THE SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL



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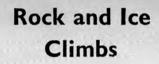
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The Great Buttress of Carn Dearg. Climbers on The Bat are marked.

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LINK FACE TO FACE

By Andrew Nisbet

A WINTER ascent of the Link on Lochnagar was a long-standing ambition conceived in the days of a largely nocturnal apprenticeship when we University novices would creep out of Allt na Guibhsach at five in the morning and break the trail to the corrie in darkness and ever-deepening powder, always to be tactically overtaken just below the final col by the Etchachan Club in top gear. And while they would grind the grade V buttresses into submission we would look on in envy as we floundered up the classics and staggered back long after dark, maybe just in time to overhear the discussion of great unclimbed lines before they retired to bed and we were left to crawl into our corner for another short night. And so we heard about the Link, revered as the next great problem and logical step after the notorious Pinnacle Face which remains as the last achievement of the tricouni age which had passed away before the Link came under attack. With the acceptance of crampons, the Cairngorms were launched into an ice climbing era and the Link was pushed to the background where it lurked to brood over the battle for the major ice lines. It was out of sight but never out of mind, remaining as one of the last and most sensational of the great Cairngorm style mixed routes before a new era on the bare rock faces is finally forced on us.

How often had I mentally pulled over the crux, Terrordactyls thudding into imaginary grass over the top and working myself up into the frenzy of enthusiasm and confidence which would be necessary to oppose such unknown odds. Except I knew that there was no grass on the crux overhang and pegs might be the only answer. And then there was a VS chimney pitch to reach the traverse of Route 2 and maybe you'd have to peg that too, if there were any cracks, by which time the route might not be worth the effort. What sort of satisfaction would you get after scarring a fine summer route with peg holes, let alone the inevitable crampon scratches left to humiliate struggling rock leaders? Of course the ethical argument works in reverse, depending on one's priorities: the recent transformation of Pinnacle Grooves from a fine winter proposition to a

high quality rock climb by a zealous Etchachan gardener (who, incidentally, does not climb in winter), could be seen as a great loss to future winter lemmings.

Winter arrived and a chance November visit to the Dubh Loch showed the critical amount of ice on the chimney pitch of Vertigo Wall. The information was kept secret till a December ascent left minds blown and bodies shattered, and was followed by an escape to the Alps. In our absence the snow melted and started a rotten Cairngorm winter. The big blizzard left powder for months while one must ski or sink, or be distracted to neve and new routes in the far North-West. Then it thawed and the Link was gone.

As usual the summer was wet and the frustration kept the Link under attention. An abnormal number of summer ascents brought a suspicion of competition, confirmed near closing time one night by the admission to a March inspection although all it revealed was a snow-stripped Link in the midst of the best conditions of that year. It has the same problem as Vertigo Wall, in that after mid-February it catches the sun, the first thaw strips it bare and the snow never returns. It's going to have to be done early in the season when the weather is bad, the climbers are unfit and the daylight is short maybe another bivouac job, which is hardly an attractive proposition, for misery like hanging for fourteen hours in Scottish weather on Vertigo Wall is only slowly forgotten. Even if you miss out the top pitch and finish up Route 2, it still leaves the cruxes of Route 1 and Route 2 with the Link in between. In the type of powdery conditions likely to be needed for a true winter ascent, I took three hours on the crux of Route 1 and Bob Smith was four hours on the crux of Route 2. How much daylight does that leave for three equally hard pitches on the Link? It was almost impossible to keep an open mind about all these problems, so eventually hopes faded under persistent pressure from moods of pessimism and the Link was relegated back to a dream. It seemed so unrealistic to contemplate free climbing routes with such sustained summer difficulty, when even a smooth V.Diff. pitch can force a peg or two or a couple of hour's excavation.

Then one day, on a summer ascent of Route 2, I looked down longingly from the traverse towards the Link – so bottomless, what an impressive line! The traverse of Route 2 ends in a big groove, not too steep and full of grass, just like a good winter line, but although it continues down underneath towards the Link it is undercut and I could see nothing but space. Was this a ray of hope? Yes, it was mentioned in the guidebook, 'a big vegetated groove slants left' from above the summer crux. Did this mean the second VS pitch and the traverse of Route 2 could be missed out by an independent winter line? A summer inspection seemed imperative but it continued to rain and repeated visits were transformed into aquatic ascents of

Polyphemus and Raeburn's Gullies. Now these are not to everyone's taste, though excellent practice for winter, so I lost an unsuspecting friend, not to mention thirty feet off a new rope, while the Link laughed in the mist.

A final factor tipped the balance when Norman Keir, equipped with a pair of trampons (tricouni-nailed crampons) claimed a revolution in winter buttress climbing despite a very wet mishap on the sea cliffs. Now I acquired a pair and the prospects of the Link improved.

Autumn arrived and climbing activity dwindled to a slimy November on the sea cliffs. Winter was proclaimed by the first sleet in Aberdeen and a dash up to Lochnagar gave me a chance to try out the tricounis on Black Spout Buttress; they were fantastic on half inch slush! The Link was thoroughly photographed and the big groove showed up well; the line was real.

Next weekend we were back, and with a dusting of snow on the cliff the tricounis were brilliant. Optimism rode high. Then came the blizzards, endless storms depositing feet of powder making the 'Gar accessible only to skiers and suckers. January slipped by and feet of powder still remained; as soon as it thawed the Link would be gone for the winter, but unless it did, by the time you reached the route, there would be no time to climb it, unless you bivouacked in a snow hole in the Black Spout. But it was minus twenty every night, with wind and snow, so we went to the North-West in search of better conditions.

Then John Anderson came on the phone. He'd been up to the corrie and conditions were 'magic.' Eagle Ridge had been conquered under the threat of an impending blizzard. All the grooves were filled with ice, even on the Tower. No one believed him but a good forecast for the weekend tipped the scale.

'Fancy the 'Gar this weekend, John?'

'Yes - Parallel B?'

'There'll be nothing in it.'

'Verglas, it'll be good.'

'Fancy the Link?'

'What's that?'

'Best line in Scotland.'

'Ice?'

'No, grass.'

'Not interested, winter's all about ice.'

'Ice is boring.'

So I invited him round to see the slides while Alf gave him the standard gloomy warning about my propensity for bivouacs. But to my surprise he agreed; or maybe no one else could offer him transport.

Nine o'clock on Saturday and we're at the bottom. The first pink sunlight glows on the snow-crusted Black Spout Buttress. Light flurries of pink spindrift float into the Black Spout on to a mattress of fluffy powder. The rest of the corrie is pure white, not a speck of black penetrates the fog crystals. It's breathtakingly beautiful, on possibly the coldest day of the year.

Tricouni plates are on and I'm to take the first pitch (also the crux of Route 1). Obsessed by a blind faith in their potential and a need to save weight, my crampons have been abandoned. After all, it was on this pitch two winters ago that a three hour struggle and an illegitimate peg for aid really convinced me how useless crampons are on powder crusted rock. Tactics have been decided; John scorns bivvy gear but I persuade him to haul a sack. Rarely do I feel so enthusiastic at the start of a route, particularly one with so many unknown factors. But the day is so magnificent

The first bulge is awkward, there's ice but I scrabble over it on a wave of confidence. A superb peg runner follows at the base of a short slab. All I can see is a smooth crusted surface but I remember what's hidden; how once before I scraped off inches of powder to reveal blank rock which precipitated an appalling front point teeter on tiny nobbles, and a longing for the stability of nails. Now I attack the plaster vigorously but the Terrordactyl whips smoothly over the surface. It's ice, and it's thick, half an inch in places. How did it get there? Lochnagar faces don't form ice, not without a thaw anyway. My heart sinks as I realise the consequences. I cut a nick and stand up on one nail but the ice breaks immediately and I'm left dangling from one tool. Two more tries - that tool's in well. It's hopeless, I've never cut holds before and one doesn't become a Marshall or a Brooker overnight. I could walk up in crampons too. Frustration powers a legless scramble while the consequences of an imperfect tool placement are only too obvious. I rest under a small overhang, feet happy on a small flat hold. It's crazy, I couldn't rest here when in crampons and had to hurriedly place an aid peg. This time I can rest for ever but can't climb. The corner crack is filled with ice so I can't get the aid peg in, only a Terrordactyl pick will fit - it can therefore be climbed, but can I do it without using my feet. A perfect placement on the lip, pull up with both hands and make a despairing lunge for the upper crack. The tool jams, probably solid, but I hesitate fatally. Another huge pull and one knee is over the lip but I'm too late to reach a buried flake. Exhausted I slump back over the lip but the tool won't come out so I hang uselessly for a second before making another lunge as a last dying gesture.

Desperation gains the extra inch and a Terrordactyl hooks the flake. Now with both tools over the flake I can pull over on to my knees in a praying position (praying that I had crampons, of course, in which case I could stand here happily). A semi-mantelshelf starts a further twenty feet on hand and knees stretching the limit of my arm muscle endurance till at last I can stand on a clump of grass and contemplate the ludicrous situation. John follows cheerfully and easily, happy to be moving again after his long cold vigil. He seems unaware of my helpless, exhausted state although I moan continuously. He complains of cold feet but traverses round purposefully into the start of the Link proper.

Time passes. I'm standing in a little snowy groove, not comfortable, not uncomfortable. The wind has dropped and the sun is bright. Little figures scurry around the corrie. Some pass quickly, ploughing up a powdery Black Spout, others glance up and point, then move on. Snow from unseen excavation above sweeps past, only an occasional light gust from the gully below diverts it into my neck and raises a light shiver. Now and again the rope moves a little, up and down a few times, imperceptibly creeping away. It seems so peaceful, almost euphoric, just watching the world going about its business, not a stir of wind or limbs, with only an occasional inaudible shout from above or a shift in the constant

flow of cleared snow to bring me back to reality.

It's into afternoon now, the sun is away from the West Buttress and the hillwalkers have long gone. Observation of the world at play has detached me from fear and the call to climb is accepted almost passively. The cold has numbed the necessary enthusiasm and aggression, despite the suspicion of what's to come. I wander along a ledge and there it is - a big groove a hundred feet long, overhanging at entry and twice more in its length, the overhangs avoidable by clean rock on the right in summer. My worst fears are confirmed, all is ice. The groove has been vacuum cleaned of powder and every face is glazed with clear ice, even the big grass plug on the first overhang. Terrordactyls sink to perfection as I try to cut steps but the ice is too thin, the steps break and I fall off. I kick the ice with my feet, front pointing without front points, climbing while every second expecting a tool to extract under unreasonable strain. Then my willpower is finished. The second bulge is hopeless, John shouts a warning but it's only too obvious. A vertical wall on the right with irregularly shaped depressions each smoothed over with water ice sometimes an inch thick, if you're lucky. Each depression has a Terrordactyl hole and two front point marks shaped like a little mocking face, and all this excavated from a facade of thick crust while the only runner is many feet down. I am both impressed and depressed, so I start to prussik, past the third bulge - wide bridging on glazed rock with only a solitary peg for protection and no sure placements to check a slipping foot.

We are united, but there are no smiles. He was stretched, and the route seems to be slipping away, while I am helpless to contribute and evening is approaching. The crux lurks round the corner so I offer to peg it. As I cut steps on an easy iced slab and awkwardly move round the corner into a niche, I think John realises for the first time how much of a passenger I really am. I'm stunned by the size of the overhang. Crouched in the niche, I have to stretch my neck right back to see the lip; I'm in a white cave of iced walls with an ice-choked roof crack. Any pegging cracks are buried deep; it looks so impossible I can only stare. 'Shall I have a go,' says John from round the corner. I'm still speechless so he comes round. No words when he sees it, he just starts. The belay is the rustiest of old pegs from the fifties and our pathetic contribution at my feet. John shoves his axe into the roof and lurches his feet up on to a smooth icy wall. They slide off repeatedly but he still dangles. I cut a score in the ice: it's lip breaks off but I can hold his foot on to it. An amazing pull up on one arm and one supported foot and a Terrordactyl drops over the lip. It sticks to something and he hangs spreadeagled over the roof above my head.

'I don't know what this tool's in,' he says. Then pauses.

'Will I hit anything?'

'No chance' I reply, as falling snow touches nothing to the Black Spout itself. 'Neither of us will touch anything' I think to myself.

'I haven't got the courage to do this' he says and I relax for a moment in anticipation of a safe retreat; and then he starts pulling up, ever so slowly at first to a bent arm position. I stop breathing, feel the hot flush of adrenalin in my face and a tingling down to my fingertips. A foot swings out from under the overhang and lodges on a fluted edge of fog crystals far out above me.

'What's that foot on?' he shouts. 'Is it good?'

'I don't know' I answer. 'It doesn't look it.' It looks appalling.

'Maybe it is' is my most optimistic offering, since there's no way back. His whole body is still in view, suspended out behind me, bridged across the lip of the roof. How can he stay there? The bridge edges higher and wider and he grunts out of sight. Debris pours out behind me, like being at the back of a waterfall. What sort of a position is he in? Will he run out of strength up there? I know there is no protection. I clip his rope into the belay as a runner, but then unclip it again. Maybe a direct fall on to my body will absorb some of the force on the belay? From sixty feet? I clip it in again but doubts and morbid visions race through my mind. Then he's up and I feel close to fainting.

At this point I hear the now notorious climbing call, 'Prussik when you're ready,' which was picked up by a nearby Lairig Club president on his own private epic and recalled with glee the

following week at the Club dinner. His shrieks and whoops of derision break the tension and obscenities fly across the Spout. As they abseil off I prussik at speed in increasing darkness. The wall above, containing the deep chimney crack of the next summer pitch is blank, white and vertical. Only a later summer visit was to show me a back and foot chimney completely obscured in that wall. We must go as planned up the groove on the left to the finish up Route 2 – the logical winter line; or just an escape? John races up in the gloom, a race against darkness. His feet are scraping and sliding, you can see the sparks at night. 120 unprotected feet almost at running pace, no time to clear holds, just blast on and hope for the best. The belay peg I prussiked on comes out in my fingers but these things are no longer important.

There is lots of night climbing left; the finish of Route 2, the abseil from the summit of the Pinnacle, arêtes of feathered fog crystals; climbing at night is so relaxing after the pressures of daylight. All the route costs me is three nights of nightmares and some memories I'll never forget. John is not so lucky, his frostbitten toes costing him most of the winter's climbing and the future problems that frostbite can bring.

I've done the route since in summer and was astonished at the features we never saw. The route is bristling with cracks and flakes, with the potential for infinite protection. Will the complete summer route go? I think it will – each pitch seems possible, but all in one day seems doubtful, possibly only in tricounis and under light powder, although predictions are dangerous. I know I won't be back in the same conditions. Lemmings don't have nine lives.

TWELVE DAYS SOLITARY

By Paddy Buckley

DECEMBER 20

The Royal Highlander, so crowded that even the corridors were full, drew into Inverness four hours late. But, as usual, the Kyle train had waited for it. There was no time for a meal, however. I asked the guard to put me down at Loch Luichart. I stepped on to the deserted platform, hoisted my 57-pound pack, and set off. A Land-Rover swished past, heading east. It was driven by Anderson, Whitbread's gatekeeper at Kernsary. He was the last human being I was to see for twelve days.

I left the road and turned towards the hills: 1.30 p.m. and twelve miles to go. There had been a lot of snow, but most of it had melted, and the streams were high. It was cold and soon began to rain. Pale-rumped red deer ran away across the barren hillsides. I envied their fleetness. I was jaded from lack of sleep; I hadn't had a meal for 21 hours; and my pack, despite meticulous preparation – every item had been weighed and scrutinised – felt too heavy. There was 25 lbs. of food, enough for fourteen days; there were crampons, an ice axe, boots, gaiters, candles, two torches, three pints of paraffin, and enough warm clothing to cope with the coldest conditions. My only luxury was a plastic flask, full of Drambuie. It weighed 1 lb. 4½ ozs., and it was a potion magical beyond belief.

By the time I reached Fannich Lodge it was dark. The map led me down to the edge of the loch, but it was a false trail – for low water only. I cast around and eventually found the track above the lodge. Only four miles to go, but in the circumstances, seemingly endless. At last a building loomed out of the murk: The Nest of Fannich with the familiar and comforting M.B.A. plaque on the door. (Nest, alas, is no longer maintained by M.B.A.). Soon there was a fire blazing, the kettle boiling, and a meal cooking on the Primus. A generous swig of Drambuie on an empty belly had turned Nest into a five-star hotel and me into a happy and unsteady ninny.

DECEMBER 21

Breakfast in bed by candlelight. As soon as it was day, I tidied the rooms and then carted dead wood from the derelict plantation. A MacInnes axe is a great bothy tool; a combined hammer, chopper, crowbar, pot-lifter and spade. To celebrate the solstice I traversed the A'Chailleach horseshoe in winds that gusted to Force 10. With the aid of a long iron stake, I crossed the swollen River Nid, the water chilly and waist deep.

DECEMBER 22

Squally and unsettled, so I spent the morning getting in a good supply of firewood. It was my first visit to the Fannichs, and I was uncertain about the river crossings. I practised at a couple of places on the Nid and then went up to the 'bothy-kettle' bealach to reconnoitre the route onward. It looked a wild and desolate journey. Back to Nest by way of Sgùrr nan Each in very hostile conditions. To bed at 6.30, and awoke, fresh and alert, at midnight. One of the consequences of this deepening solitude was my inability to sleep through the night; whatever time I went to bed, I would wake up five or six hours later, quite refreshed and unable to doze off. Sure it was a good opportunity for Great Thoughts, but an awkward time to analyse the various creaks and scurryings, both inside and out. The remedy had been foreseen; Drambuie and Mogadon.

DECEMBER 23

The wind moved round to the west and I became less cold. Spent an invigorating day trotting round the eleven tops of the eastern Fannichs. What superb country! From the Dirrie More, these hills look dull and uninspiring, for the great cliffs and lonely wild corries are hidden. But there is a feeling of space and remoteness, and the paths are few. I reached the end of the ridge, An Coileachan, in driving rain, retraced my steps to the shelter on Meall Gorm, and ran down the excellent track to Fannich Lodge and darkness. (The Northern Highlands District Guide is in error when it says this track is 'practically fictitious').

DECEMBER 24

Much brighter and less windy. Decided to explore the three passes between Gleann Cabuie, and Loch a'Bhraoin. Discovered one of the most impressive panoramas in the North-West: Meallan Chuaich, a modest hill that sits in the middle of a high moorland plateau with an horizon that extends from the Achnashellach hills, through Torridon to Slioch, Airigh Charr, A'Mhaighdean, An Teallach, the peaks of Assynt, Seana Bhraigh, and on to the massed ranges east and south. The vastness of this area is overwhelming.

Most of the day I had been travelling west-north-west with Glen Cabuie in sight on my left. I didn't need to consult the map to return to Nest. It was simply a matter of dropping down from Groban to the glen, turning left, and following the river back to Loch Fannich. The mist fell as I reached a ruined shieling (Tighvean) I knew I had boobed. A quick check with map and compass revealed that I was in Gleann Tanagaidh and heading south, when I should have been in Gleann Cabuie, heading east. Between the two valleys was a looming and unknown ridge. It was the classic orienteering problem: up and over, or the long way round. I was on the edge of the map and the light was beginning to fade; so I stormed up the hill, cursing my stupidity. The top of the broad ridge was a great maze of peat hags and pools: I ran and leaped in the gathering gloom, until at last I could see the glistening river, winding down to Loch Fannich. One last breakneck gallop down the darkening hillside, and I was able to relax. I never minded doing the last few miles in darkness, so long as I was on a path, or valley bottom (the right one, of course). There was so much surface water about that a torch wasn't necessary.

You may be wondering about the practice of safety on the hills. If the main article of the canon declares that you should not go alone into the winter mountains, you may not be easily persuaded by the opinions of a heretic. So much of the well meaning advice depends on the arrival of a rescuer – the whistle, the bright clothing, the rucsac heavy with emergencies. The case for total self reliance

is seldom pleaded, as though it were tempting Providence. My plastic whistle, had I needed to blow it in the gale force winds of those first three days, had a range perhaps of 40 feet – assuming of course that there was anyone on the hills to hear it. Route details left at the bothy? Some men of the R.A.F. Kinloss Rescue Team came to Nest for Hogmanay. They left a note, some grub, and some whisky, all of which I found on my next visit – at Easter! Emergency gear? For how long an emergency?

Like the prospect of hanging, mountaineering alone concentrates the mind wonderfully. We are *all* survivors, not just the solitaries, and we make use of the same basic safeguards – fitness, stamina, and experience – to a lesser or greater degree. Lest I seem too far gone in this elitist philosophy, I should also declare that there was seldom a day on this trip when I wasn't reminded how tenuous was the line between survival and disaster.

DECEMBER 25

Fresh snow for Christmas, which had drifted knee deep on the bealach as I travelled on to the shepherd's cottage beyond Loch a' Bhraoin. A friend had reported it locked during October, so I had set off early in case I needed to go on to Shenevall. But it was open. a fine refuge from the drizzle. I swept it out, fetched water, and gathered winter fuel. The fire that evening was the best yet, and after my bath, I lay on the couch, stark naked, gazing into the By this time, the solitude was no longer flames and singing. unsettling but an increasingly wonderful experience. To give a sense of order to my life, I had established routines in the bothies. The heartlifting dram on my return, and the ritual of tea. I became absurdly tidy. I would strip off each night in front of the fire and wash myself, top to toe, in hot water - before dinner of course. I had already begun to talk to myself and when I threw the slops out the door, I would shout 'Gardyloo,' just in case someone was passing. To while away the long winter evenings, I whistled, sang, and occasionally danced my way through a repertoire of almost a hundred English morris dance tunes. On this Christmas night the mood was for the great classical slow movements, and the sad haunting melodies of Beethoven 5 and 9 filled the firelit room with the beauty of the world.

DECEMBER 26

A clear day after early morning drizzle. The hills glistened in the sunshine, but I had to walk in the shadow of the valley for most of the day. At Achneigie I once had the greatest difficulty in crossing the burn in spate, but today was easy. At Shenevall there were obvious signs of a recent party, boozy and untidy. I was glad to have missed them. I collected the dead men into a large plastic bag, and then thought how ridiculous it was to be clearing up scruffy

bothies on such a fine day. So I made my fourth ascent of An Teallach, finishing the ridge by moonlight. Magic, unforgettable.

In the cottage there was the luxury of several candle stubs, and I settled down to read the log book. Old friends appeared, and my anger at the grottiness of Shenevall was chastened by the comments of those who, visiting the area for the first time, had found it a place of peace and beauty. The sound of mice behind the skirting stopped me from going to sleep. I thought about the poor woman who had ended her life in that room . . . Eventually I had to dope my imagination with a Mogadon cocktail.

DECEMBER 27

Forded the river where it was widest, only knee deep, but ice cold. Hurried across the molinia triangle towards Larachantivore and waded the next river just below the Colonel's favourite residence. Remembering difficult summer crossings, I was relieved it had all been so easy. From here onwards I was on my home ground, and I tramped along in sunshine and high spirits. The barn at Carnmore had been left open for the ponies, and there were dollops of dried horse dung around the fireplace. I used some to fill the gaps in the wall and gradually disinterred my grate. Whitbread's anthracite and Whitbread's ash logs soon brought comfort. Later the rain lashed down and the wind howled. I didn't care; I was back in the finest place in all Britain.

As day succeeded each day, with still no sign of another human being, I began to relish my isolation, to wish that the bothy would remain empty, that no one else would arrive to interrupt my evening lunacies. The 'outside' world had ceased to exist. My daily life was totally absorbed with the basic essentials of survival; rest after effort, warmth and shelter after being cold and wet, and food in a hungry belly. Nothing else seemed to matter.

DECEMBER 28

My watch stopped working. The causeway was under water. I saw eighteen fine stags on the way up Meall Mheinnidh, and the tracks of a wild cat in the snow on Beinn Airigh Charr. A squally sort of day with some dramatic views. Back along the stalkers' path in the dark, with the water even deeper on the causeway. A vicious hailstorm lashed me before I could reach the barn. I put a match to the kindling and in minutes there was a blazing fire and a kettle on the boil. Happiness is the sound of rain on a tin roof.

DECEMBER 29

Fresh snow overnight and a cold north-west wind. But there was sunshine and blue skies. Until now, because of all the river crossings and general wetness, I had been wearing my amphibious fell-running shoes. Today I wore my boots for the first time, and it was

great to have warm dry feet. I gave my axe a change from menial tasks and showed it some snow-ice on A'Mhaighdean. An eagle, some ptarmigan and several deer were also out enjoying the sun. Back home along the ridge of Tarsuinn Chaol – one of the finest short walks I know. Superb colours: the sky ranged from apple green to blue to pink and yellow and purple, the valley bottoms glowed orange at times, and just before sunset, Carnmore Crag was lit up as though by a celestial spotlight.

An agile mouse had nibbled my last cheese, suspended in a poly bag from a nail in the partition wall.

DECEMBER 30

The snows of yesterday had almost gone. A dreich day, unfit for the tops. Attempted to walk round Fionn Loch, anti-clockwise. Part way across the outlet stream, my motivation shrank; I retreated and made my way home over the Little Cheese and the Big Cheese.

DECEMBER 31

Packed my gear, tidied the barn, and set off to meet Denis King at the rendezvous on Loch Maree. The cottage at Ardlair is my favourite bothy, and has one of the loveliest settings in the Highlands. (It has since been sold to a Dutchman and will no longer be available to travellers). Denis was away on the hill but some of his Scots friends were outside the bothy smashing up firewood salvaged from the sad ruins of the great house. I introduced myself and at first found difficulty in being coherent. I'd been away from people a long time. Later on, as the whisky flowed, my tongue loosened. I didn't need the offered flask; I was high enough just on company. The women glowed beautifully in the candlelight, and the conversation and argument would have graced the Athenaeum. At midnight we welcomed in the New Year, and our howls floated across the misty calm waters of Loch Maree.

JANUARY 1

I took Denis along the post-runners' route and thence by stalkers' paths to the far side of Meall Mheinnidh, where yesterday I had seen a dead hind, freshly killed but abandoned. His expert hands and knife soon had the meat and offal packed into a couple of rucsacs. Back to Ardlair, with its oven and woodburning stove, for enormous meals of fresh meat, a welcome break from all that unpalatable Protoveg. Ray Simpson made chapattis on the top of the stove and Mary produced a bag of 'suir plims.' Afterwards we talked and sipped until 2 a.m.

JANUARY 2

Ray and I were up early and we trotted the seven miles to a deserted Poolewe. We hitched a lift to Inverness where I spent nearly two hours in a British Rail shower. After a feed of fish and chips and a quart of milk, I caught the overnight Royal Highlander to London and my Suffolk home. Despite the gargantuan meals of venison I had lost ten pounds in weight.

A YACHT MEET

By G. J. F. Dutton

It was not long after the unfortunate episode of the Cave Meet*, and we should have learned to leave the nineteenth century alone. The Doctor was reading out of a recent Club *Journal*, carefully keeping its pages above the spirituous rings of the table in Daddy McKay's.

".... that supreme Victorian event, the Yacht Meet of 1897, and the desperate race back off Sgurr na Ciche before the Presidential Yacht sirened finality and sailed away down the loch Whisky in the panelled smoking room and piping on the after-deck, with the sun setting over Skye beyond the loch and the President dancing a reel

'There,' said the Doctor. 'That's what we should have. A Yacht Meet.'

'Lies,' pronounced the Apprentice, who had suspicions of that particular *Journal* editor. 'Lies. He made it all up. Always did. Even invented his contributors. The biggest liar out.'

The Doctor defended the now retired office bearer, though he looked thoughtful. Several of his own articles ('the best ones, too') had suffered editorial Improvement.

'No,' concluded the Doctor, 'it's perfectly true. It's described away back in volume four, in 1898. We should do something like it now. Trouble is, who has a boat big enough these days?'

We thought. 'Macassar?' suggested the Apprentice.

'Lord, yes! Of course, Macassar! He has several, by all account. And his place is just by the very loch '

^{*}This ridiculous excursion still rests among the folktales of the Club, the Editor having so far lacked the effrontery to publish an account in the *Journal*.

On the next Thursday we were informed that arrangements were complete. The Doctor had phoned, and had been answered favourably. A large ocean-going motor yacht, complete with crew and stateroom, lay at our disposal for the following weekend. All we had to do was drive over. It sounded most attractive. I put off a visit south and the Apprentice, to the amazement of his fellow-Weasels, forewent a promising line on the Ben – Wedgewood, a little to the left of Sassunach. Early on the Saturday morning we were cantering along a West Highland road in the Doctor's old Mercedes. We discussed our benefactor.

Sir Hector Macassar was, by universal agreement, a remarkable man. Unanimity stopped there. The Doctor had known him as a student, and had climbed with him in the J.M.C.S. Even at that age the youth had organised things - bus meets, expeditions abroad, convenient loans. With the greatest breeze and aplomb he had risen in the world, by means that no one - not even the Doctor understood. There were hints, of course; but doubtless prompted by envy. The Macassar expeditions became world-famous, his films and books universally applauded. That description of how he sank a pursuing polar bear with his canoe paddle had been translated into a dozen lauguages. Both Poles he knew, the Himalayas and every big range in the world. Amazonian jungles, remote Polynesian islands, world-renowned political figures. For some of these activities - which ones were not divulged, but rumour included two international business men, a hundred thousand dollars and an ex-Prime Minister - he had been knighted. Yet he remained essentially the same Macassar of the early days, jovial and unpretentious. The motto above his arms read Faill ill o agus ho ro eile, and only cynics regarded this as his considered comment. He kept close connections with the Club and established the Macassar Trust; this presented emulators, if their expeditions had been successful, with a medal showing himself on both sides and offered them a complete set of his books, fully illustrated and at reasonably reduced prices.

Such was the man whose estates we were now approaching. Invercannilie Castle, an enormous Victorian pile, had belonged to an admiring reader of his, a rich old lady. Sir Hector had naturally returned the admiration, and had been duly bequeathed the castle and a few thousand acres. As the rich old lady's next-of-kin employed counsel unversed in the balance holds of Scottish law, he had remained there, and now held court in Renaissance splendour. Or so we had been told. We waited dry-mouthed for our first glimpse of Invercannilie.

Our first glimpse was a huge signboard and a menagerie of shanties – *Invercannilie Caravan Park*. Sir Hector was a well-known environmentalist. To prevent the coastline (previously inaccessible)

from being overrun by Sporadic Development, he had constructed a road and this park. Sportingly, he had built it on his own land. The inmates appeared suitably subdued and the charges not unduly excessive.

Beyond the caravans, a high wall and gates. We were admitted, somewhat doubtfully, by the wifie at the lodge. Within, the grounds were peaceful. We dipped down to the loch. Through spires of Sequoiadendron we saw whitewashed turrets, gleaming in the early sun. Above the highest flew Sir Hector's own flag. It much resembled that of the Bank of Scotland, but the roundels, or, were replaced by small golden cuboids. 'Liar Dice,' averred the Doctor. 'Sir Hector's favourite game.' Below it, on a smaller turret, flew the national flag, of the authentic azure. Sir Hector was a devoted patriot.

We crunched to a halt outside the main entrance, the Mercedes cringing on the half-acre of gravel. Impressed, we mounted several flights of steps. An attractive young lady of eastern appearance received us at the swing doors and ushered us into a huge vestibule. She took our names, and vanished.

'Do sit down' – another, equally attractive, young lady. We declined. We were, unashamedly, amazed. Invercannilie entrance hall had been vast enough to begin with, designed for some megalomaniac Victorian stockbroker. Its eighty-foot-high vaulted ceiling would accommodate smoke from several board-rooms of cigars. But Sir Hector had wonderfully increased its guest-humbling magnificence. Walls flaunted spears and harpoons, targes, totems and gongs. From the invisible ceiling hung sails, kayaks and outriggers. About the floor lay skins of half the larger *Mammalia*. Stuffed heads eyed us severely from every corner. It was easy to see, as the Apprentice remarked, that Sir Hector frequently took his vacations abroad. And all around, immense bustle, a tripping to and fro of attractive young ladies, mostly of exotic origin, carrying piles of papers.

'Secretaries,' explained the Doctor. 'They help in the house. Sir Hector has so little time. And now this Oil'

A tremendous crash. The Apprentice, stepping back to admire a secretary, had tripped over the open muzzle of a rug and dislodged a complete set of samoura-oura, rare Amazonian blowpipes. They were fortunately not properly poisoned, and he was being reassured by a circle of secretaries when our names were called and we were led out of the hall, along a trilling conservatory bright with humming-birds and into a swift and silent lift. It deposited us on to a plush air-conditioned corridor. A door opened. A great hand extended.

'Wonderful to see you!'

Sir Hector was huge, bearded and beaming, in nondescript tweeds and a pink shirt. Waved to chairs, we listened as he leant back, boots on the desk among the telephones, and explained why he was sorry. Our yacht, it seemed, had already been booked. Only for this weekend. But by a *great* friend of his, the Emir of somewhere or other (Sir Hector's Arabic was too colloquial to follow). Visiting on business. And the Emir had only this week in Scotland, whereas we lived here. We would understand. We would be fair. Next weekend? The other big yachts – only five since that affair at Ekofisk – were hired out – were lent – all the summer, but this, the best, would be free next weekend.

None of us could face the build-up of another such day. Had he nothing else?

Sir Hector considered. He jumped up. A telephone fell.

'I'm sure we must have. But small, very small. Some of the girls go sailing. And we hire a few to caravanners. Let's go and look. You're sure you don't want a power boat? We've plenty of those. The boys love them. And old Donald Archie. They're great fun.'

The journey to the boats was memorable. Our host's breezy commentary on everything we passed, from Patagonian firesticks to a newly-installed computer console ('a prototype I got from the Mitsubishi people to try out here') dazed us. We were briefly introduced to Donald Archie, the head keeper. He was sitting on a stool at the swimming pool Coke bar, next to the jukebox. His eyes said nothing – with considerable emphasis.

Down at the quay floated a duckweed of small boats.

'Now, which would you like?'

They were all very small. The Doctor, who had brought his pipes to play on the after-deck at evening, gazed glumly at a snuggle of two-seater Mirrors. Sir Hector could not have been more helpful. He skipped, with ease long born of killer whales and icefloes, from bow to bow. We followed, skidding on fibreglass, clutching diminutive masts.

'Why, here's a trimaran. Didn't know we had one left. That's

big enough. You could have a hull each.'

But we declined. They were chancy things, the Doctor said. We decided on a G.P.14. Fourteen feet. An Sgarbh. The Cormorant. It would just about be able to cram us all in.

'Excellent!' said Sir Hector.

We gazed wistfully offshore at the great glittering vessel that lay under the black sardonic mountains of Knoydart. Men ran about its decks, polished its white hull from cradles.

'You know,' said Sir Hector, 'I'm really sorry you can't have the *Mobaidh Dhic* this weekend. But any other time, remember, she's yours. Unless, of course, we have sudden guests. They all like a trip.' I avoided the Doctor's morose eye.

* * *

'Raeburn was a good sailor,' remarked the Doctor reassuringly from the helm as we battered up the loch. 'Damn,' he added. A large wave had stared in and jumped aboard. The wind was increasing, gusting from the dark hanging glens above us. Sgurr na Ciche vanished ahead into mist. Waves broke white on the shore we were making for. Our rucksacks were sodden. We recalled that cormorants frequently travelled long distances underwater. It was not very enjoyable.

The crew did their best. The Apprentice, despite twinges of samoura-oura, leapt from gunwale to gunwale at our skipper's command, leaning well out, at times half-immersed. I held various ropes, sometimes dodging the boom, which uncannily anticipated the Doctor's intentions. His subsequent 'Gybe ho!' was delivered applopatically, while the victim groaned in the bilge.

Some thirty feet off shore, the inevitable happened. The Sgarbh took the bit in its beak, and went for a dive. Despite Sir Hector's lifejackets we swam fairly well and beached most of our kit, including the distraught Doctor's pipes. Then we beached the boat, well up on the silverweed. We wrung ourselves damp, and helped the Doctor wash and lay out his reeds ('just blown in!'). Then lastly we plodded towards our peak, trying to forget last night's anticipation of today, the Apprentice gloomy with imagined Amazonian toxins.

It was a good peak, though, high and sharp above low cloud. The cloud considerately hid the loch, the *Mòbaidh Dhic* and the unrepentant *Sgarbh*. A large piece of seaweed, found in the Apprentice's rucksack, was placed on the cairn, to disturb the next Munroist. The Doctor added a crab's leg, from his pocket. In the sun we dried, convinced ourselves we could see Ben Wyvis, and tried to forget the sail back. To walk to the czr would take too long, and would be discourteous. There was, moreover, the *samoura-oura* to be humoured.

Halfway down we heard a curious noise. A wail. The Doctor was furious. 'Some ass trying my pipes!' But the wail continued, with a full-throated urgency no marinaded reed could aspire to. It was so like a ship's siren. Unmistakably like.

We looked at each other, and misery returned. The irony. Ah well. We dropped down through the cloud, despondent.

The cloud cleared. The siren roared. We saw the loch, slicing sunlit between Morar and Knoydart. And on it a white ship, just off-shore beneath us. Sirens again. And a powerboat running about ecstatically like a small dog. The Doctor pulled out his Trinovids, wiped off the salt, and gazed.

'Lord, it's the Mòbaidh Dhic. And there's Macassar in the speed-boat. Pink shirt. What on earth He's seen us. He's waving. Do you think ?'

We did think. We ran, leaping hags and boulders, falling, floundering, to the motherly bellowings of the $M\grave{o}baidh\ Dhic$.

That evening the Doctor piped indeed. On the after-deck. Not with his own set. The prawns were still in it. But with Sir Hector's gold-mounted Robertson's. As Sir Hector's piper was away at a wedding for that month, the Doctor played uninhibitedly. Fortified by a fine meal and much Glen Rauchle, we heard him in peace. Then Sir Hector had a blow. He played surprisingly well. 'Better than he used to,' remarked the Doctor, 'but it's the pipes, of course. A great thing, gold.' We danced a reel, unsteadily. Our host, the Emir, beamed among his attendants.

For the ship had been lent to the Emir. But Sir Hector's conscience, resilient as ever despite forty-odd years with its master, had whispered in His Eminence's ear. About our upset plans. And the Emir insisted on helping us out. He insisted, too, on a Blow. The three of us, Sir Hector, the Doctor and I, held his wavering instrument upright while the attendants raised their hands and marvelled and the drones roared farewell to the great sunset hills at the head of the loch, to Sgùrr na Ciche with its piece of seaweed and its crab's leg, and to the two MacDonalds and a MacRae who were trying, between drams, to hammer the centreboard back into An Sgarbh. The chanter, for its part, frequently managed to achieve low G.

The fourth of us, the Apprentice, was not on deck to appreciate this glorious consummation. Not because of the *samoura-oura*. Because of a secretary.

C G.J.F.D.

DAYS WITHOUT NIGHTS

Days without nights,
Days with sunshine that never dimmed
On all our windy way.

We seemed to go
With silver wings that flew us up –
Far golden peaks of yesterday.

H. M. Brown.

CARN DEARG BUTTRESS IN WINTER

By Mike Geddes

MY FRIENDS and I had been getting into bad habits this winter. The alarm call would often go unheeded, and we would relapse into laziness as more energetic teams prepared for the day.

Following this pattern, Alan and I left the hut late one Saturday, headed towards Observatory Gully, and looked for something to climb. Carn Dearg Buttress caught our eye, as the rising traverse line of Route II was unexpectedly white. This was an old idea, which I hadn't really considered seriously for this winter, as I'd been away from the game for a few years and was feeling nervous. It looked about right, and the resolve for an early start on the Sunday provided an excellent excuse for an easy Saturday. We scraped at another old problem, the slabs left of Point Five, without success, but made up for it with a steep climb into the reddening cornices left of Gardyloo Gully.

So we rose early on the Sunday, and for a while it looked as though we might actually have been first out of the door. Then Alan reminded me of his ritual for relieving himself. Once at the hut, once on the way up to the route if it's difficult, and once at the foot of the route if it's really difficult! We eventually got out into a brilliant morning which seemed ideal for this type of climbing, being not too cold, but freezing, with no wind and a clear sky.

We had been in two minds about which way to start the climb. Coming in from the left above the initial buttress is the natural line, while including the direct start would give even more fine climbing and a greater chance of an epic. Con and the American visitor, Ken, were already heading into the direct start area, so the choice was easy.

I passed a team looking for a belay at the foot of the Curtain, while Alan, having decided that Route II looked difficult, was relieving himself again. He joined me at the foot of the chimney and ranted about fabulous conditions, and about the rock being clear of snow. I pointed out that the piece of rock in question was a roof. Anyway, he took his gloves off, launched himself at the chimney, and dealt with it in good style, murmuring all the while about arm locks and getting lessons from Rab on climbing snowed-up rock. When I followed, I tried once again to learn how to armlock (elbow above hand, or is it hand above elbow?), and wondered what these tricks were that Rab had divined. The final move over a chockstone was quite tricky, but Alan helped my cool with the threat of a photograph.

From here, the summer route leads right across a steepish slab on small holds, round a corner, up under a huge roof, then right again to the far side of the buttress. No rock was showing on what we could see and the weather was still perfect, so there seemed to be some excellent climbing ahead. Although the initial traverse looked easier higher up, I was keen to have a go at the summer line, and cut at the first patch of snow. This turned out to be nevé, but only to delude us, and I set to work clearing my way across the traverse. I made myself at home by chatting to Al, thinking that it's better to clear handholds before footholds, and wondering why the Aberdonians hadn't patented a portable vacuum cleaner. Finally I relaxed when I came across another patch of nevé, ideal for a huge, secure jug. After an hour or so of indulging in all these luxuries, the lack of further encouragement from Alan reminded me to get a move on. So I banged in a peg and swung down to where the route goes round the corner and on to an easier slab. In fact it wasn't much easier, but eventually I got to a big spike belay. Alan arrived before too long, with a lot of enthusiasm:

'Great, isn't it? The atmosphere's like a summer rock climb, eh?' We were dry and warm and the sky was blue. It seemed unreal.

He went back down a bit, then up to a green boss of ice originating from the Meadow, a patch of grass and heather under the upper overhangs of the buttress. This was a fine sight; climbing thick bulges of ice amidst all the powdered slabs, marred only by the smir of cloud which was turning the sky from clear to milky blue. I pulled on my cagoule. Rab appeared on the path down the glen and shouted up.

'What about your lift?' (I was supposed to be on my way down south that night).

'See you in the Jacobite at six,' I yelled.

'We're going today, not tomorrow!' he screamed, with obvious delight.

Alan pulled the rope in and I sped up, finding that the stream of ice was in fact somewhat rotten. I surveyed the next pitch, another traverse and the second difficulty in summer, and came to the rather hasty conclusion that it wouldn't be too bad. The higher line took me into frightening manoeuvres, with fingers on icy holds, crampons demolishing any hope of a positive foothold, and Alan urging me to 'pretend they're P.A's, just pad across.' Back at the Meadow, I dug out a few more belays and, with the rope now slightly above, tried the lower summer line. This turned out harder than the second pitch, as I still couldn't find any footholds, but scurried across on doubtful powder till a runner gave relief. The next section was a steep groove, where I ended up bridged shakily on sloping holds, clawing at useless snow over the top. I had got it wrong and soon realised that a conclusion would have to be effected rapidly, or

gravity might resolve matters. That Godsend to buttress climbers, a patch of frozen turf, came to the rescue and I mantelshelved rapidly out of the clutches of the lower buttress. A couple of small wire nuts promised some assurance for Al, and I edged along the rest of the traverse, eager for the relief which the buttress edge promised. Here I installed myself on an airy perch high above the Allt a' Mhuilinn and watched the teams trotting down the path.

The light was flat now, with the sun definitely on the way out. Alan followed as quickly as possible, while I wondered about my lift and sneaked glances at the long buttress edge above, looking for a way. We dispensed with a brew halt, and he stormed off into the gloom above. We held a long distance conversation about possible routes, but what looked like an escape turned out to be steep and bare. This pitch was reasonably straightforward, so we were soon together again in the familiar torch-lit theatre of night operations.

Most of the route was done, but the wall lurking above was a little worrying.

I tried to sort out the features of the summer way, which I remembered as being steep and juggy. Alan suggested further right, which held less snow, since it was even steeper! I was tempted by some big spikes there, but once past them found myself in a corner, out of balance and reluctant to leave a low-down jam. Clearing revealed only a blank lessening of angle on the right wall, a front point nick on the left, and hole in the corner to go for. A brief moment of consideration and 'here we go' into the kind of moves which I seldom find secure. I thought it best to do them quickly and as predecided, but they only took me into an even more precarious situation.

Then the headlamp came off. The wire tangled with the slings, the slings tangled with the axe, and panic threatened. At this point, Alan enquired after my health and whether I had a runner, and got a suitable reply, if somewhat muffled by the jumble. He assured me that he would show me how to fix the headtorch 'when we got down.' This optimism did wonders for my view of the situation, so I got back to work again. I grabbed the headtorch with my teeth, poked away at the hole in the corner, and found a fabulous socket for the axe. This afforded enough relief to prospect the remainder of the steep section. I decided that this was just about impossible, but moved up anyway and found a small flake to get a peg behind. My one free hand dropped the first peg, then managed to nest the remaining two blades loosely down the back of the flake. So I had a handhold good enough to pull down on, and it was just enough to get me over the lip and on to balance terrain again.

Here I hid behind the security of a huge flake while considering the traverse back into the proper line, and whether I could fix a runner. The flake would need a twenty-foot sling, and it seemed that to reach the other possible sites would be more difficult than doing the traverse. Around here it started to snow, to complete the splendid setting for the traverse which followed, without handholds or runner, way out in the night. A steep groove of deep, deep rubbish led up on to easy ground.

The supense slowly drained away. Alan came on in the white darkness and rolled past as well as his snowed-up glasses allowed. I looked around from the stance for signs of Ledge Route. Soon a shout floated down and I stumbled up to the right spot.

We lay about behind a boulder, supped our brew, and told how ideal, how classic it had been. We bounded off down the gully and the path for an early morning return to Fort William.

REFLECTIONS IN A DIAMOND

By Alex. Harrison*

Last year the Charles Inglis Clark hut celebrated its fiftieth year and I my sixtieth as a member of the Club. I had an old school friend, George Murray Lawson, with whom I had gone on the hills. He was a member of the Club and I decided that I should like to join but not until the war was over. I had leave from France in September 1918, and I and Lawson spent some of the time in the Braemar area and the Cairngorms. I enjoyed it so much that in spite of the war risks I put in an application and was admitted as a member in December 1918, with a qualification which certainly would not be accepted now.

I was in London for some time after the war and the first meet I attended was the 1920 Easter meet at Fort William under perfect conditions. William Ling was President and he certainly lived up to the motto of his old School, 'Manners Maketh Man.' No one could have welcomed a new recruit with greater kindness. I received just as kind a welcome from the older members of the Club and look back on them with reverence.

These were men with great experience and character. Just to name a few, there were Gilbert Thomson, the water expert, Goggs who gave the name to the comparatively good path up to Stob Gabhar – Goggs bogless, the Rev. A. E. Robertson – the Pius

^{*}The Honorary President is our most senior member by some three years - (Hon. Ed.).

Aneas — a very good photographer, the venerable Godfrey Solly — about to be Vice-President of the Alpine Club. The last had a silk rope which did not retain water like a hemp one and which my brother envied. In spite of his age he was a very stout fellow. At a Meet some years later some of us asked him to come on an expedition with us but he said at his age he was not safe. We did a climb and were resting at the top of the Carn Dearg North Gully when we heard a shout and a call for a rope. Solly had climbed the Gully alone and wanted a rope to help him over the cornice.

Sang was the Club Secretary and was known in the British climbing world as the perfect Secretary. On an evening after a climb P. J. H. Unna would lie full length in front of the fire drinking China Tea which had to be made in a china teapot. It was at a Killin Meet later that I met Harold Raeburn. He arrived one evening and he obviously treasured his ice axe as he produced it carefully wrapped up in cloths and well oiled. Next day I had the pleasure of being instructed by him in gully climbing in the Tarmachans. Another member was Harry McRobert who had an encyclopaedic knowledge of both climbing and ski-ing at home and abroad. He had a quick wit which could cool tempers which were getting hot at a committee meeting. Teddy Thomson who joined a couple of years after me had an intense love of the hills, and an intimate knowledge of everything which pertained to the Club. Lastly there was my great friend Bobby Jeffrey and his wife Mabel who was a daughter of Dr Inglis Clark, with whom I climbed and skied both at home and abroad.

The 1920's meant release from war restrictions and the exploration of new routes in the Highlands led by J. H. B. Bell and joined by others such as McPhee, Speirs, Bartholomew and Elton to name a few.

At that time climbers had an understanding with the Keepers at the King's Park in Edinburgh that the latter did not get up until 8 a.m. and so in summer we young climbers had our practice on the Crags under Douglas Menzies and Morrison, taking care to be away by 8 a.m.

Getting to the Highlands in those days was not as easy as it is now. The roads did not compare with those today and cars were not so plentiful. To get to Glencoe was quite an undertaking. The road skirted Loch Tulla and then mounted to Ba Bridge. In winter a spade was put in the boot and when one got to Ba Bridge one felt one had broken the back of the journey, but parts of the road down to Kings House were very bad in bits showing slabs of rock and shingle. The condition of Kings House Hotel was very different to what it is now. A former climber whom we knew went there supposedly to fish but really to enjoy the scenery usually had the bedroom over the dining room. He said there was a hole in the floor and in the morning he called down to order his breakfast. He might

not get what he ordered. The kitchen might get bacon and eggs but the dining room only bacon. A young friend composed a rhyme –

> 'There was an old man of Tigh Reigh Who found to his infinite glee That the water plus dirt Which he wrung from his shirt Could be sold to the tourists as tea.'

However a new tenant arrived. Copper water pipes were installed – the rats were banished and all was bliss. In those days most cars were open and on a winter night it was very cold in a back seat returning from Glencoe.

In Glen Brittle in Skye there was only one house where one could stay - Mary Campbell's cottage. We slept in box beds. If one went out of the front door at night one might bump into a cow - Mary was the soul of hospitality and it did not matter when one came back from an expedition. In June the days are long and it might be near midnight when one got back but dinner was ready. A short time after dinner was finished Mary would come in and say 'You will be having some cocoa' and that meant cocoa with bread and butter and two boiled eggs. Then there was a large jug of milk before going to bed. Luckily one took what one wanted for lunch and had plenty of exercise. Bobby Jeffrey was a great favourite of hers and in winter she knitted stockings for him. She also had many clocks which did not always go well and on wet days Morrison spent his time repairing them. Later Mrs Chisholm at the Post Office took in lodgers. She had a bath. Still later Mrs McRae took in lodgers. Not many climbers stayed at Sligachan. Dr Collie stayed there. He always looked lonely and was glad to see climbers. The road to Glen Brittle was apalling but one often went over the Bealach Mam with a rucksac. In those days there were comparatively few climbers on the hills and some days one would see no one at all.

My first season in the Alps was in 1924 (if you except one day in 1914 curtailed by the outbreak of the war). I went with a meteorologist called Kenneth Douglas. He had been out in 1923. We had a guide for a fortnight and then joined up with Arthur Rusk to go guideless. Our first climb was the Dent Blanche from Zermat to Arolla where we did some more expeditions. The only S.M.C. Meet in the Alps was in 1925. The party was Ling, Sang, Unna, Goggs and Brown (A. C.), Douglas, myself, P. Donald and his friend Kirkland. We had a week at Pfaffler Alp where we did some tops and then did a tour through the Oberland finishing at Grindelwald. The weather was not very good so we did more passes than tops.

It was about 1924 that the Junior Club was formed. The instigator was Arthur Rusk backed by Hutchison and Rutherford. It has contributed many members to the Senior Club and many of

our present senior members originated in the various branches of the J.M.C.S.

We were all anxious that Sang should become President of the Club and he said he would, if I would take on the job of Secretary, so I agreed. Unfortunately, he never became President as he died suddenly.

In the '30's there were not many climbing accidents. At that time the police considered that their duties extended as far as the rocks. Above that it was the concern of the S.M.C. Telephones are usually quiet on a Sunday evening and if one's did ring there was always the fear that it was to report an accident. If it was, then the telephone was busy to Glasgow, Edinburgh and the Lowlands; there was a making of sandwiches and at dawn next day, say at Kingshouse, the S.M.C. from Managing Directors to office boys collected to do the job. In these days it was not news for the press and it was not usually reported. The equipment was primitive but later a Rescue Committee was formed under Dr Donald Duff (later an Hon. member and M.B.E.) and Dr John Berkeley of Fort William perfected equipment. In addition the local police were instructed in Rescue work.

In 1935 the Glencoe Estate came into the market and Unna and James (later Sir James Wordie) conceived the idea that the Aonach Eagach should be bought for the nation. An appeal was issued to British climbers and a contribution was received from the Pilgrim Trust and it was bought and transferred to the National Trust for Scotland.

In 1937 Dalness came into the market and Unna bought it anonymously and gave it to the National Trust. Then he considered that money was required for upkeep and the purchase of more mountainous areas so he executed one or two seven-year covenants in favour of the Trust. He wished to remain anonymous so he named a small committee to deal with it, Robert Jeffrey, Arthur Russell and myself. I joined the committee of the National Trust. In 1947 Kintail came into the market. Petrol was still scarce but we got a car. It was a glorious morning and Sir Ian Colquhoun, Arthur Russell and I had little hesitation in recommending that the estate should be purchased. Again Unna provided the money without disclosing his name.

The circumstances of Unna's death are curious. The meet was at Dalmally. Unna went there a day or two before the start of the Easter Meet. It was a winter of very hard frost and little snow and when Unna did not return from an expedition a search was made and his body was found at the bottom of a steep slope. It is not known if he slipped or if his heart failed. It was arranged that he would be buried at Oban in an afternoon and we all went to find that it had suited the minister and the undertaker to have it in the morning.

In some way it seemed typical of Unna to have it that way. He was buried looking to Ben Cruachan.

Shortly before his death Unna received a Bonus scrip from an engineering company. He handed it to Arthur Russell – 'Make a Trust – trustees Robert Jeffrey, George Russell and myself, to be used for what they think right for mountainous country.' We in total gave the Trust over £30,000 from £4,000 – the last gift to enable the Trust to take over Torridon in 1967. Unna left the residue of his estate, about £100,000, to the National Trust.

I have greatly enjoyed membership of the Club and have made many good friends many of whom are considerably younger than myself.

A SHORT WALK WITH CEMNI-KAZE

By John Mackenzie

ACT 1

The sun is shining and all is well with the world.

Cemni-Kaze takes in the rope, closely followed by his side kick, Vile Ted Grab. Kaze speaks. 'Vile, I can't see this big block belay mentioned in the guide book, so I used a smaller one.'

'Where Kaze? I see no boulder.'

'It's psychological Vile, I can't see it either.'

'Oh.'

Formalities over, now back to reverie. Above and to the right is the crux section of Jack the Ripper, a climb on Stac Polly. It is steep but interesting. Thin cracks snake over a bulge, which overlooks a great drop to the screes. Kaze slithers over the bulge then up the cracks and so to a foothold rest on the very edge. He moves left over a big loose flake and shortly arrives at a bigger ledge and belays.

He leans over the edge. 'You'll like this Vile, just your scene, nice and delicate.'

Now Vile is a nice lad, sufficiently new to the game not to interpret all the verbal subtleties quite correctly. He moves up to the bulge with confidence and stretches over it. His eyes glaze.

'There aren't any holds and I thought you said it was nice' he states. 'So it is, so it was, but that's the delicate bit, it comes nice again by the by.'

Vile grits and slithers up the slab to the big loose flake, pauses to dither, then speaks.

'Grand trundle' (shakes it awhile) 'but there are folk beneath.'

'All the more reason' says Kaze 'to reduce the surplus.'

The flake refusing to move, Vile instead climbs over it and joins Kaze. A couple of rope lengths later they stand on the summit and admire the view.

'Now over there' says Kaze 'is Ben More Coigach, and that steep ridge is the Fiddler. It is one of the great rock climbs of the North West. We shall do it tomorrow.'

'Is it delicate?' (Vile has doubts).

'Only in parts. A good classic, plenty of grass and loose rock, and er great views, especially downwards.'

Kaze leers and kicks a stone over the edge. It hits a tourist below.

They exit stage right.

Interval.

ACT 2

A new day dawns, the sun is shining. They stop their car and contemplate the walk in.

'How far is it, Kaze?'

'Four miles Vile, there should be a track.'

They walk down slopes and up slopes, around bogs and through them and eventually meet the track. The Fiddler rears impressively in the distance, it gets no nearer for a long time. The sun does not shine so brightly now and a slight wind keens. The Fiddler plunges into shadow as they skirt the lochans at its foot. The atmosphere is pregnant with foreboding.

'You look pale, Vile. It certainly seems impressive but I'm sure it's not as bad as it looks.'

Silence reigns. They stare up. The first 500 feet consists of a cluster of sandstone slabs interspaced by grass and black moss filled grooves. Above that for another 1,000 feet rears a stone Leviathan, broad at the base and gradually tapering and steepening to a great prow, overhanging at the top. A Titanic; it is like looking at the bows of a massive ship advancing upon you as you row frantically out of the way.

Kaze moans softly to himself; all is in doubt, all is uncertain.

They rope in silence, put on the gear, don helmets and place the rucksacs neatly away as in some protective ritual. They move together up broken rocks, up the moss filled grooves and arrive at a clean slab of red rock. Kaze mounts steadily, enjoyment creeping in. Some thin balance moves takes him out of the slab on to grass

above. Vile then moves up strongly to join him and they finally huddle together in a little nook below a long slanting groove which cleaves the buttress in two. They stare up.

'Well Kaze, the lower 500 feet were pleasant enough. This groove must be the line. See those two black overhangs – we turn those on the right; I can't see what's above, it's all so foreshortened.'

'You're right Vile, Pilgrims Progress forever bloody up; let's shift on.'

Above is a long but moss free groove. Kaze climbs more slowly up the steep section at the top where it is a little more difficult.

Vile is pleased, this is more like fun; no great problems here. He chortles the while.

'Fool that I was to doubt you yesterday, Kaze, this is really great good rock too.' Kaze turns slowly to Vile, but without any smile.

'Quem Jupiter vult perdere dementat prius.'

Vile's jaw drops.

'Eh? Did you say something about a stomach ache? A new species of flower perhaps?'

'No, Vile,' (a pause), 'whom God would destroy He first sends mad.'

'I see,' says Vile, 'then I'd rather be an atheist.'

Thus encouraged they turn back to the rock. It grows dirtier and nastier. The groove is vegetated and leads to a cave topped by a formidable overhang. It is a fine perch. They say little, exchange belays and smile feebly. Kaze avoids the overhang on the right by a steep slab. Now in the sun again, another dirty groove curves up and right and leads to a depressing amphitheatre of slabs. Kaze is now distinctly worried. The base of the slabs is devoid of ledges and also of belays. He squats down by a little corner, hammers in a piton as far as it will go in the only available crack and brings up Vile.

Vile stares up. 'Oh Hell! What was that you said about Jupiter?'

'It was all about what sane men, who are safe in bed, say about people like us.'

The tight-lipped pair stare hard at the scene above; a triple tier of steep slabs separated by thin ledges, leads up to a beetling headwall on the right, the self same prow which appeared so ominous from below. On it's left another slab abuts an obvious edge. Kaze speaks.

'The slabs Vile, for your interest, are called the Pale Slabs. They are not called that because they are marginally lighter than the surrounding rock but due to the livid hue of the skin of those who contemplate climbing them.'

The first slab is now climbed by its vegetated centre. They reach a ledge on the right below a vertical wall. An abandoned nut sprouts from a crack.

'Signs of retreat, Vile, can't be too good above. Let's crawl along the ledge.'

They do and arrive on all fours at a splendid and scenic balcony. It has a large boulder strategically placed to provide a seat. They sit.

'I say Vile, this must be the famous "Hansom Cab" stance below the second slab. Good views, eh?'

Vile agrees enthusiastically for he is now happy that death is not imminent, at least not for him. It would be a gross misfortune for Kaze to pull him off if securely attached to a three ton block well rooted into the ledge.

The way appears to follow a forty-foot groove above the ledge but Kaze has spotted a more attractive line to the right.

'The groove is wet and sprouts nasty green things at the top. There's a vertical crack above me which is dry, technical and well protected. I'll have a wee look.'

The crack is indeed all it promises and soon Kaze has a belay above. He looks down.

'Quite thin in places Vile.'

Vile nervously smiles approval! However the ledge is neither so spacious nor so secure as below. Above, the third and last Pale Slab bares its teeth. Near the edge, horribly rounded holds lead up above a severely undercut start. An ancient piton sprouts thirty feet up. It is all far from promising.

'Right Vile, here goes. Watch the ropes as I step up over this bleeding edge.'

Kaze steps up and establishes himself on the slab, like an unwilling slug withdrawing its horns in a blue funk.

'It's bloody steep and hellish thin. All the holds are miserable rounded jobs and it's pure foot work. No protection until the peg – really negative.'

One delicate move follows another. The peg when reached turns out to be largely iron oxide and is perhaps two inches into a vertical crack.

'For Chrissake, Vile, this peg's useless. I could pull it out with two fingers – the ultimate in psychological protection. Hopeless, just bloody hopeless.'

Minutes pass, Kaze steps left into a bottomless groove where there is a big block. As he steps the block promptly flits off spacewards. Somehow still on he pulls up on better holds and reaches a ledge. Nerves at both ends of the rope are wearing thin. 'Fifty feet of rounded rubbish and no protection. The ledge I'm on is absolutely frost shattered and the belays are not too great. You'd better come up, take your time, forget about your hands, it's feet all the way, save the last few feet.'

Viles needs no warning. Grimly he steps up onto the slab and moves up past the peg; he steps left – no rockfalls this time – and joins Kaze. As he sits down on the ledge it shakes slightly.

'Sorry about this Vile; last winter's frosts have wrecked havoc here. Grab the rope and I'll have a look round the corner to the right. It seems to be a slab and can't be any worse than here.'

He moves up and right and gains a long thin crack which runs diagonally up to the base of the prow. The crack is devoid of protection or positive holds and has the odd grass tuft at intervals. It is a monster winking with false hope.

Kaze has now got himself totally committed; he cannot reverse the slab and cannot go left to rejoin the true line now lying in the sun to the left. There is no choice but to climb the prow which seems to have a faint line of possibility up the centre.

'Vile, I'm afraid I've landed right in it. I think I can get a peg or two in for a runner under this flake but I doubt if they'll be much good. How much rope is there left?'

Vile is now diagonally below to the right as viewed from Kaze's position. 'Ninety feet' he states, 'Does it look possible?'

Kaze grimaces. 'Cheer up Vile, the worst is yet to come.'

He moves up above the slab onto the wall. There are holds. He gains a corner and arrives at an overhang. The drop beneath is horrific, but there is no choice. A layback move and a long fumbling grope over the roof remove a sizeable stone resting on a small ledge above it. The stone hurtles down for several hundred feet without touching rock. It does not whistle melodiously as well-behaved stones do, but falls with a gut wrenching howl, such are the acoustics of the place. It bounces once and disappears from view. Kaze looks down, cursing softly with bated breath.

'What are you doing?' came a faint voice from below. 'Shaddup, I'm thinking for God's sake'

Meanwhile far away in saner society, birds are twittering, people are eating lunch and children frolicking. Up here the world has come to a dead stop. Time hangs motionless. Kaze is endeavouring to get a grip on himself. Above the overhang is a leaning wall devoid of protection but amazingly equipped with holds. Hesitantly he moves up. The holds continue to a small and narrow ledge with above it a steep blank slab. It has a single ray of hope in the form of a thin but deep crack up its centre, unfortunately terminating at fifteen feet.

He slots in a reasonable nut runner, jams fingers in the crack and climbs strenuously to its end. It is impossible to go further. A fall from here would probably rip out the few bits of gear; three hundred feet later the rope would go tight on Vile whose belays, unbeknownst to Kaze, have dropped off, and then in one mighty arc they would join the rucksacs 1,300 feet beneath.

A disembodied voice drifts up from beneath. It seems to come from another planet.

'How is it going?'

Kaze smiles to himself, there is no fear any more, he leans out from the cliff like a mediaeval gargoyle.

'Pan - aesthetic, - but terminal -.'

He turns back to the crack. Fingers stuffed well in provide a secure hold, so releasing one hand a piton is extracted from the rest of the gear and driven home into the crack. With a convulsive contortion a standing position is gained, the piton providing the left foothold. A long stride right, a hurried mantelshelf move on to a rounded edge and security is gained. The angle lies back and adrenalin floods in.

'YAHOOO . . . ! Made it Vile! How much rope left? There seems to be a belay ten feet to the right. It seems a lot easier above now too.'

Whoops and yells from below are followed by silence.

'Kaze, the belays have dropped off and you've run out all the rope, so I'll move along the ledge and give you some more.'

Ten feet are all that is needed. He gains an incredibly exposed eyrie on the very edge of the world. The ledge is less than a foot square but has excellent belays in the crack behind. The rucksacs now appear directly below his feet.

Vile is summoned and mounts the slab far beneath, the ropes billowing out to him stitched to the rock at infrequent intervals. At the foot of the wall Vile appears to be further into the cliff than Kaze, such is the angle. He climbs superbly but leaves a nut and the piton in the final slab; who cares, survival matters more. A hand followed by a pale face greets Kaze, there is no room for two so he stands on Kaze's feet.

'Tell me' he hisses. 'What makes people do things like this? You're absolutely bloody insane.'

Kaze tries hard to save face.

'I lost the route and couldn't retreat so' – a feeble smile – 'carried on. Incidentally I know where your sun tan went.'

Belays exchanged with heart stopping manoeuvres Kaze shambles off up a steep but reasonable crack. He is moving like an octogenarian, mumbling incoherently and giggling incessantly. He

disappears behind a huge rock tower, the safest and least exposed belay and stance in all Scotland. Above, a final groove leads to easy rocks up which Vile and Kaze now wobble, taking belays and otherwise behaving like condemned men reprieved at the eleventh hour. They reach the summit together.

'You know Vile, that's the first route I wished that I had never climbed and I'm truly sorry that you had to be there as well.'

'Ach, don't be daft. It was fine until you got lost, but then you never could tell your left from right!'

They exit stage left.

POSTMAN'S ROUTE - LOCH MAREE

By D. W. I. Piggott

A YEAR or two ago I was walking out from a camp-site at the head of Fionn Loch after a spell of bad weather. The weather cleared on the way to Poolewe so I made a diversion to have a look at the old postman's route along Loch Maree (route 144(a) in 'Scottish Hill Tracks, Northern Scotland,' D. G. Moir). I skirted Ben Airigh Charr by an attractive route to Ardlair on the lochside. This ruined mansion, a Victorian pomposity, lies under a cliff, sheltered by trees from the west and facing up the loch. I was now on the postman's route, no doubt greatly improved by the estate for access to the farm buildings and the 'Big House.' Continuing eastward under more cliffs the path gradually fades as it passes mature tree plantations and clearings until I lost it before reaching a delta fan of gravel at the foot of a deep tree-filled gully. There were signs of early habitation here and a clearing in the natural woodland, with a spit running out into the loch. A short distance ahead far taller cliffs rose sheer from the water where a succession of buttresses had been cut off and polished by glacial action. There appeared no chance of a postman's path across these as they extend for over a mile, with intervening gullies. On the other hand it seemed unlikely that he would have climbed 700-800 feet to go over the tops. There was a problem here needing some historical research so I decided to consult Osgood Mackenzie's book referred to by Moir, and retreated to Poolewe. The feature is marked on the Ordnance Survey as Creag Tharb (Bull Rock) and would appear to be the only serious obstacle along that shore to Kinlochewe.

Chapter III of his book is quite clear about this route as it was used prior to the building of the destitution road of about 1850, which was constructed on the same side of the loch as the present road. The only alternative seems to have been to go down the loch by boat. In those days the mail from Stornoway came by a small sloop to Poolewe once or twice a week. This, together with any letters from Gairloch and Aultbea, was carried by Big John the Post in a small leather bag to Dingwall and later to Achnasheen when the railway was built. He passed through Ardlair and Letterewe and the Bull Rock was a famous obstacle redounding mightily to the credit of Big John. Osgood Mackenzie personally made a special trip with some friends to see for himself and noted that in more than one place they could only move with the help of their stalker. A post-office official from London on a tour of inspection to Stornoway fainted on the way and had to be carried to Ardlair by Big John the Post!

Armed with this assurance I borrowed a small blow-up dingly and set off this year again to look for a route. The boat was launched from the road opposite the islands and I landed on the prominent spit of gravel. The Bull Rock looked even more formidable from the The gullies and every available crack sprouted pine trees reminding one of those Chinese paintings of trees growing twisted and stunted out of vertical and improbable-looking limestone cliffs. Here the trees grow clean and straight in the gullies but the buttresses stood bare as ever, dropping into deep water. The woodland was fairly thick as I approached the first obstacle but it was easy to walk along the shore. This ended at the cliff but there was a steep rock to the left which gave a quick scramble to a point some thirty feet up the buttress. Here the angle had eased from near vertical to about 60 degrees and there was a narrow strip of vegetation running horizontally right across to the next gully. There must have been a narrow crack in which grass had been able to establish itself. I felt instinctively that this must be the way and, although there were no handholds, there was no problem in crossing on a dry and windless day. Once in the first gully among the trees the problem was to find the next ledge when one could not see the face of the buttress. I examined the possible ways out of the gully and discovered a narrow path of bare earth almost overhung by vegetation, like a badger run, leading onto the rock and there was another ledge crossing the face. There must have been about six buttresses and the route climbed to about 200 feet in the middle, then dropped until the last buttress was crossed only some 20 feet above the water. Each buttress was crossed at the lowest point where the angle eased off and made the traverse possible. The paths were only well-marked at the critical points of climbing out of or into a gully. The rockclimbing was nowhere difficult but the ledges were very airy and the water seemed a long way below. In bad weather the situation would be totally transformed.

From the Bull Rock to Letterewe would be rough going along steep hillsides, now tree-covered but possibly still denuded then after the iron-smelting carried out in several places on the loch in the seventeenth century. Thereafter there is a good path to Kinlochewe. I was left with the greatest respect for the postman travelling week in and week out throughout the year in all weathers with his bag over the Bull Rock.

My return to the boat was over the tops of Ben Airigh Charr and down through a break in the cliffs above Ardlair House. This time however the ruin had gone and new foundations showed that the magnificent site would again be occupied by a house enjoying one of the finest views in Scotland, over the water to the islands and bounded by the Torridon hills in the distance. Rowing back towards sunset through choppy water I took a narrow channel between two islands. Here was perfect calm and a strong feeling of dropping back in time to a dream-like ideal scene before man and his sheep had done their worst.

NAVIGATOR'S ROUTE, SGURR NAN GILLEAN

By R. D. Walton

It is not everyone who is fortunate enough to make a new route on a celebrated and much climbed peak, especially on his first ascent. But I can find no reference in Macpherson's Guide to the Isle of Skye (1948 Edition) to the route that I followed on Sgurr nan Gillean. If you read this article to its end you will probably say 'No Wonder.' It is true that only part of the way was new; every discoverer builds to some extent on the work of his predecessors; and the new part could be dodged by following a red dotted route on the big Scottish Mountaineering Club map, as, indeed, I had every intention of doing. The route is specially recommended to those who are climbing Sgurr nan Gillean for the first time, alone, with the mist down to about fifteen hundred feet, and the visibility about ten vards. Under these conditions the climbing might be rated Class 1, Easy, with possibly one pitch Class 2, Moderate, and the route finding Class 2-4, Difficult (assuming an I.Q. of at least 120; it is advisable to ascertain this last item before a start is made).

But to put the matter in its proper perspective, I should mention that in spite of three previous visits to Glenbrittle I had not set foot on Sgurr nan Gillean. Tourists who have seen Sgurr nan Gillean from the bus at Sligachan always ask 'Have you been up that Sgùrr Something that you see from the hotel at the crossroads?' Prestige demanded that I should no longer have to answer 'You mean Sgùrr nan Gillean? No.'

I therefore spent the first week of July at Glenbrittle getting into training. I went half way up the Alasdair Stone Shoot before leaving it; I went all the way up Gars Bheinn; and climbed both Sgurr Dearg and Sgurr na Banachdich from the Bealch na Banachdich. As the clouds were seldom above two thousand feet for long, these expeditions served as excellent training for the later serious work on Sgurr nan Gillean. I was going to devote the second week, if necessary, to the Sgurr nan Gillean expedition. Transport and food were arranged. At six a.m. on the Monday I looked out from my tent, saw the mist creeping along the lower slopes, felt the heavy drizzle, and returned to my sleeping bag. I have no doubt the bus left at seven-ten as usual. By noon the mist was lifting from the south end of the ridge; the top of Sgurr Sgumain could even be seen occasionally. The next step will be obvious to earnest readers of the Mountaineering Classics. To ensure the success of an expedition a reconnaissance should be carried out. I caught the one-thirty bus to Sligachan, reaching it at two-thirty. The mist had by then returned to its normal level of fifteen hundred feet. Having once descended the Coire a' Bhasteir in a gale when the rain was so heavy that it was not easy to decide when I was in the burn and when not, mere mist and drizzle did not detain me on my way through the gorge. By four-ten I was at the Bealach a' Bhasteir. Half an hour was sufficient to try three steep, wet and slimy gullies or chimneys on the West Ridge of Sgurr nan Gillean, and retreat without finding the reputedly easy one. A fortunate look at the compass prevented a descent on the wrong side of the ridge to Lota Corrie. The return down the Bhasteir Corrie was then done at speed, in good order. I emerged from the mist a short way below the gorge, and saw approaching two heavily laden figures. 'Ah' I thought, 'two real climbers going to camp in the Corrie.' Then they hailed me with 'Is this the way the path goes to Glenbrittle?' In spite of the implied doubt in their question it took some time to convince them that the path did not go that way. I reached Sligachan in good time for the six-twenty bus back to Glenbrittle, having established the unpleasant nature of the West Ridge in rain and mist.

Tuesday morning at six was different from Monday; it was hardly necessary to look out. There was a strong wind and heavy rain with the cloud base as usual. These conditions lasted most of the day, which was spent at Glenbrittle. Wednesday at six looked like Monday, but had improved by ten. So I cycled up to the start of the Bealach a' Mhaim path and set off on foot. The mere absence of a bus could not be allowed to jeopardise the success of the expedition. When the Bealach cairn was reached the mist had

returned to its usual fifteen hundred feet, with accompanying drizzle. A slightly rising route was followed across Fionn Coire and round the end of Meall Odhar to the Bhasteir Gorge. Some noisy ravens drew attention to a sheep on its back in the heather, its legs pointing skywards, ugly and stiff: it was as dead as mutton.

The gorge felt as impressive in the moving mists as no doubt the Rishi Ganga did to Shipton and Tilman, with the Bhasteir Corrie beyond corresponding to the Inner Sanctuary. The shore of the placidly limitless Loch a' Bhasteir, with its far side, fully twenty yards away, invisible, would have made an excellent place for calm contemplation if it had not been so wet, and if I had not, by mistake, stepped into it before I noticed it. The Bealach a' Bhasteir was reached without further incident, and under a convenient rock the contents of my rucksack were, to coin a phrase, investigated. Together with a piece of string, a whistle and a compass were the usual six sandwiches. Three of these provided some sustenance, the physical counterpart of that flux of spiritual energy that would be necessary for the next phase of the expedition, when I should have to face the unknown. Where the latter energy was to come from I had no idea, but I had faith in the infinite and my map reading.

Facing toward Lota Corrie, a start was made to the left. The curtain of mist wavered slightly, but it was not possible to see much; the rocks did not look promising for a descent. It seems to be the usual practice for contributors to climbing journals and to Club Guide Books to describe such rocks as 'Absolutely Perpendicular'; but I have no wish to exaggerate; they were in fact, almost vertical. Farther to the right they seemed less steep, but it was soon found they were more rotten and slippery. After several pieces of broken basalt dyke had crashed downwards, to disappear in the mist, an intermediate route was taken, where the friction between tweed and gabbro allowed a safe but undignified descent.

Looking back there seemed to be half a dozen easy ways up, which was a relief in case I should have to return that way.

According to the map, I should now have reached a terrace of scree with rocks above and below, and this appeared to be correct. I kept on this terrace, close in to the cliffs and still descending slightly. It was quite calm here, the silence being disturbed only by my footsteps and an occasional heavy drip from the rocks above. I spotted a piece of alpine scurvy-grass, and as I munched the leaves I reflected that the fish paste in my sandwiches was no doubt deficient in vitamin C. The cliffs on my left here curved away in a bay, and on crossing it I noticed a gully where they jutted out again. The gully proved easy, but there were no nail marks to be seen; so a cairn was made a little beyond the top to cover my retreat.

I now found myself on a slope of broken rock, of only moderate steepness, and scrambled up without difficulty. In a short time I reached what I presumed to be the South East ridge of Sgùrr nan Gillean. No isolated nail marks here; almost a continuous groove worn by the boot nails of the tourists. Another cairn marked the spot for a possible descent. Then, looking round cautiously, I changed the Scottish Mountaineering Club badge from the front to the back of my lapel, just in case, and proceeded up the ridge.

At what seemed to be the summit there was an eeric silence and a large cairn. It was difficult to obtain certain evidence that this really was the top. The Ordnance Survey staff might consider carving names and heights on summit rocks for the benefit of 'mistified' members of the S.M.C. Obviously then, tests had to be made to avoid the possibility that my conquering spirit might be let down by a later discovery that I had not reached the summit. The rock seemed to be definitely gabbro, or basalt, or dolerite – certainly not red granite. A compass bearing was taken; this gave 213° (Magnetic). As conditions were not very suitable for photography, the scene was looked at through a colour filter; everything looked different – yellowish in fact.

There was no need this time to investigate the contents of my rucksack; I knew it contained three sandwiches, one fish-paste, one cheese, one jam; and a boiled sweet. It was while I ate these that I noticed the bee. The poor thing was so wet that it could not even buzz to express the annoyance it obviously felt in its situation of complete frustration. For there it was, trying repeatedly to crawl up the overhang from the lower to the upper surface of the topmost stone of the cairn. But the rain on the smooth surface of the overhang was too much for it; it was still there when I left, and may be there yet. If it is not, this should not be taken as evidence to discredit my account.

I left the top and went down the South East Ridge. Soon I reached the cairn I had made, and continued. After about another hundred and fifty yards south east and downwards I came to a large cairn which obviously marked the spot where the tourist route left the ridge for the Coire nan Clachan Geala. It was only then that suspicion changed to probability that on the way up I had made a New Route; for on the map the dotted route from Lota Corrie joins the South East Ridge at the same point as, but on the opposite side from, the Tourist Route. Confirmation of this thrilling discovery came, as already mentioned after consultation of the 'Guide to the Isle of Skye.'

Preferring a circular trip, I continued down the Tourist Route, thankful for the abundance of cairns. The lochan in Coire Riabhach was just below the mist, and after contouring round the end of the Pinnacle Ridge and striking across the moor, the Bealach a' Mhaim path was reached safely. From the Bealach a' Mhaim cairn to the top had taken three hours; from the top back to the cairn, two hours,

giving about four complicated hours in the mist - a most enjoyable four hours.

And now, when tourists, or even hikers, ask me about it, I can say 'Sgùrr nan Gillean? Oh yes, I've been up it. In fact I made a new route for part of the way up.'

AN S.M.C. ABROAD

By Malcolm Slesser

I RECALL one of the editor's assistants remarking to me some short while ago, I think it was in 1947, that the Alps were for old men. Meanwhile we should look at the other ranges of the world. I took his advice, more or less, and when by happenstance I found myself cheek by jowl with the Alps from 1977 to 1979, it was to discover that the Alps were overrun—crowded huts, busy routes, appalling manners. They were simply no longer attractive. To an older breed of mountaineers, mountains were very private things. Once there were a lot of mountains and not many mountaineers, so it wasn't difficult to satisfy this essentially selfish indulgence. But the Alps today are circled by the great conurbations of Europe and from as far afield as Karlsruhe, Paris, Milan, Genoa, Munich, Vienna, Trieste and Marseilles, the Alps are now accessible for a weekend.

Happily the newer breed for the greater part are gregarious, or if not that, need the accolade of fellow climbers that is obtained by self-calibration on well known routes of known severity. This left, I was to find, quite sizeable chunks of Alps empty and unwanted. As Archie Henry remarked, they must be uninspiring hills, and so, of course, they are to the rock climber, but to the winter or skimountaineer they can offer great adventure and a superb environment.

Winter mountaineering in the Alps has its snags, one of which is a lot of deep soft snow. The conditions to wait for are May and June, when north faces are in excellent condition, and the days long. But my tale relates to ski-mountaineering which is possible from December to June.

It is noticeable how many members of the Club are turning to this pursuit in middle age. On the whole this is too late, for there is nothing which improves the enjoyment of ski mountaineering more than being able to ski, and it is notoriously difficult to learn this art as one grows older. However technology has been coming to our aid, with lighter skis and better bindings, yet the two biggest aids have been greater affluence (thus allowing one to ski on decent skis) and the recent introduction of plastic ski-mountaineering boots, which with vibram soles and the necessary rigidity and support allow one to make the best of the downhill. The descent on bad snow need no longer be an agonising process of hanging on with clenched toes and skis four feet apart. It can be a clean cut track always under control. It's a good feeling, and it allows one to attempt steeper slopes and narrower crests, for there is now much more control over one's immediate destiny.

Thus it was that though I found myself five hours from the Dolomites and four from Chamonix, I rarely visited those places. For at the head of Lago Maggiore stretching from the Simplon to the Splugen passes were just so many lovely ski-peaks that a man could spend his life on them and never do them all. It was on these hills I found my own delectable 'haute route.'

Let us start with the Hospice of St. Bernard on the Simplon Pass. This huge stone built structure sits on the crest of the 2,000 m pass, a route which is always kept open. The brothers have set aside a dortoir for the climbers, and moving with the times, have a bar for coffee and beer. It's seven Swiss francs a night, about two quid. From here there are numerous innocuous peaks to be done, many safe even in dangerous avalanche conditions. From here, too, there is a subtle and longish traverse to the Weissmies hut, but the plum is Monte Leone, 3,553 m. It's best done in spring for it is a hefty 1,600 metres of ascent from the Hommatugletscher.

The bold skier can make this peak the first leg of the Ticino 'haute route.' Instead of returning to the Hospice one can slip down the steep Chaltmasser gletscher to the Chaltmasser pass (2,770 m) and into Italy by the Ghiaccio d'Aurona. It's not a place to be in unstable conditions, but that apart it leads to a gorgeous sunny basin above Alpe Velha, which is cut off in winter. It shouldn't be too hard to find an open shed to give a doss for the night at Gornu, 1,770 m.

The idea now is to head east-north-east up the passo di Valtendra (2,113 m), which leads over to Goglio. The scenery is magnificent with the spire of the Helsenhorn in full view at the col. Above and to the left (north) now is a steepening snow slope topped by rocks with a number of gullies leading through. One climbs one of these to debouch at the head of a long shallow corrie and a fantastic panorama of aiguilles. This corrie will lead to Alpe Devero, one of the most beautiful of all the Alps. Normally it is reached by a small private funivia, and is thus very cut off. There are exquisite summer pastures and a lovely loch with a backdrop of the Punta D'Arbola (3,235 m) at the head. But this is winter. The shallow corrie makes an enticing descent, and very scenic, but if snow conditions are

anything but extremely stable, one should avoid it, for the final drop down to Alpe Devero is steep and avalanche prone. Instead follow the crest towards Monte Caxxola (2,330 m) in a north-easterly direction to meet the top of the piste system, which will give a superb last 500 metres to the Alp. The C.A.I. rifugio stands ten minutes from the bottom of the piste and Signor Angelo gives a good welcome and large grappas. One can eat here, and there is a simple West Highland shop providing stores for the onward passage.

There are many fine ski ascents to be had here at all seasons and some excellent rock climbing in summer. The Hon. Secretary and I did the east ridge of the Punta Della Rossa (2,888 m) giving a fine severe route of 500 m. But that was in summer.

There are two ways out of the Alp, and both require one to reach the head of Lago Devero, as lovely a traverse as one could wish for, gliding through open pine woods. Make for the Scatta Minoia (2,599 m). One goes to the head of the Devero valley to Pianbaglio, and then, as indicated on the map, there is an obvious eastward valley leading up. However in its lower section it is threatened by the steep face of the Punta D'Arbola, and it's safer to work up some steep ground south of this valley to reach a gentle plateau, leading again to the narrow defile below the col. This col is virtually impossible to find in cloud except by one who has been there before, as its approach is a steep little wall, walkable, but having no appearance of a col. The gap itself is marked by a decayed hut. The other side, leading to the Vanina is interesting, testing ski-ing, and no place to be when avalanches are likely, though both times I did it it was in foul conditions, and thick mist. The avalanches had just preceded us by a few hours! Down across Lago Vanina one sees the dam and a sizeable house, the dam-keeper's residence. The Refuge is nearby, with electricity and all mod cons. (2,194 m). From here less than an hour will lead one down a beautiful valley to Valdo in Val Formazza, with shops, buses, bars, etc. But stay, the best is yet to come, for above the hut rises a subtle valley leading to the Ghiaccio del Sabbione notable for two reasons. First, from it one gains the Punta D'Arbola - a lovely peak. Secondly, this glacier flows into the Lago de Sabbione, offering an extremely arctic impression.

From the Rifugio Vanina (take food with you for this leg and the next) one strikes up a steep slope to gain the exquisite Lago de Sruer, from which an impressive corrie rises, terminating in a further steep slope at the Passo del Vanina at 2,732 m. The Punta D'Arbola is an hour and half above one. The day the Hon. Secretary and I passed this way a full gale was blowing, and we settled for a schuss across the Sabbione Glacier to the western corner of the Lago (2,466 m). There are few crevasses and one can pretty well take it straight. In principle one can chicken out here, for the Rifugio Citta di Busto

is a mere hour away to the north east, but to get there demands crawling along the loch side under some rather steep slopes. I should be nervous about it. It's a pity, for the whole of this basin is a skimountaineering paradise, and most spectacular. Not only are there the peaks on the Swiss-Italian border to the immediate west, but a delectable group just south of the Lago rising to almost 3,000 m. From here too one can cross into Switzerland by the Hosanjoch, from where a complex route will take one to the Bintal hutte, 2,269 m. It's one of the remotest spots in the Alps.

Anyway the prize is none of these. It is the Blinnenhorn (3,373 m). Above, to the north, up a steep corrie, which leads to the plateau at the head of the Gries Gletscher. Some care is needed to find a safe route up. Unmarked on the map, but 300 m above the west end of the loch is a hut, used by the Italian Military, and a useful emergency refuge. We made the final move to the plateau by a steep couloir from which it was easier to remove skis, and left our sacs at the shallow col, about 3,050 m. The Blinnenhorn rises directly to the west, and is easily ascended. It offers fantastic views of immediate objectives, past days, and of the Valais and Oberland peaks. In particular the Oberaarhorn looks fantastic from here. But now comes the pièce de resistance, for the Cornu hut is the night's lodging place and there is a descent of 1,000 metres over ten kilometres. The Gries Gletscher is dangerously crevassed in places, but even the 1:50,000 maps indicate the danger areas well enough. It is serious enough for a rear man to carry all the rescue gear, and the leader to have his prussiks at the ready. I don't think Bill Wallace and I shall ever forget that superb descent. It went on and on and on. Powder snow, then packed snow, then hard snow. Always subtle, always engaging every morsel of concentration. We finally rattled down to the Gries Pass at 2,497 m. There is a tiny emergency refuge hut here (not marked on the map). There then follows a short steep traverse, which calls for one man at a time, followed by a gentle rise for a couple of kilometres to the Cornu Pass, from where it is easy schussing to the Cornu Hutte, 2,333 m. This is a gorgeous hut, with few visitors. A telephone allows you to phone your friends anywhere in the world – but you have to pay.

From this hut two magnificent ranges of ski-mountaineering hills await you, to the north and south of the Val Bedretto which lies below the hut. For sheer pleasure I would recommend slipping down the Nufenenpass road to the simple albergo at All' Aqua, where two sisters reminiscent of Hanna and Nancy Girvan of Inverarnan fame offer hospitality the whole winter long, even though the road is blocked for 3 to 5 months. Here the weary eat, sleep, have showers and generally recuperate. It must be about the cheapest berth in Switzerland. For those going towards Andermatt, the ascent is to the Capanna Pian Secoo, an hour above All' Aqua, a delightful little hut which like all the Swiss huts in this area, is

always open and unguarded in winter. Beware, however, for the route to Andermatt over the intervening peaks via the Rotondo Hut requires the ascent of steepish south facing slopes. Avoid the place like the plague if there has been recent heavy falls of snow, for it is noted for its powder snow avalanches (I've even seen bent pylons here). But it quickly turns to spring snow. The north side down to the Rotondo hut is much safer, and Andermatt is just a couple of hours down the valley.

On the whole, however, I prefer the south side of the Val Bedretto, and recommend an ascent to the Refugio Cristallina (2,349 m), made from Ossaco (1,313 m) which may be reached by ski-ing downhill from All' Aqua. It's a lovely ascent, through open pine woods, after a brief struggle with a forest track. The peak to do is the Cristallina (2,912 m) which offers superb steep ski-ing on the descent. If this is the end of the tour, then the best way down is to return to the Passo di Cristillina, then work westwards to the Ghiaccio de Vallegia by a low col, and cross this, still going westwards to another col to find oneself in the Valle Cavagnola, which leads down to All' Aqua. From there one can phone the post bus and tell them to pick you up at Bedretto a few kilometres down the valley, and so to the station at Airolo, and the train north or south. But better still is to move on to the Robei hut 1,836 m or Cap. Basodino. This is a complex, but short route, and the skier will have to use his judgment. The hut is at the top of a funivia rising from San Carlo in the Val Maggia, but in winter this does not serve the tourist. The approach from the valley is ridden by avalanches. and not advisable. Thus the hut is very quiet. It is all electric, and sits on a lovely belyedere below the lift station and surrounded by several dams. Excellent ski-touring may be had from here in all directions. But for the 'haute route,' the peak to go for is the Basodino (3,273 m). It is a long ascent up Vale dei Fiorina – the valley of flowers, and climbs on to the Basodino glacier. One can ski to within 200 vertical feet of the summit, after which it is a scramble. There is now a delicious descent first down the glacier, which high up is fairly innocuous, and then cutting north to the Kastel-lucke, a gap between steep walls. Unfortunately the descent takes one below the col and one must climb for ten minutes. It's worth it for the descent is down a broad steep slope, too wide to be a couloir, yet definitely not a simple slope. It runs out on to a tilted plateau full of subtle dips and bumps, and leads to within two minutes' poling of the Rifugio V. Togia (known to everyone as the Maria e Luisa hut) at 2,190 m. This hut is an albergo in the ski-touring high season (after the middle of April). Otherwise there is a squalid winter refuge. The trip may be completed with a glorious descent to the valley of Formazza to the point where the road is kept open, Sotto Frua, below an impressive waterfall. Four kilometres down the snow banks on the road side bring one to Valdo, and civilisation in Italy.

The bus to Domodossola and then to the Simplon will return you to your by now frozen car.

I never did do the whole trip as a oner, as Bill Wallace and I planned, but over two years the bits were pieced together. It's as good a ski-mountaineering route as I know. But, as one finds out, the whole of the Alps are good ski-mountaineering. One merely needs to get to know them. The Alps are for old men, only if they know where to go.

Maps: Carte nationale de la Suisse 1:50,000, sheets 274 (Visp); 265 (Nufennen Pass); 275 (Val Antigorio).

Useful telephone numbers: C.A.I. Rifugio, Alpe Devero 0324-62026. Weather reports: In French, Lausanne 162; in Italian, Lugano 162. Avalanche and Snow information: Dial city code 120.

RECENT ICE CLIMBS ON BEINN UDLAIDH

By Ian Duckworth

REFERENCE is made to climbing in Coire Daimh on Beinn Udlaidh in the Southern Highlands Guide (pp. 164-166).

The first recorded winter ascents was done during the winter of 1968/69 (Central Gully), although it would seem unlikely that this was the first occasion that nailed, or cramponed feet, had passed this way.

I was first introduced to the Coire during the winter of 1973/74, having just moved up to Scotland from the Cornish Riviera. It was surprising to me that the winter climbing potential had not been exploited in view of the extensive developments in nearby Glencoe. Mild winters plus a lack of nerve and skill meant that most of the fine unclimbed lines were to be left for a few more years. At this time the place was so unknown that deeds of derring-do could always be postponed for another day in the sure knowledge that the desired route would still be virgin waiting upon your next visit.

The best products of these years would seem to be *The Cramp* and *Doctor's Dilemma*. The names of these routes hopefully convey the difficulties encountered in coaxing partners whilst still completing a training of how to proceed up steep places during a Scottish winter. The unfortunate 'Geordie' Skelton who suffered from cramp was converted to wrist-straps that day as he gracefully slid off the

end of his remaining tools after pulling his remaining points of contact. The infamous Doctor Michael Firth from Stirling has now emigrated to New Zealand despite rumours to the contrary that he went to Australia to join the well-known Flying outfit.

During the winter of 1978/79 the pace of events began to change. More people knew about the cliffs by now due to a failure on our part to be sufficiently secretive. This winter was also unusual for the severity, and persistence, of the cold weather, resulting in an exceptionally fine formation of ice. The time for great deeds had arrived, and on one fine day in January, the vulpine Bob Duncan emerged from the depths of pre-finals depression, and in the company of the ingenuous John Fraser, completed two of the best, and hardest, routes in a single day. Organpipe Wall and The Smirk, stand out as prime examples indicating the inadequacies of the recent grading system. Too short to merit a Grade V and according to the criteria employed with this system, they would nevertheless appear to be as hard, and as serious, as many of the classic Grade V's which pass the 'over 500 ft. rule' often due to a liberal amount of 'easy-slope bashing.' Due to the inconsistencies employed by the advocates of that system in allowing old routes shorter than 500 ft. to be awarded a Grade V (i.e. The Wand, The Cancer, Gardyloo Buttress, etc.), and recognising that resistance to proposed changes in the grading system are often countered from the same sources, we have decided to effect a compromise with respect to the grading of our routes, which whilst not recognising an arbitrary 500 ft. rule nevertheless pays attention to length of route as a factor affecting overall seriousness, and hence its ultimate grade. This accords with the revised approach to winter grading outlined on page 47.

The Smirk built up satisfactorily for the first time in the five years I had been visiting the corrie, and the name refers to that irritating twitch of Bob Duncan's observed when he was recounting the details of his ascent to a thrice failed Ian Duckworth and Alan Pettit, at the end of the day.

However every dog has its day, and as the quality of the ice improved in its ice-screw acceptance level over the course of the winter, the hard *Junior's Jaunt* was added to the right wall of *Central Gully*. By this time the young Neil Morrison had become an afficionado, and was providing inspiration for route names.

A certain amount of confusion was caused by the incongruence between the names of some of the original summer routes, and those of the subsequent winter ascents. This resulted in *Quartzvein Scoop* being named the *Ramp* after being climbed by Tony Shepherd, Tony Gray and Dougie Evans. Similar mistakes were made with *Ramshead Gully* (the original *West Gully*), and *South Gully* of the Black Wall (the original *Ramshead Gully*), and in all cases the

original names have been adopted (The Southern Highlands, pp. 164-166).

The Black Wall, which to my mind is the showpiece of the coire, when in good winter condition, received its first major route with the ascent of *Peter Pan* by Ian Duckworth and Peter Bilsborough, followed shortly afterwards by *Tinkerbell* (later to be superseded by *Cut-throat*). Quite where these allusions to immortality, and fairies, came from is not clear; although some one has recently been informed by an attractive young skier that he is wearing well; but the tradition has stuck, with *Captain Hook* and *The Croc* to follow.

The winter of 1979/80 produced a spell of fine cold weather in January, and a spate of activity resulted in *Green Eyes*, *Junior's Jangle* and *South Gully of the Black Wall* IV, being climbed. Early in February Dave Cuthbertson and Chris Calow produced the fine *Captain Hook*, the first route here to be given a five grading. This route had been eyed up for several years by the regular visitors but always looked suitably intimidating to be postponed. Dave pronounced its difficulties to be severe but not approaching those of his own *Elliot's Downfall*. Captain Hook was done on a Saturday, the same day that Ian Duckworth and John Fraser completed the pleasant *Ramshead Buttress*.

An injudicious word in 'the Drey' by Dave about further possibilities in the Coire in condition at the time that might have encouraged the perfidious Bob Duncan to break with tradition and rise early, whilst other heads were still on the pillow. When the various parties made their ways to the cliffs on the Sunday, there was much consternation, because although the Duncan transport had been sighted at the road, he was nowhere to be seen, until a black dot was sighted on the wall leading to the incipient Cut-throat. Dave and Chris disappeared upwards in the same direction, whilst Quintet, a much tried line on the right of Organpipe Wall, was climbed in excellent condition, by Ian Duckworth, Alan Pettit, John Fraser, Willie Woods and Rod Stewart.

At the end of the day we were informed that the magnanimous Bob was to allow *Cut-throat* as a four-man ascent. This route which consists of an excellent ice wall, and a steep, detached icicle leading to an easier finish, will not often be in prime condition, and could be very hard to impossible if the icicle was attempted in its usual brittle and exiguous form. In fact it would probably entail a free pull-up and a one-arm lock whilst trying to establish the feet on to a free-hanging icicle about six feet in circumference.

The final route worthy of a special mention lies between *Cutthroat* and *Peter Pan*. This route does not often form in its longer twenty feet but can be gained from the wall on its left. Originally named *The Croc* after an ascent by John Fraser, Dougie Evans and

Adrian Barnton, it has been mooted that it should be rather euphoniously renamed Adrian's Icicle.

The development here is now near to maturity, although certain obvious possibilities still exist. Lacking the length of route, and remoteness of situation, which are the hallmarks of the best Scottish cliffs, Coire Daimh has nevertheless many fine climbs, by way of recommendation, as well as being a place of quiet contemplation, although recent publicity will not improve it in this respect.

Route List (from Left to Right):

| court | Dioe Inom Bore to re- | 9.10/ | | | |
|-------|------------------------------|--------|----------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 1 | Zig-Zag | II | 300 ft. | 1970/71 | |
| | | | S.M.C.J., 1971, xxix, 425. | | |
| 2 | Junior's Joke | II | 300 ft. | 1979/80 | |
| 3 | Ice Crew | III/IV | 300 ft. | 1979/80 | |
| 4 | Quartzvein Scoop | III/IV | 300 ft. | 1978/79 | |
| 5 | Captain Hook | V | 250 ft. | 1979/80 | |
| 6 | Cut-throat | IV/V | 250 ft. | 1979/80 | |
| 7 | Adrian's Icicle/ The Croc | IV/V | 250 ft. | 1979/80 | |
| 8 | Peter Pan | IV | 300 ft. | 1978/79 | |
| 9 | The Cramp | III/IV | 400 ft. | 1976/77 | |
| | | | S.M.C. | .J., 1977, xxxi, 184 | |
| 10 | South Gully of | IV | 400 ft. | 1969/70 | |
| | Black Wall | | S.M.C | S.M.C.J., 1970, xxix, 317 | |
| 11 | Green Eyes | III/IV | 400 ft. | 1969/70 | |
| 12 | Ramshead Gully | III | 400 ft. | 1969/70 | |
| 13 | Ramshead Buttress | III/IV | 400 ft. | 1979/80 | |
| 14 | Sunshine Gully | II | 350 ft. | 1970/71 | |
| | | | | .J., 1971, xxix, 425 | |
| 15 | Junior's Jaunt | IV | 300 ft. | 1978/79 | |
| 16 | Central Gully | II | 600 ft. | 1968/69 | |
| | | | | .J., 1970, xxix, 317 | |
| 17 | Doctor's Dilemma | IV | 600 ft. | 1977/78 | |
| 18 | Junior's Jangle | IV | 450 ft. | 1979/80 | |
| 19 | White Caterpillar | II/III | 350 ft. | 1978/79 | |
| 20 | West Gully | II/III | 700 ft. | 1971/72 | |
| 21 | Horny Ridge | I | 600 ft. | 1971/72 | |
| 22 | Side-Step | II | 600 ft. | 1978/79 | |
| 23 | Hobo | III | 550 ft. | 1978/79 | |
| 24 | Organpipe Wall | IV/V | 250 ft. | 1978/79 | |
| 25 | Quintet | IV | 250 ft. | 1979/80 | |
| 26 | Smirk | IV/V | 300 ft. | 1978/79 | |
| | | | | | |

NEW CLIMBS SECTION

WINTER GRADINGS.

Following last year's note in the *Journal* and various Glossies enough response has been received from active winter climbers to arrive at a consensus on this subject. The results of the exercise are as follows:

- A numerical system similar to the existing system will be retained, i.e. Grades I to V with the door open for Grade VI for very hard new climbs, subject to evaluation by further ascents.
- Split grades (e.g. III/IV) are still acceptable for borderline routes or those which are prone to great variation in standard.
- Grades should be related to the snow and ice climbing. Reference to rock climbing standards in description and definition of the grades should be omitted.
- The requirement that Grade V's should have a minimal length to be abandoned.
- 5. The allocation of grades should be based on the pyramid concept, i.e. the easy routes at the bottom can be done by everyone but as we go up the grades we also thin out the number of climbers capable of the route. Ultimately the grade should be based upon the 'feel' of how serious an undertaking the climb is. This clearly tends to push long and sustained routes up the scale but does not preclude a short route with only one extremely hard section from having a high grade although it is unlikely to do so if its single crux can be easily avoided or is close to the ground.
- 6. Although any assessment of the seriousness of a climb must take into account the level of protection possible, it would be too difficult and variable to allow for the liability of a route to spindrift, avalanche, etc. Thus Zero Gully would be IV in spite of its vulnerability to these objective hazards.
- 7. Since the grading is based upon the assessment of snow and ice difficulty, it is quite appropriate to refer to the grade of the actual climbing or of an individual section, the grade being a combined assessment of seriousness in terms of angle, security, sustained nature, etc. in other words 'the feel' of the climbing. It is still not directly analogous to rock climbing, where one can speak of an individual move as being of Very Severe standard or whatever.
- Although occasional reference to the standard of a pitch or section of climbing is acceptable, the inclusion of pitch gradings in route descriptions is not desirable.
- 9. Retention of Grade V for more serious routes means that some of the classic ice climbs which have yielded so well to modern ice techniques and are no longer as serious as they were, will be reduced. On the other hand rock routes are more likely to maintain their difficulties and less likely to be downgraded. The new Lochnagar/Creag an Dubh Loch guide has already adjusted gradings in this way (e.g. Polyphemus Gully from V to IV. Eagle Ridge, still V).
- 10. The comparative reassessment of winter routes should be an on-going process. Comment on routes which seem to require confirmation or regrading is always welcome, and changes will be published from time to time.

NEW CLIMBS—THE ISLANDS

Arran: A'Chir: Coire Daingean.—Lower Right Chimney.

W. McPherson & C. Moody. 27th May 1977. 160 ft. (48 m). Severe.

This route lies on the slabby wall at the head of Coire Daingean, and follows the obvious chimney/flake some 50 ft. (15 m) right of Lower Left Chimney.

Climb a left slanting crack to ledge at foot of flake, climb this to top.

Glen Iorsa Face.—Cairn's Cream Corner.

I. McColl & C. Smith. 3rd June 1978. 180 ft. (54 m). Very Difficult.

Start at chimney-crack 20 ft. (6 m) right of *November Chimney*. Climb this then follow obvious slab corner in two short pitches (135 ft, 41 m). Move up and left to flake crack with pointed top, climb this exiting left at top 45 ft (13 m).

Cir Mhór: South Face. - Green Gully

C. Smith. 27th January 1979. 300 ft. (90 m). Grade II/III.

The lower gully contained one ice pitch. The left finish involved a through route followed by steep mixed ground.

Upper East Face.—Theseus. 325 ft. (97 m). Hard Very Severe. H. Henderson & D. MacDonald. 30th June 1979.

This route follows a line of weakness and includes parts of earlier climbs.

Start as for Labyrinth.

Climb the fault line to where *Labyrinth* goes right up a sloping fault. Climb directly up a crack line (strenuous) to the base of the final corner. The last pitch is the crux. Start as for the *Stewart Orr Variation* but continue up to loosely piled chockstones. Move left under the crack, now a hanging flake, and climb the leftward edge to the top.

North-East Face.-Gully B1.

R. Gatehouse & C. Smith. 17th February 1979. 450 ft (135 m). Grade III. Follows the summer route with two main pitches.

-Gully C. 600 ft (180 m). GRADE IV.

R. Gatehouse & C. Smith. 18th February 1979.

Easy snow leads to a cave pitch climbed on the right. Follow iced grooves rightwards for 120 ft (36 m) to cave on left. Climb iced slab on right and follow continuation of gully including through route to reach chockstones blocking gully. Traverse left under these, crossing top of corner to gain easy ground.

-Eastern Stone Shoot. 400 ft (120 m). GRADE II.

D. McBrayne & C. Smith. 3rd February 1979.

One ice pitch near start.

-Pan's Pillar. 300 ft(90 m). Very Severe.

R. T. Richardson & W. Skidmore. 4th July 1979.

This climbs the narrow, prominent 150 ft (45 m) pillar lying on the slabs about 200 ft (60 m) right of *Pothole Slab* and immediately left of *Gully D* (cairn).



Rannoch Moor and the watershed hills of Coire Ba.

Photo: H. M. Brown







Climber: D. Jenkins

Photo: P. Macdonald

THE ROOST—This little-known climb follows a remarkably impressive line on the south face of Creag Shomhairle in the Foinaven region. It was first recorded in 1962 by members of the Caithness Mountaineering Club who modestly graded it 'Severe.' Starting from an already exposed stance, a strenuous crack (prominently seen in the photopraph) is climbed on magnificent rock to a belay on the upper heather ledge. From here the route continues to beneath the main overhangs and then by an easy but superbly situated left traverse, round the edge of the buttress and into an open corner (not seen here) leading to several hundred feet of scrambling. Although the main difficulties occupy less than 200 feet, the quality of the climb and its proximity to the road—about 3 miles of pleasant walking—are adequate compensation.

Gain the pillar and follow right edge with difficulty (peg runner) to a resting place at small thread runner at 100 ft (30 m). Continue straight up for a short way then trend left onto a delicate slab (crux) leading to top of pillar. Belay below (150 ft, 45 m). Move right up short slab to ledge and continue up waterworn slabs to thin crack and peg runner. Trend right to bottom of narrow grass strip and follow this to top and peg belay (150 ft, 45 m). The thin crack, if dry, might give a better finish.

Cioch na h'Oighe: The Bastion.-Rhino.

G. E. Little & W. Skidmore. 1st July 1979. 270 ft (81 m). Extremely Severe.

A steep and strenuous route from the (abrupt) start to the finish. This is the first conventional ascent by a roped party – the route was previously soloed using a back rope by G. E. Little on 3rd June 1979. Start at cairn on Ledge 3, well up and right of *Armadillo*, and directly below obvious pointed flake high on wall.

Gain and climb a 10 ft (3 m) leftward facing flake. Mantelshelf and go straight up to bulge, pull left to reach small heather ledge. Climb up to curious hole (peg runner above, in place) and step right to stance on fine grass ledge (70 ft, 21 m). Climb straight up on good flakes then by a crack to enter the crux chimney crack (peg runner in place above). Climb the chimney crack and exit left round chockstone (nut for aid) to gain stance and belay on top of flake at *Tidemark* (70 ft, 21 m). Walk right and climb corner above big block. Make hard detour on left wall then continue up corner to large grass ledge and belays (100 ft, 30 m). Climb overhanging corner with strenuous finish to ledge and belay (30 ft, 9 m). A short scramble leads to top end of Ledge 4, descent on right.

Bennan Head.—Black Cave Pillar.

220 ft (66 m). Hard Very Severe.

G. E. Little, R. J. Little & W. Skidmore. 26th May 1979.

This climbs the attractive pillar right of the Black Cave, a well-known landmark. The pillar dries quickly.

Start centrally and climb, trending left, to a groove which leads to a rightward traverse and a way up to ledges and belay at overhangs. Peg belay in place (90 ft, 27 m). Old slings were found here. Move right to blocks and gain wall above with difficulty. Step left and climb wall until possible to traverse right into small recess under twin cracks. Follow cracks to ledge and belay (60 ft, 18 m). Traverse (15 ft, 5 m) left and start up short slabby wall, gain small ledge left of the little shattered pillar under overhang. Swing right round pillar to gain main corner, pull over detached flake and climb to final corner. Ascend corner with peg runner (in place) on left wall (70 ft, 21 m). Metal belay stake, in place, on flat top of crag.

SKYE

Coire a'Ghreadaidh: Sgùrr Eadar da Choire.—Gael Force.

450 ft (135 m). Hard Very Severe.

H. Henderson & R. G. Ross. 24th September 1977.

This route lies on a south facing wall on Sgùrr Eadar da Choire, a point on the North-West Ridge of Sgùrr a'Ghreadaidh. In the centre of the face will be seen a prominent corner at three quarters height. The route climbs the corner from directly below, starting at a prominent groove (cairn).

Climb the groove and steep wall to grass terrace (150 ft, 45 m). Continue, steeply at first, to detached flake, then trend rightwards to foot of main corner and belay, peg in place (150 ft, 45 m). Traverse 20 ft (6 m) under corner, then directly up crack (crux) to finish over a steep wall to belay on terrace (80 ft, 24 m). Finish by steep wall on good, loose holds to reach summit cairn (70 ft, 21 m).

Coire Lagan: Sron na Ciche: Eastern Buttress.-Enigma.

450 ft (135 m). Extremely Severe (E3).

M. Hamilton & D. Mullin. May 1979.

The main pitch of this route follows the fine crack in the steep wall well left of the upper pitches of *The Snake*. Start about 40 ft (12 m) right of Creag Dubh Grooves, between *The Plunge* and *Strappado*, and at the right-hand end of a large, flat ledge with a deep crevasse at the back.

Climb the wall above, first by a left slanting groove then slightly rightwards by cracks. Belay over on the left (120 ft, 36 m). Climb easily right and up (crossing Strappado) to a thin, right slanting corner crack; climb this until below a large overlap and traverse right to nut belays on a well-situated ledge (80 ft, 24 m). Above and left the wall is split by a thin crack. Gain and climb this to a belay beyond the final overhang (120 ft, 36 m). Continue up the crack (130 ft, 39 m).

The route was climbed on sight, in a single day, and was yo-yoed.

RHUM

Trollaval: Harris Buttress.—Guillotine. 410 ft (123 m). Very Severe. R. Barton & D. Morris. June 1979.

This line follows the 250 ft (75 m) vertical crack mentioned in Hamish Brown's guide. In its upper reaches the crack is actually twin parallel grooves. A good, sustained climb.

Climb the crack and move right to a good ledge below the right-hand groove (40 ft, 12 m). Climb up to the bulge guarding the right-hand groove, avoid this by following the left-hand groove a short distance, when a delicate traverse leads back into the original groove and a ledge on its right (50 ft, 15 m). Move left to a small pinnacle perched between the grooves. Climb into the bay above, escape by a steep crack on the left and move left to a large block ledge (80 ft, 24 m). Move back right under the Guillotine and use it to surmount the short, steep corner. Follow pleasant ramps and grooves to belay below a large white slab (120 ft, 36 m). The slab now leads easily to a junction with Archangel. Escape is also possible leftwards (120 ft, 36 m).

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS I

Letterewe Forest: Beinn Lair: Creig na Gaorach.—Denisen.

R. A. Croft & J. R. Sutcliffe. 30th May 1978. 450 ft (135 m). Very Severe.

This route lies on the same crag as Rainbow's End (see Notes). The buttress has a band of vertical rock at mid-height, with a big red slab below and easier, slabby rock above. The climb takes the only obvious breaks through the steep section.

Starting below the centre of the buttress, variable but poorly protected climbing trends slightly left to the top of the large slab, below a vertical wall (200 ft, 60 m). Traverse left to obvious crack leading to grass ledge (50 ft, 15 m). Traverse right on wall below an overhang, and reach a higher ledge by a difficult, exposed move (40 ft, 12 m). Gain the rib directly above via corner on right and finish up pleasant slabs.

Beinn a'Chaisgein Mór: Carnmore Crag.—Original Route, Direct Variation.
C. R. Ambler & M. A. Hopkins. May 1964. 100 ft (30 m). Very Severe.

Previously unrecorded in this *Journal*, this variation eliminates the one poor section of the original route the turfy ramps and traverse from the Central Bay (pitches 5, 6 and 7 in Guide). The standard is similar to the subsequent crux pitch, and this variation renders the route more direct than *Fionn Buttress*, and of comparable quality.

From the foot of the ramp above the hanging eracle (pitch 5), make for a nose of cracked blocks on the wall above, via a small niche (60 ft, 18 m). Steep and very exposed rock leads up, passing right of small everhang, to the traverse – ledge and belays at the junction with Fionn Buttress (40 ft, 12 m).

Coigach: Cul Beag: West Face. - Kveldro Ridge.

R. Gatehouse & C. Smith. 10th July 1979. 670 ft (201 m). Very Difficult.

Seen from Linnoraineach the most obvious feature is a Y shaped gully with a prominent pear shaped slab at the first tier. This route takes the ridge to the left of the amphitheatre formed by the Y gully. On approaching the slab from below, the route takes the left-hand skyline, which appears as a three-tiered ridge.

Start 300 ft (90 m) to the left of the Y gully at the foot of the second tier seen on ridge. Scramble 150 ft (45 m) to cracked wall. Climb this wall by a crack (90 ft, 27 m). Climb groove on right side of following wall (80 ft, 24 m). Scramble 250 ft (75 m) to final tier. Climb this by leftward slanting chimney (100 ft, 30 m), to finish just below summit.

-Lickerish Quarter.

R. Gatehouse & C. Smith. 10th July 1979. 290 ft (87 m). Severe.

Start at the foot of *Curving Chimney* (see *S.M.C.J.*, 1960, xxvii, 151, 53). Climb rib on right of chimney for a few moves then traverse up and across to corner (50 ft, 15 m). Climb corner or slabs on left to pulpit then slabs directly above.

Cul Mór: Creag nan Calmon: S.W. Face: Lower Tier.—Buffalo Ballet.
R. Gatehouse & C. Smith. 12th July 1979. 425 ft (127 m). Very Severe.

There are three main buttresses – West, Central and East. East Buttress merges with crags overlooking Loch Dearg a'Chuil Mhór. West Gully is a large amphitheatre separating West and Central Buttresses. East Gully slopes diagonally up left between Central and East Buttresses.

There is a prominent line of slabby grooves on East Buttress, starting at the foot of East Gully. On closer inspection these proved to be an impressive series of chimney cracks. The route attempted these, but wet forced a move to the rocks on the left. (GR 158 111).

Start at the foot of East Gully on the right wall, below a prominent chimney. Climb groove then chimney, traveree right to easy ground. Follow gully to beneath chimney crack. Climb rib on left of gully for 80 ft (24 m) to below narrow chimney, climb this then another chimney, traverse left below overhang to narrow rib. Climb to top of rib, tension right across steep slab to gain top of overhang. Follow chimney to top.

Sgurr An Fhidhleir.—Nose Direct, Tower Finish. 300 ft (90 m).

D. Gilbert & J. Mackenzie. 10th June 1979. Extremely Severe (E2).

From the ledge immediately above the loose groove of the third slab of the original Direct Route, climb wall then traverse across bald slab, up and right via thin grass steps (no protection), to exposed central nook, poor belays. The top vertical wall now looms directly above. Climb up and slightly rightwards past fixed wire runner to overhang. Overcome this on right then climb wall above to gain groove with steep slab on right. Climb crack in slab to fixed peg. Using this for foothold step right and mantelshelf into groove (crux). Step right again into small nook stance with great exposure (150 ft, 45 m). Climb crack above to ledge, traverse left into groove and follow this to gain secure chimney stance and belays behind detached tower (25 ft, 7 m). Climb chimney onto tower then groove above to belays. Easier rocks lead to junction with *Direct Route*.

-West Face.

P. F. Macdonald & C. Rowland. February 1979. 650 ft (195 m). Grade III.

This route follows a depression line left of centre on the west face of this peak. The length given is to the junction with North West Face (see S.M.C.J., xxxi, 1979, 398).

Follow the depression, then a choice of grooves leading to more open climbing. The route eventually joins *North West Face* route above the prominent shoulder. The final gully of that route was then followed.

The Fannichs: An Coileachan: Garbh Coire Mhór. - Sage Corner.

D. Butterfield & J. Mackenzie. 5th May 1979. 550 ft (165 m). GRADE II/III.

About halfway up the easy Central Gully break out right and head up iced slabs and snow to a prominent icefall bordering a corner. The icefall consists of short, vertical steps and may extend for 300 ft (90 m). Finish up snow, no cornice.

-Downward Bound.

D. Gilbert & J. Mackenzie. 19th January 1980. 600 ft (180 m). Grade III.

To the right of Wot Gully a prominent ice fall gives upwards of 200 ft (60 m) of short, vertical sections. Climb this to a broad snowfield. Either climb the broken buttress above, or use the ice fall as a direct start to Wot Gully and traverse into it easily, giving more interest.

The snowfield is very prone to dry-slab avalanche, and J. Mackenzie notes that the first ascent was immediately followed by the first descent, taking approximately six seconds.

Sgurr Mor: East Face.—The Resurrection.

1,500 ft (450 m). GRADE IV/V.

D. Butterfield & J. Mackenzie. 14th March 1980.

Between Easter Gully and East Face Route are a series of icefalls, bordered on the left by a steep gully groove. Follow this to a niche on the right wall at an icefall.

Traverse right across a diminishing ledge (peg runner), across a bulge, then weave through bulges to belay on blocky shelf (120 ft, 36 m). Climb ice above then traverse left to bulge and up iced slabs to in situ peg belay on right (150 ft, 45 m). Gain steepening snowfield above, heading for icefall in centre (several pitches of 150 ft (45 m)). Climb icefall to snow belay at 130 ft (39 m). Go up left to gain steepening shallow scoop then up hard snow or ice steeply to vertical rock headwall (several pitches). A shallow cave behind icicle fringe provides refuge. Now traverse right beneath headwall, round steep rib then up to snow belays above. Traverse up and right again to where headwall suddenly ends and finish up steep snow with cornice finish.

A superb but intimidating alpine-like route, with great variety of climbing. Early in the season the snowfields present an avalanche threat, as do the massive cornices in thaw conditions. Despite this, highly recommended.

Beinn Dearg Mhór.—Twisting Gully. 900 ft (270 m). GRADE IV.

M. G. Geddes, C. Higgins & A. Walne. 19th January 1980.

Right of the mass of the South Peak a narrow gully cuts into the cliff. The lower reaches are hidden from the corrie floor, while higher up the gully trifurcates to give parallel, right-slanting branches. This route climbs the lower gully and the central branch, notable for its clean-cut line.

A'Mhaighdean.—Ermine Gully.

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

R. F. Allen & M. G. Geddes. 29th April 1978.

This is the most prominent, long gully left of $West\ Gully$, just left of $Vole\ Buttress$, and well right of the Sandstone Buttresses. Two pitches were encountered low down.

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS II

Liathach: Coire na Caime. - Vanadium Couloir.

A. Paul & D. Sanderson. 24th February 1979. 1,000 ft (300 m). Grade IV.

This route is very obvious from the Coire Dubh path, and follows the gull immediately left of Bell's Buttress.

Fuar Tholl: Mainreachan Buttress.—Private Eye.

600 ft (180 m). Hard Very Severe.

M. Boysen, P. Braithwaite & P. Nunn. April 1974.

The route climbs the buttress in the centre, through the obvious black cave at half-height. Start down to the right of *Snoopy* at the next gangway trending leftwards.

Climb the gangway, awkward (150 ft, 54 m). Continue slightly rightwards and belay in the back of the cave (100 ft, 30 m). Exit over the roof of the cave past a thread runner (difficult and often wet) to belay above (100 ft, 30 m). Continue up cracks and steep walls to the top. The upper section is very loose (150 ft, 45 m).

Beinn Bhan: Coire nan Fhamhair.—Die Riesenwand—(Giant's Wall).

A. Nisbet & B. Sprunt. 26-27 January 1980. 1,500 ft (450 m). GRADE V.

This route takes the line of least resistance on the face between *The Chimney* (see S.M.C.J., xxxi, 1979, 397), and a huge, overhanging corner tucked away on the side of the *Upper Connecting Ridge of A'Phoite*. Poor protection and bewildering exposure lend an air of excitement and confirms this as an outstanding route. The large snow ledge provided a fairly comfortable bivouac which may be unnecessary in future – since a point only 120 ft (36 m) short of easier ground was reached on the first day, followed by an abseil return to the bivouac ledge.

Start at the left side of the face below a secondary corner. Climb steep ice to a short barrier wall (in lean conditions climb a left slanting line to the same point). Pass the wall by moving left and back right to rejoin the ice above. A deceptively steep, icy groove leads to a niche underneath a huge roof. Escape by traversing right to gain a large, horizontal snow ledge (bivouac site). Traverse the ledge rightwards for 35 ft (105 m) to join another ledge leading back left to a belay after 120 ft (36 m). From below it appears best to traverse back right again, but the ledge appears to contain a blank section. Instead, continue up and left along the now diminishing ledge until a memorable swing round a bulge leads to the end of the difficulties. A short traverse left leads to a shallow gully which gives a pleasant route to the plateau.

Coir' Each.—Skidmark Buttress. 600 ft (180 m). GRADE III.

R. Robb & S. Young. 7th February 1980.

This route climbs the buttress immediately left of *Deep Gully* (see S.M.C.J., xxxi, 1978, 273). Start at foot of wide groove, peg belay on large, lefthand wall.

Follow corners and ledges for two pitches to reach the top of a rightwards trending ramp. Climb steep, exposed groove above (crux) to gain wide ledge; traverse left for 20 ft (6 m) and continue up grooves and corners to the top. Good protection throughout.

-Hors d'oeuvres.

500 ft (150 m). GRADE III.

P. Anderson & K. Murphy. 5th February 1980.

This route follows the rightmost gully on the main face, taking a direct start. An easier start is possible further right.

Climb obvious icefall to belay under rocks on right (130 ft, 39 m). Follow icefall on left leading through short ice bulges and grooves to a snowfield, spike belay on back wall (150 ft, 45 m). The main gully is now gained and leads in two pitches to easy ground.

Coire na Poite.—Dormouse Chimney.

GRADE IV.

M. Freeman & J. Moreland. 4th February 1980.

Well to the right of North Gully, and high in the centre of the north face of A'Chioch is a prominent, ice-filled chimney which is often in condition. It provides two full pitches with steep and varied climbing on continuous ice.

The lower section leading to the chimney may be avoided by traversing in along a good ledge from the coire upper floor. Above the chimney an escape rightwards can be made on the easy snow slopes above the chimney.

Meall Gorm: North East Face.—Way Out. 700 ft (210 m). Grade II. R. Robb & S. Young (both solo). February 1980.

The corrie leading up to the Bealach nam Bo has a steep step in its floor about halfway up. At this point the cliffs of Meall Gorm form a Long Buttress, the toe of which descends into the step. Just to its right lies a wide gully, Easy Gully.

This route is the least obvious, and furthest left on this face. It is shallow and trends continuously left, taking in icy grooves and turfy walls to finish on the left of the ridge. The climb may be more rewarding in leaner conditions.

-Stonner Falls.

300 ft (90 m). GRADE III/IV.

P. Anderson & K. Murphy. 5th February 1980.

This climb lies on the buttress right of Easy Gully, and follows a rightward trending gully, topped by a large cascade of ice. The ice rests on a broad terrace running the width of the face. The climb is well seen from the road.

Climb short ice step then easy gully to wide terrace and peg belay (130 ft, 39 m). Follow ice bulges on the left to a peg belay below the final icefall (90 ft, 27 m). Climb the icefall on the left through bulges to the broad terrace and spike belay on back wall (80 ft, 24 m).

-The Mono Blues.

700 ft (210 m). GRADE II.

M. G. Geddes, B. P. Hall, A. McIntyre & J. Porter. 25th March 1978.

There is a broad gully right of Wedge Buttress. This climb follows the next gully right. Two short pitches were encountered.

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS III

The Reay Forest: Foinaven: Creag Urbhard.—Iolaire.

D. Broadhead & D. Rubens. 13th July 1979. 500 ft (150 m). Very Severe.

Start 200 ft (60 m) left of the bay of Chicken Run at the left end of a rocky terrace, below a big roof.

Climb a crack cirect to belay (130 ft, 39 m). Continue up to the roof (15 ft, 5 m) and trend right under it towards a prominent, steep chimney crack. Belay just before the chimney (80 ft, 24 m). Gain the chimney crack awkwardly, and climb it to belay below a corner (80 ft, 24 m). Climb the corner to a shelf (80 ft, 24 m). Follow the shelf up without difficulty to finish (130 ft, 39 m). A good route.

An Teallach: Toll an Lochain.—Lord's Gully.

GRADE II.

A. Borthwick & F. Fotheringham. 17th February 1973.

The route finished by the right branch, which gave three pitches.

-Lady's Gully.

GRADE II.

F. Fotheringham & J. R. R. Fowler. 30th December 1974.

This route starts at the apex of *The Triangle*, the snow patch on the main face of Corrag Bhuide (see *S.M.C.J.*, xxxi, 1978, 274).

-The First Icefall.

450 ft (135 m). GRADE III.

J. McKeown, C. MacLeod & B. Sprunt. 7th February 1980.

Climb the frozen First Waterfall which lies between Creag Urbhard and the First Dionard Buttress.

-Thawr.

400 ft (120 m). GRADE II.

A. Nisbet & N. Spinks. 8th February 1980.

This route follows the broadest of the many ramps leading leftwards from the *Terrace*. Follow the *Terrace* for 700 ft (210 m) to reach the start (some 450 ft (135 m) past the huge corner of *The Fly|Chicken Run*). Probably the easiest way off the *Terrace*.

CAIRNGORMS I

THE NORTHERN CORRIES

Coire an t-Sneachda: Aladdin Buttress.-Damnation.

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

I. Dalley & M. J. Freeman. 16th December 1979.

The summer route was followed throughout in mainly powder conditions with some ice. A peg was used for aid at the first overhang due to lack of take-off and the late hour; better conditions should obviate the need for this. Four pitches on the buttress then lead to easy ground and so to the plateau.

An obvious winter line which should provide excellent climbing later in the season.

Loch Avon Basin: Shelter Stone Crag.—Citadel.

GRADE V.

M. Hamilton & K. Spence. 23rd February 1980.

This is the first complete winter ascent, one peg used for aid at the low summer crux. (See S.M.C.J., xxix, 1971, 364, for an earlier attempt account).

-Postern

GRADE V.

M. Hamilton, K. Spence & A. Taylor. 5th/6th January 1980. Climbed free.

CAIRNGORMS II

Ben Macdhui: Coire Sputan Dearg.—Topaz. 230 ft (69 m). Very Severe.

R. J. Archbold & D. M. Nichols. 10th June 1979.

From the foot of the slanting fault of Amethyst Wall move out right onto the steep slabs, starting about 15 ft (5 m) below a curious, round niche. Climb up by cracks to the obvious, hanging corner. Gain this and step left to belay beneath a small roof (100 ft, 30 m). Step down left and traverse across a steep wall. Above is a shallow, cracked groove with a bulge. Climb this and exit right onto the crest of the ramp (100 ft, 30 m).

McCartney's Variation starts 30 ft (9m) above, and the combination can

be recommended.

Beinn a'Bhuird: Garbh Coire.—Chindit. 340 ft (102 m). Very Severe.
R. J. Archbold & N. D. Keir. 15th July 1979.

This route follows the edge left of Slochd Wall. Climb first pitch of Slochd Wall (40 ft, 12 m). Climb diagonally left to the edge then follow crack for about 40 ft (12 m) to a steepening. Traverse left (peg runner) and step round into the fault of Ghurka (70 ft, 21 m). Regain edge just above as for Helter Skelter and follow that route diagonally right into the middle of the face until it is possible to move back left to the edge. Follow the edge then traverse left across the top of the fault to belay as for Ghurka (60 ft, 18 m). Now climb the long, final pitch of Ghurka, but instead of moving left round the tower at the top, move right onto the frontal face at an obvious point. Climb diagonally right a short distance and finish by the final crack of Helter Skelter (170 ft, 51 m).

-Surgeon's Slab. 220 ft (66 m). Severe.

R. J. Archbold & W. S. McKerrow. 4th June 1978.

On the lower section of Mandarin Buttress there is an area of surprisingly good rock. There are two obvious large slabs, one on each side of the buttress. This route climbs the left-hand slab.

Start where a miniature crested ridge runs up to the foot of the buttress. Climb up onto the slab proper, then go diagonally left to reach a hidden crack. Peg belay (110 ft, 33 m). Follow the crack to the top of the slab, cross a rightward trending gully, and climb a short, steep crack in the back wall to reach easy ground (110 ft, 33 m). The final crack is Very Severe but can be avoided via the gully.

-Witch-doctor. 200 ft (60 m). Very Severe.

R. J. Archbold & W. S. McKerrow. 4th June 1978.

Between Surgeon's Slab and the slab further right there is a triangular section of rock. Climb the obvious crack line to belay just below the bulge at the apex of the triangle (80 ft, 24 m). Make a long stride right to the bounding edge, move up a short way, step back left then continue up steep cracks to reach easier ground (120 ft, 36 m).



January 1980

Brian Sprunt on the key traverse leading to the upper part of the face on

Die Riesenwand (Giant's Wall), Beinn Bhàn (page 53).



February 1980 Photo: A. Nisbet Sprunt pushing the boat out on the crux of Epitome – Black Spout Pinnacle, Lochnagar. Photo from the lip of the Hood roof (reached by abseil) Page 73.

-The Primate.

J. Anderson & A. Nisbet. 9th July 1979. 300 ft (90 m). Hard Very Severe.

This is the crackline splitting the roof right of Slochd Wall. Start on top of two large jammed blocks in N.W. Gully.

Step left onto the face, climb up and traverse left under the roof to reach the main crackline. Follow the crack through the roof to belay. Further cracks lead to the grass terrace below the final wall. Finish up this (as for *Helter Skelter*). No pegs required.

CAIRNGORMS III

Braeriach: Garbh Choire Mór.—Sphinx Gully. 350 ft (105 m). GRADE III. R. F. Allen & M. G. Geddes. 18th November 1978.

This name is suggested for the gully running up the left-hand margin of the recess between *Sphinz Ridge* and *Pinnacles Buttress*. A summer ascent is recorded in M. Smith's 1961 Guide.

The climb was made partly on old snow, and partly through new snow, the main pitch being climbed by a short groove and ridge on the right. The climb should be easier later in the season, cornice finish excepting.

CAIRNGORMS IV & V

Creag an Dubh Loch: The Central Slabs .- The White Elephant.

J. Anderson & A. Nisbet. 1st April 1979. 1,000 ft (300 m). Grade III/IV.

Enter the *Dinosaur* gully as for *Mammoth* or *Labyrinth Edge* and follow it to the Sea of Slabs. Climb directly up on ice, then traverse right to enter and climb the final groove of *Pink Elephant*.

When heavily iced (as on this ascent, though these conditions will be seldom encountered), the climbing is technically easy but exposed and enjoyable. Even more rarely in condition will be the *Direct Start*, climbed by N. D. Keir & D. Wright, January 1975, on which occasion the *Dinosaur* gully was entered directly from the foot of the slabs (very hard climbing on thin ice). An alternative finish is an icy corner directly above the Sea of Slabs, as yet unclimbed.

Central Gully Wall .- The Mousetrap. GRADE V.

M. Hamilton, K. Spence & A. Taylor. 12th January 1980.

The grassy recess was gained from the start of Vampire, with one peg for aid. Thereafter the route was climbed free.

-Goliath.

500 ft (150 m). GRADE V.

N. Morrison & A. Nisbet. 16th January 1980.

Climb the initial slab and a steep finger of ice (the 'Goliath Icicle') which forms in a groove left of the summer line. Traverse right to meet the summer route and follow this up and back left to below the final slab. The route chosen now traverses horizontally across the slab (peg handhold to start), with a short descent to pass under an overlap and a short rise again to gain easy ground. Continue to belay above the slab. Easy climbing to the plateau.

False Gully Wall .- Sans Fer.

520 ft (156 m). Extremely Severe (E4).

M. Hamilton & K. Spence. June 1979.

Start 30 ft (9 m) left of Falseface. Climb niche and slab heading for prominent finger crack, climb this to sloping stance and peg belay as for Falseface (140 ft, 42 m). Walk left 30 ft (9 m) to base of crack in wall. Climb crack (60 ft, 18 m). Traverse left 15 ft (5 m) to groove and climb this to rest under bulge. Continue over bulge then up grooves slightly right then left to nut belay on ramp (140 ft, 42 m). Traverse up left on ramp to niche, exit left through roof. Traverse left then up into niche. Continue straight up through roof to reach easy ground and block belay (150 ft, 45 m).

Corrie Fee of Mayar: South Wall .- The Wild Places.

A. Lawson & A. Smith. 12th January 1980. 700 ft (210 m). Grade III/IV.

This route follows a line of ice grooves leading to the obvious overhung niche in the centre of the face between Look C Gully and Romulus and Remus. Start directly below niche in right slanting ice groove.

Climb groove and move directly to base of upper icefall (50 ft, 15 m). Climb icefall and continuation ice groove to foot of ice curtain beneath overhang, tree belay (150 ft, 45 m). Climb directly up curtain to slab, then traverse slab diagonally left to corner and so to top of next slab (100 ft, 30 m). Climb left and up past overhang to easy snow slope (150 ft, 45 m). Climb gully on right to snowfield below terminal rocks (150 ft, 45 m). Traverse left up slab ramp and finish by rock moves to gain the plateau (100 ft, 30 m).

-Shelf Route.

550 ft (165 m). GRADE III.

M. G. Geddes, F. Hutchinson & J. Hutchinson. 9th January 1977.

Start up *B Gully*, to traverse out left about 100 ft (30 m) below *B Gully Chimney* where a shelf rises parallel to the gully. Follow the shelf across the chimney and up to join *B Gully Buttress* before the pinnacle. Finish over the pinnacle.

Lochnagar.-Multiple Chimneys.

GRADE IV.

M. Hutchinson & A. Nisbet. 8th March 1980.

This winter ascent just managed to find an independent and direct line between variation finishes to Giant's Head Ordinary Route and Bolton's Tower Finish to Polyphemus. The route started immediately at the top of the lower crux of Polyphemus. The final chimney splitting the Tower gave a fine hard pitch leading to a difficult cornice.

-Pinnacle Grooves.

GRADE V.

S. Kennedy, M. MacLeod & A. Nisbet. 17th March 1980.

This first winter ascent enjoyed good conditions, and used one nut for aid at the downward pointing flake.

-The Strait-jacket.

GRADE V.

A. Nisbet & N. Spinks. 21st March 1980.

An entertaining but very strenuous winter climb. No aid was necessary as the steep corner (aided in summer) was iced.

WESTERN HIGHLANDS

Sgurr a'Mhuilinn: Creag Ghlas: West Buttress.—Spare Rib.

R. McHardy & J. Mackenzie. 2nd October 1979. 220 ft (66 m). Very Severe.

The right edge of the cliff is bordered by a shallow gully and consists of slabs and grooves with a conspicuous overhang near the top. The right wall overhangs.

From the foot climb slabs on left to heather. Cross to steeper rock on right past spike to gain bulge topped groove on right edge. Follow groove to gain thin groove left of heathery groove, step right to reach tree with various belays and sliding stance (150 ft, 45 m). From tree gain steep slab and so up left to corner. Traverse right under overhang to edge, continue up groove to top (70 ft, 21 m).

Ladhar Bheinn: Coire Dhorrcail: Spider Buttress.—Eastern Chimney. 900 ft (270 m). Grade IV.

D. Broadhead, S. Gallacher & D. Rubens. 24th March 1979.

Approaching the Spider Buttress up the left side of the coire, a thin fault line will be seen rising from a square cut bay, some 300 ft (90 m) above the base of the East Pillar. The fault line eventually crosses the buttress high above the Spider, provides a good alternative to a direct ascent of the pillar, and could be more difficult for those of a large stature.

Follow the fault line, which is extremely narrow in places, for 400 ft (120 m) to the crest of the East Pillar. Short walls and grooves lead in 200 ft (60 m) to easier ground and the ridge above. (See S.M.C.J., xxxi, 170, 1979, 409).

LORN AND LOCHABER

Aonach Beag: North Face.—Mayfly.

700 ft (210 m). GRADE III.

K. Schwartz. 9th May 1979.

There is a large triangular face between the Aonach Mór Aonach Beag saddle, and the North-East Ridge of Aonach Beag. The face has a steep buttress nearest the col, a gully area in the centre, and the lower, rocky part of the Ridge. Just left of the centre (GR 197 718), an initially wide gully, marked on its lower right by a rock rib, leads to above the pinnacles of the North-East Ridge. This climb takes the gully.

Climb the gully 300 ft (90 m) to reach a 60 ft (18 m) high and equally wide icefall. This is climbed on its right to continue by the much narrower gully above, which leads via a steep ice patch with an awkward bulge to the easier but icy top section. Finish along the North-East Ridge to the summit.

East Face.—Anabasis.

800 ft (240 m). GRADE III.

R. A. Croft & J. R. Sutcliffe. 22nd April 1973.

High on the East Face, facing the Grey Corries, is a steep buttress, from which a band of more broken rocks slant up rightwards to just below the summit. The buttress rises above a basin reached by a long and complicated approach up steep slopes broken by deep gullies and rocky outcrops. The climb starts up a steep snow ice gully at the lowest point of the buttress. A bergschrund was crossed on the first ascent.

Steepening snow gains the gully which leads in three pitches (rock belays on right) to a deep cave where the gully ends beneath overhangs (200 ft, 60 m). Traverse right on to ice bulge and climb to rightward trending snow shelf below upper rocks (75 ft, 23 m). Continue rising traverse until an open groove can be climbed into a shallow bay (100 ft, 30 m). A short ice groove on the left leads to mixed ground, trending right via rock ridge to reach the upper snow slope (125 ft, 37 m). Follow right edge to nose which breaks through massive cornices close to the summit (300 ft, 90 m).

Creag Meaghaidh: Coire Ardair.—The Great Buttress.

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

P. Braithwaite & C. Brookes. 12th February 1979.

This route climbs the buttress immediately right of the North Post. The climbing is sustained and direct, and a complete covering of snow and ice is desirable. Start at the lowest point of the cliff between the North Post and the South Pipe.

Climb easy mixed ground to the foot of the buttress proper (200 ft, 60 m). Starting approximately 200 ft (60 m) right of the North Post, follow the line of least resistance to reach the ledge of Posthorn Gallop. Good belays at regular intervals (700 ft, 210 m). From the ledge climb the steep buttress directly above crux (100 ft, 30 m).

Ben Nevis: Observatory Ridge: West Face. - Abacus.

N. Muir & A. Paul. 27th November 1977. 350 ft (105 m). Grade IV.

This route climbs the obvious, bow-shaped chimney groove in the middle of the face between *Original Route* and *Hadrian's Wall*. The groove leads to the crest of the ridge.

-Antonine Wall.

N. Muir & A. Paul. 3rd December 1977.

500 ft (150 m). GRADE IV.

Just right of *Abacus* is a steep, ice-filled groove, leading to a slab capped by a huge roof. Climb the groove to below roof, move right over slabs to gain snow-filled groove and follow this to crest of ridge.

From below the roof a direct finish might be possible, given more ice.

-Sickle.

M. G. Geddes & B. P. Hall. 29th December 1977. 1,000 ft (300 m). GRADE V.

This route lies on the slabby wall right of *Hadrian's Wall Direct*. Start from the left hand end of a snow ledge, above and left of the foot of *Point Five Gully* (the ledge may bank out in heavy snow conditions).

Gain and climb a groove which leads up and left close to Hadrian's Wall Direct, then curves back right to a steep, iced corner. Climb the corner to reach the snow above the chimney of West Face, Lower Route. Finish as for Hadrian's Wall Direct, or join Observatory Ridge.

-Galactic Hitch-hiker.

M. G. Geddes & C. Higgins. 14th April 1978. 1,000 ft (300 m). Grade V.

This route climbs the steep slabs between Sickle and Pointless, and continues by the rightward stepping corner system above. The routes relationship to the West Face, Upper Route is uncertain. Below the corner system there is a very shallow groove which is a snow trap. Start below this groove, on the same ledge as for Sickle.

Climb slightly leftwards up another groove, then rightwards to regain the shallow groove at 150 ft (45 m). This becomes a shelf which is followed for a short distance, before moving up to below the vertical wall which overlooks the slabs. Move right, crossing a distinctive pointed block, into the base of the corner system. Climb the wall some distance right of the first corner (peg for aid), and move back into the next corner. Follow this, and easier ground above to the Girdle Traverse ledge. Climb directly up to the plateau.

Indicator Wall.—Albatross.

600 ft (180 m). GRADE V.

M. G. Geddes & C. Higgins. 21st January 1978.

This route follows the prominent, shallow corner which falls directly from the plateau, between *Indicator Wall* and *Psychedelic Wall*.

Start in an open bay right of the small buttress below the corner, and climb an ice groove for one rope-length. Move left into the main groove and follow this to the summit. A steep section at midheight is passed on the right.

-Psychedelic Wall.

600 ft (180 m). GRADE V.

N. Muir & A. Paul. 22nd January 1978.

This climb takes a direct line, starting from the lowest rocks opposite the left edge of Gardyloo Buttress.

Climb iced rocks to a snow bay (100 ft, 30 m). Continue up steeper ice to gain a leftward trending snow ramp. From near the top of the ramp take a groove leading to left edge of large plinth (150 ft, 45 m). Continue up slabs to gain corner (120 ft, 36 m). Follow the corner and chimney above to below steep wall (100 ft, 30 m). Climb the right-most of three corners then mixed ground to a cornice finish (130 ft, 39 m).

-Shot in the Dark.

400 ft (120 m). GRADE IV.

M. G. Geddes & A. P. Rouse. 11th February 1978.

This route lies on the left wall of Gardyloo Gully, right of Psychedelic Wall. Start about 100 ft (30 m) up from the toe of the buttress.

Climb up, aiming initially for the distinct, oblong roof near the top of the face. Cross several rightward slanting, overlapping grooves, go up a short corner, traverse right and cross a shallow groove. Finish by a steep slab and short ridge, some distance right of the oblong roof. (The shallow groove referred to in the above description is probably that taken by *Caledonia*, described below, which starts well to the right and finishes a little distance left of *Shot in the Dark*).

-Caledonia

500 ft (150 m). GRADE V.

D. Gardner & A. Paul. 18th February 1978.

This climbs the steep slab corner, some 200 ft (60 m) right of Psychedelic Wall.

Climb the corner to gain a snow bay. Move up a rightward trending snow ramp; from its top finish up steep slabs, turning bulges on right.

Gardyloo Buttress.—The Great Glen.

P. Braithwaite & P. Moors. 12th February 1978. 400 ft (120 m). Grade V.

This route follows the steep, shallow groove right of Smith's Route. The climbing is difficult and serious.

Climb the groove with increasing difficulty to exit out left across a sloping gangway. Poor belay up and right of *Smith's Route* (170 ft, 51 m). Re-enter the groove and follow the steep arête on the right (difficult) to snow slopes above (100 ft, 30 m). Finish up snow (130 ft, 39 m).

Douglas Boulder.-Western Grooves.

T. Anderson & G. E. Little. 8th April 1979. 650 ft (195 m). Grade IV.

Start at bay left of *Cutlass*. Climb for 150 ft (45 m), trending left, to the base of a shallow groove. Follow the steep groove/corner for two pitches to flake belay. Move left round rib, up ramp to belay below semi-detached flake. Climb groove above then right trending ramp, leading in two pitches to the top of the Boulder.

-Gutless. 600 ft (180 m). GRADE IV.

P. McKenna & D. Sanderson. 15th March 1979.

Follow chimney to rightward sloping ledge (300 ft, 90 m). Climb ledge and edge of buttress to the top of the Boulder.

Number Two Gully Buttress.-Rip Off.

400 ft (120 m). GRADE IV.

P. Braithwaite & J. Lowe. (Both solo) March 1976.

This route climbs the steep slabs and walls left of the buttress. The most obvious feature is a diagonal fault running across the walls. Start right of the fault.

Climb steep grooves in the back of the coire, until it is possible to traverse left onto steep slabs (150 ft, 45 m). Climb the slabs, no belays or protection (250 ft, 75 m).

-Five Finger Discount.

450 ft (135 m). GRADE IV.

M. G. Geddes & C. Higgins. 4th February 1978.

In the corner between the slabby face of Raeburn's Easy Route and Number Two Gully Buttress there is a deep groove, defining the left-hand edge of the buttress. The first 100 ft (30 m) or so of this is taken by Rip Off (described above).

Climb the groove till it bends left and steepens. Move up left onto an edge, follow this to a small gully. Finish by the gully and slope above.

-Burrito's Groove.

450 ft (135 m). GRADE IV.

M. G. Geddes & C. Higgins. 8th April 1978.

Between Five Finger Discount and Number Two Gully Buttress route there is a distinct groove leading directly up the buttress. The groove is well seen from below Comb Buttress.

Climb the groove. An overhang at 150 ft (45 m) was insufficiently iced, and was turned on the left.

Carn Dearg Buttress.—Route 11. 500 ft (150 m). GRADE V.

M. G. Geddes & A. P. Rouse. 12th February 1978.

The minor buttress of $Route\ I$ was avoided on the left; taking the snow ledge which leads past the foot of $Mourning\ Slab$ to the chimney section. Thereafter, the summer route was followed throughout. Much clearing was involved, as the climb was well plastered with snow and ice, and three pegs were used for tension.

-The Shadow.

P. Braithwaite & D. Pearce. 26th March 1979. 1,000 ft (300 m). Grade V.

The summer line was followed, and gave hard, sustained climbing throughout.

-The Shield Direct.

M. Fowler & A. Saunders. 15th March 1979. 970 ft (291 m). GRADE VI. Start 15 ft (5 m) right of The Shield, Variation Start, at the foot of an ice groove directly below the chimney of The Shield.

Climb the ice groove to a stance on the right (80 ft, 24 m). Climb over two steepenings to gain a large ledge on the right, at the foot of the chimney section of *The Shield* (100 ft, 30 m). An ice chimney followed by steep ice leads to a cave stance on the left (100 ft, 30 m). Steep ice grooves lead to easier climbing in the now wider chimney (120 ft, 36 m). Continue in the same line to the top of the chimney flake (130 ft, 39 m). Move up left on to a flake, cross the bulge

above trending right and continue by the easiest line (several options) to gain ledges (150 ft, 45 m). Climb right to gain a left slanting ledge line (snow), which is followed to the crest of the buttress (110 ft, 33 m). Follow the arête to the top and junction with Ledge Route (180 ft, 54 m).

-Gemini. 1,000 ft (300 m). GRADE V.

A. Paul & D. Sanderson. 23rd March 1979.

Climb Waterfall Gully for 230 ft (69 m) to the rightward trending groove of Evening Wall. Follow this to the enormous flake of that route. Climb the ice wall directly above to rightward sloping grooves. Follow these for 200 ft (60 m) to the obvious twin grooves. Follow either groove to a broad ledge. Traverse the ledge rightwards for 50 ft (15 m) and climb iced slabs leading in 150 ft (45 m) to easier ground. (See Notes).

North Wall of Castle Ridge. - Alchemist.

A. Paul & D. Sanderson. 26th March 1979. 900 ft (270 m). Grade V.

This route follows the groove system right of *Lobby Dancer*. On this ascent, *Serpent* was followed to the icefall, which led to the start of the grooves.

Follow the grooves with minor deviations to below the overhanging barrier near the top of the buttress. Climb the barrier by the right wall of a huge flake 40 ft (12 m) right of *Lobby Dancer*, and using aid gain a narrow, iced chimney. From the top of the chimney climb up left and then traverse right to gain a cave and block belay. Climb right, go round arête and follow groove above to *Castle Ridge*.

-American Pie.

D. F. Lang & N. W. Quinn. 18th February 1978. 2,580 ft (774 m). GRADE IV.

Start to the left of Serpent, below a large and obvious ice smear. Climb snow and ice to foot of a steep, narrow and hidden ice chimney slanting rightwards (100 ft, 30 m). Climb chimney to small snow bay and belay (100 ft, 30 m). Follow a small, twisting ice chimney to belay (30 ft, 9 m). Break out of corner onto buttress edge and continue straight up to snow bay (200 ft, 60 m). Climb short icy groove to ramp and belay (50 ft, 15 m). Follow ramp up and across face rightwards for 1,400 ft (420 m) to gain upper amphitheatre. Continue up and left over mixed ground to rock band (360 ft, 106 m). Climb rock band on the left for 100 ft (30 m), and traverse up and rightwards to just below the summit of Castle Ridge on the side of Carn Dearg (250 ft, 75 m).

Garbh Bheinn of Ardgour: The Great Ridge: The South Wall.

-Bodkin. 280 ft (84 m). Hard Very Severe.

K. V. Crocket & S. N. Smith. 10th June 1979.

This route lies on the lower tier and climbs the wall and steep edge immediately right of *Butterknife*. Start 10 ft (3 m) right of that route.

Climb to a steepening at 50 ft (15 m). Step left, continue up and left to belay on edge below bulges (80 ft, 24 m). From the belay move right, up to overhang, left to edge. Continue more easily up edge overlooking the corner of Butterknife (80 ft, 24 m). Climb as for Butterknife to gain the Terrace (120 ft, 36 m).

Creag Dubh, Newtonmore: The Great Wall.—Fuhrer.

150 ft (45 m). Extremely Severe (E4).

D. W. Cuthbertson & I. Duckworth. 17th June 1979.

A fairly direct, short but serious line between *The Hill* and *Outspan*, climbing the obvious quartz blotch on the wall left of *Inbred's* second pitch. Start just right of *Outspan*.

Climb to rounded spike, up quartz scoop going diagonally left to reach a block. Stand on this and traverse right and up to join *Outspan*. Follow that route as far as the large spike then climb up and left up quartz blotch, stepping right to reach the girdle. Finish up *Inbred* or *Mythical Wall*.

Cleaned and inspected by abseil.

Sprawl Wall .- Desire.

240 ft (72 m). Extremely Severe (E2).

D. W. Cuthbertson & I. Duckworth. 16th June 1979.

This route follows a line of grooves between *Hornet* and *Raven's Squawk*, climbing directly through the overhangs. Start at the right-hand side of the Buttress taken by *Hornet*.

Climb directly up the right-hand side of the buttress to ledge and belays (80 ft, 24 m). From right end of ledge gain groove with slabby right wall. Climb this then continue up and right to a stance and belay on Raven's Squawk (80 ft, 24 m). Traverse left and up to old peg beneath overlap. Pull over this and so up to ledge beneath roof. Turn the roof on the right, then go back left along overhung shelf to finish directly over final overhang, tree belay (80 ft, 24 m).

A good, sustained and varied route which is quite serious.

GLENCOE & GLEN ETIVE

Buachaille Etive Mór: Slime Wall.-Misty High.

A. Paul & D. Sanderson. 17th March 1979. 650 ft (195 m). GRADE IV.

This route climbs an icefall approximating to the summer line of *Belial*. Climb the icefall and follow the right-hand chimney. Climb easier ground to a short chimney and go under chockstone to North Buttress. Follow the icefall on the right for 300 ft (90 m) to easy ground.

Cuneiform Buttress.—Cuneiform Corner. 200 ft (60 m). Grade IV.

A. Paul & D. Sanderson. 17th March 1979.

Follow the obvious icefall which forms in the corner right of Snowba's, leading to the traverse ledge going right into Great Gully.

Bidean nam Bian: East Face of Aonach Dubh.-Heart of Glass.

350 ft (105 m). GRADE IV.

D. W. Cuthbertson, K. Johnstone & W. Todd. 18th February 1979.

This climbs the icy chimney left of *The Challenge*. Follow ice steps to good cave on right. Traverse left then back right, go up steeply to recess and belay (100 ft, 30 m). Traverse left and climb ramp/groove to recess on left of obvious ice boss. Go up and right then directly up pillar of ice to belay on left (100 ft, 30 m). Traverse left and follow ice flow to top (150 ft, 45 m).

North Face of Aonach Dubh.—Venom. 1,000 ft (300 m). Grade IV/V. R. Anderson, D. Brown, M. Duff & A. McAllister. January 1979.

From left to right this route, its Direct Start, and the companion line all lie on the buttress which is level with and further right than the North-East Nose. The buttress is split by twin gullies which start about 350 ft (105 m) up the face.

Climb a chimney line to a tree-covered ledge. Traverse left to reach another chimney; this provides access to the left-hand of the twin gullies. Continue upwards, turning two large roofs on the right.

-Viper Start. 400 ft (120 m). GRADE IV/V.

R. Anderson & D. Brown. February 1979.

This climbs the less obvious chimney to the left of the original start to *Venom*. The chimney leads more directly into the left-hand gully, avoiding the traverse of the tree-covered ledge.

-White Snake. 1,200 ft (360 m). GRADE IV.

R. Anderson, D. Brown, M. Duff & A. McAllister. January 1979.

Climb obvious icefall to a huge roof, bear left and continue up the righthand of the twin gullies.

West Face of Aonach Dubh.—The Flute.

200 ft (60 m). GRADE IV.

D. W. Cuthbertson, 30th January 1979.

This is the obvious chimney/gully line to the right of *The Screen*. It leads in two pitches to a tree belay on the right. Easier ground then leads to *Middle Ledge*.

-Number 5 Gully, Direct Start.

D. W. Cuthbertson. February 1979.

350 ft (105 m). GRADE V.

The pillar of ice which in a good winter forms the true start to the gully. An overhang of ice at one-third height followed by about 15 ft (5 m) of overhanging ice presented interest on the first pitch (150 ft, 45 m). Continue up the gully to join the normal route in two pitches. A short pitch may be encountered.

East Face of Gearr Aonach.—Rainmaker. 350 ft (105 m). Grade V. D. W. Cuthbertson & M. Duff. 7th February 1980.

Climb shallow chimney left of corner then continue up ice smears to ice belay left of icicle recess (150 ft, 45 m). Climb chimney to recess, continue up chimney, avoiding corner on left. Regain corner for final 30 ft (9 m). Belay on rock rib on right (150 ft, 45 m). Ice, then easy snow leads to the top (50 ft, 15 m).

Stob Coire nan Lochan: South Buttress.—Tilt.

GRADE V.

M. Hamilton K. Spence & A. Taylor. 20th January 1980.

The summer line was followed free.

Glen Etive: The Trilleachan Slabs.—Dan.

GRADE IV.

R. Anderson, M. Hamilton & K. Spence. 26th January 1980.

The summer line was climbed on thin ice, often in condition.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

The Cobbler: North Peak: -Wild Country.

160 ft (48 m). Extremely Severe (E4).

D. W. Cuthbertson & R. Kerr. 4th/5th July 1979.

A very impressive, difficult and sensational route based on the old aid route *The Nook*, which this climb should now supersede. Start at the foot of the overhanging groove right of *Direct Direct* (the *Nook*, *Direct Start*, now climbed free).

Climb the groove and continue up slab to flake belay on Punster's Crack (70 ft, 21 m). Climb leftwards up slab then by quartz-blotched wall to ledge on The Nook (runners a long way right in the thin crack of The Nook). Ascend overhung ledges rightwards, where they peter out step up and then move right to gain the foot of thin overhanging crack. Climb this crack, heading for a small but good sidepull before reaching a recess then the top. Flake belay well back (90 ft, 27 m).

Notes: The route was cleaned of lichen and inspected over the top 25 ft (7 m) only, when a 'stopper $5\frac{1}{2}$ ' was pre-placed in thin crack. The leader took three

falls. Pitch one was climbed on the 5th July, pitch two on the 4th.

-Evening Stroll.

140 ft (42 m). Extremely Severe (E1).

D. W. Cuthbertson & R. Kerr. 5th July 1979.

The line of the route is the curving edge of the buttress left of Right-

Angled Gully. Start at arête just left of the gully.

Climb the rib then step right into gully (thread runner). Return immediately back left onto arête which is followed to a stance and good belays in horizontal crack (70 ft, 21 m). Follow Punster's Crack to the crack then take the line of the left curving overlap, finishing up the left-hand edge of slab (70 ft, 21 m).

The Brack.—Big Game Route.

400 ft (120 m). GRADE III.

P. Bilsborough & I. Duckworth. 14th January 1979.

Start at the foot of *Elephant Gully*. The climb follows the shallow gully to the right, is not particularly good, but will be in condition much earlier than the proboscidian.

Climb easily to stance and peg belay (50 ft, 15 m). Continue right up short, steep ice pitch and easier ground to foot of steep slab (100 ft, 30 m). Climb slab and traverse left to chockstone belay (crux, 70 ft, 21 m). Easy climbing leads to the top (180 ft, 54 m).

Glen Orchy: Beinn Udlaidh*: Coire Daimh.—Peter Pan.

P. Bilsborough & I. Duckworth. 10th March 1979. 300 ft (90 m). Grade IV.

At the left of the upper cliff are two obvious icefalls. The route climbs the right fall. Start at its foot.

Trend right up icefall to cave. Step back left and continue up steep ice for 70 ft (21 m). Step left to belay (140 ft, 42 m). Continue above belay for 15 ft (5 m) and make a rising traverse left to below rock wall (110 ft, 33 m). Continue the traverse left for 20 ft (6 m) and climb 30 ft (9 m) of very steep ice to reach plateau (50 ft, 15 m).

-Junior's Jaunt.

280 ft (84 m). GRADE IV.

P. Bilsborough, I. Duckworth, N. Morrison & W. Wilson. 24th February 1979.

This route climbs the obvious icefall starting 150 ft (45 m) up the right side of Central Gully. Step right on to steep iced slab and climb to its top at 100 ft (30 m). Traverse left 40 ft (12 m) to belays (140 ft, 42 m). Traverse back right and follow steep icefall direct to cave. Trend right to top (140 ft, 42 m). Short, but with two good, technically hard pitches.

^{*}For these routes see article and photo-diagram in this issue of the 'Journal.

-Organ-Pipe Wall.

R. Duncan & J. G. Fraser. January 1979. 250 ft (75 m). Grade IV/V.

This route climbs the obvious icefall high up on the cliff to the right of West Gully. The icefall is followed directly, via a groove and wall up the middle.

-The Smirk.

R. Duncan & J. G. Fraser. January 1979. 300 ft (90 m). Grade IV/V.

This is the very steep and obvious chimney/gully, about 250 ft (75 m) right of Organ-Pipe Wall. The left fork was taken. A more direct finish would be possible given a better build-up higher up the gully.

-The Croc.

250 ft (75 m). GRADE IV/V.

A. Barton, D. Evans & J. G. Fraser. January 1980.

This climbs the icefall high up on the left side of the corrie, via a rib.

-Captain Hook.

C. Calow & D. Cuthbertson. January 1980. 250 ft (75 m). GRADE V. Climb the funnel-shaped icefall trending right, about 300 ft (90 m) left

of The Croc.

-Cut-throat.

250 ft (75 m). GRADE IV/V.

R. Duncan & R. Young; C. Calow & D. Cuthbertson. January 1980.

Directly between The Croe and Captain Hook is an obvious icicle. Climb the lower icefall then the icicle to the top.

Beinn an Dothaidh: Creag Coire an Dothaidh.—Fahrenheit 451.

K. V. Crocket & I. Fulton. February 1976. 450 ft (135 m). Grade III/IV.

The obvious right-hand icefall of this buttress (see S.M.C.J., xxxi, 1976, 59). The initial gully led to short ice walls, traverses, and vast sheets of water ice.

OUTCROPS

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

D. W. Cuthbertson. 24th June 1979. 120 ft (36 m). Extremely Severe (E4).

This climbs the overhanging left arête of Mousetrap. Start just left of Warfarin. Climb the difficult rib to a scoop which is climbed until a traverse left can be made into Mousetrap. Follow Mousetrap until an obvious traverse leads out left onto the arête proper. Climb the arête and left side of the block to finish.

Cleaned and inspected by abseil.

-Voie d'Lamie.

120 ft (36 m). Extremely Severe (E3).

R. Anderson, D. W. Cuthbertson & M. Duff. Summer 1979.

Climbs the impressive thin crack in the head-wall above the upper part of *Hang-Out*. Start just left of *Hang-Out*.

Follow grooves to recess under bulge, continue by obvious hand traverse line rightwards to reach the ledge on *Hang-Out*. Climb the thin crack above.

Cleaned and inspected by abseil (good $3\frac{1}{2}/4$ stopper placement just above first finger pod halfway up crack).

Lower Tier.—In The Shrubbery.

120 ft (36 m). Extremely Severe (E1).

R. Anderson & D. W. Cuthbertson. Summer 1979.

Climbs the obvious buttress between Cludge and Civer. Start about 15 ft (5 m) right of Cludge at tree-filled corner. A surprisingly good pitch.

Climb corner, traverse right under overhangs then back left up ramp/groove. Traverse right to small birch beneath bulge. Pull over bulge, up second bulge to climb a slab finishing up a rib. (See Notes).

Glen Lednock: Balnacoul Castle Crag.—Piggies Paradise.

130 ft (39 m). Extremely Severe (E1).

D. W. Cuthbertson, I. Duckworth & N. Morrison. 11th June 1979.

The climb follows a line of flakes up the right-hand side of the buttress, finishing up an obvious groove. Start as for ... Wendy. (See S.M.C.J., xxxi, 1979, 416).

Climb groove and follow right-hand crack to ledge with large flake. Continue up flake until possible to move left into final groove which is followed to tree belay.

-Grooved Arête.

D. W. Cuthbertson. 11th June 1979. 85 ft (26 m). Extremely Severe (E3). Climbs the right-bounding arête and wall of the old aid route Central

Groove. Start at tree ledge at foot of corner.

Climb corner to ledge, step left and follow groove to second ledge. Step back right into groove and go up to thin horizontal crack. Follow the arête, mainly on the left-hand side, to finish with a step right.

Cleaned and inspected by abseil.

Dumbarton Rock.—Knight Templar. 120 ft (36 m). Extremely Severe. J. Laird. 15th October 1979.

Start 18 ft (6 m) right of rock rib at base of *Windjammer*. Climb leftwards up bulging groove (slightly overhanging), to small stance at 15 ft (5 m). Traverse right to foot of obvious thin crack. Climb crack directly, keeping left of small overhang (25 ft, 8 m). Climb up diagonally rightwards to edge of buttress, continue leftwards up edge to finish at top of *Windjammer*.

This route was climbed solo, using a variation of the Barnett system, and following an abseil inspection.

REGIONAL NOTES

Northern Highlands

Letterewe Forest: Creig na Gaorach.—The Guide Book description of Rainbow's End requires a slight correction. The second sentence (p. 52) should read: 'After the first two pitches, the climb eases....' All that glisters....

Sgurr a'Chaorachain: A'Chioch.—On 1st June, 1978 (the 10th Anniversary of the first ascent), R. A. Croft, M. L. Prestt and J. R. Sutcliffe varied Cleavage by trending right on to a rib, above the crucial layback crack (pitch three), then climbing directly on pleasant rock to the belays at the start of The Maxilla. This makes a more logical line than the original. Additionally, The Maxilla is of much more sustained interest and standard than Cioch Nose, Direct Start.

Foinaven: Creag Dubh: Coire Duail!.—The route recorded as *Sava* in the *S.M.C.J.*, xxxi, 1978, 275, was in fact climbed by P. W. Green & P. A. Haigh on 27th May, 1975. A simultaneous attempt, by R. A. Croft & J. R. Sutcliffe, to climb the pillar on its left petered out after 200 ft (60 m) of black slabs, following which a delicate traverse below a steep, pink wall led to the groove of *Sava* below the corner.

Cairngorms

Beinn a'Bhuird: Garbh Coire.—We note a free ascent of Slochd Wall by B. Lawrie & A. Nisbet on 3rd July, 1979. The climbing was Hard Very Severe and the final wall, avoided on the first ascent, was climbed (as for Helter Shelter). No pegs, other than those in situ, were used.

This ascent accentuates the approach of a notable event in Cairngorm climbing – the elimination of aid from Mike Rennie's routes. Now that Congar, Crypt, Mort, Stiletto and Slochd Wall have been 'released,' and Post Mortem is waiting for dry conditions to eliminate the last three aid points, it may be that the final challenge will be posed by Thor, on the Shelter Stone Crag.

Thor is probably a more resistant problem than the routes mentioned above, and it may well take on the role of the 'last great problem' in the Cairngorms.

Lochnagar.—The ramifying branches of *Douglas-Gibson Gully* have been the scene of recent activity. Crazed by the wet summer, A. Nisbet & D. Wright made a rainy ascent in September 1979 at Grade IV (summer grading seemed inappropriate). A little rock was encountered here and there but either fell off or was removed. Subsequently R. MacGregor, N. Spinks & D. Wright made a second winter ascent in late November 1979 (no aid used), and were impressed by its quality. In February 1980, A. Nisbet, N. Spinks & J. Unwin climbed the far left branch 250 ft (75 m, Grade IV), managing to avoid a substantial cornice on the left. A. Nisbet and D. Wright also made an aidless ascent of *Central Buttress Direct* (December 1979).

Glen Clova: Winter Corrie.—R. Simpson notes that the prominent chimney and steep slab to the left of *Diagonal Gully* provided a good winter climb—*Diamond Slab*.

Lorn and Lochaber

Ben Nevis: Carn Dearg Buttress.—Evening Wall, one of the last of the Nevis plums to fall (to Paul & Sanderson, see New Climbs, this volume), had an ascent a week later by Kimber & McIntyre. This ascent started up a very steep, icy groove immediately left of Waterfall Gully, entering Waterfall Gully after one pitch.

Glencoe Area

Glen Creran: Beinn Sgulaird: The Sgulaird Slabs.—(See S.M.C.J., xxxi, 1977, 181). S. Kennedy & C. Moody report climbing routes on either side of Creran Corner, on 1st June, 1978. Left and right routes provided a Severe and Very Difficult respectively. Additionally, the erstwhile author of the latest Guide to Glencoe, while skulking around the less likely spots in the area, inspected the main Slabs, and came away unmoved.

Aonach Dubh: North Face.—E. Grindley writes to say that the reference to *The Clearances* in the new Glencoe and Glen Etive guide is overstating the case when it notes that 'aid and siege tactics were used on the first ascent.' He points out that the two main pitches were climbed on separate days, but that both were climbed from the ground upwards with no prior inspection from above, and without using high side runners on adjacent routes. The only aid used was a rest on the piton of the second pitch while clearing moss on the large roof.

Lower N.E. Nose.—D. Mullin notes a free ascent of *Freak-Out* in May, 1979, along with J. Melrose. The climb was done in classical form, i.e., on sight, in a single day, no yo-yoing.

Southern Highlands

Beinn Narnain.—N. Muir & A. Paul, in their search for the shortest description, refer to a corner up the middle of the largest crag facing the North Peak. When we learn more, we'll let you know.

Craig-y-Barns.—Not surprisingly in such a poor summer, we have been inundated with short, hard, and no doubt very good quality of climbing routes from this area. We will file these until someone can put us out of our misery and produce an update of the outcrop guide.

The Islands

Shetland.—Ronnie Robb reports perhaps the most northerly route in the country in the form of a 100 ft (30 m) easy Very Severe on the sea cliffs north-west of the hill of Saxa Vord in Unst. The climb follows a steep, curving diédre on a broad, wet cliff.

Shetland abounds in fine sea cliffs, and W. D. Brooker recommends the north-west coast of Yell as among the best areas. Here, on the coast west of Whale Firth is the fine twin-pronged Ern Stack, composed of white syenite and backed by a skin of dark schist (up which one climbs – Very Difficult). Just to the south is the Eigg – a bold 100 m prow which is a memorial to the final nesting place of the sea eagle in Britain. From its summit one can just see the iron spike used by the clergyman who robbed the last nest.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

At your groat's end.—Hamish Brown (who else?) sends the following summary of an unco stravaig he made on foot from John o' Groats to Land's End following a sort of Thumb line between these points. He started on 2nd May and finished on the 23rd October.

GROAT'S END WALK

175 days, less 29 'off'=146 walking days, averaging 17 miles and 1,700 feet; in all 2,500 miles, 250,000 feet.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- North coast walk 9 days of snow in May!
- 2. North-South trip over 33 Munros from Ben Hope to Ben Lomond.
- 3. West Highland Way, with Ray Swinburn.

- 4. Sixth round of Munros completed on Ben Lomond.
- 5. Canoe River Forth, 17-21 June.
- 6. Walk through Borders.
- 7. Pennine Way (with diversion to Lakes).
- 8. The English 3,000ers.
- 9. Foot link of the Three Country summits.
- 10. Coast to coast walk across Ireland (Dun, Laoghaire to Dingle).
- 11. The Irish 3,000ers.
- First-ever foot link of the FOUR country highest: Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike, Snowdon, Carrauntoohill.
- 13. The Welsh 3,000ers.
- A traverse, North-South, of the Welsh Hills: Snowdonia, Rhinogs, Cader Idris, Plynlimon, Rhaeder Hills, Brecon Beacons, Black Mountains, Offa's Dyke Path.
- South West Hills and Coastal Paths: Mendips, Quantocks, Brendon Hills, Exmoor. . .
 - 16. John o' Groats to Land's End walked.

Memoirs of a fallen septuagenarian.—Iain M. Campbell sends this account of a Lazarus-like experience in 1934:

'The first recorded ascent of Bidean nam Bian by a party consisting exclusively of 72-year-olds was made on 6th September 1979. It may be suggested that in recent years there have been other ascents of greater significance, and with this I agree. Indeed, the object of this note is really to record an occurrence of no actual climbing significance at all.

'The party on 6th September comprised Maurice Cooke and myself. The climb was suggested by me because I had not been on Bidean since I came off the Church Door Buttress, at the age of 27. A reference to this mishap can be found near the beginning of the first chapter of Hamish MacInnes' 'Call-Out,' and from this I quote: "... Mrs Elliot recalls that first rescue in Glencoe: apparently Mr Stark, the Factor, went in to have a look at Campbell in the other room. He then came into the living-room where she was handing out bowls of soup to the exhausted rescuers ... 'There's no need for your camp bed, Mrs Elliot,' said the Factor. I'm afraid he's gone."

'However, I had not gone, and on this 6th September 1979, Maurice and I wanted to look, from a reasonable distance, at the actual Buttress and so we went up to the summit ridge by the scree slope to the west of the summit. Not a very exciting approach but a splendid top when you reach it, and the descent by Stob Coire nam Beith was agreeable.

'In 1934 I had been one of a party of six who had gone to Kingshouse for the week-end: the others were Sandy Wedderburn (President of the Cambridge University C.C.), Edo Derzaj (the Jugo-Slav after whom Slav Route on Nevis is named), Pat Baird (still a member of the Club), A. V. Hargreaves (later, I think, President of the Fell and Rock), and D. D. Keall (Cambridge University C.C.). Hargreaves and I went to climb the Church Door, and he led. Near the end of the more difficult part of the climb, he decided he could not make it go, so came back down to the arch of the Church Door where I was, and I went into the lead. Events showed that I could not make it go either. This was before the days of nylon ropes and it was therefore no surprise that our Beale's Alpine Rope broke when my weight came on it after a fall of, say, 60 feet. (My total fall was about 180-200 feet).

'Hargreaves, happily, had belayed himself to a spike of rock and so was only dragged off and left dangling. Shortly thereafter Pat Baird, who was going to do the Buttress with Keall after us, was somehow able to kneel down and pull Hargreaves back up by the scruff of his neck – the rope being too frayed to allow a direct pull.

'Looking up at the Buttress this September, I was amazed, humbled, and very grateful to all those good people who combined to rescue me in 1934.'

Too few in the bush.—Adam Watson writes to sound this precautionary note.

There is an increasing conflict between climbers and those interested in conserving birds of prey. Until about the 1970's, Scottish climbers went mostly to big steep cliffs at high altitudes, or else to small crags in low valleys near towns. They usually did not climb small crags on lower hills and moors, and it is these that are usually the homes of golden eagle, peregrine falcon, raven and buzzard. However, more climbers now visit these places, and those interested in wildlife conservation are increasingly complaining.

Scottish climbers have a special responsibility here. Scotland now has some of the world's largest and most pollution-free populations of golden eagles and peregrines; populations elsewhere have suffered badly from contamination with pollutants, and from persecution. This makes the good Scottish populations internationally important, because they are a reservoir for recolonising other places. As stocks elsewhere declined, so the interest of the world's falconers and egg collectors in our Scottish birds increased. You will have read about their raids on chicks and eggs, and about the high prices paid by Arab and German falconers. On top of this, in recent years many of our Scottish eagles, buzzards and ravens have died from poison laid illegally by gamekeepers and shepherds in baits left on the open hill. Ravens have become quite scarce in places where they were formerly common. So our Scottish birds of prey are now having a bad time from deliberate persecution and increasingly from unwitting human disturbance.

Obviously, conservationists do not wish to publish lists of crags for climbers to avoid, as this would merely advertise these breeding places to other people likely to rob the eggs or young. However, climbers themselves could help. Here is some practical advice. Breeding peregrines scream loudly and fly close if you go near their nesting crag. Ravens and buzzards make much less noise, and disturbed eagles are virtually silent. But if you see any bird of prey flying repeatedly near or around a crag between March and mid June, it is likely to be breeding there, and it would be wise for you to avoid the place. Young eagles seldom fly before July or August, but after early June are big enough not to suffer from cold during a climber's visit to a crag. The most dangerous time is a cold spring day while the birds are incubating eggs or have tiny young (mid March-end of May); a climber's visit may keep the parents off long enoungh for the eggs to cool, and subsequently fail to hatch. Ravens are early-nesters, and can be incubating eggs even in February.

Scots polished off.—In the first week of March this year three Polish climbers, Stanislaw Handl (Stan), Jan Fijalkowski and Michael Momatiuk (Mike) were in Scotland on a B.M.C./M.C. of S. courtesy visit, chaperoned by Mark Hutchinson (B.M.C.) and following the style of the successful visit by French climbers last winter (S.M.C. J., 1979, xxi, 424). Andrew Nisbet reports: We began with some climbs on Nevis from the Onich Hut and ended with a few days at Glenmore Lodge. A fine weekend on Lochnagar was the highlight in a spell of disappointing weather. Snow conditions were magnificent, with an unprecedented amount of ice in the grooves, particularly on the Black Spout Pinnacle. With weather to match, it was inevitable that great things would be done.



Glencoe across Loch Leven.

Photo: H. M. Brown





The Winter cliffs of Coire Daimh, Beinn Udlaidh.

Photo: R. Stewart

The Etchachan Club's 'A' team of John Anderson, Bob Smith and Brian Sprunt had assembled in the Pannanich Wells Hotel, Ballater, to partner the Poles. Brian, suitably clad in the kilt, had been planning his usual 'burn off' tactics, but by Sunday night even he had to admit defeat. A drinking challenge was an immediate setback as Mike proved he had quickly acquired a taste for Scottish beer and whisky while a pull-up competition ended abruptly when we discovered that Stan could do eleven one-arm pull-ups in succession. But the most entertaining moment of a hilarious introductory evening occurred when Bob Smith, driving in front, successfully decoyed the Polish car off the road at the notorious bend on the road up Glen Muick. It was no problem for the group to manhandle the car back on to the road.

At 5 a.m. on Saturday morning, to the sound of rain outside, the teams were selected: John and Stan, Bob and Jan, Brian and Mike, and myself with Mark Hutchinson. Bob and Jan were first to set off in thick mist and drizzle and as the rest of us followed erratic tracks wandering around the hillside, we realised they weren't using their compass. Eventually we met up and navigation was salvaged but the white out conditions at the first aid box gave the Poles no clue as to what they were to experience. Despite doubts, we decided to adhere to our planned routes and hope for the forecast improvement. Our reward came shortly afterwards as the mist gradually began to disperse, providing breathtaking glimpses of Lochnagar in perfect winter condition. The top routes began to fall in remarkable times as a beautiful clear afternoon developed. Link Face, previously regarded as the hardest route on Lochnagar, was demolished in four hours by Brian and Mike, but the most notable event was the first winter ascent of Epitome, an HVS on the Black Spout Pinnacle, by Bob and Jan (also in four hours). They kept pretty quiet about it, except to say how good it was, and how Bob had taken a twenty-foot fall. Their aim, to entice a second ascent the following day, was successful and only then did everyone realise how desperate the crux pitch was.

Sunday dawned a perfect day but Mike could not be persuaded to leave his bed. Brian, now climbing with Rob Milne, an Edinburgh-based American, repeated Epitome but it took as long for the crux fifty foot as Bob and Jan had taken for the whole route on Saturday. Brian's thirty-foot fall finalised the Polish burn-off of the Scots. Jan had led the crux using a new technique involving clipping into his axes with fift hooks. This ethically contentious but highly efficient technique allowed the pitch to be climbed in a few minutes compared to Brian's multi-hour flying effort. Meanwhile John, again with Stan, completed the Scottish 100% peeling record by falling off on the third ascent of Crypt and losing a crampon at the same time. There was no problem completing the ascent since neither John nor Stan use their feet much, Stan apparently leading the crux by a series of one-arm pull-ups on his axes. Bob and Jan chose a quieter day on the classics of Eagle Ridge and Tough-Brown Direct. As Jan commented later, 'Nice routes, easy, but Grade V!' The Poles clearly found the grades unintelligible.

The weekend concluded with a splendid supper party at the Pannanich Wells courtesy of M.C. of S. during which Jan was moved to say, no doubt encouraged by the braw Glenlivet, that it had been the best weekend's climbing he had ever had. All in all, a highly entertaining weekend with a skilful and sociable Polish team.

Saturday
Pinnacle Face
Epitome (first ascent)
Shallow Gully
Link Face (second ascent)
Giant's Head Direct

Eagle Ridge Multiple Chimneys (first ascent)

ROUTES

John Anderson/Stanislaw Handl Bob Smith/Jan Fijalkowski Bob Smith/Jan Fijalkowski Brian Sprunt/Michal Momatiuk Brian Sprunt/Michal Momatiuk Andrew Nisbet/Mark Hitchinson Andrew Nisbet/Mark Hutchinson Sunday
Crypt (third ascent)
Eagle Ridge
Tough-Brown Direct
Epitome (second ascent)
Route 2

West Gully Direct

Anderson/Handl Smith/Fijalkowski Smith/Fijalkowski Sprunt/Rob Milne Nisbet/Hutchinson Nisbet/Hutchinson

Compleating the second century.—When the number of the Elect reached one hundred in 1971 (S.M.C.J., 1972, xxix, 87) it was hinted that enough might be enough. Now that there are over two hundred convicted Munroists and dear knows how many undetected clandestines still at large perhaps the list should be closed—and then again perhaps not, the millenium might be the most appropriate end point. To be going on with, this year's cases are as follows:

| (182) A. G. Maclean, 1978, 1979, -; | (194) P. D. Brown, 1979, —, —; |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (183) W. Steele, 1978, —, —; | (195) Leonard Jameson, 1979, -, |
| (184) A. Stevens, 1978, -, -; | (196) Duncan Peet, 1979, -, -;[-; |
| (185) S. Beck, 1978, —, —; | (197) M. R. Don, 1979, —, —; |
| (186) Susan Mackenzie, 1978, -, -; | (198) John Rogers, 1979, -, -; |
| (187) Christopher Barton, 1979, -, -; | (199) S. R. Palmer, 1979, —, —; |
| (188) David Lane, 1979, -, -; | (200) Dewi Jones, 1979, -, -; |
| (189) A. L. Bartlet, 1979, -, 1979; | (201) F. Telfer, 1979, —, —; |
| (190) P. Cooper, 1979, 1979, 1976; | (202) Mrs M. Tildesley, 1979, -, -; |
| (191) Sue Robertson, 1979, —, —; | (203) H. Thomson, 1979, —, —; |
| (192) Carole Smithies, 1979, -, -; | (204) D. Foster, 1979, —, —; |
| (193) Pamela Brown, 1979, —, —; | (205) Robert Hillcoat, 1979, -, |
| | |

Interesting points from the accompanying correspondence are that (196) D. A. Peet is the son of our worthy Custodian of the C.I.C. Hut who, as our informant tells us 'has not compleated his.'

(190) P. Cooper has taken a very through approach, having climbed not only the classic Munros and Tops but also 'the 2,000 foot mountains and tops of the Lowlands (sic), England, and Wales. The 2,000ers I have defined on the 'every complete contour ring' basis which implies a lot of minor tops such as Munro and Donald would have omitted. On this basis the 2,000ers are:

| Wales | 233 |
|----------------|-----|
| England | 180 |
| Lowlands (sic) | 180 |

which with 542 Munros and Tops gives a total number of 1,135.

Ireland is not included in Mr Cooper's statistics, but he completed these, too, in 1976. There will always be disputes about the exact number of qualifying summits and in the phrase of the Munro Maestro himself, Hamish Brown, 'the answer; is simple; you do everything to make sure' (S.M.C.J., 1977, xxxi, 189).

We now pass to an historical note. J. C. Donaldson delving among the S.M.C. Archives has discovered that mistakes were made even in the Heroic Age. (7) J. Robertson actually compleated his Munros two months ahead of (6) G. G. Elliot and they should, therefore, exchange numbers. A more modern bungle is that (128) A. L. Mackenzie and (129) L. Mackenzie have been recorded twice, appearing later as (159) and (161), in which case everyone in last year's list from (162) to (183) moves up two places and this year's begins at (182).

Finally we bring the attention of readers to a note from T. G. Moore which tells of Postilion's disease striking a trig point on Sgurr na Ciche. Somewhere between April 1978 and May 1979 the summit triangulation station was demolished by Thor's hammer. The O.S. have been informed

Statistical Munroology.—The following items have been extracted from notes made by J. C. Donaldson who is stalking the Munros for another edition of the Tables before they go into rut again and produce some more for yet another edition.

'Beinn a' Chroin which is located at the overlap between O.S. Sheets 50 and 56 is 946 m in one and 940 m in the other. According to the O.S. Office the height is actually 938 m, they think.' (These are not mistakes – the damn things go up and down like yoyos).

'Beinn an Lochan has been demoted as the spot height of 901 m appears

in the Second Series maps.

'Beinn Dearg (Torridon) is not currently a Munro. In height is 913.8 m or 2,998 ft.' (The O.S. should do a bit more work on Beinn Dearg—only 2 ft to go. Meanwhile just jump up in the air and you'll make it). There are also strange goings-on among the Corbetts. 'In the new 1:10560 maps there are many changes in Corbetts both in heights and in locations.' (They move around, too, as well as up and down, just like the Munros. See S.M.C.J., 1975, xxx, 403).

'Also as reported in S.M.C.J., 1979, xxxi, Sgùrr Cos na Breachd-laoidh is a new Corbett but it is only one of twelve that have already been noted. On the other, hand five will be moved from the list.' Donaldson is probably right in querying the spelling of 'laoidh.' Gaelic for 'fawn' is usually rendered 'breac laoigh' in the genitive - but then 'na' is usually restricted to feminic nouns and 'laogh' is masculine. The alternative is 'laoidh' - 'a sacred song' but that, too, is masculine and makes less immediate sense - although you never know, for Gaelic is difficult and deep and has been around longer than English and knows the hills correspondingly better.

Now to revert to the banal again, it may interest you to know that the minimum height for a Corbett is 762.01 m.

Donaldson's final remark we quote in full:

'You might like to put a note in the Journal that I am fast going round the bend establishing the correct heights of aspiring Corbetts as well as sorting out the correct order or Munroists for the next edition of the Tables. Perhaps in future there should be a financial penalty for claims lodged late, on a progressive scale the later the date the claim is lodged.'

This suggestion by our ex-Treasurer is particularly noteworthy in view of the fact that the last name on this year's list is that of our new Treasurer, Bob Hillcoat. His position at the end of the list is not due to his ascent of Carn an Righ last September being the final compleation of the annual crop

but because he forgot to report it until the following Easter.

Achievement of Munros.—We have in previous Journals (S.M.C.J., 1978, xxxi, 291) stressed the analogy between Compleating the Munros and an Achievement of Arms and the consequent need for a Lyon Court of Munros whose authority on what is a Donaldson, Munro, Corbett or Donald and who has qualified for the Accolade would be final. Such a Court is increasingly necessary to provide a standard against which Munro Errantry can regulate itself. All the factual evidence indicates that a Munro summit oscillates a little around an average height and map reference so that they are never exactly classifiable on a boringly trigonometrical basis. This may alarm the O.S. and exasperate the Worthy Editor of the Tables but will not surprise any man-of-the-world. What is required is a body of reasonable sane people

who will come to a balanced decision after taking into account the arithmetic and aesthetics of each candidate summit and so produce a 'minimum list.' Those who felt worthy peaks had been omitted could add them to their own personal list and wear them as stars on the Munroist's Shield, Banner, Sash, Ribbon, or Tie. whichever of these the belted Munroist elected to carry.

The Court could consist of a Lyon Recorder and perhaps three Pursuivants: a 'Hutton Pursuivant' who should be a Geologist with field experience in orogeny, a 'Murray Pursuivant' with the same sensitive eye for topography as W. H. Murray (maybe W.H.M. himself could be the first incumbent) and an 'Ignatious Pursuivant' who should have a good Honours Degree in Metaphysics or equivalent experience.

Appointment to the Court would depend on passing a very strict test. The test would consist of the telling of three of four carefully chosen jokes; failure to see the point of any of them would exclude from service. This would eliminate the bores, pedants, bureaucrats and impossible obsessionals who bring the leaden 'sadim touch' (S.M.C.J., 1977, xxxi, 197) to so much that can be interesting and enjoyable.

Hard Rock in Demand.—In 1976 the 'Verney Committee' set up to advise on future supplies of aggregate for the construction industry, listed nine main coastal granite masses as potential super-quarry sites. One of these was the coastal intrusion between Cruden Bay and Boddam, just south of Peterhead. Hard on the heels of the report came a developer with an application for re-opening an old quarry in the area. Since this stretch of coastal cliff is a popular climbing area, the M.C.S. and the Etchachan Club lodged objection which was sustained through this and several further applications. Eventually the developer simply started work, defying the District Council's refusal to grant planning permission on a legalistic argument. After an initial show of force the Council gave in and granted conditional planning permission.

At this stage the developer ran his true colours to the mast by stating his objective was a super-quarry exporting vast quantities of aggregates to the Continent. He underlined this with an application to Parliament for a Provisional Order seeking permission to develop a £2.6 million harbour facility at the site. If granted, this would certainly prejudice any public enquiry later called to consider a super-quarry application.

What is at stake is the survival of the Longhaven climbing area and a piece of coast of outstanding quality and beauty. Needless to say, the M.C. of S., local clubs, the Scottish Sports Council and a number of other bodies have lodged petitions of objection and are building up their case for the eventual confrontation.

This is not the place to set out the arguments but we would sadly point out that this kind of situation is what makes mountaineering need to see to its defences. Longhaven to-day, perhaps the Etive Slabs to-morrow!

A bas les helicopteres.—Our international affairs desk brings the following extract from the *Financial Times* of 31st December, 1979, to our notice.

'President Giscard d'Estaing will have to give up his favourite sport in the New Year — helicopter trips to the summits of France's snow slopes and ski-ing down the valleys.

'Instead Giscard will join lesser French holidaymakers in the queues for ski lifts of the conventional variety. Opposition by majors of Alpine resorts and by environmentalists, not to mention other skiers, has killed off this form of leisure, reserved – inevitably – to the wealthy. Jean-Pierre Soisson, Minister for Youth, Sport, and Leisure has decreed that helicopters must in future be used only for rescue missions. 'If this brings relief to those tired of being simultaneously deafened and swept off course by miniature artificial snow storms, Giscard will not be pleased. Earlier this year he used a helicopter at Chamonix to convey him to Le Buet, a 10,000 ft peak in the Mont Blanc range normally out of bounds to all skiers. The summit was subsequently the scene of a punch up between supporters and opponents of helicopter ski ing, some indication of the Gallic passions the issue has aroused.'

Watch out.—The deleterious affect of magnetic seat belts on compasses has already been mentioned (S.M.C.J., 1973, xxx, 189). This year our Scientific correspondent draws our attention to a letter in the Guardian (an English provincial newspaper) in which the writer, Tom Sheppard, warns readers of the errors induced in compasses by the user holding the instrument in a hand on which an analogue quartz watch is worn.

'In recent solo expedition in the Sahara over previously untraversed ground I found a 2°70' error which put me as much as 19 km off course at the end of a 300 km day. Night astro-shots enabled me to detect the errors which were experimentally confirmed later. Analogue quartz watches generate magnetic interference from their step down motors—the Rolex, because it is so 'expedition-proof,' ironically, is particularly prone to this effect.

'Hill walking in fog and rain, like roaming the Sahara, demands accurate compasses.'

We would hasten to add that our own observations suggest that many Club members might well accept an error of this magnitude in a compass without noticing it.

Farthest out.— Our sailing correspondent advises us that another ascent of Rockall has been made – in a refreshingly eccentric style by some Oxford University students who sailed out in their own boat and climbed the supramarine part of the mountain, in full evening dress. On the summit they dined and then jumped off or, in one case, dived off. One bottle of Champagne was courteously left for the next visitors. Had it been whisky a Meet might have been considered.

SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN ACCIDENTS, 1979

This year's accident list was compiled by Fred Harper. Our thanks are due to him, to the M.R.C.S. and to the dedication of the various Rescue services and all that they do to assist those who encounter trouble in the hills.

Our published list includes all incidents arising from recreational use of the hills by those engaged in walking and climbing but excludes call-outs involving anglers (2), shooters (2), fell runners (1), stranded cars (2) and people not in 'wild country' (3). Additionally there were four alerts on account of straying skiers at the Cairnwell, one of which involved an M.R. search, and no fewer than eight aircraft crashes. In total there were over twenty call-outs of a non-mountaineering nature.

As far as can be judged from the information, 'walkers' featured in 80 incidents and 'climbers' in 29, these terms being used to denote the activity engaged in when the incident occurred. Details are lacking but we assume that the climbing incidents were on climbing terrain and not necessarily all on actual named routes or to roped parties. Particularly noteworthy is the continuing frequency of mishaps to hillwalkers in winter involving falls on snow and ice due to either lack of axe and crampons or the ability to use them effectively.

In order to arrive at a more clearly defined geographical distribution of incidents we have this year applied the well known divisions used by the District Guidebooks with the additional separation of the Ben Nevis and Glencoe areas because of their high accident figures. Most incidents are, of course, the result of a combination of factors but some major contributory causes and categories emerge and are listed below.

| Number of Incidents | | | Number of Incidents | | |
|----------------------------------|--------|----------------------------|------------------------|--|--|
| Poor Timing | 17 | Hillwalking slips (summer) | 17 | | |
| Navigational Error | 11 | Hillwalking slips (winter) | 20 | | |
| Equipment inadequat | te | Climbing falls (summer) | 7 | | |
| or ineffectively used | 1 7 | Climbing falls (winter) | 8 | | |
| Rockfall | 2 | All incidents (summer) | 59 | | |
| Avalanche (including one corn | ice) 5 | All incidents (winter) | 52 | | |
| Drowning | 1 | | | | |

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

The geographical divisions conform to those used for the District Guide books.

| Region | Casualties (of which fatalities bracketed) | | | | Inci Actual Rescues | | other Call-outs | | Total Inci- dents |
|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------|---------|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| | Injured | Exposure, Exhaustion | Illness | Total Casualties | Casualties | Cragfast, etc. | Lost, Ov'due or Benighted | False Alarms | |
| Northern Highlands | 6(1) | 1 | - | 7(1) | 7 | _ | 4 | - | 11 |
| Western Highlands | 3 | _ | 1 | 4 | 4 | 1 | _ | - | 5 |
| Ben Nevis Area | 18(5) | 2 | 1(1) | 21(6) | 17 | - | 2 | 1 | 20 |
| Glencoe Area | 8(1) | - | _ | 8(1) | 8 | _ | 4 | _ | 12 |
| Other Central Highlands | 3(1) | 1(1) | 1(1) | 5(3) | 4 | _ | 1 | _ | 5 |
| Cairngorms | 11(2) | 2 | 3(2) | 16(4) | 16 | - | 13 | - | 29 |
| Southern Highlands | 7 | 4 | 1 | 12 | 11 | _ | 2 | _ | 13 |
| Southern Uplands | 1 | - | _ | 1 | 1 | - | 3 | - | 4 |
| Skye | 3(1) | - | - | 3(1) | 3 | - | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Islands | 4 | - | - | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 | - | 7 |
| All Areas | 64(11) | 10(1) | 7(4) | 81(16) | 75 | 2 | 32 | 2 | 111 |

Accident List

This list omits incidents of a non-hillwalking mountaineering nature.

1979

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

February 19-Two climbers benighted in Coire na Caime, Laithach.

April 3—Solo hillwalker fell on N face of Beinn Alligin. Assumed he slipped-iced rocks. Fatal.

APRIL 4—Two climbers benighted on Liathach. Difficulties with route, plus white-out conditions.

MAY 29—Gairloch area - hillwalker fell - spinal injury, broken ribs and punctured lung.

August 6—Gairloch area - fall on Tollaidh Crag - arm, shoulder and head injuries.

August 11—Tourist scrambling on rocks at Stoer suffered from attack of vertigo. Fell and was concussed.

August 22-Gairloch area - hillwalker exhausted.

August 26-Assynt - two hillwalkers late.

August 28-Two climbers overdue on Am Buchaille, Sandwood Bay.

SEPTEMBER ?-Hillwalker on Liathach - broken arm.

WESTERN HIGHLANDS

May 19—Member of party of hillwalkers slipped and broke leg near Bealach nam Barrisdale, Knoydart.

MAY 27—Hillwalker collapsed with suspected coronary attack when descending from Ladhar Bheinn.

May 28—Young female tourist crag-fast in Glenelg.

 ${\tt June}$ 26—Hillwalker slipped on wet rock when crossing a burn walking from Kinloch to Kylerhea. Severe concussion.

September 19—Glen Urquhart - hillwalker injured.

BEN NEVIS AREA

January 31—Two climbers benighted on N.E. Buttress, Ben Nevis. Completed climb next day and descended themselves. Late start to climb.

February 15—Hillwalker fell down Red Burn, Ben Nevis, while glissading. Bruising and scalp wound.

February 28—Party of six in No. 5 Gully below another pair at cornice which collapsed while being tunnelled. Six of the eight swept down and one received stab wounds from his own axe. Mild weather.

March 17—Party descending abseil posts on Ben Nevis had just unroped when one was blown over. Slid down the slope and broke ankle.

March 25—Two climbers lost on summit of Ben Nevis after completing climb. In bad weather, one fell through cornice and down *Five Finger Gully*. Companion made his own way down as did the uninjured climber.

April 8—Two climbers avalanched near the foot of Garadh Gully on Ben Nevis. One died.

April 16—Hillwalker descending from Aonach Mór fell 500 feet down steep ground. Concussed so party camped overnight and walked out next day.

APRIL 22—Climber fell off Gambit, Poll Dubh Crags. Hit ground on rope stretch and broke ankle.

May 4—Climber fell from 2nd pitch of Point Five Gully, Ben Nevis. Facial injuries.

May 7—Two climbers near foot of *Italian Climb*, Ben Nevis, hit by avalanche. One buried; found dead about one metre down less than one hour later.

 ${\rm May}$ 25—Youth cragfast in small gully near tourist track up Ben Nevis. Eventually extricated himself.

JUNE 10-Climber, unroped, fell approx. 150 feet on Tower Ridge. Dead.

June 19—Climber in $Five\ Finger\ Gully$ on Ben Nevis pulled boulder onto himself and broke his leg.

July 26-Walker fell on waterslide slabs in Glen Nevis. Fatal.

July 29—Ben Nevis - climbers concussion and head injuries/fractured right elbow.

August 13—Tourist fell on waterslide in Glen Nevis. Minor head injuries.

August 13—Tourist descending tourist path on Ben Nevis. Slipped when taking a short cut and dislocated knee cap.

August 15—Tourist descending Red Burn Gully hit on head by falling rock. Fractured skull.

August 16—Climber fell approx. 500 feet on Tower Ridge due to wet and greasy rock. Fatal.

August 26—Tourist on tourist path on Ben Nevis had heart attack, fell and sustained head injuries. Fatal.

NOVEMBER 22—Two of a party of seven of Royal Dutch Marines collapsed with exposure on way to C.I.C.

DECEMBER 31-Fall in Point Five Gully - broken arm and jaw.

GLENCOE AREA

Janauary 5—Party of students benighted on Aonach Eagach in heavy snowfall.

January 6—Two climbers benighted in *Great Gully* on Buachaille Etive Mór. Hit by powder avalanche during the night and lost their rope. Stuck, but uninjured.

February 1—Two climbers retreating from Rev Ted's Gully on Gearr Aonach. Leader fell when descending bad ice. Broken ankle.

February 10-Fallen climber in Glencoe.

February 18—Two climbers descending No. 3 Gully, Aonach Dubh. One fell due to crampons balling up. Fractured vertebrae.

February 24—Climber fell - ankle and shoulder bruised.

APRIL 1-Glencoe - climber fell - both ankles injured.

May 12—Glen Etive - search for missing hillwalkers.

August 10-Hillwalker - fatality.

August 30-Hillwalker - broken arm.

August 30-Climber - rib injuries, cuts.

OTHER CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

January 3—Two climbers at top of *Cinderella*, Creag Meaghaidh, benighted. Descended the next day. Uninjured. Did not allow enough time for the climb. February 9—Experienced female walker lost on Ben Cruachan. Found several months later. Dead.

MARCH 26-Walker fell through ice on Loch Oassian and drowned.

MARCH 27—Two young hillwalkers were descending into Coire Lochan on Cruachan to camp. One fell on ice, disappeared from view. The other went to investigate, and also fell. Well equipped but no crampons. One suffered cuts and bruises, but raised alarm. Other boy had three compressed vertebrae and fractured arm and shoulder.

August 2—Party of two walking from Kinlochleven to Steall. One complained of stomach pains and collapsed 2.25 miles from Steall. Dead when teams arrived.

CAIRNGORMS

JANUARY 1-Two hillwalkers late from Ben MacDhui. Uninjured.

JANUARY 4—Hillwalker out for afternoon became lost and tired in Glen Quoich. Spent night out and returned to Braemar the next day. Lucky to have had a very mild night.

JANUARY 27—Solo climber fell from cornice of Crotched Gully in Coire an t-Sneachda. Fractured both ankles and lacerated face.

January 29—Previous climber's companion returned to Jean's Hut to collect equipment left there. Got lost in bad weather and eventually found, uninjured, near Loch Etchachan after spending the night out.

JANUARY 28-Two hillwalkers stormbound on Ben-y-Vrackie.

February 4—Inexperienced hillwalker slipped on hard snow while descending the Coire of Glas Maol. Unable to stop with his ice-axe. Broken leg.

February 12—Hillwalker fell on Goat Track of Coire an t-Sneachda. Head injuries.

FEBRUARY 23—Climber avalanched from foot of Fiacaill Couloir in Coire an t-Sneachda. Broken pelvis and lower leg.

MARCH 3—Member of school party slipped and fell while descending into Corrie Kilbo, Glen Doll. Fractured ribs and collapsed lung.

MARCH 3-Fall on Fiacaill Ridge. Facial injuries.

MARCH 4—Hillwalker slipped on hard snow near summit of An Socach. Party evacuated casualty to Altanour Lodge, then taken out by police. Fractured collar bone.

MARCH 13-Party of hillwalkers late back.

APRIL 18-Overdue, inadequately equipped family on Cairngorm.

June 2—Hillwalker - coronary in Lairig.

June 9—Lightly equipped hillwalker on route from Glen Doll Y.H. to Lochnagar and back lost in mist and benighted. Plan too ambitious.

JUNE 12-Hillwalker died of heart attack on Bynack More.

June 17—Three boy scouts late for rendezvous after overnight trip. Navigational problems due to new areas of afforestation.

JUNE 23-Walker on sponsored walk in Lairig Ghru - exposure.

July 7—Retired doctor suffered a heart attack on descent from Cairn Toul-fatal. July 22—Teenage girl became separated from the rest of the party and got lost. Made her own way off the hill.

August 1—Party of five hillwalkers benighted at Derry Lodge on return from Ben Macdui. Over-ambitious plans.

August 1-Hillwalker late back.

August 18-Hillwalker overdue.

SEPTEMBER 16—Member of Duke of Edinburgh group collapsed with exhaustion and exposure on the Bassies, Glen Doll. Adequate equipment but poor weather.

SEPTEMBER 16—Experienced hillwalker stepped into pot hole on Jock's Road, Glen Doll. Broken lower and upper leg.

NOVEMBER 11-Climber soloing in Coire an Lochain - fatality.

DECEMBER 16—Hillwalker lost – separated from companions. Found dead five days later in Coire an t-Sneachda.

DECEMBER 29—Hillwalker overdue.

DECEMBER 31—Men suffered fall hillwalking – one with broken ribs. Benighted Jean's Hut.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

January 2—Two hillwalkers lost on Ben Lomond in white-out. Both suffered from exposure.

January 28—Hillwalker slipped off Succoch Burn track into burn. Fractured lower and upper leg. No crampons.

MARCH 24—Hillwalker slipped on snow near The Law. Unable to brake with axe and fell into gully. Broken shoulder, cracked ribs and crushed vertebrae.

APRIL 8—Experienced hillwalker fell from ridge on Creag More in bad visibility. Dislocated hip, fractured pelvis.

June 17 Inadequately equipped member of hillwalking party slipped and fell into gully on Ben Narnain. Broken shoulder.

JUNE 24-Man suffered illness while at Narnain Boulder shelter.

JULY 5—Family in Cruach Ardrain area split up. Search mounted for father searching for wife and daughter. Uninjured.

July 21—Hillwalker fell in Creagan Lochan, Ben Lawers, while searching for rare plants. Fractured pelvis, crushed vertebrae and concussion.

August 27 Member of Scout party collapsed when ascending Schiehallion.

SEPTEMBER 2—Teenage girl with exposure on Campsie Fells.

SEPTEMBER 23—Hillwalker tripped on rough ground and broke ankle.

NOVEMBER 17—Army cadets became lost and exhausted on hills above Gairlochhead.

DECEMBER 16—Hillwalker on Ben More - back injury.

SKYE

June 28—Walker sprained ankle in Cuillin.

JULY 22-False alarm - Cuillins.

July 27—Search for missing climbers.

August 15—Solo climber fell in Cuillin - fatal.

August 26—Hillwalker - collar bone, back and leg injuries.

ISLANDS

February 12—Arran M.R. team doctor slipped and fell 300 feet on steep snow on Creag Ghlas while on M.R. exercise. Fractured pelvis and ribs.

February 18 Guest of Findhorn Foundation on Isle of Erraid went for a walk but at low tide crossed a sandbar to Mull. Lost overnight. No map or compass.

MARCH 31—Geology student slipped on snow patch on ridge between Cloch na Oighe and Goat Fell. No crampons. Fractured lower leg.

April 3—Two hillwalkers trapped on ice ledge below summit of A'Chir. No crampons.

May 17—Hillwalker stumbled and fell when descending from Goat Fell. Fractured lower leg.

July 28—Lewis - search for missing hillwalker.

OCTOBER 15—S. Uist - hillwalker, concussion and knee injury after slip on wet grass.

SOUTHERN UPLANDS

August 15—Tourist broke leg near Grey Mare's Tail.

SEPTEMBER 22—Boys on Duke of Edinburgh scheme overdue.

OCTOBER 21—Two hillwalkers overdue in Glen Trool area.

DECEMBER 23—Hillwalker lost and benighted in Galloway Hills.

IN MEMORIAM

W. R. M. WATSON

BILL WATSON joined the Club in 1946 after a distinguished record of war service, mainly in the Special Forces.

Ski ing was his prime enjoyment and both climbing and hill walking had to give place to it; for that reason, he seldom attended our New Year or Easter Meets.

For those who did share his company on the hills, he will be remembered chiefly for his tremendous vitality and sense of fun, which made him a joy to be with, even in the worst of conditions, and the memory of his pawky grin from within a frozen or sodden anorak hood will always remain.

He died on 25th July, 1979, at his home at Ardlamont, after a mercifully short illness, at the age of sixty three. He leaves behind his wife and four children, all of whom, in their own right, are notable ski ers.

R.R.S.H.

DOUGLAS STEVEN

Douglas Steven died in March, 1980, after an illness from which he was aware there could be no recovery. During the last few weeks he had much pleasure in recalling hill climbing, camping days of mainly the 1925/35 years.

He joined the J.M.C.S. shortly after its formation and particularly in student days spent as many weekends on the hills as means of transport permitted. Many times this meant catching the 5 a.m. train from Queen Street Station with a blue tram leaving Botanic Cardens, a mile away, as the only aid a ploy for the enthusiast especially at New Year. For some years the destination was King's House Inn which a group of us took over entirely for 3/4 days.

In later years work took him to London – he was a C.A. and a senior member of the Weston Bakery Croup but he returned every year, war years excepted, to Boat of Garten, and rarely missed a chance to climb one or other of the Cairngorms, the hills he loved most of all.

An enthusiastic companion with a capacity for a more than average mileage with a more than average load, it was the company of his friends on those occasions which gave him most pleasure.

He played a major part in the organising of the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind's annual fund raising climb of Ben Lomond, a part recognised by the naming of an eye camp in India after him.

J.A.S.

JOHN CUNNINGHAM

The death of John Cunningham closed a unique chapter in Scottish climbing history. His career was exceptional for he was responsible for a proliferation of new routes over a span of thirty years. John started climbing as a lad of fifteen on hard routes, and ended as he began, still climbing at a very high standard with a competence which earned him the respect of everyone he knew, and many he didn't. For several decades he was a legend and a driving force in the Creagh Dhu Mountaineering Club.

As a shipwright he served his time in John Brown's, where many other aspiring rock gymnasts germinated and the crags and peaks of west Scotland became his playground. Routes such as Gallows and Guerdon Grooves were far ahead of their time and even later, when Sassenachs in the form of Brown and Whillans stole across the border to do their damnedest on Scottish rock, John still held his own. He must have pioneered more routes than the average climber has had pints of ale. John was difficult to get to know, especially in his early climbing days, but once that barrier was overcome he was a delightful companion. I knew him over a large part of his active climbing life and found him a wonderfully easy person to get along with and also extremely humorous, especially in his early motorcycling days when we used to scare the daylights out of tourists and ourselves on the snakey side of Loch Lomond. I remember he had the record number of falls on a given weekend. On one occasion he fell off his machine and accompanied it in an elegant slide through the wicket gate of a cottage.

He seemed more at home on British hills than on higher mountains, though he had several visits to the Himalayas and to Antarctica as well as spending some time in New Zealand. After his various Odysseys he took a P.E. Diploma at Jordanhill and started instructing professionally. His dedication is well remembered at Clenmore Lodge and his final act was one of dedication in attempting to save a pupil from drowning off the cliffs of Anglesey. In so doing he lost his own life; an end not unexpected when you knew him.

Despite his possibly unmatched record of new rock routes in Scotland, he will be best remembered in years to come as a prophet of hard ice climbing. For it was John who, when in Antarctica, first experimented and developed his 'ballet' on ice (in fact he did study ballet at one time), using his unique ability to climb intimidatingly steep ice with razor keen crampons and an ice dagger. After the coming of age of the dropped pick there was no stopping him and from his base at Glenmore Lodge he raised the art of ice climbing to new dimensions.

John Cunningham may have passed on, but as long as climbers use climbing guides his name will remain.

H.MACI.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

Easter Meet 1979 - Arran

The Easter Meet held at Corrie Hotel and camping in Glen Sannox was attended by 18 members and 6 guests.

The weather was very good and parties were out every day. The following ascents were reported: Goat Fell, North Goat Fell, Cioch na h'Oighe, Cir Mhór, Caisteal Abhail, Ceum na Caillich, Suidhe Fhearghas, Beinn Nuis, Beinn Tarsuinn, Beinn a' Chliabhain, A'Chir Ridge, Beinn Bharrain, Beinn Bhreac, and traverse over Creag Ghlas Cuithe, Creag Ghlas Laggan to the Fallen Rocks and Sannox. Some rock climbing was done on Beinn Nuis, Glen Sannox slabs and sea cliffs at Dippen Head.

Present were: Members, B. Fleming, R. G. Folkard, J. Gillespie, J. N. Ledingham, R. C. S. Low, J. Madden, D. Marshall, J. R. Marshall, H. H. Mills, M. Morrison, T. Nicholson, R. Richardson, G. S. Roger, W. Skidmore, W. T. Taylor, A. Walker, G. C. Williams, F. R. Wylie, and Guests, J. Bell, J. Broadfoot, N. G. Hetherington, D. Hodgson, G. Little and R. Little.

It was a very successful and enjoyable meet.

New Year Meet 1980 - Tyndrum

The New Year Meet held at Invervey Hotel was attended by 13 members and 1 guest.

The weather was excellent and the following ascents were reported: Beinn Dubhchraig, Beinn Chuirn, Beinn a'Chleibh, Beinn Chaluim and Beinn Tulachean. On the lower slopes it was heavy going in soft snow but the summits were quite icy. Some members skied on Meall a'Bhuiridh and Beinn Ghlas.

Present were: President Elton, C. C. Gorrie, J. N. Ledingham, I. D. McNicol, D. H. McPherson, H. H. Mills, I. H. Ogilvie, G. S. Roger, D. Scott, I. H. M. Smart, C. B. M. Warren, T. Weir, F. R. Wylie and N. G. Hetherington (guest).

This was another highly successful and enjoyable meet and we express our thanks to Mr Black and his staff for looking after us so well.

Reception, A.G.M. and Dinner, 1979

DECEMBER 1st, 1979, saw us again at the George Hotel, no suitable venue having been found in Glasgow. The lecture was delivered by Ken Crocket who gave us a light-hearted account of climbing in the Glencoe area as a trailer to encourage us to buy the no doubt excellent, but exorbitantly priced new Glencoe Guide. The highlights were the fine slides of sunsets – Ken is either a connoisseur of sunsets or just plain slow at getting off the mountains.

Thereafter the proceedings declined steadily. The first contentious item at the A.G.M. is under a 'D notice' and cannot even be reported, suffice to say it aroused considerable passion in some breasts and complete indifference in others. Members then got out of hand and Neil Quinn was called to the Chair to quell the disruption and hilarity. The motion (which I am not allowed to mention) was carried. Office bearers' reports were presented. The main points concerned the deficit on the Club's accounts (which was mainly due to Journal costs) and the disquiet about the cost of the new Glencoe Guide. The increased subscription will help but members were asked to do all they could to increase Journal sales.

After several attempts Ken Andrew finally got a discussion on the trial borings into the granite of the Mullwharchar area. As usual there was considerable argument as to the relevance of the S.M.C. in this matter but a motion was eventually passed that a letter of protest be sent to the forthcoming public inquiry. (The earthquake which affected the area in question twenty-five days later only demonstrates what the S.M.C. is capable of when it makes up its mind). Another indication of the instability of the world in which we live was the intelligence that Club ties are no longer available, but we were given hope by the reassurance that a new supplier is to be found.

This A.G.M. marked the end of Donald Bennet's long and worthy spell as Club Secretary – a burden which he cannot be sorry to lay down. Bill Wallace now takes it up and he deserves our sympathy.

The dinner was no worse than we feared but the speeches were longer.

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 week-end 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, Dundonnel), Jim Clark, 13 N.W. Circus Place, Edinburgh, EH3 6SX; Secretary, David J. Mole, 42 Dolphin Gardens West, Currie, Midlothian, EH14 5RE.

Glasgow Section.—Easter '79 gave promise of a fine warm summer – or so it seemed from the top of the northernmost Scottish three-thousand-footer. It was not to be and the meets, mainly wet ones, were not as well attended as they might have been.

However, the Section was active on higher hills with Peter Cairns in the Atlas, Pete Hodgkiss, also Angus McInnes, Peter Cairns and a third party, James McLaughlin in the Alps, while Bill Donaldson and Ian McLeod were in the Pyrenees and Steve Gardner in Nepal. They all had successful journeys.

The winter climbing has produced some creditable performances, but there could be more to come.

A tremendous evening (and morning) was had by about fifty members and guests at the Annual Dinner in the Kingshouse. The social side continued with excellent lectures and, of course, the Burns Supper which was a great success in new surroundings. The photographic competition is almost with us again with the judge, Alastair MacGregor, being the winner of the best two competitions!

The Section is strong and looks to the future with increasing confidence.

Office Bearers—Hon. Member, W. H. Murray, O.B.E.; Hon. President, W. H. Duncan; Hon. Vice-President, J. Gillespie; President, Dr A. McInnes; Vice-President and Secretary, C. Findlay, 16 Netherblane, Blanefield; Treasurer, W. Forbes; Coruisk Hut Custodian, D. McDonald.

Inverness Section.—The membership continued its slow climb and reached 30 in the last year with most members being active mountaineers although most tend to pursue their mountaineering activities in small groups rather than with the Section as a whole.

The summer meets tended to be organised at short notice depending on interest and where good weather seemed most likely but almost all seemed to

be held in poor conditions with greasy rock at the best.

Gerry Smith and Tom Anderson spread their wings, courtesy of Skytrain, and spent two weeks in Yosemite where the warm sun and dry rock were a pleasant change from home. Some good routes were done and Gerry is threatening to return this summer. Other members visited the Alps where mountains were climbed but in nothing like perfect conditions.

April 1980 saw the first exchange visit between the mountaineers of Inverness and the mountaineers from Inverness' twin town in Germany, Augsburg. J.M.C.S. members were prominent in the party going to Bavaria and all enjoyed the experience and tremendous hospitality provided by the Augsburg section of the German Alpine Club. New Spring snow in quantity made climbing a non-starter but now some members have threatened to hang up their 'terrors' and buy skis as a result of the days spent ski-ing on and off piste.

Office-Bearers—President, Steve Carroll; Vice-President, Tom Anderson; Secretary/Treasurer, Neil Lawford, 1 East Croachy Cottages, Aberarder, by

Inverness.

Lochaber Section.—This year saw the Club's first sponsored Alpine Meet when 18 members travelled to the Engadine Valley in Switzerland. Many peaks were ascended by differing standards of route including 8 members up the North Ridge of the Piz Badile at the same time.

There was the usual round of winter meets including the Annual Dinner at Dundonnel, which is proving as popular as the Annual Dance, and the New

Year Party at the Club's hut at Steall.

Over the year considerable renovation work has been undertaken at Steall including the construction of sleeping platforms, with deep foam mattresses to replace the old beds. Further work is planned for the coming year to further improve the facilities.

This year's round of indoor meets have been very successful with a series of slide shows on Mt. Kenya, Changabang, Cordillera Blanca, the Alps and The History of Mountaineering. The Club has also purchased a slide

projector and screen.

One of the facilities of the Club is its library which besides possessing nearly all the S.M.C. Journals, and many guides for both home and abroad also has a wide range of mountaineering books to which it adds regularly. We are also in the process of building up a slide library of Scottish climbing and views.

Increased pressure is now being brought to bear on the Highlands both from industrial and recreational bodies and the Club, through its committee,

is keeping a watch on all proposed developments.

Office-Bearers—Honorary President, J. Ness; President, J. Patterson; Vice-President, N. Hitch; Secretary, L. Houlker, 3 Treslaig, Fort William (Corpach 633); Treasurer, H. Campbell; Steall Custodian, E. Kay, 22 Glenloy Street, Caol, Fort William (Fort William 3320).

London Section.—The Section had a fairly quiet year, the main features being a rise in the number of aspirant members, the beginnings of a takeover by established members in Bethesda and the commencement of a genuine hut works programme. Climbing activity was confined mainly to North Wales but individuals went as far afield as New Zealand, America and Greenland.

During the year we held nine official meets with many other successful weekends in between. The winter meets in Scotland and Wales had plenty of snow as in previous years, while the summer meet in Derbyshire was particularly affected by rain and that modern day scourge of all mountaineers, the periodic shortage of petrol. The autumn meet was well attended as more new members decided to give the Section a try.

After a year or so of national advertising the Section has had an increasing number of enquiries and with our regular gatherings in London a communal meeting place has been provided. Section membership is now in the sixties and our main aim in the coming year will be to encourage more younger members as there is a growing feeling that the average age, and therefore club interest and activity, may become too great and too little in that order.

Finances were at the outset very healthy in readiness for the eventual outbreak of hut repair works. These were duly started during the year so that the Section is now only just in credit. To meet the expected increase in expenses next year it was agreed to increase our subscriptions and to raise hut fees.

The Section has for the past few years taken an interest in the affairs of the B.M.C. whose activities have been mainly confined to south of the border but by natural expansion are appearing on the northern horizon. The past year has seen an internal power struggle leading to a boring and costly legal wrangle, the suggestion of massive climbing walls in London and the closure of part of Tremadoc.

The Section was again represented on the M.M.C. South East Committee, attended the Whole Club Dinner at the Kingshouse and revisited the Waterloo Motel in Betws-y-Coed for our own A.G.M. and Dinner. Entertainment was again provided unintentionally by Robin Watts who gave a gripping account of how he and his men parted the pack ice in eastern Greenland.

Office-Bearers—Hon. President, J. D. Porta; President, B. Wheeler; Secretary, H. Jordan; Treasurer, D. Edmunds; Hut Bookings, B. Wheeler.

Perth Section.—1979 was the Jubilee Year for the Perth Section. Membership stood at 64, an increase of 10 on last year. Fourteen meets were held during the year, of which 5 were day meets and 9 were during weekends. Average attendance at meets was again up on last year but the most poorly attended was the Whole Club A.G.M. and Dinner at Kingshouse Hotel, Glencoe. The most successful meet was the weekend one to Skye, where we were blessed with excellent weather.

On 1st April, 1929, the first official meet of the J.M.C.S. – Perth Section—was held at Coylumbridge; 4 members attended. On 1st April, 1979, a bus meet to Coylumbridge took place; 26 members attended, including Chris Rudie, our Hon, President and one of the original 4 members. Other Jubilee events included climbing all of the Munros in and on the boundaries of Perthshire (56) on Easter Sunday – again Chris took part and climbed Schiehallion. The Jubilee Dinner was held at Hunter's Lodge, Bankfoot, and was attended by 88 members and guests. Slides and photographs of the past 50 years were on show, helping to rekindle many almost forgotten events.

For the third successive year the Club won the annual 'Mountain Mind' quiz in Dundee. We organised this quiz and will again have to organise the 1980 quiz.

The Joint Annual Lecture with the Perthshire Society of Natural Science was given by Ken Crocket of the S.M.C. who talked on rock and ice climbs in Scotland.

The Section was represented at the annual dinners of the London Section and the Edinburgh Section and at the dinner of the Grampian Club. The President also attended the annual dinner of the S.M.C.

The A.G.M. was held in Perth in November at which the following Office-Bearers were elected:

Hon. President, Chris Rudie; Hon. Vice-President, James Anton; Hon. Members, Walter Pethers, David Wares; President, David Baker; Vice-President, Tom Rix; Treasurer, John Rogers; Secretary, Joe Stewart, 78 Wilson Street, Perth.

S.M.C. AND J.M.C.S. ABROAD

The Alps

STUART SMITH, who was wrongly promoted to membership of J.M.C.S. in a previous issue (S.M.C.J., 1979, xxi, 442) writes: 'This summer I was back in Chamonix for a fortnight with Ed. Jackson. We first climbed the Frendo Spur (D) which was very enjoyable and then the Vaucher Route (TD) on the Aiguille du Peigne. This offered excellent rock climbing but was unfortunately very busy. After that we climbed the North Face of the Triolet (TD) on which the front six points broke off my Chouinard crampons. Progress on steep ice was, therafter, rather slow!'

JOHN STEELE writes: 'Fortunately, this year I was again able to make two trips to the Alps. During the winter visit with John Turner we ventured onto the High Level Route and spent a night at the refuge Bouquetines. This conical shaped hut is well placed cutting down the long ski traverse from Zermatt to the Vignettes hut. It is sited on a rocky promontory directly opposite the Col Collon descent.

In the autumn my companion was Bob Parry on his first trip. In a spell of ten days glorious weather we managed the Point Chèvres, Petit Veseivé Point Tsalion, Dent Tsalion, Aiguille Tour traverse and the Aiguille Genepé. All the routes were covered by a foot of powder snow making the rock ridges difficult. However the semi-winter conditions were compensated for by the superb views of the distant peaks. Only the Matterhorn, Mont Blanc and the Grandes Jorasses had their daily storms.'

ANDREW NISBET writes: 'With Neil Spinks, Bob Smith and Dave Wright (all Etchachan Club) I spent Christmas and New Year in Chamonix. Unusually snowy conditions restricted activity and only accessible routes were climbed during a meagre three days of fine weather. Bob Smith and Dave Wright climbed the Frendo Spur in three days, the last of which was a violent storm. Andrew Nisbet and Neil Spinks made a pleasant new route on the right side of the North Face of the Col du Peigne. Steep and very difficult mixed ground led to a snowfield just deep enough for a bivouac in a snowhole. On the second day a line of steep grooves filled with perfect white ice led up and leftwards to the Col du Peigne. An easy descent down the Peigne Couloir on the South side of the col allowed an escape just before the onset of the storm which caught the others. It was agreed that Chamonix is a much more attractive place in winter than summer despite the long periods of enforced stay in the valley, and the days spent cross-country ski-ing on prepared tracks through the woods were almost as entertaining as the climbing.'

Theo nicholson writes: 'The last part of our Swiss holiday was during the first half of September 1979 in the Val d'Anniviers. No high peaks were climbed (I fear that for me, they are beyond enjoyable reach now) but in nine days of fine weather, my wife and I climbed a number of peaks and passes up to about 10,000 feet. As on several previous occasions, we stayed in St. Luc and depended on the somewhat infrequent buses to make expeditions from Zinal, Grimentz or Moiry. The last bus back was never later than around 5.30 p.m. but we were always able to be out for 8-9 hours each day.

The more memorable days were those on Becs de Bossons, Arête des Ombrintzes, Col de Torrent and Sasseneire, Corne de Sorebois, Cabane Arpitetta, Col de Forcletta and La Brinta (above Alpe d'Ortsiva). Sasseneire, which is a little over 10,600 feet, was the highest peak, attained by an hour's scramble along a shaley ridge from the Col de Torrent. But La Brinta was the most enjoyable. It is an isolated rocky point not unlike a Skye pinnacle but of slatey rock and an easy scramble. The view all round the horizon was superb; from the distant Jura and nearer Wildstrubel ranges on the North to the magnificent peaks around the head of the Val d'Herens and dominated by the Dent Blanche to the South. It would have been a joy to lie on the narrow top, soaking in the sun for hours but the last bus at 5.30 was many miles away and 5,000 feet below so the siesta had to be cut short—but the memory of it remains.

North America

ROBERT J. WATTERS (J.M.C.S.) writes: '1979 started in good Scottish fashion, stranded 1st January in Andrew & Louise James' (S.M.C.) house in Vancouver, B.C., weather perfect, blue skies. Fortunately Andrew had adequate Scotch on hand to ensure that we were not fit enough to venture out in the hills during the good weather, and four days later the weather broke and supplied the next excuse. It had been a close call. Deciding to redeem at least part of the 1979 climbing scason, I went up to Alaska in mid-May with Steve Weaver and Ron Reno to ascend Mount McKinley via the touriet route (West Buttress). A great wee trip, arriving on the summit at the end of May, a day ahead of Mike Kennedy with three lovelies (ladies) in tow. Though on reflection we must have done something wrong, as on checking our weight back in 'civilisation' we had put on 2 5 pounds each. Remainder of the year spent hill baching in the Sierra and rock climbing at Donner and Lovers Leap. The most enjoyable climb being the classic Royal Arches Route in Yosemite Valley in November.'

Morocco

IIAMISH Brown writes about his 'Ridge of Dreams': '1979 saw a long-desired expedition accomplished: a 50 mile traverse of the remote main spine of the High Atlas from the Toubkal Massif eastwards to the Tizi-n-Tichka road. This entailed seven bivouacs, all over 3,200 m and the highest at 3,800 m. The weather played cat and mouse for several days but cleared for the major difficulties over the Taska n' Zat peaks before breaking down completely on the day an escape was made south to the desert and Ouarzazate.

The ridge was gained from Imlil via Sidi Chamarouch and a long ascent to the Tizi n' Tagharat (3,456 m). Four porters carried our 40 lb packs up this initial 2,000 m, a very vital contribution as there was no time to acclimatise. Bivouac I was on the Tizi n' Terhaline (3,327 m), II once over Adrar Tinilim (3,670 m), was in an azib (goat shelter) near the Tizi n' Onouraine (3,109 m), III on a col at 3,543 m after doing Adrar-n-Dern (3,853 m) and Iferouane (4,001 m) (the highest point), IV on the Tizi n' Tighremt (3,400 m), V at 3,730 m, both days taking in several nameless summits, VI at 3,800 m after the big day over Borj n Oufraon (3,865 m), a nameless peak of similar height, Taska-n-Zat (3,912 m) and its East Top (3,818 m), VII saw the climbing over, a 100 m bum slide off and an incredible gorge down to the desert south. The next day we walked out to the main road and went to Ouarzazate. The crossing of the 2,260 m pass back to Marrakech was made in a rising blizzard, so we only just made 'the Ridge of Dreams' as we have long called it.

The rope was hardly used but sometimes (once for 12 hours non-stop) the ridge gave fine, exposed scrambling. Many of the summits were uncairned and a winter traverse may be unique. Iferouane is sometimes climbed as a major ski expedition but the rest is rarely visited, being defended by extremely deep-cut gorges to the north and having the desert to the south. It proved a

strenuous expedition with most members suffering at times physically but the biggest danger was the weather. The 'big three' of the Taska-n-Zat had to have good weather as there was no escape possible. Careful planning and a strong young team helped le vieux Ali Baba. The latter were Peter Cairns (J.M.C.S.) and fellow B.F's Tom and Patrick Heneghan.

Earlier, several standard ski/foot ascents were made with Scottish friends in the Toubkal Massif and later, for three weeks, a group of Americans 'trekked' in the Massif and also climbed all the 4,000 m summits.

Partly on a commercial basis and partly for my own ploys I am now regularly spending February April in the Atlas to climb, trek and ski. With a Marrakech base at the Hotel Foucauld (good food) and a hill base at Imil, it is easy to add individuals to parties, or to organise complete trips, and members are welcome to avail themselves of my considerable knowledge of these mountains, whatever their interests. A fuller account of the Ridge of Dreams and other practical notes will be found in the 1980 Alpine Journal.'

New Zealand

SANDY STEELE (J.M.C.S.) writes: 'Fulfilling a long standing ambition I managed to escape the excesses of last year's winter with a six weeks visit to New Zealand in December and January. By no means a climbing holiday (one of my reasons for going was of a matrimonial nature sadly however still unfulfilled) I was determined to see as much of the place as I could. Inevitably, however, the climbing gear just happened along with me. As it turned out I had a superb visit among really friendly people who undoubtedly live in some of the most beautiful country outside Scotland, and with the help of a few non-climbing friends from Christchurch managed to get into the mountains. In the Mount Cook area of the Southern Alps (South Island) I climbed (solo) Mt. Annette (7,351) from the Mueller Hut, the Footstool (9,073) from the Sefton Bivouae and from the Hooker Clacier paid a visit to the Gardner Hut (5.600) on Mt. Cook (12,349). A bit later while playing tourist in the water ski resort of Wanaka I paid a brief visit to the Mount Aspiring region (further south than the Mount Cook area) with a walk up the Matukiluli River to the beautifully situated Aspiring Hut. And a day or so later a tiring grind up the Rob Roy stream for an abortive attempt on Homestead Peak (6,572).

My last sojourn to the mountains before giving in completely to the indolent life of sun, sand, and sea was a visit to a 'real' active volcano Mt. Ruapehu (9,173) in the North Island. Though the lower slopes provide New Zealand with one of its major ski centres the actual summit peak gives a reasonably steep climb on good ice.

Although none of the peaks in New Zealand are particularly high by Alpine standards it becomes immediately apparent that these modest altitudes belie distances, heights of ascent, and a remoteness more in keeping with 'big mountain' territory. For example a visit for the *voienormale* on Mt. Cook – getting to the Haast Hut (6,900) or Plateau Hut (7,600) is a major expedition in itself unless you fly in. From these huts to climb Cook will take a party 24 hours to complete!

The climbing fraternity in New Zealand is still small and close-knit and apart from the influx of Aussies in the short summer season these lucky few have hundreds of square miles of mountains to themselves. What ever happened to the £12 assisted immigration scheme!'

Asia

DAVE BROADHEAD writes: 'I started in Kashmir in early August, intent on visiting Ladakh. Finding the buses from Srinagar booked up well in advance (an indication of the popularity of the place with tourists) I decided instead to walk across. Starting from Pawalgam I walked up to Sheshnag, a couple

of days ahead of the Amarnath Yatra, an annual pilgrimage of thousands of devout Hindus unaccustomed to mountains terrifying themselves trekking 'en masse' through some magnificent mountains to the 'Sacred Cave of Amarnath' at about 13,000 feet.

'From Sheshnag I crossed into the peaceful Wardwan valley, inhabited by nomadic Gujar shepherds. I relied on these friendly people for directions, lacking an adequate map and finding the route description supplied by the so called 'Mountaineering Department' of the Tourist Office in Srinagar quite inaccurate. Although not realising it at the time I was treading ground covered by Geoff Cohen and Des Rubens in 1977 (S.M.C.J., 1978, xxxi, 322) and succeeded in crossing a fine glacier pass to the North of the Nun Kun massif, leading down into the Suru Valley. I crossed the pass, about 15,000 feet, in the company of two Gujar lads who gave an impressive performance on the glacier ice wearing hob nailed wooden clogs. Old accounts and maps describe several passes crossing this watershed, although in 1977 Rubens and Cohen failed to find any. I am still slightly confused as to which pass we actually crossed, which seems the only feasible one, regularly crossed by Gujans with animals and loads.

'After seven days walking from Pahalgam I arrived at Panikar, and proceeded by truck rather bumpily to Kargil and thence more smoothly along the highway, remarkable for its engineering and scenery, to Leh. After a few days sightseeing I wanted to walk down to Zanskar and then on to Manali, so had to backtrack along the road to I amayuru. I joined up with an Austrian couple for the nine day trek to Padam, sharing a horse and horesman to carry the packs. The horse turned out to be a well worthwhile luxury as the path climbed half a dozen steep passes, dropping down into the valleys between. From the horseman we learned the art of malking dung fires and acquired a taste for tsampa in many forms—dry, moist, in salt tea and best of all with chang, the popular local barley brew. From Padam I shouldered my sac once again, and enjoyed the long gradual climb over the 17,000 foot Shingo La, joining the road again six days later at Darcha in Lahul. From there I crossed the Rhotang Pass by bus to Manali, down the magnificent Kulu valley and back to Delhi.

'At the beginning of September I returned to Kashmir with Anne Macintyre, heading for Sonamarg. After a few days gentle walking in the Thajiwas Valley we went up to Amarnath Cave, deserted at this time of year, a superb day's walk from Baltac at the head of the Sind Valley. Following a chance meeting during a tea stop on the bus journey up we were joined by Mungo and Sue Ross, old friends from Aberdeen. Hiring two ponies for a week's trek around the sacred lakes and hills north of Sonamarg we were thwarted by a heavy snowfall after our first day. Forced to abandon the trek, we took a bus down the valley, and contented ourselves with a shorter walk up to Gangabal. Lying beneath the impressive east flank of Harmukh peak, it is the largest and most sacred of the 'high altitude lakes.' This area offers excellent possibilities for hillwalking, scrambling and fishing. Our attempts at the latter using improvised tackle were fruitless even though we could see huge trout just waiting to bite. A walk up through the fast melting new snow to a nearby col was much more rewarding, giving a fine view of Nanga Parbat in the distance.

'Towards the end of September Anne Macintyre and I returned to Pahalgam, and walked up the west Lidder valley to have a look at the famous Kolahoi peak, continuing west over the Yem Har Pass back into the Sind valley once again. Kashmir is particularly beautiful at this time of year. The shepherds have all moved down with their families and flocks, leaving the upper glens deserted, and the rich autumn colours almost made us feel home sick. Back in Delhi we were joined by Geoff Cohen who assured us that we were missing nothing at home, and headed across to Nepal. Geoff should be

writing describing our successful visit to the Jugaal Himal during October, and his subsequent trip to Rolwaling.

'At the beginning of December, Anne Macintyre and I set off on a 19-day trek around the Annapurna range. Starting from Dumre we followed the Marsyandi river up around the back of the Annapurnas to Manang. The 17,000 foot Thorung La Pass took us to Muktinath, rather cold at that time of the year. These two villages and the surrounding areas are strongly Tibetan in climate and culture, lying to the north of the high mountains. The spectacle of fantastic ever-changing mountain views continued as we descended the Kali Gandaki river, between the Annapurnas and Dhauligiri, and around to Polthara, where we enjoyed Christmas boating on the lake, with a magnificent backdrop of Machapuchare and the Annapurnas.

'Having enjoyed two autumns, we are missing out winter completely spending a couple of sunny months travelling in the south of India and Sri Lanka. At the moment we are spending a few days 'up country' in the cool of the hills. Today we climbed Pidurutalagala, the highest mountain in Ceylon (8,820 feet), little more than a stroll, but a nice change from basking on the beach. We are planning to go back up to Darjeeling, Sikkim and Assam in March, to see something of the Eastern Himalayas. I plan to meet up with Geoff Cohen again in April, hoping to visit Garhwal and Humaon.

'I can thoroughly recommend all the areas visited so far to anyone considering a 'sightseeing' or trekking trip to the Himalayas. In Nepal it is big business, and the regular treks can be followed 'living off the land,' eating and staying at lodges and houses. In Kashmir, however, it was essential to be self sufficient, particularly during the Muslim 'Ramadan' Fast, and similarly in Ladakh, unless one is prepared to live exclusively off tsampa. Outside of the main 'resorts' I saw very few other Westerners in Kashmir, whereas Ladakh was much more popular, particularly with large groups. In the peak trekking month of October we spent our whole time in Jugal Himal without seeing another soul. In December even the popular Jomsom trek from Pokhara was much quieter than we expected, so by carefully choosing your time you can avoid the crowds despite the shortness of the best season determined by the monsoon and the onset of winter snows.'

REVIEWS

Borrowdale.—By S. Clark (1978; Fell and Rock Climbing Club). Buttermere and Eastern Crags—by I. Roper, E. M. Grindley and G. N. Higginson (1979; Fell and Rock Climbing Club). Llanberis Pass—by Geoff Milburn (1978; The Climbers' Club).

The Borrowdale area has been closely linked with the upsurge of climbing standards in the 1970's, as is evinced by the appearance of about a hundred new routes in the decade since 1968. Much of the activity has been on established cliffs like Goat Crag, Black Crag and Eagle Crag. However there have been some important 'discoveries,' most notably Greatend Crag and also the crags of the secluded Watendlath valley. Several of the climbs have reached new levels of difficulty, and this has prompted the introduction of E-gradings (E1-E5) for the first time in a Fell and Rock Guide.

For reasons of economy it is planned that several of the Lakeland Guides will be amalgamated in future editions. In fact only Great Langdale and Borrowdale will retain their independence. The guide to Buttermere and the Eastern Crags is the first in this new series, and it is remarkable that so much has been successfully squeezed into a reasonably sized book. The Buttermere section has been updated with the inclusion of about twenty-five new routes, five of which lie on the newly developed Honister Crag, high on the Fleetwith side of Honister Pass. The other routes, scattered amongst the better known crags of Buttermere and Newlands, include The Wray on Green Crag and several additions on Eagle Crag in Birkness Combe.

The Eastern Crags section has been completely rewritten with the omission of several climbs (and even whole crags) which are felt to be of poor quality. This is a bold decision, partly dictated by shortage of space, which could easily have led to an unbalanced or random selection. However, it is a tribute to the careful and painstaking approach of the authors that the end product may still be viewed as a comprehensive survey of the area. Some of the most notable new routes lie on Raven Crag (Thirlmere) and Dove Crag, but there is also a sprinkling of good new climbs on some of the smaller crags. As might be expected, several descriptions from the last edition have had to be modified as a result of the elimination of aid.

The volume has two fine black and white photographs showing climbers in action on Samson and The Medlar. On the other hand, the lack of an index is noticeable. However, the various lists of climbs together with the inside cover maps of the two areas just about make up for this omission.

A similar amalgamation has been made by the Climbers' Club, with the return to a single volume for Llanberis Pass. The resulting complete guide to one of Wales' most popular climbing grounds is very welcome and seems excellent value for money. A glance at the list of first ascents shows a continuing flow up to the time of publication, together with considerable progress in the elimination of aid points. Those with weak arms, will no doubt go much the same at the knees when they read that the Sexus roof now goes free. On a lighter note the author has included amusing quotations from some of the pioneers of the early routes. Special features include a short appraisal of winter climbing possibilities, and a graded list of climbs in order of difficulty. Although such lists are not part of the official policy, the author has secured its inclusion '... mainly for amusement in the pub but partly to stimulate discussion' With pitch gradings, adjectival gradings and E gradings elsewhere in the guide, there will no doubt be plenty to argue about.

Glencoe and Glen Etive, Rock and Ice Climbs.—By Ken Crocket. (1980; Scottish Mountaineering Trust—West Col, 264 pp, 32 photographs, 22 diagrams, £7.95).

At last a new Glencoe guide has appeared, the first of a controversial series of six selective guides to the Scottish cliffs. The guide, with 330 routes (summer, winter, or both) and 32 photographs, offers half a lifetime's climbing for all but the local resident and is rather better value than the discouraging price of £7.95 might indicate. Ken Crocket has produced a methodical and well-organised guide which seems clearer to read than the previous two volume series. With the large size of the guide, few routes of any merit have needed to be omitted, although I still find it frustrating not to know whether the obvious slimy cleft in the middle of the cliff has been climbed or not. Connoisseurs and first winter ascent collectors are recommended to take along 31 volumes of the S.M.C. Journal. The original descriptions have generally been retained, though trimmed to a minimum, but the effective and functional description of each cliff should allow the routes to be found and followed, achieving the main purpose of the guide. However, comments about the quality of routes and the available protection for the higher grades are often difficult to find and I think a list of recommended routes would have been beneficial. A scan down a list allows a quick, safe decision on a choice of route or cliff.

The introduction of photographs is a new feature to S.M.T. climbing guides but the selection here is very disappointing considering the popularity of the area. The exceptions are some of the winter pictures. The reproduction looks poor but even so, many of the rock photographs show a climber so close that none of the character and exposure of the route is revealed. The same criticism applies to the cover picture. Those of us without photographic memories will find the hard cover annoying as the larger size prevents the book being carried in the back pocket. The diagrams show little detail of the cliff features and I suspect will add little to the excellent route locating descriptions. I never find diagrams much use anyway.

The problem of description of aid points seems not to arise in Glencoe as few routes traditionally use aid. The history of any aid elimination has always been included. However, the policy on the Etive Slabs is less clear. All the routes described have been done free so the aid points have been deliberately retained. Yet the tension traverse on Big Ride (described as aid) adds nothing to the grade done free while the second overlap on Swastika and the tension traverse of Hammer (described free) add a grade to the route. Surely the 'optional' aid point is more sensible than the writer's arbitrary decision.

This leaves the thorny question of the policy of selected guides. Despite his apparent support for the policy, Crocket appears to have steered between the rocks by keeping descriptions minimal and including most of the routes in the area. Few people will find a favourite route omitted so the guide should sidestep much of the criticism ahead. The small size of Glencoe has undoubtedly helped but future authors (such as myself in the Cairngorms) are not so lucky. Selected guides seem to be unpopular among the regular Scottish climbers and the MacInnes guides, disorganised as they are, will be more financially attractive to the casual English visitor. I think the market for a selective guide is not as lucrative as might appear. A slightly larger series of comprehensive guides (not as many as the present number of guides, which tend to be on the thin side) might serve better the S.M.C's role as Monitor of Scottish Climbing.

These critical points are not meant to detract from what I found to be an efficiently produced, practical guide and good value as a long term investment. The guide is tolerably comprehensive despite the selective guidelines, but I hope these are given a fresh consideration.

A.D.N.

REVIEWS

Black Cuillin Ridge Scramblers Guide.—By S. P. Bull (1980; Scottish Mountaineering Trust—West Col, 112 pp).

This latest S.M.C. Guide is a departure from previous practice, being neither a District nor a Climbers Guide but aimed at the hillwalker who lacks climbing skills and experience but who is prepared to venture on to the Cuillin within his capabilities. This guide serves its limited objectives admirably and the carefully described routes and practical comments will be useful even to those whose interest is not confined to the easier peaks and ridges. The descriptions are backed by maps, tabular diagrams and a profile of the main ridge and the emphasis is on approaches from the 'outer side' of the ridge. Some may regret the omission of Blaven, Clach Glas and the many enjoyable scrambles available from the Coruisk basin, such as The Druim nam Ramh, Sgùrr Coir an Lochain and the Dubhs Ridge but it should be borne in mind that the District Guide provides such coverage.

W.D.B

Fifty Classic Climbs of North America.—By Steve Roper and Allen Steck. (1979; Diadem, London. 324 pp, numerous black and white illustrations, £12).

This book provides an informed and interesting survey of a selection of fifty classic routes on North American Mountains. The range of examples extends from the glacier-armed peaks of Alaska and the Yukon to the barren rocks of Arizona. The fifty climbs are nor described in detail but the character of each is briefly and effectively sketched and a summary is given of the type of equipment required, problems of access and the length of time a competent and reasonably lucky party will require to make each ascent. Photographic portraits of the mountains are given and there is also a wide range of action shots depicting the bumsides of some of the most celebrated North American climbing names overcoming the more choice pitches.

The technical and logistic section is prefaced by accounts of the topographical and aesthetic quality of each mountain, the history of its exploration and first ascent, and its present status among the afficianados. This section is very well done and makes fascinating reading. The authors give copious extracts from the original accounts and succeed in recreating the aura of the unknown that once surrounded what are now standard routes.

The varieties of the problems requiring solution are great and the book gives an insight into the evolution of the bold native climbing techniques which have taken North American climbers into the creative forefront of our pastime.

In a way it is a pity that so much lore and expertise should be presented on a plate to any old vulgarian with a spare twelve quid. In a properly organised world such high knowledge would only be passed on around remote campfires to acolytes of proven aesthetic responsibility.

1.H.M.S.

Everest The Hard Way.—By Chris Bonington. ((1980; Hodder & Stoughton. 239 pp, 85 colour ill., some mono. £12.95).

This is the second edition; the book first appearing 1976. Little point in retracing the actual climbing: the demanding and decisive lead by Estcourt and Braithwaite, breaking out of the Left-Hand Gully, followed by Haston and Scott's summit push (not forgetting the world's highest bivouac), are all too well known by now. It's the minutiae of the book – the jigs and the saws – which fascinate, the use of technological innovations, not simply because they were provided, but because they actually helped. The B.B.C. film unit had a heavy reliance upon batteries, and apart from a petrol-driven battery charger, a six-day round trip away by runner, effective use was made of a solar charger at Camp 2, probably the first time that solar chargers had been used to support a film unit.

Back home, before the boots went in, the crushing, grinding task of organising the whole show was the monkey on Bonington's broad back. Computers were enlisted to help organise logistics, but acted merely as a back-up system for the human brain, a tool for discussing the problem and for totting up the sums involved in weight allowances, food reserves, and gear and food consumption. But don't feel sorry for our Chris, for, apart from the elitist privilege of climbing on Everest, our leader confesses to finding the planning of an expedition, particularly one as complex as Everest, 'an intriguing intellectual exercise.'

The book is well produced, though my review copy had the three colour plates following p.168 missing. With an expedition total of some 15,000 colour transparencies to choose from, the 85 used for the book are adequate enough, considering just how difficult photography can be under these

conditions.

The summit photographs, of a cold, twilit world, reminded one that high technology or not, such ventures are really only permitted to succeed by the grace of the mountain gods. The cruel death of Mick Burke only confirms this.

KVC

Yosemite Climber.—By George Meyers. (1979; Diadem, 96 pp, 87 ill, mostly colour, £7.50).

It says on the cover 'Action photographs from the world's leading rock climbing area.' That Yosemite Valley is the world's leading rock climbing area seems open to dispute, but its claims for the title are obvious from the photographs around which the book is based.

In fact, the four essays by John Sheard, John Long, Molly Higgins and Bill Westbay seem to be almost an afterthought. They are interesting personal accounts of their experiences in the valley and in style and format similar to climbing magazine articles. In fact, John Sheard's essay is based on his

article in 'Crags 14.'

The essays though are not what the book is about, it is the photographs, For maximum effect they should be studied in midwinter, when the bright sunshine and suntanned bodies have you doubting the sanity of snow plods and winter climbing. The sixty-four full-page colour plates catch the bewildering variety of climbing situations in the valley — from the spectacular cracks and lonely slabs to the sweeping walls with their gear-festooned climbers.

All in all, a superb book whose photographs I'll never tire of.

R.A.S.

The Last Blue Mountain.—By Ralph Barker. (Diadem, £3.95).

This is a paperback reprint of the book which first came out in 1959. It is unusual in being written in the third person by a professional writer who was not on the expedition in question, but is well done and not lacking in detail on that account. From today's standpoint the attempt on Haramosh was one of those dull 'snow plod' affairs with endless and confusing shuttling between camps amid frustrating weather conditions. However, this expedition ended with an accident which was to lead on to a courageous struggle for rescue and survival with a tragic conclusion in spite of the heroic efforts of Tony Streather, the expedition leader. The dramatic story of these events makes inspiring reading and justifies the re-issue of this book.

On the Heights.—By Walter Bonatti. (248 pp. 20 illustrations. £3.95); K2-The Savage Mountain.—By Charles Houston et al. (400 pp. £4.95) and Climbing in North America.—By Chris Jones. (£5.95) are also paperback editions published by Diadem.

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The first two are well known classics, On the Heights particularly meriting re iesue. The third brings an outstanding recent publication within reach of the hard up. Nothing seems to have been lost in the quality of the illustrations and it provides a bargain for anyone who wants this important book for reading and reference rather than for mere bookshelf display.

Mountaineering in Scotland and Undiscovered Scotland.—By W. H. Murray (£8.25) bound as a single hard covered volume is another Diadem offering. This is a photo reprint with most of the original photographs and of a quality as good as, and perhaps better than the first editions. Good wine needs no bush and this volume needs no promotion here except to say that this is an opportunity not to be missed by the young man who lacks the foremost classics of Scottish climbing literature in his library or for the veteran whose copies have become too dog-cared with much reading, like my own.

W.D.B.

Scottish Mountain Climbs.—By Donald Bennet. (1979; Batsford. 192 pages, 187 photographs, 17 maps, £10).

I have been aware of the presence of Donald Bennet for over thirty years; in the same period Scottish mountaineering has given me daily mental exercise. In this book the two click together nicely.

Do not misunderstand me when I say it is an old fashioned book. There are no dramatic colour plates (although the beautiful dust cover is worth protection). The text is in clear and good English. There is no flowery or self conscious description and no brash opinions. There is almost a reticence which well becomes the author. Bennet does not project himself; he is not photo graphed climbing ladders for us.

The book is about what it says — Scottish mountain climbs. There is a balanced, countrywide, selection of hillwalking, scrambling, ski-touring, classic summer and winter climbing. (I regret the omission of Hard Rock in the same way that I regret its omission from my own memories). It is widely informative in area, approach and route description without undesirable detail. The appropriate mountaineering history is not neglected. There are small, useful skotch maps. The essence of each district is caught and simply conveyed. Perhaps chapter 32 on the Letterewe Wilderness best illustrates this.

But it is a 'picture-book' too, though again not in the modern style. I had forgotten that much of my early climbing drive was fired by the powerful black and white photographs of the Milners and Smythes. Since then we have been dazzled by too many expedition books, climbing glossics, advertisements and Scottish calendars. Mountain view, rock climbing pose, ski movement are equally well caught. Donald takes great care in his photography; it is a pity that, for £10, Batsford did not take equal care in the printing. The quality of reproduction is not good enough. I was disappointed in failing to identify positively, against a heroic background of approaching storm, my only possible appearance in the whole book.

As I have indicated, hard modern rock climbing and its techniques are not included. But the great variety of pleasures in classic Scottish rock climbs is well portrayed and described. I liked particularly the South Ridge of Rosa Pinnacle and, again, Wisdom Buttress in Letterewe. The rock texture is good, the action of the climbers neither exaggerated nor sloppy, the karabiners the right way round on the runners. In general, I am pleased that the author likes the Cairngorms. Under 'Lochnagar Granite' he gives 'other Scottish climbers' views of the Aberdeen school. The recent opinion of younger Chamonix guides in this respect is probably more valuable than that of older Western District members.

Bennet reminds us of the old delights of walking and scrambling over some of our better hills and how these hills change into mountains in the winter. This is especially well done in the Mamores (including possibly the best picture in the book: The Devil's Ridge on p.68).

Winter climbing includes fine descriptions of Tower Ridge, Creag Meaghaidh and the Buachaille among others. Possibly the most evocative picture comes from the handful not taken by the author: Crowberry Gully by K. Crocket on p.51.

The chapters on ski-mountaineering are inspiring. One or two scenes on the Grey Corries are particularly good. Occasionally, the exuberance of the descent is caught but perhaps Slesser or Wallace could look for more dashing slopes. Some members may glower here as, thigh deep at the edge of Coire Cas, they might survey with mixed feelings the fledgling antics of ski school. Believe me, I hnow. Donald shows how beautiful is the emergence to flight.

Certainly a book to have around the house, not to be read in snatches in Aberdeen bookshops. Worth buying, even.

My sons' recreations seem to be a sequence of muddy field, shower-room, beer-hall. Sometimes, with grinning tolerance, they walk and ski with me. But when their children pipe to their wheelie chronic 'What was this S.M.C., then?' I will claw from my shelf and open for them Donald Bennet's Scottish Mountain Climbs. Handsomely autographed, of course.

J.M.T.

Journal of Kindred Clubs

American Alpine Journals 1978 & 1979.—North Americans have Alaska as a sub Himalayan backyard. Key mountains are McKinley, Foraker and Huntington. As in the Himalaya, large circuses have largely given way to small, alpine ascents. Both volumes at 360 and 373 pages respectively, are chock-full of expeditions, too many to recount in detail, so here goes with a few impressions, interspersed with towering visions of Bradford Washburn's ice cream mountains.

Throughout these journals is a sense of calm objectivity — on the Annapurna III attempt, after a new route gaining the summit ridge, and with 5 hours and 800 feet of non technical climbing to go 'we jointly decided that the last 800 feet were not worth losing toes and fingers for and headed down.' No debate, no emotion a great sense of relief at having given your best shot and knowing you could now go down for good.

Occasionally we meet some crystalline gut reactions, such as in an ascent of the north face of Mt. Huntington, a two-man, nine-day struggle, the last four with no food. The first 1,600 feet of the 6,000 ft face had F9 rock climbing in an iced up chimney and vertical Canadian type waterfall climbing, as well as fifty feet of gently overhanging ice.—'It was during one of Simon's excursions into the vertical wilderness that a single thought worked into the murky depths of my mind. Climbers who choose to pioneer first ascents up difficult and dangerous faces on high mountains have chosen to be crazy For my part I have chosen to be crazy in order to cope with a crazy world and have adopted craziness as a life-style Simon meanwhile is gripped speechless above me, unaware that his faithful belayer is spacing out on crystals of ice and snow.'

There are stories from abroad – Bonington on The Ogre (official name Baintha Brakk), where Scott breaks his legs and our capric leader reaches Base Camp with NO VOICE!

An American visit to the U.S.S.R., climbing on Pik Kommunizma, revealed that nails and all, the extent of Soviet accomplishments in severe alpinism with comparatively primitive tools and techniques is largely unappreciated in the rest of the mountaineering world.

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A touch of humour, if doad pan, in the 1979 account of the American K2 expedition, was all the more welcome for the general lack of wit elsewhere in the American Journals 'the market in tectimonial cards from the 1975 expedition proved to be very brisk. They passed down the line of would be porters at roughly the same rate as the sahibs inspecting them.'

K.V.C.

The Canadian Alpine Journal 1979. 120 pp. One third the length of the American Journals, but twice the area—at first glance the layout is attractive, though the quality of reproduction is lower—but on closer inspection cach printed page becomes a formidable field to plough. Worse, the print is small, and reading this journal the image of duety Dickensian clerks, hunched over dark wooden benches crept into one's mind.

The writing? Not as tightly controlled as the Americans, losing something indefinable en route. Exceptions include an history of the Alpine Club of Canada, 1906 to 1929, an adaptation, according to the small print, of a paper submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts. Higher degrees, it would appear, are possible at the University of Toronto.

Funny to see honest Scottish faces learing out of the pages like a selection from the Inverbraw Grouse Beaters – actually the Scottish Baffin Island Expedition – mosquitoes, icebergs and several virgin ascents to their credit.

The Canadian Alpine Journal should have been easy ground following the hard ascents of the Americans, but the Victorian format was fatiguing, and the writing generally not as intense.

The Alpine Journal 1979. 274 pp. Those who have unconsciously gripped their ice creams while watching Clint Eastwood in the 'Eiger Sanction,' will remember the sequences depicting an ascent of a desert sandstone tower. In an article describing such towers in the American Southwest Desert, we learn of the rigours and attractions associated with these impressive natural features. The author, while helping film the 'Eiger Sanction,' made the fifth ascent of the unbelieveable Totem Pole in Monument Valley (remember those classic Westerns by Ford?). Temperatures in the desert are seldom right - too high, too cold, high winds can flay a rope within hours, food is unavoidably gritty. In compensation there is a tranquil stillness, the majestic sky and encompassing grandeur - the space is overwhelming. And finally there are the towers: the rock at its best brittle and rotten, and at its worst the con sistency of wet sugar, yet magically attractive, with names such as Shiprock, rising 550 m above a flat sea of desert, Titan, of the Fisher Towers group, set in a sci-fi landscape, and the Totem Pole itself, now banned to climbers along with Shiprock and several others. This is partly due to Navajo religious beliefs, more so perhaps to political pressures.

In a selection of writings unearthed from the Strand Magazine, we find some healthy mountain stories, including the mountaineering exploits of Queen Victoria, mostly in the Cairngorms. In October 1859 she ascended 'Ben Muich Dhui,' the highest summit of the massif. Her Majesty wrote, 'It had a sublime and solemn effect, so wild, so solitary – no one but ourselves and our little party there . . . I had a little whisky and water as the people declared pure water would be too chilling.' Nowadays, the chilling factor is the amount of tax levied on each bottle of the 'cratur.'

To read *The Alpine Journal* requires a month of leisure and a globe of The Earth. The wealth of writing is a tribute to the Editor and his team.

Crabs – The Journal of the Etchachan Club 1979. 30 pp. The ghastly cover of this scrawny but energetic journal has a climber apparently about to test his only runner, and a note stating NO FREE POSTER INSIDE. The reader is warned while still on the approach march. We can relate with amusement and at the expense, yet again, of that mythical Aberdonian, that this particular copy was sent to our Hon. Librarian in lieu of postal charges unpaid.

Some highlights? The inner cover drawings are amusing; Nos. 1 & 2 of a 'New Series of True Life Grips,' capturing two facets of winter climbing. 'Tantalus' is a suspicious piece of writing; is it a true example of Batesian mimicry; surface cynicism hiding some mother vein of truth? Who knows. I read it several times and I'm still suspicious.

We confess to a certain itching for more of this wee journal.

K.V.C.

The Rucksack Club Journal 1978.—This year's is a worthy edition with articles on the Himalayas, Greenland, Tasmania and the Alps. Writing and photographs keep your interest. One article on 'Self Sufficiency' gives an insight into the ways of a competitive fell runner. In it, Geoff Bell describes a journey along the Pennine Way carrying all his food and equipment. He covered the 269 miles between the pubs at each end in 5 days 16 hours and 14 minutes. In a detailed list of the weights of his equipment is included '2¾ oz of money.'

The Fell and Rock Journal 1978.—The articles in this edition give a good read: a 'look back' article by Ivan Waller (including a wry anecdote about Graham MacPhce), an attack on a Himalayan giant, an amusing account of an also ran in the Engadine Ski Marathon and some shambles in the Alps. The other three-quarters of the Journal are taken up by club affairs.

I.H.M.S.

The Edinburgh University Mountaineering Club Journal, 1978 and 1979.

—Like all University clubs, the E.U.M.C. is prone to fluctuation in its vitality. This is reflected in its journals. Both are creditable publications, well and even expensively presented, but that of 1979 is well over twice the size of its predecessor. Both issues are characterised by rather short but lively contributions leavened by cartoons and amusing verse and clearly emanate from a club which is highly active in both climbing and social terms.

The Pinnacle Club Journal No. 17, 1977-80, is a staider publication but its contributions, again largely in the form of short articles, range widely from a sensitive account of a visit to the Foinaven country by Gwen Moffat to the deserts of Jordan and the jungles of Bolivia as well as the Alps and Rockies.

W.D.B.

The Yorkshire Ramblers' Club Journal, 1979.—This contains Clive Rowland's version of the 'Ogre epic,' accompanied by some fine photographs. It makes compelling reading in spite of the considerable exposure the story has already received. G. Spenceley's account of a canoe expedition through the Barren Grounds of Arctic Canada also caught the attention, conveying well the sense of isolation in this lonely wilderness. Other articles describe expeditions to Spitzbergen, Toutkal (the High Atlas), and the Los Tayos caves in the Amazon Basin. Nearer home are the Donalds – 'all hills in the Scottish Lowlands 2,000 ft in height and above.' Their quiet charm is described by D. J. Farrant, a Munroist who found a sequel.

R.A.A.

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ERRATA:

In the 1979 Journal, the reviews of the Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa, the Ladies Scottish Climbing Club Journal, 1978, and the New Zealand Alpine Journal, 1978 were written by C.S., and not K.V.C.

The fact that K.V.C. appears after a number of reviews in this issue while C.S. appears to have been excused or evaded duty will not escape the discerning reader. Is this an example of expiation and recompense or of further usurpation by K.V.C? The Editor confesses to uncertainty.

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Editor: W. D. BROOKER, 35 Oakhill Road, Aberdeen.

Assistant Editor: I. H. M. SMART, Department of Anatomy, The

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New Routes Editor: K. V. CROCKET, Department of Zoology, University

of Glasgow, Glasgow.

Advertisements: W. H. Jones, 88 Albany Road, Broughty Ferry,

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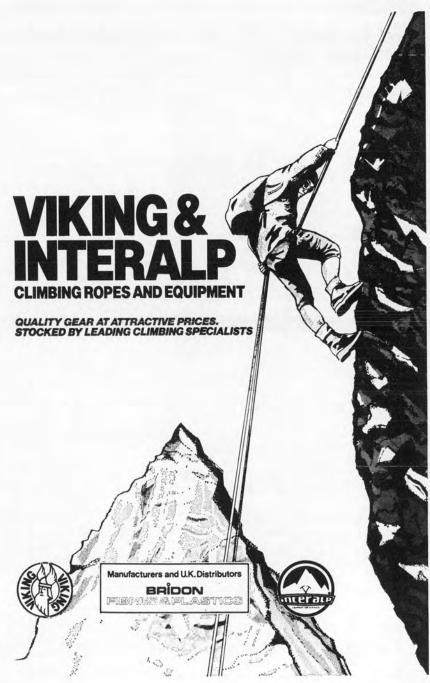
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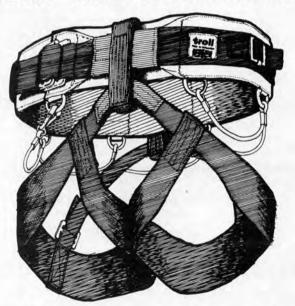


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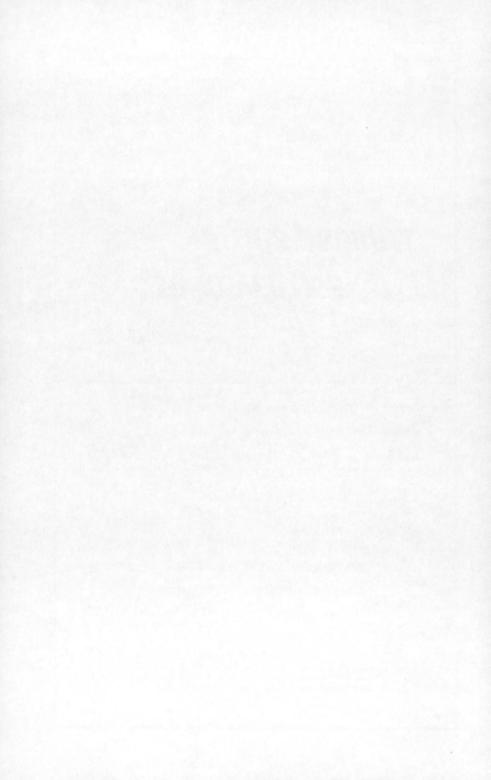
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