



OREAD

1983





OREAD

THE JOURNAL OF THE OREAD MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

1983

CONTENTS

Higher and Higher - Drawn to the Flame	Mike Pearce	3
A Climb of Yesteryear: Napes Needle	Gordon Gadsby	5
Larking on Lundy Island	Ruth Conway	10
Annual Dinner 1982: Photo Report	Mike Pearce	18
'Queer Feet' - A New Route?	Gil Male	21
The Good, The Bad, The Ugly, Me and Him	Jill Towle	24
Tom Thumb - Prince of Darkness	Brian West	26
Climbing in the Fast Lane	Chris Radcliffe	29
Mrs. Wilson's First Lead	Jill Towle	32
The On-Sight Lead	Anon	33
Alps '83: A Summary	'Rock' Hudson	35
Living on the Front Line	Robin Sedgwick	40
Climbing Death-Roll		49
Thrills and Spills on the Ryan-Lochmatter	Tim Barnett	50
Of Tubes and Drips, and Bleeping Sounds, and Urgencies and Things		
The High Atlas of Morocco	Chris Wilson	57
Moroccan Days	Mike Wynne	61
Dolomite Days - The Rosengarten	Ann-Marie Carrington	63
Letters from Jeddah	Colin Hobday	69
Mountains by Bicycle	'Sheik a Leg'	72
Climbing in New Zealand	Tony Smedley	75
Bullstones 1982: Photo Report	Chris Radcliffe	78
Meet Reports 1983	'Rock' Hudson	84
Cheedale	Nat Allen	85
Langsett-Heathy Lea	Ron Chambers	86
Appletreewick	Keith Gregson	87
Lake District	Brian West	88
High Peak, A Poem	Gordon Gadsby	90
Some 30 Years Ago	'Rock' Hudson	91
Obituary: Oliver Jones	Dave Penlington	95
Obituary: Jean Russell	Reg Squires	96
"More Bright Jewels"	Trevor Panther	97
Dovedale Dash 1982 - Oread Results		100
Oh, What a Lovely View	Colin Rapper	101
Technical Notes	Equipment Editor	106
The Page of Bits and Pieces I couldn't find room for anywhere else	Editor	108

Cover Picture: Near the Summit of Mont Blanc

This year's Journal, for a variety of reasons with which I will not bore you, has reverted to normal in failing to make the Dinner, Xmas and even the last of the Indoor Meets - well, there's always the A.G.M.! As with last year's Journal the response from contributors has been good, everything contributed has been used in some form, and the editing has been kept to a minimum. The geographical spread of the articles is well balanced, ranging from local climbing, Meet Reports, Lundy and Scotland to rock climbing in France, mountaineering in the Alps (a very strong section) and Dolomites, and on to Morocco, Jeddah, America, South Africa and New Zealand (Radders, of course, responsible for articles on the more distant locations). More use has again been made of photos, with in particular a Photo Report on the Annual Dinner 1982 - I feel there is still more scope in this direction, expense permitting. From this response, the Club would appear to be in a very healthy state and I see no sign of this changing.

A late night discussion at a recent M.A.M. Meet threw up one of those perennial topics of conversation in established clubs - a topic that I commented on in last year's Editorial - why do younger members not go on the mountain/walking orientated Meets? Ignoring the reverse argument, which is probably just as valid, I looked around the people in the discussion. It occurred to me that the younger members who attend regularly on a Tuesday evening at the Rowing Club, would probably have a fairly fixed view of a lot of these older members - they would be glued to an armchair (emerging only with difficulty to heckle at the A.G.M. or Dinner), hero-worship Mallory or Kirkus, and think that chalk has got something to do with Dover or blackboards (the president, despite attending at the Rowing Club, seems strangely to also hold this latter view). Given that it is not possible for everyone in the Club to attend the Rowing Club, this communication problem (which is what it boils down to) could be alleviated somewhat if members made more use of both the Journal and, particularly, the Newsletter. Without undermining the Journal and its usefulness in this respect, I feel that the power of the immediacy of the Newsletter is overlooked by many members. Where are the short post-Meet reports and snippets of information that everyone should be contributing to the Newsletter? So, for 1984/5, don't be shy - write a few items for the Newsletter each month and give the Meets Secretary the problem of what to leave out.

9.3.1984

Acknowledgements: Thanks again to all those members who made the effort, put pen to paper and hence enabled the production of this Journal. As in previous years, my thanks to Pete Northcote for the printed titles, to Colin Hobday for considerable help in the production of the cover and the printing of the photographs, to Pete Scott for organising the printing of the text and the collation of the Journal, to Mike Pearce for help with the production of original photographs from slides, to Beryl Strike and Eileen Gregson for their excellent cartoons and sketches, and to Ruth Sigley for proof-reading, editing one article that I couldn't make any sense of(!), numerous cups of coffee and the loan of a Pritt stick at a crucial stage of the type setting.

My thanks also to Derbyshire Library Services for allowing me leave to publish an article by their best-selling authoress Ruth Conway, whose latest tome "Local Newspapers in Derbyshire" (D.L.S. 1983) has been top of the Clay Cross Chronicle's best-selling list since its publication late in 1983.

My final thanks to Marion Cooke for reminding me of the excellence of Samivel's cartoons in "Sous l'oeil des Choucas" (Paris, 1932). Looking through them again, I couldn't resist using a few in this year's Journal - for those of you who are not au fait with either French or Franglais, translations are available from the Editor.

Photo Credits: Ann-Marie Carrington p.67, Keith Gregson p.94, Colin Hobday p.68, 'Rock' Hudson p.84, John O'Reilly pp.13,14,17, Mike Pearce pp.18,19,20, Dave Penlington p.93, Chris Radcliffe p.83, Robin Sedgwick pp.45,46.

Higher and Higher - Drawn to the Flame

Mike Pearce

I slumped a little lower on the belay - finally trusting the pegs with my weight. The thin tree crushing into my instep. Christ, why did I get this belay? Hurry up, Paul!

Earlier in the morning, as we shivered in the October dawn, I'd had that familiar, but never expected, tightening of the muscles. I was sure I wasn't nervous - why wouldn't my stomach co-operate? The drive and walk into the gorge went unnoticed. My thoughts centred on the route.

I shrank behind my helmet - hiding from the scorching sun. Rolled down my shirt sleeves. Taking the rope in rhythmically, mechanically. Sink lower. Come on, Paul!

I waited at the bottom of the first pitch, geared, booted, roped. Keen to go. Impatient with Paul to get tied on - 'Come on, let's go, let's go!'. Grunt from Paul. My body shivering in the chill. I jig and dance to an imagined tune to keep warm. Cold fingers stiff on grey limestone as, ready at last, I go. Climbing too fast, wobble into a crack, reach for a peg, clip the sling, heave and roll up onto the ledge - no style, who cares? No resting, attack the crack, 25 feet from the ledge with no gear but I've warmed up and style returns. I'm climbing neatly, feeling good. The tune playing. What a pitch, what a route - what a day! Quick belay and haul the sleepy Paul. Storm the second pitch, the beat goes on.

Christ - he's so slow. Move man, move. I lift my foot off the tree and hang in the harness. The pain moves insidiously up from my toes to my thighs. Time is relative. Every minute on this belay seems endless. Sun and pain.

Paul, awake at last, powers up the third. Fourth pitch and I'm still rolling - move after beautiful move - unstoppable - I'm a climbing superman. Paul on the fifth - high and wild - the fine steep jamcrack reminds me of Derbyshire days. Slot and pull. Slot and pull - I surge up in a flurry of shouts and yelps of joy. This is fun in the sun!

Jesus - how much longer? Don't look at the pegs - they must be O.K.. I ease my weight back onto the tree. The shining depths of the gorge mock me from afar - cool, virgin, unattainable. At last, Paul appears at the bottom of the 30 foot crack.

The sixth is mine and I rush on. The beautiful sun warming my hands and my soul.

Good climbing? No, great climbing! 70 feet, 80 feet - hard enough to be interesting but not too hard. 100 feet out, I pull round a corner. A 30 foot crack slants off. My eyes travel the thin line to meet the sun staring malevolently back. Shit! This looks hard. I clip a peg and step into the crack. Small finger jams, feet on the wall. I go. Dynamic fingery moves, right on my limit, no rest, can't stop - no nuts anyway. Peg above, must clip it, teeter and reach - get it first time, fight the rope in, shaking. I'm nearly off, reach a hold and pull - hell, it's a layback. Reverse to the peg, arms shaking, feet vibrating, no place to rest - up for another go, too tired to layback, too hard to crack climb. Damn! I subside onto the peg, clip in and collapse, head on the rock - heart pounding - hot sun on my neck, the spell broken, demoralised. Where's the rhythm now? Irritation sets in as I stand in the sling, reach up wearily to the small tree, pull through and clip the pegs. Further demoralised, I start my miserable sentence on that belay.

My spirit lifts a little as Paul comes into view. I take in carefully, glad of his company. No longer the invincible climbing machine. We chat as we swap gear and my morale sinks to a new low as he leads off. More agony and no-one to talk to.

We reached the chimneys at last. Shade and security, after the long grim pitches in the sun. A wild layback out of the line and a teetering pocket pitch back in. Paul fights up a nasty, tight chimney and I grunt and heave in pursuit, almost at the point of giving up and sliding back down. This isn't climbing! I want out. Struggle and fight. I'm glad this isn't my lead. I flop onto the cramped belay. And there it is - the infamous chimney pitch. 100 feet of vertical V-chimney like a big piece of angle iron on end. For months I've been asking people about it - 'manky belay' - 'no gear' - 'desperate' - '5b chimneying' - 'a real stopper' - 'Oh, you'll get up it; probably'.

I sort out the gear, dumping all the small stuff on Paul. The cool of the chimney and a new supply of adrenalin refreshes me. This has to be climbed. No gear to pull on. Get up or get off - 800 feet of abseiling down the line. I start. Concentrating, careful, delicate. Push with the outside foot, hands on the wall behind, back up, foot up, keep moving. One toe edged into a vertical wrinkle is all that holds me in. Don't worry, just climb - it'll stay, move again. Paul speaks and I shut him up too harshly. If I lose my concentration now....he's 20 feet below, directly in line..... The crack at the back narrows. I carefully reach in with a large Friend - damn! Too soon. Clip it back on my rack. Two more moves up. 25 feet above Paul, 1500 feet above the river - how much higher than the rest of the world?

The Friend slots in and I'm bombproof. The hard rock music plays and I'm rolling again. Move and rest. Concentrate and go. Don't lunge for the tree. Change sides. A peg! Clip and climb. I rise higher and higher, drawn by the light at the end of the tunnel. Another Friend. The chimney narrows. I reach around the arete, stretching for a finger-sinking jug, abandon all caution and swing, yelling and baying, onto the belay - what a move! What a pitch!

And then there was the last pitch - a full run-out with the face opening out until I'm there, pulling over the threshold. I'm on the edge of the old world. Renewed, my heart searches for my future in the new world. What a route, what a day, what a life!

* * * * *

An ascent of 'La Demande' on Falaise de l'Escales in the Verdon Gorge, France, by Mike Pearce and Paul Laver in October 1983. The title of the article is taken from 'Drawn to the Flame', a song by Roy Harper.



A Climb of Yesteryear: Part 1

Climbing Napes Needle by A. A. Milne

Ken and I went to the Lakes together in August 1902, staying at a farmhouse in Seathwaite. We had decided to do a little rock climbing. We knew nothing about it, but had brought a rope, nailed boots, and the standard book by Owen Glynne Jones. The climbs in this book were graded under such headings as Easy, Medium, Moderately Stiff and Extremely Stiff. We decided to start with a Moderately Stiff one, and chose Napes Needle on Great Gable, whose charm is that on a postcard it looks Extremely Stiff. Detached by the hands of a good photographer from its context, it becomes a towering pinnacle rising a thousand feet above the abyss. Roped together, since it seemed to be the etiquette, Ken and I would scale this mighty pinnacle, and send postcards to the family.

We were a little shy about the rope when we started out, carrying it lightly over the arm at first, as if we had just found it and were looking for its owner and then more grimly over the other arm, as one who makes for some well down which some wanderer has fallen. The important thing was not to be mistaken for what we were: two novices who had been assured that a rope made climbing less dangerous, when, in fact, they were convinced that it would make climbing very much more so. There was also the question of difficulty. To get ourselves to the top of the Needle would be Moderately Stiff; but it was (surely) Extremely Stiff to expect us to drag a rope up there too. I felt all this more keenly than Ken, because it had already been decided, anyhow by myself, that I

was to 'lead'. Not only had I won the Gymnastics Competition Under-14 in 1892, but compared with Ken's my life was now of no value. Ken had just got engaged to be married. If I led, we might both be killed (as seemed likely with this rope) or I might be killed alone, but it was impossible that I would ever be breaking the news to his lady of an accident which I had callously survived. I was glad of this, of course; but I should have liked it better if it had been I who was engaged and Ken who was being glad.

We scrambled up the lower slopes of Great Gable and reached the foot of the Needle. Seen close it was a large splinter of rock about sixty feet high, shaped like an acute angled pyramid with a small piece of the top cut off, leaving a flat summit which could just take Ken and me and (we supposed) the rope. We had practised tying ourselves on, and we now tied ourselves on. I just started up, dragging the rope behind me.

The Napes Needle has this advantage over, from what I hear, the Matterhorn: that the difficult part is not really dangerous and the dangerous part is not really difficult. The dangerous part, as one would expect, comes at the top. One begins by forcing oneself diagonally up a flat slab of rock, the left leg from knee to ankle wedged in a crack, and the rest of oneself free as a trolley-bus to follow the left leg upwards. Only the reassurance of the book, as shouted up to me by Ken that this, though difficult, was not dangerous, kept me at it. No doubt my leg was jammed - no doubt about it, as I found when I tried to move it; no doubt I couldn't roll down the mountain without it; but the rest of my body felt horribly defenceless, and every nerve in it was saying 'This is silly, and one should stick to Essex'. With a sudden jerk, I loosened my leg and got it in a little higher up (which meant twice as far to fall). I puffed on until a moment came when I could go no further. Knee still in crack, heart still in mouth, body still in vacuo, I sidled backwards to Ken.

'It's no good. Sorry'.

'Were you really stuck?'

'Absolutely. There's more in this than we thought.'

'Shall I try?'

At some other time I might have said 'My dear man, if I can't, you can't'. At some other time I might have said 'For Maud's sake, no!'. At this time I said 'Yes, do.' I wanted to lie down.

In a little while he was back down with me, and we were studying the Easy group.

'Suppose I came up behind you and pushed a bit?'

'Is that right?'

'Well, I don't see what else I can do.'

'Nor do I. I don't like the look of the dangerous bit at the top, do you?'

'It may look better when we get there.'

'Yes. Well, let's get there. Dash it, we can't just carry the rope home again. Come on.'

It was a little easier this time; I felt more like a tram, and less like a bus; I got to the sticking place and waited for Ken's hand to reach my foot. With its support I straightened my knee and got a handhold higher up. We went on doing this until Ken had reached the sticky place, by which time I was in sight of home. Soon we were sitting side by side on a broad shelf, puffing happily. The 'difficult' part was over.

There remained a vertical slab of rock in the shape of the lower four-fifths of

an isosceles triangle. It was about fifteen feet high, and there was a ledge like a narrow mantelpiece halfway up. Owen Glynn Jones (who may have been a nuisance at home) made a practice of pulling himself on to mantelpieces by the fingers, so as to keep in training, and no doubt it is in the repertory of every real climber. We were merely a couple of tourists. When in doubt, we collaborated. Ken reached up to the ledge and grasped it firmly, and I climbed up him. When I was standing on the ledge, my fingers were a couple of feet below the top.

In making these climbs it is impossible to lose the way. Every vital handhold is registered in the books, every foothold scored by the nails of previous climbers. To get to the top I wanted one more foothold and one handhold, and I knew where they were. I shuffled to the left and looked round the corner.

On the precipitous left-hand face of the pyramid, a little out of reach, there was an excrescence of rock the size and shape of half a cricket ball. That was the handhold. Just within reach of raised foot and bent knee a piece of rock sloped out for a moment at an angle of 45°, before resuming the perpendicular. That was the foothold. I should imagine that the whole charm of the Napes Needle to an enthusiast rests on that forbidding foothold. To a non-enthusiast, as I was at that moment, the whole charm of a foothold is that it holds the foot solidly, at right angles to whatever one is climbing. This didn't. Could one's nails (and Jones) be trusted? When all one's weight was on that slippery looking, nail-scratched slope, while one grabbed for the cricket ball, did one simply disappear down the left-hand face, leaving Ken with a lot of rope and no brother, or did one's head appear triumphantly over the top? That was the question, and there was only one way to find the answer. After all, there must be something in this rope business, or people wouldn't carry them about. If I fell, I could only fall thirty feet. It was absurd to suppose that I would then break in half; there was no record of anyone having broken in half; no, I should simply dangle for a little, assure Ken's anxious head that all that blood he saw everywhere was only where I had hit myself on the way down, and then climb gaily up the rope to safety. All this was just the give and take of the climber's life. Without the rope one would be a dead man, but with it the whole climb was child's play or just plain folly?

Oh, well

It was delightful to sit on the top of the Needle and dangle our legs, and think 'We've done it'. About once every ten years it comes back to me that, in addition to all the things I can't do and haven't done, I have climbed the Napes Needle. So have thousands of other people. But they, probably, knew something about it.

* * * * *

An extract by A.A.Milne from his autobiography 'It's Too Late Now' published in 1939. Submitted by Gordon Gadsby.



A Climb of Yesteryear: Part II

Climbing Napes Needle by Gordon Gadsby

It was a warm, sun-dappled day in the mountains of central Lakeland, with great fleecy white clouds drifting slowly above the towering rock spires of Great Gable. With Colin Hobday and George Reynolds I was climbing Napes Needle, the most famous rock pinnacle in England.

Although less than one hundred feet high, the ascent is difficult and exposed, as the Needle holds a commanding position over one thousand feet above the valley floor. The rough rock was cold to the touch as I climbed in shadow up the prominent crack on the west wall of the pinnacle. Colin carefully paid out the rope as I inched my way up the steep forty-foot high wall.

Ten minutes later I stepped round a rock spike and into sunshine on the airy south face of the Needle. In that clear space below I could see the great sweep of rock, scree and jumbled boulders right down as far as the sparkling waters of the Lingmell Beck in the valley bottom. Far beyond the river, the neat farms and fields around Wasdale Head led down to the placid surface of Wastwater, Cumbria's deepest lake.

Above me, a slab rose up to the neck of the Needle, the holds were good and soon I was anchored on that narrow perch below the most spectacular summit block. Fifteen minutes later, Colin and George had joined me on the stance.

George was keen to lead the final pitch which, on close inspection, seemed

devoid of hold and, at least, Severe in grade. However, it held no fears for George; he climbed the vertical edge then traversed on a tiny sloping ledge to the front of the overhanging block. He grinned down to us between his boots. 'It's a bit thin here, mate,' he called. 'You'll love it.' So saying, he made a strenuous upward movement and mantelshelved cleanly up the smooth wall and onto the top. Soon we were together on that much-coveted rock steeple - the view was great - the situation fantastic.

Later that day, we ascended Arrowhead Ridge which, although 250 feet higher, seemed easy by comparison to the Needle. From the Ridge Top we scrambled to the summit of Great Gable at 2949'. The view was magnificent; in the South, the Scafell summit dominated the scene, craggy ramparts stark against the evening sky; in the South-east beyond the long ridge of Glaramara, the Langdale Pikes were bathed in sunlight; South-west was Wastwater and the sea.

We descended quickly by the way we came, anxious to be back at the tents by dark. When we reached the vicinity of Arrowhead Ridge, we followed the popular climbers track that scrambles down between the rock ridges, taking great care as the rock is reputed loose. Colin and I were in front and had just negotiated the last rock band in the gully. Soon we would reach easier ground, then a quick scree run down to the river and a pleasant three mile walk back to camp.

Suddenly a loud cry - 'Look out below!' came from George. We looked behind us. He was part way down the rock band. Beneath his feet the wall was breaking up! Great blocks as big as oil drums trundled slowly towards us, lurching this way and that between the narrow walls, smaller stones and rocks whined and ricocheted above us. There was no way out - Colin and I pressed ourselves flat against the gully sides as the blocks crashed and splintered around our heads and bodies. The air was full of choking yellow dust and the frightening smell of sulphur - every second we thought would be our last. Miraculously, thirty seconds later we emerged, dishevelled, cut and bruised, but without serious injury. Above us, George was hanging from his fingertips above a gulf of air and was quickly rescued.

Later, as we walked back along the valley track with other Oreads, Ray Colledge told us that the rock fall was bigger than any he had seen in the Alps and showed us where the rocks had come to rest a thousand feet below in the middle of the Lingmell River. It was a sobering sight; I thought of the words of the Chinese philosopher, Confucius, 'Absence of body is better than presence of mind' - somehow we seemed to have been blessed with both that day.



Larking on Lundy Island

Ruth Conway

An entertainment with a Cast of Thousands (plus Absent Friends) including such star turns as

The Drinking Man with his friend and Cook, the Non-Drinking Man (a kind of Push-Me-Pull-You)
Morecambe and Wise
The Usurpers
The Prof. and his Dignified Pal
The Gang of Four (a wild and desperate bunch who, deprived of their normal pursuits such as stealing candy from babies, were forced to climb and thus became the 'E' Men)
The Moral Re-armament Brigade or Spiderman
The Face that launched a 1,000 ships (and sank a few pints)
The Travelling Salesman and the Librarian
The Actress and the Bishop
A Builder and his Mate
The Enthusiast
Five Hundred Thousand Performing Fleas
A Rushing Mighty Wind

The Scene

A high, rolling, barren island; winds light to variable. By day, wide open spaces and endless sweeping skylines - at night, the lights of Ilfracombe so close you could swim to the Chippie. Limited, uncompromising - a resting place to realise your soul or drive you out of your mind. But, then again, we were only there for the laughs (surely not the beer?) and the climbing - the climbing was something else. The length, the variety, the sheer quality of the routes. I think it has spoiled me for the rest of the world.

Prelude

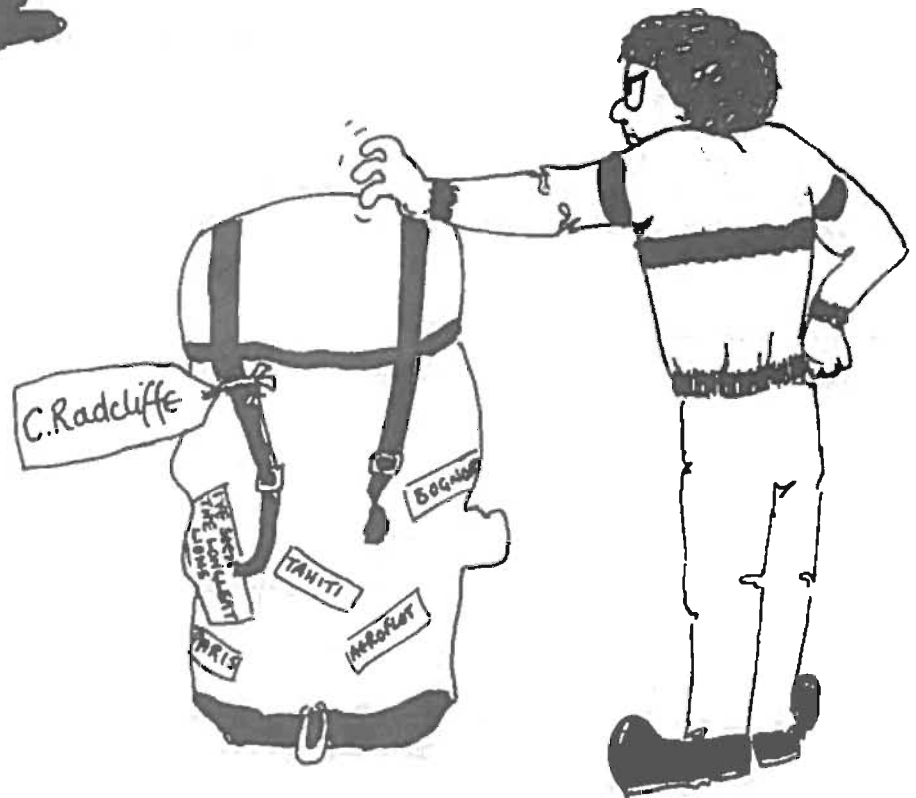
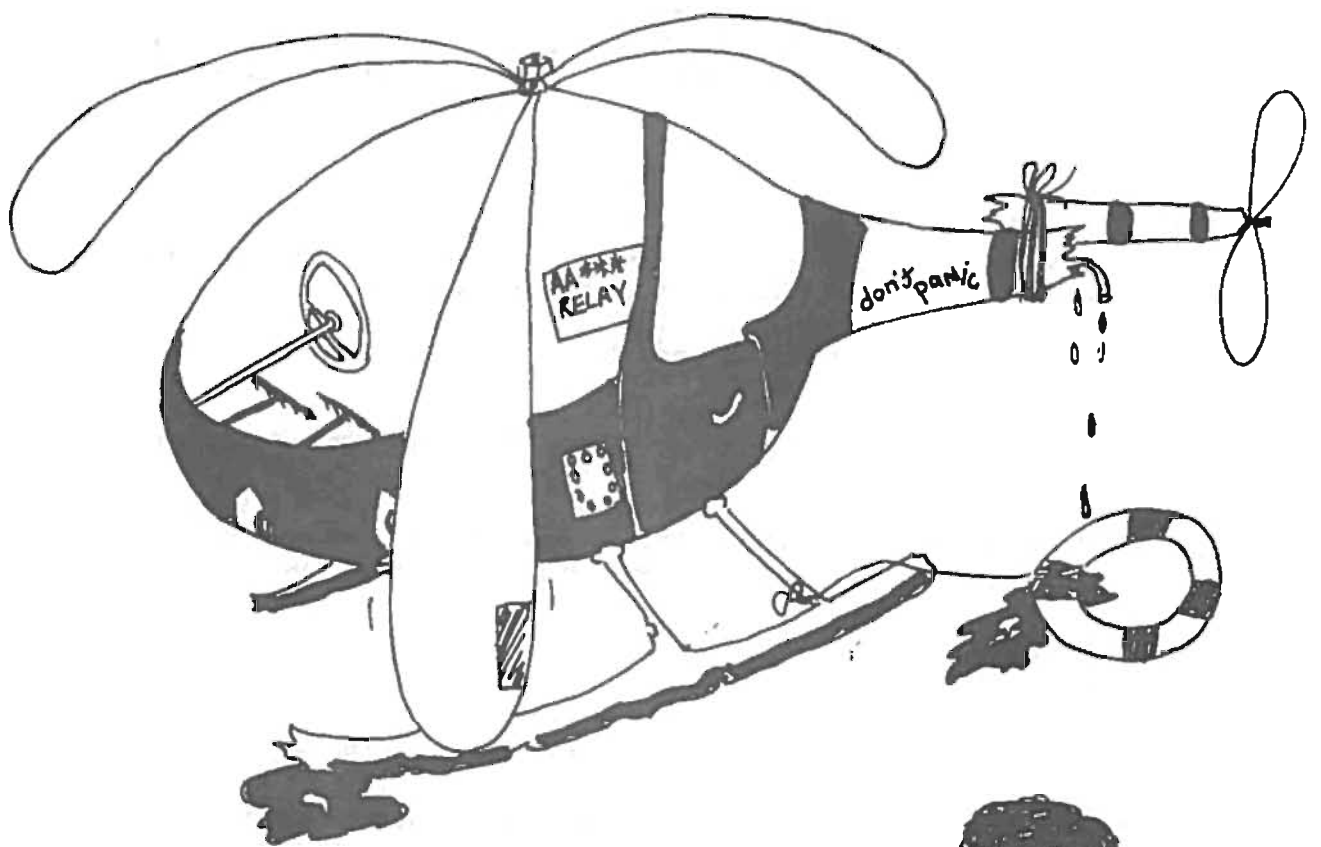
A muddy field.

'This is quite decidedly the most basic airport I've ever been to.'

A caravan which appears to be about to take off and float away, windsock waving merrily, in the general direction of Penzance - its counterpart on Lundy has boulders on the roof. The Castle Air girl started her spiel -

'In the unlikely event of an emergency.....'

The rest of her words are drowned by the light breeze, onset of gentle drizzle, and Freddie and Al coming to blows over possession of the front seat on the flight. She abandoned us to our fate and turned to deal with John Heald who,



very much on his dignity, was taking grave exception to his re-arranged flight time.

'Is that it? No wonder they said suitcases would damage the fabric. It'll take one look at Radders and disintegrate!'

'When you come to think about it, logically I mean, it's a miracle these things go up in the air at all - I mean, why don't they just screw themselves into the ground?'

The Ranch

'Hey! It's a bit palatial up here, isn't it! Rugs, pictures, even the Comfy Chairs. You could hold a party in that fireplace.'

'What have you got then?'

'What used to be the outside loo and the rest of them are in a sort of converted cowshed on the left.'

'Teach you to economise.'

'There was only Scottie actually asked for the cheap end - I shall murder O'Reilly when I see him.'

In the event, we set off in moderate harmony, we of the up-market Old Light Upper, and the Boys from the Backyard, in the general direction of

The Devil's Slide

'You can't climb in this wind, it's crazy!'

'Perfect conditions, you'll be glued to the rock, you'll be blown up it!'

Sober prophecy: Richard, his jacket blown over his head, heard his guidebook slip from his pocket - looked down - no sign - it sat some 30 feet above him, fluttering on the slab, patiently awaiting his arrival.

Not content with Albion, we ran the gauntlet of the rising tide to snatch a second route. Yet another squall arrived, the rain bouncing across the slab, the waves crashing at my heels - Come back Stanage, all is forgiven.

Meanwhile, back at the Ranch...

The Old Light is warm and welcoming, shuttered windows keeping out 90% of the rain.

'Well, it doesn't look as if Gregson and his mob have made it then.'

'Who's with him?'

'Ron, Chris Bryan, Roger Lar....'

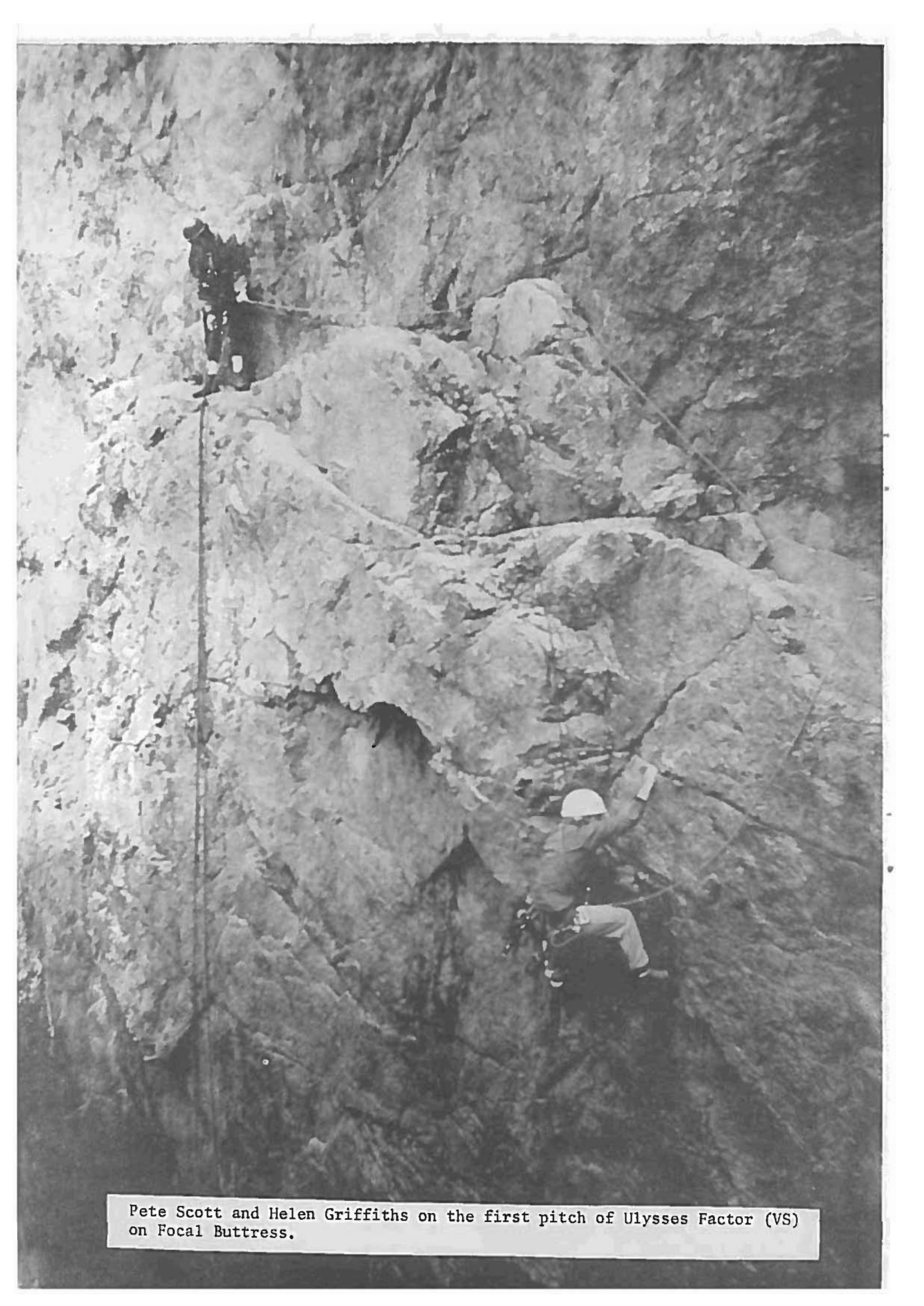
'Oh well! Say no more! Chopper's crashed - smash on the motorway - attacked by mad axeman - nothing would surprise me, nothing, if Roger's involved!'

'They'll sort something out. They'll be here on the boat tomorrow.'

Meanwhile, two of the inhabitants of outer darkness have slunk into the vacant spaces in the luxury quarters with surreptitious sleeping bags; and the Gang of Four, having cooked two-and-a-half pounds of everybody else's mince in the belief that it was their own half pound, have already been raiding the food boxes.



Chris Radcliffe, Ruth Conway and Fred Phillips having just completed Albacore (HVS) on the Old Light Cliff.



Pete Scott and Helen Griffiths on the first pitch of Ulysses Factor (VS) on Focal Buttress.

The Nightlife

'Well folks, well folks, what's it going to be tonight then. Are we going down town - or shall we stay local?'

No-one stayed local much except the frustrated Drinking Man whose Cook never had tea ready before 10.05 pm. Two unlit fields past the eerie whine of the windmill that generates the island's electricity in its own, sweet, vague, erratic way (dim, bright, cutting out momentarily, and curfew at 12.30 sharp). A marvel of modern technology governed by a big switch marked ON and OFF. Then down Lundy High Street (!) to that social centre of the universe where you knock to enter, drink reasonable ale at 75p a pint, fight for seats, squabble over the Climbing Book and discuss technical gradings.

'The thing about 5B is it demands a dynamic approach.'

'No, it doesn't. All that 5B demands is a rope from me, all the way to the top of the crag.'

What it's really all about

In retrospect, the early part of the week was the best of the weather, all ticking off the recommended routes and adding up the daily star rating - Albacore, American Beauty, Albion, Eclipse, Diamond Solitaire, Formula One (on which the Salesman logged a lot of flying time and a most spectacular bruise), Conger, Satan's Slip, Stingray, Ulysses Factor. The Enthusiast put up a new route - about H.V.S. 5a, youth, (on close examination of the supplement this turned out to be Desperado E2, 5b) - you pays your money, you takes your choice. No bad news except a nasty time had by all who had the misfortune to do Apsara, and John H. and the Prof. disapproved strongly of the finish to Cow Pie. Helen had a laugh-a-minute day getting soaked to the skin while belayed 20 feet up Albacore, followed by being hauled bodily up the aid move on Roadrunner. This being due to a certain lack of forethought on the part of her intrepid leader who has never quite realised that we are not all 'Son of Spiderman'.

Day by day, the Usurpers scanned the horizon with furrowed brows in constant fear lest they sight a gallant little vessel, Jolie Rogere at the helm, battling its way towards the Landing Bay.

'If I see 'em, it's up to the Battery and see if we can get those cannon working, or it's back to the shithouse for thee an' me, lad.'

The statutory wet morning. Lie in late and down the pub at lunchtime with an easy conscience. It was hot and steamy down in the Slave Quarters. Much examination of flea bites - the winnets have struck again - gleeful comparison of their evil habits and preferred feeding grounds -

'Do you absolutely have to start off every morning by mentioning the contents of your underpants?'

'What's those on your back, Pete - bedsores?'

Next day dawned fine and fair - and yet - What is this? Strong men sitting about sipping coffee at 10 o'clock.

'What's up with you lot. American Beauty today, isn't it?'

'Just get out there kid - see if you can stand up.'

Come to think, the wind had freshened just a trifle. We went walking round the South Light - well, I say walk, more a series of uncontrolled dashes from one point of contact to the next. Half the Navy was sheltering in the harbour. Even the Enthusiast downed three pints at lunchtime and then went bouncing across the fields, announcing that he'd never missed a day's climbing on Lundy yet - must get out, just the job, brisk walk to Seal Slab, etc..

Somehow, I was ordained as the sacrificial victim, scurrying, somewhat inebriated, at his heels on a whistle-stop tour of the West Coast. The clouds were blazing across the sky, in Arch Zawn the sea was a howling cauldron and, as Chris was prospecting some 50 feet above Seal Slab, it forcibly persuaded him that the East Coast was a drier, if less exciting, option - so we beat a diplomatic retreat to Knight Templar Rock. Another world, peaceful, sunny, the ships lying gently at anchor.

The 'E' Men had done Ulysses Factor, rejoicing in the waves and the flying foam -

'That's the way to do a V.S., really wild man!'

'I reckon it's that bloody windmill making this weather. Let's go and switch it off.'

'Watch it, that's all that keeps us afloat. We're steaming up the Atlantic at 30 knots.'

'So that's why Gregson and the lads have never turned up - can't catch up with us.'

Finale

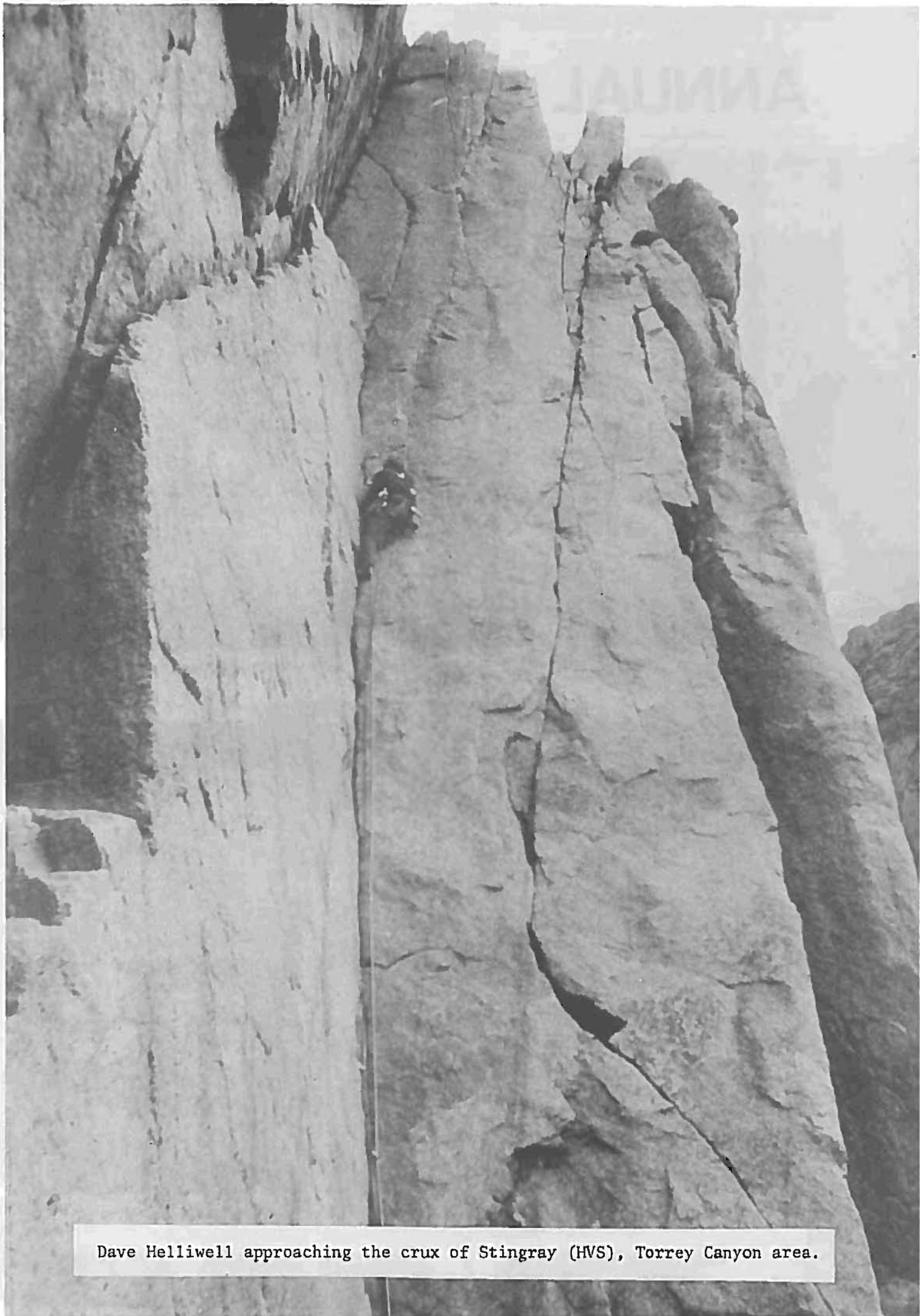
Suddenly it was Saturday. The Enthusiast woke us at crack of dawn for a last minute onslaught on Albacore. 230 feet of abseil, joy and laughter getting past the knot (why was I dangling upside down?), the sea going splish-splash a bit hungry like. A superb pitch. Word spread and the Comedy Duo leapt out of their pits, grabbed their gear and came sliding like demented spiders down the ropes to join the last-fling party as our Leader set the cameras rolling on Sunset Promontory.

And so it was - a quick clean around, pack up, a last pint, onto the little whirlybird and back to the real world.

It was very quiet and warm in Devon. I still miss the wind.

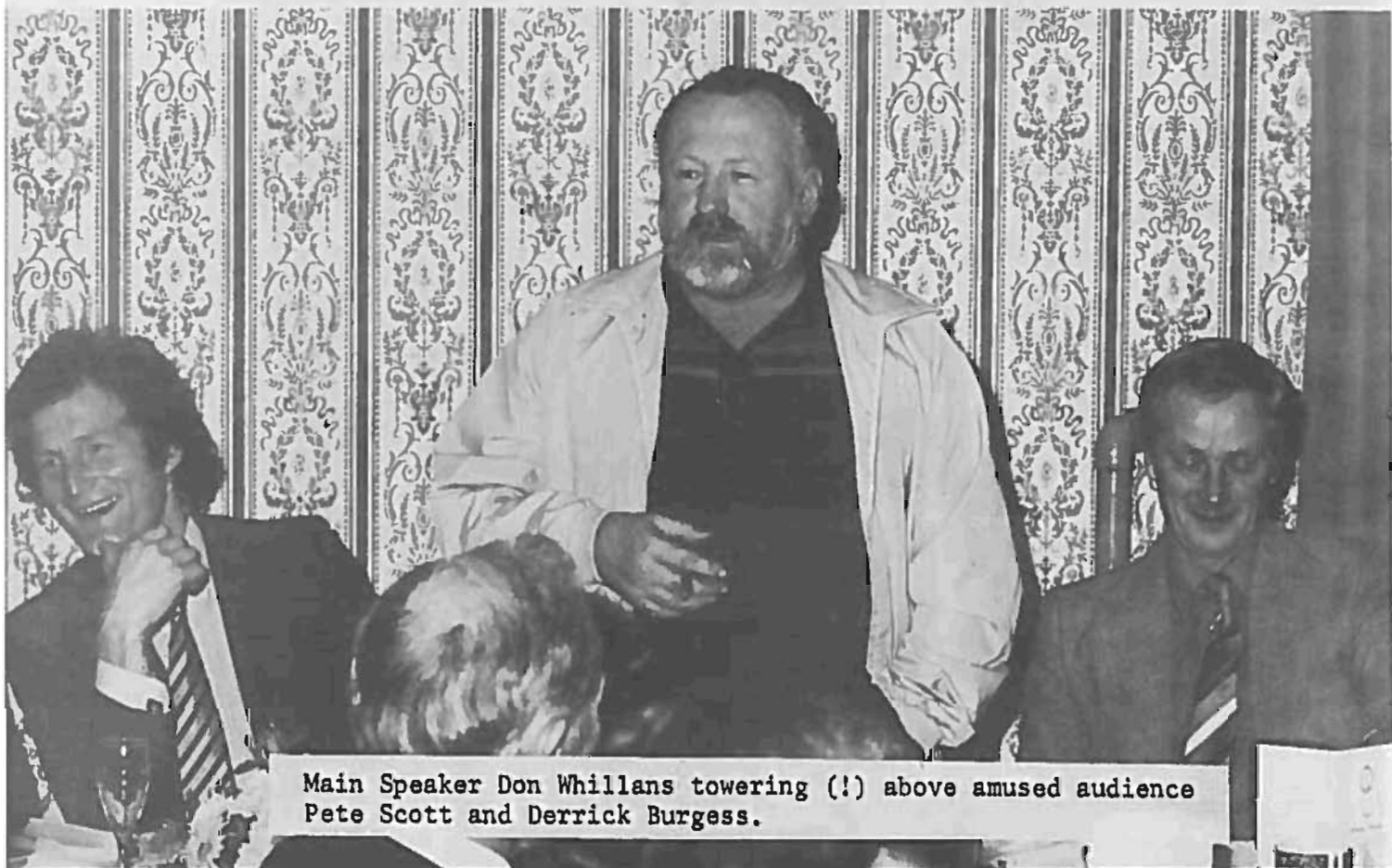
#####

The Lundy Meet took place from 10th to 17th September 1983. We stayed at the Old Light Complex. The Meet was organised by John O'Reilly and was attended by John, Dave Helliwell, Chris Radcliffe, Stuart Godfrey, Edith Colley, Mark Pearce, Richard Freestone, Pete Scott, Helen Griffiths, Gil Male, Al Ames, Tony Raphael, John Heald, Steve Clegg, Brian Wilderspin, Steve Gough, Stuart Campbell, Fred Phillips, Ruth Conway. The four who should have been there but sadly were stranded after a car breakdown caused them to miss the helicopter, were Keith Gregson, Ron Sant, Chris Bryan and Roger Larkam.

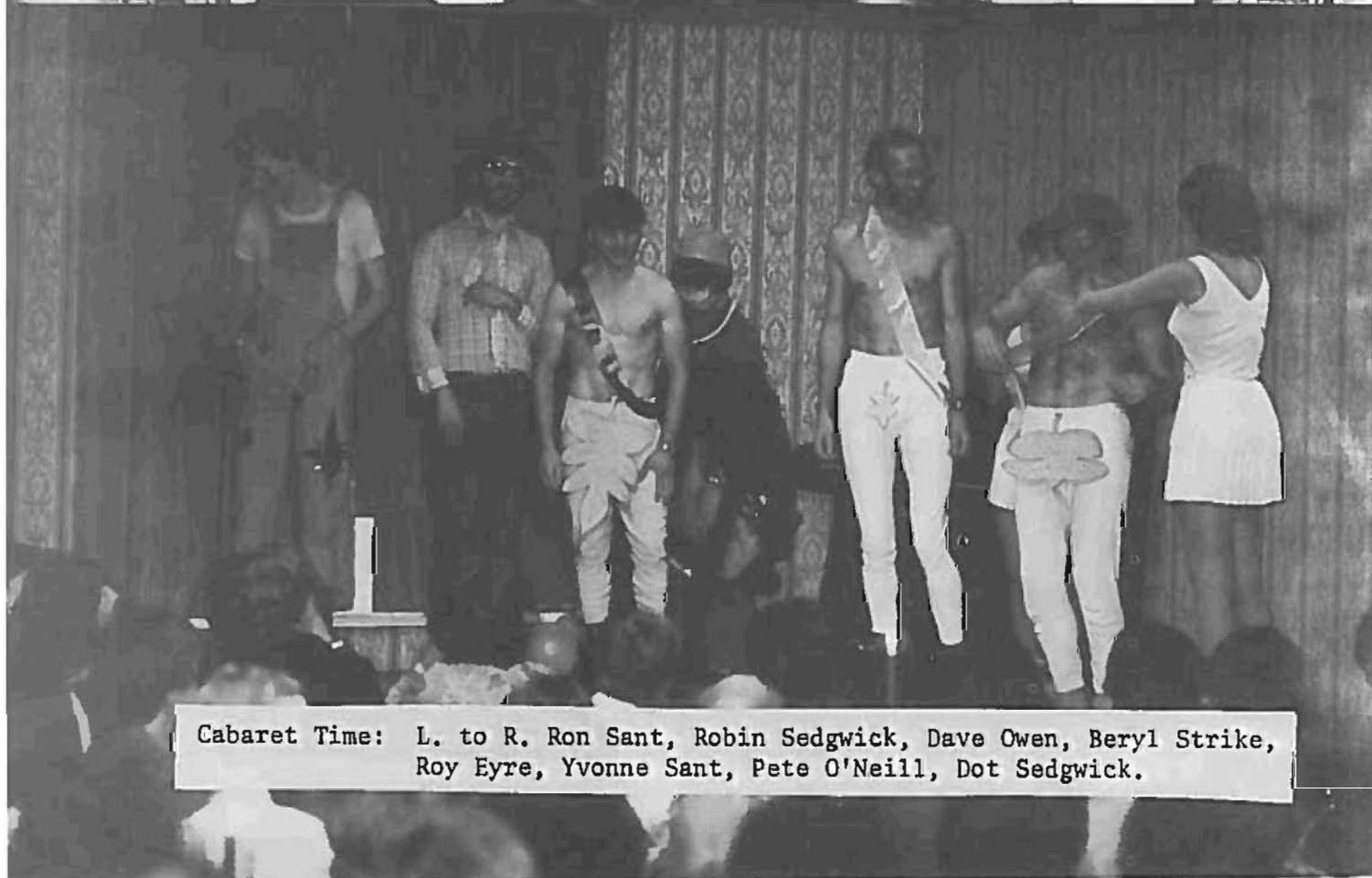


Dave Helliwell approaching the crux of Stingray (HVS), Torrey Canyon area.

ANNUAL DINNER 1982



Main Speaker Don Whillans towering (!) above amused audience Pete Scott and Derrick Burgess.



Cabaret Time: L. to R. Ron Sant, Robin Sedgwick, Dave Owen, Beryl Strike, Roy Eyre, Yvonne Sant, Pete O'Neill, Dot Sedgwick.



Cabaret Time: Elton Ron allowing his fans a few moments to settle before launching into his next hit single.



Above: President Pete Scott and Guest Speaker Don Whillans
 Below: Master of Ceremonies Bob Pettigrew and Guest Speaker Will McLewin



'Queer Feet' - A New Route?

Gil Male

I see little point in beating around the bush, however insignificant or even significant the facts of the matter may be. Approximately one eon ago Dave Owen suggested a day out somewhere or other. Now, those of you who know Dave will realise that 'somewhere or other' means gritstone and that during summer (not during daylight hours as this is precious time reserved for climbing) he is regularly seen in pubs/cafes/rowing club etc continually muttering 'excellent' and displaying a pair of hands, the backs of which have an appearance similar to the coat of a Freisian cow. This is symptomatic of a being a gritstone crack freak. Not really our type dear, much too manly.

Well, knowing that the first thing in Dave's mind on a day out would be some horrendous fissure, the plan adopted was firstly, a softening-up procedure and, secondly, to head for a crag with not a single hand-sinking crag in sight. The softening-up procedure, I thought, was simple. On the arranged day I appeared, carried his sack from the house and strapped it firmly to the back of my 750 cc Honda; a spare helmet was provided to complete the trap. Well, this worked beautifully. Dave clambered onto the back and off we went, not exceeding 70 mph as we were in a built-up area. Once on the open road, however, things were different. A twitching, jumping, wriggling body became apparent. The plan was working. After cranking over past Sudbury Prison, the road becomes ideal for hairy, high-speed manoeuvres on a big bike. Just the job!

Past the Howard Arms, footrests grinding. Not an easy thing to do, that. Pass the Howard Arms - it serves Marstons Ales. Through a nice 70 mph right-hander just past Cubley. Past Darley Moor race circuit, to complete the image, and then down the bank into Ashbourne. Bloody Hell - the lights are on red so we have to stop.

Twin disc brakes cause the front wheel to flutter a little as we come to a halt. A feverish tapping on my shoulder ensued. Oh, Dave, I'd forgotten about you. O.K.? Well, he was, he'd enjoyed every minute of it! If anything, it had invigorated him!! This really put pressure on phase two of the plan. I needed time to think things over so headed for Aldery Cliff, Earl Sterndale. No hand cracks there and the 'Quiet Woman' nearby - Marstons Ales, of course.

On arriving at Aldery, a curious impish creature leapt off the bike and started dancing around, muttering 'excellent' and 'goes well, doesn't it'. Phase one was not a complete flop, however, perhaps he hadn't noticed this was limestone. It was Aldery. There wasn't a single raunging crack in sight. 'Well, what are we going to do?'. 'Does go well, doesn't it?'. 'Excellent!'.

The crag was dry and a lot of enthusiasm was emanating from Dave. Unfortunately, enthusiasm can be infectious and after careful studying of the guidebook, it became apparent that there may be a gap. Not much of a one, if at all. We weren't sure but we thought we'd have a look anyway. It was a steep slab just to the right of The Spider. It is an obvious feature which, judging by the moss on the upper part, hadn't been climbed before. The question was, could it be

protected? After standing at the bottom and looking up, it was obvious that resting places were not in vogue. Once on the upper slab, the climbing would be thin and sustained, making it impossible to stay in any one place for very long. We both decided to abseil down the thing to see if protection could be arranged. Fortunately, two pockets were cleaned out and each took a small wire. A third point of protection existed at about twenty-five feet where the route moved left onto the arete of The Spider, common with Burst.

The enthusiasm was still there, but after seeing the climbing involved and the quality of the protection it was of a very nervous nature. Dave then dropped the bombshell. 'You're the slab man - you'll cream that, I prefer something you can get your hands into like a good crack'. I suggested the Quiet Woman, but Dave knows how to work on your weaknesses at times of stress - 'Yeh, okay, after we've done this'. That was it. It was like a red rag to a bull or, more accurately, like a carrot to a donkey.....until we again stood below the thing. Weakness ensued. We nearly walked away. Then an idea. The hard men do it. Why can't we? I abseiled down. Placed the three runners in the previously cleaned slots and we did it. The climbing was continuously thin and very good. But we felt we had cheated, although we both agreed it was great and we had really enjoyed the route.

The route weighed in our minds all summer and it was curious how often it became a topic of conversation between us. It had to be done properly. It was funny how that almost insignificant piece of rock had become a fascination. We decided to leave it until a year had elapsed, to give our ascent some form of respectability, before attempting a clean lead.

The day came on 29th January 1983 after Dave had bought a new pair of rock boots - Galibier Contact Cuirs (pronounced 'Queers'), which we were told were very good for limestone. After a breaking-in period on The Roaches boulders, the idea formed. Why not see how good they are and do the route.

So, there we were again. At the bottom of that slab. The route starts between the arete of The Spider and the corner of Burst. A few very thin moves to start with for about 15 feet and then easier climbing to the arete looking down The Spider. The climbing can be made easier by using the arete but this is unnecessary, and it is better not to as the climbing is then more in character with the upper part of the route.

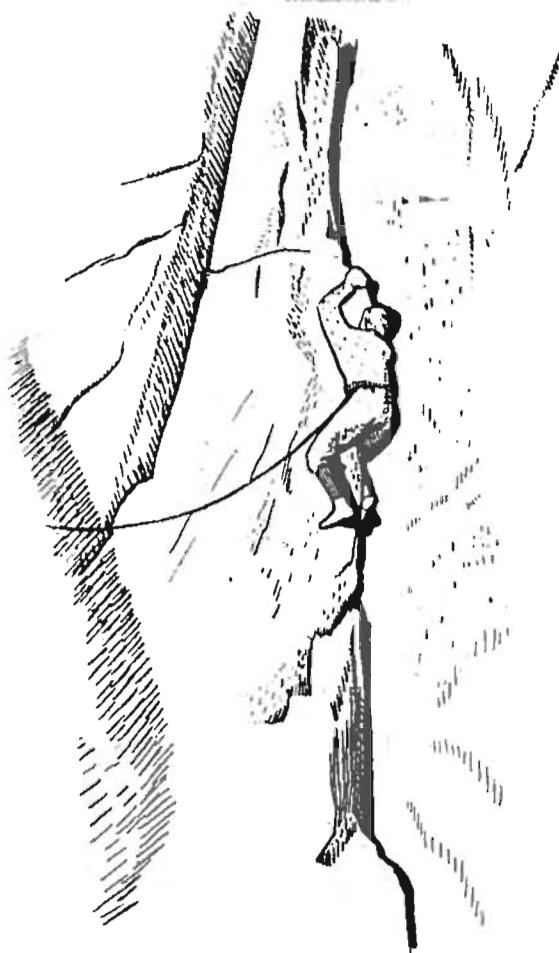
On the arete, the first runner can be placed, and it's a goody. Mind you, it needs to be. A few moves upwards and then a thin horizontal traverse for about 6 feet rightwards. At the end of the traverse a bridging position is attained on no-holds, the type you stand on when there are no holds. A couple of equally desperate moves upwards and a small 'rock' can be placed in the first cleaned slot. Not a nice place to stop, still on no-holds and facing a potential twenty-footer. Still, this is the upper slab and above there is another runner placement, somewhere above.....somewhere. Don't mess about. Carry on upwards on no-holds and one or two finger-tip edges - the second cleaned slot is reached. The calves ache and forearms tell a little about the thin-ness of the moves. But that runner has to be placed. In it goes. Phew. Not too well though. Gibber, gibber. Should have cleaned the slot out better a year ago. Don't gibber. Well, maybe it's filled up a bit since then. For heaven's sake, don't gibber - gibber, gibber. Don't. That's it - up we go, no more runners, go for the ledge.

A really good pitch. Glad we came back. Dave pulls himself onto the ledge and

says 'well done youth, good lead, excellent'. It's nice to feel a smile start from below and find its own way out. Perhaps that's what it's all about.

There's still rock above us and, while we're in this mood, we can't leave the route to end ignominiously on this ledge. It's only fitting that it should have a top pitch. Well, it has. Maybe a little artificial, but it does have one or two good moves. It goes up the headwall left of the second pitch of The Bender. Move round the arete of The Bender then, immediately, climb straight upwards to the top. That's it - done. Time for memories, and more smiles, maybe not so intense but nevertheless still smiles. Good company, good rock, good route. That's how it will be remembered.

Well, in retrospect, Dave and I find it hard to believe that we could have put up a new route on such a popular cliff. Certainly, not one as obvious as this. However, the guidebook describes no route similar to this and the slab had to be cleaned before it was climbed. Perhaps you would like to give it a go and tell us what you think about it. Our name for it - Queer Feet E1,5b 5a.



The Good, The Bad, The Ugly, Me and Him

Jill Towle

'What are you doing this week-end?'

'Dunno.'

'How about going to the Lakes, and trying 'The Crack' on Gimmer again.'

'I'll think about it.'

Well, he thought, and we did. We couldn't set off until Saturday evening, due to these people that sit around in shops all day.

Arranged to meet up with Mike Pearce, Graham Duro and Paul Laver at a Service Station on the way. The 'Z' team set off later than us but, with Graham's foot firmly planted on the floor, they managed to catch up with us. As they whistled past in the outside lane Pearce, not wanting to miss a trick, stuck his head out of the window and immediately his glasses flew off!! John and I couldn't decide what had happened - Mike seemed to be waving frantically and mouthing something. We arrived at the Service Station hoping for an explanation. Graham and Paul nearly fell out of the car with laughing and poor Mike just stood squinting at us. He didn't seem too bothered, managed to avoid walking into most things, but we didn't let him forget that episode in a hurry.

Arrived in Langdale about ten o'clock, tents up, brew on. Our tent took a little longer to put up - John had borrowed a new hire tent from the shop which took some beating; the holes that the poles fit into weren't there, but with Mike's knife in hand and a few cuts here and there, we were ready to move in. We had been threatened with an early start the next day, so once the last dregs of tea had disappeared we all turned in.

Sure enough, the alarm clock came wandering past sometime before six o'clock, singing and shouting, to get the unwilling team out of their pits.

A few hours later, we were all ready for the off, sacks full of gear and food to keep us going through our ordeal. We trekked out of the campsite, along the road, past the Old Dungeon Ghyll and there in the distance, covered with cloud, was Gimmer. The more we walked up, the further away the crag seemed to get. Gradually, other members of the party started to disappear from view. I didn't think I would make it - John kept waiting for me. But, when I managed to catch up with him, he would start trotting off again.

Somehow I made it, and in guidebook time (!), collapsed on the nearest rock and demanded a drink, casually mentioning that the rain had arrived as well. The rain wasn't too heavy so we geared up and trekked round to the bottom of the route. 'The Crack' loomed above, up into the clag. Despite the early start, some-one was already established in the bottom corner crack so we joined the queue and waited.

Eventually, John set off, taking some time to gain the first stance. When my turn came, I soon found out why - a few moves were a bit tricky, got them sorted, went for it and landed on the stance fairly safely. Mike was hot on my heels and followed me onto the stance which was a bit on the small side, enough room for two-and-a-half pairs of feet.

I was led to believe that the crux moves were those off the first stance, and John took quite a while sussing it out. Meanwhile, Graham had crept onto the stance and there wasn't enough room. He didn't feel too safe and let out the odd whine, just in case we forgot about his insecurity. Graham had got his toes on a ledge and had one finger pocket - I couldn't see what the problem was. Graham eventually decided to retreat, leaving Mike and Paul to finish the route. John managed to make the move, and plodded across to the Bower, the next stance.

The weather, by this time, had got a lot colder, my feet and hands were getting rather chilly and I was sure I was in danger of getting frostbite. When my turn came, I didn't seem to have much trouble with the crux, though I did have to stop off to warm my mitts before continuing. The final moves to reach the Bower were a bit on the strenuous side - threw myself onto the ledge somehow.

We shuffled the belay and John set off up the third and final pitch - I think that was when the snow started to fall; at one point the snow was actually blowing uphill, definitely a chilly place to be standing. There was one more surprise move left and my leader took his time getting beyond it - he reached the top soon afterwards.

I was delayed slightly leaving the ledge, due to Mr. Pearce feeling a little unsure of the last few moves onto the stance. I'm not quite sure what he was planning to do if he couldn't make it - grab hold of my foot? He made it - no problem.

I shivered up the last pitch, wet greasy and cold. Struggled to get into the chimney, my feet lost contact with the rock, I was trying to swim uphill - it seemed to work. At last, I reached the top, found a little hole to snuggle into and keep warm, while John waited for the Pearce-Laver team to arrive. When the Pearce bonce peered over the top, we set off down. John steered me down to the sacks, hanging onto me in case I blew away. Trundled down to the campsite for a welcome cuppa and an afternoon nap, until the pubs opened.

Monday, it rained, but just for the record Graham and I studied the antics of 'Rubiks Revenge', while Mike, John and Paul insisted on doing a route, Middle-fell Buttress in the pouring rain.

And so ended another wet week-end in the Lakes.

Tom Thumb - Prince of Darkness

Brian West

I first met the Oread about seventeen years ago. After walking from Wirksworth to an evening Meet at Cratcliffe, I was duly recruited to a rope of half-a-dozen hopefuls who were to attempt Bramley's Traverse.

After much heaving and ho-ing we puffed onto that capacious ledge and there clanked to a halt like a goods train at the buffers. Les Langworthy led the abyss, followed trustingly by Howard Johnson - all blow-wave and tight trousers. Then it was me. Or, rather, it wasn't me. One look down that groove and I decided to stay; and, despite all coaxing, stay I did.

With typical Oread solicitude I was jettisoned and left to my fate. However, I did not go down immediately. I sat for some considerable time on that ledge, fascinated by this Oread chain-gang as it shuffled past, happy in its bondage. In a way I am sitting there still.

"Enough of this ancient history!", I hear you cry. "Who is this Langworthy wally? Who is this Johnson wimp? This is 1983!"

Alright, it's 1983; a Wednesday night, and I'm at Cratcliffe again. Unfortunately, so is everyone else. The fair flower of youth blossoms on every conceivable line, and on some that are quite inconceivable. I recognise one wilted bloom levitating mysteriously up an improbable bulge. It is O'Reilly, giving a fine impression of a haul-sack to an unappreciative Martin Roome. Martin hangs tight to his belay; teeth clenched, hernia imminent.

Now all this is bad news, as they say. My repertoire at Cratcliffe is not very extensive. It finishes, quite symbolically I always think, where adjectives fail and numbers begin. Furthermore, I am climbing with Helen (she of the stretch jeans and maidenly blush), and Helen is no mean climber if kept beyond the grasp of her twin gods, Beer and Chips. So here I am, with a personable young lady to impress, and nothing in sight that I can actually climb.

A glance along the crag confirms the worst. I am left with either "Savage Messiah" or some gem quaintly entitled "Reticent Mass Murderer". I can hardly think that either will be suitable for persons of a nervous disposition.

I am about to do a Basil Fawlty, and faint on the floor of Owl Gully, when my eye lights upon an untenanted strip of crag - Bramley's Traverse! Just the job to flutter a maiden's heart whilst bolstering the macho image. Who knows, it might even elicit one of those charming exclamations that Helen is wont to utter in moments of stress!

After much heaving and ho-ing (see paragraph 2 - things haven't changed much), I arrive on the brink. Throwing a nostalgic glance down the groove, my gaze is rivetted to a gruesome object that neatly blocks the exit to that horrid chute: I nearly fall off in fright! It is a severed head.

I turn to see if Helen shares this dread apparition. Helen does not: she sits unseeing, rapt in page 3 fantasies of Wheat Crunchies (Worcester Sauce flavour). I am alone with the horror.

I close my eyes until the world has stopped spinning, then cautiously peep through my fingers. All clear! Not a vestige of a head, severed or otherwise! Feeling quite relieved, I wonder could it be the Rowing Club Bass? Better ask Helen later. She knows all about these things.

I prepare to sally forth. Suddenly, that unholy head rises briskly from the depths and resumes its vigil in the groove below. It seems vaguely familiar. It is not, after all, a bird-limed gargoyle, but the unlovely and disembodied head of Dave Owen, chalked to the eyeballs! What is worse, judging by the frantic rolling of those same eyeballs, it is still alive!!

Now, although a past member of the Committee, I have never really mastered the art of speaking with ghouls. With me, Conversational Voodoo is a dead language. Hamlet, however, shows a fine grasp of the subject. Confronted by this spectre I resolve, like Horatio, to cross it though it blast me! Inspired thus by the Bard, I declaim in ringing tones:

"Stay, illusion!
If thou hast any sound or use of voice,
Speak to me."

Jackdaws squawk; Helen stirs in her sleep; the grisly jaw drops in amazement. I sympathise. It must be three hundred years since the poor thing was last addressed properly.

"Excellent route, youth!" burbles the head, adding cryptically; "Tom Thumb!"

Ghouls are not what they were, it seems. It may be apathy, but I don't think I'd have bothered to come back from the grave with such a piffling message as that. This is hardly the airs from heaven or blasts from hell that I had envisaged. It is, in fact, more like CB radio: Tom Thumb must be it's 'handle' in the spirit world. Pretty apt, I suppose, for a Dave Owen lookalike.

A fresh fancy beguiles me. Were I to inquire after Tom's good health, perhaps, or pull that festering thorn from His nose, might not this Almighty Thumb gratefully turn me into Ron Fawcett, say? Or, better still, a Jedi Knight? He might even grant me three wishes! If he does, Helen is in for a surprise.

Too late! The vitality drains from that repellent visage and it sinks slowly towards its rocky horizon. Eager to sell my soul for rich reward, I lurch after the vanishing Thumb and peer fearfully into the depths.....

I am appalled by what I see! Beneath the lip swings Dave Owen, disappointingly complete and unabridged. Beneath Dangling Dave stands Derek Bolger, sweat streaming from his brow. Before my eyes, the Bolger biceps bulge; the strings are worked; and the ghastly marionette jerks aloft. With another two thou. scraped from his hands, Dave is once more offered up to the crack in search of that elusive interference fit that means blessed release and another tick in the book.

This is infamy! For one outraged moment, I am tempted to stand upon that rising head and be ferried effortlessly across the void. A big lad like Derek



wouldn't notice an extra twelve stones, I'm sure. But this is unethical and I am made of sterner stuff. Besides, that pimply forehead looks greasy to me. Should I ask Dave to chalk it up for me? Better not; a toe-jam in the mouth would do nicely.....

I am above all this. I cross the groove without resorting to base artifice and mantelshelf out, bursting with righteous pride. Reprieved from a fate worse than death, Helen is jerked from her kilocalorific reveries; the 'Blacks Head' beckons! She follows eagerly and, after a heart-warming yelp or two, emerges serene, radiant in the sure and certain hope of haddock and chips to come. Only the merest hint of a frown betrays the furore within as that razor-keen, Oxford-honed intellect grapples with the ultimate cosmic question: with or without mushy peas?

Climbing in the Fast Lane

Chris Radcliffe

Judging by the number of people who offer to 'carry my bags', many regard the opportunity which my job affords me to travel all over the world as rather fortunate. In fact the reality is not very glamorous and, like any other job, it has its good and its bad moments. Living in hotels is much the same the world over and the fatigue of travel, lack of sufficient time in any one place, and the break-up of one's normal social life takes away much of the apparent glamour. Nevertheless, I have always tried to take advantage of the opportunity of travel to seek out and sample some of the climbing and mountain areas near to the places I have visited on business, and in this article I want to describe some of these experiences.

SOUTH AFRICA

Most of the industry in South Africa is on the Reef in and around Johannesburg and, although 5000 feet above sea level, this is a flat and uninteresting area. However, within an easy two hour car ride one can reach an escarpment known as the Magaliburg, where there is a dramatic change in the scenery as one drops down into the "kloofs" or steep-sided valleys and here there are outcrops of excellent rock. My companion has invariably been Clive Ward, who has an infectious enthusiasm for his local area and who has, almost single-handed, produced a comprehensive and detailed guide to all the climbs. Here, there is yet another grading system; an open-ended combination of letters and numbers.

On my first visit we climbed in Trident Kloof with an approach along a path in semi-tropical forest. The routes are around 200 feet long and we did a fine traverse on Migrain, F3 (V.S.plus), and a good hand-jam exercise, Illegitimate, G1 (H.V.S.). In contrast, Dome West rises up above the escarpment, so there is more of a mountain atmosphere. We did a route called Reluctance, F3, but the occasion was mainly memorable for me being "buzzed" by an eagle. Probably the best climbing is in Tonquani Kloof, owned by the Mountain Club of South Africa, and the most enjoyable route we did here was Coffin Direct, G1, a creation of the Barley brothers, who put up many routes in Yorkshire in the sixties. This involves a wide, overhanging chimney followed by delicate traversing in a very exposed situation.

Most of the interesting mountains in South Africa are well away from Johannesburg, notably the Drakensburg which are spectacular but offer few technical routes, and also several ranges in Cape Province. Two years ago I was able to meet up with John Moss, an old university colleague, in Cape Town and we visited the Hex River range. This was in early September - it was winter and in the middle of an unusually cold spell. There was good snow cover so we went skiing from the University of Cape Town Hut. This must have been reminiscent of what it was like in Scotland before the developments. There was a two-and-a-half hour walk to reach a short gully which one could descend into the teeth of a blizzard, in about two minutes, before an arduous climb back up to repeat the exercise. We were part of a large and boisterous group of undergraduates and on Saturday night we crowded into their excellent Hut close to the ski-ing area.

It was an evening of communal cooking, communal singing and communal sleeping so it was an especially memorable occasion.

U.S.A.

In 1979 I had a superb holiday in America with Pete Scott, climbing mainly in Colorado and also Yosemite valley. We had been fortunate in being able to stay with Dez Hadlum who lives in Denver and he had lent us his Oldsmobile which enabled us to visit other climbing areas, including the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, sandstone towers in the Navajo homelands, and the Grand Canyon itself. Since then, on almost every trip to the States, I have managed to arrange a dog-leg through Denver to meet up with Dez again. As well as climbing in the Platte River region, on The Shield and in Boulder Canyon, I have had superb ski-ing weekends in resorts like Copper Mountain, Loveland, Winter Park, Beaver Creek and Vail. On one occasion it was virtually an Oread meet as Derek and Pat Carnell, Dave and Pam Weston were there as well, and 'Tabs' Talbot had flown in from Calgary.

On another occasion I was visiting the west coast of the States so I arranged to spend the weekend staying in Fresno. On the Saturday I motored into Kings Canyon Park, where the giant Sequoia trees are located. At first it was a day of mist and rain, but it cleared as I dropped into the canyon itself. From the road head I followed a trail to Misty Falls surrounded by superb granite domes. Although not as spectacular as Yosemite, relatively few climbers visit this part of the Sierras and the area feels truly remote. I felt quite frustrated not to be able to actually go climbing in this magnificent area.

Next day, I visited Yosemite. It was towards the end of April and it was an immaculate day with deep blue skies and snow on the Sierras beyond. The tourists were there in full force, but they didn't detract from such spectacular scenery. The most striking difference from my earlier visit was the relative lushness of the vegetation and in particular the classic waterfalls - Bridal Veil Falls and Yosemite Falls - were in full spate, whereas they were completely dry when Pete and I were here before in early September. I had a superb day walking up to the valley rim from Sunnyside campsite, by the side of Yosemite Falls. The upper part of the trail is supposed to be closed as it had been destroyed by a vast rockfall, so I had the area to myself. I delayed so long on the top that I had to drive at over 80 mph at every opportunity on the return to Fresno (the speed limit is 55 mph) to catch my flight back to L.A..

Three thousand miles away on the other side of America, there is the almost equally well known climbing area of the Shawangunks in New York State. I was there in early May and I found this too was a most attractive area. The visit came at the end of a trip, so I was overfed and unfit. Consequently, I psyched out at the characteristic overhangs which occur at mid-height on two or three routes which I attempted to solo. In the end, before rain stopped play, I climbed a very easy, but classic, three pitch route called Rusty Trifle with a 60 year old local enthusiast called Ira Brant. He was a music teacher from New York with a weekend cottage below the crags where the local climbers congregated for a beer. As a result, this visit was memorable for the opportunity to meet such notable U.S. climbers as Steve Wunsch and Dick Dumais. Later, I joined them at a lecture in the nearby N.Y. State University given by Al Rubin on a climbing trip to the sandstone of Poland and East Germany.

AUSTRALIA

As anyone who reads the climbing magazines will realise, Australia produces

some of the hardest of the world's rock climbers. Although I have been there twice I have had no opportunity to go to the Arapiles which are about 400 miles from Melbourne. Not too far away, however, is Hanging Rock, made famous in the film "Picnic at Hanging Rock" and consequently a tourist "honey pot". It is mainly regarded as a beginners cliff despite having a very soft, friable rock which provides the biggest collection of unprotected and dangerous leads in Victoria State. It is an isolated outcrop of rock with a maze of weird pinnacles and is reminiscent in character to Brimham. I confined myself to easy lines, notably the classic Bridge of Sighs which is over 200 feet long and starts with a very shaky 20 foot rib which is detached from the main face. I also visited a nearby crag called Camels Hump, less spectacular but rather quieter.

A thousand miles away in neighbouring New South Wales are the Blue Mountains, about 60 miles from Sydney. These are plateau-like sandstone peaks topping miles of dense forest which provide strenuous 'bush whacking' country. There are sizeable cliffs as well and rock climbing has been well developed on Narrowneck which I only saw on a misty, rainy day which made it look similar in character to Dovestones.

On this occasion I was walking with our Aussie agent, Mike Maude, and three of his children, the youngest a girl of twelve. We planned to follow a tourist track to Mount Solitary (3165 feet) and I anticipated a pleasant but not too strenuous day. There was a good track through the forest and some scrambling to reach the summit, which we did in good order. However, the return went disastrously wrong. We were attempting to return by a circular route. I'm not sure if there is a track but we certainly didn't find it and, once off the track, progress was very slow through the forest. To cut a long story short, we descended into the Jamison valley and, after several false starts, eventually reached a forest track which we followed around several subsidiary valleys leading circuitously towards our start point. We had been walking for far longer than had been planned and then Mike unexpectedly collapsed. After a rest, he was only able to proceed very slowly supported by his two youngest children, while the eldest and I attempted to reach civilization and help. Eventually, we reached a maintenance hut long after dark, in deteriorating weather and after around thirty five miles of walking. I found that the track was a dead end, close to habitation as the crow flies but separated from it by the cliffs of Narrowneck. Fortunately, there was a telephone in the hut and we were able to call Mike's wife to reassure her and then to call the police who sent in a landrover to rescue us around 2.00 am! The next time I had a weekend with Mike he played it safe and we went to the beach instead!

From Australia I travelled to New Zealand, a country which has recently added to the places where one can find modern style crags and climbers, who climb at the highest standards of difficulty. But, of course, it is more usually regarded as a place for traditional alpinism, and I had decided to take my holiday in 1982 climbing in the Southern Alps. This must be the subject of a separate article, but I was now 12,000 miles from home and this holiday proved to be a fitting conclusion to two years of frequent travel around the world. I have been able to take advantage of my business trips during this time to visit a variety of interesting and enjoyable climbing venues. There are many places I haven't been to, but for me the world certainly seems a smaller place.

Mrs. Wilson's First Lead

Jill Towle

I was in the depths of a Ski Brochure when the team arrived to go climbing, the team being Chris, Jan and John. I parted company with the brochure and we headed for Stanage - Oh. no, not again, I was there last Sunday. I suppose I quite like the place now - must be getting used to it.

Trekked up to the High Neb area, Jan and I arriving a little after John and Chris. We might have been a bit red in the face, gasping for breath, feeling a bit weak at the knees, but we arrived. We plodded along the bottom of the crag trying to look interested, even picked up my guidebook to try and find the routes and to look the part - most folks who saw me reading it were a bit worried though; it's bound upside down. Eventually made a decision, threw the rope at Jan and we trotted off away from the crowds.

Once away from the limelight, there was no stopping me - knocked it dead, youth. I felt quite pleased with myself, managing some routes that I had failed on before. Jan didn't do too badly either - she had threatened to squawk if things were too desperate, but luckily I never heard a peep out of her.

Jan's real moment was to come. I persuaded her to try leading a route, 'Gnats Slab', the start of which is very awkward. Jan made several attempts but couldn't get the move sorted. Maybe all the gear that I had off-loaded on to her had something to do with it. Well, she did want to look the part. Jan ended up walking round the side and joining the route higher up. For the record, she was so annoyed that I did the move, she had another go, minus the gear, and she cracked it - well done, Jan.

Lunch was called for to celebrate. From High Neb we trekked across to Goliath's Groove area to see what else we could tackle. Left John and Chris there, while we sauntered along a bit further in search of easier routes. Found another route for the budding leader to try her hand (and feet) at, around the Pools Crack area, don't know if it had a name. Jan did it, no trouble, 'p.o.p.', what a star, look out Jill Fawcett.

We knocked off a few more routes before calling it a day. John and Chris might have done some climbing, who knows, Jan and I were too busy sorting our own routes out - what fun!

The On-Sight Lead

Anon.

I arrive at the foot of the crag. What lies ahead? A defined line? A known grade? Dangers? Unknown... The route rises from ground level to crag top. Somewhere is the crux. What does it entail? Can I do it? Will I cheat? Will I back off? Or, will I just not be capable of overcoming the difficulties, and fall? If so, will I have the drive to try again?

If the crux is overcome, I can relax and wait for the next challenge. Cheating is possible but, from it, satisfaction is never gained. If I back out, I will never know if it were possible. Eventually, I will find a crux which defeats me and I will fall.

As my weight rests on that thin life-line, I find there are two choices - up or down? Friends, with the security of terra firma beneath their feet, voice their opinions. "Give up lad, you just haven't got it." Friends! "Go on lad, you can do it." My real friends are suddenly behind me. I reach up and move back towards the crux. Words of encouragement move me upwards - at this point, advice is always welcome.

The crux is overcome and the climb quickly eases. I collapse at the top, wondering what I have achieved. Could I have done it alone? Would I have had the nerve to continue after the fall? I managed on my own no extra pull on the rope just my skill, my ability. Or was it?

Could I have completed the climb without the backing of my friends? I doubt it. I needed their support, their help. If they had turned their backs on me, I'd have given in, or failed again.

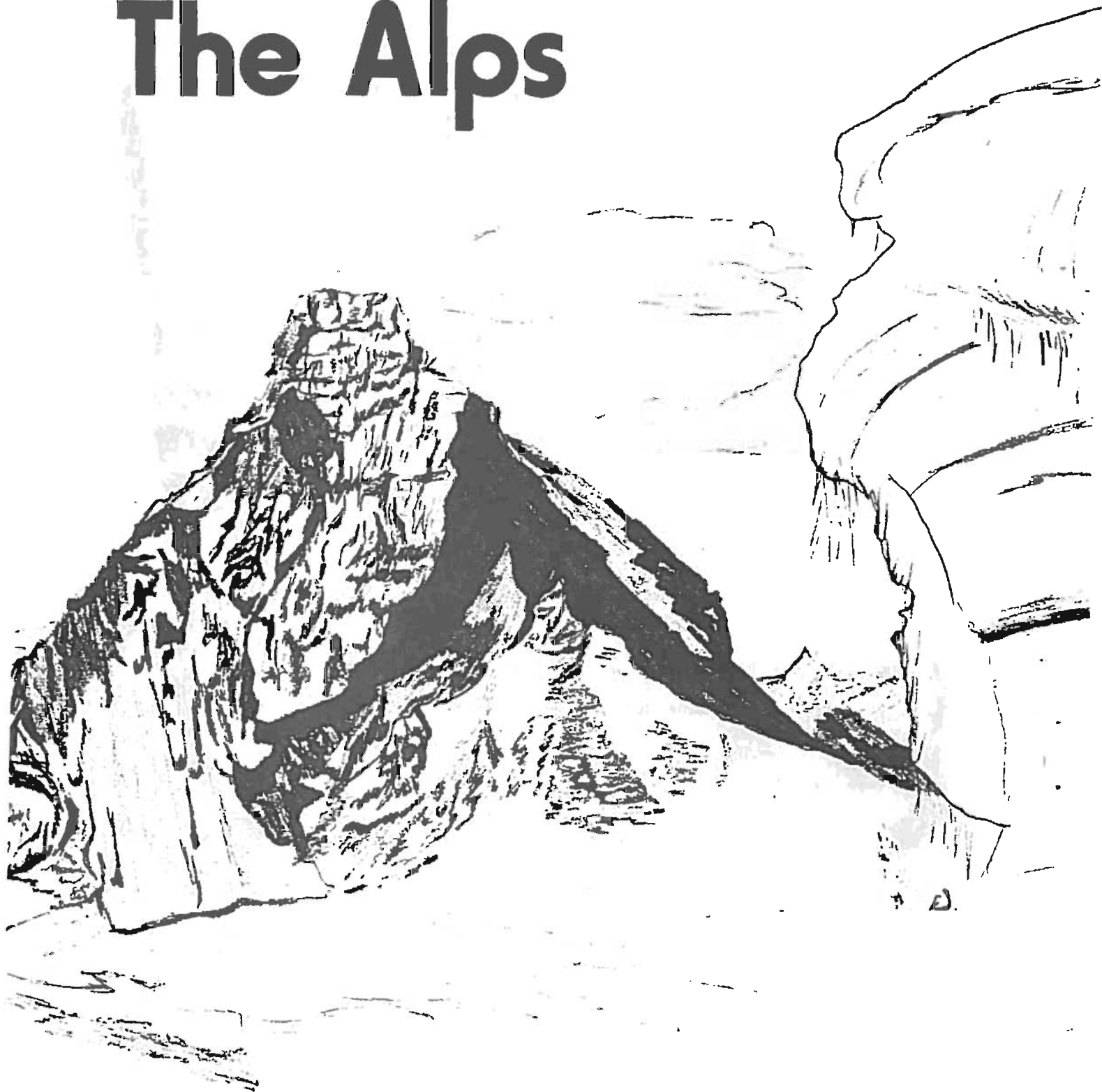
The on-sight lead is life itself. It's good to have friends, especially when you fall.

Here's to friends.

Cheers.



The Alps



Alps '83: A Summary

'Rock' Hudson

There was a smaller turn-out than usual for the Alpine Meet, with only 24 Members and friends attending for various periods between July 20th and August 12th. The Meet was based on the campsite at Bodenwald, Grindlewald. The site was generally thought to be good with reasonable charges, no problems with reductions when at the Huts, a shop on site for basic provisions, and a bar so close that there was never any excuse for not going for a drink.

Mountaineering conditions in the area were not good particularly on snow/ice routes due to prolonged hot weather which produced deep, sugary, granular ice, loosened rock and abundant rock faces. The glaciers were very 'open', with couloirs frequently barred by open bergschrunds - the Glackstein Hut log book recorded only three ascents all season (apart from ascents of the Wetterhorn which requires no glacier work). During the Meet, conditions did not really improve and no freezing was experienced below 4500 m..

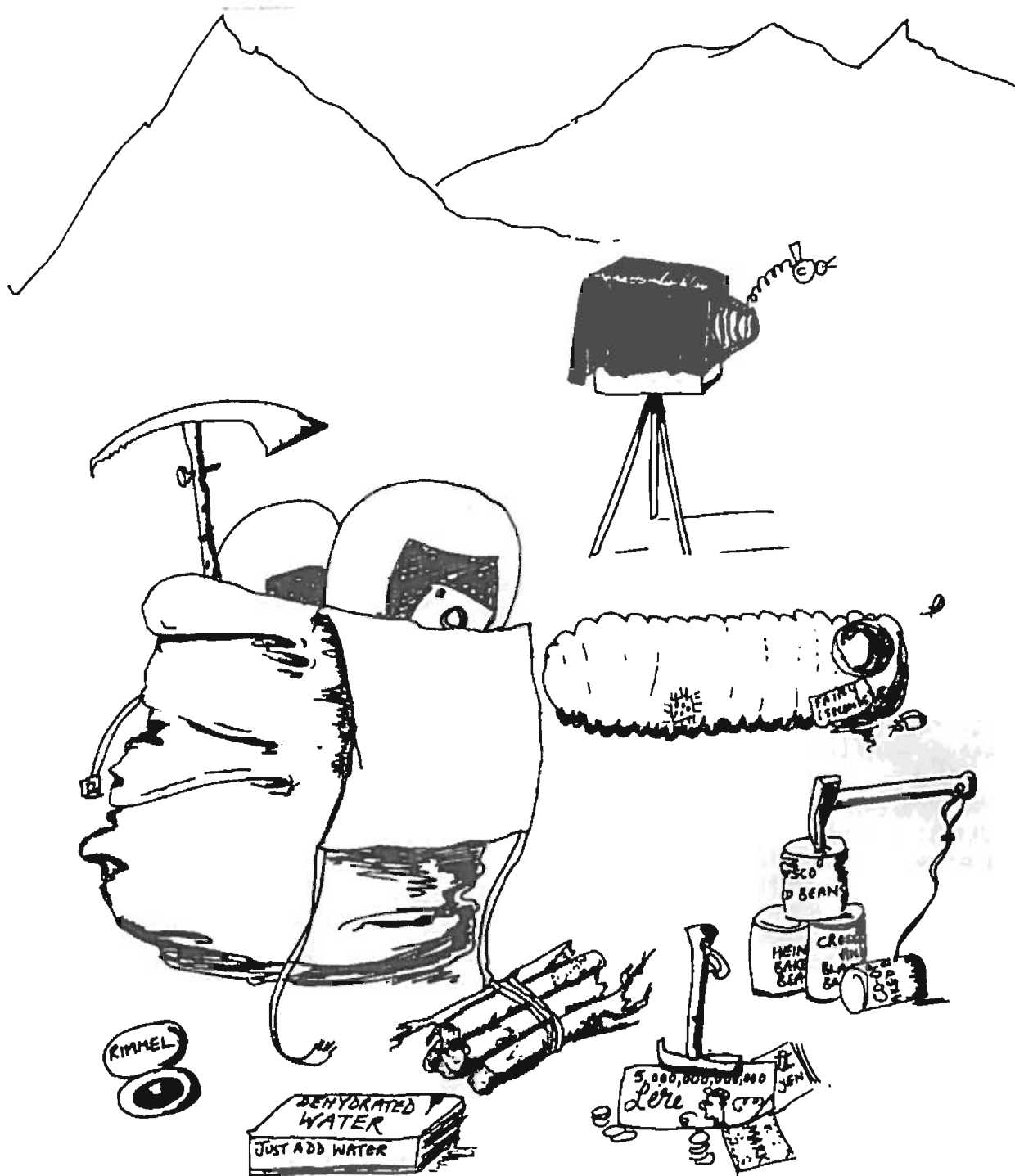
The first trip of the Meet saw Gordon Wright and Bev Abley heading for the Strahlegg Hut, only to find it no longer existed having been replaced by the new Schreckhorn Hut at 2520 m., 100 m. above the ruins of the Schwarzegg Hut. It's over 5 hours from Grindlewald and adds up to an hour to many of the routes done from the Strahlegg Hut. Next morning they toiled up to the ramp/couloir on the S.W. Ridge of the Schreckhorn. Glacier conditions were not good, Bev was unwell and the bar in the valley beckoned, so they headed back to await the arrival of other Oreads.

Colin, Tony & Rock set off for the Gleckstein Hut on the 25th July, a friendly Hut in a fine situation. On the 26th they climbed the Wetterhorn by the normal route. No snow was encountered to the ridge and above it, only poor ice. Although easy, the route had interest and a good view from the top. The following day they returned to the valley, other routes being impractical because of glacier conditions. By the time they reached the campsite, they were 'all in' - this due largely to the temperature being 100°F plus.

The Penlingtons, Pete Wragg and Keith Kendal had arrived and rushed up to the Strahlegg Hut, while Gordon and Bev had taken the most expensive train in Europe to the Jungfrauoch. Both the former teams climbed the Schreckhorn. Pete and Keith followed the S.W.Ridge and found it a fine route, but suffered continual rock bombardment in the ramp/couloir. They returned the same way finding good fixed abseil points all the way down the ridge. Dave and Roger took to the Andersongrat, finding difficult snow conditions particularly when trying to gain the ridge too far to the right of the correct line. They came down the same ridge as Pete/Keith but had to bivouac in the ramp/couloir amidst considerable rock-fall (32 hours on this route!).

The following day, the 'dynamic duo' returned from the Jungfrauoch. Their first day had been spent walking to the new Obermonchjoch Hut (a largish, private Hut - expensive and not interested in the needs of mountaineers), and later climbing the S.E. Ridge of the Monch, a quick route hampered by groups of guided bumbles. The following day they climbed the Gross Fischerhorn by its N.W.Ridge - rated a good day out. The weather still holding for them, they finished this little sortie with the S.E.Ridge of the Jungfrau, using the Rottelhorn flank to reach the Rottelsattel - snow conditions were bad and, again, they were delayed by other parties.

John Linney, Rock, Tony and Colin went round by car to Fiesch on the 30th July. A fine pace was set to the Marjelensee to the Aletsch Glacier which was followed to the Concordia Hut. Although the glacier was dry with many open crevasses, the pace was steady but we took considerably longer to reach the Hut than the guidebook suggested - perhaps a misprint. Next day, they climbed the Gross Grimhorn by the Grimegghorn - an interesting route, the top ridge has poor rock and the party returned by the same route as they had been told by an English group of the difficulties of trying to cross the Ewigschneefeld.



The party was too tired to cross to the Finsteraarhorn Hut, so next day headed for the valley - in retrospect, the correct choice as by that evening the weather had broken and heavy rain fell for two days.

Before the storms Pete and Keith made their way to the Mittelegi Hut from the Eismeer station. Pete said that the Mittelegi ridge of the Eiger was a great route with fine situations and great exposure on the narrow sections. The normal descent was a most unpleasant 5000 feet of steep, loose rubble. At the same time, another epic was unfolding on the Schreckhorn. Gordon and Bev took the E.S.E. Ridge, which was generally steep, loose rock. This and the overall conditions caused them to bivi on the way down. Bev had a pleasant night - Gordon did not. This may have been due to the large amount of extra equipment Bev was carrying. Gordon was somewhat taken aback by both the contents of Bev's sack and his explanations for same. The items included:-

eye shadow	"not as heavy as goggles"
two spare helmets	"for soup, in case you drop the billy"
spare sleeping bag	"stops first bag being soiled on ground"
spare piton hammer	"in case normal one too light for large pitons"
2nd spare piton hammer	"in case of loss of tin-opener"
ice axe	"in case snow found hidden beneath scree slopes on a rock climb"
Heinz, Crosse & Blackwell,	
Tesco & Co-op Beans	"you might be climbing with a faddy bugger"
just a small bundle	"in case primus/bluet dropped and, in any case, it gives a homely atmosphere and don't forget, it's Swiss National Day"
of firewood	
dehydrated water	"only inexperienced mountaineers would forget this on a rock route"
35mm, 2.5", half-plate, full-plate cameras & assorted lenses	"I believe it's the only way I shall ever win the photo competition"
Italian, Austrian & Nepalese, etc money	"you might descend by another route"

(Editorial Note: this list has been much reduced because i. this is a family Journal and ii. lack of space. For a more comprehensive listing, contact Rock or Bev)

On 1st August, John & Cath Muskett and friends arrived from Chur. The recent storms had put snow down as far as the lower pastures and Kleine Scheidegg had a very wintry aspect. This sent Pete, Keith, Gordon & Pauline round to Visp. The arrival of the Penlingtons from the Jungfrauoch brought news of a half to three feet of new snow on the tops - it had taken them over 6 hours to reach the station from the Concordia Hut in white-out conditions. However, they had climbed the Monch and Gross Fischerhorn by the normal routes before the arrival of the bad weather.

Patches of sunshine on the 4th August did not prevent the Ableys leaving for Visp, and the Raphaels for Arolla, where they had several good days' walking. The following day proved very wet, and Dave and Roger headed for Leysin where they called in at the Club Vagabond to find out about climbing conditions - it appeared to be very like a shop with service difficult to obtain. They quickly headed for Visp. The Musketts left on the same day and headed for the Pennine Alps.

The sun returned on the 7th August and parties set off for the Lauterbrunnen to see the views, get the legs working and to assess snow conditions. The Lauterbrunnen Wall was impressive but much fresh snow still lay on the faces,

prompting a few more days festering on the campsite and in the bar. However, the following day was again perfect so the Linneys spent the day at Gross Scheidegg, while Colin and Rick scrambled up the Schwarthorn. Although not graded it provided a longish day with a fine panorama along the northern flanks of the Oberland. The 9th, still perfect weather, and Colin, Rock & John took the 'tele' to First - the longest open car system in the Alps. They soon left the tourists behind and scrambled to the top of the Fauldenhorn. These mountains give numerous walks for those off days when you are unable to visit the higher peaks. The sun had already gone down by the time they descended to Bessalp. Rock's feet were sore so he thought it a good idea to take the Posthorn Bus to the town, until he was asked for 9 S.F. - he had a beer instead for 3 S.F.. After a plod in the rain back to Grindlewald he still had money for two more beers (he calls it Alpine Holiday Economics).

Yet more rain and they could take no more, so the Oread left the Grindlewald valley on the 11th August.

* * * * *

OTHER AREAS

Other areas in the Alps were visited by a number of teams. The following is a compilation from information forwarded to me by various people. There is a little overlap with the above Grindlewald summary. I apologise for any omissions.

THE HOBDAV FAMILY visited the Rosengarten Group in the Dolomites during late July and early August and undertook the following -

- Roszalne - an easy rock climb.
- Kersel Kogel - to the highest summit by an easy rock climb. A fine summit for obtaining views of the region.
- Santner Pass - part of the High Level Route, very interesting, made difficult by lingering snow in the gullies.

(for more detail, see Colin's article. Ed.)

CHRIS WILSON & JOHN O'REILLY visited the Mont Blanc Massif, but their activities were soon curtailed when Chris became ill. They managed the following in their first week -

- Traverse of the Grands Charmoz - Grepon - an alpine classic, the rock climbing very good, glacier descent very dangerous.
- Innominata Ridge on Mont Blanc - a long, serious climb done over three days (with Pete Scott and Tim Barnett).

(for account of the Innominata - and other things - see Chris's article. Ed.)

PETE SCOTT & TIM BARNETT had a fairly long period in the Alps (almost six weeks), the early period in July providing beautiful weather. They were able to visit the Mont Blanc Massif, Uri Alps in Switzerland, and Kaisergebirge in Austria. The following routes were climbed -

- Traverse of Les Courtes - a manly descent was encountered from the Col des Cristaux.
- Mont Maudit by Frontier Ridge - people visiting the Col de la Fourche Hut will probably find it in a poor condition, being without door and very damp.

Dent du Crocodile E.Ridge - climbed by mistake for the Ryan-Lochmatter on the Plan. However, a good route at T.D.. What the guidebook says about the Plan/Crocodile couloir is all true! (for an account of this, see Tim's article. Ed.)

Aig. du Peigne, Vaucher Route - good route at T.D. - E.B.'s were worn and chalk bags carried!

Innominata Ridge on Mont Blanc - not technically too hard but some interesting situations. Very long and serious. Two huts are now situated at the Eccles Bivouac (with Chris Wilson and John O'Reilly).

Salbitschijen by S.E.Ridge - excellent Grade IV rock climbing in friendly surroundings.

Fleischbank, S.E.Diedre - a good route at VI/Al. The Wilder Kaiser is worth a visit.

DAVE & THELMA WRIGHT, after leaving Grindlewald, headed for Solden in the Otztal Alps, from which they did a number of scrambles on local peaks.

KEN & DOREEN HODGE visited the Chamounix valley later in the season. They took a flight then bus arriving in the valley in only a few hours - they then stopped in a chalet. A week was spent walking over the mountains to the north of the Mont Blanc Massif, in almost perfect weather all week.

JOHN & KATH MUSKETT and friends, after leaving Grindlewald, camped at Arolla from where they climbed the Peigne du Arolla, Aig de la Tsa & La Lurette.

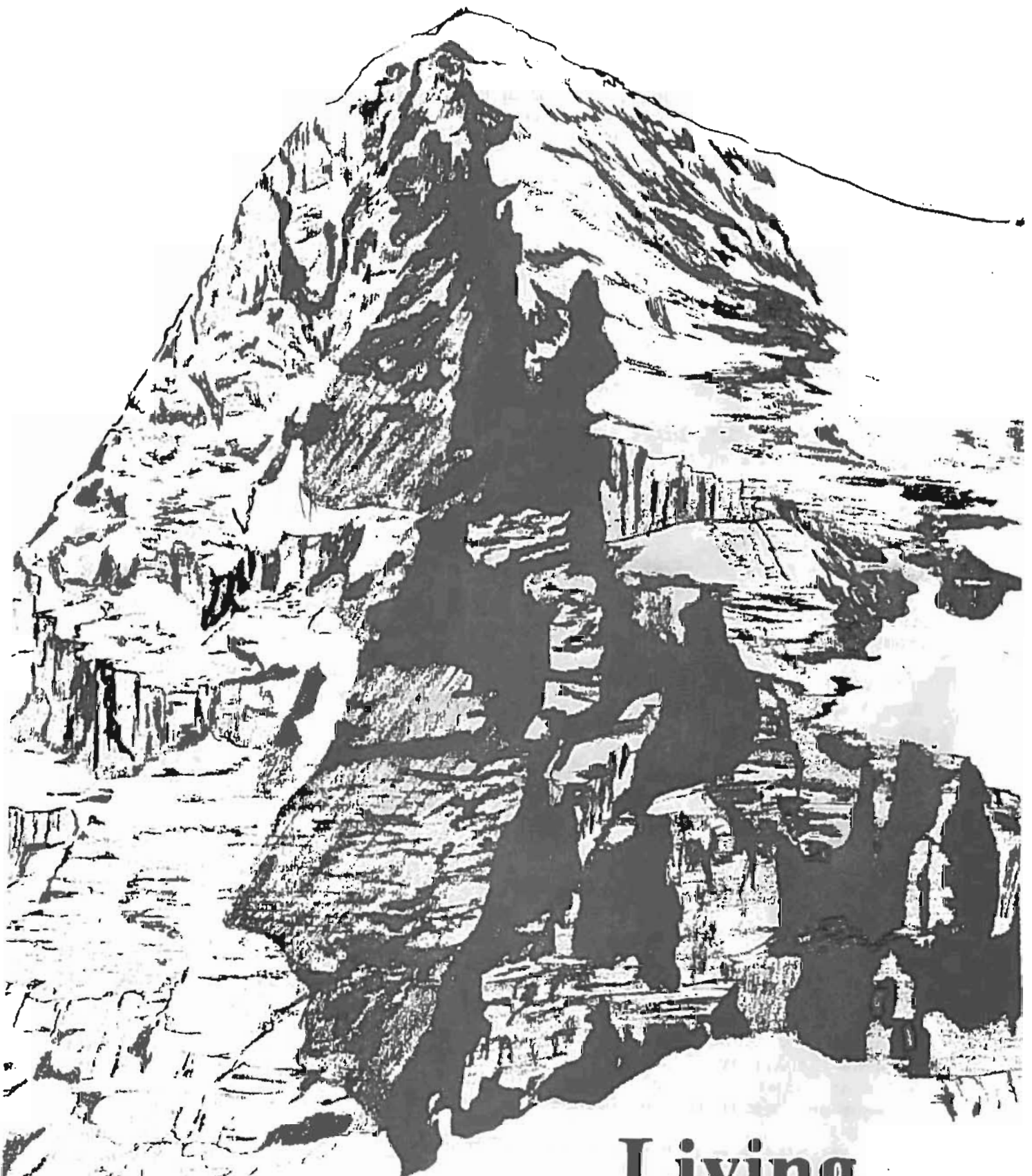
PETE WRAGG & KEITH KENDALL visited the Pennine Alps and climbed the Dri Horlini from Almagellarp in the Sass area. They joined up with GORDON WRIGHT for the traverse of the Dom and Taschhorn.

GORDON WRIGHT & BEV ABLEY, from their base at Visp, did the following routes - Flletschhorn-Lagginhorn traverse, Weissmies by the normal route, Nord End on Monte Rosa. The ABLEY family also climbed the Mittaghorn from Saas.

ROGER & DAVE PENLINGTON finished up in the Pennine Alps where they completed the traverse of the Durrenhorn-Hohberghorn-Stecknadelhorn-Nadelhorn. A fine day out with good rock on the ridge, poor rock on the flanks, and the snow in good condition.

JOHN & SHEILA FISHER visited the Bernina and Bregaglia during early August. It was Sheila's first visit to the Alps. They climbed easy peaks, connecting Huts by crossing high passes. They say 'the Italian side of these areas are very good and of special interest were the 'aided' sections along the Roma Traverse between the Allievi & Badile Huts'. A fine illustrated guidebook is now available for the whole of the traverse of the Disgrazia/Bregaglia Massif, but at present only in Italian or German.

ROBIN SEDGWICK & ROB TRESIDDER stopped independently at Grindlewald from where they climbed the 1938 Route on the North Face of the Eiger. They then went to Chamonix where Rob soloed the Brenva Spur on Mont Blanc, Robin being unwell. (for an account of the Eiger, see Robin's article. Ed.)



Living on the Front Line

Robin Sedgwick

Dreams become stark reality so quickly. The bridge from the everyday existence of Derby remains as a 24 hour blur of isolated memories and overriding impressions; bleary-eyed driving, endless cigarettes and pounding rock music. A missed ferry, the thunderstorm across northern France, snatched periods of sleep and roadside brews, the transition brief but total. Two 'carries' and we're established in the meadows above Alpiglen; two small tents on flower-strewn grass, a gushing mountain torrent, Swiss sunshine and clear blue skies. Two perfect evenings of lying on the grass drinking Pernod, searching for shooting stars. An idyllic existence of hedonistic indulgence, savouring life and company, a time for mental preparation, speculation and hope.

Our second morning in Alpiglen dawned and, with it, the realisation that the game was on. Five years of daydreams and hopes, of aspirations and desire were suddenly brought into critical focus by the reality that perfect weather and adequate conditions meant the mountain was questioning our temerity, calling our bluff. We left camp at mid-day.

'Laurie seemed quite emotional when we left' was Rob's comment at the Swallow's Nest that night. True, she had been; but at least her feelings had been obvious. Mine had been securely locked up. A certain surface edginess had been apparent as I paced nervously, waiting for Rob to finish packing, anxious to be away, the adrenalin already starting to flow. Inside, however, was a complex mixture of emotions; not fear, not just apprehension, but a combination of so many things. The joy of embarking on a long desired-for venture, tempered with nagging doubts and an overbearing weight of history of a route of which I knew every pitch but had yet to climb. The overall effect was to screw my stomach into a tight ball, a knot of nerve endings and emotion, a tangled web of anticipation, commitment and apprehension. And yet, as soon as we set foot on the face, the transformation had been total. To say it became just another route would be false - the Eiger could never be that, but practised movements, and decisions and problems to be solved brought on an air of familiarity and confidence, and I'd suddenly felt relaxed and pleased to be there. Even the atmosphere of the face had helped to dispel any lingering qualms; bright afternoon sunshine, pools and trickles of water glinting and sparkling, giving a holiday, almost seaside-like, atmosphere - certainly not the grim, macabre Nordwand of the mythology.

Towards the top of the Shattered Pillar the first stones had screamed past, shattered feet away and rattled on down the face, harbingers of the tempest to come. Rob claimed the Difficult Crack, steep and gushing with icy water, and led it in fine style. As consolation, I got the Hinterstoisser, an aerial ropeway on the edge of the void - spectacular, safe and enjoyable; a leisurely cruise climbed smoothly, realisation dawning that this really was the Eiger, and I was enjoying myself. As dusk closed in, we settled down at the Swallow's Nest, the sight of the tiny orange spot of our tent in the meadow below somehow heightening our senses of isolation, remoteness and commitment.

The Swallow's Nest isn't the Hilton but I slept well, Rob not so well. First light saw us brewing and packing as an Austrian soloist cruised past having taken an hour-and-a-half from the foot of the face. The weather was warm, water was still running down slabs to the left, but the stones were quiet, and the cold grey dawn and cloudless skies promised settled fine weather. There was no decision to make and Rob led off. It immediately became apparent what bizarre condition the face was in. The first icefield and one-and-a-half rope lengths of the second had simply ceased to exist. Instead, we tip-toed up rubble-littered slabs, scree-covered ledges and little rock walls, nowhere hard but desperately loose, insecure and mostly protectionless.

By the time we geared up for the second icefield, the mountain was flickering into lethal life. For the two-and-a-half pitches to the icefield's upper rim, a constant patter of small stones clicked off my helmet and bounced off the ice around us. Being hit became simply a new part of the game, something to be accepted, senses attuned and keyed up for the deep whirring hum of the larger, more hostile projectiles. Instinct was to duck, but after having one stone under the helmet onto the back of the neck, it appeared the best defensive technique was to keep head up and hands in, leaving only shoulders exposed.

It was with gratitude that I reached the protective wall at the top of the icefield, belayed and started to bring Rob up. Below us, two lads from Southampton, Dave and Allan, had appeared and were slowly gaining on us. Suddenly, an isolated crack from high above was followed seconds later by a whirring and clattering mass of blocks that shattered off the ice spraying fragments in all directions. I had a brief glimpse of Rob flattened against the ice before he vanished into a cloud of dust and bouncing stones. What seemed like minutes must only have been seconds, before the stones rattled off down the face, the smoke drifted away and dispersed, an eerie silence descended, and Rob started climbing again.

'Nasty, youth - you O.K.?'. There was little discussion as Rob reached my stance and led off on the first of ten interminable rope lengths across the icefield's upper rim to the distant Flatiron. Mercifully, we were protected from stones at this point. The barrage was continuing intermittently, occasional big ones screaming overhead to shatter on the ice below, periods of quiet, lulls in the storm; then a vast barrage as Rob had just experienced, before silence descended again. Dave and Allan overtook us and it was afternoon by the time we reached the Flatiron. The pitch off the ice was hard due to the recession of the ice. Rob led it without his sac, then hauled while I prussicked. Above, a steep strenuous chimney led to a scree-littered ledge band leading leftwards, towards the crest of the Flatiron. The third ropelength along this brought us directly into the firing line again. I watched transfixed as Rob huddled behind a minimal rock outcrop with limestone blocks shattering around him, filling the air with whirring stones and swirling dust. I was huddled on a protected stance at this point and was unaware of him shouting across to the figure of a man he saw sitting on a rock pedestal below Death Bivouac. He even recognised the man's fair hair and nordic profile as Mehringer from his photograph in 'The White Spider'. When he looked later, the figure was gone. Rob could later offer no rational explanation. He merely ventured that he was in a highly susceptible mood at the time!

As the barrage ceased, Rob hastened to safety beneath a band of overhangs two pitches diagonally below Death Bivouac where we could see Dave and Allan ensconced. I scuttled across to join him, and surveyed the way on. Difficult moves left on slabs brought the end of shelter from above. The ground beyond was suicide territory, being raked constantly by a barrage of large stones. Our chances of crossing that with an unprotected stance halfway across, were less than minimal. I traversed back to Rob. I had previously rejected the possible line straight up as this was being too heavily strafed, but now reconsidered it. A crack between rock and ice could be wedged to give access to easier ground and thence, in about a ropelength, it should be possible to reach the shelter of overhangs, and traverse into Death Bivouac. I reasoned that the bigger, more lethal stuff was flying further out into space, and that the further we progressed the more our chances increased. I waited for a lull in the barrage, took a deep breath and went for it; a bat out of hell, a

frightened rabbit on the edge of oblivion for 150 runnerless feet, on loose unstable ground, until the rope came tight and I rammed a Friend into the nearest crack and slumped dry-mouthed onto the belay, breath gasping and heart pounding. Rob scuttled up behind and we traversed easily into Death Bivouac.

I felt totally numb, perhaps 'shell-shocked', an expression often used out of context but having a certain appropriateness here. I lay slumped on the ledge, smoking cigarettes and gazing back across the sunlit second icefield for the best part of an hour before I took any part in getting things organised. I had lost all desire to climb the Eiger and would have preferred to have been anywhere other than our present position. Our progress had been disappointing, to say the least. Slowness across the second icefield and avoiding the bombardment on the Flatiron had cost us precious hours. Dave and Allan, with whom we now shared the ledge, had already had a look at the third icefield and come to the obvious conclusion. We brewed, ate, talked and settled down for the night.

The grey dawn half-light complemented the atmosphere of the third icefield perfectly. Black, glassy ice, embedded with grit and stones, overhung by dark, beetling rock walls, it exuded an atmosphere of sleeping menace. Above and beyond, the Ramp gave four superb pitches on sound rock, the previous evening's trepidations and misgivings dissipated by the smooth flow of movement and progress. The waterfall chimney, a black overhanging nasty, gave a hundred feet of bridging and peg pulling, half blinded by spray, icy water gushing down sleeves and gaiters. A memorable, magnificent pitch. The ice bulge proved to be a wicked little slot between ice and rock, very steep, very Scottish; thrutched by me, wedged much more elegantly by Rob, to an awkward pull out onto the Ramp icefield. A further ropelength, curving away right, led to the Brittle Ledges. Following this latter pitch, I heard a crack and looked up to see the sky black with stones. I instinctively flattened against the ice and, seconds later, my very being was engulfed by a total assault on the senses, as rocks whistled, cracked, whirled and thumped off the ice around me, smashing against helmet and rucksack. A sharp crushing blow on the left shoulder, inhaling dust, an acrid smell in my nostrils; a timeless period of detachment and waiting, of split seconds transformed into hours; nothing lasts forever, but everything lasts for some time. Slowly, the veil was lifted, the air cleared and silence descended, save for the rattling of small splinters and pebbles still dancing down the ice below me, and Rob's worried shouts from above. Apart from the pain in my shoulder, I appeared to be O.K. - I yelled back and climbed up to join him on the Brittle Ledges.

Two more pitches and we reached the Traverse of the Gods. An excellent lie-down ledge with leaning back wall appeared to offer a protected bivouac and, despite it being only early afternoon, we decided to call it a day, as the Traverse and the Spider beyond were undergoing constant barrage. Strolling about the ledge, sorting gear, I was suddenly smashed by a single large stone that glanced off my helmet, dislodging a large chunk of fibreglass, ricocheted off my shoulder and spun off into the void. Our ledge was obviously more poorly protected than we thought. We spent the afternoon in a steady patter of gravel and splinters, the big ones humming overhead as we brewed and dried wet gear in the warm sun before turning in, huddled as close to the back wall as possible. I hung my rucksack above my head as a line of defence against stones. It did nothing to stop the one that smashed into my knee at 2.30 am, bringing me gasping and moaning out of sleep.

Dawn found us fully geared and breakfasted as I shuffled and edged nervously, waiting for sufficient light to launch out onto the Traverse of the Gods, wanting to be away towards the waiting summit. Today had to be our last on the face; three days of good weather so far - surely it couldn't last? Today, we had to be up and out and down.

Like the rest of the face, the Traverse was totally devoid of snow, consisting of scree-banked ledges and tottering heaps of rubble that made movement akin to being on roller skates. Towards the end, the angle steepened, the rock became more solid and the exposure became utterly awesome, a bottomless abyss snapping at the heels all the way down to the second icefield and the meadows below. As we prepared to move into the Spider, a barrage of rocks rattled down our proposed line of ascent. The time was 6 am. Such was the nature of the game. What followed was probably the nearest we had come to a communal decision on the whole route. Previous decisions had either made themselves or had been resolved by whoever held the lead at the time. No question of ego or dominance, just a mutual sharing, trust and reliance on each other; a relationship forged not on countless previous testings but rather on empathy, common motivation and instinct. Whoever held the lead had made the decisions with little recourse to the other, save suggestions regarding the next pitch surveyed while belaying. This was different. 'I don't think we have many options open, do we?' I agreed and pointed upwards.

The White Spider is a magnificent place, an experience to be treasured as a little gem amidst a handful of life's select memories. At the time, a blur of dry mouth, cramping calf muscles, and radar-sharp senses alert for the by-now commonplace warnings of oncoming stones. A cathedral-like atmosphere, the very epitome of the Eiger, hemmed in by seemingly impossible cliffs with 6000 feet of clean exposure sucking ones heels towards the meadows of Alpiglen. The Spider is indeed an awesome place. I felt almost as if entering a shrine as I cramponed up to Rob's icescrew belay. As if respecting our benediction, the Spider stayed quiet and we scuttled up a further two ropelengths to the relative safety of the foot of the Exit Cracks. A brief halt for a bowel movement, probably brought on by having to hop up the last 30 feet of ice on one crampon, and then we were off and away, galloping up the first easy pitches of the Exit Cracks. Rob got the Quartz Crack, possibly the hardest pitch on the route; steep and strenuous, with a thin delicate slab exit at the top, led and seconded, gratefully, without rucksacks. Above, I continued left to the pulpit and diagonal abseil.

The square cut gully above was like Point Five on a bad day, except the descending detritus was stone and not snow. Rob's attempts to move in the lulls led simply to inactivity. Eventually, he was committed to move through it, a constant rattle and whine of stones that bounced off his helmet and rucksack, as I huddled defensively beneath a protecting rib of rock. Three more pitches followed, with diminishing angle and decreasing stonefall, until we basked in the sunshine, gazing at the beckoning summit icefield. As Rob led off up easy, but appallingly loose, ground I began to feel a warm glow and a lump in my throat as realisation dawned that success was nearly ours. I was brought back cruelly to reality as a further barrage of stones peeled off the wall above and sprayed the surrounding area, inflicting further suffering to my already cut and bleeding shoulders. It was to be the mountain's last salvo. The summit icefield was only one ropelength until we could move together along the Mittelegi Ridge to where we were re-united with Allan and Dave.



Robin Sedgwick on the final pitch of The Spider





Dave had been leading the Quartz Crack the previous evening when he pulled off a block, fell 60 feet, badly lacerated his hands and gashed his knee. The block whistled just over Allan's head, taking the crampons off the lid of his rucksack and shearing both shoulder straps. Indeed, we had seen the abandoned sack stuffed into the Quartz Crack but had thought nothing of it, so littered is the face with refuse - a stove and pans on the second icefield, a bivi bag in the Spider, even a sleeping bag in the Ramp. The two had abseiled to a ledge where Allan had put six stitches (without anaesthetic!) into Dave's knee, and spent an exciting night, being hit constantly by stones. They continued in the morning, with Dave prussicking the hard bits until we sighted them on the summit icefield. Dave even made a symbolic final lead to the summit.

Dave felt he couldn't manage the descent, so we installed him in his sleeping bag, left him our stove and food, and set off down with Allan to call a chopper. They pulled him off at 10.30 that night and flew him to Interlaken Hospital where he learnt he had climbed the last 800 feet of the face with severed ligaments in his knee.

The descent was loose and devious, but otherwise straightforward, and we reached the foot of the West Flank shortly before dusk. As Allan went on to Eigergletscher to summon the helicopter, I waited for Rob who was some way behind. Removing helmet and harness, taking off waterproofs, fastening my axe to my rucksack, even putting my camera away, was somehow symbolic, a gesture of completion and finality. I sat happily on a rock and contemplated the setting sun on the surrounding peaks, feeling tired but very mellow. Eventually Rob skidded down the snowslope to join me. 'Sorry I wasn't more emotional on top, but we had a job to do'. It was true, Dave's dilemma had taken the impact out of the summit. The task of getting him comfortable had pushed more personal thoughts out of mind. In a way, I felt slightly cheated. Consequently, our 'summit', our moment of completion, was the base of the West Flank. We exchanged words and firmly shook hands.

All that remained was the walk to the tents. As so often after a big route, we eventually went our separate ways, I for one preferring to be locked into my own thoughts, to value that time on my own; a time for contemplation, reflection and speculation, as an anaesthetic to forcing weary muscles and a burdensome rucksack through the darkness.

After twice getting lost, I tottered into our meadow at 11.30 to find the tents in darkness, surprised to find that Rob wasn't there. 'Anybody home?'. A moments pause and a sleepy voice replies, a soft Irish accent, a voice I'd last heard a couple of light years ago. In that one moment the spell was broken, the face was behind and I was back with friends, safety, warmth and comfort. Laurie and Bobby piled out of their tent, warm hugs and kisses from Laurie, appeals for tea and cigarettes from me. Rob staggered in 15 minutes later, having been even more hopelessly lost than me. The next few hours became a blur; four of us in a two-man tent, tea and fruit juice, I duck instinctively as the primus roars into life, Pork in red wine, endless talk and cigarettes, four bottles of wine and finish the Pernod, tottering drunkenly out at dawn taking sunrise photos. I fell asleep on the grass in broad daylight at 6.30 am..

* * *

Opposite: In the background Robin on the Hinterstoisser Traverse, top photo Rob at the end of the Second Icefield, and below - Robin at the top of the Exit Cracks.

Postscript

The following afternoon I walked alone to Kleine Scheidegg and sat contemplatively drinking beer on the cafe terrace, overlooking the Eiger. It was late afternoon and the last of the tourists were leaving, the cafe almost deserted. The plaintive note of the Alpenhorn drifted across from the hotel, wistful, haunting, evocative of forgotten dreams and distant memories.

The Eiger was unchanged and yet subtly different. A burning ambition and a sense of purpose had gone forever and irretrievably. I looked down at the fresh scars on my hands, impressions which would soon heal. The impressions in my mind would last longer, though they too would fade with time. Fading memories and a set of colour transparencies - is that all you're left with? I had dreamed of the Eiger for a long time, an urge verging on the obsessional, my ascent the consummation of a longed-for love affair. But whereas a love affair gives hopes and dreams and promise of future joys, here there was nothing but the past. It was over, it was done. I suddenly felt filled with a strange mixture of satisfaction, emptiness and a sense of loss.

Perhaps the only thing worse than not achieving ones ambitions is to achieve them? The cafe was closing around me and I slowly made my way down the track and into the meadows at the foot of the face. I picked my way through the tufts of grass and clumps of flowers, revelling in the contrasts between this tranquil green world and the towering grey mass of the Wall looming above; a Wall which had occupied years of thought and on which I had spent four days on the outer limits of existence. That I had climbed it, I was grateful. That the quest was over made me feel remorse. Perhaps the balance of my thoughts would change in time? I didn't know. I turned my back on the wall of yesterday and ran off downhill to the tents and tomorrow.

* * * * *

Eiger Footnotes

Postcard received by local well-known (!) climbing emporium,
tea-shop and late night Oread banking facility -

Alpiglen 1.8.83

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to complain about a Phoenix climbing helmet purchased from your emporium - when large lumps of limestone fall on it from a great height, bits break off it. Not really satisfactory, is it? Also, have you thought of adding shoulder pads to your range of equipment for use by Eignordwanders such as ourselves! Robin.

When asked on his return "Would you say it was the best route you'd ever done?", Rob replied "No, I think Right Unconquerable is."

Climbing Death-Roll

STATISTICS OF A YEAR'S MOUNTAINEERING ACCIDENTS

During the twelve months which ended on November 15th last, 210 people were killed in mountaineering accidents in Central Europe i.e. the Swiss Alps, the Tyrolese Mountains, the Austrian Alps, the Carpathian Alps, and the Bavarian Ranges. Ninety-four fatal accidents occurred in Switzerland, and eighty-two in the Tyrolese Mountains, the remainder being distributed over the remaining ranges mentioned.

During the same period there were 567 accidents which did not end fatally. Of these, 184 were serious accidents, involving permanent injuries or amputation of some limb.

The principal cause of accidents was the recklessness displayed by inexperienced mountaineers in attempting difficult ascents without necessary knowledge, equipment or guides. In some cases, ladies who had never before ascended any kind of elevation attempted difficult climbs in light ballroom shoes and thin summer dresses, without guides, and without any kind of equipment. In many other cases women were the principal offenders in reckless climbing.

In other cases climbers were surprised by avalanches, breaking of ropes, sudden fogs which caused climbers to become lost, failure of the heart at difficult points, etc. The victims were principally Germans, English, Austrian, Italian and Swiss.

Americans hardly figure in European climbing. They appear to have no taste for the pastime.

Originally published on 23rd December 1910
in the Clay Cross Chronicle.

Thrills and Spills on the Ryan-Lochmatter Ridge

Tim Barnett

Crap, cans, pegs and slings indicated that there was a route up the steep groove that hung above us, but we both knew that our grade IV route didn't go that way. Pete reads the description again from already crumpled pieces of paper and says that we can get on route via a couloir on the left of this initial buttress. I curse to myself about the wasted time as it is now two hours since we left the Envers Hut and slogged up the wet Envers de Blatiere glacier. Maybe I should have learnt a lesson from events of three days ago when we first came to do the route but had strayed up the wrong glacier. Maybe I should question Pete's decision, but as he is the one with experience, the one who has been here before, and as I knew no better there seemed little point. It had been a warm night with nothing freezing so there had been numerous rumbles as rock fell and seracs collapsed. Now it was getting really warm as the sun rose rapidly over the horizon into a cloudless sky.

Down we go, back onto the wet glacier and plod on up, way past the buttress with the hanging crack, following two other pairs, one an English party, over large crevasses.

Steep, runnelled snow slopes lead from a huge bergschrund up to a broken buttress where the English lads are fast finding a route. The other party is climbing up through a black wet couloir towards a ridge on the right.

'That must be the couloir,' says Pete.

'Yeah,' I agreed, totally confused. I remember that there isn't a route between our route on the Aiguille du Plan, the Ryan-Lochmatter Ridge, and the snow slopes of the Pain de Sucre - surely no-one is going anywhere near the Pain de Sucre in these conditions.

'So where are the English lads going?' I ask.

'Dunno.'

I plod on up towards the stone-blackened snow beneath the couloir, Pete roped thirty feet behind. The nearer we get, the louder the sound of running water and falling stones and the hotter the sun becomes.

I see stones - perhaps stones bouncing down towards me. An instinctive, protective move throws me off balance, causes me to slip and, as my axe doesn't hold, down I slide. I think I shout, but all my concentration is on getting my axe to brake in the deep wet snow.

I stop for an instant, and then downwards again, this time with Pete sitting on my head. Come on, axe - break!

'Why did we stop?' I ask, brushing off snow and looking at the deep runnels

made by stones, running down from the couloir into that huge bergschrund.

'We shouldn't have...' I continue, '....Look out!' I leap out of the path of a tumbling brick, getting caught on the upper part of my right arm. 'I'm off!' as again I am thrown off balance, but this time I regain it after a few steps backwards. 'Okay' - pause, then 'nothing's broken'. I only feel a slight throbbing.

Pete was already making his way up towards the couloir. I feel remarkably calm as I look at the distance we slid - a fair way - Pete looks even calmer. I don't want to go anywhere near that couloir - why can't we follow the English lads? It's too warm! I don't know if I voice my thoughts but I knew that Pete wasn't going to be turned back from this route a third time.

'You'd better take a stance' advises Pete at the bottom of steep, almost vertical, ice steps that lead to the couloir. I ram an axe into hard snow and cower against a wall of hard-packed snow. Now I can hear the whirring of the falling sounds and the thumps as they hit and bounce off the snow above, showering me in a white powder. It's hot, the sun high and strong. Stay cool, Tim, I tell myself, trying to put the thought of the seriousness of my situation to the back of my mind. The rope no longer runs through my hands. Jesus.....he's been hit!

'Pete!'

'I've got to put my crampons on,' a voice shouts from above. The rope moves and eventually pulls at my waist.

'Hold on,' I cry as I panic to buckle crampon straps. I scramble, almost run, up to Pete only having time to wish I had the two axes Pete had.

'It's fairly sheltered here,' Pete smiles, standing under the bottom rocks of the couloir. Water pours down a groove at the side and down under the snow. It's raining stones - I can hear them whizzing, whirring, bouncing past. The sounds are sickening.

'Where now?'

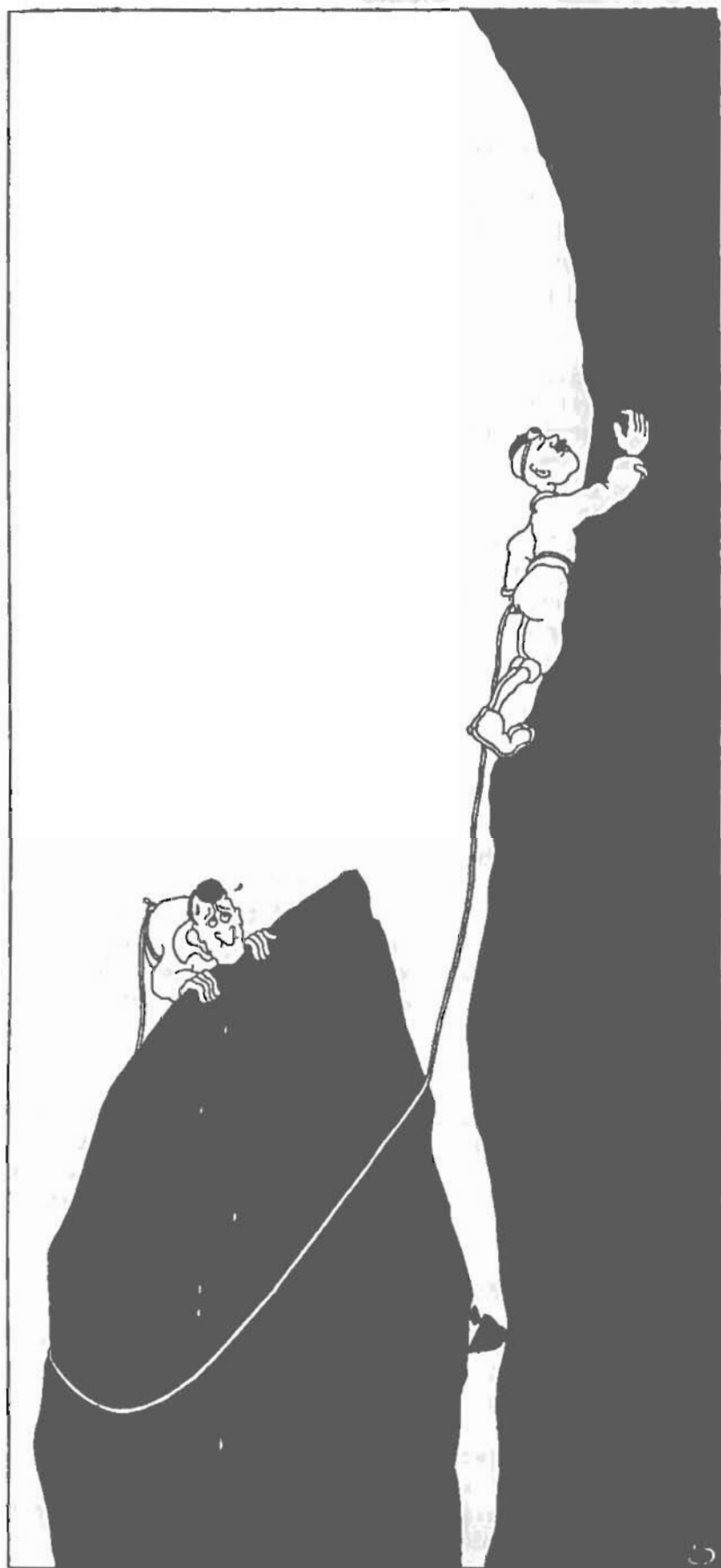
Pete indicates some pegs. A hard, irreversible move leads to the edge of the couloir and out of the path of the stones. Here we both rest, take off excess clothes and look for a route up to the ridge. There is only one way - up the couloir. Even abseiling is out of the question - only the gaping jaws of bergschrunds are below us. I look up the dirty, dusty couloir where high above us the English lads skirt it's other edge. The other team is out of sight, having escaped from the steep gully.

A small niche with a single peg offers me a little protection after a rope length. From here, Pete stepped into the middle of the couloir. High above, a gunshot-like crack - I see the stones. Bricks, boulders, falling, bouncing....

'Pete!' He stops. I no longer dare look but try to make myself a millimetre thick. Now I hear that sickening, whirring sound again as the rocks fall inches away. I hear the screeching and rattling as they hit, bounce, ricochet their way down the couloir. I smell the cordite and my stomach turns. I feel the disturbed air as the stones hurtle down.

Pete is trapped, pinned down as the stones fall continuously. A quick glance up the steep, scratched couloir.....more and more stones, as if someone was emptying a dump truck a thousand feet above.

The rope moves a few feet, another volley of rocks. He's got to have been hit...



LE VIEUX GRIMPEUR AU DÉBUTANT :

“Et maintenant, jeune homme, maintenant *seulement*, nous allons commencer à grimper.”

(Avec Editorial apologies a Pete et Tim mais cet one je ne was able to resist pas!)

no movement.....the rope's cut.....Christ, hurry up! Something hits my foot, something else bounces off my rucksack with a thud.....there is no way he can't have been hit.

'Hurry Pete, please,' I didn't want to be here a second longer than I had to - I don't want to be here, full stop! The noise seems deafening, the situation is terrifying as the rope inches its way through my hands.

Eventually, it's my turn to dodge stones and I climb as fast as I can. How Pete and I managed to avoid being hit defeats me, but after another couple of pitches we are sitting relaxing on a shoulder - safe.

It's a perfect alpine day and it feels good to be alive as we absorb the sunshine, pushing the memories of the past couple of hours to the backs of our minds

There is a strange calm, everything is quiet and it takes a while for me to realise that there are no stones falling down the couloir - really weird.

Easy climbing for a couple of pitches leads to steeper red granite that is warm and friendly in the bright sunshine. There are continuous cracks and rumblings as stones fall and rock buttresses disintegrate, but they are on other mountains and are no concern of ours as we climb our ridge that is safe from falling stones.

Large ledges provide comfortable belays where I can sit, suck a boiled sweet and doze, with my mind thinking of nothing for what seems like hours but is really only minutes as I'm brought back to the reality of the climb by movement of the rope, or the buzzing of an insect near my ear that causes an instinctive tensing and ducking.

We aren't climbing slowly, but time is flying by and the top looks miles away. Route finding is proving difficult as our tattered paper says go left at Grade III, but we can both see that the route goes up a Grade IV crack on the right. Confusion.....time wasted looking for a way up to the left then, cursing the guidebook writers, the crack on the right is climbed.

I begin to wonder if we're on route or not, but for some reason I'm not too bothered - just enjoying the climbing. Then Pete recognises a diedre and gives it a name, saying that he had seen it in a photo somewhere - if you say so, Scott, but it rings no bells with me.

'How did this come undone?' queries Pete, pulling an end of rope from his harness. Christ, how long has that been like that?

'You ought to use a figure-of-eight with a single eleven,' I suggest.

'How do you tie one of those?'

I think he's joking at first. Reconnected, he thrutches, pulls, pegs his way up the diedre making a pitch that looks hard look desperate. He falls off the top move but doesn't go far as, somehow, I'm expecting it.

'Hold broke off,' he explains hanging in mid-air. I look down.... thank god you were tied on!

A few more pitches fit the scribbled route description. 'This must be the hard Chamonix crack', Pete says, looking up at a wide, vertical chimney crack.

I squeeze, grope and thrutch my way up, feet kicking at the ice in the back

of the crack - it's hard. I can't move, camera jamming in the crack, but gradually, strenuously, I inch my way up, practically ripping the arm off my shirt. I nearly fall off the stance as my body shakes, drained by the hundred feet of sheer effort. As I start to drag the rope in, my arm starts to ache.

We sack-haul on the next pitch, a shorter Chamonix crack, and then an easy pitch brings us to a steep wall that looks impossible, but has pegs in a shallow crack at the bottom.

'Nothing about this in the description,' says Pete, confused. 'Is there a way round to the left?'

I stop looking for the top and, wondering where all the time has gone, spend more minutes looking for a non-existent route around to the left.

'I don't think I can do it,' Pete explains disappointedly after his second attempt. I'm tired, thirsty, hungry, my arm hurts and I don't care because all I want to do is curl up, switch off and sleep.

'We'll bivi here.'

I smile with relief as I pull out my bivi bag and tie myself onto a suitable spot. The sun quickly disappears from the still cloudless sky. What a day!

* * * *

I woke a couple of times feeling cold, but wake properly after a good ten hours as the sun starts to reappear. My stomach gnaws at my inside, begging for more than just boiled sweets, but there is nothing more because we should have been down in the valley yesterday teatime. Pete struggles, standing in slings to crack the wall, and I watch pin-pricks of light cross the glacier below, still in the dark. I try to ignore my complaining stomach and aching arm.

A well-placed peg cracks the pitch, and we start to progress again up to a never-nearing summit. No more pitches fit the description and we blindly follow the pegs up steep cracks. Thinking only of climbing and the top, I ignore the spectacular views. I curse the sun and the suffocating heat. My throat is dry.

Several pairs are climbing rapidly up the ridge of rock to our left, on the other side of the couloir.

'We must be on the East Ridge of the Crocodile,' smiles Pete.

'I know.'

Up we go, hungry and thirsty. 'How much further?' I ask over and over, as I watch the leading team on the Ryan-Lochmatter disappear near the summit of the Aiguille du Plan.

'I'm there,' Pete smiles down at me a couple of pitches later. At last!

Relief is my first feeling, hunger is the next, as I stand on top of the Dent

du Crocodile. I don't feel any satisfaction on having completed the climb, as we still have to get down. Pete sets up an abseil while I stuff a Mars bar down a parched throat. It's two in the afternoon - we should have been well on our way down this time yesterday.

Two abseils and two pitches of cramponing up shitty ice brings us to the summit blocks of the Plan. I tell two weary climbers of our epics. They are unimpressed, but offer a bite of food and some water - all that I really want.

Now there is only the traverse from the Plan to the Midi telepherique station. An easy snow plod that only took us a couple of hours last year, so we'll easily be down in Chamonix this evening.

Where have all the bucket steps in good hard snow gone? The snow conditions are a little different from last year - it is so warm. The snow is wet and just slides off to reveal the hard winter ice, and so we are having to pitch some of this traverse. It's slow going, the route has become serious again and feels very insecure.

We untie below the worst climb in the world - the long, steep plod up to the ice tunnel of the Midi station. It's getting dark as I take my crampons off in the tunnel and there is a cold wind blowing. Now, as I watch the clouds building up, I can really relax. Even though we've missed the last car down, it's over. Two very long and intense days have left me drained mentally and physically, but I begin to get those feelings of pride and satisfaction.

There are quite a crowd of climbers kipping at the Midi station and some allow us to scrounge food and water. For some reason, Pete and I don't sleep and the first car down is a great relief.

Walking through the deserted streets of Chamonix, I feel pleased with myself at having overcome continuous difficulties, at having climbed a route two grades harder than the one we set out to do - there is no feeling of annoyance that we have climbed the wrong mountain.

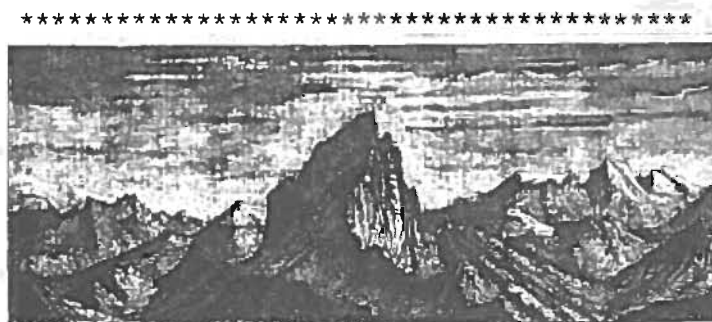
'What number is the Crocodile in Rebuffat?'

'Dunno. All I remember is a picture of someone standing in etriers on a horrendously steep wall,' replies Pete.

'I get the impression someone doesn't want you to do the Ryan-Lochmatter.' Pete had been defeated now for a third time (his first attempt on the Ryan-Lochmatter had to be abandoned due to a storm during a previous season).

'Yeah,' smiles Pete, 'but they don't have to go to those extremes to stop me.'

'Hey, let's forget about the Ryan-Lochmatter for this year.'





Hum!

Of Tubes and Drips, and Bleeping Sounds, and Urgencies and Things

Chris Wilson

'What's up?' came John's enquiring voice from below. What was up? My right foot was firmly placed on a peg, my left dangled vaguely around a crack too wide. Above, thirty feet of crack reared, handholds to the left, a line of pegs up a steeper line to the right. I was knackered, for some reason the altitude seemed to be taking an excessive toll on me. Obviously, yesterday was still affecting me.

With the dawn, Will's car disappeared down the road back to France, and with it our passports and possible escape. The walk up to the Franco Monzino Hut had been different. Tim complained of blood in his mouth. I followed the line of painted boulders, the others followed me. At the foot of a cliff, the red spots disappeared and, 150 feet up the cliff, a yellow circle was seen. John took the lead up these cliffs, Tim and I remaining at the rear, complaining and muttering about retracing our steps to reach the correct path. Three hours later, we sat on the grass looking down on the Hut, only half-an-hour behind schedule, whilst Tim received a cross-examination on his state of fitness. This, it seemed, was the point of no return.

Days later, staring at a ceiling for hours, I returned over and over again to the route. Maybe if I'd gone down from the Hut, I wouldn't be looking blankly at the small cracks in the left-hand corner, or the stains above my head, or the twenty assorted tubes and cables attached to me. 'Bleep, bleep, bleep' - the reassuring audible sound of my beating heart flooded the room and I drifted back to the Innominata.

Above the Hut, a flog up the small Chatelet glacier was followed by a short wall. A stone bounced over our heads. The scree slope above went on for ever. The ridge on the left was festooned with gendarmes. They appeared to start below us and finish miles above - we needed to traverse below the first of them. So, up we went, then down, then up.

Occasional glances over the ridge gave views down vertiginous cliffs to the Brouillard Glacier below. Eventually, the way was found and up the glacier we went. God, I was knackered. Pete and Tim went steadily off into the distance. John said nothing, just watched as I toiled away slowly. The technical parts were fine; it was necessary to slow down. The easier sections were murder - I knew I was slow. I knew some parts were exposed to stone/ice fall, but I just

could not go any faster, only slower still.

By the time we reached the Eccles Bivi Hut, the new Hut, I felt rough. Rough enough to not appreciate the niceties of the Hut, with its dry blankets and mattresses, its high gloss table and cushioned stools. Tim produced an endless stream of drinks which I used to wash down a number of aspirins. I started to feel better, though I still refused Pete's offer of beer.

Yes, I said to the doctor, I'd had a couple of aspirins a few days before. That, he explained, was one of the contributing factors which had led to my present state. The blood packs were replaced by glucose solution. The tube down my throat kept gurgling away, and it hurt - my god, it hurt; as did my back. The various tubes and wires gave me something to study - oxygen, drips, pulse, etc. The main focal points were the drips, though. Over the next few weeks, I became very attached to them. I wondered vaguely why the left and right were different. And then drifted back to the Eccles Hut.

Crampons or no crampons - that was the question; and the question was, inevitably, answered wrongly. Two pitches later, on they went and on they stayed. Near the top of Pic Eccles we must have gone wrong. Tension traverses shouldn't be necessary on this type of route, but we weren't the first, as the rotting slings indicated. Col Eccles - glorious views across to the Peuterey and two moving dots. Nearer, the Central Pillar of Freney, swarming with bodies and ropes. As ice/snow crests go, the one on the Col Eccles was far easier than those to follow, but as I didn't know that it seemed desperate. Not far above, that Grade IV wall. I clipped all the pegs in reach and then exhausted myself by swarming up the rock, promising myself the first fag of the day at the top. Sitting on the top, blowing smoke down on John, the exhaustion dissipated and the pitch seemed easy.

Not so life in the Urgencies Department at Chamonix hospital. Pete and Will had rushed me there on Tuesday night, club night at the Rowing Club. Bedlam had erupted after the contents of my washing-up bowl were displayed. People removing my clothing, others taking blood, others temperature, both arms were attached to plasma drips, my chest was wired up and, all the time, questions were fired at me. Oxygen was fed down my nose. The doctor kindly asked me to eat a hose-pipe - 'just like spaghetti' he said. Others took blood pressure where areas of arm were sufficiently free of paraphernalia, and still others looked on, made comments, gave injections and brought in more equipment. All the while I seemed to be visiting rooms around the hospital - the theatre, the x-ray, finally coming to rest in the room with the ceiling cracked in the left corner. Another doctor removed the fat piece of 'spaghetti', replacing it with a thicker piece, and then replacing that with a straighter piece attached to a machine. By now, I felt pretty wretched but the assembled multitude seemed satisfied with what the machine told them. Some left. Nurses continued to take various readings and comfort me throughout the night. In moments of peace, I thought of the rest of the route.

Above the first step, the ground became easier if looser, although another of those ice crests appeared. It was terrifying. 'A cheval' on something that felt as though it would snap at any moment, thousands of feet up in the air. Climbing became an effort and 300 feet seemed too much. Pointing to the team of Pete and Tim above, I suggested that having but one leader would save time. Five pitches each. In practice, we weren't too good at it and kept resorting to leading through. The Great Couloir - '150 feet wide, snow, cross quickly' said the book - 50 feet ice, it was, and I crossed slowly. The slanting

couloir to the left was loose, very loose. Crashes from above told us that the others were up there. Then the final buttress up to the Brouillard Ridge. In the cloud. I kept saying that above this it would be a walk, and on we went in that belief. The ice to the top seemed odd - a placement repeated in identical-looking ice to the previous one would pull through, dinner-plate, or just loosen everything around. Also, it was getting cold. And we had to lead through. It was exhausting; but I did feel I was going better now.

On reaching the Brouillard Ridge, my system received a shock. Occasional glimpses through the cloud did not reveal the expected easy-angled snowslope, but still more sharp ridge. Also, it went up, and down, into the distance. Will this route ever end?

And would the night ever end, I asked myself. All night long they pricked me, prodded me, asked me questions and took tests. Daylight came and, hours later, a familiar face. Rob came and explained my problem to me - an ulcer and severe haemorrhaging. I wasn't too bothered; I would be starting my new job on Monday and the hospital would fix me up by then. And so the day went on. Not much different to the night. In the afternoon, more welcome familiar faces. All looking worried. The next night was worse. That damned tube down my throat was murder. My back hurt. My guts hurt. And the minutes took hours. The nurses were great but, as they explained, my throat hurt on account of the tube - that must stay, so my throat must hurt. My back hurt because I had stayed in the same position for so long - I would have to get used to it. My guts hurt because that was why I was where I was. All night long, the bleeping continued, interrupted only by the sound of glass phials being broken and drips being changed. How different to the Vallot Hut.

John and I plodded over the top. Yet again John had seen nothing from the summit of the Blanc. By the time we reached the Hut, we were white all over with frost. The wind was screeching and we looked forward to warmth and comfort. Our dreams were shattered on entering. Pete pointed to the second and third steps on the stairs - they were for us to sit on. The Hut built for about a dozen was packed with over 50, all but a few on their way up the normal route. The remainder of that sleepless, murderous night is another tale, but it was not pleasant, nor uneventful. Unlike hospital.

A routine had been established. Day followed night and drips were changed. Jan arrived from England and life improved. By Friday I'd worked out that there was a window and that by moving a curtain I could see the mountains. On Friday they moved me. On Sunday I moved them. The dawn came, daylight flooded the room, but then the room turned around and night came. Two nurses answered my call. They spoke with one voice and seemed far off. The room quickly filled with people who established that I'd haemorrhaged again. I was very scared.

The Urgencies Department in Geneva was different. No cracks in the ceiling. Same performance though and another sleepless night. This, however, was the technological age. Computers, electronics and blood to feed them. It seemed I was pretty rough. By Tuesday I was fine and the flight had been arranged to the D.R.I. for the next day. Later on Tuesday, I haemorrhaged again, the fourth time. All the facilities available to the 21st century whirled into action and by Tuesday night I'd been fixed up, cut up, stitched up and on the way to recovery.

After the Innominata, we'd set our sights on Route Major. The weather wasn't quite right, so we were waiting for Wednesday. That Wednesday never came. But, one year soon.....



SOLITUDE : " Ce serait bien plus beau si je pouvais le dire à quelqu'un. "

The High Atlas of Morocco - The Place and the People

Mike Wynne

Chamonix meteo - Summer 1982 - 'Fine today, storms tomorrow afternoon'. Typical. Another day's dossing by the pool, bouldering, then twelve hours of playing cards, writing cards and rolling cigarettes, protected by a thin sheet of polythene.

High Atlas meteo - Summer 1983 - it does not exist but who needs one anyway - nearly every day is clear and sunny.

A range of mountains within easy reach of Europe, completely different to the Alps in every respect except altitude. Situated in a country whose culture is certainly different to ours, except that many Moroccans now wear European clothes, and inhabited by an ancient and simple race of Berbers, the Atlas offer an entirely different type of entertainment to the Alps. Louis Neltner wrote in 'La Montagne' in 1929 "Il n'est plus beau ni moins beau que les Alpes: il est autre" (It is neither more nor less beautiful than the Alps: it is different). The whole Atlas range stretch 700 km across Morocco, but the High Atlas is only a small part of the range, 70 km south of the imperial city of Marrakesh. This part is volcanic, long jagged ridges of loose rock where many of the cols are crossed by well-made mule tracks, connecting many of the remote Berber villages.

The Berbers are a part of these mountains, as glaciers are a part of the Alps. They have created green and fertile areas in the valleys by extensive, but simple, irrigation systems. Their huge herds of sheep and goats graze off scrub growing right up to some of the major summits. A visit to the High Atlas would not be complete if the native Berbers were not involved. They are a very hospitable people, will often offer the visitor mint tea (expecting some reward), but are also beggars by nature. Except for the frequently seen, but rarely correct, digital watch, their life style has not changed for thousands of years. Most houses are mud construction (though some cement is now used), and they survive off their fields, worked by man and mule.

Mules are the essential beast of burden for the Berbers, also for the tourist and climber, the Atlas equivalent to the trains and cable-cars of the Alps. Using mules (beware of rip-off prices), one can tour the valleys and high passes of the Atlas without being burdened by the ubiquitous large sack of the Alps. Working as a leader of trekking holidays in the High Atlas this summer, my groups would use mules to carry food and cooking gear, though many opted to put all personal gear on the mules. Using this method, some very unlikely characters managed long ascents over the passes and the ultimate aim of their holiday, the ascent of North Africa's highest peak, Toubkal (13,665 feet). Many people visit the Atlas simply to climb Toubkal, which is served by the Neltner C.A.F. Hut at 10,200 feet - a wasted exercise as there is so much more to see. Many come clad only in t-shirt, trainers and a blanket which, though it is usually

sufficient in the summer months, could be uncomfortable. The terrain, scree, is much more comfortable in boots (except for the Berber shepherds whose 'mountain boot' is a tyre-tread sandal). The views from Toubkal can be spectacular, though often hazy in summer. One can see from Marrakesh on one side of the range across to Sous and the Sahara on the other.

The best time of year for views is the winter, when the air is clear and the range is covered in deep snow. January and February give the best ski-ing; ski-mountaineering or touring being the most popular form of sport, though there are a few downhill resorts in the Atlas. In mid-summer all but a few isolated patches of snow will have gone, exposing large scree slopes and loose rock. There are some rock climbs in the Atlas, and some claim to be good, but the main attraction of the summits (other than Toubkal) is the isolation, though this can often be disturbed in the most unlikely spots by a singing Berber shepherd brandishing a blackened teapot of mint tea!

Apart from drinking too much sweet mint tea, and hence having rotten teeth, the Berbers seem to have life sussed. The men do some of the light tasks in the fields but the women do all the heavy jobs like fetching water and firewood. They cook excellent meals of tagine (spicy stew), couscous and, on special occasions, a meshoi (a whole roast sheep). They may be poor, but they have little need of much cash as most of their food they grow themselves. On the whole, they are, by our standards, unhygienic (the kids are filthy, but friendly) and hence, for us Europeans living with them, a bout of 'brahim's bowels' is not uncommon. Flies are common, but surprisingly few bite. There is no malaria and few midges. All Berbers are dressed and shod tattily (little is spent on clothes), though the women appear glamorous in brightly coloured clothes.

Language is no real problem. French is the commercial language, though all speak Arabic, and the Berbers have their own dialect, which is unwritten and only spelt phonetically on maps and guides. It is fun to learn some Berber words, the most useful being 'wallu' meaning 'nothing', a useful reply to the continual demands for 'l'carrikan' (money), 'bonbon' (sweet), 'dirham' (Moroccan currency), etc.. A fuller dictionary is available on request, but the 'teach yourself Berber' cassette is not yet completed.

Any visit to the Atlas should be combined with at least a visit to Marrakesh and, if possible, a tour into the deep south, the Sahara side of the Atlas. Local buses are slow, but cheap - car hire is ideal, but expensive, unless booked through an agent in England. The fascination of being so close to the world's greatest desert, yet at an altitude of 4000 metres plus, draws one towards the contrast of the desert, the casbars and oases. Moroccan roads are either good or dirt track (piste), thanks to the French protectorate. A journey of 350 miles, starting and finishing at Marrakesh, takes one over two passes, and through the desert, completely circumnavigating the High Atlas. The return over the single-track, partly piste, Tizi in Test (Tizi means Pass), is a tremendous trip.

Marrakesh can only be described in a separate book - and many have been written about it. The ultimate tourist rip-off centre where, unknowingly, people can pay high prices for souvenirs, but alternatively some excellent bargains can be had. Good value and hospitality can be found in the Hotel Foucault, on the edge of the main square, the Djemma El Fna. Local guides are hard to avoid.

Although I have included some local information, this is not meant to be a guide on how to get there. Hopefully, it has whetted the appetite of a few who might want a change from the Alps. If you want information on the country, please contact me - I'll hopefully be back there next summer, after this winter in Austria - well, it beats a 9 'til 5 job any day!

Moroccan Days

Ann-Marie Carrington

The day finally dawned. I rose at 6.00 am with plenty of time to spare - I wanted to make sure I got there. I caught the 8.00 am coach to London, then a bus to Heathrow; I was there by noon. I then spent about six hours dossing at the airport waiting to go (I was still feeling high, as I had been since early that morning). I think the airport staff must have thought I'd taken up residence. I ended up minding various people's baggage and meeting a lad from Casablanca called Adbellatif on whom I practised my french. And he understood (I think!).

Got on the 'plane and made yet another friend, David, who was going to hitch around Maroc. The funny thing was that Mike had told me to stay clear of people with rucksacks in case they were his lot, and I let on that I was getting a cheap holiday (they knew by the end of their stay anyway!), so I virtually ignored David at first due to the presence of his rucksack. Finally arrived at Casablanca airport - no sign of Mr. Bogart. Panicking like mad in case the Wynne had forgotten me, I rushed towards the exit doors after being searched. He was also panicking because I appeared five minutes after everyone else! We caught the bus into the centre of Casablanca and checked into the Hotel Majestic. We were treated to drinks and then headed for the ice-cream parlour - gorgeous fruity ones (!). By this time I was in a real daze - still couldn't believe I'd arrived. I was annoyed it was dark 'cos I couldn't see everything. Maybe I wasn't there at all?

The next morning dawned and realisation of where I was hit me as the sound of the traffic along with the heat rushed into the room on opening the shutters. After a small shopping spree for provisions, we headed for Marrakesh on a quiet, efficient CTM bus, taking four hours with two stops. The heat was amazing - a real stick-to-the-seat job. The land was arid and very flat until we sighted small hills just before Marrakesh. The Moroccans are amazing drivers - two coaches travelling at high speed towards one another, horns blaring and lights flashing 'til one moves over just before impact - phew! We saw lots of mules, bicycles and quite a few cars. The roads were a lot better than Derby roads - superb lack of potholes. When we arrived, we had to wait a while for our sacks to be weighed (you have to pay too) and loaded onto a big roof-rack, then secured by a big net. Anyway, got to the Hotel Foucald in two of the numerous "petite taxis", had tea and out to sample the night life in the souks and market square. People were dancing, singing, playing drums, charming snakes and selling produce from lots of fruit and meat stalls, not to mention the numerous clothes stalls. Almost everyone asked us if we wanted a guide. Many of these were kids who spoke quite a few languages. We employed one little lad who alternated between English and French, and we were off on our tour. This is where Mike first started bargaining for me (in camels, of course). Five was the starting figure. By the end of the hols. it had gone up to 500 (so Mike says)

but I'm sure it was really 5000 (!). But Mike says there's not a lot you can do with camels, except break a few bricks.

The next day, we caught a Bedford van into the mountains, via Asni and some very sharp bends. The driving didn't improve either. We got to a village called Imlil, consisting of a few houses and shops and, wait for it, a cafe. Luxury of luxuries! From Imlil, we walked with our sacks to Aremd (pronounced Arund). The food was taken up by mules. The mountain people are called Berbers and have their own unwritten language. I managed to pick up quite a few words (and not all clean). A conversation in Berber consists mainly of grunts and gesticulations with various set phrases thrown in (well, my conversations did). Got to our house, a very colourful one especially for Mike and his groups. I think we had one of only two houses 'avec une loo' (well, a hole). The house is owned by Mohammed and organised by his son Lahcen (capitalist Berber), one of the best Berbers ever. Many an evening Lahcen taught me Berber words and phrases. You think of the word you want in English, translate it to French, and then it is translated to Berber - it got quite complicated sometimes.

The first two days were spent on easier walks, one to a waterfall near Sidi-Chamaroux and one to a copper mine. The waterfall was beautiful and once there, we swam and sunbathed all afternoon. We received a guided tour of the mine and its complex passages.

Then came the serious stuff. We set off on a circular tour taking seven days and six nights. The first day was spent walking to the Neltner Refuge, bypassing Sidi-Chamaroux, for a bottle of Fanta. Sidi-Chamaroux is basically a few shops and houses centred around a shrine. People come from miles around to carry out their pilgrimage. Once there, they can buy souvenirs, like plastic beads. And, of course, the ever-present bottles of Orangina, Fanta and Coke - the higher the altitude, the higher the price. You can tell how high you are by the price of Coke!

From Sidi-Chamaroux, we walked up to the Neltner Refuge. Altogether, it was about six or seven miles starting off at 6000 feet and going up to about 10000 feet. I got to the Hut and collapsed into my bag feeling rather ill, emerging next day to wander from one rock to the next (to the loo) while the rest of the group did the big 'un, Toubkal (13,500 feet). The day after, we walked up to a col and descended a few thousand feet to the Lac d'Ifni; you could see it from the col, a tiny blue speck in the distance. I was out in front, feeling much better, following our mules, 'til we stopped for lunch by a pleasant stream - and yet more bottles of coke! Mike and I followed up the rear when we set off again, round a corner and there it was, looking like five minutes away. It was, of course, a half-hour walk away. Once there, we swam, washed clothes and generally dossed. The sun went down and it got considerably cooler, so we ate and bivvied in our little houses. Ours had four walls and a doorway. No roof, though! I actually saw some shooting stars - the sky was beautiful, really clear. After a couple of hours of sleep, I awoke feeling ill again, so the rest of the night was spent awake (!!! Ed).

Consequently, the next day was a very slow walk for me (Mike was crawling!), uphill at first and then fairly flat to the village of Amsuzat. On arrival, I felt considerably better and tucked in to my share of the communal tagine, made by the muleteers. Tagine is like a stew which is eaten by all and sundry using bread, from a massive bowl. If you go to a house for a tagine, the meat is eaten last and shared out between those eating by the head man, usually the

father. I was very privileged when sharing Lahcen's tagines for usually the men and women eat separately. When the father is present at tagine times, his sons are all very polite. As soon as he departs, the conversation gets very bawdy! Not that I participated of course, being a member of the weaker sex! We slept that night on the house verandah - not such a posh house, as it had no loo. We had to go in search of the mule pit below, where all the rubbish was thrown. I was showered with cornflake remains the next morning!!

Next day was another slower walk to the village of Tissaldai. An even slower walk pour moi, being ill encore. We followed the valley and descended into Tissaldai in time for tea, and were able to lay our pits out on grass. Yes, grass! Mainly found in the better irrigated valleys, of course. As you get higher, the streams and irrigation channels get scarcer, but the water from sources above village height is fit to drink - only polluted by sheep and goats. Everyone settled down except Mike, moi and an American lad, Charlie. We got out the pans, lids, and kettles as drums and pretty soon broke into a sing-song avec les muleteers; progressing into a dance with Mike in the dance circle and Charlie and I tapping the rhythm out on the washing-up bowl. In return for this we performed the hokey-cokey which the mule men found amazing, not to mention totally incomprehensible! Peace eventually reigned!

In the morning, we had a very long climb to an extremely windy col for lunch. On the other side of the col, we found a sheltered spot and ate, slept and sunbathed before descending to Azibtifni - a very primitive mud-hut village. As usually happened, our first priority was food - during its preparation, it actually rained! At least three spots of rain were felt on our faces. Settled down into our allotted field after another sing-song. There was also a dance in the village which we tried to compete against - unsuccessfully. Deafening!

After breakfast on our last day, five of us set off for home via Aksoul (12,700 feet) - The Hard Way (cf. Chris Bonington). The other five followed the mules round the valley. It was a very steep, rocky ascent which would have been easier if I hadn't had to keep stopping because 'brahim's bowels' had struck yet again! Walking is a great laxative! I eventually made it to the top after Mike drolled out the bunging-up pills. We ate lunch and descended the 3000 feet of mainly scree - I hated every minute of it. Scree does horrible things to me. That's all I'm saying about the descent - traversing scree is not my speciality (enquiries as to what is via the Editor only. Ed.). At the bottom we were greeted by three shepherds offering mint tea, in which ritual I did not partake due to my immense dislike of the stuff. Drinking mint tea is a great ritual too. The tea-maker has to pour the tea out, then back, then out, etc., until it's tested by the guests and agreed to be perfect for consumption. The tea itself is very minty (logical, eh) and very sweet. The sugar is broken off with a hammer-like object and massive pieces of it are crammed into the tiny teapot. Hour-an-hour later we set off again and returned to Aremd for a Lahcen tagine, after a very cold dip in the water-hole. My screams were heard all down the valley as I hit the water, almost pure ice.

Lahcen's 'grande taxi' drove us to Asni on the following day, to part company with the group, then another taxi to Marrakesh. I retired to bed with 'brahim's bowels', getting up in the afternoon to go shopping for a jalabba (like a kaftan). I spent most of the shopping spree in agony, asleep on a carpet on the carpet man's stall. He was very kind and even offered me an aspirin in return for my services as an added attraction to his carpets (!). I must admit I lost some weight on that trek, due to tremendous amounts of exercise but mainly due to 'brahim's bowels'.

Abdul was our official Marrakesh guide who took us round all the sights, speaking very good but very fast English. After we'd seen the group off in Casablanca, we joined Abdul at his sisters in Agadir. We caught a cheap, ramshackle bus which took nine hours and went via Marrakesh - couldn't get away from the place. Spent most of the journey sleeping or listening to Mike's 'walkman'. Arrived in the early hours, and later went for a look round the town - not very impressive. Went on a tour of the fishing port, acquiring lots of sardines on the way. Actually swam in the sea, in a white t-shirt too!

We returned with Abdul on yet another crappy bus to Marrakesh, then straight on to Imlil on an overcrowded bus. We were stopped by the police en route and various people hid under seats. We walked to Aremd by moonlight, arriving in time for a tagine. We met up with our friends, David and Mark, the next day at the Neltner Refuge and did our own mini-tour of the 4000 metre peaks in the area. We did Ouankirim (4083m) (won't tell you how it's pronounced, but it begins with 'wan..'), Akioud (4010m), Tazahart (3974m) and Afella (4015m). We bivvied at 3875m - bloody cold and then at the Lepiney Refuge (3000m) where we were nearly blown away in the night.

On our return to Aremd, David and Mark left for home and Mike and I dosed/sunbathed for a couple of days - we did occasionally move to go and wash ourselves/clothes in the stream. We were besieged by kids asking for money, chocolate, soap, aspirin and clothes, to name but a few. We gave away some soap on the insistence that the kids got in the water to wash themselves with it - some did.

We set off for Imlil to buy provisions as we were planning to climb to a plateau above Imlil. On the way, we decided to climb Toubkal as I'd not yet braved it due to circumstances already described. Loaded up, we set off for the Neltner. At seven the next morning we set off and arrived at the summit at 9.10 am, staying there for 50 minutes, then down by 11.30 am - the descent would have been quicker if a certain person (not me this time) hadn't been struck by 'b. bowels' on the way down! We walked back to Sidi-Chamaroux, stopping for my last look, both feeling quite ill and exhausted due to our rapid ascent. When we got back to Aremd, I went off for a Lahcen tagine, leaving Mike groaning in his pit.

I bade my farewells to the house, Lahcen et al. on the following day, met Oussa in Imlil and caught a 'grande taxi' to Asni to stay at Oussa's house - we had 15 in our taxi - the guidebook recommends 6 or 7! After a brief tour of Asni market and the 'mule park', we set off for Marrakesh for a flying visit, then to Casablanca to pick up Mike's new group of four fellas (now why couldn't I have been on this tour!). In Casablanca, we walked along by the flower stall, where I made friends with the stall-holder, and every time I passed (which became quite frequent) I received a different-coloured rose. Never have I seen so many splendid roses - reds, pinks, oranges, yellows.

The following day, my last full day, Mike and his group caught their bus back to Marrakesh, leaving me alone in the hotel in Casablanca, fending off various offers from the manager and his staff.

My final day dawned and I set off for the airport, having an argument with an insistent porter on the way there. I took my rucksack on as hand luggage and my string-tied sack full of jalabbas, blankets, coats, etc. was only put on the plane after being thoroughly searched. Got off the plane in the U.K. and what can one say? - it was raining! Typical, I thought, dragging my sack behind me, dressed in shorts and shirt, looking an absolute fool!



Morocco - the town of Aremd, showing the Mosque, two typical street scenes and a local peasant woman.



Vajolet Towers &
Gartle Hut from
the Santner Pass



On the Summit of
the Kessel Kogel,
looking down onto
the Vajolet Towers
with the Rosen-
gartenspitze in
the background

Tiesser Alp Hut
with the Rosszane
in the background



Dolomite Days, A family holiday in the Rosengarten

Colin Hobday

We arrived at the small hamlet of St.Cyprian at around eleven o'clock in the morning, 'we' being Uschi, Stephen, Annette and myself. It had all started much earlier, having left Munich very early that same morning, crossed over the Brenner Pass and bypassed Bolzano, before turning sharp left up a steep and narrow road (24% gradient) into the Tiers Valley, passing through the charming village of Tiers and stocking up with supplies at the local shop before continuing a further two kilometres to the end of the road above St. Cyprian.

With the temperature in the 90's, we sat in the shade of the large pine trees for an early lunch, then shouldered our large packs which contained supplies for a week, as our intention was to traverse from Hut to Hut using high-level paths. The path to the Schlern Hut climbed steeply up the Barenfalle, a steep gorge. It was like walking in an oven, though we were lucky to find a trickling stream where we stopped to refresh ourselves and to admire the wonderful panorama of the Rosengarten Peaks towering above the meadows of the Tiers Valley.

Eventually, we came out of the gorge onto a ridge, which took us in a large loop round to the Schlern Hut (2461m.), four-and-a-half hours after leaving the valley. The Hut has a reputation for being the best in the area. Situated overlooking the Saiser Alm, it is only twenty minutes to the easy summit of the Schlern (2510m.).

The following day saw us walking along a pleasant broad ridge, the Langkofel in the far distance rising out of the early morning mist, while away to our right the massive bulk of the Rosengarten caught the early morning sun. In just over an hour we had reached the summit of the Roterd Spitze (2651m.). Here the paths divided to join up later at the Tierser Alps Hut. As we were carrying heavy sacks, we chose to take the easier route by descending below the ridge and traversing to the Tierser Alps Hut, directly below the summit of the Rossezahne. Leaving Uschi and Annette to sunbathe outside the Hut, Stephen and myself, plus a rope and a few slings, set off for the summit. There was no real difficulty, though there was a pleasant slab pitch.

An hour-and-a-half later we were back down once again, coming to terms with our heavy loads as we set off over the Malignon Pass (2600m.) in the full heat of the day, the rock walls that towered above us reflecting that same heat so that it felt like being in a greenhouse. Also, there is no vegetation up there and no water. During the whole week, the only animals we saw were a few sheep.

Stopping on the col, we drained our last drops of water as we studied the path disappearing for hundreds of metres down a steep scree couloir. The views from the col were very impressive, great solid rock walls and scree in all directions. The Kessel Kogel and the Rosengarten Spitze dominated the skyline. However, time was pressing so we started the long descent down to the Grasleiten Hut, arriving at four o'clock feeling rather tired after our first full day in the Dolomites. This was soon put right with beer and tea followed by a good meal washed down with local wine. In the evening we had a very noisy but enthusiastic singsong with a German climbing club group who we were to keep meeting for the rest of the holiday.

Next morning saw us making an early start (6.00 am) in an attempt to beat some of the heat. It was a fairly pleasant climb up to the Grasleiten Pass in the shadow of the Kesselkogel. Once on the col, we left our sacks beside the small Ref. Principale, a private Hut. With rope and slings we set off for the summit of the Kesselkogel (3008m.), the highest peak of the Rosengarten. The route went up a ramp, crossing a large rock wall, though not difficult as it was secured with fixed ropes it was very exposed for a few hundred metres, then followed pleasant scrambling zig-zags up the face, eventually joining the knife-edge ridge to take us the last 200 metres up to the summit. By now, the sun was shining down out of a clear blue sky. On the summit we again met the party from the German climbing club. The view from the summit was tremendous - surrounded by gigantic rock peaks - to the south the Rosengarten Spitze towering above the Vajolet Hut (our destination later in the day) and to the north the Schlern and the Langkofel just visible through the heat haze.

All of a sudden, the peace was shattered by the roar of two airforce jet fighters skimming over the summit - we all ducked involuntarily, and were left quite deaf. The descent was uneventful and we were back on the col for one o'clock and lunch. A steady downhill walk brought us to the Vajolet Hut by 3.00 pm. It was packed solid with Italian daytrippers who all seem to come to this particular Hut, and by the end of the day the Hut is usually quite a shambles. Fortunately, at night it is quite peaceful and not too busy. So, for the rest of the afternoon we kept out of the way of the tourists, found a nice stream nearby to cool our hot and sweaty feet, and had a pleasant afternoon kip on a grassy bank.

We had another early start the following day up to the Gartl Hut, the route following easy rock scrambling and starting just opposite the Vajolet Hut. The Vajolet Towers soared up into the sky above us. We stopped at the Gartl Hut to watch two groups of climbers ascending the smallest of the Towers - it looked quite impressive. Another half-an-hour of walking saw us at the Santner Pass, the Vajolet Towers now behind us, whilst to our left the Rosengarten Spitze. It was difficult to visualise where the route actually went. We were looking for the Santner Steig (a climbing route with fixed ropes and ladders through the Rosengarten Wall down to the Rosengarten Hut). However, as soon as we reached the far end of the Pass the route became more obvious. It traversed across the wall for a short while and then descended steeply for 200 metres into a snow-filled gully. As it was still early morning, the snow was more like ice and very treacherous. We had to take great care descending the gully, trying to use the rock on the side as much as possible. It took us another hour climbing over ladders, down steel ropes and along pegs in the wall until we came to easier ground, and headed for the Rosengarten Hut an hour-and-a-half away. We discovered that most people do the route the other way round as it is much easier. The Rosengarten Hut is very clean and spacious. They do not, however, provide early morning tea.

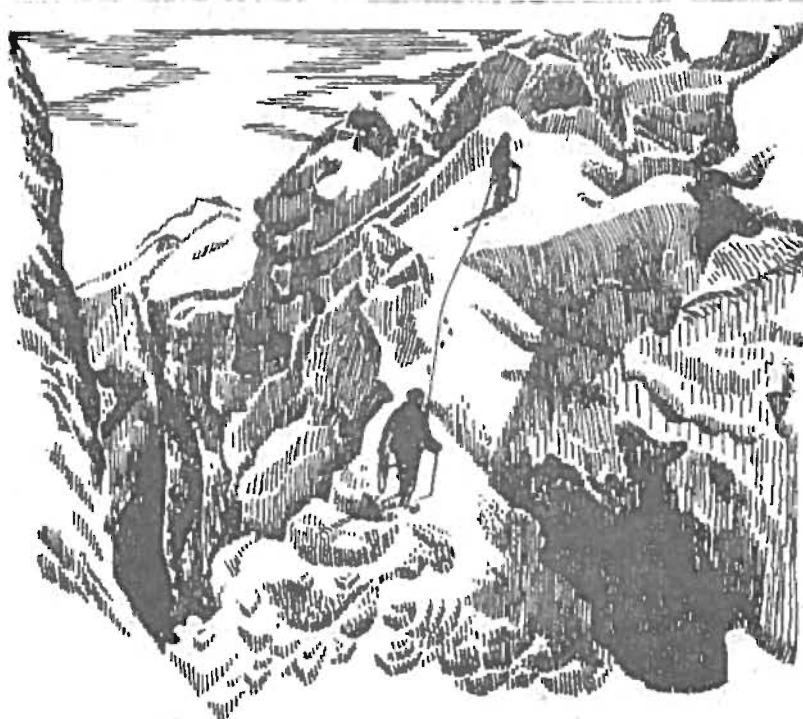
This was our last stay at a Hut, and we had still not seen the famous sunset over the Rosengarten. The atmosphere was just not right, the air not clear enough - every night we had a hazy, pale sunset.

Next morning, we left for the valley. It made a nice change to walk across meadows and through the forests after all the rock scenery of the past days. We passed through the Niger Alm and down the Purgametsch Valley back to St. Cyprian for an enormous icecream. By chance, we bumped into climbing friends from Germany who were staying in the village. We immediately went to the next Wine Bar and consumed a couple of bottles of wine, all on an empty stomach. They did not know that we had left in the morning without breakfast.

After a big cheerio around lunchtime, we had great difficulties finding the way back to our car, due to our somewhat fuzzy heads. We were very pleased to see the car still in one piece, without broken windows, picked locks, etc. Apparently, gangs of youths from Bolzano go at weekends on the rampage and break open all types of cars and steal their contents.

We left the mountains that day and hurtled down to Venice to have a couple of days on the Adriatic Coast and a day sightseeing in Venice.

Reflecting on the holiday, we found the area to be ideal for a family holiday if you are capable of easy rock climbing. The Rosengarten group is ideal for a few days - for a week or even longer, one simply extends the circular route to include the Langkofel, etc.. During our stay we only met one English group, the Huts were all excellent (price per night approx. 5000 lire). As everywhere else, the Huts are quite busy during July and August. All Huts supplied tea water, good meals and a large variety of drinks, etc., and all at reasonable prices.



Letters from Jeddah

'Sheik a Leg'

Dear All,

15.4.83

Forgive me for not coming to visit you on my leave. I ended up returning here, under great pressure of wanting to stay at home, on 15.4.83. I enjoyed every moment being with Ingrid and we managed to have a quiet 7 days together living in a caravan on the coast, and windsurfing. It was bloody cold in the water, though. Two weeks went so incredibly fast and now I'm back in 'dragsville'.

Ingrid is very upset (and I am) that as yet she cannot join me out here. That's because I still have not got a residency visa. On getting my last visit visa for work, the Saudi Embassy in London started kicking up a fuss as it was my third consecutive visit visa - they threatened not to issue a fourth visa unless I come up with another passport. Luckily, I have another one to put forward. Perhaps, however, that's not so lucky - if they won't give me another visa, I won't have to come back here again. I suppose it sounds as though I'm not happy here - well, at least that's true. But I'm in one of those funny 'Catch 22' situations. I want to feel as though I've done something useful and make a success of myself, for a change. The other thing is that if I return within 12 months I'll owe the taxman and, considering that I've saved very little yet, I wouldn't even be able to pay him. Anyway, enough of the moans.

On the Thursday afternoon before I came back I bought Ingrid an old Escort for £200 with 12 months M.O.T. and 2 months tax. Its bodywork is rough (dints only - not rusty) but mechanically it seemed quite reasonable for its age. Anyway, with Ingrid driving, it doesn't have to look good because it's bound to take a few knocks. She was over the moon at now having a motor to play with. I hope she buys a maintenance manual to know what to do for all the normal bits and bobs, like oil, water, wheel changes, etc.. I've told her whilst it's running okay to leave it alone and only feed it petrol. Then, once every blue moon, check oil and water. I think she'll cope alright so long as some brave person offers to sit beside her whilst she's practising at dodgems.
(Editorial Note: Typical M.C.P. comment. Ingrid passed her driving test with flying colours at the first attempt.)

Did anyone go in the London Marathon? One of these years I'd like to do it. At present, I don't think I've ever been so unfit. My body has taken on a slightly different shape because of lack of use of muscles. Like - my gut's grown, my tits are sagging, and even my arm muscles are looking weak and flabby.

I'm now "trying" to keep myself at some form of fitness. Every day this week I've swum a quarter of a mile and played either squash or tennis at night. I'm also trying to eat less. I wonder how long all that'll last?

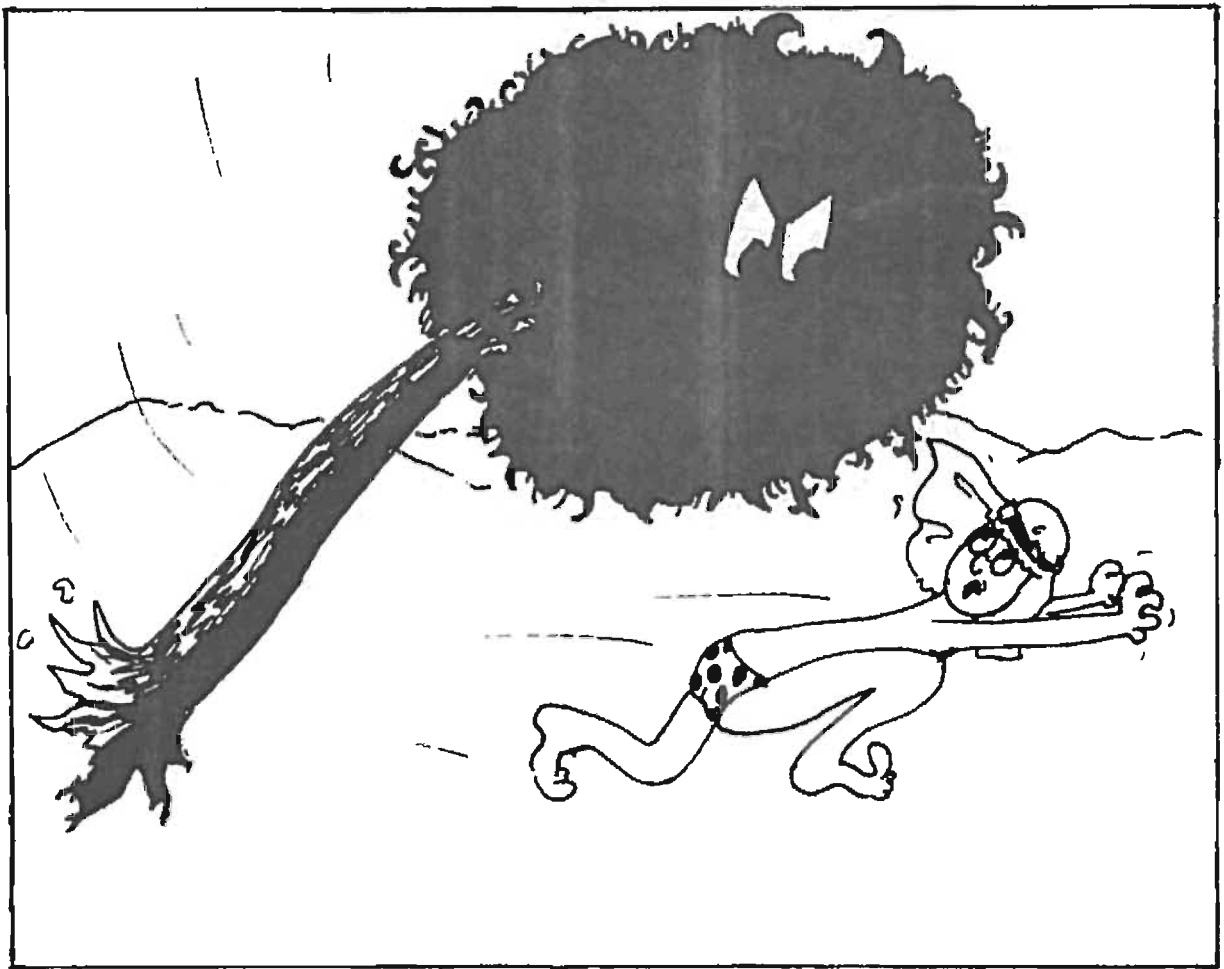
The only exciting thing that's happened since I've been back here again was the other day when gale force winds blew a small acacia tree down as I was walking underneath it. I was only wearing swimming trunks and, on pulling myself from under the mess, I ended up with thorns sticking in me and many thorn

scratches down my back. It looks as though I've had a good time with a nympho.
No such luck.

Anyway, tell me what all the latest scandal is, but not about your wonderful
ski-ing holiday; it only pisses me off,

From your ever loving,

Sheik a leg.



* * * * *

Dear All,

15.8.83

I think most people (definitely including me) find it difficult to put pen to paper. However, I'm in a different situation where I could write lots of letters because when I'm not working there's little else to do. The only problem is that there's very little of interest to communicate to the rest of the world.

The basics of it are that it's now extremely hot and mucky. Temperatures are well over 40° C. every day and relative humidity is 100%. Who needs a shower?! You just have to stand outside with a bar of soap and let the atmosphere do

the rest. Today's excitement consisted of filling the car's petrol tank. On removing the filler cap, the pressure in the tank gushed a load of petrol all over my arm and trousers. So I kept away from smokers for a while.

You're right, I won't be able to make the Christmas ski-ing holiday. Believe it or not, I'll probably be working in this godforsaken sweathole on Christmas Day. I've officially (verbally) told my boss that I wish to leave Saudi at the end of 1983. That means Jan 1st 1984 to be totally sure of being eligible to receive the full year's commission. But it'll mean I've spent a total of 14 months here. I could return on Nov. 6th 1983 but they might try to swindle me out of commission. So, it's worthwhile to do the extra 6 or 7 weeks.

Whilst I was recently on holiday with Ingrid we did a very small amount of climbing at Pennards Pillar on the Gower. I managed to frighten myself to the point of trembling leg on an easy climb after getting into an awkward position. After talking to myself for some time I managed to overcome the fear and the problem, but it didn't do my will to continue any good at all. We did another climb of a similar easy grade, successfully, which boosted my morale again. Then it seemed like a good idea to partake of the evil brown alcoholic liquor. I'm afraid that was all the climbing I've done or am likely to do in 1983 - will I win the prize for being the most enthusiastic climber of the year? I have tried a little bit of bouldering here, but the rock's very friable and too bloody hot to hold.

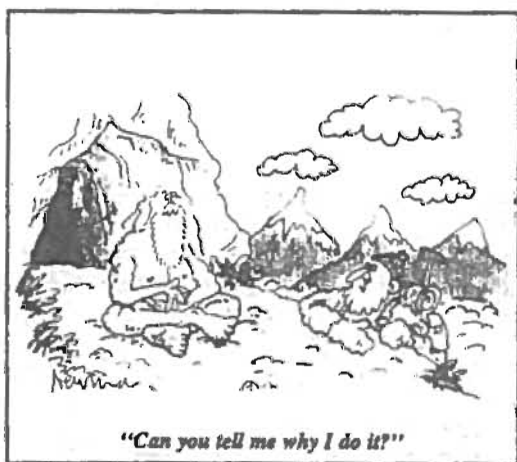
Where will it all end? I'm going to start at the bottom again, and probably stay there. Mind you, as long as it's attached to a young, pretty, randy girl I shan't complain. I'd better change tack or I might go and grope a Saudi air hostess or, worse still, a camel. You need thigh length wellies to hold a camel in,

Until the next nondescript epistle,

Lots of luv and cuddles,

Sheik a leg.

* * * * *



Mountains by Bicycle

Tony Smedley

There are acceptable alternatives to the mountain sport thing, potholing possibly; one senior member is known to sail, and we all know about the strange pastimes of Musson and Jaggs. So the boy's suggestion of a bicycle tour of North-west Scotland didn't strike me as too alien. I could ride a bike in the sense that I didn't fall off immediately, and I could acquire experience en route. Saddles could be tricky, but a well-trying boot breaking-in technique could be adapted - 'have a try on my bike, son, see if you get to Matlock and back by lunch, nice new saddle should help'. Or something like that. I purchased a bike and went into strict training.

Two weeks later the team arrived in Thurso - by train, I would hasten to add. The weather was not too encouraging, a light rain was falling in the westerly breeze. No point delaying - we had to cover about 14 miles to Reay in the next two hours in order to arrive at our first guest house at the appointed time. Not a daunting prospect on the face of things maybe, but into the rising westerly with the unfamiliar feel of the heavily loaded bikes?

We set off into the wind, rain and surprisingly heavy traffic, our start coinciding with the change of shift at Dounreay. I felt disappointed - it's supposed to be a wilderness up there and we had encountered 8 double-decker buses in the first half-hour, and the headwind was difficult to cope with. Eventually, we made the boarding house to a warm welcome and a huge meal.

Our next leg was to Tongue Youth Hostel, 32 miles away. The wind had dropped, it was a clear morning and the sun sparkling on the spherical reactor casing of Dounreay across the little bay. The road undulated into the distance and successions of hard climbs and sweeping descents into an increasingly wild environment were the order of the day.

By midday, the wind had risen to gale force and it was raining heavily - hoped in vain for a pub, but no respite. With capes flapping and feet squelching, we pressed on, the boy a foot behind my rear wheel, a position which enabled him to ride over my right foot without trying too hard every time I stopped. Eventually, the Hostel loomed out of the rain. It was 2.30 and the wretched place opened at 5.00, so on to Tongue village which boasts a supermarket where the boy selected a ghastly heap of constituents for dinner. The weather cleared as we returned to the Hostel, affording splendid views across the Kyle of Tongue and Ben Loyal. We booked in, hung our sodden shoes next to the boiler and Vince started cooking whilst I tried to dry the camera. The meal was appalling - reconstituted steak things with spaghetti rings in tomato and sweetcorn, followed by tinned jam sponge. I made a mental note to buy food myself in future.

Morning dawned bright but promised rain. Ben Loyal was rapidly disappearing with the growing murk and the wind, though tolerable, showed signs of rising gusty and variable in direction as we set off for Durness over the barrage across the Kyle. We certainly had our desired desolation now - as we climbed up from the barrage, the country was reminiscent of the Snake Pass summit, and it was raining again. Over the top of the high moor the road falls away in a sweeping descent, the machines flew downhill in the sheltered sections, and I suppose we reached 30 to 40 mph, water centrifuging off the wheels and the frame vibrating so much that dirty bubbles pumped from the truncated

fingers of our track gloves. Certainly I liked the new narrow-section wheels, reminiscent of the tubular tyres I had used in my youth. But the high pressure combined with the steep angles of the modern frame made for a harsh ride which left my hands numb at the end of the day.

Another long climb and we could see Loch Eribol below us, the weather cleared as we watched but the wind had increased to an uncomfortable level, raising white caps on the loch as we peddled downhill (!!) to the sea.

After a struggle, we turned the end of the loch and free-wheeled 8 miles back along the other side of the inlet to the north coast and another shower.

Durness boasts two pubs. We chose the better-looking of the two and bought a meal and the beer which I now needed as a therapy to allow me to contemplate the 70 mile run to Achmelvic next day - even the boy was quiet at the prospect, in the prevailing conditions.



We made a 7.30 start from Durness, the wind had abated somewhat but we expected it to return by midday. It was raining again within the hour, producing magnificent views of hills with wind-torn clouds and rainbows. As we climbed steadily toward the summit of the pass which descends under Foinaven and Arkle down to Rhiconoch, conditions were appalling on the fast descent and water was driven up under our capes to meet the deluge coming in round our necks - but slowly the weather cleared until we encountered bright warm sunshine above the Kylesku. Another exhilarating descent to the ferry and the Inn was open; suddenly life felt good with only 20 miles to go, as I drank my beer below the magnificent bulk of Quinag.

I decided to take the coast road despite its tortuous nature and succession of steep climbs, partly because of its exceptional scenic value and partly because it was an area in which I had spent some enjoyable holidays in the past and wished to see again. It certainly justified the extra effort, the coastal scenery views of Quinag, Suilven and Canisp were superb.

We were greeted at Achmelvic Hostel by the warden with cups of tea and biscuits. We were both tired and looked it, and it seemed that the majority of the visitors arrived by car and spent the day on the beach or fishing, so he was pleased to see someone arrive by their own efforts. He really was most kind, he even provided some oil for the bikes.

We had planned something of a rest day for the next run, with only 20 miles down the coast to Acheninver, a tiny 'bush hostel' which nestles under the shattered height of the Ben More Coigach. The day dawned wet and windy but brightened as we approached Lochinver, where we bought some food, including fresh bread and sausage rolls from a bakery. We progressed down the coast road, enjoying the coastal scenery, stopping at Loch Sionascaig to watch an eagle soaring against the profile of Stac Pollaidh. However, the sunny spell soon faded and we pressed on towards Acheninver, through a depressing collection of holiday caravan and tent developments. Alas, this place which I remembered as the epitome of the North Western 'Wilderness' from 30 years back had changed dramatically. Nothing could really detract, though, from the distant views of An Teallach with the Summer Isles in the foreground.

The Hostel hadn't changed much, though the elsan had gone but you still wash in the beck, preferably upstream of the new toilet outlet. We spent a quiet evening, taking photographs and checking the bikes.

The morning was bleak with a full gale driving rain from the west, a pretty awful prospect, the only light relief being provided by Vince. The warden gave us his wood box to fill with sticks, to be cut from drift-wood and old fish boxes with a small axe. In a trice the lad demolished the wood box - luckily we found something similar in a corner of the bike shed and filled this, beating a hasty retreat into the gathering storm before the crime was discovered. The day developed into one of the worst I have ever experienced, the heavy rain being driven by gale force wind, and to add to our misery my front wheel punctured. Even fitting a spare tube was a trial in those conditions - at one point Vince was blown off his bike by a gust, every little inlet contained fishing vessels seeking shelter, including some Russian boats.

We were absolutely sodden. Fortunately, by now, we had learnt to keep anything that mattered in poly bags, but the panniers had tended to fill with water which percolated through the wrappings so even this was not foolproof.

We arrived at Ullapool by midday and changed from our wet gear into less-wet gear outside the most presentable looking pub, surprising what can be accomplished under a cape. The tourists looked on a bit startled, from under their umbrellas, but we were past caring. Stuffing the wet mess into our panniers, we fled into the warm dry pub and ordered a meal with a lot of beer for me and coke for Vince.

Ullapool Hostel was modern, luxurious and full. The drying room was large but it couldn't cope with the mass of wet gear it received that day, so our next day started with wet gear. We had planned to follow the coast down to Carn Dearg - this meant turning off the Inverness road at Braemore 12 miles from Ullapool. We reached the junction in less than an hour with the following wind, and stopped. The weather looked clear ahead but it was raining in the wind from the west. There was really no decision to be made - we set off for Inverness into rapidly improving conditions and caught a train home.

Climbing in New Zealand

Chris Radcliffe

The early morning sun glints through the thin cloud, giving an ethereal appearance to Hochsetter Dom as we set out from the Tasman Saddle Hut high in the New Zealand Alps. Mark and Edie are ahead on ski, while Rick and I are forced to slog our way through deep snow after two days of storm. We had successfully completed our climb of Elie de Beaumont and were now taking advantage of a brief period of relative calm to descend the 28 km. length of the Tasman Glacier back to Mount Cook village.

Climbing in the New Zealand Alps is rather like climbing on peaks similar in scale to those of the Pennine Alps, but in a climate with the vagaries of the scottish winter. With the immediate proximity of the sea, prevailing winds from the N.W. bring very high snowfall across the Divide which accounts for the tremendous glaciation of these peaks despite unexceptional altitude. The highest peak, Mount Cook, is 12,349 feet high.

Nevertheless, the New Zealand Alps are an extremely attractive mountain area, and the whole of the South Island of New Zealand, with a population of less than half a million, provides a wealth of contrasting wild country. I was indeed fortunate to be able to take my holiday here in December 1982, courtesy of my employer, the T.I. Group.

After several days in Auckland and Wellington on North Island, I went on to visit Christchurch, which provided an excellent starting point for my two week holiday on the South Island.

There is a mountain barrier - The Divide - running the full length of South Island and providing a variety of mountain scenery. To the west, there is a very high level of precipitation and, together with an equable climate, there is the basis for a dense jungle, which reaches high up the mountains and this, plus the rain, provides immense problems for trekking off the beaten track. To the east of the Divide, in the rain shadow of the mountains, there is a variety of attractive and unspoiled countryside, while the Canterbury Plains provide one of the richest farming areas in the world.

My main objective was to climb in the Mount Cook region, but at the end of my trip I did a quick tour to take in three contrasting areas. Queenstown to the south is a lakeside resort near hills which were once the scene of a gold-mining mania. Exploring nearby, I came across a sign saying "Dangerous - Extreme Caution Necessary". With that sort of encouragement, I found myself driving on an amazingly precipitous track that led deep into the Shogun river gorge. One section 300 yards long had taken chinese coolies three years to hack from solid rock. Once the valley bottom was reached there were still several miles to be traversed on foot to the site of the gold mine. Only later did I find out that the hire car conditions specifically exclude this road from insurance cover, so it was fortunate that my only mishap was a puncture.

I continued next day through a magnificent area of hills, lakes and forests on

mainly well-made roads but with few vehicles of any kind (this is partly a function of a small population, but also New Zealand law prohibits road transport of goods for distances of over 100 km, to ensure custom for the railway network). My destination was the Fox Glacier on the west side of the Mount Cook area, which some days before I had looked down upon from summits on the Divide. Immediately I crossed over Haast Pass and down to the west coast, I entered an area of primeval jungle: this, together with heavy cloud and threatening rain, made it rather depressing country. I left the car at the road head, determined to spend the night at the Chancellor Hut overlooking Fox Glacier, which I believed I could safely reach solo. The glacier is in massive retreat: the terminal face in 1895 was 2.6 km further down the valley. The cloud cover was low and I was apprehensive about reaching the Hut, which involved a climb of about 4000 feet. I traversed dodgy moraine to reach the glacier and cramponed across to the other side. There was a particularly impressive rock avalanche down a couloir not far away - fortunately, I was well clear as there were some house-sized blocks coming down. Once I had climbed above a medial moraine, I was lucky when the cloud lifted sufficiently to enable me to see the obvious way off the ice-fall to reach a line leading to the Hut, although I was engulfed in cloud before I reached it. The Hut was empty, my only companions the raucous beas, a rather dowdy, but incessantly curious, member of the parrot family. Next morning I made a brief sortie to overlook the upper neve on Fox before returning. On my way down, I was 'buzzed' several times by a helicopter, but I never found out why.

Back in the car, I continued up the coast for a while, before turning east and heading up the Otira Gorge and over Arthur's Pass. This was another mountain area which I planned to sample. I descended down to the main valley of the Wainakariri river which I crossed to reach a trail leading through dense beech forest by the side of Andrews stream. I intended to cross a saddle and descend into another river system, but I underestimated the scale of the terrain, so at nightfall I just bivouacked at the saddle. Next morning, I picked a line up the nearest peak and scrambled to its summit in a couple of hours. Now, I planned to traverse a ridge system back to my start point. Again, I underestimated the scale of deceptively placid hills, but my main problem came when I reached the forest on my final descent. Progress became almost nil as I climbed over fallen logs and I stumbled constantly as branches and undergrowth gave way under me. I knew there was a forest track at right angles to my general direction but it wasn't obvious and I was lucky and rather relieved to find it.

This brief trip marked the end of my stay in New Zealand but I had spent the greater part in the main climbing area, Mount Cook region. This can be reached in half a day's bus journey from Christchurch, passing through first the Canterbury Plain, then through the tundra of the MacKenzie Plateau before following the Tasman River to Mount Cook village itself.

This is based around the famous hotel called the Hermitage. The first of three hotels of this name was built in 1894 and since then all have been on the tourist round. Some come in by light plane and most by coach. Few venture further than the telescope on the front lawn to sight Mount Cook, two-thirds hidden from this vantage - if the weather is kind. A motel, youth hostel and a number of chalets make up the village. It is small and unspoilt but lacks any kind of atmosphere. Perhaps this was because early December is rather early in the season, there had been extensive bad weather, and there was a strong sense of anticlimax among the locals after the conclusion of an epic rescue of two climbers from Mount Cook.

Bad weather in this region is the norm. Settled periods do occur, usually after Christmas, but so sudden are the changes that any route lasting over 24 hours is a serious undertaking, regardless of the technical difficulties. Mark Inglis and Phil Doole were both National Park employees and had completed the classic traverse of Mount Cook. They had descended to bivvy in a snow cave in the 'schrund above Empress Glacier when storms hit and they were trapped. For several days they had poor bivvy gear, but an air drop of food and equipment was made after five days which made their life more comfortable. Conditions were too poor to enable a helicopter to land and in one attempt an Air Force Iroquois crashed. The local helicopter ace managed to get the pilot and crew off and it was he who eventually did the final rescue, managing to fly under the cloud from the other side of the mountain in a brief lull in the storm. Inglis and Doole had been on the mountain for 14 days and both have since had both feet amputated.

This rescue had dominated the headlines ever since I arrived in New Zealand and it had been completed only a few days before I arrived in the village. While I was there, the Air Force had flown in another Iroquois which was used during every fine spell to bring back the wrecked helicopter piece by piece and these were eventually flown out in a Hercules from the short Mount Cook airstrip.

Correspondence before the trip had provided me with a contact at the village, so as soon as I arrived I looked up Nick Banks who is Chief Instructor for Alpine Guides, the local climbing school. He had climbed Everest on the successful German Expedition and had spent some time at Plas y Brenin, so he was familiar with the U.K. climbing scene. He was now 'booked' with several clients so he couldn't offer to climb with me. We went bouldering and he introduced me to several of the local instructors - Brian Carter, Dave Begg and Bill Atkinson who I found to be basically friendly, but in common with many instructors elsewhere seemed not to have the flush of enthusiasm for climbing which people who live and work away from the hills have. Eventually, Dave 'gave it to me straight' - the guides work for money and when they are not working, they climb with their mates. He suggested I book a guide, maybe I could get a cheap rate: at \$100 dollars a day, I would need to! This attitude was reasonable, I suppose, but it took a bit of adjusting to - I didn't act upon the suggestion.

For most of my first week, the weather remained unsettled. There were periods of fine weather when conditions looked superb, but within hours the next front would arrive and the mountains would disappear in clag. I climbed the local peak, Sebastopol, and went on photographic and training sorties to Mueller Hut and Hooker Hut. The views were magnificent, none more so than when, on my way up to Mueller, the summit cone of Cook appeared above the cloud like a Himalayan giant. From this point, Cook lies above Hooker glacier, an amazing and chaotic mass of moraine and ice. The glaciers in these parts are much bigger and more alive than their European counterparts: movements of up to one-and-a-half metres per day have been reported. The most spectacular peaks in the immediate vicinity of the Hermitage were Mounts Sefton and Footstool with their forbidding hanging glaciers providing dangerous and rarely climbed face routes.

After a couple of days, Nick came round to say there was a chance of a place in a Cessna to go up to the Grand Plateau to do a short technical route. Unfortunately, this arrangement fell through due to high winds, and also he got called out on a rescue - a local policeman had wandered solo onto Tasman glacier and fallen into a crevasse, an unnecessary accident which proved fatal.

I was staying in the alpine guides chalet and I was joined midweek by a guided party. The guide, Russel Brice, works outside the Mount Cook area normally. He has had five trips to Nepal, including a two-man attempt on the West Ridge of Everest, and I found him a very straightforward and likeable person. His course was being frustrated by the weather, but he had considerable enthusiasm and certainly worked hard to try and give his clients their money's worth. He was very helpful to me as he gave me a lift to the N.Z. Alpine Club Hut which was located outside the National Park boundary. I found a solitary occupant - Rick Walshe, a kiwi who had just arrived on leave from his job as a site engineer in Australia. We appeared to be the only two casual climbers in the region and immediately teamed up together. But yet another front came over and it rained heavily overnight, so it was obvious we weren't going anywhere in a hurry.

I had now got the message that climbing in N.Z. is much more of a waiting game than anything I had experienced before. Nick Banks had told me that despite being an Instructor and living permanently in the area for 12 seasons, he had only climbed Cook 13 times. He also told me the story of a German climber, determined to climb Cook, who was foiled after a two week holiday, so he came back again for a six week holiday. With 12 days to go he still hadn't set foot on the mountain so, in desperation, he went up to the Hut in doubtful conditions and finally climbed the mountain on the 13th day! The obverse of that story is Chris Bonington who came to N.Z. to give a lecture. With only 4 days available he managed to do both Tasman and Cook before flying back to the U.K..

Rick and I made the best of the conditions by walking up to the site of the old Ball Hut by the side of the Tasman Glacier. This is an immense glacier 28 km long and its terminal face, unlike those on Fox and Franz Joseph glaciers on the other side of the Divide, has not changed position much since last century. Yet there has been a dramatic change in the movement of ice. The surface is now over 100 feet below the level of the Ball track, yet in Victorian times the level was above that of the track. At one time tourists could visit Ball Hut in a horse-drawn carriage; now the track has collapsed into the glacier in many places and the Hut has long since been dismantled. The mountains are collapsing at such a rate that many of the high mountain Huts are liable to subsidence and frequently have to be re-built.

Next day was incredibly fine. Although we both wanted to climb Cook, we decided it would be prudent to climb something else first and we planned to go up to Tasman Saddle Hut. It would be a tiring two-day climb to reach the Hut on foot and in these mountains you can't chance getting that kind of fine weather, and still reckon to do the route. Hence it is quite normal for parties to fly in, usually with ample supplies to sit out the bad weather.

This was a new experience for me. I really enjoyed it as there was a very positive sense of flying as up-draughts caught us unevenly as we climbed high over the mountain ranges. The flight costs £70 and normally three climbers plus gear are allowed in. As we approached the saddle I was rather apprehensive as we seemed to be landing downhill and the pilot kept bouncing off the snow, before finally taking off again. Being ignorant, I thought he had made a mess of the landing, but in fact he was just testing the snow. When we finally came in, it was still quite exciting as the throttle is held full open until the end to ensure we didn't nose dive into the snow.

The Hut is brilliantly situated on a rocky outcrop overlooking the glacier and is held in position by steel hawsers. We spent the afternoon climbing Hochsetter Dom, 9258 feet, above the saddle. There were some big crevasses to avoid, but

it was technically easy. The summit is on the main divide, so we could look down the Whymper Glacier towards the forested valley of the Whataroa river in vivid contrast to the snow and ice of the Tasman on the opposite side.

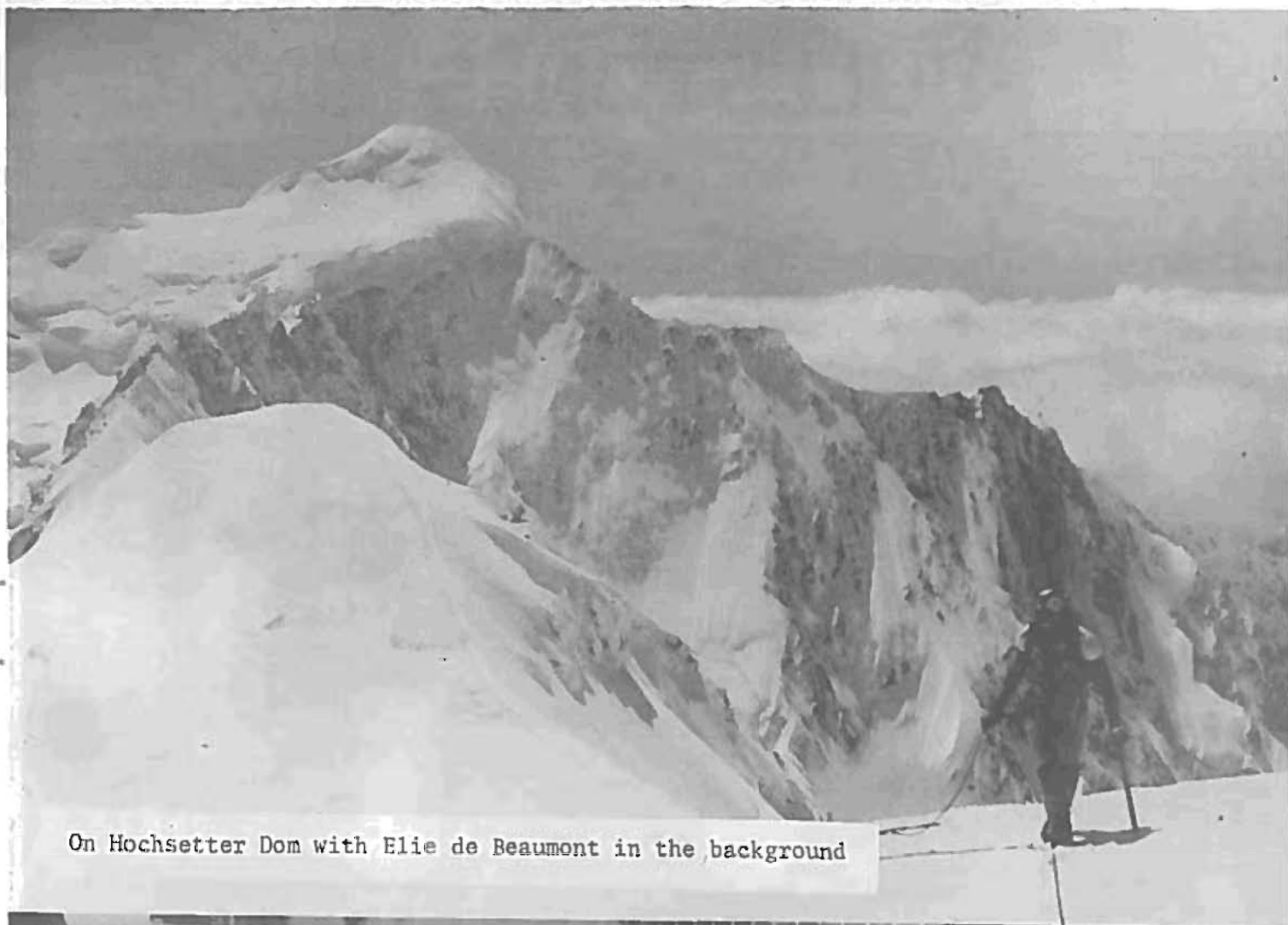
Back at the Hut we were followed in by Mark Whetu and Edie Young, ski instructor guides who had made a ski ascent of Abel peak in good conditions after all the recent snow. At 7 pm we had the routine call from Park H.Q. in which they take details of the parties staying at the various Huts (which have no guardians) and provide a weather forecast.

Next morning we made an alpine start to climb Elie de Beaumont, 10200 feet, one of the half-dozen highest peaks in the Southern Alps. Rick led off at a fast pace, angling across the top of the Tasman glacier. It was fairly clear, but high cloud indicated bad weather to follow, but our objective was straightforward and we had ample time. Anna glacier was quite steep and we made slow progress on soft snow until forced to halt by a massive bergschrund. We had to traverse left under the face of Green Peak until we could find a way up. More glacier work brought us to the col on the S.E. ridge where we were now exposed to a chill N.W. wind. The route continued by traversing under ice cliffs on the side of the ridge - soft snow on ice - until we were able to regain the ridge which we followed to the summit. The initial section was quite steep and it was interesting that Rick - whose experience is entirely in N.Z. mountains - seemed less confident on this more technical ground, which I found rather enjoyable; whereas he was entirely at home weaving his way round 'Big Daddy' crevasses on the glacier while I was constantly apprehensive of a snow bridge breaking up under me.

The ascent had taken us four hours and we descended by the same route in a similar time, slowed by the soft snow. It had been an uneventful and technically easy climb, but this was more than compensated for by climbing in a new and different mountain range. Mark and Edie had turned back early on when they found they could get no edge control on their skis, and the promised bad weather arrived during the afternoon - it continued without a break for the next two days. It was relatively boring with limited reading matter and Rick and I had inadequate food supplies which dictated some rather weird food concoctions. But the Hut was comfortable and I had equable companions, so I found it strangely enjoyable to be holed up in the Hut secure against the elements, with the snow building up against the windows outside.

On the third day it dawned fine, although cloud quickly built up and we set off down as soon as we could. Hard work, even downhill, because of the volume of snow but we reached the moraine in 4 hours. Now we had to cross the chaotic jumble of Ball glacier. It didn't look far, but appearances were deceptive and the moraine 'bash' was really hard work right to the end and took us over two hours. We thankfully climbed out to reach the track we had traversed a few days earlier. Now we could change into trainers for the remaining two-and-a-half hour walk back to base.

I had insufficient time to contemplate another route and the weather had clagged in once again. Hence I made the decision to do the quick tour I have already described. Despite the limited climbing, I was well satisfied with my trip to an attractive and varied country, and I feel fortunate that I have had the opportunity to climb there.

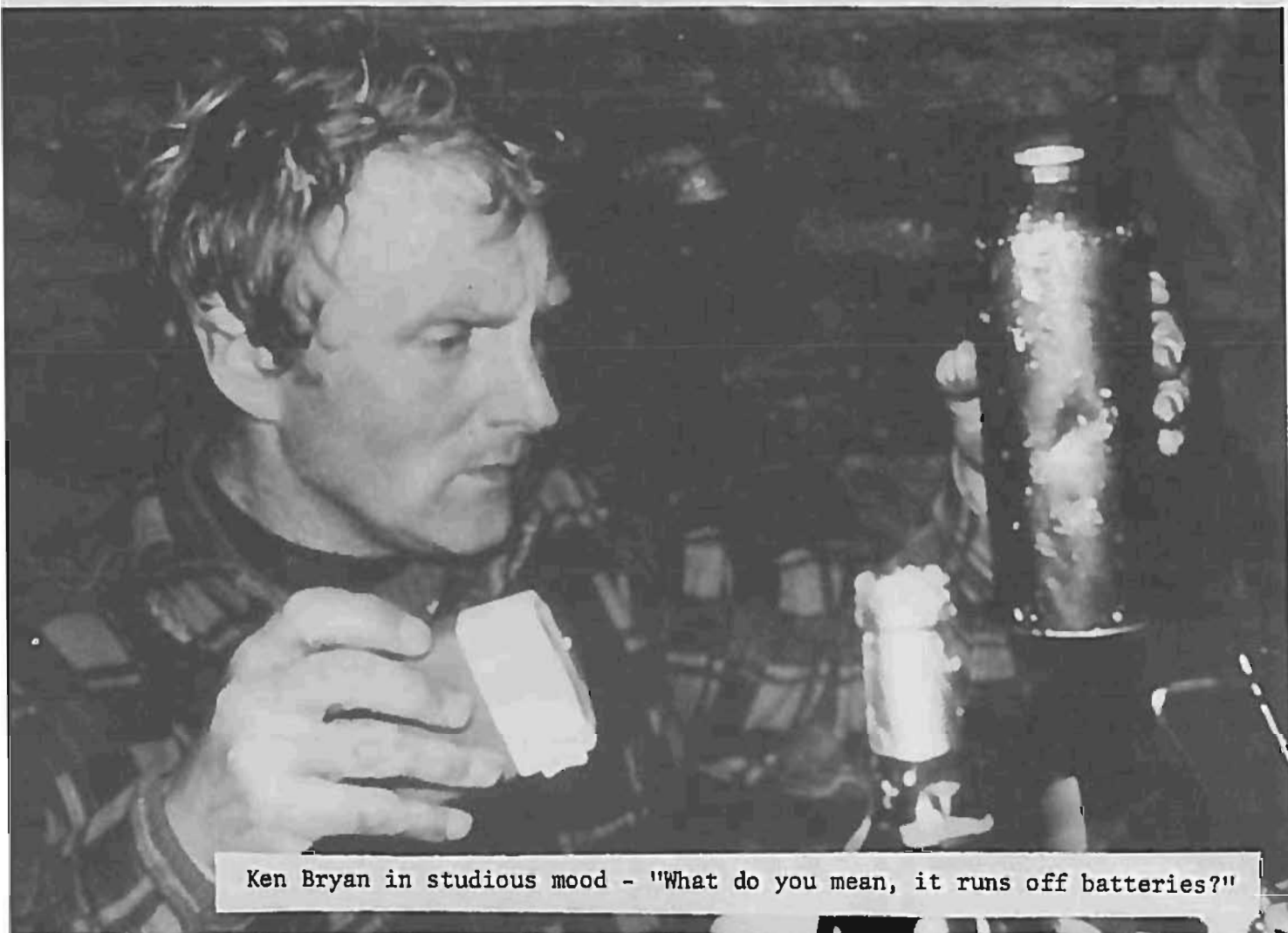


On Hochsetter Dom with Elie de Beaumont in the background



In the Tasman Saddle Hut: Chris Radcliffe, Edie Young & Rick Walshe

BULLSTONES 1982



Ken Bryan in studious mood - "What do you mean, it runs off batteries?"



L. to R. Jim Winfield, Ian Brindle, John Linney, Chris Jonson, John Gresty.

Meet Reports 1983

Cheedale — July — Nat Allen

The previous week's heat wave seemed to be on the blip, as Ruth and I raced into the car park at the top of Topley Pike in a pea-souper at the un-Natty hour of 10 am.. So gripped had I been to be there on time that I had left the 'Moon' at closing time the previous evening.

I didn't recognise any of the plebs alighting from their cars, as we purchased a brew from the lay-by vendor. I suppose this lot's on a sponsored pub crawl. I grunted as we sat and waited in the mist - 'not a bugger came'. Feeling a bit cheesed off and bemoaning my ruined nights' drinking, we plunged down to the railway line. Thank god, there's some of 'em. So we set up base camp, formed up in two ranks, and hit rock. Vincent joined Ruth and I on 'Stalk' and 'Firefly Crack' and we heard as we talked on stances of father Tony's injuries (more later). Up popped Radders, cheerful, bushy-tailed and rippling with muscles as ever. I didn't like to stare too hard at his full midriff and was pleased to discover that the Radders' waistline was not in a corset but his guide book was in his shirt. 'What's a corset' says our Vincent. Some-one said 'Your dad wears one'. We descended for lunch.

George's team seemed cragfast on the Obelisk and some-one was crossing Chee Tor Girdle, although I couldn't see them. Richard and Beryl had disappeared towards the Anglers Arms, then the sun had its way, and we all basked in the glorious sunshine. Vincent led us up 'Thin Thin Groove'; as he started I asked if it was his dad's rack - 'his gear's a load of rubbish!' 'Oh, dear' says Ruth. I found Vincent belayed at the top in the middle of a dead sheep, kept my distance and asked more of his father's injuries, 'Were they war wounds' says I. 'No - motor bike. He's never happier than when he's crashing his bike'. I was allowed to lead 'Cetswayo' and Gresty's team appeared through the long grass. 'Yer dad's mending his bike today, is he?' 'His push bike, we're cycling round the north of Scotland this summer'. 'What about his war wounds?' says Ruth. 'Oh, they come in spasms' said the lad. Ruth sunbathed as Vincent and I did another couple of routes. Gresty was wrestling with a bunch of nettles on 'Succulent Corner' as I rested in the hot sun. 'Don't you climb with your dad these days?' says I. 'No' says Vincent, 'not since Easter. I did Arrow and Army Dreamers one day and when he found out, he says 'you can sod off if you want to do climbs like that.'

We chatted with George's team and then back down for a drink. The President's here, can't you hear him, oh that's what the bloody racket is up there. My gaze slid up the crag at this moment to see the buxom Radders being gently lowered earthwards by Rod off, wait for it, 'Thin Lizzy'. Vincent the innocent, not used to embarrassing the aged, offered to lead it for the two 'fortygenerians'. Radders snorted and pulled the rope down, gave Vincent the end and said 'you won't be wanting a top-rope up to the crux, will you boy?' 'No, Mr. Radcliffe' says our lad. 'Cos you're here to lead', and he did.

Gregson was now at the base supping at a tin of beer, Roger and Chris came in from Chee Tor and we all watched the athletic Radders cream up 'Thin Lizzy' after Vincent. Ruth and I then left the twenty-odd Oreads that had arrived to finish off what had turned out to be a very pleasant day. Thank you all for coming.

Langsett to Heathy Lea — August — Ron Chambers

The ten Oreads who gathered at Heathy Lea on Friday evening looked more equipped for a beach trip than for a walk over Bleaklow. The recent spell of mediterranean weather had brought out from the moth-balls various assortments of shorts, t-shirts and sunhats. Bottles of orange squash hung from every spare rucksack strap, and the smell of Ambre Solaire was enough to knock you sideways!

It didn't surprise me too much therefore when heads turned as we entered the lounge of the 'Waggon & Horses' at Langsett. In fact, the silence was broken only by some elderly dear who, finding the sight of Pete Amour's hairy legs just too much, proceeded to choke on her 'scampi-in-a-basket'.

Undaunted, and in true Oread tradition, we began to settle into some serious drinking and gradually became part of the furniture.

Kicking-out time saw us making our way along the shores of Langsett reservoir towards the bivi spot by the 'Little Don' at the bottom of 'Cut Gate'. Candles and stoves were lit on arrival as everyone prepared for their night under what now appeared to be fast-fading stars. I snuggled down into my pit and lay watching the flickering candles, half listening to various conversations around me. One between Brian West and Helen intrigued me for a while when I overheard him confess to her that he hadn't washed his for 17 years, to which she owned up to never having washed hers at all!! But I quickly realised that they were only discussing sleeping bags, so I snuggled further into mine and drifted off to sleep.

The night passed uneventfully, apart from being woken once by the distant rumblings of a thunderstorm - 'glad it's not over us' I remember thinking to myself.

Dawn broke with a thick damp mist clinging to everything. 'What's happened to all this fantastic weather we've been having' someone croaked, as we struggled to light stoves and prepare breakfast. I think those who had decided not to bring sleeping bags were by now beginning to regret the decision, as they stood shivering whilst the rest of us lay in our nice warm pits.

Walking up 'Cut Gate' at 7.30 am in a thick 'pea-souper' was not really what I had envisaged for the start of the day. It even started to rain at one point, the first we'd had for about a month - still, you can't win 'em all, as they say. We found Margery Hill summit without incident, but the section across from there to Back Tor in white-out conditions really has to be experienced to appreciate the delights!!

At one particularly desolate spot, somebody asked 'Where's Pete Amour?'. It appears Pete had stopped to adjust his gear without informing anyone (a dreadful mistake when out with fellow Oreads in bad conditions - ask Burgess!). After a few minutes of shouting and yawping, a lonely figure emerged from the mist. 'What's up, are you all lost?' he quipped.

By sticking rigidly to a compass bearing and ignoring all remarks like 'I think we ought to be further left' or 'I'm sure we should be there by now' etc., we eventually hit the watershed track which led us straight to Back Tor. Everyone

was glad to reach the 'Strines Inn' where the opportunity to change into dry clothing and top up on calories was not wasted. By the time we reached Moscar Lodge, the mist had lifted and a short sun-bathing session was enjoyed before the 'flog' down the edges.

A well-earned rest was taken at Longshaw Lodge Cafe where 'pots of tea' and elastoplast were the main attractions. As we approached Froggatt Edge it became increasingly apparent from the unusual 'gait' adopted by some that a certain amount of suffering was taking place amongst the ranks. I asked Chris Bryan, who appeared to be affected more than most, if he was practising some new form of 'reggae' dance, but he didn't seem amused.

We sat down for another breather at Curbar Gap and waited for Pete, who had apparently dropped off the back suffering from a similar 'sore-feet syndrome'. Upon reaching us he muttered that if he stopped, he would never start again. So with eyes glazed and jaw set in grim determination, he pressed on.

We eventually reached Heathy Lea at 7.30 pm just 12 hours after leaving the bivi site at Langsett. Everyone felt pretty exhausted and most of us were suffering from sore feet - Pete Amour flopped onto the settee and refused to move until he had downed at least three cups of hot sweet tea. You could almost hear the 'sizzle' as George Reynolds' feet sank into a bowl of cold water - a look of ecstasy that has probably only ever been seen before by Janet crossed his tired brow. Young Gary Burgess had done well considering the handicap of having to use the old man's gear and boots (what gear?).

The evening was spent eating and drinking in the 'Wheatsheaf' and Sunday saw us loosening up on Birchen's Edge, where it was good to see one or two of the more senior members putting in an appearance.

Thanks to everyone who turned up and made the week-end so memorable. Apart from myself, the walkers were Pete Amour, Ken & Chris Bryan, Gary Burgess, John Gresty, Helen Griffiths, George Reynolds, John Theobald and Brian West.

Appletreewick — September — Keith Gregson

Friday saw Rock and I visiting the secondhand book sale in York. We examined thousands of books, many of the antiquarian bookshops and a lot of the local talent - though Rock didn't do his fare share of the latter!

On our way to 'Aptrick' we met Lol and Michael at Barden; they were enjoying a leisurely evening watching the river go by in idyllic surroundings, and marvellous weather - it wasn't to last.

At the campsite we were joined by the Linneys and were soon off to the pub. We sampled the New Inn first - it was rough. In fairness, the place was in disarray due to re-decorating and, obviously, the beer had been standing for a long time, but it did taste like it. Thus we adjourned to the Cavendish which provided both good food and ale (Theakston's) for the rest of the weekend. The Oread team gradually increased with the entrance of Ian and Beryl, Jill, Margaret, Alistair and George.

The morning dawned to a clammy mist which pervaded all things and reduced enthusiasm to zero. A gentle stroll was the order of the day, so we all headed up the river, eventually docking at the chip shop in Grassington, followed by a shandy (or two) next door. The stroll home via Hebden Moor and Hebden Gill was all that was needed to encourage the total collapse of the weather. However, the downpour didn't last too long and we arrived home in the dry.

Sunday saw the team on Simon's Seat looking for the crag under a bowling green of moss - it really was repulsive. However, various routes were done, and Ian was at home on the 'greenies'. Winter was obviously on its way.

Those present included:- John Margaret Richard and Helen Linney, Beryl Strike and Ian Brindle, Jill Towle, Margaret Theobald, Alistair and George, Rock Hudson, Lol Burns & Michael.

Lake District — October — Brian West

This was a late addition to the Meets List and, as such, it suffered the twin blows of inadequate advertisement and a Radcliffe counter-attraction (I am amazed that people should choose to pollute their bodies when they could go for jolly, healthy walks in the rain). However, the British Weather looped the loop and gave us a week-end to remember.

Meeting in the Greyhound at Shap, we found that Friday night was music night. Frowns from the senior members present were soon dispelled by the beer and Penlington was eventually persuaded to stop 'head-banging' for a moment in order to chair a lively discussion on the relative merits of Big Shap Girls.

Midnight found us steeplechasing westwards from Shap, a hard frost and a full moon making torches unnecessary. Moonlit all the way, we took a somewhat sporting route over the tops and rolled wearily into Mosedale Cottage about 2 am..

In the morning, misty in Mosedale, a steady grind up Branstree opened up the circulation. An unsteady grind down Branstree then shut it down again. A halt was called at Mardale Head to restore morale and to contemplate the next obstacle, the Riggindale Ridge of High Street. This disappeared up into the summit mists and so, in our turn, did we, emerging to warm sunshine by Rampsgill Head and High Raise. Turning left at Wether Hill, the charms of Fusedale led us to Howtown and Ullswater. An hour later we were cooking 'al fresco' beneath the Swarth Beck ravine. With the sinking sun behind and a rising moon before, we were lit along Ullswater and across Moor Divock with its stone circle and strange sink-holes. Full dark saw us staggering into the pool of light shed by the Theakston's sign on the Helton Inn....

We soon had our stockinged feet under the table, both literally and metaphorically, and the evening progressed steadily through shandy to bitter, and then finally to Old Peculiar.

Whilst dishing up the sausage and chips, mine host had beguiled us with tales of Desperate Annie, legendary 'twixt Penrith and Kendal for her prodigious appetite concerning men. Who should then appear, some half-hour later, but the legendary lady herself. The landlord introduced her to us and, due to his stunning in-depth knowledge of Shap girls, Penlington was elected as the Oread's starter for ten. One look at him was enough for Annie and she turned to seek solace in a box of dominoes. I am not at all sure whether Dave was relieved or disappointed. She is a big girl.

I remember little about climbing the hill to Mirebank Plantation and bivouacking behind its enclosing walls; only that it was so bright and still the first time I got out of my bag, and that it was so bright and windy the second time. The wind was still there in the morning, as John Gresty fried yet another sausage, but it was pleasant lying in the sun.

A brisk walk over Helton Moor brought us to Scalegate, a farm policed most effectively by a large and belligerent free-range pig. So efficient was it that Ken Bryan prudently chose to use his telephoto lens after a few close encounters with the normal kind. A switchback route across Cawdale and Willdale brought forth mutinous mutterings from the rabble. Thinking 'What would Ashcroft do?', I ignored them completely and speeded up.

Haweswater appeared at our feet and, after a rest, we embarked upon the last stretch from Burnbanks to Shap. This became a race against the weather as clouds swept in from the west. I, for one, wanted to complete a week-end in the Lakes without taking out a jacket. A scatter of rain accompanied us into Shap village, but it was too late and too little to matter. Shap's weird little cafe, and its even more weird inhabitants, then claimed our attention for what was left of the afternoon.

For me, this week-end was made by the weather and the company. I couldn't have wished for better. I would like to thank Colin Hobday, Ken Bryan, Chris Bryan, Pete Beresford, Helen Griffiths, John Gresty, Roy Eyre and Dave Penlington for turning out on what had promised to be a very wet week-end.



High Peak

Gordon J. Gadsby

Frosty glistenings on the moonlit way
Crunching boots and clouded breath
Ridge upon ridge into the far away
And all around the stillness likens death.

A cackling grouse snuggles in the snow
As shadowy figures follow one by one
Those broken groughs of Kinder's high plateau
Mumble, curse, rejoice the ground there won.

Reach Blackdens, jagged hoary rim
Space beyond space and a starlit bower
Twinkling lights at a human's whim
Ghost white hills and meteor shower.

By torchlight glimpse the fox's trail
A white hare's darting track
Think of friends with fire and ale
Walk on, walk on, not back.

Safe at last, by the cabin wall
The humming stove exudes its glow
To percolate our bodies overall
While racing thoughts, remain out in the snow.

The following idea comes to mind for a number of reasons. As Archivist, I've been trying to obtain any type of material relating to the Club's history, but up to the present I've been given only a single collection of early Meet Reports. I've found many of these good reading and I think they will be to others, as well as those involved who will almost certainly by now have forgotten those long past times. Hopefully, such an article will provide a few vignettes of the early members; their long association with the Oread, and with climbing and mountaineering in general.

Having recently thumbed through a Geographical Journal, its article '50 Years Ago' springs to mind. At present, however, the Club and its members cannot fulfill this criterion - I've therefore gone for the next best thing -

'Rock' Hudson.

Some 30 Years Ago

Joint Meet with M.A.M. - Birchens Edge, March 26th, 1950.

This was a glorious day, and the M.A.M. came over in force by coach and were introduced all round by the leader, who arranged climbing groups so that individuals of one club climbed with individuals of the other. A total of 60 attended this Meet and the President (C.B.Machin) was seen leading a string of five ladies. This was also the day that Keith Axon peeled off the top of 'Emmas Dilemma' whilst leading. He fell beautifully, turning twice in the air, bounced on the lower ledge and turning another complete somersault, made a perfect landing in the bracken below. His training as a parachutist and airborne trooper stood him in good stead, for he escaped with nothing more serious than a ricked ankle and some slight shock. I noticed that a few seconds later he lit a cigarette with perfectly steady fingers, but that half-an-hour afterwards this would probably have been impossible.

Leader: Eric Byne.

Kinder-Rowsley Walk - January 10/11th, 1953.

Five members of the Club, D.Penlington, M.Moore, R.Brown, R.Dearden and G.Gibson spent an uncomfortable Friday night sleeping on boards outside a shooting cabin on Middle Moor above Hayfield, being unable to effect an entrance. Drizzle during the night helped the party to an early start and the Downfall was reached by 10.00 am in heavy mist. A line was taken to Fairbrook, followed by a traverse

of Seal Edge and Blackden Edge; the morale of the party being much improved by the appearance of the sun on reaching Fairbrook. There was very little snow and although breezy, it was remarkably warm for January.

From the eastern end of Kinder, the ridge running S.E. to Whin Hill was joined and, passing over Whin Hill, the descent made to Bamford and the Yorkshire Bridge Inn which was reached at 4.30 pm. Here tribute must be made to the hospitality offered at the Yorkshire Bridge and received gratefully, for the party stayed in the pub until 10.30 (is this a record?). The last four miles to Stanage Plantation being walked in the dark. Here the night was spent in a depression in the ground, the sloping sides of which rolled all to the centre - those unfortunates in the centre, although not lacking warmth, were nearly suffocated by the weight of the bodies.

Dawn on Sunday showed that other members and friends were camping nearby and the party grew to 11 in number, Ernie Marshall, Jim Winfield and their friends joining for the walk to Rowsley. The route followed the line of the gritstone edges, Stanage, Burbage, Froggatt, Curbar, Baslow, Gardoms, finishing through Chatsworth Park with the last two miles done at a half-trot to catch a bus. All were tired and those who did the whole walk from Hayfield were satisfactorily shagged.

Leader: G.F.Gibson.

* * * * *

'Rock' Hudson is always pleased to receive older printed material, written material, photographs, lantern slides, etc, relating to the Oread and Oread activities since 1949.





Eric Byne, probably on
Harston Rocks, c. 1951



Trevor Panther below Froggatt Edge c.1951/2



Roger Turner, Mike Moore,
Jim Kershaw, Brian Cooke.
Gardoms Edge c. 1953

Inspecting a new nylon rope on a Derbyshire Meet.
L. to R. Dave Penlington, Jane Norman, John
Adderley and Mike Moore c. 1951/2





Oliver Jones as most Oread members will best remember him - piping the newly-weds around the Annual Dinner at the Green Man, Ashbourne, 1982.

Obituary:

Oliver Jones (1906-83) Honorary Member

Dave Penlington

Oliver died on the 19th April after a short illness. A loyal Scot, he was born in Glasgow in 1906. He was elected to club membership in 1949, the year of its foundation. He remained an active member throughout his life. After having two artificial hip joints fitted a couple of years ago, he climbed in South Africa and was on Ben Nevis the following Easter. His climbing itinerary was simple - Ben Nevis at Easter, Glen Brittle for two weeks in August, with Wales and to a lesser extent Derbyshire and the Lakes in between. There were also trips to the States, Canada, Arctic Norway, Switzerland, South Africa, etc..

At sixteen he left home for America and, in the next five years, he had 50 or so jobs ranging from cleaning sewers to building aircraft to being a lumberjack, etc.. In his later years, up to retirement, he ran his own engineering works in Birmingham with a product range from cake trays for Lyons to the famous 'cullin' climbing nail - he also made 'B.P.' nails for his competitors.

Oliver was not only a mountaineer, he played Rugby until well after retirement for the Old Edwardians in Birmingham. His support of international rugby took him on regular visits to Cardiff, Twickenham, Paris and so on. The Americans loved him and a number of features on the O.A.P. player appeared in various 'States' and South African newspapers.

After rugby came Scottish Dancing, swimming and cycling, the latter activity leading to his arrest on the M6 motorway extension into Birmingham. This, in the end, turned out to be very embarrassing for the two policemen involved - how could they do such a thing to a poor O.A.P.!!

Oliver's background made him an ideal member of the Oread. After a hard day, out would come the guitar for an equally long session of singing and drinking. In Glen Brittle the Macraes invited him to play with the other bagpipers at the annual Summer Ball, indeed a unique honour. Most members will remember Oliver as the bachelor who presented the tankards to the newly-weds at the Dinner. This tradition, which commenced with Nan Smith and Keith Axon in 1950, was only broken in the one year when Oliver was in dock being re-fitted with his new hip joints. A tradition which will no doubt have died with Oliver.

A great man in so many ways. He will be remembered by countless members who have enjoyed sharing his life, whether actively or just watching from the sidelines.

Obituary:

Jean Russell

Reg Squires

Jean Russell was well known to many members of the Oread. The wife of Clive (Rusty) Russell, she was unfortunately never able to be fully active in the mountains due to a life-long infirmity, which rendered any physical activity extremely arduous. But she always enjoyed the hills and tried. The ascent of a Derbyshire peak, Chrome Hill, springs to mind - it took as much effort and determination as the rest of us require for a major peak. A small reminder that in our pastime there is always a personal challenge to meet, whatever one's level of participation.

Jean was often present on the social scene and assisted with administration from time to time. Her major contribution to the club, for which she will perhaps best be remembered, was inspiring and leading the committee which produced 'Climb if You Will', the book produced in remembrance of the late Geoff Hayes, of which she was the editor and publisher. In the risky and expensive world of publishing it was a brave, even rash, venture for a club to undertake - Jean saw it through to a successful conclusion, resulting in what is now a much sought-after record of Oread history and involvement in local climbing.

She was, of course, a professional in this field, being well-known nationally for her work with children's books, and through lecturing, magazine publishing and critical reviewing she made a large personal contribution to the development of this branch of literature.

All came to an end just after Christmas 1982, when the asthma that had limited all her activities took its final toll. Our sympathies go out to Rusty, who can be in no doubt she will be missed by club members and friends everywhere.



"More Bright Jewels"

Trevor Panther

This October 1980, Bob Pettigrew showed me an article I had written for the Oread Mountaineering Club Journal for January 1958. It was called "Bright Jewels".

I had quite forgotten about it and was amazed that he had kept it and even more amazed that he had several copies made and given them to members of a rock climbing course on which I was instructing recently.

After 22 years, I felt that I must be able to produce some "More Bright Jewels". I have found the task much more difficult than the writing of the original "Bright Jewels". So much and such varied climbing experience has occurred in these 22 years that it is all merging together into an ill-defined mass.

These new "Bright Jewels" are here because they recount moments of great beauty or climbing situations which have taken me to the brink.

The first of these 'Jewels' occurred about Easter 1967.

The girdle traverse of Craig Fach had still to be completed.

In the company of Bill O'Connor and Tony Bartlett, I started to lead that intimidating pitch.

This started with a wide stride to place a peg, followed by a downwards and rightwards tension traverse over gently overhanging rock.

The prospect looked pretty bleak but a micro peg and several horrifying pendulums enabled me to lie horizontally on the rope and grab a small vertical finger hold. My friends were shouting encouragement but they seemed to be in a different world from me.

This small fingerhold helped me to place another micro peg which enabled me to assume an upright position again.

The traverse continued rightwards for another 30 or 40 feet.

It was climbing of exceptional delicacy with feet squeezed onto tiny friction holds and fingers on occasional pegs placed upwards in an overlap.

None of these would have withstood a downward pull.

During the climbing of this pitch I had no notion of time at all. I was in a kind of infinity. At last I reached the safety of the impending groove of 'Pi', an A3 route with a few rusting pitons in it. I lent rightwards in precarious balance and tension and snapped a karabiner onto one of these rusting pitons and took a rest standing in a sling.

The key pitch to the complete girdle had been turned.

I was so spent, mentally psychologically and physically, that I was not able to climb any more that day.

Two months later, Rob Harpley and I returned to Craig Fach and put the whole girdle together in six hours and twenty minutes.

* * * * *

The next 'Jewel' was in late December '79. My young friend Dave Warren and I left my house in Gerlan about noon. We did not have any particular plan in mind as it was a bit late in the day. However, we took ice climbing equipment and headed for Black Ladders.

The great black cliff plastered in snow and icicles was too tempting, so on the spur of the moment we decided to solo Eastern Gully. It was not in very good condition, having too much soft snow in it.

The crampons and ice hammers were however very necessary if we were not to spend too long on the face. We emerged at the top in just 45 minutes with the low sunlight in the west, turning all to gold and rose red.

We kept our crampons on and set off for the summit of Carnedd Dafydd after taking a few photos.

The sun had disappeared behind Snowdon as we reached the summit. It was very clear, cold and utterly silent. We too were silent and just stood for several minutes soaking up our surroundings.

Soon it was quite dark and we moved carefully down the boulder-strewn and icy slopes towards Gerlan. A brilliant half moon lit our way home.

* * * * *

In the early January of 1980 I found myself instructing on a snow and ice course in the Cairngorms.

During this week, one day provided me with a memory I will never forget. It was an occasion which demanded everything that the sum total of my climbing experience has taught me. The five strongest climbers on the course and myself headed into Coire an't Sneachda. It was very cold and windy.

Sixteen stone Alan actually blew over in the bottom of the Coire!

At the base of the cliff we split into two parties, one of four climbers and the other of Mac and I.

It was immediately apparent that the surface conditions were bad and the weather was getting worse.

My first pitch was up narrow channels of ice with nine inches of powder snow on top.

I got to grips with a rock bulge thinly veneered with verglas. Eighty-five

feet of steep run-out and no chance of protection anywhere.

The front points, the terrordactyl and the axe pick grated horribly onto the hard rock under the thin ice. The spindrift blew in all directions at once. I was blinded by it and my goggles caked up till it was impossible to see. I was totally committed and the only hope was upwards.

At last, deep snow and a big "dead man" belay was duly hammered in.

Mac came up fast and belayed to the dead man anchor.

I traversed up right to the crux - a fifteen-foot impending corner caked in verglas and rushing with a waterfall of spindrift.

A frantic struggle began. Crampon front points grating and ice hammer digging to find a crack. Fortunately, one appeared under the ice and two rock pegs went in. My arm muscles were unhappy and the axe hammer dropped from my tired hand.

I hung from the peg with my eyes closed against the torrent of powder snow just long enough to regain strength for a few more feet. At last the pitch was overcome and Mac started up.

He had a terrible struggle to remove the pegs and slings. Time raced on, darkness grew and the storm reached tempest proportions.

Alloy karabiners stuck to my fingers and skinned them whenever gloves were removed.

We continued over easier ground, traversed right for 300 feet and found an easy way down into the coire.

The next day we paid for our efforts with an agony of weariness. We had pulled out all the 'stops' as this was not just a matter of completing a climb successfully, it was a fight for life itself.

Perhaps all mankind should go to the brink occasionally. We learn a great deal about ourselves, about our friends and about this wonderful world.

* * *

NOTE:- THAT EVENING, R.A.F. WEATHER REPORT FOR THE CAIRNGORM PLATEAU WAS -
'WIND GUSTING TO 70 KNOTS, 0 DEGREES FAHRENHEIT'.

* * * * *

Dovedale Dash 1982

Oread Results

The following is a list of Oread results in the 30th Dovedale Dash 7.11.82.

<u>Overall Position</u>	<u>Oread Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Time</u>
45	1	C. Russell	32 minutes plus.
60	2	T. Barnett	33
102	3	R. Hopkinson	34
113	4	R. Larkam	34
167	5	J. Blackledge	35
173	6	M. Wynne	36
191	7	C.J. Radcliffe	36
202	8	B. Wilderspin	36
210	9	R. Freestone	37
266	10	R. Eyre	38
288	11	P. Bingham	38
304	12	S. Wetton	38
306	13	M. Lightfoot	38
309	14	R. Tresidder	38
338	15	D. Wright	39
379	16	C. Wilson	39
548	17	K. Gregson	41
549	18	M. Pearce	41
584	19	R. Sedgwick	41
636	20	J. Ashcroft	41
773	21	M. Roome	43
977	22	J. Winfield	45
1086	23	D. Weston	47
1117	24	P. O'Neill	49
1161	25	F. Phillips	50
1184	26	D. Williams	51
1192	27	R. Thatcher	51
1219	28	S. Gough	52
1241	29	H. Griffiths	52
1248	30	P. Lancaster	53
1331	31	G. Reynolds	57
1360	32	S. Eyre	59
1365	33	C. Eyre	59
1430	34	A. Ames/B. West 3-legged	62 minutes plus a lot!

The winner, Chris Woodhouse, of Derby C.& A.C. finished in 28 mins. 50 secs..

Oh, What a Lovely View

or, Scenic Places I Have Shat

Colin Rapper (Research material collated and re-organised by Sam Lea)

This is a subject which I know is very close to the hearts (if that's not too physically inaccurate) of many climbers and walkers. How many of us have never experienced the joys of that open air, au naturel, al fresco response to the call of nature. Not many, I am sure.

To wander to the foot of a favourite crag, the sun shining, a gentle breeze on a bright spring morning; the birds singing, the leaves a-stir. To place the sack in a comfortable spot under that awkward-looking crack line. And to feel the beginning of the inevitable urge.

At this point, the experienced and worldly wise reach into the handy outside pocket of the sack for that most essential item of mountaineering equipment. At this point, the new and inexperienced begin slowly, and then with increasing urgency, to search through that sack for sandwich bags, old maps, dead woolly hats, anything - they cast about in despair amongst their companions for some suitable material to avoid the ominous image of the dock leaf or handful of fern which is forcing its way into the front of their minds.

For those of us who have played this game before, the next move is to wander off amongst the trees or boulders in good time to avoid unnecessary rush and discomfort, and establish ourselves in a spot, preferably concealed yet affording a good view of the surrounding countryside, in order that we may enjoy the morning (or afternoon/evening) call to the full.

From this vantage point one can observe the trees, the fields, crag and cloud, the birds and the buttercups, perhaps even climbers engaged in the baser aspects of the sport involving the use of ropes and other paraphernalia. If we have chosen well, our contemplation will rarely be disturbed, and probably then only by a less fortunate, less foresighted comrade thrashing through the undergrowth, face contorted in agony, knees forced together impeding progress, a polythene bin liner in one hand and belt buckle in the other, frantically hoping to secrete himself before the omnipotent force of the preceeding evening's seven pints of Marstons and tinderloo curry combine forces to estrange him from his wife or laundryman.

It is with one or two tales collected from various aficionados of the pastime (who shall remain un-named in order to maintain their dignity and public standing (crouching?)) that I hope to convince various sceptics and scorners that this can be more than just an irksome bodily function.

You all know someone who has a story along the lines of:

'So there I was, minding my own business, when first rushing through the

woods comes this great big dog which shoots up towards me, and then - Oh no! The owner hard on its trail. So I looked at her and she looked at me, and I said 'mornin', and she said 'mornin' and pulled the dog off leaving me covered with more than just my own embarrassment,'

I hope therefore that some of the following examples will highlight a few of the problems which the beginner may experience, and point out a few possibilities to the more advanced performer. (I would like to state at this point that all of these parables are true. At least, that's what the bloke who told me said.)

The first shows what can happen if this really basic error is made:

Our hero, one hard winter, having inspected the chemical catastrophe which passes for sanitation at the C.I.C. Hut on Ben Nevis, made the only humanly acceptable decision (which anyone who has seen the aforementioned aberration will understand) i.e. to go 'al fresco', cold notwithstanding. And so, early this rimey morning, after giving the customary and traditional greeting 'I'm just off for a crap, chaps', he trudged, crampons crunching, into the dawn light. He went in the opposite direction to the Ben's uninviting gullies, knowing well the Point Five and Zero aspirations of the Hut's occupants, and therefore thinking this a good move. He found himself a large boulder for cover, with a fine view back up the corrie. He dropped his strides and assumed the position. After a few moments of enjoyable, if chilly, meditation he heard a sound approaching which was the result of his lack of research and planning. Too late to do much anyway and being a bit of a cool customer (sorry), he thought; I'll just brazen this out. So, around the edge of this boulder appears a mountaineer - our hero looks at him and he looks back at our hero, 'mornin' - 'mornin' and the mountaineer walks on. Followed shortly by a Boy Scout. And another. And another. Thirteen in all - our hero vanishing down a hole he wished in the ground.

LESSON ONE: PLAN YOUR STRATEGY THOROUGHLY.

Another common error, difficult to avoid this one, is illustrated thus:

Our hero, prior to a days cragging, on Ilkley Moor baht trollys. The location selected for the morning's performance fulfills a majority of the required criteria - good views, adequate support and reasonable concealment. Now, it is obvious to all concerned that the finale requires a radically different, that is somewhat more erect, posture than the main act. And so our hero, full roll in the left and visable portion in the right, stood up; only to be confronted by an old boy and his wife out walking the dog. I mean, an old boy and his wife! You just don't coolly say 'mornin', do you? Hero, no more, he ducked back down, and I leave you to ponder his predicament.

LESSON TWO: ONCE OBSERVED, YOU'VE BLOWN IT.

Let us move on now to the more advanced exponent of the art. Let us see what scope there is for innovation amongst the more creative. Our hero, renowned amongst his contemporaries as a leader in the field, well-known (and dubiously regarded) by most for his activities, a guiding light for us to aspire to (in fact, only superceeded by his brother), produced one day this, perhaps his piece de resistance from the point of view of being well equipped:

Whilst approaching the Roaches, this legend in his own time was visited by THE Urge. Being a great believer in the 'when you gotta go you gotta go!' school of thought, he stopped at Hen Cloud campsite and erected his tent in

double quick time.

This tent having no groundsheet! (gasps from the crowd)

Tie-ups instead of a zip! (thunderous applause)

Our hero goes about his business in a relaxed manner, tidies up, strikes camp and proceeds with the days doings.

LESSON THREE: BE PREPARED.



Travelling further afield: the Alps. Once again, most can tell a tale of potential death by indecent exposure. For myself, you know those experiences which form a lasting impression on your mind - the vivid scene, caught in glorious synapsurround and cerebrocolour in the old grey matter, well picture this:

The crystal clear sky, a blue so blue that a soap powder ad. agency could

not describe it; the dazzling white snow of the gracefully corniced ridge cutting across the foreground. And behind, the majestic Dom and the Tasch, monarchs of the Mischabelle, the traverse as sharp as if it was *right there*. And on this aforementioned ridge, smack in the middle, the red jumper a perfect focal point, new Curver set in the snow at an angle *just like that*, and the position assumed to a tee - our hero! The only thing which prevents this aesthetically moving scene from being a photographic reality is the tone of voice in which the subject growled, "Just you ***** dare!"

LESSON FOUR: THINK BIG.

(This same unfortunate once fell foul of Lesson Three following an ascent of Castle Ridge on the Ben, and taken short en route to Fort William on a beer run. He was reduced to the use of a slice of bread and a polythene bag. The boost in sales of a product not too far removed from Germolene in the following weeks was astronomic.)

As you can see, the scope is virtually endless for those with flair and imagination: that picturesque zawn, that hanging belay, that precarious bivouac. The windswept summit, the sun-baked dale. The possibilities multiply.

But hold. What's this?

'Stop! Just one moment there!' I hear the conservationist cry, hand held aloft in dismay, jaw dropped below in horror, brow deeply furrowed with consternation -

'The ecological imbalance! The environmental upset! The smell!!!' And who can blaim him, imagination run riot, visualising legions of newly-converted, as the warm summer season starts, marching steadfastly into the undergrowth or behind boulders to take their relief, whilst their pet labrador puppies happily bounce rucksack loads of pink Andrex in and out of every conceivable obstacle. No, indeed, this is not on. We cannot have the country's ageing sewage systems heaving a sigh of relief whilst the National Parks and beauty spots slowly vanish under the results of the nations most popular pastime.

In order to provoke some thought along the lines of the protocols, indeed ethics, of al fresco allow me to refer to a story concerning that strange band who, if we occupy the top of the outdoor pursuits coin, they occupy very much the bottom.

The following was related to me by a caver of some repute and is true. As I stand here. Honest.

Concerns a trip into a cave somewhere in the South of Wales, which cave's entrance is affected by tides increasing just how impressive is the concern for what, to my mind, is an environment most suitable for the dumping of. (Editorial Note: *This one sentence has been left unedited just to give you some idea how the author's mind works!!*).

All the gear for the trip had to be humped through acres of sludge under the usual low ceilings and, on this occasion, it included not only the usual Gothic torture chamber decorations, bondage gear and other mechanical contraptions peculiar to the speleologist, but also T.V. filming equipment - lights, cameras, make-up girls, etcetera.

Anyway, umpteen dozen man-trips notwithstanding, this team actually took in with them ammo boxes dedicated to the purpose. These, when filled, were duly removed and emptied - then returned for re-use. Just think of the human en-

deavour involved. No, I don't mean in carrying the ammo boxes back and forth, I mean think of the accuracy required to ensure that the ammo boxes' monitors duties were no more unpleasant than necessary. Now, whilst not endorsing the wholesale removal of every motion from the countryside,

LESSON FIVE: BE CONSIDERATE TO OTHERS.

In conclusion, I would like to say that if all lessons are duly learnt, I am sure that a long and satisfying career lies ahead, be you tyro or veteran. It is an enjoyment which will outlast your hard climbing days, and even your hard walking days. So good luck and good, er, happy, er.....
.....oh, never be without the necessary.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: A select bibliography was to appear at this point but pressure of work, unavailability of research material and editorial deadlines rendered this difficult. In lieu, I add a list (non-exhaustive) of names to look out for in connection with this subject:

Whillans
Patey
Whymper
Musson
Boardman
Whillans
McInnes
Rapper
Whillans
Whillans
etc.



TECHNICAL NOTES

Equipment Editor

In keeping with editorial policy, and with a view to increasing the technical competence of Oread climbers on both rock and ice routes, we publish below a few extracts from the Cassin 1983 Catalogue (English Version)(!). Your attention is drawn particularly to the second paragraph of the introductory 'Warning'.

WARNING:

Some aspects of mountaineering, including technical rock, ice, and snow climbing are hazardous. Any person using our equipment for climbing or caving is personally responsible for learning the proper techniques involved.

Remember that a good tool cannot substitute the personal instruction achieved at the beginning by a technical theoretic information and a personal experience on the mountain after.

Ice - axes

The ice-axe is born many years ago to help the man found in high mountain tours. In that period the ice-axe were used as support, stepping and as help to stop in when one slips.

To-day we go on the mountain in a different manner also for security reason is better to go on strong ice than snow, as consequence the tools of the mountain have also changed to better follow the new demands.

The modern ice-axes are a necessity in order to complete climb, with the old ice-axes is not sensible to go up the ice-falls that now are considered the winter version of the summer free-climbing.

The CASSIN made the correct ice-axes for the three basic use: ice-axe for excursionism traditional and for extreme use as icefall that are climbed with the piolet traction technique

When you buy an ice-axe to choose the proper lenght for your ice-tools, you must consider two things: your lenght and the type of climb that you have in mind. As first to find the right lenght you put the ice-axe in your hand and the spike must arrive to the earth but if you use normally the ice-axe to go around for snow trip is better to have the tool a little bit longer and of contrary if you intend to use the tool frequently for technical mixed climbs you should consider that shorter is better.

Our Guida Pro and Super Pro are designed to satisfy all the excursionism demands, the lightness is really important. For ski-alpinism we suggest the Guida model.

Our Extreme Glace and Icefall are really technical ice-axe that we made with special control because the success on many important way depend also from his quality. The proper lenght for these ice-axes is cm. 45 or 50 for vertical way an a little but longer for no so difficult way.

Handle in aluminium Ergal really strong is covered in rubber with a no-slippering design. The spikes are really short for free movements.

The two passer-rivets have also an use motivation. The first near the spike is to fix the spike, and for the webbing passage The second one is to fix the hole-hand band.

The little hole on the ice-axe head is to fix the weight that help the penetration in strong ice.

Hammers

The CASSIN hammers line think to the mountains in his whole series from rocks to ices.

The steel used for the hammer head is always nickel-chrome-molibdenum and the handles are for the most part covered in rubber this make them extremely durable and dampens vibration far.

In the hammer line we find following the different utilizations. From the first with wooden handle for price question we go to the classic hammer with a pick that can be used for hooking and levering out the pitons, chocks and crack cleaning. These hammers are also named «*deplionneur*».

The ice hammers from an estetic point of view are surely the most pleasant also if his image is only the result of a long study.

The basical version have an hitting head with a long pick teethed for solid placement in strong ice. From this one we have two type more sophisticated, one with moulded handle and the other with spike.

1) The unusual line of the handle in the below photo is the result of a specific study to avoid the painful trouble to crush the kunkles on the wall.

2) The long spike and teeth put this hammer in the first beginning for the piolet-traction.

Mountain gears

220 - DESCENDER

This descender has a 8 shape, from this the name. The success of this tool is due to the lightness and the many utilisations, it can be used as brake knot, as security with the climbing friend and as static blockade all with really easy work. Weight gr 145.

225 - ETRIER IN WEBBING

Etrier in nylon webbing for maximum strenght kg. 500.

This type of webbing is really interesting for the climber who use the light shoe because don't cause constriction to the feet and don't glip. Weight gr 120. Length cm. 140

TENT HAMMOCK

Art. 277

Special hammock for long ascent with cold and watering bouvac. It is made in nylon also with a cover-tent waterproof well helping also for wind and low temperature. Webbing in nylon band. Weight gr. 1100

230 - MAGNESIUM BAG

Is to be waist fasten. It is rigid but soft in the top to introduce better the hand and to remain also in the coriel position during the climbing. Weight gr 57

231 - From CASSIN also magnesium-soap. Weight gr 62

245 - GLOVES

Gloves in nylon for the water and umidity without interere the hands movements

BOUVAC SAC

The form of the bouvac sac is a mum with a long zip covered. It is made in two type.

Art. 270 b

Gore-Tex, the famous lessle water-proof but expiring for the upper-part and in nylon on the earth part. We can have so a cheaper price with more long life.

Chocks

CASSIN made different type of chocks that due to their easy placement, high security and wide size range have been an indispensable part for every climbers' rack.

Our chocks and mezzelune are available free, with robe or with wire.

The only real difference between chocks and mezzelune is in mezzelune favour because in the crack with his half-moon shape they can find 3 lever point instead the normal two.

The matherial that we use is in an alluminium alloy stronger.

Our last study is arrived to made blends. Blends are the complet range made for little crack, dream of every free-climbers.

The matherial used to made the blend is the brass that is melt on the wire. The direct melting on the wire avoid the losing force on the solded or curved wire inside, having so more security. The breaking force test for the blends have the same result of on only the wire.

The size of CASSIN blends are prepared to be always inequal, we have seven size with fourteen different faces. The wire is covered in part in plastic matherial for a better handling.

Alluminium and cooper head are little cilinder to be used in small cracks to force a passage.

Copper or soft alluminium try to mantein as much surface contact with the rock as possible to spread out the load and prevent shearing.

The heads work well only if are well placed we suggest that is necessary to try on the rocks before to go on the big wall to find the reale sense who said that you are sure without risk. It is possible to use the head more than one time only if they have no changed too much his basic form.

The alluminium head are for limeston and the copper heads, more strong, are for granite.

For fifty years now Riccardo Cassin has grappled with every type of rock-face: dolomite, granite, ice, Sheer rock, with «impossible» climbs.

The equipment and accessories which you will find in this catalogue are the outcome of an enduring passione and exceptional experience applied to the specific problems of top-level mountainering.

THE PAGE OF BITS AND PIECES I COULDN'T FIND ROOM FOR ANYWHERE ELSE

Found by Chris Wilson and John O'Reilly on their tent
on their return from the Charmoz-Grepon traverse -

Mes Cher Amis (Youths)

Apres vous avez departez, nous avons become fidgitez - maintenant
nous faisons (aujourd'hui) l'ascension de l'aiguille de peigne par
la voie "Vaucher"..... nous esperons!

"Qu'est-ce que c'est cette montagne!"

Nous esperons que nous faisons la descent ce soir, mais.....
connaissaing us, la descent maybe demain!

Alors, see you.

Pierre (as in 'Chute de....')
et Tim

29th Juillet/Samedi

Je sincerely hopes not.

"I'm sorry - I'm just a spastic and a wimp!" T*m B*rn*tt

As he cruised over the final moves of one of his hardest leads
of the season, Liquid Courage E3 5c, D*rr*ck B*lg*r was heard
to say "...all this scr*w*ng must be doing me the world of good!"

"If you use the Ski Aperitif method you'll be ski-ing
parallel in a week." D*v* *w*n

LONDON MARATHON 1983: It is rumoured that a well-known Oread
only finished this event upon realising
at the 20-mile mark that he had no money, was gasping for a fag
and that his were at the finish. It is also rumoured that he
will be running in next year's event with French or Swiss
nationality after his latest Alpine season.
