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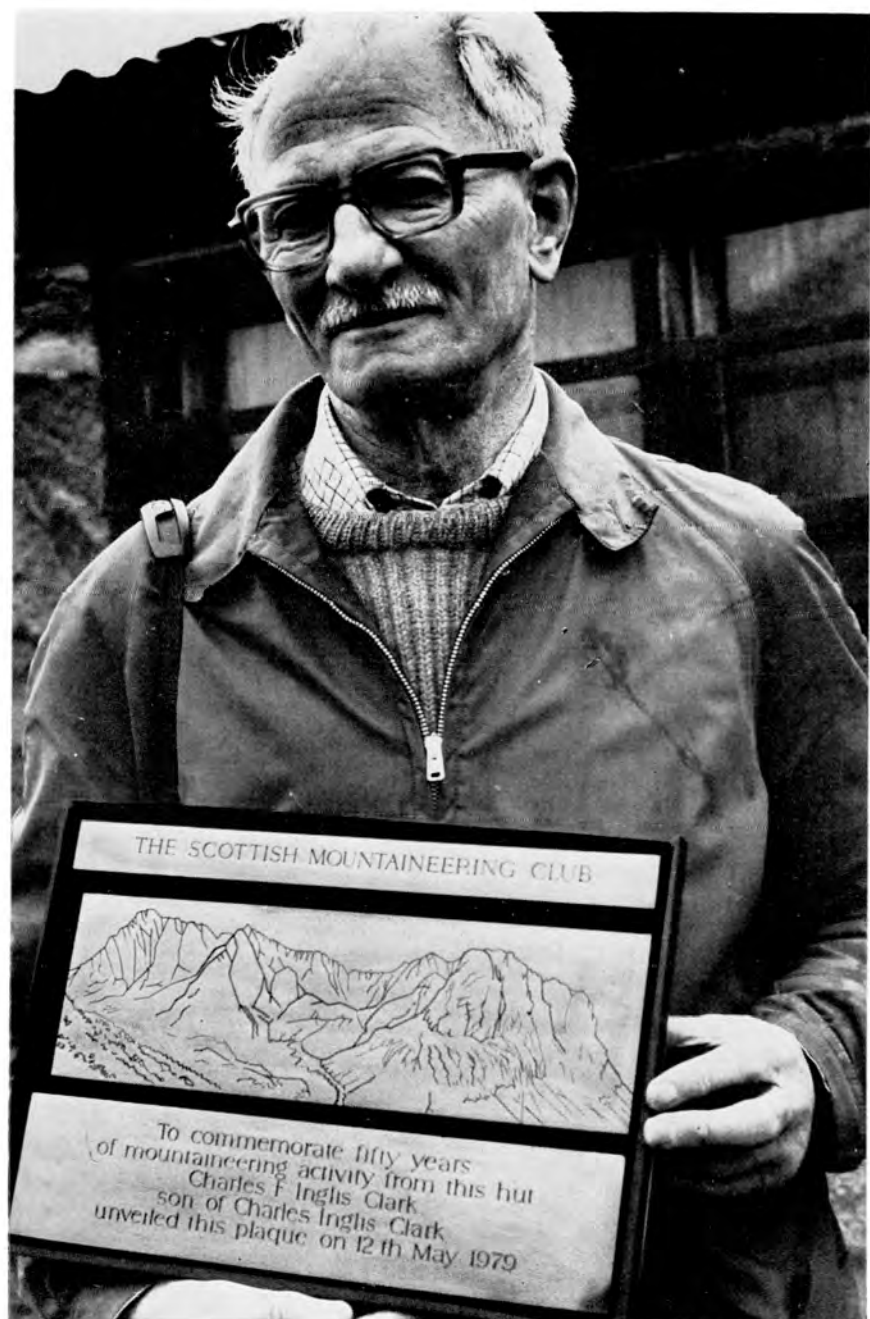


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President Elton with the Plaque.

Photo: D. J. Bennet

The jubilee plaque was prepared from an original Inglis Clark photograph.

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C.I.C. HUT - ORIGINS AND OPENING

By R. R. Elton

THE THOUGHT of having a climbers' hut on Ben Nevis arose at Easter Meet 1925 in Fort William when Maylard in conversation with George Sang (Hon. Sec.) suggested the idea. Sang had as his guest the factor of the Nevis estate.

Dr William Inglis Clark heard of this from Sang and became engrossed with the idea. He had climbed for many years, and was not only an authority on the hill, but had through the Club Journal made his reputation by many climbing articles and by what became the first guide book on Nevis. This was further emphasised by his continued mourning for the loss in 1918 of his son Charles Inglis Clark who was killed on active service in Mesopotamia during the 1914-18 war and by his anxiety in 1908 when his son had a 30-hours expedition on Nevis (*S.M.C.J.*, 1908, X, 73).

In 1927 with much work by Sang negotiations for the hut building were completed and a small group including Sang and Sandy Harrison (now Hon. President) selected the Hut site along with owners, architect and builder.

The architects were Mears-Wilson in Edinburgh, and the builders W. T. Gibson & Co. of Glasgow. The former were found by W. W. Naismith, the father of the Club, and whose indirect descendant is still with the firm. The builders were found by A. E. Robertson (later President) who knew well Tom Gibson who became the construction builder. Tom was a complete enthusiast. I met him sometimes during 1928 when he lived on the hill in tents and later under cover, from his work. He climbed Nevis many times, and latterly joined the Club I think as an Honorary Member. Unfortunately he died a few years later.

The building work was all done without any record but goods taken up were all carried on horseback. Furnishings were arranged by Club members and by November 1928, the position was explained at the Club's A.G.M. and I was appointed Hut Custodian. In the 1929 New Year I spent the weekend with J. H. B. Bell at the Hut, when after 18 inches of snow in Fort William and an hour digging

out the Hut door, we gained access. Hut usage was rather slow to develop, but access to the J.M.C.S. and guests from kindred clubs brought an increasing use, which will be dealt with below.

THE C.I.C. HUT - 1930's

By W. H. Murray

WHEN I first went to the hut in the mid-1930's it was the only club hut in Scotland, yet was still little used. The new Glencoe road had opened only in 1935. One could be sure of getting in. But already it was playing its part in a new exploration of the cliffs. Macphee was working on his rock-climbers' guide and without the hut could probably not have written it. His parties and Bell's were the chief users. Except in thick weather, their every visit either produced new routes or gathered ideas for them. Bell's game was to put the guide out of date, and climbers arriving at the hut always had this immediate excitement of opening the climbs book to read what new thing had been done, tried, or repeated.

The eight bunks were the best sprung and most comfortable in which I ever slept. One could lie there on a winter's night and watch the iron stove glow red-hot in the dark. These comforts of hut-life made a lasting impression on me. Still more could be made of them with forethought. Since my early visits were usually made with Mackenzie, MacAlpine, and Dunn, I rapidly learned the finer tactical points: such as, to carry the keys on the way up, and so without loss of decorum be first through the door to get a bunk by the fire; or be prompt in putting one's blankets into the oven, while it was warming; yet not be forward in the morning, but rather watch over the edge of the bunk to note if the first riser's breath smoked in icy air, and if so, wait till the primus was purring, porridge on the boil, and the raw edge taken off the new day. Fast as I learned, I could not expect to compete with masters, and had to reserve my lore for later deployment in more innocent company.

The scenes that spring to mind from early days are those that gave a lift to the spirit on wet or windy nights: that first sight of the hut's beckoning light far up the glen; the warm, wholesome fug when the door swung open; the steaming mugs of rum punch, the brewing of which was always the first move on arrival; and the coal fire in the big iron stove.

It was at the C.I.C. that I first met Dr J. H. B. Bell. I arrived with Mackenzie and MacAlpine late one April night to find him there

with three Englishmen – Jack Henson, Dick Morsley, and Percy Small. They were up to make the first ascent of Green Gulley (not knowing of Raeburn's climb thirty years earlier). The bitter cold of that night was banished by the welcome he gave us – mugs of hot soup before a blazing fire. I had my first lesson on the follies of 'volunteering' when I went to fetch a bucket of water for the rum punch. After digging through feet of interminable snow I found the burn frozen solid. My principal lesson came in the morning, when I watched Bell make breakfast for his own party. Porridge, sausage, and kippers were all stirred into the one pot. As a practical chemist, he was imbued with the truth that a meal was a fuel-intake, therefore its separation into 'courses' was an auld wife's nicety, and not for climbers. He later persuaded me to share his burnt toast, on the grounds that charcoal was a bodily need. He expounded equations of chemical change, and showed how charcoal absorbed the troublesome gases of stomach and gut, to our mutual benefit. Bell when cook could talk one into eating almost anything. But not even that toughest of characters, Dick Morsley, had a palate tough enough for Bell's porridge. After one spoonful, he strode to the door and flung his plateful out on the snow. The hut for me was a school of further education.

When I began climbing with Bell he made occasional concessions to my weakness for high cuisine. He introduced me to Hell's Kitchen at Fort William. This underground vault had sawdust on the floors and bare wooden tables. It was frequented by fishermen off the boats and by the Lochaber underworld. Fish and chips and black puddings, if too fastidiously cooked apart in two pans, were sensibly served on one plate. After an evening there we could better face dirty nights in the Allt a' Mhuilinn.

I can see from an old diary that my opinions of the hut were not always complimentary. 'The S.M.C. must have been mad to put so foul a building on so foul a hill' is an excerpt of 20th February 1938, wrung from me one black night on the path up. The right bank of the Allt a' Mhuilinn was coated in ice. A dismal mist hung low on the Ben. Beyond the deer-fence were scattered countless thousands of stones and boulders. We seemed to have stumbled over every single one, until at last we abandoned the path for the ice bound bed of the burn which was easier to find and follow. The toils of ascent with a heavy load will live strong in every hut-user's mind, and probably so does that first sight of its light. But no light shone that night.

My companions on this visit were again Mackenzie and MacAlpine. MacAlpine was the devil's own fire-stoker. He had genius. When he was present, I never tried for the bunks by the stove. His finishing touches last thing at night induced a heat through which Satan Himself could not have slept. And He it was who now saw to MacAlpine's punishment. Inspired by a heady brew, he had stoked

the stove to an unprecedented red-hotness, forgetting that his blankets were in the oven. When this was shortly discovered, Mackenzie and I basked in a glow of moral righteousness, the more keenly enjoyed for being so unaccustomed, while MacAlpine debated whether to confess their incineration to the hut custodian or to claim more plausibly that Bell had eaten them for breakfast.

The night outside looked so grim that we believed the next day lost and stayed up until 2 a.m. We rose to a blue and cloudless sky. There was no wind, the sun blazed, and the tight-packed gullies glittered icily. We went for Observatory Ridge, of which no second winter ascent had been made, and had one of the best climbs of our lives. We finished up Zero Gully by torchlight. A high bitter wind flailed us on top. In these days the Observatory still had its roof. It made an excellent outpost for the C.I.C. We wriggled through the upper half of a window to a big snow-grotto inside. MacAlpine had carried up a medicinal bottle of rum. Our festivities lasted till midnight. By the time we had kicked and cut our way off the Arête to the hut it was two-thirty. My previous night's thoughts on the C.I.C., when all looked hopeless, were not only revised but reversed. And so with many of our best days on the Ben. Without the hut we should not have had them.

THE C.I.C. HUT - 1950's and '60's

By James R. Marshall

MY FIRST sight of the C.I.C. was well over 30 years ago, during a stop on Carn Mór Dearg arête to watch the incredible, unassailable looking Great Buttress, materialise through dark, rolling, storm clouds. Then the wet hut roof caught the light and I was appraised in somewhat dramatic emphasis by a learned colleague: 'the men of the S.M.C. reside there when intent on tackling these formidable crags.' On I stumbled, humbled, conjuring visions of Wagnerian heroes sallying forth to great deeds on that sombre frightening crag.

A couple of years later, from a camp below the hut I made a tentative approach thinking (as the whole climbing fraternity seemingly still do) 'maybe a cup of tea or even an invitation to climb with these legendary beings,' but it wasn't to be. I just got a nose in the inner doorway when some specky weed bawled from his bunk 'bugger off' and being a well brought up lad, I did just that.

Strangely in my experience, this is a not unfamiliar introduction to the paradox of the C.I.C., a hut uniquely placed to enjoy the

greatest climbing area in the country, yet damned difficult to gain access, tactical not physical. Terms of access require one to be either, a member of an 'acceptable' club, or a guest of a member. Is the former a subtle coercion to club membership? The latter isn't easy either, not many members go to the hut; then find one that deigns to fraternise, not easy! e.g. that famous-infamous old Glasgow club find it hard to qualify, they even have a complementary hut, well a sort of

No doubt S.M.C. members feel they have the right to be selective, indeed they do, the hut is uniquely theirs, as intended by the original founders, who specifically stated it was for members and friends. What is remarkable, perhaps even shameful, is the S.M.C.'s apparent disregard of the situation (in their unique knowledge of the demand for winter bookings at the C.I.C.). As the senior club in Scotland they should have as far back as the sixties alerted the climbing community to the need to raise funds and construct alternative accommodation, in the form of a mountain bothy or better, wherein overcrowding, non-booking, etc. could be indulged in 'ad nauseum,' leaving the S.M.C. to indulge in the luxury of a club hut with selective occupation as their historic right.

Though unfamiliar with present-day statistics; new ascents and the disturbing number of climbers seen daily, in full winter, would indicate a continuing, if not increasing, demand for additional accommodation. As I see it, there is a need for a non-payment, mountain bothy for the young or parsimonious in conjunction with a hut similar to that of the C.I.C. for the more affluent, both to be built on the upper edge of the plain below the present hut (in suitable deference to station!). The whole project should be funded by the national bodies which spawn a proliferation of mountain bureaucrats. In turn, they, having little more to do than endlessly debate the good or evil of mountain educational policies, can be given a more meaningful purpose to life in the responsibility, management and maintenance of the new huts. Surely therefore, the most appropriate means whereby climbers can celebrate this 50th year would be to emulate the founders of the C.I.C. and initiate such a project to end the lottery of place bookings and pressures on over-zealous C.I.C. warders.

By 1950, though reasonably acquainted with Ben Nevis, my first actual stay in the hut was on a memorable September meet of the Edinburgh J.M.C.S., when we all fought our way against a tremendous gale, which had us shattered long before the hut was reached. High up the wind literally bowled us over, sacs and all, one collapsed but was assisted to our goal. It was the first experience of that sheltered, secure sensation, so much a part of the hut. Outside, the great roar of the wind hammering the cliffs, the endless rushing vibration of the river in spate and the intermittent clatter, as the

wind hurtles against the hut on its way down the glen. Soaking in this ambience and great mugs of tea, we realised one of the party was missing, so off we went again into the screaming night to search. Down on the slabs, the gale blew us off our feet several times (no sac ballast) but eventually we found him, sensibly down among boulders in his sleeping bag and got him back to the C.I.C. and recovery, though he must have been up half the night from the volumes of sweet tea forced on him.

In these early years, little was done other than the established classics, the Ben had not yet come to the attention of the post-war, *avante garde*, so busy in the Cairngorms and Glencoe (one exception being Hamish Nicol who survived a long fall from high up the steep ice of Zero). The neglect was understandable, why toil up Ben Nevis? with so much at easier reach; even though strong, regional competition existed between areas, it was rarely overtly expressed, with so many good routes available for the making.

Then, in a frustrated rebuff from winter climbing, Whillans and Brown put the boot in and climbed Sassenach (1954). Up to that point, a new line could be left till later; no more, if the line was big it had better be climbed. Coupled with this event, progressive climbers became aware of the limitations of a winter Glencoe and naturally turned their attentions to the great crags of Ben Nevis and Creag Meaghaidh.

As new interest developed, the hut was at its lowest ebb, the old stove had had it, the interior was black with soot from dirty primus stoves and when busy the floor swam in meltwater and ooze, giving the place a dank, dingy, uncomfortable air. Help was at hand however, some member recommended a Swedish barrel stove, smoke ring and all, which worked wonders, the interior dried out, it was actually possible to see the floorboards, the blankets stopped growing fuzz and the hut became very popular. (The original stove landed on the refuse pile, duly to be rescued by the Creag Dhu to give long, honourable service in Jacksonville).

The rehabilitation was too attractive, with attention focused on the great gullies, regular occupation was the thing, legitimate or not and certain Glasgow climbers were seen in city bars suffering 'C.I.C. stoop' a chronic condition from using the 'wee door,' i.e. window access, for excessive periods. Ian Clough and colleagues took to occupying the hut mid week then week-enders, booked and non-booked would pile in until the hut was crammed to the door. All this activity drove the hut committee spare; how could it be controlled? Stronger defences just produced greater technical achievement in enforced entry. I had some kind of responsibility role at that time but believed in the 'open' hut concept and participated in over-crowding sessions with a will, once with 32 persons in the hut! Indirectly this had a good effect, in that it was grand to escape onto

the cliffs in the morning, besides, C.I.C. crowding came nowhere near that of certain French huts of the period, the only difference being they had a hut guardian to collect!

A great deal of reprehensible behaviour occurred during this era, stemming principally from the Edinburgh 'youth movement,' self help was rife, sassenach baiting a duty and avoidance of hut chores a must. It was hell when an extra day or two was available and you ended up with all the week-end debris. Yet it was very entertaining and in retrospect hard to decide whether the night life or the crag was the main attraction, e.g. J.C's. (not the one that walked on water) full hut game was typical, in an already warm hut and clad only in underpants, he would complain of the cold then stoke the stove until temperatures soared into the 80's and inmates' faces matched the cherry red chimney of the stove.

Despite the frenetic numbers, surprisingly few new ascents were made during the decade mid 50's to 60's. On the northern cliffs, about 125 new summer and winter ascents were recorded, i.e. little over 12 per annum on average but that distorts events; for in fact the years 58-61 account for more than half that total. Then even more significant, Ian Clough and I account for about 60% of the total, showing I think quite clearly how little exploratory climbing was engaged in by others during the period. (Quantity of course is no indicator of quality!).

By the sixties, the dominant hut abusers had grown old, tired or dead, a new force in the form of The Squirrels emerged, a little more subdued and responsible, to mop up the few remaining old style lines. A new warder took over, one who was aware that 'climber' did not necessarily equate to 'gentleman.' The hut interior was adapted by contractor Clough to take a few more 'herring' and gas was introduced as fuel. Ludicrous password systems were evolved and the hut defences strengthened to a point of paranoia! (futile, the enlightened can still enter).

But the boisterous days were over anyway, the main wave had washed on, the next generation flexed their muscle on the new classic climbs, thrashed times on the big routes, looked tentatively at the unclimbed walls between and continued the vituperative action with over zealous warders on the vexing, access problems.

Then came the enlightenment of front point technique, the pick and stick brigade took off, swelling to the second wave, but that's another story and not mine to tell.

THE C.I.C. HUT – BEN NEVIS IN THE 1970's

By M. G. Geddes

THE LAST decade has brought great changes to Ben Nevis. The introduction of better ice-climbing equipment and the increase in popularity of mountaineering and associated activities throughout Britain have produced a startling increase in the level of winter activity. Summer climbing limps along behind, largely because of the weather conditions, I suspect.

In the early seventies, the great ice climbs of the fifties and sixties were climbed with increasing frequency and those which had remained inviolate for ten years or so were first repeated.

Inclined picks, the moveable hooks, have made steep ice climbing faster and less strenuous, and Zero and Point Five Gullies, Gardyloo Buttress and the Orion Face Direct became classics within a few years. The opinion was even voiced that the new tools would *retard* Scottish winter climbing by diverting attention from the 'real' problems, the buttresses. To some extent, development in that direction was blown off course, but climbers did return to the buttresses and will continue to climb there, better equipped and more capable now that thick ice pitches have been relegated to a minor place in the difficulties of a mixed climb. It is interesting to note, in passing, that the adoption of a different pick is but a revival of an old idea; Welzenbach sported a steeply curved pick on the Oberland north faces, while an Alpine Journal of that era scathingly records a German note on smaller hooks, used for serac climbing, as 'yet a further development of modern mountain-madness!'

The number of climbers visiting Ben Nevis increased dramatically until about 1975, and has continued to increase, although more slowly, since then. While Point Five Gully had only been climbed by about seven or eight parties in the 12 years preceeding 1971, it can currently entertain this number *up one weekend*. The climbing jet-set, and more genuine travellers, even come half way across the world to be blasted by the mountain's winds, buried in its spindrift, and bewildered by the plateau. French, Americans, Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders are now to be spotted regularly. One party of Italians had been particularly well prepared, doubtless by an English party. They managed to wriggle their way through the defences of the hut, without a word of English and liberal use of 'Non Comprendi,' before proceeding to cook their pasta. The occupants tried their best to establish some mode of communication, to no avail until they asked the visitors where they had been. 'Point Five Gully – piece of duff!' was the only English they had been taught!

The use of the C.I.C. hut has been a contentious issue throughout these years. On the one hand there are those who wish the hut to be treated as the private house of the occupants, and on the other there are those who wish it to be used as an Alpine refuge. The increasing numbers passing the hut each year has exacerbated the conflict; angry and at times violent scenes have resulted. It would seem that both parties are dissatisfied with the current situation. The scene which I personally find most unsatisfactory is when enthusiasts camp for days of rain and storm in the Allt a'Mhuilinn, and the hut remains half empty because the occupants, club members or others, are adhering to the 'private guest house' policy. This is particularly bewildering to foreign visitors, and, I believe, contrary to the spirit with which the bequest was made. To quote MacRobert, describing the opening (Easter) weekend in the *Journal*: 'Soon a stream of visitors arrived, mostly en route for the summit, some bringing their lunch, and enjoying it in the comfortable shelter of the hut, for a piercing wind prevailed.'

The increase in climbing activity has brought with it an increase in misfortunes, although probably not a proportionate one, perhaps because of better belay material and techniques. The scene on a busy day can be not unlike a clip from the climax of a cops and robbers thriller. Shouts are drowned in the chop of a helicopter as it swoops into the corrie, and hats and ropes are whipped about in its wake. Files of orange or khaki cadets stretch down the glen, snocats wail as they sink deeper into the ever widening swamp, and rescue men are lowered from the summit on spidery threads.

To get back to the climbing itself, the development of fine new winter routes, both on ice and mixed terrain has continued abreast of these unfortunate side issues. To list the good ones would take a page, for they are nearly all good. The most notable, for length, 'line-appeal,' independence and sustained difficulty include Minus One Gully and Buttress, Astronomy and Route II. Whether or not these will ever come into vogue depends partly on the degree of winter conditions which the future climber finds acceptable. More likely to attain the popularity of the 'golden oldies' are routes such as Astral Highway, Slav Route, Albatross, Rubicon Wall and Lobby Dancer, which are more often in currently acceptable condition. Summer activity has seen the development of rock climbing on Central Trident Buttress and the North wall of Castle Ridge, and several high standard routes, including a free version of Titan's Wall, and Caligula, the groove right of the Sassenach chimney.

As for the future, I hesitate from suggesting where 'the next great advances,' etc. will take place. Further improvements in ice tools could lead to a burst of activity on the icicles, or development may continue on powdered and verglassed rock climbs. Perhaps the European visitors will lead the way with a few extreme ski

descents – Ledge Route, the North Face of Castle Ridge, and the Little Brenva Face seem likely candidates. The most futuristic scene of the decade was witnessed last winter by some friends passing the foot of Green Gully. A lone body rolled out of the mist, shot down the lower reaches of the Gully, and stopped in the snow near them – it was a four-foot badger. The beastie gave them a scowl, shook the snow off, and set off up the Gully on another attempt!

THE C.I.C. HUT – JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

By R. T. Richardson

By THE time this issue of the *Journal* appears the main structure of the C.I.C. hut will be (*Deo et Vandali volente*) fifty-one years old, the Jubilee celebrations will be over and the hut will be back to normal use (whatever that may be). A full report of the celebrations should appear in the 1980 *Journal* but by now it will be known if the plans of the organising sub-committee have been worthwhile – although in this Club it is axiomatic that you can't please everybody and sometimes you can't please anybody. Anyway whether the Jubilee celebrations have pleased everybody or not, the sub-committee has enjoyed its meetings. The main burden of the work has fallen on Charlie Gorrie, with Bob Elton, Alec Small and Bob Richardson in supporting roles and Bill Wallace to control the wilder flights of fancy. Meetings have usually been at Bob Elton's house and with his hospitality and Alec's stories the business has gone merrily along. I wish all committee work was as pleasant – but perhaps the food and wine have been a factor.

The actual Jubilee celebrations illustrated many of the C.I.C. problems. A week before the event the lock was found to have been vandalised and on the morning of the 12th May there was low cloud and gusting winds – not good helicopter weather. About a dozen cars went up to the dam and the advance party went up the hill carrying the provisions and prepared to batter down the door. This proved gratifyingly difficult but by the time the traffic up the Allt became heavy, the door was open, another lock fitted and the soup was heating on the stove.

Flying conditions were bad but John Polland successfully brought up Charles Inglis Clark (son of *the* Charles Inglis Clark) and some of the Jeffrey clan – other Jeffreys walked. We were very pleased to be able to fly up Drew MacCorquodale, who hasn't let a wheelchair lessen his interest in mountaineering. The plaque was

duly unveiled (to a chorus of howling dogs) the drink consumed and everyone evacuated safely to civilisation. The only casualty was the drive shaft on Jim Anton's car. It was a remarkable sight to see so many in their sixties and seventies and one (or two?) in their eighties tramp up and down. Between sixty and seventy people visited the hut despite the weather.

The Dinner was generally judged a success. About fifty people attended, the food was adequate and the speeches short. The socialising afterwards went on to about midnight. Not such a stylish event as the Opening Dinner but a notable event all the same.

Well, by the time this appears in print it will be all over and some of you will actually have been there. But how do you appropriately celebrate fifty years of a mountain hut anyway? Fifty years of greasy frying pans, unwashed clothes and general squalor. Fifty years of acting as a base for endeavour on wet rock and dry rock, soft snow and hard ice. Many routes, many frights, many triumphs and not a few defeats, even occasional tragedies. Fifty years of all the many facets of mountaineering activity which have centred round that durable and cunning construction, laboriously built during the wet summer of 1928.

The interior of the hut has changed considerably since then, the coal stove and paraffin lamps have gone, as have the old bunks. Now we have gas lighting and heating and rebuilt sleeping accommodation which, along with the extension, allows the hut to accommodate twenty people in some degree of comfort. Despite all the changes, Charles Inglis Clark's photograph still hangs on the wall, the barometer is still there (although the binoculars have long since gone) and the Rev. A. E. Robertson's table still stands.

In recent years usage of the hut has increased sharply – 2,022 bed nights last year – and it is now very difficult for non-members (and even members) to gain access without booking well in advance, a fact which a self-elected elite resent strongly. For most of the hut's history the number of people climbing on the north side of Ben Nevis was relatively small and attitudes to casual visitors could be generous. Now the hordes pour up the Allt in winter and many of them expect to walk into the hut, knock the snow off their boots and be handed a cup of tea. The hard economics of running and maintaining a hut in such a position and the personal cost of replacing stolen gear have forced us into raising the drawbridge. Cries of 'Where's the fellowship of the mountains?' usually come from people who have no such huts and such problems of their own.

I suppose it is impossible to run a hut in such a unique position without annoying somebody and the occasional unpleasantness should not obscure the fact that many hundreds of non-members use the C.I.C. each year – not that they are prepared to write to the

glossy Mountaineering magazines and say so. It is still a place to relax after a hard day, to drink gallons of tea, to eat (and maybe sip a little wine) – above all to talk with fellow climbers. Few of us are without happy memories of evenings at C.I.C. – be they spent around coal stove or gas fire – and with luck and care and hard work it should see another fifty years of hard days on the mountain and convivial nights around the fire.

JUBILEE JAUNT

By Hamish M. Brown

IT WAS not planned specifically as such but as the trip was intended to finish the day before the Queen's Jubilee this code-name presented itself unimaginatively. I don't know what it did in your part of the world but from my Kinghorn home we looked over a rain-lashed Forth to the pathetic bonfire flicker on Arthur's Seat. Scotland's Jubilee was notoriously wet and there was much cheating to ensure the continuity of bonfires over bleak mountain tops. Our Jubilee jaunt though was sunshine all the way – a heatwave horror in fact.

Ray wanted to do a coast-to-coast trip, I was very interested in a west-to-east Munro walk, so we combined forces to do both. Sgùrr na Banachdich is Scotland's westmost Munro (3,000 ft. summit) and Mount Keen is the most easterly. I had already tramped from Keen to Banachdich and also from Ben More, Mull to Keen, so this was a chance for further variety.

Ray lives in Cleethorpes on Humberside where a hundred-foot contour is called a hill. It is a resort of candyfloss and cars, donkey rides, pollution – and teeming people. Anything or anywhere more in contrast to the Rough Bounds of Knoydart would be hard to imagine. The dates of our hike, come to think of it, were determined by the days of sailings into Knoydart. No Humber tunnel there; just three boats a week.

Back-tracking from a sailing time gave us the starting date of May 22nd in Glenbrittle. We took two days motoring up for we had to check various places for accommodation and leave parcels of food, fuel, film, maps and other necessities – or luxuries. The night before was spent at the Glenbrittle Camp Site where the friendly warden looked after my Dormobile once we had left. There was still a great deal of snow filling the corrie headwalls and it was strange to sprawl in the sunny evening and see the returning climbers with ice axes on their rucksacks. As soon as we had set off north the baro-

meter had shot up and, innocents that we were, that was the start of the grilling.

Scotland has a reputation for its somewhat erratic weather, which may or may not be justified, but is an endless topic of conversation among tourist victims. It averages out I suppose – otherwise we would have no tourists at all. As long as half go home saying 'Great weather' and half go home saying 'Rained the whole time' our economy will survive. Of course averages never happen, nor was our trip average. It was an extreme of heat such as I have seldom known. To regain the balance an extreme of 'wet and wildness' was due and the Jubilee did its best to level off the weather statistics.

We were off early, for the Cuillin in full heatwave conditions demand devious dodging. Not only is gabbro a very abrasive rock but it seems to absorb heat and radiate it out like an electric grill. Climbers in these conditions usually return to base 'well-done,' their body juices drained out of them and nose and ears like pork crackling.

We walked in our dreams till Ray realised he was ascending Sgùrr Dearg instead of Coire na Banachdich. I sat in the corrie for an hour wondering if he had managed to break a leg. Once he had rejoined me it was a joy to wend up to the Cuillin Ridge at the Bealach na Banachdich. Ray's mind was working away at how to lighten his pack, and for days thereafter he was posting home this and that – or simply abandoning items. Ounces became debating topics. It is surprising what you can do without when you have to carry it, especially over Munros and high passes, especially when the sun leans on you like a Bunyan's burden.

We outflanked much of the ridge to reach Sgùrr na Banachdich, 3,167 feet, the westmost Munro. The background was black Black Cuillin, striated with snow and girdled with shimmering heat. Photographically the trip was not a success, for as soon as the sun rose, at four o'clock, it veiled the landscape in stifling haze. By eight o'clock, when urban breakfasts happen, our grill was set at the top heat index and stayed there till six in the evenings, when it switched off and we continued to bake gently till the night cold came and frosted our cake of contrast. On several occasions I was to wake with hoar on my beard.

We know cold all too well. It is much more difficult to describe heat adequately. Ray took five days of it – and then went home looking like an overcooked salmon. Twelve days out I could still go into Mar Lodge, on Deeside, in the afternoon, drink three cokes and seven cups of tea, and not need a pee till bedtime. Two days later, beyond Mt. Keen, at five in the evening, the sun actually raised blisters on the back of my knees. Aye, it was 'warm walking,' as a Lochaber shepherd actually admitted.

Without ice axes we had to wriggle our way down off the Cuillin Ridge, keeping to the gaps between rocky walls and the big sweeps of snow. After that it was screes and rough stuff and then a delightful dip in a blue pool before Loch Coruisk. The loch was benign, snoozing like an old man on a deckchair, not at all wild as Sir Walter Scott, Horatio McCulloch and others tell us. We walked its length and then round to the stark concrete box of the hut by Loch Scavaig. Day-trippers are apt to head for it in droves under the impression it is a public toilet.

It actually does have a flush toilet, running water, gas cooking, bunk beds and, last line in luxury, the resident English climbers had brought in a barrel of beer. Providence and profanity are close cousins. Such things in one of the most remote corners of Scotland could be regarded poorly, but on that day beer on tap was not to be spurned on any grounds. Pity it was not Campbeltown Loch as well.

The next day we crossed 'the Bad Step' and followed the switch-back path round to Camusunary Bay where Blaven sliced up into the blue. As it was a favourite hill I suggested doing it from the col to its south, up the Abhainn nan Leac, a stream full of sculptured pools. Ray, not being a peak-bagger, decided to go round so faced the rough track and then road miles. We made a rendezvous where the burn off Blaven reached Loch Slapin. Blaven was magnificent with a view of islands – and highlands – hard to equal. I had taken a swim going up and dithered on top so ended having to romp down the miles to keep the appointment. I made it with several minutes in hand. An hour later there was still no Ray. I went on and sat at the head of the Loch. He could not pass me unnoticed. He came eventually, having tired of sitting by a burn flowing into Loch Slapin – two hundred yards along from the correct burn.

We walked on through sleepy Torrin and up the long glen to Broadford. A quick cup of tea with Bill Wallace, the welcoming Warden at the Youth Hostel, showers ('we are going soft' I thought) and then we went along to the hotel for dinner. Broadford Hotel is a friendly place and the food good. We made the most of it.

The next day was a killer. To avoid some of the tarred road we went over the hills and moors to the Sound of Sleat. I have a memory of us lying by a red, stone-lined pool in the middle of nowhere, Blaven a tooth in the blue, and not a murmur beyond the scurry of mice and the distant bleat of a lamb. Moment of bliss, followed by miles of dour road-bashing. Ben Sgriol, king of the little hills, hunched into the sky across the Sound. We took our thirsts down to Isle Ornsay and competed with the Navy in quenching them till the offshore frigate hooted and they departed. So did we. Those hot miles. Only once did we find a shop. As I left it I overheard Ray *beginning* his order with 'three ice creams please, and . . .'

The southern end of this peninsula is well wooded and lush. We saw the ferry come in from Mallaig and half thought to catch it there and then. Later, we were glad we had not done so for the Ardvassar Hotel would have been missed. If the night before I had relished a shower, this time I lay in a deep bath, with a pot of tea beside me. A full-length mirror revealed a two-tone creature: very pale in the trunk and distinctly red at the extremities.

We sailed early to Mallaig, did a big shopping and at noon were off on the estate boat to Inverie of Knydart where we had arranged to stay at the workers' hostel. Ray made the mistake of lying in the sun during the afternoon. The next morning, over breakfast at five, he admitted the sun was too much. Rather despairing we agreed to give it that day to cool, or he would go home. I took off for the tops but there was no breeze even there and a lochan at 2,000 feet could only produce warm water. It was so obviously set fair that delay was pointless. Ray told me to go on so after a big meal, I did so. He walked up the glen with me till I branched off for the Mam Meadail. It must have been disappointing for him but as the next few days led through wild, quite uninhabited country, the decision was a wise one. The heatwave continued.

I just made the pass in daylight but it hardly becomes really dark at the end of May and there was a moon to see me down the zig-zag to Carnoch and the curlew-crying sands of Loch Nevis. The Carnoch River can be desperate in spate (the new metric map shows a bridge though it has been gone for a decade or more) but this time it was just boulder-hopping. At midnight, still in shorts and shirt only, still dripping with sweat, I arrived at Sourlies.

A month before Sourlies had been some broken and overgrown walls. I'd pulled out rubbish from inside and dug till I broke the spade handle, then collected stones and stripped moss off the interior walls – a very minor help to reconstruction. Now it was a neat, snug wee bothy, thanks to the Mountain Bothies Association, who had had a work-party there for a week (*S.M.C.J.*, 1978, xxxi, 289). The estate landing craft helped take in materials for the head of the loch is too shallow for normal boats. There are so many pathetic piles of stones in the remote glens that it was almost cheering to tears to see one restored. I had a brew. The bed shelf smelt of freshly worked pinewood.

Hotels and hostels are fine but they are not conducive to early starts. I left Sourlies at five, for the path up to the Mam na Cloich Airde, as romantic a pass as you could find. The made path twists and turns up to 1,000 feet, there are lonely lochans and black crags – and suddenly the green sweep of Glen Dessarry beyond. It was the sort of place one might expect to meet Alan Breck Stewart and Davy Balfour.

I crossed over to another bothy, A'Chuil, where I met five Carn Dearg Club lads. Breakfast time. They had been wandering about, Munro-bagging, and were all 'weary o' the sun' – a rare complaint. Another pass took me over into Glen Kingie and I went up and down Sgùrr Mór before collapsing into the river. The ochrous strath was a nightmare of heat so I lay up in Kinbreak bothy till after five, then ate, and went on down the glen. Even in the drought the river was not easy to cross but a herd of hinds showed me a ford. The empty strath fell behind. I wended up forestry roads through young plantings. Originally Tomdoun Hotel was my aim but it was off the direct line so I kept to the south of it and eventually just slept out in the heather, by Lochan an Staic. It was moon-bright and frosty cold. The hills of Glen Kingie looked remote, as they should, for I had covered 16 miles with 5,000 feet of ascent. In the east the regular cone of Ben Tee called the new day's walk ahead.

I rose amid the bubblings of blackcock at *lek* and descended to the River Garry which was smoking before the fiery sun. For years I had intended following along south of the River Garry – going west to east across the view one has from the hill road over to Glen Shiel – so today had the joys of new ground and an old longing. It was all forestry walking. I broke the back of it early, had a second breakfast, then followed a path up to the peaty col under Ben Tee. Though not a Munro, Ben Tee is a great hill, so it was climbed. From the top I could hear the noise of the repair work on the locks at South Laggan. The thought of the tea room there helped over the dusty miles of moor. A vast pot of tea and home baking was much appreciated. Even inside the building the sweat continued to run down my back. Coming out, I saw a herd of cattle all belly deep in Loch Lochy. I joined them.

The Frasers welcomed me at the Youth Hostel and between their store and the parcel we'd left I made a real pig of myself. Two female hitch-hikers sat goggle-eyed watching me eat. I only had tea; a tin of gooseberries; five fish fingers; a steak & kidney pudding with a tin of mixed vegetables, beans, fresh carrots and potatoes; peaches and cream; coffee; cheese and biscuits. When I looked at their egg and beans one of them actually put her arm round her plate . . .

I had reached the Great Glen. The western wastes had gone easily enough apart from the heat. When I set out on the next part (to the A9 at Dalwhinnie), the sky was overcast but by afternoon had reverted to the blazing sun again. I ran several planned days together to reach Dalwhinnie in two days. Leaving the Great Glen I headed up its wooded eastern slopes to cross bleak bogland and drop down to the head of Glen Roy of 'Parallel Roads' fame. As it was only noon, instead of a bothy night there I traversed Beinn a' Chaorainn to Loch Laggan side. This Munro has been creating fun



December 1978

Photo: H. M. Brown

On the summit of Carn an t'-Sagairt Mor Jim Donaldson contemplates his 22 years of service to the Club.



On the ridges of the Saddle (Spidean Dhomhuill Bhric).

Photo: H. M. Brown

as the new surveys have shifted the actual summit from one bump to another. Three new Munros have actually been created by the Ordnance Survey in the last few years; a comment on past mapping deficiencies rather than the actual growth of certain hills.

We had left a parcel hidden among the bracken so I soon had a good meal inside me. Again, I just slept out, and again had a clear, cold night, waking to the spraying of hoar frost on to my face as a curious coal tit swung on the birch scrub above me. I had only just set off when I ran into another blackcock *lek*. Curious coincidences of my bivouacs. The rewards of early starting.

I took the stalking path up to the col between Beinn a' Chlachair and Geal Charn. A solitary tent stood on it with a view over Laggan side to my snowy peak of yesterday. The burns were actually frosted or frozen as I cut round by the path skirting Geal Charn. Beyond I traversed slippery hillside to the col east of Geal Charn. Having virtually circumnavigated this hill I then went up and down it, carefully dodging snow flanks. When I crashed into Blackburn of Pattack bothy for a second breakfast (at nine o'clock) I roused a couple with two children who set about having their first.

A wandering stream took me up onto the southern end of the long ridge of the Fara whence I looked over to Ben Alder, Creag Meaghaidh, the Monadh Liaths and the hills of the A9. The hot miles of walking along the Fara almost overpowered me. It was stupefyingly hot. I found a burn, had a drink – and woke up an hour later!

I charged down from the massive cairn through a great herd of stags into Dalwhinnie. The Grampian Hotel gave a friendly reception, but with a name like Mrs Kettle for hostess, this was to be expected surely. In the morning I left a parcel (one had been left at Dalwhinnie en route to Skye) and went on very lightly laden for I abandoned sleeping bag, stove and other things. That night I was aiming for a bothy and thereafter would be in proper accommodation. The bothy area could provide dry heather, Scots pine, or Juniper for burning, each with its own distinctive scent, so the stove was a luxury. I decided I could survive one night without a sleeping bag. It was a case of survival too, for it froze hard and wearing clothes alone and inside the rucksack was hardly adequate. Besides, at the head of Glen Feshie I was over 1,000 feet up. Nearby once stood a bothy made famous by Landseer who used it as a studio and left a painting of a stag on its wall. When I threw some paraffin on the wood to start cooking several stags outside the window reared up in fright at the sudden flames.

A devious route over Meall Chuaich and crossing the passes of Gaick and Minigaig had led me through a slot of a pass to upper Glen Feshie, a delectable spot, despite being raped by an ill-placed bulldozed track. Beyond that however was all greens and browns of delight: the pines and young birch catching the dawn sun,

brilliant, feathery greens against the rolling brown hills of heather. Barren Cuillin, the empty sweep out of Knoydart, the trees of Glen Garry, the grassy hills south of Laggan, now this – what a land of contrasts.

The Munro-bagger in me came out and from the Falls of Eidart I wended off into the Cairngorms over Beinn Bhrotain, Monadh Mór and Carn Cloich Mhuillin before descending to the River Dee. The last was a hill Munro himself was keeping to the end of *his* Munro-bagging but he was still baulked by the Inaccessible Pinnacle in Skye when he died during the First World War. He made his famous list of 3,000-foot summits in 1891. The first person to complete them all was the Rev. A. E. Robertson, in 1901, a feat not repeated for 20 years, when another reverend did so. Now about a dozen people complete the round every year. My dog has even done them all – plus the English, Welsh and Irish 3,000'ers. I often wonder if Munro was aware of what he had started.

At the Chest of Dee I had a glorious swim in the large granite-carved pools, then came out and dried in the sun while a fire of heather stalks produced the blessed brew. At White Bridge a foundered school party was lying on the grass – perhaps 'frying' might be a better description. At the bothy I had picked up a copy of the biography of Richard Dimbleby and this book became my escape from the long, hard eleven miles to Braemar. I simply read all the way, delving into the book and cutting out the cruel hot world which I walked. At the Linn o' Dee and certain other favourite spots I did surface again to enjoy the beauty. Reading of Auschwitz and Belsen, then looking along the glorious reaches of Mar had an unsettling effect. I was offered a lift and felt slightly crazy refusing – but it would have taken too many weary words to explain why I had to hoof it to Braemar. Twenty-five miles made this the longest leg.

Possibly due to the sun, or overeating, or both the next day felt a bit of a toil and was not enjoyed as it might have been – so I largely read the miles away again: through Glen Callater, along the loch and up Jock's Road. Instead of following this down to Glen Doll direct I took to the moors as I had done a few years previously when doing all the Munros in a single trip: Tolmount, Tom Buidhe, Dreish and Mayar, an odd assortment of names. On the way I passed Finalty Hill and eventually descended into Glen Doll down the Shank of Drumfollow.

Dried-out peat bogs were teeming with deer. Their hoof-beats as they passed made just the same noise as herds of game on the plains of Africa. A dunlin sliced off from my feet and then stood watching anxiously. Very gingerly I moved about – and was lucky enough to spot the partner sitting tight on the nest. It is tiny incidents like this that are never forgotten; they are the brush stroke, kisses

of children in the adult sweep of hills. I sang down into the green jungle of Glen Doll, leaving the empty heights, and the view, far off still, of Mount Keen. Perhaps there would be an ending after all.

After the Glen Feshie- Braemar crossing the next was to be my longest day – and a harder one as it had little in the way of beaten track. What there was came at the start; the brutal ascent of the Capel Mounth, the old drovers' route to Glen Muick and Ballater. As a youngster it had been one of my first hill crossings and Lochnagar one of my first hills. East of this pass lies one of the largest areas of peat bog landscape in Britain, as I knew from battling over it once before to Mt. Keen. I started off from the same high corner but cut over to join the Water of Mark near its source. I nearly jumped onto a fox which was sleeping in the shadow of a peat bog. It fled and ran right into a herd of deer, which charged off in turn setting up a great complaint of grouse . . .

The winding Mark cuts deep into the hills – a whole area of peat domes, river-captures, meanders, waterfalls and quiet splendour. It deserves to be better known but then, there are no Munros in it – Mount Keen apart – and ninety-nine out of a hundred climb that hill by the same route. Queen Victoria was one of the ninety-nine. The Queen's Well stands a monument to her hill devotion. I followed the river, as bends or not, the going is quicker than the watershed above. After a swim and 'chittery bite' however I had to pull up on to the moors. Mount Keen's cone lay full ahead but my course was that of a ship tacking into the wind. The dry bogs made soft, if devious going. On one occasion I startled two hares; they exploded off round the bog in opposite directions and ran full pelt into each other with a crash that had me wincing.

Just before the final pull up the granite boulders to the trig. point there are welcome springs by the old Mounth Road which crosses from Tarfside to Glen Tanar. Due to the proximity of path and hill, Mount Keen has one of the earliest recorded ascents of a British Mountain: John Taylor, in 1618, wrote ' . . . when I came to the top of it, my teeth began to dance in my head with cold, like virginal's jacks; and withall, a most familiar mist embraced me round . . . so that it did moysten throw all my clothes.'

Time was pressing as I had a bed and breakfast booked at Tarfside so I went on, this time on the watershed, over the Braid Cairns and then miles of dried out, clawing, heather moors. The westerling sun, far from cooling, seemed to burn like a magnifying glass. It raised blisters on the back of my well-tanned legs. The interminable heather at last died out as I lost height and descended into the lush tunnel of the North Esk Valley; in the no-man's land between fields and moor were the ruins of a considerable settlement: long lines of tumbled walls and guardian rowan trees over which the waups and pied pipers were crying a lament. Nobody I spoke to knew anything

of its history, though it could not have been very old. History is what lies beyond grandfather's gossip it seems.

Weeks previously I had telephoned Tarfside Post Office to seek advice about accommodation – and landed lucky. It was all fixed up with the post mistress' sister at what was once the Vicarage: a large house, backing onto a farm, and with the front lawn running down to the 'English' Church. The smell of fields and trees was almost sickly sweet after the acrid moors. The village seemed *en fete*; an old man explained it was the kiddies Jubilee Day so there was nobody likely to be in at the post office. While talking everyone seemed to come out from a hall and I was pounced on by a lady who turned out to be my hostess; 'Ach you looked like a walking person' no doubt politely covered my worn attire among all their Sunday-best.

Mrs Guthrie knew how to look after a walking person anyway. A cup of tea restored and after a bath I had a supper I will long remember: a fine salad and endless piles of home baking. The milk was yellow with cream. I thought of Ray and Cleethorpes, the contrasts, the glorious contrasts – like the owl hooting while I stretched between clean sheets. How many nights ago had I shivered on the boards at Ruighaiteachain with the stags peering in at the window? The western seaboard seemed aeons of time and experience away. It was almost over now: Banachdich to Keen was done, all that remained was the walk to the eastern sea. The common denominator, all through, had been the beating of the sun. I put cream on my blisters, and slept.

It was tempting just to bomb down the road to Edzell and on to the sea but tarred roads make unfriendly feet and I was walking a mountain way after all. 'The Retreat,' two miles down from Tarfside, is an outstanding folk museum but was shut when I passed, so having missed that, I crossed a swaying footbridge and wandered up onto the Hill of Wirren: a sort of ambulatory coda to my long symphony. It is only 2,274 feet but being on the edge of the big hills had an extensive view: Clachnaben (to the north east) running west to Mount Battock, Mount Keen, Lochnagar and all the Grampian jumble. To the south I could see the Lomonds of Fife, my home hills, and Arthur's Seat where in two days the Jubilee bonfire would blaze. And I could see the sea.

Again it was tempting to hurry off. With exaggerated slowness I threaded the last of peat moors to the summit. For the first time in the trip I actually used my compass. So dome-shaped is the top that I could not see the arm of the descending bump which was my way off – so I had to start on a bearing till it came in view. The dome is supported by many buttressing ridges so accuracy mattered – error would be measured in miles once down a wrong ridge.

I came down into a rich agricultural landscape which smelt of honey and was loud with bird song. Edzell was noisy too as a clay-pigeon shoot seemed to be part of its celebrations. I chose an hotel and luxuriated lazily. (Tea in the lounge with a test match on T.V.). The overdressed manager asked me if I did not have anything to wear on my feet. I was padding about in stocking soles rather than my big boots. My brief 'No' rather ended the conversation. The place was all right, the food fine, but it lacked the feel of hills and the hospitality of hill folk.

The next morning I walked the 11 miles into Montrose, striding before a cloud-piling wind down to a near-empty beach. The Scurdie Ness lighthouse seemed a symbol of finality. I let the waves wash over my toes, then wended back past kids flying kites to the station – and caught a train home to Fife. There could hardly be a less dramatic ending.

The next night we sat before the T.V. as the bonfires spread out over the country. Taking our cue from the box we looked over the Forth to Edinburgh. The rain rattled on the glass, the roar of the sea came from below the house. It was then, suddenly, that I felt the Jubilee jaunt was really over.

FREESTYLE ON CREAG AN DUBH LOCH

By Dave Cuthbertson

THE DAY dawned bright and clear with hardly a breeze in the sky. A brew, a quick bite to eat and we were off. With heavy rucksacks and food for a week, we set out along the track along Loch Muick. This for me, is normally one of the most beautiful and enjoyable walks, but in that stifling heat, sweat was dripping everywhere. My boots were killing me, my shoulders ached and my head was spinning. The thought of doing any climbing later on in the day seemed to make things even worse. In spite of all these grumblings we made reasonably good time, the tent was erected and half an hour spent lapping up the mid-day sun on the little golden beach.

As I lay there, I could not help thinking 'Why do so many climbers go to the effort of making trips to the Alps when there are almost a thousand feet of the most compact and continuous walls and slabs of granite right here in the heart of our very own Scotland?' If you choose the correct time of year you may find yourself having to kick steps up steep snow slopes to get to the start of routes, and descend still snow filled gullies – an Alpine atmosphere with no

monstrous blocks the size of double-decker buses hurtling down on your head every ten minutes, no chance of getting frazzled by thunder and lightning storms, no Continentals falling on you, just peace and quiet and the chance to climb, one, two, or even three routes in a day! That's what I like about the Dubh Loch, peace and quiet, and although the cliff is more frequented than say, five or six years ago, you very rarely find yourself having to queue for climbs or being delayed by parties in front.

There is not an awful lot between The Giant and Cougar but I think Cougar is the more worrying. I knew of several people who had made ascents of The Giant, some cutting the amount of aid used on the first ascent by more than half. I had even heard that it had been climbed free, although I took that with a pinch of salt. At least we knew it would be a reasonably feasible climb. As for Cougar, I knew no one who had climbed or even attempted the route, a very impressive, bold and intricate looking line in imposing surroundings, with the crux at the end of the last pitch. Without doubt, it seemed a challenging and exciting proposition. We decided on The Giant.

Six hours later, we were sitting on the summit plateau soaking up the afternoon sun, having managed a completely free ascent and in the most ethical way possible. It is very satisfying to make an ascent of a difficult climb, especially without recourse to such unethical tactics as yo-yoing, overhead tight ropes, resting points, etc. Chalk was employed so I suppose there still remains the first chalkless free ascent! But we won far from easily. The Giant proved to be a very hard and technically demanding climb with some close and desperate moments, the third pitch in particular proved trying. In addition, our first encounter with the Central Gully Wall gave us insight to the type of climbing found here, and what we could expect on Cougar. For instance, we discovered that many of the cracks, which appeared good from a distance, turned out to be dead or flared on closer inspection. Also an abundance of hard moss lined the backs of cracks as well as a fine lichen coating the walls of grooves. The latter two points in particular were to prove a major problem but only tomorrow would tell.

Later in the evening two guys who had been on King Rat arrived at the tents. 'Hi, there, was it you on The Giant earlier on?' 'Yes.'

'Did you manage it all free?'

'Yes, all free, with the third pitch in particular proving a bit desperate.' There was a pained expression on their faces though I had no idea who they were.

'Cubby, that's Fowler,' said Murray. 'Ask him about Titan's Wall.'

'Hey, you didn't happen to do Titan's Wall recently did you?'

'Yes, we did.'

That really knocked me back, to think that we beat him to The Giant by only half a day. ‘

‘What did you think of Titan’s then?’

‘Desperate. I fell off twice.’

That made me feel a little better. ‘Did you?’ I fell off once.’ We swapped conversation and sipped cups of tea for the rest of the evening.

Next day was again fine. Basically lazy, we did not arrive at the foot of the cliff until about mid-day. Willie and Adge decided to spend a day on the classics. (I call it *Hard Rock* ego tripping) while Mick Fowler and Phil Thomas attempted The Giant.

Central Gully Wall is a very impressive place, particularly so if it’s your first visit to the cliff, and it’s all too easy to be taken aback by the immense mass of rock, the sheer size of its great slabs and walls, the verticality of it all. Along with its dark and foreboding atmosphere one felt an air of great awe and seriousness. The gully is like a chamber of horrors, with the huge diédres and grooves of Patey’s Vertigo Wall, the dubious direct start of Goliath, and the mammoth staircase system of grooves and corners on The Giant. Separating the latter from Cougar is the most phenomenal unclimbed line, huge corners, cracks and grooves, great slabs and – enough said. As one exits from the chamber out into the friendly light and warmth lies Cougar, out on the right flank away from the gloomy depths of The Giant and its hostile neighbours.

An obvious line of leftward slanting grooves and corners leading to the Great Slab at about half height introduces Cougar. From the slab an intricate way is found through clusters of overhangs and overlaps to finish up a series of cracks and grooves. Hopefully, because of its slabby nature, the climbing, although difficult, would not be too strenuously sustained.

Soon we arrived at the foot of the route and I began to feel doubts at the sight of the Cyclopean slabs and overlaps of grey and pink granite. Murray was quite positive. ‘According to John Ingram, Dougie Dinwoodie made the third ascent and managed to cut the aid down in the process and if Dinwoodie can do Cougar then so can we.’

‘That doesn’t make me any happier, these boys are used to climbing on granite.’

Without saying anything Murray snooped off into the first pitch. He traversed right into a groove, then up to a ledge. ‘Cubby, I’m going to take both pitches in one run out. Alright?’ He moved back left into a corner, up some slabs then out of sight. It was only then that I realised that Murray climbing both pitches in one run out left the first hard pitch to me, and the last. I reached the ledge, where just to my right the crucial overhanging crack of Vampire

contained some abandoned gear Hamilton had already claimed. I stretched across and it lifted out easily. Even if we failed on the next pitch (which wouldn't be such a bad idea) the route was proving profitable already. Feeling a bit apprehensive as I was, I tried my best to delay the action as much as possible.

'What does the guide say for the next pitch?'

'You just climb up to that bulge, then up the corner above onto the big slab using four points of aid.' I climbed to some very enjoyable slabs leading to the bulge. It didn't look particularly difficult so I was a bit careless with protection. Another couple of tricky moves brought me to an alarmingly loose flake.

'Watch, Murray, there is a hell of a loose flake up here.' There was a hectic scuffling on the ledge below as Murray frantically searched for some means of protection (no helmet). It just looked like a matter of passing the flake then I would be up on a ledge at the foot of the corner. I tried to mantelshelf, but no way. I tried on the left but failed. I tried on the right but failed. To hell with it! A quick move up was one move better off, a fair distance from the last runner with a pendulum fall uninviting into the corner below. I just could not seem to find any direct way over the bulge so I found myself continuously traversing on very steep rock and moving farther and farther away from my protection. I was beginning to feel a little gripped. Another couple of hardish moves and I tried to pull on to a ledge, only to find that my ledge was not a ledge but a slab lying at a steep angle of about forty five degrees, not too easy for mantelshelving. Backing down quickly, I moved left, glancing back at my protection perched precariously behind the flake and Hamilton's camera clicking away.

'Pay attention to the ropes will you.'

'It's O.K. I've got you with one hand.'

How reassuring! I was breaking sweat and the old legs were starting to rattle but another move left and a poor nut gave some confidence. I stretched left and some small holds on the slab above enabled a pull up, feet at the same level as my hands. I could feel myself slowly beginning to rock backwards. - Keep a good grip, man, don't lose control. Left hand slowly piano played for a dead crack, just enough for the tip of a finger, and a couple of thin lay always brought the safety of some footholds at the foot of the corner and the quickest nut I had placed in a long time - relief!

The corner above looked thin with a lot of moss and lichen. After a good rest I made a move up. Desperately, with my left hand, I tried to free the crack from the strips of moss to gain any possible finger jams, my right hand frantically searching for any available face holds, with my feet flailing to gain friction beneath the coating of lichen. This repetitive procedure saw me to a small but good resting foothold about half way up the corner. Off I went again,

similar climbing, but thinner and steeper with less lichen. Finger jamming and laybacking I reached a point just below what looked like a ledge at the top of the corner, I stretched up for a good jug, and holding on to this blindly threw my hand over the top – nothing but turf. Strength rapidly diminishing I made a hasty retreat back down to the safety of my little ledge. It had been rather close. The next time, my fingers drilled into the turf, pulled up and the pitch was done. A short technical wall then led easily up to a stance just big enough for both feet. What a piece of rock! It was as if someone had cut a huge chunk of the Etive Slabs and slotted it into the face. And what a fantastic pitch it had been, very sustained on superb rock with so much variety.

Murray dithered and I sensed that at last he was beginning to feel apprehensive, especially now that it was his turn to lead a pitch that previously employed the use of four points of aid. Slowly he crept away from the safety of the belay, leftwards across the Great Slab to the foot of an overhanging corner set right on the edge of the face. Apparently the Slab was easy but he seemed to be taking his time on the corner. Although we were in the shade, it was still very hot and clammy and I could see his hand dipping into the 'white stuff' more times per minute than usual! 'What's the problem, Murray?'

'It's just that there's a lot of lichen on the walls of the groove. Protection's good though.'

It was really impressive to watch from where I was situated, the Great Slab of grey/pink rock tapering out to a point at the foot of the corner that had to be climbed, seemingly the only possible weakness through huge overlaps and clusters of overhangs. All I could see of Murray was his head lying back and his ropes hanging free, out in space. There was a mass of chinking gear as he cracked it.

'It's not too bad. Steep, but there's a really good chockstone for pulling over.' That was a classical example of Murray. Once he's up a pitch it immediately becomes easier. I was very cautious, ready to expect the worst.

I thought that once he had done the groove our problem would be over, for that pitch at any rate. However, I was wrong. You see, Murray goes absolutely berserk at the sight of any loose or bad rock. Half an hour later he was only a few feet from the top of the groove.

'What's up Murray?' No answer. 'What's the problem, can't you find where the route goes?' After climbing continuously with a friend for several years you get to know him quite well. My diagnosis was simply that he was gripped out of his mind! It was over another hour before he called for me.

A bit stiff, I traversed out across the Slab. It was a tremendous situation with the exposure increasing the closer to the edge of the Slab one got, reaching its maximum once the foot of the corner was

gained. It was short but a hell of a lot steeper than I expected, and I should have kept quiet when I told him to place so much protection, there were at least eight runners in approximately twenty feet of rock. The corner held a really magnificent crack with finger jamming and laybacking finishing with a great flange, leaning out on which was fantastic, perched over great slabs and overlaps in an absolutely superb position. Pulling hard on the flange and placing my feet as high as possible, I threw my hand over the top in a search for Hamilton's chockstone – nothing there. Why am I so damned short? Leaning further out and edging my feet higher gained a little more height – still nothing there. With strength rapidly diminishing, a rapid retreat was started but to my surprise my hand sank in behind the chockstone perched almost on the tip of the corner. A quick pull up and the pitch was done.

Now I saw what all the fuss was about. Beyond a slab and a short wall lay a large poised block barring the way ahead. I admit it was frightening. Have you ever tried to mantelshelf without applying any pressure to the shelf? Eventually I arrived at the stance at the foot of the final pitch only to find Hamilton perched in a corner gibbering and absolutely psyching out.

'Don't stand there. It's loose, and watch the block beside you.' He continued, 'Hey, Cubby do you realise that the whole of this stance could just give way beneath our feet.' I was beginning to wonder about my constant companion!

'Stop squawking and let's have a look at the guide.'

–'Climb behind belay and easily up to overhang on right. Continue right round corner and mantelshelf onto block. Climb crack (stone protruding, seven pegs) and up slabs to big terrace, 110 ft. (crux).'

'Well, you better wish me luck.' He did not say anything. A tricky layback move led from the stance to the slab and then into a corner. Exposure returned with a rush as I stepped out right on to the block. What a lovely move! A few feet higher and I reached the crack with the protruding block, not vertical but steep, with the usual strips of moss lining the crack. A bomb proof nut was followed by some typical work, mainly finger jamming and using holds on each side of the crack, not exceptionally difficult but quite sustained and in a truly superb position. Another good nut protected a hardish move, on to the slab beneath the final overlap. Although I was standing on a slab in a corner I could not manage to rest properly. I had to move quickly and not only for that reason. The gentle east wind which we had been experiencing for the last few days had veered round to the west bringing with it ominous cloud and a coldish wind – all I was wearing on top was a vest! To retreat from where Murray was situated, let alone from my own position, would have been a complicated and serious matter. It would have been very difficult to follow the line of Cougar because of the traversing

involved, as well as the roofs and overlaps. To continue rather than retreat, no matter what the tactics involved, was a safer solution.

The situation that now presented itself saw me perched in a corner at the right hand end of a long overlap curving up to the left, with the terminal slab above and another overlap below. Innumerable times I tried to gain the slab above but to no avail. Over an hour passed without any headway. So close, yet so far away. By guide book reckoning we could not possibly have more than two points of aid left to eliminate. Aggression took over as I gave it another try. No way! it was useless. Obviously there were two last alternatives. Either I follow the line of the overlap in hope of finding a possible weakness or I submit to the use of aid. Feeling pretty tired but reluctant to admit defeat I started off left. I traversed under the overlap, stepped across a gap and down to a subsidiary overlap, the main one being above and to my left. Some thin moves followed to a very welcome spike runner. I tried to follow the lesser overlap but got nowhere. It had to be upwards or nothing. I left the sanctuary of my spike for the uncertain security of a thin horizontal break covered in lichen and moved up right into a clean scoop – still no protection. Some nerve-racking moves followed and another chance presented itself for the slab above. A little flared crack in which I managed to place a pathetic nut inspired a trickle of confidence. However, the position was plainly serious. Fingers in the crack, I managed to layback on to the slab. Had I cracked it? Unfortunately the crack ran dead after about ten feet. I now had to make a hair-raising retreat. Very nervous and shaky with the extreme tension I reached the welcomingly secure but rather strenuous position of the spike. However, the longer I stayed there the more my sanctuary involved a fight against gravity. With nowhere to go yet nowhere to stand I set off again. Back up the break to try to force a line along to the left. A couple of times, several times, innumerable times, I tried that traverse, and each time found myself scurrying back to the insecure safety of the scoop – an even worse resting place than the spike! My protection was extremely poor though this was probably due to the fact that I had hardly any gear left. I was carrying pegs but in my desperate position I could not force myself to go to the effort of banging one home. I was almost completely drained, physically and mentally. In the end, by utilising a crack in the slab above, I managed to layaway to the left, feet on precious little but eventually my toes managing to reach a slab further along. My left hand reached another crack, unfortunately facing the wrong way for a side pull. Now totally gripped and committed I could do nothing but continue. Never in my whole life had I been so aware that I could come off at any moment. My left hand managed a finger jam. My position became even more precarious. I was relying on my feet without even knowing if they were on holds. Slowly my right hand came

across to the crack where I found to my alarm that my finger jam was actually wedged into a combination of mud and grass lining the back of the crack! Immediately I layed away on the crack with my right hand while my left cleaned the slab below for my feet. The difficulties began to ease as I spotted a peg in situ. It was a good peg which inspired confidence, but I had no gear left to clip in. How was I to remove my harness krab? Who would notice if I held on to the peg for a few seconds? Was it permissible? Was it ethical? Was it essential? Luckily a small undercling big enough to take the first segment of my fingers allowed me to remove my harness krab and clip in – relief. I tried to calm myself down but was still very nervous, very shaky, still fairly gripped and in a strenuous position. After a few moments I managed to regain my cool and work things out. With still no way of pulling over onto the slab I had to follow the overlap to its end, still looking equally difficult and about twenty feet to go. Nevertheless something had to be done quickly or the peg was going to be used for a rest.

Unfortunately I remember very little of the last section except for heaving up, with knotted arms, on clumps of turf and rolling on to the stance. I was up! Miraculously, I was up! I could not believe it. Still intact, if completely exhausted, I had made it.

While Murray climbed to join me I suddenly realised it was raining heavily. Without saying a word he passed me and shot up into the mist over wet turf and greasy rock. 'Well then?' I asked as we were coiling the sodden rope.

'Hard,' he said, 'Let's get down.'

THE ADVENTURE OF THE MISPLACED EYEGLASSES¹

Edited by Robin N. Campbell

I ROSE to stretch my legs and to afford some relief to my digestive organs, which had been doing stout work with Mrs Hudson's afternoon tea. Holmes was sitting in his armchair, smoking and reading a

¹The manuscript of this story was prepared by me from a bundle of case notes signed by John H. Watson, M.D., which I discovered in the bottom of a box of lantern slides in the old Clubroom. Examination of the slides made it seem likely that they were donated to the Club by Norman Collie. It is, as always, a hazardous matter to assign a date to Holmes' cases, since Watson was (almost certainly deliberately) lax and, indeed, wayward in giving such indications. Early January 1896 seems the most probable date, shortly before the case of 'The Missing Three Quarter.'

monograph concerning Oriental poisons. I moved to the window overlooking Baker Street and stared out at the mournful fogs of a January afternoon.

'We should get out of Town more often, Holmes,' I remarked. 'These damnable fogs will be the death of us.'

As I spoke these words a figure on a bicycle materialised below the window, dismounted, and moved towards our door. A moment later Mrs Hudson's boy entered with a telegram.

'Perhaps your prescription will soon be administered, Watson,' said Holmes, ripping open the telegram. 'Yes, indeed. And a fairly heavy dose at that. We must catch the Night Mail to Glasgow.'

I picked up the telegram and read as follows: 'NEED YOUR HELP. COME IMMEDIATELY. RAEBURN WILL MEET AND ADVISE. NORMAN.' The telegram had been issued from Fort William Post Office.

'Good gracious, Holmes?' I exclaimed in some dismay, 'Not Scotland surely!'

'I fear so, Watson. My cousin Norman² is a most considerate and courageous man. He would not trouble me over a trifle. I deduce that he has been falsely arrested and charged with murder. Come, we must make some purchases.' Holmes brushed my queries aside and swept out of the room. When I reached the street he had already found a cab. We sped through the murk to Marble Arch and alighted at a tiny dingy shop, Lawrie's by name.

'This gentleman requires a pair of your best Alpine boots,' said Holmes to the shopkeeper, indicating myself, 'and he needs them by nine o'clock this evening. Is it possible?'

Mr Lawrie, if indeed it was he, made some discreet measurements, consulted his watch and replied affirmatively. Holmes and he then embarked on some further exotic negotiations after which we returned to Baker Street. After dinner Holmes packed an extraordinary assortment of articles into his largest trunk before we rattled off to Euston. At the station we took possession of an unwieldy parcel from Lawrie's and soon we were speeding northwards in a comfortable sleeping compartment of the London Midland and Scottish Railway Company. Very early next morning we passed through Glasgow where our coach was transferred to a train of the West Highland Railway Company. Eventually we took morning tea and gazed out at sullen hills around a grey 'loch.' The tops of the hills were wreathed in snow and curling mist.

'Cheer up, Watson,' said Holmes. 'In thirty-three minutes we shall be in Crianlarich. The attendant has promised us a capital breakfast there.'

²There seems little doubt that Collie is intended. The photograph recording the Inveroran Meet of 1894 (Club Archives), which shows Collie on the extreme right, makes his resemblance to Holmes very evident.

'Porridge, I'll be bound,' I remarked sadly. 'But Holmes, tell me about your cousin Norman. Who is he and what is he doing in Fort William, of all places?'

'There isn't very much to tell. He is a research chemist at present engaged in secret work for Government, thanks to my brother Mycroft's influence. He visits Fort William regularly in order to practise the art of mountain-climbing with his friends in the Scottish Mountaineering Club. Ben Nevis is there, you see. A mountain, Watson.'

At Crianlarich a surly youth entered our carriage with a hamper. It was indeed an excellent breakfast. We ploughed our way through kippers, bacon and eggs and hot bread rolls while the train chugged up yet more dismal valleys surrounded by still higher mountains. Finally, we crossed an endless waste of bog and water before careering down a series of giddy inclines to Fort William. On this last section of the newly-opened line Holmes pointed out Ben Nevis to me – a huge boss of ice and snow with black crags menacing the northern approaches. It was unthinkable to me that a man could derive pleasure from *looking* at such an ugly mountain let alone from climbing up it.

Soon we were lunching at the Alexandra Hotel with a small stern-looking young man with impressive moustaches and the carriage of a guardsman.

'I am Harold Raeburn,' he had said when he met us at the station. 'Your cousin Norman is in grave danger and has asked me to inform you of the details of his case and to help in whatever way possible.'

After we had completed our meal, we took some brandy in the lounge. Above the fireplace there hung an enormous panorama showing every shoot and precipice of the northern face of Ben Nevis. The remaining furnishings consisted of a few rough pine tables, several massive and evil-smelling armchairs and a menagerie of stuffed carnivores and raptors each of which seemed to have been caught by the taxidermist at the very moment of predation. An admixture of damp logs and peat smouldered fitfully in the cavernous hearth. While we applied ourselves to the brandy Raeburn told us the depressing history which now follows, illustrating his narrative with the help of the large panorama and a scale model of the mountain in *papier-mâché*.

'Two days ago Norman set off to climb the Tower Ridge,' pointing to the largest and most repulsive of the precipices, 'with a Mr Willoughby – an acquaintance of his from the Foreign Office. It was a fine day but they were held up by the heavy accumulations of ice on the Ridge. At the Great Tower, the crucial part of their climb, Mr Willoughby fell, the rope parted and he plunged to his death in Observatory Gully below. Norman continued the climb with great difficulty to the summit. There he enlisted the aid of a student from

Edinburgh, one James Moffat, who was temporarily in charge of the summit meteorological observatory. The two men descended to the Halfway Observatory where Norman recuperated while Moffat continued to fetch the police and a party of club members attending the Meet here, myself included. By first light we had reached the body. There was of course no hope that he would be alive. However, worse was to follow. Examination of the rope showed that it had been partially cut through by some sharp instrument some six feet from Willoughby's waist. The suspicions of the police immediately fell on poor Norman. The question naturally arose why Willoughby would not have noticed this defect of the rope. Whereupon someone remarked that he was very short-sighted. Despite careful searches, no trace of his eyeglasses was found. However, while returning with the corpse, the police searched the Halfway Observatory and discovered the eyeglasses there together with a small patent pocket knife. Norman was immediately taken into custody. The theory of the police is that Norman contrived to dislodge and remove Willoughby's eyeglasses somewhere on the Ridge, then sabotaged his end of the rope. On the Great Tower there is a steep part where Willoughby would inevitably have put his full weight on the rope.' Raeburn gestured in an unmistakable way to indicate the result of this misadventure and went on. 'At the moment they are seeking the motive in collaboration with Scotland Yard in London. I surmise that, since Willoughby was employed as a secret agent in the Foreign Office, they are looking for some connection between his security activities and Norman's secret work on disabling gases.'

At the conclusion of this dismal speech Holmes congratulated Raeburn on his orderly presentation of the facts and lay back in his armchair, sunk in thought. In the ensuing half-hour he asked Raeburn only two questions. The first was to ascertain whether there were any footprints in the snow around the body when the rescue party arrived. Raeburn had been first on the scene and was adamant that there had been none. The second question concerned the location of the village fruit shop. As we had just consumed a vast dish of brandied plums I could make no sense of this at all. Holmes then left us to make some enquiries in the village. Raeburn had been sent to the police station to arrange an interview with the prisoner for six o'clock, so I had leisure to turn over the facts of the case in my mind. It seemed to me that the case was practically hopeless. If Holmes' cousin had not cut the rope, then who else could have possibly done so? Willoughby? Only if we suppose that he committed suicide in this horrible manner with the purpose of implicating his companion in a murder charge! Surely a fantastic notion! Moreover, how could he deposit the eyeglasses in the Halfway Observatory? So I ruled out Willoughby. It did not seem possible that some third person could have lain concealed on the mountain to spring out with his knife at the ready at the critical

moment. And then again there was the curious and damning circumstance of the misplaced spectacles. Since no footprints were found beside the body, this imaginary assailant must have found time to whisk Willoughby's spectacles from his nose before severing the rope and then, somehow on the following morning have left knife and spectacles in the Halfway Observatory. Incredible as it might be, this seemed to me to be the only conceivable solution to the case. No doubt we should have to examine the ground tomorrow for traces that might favour this outlandish hypothesis. I gazed at the panorama before me and gave a shudder at the prospect. I was still transfixed in the same posture when Holmes returned, slapping his arms to restore the circulation.

'Well, Watson, I imagine you have solved the case. Everything you require is in front of you! You know my methods well enough to settle such a simple problem, I'm sure.'

Staring dully at my friend I told him my thoughts about the case.

'Excellent, Watson, excellent!' he cried. 'But if there is no third man, what then?'

'Then the only person who could have cut the rope is your cousin and he is doomed, Holmes. He cannot escape the gallows.'

'Precisely, Watson, the only person who could have done it would then be Norman and of course we assume that he did not. Surely that suggests a conclusion? No?' I shook my head in bewilderment. 'Well, we shall find out soon enough tomorrow. Let us hope that it does not snow before we reach the vital spot.'

When Raeburn had also returned we took afternoon tea and then set out for the police station. Sergeant McDonald welcomed us warmly, remarking that he was himself a student of Holmes' methods, and showed us into the interview room. Holmes' cousin bore an extraordinary resemblance to my friend, with the same finely cut features and air of asceticism very apparent. After some preliminary remarks of a personal nature they fell to discussing the case. I will mention here only those parts of their conversation which add to Raeburn's narrative.

Holmes had just asked for a description of the crucial section of the route, the direct ascent of the Great Tower.

'Well, Sherlock,' said the prisoner, 'the difficulties began above a small platform some sixty feet below the summit of the Tower. I was able with the assistance of footholds on Willoughby's shoulder and on his ice axe, which he had jammed in a crack at arm's length, to reach good handholds and pull myself onto easier ground³. After this, the angle and the difficulties decreased towards the summit of

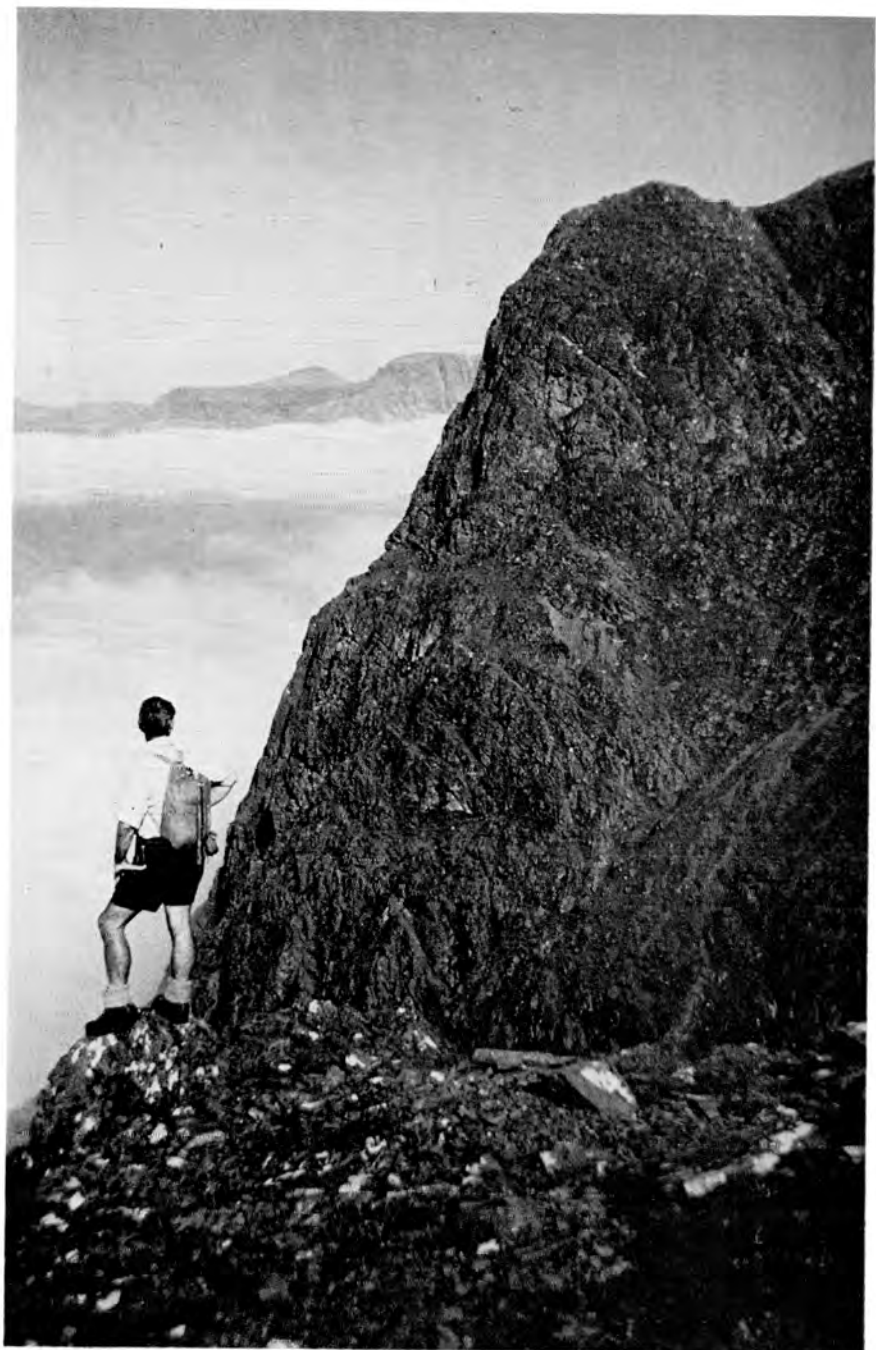
³Evidently the same route as that later followed by Parker & Inglis Clark (see *S.M.C.J.*, 1897, iv, 222).



June 1977

*'Cougar,' Creag an Dubh Loch.
Hamilton and Cuthbertson on The Great Slab.*

Photo: R. J. Archbald



July 1977

Beinn Airigh Charr.
Cousins reflects on the tragic fate of Martha.

Photo: W. D. Brooker

the Tower. Then I called out to Willoughby and took the strain on the rope. You see, he could not follow without the assistance of the rope. At this point I heard a cry from below and the rope went slack in my hands.' On saying this, he plunged his head on his hands. 'I shall never forget his scream of horror as he plummeted to his death on the rocks below. It was ghastly, inhuman.'

After a brief interval Holmes asked, 'Did you see anything of this, Norman? Did you notice anything unusual whatever at the time of the accident?'

'No, nothing. I could not see Willoughby because of the convex curve of the ridge, nor even the place where he landed.'

'And how do you account for the discovery of Willoughby's eyeglasses and the penknife at the Halfway Observatory?'

'I cannot account for the spectacles at all. He was wearing them when I last saw him below the Tower. As for the knife, it is mine. I always carry a pocket knife while climbing - they are often useful. I'm afraid I have given you a hopeless task, Sherlock. The evidence against me is too strong.'

'Nonsense, Norman!' Holmes retorted. 'I understand everything about this case except the motive. Your next night in this miserable gaol will be your last. Count upon it.'

At this display of confidence the prisoner visibly brightened and we left a much happier man behind us as we trundled back to the hotel in our dogcart. However, as I looked up at the great dark mass of the mountain I could think only of the rigours of the morrow. I could not recall a stronger feeling of apprehension since my time of service in Afghanistan. On that appalling march to Quetta each sunset had brought the same feeling of boneless dread as the mountains darkened around us and the night filled with the alien cries of the pursuing Afghanis as they settled round their campfires.

In the morning we were roused at six sharp and had soon joined Raeburn in the breakfast room. I had little appetite for the greasy slabs of bacon which were put before us. Holmes, though normally a late riser, seemed fully alert.

'What a splendid day it is, Watson,' he ejaculated. 'We shall soon discover whether these small Scottish hills can rival the Alps for beauty, as my cousin would have it.'

Indeed, my spirits lifted a little when I saw the dawn striking the hills on the other side of the 'loch' with tints of rose and purple. And I felt more confident when we assembled in the stable yard. Raeburn and Holmes cut most impressive figures in their hard black Norfolks, heavily nailed boots and murderous pickaxes, girt about with ropes and rucksacks. I hoped that I did not disgrace them with the newness of my own equipment. The cloth of my suit was so stiff and rough, the boots so hard and heavy, the axe so alarmingly

sharp that it was only with difficulty and some considerable trepidation that I was able to move at all. However, I managed to mount my pony without mishap and soon we were off, plodding through the village and then along a fairly decent track slanting up the flank of the mountain. At the Halfway Observatory we stopped for a pull at our flasks and a bite of breakfast, then continued past a frozen 'loch' and over some hard snow patches which the ponies negotiated with complete indifference. Eventually we halted at the edge of an abyss and dismounted. Raeburn instructed the groom to return with the ponies to the Observatory and to wait for us there, then set off over the edge of the abyss, with Holmes and myself hard on his heels. Although the ground dropped with alarming steepness, the rescue party of two days ago had cut out large steps in the snow and so we were able to descend without much difficulty. We then began a long level traverse below appalling black cliffs festooned with frozen waterfalls and colossal stalactites of ice. At about ten o'clock we reached the base of the 'glen' at a point where a side valley opened out to the south. The precipice had assumed the hideous appearance of the panorama in the hotel lounge. Our climb began here in earnest. We proceeded up an extremely stiff slope of snow passing the base of the so-called 'Tower Ridge' on its left hand side. I found it very tough going and on several occasions appealed to Raeburn and Holmes for some respite. Holmes offered me a handful of coca leaves to chew (Raeburn and he had been munching them from the outset) but I thought it a disgusting and unhealthy practice and declined.⁴ After an hour of this purgatory we reached an area heavily marked by footprints surrounding a depression in which I remarked the presence of what were undoubtedly blood-stains. Holmes made us stay back while he scurried about, comparing footprints with drawings he had obtained from Sergeant McDonald. Raeburn commented on the agility with which my friend moved about on the steep snow, using his pickaxe purely for balance and rolling his ankles over so that all of his bootnails were always dug into the snowcrust.

'Ah yes,' said Holmes abstractedly, 'I learned this method from a Swiss colleague of mine, Monsieur Phildius of Geneva. I shall write a letter of introduction for you so that you may study with him on your next visit to the Alps.'⁵

Suddenly Holmes pointed to the ground and cried out, 'Raeburn! What do you make of these marks?'

⁴The use of coca leaves by Victorian walkers has been explored in a recent issue of the *Journal* (see *S.M.C.J.*, 1971, xxx 385). Raeburn's ready adoption of the habit suggests that the practice was not unknown amongst the early Club members.

⁵Holmes was apparently as good as his word (see Raeburn's 'A Scottish Ice Climb' in *S.M.C.J.*, 1907, ix, 153).

We moved up and peered at a spot close to the bloody hollow. I could see two marks each shaped like an X with deeper indentations at the extremities of the cross-pieces and about four or five inches across.

'Well, sir,' said Raeburn slowly, 'that's very strange indeed. They look like these new-fangled instep climbing-irons that Eckenstein has been trying out. Perhaps his friend Crowley wore them – he was with the party – but it's odd that we didn't see them lower down. They may have been obliterated by other tracks, or perhaps he wore them only for this last steep section. After all, most of our members regard their use as illegitimate.'

'I see,' said Holmes. 'Then we shall discuss the matter with Mr Crowley at the hotel. In the meantime we must record the marks for I suspect that they may be vital evidence.'

To my astonishment, Holmes rummaged in his rucksack and withdrew a foot rule and a small camera.

'I borrowed this from Dr Inglis Clark at the hotel,' he explained. 'He is an electrochemist as well as a mountain-climber. He was given this pocket camera by the famous photographer Stieglitz. A wonderful addition to the armoury of the consulting detective, don't you think? Now, Raeburn, we must proceed to the scene of the accident. How shall we do that?'

Raeburn unwound a rope and tied one end onto his waist, myself in the middle and the other end to Holmes. Then he began to cut a ladder of steps up the steep snow above us. We continued in this way until the crags began to close around us, whereupon we embarked upon a tiny ledge leading onto and across the right-hand crag. This was a most ticklish manoeuvre and only one of us could move with safety at a time. I will spare you a description of the horrors of this passage. Suffice it to say that it surpassed in awfulness the traverse of the ledge above the Reichenbach Falls which I made on that fateful day when Moriarty fell to his death. Eventually we stood poised on the crest of the Tower Ridge at a small uncomfortable platform. Immediately above us the ridge reared up perpendicularly. I recognised it as the last bastion of what Raeburn had called the Great Tower.

'This is the exact spot where Willoughby fell?' asked Holmes.

'Well, perhaps a few feet higher,' said Raeburn. 'He began to climb from this ledge and we may suppose that he fell almost as soon as his weight came on the rope.'

Holmes began to make a minute examination of the traces in the scraps of snow and ice adhering to the backbone of the ridge. After a moment he cried out in evident satisfaction and turned to face me. 'Now, Watson, I have established to my satisfaction that no third person was here. There is no place where he could have been con-

cealed save on the ledge by which we arrived and that bore no traces of previous visitors. Do you recall your own analysis? If the rope was not cut by Norman or Willoughby, then someone else must have cut it. But there are no traces of any third individual. Willoughby and my cousin are eliminated from consideration, the former because of the strange migration of the eyeglasses, the latter by hypothesis. What can we now conclude? Recall my maxim: when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be true.'

I could think of nothing except the inane remark that the deed must have been done by a person who left no traces.

'Outstanding, Watson,' he cried. 'And so?'

But here Raeburn stepped in, 'By a bird!' he exclaimed. 'Perhaps a large macaw or a Phillipine Monkey-eating Eagle?'

'Precisely so,' said Holmes, somewhat discomfited – or so it seemed to me. 'My own preference is for the Hyacinthine Macaw of Brazil, *Anodorhynchus hyacinthus*. But you know your birds uncommonly well, Raeburn! Phillipine Monkey-eating Eagle indeed! I had not thought of that. You see, Watson, the hypothesis of a large and powerful bird explains everything. It swoops from its lair, bites through the rope – a trifle to such a brute – descends to the corpse and returns with the spectacles to its trainer. Moreover, the assumption that it was a macaw is favoured by the hideous screech which so affected my cousin and by the curious traces which I photographed. Not instep climbing irons, but the characteristic talon-print of a large psittaciform! And, look here!' Holmes pointed to a group of four tiny punctures in a patch of snow, 'Here once again is the bird's spoor!'

'But who is the trainer and why did he do it, Holmes?' I expostulated.

'I think we shall find the answers to these questions by asking Mr Moffat in the summit Observatory, Watson. Let us be off now, Raeburn. The day is wasting!'

We retraced our steps along the ledge and after a tiring climb up a steep funnel of snow broke through a cornice formed by action of the wind to reach the final bare slopes of the mountain. The Observatory, a squat structure draped in frozen crystals of fog and of a very sinister appearance, crouched beside the summit. Holmes pushed in the outer door and lit a small paraffin lamp hanging on the inner door. We removed our boots, opened the inner door and climbed down a ladder into the Observatory. We found ourselves in a sparsely furnished room containing a small library and a collection of curious scientific instruments. Raeburn and I were content to sit while Holmes searched the building with customary meticulousness. It was plain that Moffat was no longer resident.

When Holmes had concluded his researches he seemed rather disappointed.

'Moffat is undoubtedly our man, gentlemen. My enquiries in the village revealed that on his journey here his luggage contained a large wooden crate which surely concealed the wretched bird, drugged I suppose, and that throughout his stay here he has bought uncommonly large quantities of fruit – its natural diet. The needs of the Phillipine Eagle would have been somewhat harder to supply, Raeburn! But there is no trace of the animal here; no feathers, no droppings, nothing. Moffat has been most admirably thorough. We *must* have physical evidence of the bird to convince the police.'

'Perhaps he threw such things away along with the ordinary rubbish,' remarked Raeburn. 'I will show you where the rubbish is usually deposited.'

We resumed our boots and followed Raeburn out onto the summit. He led us to a point on the cliff-edge which protruded to the north and pointed down into a deep and narrow chasm. My stomach lurched at the sight of it. An apparently perpendicular snow funnel, topped by an enormous cornice led down to a slight bay before plunging downwards once more in the form of a frozen blue waterfall. In the bay we could see a smudge of colour where the rubbish had accumulated.

'Gardylloo Gully. It is named after the old Edinburgh street cry which accompanied the throwing of rubbish from high windows,' explained Raeburn.

'There is nothing else for it,' said Holmes. 'We must investigate these traces.'

With a heavy heart I paid out rope as Raeburn kicked and hacked his way down through the cornice. Despite all the trials of the day I had borne up well, so well that I had surprised even myself. However, I had thought our efforts to be at an end and this unexpected further encounter with the precipice quite unmanned me. I begged Holmes to be left behind, but to no avail.

'No, Watson, you must remain with us. You are safer on the precipice with us than wandering alone on the summit. I dare not leave you.'

I was so dispirited that I failed to react to the aspersion of incompetence cast by this belittling remark. I abandoned myself to my fate and thrust myself over the edge of the abyss enjoining Holmes to keep the rope taut. Remarkably, I did not fall. I kept my eyes firmly fixed on the next step downwards and dug my pick-axe deeply into the snow. Soon I had joined Raeburn just above the slight hollow where the rubbish lay and could watch Holmes' fearless descent of the funnel with astonishment. On the final manoeuvre to gain the hollow Raeburn proceeded very cautiously,

prodding the snow ahead of him with his axe. 'This hollow is the outlet of an ice cave,' he explained, 'and we must take care that we do not fall through.' Just before reaching the base of the hollow his axe passed easily through and in a moment he had excavated a circular aperture something like a London manhole. We moved gingerly around this and began to examine the pile of rubbish. It was immediately plain that our search was ended. On top of the pile lay the wreckage of the crate and underneath was the body of the bird, a formidable beast about a yard in length from its poll to the tip of its tail. Holmes seized it to place it in his rucksack and then gave a cry of surprise. Pinned to the breast of the bird was an oilskin packet. The bird once safely stowed away, he carefully opened the packet. It contained a single sheet of paper addressed to Mr Sherlock Holmes and bearing the following sensational message:

'I, James Moriarty, known to you as James Moffat, the son of Professor James Moriarty whom you foully murdered, have taken my revenge upon you. Your cousin Norman will be hanged for murder. Your brother Mycroft will be disgraced and barred from public office. Knowing that your infernal meddling would bring you here, I have mined the cornice of the Gully. You and your wretched accomplice will shortly be crushed beneath tons of snow. A fitting irony that your cleverness should be instrumental in your death!

Hail and farewell!

'So, gentlemen,' said Holmes, 'now we have the motive. I had forgotten Moriarty's spawn.'

He then looked up to the edge of the precipice. I followed his gaze. On the very point where we had stood some minutes before we could see the figure of our executioner, observing us in perfect stillness and silence as if we were already dead. This ghoulis apparition was rendered still more frightful by the circumstance that the face was almost completely covered with a black Balaclava helmet and a smoked-glass visor, recalling a mediaeval headsman. After a while the figure stirred, raised its arm slowly in salute and disappeared.

For the second time that day we had cause to be impressed by Raeburn's presence of mind. Immediately, he seized hold of Holmes, pushed him through the manhole and lowered him into the cave by using his firmly-embedded axe as a pulley. When the rope slackened I was dispatched into the bowels of the mountain with equal lack of ceremony. The cave was illuminated by faint and eerie blue light transmitted through the waterfall. As I fell beside Holmes in the soft snow at the bottom there was a tremendous explosion from above whereupon Raeburn leapt down through the hole to lie at our

feet. The din of the explosion was followed by an ear-shattering rumble as huge blocks of snow cascaded about our prison, blocking the entrance hole and extinguishing the feeble supply of light. The rumbling continued for what seemed like several minutes, shaking the entire mountain to its foundations. Finally it stopped. Holmes was the first to recover from the shock of this terrific avalanche. His gropings produced a small pocket lantern from the rucksack and when this was lit we could take stock of our situation. Poor Raeburn was our first concern. However, the man was evidently constructed of iron. Thanks to the softness of the snow here, his fall of some forty feet had only winded him and he was soon on his feet again. It was evidently impossible for us to escape upwards. The hollow would be filled with heavy debris. Our only chance was to cut through the waterfall at its steepest section, that being both the thinnest part and most likely to be free of accumulations of snow. We took turns to hack at the ice with our axes at arms' length above our heads – an unbelievably exhausting business. But everything has an end and after an hour we reached snow and were able to push an axe-handle through to the outside world and thus ensure our supply of air. We ate a little and emptied our flasks. With the aid of shoulders and the rope we soon found ourselves perched above the wreckage of the avalanche which stretched far down the mountain towards and beyond the place where Willoughby's body had lain. It was now going dark and we wasted no time in our descent⁶. However, seven o'clock came and went before we reached the Halfway Observatory and were able to rest – if that is the word – on the broad backs of our Highland 'garrons.'

At Fort William we presented our evidence to Sergeant McDonald who took immediate steps to secure the prisoner's release. I was so tired that at dinner I could hardly raise my fork to my lips and, were it not for the need to maintain certain standards, I would have eaten from my plate like a dog. My final thought before I sunk in deep slumber in my unheated bed was that of all the cases on which I had accompanied Sherlock Holmes, none had exacted such a heavy toll of strength and spirit as this extraordinary case of the Secret Agent, the Observatory and the trained Parrot⁷.

⁶As this descent of the gully is earlier than that of Hastings and Haskett Smith (1897) it is clear that current guidebooks stand in need of revision. Moreover, Raeburn's exact knowledge of the gully's topography suggests that this was not his first descent (or ascent).

⁷I think that this case must be identical with the one referred to by Watson in 'The Veiled Lodger' as the case of the Politician, the Lighthouse and the Trained Cormorant. The disparity may be due to the well-known deficiencies of Watson's memory or to deliberate concealment. After all the Cormorant – a bird of invincible stupidity – would be anything but an apt pupil.

Two weeks later Holmes and I were seated by the fire admiring the beautiful stuffed Hyacinthine Macaw which the police had brought round that morning, when the boy entered with the evening paper. Holmes, as always, began to read it from cover to cover. I could see that an item on the home news page had caught his attention.

'Watson, Justice has been done. Most apposite justice. Moreover, we should have anticipated this turn of events.'

He handed the paper to me. The item read as follows:

'UNUSUAL DEATH IN EDINBURGH.

The death has occurred in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary of James Moriarty, *alias* Moffat, a student of zoology at the University and wanted by the police in connection with a recent fatal accident in the Highlands. Moriarty died as a result of respiratory complications following contraction of *psittacosis*, the highly infectious disease transmitted by tropical parrots'

'Indeed Holmes, he deserved no better fate. But how could we have guessed?'

'The smoked-glass visor that he wore, Watson, and the black helmet. It was not a bright day, nor painfully cold. He had photophobia, which – according to Dr —, your erstwhile colleague – is a common and distinctive symptom of the disease.'

Holmes permitted himself the merest suggestion of a smile, 'Elementary, Watson, I should have thought.'

BEINN AIRIGH CHARR

By Paddy Buckley

FORTUNATELY Airigh Charr's modest altitude of 2,595 ft. keeps the collectors on other courses but it is one of the most rewarding hills in the north-west. Broad-based and massive, no man has ever set foot in all its corries in the same day. The traverse of the ten or so supporting tops is a delight of rough tramping, solitude and incomparable views. Even in the foulest weather, you can enjoy the nine mile circuit at base-level, walking *almost* entirely on stalking paths, once excellent, but since the sheep were removed, becoming

overgrown. I say almost with just a trace of malice. Although W. H. Murray, Tom Weir, Hamish Brown and other authorities have declared that a public right of way exists along the north-east shore of Loch Maree, I am not persuaded that they have actually put it under foot.

I refer to the post runners' track, most of which is still easily traceable. But there is a crucial gap in the continuity. The post runners, with admirable hillcraft, found a cunning and exhilarating route through the tangled precipices of Creag Tharbh – the Bull Rock. But the stagecoach made their work redundant in the 1850's, and their way through the Bull Rock has almost passed into oblivion. Even the local stalkers are unaware of the original passage; they travel much higher up, above the tree line.

A plan of Letterewe Estate, made for Hector MacKenzie in 1835, places Beinn Ari Charr $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles north-west of the present trig. point, on a ridge between Allt Airigh a Charr and Allt a Conair. The Gaelic is translated as 'hill of the twisted pasturage' which certainly fits the older siting. The same plan puts Bidean a Bhurich – 'turning up the earth' – at the trig. point and names the peak to its north as Bidean Morich. By 1886 this had become Spidean Moirich – 'Martha's Peak.' 'It is said that a woman of that name, having climbed this peak, sat down and began winding thread on her spindle. The spindle fell from her hand down the steep rocks to the north-east. Martha tried to recover the spindle but fell and was killed.'¹

By 1953, 'Martha was a legendary heroine who took her goats to pasture on the mountains and was reputed to have made the first and only traverse of the tower.' E. W. Hodge at least puts a distaff in her careless hands, whereas his successor, Thomas Strang, makes it a crook. To him she is no longer a 'heroine,' but 'a local lass.'² Perhaps the next editor of the Northern Highlands guide could be persuaded to delve a little deeper into the source materials.

Below and east of Martha's Peak is the beautifully situated ruin of Strathanmore (GR 946763). It was a shepherd's cottage in the 1850's when Osgood MacKenzie³ had already begun his career of killing everything that flew or swam or ran. The ospreys had been driven from their island in Fionn Loch, and had sought refuge on the cliffs of Martha's Peak. But even there, their nest was robbed, this time not by Osgood – for he arrived a day too late – but by his rival, Jock Beatie. However a Scottish pound note was big enough bribe and Osgood went home 'in semi triumph' with the two large white eggs. And soon the ospreys, who gave their name to Fisherfield, vanished from Scotland.

¹Dixon, J. H. (1886), *Gairloch and Guide to Loch Maree*, pp. 315, 342.

²Northern Highlands District Guides, E. W. Hodge (1953), & T. Strang (1970).

³Mackenzie O. (1921), *A Hundred Years in the Highlands*, p. 130.

Strathanmore was once 'fine rich pasture,' but now the drains are blocked, and a shallow lake appears after heavy rain. The cattle drovers knew this place, I'm sure, as they drove their herds from the port of Poolewe to the tryst at Muir of Ord. Dr Haldane⁴, making a rare error, places a drove road along the north-east shore of Loch Maree; that is, along the post runners' track. But no cattle could ever negotiate the Bull Rock.

The great escarpment which contains Beinn Airigh Charr, Meall Mheinnidh and Beinn Lair, is the largest exposure of hornblende schist in Scotland. The angle of the bedding plane produces an accommodating profusion of incut holds on the scarp slope. The general aspect is north-easterly, favouring the growth of a lichenous microflora on the rock, which then becomes much more demanding in the rain. This and the naturally sombre hues of the hornblende give the crags a dour and rather introverted atmosphere.

It is interesting to contrast this northern exposure with the opposite end of the bedding plane, for example, on the other side of Beinn Airigh Charr, at the line of cliffs above the Garden of Hesperides. (Dixon 342). The rock face here would perhaps be better upside down: the incut holds have become small overlaps. Progress is by underclings and overhangs, by jamming cracks and smooth massive slabs; all much more technical. The dark-green hornblende is here oxidised to attractive shades of brown and red; the vegetation is lush and often prickly; the aspect south-westerly and the outlook idyllic.

West of Strathanmore and at the foot of the south-east end of the main crag is Loch nan Uamhag – 'loch of the caves' and unnamed in both Strang and Rowe⁵. Above the lochan are some excellent howffs; dry, commodious, and quick to feel the morning sun. In some a deep litter of droppings suggests their use by the large population of wild goats in this district. Foxes roam among the boulders and I have seen the tracks of a wild cat in the snow. Just above the enormous boulders is one of the most prominent features of the crag – the vertical arête known widely as Brooker's Blade, but first described in print as the Beanstalk. In 1963 I was nearly dislodged from the second pitch by an eagle. Several years later I persuaded Mick Goad to take the sharp end, because he was wearing a large white crash-hat. The eagle attacked Mick twice, mercifully when he was on the top stance. My bare and fragile balding head was ignored. Still later I pointed out the abode to Paul Nunn but he had eyes only for the overhanging grooves. His subsequent route, adjacent, seemed a little foolhardy in view of its vulnerability to the 'pre-emptive strike.'

⁴Haldane, A. R. B. (1973), *Drove Roads of Scotland*, p. 108.

⁵Northern Highlands, Vol. I, *Climbers' Guide*, I. Rowe (1969).

Brooker's Blade and the Roc are both short climbs – 300 ft. at the most; they take lines which are bold and inescapable. And you can easily descend to the base afterwards. Their attributes, you see, are all very modern, and really quite untypical.

Loch an Doire Chrionaich – 'lake of the withered grove' – lies at 650 ft. above sea level; the summit of Martha's Peak at 2,270 ft. In between is a vast and complicated crag 1,500 ft. high and over twice as broad. No other cliff in the Northern Highlands is so well suited to that style of exploratory climbing which Rowe and Tiso championed some years ago.

Ling and Glover, of course, climbed here in 1910 and 1911; Bell and the young Slesser have also recorded their ascents. If you should wish to follow in the cobwebbed footsteps of these worthy pioneers, then go to it and good luck. Mr Brooker's six-figure map reference⁶ will get you to the foot of the crag and various route descriptions will lead you a merry dance up and away, with the wind scattering the dust you brought from the archives. Two things I would urge however: be sure to include the summit tower in your itinerary – it is a jewel and a delight; and I beg you to allow your progress to remain unrecorded. It is too much to ask posterity to follow these long and rambling routes.

Martha's Peak provides the perfect and essential contrast to that other crag on the opposite side of Fionn Loch: one is an idyll of sunshine and warmth; the other is cold and uninviting; on one the lines are fixed and purposeful; on the other you go as you please; one is an outcrop and the other a mountain. Martha's Peak should be left to the mountain explorer, to the great eagles and the golden red foxes.

ON THE OWL PILLAR

By D. M. Nichols

'Severe weather Sam,' observed Mr Pickwick.

'Fine weather for them as is well wropped up, as the Polar Bear said to himself when he was practising his skating,' replied Mr Weller.

One of the first hard facts we have to face up to in this life, usually forcibly brought home to us on the day of the first shivering primary school swimming lesson, is that all human beings are

⁶S.M.C.J., 1978, xxxi, p. 285.

divisible into Aquatic Mammals and Non-Aquatic Mammals, in that order of frequency and social importance, according to some lottery of nature. Me, I went to a school with a 'swimming reputation,' which probably explains why the spectre of death by drowning has haunted me all my days, at least since the moment I realised it was bad form to appear in public in a rubber ring. The realisation in oneself of non-aquaticness comes hard. As a state of mind it constitutes a considerable mental drawback for any would-be explorer bent upon travel in the spring-time Cumberland Peninsula of Baffin Island. From the first look at the place until the last, such a person is liable to find his enthusiasm rapidly dampened, rather literally, especially if his legs are short like mine; since the one thing there really is plenty of, in Baffin, is water.

Which I suppose makes it all the more remarkable that I should actually have found myself wading across the Owl River not just once, but twice, in the space of a mere ten days during July of last year.

Admittedly, though, the motivation was there. The first time, four of us set off wetly, splashing bravely, ostensibly to inspect the wildlife on the other side, although of course we all knew secretly we were really going because there was a rumour (propagated by Jock, usually reliable in such matters) that there were two tins of corned beef in a shelter on the far side. (And, as far as I know, one of them is there yet, although if I'd had my way, we'd have had 'em both). The second time we crossed the great river, our objective was more praiseworthy, probably, but less edible: to climb the beautiful rock spur which dominates the upper Owl Valley on its southern side – a spur we had christened the Owl Pillar because of its uncanny resemblance to a barn owl beaten with a sledgehammer into the shape of the bows of a pre-War Dreadnought.

Greg had suggested trying to climb this 4,000 ft. spur as we were wandering down Ozymandias' South Glacier one sunlit evening, nimbly leaping crevasses in our P.A'S (incidentally this is a game everyone ought to try, very good for the nerves). Seen from the north that night, it looked a lovely feature rather reminiscent of the Bregaglia, with the virtue of finishing at the very summit of an unclimbed mountain. Guy and Jock, it seemed, also had their eyes on it. In fact Jock had his own name for it, a Glaswegian patios phrase which sounded something like 'Mount Rarijonat': quite pleasing in a biblical sort of way.

So it was that we four had detached ourselves from the rest of the party on the long hike back up the Owl from the shadow of Ozymandias, and, choosing a likely spot for the fray, had solemnly prepared to cross the mighty river yet again. Jock removed all clothing from waist downward, apart from a pair of sandals, and set off alone on the half-mile long freezing wade, looking like a Hindu

guru muttering Brahminical verses into his beard. The rest of us compromised by leaving on just overtrousers and boots, Greg setting off alone with great aplomb, hat set at a nautical angle. Guy and I set off gingerly in tandem, feeling almost paralysed by the cold in a matter of seconds. The water was fast flowing, and in places about thigh deep. Being very recently out of the Rundle Glacier it was muddy; and therefore it was impossible to estimate depth or spot stones, hazards both to our frail equilibria. Before long Guy and I were staggering and lurching along, clutching each other's arms like a couple of drunk wifes on Market Street. In the distance we could see Greg forlornly walking in wet circles trying to negotiate a deep bit. As Guy splashed along chuckling at the ridiculous spectacle we must have made, I looked carefully at the height of the top dry bit of him, thinking if the worst came to the worst I could always clamber onto his back and perch there until he sank, a brief respite at least.

Of course, we made it, and were soon pitching the tents on the boggy tundra, at the foot of the Owl Pillar moraines. The weather was gloomy, a strong cold wind blowing down valley from Asgard, shrouded in mist. The day, like many another on Baffin, was spent brewing, and playing bridge and savouring the bliss of dry down.

We woke at 7 a.m. to Greg's wrist alarm. A quick look outside. It was raining and misty, so we subsided back into our pits. A couple of hours later I was dozing quietly, congratulating myself on having averted, honourably, a lot of hard work on short rations, when Greg, after casting a jaundiced eye at the heavens, announced it was improved sufficiently to warrant at least a look. We had prepared a feast for breakfast, to sustain us on what promised to be a long day; a special recipe of Greg's, consisting of a whole tin of Hero muesli, mixed with instant mashed potatoes and served hot. This proved utterly disgusting but unfortunately there was nothing else at all to eat; an inauspicious start to the day.

Outside there was the usual Baffin surprise of dry boots and socks, left outside overnight in the bitter, steady breeze that whistles day and night over the tundra and moraines to disappear into the chartless hills to the north. We were soon picking our way up slopes of heather and boulders, studded with rhododendrons and avens, to the foot of the spur. Looking up its 4,000 ft. sweep it looked enormously inviting, rising at first gradually between its two steep little flanking glaciers, steepening steadily to rear finally and breathtakingly into a jutting, slender prow of yellowish granite; its tip connected by a narrow horizontal causeway of ice to the very summit of the mountain. There was to be no route finding difficulty at least. The only line on the final pillar, as seen through field glasses from camp, led straight up the very nose, a series of discontinuous scratches on its prow. On the other side of the summit, we knew easy

slopes of snow stretched down to the endless ice-caps; flanking the Pillar and facing us, the little glaciers' great headwalls loomed wetly and forbiddingly.

For a couple of hours we soloed meditatively upwards on scree ledges, piled blocks, shattered ridges of black granite and great whaleback slabs of a kind peculiar to Baffin Island. The climbing was hot work but easy enough. Greg's sporting instincts had sent him away ahead as usual, to make sure of first place at the inevitable bottleneck. Below me Guy and Jock were visible, bobbing in and out of sight amongst the great granite blocks on the ridge crest, seemingly oblivious to the fact that they were being out-manoeuvered. There was a vague sun, somewhere, and high veil of cloud. Fifteen miles away to the south-west Asgard sat on the horizon like an inverted flower pot surrounded by model plaster mountains. The calmness was suddenly rent by the mew of a giant bird, a great hawk, which we watched soaring into infinity above the Pillar, to vanish over the edge of the ice-world above. This was an eagle beyond a doubt, even if the book and our tame zoologist (Guy) maintain there aren't supposed to be any on Baffin. If you can have Baffut Beagles you can have Baffin Eagles, say I. At any rate, looking the other way, to the north-east, there was no question of what we saw glinting in the limitless distance – icebergs in the Davis Strait.

About halfway up to the foot of the final head-pillar, a great step about 300 ft. high barred the ridge crest, where we each, one by one, got stuck in various places, until the nerve-racking business of reversing back and forth beneath someone else doing likewise on very steep loose rock finally made us put on a rope and do it properly. Two pitches of excellent steep rock with giant boot-sized cracks led us up onto the whaleback crest again, and several more pitches up, gradually steepening slabs and walls found us eventually at a superb pulpit at the foot of the final pillar. It was a spot old Dülfer himself would have gladly lent his name to. To either side steep chimneys dropped precipitously to the glaciers below. Ahead bristled crack and flake and slab, soaring up, drawing the eye inevitably to the top a thousand feet above; it was like looking up the bows of the *Titanic*, but somewhat drier.

P.A.'s were donned and some peanuts consumed. Greg and I started first, immediately on superb, steep rock, up a great slab cleft by a fine crack which split an overlap and apparently petered out 150 ft. higher. This, and the next pitch or two, a long rising line running rightwards across the slab up incredible finger-sized flake cracks invisible from below, gave immensely enjoyable climbing. We found ourselves chuckling with glee, although a little higher Greg's glee was modified somewhat when he found he was going to have to lead a near vertical hanging crackline formed by a series of

huge piled paving stone sized flakes. This was climbed with a great deal of uncharacteristic muttering, and when my turn came to follow I was commanded imperiously not to use any of the holds since they were all too loose, and liable to succumb to gravity at the lightest touch. I lurched up blithely, and rather scornfully, until halfway up I found myself clutching a giant granite bookend to my chest and felt it swaying gently in the breeze. Feeling rather like Dr Strangelove astride his atomic bomb, I covered the last few feet to the belay like a rocket.

Several more superb cracks and grooves led straight up, offering a thin wandering ladder through seemingly blank seas of polished granite. The climbing from here on was increasingly technical. Being almost completely fresh and unweathered, the rock was as smooth as a mirror and offered little friction for padding above a certain angle; all progress depended on strenuous finger-cracks and jamming. Looking down from here there was an intriguing view of blank convex wall with the two figures of Guy and Jock moving as if in slow motion directly below, and beyond the spur curled down and down until it lost itself in the muddy greens and browns of the Owl River.

A little higher a smooth vertical band wrapped itself right round the front of the Pillar, barring our path. It was split by only one weakness – a leaning pea-pod like diédre which closed to a thin arrow-straight crack in a corner, about 200 ft. high, closed at half-height by a big roof. Not fancying the leaning pea-pod initially I endeavoured to climb a hair-line crack in the slab on its right, but found somehow I was unable to get started. Desperate measures being needed, I took off my sack and even took off the Elastoplast finger-tip strapping which I'd been using unsuccessfully to protect my hands. Unfortunately, I still could not squeeze my fingers into the crack, despite pushing hard, so I gave up and set off up the pea-pod. Bridging moves led rapidly up to a foothold on the wall outside the diédre, where I came to a halt. I didn't need to look down to know that reversing where I'd just come would be desperate, so I clutched the miserable knob of rock at chest level that was holding me on the wall and grimly resolved to hang on until I dropped off like a ripe fruit. An impatient shout from below woke me sufficiently from this fatalistic trance to realise that I might find a runner. Unfortunately there were none, but needs must, so I winkled two tiny stoppers into the top of the pea-pod, which I could just reach (but not see) by hanging over from my now bloodstained knob of rock. Confidence restored somewhat, I launched gingerly into an out of balance layback, over the little overlap and up to the roof above. Fear lending me strength, as it does in such situations, I managed to keep going (no runners here!) and arrive trembling at a perfect stance under the roof. After hauling up my sack, I watched Greg start up, carrying his. There followed a frustrating few

moments, liberally punctuated by curses, while he tried unsuccessfully to retrieve the runners. The next moment he had pendulumed neatly like a ballerina out of the corner, across the slab, made a few swift moves up the hairline crack, and joined me on the stance. It was all done so delicately, to this day I don't know whether it was deliberate or not, but either way it wasn't half spectacular.

The steep off-width crack above gave us a superb pitch. Greg led this sackless, and it was hard and sustained, and very Chamonix-like. Unfortunately, as I found when I joined him (on a very tight rope and pushing his sack bumpily in front with my head) it more or less stopped in the middle of nowhere. About 20 ft. below and to the right, a vague crackline led up steeply with small hiatuses towards the foot of the big arching corner so prominently seen below the top of the pillar, when viewed from the valley. Gaining this crackline required a tension traverse off a knife blade peg, which began with a dignified pendulum and degenerated rapidly into a frantic, bleeding 'sprauchle.' I continued up the cracks above, dishevelled and with hurt pride; they were continuously technical and rather damp, and ended abruptly at a completely blank section, devoid of the smallest semblance of a hold. Balanced on a toe hold at the top extremity of the crack I looked despairingly around the sea of smoothness; I could see we were stumped. Five feet above my outstretched hand was the bottom of a hanging, vertical, finger sized flake crack which ended some 10 ft. above on an apparent ledge.

This was no time for moralising. Besides, I was beginning to feel very precarious. Ceremonially I took out my prized Small Knife Blade. There was a horizontal hairline crack at shoulder level, which with much battering protestingly accepted the distal half inch or so of the peg. When I nervously stood on it, it bent, but held, so I changed feet and placed one toe on a wrinkle. As one foot slipped off the sling, my right hand's fingers were trembling up and into the bottom of the crack like frightened rabbits. With shaking fingers I managed to get a small hex into the crack higher up. A last glance at Greg, watching these antics away below with resigned amusement, and I got myself into a layback and shot up the crack. Just below the top I plonked my right hand over for the expected jug, which disobligingly lifted out. I have a recollection of staring stupidly at my treacherous extremity, chin pressed on knees, feet flat on the vertical wall. Next, I launched backwards into space, at some velocity. This must have been an entertaining spectacle for the other three. Speculation as to where I would have landed had I not been tethered by a rope is interesting; I favour the Owl River itself, but opinions differ. As it was I was next aware of hanging, like a sack of tatties on the side of a skyscraper, about 20 ft. below swinging gently above the tiny glacier. I hauled myself back up the rope to the hex, blessed thing, and stood up on it. A couple of

moves and a quick hand traverse right to safety, and I was on the ledge. To save time, Greg prusiked the wall and crack, pausing only to observe that the flake, since all four sides boasted deep finger cracks, shouldn't really have been there at all; to prove which point he tapped it gently, and it emitted a sonorous boom. Charming.

It was now about 10 p.m. Things were becoming interesting. As I watched the other two climbing up to the peg move, Greg went quickly out left across an undercut wall to arrive precariously in a huge chimney system, up which he vanished rapidly. The light was poor, and looking out across the valley the Asgard peaks showed up, black and featureless, outlined against a ghostly yellow glow on the Penny Ice Cap. It was suddenly very cold. Musing to myself in my little niche I heard Greg shouting that he had reached a big ledge; Guy inquiring mildly about where the route went; and before I could even croak 'what' I noticed little white flakes spiraling downward out of the empty grey sky, at first few, then more and more, beautiful and deathly. It was a fascinating sight.

Another shout. What was he saying?

'It's bloody well SNOWING!'

There was a long pause. A shouted discussion, half heard, half lost in the gathering gloom. It was a bitter moment. Greg could see that we had two, perhaps three, hard pitches to the top. As everything grew colder and whiter we knew a moment of indecision. A bivouac? With no food and no bivouac gear, a little unpleasant maybe. Besides, we all by now had reason to know how long these Arctic storms could last. We thought of our two Colorado friends at Summit Lake who had sat for two days on Asgard's South Ridge before being forced to retreat. So it was downwards. Miserably I set off up to join Greg where we could abseil directly down the great nose itself. Already every hold was covered with wet snow, freezing and slippery. Greg's sack jammed above me in the chimney, and my glasses were an inch deep in rime. Climbing in P.A.'s here was very tenuous. I couldn't even raise a laugh at the antics of Jock and Guy on the wall below, trying to put on duvets and big boots while sharing a hanging belay.

At 11 p.m. we began to bale off. This was a good moment to discover that I'd forgotten my descendeur. As I shivered alone on the plunging wet slab over which Greg had janglingly vanished before me, I contrived a curious arrangement of several karabiners. After an age, spent staring at my numb fingers gripping the solitary peg, I caught a faint shouted summons from the abyss, and promptly dropped the four karabiners at my feet on the steep slab. In an instant I had caught all four in one hand before they slithered out of sight, something I could probably have hoped to manage once in every hundred attempts – inspiration or divine intervention I know not. Anyway, our first two abseils went smoothly enough. After the

second I joined Greg again on a tiny foothold, and we began pulling down the ropes – which jammed inextricably and inexplicably after we'd retrieved about 40 ft. The situation could have been very ugly indeed, for it was by now snowing hard, but to our relief we saw two red helmets looming out of the misty half light about 25 ft. or so to our right, seemingly suspended in space, just below us. In the end we cut and abandoned our own ropes and gingerly swung down to join the other two on a ledge, only to find them staring grimly up at their own jammed rope, caught by the knot in a sharp flake about 40 ft. above. It was a nasty moment, for we found the other two had already freed their rope once, as well as having narrowly avoided decapitation by some falling loose flakes inadvertently dislodged by our ropes earlier. No volunteers being immediately forthcoming for the job of climbing back up to the jammed knot, Guy set off to do it himself, a singular effort in the atmosphere at the time, and not without some heart-stopping acrobatics on the snow clogged cracks above. But he managed it and the day was saved, at least temporarily.

Several abseils followed, colder and colder, wetter and wetter, until a great snow shelf was reached which enabled us to traverse onto the crest where we could reach the pulpit and climb down roped. This frightful and uncomfortable business lasted several weary hours, punctuated by moments of panic, wrestling with loose slithering blocks. The process resembling swimming for the first man down, on a tight rope – the second would usually follow, in an undignified and uncontrolled slide to save time, relying on a frantic grab for the pre-placed runner. Another bout of abseiling on the rock step, again nearly losing Jock under a hail of dislodged flakes and loud Glaswegian oaths, and we at last found ourselves scrambling down the last few hundred feet onto the moraines at the bottom. Looking up, the Owl Pillar was dappled white against a clearing, scudding sky.

Here we split up. I found myself a small stream and savoured the heaven of a first drink for the twenty-nine solid hours we had been going. At 3 p.m., after sixteen hours of non-stop retreat, we reached the tents, had a brew and flaked out.

The following morning we had a meagre breakfast and bade farewell to the Owl Pillar, renamed by Guy the Snowy Owl Pillar, glistening wetly in the sky above us. I for one had gone only a hundred yards or so when I suddenly realised the pleasures of the day in prospect: huge sacks, fifteen miles of moraine bashing; nothing to eat; and worst of all, we were on the Wrong Side of the River

But that's another story.

AVALANCHE ACCIDENTS IN SCOTLAND

—SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

By Blyth Wright

THE FIRST problem facing any student of Scottish avalanche accidents is to find accurate information on their incidence over the years. Each season many parties are involved in avalanches of varying size, but by no means all avalanche incidents result in injury: an educated guess might be that perhaps a quarter of such incidents do result in fairly serious injury to at least one member of the party concerned. Although some accidents go unreported because the party deals with the situation using its own resources, most accidents will result in a Mountain Rescue call out. The published records of Mountain Rescue incidents have been more comprehensive in some years than in others, but provide the best basis we have for year by year comparison of avalanche accidents. The figures in this article are based mainly on these records. No statistical significance is claimed for these figures; they are often approximate and are presented mainly for interest's sake, while the conclusions drawn undoubtedly reflect the writer's prejudices.

THE STATISTICS.

TABLE 1 – *Total Avalanche Accidents.*

	Winters 1959-60 to 1968-9	Winters 1969-70 to 1978-9 (to Feb. 1979)	Totals 1925 to Feb. '79
Accidents	12	40	62
Persons involved (minimum)	35	100	165
Fatalities	4	14	24
Injured	17	55	85

N.B.— Only accidents involving injury or a Mountain Rescue call-out are noted.

The distribution of deaths and injuries due to avalanche is fairly random over the years, although the general trend is upwards. However, in general and over ten year periods, some factors are reasonably constant, i.e. an average of 2-3 people is involved in each incident.

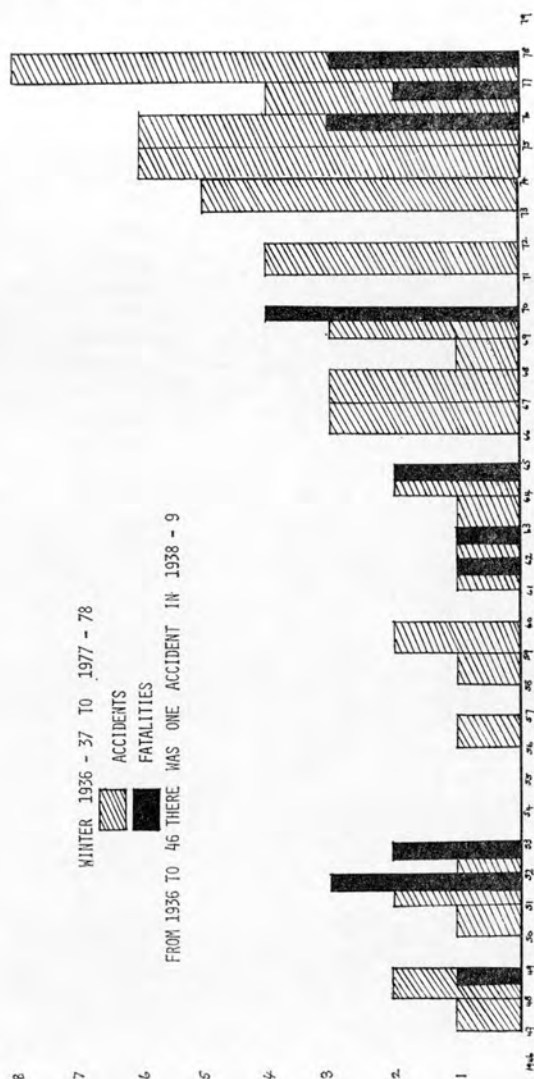
About 1 accident in 3 involves a fatality.

About 1 person in 7 involved dies.

About 2 in every 3 or 4 persons involved are injured.

The only real conclusion to be drawn here is that if a party has been involved in an avalanche serious enough to warrant a call-out, the chance for each individual of having been killed or injured is high.

TABLE 2 - *Yearly Distribution.*



The values for winter 1978-9 are incomplete. It will easily be seen that there has been a marked increase in accidents reported from about 1965, with fatalities in each of the last four winters.

TABLE 3 – *Frequency According to Month.*

November 1	December 10	January 13	February 16	March 14	April 6
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No details for 2 accidents.

Clearly the high winter months of January, February and March produce most accidents, although the fact that December has seen more trouble than April is slightly surprising. It may be that a majority of climbers now confine their activities to the peak season. Also, the wet snow avalanches which probably predominate in April are much more predictable than the typical early-season wind-slab avalanche. It is interesting to note that according to the records, cornice avalanches cause no more accidents in spring than during the rest of the winter, though fuller accident reports might tell a different story. Although only 5 accidents due to cornice collapse are noted, several accidents recorded as due to avalanche must undoubtedly have been due to cornice collapse or to cornice triggered avalanches in gullies.

TABLE 4—*In Relation to Total Winter Incidents.*

Year	All Winter Incidents	Avalanche Accidents	Year	All Winter Incidents	Avalanche Accidents
1957	23	0	1968	25+	1
1958	14	1	1969	22	3
1959	15	2	1970	33	0
1960	24	0	1971	27	4
1961	14+	2	1972	26	3
1962	N.A.	1	1973	24	2
1963	35(est.)	1	1974	43	6
1964	25(est.)	0	1975	34	6
1965	29	0	1976	51	5
1966	21	2	1977	48	8
1967	27	3	1978		
1968			Totals	560+	50

SOME POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS.

(a) *Open Slopes.*

The old idea that open-slope avalanches are uncommon is totally false and one hopes that it is no longer current. At least 27 out of 62 incidents recorded have been due to open-slope avalanches, some up to half a mile wide.

(b) *Burials.*

There is a widespread belief that complete burials are unusual in Scottish avalanches. In fact, they are quite common, at least 20 more or less complete burials being noted. Many others not resulting in injury are known. These burials have resulted in a number of fatalities, some of them due to asphyxia and others to multiple injuries sustained during the fall.

(c) *The 24-hour Rule.*

It may well be true, as has been emphasised in mountain safety

publicity, that it is unsafe to climb during a snowfall or during the 24 hours following it. However, the corollary that it is safe to climb after waiting 24 hours should not be drawn. Avalanches in Scotland frequently occur in cold weather many days after the last snowfall, due to wind transportation of snow and consequent build-up of windslab.

(d) Size of Avalanches.

Climbers sometimes feel justified in crossing an unsafe slope when it seems that only a small avalanche could possibly result. However, except in the few Scottish cases where the volume of snow has been so overwhelming as to leave the victim no possible chance of survival, the size of the avalanche bears little relation to the damage done. Some tiny snowslides have caused death or serious injury by carrying climbers over cliffs or into boulder fields. It is interesting that in a survey of 61 North American incidents almost half of fatal avalanches travelled no more than 100 metres.

POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS.

How is the increasing number of avalanche accidents to be explained? Several possibilities come to mind.

(a) Snowfall.

It might be thought that years of great snowfall produce most avalanche accidents. Records kept by the Meteorological Office in connection with the Snow Survey of Great Britain make it possible to identify these years. Comparison with avalanche accident figures shows no direct correlation. It is even possible to speculate that heavy snowfall reduces the number of avalanche accidents (a) by keeping climbers away from the hill, and (b) by reducing the likelihood of injury in an avalanche, as boulder fields are well covered.

(b) Increasing Numbers.

Comparing the approximate yearly totals, it can be seen (Table 4) that over the last 20 years avalanche accidents (very broadly speaking) have conformed to the upward trend in winter accidents, although this might not be true for individual winters. The Table also illustrates their importance (or unimportance) in different years in relation to the sum of winter accidents.

(c) Inexperience/Incompetence.

It is obvious from reading accident reports that climbing experience is in itself no guarantee of immunity from avalanche accident – some of the best-known names amongst Scottish mountaineers appear in the reports. Perhaps in some cases familiarity breeds the confidence to take one risk too many. In other instances, foolhardiness is written large between the lines of the accident reports. It is worth observing that in almost all cases, with

the exception of cornice collapses, the climber or skier himself has triggered off the avalanche by his presence on the slope. This is in accord with experience in other countries. As far as records tell, only in one recent case on Ben Nevis was a party overwhelmed by an avalanche from above.

(d) *External Influences.*

In France and U.S.A. it has been established that supersonic bangs can produce a pressure increase of 4-6 millibars, equivalent to a new snowfall of 45 cm. This is more than enough to trigger avalanches in high-risk conditions, through overloading of existing weak snow layers. In addition, at least one case is known where a cornice collapse was apparently triggered off by a low-flying aircraft.

PREDICTION AND AVOIDANCE.

Climbers by the nature of their sport and themselves habitually on slopes of an ideal angle for avalanche activity, i.e. between 30° and 45°. Continued survival is therefore dependent on care, experience, technical knowledge and a measure of luck. There can be little excuse for a lack of technical knowledge, as several excellent and readable publications are available. Ed la Chapelle's *A.B.C. of Avalanche Safety* is a good general guide, while the U.S. Forest Service's *Avalanche Handbook* contains fuller information for the enthusiast.

Intelligent interpretation of the recent weather pattern in a given area is the best guide, coupled with informed personal appraisal of the slopes in question. At present no organisation exists in this country equipped to issue accurate avalanche warnings and it is doubtful whether one could ever be created. Even in Alpine countries, where there are well-established avalanche warning systems, no attempt is made by the national warning service to issue warnings for high mountain country. The warnings issued are appropriate to altitudes where human habitation exists and where it is possible to make regular daily observations of weather and snow conditions.

It is doubtful whether the scale of the problem in this country is large enough to attract or justify any substantial public expenditure.

One other point may be of interest, that is the tendency since the early 1970's for avalanche accidents to occur in groups or epidemics. This occurred on 12-13 February 1972 (3 accidents), 19 January 1975 (4 accidents), 30 March 1975 (2 accidents), 12-14 March 1976 (5 accidents), 21 January 1978 (3 accidents), and 19-21 February 1978 (2 accidents). These occasions will usually coincide with a weekend or holiday when conditions are bad and the geographical distribution will also depend on snow conditions and weather history. For

instance the two accidents on 30 March 1975 both occurred in the Northern Cairngorms, whereas the incidents on 12-14 March 1976 took place in locations as widely separated as Cairngorm, Lochnagar and Bidean nam Bian, indicating a widespread avalanche risk. This kind of broad-scale risk is more common than hitherto believed, as an inspection of the accident records indicates.

If avalanche warnings to the public are required or justified, I believe that the simple publicising of avalanche accidents by the media as they occur, with meaningful details of avalanche type and slope orientation, would be the most effective. This would be of little help to the unfortunate Saturday avalanche victim, but might well add to the safety of those going forth forewarned on the Sunday.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

SIR—If members of the S.M.C. continue to waste time discussing trivia then two hours is inadequate for our A.G.M.

The issues of nuclear waste disposal by underground burial, Craigroyston, and Fionn-Fada have been with us for some time, yet the Club has shown a shocking lack of interest in them.

The Club, not the committee, must form its policies on such issues in advance and not rely on bland statements from the nuclear and electrical industries. Yours etc.

K. M. ANDREW.

But see report on p. 438 for another opinion.—Editor.

PITCH SEVEN

It is consummation, a mad rape
Of earth's solid resisting; mute
Limbs thrusting, hands grasping,
Minds godworn, craving a primitive substitute.

It is not
Behaviour as was always there!
Outworn creeds, too simple
For our fractured, shackled, nightmare understanding.
We were content once, or dreamt we were,
Before the plastic age
Before the bomb
Before free love
Free milk
Free doom.

Agag no longer tip-toes,
Tripping with a virgin wonder.
Jericho's walls are broken down
For glory, death and plunder.

It is substitution, a dagger desperation
Ripping bare the nakedness of men.
Why?

Because we must
Engage the body to liberate the mind,
Embrace earth rock to find a soul.

It is all the deep things of long ago
Swept away, then phoenix born
For a new generation.
We may not understand, God knows,
But still we climb.

Take in the tangled slack!

HAMISH M. BROWN.

NEW CLIMBS SECTION

REVISED GRADINGS.

EXTREMELY SEVERE.

Following the adoption in 1978 of the Extremely Severe grade we print a selection of the existing routes worthy of that grade. The E grade is also included where reliably known.

Northern Highlands					
Balaton	E1	Carnmore Corner		St. George	
Heavy Flake	E1				
Cairngorms					
The Pin	E2	Steeple	E1	Cougar	E3
Culloden	E3	The Giant	E3		
Ben Nevis					
King Kong		The Bat	E2	Torro	E1
Adrenaline Rush	E3	Caligula	E3		
Glencoe and Glen Etive					
Carnivore	E2	Shibboleth	E2	Kingpin	E2
Trapeze	E1	Yo-Yo	E1	Jaywalk	E1
The Long Reach	E1	The Big Ride	E2	The Pinch	E3
Arrochar					
Club Crack	E1	The Nook		MacLean's Folly	

WINTER GRADINGS.

The current system of grading winter routes was evolved among the Aberdeen school in the early 1950's and first made its appearance in print in the *Journal* in 1956. Since then it has been adopted in various guide books and is now in general use. In the last few years technological and climatic trends have encouraged a significant increase in both the quantity and technical standard of winter climbing. The question we must now ask ourselves is whether the winter grading system should be modified to meet the changed situation. The present system is as follows:

- GRADE I Uncomplicated snow climbs having no pitches under adequate snow conditions. They may however present cornice difficulties or have dangerous outruns.
- GRADE II Gullies containing individual or minor pitches, or high angle snow with difficult cornice exits. Easier buttresses which under winter cover provide more continuous difficulty. Will include pitches of up to Very Difficult.
- GRADE III Serious climbs which are not advised for inexperienced parties. Will include climbing of Severe standard.
- GRADE IV Routes of either sustained difficulty or of the greatest difficulty but too short to be included in Grade V.
- GRADE V Routes of sustained difficulty which provide serious expeditions usually requiring favourable conditions. (To be in this grade a route usually requires to be at least 500 ft. (150 m) and to reach or exceed Very Severe at several points).

It should be remembered that the grading relates to the overall seriousness of the climb and is not a precise measure of the actual technical difficulty encountered at its hardest point. It follows that if a climb is short it may

reach a higher technical standard than a long route of similar grade, which may well merit its assessment on account of its length, route-finding aspects or problems of escape. Recent editorial correspondence raises the following points.

- (a) The increase in very hard routes which are too short to justify a V grade but which may be of higher technical standard than many V's, e.g. The Chancer (280 ft., 84 m), undoubtedly containing Hard Very Severe climbing but on the present system it should be IV rather than V. One answer to this problem is to grade such routes as IV (or V) with a suffix such as 'S' for short. Other solutions have been suggested.
- (b) Recent growth in hard rock climbing has resulted in revision of the scale to incorporate the H.V.S. and X.S. grades. Should winter gradings similarly be extended to a Grade VI? A view has been expressed that Grade V (by definition) includes the most serious climbs and that (whatever may exist elsewhere) the scale of our own mountains would effectively prevent any possible route from achieving the level of seriousness to warrant a Sixth grading. Further, there is nothing to prevent reference to pitches of H.V.S., X.S., etc, in the route descriptions of technically hard climbs whether they be short (Grade IV) or long (Grade V.)
- (c) Does a system which was evolved to cater for traditional methods of winter climbing still hold good for an activity which has undergone so much technological change? Has the advent of techniques which allow Smith's Gully to be climbed in 45 minutes removed the justification for a grading based upon seriousness? In reply it has been pointed out that although present day ice climbing differs radically from that of twenty years ago the steep winter rock which is the arena for some of today's most impressive performances yields to techniques which have more in common with the past than with the pick and stick of modern ice work.

The debate is involved and specialised. It clearly cannot be conducted in the annually appearing pages of this *Journal*; nor can the decisions be left to the editors of Journals and Guidebooks. Those who are presently active on the winter frontier should be involved in confirming its definition – or redefinition.

Comments and letters are invited and should be sent NOW, not after your prejudices have been reinforced by next season's climbs. By then the discussions may be over.

CLIMBING CRAGS AND NESTING BIRDS.

It has been pointed out that we occasionally report new routes on crags that house nesting peregrine falcons, eagles or other rare birds which may suffer from disturbance by climbers. Most climbers derive pleasure from seeing such birds and would support measures to encourage their preservation. We would ask readers to behave circumspectly in these matters, to avoid climbing in places where nesting is in process and to refrain from submitting routes on minor crags where they find such rare and easily disturbed species to be in occupation.

NEW CLIMBS—THE ISLANDS

Isle of Eigg: South Wall of the Scur of Eigg.—*Purphura*.

P. Moores & S. Whaley. 25th May 1978. 400 ft. (121 m). Very Severe.

Near the left end of the face there is an easy, open gully, used in the descent. This route starts to the right of the gully, under a small roof, and follows an obvious, ramp/corner-like feature.

Climb a groove to the small roof, exit right and climb slabs to reach a very obvious, horizontal fault belay (130 ft., 39 m). Move up and left across a smooth slab, then slightly down before breaking through the tiered overhangs. Follow slabs to the top (140 ft., 42 m). Easy climbing to finish (130 ft., 39 m).

Cir Mhór: Rosa Pinnacle: Lower West Face.—*The Iron Fist.*

D. Dinwoodie & R. Renshaw. May 1978. 250 ft (63 m). Hard Very Severe.

The twin chimney-line of *The Sickie*. Climb as for *The Sickie* to a belay ledge under the chimney. Climb the chimney then pull over a bulge into a notch on the rib. Climb the rib and cracks above to a belay on *Sou-Wester Slabs* (An old peg and sling was found at the top of the chimney).

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS I

Beinn Lair: North Face: Butterfly Buttress.—*Butterfly Gully.*

D. Dinwoodie & R. Renshaw. April 1978. 1,200 ft (360 m). GRADE II.

The long couloir splitting *Butterfly Buttress*, and prominent from Carnmore barn. It forks about 500 ft. (150 m) below the plateau; the more interesting left fork was taken.

Letterewe Forest: Dubh Loch: Ghost Slabs.—*Necrophile.*

700 ft. (210 m). Very Severe.

D. Dinwoodie & R. Renshaw. 29th April 1978.

This route climbs the right-hand section of the right-hand slabs. A start was made at the lowest point, just down and left from an isolated tree. Most of the rock could be avoided by linking the ubiquitous heather patches, but the steepening open slabs provide good climbing.

After clawing up a heather field below the steep headwall, an exit was made away out right by climbing through a bulging break to finish round a fine exposed nose. There are few belays apart from the occasional tree.

Beinn a'Chasgein Mór: Torr na h'Iolaire: Lower Wall.—*The Eyrie.*

230 ft. (69 m). Very Severe.

R. Archbold, G. Cohen & G. Macnair. 22nd May 1978.

Start as for *Sickie*. Climb right and up for about 50 ft. (15 m); traverse right and up a short groove; at the top move left onto a slab under the prominent overhang. Follow the slab and belay on ledge to the left. Climb up for 10 ft (3 m), and then left into a corner; climb this and the easy slabs above.

Harlequin Wall.—*Holly Tree Wall.*

150 ft (45 m). Very Severe.

R. Archbold, G. Cohen & G. Macnair. 22nd May 1978.

Below and left of Harlequin Wall is a black wall of better rock with a holly tree. Climb up to the tree, step right and follow a crack for 20 ft (6 m). Traverse left across a slab and back right under a huge block into a chimney. The chimney forms the right hand side of the block. Climb this to belay on top of the block. Traverse right for about 15 ft (5 m) and climb the wall just left of an unpleasant gully.

Carcase Wall.—*Cadaverous Crack.* 160 ft (48 m). Very Severe.

G. Cohen & G. Macnair. 22nd May 1978.

Between *Skull* and *Wishbone Rib* is a large recess. This route takes the right-hand crack of the recess. Climb past three overhangs to a ledge (sling used for gardening on last move). Climb the vegetitious chimney above, step left to finish.

Seana Braigh: Luchd Coire: Diamond Buttress.—Diamond Edge.

800 ft (250 m). GRADE III/IV.

D. Dinwoodie, R. Robb & R. A. Smith. 15th April 1978.

This route follows roughly the frontal crest of the buttress. Start left of the crest, up the higher of two, obvious right-slanting ramps. The finish was up the big, obvious diédre cleaving the upper nose. This is right of *Rough Diamond* (see *S.M.C.J.*, 1974, xxx, 165, 270).

An elegant line with fine situations. Being heavily vegetated it should be amenable often.

Coigach: Cona 'Mheall: Achininver Pinnacle.—Levitation Towers.

400 ft (120 m). Hard Very Severe.

J. Mackenzie & D. McCallum. 11th November 1978.

This route climbs the unusual knife-edged arête which juts out to the right of the Achininver Pinnacle (see District Guide, p.153). To the right of the pinnacle is a triple towered, narrow arête. Start at the base (cairn).

Climb cracks and tight chimney to flake belays. Continue up awkward corner crack to level section and belays, easily up then along arête to second tower and belays on right below crack. Climb to perch then move up and right (crux, peg runner), to sloping ledge. Gain rib above and follow this to alcove, climb corner to belays. Continue along crest to the next tower which is climbed direct to belays above. Interesting scrambling to finish. A good and unusual climb which is well protected.

The Fannichs: An Coileachan: Garbh Coire Mhór.—Short Shrift.

B. Brown & J. Mackenzie. 27th January 1979. 500 ft (150 m). GRADE II/III.

On the left (north) wall of the coire is a prominent, narrow gully. Follow this over two ice pitches to its conclusion at 250 ft (75 m). Either finish straight up over snow or, better, go right and up for a further 500 ft (150 m) of mixed ground at Grade II.

—*Echo Face.*

1,200 ft (360 m). GRADE III/IV.

D. MacCallum & J. Mackenzie. 13th January 1979.

Between the central gully and the corner on the extreme right of the coire there is a large slabby face with a thin central line.

Iced slabs lead to a snowfield. More icefalls, iced slabs, small snowfields then easier ground leads to a snow funnel which is followed up and right to the top.

On this ascent thin ice and powder snow presented difficulties, but the route should come into condition early.

—*Plumline.*

B. Brown & J. Mackenzie. 10th February 1979. 1,200 ft (360 m). GRADE IV.

This route climbs the fine corner on the right of the coire, right of *Echo Face*. The direct (right) entrance was taken over iced slabs and an ice pitch leading to a snowfield. This leads to The Barrier, an inset groove on the right, hidden from below, leading into a deep, womb-like cave; excellent pulpit stance. A vertical ice wall is gained from this cave, steep ice above leading to another cave and stance. Continue up more ice then snow, following the line of the corner over an ice pitch then finally snow and a corniced exit as for *Echo Face*. Recommended.

—*Prune Buttress.*

700 ft (210 m). GRADE III.

R. Butler, D. Howard, D. MacCallum & C. Roylance. 11th February 1979.

Climbs the edge of the buttress left of the central gully. Start 30 ft (9 m) left of the edge, climbing through small steps and snow patches to a point overlooking the gully. More mixed ground leads to a finish up the crest. Some good positions. (See NOTES this issue).

—*Crystal Tripper.*

800 ft (210 m). GRADE IV.

D. MacCallum & J. Mackenzie. 17th February 1979.

To the right of the third gully from the left, there is an impressive ice fall. Start 100 ft (30 m) right of the gully at an inset corner.

Climb ice patch to snowband. Above are two ice falls; climb the left fall for 100 ft (30 m) to screw belays on left. Steep ice is then climbed to rock, peg runner, traverse right to groove and so to second snowband. Climb ice fall above, bulge at 80 ft (24 m), continue up iced slabs to screw belays. Easier ice continues up the runnels above, leading to a snow fan exit, sometimes corniced. Recommended.

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS II

Beinn Eighe: Coire Mhic Fhearchair: Eastern Ramparts.

Heavy Flake. 320 ft (96 m). Extremely Severe (E1).

G. Cohen & M. Hamilton. July 1978.

At the left end of the Eastern Ramparts there is a vague pillar; bounded on the left by an obvious corner, and on the right by a steep, straight crack.

Scramble up easy ground to belay at right side of a wet recess (50 ft, 15 m). Step right, up, then traverse left to crack which is climbed to a belay in recess (70 ft, 21 m). Climb directly up fault to belay behind flake on right (40 ft, 12 m). Step left and climb groove to belay under roof on left (60 ft, 18 m). Traverse 15 ft (5 m) right and climb large flakes leftwards until groove leads to top (100 ft, 30 m).

As intimated in the Rock Guide, the ascent of these fine buttresses under winter conditions gave excellent climbing, the East and West Buttresses falling this season, and a report of an ascent of Central Buttress in 1971 also being included.

East Buttress.—

Easy Route/Ordinary Route. GRADE III/IV.

D. Donoghue & M. Orr. 17th December 1978.

The lower, sandstone tier was climbed on the left side (Easy Route). Following a traverse rightwards along the Broad Terrace, Ordinary Route up the quartzite tier was closely followed.

Central Buttress.—*Hamilton's Route.* 1,000 ft(300 m). GRADE V.

J. Ronayne, K. Spence & K. Urquhart. February 1971.

This is probably the easiest winter line up the buttress. To start, keep to the right of the buttress. On the lower quartzite tier climb a corner on the right near *W.C. Gully*, and on the upper quartzite tier keep to the crest.

(The route was climbed on two separate days; on the first day the party climbed up to the final quartzite band, traversed right into *W.C. Gully*, and roped down this. The following day *W.C. Gully* was climbed, traversing left onto *Hamilton's Route* and climbing that).

West Buttress.—*Ordinary Route* (quartzite tier). GRADE III/IV.

R. MacGregor & A. Nisbet. 13th January 1979.

The general standard was Grade III, with a hard, short corner low down. In a spirit of self-preservation, the sandstone tier was left for longer days.

Applecross: Beinn Bhàn: Coire nan Fhamhair.—The Chimney.

A. Nisbet & B. Sprunt. 17th February 1979. 900 ft (270 m). GRADE III.

This is the prominent, steep and narrow chimney left of the very steep main cliff. The lower section of the chimney overhangs continuously and rarely, if ever, holds much ice. Consequently, this ascent involved a 600 ft (180 m) detour along sensational snow ledges into the upper part of the chimney, which was then followed over three ice pitches, the first being the crux.

Coire na Poite.—Wall of The Early Morning Light.

1,400 ft (420 m). GRADE IV.

J. Horsfield, B. Jones, K. Spence & P. Thomas. February 1971.

This route takes a central line up the back wall of the coire. Start at the centre of the face.

Climb easy ice for four pitches to reach a break in the first rock band. Climb the break then continue up and right for two pitches to reach rightward sloping break in second rock band. Climb this and continue by line of least resistance on snow, ice, and iced rock for eight more pitches to the top.

(The line appears identical to that of *Moonshine*, recorded in *S.M.C.J.*, 1978, xxxi, 273).

—Upper Connecting Ridge of A' Phoite.

B. Goodwin, J. Grieve & D. Tierney. February 1971. GRADE IV.

Better a late connection than none at all . . . This is probably the first winter ascent of the ridge (see *S.M.C.J.*, 1978, xxxi, 285, for details of a recent ascent).

Meall Gorm: North-East Face.—Blaeberry Corner.

350 ft (105 m). GRADE IV.

J. Horsfield, B. Jones, K. Spence & P. Thomas. February 1971.

The summer line was followed throughout, with a difficult middle pitch.

Ben More Coigach: Sgùrr an Fhìdhleir. *North West Face.*

A. Nisbet. 20th January 1979.

1,000 ft (300 m). GRADE III.

This is the ramp/gully to the right of the nose, and well seen in the District Guide photograph (facing p.152). A diagonal ramp leads with one pitch of climbing into the long final gully. This could be tedious, and probably dangerous in loose snow conditions.

The narrow gully on the slope just left of Sgùrr an Fhìdhleir was climbed by J. Barmby & B. Sprunt (Grade II).

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS III**Assynt: Quinag: Sail Garbh.—Y Gully.**

1,000 ft (300 m). GRADE II (by Right Fork), GRADE I/II (by Left Fork).

Right Fork: J. Barmby & B. Sprunt.

Left Fork: J. Anderson & A. Nisbet, in descent. 21st January 1979.

This is the deep-cut, Y-shaped gully left of *Barrel Buttress*. The right fork is particularly scenic.

—*Cave Gully.* 1,000 ft (300 m). GRADE III.

J. Anderson & A. Nisbet. 21st January 1979.

This narrow gully lies on the left side of the Barrel Buttress, overlooking the right branch of *Y-Gully*. The route passes the steep section of the Barrel Buttress via the cave pitch.

—*Y Buttress* 1,200 ft (360 m). GRADE II.

A. Nisbet & N. Spinks. 13th February 1979.

The buttress bounded by the left and right forks of *Y Gully*. The line is variable, while the steep summit tier was turned on the right. A good line with indifferent climbing.

—*Cooper Gully.* 1,000 ft (300 m). GRADE I.

B. Clough, J. Elliott & R. MacGregor. 13th February 1979.

The gully to the right of the Barrel Buttress.

(On this ascent, a build-up of snow had banked out the pitches in the Y Gullies, reducing both to Grade I. The right fork gave an exciting descent).

The Reay Forest: Foinaven.

The following notes, and routes, are courtesy of A. Nisbet. (*This would seem as good a place as any for this Editor to note with disquiet the recent phenomenon of East Coast, and even Aberdonian climbers to be found far away from their usual happy hunting grounds. While it is conceded that it is usually warmer in the West, and it has been a very cold winter, there have been vague comments about poaching. We can only hope that this spate of incidents is a mere climatic whim.*)

Strath Dionard in winter turned out to be magnificent both scenically and in the quality of climbing. The waterfalls of **Creag Urbhard** were transmogrified into huge lines of ice, as had a large area of slabs on the South Ridge, although the ice was broken by a rock overhang. Perhaps the most striking feature was the frozen Third Waterfall. This had formed an enormous icicle 50-100 ft (15-30 m) high, and a metre or so in diameter, with a 10 ft (3 m) drooping ice lip at the top. The complete line would have given a very hard

climb with extensive aid required – so we avoided it! Of the climbs described below, the *Second Icefall* and *The Fly*, both on Creag Urbhard, and *Plume* and *Sigma*, on the Dionard Butresses, gave the best four routes, with each providing water ice climbing to match most Scottish routes.

The routes are probably in condition fairly frequently during January and February. The icefalls have been named after their summer falls.

Creag Urbhard.—*The Terrace*.

2,000 ft (600 m). GRADE III.

B. Clough & A. Nisbet. 8th February 1979.

This was an ascent of *The Terrace*, finishing up the snow gully above The Second Icefall. The Terrace is gained by a steep 50 ft (15 m) ice pitch.

—*The Fly*.

400 ft (120 m). GRADE IV.

R. MacGregor & A. Nisbet. 12th February 1979.

The length given is from The Terrace. The prominent feature is an icefall depending from the huge corner of the summer route *Chicken Run*, under the final pitch of *Flyover* (see below).

Climb the initial pitch onto The Terrace and follow this for 200 ft (60 m) to reach the start. Climb diagonally left across heather and a short rock corner to reach the icefall. Follow ice to a ledge which escapes out leftwards from the main corner to finish up easier angled ice.

—*Flyover*.

600 ft (180 m). GRADE III/IV.

B. Clough & A. Nisbet. 10th February 1979.

This is an obvious, leftwards curving line which finishes along an undercut ledge overlooking *Chicken Run* and *The Fly*. The first pitch only is hard. Start on the tree-covered platform midway between the lower end of The Terrace and The Second Icefall.

Climb ice and move left into a chimney. Follow this to a heather ledge which leads to The Terrace. Move slightly left and follow the upper ramp to the top.

—*The Second Icefall*.

600 ft (180 m). GRADE V.

A. Nisbet & N. Spinks. 9th February 1979.

The length given is to The Terrace. The 70°, preliminary ice pitch was followed by 180 ft (54 m) of easy snow leading to the foot of the main icefall. This was climbed mainly on the left side, passing an airy perch underneath an obvious roof. Rock belays.

—*The Green Knight*.

350 ft (105 m). GRADE IV.

A. Nisbet. 11th February.

High up and right of the North Buttress is a prominent, green icefall. In summer this may form a 5th Waterfall. In winter it gave a short, steep climb.

—*Gawain's Chimney*.

400 ft (120 m). GRADE III/IV.

B. Clough, J. Elliott & A. Nisbet. 11th February 1979.

The narrow chimney just left of *The Green Knight*.

The First Dionard Butress.—*Incisor.* 700 ft (210 m). GRADE III.
R. MacGregor, A. Nisbet & N. Spinks. 10th February 1979.

A broad, snowy ramp rises beneath the west face of the buttress, to emerge at the top of The First Icefall. This route climbs the slabby face to the obvious skyline notch.

From a boulder field traverse left for 30 ft (9 m) onto the face to reach a streak of ice. This is climbed for 200 ft (60 m) to reach a rightward slanting snowline obvious from below. Cross heather terraces and climb a series of short corners into the notch.

—*Plume.* 400 ft (120 m). GRADE IV.
R. MacGregor & N. Spinks. 11th February 1979.

The route takes the impressive, sweeping icefall immediately behind the east end of Loch Dionard, to finish on a large diagonal terrace.

The Fourth Dionard Butress.—*Sigma.* 600 ft (180 m). GRADE IV.
B. Clough & R. MacGregor. 9th February 1979.

This route lies on the first prominent buttress east of the First Dionard Butress, and approximately 1 km from the east end of Loch Dionard. The buttress is bounded on the right by a deep gully obvious from below (*Guinevere Gully*, described below). The route follows a sweeping ice line to the left of a large roof, and rises steeply to a heather-covered ridge. From here step rightwards onto an undercut slab and follow the ice up a shallow gully to the top.

—*Guinevere Gully.*
B. Clough & J. Elliott. 10th February 1979. 1,000 ft (300 m). GRADE I/II.
This is the deep gully mentioned in the description of *Sigma*.
Note: For a recent summary of summer climbing on Creag Urbhard see *S.M.C.J.*, 1977, xxxi, 148-152, with a diagram facing p.146.

CAIRNGORMS I

The Loch Avon Horseshoe: Shelter Stone Crag.—*Western Grooves.*
B. Barton & A. Fyffe. March 1978. 750 ft (225 m). GRADE III/IV.

Follows the line of grooves between *West Ridge Route* and *Clach Dhian Chimney*, joining the latter route just below the top of the slanting crack of *Postern*. Start below the grooves.

Follow the grooves, which are wide and shallow, to just below the first step in the right skyline. There is one awkward exit from a short red chimney. Continue up a ramp leading left to gain the slanting crack. Finish as for *Clach Dhian Chimney*. Often in condition.

—*Cupid's Bow.*
300 ft (90 m). Extremely Severe.
D. Dinwoodie & R. Renshaw. 27th May 1978.

The obvious line up the middle of the Central Slabs. The climbing up into the Thor diédre is as for *Loki*.

From the Low Ledge below the first corner of *Thor* climb up right for 30 ft to belay on a grassy platform. Go straight up cracks then traverse right

into a shallow corner. Go up this then move left onto the rib and traverse into Thor diédre. Go up this for a short way to take a stance in slings beside a ledge of sorts. Move up the diédre (1 peg) then swing out left onto a ledge below a prominent tapering corner. Climb some 20 ft up the corner to gain flakes out on the left rib (2 pegs) – a rurp was used to find the first reasonable placement but this is not necessary. Move up the rib and climb the awkward bulging section at the top of the corner (peg runners in place). Move on up the crack-line until it jinks to the right. Step up left onto a difficult slabby grey wall and climb this to traverse right by small ledges to a possible belay point under a flake-crack in the headwall. Exit out and left by this crack and traverse off left by slabs.

Peg runners used throughout.

Cairn Etchachan: Main Face.

—*Eastern Approaches – The Guillotine*. 600 ft (180 m). GRADE IV.

A. Fyfe & A. Liddell. 4th February 1979.

On both routes the summer line was followed, giving a good, varied climb. The routes can also be climbed separately if so wished.

—*Bastille*.

R. Archbold & T. Syme. July 1978.

900 ft (275 m). Very Severe.

Between *Red Guard* and *Route Major*. The climbing is of variable standard, the main difficulties lying in the lower section.

Start at foot of ramp of *Route Major*. Climb short corner to higher ramp, continue up and right to edge overlooking gully of *Red Guard* then up left to belay (150 ft, 45 m). Climb cracks close to right edge then left-slanting groove to grassy bay (140 ft, 42 m). Up right over chokestone then left to foot of two-tiered corner. Climb lower corner with awkward exit on left (70 ft, 21 m). To avoid upper corner (wet) step round left arête, climb short groove exiting on right. Belay on ledge system (80 ft, 24 m).

Trend slightly right to land on ramp at point where *Red Guard* (summer) breaks off (260 ft, 78 m). Move left then up to prominent collar-shaped overhang. Climb this by central crack and follow crack to stance (100 ft, 30 m). Easy to plateau (150 ft, 45 m).

Upper Cliff.—*Poison Dwarf*. 250 ft (75 m).

S. Crymble & A. Fyfe. 12th July 1978.

This route lies between *Crevasse Route* and *Equinox*. Start about 20 ft (6 m) up the initial gully of *Equinox*.

Climb the overhung ramp slanting left, keeping well right until a ledge on the left can be gained. Go up the obvious corner to another ledge and belay on left (120 ft, 36 m). Climb the wide crack above, difficult at either end, to a belay beside the rock window on *Crevasse Route* (50 ft, 15 m). Go up the wide groove above to the recess, use the large flake to gain the arête on the right and follow this to the top (80 ft, 24 m).

—*Time Traveller*.

A. Fyfe & D. Morris. 11th July 1978.

250 ft (75 m). Very Severe.

Lies on the left wall of the *Equinox* gully. Climb *Equinox* to the large block (100 ft, 30 m). Step left and go up the groove and crack to a ledge and belay (40 ft, 12 m). Continue up the crack system to a ledge (80 ft, 24 m). Finish via the short, easy corner above (30 ft, 9 m).

—*Pythagoras*. 300 ft (90 m).

S. Crymble & A. Fyffe. 12th July 1978.

This route follows a line of corners then the obvious crack in the wall left of *Boa*. Start just left of *Boa*.

Follow a grassy groove trending left to belay where the groove splits (100 ft, 30 m). Continue up right, facing corners and passing right of a huge flake to reach the large platform below the final wall (100 ft, 30 m). Climb the fine crack to its end, traverse left to a fine exposed stance on the edge (70 ft, 21 m). Go up the left slanting groove until it is possible to move right and so to the top (30 ft, 9 m).

Gully Face.—*Siberia*.

A. Fyffe & T. Walker. 28th February 1979. 700 ft (210 m). GRADE IV.

This route follows the lower edge of the buttress right of the Scorpion fault, finishing up the hanging gully between the edge and the fault. Start right of *False Scorpion*, where obvious ramps lead up and left into the main depression.

Follow the ramps easily for two pitches to below the first steepening. Traverse right to ramps which lead left overlooking the main gully, to belay in a cul-de-sac level with two large blocks on the right skyline. Move onto the rib on the right and descend right to gain the groove which leads into the hanging gully. Follow this to the top.

The top section of this route would appear to be the unclimbed continuation of the gully of *False Scorpion*, as mentioned in the Climbers' Guide.

Longbow Crag.—*Shotgun*.

A. Fyffe & E. Fyffe. 10th July 1978. 450 ft (135 m). Very Severe.

This route lies between *Relay Climb* and *Longbow Direct*, taking the cracks close to the left end of the Longbow roof. Start about 50 ft (15 m) left of Longbow Direct.

Climb a rounded, pock-marked rib to a large block belay (100 ft, 30 m). Move up left and cross overlap, up broken slabs then continue up fault left of steep, reddish wall to below obvious cracks (120 ft, 36 m). Move left about 15 ft (5 m) and climb bulging wall by a small flake to gain groove above (crux). Follow groove then go left and back right to large recess by the roof (80 ft, 24 m). Climb corner then chimney fault above (150 ft, 45 m).

Stac an Fharaidh.—*Speakeasy*. 400 ft (120 m). Very Severe.

A. Fyffe & B. Wright. 17th June 1978.

Lies between *Mac's Dilemma* and *Sermon*. Start at the left end of a long, large block lying on the easy lower slabs.

Climb slabs over two small overlaps, trend right then back left to belay in corner below overlap. Exit left from corner onto ledge, traverse left on shelf above this to a small corner. Climb corner, move right then back left with an awkward mantelshelf (peg runner, crux), then straight up to grassy ledge. Follow obvious fault parallel to the arête, moving out right from the short, deep chimney to follow crack above. A short pitch leads easily to the top.

The Northern Corries:

Coire an t-Sneachda: Fiacaill Buttress.

The two routes described below lie on the right wall of the buttress, above *Fiacaill Couloir*, and starting about 150 ft (45 m) up that route.

—*Bellhaven.*

A. Fyffe & K. Geddes. 19th February 1979. 250 ft (75 m). GRADE IV.

This follows the left facing corner left of *Invernookie*, and directly above the start of *Fiacail Couloir*.

Climb the corner to gain a ledge and belay on the smooth left wall. Alternatively, gain the corner via a ledge starting higher up the Couloir; this leads rightwards into the corner. From the belay re-enter the corner and follow it for two pitches to the top.

—*Rampant.*

A. Fyffe & T. Walker. 1st March 1979. 250 ft (75 m). GRADE IV.

This follows a line of ramps then the big corner in the crest of the upper buttress left of *Bellhaven*. Start at the alternative start to *Bellhaven*; at the ledge leading rightwards.

Gain the higher of two ramps leading left, follow this to where it steepens into a corner. Climb the corner and follow a ramp leading back right to belay at its top. Move right into the big corner and climb this, exiting through a window onto the *Fiacail Ridge*.

Fluted Buttress.—*Fluted Buttress Direct.*

S. Crymble & A. Fyffe. 18th March 1978. 400 ft (120 m). GRADE III.

This climb lies on the most massive section of the buttress, between *Spiral* and *Broken Gullies*. An old peg was found on the first pitch. Start at a line of chimneys on the left of the buttress.

Follow the righthand of two grooves into the chimney and follow this for two pitches, trending right to emerge on the crest of the buttress. Follow the crest to finish on the plateau at the col between *Spiral* and *Broken Gullies*.

CAIRNGORMS II**Beinn a'Bhuird: Coire an Dubh Lochain.**—*Sniffer Buttress.*

A. Nisbet & N. Spinks. 24th June 1978. 240 ft (72 m). Hard Very Severe.

A disappointing route, climbing the small buttress right of *Tantalus Gully*. Climb up and rightwards along a fault (very loose rock) to gain mossy ledges. Above are twin cracks on sound rock (crux), climb these to belay. Follow the narrow chimney above then a gritty ledge leftwards to a fault between two unusual pillars, which gives an interesting finish.

Bloodhound Buttress.—*The Scent.*

A. Nisbet & N. Spinks. 25th June 1978. 400 ft (120 m). Very Severe.

A steep and exciting route, perhaps the best in the corrie. The intention is to gain the large, hanging slab underneath the nose of the buttress.

From the main rake, climb up and slightly left, heading for the left end of a long rectangular roof (160 ft, 48 m). Climb the corner above until it is possible to traverse right between roofs and out onto slabs (traverse c.40 ft, 12 m). From the slabs one can gain zig zagging ledges, left and back right, which lead to a point directly under the hanging slab. Swing up onto the slab to belay (120 ft, 36 m). Climb the corner at the left side of the slab and step out onto the rib on the left, finishing by a series of blocks and steep cracks (120 ft, 36 m).

Garbh Coire.—*Crucible Route.*

R. Archbold & D. Dinwoodie. 7th April 1978. 700 ft (210 m). GRADE IV.

This is essentially the route on the North Face of *Squareface* described in Regional Notes (*S.M.C.J.*, 1976, xxi, 63). In winter the 'repulsive funnel' is transformed into a snow basin capped by a huge cornice. Below the basin is a prominent rock snout. Observations made in milder winters indicate that freeze and thaw in the basin can produce twin icefalls (split by the snout), with the rest of the face largely bare. On this ascent, however, water ice was found only on the left side of the snout, and much of the face was covered in snow-ice of variable consistency.

Climb obvious ice gully to gain lower end of the big shelf. Zig-zag up ramps to bottom right-hand corner of snout. Traverse left across snout (a tension move may be necessary) then climb up into the basin. Exit on right.

—*Helter Skelter.*

R. Archbold & W. McKerrow. 3rd June 1978. 900 ft (270 m). Very Severe.

A rising girdle of *Mitre Ridge*, with a spectacular finish on the *Sloch'd Wall* buttress.

Start by two large blocks on ledge near foot of S.E. Gully. Move right into crack, climb this for 40 ft then traverse right and belay above isolated overlap on *East Wall Direct* (80 ft, 24 m). Move down right into grassy crack, traverse right then climb up beneath overlaps and traverse right to gain central crack line. Move up and right to the steepening, cross *The Bishop*, belay just left of orange scar beneath overhang (120 ft, 36 m).

Climb groove left of overhang, cross *Mitre Direct* and climb diagonally right up ramp to fine balcony overlooking *Mitre Original Route* (120 ft, 36 m). Climb slot chimney in left corner of balcony then spiral round crest on superb holds to emerge above the chimney on *Mitre Original Route* (120 ft, 36 m). Move into *Cumming Crofton*, climb ramp of *Chancel* and belay on large ledge (80 ft, 24 m). Follow ledge into *Commando Route* then up right onto *Ghurka*. Follow this to belay on right at back of bay (120 ft, 36 m).

Descend slightly and gain sloping foothold on arête. Move up then make exposed rising traverse to sloping ledge in corner system left of *Sloch'd Wall*. Climb corner for 10 ft then move right to ledge on *Sloch'd Wall* (70 ft, 21 m). Move right beneath a corner and climb left edge of wall above to rejoin *Sloch'd Wall* at top of corner. Continue by short walls to gain obvious left slanting groove in final headwall (130 ft, 39 m). Climb groove almost to left edge and finish by crack above (50 ft, 15 m).

Mitre Ridge.—*The Chancel.*

400 ft (120 m). Hard Very Severe.

D. M. Nichols & G. Strange. 27th May 1978.

This route climbs the cuneiform buttress right of *Cumming-Crofton Route*. Start 20 ft (6 m) right of that route at a large block.

Climb prominent cracked groove to niche, belay ledge on right (60 ft, 18 m). From niche move up left and climb shallow corner to bulge. Pull out onto left wall then go left and up to belay on second pitch of *Cumming Crofton* (60 ft, 18 m). Continue up obvious ramp to grass terrace girdling the face of the buttress (80 ft, 24 m). At the mid-point of the terrace climb wall above, going leftwards to ledge. Go straight up to easy ground below the Second Tower on *Mitre Ridge*.

—*The Bishop.*

650 ft (195 m). Hard Very Severe.

D. M. Nichols & G. Strange. 28th May 1978.

A direct line left of and parallel to *Direct Route* (Stephen/McIvor). Start at lowest point of apron slabs, about 30 ft (9 m) left of *Direct Route*.

Climb crack to bulge. Move left then continue more easily to belay at foot of grass tongue. Move up right into corner and climb slabs and grooves up rightwards to belay on turf ledge below and left of pink rock sear (120 ft, 36 m). Go up left and climb left-hand of three cracks. Continue up rightwards onto steeper wall (100 ft, 30 m). Climb wall to exit beside loose block. Scramble across broken ground to belay below impending wall (level with shoulder on *Original Route*). From flake on left climb groove to gain thin crack which leads out to ledge on left edge. Go up right through slot to belay on large ledge (60 ft, 18 m). Follow deep fissure and continue straight up ledge overlooking the East Wall meadows. Scramble up crest to col below the Second Tower.

Coire an Dubh Lochan.—*Come Dancing.*

S. Falconer & G. Stephen. 9th July 1977. 690 ft (207 m). Very Severe.

This route starts 70 ft (21 m) right of *Polypody Groove*, and follows an obvious, thin leftwards slanting crack to join a corner with two overhangs.

Climb up 15 ft (5 m) to horizontal crack, traverse right along the crack to join foot of groove, continue up leftwards along obvious line to ledge belay (90 ft, 27 m). The next pitch continues up the thin crack to join the corner below the lower overhang, then up the corner to the larger upper overhang (110 ft, 33 m). Climb round overhang and up corner to belay on rib (150 ft, 45 m). At this point the route joins *Tearaway*. The upper section follows the rib and finishes as for *Tearaway* (350 ft, 105 m).

Lochnagar: Central Buttress.—*Sciolist.* 450 ft (135 m). GRADE IV.

A. McIvor & G. Strange. 5th April 1978.

This climbs the vague line of grooves between *Centrist* and *Shallow Gully*. Climb up fairly directly, always to the left of *Shallow Gully*, to finish beside prominent, square tower.

CAIRNGORMS III**Braeriach: Coire Bhrochain: Central Buttress.**—*The Lampie.*

670 ft (191 m). GRADE IV.

J. C. Higham & J. H. Moreland. 25th March 1978.

This route follows a chimney line on the left of the Braeriach Pinnacle, and starts at the prominent, recessed chimney 50 ft (15 m) left of *South Face Route*.

Climb the chimney (150 ft, 45 m), then traverse up and rightwards across the Slab Terrace. Ice-covered slabs then lead in 110 ft (33 m) to an obvious chimney. The chimney leads in two pitches to a skyline notch on the 'airy ridge' of *West Wall Route* (210 ft, 63 m). Continue along the ridge for a further 200 ft (60 m) to reach the plateau.

Sgòran Dubh Mòr.—*Robert's Ridge.*

GRADE III.

N. D. Keir & R. A. Smith. 6th January 1979.

This ascent followed a good, natural winter line, virtually independent of the summer line. Make a long run out up steep snow groove just right of the summer start. Make exposed moves left to step into V-groove then back right over 'smooth slab.' Climb straight up easy ground to continue by corners on left of crest. Go up crest, then skirt steep upper wall on left by broken ground, passing a detached pinnacle to finish on neck of arête beyond The Anvil.

Climbing the true crest in winter would be much harder, but artificial as such. On this ascent, 'trampsons' were worn by one of the party (see NOTES).

CAIRNGORMS IV & V**Lochnagar:** *Parallel Gully A - 1930 Route.*

GRADE IV.

N. McCallum & A. Nisbet. 16th December 1978.

This alternative finish, some 350 ft (105 m) in length, is a great improvement over the disappointing right branch. The climbing is sustained and the scenery good.

Climb the lower right branch of the gully up to the 'formidable cul-de-sac,' escape left onto a buttress (the 1930 finish, though the original route may have fallen down). Climb the buttress crest to a large pinnacle, pass behind this and swing up left to reach a groove. From the top of the groove, move left and up to reach the crest of *Parallel Buttress* just below the plateau. From the groove finish it is possible to go right to gain ledges overlooking the cul-de-sac (old peg here).

Black Spout Pinnacle.—*Link Face.*

GRADE V.

J. Anderson & A. Nisbet. 27th January 1979.

Commencing with the first pitch of *Route 1*, this line followed *The Link* past the first Very Severe pitch (summer crux), and then took the 'big groove slanting left.' This is joined at midheight by *Route 2*, which was then followed to the top.

Exceptionally icy conditions allowed front pointing of the crux (with difficulty). No aid was required.

—*Pantheist.*

180 ft (54 m). Hard Very Severe.

D. Dinwoodie & R. A. Smith. 16th July 1978.

The obvious groove just right of *Pinnacle Grooves*. Start up obvious cracks 20 ft right of the initial groove of *Pinnacle Face* which lead by a square slot to a ledge. Move right up a little slab over a bulge then break left and back up right to belay in a grassy niche (80 ft, 24 m). Traverse left and climb the big groove to The Springboard.

Tough Brown Face.—*Sylph.*

300 ft (90 m). Hard Very Severe.

D. Dinwoodie & R. Renshaw. 12th July 1978.

The thin line of grooves and flake-cracks between *Psyche* and *Crypt*. Start up an obvious left-trending groove-system just right of the similar starting grooves of *Psyche* (130 ft, 39 m). Belay under the big *Psyche* crack. Just right of the big crack are twin finger cracks. Climb these to the top of a detached block. Avoid a blank section above by traversing right under a small

roof onto the rib of *Crypt*. Step back left into the groove above and climb it to an awkward pull out at the top (hard for small climbers). Move up and step left to pull over a roof by a flake crack (the continuation of the big *Psyche* crack). Continue up the rib above past the left side of a big roof to belay as for *Crypt* (130 ft, 39 m). Finish up *Crypt* (40 ft, 12 m).

—*Crypt*. 280 ft (84 m). GRADE IV/V.

A. Nisbet & B. Sprunt. 4th February 1979.

Start as for *Psyche/Nymph*; immediately below their divergence, step right onto a large flake. Using tension initially, gain the foot of the 'perfect layback crack.' Move right into the main corner and climb it free (very strenuous). Continue up the diédre past the overhang (corniced and very difficult) to the top of the chimney of *Parallel Gully B*.

The summer route was devoid of ice but has been climbed before, this would make for a freer if less sensational route. As on *The Link*, conditions provided for ice climbing in H.V.S. rock situations, giving a magnificent but very hard route. (See NOTES).

Creag an Dubh Loch.—*Ariadne*.

400 ft (120 m). Very Severe.

D. Dinwoodie & R. Renshaw. June 1978.

Goes up the slabby rocks between *Labyrinth* and the *Aqueduct*, heading for a prominent groove high up. Scramble up to belay above a little rowan tree. Climb obvious grooves above past a tall detached block and so to ledges (120 ft, 36 m). Move up slabs on the right to a ledge then find a way up rightwards and up more grooves to the base of the big groove (120 ft, 36 m). This would give a good pitch but was wet on this occasion. It was turned by climbing the left arête and exiting out left across a cleft. Scrambling to the Garden.

Central Gully Wall.—*The Prowl*.

1,400 ft (420 m). Extremely Severe.

R. Archbold, D. Dinwoodie, R. Renshaw & G. S. Strange. 17th June 1978.

This route girdles the Wall at a lower level than *Catwalk*. Increasingly impressive situations.

Go up *Caterpillar Crack* to the bare slab. Step left and work up then down and away across sustained pink slabs to belay on the jutting nose of the Bower Lang Route. Continue at the same level below an overlap and go up a short groove on the right side of a slabby plinth (*Cayman*) to a belay ledge. Go left along the ledge and up a bulge (*Gulliver*) to easy ledges. Go along these then down slightly left to a ledge 20 ft above the roof of *King Rat*. Go up *King Rat* for 20 ft then go left by small ledges into the crackline of *The Monster*. Go up this to the overhanging notch and exit left into the Mousetrap recess. Go up *Mousetrap* for 30 ft then move down left into the overhanging cracks on the Red Wall of *Predator*. Climb *Predator* to a point some 20 ft above the break in the roof. Traverse left (not obvious) to step down onto a ledge on Vampire Slab 30 ft below the toe-traverse. Climb this route to the belay above the big corner. Traverse the big slab on the left to hand traverse a block and step down onto the small girdling ledge of *Cougar*. Go along this round a nose to belay on a hanging green slab. Move up the slab and climb a bulging wall to gain a higher slab tucked under the roof.

Go left along this then climb down a little arête to gain a huge recess occupied by a big detached block. Swing up the arête on the far side and move left to an airy belay porch. A fine flake crack below leads sensationally into Giant corner in 30 ft. Climb leftwards to an old peg in a slab (1950's Route) and climb the overhang above to step left onto Goliath's shelf variation. A finish was made up *Goliath*, a free link with *Vertigo* looking unlikely.

B. Lawrie & M. Freeman.

—*Vampire*, 3rd pitch variation.

Continue in the main line of the corner to join the original route near the top of the 3rd pitch. The last 15 ft were very wet and required two pegs and a nut. Extremely Severe.

Craig of Gowal: East Face.—*The Gowk*. 620 ft (186 m). GRADE IV.
E. Cameron & G. N. Hunter. 11th February 1979.

In winter the slabs become sheathed in water ice, giving a fine, sustained climb. The summer route was followed throughout.

—*The Plarmigan's Tail*.

600 ft (180 m). GRADE III/IV.

G. N. Hunter & S. Littleford. December 1977.

This route climbs the shallow recess to the right of the main slab of *The Gowk*. Two pitches lead to a snow basin. Above, a shallow gully leads to a large rock wall. A short traverse left, a 20 ft (6 m) ice pitch then a move up right on ice leads to easier ground and a cornice finish.

Glen Clova: Red Craigs: The Doonie.—*Heineken*.

P. A. Standing & R. I. Tait. August 1976. 210 ft (63 m). Hard Very Severe.

A natural line between *Special Brew* and *Export*, giving excellent climbing. Start as for *Special Brew*.

Climb as for *Special Brew*, following rightward sloping ramp for 60 ft (18 m). Move up slightly and traverse right for 30 ft (9 m) to a ledge. Climb orange coloured diédre (one peg runner) to gain pedestal. Make a long step left and move up to spacious ledge. Climb black corner behind belay onto large block, and continue to top.

—*Guinness, Alternative Finish*.

P. A. Standing & R. I. Tait. August 1976. Very Severe.

From start of final (third) pitch, traverse out right and step round nose. Climb straight up to rejoin original route near the top. Good positions.

The two aid bolts on pitch 2 have been retired and a free ascent made by the Riley brothers.

WESTERN HIGHLANDS

Sgùrr a'Mhuilinn: Creag Chlas: East Buttress.—*Boulder and Bolder*.

M. Birch & J. Mackenzie. 28th May 1978. 1,100 ft (330 m). Very Severe.

This route lies on the right side of the buttress which contains *Oh! (or Oh Dear!)* – see *S.M.C.J.*, 1970, xxix, 161, 319, and NOTES, this issue). The lower section follows the best rock, climbing avoidable difficulties. The upper section takes a natural line. Start at base of buttress where terraces cross above smaller crags on the right, cairn beneath short wall.

Climb wall and rib above to take optional crack on left, or go right and take pleasant rocks leading to ledge and cairn below steep slab. Climb central crack (V.S.), above this go right to pale rock, up this to easier ground. Go right towards obvious arête. On the left is a fine-shaped arête, bounded on its left by a wide, deep chimney. Climb crest of arête and go right to stance below steep right wall and corner above. Climb first crack right of corner to arête, go right across slab to deep crack, up this to fine stance and huge spike belay (V.S.). Take steep corner crack behind to gain easier rocks and so to top.

Glen Strathfarrar: Sgùrr na Muice: South East Face.—*Best Back.*

500 ft (150 m). GRADE III/IV.

D. McCallum & J. Mackenzie. 18th February 1979.

The left hand side of two ice falls, the right being *Streaky* (see *S.M.C.J.*, 1978, xxxi, 280). A pitch leads to the lower mass of ice. This gave 70° ice with screw belays at 100 ft (30 m). The ice above steepened to a bulge, above which easier snow and ice lead to the top. Descent as for *Streaky*.

Ladhar Bheinn: Coire Dhorrcail: Spider Buttress.—*East Rib.*

C. Higgins & R. Speiss. 9th February 1979. 1,500 ft (450 m). GRADE IV.

This route follows the left hand rib of the buttress. Start at the lowest rocks and maintain a central line where possible.

—*Tir na Og.*

A. Foster & C. Higgins. 17th February 1978. 1,300 ft (390 m). GRADE V.

This route follows a direct, central line. Climb into snowfield by obvious ice grooves, then directly up snowfield to central groove. This is climbed to its termination, one rope-length left of the buttress summit.

—*Summit Route.*

A. Foster & C. Higgins. 19th February 1978. 1,000 ft (300 m). GRADE III.

At the top right of the coire are two prominent, stepped corners. This route climbs the right-hand corner.

Climb snow then ice to belay left of ice fall. Traverse right, then climb to belay in groove. Continue in grooves until a rightwards traverse can be made to belay above ice fall. Climb snowfield and summit buttress direct to top.

—*Transatlantic Bong.*

C. Higgins & K. Sims. March 1978. 800 ft (210 m). GRADE IV.

Climbs the left-hand, stepped corner.

—*Thunderchicken.*

C. Higgins & K. Sims. March 1978. 800 ft (210 m). GRADE III.

Climbs the first corner left of the two stepped corners.

BEN NEVIS**North East Buttress: First Platform.**—*Rain Trip.*

600 ft (180 m). Severe.

M. Birch, C. M. Kenyon & J. Mackenzie. 23rd July 1978.

This route lies on the right of *Ruddy Rocks*. Climb a series of mantel shelves to thin grass ledge, belay on left (70 ft, 21 m). Climb black wall above, turning overhang on right, flake belays on right (70 ft, 21 m). Go up left to corner and climb to belays (70 ft, 21 m). Climb ribs trending left to huge flake belay (80 ft, 24 m). Climb up left to gain bay (70 ft, 21 m). Above is a roof. Climb past spike to roof, step left to flakes and belay (70 ft, 21 m). Climb up to steeper headwall, flake belay on right (60 ft, 18 m). Climb overlap above, continue up corner to belays (70 ft, 21 m). Finish up crack behind belay (40 ft, 12 m). Belays and rock are good.

Minus Two Buttress.—*Central Route.*

GRADE V.

A. Nisbet & B. Sprunt. 18th March 1979.

The summer line was followed to the point where overhangs are turned on the left (one nut, one peg for aid on the first overlap of the nose). After an attempt on the summer line which failed at the last move, the overhangs were turned on the right (one peg for tension) and the route rejoined immediately above.

The Orion Face.—*Astral Highway.*

C. Higgins & A. Kimber. 28th December 1976. 1,300 ft (390 m). GRADE V.

The initial pitches are as for *Orion Direct* to gain the Basin; thereafter the route climbs directly by an independent line to the left of that route.

Climb the first four pitches of *Orion Direct* to the Basin (520 ft, 156 m). Above the Basin will be seen a groove, midway between *Epsilon Chimney* on the left and the *Second Slab Rib* on the right. A shallow groove trending left from the Basin leads to this groove. From top of the Basin climb left trending groove over iced slabs to belay beneath main groove. Climb this over bulges then by steep groove on right. Continue in slabby groove trending left, then more directly to stance below short ice wall on left. Climb ice wall and shallow grooves to belay. Follow groove, direct at first then rightwards, finishing by a corner to exit onto the crest of North East Buttress, above the 40 ft (12 m) corner of that route.

Observatory Ridge.—*East Face.*

550 ft (165 m). Very Severe.

C. Higgins & H. Woods. June 1978.

This is the first summer ascent of a line previously climbed at Grade IV (see *S.M.C.J.*, 1974, xxx, 276). It follows the prominent groove striking leftwards up the entire length of the east face.

Càrn Dearg Buttress.—*Adrenaline Rush.*

770 ft (231 m). Extremely Severe (E3).

K. Johnstone & W. Todd. 17-18th June 1978.

A fairly direct line between starts of *Bullroar* and *Cowslip*. Start at large boulder 30 ft (9 m) right of *Bullroar*.

Climb crack on left-hand side of boulder, up groove above, step left to a ledge (50 ft, 15 m). Move up and left to the right-hand side of a large detached block. Step up then right to gain groove directly above belay. Follow groove to a roof, move right then over roof to gain a slab. Move diagonally right for 25 ft (7 m) then move back left along the lip of the next overlap to belay below corners (120 ft, 36 m). Follow corner line passing overhang at 40 ft (12 m), (140 ft, 42 m). Continue up crackline to belay in large corner 30 ft (9 m) below huge roof (140 ft, 42 m). Move onto rib on left; up this until possible to traverse right along lip of roof. Pull onto a hanging slab, cross this to belay on its right edge (110 ft, 33 m). Step down and traverse right 30 ft (9 m) to foot of shallow groove. Climb groove 20 ft (6 m), step left then move up corner and across slab on right to belay below wide diagonal crack (junction with *Centurion*, 85 ft (26 m)). Cross slab on left to corner, cross left wall of this to slab/rib, up slab to finish up undercut groove on left (125 ft, 37 m).

—*Caligula*. 430 ft (129 m). Extremely Severe (E3).

D. Cuthbertson, D. Mullin & W. Todd. 2nd June 1978.

The very steep line between *Sassenach* and *Titan's Wall*. Start as for *Titan's Wall*.

Climb first pitch of *Titan's Wall* (120 ft, 36 m). Traverse left round arête and continue to a small ledge and belay at the foot of the groove (40 ft, 12 m). Climb the corner and step left to a foot ledge and hanging belay on the arête (60 ft, 18 m). Make a few moves up the rib above belay then traverse right into groove. Climb groove for a few moves then traverse right to a small ledge and belay (60 ft, 18 m). Step up and left to gain a thin diagonal crack, climb this and overhang then continue along right-trending ramp to crack. Climb crack and continue to a stance and belay at the top of *Titan's Wall* (150 ft, 45 m).

(This impressive line, known traditionally as 'the big banana groove,' has defied several earlier attempts).

Raeburn's Buttress: *Boomer's Requiem*. 600 ft (180 m). GRADE IV.
C. Higgins & D. MacArthur. February 1973.

On the left of Raeburn's Buttress, an ice fall plunges from the hanging corrie above to meet the lower section of Raeburn's Buttress. It is well seen from the Allt a'Mhuilinn path.

Climb first pitch of *Raeburn's Buttress* then move right to ice fall which is climbed direct. Cross easy snow to ice pitch on left, climb this then continue to beneath Summit Buttress, finishing by a choice of routes.

North Wall of Castle Ridge.—*The Lobby Dancer*.

C. Higgins & A. Kimber. 28th February 1977. 600 ft (180 m). GRADE V.

This route lies on the immediate right of a clean, overhanging face well seen from the Allt a'Mhuilinn path. Access to the climb is possible either by direct ascent as on this occasion, climbing some ice pitches, sometimes roped, or from the left using a diagonal ledge line.

Climb groove in three pitches, climbing an overhang on the right on pitch 1, and an awkward chimney on pitch 2, to belay beneath barrier wall. Gain continuation ice groove above wall by pegging left then up into groove (poor, difficult pegging, 30 ft (9 m)). Climb to block belay on right then leftwards to crest of *Castle Ridge*.

GARBH BHEINN OF ARDGOUR

The Great Ridge: South Wall: Upper Tier.—*The Pincer*.

D. Dinwoodie & R. A. Smith. August 1978. 180 ft (54 m). Hard Very Severe.

Climbs the righthand rib of the prominent groove between *The Peeler* and *The Clasp*. Climb straight up the steep rib for 70 ft (21 m) or so then move up left, overlooking the groove, then back up right to easier rocks. Go up and traverse left below an overhang to finish up an obvious steep corner-line.

—*The Foil*.

P. Moores & M. Tigh. 29th May 1978. 270 ft (81 m). Hard Very Severe.

This route climbs the very obvious, slanting roof above the first pitch of *The Clasp*. Start between *The Clasp* and *Excalibur*, at the right end of the roof.

Climb up to the roof, move left directly underneath the roof and follow it to where it fades (hard), exiting onto steep slabs on the left (140 ft, 42 m). Climb cracks above to the summit (130 ft, 39 m). (See NOTES this issue.)

GLENCOE & GLEN ETIVE

Buachaille Etive Mór: Slime Wall.—*Grogblossom*.

370 ft (111 m). Extremely Severe (E4).

M. Hamilton & D. Jamieson. June 1978.

This route climbs the very steep wall left of the Shibboleth groove. The first pitch is common with *Guerdon Grooves*.

Climb a series of grooves trending rightwards to reach some large flakes and a ledge (90 ft, 27 m). From the stance trend left across the wall to an old peg runner, climb roof and easier ground (*Shibboleth* is immediately right). Continue up wall for 40 ft (12 m) to good ledge (peg runner in situ), step right and climb right arête of groove to poor resting place. Continue to an undercling hold, step left, make move up wall to belay on *Revelation* (140 ft, 42 m). Trend 10 ft (3 m) left to black groove, climb this 50 ft (15 m) to old peg, move right and join the *Revelation* flake. Follow this to top (140 ft, 42 m).

Creag a'Bhancair.—*Walk With Destiny*.

330 ft (99 m). Extremely Severe (E1).

D. Cuthbertson & D. Mullin. 28th May 1978.

The route takes a crack line on the wall left of *Cayman Grooves* in its lower part, then continues directly up the wall between *Carnivore* and the chimney of *Cayman Grooves*. Start as for *Cayman Grooves*.

Follow *Cayman Grooves* until possible to gain crack system by a left traverse. Follow this with slight deviation on left and continue to ledge and belay (130 ft, 39 m). Walk left a little to the end of the *Carnivore* traverse. Climb wall and bulge to horizontal break. Climb bulge above break and continue to ledge and belay (60 ft, 18 m). Climb groove and continue up wall to ledge and belay (140 ft, 42 m). Easy to top.

The Etive Slabs.—*The Pinch, Direct Start*.

200 ft (60 m). Extremely Severe.

B. Duff, M. Hamilton & D. Jamieson. June 1978.

This gives a difficult but elegant entry to the *Hammer* slab. The lower half of the *Hammer* slab will be seen to have a smaller, inset slab on the right, overlooking the wall above *Agony*. The slab is very narrow at first but widens with height. Start as for *Agony*.

Climb the first 10 ft (3 m) of the *Agony* corner, move up onto the inset slab on the wall above. Continue up corner on improving holds to reach peg belay (125 ft, 37 m). Continue up corner to belay as for *Hammer* (75 ft, 23 m).

The Pinch in its entirety is graded E3.

Bidean nam Bian: Geàrr Aonach: North Face.—*Marathon Man*.

A. Crocket & K. V. Crocket. May 1978.

320 ft (96 m). Severe.

Start immediately right of *The Walk*. Above is a steep black wall marked by grooves and cavities.

Climb straight up to ledge (150 ft, 45 m). About 30 ft (9 m) above is a left trending gully with a rib of steep, clean rock on left. Climb up to rib, step onto rib from left and climb it directly on perfect rock to ledge and flake belay (130 ft, 39 m). Step left and climb awkward wall above to easier ground (40 ft, 12 m). Scramble to top in 100 ft (30 m).



May 1977

Ready to Go!

Photo: A. Fyffe

Ominous Crevasses, Seracs and Rimaye on the Glacier du Coire an Lochain.



Colin Grant on Fionn Buttress, Carnmore.

Photo: K. V. Crockett

Aonach Dubh: East Face: Lower North-East Nose.—*Storm Trooper.*

K. McCluskey & C. McLean. June 1978. 200 ft (60 m). Extremely Severe (E3).

This route climbs the steep wall and overhangs between *Little Boomerang* and *Boomerang*. Start below the right hand of two cracks.

Climb crack to first overlap, go slightly left into a broken crack and climb this, trending rightwards into the centre of the wall. Continue to small ledge below roof, climb up left side of roof, traverse right through overhangs then up wall to belay on *Boomerang* (130 ft, 39 m). Finish up *Boomerang* (70 ft, 21 m).

—*Spacewalk.*

K. Johnstone & P. Ogden. April 1978. 150 ft (45 m). Extremely Severe (E3).

Start about 40 ft (12 m) right of *Freak-Out*, directly below crack in steep wall.

Climb crack, then go up and slightly right to roofs. Climb through roofs on left to join *Crocodile* at old peg runner, continue to belay on *Freak-Out* (80 ft, 24 m). Climb groove on right past old peg runner to below roof, step left, up short groove (one nut for aid, in place), continue up then right to tree belay (70 ft, 21 m).

Descent by abseil is recommended.

The Lower Walls.—

This is the name suggested for the long, low line of dark cliffs which lie lower than, and between the main east face and the north-east nose. The walls contain the older routes of *Grochan Grooves* and *Lament*, and below are described several recent additions. Several short routes on the left section, which are often wet, are not described. The first route breaks our self-imposed 150 ft (45 m) minimum, for mountain crags, as being better than the average shorty.

—*Lady Jane.*

130 ft (39 m). Extremely Severe (E2).

D. Cuthbertson & D. Jamieson. July 1977.

Climbs the steep wall about 65 ft (20 m) left of the prominent groove of *Grochan Grooves*, and just right of an obvious crack.

Climb wall to reach right curving crack, follow this then up to horizontal break just left of wet streak. Move up, trending left, then back right and up to ledge with small tree below overhang. Climb leftwards through overhang to finish (130 ft, 39 m).

—*Sir Chancealot.*

B. Duff & K. McCluskey. May 1978. 154 ft (46 m). Extremely Severe (E1).

Start about 40 ft (12 m) left of *Grochan Grooves*. Climb wall direct, then trend right to gain a sloping shelf at 65 ft (20 m). Continue up wall above taking small overhang on the right to gain thread belay on the horizontal fault ledge (80 ft, 24 m). About 10 ft (3 m) right of belay is a small tree with, above, a roof split by a large steep groove. Climb the groove, strenuous, to good holds above roof. Continue up and leftwards past a small tree to a spike belay (74 ft, 22 m).

—*Blast-Off.*

B. Duff & K. McCluskey. May 1978. 160 ft (48 m). Extremely Severe (E1).

Start 15 ft (5 m) left of *Grochan Grooves*, at a cairn.

Climb bulging wall on left trending holds then directly up wall to rounded ledge. Continue up wall following crack line to gain the horizontal fault and tree belay (80 ft, 24 m). Move left 20 ft (6 m) to large overhanging corner. Climb corner then wall above to terrace and block belay (80 ft, 24 m).

—*Double Exposure.*

K. V. Crocket & C. J. Gilmore. May 1978. 228 ft (68 m). Very Severe.

Some 20 ft (6 m) right of the lowest rocks is a corner with small, multi-coloured slabs. Start below corner.

Climb corner for 50 ft (15 m), break out right and go up to belay under roof (80 ft, 24 m). Go up and left, step onto steep wall, move right, up to block then follow groove on left. Easier rocks lead to top (148 ft, 44 m).

The first pitch is common in part with an earlier, easier route which dribbles out leftwards to finish up *Grochan Grooves*.

—*The Challenge.*

150 ft (45 m). Extremely Severe (E2).

R. Anderson, D. Cuthbertson & D. Mullin. May 1978.

The shorter, right-hand section of the Lower Walls is bounded on the left by a dank chimney. This route climbs the right bounding rib of the chimney. Start at a cave.

Climb overhang to reach small ledge, traverse up and right across wall to gain ledge and belay (70 ft, 21 m). Step left and climb obvious left trending ramp. Finish up wall (80 ft, 24 m). A short, but good line.

Weeping Wall.—*Trichord.*

B. Duff & K. Johnstone. May 1978. 225 ft (67 m). Hard Very Severe.

This sustained, and good wall route climbs the steep face to the right of *Drain Pipe Corner*, crossing *Adam's Wall* at the large jammed block belay. Start 10 ft (3 m) right of *Drain Pipe Corner*.

Climb short wall trending left to small arête, continue up right to ledge at 25 ft (7 m). Follow faint crack line for 44 ft (13 m) to flakes on the left, continue directly to large horizontal flake at 85 ft (25 m). Traverse right to belay before tree. The next pitch climbs the right trending and overhanging ramp above. Start up short, steep corner to gain ramp, continue through overhangs moving rightwards to gain large fault ledge at 60 ft (18 m). Traverse left to belay at large block (70 ft, 21 m). Above and left is a large roof. Climb this at its greatest extent to ledge above. Continue more easily to belay (70 ft, 21 m).

—*Triceptor.*

210 ft (63 m). Extremely Severe (E4).

P. Greenwell & K. Johnstone. May 1978.

Start 20 ft (6 m) right of *Drain Pipe Corner*. Gain a narrow ledge at 15 ft (5 m), move up then hand traverse left a few moves. Move back right and up then follow obvious mossy groove line to ledge. Walk right 15 ft (5 m) to tree and belay (100 ft, 30 m). The next pitch, when seen from below, starts just right of the tree and goes up past two small, square overhangs. Start just right of tree, climb up about 28 ft (8 m), step left, climb up about 10 ft (3 m), then move left to gain easier ground. Belay on ledge above (60 ft, 18 m). Start at small cairn just left of two cracks. Climb directly up to bulge, step right to wide, mossy crack and follow this to easier ground (50 ft, 15 m). A hard route.

Stob Coire nam Beith.—*The Corridors, Direct Start.* 200 ft (60 m).
I. Fulton & J. Hutchinson. December 1977.

This winter variation climbs steep ice to the right of the original first gully, leading directly to the second gully. In combination with the original continuation, the climb is Grade IV overall.

The Aonach Eagach.—*Blue Riband.* 1,800 ft (540 m). GRADE V.
J. MacKenzie & G. Rooney. 18th February 1979.

Looking up rightwards from the large lay-by below the pinnacled section of the Ridge, three large ice-falls can be seen descending the buttress. This route climbs the central fall.

Climb steep ice for two pitches (170 ft, 51 m). A narrow ice runnel leads to a steep ice-fall (120 ft, 36 m). Climb this then a further 250 ft (75 m) of easier snow to below a large ice-fall (it is possible to escape at this point). Climb the ice-fall (120 ft, 36 m). Follow the right branches of the gully over easy snow and small ice pitches to a steep, short ice-wall (500 ft, 150 m). Climb the ice-wall, which overhangs slightly (40 ft, 12 m). A further 500 ft (150 m) of easier climbing leads to the ridge.

Recommended, with the rider that conditions for such a route seem to be in intervals of 10 years!

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

Beinn Cruachan: Stob Dearg: North-East Face.—*Central Grooves.*

I. Fulton & C. Grant. 19th February 1978. 750 ft (225 m). GRADE IV.

This route, and the following variation, are to be found on the triangular-shaped granite crag on the north-east face of the Tynnuilt peak. The crag is bounded on the right by the North Ridge, and on the left by the gully of the North East Face route, hereafter referred to as the *Original Route*. (See *S.M.C.J.*, 1971, xxix, 425).

In the centre of the face is a prominent groove line, rising above a short, steep corner at the top of a steep snowfield. (The snowfield may become icy grooves up granite slabs, depending on conditions).

Climb the groove in three pitches to the right-hand side of a small central bay (320 ft, 96 m). Climb the 25 ft (7 m) slab corner at the top of the bay, move left into a recess, exit on the right and continue up more easily to a recess (150 ft, 45 m). Traverse horizontally left round an edge then up leftwards for 120 ft (36 m). Follow a short chimney crack to an easy groove and finish up a short overhanging chimney to belay just below the summit cairn (280 ft, 84 m).

—*Original Route, Direct Start.* 200 ft (60 m).

C. Gilmore & C. Grant. January 1976.

This climbs the icefall which rises from the left-hand side of the snowfield and leads to the foot of the gully of *Original Route*.

OUTCROPS

Dunkeld: Craig-y-Barns: Cave Crag, Upper Tier.—*Tombstone.*

80 ft (24 m). Extremely Severe (E2).
D. Cuthbertson & M. Duff. 10th October 1978.

A steep and fairly strenuous pitch, taking the line of an obvious crack and groove to the right of *Gnome*. Start by scrambling up and right to a ledge and belays below crack.

Climb crack to overhang, pull over this and continue via large block to exit on the left and so to finish.

Balnacoul Castle Crag: Glen Lednock: West Buttress.

No Place for A Wendy. 170 ft (51 m). Extremely Severe (E3).
M. Hamilton. April 1978.

Climbs grooves right of the *Great Crack*. Climb dirty groove and step left where it steepens to peg belays on *Great Crack* (55 ft, 17 m). Return to groove and climb it to top (115 ft, 34 m).

Dalmahoy Hill, near Edinburgh (Grid Ref., NT 136671).

We do not normally record routes on small outcrops as this task is more properly the province of the relevant local clubs. The descriptions below have been included partly because the location of these outcrops makes them more important than their size would otherwise warrant and partly because they arrived so concisely and well laid out. We thank Ken McCulloch who compiled the descriptions and notes and who was one of a number of climbers involved in these explorations.

Access to this recently rediscovered crag is from near the entrance to King & Co's Quarry at Kaimes Hill. The rock is dolerite, and gives excellent friction when dry – the northerly aspect of the crag makes it an unattractive prospect during the winter months, but on a summer evening it assumes a truly delightful atmosphere, perhaps the closest thing to a mountain crag in East Central Scotland.

The 'Currie Boys' of old apparently haunted the crag, and *Resurrection* is so named because of the quantity of old iron found during gardening. The 19 routes described below probably necessitated altogether in excess of 80 man-hours of hard labour. All routes have adequate top belays: spikes, nuts, or in situ pegs. Belays at the foot of climbs are available on some routes, and are recommended where so found, since some routes involve long run-outs before leader protection can be found.

The crag is on the Dalmahoy Estate, and the owner, the Earl of Morton, seems reasonably happy to have responsible climbers around. Clay pigeon shooting is practised to the west of the climbing area, and although the crag is just inside the flagged danger area, it is very doubtful whether climbers would be at risk – the responsibility is personal in each case of course.

The routes are described from left to right.

1. —*The Arête.* 30 ft (9 m). Difficult.

The arête at the left-hand end of the crag, with a rowan tree at its foot. A useful descent route once identified.

2. —*Professor's Groove.* 30 ft (9 m). Mild Severe

The slab right of *The Arête* is broken by a small groove. Climb an overlap to gain the groove, which is climbed direct to the top.

3. —*The Corner.* 40 ft (12 m). Very Severe.

Climbs the prominent corner right of *Professor's Groove* directly, holds on that route being out of bounds.

4. —*Ivy Tower.* 60 ft (18 m). Severe.

Climb the slab-rib left of *Lightning Groove*, near its left-hand edge.

5. —*Lightning Groove.* 80 ft (24 m). Very Severe.

The last long groove on the left-hand section of the crag. Climb it direct, the crux is a thin section about 15 ft (5 m) from the top.

6. —*Munich Climb*. 80 ft (24 m). Very Severe.
Start 5 ft (2 m) right of 5. Go up a broken groove to overhangs at 40 ft (12 m). Move left and up into another groove which is followed to the top.
7. —*Grass Widows*. 75 ft (23 m). Very Severe.
Between *Resurrection* and *Munich Climb* are large overhangs with an obvious break in the centre. Climb up to and through the break, finishing up a groove.
8. —*Resurrection*. 75 ft (23 m). Very Severe.
At the left hand end of the steep central section is an undercut slab groove. Start up a dirty slab to overhangs at 30 ft (9 m). Climb the overhang direct and go up the groove above to gain small ledges on the left. Finish up the slab-groove above.
9. —*Frustration*. 75 ft (23 m). Hard Severe.
Start 20 ft (6 m) left of *Roots* at a groove. Climb this until forced left onto a slab. Go up then across the slab on the right (peg runner on first ascent) to reach good holds. Finish up a leftward trending groove.
10. —*Triad*. 80 ft (24 m). Very Severe.
Start in an overhung niche just left of *Roots*. Climb the overhang onto a slab and pass a further overhang to reach a small ledge. Follow an awkward groove above to the top.
11. —*Roots*. 120 ft (36 m). Very Difficult.
Start at an obvious rib near the centre of the crag. Climb the rib and a broken wall above, past a small rowan, to finish up a short slab.
12. —*Pop-It*. 60 ft (18 m). Very Severe.
Scramble up to a small tree just left of 13. Go up a groove for 15 ft (5 m) and move left onto a slab. Go up the slab and overhang above to gain a shallow groove. Follow this to top.
13. —*Jack of Hearts*. 110 ft (33 m). Very Severe.
At the right hand side of the steeper central mass are two prominent grooves. Start up the left hand groove (arrow). Climb an overlap at 70 ft (21 m) onto an overhung slab (peg runner on first ascent). Take the overhang above direct to finish up a broken groove.
14. —*Fine Escape*. 110 ft (33 m). Severe.
Climb the groove immediately right of 13, to a sloping ledge at 60 ft (18 m). Go up a small groove (crux) to gain slabs which are followed leftwards to the top.
15. —*Draconian*. 90 ft (27 m). Mild Severe.
Climb the groove left of 16.
16. —*Fathers' Day*. 90 ft (27 m). Mild Severe.
Start at a tree below a triangular overhang, about 15 ft (5 m) left of 18. Go up through the notch on the right hand side of the overhang, follow the groove above to the top.
17. —*Rearguard*. 90 ft (27 m). Hard Severe.
Immediately left of 18 is a rib. Climb this, moving left to a mantelshelf at 30 ft (9 m). Go straight up to finish in an exposed groove.
18. —*Cakewalk*. 80 ft (24 m). Severe.
Below a prominent hanging rib at the right hand end of the crag is a square cut groove. Climb this and slab above to below the rib. Climb the rib direct over two bulges to the top.
19. —*Birthday Party*. 80 ft (24 m). Very Severe.
At the right hand end of the crag is a steep groove topped by a corner. Climb the groove for 50 ft (15 m) and finish up the corner above.

REGIONAL NOTES

Northern Highlands

Creag Mhór Thollaidh: The Tollie Crag.—*The Ugly Duckling*. Hard Very Severe. J. Mackenzie notes an ascent of this and amends the description to read – Climb black wall past tree and up good crack. At the top go left into trees in bay (150 ft, 45 m). Go left into corner, climb lower crack then go right to tree and diagonally up right to mantelshelf onto arête. Continue up thin slabs to belays (130 ft, 39 m). Climb crest directly in two pitches to finish. The lower wall is the crux.

—*Hand-Rail* is very pleasant at middling Severe, the top section is now free of vegetation.

Applecross: Sgùrr a'Chaorachain. A. Nisbet notes an ascent of the nose on the south-east spur of this hill on 14th January 1979. The line, a series of snow patches on the right of the crest, is impressive from the north-west end of Loch Coire nan Arr, but on closer inspection turned out to be somewhat artificial (Grade II/III).

Ben More Coigach: Cona' Mheall.—*Achininver Pinnacle*. J. Mackenzie notes that this climb is closer to 500 ft (150 m) than 300 ft (90 m) as per the District Guide. Additionally, a wide crack avoided on the original ascent provided a good Severe pitch.

Skye

The Cioch.—*Overhanging Crack Variation*. This has now been free climbed at Extremely Severe (E2) by G. Cohen & M. Hamilton. (Summer 1978).

Cairngorms

Creagan a'Coire Etchachan. A. Nisbet notes an ascent of the arête right of *Djibangi* (120 ft, 36 m) at Very Severe, in company with M. Bridges (May 1978). It gives a fine, exposed pitch. *Stilleto* (Extremely Severe) was also done free, probably by Dave Gardner.

Bheinn a Bhuird, Coire an Dubh Lochan. The piton on the crux of *Bloodhound Buttress* is not required. There is no increase in standard.

Bheinn Bhrotain. The Dee face of this mountain presents a fine little cliff which would provide some short but hard routes. Well to the right of this cliff Brian Lawrie and Dave Mercer climbed a long sliver of pale coloured slabs, which are very conspicuous on the approach to this mountain from Derry Lodge. Very Difficult 900 ft.

Lochnagar: Tough-Brown Face. A. Nisbet & D. Wallace note an ascent of *Post Mortem*, with two aid pegs on pitch 1 and one aid nut on pitch 3 (Extremely Severe E1). The original line was followed closely except near the top where a move left (three aid pegs originally), was avoided by continuing right.

—*Mantichore* (Hard Very Severe). The two pegs on the second pitch were eliminated by Brian Lawrie & Paul Tipton, without any increase in standard.

—*Pinnacle Grooves* is now very clean and can be considered ordinary Very Severe.

The *Winter Girdle* of Lochnagar could be called an Academic Exercise in Lateral Thinking or a Walk in Two Legs. Nomenclature aside, N. Keir in the company of other Lochnagar devotees records the following first ascent incidentals. The *Winter Girdle* was indeed accomplished in two legs thus – the first leg climbed with H. Towler, followed a switchback course from the Left Hand Branch to Douglas Gibson Gully, included 1,600 ft of up-down-and-across climbing plus 4 abseils, and took 5 hours; after an indecent interval of one day during which Keir's soloing abilities were proved inadequate to the task remaining, the second leg surrendered when G. Muhlemann and A. Nisbet were roped in. This leg followed a more natural winter line across the Shadow Buttress Group to Central Buttress, included 800 ft actual climbing plus one abseil and occupied 7 hours. The route-finding interest on the first leg, and the technical difficulties on the second leg seem to justify an apparently pointless adventure. Given perfect snow conditions or the agility of a French guide, the whole course could become a One-Legged Race, but that would be introducing the dastardly element of competition.

—*Eagle Ridge*. In common with Grade V's elsewhere – though not detracting in any way from the serious nature of the route – *Eagle Ridge* is emerging as something of a trade route, having been climbed in most conditions and receiving regular ascents each winter. Interesting irregularities include a 3½ hour solo ascent in perfect snow-ice conditions in April 1975, using a self-belay system on the Tower section.

Recently, experiments in more adaptable footwear has seen an almost cramponless ascent by Bob Smith and Norman Keir. The prototype footwear, nicknamed 'horseshoes,' proved to be too adaptable on this occasion, as they parted company with the wearer, Smith, as he was seconding (fortunately) a pitch above the Tower. To complete the climb via the Dundee Route, which proved to be quite a struggle, Smith donned crampons, while Keir continued in 'trampers,' i.e., nailed plates.

On the subject of WINTER FOOTWEAR, there appears to be evolving, at least in the eastern schools, a whole range of gear between crampons at one end, and nailed boots at the other. The gradation corresponds to the transition from ice climbing to rock climbing in winter as follows:

1. Long-point, rigid front-pointing crampons (Chouinard).
2. Long-point, flexible ditto (Salewa, Chouinard).
3. Filed down, flexible ditto.
4. Mariner spikes – sharp quasi-nail crampons with two stubby front points (Stubai).
5. Trampers (or Tripons) – rigid tricouni-nailed plates (home-made).
6. Horseshoes – plain or serrated metal rim plates (home-made).
7. Nailed boots.

It would seem too early yet to evaluate the relative merits of the intermediate articles given above, but it would seem at this stage that the modern ice man has a choice of inventing something adaptable to suit conditions, climbing cleanly, having declared his weapons at the start, or staying at home through indecision.

The various footwear options could also lead to interesting situations, such as one recent occasion when a well-known climber arrived at the foot of a hard rock climb equipped with tricounis. Unfortunately conditions demanded crampons, and the luckless climber had to pursue his crampon-clad companions en prussik.

Cnapan Naithreachan. A. Robertson notes: Under a heavy build-up this slabby face probably largely banks out (see *S.M.C.J.*, 1970, xxix, 309), but early in the season it may provide an accessible alternative to the unconsolidated higher areas. On 28th January, 1979, four routes were climbed

by various permutations of S. Evans, A. Robertson & R. Smith. The central groove was the most obvious line at Grade II, but two parallel series of grooves on the right, and a snow gully with a prominent ice bulge further to the right again provided pleasant training climbs (surely a contradiction here – Ed.) of 300 ft (90 m) at Grade II/III on firm snow-ice.

Creag an Dubh Loch.—*Culloden*. The new guide is misleading in that it suggests that the Lamb-Whillance free finish went out left. In fact it seems that they avoided the aid on the *immediate* left. A variant going away out left has in fact now been climbed. It is steep, exposed, awkward, and messy and a nut was used for tension.

—*Labyrinth Route*. Bell's route name has turned out to be most appropriate for there is more confusion about this route than any other at Dubh Loch and no two parties seem to have taken the same line. The Labyrinth-Hanging Garden combination has been climbed several times in winter and can be considered a great classic which is very often in condition (*Gr. IV*), the *Left Fork* proving most popular. Since *Hanging Garden* is the obvious natural line up this part of the cliff it would seem quite likely that the Sellers-Smith-Annand 1959 ascent was by this climb taking Bell's summer line. The remarkably fast time of 5 hours seems to support this.

An ascent of *Labyrinth Left Hand* as described in the new guide was made in winter 1979. It is much less obvious than *Hanging Garden* but is the closest line to the *Direct*, which is seldom in condition. The first steep pitch with its final short overhanging cleft is the crux. Above this the 'big roofed corner' was climbed, instead of climbing up left to the main corner of summer. The slab of the roofed corner was sheathed in ice and climbed up rightwards to enter the easy upper reaches of the *Direct*. (D. Dinwoodie & A. Williams, 12 hrs. *Gr. V*).

A hard variant was also climbed this past winter going up icy corners between *Garden Left Fork* and *Yeti*. The climbers were Lang & Quinn intent on following *Labyrinth*!

The Central Gully Wall has seen a good deal of reduction in aid recently. A. Nisbet notes a free ascent of *Vampire* at Extremely Severe, in company with Brian Lawrie. *King Rat* was climbed free at Extremely Severe by Phil Thomas (?). In fact the only remaining aid peg on the main part of Central Gully Wall is the one on the lower half of *Water Kelpie*. Quite a change from a few years back.

Western Highlands

Sgùrr a' Mhuilinn: East Buttress.—*Oh! or Oh Dear!* J. Mackenzie notes that this line gave a poor and contrived climb. If the first, good pitch is taken direct the standard is just Very Severe; the remainder of the route can best be described as either Difficult or up to Very Severe if all the difficult bits are looked for and climbed. The last 400 ft (120 m) is poor scrambling, best to go right onto steeper rock. (See NEW CLIMBS, this issue).

Lorn and Lochaber

Garbh Bheinn of Ardgour: South Wall: Upper Tier. A. Fyfe and spouse note an ascent of the crack left of *Sgian Dubh* (110 ft, 33 m, Severe), in May 1978.

Glencoe and Glen Etive

Buachaille Etive Mór. D. Cuthbertson & W. Todd note a free ascent of *Bluebell Grooves*, at Extremely Severe (E2).

Bidean nam Bian. D. Cuthbertson & D. Mullin note a free ascent of *Kingpin*, at Extremely Severe (E2).

Etive Slabs. P. Greenwell & M. Hamilton note a free ascent of *Groundhog*, at Extremely Severe (E2). In winter 1979, M. Hamilton, K. Spence & A. Taylor climbed an ice smear through the steepening of *Ba's*. K. Spence believes this has been climbed in summer, perhaps in the late 60's.

Southern Highlands

The Brack.—*Mammoth*. The probable second ascent of this impressive line, 12 years following the first, was also a free ascent, by D. Mullin & A. Petit, summer 1978. The first ascent employed a considerable amount of aid, including wedges. The crux is the overhanging crack on pitch two leading into the recess. On the free ascent, at Extremely Severe, the leader employed the modern technique known as yo-yoing at the top of the thin crack. For climbers who prefer 'Cosmopolitan' to 'Crag' in the dentist's waiting room, this involves climbing up as far as possible, then being lowered down from the top runner to the belay, where a rest is taken before the next sally.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

Photographs Required.—The author of the new selective guide for Lochaber and Badenoch would be glad to get black and white prints under Summer or Winter conditions of such Kenspeckle hills or Ben Nevis, Creag Meaghaidh, Binnien Shuas or Garbh Bheinn of Ardgour. A small fee would be paid for any that were used. Offers to Colin Stead.

Cold Feet.—We have received a report of an unpleasant case of Immersion Foot which resulted in the amputation of the distal phalanx of the big toe and six-week stay in hospital. The thing happened easily enough – a foot getting wet in a bog in cold weather conditions and never warming up while its owner went on walking for the rest of the day. For irreversible tissue damage to occur it is not necessary for actual freezing to take place; prolonged, severe cooling is enough and the onset is characteristically painless. This report was accompanied by a fierce colour slide of the affected foot.

Another report tells of a frozen thumb during a gully climb. Make sure there are no holes in your handwear.

Robin Gall Inglis Library Bequest.—The following books have been purchased from Robin Gall Inglis' bequest: Changabang – Bonington *et al*; Vallot Guide, Vol. 2 Chamonix Aiguilles, Vol. 3 Aiguille Verte, etc.; Mountain Weather for Climbers – Unwin; Avalanche Handbook – U.S. Forest Service; Everest the Hard Way – Bonington; Camera on the Crag – Hankinson; The Vertical World of Yosemite – Rowell; Expeditions the Expert's Way – Snell and Ballantine; A Survey of Shelters in Remote Mountain Areas of the Scottish Highlands; Women on the Rope – Williams; Mountaineering First Aid – Mitchell; Memorable Munros – Gilbert; Hill Walking in Scotland – Gilbert (booklet); A.B.C. of Avalanche Safety – La Chapelle; My Life as a Mountaineer – Heckmair; Medicine For Mountaineers – The Mountaineers; Between Heaven and Earth – Rebuffat; The Story of Scotland's Hills – Steven.

A Bridging Movement.—Not content with dabbling in Munros the Ordnance Survey are now toying with our bridges. Hamish Brown explains and appeals for information:

'Can any older member of the Club help with information as to the date of the destruction of the bridge over the River Carnach at the head of Loch Nevis? I ask, because (among other idiosyncrasies) the latest O.S. 1:50,000

map still shows it as being there, a mistake which has led to some near fatal fiascos on this sometimes difficult river. (To be fair, if inconsistent, the same map fails to show the existing bridge over the difficult Allt Gleann Unndalain on the Barrisdale side). At one time I mentioned this Carnach error in the 'Climber and Rambler' and also wrote to the O.S. Later I called in at Southampton but they seemed only interested in the fact that I had given differing times for the length of time it was supposed to have been missing; i.e. I was an unreliable witness! They even produced a surveyor who swore he had camped by the bridge just four or five years ago. At that stage I gave up. As curiosity still nibbles I make this query, and of necessity to our older members, for the bridge went a long time ago.

Munroötic Activity.—The steady tread of compleaters compleating their big feat resounds across the land. This year's list contains a number of people who were compleat in other years but whose names did not reach the recorder until now. The number in brackets preceding each name, refers to the provisional order in the ranks of the Elect. The dates following each name refer to the dates of compleating the Munros, the Munro 'tops' and the Munro equivalents furth of Scotland, respectively. This year we welcome the following new members to the Munrobility:

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| (158) Archibald G. H. Grant, 1973, —, —; | (171) S. Robertson, 1978, —, —; |
| (159) A. MacKenzie, 1973, —, —; | (172) A. S. Bowie, 1978, —, —; |
| (160) J. Sloane, 1974, —, —; | (173) J. E. Smith, 1978, —, —; |
| (161) L. MacKenzie, 1975, —, —; | (174) F. Wiley, 1978, —, —; |
| (162) R. Millar, 1975, —, —; | (175) I. C. Murray, 1978, —, —; |
| (163) D. Whalley, 1976, —, —; | (176) I. C. Munro, 1978, 1978, —; |
| (164) T. MacDonald, 1976, —, —; | (177) Mrs J. H. B. Bell, 1978, 1978, —; |
| (165) D. Henderson, 1976, —, —; | (178) A. G. MacLean, 1978, —, —; |
| (166) A. F. des Moulins, 1977, —, —; | (179) S. Craven, 1978, —, —; |
| (167) N. Hawkins, 1978, —, —; | (180) A. F. Craven, 1978, —, —; |
| (168) J. L. Morning, 1978, —, —; | (181) D. A. Shanks, 1978, —, —; |
| (169) T. Moore, 1978, —, —; | (182) R. C. Munro, 1978, 1978, —; |
| (170) J. Allan, 1978, —, —; | (183) J. Stewart, 1978, —, —; |

(175) Matthew Moulton through no fault of his own was wrongly reported to have done the tops twice in *S.M.C.J.*, 1975, xxxi, 191. He writes that once was quite enough. However, the real Munros have proved habit forming; he has done them three times now in 1968, 1971 and 1978; he hopes to compleat another round this year.

Many compleaters of the old list have written in to say that they have topped up on the new ones. Presumably all members of the Auld Elite still sound in mind and limb have done the same. *Munroblesse oblige*, after all. Mr & Mrs A. L. Cram compleated the Munro tops in 1978, she for the first time, he for the second. Also of note is the compleation of the Munros and tops by (177) Mrs J. H. B. Bell.

The hills over 2,000 feet in the Lowlands as listed in section 3 of the tables, namely the 'Donalds,' have been completed by David Clark.

There is, we are glad to say, a considerable amount of clandestine compleating going on. Some of the people just listed were clyped on by informers. Also we have on our files an irate letter from one of these clandestines demanding to know who it was who gave him away. Munroists have an interesting 'Pride-Shame' relationship with their activity.

A new Corbett has been detected on the metric map by M. Keates. It is on the north side of Glen Dessary and bears the name of Sgùrr Cos na Breachd-laoidh and rises above the 830 m contour and thus has a height of at least 2,723 feet. The col between it and An Eag drops below 650 m (2,133 feet) and the ascent is, therefore, at least 180 m or 590 feet.

Hamish Brown also reports that Bynack More has a new top named on the 1:25,000 O.S. map as Bynack Beg which breaks the 960 m contour and is thus over 3,150 feet.

The letters we have received from compleaters contain much interesting anecdotal material. Considerable ingenuity is displayed by candidates claiming the 'first' of one or other of the innumerable permutations possible. Double compleating is currently fashionable. (168) J. L. Morning and (169) T. Moore made their final ascent together on the same hill as did (170) J. Allan and (171) S. Robertson. (163) D. Whalley and (162) T. MacDonald compleated on the same day but on different hills. This synchronisation seems to be a particular idiosyncrasy of Kinloss M.R.T. personnel. However, at least one other instance of simultaneous compleating is on record that of (121) C. N. Turner and (127) W. C. T. Sarson. The fact that the latter two are not numbered consecutively does not mean that there was a wobble in the time warp coincident with their final ascent but merely illustrates the haphazard way information reaches us. The first father and son to compleat we are informed was (31) G. Y. MacDonald and (32) C. G. MacDonald in 1958 and not as we suggested in last year's *Journal* (156) I. Gray and (157) D. Gray who are probably the third such paterfamilial team.

We feel the ultimate in Munromanship requiring the use of craft and cunning against Time, the Auld Enemy, is the record for the longest time taken to do the compleating. This is currently held by (174) Fred Wiley, who has spread out the pleasure over 57 years. He writes: 'If no one has done the round quicker than Hamish Brown my own time of fifty-seven years could very well be the most leisurely, but it's been none the worse for that. I have had no epic journeys to recount; just a long list of outings full of solid enjoyment in the most beautiful small country in the world with a number of very good friends. I could not be more grateful.' (172) A. S. Bowie another of the 'better sort' of Munroist writes of his long march in similar vein: 'It was a most enjoyable five years. It has taken me to parts of Scotland I never thought of going to — or even knew of — and as we climbed all the year round we experienced the 'pleasures' of all kinds of weather.'

Recent Advances in Theoretical Munroölogy.—We have received the following contribution from Geoff Cohen who appears to be a practising armchair Munroist:

SOME UNSOLVED PROBLEMS IN MUNROÖLOGY

As a rather intermittent practitioner and amateur student of Munroölogy, may I pose some questions that could be of interest to the more fastidious pedants of the subject?

1. I wonder whether there are any Munroists who can claim to have: (a) climbed all the Munros in true winter conditions, or (b) seen a clear view from the summit of each Munro, or (c) ascended each Munro separately (i.e. not as part of an interconnected ridge walk involving only a relatively short ascent from a high col).

These achievements are presented in ascending order of difficulty and I should be surprised if there were anyone who could claim the full absurdity of the last record. As an ultramontane with a tendency to pick up Munros in the back end of the year, I find that of a total of 125, some 60 per cent have been done in true winter conditions and, surprisingly, 65 per cent have yielded a view from the summit on at least one occasion.

2. It is generally recognised that as a science develops its concepts pass from being purely classificatory to being capable of increasingly precise measurement. Concurrently more refined and mathematical models are proposed for the processes concerned. Perhaps the science of Munroölogy has

reached sufficient maturity for such a quantitative approach to develop. In this spirit is a problem which has intrigued me since well before 'Hamish's Mountain Walk': the question of a minimum time path through all the Munros. The problem may be posed mathematically as follows: ignoring all logistical constraints, and defining the time between any pair of summits by a suitable version of Naismith's rule, what particular path from a given starting point would traverse all the Munros in the shortest possible time? Readers familiar with the nodes and links of graph theory may perhaps be able to offer an approximate solution to this computationally formidable problem.

3. A casual enquiry by a visitor from the south as to which area of Scotland contains the most Munros prompts the question of how best to define the (areal) density of Munros. This is related to problems like the isolation of Munros: which mountain or group of mountains is most isolated from peaks of similar height? It also has a connection with the '24 hour problem' of Blyth Wright: where should one try for the greatest number of Munros within the space of 24 hours? (An intriguing suggestion is the Cuillin Ridge followed by the North and South sides of Glen Shiel: but mechanical transport is surely unethical).

4. Ever more obscure problems abound for the ardent Munroölogical theoretician. Where, for instance, is the centre of gravity of the Munros - taking 'weight' as proportional to height above 3,000 feet? What, if anything, characterises the height distribution of Munros? (Unfortunately they do not follow Zipf's Law as might have been expected). All such problems can of course be extended to Munro tops, Corbetts or even Donalds and the 'furth of Scotland.'

Despite metrication, the subject of Munroölogy has apparently boundless horizons.

Entente Cordiale.—In February, a group of six French climbers visited this country as guests of the British Mountaineering Council. All but one were young professional guides whose main objective was to sample some Scottish winter climbing and to this end B.M.C. officer Alex. McIntyre brought them north. Donald Bennet organised accommodation at Fort William from where they polished off various Creag Mheagaidh classics at furious speed, namely Smith's Gully, The Last Post and South Post, the last in the company of Alastair McGregor and Bill Duncan. On Nevis they disposed of Point Five, again in record time.

For their second weekend they moved to the East where Bill Brooker had arranged the Lairig Club Hut at Allt-na-giubhsaich and brought out a representative team from the Aberdeen School to host the visitors.

REFLECTIONS OF THE FRENCH VISITATION.

Greg Strange reports as follows:—With a little apprehension a normally reticent group of Etchachan Club members made a rendezvous with the six French celebrities and their English entourage. Could these colourful, friendly, yet unassuming young men really have climbed the most difficult routes in the Alps, skied down major north faces and only a few days ago ascended Smith's Gully in the impressive time of $\frac{3}{4}$ hr? At the Spittal car park someone presented Jean-Marc Boivin with a large shovel suggesting that it might prove useful for climbing on Lochnagar. This caused much laughter which combined with Alex McIntyre's rock music and a display of Northern Lights set the tone of events for the weekend.

From the 5.00 a.m. chaos of an overcrowded Alt Na G. food was produced and snow melted for brews (the pipes were frozen). Despite warnings from Alex the French seemed keen to team up with the Scots so first light saw various international parties heading for Lochnagar and Creag An Dubh Loch. It was

a beautiful day. As if by order the view of Lochnagar from the col was as good as ever. A great iced cake set against a blue sky. Hardly a rock was showing. Not unexpectedly, the snow and ice conditions were mediocre; nevertheless Eagle Ridge, Parallel Buttress Direct, Pinnacle Face and a hard variation to Winter Face were all climbed in fast times. The French equipment and technique was very efficient. Using precision-made Charlet or Simond crampons and axes they were able to climb almost as fast as they could walk. Clearly they enjoyed themselves immensely, likening the fantastic snow scenery to that of the Andes. At Creag An Dubh Loch, Labyrinth Edge and a route in the Hanging Garden were climbed.

Sunday provided the perfect contrast. A great gale from the south-west beat back several combatants and only three Frenchmen made it into the corrie. Undaunted by the conditions, René and Alex were determined to make up for the previous day's disappointment on a rather bare Creag An Dubh Loch. They polished off Eagle Ridge then Parallel Gully 'B' and still arrived back at the hut before nightfall. Two parties also climbed Shallow Gully. The day was rounded off with pints and pool in the 'Tink' bar followed by a fine traditional Scottish meal of mince, tatties, neeps and skirrie with cloutie dumpling to finish, courtesy of the Pannanich Wells Hotel, and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland. It was a relaxed and homely affair with a kind of fractured *franglais* circulating freely as linguistic currency. As Derek Pyper said to me afterwards - 'Imagine the song Tom Patey would have written to record the occasion when Armand Charlet's grandson climbed on Lochnagar.' It was a remarkable weekend.

THE LOCHNAGAR BASHING RECORD.

<i>Eagle Ridge :</i>	Dominique Julien and Dave Nichols René Ghilini and Alex McIntyre
<i>Parallel Buttress Direct :</i>	Jean Franc Charlet and Greg Strange
<i>Pinnacle Face :</i>	Renier Munsch and Andrew Nisbet
<i>Grovel Wall :</i>	Julien and Nichols
<i>Shallow Gully :</i>	Jean-Marc Boivin and Brian Sprunt Charlet and Strange
<i>Parallel Gully 'B'</i>	Ghilini and McIntyre
<i>Parallel Gully 'A' :</i> (<i>Sprunt</i> by right fork)	Boivin and Sprunt (both solo)
<i>The French Connection :</i>	This was a new direct line beginning with the first pitch of Winter Face on the Pinnacle and continuing straight up: Boivin and Sprunt (who led the very hard second pitch)

and on Creag an Dubh Loch:

<i>Labyrinth Edge :</i>	Gilles Rotillon and Bob Smith
<i>Hanging Garden :</i>	Ghilini and Guy Muhlemann

SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN ACCIDENTS, 1978

THIS YEAR'S list was collected by Ray Sefton and compiled with the assistance of John Hinde. Our thanks are due to these gentlemen and we record our appreciation of the efforts of the M.R.C.S. and the various Rescue services for all that they do on our behalf.

*Having examined the list we would make the following comments:—*There is an increase in the number of incidents over last year by about 15%, with sadly a rather larger rise in fatalities. Comparison of the figures below with those for last year show small increases in most types of accident. The big rise in the *Exposure* category is due partly to the inclusion this year of cases of fatigue and exhaustion in that column, rather than with *Illness*.

As far as it is possible to separate them it appears that of the 97 casualties 36 occurred when the victims were engaged in climbing (roped or otherwise) as opposed to 61 when walking (including climbers walking off). Of the climbing casualties a little less than half occurred in winter conditions and of walking, just over one third. Overall about 40% of casualties occurred in winter. *The simple slip*, particularly on snow or ice, remains a prime cause of accidents while the increased significance of navigation errors is perhaps due partly to foreign visitors who are unfamiliar with our hills and partly to inadequately trained groups of young people. The Nevis Tourist path continues to reap its annual harvest of incidents, particularly to the ill-equipped.

Apart from the 'mountaineering' incidents which we have used to draw up the table below there are some twenty or so miscellaneous incidents, including two fatalities to birdwatchers, one exposure fatality to a local, a caving incident near Inchnadamph and a gorge spectacular involving firemen and ambulancemen (some of whom had to be rescued in their turn by the mountain rescue!).

In all, there were 207 M.R. team call-outs, 26 for S.A.R.D.A. dogs and R.A.F. helicopters were deployed on no fewer than 83 occasions.

<i>Cause</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Cause</i>	<i>Number</i>
Illness	7	Slips, rock/scree/grass, Hillwalking	28
Exhaustion/Exposure	21	Slips, snow/ice, Hillwalking	13
Inadequate Equipment	8	Falls (roped) Rockclimbing	3
Navigation: Error	17	Falls (unroped) Rockclimbing	4
Poor Timing	5	Falls (roped) Winter Climbing	3
Benightment	14	Falls (unroped) Winter Climbing	1
Cragfast	4	Rockfall	2
Caving	1	Abseiling	2
False Alarms	11	Belay Failure	2
Non-Mountaineering	20+	Falls through Cornice	3
		Glissading	2
		Avalanche	6

These are contributory causes, in many cases a combination of causes is responsible for the incident.

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

As in previous years we have compiled this table from the preceding list of accidents.

	<i>Casualties (of which fatalities bracketed)</i>				<i>Incidents No. of Direct Rescues</i> <i>Call-Outs</i>					<i>Total Incidents</i>
	Injury	Exposure	Illness	Total	Casualties	Cragfast, etc.	Lost	Overdue or Benighted	False Alarms	
Northern Highlands	5(1)	—	1	6(1)	6	—	2	2	2	12
Skye	8(2)	1	—	9(2)	9	1	—	—	—	10
Cairngorms Lochnagar- Deeside	18(4)	7	—	25(4)	16	1	2	7	5	31
Ben Nevis Area	14(2)	4	1(1)	19(3)	18	—	2	4	—	24
Creag Meaghaidh	4(2)	1	—	5(2)	3	—	—	1	1	5
Glencoe Area	12(2)	—	1	13(2)	11	1	—	2	—	14
Southern Highlands	5(2)	2	3(1)	10(3)	9	1	2	1	1	14
Arran	—	6	1	7	3	—	—	1	1	5
Southern Uplands	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	2
Sea Cliffs	3	—	—	3	3	—	—	—	—	3
All Areas	69(15)	21	7(2)	97(17)	78	4	8	19	11	120

Accident List

*This list omits some fifteen incidents of a non-mountaineering nature and in addition those incidents marked * have been omitted in the statistics.*

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

FEBRUARY 2—On 31 January a hillwalker left Cluanie to walk to Achna-shellach allotting four days. However a relative became anxious about his safety and a rescue operation was mounted. He was located by an M.R.T. and evacuated by helicopter.

15 APRIL—A search was initiated, but later cancelled, for a middle aged couple. Their car had been left on the north side of Loch Houran and they had gone camping in the hills.

MAY 3—A 79-year-old commercial traveller (retired) walking in the hills near Glen Beag, Glenelg, fell 60 feet on a steep slope sustaining fractured vertebrae, multiple abrasions, contusions and hypothermia. He lay for 2 hours till his calls for help were heard. He was carried to safety.

JUNE 1—A youth walking alone on the hills above Glencarron slipped on wet grass and fell 50 feet sustaining fractures to leg, nose and hand. Successful search by local estate workers.

JUNE 22*—Two men, well clad but without food descended to the sump of Glen Bain Hole, near Inchnadamph, Torridon. Their carbide lamps flooded and went out when they were returning but were still 300 feet from the entrance, so they had to sit tight. They were recovered next day by a rescue team which was underground for 45 minutes.

JUNE 23—Search of Glen Coul in rain and low mist for a missing father and son who had set off to walk to the Eas a Chual waterfall. They turned up unharmed 25 miles from their destination.

JULY 4—Belgian woman evacuated from a hill near Fort Augustus suffering from asthma.

JULY 15—Search initiated when one of two Frenchmen failed to return from Quinag, on which they had climbed to take photographs. In mist and rain they had separated. They had no map and compass. The missing man turned up next day.

JULY 27—Injured hillwalker evacuated from Liathach, Torridon.

JULY 27—Injured hillwalker evacuated from Beinn Alligin, Torridon.

JULY 29—Couple from Stoer Campsite returned late from a walk on Canisp. Turned up safe and well before teams set out, although alerted.

SEPTEMBER 6—The deceased left his motor cycle at Strathmore Lodge intending to climb Ben Hope. A route card was available with 11 grid references which were followed by the rescue party. His body was found on a ledge below a buttress. He had fallen about 150 feet sustaining head injuries.

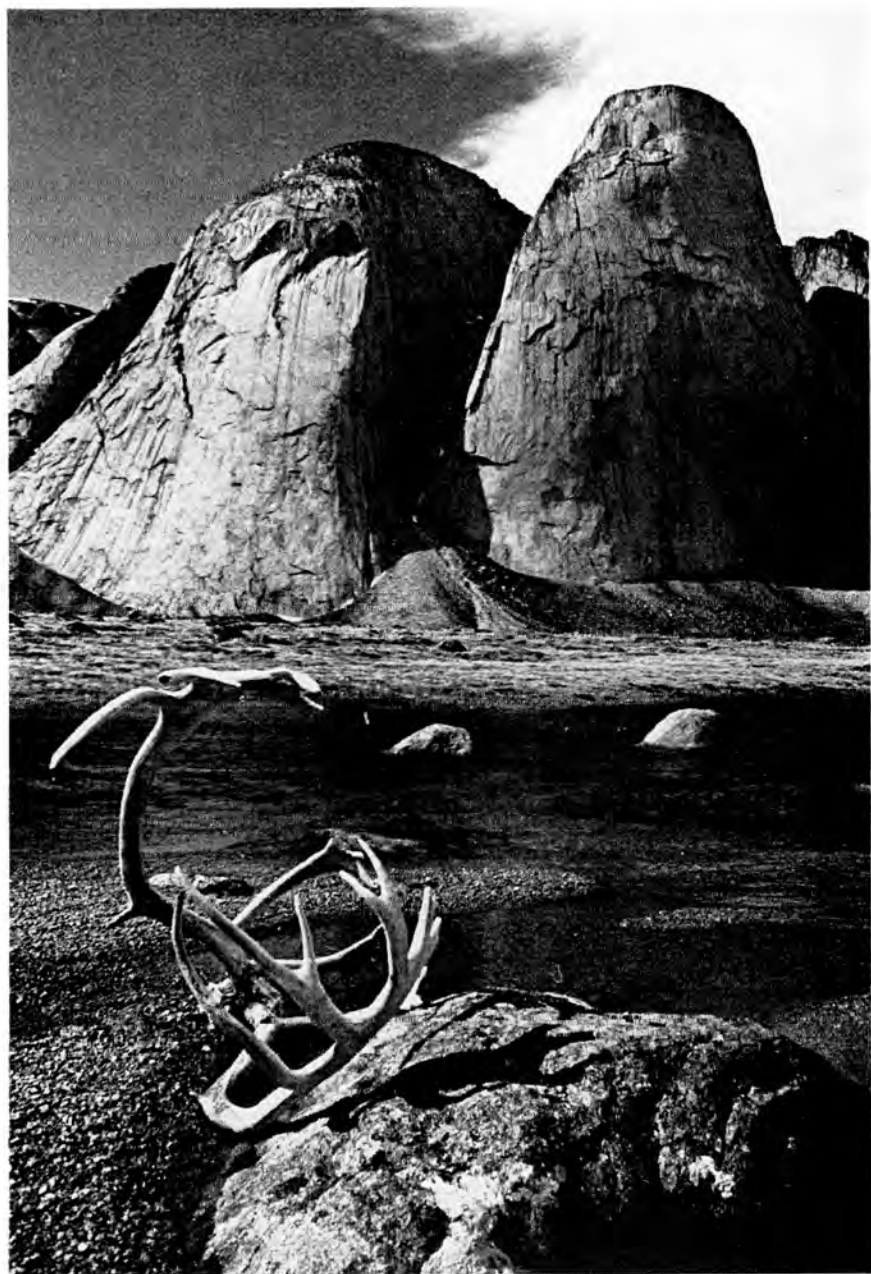
OCTOBER 9—A man and his daughter benighted by swollen burns when hill-walking between Slattadale and Tollie Farm.

ISLE OF SKYE

MARCH 18—One of the boys of a school party was left on Marsco summit in a polythene bag with two companions when he started to suffer from exposure. Rescued by M.R.T. Poor weather.

MAY 17—Injured climber airlifted from Coire Lagan.

MAY 27—Girl, 20 years, broke her leg at the Chambered Cairn on Loch Brittle Coast Path.



July 1978

© Photo: S. Bateson

Ozymandias—Baffin Land.

*Left arm and leg and the right arm were all climbed.
The prominent right hand buttress (the right leg) remains virgin.*



July 1978

The Owl Pillar.

Photo: Greg. Strange

The final 1000 ft.—highest point reached was just below the left end of the prominent sickle shaped roof.

MAY 29—28-year-old school teacher with a male companion was descending An Stac. He fell and dislocated his shoulder.

MAY 30—A 27-year-old Army sergeant and a 17-year-old Army apprentice became cragfast when climbing *Engineers' Slant*, Western Buttress, Sròn na Ciche. They had to be rescued.

MAY 31—Fatality. 21-year-old climber fell 500 feet when a hold gave way on Sgùrr a Ghreadaidh. Airlift.

JULY 11—15-year-old climber rescued from Sgùrr a Mhadaidh with a head injury and suspected broken wrist. Airlift.

JULY 12—Injured climber (16) airlifted from An Dorus.

JULY 29—Girl (17) rock climbing at Point of Sleat in a party of four Venture Scouts. Handhold gave way. She fell fifteen feet and broke a leg.

UNDATED—Fatality to boy of 15. With father and two others tried to avoid Alasdair Bad Step on the wrong side. They did not like the greasy rock and abseiled off. The abseil block came off and the boy fell. R.A.F. helicopter.

CAIRNGORMS, LOCHNAGAR AND DEESIDE, GRAMPIANS

JANUARY 4—Two climbers overdue in Coire an-t'Sneachda in severe weather after setting off too late for their intended route.

JANUARY 4—Missing walker found in Sinclair Hut. He had continued descent of March Burn when his companion had decided it was too steep and turned back.

JANUARY 11*—A ghillie was found dead from exposure at the Landseer Falls. Poorly equipped for the severe weather conditions he had set off to walk from Linn of Dee to Glenfeshie Lodge to visit a friend.

JANUARY 14—A vain search of the foot of *The Vent* in Coire an Lochan after cries for help and three figures had been reported.

JANUARY 15—Walker fell over the head wall of Coire Cas sustaining a fractured skull and arm.

JANUARY 21—One student killed and one injured (chest and back) by an avalanche in *Raeburn's Gully* of Lochnagar. Both were swept down about 500 feet. The dead man had no helmet and died of head injuries.

JANUARY 21—While a helicopter and M.R.T. were evacuating two casualties from an avalanche of Central Gully, Coire an t-Sneachda, a second avalanche occurred from the Goat Track, in which one of the party broke a leg. Helicopter took the two worst injured and third casualty was stretcher carried. Also an uninjured victim collapsed with exposure and had to be carried.

JANUARY 28—Exhausted student evacuated by helicopter from Faindouran Lodge.

JANUARY 31*—Many teams carried out search and rescue tasks after the blizzards.

FEBRUARY 26*—Lost boy skier found safe in Coire Direach.

MARCH 8—Student fell in Coire an t-Sneachda. Ice-axe puncture wound.

MARCH 24—M.R.T.'s searched in area of Cairnwell Ski Centre. Search started because of an abandoned car, but a route note had been left with a chairlift employee who had forgotten it.

MARCH 24—Poorly-clad youth suffering from severe exposure evacuated from Ben Alder Cottage in severe weather.

MARCH 24—Man reported injured after stepping over Coire Cas head wall in a whiteout. He was found walking down unaided.

MARCH 25—Climber with knee injury airlifted from Shelter Stone after spending the night in an emergency bivouac.

MARCH 26—Man and six youths glissading on plastic sheets on snow slope above Glas Allt Mor (Craig Derry). One of youths collided with man who sustained a double leg fracture. Man dragged down to path and then evacuated by Snow Trac.

APRIL 2—Skier skied through cornice on Coire Sputan Dearg in a whiteout. Fell 100 feet and slid 300 feet. Uninjured but in a potentially dangerous situation. Helped down by M.R.T. which had been flown in.

APRIL 9—Two brothers fell the whole length of Douglas Gibson Gully of Lochnagar. They had climbed to within ten feet of the top when soft snow gave way. One brother with slight injuries went for help but M.R.T.'s found his older brother dead from head injuries and hypothermia at 1.30 a.m.

APRIL 9—Benighted party of six found in Strath Nethy unharmed. They had intended walking from Macdui to Car Park via Shelter Stone.

MAY 28—Unroped woman climber fell six feet when retreating from a rock climb in the Pass of Ballater sustaining compound fracture of tibia and fibula.

JUNE 3—Three experienced roped climbers on 1st pitch of Eagle Ridge, Lochnagar. Leader belayed, bringing up second, when a boulder was dislodged which struck the third climber at the bottom of the climb. She was injured and knocked into the bergschrund.

JUNE 10*—A bird watcher fell, or was blown, from a crag in Glen Loch. He fell about 200 feet and received fatal injuries.

JUNE 20—Helicopter went to a girl with minor injuries near Loch nan Stuirteag, but she was fully recovered when it reached her.

JUNE 25—Injured hillwalker flown out from below the Devil's Point, Lairig Ghru.

JULY 4—Lairig Ghru. Three teachers and nine pupils walking and camping for four days, two of the days during persistent rain causing swollen burns. Eventually four pupils were suffering from exposure and were carried out part way by M.R.T.'s and finally evacuated by helicopter.

JULY 8—A climber who had fallen on Ben Macdui and was walking out was located by helicopter and evacuated.

AUGUST 4—French party of hillwalkers missing near Tomintoul.

AUGUST 16—16-year-old boy injured on the Scories, Glen Doll when walking with three friends. Fell off a steep shoulder between two rock bands.

AUGUST 20—Two walkers benighted in Lairig Ghru after becoming separated from their two companions when descending Sròn na Lairig, Braeriach.

AUGUST 26—Lost hillwalker found on summit plateau of Ben Macdui. She was separated from her party and had no map, compass or navigational ability.

AUGUST 30—Four senior adults late back from a walk in the Cairngorms. None of them had a compass but one had done the route before.

OCTOBER 1—Seven girls became separated from a party of 22 pupils and two adults descending from Mount Keen to Glen Mark. They turned up at Glentanar Lodge, safe though weather had turned to sleet and snow.

OCTOBER 16—Search was made after a red flare was reported near Coire an Lochain, Braeriach. Nothing found.

DECEMBER 19—Avalanched climbers airlifted from Coire an Lochain, Cairngorm.

DECEMBER 26—Bodies of two walkers found in an avalanche in Coire Bogha-loiche, Glen Einich. Bodies recovered next day in severe weather.

BEN NEVIS, MAMORES AND ARDGOUR

JANUARY 2—A walker fell down a snow slope near Nevis summit, dislocating a shoulder and twisting his ankle. Due to his injuries and bad weather he stayed in the summit shelter. Helped down by three climbers next day.

JANUARY 3—Four climbers in two pairs climbed *No. 2 Gully*, Ben Nevis. First pair sheltered from storm overnight in summit refuge. Second pair could not find it and dug a snowhole, and they were eventually found on summit with one of them suffering from exposure. The first pair had descended and alerted rescuers.

JANUARY 6—One of a party descending Ben Nevis twisted his ankle on an icy patch after removing his crampons.

FEBRUARY 21—Five climbers were descending diagonally from Càrn Dearg Mheadhonach to the C.I.C. Hut. They were crossing a small depression, led by the victim, when a slab avalanche was triggered off. Two were carried down, but one ran clear. The slab was a channelled avalanche and carried the victim down 1,200 feet. He was buried but dug out by the rest of his party who tried resuscitation without success.

MARCH 13—Exhausted walker was separated from his companion and was found on the Ben Nevis Zig-Zags.

MARCH 22—Couple benighted on *Observatory Ridge*. They dug in and completed the climb next day.

MARCH 26—Injured climber airlifted from Ben Nevis.

MARCH 26—Four climbers descending just above path from C.I.C. Hut to Halfway Lochan in late afternoon. When underneath the foot of *Castle Ridge* they were caught in a massive avalanche which started high on the crags of Càrn Dearg and crossed the Castle Coire. All four were carried along about 500 feet and one was buried. A helicopter on another rescue mission saw blood and debris and quickly rescued three men. Large scale searches with probes, dogs, trenching (15 feet deep in places) and metal detectors were done on 26, 27 and 28. Dead man was found by a probe, six feet down, near avalanche tip. The debris had crossed the glen and he was found just beyond the Allt a'Mhuilinn.

MARCH 26—An experienced climber slipped 300 feet on ice when descending Red Burn, Nevis, and was separated from companions who reported. He got down safely alone.

MAY 28—Walker fell on descent of Nevis Tourist Path. Head injury.

MAY 28—Walker fell descending Glen Nevis Waterslide. Extensive bruising.

MAY 31—Walker fell descending Nevis Tourist Path. Rib injury.

JUNE 1—Walker fell 60 feet on Glen Nevis Waterslide. Broke his back.

JUNE 4—Loch Treig Hills. Search for two girls who should have walked from Corrou (Loch Treig) to Lochan Coire an Lochain (Cno Dearg) but went to wrong lochan. Spent night at the wrong rendezvous waiting for others and then contacted the Police to report the others missing. Walked out to Moy (Loch Laggan). Good weather.

JULY 21—65-year-old American tourist went most of way up Nevis. On descent she collapsed with heart attack. She had left her tablets in the hotel.

AUGUST 9—Tourist in plimsolls, slipped on wet slabs on Nevis Waterslide. Double fracture of the skull.

AUGUST 9—Tourist in town wear and plimsolls slipped on Ben Nevis. Torn leg ligaments.

AUGUST 11—20-year-old French tourist in town wear and plimsolls slipped on Ben Nevis. Ankle fracture.

AUGUST 30—Tourist. 51 years. Exhausted on Nevis Tourist Path. Carried.
 OCTOBER 22—Husband and wife tourists descending Nevis from summit. Wife collapsed from exhaustion on path.

OCTOBER 23—14-year-old boy with uncle walked over the four Lochaber 'four thousanders.' Went ahead of uncle on Nevis and was separated. Found by M.R.T. in summit refuge.

NOVEMBER 9—Husband and wife got lost after crossing three Munros in Mamores. Could not descend Steall Waterfall, went back up and were benighted. Wife became cold and tired. Husband went for help next day but could not give correct location causing search.

NOVEMBER 2—Tourist fell on Glen Nevis Waterslide. Head, wrist, pelvis injured.

DECEMBER 11—Four climbers climbed *No. 2 Gully*, went to summit and returned to top of *No. 2 Gully*. Intended to descend *No. 3 Gully* and went to where they thought it was. Deceased went to edge to look over and fell. Body found below *Green Gully*.

CREAG MEAGHAIDH

JANUARY 12—Two climbers ascended *Centre Post* and waited on top for their friends who did not join up. They elected to bivouac on summit plateau because of zero visibility. Next day they searched two hours for a way down and followed a slope descending north. They spent second night out at the head of Glen Roy. On third day they reached Braeroy Lodge and contacted police. Good climbers with good equipment and spare food they were lucky to survive as they had no map and did not use their compass.

JANUARY 21—Two well equipped climbers fell from *Diadem* in bad weather and were killed.

JANUARY 29—In the evening of 29 January a climber was left exhausted, by his friends in severe weather, one mile above Aberarder Farm. Several attempts were made during the night and next day to deploy M.R.T.'s and a helicopter, but these were frustrated due to severe weather and deep drifts. The man was rescued after two nights out, by helicopter, virtually unharmed. The party had a guidebook but no map, which may have been a factor contributing to their predicament.

FEBRUARY 18—Two climbers injured in fall from *South Post*.

APRIL 1—Two walkers fell through a cornice on the summit ridge of Creag Meagaidh. They spent the night in a snowhole and were rescued unharmed next day.

GLENCOE

JANUARY 3—Six well equipped but inexperienced Liverpool youths got lost on Bidean nam Bian summit in bad weather. Bivouac near top and descended next day into Glen Etive.

JANUARY 4—Two climbers found descending *Easy Gully* of Buachaille Etive Mór. They had separated from a larger party the day before, started to climb *Curved Ridge*, then got lost and started to descend by a different route. Spent night in bivouac.

FEBRUARY 11—Teacher and two pupils descending Ben Starav all without crampons. One pupil fell 150 feet on snow. Whilst rescue team leader was attending to the injured girl, the teacher and the second pupil also fell about the same distance and were injured.

FEBRUARY 17—Climber fell 100 feet in Chockstone Gully. Piton came out. Broken leg.

FEBRUARY 28—Two climbers escorted down from Aonach Eagach Ridge. One of them had dizzy spells, when nearing end of climb. They had flashed distress signal as dark was falling, which had quickly been spotted by W. Elliot.

MARCH 26—A girl, one of a party of university mountaineers, was ahead when descending a snow slope on Stob Dubh, south of Glen Etive. She slipped on an ice patch and slid 500 feet, striking several rock outcrops. Severe back injuries and concussion. No ice-axe or crampons.

APRIL 16—Fatality. Unroped party of four were climbing *B Buttress* on West Face of Aonach Dubh. Deceased was carrying rope coiled over shoulder. Rope snagged and he could not get proper holds. Grip gave out before others could help him. He fell 100 feet straight and went about 500 feet bouncing off large boulders.

MAY 26—Youth (13) traversed Aonach Eagach with brother and sister-in-law. Injured youth's first time on hill. Slipped on scree and fell 100 feet.

MAY 26—A woman climber was rescued, with head injuries and unconscious, after a 400-foot fall on Stob Dubh, Glen Etive. R.A.F. helicopter.

JUNE 24—Roped leader of two was climbing a small pitch 200 feet above Jericho Wall in Clachaig Gully. Experienced. Handhold gave way and he fell six feet. Fractured tibia and fibula. Helicopter evacuation.

JULY 4—A man and a woman, from a party of four, decided to leave *Clachaig Gully* just above the Red Chinmey pitch. Only ten feet up a heathery slope the girl slipped and fell down on to the man below her. He also fell ten feet and landed on top of the girl. Girl had two head wounds and was evacuated by helicopter. Man assisted down by M.R.T.

AUGUST 11—One of party of seven rambling on The Mole, Glencoe, twisted and broke his ankle on marshy ground.

DECEMBER 29—Deceased was one of a party of four friends, of whom only one had experience (very limited) of winter climbing. They thought they were climbing *Great Gully* of Buachaille Etive Mór but had not reached it. They climbed a small ice patch which gave them confidence to try another. Deceased fell 80 feet when following the leader up this. He died from head injuries consistent with the possible penetration of his ice-axe.

DECEMBER 30—Three stranded climbers airlifted from Buachaille Etive Mór.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

JANUARY 22—Four schoolboys got lost on a hill walk between Rannoch and Glen Lyon. Found about midnight near summit of Càrn Chreag, one with exhaustion and mild exposure.

FEBRUARY 11—Man killed when he lost control glissading and fell 500 feet. Accident at approx. 2,500 feet on S.E. Ridge of Ben Vane, Arrochar. His companion thought it too steep to glissade and decided to watch.

FEBRUARY 12—A man was killed when he slipped on ice and fell 300 feet. He had been walking with his son on Beinn Luibhean. No ice-axe or crampons. Died from head injuries.

MAY 2—Walker on Ben More, slipped on steep snow and fell 100 feet. Dislocated shoulder, cuts and bruises.

MAY 21—R.A.F. helicopter lifted a climber from the Brack. Suspected fractured skull and shoulder after a falling rock pierced his climbing helmet.

MAY 21—R.A.F. helicopter located a girl (12) missing on Schiehallion.

MAY 24—Woman hillwalker died of heart failure on Ben Lomond.

JULY 4—The leader of four students became ill (mumps) whilst on a six-day walk near Loch Creran. Evacuated to hospital.

JULY 7—Belgian schoolgirl (15) with a party, could not stand up after taking a rest halfway up Ben Lomond. Evacuated to hospital. Back trouble and dizziness.

JULY 10—Woman separated from family party on Schiehallion. When lost she stayed put and awaited rescue by R.A.F. helicopter.

JULY 29—German tourist and girlfriend went off to climb on Creag an Lochain (Lawers). On a relatively easy bit he became scared of the height and froze. The girl made the climb and went for help. Police team tried to coax him down. He would not budge and was evacuated by R.A.F. helicopter.

SEPTEMBER 7—Fatigued walker (49) helped down from Coire Glas, Ben Cruachan.

OCTOBER 1—Fallen climber. Leg injuries. Airlifted from The Cobbler.

ISLE OF ARRAN

JUNE 4—Three Scouts were walking from Dougarie Lodge to Lochranza for a Scout award. Two of them were exhausted and were evacuated by stretcher from Glen Iorsa after the third went for help. All 12 years.

JUNE 14—Search for hotel guest benighted by cloud on The Castles. He had not left a route card. Walked in unaided.

JULY 25—Mountain search initiated because a couple had left their car abandoned in Lochranza for three days.

AUGUST 18—Man (57) and wife climbed Goat Fell. Descending he had severe chest pains. Wife stayed with him and got help. Doctor airlifted in and casualty evacuated by helicopter.

AUGUST 23—Search for four Scouts on a twelve-mile Scout Award Hike. Distress signal had been torch flashed from the 'Squiller' area. They were found with wet clothes and gear, exhaustion and exposure $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of the Ross Road.

SOUTHERN UPLANDS

FEBRUARY 19—Search for climber with head injuries. Merrick area. He walked out.

OCTOBER 19—Helicopter joined an M.R.T. search and found five Scouts who were benighted on a hill walk from White Laggan, Minnigaff, Wigton to Backhill of Bush, Kells, New Galloway.

SEA CLIFFS

MAY 31—Girl (17) injured hip abseiling at Primrose Bay, Hopeman, Morays. Evacuated by R.A.F. helicopter.

JULY 3—Youth fell 30 feet when climbing sea cliffs at Cove, Inverasdale. Fractured skull and ankles.

SEPTEMBER 10—Climber (17) fell and broke ankle when climbing on cliffs near Hopeman. R.A.F. helicopter.

FINALLY.

The choice between keeping your car wheels or your reputation :

MARCH 20—Large-scale search took place around Ben Lawers because a car had been left in the Lawers Car Park and no notice of intentions.

And a warning not to be careless with that worn-out survival bag :

MAY 10—Investigation of a large orange article just under the cornice of Creag Meaghaidh reported by shepherds. Small party in a Snow Trac took all night to do the job because of poor weather and vehicle track difficulties. Large polythene bag and some food found.

IN MEMORIAM

ALFRED MANTZ

ALFRED MANTZ, who was killed in an accident in Glencoe in April, 1978, was one of the Edinburgh boys who returned from the war and became a regular attender on the J.M.C.S. Buses from 1949 onwards. Although small and stockily built, he soon became a mountaineer of tireless energy, walking the hills in all weathers, winter and summer. His first real climb was the Napes Needle on Gable, led by Dan Stewart, a climb he loved to repeat on Lakeland visits. He loved rock climbing and quickly became a capable leader up to Severe standard. Alf or Fred was always a cheerful, kindly, happy-go-lucky character who would willingly take any novice on a climb, if he was keen enough. He climbed continuously for nearly 30 years.

A compound ankle fracture sustained in Arran caused him constant pain and much loss of work for several years, but he still made the effort to go on the hills. Eventually he had an operation to stiffen the ankle and by 1958 he was able to climb again without pain and little evidence of his handicap. Fred always called himself a late developer and for him the best years were his last twenty from the age of 45 to 65. About 1959 I really got to know him and he became my best friend, companion and leader in many expeditions until his death. Fred was a bachelor and climbed with many other people besides me, for he loved the hills and climbed at every opportunity. He had a magnetic personality and he must have introduced a lot of beginners to the joys of rock climbing.

He enjoyed about 17 seasons abroad in Switzerland, Austria and Italy, and I shared nine of those holidays with him, as well as many other weeks in Skye, Glencoe, Nevis, other parts of Scotland and the Lakes.

Zermatt was his happy hunting ground. 1962 and 1963 were great years when he led me on ascents of such peaks as The Iagi grat, Lagginhorn, Strahlhorn, Rimpfischhorn, Monte Rosa, Alphubel, Zinal Rothorn, Matterhorn and Leiterspitze. In 1963 we traversed the Matterhorn from Italy on the same day as Patey. In 1967 we climbed Piz Palu and Piz Bernina among others. Fred's best ascents in the Bregaglia and the Dolomites from 1973-75 were the Ago di Sciora, Piz Badile, a traverse of the Cengalo, Monte Pelmo, the Civetta and the Cima Grande of the Laveredo.

At home, Skye was his favourite haunt where he spent a week every June. He did the Cuillin Ridge traverse twice. He loved to repeat the classic climbs up to V.Diff. standard, such as Cioch West, White Slab, the South Crack, and, in Glencoe, Agag's, January Jigsaw, North Face Route, Church Door and Clachaig Gully. Most of these he climbed at least ten times.

I enjoyed most of these climbs several times with Fred as my leader. He was the fittest man for his age that I have known. At the age of 64 he retired on the 'year early' scheme and enjoyed his climbing. In May 1977 he spent two weeks in Glenbrittle, climbing every day.

I managed to have four days with him at that time and we did the complete round of Coire Lagan. The next day he led me up the West Trap Route on Sgumain (a great thrill for me who had climbed it 24 years earlier but now I was recovering from a broken hip). Our last great day together was in August 1977, when we drove from Edinburgh to Lochnagar and back in a day and Fred led me up Eagle Ridge Direct.

It was only in 1971 that Fred joined the S.M.C., but he had been a J.M.C.S. member for over 20 years. Fred was a most unusual man, a bricklayer who loved English Literature, a violinist who played for years in two Edinburgh Orchestras, a regular bridge player and a keen Scottish Country

dancer. He was a member of the Edinburgh Glenmore Club and the Holiday Fellowship. He is sadly missed by a wide circle of friends in Edinburgh and South of the Border.

Our sincere sympathy is extended to his brother Jack, with whom he stayed, and to the other members of the family.

GEORGE CHISHOLM.

HUGH MACRAE

[Although HUGH MACRAE was not a member of the Club his passing breaks a link with a bygone age when the West Highlands were remote and Glenbrittle was about as accessible as Shangri-La. Many of us will remember happy evenings around his fireside, an elect circle in those days when climbers were still few and the Cuillins remote and mysterious.—EDITOR].

For more than half a century Glenbrittle has been the centre of some of the most important climbing developments in Scotland, particularly in rock climbing. Behind the activity on the peaks was the host of all the visitors, farmer Hugh MacRae. With his death at the age of 94 in June 1978 there passes a true friend to thousands of climbers.

Few realise how much the progress in mountaineering was dependent on his courteous acceptance of the ever increasing number of visitors on his lands, and his genuine concern, based on his strong convictions of Highland hospitality, for mountaineers and their problems. It was his sympathetic interest which permitted progress to continue in the cordial and individual atmosphere that has made Glenbrittle and its attractions famed throughout the country and beyond.

He voluntarily undertook all sorts of responsibilities that many would have avoided and those who found refuge in MacRae's Barn from rain and midges were grateful members of a large and privileged band. Despite the rigorous demands of farming in such a rough area he was always ready to give precedence to rescue and recovery no matter how inconvenient to his own affairs. This wholehearted support of mountain rescue ranged from the first primitive, random help to organised Mountain Rescue Teams and R.A.F. helicopters.

A native Gaelic speaker, his great delight was to talk in the old tongue with his friends but he never used it to those who did not share his advantage. His quiet sense of humour was acutely descriptive of the odd characteristics of some of his more unconventional visitors. Informed about some crag-fast sheep which could involve him in loss he simply commented, 'Oh! Just leave them alone. They'll come down with the snow.' In terms of risk humans came before sheep. There was his macabre aside on early mountain rescue 'The boys find it easier to bring them down when they're dead.' Even when complaining about campers stealing his potatoes, he did so with wry forbearance.

His reminiscences of stalking and West Highland life around the turn of the century were a brilliant evocation of these colourful but harsh times, told both from the point of view of a hard working ghillie and wealthy sportsman. Just as his recollections and comments on Highland farming, particularly among the Cuillin corries, were pithy and forceful, a narrative of continuing hazards and difficulties tackled with resource and courage. Epitomised to some degree in his comparison of the present Glenbrittle road with the old track, 'It is a boulevard nowadays.'

Over the years he became a friend to a host of diverse visitors, recalling names and incidents with encyclopaedic accuracy and detail, and all with a quiet dignity and warm-hearted generosity that made him a man to be remembered with pride and gratitude. Beannachd leat.

ALEX. C. D. SMALL.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

Easter Meet 1978—Kinlochewe

THE Easter Meet held at Kinlochewe Hotel and the Ling Hut was attended by 27 members and 5 guests.

The weather was rough but as usual parties were out every day and from reports received the following ascents were made: A' Mhaighdean, Beinn Tarsuinn, Beinn Liath Mhór, Beinn Alligin, Sgùrr nan Ceanraichean, Meall A' Ghiubgais, Baosbheinn, Maoile Lunndaidh, circuit of Maol Chean-Dearg and Stuc A' Chroin (Loch Earn).

Present were: President Donaldson, J. M. C. Aitken, J. F. Anton, M. H. Cooke, G. J. F. Dutton, R. R. Elton, B. Fleming, B. S. Fraser, I. Fulton, C. C. Gorrie, J. M. Hartog, J. N. Ledingham, R. C. S. Low, A. Mantz, J. R. Marshall, H. H. Mills, M. Morrison, I. D. McNicol, D. H. McPherson, K. Macrae, T. Nicholson, R. J. C. Robb, G. S. Roger, W. T. Taylor, B. G. S. Ward, C. B. M. Warren and F. R. Wylie, and guests: J. Broadfoot, D. Cox, A. Dutton, N. G. Hetherington and D. Livingston.

Despite the rough weather it was an enjoyable meet.

Skye Meet 1978—Glen Brittle Memorial Hut

IT HAD been hoped that a meet in Skye for a week in June would be popular and 12 places were booked at the hut. In the event there were 8 at the hut for a total of only 31 bed nights and 3 staying nearby.

Present were: President Donaldson, D. J. Bennet, W. L. Coats, C. Grant, H. H. Mills, D. H. McPherson, G. S. Roger, S. Smith and B. G. S. Ward, and guests: J. Bennet and D. Pigott.

There were three good days on which the following climbs and ascents were reported: Eastern Buttress of Sgùrr Sgumain, traverse of Clach Ghlas and Blaven, the Cioch by Collie's route and Eastern Gully. Sgùrr Sgumain, Alasdair, Thearlaich, Mhic Choinnich, Sgùrr Thearlaich by *White Slab* and Thearlaich Dubh Gap, Sgùrr nan Eag, Sgùrr Dubh na Da Bheinn, Sgùrr Dubh Mór, Amphitheatre Arête, Amphitheatre Wall, high level walk over the Storr and we congratulate Wilfred Coats (Octogenarian) on his traverse of Sgùrr a' Ghreadaidh, Thormaid, Banachdich and Sgùrr nan Gobhar accompanied by the President and two others. The average age of the party was 72.

Despite the poor attendance the company was good and much was achieved in the three good days.

New Year Meet 1979—Inveroran

THE NEW YEAR meet was held at Inveroran Hotel and was attended by nine members and one guest.

The weather was reasonable with very cold winds and Sunday, 31st December, was a superb day of sunshine. The following ascents were reported: Stob Coire Odhair, Stob Ghabhar, Beinn Achaladair (3,288 top), Meall an Araich, Beinn Suidhe, Beinn Chaluim (3,236 top) and Beinn an Dothaidh.

Present were: President Elton, C. C. Gorrie, J. N. Ledingham, W. H. Murray, I. D. McNicol, I. H. Ogilvie, G. S. Roger, C. B. M. Warren and F. R. Wylie and guest: I. Waller (A.C.).

We congratulate Iain Ogilvie on his recovery enabling him to do two Munros in very wintry weather.

It was a very enjoyable meet and we express our thanks to Mrs Gravell and her staff for looking after us so well despite difficult arctic conditions and last-minute cancellations due to bad road conditions around Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Reception, A.G.M. and Dinner, 1978

THE LECTURE was given by Greg Strange and described a trip by a predominantly Etchachan Club party to the Cumberland Peninsula of Baffin Island during the atrocious summer of 1978. The quality of the slides – covering such diverse subjects as aircraft, lemmings, Arctic flowers and an impressive selection of smooth granite buttresses – was very high. A strong resemblance between the Cairngorms and the Baffin Island mountains (Mount Asgard excepted) was evident. Apart from the difference in scale and the absence of pubs the Etchachan Club were evidently at home, the resemblance to their home territory being emphasised by the predominantly wet and cloudy weather encountered. Greg's talk underplayed the physical and technical difficulties encountered – the ascent of the headwall on Mt. Killabuck being dismissed in two sentences – only displaying vestiges of emotion when describing how the party had allowed themselves to be fleeced by a local trader. It was a well-delivered and illustrated account of an efficient expedition which, despite bad weather, accomplished some very impressive ascents of high technical standard and two equally impressive failures. Definitely a model for the future.

The tea and buns provided after the lecture were excellent and plentiful – the George Hotel is one of the last strongholds of the afternoon tea.

The Ninetieth A.G.M. was generally voted the most enjoyable for many a year. Yet again the George Street Dungeon was the scene for a virtuoso display of schism and reaction. Serious and not so serious matters were debated with vehemence, direct negatives were proposed and seconded, votes were taken, the Secretary brandished the Minute Book, members threatened other members with revelation of their sordid pasts and general uproar was frequently imminent. For once, most of the noise came from the under-fifty age group but good humour (more or less) prevailed and Jim Donaldson, chairing his farewell A.G.M. as president, remained unruffled throughout.

The business started quietly enough and proceeded smoothly until the Huts Convenor was rash enough to mention the problems anent would-be unauthorised visitors at the C.I.C. Hut. Some members thought inhospitality diabolical and there was considerable disputation regarding the attitudes to be adopted towards door-rattlers, crampon adjusters, sandwich eaters and other refugees from the White Hell of the Allt a' Mhuillin Glen. In the end it was generally accepted that Hut occupiers should be courteous but firm in excluding casuals but that genuine cases of injury and exposure deserved every consideration.

This discussion naturally raised Banquo's ghost in the shape of the unfortunate A.R. and a motion calling for his perpetual exclusion from C.I.C. was put. After much debate on the varying versions of the famous Incident the majority was for letting that particular flea 'stick to the wa' and the motion was narrowly defeated.

The next brouhaha concerned Trevor Ransley's proposal at the previous A.G.M. to admit women guests to the dinner. This had been discussed by the Committee who had come up with a proposal to maintain the A.G.M. and dinner as at present but to organise a separate dinner-dance – to which, it was pointed out, ladies might be invited (notwithstanding this, the proposed function was referred to by an eminent member as a 'bisexual affair'). Trevor

rightly pointed out that this did not affect his original motion which, now having had a year's notice, would the Chair kindly put to the meeting. Trenches were hastily dug and the old artillery rolled out. When the dust had died down the motion had been heavily defeated and the invisible ink in the Constitution re-consecrated. Judging by the heavy vote for the status quo there should be no problem in co-opting a large and energetic dinner committee for next year.

In addition to the drama a large amount of Club and associated business was smoothly reported by office-bearers and representatives among whom was Mike Taylor presenting his farewell report as Club representative on the M.R.C. of S. Also bowing out, after an incredible twenty-four years of S.M.C. Committee service, was Jim Donaldson who received the well-deserved thanks of the meeting.

The Ninetieth A.G.M. amply demonstrated the Club's capacity to conduct vociferous argument in good humour and, in the end, to uphold its own ninety-year old way of doing things.

The dinner, organised by Kenny Macrae, provided better food and service than the previous year but was marred by the bad manners of a number of dedicated tobacco pyrologists who, never mind the Loyal Toast, diffused the odour of burning vegetation before the sweet had been consumed.

The speeches varied in length and tenor. Jim Donaldson's quiet farewell speech was balanced by Charlie Gorrie's brief but pungent toast to the Guests who received their annual abuse with good grace. Charlie included an interesting exercise in statistical accuracy by computing the probable number of alcoholics among the guests and then eliciting the appropriate number of confessions. The reply was made by Dennis Gray in a long (almost too long) and amusing speech. This was ostensibly about differences in attitude between Scots and English climbers and consisted mainly of hilarious (and possibly apocryphal) anecdotes featuring totally atypical characters from both sides of the Border. Perhaps intentionally, he reminded his audience of the good old anarchic days of the apprenticeship system (when certificates were something to do with National Saving) before concluding with a warning that his sensitive ear could hear the not-so-distant shuffle of the lay and bureaucratic hordes converging on the innocent and uncontrolled mountaineer.

J.M.C.S. REPORTS

Edinburgh Section.—Membership is slightly up this year but this has nothing to do with the admission of women as full members of the Club. We have got a good number of new members now which is very promising for the future of the Club.

All meets were well attended and members were active when the weather allowed. There was no outstanding meet of last year apart from our annual week meet to Carnmore. Our meet in September to Skye was unusual in that all the tents were blown down in high winds at the Sligachan.

This year we have arranged nineteen weekend meets, three one-day meets and twenty evening meets to local crags in the summer. This should keep most members quite active again this year.

Our annual dinner was held in the Coshieville Hotel, Kenmore, in which an excellent meal was served by Mr Reed, the proprietor.

Hon. President, Mike Fleming; *Hon. Vice-President*, Jim Clark; *Hon. Member*, Ian M. Ogilvie, O.B.E.; *President*, Bill Myles; *Vice-President*, Nigel Grant; *Treasurer*, Ken McCulloch; *Hut Custodian* (*The Smiddy, Dundonnell*), Jim Clark, 13 N.W. Circus Place, Edinburgh, EH36 5X; *Committee Members*, I. Brodie, A. Bruce, J. Durham, A. Morris, R. Phillips, T. Ryan; *Secretary*, David J. Mole, 42 Dolphin Gardens West, Currie, Midlothian, EH14 5RE.

Glasgow Section.—The Club started the year in fine fettle which unfortunately was unable to reach the expected peak, in that the summer weather being so dreadful, virtually nothing was done. This, of course, excludes all the epics experienced by those members who were caught by rain storms half way up climbs.

The membership is healthy, standing at around 90 members (not that they are always standing as can be seen at the Club Dinner held, of course, in the Kings House when around 40 of them are to be found lying in various prostrate positions having dined and wine not too wisely but too well). The replay, of course, will be at the 1979 Dinner where you can take revenge on the bottle of whisky that flooded you last year.

The continent fell to a three-pronged attack with Curley Ross and Hamish Henderson, now the esteemed President, going off to the Gran Paradiso Range in Italy via France where it rained, Germany where it rained, and Switzerland where it rained. They were completely captivated by the Italians, by the wine, by the food and, of course, the climbing, even managing to have, at the very least, the first Scottish ascent of the north face of Ciarloron direct. They have so far been unable to find this route in any guide book and would be obliged to have any evidence supplied to them. Those of us who are bored hearing of their exploits will be quite happy if they could be taken down a peg or two, though, knowing the pair of them, this is highly unlikely.

Pete Hodgkiss had an unlucky start to his holiday. Ron Hockey his partner unfortunately injured his back and was unable to accompany him to the Western Graians. Nevertheless Hodgkiss climbed the north west route of the Grand Casse and traversed the Dent Parrachers. Hodgkiss flew from Manchester to Geneva for £58 return, leaving at 10 a.m. and was in the Alps that same night. This was by courtesy of an accommodation-linked flight provided by a company called Whiteside of Blackpool — contact him for details.

Dr Angus McInnes and Fred McGill were also in the Alps and in spite of the worst summer weather for many years, were able to clock up some worthy ascents and ridge traverses. Among them the North Face of the Triolet. Dr Alastair MacGregor went skiing in Italy in January 1979.

Attendance at meets has been very high and there is a steady influx of new members, some of them embarrassingly young and even more embarrassing, skilled at climbing. However, this does allow the more senior members to adopt the pose of elder statesmen and gives them the opportunity to pontificate, not that they need much opportunity.

The winter season has started well and we can only hope that at the end of it some more stories will have been born.

It should be noted that the Glasgow Section of the J.M.C.S. is still, and has every intention of remaining, a male only club. The disgraceful abandonment of their worthy peerage by Edinburgh Section and their renunciation of masculine pride, was a blow to us all. However, rest assured dear reader there remains one bastion against this monstrous regiment of women.

Office-Bearers—*President*, Hamish Henderson; *Secretary*, Donald Stewart; 18 Buchanan Drive, Cambuslang, Glasgow.

Inverness Section.—Since its formation a few years back the Section's membership has been stable at about two dozen with about half this number being really active in mountaineering. A dedicated few visited Chamonix in summer of 1978 and others found the Pyrenees a refreshing change of venue for Christmas.

At home, the Section has been reasonably active with bookings of the S.M.C. Huts averaging once per month. No prizes are awarded for guessing the most popular Hut. In between times, joint meets have been held with

the Inverness Mountaineering Club despite the presence of ladies.

The first annual dinner of the Section was held at Invereshie House, Kincaig, on Saturday 5th May. The venue proved most agreeable although support from the Inverness and other Sections was somewhat disappointing. Next year the dinner will be held in early April to catch winter climbing conditions.

This Spring saw the unfortunate death of Howard Welch in an avalanche on Ben Nevis. Howard was an active mountaineer, a regular weekender, popular, quiet but self-assured. He was an experienced mountaineer, climbed to a reasonable standard and was a C.I.C. regular. Howard will be sorely missed by the Section.

Office Bearers 1979.—*President*, S. J. Carroll; *Vice-President*, T. Anderson; *Secretary/Treasurer*, N. Lawford, 1 East Croachy Cottages, Aberarder, by Inverness; *Committee*, I. Dalley, I. Douglas, C. Fraser, M. Garrett.

Lochaber Section.—As in the last few years membership has remained around the 75 mark.

This year's outdoor meets, bar one, have all been blessed with poor weather. The exception being this year's island meet to Coruisk when over twenty members sailed there from Arisaig. Because of the thoughtful provision of a bar on board only the more hardened sailors stayed up top. The remainder only emerging as we sailed into Coruisk accompanied by a beautiful sunset.

Several parties assaulted the ridge from various starting points but all ended up sunbathing on the summits. It was one of those days for which Skye is famous, blazing sunshine, not a breath of wind and no water on the ridge to moisten one's throat. The generally poor weather on the other meets, including the annual trip across the border to the Lakes, ensured that more time was spent in investigating the local hostelrys than visiting mountain tops.

This year's indoor meets have been the most successful held so far. A series of varied and interesting slide shows on mountaineering topics were 'played to packed houses.' Once again the annual dinner-dance was a tremendous success as was also the first of an Annual Club Dinner held at the Dundonnell Hotel.

One of the facilities of the Club is its library which besides possessing nearly all the S.M.C. *Journals*, and an extensive series of guide books of home and Alpine ranges has a wide range of general mountaineering books to which it adds to regularly.

The big event in 1979 is the Club's first meet to the Alps. Twenty members are making the trip to the Engadine in July for a few weeks for what promises to be a successful occasion. It should provide us with many slides for the winter shows.

Increased pressure is now being brought to bear on the Highlands both from recreational and industrial bodies and the Club through its Committee is keeping a close watch on all proposed developments.

The Club is very much alive and going strong with an active nucleus of local members who are out on the hills most weekends.

Office-Bearers—*Hon. President*, J. Ness; *President*, D. Watt; *Vice-President*, J. Patterson; *Treasurer*, H. Campbell; *Secretary*, Les Houlker, 3 Treslaig, Fort William; *Steall Hut Custodian*, E. Kay, 22 Glenhoy Street, Caol, Fort William.

London Section.—The past year has been a fairly mediocre one for the Section which like many other Clubs is suffering from a lack of new blood. The acquisition of new members will be of prime importance in the coming year, as will the completion of hut works started on Glanafon some ten years

ago. Of the ten official meets held during the year, the best ones were our winter visits to Wales and Scotland where snow conditions on the whole were good. This trend seems to be fairly well established as the past couple of winters have produced the best snow since the late sixties. Conversely though, after a superb spring meet in Cwm Glas the weather deteriorated as did Club activity, only to be rekindled at our Section dinner in November.

Membership has dropped during the year to 54 paid-up members, although there are no doubt the usual crop of active financial amnesiacs. Glanafon cottage saw less use during 1978 but with unheard of amounts of money in the Club kitty we hope to rectify the situation.

Our Section A.G.M. and Dinner was held in Derbyshire this year, a pleasant venture outside Wales. We attended the Perth Section Dinner, the B.M.C. A.G.M., were active on the B.M.C. South East Committee and are attempting to gain representation on the Welsh Committee.

Office-Bearers—*Hon. President*, J. Della Porta; *President*, and *Glanafon Booking Secretary*, Bill Wheeler, Officers Mess, J.L. Regt., Old Park Barracks, Dover, Kent; *Secretary*, H. Jordan, Waytes Cottages, Keston, Kent; *Treasurer*, D. Edmunds, 70 Buryfield Road, Olton, Solihull.

Perth Section.—Membership of the Perth Section remained at 54 with several new active members replacing those who fell by the wayside. Fourteen meets were held during the year of which four were day meets and ten week-ends. Average attendance at meets was up on the last few years. The Annual Dinner was held in the King's House Hotel and once again provided us with our best turn out, members coming from as far afield as Sussex to join in the revelries. The most successful meet was, undoubtedly, the long week-end spent on Rhum in May. All the major tops were visited during the week-end, the main ridge providing a splendid expedition. The welcome given to us by the islanders matched the magnificence of the hills and we were royally entertained at the Saturday night Ceilidh.

The Joint Annual Lecture with the Perthshire Society of Natural Science was given by Bob Barton of Glenmore Lodge who gave a very impressive lecture on his two-man expedition to the Karakorum.

For the second successive year the Club's 'Brains Trust' won the 'Mountain Mind' quiz organised by the Carn Dearg Club of Dundee. This time victory brought us the added 'prize' of organising the quiz for 1979.

The A.G.M. was held in Perth in November. The meeting was dominated by arrangements for Jubilee Year which was proclaimed to have begun by Iain Robertson, the incoming President. Events for the year were to include a Jubilee Dinner to be held in the environs of Perth on Saturday 20th October 1979. The A.G.M. was well attended and this indicated the continuing strength of the Section as its 50th year began.

Office-Bearers—*Hon. President*, Chris Rudie; *Hon. Vice-President*, Jim Anton; *Hon. Members*, Walter Pethers and David Wares; *President*, Iain Robertson; *Vice-President*, David Baker; *Treasurer*, John Rogers; *Secretary*, John Reed, 9 Burnbank, Bridge of Earn, Perth.

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

The Alps

STUART SMITH (J.M.C.S.) was camping in Chamonix for several weeks in July and August. For the first fortnight, while with ED JACKSON (S.M.C.) the weather was abominable with much snow falling below the tree-line. He writes . . .

'After an unfortunate incident during a walk from the Aosta valley (where we were searching for good weather), Ed had to drive home with only one leg fully operational, so back in Chamonix I climbed the Papillon Arête (Aig. du Peigne) with 'Don.'

'I then teamed up with Paul Marynez (G.U.M.C.) and did several climbs starting with the traverse of the Aigs. du Tour and then the N. Buttress of the Aig. du Chardonnet. After, on the traverse of the Grands Charmoz we recorded a very slow time due to the still large quantity of snow and a couple of Spaniards who, on failing to lasso a pinnacle, tied onto us instead! Next we did the N.N.E. ridge of the Aig. de L'M on which we had the whole mountain to ourselves by the simple device of not starting the climb until 4.30 p.m.!

'The N. Face of the Aig. d'Argentière gave us another enjoyable climb. The view from the summit of a big storm coming in and brewing round Mt. Blanc was most impressive but encouraged us to make a speedy descent.

'While I was ill Paul traversed Les Courtes and then our last route of the season was the Brenva Spur. Unfortunately, as the telepherique had been blown up, we didn't arrive at the Col de la Fourche bivouac hut till well after dark; so we had dinner for breakfast and abseiled off the balcony at midnight. The rest of the night was uneventful and we reached the summit of Mt. Blanc about an hour after sunrise.

'The main advantage of climbing at night (we did the Argentière and Chardonnet at night as well) is nothing to do with encountering good climbing conditions, Blackshaw please note, but that you can't see how many thousands of feet you still have to climb!

'We then festered at the swimming while the weather went from bad to worse and we were offered a lift home!'

JOHN TURNER writes: 'JOHN STEELE and I camped for three weeks in the Pennine Alps during March. J.S. concentrated on improving his ski-ing while I spent most of the time learning the basics. In all we had sixteen consecutive days on skis, only a couple of which had poor weather. To round off a very successful trip we managed the South East ridge of La Luette from the Dix hut.

'I returned to the Arolla district for the last two weeks in September. Again the weather was glorious and with girlfriend in tow enjoyed a number of valley-based treks as well as a solo traverse of the Dent de Perroc via the Point Genevois.'

'PETER STOKES and IAN VAN HINSBERG visited the Alps in July and August. From the Rothorn hut they traversed the Trifhorn to the Montet hut. They next traversed the Besso and Blanc de Nominay followed next day by Mont Durand. After a rest day they climbed the Dufourpitz by the ordinary route and from its summit traversed the Grunzgepel, the Zumstinspitz to the Signalkuppe. The unsettled weather continued however so they found themselves in some difficulty in descending from the summit of the Liskamm. This they eventually managed to achieve. They then moved to Bonande in the Dauphine and traversed Le Bans by its North East Pillar. Next day an attempt was made to traverse the Barre de Ecrin by its South and North faces, but bad conditions and worsening weather forced a retreat. Still in search of settled conditions they again moved, this time to the Vecours where an ascent was made of Mont Aiguille wearing PA's and using steel cables as a handrail!'

'JOHN FAIRLIE and his wife Lizbet had a fairly quiet year for them. In the spring they managed a ski tour in the Pitz Palu area, in June climbing in the Dolomites as well as climbing trips to the Donanstal and the Alpstein.'

J. McK. STEWART writes: 'I was in Switzerland from 28 July to 12 August attending the A.B.M.S.A.C. Meet in Zermatt. Weatherwise this was the most depressing and frustrating Alpine season I have had since my first visit in 1934.

'Extreme variations in conditions changed daily and no serious climbing plans could be made with any reasonable hope of success. Ascents included The Ober Rothorn, Stockhorn, Cima di Jazzi, West Längflujoch and a great deal of footslogging for no profitable reason.

'Huts visited were the Monte Rosa, Hörnli, Schönbühl together with Fluhalp and an attempt to reach the Rothorn Hut ended in retreat down the moraine to Trift in a blizzard as cold and raw as a January day on the Ben. Fortunately the good Club atmosphere and social life at our Hotel base in Zermatt helped to make up for the lack of mountaineering activity.'

Corsica

H. M. BROWN writes: 'In May/June 1978 a late winter and continuing bad weather curtailed activities but did not stop two round trips (a) from the head of the Restonica Valley up to camp by a frozen Lac de Melo from which an attempt on Punta alle Porte was stopped by storm and avalanche dangers. The Bergerie de Grotelle is now a Nancy Smith-type hostelry. We went up from it to the Berg. de Cappellaccia on the Alzo plateau, an odd flatness in these jagged hills. From it, on one day in the summer, the setting sun can be seen streaming through the *trou* of Tafonato. Dreich weather for our bivouac there and then a superb descent by the Tavignano, perhaps the grandest of all valleys and overlooked by many rock towers, hardly climbed. (b) From the Col de Vergio via the falls and the Golo valley (fun with river-crossings) to the leaky Berg. de Tula. We retreated off Paglia Orba and just got a substitute ridge traverse to Capu Giargiole before the storms came again. The *trou* puffed cloud like some one smoking! From the Col Triplex we added the easy Punte Licciola before descending to the Grotte des Anges shed which now leans at interesting angles. Monte Albano actually gave a good day; a peak with a fine view. We walked out to Calacuccia the next morning.

'*Practical Points.*—'Camping U Sognu,' below the Citadel at Corte, made a delightful base from which we simply hired cars to deliver and pick us up from sorties—a more efficient system than being stuck to one's own car. The bergeries are becoming less useful as they are either poshed up and then kept locked or are simply being allowed to fall down. A grand high level walking route, GR20 has been 'established' but remains mostly on paper like the West Highland Way. Eventually it will mean huts above the Berg. de Tula and elsewhere which will be useful for climbing as well as for the Way walkers. From reading the guides and others' comments, the impression is that the island has tremendous rock-climbing possibilities still. There are major granite crags and spires with no routes at all. It may not have an alpine scale but there are other attractions. We only met people at the Grotte. In July/August rain is virtually unknown. Earlier, in May/June the snow vastly improves the scenery, which is at its freshest then, and allows crampons to be used to cover ground rapidly. The 'Joliett' (mini-train) from Bastia to Ajaccio gives a spinal transport system, which with good flights and ferries to the island allows one to leave a car behind for once. Corsica is a good buy I reckon. There are good I.G.N. maps, two rock guidebooks (recently revised), and quite a few notes in the S.M.C.J., A.J. and so on.'

'*Montagne Sainte-Victoire.* This is the mountain Cezanne kept painting and is a sort of Calanques shifted thirty miles inland; a four mile long array of limestone buttresses which needs three guide book volumes to describe its rock climbing routes. I scrambled up it one evening for a bivy and a leg-stretch after motoring from Morocco—and had an interesting night. The

summit ridge was gained by going up through a hole in the mountain flank (akin to the famous *trou* in Tafonato, in Corsica, which I was to see a week later) but my bivy was disturbed at 1 a.m. by rain coming on. In stocking soles I felt my way down the 'Caragai' hole and settled down again in what felt like a draughty aircraft hanger. This west summit with la Croix de Provence is not the highest but is the more attractive. A restored monastery just below it has been restored as a high-class bothy. Fire risk is so high that smoking is even forbidden on the lower slopes. There is an article in the *Alpine Journal*, 1975, p.198, which with the I.G.N.1: 50,000 Aix-en-Provence map is about all there is to help other than the guide books. On the spot the only problem is selection.'

The Atlas

H. M. BROWN writes: 'The S.M.C.J. of 1973 tells of a traverse of the M'Goun Massif in Morocco. On that occasion being the car-owner I had the job of dumping and picking up the Mill-Roberts team. In 1978 I went again with fellow Eagle Ski Club members, having arranged transport to drop us and pick us up at the end. We actually drove into the Bou Goumez valley ('never again' the hire firm said) and lodged with its Sheikh in splendid surroundings. A three day trip took us up the valley to the Lac d'Izourar and a ski ascent/descent of Irghil Ouagoulzat (3,770 m). We then crossed the Tizi n'Ait Imi on the eastern crest of this long range and, on foot, made M'Goun (4,071 m) despite blizzards and porter failures. This entailed crossing the Tizi n'Ounout to the Tizi n'Oum Soud – the cols at the head of the double valley draining M'Goun on the north. Across a canyon we could see the plateau where Mill-Roberts had frozen in their bivouac. Like them, we found M'Goun a tussle (see A.J. 1979 for a full account): six hours to make the ascent, one and half to descend. The next night, well down east, beyond the meeting of the rivers from the cols, we had a revolting dust storm overnight. Just escaping more bad weather we crossed the Tizi n'Ait Hamed (c.3,000 m) to descend into the desert. Bou Drarar, our collecting point, lay on such a bad road we took the chance of a lorry out to Kelâal on the main road. This gave another sort of dust storm but ensured we caught our bus and our planes home. Journeys like this are vivid and memorable, true adventuring but not for those who worry about time and motion.

'After the Eagles had flown I went up to Imlil in the Toubkal Massif and from there to Sidi Chamarouch and the Tizi-n-Tarharate route above it, climbing about 3,000 ft to bivouac under a boulder. The tizi (pass) 3,156 m led to a windy, misty wilderness but Adrar n' Tichli, 3,753 m was climbed and the 7,000 ft down to Imlil done just *not* ahead of the heaviest rain I have met in the Atlas. It remained grey for the drive to Tangier and apparently all Europe had been dismal.

'I have a limited number of the Toubkal Oukaimeden maps available and also copies of articles on the Toubkal Massif so if people are interested in the High Atlas I can possibly help them. The main area is developing, with trekkers and tourists moving in – but the feeling of remoteness remains. Climbing, ski mountaineering, remote wandering are all superb, in a setting which is so 'foreign' yet as easy to reach as the Alps – and a deal cheaper.'

Asia Minor

A. L. CRAM writes: 'In January 1979, I revisited South Sinai, that vast triangle of genuine Old Testament wilderness, spreading north from the tip of the peninsula for 100 miles with like base. Myriads of unmapped tops fill the triangle and thrust out from wide shingle aprons to widely varying heights, prime material for some future Ali bin Munro. Gebel Katharina, twin of Mount Sinai, some 40 miles inland from the east coast, attains 8,675 feet; main tops

in lesser groups hardly exceed 3,500 feet, but all are surrounded by lesser tops, towers and pinnacles. From our experience at Mount Sinai in 1977, we equipped ourselves for car-camping, of necessity bringing all our gear from home and supplies from Elat at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. A glorious desert drive of 150 miles over the high Sharira Pass ends at the little haven of Sharm-es-Sheikh (ancient Ophir), on the Red Sea. Like some other Avalon, neither rain nor snow falls here to wash the gravel off the crumbling slabs or to clean the stones from the shattered rim rocks and towers so that, looking warily up, the blue sky is visible through the crevices. The sound of falling water or stones is not heard here or any bird, animal or even insect noise in the deep wadis. Yet the silence is not oppressive, simply whole and unpolluted by any sort of noise.

Put off by the extensive minefields in the extreme south, on the outskirts of the Gebel Ghat el Gherbi and Gebel Barakat, evidence of the 5,000 years war, where any disturbed ground induces Agag's Syndrome, we withdrew to the Straits of Tiran, opposite the lifeless coast of Arabia a scant 6 miles away. Maybe affected by the B.B.C. weather bulletins, we passed many days lying beside our little tent under the palm trees and blue sky on the hot sand, taking in fluids from the ample gallonage thoughtfully put in the boot at Elat, occasionally rising to ward off the predatory actions of young camels, old Beduin and American and European drop-outs and drabs, this being one of the farthest beaches of the Western world.

Possibly, cliffs of unbroken rock await the climber far inland, but the peaks of the Gebel Ir'im hold out a minority appeal. Rising as they do from level shingle plains, seven miles from the sea, in compacted gravel cliffs for hundreds of feet they are repellent at first view, but their secret charm lies in following their innumerable wadis. Walking up a level apron of sand between rock portals, one can continue for some hundreds of feet or even yards to an abrupt wall only to find a right angled turn along a narrow corridor a few yards wide, in turn, becoming a 'squeezeable' cleft and then an oblique slit followed by a crawl perhaps ending in a gigantic cirque of brilliant colours but freezing menace. Otherwise, by one feature or another, all different, it is possible to gain upper basins and from there scramble up to airy, narrow ridges. These are linked to higher ridges, but some can end on the edge of an abyss or require a traverse above a stony pit round some tottering pinnacle and suddenly unforeseen a main top can be gained. The whole landscape is simply unfinished, the raw materials of mountains. And, inevitably, treacherous and vicious places are also present, not least, the 'roller bearing' combination of gravel and plimolls.

'The interest engendered by edge and pit can lose regard for time and the sole warning of the quick drain of the bright light in the evening is a stirring of icy air and one can lose sight of the need to be able to retrace a complicated route or find a way down into a wadi travelling in the direction of entry, otherwise, some burrow far into the labyrinth. At times like these, my wife, like Lot's, took care to look back, her perceptions of survival, very probably, enhanced beyond normal by recollection and prudently to guide me down routes which I still cannot forget.'

North America

W. D. BROOKER was in British Columbia in July and writes: 'During a twelve-day motoring tour from Vancouver to the Rockies and back again, with my wife and daughter, we saw a lot of spectacular mountain scenery and visited several National and Provincial Parks. The way in which the camper is catered for was very impressive, and the degree of control exercised quite acceptable, when balanced against the freedom from litter, the good sanitation facilities and the universal opportunities for campfires of veritable Creag Dhu proportions. Our own free and easy approach with its pyrophobia and litter

generation does not compare too well. Garibaldi Park in the Coast Range was visited and a snow-bound camp established at lovely Garibaldi Lake at the end of a 6-mile trail. From there, volcanic Black Tush (7,600 ft) gave an enjoyable climb, easy but for the last hundred feet or so up a buttress which seemed to be composed of compressed coke. Yoho Park in the Rockies yielded a valley walk through forested slopes laced with great waterfalls. Manning Park in the Northern Cascades was disappointing. Heavily forested, and its main peak, Mount Frosty (7,900 ft), presenting a ridge traverse which looked exciting but was so shattered and rotten it gave little pleasure and was followed by a steep 3,000 ft descent to the valley through pathless forest involving strenuous and unpleasant bush-whacking. In retrospect one really needs to allow two or three days at each location to give one time to get above all the pervading forest before getting on to the peaks.'

THEO NICHOLSON, one of the *viellards terribles* mentioned in *S.M.C.J.*, xxxi, 1978, 268, sends us the following account of ten days of climbing in the woods of Maine: 'Whilst on a visit to a doctor son in Ontario my wife and I took the opportunity to spend ten days in Maine of which the first seven were on Mt. Desert Island. It lies about 150 miles N.E. of Boston and whilst there, we enjoyed climbing most of the hills over one thousand feet high of which there are seven. Although low, they are mountains in miniature. The lower slopes are covered by dense forest of spruce, pine, poplar, aspen, birch and maple whilst above about six hundred feet, the rock shows through in great Cairngorm-like red granite slabs. So walking up these hills is often by very rough tracks which sometimes provide scrambling over large boulders.

'The views from the tops are extensive: in the clear cold air from N.W. and North winds, one could perhaps see 80 miles up the Maine coast to New Brunswick and northwards towards the Quebec border. The scenery of rocky indented coast and dense forests inland is somewhat uniform, relieved only rarely by an occasional hill. Later, we motored 120 miles North, via Bangor to Millinocket, the nearest township to the Baxter National Park in which stands Mt. Katahdin, 5,267 ft – the highest peak in Maine.

'Having 'receded' the approach to Roaring Brook compound (1,450 ft) and spent the night in a motel in Millinocket, next day I left the car at Roaring Brook and set off at 8 a.m. It was a rare and perfect day: calm and clear and there had been 2 degrees (C) of frost overnight.

'I chose the Helen Taylor Trail as the most interesting – passing over Mt. Pamola and the 'Knife Edge' ridge to the South Top and thence to the main top, Baxter Peak at 5,267 ft. The trail, well marked by painted signs or cairns, climbs steeply through the forest. The going is rough, mainly over granite boulders and not infrequently hands are needed either on the rock or on trees or exposed tree roots. After about 1,000 ft of climb, the way levels off in lighter forest before again climbing up the steep slope to the Keep Ridge. It was a windless day of brilliant sunshine and already some birch, poplar and maple were changing colour, some to a golden yellow and the occasional red maple to a brilliant scarlet which splashed like blood on the hillside.

'As one climbed, so the trees diminished in height and sometimes a clearing gave a welcome glimpse of the mountain ahead. About 10 a.m. and at about 4,000 ft by my aneroid, I stopped half way up the Keep Ridge to enjoy the view and to take some food. At this height only birch survived as ground scrub whilst blueberry grew wherever the rocky surface permitted.

'The view to the East and South extended to perhaps 100 miles – forest and lakes as far as the eye could see and only an occasional hill to add interest to the landscape.

'The ridge ahead was of granite boulders and led up moderately steeply to Mt. Pamola, a top of 4,902 ft. This I reached at about eleven o'clock and passed over it with only a short pause. Then followed a 100 ft drop to a narrow

saddle, the lower 50 ft of which was steep and required care: likewise the first 50 ft on the other side gave a scramble up rock with plenty of good square holds. Thence followed the 'Knife Edge' an undulating ridge of about 400 yds length. It was narrow but of sound black rock which reminded me of parts of the Skye ridge. Nowhere was the ridge as narrow or as exposed as parts of Crib Goch. I was of course lucky in the weather: in gale, rain or snow it would have been a different proposition. But the Park Wardens decide daily at 7 a.m. at this time of the year (September) whether the Knife Edge ridge is to be allowed or not. After October, permission to climb on Katahdin must be sought in writing one month ahead from the Park Supervisor at Millinocket. No doubt, he requires that only reasonably experienced and equipped people go up.

'So, after enjoying the Knife Edge, I reached the South Top (5,240 ft) and passed on over a shallow dip and 400 yards further over a rounded ridge of granite boulders and so to the top of Mt. Baxter at 5,267 ft. It was 12.45 p.m. for I had stopped more than once to talk with other climbers. About a dozen others around the top were enjoying the sun but only two or three had come up over the Knife Edge and the Helon Taylor route. The absence of litter impressed me; not even a cigarette end or a matchstick did I see. What a difference from the rubbish abounding on the tops of Snowdon or Tryfan in Wales or on Ben Nevis - perhaps - for I have not been on the latter for about 15 years. The absence of rubbish leads one to wonder whether some restrictions and control should not be applied in our own 'National Parks' however much we might resent them for other reasons! I enjoyed 1½ hours of sunbathing, rest and lunch near the top. I had thought of descending by the Cathedral Trail but two climbers to whom I spoke at different times told me the Cathedral Trail was not an agreeable way down because of the large boulders: it was more pleasant to climb up rather than down.

'My leg muscles were suffering from much bouldering and climbing on the way up and as I walked down towards the Saddle, thinking of going up the other side and down the Hamlin ridge, I was afflicted by a dose of the usual (for me) cramp in thighs. So, lacking a kindly companion to force the foot back and up - which usually cures it - I lay up for 15 minutes, ate some Dextrosol, drank a little tea and decided that the 500 ft more of uphill work and a longer descent were not for me. So I came down by the Saddle Trail to Chimney Pond. The first 500 ft was steep and very rough - going down a dry water course full of granite boulders. I came down slowly and the cramp subsided. In due time - it seemed a long time - I reached the spruce enclosed lake deep in South Basin at 2,914 ft and lying under the high rock walls of Pamola, Knife Edge and Baxter. Chimney Pond seemed to me an unattractive name for so delightful a place but all small lakes are 'Ponds' in these parts. Here also were a Warden, Bunk Houses and camp sites. The lake is reserved exclusively for drinking water: no washing or bathing in it is allowed.

'I enjoyed the quiet and beauty of the situation and was told that my wife (whom I had left at Roaring Brook) had been up and had started back only twenty-five minutes earlier. So down I went over the rough bouldered trail and about two miles on, overtook my wife and in about another half hour we were back at Roaring Brook - at 5.30 precisely.

'It was indeed a memorable day on which to finish our short stay in Maine.'

Greenland

DOUGLAS SCOTT and I. H. M. SMART, together with C. N. Eccles and C. Eccles spent six weeks in the inner reaches of Scoresby Sound in East Greenland. I.H.M.S. writes, 'Thanks to an air drop by the R.A.F. made for an army expedition we were able to have included a boat, outboard motor, fuel and food. These were parachuted at the mouth of the Shuchert River. Two para-

chutes failed to open properly; these contained the radio sets but nothing important such as food. We walked to the drop zone from Mestersvig, maybe 100 miles. A delightful time was had by all putt-putting among the icebergs which are huge and numerous. The slow speed of the two boat armada coupled with bad weather delays in Iceland awaiting the flight to Greenland forced us to shorten the trip and we spent most of the time in the Bear Islands, a group of mountain tops sticking out of the sea forming a very complex and beautiful archipelago whose loneliness was accentuated throughout our stay by the haunting call of the Great Northern Diver. The main peak of the group, a shark's fin of good rock rising 830 metres straight out of the fjord was climbed, the V.Diff. crux being brilliantly led by D. Scott. The Army Expedition had beaten us to it, alas. The boat, outboard, fuel and enough grub for four men for 2-3 weeks has been cached somewhere in the area. Offers for this valuable and strategically placed depot should be made to any of the principals involved.

Other Expeditions

The Aberdeen Baffin Island Expedition, 1978.—DAVID NICHOLS sends us the following account.—'This, the Etchachan Club's first overseas Foray, began on 28th June when seven Scots — Steve Bateson, Ian Dalley, Mike Freeman, Bill McKerrow, Guy Muhlemann, GREG STRANGE and myself — were spirited from a wet, dreich Prestwick to the sizzling heat of Montreal. The London contingent of John and Alison Higham, and John Moreland, joined us the same evening in a bar on the wooded shores of the St. Lawrence, in which earlier a cooling swim had set the tone for what was to be a bizarre onward journey to the Cumberland Mountains. Next day a characteristically late Nordair jet flew us north for 1,300 miles, over limitless forests, then the bare rocky wastes of Northern Quebec, then the green crazy paved sea ice of Ungava Bay and Hudson Strait to land finally on a snowbound and desolate Baffin Island, with a temperature just above freezing. Frobisher Bay is a curious mixture of scruffy prefabricated shacks and futuristic plastic, and one night there is usually enough for most people. Our onward flight to the Cumberland Peninsula, far to the north east, was in an ancient Dakota which lurched bumpily through yellow icy cloud for an hour and a half, nosed hopefully about over Cumberland Sound for a few minutes grace, before despairingly greeting the Pangnirtung mud in a crazy, careering slalom. An all night 10 mile sledge ride, towed by cheerful Eskimo on skidoo, eventually left us on terra firma in a wintry Weasel Valley, at 4 a.m. on 1st July.

From the first, the main objective of our trip had been to attempt the stupendous unclimbed precipices of Ozymandias, a Yosemite like mountain far to the north, in the remote Owl Valley. Unlike the mountains of Weasel Valley and the fairly familiar Asgard group, this beautiful and isolated area has seen very little climbing activity — largely because of the logistic difficulties involved in getting enough food and equipment in there. Because of this, and the enthusiasm of Pat Baird and Adam Watson, we felt it was worth the extra 40 miles under 90 lb loads. We used a period of bad weather (low cloud, wind, drizzle) to stock a base camp at Summit Lake. This was a five-day back breaking exercise, relieved only by the spectacle of the new Arctic spring. On the first fine day we all went climbing. Greg, Bill and Steve made probably the second ascent of the Italian Ridge on Mt. Sigurd, a Grade III Alpine-style traverse. The Highams climbed Mt. Friga. The remaining five of us climbed Mt. Killabuk's East Face (4,000 ft H.V.S.) by a line on the left of the great slab apron, increasingly hard, to join the Scott/Hennek route at the foot of the headwall. This was climbed by chimney cracks up the leaning pillar on the left of the Scott aid route, and went free, giving hard climbing. We had 22 hours of non-stop rock climbing, showing the advantages of a midnight sun; also the disadvantages, when one falls asleep on one's jumars.

'The weather broke as soon as we were all down – in fact that 36 hours good weather was the most we were destined to experience. Two days gruelling slog through the murderous Glacier Lake moraines and down Owl Valley saw us encamped beneath Ozymandias, where we stayed for 2 weeks. Good weather again, a bit of courage plucking, and we set off again. Greg and I climbed the left-hand of the twin pillars (Ozymandias Left Leg, 3,000 ft H.V.S.); this gave the hardest climbing on the smooth lower slabs, a very sustained 1,000 ft; a 'night time' bivouac in bad weather below the headwall and an amazingly straightforward chimney up the latter on the second days' climbing. Guy and John climbed the first 500 ft of the Right Leg, descending when they found a blank section needing many bolts. The same pair, with Mike and John, climbed the right hand flanking buttress (Ozymandias Right Arm, 3,000 ft V.S.) which followed a huge chimney system to the defined crest above. The Highams, John and Alison, climbed the left-hand flanking buttress (Ozymandias Left Arm, 2,500 ft, S.-V.S.). Ian and Mike reached the remote summit of the unclimbed snow dome up the Ozymandias South Glacier, one of the highest points in Baffin, by a long snow trudge and scrambling ridge (Peak Ecks has stuck!) and had a nasty accident on the descent when Ian slid 500 ft down the wet Ozymandias River slabs – fortunately without serious injury. Bill, Alison and Steve climbed a prominent 'S' shaped ridge across the Owl River, giving a pleasant V.Diff. climb and a magnificent viewpoint.

'On the walk out from Ozymandias, Guy, John M., Greg and myself attempted the Owl Pillar, a fine 4,000-ft spur dominating the upper Owl Valley, but were foiled by a blizzard 300 ft from the top. Up to this point the climbing had been excellent, H.V.S. or harder in sections. After an epic descent we all regathered at Summit Lake camp. While the two Johns left early for home, Mike, Greg, Bill and Steve took four days food and went up the Turner Glacier, establishing camp at the foot of Mt. Loki's magnificent east ridge. In unrelenting miserable weather they remained tent bound until on the last day a clearing encouraged them to chance a try at the big rock peak immediately to the north of their camp (later named 'Enasiagit,' Inuit for 'good fortune'). This 2,500 ft granite ridge gave excellent climbing on perfect rock, with pitches of V.S. – the hardest being the last moves onto the summit block. The descent in bad weather, down the opposite, unknown side of the mountain, was an all-night epic, finishing in a blizzard.

'When, a day or two later, the last of our party had left Summit Lake for home, the rock peaks were glistening with fresh snow, heralding possibly the coming winter. While we were at Overlord, awaiting a canoe out, we had an unusual meeting with members of another Scottish party, who were camped not far from the head of the fjord and who were climbing among the neighbouring glaciers and peaks – it's not such a big world after all.

'On the 7th August, it seemed smaller still, as we looked down on the Arran peaks shrouded, as usual, in mist, and the long trip was finally over.'

REVIEWS

Avalanches and Snow Safety.—By Colin Fraser. (1978; John Murray Publishers Ltd. 269 pages. £6.50).

This work originally appeared as the 'Avalanche Enigma' in 1966 and as such will be familiar to some readers. The change of title is well conceived. Thus the emphasis moves from avalanches as a mysterious, almost inevitable natural disaster, to something predictable and even preventable. Also, the new title will hopefully appeal to a wider range of readers. The chilling message from the first chapter to the last is that avalanches concern everybody who goes into the mountains in winter, to work or to play. Ski resorts and piste skiers are not immune from risk and skiers seeking deep powder should certainly look before they leap.

The book is easily read in spite of a large proportion of scientific information. The latest theories of avalanche formation and release are described in a manner likely to be understood by the average skier or mountaineer (whatever that is). Certainly, the numerous anecdotes and the chapter on Death and Survival will ensure that the reader develops a new respect for the snow covered mountains. The chapters on Rescue Organisations and Reserve Methods are of more than theoretical value. Mr Fraser emphasises the importance of the initial action taken by those present at the scene of an avalanche accident and of course the importance of extracting the victim quickly. For ski mountaineering he has no doubts regarding the value of electronic transceivers of the Picps type. The use of explosives and mechanical avalanche barriers are peculiar to Alpine areas, but of considerable general interest.

Finally, what is the relevance of this book to Scottish Mountaineering? Considerable, I would say, and refer only to the numerous fatal and non-fatal avalanche accidents which have occurred in recent winters. The almost constant wind accompanying snowfall in the Scottish hills predisposes to the formation of slab and as a result this type of avalanche is probably the greatest hazard.

One way to reduce mountaineering accidents lies in better education of climbers and hillwalkers. This book should be required reading.

D.G.

Storm and Sorrow in the High Pamirs.—By Robert W. Craig. (Published by The Mountaineers, Seattle).

In the aftermath of the disturbing events that occurred during the 1974 International camp in the Pamirs very few of the participants could have envisaged the possibility that an outstanding literary work such as this might emerge from the disasters and unexceptional mountaineering achievements of that expedition. Of course, with hindsight, it could be seen that all the ingredients were there and Bob Craig's experience and deep involvement certainly qualified him more than most to tell the tale. Furthermore, he is obviously a very talented writer.

Craig was deputy leader of the 19-strong American contingent at the Alpinade and 'Storm and Sorrow' is his account of — 'a complex of events that included many climbs, much suffering and death, and struggles for life against odds that were greater than any of the participants could know.' Essentially the book is about people. Imagine 160 unequally represented climbers (with widely differing abilities and aspirations) from U.S.S.R., Japan, America, Italy, France, West Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Holland and Britain. Permit them to climb 20,000 to 23,000 ft peaks composed mainly of shale and ice. Add deep unstable snow, earthquakes, unprecedentedly bad storms and continuous precipitation and you have the perfect set-up for a complicated epic.

Somchow the author successfully unravels the confusing chain of events that culminates in the deaths of 8 Russian women attempting the first all female traverse of Pk. Lenin. With a final total of 15 deaths you might expect morbid sensationalism; but this is not the case. Sensitivity and compassion are the ever-present qualities in the writing, whether describing the harrowing experience of being suffocated inside a tent engulfed by an avalanche or discussing logistics with the unfortunate Russian hosts whose hospitality and good intentions met with so much bad luck.

The book has its lighter moments especially during the initial chapters. It was interesting to learn how meticulously the Americans prepared for the expedition and how Pete Schoening had visited Moscow in 1973 and — 'secured a promise that four unclimbed and untried climbing objectives would be exclusively designated for first attempts by the American teams.' I particu

larly enjoyed the chapter entitled 'North Face of Peak 19' which recounts the rewarding first days when Craig and his three companions were free from the bustle of base camp and at last getting to grips with their chosen objective. It reminded me of our few memorable days on the British Spur of Pk. Lenin.

There are some minor factual errors concerning the activities and whereabouts of the British parties; but these are insignificant in the context of the book. Do not be discouraged by the garish paperback production. The text is absolutely fascinating.

G.S.S.

Classic Rock.—By Ken Wilson. (1978. Granada Publishing, 256 pages. £12.00).

This is Wilson's sequel to his successful *Hard Rock*. It follows the same format of selecting some of the best routes of their grade in all areas of Britain, describing them by short essays written by different contributors, and illustrating them photographically. The climbs selected are limited up to Hard Severe in standard thereby leaving room for further editions in the series.

It was with much regret that I found this to be a disappointing book. Perhaps it was the disjointed nature of a commentary by such a variety of authors or the lack of immediate impact by photographs of easier grade. While some of the routes had a colourful and interesting history too many simply had nothing worthwhile to write about them. What can you say about Little Chamonix?

I must disagree with Wilson's preface statement that these climbs 'can generally be tackled by any climber regardless of age, experience or fitness.' The Chasm and Eagle Ridge are no places for inexperienced climbers. At a price of £12.00 it is more than can be asked from even your favourite aunt.

I.F.

The Shining Mountain.—By Peter Boardman. (1978. Hodder & Stoughton. 192 pages. £5.95).

This is the account of one of the most audacious undertakings ever attempted in the Himalayas – the ascent of the West Wall of Changabang by a two man expedition. The climbers were Peter Boardman and Joe Tasker. The West Wall had been the intention of the 1974 Bonington expedition but had immediately been dismissed as impossible. Indeed, Boysen wrote that 'The route we had originally contemplated was obviously so difficult it was laughable.' Doug Scott, when asked his opinion of their proposed objective, declared that it was 'Beyond the bounds of possibility, youth.' This book is a gripping account of the successful ascent. It is a story of endurance, perseverance and climbing to the limits told by Boardman with extracts from his and Tasker's diaries. The writing style is of a narrative, immediate nature which, if lacking in the finer points of prose, holds one's attention from beginning to end. A splendid achievement and a recommendable book.

I.F.

Mountain Weather for Climbers.—By David J. Unwin. (1978; Cordee. 60 pages. £1).

This modest little booklet contains a clear and concise account of the basic meteorology of our climate. There is also a good deal about weather aspects relating to mountains and British hills in particular. The whole is presented with clear explanatory diagrams and supplemented by useful features such as the Beaufort wind scale, the Shipping forecast areas and a list of weather terms used in German, French and Italian. This inexpensive manual is highly recommended.

W.D.B.

The Games Climbers Play. Edited by Ken Wilson. (1978; Diadem. 685 pages. £8.50).

This is an anthology of over 100 articles, and other items drawn from mountaineering magazines and journals. The *S.M.C.J.* is well represented and many will find much that is familiar both from our own *Journal* and other well known sources. The presentation is under nine chapter headings embracing not only expected items such as rock climbing, Alpinism, etc., but also matters such as style and character, risk and morbidity, and the contemporary issues of rescue, access and mountain education.

A collection of this kind is inevitably a personal choice and as such criticism is largely invalid. Some of the pieces are significant, some exciting and others entertaining, even if one or two authors are overexposed (after the eighth encounter 'Mac' Davis' humour begins to smack somewhat of the prefects' room I remember at school). Like all collections it is a book best dipped into at will rather than read from cover to cover in the manner of a reviewer. Used as intended it will rarely fail to reward with something which inspires, satisfies a mood or promotes a chuckle.

This anthology differs in style from its well known predecessors by Irving and Ward. It is pronouncedly Anglo American, with a strong contribution from across the Atlantic, but almost nothing from across the Channel. It is also a contemporary collection, reflecting the climbing world of the 60's and 70's with very little of earlier vintage and all the better for that. There is a selection of good, if unexceptional photographs, and a peppering of original and amusing cartoons. All in all, a worthwhile buy for the bookshelf at a reasonable price.

W.D.B.

Gervasutti's Climbs.—By Giusto Gervasutti, translated by Nea Morin and Janet Adam Smith. (1978. Diadem. 200 pages. £3.25).

This is a paperback edition of the account by one of the greatest of European mountaineers of his ascents during the 1930's and early '40's. Originally published in 1947, a year after his death on the Gervasutti Pillar of Mont Blanc du Tacul, this is a facsimile report of the English translation which appeared in 1957. As a paperback its binding is less robust than one might want but one cannot but commend the way in which the photographs are matched to the text — all too rare an attribute in climbing books.

Gervasutti was in the thick of the great surge of Alpine climbing which occurred in the 1930's and his book gives some interesting insights to the relationships between leading climbers of the day, and with the climbs they sought to achieve. Apart from this the style is attractive, giving both a lucid topographical picture of the routes being attempted as well as the human response to them. This is a classic from the recent past which deserves to be read by today's young climbers. The concluding chapters gives as good a summary of the reasons why we climb as any this reviewer has encountered elsewhere.

W.D.B.

Life is Meeting.—By John Hunt. (1978; Hodder & Stoughton. 286 pages, 24 illustrations. £6.95).

As the title suggests, this is not just a volume of mountaineering memoirs. The climbing is there, of course, spanning more than forty years of activity and ranging over most of the great mountain playgrounds of the world — the Alps, the Tatra, the mountains of the Yukon, the Pamirs, the Stauning Alps, Kashmir and, of course, Everest. But Lord Hunt's activities have never been confined to climbing, so that it comes as no surprise to find the mountaineering chapters interspersed with work in the political sphere. So we are treated to discussions of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, the Parole Board, the

House of Lords and democratic reform all acutely and sympathetically observed. The spectre of the Mountain Leadership Certificate debacle rears its ugly head for a page or two, but it is soon dwarfed by the Pamirs. The final chapter is devoted to the Alps; it is rather fragmented and gives the impression of being appended as an afterthought.

The writing is gentle and unexaggerated, but the persistence of such a style over nearly 300 pages does tend to make the book rather soporific reading at times. This mixture of mountain and politics is quite unusual; whether one likes it or not is largely a matter of taste.

CHRIS GILMORE.

Bushcraft, A Serious Guide to Survival and Camping.—By Richard Graves. (Routledge and Kegan Paul. £2.95).

Despite the sub-title this is a book which the Scottish climber will smile at now and then. There are three hundred pages of it, with innumerable illustrations, which look just like 'Scouting for Boys' or Arthur Ransome down under where presumably the book has already appeared. 'Absyle' fortunately is illustrated, for the technique, the bare feet and the hawser being used are unfamiliar, the last being a bush made grass rope of three strand three lay (2" diameter) of breaking strain, approx 400 lbs. The 'approx' might worry the crag fast Scot but he would have starved to death long before completing such a rope. Every other picture is of constructions of all kinds which all seem to be made of wood. One shudders at the destruction of trees that have gone into learning to camp and survive in style. As we have already destroyed all our trees this is largely irrelevant.

How about a nice wee rope walk? 'The cross bar A is supported by two uprights, and pierced to take the cranks B. These can be made out of natural sticks, morticed slab, and pegs or, if available, bent wire. The connecting rod C enables one man to turn all cranks clockwise simultaneously . . . A similar crank handle to C is supported on a fork stick at the end of the rope walk. This handle is turned in reverse (anti clockwise) to the cranks C to twist the connecting strands together. These are 'laid up' by one or more of the feeders.' It would be much easier to send for McInnes, though maybe he is not so hot on Huts and Thatching, or Fire Making. Tracks and Lures, Snakes and Traps are dealt with in other chapters. The reader cannot escape! It is certainly a book crowded with information and a read through it will give the dullest many a hint. The greatest part of it though has little to do with Scotland. Even further of Scotland its message seems unduly complex, hard work, and far too serious.

HAMISH BROWN.

Give Me The Hills.—Verse by Syd Scroggie, arranged D. Phillips, drawings by Colin Gibson. (1978; David Winter & Sons Ltd., 15 Shore Street, Dundee. 95p plus 20p postage).

I Never Fell into a Midden.—By David Phillips. (1978; David Winter & Sons Ltd., 15 Shore Street, Dundee. well illustrated with hill photographs. 95p plus 20p postage).

Journalism and Dundee still have their connections and these two small volumes add the link of hills to make a combination which is often refreshing and sometimes irreverent. Both authors are well enough known characters and their enthusiasm for the hills, for Dundee, and life generally is reflected in their prose, verse and photographs. Non Dundonians might like to compare notes!

H.M.B.

Journal of Kindred Clubs

The Canadian Alpine Journal.—The 1978 C.A.J. is, as always, a superbly produced glossy. Nearly 130 A4 pages stuffed with climbing articles, route descriptions, topos, maps, photodiagrams, climbing action photographs, and photographs of cliffs and mountains.

The main bulk of the journal is rightly devoted to northern N. America and includes everything from multi day extravaganzas on Mt. McKinley down to 30 ft outcrop problems with a few articles on the European Alps, Himalayas, etc. thrown in for good measure. Lightweight articles, photographs of flowers, poetry (apart from a couple of short lapses) and other such irrelevancies are firmly excluded although a few articles of a scientific nature are allowed to creep in.

In short this is a first class journal written by real climbers for real climbers, packed with information and definitely essential reading for anyone planning a climbing trip to N. America; fairly tedious for anyone else.

S.N.S.

Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa. Little of general interest in this, other than an account of an expedition to Baffin Island, where a foray on the N. Face of Tasuit Bastion was unsuccessful. Most of the other articles relate to home activities, made more incomprehensible to this reviewer by his inability to read Afrikaans or understand the grading system of F this or E that. Somebody could do journal reviewers a service by publishing a glossary of comparative route and pitch gradings for the different countries.

Ladies Scottish Climbing Club Journal, 1978. A welcome return to this, the first for ten years. Published on quality paper with many illustrations, including one on Salisbury Crags. Why does the parkie not throw them off? The articles are a fine mix, both home and abroad, Greenland, Canada, Andes with a poem or two thrown in. Let us hope that No. 7 appears sooner than 1988.

New Zealand Alpine Journal, 1978.—Hardback this year and full of quality photographs, this is a really fine journal which puts most others in the shade.

K.V.C.

Cambridge Mountaineering, 1978.—The cheaper format forced upon journals like this by present day production costs is a handicap which has not been overcome in this issue by the quality of its contents. The major piece is a travel tale to the Hindu Kush, but apart from one or two good cartoon drawings the best item is a colourful and realistic appraisal of today's Yosemite in the grip of park control and commercialism.

W.D.B.

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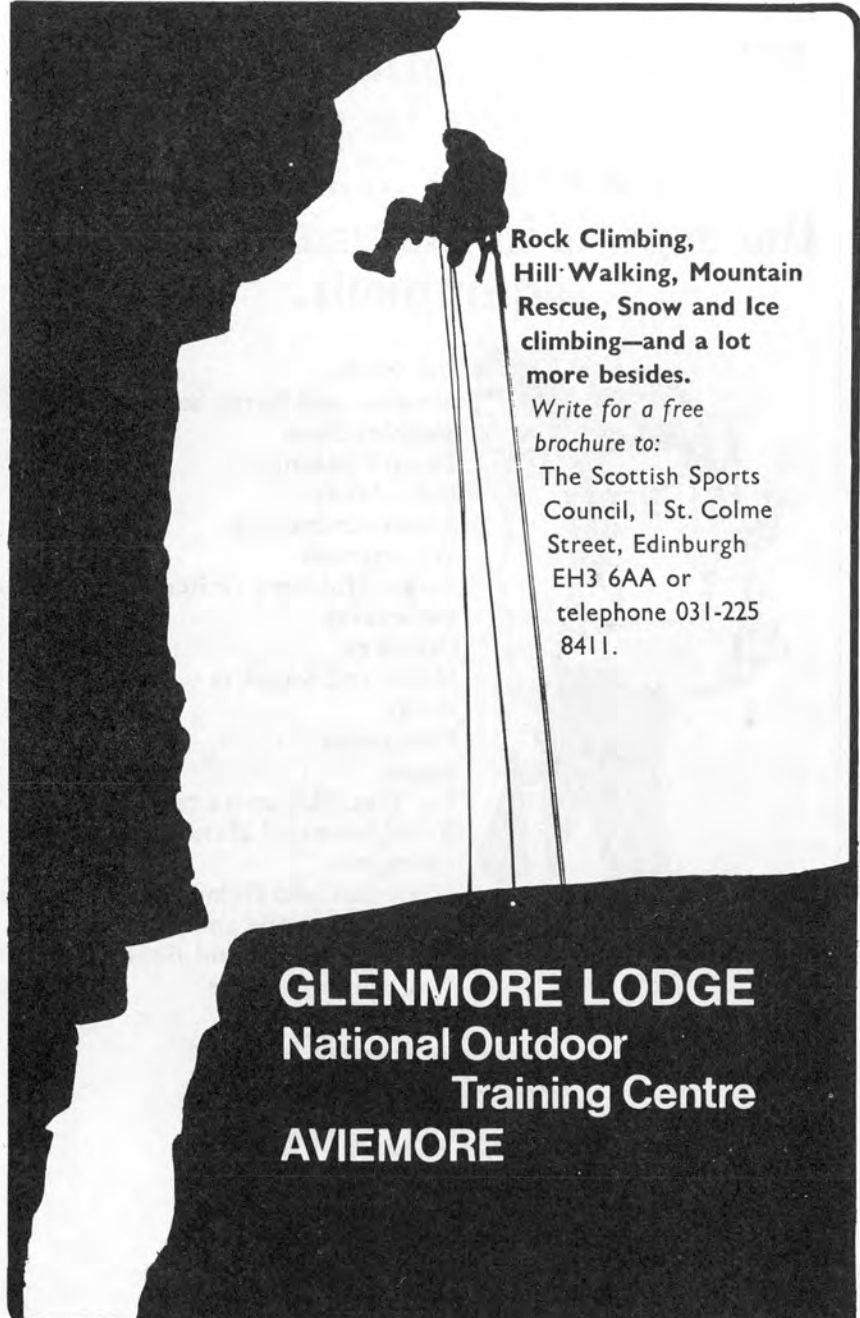
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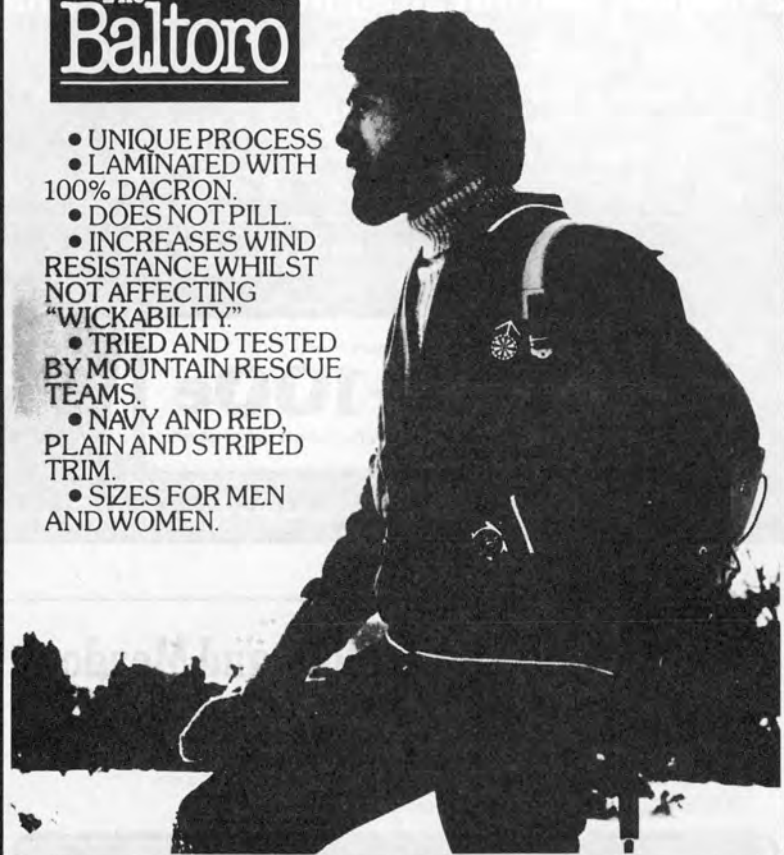
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