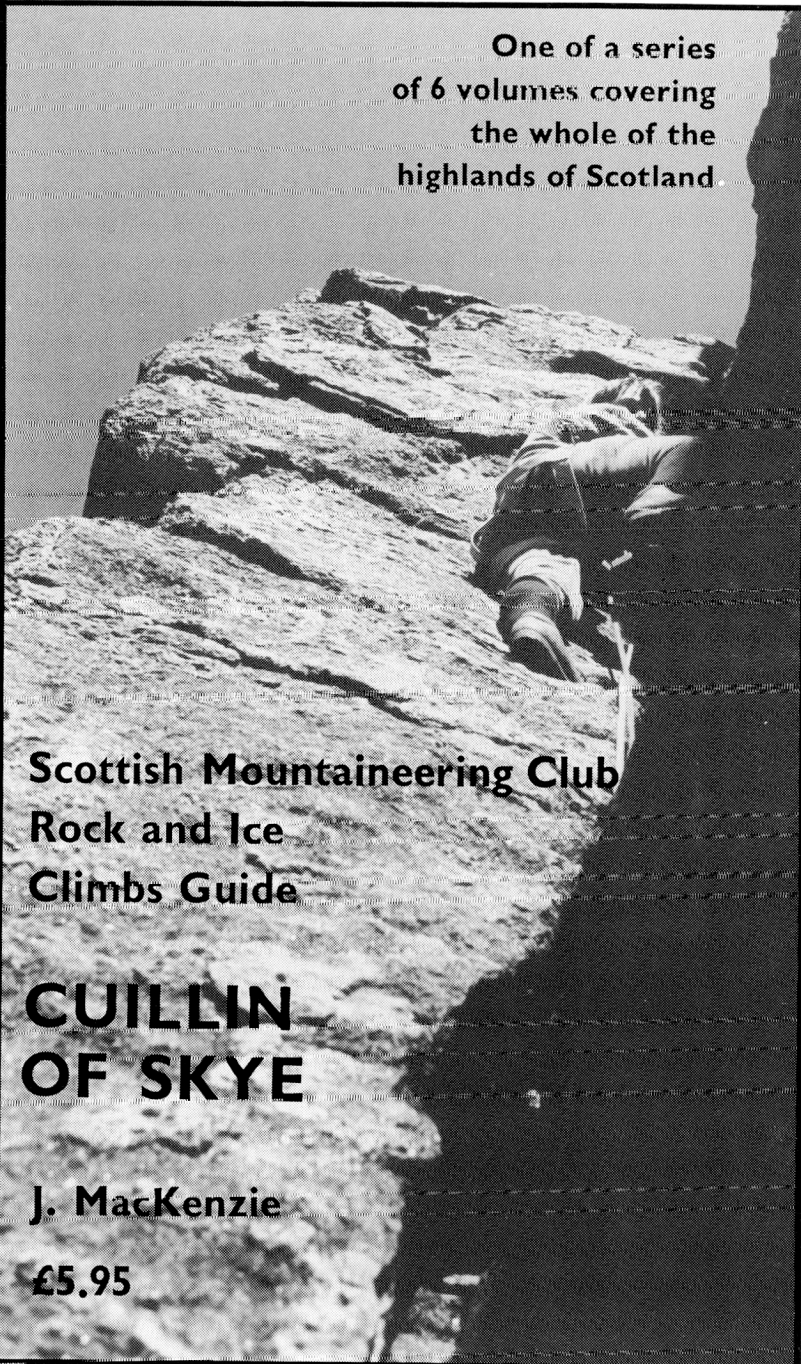


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## CLIMBERS ON BEN NEVIS LAST CENTURY

As seen by W. T. Kilgour

One of the most sought-after books in Scotland is W. T. Kilgour's *Twenty Years on Ben Nevis* which is a chatty account of what it was like to live on top of the Ben as one of the meteorologists in the Observatory. The photographs of the buildings covered in fog crystals, of ping-pong played on a table made of an ice block, of dignified tobogganing, these alone would make it a gem. The book was published in 1905 and its penultimate chapter is entitled 'Mountaineers.' This is how others saw us a hundred years ago. The extract has been somewhat edited without, I hope, losing anything of its flavour –

Hamish Brown.

ONE afternoon not long after the Observatory had been opened, a member of the staff who had gone out for a walk on the snow was amazed on looking over a precipice to see, 1,500 feet down, two dark objects laboriously scaling the ice-covered and snow-clad face of the declivity. That human beings should attempt to reach the top by such an access never crossed his mind. Roped together, and cutting foot and hand holds with their ice axes, slowly but surely those two venturesome climbers made the top by a route which had never, within mental ken, been previously attempted. To say that the observers were astonished would meagrely express their feelings, for they deemed these gigantic precipices impregnable to frontal attack. On their arrival there was a retreat to the domicile where a right royal repast was spread. These two along with others constituted the nucleus of what is now known as the Scottish Mountaineering Club.

Amongst the Club are professors of various universities, clergymen, doctors, advocates, artists, engineers, and business men, who find the highest form of relaxation and enjoyment in pitting themselves against the forces of Nature, and grappling with physical difficulties which call for the exercise of pluck, endurance, and resource. Theirs is a strange pastime, but members aver that, by this securing for a time absolute mental rest, they are enabled to return to intellectual labours with renewed vigour . . . .



The mountaineering of the Club is not of paper description. All affiliated to it can shew a considerable record of ascents made in Scotland under winter conditions – that is, under ice and snow, summer climbs being relegated to the category of hill-climbing. Many are also members of the Alpine Club, and have been engaged in historic explorations and climbing on the greatest mountain ranges of the world.

For this meet over thirty members assembled at Fort William, and directed their attention to Ben Nevis and the surrounding summits. Some came from as far as London and further south, and the first few days were employed in scaling the rock ridges and snow gullies embraced within the circle of what is known as the northern precipice of the mighty Ben. The misty, cold weather which prevailed on the occasion, far from deterring, only added to the zest of their work. They did not seem to revel in the view so much as in the enjoyment of surmounting the difficulties of the tasks which they imposed upon themselves. The tourists who visit in the latter and wetter summer months, climb by the path, up which, the mountaineers say, any man with vigour enough may push a wheel-barrow.

On the other side of the mountain there are at least ten different routes of ascent. Some are gullies filled with snow, which does not disappear even during the hottest August; the others are rock ridges of most precipitous contour, at places almost perpendicular. They are some 2,000 feet in height, and afford but the most meagre handhold, which is made much more precarious by the cracks having to be cleared of ice before the climbers' fingers or boot toes can be inserted.

No less than twenty eight climbers made the ascent by these irregular and difficult routes. The temperature was about 3 deg. under freezing point at the time these mountaineers were adhering like so many limpets to the ice-covered rocks and snow faces. One party of three were on the rocks of what is known as the Tower Ridge for no less than nine hours, being absent from Fort William in all fifteen hours. Another five made the ascent by the North-East Buttress, at one time considered inaccessible, and only climbed once previously.

Other members found their diversion in ascending snow slopes, sometimes hemmed in on either side by walls of black rock hundreds of feet high, the slope of the snow appearing to the uninitiated only a degree less than the perpendicular. It is amazing with what alacrity Alpine men will tackle such a snow-slope, and if an overhanging cornice bars their way, they think nothing of tunnelling a passage up through it – a feat of some magnitude, seeing that perhaps a depth of 20 feet of snow has to be penetrated with no better accoutrement than an ice-axe.

Of the exhilaration and health-giving qualities of this exercise, no one who had had the good fortune to be present at the evening dinners of the club during a meet can have any doubt. The ruddy faces of the mountaineers, which have been exposed to the biting blast for hours on the mountain, the cheery voices, the ringing laughter and the rapidity with which the viands disappear, speak volumes. The entrance halls of the hotel reminded one more of such Alpine climbing centres as Zermatt or Grindelwald than a West Highland tourist resort.

Till the inauguration of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, hardly any one knew how attractive the Scottish mountains were in winter. Some who have seen photographs taken during the spring months, consider they represent views in Switzerland having no idea that such magnificent scenery is within half-a-dozen hours by rail from our cities.

Talking of railways Ben Nevis has come in for a fair share of attention, and the time may not be far distant when the present mode of ascent by path will be superseded by the modern saloon carriage. The mountain has been surveyed, plans prepared, and the route actually staked out in part. The proposal was that the line should follow the old pony track up to the lake and then wind round the upper shoulder of the mountain to the summit, a total length of four miles. The permanent way would consist of outer rails and a centre rack laid on sleepers securely fixed longitudinally. The maximum gradient would be 1 in 2.62 and the estimated cost about £27,000. It was computed that a remunerative income would be derived from tourist traffic and the promotion of special excursions from the large cities. The proposition was to charge (as on the Righi) one shilling per mile, single journey up or down, and fare and half return. The erection of an hotel would doubtless be well patronised.

In assuming that the proprietors interested would give the land required, without the necessity of applying to Parliament for powers, the promoters took too much upon themselves, as the late Lord Abinger ordained his trustees to oppose any such scheme . . .

## C.I.C. JOTTINGS

Edited by R. T. Richardson

For the benefit of that large segment of the Club which has never had the opportunity to read the original, here are some entries from the recently retired C.I.C. Log Book (at present being restored and rebound). This book spanned the period from 1971 to 1980 and hence saw the introduction and spread of modern ice-climbing techniques. Names have been suppressed to protect the guilty. The jottings are roughly arranged by similarity of topic.

### GETTING THERE.

- (i) '24:11:73. People without the key arrived at 3.15 a.m. after a really foul walk-in . . . . found hut locked and empty. Party of seven spent night in radio shack. Party with key failed to find hut . . . . spent night on some God-forsaken scree slope in poly bag (100 yards from hut).'
- (ii) 'Dec. 1973. We hereby claim a record. Distillery to C.I.C. in 14 hours. Got lost in blizzard and bivouacked at Lochan on Tourist Path.'
- (iii) '17:3:74. Distillery to C.I.C. in 22 hours – 1 bivouac.'
- (iv) '1:5:71. Argyll Bar to C.I.C. in 5 hours. A large carry-out . . . . in the absence of any members of the S.M.C. a pleasant time was had by one and all.'
- (v) '18:6:71. Called in during solo traverse of Highlands from Cape Wrath to Glasgow. Distance so far 250 miles, climbing over 50,000 feet over 70 summits.  
19:6:71. Left 06.00 for dentist. Returned 14.30. Left for Steall 15.15.'
- (vi) '25:4:76. Arrived at hut to find lock with 3-inch screw driven through.'
- (vii) '29:1:78. Arrived hut after nine- hour walk up in deep snow and spindrift.'

### SEASONAL VARIATIONS

- (i) '10:9:72. Castle Ridge – snow.'
- (ii) '12:9:76. Northeast Buttress. The Mantrap and 40 Foot Corner were heavily iced.'
- (iii) '1:5:77. Orion Direct.  
Point Five.'

## COMPETENCE AND OTHERWISE

- (i) '15:4:74. Arrived 2.30, went out and did Centurion.  
16:4:74. The Bat.'  
17:4:74. Torro.'  
18:4:74. Sassenach.  
— also did Garadh Gully after attempting Point Five,  
conditions bad.'
- (ii) '23:6:74. Centurion.  
24:6:74. Bullroar.  
25:6:74. Sassenach.  
26:6:74. The Bat.  
27:6:74. Titan's Wall.'
- (iii) '28:12:74. Ascent of No. 5 Gully, solo, in groups of three and two. An avalanche track gave good hard snow . . . .'
- (iv) '29:12:74. No. 5 Gully solo . . . . only ——— made summit as  
——— and part of cornice made rapid return to lower level.'
- (v) '19:2:75. . . . started Tower Ridge, changed mind, to Gardyloo  
Gully instead. Going over cornice, cornice breaks. ———  
descends involuntarily to base of Observatory Gully at some  
speed . . . . not hurt.'
- (vi) '1:4:75. Up Tower Ridge, down Tourist Route (where is No. 4  
Gully anyway?).'
- (vi) '19:12:75. Three hours amble upwards to Summit, followed by  
epic abseil descent and arrived at C.I.C. at 7 p.m. Two ropes  
left on abseil posts and retrieved the following day.'

## VARIABLE TEMPI

- (i) '8:4:71. Point Five Gully. Ice now better but not quite enough  
in the right places . . . . spindrift bad. Eighteen hours, two falls,  
no submissions and a knockout.'  
'10:4:71. Climbed Point Five Gully,  $2\frac{3}{4}$  hours, two or three  
inches of slush over most of the ice but nevertheless very good  
climb.'
- (ii) '12:3:73. Tower Ridge, 9 hours.'  
'13:3:73. Tower Ridge,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours.'  
'20:3:73. Tower Ridge,  $1\frac{1}{4}$  hours.'

## ECHOES OF EPICS

- (i) '29:3:72. Up No. 3 Gully, intended to go down No. 4 – too  
easy – so up to Summit . . . . then it happened, wind and  
white-out. Only safe way down long trip to Steall Gully, call  
at Polldubh R.N.M.C. . . . . then to Fort Bill Police to report  
safe. Good night's bivvy in caravan then back via Lochan.  
36 hours for No. 3!'

- (ii) '27:1:73. Observatory Ridge. Powder, verglas, miserable weather, party of three . . . broken crampon . . . forced into Zero Gully. Finished 9.30 p.m. (One alternative to those long boring evenings round the fire.)'
- (iii) '17:2:73. Hadrian's Wall Direct, etc. (Comedy of Errors) 17½ hours.'
- (iv) '9:7:76. Bullroar – this route more than the usual money's worth due to cloudburst with accompanying pyrotechnics off-stage. 300 feet from top of buttress a retreat was advisable and duly made on diminishing lengths of rope, some rope left (somewhat undernourished) 200 feet above ground over Titan's Wall.'

### THE MOUNTAIN STRIKES BACK

- (i) '23:9:71. Climbed up path on 20th. Rained 21st. Peeled off 22nd, knackered knee. Relegated to hut for rest of stay.'
- (ii) '15:2:77. Decided to have an easy day and got avalanched off Càrn Mór Dearg.'
- (iii) '15:2:77. . . . went to foot of Hadrian's Wall, enormous powder snow avalanche burst over us. Came down very fast.'
- (iv) '13:4:77. . . . witnessed 12 Sandhurst 'pongoes' bomb out of No. 4 . . . roped together. No injuries. . . . preparing to abseil down No. 4 when part of its cornice collapsed. Caught a brief glimpse of bodies disappearing down the gully, leaving behind their leader sitting beneath the cornice blowing a whistle.'

### MISCELLANEOUS

- (i) '17:3:71. Today was cancelled for lack of support.'
- (ii) '31:7:71. Abseil posts – last one has fallen down so don't use it.'
- (iii) '13:2:72. Up to foot of Zero – then back to hut for ropes. Then back to Zero – another party in it – so up Minus Three Gully (2½ hours). Second climbed crux then realised he had left axe – reversed to retrieve.'
- (iv) '25:2:72. ——— thought Tower Ridge (in 4 hours) better than sex. ——— proved him wrong!'
- (v) '15:4:72. Down No. 4 Gully. Large cornice – began to tunnel down only to discover another party doing likewise in opposite direction.  
 . . . up to Gardyloo. Tunnel already started 20 feet up. Two hours later emerged at top of chockstone pitch leaving 60 foot tunnel . . . finished in dark and bivouacked 400 feet south of Summit.'

- (vii) '1:6:72. First part of Centurion yet again. Does the sun ever shine here?'
- (viii) '31:8:73. . . . been in Fort William for nearly 5 weeks and we have had two days of sunshine.'

## LITERARY CRITICISM

'11:12:78. Constable ———, Fort William: Re the entry of the 4:12:78 in the Visitors' Book – any entry of such filth will not be tolerated, any further recurrence of this will be dealt with as a Criminal Matter.'

## THE LAST OASIS

By Andrew Nisbet

BEFORE you ask, it's a route on Creag an Dubh Loch, named because a steady stream flows over its pink walls and slabs even when the rest of the cliff is dry and baking under a relentless sun (it used to happen when I first started climbing, but that's not so recently). The walls stay pink because even the grey Dubh Loch lichen can't survive such permanent submergence. A good summer route when dry; consequently it's rarely climbed.

You might think it would have had a winter ascent years ago but it's one of these routes where the feeding spring seems to freeze up and disappear in winter. Not that there hadn't been intentions. A notable Etchachan Club pair (this famous phrase makes them easy to identify from previous *Journals*) once went to climb the Oasis, found good conditions but had forgotten one of their ropes, so had to be content with a snow desert instead. The inherent steepness of the route was sufficient to put off contenders when conditions were anything less than ideal.

When Neil Spinks and I went up there for a look last winter, it was predictable by the perverse laws of opinion that conditions would be good – that is, everyone else had dismissed the weekend as being too warm/too dry/ too late in the year/or were just too apathetic. Mind you, April on the Dubh Loch is optimistic. But as we had hoped, it was a frosty morning with not a cloud in the sky as we walked up from Glas Allt, and on arrival we found the route was smothered in ice from top to bottom.

The sun was starting to angle up out of a clear blue sky as we approached the cliff – no walking on the loch this time.



'Climbing in April is really pleasant,' I remarked as we put on crampons in the sun. [At this point the discerning reader might anticipate a small problem which would crop up]. A good covering of crisp snow made the walk over the boulder field towards the start easy but we were sweating under a heavy load of ice screws, even though we had chanced to leave our sacks by the loch on such a fine day.

On the cliff the frost had been less active and the snow was soft under a thick crust. Our feet kept breaking through unpredictably so we put on the rope for the scramble up to the start of the Broad Terrace Wall. The sun was higher now and sweat was running down my brow from under my helmet as we plodded up deep soggy snowfields. I was hoping the snowfields wouldn't slide off a lubricated grass surface as the start of the route is rather too high for a surfboarding descent. My vest was clinging to my back now under six layers of clothing and a baking sun, which shines directly on to this part of the face in the morning. Sheets of snow were slithering ominously off the slabs around us.

The introductory gully was almost in the shade. But suddenly I broke through the temporary névé and water oozed out of the hole made by my axe. As it flowed, the névé turned to slush for Neil to wade up. He was unhappy.

'It's a bit warm.' Then after a pause during which I failed to take him up on his disguised suggestion, added, 'I think we could abseil in one into S.E. Gully.' I took this simply as an interesting observation. He joined me on the first stance. I quickly set off up an ice bulge, made delicate move up a slab of ice backed with water which threatened to peel off when I kicked my points into it, and managed to place a good axe over the lip. I had struck a spring again. Water streamed down my arms, poured off my elbows, eventually penetrated my whole body and dripped off the soles of my feet.

'Hold it - I must take a picture - nobody will believe this' and Neil shrieked with laughter. Moving off the bulge was awkward and took time (unfortunately for me). All the ice above was slush except a thick band in a groove which slanted abruptly right above the bulge. I kept the good placement in and mantleshelfed into the puddle over the lip.

The amount of climbable ice was rapidly shrinking so I was forced left away from the summer route into a cramped stance under a small roof. At the back of this recess seemed a good place to stay. The stream flowed over the lip in front of us and the icicles which were crashing down off the main icefall to the right would miss us, even if they came unnervingly close. Neil was still unhappy.

'The sun will be away soon,' I suggested. This wasn't a lie, it just turned out to be not quite accurate. The more the sun moved south,

the higher it became and it neatly traced a line just above the outline of S.E. Buttress. We were so wet by now that we needed its warmth.

We chatted for a while behind our curtain of water but I couldn't bring myself to agree to a retreat. It might be ten years before there would be climbable ice on this route again. The crashing of icicles seemed to have eased a bit. In fact, most of them had already fallen, so I gingerly edged out across a slab aiming for the main icefall, diagonally over a bulge and across to the other side of the ice. I knew if I dug deep enough in the slush there was an odd fixed peg and a good chock placement, an advantage of having been here before in summer. I needed the reassurance, it looked very steep and serious above. I didn't even try putting in ice screws, in slush like this they would just fall out. A double bulge loomed up above but the axes were going in up to the shaft. It was still worrying in case one pulled right through so I rested on my axes between the bulges, not because I had run out of strength but so that I was fresh if anything unexpected happened (such as the whole pitch collapsing). Sixty feet above the good Moac runner and increasingly nervous, I came across the direct continuation of the ice, a forty foot plumb vertical screen of soggy icicles, but there was no way I was going up there without runners. The only ones possible were slings round icicles, just a wet joke in these conditions, so I slunk off sideways into a cave behind the ice, battered a number ten hex sideways into a slush-filled crack and pegged up the summer route. I feel apologetic about the aid now but I was under some strain at the time. Just to emphasise the point, Neil followed without using the aid.

Now we were faced by the last twenty feet, a straight pull-up on to a slushy ledge, which could be awkward in these conditions. But we hadn't noticed the sun had gone behind the hill. The snow was rock-hard to finish!

## CRIPPLES ON THE TRIOLET

By Graham E. Little

ROB's fumbblings for aspirins, to appease an acute toothache, woke me at four, from a fitful sleep. I gazed out across the Argentière Glacier at the mighty gaunt spectres of Les Droites and Les Courtes, garbed in their tattered cloaks of moon glistening ice. My eyes swung hypnotically up the glacier, already alive with swaying pinpoints of light, to the North Face of the Triolet, our intended route. Its great apron of ice presented a magnificent, beckoning line, even though this summer of 1976 had followed a lean winter.

Suffering from post bivi-blues we trudged up the never-ending glacier, gulps of neat Pernod (strictly medicinal), from Rob's water bottle, breaking the monotony. Rising over an icy hummock we startled a huddle of three shivering Japs, their toothy grins whiter than the snow itself. Passing the time of night we hurried on up a steepening snowfield to below the bergschrund, at the right hand side of the face.

The dawn came quickly and ominously with an angry blur of fire. Long wings of steel grey cloud hung on the horizon, harbingers of impending bad weather.

Avalanche debris wedged in the bergschrund gave an easy passage and I led out to the base of a short ice wall. Rob followed quickly with the Oriental trio hard on his heels. The wall was as brittle as any Scottish ice pitch and the surface fractured with alarming ease. Pretending to feel at home Rob eased himself up and onto the ice slope above. Thoughts of burning off our inscrutable friends were soon dashed as we witnessed their amazing climbing technique which consisted of inadequate belays, no runners and the leader bringing both his mates up together.

We held onto our marginal lead up the first great ice slope; pitch after pitch of bare 50° ice – no comforting névé for us.

Above us loomed the huge overhanging serac barrier apparently barring any further advancement. The ice steepened and we embarked upon the key passage, an awkward leftward traverse following the base of the serac wall. Using tubular screws for belays and runners we made safe and steady progress.

'Hard work,' I informed the leading Nip. He seemed in total sympathy as from then on, at every stance, he flashed his disarming smile, offered me a peppermint and in not quite impeccable English assured me that it was indeed 'velly hard work.' A final 70° pitch and we were on the ice field above the barrier.

The weather was looking grim and I was feeling much the same having barely recovered from three days of the Chamonix runs. Rob was popping aspirins into his mouth like sweets and the contents of the water bottle were rapidly diminishing.

'It's like a bloody cripples outing,' I shouted as the first flurry of snow fell from the leaden sky. The panting, grinning figures below seemed in total agreement.

Trending right up easier ground we arrived at a snowy bay. Yet another serac complex barred our way but this time with no obvious way up. After some deliberation I attacked the wall at its lowest point moving up on merely vertical ice (the rest was overhanging). A screw runner – tension – cut a step – aching arms – choke on fresh snow slides – what a life! My Oriental audience smiled encouragement from below as they munched their hill food. Happy little fellows right enough!

With only a few feet to go the ice inexplicably gave way to remarkably steep rubbish. I grovelled around for a while in imminent danger of falling off, then with unorthodox bridging and the aid of a horizontally placed axe, I levitated onto the icefield above. An audible sigh of relief came from the Japs. Working on the Kamikaze principle their leader threw himself, with great determination, at the wall and fell off. After much shouting, perhaps even swearing, he repeated the exercise, this time successfully.

With successively decreasing pitch lengths Rob and I groped our way, through mist and snow, up the final endless ice slope, the Oriental banter fast receding. We were both totally knackered and much relieved to gain the Col Sup-de Triolet, after seven hours of sustained climbing. Finding some shelter we donned duvets then scrambled along the south flank of the Petites Aiguilles on shattered snowy rocks.

As if by divine intervention the snow abated, the clouds were rent and the sun shone hotly as we dropped down to the head of the Courtes Glacier. The descent down this fiendish, jumbled maze proved quite an epic, and involved two 150 feet abseils down overhanging ice cliffs from snow bollards!

After a much needed bowl of soup and bottle of wine, in the Couvercle Hut, we took time to reflect. It was a great route done in hard conditions. Over two and a half thousand feet of hard grey ice! What a climb!

Before crashing out we speculated on the possible whereabouts of our little slant-eyed pals. 'They'll be huddled together in a snow hole somewhere,' Rob assured me. 'Still smiling,' he added.

## FREE ON SUNDAYS – AT THE BRECHE DE ROLAND

By Dan Livingston

Down the years, I have made several visits to the Spanish side of the Pyrenees and usually the Brèche de Roland has been included in the itinerary. This breach in the frontier ridge, if we are to believe the legend, was cloven by the mighty sword of Roland to facilitate his retreat from the Moors. Each visit seemed to be associated with an unusual incident, always minor but nonetheless memorable in some way. The very first was back in 1956 when Spain required a visa for entry and when John Lowe and myself walked in by the Brèche, blissfully unaware of the fact that this route was prohibited. The result – we were confined for two days by the *Carabineros*, while we were investigated. But this is not the story that I want to tell. The latest incident at the Brèche was more amusing.

The party consisted of George Roger, Hugh and Nan Leith, Margo McDougall and myself. We had left Tarla on the Spanish side to prowl around the mountains for three or four days and the journey took in, as usual, Roland's Masterstroke. The snow on the slopes down to the Refuge des Sarradels was quite firm and a bit icy in places. Suddenly, I slipped and fell, putting out my free hand to break the fall. It was when I got up and looked at the right hand that I was astonished to see that the pinkie of the right hand was exactly at right angles to the direction of the other fingers. There was no pain. Had I not looked at it I wouldn't have known. Being a bit dim on medical matters, I assumed that it was broken. Nan, behind me, expressed horror and looked as if she had seen a monster. Fifteen minutes brought us to the Refuge where I asked Madame la Gardienne if there were in the hut any visitors with medical knowledge. No, but she must radio the mountain rescue post down in Gavarnie. After a long exchange with the post, it emerged that an ambulance bearing the letters C.R.S. was going to make for the road end at the col which is called the Port de Gavarnie and I was to descend the 800 feet and rendezvous with it there. It amused me to see and hear Madame gazing at me and reading off my salient features for identification. I was an Englishman, small, elderly, and with white hair. To none of these, although most are true, do I give official recognition. Soon George, Hugh and I set off down to the Port, the ill-directed digit held aloft to prevent anything or anyone knocking it off. When 200 feet above the Port we spied a small helicopter well below us and like ourselves it was heading for the pass. We watched it circle low over the col and head up our own track. Now, knowing, or rather believing, that the French are not so generous in mountain rescue as the British and having already

made a hasty mental estimate of the cost of an ambulance, panic entered my mean breast, when I saw the machine heading for us and for such a trivial injury. As he overflowed us, he was loud-hailing 'Are you the Englishman? Are you the Englishman?' To my credit I didn't say yes but I did hold up my bent pinkie for identification. He turned and landed. A young man nimbly disembarked and wanted to hustle me on board. 'Mais je n'ai pas commandé un hélicopteur et je ne veux pas payer pour un hélicopteur.' This sentence was processed in the two minutes before landing and I didn't give a damn whether the helicopter was masculine or feminine. 'Vite, vite' said the young man who turned out to be a doctor and I allowed myself to be hustled on board, having made my statement in regard to payment. A few minutes took us down to the post of the Campagnie Republicaine de Sécurité at Gavarnie. Now that we could talk, the doctor told the pilot and the mechanic of the Scotsman who almost wanted a statement before boarding that he should not be billed. The pilot told me that the service was always free on a Sunday – especially for Scotsmen. There was much good humoured banter before the pinkie was straightened – it was only a dislocation.

The arrangement that had been made with George and Hugh was that I should spend the night in Gavarnie and on the following morning about 10 a.m. we should meet at the Port for our return to Spain. However, the advent of the chopper on the scene had advanced events so much that I wondered if perhaps I might be able to walk back up the Refuge before nightfall. The crew thought it not advisable. Then the pilot dropped a bombshell. He would fly me back up to the hut! I gathered from the talk that supplies had to be taken to a hut in an adjacent cirque and that he would be prepared to go out of his way and drop me at Sarradels. After a fantastic flight round the Cirque de Gavarnie he touched down outside the hut and I clambered off amid hasty and unheard words of thanks and farewell.

Nan and Margo were dumbfounded to see me arrive in this way. As for George and Hugh, they were still slogging up the soft snow after their mercy mission. I had two large drams in me before they arrived – aghast at seeing me here.

When I was young, I used to think erroneously that gratuitous meant free. Later, I learned that it meant 'uncalled for.' Now, I know that it can mean both – on Sundays at the Brèche de Roland.



## THREE IMMODERATE MOUNTAINS

By I. H. M. Smart

THE HALLS OF DIS.

*'... et rebus nox abstulit atra colorem'**... and the rest of Aeneid Bk VI.*

MY MEMORY of this story begins on the top of a remote peak in East Greenland which had not yet divulged its name to mapmakers. We had climbed it by an interesting ridge of red granite and I remember a bull musk ox (no mean climber itself) ambling away from the summit as we approached – a gesture on its part which allowed us to complete the first recorded ascent by bipeds. It was, moreover, a finely focused High Arctic day of silence and clear air; the sort of weather through which you could see far into the interior without any aberration. Under such circumstances the contemplation of mountain and rolling tundra required a high order of attention and it was several hours before we descended by thrilling glissades down a gully of granular snow. The valley below led to the sea along a five-mile carpet of plants hugging the ground in the height of their autumn colour. We stopped half way for coffee amid a patchwork of wine-dark blaeberry and scarlet leaved bearberry, bearing berries as black as the apples of the underworld. While extracting the minimum of dry twigs for a fire, a branch of willow had come away. It was too green to burn and its bright yellow leaves too beautiful to leave, so it was thrust through the top of a rucksack where it made a rather attractive pennant against the blue sky.

Further down the valley the fine focus of the day faded and the landscape became normal. As we approached the sea a film of cloud moved high across the sky, the rich evening colours drained away and something came from somewhere to brood over a colour-forsaken land. As is well known there are places on the earth in some way haunted and unhappy, where a man will not willingly linger. This place was such and in spite of weariness we kept moving along the shore. The situation was not improved by the rising of the moon like a grey hole in the gloaming through which light from the other side ebbed and flowed. And so we travelled onward under the shade of the lonely night through the empty halls of Dis and his ghostly kingdom finding our way by the grudging light of an inconstant moon. It really was a bit like that.

There were two cruxes on the night's journey along the shore: first a passage through the cold, grey streams of a many fingered river delta that searched us for our credentials and then the horror of stumbling on the low grass-grown walls of a long-abandoned

Eskimo house with a skull in a recess where a light should have been.

Some hours later we were able to strike inland again. After the labour of steep snow and the toil of unstable scree we reached the upper air and crossed a pass back into the interior. By the next day the shadow had passed and we had our morning coffee amid the crisp autumn colours with the details of distant hills enhanced once again and the sweet wood smoke rising straight into the air. In its way this penetrating clarity was every bit as disturbing as the myth laden gloom of the previous night.

#### THE PALACE OF THE WINTER QUEEN.

*'The Dark Goddess and the White endure the cold together,  
Rivals in elegance amid the frost on the moon.'*

*Li Shang-Yin.*

The hill behind our house is of no great height and its summit has been attained by numerous sheep and rabbits. Last January, however, under the spell of cold clear weather, two feet of powder snow and a full moon, its homely slopes and woodlands were transformed into an unfamiliar land basking in all the colours of the moonbow from shining white to luminous dark. I cannot recall any experience so aesthetically rewarding as the first midnight ski descent from the silver summit of glittering Soracte to the river below the house. First down the winking snow of the upper slopes leaving a trail of diamond dust so fine you could still see it floating and sparkling in the moonlight as you turned. Movement over the air filled snow was so near to levitation that the mind easily bridged the difference. Then through the little glen with the lone pine followed by a skating waltz across the dancing floor of the frozen lochan, for the moon can play an exhilarating tune when she keeps her fingers off the back-lill. Then past the Sitka trees with their backs straight in the moonlight though their arms sagged full of diamonds. Next past the house with the yellow lamplight shining faintly through from the other world where copious drams were waiting release from magic bottles.

Finally, a schuss through the open birchwood, a palace encrusted everywhere with jewels of frost and hung about with ice crystal chandeliers. However, a shadow concealed a natural ski jump and a period of true levitation followed; then, the joy of grabbing a passing chandelier of frost-candled pendular birch and swinging to a halt (a life-long ambition accomplished without its intrinsic vulgarity – this was, after all, a magic night) still upright, amid a pile of tinkling crystals. The speed from the rest of the slope carried the skis across the silver haugh to the old ford and its guardian, an ancient, twisted, white-robed larch. Here to pause awhile and watch the moonbeams quiver on the ice bound river – just as Stott advises us to do in the Club song.

## BEYOND THE DREAMS OF AVARICE.

*'An t-or is fearr air bith  
- the best gold of any.'*

*Salm xix, 10.*

The western slopes of the Colorado Rocky Mountains have spectacular Fall colourings. Predominant is the bright yellow of the aspen poplar. This tree is tall, slender stemmed with a terminal canopy of trembling leaves that turn their colours on and off in the breeze. We had climbed a shapely mountain somewhere in the San Juan range which gave a circumferential view of these realms of gold. Near the top, I remember, was a last isolated thicket of low Juniper. Here, under a bough were traces of a twig couch and a very modest fire where some discriminating citizen had passed the night. Had we had the foresight to bring food into this Midas land we'd have done the same. Our improvidence forced us off the top in the late afternoon and the rocks and scree funnelled us towards a steep slope stalked and shared with aspen saplings fifteen feet high. Their thin, whippy stems were ideal for cushioning the descent. I can remember brachiating down the golden brace swinging from trunk to pliant trunk through the wake of currency shaken from the trees by my spendthrift companion. The air was filled with coin of the realm raining down from the blue sky: sovereigns, doubloons, guineas, Kruger rands and gold moldores floated in the air shining as they hit the sunlight, full face and disappearing when they turned edge on. This was copious, innocent wealth you could revel in with a clear conscience - a cloud of gold a hundred yards long you could run through whooping and yodelling and shouting 'Rich beyond the dreams of avarice.' There were banks of it on the ground and as you passed you could kick it back up into the air again to join the gold leaf raining down from heaven. I have always wanted to order a pile of Kruger rands from the bank and kick them up in the air while the tellers showered me with gold moldores: it was every bit as enjoyable as I had supposed.

This experience is clearly recorded somewhere in my mind and I often re-run the episode during boring committee meetings. Up till now it has always been played silently and without movement but I suppose one time I'll forget and start kicking the order papers up in the air, whooping and yodelling the while. Such behaviour will no doubt arouse criticism.

## AN OCCASION

By G. J. F. Dutton

'OF COURSE we should go,' said the Doctor, sternly. 'The least we can do. He is a Good Man, and has been kind to us.' The Apprentice and I groaned. The back bar of Daddy McKay's gleamed in sympathy. There seemed no way out. Our consciences shared the same rope: the Doctor couldn't go alone. But he frowned. He drank thoughtfully; a good fifty pence of Glen Bogle. 'It might even be an enjoyable occasion.' He was unconvincing. We stared into our glasses; Glen Bogle stared back.

The occasion was to be the Last Munro of old Zero. Old Zero, *alias* The Reverend Zoar McKinley McSigh, M.A., B.D., had been a friend of the Doctor's at college. 'He always was an elderly-looking youth,' the Doctor recalled. Twenty-five years later he resembled a grave and active septuagenarian. He was the respected minister of a Wee Free flock in Glasgow, a staunch teetotaler and tireless campaigner for the Light, a diligent visitor of the sick and uncared-for. Distressingly admirable. He made us fidget. 'Excellent fellow,' the Doctor would say; and reach for Glen Bogle or its equivalent. The Rev. McSigh had nevertheless one fleshly weakness. He climbed hills. As a student he had climbed Salisbury Crags; but he gave up such doubtful adherences on ordination. A long hill walk inspired a wider view, and he persuaded his congregation that no trespass was involved. Certainly his Saturday excesses brought them fine draughts of fire and resonance the following day, in both Gaelic and English.

The path is slippery, however, and the Devil had whispered 'Munros' . . . . There was no excuse. True, the first Compleater, No. 1, had been a minister, but the Rev. A. E. Robertson was not of the Evangelical Free Church; and therefore no fit person to emulate. As with lesser men, totals inflated the head of McSigh. Pride lifted him continually above 3000 feet; outlandish hills were followed. Little by little. Until Auld Hornie had sold him the lot, and the last one was coming up this Saturday. It was Càrn an t-Sagairt Mór. Would so auspicious a name avert retribution?

No. To ensure infernal success the Tempter took on the irrepressible and rotund form of A. J. Evergreen Smith, who had completed them all - Separate Mountains, Subsidiary Tops, Eminences Furth of Scotland and the whole litter of Corbetts, Donalds, Dochertys and Maxwells - a dozen times . . . . Evergreen, a compulsive organiser, happened to organise the Boys' Brigade in McSigh's district and soon swept the straying minister into

intemperate and brow-knitting enthusiasm: the ascent of his Last Munro should be a Real Occasion.

Not only would the youth organisations of all the kirks in McSigh's district take part, but even the more able-bodied of his own congregation. And also as many as possible of the previous Compleaters would be called out, each identified by the number of his or her position in the Official List of Munroists as published (shame-facedly) by the editor of the *Journal*. All would assemble at the summit, where the Rev. Zoar would exhort them before psalm-singing and descent. Exceptionally blameless, if somewhat Apocalyptic. And the Doctor and ourselves were especially asked to share his pleasure. How could we refuse? Glen Bogle gave no answer. It glumly retreated beneath our eyes.

Well, we were there. At the foot of Càrn an t-Sagairt Mór. As expected, mist and drizzle. Last Munros are usually, despite the weather, scenes of alcoholic mirth, often of excess. This occasion would be decorous. At first, no stimulating beverage was considered; but the diabolical inspirer of Evergreen Smith persuaded minister and elders, in view of the cold and exertion, to allow a little weak medicinal wine for those frailer members of the congregation who might need it – no beer, and certainly nothing spirituous. After all, a sip of Bouvier or suchlike celebrated physical thankfulness on these occasions in the old days. He even persuaded, with the extensive nether forces at his disposal, McSigh to agree to savour a touch of weak, very weak, medicinal wine himself at the top. McSigh had never – not even as a divinity student – tasted alcohol; his Communion wine was non-alcoholic; this was indeed a victory for darkness. He had wrestled; but – the Last Munro: just once, just once; to do it *properly*.

The Doctor had no objection to wine on the hill; he toasted Alpine summits with aluminium and *vin-du-pays*. But that week a rich and thankful patient had given him a bottle of Lochaber No More, the finest and rarest of malt whiskies, 16 years old and 100° proof . . . . The temptation to alleviate the strain of duty was too great; he brought it with him.

From the busy group round the cars and buses that morning, McSigh came over. As a special mark of friendship he presented us with a half-bottle of wine, wrapped in brown paper. 'Just like my own – of course I shall take only a sip – but I expect you fellows will nearly empty the bottle!' And almost a wink from that clear blue eye: then he swiftly returned to the black-coated huddle of elders.

We unwrapped the brown paper, and stared. 'Sister McVittie's Medicinal Wine. Extra Weak: Formulated Specially for Invalids and Similar Persons.' Sister McVittie, unexpectedly rubicund,

eyed us firmly and therapeutically from the label. She pointed unflinchingly at the small print: *Guaranteed to contain less than 0.5% ethanol*. We unscrewed the bottle and sniffed. Ghastly. The Doctor hurried behind the car. He emptied the bottle, washed it thoroughly, and refilled it with Lochaber No More. He put it in his rucksack for the hill. He did not wish to hurt his old friend.

We relaxed, and set off. As we left, crates of Sister McVittie were being unloaded and dispensed, each bottle wrapped in brown paper, to the many Invalids and Similar Persons of McSigh's congregation; they stuffed them hurriedly away in pockets and bags.

It was no climb. Wet heather and grass, uphill. Visibility, a dozen yards. Interesting yards. Across them passed a succession of improbable figures. Not only the elders and congregation, puffing and mist-dripping, in gumboots, goloshes and steel-rimmed spectacles, clutching black plastic bags and wilting umbrellas; not only the pink and uniformed Youth carrying banners; but also more familiar figures in rock-torn attire, some already well-stimulated and each bearing his number as a Compleat Munroist; the Mark of the Beast, as arranged by Evergreen's Infernal Master. (Prudence compels the narrator to change the numbers here and To State Clearly That They *Are* Changed . . .). Several, as a token of respect requested by Evergreen, were repeating for McSigh's Last Ascent, the self-imposed conditions of their own Last Ascent. They paraded like sufferers out of Dante. Number 112 was carrying a set of pipes, No. 105 a folding stool; 125 was burdened with his skis. Number 172 was in evening dress, No. 230 in nothing but a kilt and a false beard. Number 83, who had stepped to his summit cairn carrying his fiancée, a wee smasher, in his arms, now followed obediently her matronly shadow; No. 76 experienced similar difficulty with his baby, grown too large for the rucksack, who stalked gloomily beside him, six foot three and desirous of Hampden.

Halfway up we came across Sir Hector Macassar – No. 56, an old vintage – sprawling on a plastic Inverness cape. Unashamedly, he was enjoying his whisky. He offered us some. The Doctor slung off his sack and in turn proffered our disguised Lochaber No More (Sister McVittie continued to point, unmoved). Despite Sir Hector's indignant refusal, we poured it out, pressed it within olfactory range. Whiskers twitched. Eyes widened. Mouth opened. Savour. Gulp. Savour.

'Terrific stuff, man, terrific stuff . . . . Where on earth . . . ?' The Doctor signalled silence.

McSigh had appeared. Well ahead of his flock, only the fittest of elders beside him. He came up to us. Sir Hector, also once a fellow-student, welcomed old Zero and offered him a drink.

'No, no. No. But –' and here McSigh glanced almost gaily at his elders, who smiled grimly and inspected the turf – 'at the top I mean



to take a wee mouthful: of weak, very weak, medicinal wine.' And he produced his half-bottle. Macassar sat up, unwrapped it and held it at arm's length.

'It's real!' insisted the unbecomingly enthusiastic Zero.

'Disgraceful,' observed Macassar. His further remarks were lost in the arrival of others. Among them were those two inveterate old summit-scavengers, Geordie and Wull.

'Awfy wet day,' volunteered Geordie.

'Could dae wi the sun,' suggested Wull.

And of course Evergreen himself, leading battalions of the young, his bald head gleaming with drizzle and pleasure, his twelve cards twinkling. About him dangled also multicoloured buttons, symbols of the various groups of sub-Munros he had conquered and reconquered throughout the four and a half countries of the British Isles.

We extricated ourselves, put Lochaber No More back in the rucksack and steamed on. 'Keep it for the top,' advised the Doctor.

At the top, there was some delay. The battalions had to be mustered, the flock folded and stragglers accounted for. Number 76 had lost his baby, No. 112 his Low G. But it was a gallant throng. Banners dipped determinedly.

An elbow nudged me, hard. It was Geordie, offering a can of Export. 'Aye, doon wi it,' urged Wull, holding two. We quaffed. The Doctor was about to open our supercharged Sister McVittie: but the ceremony had begun.

Cries for silence. Banners dipped. The Rev. Zoar McKinley McSigh was balanced on the cairn and about to address us.

'My friends, this is a Happy Occasion. We have taken a rest from our Everyday Toil, and are gathered here together in the Clear Upper Air . . .'

Geordie, beside me, nodded and wiped froth into his moustache; drizzle beaded his sweating brow. Zero then elaborated the parallels with the Spiritual Ascent – the steepness, the backslidings, the mists, the rewards of perseverance. We wondered how soon he would come to the wine. Quite soon.

'And now we have reached this top. This Earthly Top; that is yet, friends, also a Higher Top. And we shall celebrate that Higher Top shortly, with all our hearts. But before celebrating that Higher Top, let us pause, and celebrate this Earthly Top. In an earthly way: for have we not reached here, friends, by an Earthly Way?' Geordie nodded. Wull drank noisily behind him; too precipitate – steel spectacles turned and frowned.

'Let us celebrate this Earthly Top in an Earthly Way, in the

customary manner, before we go on, before we celebrate our greater ascent. Let us drink a toast to the friendly earth and stones that have helped us up, so far, so very far – though not, friends, far enough.’ Geordie clouted my ribs again – ‘Man, he gies ye an awfy thirst, ken,’ he whispered hoarsely, ‘ditherin-datherin awa like yon.’ But the Rev. Zoar signalled down to his elders. Furtive rustling of brown paper behind the cairn.

‘Let us therefore drink a toast. Some may wish water, fine burn water, others the juice of fruits, others, others’ – he hesitated – ‘others may be forgiven, perhaps, a mouthful of weak, weak, medicinal wine, for such an occasion, for such an occasion. O, it is a weakness, a failing of the flesh, for the flesh is weak in climbing a mountain; it is like embrocation for the stiffness or plaster for the blisters, on a mountain . . . . A weakness, a failing, but’ – (he was clearly anxious to get on with the experiment) – ‘in-human-sympathy-with-those-before-us-who-sought, amidst-all-difficulties-of-stress-and-storm, these-heights-of-our-earthly-kingdom, we-will-celebrate, each-in-his-own-way, our-vouchsafed-and-happy-arrival-here.’

He bent down and was handed a large cup(!) by a frozen-faced elder. It appeared remarkably full. It winked over the brim as he stood erect. He raised it to his lips. A hundred other cups, glasses, flasks and bottles of coke were raised also.

‘To our Bonnie Caledonian Hills and our climb beyond them to greater and more blessed Heights . . . .’

He downed it. All downed it. Very felicitous. We were moved. The Apprentice ventured not a joke. We were all brought up in good kirk-fearing households. And old Zero was so excellent a man.

He was also a thirsty one. His mouthful drained his cup. He looked surprised. The wine – even under the resolute supervision of Sister McVittie – affected him severely. He was quite unused to alcohol. He coughed, sneezed, grew red and watery-eyed. He swayed, and was helped down. Great applause, rapturous from the like of Geordie and Wull and Macassar, dubiously tight-lipped from the umbrella’d and goloshed throng.

Buzz of conversation. Then a psalm began.

Having no book, the Doctor hauled out our bottle. He unscrewed it and offered it to Geordie and Wull. They read the label, glanced at each other, and shook their heads. The Doctor winked and grinned broadly, poured some into a plastic glass and handed it to Geordie. Geordie tasted it, blinked, and handed it to Wull. Wull sipped it, twice, and handed it back.

‘Good, eh?’ asked the Doctor, pouring some out for us. ‘Sixteen years old, 100° proof, *and* the best!’

‘No bad,’ said Geordie; ‘but no like whisky, mind.’

'Ay, whisky'd be the thing,' agreed Wull. 'Gey cauld here the now.'

We stared uncomprehendingly at their lack of taste. The Doctor shrugged, and swigged his glass.

'Grooogh!' He spat it out. 'Wine; damned medicinal wine! Evergreen's damned medicinal wine!' We all spat in sympathy, upsetting the damp-leaved psalmists about us.

'Some swine's switched bottles!' choked the Doctor. But his rage, and the countering belligerence of our shocked and hitherto tumultuous neighbours, were lost in a growing tumult.

The psalm had ended. The crowd pushed forward. The Rev. McSigh, clutching his cup, refilled and respilling, was endeavouring to climb back up his cairn. Two elders were trying to assist him, three to restrain him. On hands and knees he reached the top. He was excited and flushed. He perilously straightened and stood, swaying. Then he began to bellow.

It was a rousing sermon, graphically if unconventionally illustrated. More of Paisley than Chalmers. Much was in Gaelic.

McSigh was above and due west of us; it was a westerly wind. We sniffed . . .

'Lochaber No More, by the Devil!' hissed the Doctor. 'He's been drinking our bottle!'

I glimpsed Macassar a little way along, gold teeth filling his whiskers, cigar in hand, gazing happily. It had been him; while we were distracted by Geordie and Wull and Evergreen . . .

A rousing sermon; but the preacher was profoundly drunk. One hundred proof, 16 years old . . . We listened and watched admiringly. He maintained precarious balance, on both cairn and theology. The congregation stood enthralled. Never had flames roared brighter. Calvin stoked furiously, Knox brought more faggots. Heavens! Another gulp from the cup . . .

The Doctor was about to scramble up and snatch it, risking unseemly altercation; when further fruits of error, rewards of Satan, tumbled to earth. A body of police, waterproofed, radio'd and ominously bulging, pushed amongst us.

The Inspector – our old friend McHaig – seized the Doctor. 'Ah, thank heaven, it's yourself, Doctor: what is going on here, now?'

A very puzzled man. We explained. He stopped breathing. Then he stepped back, slapped his thigh and began to curse, most frightfully and unsuitably. Our black-coated neighbours, breathless in their turn, white with horror, turned and engulfed him. One furious lady shook him, another slapped off his cap, another hit him quite hard with her umbrella.

Violence breeds violence. His men breathed deeply, felt under their raincoats, bayed, and likewise surged forward, grabbing most ungently. A regular brawl developed. We saw the helpless Evergreen, betrayed by the False One, delivered to judgement; his glittering badges proclaimed him ringleader. The Inspector ran about trying to call off his keepers of the peace. Scuffles, cries. We began to imagine a CS edge to the westerly drifts of Lochaber No More. Above us, the sermon continued, a uniformed interrupter being disposed of by an accurate kick.

Eventually the Inspector, with the Apprentice's rather too eager help, drove his men out of the fray. Order was more or less restored. Silence fell.

We all looked up. The cairn was bare. No preacher.

He was lying flat beside it. Two elders lay beside him. Uproar again. Hysterics. The Doctor hurried forward. He knelt by the victims, undid collars, felt pulses, listened to chests.

We saw, with relief, the bodies stir, and sit up. They rubbed eyes and groaned. Two fell back and began to snore. The Rev. McSigh, a man of steel, accepted a hand and was helped up. The Doctor, ever sagacious, leapt on the cairn. He called for silence. He explained that Excitement, due to the unfortunate error of our gallant police – who were looking for . . . for burglars (unlikely, we thought) – that Excitement had caused Mr McSigh to lose his balance. The fall had stunned him. But no injury whatever; perfectly fit. Though naturally he might be somewhat giddy for a while, with a headache and perhaps difficulty in communication for an hour or two. And the elders? Ah, the elders had also suffered from Excitement, but they were older men, and might take a little longer to regain their feet; but nothing serious, nothing at all. Plenty of willing hands. Let us continue with the service. Not spoil so happy an occasion. Another psalm. Eighty-four? To *Martyrdom*? Let our good friends the police join in . . .

Cheers, clapping. Singing. The Doctor rejoined us through an accolade of black gloves.

'Tight as owls,' he said, 'all three of 'em. The elders sooked the bottle behind his back. Old devils. Hardly any left. Let's go and finish it.'

A hand tapped the Doctor's shoulder. Inspector McHaig. Sad and embarrassed. He drank the proffered glass without a word. Then, nervously, he explained why he had been summoned.

'A damned old fool' – a Major Pigstrap (the name sounded like that, but surely could not be) – had rung him up excitedly. Pigstrap lived just outside Balqueenie and had been taking exercise from his car, near the track up the glen. He had seen strange motor cars,

vans and buses arrive. From Glasgow. *Glasgow!* Nosey-like, he had investigated further, with dog and walking stick, and had seen troops of people, some with curious bags, some with badges and numbers pinned on them; some in paramilitary uniform and carrying banners. All disappearing up into the mist. Some secret rendezvous. Many young, many older – old enough to know better, obviously there to lead them on, furtive, desperate-looking dark-clad buttoned-up people, grim-faced, determined – Real Reds they must be, Fanatics. And they were carrying, and trying to hide from him, brown paper parcels that looked like bottles – inflammable liquid? Petrol bombs! That's what they would be! *Petrol Bombs!* And he had heard bagpipes – *Nationalists* there as well. He had asked a youth what was going on: the answer was sinister – 'A special occasion. Arranged for No. 293. *The Big Event.*' Secret, you see. Code. Cells. Pigstrap had crescendo'd by describing it, through foam, as an armed meeting of activist extremists who would afterwards descend on the, on the . . . . McHaig looked grave. 'You ken WHO's staying there the now . . . .'

The Inspector wiped his brow in anguish. It had *seemed* so genuine. Why, as they had puffed up – too misty for helicopters – they even heard singing. Impassioned singing. The SAS man attached to them (McHaig peered anxiously around) had unhesitatingly identified Old Hundredth as the Internationale . . . . 'Ye cannae blame the lads, like . . . .'

Nothing would happen, we reassured him. Errors were too evenly distributed. He came down the hill with us, his men limping behind. He ignored the ribald staggerers to right and left. He ignored the obviously unsuitable would-be drivers singing on the road beneath. He ignored the piper on the bonnet, hugging his recovered low G. It was enough to have avoided arresting the Rev. Zoar McKinley McSigh, M.A., B.D., for being drunk and disorderly and/or inciting to riot and/or civil disobedience and/or armed insurrection on the summit of Càrn an t-Sagairt Mór at 13.15 hrs on the 11th October. nineteen hundred and whatever . . . . A narrow escape. He pressed both the Doctor's hands silently as he left. From high above came wafts of (devoutly-led) thanksgiving.

The Doctor let the clutch in, rather cautiously. In the back seat, the Apprentice and I passed between us the much-diminished but authentic bottle of Lochaber No More. We had left Sister McVittie behind in the ditch. We lay back, content.

The Doctor swerved skilfully round an errant sheep.

'Quite an occasion,' he said.



## THOUGHTS OF A MIDDLE-AGED GENTLEMAN<sup>1</sup> – on walking from Ardvourlie to Mangersta<sup>2</sup>

MY OLD grey canvas rucksack fits its worn wooden frame tightly. It seems to be getting heavier. The sky is cold and grey. Dogs bark and leap with anticipated pleasure. The Berber<sup>3</sup> is far ahead and almost out of sight. Our boots ooze in and come out with sucking noises.

It is good to be walking into the hills again, these winter hills of Harris, bare rock and brown heather, ancient lichens on ancient stones. The burns are in spate after the long wet winter of rains and snows. Stepping-stones are covered.

The rhythms of middle-age are slower. Flashed memories of youth and climbs and old companions. Gasping talk with new companions. The joy of lungs filled with island air. Stags roar. Deer run. Grouse rise as we zig-zag slowly to the bealach. The Berber is silhouetted on the skyline, his djibbah flowing in the keen wind. Dogs run ahead panting.

Loch Chleister lies below the pass, in a wild corrie. Beyond are the jagged hills of Harris, crags and snow-topped summits. We are alone in this place with the deer and the grouse. There is no path ahead, only the rough moor seamed with peat-hags and a long descent, stumbling, sliding, squelching into the bogs. There is no glint of water below to suggest the fiord of Loch Resort, only layers

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*Footnotes :*

1. – Gentlemen who reach middle age prefer to remain anonymous.
2. – Ardvourlie lies on Loch Seaforth in Harris. Mangersta is on the west coast of Lewis. A path from Ardvourlie goes by the south end of Loch Langavat and over a bealach to Loch Chleister. From Loch Chleister we followed the Amhuinn a Chlair Bhig to Kinlochresort and from there by the north shore of Loch Resort to a point almost directly north of Strone Ulladale (Creag an Fhithick on the one-inch map). The going from here to Loch Tamanavay is very rough and in mist the route is difficult. From the head of Loch Tamanavay (Loch Cheann Chuisil) we ascended by the river (Amhuinn Cheann Chuisil) to the Bealach Raonasgail. A path materialises near the top of the pass and descends to Loch Raonasgail and Loch Mor na Cliche. From here one goes west under the north cliffs of Mealisval to a last bealach and a descent to the Lewis coast. The total distance is approximately thirty miles.  
A more sporting start could be made from the Tarbert-Stornoway road where it crosses the Maarug River. From here it is an exhilarating short ascent to the summit of The Clisham and its high ridge which takes in Mulla-fo-dheas, Mulla-fo-thuath and Mullach an Langa before the descent to Loch Langavat.
3. – The characters are as fictitious as middle age. The Berber lit the fires. The poet told us stories. The engineer lit the stove and suggested ways of fording rivers. The gentleman nodded.

of hills and hidden folds. Suddenly we are at an ancient beehive house by the river, long unvisited. Dead. Quiet. The poet stops to write a verse. The Berber smokes a cigarette. The engineer is ready to light the stove but is persuaded to continue another mile to the loch. A pause to rest sacks and backs. Round a corner of the river are the quiet green meadows of Kinlochresort and Luachair and the seemingly summer cottages, the head of the fiord, a place to stop and light driftwood and brew tea and warm feet. A place to stop and stare and wonder and be glad. A place dominated by the profile of Strone Ulladale and by the walled west entrance of Loch Resort from the Atlantic. There is a cold stillness here and a clear pale sky with fast clouds. But we must not yet stop, shedding our sacks, but go always a little further for tomorrow will be longer. And so we scramble westwards along the north shore against the setting sun. The old man plods, the young men run before, and at the end of day we reach a point opposite Strone Ulladale with light enough to pitch tents and light fire and gather mussels for supper in the cold night air. The moon shines bright. A seal watches. The dogs lie tired. We sleep and sleep as the snow showers fall on the high hills.

At morning light the air is icy. We warm our hands at a breakfast fire and sup our muesli and take down our tents and begin the long Sabbath walk against the northerly wind. Hail squalls sting our eyes. We tighten our hoods as we lean into the rough wind. The Berber leaps ahead. The way is hard between crags and round lochans and across bogs. The gentleman meditates on middle age. At Tamnaway a keeper's cottage for summer people gives shelter for a brew in a squall and time to read the magazines left by summer ladies.

The going is easier now, firmer, rockier round the head of the loch and onward ever upward on the long slow climb to the Bealach Raonasgail, each of us wrapped in silent separate meditation. The fierce wind numbs our hands and feet. Near the top of the pass a rough path materialises to take us down into the glen, a most impressive basin encircled by rocky faces. Hail showers increase in frequency as we pass under the great north-east face of Mealisval, almost forced by its steepness into Loch Mór na Cliche, and through a field of gigantic boulders to the last bealach.

Beyond the bealach lies the whole of Lewis and the broad Atlantic, raging in a wild northerly gale. The descent to Mangersta Bay seems long and slow and stumbling. Even the dogs are tired. Every peat-hag seems a technical problem, slimy and impossible. The young men gently exhort their aged companion. The poet speaks comforting words. And so we reach the white sands of Mangersta and the village tucked behind the cliffs. And a very warm welcome and tea and food and music, but no dancing. (On the Sabbath!).

## KINLOCH

Did you dwell here with me  
in this beehive of placed stones?  
But for the summers  
while the cattle were heavy.

Were these our barley-rigs  
from high rock to shore rock:  
did we pile these cairns  
from deep cleared furrows?

Did you bait my line, love,  
at the head of the steep loch?  
Strone Ulladale my bearing  
to the tuskfish of winters.

Will we make fire now?  
Set it this ebb-tide  
to the high-water strewings  
of packets and canisters.

IAN STEPHEN.

## I WILL FIND A MOUNTAIN

I will find a mountain here or there  
To act as beacons in the grey  
Of civilisation, a brightness in their air  
Of gloom.

I would walk into blue day  
Above the cold clouds and red strife of men.

It is there we become whole  
– and young again.

HAMISH M. BROWN.

## THE SAME OLD STORY

from John Hinde

I HAVE been delving in the files of the *Inverness Courier* and came across two interesting accounts of early accidents in Lochaber. They are both described under similar headings of 'Melancholy Occurrence.'

12th October, 1836.

Samuel Macdonell of Fort William – 'a fine young man of about twenty years of age' who had 'been frequently upon the hill' – set off for the summit of Ben Nevis accompanied by two young gentlemen from the South. 'They scaled the gigantic precipices with comparative ease, and having satiated themselves with the magnificent prospect from the summit prepared to descend.' On the way back . . .

'by the time they returned to the point opposite the house of Glen Nevis, it was six o'clock, and the evening was fast setting in upon them. At this place the party had separated, one being in advance of Mr Macdonell, and the other a little behind him. The grass was wet and slippery, and Mr Macdonell amused himself by sliding down parts of the hill to outstrip his more cautious companions. The latter remonstrated with him on the danger to which he exposed himself by such a practice, but he persisted, till at length, the unhappy youth lost the power of stopping himself, and his foot coming in contact with a stone, he was precipitated headlong down a deep ravine. The gentleman in the rear hurried to where he lay, and found him weltering in blood and quite insensible. He lifted him from the ground and carried him to a spot less dangerous in appearance; and then proceeded onwards in search of his companion, whom he overtook at a short distance. He briefly described the melancholy accident that had occurred, and directed him to return back to the place, while he himself made his way to Glen Nevis to procure assistance. About an hour elapsed before he got there, but this being accomplished not a moment was lost in obtaining torch-lights and individuals anxious and ready to render what aid was in their power. Here, however, a most painful cause of delay took place: the young man, not knowing the local bearings of the hill, and being otherwise confused and shocked with what he had witnessed, could not recollect the exact spot where he left his companions – he wandered about in quest of them, imagining every fresh turn or ascent would lead them to the fatal place; and thus four hours were spent in the fruitless and heart-sickening search. At last one of the men heard a faint cry, which the shepherds at first thought was that

of a lamb, but which proved to be the moaning of the second of the party, who was lying utterly exhausted, and in danger of perishing from cold and fatigue. He had also been unable to find the spot where their unfortunate young friend lay. Some of the party carried this gentleman to Glen Nevis, where restoratives were promptly administered, and he again revived. A fresh party, now set out to join those already on the hill, and after a long and anxious search of several hours they discovered the body of Mr Macdonell in the place to which it had been carried by his companion, but every trace of life had fled.'

1st September, 1847.

Two English tourists (45 and 23) left the steamer *Culloden* at Ballachulish and walked up Glencoe to Altnafeadh, in stormy weather with high wind and sleety showers. At Altnafeadh they took a piece of oatcake and a glass and a half of whisky – all that this 'humble change-house' could provide, and their only refreshment since breakfasting on board at an early hour. They rested for one hour and crossed the Devil's Staircase to Kinlochleven. They were seen five miles from Altnafeadh between 5 and 6 in the evening, tired and very wet.

They crossed the Leven Bridge at Kinloch and met a girl who pointed out the way to Fort William, which was then a further twelve miles, by the old Military Road. 'They were not seen in life afterwards.'

After walking a total of twenty-two miles, with nine miles still to go, they died three miles beyond Kinlochleven. Their bodies, with knapsacks on their backs, were found lying close together by two shepherds, beside the road, seemingly asleep. Near the bodies were found an umbrella, a walking-stick and a small pocket spirit flask, empty. The gentlemen had become exhausted by fatigue and hunger, benumbed by cold and wet, and benighted they slept 'the sleep of death' where their bodies were found.

Local worthies from Kinloch carefully removed the bodies to the small inn at Larachmore, from whence they were taken to Fort William. They were medically inspected in the presence of the Sheriff, and the doctors agreed that no marks of violence could be found.

'There seems no reasonable ground for doubting, that, exhausted with their long and fatiguing journey on foot, drenched with rain, having encountered the cold blasts of the wild regions through which they passed, and forded deep and rapid mountain streams, the weary travellers at length sat down by the wayside to rest, and fell asleep, to wake no more. Their fate should prove a warning to our southern tourists, many of whom rejoicing in their strength, ascend high mountains and attempt long journeys through unfrequented

by-roads, without guides, without clothing suitable to the country and climate, and in the distressing case we have been recording, without adequate sustenance.'

Melancholy Occurrences indeed, and sadly far from the last such.

## NOWHERE TO FALL BUT OFF

By John Grieve

NOT long ago I was front pointing down an ice slope in Glencoe with the very battered body of a young girl tucked under one arm. When I reached the path below I met an old friend introducing a clutch of young would-be climbers to the hills. After dumping my load at the side of the path the crack was of climbing conditions and the weather. It was only when I noticed a white faced lad steeling himself to look down at my pathetic bundle that I began to wonder about the game I was mixed up in.

My affair with the effects of gravity on the mountaineer in Scotland has come of age, tempting me to indulge myself in some general ramblings connected with that bit of climbing that comes after having fallen, jumped, been pushed, slipped, knocked off, or for any other reason parted company with the mountain in a vertical, or nearly vertical, situation. Twenty-one years ago Fred, two alpenstocks, a camera and me were to be found at what later knowledge tells me was halfway up Number Three (or perhaps it was Four) Gully on Ben Nevis. Fred and camera loomed out of the mist to record our first encounter with steep snow. When developed the snap showed a matt white empty snow slope. I was already involved in that bit of mountaineering previously mentioned. Having had the presence of mind to throw away the alpenstock I was reduced to using my fingernails in a vain attempt to arrest the mad slide into probable oblivion. Fred later confessed that he was a bit peeved at being left alone with the camera, listening to the jangle of electrical conduit ice pegs getting fainter as I accelerated towards the lochan which gaped like some evil eye far below. Gravity lost on that occasion and I came to a halt short of Cyclops and also of my finger nails but surprised to find myself still in the land of the living. Fools rush down. Since then the Ben has dealt me crueller blows.

A decade later some Squirrels, tired of polishing their nuts in a rain-lashed Drey decided to while away the time writing a play about the current climbing scene in Glencoe. Bugs and Ian Rowe flashed their caustic pens and recast Allen Fyffe as 'Wee Dubh

Lochan Balding' after his big crag and scanty hair. In the year previous to this four of my friends had been killed climbing with me. My name in the new work was sheepishly revealed by Kenny Spence as 'Rentokill.' Bugs never made it either. I had a vision of him waiting below the summit of some North American peak slowly losing his temper with a procrastinating partner and stamping his way right through the cornice. But perhaps it was not like that at all.

Little did Bugs and Co. know at the time but their notion of murder on the mountain was not a unique idea. Several years later I discovered that the idea must have occurred to somebody else. When I returned from The Italian Climb the sole survivor of a rope of four, victims of one of Ben Nevis's murderous avalanches, I was summoned to the Police Office in Kinlochleven and suffered an intense grilling lasting for hours by two detectives who did not know the difference between crampons and tampons. They asked the same, to me stupid, questions time after time. I now know that Tom Patey, highly distraught with the death of Jim MacArtney, contacted the Procurator Fiscal at Fort William and suggested that more than a simple accident had taken place. Tom could not accept that I had survived and Jim had not. In his tribute to Jim in the *Journal* he wrote, 'most of us find the whole thing difficult to accept' (*S.M.C.J.*, 1970, *xxix*, 331). What Tom really thought had taken place I do not know.

The reason for relating this episode is to help illustrate a common reaction shown by survivors of fatal climbing accidents. Part of what Tom could not stomach was witnessing my return to the C.I.C. hut in what a lot of people might have construed as good spirits. My mind had been on the rack the whole time I was stranded on Tower Ridge. The enormity of the loss had filled my head for twenty-four hours. Now, having reached safety, I was only certain of two things. Our sport was a ridiculous criminal pastime and I was bloody well glad to be alive. Amidst the sheer anger at the stupid waste of three great friends must have been mixed a little euphoria. When the thunder of the avalanche had died away and the echo of my thin shouts had returned leaving me alone on a clean swept snow face I had made a promise, I would never climb again. Three weeks later I took a climbing course up the second winter ascent of Deep Gash Gully.

The Nevis accident was just one incident in a disastrous chain of climbing deaths that wiped out over a dozen friends in a short time and has continued at a trickle ever since. The impact gets less and less and the peripheral are hardly noticed by their absence. If Mike Burke or Nick Escourt walked into the Clachaig one night I don't think I would bat an eyelid. Climbing deaths have become an acceptable part of the game. The statistically minded rate the



chances of returning from a major Himalayan trip at ten to one. It's all in the game. The biggest shock of all was to hear about Ian Clough over the radio. Not being there made it seem even worse, leading me to wonder if direct involvement in a disaster or accident develops its own form of anaesthesia.

I have rambled too far. My intention was to sneak a sideways glance at the glorious men of the rescue brigades who tidy things up after Gravity, the big G, has won its quick fight. This takes me back to where I started. When first involved in this macabre recovery service the lack of decorum in handling the bundle I dumped on the pathway would have been born of enforced bravado, an attempt to make the task more bearable. Over the years this has been replaced by sheer indifference, the simple result of doing something too often, and I am sad to say at times it is even enjoyable. Ben Nevis was the venue for my earliest experiences of mountain rescue and I remember being somewhat disturbed at seeing one of the team sat on a stretchered corpse eating his piece. Not long after I saw the same man sat on a corpse eating his seat's piece. The process had begun.

Never having tried to analyse my motives for climbing or not climbing mountains but merely accepting that I sometimes enjoy doing it, I am reluctant to try and find deep reasons for being a member of a rescue team. As a climber living in an area that obviously needs a rescue service it is part of the natural scheme of things to be part of it. This criterion used to judge the motives of mountain rescuers should be applied to teams rather than individuals. If there is a frequent occurrence of genuine mountaineering accidents in an area the criterion applies and motives are what I would term as healthy. Applying this yardstick a quick study of the accident reports would turn up several rescue teams whose motives might be termed unhealthy. My own reasons for wanting to be pulled out of bed on a foul winter's night to go bashing round the Buachaille looking for someone so laden with survival gear that Curved Ridge becomes a two-day affair are simple. They have nothing to do with public spirit or humanity. I simply enjoy doing it. What can be said is that the motives of the Glencoe Team as a whole are well founded in that they provide a necessary service with much skill and little fuss. In several other areas an unnecessary service is provided with great fuss and little skill.

Mountain Rescue has become a growth industry developing into a sport in its own right with teams performing vast and varied practices in areas where no real need exists. You can even pay your money and turn up at Glenmore Lodge and learn about it. They make you dig a hole in the snow and sleep in it, a very useful thing when tracking down missing university climbing club members on three-day ascents of Broad Gully. The climbing fraternity tend to



Devil's Ridge, Mamores

*Photo: Donald J. Bennet*



The Scur of Eigg

*Photo: Hamish M. Brown*

view this badge and bullshit brigade with at least gentle derision. Dutton's article 'A Good Clean Break' says it all. The Pitfoulie Mountain Rescue Team is a sort of club that comes out every weekend to practice if the weather is good. As a general rule the more Landrovers, dogs and most of all badges, a rescue team sports the less useful they are likely to be and the more I would suspect their reasons for existing. This view is not just born out of elitism. For a short time I made the mistake of appearing as a member of the Mountain Rescue Committee for Scotland and experienced at first hand the silly bickerings of ego tripping leaders of obscure teams demanding equal status with the few areas that positively need a rescue service. One such fellow was giving a list of the two call-outs his fine body of men had dealt with that year. One involved helping the police catch an escaped lunatic and the other was a daring rescue of a yellow flashing road sign from a golf course in central Scotland. The lunatic may have been flashing as well for all I know. Any incidents outside the regular climbing areas in the Highlands and Islands could be properly dealt with by the police having a list of local people who could turn out for the occasional search on a very loose basis. I would have thought that the very name Tweed Valley Mountain Rescue Team was a bit of a joke. Perhaps my jaundiced eye sweeps too far.

Harold Drasdo in his essay 'Margins of Safety' lists several groups of climbers who seek gratification without risk and identifies the 'obsessive rescuer' who does not climb because he is obliged to be fit and ready at all times. A friend of mine came across one of this not so rare breed at a Search and Rescue Dog Course at the Kingshouse. He refused a drink on the grounds that he was liable to be called out at any time. He had shown the good lord Bacchus the back door in order to protect his efficiency as a canine rescuer. Many people could vouch that the Glencoe Mountain Rescue Team adopt a different approach.

In Scotland the police maintain that they have a remit to safeguard life and this extends to people in trouble on the hills. The Scottish Office support this view and will only aid rescue through the Police Committees, in effect placing all responsibility in the hands of the chief police officer of each constabulary. Why things should be different in the Lifeboat and Fire services they will not say. The fact remains the police have overall control of mountain rescue in this country. The brunt of rescues in Scotland is born by teams in an area served by the Northern Constabulary whose Chief, Donald Henderson, has the right attitude to mountain rescue. He views it as the job of local rescue teams with the police giving all their help at the roadside and with the limited finance available. The system works very well indeed. In other police areas involvement or I would say interference with the sharp end of rescues is rife. If you

happen to come to grief on Ben Cruachan the chances are you will be attended by a bunch of constables from Dumbarton who leap from red and white vans all dressed in uniforms cloned from the pages of a Tiso catalogue. It's a long way from Dumbarton but only a half hour from Glencoe. Boundaries and Bureaucrats get in the way. I do not believe that the police usually have the experience, skill and local knowledge that are vital in carrying out a quick and efficient rescue operation. Local teams are crying out for finance yet Strathclyde Police can afford to equip, train, pay overtime and transport inexperienced policemen to areas where local people would do the job for almost nothing. Again motives are suspect. It might look good on the recruiting posters and do wonders for their public image but I cannot see that it helps anyone stranded on an Argyll hillside.

The involvement of a rescue team should start and end with a mishap. If there is a need for accident prevention or safety promotions somebody else should fulfil it. We constantly hear team spokesmen or more often desk bound policemen pontificating about causes of accidents. The right of anyone to go into the hills and kill himself in the name of his sport must be safeguarded. In Glencoe a policy of no criticism has, without discussion, developed over the years. The only exception would be when young lives are placed in danger by the bad leadership of one of the more irresponsible character building brigade.

In the early days of the Club a fall on a difficult mountain resulted in telegrams to Glasgow and Edinburgh and a group of Members catching the train north and using their skills and equipment to perform the rescue operation. This and self-help rescue by the casualty's own party can be identified as a particular type of involvement. It is a basic response to a call for help by a companion or fellow traveller. Apart from this there are the local shepherds and keepers who throughout the century have gone on the hill with no specialist knowledge other than a great ability to move around their own bit of country, and who turn out for reasons of simple humanity to help a stranger in trouble. Today in Glencoe these two types of people still exist and work side by side surrounded by modern gear, assisted by radios and helped more and more by helicopters. In some cases they have fused together but the basic motives are still there. The climbers live in the area now and do not have to catch the train north and the local shepherds and forestry workers wear crampons and use short axes. Some are locally born climbers and the fusion is complete. Somehow I feel that this is the way it should be.



## A BRIDGE FOR TROUBLED WATERS

By Philip Gribbon

I WAS the gaffer idling on the buttress. A mate was drilling holes on the line of planks. The heavies were carrying masonry on to the pier, and a paddling fisherman was tossing wet stones on the bank.

A clutch of oystercatchers came a-pleeking up the river, and two deer, with their antlers held high, struck across the moss in their bewilderment.

I turned with my hammer to thump the nails into the masticky sandwich of planks that was shaping into a soft bed for the cables. I was engrossed with a craft on a peaceful morning with the Carnach river murmuring its way towards the sea.

It had been a busy week from the moment that we had stumbled ashore over the wrack on the ebb tide. I was under orders to see that the materials were on site from the hi' heidyin, and that the pits, precise in plan and position, were placed to await his coming. I toiled laden up the track from the shore and mulled over our incapability of transporting sacks of cement and loops of steel across squelchy bogs and furrowed hills. I staggered to the site in a trail of hoof prints. There was a mystery mound under a blue sheet with a smell of cement seeping out to the damp air of dusk. Wild garrons, panniered with bags had walked their Rough Bounds of Knoydart, and had saved us not only time and effort, but also the disdain of our hi' heidyin: his haulers and packers would never have met his tight timetable.

On an evening flood they arrived phutting up the loch. A familiar silhouette in his flat duncher was bowspritting in the gloaming. In greeting I doffed my Hemingway check cap and tugged my forelock, 'Dr Bennet, Sir.'

I smiled graciously to the Gorrie, C.C., the King of the concrete mixers, and was introduced to a Man from a Trust. I offered a strong arm over the slippery seaweed, but in return I was given a box, heavy with turnbuckle screws, spanners and angle irons, all hiding some unknown delicacies, the essentials for a well-equipped engineer, his techbits over his meakits. Unwittingly a docile sherpa shouldered the DJB box and marched off afar, unaware that only the Injuns lived at Carnoch while the Chiefs dossed at Camusrory, that delectable social centre of the heavenly loch, ping pong tables, beds an' all. So deep in the dusk the master builders sat on the steps, waiting long for their supper, waiting to be sure that a muttering minion returned the box and that there would be a breakfast ahead on the big day.

At the edge of the pit, the duo of poised heidyins made instant and independent proposals on how it should be done; a stuffing of claggy boiled brain oozes, aggravated with gravels sized in abstract ratios, pummelled, pomandered and belted with splatting boulders. I, a progenitor of the pits, found it impossible not to throw learned irrelevancies into an intellectual creativity that involved filling a hole with concrete. Everyone was an expert, self-styled, but a mere gaffer should have known that the engineers were stuck together on a constructional high that didn't tolerate flippant remarks. I dropped rank down to the mixers, with their buckets, by their sand-piles, leaning on their shovels, joyfully waiting in the rain for a decision, any decision, from the heidyins.

A plastic sheet liner to staunch the water seeping out of the walls sank ceremoniously to the bottom of the pit under the first gooey splodges of the mix. Buckets of sand rattled across the aerial twin wireway spanning the river whose level was rising quickly towards the bottom wire. As wet workers, skilled in pacing a day's effort, drifted off for their lunch, the management mumbled disparagingly about those whose enthusiasm for sustained work left something to be desired. Diplomatically I agreed, but notwithstanding nonetheless and all that, where was their lunch? Oh, they weren't having any! Yes, they'd like a cup of tea, thanks. It was raining heavily.

We sidled back like wet vermin nailed on wires to the pit on the far bank to find a glutinous dark hole spurting with peaty water. Some frantic bailing lowered the level by a fraction. Gorrie was telling what had to be done to Bennet, who was suggesting his alternative strategy and instructing Gribbon how to do it, thus leaving him in his turn no option but to query both of them: a discordant triumvirate professing and proffering academic gems and quirks of fantasy as the chill waters lapped round their ankles. The mixing shift wielded their shovels at full speed, and batches of concrete streamed inside the pit. The two anchor beams were plunged downwards, striking a finis, git the buggers in, twist 'em, turn 'em, tap 'em. Admiration beamed from faces seamed with riverlets, while the swollen stream poured into the flood channel, breaching a protective dam, encircling the main pier, taking away in a rushing swirl both boards and tools, and threatening to drown the mix in vortices curling to the sea. Work was abandoned; the heidyins agreed to allow the soaked workers to return to their cold damp tents. Slow and cautious it was, clipped to the top wire and protected by safety ropes, spanning the sprung cables and swinging like marionettes, with the waves tearing, buffeting and sucking like a writhing nest of slavering kelpies waiting for their victims.

Today all was at peace. I was hypnotised by the swirl of silky water and watched the ripples play a pattern on the stones, but in



the corner of my mind there was an alien feeling to the quiet valley. Two walkers and a dog were moving purposefully up the far bank of the river. On coming closer I recognised the well-kent stravaiging guardian of the wilderness, with a bunnet, a sweep of the kilt, a whip of a fishing rod and a stab of a black beard giving him away. Whiffs of controversy had become reality. This was no visit of homage: here was a bee's knees, bearding a lion in the den an' all that. His companion was wiry and elfish, unknown, behind dark glasses and beneath a keel-up deerstalker. Cor, I thought, it's our *bete noire*, the slayer of bridges and his dog come to toast us to shreds.

We turned to the work, watching our visitors out of the back of our heads. They reached the bridge site and their cameras snapped for evidence. We gave them a quick flash. Spurning the wires they paddled a ford to the feet of a startled Man from a Trust returning from a nap at the camp in the ruins of the clachan of Carnoch. They wrung their fingers in friendship and their socks from necessity and ambled towards our apprehensive dithering work crew. Propping a cromach and taking care not to snag a rod they sat down at a discrete distance for their *al fresco* lunch. Not being able to endure a sudden strain in my cold shoulder, I walked over with conscious nonchalance. The wee dog was slurping his chunky bits out of a plastic dish.

'Hullo, Phil, how are you?' We could be anywhere but where we were.

'Fine,' I answered, non-committal, giving nothing away. We passed a few pleasantries, then he played an ace.

'This is Christopher Brasher.'

'Who? Oh, I know.' I was overwhelmed with confusion, tongue-tied and caught in full view conniving in man's nefarious anti-wilderness activities by the media's foremost observer. 'Pleased to meet you.'

'Care for a dram?' he asked, pouring out a good measure from his hip flask.

It was an offer I couldn't refuse, no way.

'Cheers, Sandy,' a gulp of drambuie, 'an' may your boots never get wet.'

Back at the bridge, with the people's friend padding on my heels, I turned to a poised pencil.

'Yes, it's a bridge repair not a rebuild, an' sure, there's been objections, as you know well enough. Everyone has a right to his opinions an' no one would deny that, but it's those who write articles about remote areas, an' publish 'em, an' write guide books, well, I'm agin them. You've seen what Big Walks has done for Carnmore, with distances, times, an' all, an' you better than most

know all about that 'cos you called it the Sanctuary and tried to hide where it was in your articles. If only people would keep quiet about what they go an' do. A wilderness is where no one goes 'cos he's never been told about it, like . . . well, y' know.' I was mesmerised, a mere pawn, rabbiting on, looking for a diversion.

It came on the bank with a barking dog at heel, brisk and authoritative, in sweater and green wellies, the Factor of the Estate, to see his bridge on his river. What a perfect coincidence, a more uncannily predestined meeting couldn't have been better arranged even by the' diel hisself. Builder, watcher, tinker, spy . . . and factor. Oh, if only the two heidyins B & G were here we'd have hit the magic number seven at the scene of the crime.

'This is Sandy MacDonald. He knows all about the bridge. I'm only the gaffer.'

I was smiling on the wings, and a lark was singing in the blue sky.

## MEMORIES INSPIRED BY SIBELIUS

### - First movement, Third Symphony -

Switch-flick,  
Back it floods:  
Muttering bass - Sibelius Three  
Strings meander familiar thematic curve  
Circling across towards centre;  
And from memory's stream  
A message flows -  
- Washes me back to Mam Unndalain  
That sunny day's stride to Kinlochquoich -  
- Zig-zag down to lonely 'nam Breac  
Cradled in loving fold of mountain flank.  
Boots in rhythmic tread-stamp  
Downbeat and upbeat on fine, firm path.  
Exultation in blue-skied sunshine,  
In nodding asphodel, in deer's strut  
And ewe's tail-bob-panic,  
In upreared femininity of conquered summit,  
In power of firm body and keenness of sense,  
In width of space - Sibelian space,  
In music, in rhythm, in being there;  
And ultimately because I was there, and still am there  
Then because  
I am here.

JAMES BENSON.

## GIANT

A thousand metres sheer,  
Diamond buttressed, mammoth shouldered,  
Dagger at the stars,  
He shrugs presumptuous climbers off in avalanche  
As stallions switch flies from their flanks,  
And endures perennially battering blizzards.  
Epochs ago when mountains were holy –  
Not playgrounds but temples –  
They named him,  
Those dawn-men who danced in his shadow,  
'Sentinel,' 'Shepherd' and 'Giant.'  
They knew he was old then,  
Even as he was old when Megalithic Man  
Set stones on the moor,  
Aligned to him,  
When sighting setting suns;  
An eternal solstice recorder,  
Recorder of Time itself.

Eternal?

His body is built of sea-snail shells.  
He is a tower of ancient bones  
Folded and piled when continents collided,  
Churning Everests out of abysses.

And he rots at the edges!  
Dissolves by drips from leprous ledges,  
Crumbles like cheese from frost-shattering ridges.

A stone falls from the face,  
Clatters and claps down the screes  
To the well-heads of rivers  
That grind rock on rock  
And roll all their grist to the sea.

... Till the snails grope again where the giant stood,  
Under yellow water, feeling flat, blue mud.

A. J. HASTIE.

## NEW CLIMBS SECTION

**WINTER GRADES** – The question of winter grading, and in particular Grade VI arises again. There is no doubt that Grade VI is now required, see for instance *The Shield* on Ben Nevis in the new Lochaber and Badenoch guide, but we question whether it should be used for existing routes generally given Grade V. Letters, comments, perhaps lists of Grade VI's are all invited. Write NOW before the postage goes up again.

**TIMINGS** – We have received notification of various climbs too late for scrutiny and inclusion. These will appear in next year's *Journal*, but to avoid such delay contributors are reminded that route descriptions (and other MSS) should be submitted by the end of February at the latest.

Material can be sent to the Editor or the New Routes Editor at the addresses shown at the back of the *Journal*.

## SKYE

### SRON NA CICHE, Cioch Upper Buttress—*Ghost Riders*.

C. Dale & S. Cox. 18th May, 1981.

85m. Extremely Severe (E1).

This line is directly behind the Cioch, between *Krugerrand* and *Wallwork's Route*. Follow arching dyke until an obvious handhold can be used to surmount overlap. Gain ledge by long reach and follow wall up leftwards for 10m to obvious ledges leading back right to jammed block recess beneath overhang; belay (5a/b). Gain pinnacle up on right and surmount overhang slightly right of this. Continue to a sloping ledge and move rightward round a corner enabling the arête to be followed directly to the glaciis using cracks and a recess (5b).

### Cioch Buttress—*Acapulco Wall*.

P. Hunter. 9th August, 1980.

120m. Extremely Severe (E2).

This is a direct line 7m left of *Bastinado*. The crux is poorly protected and on the first ascent the second couldn't follow.

Start just right of *Little Gully* climbing a ramp and short wall to a ledge. Gain and climb a short steep crack to large block belay of *Bastinado* (27m). Go left awkwardly until possible to pull right onto very thin crack. Up this and bulge to small ledge (5m left of *Bastinado* crux). Up wall above to niche with overhang. Climb this to tiny spike runner then go rightwards and up wide crack to block belay (35m, 5b/c). Climb slabs and cracks more easily to ledges beneath the Cioch (58m).

### SGURR NAN GILLEAN, Gillean East Buttress

This cliff lies on the lower slopes of Sgùrr nan Gillean directly across the glen from Marsco Buttress. There is a large buttress on the left, with a prominent nose and a broad expanse of slime beneath it, perhaps appropriately called The Snot. The buttress is girdled high up by a broad ledge. On the right is a high angled slab separated from the left buttress by two deep chimneys.

The sun is off the crag early and blade pegs may be required for belays.

—*Cheek of the Devil*. 168m. Hard Very Severe.

S. Drummond & P. Hunter. 10th April, 1980.

Starts at cairn on slabs just left of The Snot. Climb slabs to niche just left of the nose (27m). Pull over niche and up leftwards steeply into blank groove with bulging headwall. From very narrow ledge beneath headwall go right up faint groove to wide ledge and peg belays (27m). Traverse right then up to small V-groove high on the right hand side of the big wall. Up groove to peg belay (37m). A steep wall leads rightwards to arête; then climb round arête and up to superb eyrie (peg runner in place). Climb delicately around arête then up thin crack and walls to the girdling ledge (37m). Finish up short walls and corners (40m).

—*Rat-Trap*.

103m. Very Severe.

S. Drummond & P. Hunter. 3rd May, 1980.

Takes the middle of the wall on the right of the prominent chimneys. Scramble to start at cairn at foot of wall. Up and rightwards to peg belay in niche at foot of ramp/groove system (37m). Follow ramp/grooves to short chimney. Up this to peg belay beneath obvious left slanting crack (26m). Climb this very awkward crack and easier ground above (40m).

—*Opal Creamer*. 85m. Extremely Severe (E1).

S. Drummond & P. Hunter. 4th May, 1980.

Takes a sustained line left of the white streak on the right hand wall. Scramble past *Rat-Trap* to cairn. Climb direct up faint line on rock for 13m, then slightly left to follow narrow zig-zag line to a crack at 33m. Go right, then left, then up to belay under first overlap (45m). Climb overlap on right, move up and past overhang to finish up slabs and *Rat-Trap* (40m).

**GLEN SLIGACHAN, Marsco Buttress**—*April Fools*. 50m. Very Severe.

P. Hunter & C. Lees. 3rd April, 1979.

Takes a more direct line than *Central Buttress* to top wall. Climb short step to crack in left hand side of wall. Up this crack to huge spike belay (22m). Above, move right to arête and then up this until possible to move right onto wall. Up rightwards to *in-situ* peg runner then finish up short wall above (28m).

—*Slow Riser*.

S. Drummond & P. Hunter. 3rd May, 1980. 105m. Hard Very Severe.

Starts right of *Central Buttress* where steep wall and waterfall line are apparent. High up on left hand side of steep wall is a prominent V-groove. Climb directly up to groove by faint crack line. Belay 5m up groove in sentry box (32m). Continue up groove and short wall to top wall (42m). Up vertical fault line in wall to hand traverse which is followed leftward for 10m to arête. Gain crack above and climb it for a metre or so then move left into groove. Up groove and wall then finish as for *April Fools*.

**SGURR ALASDAIR, Coir' a' Ghrunnda Face**—*Oneshotbang*.

C. Higgins. 13th August, 1977.

130m. Very Severe.

Climb the obvious gully/crack immediately to the left of *Con's Cleft*.

## **WATERSTEIN, Neist Point**

Several climbs have been reported in the Waterstein area. The sketch maps and diagrams were received too late to prepare them for this issue and they, together with the route descriptions will be held over till next year.

However, the most spectacular route would appear to be *Supercharger*, a major discovery, described below.

Access is problematical. The options are (i) abseil down the complete length of the route from the summit of An t' Aigeach, (ii) descend steep grass to the north, scramble round bay and wade across two inlets at low water, (iii) by boat in calm weather.

### AN T'AIGEACH, Stallions Head Crag—*Supercharger*.

114m. Extremely Severe (E2).

E. Grindley, C. Grindley, W. Jeffrey & N. Williams. 22nd August, 1981.

Climb crack at left of platform. Gain short groove above, then step left and pull over a small roof. Either continue up groove above or move right and back left, before climbing short corner to stance on left with peg belays (27m, 5b). Move up left, then step right to reach steep corner. Ascend this and pull out at top into an easy groove on right. Follow this and traverse right to large stance (27m, 5a). Ascend steep crack to gain flake line leading up left to a corner below a big stepped roof. Make a hard move right onto the face then continue right and up to right hand end of big roof. Climb overhanging wall and swing left to pass another small roof. Further strenuous climbing leads to a small grassy stance on the left (36m, 5c). From left side of ledge climb an awkward crack. Easier climbing up a broken arête and then grass, leads to the summit of An t' Aigeach (24m, 5a).

## NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

### THE FANNICHS, Sgùrr nan Clach Geala, South East Face

—*First Footing*. 400m. GRADE III.

N. Halls, A. Kimber & R. Townshend. 2nd January, 1982.

The route starts a good deal lower and to the south of *Summit Buttress*. The ground that descends from the bealach between Sgùrr nan Each and Sgùrr nan Clach Geala is bounded on the right by slabs and ledges (often iced). Start beneath the right hand end of the slabs mentioned above and climb a short ice pitch to gain a series of easy angled gullies and open snowfields which are followed, trending gradually right for 225m, making for an obvious icefall in the headwall. Climb the icefall direct (40m) to a belay. Continue ascending into a narrow blind gully (20m), traverse out left to a poor belay (10m). Move up left and into a hidden chimney (30m). Above the chimney continue more easily to reach the southern slopes of the mountain.

## CAIRNGORMS

### SGOR GAOITH, No. 5 (Pinnacle) Buttress—*Resurrection*.

180m. Very Severe.

R. Archbold, W. McKerow, G. Strange & H. Towler. 13th September, 1981.

Climbs the slabs right of *The Slash*. Start right of *The Slash*. Go up and left to belay in gully bed (27m). Climb short chimney on right and move right to rowan sapling at foot of obvious wide crack. Climb crack to belay on ledge (27m). Move right round edge to gain another crack and climb this over bulge. Continue up cracks and grooves to big ledge (42m). Follow close to the edge for a further two pitches to reach easy ground.

(Climbing up to the sapling is somewhat unpleasant, thereafter there is a marked improvement).

**LOCH AVON BASIN, Hell's Lum Crag**—*Boke*. 105m. GRADE IV.  
F. Burnton, C. Dale, A. Dytche & Horner. 24th January, 1982.

This climb lies between *Puke* and *Chancer*. From the base of *Hell's Lum* chimney follow a leftward trending fault directly, passing several ice bulges; continue to belay at the head of a narrow shallow chimney. Ascend the head-wall above by a slightly rightward trending line to snow slopes. Continue to the top.

—*The Devil's Alternative*. 168m. Hard Very Severe.

B. Barton & A. Fyffe. 1st August, 1981.

An eliminate line between *Auld Nick* and *Big Deil*. Start at a greenish buttress just left of the depression of *Escalator* and climb this by shallow cracks to a huge terrace (42m). Twin cracks rise above the overlap. Gain these from a scoop on the right and climb them to the next overlap (cross *Auld Nick* here). Work left across the overlap to the glaciis (42m). Above is a stepped wall left of the corner of *Auld Nick*. Zig-zag up this to gain a short left-leaning corner above which moves up and right lead to the next glaciis (42m). Climb into a niche in the grey wall above, go leftwards to a horizontal crack then make a hard move to easier ground. An easier rib now leads to the top (42m).

### **NORTHERN CORRIES, Coire An T-Sneachda, Aladdin Buttress**

—*Magic Crack*. 75m. Hard Very Severe.

D. Dinwoodie, M. Ross, G. Strange & J. Wyness. 16th May, 1981.

Just left of *Damnation* there is a prominent crack in a shallow dièdre. Climb easily to ledges below main pitch of *Damnation*. Go up left and climb crack to ledge on left. Continue through bulge and up steep slabs to easy ground.

### **Shelterstone Crag**—*The Missing Link*.

R. Anderson, D. Cuthbertson & M. Lawrence.

This pitch links *Thor* and *The Pin*. On this ascent two 24m pitches were climbed free on *Thor* (4c, 5a). Thereafter traverse right and climb the long narrow overlap to gain *The Pin* just below the final crack pitch (42m, 5c). Up *The Pin* to finish (5a).

Climbed in this manner the overall grade would be E2 or E3. The pitch has been attempted in the past with considerable use of pegs; some were used as runners.

### **CREAGAN A' COIRE ETCHACHAN**—*Talisman Direct Start*.

38m. Extremely Severe (E1).

S. Kennedy, N. Mollison & A. Nisbet. 13th July, 1981.

This start climbs the obvious corner system just left of the arête below *Talisman*. Starting at the lowest rocks, follow the corner to an overlap (peg runner in place), then take the continuation corner on the left. Traverse back right immediately across a steep wall on good holds to reach the arête which is followed to the stance on *Talisman* (after the traverse pitch).

### **BEINN A' BHUIRD, Garbh Choire**—*Alchemist's Route*.

R. J. Archbold & D. M. Nichols. 2nd March, 1980. 230m. GRADE III.

This route lies towards the left end of the North Face of *Squareface*. The main feature is a zig-zag ramp which bypasses an obvious chimney halfway up the face.

Start at foot of ice gully taken by *Crucible Route* but slant up left to gain snow slope. Climb this until obvious branch leads rightwards across the



bounding rocks and then up to the chimney. Follow ramp on left wall then climb up to reach the top of the chimney (in good conditions the chimney itself will probably give a slightly harder variation). Climb the shallow gully above, which gives out onto steepish snow slopes.

The cornice on this face is notorious, both for its height and its continuity leftwards almost to the *Sneck*. Traverse right into the basin of *Crucible Route*. Exit up right.

—*Mitre Variation*.

Very Severe.

R. J. Archbold & H. Towler. 5th September, 1981.

A link pitch on the West Wall allows the following combinations of *Cumming-Crofton Route* and the *Mitre* routes.

Climb *Cumming-Crofton Route* to the stance above 'the 30ft traverse.' Continue in the corner for 3m then traverse left to a protruding block. Follow the obvious cracks straight up to the crest of the ridge (18m). From here it is possible to traverse left 5m to join *Mitre Ridge Original Route* and *Mitre Direct*. However, pleasant climbing in a fine position may be obtained by going straight up the edge to the foot of the first tower (10m). Continue by one or other of the *Mitre* routes.

—*Rhombus*.

58m. Severe.

R. J. Archbold & H. Towler. 5th September, 1981.

Most of this route is visible in the photograph of *Squareface* facing p243 of *S.M.C.J.*, xxi, 169.

Start in gully bed at a point directly below the 'deep fissure' in the top pitch of *Squareface*. Climb up and slightly left to join the second pitch of *Squareface* at the end of 'the 30ft traverse.' Follow *Squareface* up to small ledge in middle of face (level with second man in photograph, who is actually climbing the 'first obvious vertical crack' which is bypassed by *Squareface* (30m). Climb diagonally right, step round a rib into a shallow groove and follow this up and right to a small stance below the obvious finishing crack (14m). Climb the crack to the top (the lower section may be varied by an airy excursion onto the right edge via the obvious horizontal crack) (14m).

### Coire an Dubh Lochain, Bloodhound Buttress

*Hooker's Route*. 88m. Hard Very Severe.

A. Nisbet & N. Spinks. 10th August, 1981.

The following route is notable for the use of unconventional techniques! On the first ascent a 3m pole was carried 8 miles from the Invercauld Forest to place a hook. This was considered 'more ethical' than placing it from above.

Start at the prominent inset slab fairly high on the left side of the cliff. Climb the corner formed by the slab for 6m, move out to the crest and follow this to step down into a grassy niche and belay (26m). Progress above is barred by overhangs. A hook is embedded in a peculiar flake above a roof. Lasso the hook, prussik up the rope (3m) and use slings on the hook to make an awkward exit up a flake above. Further flakes lead to a large roof which is passed by traversing left immediately underneath it. Belay on top of the roof (20m). Go up easier slabs to the top (42m).

**LOCHNAGAR, West Buttress**—*Dod's Diversion*. 150m. Hard Very Severe.

G. Strange & G. Thompson. 29th July, 1981.

Climb *Gargoyle Direct* for 30m to ledge and large block belay on right. Ascend steep wall by crack-line just left of block (18m). Continue as for *Gargoyle Direct* but gain plateau via obvious steep crack finishing just left of the *Gargoyle*.

**Tough-Brown Face—*Tough-guy*.** 110m. Very Severe.

R. J. Archbold & G. P. Muhlemann. 17th May, 1980.

In the lower right-hand part of the face there is a large white scar, just below the long ledge which slants down leftwards from the crux of *Tough-Brown Ridge Direct*. The first two pitches follow a system of steep cracks, punctuated by grassy ledges, roughly one-third of the way across from *Tough-Brown Ridge Direct* towards *Mort*. The start is difficult to describe owing to the huge snowfield which encroached onto the lower rocks, but this section finishes on the long ledge, a few feet right of the scar (65m).

Climb the wall above, to the left of two thin vertical cracks, using flakes and small ledges leading up and left. Cross rake leftwards and continue diagonally left via large cracked blocks to a stance some 10m below another white scar (30m). Trend up left into the trough of *Mort* (15m).

**WHITE MOUNT: Eagle's Rocks—*Vanguard*.** 77m. Hard Very Severe.

R. J. Archbold & T. Syme. 30th August, 1981.

Right of the amphitheatre of *Plateau Buttress*, there is some steep rock which is skirted by *Flankers' Route*. Start at foot of left edge and slant up right to gain large flat slab (8m). Launch onto the steeper rocks just right of an overhung bay then traverse left above the bay. Climb up to a small overlap which curves up right to form a groove. At top of groove pull out left, traverse away left, then step up to stance on edge overlooking amphitheatre (26m).

Move right and climb right wall of triangular recess to land on broad ledge (10m). Above this is a short but awkward band of steep rock. Climb it at a corner on the left. Continue more easily, keeping to the left for better rock (33m).

**LOCHABER****GARBH BHEINN OF ARDGOUR: South Wall of The Great Ridge**

M. Diggins & A. Fyffe. June, 1981.

—*Gralloch*. 45m. Very Severe.

On the lower tier left of *Scimitar* and leading to the terrace is a large open right-facing groove which is the main feature of the climb. Start up *Scimitar* for a few feet and continue up and left via thin cracks and ramps leading to the main groove. This is then climbed more easily to the top.

**BEN NEVIS, The Comb—*Left Flank*.**

100m. GRADE IV.

G. E. Little & R. Richardson. 21st February, 1981.

Start at a point in *Comb Gully* just above the first main ice pitch (22m above *Hesperides Ledge*). Traverse right up ramp, then up to belay below obvious icefall. Climb icefall directly, to enter a shallow gully; belay. Continue up gully to top.

**Orion Face—*Journey into Space*.**

240m. GRADE V.

C. Higgins & A. Kimber. 8th March, 1980.

Start midway between *Astral Highway* and *Second Slab Rib*. Climb directly to the right of a short corner where a delicate traverse right on steep ground gives access to easier climbing and a block belay. Continue diagonally leftwards by an obvious iced slab until a break right onto the upper section of the wall can be made at 19m. (This section is believed to be part of the diagonal line taken by Bell from the *Second Slab Rib* on the first ascent of *Long Climb*. Bell's route continues traversing diagonally leftwards). Ascend slab, move right beneath overhang then by groove direct, climbing occasional bulges until the right hand end of a prominent snowfield is reached. Move diagonally leftwards up snowfield and climb obvious corner passing overhang on left to finish.

## GLENCOE

### BUACHAILLE ETIVE MOR, Creag a' Bhancair—*Outlandos*.

A. Kay & N. T. Morrison. 26th June, 1981. 70m. Extremely Severe (E2).

On the right hand margin of the central overhanging wall there is a corner line broken by a grassy ledge at half-height. Start at a tree below the corners. Climb up corner until a move right over bulge (old peg) leads into the main corner line. Climb this to the grass ledge then climb the continuation to its top where moves are made out right to a belay (45m, 5b). Climb the wall above to reach the grass rake (25m). It is now possible to walk off or follow either *Cayman Grooves* or *Walk With Destiny*.

### AONACH DUBH, Lower North East Nose—*Revengeance*.

54m. Extremely Severe (E5).

R. Anderson, D. Cuthbertson & M. Lawrence. Summer, 1981.

Climbs the steep wall to the right of *Crocodile*. Start at the tree as for that route. Climb crack going rightwards over bulge and up *Spacewalk* to the old peg on *Crocodile*. Move right and up wall to a tiny overlap; move right again then from right end of the overlap climb directly up wall to a ledge and belay on *Crocodile* (24m, 6b). From the top of cracked blocks on the right of the *Crocodile* corner ascend wall going leftwards into groove; up this and overhang direct to finish (30m, 5c).

The climb was cleaned and inspected and the first pitch was yo-yoed and climbed a day before the second. On an early attempt a severe fall resulted when marginal protection pulled out.

### West Face, E. Buttress—*Prophet of Purism*.

120m. Extremely Severe (E4/5).

D. Cuthbertson & R. Williamson. Summer, 1981.

Zig-zags a way up the big wall between *Bannockburn* and *Big Top*. Start on the rake of *Trapeze* about 5m from the foot of the corner. Traverse left and up right-facing corner, move left across wall to a small hanging groove, step down to an obvious traverse line which is followed to a recess on the left side of the wall (obvious traverse down and left avoided). Continue up overhanging wall to an *in-situ* nut then diagonally leftwards to gain the arête of *Big Top*. Belay at the foot of the flake cracks (30m, 5c/6a). From the top of the flake step down and move right to gain thin diagonal crack. Follow this to a delicate thread and ascend to just below a ledge on *Big Top*, step down and follow obvious traverse line to a large flake, move back left and up groove, move left from the top of this and up to a belay on *Bannockburn* (30m, 5b/c). Up twin grooves above to belay at the huge flake of *Big Top* (30m, 5a). Up open corner above to the peg on *Big Top*, continue up steep undercut groove above and move right to finish up easy right-angled corner (30m, 5b).

The first pitch was yo-yoed and was climbed several days prior to the other three pitches.

## SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

### BEINN UDLAIDH, Coire Daimh—*Peter Pan Direct*. 85m. GRADE IV/V.

D. Claxton, I. Duckworth, A. Kay & N. Morrison.

*Peter Pan* (S.M.C.J., 1980, p66) follows a devious line with unnecessary traversing. On this ascent the icefall was climbed direct from top to bottom.

## ARROCHAR

## BEN DONICH

Ben Donich at 843m is the large hill next to The Brack on the south side of Glen Croe; G.R. 219043. Its size is tempered somewhat by the fact that the road here reaches 240m at the Rest And Be Thankful. The summit aspect is very fine.

The climbing is situated on a series of pale coloured crags above a massive boulder field at 700m (460m above the road) on the north west face overlooking the top end of the Gleann Mor road to Loch Goil.

The crags are wet, which probably accounts for their neglect, but in good conditions they offer interesting climbs on some of the most uniformly steep rock in the area.

Access at one hour plus is best via the grassy whale-back north east ridge reached from a point 1km down the Loch Goil road. Follow a forestry road for ½km and go up through the trees to the ridge.

Dossers will find a good specimen (sleeps 2-3) under the large wedge-shaped boulder close to and facing the highest crag; but no convenient water. The entrance looks north (cairn).

The three short messy gullies between the various crags have been climbed in winter at Grade I/II. The crags are numbered one to five, left to right.

—*Déjà vu*.

36m. Very Severe.

G. E. Little & W. Skidmore. 24th May, 1980.

The left hand (No. 1) crag has a prominent overhanging prow. The route takes the left bounding fault of the prow. Start from grassy recess.

Climb left wall, move left under bulge and go up to grass ledge and belay (12m). Meander up left wall to enter and climb a hanging V-groove to top (24m).

—*Voulez Vous*.

36m. Very Severe.

G. E. Little & C. Ritchie. 27th June, 1981.

Takes the right bounding fault of the prow.

Climb first pitch of *Déjà Vu* (12m). Move right and climb awkward bottomless crack to commodious bay (9m). Ascend fine corner crack to top (15m).

Crag number two; no climbs.

Crag number three; the main face, is very steep. *Flakewalk* is described first for convenience since it cuts across all other routes. The thin bulging crack lines, running up through roofs, are unclimbed.

—*Flakewalk*.

60m. Severe.

R. T. Richardson & W. Skidmore. June, 1980.

The main feature of the highest (No. 3) crag is a fault running from near bottom right to top left. Start right of sloping groove at small recess. A classic route.

Gain thin flake line up left and climb to main fault. Follow this to fine stance in overhung recess (30m). Pull up to ledge on left using steep flake, crawl left, then go straight up flake to finish just left (crux) of perched skyline boulder. Large boulder belay (30m).

The route can be climbed in three of four shorter pitches, if desired.

—*Skywalk.*

43m. Extremely Severe (E1).

G. E. Little &amp; W. Skidmore. 16th August, 1981.

A relatively quick drying, serious climb, near the left end of the main face. Start at short black groove under knobbly grey wall. The first pitch, though easier than the second, is short on protection.

Climb the groove to ledges and take thin wall on right to bay (poor peg runner) where bulge on left is climbed and a wall leads to the overhung recess of *Flakewalk* (20m). Gain a high right traverse under a roof and follow a good flake. Somehow stand on the flake, step left to a peg in a gas hole, and pull over a strenuous airy bulge to small ledge. The way up is barred by a roof, so traverse left across a deceptively delicate wall to finish just right of perched boulder. Large boulder belay (23m).

The status of the peg on the second pitch is in doubt. Little's description refers to a peg runner; Skidmore states that it 'can be done free.'

—*Simple Visions.*

50m. Hard Very Severe.

G. E. Little &amp; C. Ritchie. 27th June, 1981.

A hard steep route up the wall right of the (unclimbed) bulging crack line. Dry conditions essential. Start 10m left of *Flakewalk* at deep vertical fault.

Climb fault to ledges (on *Flakewalk*) and move up left to better ledge (14m). Traverse right across knobbly wall to thin crack. Up crack to rightward trending mossy ramp leading to airy belay on top of perched block (18m). Move up, traverse left and climb steep wall with scant protection to good flake. Climb diagonal corner above, breaching the roof line, to top. Belay well up slope (18m).

Crags four and five; no climbs.

## ARRAN

CIOCHE NA H'OIGHE, The Bastion—*Digitalis.*

G. E. Little &amp; W. Skidmore. 4th April, 1981. 69m. Extremely Severe (Aid).

This climb ascends the obvious roofed pillar to the left of *Klepht*. Climb *Klepht* for 12m to a small ledge. Tension left across bare slab to small hold. Move round edge to belay in grassy niche (19m, 5b/c). Up corner above detached pillar to below roof. Turn roof on the right and climb cracks trending left to small ledge (15m, 5a). Ascend awkward corner with the aid of a nut and then directly up to a small ledge below twin roofs (15m, 5b). With a nut for aid climb overhang between twin roofs to gain a groove. Move left and up easier rock to heather ledge and flake runner. Up slabby groove trending right to thread belay on terrace (20m, 5a). Walk off left (as for *Klepht*) to gain *Ledge Four*.

The climb was precleaned by abseil.

—*Klepht Direct.*

G. E. Little &amp; C. Ritchie. 16th April, 1981.

Extremely Severe (Aid).

Climbs the *Klepht* corner directly. Climb overhanging corner and flakes on the left wall to a small rock ledge. Move right and climb corner directly to bolt belay on grassy ledge (31m, 5b/c). Follow holdless corner crack to crumbling recess on left wall. Continue up corner (poor rock in places) until a short move left, at a bulge, can be made. Climb narrow crack on left wall of corner leading to a thread belay on terrace (31m, 5c). Walk off left to gain *Ledge Four*.

On this ascent four points of aid were used on the second pitch but Little reports that the amount of aid used will depend on confidence in using crumbling holds!



*Photo: Donald J. Bennet*

North Face Route on Central Buttress, Buachaille Etive Mór





*Photo: Donald J. Bennet*

Nimlin's Direct Route on the South Peak of The Cobbler



**Nameless Crag**—*Risqué Grapefruit*.

D. Cuthbertson & D. Jameson. Summer, 1981. 30m. Extremely Severe (E2).

Climbs the obvious slab on the left facet of the crag. Start at a small stepped corner left of an obvious (unclimbed) corner. Up groove and step right onto slab edge beneath overlap. Up slab above trending right into open corner; climb this then follow left trending line to top.

The route was cleaned and inspected.

—*Les Boys*.

30m. Extremely Severe.

D. Cuthbertson & D. Jameson. Summer, 1981.

Takes the obvious quartz crack 5m left of *Risqué Grapefruit*. Start immediately right of the chimney. Climb crack to its top, move right on rough slab then up to gain *Risqué Grapefruit* which is followed to the top (30m, 5b/c). Cleaned and inspected.

**Pinnacle Ridge**—*Soap Suds*.

15m. Extremely Severe.

D. Cuthbertson & I. Sutherland. Summer, 1981.

Start 5m left of *Chalky Wall* (left of *Piton Crack*). Climb to left end of overhang, move right and pull over this, move right again and finish up left slanting crack (15m, 5c).

The route was cleaned and inspected.

**High Crag**—*Sky Pilot*.

30m. Extremely Severe (E2/3).

D. Cuthbertson. Summer, 1981.

Climb the vague crack line between *Crag Lough Grooves* and *Autobahn*. Finish up a pleasant slab.

**Cavalry Crack Buttress**—*Before the Flood*.

D. Cuthbertson & D. Jameson. Summer, 1981. 39m. Extremely Severe (E4).

Climbs the obvious ramp between *Versus* and *The Long Crack* starting 5m left of *The Long Crack*.

Ascend wall to gain ramp which is followed to an overlap barring access into a steep brown groove. Move rightwards over overlap and up groove to horizontal vegetated break; climb groove above to ledge with small trees (39m, 6a). Finish up *The Long Crack*.

The route was cleaned and inspected.

## REGIONAL NOTES

In an unsolicited testimonial P. Hunter confirms the high quality of *Dilemma* (*S.M.C.J.*, 1978, p270) on **Eastern Buttress**, **Sròn na Ciche**.

He also notes a direct variation to *Spartan Groove* climbed with S. Drummond on 8th August, 1980. This may have been done before and raises the overall standard to HVS. From the old peg runner, now broken off, instead of moving right to by-pass the overhang, pull through it to a small ledge on the left. Gain the slab above and finish more easily.

C. Higgins notes that the routes on the Sgùrr Alasdair face of **Coir a'Ghrunnda** are longer than recorded, being between 120 and 140m.

**CIR MHOR, S.E. Face**—*Skydiver*. 134m. Extremely Severe (Aid).  
G. E. Little & C. Ritchie. 1st August, 1981.

Start 15m to the left of *Minotaur* below obvious overhanging prow. Climb groove immediately left of edge, or easier wall further left (4c), until a slab can be traversed left into a corner with a flake belay (18m, 5b). Return right to below vertical corner. Ascend this to poor stance below big overhanging prow (20m, 5b). Move left under roof to awkward corner which was climbed initially with four points of aid (two *in situ*) to tiny ledge with large unstable flake. Traverse down and right to top of large crumbly flake overlooking *Minotaur* (21m, 5c). Cross flakey slab wall moving up and right to short corner. Move right round edge to belay in grassy niche (18m, 5a). Move up and left to gain and climb grassy groove/chimney to platform (27m). Walk right and up to top via *Labyrinth* (direct finish (30m)).

**N.E. Face**—*Pan's Pipe*. 91m. GRADE III.  
G. E. Little. 12th December, 1981.

Start immediately to the left of *Pan's Pillar*. Climb obvious ice smear to the top of the pillar (43m). Ascend narrow smear above to below small cave (48m). Descend to the right.

—*Gully B2 Direct*. 152m. GRADE III.  
G. E. Little. 12th December, 1981.

Ascend snow to steep ice pitch. Climb this on thin ice and up to junction with *Bottle Dungeon Cave* variation. A long, easy angled ice pitch and snow above lead to huge jammed blocks at the top of the gully. These can be turned on the right wall.

**A'CHIR, Coire Daingean**—*Cascade*. 85m. GRADE III.  
G. E. Little. 18th December, 1981.

On the vegetated slabs at the head of Coire Daingean, to the left of *Lower Left Chimney*, is an obvious ice fall. Climb it directly.

## OUTCROPS

**POLLDUBH, Secretaries Crag**—*Vincent*. 60m. Extremely Severe (E2).  
D. Cuthbertson & I. Sykes. Summer, 1981.

Climbs obvious crack line on steeper side wall of crag. Start at groove at the toe of the buttress.

Up groove and crack to a junction with *Last Word*; up this to ledge and belay (24m, 5b). Pull leftwards round overhang and up to small loose block. Climb wall above going right to crack on arête, up this and slab to ledge and belay (12m, 5b). Step down and pull into thin crack, follow this and left traverse to a ledge. Climb cracks above to top (24m, 5b).

—*Ring of Fire*.

D. Cuthbertson & D. Jameson. Summer, 1981. 30m. Extremely Severe (E4).

Climbs shallow groove line close to the arête on the top tier of the crag. Climb severely undercut groove to a small ledge. Continue up shallow groove and thin crack to the arête. Up arête and slab to top.

## Cairngorms

**Coire an Dubh Lochain**—A. Nisbet records the following excursion. On the slabs right of *Polypody Groove* is an obvious pink waterwashed streak. In dry weather, on a sunny morning, it gave a pleasant solo on immaculate clean rock, at about Severe standard (55m). Descend on the right by the lower slabs of *Crow's Nest Route*.

## Ben Nevis

C. Higgins notes that the original name for the route climbed by M. Geddes and himself on the North Wall of **Castle Ridge** (*S.M.C.J.*, 1981, p158) is *Last Day in Purgatory*. We hope this puts Higgins out of his misery.

## Glencoe

**Aonach Eagach**—In his search for the longest Grade V, N. Morrison observes that *Blue Riband* (*S.M.C.J.*, 1979, p415) is about 690m long rather than 540m. He opines that this magnificent route may be in condition more regularly than the once in ten years suggested by MacKenzie.

## Southern Highlands

**Creag Coire an Dothaidh**—*The Professorial Seat* mistakenly recorded without credits in the 1981 *S.M.C.J.*, p172, was climbed by A. Morrison and N. Morrison.

## Waterfalls

We note an ascent of the frozen *Gargunnock Waterfall* by Messrs. Claxton, Duckworth, Kay and Morrison on the 26th December, 1981. The waterfall is only six miles from Stirling and has four tiers linked by easier ground. All the tiers were climbed and the route merits Grade IV.

Elsewhere other waterfalls were climbed during the extremely cold spell around Christmas and New Year (Braemar temperatures down to  $-28^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) but no details are available as yet.

In Glasgow we record the occurrence of a three storey high waterfall in the vicinity of A. T. Mays shop just off Byres Road. While roadside climbing is now commonplace on the *Finnieston Walls* it is likely that attempts to climb the above waterfall would not have met with approval from the attendant Officers of the Law.

## Caving

**Beinn Narnain**—C. Dale reports a subterranean diversion; anyone with agoraphobic and hydrophiliac tendencies might be well advised to investigate the *Spearhead Arête* buttress.

## BARRICADES AGAIN

### THE LURCHERS GULLY AFFAIR

By R. D. Watson

ALTHOUGH many of us have already heard too much of this matter it seems important for posterity to record in the *Journal* some information about an issue which threatened to set son against father, brother against brother and, dare we say it, even Member against Member. Its battle lines were drawn by a planning application to Highland Regional Council in 1979, and which received unanimous approval by the Council on 13th June, 1980. Watered by the springs of contention, and nourished by the blood of the contenders, it grew into a Public Local Inquiry lasting six weeks, hearing 57 witnesses, and accumulating more paperwork than probably any other inquiry ever held in Scotland.

An incipient swell of awareness among mountaineers and others with a concern for the welfare of Scottish mountain areas broke on this proposed ski-ing development like a wave, taking many by surprise. To some extent the developers brought the onslaught on themselves by an almost studied indifference to the interests of other hill-users, an attitude which has been encountered in Highland issues before. Remember the Coruisk affair in 1968 and the Highland Bothies in 1974-75?

The case for development was in essence simple. Facilities on Cairngorm were overcrowded, particularly at weekends when hordes of day or weekend skiers were crowding out visitors who were staying for a week or more. Survey showed scope for further development in this market, and ticket sales and other data suggested an increasing number of people were taking up downhill ski-ing. More facilities on Cairngorm would ease the crowding, especially of beginners, cope with the increased demand, and boost the tourist industry in Speyside. No other centre in Scotland was ready to expand to cope with the excess demand that was pressing on the Cairngorm ski area. Further expansion was not possible within the present area on Cairngorm; and thus it was proposed to develop Coire an t' Sneachda, Coire an Lochan, and the Allt Creag an Leth-choin (the Lurchers Gully). The beginners would use Sneachda, the intermediate skiers Lurchers, leaving more room for advanced performers on the White Lady and elsewhere, and the whole expanse from Coire na Ciste to Lurchers Gully, would be interconnected into a single 'ski-complex' comparable to an Alpine resort. This would give Aviemore an attraction that would allow it to compete with continental resorts to a greater extent.

Its simplicity gives the case an apparent soundness, but it is in fact shot through with weaknesses and pitfalls. As examples, it is very doubtful whether the road access problems to the new area have been satisfactorily solved, and there is good evidence that the snow holding characteristics of the zone connecting the Coire Cas car park with Lurchers, across the mouths of the corries is inadequate.

The M.C. of S. set up a working party and its lady Chairman, Pat Ransley, sent a summary of their objections to Member Clubs prior to the Inquiry. This began with a clarification of the M.C. of S. attitude to downhill ski developments.

'We recognise the increased demand for downhill ski-ing in Scotland and at the Public Inquiry we shall be suggesting alternative sites, such as those adjacent to the Drumochter Pass which have been investigated in the past and are now subject to development proposals.

Nonetheless, downhill ski-ing and its associated structures intrude greatly on the landscape, often conflict with the activities of other recreational groups, and bring problems of erosion and litter in their wake. If such conflicts and problems are to be minimised, then basic issues such as site selection should be resolved with the involvement of mountain users, by planning at a *national level*. *This has not been done.*'

It then attacked the narrow outlook and lack of consultation with which the development had been pursued.

'The main supporting document for this planning application is the Highland Regional Council's Summary Report of the so-called Winter Sports Technical Working Party. This committee which included (eventually and at their insistence) representatives of the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission for Scotland, considered only the needs of one winter sport – namely downhill ski-ing – started with the remit that Cairngorm was to be developed, and rejected the requests from the governing bodies of mountain users to be represented. Indeed it is so deeply divided in its counsels that no consensus report has been produced. The version issued by H.R.C., in our view, presents an ill-argued and over-parochial case that allows little for relevant factors such as the needs of other hill users, landscape, and wildlife conservation.'

The corries in question were among the most accessible in Scotland, even before ski developments on Cairngorm. The ski road increased this accessibility and yet, in spite of heavy use, because of the shielding effect of the Fiacail a Choire Chais, they retained much of their relative seclusion and original character.

'These corries thus form an extensive semi-wilderness area which is unique in Britain in combining high mountain scenery and a sense of isolation and grandeur with relative ease of access. Their headwalls harbour numerous rock climbs of easier grade and form an important training ground where many climbers gain an introduction to Scottish climbing without excessive commitment. More importantly, they are the best training-ground for snow and ice climbing in Britain and are now heavily used as such. Further, these corries by virtue of their relative accessibility, variety of terrain, and mountain setting form an area of increasing importance to those starting in skk-touring and ski-mountaineering – probably the fastest growing form of hill recreation. The proposed development would largely destroy the setting of the climbs, severely damage the landscape of the corries and thus greatly reduce their attraction to walkers and cross-country skiers, and conflict physically with these and other hill activities.'

The summary went on to discuss the wider impact of developments in the Cairngorms, stressed the value of this unique area as the nation's premier Nature Reserve and pointed to the inevitable effects of further pressures on a highly vulnerable area. It further said . . . .

'All this must be seen in the context of the gradual degradation of the area which has been evident for some 200 years, *with a substantial acceleration in the last 30 years*. The spread of badly engineered and often unnecessary, bulldozed tracks, the slow removal of the ancient native pinewoods, and the impact of overburning and overgrazing in relation to grouse and deer management have seriously reduced the ecological resources of the area. There comes a time when a decision has to be made as to whether a resource of this scale is to be managed for the long-term benefit of the community and for the conservation of wildlife, or whether it is to be allowed to decline under the impact of short-term local events.'

The final point was that this particular issue was something of a test case . . . .

' . . . to be something of a test case which will widely influence future developments affecting our interests, and will therefore have an effect far outwith the Cairngorms. Given strong and effective opposition at this inquiry, the Scottish Mountain fraternity will be recognised as one to be reckoned with and our counsels sought and heeded.'

When the Lurchers development had first emerged the M.C. of S. Executive Committee had been slow to react. Aware of the usual inertia of so many member clubs they were tempted to seek improvement by compromise and consultation. However, an important but unknown actor in the complex weave of events had stepped ashore in Scotland in the form of Commander Ronald Titcombe, an Australian entrepreneur, and land speculator who saw the prospect of rich pickings in the North East of Scotland with the advent of the North Sea oil boom. In 1975, he launched ambitious proposals for harbour development and large scale quarrying next to the important sea-cliff climbing ground near Peterhead. The long battle to save the Longhaven cliffs, and which helped to bankrupt Titcombe's Company, forced the local clubs to get together in their own association, The North East Mountain Trust.

With stimulus from members of this group, the M.C. of S. formed a working party to produce a policy on downhill skiing developments in Scotland for use at a Public Inquiry. In practice this working party became the action group for the whole exercise. It laboured mightily to raise funds, helped magnificently by the B.M.C. and used the North East Mountain Trust, which had sharpened its claws in press and planning battles over Longhaven and other local issues, to prepare the case and fight the propaganda war.

In the end the Inquiry was held in Kingussie – part in June and again in September/October, 1981. The mountaineering case was assembled by the N.E. Mountain Trust and professionally presented by Douglas Graham, an Inverness solicitor, and himself a hill-walking enthusiast. It was a case which included expert witnesses of international standing from Sweden and Switzerland and was backed by sister organisations, such as the B.M.C., the Ramblers' Association and the Scottish Countryside Activities Council. It was flanked by conservation objections on behalf of the Countryside Commission and jointly by the Nature Conservancy Council, the R.S.P.B. and the S.W.T. as well as other objectors. Unlike the other major protagonists, the mountaineers could not call on public funds to assist them. Still, the cost is just about covered now. Has it all been worth it?

At the time of writing, the Secretary of State is still chewing over the mass of evidence and even though that evidence points firmly in our favour, he is not bound to decide in that direction (something which was stressed several times by the Reporter). Win, or Lose, the Scottish mountain scene will never be quite the same again. Too many issues about the future of our hills were brought out to be simply pushed back out of sight. Too many minds were awakened to these issues and their importance. Whatever else, some within the realms of local government and government quangoes learned that hill users had teeth and were quite prepared to use them when they felt their interests were being ignored. For that reason alone, the fight may have been worth while.

## SCOTTISH WILDLAND

By Sandy Cousins

I AM involved in a group concerned with information and policy on Scottish Wildland. We hope to stimulate conservation action rather than the (usually too late) protest action that mountain interests tend to produce.

The Guidelines below are our attempt at restating Unna's 'Rules' in terms which could apply to-day, and one hopes in future, to areas generally prized as wilderness. These are offered with deep respect for Unna's 'Rules' which many agree to have embodied the conservation datum even though they were aimed at specific areas (Glencoe and Kintail). It is intended that the spirit of the guidelines should prevail if a point is not specifically covered. There are degrees of wilderness. Variations include size, remoteness from public transport, or car access, type of country, etc. A very important aspect is the well-being of those living/working in the area. The object is not to increase wilderness in our mainland or islands but to conserve a heritage in the form of selected suitable areas. These areas will become even more important if we are successful in developing other areas to increase tourism, industry, agriculture, etc.

The present Parks categories, together with National Trust for Scotland mountain or island properties tend to be areas which might be considered 'National Parks' as far as management policy goes. Some bad mistakes have been made in the planning and management of such areas. We must not perpetuate or repeat these errors. Such 'National Parks' are generally (in the U.K.) areas to which visitors are attracted, facilities laid on and thus cannot be maintained as primitive wilderness. A primitive wilderness could be owned by N.T.S. – or other Trust – provided management policy adopted suitable guidelines. The area could still provide estate income and local employment but within it facilities for visitors would not be introduced. The inalienable ownership of N.T.S. allied to a policy avoiding actively encouraging visitors could be the best protection for such areas, other than the designation of Areas of Special Planning Control or the formation of some new Trust.

Initially, I suggest the basic need is for agreement amongst conservationists on just how primitive such country should be. Perhaps the S.M.C. would support my guidelines as such a basis. I realise we are a Club for mountaineering but we have a tradition of involvement in conservation – by some members – if not always by the Club, and can claim some success. I should be pleased if the Watchdog Committee (what a dreadful name!) would comment and perhaps the Club Committee would consider this worthy of some thought. I foresee S.C.A.C. and/or M.C. of S. shortly having to consider this subject as we are clearly losing out on present conservation issues. Some positive initiative is required or we shall be too late.

I hope these suggestions may at least form a basis for other opinion to emerge so that an agreed datum may be established. Government is in need of such a datum.

## GUIDELINES

### 1. *PURPOSE*

To hold the area for the public for all time and maintain it in its primitive condition for public access and use at any time and prevent damage, while allowing for the requirements of those living and/or working in the area where such requirements are compatible with the purpose of conservation. The areas selected would be those generally agreed to have wilderness qualities. It is not intended to create wilderness but to preserve such as we have.

### 2. *MAN-MADE FEATURES*

- (a) Primitive means no artefacts may be added, no agriculture introduced other than that which it is considered furthers the natural appearance of the area, e.g. regeneration of vegetation may be encouraged.
- (b) Existing artefacts may be maintained, e.g. bridges, shelters, houses.
- (c) Ruined artefacts may not be rebuilt but may be maintained in the condition at the time of acquisition of the land, e.g. ancient ruins.



- (d) Materials, fencing, etc. used for the above will be removed when they are no longer required.
- (e) Where existing artefacts, or visitor facilities are seen to be at odds with the primitive aim for the area, consideration will be given to their removal.

### 3. *EXISTING USES*

- (a) Domestic animals may continue to graze in the area if they are adequately managed by their owners.
- (b) Shooting or hunting by any means for sport is not allowed but, in agreement with other interested bodies, some wildlife may be killed, e.g. deer, vermin, to control numbers, to seek a balance and reduce damage. Killing for veterinary purposes may continue.

### 4. *ACCESS*

Free public access without permission is a primary objective, subject to:

- (a) Temporary closure of part of the area to allow efficient culling of certain deer species, such closure to be minimised.
- (b) Temporary voluntary restriction of access to part of the area for good conservationist/management reasons.

### 5. *VISITOR BEHAVIOUR*

- (a) Visitor activity shall be compatible with the purpose of the area and its enjoyment by others.  
Damaging or noisy activities will not be allowed.
- (b) Travel may be on foot, horse, pony, by pedal cycle or by non-engined water or air craft, but the use of motor powered vehicles of any kind, is unacceptable off the existing vehicular roads.
- (c) Low flying by powered aircraft of any kind is unacceptable except in cases of emergency or for essential management purposes.
- (d) Camping is an acceptable activity although it may be subject to specific regulation in relation to its conduct in terms of *Purpose*.

### 6. *VISITOR ASSISTANCE*

- (a) The area will not be used for commercial exploitation which conflicts with *Purpose*.
- (b) Travel within the area, climbing, river crossings, etc. will not be made easier or safer by signs, marks or bridges. No new tracks or paths will be made.
- (c) Visitor rescue should not be assumed.

## MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

**Compleat Munroists.** The following have entered the ranks of the Elect and are numbered as accurately as the received information allows:

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| (238) Connie Thompson, 1980, —, —;      | (252) William T. Devenay,          |
| (239) F. Tildesley, 1980, —, —;         | 1981, —, —;                        |
| (240) M. Lidwell, 1980, 1980, —;        | (253) James Renny*, 1981, —, —;    |
| (241) Rona M. Craig, 1981, —, —;        | (254) W. D. Duncan, 1981, —, —;    |
| (242) Fiona M. Wilkie, 1981, —, —;      | (255) H. F. Barron, 1981, —, —;    |
| (243) Roger O'Donovan*, 1981, —, —;     | (256) John Colls, 1981, —, —;      |
| (244) David A. Williams, 1981, —, —;    | (257) I. R. W. Park, 1981, —, —;   |
| (245) John M. Dunn, 1981, —, —;         | (258) D. A. Bearhop, 1981, —, —;   |
| (246) K. J. Hay, 1981, —, —;            | (259) Geraldine Guestsmith,        |
| (247) W. L. Wyllie, 1981, —, —;         | 1981, —, —;                        |
| (248) Andrew Martin, 1981, —, —;        | (260) Robert I. Scott, 1981, —, —; |
| (249) Leonard Moss, 1981, —, —;         | (261) Roger Robb*, 1981, —, —;     |
| (250) Christopher Townsend,             | (262) James Boyd, 1981, —, —;      |
| 1981, —, —;                             | (263) D. Vass, 1981, —, —;         |
| (251) Elizabeth M. Devenay, 1981, —, —; | (264) G. H. Maynard, 1981, —, —;   |

\*indicates an S.M.C. Member.

*Second Timers:* (56) J. Cosgrove is now 1963, —, —, and 1974, —, —.  
 (96) W. G. Carter, 1969, 1970, 1971, and 1980, —, —.  
 (161) A. F. Des Moulins is 1977, —, —, and 1981, —, —.

*Topping up:* (207) Ivan Waller\* is now 1981, 1981, —.

*And Beyond:* (175) A. G. Maclean is 1978, 1979, 1978 and has been sadly misrepresented in both *Journal* and *Tables*. He would like us to compensate him by sending a couple of Munros down to Kent where he lives. We are consulting with the Ordnance Survey to see if it is possible to move Ben Feskineth down there, assuming of course that they can catch it first.

*Corbettist:* (161) A. F. Des Moulins is not only a double Munroist but a new Corbettist having completed the Corbetts on 23rd October including a lot of doubtfuls which are not on the official list. (He is shortly moving to Calgary to polish off the Canadian equivalents).

The correspondence records varying degrees of pomp and ceremony marking the act of compleation and varying degrees of eccentricity among the Compleaters. Among possible new 'records' may be that of (258) Ms Geraldine Guestsmith. Her compleation span of 2 years 8 months may be the shortest as yet achieved by a lady. (249) Leonard Moss may be the oldest starter having begun at the age of 61 achieving compleation 4.4 years later. His weight decreased from 15 stone to 11½ stone during this time and he may be able to claim the record for having lost most weight during his period of munroving. (242) Fiona Wilkie is the first member of the Cats' Protection League to compleat. Her own Siamese cat has accompanied her to the summit of 45 Munros but unlike Leonard Moss this protected feline increased in weight to 9 lbs. We also seem to remember that the above mentioned double-Compleater (56) J. Cosgrove, was the first man to drive golf balls from the summit of his final Munro.

**Theoretical Munroölogy.**—We have a few snippets which vaguely fit under this heading. A recent variation on clandestinism has been reported in the form of someone who has pointedly refrained from climbing his last

Munro for over eleven years. (243) R. O'Donovan suggests that rather than resort to doubtful mathematics for calculating the number of non-reporting Munroists as we did last year the clandestine factor should be acknowledged by reserving one number for the 'Unknown Munroist.' We also have had a cutting sent to us from an unidentified publication (presumably a medical journal) describing in some detail 'the disease of Chronic Munroism' written by one Peter McCue, a leading specialist on the illness.

Our mathematical consultant who perpetrated an Equation in our last issue is hard at work trying to develop a General Theory of Munroölogy. He is being hampered by a certain thrawnness on the part of his subject matter. Since the Munros have consistently made fun of the Ordnance Survey and even pulled the leg of the Editor of the Tables it is not surprising that mathematics may be incapable of dealing with the dead pan shiftiness of these great humorists.

As if this wasn't enough one reader reports that there is a terrestrial tide moving the earth's crust out and in by as much as 8 inches. A borderline three thousander may therefore achieve Munro status only twice a day.

Another reader tells of an encounter in a pub in Aberfeldy with an old shepherd who said Ben Feskineth must surely be a mountain somewhere in the Rannoch region which used to be known as A' phaisg Choinneach meaning 'Kenneth's fold.' The Coinneach referred to was a famous white hart that dominated a particular area of folded ground on this mountain about the turn of the century. (The beast may have been a descendant of the famous white hart of the Coire Ba that James VI tried to have captured a few hundred years ago). When asked if the mountain was high enough for a Munro he (the shepherd, that is) said he couldn't be sure now but all that area used to be a lot higher than it is today.

**As tough as old boots.**—Charles Warren, a kenspeckle attender of Easter and New Year's Meets, who is even more durable than his boots (see report on Easter Meet in this issue) has been elected to Honorary Membership of the Alpine Club.

**Take care in the Cuillin.**—Coruisk Hut: Mountain rescue equipment. The Honorary Secretary points out that the statement in the minutes of the A.G.M. that the M.R. equipment is situated in a lean-to at the hut is incorrect. There is no mountain rescue equipment available for any emergency.

## SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN ACCIDENTS, 1981

WE ARE grateful to John Hinde for his efforts in gathering together the accident reports from diverse mountain rescue sources. As far as information goes, there is a close similarity to the preceding year, with a total of 108 incidents involving 92 casualties being taken off the hill; twenty fatalities occurred, two less than in 1980. Ben Nevis, Glen Coe, the Cairngorms and the Southern Highlands were, as usual, prominent accident areas but Skye appears more than in previous years with thirteen incidents and no fewer than five deaths.

The number of accidents resulting from slips on snow and failure to carry – or effectively use – an ice axe is less than in former years but the number of injuries arising from the *simple slip* has increased. This year 78 incidents arose from hill-walking activities, 19 from climbing and 9 from what has been categorised as ‘scrambling.’ 69% of all incidents occurred in summer and 31% in winter.

In addition there were at least another 24 incidents of a non-mountaineering nature in which the mountain rescue services were involved. These included aircraft crashes, cragfast sheep, snowed-up motorists and the usual absconding mental patients. They also included two drowning fatalities from river crossings, one on a frozen stream.

We have compiled tables which reflect the reports in statistical terms as far as the supplied information and our interpretation allows.

As always, we thank the M.R.C.S. for making the report extracts available and the various mountain-rescue services for all the assistance they so readily provide to those in trouble in the hills.

### PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF SOME INCIDENTS

Faulty Navigation	5	River Crossing	2
Lost	6	Rockfall	3
Separation	7	Avalanche	3
Poor Timing	2	Strong Wind	3
Glissading	1	Ice Axe lacking or ineffective	6
All Slips/Stumbles	39		
on paths	10		
on grass/rough ground	11	All Falls	15
on scree	4	on scree	1
on rock	8	on rock	6
on snow	2	on snow	5
on ice	4	on ice	3

### SEASONAL DISTRIBUTION

<i>Category</i>	<i>Summer</i>	<i>Winter</i>	<i>Year</i>
Hill Walking	61	17	78
Scrambling	7	2	9
Climbing	6	13	19
Other	—	2	2
TOTAL	74	34	108

## REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

*The geographical divisions conform to those used for District Guide Books.*

REGION	CASUALTIES (of which fatalities bracketed)				INCIDENTS Other Call Outs						
	Injury	Exhaustion, Exposure	Illness	TOTAL	With Casualties	Cragfast	Lost	Overdue or Benighted	False Alarms	TOTAL INCIDENTS	NON- MOUNTAIN- EERING
Northern Highlands	1 (1)	—	—	1 (1)	1	1	1	—	—	3	1
Western Highlands	5 (1)	—	—	5 (1)	5	—	—	1	—	6	—
Ben Nevis	11 (3)	3	1 (1)	15 (4)	14	—	—	1	—	15	1
Glen Coe	15 (2)	—	—	15 (2)	12	1	—	4	1	18	—
Other Central Highlands	8 (1)	—	—	8 (1)	4	—	—	1	—	5	1 (1)
Cairngorms	10 (1)	4 (1)	—	14 (2)	14	—	3	6	3	26	6 (2)
Southern Highlands	8 (2)	4	2 (1)	14 (3)	12	—	—	1	—	13	6 (2)
Skye	11 (3)	2 (2)	—	13 (5)	11	—	—	1	1	13	—
Islands (Arran)	3 (1)	—	—	3 (1)	3	—	1	—	—	4	2
Southern Uplands	4	—	—	4	4	—	—	1	—	5	7
ALL AREAS	76 (15)	13 (3)	3 (2)	92 (20)	80	2	6	15	4	108	24

## Accident List

This list omits most non-mountaineering incidents. Those included for interest are marked \* and do not figure in the statistics.

## NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

APRIL 16-17—Two inexperienced girls (19, 20) accidentally separated from three men in good weather on path descending from Coire Mhic Fhearchair. Men had rucksacks with anoraks, food, map, compass. Girls missed path which contoured left and down Coire Dubh to Torridon. Instead they followed burn initially and ended up north of Beinn Dearg. Benighted. All night search of tracks by Torridon MRT. Girls located by RAF helicopter safely descending Coire Dubh at following mid-day. 72 man-hours.

JUNE 3—Girl (18) scrambling near the top of a steep 200ft gully with a female companion. Became cragfast when she slipped a short distance and suffered slight abrasions. Face half-mile west of Stronchrubig near Inchnadamph. Assynt MRT. 23 man-hours.

JUNE 16—Man (30) experienced rock climber. Soloing 60ft sea cliff in the area of *The Old Man of Stoer*. Accident not seen but his body was seen floating in vicious tide races. Washed up three months later. Assynt MRT. 102 man-hours.

## WESTERN HIGHLANDS

JANUARY 2—River crossing of Allt Coire na Ciche in spate, one kilometre east of the head of Loch Nevis. Very experienced mountaineer (49) swept away and drowned when crossing a double rope left in situ at the crossing. This rope bridge has since been removed. Kintail MRT.

JULY 12—Two miles SE of Dorusduain, Kintail. Solo hillwalker (55) slipped on wet grass sustaining sprained ankle. He limped to footpath at Bealach an Sgàirne. Passers by alerted team. Stretchered out. Kintail MRT. 22 man-hours.

JULY 16—Girl (15) stumbled on uneven ground sustaining fractures of leg. Path in Glen Scaddle, Ardgour, 7 miles west of L. Linnhe road. Well equipped member of school party on Award hike. Lochaber MRT. RAF helicopter. 5 man-hours.

JULY 16—Girl (14), student on Outdoor Adventure Course fell 15 to 30 feet down a rock slab when descending SW face of Ben Aden. Unroped, under instruction. Bruised thigh and hairline crack of pelvis. Good weather at time, but evacuation was in darkness and rain with a river crossing of the rising Carnoch River (just before the bridge was built) to Camusrorry, overnight. Strong analgesics injected. Evacuated by boat to Mallaig on 17th.

JULY 28-29—Four Germans descending narrow, wet path down Glen Lichd. Man (30) slipped and broke ankle. Very bad weather prevented night stretcher evacuation, so he was treated and tended in a tent overnight. RAF helicopter lifted him out next day. Kintail MRT. 112 man-hours.

SEPTEMBER 30-OCTOBER 2—Upper Glen Dessarry; walker (22 got separated from his partner (who had the only map and compass). He should have gone to Glen Pean, and over Gleann a' Chaorainn bealach down Glen Finnan to A830. Instead, went over to Gleann an Lochain Eanaiche. Spent first night Oban bothy, Kinlochmorar, and second night on banks of Loch Morar. He had just returned to the bothy when found by RAF helicopter with four Lochaber MRT on board. Still had plenty of food. Uninjured. Very wet and windy. 16 man-hours.

## BEN NEVIS

JANUARY 18—Two men had climbed *Bob Run* on Little Brenva Face when leader was blown off the plateau and both fell 400ft to the bottom of the climb. Leader (40) with head and neck injuries was flown out by RAF helicopter. Second (27) with ankle injury and body bruising was taken to Coire Leis Refuge and carried down, because helicopter could not return in darkness and high winds. Lochaber MRT. 120 man-hours.

FEBRUARY 14-18—Two men (22, 22), assumed to be descending from Ben Nevis summit on January 14 fell over crag above Coire Eoghainn and died of multiple injuries. Weather that night was cloudy but with moonlit gaps, windy, and freezing above 1,500ft. Fell on very hard snow. Both had full waterproofs but town clothes and 'bendy' boots. One set of crampons was worn when they fell, and one set carried on a rucksack. Both had ice axes. Unroped. Good weather. RAF helicopter search January 17 negative. One man found in good weather by SARDA dog on January 18. Other man found close by over three hours later down a deep crevasse/cum melt hole in a shallow gully bed. Reference 164706. Bodies evacuated by RAF helicopter. Lochaber MRT. 190 man-hours.

FEBRUARY 21-22—Climber (22) saw two climbers falling from a route on *Gardylloo Buttress*. In fact they were OK and walked down, but when he got to the top of his own route he left his rucksack and rushed off for help (1630). Weather fairly good but summit in cloud. He got lost on summit but found his own way down next day (1130). Lochaber MRT. SARDA dogs. 100 man-hours.

MARCH 3—NW spur of Carn Dearg NW at 3200ft. Party of four. Hill walker, male (22) slipped on snow/ice patch after removing crampons. Fell 60ft. Scalp wound and severe body bruising. Difficult helicopter rescue because of suspected spinal injury. Lochaber MRT. RAF helicopter. Good weather. 12 man-hours.

MAY 29—Five tourists in jeans and training shoes playing on slopes and easier crags at Poll Dubh, Glen Nevis. When descending a steep grassy slope, a youth (17) slipped, fell 40ft. Depressed skull fracture. Lochaber MRT. 16 man-hours.

JUNE 10—Tourist (41) in wellington boots slipped on Tourist Path at 600ft and broke her ankle. Lochaber MRT. 12 man-hours.

JUNE 16—Very bad weather. Sleet, hail, heavy rain and high winds on Ben Nevis plateau just below 4000ft. Party of four. Soldier (22) wearing denim jeans and quilted town type anorak suffering exhaustion/exposure. Carried down by team to 2200ft. Then evacuated by RAF helicopter. Lochaber MRT. 36 man-hours.

JUNE 23—Weather cold with fairly low cloud. Soldier (22) in a party of 12 collapsed from exhaustion/exposure at 3150ft on Tourist Path. Carried down by team to 1850ft (Half Way Lochan) and helicoptered out by RAF. Wearing anorak and jeans. Lochaber MRT. 20 man-hours.

JUNE 30—Three sisters ascended by Tourist Path. The fittest (20) had forged ahead, agreeing to meet the other two on the summit, but she descended alone by a more difficult route and was found dead at the bottom of *Five Finger Gully*. Skull fracture. She had descended by the central buttress between the gullies and appeared to have fallen the lower 40 feet. Training shoes. Weather fair but low cloud. Lochaber MRT. SARDA dogs. 72 man-hours.

AUGUST 23—Report of boy (15) with broken ankle, but it was only twisted. Walked down unaided. Halfway Lochan, Ben Nevis. Lochaber MRT. 14 man-hours.

SEPTEMBER 5—Man (35) slipped when walking up Tourist Path at 2100ft. Jarred back and slipped disc. Severe pain, especially when moved, so injected strong analgesics, and RAF helicopter evacuation. Lochaber MRT. 5 Man-hours.



SEPTEMBER 5—Ben Nevis Race. Fell runner collapsed at 3500ft with exhaustion/exposure. RAF helicopter was on hand for previous rescue, and evacuated this casualty and another runner on the point of collapsing. Team on hill for race anyway. Conditions good, cool west wind. Lochaber MRT. 2 man-hours.

SEPTEMBER 14—Member of Job Creation Work Party on Tourist Path at 1300ft in good weather, slipped and tore ankle ligaments. Lochaber MRT. 16 man-hours.

OCTOBER\*—Party of 22 pushing a hospital bed up Ben Nevis for charity. Man (49) had illness and was evacuated to hospital . . . *complete with his own bed?* Lochaber MRT. 8 man-hours.

OCTOBER 21—Hill walker, male (55) died of cardiac arrest at 4000ft on Tourist Path. Weather fair. Lochaber MRT. RAF helicopter. 18 man-hours.

DECEMBER 28—On the slope approaching *Bob Run*, Little Brenva Face, climber, male (24), not wearing crampons, slipped on ice and fell 300ft. Skull fracture. One of a party of four. Very high winds made helicopter evacuation almost impossible but a Wessex from RAF Leuchars succeeded at eighth attempt. Snow showers. Lochaber MRT. 16 man-hours.

#### GLEN COE

JANUARY 1—Bidean nam Bian; man slipped on snow slope descending the ridge to Stob Coire Sgreamhach. Deep cut on forehead, broken nose and concussion.

JANUARY 6—Party benighted on Buachaille Etive Mór. They spent the night in bivouac bags and descended in the morning, having underestimated the difficulty of the climb through lack of experience.

FEBRUARY 2—Two men on Central Gully, Stob Coire nam Beith avalanched and fell over 200ft. One dead, the other a broken foot and spinal injuries.

FEBRUARY 22—One of two people on An-t-Sròn at the entrance to Coire nam Beith, used a large rock as a handhold when it came away and he fell 50ft. Both legs broken.

FEBRUARY 23—Man suffered 20ft fall near the foot of Central Gully, Stob Coire nam Beith. Broken leg.

MAY 20—Sròn na Creise; casualty attempting to avoid falling rock, over-balanced and fell 50-100ft. Head injuries and broken neck, fatal.

MAY 25—Buachaille Etive Mór; rope of two; leader fell. Serious spinal injuries.

JULY 3—Aonach Eagach ridge: man became cragfast on descent. Assisted by his own party.

AUGUST 2—Party of two descending to Lost Valley from Bidean nam Bian. Route beyond their capability, one fell, fractured skull and lacerations.

AUGUST 8—Party of two descending An-t-Sròn; one tripped and fell about 50ft. Companion went for help and also fell. Both minor injuries.

AUGUST 23—Man descending by Aonach Dubh fell about 20ft. Serious injuries.

SEPTEMBER 13—No. 5 Gully, Aonach Dubh; two men overdue through inexperience.

SEPTEMBER 16—Two men on Aonach Eagach ridge; alarm raised as car was left for three days.

OCTOBER 25—Two climbers underestimated time for Clachaig Gully and were overtaken by darkness and given assistance.

NOVEMBER 28—Man walking on Buachaille Etive Mór ridge slipped on ice and suffered minor injuries.

DECEMBER 19—Climber in Great Gully, Buachaille Etive Mór slipped on ice when crampon came loose. Minor injuries.

DECEMBER 31—Two men descending into Lost Valley when they slipped on ice. One pulled ligaments on leg, the other pierced his leg with a crampon and had severe lacerations.

### CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

FEBRUARY 11—Mixed group of seven climbing instructors and students climbing or grouped 20-30 feet below top of Cinderella, Creag Meagaidh. Two of them were roped together. Surface of soft snow lying on hard snow. They triggered off a wind slab avalanche which swept six of the seven down 700ft. Five were injured: (M41) both legs broken; (F30) broken leg; (M19) facial injuries and fractured scapula; (M30) chest injuries and twisted ankle; (M29) shock. Evacuated by RAF Sea King helicopter.

FEBRUARY 25—Hill walker (44) separated intentionally from large party on Mamores main ridge in good weather (quite windy). Claimed he later suffered from leg cramp. Stayed overnight in a snowhole in Coire a' Mhail and descended to Steall Cottage safe and well at 1400 hrs next day. SARDA dogs. RAF helicopter. Lochaber MRT. 70 man-hours.

JUNE 28—Experienced woman hill walker (39) in group of five descending to Bealach Dubh (Ben Alder) from the north side. Foot went into deep, narrow hole obscured by heather – injury to left ankle. Tayside Civ. MRT. 72 man-hours.

AUGUST 14—Hill walker (45) broke her right ankle in good weather. Simple slip in Glen Nevis near Steall Ruins. Lochaber MRT. 24 man-hours.

AUGUST 17—Good weather. Couple had been walking all day. At Monessie Gorge (283807) Roy Bridge, man (71) slipped, rolled down slope and fell into gorge (50ft). Wife also fell in trying to save him but swam ashore unhurt. Night search negative. Next day found under water. Lochaber MRT. 24 man-hours.

### SKYE

FEBRUARY 24/26—Man (29) and woman (26) missing on a walk up Coire Bhàsteir from Sligachan to Bruach na Frithe. Man (who was using an assumed name) was found by RAF helicopter at 462268 having died from exposure after apparently falling and becoming unconscious. Had left rucksack by girl's body. Woman found by SARDA dog higher up at 462262 having died from severe head injuries after a fall of 300/400ft. Skye MRT. 186 man-hours.

APRIL 19—Loch Scavaig, Bad Step; accompanied walker (23) took wrong path – heading south – slipped on a rock slab and fell 20ft. He was helicoptered out due to suspected spinal injuries which proved correct. Skye MRT. RAF helicopter. 7 man-hours.

APRIL 21—Coir' a'Ghrunnda; walker (39) struck by a falling rock dislodged by a member of her own party above her. Slight concussion and neck bruising. Helicopter requested because report was of a broken neck, but she walked down with help from a friend. RAF helicopter. Skye MRT.

MAY 12—Experienced climber/hillwalker (70) returning to Glenbrittle down Coir' a'Ghrunnda strayed from cairned route. He lost control when sliding down a smooth, wet, rock slab. Severe knee injury. Helicoptered out by RAF. 3 man-hours.

MAY 25—Climber (29) concussed with multiple abrasions to head and body. Handhold gave way and he fell while climbing 2nd Pinnacle of Pinnacle Ridge, Sgùrr nan Gilleann. Walked down with aid of his brother. Detained 5 days. Unroped. Good weather.

MAY 27—Bidein Druim nan Ramh, Cuillin Main Ridge; boulder dislodged by a forward party of the same group swept party of four climbers about 25ft down scree into a narrow gully. Two women (38, 27) sustained minor injuries. One was helicoptered out but bad weather precluded airlift of second woman, who walked down with assistance. RAF helicopter. Skye MRT. 30 man-hours.

MAY 29—Solo climber (22) killed by a fall from SW Face of An Stac, Cuillins. Witnesses below saw him in difficulties and saw a handhold give way. Fatal head injuries. Stretchered down in bad weather. This was the 'brother' mentioned on May 25. RAF helicopter. Skye MRT.

JUNE 8—One of a party of three descending from Coir' an Lochain, above Coruisk. Man (29) traversing scree, slipped on wet rock and fell 150ft sustaining a pelvic fracture and elbow injuries. Stretchered down to Coruisk by passing climbers. Taken out by boat to Elgol. Skye MRT. 30 man-hours.

AUGUST 24—Three hillwalkers descending loose scree on Tourist Path of Sgùrr nan Gilleann. Man (39) stepped on a loose boulder, slipped and fell, fracturing ankle. Flown out by RAF helicopter. Skye MRT. 32 man-hours.

AUGUST 27—Search for American couple who failed to cancel a form stating that they were climbing on Sgùrr nan Gilleann. Skye MRT. 104 man-hours.

SEPTEMBER 22-23—Two men (22, 20) crossed Skye Ridge from Coire an Ghreadaidh by An Dorus and did not return that night. They went by Camasunary (spent night) to Sligachan instead of going round peninsula to Glenbrittle. They had left Youth Hostel with no notice of their intentions. RAF helicopter. Skye MRT. 154 man-hours.

SEPTEMBER 29—Hillwalkers passing by found a dead man (63) on scree 400 yards south of An Dorus Pass. Thought to have been descending from ridge, lost in bad weather and died of exposure. Unaccompanied and ill-equipped. Carried down. Skye MRT. 80 man-hours.

DECEMBER 29—Group of four from party of seven descending Fionn Choire, from Sgùrr a Bhàsteir. Man (26) glissading, lost ice axe and slid out of control, hitting a rock. Died from head injuries. RAF helicopter. Skye MRT. 42 man-hours.

#### CAIRNGORMS

JANUARY 18—University party of three planned to walk in snow up Glen Thaitneich (Glen Shee area), cross a bealach and descend Baddoch Burn (12 miles). Bad navigation caused descent of Glen Ey (16 miles) Grampian Police MRT. Braemar MRT. Tracked vehicle. 11 man-hours.

JANUARY 27—Search of Chalamain Gap area after red flare sighted. Nothing found. Cairngorm MRT. SARDA. 32 man-hours.

FEBRUARY 21—Two climbers of an experienced party of three swept down Parallel Gully 'A', Lochnagar by a small wind slab avalanche. Leader's (22) peg belay held. He was 50ft above the other two, who were together 300ft up. Second (34) was held on rope after 100ft fall when his ice axe and 'dead man' belays failed. Uninjured. Third man (32) was held on ropes after 240ft fall when his rock peg belay failed. Unconscious. Severe body bruising, collapsed lung. Fractured clavicle. All three lowered by other climbers. Injured man flown out by RAF helicopter. Aberdeen, Braemar, Grampian Police, RAF Leuchars MRT's. 165 man-hours.

FEBRUARY 27—Check on schoolboys camping on Auchterhouse Hill, Angus (Sidlaws) in severe weather, prompted by worried parents. Boys were met coming down the hill. Tayside Police and Civ. MRT. 20 man-hours.

FEBRUARY 28—Winter Corrie of Dreish, Glen Clova; second man (15) on first pitch of a snow/ice climb. Fell 10ft to foot of climb, and 20ft on slopes below, when fall was arrested by rope to leader. Fall caused by one of his ice axes coming out. Fractured tibia and fibula. Tayside Police MRT and Tayside

Civilian MRT combined to stretch him down from 2,000ft in worsening weather at night. 99 man-hours.

APRIL 29—Social worker, male (30) leading a party of youths up Carn-nan-Sgliat above Braemar stumbled over a tree root low down on the hill and injured a knee cartilage. Braemar and Grampian Police MRT's 6 man-hours.

APRIL 30\*—Spittal of Glenmuick. Extensive searches of Lochnagar area for USAF sergeant who had laid a false trail (by telephone message, a note in the mountaineers' registration box, and an abandoned car) and faked his disappearance. Arrested about a month later in USA. Eight MRT's involved plus SARDA, plus RAF helicopter. 3,537 man-hours.

MAY 24—Man (70) wearing town shoes slipped on wet path and fractured tibia and fibula. One of a party of thirty descending from Tolmount to Glen Callater. Stretched down from 2,100ft. Braemar and Grampian Police MRT's. 45 man-hours.

MAY 28-29—German policeman (37) overdue. Had bought a compass that morning in Braemar. Two walkers he met on MacDui summit directed him to Glen Derry, but he eventually followed River Avon down to Tomintoul. Aberdeen, Braemar and Grampian Police MRT's. 226 man-hours.

MAY 31—Schoolboy (12) in large party twisted knee at Jock's Hut on Jock's Road (L. Callater to Glen Doll). Tayside Civ. MRT. 10 man-hours.

JUNE 7—Youth (15) of a walking club group of 53 on a 22-mile walk to attempt Ben Avon from Deeside. Club soon split up into smaller groups, but youth lunched alone at 3,350ft. Panicked when he could see no others, walked quickly, stumbled on a stone and twisted his ankle. Passers by, not his own party, carried him down to 1,550ft. Braemar and Grampian Police MRT's. Argo Cat and RAF helicopter. 37 man-hours.

JUNE 24—Party of teacher and four youths. Schoolboy (15) tripped and fell amongst scree descending east slopes of Cnap a' Chleirich, Beinn a' Bhuid. Fractured tibia and fibula. Stretcher and Argo Cat to ambulance. Braemar and Grampian Police MRT's. RAF helicopter. 120 man-hours.

JUNE 25—Hillwalker (30) with bad blisters near summit of Cairn of Claise (The Mounth) awaited his three companions who went on to do more summits. Over two hours later they returned but their man had gone down, alone without map or compass into the wrong glen (Isla) in thick mist and rain. Found by ground searchers, very early next morning, 0245. Aberdeen, RAF Leuchars, Tayside Civilian and Police MRT's. RAF helicopter. 185 man-hours.

JULY 7—German youth (15) suffering from appendicitis one mile below Loch Loch (Beinn a' Ghlo). Evacuated by gamekeepers, police and ambulancemen in good weather.

JULY 18—Man (50) exhausted trying to complete Lairig an Laoigh from Loch Morlich, with three companions. He was picked up by Landrover in Glen Derry. Braemar and Grampian Police MRT's. 3 man-hours.

JULY 20—Accompanied hillwalker (37) on Lairig Ghru Route from Coylumb-bridge. At Luibeg Burn he appeared to be afraid of the water, which was low at the time, and attempted the crossing crawling from boulder to boulder on hands and knees. His hand slipped off a boulder and he fell face first into the boulder, breaking his nose and cutting his forehead. He lay unconscious face down in a shallow pool, but was quickly pulled out by his companions. Flown out. Detained in hospital overnight. *There is a good bridge just upstream.* Braemar and Grampian Police MRT's. RAF helicopter. 8 man-hours.

JULY 30—Sgor Dubh (south of Luibeg); woman hillwalker (26) separated from companion and walked on heedless of time. Teams called out, but cancelled.

AUGUST 16—Climber (45) killed when soloing on *Black Spout Buttress*, Lochnagar. He was seen to fall from the top pitch, together with loose fragments of rock. His two companions had been roped up below him on the same pitch.

Another witness alerted teams. All three had climbed *Eagle Ridge* just before. Deceased had severe head, rib and leg injuries. His helmet had come off his head with the straps still fastened and intact. Braemar and Grampian Police MRT's. RAF helicopter. 57 man-hours.

SEPTEMBER 21—Hillwalker (33) on Dee to Feshie route camped near the head of Feshie. Next day he was trapped on the north bank of the Feshie by the Allt Coire Bhlairst and the Eindart Burn, both in spate. Wisely he waited till burns went down and he reached Glenfeshie P.O. 12 hours overdue. Cairngorm, Braemar and Grampian Police MRT's. 106 man-hours.

SEPTEMBER 28—Seventy people were walking from Blair Atholl to Aviemore. A girl (15) with inadequate protective clothing suffered from exhaustion/exposure at Corrour Bothy. Apparently recovered then suffered again next day en route to Sinclair Hut. Airlifted out by RAF helicopter. Cairngorm MRT. 30 man-hours.

OCTOBER 2—Party of nine Army officers and potential officers walking Glen Tilt-Lairig Ghru camped at Linn of Dee. Next day in Lairig Ghru near foot of Tailors' Burn man (19) collapsed during sleet in a NE gale. Born and brought up in S. Africa he had neither seen snow or such conditions. Carried back to Corrour Bothy on rope stretcher. Recovered and walked to Mar Lodge. Meanwhile some of party had reached Glenmore Lodge and raised alarm. Braemar and Grampian Police MRT's. 20 man-hours.

NOVEMBER 8-9—Three men hillwalking got lost in mist on an intended trip from Glen Doll to Tom Buidhe and return. Spent night under a rock with one space blanket and walked into Glen Isla. RAF helicopter. Tayside Civilian and Police MRT's. 207 man-hours.

NOVEMBER 21—Crampons swinging loose in high wind broke spectacles of a well-equipped man (32) with a companion in Upper Glen Doll. Bad vision caused separation and he bivvied. Found walking out next morning. Tayside Civilian and Police MRT's. 35 man-hours.

DECEMBER 13-14—Lochnagar; two men (24, 29) attempted *Raeburn's Gully*, caught by severe blizzard, retreated with difficulty and got caught by darkness in storm. Bivouacked in corrie and encountered rescuers at midday just below mouth of corrie when seeking way down. Another two men (both 18), climbed *Black Spout*, were caught by blizzard and darkness, lost their compass and bivouacked, probably in the small northern corrie. They too survived the night well and encountered the rescue party on their way down the mountain. Neither pair knew their exact location. Aberdeen, Braemar, Grampian Police MRT's. 236 man-hours.

DECEMBER 23—False alarm for Cairngorm MRT when white flare seen in Strath Nethy. Nothing found.

DECEMBER 30-31—Party of five started late on *Escalator*, Hell's Lum Crag. One soloed and left a rope from top to help others, waited until 9 p.m. and then went for help in very bad weather. Only three of the others could get up, even with the fixed rope. These three bivouacked at the top of the climb. One of them had just got into his bivvy-bag when a strong gust of wind blew him over the crag and he fell and slid 900ft, sustaining injuries. He was lifted out by helicopter which managed to land near the Shelter Stone despite bad visibility. The other two were walked out but the cragfast man (19) was found to be dead from exposure (without his boots). It was his first winter climb. Time saved for the rescuers by use of a tracked vehicle was probably vital in finding and succouring the injured man. RAF helicopter. SARDA. Leuchars & Kinloss, Glenmore Lodge and Cairngorm MRT's. 180 man-hours.

#### SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

MARCH 23, 1980 (Omitted in last year's report)—Poorly equipped walker died of exposure at about 1500ft in the Campsie Fells. Alarm raised by companion. Body found by SARDA dog. Lomond MRT. 120 man-hours.



FEBRUARY 5—Party of four hillwalkers on Ben Vorlich. Experienced man (25) with no ice axe, tried to retrieve a bag which had blown over east face (a very steep face with ice and frozen snow) and fell 500ft, sustaining head injuries. Located by RAF helicopter and flown out but he died in hospital two days later. A second experienced hillwalker (24), again with no ice axe, attempted to rescue the first by climbing down the face, but he also fell, sustaining head lacerations and bruising his back. Found by Tayside Police MRT, stretchered down, and later airlifted by the same RAF helicopter after it had refuelled. Tayside Police MRT. 45 man-hours.

MAY 29—Male student (19) fell down a waterfall on Ben Lomond, 1000ft above Rowardennan. One of a party of six. Training shoes. Cut head, strained leg, broken wrist. Lomond MRT. 68 man-hours.

MAY 31—Ben Lomond Fell Race. Three fell runners stretchered; one man had severe cramp near summit and later walked out, another damaged his knee badly at 800ft and a schoolgirl collapsed unconscious with exhaustion/exposure near the top. Searches were made for two more fell runners who later turned up on the wrong side of the hill. Lomond MRT.

JUNE 7—Seventeen cub scouts and three adults overdue. Caused by compass error in mist and late start. Went to Glenmallan, Loch Long instead of returning to Glen Fruim. Arrochar MRT and Police MRT. 10 man-hours.

JUNE 21—Illness. Girl (18) stretchered down from Cobbler summit. One of party of six spending shortest night on summit. Arrochar MRT and Dumbarton Police MRT. 50 man-hours.

JULY 12—Man (24) descending Cobbler South Peak to complete the traverse. Unroped with two companions. Slipped on greasy rock whilst descending SE Ridge. Fell 170ft to foot and was killed. Dumbarton Police MRT. RAF helicopter. 40 man-hours.

JULY 13—Strathblane Hills, Campsie Fells. Woman (57) fell and broke her leg climbing on rocky escarpment. Stretchered down to Blanefield. Lomond MRT. 30 man-hours.

SEPTEMBER 26-27—Night and dawn search for three men on SAS training. Well equipped. One with exhaustion and mild exposure correctly looked after by the other two. Lomond MRT. 140 man-hours.

OCTOBER 15/21\*—Knapdale, Loch Fyne. Keen fisherman slipped crossing stream in a gorge. Drowned, probably after being knocked unconscious. Found with foot trapped between boulders. Dumbarton Police MRT. 93 man-hours.

OCTOBER 26—Soldier (20) on Army exercise collapsed with slight chest infection, fatigue and slight exposure, NW of Meall Garbh on Ben Lawers. Army helicopter failed to evacuate him because of high winds. Tayside Civilian and Police MRT's found him at 2330 hours and stretchered him out. 336 man-hours.

OCTOBER 27—Hillwalker, male (57) died of natural causes when hillwalking with friends near Amulree.

NOVEMBER 22—Moors north of Ben Vorlich; Dutch marine officer concussed by slipping on wet grass and knocking head. An NCO later slipped and cut his hand badly during carry out of officer on improvised stretcher. RAF helicopter.

DECEMBER 6—Cobbler/Ben Ime Bealach; wet, slight snow and ice. Walker, male (33) slipped while descending. Concussion and bruising, leg and back injuries. Stretchered off. Dumbarton Police MRT, Arrochar MRT, SARDA. 60 man-hours.

DECEMBER 21—Beinn Leabhain, Glen Ogle; girl (17) exhausted in knee-deep snow. Lochearnhead/Killin MRT. 4 man-hours.

## ARRAN

MARCH 17-18—Solo hillwalker (36) somehow missed track from Glen Rosa to Glen Sannox and wandered down Glen Iorsa to Dougarie Lodge. He spent the night (heavy showers) under an overhanging bank of Iorsa Water. No compass. Extensive search by Arran MRT. 143 man-hours.

JUNE 9—Ceum na Cailleach. With three companions a man (28) was descending from the Witches Step on the North Glen Sannox side (i.e. to the north). Missed path in mist, slipped on a ledge covered with granite gravel, and fell 50ft into a gully, fracturing pelvis and dislocating shoulder. Arran MRT did an 800ft stretcher lower in four stages of 200ft then he was flown out by RN helicopter. 125 man-hours.

SEPTEMBER 9—Experienced hillwalker (18) scrambling along A'Chir Ridge in mist, with a friend, slipped on a slab and was killed by a fall down the west side, sustaining a fractured skull. His body was located by a SARDA dog and carried down overnight by Arran MRT. 260 man-hours.

NOVEMBER 15—Member of a mainland MRT and his SARDA dog were on an organised MR exercise in Arran during high winds, searching a ridge. Just north of the summit of Am Binnein he was blown to the ground by a freak gust and fractured his left scapula. 48 man-hours.

## SOUTHERN UPLANDS

FEBRUARY 7—Hillwalking group of 16 on east face of Beninner (2328ft), Carsphairn hills. Woman (60) slipped on wet grass, slid through a snow patch and rolled 100 yards. No ice axe. Head lacerations, bruising and possible neck injury. RN helicopter. Galloway S & R Group. 36 man-hours.

MAY 23—Girl (22) broke leg on Pennine Way in Cheviot Hills. RAF helicopter.

MAY 27—Extensive searches for a man missing at Machermore. He had gone for a hill walk '*to sort things out.*' Helicopters. SARDA. Galloway and Moffat MRT's.

JULY 15—Lad (12) fell on rocks and bruised his back on a sponsored walk on Criffel. RN helicopter. SARDA. Galloway MRT.

AUGUST 9—Criffel Fell Race. Girl (15) twisted ankle.

## IN MEMORIAM

## EDWIN KER

EDWIN KER died last January at the age of ninety. He joined the Club in 1944 but seemed to have done very little climbing until he met Tom McKinnon in the early fifties. His childhood was spent near Milngavie but most of his early years in Canada where he lectured in English at Toronto. He disliked talking about his past so I know very little. His cavalry exploits with the White Russians are a bit of a mystery. I met him through Tom and we did a few climbs together. He became very keen on ski-ing with the idea of eventually ski-ing on glaciers and mountains. Unfortunately rheumatism and stiffness prevented him from getting much ability in spite of the utmost determination. Sailing was probably his greatest love. I remember a night passage in the Sound of Sleat, seeing him at the tiller of his boat crooning happily to himself with the rest of the crew in their bunks. He tended to avoid company, detesting small talk and reminiscences - 'Garrulous old men talking about the past . . .'



He was extremely generous and many a delightful meal Tom and I have had cooked solely by Edwin in his comfortable book-lined hut at Balquidder where he lived alone. He could be devastating, as when a Young Scientist was holding forth on a pet subject, 'May I give an analogy?' E.K. who had been holding in his exasperation, 'NO!' Collapse of Y.S.

Another rugged individualist has gone.

D.S.

## TOM D. MacKINNON

TOM MacKINNON was a member of the Club for 45 years, and last November on a showery day of high wind and snow spume blowing on the ridges it was the sad duty of three members, including the author to sprinkle his ashes round the mossy base of a slender birch near the limit of the trees near the big boulder where the ravine gives way to grassy meadow. That Autumn day of rich colour and fast-moving sunbursts the setting was suitably Himalayan for a man who loved big mountains.

It was on the 1950 Scottish Himalayan Expedition I first got to know Big Tom, as he was generally known, a description that fitted him mentally as well as physically, especially when the situation was getting out of hand and a big decision had to be made. We remember his rock-like imperturbability, the good humour and the twinkling eye. It was still there, even in the worst moments of his long and painful illness that resulted in his early death at 68.

We remember – Douglas Scott, Bill Murray and I – his epic route-finding in the moonlight after the first ascent of our first 20,000ft peak, Uja Tirche. After 15 hours of climbing, some of it technically hard, we faced a complication of crumbling rock pinnacles banded with frozen snow and glazed with ice. Tom had led a way through them in the morning to put the summit in the bag. Unerringly he steered us down, safeguarding the three of us down a most daunting vertical wall, descending after us unprotected. Eight hours later he was snow-blind, the result of him removing his goggles to cope with the crux of the shining snow-arête and ice wall that opened the way to the summit.

The foundation of Tom's skill had been laid early. He did the A'Chir ridge solo when he was 14 and by the age of 20 he had sampled the best that Scotland had to offer in classic routes of the time. Summer and winter Tom and his friend John Brown were out. Two summer holidays in Norway led to a holiday with a Swiss Alpine Club party, and he climbed 14 peaks in his first Alpine season, including Mont Blanc.

Being a hard working pharmacist, with his busiest day of the week Saturday, he used to tell me that the hardest day on a mountain was not as tiring as Saturday in the shop dispensing from morning until late closing. So he tended to regard the Scottish hills as marvellous training for Alpine seasons, and in the six years before the war he had climbed over 70 peaks in the Central Massif.

Route finding was his special forte, so highly developed that when he lost his only eating utensil, a spoon, in the Rishi Gorge, he set himself the task of finding it three weeks later when we re-traced our way back across the difficult face we had traversed. He got it too.

We were back in the Himalaya in 1952 exploring unmapped mountains in the Rowaling Gorge before crossing the Tesi Lapch to Sola Khumbu. Once again Tom showed his gift of rapid acclimatisation which without doubt was one of the reasons for Charles Evans choosing him for the successful attack on Kanchenjunga. Of Tom, George Band wrote: 'At 42, he was the oldest of the party, but his age merely reflected greater stamina and experience.' The south-west face of this third highest mountain in the world had a fearful

avalanche reputation. Band and Evans agreed that it made the Khumbu Icefall of Everest look like a children's playground. Celebrating the preparations for the assault, Band writes: 'Waving the empty bottle, Tom, with his matted red beard, heavy ribbed jersey and scarlet nightcap, resembled a jovial pirate plucked from the pages of *'Peter Pan.'* Tom and five Sherpas set up camp V.

It was as high as Tom was to get by reason of a Sherpa falling down a crevasse from which, to quote Charles Evans, 'Tom had bodily lifted him out, an extraordinary feat.' The weather was poor. The Sherpa was ill, so Charles asked Tom to take him down all the way to base. Evans assessed Tom as a man 'Extraordinarily kind, full of humour and strength and real goodness.'

On an expedition Tom got a lot less peace than we did through willingness to forego his own comfort if a native came to the camp for treatment. Sometimes the queue would be quite big, and there was always a lot of good fun and banter among the cheerful people of the higher country. I remember in Rolwaling Tom visiting a stone hut containing a Sherpa who seemed chilled to the bone and breathing his last between filthy blankets laid on the floor. Tom sprang into action by getting hold of two small boys and putting them in with the patient as hot water bottles, while he boiled up water to mix in flour and make a poultice, at the same time injecting him heavily with penicillin. He stayed with him for part of the night, and was back next day renewing the treatment. A few days later the man was walking about.

His modesty was legion, but when he showed you pictures taken by him on the face of the Mer de Glace face of the Grepon, or you could get him to talk about his double-traverse of the Matterhorn, from Zermatt back to Zermatt via the Swiss and Italian faces in a day, then you knew there could be a lot more when the time was ripe for him to unfold.

President from 1958 to 1960 Tom was married by then and was settling down to a new kind of family life in the house where he had been born overlooking Tannoch Loch on the outskirts of Milngavie. Many a visit I paid to him in his invalid days following the severe stroke which took away the power of his legs and made speech difficult. From having a zimmer as a walking aid he was able to discard it for walking sticks and he was delighted when he made his first ascent of the stairs without them. He worked hard on his defective speech too, and was clearly on the mend for a time, swotting up for future Hebridean cruises, for he had become a keen sailor and managed a wee cruise with his wife Rowena and daughter Charlotte in 1980. At that time he was able to walk with the aid of sticks round the garden and we had a great party in his house with climbing friends to see slides of George Rodger recently returned from another trip to the Himalaya.

He was in fine form that night, but sad days were shortly to follow as his health began to slip back, and in the last weeks those who loved him knew his time had come. His death was a merciful release, which is why we put sadness behind us when we went to the Lost Valley and celebrated the life of a man whose presence always made you feel good.

T.W.

I first met Tom at the C.I.C. Hut in July 1934. He and John Brown were already a well-known partnership. On that occasion someone glissading down No. 3 Gully fell into the bergschrund and broke a leg. We got the iron bunk-frame that doubled as a stretcher and the five available trudged back up No. 3. When we got back down to the Lochan na Ciste we were all pretty well knackered, having had no food since our piece early in the day. Tom as ever was a tower of strength. I remember his advice, 'Drink plenty of water, it will help to break down your fat and give you strength.'

Although he loved the Highland hills I think most would agree that his

greatest interest lay in higher mountains – in Norway, the Alps and the Himalaya. On a traverse of the Obergabelhorn with him and Bill Bennet we had an example of his sound mountain sense. It was late in the afternoon as we descended the Arbengrat and Tom advised against going on to cross the slopes beyond where the softened snow would be ready to peel off the underlying ice. So we bivvied high on the rock ridge and continued over hard frozen snow at dawn.

D.S.

## JOHN G. MacLEAN

JACK MacLEAN, a life member, died in 1980. He joined the Club in 1929, and it was shortly after that, that our acquaintanceship began. An early and typical episode was the start of a holiday in Glen Brittle. Jack, with other members of the party had preceded me and he had arranged to pick me up next day off the bus at the Drynoch Road end in an internal combustion contraption known as the 'Blue Death' which he had acquired from a D.I.Y. enthusiast. Tired of waiting by the roadside, I set off to walk and was halfway to Carbost when a machine gun stuttering heralded the arrival of Jack, delayed by car trouble. He promptly climbed out of the contraption with his usual beaming smile, sat down on the grassy bank beside two rucksack-laden females I had met on the bus, and intimated that the car was my job. That was the imperturbable Jack. The removal of a few lumps of chewing gum from parts of the mechanism seemed to cure the trouble, and we proceeded on our way. After that, Jack acquired a large touring car which he generously used as a form of public transport for his friends to and from Glen Brittle in those days when car ownership was less prevalent.

Jack was neither a Salvationist nor an Ultramontane. A bit of both, with a zest for ski-ing thrown in. He was a competent rock-climber but seldom to my knowledge aspired to lead. He enjoyed the climbs just as much, and with a real zest further down the rope. My memory is of being at the top of a pitch taking in the rope and seeing Jack's head come into view preceded by his theme tune,

'We are but little children weak  
Nor born to any high estate.'

Whether this was an unconscious upsurge from a subconscious memory of childhood days, or an expression of his reaction to the climb, I never knew. But it was promptly succeeded by his broad grin of satisfaction indicative of how much he was enjoying himself. He would probably count as his finest day, the occasion when as one of a party of three he made what was understood to be the second ascent of Route I on the Rannoch Wall.

He had, like most of us, his foibles, but far from proving irksome to others, they seemed to be the very things that endeared him to people. And he had par excellence the faculty of making himself persona gratis with others. He was without doubt the blue-eyed boy of Mrs Chisholm at Glen Brittle and, although I cannot corroborate it from my own experience, I have heard it said that if Jack was late off the hill (which being no laggard he seldom was) well, dinner just had to wait. I recall too, an occasion when the same mystique obtained for two of us arriving after midnight, a shake-down in the private parlour of the Station Hotel at Fort William.

His record may not go down in the annals of outstanding climbs, but if the joys of climbing are to be assessed in terms of climbing companions, Jack contributed much. After the late 'Thirties' I had little opportunity of climbing with him, but I believe he was back in Glen Brittle for several seasons after the war. Thereafter, ski-ing claimed his increasing interest.

To his widow Maureen, we extend our deepest sympathy.

W.L.C.

**ROBERT L. MITCHELL**

DR R. L. MITCHELL, one of our Aberdeen members, died early this year at the age of 71. Bob was originally an Edinburgh man but he made his home in Aberdeen when he joined the Staff of the Macaulay Institute for Soil Research in the mid-1930's. A noted scientist, he gained a reputation for his research in spectrochemical analysis of soils and related materials and, indeed, became a world authority on certain aspects of this work. He held the responsible post of Director of the Macaulay Institute from 1968 until his retirement in 1975.

Widely travelled, Bob Mitchell was an enthusiastic photographer and examples of his work are to be found in mountaineering guides and journals, including our own. Also a member of both the Alpine Club and the Cairngorm Club, it was with the latter that he was most closely associated. He joined it in 1935 and held office in turn as Committee member, Librarian and Journal Editor from 1938 to 1969. Fittingly he was made an Honorary Member of the Cairngorm Club in 1970. He also gave service to the S.M.C. as a Committee member from 1960-63 and had a session as Chairman of the Association of Scottish Climbing Clubs.

A bachelor, Bob was a private man, diffident and even shy at times and most of his close friends were those with whom he shared a love of the hills. This he was always ready to express and I well remember the enthusiasm and encouragement he communicated to me when I was a young and very junior member of the Cairngorm Club. They were still as evident when I consulted him about the Picos de Europa – a couple of years ago.

W.D.B.

**F. E. O'RIORDAN**

FREDDY O'RIORDAN died suddenly at his home in Edinburgh on 12th April 1981 within a week of his seventieth birthday, leaving a wife and daughter.

He joined the Club in 1947, having been a keen member of the J.M.C.S. for several years prior to the war when, in addition to climbing extensively in our own country, he spent a great deal of time in Norway, returning to the Trondheim region for year after year. He became Assistant Secretary in 1947 and continued in that unassuming but exceedingly valuable role until 1955. During that time, he was responsible for producing two membership lists – a work of great devotion!

As he grew older, he remained extremely active, visiting the Alps at least once each year, though latterly he concentrated more on the flora and photography than on the high tops.

He practiced as a W.S. in a prominent Edinburgh firm of lawyers before the war and returned to it after his service which was mainly in R.A.F. Intelligence in Burma. In 1951, he was invited to join the Board of Tullis Russell & Co. Ltd., as their legal adviser, but he swiftly became head of their purchasing department which gave him the opportunity for world wide travel.

He had three great loves: his family, the hills in all their aspects, and music (being for many years a director of the Scottish National Orchestra). But the greatest thing about Freddy was that it was fun to be with him, be it camping in a remote corrie or closeted in his Kirkcaldy study being taught to appreciate chamber music. Those of us fortunate enough to be numbered amongst his friends – and he had a great many – will never forget him.

R.R.S.H.



## JOHN PROOM

JOHN PROOM joined the Club in 1956 and served on the Committee from 1962 to 1965. As Vice-President of the J.M.C.S. (Perth) he did much to encourage young climbers and proposed quite a few for membership of the Club.

He was a most enthusiastic mountaineer, a particularly keen rock climber and greatly enjoyed camping and visiting bothies in remote parts of the Highlands. The 'John Proom May Meet' with Bill Jones and Bill Patullo (Grampian Club) became an annual event which I was privileged to attend on the last two occasions. He was also active abroad and had quite a few seasons in the Alps. He attended the Joint Meet of the Club, Alpine Club and Climbers Club at Saas Fee and Zermatt in 1960 when he and Mike Banks climbed the Zinal Rothorn by the Rotgrat. In 1962 he climbed the Weisshorn and traversed the Matterhorn up the Italian ridge and down the Hörnli ridge.

He took a great interest in mountain flowers at home and abroad and in the Maderanertal he was busy with a hammer collecting crystals.

In May 1977 he suffered a stroke. However he struggled on with great courage and took part in the J.M.C.S. (Perth) Jubilee celebrations on Easter Sunday 1979 when the members climbed all the 56 Munros in Perthshire. John and his companion did Stuchd an Lochain from Glen Lyon. He said 'It took us all day but we had only two good legs between us!'

He was a Customs and Excise Officer and served in the R.A.F. during the war. He made his own wine with great success. He was also a keen gardener and a brilliant bridge player. Always cheerful with a great sense of humour; at the Club A.G.M. a year or so ago he spotted a printing error in the Auditor's docquet and wanted to know the significance of the 'Bride of Allan'!

He died on 4th September 1981. To his widow Margery and three married daughters we offer our very sincere sympathy. He is greatly missed by his many friends.

G.S.R.

## ROY TAIT

ROY TAIT died on Lochnagar last August. Having successfully led his party up Eagle Ridge – his favourite route, which he climbed annually – he suggested that they continue with Black Spout Buttress. While leading, un-roped, the rock on which he was standing gave way and Roy was killed outright.

A popular and much respected climber in the Dundee area, Roy had wandered the hills and climbed freely before joining the Grampian Club in 1974. He became a regular attender on club outings and was soon involved in committee work. His enthusiasm and varied talents also enlivened the indoor meets. By 1980 he had been appointed Vice-President. He volunteered to join the Tayside Mountain Rescue Team at its inception, soon becoming a team leader, always to the fore in organising, whether it was socially or on the hill.

His infectious enthusiasm and continual good humour made Roy a firm favourite with everyone he met. He was a good companion and also a most competent mountaineer, equally at home on rock, snow or ice. He did much to draw the different climbing fraternities in the Dundee area together.

Roy was very proud to be invited to join the S.M.C. in 1977. He attended the C.I.C. winter meets and helped on work parties before being appointed to the Committee in 1981. Without a doubt his presence would have been a great asset to the Club with his organising abilities and debating skills.

A gifted raconteur with a remarkable memory for people and detail, he was much in demand at social functions, always ready and willing to entertain

with verse or song. Originally an engineer to trade, Roy had served in the Merchant Navy before becoming a representative for various firms in the electrical trade. Roy was well known in Masonic circles and was due to be installed as Right Worshipful Master of Lodge St. Mary, Dundee.

A family man with two grandchildren, Roy and his wife, Shirley, shared many interests, enjoying the countryside together and holidaying among the hills at home as well as abroad with their two sons and daughter. He was so proud of them all. The affection in which he and Shirley were held was shown by the enormous turn-out at Roy's funeral when a moving tribute was paid by Terry Isles, President of the Grampian Club.

Roy was a leader by nature, with many hard routes to his credit but he will be remembered for the consideration and patience he displayed when introducing novices to his chosen sport. A word of friendly advice, a hint or tip about a route he knew well, always given with a smile, Roy was free of malice or competitive instincts.

He enjoyed life to the full and died as he had lived, giving freely of his time and skills for others.

While offering our sympathy to Shirley and her family, we who were privileged to know Roy Tait are grateful for the many happy memories we share with them.

G.L.J.

## FREDERICK ROBERT WYLIE

Through the death in January of FRED WYLIE, the Club has lost certainly one of the most active of its senior members, a very recent and valued Committee member, and a man who had a deep and life-long love of the Scottish Mountains.

To his very wide circle of friends he was always known as 'Fred' and so he will remain. A quiet and modest man, he had a great capacity for friendship and the warmth of the welcome he received at Club Meets and functions was itself a telling tribute to the high regard felt for him by all members.

Born in Glasgow in 1904, he was educated at Glasgow High School and thereafter as an architectural student showed exceptional promise by winning most of the top awards in his generation. Graduating A.R.I.B.A., he joined the family firm of Wylie Shanks and Wylie, eventually becoming senior partner before retiring in 1977. He was responsible for several Glasgow buildings of high architectural merit, including the Dental Hospital and the Head Office of the Scottish Legal and Life Society in Bothwell Street. For his long and valuable service as chief architect to the Scottish Industrial Estates he was awarded the O.B.E. and as Deacon of 'the Wrights' held highest office in the Glasgow Trades House.

Only second to his love of the hills was his interest in swimming. A life long member of the Arlington Baths in Glasgow for over 10 years he gave his services as an instructor to disabled boys. He was also keenly interested in Art and in Music.

During the war, he was called up in 1942, and as a Major in the Royal Engineers, spent nearly three years in India supervising the construction of base facilities.

I first met Fred on a hot June day in 1935, when, as complete strangers to one another, we joined forces at the base of Buachaille Etive Mór, and climbed Curved Ridge. At that time he had been for some years a member of the Glasgow High School Climbing Club, but soon after joined, and attended, the meets of the Glasgow section of the J.M.C.S. Although meeting intermittently on the hills, it was not until after he joined the S.M.C. in 1952 that our thirty years of close climbing association commenced.

For a succession of seasons our weekend outings were crowned by often gloriously sunny June vacations. Usually we joined Myles Morrison, Bill Carmichael and others for two weeks in the Cuillin but latterly made long incursions by outboard motor boat on Lochs Morar, Mullardoch, and Quoich to the remoter peaks of Kintail and the Rough Bounds. On few of these expeditions were we able to restrain him from swimming in frequently icy burns or lochans. Later still, we spent several vacations in the Alps, climbing in districts as varied as Canton Ticino and the Bernese Oberland of Switzerland, and the Stubai Thal in Tyrol, and the Dolomites. Last summer we flew to Dublin, hired a car, and did the Irish 3000ft tops in a few days. Never a rock climber he was always a hard and steady goer on the hill.

Fred completed the ascent of all the Munros in 1975, and was currently extending his knowledge of the Scottish hills by collecting Corbetts, 110 of which he had ascended by New Year 1982. By tracing the routes of all his Scottish expeditions on his set of 1 inch to 1 mile O.S. maps, he neatly allied his draughtsman's expertise to his mountain interests. From 1952 he never missed a New Year or an Easter Meet of the Club, and I climbed Ben a'Bheithir with him on 2nd January of this year when attending what was to be his last Meet.

Fred kept himself fit by joining with Glasgow friends in long hill walks every Wednesday. It was on the walk of Wednesday, 13th January, that in Glen Fruin he died, as he often told me he wished to do, 'on the hill.'

But these records of his life do no more than exemplify his deep love for the Club and the hills. His many friends will treasure their own personal reminiscences of a most endearing character, whose passing leaves one with a sense of privilege in having enjoyed his company and regard, in spite of the inevitable feeling of irreparable loss.

He had a very happy family life, and to his devoted wife, two sons and daughter we now offer our sincere sympathy.

J.N.L.

## BOB SCOTT O THE DERRY

BOB SCOTT was not a member of the Club but the appearance of his obituary in this *Journal* is certainly justified. He put his stamp on Scottish mountaineers if not on mountaineering and a proper record for posterity would not be right without him.

Few climbers knew Bob before he went to the Derry. His predecessor there was a Glen Livet man, known locally as Aal Beattie. I got on well with him, but he took a hard line with most people entering his domain. Even the Commandos were wary of him, calling him 'Buffalo Bill.' To one unfortunate camper whom he ejected, he announced 'Haud up the glen, an if ye dinna like that haud doon the glen!'

Bob was an extraordinary contrast when he took over from Beattie in 1947. He welcomed everybody to the place, provided they stuck to the fair rules that he laid down for litter, fires and other aspects of his countryside code. He laid down these rules with a unique mixture of wit and sarcasm, combined with enough aggression to enforce rapid compliance from even the most pompous and status-conscious naval officers, professors or judges. In doing this, Bob used the Aberdeenshire dialect to good effect. There is no tongue more expressive than Aberdeenshire Scots, and Bob was the best exponent of it that I have ever come across. Even at his most aggressive, though, he always had such a deep wit and such a marvellous turn of phrase that he could make everybody laugh and appreciate his abundant sense of humour. That, along with his outgoing personality and the great welcome he gave to visitors, made him outstanding with people.



It was partly because of this that Luibeg and the Derry became the main base for mountaineering in the north-east. It stayed that way for over a decade of remarkable advances in exploration of new routes in summer and winter on the crags. The place was such a good base that the keener climbers tended to go there, and mutual stimulation then forced the pace even faster. The excitement of exploration at that time was tremendous. The stimulus of a gathering of the right number of people, as happened so often at Luibeg, the Fife Bar or the Bruachdryne tea room on the way up to Luibeg, helped greatly. Much of this was due to Bob's marvellous personality. Without wishing to do any climbing himself, nonetheless he greatly respected what was being achieved. Bob was proud that this was happening on his beat, which he regarded as the finest part of Scotland. And he was delighted that it was being done by north-east loons with whom he could communicate most easily in the rich tongue of Aberdeenshire. Into the 60's, the wave of general tourists became so great that Bob had to impose more restrictions on everybody, for the sake of maintaining the marvellous area around Luibeg without serious damage.

Bob was rightly and rightfully Bob Scott o the Derry, in a way that Highland lairds can never be. Nobody can really own land in the sense that one can own and carry around a book or a suit. All one can do is have the right to have use of land. In that fundamental sense, Bob clearly had pre-eminence in the Derry beat and it was truly his kingdom. Both it and he were never the same after he left. Those of us who were privileged to know and use the kingdom under his stewardship will not forget that.

A.W.

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

### Easter Meet 1981 – Dornie

THE Easter Meet held at Loch Duich Hotel was attended by 22 members and 7 guests.

The weather was excellent. The following ascents were reported: Meall na Teanga, Sròn a' Choire Ghairbh, A'Ghlas Bheinn, Beinn Fhada, Bidean nam Bian, Gairich, Sgùrr na Ciste Duibhe to Sgùrr Fhuaran, Aonach Bhuidhe, Beinn Sgrìol, Moruisg, Sgùrr nan Ceannachean, Sgùrr nan Ceathreamhnan, South Cluanie Ridge from Creag a' Mhaim to Sgùrr na Sgine and Faochag, Saddle by Forcan ridge, Mullach na Dheirgain, Sguman Coinntich, Sgùrr An Airgid and rock climbs – A'Chioch (Applecross) and Ardverikie Wall (Loch Laggan).

Present were: *Members* – Vice-President Ledingham, D. J. Bennet, T. B. Fleming, R. G. Folkard, C. C. Gorrie, J. M. Hartog, R. Hillcoat, R. C. S. Low, M. Morrison, J. R. Marshall, I. D. McNicol, K. MacRae, D. H. McPherson, T. Nicholson, I. H. Ogilvie, D. W. I. Piggott, G. S. Roger, C. R. Steven, W. T. Taylor, I. Waller, C. B. M. Warren, F. R. Wylie and *Guests* – R. Allen (A.C.), I. Cumming, W. Donaldson, N. G. Hetherington, J. Nicholson, O. Turnbull (A.C.) and D. Livingston.

Congratulations to Charles Warren who celebrated a recent birthday with the two severe rock climbs led by his two Alpine Club guests. Furthermore he wore a fine pair of Robert Lawrie's boots which he took to Everest in 1938 – a most remarkable record.

Once again a most successful and enjoyable Meet and our thanks to the manager and staff of the hotel for looking after us so well.

## New Year Meet 1982 – Glencoe

THE New Year Meet held at Glencoe Hotel was attended by 15 members and 5 guests.

Apart from New Year's day the weather was not too good. However, the following ascents were reported: Ben Ledi, Stob Ban Sgùrr Eilde Mór, Binnein Mór, Na Gruagaichean, An Garbhanach, Am Bodach, Mullach nan Coirean, Sgùrr Dhonuill, Sgùrr Dhearg, Bidean nam Bian and some members skied on Meall a' Bhuiridh.

Present were: *Members* – Vice-President Ledingham, H. Brown, J. Mackenzie, I. D. McNicol, D. H. McPherson, H. H. Mills, W. Myles, I. H. Ogilvie, D. W. I. Piggott, G. S. Roger, G. Sanderson, D. Scott, I. Smart, W. Wallace, C. B. M. Warren, F. R. Wylie and *Guests* – J. Broadfoot, H. Hanslinger, N. G. Hetherington, L. Watson and G. Wylie.

It was an enjoyable Meet despite the weather. The company was good and parties were out every day. Out thanks to Mr Mac Connacher and his staff at the hotel for looking after us so well.

It is very sad that this was Fred Wylie's last Meet. He died coming down from the Luss hills about 10 days later. He was a most keen and regular attender at our Meets and will be greatly missed.

## Reception 1981

THE Revolution arrived in Stirling on the evening of Saturday the 31st October when the first S.M.C. Reception to be held in isolation from a Dinner took place at the Golden Lion Hotel. About eighty members, wives, girlfriends and other guests were there to see the slides taken by Dave Broadhead and Des Rubens on their trip to Colorado and Wyoming. Their commentary, delivered as a double-act, was light and entertaining and the photographs were excellent. They left us envious of the climbing and weather they enjoyed and impressed at their work-rate – thirty routes in a month's trip spread over four separate climbing areas from Boulder to the Grand Tetons.

The buffet was excellent and there was adequate time to go round and talk to people, none of the usual rush to get the A.G.M. started. A relaxed and civilised evening I thought – some must have thought otherwise judging by the November Circular.

This function was of course experimental and the future arrangements have yet to be decided, but the consensus of those present seemed to be that it was an enjoyable evening and a valuable opportunity to meet and talk to a wider range of fellow members than was feasible under the previous system. In fact, we might be in danger of becoming a Club rather than a set of occasionally tangential cliques if this sort of thing is allowed to continue.

## A.G.M. and Dinner

THE 93rd A.G.M. of the Scottish Mountaineering Club (it is salutary to write out our title in full occasionally) took place in a unique setting on the 5th December 1981 – a mere three miles or so from actual mountains. Not only that, the Cowlumbridge Hotel, with its modern architecture, indoor swimming pool, numerous bars and courteous staff is not the kind of place the S.M.C. usually selects for its annual attack of self-importance. Although no one actually turned up with snow on their boots, many of us had been on the hill that day. In fact Jim Donaldson, Bill Myles and Iain Smart did the thing in style by walking over from Glen Derry by way of Loch Avon to the Coire Cas car park, where they accepted an (unsolicited) lift. However, to keep the record straight, only Smart made the return journey on Sunday, to reclaim his bicycle left at Derry Lodge.

The A.G.M. started with an unscheduled interruption from Jim Donaldson, who took exception to the comments in the Circular on the Reception and wished to record his dissent. He was widely supported in this. Business then went suspiciously smoothly and at such a rate that it looked as though it would be all over in half-an-hour.

However, as expected, Robin Campbell's motion concerning the Unna Rules and National Trust for Scotland produced much serious discussion. It became apparent that there was a strong feeling among the members present that if the mountain environment is to be preserved in the form which best suits our own (selfish?) interests and, more importantly, which most of us believe is in the best interests of the mountain ecology; a more positive attitude to conservation will have to be adopted. The motion was duly passed *nem. con.*, but in addition to briefing Ken MacRae (who is the Club's representative) it was suggested that some form of guidance principles be formulated regarding the future management of mountain areas. Instances of particular actions by the N.T.S. which members feel are inimical to the spirit of the Unna Rules and contrary to sensible preservation of the mountain environment are being sought.

The Grampian Way problem also re-emerged in a slightly different but no less worrying form. Faced with opposition from landowners in the Spey Valley, a modified route for a Spey Valley Walkway has been planned which will take it over high moorland from Tomintoul to Glenmore. This raises again the familiar problems of induced traffic through sensitive and potentially hazardous country. It was decided to oppose the proposed route.

No A.G.M. would be complete without some example of utter confusion of motions, amendments and counter-motions and of course the Dinner venue produced it. Despite Sandy Cousins' appeal for a return to metropolitan squalor and the full de-oxygenating marathon of slide-show A.G.M. and Dinner and a diversionary and futile motion from Crawford and Richardson to leave the whole thing to the Committee, Gerry Peet was successful with a motion for the A.G.M. and Dinner to be held in a mountain environment. (I suppose the experience of returning from a winter's day on the Cairngorm plateau to a warm luxurious hotel where one could gaze on swim-suited young ladies while reclining the hill-weary body in a comfortable chair and sipping refreshing beverages may have slightly clouded our judgement).

Yet another Slesserian epistle was then read out. This year it was Thailand that had Childe Rolande in thrall and prevented him from delivering in person his impassioned plea for a return to older and more noble(?) forms of Annual Function. We await next year's Epistle and wonder from whence it will come (it is believed that the Trust plan to publish them as a bound volume).

Again, unusually, there was time for beer and talk before going into Dinner. The food was definitely better than in recent years, even if one could quibble over some details. The speeches however were unremarkable and no distinct recollection has persisted. The Club Song was duly sung.

There are those who will point at the reduced numbers present and condemn the experiment of going to Coylumbridge as a failure. However those who were present represented a good mix of young and old including many from the North and North-East who would have been reluctant to travel to the Central Belt. I would say myself that it was a well-balanced company of active S.M.C. members who seemed to enjoy each other's company and, for once, had the time to talk to each other rather than huddle in little cliques for a few brief words before dashing into the Metropolitan night. This year we had an occasion which, for most of us, was a full weekend of mountain experience, good company and a pleasant dinner as the pivot of it all. We were dangerously near behaving like a Mountaineering Club.

R. T. RICHARDSON.

## J.M.C.S. REPORTS

**Edinburgh Section.**—Membership has remained constant for the year at just over the 50 mark, those people who have left the area or become committed to University courses or whatever being replaced by new blood, so the Club is in a fairly healthy state as regards membership.

Most Meets have been well attended, especially the week-long Meet to Wales in the spring. The other Meets at week-ends showed fluctuating attendance, some areas obviously being more popular than others. A number of day Meets were organised to places near at hand which offer good climbing but don't justify a week-end, and these proved to be so popular that the club intends to continue them this year.

Work on our new hut at Laggan continued over the course of the year and good progress has been made, only a few major jobs remain before the hut offers all the comforts of home!

The Annual Dinner and A.G.M. were held in December at the Bridge of Orchy Hotel and for once the sun shone. Most of the hills in the area had parties on them on both the Saturday and Sunday. The meal and the following festivities were enjoyed by the eighteen members and guests who attended.

*Office-bearers*—*Hon. Member*, I. H. Ogilvie, M.B.E.; *Hon. President*, M. Fleming; *Hon. Vice-President*, J. Fowler; *President*, J. Darham; *Vice-President*, K. McCulloch; *Secretary*, A. Bruce, 59 Balfour Street, Edinburgh, 031-554 7726; *Treasurer*, J. Cunningham; *Hut Custodians*, *The Smiddy*, Dundonnell, David More, South House (top flat), 139 Buccleugh Street, Edinburgh, 031-668 2552; *Jock's Spot Hut*, J. Durham, Cockburn Crescent, Balerno, 031-449 4396.

**Glasgow Section.**—Over the past year Glasgow Section has enjoyed a very active and enthusiastic time both socially and on the hill. Whilst the winter was disappointing, from a snow and ice point of view, nevertheless Meets were very well attended and several serious winter routes completed. During the summer period Meets were once again very well attended with serious climbs being done in the popular rock climbing areas of the country, the highlight of which was a 'first' video recording of the seaward face of the sea stack known as 'The Souter' near St Abb's Head, Berwickshire, by three of our members, namely Jim McLaughlin, Dick Edie and Jim Magill, in November.

Our first Meet abroad for almost ten years was towards the end of the summer when we made a mini-invasion of the Alps around Bregaglia where seven members of the Section enjoyed two weeks of glorious weather and climbing and, judging by the slides of the trip seen at the recent members' slides night, Glasgow Section kept the flag flying. Another of our members, Martin Lawrence, spent his summer in the Alps climbing around Chamonix, Verdon and on the Haddegg Slabs. Bill Forbes and Ian Burley were also in the Alps. Hopefully next year when we go abroad we shall be easily identified with the aid of the new resplendent sweat-shirts depicting our Club.

This present winter we organised a Whole Club Winter Meet at Creag Meagaidh which was well attended by four of the Sections: Glasgow, Inverness, Lochaber and London. It is to be hoped that this will now become an annual event, after the lapse of some years.

On the social side it has been an excellent year, with the Burns Supper once more proving to be a very special evening, anyone who attended will vouch for that. Our Annual Dinner at the Kings House Hotel, Glencoe, was a great success and enjoyed by all; our guest speaker for the evening was Donald Bennet.





Ladhar Bheinn from Loch Hourn

*Photo: Donald J. Bennett*



*Photo: D. T. Meldrum*

Teabreak at Carnach ruins for the Gaffer, the Hi'heidyins B & G  
and the Man from a Trust



*Photo: P. W. Gribbon*

The designer tests his catenary, while directing sprites and  
naiads in the hunt for treasure in the river

Glasgow Section is at present enjoying a very healthy position with a membership of eighty-five, part of which is a group of up and coming, young, enthusiastic climbers which together with the more established climbers of our Section, backed up by our energetic Committee, gives us great encouragement for the Section going from strength to strength in the coming year.

*Office Bearers*—Hon. Member, W. H. Murray, O.B.E.; Hon. President, T. B. Fleming; Hon. Vice-President, I. A. MacLeod; President, D. MacDonald; Secretary, P. McNiven, 139 Speirs Road, Bearsden, Glasgow; *Coruisk Hut Custodian*, G. Richardson, 300 Faifley Road, Clydebank.

**Inverness Section.**—The year has been fairly quiet with membership at the same level as last year but attendance at Meets being poor. Bad weather, or forecasts, were the major factor behind this. Outside the official Meets members ventured far and wide with visits to Alaska and the Maritime Alps as well as to many places in the Northern Highlands.

No Annual Dinner was held this year because of difficulties with a suitable location but a Christmas Dinner was organised in an Inverness Indian Restaurant and proved to be a very successful and warming evening.

Future expedition plans include a summer trip to Romsdal in Norway and a group of four members have now received permission to climb the north ridge of Ama Dablan in 1985. Between now and 1985 there will be some fund-raising activities to support this team.

With this future it is hoped that the Section will prosper but it has every intention of remaining an all male preserve.

*Secretary*, Neil Lawford, 1 East Croachy Cottages, Aberarder, Inverness.

**Lochaber Section.**—The Club membership this year is around 60, of which the majority are local and active. Outdoor Meets are held monthly, mainly over the Autumn and Winter. This year Meets have seen the Club going to the Lake District, Lochnagar, Glen Clova, Lewis, Dundonnell and the C.I.C. hut. All Meets have been well attended with good climbing, walking and socialising freely available. Especially successful was the Annual Dinner at Dundonnell when over a third of the membership was present.

Indoor Meets held over the Winter have encompassed a broad spectrum of slide shows from Nanga Parbat, Norway, Yosemite to Mexico and the Himalayas. All held in local hostleries and attracting large and enthusiastic audiences.

Following on from the successful Meet to the Engadine in 1979 the Club is having another Alpine Meet in July 1982. This time to the Dauphiné.

Club facilities available to members, besides cheap indoor and outdoor meets, are the free use of the Club Hut at Steall in Glen Nevis and the Club library of mountaineering books, journals and guidebooks.

*Office Bearers*—Hon. President, D. Watt; President, N. Hitch; Vice-President, W. Munro; Secretary, L. Houlker, 3 Treslaig, Fort William (tel. Corpach 633); *Treasurer*, H. Campbell; *Steall Hut Custodian*, I. Walker, 12 Grange Terrace, Fort William (tel. 3512).

**London Section.**—Membership currently stands at 65, a slight increase on last year.

Eight official Meets were held during a very mixed year. The three winter Meets in Wales in January, February and March were well attended, but poor snow conditions kept members occupied in much ridge walking rather than actual climbing. The Scotland Meet petered out as did the winter, followed by a dry and sunny Easter Meet, snow in early May, and a washout during the Bank Holiday camping Meet to Cwm Silyn. The June Meet to



Symonds Yat limestone was a pleasant new venue and the Lakes Meet was moved to Glanafon in mid-September, just in time as the snow arrived on the second day in October!

Conversation in Scotland had led to discussion at Section Committee level of possible membership of the Mountaineering Council for Scotland. However the majority opinion of the Section was that London could not afford membership of both M.C. and S. and the B.M.C. and it could make a more valuable contribution through the latter.

The advertisement in *Climber and Rambler* was eventually removed in the spring. Two new inserts had been made, one similar to the last one, the other aimed at rebuilding the Midland Group of members.

A letter had been sent to the B.M.C. on the matter of constitutional revision. We had made the point that the inherent weakness of the Council was a system whereby a southern-based club had only a tenuous link with what happened in the major mountain areas. It is currently being considered by the B.M.C. Constitution Working Party.

The matter of Associate Membership had been discussed with its special significance in the other Sections. The opinion is that Associate Membership of the London Section should be restricted to full members of other Sections resident in the south.

*Office Bearers*—*Hon. President*, J. Della Porta; *Vice-President and Circulation*, A. Steele; *Treasurer*, D. Edmunds; *Meets Secretary*, J. Steele; *General Secretary*, H. Jordan, Waytes Cottages, Keston, Kent (tel. Biggin Hill 71851).

**Perth Section.**—1981 was a good year for the Section. Membership increased by one but the average attendance on Meets was down slightly on last year. Most Meets were marred by either a lack of snow and ice in the winter or rain and cloud during the rest of the year. The Annual Dinner was held in the Kingshouse Hotel, Glencoe, with accommodation in Lagangarbh. The Club again won the local 'Mountain Mind Quiz' in which ten clubs participated.

The Joint Annual Lecture with the Perthshire Society of Natural Science was held in Perth Art Gallery in January. Jeff Banks, a member of our own Section, gave an excellent illustrated lecture on Kenya, including an account of an ascent of Mount Kenya.

The death of John Proom was a shock to all of us. John had been our Honorary Vice-President for over 20 years and had taken a keen interest in the Section. He will be missed by all who knew him.

Our A.G.M. was held in Perth in November at which the following office bearers were elected—

*Hon. President*, Chris Rudie; *Hon. Vice-President*, James Anton; *Hon. Members*, Walter Pethers, David Wares; *President*, Leonard Moss; *Vice-President*, Jeff Banks; *Treasurer*, John Rogers; *Secretary*, Joe Stewart, Flat 1, Duntrune House, Duntrune, Dundee (tel. Kellas 391).

## S.M.C. AND J.M.C.S. ABROAD

### The Alps

MALCOLM SLESSER and BILL WALLACE were again ski-touring with the brothers Roland and Claude Zeyen from Luxembourg. This time their route started in the south close to the Alpes Maritimes and traced a circuitous route through the Haute Ubaye and the Parc National de Quayras, including a circumnavigation of the Aiguille de Chambeyron and an ascent of the Grand Glaiza. The Zeyens left at the end of the first week. Our heroes continued

northwards past the ski uplift of the Col Montgenevre. After a day blizzard watching at the Dreyere Hut an attempt on Mont Tabor had to be aborted on account of highly dangerous windslab. The traverse continued to Modane from where it was planned to cross two cols to reach Meribel but bad weather and unreliable snow forced a tactical retreat.

We have received the following report from the Glasgow Section of the J.M.C.S.—

'The first official Alps Meet of the J.M.C.S. Glasgow Section, for almost ten years, took place August/September in the Bregaglia Alps with base camp at Vicosoprano and visits to the Sciora Hut and the Furno Hut. The team members were: Dougald Middleton, Mark Garthwaite, Angus McInnes, Ian Sneddon, Neil Marshall, David Ritchie and Coll Findlay. The 'work done' included—Torre Innominata, Punta LK and Punta, Cacciabella Pass, Il Gallo (everyone up!), Monte del Furno, Mount Rosso, Vazzeda, Pass del Casuil and Piz Casnil East Ridge. The weather was perfect for all but part of a couple of days. Rest days included a visit to St Moritz, Chiavenna, Lugano and Como, with an enforced stop in Zurich to collect a passport on the way back! The situations and scenery and also the 'sights' at the Huts and camp sites all contributed to making it a successful, enjoyable and mind-broadening meet.'

## North America

DAVID J. BROADHEAD sends this account of a summer's climbing in the United States: 'For quality rockclimbing, Eldorado Springs Canyon is indeed the golden land of one's dreams. "On the walls of the canyon are now found some of the longest, most aesthetic and most difficult climbs in the state of Colorado, and indeed in the entire country." So writes Jim Erikson in *Rocky Heights*, the latest guidebook to Boulder free climbs. Eldorado is only a few miles from the bustling university town of Boulder, itself only an hour's bus ride from Denver, capital of the mid-west, now accessible directly from London by Western Airlines.

'Leaving Edinburgh on a Sunday evening, we were camped in the mouth of the canyon by Monday night. Waking early, we had our first dramatic view of the steep enclosing walls on each side, the multicoloured conglomerate sandstone glowing in the gentle morning sun. Finishing our first route by mid-morning we found the sun soon turned fierce, burning bare legs and arms and giving alarmingly sweaty palms. Climbs face in all directions, so this problem is easily solved by choosing routes in the shade.

'Controversy still rages over the use of chalk. Definitions of various forms of aid are clearly laid down in the guidebook, which also offers advice on *Competitive Ethics* and *Environmental Imperatives* in an attempt to encourage the beginning of a new personal consciousness in rockclimbing. Meanwhile, the popular routes are well dusted with chalk, which we did not use and on most of the cruxes a few "fixed pins" which we occasionally did.

'All the routes we climbed during our four-day stay are highly recommendable. On the magnificent Redgarden Wall, *Redguard Route*, 5.7 (VS), *Anthill Direct* 5.8 (HVS), *Ruper* and *Upper Ruper* 5.8. On the other side of the canyon, on *The Bastille*, rising straight from the road, *Bastille Crack* 5.7 (VS) and *West Buttress* 5.9 (E1) and on the shorter, less intimidating *Wind Tower*, *Wind Ridge* 5.6 (HS) and *Calypto* 5.6.

'As a change from the closed-in feeling of the canyon, nearby ridges have some impressive pinnacles, and we spent an exciting evening on *The Maiden*. The "voie normale" up this unique spire is by the North Face, 5.7, consisting almost entirely of downclimbing and traverses for several rope-lengths. Arriving on the summit in the gathering dusk, we were treated to a magnificent

display of twinkling lights carpeting the plains below, stretching east to Denver and beyond. The descent rappel, "one of the airiest and unusual that one could imagine" lived up to its reputation. With an indescribable feeling close to terror I launched into space. Spinning slowly round, it seemed an age before my feet touched down on the tiny ledge on a fin of rock 120 feet below. Another rope-length took us to the ground, by which time figure-of-eights were alarmingly hot.

'In complete contrast, an hour or so away to the north, the Rocky Mountain National Park offers good rockclimbing on high altitude granite crags at the head of deep glaciated cirques, between broad open summits. As a National Park "... that offers a wide spectrum of recreational possibilities to the outdoor enthusiast" the area is very popular, governed by strict regulations, enforced by an efficient ranger service. However, of the thousands of daily visitors there seemed to be very few other climbers, unlike Eldorado. A phone call was sufficient to obtain permission to climb and bivouac.

'On our first visit we were fortunate to be in the company of Dick DuMais, author of *The High Peaks*, the latest climbing guidebook to the area. A magnificent three-hour walk up Glacier Gorge, past some picturesque tree ringed lakes took us to the foot of Spearhead Peak (12,575'). After a rather wet bivouac we climbed the monolithic North East Face, an almost perfect triangle of grey granite, 800ft high. *Syke's Sickle Route* 5.7 A1/5.9 gave pitch after pitch of slabs, flakes and ledges leading to a dramatic notch through a distinctive sickle shaped roof. Emerging onto steep slabs where for the final pitch, the rain started again. The weather in the high peaks is distinguished by regular afternoon storms which encourage an early start and an early finish. Down below the rest of the party were following our progress through a telescope. Since the top pitch has a reputation of being unclimbable in the wet, anxiety about a long wait while we retreated was dispelled by a New York veteran of alpine seasons with Tom Patey. "Aaw, they'll be aalright, the're Scaattish, they're used to the rain." Slithering up the freshly soaked slab I was thankful for a tight rope, Des having led up just in time. Soaked to the skin on the walk back, at least we could be fairly certain of sunshine next day. We returned to the Park a few weeks later and climbed some more fine classics. North Face of Hallett Peak (12,713') *Jackson Johnston Route* 5.7; Petit Grepon, South Face 5.8; Mount Meeker (13,911') *Flying Buttress* 5.8 and the highest point of the entire northern front range, Longs Peak (14,256') by *Stettner's Ledges* 5.7, followed by *The Window* 5.8, leading up the East Face beside *The Diamond*.

'Just outside the Park entrance, the town of Estes Park caters for the tourists' wants in the way of eating, shopping and entertainment, very like Aviemore. For climbers there is friendly advice and good crack from the lads in Komitos Boot Store, and the Surrey Restaurant serving cheap breakfasts all day. Just a few minutes away, fine crags on Lumpy Ridge mean you do not even have to walk into the mountains to climb. Following the Rocky Mountains north past Fort Collins into Wyoming and through Fort Laramie, real Indian country. Mile after mile of dull arid desert, dotted with sage brush and the occasional antelope. We broke the monotony of the drive with a small detour to the Medicine Bow Hills. Glistening among the lakes and pines a roadside crag of pale grey quartzite gave an entertaining morning's climbing. Continuing on over the Continental Divide past Rock Springs, then turning off the main highway at last, we bumped the last forty miles or so along a narrow single track to Big Sandy Opening. A dozen or so parked cars marked the end of the road, and the southern entrance to the Wind River Mountains.

'Planning on a nine-day trip, we wondered how we would manage to carry enough food in, having filled a trolley on our last supermarket visit. Our American friends smugly packed their little freeze dried packets while we struggled with bulging brown paper bags. Well worth it too, we discovered

as we munched our way through biscuits with every brew and tucked in to tasty vegetable stews, while they stoically struggled through another "Mountain House" or nibbled away at a granola bar. A walk of three or four hours took us up above the tree line to a spot below Deep Lake where we camped looking out onto some magnificent peaks and buttresses. Behind us, sharply pointed Steeple (12,040') gave a good introductory climb by its *North Ridge*, 5.8, despite the thunderstorm which almost caught us perched on the top. Only a few minutes away from our tent the East Face of Haystack (11,978') presented almost a mile of granite slabs, overlaps and dihedrals (corners). *Right Dihedral* 5.9 and *Central Corner* 5.9 were both excellent climbs. The latter was short enough to allow us to pack up camp after lunch and walk a few miles over the rugged Jackass Pass into the magnificent *Cirque of Towers*.

'The Wind River Mountains are designated as a "Wilderness Area" with an appropriate set of rules and regulations, but without the rigorous controls and permits applied in National Parks. Although the first climbs were only done in the 1940's, *The Cirque* has become a popular goal for hikers, campers, fishermen and climbers, to such an extent that Lonesome Lake, nestling among the towering peaks has been declared unsafe due to faecal contamination. This has perhaps put some people off, since we found the cirque relatively quiet with only a few other tents. While we were on the hill one day, a passing ranger kindly left us a booklet entitled "Wildlife Ethic" which informed us that "today's wildland visitors . . . carry one principal tool for the conservation of our wildlands a lightweight shovel or trowel. Today, this item is as important to campers as a sleeping bag." This sort of attempt to educate visitors seems to be working. We were impressed, for example, by the absence of litter everywhere we went. Another familiar situation has been created by Steck and Ropers '*Fifty Classic Climbs*,' re-named by some, '*Fifty Crowded Climbs*.' The two featured routes in the cirque both had other parties on them when we did them. On the North East Face of Pingora (11,884') the *Daly Route* (5.8) gave a dozen of so fine pitches, following a line of cracks and grooves while the classic traverse of Wolfs Head (12,150') by the *East Ridge* (5.5), was an exhilarating airy scramble, weaving in and out over a series of narrow pinnacles. The shadowy *North Face Centre* (5.9) on Mitchell Peak (12,482') had more of an air of seriousness to start with, but developed into an enjoyable romp, culminating in superb views from the summit, looking out to the rest of the range stretching away to the north. The same evening we moved our camp once more, crossing over Texas Pass and round the back of the now familiar peaks to Shadow Lake. Next day we climbed Sharks Nose (12,050') by its *South West Face Direct* (5.8). Yet another excellent route with some improbably steep pitches climbed on unbelievably good holds. Walking back out to Big Sandy, looking forward to cold beers, we felt very lucky about the weather, which was threatening to break at last. We had escaped the worst of the mosquitos too, following an unusually dry winter.

'Twenty four hours later we were heading into the hills once again, some hundred miles or so further north, walking up Garnet Canyon to bivouac at the foot of the Grand Teton (13,770'). With the afternoon to spare we had time to climb *Irene's Arête* (5.8) a popular short rockclimb in the canyon just above Petzolt's Cave, a fine howff. Next morning, despite claggy weather, we started the classic *Complete Exum Ridge* (5.8). Nearing the end of the difficulties, the first hail storm hit us on the *Black Wall*. After a short cold wait, a clear spell saw us over the crux and onto the scrambling above. Grateful for balaclavas and mitts for the first time, it was snowing heavily when we arrived on the summit. Just like a day on the Ben. The popular Tetons have much more of an alpine atmosphere than the other areas we visited, attracting climbers from all over the States. The American Alpine Club "Climbers' Ranch" near Jenny Hole is a great meeting place offering cheap accommodation. Unfortunately the pressure of numbers was all too obvious when it came to "booking



in" for routes. This is another National Park with limited numbers of bivouac and route permits each day. All this climbing was crammed into four weeks of July and August by the end of which at least one of my fingers was worn down to raw flesh. We were very lucky with weather and in travelling with local climbers who were always generous with their hospitality and advice.

'So go west young (or old) man (or woman - lots of them on the crags, leading 5.12). The return flight to Denver cost £301. Food and camping was not expensive, though climbing gear certainly was. (E.B.'s cost over £40). Take plenty of nuts. We did not bang in a single peg. A 50m rope is worthwhile, and a double makes the occasional rappel more straightforward, though Americans tend to climb on a single rope. Paraffin and Camping Gaz are expensive too, since most people use petrol stoves. Transport is a slight problem. Buses etc. are very limited and car hire is about £6 per day. However, lift sharing is popular if you have the time and initiative to ask and advertise around climbing stores and colleges. Otherwise there is always hitching. If you get tired of climbing there is plenty of fine walking. I spent a few wet days in the Indian Peaks, part of the Roosevelt National Forest south of the Rocky Mountain National Park. National Forests have almost unlimited access and camping, and networks of fine trails.'

### Spain and Morocco

HAMISH BROWN reports: 'I met up with Dave Cohen (U.S.A.) in Malaga for several days, ski-ing in the Sierra Nevada, which culminated in a long day to climb Spain's highest, Mulhacen (3,487m). We then motored south through Morocco: Sebta, Volubilis (Roman City), Meknes and over the Atlas to the desert. An Eagle Ski Club gang joined up, the visit coinciding with the only big snows of the season, which gave resort ski-ing at Oukaimeden to acclimatise before making various ascents in the Atlas, including North Africa's highest, Djebel Toubkal (4,165m). A bivvy on Tazarhart and a descent of the Agoundis, followed by dinner "Au Sanglier Qui Fume" rounded off that meet. I then went off to bird watch down the coast to the remarkable lagoon of Sidi R'bat before re crossing the Atlas for some trekking and touring which visited the remarkable Ouzoud Falls, one of the finest in the world. After Barclay Fraser joined the party another visit was made to the desert south and then these two motored home by the Moroccan coast and all manner of historical sites in Spain. Only one wee walk was snatched in the Gredos as there and in the Picos winter finally decided to come, seeing it was late spring.

'In the autumn I sailed from Southampton to Casablanca and then took the *Eye of the Wind* crew off to the Atlas to trek and climb. Once they had scaled Toubkal and so on, a solo crossing was made of Aourirt n' Ouassif above Imilil.

### Australia

A. L. CRAM writes: 'A main aim in 1981 was to traverse the Great Dividing Range in Australia. The Range extends from the chill Southern Ocean, in an arc, for more than 3,000 kilometres, to the tropical Arafura Sea, with to the east the South Pacific, the Great Barrier Reef and the Coral Sea and to the west the arid "Red Heart" outback. More than 100 kilometres wide in parts, although consisting of ranges, peaks, plateaux, ravines and great river gorges, the Range maintains a lofty unity. The many east-flowing rivers are surprisingly big while the west-flowing Darling and Murray Murrumbidgee rivers flow all the way into South Australia. From a crest, the horizon can be filled with uncountable Scots like peaks, suffused in a unique blue colour caused by the light scattering on eucalyptus globules in the atmosphere. Tall forests of Mountain Ash and other blue gums cover the slopes giving way to graceful

snow gums near 6,000 feet. North of Capricorn, dense rain forests with giant figs and creepers fill the spaces between the lofty escarpments. Using a Ford Escort and a small tent, we found plenty of good water but camp sites had to be in clearings. A number of stockmen's huts and mountain refuges are available. In the outback, camp in the shade of Red River Gums is at risk as these trees drop great limbs in the heat without a sound, as one can hear from time to time. My wife was coaxing a young kangaroo when a gum without warning shed several tons of branch beside them. The stunning concussion caused many large red males to "boom" madly across the ringing plain. The sloe-eyed "joey" clung to my wife with its stick-like forelegs and flat black "fingers" for safety.

'Unlike the African bush with distinctive markers of large skulls, game trails and trees smashed by elephants, "the trees" display an endless and trackless repetition of steep conical hills, identical vegetation, one dry valley the pattern of the next while a direct line on high ground often takes one to "look-downs" into 2,000-foot deep ravines. Ceaseless attention has to be paid to the reverse route, even to leaving paper markers, especially when habituated to a wrist watch/sun guidance system which can omit to take into account the sun is to the north. Rewards exist in the sheets of strange bright alpine flowers, orchids, encounters with the wistful grey mountain kangaroos, species of wallabies with pouched young, koalas up trees, emus and cassowaries in the brush and in the air streamers of rose and green parrots and lorikeets, or white crested cockatoos and awakenings with the crazy laughter of kooka burras, the "Bushman's Clock," preying on snakes, breakfast sausages seem irresistible. This being the "Land of Oz," one can descend to urbanisation, golden beaches and to iced beer and sizzling steaks in air conditioned super markets.

'We set off from the southern tip of the continent, Wilson's Promontory, where an icy gale from the Bass Strait whipped sleet in our faces at 2,000 feet on Mt. Oberon and the long Range marched north. In the "Victorian Alps" we scrambled up the many horns of Mt. Buffalo (5,646 feet). Slithering down smooth north-facing granite slabs in the mid-day sun, they were too hot to handle we found too late, and an alarming "radiation sickness" commenced. In New South Wales we spent a long time in the Snowy Mountains, crossing deep snow beds to the highest point in Australia, Mt. Kosciuszko (7,309 feet). From Charlotte's Pass, where snow can be 7 metres deep in winter, we walked around the eleven remaining high tops. The rocky summits of Mt. Townsend and Mt. Alice Rawson were best. The glaciated basin of the frozen "Blue Lake" was a replica of a Cairngorm corrie. Out from Falls Creek, we rambled over the 6,000 foot high Bogong High Plains and surrounding tops. "Bogong" is the aboriginal name for edible moths harvested here. Mt. Niggerhead provided a swim on thick brush above a veritable snakes' sauna. They ignored us.

'Limestone plateaux are common. Drainage water causes "sinks" and deep caving systems. We ventured into a number of named caverns. On one lip of one smooth funnel was the legend "Vertical pitch 600m. No hitches." A national pastime is descending into rifts. We scrambled down 2,000 feet into the narrow Bungonia Canyon. Flash flood marks up high and thunder counselled withdrawal. As we arrived up at our site in pouring rain, a "Southerly" blew away the tent. Without disparaging the frequently fine weather, the sky was often overcast and we experienced frost, snowstorms, dense mist, thick driving clouds, humidity, frequent rain and high winds while heat could be frazzling. In the delightful Blue Mountains, 100 kilometres west of Sydney a cloudburst sent two feet of water over the camp site; the shed of drainage water was spectacular, especially across narrow mountain roads.

'Driving north for hundreds of kilometres along, across and below the Range, high passes afforded daily access to crests and rock formations. I remember the wild Liverpool Range. The New England Uplands and the Darling Downs lie to the west of the Range at about 3,000 feet and for more

than 100 kilometres long, the cool alpine climate suitable for countless head of stock, in green grasslands. In goldrush days, bushrangers frequented the surrounding hills. In one great tumble of granite rocks deep in the forest we came across a concealed "stable," "living room" and "kitchen" with long smoke cleft not to speak of several escape routes under and through the clefts. One could still discern different approach routes for horses "in the trees."

'South of the Queensland Border we walked up, by the adhesion of rubber soles, the steep granite dome of Bald Rock, an eerie place, said to be the largest single granite rock in the hemisphere. On the Border is the 6,000 foot Lamington Plateau with its groves of remnant Arctic Beech trees, lofty rain forest and timid wallabies. Once again a downpour washed our tent off the site. North of the Border we went down to Byron Point, the most easterly cape, and the golden sands and blue rollers of "Surfers' Paradise" then, 100 kilometres north of Brisbane, into the unique group of the eleven "Class house Mountains," so called by Captain Cook from their glittering crystals in immense sheer spires, the residual volcanic plugs of volcanoes. The long severity of the Range induces visits to the "Salad and Fruit Bowl," 200 kilometres of coastal strip. In North Queensland it is feasible to cruise among the islands of the Whitsunday Passage or to bathe off the Barrier Reef and in a day or two to be back on the cloudy heights. When the monsoon broke further north, the rivers flooded and gravel roads required four-wheel drive. The North Coast from east to west deserves several months' travel, in itself, but in dry cooler weather, and we turned south, for a 3,000 kilometre fast drive to Melbourne and then on to South Australia. Near the Border we explored the sandstone ramparts of the 80 kilometre-long, 5,000 foot Grampian Range from a place named Dunkeld. The object was the Flinders Range north of Adelaide. On the way north the "Big Sizzle," according to the press, hit us in semi-desert country. Temperatures in the sun were 130°F, the nylon flysheet became stiff like a board, it was sickening to go into the car and the seats and steering wheel could not be touched. In the shade, it was bearable without clothing but the radiation of heat from the sand made nights high intolerable and one night we loaded up and drove the length of the Murray River back to the Snowy Mountains in course of a week and made a second ascent of Mt. Kosciuszko. In all we drove 20,000 kilometres. It is wiz in Oz.'

## New Zealand

TOM BOYD writes: 'The impressions made on a Scottish mountaineer by a visit to New Zealand in January 1982, may be of interest, although lack of time and suitably experienced companions prevented any serious climbing. The area of the North and South Islands is about 10% greater than that of the United Kingdom, but the total population is only 3.2 million. The North Island has as its principal mountains 4 volcanoes of some 8,000/9,000ft, the highest, Ruapehu (9,175') carrying perennial snow with good ski-ing, often bedevilled, however, by "Scottish" weather: it also gives some winter climbing and last winter avalanches claimed several lives.

'The very mountainous South Island has an area similar to England and Wales, a length of about 500 miles (John O'Groats to Bristol), an average breadth of perhaps 120 miles and a population of just 860,000. Crossing the Cook Strait between the North and South Islands (comparable to Dover/Calais) one's view to the south is of an enticing mountain land. More immediately, however, as the ferry enters the Marlborough Sounds it skirts an incredible maze of waterways, coves, headlands and islands. Many of the channels remind one of "The Kyles," but the whole is surrounded by little-inhabited country and covers hundreds of square miles: a canoe and tent might be useful here.

'In the South Island one is hardly ever out of sight of hills often resembling those of home, but usually higher. About half way down the South



Island one crosses from the east through Fairlie over a pass into "The MacKenzie Country," a land of wide rolling Border type hills named after a Ross-shire sheep stealer. The great snow-covered barrier of the Southern Alps culminating in Mount Cook (12,349') then lines the western horizon: approaching, one might be in Torridon.

'The Mount Cook National Park is a showpiece and contains marked walks of varying duration (e.g. the "Glencoe Walk") with easy access to the Hooker and Tasman Glaciers, and with excellent views of Mounts Cook, Tasman (11,475') and others. The altitudes are Austrian but the scale is almost Swiss, for although the Southern Alps are lower by 3,000 ft than their Swiss counterparts their snow lines and valley floors are also lower in the same proportion.

'Further south, mountain-girt Queenstown (1,100') on its lake with its steamer was, we were warned, a tourist trap to be avoided in the busy season. Fearfully anticipating "Balloch in The Fair" we approached to find the place small, quiet by our standards, and attractive – possibly resembling some alpine lake resort of the Victorian era. The single dominant mountain here is Ben Lomond (5,730') which I duly ascended in brilliant sunshine; the map, however, refused to set to both compass and ground, until it occurred that the declination was *east* (over 21°E). There were fine views of Ben More (6,100') linked by a ridge to Craigellachie (4,615') and also Ben Nevis and other tops with familiar names; above all, however, Mount Earnslaw (9,250') and Mount Aspiring (9,957') gleamed in the sunlight. These Scottish place names although widely scattered make it hard to believe one is far from home, and they are so numerous that one soon ceases to remark on them. We passed by Aberfeldy, Athol and Aviemore, Largs Peak and Skelmorlie Peak and visited Glenorchy and Glenquoich Station. On Stewart Island we landed at Oban and saw the islands of Iona and Ulva.

'In the south west is Fiordland, remote, mountainous and inaccessible and containing the magnificent Milford Sound (comparable to a Norwegian fiord) which can be easily visited and many other fiords which cannot. The precipitation on the west coast is heavy (up to 250 inches) so perhaps our own Kinlochquoich is not too bad. On the lower slopes many of the mountains are covered by dense scrub and forest with obvious access problems and it is difficult to credit that there are no snakes; the sandflies can, however, be a trial and sometimes the midges of home seemed almost good friends.

'Scenically New Zealand is a wonderful country – a combination of Scotland, Austria, Norway and more. In a short holiday one can only gain realistic impressions of the landscape, and its beauty and variety are such that one is continuously motivated to press on to see what lies beyond the next range. The South Island has no crowds or industrialisation as we know them and if one selects one's area, the climate is much better than ours. Superlatives are suspect, but to me New Zealand seemed to deserve its name of "God's own Country" – if He would just remove the sandflies!

## REVIEWS

**Munro's Tables of the 3,000 feet Mountains of Scotland and Other Tables of Lesser Heights.**—Edited and revised by J. C. Donaldson and Hamish M. Brown. (1981; Scottish Mountaineering Trust, Edinburgh).

Anyone who has read *Hamish's Mountain Walk* will appreciate that Jim Donaldson, who has done such terrific work in editing and revising these tables for so many years, could not have had a better informed co-editor than Hamish Brown who has climbed all the Munro's at least six times.

The introduction is in itself a most interesting history, and it also makes it perfectly clear why the tables need periodic revision. What constitutes

separate mountains or Munro's was described in earlier editions of the Tables as Tops which 'may fairly be reckoned distinct mountains,' and the Tables were thought to comprise every 'top' which attained an elevation of 3,000 feet.

In these new Tables five Munro's have been added, which had been anticipated, and seven have been de-moted to Tops, with which most people who have been there would agree. Beinn an Lochain, that fine summit above the 'Rest and be Thankful' pass, having temporarily soared to 3,021 feet has now sunk to 901 metres. It is in the Tops however that more significant additions and many deletions have been made. The second summit of several twin peaks has been made a Top, the outstanding example being Ben Lui, while most of the others are also quite reasonable and would normally be included in a walk over the mountain in any case. Some lovely points on ridges like the N.E. Top of Mullach Fraoch-choire, Rudha na Spreidhe on the N. ridge of Lapaich and Fiacaill Coire an t'Sneachda on Cairngorm are to be regretted but will not stand up to close analysis. The new Tables give the metric heights only, and this has introduced a problem because 3,000 feet are 914.4 metres and the maps work to the nearest metre so that a mountain of 914 metres may or may not be a Munro.

The score, over the years, is as follows:	<i>Tops</i>	<i>Separate mountains</i>
Original Tables	538	283
Revised Tables	543	276
First Metric Tables	541	279
New Tables	517	276

Table I is arranged according to Districts and the Sections have been regrouped and re-numbered, and sub-divided under collective names. Once the old Section numbers have been dismissed from the mind, the new lay-out is much easier to follow, and it so happens that the single figure section numbers are south of the Great Glen and the teens are north. Skye and Mull are Section 17 as before. Six-figure map references have eliminated the need for describing the position of the mountains. Bartholomew 1:100,000 scale map numbers are given as well as the 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey numbers.

The lay-out of Table II in order of altitude is basically unchanged but as throughout, heights are in metres only. An obvious feature which has always been so, but might not be appreciated by newcomers to the system, is that Munro's are also Tops and carry two numbers representing their order of height as Separate Mountains and their order of height as Tops. For example Top No. 4 is higher than Mountain No. 4 which is in fact Top No. 5.

An index to Table I and a list of Munroists completes the Munro Tables. An addendum brings the total recorded up to 236 individuals of which 28 are women. 56 have done the Tops as well, 10 the Welsh, English and Irish as well as the Munro's and 28 the 'Grand Slam.' There must also be quite a few who have not been recorded.

Hamish Brown in his book described the Tables as 'one of the oddest of best-selling books.' It may be odd, but it is certainly very useful and with the ever increasing number setting themselves this objective, this latest revision should be once again a best seller.

Included in the book are 'Corbett's Tables of Scottish Mountains 2,500 feet and under 3,000 feet in height with re-ascent of 500 feet on all sides' edited and revised by the same authors. There are now 223 Corbett's. These include some of the finest mountains in Scotland, and this is usually true when the 500 feet drop is close to the summit on all sides. On many however the Corbett may be the highest of a group of hills of some considerable expanse with the 500 feet drop several miles from the highest point and these can be flat topped and uninteresting. Having done a mere 30 Corbett's and having no intention whatsoever of trying the lot, I am biassed and would recommend fairly careful selection.

Finally comes 'Donalds's Tables of all the hills in the Southern Uplands 2,000 feet in height and above' revised in a similar way. The layout is more like that of the Munro Tables. A feature which seems unnecessary and liable to confuse is the numbering of the hills within each section, starting at 'One' each time, in addition to a Hill number and a Top number in order of height. Hill walkers in the Southern Uplands, particularly those wishing to explore new districts will find these tables very useful. To the peak-bagger they are essential.

It would be wrong to conclude this review without reference to the illustrations to which such adjectives as representative, typical, unusual, comprehensive, excellent and beautiful could be applied. Of the eighteen, eight are snow scenes, and suffer less from the absence of colour. The photograph of the Glacier in Coire an Lochain is unique.

Here is a salutary extract from page 68, a fitting end to this review:

'Existing Munroists who are fit and well will be expected to do the new Munros and Tops as soon as possible as the accomplishment of this objective presents no insuperable task.'

IVAN WALLER.

**Winter Climbs, Cairngorms.**—By John Cunningham — revised by Allen Fyfe. (Cicerone Press, £3.75).

Although unapparent from the title, this revised winter climbing guide-book covers Creag Meaghaidh as well as the Cairngorms. The guide is a considerable improvement on the original, having been elevated from a fifty-page pamphlet to a well-bound plastic-covered volume of the kind climbers have come to expect nowadays. Even the fine black and white cover photographs were appropriately taken in the Cairngorms this time. Most of the many anomalies in the first editions have now disappeared although we do still have a Hell's Lum Chimney! Other improved features include excellent new diagrams, revised star ratings and gradings which seem to coincide with current informed opinion (Eagle Ridge at grade 4 is presumably an error), and the first-time inclusion of Creag An Dubh Loch and Coire Sputan Dearg.

Inevitably selected guides will omit some good climbs and even good cliffs (the relatively popular Eagles Rocks are unaccountably missing). Generally speaking, the guide gives a good selection of routes, having used as a criterion for inclusion climbs which comply with the traditional concept of a natural winter line. The introduction explains how the selection has also been made to provide an even spread through the grades. However, there is a noticeable lack of recent high-quality routes which will appeal to present and future winter specialists. Labyrinth Direct, Vertigo Wall, Goliath and Mouse-trap at Creag An Dubh Loch, Crypt and Link Face on Lochnagar, Cumming-Crofton Route on the Mitre Ridge, The Dagger at Etchachan and the twin grooves of Vulcan and She-Devils Buttress on Braeriach are all excellent winter climbs which do not feature.

For the casual visitor this guide will probably provide good value at £3.75. Mind you it will need to, for soon it will be competing with MacInnes' selected Scottish Climbs (now in one volume), MacInnes' selected Scottish Winter Climbs (to be published shortly) and our own S.M.T. selected Rock and Ice Climbing Guide to the Cairngorms (in preparation). Do not despair. If none of these selections suit your taste, you could always carry a complete set of *Journals* next time you go winter climbing in the Cairngorms.

G.S.S.

**Eye to the Hills.**—By Hamish Brown and James Macmillan. (1982; Pettycur Publishing, 21 Carlin Craig, Kinghorn, Fife. £1+s.a.e.).

This slender collection of about 30 poems includes some which have already appeared in the *Journal* and readers will recognise them. However, here is plenty new material, some best forgotten, others providing insight and reflection; like 'The Hill of The Spear.'

W.D.B.

**Great Langdale.**—By M. G. Mortimer. (1980; Fell and Rock Climbing Club).

This, the second volume in the new Fell and Rock series, maintains the high standard set by the Buttermere and Eastern Craggs guide. The 1973 edition, written by Austin and Valentine, has been completely revised with the inclusion of new routes from the period 1972-79. Many of the best developments seem to have taken place on Pavey Ark, now recognised as Langdale's major crag and on the small but impressive Deer Bield Crag in Easedale. Most notable elsewhere is the network of hard eliminates in the vicinity of Kipling Groove. Part of this frontage is shown to good effect in the excellent photograph of Gimmer String. There are three other good black-and-white action shots.

The publication of the 1973 edition was surrounded by a certain amount of controversy owing to the authors' refusal to include routes climbed with the assistance of pre-placed slings. As part of a general clean-up campaign in the last decade, these routes have been climbed free and are now fully documented; indeed, Cruel Sister rates the full three stars.

R.J.A.

**The Winding Trail.**—Edited by Roger Smith. (1981; Diadem, London. 476pp, with numerous illustrations, maps and cartoons. £10.50).

This book is a companion to *Games Climbers Play*, from the same publishing house, and with the same format – a collection of essays and articles from books, journals and magazines. The difference is that *The Winding Trail* is all about walking: long walks, short walks, hill walks and valley walks, backpacking and bush-whacking. Most of the contributions come from this country and North America, where the Appalachian Trail receives a very fair share of attention.

There are seventy-one contributions, mini-chapters one might call them, so this is hardly a book to be read from cover to cover in one go. Nor is it meant to be. It is a book for the fireside or the bedside, to be picked up and read when you have a few spare minutes and seek relaxation. It is a relaxing book; none of the tensions of climbing epics, but the contemplative thoughts of walkers on the trail or in forest bivouacs and their delight in their surroundings. In a book with so many contributions it would be surprising if all maintained the standard of the best. Some of the essays are full of interest and entertainment, others are quickly forgotten. I found it interesting a few weeks after reading the book to look through the index to find out how many of the stories I could recall. About half, possibly, and those were the ones worth reading again. It may be invidious to name names, but that is what reviews are for: Bill Murray and Alasdair Borthwick should be familiar to us, and are well worth reading again. Other familiar articles came from the S.M.C.J., the only British climbing club journal to be thus honoured. Apart from these, I liked the story of Grandma Gatewood, grand old lady of the Appalachian Trail, and Dick Sale's light-hearted account of the Welsh three thousand-footers in which he refuses to take too serious a view of a mountain epic. Kev Reynolds, on the other hand, rightly takes a serious and sad view

of the destruction of a Pyrenean mountain valley. In spite of the profusion of present-day writers on wilderness, R. L. Stevenson still takes some beating, as his contribution proves. There are many other interesting and amusing stories, and Roger Smith has done a good job in bringing this varied collection together in a single volume.

D.J.B.

**Take it to the Limit.**—By Lucy Rees and Alan Harris. (Diadem. £5.95).

This climbing novel seeks to describe a facet of the Welsh scene of around 1970 – and at times, a pretty unsavoury facet. The climbing action includes Wales, Hoy, Nevis and Yosemite and much of it is good stuff – realistic and even gripping on occasion. The human interest centres on the relationship between two climbing companions and their very different motivations. Complications arise with the advent of a *woman* and demon drink. Feminists may find this sector of interest. (If this is freedom who wants to be liberated?). There is a nihilistic streak in the book which reaches its doom laden conclusion on El Cap. Nevertheless, as climbing novels go this one isn't bad; the action is good, the characterisations vivid even if their interaction is somewhat overdrawn at times and frequently unpleasant. A question that comes to mind is that in the unlikely event of Luke wanting to join the S.M.C., would we, or could we, keep him out?

W.D.B.

**Waterfall Ice.**—By Albi Sole. (Rocky Mountain Books, Calgary, Canada).

This is a guidebook to the ice climbs in the Canadian Rockies. It is dedicated to our late member, Bugs McKeith, and contains one of his drawings as a frontispiece. Profusely illustrated with some most impressive photographs on horrendous icefalls, this little book makes interesting reading whether or not one has any intention of going to the Rockies. The author's definition of 'free' relating to ice climbing would be a nasty shock to most of us.

C.S.

**Fifty Years of Alpinism.**—By Riccardo Cassin. (1981; Diadem Books Ltd. 107 pages, 90 black and white photographs, 6 maps and diagrams. £8.95). **Hamish's Groat's End Walk.**—By Hamish Brown. (1981; Victor Gollancz Ltd. 301 pages, 94 black and white photographs, 22 maps. £9.95).

Thirty years ago Patey could snap his fingers over a coffee cup and I would recite, word-perfect in English and French, the way up our unclimbed Eperon Walker; today, Pyper can make a sign over a pint glass and I will recite, word-perfect in English and Gaelic, all my unclimbed fifty-three Munros. It was with a knowing look that the Editor handed me these two books, together.

Cassin's book is simple and great. Simple in being a straightforward account of his progress in mountaineering, flattened by a ghostly hand, I suspect, and a translator's awkwardness. Great in that, despite these factors, you cannot fail to marvel at the fire of the man glowing from every page. Behind these fascinating thirties' photos must lie another whole volume. What scrapes, non-climbing adventures, laughs and jokes are concealed? What of family life? The politics and war-time experiences of these young anti-fascists in lecco? Who was the intriguing Mary Varale? No, what we get is an almost incredible fifty-year chronology of very, very hard climbing by a very, very hard man. It starts with poor apprenticeship days in Lecco



where the local Grigna crags drew Cassin's athleticism away from boxing into a circle of hard young climbers where he quickly established his leadership (Nuova Italia group!). Inspired and befriended by the older Comici, he learned the techniques of artificial climbing and launched himself on to that great series of Dolomite routes. A later photo, a rare action one of Cassin on the North Face of Leschaux, is thoroughly 'modern' in atmosphere (clothing and hemp ropes apart). Chapters 8, 9 and 10 deal with the Cima Ouest, the Badile and the Walker. These rise out of the general tone of the book and are the most exciting accounts. What a coup the Walker was! I never tire reading how the jewel of the Western Alps was knocked off by the trio who were quite unknown to the local guides and hut guardians ('How do we get to the foot of the climb?').

Other routes lead up to 1940 and the war. There is a last great summer route on Mont Blanc illustrated by a hut group of parting friends. Note the early Vibrams. There is a brief, scarcely revealing, chapter on partisan activities and then back to the mountains where Cassin had become an elder statesman. President of the local C.A.I. he may have been but it is clear that he prefers the company and climbs of the new Lecco Spiders. It is evident that his post-war campaign on the great classics is very much more to his liking than expeditions, soured as he must have been on being excluded from K2 in 1954, a victim of expedition politics (and medical skulduggery). Humour is restored by his leadership of the successful Gasherbrum IV expedition. Failure (in 1975!) on the South Face of Lhotse provides a slightly depressing last chapter. What is much happier is a long list of joyful repeat ascents including the Badile with his son in 1971 and the Cima Ouest in one day in 1972. There are climbs in the Caucasus and the Andes, but you get the impression that he is most contented on his own ground with his own Lecco pals. It is with five much younger Squirrels that he went to Alaska in 1961 and, to his justified immense satisfaction, completed the severe and harsh ascent (and descent!) of the *Cassin* South Buttress of Mt. McKinley.

There are interesting notes on his Epilogue on 'the magnificent sport of ski-mountaineering' and on mountain rescue where Cassin, as would be expected, has exerted himself to the full on many occasions throughout his career.

The dust cover shows the old pensioner, strung with slings and stirrups, pursuing 'healthy pleasure and spiritual elevation' on the Grigna of his youth.

Dr Bell would have nodded approval over every page. For the Ultramontane indeed.

In contrast, although not really a Salvationist, Hamish M. Brown has produced a perfect book for that band and for a very much wider readership. *Hamish's Groat's End Walk* is a very professional job but I did not find the same delight in it as I did in *Hamish's Mountain Walk*. If it seems to plod it is not because it is not well written. It is because the journey itself seems to plod and Hamish, a true mountaineer, knows it. Although he can handle the mundane with interest and sympathy, even his alert imagination finds it harder going after crossing the Highland Line.

Club members cannot expect kind reviews in their own *Journal* . . .

I was tempted to write a doggy review (under the *nom de plume* 'Aberdeen Scotty') about Hamish, a pedigree collie, being taken the walkie of all walkies by his guide 'Storm' Brown. Great romping fun - lifting leg freely against a hundred cairns, 'rounding up some wheater chicks' (p.114) and generally disturbing any fauna encountered. Super feeds of branded doggy food. How 'Storm' eats his own weight of branded food and ice creams, and carries his branded snugly night things in a branded bag. I should have wished to go with 'Storm' Brown next time, maybe with my West Highland friend. Sponsored by 'Black and White' whisky . . .

However, that would have been contrived and too unkind. Despite the trudge, this is too happy a book by too amiable a person for that.

It is a surprise to be reminded that you can walk from end to end of this crowded little island with so little human encounter. I grew fairly weary over the border. There were flashes of interest on the Pennine Way. A school dislike of some poets and visions of crowds give me a hang up about the Lakes. The Rhinogs and Cader Idris strangely draw me, as do the agreeable accounts of Welsh valleys. The days 'by Severn shores' seem very long, if pleasant enough. I must admit that the Irish Three Thousands attracted for the future; like after the Alpine Four Thousands. Ireland, after all, has an English-speaking geriatric medical service with reciprocal N.H.S. arrangements.

Hamish broods a good deal about crowds and erosion in the wilderness. This book will diminish neither. It will sell very well and may educate as well as please.

As I return these books to the Club library what do I feel? – Members, polish your piton hammers and let the dust fall on our Tables! But just let me run round those fifty-three first.

J.M.T.

### Journal of Kindred Clubs

*Alpine Journal* 1981.—This issue contains 274 pages including 100 black and white illustrations and 10 maps, and with an extraordinary variety of subject represents at £9.50, fair value for a specialist publication. Ten articles describe Himalayan Expeditions, six describe other mountain regions, five treat historical matters, four are on questions of ethics, and two concern science (the growing awareness of altitude associated problems) and technology (a sceptical and informative survey of the search for the perfect mountain garment).

Michael Ward's article on the Kongur massif is the star. He displays a sense of excitement in discovery not lost in detailing complex topography. Of the photographs the most spectacular are those illustrating John Barry's exciting account of the Gauri Sankar expedition, while those that grace W. H. Murray's thought-provoking piece in the 'Reminiscence' series, show real artistry – they are by the Scottish or 'real' Douglas Scott.

Robin Hodgkin examines the relevance of a mountaineering apprenticeship and attributes the same level of insight to Tom Longstaff and Don Whillans: he writes convincingly and with some authority, and has also an interesting list of references.

Simon Fraser communicates well the delight of moving through new country in his article on crossing a Himalayan Pass in winter. John Whyte's reflective essay pays tribute to the Scottish poet Douglas Fraser. From Mark Robinson's long article 'The profit of impurism – the Shawangunk scene,' one must conclude that the uglier aspects of competition are becoming more prevalent in extreme rock-climbing. Among the notes Katherine Chorley writes a perceptive review of Michael Robert's poetry and prose, and the Spirit of Strutt lives on in the current editor's cavalier dismissal of 'Solo Faces' (a stimulating novel showing insight into the obsessional aspect of mountaineering).

Librarians, archivists, and bibliophiles should note that from 1982, hard-back binding will be available only on special order.

P.H.H.



*The Rucksack Club Journal* 1980; *The Climbers' Club Journal* 1979/80. In recent years the attractions of good rock, sunshine and relatively cheap air-fares have lured an increasing number of British climbers away from the Alps and across to North America. This is reflected by the inclusion in the *Rucksack Club Journal* of no fewer than four articles involving visits to Yosemite and also, in one case, the North Cascades. Highlighted ascents include the Nose of El Capitan and the Direct Route on the N.W. face of Half Dome. By contrast, the final feature article deals with a solo excursion on the East Ridge of Chambe in Malouri's Mlanje massif.

However, perhaps the most memorable item in this volume is the obituary for H. M. Kelly who died in 1980 at the remarkable age of 96. Kelly, pioneer of many fine climbs in Wasdale and on Pillar, continued to climb right into his seventies. An arresting photograph shows him in his late sixties on an ascent of his very own Moss Ghyll Grooves.

The obituary list in the *Climbers' Club Journal* has its own share of famous names, including those of George Sansom, Fred Pigott and Ivor Richards. Reading these notices provides a fascinating insight to the pre-war scene.

Turning to the main articles, the first two strike a sombre note, dealing first with the dangers of avalanche and then with the risks attached to the Alpine-style approach to big Himalayan peaks. The remaining articles include an account of a visit to Mount Kenya, another venue of increasing popularity and several readable stories of thrills and spills at home. Photographs are numerous and of generally high quality; some muddled captions lend added interest.

R.J.A.

Also received are *Cambridge Mountaineering*, 1980 and 1981, and the *Moray Mountaineering Club Journal*.

These journals reflect very different clubs, although each is a pleasant read in its own right. *Cambridge Mountaineering*, full of strange oaths and inward humour but telling of a club very active in difficult climbing both at home and abroad; the *Moray Journal* marks the golden jubilee of a parent club where the membership is largely salvationists but rich in good fellowship and club activities.

*Fell and Rock Climbing Club Journal* 1981.—Edited by A. G. Cram, this issue commemorates their 75th anniversary. From our aged heights we offer our congratulations. There is pleasant reminiscing from A. H. Griffin on climbing in the Lakes 50 years back. J. Wilkinson gives a scholarly exposition on risks in mountaineering. It appears that the odds against death while climbing are 600:1 which fact may give a grain of comfort to someone. A survey of the 75 years of their Library left the current S.M.C. librarian wondering where he and his predecessors went wrong! There is too an interesting account of an ascent by E. Wood-Johnson of what sounds like the Diamond Slab on Sròn na Ciche in 1932. If so, this would seem to pre-date the recorded route by 14 years! To reduce rope drag, the leader towed his rope up with fishing line!

C.S.

*La Rivista del Club Alpino Italiano*.—This, the journal of the C.A.I. is received every two months. Regrettably this reviewer does not have the Italian and merely picks up the odd word as he flips enjoyably through it. The September 1981 issue contains an illustrated article on 'Ice of Scotland' by Gian Carlo Grassi. The climbing areas covered include the well-known Whangle near Glasgow!

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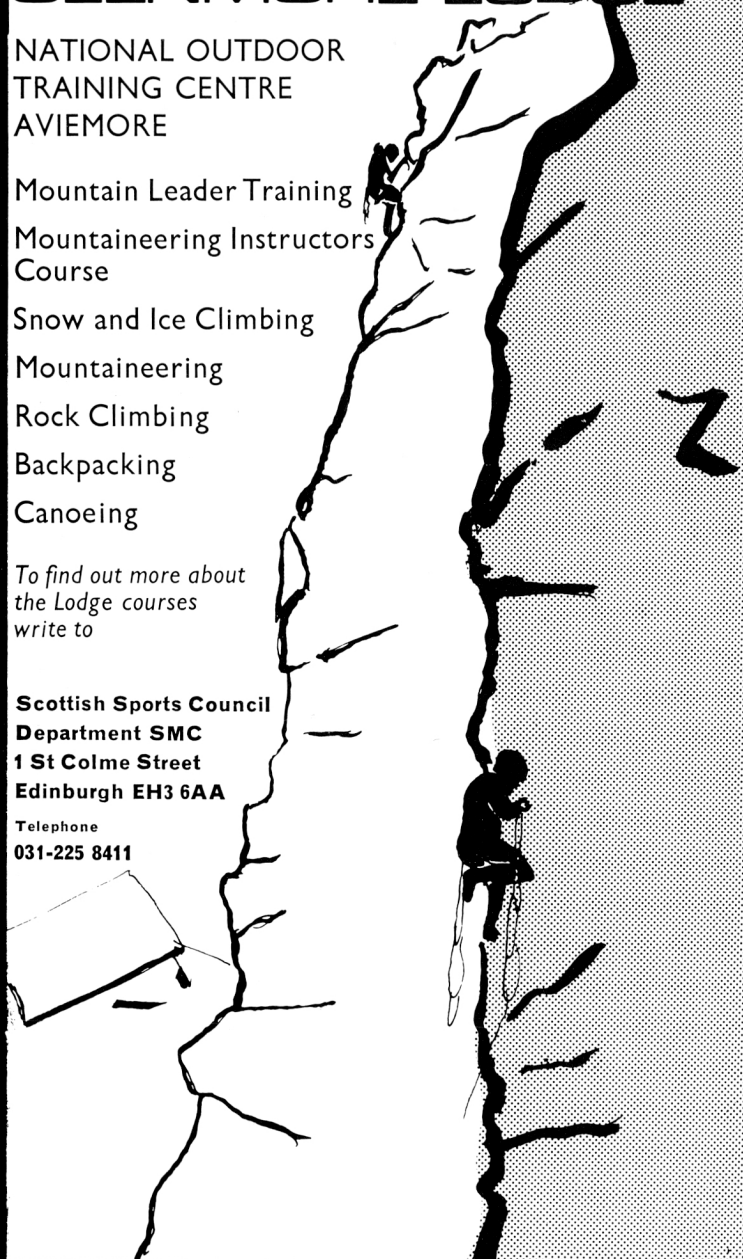
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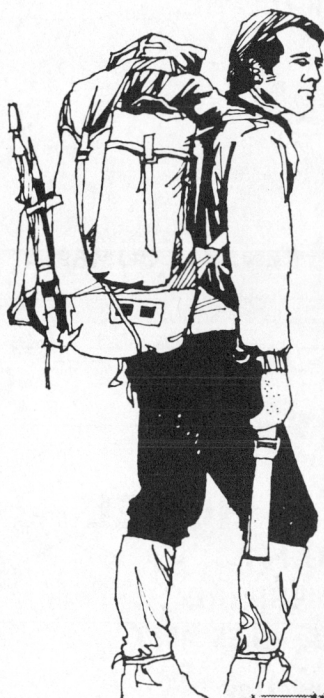
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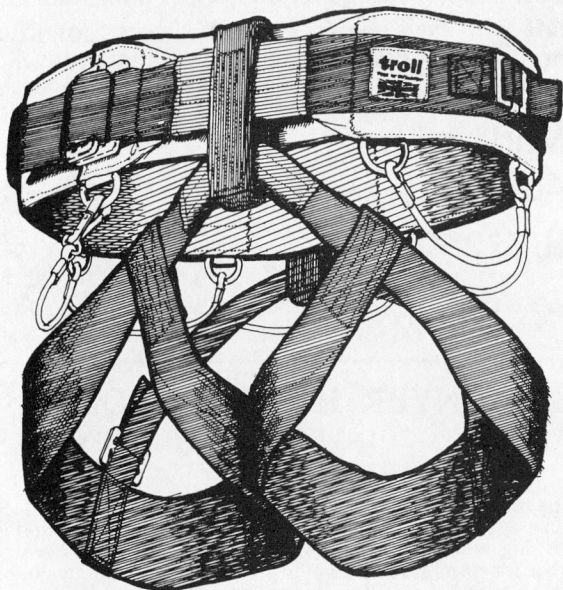


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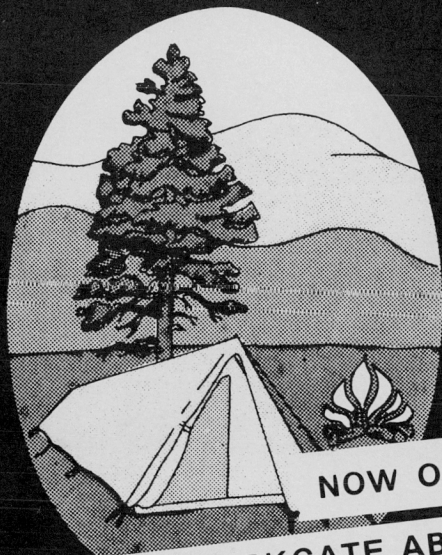
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