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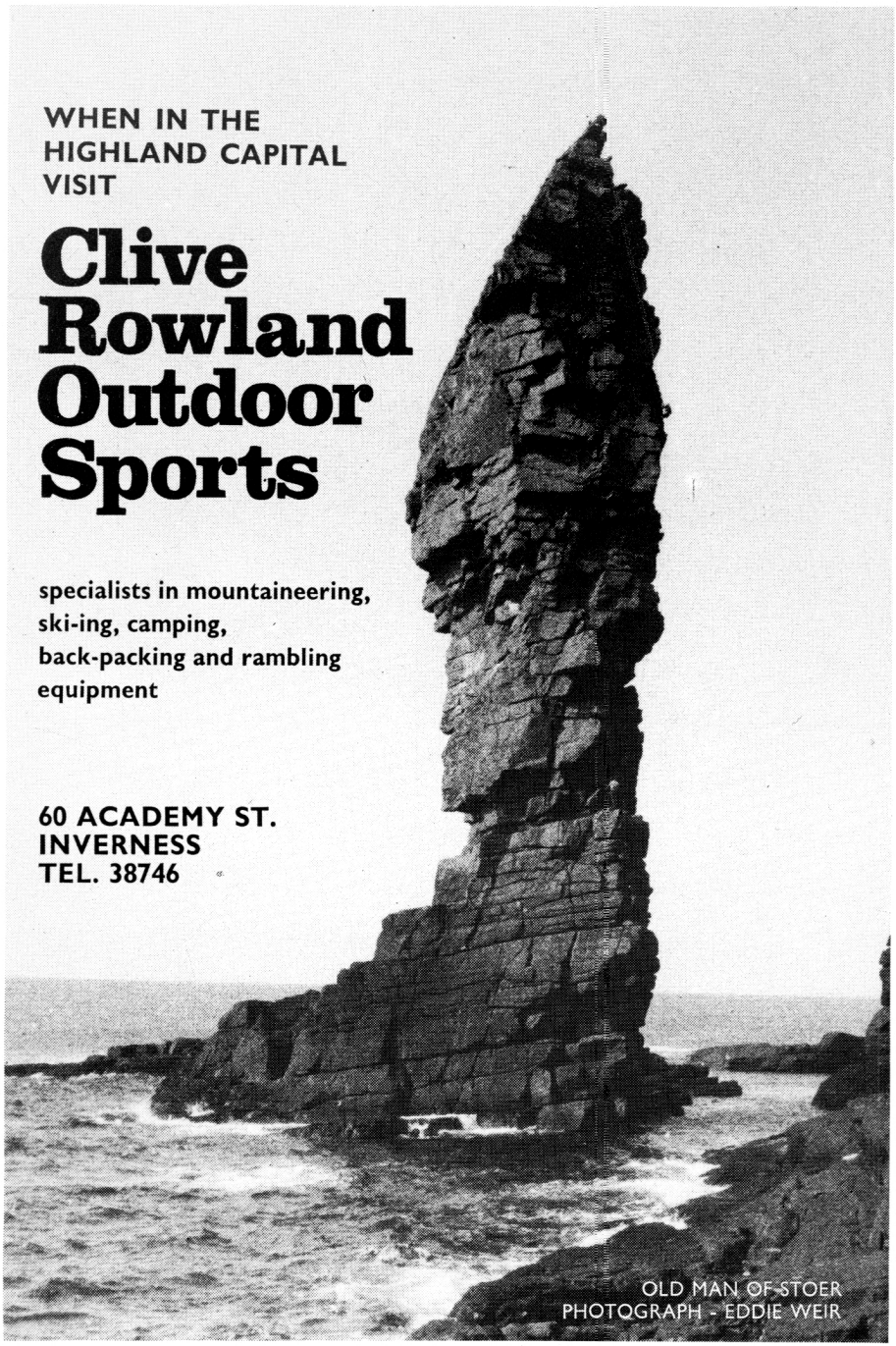

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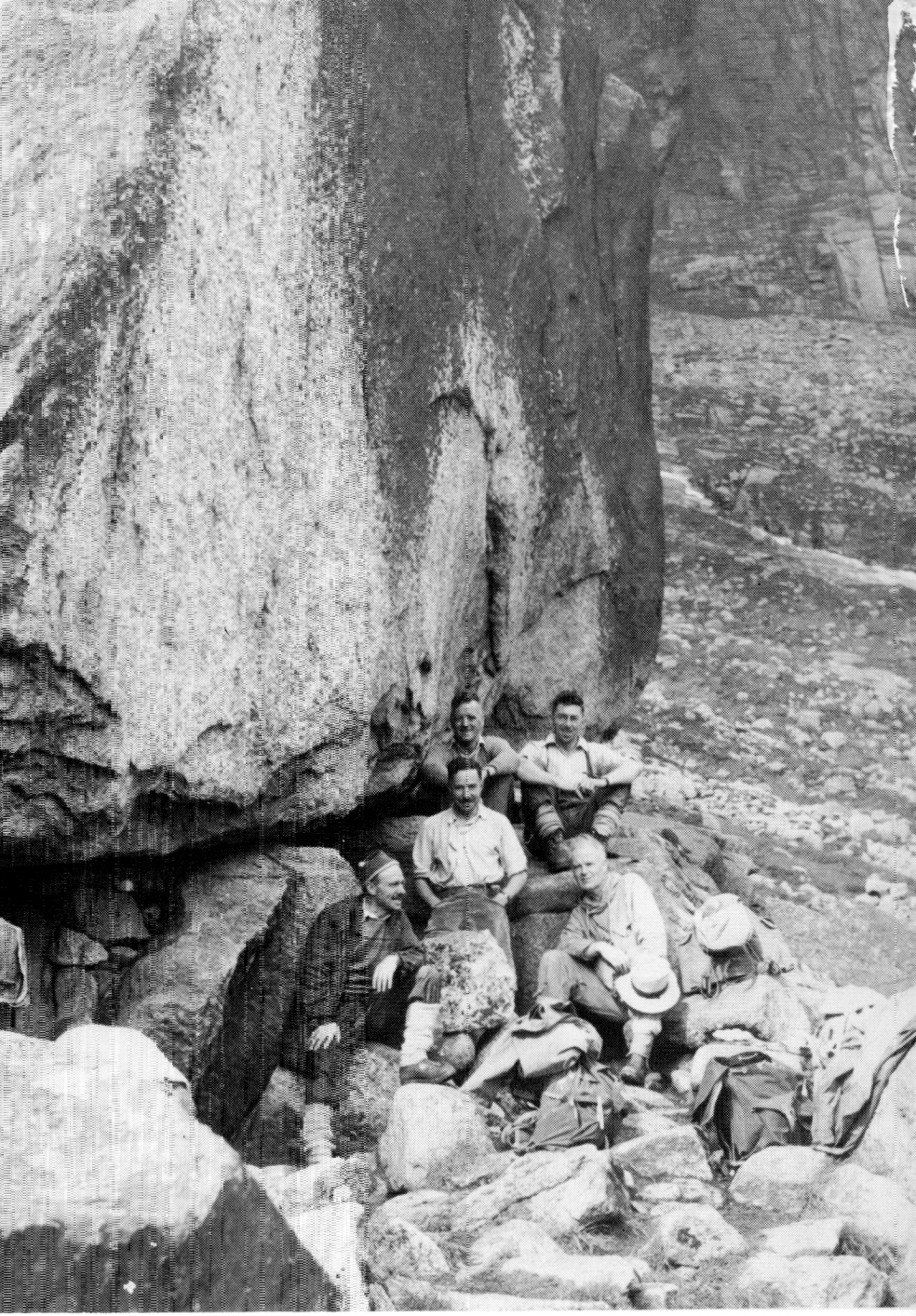

Selftimer Photo: T. Weir

At the Shelterstone in 1956
Tom Weir, George Roger and Percy McFarlane (of the Grid) with Matt Forrester and Ian McNicol behind

THE SCOTTISH
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THE INITIATION

By J. R. Marshall

YEARS ago, as uncouth youths, we had the temerity to take up residence in that haunt of Glasgow's elite, Jacksonville; at that time a stygian hollow beneath a few old pauchled haps.

Out on a stolen week, we diligently polished off the norms of the glen till the weather broke, then we retired to the gloom of the doss. High water came and went, leaving us in its aftermath, perched on narrow planks, sorting ourselves out in a fastidious attempt to avoid contact with an unspeakable mire, masquerading as a floor.

Therafter, we festered twenty four hours in the pits, till a darkening doss indicated arrival of owner representation, fortunately in the form of big Smith. 'Aye lads, what are you doin' here, hardly your style, is it?' he queried, casually staking a place in the mire. However, our luck was in, Wullie was the most tolerant member of that eclectic group, kind hearted for bye and it wasn't long before we enjoyed the fruits of his seemingly bottomless bag, all conjured with effortless bludging.

Suffused with goodies and camaraderie, the fester continued into the night, with one signal comment of Wullie's echoing into sleeptime: 'Aye, Raven's is good for a wet day.'

Breakfast was well underway when he queried from the pit 'Any tea, where are ye gaun?'

'Raven's,' we replied.

'Hmm, no a bad day for it,' as the shining eye took in the driech drizzle at the door. 'no a bad day, mind and keep your strength up for the Cork pitch.'

We hung about for our breakfast supplement, then having exhausted Wullie's hospitality, moved off uphill, eventually to stop for a breather under Great Gully.

The black impending slit of Raven's Gully showed fleetingly through dark cloud, doubts stirred, then a cheerful 'Hello there' split the gloom, it was Wullie, sharp cadie and all (looking like a Scots Dick Tracy!). 'Raven's a sociable climb. can I join in?' Such moral support is hard to beat, so we moved uphill at a more enthusiastic pace.

From close quarters, the gully was more inviting and before long the introductory pitches were below us as we roped up under the notorious chockstone of pitch four.

With a knowing smile, Wullie proferred the wall, 'just up there, tae a big grip, then pull yourself ower.' High with the tradition and grandeur of our situation, I started up, fitting nails onto nicks, wormed the right shoulder up past the roof, grabbed the big grip and thought, not so bad.

Advice percolated up through the crack, 'That's it, now just pull.' Easier said than done, I heaved and stuck, tried leaning out, pushing with left hand, squirming and jamming but to no avail! Fright set in, a clattering retreat saved me but lost the day. I was shattered; to be stopped was a new experience, so back onto the wall, again and again, each time with diminished gain but increased hazard. Frustrated, I acknowledged defeat, our middleman declined and Wullie took over.

Nonchalant, he latched onto the wall, big boots sticking to the rock like magic: then with an imperious doff of the cadie and 'Haud this, Jimmy' he disappeared over the roof like smoke. Christ, that put us in our place and like to disappear into our boots we followed up on taut rope and nerve to join a tactful Wullie, promising the rest of the climb would be great.

Above, in a hall of rivulets, the chockstone pitch salved our pride, in the glorious struggle to overcome its dank walls. The sheer delicacy of pitch six held me enthralled, but reduced Olly to tatters as he swung off, again and again. What a climb! the easier, tottering upper wall gripped us in awe at the silver-grey, slime wall's plunge into the misty void in frightening exposure.

Thinking all we required was to romp up uninterrupted, we came together under the innocuous looking chimney which Wullie introduced as the 'Cork.' I ferretted up into the thing but stuck fast, descended, stripped off some clothes and tried again. I tried so hard I could feel the ribcage flatten, but to no avail, there was no way I would get up the bloody thing! Olly was demolished, so Wullie doffed the cadie, stripped off his jacket and wriggled his way up and over. We followed unashamedly leaning out on the rope, patting the rock for appearances, to emerge from the Raven's maw, one hundred percent impressed!

In retrospect, I know we'd been 'taken' by Wullie, I've often done the same to others since, we didn't know it then but we could not have picked a better man for the initiation.

However, at the time, I didn't give a damn, what a fantastic climb it had been. I resolved I'd get back into the gully again but now it was great to be out of that hole! Off we went into the drizzle and down, burning off the adrenalin with delighted release. In the doss our elation dissipated under increasing pressure from the multiple owners, in an introduction to unimagined depths of ribald coexistence, far beyond the wildest dreams of our hitherto protected environment.

Twenty four hours on, deep in wet and windblown contemplative escape from the harsh reality of a lift by open lorry, and still pondering on the power and grace of these same men on the rocks of Buachaille Etive, it came to me that we had partaken of the height and depth of experience, but more significantly, had been shown the way and the light by Glasgow's Ullysean crew, to a new and vital life style waiting to be enjoyed in our Scottish mountains.

WHEN I WAS SIXTEEN . . . .

By Philip Gribbon

ON THE still shore of Kishorn a distant generator throbbed through the short summer night. High on a gantry a single arc light shone on the deserted platform site. Across the northern hills the predawn light glimmered and spread its mystery amongst the shadowy stones through which the stream trickled and murmured soft things to itself.

Beyond our tent and behind the dark broken terraces of Torridonian sandstone was a long lolloping profile of bumpy castellated towers that spilled into the corrie in a sheared vertical nose. Imagination danced the night fantastic. The mountain was an improbable fank for fleecy sheep huddling at the dykehead, the dark cells for monstrous monks and the secret combs for big bees, or the last black thoughts from the earth mother, the clenched fist, knuckles in blood, a giantess convected and wedged in deep purple magma. Crazy dreams spinning towards the solstice.

Inside was warmth in a breathless Force 10 while outside was a sparkling bright day with a climbing sun in a blue sky. With no need to rush and no problems in sight, I wandered barefoot, wondering where *was* the route through the sharp cracks on the swelling curve of the Cioch.

This was Applecross, green field green peace land, away over the sea from every climber's favourite Cioch in Skye. Thanks to the mountain media men and their surrogate routes in the cosy armchair, A'Chioch of Sgùrr a' Chaorachain had gained star status among the classic climbs of Britain. So unwittingly, we were about to have an experience.

Over the hill came a company minibus, sleek in its Howard Doris eco-pattern of bog gray. It careered round the hairpin and sped past the tent. This was when we saw another tent at the bend, with occupants that strolled slowly, then upped and set off rapidly up the valley. Mere over-eager walkers, we surmised, and drank another leisurely cup. We followed them by eye. Behind us at the bridge a car drew up, three folk got out, two were lassies, so we watched some more, and they turned climbery with ropes and things. We weren't going to be alone, but no difference. It was a perfect day, plenty of time, with room up there for everyone. Two more cars appeared and shuggled on to the verge. Everyone had just increased by another seven and that was too many for us to tolerate with equanimity.

We excelled ourselves, shoving gear and grub into our sacks, and bolted off along the burn towards the loch to ensure a high place in the inevitable queue. Now, catch yourselves on, lads. What was the point in becoming hassled and rushed in such an unseemly race to reach the route? Besides, these new comers were showing themselves to be no mean walkers. On a rising traverse higher on the hillside they were not only catching up on us but they were overtaking us. We'll not play that wee game. We'll just sit peacefully in the tangle of dry deergrass soaking in the sun and listening to the ripples lapping in the stones, and ignore those dashing climbers on the hill. However once we had done those things and some more besides, we had to go in idle pursuit.

Little figures scurried back and forth on a terrace on the nose, they were searching for the classic route. The leading pair had gone from sight to appear in silhouette perched directly above the blocky lip that overhung the terrace. Tiny men were making tentative essays at likely alternatives, some were watching, all were waiting. The corporate mind of the climbing caterpillar had to make up its mind about the start of the line up the face. Someone now was slanting away from the edge, gaining massive steps

joint by joint, feeling out and selecting the easiest way. The rest quickly spaced out a queue, and we worked out our positions as we scrambled up heathery ladders through the tiers. We were to be number fifteen and sixteen in line.

We toured the terrace, cautiously peering down the hidden slabs that dipped into the distant scree, and craning our necks up the steep cracks that ran into the sky. We sat on the curving ledge to wait, with raised English voices calling on high and grumbling natives below on the heather. There were more climbers yet to come, walkers on a corrie circuit and black birds on the wing, gentle winds on the loch and distant hills on the horizon.

Oh yes, we climbed the route. It didn't matter that we followed others or that others followed us. Every move, instinctively automatic or rationally assessed, was made in complete isolation. I trailed close and companionable to handholds vacated by the stranger's shuffling shoes. She was competent, as well as shapely and attractive. I lapsed on occasions but with thoughtful contemplation made the moves in the right order. The escape from a second short terrace was up a mis-named open chimney. The whole character of the route had changed. Here was an airy stance, spacious and well-appointed. I sat down in a private niche in everyone else's spiders web and got my nut in, and looked across at a deep maroon steepening slab barely nobbled with tiny crucial bumps. Timorous voices were twittering in turn, the slab was providing its fun. This was crux country, nothing drastic, just pure quality, with every attribute of situation, texture and sequence, all great stuff. We just wandered on, searching for the satisfying variants to gain the minor top.

Ahead beyond a dip the last wall ringing the main top was in a noisy state of siege with snarled parties jostling each other up the final pitch. It wasn't for us. Let's look for a tail stinger. We chose a lost errant crack with a fine intense bridge that required hooked arms hauling overhead while moss and dust cascaded into our shirts. We arrived taxed and satisfied.

There wasn't another climber in view. The far walkers dandering along the rocky rim of the corrie were in the right place. We were, too.

Now, come down, numbers fifteen and sixteen, your time is up.

B GULLY

By G. J. F. Dutton

A collection of Doctor tales has been rounded up by that indefatiguable entrepreneur, Ken Wilson, and is now published by Diadem. This one, however, has successfully evaded capture. – Ed.

WE SHALL leave it as B Gully, and not name the hill it defaces. To say more would endanger the innocently curious; few people would otherwise find it, and only the Doctor would look for it. What it does in summer I don't know, and don't care. It probably breeds rabbits. In winter it drives one to theosophy or astrophysics.

That New Year the Apprentice, the Doctor and I had gathered some excellent high grades in the Western Cairngorms. The Apprentice found them relaxing after two days with the Weasels, wintering summer VS's on the Ben. The Doctor, no mean performer on ice, had led several hard pitches and was high for the last day. However, the night before, it blew and snowed so arctically that we resolved to go home. But the morning radio reported no road at Dalnaspidal or anywhere else; so we resigned ourselves agreeably to an extra day's climbing. But where?

The southeast wind had filled all the northerly gullies and they lay together in the cold morning sun hatching powder-snow avalanches, joining wicked hands and waiting for us. We turned to the less intelligent hills opposite, a huddle of bent and balding brows.

'That wind should have cleaned out Beinn X,' pronounced the Doctor (naming the unmentionable hill) '*and* both its gullies. I read somewhere that B Gully is an easy snow walk with fine views south. We could have a gentlemanly stroll up it and watch for the ploughs coming through.'

We were not enthusiastic. But he had been robbed of a final good lead; so we assented. Beinn X was blunt bad-tempered scree, a dreadful slagheap of windblasted icy detritus; yet its two distant gullies blinked harmlessly enough. We headed for B Gully, through snow-dispensing sitka spruce. 'Still,' remarked the Doctor, when we thankfully broke clear, 'they add a touch of difficulty to an otherwise easy day' – his usual, and usually accepted, invitation to Fate. We wiped our necks dry and followed a welcome path past a shepherd's cottage to the hill itself.

The gully began mildly enough. Its snow was hard and its angle slight. The jaundiced eye did note, a little way up, the

whiter whiteness of deep new snow. The Doctor disagreed. 'Never, in a wind like last night's. All the loose stuff's been blown to Lochaber. Look how there's none on the scree.' He was still enlarging upon this certainty when he began to diminish. He was progressively entering his footsteps. We waded after, cursing his bobbing head. We were climbing into, not up, the gully.

'Don't worry. A softish patch. A mere aeolian aberration – due to that big rock' – and he waved his axe towards the uniform scree slope on our right, which faced the equally uniform one on our left. 'We'll soon strike bottom again.'

And he ploughed on, treadmilling determinedly. No bottom could we strike. It was wrapped in eiderdown. We climbed through an endless sleeping bag. The floor could be stamped to some quiver of stability; front and sides fled from our grasp, and fell in again behind. Loyally, we underwent an hour or so of this. The Doctor, ahead in the burrow, kept promising an eventual excellent view of the snowploughs; an inducement we considered insufficient and, increasingly, improbable.

Then a mist came up from the strath; and our floundering lost any trace of relevance. We were isolated in space, each performing a private inexplicable penance. Up, down; up, down. Down, up; down, up. *Om mane padme hum.*

Nothing could we see but occasional toiling pieces of ourselves. The environment had abdicated. Its ghost hung around in a thick flannel of expectancy. No doubt some Beatitude was preparing. Sensory deprivation is, however, unsuited to the impure, and our unemployed reflexes became restive. We spoke to them severely. But they prevailed. Nirvana would have to wait.

'I've had enough of this bloody place,' roared the head, shoulders and one arm of the Apprentice. Another arm, ectoplasmically dim, floated above him in vague Blavatskian deprecation; it repeated the Doctor's familiar assurances that rock would soon appear and that the view would be good. It withdrew and faded, exorcised by pulverising oaths from a demi-head sable, couped at the neck, issuant from an infinite field of argent.

Beinn X is only two and a half thousand feet at the worst, but to continue would disperse ourselves further into a dubiously-heraldic spirit world. B Gully under these conditions – probably under any conditions – is not the Eightfold Noble Path. It was not any sort of path; and to descend proved as baffling as trying to go up. Merely to stand still in such a whiteout entails much geometric unhappiness; the dimensions crowd round and leer unpredictably. They push back from in front and shove from

behind. You inevitably fall. Our drunken progress down a thousand odd feet of this non-Euclidian picketing may be imagined.

We tried occasionally to escape from the side. During one of these time-consuming excursions the Doctor sang triumphantly 'A rock! At last! We're there!' And he carefully stepped on a small black triangle and firmly pushed himself upwards. Then we knelt and pulled him out. He had stood on his own glove, dropped the moment before. The glove had, of course, vanished for ever into nether whiteness. We spat out snow and continued. B Gully had no sides any more; they had slipped, like the rest of our once so solid and Newtonian Beinn X, into a boundless continuum of uncertainty.

It was, in fact, impossible to measure advance in any direction. We began to sympathise with Einstein. The compass, and the Doctor's much-consulted but equally equivocal clinometer, tended to believe we were going down: yet small objects (borrowed from one's companion) when thrown ahead to prove this would stick in mid-air, or annihilate themselves suddenly and permanently despite apologies. The Doctor aimed bearings from behind; but they never reached us. He blamed the Heisenberg principle. We suffered, in fact, most of the New Cosmology. Only a Black Hole was missing. It came later.

We swore we *were* going down. The air felt more still, and last night's meringues loomed increasingly confectious. We became convinced we were descending a steep, sheltered and previously unseen branch of B Gully. Such unexpected fluvio-glacial gorges ferret these lower hills. We roped up and followed the Apprentice's erratic thread through the piled hallucinations. The Doctor, at times disconcertingly below us, acted as anchor; he was our longest peg. But no steep pitch fell away beneath; whenever we imagined one, the Apprentice's torso would surmount it into space, a rising kite tight in our fingers.

It grew dark; but still no communication from Scotland. We leant against each other. We were light-headed from weltering in abstraction; our hemispheres had drifted up. We argued about the existence of torches; each assumed somebody else had brought one (only a gentlemanly stroll . . .). We would have to bivouac until this hopeless mist cleared up. The Apprentice, cursing dully, plunged his fist into the wall of snow before him to test its howff-forming potentiality.

His howls and fragmentary dance testified the negative. Solid. Obviously ice. We had struck it at last. We *were* in a gorge. At a steep part. The ice appeared to rise above us; therefore it presumably stretched below. We collected ourselves. We smelt

avalanches. I gathered the rope, and the Doctor, hovering beyond my shoulder, divested himself of legs and dug in. The Apprentice leant forward, sniffing cautiously, tapping with the point of his axe. Suddenly there was a thump and a dull crack, and a black line appeared across part of the wall; a fringe of dislodged snow trickled down it. Windslab! Windslab and powder snow . . . This, then, was it.

'She's going!' croaked the Apprentice, snatching back his axe. The Doctor drove himself in, together with his comment, up to the hilt, and vanished from sight. I hauled on the rope and fell back into feathers, feet plunging. The Apprentice, as he later described it, was plucked from his steps and flung outwards and upwards . . .

We wrestled, clutching the rope, our only reality. It clutched back. Blows demolished my breath – we were over the wall – or was it the Doctor's boots? A rush of silence . . . I imagined myself falling, falling, in the caress of a powder-snow avalanche, towards rocks or suffocation.

Then it seemed as if I awoke.

'Good Lord,' said the Doctor, just above my ear.

I clawed away snow. I felt myself carefully. Surprisingly, I could sit up, though it was painful.

We must have stopped; but we might never have moved. In front was an apparently identical ice wall, again with a black split across it. But the creaking and tearing was louder this time, and the split widened, jerk after jerk. We heard tinkling, as of ice, into the abyss beyond. We were about to be swept down the next step of this appalling stairway. We grabbed the rope again; and waited.

But the split grew wider, until it was almost a regular square. A black square. Our long-bleached eyes drank it with fascination. Black. Square. Hypnotised, we wrapped the rope round our arms.

And then, incredibly, the square slowly filled itself: and presented us – with a Human Head. A large human – hairy and whiskered – head gazed at us from the square. Its eyes glittered in the half-light.

I groaned. This was Concussion; or worse. Maybe, The Other Side. Letting go the rope with one hand, I rubbed snow round my eyes. It was still there. 'Good Lord . . .' repeated the Doctor, perhaps appropriately.

The head spoke. With deliberation.

'Ye'll be the fellies: that went up the hill the day?'

Silence. 'Aah,' replied the Doctor, the only one with a biddable larynx.

'Well, then: jist ye come roon to the door: an I'll let ye in. It's awfy deep-like: oot there at the back. Wait now: till I pit on the licht.'

The head withdrew, and almost at once the square blazed forth. *Fiat lux*. It was not St. Peter. It was not The Gate. It was not even a Black Hole. It was somebody in a cottage. The cottage was snowed up at the back, it was whitewashed and, as the Apprentice had demonstrated, it was built of sound local granite. There had been no avalanche, and we had fallen only in our own estimation.

We rose and followed the rope to the Apprentice, who had been buried and half-strangled by our earlier presence of mind; pulled him up, brushed him down, stifled his questions and propelled him towards the approaching torch.

'Come awa in: come awa in. I jist couldna get yon windy open: an noo the gless is creckit. Pieces aa owre the flair. Michty: where hae ye been? Aa snaw? Ye've come doon the burn: that's what ye've done: richt aff the hill. But: ye'd like no *see* the road.'

We dripped beside a roaring fire, clutching hot sweet tea and newmade bread. Frying hissed wonderfully behind us. We gathered that there were only two places on the hill where snow always collected, B Gully and the burn that ran down from it directly to the shepherd's cottage, the cottage we had passed that morning. The burn, it seemed, was the usual place to find the more stupid sheep in weather like this.

'But: I've niver had three o them: at ma back windy afore!' exclaimed the shepherd, genially enough, pouring out drams for each of us.

We thought it best not to comment. Later, perhaps, the Doctor might describe how he had steered us straight to supper. Just now, he studied his whisky. We had begun hesitantly to discuss the hazards of lambing, when the shepherd's wife called us to table. Plates steamed, chips stretched themselves expansively on top of bacon, sausage and egg. 'And so it's Mr McPhedran you're knowing,' she said, naming the shepherd who had been our host on the Craggie expedition, 'he marches with us. A great man, Erchie, a great man.'

'Remarkable, remarkable, mmm, his fiddle has, mmm, exceptional bite and drive,' agreed the Doctor, munching affably, wielding his fork; and conversation was launched down the channel so tactfully provided.

©GJFD

THE HARD ROCK ROUTE TO E7

By Gary Latter

SCOTLAND, with its dreich climate and only a small number of active climbers at any one time has always managed to produce a very respectable crop of hard routes, seldom behind their southern counterparts in the difficulty stakes.

In recent years the whole face of rock climbing has changed dramatically. Not only has the number and difficulty of routes increased immensely, but the technological advances on the equipment front have made it a totally different game altogether. No longer do we have to depend on hawser laid ropes, PA's and a handful of pegs and slings. Instead we now have much higher performance dynamic kernmantel ropes, a wide choice of specialised footwear to replace the now obsolete EB's, such as Cragratz, Crack specials and the revolutionary new Firé rock boots which should result in a giant leap forward in hard friction climbing.

On the protection front the first major breakthrough occurred in the early seventies when Chouinard introduced his full range of 'Stoppers.' These have now been superseded by 'Friends,' 'Rocks' and 'RP's,' which together with lightweight hollow karabiners allow a much wider range of runners to be carried than would previously have been possible.

In the late 40's and 50's John Cunningham raised standards on rock to a new high level with ascents of *Gallow's Route, Guerdon Grooves, Bluebell Grooves* and ultimately *Carnivore,* all in Glen Coe. Another Creag Dhu climber of the day, Patsy Walsh also made his mark with *Club Crack* on the Cobbler's North Peak and *Trophy Crack* on Skye.

Southern raiders Brown and Whillans grabbed the prominent line of *Sassenach* on Carn Dearg Buttress, Whillans returning a couple of years later to snatch the other fifties classic on the Ben with *Centurion.*

The Cairngorms were the scene of great post war explorations, with new crags being developed apace, largely by Aberdeen climbers. Most of this climbing was done in pre-war style, using nailed boots, and its culmination was Tom Patey's ascent of the intimidating *Vertigo Wall* at Creag an Dubh Loch. Jerry Smith's *Pinnacle Face* on Lochnagar (in rope soles) heralded the breakthrough on to steep open faces, using more modern footwear. It was followed by Brooker and Grassick with *The Link,* Seller's ascent of the impressive *Citadel* on the Shelter Stone Crag and

Barclay's *Waterkelpie Wall,* the first open face route on the Central Gully Wall of Creag an Dubh Loch.

Other hitherto almost untouched areas were also receiving attention, notably the great discoveries made by M. J. O'Hara on Carnmore Crag at Fionn Loch, such as *Fionn Buttress* and *Dragon.*

At this time the Etive Slabs were pretty much untouched but in '57 Mick Noon and Cunningham climbed the now very popular *Hammer,* and with Smith added *Agony* with some aid. Noon also put up *Claw* and another classic slab climb, *Swastika.*

The late fifties and early sixties saw a dramatic rise in standards, Glen Coe being the main forcing ground. Edinburgh climbers dominated the scene, with nearly all the additions deserving classic status. Robin Smith climbed *Shibboleth, Big Top, Yo-Yo* and *Marshall's Wall,* Jimmy Marshall put up *Trapeze,* and *Pause* on the slabs, whilst Dougal Haston and Moriarty produced *Hee Haw* to complete the E. Buttress of Aonach Dubh triology.

On Ben Nevis Smith and Haston climbed the magnificent line of *The Bat,* precursor of nearby routes *Torro* and *King Kong* which came a few years later. In the Cairngorms Smith climbed *Needle* on the Shelter Stone Crag, the last of the outstanding contributions he made in his brilliant and all too short, career. At Creag an Dubh Loch the Barley brothers climbed *Culloden* and broke the spell of the intimidating Broad Terrace Wall while Robertson, Fyffe and Wilkins added *Blue Max* on the Central Slabs. The mid-sixties saw a surge of interest in the roadside crag of Creag Dubh where Spence and Porteous added the bold and serious *Hill* up the steep wall left of Haston's classic, *Inbred.* The following year, 1968, saw two major additions to the Shelter Stone Crag with *Steeple* by Spence and *The Pin* by Rab Carrington, the latter a line through an area of rock, previously described as 'manifestly impossible' – how times change! Another effort by Carrington was perhaps the most impressive of the year – *Pinch* on the Etive Slabs, which added a new dimension to slab climbing.

The exceptionally dry summer of '76 saw the onslaught of a fairly intense period of activity throughout the country that was to last right up to the present day.

Ed Grindley irritated the natives by climbing the plum line of *Clearances* on Aonach Dubh. Climbed on sight over two days and only slightly flawed by use of a point of aid on the top pitch.

Another Englishman, Nick Colton also stole the limelight that year by climbing two very bold and serious lines. On the urban arena of Dumbarton Rock he led the much eyed imposing arête of *Fever Pitch,* a route that still awaits a repeat ascent. The

following day he added (on sight) the unprotectable overhanging groove of *Le Monde* in Glen Coe.

The following year saw the emergence of a modern breed of climbers intent on relieving the existing routes of their sometimes overblown reputations and their often overuse of aid. This keen and talented group comprised of Dave Cuthbertson, Murray Hamilton, Ken Johnstone, Dougie Mullin and Willie Todd. Hamilton had already made his mark on Upper Cave Crag the previous year by freeing *Squirm, Squirm Direct* and *Corpse,* as well as reducing the aid on *Rat Race* to one peg.

Cuthbertson had also been active here, freeing *Ratcatcher* as well as adding the serious *Run Free* and *Ticket to Ride* on the nearby Creag Dubh. At first rivalry occurred between East and West, but this was soon dispelled and they teamed up to blitz the crags, producing routes of a standard of difficulty never encountered before on Scottish rock.

Again raiding Englishmen grabbed the plum when Mick Fowler and Phil Thomas made the much sought after free ascent of *Titan's Wall* on the Ben, Cuthbertson and Hamilton making a repeat ascent a few days later. On the same cliff Johnstone made a free ascent of *King Kong.* The raiding pair also made some other important ascents on Skye with *Stairway to Heaven,* an impressive line up the wall between *Jib* and the *Great Prow.*

In Glen Coe Cuthbertson managed to reduce the aid on *Freak Out* to one solitary peg and with Todd added the fine *Bannockburn* up the very steep wall left of *Trapeze.* The same pair along with Hamilton and Rab Anderson put up *Crocodile,* a steep airy classic up the wall and groove right of *Freak Out.* Johnstone made the long awaited free ascent of Dave Bathgate's *Flip Out* on the North Face of Aonach Dubh as well as adding two major routes in the shape of *Massacre* and *Eldorado* to the walls left of the *Clearances,* and so introduced his infamous 'gardening slings' to the new route scene.

Over on the Cairgorm granite of Creag an Dubh Loch Cuthbertson and Hamilton made free ascents of *Giant* and *Cougar,* just beating Londoner's Fowler and Thomas by half a day! On Creag Dubh's *Barrier Wall* Cuthbertson added *Ruff Licks* on the same day as Hamilton made the free ascent of the neighbouring *Muph Dive,* Cuthbertson repeating the route the following day and dispensing with the yo-yo tactics.

The Polldubh crags in Glen Nevis received their first major hard route when the formidable duo of Cuthbertson and Hamilton bouldered out *Chalky Wall,* a short but hard route. On the Glasgow Outcrops by far the two most significant ascents were the reduction

of the aid on *Big Zipper* down at Dumbarton to two lonely bolts on the apparently blank and holdless initial wall by Hamilton. At Auchinstarry Quarry Todd climbed the striking arête of *Nijinski,* though relying on pre-placed side runners high up neighbouring routes, making it a virtually top-roped ascent.

The Summer of '78 saw no slackening in the pace, Cuthbertson, Todd and Mullin battling it out on *Caligula* on Carn Dearg Buttress, a line climbing in part the much tried *Banana Groove* round the corner from *Titan's.* Todd returned a few weeks later in the company of Johnstone, and the pair spent two days getting to grips with *Adrenalin Rush,* a fairly direct line between *Bullroar* and *Cowslip.*

Glen Coe activity continued unabated, Johnstone created the serious *Triceptor,* and the aptly named *Spacewalk* up the area of rock left of *Crocodile,* with a point of aid on the top pitch. Cuthbertson made longstanding free ascents of *Bluebell Grooves* (with Todd) and *Kingpin* (with Mullin) as well as adding the problematic *Challenge.* On the Buchaille's *Slime Wall* the shallow grooveline on the wall left of *Shibboleth* was ascended by Hamilton to give *Grogblossom.* Down on the slabs he also put up a fine *Direct Start* to the *Pinch* and with Pete Greenwell freed *Groundhog.*

On the Brack the impressive aid route of Mammoth was climbed free by Mullin, whilst on Cave Crag Cuthbertson excelled himself with an on sight free ascent of a route now known as *High Performance,* giving gymnastic climbing on the initial roof. On Creag Dubh the steep cracks of *Case Dismissed* fell to a two day effort from Cuthbertson.

The following year Cuthbertson (that man again) continued to push standards even further, first with *Gabrielle* on Balnacoul Castle Crag in Glen Lednock, then the serious *Fuhrer* up the wall left of *The Hill* on Creag Dubh. On Upper Cave Crag, *Mousetrap,* the last of the classic aid routes succumbed to a free ascent, along with the impressive overhanging arête on its left to give *Morbidezza.* The route of the year was without doubt *Wild Country* on the North Peak of the Cobbler, climbed over a period of two days and involving many falls, at 6b/c it was a major breakthrough at the time and still awaits a repeat ascent five years later!

On Skye Mullin and Hamilton produced *Enigma,* the main pitch following an immaculate crack in the upper headwall of Sron Na Ciche. Hamilton and Kenny Spence brought the first of a spate of modern routes to Creag an Dubh Loch with *Sans Fer* on the False Gully Wall. In the Coe Mullin eliminated the sole aid point on the steep crackline of *Freak Out,* Whilst Todd freed *Antigrav* of its two aid nuts at Dumbarton to give the area its first 6a.

In 1980 Cuthbertson teamed up with Johnstone and set about the process of bringing Scotland into the eighties. On U.C.C. the wall left of *Ratcatcher* was breached with *Lady Charlotte,* a pointer at the shape of things to come. At Dumbarton Rock the magnificent curving crackline of *Chemin de Fer* was freed after a sustained effort over several days.

Cuthbertson returned to the Cobbler and carried on from where he left off the previous year. The pocketed wall left of the classic *Club Crack* gave *Rest and be Thankful.* A route similar in style to *Right Wall* in Wales, whilst the line of grooves on the South Peak became *Ruskoline,* another equally serious line and firmly establishing the E5 grade in Scotland.

Lakeland raider Pete Whillance made the first of his very productive visits North of the Border, climbing two very hard and much sought after lines in the process. On the Brack the very serious big arête next to *Mammoth* gave the *Edge of Extinction,* whilst further North on Creag a'Bhancair the obvious slanting fault line was climbed to give *The Risk Business,* another serious proposition with two 6b pitches. Also in Glen Coe that year Hamilton relieved *Spacewalk* of its aid nut and did the same on *Eldorado,* Johnstone later repeating his own route cleanly and adding a fine top pitch with Cuthbertson a few days later.

The strangely neglected crags at Polldubh and Glen Nevis got a modern review in 1981, Cuthbertson adding three hard and contrasting pitches in the shape of *Before The Flood, Ring of Fire* and *Sky Pilot,* the latter a unique boulder problem type route up a severely overhung wall – good for a rainy day. Hamilton also got in on the action with free ascents of *Black Friday* and *Tomag,* along with the very fine *Quality Street* over on Car Park Crag.

In Glen Coe two big lines were climbed, *Prophet of Purism* up the extremely steep wall left of *Bannockburn* and *Revengeance* up the wall between *Spacewalk* and *Crocodile,* both bold and serious climbs typical of Cuthbertson. Over in the East the ubiquitous Cubby was active in preparation for the new guidebook for the area, producing a never ending flow of hard routes in the process. On Cave Crag the wall left of *Morbidezza* was dubbed *In Loving Memory,* whilst further North on Creag Dubh many routes were added, the most significant and indeed the hardest, being *Ayatollah, Galaxy, Acapulco, Silicosis* and *Instant Lemon Direct.* Finally on Shelter Stone *The Missing Link* free climbed a line previously recorded as *Loki.*

Although I have no personal experience of them, Aberdeen sea cliffs have been well known as a focus of high standard rock climbing since the late forties when *White Seam* was the test piece

at Souter Head. Twenty years later Mike Rennies' *Mythical Wall* had assumed this position. Ten years further on and the climbing on the coast had moved into E grades with Bob Smith's *Red Death* at Long Slough. Pioneers like Smith, Brian Sprunt and Dougie Dinwoodie were leading figures in establishing the hardest climbs. These now include *Sun God* on the Round Tower near Longhaven, *Hahoochie* at Craig Stirling and *Prehistoric Monster* at Earnsheugh. A new guidebook is just about to emerge and will contain ? routes.

In the Summer of '82 both Hamilton and Whillance were very active in the Cairngorms, bringing the big grades to the big cliffs with *Slantibantfast, Bombadillo, The Israelite, Ascent of Man* and the *Naked Ape,* all very fine and hard additions to the sweeping granite slabs and walls of Creag an Dubh Loch. On the Shelter Stone Crag Whillance put up *Run of the Arrow* and Hamilton made the long awaited ascent of *Cupid's Bow,* a route overaided on its first ascent back in '79.

Cuthbertson started the year off on the lowland crags by freeing the corner of *Cyclops* at Dumbarton and making a 'proper' lead of *Nijinski* at Auchinstarry, though still using side runners in the process. On Cave Crag he freed the bolt ladder of *Fall Out* – a two day effort. Other routes requiring many falls/yo-yo's from Cuthbertson that year were *Exocet* and *Cosmopolitan* in Glen Nevis, both very technical at 6b and 6c respectively. Also active in this area, Ed Grindley climbed the striking arête of *Edgehog,* a route further enhanced by the magnificent backdrop all the way down the glen. Over in Skye Cuthbertson made his mark on Sron Na Ciche with *Zephyr, Team Machine* and the superb *Magic.*

1983 was again dominated by the three climbers, working separately they produced several undoubtedly hard and serious routes. Hamilton returned yet again to Creag an Dubh Loch, this time adding *Flodden* which sports two 6a pitches and a 6b pitch, and *Voyage of the Beagle* with three 6a pitches. All these routes and their 1982 predecessors were pre-cleaned and inspected by abseil, thus perhaps placing a greater aura and sense of achievement on subsequent on sight ascents.

In the 'Coe the only noteworthy addition was Whillance's ascent of the grooveline right of *Kingpin* to give *The Lost Ark,* a line previously attempted by several parties. On the Ben the *Banana Groove* was climbed in its entirety by Hamilton, but yet again Whillance snatched the plum with the left arête of *Titan's* dubbed *Agrippa.*

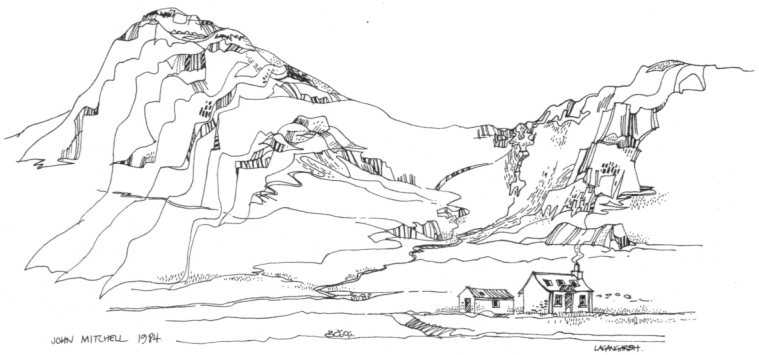
Cuthbertson climbed three more hard lines in Glen Nevis with *The Handren Effect, Short Man's Walk About* and *The Singing Ringing Tree,* but undoubtedly the hardest undertaking of the

year was his free ascent of *Requiem* at Dumbarton. At E7 6c it is at least a full grade harder than its nearest rival, requiring several weeks effort in its ninety feet of sustained and strenuous climbing. Finally Gary Latter rid the crag of its last two aid points with his free ascent of *Big Zipper,* giving very hard but well protected climbing.

The future of Scottish climbing looks very healthy indeed, with climbers of the calibre of Cuthbertson, Hamilton and Whillance producing free climbs of the highest standard. Needless to say none of the hardest additions have had repeat ascents, such is the difficulty of the routes and the relatively few climbers operating at the top of the grade.

There are of course some unhealthy patches. Over in Arran several aid extravaganzas masquerading as free climbs can only be described as route bagging taken to extremes. Bolts have already made an appearance on one or two outcrop routes and it may only be a matter of time before we see them in use on bigger crags.

What does the future hold? Certainly there is plenty of unclimbed rock about but protection, or rather the lack of it, is something of a problem on these relatively featureless faces. Obviously the use of bolts would solve this problem thus enabling more climbers to operate at the top end of the scale. However successful pioneering of rock climbs has always been the result of boldness and if bolts are used to safeguard unclimbed rock there will be no great problems left for the future generations. We have reached a point where self-discipline or careful controls may be needed to safeguard the heritage of our successors.



SMALL WOMAN, BIG BREATHS

By Bob Duncan

I OFTEN used to wonder why I took up rock climbing in the first place. Okay, I was useless at football, worse at rugby and the kiss of death with girls, but I really can't see the relevance of such minor failings. Uncharitable hypotheses to the effect that it was all some misguided effort to prove my masculinity I consider beneath contempt. Did Mallory and Irvine have to suffer such slanders?

Still, I suppose it is necessary to acknowledge my physical (and, some say, mental) unsuitability for such a demanding pastime as (relatively) modern rock climbing. Now, genetically it is quite possible to have few characteristics of either parent, so it is quite unnecessary to speculate, as some have done, on some fantastic and improbable liaison between my dear mother and a decrepit version of Charles Hawtrey in order to explain my physique. It must have been a continuing shock to her, and my father, when, as their firstborn grew older, his build remained essentially that of a malnourished infant.

However, when I wasn't recovering from overindulgence in shandy, or from muggings at the hands of penniless pensioners, I worked at developing my puny frame. Torrid sessions in the sweatshop of Meadowbank, rubbing torsos with latter-day Greek gods, had their effect. The spring of 1982 saw me depart the Meadowbank Wall for the last time until October – sporting what, to the untrained eye, looked like a body a ten year old would be proud of. I strutted out, unassisted through the revolving doors, to the unashamedly admiring glances of a Brownie hockey team.

That summer saw me and Jerry (the Blob) hammering the soft touches round the country. His greater technical expertise meant that I was employed mainly as the powerhouse for those strenuous leads which seem to figure so prominently in modern routes. This did result in rather a poor tally of strenuous leads and quite a lot of abseiling to retrieve runners, but I did get up the odd route and began, foolishly, to think I was going pretty well.

Then the summer holidays ended and Spider suggested we made a foursome to split costs on weekend jaunts to Derbyshire. I was happy to say yes. Travel on the bike had yielded less in the way of weak-kneed women than I had secretly hoped. The prospect of being chauffeured over long distances held more immediate appeal.

And a very pleasant change it made, too, but it wasn't all roses. Apart from the endless playing of 'Bat Out of Hell' on the car stereo, the biggest problem was the climbing. Derbyshire is not crammed with soft touches, and we worked them out pretty quickly. Then I at least was forced to face reality. Jerry played about on micro-climbs, kidding himself that he was doing his technique a tremendous amount of good, but I could scarcely leave the ground on such 'routes' and was compelled to continue working out on the strenuous stuff. This didn't go much better, and Derbyshire weekends began to give me nightmares, thoughts of unprotected exhaustion haunting my sleep.

Much of this nocturnal petrification concerned one climb in particular. *Wee Doris* is no longer a super-route, dating as it does from the late sixties, but neither is it a complete stroll, not if you haven't done it before.

A word of warning. Watch some bronzed youth cruising some limestone horror, casually remarking how reasonable it is, forcefully expelling breath just after the crux. Impressive, isn't it? But the chances are that he's done it before, and not just once. A touch of cynicism is in order if you're not to be psyched out before you start climbing. Time enough for that on the route.

As the weekends passed and I gradually failed on, or frigged, all the alternative possibilities, it became apparent that I could no longer put off my date with *Wee Doris* without losing face. Was I man enough? This weekend would surely tell. I didn't see how I could avoid it.

But age has its compensations. Experience, for one. An idea took shape in my head. The order of events was normally first choice of route every alternate day, and really it was my turn. But I had managed to cram my climb for the weekend in the previous day, after an unheard-of piece of efficiency on the part of the Blob in not requiring all the daylight hours to achieve his ascent. So, trying hard to sound nonchalant, I suggested that it might be fairer if he did his route first.

To my amazement, he agreed – and so, breathing more easily, I settled down for a pleasant day belaying. *Bubbles* may not be the Eigerwand as far as length is concerned, but neither, as I have implied, is Jerry a Messner.

Devious and unreliable as ever, the Blob firmly extracted his finger for the second successive time that weekend. Not only that, but from somewhere he appeared to have acquired a little 'bottle,' to judge from the way he seemed to be pushing the boat out as he neared the horizontal break just below the top. I began to take more interest in the proceedings, and was rewarded almost immediately by the terrifying sight of the Blob taking flight.

Terrifying, not because of any misplaced sense of affection for the body now darkening the sky as it accelerated towards me, but because it was my job to stop it. Worse, rather careless positioning had left me very vulnerable should runners or ropes fail (not such a remote possibility considering the mammoth forces about to be generated as I attempted to halt the Blob's dynamic descent).

Fortunately, both gear and second man proved equal to their mighty task, and, after a period on the ground to recuperate, Jerry returned to complete his ascent, with one fall for aid, and the onset of his grey hair advanced by a couple of years. There was no question of my seconding the route: I wanted to save myself for the horror I knew awaited me a short thrash away through the undergrowth.

And so it was my turn. By modern criteria (admittedly, not always rigorously applied except to donglers like myself) any ascent I made of *Wee Doris* that day, or any other, would have already been flawed. I had belayed Le Miserable on one of his numerous attempts the previous year, and, apart from watching him climb the crux, had actually stooped as low as to use the rope through his high runner as a top-rope in order to have a half-hearted bash myself. It wasn't really a serious effort on my part, but I had been emphatically and repeatedly told that this was no excuse. I suppose I inwardly agreed, but I certainly had no intentions of admitting it. Let them play their silly games. Feeling that strange, familiar mixture of fear and eager anticipation I chalked up and touched rock.

The first few feet of *Wee Doris* actually follow *Medusa,* a Hard VS, unless you're simple enough to take in the 'Direct Start,' a ridiculous and pointless little boulder problem quite out of character with the rest of the climb. At least, that's how I justified missing it out!

A few easy moves on extremely polished holds land one on a neatly sawn-off tree stump, where it is traditional to place a pointless sling. From here the route goes left, along a good foot-ledge with fine holds, but an unfortunate bulge between the two, making a prolonged stay rather energy-intensive. Then the first real climbing, a few feet up twin cracks to the 'roof.' All this went fine; it's really quite easy, I suppose. Placing runners at the roof used up a fair amount of my miserable reserves of strength, so I scurried back to the stump for a breather. One of the problems with *Wee Doris* is the polished state of the holds, caused by the number of top-rope ascents it receives for training, owing to the bulk of the climb remaining dry for quite a long time after rain starts to fall. This does make the climbing less pleasant, if that

description could ever be applied to such an experience, and makes things even more strenuous, as fingers hang on while feet skate off greasy holds.

I knew, as I started again, that once over the roof I would be committed. The adrenalin surged and my stomach churned as if I was ascending to some insatiable courtesan's boudoir. In some ways that simile was to prove more apt than I might have cared to imagine.

The crux is getting stood up above the roof. It's not too hard, really, although it does require a little power. Just a little, thank god, otherwise my attempt would have foundered there and then. But technical difficulty is not what *Wee Doris* is about. No, the successful suitor must husband his (or her) strength, there being no rests between the stump and the top. Oh, we've heard how so-and-so hung about above the roof for hours, but his arms don't look like the legs on an underfed sparrow. Despite my rigorous training regime mine do, so I threw a runner into the bomb-proof crack and kept going. For a millisecond. Then primordial instincts took over. I knew that this was the last place I would be able to get runners, so, on the belt-and-braces principle, I stopped and put in a wire. Well, ropes *have* been known to break.

I think it was then that I knew I was going to yo-yo it. I half-heartedly tried the next move, getting from one huge solution pocket to another, but all the time I was thinking about how attractive the ground looked, how restful it would be to be down there. And how safe. After a few minutes of this I sank onto the rope and the Blob lowered me in disgrace to the ground.

I sat feeling sorry for myself for ten minutes, letting the blood drain back into my forearms, kicking the rock, and hating all those people who had managed the climb in good style. Then I tied on again, resigned to just getting the thing out of the way.

The moves from my previous highpoint to the next pocket turned out to be fairly straightforward with reasonably fresh fingers and forearms, and the holds above looked as if they got better. Time to GO FOR IT. After a few more moves I could reach from a flat horizontal break to the final little wall. I got some slimy flat holds, pulled up, and came to a halt. A quick search for better things above proved fruitless, and I began to sweat. So far, my mental condition was quite normal. Many – if not all – of my successful ascents have involved periods where the likelihood of a fall has seemed quite great. Now worried, but not desperately so, I made my second big mistake. (The first was being within a hundred miles of Stoney Middleton). I brought my feet up so I could reach further.

All that happened was that I could no longer take either hand off the rock, the holds were so flat that one by itself was inadequate. Neither could I reverse the last move, my balance being so precarious. I really began to sweat. I looked down, down, down to my runners, now nearly twenty feet away. I looked up, to the top of the climb. Five feet above my head? not much more, anyway.

It was then, with my fingers tiring rapidly and my brain able to think of nothing to do to improve my position, that an icy hand ran down my spine as I finally truly realised what was about to happen to me. There was nothing in the world except me, the rock in front of my nose, the hole at my feet, and, thank god, some bomb-proof runners so far away that they looked closer to the ground than my heels. The last strength trickled out of my forearms, now swollen to a ridiculous mockery of their true worth. It was time, no point in (no way of) postponing the inevitable. I swallowed nervously, grunted to Jerry (mentally blessing his vast bulk), thought fleetingly and tragically of the legions of sophisticated women whose future happiness lay in the balance, and let myself go.

I appeared to accelerate in two phases, the second coinciding with me passing my top runners. Even reaching them had seemed to take an age. Only half way, boy, still the other half to go, the world spinning crazily and the ground and the Blob's anxious face getting rapidly closer.

When am I going to stop? Oh, mother!

And then, almost too late, all the breath was knocked from my body as the ropes whipped tight, slapping the rock noisily in their fury at being so ridiculously overworked. My head carried on a little further and I ended upside down, oscillating gently, and looking into the Blob's ashen features. I had come to rest at about the level of the stump, so one advantage of the length of my plummet was that at least Jerry didn't have very far to lower me.

That was it for that weekend. Further excitement seemed superfluous. I thought I could just about cope with lying in the back seat of the car for a few hours.

I went back and settled the score the following weekend, belayed by another friend (Jerry having seen enough), and wearing my crash hat for a change. Despite my extensive first-hand knowledge of the route, still things didn't go totally smoothly. As I neared the point of the previous week's takeoff I was shaking so much that I could hardly see the rock. Fortunately I was able to beat a hasty retreat to The Runners, was lowered ignomin-

iously to the ground yet again, and, after a time spent calming myself down, and wishing I smoked, I returned for the fifth, thankfully successful, attempt.

As you can see, I didn't do too brilliantly on *Wee Doris*. I know I should feel absolutely terrible about it, but, to be honest, I actually prefer it the way it was. Daft it may be, but forgettable it wisnae.

ON A MOUNTAIN RIDGE

Two contrary impressions share
In our experiences there:
One is of rock and one of air.

Yet in a sense the two agree,
For they together hold the key
To what we feel and what we see.

With all the world reduced to this –
A narrow crest, a vast abyss –
There is no need for emphasis.

Feet firmly planted on the ground,
Our gaze is free to range around,
Alert to every sight and sound.

So, as we test each step with care,
We move in space, at once aware
Of solid rock and empty air.

This is the balance climbing brings:
In air our fancy spreads its wings,
On rock we touch enduring things.

D.J.F.

GÖSCHENERTAL

By Dave Snadden

THE MIST swirled through the tent, droplets were hanging from the heather and blaeberry nearby. The poles were beginning to sink into the bog and damp was starting to creep up the walls. There was even a few nasty little insects flying around which bore a striking resemblance to midges. Depression reigned, compounded by the fact that our Camping Gaz stove, scrounged for the universal availability of its fuel, had only one meagre cyclinder left, the nearest supplier being 50 km away by bus and train. It surely wasn't worth travelling two days and 1800 km just for this. The drizzle then began to ease and tantalising patches of blue were glimpsed beyond the gradually thinning cloud. Spirits began to lift.

We had arrived two days earlier, getting off the post bus at the end of its steep haul up the valley. We were weighed down by huge sacks and multitudinous plastic bags full of locally purchased and eminently non-transportable goodies like loaves, melons, wine and the sort of things that discerning mountaineers in these parts consume. The bus quickly set off on its return journey and was soon engulfed in the dense mist, leaving us forlorn and bewildered in a vast car park devoid of signs of human presence, apart from a forest of no camping signs and a large well shuttered Inn. A wet piece of card was pinned to the door. 'Montag Geschlossen.'

The sound of tackety boots appeared in the distance and shortly a machine pistol toting soldier materialised.

'Was sprech sie?, Deutsch?, Franzosen?'

'Nein, nur Englisch.'

A meaningful grimace was followed by a bizzare conversation in those three languages, from which we were to understand that for most of the next week about three-quarters of the area would be out of bounds as the Swiss Army artillery were firing live ammunition at Dammagletscher. A warning reinforced by many multilingual posters nearby extolling the virtues of not touching any unexploded shells found in the region on pain of instant annihilation. All this made the now historical and fortunately buried M.O.D. proposals for Knoydart seem rather tame.

'Is you good at kars?'

The questioner turned out to be Danish and it eventually transpired that he was referring to his erratic and very broken automobile which he hoped was soon going to take him to 'Corse.'

'No, but at least you won't have to push for 20 km. Do you know anywhere we can camp around here?'

'Sure, ten minutes up that path.'

With this he gesticulated at a dizzy series of zig-zags disappearing into the mist at a most alarming angle.

An hour later, arms paralysed from the weight of our polybags, whose contents were beginning to swell in the rain, the angle began to relent and an almost flat patch of ground was found after much squelching in a bog of Skye-like consistency. The wet tent was soon up and we wondered whether our now soggy and well expanded 3 kg of pasta would need to be cooked or merely washed down with vast quantities of vino collapso.

The glimpses of blue turned out not to be the teasers that we were dreading, but the harbingers of a short period of fine settled weather. As the gentle breeze began to stir the curtains of mist, a rent appeared, at the end of which rose a great granite tower. We hoped that its apparent height and angle was being increased by the tendrils of mist that clung to it. As the mist rolled away, however, the monster reared up even higher and seemed to grow steeper and more foreboding.

'Funny looking IV. Are you sure that's the right hill?'

'Yes, if we are where we think we are.'

'Maybe we should have a warm up climb first.'

A search of the fifteen year old guide book showed that we were likely to become cannon fodder on any of the easier routes within reach of our tent.

We awoke the next day to find that we had missed dawn by several hours, and also to discover that we had ended up a mere 45 minutes from the hut, a fact that appealed to our empty purse. Our airy site also afforded magnificent views of the savage glacier scenery that characterises this part of the Alps. Being unfit, and merely unambitious climbers of the lower grades, we opted for a reconnaisance of the mountain by the easy but pleasant route normally used in descent. We set off shortly after nine and had just gained the path when a deafening roar filled the air. As the menacing echoes began to fade a low rumbling appeared from down the valley and we heard clearly the rifling of a large calibre shell as it climbed slowly into the air and eventually landed high on the glacier with a muffled crump. This was the Swiss version of Big Bertha with whom each day's festivities began and ended, the intervening period being sporadically punctuated by the relative soprano notes of her little sisters. The summit was deserted apart from the enviable aerial antics of the lunch-scrounging choughs.

The views were superb and from the East the peculiar summit needle of Salbitschijen beckoned alluringly.

Back on our sun-bathing rock that evening we saw a tiny figure lurching slowly down the path, far behind his companions. We followed his progress and we were surprised when he detached himself from the track and limped in our direction. He smiled awkwardly and looked at us with his single eye.

'You are going to do the South ridge tomorrow.'

I didn't know if this was a question or command, so nodded non-commitally anyway.

'I have slipped a disc and found the VI we did today a bit hard. I fancy something easier than the VII my friends plan for tomorrow and I wondered if I might come with you.'

He was Norwegian and seemed vaguely sensible, and more to the point was just what we needed, a disabled hardman. How could we refuse?

'See you at Seven then.'

No Alpine starts here.

At 10.00 a.m. the rock was already hot as he led up the first thin slab, a red spotted scarf tied round his waist as a gesture of support for his creaking vertebrae. The rock was beautifully sound granite and the fine slabs terminated 100 m higher at a flat ledge. Above this the rock steepened considerably.

'Your turn now, my back needs a rest.'

With that he stretched out full length on the ledge.

The climbing was absolutely superb. After about 30 m, when I was on a small bulging flake with rather precarious holds, Bertha announced the start of the day's target practice and the unexpected thunderous roar nearly cost me my tenuous hold on the rock. Thank goodness there was no leering half-rotten cornice at the top of this climb. More glorious sun-splashed pitches led to the half way point where the wall became a ridge and where the climbing became easier for a short way. At this point my pale companion, who was beginning to gently sizzle, began to find the technical difficulties not taxing enough. She consequently proceeded to cover her hands, and anything else that might come into contact with the route, in Savoy and Moore's extra greasy glacier cream. Of such inspirations are born fashions and it may be that once all the blank walls have been climbed we will see the pioneers of tomorrow dipping into little pouches of Savoy and Moore's dangling from their harnesses.

His turn again. Real continental climbing this, the leader on one end of a double rope, the seconds each on one part and

climbing together on anything less than IV. This sort of behaviour would no doubt be frowned on at home, but I'm pleased to report that we didn't degenerate completely and resisted the temptation to belay by looping the rope a couple of times through a Krab dangling from a rusty, wobbly peg as seemed the norm in these parts. Ingrained British belaying habits caused us to lengthen guide book time by about a quarter on most of the routes we did in the region, though we were quicker where ropework was not involved.

'What's your names?'

His voice drifted down from a rope length away. We replied and tendered the same question. A guttural grunt was the response so that we had to wait till we'd climbed the pitch for clarification. My turn again and he seemed like an old friend now, steady safe and exuding confidence. Not the sham confidence of a kudos-questing cragsman, but the modest confidence that stems from much time spent in the high places and a genuine respect for the mountains.

Another orthopaedic ledge and only the last couple of pitches to go now. We were glorying in the joy of climbing in shirt sleeves against a backdrop of snow, remarkable exposure and scenery to enthrall any eye. From the top we descended the route we had previously explored, after a scenery drinking stop lasting half the afternoon. Most of this was spent looking at the crenellated ridges of Salbitschijen across the valley. It was interesting to hear our friend classify climbers into 'normal' and 'abnormal' and put us in the former category. It was not so flattering to hear about his 'normal' friends who had climbed Salbitschijen's South ridge the previous year and found it hard. He was sure that we too would find it hard, perhaps too hard! Obviously there were subtle degrees of normality.

We parted on the path, he for Corsica and we for a major excursion to find some fuel.

A few days later, on Hochschijen, a fine route devoid of people, we looked across to the first climb of our trip. With much regret we saw a huge scrum of red hatted climbers jockeying for a favourable starting position at the bottom of the ridge. Every few minutes we watched the fortunate, or perhaps merely the biggest, detach themselves from the mêlee to join the continuous line of folk climbing or being dragged up the mountain. The realisation began to dawn in our timeless holiday minds that this must mean that the dreaded Alpine weekend was upon us. Even Agag's groove at Glasgow Fair couldn't match this.

A week later we climbed the South ridge of Salbitschijen. Our friend's warning had been reinforced the night before when we

had arrived at the hut to be told that a British pair on the mountain were seven hours overdue. Everyone seemed to think that we were in someway responsible for this. Fortunately they hove into sight shortly before it looked as if we were going to be turfed out into the dusk to look for them. They were festooned with ropes, and from their harnesses wearily drooped every conceivable form of modern climbing gadgetry. Pegs, Friends, a multitude of slings, chocks and even jumars had been taken to crack the easiest route on the mountain, a non-commendable meander named after Messrs. Hug and Kurz. They hailed from the flat lands of England and thoroughly deserved the mirth with which a French guide had described them earlier in the evening. With folk like these around who needs the National artillery to provide revenue for the local hospitals? It was with a mixture of relief and determination that we eventually retired to bed, after a brief geography lesson on Scottish separatism for a few unenlightened continentals.

The route was magnificent, long, sustained and steep. The exposure was exhilirating, and from deep down inside us rose the vestiges of abnormality. It was the best we had done, and the sun shone.

A POPULAR ROCK CLIMB

Large men have taken it by storm;
Slim girls have coaxed it to defeat.
Climbers in every shape and form
Have joined the endless, human swarm
All eager to compete.

Most climb for fun, a few in fear,
Others to find what they can do,
Planning, perhaps, to pioneer
A variation (hard severe),
Some to enjoy the view.

Whatever motives bring them here,
All gain, before the day is done,
A new awareness, sharp and clear,
The gift to every mountaineer
When victory is won.

D.J.F.

BAFFIN ISLAND INITIATION

By Graham Little

RELAXING on a narrow mossy ledge, nearly three thousand foot above the Weasel Valley floor, memories of the previous ten days seemed but mere details, my senses drowned in the magnificence of the rock and ice wilderness spread before us, a landscape of intense purity and grandeur, the glaciers still carpeted in winter snow, jagged black rock spires standing stark and proud in the clear Arctic air.

We'd left camp. below the moraine ridge, in the afternoon, feeling optimistic despite the cloud cloaked hills and steady drizzle. A protracted grovel up the messy slabs to the south of the Tete Des Cirques glacier snout, brought us to a sharp rubbly arête. As we neared a small col the cloud miraculously dissipated, our intended peak looming above, its great north ridge falling in one clean sweep from the summit to crumbling base. I gulped, Rob looked longingly back down the hill.

The roar of the primus and the aroma of Boeuf Stroganoff broke my reverie. Another pot of snow is melted down and over a good brew we speculate on the difficulties ahead, the aromatic spirals emitting from Rob's pipe giving the ledge a safe and comforting atmosphere.

When all excuses for delay have been exhausted I don my bulky sack and move into a corner on the right, which unlike the previous five loose pitches, gives pleasant climbing. Grooves and slabs lead to the base of a big corner. With a wary eye on a hanging block I climb the cracked right wall, leaning across to place the occasional nut, to an airy belay on the very edge of the ridge.

'This looks like a candidate for aid,' Rob observes, volunteering me for the next pitch. I traverse right over an unfathomable plummet, my sack providing an unwelcome friction brake on the overhang above. 'Watch the rope,' I fatuously shout, as I ease my reluctant body into a wet greasy groove. Following the time-honoured procedure for such occasions I fumble for a peg, hastily poke it into a crack and subject it to a good pounding! I clip in a breath again. Reasoning that the heavy sack must be the cause of my ungainly climbing I hang it from the peg, leaving the problem to Rob. Divested of the orange hump my confidence returns, but the ensuing insecure handjams and unconvincing toescrapes make me emerge from the void convinced that I'm an ungainly climber by nature!

Glancing upwards from the belay I'm immediately aware of a monolithic, eagle shaped rock prow, about a hundred foot high, its head inclined towards me, eyes staring coldly down upon this intruder of its stony eyrie. A brief inexplicable feeling of apprehension steals over me, soon replaced by one of satisfaction, as if the eagle were of my own making.

Much grunting and blaspheming drifts up from below, followed by two orange humps and one sweating brother.

'What's that above,' I ask Rob. 'An eagle,' he replies without hesitation, showing my wonder if not my trepidation.

The malevolent glint in the eagle's eye proves illusory, its broad back giving easy passage, though midnight shade, via a great cracked slab. We stride the sharp edge above with elation. A short bulging wall of loose yellow rock brings us back to earth. A worrying traverse on disintegrating granite, past groaning blocks, takes Rob to the haven of a grey rib beyond.

Less nervewracking climbing follows by cracks and grooves, in the pale morning light, to the base of an obvious black, wet, overhanging corner. Tentative sallies on either side of this impasse give scant encouragement. A head on confrontation with the corner seems inevitable.

Perched on a cone of soggy snow I try every technique I know to get started but without avail. 'What the hell would you do?' I shout in exasperation, turning to Rob. With studied nonchalance he takes the big hex and wedges it between a loose flake and a near imaginary rugosity on the side wall.

'That,' he replies succinctly. Eyeing the hex with great distrust I clip in a sling gaining a few crucial feet. A long stretch and a knifeblade is tapped a fraction of an inch into a cracklet on the right wall. I tie off, ease up and repeat. Reaching high to a narrowing in the corner crack I place a reassuring bong. Another hex, a bombproof leeper and I heave into the easy angled groove above.

We scuttle up broken vegetated ground in search of a snow patch for a much needed brew.

'I don't want to worry you but that high cirrus is a sure sign of bad weather,' Rob ventures authoritavely. He worries me!

Reflecting on the benefits of a College education I gulp down a mug of lukewarm tea and hastily pack my sack. Spurred on by visions of an impending storm I attack the groove above. Its tendency towards damp verticality and a absence of holds soon has me fumbling for a peg. A definite case of déjà vu! 'It's desperate!' I inform Rob who's still clutching his brew mug and filling his pipe. 'Watch the rope!' This time I really mean it. Rob

lights his pipe and grins. A couple of aid moves and a skin tearing jam crack take me to a block strewn ledge. Rob decides to prussik so I tie off the ropes and relax.

A few minutes elapse then the ropes slip round a bulge, twanging tight.

An almost unintelligible mixture of curses and explanations float upward, the gist of it being that Rob is hanging upside down from his prussik loops. After attaching a descender he whips out a knife in the best film star tradition, and cuts one of the slings, regaining control.

Mossy grooves lead us back leftwards below the steepening rock of the summit tower. A fine strenuous layaway leads me to the base of a hitherto hidden slab corner, slicing diagonally below the summit overhangs. Rob leads, I follow with a feeling of relief, mingled with excitement, welling up inside me as I realise that the next pitch will probably the last.

A huge poised flake offers the only means of progress but a direct pull looks suicidal. I try to look confident and our Rob looks grave. I top the flake and it sounds as loose as it looks! I inspect it more thoroughly trying to decide why it hasn't fallen off.

'Doesn't look too solid,' Rob ventures, confirming my worst suspicions.

For want of anything better to do I place a knife blade between two quartzy crystals. With a spot of tenuous tension I levitate, brushing my feet along the flake edge like some avant garde dancer. One, two, three and the 'pas sur roche' is over, the metamorphosis reversed. A clumsy yellow groove with the rock falling away and the sky is rushing to meet me.

A final short wall of prefect rock on tiny flat holds and I drift with the clouds, wollow in the slushy snow that ices the last few feet, find myself there at the summit, the end of the climb, the realisation of the dream.

Rob joins me and we wander around the top like a couple of drunks, marvelling at the endless panorama of rock, ice and sea. The peak is christened 'Point Ruscoe' in memory of a good friend who died on Ben Nevis. We crunch Brazil nuts and smoke my much travelled Havana cigar. A gyr falcon drifts lazily by, gliding effortlessly on broad white wings. Clouds blur the sun then rush on, fast feathered sheets torn by the winds of the upper atmosphere.

'It's really great up here but how the hell are we going to get down,' Rob ponders, half to himself. His all too pertinent query jerks me out of a blissful state. Reversing our ascent route is not on, due to the complicated nature of the ground and the quant-

ities of loose rock. A descent to the south or west is completely out of the question involving over three thousand foot of abseiling. the only possibility appears to be down the north flank of the col between Point Ruscoe and the unclimbed peak to the east.

A short scramble, an abseil down rusty boiler plate slabs and we're ploughing through the snowfield at the col. The peak to the east towers above us loose and impregnable. I peer into the void and experience my first touch of vertigo. 'Christ, Rob it overhangs all the way,' I exclaim, drawing back from the edge.

Knowing that Rob is not averse to abseiling off jammed boot laces I decide to fix the abseil points. A cold welded peg, a long sling over the edge, a quick prayer and I launch into the emptiness below.

Seven full length abseils down huge, hanging grooves, past vast undercut flakes and we gain a steep ice gully, an obvious target for stonefall. A high speed descent in crampons and the dubious delight of soggy glacial snow is ours.

Rob persuades me to take a short cut back to camp down the deep gully flanking the N.W. buttress. A quick but nightmarish sinking, sliding, stumbling descent and we gain the grassy slopes above camp and a reception committee of bloodthirsty mosquitoes.

The climb is over yet the memories can never fade. Clouds descend and greyness envelops all. It rains for sixty hours. We need the rest!

THE GREAT STACK OF HANDA

By Hamish M. Brown

HANDA is one of those places that vaguely rings a bell – but only one in a hundred could site it correctly. It is a well-hidden island off the Sutherland coast and its Great Stack was the scene of an ascent a hundred years ahead of its time.

We are constantly told in historical works that rock-climbing in Britain began with this or that ascent in the 19th century but this is quite wrong. In 1876 the men of Lewis 'raided' Handa and 'conquered' the Great Stack, an event paralleling *Sassenach* on the Ben, except the players were obscure peasants and the event only just recorded! But their *forebears* were the first British climbers – with cliff-scaling deeds on Sula Sgeir, North Rona, St. Kilda or Handa recorded long ago. The men who led the first

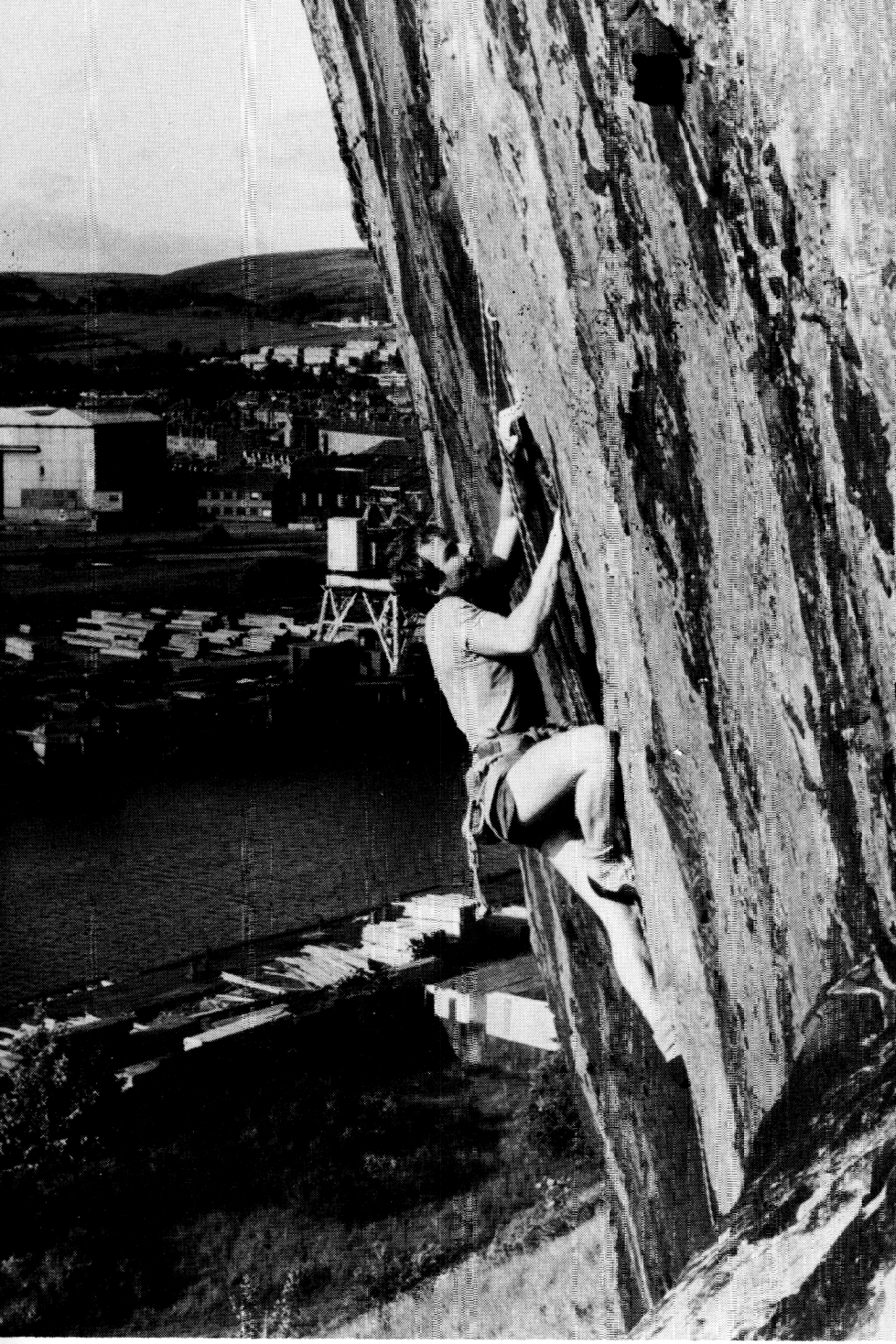


Photo: Cerys Latier

'Scottish Industry'
Willie McLure on *Chemin de Fer,* Dumbarton Rock



Photo: Garry Latter

Garry Latter on *Gorilla* (6b), Dumbarton Boulders

Do not be alarmed, it is a chalk bag!

ascent of Stac Lee (photo in SMC 1981) may have had ulterior motives (the capture of birds) but it was a rock climb of some skill. This was Britain's first real rock-climbing.

Some would detract by saying these climbs were not done for sport but that is misleading. The main objective was fodd-gathering but young men are young men and climbs were done purely for fun and kudos – just as first ascents today. Nor did they carry pitons and chalkbags, and I doubt if their horse-hair ropes would appeal to our jangling heroes today. To prove their worthiness as prospective husbands, lads on St. Kilda would perch on a jutting rock hundreds of feet above the sea and there go through dangerous balancing feats. All males climbed and some climbed better than others – human nature has not changed. The ascent of Handa's Great Stack was the result of just such a bit of showing-off.

The men of Noss (in Lewis) regularly culled the birds of North Rona. They do so to this day, by a special clause in Bird Protection Acts, though they no longer *row* there (North Rona is 45 miles north of the Butt of Lewis and can just be seen from Cape Wrath on a clear day). They had no *need* to head for Handa to collect birds – but it was a good excuse. It had probably been planned and talked about for long enough.

Donald Macdonald was probably a bit of a rebel. He had character enough to fall out with the local church the year after the Handa raid and took himself off with a friend, to voluntary 'exile' on North Rona. They stayed on after the cull but the following summer when the men of Noss returned they found both men dead, for reasons which will now never be known.

But before considering the climbs of the Stack, a few words on Handa itself. I first read about it in the Victorian memoir of its then laird, Evander Maciver of Scourie. He wrote 'Handa is composed of sandstone and rises gradually from the sea to attain a great height on its north and west side, where the cliffs are perpendicular. It is the resort of myriads of sea-birds. When I came here in 1845 I found Handa occupied by seven crofter tenants, with a queen amongst them. They lived comfortably, and grew large crops of potatoes on its sandy soil, when top dressed with seaweed. When the potato disease broke out in 1847 the crop failed in Handa completely; the people's source of support was gone. They said they were willing to emigrate to America if the Duke of Sutherland would pay the expense of sending them there. The result was that not only were the tenants of Handa, but a very large number from Assynt and Eddrachillis sent to Canada and Nova Scotia during the next two years – in all exceeding 500 people.'

Handa is a bird island now, a reserve of the RSPB. From April to September it is wardened and visitors come out with one of the local crofter-fishermen. It is not an island of bird rarities but shocks with numbers instead. The red sandstone sweeps up gently from machair-edged silver sands facing the port of Tarbet on the mainland then suddenly finishes on the sea-sliced precipices facing the Minch. Here there is an urban bedlam of birds, an ornithological tenement-life, with the Great Stack the high rise of them all. Nobody can fail to be impressed by the Great Stack. It stands in the mouth of one of the many geos with the highest point of the island not far off (406 feet). It is a bold ledge-banded monolith of rock, riddled with sea-level tunnels, capped with rank gull-manured vegetation and, in season, every ledge crowded with guillemots, razorbills, gannets, puffins and shags. Ten thousand or so of these at a time is a memorable sight, sound and smell.

Two of us who spent a month last summer as voluntary wardens on Handa (there is a fine bothy) were lucky to visit the Great Stack with Robert, one of the boatmen. We chugged off, east-about, along the coast. The cliffs steadily grew in scale, geos and caves honeycombed the coast and we dodged flat islets, bases of long-fallen stacks. The north reach of coast is a massive 400 foot blank 'curtain wall' which has resisted the attacks of the sea. At its west end the attack had been more successful with a chaos of broken pillars and crags. The Great Stack so fills the mouth of its geo it cannot visually be separated from the land. With necks craning up at the whitewashed ledges (empty with the lateness of season) we passed its outer bastion. Robert turned the bows in towards what seemed no more than a doorway in the rock. It was a doorway that reached to the sky however. Shags crashed out about us as we chugged through the gloomy corridor while the sea surged and gurgled in and out of the many holes and tunnels. The Great Stack is a huge tooth with rotten roots.

Before we could take it all in we were round and out again to the sunny sea. We shook our heads in wonder that this 'impregnable' tower had been climbed. Climbed is used loosely. The techniques were slightly unusual.

There is a certain confusion about the first and/or second climb and having read all the accounts possible I'm not too clear either. Harvie-Brown (writing of 1873-1876) says the first was by a Uist party (why from the other end of the isles?) called in at the laird's behest to clear off the summit-nesting black-backed gulls. (Why?). They were supposed to have thrown a line across (80 feet), caught it round something firmly (what luck!) and sent

a lad out with a heavier rope – which sounds highly irresponsible. Perhaps this account has been mixed up with the other, better documented and thoroughly proved ascent, by the group of skilled Lewis men I've already mentioned. They were thoroughly familiar with cliffs and rope-handling. An ascent from sea-level was rather discouraged by the bird-crowded ledges, a fact re-discovered by Tom Patey long after, but they won their summit by a piece of bold simplicity. They walked the ends of a long rope out both arms of the geo until its central length between came to rest on the Great Stack!

The rope was then tied or anchored firmly and 'ace climber' Macdonald swarmed along the rope: a feat, simple perhaps, but of staggering boldness for there was no security as he cat-crawled out 400 feet above a crashing sea and with birds shrieking round. A sort of pulley system was then rigged up and the birds were culled. Stakes, stuck in the middle of the green cap of the Stack, remained visible till after the last war – as challenging a sign as a peg in the middle of a big face.

On the first of July 1967 Tom Patey, with henchmen Chris Bonington and Ian MacNaught Davies, arrived on the scene. They repeated the Lewismen's raid on the Stack but even with all the aids of modern mountaineering found it no easy task. Nylon rope stretches more than natural fibre so as soon as the fixed line had Tom's weight, it sagged. He was sitting in harness, suspended from *jumars*, and these proved frustrating and exhausting for Tom's parabolic route. Birds cannoned into the rope and Tom noted, while dangling like a spider in the middle, that a guillemot 'was pecking thoughtfully at the taut rope' where it crossed its territory.

A few days later this gang were off for the Orkney Isles and the tele-spectacular of the Old Man of Hoy. Tom Patey was killed in 1971 when abseiling off another stack by Loch Eriboll. Macdonald died on North Rona. It seems a rather chancy game.

The Great Stack was finally climbed from sea-level by Hamish MacInnes, G. N. Hunter and D. F. Lang on the first of August 1969. They also climbed the obvious Stack in the bay (Puffin Bay) where the path across the island reaches the cliff edge.

There is room for more though – and many other unclimbed stacks and cliffs. My eye of faith noted several as we returned from our circumnavigation. If only I was twenty years younger . . . .

AN UNSUSPECTED FORERUNNER

By R. L. St.C. Murray

Almost 100 years after the original publication of 'Kidnapped' RLS (Murray) has come across this interesting addendum.

MAKING no claims to literary ability and having originally taken up my pen to write my adventures only because I thought I had a tale worth telling, it is necessary that I should provide some excuse for imposing on my indulgent readers again. When detailing my adventures under the title *Kidnapped* I omitted – partly from a desire not to scratch the tender surface of my friend Alan Breck Stuart's pride and partly from a desire to retain that brevity of expression and concise style which were such features of that work – I omitted, I say, a strange interlude in my travels, which was interesting because of the light it sheds on yet another side of the complex character of Alan Breck.

The reader will recall how Alan and I were roasted by the sun while hiding on top of a rock in Glencoe and made our way 'up the steep sides of mountains and along the brows of cliffs' to the Heugh of Corrynakiegh where we spent three days.

During these three days we waited for word from Alan's kinsmen and, being in as safe a hiding-place as we could hope for, it seemed to me that we should venture out as seldom as possible. But on the first and second days we spent many hours making our way along narrow ridges and ascending every slightest summit. Being so dependent on Alan's knowledge of the area and his superior skill in this game of hide-and-seek, I hesitated to question him, but on the third day when he made ready for a similar excursion I felt called on to say:

'Why do we risk our lives again, Alan? Not only have we the Redcoats to fear, but you seem to delight in taking us on the narrowest ridges and steepest tops.'

'Do ye no trust me, David?' he replied, in a tone not so much angry or insulted, but rather evasive.

'You know I trust you. Indeed, I have no choice. But had I the choice, you know I would trust you with my life. After the dangers we have passed together, it is to be expected that I should.'

Alan seemed mollified, but he made no answer and set out as usual with me following. Soon we were ascending a steep and rocky face and, as we gained height, I paused to look around me. Being reluctant to look straight down, I cast my eyes to the

east. First I could see the inn called King's House and further a great flat moor interspersed with many stretches of water glinting in the sunlight. With little warning, a black cloud came over the sun, a cold wind began to blow and soon icy spikes of rain and sleet began to chill us. As the sleet became something like snow, I reflected that winter weather in July was a not unusual example of the unpredictability of our Scottish climate. These unexpected storms are not unlike the outbursts of Alan Breck and perhaps account for that arrogant pride to be found in so many of my fellow countrymen. In the best, it is a virtue but in so many it is a defect posing a far greater threat than any from enemies overseas or friends across the border.

Soon we had completed the steep ascent and as we scrambled along the summit ridge an incident occurred which led, eventually, to my learning the reason for my companion's strange behaviour. We were descending a steep, rough slope on a scattering of loose stones when Alan, usually so sure-footed, slipped, kept his feet for a moment, slipped again and slithered to the foot of the slope where he sat plump down in a most ungainly manner. Seeing that he was unhurt, I could not repress a chuckle.

'What is there to laugh at?' said Alan, 'I was coming down whateffer.'

'True' I said, trying to compose my features, but another chuckle escaped.

Alan glared at me. 'It ill becomes you to laugh at one who bears the name of a king.' Here he paused and sank into thought. 'Although that king and his house have lost their rights forever.'

'I think that is likely,' I replied, 'but I am surprised to hear that view admitted by one of your party whose whole hopes are pinned on the return of Charles Edward Stuart.'

'It's not an opinion. I know it for a fact for I have the second sight.'

I digested this surprising piece of information as we continued on our way following each rise and fall of the ridge, a mode of progress which I found particularly irritating. Finally, wet and cold, I could bear it no longer.

'I would think that one who bears a king's name would have more sense than to wander over these rocky mountains in this purposeless manner.' I regretted my words as soon as they were spoken for the knowledge which I had gained of Alan's disposition led me to expect at best a fit of sulks and at worst a challenge to a fight which I could ill afford and for which I had little inclination.

However, Alan hesitated and then replied in a sheepish tone quite unlike himself. 'Perhaps I owe you an explanation, Davy.' He then related to me many of the wonderful things which he claimed were revealed by his second sight, some of which were credible but others plain absurdities. Horseless carriages and even flying machines might be believed as developments of the future but his talk of pictures projected through space and men on the moon was ludicrous or even blasphemous. However, I could see that Alan was deadly serious and believed all as genuine glimpses of the future. It was obvious that he considered that I was privileged in being taken into his confidence but, at the same time, he kept glancing at me to see my reaction. He was as sensitive to scorn as an author with his first work, but I kept a straight face and listened intently. It would have been cruel to him, and perhaps dangerous to myself if I had shown any signs of incredulity.

But when he came round to telling me the reason for his strange behaviour, my gravity was strained to the limit. According to his visions, future generations will take to tramping the hills and climbing the mountains for pleasure! A book will be published in which will be catalogued all the mountains of Scotland.

'And Davy, lad,' he continued, 'it will be a great thing to climb all the mountains and those who have done so will be the envy of all. Knowing this, I can be the first and others will follow in the footsteps of Alan Breck Stuart and 'tis no shame to them.'

Alan was still talking excitedly about 'separate mountains' and 'lesser tops' when we found ourselves back at our hiding-place where we met our messenger who had returned at last. There was then so much to be discussed that Alan's attention was diverted and he did not look for my reaction to his wild talk. I found this a great relief for I am not sure that I would have been able to conceal my thoughts and avoid offending my touchy and gullible friend. He must have regretted his indiscretion for he never mentioned the subject again.

DAVID BALFOUR.

CAIRNGORM CROSSING

By Raymond Simpson

AS I STOOD shivering in a pessimistic queue waiting for the chairlift to start operating, I lamented my uncharacteristic extravagance. The sign read 'Chairlift Closed – High Wind.' Why hadn't they told me that down below?

Yesterday, I had seen the Cairngorm plateau creamy white beneath an almost cloudless sky and had decided to take advantage of this late snowfall to ski across to Deeside. Already however my plans were being thwarted, the line of pylons disappeared above into a thick black cloud, the wind had strengthened, backing into the west and gobs of sleet were falling at this level. At last the operator ambled down to open the gate and the queue shuffled up the steps.

I cowered in the loo at the Ptarmigan cafe, working out the bearings across the plateau and eventually steeled myself to leave at 10.30 a.m. The skis were hardly on before they had to come off as I stumbled over the icy boulders below the summit of Cairngorm. Once on again they carried me down into Coire Raibeirt, rattling across the icy surface into the gloom at an alarming rate. I realised that I had lost too much height when the top of Longbow crag loomed up out of the mist. I slithered round the ridge and cut across the top of the descent to *Hell's Lum*, rasping noisily across the tracks of two climbers who showed a healthy disdain for stray skiers.

A short climb brought me over the top of the crag and through a window in the mist I caught a glimpse of Carn Etchachan. I tried to make sense of the maze of icy grooves where Rob and I had made our way to the cairn in February. It was then as we plodded wearily back across the plateau in the moonlight that I had conceived the idea of a ski traverse as a more leisurely way of enjoying these hills – so much for my dreams. I would have been as well walking into this wind as skittering about on skinny boards.

At last I seemed to be moving without effort again, and schussed down on to a levelling of the plateau catching a fleeting glimpse of a bit of the Shelter Stone crag – now in profile, so this must be the head of the Feith Buidhe. In an island of clarity beneath the cloud I checked my bearings. None too soon as I was heading back towards Cairn Lochan!

As I ascended towards Ben Macdui the clouds started to break up giving me beautiful little cameos of the corries of Braeriach,

the west buttress of Brochain, the massive cornices of Choire Dhaidh and the fine edge of Angels peak splitting the light and shade of a shaft of sunlight.

A solitary snow bunting left the cairn as I arrived on the summit and I sheltered awhile trying to reduce my load of frozen Mars bars. I set off again stiffly on a bearing towards Stob Coire Sputan Dearg, grating the skis on the thinly covered boulders. The corniced edge came up to meet me sooner than I expected and I followed it till I could make out the bulky shadow of the Grey Man's Crag.

Would the depression into which I was being funnelled give me a clear run down to Loch Etchachan? I started with cautious traverses and gentle stem turns but, as the visibility improved and I felt my edges biting easily into the surface, I turned into the fall line and linked turns in knee-deep powder for almost a thousand feet down to the lochside. The change in mood was dramatic. Out of the wind this gully had accumulated masses of powder which was a joy to ski and as I came out of the clouds I could see the Eastern Cairngorms basking in sunlight affording me the highway I sought.

I was brought back to earth as I hit a fragile icy crust on the lip of Coire Etchachan, and suffered the first fall of the day. Below the lip however the sun shone on a tongue of perfect spring snow in the bed of the burn. I whooped down trying to grasp the kaleidescopic perspective of the corrie as I swung from one side of the gully to the other, the clean lines of the Crimson Slabs and the ice recess of *the Corridor* alternating with the crags of Ben Mheadoin and the creamy expanse of the Yellow Moss beyond.

I sank into a schuss and came to a halt at the door of the hut, its strictly non-combustible interior as uninviting as ever. There was enough snow in the bottom of the corrie to carry me down the path a good way and I paused to chat with a gnarled old Aberdonian who told me it was only 12.40. This encouraged me to stay high so I crossed the burn by the last snowbridge and contoured round on just adequate snow patches across the Lairig an Laoigh into Glas Allt Mor. The burn was however capped by a monstrous cornice extending well out across the corrie, so I gave it a wide berth and zigzagged up the softening slope stopping on a sun-warmed boulder to peel off a few clothing layers and slake my thirst.

Emerging onto the Yellow Moss I was faced with three miles of unbroken snow fields leading gently across to Beinn a'Bhuird. This had been Adam Watson's route from the east when he skied over the six tops in 1962, a remarkable achievement which

Graham Boyd and Grahame Keir repeated a few years ago. It was delightful to pole leisurely along in the sunshine with the assistance of a westerly wind and the views down the Derry and across to Beinn a'Ghlo, hulking over the flat tops of Glen Ey and the Bynack. There was no urgency, the day was long, the conditions fine and I could drop off the plateau at any point now and be in Deeside by night fall.

I stopped on sunny boulders to perform a toenail amputation and burst a blister. Ptarmigan scurried over the snow and a buzzard quartered the head of the Dubh Ghlean. Footprints plugged across the plateau and up the slope beyond, reminding me of the first time I had passed this way almost twenty years ago, in mid winter from Scott's bothy. An epic day with a forced march to Braemar, just in time to miss the last bus and collapse in 'Bernard's' barn.

As I rose up on to the back of Beinn a'Bhuird the clouds rolled off Sputan Dearg and Cairn Toul baring their scalloped features to the sunshine and revealing the massive bulk of these mountains. Suddenly I found myself on the edge of Coire nan Clach a few hundred yards south of the cairn with Deeside at my feet, Lochnagar brooding under a cloud and the Tors of Ben Avon almost within reach. As I skated away from the cairn anticipating a gentle run across familiar contours to the Sneck I caught an edge on a stone and fell flat on my face! Looking round to see if anyone was watching I brushed myself down and regained my composure; perhaps this plateau did deserve a bit more respect. I pushed off again on a gentle schuss till I was clear of the stones, building up speed to contour round the Priest's Knoll and come in on a long icy traverse above a cornice reaching the edge of the Garbh Choire where the snow ran out, about a hundred feet above the col.

The Sneck is a windy narrow place, a rare feature in Cairngorm topography, its crest and the ridge beyond leading to Ben Avon were completely denuded of snow and ice, revealing dry bare red granite and scree which gave the place the raw clean feel of a high mountain. I heard the rumble of loose blocks crashing down into the Garbh Choire and saw two figures approaching. We traded superlatives about the weather and I noted the time, 3.30. It seemed a pity to miss out Ben Avon when there was still five hours daylight left. Even at this stage in my journey I enjoyed climbing up the ridge, perhaps it was having the skis off for the first time, perhaps it was the stark outline of *Mitre Ridge* or the sun-dappled Coire an Dubh Lochan which lightened my steps, perhaps I was just speeding.

Fatigue hit me, however, when I started poling towards the surreal granite tor glowing red on a blinding white plinth against an inky backdrop of storm clouds. I was glad to drop in the shelter of a hollow in the snow at its base, but there was no longer any warmth in the low sun, so after a brief rest I relaxed into a long gentle run in the general direction of Carn Eas.

At the head of the glistening fan-shaped bowl of the Allt an Eas Bhig I dropped down by what seemed like an infinite series of wide skidded turns, changing weight from one ski to the other very gently, trying not to break the fragile icy crust which had now reformed on the surface of the snow. Avoiding the constricted part of the burn by traversing above a cornice and ski-ing down a ridge, I slipped into the Allt an Eas Mhor and snow-ploughed down its bed in softening wet snow until the only continuous snow was in the path leading to the flats at the head of Glen Gairn. Leg weary and with a hailstorm beating a tattoo on the back of my neck I launched into a steady stride and glide down the glen, praying that there would be enough snow cover to see me down to the Bealach Dearg track. Fortunately there was.

As I stepped out of the skis the storm clouds rolled off down towards Corndavon, casting long ephemeral shadows across the glen. As I walked over the pass the corries and tors of Ben Avon gathered the evening shadows and mists around them, another world again, vast and remote.

From the top of the pass a snowy burn ran down to meet the track coming up Glen Feardar. This was a real bonus at this stage in the proceedings so I hastily put the skis on and let them carry me gently down for almost two miles to a soft grassy track leading to some deserted sheilings. I could not have imagined a pleasanter end to my journey than the walk through the birch woods of Glen Feardar with the setting sun gilding the slopes of Lochnagar and the Stuic, and a curlew piping me home.

I walked into the wee pub at Inver at 8.30 p.m., ordered a pint and something to eat and phoned Linda. Yes, she could pick me up in about an hour and a half, had I had a good day?

AT BEN NEVIS OBSERVATORY

By John S. Begg

This account was passed to us by John Hartog from the papers of his father, the late Sir Philip Hartog, who died in 1948.

I. – THE LIFE OF THE STAFF

IT HAS been said with truth that one-half of the world does not know how the other half lives, and certainly there are thousands of our fellow-men occupied with daily work of the details of which we know nothing, and of the existence even of which we may be ignorant. It has therefore not surprised, though it has amused me, to note the ideas which the average man has as to the life and work of the observers on Ben Nevis.

POPULAR ERRORS – At the outset then it seems fitting that I should rectify four errors that many people seem to fall into as regards this subject – (1) that the observatory is entirely supported by Government; (2) that it is an astronomical observatory; (3) that in some vague way the work has to do with the weather forecasts which appear in the daily papers; (4) that Ben Nevis is pointed in shape, with a narrow summit.

As to the first, the expenses of the observatory are certainly partially defrayed by an annual grant from Government, but public subscriptions defray the greater part.

(2) The observatory is in no sense whatever astronomical; there is not a single instrument of the kind in the place, with the possible exception of a telescope, which is employed for observing the views on a fine day. The work is purely meteorological, i.e., connected with the weather.

(3) The work done there has nothing to do with the forecasts issued nightly from London. Several Scottish stations do send nightly reports to London, and very valuable they are, but Ben Nevis is not one of them.

(4) The summit of 'the Ben' (as those who have lived there usually and affectionately term it) is not a real peak, but is practically flat, there being an area of about seventy acres, any point on which is hardly appreciably lower than the Ordnance Survey cairn.

The advantages for scientific purposes of the summit station on the Ben are twofold – it is worked in conjunction with a sea-level station at Fort-William, close at hand, and it is situated in the track of the south-west storms from the Atlantic, which

exercise, particularly during the colder months of the year, so preponderating an influence on the weather of Europe.

THE STAFF AND THEIR WORK – The permanent staff consists of four men, two to attend to the Low Level Station, and two for the summit, and these four interchange places when a spell of settled weather makes it safe to do so, in order that the life of none of them may become too monotonous. In addition to these four observers, there is a roadman who looks after the bridle-path which, from base to summit, has been made, and is kept in condition at the expense of the Scottish Meteorological Society, who levy therefore a just tax of 1s per head on all persons using the path to ascend the mountain. A male cook on the summit does the work of a general servant, with this difference from the ordinary 'general,' that he is treated as one of the family – a small one, indeed, consisting of the two observers and himself.

In the summer months and in future, possibly in winter also, observations are regularly taken by a young Edinburgh meteorologist at a hut half-way up the hill, at a height of 2200 feet, built originally for the convenience of the roadman for shelter when working on the path. At all three stations the observations regularly taken are – atmospheric pressure (i.e., height of the barometer), temperature, humidity, rainfall, direction and force of the wind, rainband, and amount of cloud and sunshine. At the base station at Fort-William, situated about two miles by road from where the bridle-path begins to ascend the hill, nearly all these elements are recorded continuously by the most ingenious automatic methods, chiefly photographic.

At the Summit Station, where frost, drifting snow, and frozen fogs clog and form huge accretions on all outside instruments exposed for long to the weather during nine months out of the twelve, automatic registration, with its delicate apparatus, was very soon found to be out of the question, and the more laborious, though almost as satisfactory, method of hourly observations, night and day, was resorted to, and that has been the daily routine now for fourteen years.

THE OBSERVATORY BUILDINGS – The observatory is in reality built of wood, each room having double wooden walls, padded in between with felt. On to this, however, is added, both for comfort and for stability, stone wall varying in thickness from 4 feet at less exposed parts to 10 feet round the base of the tower. All the windows are double to prevent draughts. The tower, so often to be mentioned, is an indispensable part of the building, for, the roof being flat and the wind nearly always fairly strong,

snow does not lie deeply on the roof, but gets blown off, and collects all round the house. Also, if the snow is drifting badly, the main entrance gets completely blocked, and it is useless attempting to clear it till the weather clears, as the snow drifts in quicker than it can be shovelled out. But by climbing up an inside ladder to the tower, and opening its door, we reach the roof by a few wooden steps, whence, either by a few more steps or, if the snow is deeper, by a jump, we reach the hard upper surface of the snow-covered mountain, and thence, a few yards off, the thermometer-box and rain-gauge. And though it is not exactly pleasant to step out of that tower door in the middle of the night to face for a few minutes drifting snow and a wind blowing steadily 90 or 100 miles per hour, still, as the poet says, 'Variety's the spice of life that gives it all its flavour'; and such an experience is preferable to being boxed up for days together without any means of exit; and, in addition, you have the satisfaction of feeling that you are doing your duty as a Briton should. As, however, this tower was not erected till the summer of 1884*, 'occasional interruptions in the observations occurred during the first five months on to April, 1884. As the season advanced, the interruptions became less frequent, and from 7th May, 1884, the observations have been made without the break of an hour, except for fourteen consecutive hours, from 6 p.m. 21st February, 1885, to 8 a.m. of the 22nd, this period being signalised by a storm of such unprecedented severity as absolutely precluded the possibility of any egress to the instruments.'

FOOD AND DRINK – The house, excepting the tower, is one-storied, and consists of office, kitchen, four bunks called bedrooms, and – what constitutes half the building – store-rooms for coke, paraffin, and food. All these are brought up during the summer months when the hill is practically free from snow, in daily instalments on ponies' backs, and it is a rare thing to get a pony up with the luxury of fresh meat between the end of September and June. For the greater part of the year, therefore, the observers exist on beef, mutton, tongue, salmon, turnips, peas, peaches, prunes, tomatoes, and milk, all tinned, along with tea, coffee, sago, rice, etc., bread, potatoes, onions, ham, dried fish, and dried apples, which, of course, are not tinned. There being no springs on the summit, our drink in summer was rain water, and in winter melted snow, both being much more palatable than I expected. It is a rule of the observatory that, with the exception of a small bottle of brandy kept in case of emergencies, in the medicine chest, no intoxicating liquor is to

*Trans. Royal Soc., Edin, Vol. xxxiv, p.xxix.

be found on the summit, a rule which is strictly adhered to, with very rare exceptions.

ANIMAL AND VEGETABLE LIFE – As to the animal and vegetable life, of the latter it may be said that it is non-existent, for, with the exception of a little moss here and there and one poor solitary flower once plucked by an observer, there is no trace of vegetable life above about 3500 feet – nothing but hard, jagged boulders and banks of small loose stones called 'scree.' Animal life is scarce; snow buntings and ravens are frequently seen on or near the summit. White weasels and stoats make their abode there also, and two of the latter now standing stuffed in the Meteorological Office at Edinburgh were caught inside the observatory. Footprints of hares and foxes are frequently to be seen both over the summit and on the observatory roof. One early morning in winter the observer on duty was sitting by the stove in the office when he suddenly felt impelled to turn round and look at the window. On doing so, he saw two bright eyes, which peered at him for a moment through the darkness and then vanished. A weird experience; but when he went out for his next observation he found the mystery explained, for outside the window and over the roof were marks of a fox's feet. Deer and ptarmigan, though common lower down, never venture so high as the summit. Hawks and eagles have been observed, but not at close quarters. House flies are found inside the observatory, and in May and June the surface of the snow sometimes swarms with small black insects.

DRESS – In the matter of dress, as can be imagined, the observers, being cut off from all civilisation for most of the year, are not very particular. It is, in fact, one of the observatory witticisms that the only difference there between Sunday and a week-day to certain observers is that they honour the day by washing their faces and possibly putting on a collar. Comfort and not elegance is aimed at, and in cold, stormy weather the appearance of an observer outside is something of a cross between that of a North Sea pilot and an Arctic explorer. In all weathers, unless it be exceptionally fine, or when he puts on his snow shoes, the observer discards his ordinary boots, and wears long sea boots reaching to the knee. If the weather be wet he dons his oilskin coat and trousers and his capacious sou' wester. If it be cold and drifting hard, he puts on his Icelandic stocking, a marvellous thick worsted arrangement which covers up all the head and neck except the eyes and nose, and even over this a sealskin bonnet with flaps does not make him too warm. If the sun shine brightly he puts on his blue snow goggles to prevent snow blindness, and if the snow be soft he changes his sea boots

for mocassins, and straps on to them his large, and at first unwieldy, snow shoes. Add to these items mufflers and gloves, and you have a fair idea of his outfit.

When he returns from his observations, his walk, or his tobogganing into the warm office, he discards these things, and appears just like an ordinary Scotsman, minus collar and tie, and plus, probably, a bristling beard, which he cultivates while there as an additional protection for cheeks and throat against cold.

II – THE CLIMATE OF THE BEN

TEMPERATURE – The mean annual temperature, i.e., the average of those 100,000 odd observations taken since the opening of the observatory in November, 1883, is 31.3 deg. fahr., i.e., ⅜ of a deg. below freezing point, and 16 degs. lower than the mean annual temperature of Fort-William. The highest shade temperature recorded – 67.0 degs. – was in June of the Jubilee year, 1887, and the lowest in January, 1895 – ½ deg. above zero. This will doubtless surprise many readers who may have frequently heard of temperatures several degrees below zero being recorded at many places in Scotland, and indeed it is one of the most curious weather phenomena of the Ben that the type of weather which brings hardest frost at low levels, namely, cloudless and calm with thick hoar frost, is the type which brings the finest and mildest weather on the Ben; so that it is quite a common thing to find in such weather – 'anticyclonic' as it is called – the ordinary state of matters reversed, and the temperature on the summit several degrees higher than at sea-level. All will remember the few days of severe frost we enjoyed in this district before last Xmas from the 18th to the 23rd December. Fort-William also was visited with a very keen frost then, but throughout the whole period the summit was basking in a clear sky without haze or rime, light winds, brilliant sunshine, very dry air, and a temperature several degrees higher than at Fort-William.

The mean temperature of July, the warmest month, is 40 deg., being the same as that of Spitzbergen for the same month. There has only been one month since the observatory opened in which snow has not fallen, and in which the temperature has not at some time or other fallen below freezing point, and during two Januaries – those of 1895 and 1897 – the temperature never once rose over freezing point. These, I think, are the most striking facts as regards temperature.

HUMIDITY – As to the very dry air to be found at times on the summit, the term on which the interests of the whole subject rests is 'Relative Humidity.' The relative humidity of air at a certain temperature is the proportion expressed as a percentage of the amount of water vapour actually present per cubic foot to the amount required to saturate the air at that temperature. Hence when the air is saturated with fog or mist, we say its relative humidity is 100, and any percentage below 50 means what we usually call very dry air. Before the erection of High Level Observatories the lowest relative humidity ever observed was 11 per cent. at Djeddah in the Arabian desert. That certainly is very low, and much lower than will ever be observed at any low level station in Britain. But the curious thing is that during spells of anticyclonic weather – such as the one we enjoyed before Xmas – relative humidities as low as 11 are by no means rare on Ben Nevis, and a minimum of 6 per cent. has actually been observed. In such dry air I have frequently seen and heard the snow on the summit evaporating away with astonishing rapidity, though the temperature was perhaps below freezing point, and no visible melting took place. Were this the normal state of weather on the Ben, it would indeed be an unmixed delight to spend one's days there, but, unfortunately, these brilliant days are very much the exception; for the summit is enveloped in cloud, and the air consequently saturated, on an average four days out of five.

RAINFALL – The rainfall on the Ben is also remarkable. The mean annual rainfall of Elgin, I found through the courtesy of a gentleman in the *Courier* office, to be about 27 inches. The mean at Fort-William is about 75 inches, the west coast being much wetter than the east, while the fall on the Ben reaches the large annual mean of 134 inches, including melted snow, which is reduced by melting to about one-tenth of its original bulk. Six or seven inches is considered a large month's rainfall at most Scottish stations. In one September over 43 inches fell on the Ben. A rainfall of an inch per day is considered very heavy at low levels. On one day over 7 inches fell on the Ben. The snow post on the summit never registers a very great depth for two reasons – (1) it is placed in a position where the snow has been found least liable to gather in drifts, so that much greater depths would be found in places whither the snow has been blown by the almost continuous wind; and (2) the great bulk of precipitation occurs not as one might expect, in the form of snow but in the form of rain or sleet, the heavy plumps always coming down during the thaws which every now and then make life so disagreeable on the summit. Hence the greatest depth of snow on

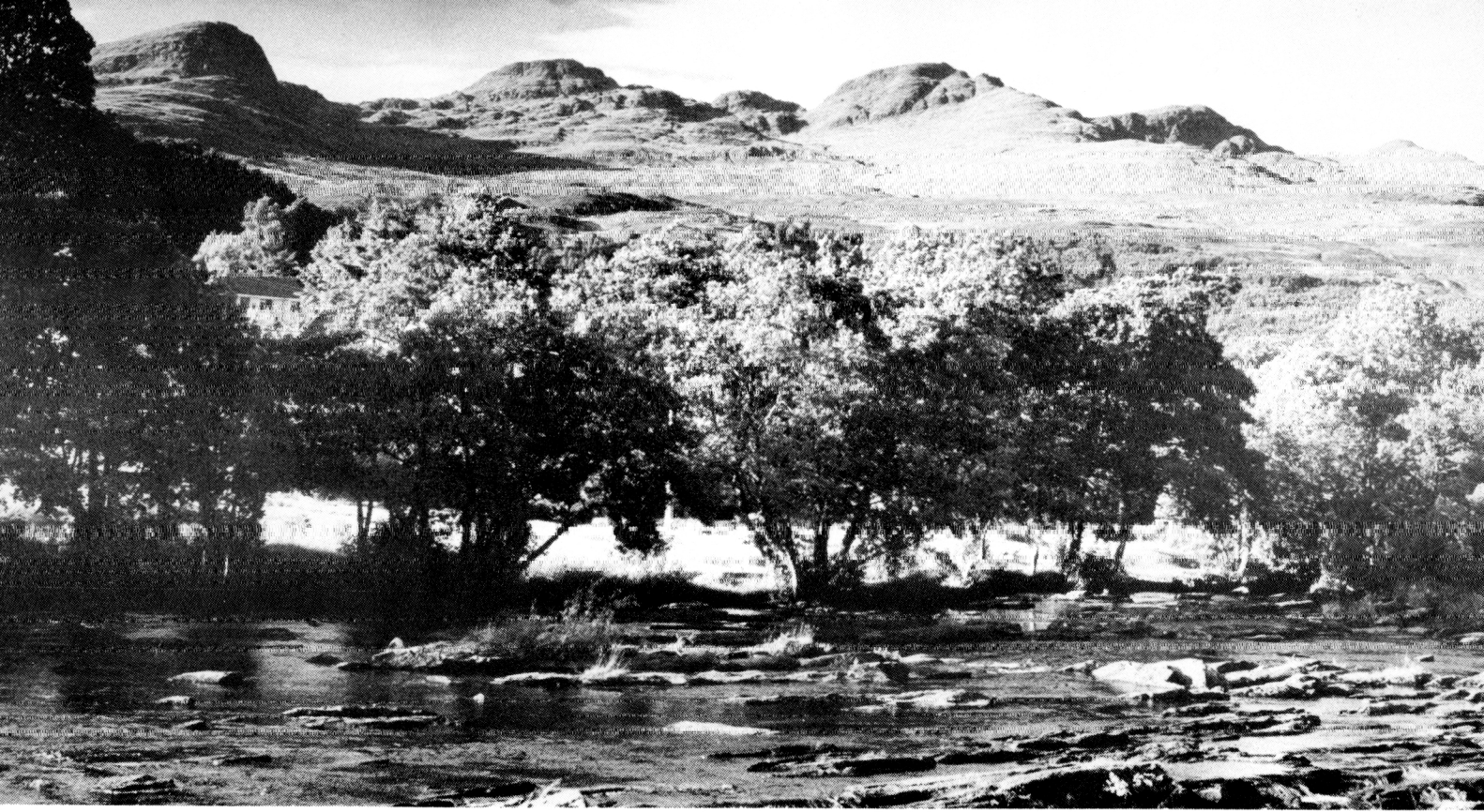


Photo: Kevin Williams

The Tarmachans from the River Dochart



February, 1983

Photo: Richard Gibbens

Liathach from Fasreidhnean, Beinn Alligin

the summit, as recorded in *The Scotsman* and other papers – occurring generally in April – varies according to the nature of the winter from 7 to 12 feet only.

GALES – More remarkable even than the rainfall is the tremendous velocity which the wind at times attains.

On the night of the memorable Tay Bridge disaster the wildest gusts fell short of 100 miles per hour. 'Windy Friday' is still remembered in Edinburgh as a day of phenomenal storm, when cabs and carts were blown over and people lifted off their feet in the streets, and the maximum velocity registered was 98 miles per hour. I have cited these two instances in order to give an idea of the terrific wildness of the hurricanes which sweep over the summit, where velocities of over 100 miles per hour have been frequently observed. For the first two years, when such storms passed over the Ben, the two observers used to go out roped together for greater security but it has been found that even in the strongest gusts perfect safety can be secured by crawling, or, in extreme cases, lying down flat. While on the matter of storms I shall quote an extract from the observatory log book for February 21 and 22, 1885, when the great storm, which interrupted observations for fourteen hours, swept over the summit – 'Feb. 21, at 1 p.m. – Rain gauge found blown away to near the edge of the cliff, not put out again to-day. At 4 p.m. the note book for the observation was torn in two and blown away. After 5 p.m. no temperature readings were taken, as the lamps could not be kept alight, and the observers could not stand against the wind. At 6, 7, and 8 p.m. the observers went out at the tower door with a long rope, and had to be hauled back. After that the observer did not go out. At 10 p.m. the outer glass of south window in tower was seen to be broken, probably by a flying piece of ice, many of which were heard rattling on the tower like stones.

'Feb. 22 – First temperature reading taken at 8 a.m. Thermometer box found badly choked with drift, and with about half its back outer louvres smashed. The top joint of snow post was also broken. The snow was much blown away by the wind, the general height being lowered several inches – even the hard crust on top was broken up.'

OPTICAL PHENOMENA – Of peculiar optical phenomena observed on the Ben, the chief are fog-bows, coronae, and glories. The first occur when the sun breaks through thin dispersing fog which is sinking below the level of the summit; an arch similar to a rainbow is then frequently observed. Coronae or coloured rings round the sun or moon, are sometimes observed at low

levels, but never in such brilliancy as from the mountain top when a scud of thin fog passes between the observer and the sun or moon.

A glory, however, is the most striking of such phenomena, otherwise called the Spectre of the Brocken. Many a time have I seen that beautiful effect when the setting sun cast my shadow on a fog or cloud bank to the eastward, my form being distinctly outlined on the white cloud sheet, and round my head, what one does not associate with this earthly existence at all, a brilliant many-coloured halo.

FOG CRYSTALS – One of the most striking phenomena to be observed at high level stations is the formation of snow crystals from fog. As Ben Nevis is situated in the path of the Atlantic cyclones, with their vapour-laden wind systems, the formation of snow crystals on the observatory and all surrounding objects exposed to the drifting fogs, when the temperature is below freezing point, proceeds often at an astonishingly rapid rate. The forms and arrangements of the crystals vary with the surface to which they adhere, but all belong to the feathery or fir-cone type. On a flat board they gather first and most abundantly near its edges, forming a beautiful border round it, while the centre remains clear. On the other hand, a round post shows an almost uniformly disposed mass of crystals all over its windward half. The rate of growth of the crystals varies with the density of the fog and the speed of the wind. On one occasion a post four inches square grew into a slab of crystalline snow of about 5 feet broad and 1 foot thick in less than a week, strong south-easterly winds with low temperatures prevailing during the whole time.

THUNDERSTORMS – A gale on the summit is bad enough, but a thunderstorm is infinitely worse, and is indeed the only real danger to which observers are exposed. Fortunately they are not common, and occur as a rule in winter; the worst type being when the thunder cloud settles on the hill-top. It is first of all seen approaching with lightning flashing from it; when it envelopes the summit in the form of mist no lightning is seen, no thunder is heard, but the telegraph needle clicks vigorously and almost continuously. The worst is yet to come, for the moment the cloud moves off the summit a flash and a crack like a pistol shot breaks from all prominent metallic objects in the observatory, such as wires, stove-pipes, and kitchen utensils. On one occasion a flash from the stove knocked down and stupefied one of the staff who was seated at a desk close by, while another such flash set fire to some of the woodwork between the office and the kitchen. On another occasion the telegraph

instrument was wrecked, being smashed and twisted almost beyond recognition.

ST. ELMO'S FIRE – The other electrical phenomenon of St. Elmo's Fire is quite harmless, though very peculiar. It occurs chiefly at night, and in winter, with a westerly wind. It is very seldom seen at low levels, though sailors have occasionally observed it at the top of ship's masts. When it occurs a noise something between a hiss and a crackle is heard continuously. The top of the lightning conductor, the kitchen chimney cowl, the wind vane, and even the tip of the observer's pencil emit a bluish flame, while the observer's hair glows, and, if he looks upward, he feels a prickly sensation on his face. Beyond causing in certain persons slight headache, this penomenon is known to be perfectly harmless, but its source or cause is as yet a mystery.

This article will be concluded in the next issue with an account of John Begg's 'Personal Experiences.'



WIND AND WEATHER ON CAIRN GORM SUMMIT

By J. S. Barton

THE MOUNTAINEER may well have mixed feelings on reaching the summit of Cairn Gorm, for even here man's works are plain to see, whiteout permitting. A little way beyond the cairn is a small stone hut festooned with aerials and crowned with what appears to be a dustbin. Walking past this intrusion with eyes drawn to the distant slopes of Ben Macdui, one is quite likely to fall over a further contraption resembling a triangular bedstead. Who is to blame for this high-altitude ironmongery and what is its purpose? I hope the rest of this article will soothe our imaginary visitor's feelings.

The hut was first on the scene for the praiseworthy purpose of mountain rescue, as a relay station for teams out of direct radio contact with their base. The dustbin and bedstead devices are both devoted to measuring Cairn Gorm's weather. They have a distinguished precedent in the Ben Nevis Observatory which opened one hundred years ago, but after its closure in 1904 there has been no officially recognised high altitude station dedicated solely to mountain weather observations. From time to time enthusiasts and volunteers have made mountain weather surveys, but individual resources could not meet the task of providing year-round readings with any reliability. P. D. Baird's effort was the most notable of this kind, with instruments placed near the summit of Ben Macdui in 1956. With the advent of the Coire Cas chairlift the Meteorological Office installed a recording anemometer and wind vane just below the top station at 1074 m. Britain's highest officially recorded gust of 144 mph occurred here on 6 March 1967.

In the early 1970's there was renewed interest in mountain weather for two reasons. Firstly, there was scientific interest in upland climatology in relation to water resources and secondly, the deaths from exposure of six young people on the Cairngorm plateau in November 1971 led to an examination of ways of improving mountain forecasts. Action was taken in 1975 resulting in a joint effort by Edinburgh University, the Meteorological Office, the Institute of Hydrology, based in Wallingford, and the Physics Department of Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh. The goal was to set up automatic weather recording instruments on Cairn Gorm summit; funding from the Natural Environment Research Council was secured for a modest development programme. Heriot-Watt Physics Department's involvement was due to Professor Desmond Smith, who not only had experience

of designing instruments for satellite meteorology, but as a keen skier and mountaineer recognised the likely problems posed by a severe mountain environment. The Institute of Hydrology (bedstead) and Heriot-Watt (dustbin) designs were complementary in concept and the two systems remain separate, though each has been developed considerably over the years. The rest of this article will concentrate on the Heriot-Watt system.

A detailed technical description would be out of place here, but the H-W station is essentially a simple but novel design. The instruments are housed inside the dustbin, which is actually made of fibreglass, until an electric motor raises them clear to record wind speed, direction and temperature for a 3 minute period, after which the station closes. Its interior is electrically heated to combat ice build-up, power being supplied by mains cable already laid on for the radio equipment in the hut. The whole cycle repeats automatically every half hour, giving 48 observations daily. These would be of no value to forecasters unless they were quickly available, therefore a VHF radio data link transmits the readings to Heriot-Watt where they are stored by computer. A line to Glasgow Weather Centre enables forecasters to receive printed summaries of conditions on Cairn Gorm minutes after the readings are taken, the whole process requiring no human intervention. A further extension of this data link is envisaged for the ski area car park, where a current display of summit weather will be combined with a forecast. This should be a striking demonstration of the changes in weather generally experienced between mid-height and summit.

The Heriot-Watt data have been archived by Edinburgh University Meteorology Department. Even allowing for equipment failure and unreliable data, this is a large amount of information, so I will concentrate on the aspect most likely to interest the mountaineer and that is the wind speed – certainly the most dramatic feature of the Cairn Gorm climate. The station actually measures two wind speeds when it is open, the mean speed over 2½ minutes and the highest 3 second gust in that time. Comparison of mean and gust is a rough measure of amount of turbulence: generally the gusts are about 25% higher than the means, though occasionally this figure might be as high as 100%. There is evidence that on average south-westerly winds at the summit are slightly gustier than those from other directions, reflecting the turbulence generated by the corrie edges upwind. Gustiness can vary a great deal in complicated mountain terrain. One can often step out of a steady gale force cross-wind by going a few yards down the sheltered side of a ridge, but further down a lee slope one is liable to be thrown off balance by violent gusts, perhaps travelling back up the slope from eddies rolling off the ridge top.

Summit wind speeds from two years with fairly complete data (1980-81) are shown in the table. Column 1 lists the number of days with wind observations each month, followed by the number of days with gales, when at least one 2½ minute mean wind exceeded 40 mph, i.e. Beaufort scale force 8. The final columns list the monthly average speeds and the maximum 3 second gust observed each month. A sample of two years is too small to allow firm conclusions to be drawn, but sufficient to build up a picture of weather on the mountain over the seasons. Scaling up to a full year, we expect gale force 8 on about 205 days. Compare this with the corresponding figure for Lerwick (49 days) or for Edinburgh (10 days). On something like 10-20 days per year on Cairn Gorm the wind stays above gale force for full 24 hours. Mountain gales are therefore frequent, intense and prolonged in comparison to lowland gales. Not surprisingly the summer months show the lightest winds, but the occasional deep depression can materialise in July and August to maintain monthly averages around 20 mph. In winter the picture is reversed and wind is the norm, with occasional relief if an anticyclone becomes established. The strongest winds occur either as westerlies or north-westerlies when the warm or cold fronts of a depression pass, or as south-easterlies when pressure is high over the North Sea. The annual mean of 30 mph is much more impressive if converted to total wind run: 30 × 365 × 24 equals 262,800 miles of fresh air.

In interpreting maximum gusts one must remember that the station only samples 5 minutes per hour, so the figures do not represent absolute maxima. The values speak for themselves: 100 mph gusts, rare events in the lowlands, are common in winter and force 12 (72 mph) gusts generally occur throughout the year. The absolute maximum gust yet recorded is 148 mph on 7 December 1978 during a south-easterly gale. The highest 2½ minute mean is 124 mph (with gust 141 mph) on January 1983 in a north-westerly airstream after the passage of a cold front, when the temperature was – 6 degrees C! It is almost impossible to imagine such conditions, especially when coupled with the hazard of blowing snow and nil visibility. These maxima are slightly higher than notable gusts at other hill-top sites, for example 123 mph on Lowther Hill in February 1962 and 133 mph on Gt. Dun Fell, Cumbria in January 1968.

How does Cairn Gorm stand in the world rankings of extreme weather? Mount Washington in the White Mountains, New Hampshire USA boasts the world record gust of 231 mph, while 200 mph gusts have been recorded at Long's Peak, Colorado, at Thule, Greenland and at the summit of Mount Fuji, Japan.

Month	No. of days with observations	Days with gales	Average wind speed (mph)	Max. gust (mph)
1980				
J	28	14	27	90
F	29	20	31	97
M	31	20	31	97
A	30	17	28	99
M	23	10	23	81
J	30	10	21	92
J	26	7	20	69
A	24	9	26	96
S	14	11	33	85
O	31	22	32	105
N	28	16	33	105
D	25	24	45	126
	319	180	mean 29	
1981				
J	18	16	45	105
F	23	19	41	117
M	20	15	30	103
A	30	8	21	79
M	25	15	30	76
J	25	10	25	78
J	31	12	24	83
A	31	11	20	71
S	30	22	31	110
O	22	15	30	90
N	30	26	38	121
D	31	17	30	121
	316	186	mean 30	

Table of wind speed observations, Cairn Gorm summit 1980-81.

Editor's Note

At 8.20 p.m. on January 21st, 1984 the anemometer on Cairngorm Chairlift tower recorded a gust of 161 mph. This has been investigated by the Meteorological Office and attributable to an instrument malfunction caused by a momentary power interruption so that the highest wind gust reliably recorded that day at the Chairlift was 112 mph some two hours later. The Heriot-Watt instrument had shown 113 mph (with a temperature of – 10°C) at 2 p.m. that day and then ceased to function.

Five people lost their lives in the Cairngorms during that particular storm.

The Editor would welcome brief accounts of experiences involving exception ally high wind speeds in the Scottish mountains with a view to publishing a collection of such accounts in a future issue.

Cairn Gorm is not quite in the same league as far as extremes are concerned, but average wind speeds are not much inferior.

Some idea of the difficulty in walking in high winds can be gained from the fact that the terminal velocity of a skydiver in free fall is about 120 mph. This wind speed therefore exerts a drag force roughly equal to one's body weight. It is possible, but tiring, to walk in winds of 60 mph, but balance and breathing become difficult if speeds exceed 80 mph. Wind chill is an additional problem, particularly in winter. Summit temperatures are not usually below – 10 degrees C, but the high winds can lead to heat loss that is well above the frostbite limit. The overall amount of wind chill experienced depends on the individual's clothing and metabolic rate, and the wind chill equivalent temperatures often tabulated with impressive precision in the literature are only attempts to simplify a complex problem and should not be taken too literally.

Wind plays a very important role in determining the condition of the winter snow cover. Almost bare ridges, deep drifts in the corries and intricately sculptured sastrugi on the plateaux are all clear signs of the wind's action on snow. Not so clear, until perhaps it is too late, is the formation of wind-slab by the build up of wind-driven snow on lee slopes. The formation and release of avalanches is too large a subject to embark on here, but the connection between current snow conditions and the preceding week's 'weather history' is obviously a close one.

Since readings began in 1977, the Heriot-Watt station has built up a unique record of the sub-arctic climate of this windswept summit. It gives documentary evidence for the contention that the weather of our hills, for their height, is amongst the most testing in the world.

Many people have helped with this difficult project. We are grateful to Northern Constabulary for permission to use the hut, to the Cairngorm Chairlift Co. Ltd. for help in moving equipment up and down the hill, to Jo and Mollie Porter for assistance on site and to Glenmore Lodge for providing a base for our maintenance visits.

Further Reading

P. D. Baird – Weather and Snow on Ben Macdhui
Cairngorm Club Journal 17, 147-149 (1957)

Robin Stirling – The Weather of Britain
Faber & Faber (1982).

NEW CLIMBS SECTION

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS (NORTH)

FOINAVEN, Creag Urbhard – *Foxtrot* 320m. Hard Very Severe.

E. Jackson & S. N. Smith. July, 1983.

Takes a generally left to right rising line starting near *Tortoise,* crossing *KWH,* crossing the *Zig Zag* to a gully system below the big corner of *Masha.* Much of the climbing follows a conspicuous pale line of water-worn rock. From below *Masha* it breaks out left up a steep wall through overhangs to gain ramps finishing left of *Masha.* The climb is probably in the lower end of its grade.

Start near *Tortoise* on top of small mound. Climb short steep walls, immediately behind the mound, and corners, past a wobbly jutting flake to a short smooth slab. Climb this trending rightwards then up past block to ramp which is followed rightwards to belay, (39m). (Approximate junction with *KWH*). Continue on rightwards up the ramp then rightwards up wall to belay on small ramp below shallow corner formed by two smooth water-worn slabs, (42m). Climb corner, then lay-back up flake to ramp; follow ramp rightwards crossing the *Zig Zag* to belay, (39m). Continue on up and rightwards up light coloured rib finishing by steep wall to belay at small Rowan at foot of gully leading into *Masha* corner, (45m). (Chimney on right would also be feasible). Climb up shallow gully above to platform then on and up into the confines of the gully, (45m). Loch Eriboll now visible. (From the platform it would be possible to go out left up groove line). Continue up gully, then up left wall, 21m, move up and left for about 7m to belay on ledge immediately above flake, (27m). A short wall and groove above leads up left to the bank of overhangs near the top of the cliff. Climb wall and groove for about 9m; an overlap on the left is surmounted then climb a groove until it is possible to escape right at 20m to a commodious platform and belay, (23m), crux pitch. Continue up slab/ramp, surmount overlaps and continue to top, (60m).

– *Masha, Right Hand Finish* 108m, Very Severe.

E. Jackson & S. N. Smith. July, 1983.

This finish starts near the bottom of the great open-book corner of Masha (where the 'corner' resembles a shallow chimney) and gives two good distinct pitches. The corner is probably frequently very wet.

Start about 10m right of the corner at a short steep wall. Climb wall then small corner onto slabs, about 12m, move up and right then traverse hard right across slab, round nose to small slab immediately above pinnacle/flake, belays in corner above, (24m). Surmount the overlap above at its right end by a crack above the belay to gain another small slab. Climb steep groove to slab/terrace. Climb crack in left side of steep wall directly above, (39m). (the final corner of *Fingal* lies at the right end of the steep wall). Scramble to the top, (45m).

Lord Reay's Seat – *Pobble, Corner Finish* 45m, Hard Very Severe.

E. Jackson & S. N. Smith. July, 1983.

This provides a fitting finish to a magnificent climb, (see SMCJ 1973, p.171 or Northern Highlands District Guide, Third Edition New Series p.205). Above the 'crinkly slab' trend right across a slab to reach the steep very obvious right angled corner. This is climbed direct with a short excursion rightwards at the very top, (45m).

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS (SOUTH)

BEINN EIGHE, Coire Mhic Fhearchair, Far East Wall – *Morning Wall*

R. Archbold & G. Strange. 19th June, 1983. 50m, Very Severe.

Climbs the little grey wall between *Nightcap Groove* and *Sidewinder*. Start in an easy broken groove up and left of *Sidewinder*. Scramble up the groove then continue straight up to reach right hand end of a grass ledge. Step round right, go up crack and back up left to belay on ledge above a square-cut overhang (40m). Climb above the ledge, traverse left into short corner, then go up and slightly right to a bulge. Mantleshelf over this and continue to the next terrace and easy ground (20m). Dries quickly.

FANNICHS: Loch a'Mhadaidh Buttress – *The Boundary* 275m, GRADE IV/V

D. Broadhead & D. Rubens. Winter, 1983.

This is on the large crag of Carn na Criche which overlooks Loch a'Mhadaidh. The lower part of the crag is ringed by a 60m, almost vertical, rock band. One third of the way from the left end of this band is a thin ice fall, the only break hereabouts. Climb the ice fall for 60 metres to the top of the band. A short way above trend slightly right at a fork and continue over an overhang and steep ground, following the obvious line to the top.

LOCH TORRIDON, Diabaig

The following climb is on the slabby, south-facing wall of the crag located due south of the main cliff, at G.R. 801 593. (*Charlie's Tower* is also on this crag; see SMJC 1981 and 1983).

– *Easy Does It* 140m, Mild Very Severe.

G. Bones, S. Easson, K. MacDonald & D. N. Williams. 15th September, 1983.

Start at a short corner/groove with a small oak tree. There is a small roof further right. Climb to the tree and then ascend the wall on the right to a ledge. Move up, right and then back left. Continue to a large grassy ledge and belay (24m).

Climb the obvious rightward slanting groove above. Pass the overhang at the top on the right. Step back left and pull out onto slabs above, belay (26m).

Continue rightwards more easily, up slabby rocks, to the top of the crag (90m).

CARN A'BHIORAIN: North West Face (Coill a'Bhun) – *Fain Falls*

B. Findlay, S. Kennedy, R. Ross & G. Strange. 21st January, 1984. 106m, GRADE IV.

An impressive icefall forms on the steep north-west face; clearly seen from the main A832 Dundonell-Braemore road. Situated some two miles beyond Dundonell House (immediately opposite a layby) and a few hundred yards left of a deep obvious gully (used in descent). Climb the icefall in three pitches.

Applecross

SGÙRR a'CHAORACHAIN, North-West Buttresses – *White Dwarf*

S. Allan & A. Nisbet. 16th January, 1984. 300m, Grade III.

This is a good buttress route taking a heavily vegetated line probably just to the right of the summer line *Jupiter*. Top end of its grade.

Towards the right side of the buttress is a narrow gully ending at a steep band of rock (there is also a slabby corner further right, ending at the same height in a big overhang). Climb the gully with some deviations on the right and when stopped by the steep band of rock, crawl rightwards along a ledge past a tree (good landmark) to a V-groove. Climb the groove until possible to step on to some jammed blocks on its right wall (tricky). Trend slightly rightwards for 70m until past the steep part of the buttress. Return easily left to the crest and follow it over short walls and blocks to the top (the last part was avoided on the left).

– *Sinister*

S. Allan & A. Nisbet. 15th January, 1984. 250m, GRADE III.

A winter ascent by the summer line. Not as good as *White Dwarf*. The 10m above the small tower (not visible from below) provides a hard and strenuous crux but the rest is easy.

BEINN a'MHUINIDH – *The Waterfall* 120m, GRADE V.

A. Nisbet & P. Thornhill. 27th January, 1984.

The waterfall was not completely frozen but there was thick ice just to the right of the water flow. Technically easy for the grade but thawing conditions forced the use of rock belays which were poor and awkward to set up. Three 20m pitches were climbed until below a curtain of icicles. The top of the icicles was gained via a hidden rock niche on their right, then decreasing angled ice led to the top.

NOTES

Beinn Eighe: Coire Mhic Fhearchair – G. Strange notes the route description of *The Reaper* (Far East Wall) in SMCJ 1981 p.153 omits the third pitch. The second pitch ends at belay in niche, (24m). Then climb the crack to belay ledge on left, (25m). The last pitch is as described.

SKYE

Kilt Rock, Staffin

There are some impressive sea cliffs near the village of Staffin, on the north-east coast of Skye. One particular section of cliff, called 'The Kilt Rock,' is a well known scenic feature. It consists of dolerite sill which has been intruded into sedimentary shales and limestones. It is so called beacuse of its well developed columnar jointing. There is a car park and view point for the Kilt Rock by the outlet from Loch Mealt at grid reference 509655.

Many climbers must have seen the Kilt Rock over the years, but no routes have previously been reported there. This year more than 20 new routes have been put up in the Kilt Rock area. All these lines were cleaned by abseil prior to being climbed. The rock on the present routes is generally sound but in places requires careful handling.

Although none of the routes are longer than one rope-length, what they lack in length they more than make up in quality and atmosphere. The lower half of the cliff consists of steep grass and loose shale, so some of the routes are best reached by abseil. Several stakes have been left in place on the cliff top. These should not be used singly. In many cases an extra rope is needed to arrange a belay at the top before climbing.

The best way to approach the Kilt Rock is to park as for the view point and then to walk up the road as far as a public phone box. Leave the road just past a stone wall on the right and head NNE across open moorland. Cross a wire fence where a gully cuts back deeply from the cliff edge. This gully can be descended without undue difficulty to reach the foot of several routes.

The routes can be grouped into three main areas: –

i. The steep wall south of the descent gully, Elishader Wall
ii. Both walls of the descent gully.
iii. The front face of the Kilt Rock itself.

The routes are described from south to north.

KILT ROCK, Elishader Wall Area – *The Pinnacle*

There is a prominent pinnacle at the southern end of the wall, which can be seen clearly from the descent gully. To reach it scramble down the gully, traverse along below the wall and ascend steep grass to the col between the pinnacle and the main cliff. A crack on the south side has been climbed at about VS by a Lakeland team.

– *The Pioneer* 39m, E1.

P. Hunter. 12th July, 1983.

Climb the corner/jamming crack just left of a large stepped roof, on the left hand half of the wall, (5a/b).

– *Fancy Free* 43m, E1/2.

R. McHardy & E. Grindley. June, 1983.

Climb a prominent crack near the right hand of the wall, opposite the start of *Staffin Special* (see below). There is a corner/recess at the top.

Descent Gully Area, Right Wall – *Jamboree* 27m, Very Severe.

D. N. Williams, W. Jeffrey & P. Hunter. 11th July, 1983.

Climb obvious bridging/jamming crack halfway down the gully on the right. Cross rightwards and finish up another crack.

– *Jammy Dodger* 27m, Very Severe.

D. N. Williams & P. Hunter. 16th July, 1983.

Climb shorter groove/crack just right of *Jamboree*. Gain ledge with difficulty. Move right and climb the obvious corner to the top, (4c).

Descent Gully Area, Left Wall

The next seven routes are on the left wall of the descent gully.

– *Romper* 10m, Very Difficult

D. N. Williams & W. Jeffrey. 11th July, 1983.

Climb the small recess near the top of the gully.

– *Sporran* 21m, Hard Very Severe.

W. Jeffrey, D. N. Williams & P. Hunter. 10th July, 1983.

Further down the gully there is a J-shaped recess. Gain this and bridge up to holds on the left, reach a projecting block and climb onto it with difficulty (5b). Finish more easily.

– *Pied Piper* 22m, E1.

P. Hunter & D. N. Williams. 21st July, 1983.

Climbs the obvious weakness right of *Sporran*. Move straight up to the left side of a giant flake/pedestal, make hard moves right, climb up to better holds and a ledge, continue up the front of a large flake and a crack on the left to the top, (5b).

– *The Electric Bagpipe*

D. N. Williams & P. Hunter. 16th July, 1983. 33m, Very Severe.

Start at a short corner some distance down the gully. Climb the corner and continue up the front of a giant flake until forced into the crack on its left, reach the top of the flake and layback up the crack on the right, step left onto the wall and climb to a ledge, move up and right to finish, (5a).

– *Clandestine*

D. N. Williams & C. Hill. 28th May, 1983. 37m, Mild Very Severe.

Follows a rising traverse line on the left wall of the gully starting at the same corner as *The Electric Bagpipe*. Climb the corner and then move right and up to a triangular recess. Step right again and climb the left of two parallel cracks. Climb the left side of a pedestal to the top.

– *Brazen* 37m, E2.

P. Hunter & D. N. Williams. 18th July, 1983.

Start just down from the corner of *Clandestine*. Gain a small overhung recess from the right with difficulty, make a hard move up to better holds, join *Clandestine* and reach the triangular recess as for that route, then climb straight up the obvious crack to the top, (5b,c).

– *Staffin Special* 42m, Very Severe.

D. N. Williams & P. Hunter. 13th July, 1983.

Near the bottom of the gully a ledge runs horizontally out across the wall. Follow this ledge rightwards then move up to a platform above, reach a corner and make some awkward moves to gain a leftward slsnting crack, follow this and reach a recess also used by *Clandestine.* Take the righthand of the two parallel cracks, finish up the right side of the pedestal above, (4c).

Kilt Rock Area

The next three routes can all be reached by turning left at the bottom of the descent gully. They all finish on a prominent slab near the top of the wall.

– *Tartan Terror* 42m, E1.

P. Hunter & D. N. Williams. 13th July, 1983.

Climb a broken groove just around the corner from *Staffin Special,* reach the platform above, (it is probably more pleasant to climb the first part of *Staffin Special* to this point), step right and climb the steep crack, (5a/b).

– *Skyeman* 42m, E2.

P. Hunter & D. N. Williams

Climb the crack immediately right of *Tartan Terror* to finish in the middle of the slab, sustained, (5b).

The crack immediately right of *Skyeman* is as yet unclimbed.

– *Wide Eyed* 42m, E1/2.

E. Grindley & R. McHardy. June, 1983.

Climbs the deep chimney-crack in the corner right of *Skyeman,* (5b).

The remaining routes are best approached by abseil. They are all steep and sustained for 45m. Most of them have hanging belays at the bottom for which pegs may be required. Some of them are difficult to identify from above.

– *Edge of Beyond* 45m, E2.

P. Hunter & W. Jeffrey. 10th July, 1983.

Climbs the next groove right of *Wide Eyed,* with an excursion onto the left bounding arête at half height, (5b/c). There is a large boulder at the top of the route.

– *Grey Panther* 45m, Hard Very Severe/E1.

E. Grindley, D. N. Williams, W. Jeffrey & P. Hunter. 9th July, 1983.

Climb the groove/recess right of *Edge of Beyond,* (5a/b).

– *Internationale* 45m, E2.

R. Swindon & E. Grindley. 1st May, 1983.

Climb a conspicuous jamming crack right of *Grey Panther,* move right to finish, (5b).

– *Footloose* 45m, E2/3.

E. Grindley & R. McHardy. June, 1983.

Takes a leftward slanting lichenous crack, halfway between *Internationale* and *Road to Ruin.*

– *Ruination* 45m, E3.

P. Hunter (unseconded). 16th July, 1983.

Start as for *Footloose* or climb the first 3m of *Road to Ruin* and then traverse left (delicate), where *Footloose* moves left, continue straight on up, (5c). The final moves are on inferior rock.

– *Road to Ruin* 45m, E1.

E. Grindley, R. Swindon & D. N. Williams. 31st April, 1983.

Climb the jamming crack just left of an obvious chossy chimney, move right at the top and climb on the left wall of the chimney for the last few moves, (5b).

The chossy gully is unclimbed.

– *Killer Whale* 45m, E3.

W. Birkett & Lyle. Summer, 1983.

Climbs the prominent crack line just right of the chossy chimney. The crack seals towards the top and then the wall on the left is climbed with difficulty, (5c).

WESTERN HIGHLANDS

LADHAR BHEINN, Coire Dhorrcail – *Celtic Sea* 180m, GRADE III.

R. J. Allen, D. N. Williams & W. Jeffrey. 19th February, 1984.

Climbs the last prominent corner 45m left of *Thunder Chicken.*

– *Western Approaches* 180m, GRADE III.

R. J. Allen. 19th February, 1984.

Climbs the narrow and interesting gully on the right hand flank of Landlubber Buttress.

BEINN FHADA, Sgùrr a Choire Ghairbh – *Summit Buttress* 200m, GRADE III.

A. B. Lawson & R. Richard. 3rd March, 1984.

This route follows the summer line noted in the District Guide, except near the bulge, where the winter line carries on directly above. (In summer, the route traverses left across a gully at this point). Undoubtedly better in Winter than Summer but disappointing in either case.

CAIRNGORMS

NORTHERN CORRIES, Coire an Lochan, No. 2 Buttress – *Crow's Nest Crack*

S. Kennedy & C. MacLeod. 18th December, 1983. 90m, GRADE III.

The summer line was followed as far as the 6m wall, above and left of the obvious chimney. In deep powder a finish was made moving rightwards via a large flake then up a short bulge to the plateau. Later on in the season a left hand finish into a shallow gully would probably prove easier.

No. 4 Buttress – *Sindwinder*

E. Clark & A. Nisbet. 11th December, 1983. 100m, GRADE III.

A devious line, but the easiest on the main buttress (easier than *Western Route*). Right of the three corners (the left two being *War and Peace* and *Procrasination*), an easy ramp leads out on to the buttress crest. Climb the ramp passing under the rightmost corner, then up blocks for 5m until a traverse left leads back to the top of the corner. Climb a short strenuous wall above (crux) to a large platform. Go straight up from the platform until stopped by steep ground. Climb a chimney on the left (the opposite side of the *Savage Slit*) and squeeze through a gap to gain and finish by the easy upper section of *Savage Slit*.

– *Sidewinder Direct*

S. Allan & A. Nisbet. 18th December, 1983. 90m, GRADE IV.

Sustained, with good quality pitches. Climb the initial ramp of *Sidewinder* until it is possible to swing left into the rightmost corner. Follow it to rejoin the normal route below the short, strenuous wall. Where the normal route goes left to a chimney, climb the steep wall above a crack to reach easier ground.

BEINN a'BHUIRD: Dividing Buttress – *Parkie's Route* 90m, Hard Very Severe.
A. Nisbet & M. Ross. 10th July, 1983.

Follows the slabs right of *Streaker's Root.* The aim is to 'Keep off the Grass,' which is close on the right. Start at the lowest tongue of slab. Climb to the top right end of the tongue and up a vague rib to slabs. Climb the slabs (thin in places) keeping off vegetation on either side to belay on a grass plug at the base of a prominent corner 5m right of *Streaker's Root* pitch 2 (45m, 4c). Climb the corner until 5m below a roof, then move out on to the rib on the right. Go up the rib until forced to traverse right (crux) into a niche. Climb out of the niche and up the crack above to easier ground. Trend left across pleasant slabs to finish (45m, 5a).

– *The Fringe* 55m, Very Severe (4b).
A. Nisbet, M. Ross & D. Strickland. 10th July, 1983.

Climbs the slabs starting just left and below the big corner of the *Jewell-Kammer Route.* Climb up for 10m, then diagonally right to a small ledge on the arête overlooking the *Jewell-Kammer* corner. Traverse left to a crack which comes up from below and forks. Climb the right fork, then slabs leading slightly left to a ledge below a prominent crack in a slab (34m, 4b). On the right is a corner with an overhang (5b on a top rope). Climb the prominent crack to an edge, then move up right by another crack into slabs leading to easy ground (25m, 4b).

Garbh Choire – *Token Groove* 105m, GRADE II/III.
B. Findlay & G. Strange. 30th January, 1983.

On the first buttress left of M and B Buttress (Stob an t-Sluichd). Climb prominent shallow left-trending groove system left of main crest.

NOTES

Sgoran Dubh, Roberts Ridge, Donald Bennet reports that a recent rockfall has altered the character of part of the climb, severely damaging the tree which provides the belay (and some useful holds) at the foot of the second pitch. However it remains an excellent little climb.

By the time of publication of this Journal the new Cairngorms Guide should be gracing the shelves of the bookshops. Full details of many new routes will be available in the guide so they have merely been summarised below. Route descriptions which are not given in the guide are generally included above.

SUMMER 1983

Despite a late spring and snow around the cliffs in June, Summer 1983 was again warm and dry. There was a lot of activity in the Cairngorms, both first ascents and early repeats, with **Creag an Dubh Loch** taking pride of place as usual. Murray Hamilton was again most active, with five fine routes in July. First and probably the top achievement of the Cairngorm year was *Flodden,* taking a right to left line up the steepest part of the Broad Terrace Wall and the first route to violate the 'untrodden grass balcony' (*Flodden*; E5; 6a, 6a, 5a, 6b, 5a; M. Hamilton, K. Spence & R. Anderson). *Friends Essential* by the same team, is a one-pitch crackline on South-East Buttress (E2; 6a). The following weekend, Hamilton returned with Pete Whillance to put up *Masque* (E2; 5c, 5b) which takes a corner line near the top of False Gully Wall, and *Alice Springs* (E2; 5c, 5b), a thin crackline left of *Last Oasis* on the Broad Terrace Wall . At the same time, Duncan McCallum and Kenny Spence climbed a companion route to *Flodden* called *Range War* (E3; 5b, 5c, 6a, 5a). The two routes cross at the Balcony.

In August attention reverted to the Central Gully Wall. Hamilton and Rab Anderson claimed the long-admired and previously attempted 'Boysen line,' a diagonal line of hanging slabs under *Cougar* and finishing by *The Naked Ape* (*Voyage of the Beagle*; E4; 6a, 4c, 6a, 6a, 5c). Meanwhile, Dougie Dinwoodie was attempting an improbable line right of *Ascent of Man* and was successful after a protracted struggle, much to the relief of the Aberdonians. (*The Creature*; E5; 5c, 6a, 6b, 5b; D. Dinwoodie & G. Livingstone).

Also during August much of the Dubh Loch's remaining aid was eliminated by Dinwoodie (*Vampire Direct*; E3; 5c and *The Crow*; E2; 5c, with Livingstone) and by visiting English climber Brian Davison. (*Dragon Slayer*; E4; 6b and *Goliath Direct Start*; HVS; 5a, with Nisbet).

The latter team also found an independent finish to *Dragon Slayer* (5b), while Davison found the great pink corner just to the right to be dry (E3; 5c. with Charlie Ord). The last peg on *Waterkelpie Wall* was eliminated by Nisbet and Pete Langhorne (E1; 5b). Opposite, on the south side of the glen leading towards Loch Muick, Greg Strange and Brian Findlay climbed the isolated, diamond-shaped slab (*Solitaire*; E1, 5b).

Creag an Dubh Loch seemed to divert attention away from **Lochnagar** although two notable events did occur. Late in the summer, Brian Lawrie and Neil Morrison repeated *Black Spout Wall,* eliminating the aid at a surprisingly reasonable grade (E2; 5c, 5c-5b) but were excited by its high quality. Around the same time Rob Archbold and Greg Strange linked the start of *Dirge* to the finish of *Post Mortem* to produce another route of stunning quality, *Tough-Brown Integrale* (E1; 5a, 5a, 5b, 5b, 5a). Strange and Guy Muhlemann also made a variation start to *Nihilist* (5b).

The more remote cliffs were not neglected either. At **Creagan a'Choire Etchachan** in June, Brian Davison led a large party up the serious *Scythe* (E2; 5b), taking a corner system right of *Sickle* and continuing up a clean arête above the Terrace, (*Delicatessen*; VS; 5c). Later that month Murray Hamilton and Rab Anderson plundered another fine line, the first corner left of *The Corridor,* (*The Henchman*; E3; 5c, 5b). Andrew Nisbet and Brenda Clough also put up a good left-hand finish to *Original Route Direct* (VS; 5a).

On **Beinn a'Bhuird** the best new climb was *The Empty Quarter* (E3; 5c; Dinwoodie & Strange), taking the steep wall right of *The Channel,* on the West Face of Mitre Ridge. On the slabs right of *Quickstep* (Coire na Ciche), Ged Reilly and Forrest Templeton climb *Limbo Dance* (HVS; 5a). Nisbet, with Mungo Ross and Dawn Strickland paid a visit to the Dividing Buttress, the first two cleaning the top pitch of *Streaker's Root* on abseil and reckoning the route to be a mini-classic, as well as establishing two more routes of lesser quality, (*Parkie's Route* and *The Fringe*).

Last addition to the Braemar side of the Cairngorms was an unusual climb on an obscure cliff, the Dee Face of **Beinn Bhrotain**. Brian Findlay and Greg Strange climbed a diagonal dyke on the left of the face, (*Brodan's Dyke*; VS; 4c).

New route activity in the **Northern Cairngorms** has been much more limited. The only addition to the Shelterstone Crag is *The Harp* (E3; 6a; Pete Whillance, Ray Parker), a thin crack between *Sticil Face* and *Snipers.* In Coire an Lochain, Davison climbed *The Demon* (E2; 5b, 5a) with Nisbet, on the steep main face of No. 3 Buttress while the same pair freed *Daddy Longlegs* (HVS; 5a, 4c), *The Vicar* (E1; 5a, 5a) and *War and Peace* (HVS; 4c, 5a, 5a).

WINTER 1982/83

At the tail-end of the 82/83 Winter, Findlay and Strange climbed a west-facing corner system directly up the large broken face between Coire an Lochain Uaine and Corrie of the Chokestone Gully (*Angel's Delight,* III/IV). In Coire na Ciche, Beinn a'Bhuird, Nisbet and Doug Hawthorn repeated *The Carpet* without aid (IV/V), using avariation finish on the left. Also on Beinn a'Bhuird, Stob an t-Sluichd, Findlay and Strange found *Token Groove* (II/III), a left-trending groove on the buttress left of M and B Buttress.

WINTER 1983/84

The winter had a mild start with only intermittent snow before New Year. Conditions were sometimes adequate high up and five winter routes were climbed

in Coire an Lochain before Christmas. Nisbet and Ewan Clark followed the arête left of Y-Gully Left Branch to give *The Overseer,* IV and the next day snaked up No. 4 Buttress left of *Western Route* for *Sidewinder,* III. The following weekend, Sandy Allan and Nisbet climbed a direct version of *Sidewinder,* IV and the summer line of *Grumblimg Grooves,* V. Steve Kennedy and Charlie McLeod climbed *Crow's Nest Crack,* III. Around the same time, Hawthorn and Dave Lawrence found a line between *Bugaboo Rib* and *Sasquatch,* in the Corrie of the Chokestone Gully (details unknown).

Maintaining the emphasis on the high cliffs, Livingstone and Nisbet climbed *Lucifer Route* (V) (Sputan Dearg) in fair style just before New Year after a sieged ascent in a blizzard before Christmas. Still at Sputan Dearg, Allan and Nisbet forced the difficult *Grey Slab* (V) with a fall on pitch 1.

Perhaps the hardest route this winter in the Cairngorms was climbed in early January by Arthur Paul with Dinwoodie who succeeded on the 'last great problem' of Lochnagar (*Psyche,* V) following an attempt the previous winter. At the beginning of February, Allan and Nisbet succeeded on *Black Mamba,* V/VI (Creag an Dubh Loch) at the third attempt (the first by Nisbet and Phil Thornhill), approaching on ski and taking advantage of a little ice.

In mid-February, a major thaw had improved conditions on the higher cliffs and eased the approaches. Nisbet and Adrian Clifford visit Garbh Choire, Beinn a'Bhuird and climbed *The Actress* (IV/V), a parallel line right of *East Wall Direct,* and an unnamed route (V) starting up *Mitre Ridge Direct* and finishing up *The Bishop.*

Greg Strange has supplied the following notes on **Lochnagar**.

Tough-Brown Integral – In August, 1983 Rob Archbold and I climbed *Post Mortem* via the first two pitches of *Dirge* and a good link pitch utilising a narrow rising foot-ledge which joined *Post Mortem* half way up its first main pitch. This combination gives excellent sustained climbing avoiding grass terraces and the slow drying initial section of *Post Mortem's* first main pitch. (150m, E1, 5b).

Sinister Buttress – In December, 1982 Murray Hamilton and I climbed the steep wall left of *Direct Route.* From the toe of the buttress easy ledges led up to below a steep wall. Here we went up right via an ice bulge then back left to a little corner. This gave access to a steep left-trending ramp which led to easy ground. Climbed in a blizzard. Initially we thought we were climbing on the Cathedral.

The Cathedral – A few weeks after the above incident Rob Archbold and I climbed the broken groove line immediately left of the mummy-shaped tower and finished by the deep chimney of *Transept Route – Transept Groove,* 105m, GRADE IV.

Sunset Gully – This, the obvious gully is the right flank of *Sunset Buttress,* climbed by Ian Dalley and myself in December, 1982. The left fork was climbed (GRADE III).

LOCHABER AND BADENOCH

GARBH BHEINN OF ARDGOUR, South Wall of Great Ridge – *Scimitar Variation*

T. McAulay & D. Sanderson. 16th July, 1983. Very Severe.

After the first part of *Scimitar* at the Terrace go right to the first corner and overhang. Climb these and go directly up to rejoin the original route at the flake belay.

Upper Tier – *Chib* 60m, Very Severe.

T. McAulay, D. Sanderson & N. Muir. 16th July, 1983.

Start at the next corner right from *Excalibur.* Climb corner, go straight up, trend slightly right to large flake, go straight up to belay on grass ledge, (42m). Go straight up to top of buttress, (18m).

BEN NEVIS, No. 3 Gully Buttress – *Quickstep* 170m, GRADE IV.

R. Townsend & T. Bray. 26th March, 1983.

This route lies between *Aphrodite* and *Two Step Corner,* climbing the obvious corner to the left of the latter route. On this ascent dangerous snow conditions prompted a start on the ice slabs to the right of *Green Gully* reaching the foot of the main corner in three pitches. However a more logical start would be up the ordinary route to the snow shelf or independently by a straightforward groove between this and the initial pitches of *Two Step Corner,* (approx. 90m).

The steep ice on the left wall of the corner was climbed to a belay at 45m. The final pitch led into a conical basin which appears to be overhung at most times by a large cornice. A short but exposed and overhanging exit was made on the right arête, (30m).

NOTES

Ben Nevis, Minus One Direct – *Serendipity Line* – For those who don't have their own dictionary the term 'Serendipity' was apparently coined in 1754 by Horace Walpole from the title of the fairy tale, 'Three Princes of Serendip,' whose characters 'were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things they were not in quest of.' The Editors made no quest for the following notes but record them as a useful discovery: – Ken Crocket notes that the *Serendipity Line* is some 85-90m in length, not 45m as in the Lochaber and Badenoch Guide. It follows the crest of the buttress in its entirety, does not enter *Minus One Gully* at any point, and rejoins the 'standard' route at the great terrace. The entire route, if climbed by the *Serendipity Line* should be regarded as Hard Very Severe.

Noel Williams goes further in amplifying the guidebook's terse description and also records a further variation, (we have archived a sketch diagram).

– *Arête Variation* 44m, VS/HVS.

S. Abbot & D. N. Williams. 28th August, 1983.

Climb the original route to the stance below the wide crack. Take the first part of the *Serendipity Line* as follows: – Traverse diagonally left, until a hard move allows a recess to be gained. Make some devious moves up this and climb easier rocks above, to a belay in a small grassy niche, (23m). Step left into another recess and climb its slabby left wall. (Macdonald & Rowe's variation presumably moves onto the crest here. See SMCJ 1970). Climb the steeper section above until able to break out onto rightward trending slabs. Stance at a stack of detached blocks, (21m).

The *Arête Variation* starts here. There is a prominent slab on the left, capped by a long narrow overhang. Use tension (peg in place) to gain a foothold in the centre of the slab. Move up to the overhang and undercling left to the arête. Gain this and follow to a small stance, (18m). Climb a crack in the crest above and continue more easily in the same line, (26m).

At this point it is possible to traverse right to rejoin the original route where it regains the crest of the buttress (also the finish of the *Serendipity Line*). However, it is more natural to continue directly for 18m, reaching the great terrace as for *North Eastern Grooves.* Finish by the original line.

GLENCOE AND GLEN ETIVE

BUACHAILLE ETIVE MOR, Rannoch Wall – *Plonk* 60m, Very Severe.

T. McAulay & D. Sanderson. 23rd June, 1983.

Start in *Easy Gully* as for *Wappenshaw Wall, Direct Start*; climb the corner in its entirety to start of *Wappenshaw Wall* (original route), (24m). Climb directly up from ledge to top, (36m).

Great Gully Upper Buttress – *June Crack Direct*

T. McAulay. 19th June, 1983.

From the small rock shelf at 30m on the original route climb the overhanging crack directly instead of moving to the right.

Slime Wall – *Guerdon Grooves* GRADE VI.

D. Cuthbertson & A. Paul. 28th January, 1984.

Follows the summer line. Very technical and serious.

Cunieform Buttress – *Raven's Edge* GRADE V.

B. Sprunt & R. J. Allen. 21st January, 1984.

Generally follows the summer line. The open-book corner on Pitch 3 was avoided by a rib rock on the right.

GEARR AONACH, East Face – *Jaberwock* GRADE IV/V.

A. Paul & D. Cuthbertson. 30th January, 1984.

Climbs the obvious ice fall between *The Wabe* and *Mome Rath Route* taking in the ice fringe at the top.

– *Snowstormer* GRADE V.

D. Cuthbertson, A. Paul & C. McLean. 31st January, 1984.

Commence with the first summer pitch of *Snowstormer* (with the exception of a short excursion on the right) to belay on a small pedestal above the obvious V notch. Icy corners are then followed directly above to another belay under the small overlap overlooking the corner of *Rainmaker*. Easier climbing then leads to the top.

AONACH DUBH, Lower North East Nose – *The Wellie Boys* 69m, Very Severe.

T. McAulay & A. Paul. 11th May, 1983.

This route climbs the wall left of *Turnspit*. About 24m up is a small niche; start just to the right of this. Climb grooves and wall past the niche on the left and belay right of large ledge. Traverse left along ledge for about 8m to a groove then climb direct to top.

North Face (Lower Cliff) – *Divergence* 170m, GRADE IV.

A. Nisbet, C. Murray & S. Taylor. 21st January, 1984.

This route takes the left branch of *Darwin's Dihedral*. Start up *Darwin's Dihedral* until its crux pitch is reached. Climb the buttress on the left of the ice (easier; the ice was also incomplete) to enter the upper basin. Take the left branch, which is a deep chimney (55m from a tree belay to the top).

NOTES

Buachaille Etive Mor, *Central Buttress* – T. McAulay notes an ascent of the *Direct Route* by the *Chimney Route* at GRADE IV in the company of D. Sanderson on 21st January, 1984. (The New Routes Editor recollects reports of an earlier ascent).

Dalness Chasm, *Central Branch*. – This route was incorrectly credited in the 1983 J. The first ascent was by D. Cuthbertson and E. McArthur. But do they actually know where it is? See the Gullies Section.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

MEALL BUIDHE, Glen Orchy

The cliffs lie on the north side of the col between Beinn Achaladair and Meall Buidhe. Their most obvious feature is a deep gully (*Forked Gully*) left of centre. To the left of this gully the rock becomes progressively more broken until merging into the hillside. To the right is the complex main buttress, decreasing in height, from a maximum of 170m, to the col. Below the right hand end of the main cliffs is a separate, steep buttress.

– *Rock Scar Groove* 125m, GRADE II/III.

G. E. Little. 20th February, 1984.

Start 30m to left of base of *Forked Gully*. The groove, indefinite in its lower part, becomes well defined higher up. Climb the groove with two ice pitches and short snow slope above.

– *Forked Gully, Right Fork* 105m, GRADE II.

G. E. Little. 20th February, 1984.

As the name suggests this gully splits into two in its upper third. The right fork is quite steep with cornice difficulties. (Left fork is GRADE I).

– *Mortal Coil* 170m, GRADE II.

G. E. Little. 29th March, 1984.

Start at the base of an obvious diagonal gully to the right of *Forked Gully*. Climb this with an easy angled ice pitch, to just before the start of a large snowfield. Take snow ramp raking right to steepening ground. Climb directly up steep, exposed, though broken ground to the plateau.

– *Second Sight* 170m, GRADE II/III.

G. E. Little. 22nd March, 1984.

Near the centre of the main buttress is an obvious wide snow ramp, slanting up from right to left. Climb a steep ice pitch to gain the ramp which is then followed to its termination below a steep groove. Traverse 10m hard right then follow the line of least resistance up the complicated ground above.

– *Psychic Gully* 150m, GRADE II/III.

G. E. Little. 22nd March, 1984.

This diagonal gully bounds the right side of the steepest part of the main buttress and starts at the base of the snow shelf dividing the main buttress from the steep buttress. A short ice pitch gives access to the gully. Its upper part contains a double ice pitch and a short awkward corner to finish.

– *The Scoop* 55m, GRADE III.

G. E. Little. 22nd March, 1984.

Near the left end of the long steep buttress is an ice filled scoop. Climb it directly.

BEINN A CHAISTEIL – *Benoovi Five* 76m, GRADE III.

T. McAulay. 27th March, 1983.

At the far left hand side of the main crag is a deep gully. Go further left to a small corrie. High up is an obvious ice-fall. Climb gully to ice-fall, climb ice-fall, gain a small amphitheatre and go straight up to finish.

THE COBBLER, South Peak – *Ithuriel's Wall Direct* 60m, Very Severe.

T. McAulay & D. Sanderson. 15th August, 1983.

Climb Ithuriel's Wall to block belay. Follow corner on left. At overhangs where original traverses right climb overhangs directly. Carry on up and belay on left hand edge of *Gladiators* ledge. Go straight up from belay to top.

ARRAN

A'CHIR: Coire Daingean – *Chockstone Gully* 130m, GRADE III.

G. E. Little & A. Watson. 21st January, 1984.

This route climbs *Gully Three* via its true start and it is suggested that the above name would be more appropriate. It is a natural winter line.

Climb open gully, to the right of *Boundary Ridge*, passing below an enormous chockstone at 30m to a snow cave. Difficult moves on the right lead to the start of a well defined narrow gully. This is followed, with two short pitches, to the top.

OUTCROPS

GLEN NEVIS, West End Crag (First Crag up and left of Sheep Fank) – *Principle of Moments* 18m, E3.
G. Latter & I. Campbell. 23rd July, 1983.
Start below the lefthand of two slanting cracks. Climb crack until forced to move onto right wall, pull back into crack and finish up a shallow groove, (6a).

Evening Crag (Down and right of Car Park Crag) – *Choc Ice*
G. Latter & I. Campbell. 22nd July, 1983. 15m, E1.
The bottomless groove on the left end of the crag, with an overhang at its foot, (5c).

– *Take Two*
G. Latter & I. Campbell. 22nd July, 1983. 15m, Hard Very Severe.
The short steep crack in the right wall of the crag, (5a).

Lower Gorge Crag – *High 'n' Dry* 18m, E3.
G. Latter & D. Cuthbertson. 22nd June, 1982.
A good alternative first pitch to *Cosmopolitan.* Start from atop a rounded boulder and climb the wall to gain foot of crack, step down and left and finish up short groove, (5c).

– *In The Groove (A First Pitch)* E1.
G. Latter & I. Campbell. 24th July, 1983.
Start right of *Plague of Blazes.* Climb the crack to the stance on *Travelin' Man,* (5b).

Nameless Crag – *Les Boys – Direct Finish* 6m, E4.
G. Latter & I. Campbell. 25th July, 1984.
Climb the wall immediately above the crack on the normal route, (5c).

Buzzard Crag – *The Effect* 36m, E5.
D. Cuthbertson (unseconded). April, 1983.
Climbs the wall right of *Steerpike.* Climb curving crack to a peg runner, up wall above going left into a scoop at foot of shallow groove, up this (in situ nut) and easier corner to top, (6a).

Upper Gorge Crag – *The Singing Ringing Tree* 36m, E5.
D. Cuthbertson (unseconded). 9th July, 1983.
Climbs the bulging wall left of *Spreadeagle.* Start at the foot of obvious thin crack. Climb crack and move right to holds on bulge, move right again and up to obvious flake crack, take a line up wall above then move left round hollow flakes to finish up a slab (6a).

Galaxy Buttress – *Short Mans Walk About* 45m, E4.
D. Cuthbertson & G. Latter. 7th July, 1983.
Climbs roof and finger crack to a no-hands rest on right. Regain crack which leads to a ledge and nut belays, (33m, 6b). Climb the scoop above, gained from the right, (12m, 5a).

DUMBARTON ROCK – *Requiem* 27m, E7.
D. Cuthbertson (unseconded). 6th July, 1983.
Now free, providing a superb, strenuous and super-sustained pitch, the last move being the crux, (6c). Sieged over several weeks.

– *Requiem Direct Start* 15m, E3.

B. Masterton & A. Wren. 1st March, 1983.

A serious pitch up the wall direct to the bolt belay at the foot '*Requiem*,' turning the small overlap on the left, (5b).

– *Rock of Ages* 15m, E3.

G. Latter (unseconded). 20th March, 1983.

Climbs the traverse line leading to the foot of *Requiem*. Start as for *Big Zipper*, gain and climb the obvious 'flake' like feature crossing *Chemin de Fer* en route, (one peg runner in situ), (6a).

NOTES

N. Williams notes that several new low lying crags have been developed recently in Glen Nevis, South Ballachulish and Kentallen as follows: –

Glen Nevis – *Steall Hut Crag* – a poorly protected route has been made on the large slabby face on the left-hand side of this crag.

– *Wave Buttress* – More than ten routes have been done on this crag which lies just above the high point of the uppermost footpath through to Steall.

– *Crossbones Crag* – several easier grade routes have been put up on this crag, which is situated in trees behind SW Buttress, at Polldubh.

– *West End Crag* – several routes have been made on this crag, which lies above and left of Sheep Fank Wall, at Polldubh.

South Ballachulish – *Crag Allan* – this 30m granite crag is reached by a forest road which leaves the Oban road 2km west of the Ballachulish Hotel. Walk along the track as far as a sign indicating a footpath to a memorial cairn. Turn right and head steeply up the hillside to the crag. The crag often remains dry in wet weather. About 10 routes have been climbed there so far.

Kentallen – *Kentallen Bay Crag* – about half a dozen routes have been completed on this crag which easily seen on the hillside above the main road.

Details of these routes will be included in the next addition of the 'Polldubh' Guide, which is being compiled by Ed Grindley. Details of new routes in the area are kept in the 'new routes' book in Nevisport.

Dumbarton Rock – G. Latter notes a free ascent of *Big Zipper* at E4, 6c on 11th September, 1984 and the first lead of *Grey Wall* at E4, 5c in the company of A. Wren on April 21st, 1984. The route recorded as *Eldorado* in SMCJ 1983 was climbed on 21st June, 1980 by G. Latter and named *Nil Desperandum*.

Auchinstarry Quarry – We have received descriptions for a number of routes in Auchinstarry Quarry; these will be included in the forthcoming Outcrops Guide.

GULLIES

It's a well-known fact of theoretical munroölogy that the height of mountains can vary, similarly all Guide book authors (and indeed users) are aware that the length of climbs can vary considerably. It seems that Gullies may also wander. Noel Williams offers the following: – 'the present description of *Surgeon's Gully* in the Lochaber and Badenoch Guide says it starts 'right of the old graveyard' – this is rather ambiguous. *Antler Gully* probably fits this description best! It is very easy to locate *Surgeon's Gully*, because a prominent stone wall leads straight up the hillside to it.' (The SMCJ for 1948 may apparently help identify the major gullies on the west side of Ben Nevis). Williams continues, 'I realise that gully climbing is rather old-fashioned these days but whilst I'm at it I should mention that *Dalness Chasm* is incorrectly labelled in the Glencoe and Glen Etive guide according to the 1:25,000 map of Glencoe. Is the OS right?' (*The Guide-book appears to be correct – New Routes Ed.*).

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

More and more Munroving – The most recent list of Compleaters is as follows:

(296) John E. Ramsay, 1983, –, 1982;
(297) Duncan MacNiven, 1983, –, –;
(298) Ian Bryce, 1983, –, –;
(299) L. J. Skuodas, 1983, –, –;
(300) *Derek G. Pyper, 1983, –, –;
(301) R. D. Whittal, 1983, –, –;
(302) Alan C. Sloan, 1983, 1983, 1983;
(303) Neil C. Cromar, 1983, –, –;
(304) E. Martin, 1983, –, –;
(305) Tom Proudfoot, 1973, –, –;
(306) *Gilbert Little, 1974, 1974, –;
(307) Donald Kenneth Walker, 1980, –, –;
(308) Roger Clarke, 1980, –, –;
(309) John Ward, 1983, –, –;
(310) Lena Margaret Carter, 1983, –, –;
(311) G. F. Burton, 1983, –, –;
(312) David Sibbald, 1983, –, –;
(313) Alastair F. MacNee, 1983, –, –;
(314) Robert Carson, 1983, 1983, –;
(315) Robert Paton, 1983, 1983, –;
(316) *Robert H. Clark, 1983, –, 1983
(317 Grahame Nicoll, 1984, –, –;
(318) *J. M. Taylor, 1984, –, –;
(319) K. P. Whyte, 1984, –, –;
(320) John Wild, 1984, –, –;
(321) Alister Sword, 1984, –, –;
(322) David Trainer, 1981, –, –;

(143) A. E. Law, has topped up and is now 1976, 1983, –. (217) J. R. M. Lubbock, (134) Colin Marsen and (288) Jim Braid are toppers who somehow were not credited with their extreme aberration in some of our published records: they should be 1976, 1982, –, 1976, 1976, – and 1982, 1982, – respectively. We have two 'furthers' (118) **Janet Clark and (205) Tom Rix who are now 1973, –, 1983 and 1980, –, 1983 respectively. (276) Gerry Knight has achieved the grand slam and is now 1982, 1982, 1983 and (96) W. G. Carter has done them twice so is now 1969, –, – and 1983, –, –.

(309) John Ward climbed almost all the Munros alone and without a car which required careful planning to mesh with the remnants of our public transport system. He attributes part of his success to being 'unmarried.' (302) Alan Sloan achieved the trinity within the same year which may be a record. He associates his munroving with that evocative tune 'Sailing By' which precedes the marine weather forecast at a quarter past midnight – heard by him on Mondays when driving home from munroving so late into the night when the heart was still as willing and the moon shone ne'er so bright. The party accompanying (306) *Gilbert Little drank two bottles of malt and subsequently collared him with an inscribed lavatory seat as he sat there flushed with success. (316) *James H. Clark suggests that Compleaters who are members of the LSCC should be accorded a double asterisk: we are happy to oblige. (318) *Mike Taylor admits cheerfully to having taken nearly 40 years from his first Munro ascent, an approach which has much to commend it. However, this time span is comfortably exceeded by (321) Alister Sword who started with Ben Lomond in 1936 and concluded on Schiehallion in 1984, accompanied (assisted?) by a band of 39 supporters.

The Unknown Munroist – The establishment of this slot has made it safe for clandestine compleaters to emerge from hiding. Both (304) Tom Proudfoot and the above-mentioned (306) *Gilbert Little are Compleaters who have aged ten years since their indiscretion. The record for reticence, however, goes to (237) *Has Oldham who this year has 'come in from the cold' to use his own words. He completed the Munros in 1969, the tops in 1972 and the furth in 1966. Moreover they were all Compleated by a sporting route e.g. Beinn a' Bhuird by *Mitre Ridge,* Lochnagar by *Eagle Ridge,* Mount Keen which offers no such problems was ascended by ski with the aid of a parachute. The Master of the Tables is so impressed by all this that he has suspended his usual malevolence and found a niche for him further up the number list! Another such who was sinned against by being ignored and has now been allocated a space is (269) E. D. Clements, 1969, –, 1982.

Those who may have detected a certain instability in some of the numberings mentioned should not feel surprised or indignant. Even (277) THE UNKNOWN MUNROIST himself is not immune (see below).

More Orogenesis – The Ordnance Survey is ever mindful of the need to prevent Compleaters from smugly resting on their laurels. With this and other things in mind it has set about re-contouring in metric form all those parts of the Highlands, mainly in the North and North West, which hitherto have been contoured in feet. The resultant reappraisal has altered several mountain heights by a metre or two. This is not altogether surprising since the fifteen or so years since the last survey was finished is quite long enough for the more restless peaks to have lurched a bit. So far only one growth point of real significance to readers of this paragraph has been identified. This is Beinn Teallach, a few miles north of the Loch Laggan dam at 362859, which has grown from 913 to 915 metres. It is thus a NEW MUNRO and all Munroists not exempted on medical or geriatric grounds are hereby summoned to re-enter the lists unless Beinn Teallach is already part of their tally. Among those who have already responded are brand new Compleaters (300) *Derek Pyper and (318) * J. M. Taylor as well as the venerable (207) *Ivan Waller who must be amongst the most elderly still to be lifting leg on the Munros. So there should be no excuses for others.

The Ordnance Survey will not complete their reassessment until 1986 and other orogenetic phenomena may be detected, so watch this space!

Polymunrosis pseudototalis – A correspondent has drawn our attention to a form of Munropathy which he believes may be endemic among Multiple Compleaters. He writes:

A friend of mine who suffers from one of the milder forms of Munrosis informed me of certain sharp practices, said to be common amongst Multiple Compleaters, which I felt should be brought to public attention. The most ignominious of these is to carry forward surplus Munros from Compleation *n* into Compleation *n + 1*. To illustrate, suppose our Munroist is attempting his first Compleation. He traverses the Aonach Eagach from Am Bodach to Sgòr nam Fiannaidh collecting 2 Munros + 2 tops towards Compleation No. 1 and subsequently returns along the ridge to Am Bodach and down to his car. On the return he notches up 2 tops and 1 Munro towards Compleation No. 2! An even more unscrupulous accountant might descend a few paces from Sgòr nam Fiannaidh in order to re-ascend and count it twice! I am sure that no Club member would indulge in this creative form of Munro accounting but feel that future sufferers from the disease should be warned against these moral pitfalls.

Lest there be any doubt we state here without equivocation: The True Polymunroist will wipe the slate clean after each Compleation and start his new round from scratch.

Munrosis totoyoyoensis – This extreme variation of Munrosis vulgaris or common compleating was first described by Cohen (*SMCJ, 1979, xxxi, 423*). No case has yet been reported but it remains an interesting possibility. In this condition only one Munro is ascended on each trip from sea level. Two hundred and seventy six separate expeditions on foot each starting from the seaweed would be formidable achievement. Then, of course, you would have to round off by doing the tops and the furth that would be the very *ne plus ultra* of Munropathy namely Panmunrosis totoyoyoensis. Better hurry if you want to be No. 1 on the list!

A new Corbett – A new Corbett has been discovered by Jim Duguid. Interestingly it is in the same general area as the still undiscovered Ben Feskineth (SMCJ, 1981, xxxii, 131). This region is obviously unstable and would be worth checking every now and then to see what's happening; one day the missing Ben itself might be discovered. Here are two excerpts from the correspondence. First, the Master of the Tables announces the news to the world:

'The news came this morning in a letter from a correspondent. At 456453 in Sheet 51 there is an unnamed hill with a contour height of 686m. However, the 1:25,000 gives the name Sron a' Choire Chnapanich with a height – wait for it – of no less than 837. The cols are all right so it qualifies. But how did the O.S. manage to produce such an error when the survey was done originally, almost 500 feet out.'

Duguid replies to some of the Master's queries thus:

'I have re-checked my maps since you telephoned. There is no doubt that on the 1:25,000 the name 'Sron a' Choire Chnapanich' applies to the 837. summit. It is printed in bold writing, similar to the adjacent Meall Buidhe and Stuchd an Lochain, and appears close to the summit. 'Creag Doire nan Nathrach' is in smaller print and lies close to the crag markings 0.6km to the South-west.

I don't believe the Ordnance Survey did any serious work in this area between 1870 and 1970! My 1906 one-inch Sheet 46 shows exactly the same contours as do the 1927 and 1956 editions. In each case there is a neat 2,250 feet contour. The name 'Creag Doire nan Nathrach' appears on all editions close to the crag markings. (These markings changed from a cliff in the 1907 sheet to the more scattered crags in 1927 and these are unchanged up to the 1:50,000 First series.)'

Six Tops Langlauf. – Raymond Simpson has sent us an account of his completion together with Rob Ferguson of what has clearly become one of the GREAT DAYS that the Cairngorms have to offer. The date was Easter Sunday, when good snow cover was combined with very fine weather and continuous sunshine. For the record, the timetable and route were as follows:

21.00	–	Derry Gate – dark, wet snow and flooding.
Midnight	–	Corrour Bothy, 5 hours sleep.
05.35	–	Left Corrour, hard frost with a clear sky.
07.15	–	Cairntoul, ascent on foot, 10 minute stop.
08.45	–	Braeriach, 10 minute stop.
09.30	–	Lairig Ghru, descent by Coire Ruadh, south of Sron na Lairig, 20 minute stop.
10.50	–	Ben Macdui, ascent on foot.
11.50	–	Cairngorm, 15 minute stop.
13.10	–	Fords of Avon, on foot for half mile from Saddle, 1 hour rest.
16.10	–	N. Top, Beinn a' Bhuird.
16.30	–	The Sneck, 10 minute stop.
17.25	–	Ben Avon summit, on foot up to Ben Avon plateau, 1 hour rest.
18.30	–	Allt an Sneachda, skis taken off, 10 minute rest, descent via Clach a' Cleirich, difficult crossing of Dubh Ghleann stream, then by Clais Fhearnaig.
21.00	–	Derry Gate – all downhills on ski. Nordic style skis used.

The rewards of opportunism – Dave Snadden reports the ascent of a mountain of the moon, last January:

'A combination of a full moon, clear skies, a frost and snow clad hills can result in the emergence of streaks of lunacy in those who had previously considered themselves sane. Thursday 19 January 1984 was one such night and at 11 p.m. I found myself standing at Garbat in the company of my wife Moira, Alan Munro, Calum Anton and John Hawco.

'We donned skis and ascended the forest track that leads to the long gully which descends from Tom a' Choinnich. We climbed this gully and contoured round the summit to the col immediately North of Ben Wyvis. A short ascent found us at the Ben Wyvis Trig. point at 2 a.m. We were rewarded with ghostly views of the Fannichs and other hills to the west, while to the east were the unusual sight of the scattered townships of Easter Ross.

'We then experienced a beautiful ski run down the gully of the Allt Bealaich Mhoir and eventually down through the forest to Garbat for 4 a.m. The whole traverse from North to South was completed in perfect snow conditions. There was little wind and the moon gave more than adequate visibility. The cold was extreme, the temperature at sea level that night being – 19°C. The only minor problem we experienced was that one of the cars had frozen solid while we were on the mountain and we had to tow it home.'

Translocation of Ling Hut – A member who is also a reader of the Woman's Own has drawn our attention to an advertisement in that prestigious publication which shows the Ling Hut in full colour. The blurb avers the hut is the home of Rory McTavish, that it is located on 'a remote island' and that Mr McTavish will soon be receiving from the mainland a new kind of porridge made of wheat and nuts and raisins (yuk). The Club legal advisers are looking into the possibility of royalties.

Himalayas at risk – There has been considerable publicity in recent years about the concern felt by many people on the future of the Himalayan environment, under threat from over-population, over-grazing and deforestation as well as the impact of trekkers and climbers. One does not have to look very hard for evidence of these problems and appreciate the difficulties which face the local people and their governments in trying to overcome them. The Himalayas are not the only mountains with problems, and after a meeting in Kathmandu in October 1982 the *UIAA General Assembly* adopted a series of principles and guidelines as a programme for action to which I think we should all give careful consideration.

THE KATHMANDU DECLARATION ON MOUNTAIN ACTIVITIES

1. There is an urgent need for effective protection of the mountain environment and landscape.
2. The flora, fauna and natural resources of all kinds need immediate attention, care and concern.
3. Actions designed to reduce the negative impact of man's activities on mountains should be encouraged.
4. The cultural heritage and the dignity of the local population are inviolable.
5. All activities designed to restore and rehabilitate the mountain world need to be encouraged.
6. Contrasts between mountaineers of different regions and countries should be increasingly encouraged in the spirit of friendship, mutual respect and peace.
7. Information and education for improving the relationship between man and his environment should be available for wider and wider sections of society.
8. The use of appropriate technology for energy needs and the proper disposal of waste in the mountain areas are matters of immediate concern.
9. The need for more international support – governmental as well as non-governmental – to the developing mountain countries, for instance, in matters of ecological conservation.
10. The need for widening access to mountain areas in order to promote their appreciation and study should be unfettered by political considerations.

KINDRED CLUBS

ONE reason for including material of this kind in the Journal is so that a record of this sector of mountaineering is maintained, albeit incompletely. It is illustrative of the way in which details may be forgotten or misremembered unless committed to print that last year's item about the Jacobites Mountaineering Club has brought forth the following amendment from Martin Plant, a founder member.

Setting the Jacobite record straight –

'Although non-sexist and providing an alternative to the JMCS in Edinburgh, the Jacobites was in no sense a 'breakaway' from the JMCS. Secondly, the imputation of ignorance of history is untrue and the name 'Jacobites' was chosen simply because it was Scottish and the founders liked it. Thirdly, Dougal Haston, Joe Tasker and Pete Boardman were among well known lecturers brought to Edinburgh by the Jacobites, but not Doug Scott. To complete the record, a major contribution to the establishment of the Jacobites was made by Jock Young, John Graham Willie Jeffrey and Allan Davidson, all Scottish climbers.'

GLASGOW GLENMORE CLUB

By Harrold Thomson

THE Glasgow Glenmore Club has its origins, as the name suggests, in Glenmore Lodge (now Loch Morlich Youth Hostel), the then Scottish Council of Physical Recreation (now Scottish Sports Council) Outdoor Centre. At the time of the Club's founding in 1954, Glenmore Lodge ran chiefly holiday courses for adults and courses lasting one week or longer for school children. These courses, as well as giving tuition in basic mountaincraft, also included sailing, canoeing, ski-ing and field studies at appropriate seasons. When the Club was founded, therefore, its object (although not formally adopted) was to enable people who had attended courses to continue the activities begun at the Lodge. One of the chief instigators of the Club was the then Glasgow Director of Education, H. Stewart Mackintosh.

As a direct result of the above, the original members were a mixture of voluntary instructors from the Lodge (one of them being the Club's first chairman, Jock Nimlin) and ex-course members, male and female, including a fair number of school children.

For the first few years, the content of outdoor and indoor meets reflected the Club's origins, consisting mainly of simple hillwalking, rock climbing and also occasional canoeing, sailing and ski-ing weekends, mostly organised with public transport in view, with meetings at bus and train stations. A fair amount of emphasis at that time was given to training some of the younger members, who were included as associate members (15-18), with outings specially for them. A small nucleus of keen members formed and days or weekends were spent by them in the hills outside official club meets, partly hillwalking, but also rock climbing. Because of the Club's close association with the Education Department, through school children who had attended courses at Glenmore Lodge, the Club was given the use of a school hall free, for its indoor meetings and also very generous donations in the way of tents and climbing equipment.

The early 1960's saw a change in emphasis of the Club's activities due to an increase in car ownership, the commencement of Scottish Mountain Leadership Training and, The Duke of Edinburgh Awards Schemes and more members taking greater interest in mountains (not to mention Munros!). More and more outdoor meets thus were oriented towards the hills. About that time, the Club prepared a 'Navigation' stand, which aroused a great deal of interest, at a Mountain Safety Exhibition in the Glasgow Palace of Arts. This was later to be revised and become part of the Donald Duff Memorial Exhibition. As such, it was exhibited at several venues throughout Scotland, although the exhibition has since been further improved and now seems likely to become a static, rather than mobile, exhibition. Since then, the importance of training and safety has been reflected in the fair proportion of indoor and occasional outdoor meets which contain some aspect of training.

Around the same time a definite pattern emerged for meetings – twice monthly indoor meetings, once monthly weekend and once monthly day meets. This appears to have been a successful format, as this pattern has remained unchanged since then, although often the day meets become weekends for some!

The Club became a member of the ASCC (later to become the Mountaineering Council of Scotland) in 1964 and since about 1970 has had one of our Club members on the Executive Committee of that body, the present Treasurer of the MC of S being a Club member.

In the 1970's, it was found necessary to limit the membership, as it was becoming a major practical and safety problem for the committee to organise weekend meets with attendance of about 50, and occasionally more. After considerable thought and debate, a waiting list was instituted and has been retained, off and on, since then.

The Club is a member of the Mountain Bothies Association, the Scottish Rights of Way Society and Friends of Loch Lomond. Fifteen years ago the Club 'adopted' Gorton bothy and over the years, many weekends have been spent there by many different club members on regular maintenance and some more major

repairs. Sadly, it seems that this long association may require to come to an end, unless recent vandalism stops, as the land-owner considers that this bothy would be better demolished rather than encourage vandals to use it.

Being a Club open to both sexes, the social side has not been neglected and over the years, many social functions have been held, from dinner dances to barbecues, sing songs to Burns Nights – and more besides, both arranged and impromptu, not to mention congenial evenings spent in hostelries over the length and breadth of Scotland. One tradition from the old Glenmore Lodge which has survived the years is that of the Scottish Country Dancing (although hardly RSCDS standard), at present supplemented by English and American square dancing, popular and more recent innovations. No doubt the social aspect has contributed to the number of marriages which have taken place between members!! The Club's last big 'do' was its 25th anniversary, which was celebrated at the present Glenmore Lodge over a weekend, when former and present members all met, had two days on the hill, a slap-up buffet meal and an evening of dancing and general conviviality.

The Club's present strength is about 120, with a hard-working committee of nine, who are responsible for, among other things, organising a varied programme of indoor and outdoor meets. Monthly official weekend meets are held in many different places, ranging from the Lake District, Glencoe, Glen Clova and Killin to such places as Skye, Torridon and Rum on long holiday weekends, not to mention occasional 'family' weekends, when potential next generation members are welcomed. For weekends, the Club uses Youth Hostels, club huts, outdoor centres and often tents, sometimes in combination. The day meets tend to be a bit nearer home. The nucleus of the Club is often away at other weekends, in small groups.

The Club's fortnightly indoor meets, as well as including the occasional social and training evenings, consist mainly of talks, usually illustrated by slides, covering a wide variety of general mountaineering and related topics, for which the club owes a large debt of gratitude to the large number of speakers who have given freely of their time over the years of the Club's existence. Without them, the difficult job of arranging a varied programme of indoor meetings would have been impossible.

With a club of this size, there are naturally many varied interests with members who indulge in other aspects of the mountain scene such as ornithology, botany, photography and geology. In recent years, there has been a revival of interest in rock climbing and at the moment this seems likely to continue – the wheel appears to have turned full circle! There is also an increase in winter climbing, ski-ing and ski-mountaineering/touring. Although many members of the Club have climbed abroad independently, for the first time the Club is organising a meet in the Alps this summer, possibly a fore-runner of similar ventures.

SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN ACCIDENTS, 1983

The number of incidents this year reaches 150 and although it might be said that some of those which are reported nowadays are trivial and might have passed unrecorded in earlier years the hard fact remains that in 1983 there were more casualties in the Scottish hills than ever before, including no fewer than 28 fatalities. It seems probable that these figures reflect a continuing increase in the number of people engaging in hill walking and climbing. A brief study of the twenty year table of basic accident statistics supports this view, particularly the upward trend over the last ten years since more detailed statistics were compiled. The proportion of incidents involving hill walking as compared with climbing has remained relatively stable suggesting that the increase is in both main fields of activity.

Last year the number of casualties primarily due to natural causes such as illness is the largest ever. Perhaps this is indicative that too many people go to the hills when their physical condition is below the demands it may have to meet. The number of instances in which poor navigation played a part was unusually high last year, often the result of too casual an approach. Slips on snow and ice, often as a result of inadequate equipment or inability to use an ice axe effectively, remain a major cause of accidents. It is a pity that some of the victims had not taken the opportunity to attend the excellent weekend training courses in winter skills run by Glenmore Lodge in association with the Mountaineering Council of Scotland. More information on these can be had from either Glenmore Lodge or the M.C. of S.

The laborious task of gathering accident reports and compiling the statistics has again been undertaken by John Hinde. The case for going to the extra trouble of sending full information to John is not always accepted but it is apparent that the fuller the understanding of accident causes and trends the better the chances of reducing accidents. This is particularly true when reports of the same incident by different sources are compared, often throwing new light on the cause. Reports which do not identify location closely enough are particularly difficult to evaluate.

In addition to the mountaineering incidents Mountain Rescue Services are called on for many additional tasks and although non-mountaineering incidents are generally not included in our statistics, we have included a few incidents which may be of direct interest to readers of the Journal and identified them by an asterisk.

As always we take this opportunity to convey the appreciation of the mountaineering fraternity to all those who give their time and effort in providing the mountain rescue facilities expressed in the reports on the following pages.

SEASONAL DISTRIBUTION

	Summer	*Winter*	*Not known*	*Totals*	
Hill walking	55	31	7	94	65%
Scrambling	10			10	7%
Climbing	16	17		33	23%
Fall Running	7			7	5%
TOTALS	88	48	7	**144**	
	61%	33%	5%		

CONTRIBUTORY CAUSES OF SOME INCIDENTS

Route finding	1	Rockfall or break	3
Navigation	10	Loose vegetation	1
Separation	3	Grass ledge gave way	1
Ice Axe/Crampons	6	Avalanche	3
Slips/Stumbles	42		
on paths	9	Falls	18
on grass/rough ground	16	on rock	14
on scree	3	on snow/ice	4
on snow/ice	14	Cragfast	9
Blown over	1	Retreat from steep ground	1
River crossing	5	Benighted	10
Glissading	3		
Abseiling	1	Exhaustion/Exposure	10
Poor belaying	1	Illness	17

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION 1983

**The geographical divisions are as used for SMC District Guide Books.*

REGION	CASUALTIES (of which fatalities bracketed)				INCIDENTS Rescues			Other Call Outs			Non-Mountaineering	
	Injury	Exhaustion/Exposure Heat Exh./Frostbite	Illness	TOTAL	With Casualties	Cragfast	Lost	Overdue or Benighted	False Alarms	TOTAL INCIDENTS	Casualties	Incidents
Northern Highlands	2 (1)	–	–	2 (1)	2	1	–	–	1	4	–	2
Western Highlands	7 (1)	–	–	7 (1)	6	–	1	1	–	8	2 (2)	2
Ben Nevis	16 (3)	3	2	21 (3)	19	3	3	2	1	28	–	1
Glencoe	12 (3)	2 (2)	–	14 (5)	11	2	1	1	–	15	–	–
Other Central Highlands	11 (4)	1	–	12 (4)	11	1	–	2	1	15	1	2
Cairngorms	23 (1)	3 (1)	4	30 (2)	28	2	–	7	1	38	8 (3)	6
Southern Highlands	11 (5)	2 (1)	5 (1)	18 (7)	13	–	1	2 –	5	21	3 (1)	6
Skye	5 (1)	4	1 (1)	10 (2)	8	1	–	2	–	11	–	–
Islands	1	1	3 (2)	5 (2)	5	1	1	–	–	7	4 (4)	3
Southern Uplands	–	3	2 (1)	5 (1)	3	–	–	–	–	3	1 (1)	1
All regions 1983 Totals	88 (19)	19 (4)	17 (5)	124 (28)	106	11	7	17	9	150	19 (12)	23
1982 Totals	84 (21)	23 –	5 (4)	113 (25)	89	9	3	12	4	117	21 (10)	

TWENTY YEAR TABLE 1964-1983

TWENTY YEARS OF STATISTICS	CASUALTIES (of which fatalities bracketed)				INCIDENTS						Non-Mountaineering Casualties (of which fatalities are bracketed)	Non-Mountaineering Incidents
					Rescues		Other Call Outs					
	Injury	Exhaustion/Exposure Heat Exh./Frostbite	Illness	Total Casualties (fatalties)	Rescue with Casualties	Cragfast rescues	Lost	Overdue or Benighted	False Alarms	Total Incidents		
1983	88(19)	19(4)	17(5)	184(28)	106	11	7	17	9	150	19(12)	23
1982	84(21)	23(0)	5(4)	113(25)	89	9	3	12	4	117	21(4)	
1981	76(15)	13(3)	4(3)	93(21)	80	2	6	15	4	108	24(5)	
1980	78(17)	5(1)	9(3)	92(21)	80	6	2	16	5	109	16(4)	
1979	64(11)	10(1)	7(4)	81(16)	75	2	32		2	111		
1978	69(15)	21(0)	7(2)	97(17)	78	4	8	19	11	120		
1977	62(12)	9(0)	7(2)	78(14)	73	2	5	14	10	104		
1976	56(11)	12(4)	6(1)	74(16)	67	2	7	8	5	89		
1975	47(8)	4(1)	10(1)	61(10)	61	5	6	11	2	85		
1974	34(9)	3(0)	4(1)	41(9)	41	3	7	8	1	60		
1973	(7)		(2)	(9)	48		20			68		
1972	(14)		(4)	(18)	44	4	14			66		
1971	35(12)	12(8)		(20)			13			60		
1970	70(22)			(22)			10			80		
1969	47(11)			(11)						77		
1968	48(6)			(6)	48		11			59		
1967	59(11)			(11)	70		15			85		
1966	(15)			(15)								
1965	49(11)	9(3)		(14)			24			58		
1964	45(13)			(13)			8			45		

ACCIDENT LIST

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

JANUARY 1st to 2nd – Walker (39) cragfast when descending steep, icy slopes of nèvé and outcropping rock on north face of Spidean a' Choire Leith (Liathach).No ice-axe, crampons or torch. His companion – a chance aquaintance, also without these items except that he had borrowed crampons from two members of a party they had met on the ridge (one crampon sacrificed by each) – survived a descent by the same route and went for help. They could have gone down west by their ascent route (returning over Am Fasarinen and Mullach an Rathain) as did the party they met, but this party advised them to go north as the east route was too icy without crampons. Cragfast man reached by rescuers at 4 am in 'hellish' conditions. Walked off (roped). Very slight injury. Torridon MRT and SYHA. 192mh.

MAY 29th – Hillwalker/cyclist walking on the very rough coast path between Strath Kanaird and Achiltibuie when he fell and hurt his knee. Taken by fishing boat to Ullapool. Northern Constabulary. 7mh.

JUNE 17th – Teacher (30) with a party of students, was killed when she slipped on craggy ground. Beinn Liath Mhor, Achnashellach. Evacuated by RAF Wessex. RAF Leuchars MRT.

*AUGUST 18th – Lochinver. Pot-holer unable to locate exit of the pot. Rescued by Assynt MRT. Male (41). Northern Constabulary. 24mh.

SEPTEMBER 29th – Hillwalker (40) failed to return to his hotel at Dundonnell. MRT spoke to people who had seen him at Shenaval Bothy. Traced to Poolewe.

WESTERN HIGHLANDS

APRIL 23rd – Hillwalker continued in bad weather after two companions turned back on ridge of Five sisters of Kintail. His body found by ground searchers on April 25th on steep SW slopes of Sgùrr na Ciste Duibhe. Long fall over crags and steep ground into a gully. Fell while scrambling on steep grass and rock. Airlifted by RAF Sea King. Cairngorm, Kinloss, Kintail, Leuchars, Glenelg, Lochaber & Skye MRT's and SARDA. Over 1,000mh.

MAY 4th – Boy (14) hillwalking in Glen Shiel broke a leg crossing a burn. Airlifted. Skye & Kintail MRT. 12mh.

JULY 9th – Lower part of *The Great Ridge,* Gargh Bheinn of Ardgour. Leader (m25) fell back on to stance, cuts to thigh and back. Second (m23) fractured elbow and rope burns, went for help. Airlifted by RAF Wessex. Lochaber MRT. 8mh.

JULY 17th – Stob Coire Eassain, Ardgour (?). Male hillwalker got separated and stayed overnight on hill. Friends asked for help. Airlifted. Northern Constabulary. 6mh.

JULY 28th – Walker (59) scrambled to catch his wife, who had stumbled on steep ground. Lost footing and he fell 100 feet into a gully. Head and neck injuries. SE slopes of Meall a'Bhràghaid in Kingairloch. RAF Leuchars airlift. Lochaber MRT. 10mh.

SEPTEMBER 19th – Call out for woman tourist who took wrong turn in Strath a' Chomair and went to Suardalen Bothy. Good weather. Glenelg MRT. 12mh.

NOVEMBER 29th – Stretcher recovery of male teenage student who pulled a hamstring on steep ground east of Loch Shiel.

*DECEMBER 27th – River Sulaig, Loch Eil. Man (34) sitting on a log near the river in spate, fell in and was drowned. Search by locals and MRT. Lochaber 14mh.

DECEMBER 28th – Ardnish, Lochailort. Girl (19) returning from Peanmeanach Bothy gashed her leg badly when crossing a burn in spate. Evacuated by RAF Leuchars helicopter. Lochaber MRT. 10mh.

BEN NEVIS

JANUARY 2nd – Climber (m21) 40 feet from top of *Bob Run.* Fell 700 feet when 'whole slab gave way.' Seen by RAF Kinloss MRT. Chest and facial bruises. No fractures.

JANUARY 4th – Two climbers (m22, 19) killed in Coire na Ciste. Location not known at the time and extensive searches were carried out for months by civilians, service and police teams, including air searches. Bodies found on July 10th 1983 by Lochaber MRT – position consistent with having fallen from or over No. 3 Gully Buttress. Very large number of man-hours by teams.

JANUARY 30th – Very experienced party of two had climbed *Minus Two Gully,* then abseiled to 1st Platform of NE Buttress in good weather and snow conditions. When descending solo from 1st Platform one man (27) fell, unwitnessed by the other who found his body at the foot of the buttress. Stretchered down and then airlifted by RAF Wessex. Lochaber MRT.

JANUARY 31st – Woman course student (26) slipped or was blown over from just below the Carn Mor Dearg Arête at the Abseil Posts. Failed to brake, then lost ice-axe and broke ankle. Lochaber MRT. 80mh.

FEBRUARY 4th to 5th – Two men benighted near Nevis summit in gale and white-out after climbing *Zero Gully.* Descended next day down Five Finger Gully or thereabout. Hillwalking incident. (ages 29, 27). Lochaber MRT. 80mh.

FEBRUARY 5th to 6th – Man (22) had soloed *Zero Gully* with a roped pair. Should have joined up at summit refuge but could not find it at 13.00. Came down next day after going down on S. side, back up and finally down Tourist Track. Hill-walking incident. Lochaber MRT. 8mh.

FEBRUARY 5th to 6th – Having climbed *Minus Two Gully,* two men (26, 24) got off route in very bad weather when descending NE Buttress. Benighted on crag and got down to CIC Hut 13.00 next day. Lochaber MRT. 60mh.

FEBRUARY 13th to 14th – Benightment at Tower Gap, *Tower Ridge* (reached 21.00). Three women (27, 25, 20) on first winter route and man (36) helped from Little Tower to top of Great Tower by two lads who went for help. Lochaber MRT then assisted them to summit at first light. 90mh.

FEBRUARY 20th – Glissader (29) caught heel in snow in Red Burn and broke his ankle. Carried to Halfway Lochan by companions and then stretchered down by Lochaber MRT. 60mh.

FEBRUARY 21st – Glissader (22) *with his crampons on!* caught heel, twisted and broke ankle high up on Tourist Track. Carried down by 3 mates to 1,500 feet, then stretchered by Lochaber MRT. 24mh.

APRIL 3rd to 4th – Ill-equipped party of two (m23, f22) joined party of three men (26, 23, 21) just below Nevis summit in a blizzard as they thought they might get lost. Descending from summit, the combined party took a compass bearing well to the SW to avoid cliffs! They went over Carn Dearg SW and then got cragfast and benighted above and slightly E of *Surgeon's Gully.* Lochaber MRT went over Carn Dearg but got the rescuees airlifted by RAF Leuchars because of their poor gear and tricky position. 150mh.

APRIL 5th – Glissader (23) let axe slip, stabbing armpit and severing his artery. Descending Abseil Posts in party of three. Airlifted by RAF Leuchars. Lochaber MRT. 3mh.

MAY 27th – Man (68) walked up Tourist Track to 1,500 feet. Cold caused him to black out twice. Walked down with assistance. Lochaber MRT. 6mh.

JUNE 17th to 18th – Three youths (28, 22, 18) chose *Gardyloo Gully* because it looked easier than *Tower Gully*! (less snow fracture lines). At steeper snow went left on to rocks and got cragfast. Clear night and red flares seen in Fort William. Whistles heard from summit. Lochaber MRT airlifted by RAF Leuchars, roped down and hauled them up. One had early hypothermia. 83mh.

JUNE 20th – Boy (11) separated from party, with permission of uncle. Above Youth Hostel and went to Nevis summit. Descended via Meall an Suidhe and fell 100 feet when climbing down Achintee Gully. Fractured skull and cuts. Shouts for help heard by passers by. No equipment. Airlifted by RAF Leuchars and Lochaber MRT. 60mh.

JULY 20th to 21st – Couple (c.25) said they were climbing Ben Nevis, but went to Iona instead! False alarm. Lochaber MRT. 12mh.

JULY 21st – Woman (45) collapsed from heat on Nevis Tourist Track. Slight arm injury. RAF Leuchars helicopter evacuation. Lochaber MRT. 3mh.

JULY 29th – Woman (47) fell on Red Burn path (Tourist Track short-cut). Bad scalp cut and bruises. Airlifted by RAF Leuchars. Lochaber MRT. 15mh.

AUGUST 7th – Youth (19) slipped on Tourist Track and twisted ankle. Airlifted. Northern Constabulary. 3mh.

AUGUST 14th – Man (c. 20) stumbled on Tourist Track. Ankle injury. RAF Leuchars helicopter used – in area anyway. Lochaber MRT. 1mh.

AUGUST 20th – Local man (37) after successfully completing a climb at Polldubh, reclimbed it to remove pitons. Ran out of strength 10 feet from the top and fell 80 feet breaking ribs and puncturing lung. Dry rock. Northern Constabulary and RAF Leuchars MRT. 16mh.

SEPTEMBER 4th – Ben Nevis Race. Cold conditions with gale and cloud base at 2,400 feet. Total of 4 runners assisted by RAF Kinloss and Lochaber MRT's. Two walked down with help and warming up, one of whom had scalp and mouth cuts. Two carried down from near summit to tracked vehicle at Halfway Lochan, one of whom had fallen, and both had exposure. 109mh.

SEPTEMBER 4th to 5th – Males (42, 29, 20, 19). Four CB radio users on sponsored 60 hour stay on Ben Nevis. Frightened in fog, heavy rain and gales which blew tents down. Lochaber MRT called out because they were unsure of their descent route. 6mh.

SEPTEMBER 15th – Man (55) fell on Tourist Track and broke ankle. Stretchered down. Lochaber MRT. 26mh.

OCTOBER 19th to 20th – Two men (22, 21) benighted at Tower Gap. It snowed at night and they could not complete *Tower Ridge*. RAF Lossiemouth aircraft picked up four Lochaber MRT and then winched up the two climbers. 18mh.

GLENCOE

JANUARY 8th to 10th – Three climbers did not return from Buachaille Etive Mòr on 8th January. No route plan left. Late on 9th a rucksack was found in Lagangarbh Coire 1,000 foot below ridge. Searches on 10th located one man (23) killed outright from falling over a 500 feet buttress, and two men (22, 23) dead from exposure immediately above the buttress. Primary cause probably difficult navigation in desperate weather, as they were not far off normal route down Coire na Tulaich. Even if they had carried survival gear they might not have survived such weather. Glencoe and RAF Leuchars MRT's. RAF helicopter and 3 SARDA dogs. 410mh.

FEBRUARY 14th – Fall down *Chancellor Gully*. Unroped climber (22) in party of two traversing Ridge of Am Bodach (Aonach Eagach) ascending small face, fell off, rolled over edge and fell 1,000 feet to foot of snow field. Carried, but did not wear, a helmet. Serious head and arm injuries. Crampons(?). Airlifted by RAF Wessex. Glencoe MRT. 32mh.

FEBRUARY 22nd – McCartney's Gully. Leader (20) fall of 300 feet from top of E. Face Gearr Aonach stopped by belay holding. Leader, with minor cuts, climbed back up to second, who tried to lead and found it too difficult and decided to abseil. Second (20) fell 700 feet because abseil rope was not properly secured, sustaining serious back injuries. Helmet badly damaged. Leader left on climb without rope. Airlifted by RAF. Glencoe MRT. 76mh.

FEBRUARY 21st – Two hillwalkers in Lost Valley. Girl (19) slipped and fell. Cuts and bruising. Northern Constabulary.

FEBRUARY 22nd – Girl (19) unrope and without crampons, slipped on ice descending out of Lost Valley. Fell 250 feet into soft snow breaking her arm. Most inexperienced of party of 11. Airlifted by RAF. Glencoe team were alerted for the previous rescue in the same area.

MARCH 26th – Party of two, not well equipped. Hillwalker (54) killed descending from Aonach Eagach to L. Achtriochtan between Meall Dearg and Stob Coire Leith (Poucher's Descent). He fell 180 feet from the top of 'The Ramp' in deteriorating weather. Airlift RAF Wessex. Glencoe MRT. 14mh.

APRIL 5th to 6th – Two male climbers (25, 24) starting from Lagangarbh at noon were benighted on *D Gully Buttress,* Buachaille Etive Mòr. Reached mountain summit next day and declined assistance from RAF helicopter and Glencoe and RAF Leuchars MRT's. 167mh.

JULY 16th – Aonach Dubh. E. Buttress, W. Face *(Big Top).* Climber (25) fell 120 feet when leading on dry rock. His rope held but his last two running belays gave way, and he smashed into rocks on the way down, sustaining fatal head injuries. No helmet. Lowered by Glencoe MRT. 27mh and evacuated by RAF helicopter. 12mh.

JULY 24th – Party of two men climbing *Clachaig Gully.* One (41) fell 50 feet and broke arm. Northern Constabulary. 4mh.

AUGUST 13th – Red Chimney pitch of *Clachaig Gully.* Solo climber (m) fell 60 feet on dry rock. Fractured clavicle. Stretchered out by Glencoe MRT. 28mh and airlifted by RAF. 8mh.

AUGUST 31st – 'Poucher's Route' N. Face Aonach Dubh (Ref. 151561). Inexperienced man (35) fell on scree and broke arm. Good weather. Helicopter used. Glencoe MRT. 20mh.

SEPTEMBER 7th – Two men (29, 26) cragfast at foot of Red Chimney pitch of *Clachaig Gully.* Good weather but wet rock. Escorted off by Glencoe MRT. 42mh.

SEPTEMBER 10th – *Archer Ridge,* E. Face Aonach Dubh. Lead climber (30) fell 12 feet when 50 feet from top of climb breaking his leg. Second (m16) was thereby made cragfast. Dry rock. Overcast and strong wind. Casualty raised off crag, then evacuated by helicopter. Glencoe MRT. 48mh.

OCTOBER 2nd to 3rd – Two men (28, 25) cragfast and benighted at foot of Red Chimney pitch of *Clachaig Gully.* Heavy rain and strong wind. Plenty of hardware but no waterproofs or torches. Glencoe MRT roped them and pulled them out of gully on to path whence they walked down. 23mh.

DECEMBER 30th – 4 men (22, 21, 21, 19) traversed Aonach Eagach E. to W. and attempted to find *Clachaig Gully* path for descent in a 'white-out.' They got benighted off route and torch signalled for aid. Escorted down by Glencoe MRT. 64mh.

OTHER CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

JANUARY 23rd – Man (26) scrambling without crampons on main ridge of Ben Cruachan, between summit and Drochaid Glas. Nèvé lying on boiler-plate slabs. Fell 400 feet. Compound tib/fib fracture. Companions summoned aid. Stretcher lower and carry. Dumbarton and Oban Police teams. 71mh.

FEBRUARY 13th – Man (44) whose crampons were lost on the climb, roped to his son (15) who started off without crampons, were cragfast on steep, glazed snow on headwall of SE Coire of Stob Gabhar. During a calm night a rescuer abseiled to them with spare crampons, then all three climbed to the top of the corrie. Subject rescued twice previously. Oban Police MRT and Dumbarton Police. 220mh.

FEBRUARY 14th – Man (44) slipped on fairly steep nèvé descending N. Ridge of Stob Ban (Mamores) at about 2,200 feet. Slid 150 feet and stopped at a boulder. Ice axe punctured lower abdomen. Broken clavicle. Stretchered off at night by Lochaber MRT. 60mh.

FEBRUARY 26th – Descent of ridge from Cruachan summit to Meall Cuinail by party of eight men (some carying crampons). When 200 feet below summit, three uncramponned men slipped on nèvé, and one managed to brake. Next two in line also fell on their backs, slid 20 to 30 feet (wearing nylon waterproofs with minimal friction co-efficient) then over the lip of Coire Dearg and fell 150 feet striking rocks. Unable to brake with ice axes. One (22) killed and the other (20) femur fracture and humerus dislocation. Softer snow in corrie made stretcher lowers and evacuations easier. Helicopter unable to operate in darkness. Dumbarton and Oban Police MRT's. 136mh.

MAY 14th – RAF MRT member (m26) sustained broken arm and serious abdominal injuries from a 90 feet fall when a grass ledge gave way. *Rib Direct* Creag Dubh, Newtonmore. Was he on a MR exercise? Airlifted by RAF Sea King. Glenmore Lodge and Cairngorm MRT's. 18mh.

MAY 30th – Army cadet (15) suffered mild heat exhaustion near Beinn Sgulaird, Appin area. Rescue messenger passed numerous private 'phones to get to a kiosk. Strathclyde Police MRT's. 33mh.

MAY 30th – Glen Etive. Location not known. Man (46) lost his handhold and fell 40 feet. Broken clavicle and pelvis. Northern Constabulary. 64mh.

JUNE 21st – Youth (17) stumbled near Steall Waterfall in Glen Nevis. Stretchered off with ankle injury by Lochaber MRT. 15mh.

JULY 2nd Man and woman (27, 26) overdue on Meall nan Eun (above Clashgour, Black Mount). Experienced leader had gone on to do another Munro. They got on to steep ground descending in worsening weather (heavy rain) and wisely retreated upwards to find an easier way down. Oban Police MRT. 6mh.

JULY 16th to 17th – Long hillwalk (Nevis, Aonachs, Grey Corries). Two went on ahead and separated from third male (c. 21). Two searched hill and two bothies then reported him missing next day. Found in good shape near Luib Eilt House. RAF Sea King. Lochaber MRT. 16mh.

SEPTEMBER 9th – Creag Dubh. Girl (18) climbing when she fell 40 feet. Cuts and bruising. Reported as Creag Meagaidh, but presume Newtonmore. Northern Constabulary. 4mh.

SEPTEMBER 24th – Hillwalker (f62) from party of 9 slightly off route descending W. Face of Aonach Mor. They were south of the indefinite ridge which leads to the high bealach connecting with Carn Mor Dearg. Stumbled and fell over outcrop, sustaining fatal head injuries. Recovered by RAF Sea King. Lochaber MRT. 3mh.

She had previously been airlifted from the Cairngorms with an ankle injury (May 22nd 1983) and she had also been recently injured in a Land Rover Safari in Kenya.

OCTOBER – 16th – False alarm. Search of an area in Glen Nevis when a sack containing clothing and food was found by a walker. Lochaber MRT. 28mh.

DECEMBER 31st – Probably upper Glen Nevis or Amhainn Rath (Loch Treig). Nine hillwalkers crossing a spate burn. Two men (23, 21) swept away and drowned. Bodies recovered downstream. Northern Constabulary. 16mh.

CAIRNGORMS

JANUARY 2nd – Hillwalker (20) on Fiacaill Coire an t-Sneachda stumbled on hard snow during a gale dislocating his knee. Two doctors failed to reduce dislocation. Airlift by RAF Sea King. Cairngorm and Glenmore Lodge MRT's. 4mh.

JANUARY 5th to 6th – Two hillwalkers (m both 18) left camp at Loch Avon at 11.00 to reach Lairig Ghru by Ben Macdui. Snowholed with full survival gear after encountering steep slope in darkness. Next day (6th) one slipped. Minor injuries and frostbite, but got to Sinclair Hut. Airlifted out by RAF Sea King. Cairngorm and Glenmore MRT's. 8mh.

JANUARY 12th – Climbing instructor (m22) walking in Coire an t-Sneachda went over on ankle, injuring it. Flown out by RAF Sea King.

JANUARY 23rd – Man (32) course student slipped on snow and fell into boulders. RAF Sea King. Cairngorm MRT.

JANUARY 29th – Avalanche. Large area of ice veneer came away from underlying snow. Ankle injury to one member of Tayside MRT on exercise. (m36) 100 feet fall arrested by axe braking and grabbing handrail. Easy Gully of Winter Corrie of Dreish.

FEBRUARY 6th – Troop of 17 soldiers overdue on Lairig Ghru crossing (N to S) in snow and northerly gale. Grampian Police and Braemar MRT's. 20mh. Found by Snow Trac at Derry Lodge.

FEBRUARY 10th – Man (22) sprained ankle in *The Vent* Coire an Lochain. Held by rope. Crampon caught on ice and twisted ankle. Northern Constabulary. 4mh.

FEBRUARY 17th – Party of four ascending *Pinnacle Gully.* Man (34) caught in windslab avalanche and fell 1,000 feet tearing knee ligaments. Northern Constabulary. 4mh.

FEBRUARY 21st – Leader (m28) fell from cornice of *Daydream,* Coire an Lochain. Slip or windslab avalanche(?). No runners. Stopped by rope but femur fractured. Second (m29) cragfast. Cliff lower by Glenmore Lodge and Cairngorm MRT's.- Airlift by RAF Sea King. 156mh.

MARCH 17th or 18th? – Barefoot body of male hillwalker (27) found near Loch Einich. Exposure?

APRIL 2nd to 3rd – Hillwalker (m35) benighted at head of Water of Caiplich descending from Barns of Bynack. Off course (map blew away). Could not return directly into northerly gales and heavy snowfall. Survived night in snow trench with space blanket – he would probably have been better equipped with a polythene bag. Found and rescued by RAF Sea King. Cairngorm and Glenmore Lodge MRT's. SARDA. 82mh.

*APRIL 16th – Cross-country Motorcyclist (m19) failed to retun home. Searches of Sidlaw Hills on April 20th and 24th. Police and Tayside MRT's. Also RAF helicopter. 189mh.

APRIL 30th – *Larch Tree Wall,* Red Craig, Glen Clova. Leader (m25) finishing route slipped on 'easy bit at the top' and fell 50 feet. Stopped by chock belay. Fractured jaw and cheekbone. Helmet split by impact. Rescued by other club members using MR post equipment.

MAY 13th – Corndavon area of Invercauld Estate. Professional ornithologist (m36) reported overdue because of misunderstanding. False alarm. Search by Grampian Police and Braemar MRT's. 57mh.

MAY 22nd – Woman (62) sprained ankle crossing a burn near Bynack Stables Bothy. Evacuated by RAF Sea King. Cairngorm and Glenmore Lodge MRT's. Tracked vehicle. 6mh. This lady was killed on Aonach Mor on September 24th 1983 (see-Central Highlands).

MAY 28th to 29th – Man (62) lost use of legs at Pool of Dee, Lairig Ghru, and bivouacked using borrowed gear, but suffered exhaustion/exposure. One friend stayed with him while others got off the hill, some in poor shape. Rescue by stretcher carry and Terri tracked vehicle which got beyond Sinclair Hut. RAF helicopter. Cairngorm and Glenmore Lodge MRT's. 150mh.

MAY 29th – Cliff rescue at Nigg, Aberdeen. Boy (14) cragfast when watching (?) gulls. HM Coastguard, firemen, RNLI.

JUNE 2nd – Glen Luibeg. Separate incidents in same large party on schools expedition. Boy (15) suffering slight hypothermia. Male teacher (36) slipped on muddy path twisting knee. Both evacuated by Argo Cat. Grampian Police and Braemar MRT's. 28mh.

JUNE 12th – Man (38) from party of seven in Lairig Ghru had severe stomach pains at Corrour Bothy. Evacuated by RAF Sea King. Diagnosed in hospital as 'stomach upset' and discharged within the hour. Grampian Police and Braemar MRT's. 20mh.

JUNE 15th – Lurchers Crag. Man (22) struck by dislodged boulder. Broken foot bones.

JUNE Woman (34) twisted ankle at Pools of Dee but walked out to Derry Lodge. Messenger had reported that she had heat exhaustion so RAF wessex was called out. Grampian Police and Braemar MRT's. 25mh.

JUNE 18th-Man (28) descending from Braeriach into Lairig Ghru by a 900 feet snow patch, fell 600 feet to the foot of it striking boulders on the way down. Bruising and deep cut to abdomen. Walked over a mile then airlifted by Wessex summoned for previous incident.

JUNE 30th – Man (62) walking on Carn Ban Mor, Feshie Hills suffered mild heart attack. Airlifted. Northern Constabulary. 3mh.

JULY 13th – Woman (59) slipped on a steep slope in Lairig Ghru and broke tibia. Northern Constabulary. 3mh.

JULY 25th – Woman (69) walked to Ptarmigan Restaurant and had a mild heart attack. Airlifted. Northern Constabularly. 4mh.

JULY 31st – River Findhorn crags ¼ mile above Dulsie Bridge. Man (22) climbing fell into river, injuring leg. Swam down to sandy beach below bridge. Stretcher winched up to road. Police, firemen, ambulance.

AUGUST 2nd – Woman (31) slipped on snow location(?) somewhere in Cairngorms. Fell 15 feet and struck a boulder breaking ankle. Airlifted. Northern Constabulary. 3mh.

AUGUST 16th – Hillwalker (m22) overdue in Cairngorms location(?). Glenmore and Cairngorm MRT's found him.

AUGUST 16th – Rock climbing student (m17) injured (clavicle fracture and semi-conscious) by fall on Cuticle Crag, Craig-y-Barns, Dunkeld. Climbing belt of belayer opened up allowing karabiner, stitch plate and rope to fall off. (Buckle-through and feed-back type belt).

SEPTEMBER 18th – Gaick Pass. Man (29) and woman (56) underestimated time for hillwalk, sheltered at Sronphadruig Lodge. Traced by Police. Northern Constabulary. 8mh.

SEPTEMBER 27th – Man (34) hillwalking suffering from hypoglycaemia. Rescued by Land Rover. Cairngorms. Northern Constabulary. 3mh.

OCTOBER 2nd – Teacher (m28) leading party of children through Lairig Ghru. Bad weather delayed return. Northern Constabulary. 6mh.

NOVEMBER 26th – Two boys (13, 12) airlifted in darkness by RAF Sea King. Quartzite sea cliffs just E. of Findochty, Banffshire. Said they climbed out of Three Mouth Cave because they were trapped by the tide. Cragfast but others escaped along beach. HM Coastguard.

DECEMBER 18th – Hillwalker (21) without torch, separated from his companion (without map) on Sron na Lairig and went over Braeriach. Companion reported him missing. Found at Sinclair Hut by route search with dog. Cairngorm MRT and Police. 9mh.

DECEMBER 26th – Lone hillwalker (32) fell and injured his knee. Walked to Coire Cas Car Park. Northern Constabulary. 1mh.

DECEMBER 26th – Lochnagar. Two hillwalkers descending steep nèvé on E. side of Cuidhe Crom without ice axes in clear frosty weather. Man (60) slid 60 feet and hit boulders suffering compound fracture of coccyx. Woman (33) wearing instep crampons and following him, shouted then slid down also. He grabbed her in passing but was unable to hold on and she fell further to her death. He walked to Spittal of Glenmuick. She was evacuated by RAF helicopter. Grampian Police and Braemar MRT's. 60mh.

DECEMBER 30th – Woman (21) being instructed in use of ice axe, slid 150 feet. location(?). Facial abrasions. Northern Constabulary. 3mh.

DECEMBER 30th – Woman (27) and man (25) benighted on hill. Found by Police dog handler at Sinclair Hut. 4mh.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

JANUARY 29th to 30th – Party of 4 descending slopes of hard snow and ice. The experienced member was cutting steps down and only one of the party had crampons. When 150 feet below the summit one fell and may have dislodged another. Both fell 400 feet. One was killed outright (m18) and the other (m19) seriously injured. Night evacuation by stretcher lower, carry and RAF Wessex airlift. Killin and Lomond MRT's. 313mh.

FEBRUARY 6th – Large party on West Highland Way near Crianlarich. Killin MRT called out for woman epileptic (37) who recovered and walked off. 10mh.

APRIL 3rd – Hillwalker (53) broke leg in stumble in rain and mist on a path in Glen Fruim. Dumbarton Police MRT.

APRIL 19th to 20th – Two men attempting Stobinian and Ben More from Balquhidder side. No ice axes or crampons. Bodies (46, 45) found on E. Face Stobinian next day and lowered down by Killin MRT. Evacuated by helicopter. One possibly fell through cornice and the other fell attempting rescue. Killin and SARDA. 273mh.

MAY 9th – Malicious report of tourist (30) missing on Ben Ledi. Search negative. Killin MRT. 40mh.

MAY 11th – Remains of an unknown man were found by a shepherd at about 2,000 feet on the W. slopes of Beinn Odhar, north of Tyndrum. Strathclyde Police MRT's. The man had been dead for several years. 90mh.

MAY 19th – False alarm. Schoolgirl believed she saw her friend fall over a crag on Ben Venue, Trossachs. Killin MRT. 2mh.

MAY 20th – Exhausted boy (11) from large party camping on Ben Ledi became cold and unwell. Stretchered out and detained in hospital overnight. Killin MRT. 48mh.

MAY 27th – Man (37) died near summit of Meall na Dige (a top of Stobinian). History of heart complaints. Killin MRT. 60mh.

MAY 30th – Annual Ben Lomond Climb. Boy (11) in event sprained ankle (Doc Marten's boots). Girl (11) from a different party sprained ankle (welly boots). Both stretchered off by Lomond MRT.

JUNE 5th – Two youths (19, 17) without map and compass were lost and overdue in Glen Finglas attempting Brig o' Turk to Balquhidder path. Returned – unknown to them – to start where they were found by Killin MRT. 11mh.

JULY 24th – Boy (13) suffering from heat exhaustion on Ben Our (NW shoulder of Ben Vorlich) Lochearnhead. Search needed because wrong map ref. was given. Stretchered off. Killin MRT. 35mh.

SEPTEMBER 11th – False alarm. Search of summit crags of Ben Lomond after informant saw a man descend a gully and then heard a scream. Lomond MRT 300mh. SARDA approx. 60mh.

SEPTEMBER 16th to 17th – Man (84) overdue for two nights on daily walk on Weem Hill, Aberfeldy. Stumbled and lost amongst trees. No physical injury, but unable to get up. Rescued by stretcher carry. Police and Tayside MRT's. 104mh.

*OCTOBER 19th – Casualty (26) was alone, but it is believed he slipped on wet rocks when photographing Falls of Leny, Callander. Found drowned by night search of river bank. Killin MRT. 18mh.

OCTOBER 22nd – Karrimor International Mountain Marathon. Three separate incidents on Ben Vane. Female (23) slipped. Steep grass and rock. Broken ankle. Male (20) slipped on steep grass and boulders. Twisted leg. Male (19) slipped descending steep grass. Sprained ankle. All carried off by stretcher. It is fortunate that the weather that weekend was much better than that of the weekends either side, because of the large numbers competing with scanty gear. Killin MRT. 32mh.

OCTOBER 30th – Hillwalker (m44) at about 1,500 feet NN 369007, west of and below the crest of the S. Ridge, Ben Lomond. Went missing in 'the Loch Lomond area' on October 30th wearing good walking boots, but there was no MR search as no one knew where to start looking. Body found by passers by on December 28th. No boots found. Post mortem suggested a fall had punctured chest and he died from exposure. Lomond MRT and SARDA. 110mh.

NOVEMBER 12th – NW Face of Meall Buidhe (Rannoch Moor). Experienced man (59) walking from Beinn a' Chreachain to Beinn Achalladair stumbled and slid over cliff edge on to steep loose scree. He was not reached by companion who went off for help. He had to go all the way to Crianlarich because of a major 'phone fault. Night search in mist unsuccessful. Dead man found next day by RAF Leuchars helicopter. Strathclyde Police (Oban and Dumbarton) and Glencoe MRT's. 99mh.

JANUARY 31st, 1984 – Hillwalker (m76) walking along railway track at Auch viaduct near Tyndrum in storm conditions. Struck and killed by train approaching unheard from behind.

SKYE

APRIL 7th to 8th – Man (22) benighted on Sgùrr na Banachdich in snow and ice. Made his own way down next day. Ill-equipped. Northern Constabulary. 26mh.

MAY 19th – Am Bhasteir. Man (26) fell 60 feet when a handhold gave way, breaking both ankles and both heels. Northern Constabulary. Skye MRT. 66mh.

JUNE 7th – Man (28) fell 9 feet on Sron na Ciche breaking ankle. Northern Constabulary. 2mh.

JULY 27th – Hillwalker (45) with his wife, *The Table* near the base of the Needle, Quiraing, N. Skye suffered an epileptic fit. Died in hospital August 1st. Airlift by RAF helicopter. Skye MRT and ambulancemen. 2mh.

JULY 27th to 28th – Glac Mhòr, Sgùrr a' Mhadaidh. Two climbers belayed to a rock which dislodged and bruised one (m24) on the head and arms. It took time to raise the alarm and the other (m16) suffered from exposure. Skye MRT. 161mh.

AUGUST 11th – Two males (33, 14) exhausted, *Eastern Gully,* Sron na Ciche. Evacuated by Skye MRT. Descent in darkness and bad weather. 55mh.

AUGUST 25th – Bidein Druim nan Ramh. Man (35) killed. Fell 40ft into a gully when a handhold gave way. He rolled further down the gully. Companion got help. Airlifted by RAF Sea King. Skye MRT. 35mh.

SEPTEMBER 24th – Sgùrr Dubh Mor. Man (35) fell 150 feet. Broken neck, cuts, bruises. Airlift by RAF helicopter. Skye MRT. 20mh.

OCTOBER 18th to 19th – Teacher (m35) and 7 boys plus 2 team leaders cut off by spate burns at Coruisk Hut. Found own way back. RN helicopter used. Skye MRT 21mh.

OCTOBER 22nd – (m23) cragfast Camas Bhan, Portree. Skye MRT. 21mh.

DECEMBER 29th – Quiraing. (m18) suffering mild exposure. Airlifted.

ISLANDS

JANUARY 12th – Two men walking on Eaval, North Uist, when one took an epileptic fit and the other went for help. Casualty could not be traced in the darkness, but when he regained consciousness he sheltered for the night and was traced the next morning. Northern Constabulary. 30mh.

APRIL 7th – Youth (18) on adventure course, walking on Sgùrr of Eigg slipped on loose rock injuring ankles and hand. Northern Constabulary. 3mh.

MAY 7th to 8th – Two men (21, 20) cragfast and benighted on N. Ridge of A'Chir, Arran. Arran MRT lowered them by ropes to safety. Dry rock. SARDA and Police also involved. 72mh.

MAY 26th – Man (69) separated from companions on Eaval, North Uist and got lost. Northern Constabulary. 12mh.

JUNE 2nd – Girl (14) from large party, poorly equipped in heavy rain, suffering from exposure in Glen Rosa. Arran MRT. 17mh.

*JUNE 7th to 9th – Mentally handicapped youth (16) was harassed by midges and left his party at a campsite on Mull. Found in a tent at Oban. Search by Oban and Dumbarton Police MRT's. 40mh.

JULY 7th to 8th – Paps of Jura. Overnight search by local rescuers for male hillwalker (39) found suffering from non-contagious hepatitis. Oban and Dumbarton police MRT's called. (He later died of Weil's disease, contracted on Islay).

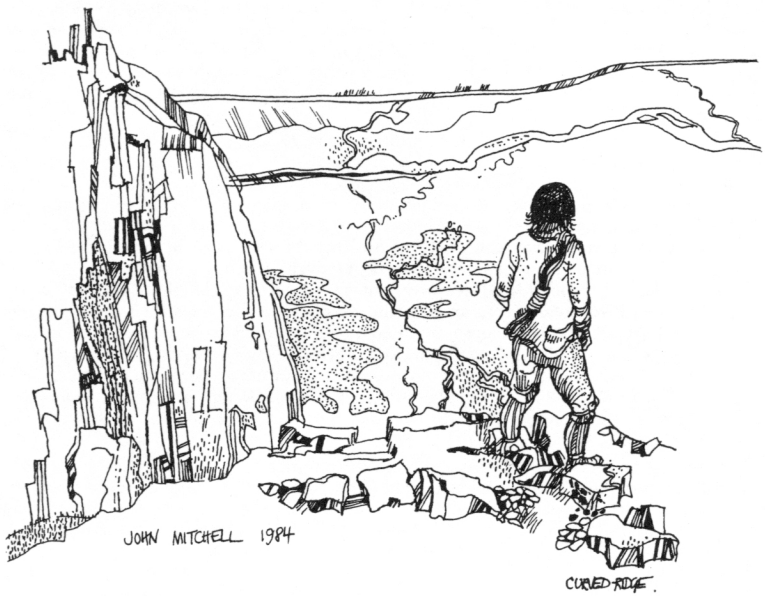
JULY 8th – Male hillwalker died of heart attack on Goat Fell Path. Stretchered down. Arran MRT. 38mh.

SOUTHERN UPLANDS

JANUARY 8th to 9th – Hillwalker (m51) died of heart attack on Dundreich (Jeffries Corse) in the Moorfoot Hills, walking from Portmore Reservoir. No route plan left. Found and airlifted by RAF Wessex. Tweed Valley MRT, Lothian SAR, Lothian Police and SARDA. 197mh.

FEBRUARY 26th to 27th – (Ages 17-20). Wether Law, Unthank Valley near Langholm. Four girls of youth organisation got lost on expedition. One girl ill camping overnight. Spare clothing and sleeping bags wet. Found next day by Moffat Hill Rescue Team. SARDA. Large number of Police, scouts and local volunteers. 40mh.

MAY 27th – Auchope Rig (Cheviots). One man from a party of four experienced hillwalkers went for aid when the other three men got too exhausted to continue in extreme weather. Found by Border SRU. All had exposure: one asthmatic, and one with knee injury.



IN MEMORIAM

GEORGE S. ROGER

GEORGE ROGER was a well kent and much loved figure in the Club. His sudden death at New Year meant the loss of one of our more senior and also more active members. Regardless of advancing years, he continued to climb with undiminished enthusiasm both at home and in the Alps. Here are three references to the memories which he has left behind.

Bill Murray makes the general observation in one of his books that men are not as good natured as they seem. True enough. George was one of the exceptions, cheerful, kindly, thoughtful, generous, it showed in his face and was a genuine expression of goodwill. But it was the mountains that made him 'Bloom.' Then the eyes sparkled more brightly, the cheeks glowed more redly, the gestures with the pipe became more emphatic, sheer high spirits made him jodel and laugh. The Victorian figure in the neat city suit, overcoat and rolled umbrella with bowler hat became the good all-round mountaineer we know, moreover, one with a vice, of always wanting to do another summit regardless of dinner hour.

As for admission of tiredness. never once in my experience did he admit it, even when his body sagged and his mouth could hardly frame the words. I think the only time I ever saw him put about was in a steamy locanta on the malarial Nepal border when after an interminable wait for a meal George was 'falling-to' when a beetle like a buzz-bomb landed on its back on his plate thrashing with its legs, at which George threw down his knife and fork in exasperation and reached for his hat. The world that I know will not be the same without him.

T.W.

My abiding memory of George will be of his enthusiasm for the hills in all weathers and his never failing courtesy which seemed to belong to a different age.

One February weekend in 1971 I acted as chauffeur and guide to George on a visit to the C.I.C. Hut to put his Presidential seal on the meet. In an attempt to avoid the worst of the Everglades, (this was before the golf course had been built) and the hell of the Allt a' Mhuillin, we left George's home in Bridge of Allan at 8 am on Saturday morning which allowed us a relatively pleasant plod to the hut in time for a hot lunch.

Leaving the hut at 2 pm I suggested *Good Friday Climb* as George had not done any modern routes on the Ben, and this was still in the era of step cutting. Roping up at the foot of *Gardyloo Gully* we set off across the long traverse using nèvé bollard belays and up the main gully to a good peg belay. I brought up George, tied him on, gave him my hammer to retrieve the belay and set off up the crux pitch. As I cut across the traverse and up the chimney, spindrift avalanches continually poured over us both and George politely asked how I was doing – 'Great' I replied and leaning out from the top of the chimney cut a double foothold, stepped across and up and over the ice bulges above to a deadman belay. A short time later George rejoined me in fine style carrying his long axe, remarking 'What a splendid route, most enjoyable.' As we changed belays and I retrieved my hammer and pegs I suggested to him that perhaps it might be a sensible idea for the Club to sell the Presidential gold badge and use the proceeds to purchase a Presidential peg hammer and short ice axe. George smiled but did not commit himself.

Moving on we reached the summit in the rapidly fading light, and by the time we had unroped and briefly eaten it was almost dark. We could just make out the edge of the plateau and made our way round to *No. 4 Gully*, where we roped over the cornice and George recounted a classic SMC ghost story about a member who, before the War, fell while crossing Tower Gap alone in November and turned up at the hut in the following March. Told in George's dry impeccable style and with the loom of the cliffs on every hand the story gained atmosphere and authenticity.

A highly relieved Meet greeted George on his return to the hut at 10 pm. George was 64 at the time and earned my admiration and respect for the matter of fact way he dealt with an experience which was probably different to his usual hill days at that time. Our climb earned the ultimate accolade from George, 'A great day.'

G.S.P.

I first became aware of George about twenty-five years ago. At that time he must have been pushing fifty: he was, therefore, 'very old' and worse still, 'respectable.' It was only years later after spending many days on the hill with him that I realised he was younger than I was. He seemed always to be experiencing the first raptures of mountaineering; a Salvationist ascent with him would become a surprisingly pristine adventure on a challenging mountain. An authentic flavour of George can be found in Robin Campbell's benignly sardonic cameo 'One Man's Meet in a past *Journal* (SMCJ,1971, xxix, 351).

If he had a fault it was an inability to turn back; the Meet dinner would often sit down with his party's places empty. Ordering the wine on such an occasion produced one of Iain MacNicol's more famous *bons mots* 'It looks,' he said, 'as if we're going to have 'Nuits Sans George' again.' I think it may also say something of the man that whoever arranges these matters deemed it prudent to use a whole freight train to extinguish him. His kindly ghost will remain among us, at least in memory, and may even tap us firmly on the shoulder if we ever feel like turning back.

H.M.S.

P. D. BAIRD

PAT BAIRD died in Ottowa on 1st January, 1984, after half a century's membership of the SMC. He will be remembered by those who had the good fortune to climb with him as a resourceful and intrepid mountaineer, and as someone whose assistance in a difficult situation could be crucial.

At the Edinburgh Academy Pat won several distinctions among them a remarkable mid-level route round the VIIth classroom which he could complete without touching the floor. Leaving the Academy in 1930, he went up to Cambridge and at once joined that University's Mountaineering Club. John Crofton (now Sir John), who met Pat in CUMC, sent me an account of climbs they did together with Jock Leslie during a three week foray into the Northern Highlands. In the first recorded ascent of the *Mitre Ridge* of Beinn a' Bhuird they were joined by Sandy Wedderburn and Stephen Cumming. Crofton and Cumming chose one route and reached the top with no major difficulty. Sandy chose what turned out to be a much more difficult route, and Crofton describes how he and Cumming watched Sandy nearing the top and 'edging his way slowly up a steadily increasing overhang which looked to us utterly impossible – as indeed it proved. Suddenly, with 15 or 20 feet out, he fell directly on to the rope, 30 or 40 feet; but the imperturbable Pat, firmly ensconsed and well belayed, calmly held him, miraculously unhurt. We later picked up his hat 600 feet below.'

In a 1983 description of a difficult ascent of *South Centre Gully*, Coire nan Lochan (in which his party had all the advantages of modern equipment) N. J. Milton writes 'The gully must have been a much more serious proposition for Baird and the Clintons on their first ascent in 1934,' while the Guide Book refers to the first winter ascent of Bidean Gully as having been made by Baird, Leslie and Clinton in that same year, so clearly Pat was a pioneer of distinction.

Also in 1934, Pat's quick thinking in a mountain emergency was shown when I imprudently accepted an offer to lead the last bit of *Bidean's Church Door Buttress* from A. B. Hargreaves. I came off near the top and, in falling rather a long way, broke the rope, leaving Hargreaves dangling on the short length of rope

by which he had prudently attached himself to a spike of rock. Pat and D. D. Keall were waiting on the same ledge as Hargreaves, intending to finish the Buttress when we were clear, and, as Hargreaves' short rope was now too frayed for a direct pull, Pat apparently knelt down and, with the advantage of courage and a long reach, pulled Hargreaves up by the scruff of his neck back on to the ledge.

Pat led an adventurous life – gold mining in Sierra Leone 1934-35 and later, varied and important work in the Arctic. During the war, Theo Nicholson met him at the Commando Mountain and Snow Warfare School at Braemar and, at a later date, Pat was second-in-command to Frank Smythe with the Lovat Scouts training in the Canadian Rockies.

I remember that Pat came with his son to an Ullapool Meet some years ago, and they were in a party for the full round An Teallach. Pat's nephew led a Royal Naval Mountaineering Club expedition to the Canadian Arctic in 1972, and his grand-nephew is today Secretary of the CUMC, so the family tradition is maintained.

Pat will long be remembered as an outstanding mountaineer. He will also be remembered for the very generous bequest that he has left to the Club.

I.M.C.

Ashley Greenwood recalls: –

In 1941 we were both instructors at the Winter Warfare School near Akureyri in Northern Iceland, where we spent the winter from November till early May. Even among such renowned polar explorers as Jimmy Scott, Quintin Riley and David Haig Thomas, Pat stood out as an outstanding exponent of polar techniques. As a navigator he surpassed them all; and when we tried to cross the centre of the island from north to south at Christmas, it was Pat alone who, in the continuous blizzards and clouds, always seemed to know exactly where we were. He taught me all I ever learnt about making igloos and living in them, and several long nights I spent with him in comfort and warmth, by candlelight, cooking, playing cribbage and sleeping. And then came an awful night when in a raging blizzard a sharp thaw set in and our igloo began to collapse on us. If there is anything more unpleasant than packing up in the middle of the night in those conditions, pitching a tent and transferring to it, I have yet to experience it.

Later in the winter, in a gap between courses, we climbed the 5,000 feet Kerling near Akureyri on skis. We spent the night before in an already constructed igloo on the glacier of Baegisarjökull at –13°F, with no discomfort. But next morning, as happens in Iceland, it began to get warmer and blow. We struggled across a pass in rising wind and skied down the other side, after which Pat not only located our mountain, but, when we entered the cloud again in climbing it, found the highest point on the flattish summit plateau, and found the way down into the valley. It was then ten miles, mostly in the dark, back to Akureyri, where we surprised the officers in their mess at drinks time by turning up on skis about three hours after nightfall.'

Angus Erskine writes: –

'In summer 1934 Pat Baird was on J. M. Wordie's boat-based expedition to Baffin Bay, landing in NW Greenland and NE Baffin Island. He climbed the Devil's Thumb at 74°N on the Greenland coast with Tom Longstaff (see 'This My Voyage' by T. Longstaff, Murrays, 1950). In spring 1936 he became a member of the British Canadian Arctic Expedition, led by Tom H. Manning (Polar Record, July 1936). Other members were P. Bennett (surveyor), G. Rowley (archaeologist), R. J. O. Bray (ornithologist and surveyor), and Keeling (medical doctor). They spent the summer on Southampton Island, and had a tough journey in autumn over to Repulse Bay on the mainland, having to abandon their boat and continue by dog sledge (Polar Record, January 1937 and July 1937). Over the winter, Baird sledged to Committee Bay with Eskimos. Then in summer 1937 the expedition had a difficult time getting by boat to southern Canada, travelling to Britain in the autumn. In 1938, Baird and Bray returned to Canada, going north in August

aboard the R.C. Mission schooner *Therese* in the hope of getting to Igloolik. The ship was stopped by ice 300 miles short, and they were put ashore with whaleboat and canoe. On 14 September, Bray lost his life when blown out to sea in the canoe. Baird then joined up with a family of Eskimos and reached Igloolik. In December he sledged to Repulse Bay and sent a telegram about Bray, and in January 1939 sledged back to Igloolik, where Rowley joined him. From February to September 1939 he sledged to Baffin Island with Eskimo families, then continued alone across Baffin Island and up to Pond Island. Finally he boarded the Hudson Bay Company's ship *Nascopie* at Pond Inlet for the journey back to mainland Canada, which he reached on 5 September, only to hear that war had broken out. Back in Montreal, he joined the Canadian Army, and in 1940 came to the UK with the 1st Canadian Division. There he married Jill, Bray's widow.

'During the war he trained mountain troops (at one time, Frank Smythe was his Commanding Officer) in the Scottish Highlands, Iceland, and the Canadian Rockies. He ended the war as a Lt.-Colonel. Still in the Canadian Army, from February to May 1946 he commanded the pioneering armed services' Exercise Musk-ox in northern Canada. This involved a large squadron of over-snow vehicles following a long route from Churchill northwards to Victoria Island and finally back to Edmonton for 3,000 miles, testing men and machines for combat readiness in severe cold. In 1947 he retired from the army and settled in Ontario, later becoming a member of staff of McGill University in Montreal.

'Baird Peninsula on the west coast of Baffin Island is named after him. He was an old-style explorer, a master of all trades. As a scientist, he was a geologist, glaciologist and meteorologist, also a surveyor and knowledgeable observer of wildlife. He was a monutaineer, a long-distance walker, cross-country skier and canoeist, but also drove motor boats and snow tractors.'

Adam Watson writes: –

'Shortly after the formation of the Arctic Institute of North America, Pat Baird was appointed Director of the Institute's main office, then in Montreal. He led two major international expeditions by the Arctic Institute to Baffin Island in 1950 and 1953. The first went to the Barnes Ice Cap and the grand mountain fjordland around Clyde Inlet, and the second to the Penny Ice Cap and the even more magnificent mountains of Cumberland Peninsula. While working at McGill University with a Carnegie-Arctic Institute studentship, I was fortunate to be asked by him to be zoologist on the second one. (At one stage the geologist and I, who had been sledging with Eskimos on the coast, became separated in a snowstorm while on our way on foot to join the rest of the expedition, and were seriously delayed by deep snow and mountainous terrain. I decided to push through to make contact with the main part of the expedition, and reached them after travelling three days without food and two nights without sleep. Baird's laconic remark when I turned up at Base Camp was 'Oh I knew you'd be all right; you'd be used to far worse weather in the Cairngorms in winter!'). Pat Baird carried tremendous respect from all of us, and could always get volunteers without giving any orders. He enjoyed, as ever, lone trips from one camp to the other, preferably reconnoitring unexplored new territory. Some important pioneering mountaineering was done on both expeditions, especially the 1953 one when a team from the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research drew international attention to some of the most spectacular of the world's rock walls.

'From 1954-59 Pat worked at the Geography Department at Aberdeen University. During this period he wrote a textbook on 'The Polar World,' published in 1964, and was active in the Cairngorm Club, of which he became president. I count myself lucky to have lived with the Baird family at Aberdeen for nearly three years, and came to know Pat well. In 1956 and 1957 he ran a weather station near the top of Ben Macdui by weekly visits summer and winter, before the easy days of telemetry and automatic weather stations. I remember a day of severe frost, snow and sun on 19 December when a largely SMC party (Baird, Ken Grassick, John Hay, and others), staggered all day up Ben Macdui with the heavy equipment, and back downhill in the dark to Derry. Baird's characteristic style

(CCJ 17, 148) went, 'By the time we left the site at 4 pm the temperature was down to 7°F and we had one frozen toe and one frozen finger in the party.' Readers of the CCJ will see a good photograph of him at the weather station (opposite page 148).

'Eventually the explorer's urge took over again and he returned to Canada. When I visited the family in 1969 he was in charge of McGill University's field centre at Mont St. Hilaire, a beautiful wooded mountain in Quebec. He went back to Penny Highland on several Canadian mountaineering expeditions, and on a quick visit to Scotland gave valuable advice to Greg Strange and others who were planning their Aberdeen Baffin Island Expedition from the Etchachan Club.

'Pat Baird was a restless explorer through and through. He had to come to terms with the modern arctic expedition, which post-war has been large, well-equipped and staffed by people who tended to be dedicated scientists first and explorers second. But he preferred to retain as much as possible of the old-style approach. Some of his quiet enthusiasm and skill as a tough loner and natural leader have rubbed off on the many who gladly went with him from a number of countries. They are a fitting form of immortality to an unusual Scotsman, mountaineer and explorer.'

IAN G. JACK

IAN JACK started climbing with the JMCS and soon showed that he was a rock climber of great ability. Much of his climbing was done on Buachaille Etive Mòr, and in August 1931 J. G. Robinson and he made the first ascent of the *Chasm* And *Devil's Cauldron Direct.* He joined the Club in 1933 and in June 1934 he was a member of the party which made the first ascent of *Route 1* on the Rannoch Wall. He was an active member of the Club until the war, but unfortunately he contracted a crippling illness which he bore with great fortitude. Although no longer active, he kept his interest in mountaineering and maintained his membership of the Club up to the end.

We extend our sympathy to his widow and family.

W.B.S.

ANGUS M. SMITH

ANGUS SMITH originally joined the Glasgow Section of the JMCS in 1933. He was an enthusiastic member of that group in the pre-war years, climbing with Norman Ledingham and Donald Campbell. He joined the SMC in 1945 and was secretary of the London District Section while living in Surrey. In the post-war years he continued to climb with Donald Campbell while Ben Humble and I. M. M. McPhail were also frequent companions. A regular attender of Easter rather than New Year Meets. The last SMC Meet he attended was at Torridon in 1969.

Angus Smith retired from his London job as a chartered accountant and went to live in Drumnadrochit where he built up a rural CA's practice and acted as an agent for a firm in Inverness. His climbing career came to an end in the mid 1970's but he still kept in touch with some old SMC friends. He is survived by his wife and two daughters.

J.N.L.

GEORGE R. SPEIRS

GEORGE SPEIRS started to climb hills as a schoolboy encouraged by his elder brother William when the family spent two summer holidays at Spean Bridge. They were fortunate also to have a number of school friends, who despite a preference for fishing and ski-ing were also willing to provide the essential element of good company on an occasional climb.

He naturally responded to the enthusiasm of the Rusk, Hutchison and Rutherford invitation in 1925 to join in weekends on the Arrochar hills and was one of the small group there when the JMCS was founded. In 1928 he joined the SMC and progressed to more serious rock climbing with his brother and other members, mainly in Glencoe. He served on the Committee from 1932 to 1935. In June 1934 he spent a fortnight ski mountaineering in the Bernese Oberland with his brother and the Zermatt Guide Emil Perren. His enthusiasm for the hills continued throughout his life and he climbed the Matterhorn on his 60th birthday.

He did more than his share of work in the community. He joined the RNVR in 1926 and served as a gunnery officer during the war and retired in 1949 with the rank of Commander. He was Session Clerk of his church in Helensburgh for many years. He was very competent with his hands and his home and garden bear witness to his skills. He enjoyed life, a friendly, kind man, and he will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

He leaves a wife and 3 sons, all married, two of them at present being overseas.

J.A.S.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

New Members

THE following new members were admitted and welcomed into the Club during the year 1983-84.

Derek Laird (37) Photographic technician, Dundee.
Duncan George McCallum (21) Photography student, Edinburgh.
William Russell Morrison (51) University professor, Helensburgh.
Alan John Scott (27) Laboratory technician, Glasgow.
Alan Stewart Shand (24) Electronic engineer, Glasgow.
Alfred Thomas Robertson (30) Teacher, Buckie.

Reception, AGM and Dinner, 1983

OF recent years the Club has been, if not torn, at least stretched by the schism between the *Urbanists* (Or *Centralbeltarians*) and the *Speysidians*. This is to say nothing of the disputes between the *Separating Functionalists* and their *Singular* opponents. All thrive on the plentiful annual diet of nit-picking as to where we will next eat our grub. One may perhaps detect a certain Ultramontane character in the Speysidians, but the arguments seem to cut across traditional party boundaries and each successive attempt at resolution serves only to open unsuspected crevasses between former ropemates. Three years ago R. T. Richardson was rash enough to report the 'Last Reception.' But 1983 was pre-eminently the year of the compromise. The Pendulum Principle has, at least temporarily, prevailed and, like Galileo, we may declare of our Dinner that 'still it moves.'

So it was that on Saturday 3rd December members and guests foregathered at the sumptuously refurbished premises of the Grosvenor Hotel, Glasgow. The proceedings began with an outstanding lecture and slide-show by H. Adams Carter, long time editor of the American Alpine Journal. His expedition to Nanda Devi (exactly 40 years after the first ascent in which he also took part) was tragically marred by the death of Nanda Devi Unsoeld. The sensitivity of Ad's account of this was remarkable and following on from his pictures of the successful ascent of an impressively difficult route up the mountain he left his audience both inspired and moved.

The spiritual side of our natures having been given sustenance, it was the turn of the more elemental man and woman within. The scramble for tea and chocolate gateaux allowed the hypothesis to be tested that those stocking up most energetically were the ones with the greatest numbers of amendments up their sleeves. It turned out to be without foundation.

The 95th Annual General Meeting began very quietly. The Officers' Reports passed through with barely a quibble. The Hon. Editor made his customary appeal to members intending an early journey to more exalted regions to provide themselves with an obituarist. Dark warnings about Rule II emanated from the Presidential Chair. The SCAC representative complained that no action had been taken on what he recalled as being the feeling of the previous AGM with regard to the bridge at the Meeting of the Three Waters. When the Chair enquired what action he himself would wish on this he replied no action! But lest we remain in any doubt as to his message he made a cogent plea for the general feeling of the Club on topical issues to be communicated to the official representatives on outside bodies. The meeting responded with rumblings about the power lines in Glen Etive and the forestry developments at Creag Meaghaidh. A motion to employ our representatives on outside bodies for fixed five-year contracts was very much in keeping with current industrial relations practice. The fact that the Committee already had the power to terminate contracts at will did not seem to weigh heavily with the meeting. It was clear that compulsory remission for good conduct was being sought and recidivism by criminal representatives thoroughly rooted out. An amendment was put, amended and finally carried, leaving the last sentence of the motion in a pleasingly vague subjunctive mood.



May, 1982 *Photo: R. Archbold*

Guy Muhleman on the top pitch of *Needle,* Shelter Stone Crag

Photos: A. Nisbet

S. Kennedy relaxes on *Cascade*,
Hell's Lum Crag

B. Sprunt pulls over and M. MacDonald
cranes his neck on *Pretzel Logic* (E.2),
Pass of Ballater

The question of Meets was raised by George Roger. They were generally agreed to be a 'good thing' but policy initiatives, if any, were deferred.

The real business of the meeting commenced under item 6, Any Other Business. Graham Tiso demanded to know whether aspirants to the Club should really be admitted with only a C-grade in Higher Climbing. The gerontocracy appeared unsure of itself in the heady conciliatory air engendered by our outward-looking President. An apprentice gerontocrat (Iain Smart) confessed to being a secret paedocrat, and where he led others followed. The famous 'Younger Element' now had its own representatives on an outside body (the SMC) and it hoped that they could be engaged for many a five-year term. One of the most notable such, Dave Cuthbertson, rose to air several matters, each worthy of an AGM in its own right.

The question of access to the Club Hotels in Glencoe and Torridon received a sympathetic response from Gerry Peat. If a member in Kinlochbervie had a sudden urge to spend a night in Lagangarbh all he need do was pass by Dunblane and pick up a key. Nothing could be simpler. The Hotel on Ben Nevis apparently retains its 'repel all boarders' policy, but for those prepared to 'take an option' the management will provide 'identification codes.' Business in summer is still very slack and special promotions, known in the trade as 'meets' (see above) were suggested. Diversification into smaller properties was also discussed but Bill Skidmore urged the Club to work through encouragement of 'small business initiatives' such as the East Kilbride M.C.

Extension of SMC franchise to the other sex was the last matter to be raised and elicited a low growl from the massed backwoodsmen in rows 1 to 8. Impassioned youth in rows 11 to 14 (egged on no doubt by middle-aged *agents provocateurs*) seemed mystified by the failure of clear reason and unmoved by an appeal for preservation of the SMC as the 'last wild area for the feral male psyche.' The Chair, clearly perceiving change on the horizon, allowed an irrelevant discussion of the merits of LSCC before drawing the proceeding to a close. We await the next AGM with interest.

Writing as one of two vegetarians diners who received a cheese omelette for their £13, I cannot comment on the quality of the meal. Service and wine were however excellent and whatever my food may have lacked was made up for in the speeches and song that followed. President Slesser, making a plea for less isolationism, revived a number of ancient customs – making new members stand to reveal their identity, and recounting a crop of climbing exploits, from Creag an Dubh Loch to Garwhal, of which the Club could be proud. Though he complimented the Club on the number of 'cretinous, difficult and bloody-minded' members it contained, all stayed obediently, even wistfully, silent for one minute in honour of 'The Unknown Munroist.' This was followed by the Club Song, more a serenade this year, with Stan Stewart accompanied on the guitar by Curly Ross. Two new verses were much appreciated and deserve to be recorded for posterity, even though cold print does not do them justice.

When the knife-edge blows, and we can't feel our toes
And icicles keep forming on the end of our nose
'It's just the price,' we say, 'that a gentleman must pay
For his pleasures midst the mountains and the snow.'
Though the hills may be laced with nuclear waste
And the acid rains cause us gastric pains
And we've been refused permission by some Government Commission
We will still go the the mountains in the snow.

Now our President bold.....well, he's getting old.
He'd like you and me in the S.N.P.
See the Tories reel; hear the Labourites squeal
When his bagpipes are produced to strike a blow.
When the yachting season's done and the ski-ing's not begun
He may give a demonstration, to justify his station
And fit in an odd weekend at the year's back end
When he knocks off an occasional Munro.

The toast to the guests by Douglas Niven was something of a *Tour de force.* The victims were clearly unaware of the asperity behind that slow and gentle smile. Ad Carter responded with relevations about our President, none lethal enough to shock those who had elevated him to high office. Ad had to be content to leave his severest comments for the Japanese, none of whom seemed to be present to protest. Let us hope that this civilised conception of mountaineering reaches out to them. No doubt the President could arrange a short trip to pass on the word. But for this evening his thoughts were closer to home. After further dark allusions to future changes in the sexual composition of the top table, he offered our sincere thanks to Donald Bennet for his organisational efforts and drew the proceedings to a close.

G.C.

New Year Meet 1984 – Lagangargh

THE New Year Meet was assailed by high winds, heavy rain and exceptionally poor conditions on the mountains. On top of this the untimely death of George Roger on Hogmanay cast a blight over the social aspects that might otherwise have been enjoyed more.

This year the Meet was centred on Lagangarbh with the services of a chef. This function was performed by Norman Tennent who produced gastronomic wonders in a culinary environment more commonly associated with Glasgow fry-ups.

Attendance was disappointing: The President, Secretary, I. Smart, D. Scott and A. G. Cousins were at Lagangargh. H. M. Brown looked in and W. Myles, I. Ogilvie and G. Roger were at Bridge of Orchy Hotel. Due to the appalling weather and the accident The Bridge of Orchy contingent did not join the traditional New Year's Day dinner.

The only notable ascent was that of Buachaille Etive Mór by the President's party on the 2nd. This began innocently enough up the North Buttress through driving rain and snow. It then encountered a remarkable coverage of verglas which turned the excursion into an epic the details of which have been suppressed but which only ended at the hut at 8 p.m.

C.M.G.S.

Easter Meet 1984 – Cannich

THE Easter Meet was held in the Glen Affric Hotel and was attended by 19 members and 5 guests.

The weather improved from moderately bad to excellent as the days unfolded.

The following excursions were made, at least two of them involving a modicum of boat work and some, at least, ski mountaineering: –

Beinn Fhionnlaidh, Tom a'Choinich, Toll Creagach, Mam Sodhail, Carn Eige, Sgòr na Diollaid, Carn a Choire Ghairbh, Tigh Mór Sgùrr nan Conbhairean, Sgùrr nan Ceathreamhnan, A'Chralaig, An Tudair, Doire Tana, An Socach (Affric), Sgùr na Lapaich (Strathfarrar), Garbh Carn, Carn nan Gobhar, Sgùrr na Ruaidhe, Geal Charn (Drumochter).

Present were: Members: – President C. G. M. Slesser, C. C. Gorrie, J. M. Hartog, J. N. Ledingham, R. C. S. Low, I. D. McNicol, K. MacRae, J. R. Marshall, H. H. Mills, Myles Morrison, Theo Nicholson, I. H. Ogilvie, D. W. I. Piggott, D. Scott, W. Wallace, I. M. Waller, B. G. S. Ward, C. B. M. Warren, W. T. Taylor. Guests: – R. Allen, J. Broadfoot, Sir James Marjoribanks, J. Nicholson, O. Turnbull.

Altogether it was an extremely successful and enjoyable Meet.

C.G.

J.M.C.S. REPORTS

Edinburgh Section. – The Section had another excellent year with the membership increasing in number and the climbing done increasing in both quantity and quality. A total of 35 climbing meets were held of which 17 were weekends and 14 evening meets to local outcrops. 4 day meets were also held which proved popular. All the main Scottish centres were visited and two excursions made south of the Border. Attendance at Meets fluctuated with the season and weather but no meets had to be cancelled through lack of support. The average attendance was 12 members.

During the winter months, the Section made regular weekly use of the climbing wall at the Riccarton Campus. This was well supported and continues to be a source of new members to the Club. Membership for the year was 53 which includes 5 associates, 9 new members were admitted.

Work on Jock's Spot the Sections quaintly named new Hut near Newtonmore has continued at a better pace thanks to the assistance being provided by the building trades students of Telford College. The necessary extension is approaching eaves height and we hope that this phase of the project will be completed in the Spring. At present the Hut is available for use by other Clubs on a fairly Spartan basis.

The Annual Dinner was held this year for the first time at the Amulree Hotel in Perthshire. It was well attended by members and guests who really got into the spirit which was well provided as ever on these occasions. The year ended with the traditional gathering at Dundonnell.

Office Bearers – Hon. President, M. Fleming; *Hon. Vice-President,* W. M. S. Myles; *President,* K. McCulloch; *Vice-President,* F. Fotheringham; *Treasurer,* N. Grant; *Secretary,* J. R. R. Fowler, 4 Belgrave Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 6XQ.

Glasgow Section. – The activities of the Section have again centred around Glencoe, Ben Nevis and Skye although the occasional deviation was made to the other side of the country – indeed section members were reported as being seen as far east as Lochnagar and Creag an Dubh Loch. A full programme of meets was held on a roughly fortnightly basis during the year from the CIC in January to Lagangarbh in December. An adventurous bunch of members risked life and limb on the MV Glen Sannox at a Glasgow weekend and enjoyed a fine weekend on Arran. Several trips were made 'over the sea' to Skye including a well attended long weekend on the other side of the ridge from the Club's home from home at Coruisk.

The hut itself had a very busy year with total bookings up by a quarter on 1982. Some necessary improvements were made to the water supply and, perhaps more importantly, to the drainage – the grass round the hut will never be as green again.

Activity abroad was considerably less than in 1982 but this may have been due to members saving up to escape the vicissitudes of the Scottish summer again in 1984. Those members who did venture to foreign parts seem largely to have been in Chamonix in July and August. Those members who stayed home enjoyed what people smugly told the writer (who was getting soaked in Haute Savoie) was the sunniest, the hottest, the driest, verily the best summer since the proverbial invention of sliced bread. Messrs MacDonald and Marshall (with the co-operation of Ian Angel) chalked up an impressive series of HVS and HVS + 's – the photographs of which made the rest of us more humble mortals green with envy.

A successful Burns Supper was held at the beginning of the year and this was followed later by the 1983 dinner which was held at the Kingshouse where over sixty members and guests enjoyed a witty speech from Bill Young, who had given us a very good lecture earlier in the year. This was part of the regular SMC Western District/JMCS lecture series which is the most obvious manifestation of our close and harmonious working relationship. An outstanding lecture came from Jimmy Marshall whose injunction to '...lean out, enjoy it, look at that swoop of the gully...' has since become the motto of at least one club member.

Our membership remains healthy with a steady influx of younger members. From one successful year, therefore, we look forward to another.

Office Bearers – President, Benny Swan, 10c Lawmuir Crescent Faifley, Clydebank, Glasgow (Duntocher 75505); *Secretary,* Dugald Mackie, 9 Ilay Court, Bearsden, Glasgow (041-943 0919); *Hon. Member,* W. H. Murray; *Hon. President,* Peter Hodgkiss; *Hon. Vice-President,* John Grant; *Vice-President and Treasurer,* Neil Marshall.

Inverness Section – Membership of the section has remained almost static in 1983; those members who have left the 'Highlands' area having chosen, on the whole, to retain links with the section. However, this has resulted in the section numbering some dozen members spread as far afield as Burton-onTrent and Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Obviously section meets are restricted by the spread of our membership, however, individual members have been active on the hill. Several visited North Wales and Pembrokeshire, enjoying fair weather and considerable climbing successes. Others made the 'compulsory' trip to savour Alpine routes again with some success. However the section's main centre of activity remains well above the Highland Line.

This last winter will be remembered for all the wrong reasons, fewer meets occurred often because it was impossible to reach the chosen destinations, when conditions did permit climbing members were active, achieving fair success in otherwise lean conditions.

All in all a typical year, with a good proportion of members actually getting out even when the weather often conspired to prevent us.

Office Bearers – President, Mike Birch, The Gun Room, Castle Leod, Strathpeffer; *Secretary/Treasurer,* Findlay Adams, 66 Perth Road, Culcabock, Inverness.

Lochaber Section. – The club has a membership of around 60 of which the majority are local and active.

Outdoor meets are held monthly visiting a wide range of locations in Scotland with occasional trips across the border. The members of the club cover a wide range of experience and ability of both climbers and mountaineers.

Slide shows are held throughout the winter months, usually at one of the hotels in Fort William.

Following the clubs successful Alpine meet to the Dauphine last year we are now working towards a club meet in the Dolomites in 1985.

During the year improvements were carried out to Steall Cottage as well as the complete rebuilding of Steall bridge.

Club facilities available to members, besides good company at the meets, are the free use of the club hut and the club library of mountaineering books, journals and guide books.

Office Bearers – Hon. President, D. Watt; *President,* W. Munro; *Vice-President,* I. Sutherland; *Treasurer,* H. Campbell; *Secretary,* L. Houlker, 3 Treslaig, Fort William (03977 633); *Steall Hut Custodian,* I. Walker, 12 Grange Terrace, Fort William (0397 3512).

London Section. – The year has been exceptionally active on an individual basis with the usual concentration of organised activity in Winter months.

The continuing influx of new members is contributing in no small way to a rapid rise in Section climbing standards as the older members have been shamed out of their bath chairs in order to provide the Apprentices with their introduction to the Hills. We expect at least ten years supply of reports for the *Journal* from Andy Walker, Tim Fryer and Steve Senior to name but a few.

Activity abroad continues apace, the prime qualification appearing to be, our President excepted, an inability to record exploits.

Martin Mackley has been prospecting an Australian 'Haute Route' in the Snowy Mountains on the odd occasions that they live up to their name. John Steele, Mike French, Peter Stokes and John Turner all made Winter Alpine trips. Summer visits were fewer, perhaps reflecting a selfish wish to enjoy the hills in comparative isolation.

At home the extensive Hut Works Programme, that curse of every Section, approaches a visible conclusion under the guidance of Peter Turner.

The usual forays North continue, excellent hospitality being provided by our Fellow Sections on numerous occasion. This helps tremendously to draw Sections together but necessitates the acquisition of a Company Car before accepting too many invitations.

One last mention must be made of our Newsletter; anyone fortunate enough to receive a copy will understand the vast amount of hard work, humour and creativity included in each issue. With its World-wide circulation '*Hogwash*' may yet equal '*Climber and Rambler.*'

Office-bearers – Hon President, Joe Della Porta; *President,* Robin Watts; *Vice-President,* R. Winter; *Treasurer,* D. Edmunds; *Secretary,* John Turner, 7 Relko Court, Epsom, Surrey, (03727) 28560.

Perth Section – Current membership stands at 59, a decrease of 7 on last year. Meets were held in Skye, Torridon, Kintail, Acnashellach, the Cairngorms, Lochaber and Arrochar. We were fortunate with the weather, e.g. Torridon was dry, sunny and midge-free, but Arran again proved the exception and, due to gales, the meet ended up in Glen Nevis.

The Annual Dinner was held in March at the Clova Hotel with accommodation in the bunkhouse. Our Honorary President Chris Rudie, in his last official duty in that capacity, was his usual entertaining self in his after-dinner address to assembled company. He was presented with a memento from the Section to mark his long association with the Club.

The Joint Annual Lecture with the Perthshire Society of Natural Science was held in the Art Gallery, Perth in January. Dave Comins was our guest speaker and gave a very well illustrated account of the '1981 Glenalmond College Expedition to Peru.'

The President organised a series of slide evenings of members' mountain activities. These included Lou Kass and Graeme Nichol on Mount Kenya, Bob Ross in Nepal and the President, Jeff Banks, ski-ing the 'Haute Route.' All together a very successful new venture which it is hoped to repeat.

The Annual General Meeting was held in Perth in November at which the following office bearers were elected – *Hon. President,* Bob Milne; *Hon. Vice-President,* David Wares; *Hon. Life Members,* Chris Rudie, Jimmy Anton; *Hon. Members,* Walter Pethers, Iain Robertson; *President,* Bob Ross; *Vice-Predsident,* Ron Payne; *Treasurer,* John Rogers; *Secretary,* Joe Stewart, Flat 1, Duntrune House, Duntrune, Dundee (Kellas 391).

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

WE make no apology for the inclusion of lengthy descriptions of exotic mountain wanderings. Today's world is so small that everyday readers of the *Journal* may well find the information these accounts contain useful when intending to visit somewhere out of the way and without appropriate guide book coverage. Besides, most of us have similar eccentric tastes in our foreign holidaying style, including a tendency to shy away from the proliferating offers of commercially based, organised 'adventure' trips. Were we to include these as articles then everybody would have to read them and some might be bored. Here, they can be ignored if you wish, browsed on if you are intrigued or avidly devoured if you are thinking of going there.

The Alps

DAVE SNADDEN writes – 'I spent just over two weeks at the beginning of July with my wife in central Switzerland, based in Göschner Tal. The valley is devoid of shops, but the public transport more than makes up for this. There are also few campsites and we had to carry our tent fairly high to find a suitable spot. Mid-week there are few people around and the huts are very quiet. The weekends were the opposite and the routes and huts were overflowing, my advice to anyone going there is to go shopping on Saturdays. The quality of the rock climbing is superlative and it is better than anything we've come across in the Alps before. The higher mixed routes have the usual quota of choss.

'We climbed the South ridges of Hochschijen, Bergseeschijen and Salbitschijen. The latter is a remarkably fine route. We attempted the South ridge of Schijenstock, but had to come off it because we started too late, it looks an interesting route. We also ascended Fleckistock by its SW ridge and Stucklistock by its W. ridge. Both mountains are fine viewpoints, but the climbing is very ordinary.'

PRESIDENT SLESSER enjoyed a five day high level walkabout with Secretary WALLACE in August. The Besso (3,667m) was climbed in shorts in intolerable heat by its west face. The Zinal Rothorn (4,227m) was traversed by the arête Blanc – arête Nord to the Rothorn Hutte with pursuit by an electric storm which fortunately did not catch up until the upper snow fields on the descent. Zinal was regained by the Schonbeil Hutte and the Pointe de Zinal (3,791) traversed south to north. Later, after the Secretary's departure (*no doubt to attend to Club business*) he went up to the Cabane de Dix and ascended Mont Blanc de Cheilon (3,869m), a quite outstanding viewpoint.'

The Himalayas

DAVE BROADHEAD writes – 'The brief account of my last visit to the Himilayas (SMCJ 1981, xxxii p.210) was prematurely cut off, either by the editor or the printer, and should have noted that my wanderings in July 1980 finished in Chamba, Himachal Pradesh. I had always hoped to return and sooner rather than later I was back in Chamba in July 1983 with Anne Macintyre. We travelled by train from Delhi to Pathankot, and thence by bus. Coming up from the plains in brighter weather, the route seemed not at all familiar, with much more snow visible on the hills than I remembered. Enquiries in Chamba confirmed an unusual amount of snow for the time of year. Lightly laden and shod in walking boots, we were planning to trek to Manali via Bara Bangahal. I had attempted another route from Manali in 1980, but had been turned back by bad weather and shortage of time, although Geoff Cohen had been more successful later the same year (SMCJ 1981, xxxii p.208).

We had originally intended to take the bus as far as Brahmaur village, then cross a high pass to Bara Bangahal. With the prospect of deep snow and our lack of acclimatisation, we decided to follow the Ravi river valley, since the 80km or so looked attractively straightforward as a dotted red line on our 'Trekking Route Map of Himachal Pradesh.'

'Where runs the river? Who can say
Who hath not followed all the way.'

'A bus took us as far as Karamukh, then a truck a few kilometres further, still retracing my route of 1980 when I had crossed the Indrahar Pass from Dharamsala. Next morning I was treading new ground along the jeep track which extends as far as Holi, beyond which we were reduced to a mule track. Progress became even slower when we crossed a flimsy wire bridge over the Ravi, and the track became much rougher. We began to realise that our original estimate of two or three days to Bara Bangahal had been rather optimistic as we toiled laboriously up and down, avoiding enormous cliffs and crossing deep side nullahs. No wonder

there were very few local travellers sharing the route, though surprisingly even in the narrowest and steepest section of this spectacular gorge there were small villages of a dozen or so houses strung out along the hillside or along a ridge, surrounded by precarious narrow terraces growing potatoes and barley.

At last, four days after leaving Chamba, we reached Bara Bangahal. One of the most remote villages in India, it is a centre for forestry operations and on the route of many of the shepherds who bring their flocks across the high passes of the Himalaya each summer. Our route continued less obviously up a side valley as the weather clagged in, the low cloud and the heavy rain threatening our chances of finding the pass we intended to cross. Fortunately, a group of shepherds invited us to stay and shelter with them in their simple stone built howff until the weather improved. This was a great opportunity to get to know some of these friendly hospitable people a little better. However, after two days huddled beside the smoky fire, having exhausted the conservation of our limited Hindi and gone through our repertoire of songs several times we were glad of a slight lifting of the cloud enabling us to continue. With the aid of a compass we found our pass, the Sagor Jot (4,833m) (also known as Kalihani) by no means obvious in the snowy wastes at the head of the valley, the cloud just above us and the rain turning to snow. Geoff Cohen had crossed here too, travelling in the opposite direction in the late summer of 1980. The pass is used regularly by shepherds later in the season, and we were relieved to see that our descent route was obvious, taking us quickly down to an idyllic lush green wooded glade where we camped, waking to a glorious clear blue sky which enabled us to dry out in the morning sun before continuing the steep walk down into the thickly wooded Kulu valley. Reaching the road at last was a relief to aching knees, and we caught the next bus the last few miles up to Manali.

'Sitting at the head of the valley below the Rohtang Pass, Manali has become a popular centre for trekking and sightseeing. One new attraction since my last visit was an abundance of video shows all over town, with a different 'English' film every day and a wide choice of Hindi epics. Our attentions were directed instead to the bazaar to restock our provisions and find a porter for our next trek. We planned to cross the Chandra river to its source at the Baralacha La, descending the Bhaga valley. This has become a popular trek with organised groups, and we had a good idea of the terrain ahead. The steepest climb was right at the beginning so we decided to splash out on the luxury of a porter to carry our nine days of provisions until the going eased off.

'With light loads and good weather we were able to enjoy the magnificent climb up to the Hampta Jot; forest giving way to meadows then snow. At the summit, on the Himalayan watershed, we were in cloud but as we descended the north side the cloud broke up to reveal a new scene, an arid treeless valley below and Deo Tibba towering behind, while in the distance we were impressed by our first view of the spectacular snowy peaks which filled the centre of Lahul, the ever changing focus of our attention as we worked our way around them.

'We joined the rough road on the floor of the Chandra valley at Chatru where we paid off our porter, who had certainly speeded up our progress over the past two days. We continued at an even faster pace next day with a couple of uncomfortably bumpy lifts along the road, which provides a tenuous link with Spiti. Gangs of workers and bulldozers were still at work clearing the damage and the last remains of the winter's snow before the road could be opened to traffic for a few months before the snow returned. It was a relief to be walking again, soon parting company with the road which climbed in zig-zags up to the Kunzum La while we kept strictly to the valley. A barren snowy waste for much of the year, devoid of human habitation, in the summer the snow disappears long enough for a scattering of hardy vegetation to come to life and flowers bloom everywhere. This sparse greenery is enough to attract shepherds and their flocks of sheep and goats which make the long hard journey up from the plains to nibble away at every accessible patch.

'At Chandra Tal lake there were signs of thoughtless trekkers whose litter was carelessly scattered around, despoiling this beautiful spot. We heard rumours that the Indian Tourist Board have plans to build a hotel there to encourage more

visitors. Commercialisation threatens even the Himalayas. Higher up the valley we crossed a couple of fierce side streams, thankful for the snow bridges still standing. We only had to take to the icy water on two occasions, careful to make an early start to ensure fording in the morning when the water was still below knee level. Approaching the watershed, the scenery was rather like the Cairngorm plateau in spring, only much bleaker.

'We were grateful for a clear day as we reached the cairn marking the southern end of the featureless Baralacha La pass (4,885m) until a mile or so further on we joined the ancient caravan route to Ladakh, where the prayer flags and the ruined stone shelters gave the place an air of history. Times and politics have moved on and a few yards away a concrete post marks the 'Manali-Leh Highway,' built, maintained and used exclusively by the Indian Army as a strategic back door to Ladakh. We followed the dirt road down the Bhaga valley to Darcha, the limit for vehicles on the public road and the starting point for treks into Lahul and Ladakh. The increase in the popularity of these activities was indicated by the number of new buildings that had appeared round the bus terminus since my last visit.

'The following morning, in torrential rain worthy of Glencoe, we took a bus down the valley to Keylong, the district capital, continuing back to Manali next day. The spectacular and rather uncomfortable drive over the Rohtang La was made even more exciting when our bus crashed into a parapet of a bridge. No serious damage done, but a reminder of the hazards of Himalayan bus journeys. We narrowly missed meeting Geoff Cohen who had just arrived as we continued our ordeal by bus on the daily Manali to Delhi 'Superfast,' fifteen hours which I try to forget when I think how accessible the Himalayas are.'

GEOFF COHEN was in the same area and sends this account –

'Sue Brener and I arrived in Manali on the morning of 10th August, having taken the overnight bus from Delhi – not a recommended way to travel, for we needed two days to recover. On the 12th we crossed the Rohtang pass and reached the end of the public road at Darcha in Lahul. From here a military road continues over the 16,000 foot Baralacha La, and several hundreds of kilometres further through Ladakh to Leh. Darcha is also the starting off point for the very popular trek over the Shingo La to Padam in Zanskar, and thence to Kargil or Lamayuru. It is a tiny village now graced by a Tourist Officer who alarmed us with the stories of dangerous river crossings on the route we proposed to follow. Seemingly a party of 15 Germans with 25 mules had turned back a few days before from a place with 'water up to their necks'; and the snow bridges marked on the map were apparently steep ice for which we were ill-equipped since we just had lightweight desert boots and no axes. 'But you may try,' the Tourist Officer told us cheerfully; and indeed all these difficulties turned out to be pure fantasy as the snow bridges were perfectly solid and straightforward.

'But we were still very uncertain of our prospects when we started walking early on the 13th. The recent drowning of a British trekker in Zanskar, which several soldiers alluded to darkly, added to our unease. To help with the rivers I cut a stout staff from a dwarf pine – the last tree we were to see for a week. The first day we followed the river Bhaga past Patseo and up to Zingzingbar at about 14,000 feet. The valleys here are steep-sided and stony and the visible peaks tend to be lower and less interesting than those seen from the other side of the range. But it is a good easy way to start and we acclimatised quickly. On the second day we reached the pass, a broad plateau reminiscent of the Cairngorms with fine peaks, both rock and snow, all round. There is an indefinable ancient air to the place, a feeling engendered perhaps by the prayer flags, cairns and even howffs left by the caravans that must have passed through here for so many hundreds of years. Three rivers leave the plateau – the Bhaga to the west, the Chandra to the south and the Yunan to the north, the first two wending their ways either side of the great knot of mountains of Central Lahul to unite below Kyelang, while the Yunan joins the Tsarap Chu, one of the great rivers of Zanskar. Though very much tempted to follow the military road northwards and then try to find the Firste La into Zanskar, we stuck to our original plan and pressed on south from the

Baralacha. The first swollen river in the early afternoon gave us a little trouble but then we camped on the tundra among patches of edelweiss and dwarf gentian with a wonderful view into the heart of the mountains.

'The weather at this time was generally good in the day with rain at nights. Usually we could see the massed monsoon clouds over the Kulu peaks to the south and unblemished blue sky over Ladakh to the north while directly above high cloud and clear patches chased each other around the Lahul mountains. Later as we followed the Chandra south and west we experienced more cloud. But whatever the monsoon cost us in the way of views was easily compensated by the flowers and herbs. The scent of wild thyme, mint and sage accompanied us everywhere and enlivened our cooking. We were too late for the really lush fields of potentillas and primulas down at about 14,000 feet but to see the sparser fields of them up at 16,000 feet glowing in the high altitude sun was perhaps even more remarkable.

'All along the upper Chandra the views of the central Lahul mountains are magnificent. On the third day we crossed the two 'impossible' side-rivers by snow bridges, passing en route through a strange country of tottering pinnacles of conglomerate. Near the second river we found an idyllic campsite from which to enjoy the almost incandescent night sky. Next day we reached the celebrated 'Moon Lake,' or Chandra Tal, a green lochan nestling above and to the east of the main river, with flat springy meadows before it and a wonderful backcloth of mountains. It is a good place for bird watching, and justly famous in the Indian tourist literature. But one very disheartening feature of this place, and of the track along the Chandra in general, was the mess left by other trekking parties. Obviously no effort at all had been made to clear up by the 'Indo-British' team that we had been told was a few days ahead of us. After tramping through stony wastes for several hours one would come across a perfect little patch of green turf with a clear stream – the ideal lunching spot – only to find open tins, plastic bags, silver paper and half eaten food abandoned quite thoughtlessly and strewn all over the place by the wind. No doubt the larger trekking parties leave the clearing up to their porters and horse-wallahs whose culture does not include a sensitivity to Western litter.

'On the 17th we reached the stony wastes of Batal where the road to Spiti crosses the Chandra. I was surprised to find that there is a regular bus service from Manali to that once remote valley – but we had no permits and little time so we turned our backs on the Kanzam La and plodded sore-footedly along the road. This twenty mile section is lined by countless superb granite cliffs, ideal for a Himalayan rock-climbing holiday. At Chatru we camped on the site of the former village destroyed many years ago when the river broke through a dam that had been formed by the Bara Shigri glacier some fifteen miles higher up. An excellent store and chai shop by the bridge at Chatru would prove useful to anyone contemplating a roadside rock-climbing holiday or a quick lightweight trek in these parts.

'We now left the River Chandra and the main road to climb up to the Hamta Jot, an easy but very scenic pass over to Manali. After a climb through delightful flowered pastures we had excellent views up to Indrasan, and back to some very pointed peaks in Lahul. We spent one day camped on the col and climbed an interesting 'Himalayan Munro' of about 17,000 feet to the north. It started with a broken buttress of rich brown Chamonix-like granite interspersed with luxuriant vegetation; then followed a walk along a flat stony Scottish-like ridge as the midday mist and rain came down; finally a castle of steep dark rock, very like Skye, took us to an incredibly exposed summit pinnacle with a stupendous drop on the far side. Persistent rain and route-finding difficulties made our retreat down what had been friendly rough slabs in the morning a little trying, but I found the friction from my Indian desert boots excellent – similar perhaps to the cheap gym-shoes of the pre-P.A. era.

'The descent from the Hamta Jot is through noble forest, somewhat depleted by the predations of man. Wandering along in thick mist we came across a vulture, its head deeply buried in the throat of a dead cow, and so gorged on its food that it had fallen asleep! At first we thought it was dead until we approached close and saw its regular breathing. Later, just before the last steep drop to the Kulu valley

we were entertained with chang by a local apple merchant, who gave us a lot of fascinating information about the economy of his village, the only 'Spitian' village in Kulu.

'Barry Owen joined us in Manali and on the 27th August we again took the exhausting bus over the Rohtang, this time going north-west along the Chandrabhaga to the roadhead at Udaipur. There we engaged three Sherpas, very willing young lads who had emigrated from Nepal to find work on the roads, and were prepared to travel at the speed we wished. We walked north up the Miyar Nullah which has some delightful villages in the first twenty miles. Thereafter we came to the upper pastures, now deserted by the Gaddi shepherds and their flocks, and inhabited only by a few unattended horses and yaks. We passed the entrance to the Gumba Nullah, scene of the Pinnacle Club Expedition's activity in 1980, and after three and a half days of very interesting walking established a base camp on the right hand side of the large moraine covered glacier that fills the Miyar Nullah. This long glacier flows down the Kangla Jot, an easy pass over to Zanskar, and is a straightforward highway of dry ice after the first few purgatorial miles of boulders. However we had no time to go that far and so having sent our porters back we carried heavy loads up the even worse moraines of the first side glacier to the right.

'On 1st September we camped on dry ice at about 15,000 feet, some four miles or so up this side glacier. The peaks around us were extremely impressive mostly with very steep rock walls. Directly ahead was a barrier of complicated icefalls and we spent a day of bad weather negotiating a tenuous way through. But further bad weather and a closer inspection of the highly imaginative maps persuaded us the next day to retrieve the food dump we'd left and go for an easier looking glacier to the left. Here the ice falls were less problematic and on the 4th September we put up our last camp in a snowbowl at about 17,300 feet. We had five days at this camp during which we managed to climb two of the excellent peaks that can be reached.

'Directly behind our camp was a blank vertical wall of perhaps 1,000 feet capped by a graceful cone of snow and either side of this were easy glacier approaches to the higher peaks. The glacier on the right of the rock wall led to a plateau at over 19,000 feet on the main watershed ridge between Zanskar and Lahul. Here there was a rock peak of about 20,000 feet which we climbed on the 6th September. The views north into brown lands of Zanskar, west to the high peaks of Kishtwar, south to Menthosa and east to mountains of Central Lahul and Kulu were all 'out of this world.' Our climb started right on the edge of a sharp ridge. The rock was firmly knobbly granite with basalt intrusions. After one very delicate V.S. pitch it eased and gave about six further pitches of superb exposed climbing at no more than V.Diff. There was a bitter wind to prevent us really enjoying the summit but anyway we decided to traverse the peak, thus giving ourselves a sporting chance to benightment. This meant attaining the next point on the main ridge, a spectacular pinnacle about a third of a mile away which seemed to require an almost vertical snow pitch. In the event it wasn't too bad but descending from this we got involved in a lot of quite difficult down-climbing, followed by the inevitable abseil traumas with only a single rope for three. In the dark we found ourselves below the rocks on a steep slope of horrid sugary ice made worse by the fact that all our ice-screws and second tools were in the tent (we had come out for a rock climb). But the face wasn't really very big and the weather was benign, so with perseverance we were back in camp by about 9 p.m.

'After a rest day Barry and I climbed a beautiful snow peak further west that we had spotted from the plateau. This time everything went very smoothly. We had a superbly varied climb with every kind of snow and ice problem from enormous bergschrunds to delicate icy arêtes. The weather was still and sunny and we enjoyed fascinating views down to the next tributary glacier of the Miyar Nullah. Again we traversed the peak, threading our way down through waves and crests of sparkling nèvé, to reach a glacier bowl on the far side of our peak. The scenery was like something out of Rébuffat but with the spice that we were the only people ever to have seen it. The slog back over a col in the hot sun was draining but a wonderful descent in the late afternoon shadow, with the slightly thawed

snow crystals sliding and hissing gently over the surface as we ran down, rounded off a perfect day.

'Four days later we reached Udaipur after an enjoyable but exhausting march out with heavy loads. The last section was more like a pub crawl from one spirit shop to the next as the local headmaster chummed us down the valley. In the dusk of an autumn evening I stumbled along the half made road in the entrance gorge of the Miyar Nullah watching the moon far above the silent dusty hillsides, and said goodbye to the Himalaya once more.'

1983 Edinburgh University Zanskar Expedition. – This expedition received assistance from the Sang Award. Derek Bearhop sends us this account of its activities:

'The expedition left Britain on the 25th June for a twelve week stay in the Indian subcontinent. Our aim was to make the first ascent of a 6,550 metre peak in the Zanskar region of Kashmir province. The best maps available were extremely vague and so we had little real notion of what sort of challenge our mountain would present. For most of us it would be our first large-scale expedition.

'Arriving in New Delhi, we were immediately exposed to the tremendous heat and the vibrant Indian lifestyle both of which made a considerable impression upon us, not least in the form of some debilitating bugs which were to linger for several weeks. In Delhi we picked up our liaison officer, an amiable Sherpa, and a cylinder of oxygen which had become obligatory as a result of recent legislation. Going 'official' also cost us a substantial peak fee, all the equipment, food and travel for our liaison officer and a compulsory medical examination. Laden down with all our paraphenalia we headed north through Srinagar and Kargil to Pannikar in the Suru Valley. We had hoped to be able to drive much further up the valley, but the heavy winter snowfall still blocked the road. A four day walk with locally-hired ponies took us to the snout of our glacier, the Durung Drung.

'The heavy snow prevented us progressing up the 25km glacier as fast as we had planned. It took two intermediate camps before we were established in a base below our objective. The mountain, which we named Panther Peak, did not present any particular difficulties and we considered it feasible to push for the summit in one day from our camp. After a reconnaisance, a team of six made the successful attempt on the 25th July. Although in places quite steep, and always extremely exposed, it was the effects of altitude which presented the greatest problem. Leaving camp at 11 p.m. on the 24th, the heavily corniced summit was reached after ten hours of climbing. The summit party consisted of Derek Bearhop, Chris Huntley, Hamish Irvine, Sandra McClintock, Helen Shannon and Andrew Tibbs.

'Fresh snowfall prevented further activity for four days, but on 30th July two other lower peaks were climbed, also believed to be first ascents. The harder of these was 'Cougar,' the route taking a gully and then a steep ridge to the summit at about AD standard. 'Shark Peak' was a pleasant snow climb of perhaps PD-standard. In all cases, the logistics of reaching the foot of the peaks combined with the considerable effects of altitude were the major difficulties rather than any technicalities.

'Our appetite for virgin territory satisfied and our food reserves dwindling, we headed back for the fleshpots. Several weeks of trekking and sightseeing followed, highlights being the ascent of Mount Kolahai (17,790 feet), houseboating on Dal Lake, the fresh fruit in Srinagar and the unmissable visit to the Taj Mahal.

'We offer our sincerest thanks to the SMC for their financial assistance in the form of the Sang Award. Thank you.

Australia

The Great Dividing Range by A. L. Cram

NORTH QUEENSLAND

In Nover ber 1983, my wife and I flew into Townsville, North Queensland to resume our traverse of the *Great Dividing Range* from South to North, squelched by the 'Wet' near Repulse Bay in 1981. The big coastal clumps with supporting ranges, gorges, rivers and waterfalls receded into what is officially known as Far North Queensland, a featureless triangle between the Gulf of Carpentaria and the Coral Sea, but regarded as one of the last great wildernesses, 600km wide at base and 800km long. North still, the Government administers islands in the Torres Straits at 10 deg. south. Straight up North are the arcane empires of Russia, Japan and China, disconcerting neighbours for a large and empty land blessed with natural resources. We had already discovered that Queensland mountains were covered with rain forest right down to the level of the sea. Where uncut, like the Andean forest on the east side above the Amazon, to all practical progress impenetrable without cutting, especially where ravines and rock barriers occur. Unlike the African rain forest no large animals make game trails; wild pigs and wallabies make crawlways only. Aerial survey photographs only the canopy so that contours are unreliable on the ground while clefts, cliffs, and watercourses are not on the map. The only safe guidance system is to leave markers of plastic tape or paper and on a big mountain this can require a lot of material. Markers deteriorate rapidly and trails overgrow in a short time. Lessons in practice show that the position of markers is important and more are required at shorter intervals. A marker conspicuous on the way up can be out of sight on the way down, behind a branch or trunk. While other parties may have been on the mountain, ascents are infrequent, even seasons ago, markers may endure in one stretch but rot in another. The party may have become exhausted and turned back so that a marked route suddenly vanishes. Most big peaks take two to three days. Water, food and bedding have to be carried. Information about marked routes is almost impossible to come by at short notice and this applies to points of departure into the forest. It is all too easy to lose the route. It is then essential to stop and go back to the last marker where one person waits while the other searches for the next marker, remaining in sight. On difficult ground, it is advisable not to leave the marker until the searcher discovers the next. As police and rangers have the task of searching, official discouragement for bushwalkers is understandable, especially when the Government spends thousands of dollars of tax money, quite frequently, while lives are lost. For example, the two highest peaks in Queensland *Bartle Frere* and *Bellenden Ker* form a massif over 5,000 feet in height and 50km long by 25km wide with seven or more peaks all covered with dense rain forest. To the immediate south six high ranges, also forested, in an area 32km by 65km cover over 2,000 sq. km. A party bushed can battle to exhaustion with the dense growth and run out of water. Certain mountains do have access roads, foot trails and camping facilities, such as *Mount Dalrymple* 4,138 feet, with a camp site on the plateau at Eungalia (Land of Cloud). Every evening white clouds rolled over. Each morning the flysheet was drenched and sweaters put on. Cold winds and showers were common. In the evening, numerous platypus followed a feeding pattern in Broken River a few feet away. Monotremes, they lay eggs, suckle young, carry a valuable fur and have a poisonous spine on the leg, not to speak of a wide bill. They are not an endangered species in Queensland. They scrutinise human beings with blue agate-like eyes, closed when they dive. Not to worry when they do not surface, they have entered the water gate of their burrows. They also travel overland. The summit was barred by 200 feet of strictly protected, trackless rain forest.

North, *Mount Elliot* 4,051 feet, in a rain shadow was closed to walkers. The access lay by a tinder-dry 2,000 foot draw up which a powerful wind was blowing. A large number of thirsty wallabies with pouched young lay about listlessly. Listless too were a few grey kangaroos on the northmost peaks of the hard to reach Leichhardt Range above the mighty Burdekin River. A struggle up the dry west side through crackling scrub and hot rubble to a crinkled rock ridge under the

midsummer sun brought home that we had not enough liquid in reserve and dehydration symptoms emerged. Body fluids transpire into anhydrous atmosphere without perspiration dampening the skin, not least on Queensland mountain tops north of Capricorn. On return we fell on our 'coolie' (ice box) with its 'stubbies' bottles filled with 'N.Q.' brand, brewed for outback stockmen and later each consumed two litres of milk at a farm shop. Queensland journeys are often measured in 'stubbies,' for example, a 'four stubbie' (short) or a 'six stubbie' distance. Be it 'distance' has enlarged meaning in that State, where a homestead may lie 300km off the highway. Respite was at hand on the Atherton Tableland, generally over 2,000 feet, a volcanic landscape yet with European looking farms, supplying milk even to Darwin and strawberries. Although only 17 deg. south, the wind was cool, warm clothes at night were worn and frequent rain storms kept the landscape green. Replete with crater lakes, ravines and waterfalls the green wall of *Bartle Frere* where it connected with the plateau, suggested a route to the north west top. We beat down a mile of prickly canes closing an old mining road and found an old timber slash through the forest and there picked up signs. Among the huge trees were blazes. Local residents told of a 'tin-scratcher' who had made a living on the mountain. Several trips built up a marked trail, using strips cut from aluminium cooking foil which were effective by glinting from many angles in the sunlight. With heavy loads, especially water, we pushed up first a steep flank and then along ribs, with frequent rocky places, to several rock bands, one with caves and a boulder filled tunnel. The forest began to alter in species and thin out. As no 'window' appeared in the canopy, it was not possible to discover if we were under the north west peak or were traversing round on the steep south face above the Russell River gorge, below the main top of 5,325 feet. Suddenly, cloud descended, and wind and rain set in aggravating the attacks by leeches, hanging like purple grapes round our legs. The aluminium strips ceased to reflect and receded greyly into the forest gloom. No water had been found. Passage of some cleft had crushed three stubbies. Map and compass in close forest on a steep slope did no more than hint that we had come round the neck of the ridge to the south. In that event, up to 5,000 feet of virgin rain forest was below. With our tinfoil not easy to see at a distance, progress on the back trail was slow and many markers had to be tediously sought. My wife reminded me we had quite often missed trails in forests in the past only to survive, perhaps from the use of paper markers, one of which had come to our rescue, noticed by her a long way across the Peruvian selva, in critical circumstances. In the prevailing torrential rain, mist and forest gloom, shut in by trees on all sides, I felt this reminiscence unhelpful, but prophetic when, slithering down I espied a metallic gleam from a tinfoil laid horizontally across a fallen trunk, reflecting the white clouds. Once through the cave pitch we began to pick up the blazes of the tinscratcher and the vertical runs down to familiar ground. Thick cloud blew over *Bartle Frere* for several days. As for *Bellenden Ker,* twice as long, a green seamless robe of forest came down 5,000 feet to the level of the sand dunes. No local resident knew of any trail apart from pig hunters, who had gone up a short distance. After search we found nothing of encouragement, indeed, only more leeches.

North, at *Mount Molloy* we put up at an historic two-storey timber hostelry, where slow-spoken, lean men with profiles chipped from obsidian had come in from out-stations to support the bar along with some hardbitten wolfram miners and a State trooper. As we had spent two days on the *Mount Lewis/Fraser Range* using an access track into this place of broken rock and shattered forest, brilliant birds and placer workings for gold and tin in a hot sun some rough sympathy was extended to us on our five orders within fifteen minutes be it no-one accepted our disclaimer to be prospectors, with metal detectors in our packs. Known deposits of gold, coal, uranium, zinc, tin, lead, gems abound. The volcanic anomalies bringing ores to the surface stick up all around. North again to Mossman and Daintree at the foot of the third-highest *Thornton Peak* 4,515 feet. Again dense rain forest came down to sea level and the Daintree River with its crocodiles. No-one knew of any track up this peak, although reputed to have been climbed by bushwalkers. Driving back to Molloy and round the west side, a logging road took us 50km into the Spurgeon River country. Camp on a billabong of the river was truly in the wilderness. Pigs and wild range bulls with their seraglios came in to drink, bellowing and scraping, while across a full white moon an hour long skein of

thousands of fruit bats flew over the tent from their caves to the fruiting trees in the canopy, with creaking leathery wings. After a cool night, we walked up into the *Mount Spurgeon* range above the falls, up a spur and then ascending a series of ridges and tops. The windless midday heat and dry air was parching on this side of the mountains. From the high top the range circled round far away towards *Thornton Peak* and suddenly our reserve water supply seemed meagre against the return journey of several hours. To reach the logging road we came down a face and began to contour, an unexpectedly serious task. Steep rolling rubble, polished dry vegetation and a series of deep ravines and broken rock outcrops took so long to negotiate that dehydration was close before we reached the road. Back at camp endless billies of tea were boiled. We had now succumbed to the Australian outdoor camp fire habit. Next day, we went up the other side of the river towards *Thornton Peak* but rain forest was met high up and we were not prepared for a two or three day excursion. Driving north, the Range at last began to lose altitude, as we could see from the top of a glaring white ridge with a temperature of about 45°C. Below was Palmer River, the scene of a gold rush in 1872, drawing in thousands of Chinese prospectors across the Straits. Humidity and heat pointed to the onset of the monsoon and further we could not drive without a four wheel drive car. Our long traverse from the Bass Strait was over.

CENTRAL QUEENSLAND

We ran south for 400km through hilly country and plains from the Atherton Tableland to the Forty Mile Scrub and 500km to Charters Towers, where 6½ million ounces of gold were milled. Long straight roads passed through blue grass cattle country, Brigalow scrub and volcanic upthrusts. Ranches are 100km and more off the main road and the landscape is without habitation, the road straight as if engineered by Rome. The Greenvale Nickel mine was an oasis for food and petrol and here too were volcanic stone bolsters covering an immense area. Brief visits were made to the cliffs and crags of the *Stopem Blockem Range*, the *Fullstop Range* and the *Great Basalt Wall*. The 'Wet' was reported on the radio in the far north and showers caught up with us. First rate solitary camp sites were available under magnificent tall trees provided one carried water. I remember *Undara Crater* and *Mount Tabletop* at the Rosella Plains as spectacular. This high cool country is still part of the Dividing Range, 200km west of the South Pacific and still in the tropics. Alice Springs in the Red Heart centre is 1,500km to the west. Even Charters Towers township is 1,100 feet above sea level. We passed Christmas in an hotel providing every luxury of food and drink, where a steak was larger than a plate and cost less. Excellent vintages filled our room refrigerator. Sunscorched and battered in appearance we were mistaken for dinkum Aussies.

600km south brought us to the new open cast coal mine at Blair Athol (240m tonnes reserve) with a new railway to the coast under construction for deliveries to Japan. On the water level wheatlands great shapes rose above the horizon causing a diversion to the North East. Uncannily accurate red rock versions of Cul Mor and Cul Beag and Stac Polly offered rock routes and scrambles but we had no water, this *Peak Range* being quite unknown to us. Water was found at Emerald 150km away and too far to permit return. We compensated by driving west to the Anakie sapphire fields, a huge area of workings and spoil heaps. We earned the title 'digger' in course of several days scratching and fossicking, along with a phenomenal thirst, a feature of gem hunting on these baking flats. My wife found a reasonable sapphire and became so fascinated that I was obliged to go looking for her with a torch after sundown. Appreciation of this caring act was always 'Have you brought me a stubbie?' Imagination was fired by the tale of the boy who picked up the 'Centenary Gem' in 1979, weighing 2,019 carats, as well as other stories about people who came and stayed years. One addict was reported to have buried a new bulldozer in an excavation to defeat his creditors but could not find the place again, so providing an enigma for archaeologists in the year 5000 A.D.

SOUTH QUEENSLAND

After a near tearful abduction from the sapphire mines, our objective was the mighty Caernarvon National Park some 600km south. Warned by rangers not to

use the access road during the 'Wet' where a party could be trapped in the gorge for weeks, we were on the dirt road when heavy rain fell. Water lay on the fields as we gave up the idea and drove on to Injune and Kingaroy and up the steep access road into the *Bunya Group* astride the main Range, just north of Capricorn. Here are the enormous stands of Araucaria pines both Bunya and Hoop species. We camped at the site 3,500 feet up. Pleasing trails run through these giant 'monkey puzzle' groves to the summits. Cold mist and rain showers were a nightly trial. On 14th January we were handing bread up to opossums hanging by their tails (equipped with little spines for the purpose) when a violent wind and rain storm got up, with thick cloud. The perpetrator was Cyclone Grace, exceptionally centred over Alice Springs and passing east. Stripped down to slips, I spent part of the night repinning lashing pegs in the gale, hosed down by torrents of water. In a short lull after daybreak we folded our sopping gear and fled down over the storm debris. As much as 9 feet of water formed lakes in the desert, flooded the Darling River tributaries and the great plains over which we had to pass to escape the surface water and submerged bridges. Anyone who has camped at the head of Loch Etive on a January night, will have had a similar experience. One can marvel at the content of this cyclone which sopped the whole northern half of Australia in course of possibly the coolest and wettest summer on record. In streaming rain we drove 400km to Moree, crossing the Queensland border at Goondiwindi. Some creeks were full to bridge level. The police at Narrabri 100km south said on the telephone that the Namoi River was in full flood but if we arrived within two hours a light but not a heavy vehicle might get through. With no oncoming traffic, the car was a ball of spray on the long straights of the Newell Highway with glutinous verges. I could see vehicles which had put a wheel on the verge had been snatched off the road, into the white fog among the trees. At Narrabri, a laconic officer offered the choice of going back or using an uncompleted new viaduct across the river valley. On the normal road lorries lay half submerged in the floods. The viaduct had no verges or surface, merely earth fill and the car did a 'sidewinder' affording stunning scenetic views first on one side and then on the other. I observed from her actions my wife was not to be separated from her sapphire in any eventuality. Still in heavy rain another 120km through the desolate Pilliga scrub over the remaining tributaries to Coonabarabran, where in clearing skies we could at last turn west. Access to one or two mountains was blocked by rivers spouting over the gravel roads.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The run from Coonabarabran to Port Augusta and Adelaide on the Southern Ocean, over 1,350km in my estimate, over the Barrier Highway, can rank as one of the world's distinctive motor runs, like the run from Peshawar to Kabul through the Khyber Pass or from the Gulf over Baghdad and Amman to the Med., with a character all its own. The surface of the two lane highway is uniformly excellent, very little traffic is encountered, the altitude is enough to ensure cool air and the sun shines from a pale blue desert sky. At long intervals State water tanks are supplied by tankers. Habitations are few and the straights endless, with hardly a crossroad. From time to time, speed has consciously to be reduced, as it builds up. The silver city of Broken Hill seemed a metropolis, at 600km shortly before the South Australian border. From Port Augusta at the head of Spencer Gulf we turned north for our objective the *Flinders Ranges,* lying in the desert between the salt lakes Torrens and Frome and to Wilpena Pound 225km distant. *The Flinders* extend some 300km in parallel and tandem ridges of red rock with ground cover of trees and scrub. The valleys are (not very reliably) reported as made by the great serpent Arkaroo in the Dreamtime on passage to drink at the great lakes. As the official figure to avoid dehydration in the dry desert mountain is one litre per head per hour the great serpent's thirst is imaginable only by those who were unable to reach the indicated mimimum.

The *Wilpena Pound* is an exceptional cirque surrounded by Munro size p[illegible]ks of some difficulty, especially in approach. The floor is about 1,650 feet and 8 by 15km, a great slash of narrow gorge to the North East opens to a creek and a camp site in a pine wood. Some 20 peaks over 3,250 feet, with other rock points,

surmount steep rocky slopes. Only two have marked trails. At 1,800 feet, the camp site is fairly cool. In winter, deaths from frostbite have occurred and in summer, from dehydration. We had a good scramble on *Mount Ohlssen Bagge,* 3,090 feet, the S.E. pillar of the Pound Gap, mainly up faults to a narrow rock crest on the highest top *St. Mary Peak* 3,841 feet. A traverse on to the vertical east face led by a corridor and window to a sensational pull up from a slab and then ledges and corners went up the face. As a rope was a safeguard on the descent above the face, in its absence, we halted about 200 feet below the top and came down to the Tanderra Saddle and scrambled down into the Pound over atrocious scrub and rubble. The walk back to camp, some 12 kilometres inside the dry scrubby cirque, in the afternoon sun was dehydrating and took pleasure out of the trip.

North, lies the Oraparrina Park, an even drier place, where a few bore holes produce water. The red rock mountains are scrub covered and without trails. A brilliant white flash, as the glittering salt lake Torrens rose above the horizon was unforgettable. From the northmost bore at Aroona we walked part of the 1,000km Heysen Trail, past boards warning of the risk in summer time. My estimation of a five stubbie two soda water each round trip was held up as parsimonious by my wife as we padded back through the gorge on a dusty track to Aroona, where she had boiled our Matilda, left ready, before I fetched water from the bore. The tea simply would not cool despite imprecations likely to arouse Arkaroo from his lair. To arrive at Gammon Park, it was necessary to go north and then descend to lake level at Parachilna. On the north tip, was the delightful hostelry of Blinman like a relic of 'Peaks and Passes,' unspoiled, with the best draught beer in the Land of Oz. The heat and humidity at Parachilna and the barometer foretold a storm and wisely we hastened back to Port Augusta, to be met with a violent sand and dust storm followed by heavy rain and a chilly 'Southerly.' Our camp site under the huge red gums at Brachina Gorge where the little Corella parrots came down like white confetti in the full moon, now seemed part of the Dreamtime, like the yellow-footed rock wallabies, both rare and agile.

VICTORIA

From Adelaide, we drove east across the Murray Bridge where the joint waters of the Darling and Murrumbidgee Rivers were rolling down and spreading over the flood plain, then south to the Coorong Sandspit on the Great Australian Bight and on for a lobster at Kingston with vintage wines from the Barossa Valley. A run of 600km brought us into Victoria, to Ararat, to camp in a pine wood at *Mount Arapiles.* This upthrust of vertical rock, some 1,200 feet high, is a rock climbing resort. A course was in full swing with fixed ropes and highly artificial and sensational traversing and roping down techniques using the latest in loops and hardware. We had two moderate ascents to the top into thick scrub, where we found the other monotreme, an echidna, a cross between a hedgehog and a porcupine in appearance with large claws and a pipe-stem nose. Placed on the soil it sank out of sight in less than a minute. Honeyeaters, robins, opossums and sugargliders live in the thickets. Only 40km distant, at Hall's Gap, we made a base in the midst of the *Grampian Mountains.* Our 1981 camp site 50km south under *Mount Abrupt* was as unchanged as an illusion of yesterday. Four or five parallel ranges 100km north to south and 60km wide are comprised. Road facilities make access easy. We began on *Mount William,* 3,855 feet. Mount Rosea, 3,095 feet in the *Serra Range* affords an interesting route up the 'Grand Staircase.' The top is formed from a continuous slab of 2km eroded into huge and fantastic shapes. We scrambled over the 7 peaks of the *Wonderland Range, Sundial,* 2,364 feet, is the highest. Again the rock shapes are myriad and wonderful. *Mount Victory* and *Mount Thackery* in the Victoria Range were interesting and we explored a route up *Mount Burchell* from the Mirranatwa Gap. The weather was cool and sunny. As many as 15 koala bears were counted in the evenings. These cuddly creatures can be picked up as they scamper to another tree and interestedly watch human activities. Their limbs are twice as long as appears when at rest and they have a clean attractive fur. Regrettably, at night, they roar like lions, a noise ten times louder than justified by size. Creating all the tension of a high-wire act, a koala walks out along a pencil thin branch 50 feet up, crouches and then extends a long limb to gather eucalyptus leaves, sometimes a little uncertainly. They do not pass round a hat, after the act.



Photo: H. M Brown

The Great Stack of HANDA, Sutherland



Photo: H. M. Brown

Cir Mhor and The Rosa Pinnacle, Arran

NEW SOUTH WALES

Moving 400km east we regained the Great Dividing Range and walked up *Mount Buller,* 5,930 feet with a narrow crest but sordid with the summer appearance of a ski resort. Skiers do seem to need a lot of mechanical aids, up and down. Mist came down at the summit. Forced to circle 500km round the Bogong and Dargo High Plains, which we had explored in 1981, we entered the Kosciusko Park over Dead Horse Gap to our former site at Sawpit Creek. From Charlotte's Pass, we made a second ascent of *Carruther's Peak,* 7,042 feet. Next day a violent northerly gale rolled low dark clouds into the Blue Lake glacier hollow and blew my wife to the ground and some distance on a granite tor on *Kangaroo Mountain,* 6,744 feet. The plateau is like that of Ben Avon. Out from the Thredbo escarpment, we struggled the 15km round trip to make our third ascent of *Mount Kosciusko,* at 7,315 feet the highest point in Australia. A violent cold wind roared across the plateau and through our parkas. Some wombats killed by cars lay sadly on the highway near Jindabyne. Surprisingly large they measure more than 35cm high and 1 metre long.

After a visit to Canberra, where the presence of diplomats draws in exotic foods and wines to benefit all, we crossed the Range to the South Pacific. This is a rough forested area not far from the south tip of Australia, about 37 deg. S. So much rain fell in a day or two that the main road was blocked by landslides. Travelling north, inland, we revisited the Bungonia Caves, the deepest in Australia and the main top. Then along the divide to the Kanagra National Park. 150km with a vertiginous drive down gravel into a limestone sink to enter the wondrously coloured panels and filigree of the Jenolan Caves. This being the Land of Oz a genuine Victorian Age hotel at the bottom of the sink produced a seven course dinner with wines, so sumptuous that instead of visiting an astounding cave we instantly fell asleep in our room and woke up fully clothed at dawn. As I explained to my wife the cause was carbon dioxide seeping from the limestone, but she was unconverted, blaming the port wine.

Across the *Black Range* to revisit the spectacular *Blue Mountains,* 100km west of Sydney, and walk over the 3,500 foot tops and down into the dripping forest with plants, birds and flowers in profusion. A visit to Captain Cook's landing place at Botany Bay brought us near to the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the beautiful old and new city of Sydney and its busy airport.

The Southern Alps

OUR peripatetic President, MALCOLM SLESSER was on business in New Zealand in February, and attempted to climb Mount Cook over a weekend in the company of Bob Cunningham of NZAC.

With planes not flying to the Plateau Hut, the approach had to be by Haast ridge, a monumental effort over the crumbling moraines of the Tasman Glacier (The Ball Hut has even fallen down) in which gaining the Haast ridge was quite the most dangerous piece of climbing I ever encountered. There was too little time to make Cook, even though the weather was perfect. Happily we stayed at the Haast Hut, the Plateau Hut now being a mid-altitude slum of indescribable filth in spite of heroic efforts by the local Park Service. Anzac peak was climbed as a second best offering great views both the east ridge and the 8,000 feet Caroline face.

The NZAC were most hospitable, putting their huts at my disposal. In return I gave a lecture to the Dunedin Section. Other sundry eminences were scaled in the course of a 3,000km tour of the South Island. The rock was almost universally bad, thus explaining the New Zealanders' predilection for ice.

REVIEWS

Avalanche Safety for Skiers and Climbers. – By Tony Daffern. (Diadem Books Ltd., £7.50).

This thoughtful and well researched book concentrates largely on North American conditions though there are examples of conditions in other mountain areas including Scotland.

One researcher who has made a study of avalanche accidents concluded that a large proportion of accidents occurred when avalanche hazard was known to be high. Many victims were completely unaware of the possibility of avalanches, knew little about safety route selection and could not recognise dangerous slopes or evaluate potential hazard. Incidents in almost any Scottish winter would seem to bear out this conclusion.

I suspect that many of us have a very sketchy understanding of snow and avalanche conditions, certainly reading this book brought home to me how little I knew of this very complex subject.

The author takes us through the different types of falling snow then the various stages of settlement and metamorphism at the hands of wind and weather. The section on testing snow conditions covers the use of improvised equipment such as ski sticks to more detailed examination using specialised equipment along with the conventions of rcording – all aimed at predicting the stability of layers in the snowpack. Having learned something of snow conditions and the state of the snow-cover the reader is guided through the causes and types of avalanche with some useful information on observation, recognition of avalanche terrain and safe route selections.

Later chapters deal fully with avalanche rescue and first-aid treatment of victims. It's a sobering thought that the chance of survival diminishes rapidly to 50% in the first half-hour and that few survive if buried deeper than two metres.

Invaluable as a reference book and for creating an awareness of the conditions affecting avalanches, the book is tremendously well illustrated with photographs and line drawings, though the format does not make for easy use.

J.N.M.

Time Gentlemen. – Some collected poems by Hamish Brown, illustrated by Ian Strachan. (Aberdeen University Press, 134 pages, £4.90).

In this inviting volume the Munro Supremo assumes a fresh identity, donning the poetical cloak, which he wears rather well. The title may suggest bar-room ballads – but the work comprises nearly 160 poems selected from 30 years of writing.

The themes are wide ranging – landscape, recollections of youth, the seasons, travel, philosophy, comments on character and life, with a running link of mountains and mountaineering. Equally varied as the topics are the verse patterns, the moods and the thoughts. He shows himself to be a sympathetic observer whose skill rises when fitting to power and significance. He is noticeably assured in his use of Scottish dialect and his crisp lines strike home effectively.

Illustrations by Ian Strachan in many varied techniques enhance the appearance of a most commendable book.

A.C.D.S.

Mirrors in the Cliffs. – Edited by Jim Perrin. (687 pages, about 40 photographs, 26 cartoons, Diadem, £12.95).

This anthology of over 120 articles and extracts covers a wide range of mountaineering writing, from the deeply philosophic to the urgently practical. It is quite the most cerebral of such collections and the supplementary notes on the articles and the subject index which classifies all the items into different categories are both very useful. There is something to be found for almost every mood and the ease with which one can run to earth classic tales like Whillan's return trip

from the Himalaya by motor cycle or Colin Kirkus's account of *Great Slab* on Cloggy make this anthology a valuable item for the bookshelf. The photographs are a mixture of colour and black and white and not directly related to the text. I looked in vain for an article on the impressive and intriguing photography of front pointing on chalk verticalities near Dover. Anyway, good value and highly recommended.

W.D.B.

Memorable Munros. – By Richard Gilbert. (Diadem, 188 pages, 5 maps, 19 illustrations, Price 7.95).

As your very latest Munroist I am now able to advise you about books like this 'Diary of Ascents of the Highest Peaks of Scotland' written by a man whose 'approach to the hills is uncomprising.'

Originally circulated in manuscript form, it should have remained so. Its only value is in emphasising the excellence of our new 'Western Highlands' and 'Hamish's Mountain Walk' (which I am reading again with much pleasure). It is not a 'valuable guide.'

Moreover, I suspect it was ghosted by one of Gilbert's junior English pupils. High time the S.M.C. had a copyright on the term 'Munro.'

J.M.T.

H. W. Tilman – The Seven Mountain – Travel Books (£14.95); **Always a Little Further.** – By Alastair Borthwick (£7.95) are both reprints issued by Diadem.

The former comprises no fewer than seven originally separate books bound in one volume. Few of us will have all seven on our shelves and one cannot but feel that this must be good value, even if not all Tilman's work can be rated today as top drawer. Alastair Borthwick's classic of the immediate pre-war Scottish world of climbers, tramps and travellers is probably already on most shelves. If not, it ought to be, as few will fail to find it as evocative today of human nature and certain aspects of the outdoor scene as it was when written, even if the fine action photograph on the dust cover doesn't show the right pre-war equipment.

The Central Highlands. – By Peter Hodgkiss. (Fourth Edition 1984, SMC District Guide, 207 pages, 95 illustrations, 16 maps, 2 diagrams, £9.95).

It is sixteen years since the S.M.C. produced the last Edition of The Central Highlands, which has been out of print for several years. This completely new edition is in the traditional mould of District Guide Books, and fills a gap with its fairly comprehensive description of this most popular area of the Highlands, including Glencoe, Ben Nevis, Ben Alder and the Blackmount. For climbing routes on the main crags the reader is referred to the comprehensive or selective climber's guide books for the district, and this guide describes only the occasional classic route in the well-known climbing areas. There are details of lesser known, generally remote crags not described in climber's guides, ranging from well-known *Upper Couloir* and *Keyhole* of Stob Ghabhar to the obscure *Loch Roy Gully*. The West Highland Way is excluded, but little else escapes the author's observation and wide ranging comment.

A guide book stands or falls by the clarity of its layout and text. Peter Hodgkiss has written in report style which is well indexed; the reader seeking information on a chosen area will find this a straightforward task, though the appropriate 1:50,000 O.S. map will be needed to follow the text in detail. This makes it hardly bedside reading, except for those who know the area well.

The 16 sketch maps specially drawn by Jim Renny provide a clear overview of each area, and it is a pity that three of them have become detached from the corresponding text by blocks of 8 photographs. Production has also not done complete justice to the full set of excellent and previously unpublished black-and-white photographs, but only much more expensive production methods and a dearer retail price could have avoided this. The two sketch maps on p.146 and p.158 are slightly mis-matched with the text. These are however minor criticisms of a book which is well produced and a pleasure to read.

One new feature is the estates map and list of stalkers' telephone numbers – a sign of increasing pressures on the use of our hills, especially during the stalking season. There are warnings for the unwary and those inexperienced or new to the Scottish hills in winter, and much varied comment on local history, Gaelic place names, flora and fauna, which show the breadth of the author's interest and experience in the hills. Geological description is interwoven into the text – much more helpful than usual chapter by an expert at the front of the book.

Is it worth buying? The most jaded of locals will find many new approaches, traverses and viewpoints not considered before, and even some new crags (3½ hours from the road). Newcomers to the district will find completely up-to-date and accurate information on roads, tracks, maps, access, approach and descent routes, ski-ing possibilitites, afforestation, accommodation and public transport. In April 1984 the trusted 6.00 a.m. Glasgow to Fort William train departed at 5.50 a.m., which must have aborted a few Highland trips. Those who had purchased Peter Hodgkiss' guide and read p.155 would not have been caught. It is hard to fault the information and coverage of his guide, and he has done us all a great service.

R.A.H.

The Western Highlands. – By Donald Bennet. (Fifth Edition 1983, S.M.C. District Guide, 180 pages, 10 maps and diagrams, 88 illustrations, £9.95).

The guide continues in its same admirable form established in 1931 and continued over the years. Scott Johnstone's book, which I have enjoyed so much for nearly twenty years, leads naturally to Donald Bennet's.

There were faint 'here be dragons' touches in Scott's; none in Donald's. It is clearly written. The layout and print much improved. It is a pity that the good maps inside the old hard covers have been given place to rather drab sketches. James Renny's maps are excellent, with Munros properly indicated. (Always a sales point, nowadays). The photographs are of Donald's usual high standard and, I thought, well produced.

Personally, I approve the list of 'Estates and Factors' and the notes on access, estate work, roads and bothies. Useful for the growing number of new visitors. Myself, I can't stand encounters.

There are brief, interesting notes on geology, wildlife, [wild life,] the wanderings of Prince Charles Edward and, appropriately from Donald, hydro electric development.

This is not just a re-worked guide. It is fresh and it reads well. A good buy for novices and old hands.

J.M.T.

Creag Dubh and Craig-a-Barns. – By Dave Cuthbertson. (S.M.C. Climber's Guide, £6.95).

This excellent guide provokes a few emotional responses from this old-timer.

One: pleasure that these roadside crags have been counted as worthy of the Club's imprint, despite the obstacle of Creag Dubh's obscene route-names. (Would-pressed its knees together firmly against further obscenities, however subtle). Surely Cuthbertson is right when he says of the Cave Crag at Dunkeld that 'some of Scotland's finest single and two pitch routes are to be found on these crags.'

Two: Pain at the final ignomimy of seeing my own routes, once desperate efforts, reduced to lower obscurities of high 4 and low 5 – the penultimate ignominy, suffered some time ago, was the loss of ability to climb these routes!

Three: sorrow at the complete victory of the English grading system; there was no way back after Crocket started it, but this guide underlines how far things have gone, when even 20-foot problems have an E grade, expressing seriousness, and a technical grade, expressing difficulty. In my stint as Editor I shunned these systems on the grounds that they would inevitably lead to Progress. The old system bewildered foreign visitors and local heroes alike, stemming the flow of new routes in a satisfactory way.

Four: delight that this is a comprehensive guide. By all means let us have selected guide *as well,* but for the committed climber this is no substitute for the real thing. And delight at the spurning of metres in favour of feet. Unlike the grading system, there *is* a way back from metres: let's vote with our feet!

Next, a few quibbles and plaudits. The general standard of production is excellent and the text well-planned and mostly clear. The star-system of recommendation has been sensibly and helpfully applied. The action photographs are splendid but the photo-diagrams are next to hopeless. There is really no alternative to line diagrams, especially on these congested and tree-ridden crags. Indeed it is surprising that no route on Upper Cave Crag is named *Sardine,* since that is how the routes are packed there! Some of the historical material is badly adrift, although most is sound and carefully researched. I am credited with the first ascent of *Rat Race,* along with John McLean and various iron tools. Not so: I *did* hold McNiven's rope while he hammered away as far as the top roofs but have no taste for that sort of climbing and never did any. In fact it was Brian Robertson who bolted his way up this and History has given him his due reward! Again, I am charged with discovering Bonskeid Crag but here the luckless Ian Rowe was responsible. I have never even seen the crag. On the debit side, I was somewhat peeved to see that there was no mention of my part in the discovery of Balnacoul Castle Crag with the ascent of *Carcase* Wall in 1971.

Oh yes, that name. Craig-*a*-Barns. Very likely. I can recall Blyth Wright laying it on very thick in that pious and professorial way of his about how wrong we were to call it Craig-*y*-Barns. 'Welsh, you fool' he said. But this is Pictland not Scotland and the Picts spoke Welsh. The surviving Picts say 'ee' not 'ah.' Ask them.

R. N. Campbell

[*The real truth about the name should be obvious to an Easterner – or a Pict, if you prefer. The local name was Craigie or Craggie Barns and the O.S. transliterated this into Welsh – Ed.*].

Guide to Mount Kenya and Kilimanjaro. – Edited by Iain Allan. (4th Edition, Mountain Club of Kenya, £10.20).

Nairobi is one of the best capital cities in the world for mountaineering – on a clear day one can see both Mt. Kenya and Kilimanjaro – and now that the border with Tanzania has been re-opened it should prove an increasingly popular one-off alternative to the Alps. The latest edition of this guide is thus timely and in most respects it is exemplary. Iain Allan has been one of the leaders of the upsurge of climbing in this area over the last decade and is well qualified to describe the doubling of routes. All the new routes are of high quality, on sound rock or ice in the case of Mt. Kenya, and not just gap fillers. The descriptions are succinct and accurate and complemented by route photographs and excellent topographical diagrams. The descriptions of routes on Kilimanjaro are necessarily less detailed but good attention has been paid to the numerous approach routes. The pleasure of Kilimanjaro is the total mountain experience and the lesser known approaches from the south and west can be recommended. The only quibble is the hypochondriacal medical section. Whilst the advice on high altitude pulmonary oedema is absolutely essential reading it is likely to be brought into disrepute by the suggested first aid kit – several kilos worth of prescription drugs. Guides to the excellent rock climbing near Nairobi can be obtained from the Mountain Club of Kenya, P.O. Box 45741 Nairobi.

A.W.

Journals of Kindred Clubs

The Alpine Journal 1982. – There are six articles describing expeditions in the Asian ranges. Among these Geoff Cohen's 'A short walk in the Pilun Gad' stands out, communicating marvellously that sense of being out on a limb and uncertain of the outcome until the last. Cohen's 'limb' was a gorge of 'Tilmanesque' proportions that took six days instead of the expected three to descend – 80 lb. loads and only three days food were minor drawbacks when set against the awesome obstacles in the

gorge. An experience of similar intensity if not duration appears in Mike Fowler's 'Games in a Private World,' one of the four articles specifically concerning rock and ice climbing.

Only three articles on science appear in this number and anticipation at Michael Ward's name was disappointed by an uncharacteristically brief account of 'Science on Mount Kongur.' However there is a rich crop of topographical descriptions – Peter Hillman writes interestingly about the geology and landforms of the Colorado Plateau and its canyons; Dick Turnbull points to rock-climbing prospects in Northern Norway; Robin Collomb contributes a professionally condensed guide to Corsica; and Frank Boothman provides an impressively erudite survey of the mountains of Tibet and the Tibet/China border – 16 pages of closely argued information including a debunking of the claim by American airmen to have seen peaks of over 30,000 feet in the Amne Machin region.

Among the historical writings Janet Adam Smith's affectionate tribute to her family's 100 years membership of the Alpine Club is very readable; while a similar zest for good company and full Mountain-days is shown in Robert Hining's racy 'South African Days' – one of the five articles of anecdotal type. Within the 69 page section of notes, reviews, and obituaries (including an index, Charles Warren compliments the memory of traveller, teacher, and writer John Morris, remarking that the obituary column 'if well done, is history.' He might as well have described this number of the Alpine Journal, full of good things and both elegant and sturdy in production.

P.H.H.

The Alpine Journal 1983. – The Alpine Club have found it no cheaper to produce softback journals so the current Alpine Journal in hard covers looks like a medium size book with 300 pages and 90 illustrations, some in colour. This edition contains 33 main articles of the usual very varied cross section – from 'Bagirathi III' by Bob Barton, through '50th Anniversary Celebrations of the UIAA' by John Hunt and Dennis Gray to 'A Botanical Expedition to the Wakhan Corridor' by C. Grey Wilson. This years selection is better than the preceding few journals, with a good balance between recent hard adventures, exploration and comprehensive comment on the world climbing scene. The 'Area Notes' are particularly informative, with some sobering observations on the Alps by L. Griffin – apparently the routes on the Peigne can be made out from Chamonix by the chalk lines – and on the pressures of alpine style climbing in Nepal by Rab Carrington.

A.W.

[*The Alpine Journal, 1983, is available to Club members at the special price of £9.60, including postage. Send orders to Peter Ledeboer, 28 Shrewsbury House, Chelsea, London SW3 5LW*].

Canadian Alpine Journal, Vol. 66, 1983. – Generous, wide-ranging, serious – these were my reactions to a first-ever dip into the CAJ. The large glossy pages compare well with our own slightly cramped format. Like the numerous black and white photographs they convey a feeling of the great spaciousness that Canada has to offer; and the articles on long trips in vast remote ranges were correspondingly the one I enjoyed most. The writing is generally craftsmanlike but I missed the veins of dry humour one expects to find nearer home. Eight pages on earth science studies look like good wholesome fare, if rather tough chewing for an amateur. Ex-Brits featured prominently in the Canadian Everest Expedition, led by Bill March, whose article reports the tragic loss of four people in two separate accidents and leaves the impression of an over-populated and very traditional trip relying heavily on Sherpas and oxygen.

Geoff Cohen

The Fell and Rock Journal 1983. – In between the wars and particularly in the decade 1933-43 when G. R. Speaker was editor, the Fell and Rock Journal was one of the most literate offerings ever to grace a mountaineer's bookshelf. The current editor has almost been blessed with the same standard and two articles make most enjoyable reading. Both these are in a humorous vein, the one a hilarious

reminiscence of Italian conviviality *before* ski-mountaineering, and the other, equally funny, is a Lakeland dialect-rendering of 'Turrier Racin.' Other articles range in a balanced mix from exploration at home and abroad, history, and anecdote to the recording of new routes – 231; where do they find untouched rock after a century's attention – and a worthwhile book review section covering 29 books. Among the rest

E. Wood-Johnson has written a warm-hearted account of week-ends at Wasdale in the 1920's and '30's, and Barry Johnson a modest but very readable article about his fell-running career.

There are 133 pages of text and 15 black and white illustrations in this edition. Lake District enthusiasts are recommended to buy a copy and others would spend a pleasant hour browsing through the librarian's copy.

P.H.H.

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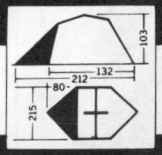

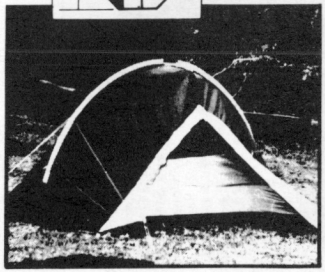

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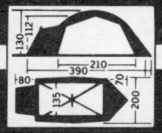

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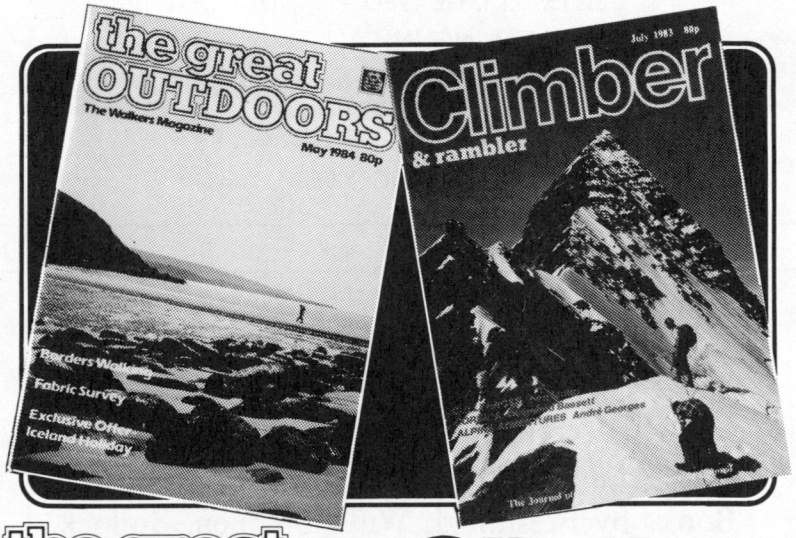

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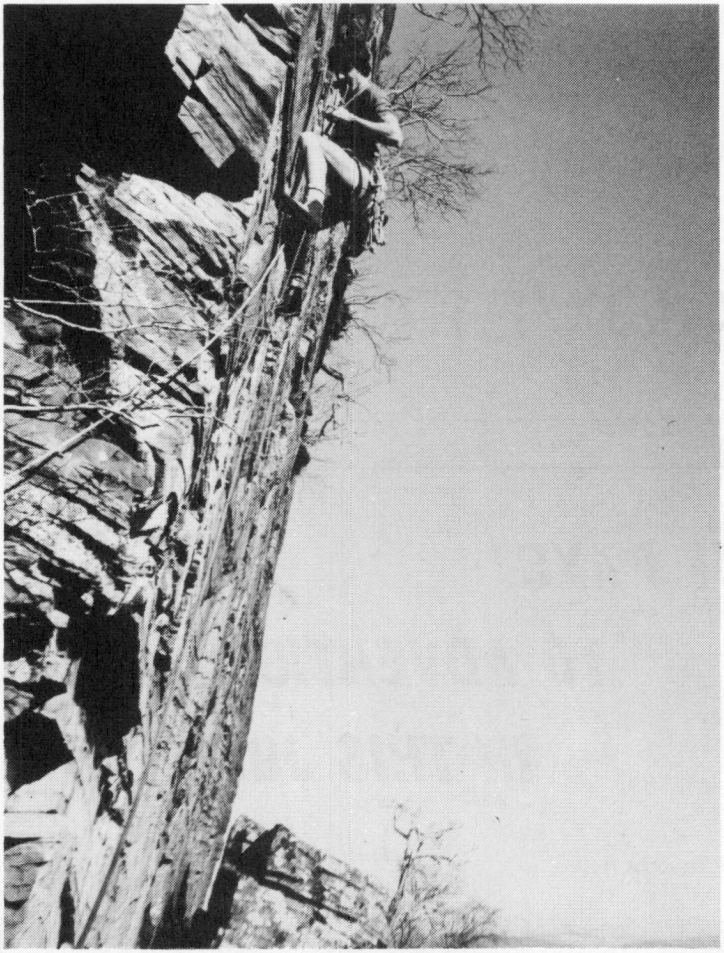

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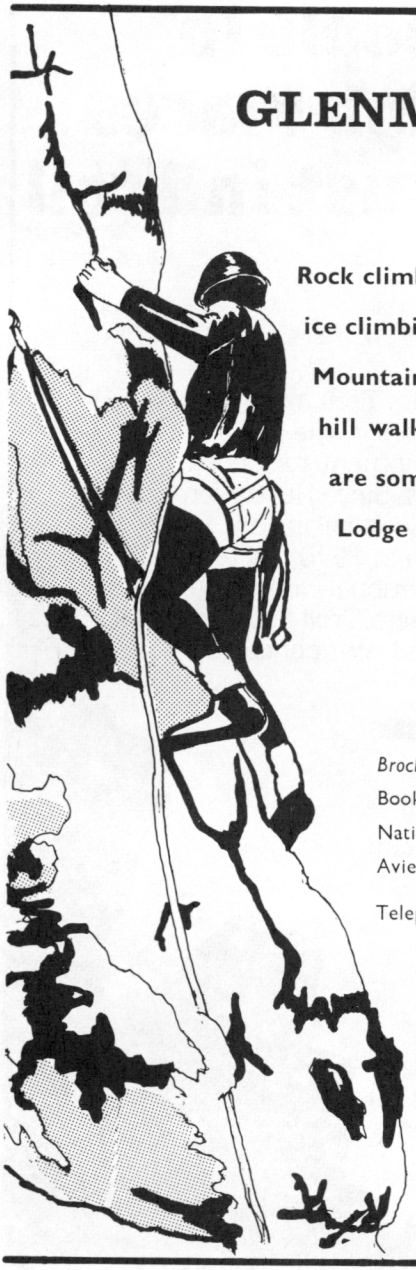

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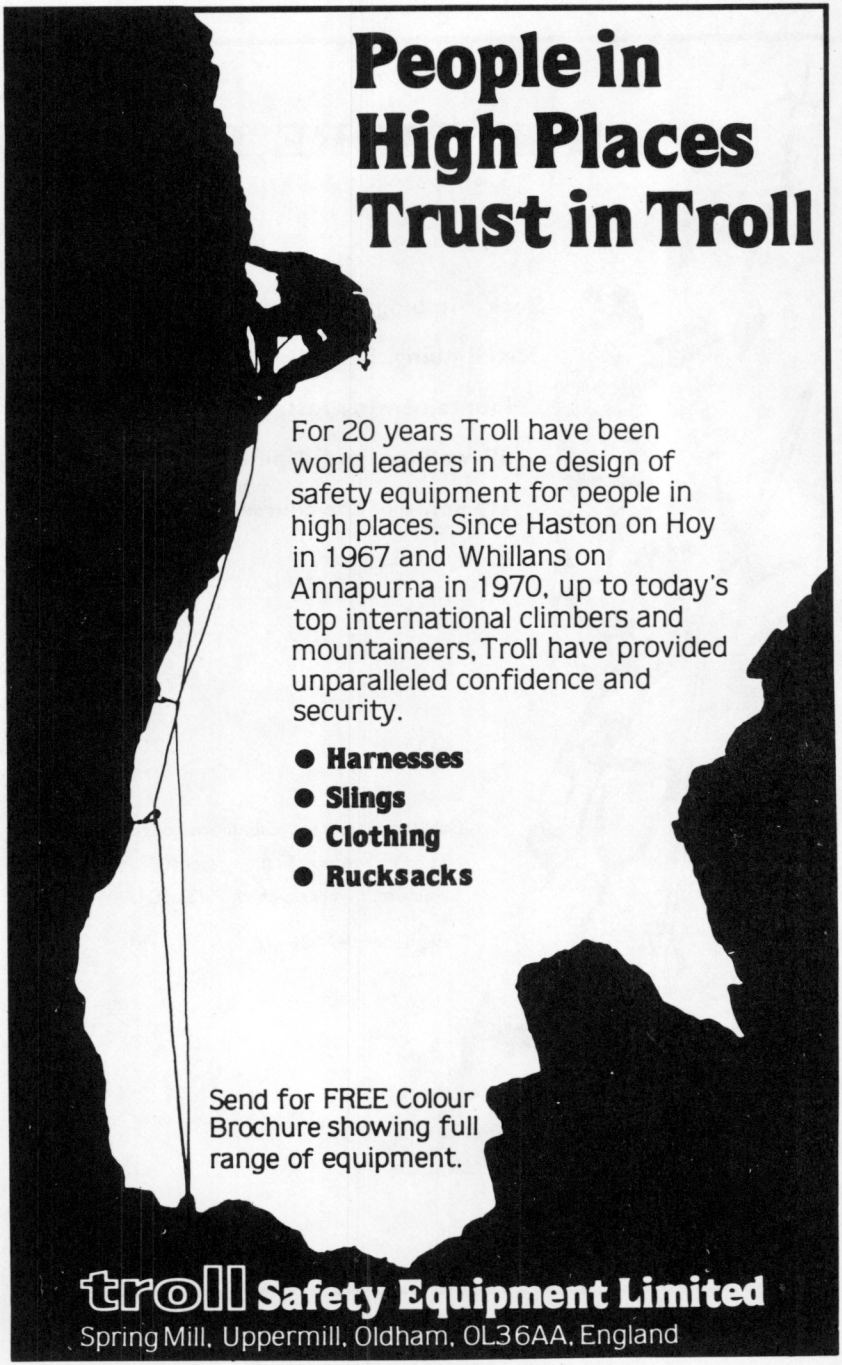
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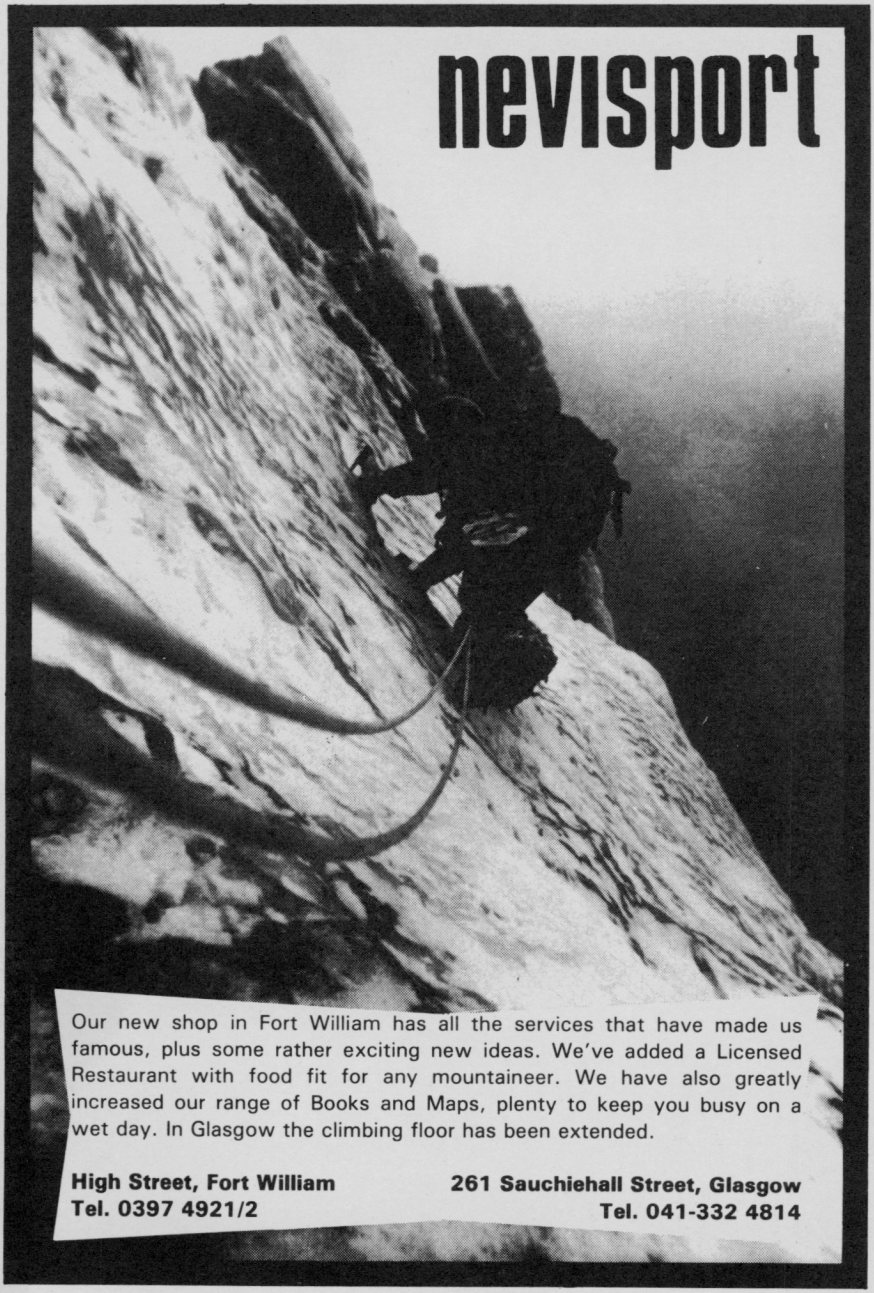
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