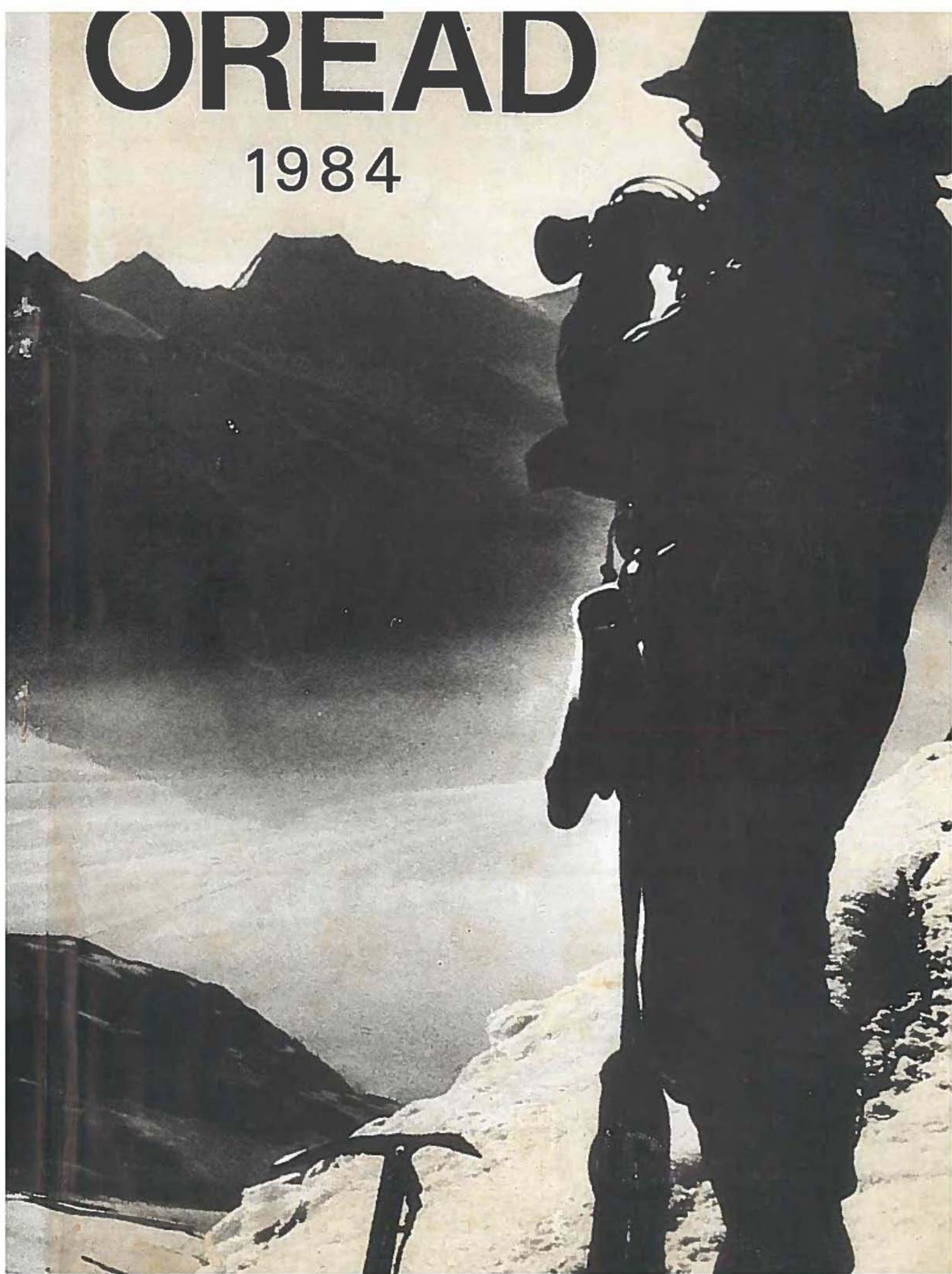


# OREAD

1984



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# JOURNAL OF THE OREAD MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

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## C.WILSON / J.HUDSON

Apologies are due for nearly a years delay in producing the 1984 club journal. There are two main reasons for this. As in previous years many of the articles did not arrive on the editors desk until this year, although requests were asked for in the autumn of last year. Chris confesses that another major factor was the pressing need to complete a number of monumental jobs on a newly brought house. Without some of these jobs being finished it would have been very difficult to provide a safe dry place while working on the 'unique manuscripts' which were handed in!

This years journal contains rather fewer articles than are found in the journal of recent years. However, club members are not being let down in the quantity of pages, because some of the articles are quite lengthy. The main problem in editing this journal; was that so few photographs, drawings or cartoons were provided by members. Because of this readers must put up with more than the normal pages containing only text. However this might make readers spend more time in taking the contents; not just looking at the illustrations! In general terms the editor can only publish what is handed in, therefore members might like to rectify this in future if they would like to see more between the covers of the journal. Again meet reports are only available for a small proportion of those that took place, a pity really, when these can provide so much insight into a years activity of the Oread.

I(Chris) have been unable to find enough time to complete the work on finishing the journal. I would therefore like to thank the new editor for taking in hand the final jobs relating to the collation and production of this journal.

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### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our thanks to all members who took the trouble and time to provide material, be it articles, illustrations or otherwise. Our special thanks go to the people who helped in the production of the journal. In particular we would like to thank Colin Hobday for photographic services; John O'Reilly for photographic duplication and Pete Scott for organisation of the duplication at Kedleston Road. The titles were provided at B.G.S.

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### PHOTO CREDITS

Cover. 'Rock' Hudson; pp.18 and 21 Jack Ashcroft; pp.92 Robin Beadle pp.99, 101 and 105 Dave Penlington; we are unable to find out who provided the photo on page 56.





# OF AIRBEDS, HARVESTERS, GASTRONOMY AND TWO VALLEYS

COLIN BARNARD

After seven OMC Alpine Meets on the trot I could perhaps feel less guilt than I otherwise might at making alternative arrangements for this year's holiday. The last Friday in July saw Rock Hudson and I on our way South. The M25 avoids all the drag of driving through London and thanks to it we were able to jump two boats at Dover. By eight the following evening we were zig-zagging up Lötschental out of the Rhone Valley.

We found a grand little site at Kippel under the towering Bietschhorn, uncrowded, minimal but adequate facilities, with lots of civilised and courteous Dutch parties, and dozed off to the accompaniment of the musical church bells and the clunk, clunk of rotating boulders driven down the bed of the fast flowing and turbid river. Lötschental is nice. If you haven't been there try and go.

A dingle morning so straight up to the Hollandia Hut. Three and three quarter hours Guide Book Time! Tell that to the Marines. The route goes up the Langeletscher and "lange", they tell me, means long. Oh the pain and suffering! Counting the steps between rests below the final rise ...79, 93, 86... will it never end! At 8.00 pm we limped in only to be dressed down by the Guide for not having roped up for the ascent. Well, yes, we had actually seen a crevasse 300 yards away now I think back. The only sop to our battered pride came next day when another British team - half our age - took an hour longer to get up.

Another splendid dawn, so off up the Mittaghorn, a snow plod with a nice snow crest between the two tops and magnificent views of the Oberland, especially Lauterbrunnen. The situation of the Hollandia is superb, consolation for any number of hours hard grind. Much of it's charm comes from being perched on a sharp arete of near vertical rocks, so if you do like I did and lay your gear on the balcony wall to dry and a helicopter comes in .... then you have a problem recovering your kit.

The peace of the virtually empty dormitory on the first night was rudely shattered next night by a giggling party coming late to bed. "Quiet", I hissed. No joy, but "oh for !!!!'s sake shut up" is intelligible in any language and thereafter we had a good night's kip. Next day we traversed Ebneflüh with dawn cloud in the Konkordia basin from which pink-tinged grey shapes emerged reminding us of last year's Grindelwald meet and of a magnificent day on the Gröss Grunorn.

Daylight brought crystal clear views, the great hanging ice bosses on the Aletschhorn, the Mischabel and Weissmies, Weisshorn and Matterhorn, Dent Blanche, Dent d'Herens and virtually all the Oberland right across to the Bernese plains. Totally wonderful, whilst beyond the Gletscherhorn the Jungfrau seemed only a breath away.

Then off to the fleshpots and - just in case anyone was watching - we roped up for the descent to the valley. Trying to get off the glacier and too lazy to bother with crampons, I was cutting steps, forgot to cut the last one and whoops! Skinned knuckles and elbow. Even that, and later on going into the stream up to my armpits and then finding I had left my spare pants in the hut, did not detract from a feeling of satisfaction at our first outing, and the feeling that we had got the timing right was enhanced when a thunderstorm and rain moved in overnight.

A sunny day exploring the Lörschentaler Hohenweg and the charming little hamlets of this relatively unspoilt valley preceded an early morning dash up the 'phrique to climb the Sackhorn (F+). Having crossed the glacier we entered a bay which became a snow couloir, climbed delicately up to the col and ascended the E ridge, which runs down to the Petersgrat. The loose rock gave way to a splendidly solid gendarme with a superb steep diedre, small but very positive holds on alternate walls, about a foot apart, just where you wanted them in fact. It gave the most delightful rock scrambling of the holiday. Then across the glacier for an eternity to the Gross Hockenhorn which was ascended by the broken and evilly loose but easy rocks of the W. ridge (F+). Then under the Klein Hockenhorn, an uncompromising Bhasteir Tooth of a peak, to the Lötschenpass and down in the early evening to the valley. When I reached the village I had been on the go for nearly 12 hours and felt I looked like it, loose untidy coils round my neck, head down, a scruffy caricature of a climber. Unfortunately, Rock's problems were a bit less short term (overstrained knee tendons) and it began to look as if he would not be doing the Highland Fling for a day or three.

It was the end of our first week, and now we had to set off to Italy and had a wet day for it. As we passed under the turn for Champex I was reminded of that appalling camp site and typically it was bucketing down. At Derby (no Derby Aosta, dear reader) we met our oppo Brooke Midgley and his family. Now old Brooke has a knack of sussing out good eating houses and over the years has made friends with one Patron in particular. For about £5.50 we could get - and did so with great frequency - aperitif, three course meals of gargantuan quantity and cordon bleu quality, all the wine we could reasonably want, coffee and liqueur. None of which helps a budding mountaineer, and ruins a decrepit one.

In Morgex who should we pass in the street but Gordon and Pauline Wright, having a sabbatical from Visp. "Don't mention three things" growled Gordon. One was the Grand Combin I seem to recall. The second was something to do with crampons.

# IN SEARCH OF CAMELS

(1975)

The third subject I didn't quite catch but sounded something like "Apply". Back to the hill grind a last, the Bec de l'Ane (what an appropriate name in the outturn!) on the frontier Graians ridge. The plan involved an early start, and only then did we find out that the camp gates are locked overnight. So the plan was revised to incorporate a slightly later start. None of it mattered in the end. Rock's knee failed him on the approach. Brooke's stamina failed him on the ascent to the Colle de la Sassiere and he and 'Nise dropped out. Reduced to a team of one my nerve failed me when I hit bare ice 100 metres below the top. Still the views were nice and the retreat promised to be quite absorbing till I could at least resume contact with Brooke and 'Nise.

Three days of rain and eating killed off what remained of the team's momentum. The rest of the holiday passed with easy trips - the Benevolo Hut, the Pointes de Falita and Mont Valaisan by La Belle Valette up which last peak we took two of the girls and it was Avril's first ever summit. Best of all was a photo trip Rock and I made on our own. Starting just before dawn from Val Ferret we climbed the Tete entre deux Sauts to get shots of first light on the Blanc range and brilliantly lit cloud boiling over Col Ferret. Halfway up something had taken a bite out of the ridge and we had a jolly time. When I finally struggled up on the far side, breathless and with nerves in tatters, I looked for Rock. No sign. When he did emerge enquiry elicited the fact that he had been deeply moved, so much so that he had had to very quickly drop his trousers and only later had he had time to regret the fact that the bog roll was safely in my sack. We carried on down to the and across Combe Malatra to Colle Malatra, finally attempting and failing on Mont Chichet, reaching a forepeak 30 metres below the summit, an anonymous bump on an insignificant lump.

Back in the fleshpots yet more eating and boozing then off at 7.30 on the Friday morning to arrive back at Stafford in the wee small hours of Saturday. Oh yes, you ask, what about the airbeds and the harvesters. Well a recurring memory of the holiday was of lying in the tent gazing at the Harvest Spiders in the roof of the tent whilst Rock blew up his leaky airbed. The latter tended to subside nearly completely within a matter of hours. In the same time the Harvesters shifted perhaps one inch. What do they do for a living? I mean how do they eat? Perhaps they chew holes in antiquated airbeds. Something certainly does.

# IN SEARCH OF CAMELS

## ANNIE (NOT ANN-MARIE) CARRINGTON

Robin, Dot and I arrived at Agadir Airport in July, to be met by gusts of hot air. This was Morocco second time around for me, and just as exciting as the first time.

We made our way to Marrakesh the following day, by rickety old bus, equipped with large bottles of Coke to try and quench our never-ending thirsts.

Once in M'Kesh we met the infamous Monsieur Wynne and his group - 19 in total. M'Kesh is best at night, cooler and full of atmosphere. The Djemma El Fna, or market place, is a must, where odd assortments are found, singing, dancing and snake charming are but a few of it's many delights.

The next day was our journey into the 'interior' - The Atlas Mountains - by mini bus and open topped van. After a brief stop at Asni (which only has the Hotel Toubkal in its favour: fantastic view and a swimming pool) we descended on the inhabitants of Jmlil. From there a brief walk for twenty minutes led to our village Arend.

The object of the next ten days was to walk up as many peaks as possible, including Mt. Toubkal, the highest (but not most difficult) which stands at over 4000 metres. The first couple of days were spend acclimatising at 6000 feet or so, doing easier walks to waterfall to sun bathe and get to know the group. The group consists of mostly teachers, including the notorious Mr. Wilson, who professed to be a Geologist really. By the end of the holiday he'd exhausted his rock vocabulary of the area and completely blown our minds!



The trek started on the 3rd day. During our ten days we got to the top of a few peaks, with most heights either just above or just below 4000 metres, using various passes known as 'Tizi's in the natives' Berber language. Apart from climbing up and down these molehills we did occasionally stop for long lunches by streams, to eat our chappati-like bread and tins of sardines. By night we camped under boulders or by streams, taking turns at cooking such delights as dehydrated chicken supreme followed by Angel Delight! After this we'd sit around talking and consuming tiny tots of whisk- (kindly donated by John and Betty), before crashing out in our pits.

By far the longest day I can recall was a 7000ft. ascent, from the Lac D'lfni to the Neltner Refuqe, to the top of Toubkal. We set off in the early morning and scrambled to the top of the col, at 36 64 metres. John, Adrian, Harvey and I got to the top first and rested before descending for lunch to the Nelther Refuge. The others followed in fits and starts, due to John's potent spaghetti bol. of two nights previously!

The more daring of us - myself, Mike, Elinor, Anna, Harvey, Robin and Jan (otherwise know as 'The Magnificent Seven') set off to bivvy on top of Toubkal. A snug night was spent with us all crammed like sardines into our little 'house' of rock. Many clothes were worn and bivvy baps froze, but it was worth it for the spectacular views at sunrise. On a clear day one can see as far South as the Sahara.

After our little night out we finally descended to Arend and thence on to Essouivra, via Marrakesh. Ess. is a little fishing port with beautiful fine sand and the warm atlantic. (NOT The Pacific as I have been known to state previously). After our strenuous hill walking it was a welcome respite for all.

Vigorous games of water polo were played, with Dot's true nature being revealed, as she leapt through the water yelling "Kill!" and such obscenities as "Tits!" Much fun was had by all, especially moi, sharing a room with four men!

The group soon departed for home, leaving Robin, Dot, David, Mike and I wondering what to do next. We could have gone sightseeing around the original Northern towns of Fes and Meknes but instead decided to hire a car and go to the edge of the Sahara in search of camels. For some reason Robin was especially keen on meeting the odd camel or two!

So, on the Monday morning we set off to collect our beat up Renault 4 from Dinky Toy Car Hire, as it has been re-named. After a sightseeing tour of the backstreets of M'Kesh we found the correct road and set off for Zapor. It is possible to reach Zapor in one day, but as we reached Ouazarzate with our 3rd puncture we had our doubts. With the puncture fixed for the extortionate sum of £1 we headed off again on the simple tarmac road. However, another stop had to be made soon, due to worries of engine seizure and the car's general despondance. As we slowed down we also felt the familiar grinding noise of the rear right side and, surprise, surprise, another puncture. A car stopped to assist and out strode a dark man in sunglasses and blue jalabba. He looked a typical Moroccan. That was, until he spoke in a London accent! After reassurance that we could cope (!) he and his wife drove away, to be re-encountered a few days later at Agadir Airport, boarding our plane home!

Puncture fixed we crawled back to Ouazarate, where we left the heap at the garage and resigned to our fate, booked in at El Cheapo Hotel - £3 for the 5 of us!

We left Dot with Brahim's Bowels (what's a holiday without dysentery?!) and went in search of food.

The next morning dawned and happily the car was equipped with a brand new tyre. We would reach Zapora without incident. We arrived there in the afternoon, it getting hotter by the minute; after a lunch stop and numerous loo stops (myself included this time!)

Zapora is very small and very hot. By the time we got there the car windows were well closed, due to our lungs' incapability to take in hot air. Drinking water left in the car was too hot to drink, on spitting it out rather quickly, Mike's comment was "F---hell, that's machine hot on the washing scale!"

We booked into another cheap hotel, opposite which is Zapora's famous landmark - a sign saying "Timbuckto - 53 jours" and illustrated by a camel! We also found a poster advertising camel rides, which never materialised - as the actual camels didn't either. One thing we did see was the Sahara's 'blue' men. We sat and drank Coke with one such person, dressed from head to toe in blue, in his carpet shop. He, being typical Arab, dragging out various carpets for us, supposedly to buy. "Good price, good quality".

No purchases were made and we decided to drive and find real sand dunes (sod the camels). After a short drive dunes were spotted to the right so off the road across country hill we touched real sand. It was amazing to walk barefoot on little Dunes, with just sand and date trees as far as the eye could see. Robin wandered off to take 'photos, looking like Lawrence of Arabia in his blue nightie'. We then drove off to the left where we found an extremely large dune. We started to walk up it when a coach load of French tourists appeared from nowhere, walked all over our dune, and promptly drove off again.

The left Robin muttering about aesthetic beauty, and bloody tourists!

After we'd eventually seen our fill of sand and even more sand we made our way back to the hotel, with thoughts of M'Kesh and home on our minds, along with dreams of cool breezes, proper loo's and Mars Bars!

And not a camel had been seen!

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## BAR TALK

ANON

It happened one Tuesday evening about six years ago. A large group of beer swilling and semi scruffy people invaded the Derby Rowing Club. It was the arrival of the Oread Climbing Club. Oread means 'nymph', but we haven't seen one yet!

As the weeks and months passed by, we got to know this bunch of scruffs, with their weird cardigans, faded jeans, the heavy drinkers, the non drinkers and the drinkers who only have a drink when someone else is in the chair - then it is always a pint. Then there are the ditherers who can't make up their minds what to drink, even though they drink the same every week; the cautious who drink Springfield and daren't tackle the Bass, and the ultra cautious who drink Orange Juice.

Not forgetting the love life which develops before your eyes, when you are behind the bar. Talk about 'School for Scandal'.

We enjoy being host and hostess to all on Tuesday evenings and especially enjoy the social occasions when we can join you on the other side of the bar, as associate members of which we are very proud.

"Pull a pint and half"



# THE HILLS AROUND PITLOCHRY

'ROCK' HUDSON

Easter Saturday found John Linney, Colin Barnard, Dave Jeffreys, Rodger Chapman, Derek Mountford and Rock Hudson in cars speeding north to the Scottish hills, where we arrived at lunch time, thereby sitting down for a drink. On being 'kicked out', we found and then settled into the cottage booked for the holidays and situated just south of Pitlochry. A fine base it was, with all modern facilities; only a short walk from the pub and provisions which allowed us meals of three and four courses cooked by a reluctant chef-du-jour.

The following day was beautiful, so upto Monzie Farn, from where a rough path was followed until below the flanks of Carn Lieth. Typical of Oreads, each know the best route, so the group split up, but all reached the same point together! Snow patches lead to the summit of Carn Lieth, from where we saw a broad ridge sweep towards Braigh Coire Ghruinn-bhargain, rightwards then to a high snowy col, before a steeper ridge leading to the tops of Beinn A'Ghlo.

Each set his own pace over the top of Braigh Coire Ghruinn-bhargain, but the party met again to linger on the col in the warm sun for lunch. The broad western flanks of Beinn A'Ghlo passed and with the highest top not far off, a broad panorama came into view. The deep defile of Glen Tilt, the lines of ridges and rounded summits above Glenshee, while to the north the hardly perceived Munroes stretching from Carn an Fhithleir to Carn Bhac.

THE HILLS AROUND  
The peniplaned Cairngorm plateau, where only the experienced eye could pick out a summit, formed the rim to the northern horizon.

ROCK HUDSON  
We returned to the top; Airgiod Bheinn, where we expected a long slow descent over steep knee jarring ground to the valley below. However, we kept descending by a narrow ribbon of snow and were soon off the mountain and back on the track leading to the cars.

The huge fry-up provided more than enough calories for the proposed day out on the hills above Glenshee in yet more perfect weather. The party slumped into car seats, with the hopes that each had an iron constitution.

Having parked at Dalmunzie Hotel, we set off up Glen Lochsie and wondered at the now rotten railway sleepers, for who would ever have expected to make a single sovereign profit from such a venture. At the lodge we turned north over the smooth southern slopes of Glas Tulaishean, though now scarred by an unwarrented bulldozed track leading nowhere.

Snowy slopes ran down to Gleann Mor from the top of Glas Tulaishean and a rapid pace was set on the still fine snow. We turned down stream, then up a side valley from where some of the party had lunch, while the rest set off up the snowy east ridge of Carn on Righ. Having joined forces again, quick time was made on the climb up Mam. Nan Carn. A short descending traverse brought us to a col from where the easy angled slopes lead to the top of Beinn-Lutham-Mhor.

Back to the col and either a long horizontal traverse on snow or a longer way over rocks and vegetation to reach the col in front of Beinn Lutham Bheag. The snowy route was not the best and left those that used it somewhat tired.

The day was somewhat advanced, so leaving Bheag for another day we ran down the snow to the still frozen Loch Nan Ean, from where we reached the head of Allt Fasgaidh. Far below this ravine broadened and becomes Gllann Taitheach. The ravine was banked up with huge snow drifts, an easy way, but we became apprehensive as we continued because of the black holes. On looking in we saw raging water beneath thin snow bridges. In the lower valley the river was swollen by melting snow from higher up. The path crossed from side to side of the river and most suffered from the invigorating effect of water after slipping on a greasy boulder. It was a long valley and each turn lengthened the mileage, but after emerging from a wood, the cars were seen close by.

It was late, but the cars soon had us in Kirkmichael with it's pub and we could enjoy a couple of hours going over the days activity and reminiscing about other days on the hill.

Tuesday was yet another perfect day, but at breakfast comments like; 'that it might be too hot' , indicated that some had sore feet or perhaps a hangover. In any case, a delayed start was proposed, while someone else thought a trip up Glen Tilt was suitable. We collected a permit and were then allowed to drive up this glen, thereby saving a couple of hours walking. It's a really fine glen, but beware! because the following may be repeated.

Rounding a corner a flock of sheep were either sitting or lying on the track. We drove slowly forward, but no response was forthcoming from the sheep. Better to drive slowly or quickly? Whichever way, the sheep just sat or stood transfixed, though a few bounded off to browse on the meadow by the river, but forgot that it was situated some fifty feet below. From the car we were unable to hear or see their fate.

The rest wandered along in front wasting time by picking out single blades of grass in a random forwards and backwards motions. They walked to the track edge only to saunter back just as the car came abreast of them, which required a heavy foot to prevent a contact. Slowly forward again, a little progress with the parents of the flock drifting away. Only the small pretty white fleecy lambs continued to gambol on the track, though their actual horizontal progress was only equal to a snail suffering from a Superglue syndrome of the bottom. They started for the edge of the track, but then stopped, turned, and charged. Yes! these lovely little lambs, Bang! Thump! Bang! rang around the glen, from contact between heads and car bodywork. Window down, look out to observe the dents, then to comments passed between passengers', but no lambs in view. Got going again, only to see another reformed ghostly legion of lambs, ears upright, fleece puffed up for protection in a repeat performance. I was mad and putting foot hard down, which soon had us amongst the lambs where they disappeared from view against the car sides, but hopefully under the wheels. The passengers did not agree with my strategy and with true British concern for animals opened the door before I stopped to help the little things. BANG! A deeper dent, 'Larry Lamb' skidded backwards, front feet out rigid, back legs up and posterior on the ground and I'm sure there was a smell of burnt flesh. Glances between driver and passenger, but no words. A further slow forwards progress, but out there new recruits advancing. Thump! Bang! but this time I've got one, because one lamb was lying prostrate on the field of battle, out for a count of 200, or better still dead. "Leave it and let's get going". "No, you can't do that, we've got to go and check, because it may not be dead". "We may be able to help the lamb". "How"? "By hurling it into the swollen river, or perhaps grabbing it's back legs and whacking it up against a tree trunk".



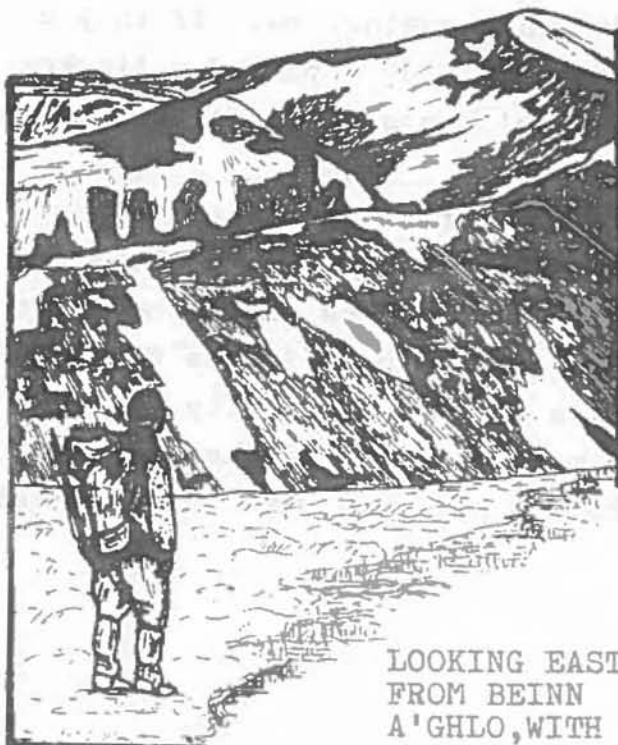


FROZEN LOCH NAN EUN,  
HEAD OF GLEANN TULAICHEAN

LOOKING DOWN GLEANN  
TULAICHEAN, WITH JOHN LINNEY



CARN NAN GABHAR,  
BEINN A'GHLO GROUP  
WITH DAVE JEFFREYS



LOOKING EAST  
FROM BEINN  
A'GHLO, WITH  
JOHN LINNEY



I was overuled. It was therefore given heart massage, kiss of life, a drink of tea, gentle prods and pokes before it cam to. A moment of unsteadiness, followed by a glance at it's comrades; to the track ahead and the grass by the wayside, before it sprang up straight into the side of the car! We tryed to grab it, dived, twisted and turned, but only finished up on the ground dirty and grazed, while the darling lamb stood proud and defiant. Back yet once again into the car and up the twisting track; the sheep left behind only to find round the corner a Phalanx of highland cattle; headed by a massive bull.

Some time later.....!

Leaving the cars at Forest lodge, some continued walking up the glen, while the rest zig-zagged Alpine style up the steep mountain side. After reaching the edge of the glen, easy slopes lead towards Carn a Ghlamain. From the top of this mountain a return was made by way of Cachghais and then back up the glen.

Feet curled up at the prospect of yet another days pounding in the hills and they had turned against me. If they hurt enough they hoped for a rest day, but I pulled a flanker and donned a pair of soft 'pub' boots. Yet another battle won.

We drove along the Rannoch road, turning off to the Brees of Fors from where at this distance the smooth slopes of Schiahallan come into view. Passing the plaque commemorating the fact that this mountain was used in the first determination of the earth's Mass, or was it gravity, might have been the boiling point of malt whisky. Whichever it was, it was unimportant for the day was very warm for the Easter period.

It turned out to be a good short days outing, with gentle vegetated slopes, a fair path leading to the eastern ridge. This ridge again had an easy angle and height was gained by a series of rocky knolls composed of large unstable blocks. On reaching the tip, shirt came off and we all lazed in the sun, with time to spend trying to figure out the names of the surrounding mountains. Each with their own ideas, none budging an inch (2.52 cm) whatever authoritative data was supplied by another. Only reluctantly was a name accepted after looking at the maps back at the cottage.

"Let's go and do Beinn Dearg", said someone. "But there's thousands called that", said another. There were a couple of dropouts, but the rest were keen to get off up the hill for the day; the weather being perfect yet again.

Glen Banvie is reached through woods using a good track, which was followed all the way to the bothy situated in Allt Sheisheachean. A fair distance to walk, but easy due to the gentle inclinations of the valley. At the bothy we turned up hill over thick heather. What's the best way? Straight up or follow the winding path? Being stubborn each took a different line. Thinking mine was best, I quickened my pace so as to prove the point by reaching the ridge first. At the ridge, foot prints and a glance upwards, where the eye caught a movement. Hurry and I'll soon catch, and even lead the way, at a quicker pace. The humps and hollows prevented any extended view, but at times something ahead moved out of sight.

The slopes ahead appeared empty, but on looking back, nobody, so better to keep a fast speed just in case. The top came into view, a long way to go, and the body is getting a bit tired now. A patch of white at the top; a drying shirt, too much sweating so they can't be that fit. Don't slow down now, for they're bound to look up, but they won't then be able to give me some stick for being

cocky and trying to gain time by leaving the path or giving an inflated sense of fitness I don't warrent.

The shirt at last disappeared as I drew close to the final pile of rocks, a most welcome fact because my legs were about to give out. Too quick, a miss placed foot with a resulting stumble, followed by a bruised knee and grazed hand. What a prat. What will they think in minute, with injuries and tiredness? Not much, because the white quartzite blocks had been there a very long time!

At last poor weather, great! Down to the village for shopping and a lunch time drink, well my feet need it, even if I don't!

Well that's another Easter over, can't grumble (honest to those that know me). Saturday found the party heading back south, but lacking that speed present on coming up, for there's no urgency in getting back to office or factory floor.

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## MEET REPORTS



Group outside the inn at Carperby.



# BULLSTONES

## 2-4TH DEC.

### JACK ASHCROFT

An anachronism in the extreme, some would say, but the Bullstones meet was moved bodily north to the Yorkshire Dales. We met on the Friday night at the Buck Inn, Malham, and camped at Fordale Scar. We planned to walk north up Gordale Scar on Saturday morning and at 8 a.m. I was a little surprised to realise that a team of eleven were in fact scrambling up the rocks. It was a grey, cloudy morning, in contrast to the fine sunset of the previous day. But not to worry - it wasn't raining.

Our route took us approximately due north to the fine high level traverse path above Cowside Beck and so over Yew Cogar Scar to Arncliffe. The cloud bank then lowered, as half the team chose to cut over the moor shoulder to attain Wharfedale by the shortest route and the others walked into the cloud to traverse Firth Fell and Birks Fell. We all met again soon after mid-day at Buckden. Lunch was taken on the village green in farm from picnic weather.

We were on our way again before 1 o'clock up Buckden Beck into a cold, damp, misty moorland scene (all reminiscent of Bleaklow on a cold, damp misty Bullstones Meet) to arrive at Buckden Pike summit at two.

Synchronisation of compass bearings - a few shouting matches - and we found ourselves dropping out of the cloud off Wasset Fell to New Biggin by 4 p.m. This I thought, was an hour ahead of schedule. But not to worry. It only remained now to walk along the lanes through Aysgarth to Carperly where I'd booked dinner, bed and breakfast at the Wheatsheaf. This turned out to be quite an excellent affair, in contrast to the dining room atmosphere of Lower Small Clough of usual meets. We drank to absent friends and the President's addition to the prospective members list with Emma Greggo. I'll leave the reader to contemplate on these things, but it was good. I have a photograph for the next edition of "Long Walks I have heard of"!

We were away by nine next morning with one dissension. Scott, with his superior knowledge of the Dales wished to follow a route via Castle Bolton and features of historic and architectural interest. The rest, in true moorland walking spirit, chose a westerly route via Bull Scar (got the 'bull' anyway) to Apedale Head and followed a pleasing high level traverse path on the south side of Swaledale.

BULLSTONES

The morning weather was superb in comparison with the usual Lower Small Clough - Nag's Head walk on Bullstones meets. We were nicely installed by the fire of the King's Arms, Reeth for one o'clock, pleased with a good 30 mile winter walk through the best of the Dales country. I know that's a challenging statement but please yourself. Harry Pretty, Pete James, Derrick and Gary Burgess, Dave Williams and Ron Chambers, for instance, chose to be centralists and stayed the weekend at the Geroge, Hubberholme in Longstrothdale. And then there were the traditionalists led by Brian West and John Theobald who would not be moved from the Peak. They followed something of the usual Bullstones meet without the debilitating Friday night in the Nag's Head.

There is little doubt the Club were active over the weekend of 2/3 December 1983. Who supped most, walked most, suffered most, whittled most we will never know, but a most enjoyable weekend was no doubt had by all.

The team who walked the Malham-Reeth distance were:-

Mark Peace, Tony Raphael, Malcomb Otter, Peter Scott, Chris Radcliffe, Paul Bingham, John Linney, Roy Eyre, Derrik Mountford, 'Rock' Hudson and myself. Bev Abley intended to join us but was laid low with 'flu, which caused a minor crisis on Friday night with car shuffling. But it all worked - and didn't British Telecom do well.

I must write about Yorkshire Dales Inns sometime.



L-R.Malcomb Otter,  
Derek Mountford,Pete  
Scott,Tony Raphael;  
more empty plates.

Chris Radcliffe,  
Mark Pearce.First  
and tenth course.



L-R.John Linney,Mark  
Pearce,Roy Eyre,'Rock  
Hudson',Paul Bingham,  
Malcomb Otter,Derek  
Mountford,Pete Scott,  
Tony Raphael,Chris  
Radcliffe.

# FAMILY MEET OCT. 1984

## GORDON GADSBY

SATURDAY 20TH OCTOBER, 1984

On a blustery sunny day everyone on the meet traversed Cnicht from Croesor. The wind at times was very strong but the views of Snowdon were superb. On the return we visited the lost village and a spectacular waterfall. In the evening we had a slide show.

SUNDAY, 21ST OCTOBER, 1984

A milder day spent on Black Rocks sands. As well as exploring, car driving, kite flying etc. we also had a two hour football match with all the children trying to outdo their parents.

Thanks to all the following for coming along to make such an enjoyable weekend:-

Bev and Cathy Abley with James and Gareth, Paul and Jean Bingham with Michael, Roy and Christine Eyre with Heather and Susan, Graham and Margaret Foster with Alex and Nick, Gordon and Margaret Gadsby with Rick and Peter plus Darren Hollingworth.





# AGDEN '84'

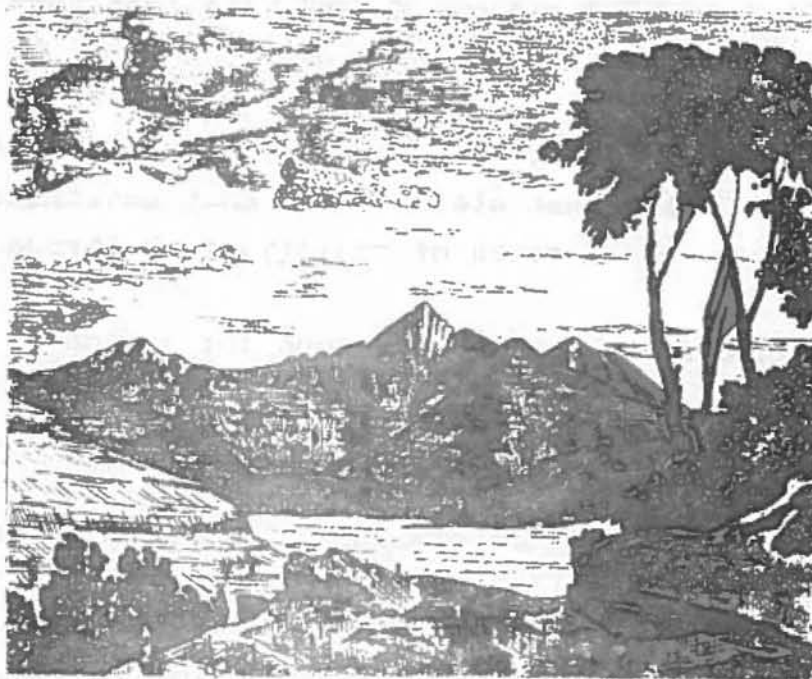
## RON SANT

"You've cocked it up again Santie - its too bloody hot!"

It certainly was a trifle on the warm side but there's no pleasing some people. Once again the traditional post Alps meet at Agden had run true to form with superb weather and only one other (non Oread) party on the crag.

The order of the day was do two or three routes, drink/breathers, do two or three more routes, drink/breathers and so on. That was the order of the day for most, with the notable exception of Smedley Jnr., who seemed to have a total fixation for a few square feet of rock adjacent to Campsite Crack. The only thing that appeared to change all day on this area was the disappearance for a couple of hours (on a sortie to the 'Old Horns") of his accomplice John Heald. I'm still not sure whether or not Vincent realised he'd gone. However, there was no harm done and Vincent seemed to enjoy himself.

Many thanks to the following for a very pleasant day (apologies for any omissions). Roger Larkham, Dave Gilbert, Ian Brindle, Beryl Strike, Keith, Eileen and Emma Gregson, John and Jan Heald, Vincent Smedley, Tony and Freda Raphael and family, Roy Eyre and daughter Sue, Dave Wright, Al Ames, 'Animal', Gil Male, Gail Searby.



# TAN-Y-WYDDFA

9-10 JUNE, '84'

## RUTH CONWAY

After all I chose the venue and the date.

After all, to quote Ms Greer "every decision a woman makes is always right".

Oh ye of little faith, why was Tan y Wyddfa not busting at the seams this finest of fine weekends of this most glorious of all glorious summers? A weekend to gladden the heart of any Hut Bookings Secretary .... why, one asks oneself, was he not there ....

Well to draw a veil over all of that, the faithful few were most amply rewarded. It started out pretty grim. Pete Scott phones from some far-flung outpost of the M.1 to tell me he'll be lucky to hit Crich before seven p.m. I try in vain to pacify our impatient driver, one Mr. Radcliffe, with the pornography section of Freddy's personal library. This does not work, he says the photographs are posed and one doesn't see that sort of thing around Brampton a very great deal.

Once underway Chris is determined to make up for lost time, I decide that sleep is the only constructive activity. Odd moments of reality break through.

.... What is the collective noun for a line of Wallies?

.... Dunno, a slug perhaps, yes, a slug of Wallies.

.... We'll have to Do Something About This .... horn, lights, brake, I finish up on the floor, mission accomplished and we sail on to the strains of Sibelius 5th swiftly followed by Elkie Brooks. (Not us, Sibelius, I mean).

.... What does she look like, this Elkie Brooks woman?

Overtaking a slug of wallies through the traffic lights on the A5 Chris takes both hands off the wheel to demonstrate.

We make the Prince Llewellyn by 10.28 and the rest of the team are already ensconced, Colin Barnard, Richard and Dawn Hopkinson, Helen Griffiths, George Fowler, Alistair Gordon, John O'Reilly and Martin Roome. I stop worrying about living and start worrying who I'm going to climb with. I seem to have done nothing but pester people to be third on a rope recently. To my unutterable relief Helen says she's on her own and why don't we team up? The Pinniclub had better watch out, the most unlady-like ladies team ever is about to hit the crag.

Well, as I told you, Saturday dawned fine and fair. By the time I got up John and Martin had already disappeared with mysterious aims in mind and our numbers had been magically swelled by Roger Larkham who chose to drive overnight and arrive at 7.30 a.m. (no accounting for taste). Weather like this it has to be Cloggy but what to do? Richard and Dawn are already established on Boulder, everywhere is busy, so Helen and I set off up Sheaf after George and Alistair. She makes short work of the first pitch, I lead through, but eventually we are both defeated by the beastly overhang. We try amazing contortions, turn ourselves backwards, sit in the groove, bridge out at alarming angles ... we just can't do it. We begin to realise that as a climbing team we do lack that certain something - basically inches. Eventually George returns from aloft and offers advice on how to leap up and throw wires into cracks. Thus emboldened I merrily aid it until I grab the jug that they had reach standing. Alistair says we can't help it, it's not our fault if we're stunted from birth - and to think I used to think I rather liked him!

The following pitch involves stepping out wildly rightwards onto the arete. The elongated bean poles in front leave us an aid sling without ever being asked - what price Womens Lib? Well, it was too early to go home and too late for another major performance, we dithered and watched Richard and Dawn on Diglyph. Eventually George and Helen decided they'd had enough while Alistair and I, little puritans at heart, did Sunset Crack for our sins.

It was 9.30 before we got back in a mad dash to the pub where the rest of the party are all rather pleased with themselves, except possibly Chris who keeps leaping up and down complaining that he can't climb, he has had some minor contretemps with Hangover which Pete had subsequently led. On closer examination they turn out to have had an excellent day in the Pass, Colin has had a splendid day walking and John and Martin are quietly smug like a pair of cats that have stolen all the cream, the Corner and Left Wall to their credit. Helen and I worship at the shrine, I don't rate the Corner, she says, it's just another boring crack climb, it's not even really hard. John starts making strange snarling noises, I decide it's a good moment to leave.

Sunday dawns problematically, my lift and party are heading for Cloggy but Helen and I can't face the walk again, Richard and Dawn are off to the Mot while George and Alistair are into the simple pleasures of life; iced beers below lake-side crags on the way home. Sounds like an inspired notion to me but Helen can't meet up with her lift. You'd think one of them would have a burning desire to run her back to Derby, or something .... the argument turns and turns, there seems to be no way we can climb together and end up in two separate cars to go home. Eventually, when everyone is thoroughly sick of us John tells us to shut up, get in the car and go to Cern Las.



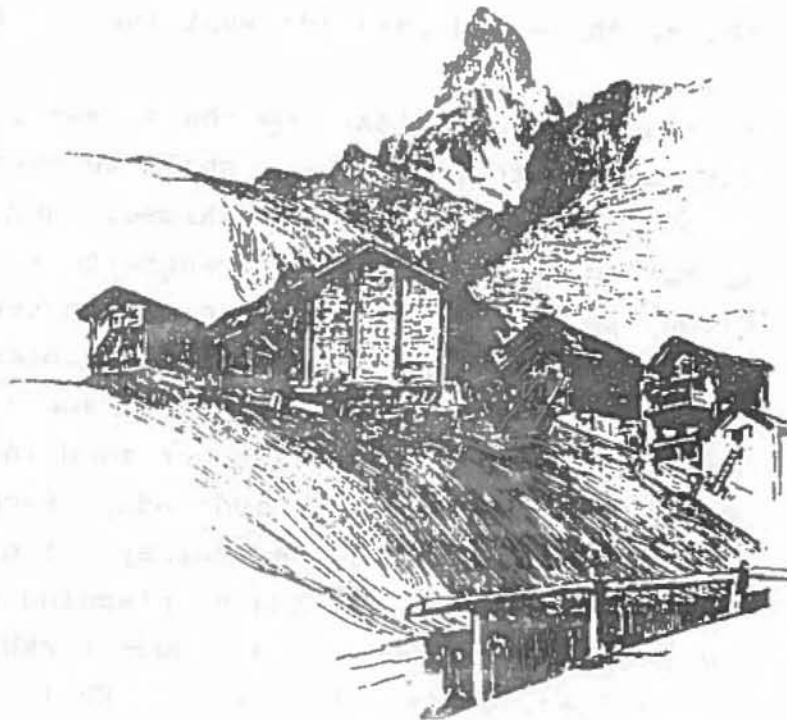
This works out better for me than Helen, she's done it before, I want to do the Grooves. We sweat out way up there, John and Martin playing some private game of bluff - what about Lubyanka then Youth?... They set off up the Grooves leaving largesse scattered in the form of in situ runners. I am determined not to be left behind and grabbing the first runner cheat, fight and struggle my way up the first little overhang. After that it is straightforward and I start to enjoy myself.

John leads the second pitch, laces it, Martin follows, leaves me all John's runners and out of the pure goodness of his heart adds a few of his own for good measure. I set off clipping into all the gear as I go, what it is to climb with a well-trained staff - all the kicks, none of the hassle. Helen, loaded down with gear considerably in excess of her own body weight is somewhat less enchanted with the procedure than I am. But what a superb pitch, I am in heaven, the third pitch surprises us all, huge holds but a very get up and go air about it. Suddenly it's all over and we're lying on top, soaking up the sunshine and thinking what lucky little things we are.

We wandered down, lazed by the stream in the Pass, no-one wanting to leave, when shall we ever see such perfection again? At last John braced himself and everyone else and we returned to Tan y Wyddfa where there was no sign of the Cloggy party. Eventually the others decided it really was time to go and left me in solitary splendour knitting on the knoll and wondering if I had made a serious error of judgement - If my team have perished in the attempt I might need to hitch home from Rhydd Ddu. Suddenly there was a huffing and puffing up the valley - I didn't realise the Welsh Highland Railway had got planning permission after all - but no, wrong again, it was Roger Larkham, sartorial elegance personified, closely followed by Chris.

They had run all the way down from Cloggy. Pete followed some considerable time later. He said he had been absorbing the atmosphere. They had had a good day; White Slab finally succumbed to Roger's twenty-seventh lasso attempt, surely the ultimate triumph of optimism over experience.

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# VANOISE ALPS 1984

## GORDON GADSBY

A group of Oreads visited this area during July and August camping at the old alpine village of Pralognan. During the three weeks stay the following peaks were climbed:-

GRAND MARCHET

by Ken and Linda Bryan.

PETITE MONT BLANC

by Gordon Gadsby, Matt O'Brien, David Gadsby, Ken and Linda Bryan.

GRAND BEC 3403m AD

by Ken and Linda Bryan.

DOME DE POLSET 3508m PD     }  
AIGUILLE DE POLSET 3530m PD)

by Gordon Gadsby, Ken Bryan  
Matt O'Brien, Bev Abley.

GRAND CASSE 3852m PD

Ken and Linda Bryan.

POINTE DE LA RECHASSE 3208m F

by Gordon and Rick Gadsby  
Matt & Darren O'Brien  
Bev and James Abley  
David Gadsby.

POINTE DES LESSIERES 3043m

Gordon Gadsby, Matt O'Brien.

Also on the meet and enjoying walks, swimming, climbing and abseiling on the Pralognan boulders, pancake parties, football matches, swing ball championships, crazy golf, cards and scrabble were Margaret and Peter Gadsby, Maureen and Lisa O'Brien, Cathy and Gareth Abley. The campsite was very good and the village traditional and unspoilt. The weather was fantastic.



# YORKSHIRE DALES

## JULY 30 - AUG. 1ST

The campsite at Arncliffe Cote in Littondale proved to be an excellent venue and the weekend was blessed with splendid weather. The turnout consisted of some twenty plus Oreads and friends.

Climbs were done on all the popular crags - including Malham, Gordale, and Attermine Scar. While the walkers covered the local fells, Chris and Sharron cycled into Wensleydale. The Falcon at Arncliffe (very local) and the Tennants Arms at Kilnesey (cosmopolitan) provided a contrast in drinking venues, both very pleasant but the walk along the riverbank to Arncliffe should not be missed. The prolific community of Oyster Catchers seems out of place somehow!

Altogether a splendid weekend, thanks to all who made up the company - they included:-

Steve Tempest, Mike?, Lol Burns and Paul, George Fowler, Alistair Gordon, Fred and Ruth, Ollie and Mark, Des, Ian Brindle, Chris and Sharron, Richard and Dawn, Brian West, Reg, Ann, Ben, Squires, Rock, Eileen, Emma and me.

**KEITH GREGSON**





# HERE, TO GO... FOR IT, CALIFORNIA STYLE

GIL MALE

This is a story about time spent in one of the most spectacular places on earth.

It tries to portray the feel of the place and explain its magnificent and awe inspiring nature. It also tries to pass on the everlasting feelings obtained, as a result of living in its environment. More to the point, however, it gives a great deal of bullshit about the authorities; climbs and climbers met during a 3 week Spring holiday spent in Yosemite Valley, California from May 19th to June 6th this year.

All good climbing stories start with the walk-in, so that's where I will start.

On arriving at San Francisco Airport, Miss Searby showed her skills by bartering with the locals and she succeeded by securing a guide to take us Downtown in this thing that he called a 'cab'. The 'cab' had a trunk attached to its back end, and suddenly let out a roar accompanied by noxious gases. It turned out to be a yellow taxi, piloted by an overlarge drawling yank, who proudly proclaimed that he was San Francisco born and bred and had never been outside the city limits. He dropped us in the centre of lego-Land and was never seen again.

Lego-Land is a maze of multi-storey buildings and forty dollar per night hotels, I expect they are very nice too! At an exchange rate of 1.3 dollars to the pound we were never likely to find out, so we ended up in a doss house, which cost 25 dollars and at some time had had its door kicked in.

It was, however, relatively cheap. A point in its favour as pointed out by Miss Searby.

The rest of the journey was relatively uneventful until Yosemite Valley was reached. Picture the scene. The Greyhound bus grinds to a halt outside the visitor's centre in Yosemite Village. A pair of tired climbers after 6,000 miles travelling haul their gear over to Sunnyside - nice name that, Walk In - remember that, Camp Site. Phew! gear dumped at the little hut signifying the entrance to the campground. "Looks like there's plenty of space in there Gail". Yes, all we have to do now is wait for the Ranger to appear". "Yeh". Ranger appears with freshly pressed uniform and polished shoes. Just like the ones you see on Yogi Bear cartoons. Just as officious too! Still she didn't confiscate our picnic baskets, but she did say we couldn't stay on the campsite.

"Why ever not? There's loads of room".

"Well" she drawled "Can't stay here, no way, have a nice day".

"Why not? there's lots of room". Here comes the drawl again.

"No we're full, three tents per site, have a nice day".

There wasn't much of the day left and we wanted to sleep.

"Look, we have travelled 6,000 miles to get here, we have no car and no way of getting out of the Valley, the bus has left and there isn't another one till tomorrow, OK". Here

comes the drawl again "Yeh .... You got a problem". Well at least we were getting somewhere. We all knew there was a problem. "Great! what can we do about it, eh!". Protracted silence followed by drawl. "Well you could try the back packers campsite I guess". We're getting somewhere.

"Yes, OK where is that then? Quick as a flash, well all things are relative, "Oh ..... well, it's up the Valley a way".

Eventually we found out where - "Up the Valley a way" - was and we collapsed into the campsite, ate and went to sleep for a long time.

The next day started really well until we woke up. We hadn't been told, the backpackers' campsite is designed for people passing through and you can only stay on it for a maximum of two nights. That's not much good when you've got three weeks. So, the next three days and nights were spent in queues and taking down and repitching camp. Eventually, however, we did get onto Sunnyside WALK IN and our stay in the Valley was guaranteed for a further two weeks. Mind you you can book only one week at a time. It's against Federal Law, or something like that, to book two weeks at a time, so you just have to book twice; by rebooking on the day before your first booking runs out, simple? Still we were on Sunnyside, along with a miscellaneous mixture of other climbers of various nationalities and we could get to know people and do some climbing. We also started to relax and appreciate our surroundings.

The Valley is a spectacular place with 3,000 foot rock faces and 2,000 foot waterfalls. I suppose it would be classed as a major crag in Derbyshire. It has a preponderance of wildlife with multi-coloured birds, such as the American version of our woodpecker, butterflies, deer, cuddly little ground squirrels and not so cuddly black bears. The ground squirrels are great, racing around the campsite all day like playful children. You had to be careful with your food, however, because the little bleeders would pinch anything that you left lying around. They didn't resort to vandalism to obtain food, they just took it as their right to petty pilfer.

The bears would eat anything that they could steal. That was the difference between the cuddly ground squirrels and the not so cuddly bears. Apart from their size. It's a good job God got it the right way round really, I wouldn't have fancied a bear running across our picnic table.

One group of Yanks on a site adjacent to ours appeared to be ardent animal lovers. They had all their food eaten by a bear. One of them was chatting, or rather drawling, to our small ghetto of English and Canadian climbers when he showed remarkable trust by producing his wallet. Great he's going to buy us some beer. No, he's showing us a couple of photos, damn! Still they were worth looking at. There was this gorgeous girl framed in a plastic cover. "Ain't she beautiful. She's the one thing I miss from back home when I stay in the valley", drawled our buddy. "I really miss going home after work and having her jump all over me and run round me and lick me all over. That's real friendliness", he added. "Yeh, she's a real good friend". Then it dawned, he wasn't talking about the gorgeous girl, he was talking about the dog in the other picture. More interested in the girl than the dog I asked,

"Who's this then, your sister?"

"Nope, that's my fiance"

"She looks nice"

"Yeh"

"Don't you miss her?"

"Yeh ..... but not like my dog, dogs are different and she's one in a million"

I suppose it must be something that dates back to the early settlers. After tramping on horseback or wagon train for thousands of miles in the scorching western sun. Living off the land. Being circled by buzzards and scalped several times a day you must get to feel pretty rough. I suppose all this on top of the fact that you can't find the pub must affect your brain and it must be taking several generations to work its way out of their systems. The English lads of course preferred the girl. So did the Canadians, although they envied the dog's fur coat.

After eventually getting our friend's mind off his dog, we managed to extract some information about worthwhile climbs in the Valley and where they could be found.



Being freshers we wanted to get a feel for grading as all this 5.6 or 5.10d didn't mean a thing. The only guide we had was that Pete Livesey reckons, in general, 5.9 is equivalent technically to 5a in this country. Needless to say, there was an element of mistrust in this statement, have you tried some of Livesey's routes in his French Climbs guide book? They are not graded for rock wimps! Anyway, we established from our friend that Yosemite Falls, Church Bowl and Serenity Crack Area had short routes to play on. So did Glacier Point Apron but he mentioned this last area with some reverence and wittered something about 'Aproneers', which we didn't understand. That understanding was to come later.

Short routes in Yosemite means anything up to approximately 500 feet high! The routes are generally speaking split into pitches which are categorised by definite styles of climbing, e.g. finger crack, jam crack, off-width, chimney and face. This differs from the English system of classifying pitches, which is M-mouse, not so bad really, (jolly) desperate or horrendous. Of course the English use these classifications in addition to the American ones when talking about Yosemite Climbs; M-mouse, jam cracks and horrendous flared chimneys being typical. The Americans refer to all climbs as being just plain fun, which makes me wonder about their inability to plumb the depths of vocabulary. After all, what other people call groups of men, women, children and dogs, in any conceivable mixture, "you guys"? To see yanks hanging on all kinds of painful sliding jams and thrutching their ways up strenuous, insecure off-widths whilst at the same time drawling "Heh, you guys! This is fun" explains something of their nature. It's like swimming in the North Atlantic in tweed swimming trunks and enjoying it. However, when it comes to climbing they do it and they certainly produce the goods, although their grading system is a little dubious.

All climbs are graded on technical difficulty under an open ended decimal system from 5.0 to the present upper limit of 5.13. The technical grade applies to the single hardest move or moves on the climb and the grade can apply to one move or a sequence of moves at the same standard. Consequently, it's a good idea to get some information from the locals before leaping in at the top of your grade. Once you get the ear for it you can judge what they think of a climb by the way in which they say, "Oh yeh! That's a real fun climb. Have a nice day". It's also a good idea to find out how long the pitches are beforehand as 50m ropes are a great help on 50m pitches. Our 45m ropes turned out to be a bind in a lot of cases.

We visited all the areas our friendly dog lover suggested and did some short routes in each. Here is a list, which I hope tells you something about them. Note that descent from all these climbs was by abseil down the route.

### Yosemite Falls

This area is split into two areas. The five Open Books to the left of Yosemite Falls and Sunnyside Bench to the right of the Falls.

The Five Open Books in English means the Five Corners. This area is known as such because it consists essentially of five rightward facing corners, not so daft, eh. Each corner is approximately 400 feet high, and is in the shade from late afternoon onwards. They afford great views of the Valley, in particular towards Half Dome and Glacier Point.

#### Munginella 5.6

The far left corner. Three pitches of excellent VS 4b/c climbing becoming more exciting the higher you get. Do it!

Commitment 5.9

The next corner right. Forget the name. Generally steady climbing with some HV5 4a moves. Pleasant.

The Surprise 5.9

Can't forget this name, it was. It looked great from below but the top pitch was HV5 5b and sustained. Not bad if you are expecting it but a Surprise if you are not.

Sunnyside Bench is the sort of name you give an area where you can while away a few hours. I suppose in retrospect this could be true but it does depend on your standards. There are three very good jam cracks here:-

Jamcrack Route 5.9

Awful name but a good two pitch route. The first pitch is V5 4b and the second HV5 5a. Both are steep sustained hand jam cracks and both are well worth doing.

Bummer 5.10c

One pitch. Steep sustained finger jamming at E1 5b. Excellent.

Lazy Bum 5.10d

One pitch. Good finger jams and protection lead to a horrendous fingery layaway at the top which must weigh in at E2 5c - Just where you need it you have to leave your gear behind.

Bummer and Lazy Bum can be top roped from the belay at the top of pitch 1 of the Jamcrack Route. Both are considered by the locals as good routes and they are useful to obtain experience of finger crack styles. Bummer is so well protected that it is worth a lead even if you are only just up to it.

## Church Bowl

Don't know where this name came from. Then again, R.I. never was my best subject at school. Anyway, here's the gen:-

### Bishops Terrace 5.8

Probably the classic of this little area. Two pitches of good V5 4c. Just a short walk to the ice cream shop too.

### Deja Thorus 5.10a

Starts nice and easy. The overhang isn't too bad. Then the trap is sprung. Strenuous fingery climbing. Only the occasional bit of good gear and 150 foot ropes are just too short so the second has to start climbing. E2 5c.

## Serenity Crack Area

We tried Serenity Crack itself but after 20 feet with no gear and Han Wag boots, which felt like wellies in the peg holes, I gave up. One of the locals, who turned up during the event, suggested I bought a pair of Fire "Great boots, man!" for 70 dollars from the local shop. Anyone who recommends boots at that price must be a climbing shop proprietor. Revenge was essential so instead we did:-

### Maxines Wall 5.10c

Two pitches. Not very steep but very hard face climbing. First pitch used to be aided so there were bolts every 10 or 12 feet. The second pitch was harder than the first and not over-protected. Must be consistent 5c slab climbing with maybe some 6a moves. Absolutely brilliant first pitch, frightening second.



## Glacier Point Apron

Slabs really are what it is all about. Glacier Point has one 2000 feet high, The Apron. You've just got to climb on it! However, forget trying to get to the top. That is unless you have no brain left or you have a long time to spend in Yosemite to develop the necessary skills, by which time you certainly won't have any brain left.

Let's get it right. In Yosemite there exist animals known as Aproneers, which live on the Apron. The tracks they leave are bolts. Bolts which are hammered into the surface of the Apron at something like 40 foot intervals. There is nothing between the bolts, other than a few lines on a topo to show the paths where the Aproneers have trod. The whole process of climbing slabs on the Apron is a major brain strain. Three bolts for protection in 150 feet of climbing on holdless rock is by no means unusual, "Fun man!" These Aproneers have developed the art to a grad of 5.13 which is unbelievable. The hardest we did was 5.9 and this was equivalent to good 5b or maybe 5c in this country. There is no doubt about it, American face climbing has been developed to a very high level. Face climbs are much harder for their grade than their counterparts and the Apron was held in great regard by all the Yanks we met. Here's some cop outs and some of the real stuff:-

Harry Daley Route 5.8      A superb route. You solo up 200 feet or more of easy rock before you find the start of the route. A little desperate, boulder-problem slab. After this you're OK, cracks appear. First a slab angle layback, then an overlap and then a spacious stance. Magnificent views down the Valley and Tenaya Canyon.

A second pitch of slab angle finger jamming to follow and then you are on the top of the Monday Morning Slab - a 500 foot pinnacle which leans against the Apron itself. V5 4c all the way.

#### Coonyard 5.9

A natural continuation to Harry Daley Route but unfortunately considerably more desperate. This is the real thing, face climbing. We got three pitches up this five pitch route and got lost. The first pitch was horrendous but fortunately relatively well protected by Apron standards. The second we ran out of rope on, and had to climb together before a belay was reached. Weh Hah! The third we got lost on. So we abseiled off. E2 5c as far as we got.

#### Crack Centre 5.6

A 300 foot long hand jam crack at slab angle. Take your belays when you run out of rope then abseil off from a substantial ledge and since trees which stick out of the slab. Hard Severe. Superb.

#### Crack Marginal 5.9

A different kettle of fish altogether to Crack Centre. Just to the right up the slab itself. You climb slowly and steadily. When you stop your feet slide. Downwards. The problem is you can't see anymore than the holds in front of you.

They are so damn small. You have to keep climbing. Every now and then you stop to regain composure. Fat chance, your feet slide. So you keep going until you do it. Must be the best slab I have ever done, E2 5b. What the hell is a 5.13 like? Take me back to Stanage.

#### Son of Sam 5.10a

A one pitch crack which curves upwards from the very base of the Apron. Very fingery, well protected and not too bad if you go for it. E1 5b.

Enough of the shorties, what about the big ones. Well these can be divided into three catagories. Little big ones, big big ones and enormous big ones. Well we didn't do any of the enormous big ones because we felt they would take too long and we couldn't carry enough six packs to see us through the ordeal of climbing one. In addition to this the sight of them frightened us both witless. THEY ARE BIG! So we decided to do some little big ones which turned out to be really good value.

#### Central Pillar of Frenzy 5.9

With a name like than you really can't miss this one. The climbing is as good as the name. Five pitches. Three at 5.9 and two at 5.8. All of them well protected. As we climbed up it a 70 year old Krout abseiled down it. "Das climbing ist gut, ja" or something like that. I'd say any climbing at that age "ist gut". Tremendous HV5 5a.

Rixoms Pinnacle 5.10a  
(West Face)

Supposedly only one grade harder than Frenzy. Generally speaking that's true. However, there is a vicious overhang on pitch 1 and, if you're under 6 feet tall, a desperate little traverse on pitch 2. It's a falling type of move.

That is a controlled fall into a crack from tiny holds on a vertical wall. You just jam your hand into the crack as you fall and swing your feet in as you go. Gail is only 5 foot and a bit. She tried to do the same and didn't even reach the crack! Tee hee! Five pitches in total, none easy. HV5 5b if you pendulum the traverse. Heaven knows what grade the traverse is. I've never done anything like it before and hopt never to do anything like it again.

Big big ones take approximately one day to climb and descend. You have to keep moving on them, otherwise you are in for a bivvy, usually because you cannot find the descent path. To thoroughbred English gentlefolk, like Gail and I, the idea of bivvying in bear country did not appeal. The idea of yomfing one pint tubs of fudge ice cream did, so we always made it to the Valley floor. That is with one exception, which was planned.

We did, in total, four big big ones so here's the gen:-

East Buttress of Middle Cathedral 5.9 Al

Ten pitches eith the easiest at mild V5 and the hardest good HV5 5a.

Also a bolt ladder which is 25 feet long. This is on the fourth pitch, just before the crux moves, and is about 400 feet up the route. This can be free climbed at consistent 5.10c, so they say, but if you are good enough to do that you'll probably find the rest of the route fairly mundane. The positions on the route are superb with excellent open climbing most of the way and great views across the Valley to El Capitan. Don't miss this one, it really is good.

#### Snake Dike - Half Dome Southwest Face 5.7

Unlike all the other routes mentioned so far you cannot get to the start by shuttle bus. I guess, to use an Americanism, because the buses only run on roads. You have to walk about 10 miles to the start of the route, do 1500 feet of climbing and then walk about 10 miles back again. Is it really worth it? Yes it is! The route goes right up the side of Half Dome and finishes on its summit. Do it in one day and you need not have the hassle of applying for wilderness permits, which you should obtain before spending a night on the Valley rim, in wilderness country.

The walk up to Half Dome leaves the Valley floor at Happy Isles, with a name like that it must be a pub, but alas we were wrong. The way ahead is upwards into the wilderness on the John Muir Trail, which takes you past Vernal and Nevada Falls; two extremely impressive 150 foot plus waterfalls. This sounds pretty idyllic stuff but in reality the John Muir Trail, as far as Nevada Falls, is a six foot wide tarmac path which is subject to constant erosion by innumerable overweight American tourists, who puff and blow their way up it every year. The path is like a lot of gritstone classics. Very worn at the bottom but becoming less used the higher you get, until you reach Nevada Falls where the path runs out.

Now you are in wilderness, no more tarmac path; just the occasional telephone. Yeh, telephones!



I suppose it's just in case you get homesick while you are backspacing and fancy ringing home to have a talk to the dog? Or perhaps its to allow you to contact the speaking clock? Or perhaps dial a recipe for teatime? I don't know. It can't be because you may be lost because there are signposts on the paths.

Fortunately, after a short walk from Nevada Falls you have to leave the autobahn and head across country towards the Southwest Face. This is great because in Spring there are lots of brightly coloured flowers and no obvious paths. You just pick your way across with your first landmark being Lost Lake. I know why it's called Lost Lake. You can't find the damn thing! Of course, eventually you do, completely by accident. It is a lake but there are so many reeds growing out of it you can't see the water. "I've squelch, shit ..... found it". Nevermind we were at least in the right place. Onward young man, but watch it. I stepped over a large boulder on a sunny slope; well you know what bouldery sunny slopes have amongst them don't you, yeh, hissing Sids, rattlesnakes! I stepped over this boulder and there it was rattling, fortunately for me, whilst heading in the opposite direction. Phew! After a change of underpants, onward young man, but this time stamp your feet, it frightens them away before you reach them. It also makes you walk like a John Cleese impersonator, mind you there are times when you don't mind looking like a wally.

The start of Snake Dike lies next to a small tree and a four foot cairn, according to Meyers guidebook. Now let this be a lesson to all you hard walkers. There was neither.

The best way of finding Snake Dike is to walk to the lowest point of the Southwest Face. Find a small roof about 75 feet up and there you are.

The first two pitches go at VS and then you have pitch after pitch of V Diff climbing. All on a kind of knobbly lump, about two feet in width and six inches high, which winds its way for 1500 feet or more up the slabs above. Bolts 150 feet apart with nothing in between. Just keep climbing. Into heaven and the top of Half Dome. Excellent. With the walk in, the views from the top and the walk down, in particular the walk off the East face down this sort of wire rope ladder affair, it's a day to remember. If you want to be cool man on the way down take the Mist Trail, signposted of course, which runs close to the base of Vernal and Nevada Falls. The spray from the falls soaks you to the skin. "Heh you guys, this is fun". The people on the shuttle buses on the Valley Floor don't think so, however, when you sit next to them wet through and with smelly armpits.

The one and only time that Gail and I had a bivvy we had it planned. We decided on a two day route starting at the base of Royal Arches and finishing on the top of North Dome. We chose to accomplish this via the imaginatively named Royal Arches Route and the South Face Route on North Dome, a total of 25 pitches, or so we thought when we set off.

#### Royal Arches/North Dome South Face 5.7 Al

This is what you come to Yosemite for. Big, big ones that start from the Valley floor and finish on the top of something; it doesn't matter what that something is, as long as it is high - lots and lots of feet high. Both of these routes fulfill this objective by combining to give an excellent 2 day orgy of rockclimbing. About 3000 feet of climbing with 25 pitches on perfect rock. To start with you get views right down the Valley and, to finish, views for miles across the High Sierra and down onto such seemingly insignificant features as the 2000 foot high Glacier Point Apron. Nowhere do you have to climb harder than V5 although some moves out of the initial 'open book' on North Dome feel very, very exposed and are real PIGS IN SPACE stuff.

To find the start of Royal Arches route first jump on a shuttle bus and don't get off until it stops at the Ahwanee Hotel. This stop is easily recognised because the rich Americans all get on and off here. If you're not sure which the rich ones are, they all are, but these are even richer. Here are some of their characteristics. Loud voices, loud manners, loud shirts and loud wives; fat stomachs, fat faces, fat wallets and fat wives. Get the picture, well at the Ahwanee Hotel you see herds of them all agreeing that the Valley "sure is wonderful", "such a wonderful place" and "gee, it's wonderful to be here". Well it ought to be. The system is set up to pander to these people and in doing so rip them off. But who's to notice when your hand is in and out of your wallet at the speed of a fiddler's elbow.

One-upmanship in the Wild West used to be who could go for their gun the fastest, it hasn't really changed, but the guns have been replaced by wallets. This isn't an entirely fair picture, although it does appear to be true. In general these people were very friendly towards us and you certainly could not consider them to be pretentious.

Anyway, what about the climbing? Like so many other climbs in the Valley it is only a short walk from the shuttle bus to the route. From the Ahwanee walk towards Washington Column and Half Dome along the bottom of the Valley wall. The route starts on the left hand side of an enormous pillar of rock which squats under the "summit" overhangs of the area known as Royal Arches. This pillar is broken and provides by far the easiest way upwards. Once you find this pillar, find the left hand side and the initial 5.6 flared chimney, which is the start of the route.

This chimney is horrid. It doesn't look that big from the ground, but it never seems to end once you are in it. Well I tell a lie there, it does end, when your ropes go tight.

That's a real help, I've got two runners in 150 feet and hey presto the damn ropes have gone tight. Oh well it's time to move together, which of course you do and of course, not much higher it's done. That is for me. Gail is still in the bottom of the chimney, wedged in, patiently waiting or was it cursing as the belay was arranged. Well not too long a wait before Gail arrives at the top of the pitch saying how wonderfull the pitch was; or was she still cursing.

Forget the first chimney, scramble across to the right hand side of the pillar and the line begins to show itself. Up, up and away. Several pitches of good H Severe climbing up grooves and cracks leads you to the top of the pillar about 1000 feet up and just below a totally blank looking slab. You notice some ledges over to the left. It says you can free climb this slab to the ledges at a grade of 5.9 but this looks horrendous. A much more fun alternative is to climb up to some in situ bolts, thread them and do a WEH HA pendulum over to the ledges.

The pendulum is followed by another less sensational one which lands you next to a tree trunk. This is a tree trunk with a difference, it forms a sort of bridge from the area of rock on which you are standing, to another area jutting out into space on your left. Needless to say the route across this bridge. Across the Rotten Log as it is known. It was first climbed in the 1930's and it was reported to be rotten then. It is still there and presumably is even more rotten now. Well it looked it. Still it's been there for a long time so you put both hands and both feet on top and walk up it like a dog. Then you look down, 1000 feet down! You put both arms around the log, both legs around it and give it some. Heave, grunt, phew, made it, yeh had, that was something else, your turn, you'll love it ..... honest. Like a lot of things it is a retrospective joy, something to bullshit about to your friends. We could do with a few of these logs propped against Stanage, it might even start a new sport.

It would certainly make some of the routes more possible.

The rest of the route is somewhat more straightforward, although the last friction slab, which is astonishingly lowly graded at 5.4 does give some concern. Once this is done, however, you arrive at the Oasis which provides an excellent bivvy site, being just below the top of Royal Arches. It is aptly named as the Oasis because a small stream runs through it and you have plenty of room to unroll your dos bags and lie full length amongst the trees which grow there. Another point in its favour, we reckoned, was that it was totally bear broof; a big plus point for wimpy English climbers.

Next day we were up and away early at the crack of 8.30 am well it gets too hot in your dos bags once the sun hits you. Having no real idea where the South Face route went we followed the guidebook recommendation of walking over to the top of Washington Column and surveying the face in question. No problem, there it is, up to that big corner, around the corner, up the cracks, then up the twin chimneys and crack to the summit. Great! We ditched our sacks and walked over to the bottom of the face.

Once at the bottom everything looked different, but we could see the big corner above us. First pitch, it said in the guidebook, follow friction slabs to the base of the corner, 5.7. Well on friction the Yanks have some funny ideas about grading so I wasn't very surprised to find the going hard. the only thing was there were no bolts and the going felt more like 5.9 than 5.7, which meant to me that it was very hard. Still it was all under control so I kept going. The corner didn't seem to be getting any closer, and it seemed only a bit closer when I ran out of rope 150 feet up. Fortunately however there was some method in this madness and a belay was manufactured in a small crack, the only one so far.



Gail came up and was similarly impressed and puzzled by our situation. We agreed that the climbing didn't fit the route description, but there was the corner above us. Another 150 foot pitch up the slab equally hard, but better protected, dumped at the bottom of the corner.

The going up to now had been much harder than we had been prepared for, so thoughts of retreat were not too far from our minds. Time was creeping on and we had to get to the Valley floor before it went dark. Still the route was there to be done and we had made the bottom of the corner. Going up the corner was not on, so round the bottom of it we went. Up a diagonal undercling. Needless to say the rope ran out before the undercling did, so a belay in slings was necessary. This is getting silly! But a ledge was spotted above us so we went for it. After four pitches, all 150 feet long and none easy, we found ourselves standing below another large corner. Why could we not see this corner from the bottom of the face? After all we could now see that it was possible to walk up to the base of it across easy rock slabs to our left. Then we saw the light. This was the bottom of the South West Face Route, heaven knows what we had just done!

Now that we knew where we were, we could plan a little better. We decided to continue and descend by walking down the far side of North Dome then back to our sacks at Washington Column. If the going got too rough we could always bivvy on Washington Column and descend to the Valley the next day.

The South Face Route took us up a small, i.e. about 70 feet high, 5.7 slab which is totally unprotected and then an excellent lay back before the first belay was reached. A second pitch followed which led us up to a large collection of abseil slings and an abandoned carabiner; thanks very much. The going above looked to be hard, so we summarised that the moves out of the corner must be somewhere close to us. But we could not find them.

A possible weakness appeared below us out onto the right bounding rib of the corner, but the moves to gain it looked much harder than 5.7 and the exposure was trouser filling, the valley floor was about 3,000 feet below. It was the only way however, so we tried it. The moves were wild, out of balance and thin but the best kind of hold, a big jug, appeared when you needed it. What was all the fuss about? The moves weren't that bad. They never are .... afterwards .... once you have done them. However, up there, with no possibility of help and a lot more climbing to follow everything seems harder than it is.

The climbing from this point onwards was continuously interesting and consistent with the route so far, at about V5 standard. The final cracks leading to the top of the Dome were reached and we knew we had done it. We had seen them from Washington Column and knew we had not got much more climbing to do. Well not much more climbing turned out to be 400 feet of laybacking. 400 feet, it only looked like one pitch from Washington Column. But we did it and once it was done we topped-out as the Yanks say.

Topping-out in Yosemite is great. The views are fantastic and it gives you a feel for the scale of the place. It also gives you great satisfaction to reach your goal after so much climbing. The technicalities of the route are of minor importance, the whole experience is quite the opposite and you now have time to think and examine your values. So it is back to the Valley floor, via Washington Column, and a descent which everyone gets wrong. But you do it and you can now stuff pints of fudge ice cream into your craving body.

There you are, that's what Yosemite is all about. Perfect rock, spectacular climbs, routes both long and short and some of the best slab climbing anywhere. It's a place to go and climb and you are guaranteed sunshine while you do it. There are some drawbacks, however, and these centre on the irritating determination of the authorities to stick blindly to their own procedures.

They seem to be incapable of thought, they just react in set patterns to any conceivable situation by selecting the appropriate action from the computer print out in their heads. Once you get used to it, however, you find ways round it. Then you can enjoy yourselves. It is still the best holiday Gail and I have ever had. Perhaps one day if all things are right Gail and I will return, after all we haven't done The Nose yet. Only then will our Spring holiday be bettered.



Phinister Proctor on Half Dome in 1884, drawn by him from memory in 1948.

# TAN-Y-COED LLAETH

## BRIAN WEST

It is a sodden, sullen night, windy and Welsh-wet. Rain-assailed, tight-nailed casements weep wantonly, lamenting a long, lost line to a long-lost estuary.

Hush now; it is Tan-y-Wyddfa and the Oreads are sleeping. The hopeless, the hopeful, the damning, the damned; all tomato-saucily sardined in beer-black oxygen-lack torpor.

Come closer; peep into Aran, into Clogwyn, into Hebog; peer at rows of sleep-sacked, cheese-toastie-packed bodies duck-downed in sweet and sour slumber.

So it seems; only you can see their hopes, their fears, their dreams.....

Pete Scott is suffering. A cold sweat beads his brow. It is raining on his Gore-Tex.

A similar sweat beads O'Reilly's brow. It is raining on Pete Scott's Gore-Tex.

Martin has a visitor. No, it is not Ingrid. It is the Ghost of Craps Past. Martin re-lives action replays of those matchless motions of yesteryear, when the world was young, fresh and just waiting to be crapped upon.

Sighing contentedly, O'Reilly gently caresses taut swelling curves; curves that belong to the wallet pop-riveted to his armpit. The wallet bulges with Radder's insurance money. John is on to a good thing. Whose gear shall he set fire to next?

Top-to-toe in figure-flattering black, Radders is hanging from a helicopter. Torn by self-doubt, he stares indecisively at the snows beneath. Chris is worried; are his skis quite the right length for the job, and what does he do with the Cadbury's Milk Tray when he gets there?

Martin has a visitor. No, it is not Ingrid. It is the Ghost of Craps Present. Like the Andrex dog, Martin romps in a surrealistic splendour of soft tissues, shimmering pint, white, blue.... Even though he can still outcrap Maurice, and the cool kiss of Twyfords Adamant has lost none of its allure, the reckless days of Izal Medicated are but a fond memory.

Doormouse-deep in her bag, Helen smoulders on. With her metabolism fuelled to magmatic intensity by liquid carbohydrate, she has achieved earth-orbit and now lies dormant, a dying ember. She dreams of more beer....

Dave Wright has had more beer and is orbiting Silverstone. His adoring public roars its approval as he laps Niki Lauda for the second time. Showing masterly control, Dave waves nonchalantly to the cheering crowds. Al Ames, not yet quite so disciplined, lurches reluctantly to an unscheduled pit-stop.

Martin has a visitor. No, it is not Ingrid. It is the Ghost of Craps to Come, looking remarkably like Ray Handley. Martin recoils in haemorrhoidal horror at the Savlon-scented, pebble-dashed portrayal of his anal future.

Pete Scott smiles. The rain has passed, and through the thinning mists a girl bound bouncily towards him, her long hair flying, her arms outstretched.

"Peter, Peter", she cries, longingly.

Ineffable joy flares in Scott's bony breast. It is Clare!



The smile freezes; that jaw juts. In six-million dollar slow-motion Clare is about to plunge into a puddle left by the rain. Should he sweep down his Gore-Tex before her? Oh cruel dilemma!

The smile relaxes. Fair wear and tear!

Black dread clutches at O'Reilly's innards. His arm-pit throbs.

The smile is now confident. There's always the BMC insurance. Down goes the Gore-Tex!

The smile slips. Set to welcome his heart's desire, Pete stares aghast as Clare springs past and on into the mists. There is more than one Peter in the world, it seems; and more than one rip in the Gore-Tex. Scott is having a rough night.

Martin has a visitor. Yes, it is!

Field-Marshal Fisher, Lord of our far-flung battle-line, receives grim news from the Front. The Fuzzy-Wuzzies have taken Smethwick; the Celtic riff-raff are poised to cross the Stour. Corporal Kipling groans in despair.

"Bear up man, bear up!" barks Lord Fisher, stiffening what passes for an upper lip.

"Remember, Rudyard, if you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs.... On your way, Gunga!"

A sharp cut from his Malacca speeds a native runner out into a hail of Welsh Nationalist spite; a gunboat is despatched to Stourbridge.

"Grease 'em, baby!" snarls Fisher....

Ego-driven mercilessly, our hapless players blunder on through the mental maze. Outside, the deep, dark, deep-dark night drips on into a wet-slate-gleaming dawn; the rain tempers to a trickle.

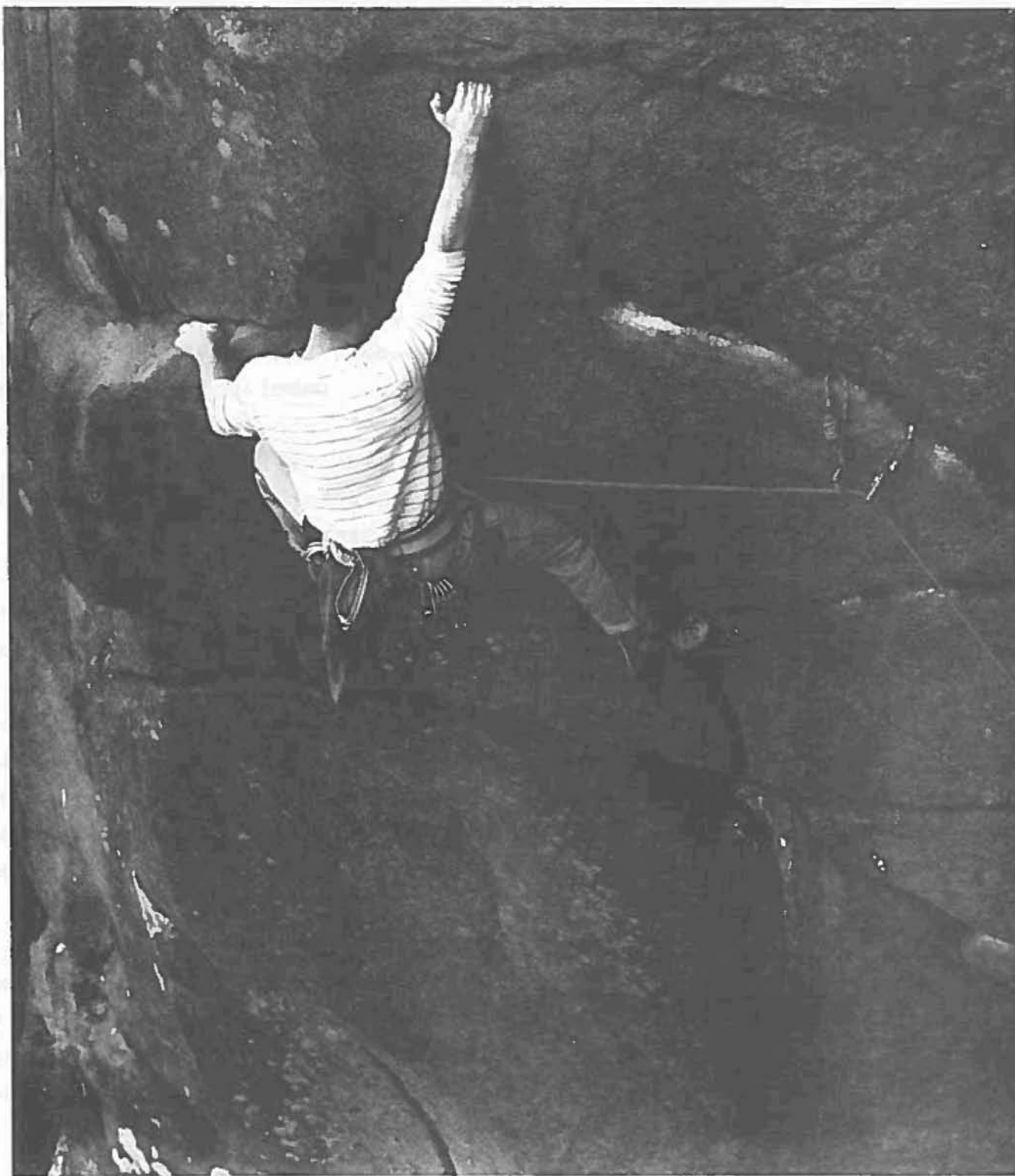
Looming out of the sea-fret, Y Garn blows its ballast-tanks and surges skywards, slicing the cloud-wrack in conning-tower majesty.

The Oreads will soon be waking. These mobile, expressive features will slowly congeal, setting into the final familiar masks of everyday. Rebelling, these mutinous neuroses will be thrust deep into spiritual stuff-sacks; horizontal and vertical holds will be adjusted to stabilize the various images for the coming day. Let us be discreet and leave the Oread to its cosmetics.

Already, bladders are signalling frantically and Gordon Wright is making an infernal row in the kitchen. Helen is preparing for re-entry, and Radders will soon be down, impossibly hearty, all doubts about the Milk Tray Box completely erased. Fisher will lie long abed, testing his words of the day for euphony and resonance, before articulating his inanities like some hesitant blackbird essaying the first querulous notes of the dawn chorus.

It is time to go. Remembering not to stub your toe on the chunk of Snodonia that lies athwart the hall, tip-toe quietly down and.... soft! What's this? Pondering great truths, a noble youth lies austere before the fireplace; a jug of pure spring-water at his elbow; a crust forgotten, on the floor. A young Greek god, taken unawares?

No. It's only me.



Action on Cratcliffe Tor.

# SUPERSONIC

## MARTIN ROOME

The corner is as hard as last week, the peg just as bendy, but at least this time I'm prepared for it. I start talking to myself. "Reach up. Pinch. No, higher. That's better. Inch up with left, undercut, pull. Doubt, if in doubt bridge out. Bridge, no doubt. Right hand up and fingerlock. Runner. Great, absolutely no doubt".

Six feet above last week's high point and Flakey's rest is looking real inviting. Hissing ropes over right herald the approach of Rolley, complete with prussiks and cameras.

"Looks real hard Mart", says Roll above my gasps and moans.

"It's alright", it isn't though and I can only pose for a couple of piccys before moving on.

Left up, lock. Right reaches high, lock, bridge, runner.

"I've never prussiked before" says Roll "Have you got any thin slings?"

I don't believe it! I tell him no and move across left to the resting hold of Flakey. No. 1 rock, clip in, lovely, stand easy. Rolley struggles up the rope to a bolt on Bastille and we chat. What a place for an over the fence type chinwag. The next ten minutes are spent pulling up four tie-offs. Gordon looks cold.

Up into Flakey. It's so familiar but, as always, no easier. Tricky moves and I've got the twin jugs by the crux and stand not so easy.

"The light is on Amber", says Roll. "What shall I do,"

"Open it up till you get green" I answer, swapping feet on the hold.

"It's on 2.28 and I've still got amber, so we don't make any sudden movements O.K.".

"O.K. Roll".

Ten minutes later and I'm still not making any sudden movements. I hate this move, after ten falls from it while doing Flakey Wall, you'd think I'd have it taped by now, but it's still dire. Two go's and it's still no good, but at least I'm not taking 15 footers off it thanks to a brilliant skyhook placement.

I want to pack it in but Gordon keeps me at it. Third time lucky and I've got the jug, mantle, reach, pull, and two pegs peer down. Clip the tat then thread them with some real tat, that's better, bridge and rest. My legs hurt.

"There's some brilliant pockets over here", says Rolley easing up Bastille.

"Cheers Roll, I'll have to remember that".

Oh well, onto new ground again and the light is fading. Move up and leave the pegs behind, good pockets and layaways then a high step up to an ace foothold.

"Bloody Hell, I've gone miles above the pegs. Where's the ring peg?" I think aloud. A quick look round and I spot a pocket. In goes the trusty skyhook. Clip in, it's rubbish. Another look and 'lo and behold' my hand is in a tailor made nut slot. No. 7 Rock off the rack. Oh no, I don't believe it. It's too big and I've got nothing near it.



"Looks good Mart".

Its Roll taking pictures. Any more and he'll get L.E.D. poisoning. I notice runners on his harness. Now not for nothing was Rolley Best Man at my wedding.

"Hey Roll, have you got any stoppers?"

"Coming up Mart".

Rolley swings over armed with two stoppers. I take one and it's perfect. "Cheers Roll".

The lights terrible now, but a thread over left brightens me up a little. The skyhook drops out. Here goes, reach left and pull. Toes crammed into shallow pockets. Up right, a break. It looks Good, it's crap. Udge up and a finger disappears into a hole. Pull through, cross arms and 3 fingers of my left hand sink into a pocket. It's a beauty. Look round, no runners and the Pro's 6 feet below mine. Try to pull through but can't. Shit. Where have the bloody footholds gone?

I start to reverse. Reach down. 3 fingers in the pocket. Wrong hand, 2 fingers. Feet Smearing for anything. 1 finger. Shit, no visible means of support and I go.

I straddle the rope through the thread on the way which tips me upside down before snapping. Oh God. My back's twisted, my knuckles are bleeding and the stars are out early tonight.

"You alright Mart?" asks Roll as I tip myself the right way round.

"Yeah, I'm OK. Thanks for the runner, that bloody thread snapped". Then again it was only  $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick. I check my tape but there's damage. I lower off licking my wounds literally.

"You were cruising Mart", says Gordon later. "I don't think so, but there's always next week", I said hoping it will rain.

Monday comes along with Rolley who drops his Fires and stopper, what a mate. "Good luck for Wednesday", he says grinning.

This time it is raining at the crux of Flakey Wall. Just my luck. But I place the skyhook and go for the jug just the same. It's not too bad this time and as if to compensate for last week it stops raining and the sun comes out. What a difference it makes, past the pegs and up to the rest. I drop in Rolley's elephant stopper and drop a No. 6 Rock on top. What the hell, I can still get two fingers in the pocket.

No thread this time so I go, the sun showing up all the footholds. I move up to my high point and realise I've got my hands the wrong way round. Damn. I reverse but this time I can see where I'm going.

A quick rest then back up again. Right hand in the 3 finger pocket. Pull through, feet walking up to a sloping ramp. Left hand reaching finds a pocket. A quick snatch brings a creaking flake to hand. The pro's 15 feet below and I'm worried. Look left and the sun bursts through. I reach and again the jug is an absolute monster. Who needs footholds? drop in the skyhook, it's ace, good thread low down, another left, No. 1 Friend in jug and a Moac, in a jug and I feel comfortable. I look up to the most welcome peg in the world, that on Original Route. I know we made it. One last hard move, mantle and stand, reach up and clip it, it's all over.

# A WINTER IN CHAMONIX

TIM BARNETT

We traversed onto the snow arete from a side entrance of the Aig du Midi telephrique station as the ice tunnel, the usual way in summer, was blocked. It was a beautiful winter's day and our snow shoes were unnecessary as we crossed the Vallee Blanche on untrodden wind packed snow. The previous dry summer and autumn had left the Tour Ronde's north face and all the couloirs we passed, black and desperate. Getting up to the Trident hut wasn't easy as there was hard ice instead of the snow that enabled one normally to kick big bucket steps. In the sun, with our backs against the warm silver metal walls of the hut, we sat taking in the beauty that surrounded us, disappointed but relaxed. Route Major was out of condition, in face the whole Brenva face of Mont Blanc looked out of condition, and it would have taken us a lot longer than the limited good weather to climb the route.

Christophe Profit, the ex-soldier turned professional speed climber, appeared with two axes and a tiny, near empty sack. After a little to eat and drink he disappeared into the dusk, reappearing sometime later with a party of friends, one of whom had had a nasty and bloody fall attempting the climb up to the hut.

Although Profit agreed that the Brenva face wasn't possible he disappeared at midnight to solo a non-existent (in my mind) ice route on the Eckpfeiler. His friends left at dawn, heading back to the valley and we were left to bask in the sun and beauty for a few hours. Both Ian and I still wanted to do a route and so we crossed back to the ruined hut at the Col du Midi where a group of French climbers bivied outside amongst the wines and left over rubbish from the telephrique station's construction.

They too wanted to grab a quick route on Mt. Blanc du Tacul the following morning before the bad weather came in again. We were joined by two Scottish friends of my Irish climbing partner on our warm shelf inside the falling down shack and as a foursome we went to solo the Jaeger couloir. Afterwards, as we abbed from snow bollards over the crevasses on the tricky descent from Mt. Blanc du Tacul they agreed that it was grade IV/(V) Scottish because it was so out of condition, but I disagreed, not thinking the route that hard.

I was staying with two other guys in a small chalet, okay for one person, but coming down to the nearly snowless town of Chamonix I found that it had filled up with another ten people! The scot that rented the place invited all his friends to us it whilst he was away on the rigs or on expedition and at New Year it felt as though everyone he had told had turned up.

New Year's Eve is the big celebration in France and Chamonix buzzed. There were lots of Brits' in town and after a Fondu and a bar crawl, a huge crowd of us gathered to sing "Auld lang' Signe" in the towns centre whilst the French youngsters let off fireworks in all directions, smashed bottles and jumped on cars.

The next morning I ran up a track that was supposed to be a ski run and up to an area where a few frustrated people were rock skiing, whilst my friends slept or suffered with hangovers after a good night. It was no surprise that with so little snow on January 1st there was a rather depressed atmosphere. The skiers were depressed because the skiing wasn't good, the climbers were depressed because the weather was so unsettled and there hadn't been any snow to form the ice and the rest of the 'bums' were depressed because there wasn't any work. Chamonix had been flooded by skiers and travelling bums from all over the world, all looking for work - so many that I never met any French locals in the bars for the whole season!

The only people who didn't seem to mind the conditions were the Swedes because they had plenty of money and the beer was what they'd come for anyway, so they just got drunk and had plenty of fights.

I, the one who had turned up with £50, was lucky enough to be offered a job with a small London Ski Club that had given me a cheap lift out. This 'job' started in the New Year and involved doing a little rep. work - checking accommodation, meeting and showing the clients around the town, giving weather and ski reports etc. It didn't pay much but gave me some accommodation in a mobile home and I quickly realized that I could make money by offering the spare beds and floor space to fellow homeless dossers at a cheap rate.

In the second week in January it started to snow... and it continued to snow. The work situation wasn't getting any better, the weather was really bad and so the depression continued with tempers getting shorter. The days were spent watching the snow pile up, then clearing the cold, white stuff, reading, listening to music, swim and eating. Then we would go the phone - and because we knew how to fix some of the public call boxes, using a ten centime coin taped to a piece of potton that was jiggled about, we could and did phone anywhere for as long as we wanted for free.

After the phoning we'd tour other 'locals' dwellings, drinking coffee and looking for some kind of action. Not usually finding any we would cruise around the bars in search of girls and we didn't find any of these either as the guys out numbered those rare creatures by twenty to one, so not being able to afford a drink we'd sit descretely avoiding the bar staff and the drunken Swedes and watching numerous ski and pop videos. The traditional Bar National was the deadest place in winter, after meal times, as nearly all the climbers had left town in desperation and the trendy places were the video bars - le Choucas, the Driver and the Pub.



Occasionally we'd go into the night clubs but, at seven quid to get in with drinks at a similar price and no girls, it wasn't worth it - even for me with my 'home made' reps card that allowed me free entry.

Often there were house parties that were really gatherings around a table where sorrows were drowned with cheap booze and dope. A lot couldn't afford the easily available drugs, but some financed their 'habits' with trips to supermarkets and sports shops followed by a selling tour of apartments, whilst others just got more into debt. It was all rather stupid and the police were fully aware of what was going on as they were indulging themselves. In fact, the Chamonix police were next to useless, causing traffic jams, refusing to acknowledge thefts, demanding your passport followed by an 'interrogation' and search with such questions as, "Do you belong to the IRA?" and "Where is your gun?", and impounding your car for being parked on an official parking space then demanding you pay a high fine or be thrown into jail.

I escaped, just for a few days at the end of January, hitching to Meribel where John O'Reilly, Chris Wilson and party had an apartment for a week's holiday. There, I started to ski and, with the help of Jill and Jan as my instructors, it didn't seem to take long to get the hang of it and after two and a half days I was hooked.

You have to experience the lows to appreciate the highs and on my return to Chamonix I was about to come out of the low period that had been January and start the high part of the season. The weather still wasn't good and the metres of snow continued to build up, but having purchased well used, but good skis and boots at a dubiously low price from a Swede, and getting a season ski pass covering the whole Chamonix Valley, I was ready to 'hit' the slopes.

Chamonix is not really the place to learn to ski unless you are unafraid and very aggressive because the skiing is steep and not easy. There are nursery slopes and easy runs but these are always very crowded and the majority of skiing is off-piste, on unprepared slopes. Chamonix is split into several little resorts, the main ones, being; le Brevent, La Flegere and the infamous, Les Grands Montets. These areas are high up, needing a single cable car to transport everyone up to the 'plateau' ski areas above the steep tree slopes. There are only a few lifts and pisted runs here leaving the skiing up to your imagination and ability and the way down is usually by the cable car or by a difficult run. Areas such as le Tour and Les Houches provide easier skiing and are good for cruising when they are not crowded. All these areas are spread over the whole valley and really you need a car but there is a bus, free if you have the Valley ski pass, that runs regularly. Also covered on the value-for-money ski pass is an area down the hill from Chamonix that is worth the early morning bus trip, and that's Megeve, St. Gervois and Les all good individual resorts that are linked. The skiing is easier and there's a lot of lifts and prepared runs to provide good days of skiing and if there is new snow then the off-piste through the trees is superb. The Megeve areas are good for a change, or for those that find Chamonix a little hard and limited, or when the weather is bad. Because the Chamonix Valley is steep and narrow, high up and shadowed by Mont Blanc, when the weather is bad it's in cloud with zero visibility, whereas skiing is still possible at Megeve when it's below the cloud.

La Flegere and Le Brevent areas, although the latter gets a lot more crowded, are superb early on in the season, especially after fresh powder dumps because they have bowls and couloirs that fill up to provide some enthralling skiing. But as they are South facing later in the season the snow gets very wet and heavy and therefore icy for the following mornings.

The place to go then - if not before - is Les Grands Montets, which has to be one of the best ski areas in the world for advanced skiers and that is why it attracts so many good skiers from all over the world. The area is split into two levels. A cable car takes you up from Argentiere to Lognan where there is a huge wide ski area with only four prepared pistes served by two (and a half) lifts, but everywhere is skiable in an area that's nearly two miles wide. It's steep and towards the end of the season there are a lot of big bumps - all rather frustrating for an intermediate and not for the beginner. By going up on the telephrique to Les Grands Montets you get superb views of the Argentiere glacier and surrounding mountains - le Aig Verte, les Drus, Mont Blanc etc. and then you get brilliant skiing down glaciers, couloirs or walls onto the Lognan area, even though all but one or two black runs are theoretically 'out of bounds'. I never tired of skiing there as I was continually finding new and different ways to get down and constantly varying snow conditions meant that it didn't get boring. One of my favourite runs was under les Drus from Les Grands Montets, across the Mer de Glace and down to Chamonix. There are plenty of good descents down to Argentiere at the end of the day, all more pleasant and less dangerous than the single, crowded piste. If you use your imagination and have the ability then Les Grands Montets is the place! I couldn't really say that it was ever too crowded or with long lift queues once you were up at Lognan. Getting up could be a problem if you arrive mid-morning, but we 'locals' overcame that by getting a ticket for the cable car we wanted the previous evening after skiing. Both this telephrique at Argentiere and the one for the Aig du Midi run on a time table when it's crowded, where tickets are issued with a number and with an estimated time so that you just turn up for your car number not having to stand for a long while in a line. We would turn up at the time we'd been given or later and get straight on a car without any queuing.

Admittedly, there were queues to get up to Les Grands Montets from Lognan but if you avoided the peak times then it was fine, anyway the wait was always worth it and the rest needed sometimes.

The other big skiing attraction of Chamonix is the Vallee Blanche, a twelve mile long run from the Aig du Midi down the glaciers and through the trees to Chamonix. The run is officially opened towards the end of February when the the crevaces have filled up, but even then you're supposed to have a guide. Personally I think a guide is an unnecessary expense because on a good day, which is the only time worth doing it, there will be an obvious track and by sticking to that, following the crowds, you're not likely to go into a crevace - and a guide won't stop you going in it anyway. It's worth spending a day or afternoon on the Vallee Blanche taking a picnic even though the skiing is easy - just a little care is needed through the Geant ice fall, but you'll have plenty of time as some guide and his clients will be holding you up. It does get crowded, but the spectacular scenery makes up for that. Those that do want to escape the crowds and find a lot more challenging skiing, then the Envers du Plan Glacier and some couloirs provide these, but its worth knowing where you're going!

There is also plenty of cross country skiing in the valley and the sports centre with its swimming pools, gym and ice skating is pretty good value. Cheap accommodation can be found by asking at the tourist office and looking at the town hall and several other notice boards. Being a small town, rather than a village, there are plenty of restaurants and bars in Chamonix and there are reasonable supermarkets too. You can have a good and fairly cheap winters holiday in Chamonix and it's not much different to summer, still crowded but a little prettier with the snow when the sun shines.

My first days skiing in Chamonix was at La Flegere and I skied solidly from when the lifts were opened, falling over a lot, finding it all a little steep and the deep new snow rather difficult. I was determined to ski or fall down the black run that leads to the valley floor rather than take the lift, but I was so tired that I couldn't even stand on my skis let alone try to ski. So the pisteurs, who have to clear all the runs at the end of the day, put me on a 'blood cart' and gave me a fantastic, but rather embarrassing sled ride down.

Three weeks later, after a lot of falls and frustration, I felt that I could ski anything and was doing some guiding work. I was fit and fanatical about my skiing and was out all day from the first lift, without a break, until the last lift. I mixed with other good and serious skiers and they helped me to learn quickly and it wasn't long before I was the first to finish in our races from the top lift at the end of the day. I was really hooked on these indescribable feelings of moving fast down the slopes. I no longer thought about climbing. Although I still wanted to climb, it was just that the big routes were still out of condition and although there were small routes, such as I'd done a few times in January, on the Tacul or the cascades on the glaciers which were exciting, but not really inspiring. Skiing was a new find of action! My lifestyle changed from what it had been in January to getting up early, skiing all day, coming 'home' eating, sleeping, eating again, then meeting some friends in a bar for a quick drink followed by more sleep. I was no longer mixing with the alcoholics, druggies, thieves and ski pass forgers, but with serious skiers and tourists I'd met during the day. As I was guiding it paid me to mix with tourists, looking for those who wanted to be ferried around Megeve or shown some different off-piste runs at La Flegere or taken down the Vallee Blanche, but mostly my 'customers' were from the ski club that I was repping for.



One of my most memorable days was in the first week when, still a beginner, I skied the Vallee Blanche with a friend. It was early in February when the run wasn't officially open and we were by ourselves making tracks through the snow on a superb winter's afternoon. Later, whilst acting as a guide, I did it many times but none of these runs were as good as that first time because of all the crowds.

The truck drivers strike in February, due to a custom officers strike caused problems. Along with another ski guide we'd taken ski club clients for a day at Megeve and on our return we were faced with roads blocked by trucks. We managed to sneak our two cars by a couple of these blocks but at another the first car got through by following an ambulance and as I tried to do the same I was given a choice of running down six truck drivers or swerving into a snowy field. We nearly got our noses bloodied by the angry, spanner holding drivers as we bumped, pushed and pulled the car through the snow and around the block. That evening Chamonix was totally cut off with trucks across the roads and railway at one end and snow blocking the pass at the other end of the valley. 'My' clients were rather panicky as they just had to get home on time and things were a little difficult until they opened the pass three days later.

My introduction to ski touring was an attempt to ski up and down Mt. Blanc from the Italian side up the Glacier du Miage and Glacier du Dome. As a threesome we skied down a steep off-piste run, making tracks from the top of the glacier but were turned back by huge crevasses and seracs in the unstable icefall on the Dome Glacier, and so we skied back down arriving in Courmayeur in the dark. A few days later an attempt up and down the North face, the Grands Mulets glacier, of Mt. Blanc was successful, but wasn't really worth all the effort of skinning up as the snow was chossy, making the descent unpleasant. As Christophe Profit proved, returning from a solo on the Brouillard face, it was nearly as quick to walk down and those that paid for a helicopter and guide must be wasting their money.

Apart from Argentiere being the start of the Haute route there is plenty of other ski touring from the Valley on the glaciers and in the Aig. Rouge.

At the end of March I fell in the bumps, breaking my thumb, which is one of the commonest ski injuries. The hospital put my hand in a splint and told me not to ski until next season, but the next day I removed the splint from the bandage and went skiing. I was supposed to be taking it easy, but three days later I had a huge high speed wipeout and, although not hurting my thumb, I snapped the tail of my skis. I thought that these were signs telling me to take a rest and, because I'd been offered a free lift in an XR3i, I came back to England. We'd had six weeks of fantastically good weather and because so much snow had been dumped beforehand, the skiing had been brilliant, but as I left Chamonix the weather broke.

I returned a week later for the start of the good weather again and best powder of the season. It was so good up at Les Grands Montets, deep and light that it billowed up above your head offering no resistance, so that you couldn't see or breath! After the powder had consolidated I had a relaxing time, sun bathing and having picnics on the rocks as the skiing was a little of an anti-climax when compared to what it had been before because now it was icy all morning with deep wet spring snow in the afternoons.

At the end of April I came back to England having had a brilliant winter, although not enough climbing. It was so good that I want another winter out in the Alps and my year out between 'A' levels and college is now going to be two!

# CAIRNGORMS –

## EASTER 1984

GORDON GADSBY

According to the locals it was already the hottest Easter in living memory and not only the hottest but also the calmest they had ever known. This in an area generally reckoned to be the wildest and windiest on the mainland of Britain – gales of more than a hundred miles an hour are not uncommon across the summit plateau. Only a few weeks earlier in fact, the tops and glens of these coarse grained granite mountains had been swept by storms of such ferocity, that one of the country's leading survival experts had succumbed to the intense cold and relentless blizzards in an area he knew well.

Now as I looked across Spey Valley on the evening of Easter Day, the trees dotted along the river reflected clearly in the placid waters that give the valley its name. Far beyond the river the mighty Cairngorms formed a magnificent backcloth, their snow covered slopes turning a delicate pink in the evening sun.

Yesterday with Margaret and the boys I had traversed the deep and lonely snowfields that sweep down to Loch Avon and the Shelter Stone. I'd spent a cold February night under that enormous block in the late sixties and remembered it well. In the early hours of that winter morning a herd of Red Deer had assembled beside the dark still waters of the loch; they were unaware of our presence and made an unforgettable sight.

How different yesterday, everywhere the snow lay deep and hard, the blazing sun not yet able to penetrate the shadowed depths below the sheer smooth walls of the Sticil crag.

The Loch itself a haven for excellent trout was still completely frozen over although this was the last week in April and temperatures had been in the eighties for several days. Wild, remote and over one hundred feet deep, this loch and its surroundings vies in grandeur with the best that Europe can offer, in winter the majesty of the high arctic and in summer, with its 800' crags, one of the finest rock climbing areas in Britain.

On our way back over Cairngorm two skiers hailed us as they returned from the top of Ben Macdhu; they were exhilarated and excited as they told us of the fantastic day they'd had across the plateaux. On their skins they made swift upwards progress and were soon lost to us against a dazzling blue and white world. "We'll have to try that some day, Dad" said Rick looking enviously back along the ski trails in the direction of Ben Macdhu. "On skis of course" he added quickly.

The good weather continued and two days later we left our cottage at Dulnain Bridge after an early breakfast and by eight o'clock had parked the car by Whitewell farm on the edge of the Rothiemurchus Forest. Soon we were walking towards the finest and best known pass in Scotland, the Lairig Ghru.

A pall of mist hung around the trees as we made our way downhill towards the yet hidden delights of Lochan Deo. From this approach the great u-shaped groove of the pass, well seen from Aviemore and Coylumbridge, was hard to discern, but the many miles of trees between us and our objective took the eye immediately; they receded into the shadowed flanks of the mountains in artistic perspective. For this was no ordinary forest seen in that eerie morning light with the sun still veiled by mist. It stretched and stretched beneath us like a mighty dark green ocean, wave upon wave of trees breaking through the mist to reach an unknown and unseen shore.

It gave the walk an extra sense of adventure and a realisation of the distances involved. It was a fantasy world and all we needed to make it real was a hobbit.

Twenty minutes later as we neared the first of the splendid towering pines that guard the edge of the lochan, the sun was already glinting on the distant summit snows of Braeriach and Ben Macdhui the four thousand foot peaks on either side of the Lairig Ghru. The waters of the Lochan were dark and absolutely still - Gollum would have felt at home here. On the far side chaffinches flitted through the pines, to the west the clearing gave way to more open woodland, but to the south east the dark forest looked impenetrable and mysterious except for our signposted path. Surprisingly in a few minutes the path gave way to a wide track with less trees and we settled into a steady pace as the air around us slowly warmed up and the mist drifted away.

The level track was bone hard under our boots as we pressed on for a mile or so. The boys ran ahead and kept disappearing amongst the trees at the trackside then emerged behind us. I envied them their energy and warned them to conserve some of it for later. Suddenly Margaret called us to a halt, there on our right, not far away in the trees, were seven red deer led by a magnificent stag. We watched them for a few minutes as they slowly made their way deeper into the forest and out of sight.

Ten minutes later the Cylumbridge track came in on the left near an iron bridge across the turbulent river Am Beanaidh that comes from Glen Einich. The iron bridge was erected in 1912 by the Cairngorm Club and contains a metal tablet which states that the Linn of Dee is 18 miles away and the Lairig Ghru summit three hours walk. Once across the bridge the track narrowed, turned sharp right and eventually followed the line of a smaller river, the Allt Druidh that comes from the Lairig Ghru.



The sun, gaining strength in the eastern sky, was filtering brightly through the trees now lighting the splashing waters of the Allt Druidh.

In places several large trees had been uprooted and blown right across the track, testimony of the fierce storms earlier in the year. Soon we reached a beautiful grassy clearing and we could see the track disappearing into the forest far ahead of us with now and again a glimpse of a snow peak through the trees. The sun was hot now, the sky deep blue and yet another magnificent day for us to enjoy.

Beyond the clearing we reached a junction of four tracks, called Piccadilly on more recent maps and marked with a post and white letters. Our track began a steady ascent through the trees until eventually an hour later we emerged high above the river on the far edge of the tree line. In front of us and above was the wide u-shaped gap of the Lairig Ghru Pass. Margaret suggested we had elevenses whilst there was still some shade, so we sat on the edge of the path beneath the last of the trees. "Look at that weird tree, Dad" said Rick. Just off the track was a Scots Pine which had been blown down countless years ago. As it lay it had sprouted four well proportioned upright trees straight from the trunk which was quite incredible. Looking back northwards we could see for many miles over the ancient Caledonian forest to Coylumbridge, Aviemore and beyond.

Far below us was the river, cutting its way deeper and deeper into a ravine as it had done for countless centuries past on its descent from the snows of Braeriach. The path ahead of us was dry and dusty as soon we were again ascending steadily, this time in the full heat of the relentless sun. Half an hour later we reached a level area with several pools of still water. One of them had masses of frogspawn around the edges and Peter was quite disappointed when I said a plastic bag would not be a suitable conveyance for frogspawn in a rucksac!

We then reached our first snow of the day, a long deep white ribbon down a shallow gully on our left. That was it, the boys would go no farther (and who could blame them), sliding was the order of the day. We had lunch here, then I left Margaret to her book and the boys to their snow and set off determinedly for the Sinclair Memorial Hut which I reached half an hour later after a trudge through deep snow. The hut is in a commanding position at a height of 640m and was built in 1957. It's a strong two-roomed structure which, although spartan, would be an absolute haven in bad weather. A herd of twenty or so reindeer occupied the environs of the building and I had to walk through their midst to open the door and look in.

After the hut the Pass, which for many miles had been wide and fairly gentle, now narrowed dramatically. Above me the Lurcher crag frowned down on a scene of desolation. Great boulder fields on my left and really deep snow in the trough of the Pass made the going more difficult. In several places there were deep crevasses where many feet of snow had accumulated over the water course, not a place to be on a dark night. (Incidentally there is evidence that some of the high corries of the Cairngorms may have held glacier ice as recently as 1810 and it's been estimated that only a 2°C drop in mean temperature would be needed for this to happen again).

As I climbed higher the angle eased, the snowfields became more extensive but not so deep. Suddenly several grey/white ptarmigan appeared, they scurried from rock to rock without really paying much attention to me. I sat down for a while, took out my tele-lens and photographed them in their different attitudes. They are a strange and lovely bird, seldom seen below 2,000, they live their lives on these barren mountains eating the green shoots, leaves and fruit of the bilberry, crowberry, heather etc. along with a few insects. They are the only British bird that can change plumage with the seasons.

These birds are also found in many parts of the arctic continent and a few years ago I saw two on the summit of An Teallach. With this ability to change colour, the ptarmigan hides from its enemies by merging into the landscape at any time of the year.

Lulled by the hot sun I could have sat for hours watching them and felt lucky to have had the chance, but time was passing quickly now, so I pressed on and reached the top fifteen minutes later at twelve forty five. The view ahead was magnificent with Cairn Toul and Devils Point towering over a hazy Glen Dee, whilst behind the pink granite screes of Sron Na Lairig 3860' glowed fiercely in the afternoon sun.

From the summit at 2773 feet, I ran down the snow fields on the Dee side of the Pass, past there the Allt na Criche or March Burn disappears below the boulder fields until soon I reached the Pools of Dee or Lochan Dubh na Lairige as they used to be called. The snow here was very deep and it needed care to approach the pools. Only the large one and one of the three small ones had any clear water, the others were completely frozen over. On a good summer day they say you can watch the trout swim in these lovely pools. All I saw today was a curving edge of faultless snow against the bright blue water and the stony bottom, but it still made a magic picture.

Soon I was back over the Pass and heading for the Rothiemurchus and my rendezvous with Margaret and the boys at Lochan Deo. Hopefully they had also had a great day. As I hurried down towards the trees I realised that this is one of the few areas of natural regenerating pine forests in the whole of Britain. What I could see before me, although vast to my eyes, was but a remnant of the ancient forest that once covered almost the whole of the Highlands of Scotland.

I also thought of my last attempt to cross the Lairig Ghru a few Easters ago from the Linn of Dee. Ken and Chris Bryan and I had turned back beyond Corour Bothy in blizzard conditions after successfully detouring to reach the summit of Devils Point. We'd seen ptarmigan that day too, but not close enough to photograph. They had been swept away from us on the wings of a gale amongst the icy boulders of Coire Odhar.

Soon I was back amongst the welcome shade of the pines and the clear sparkling waters as the river raced me down towards Iron Bridge, Lochan Deo and a welcome reunion. The time was four fifteen.



# A FAIRY TALE

ANON

Once upon a time in the far flung right hand corner of Drinkbok galaxy on the outer reaches of the known universe was a small pink planet called Dorea upon which the Doreans' lived in peace and harmony for around 257½ glinks, (approx. 5000½ of our years). They were led by a president and his inner cabinet but were greatly influenced by an ancient guru of the Fuzzyfiz sect on Grumpencrapp the miserable. A short portly chap who was followed by several disciples of the same sect.

These Fuzzyfeez had long ago lost the ability to speak coherently and communicated by a series of knowledgeable grunts. This was for the sole reason that they participated in the disgusting habit of seitt smoking. A seitt was a massive bowl on the end of a stem in which was incinerated huge amounts of weeds, herbs and grom dung from which was emitted great palls of stunkensmoker. These palls had gathered over the glinks to form massive clouds, and because there wasn't any wind on Dorea (due to it having two axes and not knowing which way to turn) the Fuzzyfeez had lost touch with the other inhabitants and only communicated with the other members of their sect via their peculiar guttural grunt.

Around about the fifteenth millennium a.p. there came from the neighbouring galaxy a huge comet which had a cataclismic effect on Dorea. For this comet which had been called Dicda-Odd-Dangler, passed so close by that the jetstream from its tail set up mighty winds across the surface of Dorea clearing all clouds of stunkensmoker from sight, and for the first time for many many glinks, in fact the very first time for the younger generations, all Doreans could see their little pink planet.



Now the youngsters were beholden at the marvellous sights before them, but not so the Fuzzyfeez for much had changed since they last cast their eyes about themselves, and as the scientists had calculated that the winds would last for the next 500 glinks they were sore afraid. The youngsters felt free at last, but the fuzzyfiz sect felt naked and exposed and petitioned their government to take some action. The cabinet thought hard and long and finally made a decision. El Presidente Vastmember decreed that a massive windbreak called a musson, would be built and behind it the land would be divided into a grid. Each square of the grid would be allotted to a Fuzzyfiz, so that he could smoke his seitt in contemplative peace. He would be compelled to record his position on the grid on a document. This great constitutional document was then known as the seitting plan, and until the planet split along the fault line between its two axes everyone lived happily ever after.

FANCY THAT/  
I THOUGHT A ROCK "BUTTRESS"  
WAS A FEMALE MOUNTAIN GOAT.



# PERFECT DAY,

## 65 FEET - E4

### JILL WESTRICK

11.00 a.m., 1st September, 1984 Robert was in the "Jovial Dutchman" supping pints while I climbed on Black Rocks to calm my nerves.

O'Reilly was late arriving at Sun Lane, but he behaved himself and turned out in his posh new suit especially for the occasion.

John managed to carry me up the aisle 'til I stood next to my future husband!

Rob said "I will". The poor lad had come so far I thought that I had better say, "I will" as well. It was hard after sticking my tongue out and trying not to fall about laughing.

Once inside the vestry the rings were off. No, not divorce proceedings just yet - the relatives wished to have a butchers. The polos were then passed around before we settled down to autograph the book.

A quick flash from the photographer and off to face the congregation with their smirking faces hanging out of the pews.

Once outside more confrontation took place with the photo-chappie, followed by the dreaded confetti. My thanks go to Ollie for pushing handfuls down the back of my dress, and only later did I discover that my undies were full of the damn stuff.

Now that all the formal bits were over, we could get down to the serious stuff - food, grub, snap - at last. It wasn't my fault that I was first in the queue. It was all very nice. Mum spilt mine on her dress - drunk again. I spilt coffee on mine - still sober.

That was the relatives entertained. Next came the real nitty gritty - a knees up party to help us celebrate. To my amusement, and that of several others, I arrived at the Rowing Club without a husband - had lost him already? He was off in search of more funds - a possible raid on Derby Mountain Centre perhaps?

We all had a right good bop, stuffed our faces and got covered in more confetti. Honest, we had a good time.

My husband and I left before the taxi driver departed without his load.

#### Acknowledgements:-

Rob (without whom none of this would be possible), Mum, Grotty, O'Reilly, Ness, Spike, Vicar, Ollie (again), Chris, Jan, Dot, Robin, Bernard, Dorothy and anybody else who knows me.



# SKI TOUR - 1984

## RAY COLLEDGE

We arrived in Chamonix on Saturday, March 31st, to find the only parking place available was outside the 'Bar National'. So after the long drive we fell out of Sheelagh's car and into the bar. It was 9 o'clock at night and the place was full of largely English speaking people. I was used to this in the summer, but not the end of March.

We had not given much thought to accommodation as we all hoped and prayed that we would start the High Level Route the next day. By 10 o'clock it seemed we didn't care. However, someone started the ball rolling and an hour later we moved into temporary hotel rooms, no one wanting to look for a campsite in the doubtful weather.

During all of March the weather had been largely fine in the Alps, so it was not surprising to see four inches of snow on the car roof next morning, with an overcast sky indicating more snow to come. With nil visibility on the glaciers and serious avalanche danger we could not start.

We had been joined by another car load of three plus Ian from Calgary in Canada and Robin from Tripoli, both having flown to Geneva. All but one of us were M.A.M. members. Luckily we found excellent and inexpensive accommodation next door to the Bar National and here we had to stay until the next Saturday due to the weather.

We skied at Les Houches, Argentiere and Chamonix itself, and on Wednesday everyone but myself skied the Vallee Blanche run through the Geant icefall. I had been put off by the thought of the queues of skiers which form in the icefall, where one cannot overtake and I had walked it many times anyway.

It turned out to be a marvellous day and I regretted my decision. The others in fact avoided the crowd by simply catching the first Midi cable car.

Surely we could now start the High Level Route, but alas, it snowed all night and much of Thursday. It was now too late to do all of it and so on Saturday morning with the clouds still low, we left for Verbier in Switzerland.

The road over the Col des Monteto was exciting with, at the high point, the road closing in between high walls of frozen snow, there was ice on the road surface. However, the weather slowly improved until at Verbier the clouds had dispersed, had we have known we need not have gone to Verbier. We could have parked in the large station car park in the village of La Chable in the valley, changed into ski mountain clothes, and boarded the continuous bubble cars which take one past Verbier to the level of the Mont Fort hut, where we could have stayed the night.

As it was, we slept in the youth hostel in the village of Bruson nearby, before leaving the cars at the Chable next morning. Because of this it was around mid-day when we put skins on the skis in the vicinity of the Mont Fort hut, to commence the climb up the Glacier de la Chaux to the saddle in hot sunshine. Most people suffered and regretted the late start.

However, once over the saddle the temperature dropped in a cold wind and dense mist developed. As a result we were unable to climb the Rosablanche and were only able to locate the Prafleurie hut with careful route finding. We were carrying little food as we had been told in the Verbier guides' bureau that the hut was guarded and light meals provided. It was in fact not guarded and as a result we dined on spaghetti and biscuits.



Unusually this hut is connected by power lines to the Heremence Valley and so by inserting Swiss coins into a meter, we could obtain lighting and boil water. However, for cheapness most cooking and water heating is done on the wood stove as usual.

During the night the mist disappeared and the temperature dropped considerably. Outside in the half light of about 5.30 a.m., as we prepared to leave, the cold was intense. It was probably the coldest start I had ever made from an alpine hut.

Eventually we arrived on a saddle which overlooked the Dix dam. Here the sun brightened the scene and there followed a delightful traversing run high above the dam. At one point we had to leap on skis from the upper lips of small crevasses, and exciting little diversion.

On skins again we commenced the ascent of quite steep ground to gain the Glacier de Cheilon. The ascent of this glacier to the Dix hut was made under a burning hot sun. The Dix hut did provide an excellent meal and also canned beer. We could even sunbathe on the terrace and dry out equipment.

Next morning was cold and clear again as we applied the skins to the skis for the lengthy climb which culminates in the ascent of the Pigne D'Arolla at 3796 metres. This was to be one of my best days ever in the Alps, with the weather staying clear all day.

At one point the route climbs a steep ice wall and on another occasion, I had climbed it entirely on skis. Now however it was too icy and at the top a steep little traverse had to be made on foot, a spectacular situation which brought forth all the cameras.

From the top of the wall a lengthy traverse of a plateau led to the shoulder below the Pigne. Here we dumped our heavy sacks before climbing the summit slope for a photographic session on the ample but icy summit itself. The descent on skis from the summit without the burden of heavy sacks, was sheer delight.

Once again with our sacks we started down towards the Vignette hut in excellent skiing conditions. The conditions deteriorated lower down where the snow was exposed to the very cold easterly wind. Here old ski tracks had frozen solid making turning difficult.

There are two ways above the hut, first the easier way to the right, and then the short cut normally taken to the left involving an exposed traverse over very steep ground. This I had taken on a previous occasion in bad weather with Roland Anthony, and been impressed.

This time the traverse line started on ice, neatly polished by previous skiers. I stopped at a point where I could not see round a corner, but becoming aware that I seemed to be on the edge of a cliff. I could not see any ground beneath my skis. The traverse line narrowed to 3 or 4 feet then disappeared. No one else was in sight as I was ahead of the team, and so with no one to refer to I side stepped up the ice to reach snow again with some relief. We could not take nine people in such a place I was sure, but before I could shout a warning to the others to descend the other way, Clare arrived to stop exactly where I had stopped.

Clare is a strong and courageous skier and so I was not unduly worried. However, before I could mention the exposed position she was in, Phil arrived. "Go a bit further so that I can get a perfect photo" he said. To my apprehension Clare obliged without hesitation.

She then decided to slide a bit further to see if she could see round the corner, and in doing so found the key to the traverse line, finally disappearing from sight. Phil followed and I realised I would have to go too.

Side slipping down to there the smooth ice stopped at the ice wall coming down from above, I found I could step down onto a one foot wide ledge of snow in a most exposed situation. I remember thinking at the time that I had done similar moves in P.A. foot wear on English rock faces.

Now I let the skis run forward with an almost immediate move into slide slipping once again, except that now the tails of the skis were overhanging in fresh air. Ahead were Clare and Phil. Above the line was a sort of ice cliff but one could now see below. Still quite steep, but in earlier days several skiers had jump turned down it further along, but now their tracks had frozen solid, so that a fall would have had disastrous results.

The angle of the slope slowly relented, but to start with, I was somewhat 'gripped' and perspiring freely. It was quite a long traverse until we could finally stop side slipping and commence descending down frozen lumpy snow. At the bottom we could look up to watch the spectacular progress of the rest of the team, looking like flies on a great white wall. So ended a really great day.

There seemed nothing now to stop us getting at least to Zermatt, but alas, the next day produced heavy snow with fierce winds. A visit to the toilet hut was an expedition, and such was the wind that the snow was coming vertically upwards through the hole in the seat. We could wait at the large and friendly hut, but Robin had planned to descend from Zermatt the following day to catch a flight from Geneva to Tripoli.

THE ROSE

It was obvious therefore, that he would have to descend now to Arolla and that we could not let him go alone over the many crevasses. Since the weather might be no better the next day, we decided to descend late morning, starting in driving snow and poor visibility.

Once in Arolla we celebrated with a superb lunch before catching a post bus to Sion from where a train took us back to Chable in time to buy food and wine for an enormous meal in the Bruson youth hostel that evening.

Robin caught his flight next day, whilst the rest of us enjoyed two days of down hill skiing around Verbier, including the spectacular descent from Mont Fort. Needless to say we did not see a cloud during both days.

During the return home we stopped at a picnic site on the German Autobahn, to enjoy a grand lunch, thanks to the foresight of Sheelagh and Clare. Peter, later to marry Clare, turned to me and said, "I suppose Ray, that visiting the Alps for you will never quite seem the same again". It will not.



# THE ROSE

# AND THE THORN

GAIL SEARBY

It was just another typical April Sunday, i.e. wake up with a roaring hang-over and it's pouring with rain!

Heathy Lea was full of people enthusiastically packing rucksacks, I looked at my watch, it was only 8 O'clock, groaned and went back to sleep.

An hour later my bladder forced me to get up. It was still pouring with rain and didn't look likely to stop. The morning was spent in Grindleford Cafe moaning about the weather, until we decided to give up and go home.

Another wasted Sunday!

How I hate British weather!

However, as we reached Belper the sun came out. "Let's go and see what the one eyed O'Reilly's up to" suggested Gil. At John's we found an enthusiastic team ready to leave and go climbing. My spirits rose considerably and somebody ( I think it was me) suggested Beeston Tor. Everybody agreed.

My heart skipped a beat. Beeston is a magical place for me, it was there that I had led my first and only H.V.S. and there were plenty more routes there that were still on the hit list, including "The Thorn" - oops, my stomach lurches when I think of that.

On the drive over I thought about the Thorn, my stomach lurched again, "No, not today" I thought "I'm not ready, I'm barely leading V.S." I decided not to say anything to the others about it.



When we arrived it was pouring with rain again. I gave a sigh of relief and retired to the pub. After half a pint of bitter and some free chips (where John not only pinched the chips, but took the V.A.T. receipt as well!) the sun came out again, so it was back to Beeston.

Somewhat mellowed by the beer and sunshine, I agreed to lead "Woctune". A beautiful route, the sun was on my back, the rock was perfect and I felt great!

Gil and I sat for a while in the Ivy Gash enjoying the sudden good weather and wondering what to do next, - well, I wasn't going to suggest the Thorn, I felt sick at the very thought!

"I'll lead out over the Thorn" said Gil, interrupting my thoughts - I'd swear he knew what I was thinking! The Thorn was my route, NO WAY was I going to let Gil lead it.

"No, I'll lead it" I said with as much determination as I could summons.

Gil shrugs "OK, but no using aid"

GULP! I started shaking uncontrollably Oh hell! what have I let myself in for!

"I've changed my mind" I squeaked.

Gil growled "Get up there" he was the one showing determination now. I know him when he's made his mind up, no point in arguing. It looked like I was going to have to do it. At least I could pull on the sling when no-one was looking.

"I'll get into a position where I can see you on the crux" he said.

Well, that's blown the sling idea. I'll have to do it free. My hands started sweating, my legs went weak and I hadn't left the belay yet! I checked everything. "O.K. Let's go".

I stop round the corner - Oh hell its exposed!  
I want a runner!

Find a wire, step up. I was sure there were big jugs  
on this section.

Oh Jesus the exposure!

Step back down again, hands sweating and whitter that it  
shouldn't be this hard and wanting to come down. Gil  
tells me to calm down and get it together.

I take a few deep breaths, check the runner. It's good,  
calm down, think about the move.

Yes, it's a big jug, move up. Another jug, move up  
another wire - I feel good now. Look up at the crux -  
oh hell, it's steeper than I remember! - look down -  
oooh-er!

Look at the rock, calm down, climb to the peg ---- reach  
up ---- carabeener, tape, red rope ---- clip ---- safe!  
Heart slows down a little.

There's a piece of tat through a thread to my left ----  
fingers automatically go for it ----

NO! NAUGHTY! SLAPPED WRISTS!

I find the jug next to it and clip the blue rope through  
the tat. Step up, easier than I thought! Reach for the  
top peg, clip the blue rope through that, safe as houses,  
relax a little.

This was a strenuous position, I had to move. Undercling  
for right hand, side pull for left. Not much for the feet -  
never mind, I won't need those. Heave up and have a look.

I could see two finger pockets, they didn't look good, was that a jug at the back or a loose block? I hope it's a jug! - ease back down to my "resting" spot, look around for foot holds, I couldn't find any.

Christ, I hope it's a jug over the top!

It's too strenuous waiting, I had to have another look. Up I go again.

"Watch that blue rope" I shout needlessly. Gil had all his concentration on me, willing me to do it.

I let go of the undercling to reach up - my heart jumps - oh no, I can't do that!

I've got to! I re-adjust my weight ---- reach up ---- it's a jug! Thank God!

Should I go back down for a rest before I do it? ---- I hovered on the brink.

"Go on" growls Gil

I looked at the sling, it would be so much easier if I grabbed that!

NO!

"Go on Gail" cried a voice from the distance. It was just the spur that I needed. Other hand on the jub and pull. Feet come off ---- I'm committed now ---- P--ULL ----. Head in crack, knee on ledge, recover myself shakily.

I'VE DONE IT! ---- no I havn't ---- foot slips, no hand holds ---- find my balance. Try to relax ---- look for a runner. There isn't one. "Well done Gail" ---- oh no, not yet. "I havn't done it yet!" I move up, shaking to a better position and find a runner, breathing a sigh of relief.

I continued to the top and clipped in, still shaking and talking to John twenty to the dozen - the adrenalin was still flowing.

"OKAY ---- SAFE"

"I'VE DONE IT! FREE!"

Gil comes up, smiling, thumbs up. He looks really pleased.

Coiling the ropes at the top smiling at each other, my first hit list route done for this year! a new contentment came over me.

Yes, Beeston is a magical place.



Steve Gough on Sloth

# TRANS-AFRICA OVERLAND EXPEDITION

## MEMBERS

(N.B.) This was received by the Editor before the expedition left. It has since returned!)

The expedition was initially to be a two-man venture undertaken by John Ellis and David McIntosh who are studying at Sheffield and Loughborough Universities respectively. Both are mechanical engineers employed by Vickers Engineering at Barrow-In-Furness, Cumbria, However, the 5 month expedition now has a team of four men and two women, all in their twenties, with adventure-seeking characters.

Leaving England in November 1984 and travelling by Land Rover we will be exploring the deserts, jungles and mountains of the African continent. Starting in Morocco we will visit the High Atlas range of mountains before moving on to Algeria to begin our trans-Sahara route. The Hoggar mountains are one of the regions of the Sahara which we will be travelling through. The route will then take us to Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon before we reach the tropical rainforests of the Central African Republic and Zaire. Our main objectives in East Africa are to climb Mount Kilimanjaro (19,340 ft) in Tanzania - the highest point in Africa and Mount Kenya (17,058 ft). Several members of the team are keen and well-travelled mountaineers, with many years of alpine and even Himalayan experience.

Another aim of this expedition is to make a study of the subglacial hydrology and hydrochemistry of the Lewis Glacier on Mount Kenya. This is the largest ice body on Mount Kenya and it is the subject of a multi-annual field study currently underway.



Having completed this work and seen some of the wild-life of the region we will move on from Kenya into the Sudan and follow the River Nile into Egypt and then onwards to the Mediterranean Sea. From there we will be returning to Europe in March 1985 by boat from Alexandria.

We are intending to make a film of the expedition and the photographic and written products are likely to be considerable.

The expedition has been financed by self contribution, Loughborough University and a variety of commercial and other sponsorships.

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# PUB CREDIBILITY

MIKE PEARCE

All the excuses have failed. The weather's great, you're fit, you have a partner, you've found your gear and the threatened visit from that long lost cousin you've not heard from for years, never met and now lives in Thabakka-beeyonde (Aus.), has failed to materialise.

You've got to the crag - probably because somebody else did the navigating. It's at least two hours to opening time - horror of horrors! You have to climb a route!

Your problem is - how do you choose the best route? You may be thinking in terms of quality, length, classic status or number of stars in the guide book, But, no - none of these will ensure your reputation and admiration at the alcoholic de-briefing that takes place afterwards. What you need is a route with that rarest of qualities - pub credibility (or PC as it's known to the cognoscenti). To give you a high PCR (Pub Credibility Rating) a route must be able to produce in your audience that moment of stunned silence, followed by the burst of spontaneous applause and the gasps of admiration well known to more experienced exponents of the art.

How do you achieve this end? Firstly, pick a route which other climbers in your group haven't climbed yet but have eyed up. This will immediately grab their interest. Make sure your route has a good name. It's no good saying to the admiring throng "We've been on Sand Buttress" - they will continue to ogle the barmaid (or barman depending on who you drink with!). You need a show stopper, like ".....had a look at 'Supersonic Nightmare of Flakey Debauchery'", for guaranteed gasps.

Pick a route someone in the group has recently failed on. A useful tip here is to keep your ear to the ground at the Rowing Club and buy the second a furtive half. The truth will out. You can then be heard indulging in the following conversation:

Failed Leader: "What's it like after the crux?"  
You: "Oh, it keeps coming but the wire is O.K.  
- probably good for a thirty footer."

Thus giving the impression that you contemplate thirty foot falls with equanimity and really boosting your PCR. Little do your listeners know that you had five more runners in the next thirty feet!

It helps to keep your own second well-oiled and co-operative so that he can say "Jees! it was desperate, he really cruised it, he was going really well!" (PCR up two more points).

Lastly, to really push your PCR into the realms of hero worship and beer buying, try soloing the route. Careful research is needed here. Top-rope inspection on quiet days is recommended. This enables you to arrive at the crag which is already covered by our gripped and sweating friends and drop your gear casually. Strap on your rock boots with an air of nonchalance and, with a "just going to warm up", drift up your chosen route - wafted by the admiring gasps of the onlookers (PCR rising to warp factor ten).

So, that's it. In the highly competitive world of modern climbing, if you haven't a huge reach or a figure like King Kong, you can still make the grade in the bar room by working on your Pub Credibility Rating.

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### **HISTORICAL NOTE ON THE ORIGINS OF SOLOING**

Recent work by the Oread Research Department has revealed little known facts regarding the origin of soloing. Apparently, some two thousand years ago one Easter there was a climber who ended life as a speleologist and shortly afterwards, made the first recorded solo ascent in very good style - without a rope and without a crag! Climbers to this day still call on his name in moments of stress e.g. "Jesus, this looks desperate!" or "Christ - I'm off!".

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### **END GAME**

The year has come full circle  
And ends as it began  
Cold fingers stiff in small pockets,  
Dead toes in a slimy crack.  
Stretching - arms aching,  
Tensing - calves shaking,  
Foot slips, fingers straighten...  
Blessed relief  
Sucked downward by the soft green turf of Harborough.

"Let's go - O.K.?"  
"O.K. - let's go - to the pub?"  
"Yeah, to the pub."  
"It'll be there next year."

And so will we.  
Keen and fit -  
Next year.

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# THINGS DON'T CHANGE, INTRODUCTION TO THIRTY YEARS AGO

'ROCK' HUDSON

On looking through some of the early Monthly Newsletters, a number of things spring to mind. Factors which appear to indicate the similarities between members' activities and activities now, with those taking place some thirty years ago. Can anything be gained from the observation? In some cases yes, in others less so, while some are open to interpretation.

The ever inclement weather experienced in the British Hills, leads to the conclusion that the climatic conditions need to be much improved. The ever present recriminations that befall meet leader from those attending his meet about the lack of providing good weather!

The pleasures obtained on reflection, or those anticipated from further participations in the clubs varied activities; be it an extreme rock climb, a classic scramble, a thousand feet of brittle ice climbing, a soggy campsite, a period of mountain photography, rock collecting, natural history, a good evening at the pub or the recollections of burnt offerings provided by a mate at a hut, perhaps a ridge Traverse and then just time to look back on any one of these or a multitude of others.

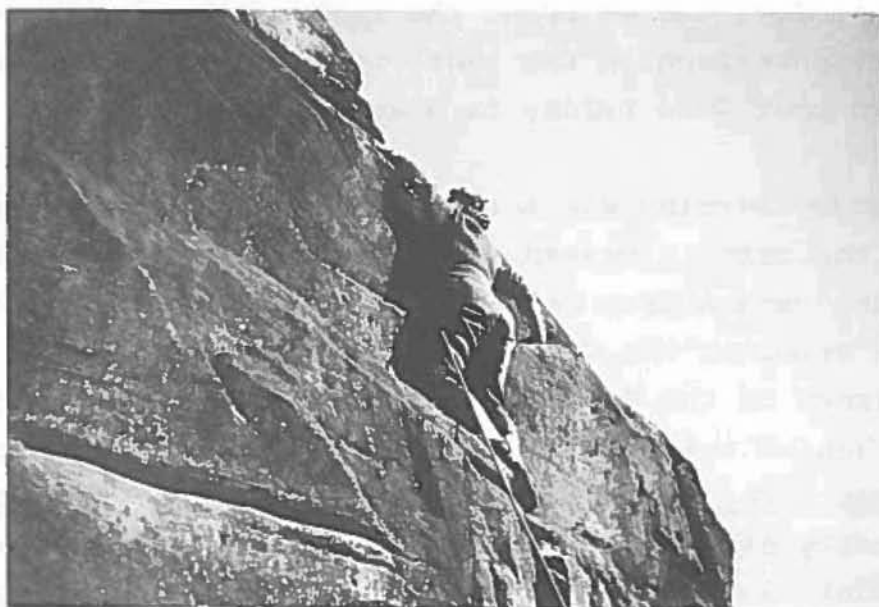
The same old arguments, people wanting change, others that don't. The comments on levels of skill, involvement, good membership or commitment. The pettiness in trying to uphold a minor so called tradition, when the important point is to still be a part of a greater one. Are we to allow members to sit on a fence and look at the view instead of being in that view? Time will only tell, when we find ourselves in that view, with its then welcome fence to sit on.



A lack of appreciation at times that all members are part of the club, a mountaineering club at that, which surely implies how much more diverse the pleasures can be for those that take in the whole spectrum of being an Oread.

So what to choose for this year's journal? Hopefully something for most, be it a long standing member or new one. Recalling long forgotten club meets or the recollection that any one of this year's meets appear little different to those of yesteryear.

Thus, the thought to all; that things do change, yet stay just the same.



'A Female Tiger'  
Betty Bird on gritstone.  
(route not identified,  
any ideas?)

# EASTER IN ARDGOUR -1955

What gods conspired together against this eagerly anticipated meet, no man can say. Yet twice on the journey North the coach met with near disaster, and after we arrived the weather was wretched.

On disembarking from the coach at the foot of Coir' an Inbhair the Meet Leader suggested setting up a chain of camps reaching to Garbh Bheinn and volunteered to man the base camp himself. For some reason this was not approved and camp was established on an admirable site about half a mile up a corrie. Then the weather turned foul and we spent the rest of the day listening to rain beating on the tent roofs. So much for Murrey's claim that Good Friday is always a fine day.

Saturday morning was more promising and parties set out for the crags - Messrs. Handley and Dyke, and Darby, "Penno" and Alison Harper to the Leac Mhor and a miscellaneous group to the Great Ridge. On the latter the Hon. Chairman of the Hut Sub-Committee climbed with Hon. Ed. and behind this august pair came John Welbourne and the Langworthys. The climb was most pleasant - nowhere hard, but airy and exhilarating and ending just below the summit. Ted Hull and Laurie Burns wisely preferred a snowy couloir and thus avoided the worst of the downpour which the Hon. Ed. precipitated by putting a colour film in his camera. Eventually everyone (including the "tigers", washed off their Slab) waded back to camp, most of us wet to the skin.

Sunday started suspiciously like Saturday. We waited to see how it would turn out and the expected downpour started hours earlier than the previous day's.

Monday was a little better, with bright periods, but as we had to leave at mid-day, no-one went out except Mike Moore, who spent the morning "eagle-baiting", whatever that esoteric pastime might be.

Garbh Bheinn is an imposing and remarkably craggy mountain, and the Amhauin Coir' an Inbhair has some very beautiful stretches, but in the present writer's opinion, the area is a little too remote for such a short holiday.



Corran Ferry, Easter  
1955  
Group includes; Ted  
Hull, Alison Harper  
(Harby), Mike Harby,  
Mike Moore, John  
Welbourne, Ronnie  
Langworthy, Charlie  
Cullum, Jim Kershaw,  
plus locals



Camping in Ardgour-Easter 1955  
Charlie Cullum, behind Ronnie  
Langworthy.

# GARDOMS EDGE,

The Saturday turned out rather cold, and most people had come prepared for a warmish night. There was a sharp frost and ice formed on the water in the buckets. The air was so still and the frost so sudden that the leaves were continually falling from the trees overhanging the Bowling Green. Our tent was under one and we got used to it. One male member reported the next day that during the night he had heard the patter of tiny feet! Not till the next day did he realise his mistake. (Or was it premonition?). Continuous mutterings during the night - one heard across the Bowling Green from a female member:-  
"Darling, I'm cold, come closer!"

On the Sunday, which was not only cold but also windy, not much climbing was done. But the party was honoured by the presence for ten minutes of Stan Moore, who in those ten minutes was on and off a climb, for the second time according to Stan - in this case due to a hand hold preferring Stan to the rock - piece of bad judgement! He moved on and was only seen once more on rock. Again he retreated - properly, this time. One wonders if he ever reached the top of the crag that time.

It rained in the afternoon and much tea was dispensed in the tents.

**OCT. 15-16TH,  
1955**

# EDITORIAL, MAY 1955

The acquisition of a hut is one of the greatest events in the history of our club. The Oread has now arrived and Mike Moore and his Hut Sub-Committee have earned all the praise and thanks we can offer them. Not content with the tremendous efforts exerted in finding the palatial residence which is now ours, Mike is among the most enthusiastic workers in equipping and decorating it, not that there is any lack of enthusiasm elsewhere in the Club; the Special General Meeting which was called (but since called off) to discuss the transfer of the Llanberis Meet of June 25/26th to the hut is evidence enough of that.

Amid the general rejoicing, however, we must not forget the quite serious financial burden which we have acquired along with the hut. Money will have to be raised from all possible sources - more gifts to the hut fund, letting of fishing and shooting rights, throwing the hut open to all (paying) guests and anything else we can think of. For a start, I am prepared to obtain and sell at a small profit a quantity of collapsible aluminium tubes suitable for packing jam, condensed milk and other sticky substances - profits to go to the hut fund. But I don't want to have a house full of the things on my hands, so will you let me know your requirements, if any, so that I can estimate a convenient number to get?

## CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sir,

How is the Oread these days?

On the 19th and 20th of March I was fortunate enough to be able to get away for a weekend and attend the A.G.M., the first meeting of the Club I had been to for a year. I saw new faces and old ones, many my best friends whom I have not seen for ages. The Oread was much itself at the A.G.M., but I am sorry to say that I think the Club has declined drastically since I first knew it - and why?

It is because there are too many pseudo - mountaineers and bar-room climbers and far too many people who do not take their climbing seriously enough. On Sunday, 20th March, I was appalled to see (a) member of the Oread play in the snow beneath Birchens.

Damn it, the Oread was started as a Mountaineering Club by a keen and fanatical band of climbers, and all that many of our members seem to do is play about on crags they have climbed on far too often!

Oread! Get a grip on yourselves and get the standard back to a level worthy of our founders. Climb to your limits, on a top rope if necessary, and don't be content with yourselves - we all have far to go!

T.S. Panther.

This letter from Trevor Panther is characteristic of that ebullient and amiable member and is to some extent justified. But it seems to me to express too extreme a view.



After all, we do climb principally for pleasure, and that includes easy and familiar climbs as well as desperate battles; it even includes childish games and sheer downright idleness. There is no need to live at full pressure the whole time. Even the fiercest enjoy an occasional frolic.



Camping in Derbyshire.  
L-R. John Welbourne, Ray  
Handly, Judy, Brenda and  
Fred Allen with children  
Ruth Botger (Welbourne),  
John Fisher, Betty Bird.



Camping on the Bowling Green,  
Froggett.  
Ann and Mike Gadd, Ray Handly, Mike  
Moore, Brian and Marian Cooke.





119 DERBY ROAD,  
DUFFIELD,  
DERBY.