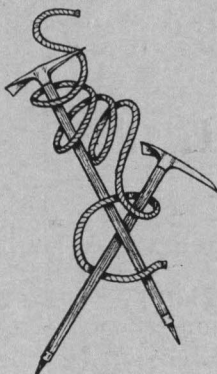


# THE SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL

EDITED BY J. H. B. BELL



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THE SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING CLUB  
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## **EDITORIAL NOTE.**

### **The S.M.C. and the War.**

WE hope to include in the November issue a list of those of our members who have joined H.M. Forces and are serving in the war. It has been decided not to print such a list in this number on the ground that the information is still incomplete. We therefore appeal to all concerned to notify the Hon. Secretary as to the facts and of any changes, so that the record may be accurate and up to date.

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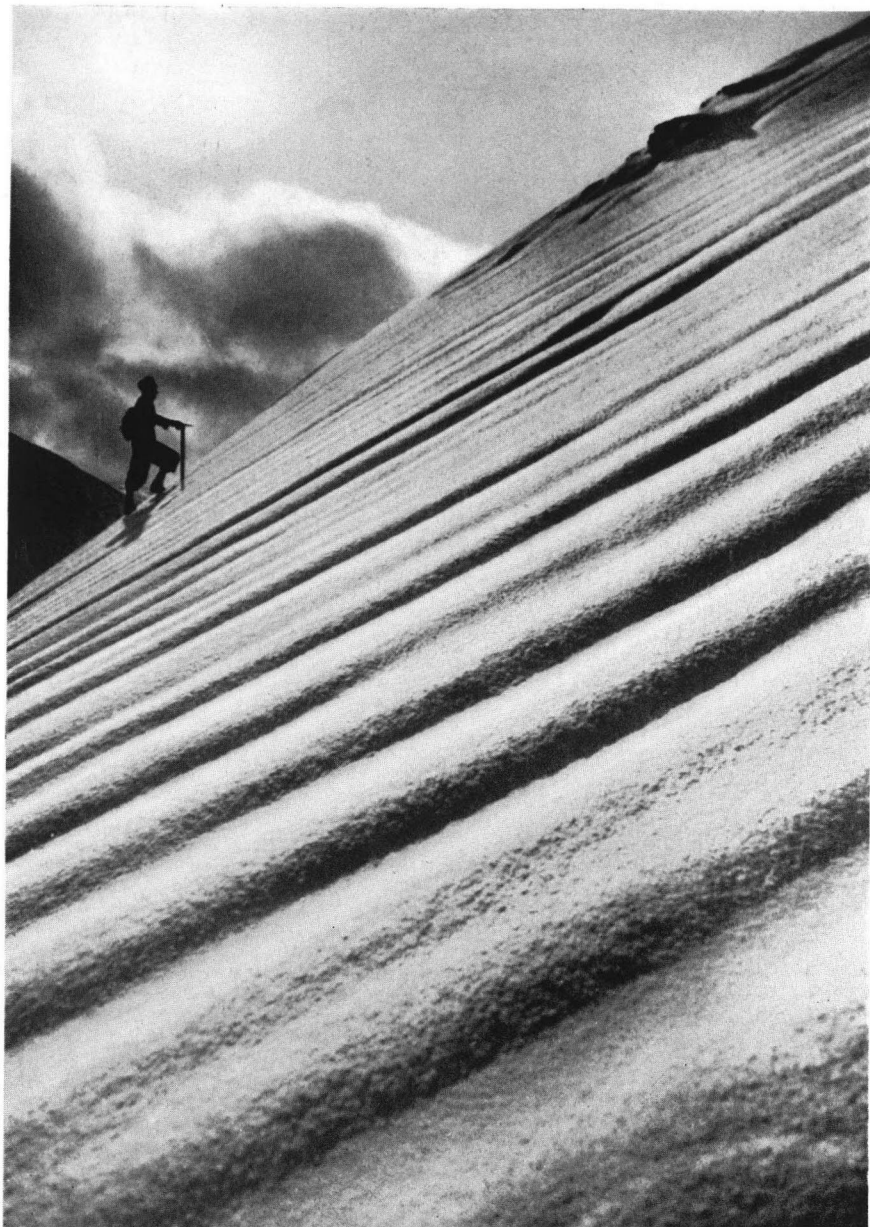
### **Index to the Journal, Vols. 11-20, 1910-1935.**

Copies of this Index, in paper covers and uniform in size with the *Journal*, may be obtained from the Assistant Editor, price 2s. 8d. post free. A large number of copies are still available.

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All Notices for November Number should be sent to the Hon. Editor, DR J. H. B. BELL, THE KNOWE, CLACKMANNAN, as soon as possible, and not later than 1st October 1940.

Copies of the *Journal* can be obtained from the Agents or through any Bookseller.



*February 1939*

#### WIND-FURROWED SNOW

*B. H. Humble*

Near summit of Buchaille Etive Beag, Glencoe. The furrows were parallel and ran downwards with the slope from west to east. The effect was not seen elsewhere on the mountain. On the previous evening there was driving rain on the moor and a very strong wind from the west with some new snow on the tops.

# THE SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL

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## VALHALLA.

By J. H. B. Bell.

THERE is an old Eastern story about a garden of Paradise situated somewhere amidst the hills of Asia Minor, but so carefully hidden away that its existence remained a legend. The delights of this garden were such as might be dreamed of by the unrestrained imaginations of the faithful. It was said that those who were destined to do great deeds in the wars of the Prophet against the nations of the unbelievers were privily given a sleeping potion and transported to this garden of delight. There they were allowed to enjoy the delights of Paradise for a time before being brought back to the everyday world, steeled with unconquerable resolution to regain such bliss by faithfulness unto death in battle against the infidel.

Perhaps the whole story is a superstition and only an ancient and more romantic variant of the "Strength through joy" cult of our own day, the efficacy of which remains to be proved; but the theme is an inspiring one, and it may be that the experience of the mountaineer holds something in common with it.

With this preamble, it may be stated that yet another account of an ascent of the Tower Ridge of Ben Nevis is contemplated. On the face of it there can be nothing remarkable or noteworthy about such an expedition. The brothers Hopkinson climbed it in the year 1892, some time before the present writer and a most considerable time before his two companions were born; and the Tower Ridge under most varieties of conditions,



summer or winter, is about the most popular climbing expedition on the Scottish mountains. The author can only plead the defiant remarks of Mummery in extenuation of his frequent visits to the Matterhorn.

*"For myself, I am fain to confess to a deplorable weakness in my character. No sooner have I ascended a peak than it becomes a friend, and delightful as it may be to seek 'fresh woods and pastures new,' in my heart of hearts I long for the slopes of which I know every wrinkle, and on which each crag awakens memories of mirth and laughter and of the friends of long ago. As a consequence of this terrible weakness I have been no less than seven times on the top of the Matterhorn. . . . The idea which cleaves unto the orthodox mountaineer that a single ascent, on one day, in one year, enables that same mountaineer to know and realise how that peak looks on all other days, in all other years, suggests that he is still wallowing in the lowest bogs of Philistinism."*

I for one, at any rate, can never forget my first attempt on the Tower Ridge in wintry garb, in company with F. S. Smythe at the Easter Meet of 1925, when we were overawed and repulsed at the Tower Gap, and ended up by dragging our weary steps at a very late hour into Fort William. The really dangerous part of the expedition was our tramp, half asleep, along the railway line from the foot of the Allt a' Mhuilinn, when a belated goods engine sneaked up silently behind us, and we only escaped destruction by a sudden and instinctive leap down the bank. Otherwise it was a well-conducted expedition and retreat, and it was gratifying to meet Mr J. A. Parker, the President of the Club, in the main street that night, who contented himself by recommending us to have a good supper, and did not once utter that ill-omened word *Search-party*.

Both Smythe and I had approached the Ridge in the spirit of exploration. We had not read up the "Guide." We climbed the Douglas Boulder by the rocks of the south-east face, and we only decided to have a go at the Tower Ridge when we were on the summit of the Boulder long after 2 P.M. No one had been up that Easter, but

two well-known climbers had already retreated from the Little Tower earlier in the same day. So we did not attempt to force the Little Tower directly, but descended somewhat and traversed round it on a steep, snowy shelf above Coire na Ciste. With a good deal of step-cutting we reached the base of the Great Tower at close on 5 P.M., and at 5.45 P.M. were faced with the awesome, frost-crystallised draperies of the Tower Gap. There was a dense mist and we could not tell what frightfulness lay beyond, so prudence won the day. It is interesting to reflect that at the Easter Meet of 1929 a party composed of Smythe, E. E. Roberts, C. W. Parry and myself were driven back from the Little Tower by a blizzard, and that it was not until April 1932 that I realised my ambition, when R. M. MacIntyre and I completed the ascent in five hours of strenuous climbing. The Douglas Boulder went direct on that occasion, as the small ledges were nearly snow-free, but the Little Tower took about two hours of hard and difficult step-cutting on the ice-plated, shelving slabs overlooking the Observatory Gully. Compared with this section the Great Tower was not so difficult. There was a glorious sun and complete absence of wind; in fact, I enjoyed a snow bath on the summit of the Ben.

The Tower Ridge, although it is the easiest of the great ridges of Nevis under winter conditions, has perhaps more elements of variety and interest than the others. There is a good deal less continuous strain than one experiences on the Observatory Ridge, where the most trying section under snow conditions is more than half-way up. At Easter 1939 the Observatory Ridge would not go at all, whereas the Tower Ridge was easy. On the last day of April, a month later, W. H. Murray, W. M. Mackenzie, and I took six and a half hours to climb the Observatory Ridge; yet, next day, in the same perfect weather, Murray and I climbed the North-East Buttress by Raeburn's Arête in about four and a half hours. The arête took two and a half hours, and the main difficulty was to regain the crest of the ridge some distance above the First Platform, but here there are good, inward sloping ledges available, so long as one is not overawed by the

accumulation of snow. Of course, in spring, the North-East Buttress gets a good deal of sun early on in the day, which makes all the difference. I have no winter climbing experience on the Observatory Buttress, but it seems certain that the main difficulty on that route, as it is a kind of bottle-neck of a chimney furnished with very small ledges, will suffice to render this climb by far the most severe of the Nevis ridges in winter. The difficulty lies high up on the mountain, and it is completely protected from the kindly offices of the sunshine.

Conditions are usually very different after the first heavy snowfalls before New Year. Then the standard of difficulty may be just as great on the lower rocks as it is near the summit. When I looked out of the Hut at about half-past six on the Sunday morning of 17th December 1939 everything was dull and cloudy, but there was a keen frost. The previous evening had provided us with a fine display of aurora borealis to light our way up the Allt a' Mhuilinn glen. When W. H. Murray, D. Laidlaw, and I had breakfasted and were slowly making our way to the foot of the rocks it was a clear, cold day with plenty of sunshine on Carn Mor Dearg and a fringe of cloud racing over the saddle at the head of Coire Leis. The Observatory Ridge was turned down as impossible, and we resolved to tackle the direct ascent of Douglas Boulder. Here we were completely out of our reckoning. The rocks were coated with *verglas* and covered with layers of dry powder snow. Steps were very difficult to make, and we soon found ourselves in impossible situations. After two abortive attempts we beat a retreat and proceeded to stamp our way up the Observatory Gully until it was possible to link up a zigzag course of snowy ledges and gain the crest of the Tower Ridge half-way between the Douglas Boulder Gap and the first steep rocks of the ridge beyond. There was no frost crystallising, and steady progress was made to the base of the Little Tower, which we reached before 1 P.M.

Here the difficulties started in earnest. A steep, slabby section with good holds took us to a little chimney. Then we had to traverse to the left, hoist ourselves over

a mantelshelf, and embark upon a longish traverse on treacherous snow-covered slabs. A severe little chimney was the only way of breaking through the impending cliff, and then more slabs returned us to the crest of the ridge where the going was much easier for a matter of 100 feet or so. We were now faced by a 15-foot rock wall. In summer conditions this may be ascended direct, although even then it is a bit of a hard struggle. But now the wall was plastered with ice and frost crystals, and an exploration to the right along the ledges above the Coire na Ciste was not hopeful. So we were again forced to do more traversing on the left over the unstable powder snow and the slabby ledges. A short descent was followed by a pull over a nasty corner, and the way led upwards for a considerable distance over the same sort of terrain—a gingerly sort of progress without much in the way of secure holds and more than a suspicion of crawling. However, it did lead us to the crest of the ridge, and so over easy ground to the base of the Great Tower at 3 P.M.

Even although the Eastern Traverse presented its customary forbidding appearance of exposure and precariousness we had no hesitation as to our course. There was little time to waste if we were to avoid getting benighted on the mountain, and it was quite clear to all of us that the Traverse was the lesser of the evils. I advanced on the rope along the thin band of snow and was reassured to find it firm and reliable. Then Murray took the lead, and I joined him at the point where it becomes necessary to descend and cross a small scoop. There was a splendid snow belay available, so when Murray had crossed the scoop I brought along Laidlaw and passed him on as well. We were soon inside the little chimney where there is a through route in summer. The passage was blocked with snow, so Murray climbed up on the outside and we two came up from the inside with the assistance of the rope, as this way is shorter but involves one very difficult step. More traversing followed, and then Murray proposed to ascend direct to the top of the Tower. However, he encountered such difficulties and

foresaw such an expenditure of time that we decided that it would be better to continue the traverse, so as to reach the crest just short of the Tower Gap. It may be pointed out that there was another choice. It is possible to traverse downwards and work across the face below the Gap, but this would involve a difficult ascent in order to regain the ridge farther on. So the line adopted was moderately upwards, up a crack behind a flake of rock. This movement is trying, but there is a secure belay. Another difficult corner follows before one can make directly for the crest of the ridge.

As Laidlaw and I waited at the top of the flake and paid out the rope inch by inch to Murray, any anxiety which we might have felt about the outcome of the day's adventure was forgotten as we contemplated the gorgeous pageant of sunset. We were in a curious situation, for we had never enjoyed a single ray of sunshine throughout the day. It was always above us and elsewhere. Now we were only spectators of the reflection of a sunset, but our elevation enabled us to gaze on the brilliant rose-pink of the snows on Carn Mor Dearg, the Aonachs, and the more distant ranges, tints as brilliant as those of any Alpine sunset and even more varied and delicate. As the moment of sunset approached the changes became more rapid—from golden to delicate rose-pink, then to full-blooded crimson, and finally, quite suddenly, to a ghostly pallor. The visibility extended to the Cairngorms, which seemed to be floating in a luminous golden haze; and the line of the horizon was marked by a pale blue band. Just before sunset this band developed a semicircular and darker protuberance about the apex of the shadow of Ben Nevis. As the sun went down this "anti-sun" rose and swelled out more and more. About a minute later the blue band along the horizon became again level and darker in colour. Then it gradually broadened, shading from purple through violet to a brilliant heliotrope, above which the sky was bright green slowly merging into grey-blue higher up—an intensely cold sunset, typical of fine weather and hard frost. This was the first time that I experienced the



Scottish counterpart of the phenomenon so graphically described by Sir Leslie Stephen in connection with a sunset viewed from the summit of Mont Blanc.\*

Meanwhile Murray was leading in a gingerly manner round a corner and the rope was running out by inches at a time. For long periods nothing whatever seemed to be happening; then there came a thunderous roar of great slabs of hard snow falling clear past an overhang into the depths of Observatory Gully. At length Murray pulled in the slack and summoned me to join him. As I proceeded I ceased to wonder at the time taken by the leader. There had been much step-cutting on small and insecure ledges, and it was a fine piece of leadership. A further short run-out of rope saw Murray on the crest of the ridge where we eventually joined him. It was very late indeed, but we hardly troubled about that, for the sight held us spellbound. We looked across the depression between Nevis and Carn Dearg as if through a "magic casement" to a golden-orange sea of cloud stretching away over the Atlantic, and still fringed on the horizon by the fiery line of retreating day. The sea was perfectly level but delicately moulded into orange wavelets. It was lapping against the walls of Ben Nevis itself, creeping up the valley of the Allt a' Mhuilinn, breaking in torn waves against the Carn Dearg Buttress—peacefully but inexorably advancing like the sweep of night. We felt that we were looking "on the foam of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn," and it was not difficult to enter into the imaginative soul of the old Gaelic bards who gazed across the western seas at sunset with the assurance that somewhere amidst these distant fiery wavelets must lie the Tir-nan-Og, the isles of the blest and the ever-young.

But there were hard realities to be faced, and a sweep of icy wind soon set us moving along the crest. It was easy to lower ourselves into the Tower Gap, but the far side was sheathed in ice and frost crystals, menacing and impossible looking. Murray made the first attempt

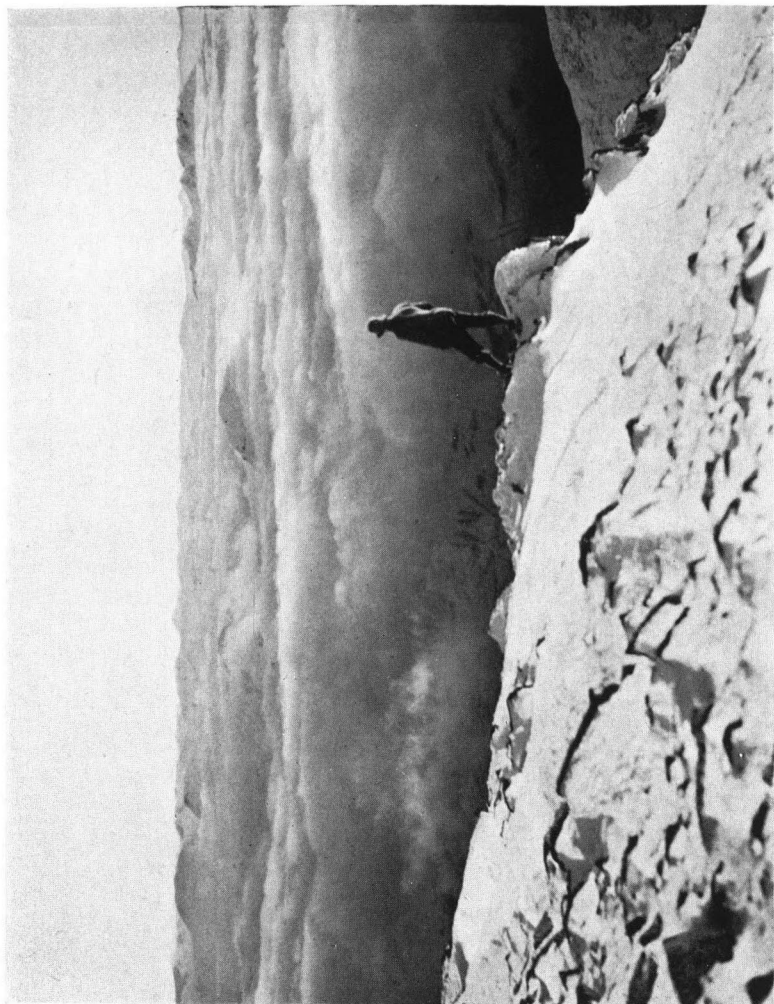
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\* Leslie Stephen, "The Playground of Europe."

to scale the wall by means of the groove overlooking Glover's Chimney, but he could make nothing of it: then I had a look at the flank above Tower Gully, but I fared no better. There was no longer any rhapsodising about nature, for the keen wind whistled through the Gap, and our one thought was to avoid benightment in such inhospitable regions. We had 180 feet of line, and we thought of retreating down the ice slope into Tower Gully; but the long descent of Observatory Gully would have taken hours in the darkness, especially by three dispirited and defeated men. There must surely be some other way. Then someone hit upon the idea of throwing the rope over the rocky bulge above us. This was not altogether easy on account of the wind, but eventually it was done. It just happened that it was my end of the rope which drew up tight against the icy groove, so up I had to go like a sack of corn, with much undignified clawing and scrabbling, but, of course, I retained the naïve illusion that I was only receiving moral support from the rope. Later on, when I was securely anchored above and was helping the others, I revised this first impression, although it must be admitted that the whole manœuvre did not take a long time to execute.

One lesser difficulty followed at a little groove between some huge blocks, and the way was clear to the steep, shallow chimney at the top. The snow was very deep and powdery, and it was necessary for the party to anchor carefully as the leader clambered up the final short wall on to the level snowfield. There was no cornice. As we took off the rope on the summit plateau and shook hands on our hard-earned victory the time was about a quarter to six.

As becomes Scottish mountaineers, heirs to the Munro tradition and no mere rock or ice gymnasts, we advanced to the summit of the Ben. There was still a faint orange glow in the west and one bright, twinkling light at the edge of that cloudy sea. Murray thought it was a light-house, but the idea was fantastic. The light shone out brightly for about a minute and then vanished for good. It was our first sight of the planet Venus as an evening



*G. A. Collie*

ON BEN NEVIS

(looking south-east; Bidean nam Bian in the right distance)

*December 1939*

star. The night was brilliant with moon, stars, and planets. Jupiter, Mars, and Saturn shone brightly, almost in a straight line. The moon was about first quarter and the crests of the cloud waves shone like silver. Except for two small rocky islets, the summits of Sgurr a' Mhaim in Mamore and Bidean nam Bian in Glencoe, the cloud sea was unbroken. Perhaps it was the spiritual exuberance of victory, but we all felt supremely fit and light of foot: the air was no longer chill but invigorating, like wine. The frost was actually keen, for the knees and seats of our breeches were hard as boards. I think that we all wished that we could go on climbing for ever in that cheerful moonlight and limpid atmosphere.

We raced down over the hard snow and boulders to the upper funnel of the Red Burn gorge, and so to the cloud level. Suddenly the waves of mist surged about us, the moon vanished, and we thought wistfully of that serene world which we had left behind, where for a brief space we had striven and walked as gods. Downwards we scrambled, slid, and stumbled until, all of a flash, we seemed to fall through the ceiling of the underworld. Actually the cloud layer was only about 800 feet thick, and we were now about 300 feet above the place where the pony track crosses the Red Burn. We were in a sort of murky twilight, but perfectly clear, for we could see the Lochan Meall an't Suidhe and the black trench of Glen Nevis, and no torches were needed to help us to trudge down the track.

For us, in our chastened mood, the murk was symbolical of the civilisation to which we were returning, where the Bill Sikeses, great and small, could always say, "There's light enough for wot I've got to do."

**NOTES ON THE CHEVIOT HILLS.**

**By the late A. Webster Peacock.**

PEEL FELL (1,976 feet), forming the western end of the Cheviot Hills, stands at the head of Liddesdale. The lower slopes of the hill to the west are mostly covered with coarse tussock-grass, giving place to heather on the higher levels, but rock, with the exception of a few outcrops, is lacking. The largest of these is the well-known Kielder Stone on the east side of the hill, just below the 1,500-foot contour. In appearance suggestive of a travelled boulder, it is really live rock which, from its greater hardness, has resisted denudation better than the surrounding surfaces. The Border Line between Scotland and England passes over the top of the Fell and intersects the Kielder Stone.

From Peel Fell the ridge of the watershed runs almost due north for over  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles, the highest top being Carlin Tooth (1,801 feet), which shows a series of jagged outcrops of sandstone crowning the western escarpment. A mile and a quarter east of the Tooth is Knocks Knowe, and just beyond it an old road, densely overgrown with heather and bent, crosses the ridge. This had served, long before the coming of the railways, for the carriage of coal from the North Tyne pits. Carlin Tooth and Knocks Knowe are almost entirely heather-covered, and great peat-hags are very frequent along the summit, making very heavy going in wet seasons. About  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles east of the latter is the western top of Carter Fell (1,815 feet), a long, flat-topped, grassy hill, which attains its greatest height (1,899 feet)  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles farther on, and breaks down sharply at Catcleuch Shin to Carter Bar, where the Edinburgh-Newcastle road crosses the watershed and Border Line at a height of 1,405 feet above the sea.

Many years ago limestone was quarried to a considerable extent on the north face of Carter Fell, and dotted over the hill are a number of filled-up shafts where coal for burning the stone was mined.

This group of hills is easy of access both by road and rail. At its western end the road through Liddesdale to



the valley of the North Tyne passes along the southern base of Peel Fell and has two connections from the north: one from Hawick up Slitrig Water, and over Limekiln Edge, joining the Dale road about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles east of Steel Road Station, the other from Jedburgh by Hobkirk and Note o' the Gate, reaching the Dale at Saughtree. The branch line of railway from Riccarton Junction on the Waverley route to Hexham and Newcastle has a station at Deadwater, close to which a track leaves the main road and runs up the Peel Burn along the west base of the Fell.

Carter Fell and the neighbouring hills are most easily reached from the Edinburgh-Newcastle road above-mentioned, which is joined, close to Carter Bar, by a road from Hawick.

For several miles to the east of the Bar the watershed ridge keeps but little below the 1,500-foot contour, and strung along it are many tops, none of which call for special mention. The going in many places is very heavy on account of the coarse tussock-grass which, as one travels eastward, supplants the heather to an increasing extent. Not until Windygyle—or Windyrig—is reached, some 11 miles in a straight line from Carter Bar, but about half as much again following the ridge's windings, do we meet with anything of greater height than Peel Fell. Windygyle rises to 2,034 feet and is crowned by an enormous cairn. As seen from the north this hill forms, with the exception of The Cheviot, the most conspicuous summit of the range. Beyond Windygyle the ridge rises, tending more to the north, and finally dies out against the mass of The Cheviot at its south-west corner, at a height of 2,422 feet. The Border Line, following the ridge, reaches here its highest level, and from this point bends sharply back in a west-north-west direction to gain the ridge enclosing the College Burn on the west. Along this ridge are several summits, the first reached being Auchope Cairn (2,382 feet), an excellent viewpoint for west and north. From the Cairn the ridge falls sharply and nearly due west some 800 feet to a col which forms the head of the College Glen, and

looks down into the Hen Hole, a rocky ravine of The Cheviot. From this col the ridge bends again, and runs thenceforward in a north-north-west direction, rising by a long ascent to the top of The Schil (1,985 feet), crowned, like Windygyle, with a great cairn. Beyond The Schil the ridge drops about 400 feet and rises again to Black Hag (1,801 feet), the last top of any importance. This ridge forms the eastern end of the Cheviots, so far as Scotland is concerned. All the tops mentioned, with the exception of Carlin Tooth, are intersected by the Border Line, but to the north and west of this there is a considerable area of hill country, many of the tops being over 1,500 feet, but all rounded and mostly grassy.

The western part of this section of the hills is easily reached by the Edinburgh-Newcastle road at Carter Bar; for the middle portion the nearest motor road is that from Morebattle to Hownam and Upper Hindhope, all along which many hill-tracks branch off leading up to and over the Border Line; while the eastern hills are well served by the road from Yetholm up the valley of the Bowmont.

This eastern portion of the hills has many points of historical and antiquarian interest. A short distance to the east of Carter Bar is the site of the Redeswire Fray, a Border fight which took place in 1575 on the occasion of a meeting of the Scottish and English Wardens of the Marches for the settlement of the ever-recurring disputes and complaints on either side, and ended eventually in a victory for Scotland.

About 7 miles farther on, lying just on the English side of the boundary line, is the Roman camp, or cluster of camps, at Chew Green, often, but wrongly, named *Ad Fines*. Skirting the eastern ramparts of the camp runs the great Roman highway (known on the English side of the Border as Watling Street), which formed the Romans' main line of advance into Scotland. Windygyle, as above-mentioned, is crowned by an enormous cairn, and has another of nearly equal size a short distance eastward; both undoubtedly of prehistoric date, though the latter has come to be known as "Lord Russel's

Cairn," thereby commemorating another tragic Wardens' meeting in 1585, when that nobleman was shot dead by one of the Scots present. Here, and for some distance to the eastward, several cleuchs, the burns in which form the headwaters of the Bowmont—Kelsocleuch, Kingseat, Cheviot, and Sourhope burns—descend from the watershed ridge. In all these cleuchs there is an extraordinary number of prehistoric earthworks of various kinds—forts, tumuli, and long lines of entrenchments—indicating that at some far-back period this area had had a large population.

The Cheviot, or High Cheviot as it is sometimes called, in addition to being the highest summit of the range (2,676 feet) covers a much larger area than any other, extending nearly 5 miles from east to west by fully 3 miles from north to south. Its slopes are for the most part very gentle, covered mostly with coarse grass and here and there stretches of heather. The top forms a table-land nearly one-third of a square mile in extent, this area being almost wholly a peat-bog with great pools of muddy water. In early summer, however, it gains a fleeting beauty from the exquisite white cups of the cloudberry, which thickly cover it from end to end. There are only two points on the hill, so far as I am aware, where rock shows to any extent, one being the Hen Hole, a ravine already referred to, at the head of the College Burn, where several scattered faces of rock might yield at least some scrambles; the other is on the north side of the hill, where the Bizzle Burn has cut a deep gorge. This I have not visited, but have heard that some climbing is to be found there. Certainly on the 6-in. O.S. map the rocks here are shown much more continuous than those of Hen Hole.

The Cheviot may be reached from two stations on the line from Cornhill (Coldstream) to Alnwick—Kirknewton on the north and Wooler on the east, the respective distances therefrom to the top being about 11 and 12 miles. From Kirknewton a road leads up the beautiful glen of the College Burn, some 6 miles of this being practicable for a car, and about 3 miles farther, at the

head of the glen proper, and forming a right-angled continuation of it, is the entrance to the Hen Hole, which heads practically straight for the highest point. If an ascent by the Bizzle Burn be preferred, the glen should be left about 5 miles from Kirknewton, at Southernknowe, whence a hill-road runs up the Lambden Burn, of which the Bizzle is a tributary. From Wooler the road running south skirts the hillfoot to Shining Pool, where it enters the fine glen of the Harthope Burn. A car can be taken up this as far as Langleeford, 7 miles from Wooler, and the path by the burnside followed thence to Langleeford Hope, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles farther and just above the 1,000-foot contour, before taking to the hill. From here the ascent is a very easy one over short heather and grass to the rim of the summit-plateau.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTES.

**By John Dow.**

THE foregoing notes were sent to me by Mr Webster Peacock in the spring of 1932 as a contribution towards the proposed "Lowlands Guide Book," and are printed as written.

The Cheviots have not received much attention from contributors to the *Journal*, chiefly, no doubt, because the higher tops are either on or south of the Border, but also on account of the remoteness and unattractive nature of most of the terrain. The summit of The Cheviot itself is probably as unattractive a "supreme spike" as can be found in the whole extent of Great Britain; and the higher ground on the Border is generally rough and boggy and of little value either for sheep farming or for sporting purposes. No one need visit the Cheviots in search of scenic beauty or exciting views, or even for pleasant walking; but one may in their central and western recesses be more solitary than in Sutherland. The wide, dull, peaty moors have a curious boding, yet not hostile atmosphere of their own, not altogether due to historical sentiment; though one might imagine a Cheviot lass, rather than a Highland lass, singing "for old unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago."

Probably the best book dealing with the Cheviots is "The Border Line" (Second Edition published 1926), by J. Logan Mack, who had considerable assistance in its preparation from Webster Peacock, and also from Sang who was Secretary of the S.M.C. at that time. Apart from some notes by Stott at p. 130 of Vol. I. and in a contribution by Webster Peacock at p. 155 of Vol. XIII., the only items in the *Journal* dealing with the district are Glover's Guide Book article at p. 278 of Vol. IX. and some references in Percy Donald's "2,000-foot Tops of the Lowland Uplands" at p. 100 of Vol. XX. The *Rucksack Club Journal* has an article by R. B. Brierley in Vol. I., p. 252, and there are two interesting contributions by Corbett in Vol. II. at pp. 167 and 286, also notes of a traverse of the range by J. Wilding at p. 209 of Vol. VIII. Wilding suggests that a strong walker could follow the whole watershed from Deadwater to Wooler in a day, but this undertaking would almost rank with the famous Coolin traverse; it would involve over 40 miles of rough walking, and at least 5,500 feet of ascent.

The most convenient centre from which to visit the highest group of tops is Town Yetholm, an attractive village where comfortable accommodation is available. From here a good road runs south up the valley of the Bowmont Water to Sourhope (for The Cheviot, Comb Fell, and Hedgehope Hill) with a fork to Cocklawfoot (for Windygyle, Bloodybush Edge, and Cushat Law).

The only motor road over the range is the Edinburgh-Newcastle highway from Carter Bar to Otterburn. To journey leisurely round it by car is an interesting day's run—the route is devious, and on the English side the nearest roads are separated from the hills by 10 to 12 miles of rolling moorland, crossed by numerous, mostly ancient and often barely decipherable, paths. Leaving Town Yetholm by the bridge over the Bowmont Water and through Kirk Yetholm, the road crosses north into England just beyond Yetholm Mains, and then swings east and south-east to Westnewton (see (2) below) and Kirknewton, and below the shapely cone of Yeavinger



Bell (1,182 feet) with its prehistoric summit earthworks, to Akeld, and passing the battlefield of Homildon Hill on right, to Wooler (3). From here the main road may be followed to Glanton, though there is a choice of side-roads on the west via Middleton, Ilderton, and Hedgeley Moor (4). From Glanton there is again a choice of roads via Great Ryle and Netherton to Alwinton (5), thence via Harbottle, Holystone, and Elsdon to Otterburn on the cross-road. From Otterburn there is again a choice of roads via Elishaw and Greenhaugh to Falstone in the North Tyne Valley, whence the route continues up the valley to Deadwater (for Peel Fell with its two cairns—Scottish and English) where the road crosses north into Scotland. It then goes by Saughtree and Note o' the Gate to Chesters, thence by alternative roads to Edgerston and Pennymuir (6), down the valley of Kale Water to Hownam, and back to Town Yetholm by the Morebattle road. The total distance is approximately 117 miles as follows:—

|                                    |         |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Town Yetholm to Westnewton . . . . | 8 miles |
| Westnewton to Wooler . . . .       | 6 „     |
| Wooler to Hedgeley Moor . . . .    | 8 „     |
| Hedgeley Moor to Alwinton . . . .  | 15 „    |
| Alwinton to Otterburn . . . .      | 14 „    |
| Otterburn to Falstone . . . .      | 16 „    |
| Falstone to Saughtree . . . .      | 15 „    |
| Saughtree to Chesters . . . .      | 12 „    |
| Chesters to Pennymuir . . . .      | 11 „    |
| Pennymuir to Town Yetholm . . . .  | 12 „    |

Six roads which are suitable for cars leading inwards from the “ circuit ” road towards the hills might be noticed:—

(1) Yetholm-Bowmont Water—already described. (2) Westnewton-Hethpool-College Burn Valley—easy access to The Cheviot and best route for Bizzle and Hen Hole rocks (*Journal*, Vol. IX., p. 279). (3) Wooler—Middleton Hall—Harthope Burn valley, Langleeford for The Cheviot, Comb Fell, and Hedgehope Hill. (4) Hedgeley Moor—Breamish Valley—Linhope, for Comb Fell, Bloodybush Edge, and Cushat Law. (5) Alwinton—Coquet valley, Barrowburn, for Windygyle (the Alwin Valley road, for Bloodybush Edge, is a rather poor one). (6) Pennymuir—Tow Ford—Hindhope, for middle part of range and Roman Camp at *Ad Fines*.

## NIGHT UP THERE.

*Some years ago a charming article under the above title appeared in the "Journal" from the pen of Sheriff G. D. Valentine ("S.M.C.J.," Vol. XVII., p. 35). The present Editor has borrowed this appropriate title for a short series of articles on a rather unusual aspect of our mountains. It is hoped to include one which will be a symposium of shorter experiences from a number of members, and brief contributions to this are invited from now onwards and throughout the year.—THE EDITOR.*

### I.—NIGHTS OUT.

By E. A. M. Wedderburn.

BOTH in the first number which he edited and in the last number of this *Journal* the present Editor has asked for articles on the less ordinary aspects of climbing. So far his request has met with little response. Now that the war is somewhat curtailing our climbing, perhaps more of us will sit down and, in gladdening the Editor, also recapture for ourselves past pleasures in writing out a few reminiscences.

A night out in the hills may be enjoyable or unpleasant, but it cannot fail to be memorable. Kugy, the king of bivouackers, in his book, "Alpine Pilgrimage," captures the fascination of nights out as does no other writer.

*"Those nights, in such strange surroundings and on so adventurous a journey, are deeply engraved in my memory. The cold rouses me, and I hear the gentle murmur of the Bistrice in the depth of the Vrata Glen. But instead of breaking the stillness of the night, it seems to deepen it. I look upward, heavy with sleep; black rocks overhanging, and the ghostly sheen of the fretted snow-wall; high over the cleft, the stars pass in slow succession. The figure of my companion crouches in the fantastic gleam of our bivouack fire, as he stirs and tends it, tireless in his care for me. Sparks fly up in wreaths from the fresh pine-branches; a smell of resin, and a clear crackling of logs; the light flickers; then once more the sinking shadows, the distant song of water, and an infinite silence about us. So the mountain night passes in the beauty of a dream. If you have thus dwelt in the secret heart of the mountains, beholding*

*the full glory of their revelation, as they unfold their signs and wonders from the going down of the sun to its uprising, nothing can efface the memory of such nights."*

These joys which Kugy describes belonged to the pioneers, and we with our huts and hostels are at a disadvantage. It is still possible to recapture the old joys, but it needs determination. Such determination seems to-day to be growing, and specially in Scotland. Elliot's night at New Year on Braeriach, Hamilton's on Nevis at New Year, or the many vagrants who crowd the caves round Arrochar all the year round are examples of a fairly widespread tendency.

My first night out in the mountains was one June on the alp of Solalex below the great face of the Argentine. We had determined to rival the pioneers, and gathered a huge store of wood. We built a fire below an overhang of rock, and were gradually driven by the heat nearer and nearer the brink of an inconsiderable precipice. This manœuvring, the constant stoking of the fire, and a plague of ants ensured a night not easily forgotten. Nevertheless, my strongest memories are of the scent of the alpenrose which was our bed, of the sullen rumbles as the snow slid off the great slabs above, and of the far-off tinkle of cow-bells as the uneasy sleepers on the pasture below stirred in their dreams of the bovine paradise.

That night, we hoped, was in the old tradition. Another equally primitive night I recall more vividly than the day on the Charmoz which followed. We had toiled with heavy loads up one of the steepest paths I know, from Chamonix towards the Glacier de Nantillons. Our intention was to sleep out as high up as possible so as to have a really long day on the peaks. Just below the moraine we came on a little group of chalets, the vacherie du Grand Chalet which was in charge of a young girl from Valais and her still younger brother. Sitting in the sunshine drinking milk, we soon realised that we had climbed far enough for a first day. We asked for permission to spend the night in the chalet, which, rather to our surprise, was gladly given. We passed the rest of the afternoon pleasantly assisting in operations essen-

tial to the production of milk. As it grew dark we prepared our supper and were ready to turn in. One hay-filled bunk was the only sleeping accommodation, and at first we feared we might be asked to sleep on the floor—no good exchange for the bed of juniper we had promised ourselves on the moraine. But it was soon made clear that we were all to share the only bed. While the lass still busied herself cleaning up her pots, we curled ourselves up in a corner of the bunk, making ourselves as small as possible. Try as we might we took up half the bed, and when the boy came in and lay down at the other end our modesty feared the worst. The girl went out, and in a few minutes we were intrigued to hear her calling to someone. Had we, we wondered, tumbled on some romance of the mountains? The mystery was soon explained when the girl returned, followed by a tinkling bell. Without ado she laid herself down on the remaining space of bunk, and at her call a large brown goat leapt after her and snuggled down between us. After that, all through the night one of us had only to turn in his sleep for the bell to ring warningly. When we got up in the early hours to go on our way we were greeted with a tocsin which followed us far up the glacier.

But one does not have to go to the Alps for memorable nights on the mountains, for it is easier to capture the tranquillity of the hills here in Scotland than in the tourist-thronged valleys of the Alps. Here, too, the soft lights and the mist are more pleasant than the harsh dramatic colouring of the higher hills. Nature in the Alps must often be convicted of overdoing the effects and of presenting scenes which are too artificial to create an impression of beauty, or even of grandeur. The finest bivouack I have had in Scotland was in Garbh Coire, below the Mitre Ridge. Every element that goes to make up a perfect evening was present. The long walk away from civilisation, the knowledge that the great mass of the Cairngorms was all around us, a splendid sunset, the gently murmuring stream, and the promise of a fine day's sport on the morrow, the outcome of which was in

doubt. It was very sadly that we left that corrie the next evening after a night under the stars in sleep neither deep nor continuous enough to rob us of its enjoyment, and a day spent in exploration on sun-baked rocks and on the scorching plateau of Beinn a Bhuird. Such nights make inaccessible climbs specially well worth while, but they can also be enjoyed in less remote high places if convention is cast aside. To traverse the Cuillin ridge is a worthy expedition, but we found it much more worth while because of a late start and a night spent in Fionn Coire. Next day we resumed our leisurely way with spirits fresher for their lack of contact with the world of men. And what if it did rain most of the night? He whose only covering was a copy of *The Times* was thus privileged and impelled to witness the sunrise from the peak of Sgurr a Fionn Coire.

Nights in the hills should not be entirely spent in sleep. The man who slumbers deeply all through a Highland night in some high corrie and does not wake at times to find the wonder of it thrilling his soul might as well be contributing to the prosperity of his country in some roadside inn. Sometimes it is good not to sleep at all, but to climb all through the night from dusk to dawn, and to see the hills in the new shape they take after sunset. One such night I spent on Aonach Eagach. While we traversed from peak to peak the stags roared eerily, now near now far, filling the night with a quintessence of longing which throbbed among the hills. The moon overtook us on our climb and filled Loch Triochatan with fairy gold. It was warm on the ridge that night and our climb was lengthened by fitful dozes, but in the valley the frost was white on the heather. This night has finer memories for me than a sunset on the summit of Mont Blanc, and a descent into the night through sparkling snowfields with Chamonix glittering below looking regrettably like some village fair.

These were well-chosen nights, not all carefully planned, but all premeditated. Some hill nights are unexpected, but not for that reason alone unpleasant. Many climbers have found themselves at nightfall on



difficult ground and have known how slowly time marches on exiguous ledges. But there is some reward in these experiences, either in the long-awaited rising of the sun or in looking back on them in comfort. Even the other type of unexpected night in the hills may have these pleasures. I mean the nights, now all too frequent, when, after a long day's climbing, continued effort is demanded by some fellow-climber's plight long after the call to rest has become imperative. There are sharp experiences. The joy of relaxation turned suddenly to tension. That first feeling not, alas, of Christian charity but of annoyance. The race up through the dusk. The unaccustomed sound of many voices in the quiet places of the hills. The inadequacy of our torches. The mist swirling round the crags, now menacing and relentless. The lurch of the stretcher. The detached feeling induced by fatigue. The uneasy quiet when the moor is reached. All *these* memories of the hills at night are strong and bitter, but their background of darkness gives them a dignity unknown to a daylight "body snatching" party.

Another memorable night was on the foothills of the Alps, those little mountains rising to some 8,000 feet, which the summer mountaineer notices only, and then with distaste, if the path to his hut lies over one. One winter's night in a high cow chalet, when the moon was full, we packed up the remains of a convivial evening, waxed on our skins, and stepped out into the clear darkness. As we climbed we quickly fell into the rhythm of our ski and for two hours slouched slowly up, the silence broken only by the crunch of snow. We were more than half-asleep as we topped the hill and stepped into the full glare of the moon. Down below, the slopes sparkled away into the shadows, and far beneath us the few lights of our hotel seemed like the reflection of stars in a mountain lake. Sleepily we stripped off our skins and smoothed the wax. Then reluctantly we were off, pushing over the brow. Slowly at first, and then faster and faster the slopes whirled up out of the shadows and slid past. It was like some bad dream in which the universe spins to meet you until you wake with relief to

find the steady, familiar stillness of your room. Suddenly, like a plunge into icy water, my brain was cleared, my ski responded to an attempt at a long, fast turn, and, no longer in a dream, I revelled in the rush of wind and the spray of snowdust in the moonlight as we darted down the slope. But it was not all like that, for in the half-light my ski-tips before me disappeared, and dips and rises merged into an impalpable future. Straining to stand on what seemed to be a sudden rise, I would find myself still speeding downhill faster than ever, and fields of apparently level snow would develop treacherous bumps under my very ski. The trees closed in on us, and we were back on the old familiar daily run. Our ski clattered on the icy track, and strange sights assumed familiar shapes as we skated down. Past they swung, suicides' leap, devil's gap, nose dive and all the rest, until with a final push of our sticks we skied on to the level road. We looked back. Aloof in the moonlight our little mountain soared ghastly white. We felt awed that we had been up there. Purified by that sight and by the fear and speed of the descent we walked back along the empty road. At breakfast next morning our feeble attempts to explain our great experience were met by two comments—"You missed a most amusing dance" and "In my day we didn't *slide* down hills."

Such contrasts we experienced on a rather different climb. Very early one summer morning we met at the foot of the Gentlemen's Climb on the Castle rock, easily identifiable above Castle Terrace, Edinburgh, but this time that short but delectable problem did not attract us. Instead, we traversed the artificial obstacles and reached the foot of the central buttress. We roped up in silence and began to climb. Already the sky in the east was growing pale and the stars were disappearing; in that it was like any other early morning climb. But, as we moved slowly upwards, strains of dance music, strangely pleasant in the distance, floated to us across the gardens, followed, just as we finished a pitch, by faint applause. And so, all the way we had music. In Wales I have seen a climber carry a gramophone to the

foot of a difficult virgin rock and, in time with the rhythm of the music, make a brilliant first ascent. But this first ascent of ours, with thousands sleeping all around and the music of the few wakeful revellers in our ears, adds a strangely piquant flavour to my memories of climbing nights.

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### CHALLENGE.

COME all ye Cuillin climbers that prance along the Ridge,  
Chimney wrigglers, buttress clingers too.  
Come all those willing to defy the ever-present midge;  
'Tis Deep Gash Gully speaking here to you.

Pray enter Coire Tairneilear and turn towards the right,  
Pass Slanting Gully with your nose in air.  
He's just a little fellow, but I'm a grander sight;  
I'm deep and dark and drive men to despair.

I hear the scrape of clinkers above me and around,  
But few have tried to set their mark on me.  
Ho! Is it that the climbers' skill in me its match has  
found—  
The Deep Gash Gully of Mhadaidh?

So come, ye gully gobblers, and taste of dank defeat.  
I daunt you, mock you, jeering from my lair.  
You who trust your lives to puny hands and feet—  
Who comes to answer Deep Gash Gully's dare?

J. C.

## THE FURTHEST HEBRIDES.

By E. W. Hodge.

IN July 1939 some English climbing friends and myself made a motor-boat expedition (the fourth or fifth) to oversea Scotland; this time to the Long Island and its dependencies: the Shiant, Flannan, Monach, and Barra groups. A fortnight and two days, starting from the Clyde, is little time for all this, especially when one spends time on the West Harris hills also. The weather, moreover, was consistently rainy and misty. Therefore, though it was always foremost in our plans, we did not do much climbing. But to us exploration was an equivalent for vertical ascent. Some lonely isle once reached, the walk or scramble to its highest point merely resembled the stroll about the summit rocks of a high peak—the cigarette after the meal. It was the big mainland hills from which we took our impulse to these travels. To some the natural development of those early expeditions which taught them first to love the Highlands seems to lie abroad. Good luck to them! But to us it seems to lie as much on the front line of the land's battle with the westerly winds and waves, where much of the mountain flora and the mountain weather and the most fantastic rock forms are found at sea-level in an essential continuity which is finely expressed by Robert Louis Stevenson in "The Merry Men," where he describes how the granite country of the Ross of Mull sinks unchanged beneath the sea.

The most striking characteristic which islands have in common is their great variety, and perhaps the reader will gather something of this from those I describe. Our first voluntary call, after attaining our desired latitude, was at South Rona. Rona, for instance, is quite unlike its neighbours—Skye, Crowlin, or Raasay—let alone the others mentioned in this article. Entering Rona one passes with dramatic suddenness between grand

little rocky portals into a land-locked fjord with wooded shores. A brief anecdote illustrates the island's character. Last year I had to decline the pressing invitations of one of the three aged inhabitants to stay for a longer talk. Like the old man in "Excelsior," he begged us not to try to reach Harris that night. He was somewhat reluctant even to point me the way back to the anchorage. "There used to be a way over the hill—but it's not for the likes of you." As I was in a hurry to rejoin my friends, I took what was, in my judgment, a short cut. After about twenty minutes of strenuous scrambling up and down little cliffs arranged like a labyrinth, and wading through bog, I had the humiliation of coming face to face with him again, calm, leisurely, and still hospitable. This time, knowing his advantage, he was even unwilling to point out the direction of the path by which I had originally come. Truly an "Island that Likes to be Visited"! I think he put a spell on us, for his prophecy of ill-luck that night came all too true.

The Shiant Isles are of a very different type from South Rona, though similar to Trodday, which lies rather more accessibly off the north point of Skye, and is nearly as fine though not as high. The Shiants, I think, are the north-westernmost land in Britain composed of the sheet-basalt, just as South Rona is, except for Iona, the south-easternmost island of the gneiss. Although three times as high as Staffa, their basalt columns cannot compare with those at the latter place, which are much more regularly formed and compact. Even at humble little Hysker, south of Canna, one walks upon nothing but a pavement of the broken off tops of pitchstone columns. Sea-water seems to blacken basalt, which otherwise weathers from a dull blue to a rather dreary brown. The scenery, though grand, is therefore rather gloomy. Of course, there are no trees: it seems almost absurd to imagine them in such grim surroundings. The north-east end of the bigger island is pierced by a natural arch. There does not appear to be much scope for orthodox rock-climbing, as, except where the slopes are too vertical to climb, the grass and treacherous rock



are mingled. Yet the general average steepness is pretty high all round the group, and even to attain the high ground on either side from the isthmus would demand scrambling and some care in the choice of a route. We arrived on one side of the isthmus just as an ornithologist reached the other in a fishing smack from Tarbert. The local puffins, it seems, have bills a tiny bit longer than normal. No one lives on the isles, although Mr Compton Mackenzie, the late owner, restored the two-roomed cottage which lies in a rather exposed position just south-west of the isthmus.

Some 20 miles north-west of the finest part of the Harris coast lie the Flannan Isles. Their steep sides, on which, but for the huge and incalculable pounce of the swell, one could have one's fill of excellent climbs, bend over into rounded grassy tops. These isles are of gneiss throughout, and so are quite different in aspect from the Shiantes. My recollection of the rich colours of the Flannan cliffs, as also of others in the outer isles, is fully borne out by a colour photograph I took which shows the thick pink stripes of coarse felspar and quartz rock alternating with the masses of finely banded black and white gneiss, like a great scheme of camouflage across the face of the cliffs. There are no beaches; at most in one or two places a shelf of rock may slope less steeply than usual. The only means of landing goods on the main island is by means of a crane fixed 30 feet or so above the water. Passengers, as the boat rises, make a grab for the steep rock-face, and if successful scramble up by slippery holds as quickly as possible out of the reach of the next swell. It would be interesting to see what means are adopted to embark and disembark the sheep, of which there are perhaps a score pastured on the group.

The lighthouse-keepers at Flannan said it was a rare thing for them even to sight a strange ship—a matter of months. I looked back through the "Album," which is always kept at lighthouses, and signature in which is, I believe, obligatory, but found no record for many years of any yacht having called, the signatures being apparently

all official. The same thing was the case even at Hysker the year before. Visitors (Baedeker might remark here) should not omit seeing the primitive chapel of St Flannan, complete with stone roof, and the earth-dwellings. Visitors might also look for the rare fork-tailed petrel, which the lighthouse-keepers say breeds here.

Because of their comparative inaccessibility, we wished to visit the Monach Islands, which lie half a dozen miles to the west of North Uist and are inhabited by some thirty people. I believe their small launches can put in at Paible, on the shore of Uist just opposite, but for us to visit them it was necessary to commit ourselves to the long voyage from the Sound of Harris to Barra on the exposed and harbourless side of the Uists, with some doubt about the possibility of anchoring at the Monachs. On the way we passed the Haskeir islets, wildly shaped rocks over which the surf must flow in rivers during a gale. These should be distinguished from Hysker (Oighskeir), which lies off Canna. Through the highest, Haskeir Aag (135 feet), is a natural arch. From a distant view on a St Kilda trip we had a memory of the southern cluster at Haskeir as a row of pillars. But now, either because their height—83 feet at most above high water—slightly disappointed us, or because landing did not look easy even on a moderate day, we passed them by. From here to the Monachs the sea is reef-infested and white with breakers on every side. It is this rocky outwork and foundation which renders possible the existence of the latter sandy isles in such an exposed spot.

On Ceann Iar, in the Monachs, amid terns and ring-plovers in thousands, we spent a happy half-day whilst Solari rebuilt one of our engines with solder and copper wire, eked out by genius. There are no mountains other than the sand dunes, which rise to some 40 feet. Here, like Robinson Crusoe, we saw fresh footprints: but the village was situate in Ceann Ear, across two half-tide fords, so we held no converse with the natives. Our chart showed the little bay by Monach village to be so full of rocks that we did not venture to sail into it. The cottages we saw were substantial and modern in type,

which rather damped our hopes of finding a primitive settlement to cast for the part of Ultima Thule once filled by St Kilda.

The eastern outlook from the Monachs is rather fine, the isolated hills and groups of hills on North and South Uist being close enough to look quite big. Nature has provided no other platform so convenient for viewing them. The farther west one goes, the nearer do mountain weather conditions descend to the sea. A shift of wind from the damp quarter, even though the general weather may be good, and the tops of very moderate hills are shrouded, much in the manner of three-thousanders on the mainland. This is rather different from the blanket of low-lying fog which may ensue in the finest weather where sea currents of different temperatures mingle or abut on the land. In the foreground the brilliant ocean sunshine; close at hand the purplish shadows on the hills. As we sailed southward the ridge of Ben More grew rapidly in bulk and swallowed up the sharp profiles of Hekla and Feavallach. The chart of the Sound of Barra showed many dangers for ships of deeper draught, but few to concern our small ship; quite otherwise was the Sound of Harris, which it would be as likely disastrous as not to sail carelessly and without directions. Our only difficulty was the usual self-made one of trying to pick up our landmarks an hour or more before they were really timeous—just the reverse of the fault one is on one's guard against when walking on the hills, where one is so apt to overshoot the rather inconspicuous mark of the turning.

I now realised an often thwarted ambition to visit the southern islands of the Barra group. The western cliffs of Berneray and Mingulay are truly grand and some of the most forbidding I ever saw—the surf at their base, and their tops so often lost in cloud. Their seaworn blackness is set off by great patches of bright yellow lichen and white guano, by vivid mosses and pink felspathic dykes and by wisps of vapour and spray. By contrast the eastern side of Mingulay showed us a smiling amphitheatre of meadowland full of handsome flowers.

"Don't do that," I cried as my friend sounded the foghorn. "You will bring the shepherd down from the hill for nothing!" But there was no shepherd. The abandoned village had in thirty odd years passed the stage of mere rubbishiness, and had achieved a sort of archæological picturesqueness. In a hollow, facing but hardly visible from the sea, the old "black" houses, now roofless, had been built huddled closely together as in a Swiss dorf—a style not so common in the Highlands. A little apart were a couple of modern houses, in habitable order but not occupied at our visit. Before leaving Mingulay we had an enjoyable scramble at a cave just north of the sandy beach.

I seem to hear someone ask whether after all such places are worth going all that way to see. Inaccessible pinnacles, arches, and the like are very common; but, as in the case of a mountain, the remoteness, the isolation, and the labour may well be the strongest inducements. As I have tried to suggest, there is no monotony about islands. Sharp contrasts on an island may lie within a stone's throw of each other—woods and inaccessible bird-cliffs, deer-forest and seal-cave. Many Munroes have no individuality at all, but most islands one visits have not merely a profile but a distinctive character. Their degree of exposure and of isolation, as well as size, height, and materials, are so many influences affecting that character. The outermost islands in particular seem to have a colourfulness, a lusciousness almost, which is all their own, whilst plants which can survive at all, like seathrift and chamomile, often make up by their copiousness for the fewness of the species. A special brilliance of sea and rock contributes there to a type of scenery which one feels it a select privilege to behold.

**A CROWBERRY COMMENTARY.****By A. C. D. Small.**

GEOFFREY WINTHROP YOUNG has expressed the belief that although mountains stay the same the ways by which we climb mountains must be continually altering if the craft of mountaineering is to retain its freshness and charm. Guide books unfortunately cannot contend with this transmutation, and are written simply to be put out of date. Into this category must come certain parts of the "Central Highlands Guide." It was a fate barely escaped at birth when the Rannoch Wall Climb was inserted as a footnote. But by now the ways of ascending such a piece of rock as the Crowberry Ridge have altered so much that a revaluation of the routes on it may serve as a yard-stick for testing climbing changes in Glencoe and other regions during the past four years.

The climbing section of the Crowberry Ridge is in shape a skewed, tapering rectangle with two additional folds on its right-hand side. This side is the more obliging flank, the front and the left sides are decreasingly so. There is no need to recite route details here, but a consideration of movement other than vertical is of help in elucidating the topography of the place.

Despite the restriction of the climbing on the Crowberry as a ridge, there is a great deal of communication between particular routes, and several areas provide scrambling in almost any desired direction. Chief of these are:—

1. The whole lower section under and including the platform gained from C Gully.
2. The basin lying between the pinnacle at the start of the Direct Route and the Shelf Route.
3. The slabs lying left of the Direct Route and above the Upper Ledge—actually the central section of the Fracture Route.



4. The slabby rocks between the Shelf Route, around the pinnacle section, and the crest of the Crowberry Ridge, including the top part of Hyphen Rib.

It might also be held that the slabs on the Direct Route come into this category.

Horizontal movement between routes is feasible at a great many points, and the type of manœuvre designated in Wales as a Rectangular Excursion can be indulged in with freedom and frequency. This freedom is a hindrance to the attainment of conciseness and accuracy in route descriptions, and where fresh discoveries have been made the incorporation of the new with the old requires explanation.

As it stands, the Shelf Route account forms a central theme on which to make variations. The original route lay up the course of the groove or gully, normally approached from basin (2). In the "Guide Book" diagram (p. 52) the start is shown rising from Crowberry Gully, but this seems more putative than habitual. Certainly, in the absence of snow anyone who is able to climb the gully wall should find little to trouble him on the upper sections. In summer, instead of the groove the preferable course is to follow the rock rib on the right, proceeding along the line shown by the letter "c" in the "Guide Book" diagram rather than that traced by the dotted line. The pioneer party then crossed leftwards to the crest of the ridge near the foot of the slabs on the Direct Route. However, the true prolongation of the route continues by the rock rib to a little pinnacle which is in line with the finish of Hyphen Rib. This is the hardest part of the Shelf Route, but there is plenty of choice, for the pinnacle can be passed either on the left or the right, or climbed to the top. The continuation is by a rock face, and finally by the groove to the level, broken up part of the ridge below the Tower. Of course, from the pinnacle moderate slabby rocks run across to the crest of the ridge (4) or to the top pitch of Hyphen Rib. Similar connections between Hyphen Rib and the Shelf

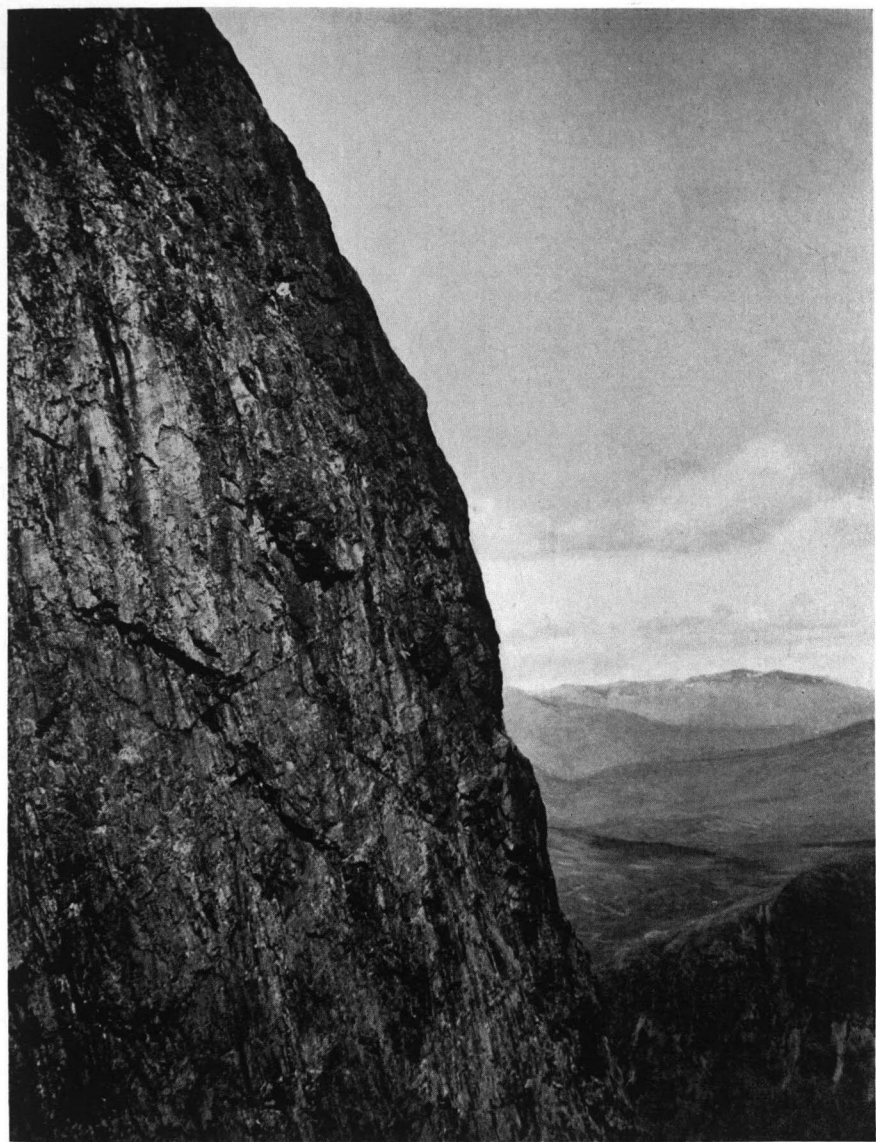
Route can be made on the lower pitches, although there is little call to do so. There is, however, a horizontal ledge half-way up the rock rib on the right above the start of the Shelf Route which, given careful treatment, affords access or egress to Crowberry Gully around Pitch Four.

It had better be explained that the diagram and photograph (p. 52) in the "Guide Book" are not to be relied upon implicitly at their upper extremities, owing to extreme foreshortening. The ridge does not flatten out in the way depicted by the photograph. In the "Guide Book" diagram the Direct Route should not slant right to the top letter "b" as drawn, but properly inclines left to a lower point on the crest of the ridge: nor should the Shelf Route come in left to the topmost letter "c." Its true line continues directly upwards through the Stygian gloom, shown in the photograph, for another 150 feet.

Hyphen Rib might also be provided by the purist with a start from Crowberry Gully, but ordinary mortals will remain content with the platform approach. To the follower in Naismith's footsteps by the original route, it may be helpful to say that the easiest way does not keep directly to the groove but on occasion diverges to the right.

On the front of the ridge the Direct Route maintains its supremacy. To those familiar with its attractions an interesting diversion traverses left at the Upper Ledge and goes by easy slabs to either of the top pitches of the Fracture Route, which has the curious distinction of being a route but is not yet a "climb." In other words, it has only been climbed with moral support from above, in the very practical form of 120 feet of climbing line. Straighteners may find occupation at the west end of Abraham's Ledge, for only one handhold is lacking in order to make direct connection with the open corner on the Direct Route, and even this lack may yield to patient search.

With Speirs' variation, complexity borders upon perplexity. The pioneer route started just before rounding the corner on Greig's Ledge, and proceeded mostly by

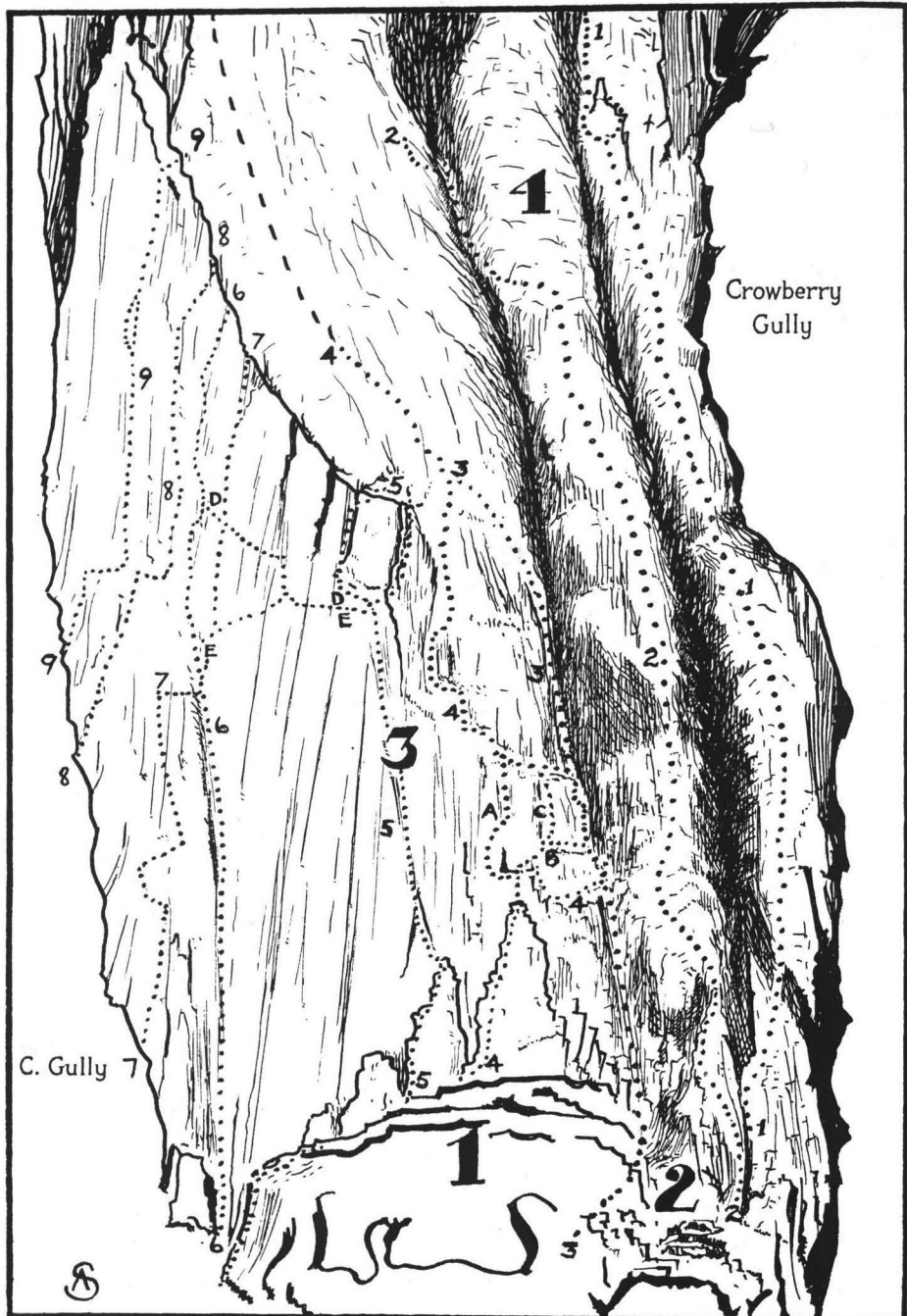


May 1939

*J. R. Wood*

RANNOCH WALL—BUACHAILLE ETIVE—AGAG'S GROOVE

(A. C. D. Small on block belay above the crux ; Miss E. M. Davidson approaching the crux)



DIAGRAMMATIC SKETCH OF CROWBERRY RIDGE

*A. C. D. Small*

the edge of the ridge with some movements to the right. More usually employed is a variant of this variation which begins a few feet beyond the corner and goes up the face above Greig's Ledge on large, incut holds to the same point. This variant is not so strenuous as the original variation.

Taken as a line of descent the Direct Route is interestingly altered. Reversing its somewhat one-pitch arrangement removes the usual atmosphere of anti-climax. A small rock lip on the open corner can be used as a belay to protect the sidle down Abraham's Traverse.

Several lines of weakness run from Fracture Route round the nose of the ridge on to the Rannoch Wall. At present only a single divergent route has been negotiated as far as Agag's Groove, and any continuation beyond this towards the Rannoch Wall \* Climb remains only in the realm of speculation. Undoubtedly this area, from Fracture Route southwards up the full extent of Rannoch Wall, will be the scene of the most notable future developments on the Crowberry Ridge. Westwards the terrain holds little prospect of fresh courses, unless the eastern bounding wall of Crowberry Gully is forced, but the discovery of the links between the various climbable, and as yet untouched sections of the Rannoch Wall should add a fine healthy bunch of new lines to the diagram. Since these fresh routes must open up parts of the Wall unprovided with ready-made lines of approach, to some degree they will almost certainly smack of artificiality. Interceptions of previous routes are bound to occur, and new climbs will doubtless consciously ignore the natural way up certain sections in order to preserve their claims to individual identity.

Agag's Groove is the longest, most direct route on the Wall and is the trade route for its neighbourhood. The original Rannoch Wall Climb, too, is a markedly

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\* It has been suggested, so as to minimise terminological ambiguity, and the suggestion has found favour with several experienced members, that this whole face be named RANNOCH WALL and that the original route be termed ROUTE 1.—EDITOR.



continuous line of ascent, and its crux is probably the more awkward of the two. However, it packs its good stuff into a very short stretch, whereas Agag's distributes its favours more evenly and with greater individuality. Red Slab Route makes its way parallel to the original route, and with it shares the distinction of incorporating a piton for belaying purposes. Although escape can be made from it, this route opens up a new portion of the wall and has a central section of adequate technical difficulty.

Satan's Slit roughly runs at an equal and opposite angle to that of Agag's. Its northward inclination takes it across the three routes already made over this section, and it cuts in turn Agag's Groove, the High Level Traverse, and Helical Route. These last two routes are the two connections between the front of the Crowberry Ridge and Rannoch Wall, and seem fated in time to form part of that last indignity of artificiality, a Girdle Traverse of the Crowberry Ridge. Satan's Slit is representative of the new order of climb, the sort that works out rock faces to three places of decimals, and in its linkage of pitches it has moments of considerable difficulty and delicacy.

Between Agag's Groove and Satan's Slit starts a companion route of the same calibre and inclination but of less technical difficulty, January Jig-Saw. Running to the right of Satan's Slit, its fairly parallel course takes the face by pitches that form simpler alternatives to the rigours of the more Mephistophelian cleavage, and both share the same finish. Helical Route, reached from the Direct Route, affords a comprehensive spiral across the high-lights of this section of the Crowberry Ridge.

In winter, conditions of the day will dictate the most practicable course, and resort must generally be made to the westerly obliging side of the ridge. Greatest difficulty is usually experienced towards the top of the climbing stretch of the ridge; the scramble and the Tower normally go satisfactorily. On the Direct, for instance, Abraham's Traverse may present no great trouble, but the slabs pitch may prove impossible if it is frozen, or, as more often happens, snow lies on ice. A combination of the

Direct for the lower part, with Hyphen Rib or the Shelf Route for the top section, is perhaps the most effective plan. No true snow and ice ascent of the Rannoch Wall has yet been effected, but it seems neither impossible nor improbable. Agag's Groove has twice been climbed in wintry conditions; on one of them snow was falling at intervals, and January Jig-Saw speaks for itself.

From all of which we may not unreasonably conclude that adequate alterations in the ways of climbing the Crowberry Ridge have put the retention of its freshness and charm in no serious danger.

Classification of climbs can never hope to satisfy everyone, but at worst they can provide the starting-point of the argument.

| Route.                                      | Standard.      | Remarks.  |
|---|----------------|---|
| 1. Shelf Route . .                          | Difficult      | Pinnacle pitch approaches very difficult.   |
| 2. Hyphen Rib . .                           | Difficult      | Slab Rib approaches very difficult.   |
| 3. Naismith's Route .                       | Moderate       | If groove is adhered to, difficult.   |
| 4. Direct Route . .                         | Moderate       | By lower easy ledges, or descent from Abraham's Ledge and rejoining at Upper Ledge.       |
| A. Abraham's Traverse                       | Severe         | Severe in boots; very difficult in rubbers.   |
| B. Greig's Ledge .                          | Moderate       | ...   |
| C. Speirs' Variation .                      | Severe         | ...   |
| Variation Variant                           | Very difficult | ...   |
| 5. Fracture Route . .                       | ?              | Above middle section moderate.<br>Left top pitch very difficult.                          |
| D. Helical Route .                          | Severe         | ...   |
| E. High Level Traverse                      | Severe         | ...   |
| 6. Agag's Groove . .                        | Severe         | Severe in exposure; lower chimney and crux technically difficult.                         |
| 7. Satan's Slit . .                         | Severe         | Exposed and delicate.   |
| 8. Red Slab Route .                         | Severe         | Exposed and delicate.   |
| 9. Rannoch Wall, Route 1 (original route) . | Severe         | Severe in exposure only; original crux route is technically hard; left variant is easier. |
| 10. January Jig-Saw .                       | Very difficult | Severe in exposure only; no great technical difficulty.                                   |

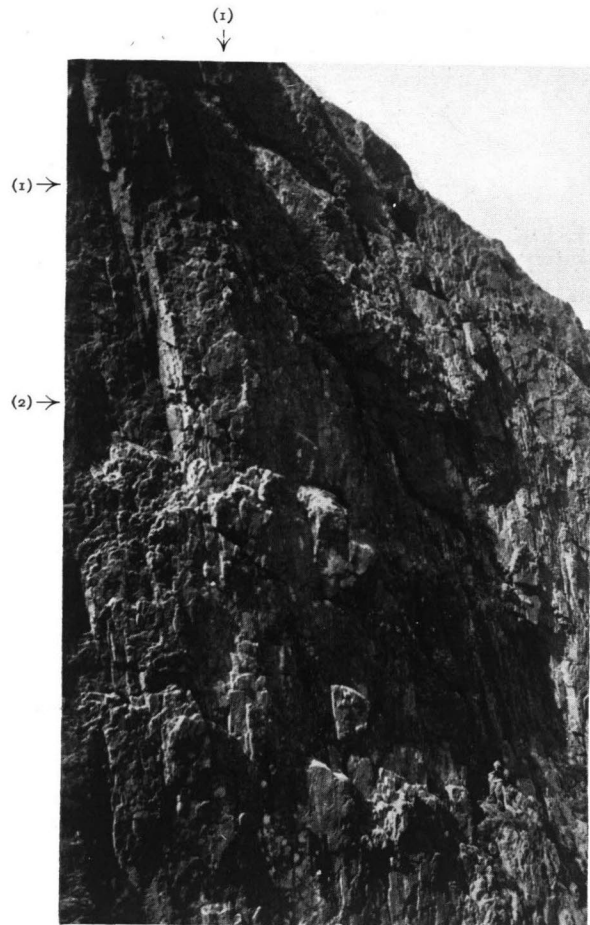
#### LENGTH OF CLIMBS.

The route lengths vary considerably. Longest is the Shelf Route, which, from the lowest part of the groove, or the rock rib, up to the level section below the Tower extends some 550 feet. Shortest is the Direct Route, giving just under 200 feet of climbing from the grass shelf to the top of the slabs. Hyphen Rib runs to about 400 feet, Agag's Groove is a little over 350 feet, and Route 1 is 250 feet.

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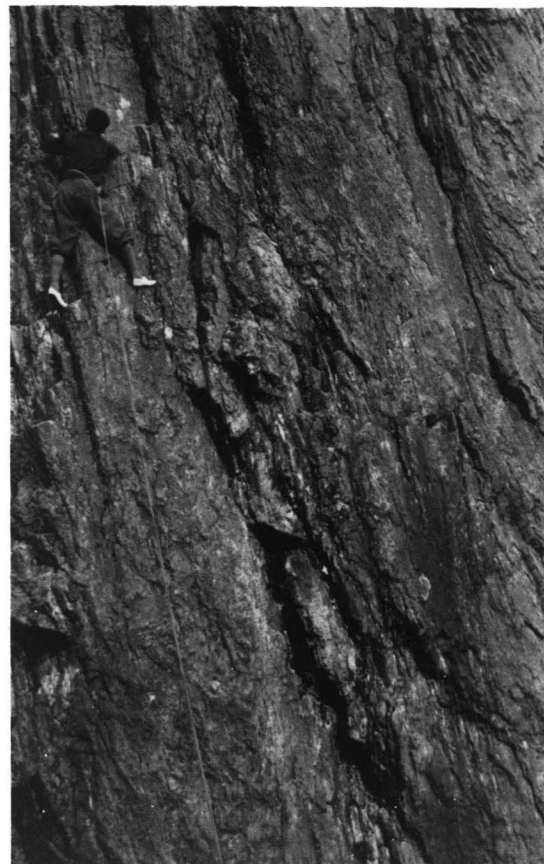


Summer 1939

↑  
(3) *Hugh Mackie*

# RANNOCH WALL, ROUTE I.

(1) PETER H. BROWN    (2) P. ANTHONY BROWN    (3) PETER SCOTT MAXWELL



September 1939

*Miss E. Speakman*

RED SLAB ROUTE  
(H. I. OGILVY leading 1st Pitch)

**NEW CLIMBS.****Buachaille Etive Mor—Rannoch Wall.****I.—Red Slab Route.**

THIS climb starts 50 feet lower down Easy Gully than the Rannoch Wall Climb, just above a cave pitch. There are two small cairns at the foot.

Rubbers are essential if this be climbed direct. The route is slightly artificial in that, at first, it is possible to escape to the left and later to the right; but the centre pitch provides very good climbing of a delicate nature on perfect rock.

*70 Feet.*—An overhanging groove, 30 feet: easier 40 feet to a small belay on the right.

*100 Feet.*—Step to the right round a nose. Work along a ledge for 20 feet as far as a juniper bush: up red slab on small holds, at the top of which a piton was placed to safeguard the leader over the next section. Traverse right round an overhang, by two awkward strides, then working to the right for 20 feet to a corner: now a slab is climbed with difficulty in spite of two bucket holds. Easier rock to a belay and a cairn level with the top of the grassy section of Route I, to which escape can be made.

*100 Feet.*—Easy mossy groove, then steep, exposed but easy rocks to top of ridge finishing 15 feet to the left of the finish of Agag's Groove.

Climbed by H. I. Ogilvy (C.U.M.C.) and Miss E. Speakman (L.S.C.C.) on 5th September 1939.

**II.—Satan's Slit.**

The start is in an easy chimney to the left of a large semi-detached flake between Rannoch Wall Climb and Agag's Groove, and the line runs to the crest of the ridge at the top of the slabs on the Direct Route.

Rubbers are essential for this route if it be climbed direct. It is a very direct climb and there are few if any escapes before reaching Agag's Groove. Small cairns were made at the top and bottom of the climb.



*50 Feet.*—Chimney, then steep but easy rocks to some very obvious flakes.

*50 Feet.*—Hand traverse to the left for 20 feet. Steep ledges lead upwards to the right: the belay is straight above the beginning of the climb.

*50 Feet.*—Straight up for 20 feet on small holds, aiming slightly to the left, then traverse horizontally to the right for 40 feet. This traverse is exposed, delicate, and sensational, and ends in Agag's Groove 40 feet below the nose. There is a large belay 10 feet down Agag's or a small one 30 feet higher.

*50 Feet.*—Follow Agag's Groove for 15 feet, then break out right up a steep, shallow scoop with good holds to a good stance. Remote and obscure belays on either side.

*60 Feet.*—The overhanging crack, which is the crux of the climb, is climbed direct with difficulty, 30 feet. This could be avoided by a scoop on the right. Thirty feet of steep but easier rocks to the top.

Climbed by H. I. Ogilvy and Miss E. Speakman on 5th September 1939.

### III.—January Jig-Saw.

Start from a pinnacle on the grass ledge half-way between the foot of Agag's Groove and the large semi-detached flake in Easy Gully.

The climb follows the line of least resistance on this portion of the face.

*70 Feet.*—Straight up a crack for 25 feet. Upwards to the left by a staircase to a large flake and back along a ledge to an obvious flake belay above the start of the climb.

*70 Feet.*—Step right round a nose: work slightly left, then straight up to large wedged block in Agag's Groove.

*50 Feet.*—Traverse right from the top of the block round a corner. Here will be found a miniature Agag's Groove, which is followed until it becomes steep and smooth. Step left round a corner and climb up to the belay at the foot of the overhanging crack, the crux of Satan's Slit.

*60 Feet.*—Traverse upwards to the right and swing round a corner into a groove. Follow it for a few feet before working left on to a vertical wall which is surmounted on small holds. From the top of this the last 30 feet of Satan's Slit are taken to the finish, or, alternatively, a groove on the right.

Climbed by H. I. Ogilvy and Miss E. Speakman on 10th January 1940.

(All three records are contributed by Mr Ogilvy.)

### In Memoriam.

**LORD TWEEDSMUIR, C.H., S.C.M.G.,**

**August 1875–February 1940.**

LORD TWEEDSMUIR'S fame as statesman, orator, business man, man of letters, historian, emblem of intellectual energy and integrity is secure and world-wide. Scotland, England, Canada, and the British Empire mourn the loss of a *bonus civis*, cut off in the full vigour and possession of astonishing mental powers fortified by uniquely wide and varied experience. It is not of that fame or, save *passim*, of the charm and social gifts of a dear and intimate friend that I wish to say something, it is to John Buchan, the mountaineer, that I will try to pay a tribute.

You may read in "Who's Who" that Lord Tweedsmuir's recreations were fishing, deerstalking, and mountaineering. Quite so; that's what he told them and it is true. But if anyone drew the inference that that order of words was one of preference, and that mountaineering only came third in his affections, he would be very far astray.

Mountaineering was a passion with John Buchan. Mountains were part of the religion of a truly religious man, who lifted his eyes to the hills. In spite of his headlong, continuous, Herculean labours, this man managed to retain his quiet hours when he communed with philosophy and theology. How he did is a mystery to all, even to me, who shared lodgings with him for a year. All I know is that he was awake when we slept. He was, of course, not alone or a pioneer in the conviction that mountain solitudes and altitudes are the cure for the bustle and noise and jarring of the modern urban life most of us have to lead. This is just what our Club has always preached, taught by the great nature lovers and Alpinists of the Victorian Age.



1935

JOHN BUCHAN IN GAMESHOPE GLEN, TWEEDSMUIR

**The Cobbler—North Peak—North Rib.**

W. H. Murray and W. G. Marskell (both J.M.C.S.) made a new route up the North Peak of the Cobbler on 15th October 1939. The route starts 20 feet to the right of Great Gully (cairn), and goes up the rib crowning the north wall of the gully. The climb is 200 feet high and is very difficult in perfect weather—probably severe in rain or wind. Eighty feet of rope was required for a party of two, and the time for the first ascent was one hour. The line of this route was first pointed out to the writer by B. H. Humble in August 1937. It is suggested that the climb be known as "The North Rib." Details are as follows:—

1. *40 Feet.*—One climbs a shallow corner until overhanging rocks force one to make an awkward left-hand traverse on to an open slab, which one climbs on very small holds to effect a hard finish above the bulge.

2. *50 Feet.*—One climbs straight ahead over easy rocks and turf ledges into a deep scoop immediately to the right of the rib. The scoop ends and becomes a steep crack.

3. *60 Feet.*—One climbs 8 feet up the crack and then makes a very difficult left-hand traverse on to the crest of the rib, which one follows for 50 feet on good holds up delightfully steep rocks, finishing at a good stance overlooking the gully. (This pitch might be very trying in wet weather.)

4. *50 Feet.*—One has a choice of routes up indefinite rocks—easy to overhanging.

W. H. MURRAY.

Whatever, therefore, may have been Lord Tweedsmuir's attitude to "recreation" when his serious climbing was over, there is no doubt in my mind that up to 1914, and particularly in the decade 1897-1907, mountaineering well-nigh monopolised his holiday thoughts. No doubt he enjoyed many a good stalk, but he lacked Duncan Bàn's rapture of the kill as the supreme triumph over the saucy little hind of his (Macintyre's) love. Buchan's love of the hills was more on the Wordsworth pattern or that of that genius of Morvern, where John Buchan often stalked and fished, Dr Norman Macleod, Caraid nan Gàidheal. Why else, instead of seeking further quarry, would he break off a day's stalking and round up his day by a rock-climb? One cannot imagine Scrope, St John, or Colquhoun at such a ploy. It is more like our one and only H. T. Munro, but I wonder if ever he did.

Nobody likes to think that any of their life's passions were entirely due to an accidental meeting. But I am obliged to admit that my topographical knowledge of wild Scotland was contemptibly small in 1897, when the late Principal Rait brought about our first meeting. I can recall to this day the thrills and nightmares I suffered from John Buchan's account of an ascent, with a gallant but unskilled friend, without a rope, up Buachaille Etibh from Kingshouse. A man who had such ambitions was shaping to become an ultramontane, and one can now see that the Veitch attitude to climbing hills must have markedly modified.

And so it befell. John read deeply in the classics of mountaineering. Mummery, Whymper, and such like were the staple of his talk, and the *S.M.C. Journal* was devoured and remembered. Not that John ceased to be a Salvationist. It was not his way to drop his old friends. He made new ones as his scene changed. And "what for no"? And so it was with the mountains. The Alps and the Cuillin did not efface Minchmoor, Cardon, or Broadlaw, or the Dungeon of Buchan in Galloway. The urge to serious technical rock-climbing was another side of his desire to rise and excel and play a part in the



world of affairs, which culminated in his appointment as Governor-General of Canada and death in harness.

To perfect himself in the craft, to *be* (primarily) and to be recognised (secondarily) as a climber of achievement, was a very real ambition of his. Old Horace wrote :

“Quodsi me lyricis vatibus inseres  
Sublimi feriam sidera vertice.”

I would paraphrase and alter these words to suit John Buchan: “Number me among the real rock-climbers and I have reached the stars.”

Well now, how far did he get ? The answer is, I feel confident, very far indeed, and though this is not meant to be a “statistical account,” I will try to indicate how in method, physique, and disposition he went about it.

He never served an apprenticeship. He just went at it by the light of nature. When I knew him his methods were original, unconventional, individualistic, but his movements were sure, decided, purposeful, and invariably he finished his climb. His assets were strong fingers and arms, rather short legs of enormous lifting power, an enviable poise, which reminded me of Raeburn's marvellous balance, and a body that had limpet qualities. One felt he couldn't slip off. He went uphill at any angle, whether hands aided feet or not, faster than any man that I, or indeed John Mackenzie, ever climbed with. His physical reserves were enormous. I never saw him tired. Mentally he had purpose indomitable, patience, courage, calm, self-control, and nerve. I never saw any signs of the influence of the great god Pan. He must have kept his secret until he let it out himself in the *Journal* in 1939.

Three successive happy days on Ben Nevis and as many happy evenings at the Alexandra stand out in my memories of late September 1904. We achieved nothing in the least out of the way, and John and his brother Walter were about as new as I was to the game and the Ben. The Castle Ridge, the Tower Ridge, and the N.E. Buttress were all we had time for. We did them all

swiftly and easily and made eager plans for the future. In the *Sunday Times* of 18th February Lord Macmillan writes of the stimulating effect of John's conversation and friendship. It was on the mountain and in the hotel that this intoxicating wine tasted best. Sad to say, few of our plans ever came off, but he and Walter had soon afterwards a very solid "go" at the Cuillin, covering most if not all of the peaks, the Cioch, and at least one new climb in the Forked Chimney of Sgurr nan Gilleán. With both of us John planned "the" traverse, but no one could have been more appreciative than he of the splendid performance of those who carried it out. He was incapable of jealousy. The Grasdale Lake hills, Switzerland, Dauphiné, the Dolomites, the Bavarian Alps were all fields for his mountaineering activities. It is interesting, for instance, to gauge his progress in 1907 by the unsigned article in the *Journal*, Vol. IX., p. 192—as Buchanish a gem as one could wish for. He writes esoterically, and no one can say, "That fellow doesn't know what he is talking about." Obviously the writer has climbed, *e.g.*, the Dent Blanche. He was justly proud of his membership of the Alpine Club. He delighted in Slingsby, and when he knew that I was Norway-mad he presented me with "The Northern Playground." I don't suppose he was able to attend many Club Meets, but he wrote for the *Journal*, besides the "Knees of the Gods," an article under his own name, "Pan," which appeared in the Jubilee Number. Those of us who are honest with ourselves find therein food for thought. He probably, thanks to his quickness in picking up from guides, was at his best in 1913. It was a very good best.

In 1914 came his first attack of gastric trouble. Then came the Great War. Development of his climbing technique could go no further. Yet I have memories of walks and scrambles in post-war days in the Letterewe Hills and a hurried rush up Creach Bheinn in Mull on one of our few fine afternoons together. Even then he went like a stag and enjoyed every minute of it.

"Remember it is the solemn duty of you and N. to come

out to us at Ottawa and we will have a try at some of the Rocky Mountain peaks together." This was written to me in 1935, the year in which his Canadian term of office began. In 1937 he did his famous long trip by every conceivable mode of transport on land, water, and in the air, through vast regions far north and west unknown to previous viceroys.

A letter written on his return to Ottawa contains the following:—

"I had a short climb on Bear Rock at the mouth of the Great Bear River. The face had never been climbed so I set out to do it. The rock was rotten and slanting the wrong way, but I took it cautiously and had no difficulties except at the very top, where there is an overhang. I managed to drag up an Indian so that he could give me a back and wriggled my way up."

That, I need scarcely say, is not the whole story, but it suffices to show considerable mountaineering zest in a proconsul with twelve lustres and two more years behind him.

Canadian press appreciations, so spontaneous and genuine, overstress, in my opinion, the fight that John is supposed to have had all his life with ill-health. For the first thirty-nine years of his life he was as strong as a horse, and the thorn in the flesh alluded to only made its baleful appearance in 1914. Up till then he could enjoy the good things of life which he loved to dispense so hospitably and gracefully. He never needed to train, for he was always fit. But by the time he went to Canada he was a sick man, and my final quotation illustrates not merely a passion for wild nature, and mountains in particular, but amazing stamina in enduring the fatigues of travel in 1937.

"We made our first traverse of the new Tweedsmuir Park. That is one of the most beautiful pieces of country in the world. The Rockies seem to me an ugly and muddled range, but the Coast Range is as exactly architected as the Alps. I am proud to think my name is attached to such a wonderful landscape. There, too, we had some sensational flying, having to thread our

way through the mountain passes in fog. I was rather glad when I could look down on salt water."

Thus writes and thinks and lives a true mountaineer.

A Canadian poetess finished a tribute in the *Ottawa Journal* for 15th February with these words:

" . . . though he be laid  
(Where else could he lie light?) in Scottish clay."

She was wrong. The ashes will rest in Elsfeld Churchyard, four miles north-east of the centre of Oxford, and it is quite appropriate to "John Buchan of Brasenose," as he was always called. The purchase of the Manor of Elsfeld after much anxious deliberation marked the decision that there would be no "Return of the Native." During the whole of this century by far the greater part of Lord Tweedsmuir's life was spent in and within sixty miles of London. He had adopted England as his earthly tabernacle. *Habeat Anglia Corpus*. But spiritually, not possibly the whole of him, but the dominating part of him, belonged inseparably to the land of his birth, upbringing, youth, early friends, church, and characteristic activities. I like to picture his ardent but gentle and kindly spirit haunting the scenes of those early days and laborious delights. And where? Well, for one, hovering over the hamlet from which he took his title; secondly, above Back Hill of Bush, the navel of Galloway wilds; thirdly, above the root of Druim nan Ramh; the patron saint of new generations striving upwards in the same noble sport.

STAIR A. GILLON.

### Col. T. H. SMITH, D.L.

THE passing of Tom Smith on 17th October 1939 brought a great sense of loss to the wide circle of friends who knew, admired, and appreciated a very happy companion who kept his cheerfulness through dark days, stormy weather, and physical weakness.

In his youth, tennis, golf, hunting, shooting, and

mountaineering claimed a share in his interests, and in later years the gentle art of angling found in him a deeply interested exponent. He qualified as a member of the S.M.C. in 1891, and in 1902 we find him contributing to the *Journal* some notes on the Dundee Rambling Club's February Meet at Tyndrum when Bens Doirean, Lui, and Chaluim were climbed.

Again we find him one of the yachting party which essayed to attack the Coolins in the stormy Easter Meet of 1897, but, undaunted by the weather which had played havoc with the arranged programme, scaled the mountains of Hourn, Glencoe, and Jura. Much of Tom Smith's climbing was done with the Dundee Rambling Club, many of whose members are also members of the S.M.C., and his cheery helpfulness on the climb and happy sportiveness in the circle around the evening fire are treasured memories amongst the older members.

He was a man of many interests. Amongst others, he was a Sub-Lieutenant of the Forfarshire Artillery Volunteers at the Wet Review of 1881, and he recruited and commanded the Dundee Volunteer Regiment during the Great War. Always interested in the education—religious and secular—recreation and training of youth, it was a joy to him to have a share along with the late Sir George W. Baxter, Bart., in the formation of the Cadet Company attached to his old school—the High School of Dundee. Later he was appointed Colonel of Cadets, and, amongst others, was responsible for nineteen cadet companies of the Boys' Brigade, in which he all along took a very keen and practical interest.

Public service claimed our old friend's attention in many spheres, and he was assiduous in his attention to the duties and responsibilities he had undertaken. Even when some years ago a motor accident left him with a painful lameness, he cheerfully got about with the aid of a stick. Though the flesh was weak, it could deprive him of none of his old vim and vigour. His Church and its mission—he was the oldest member of Session—the High School, its Old Boys' Club—of which he was first President and latterly Hon. President—the Baldovan



Institution, University College, the Technical College, the Royal Infirmary, Dundee Eye Institution, Dundee Institution for the Blind, Charity Organisation Society, and R.S.P.C.A. are some examples of his catholicity of interest. It led him to spend money, time, and labour in the promotion of these institutions, in whose work he took his full share both in the management and as Director and Chairman for considerable periods.

His native city misses his genial presence, his wise counsel, and his help so ungrudgingly and cheerfully given.

GEORGE R. DONALD.

### **ALEXANDER MITCHELL BUCHANAN.**

WE regret to announce the death of Alexander Mitchell Buchanan, which took place suddenly on 16th November 1939.

Buchanan joined the Club in 1915, and for many years thereafter was a regular attender at the Club's functions. Latterly, and possibly owing to advancing years, his attendances were less frequent.

He was a keen photographer, a painter in water-colour of no mean ability, and, notwithstanding his quiet and retiring nature, an excellent companion on the hills. The writer has very pleasant memories of his company at the Easter 1920 Fort William Meet and the Easter 1924 Braemar Meet.

The Club's sympathy goes out to Mrs Buchanan in her bereavement.

G. MURRAY LAWSON.

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We regret to announce the death of Mr T. D. Hunter, who joined the Club in 1903.

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB.

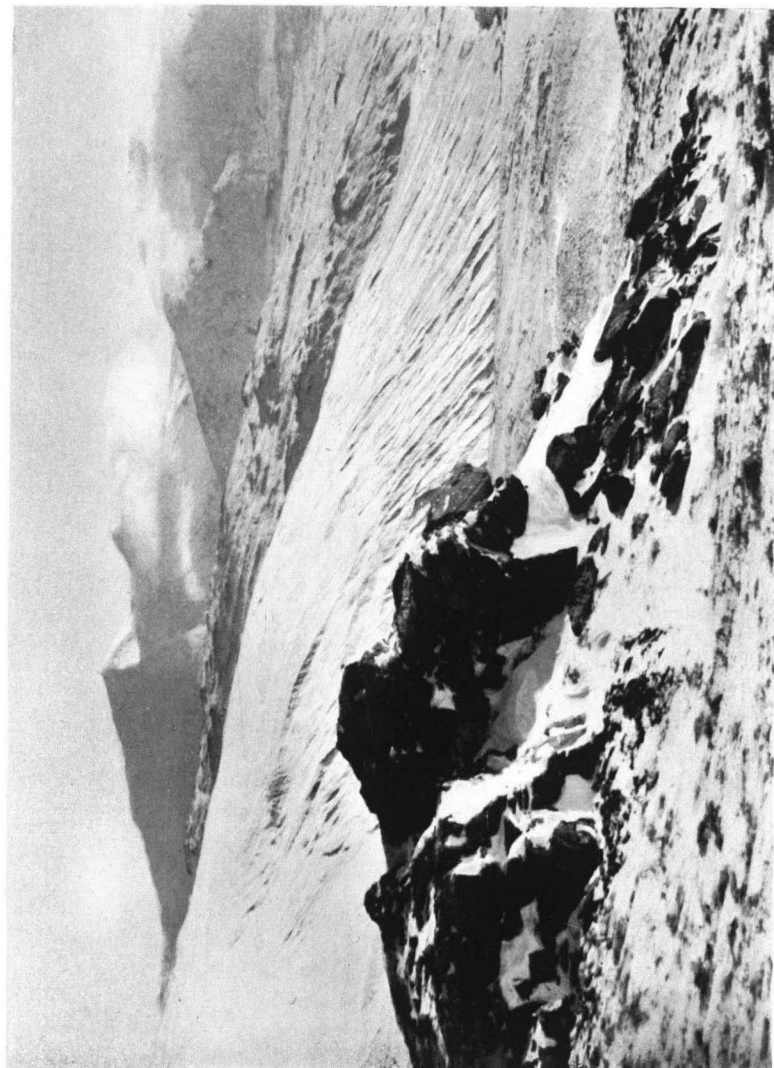
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### NEW YEAR MEET 1940—CRIANLARICH.

IN spite of war conditions and scarcity of petrol a most successful Meet was held at Crianlarich. As usual, we were very comfortably entertained. Snow was not plentiful on the hills, but there was enough to afford good climbing in the great gully of Ben Laoigh, and severe ice was found in one branch of the Y Gully on Cruach Ardtrain, not to speak of such moorland tracks as the one leading to the old lead mines beyond Choninish. The snow on the ridges was quite dry, either fine powder or a coarsely granular, firnified modification, not very often seen in Scotland. The weather was conspicuously fine throughout the Meet, the visibility on Sunday in particular being out of the ordinary even for a clear winter day.

On Sunday a party on Ben Chaluim reported a view which included the Forth Bridge, the Pentlands and Moorfoots, and even Merrick. Doubts have been expressed about the last named, but the outliers of the Galloway Hills were certainly seen. On the same day Arthur's Seat was seen from Ben More, but there is nothing extraordinary about that, as Arthur himself was known to have been on Ben Laoigh! Visibility was equally good on Tuesday when Professor Turnbull and the writer saw the jagged outline of the Cuillins about sunset from the top of Ben Oss. The sunsets were spectacular, with brilliant colouring on snow and clouds. Dense fog crept up the Dochart valley from Killin to Crianlarich and Tyndrum on Monday and Tuesday evenings. From the high ground on the Tyndrum-Bridge of Orchy road the whole valley looked like a tremendous loch.

There was plenty of climbing done, mostly on the



*5th January 1939*

THE BEN MORE RANGE  
(from the slopes of Beinn Odhar)

*H. Gardner*

nearer hills. On the respective days of the Meet the following numbers were out on the hills: Friday, 5; Saturday, 23; Sunday, 43; Monday, 33; and Tuesday, 8. These numbers correspond to a total of 39 members and 4 or 5 guests present at one time or another. The detailed names of parties, and all peaks including subsidiary ones, can be traced from the Meets Register, but it will suffice to record here the favourite expeditions and any that were out of the ordinary.

The Ben More group was visited by 29 climbers, Beinn Chaluum by 26, Cruach Ardrain by 18, the Beinn Laoigh group by 13, and An Caisteal by 12. Hutchison and Rutherford did the longest day, covering Dubhchraig, Oss, Laoigh, and Chleibh, though Bell and Turnbull climbed Laoigh from Tyndrum by the Couloir, finished over Oss and Dubhchraig and returned to Tyndrum. Turnbull, Macdonald, and Kellock were on ice in the Y Gully and had to make a detour near the east wall at the middle section. Mackinnon, the Stevens, and D. Waddell (J.M.C.S.) went to Bens Achaladair and Chreachain, whereas the Editor was even farther afield and was on Bidean nam Bian, Aonach Beag, and most of the Mamores. Murray and Dixon were on Beinn Chabhair. Corbett and Gall Inglis went on foot to Meall Glas and Beinn Cheathaich one day and to Meall nan Frean on another. It was in every way a most enjoyable and energetic Meet.

The members and guests present at one time or another include the following: The President, Mr Robert Jeffrey, and Messrs J. L. Aikman, Allan Arthur, L. St. C. Bartholomew, J. H. B. Bell, Ian G. Charleson, J. Rooke Corbett, A. L. Cram, Arthur Dixon, R. R. Elton, Hugh Gardner, Arthur Geddes, A. Harrison, D. J. S. Harvey, Norman L. Hird, E. W. Hodge, K. K. Hunter, A. G. Hutchison, R. M. Gall Inglis, J. S. M. Jack, D. G. Kellock, W. G. P. Lindsay, W. N. Ling, J. Y. Macdonald, T. D. Mackinnon, H. MacRobert, A. G. Murray, Iain H. Ogilvie, John G. Osborne, R. N. Rutherford, C. R. Steven, C. M. Steven, S. Pointon Taylor, E. C. Thomson, T. E. Thomson, R. N. Traquair, H. W.

Turnbull, P. J. H. Unna, G. C. Williams. *Guests:*  
R. A. Gwilt, Prof. J. M. Gulland, Prof. Lowenstein,  
and J. H. Sutherland.

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### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1939.

The 51st Annual General Meeting was held at 4.30 P.M. on 2nd December 1939 in the Central Hotel, Glasgow. About 30 members were present and about 20 stayed on afterwards and dined together informally. There was no controversial business at the meeting. The Club had lost 7 members by death and 1 by resignation throughout the year, and no new members were elected, so that the total membership stood at 299. It was hoped to be able to carry on the *Journal* and hold Meets in a more restricted degree and so keep the Club together as far as possible. There were no immediate financial troubles ahead, and payment of annual subscriptions by members on whole-time service with H.M. Forces was allowed to be optional during the war. A motion was passed, in view of the uncertainties of the war situation, which gave the Committee such further powers as might seem to be necessary, but subject to annual approval by the members.



## NOTES AND EXCURSIONS.

*The Editor will be glad to receive brief notices of any noteworthy expeditions. These are not meant to supersede longer articles, but many members who may not care to undertake the one will have no difficulty in imparting information in the other form.*

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*To the Editor,  
The Scottish Mountaineering  
Club Journal.*

SIR,—Appended to Mr H. MacRobert's "A Short History of Scottish Climbing," which appears on p. 50 of the Jubilee Number for April 1939 (Vol. 22, No. 127), is a list of "Outstanding Events" in Scottish climbing. The first of these with any apparent pretension to authenticity is Pennant's ascent of Beinn na Caillich in 1772. But thirty-eight years before that date Ben Lomond had been climbed by a party of two, one of whom was a woman.

It so happened that in the summer of 1933 I was entertained to tea at Bonkyl Lodge, Berwickshire, by the late Brigadier-General James Francis Erskine, formerly of Cardross. Among many treasures he showed me was an old-fashioned squat tumbler or footless glass of a faint pale-green hue, which had on it scratched, with a diamond in typical eighteenth-century writing (including signature), the following holograph inscription: "This glass was carried to the very top of Ben Lomond by Miss Annie Gillon and Lord Cardross, Monday, July 22nd, 1734. Cardross." Lord Cardross, afterwards Earl of Buchan, was then twenty-four years old, for he was born in April 1710. His companion was somewhere between twenty and twenty-two years old and was a first cousin of the (fourth) wife of the well-known "Black Colonel," the Hon. John Erskine of Carnock, Lieutenant-Governor of Stirling Castle, uncle of Lord Cardross, who had acquired the latter estate from his elder brother.

I think the inference is fair that (1) the ascent was probably made from Cardross House in Menteith, and that (2) similar expeditions or adventures were commoner in Scotland than is generally supposed.

None the less, it is surely entitled to the label "outstanding event," looking to the general dread of mountains, the bad going on undrained mosses and moors, and the lawless state of that part of the country with its Rob Roy associations. It is fortunate that the evidence has been so strikingly preserved. Evidently the hosts of the young people regarded the feat as worth recording.

General J. F. Erskine was a lineal descendant of the Black Colonel and of his son the famous Professor of Scots Law, whose "Principles" and "Institutes" have been the mental pabulum of generations of students.—I am, your obedient servant,

STAIR A. GILLON.

**St Andrews University West Greenland Expedition 1939.  
Ascent of Paulus Peak, 6,893 Feet.**

The peak which we particularly wanted to climb was a beautiful symmetrical pyramid of 6,893 feet, clearly visible on the neighbouring island of Upernivik from our permanent station at Igdlorsuit on Ubenkendt Island. The mountain was about 13 miles distant and separated from us by 7 miles of water.

On the evening of 5th August we set off, four of us in a 14-foot boat, steering directly for the glacier which runs down from the névé field on the south side of the peak to the west. We pitched camp beside a hunter's dwelling on the right side of the glacier beside the terminal moraine.

The party consisted, besides myself, of Dr H. I. Drever, K. A. Swales, and Johann Zieb, a Greenlander. Of these only Swales and myself could undertake the climbing since Drever had had his boots stolen, so he and Zieb remained at this base camp. Swales and I both had Bergen rucksacks, loaded with our equipment, provisions for a week and four days' emergency provisions, an Arctic guinea tent, and the photographic equipment, comprising a cinematograph (Kodachrome) and a Leica (Agfacolor).

At 10 A.M. on 6th August we set off up the glacier, the terminal moraine proving as usual the hardest. The going was good to begin with, but soon the glacier had to be crossed and recrossed. Sometimes the moraine was used in order to avoid crevasses and hanging glaciers. However, all crevasses were open, and at no time was a rope required. The weather soon deteriorated and sleet fell. The peak was never visible save some of the lower shoulders, but acting on the advice of Drever, who had been turned back by adverse weather in 1938, we camped at 4,500 feet; there being no flat ground we had to use the glacier. Conditions were bad with the wet, which lasted throughout the next day which was spent inside. My ice-axe, which was broken near the tip on the way up, was reshafted with the aid of a primus and pair of scissors.

8th August broke clear at 7 A.M.; the glacier and approaches to the mountain were reconnoitred as far as the mist would allow, and a bottle containing the peak's name picked up from a cairn made by the 1938 party a quarter of a mile down the moraine. At 9 A.M. we set out up a neighbouring shoulder covered with big boulders made slippery with new snow. Misty clouds came and went, giving fleeting glimpses of the surrounding mountains. At 6,600 feet a steep ice slope led to the summit. The ice was treacherous with a covering of new snow, and the last blow of the axe tended to knock the bottom out of the steps, but rocky islands proved of much assistance. Fifty feet from the summit we roped as the ridge was corniced, and a three-minute walk led us to the top at 1.15 P.M. Observations with an Abney level showed us to be on the highest point, and a round of panoramic photographs and a cinematographic record were

made. The descent took two hours to the glacier, and at 4 P.M. camp was struck, and a run down the glacier brought us to the base by 9 P.M.

#### REFERENCES.

DREVER, H. I. "Two British Expeditions to Ubenkendt Island, W. Greenland." *Nature*, Vol. 144, No. 3661, 1939.  
*The Polar Record*, No. 19, 1940. "St Andrews West Greenland Expedition."

K. A. W. PATERSON.

#### Sugach Buttress.

On 17th February 1940 I. B. Kay and D. Laidlaw (both J.M.C.S.) made what may possibly be the first ascent under winter conditions of Sugach Buttress. The summer route was followed throughout, and though little ice was encountered large quantities of powder snow added considerably to the interest of the expedition.

The ascent was accomplished in slightly under five hours, though this time could probably have been improved upon.

To those who have rambled up this in summer they recommend it as an excellent winter climb.

D. LAIDLAW.

#### The Skye Munroes.

Mr B. N. Simmonds, of the Polaris Mountaineering Club, Nottingham, writes that a party consisting of Messrs R. Tomsett, L. Chapman, and the writer did all the Skye Munroes in a day in September 1939. They slept on the summit of Blaven from 11 P.M. until 5.30 A.M., and thereafter the following times are noted: Sgurr nan Gillean, 9.15; Bruach na Frithe, 10.30; Inaccessible Pinnacle, 2.43; Alasdair, 4.30; Sgurr Dubh Mor, 5.20; Sgurr nan Eag, 6.10; Glenbrittle Hostel, 9 P.M. Sgumain was visited, but no part of the ridge south of Sgurr nan Eag.

#### Accidents on Scottish Hills from Easter 1939 to 29th February 1940.

7th April 1939.—A. S. Russell (40), S.M.C., received serious injuries when he lost control during a glissade on Ben Nevis. Died in hospital soon afterwards.

*7th April 1939.*—Alfred von Lammar, an Austrian, received head injuries due to a fall when climbing Buachaille Etive Mor. Rescue party and doctors called out.

*7th April 1939.*—A. H. Hendry (26), J.M.C.S., sustained a compound fracture of the leg due to a fall on Buachaille Etive Mor. Stretcher party called out. Accident occurred at 4.30 P.M. and party reached roadside at 3 A.M. following day.

*13th April 1939.*—Edward Donaldson got separated from his companions in thick mist on Ben More. Did not return to hostel in the evening. Search party set out at dawn and found him on summit of mountain where he had spent the night. When descending, and near the foot of the mountain, William Smith (26), a member of the rescue party, slipped and fell some distance. Killed instantaneously. First time a member of a rescue party has been killed.

*13th April 1939.*—D. Evans and G. Riley, both novices, lost their way when ascending Ben Nevis in mist. Evans slipped when attempting to cross Red Burn and fell down 50 feet, received facial injuries, but managed to descend the mountain. Later detained at Belford Hospital.

*13th April 1939.*—C. B. Noyce (21), C.U.M.C., fell and fractured leg when climbing N.E. Buttress of Ben Nevis. Hut party were unable to get him down that night, but got him down early next day. Rescue entirely carried out by those staying at Hut—no others called out.

*16th July 1939.*—Mr H. Weston Plumtre, a 72-year-old botanist, killed due to a fall on Craig Rennet (Clova). Stretcher party of keepers, estate workers, and visitors called out.

*6th August 1939.*—William Carey (46) found dead near summit of Ben Lomond. Death attributed to heart failure.

*16th August 1939.*—Peter Reid, an experienced climber, killed by fall when leading climb on Cioch. Received serious injuries and died shortly afterwards. Stretcher party called out.

*27th August 1939.*—Robert Proudfoot (27) killed due to falling when climbing alone on north face of Ben Lomond. Over a hundred folk climbed the mountain that afternoon, and most were on the summit at time of accident, but no one knew of it till the man failed to return home at night. Discovered by search parties the following day.

*25th February 1940.*—Miss Fyfe (Cairngorm Club) fell down snow slope from summit plateau of Lochnagar. Large search parties called out. Found next day suffering from bruises and exposure.

[*Note.*—As stated in a former list, the aim is merely to preserve some sort of statistical record, not to adhere to a particular definition of "accident" nor to apportion responsibility. It is obvious that, under war conditions, the taking of undue risks is to be even more deprecated than usual, as it will prove to be much more difficult to organise rescue parties.—ED.]

**S.M.C. ABROAD.**

G. Graham Macphee was in the Adula region and the Oberland last summer. With various companions traverses of the Rheinwaldhorn, Lentalucke from Zapport to Lenta Huts, Piz Casimai to Campo Blenio, and Colle del 'Huomo to Airolo were made in bad weather. The Hühnerstock and Scheuchzerjoch were visited in bad weather, and a traverse of the Strahleggjoch made. The Gross Schreckhorn and Finsteraarhorn came next. After an attempt on the Trugberg, the Mönch was climbed in a storm. Next day *skating* was enjoyed in the Eispalast at the Jungfrauoch, and the following day ski-ing on new powder snow, and next day the Jungfrau was climbed in very bad conditions.

A week of fine weather gave the Trugberg, Gross and Hinter Fiescherhörner, Grüneckhorn, Grünhorn, Aletschhorn, Agassizjoch, and Agassizhorn, Schreckhorn by S.W. ridge and traverse of Lauteraarhorn, Eiger by Mitteleggi ridge and down ordinary route in time for train home to England.

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**REVIEWS.**

**Days of Fresh Air.** By The Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery, M.P. Published by Jarrolds Publishers (London) Ltd. 15s. 315 pp. 53 illustrations.

In the course of a busy and varied career the author has seized every opportunity of seeing the world and especially the mountainous parts. It is these parts of the book which are of special interest to mountaineers. His first season in the Alps when quite a young man included the Zinal Rothorn, Dent Blanche, Weisshorn, and Matterhorn, a fine achievement for anyone.

In later years his wanderings took him to the Dolomites, Balkans, South Africa, and Canada. He is intensely observant; his judgment is shrewd, and his style good. This is a most enjoyable book, and the illustrations are good. A. H.

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**Peaks and Lamas.** By Marco Pallis. Cassell. 18s. 428 pp. 96 illustrations. 3 maps.

To review this book properly would require knowledge which I do not possess and space which the Editor would not allow. It is a long book and requires careful reading. Part of it describes the author's climbing expeditions in Gangotri and elsewhere in 1933 and 1936, details of which will be already known to readers of



climbing literature. The great merit of these expeditions lay in their smallness and comparative cheapness. Living off the country contributed to both these.

The major part of the book is occupied by a description of both Hindu and Tibetan Buddhists, their lives, culture, and philosophy, or, as the author prefers to call it, their tradition. Native arts are treated in some detail and with great sympathy. The whole book is written with enthusiasm and a genuine feeling which should go far to make a reader appreciate those things which Mr Pallis has found important. I found plenty in this book to think about, and I hope to read it again. It stands in relation to the modern books of Himalayan exploration in rather the same position as Burton's "First Footsteps" to books of the H. V. Morton type. Without being in a position to judge properly, I cannot help suspecting that "Peaks and Lamas" may become a real classic of English travel literature.

E. A. M. W.

**A Camera in the Hills.** By F. S. Smythe. A. & C. Black. 12s. 6d. 147 pp. 65 illustrations.

This is a third volume of Mr Smythe's fine mountain photographs. Seven were taken in Scotland (Cuillins and Glencoe) and the remainder in the Swiss and French Alps. Most of them were taken in the winter 1938-39 and the summer 1939. Many of them are "studies." The finest are of the great ridges of Mont Blanc. Each photograph is accompanied by details and remarks of interest to photographers, and there is a foreword on mountain photography. One of the two action photographs shows one of the best examples of dangerous climbing (not by Mr Smythe's party) that could well be imagined.

E. A. M. W.

**The Alps.** By R. L. G. Irving. Batsford. 10s. 6d. 120 pp. 131 illustrations. Map and papers.

This is primarily a very finely produced picture book of the Alps from end to end. But the book is also worth buying for Mr Irving's introductory chapter in which he sketches the history of the Alps and of their climbing, describes Alpine life, art, flora and fauna, and discourses delightfully on the pleasures and penalties which are the lot of various types of visitor to the Alps. The remaining chapters form a pleasantly written conversational guide book, useful to the tourist and interesting to the mountaineer. If no one has been discriminating enough to give you this book for a Christmas present buy it, for it is a book to possess.

E. A. M. W.

**Pictures and Memories.** By Jane Inglis Clark. Moray Press. 10s. 6d. 91 pp. 50 illustrations.

Not only to his mountaineering friends was Dr Inglis Clark's photographic genius known but also to a widespread public whom he thrilled with the beauty of his slides taken direct in natural colours, and it will be a happy reminiscence to have some of these photographs, now made available in Mrs Clark's book, beside us to look at when we will.

Far Eastern temples and palaces; floral beauties of Oakwood Gardens, Roslin; Highland grandeur and Lowland beauty; Alpine scenes—all are depicted. Throughout the book runs a happy narrative of travel and adventure among the scenes illustrated and in many other localities.

R. M. G. I.

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**Approach to the Hills.** By C. F. Meade. John Murray. 10s. 6d. 259 pp. 16 illustrations. 2 maps.

Fully half of this book is taken up with the most thrilling tales of mountaineering adventure in the Alps, Dolomites, and Himalaya. The almost superhuman feats of endurance made in the attempts on and in the conquest of the North Face of the Grandes Jorasses, the Guglia di Brenta, and the tragedies on the Eigerwand and Nanga Parbat are graphically recounted, the author making just criticism of the foolhardiness that leads to accidents and danger to rescue parties. Other interesting chapters include one on ballooning, two on character sketches of famous Swiss guides, and two on the crossing of new passes in the Himalaya; an essay on "Everest and the Future," and the account of an attempt on Kamet complete a book that holds its interest to the last page.

R. M. G. I.

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**The Alpine Journal**, Vol. LI., No. 259. November 1939.

This interesting and varied number opens with a well-illustrated account by Professor Graham Brown on the three routes up the Brenva face of Mont Blanc. He has climbed them all—the Red Sentinel, the Col Major, and the Pear Buttress route, the last being to him the most fascinating. They must all be very long and magnificent expeditions, and under good conditions sound mountaineering routes free from objective dangers.

Two biographical and historical articles deal with Alpine guides, one by C. F. Meade about that old warrior, J. J. Blanc, Le Greffier—guide, ibex hunter, and sheep smuggler; the other about the Führerbücher of the Almers of Grindelwald. Christian Almer I. celebrated his golden wedding at the age of seventy by taking his wife and daughter up the Wetterhorn!

Two articles deal with Alaska—the ascent of Mount St Agnes in constant blizzards from a base camp reached by aeroplane, and the ascent of Mount Sanford on ski. Wanderings in the Western Karakoram are dealt with by Michal Vivyan. Our old friends who

pioneered the Slav route on the North-East Buttress of Nevis describe a thrilling and desperate retreat down the north face of Triglav in winter. The Slav route has not yet been descended under hard winter conditions! An article on the mountains of Tasmania offers new rock climbs, and we learn that the highest peak in the Ben Lomond massif rises to 5,160 feet.

Mr C. B. M. Warren gives a practical and orthodox discussion of mountain sickness and the use of oxygen in high altitude mountaineering. The writer must confess that he has never been impressed with the soundness of the orthodox view. At great altitudes the rate of progress and therefore of exertion is comparatively slow, and the resting periods of the body are perforce relatively longer. Surely the solution of the problem of high altitude deterioration is quite likely to be found in something which is going wrong during the resting and sleeping periods, when there should be enough oxygen available but not enough stimulus to breathe it. It is generally agreed that acclimatisation is progressively more imperfect at all levels over 20,000 feet. The problem of lack of carbonic acid in the blood may therefore resemble that of unacclimatised persons at less than 15,000 feet in the Alps. A disorganisation of enzyme action in various organs may therefore be expected, as these are most sensitive to small changes in pH value. So far no one seems to have thought it worth while to try a mixture of oxygen and carbon dioxide for use during sleep at the higher camps. It is by no means obvious that the use of acid salts would have the same effect. Another question which has intrigued the writer is—Can the dissociation curve of oxyhæmoglobin be expected to remain the same in a subject acclimatised to high altitude and with an increase of 40 per cent. in his red-cell count, made up, in part at least, of immature cells? The writer criticises as a chemist but not as a physiologist.

J. H. B. B.

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#### **Appalachia, December 1939.**

Noteworthy among the articles in this number is the detailed story of the ascent of all the sixty-four 14,000-foot peaks in the U.S. by Carl Melzer and his son, aged ten, during two summer holidays! An article on the Technique of Rock Climbing and one on the History of Mountaineering are of interest. In the latter one mention is made of "the bens and cuillins of Scotland" as "training grounds for the valor of the British Islander at home!" An interesting number.

R. M. G. I.

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Acknowledgment is made of the following journals received from Kindred Clubs: *Mazama*; *Sierra Club*; *Tararua Trampler*; *Swedish Tourist*; *Le Alpi*; *Swiss Alpine Club Review*; *Nos Montagnes*; *Camping*; *La Montagne*; *Sangaku*; *Ladies' Scottish Climbing Club*, 32nd Annual Record, 1939-40.

## THE JUNIOR MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF SCOTLAND.

### New Year Meet 1940.

A VERY successful New Year Meet and Dinner were held at Bridge of Orchy. The following members and guests were present at one time or another during the Meet:—

*Members.*—T. D. McKinnon, S.M.C. (*Honorary President*, Glasgow Section), G. Peat, S.M.C. (*Honorary President*, Edinburgh Section), J. K. Annand, R. Brown, R. Buchanan, R. H. Buchanan, W. Cranston, R. G. Donaldson, T. C. Dow, N. K. Easton, D. Gow, A. H. Hendry, H. A. Hetherington, R. S. Higgins, E. C. Houston, J. R. Hewit, I. B. Kay, D. Laidlaw, D. Livingstone, G. C. Low, A. M. MacAlpine, G. R. B. McCarter, W. H. Murray, W. A. Nicol, F. E. O'Riordan, G. S. Roger, J. B. Russell, J. D. Sturrock, A. J. Urquhart, D. T. Waddell, R. D. Walton, and F. C. Yeaman.

*Guests.*—G. Barr, D. Buchanan, R. Henderson, T. Henderson, and E. Muirhead.

We were this year favoured with exceptionally fine weather during the whole week-end, and the mountains can seldom have been seen to better advantage. Owing, however, to the scarcity of petrol, climbing was for the most part restricted to the peaks in the immediate vicinity. Stob Ghabhar, Clach Leathad, Meall a Bhuiridh, and other Blackmount peaks, and on the other side of the glen Ben Dorain, Ben Dothaidh, Ben Achallader, and Ben Chreachain were much frequented. Expeditions were also made farther afield to Ben Laoigh, Sron na Creise, Buachaille Etive, and the Mamore peaks.

After bringing in the New Year in camp on the summit of Ben Nevis, Messrs Murray, Donaldson, and McCarter climbed Gardyloo Gully, where very fine ice conditions were found.

F. E. O'R.

# Scottish Mountaineering Club.

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ROBERT JEFFREY.

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GEORGE R. DONALD, 1939.

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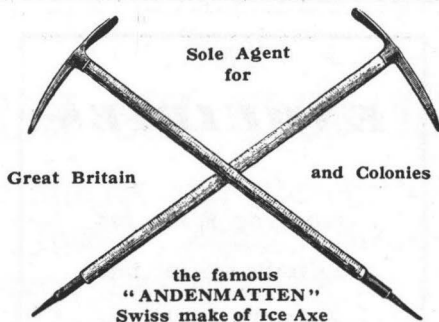
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