

THE
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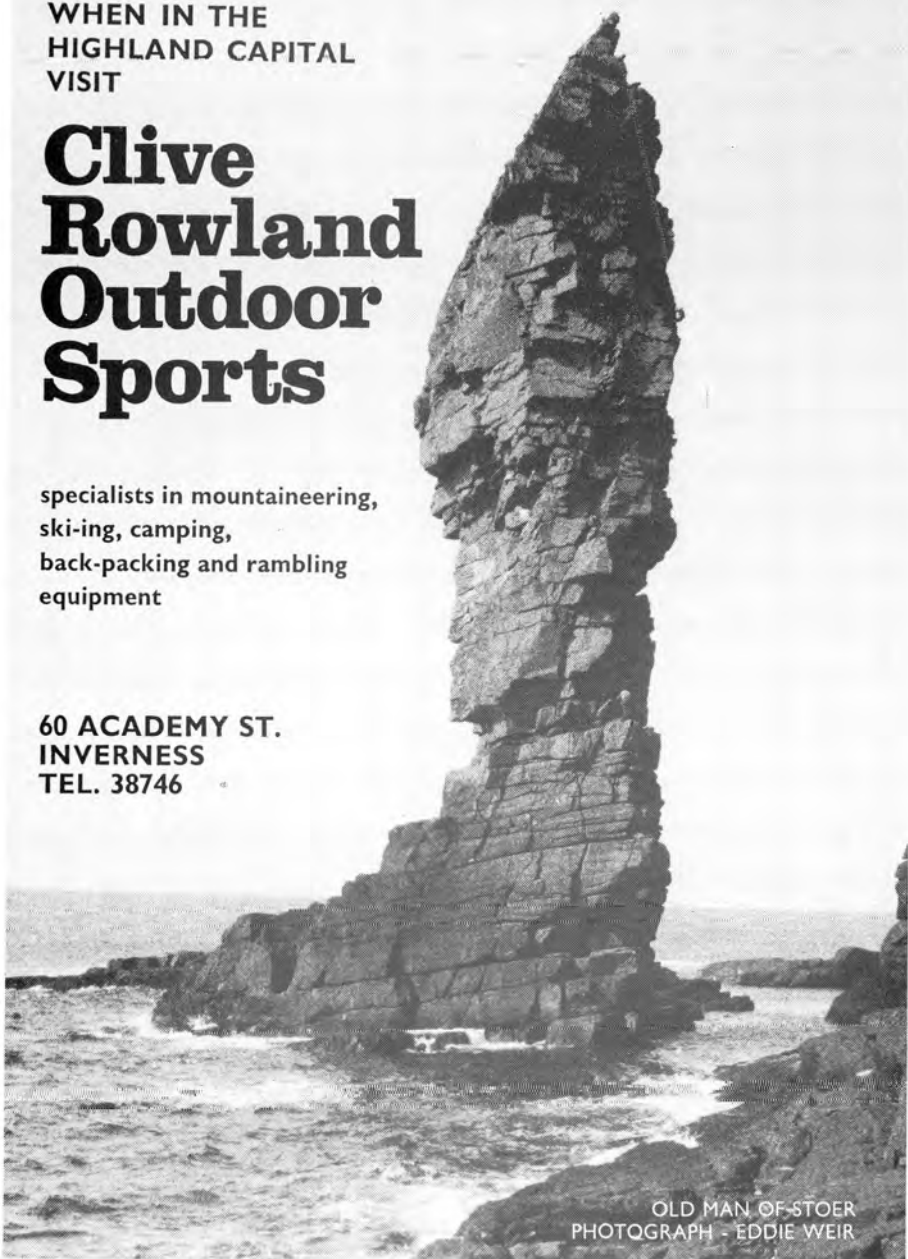
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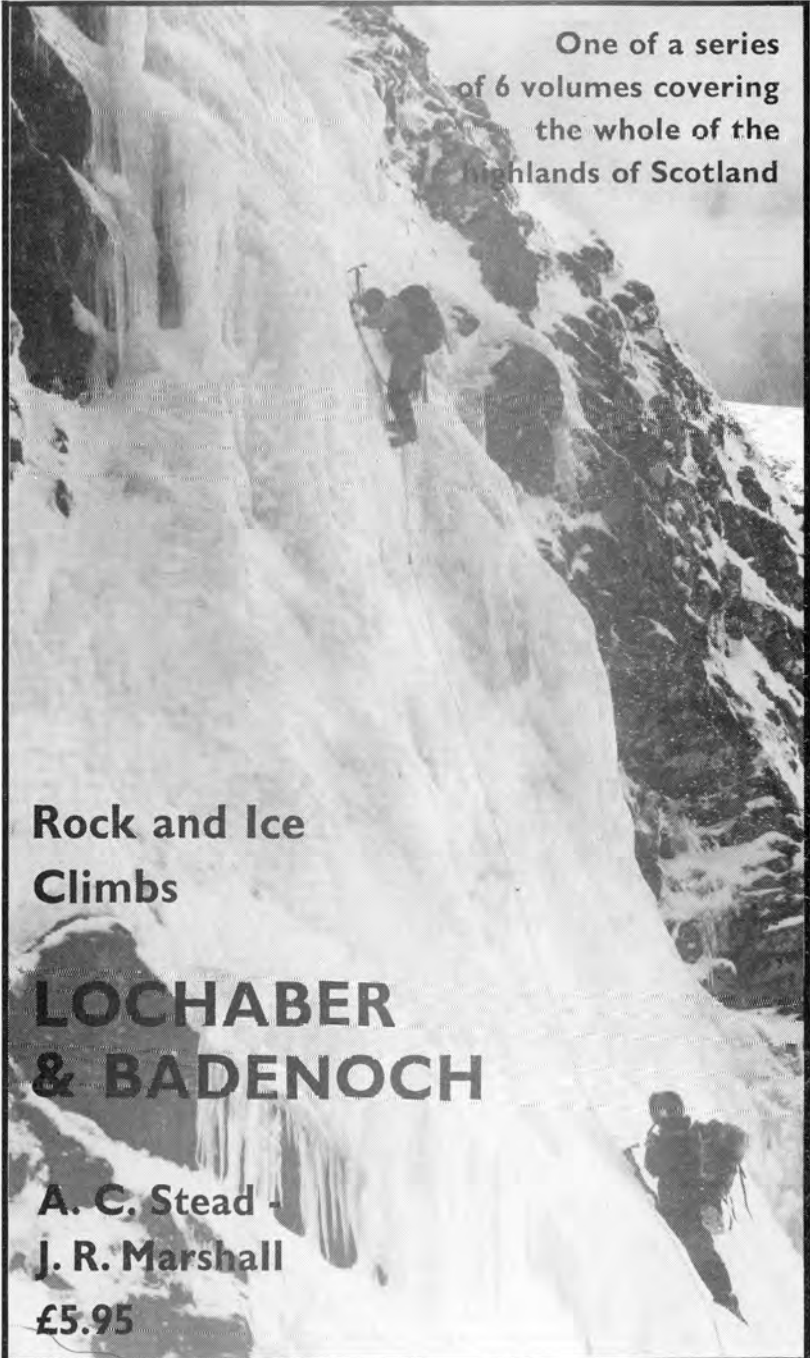


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Ben Sgritheall from Sgùrr Mhic Bharraich

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SLALOM IN THE SUN

By Philip Gribbon

OUR second day in the CIC hut dawned still and clear. Thurman and I were tempted to go and look at something on the Little Brenva Face of the Ben, but we were not over-optimistic about a quick clean ascent up a choice immaculate line. That's what we would have liked, and, believe it or not, that's what we were to get at the end of the day.

It had been disconcerting in the hut when two stalwart members had staggered in after 12 hours on the face. They were hot, flushed, and pleased with their epic enthusiasms but deprecating about the rubbishy snow and the whole scene. They were just eager to tuck into their late dinner and une bouteille de plonk. At dusk we had seen them halfway up the face as we jogged down, elated and satisfied after our two good wee routes in the cool shadowed recesses on the hill. Perhaps we had been mistaken and watched an even-later pair slowly working across the bulges of water ice in the fading light.

We put on our crampons in the porch and wandered out into the cold morning. The first light was spilling down the snow-covered cliffs. The first men from the valley were arriving at the hut. We walked away and made for the desolate corrie round the corner. What was it to be? Cresta? No, the Thurman man had done it before, after four days moronically toiling up the glen in the mist to savour just this one route on the face. Northeast Buttress? It could be done, but there were the route-finding problems and the dreaded Mantrap waiting for us. I thought of the dramas of yesterday on even more straightforward lines. Route Major? Think again. Slalom? Why not? Stable weather, excellent situations, steps to see, and a day in hand. We paused to consider its charms and were full of admiration at the winding line bathed in brilliant sunshine from a cloudless sky. It was unquestionably the only choice to make, and it didn't take long to decide.

Moving crabwise up the hard slopes towards the start convinced

us that the scale of the face could be easily misjudged, but we were in the mood for action, and the more the better. In went the first peg for the belay, and then the long lanky Thurman stepped upwards on his front points. He whacked, dug, and hauled, sliding over a bulge and moving onwards, because there was nowhere else to go. Now it was a runner peg, more pointing, always continual motion in the glistening sun. I found out abruptly what it was all about when my turn came. Steep unrelenting ice with an illusory crust of powdery snow, on which the calf muscles strained and complained and drove one onwards on teetering crampon tips. It was perfect when a borrowed Chouinard hammer locked into the ice, and merely horrific when a straight-picked Aschenbrenner blade bounced ineffectually back into thin air. It was like following up a VS with one arm carrying an alpenstock for support, and it was just as great an encumbrance. I worried when the ice shattered at each stroke. I balanced on rapidly tiring ankles, unable to move up without the security of something to hold on to, unable to stand still without thinking of falling off, and sooner rather than later. Ice work doesn't brook inordinate hesitation, nor does it accept undue haste. Move, move, onwards and upwards, steady nerves and steady rhythm, safety within reach.

Soft snow, linking the rock outcrops of the second pitch, was to become a rare commodity. A nut in a crack, and Thurman led on, vaulting over the short ice walls like a bounding kangaroo, tacked and pinned to the ice, a study in four-point contact.

Once belayed, he took pity on me and donated one surplus axe. Skidding down the rope was one fancy Terrordactyl, a new tool for an old workman. 'Ahaa! This is the stuff!' Hooky spikes shafted on metal tubes and held tight with polypropylene wrist thongs, pulling down into clear ice with irretrievable bites. The blaze of sunshine, the frost-festooned crags of lichenized rock, the azure Himalayan heaven, and the whiter-than-white slope that betrayed in its inner nature the steel-hard unrelenting sheen of continuous ice.

I went into a lead of quality. Once under a warmed wall it was a question of threading an ample runner to secure an upwards traverse line on transparent ice. What a way-off sequence of delightful moves! As the picks lodged in firmly, I looked down at my tips edging neatly into the steep smooth ice that flowed down the wall. Up, and on. The last foot of the runout brought another rock belay. We were gaining height. The tips of distant hills were riding above the corrie lip, and a few tiny figures trod the top of the Carn Dearg arête. Thurman backed cautiously across to the runner and removed it thankfully. Now the rope was directly above him and gave more than moral support.

The next rope runout was inadequate, and we fittted cautiously for a few feet without any belay. Above us was a rock wall leading

on to steep shields of ice. This was where we had seen the slow pageant played out on the previous evening. It was crux country.

My turn. I shunned the ice for a deceptive corner. It was fore-shortened to look innocuous, but it was out-of-balance stuff into a recess. That's where it became technical. It was impossible to get a crampon tip on the sloping hold and at the same time pull up; except that the word impossible doesn't exist. The answer was unorthodox: use a knee, grovel over the top, trust in the picks to stay in, pull and keep quiet, and wait for Thurman to complain about the route. Three different slings at various angles on the belay indicated the state of the route that we were attempting and we were about to continue on the big glassy wall. What a grand place to be! We were above the Coire Leis lip and could watch the walkers as they watched us. Thurman began to dither, but it was his honour to keep our honour intact. He sidled across and screwed in a runner to get confidence. After that there was no option but to move and not to stop. In went the twin heads with unwarranted force, and he climbed, rearing upwards into a crucified silhouette nailed on a vertical plate of glass, with the sun dipping in salute behind the snow, as he beat a sideways tack to the security of an unseen scoop. An excellent piece of sport for the spectators. Yes, quite a rampant pitch. Nonetheless, I chickened out round the baseline, stepping down onto powder snow that gave no comfort when it slid away, my tips grating into the underlying solid ice, and glad of the rope to enable me to enjoy the intricacies of step-finding with space below my feet.

Two quick snow plods, with a Deadman for imaginary security hammered into the windslab: the first walk after five pitches of front pointing. How far had we to go?

We were under the final walls that were reputed to be the solution to the route. It was my lead to crack the problems. I stood on an airy snow rib, studying the nicks made by our precursors in the ice, ignoring the conversational enquiries of a demoralised pair struggling in the adjacent runnel of Cresta. I rocked on my points and screwed frantically into a bulge of ice, tying off a tape and thrusting dynamically on to an icy slab. Good grief, a new peg in a crack! Clip on, and experience the relief of legs that appreciated a relaxation of mental stress as much as of physical strain. Run up another slab into a corner. What, another peg! The night climbers must have bashed their way through the darkness and never stopped to retrieve their protection. Clip again, straddle up the corner, but I was halted by the drag in the rope. I retreated and put the runner in properly by using a long sling on the peg. Another bulge, another slab, another runout completed under a little wall. Once more a peg belay, and a stance on the side spikes of my crampons. Down below, Thurman was juggling with the paraphernalia. A karabiner slid down to the basin far below. His

hammer banged out the pegs, but with a tinkle of steel one peg had vanished. Too much artificial stuff, a lack of good unblemished snow and ice. There was only one more pretence of an ice wall, then he was away on the snow. I panted up in his footsteps and waded onwards with the snow slope easing away on to the shoulder of the Ben. It was over, a welter of fine pitches, a plethora of situations in unbeatable conditions, a mere five hours and a bit. John went down to look for his lost gear, I went up to admire the view. It was a grand day for ski-ing

RHINO: A LONE SAFARI

By Graham E. Little

I FIRST heard of the great flake of Cioch na h'Oighe over a few pints in the Corrie bar. 'It had to be hard!' Bill assured me with total alcoholic conviction. A furtive glance at his guide book showed me the line – marked out in red – blood red!

The weeks passed. I couldn't rid my mind of the Cioch. I was climbing the route in my dreams although I'd never seen the cliff, let alone the line.

My first visit to the Bastion was in fact with Bill Skidmore. The guidebook images sprang to life! Klepht, Armadillo and of course the unclimbed flake – a formidable trio. He was right, it did look hard and very steep; the vast grey flank of rough granite sweeping upwards from Ledge Three like the hide of some mighty beast, the curving horn repulsing, yet compelling, my interest.

I gained a few feet on the entry wall on an awkward, strenuous, decomposing flake, made a dire leftward lunge for the point of another flake that snapped off in my hand, nearly fell off, popped in a peg and roped down, demoralised, my dreams thwarted.

We did the delectable Tidemark, then out of perversity and nagging curiosity I abseiled down the line of the great flake, heaving off a spike of crumbling yellow granite from inside the crack and excavating the thin ribbons of turf and gravel that clung to the slightest of cracks and ledges. I reached the bottom covered in the debris of my own digging, yet happy, quite certain that the route would go; it even had a name: *Rhino*.

The following weekend I returned to Arran in a near paranoid state, quite convinced that anybody carrying a rope was heading for

the Cioch. After hitching up to Corrie I ran up to the Punchbowl to find the place deserted, the sun beating hotly down from a cloudless sky, the scene was set.

Using a back rope for protection I launch up the wall. Suppressing an upsurge of pure fear I tackle the strenuous layaways with a single minded determination to gain a stance on a tiny heather ledge. A good nut for protection, a few deep breaths and up the easier flakes I go to the base of the crack. Arms jammed well inside I ease up feeling more and more out of my depth, the slack rope loop offering scant security. From a precariously wedged position I place a bomb proof peg on the edge. I hang from that beautiful peg, sweat dripping from my brow and streaking my grimy specs, blood oozing knuckles confirming the prophecy. I gaze up at the horn, glance down to the empty corrie – I can't do it!

That evening I left my gear under the bivi boulder and scoured the Sannox campsite and Corrie pub for a partner but to no avail. I even tried to persuade hillwalkers to take up climbing! I staggered back up the hill in the fast fading light, the tattered remnants of a flaming sunset still lingering on the horizon, with the mighty bulk of the Bastion towering impassionately above. To the quiet sounds of the earth I slipped into a deep sleep upon my gravel bed.

The bright morning sunlight woke me; its warmth loosening my stiff limbs. Today must surely decide it, one way or the other. Conclusively.

My peg of the previous day gives encouragement. Reaching deep into the crack my fingers curl into a damp sidepull. Ease up – wedge – check the rope is O.K. A bit higher and I lean out on a strange, loose, upsidedown flake. I flick a big chock upwards and my luck's in. On the second attempt it jams between the block and the wall. Out I swing, clip in a sling, step up and pull onto the top of the block, my heartbeat echoing on the far side of the corrie. I've cracked it!

The remaining two pitches above Tidemark are however far from a pushover. A lot of grot has to be cleaned from the first corner and a deviation made left, then right with a desperate move to a higher ledge and another strenuous corner. The final, short, almost overhanging corner makes a fitting climax to the route.

I wanted to shout out loud but I couldn't. My parched throat wouldn't allow it. A quick descent to the bubbling corrie springs and I drank a long, cool draught of pure water. I lay down on a flat rock, the hot quartz crystals burning exquisitely into my naked back. A cry of joy filled the Punchbowl with only the birds and silent rocks to share my euphoria.

A CAVE MEET

By G. J. F. Dutton

'THE original Cave Meet,' explained the Doctor, 'was nothing of the sort. It was merely named after the cave Adullam, where the discontented gathered – in the twenty-second chapter of the first book of Samuel – remember? Chaps who disagreed with the Committee's Meet went to the Cave Meet, and climbed the hills they wanted to. What I'm suggesting' – he beamed round the silently-sipping table – 'is a Real Cave Meet. Speleology. Pot-holing.'

'Sort of climbing underground,' mused the Apprentice.

'Exactly. But you climb down to start off and up to come back.'

The Doctor was beginning to elaborate on the trials and rewards of the pursuit, when the bell rang. We resisted further attempts to raise our enthusiasm below ground level and left him at the Mound somewhat discouraged. 'But he'll be up to something soon, you bet, about these caves,' prophesied the Apprentice gloomily. 'We'll need to keep our weekends booked.'

Not until the Spring did caves rear themselves again. The Doctor drove us to the North-West for the May Holiday. We each designed one of the three days. The Apprentice forged us a new route on An Teallach for Saturday; I shepherded a Sunday marathon to Seana Bhraigh; and the Doctor had charge of Monday.

'An early start,' he warned, the night before. 'We've to drive a bit, first.'

The early start caused our first incident. The Apprentice, eager to assist, offered to move the Doctor's car back to the road while we dismantled the tent. Unfamiliar with the early morning habits of the usually goodnatured old Mercedes, he was rather rough on the rein. Also he had forgotten that reverse occupied that particular position. The Doctor and I escaped with our lives; but the tent was less nimble.

'New poles,' concluded the Doctor philosophically, amidst beetroot apologies. 'We can eat at a B & B tonight. There's one near the place. Old MacGillivray's.'

Where the 'place' was and what we would do there he did not divulge. He hummed to himself, and our hearts sank. Still, it was his day; and it had been his tent. We kept silence.

We kept silence even when he stopped beside a cottage somewhere in Assynt, miles from anywhere above 500 metres. We kept silence when, with broad smiles, he pulled an old kitbag from the

boot, loosened the strings and shook out an evil-looking heap of overalls and strange equipment.

The Apprentice automatically kneeled to examine the ironware. Certain items – pitons, slings, étriers, we recognised. But the rest . . .

The Doctor was proud of his Surprise.

'Ha, thought you'd be interested. Kept it a secret. In England over the New Year – why I wasn't at the Meet. Stayed with a friend at Ingleborough. He's a potholer. Taught me the drill. We did some fine things. Lost John. Alum Pot. And this is the best place in Scotland for caves. Unexplored. Don't worry. I'll lead. You just do exactly as you're told. Easy, for a climber. For instance, these wires . . .'

And he explained – clearly, I admit – the use of the more comprehensible pieces of iron and webbing. Miners' helmets. Carbide lamps. Flints. Kitbags. Pulleys. And an assemblage of neoprene holes graphically described as a 'wet-suit.'

Some of the kit was all too familiar.

'A shovel – a bloody shovel!' exclaimed the outraged Apprentice, holding up a trenching tool. The crowbar, short, black and malevolent, reduced him to silence.

'Might need 'em,' explained the Doctor. 'Unknown ground. Might have to assist Nature.'

Behind the car we changed into unyielding garb smelling of the Ordovician. The Apprentice chose the wet-suit, covering its widespread indecencies with pieces of overall. Unlike our ragged selves the Doctor looked impressive. A Stakhanovite face worker. His carbide, for example, slipped into his headlamp. We others trailed unhappy tubes from a bulging pocket. 'Yes, sometimes they do get caught.'

As he buttoned up, the Doctor began briskly extolling the caves of the neighbourhood. He was becoming intolerable.

'And there's one by Inchnadamph that was inhabited just after the Ice Age. Peach and Horne found lots of bones there –'

'Red deer, cave bear, reindeer-wolf-and-lynx,' intoned the Apprentice. Cruel; but effective. The Doctor nodded, and laced up his great ironclad boots. Silence.

We were ready. We became aware of prickling eyes of children. Our leader looked at his watch.

'I'll go in and arrange supper,' he said. 'They do a damned good meal.'

He emerged and beckoned us. Embarrassed, we creaked in. Low ceiling. Spread table. More children.

We could not refuse the proffered cups. It was still not nine o'clock.

Mrs MacGillivray, a large and capable body apparently related to people who had looked after the Doctor's wife when a child, doubted the pleasure our mission was supposed to afford.

'And what would you be doing, down there away from the sun and the air, on a fine day like this?' (What, indeed).

Old MacGillivray, cleaning his gun in the corner, could not see the *use* of it at all, at all. Though it might be interesting, interesting. Down there. But *he* would not go. At all, at all.

Two of our hearts warmed to the MacGillivrays. But the Doctor, rescuing a lump of carbide from a MacGillivray child (they infested the place), enlarged upon the utility of the pursuit. It appeared necessary to investigate almost every crack in the ground, to see where it led . . . whether chambers, cathedrals, lakes or rivers lay hidden beneath an innocent sheep-snoring brae. Especially rivers.

'Your water will be hard, Mrs MacGillivray? I thought so. Good for thrombosis, bad for soap. And you say you sometimes run short? Well, potholers have often improved water supplies like yours – traced 'em right back, diverted other underground streams to feed 'em. Yours'll be fed by underground streams.'

The MacGillivray's water supply, in fact, issued biblically out of a split rock just behind the house. Interest having been aroused, the Doctor dilated on the remarkable habits of underground rivers, popping into and out of holes like rabbits; even disappearing on one side of a mountain range, to reappear on the other.

We again became impatient, but old MacGillivray laid down his gun. Unfortunately, he was the ideal listener.

'And what way, Doctor, are they telling if it is the *same* water that comes out one side of a hill that goes in at the other?'

'Fluorescein, Mr MacGillivray, fluorescein. A green dye. A little lasts a long time, and goes a long way. Empty some in a burn one side of a hill – and look for green rivers on the other.'

'Then maybe they could be telling us where the Uisge Dubh comes from.'

The Uisge Dubh was the biggest river on the estate. Its salmon fishing was old Inverludie's main source of income. But it often fell very low, almost to dryness. Especially this year. Now *it* came out of a hole, way up in Coire Ghlas. Would *we* be able to trace its origin? No green dye, though – or very little. The fishing tenants might object.

'Perfectly harmless. But I see their point. Could dye the fish. Green salmon and salad . . .'

We brightened. The day achieved an aim. We would search for the underground source of the Uisge Dubh. MacGillivray assured us the hole was big enough to squeeze through. Our clothes were old ones. And the Doctor was long, not wide. A fine opportunity, with the water so low. But it would be dangerous in rain. We would need a sharp eye in case the weather turned cloudy.

We reflected that the eye would need to be sharp to penetrate several hundred feet of Beinn a' Ghrunnda, a morose protruberance above the corrie which doubtless somewhere fathered the Uisge Dubh. Still, a touch of peril would add interest

We trudged away, MacGillivray at the gate remarking that the weather might well hold. But he would not like to be going down there; at all, at all. But we should be doing a grand job, a grand job. The higher the Uisge Dubh the higher the fishing rent, and the higher the fishing rent the longer old Inverludie could keep The Company from buying up the estate.

The sight of the Hole silenced the Apprentice's harangue on Historical Necessity. It was indeed uninviting. Its waistcoat of grass was a poisonous emerald. It looked narrow enough, but by the end of the day we considered it well into the coach and horses category. It was, however, only three feet high, one of which feet was occupied by the Uisge Dubh.

'Light up!' cried the Doctor.

We worked our flints assiduously. At length a pallid glare appeared, flickering balefully as we soothed our tubes. The Doctor turned a knob, and immediately shone like Pharos. 'These later types are much better.'

With a sigh, the Apprentice and I knelt – Lord! – and squeezed into cold issuing darkness. The Doctor dismissed the few clouds in the west as insignificant, and followed. Why he didn't go first, I don't know. These things just happen. So we all had to back out again, cursing and bumping. Then he led in. I blinked furtively westward. Quite a few more clouds. Rushes were bending. South-west wind

In again. I need not describe the progress. We were on all fours, straddled amongst vindictive boulders, in a foot of impatient elbowing water, kitbags clutching the roof. The Doctor's boots were just in front of my helmet, mine just in front of the Apprentice's. We suffered the basic principles of shunting. Clang. Stop. Clang. Go. Clang. Stop. Then cries from behind. The Apprentice's light had gone out. I turned my head; to be clouted back by the roof. Then mine went out. The carbide tin fell into the water.

In this emergency the light in front also disappeared. I roared. An echo. Then the Doctor's voice, booming Plutonically.

'Marvellous. Good Lord. Had no idea. Look at this!'

I bumped on towards the voice. A dim circle of light. I fell through, into a vast cavern, lit by the Doctor's headlamp. The luxury of – ah! – unfolding, standing up.

Preceded by oaths, the Apprentice appeared. He gazed up from the hole, chimpanzee-like. It really was remarkable. The air was still, warm. Only drips in the silence. Huge damp encrusted walls swam above us out of torchlight.

I wandered off across the pebbly beach, but was called back.

'Careful. Must keep together. Like a plateau in mist. Even Pitfoulie couldn't find us here.'

The Uisge Dubh itself had disappeared. Before hunting it, the Doctor took out compass, wax pencil and plastic notebook, and muttered and scribbled. We gathered it was much more difficult than back-bearings on Braeriach. He pencilled a runic symbol over the exit from our hole, then, nose down, bloodhounded the deepest centimetres of water, lifting his pencil intermittently to the nearest wall. We followed, the Apprentice occasionally adding artistic touches, for the pleasure of a future Abbé Breuil.

The cave unrolled, became narrower. At one point the Apprentice tweaked my sleeve, grinning. He extracted a huge meat bone from his kitbag (begged from Mrs MacGillivray, a woman with an iron sense of humour) and laid it by a boulder. It should interest the Doctor on the way back . . .

Presently we heard a thunder of splashing. The Apprentice paled beneath his acetylene. Those clouds.

'Ha, a waterfall. Thought so. Should make a good climb.'

Let us pass briefly over the next four hours. The three pitches in the waterfall (where the Apprentice's wet-suit acted like the rose on a watering can). The time the étrier stuck in the pulleys. The number of times the lights went out. The spilling of the spare carbide tin inside the Apprentice's wet kitbag, and his malodorous and potentially explosive presence thereafter. The contortions, abrasions, suffocations. The terrible thought of the sun above. The worse thought of the clouds.

Once, when we had come through a particularly trying tunnel, we were walking gratefully towards a flat clean floor and the Doctor was explaining the doubtless perinatal basis of our satisfaction ('Just like being born, you know'); when suddenly he disappeared and the floor parted in a splash.

'Should have remembered,' he spluttered. 'Still water's quite invisible.' This pleased us; until the pool ended in a blank wall. Below it the water lay black and faintly stirring. Horrible.

'Ah, a Sump. Good!'

The sump fulfilled its unattractive name. One had to go down under the oily water, along a short submerged passage (if there was one) and up to the other side (if, again, there was one). It was debatable who would fare worse – the leader, seeking a way, or the last man, alone with thoughts of the Other Side.

The Doctor probed. He knelt, dipped his head and rubber torch. We watched these more veterinary procedures numbly. His head emerged.

'Looks all right. Quite short. What luck to find one. Superb cave. Now, you hold on to this string. It's tied to me. I'll tug twice when I'm through. Three times and you follow. Don't get tangled in it.' And he disappeared completely.

The water gurgled, and resumed its black ruminations. The Apprentice squatted glumly, holding his string. We counted and watched the line. A float would have helped. Ten. Twenty. No bite. Fifty. A hundred We looked at each other. 'Tug it,' I suggested.

He tugged. No reply. He pulled, and the string rose, length after length, from the darkness, to the very end. We laid it reverently on the muddy bank, a wet wreath. Well

'We've *got* to find him !' – and the Apprentice, too, slipped down and vanished into the unknown.

My feelings may be imagined. Five. Ten. Twenty Suddenly the water boiled and a gasping Apprentice appeared. 'He's trapped, struggling,' he choked, and vanished again. Sweat. Ages. Then another swirl, and the Apprentice emerged, dragging a convulsive figure after him. We stretched the wreckage on the bank, coughing and streaming. The Apprentice's remarkable courage had been rewarded. He smiled modestly. I gripped his hand.

When sufficiently oxygenated, the Doctor sat up. (He had violently refused the Kiss of Life). He swore. Loudly, and for half a minute. We feared shock. But it was not shock. The explanation panted out, punctuated by fearsome hoastings and spittings.

He had got to the other side. But the string had come undone. He had waited. No follower. So he had plunged in again and gone back in search. Midway in the submerged tunnel he had encountered the Apprentice – also in search. Naturally they vigorously attempted to rescue each other. Neither won, and each retired to his corner for air. In the second round, as we had seen, the Apprentice prevailed.

After a decent interval, the Doctor led off again, *sans* string. It was bad, but soon over. The Doctor wrung my hand, adjusted my trembling helmet.

'Jolly good, eh? Don't worry' – as my shakings increased – 'I've a CO₂ lifejacket, in case you get cramp.'

That lifejacket nearly belied its name, as we shall see. But just then we guests were quite demoralised. The Apprentice was praying for the elevated peace of a *sestogrado*.

'Blood glucose low. Good spot for a bite.' So we ate our acetylene sandwiches, by one lamp turned down. The Doctor, munching, peered at his muddy pages, tapped his fingers mathematically. Navigation was in progress.

'We should be almost at the watershed, if the strata lie as I think. That means we *could* divert the next big stream we meet. It's through that wall, probably,' – indicating a brutal million tons or so – 'and send it down the one we've come up. *That* would feed the Uisge Dubh, and buck up old Inverludie no end.'

We pointed out that despite the pleasure of old Inverludie we had to get out by the hole we came in, together with old Inverludie's increased rental.

'Of course, we first need to find a higher way out. But there are dozens of little passages up there. Shouldn't take long.'

With foreboding, we climbed after him. Three wax pencils and a ball of string later, navigation assured us we were on tapping terms with the southwest face of Beinn a' Ghrunnda. As if to confirm this improbable suggestion, a hairline of light coincided in all our imaginations at the end of a tunnel on the right. But that tunnel was even narrower than ours. We stuck. Retreat throttled us with jackets.

'No good. Have to strip off,' said the Doctor.

'Strip off?'

'Put clothes in kitbags and drag 'em behind.'

This last degradation was not eased by the Doctor's jovially clinical remarks. He led off. I followed his kitbag. Then my kitbag. Then the Apprentice. Then, presumably, his kitbag. The Doctor gripped the trenching tool. ('Might need it; but mustn't dislodge anything; could be awkward.').

After an hour and twenty feet of this horizontal crux, even our leader became less sanguine. With weary humour the Apprentice suggested we call it off and get back before they missed us at roll-call. Kitbags mercifully fielded the Doctor's subsequent puns about Stalag Meit. Then he called excitedly.

'I can dig here. I'm sure there's light ahead. We're moving.' Then, 'My kitbag's jammed. Poke it along and I'll pull with my foot.'

I poked. He pulled. Badly jammed. The crowbar in it didn't help. Pull. Push. It moved a little, then hooked once more.

In despair I punched it, hard into its guts. Damn the thing.

Then a hiss. Carbide? Good Lord, not here.

Not carbide. No smell. But the bag began to bulge, expand, swell visibly, until it filled the whole width of the passage. It was quite immovable, and resilient as a football.

Communication with the Doctor became understandably even more difficult, but I gathered that I must have depressed the emergency button on the CO₂ lifejacket. It was now inflated, and would keep the wearer afloat for 4 weeks in a normal sea.

'Jings!' said the Apprentice, when informed. He reserved the mildest oaths for the worst occasions. I agreed. We simply had to uncork the Doctor. We caterpillared back, propelling our bags. In the relative space of the outer passage we searched them for suitable instruments. Then the Apprentice – he was fresher, and this was clearly a V.S. pitch – went in, a great knife between his teeth and a hook (probably meant for some shuddering abseil) in his hand. I squatted and tried to keep warm and think of nothing. Especially not of CO₂ poisoning. *Grotte des Chiens*.

At last a scuffling, gasping. The operation had been successful. Breech delivery. Twins, thank heaven. The Apprentice picked the mud from his eyes. The Doctor lay, deflated as his kitbag. But we had to get back. While we dressed he admitted that although there must be an exit along there, this perhaps was not the time to explore it. Rheumatically, we returned, ticking off the waxings, winding up the string. Before the sump, the Doctor made a half-hearted sortie; but he could not go far alone We others pointedly pricked our jets.

He crawled back, jubilantly. He had found two small streams. One on the right should be the Uisge Dubh; the other, its potential feeder. To gain information, he had put a little – just a little – fluorescein into the lefthand one. In a cardboard packet. So as not to get ourselves all green, if it did happen to be the Uisge Dubh. The cardboard would dissolve in a couple of hours, when we should be out.

We made good time. The sump held no terrors. We had less clothes and skin to delay us in the tunnels. The Doctor, leanest, was well ahead. Suddenly he bellowed

'CAVE BEAR!'

Thirty thousand years of conditioning flung myself and the Apprentice high up the wall. We clung there a horrible second before contemporary sense and the Doctor returned, the latter dangling Mrs MacGillivray's bone.

'Ha!' he said.

The Apprentice, higher than I was, carefully concluded his examination of an interesting section of strata. We climbed down and continued.

Fast. Faster. We wanted sun and air. Even the Doctor claimed he smelt grass (*Molinia*). We worried about the clouds. But our leader had recorded the drips per second at various spots on the way in; as the same number dripped on the way out, he pronounced it still a fine day.

It was. Two hours later we lay on the bank, photosynthesising morale. The water showed no trace of dye, then or as we staggered down to the cottage.

'That lefthand branch will make a fine feeder. We'll come back' – he caught our eyes – 'I'll come back with that Ingleborough chap and switch the points. Then old Inverludie can enjoy his moths in peace.' (The laird was a diligent lepidopterist; he had taken a Dotted Footman on the very slopes we were crossing). The Uisge Dubh had more or less washed us and the sun had dried us. We changed at the car.

Wearry, almost happy, certainly very relieved, we plodded up MacGillivray's path. An urchin scampered down, swinging two yellow buckets. Birds sang.

'Well, and did you enjoy your day?' Mrs MacGillivray, arms akimbo, looked quizzically down at us. We truthfully said it had been memorable. The Doctor limped over to old MacGillivray; he began to sketch diagrams and explain vigorously.

'Your supper will be a little late,' said Mrs MacGillivray. 'I've had to send the lad out for water. But there's enough for you to wash,' she added, a trifle grimly. She returned to the kitchen.

The Apprentice looked at his hands and guessed about his face. Also, he still smelt a little. He went to the bathroom. I patted a small wetnosed child.

Suddenly a roar. The Apprentice's head through the doorway. It was a horrible colour of bile. I leapt up. Acetylene poisoning . . .

'Green! The water's all green!'

The Doctor spun round in horror.

'Green! All green!' the Apprentice roared.

Mr MacGillivray went on talking.

'I would not like to have been down there at all, at all,' he said.

HINDSIGHT AND WISDOM

By Douglas Niven

'WHERE are we going tomorrow?' said Mountain Master. Before Charlie or I could say anything, he continued, 'Beinn Lair's the place, chaps!' Charlie and I both muttered about the distance, made several other futile excuses but to no avail. Mountain Master gave us both a scathing look and promptly changed the subject.

From the depths of a comfortable armchair in Alligin and with a generous glass of our host's whisky at my elbow, the prospect of a 'day trip' to Beinn Lair didn't seem so bad. I noted, however, not without some apprehension that the hour was late and an early start a remote possibility. M.M. did not seem to be in the least put out by the time – this in itself was very disturbing.

M.M. drove us with considerable style along the side of Loch Maree on a day of brilliant sunshine. Motorists deferentially got out of his way whenever he approached a passing place. Every now and then, humming a tuneless ditty, he wound down the window, lifted his hand aloft and tapped a boat precariously tied to an ancient roof-rack, as if to assure himself of its continued security, while Charlie and I admired the scenery.

A few yards past Loch Maree Hotel, M.M. made a quick about-turn into an unsuspecting parking place, charged the car into the undergrowth and brought it to a shuddering halt. 'No doubt about it, this is the place, chaps.' The 'chaps' were by this time very pleased to evacuate what was threatening to become a mobile coffin and marvelled at their continued unscathed survival. A further charge through the undergrowth, this time on foot and bearing the boat, found us all on the banks of the Loch. We pushed off confidently, only to find ourselves transfixed not more than a boat's length from the shore. 'What the hell are you playing at?' said M.M. who was wearing his peaked cap for the occasion. 'We're sitting on a rock' said Charlie simply.

The crossing of the Loch was idyllic and blissfully peaceful. Both M.M. and Charlie were fully occupied with photography. We cruised through a string of islands clustered with Scots pines – a truly magnificent landscape. The landing at the other side was also uneventful. I had half-expected a reception committee of ghillies complete with dogs but there were none to be seen – no one lurking behind boulders or even hanging off the trees.

Climbing up over those steep, rocky, bracken-covered slopes was not the best of occupations for a hot mid-summer's day – the

purgatorial aspects of mountaineering never cease to amaze me. Calvin would have most certainly approved of the sport: Knox would have positively revelled in our discomfort. To make matters worse, we were attended on the ascent by a horde of ravenous flies. To my extreme annoyance they did not appear to be bothering M.M. who by this time was fast disappearing into the middle distance. With men like these I mused from my fly-bedecked misery, what has North-Britain to fear!

The straggling party finally assembled at the col to Beinn Lair overlooking the Fionn Loch. There are other parts of the Highlands which present finer landscapes but few places match this area for atmosphere. Those who have been fortunate enough to have visited the area will understand what I mean.

As we descended, the cliffs of Beinn Lair reared up looking all the while decidedly steeper and more imposing than I remembered from a previous occasion. 'What's it like?' said M.M. as we paused at the lower end of the boulder scree. For once, I felt I had the advantage – however tenuous – over this Titan of the Scottish mountains. 'It's very nice,' I said, 'You'll enjoy it.' Ignoring my feeble attempts at gamesmanship, M.M. turned to Charlie for a second opinion.

'I was gripped the whole way up – it's steep and goes on like that for a long way,' he replied. Trying not to look in any way disconcerted at this, M.M. muttered something about it only being a 3+ and immediately addressed himself to the scree. The rock rattled and shuddered under his step.

'Who's going in the middle?' said M.M., making the decision himself before either of us had moved.

'Better to go up and round the corner' said Charlie.

'Right-Hoh!' said M.M. breezily and quickly bounded up the first disagreeable section of rock like a demented chamois in a thunderstorm.

Most north facing walls in Scotland are damp, mossy, and not especially attractive to climb. I recalled J.H.B.'s famous aphorism 'Ony bluidy fule can climb on guid rock!' with little enthusiasm. Calvin meanwhile nodded his sombre approval somewhere above as I placed a wet vibram on the first muddy foothold. Things did improve higher up – at least I knew that!

'You can lead after this' said M.M. 'I want to take a few snaps on the upper part of the buttress.' With this terse warning, he disappeared up a steep crack. With M.M. doing battle above, Charlie and I had time to chat about our previous experiences on the climb. It transpired that his ascent had been carried out in very wet conditions.

'Dry as a bone when Wally and I did it,' I said, 'except for the first two pitches.'

An imperious shout from above interrupted our pleasantries. The steep crack was less imposing than I had first supposed. Having gained the next ledge, M.M. led off again, moving easily up the next section to establish himself in a niche under an overhang. Coming up to the niche, M.M. indicated the way ahead to the left and suggested somewhat forcibly that 'I get a move on' or words to that effect. I didn't like what I saw above and said so.

'Oh very well,' he said in a pained voice. 'Change over.'

Now there are times when it's sensible and safe to do just that but this clearly wasn't one of them. Resigned, I turned to the problem again. Surprisingly, I was able to round the overhang without much difficulty and came to a delightful rising traverse which led in turn to a good ledge without an obvious belay.

'What are you doing?' shouted M.M. somewhat tetchily.

'I'm looking for a belay' I said, ranging some ten feet above the stance.

We all assembled one pitch later on a big ledge which was wide enough and comfortable enough to dangle our legs over the edge.

'Half way up the buttress' said M.M. with obvious enthusiasm. I looked at my watch and hoped he was right.

There followed a route-finding exercise which was somewhat complicated by the fact that Charlie and I had been there before. We both remembered a traverse on to the right wall of the buttress. The ledge to my right looked inviting but after dithering backward and forward to the obvious amusement of the others, I retreated to the bottom of an awkward looking chimney. This is a problem for M.M. I thought and shouted him on. However, that crafty old gentleman did not elect to come up to the stance but made a traverse to the left and disappeared from view. A distant call from above gave Charlie the cue to climb on, leaving me to admire the scenery.

Just below M.M.'s latest stance, another inviting ledge ran off to the right. I crossed over the top of the chimney which didn't look bad from above and climbed up to a corner on the edge of the buttress. This has to be the wall, I thought and belayed. M.M. disappeared round the corner without much encouragement; the rope ran out smoothly.

'He's doing well' said Charlie.

'He's enjoying it after all,' from me. I followed, hesitantly, finding the going decidedly awkward in places. The wall as I remembered it, gave elegant climbing in an exposed position; the climbing now seemed harder but the exposure oddly less. I found M.M. firmly established on good ledge above. He was obviously in fine humour.

The route now obviously lay out on the right wall again. I hadn't

bargained for this and stepped on to the first hold without much enthusiasm.

'Can you hold it a minute?' said M.M. brandishing his camera as I groped about for a runner on a loose block. It was difficult to effect a 'North Wall pose' in such a situation. Hoping that M.M. wasn't watching too closely I scabbled up the remainder of the wall as best I could and came to another good ledge with the mother and father of belays for protection. Having the security of half a hillside behind me I called Charlie on.

'Nothing much to do now' said Charlie when he arrived at the stance. And to prove the point M.M. came up and knocked off the last two pitches while scarcely drawing breath; we both followed in his awesome wake to the top of the buttress. Assembling on the plateau we agreed that the climb had proved a long and continuously interesting mountaineering route. I looked at my watch. It was now ten o'clock. The far side of Loch Maree seemed a long way off. I didn't even bother to ask if anyone had a torch.

In a rare moment of indecision, M.M. suggested a descent by the Letterewe path. This time we were given a chance to agree. M.M. battered off down the hillside followed closely by Charlie. Fortunately the path was in good order with not too many toe-breaking boulders on the way. Sighting the mini-baronial hall, we did a quick right turn, not without first disturbing the Whitbread hounds, and disappeared into the trees and the fast gathering night.

There now followed another of those purgatorial spells described previously, only this one was done in the dark. The obvious thing was to follow the shore line. Steep rocky slopes to the water's edge soon changed our minds about that idea. There was nothing else for it but to batter up through the undergrowth to 'easier ground' and to continue our search for the boat from above. A great crashing of timber ahead was our only guide to M.M's whereabouts. Charlie and I staggered about the hillside in considerable disorder. Ahead and much later the crashing changed to strange bumping noises. We followed the sounds steeply downwards, sliding and falling until we came to the lochside. Amazingly the boat was already in the water - what a man! Charlie and I bundled in, mercifully the engine started at first pull and off we chugged towards a solitary light which indicated the whereabouts of the Loch Maree Hotel on the far shore. We all relaxed.

Suddenly there was a dull thump from below the boat and much scraping. Could this be a belated and dastardly attack by ghillies in wet-suits? The life jackets were in total disarray in the bottom of the boat. I waited for the water to come up to my ankles. The calm voice of M.M. assured us that all was well. I didn't argue. Neither did Charlie. How can you disagree with a master mountaineer, and master mariner, all rolled into one?

We finally reached the shore near the hotel but not before experiencing considerable difficulty in locating our point of original departure. All that remained now was to get the boat to the car! The activity and language generated by these operations is better left to the imagination of a sympathetic reader.

'In hindsight' said Charlie on gaining the comparative safety of M.M's car, 'I don't think I'd do the trip quite like that again.' I half agreed knowing full well that somewhere, sometime . . . M.M. said nothing, he was miles away, planning his next 'day trip.'

EPITOME

By Rob Milne

THE night in the hut had been most enjoyable. The Aberdonians were hosting both the Polish climbers and their Edinburgh rivals. Edinburgh were huddled in one dark corner whispering of new route possibilities while Aberdeen were in a different corner muttering about the same routes. In the middle, the Poles put us all to shame with their one arm pull-ups.

Brian and I attacked a bottle of whisky and discussed the possibility of climbing in Alaska the next summer. We were both keen for something big, but our conversation eventually centred on the next morning and another day on Lochnagar. Bob Smith and his Polish partner had just done the first ascent of Epitome, and were telling tales of one arm pullups on verglassed rock and fifi hooks. The climb sounded interesting and we were sure they were exaggerating about the difficulty.

Six a.m. came too soon. One of the visitors wanted the day off and didn't get up, so Brian and I headed for the corrie. It was a day for climbing, with superb weather and magic conditions. Brian was joking in a worried kind of way and although I had no fears since I didn't even know where the route lay, I should have known better.

The line was unmistakeable. A vertical ramp followed by a steep slab started the route. This gave access to the ledges of The Springboard from where a steepening line led up toward the jutting overhang of The Hood. The crux section passed The Hood to its left by a large overhanging corner full of indescribable horrors. This was the 'Dock' for reasons which will become clear. We tried to talk each other into leading the first pitch and I lost as usual. But I wasn't worried about it, not yet at any rate.

Brian assured me that the Polish climber had led the first pitch in only 15 minutes. I was guaranteed that the ice was perfect. The pitch started with a steep series of steps up a ramp coated in ice. This ramp looked just off vertical and easier than the top of the pitch. Above that I could get a nut in the overhang before moving on to the steep slab above. If the slab held really good ice, this would be easy, so I started up with confidence.

The first step off the ground proved desperate. The ramp was slightly tilted and leaned to the left. I had to climb the outside of it in a series of foot placements at knee level. Fortunately the ice was good. I placed a nut into the overhang and contemplated the next move. The ice above didn't look nearly as good as Brian had promised. One swing of my tool confirmed this – bare rock under crusty snow. I impaled my Serac Sabre into the rock and pulled up. Still no ice. I placed one front point into a crack and hooked my Sabre on a crystal. My other tool pulled through the crust, but more slowly than I pulled up. Soon I was balanced at the base of the slab. The angle was still very steep and I had no tool placements. I also no longer had a runner. It had just fallen out.

So this is modern Scottish mixed climbing, I thought. No more front pointing. No more ice. Powder overlying fine contusions in the rock. It was necessary to brush the snow to find a crystal to lodge a frontpoint. But the points held on small stuff. They would have to, for the slab looked really smooth. The cracks were all choked with ice and snow so that they didn't hold protection. This certainly isn't like rock climbing with snow. It is a whole sport in itself. The ideal way to make the enjoyable miserable, the safe dangerous and the easy desperate. I oscillated between being vitalised with excitement and paralysed with fear.

I was eighty feet off the deck with no protection and no ice. My one consolation was the depth of the snow in the gully below. I placed my picks into the crust and balanced up. I could feel my frontpoints finding and then losing crystals on the slab. I inched up. '15 minutes' he said the Polish climber took. I was both depressed and gripped. Delicately I inched up the crust and onto a ramp of snow. The sweat was pouring out from under my helmet as I placed two nuts. No more risks for the moment.

I pulled around one more overhang and arrived at the spacious belay ledge. Brian followed slowly, using the adzes of his Terrors on the crust. I kept thinking. '15 minutes, boy I am doing bad.' My confidence was gone by the time Brian arrived. With a pant he told me he had a confession to make.

I knew I had been 'sandbagged' before he said it. He had known how hard the start was, but I didn't. We had a good laugh and I told him he was leading the crux. He stopped laughing and prepared to climb.

The next section was on very easy angled snow and went up and around the base of the buttress. Brian then continued up to below the 'Dock.' This section wasn't much easier than the first. After the snow slope, the route goes up a nearly vertical wall laced with tiny overhangs. I was constantly on the edge of my balance as I reached around first one roof, then the other. Above each roof was a bit of frozen turf and manky ice.

Again the trademarks of modern mixed routes. Turf is the mountain's gift to the winter climber. The amount of ice on a route doesn't matter. Nor does the angle of the rock or the size of the holds. Not if one has sufficient turf. When frozen, the stuff was bomb proof. In desperation, I had once even abseiled off an ice piton driven into turf. Anyway, turf is much more interesting to look at than bare ice. (One of my favourite excuses for stopping).

Fortunately the turf was frozen, and I was able to step awkwardly around each overhang. The pitch wasn't desperate, but it didn't let us relax. I arrived at the belay ledge slightly out of breath. When I looked up, I lost my breath totally. I recovered as soon as I remembered that Brian was to lead the crux.

We were standing on a nice wide ledge, with two bombproof pegs for a belay. Above us, the wall overhung. At the far end, the left wall of the corner was coated with a very thin layer of ice. Five feet to the right, another corner and iced up crack rose. These two corners formed a shallow chimney. After ten feet of climbing, there was what looked like a small ledge, followed by another small overhang. Above that the climb looked easy.

Brian took all the gear and started on the problem. He placed a big Hex in a wide crack in the corner and tried to bridge up. The chimney was exactly the same width as his leg was long. With crampons scraping through the verglas he slowly grunted up the iced crack. The angle was very awkward, always out of balance and the weight never off the arms. He came back down for a rest. He seemed to enjoy it so much that I refused his offer to take the lead from him. While we were chatting, a pair of ropes came over the overhang from above. Was some fool descending our route?

No, it was Andrew Nisbet, jealous and wanting to see the action. He abseiled to the lip of the Hood, the large overhang just right of the route, giving him a front row seat and a perfect camera location. With the camera on him, Brian started back up (photo *S.M.C.J.*, 1980, xxxii, 57).

This time the corner seemed easier, and after a bit of grunting, he was pushing the boat out from the Dock. Fortunately the boat and the dock didn't move, only Brian inching upwards. After what seemed like ages, he placed his tools into the ledge above the crack.

He stopped there for an eternity. Cold as I was, I asked him

what the problem was. He cheerfully called back, 'Watch me' and mantled up on his tools. The ledge turned out to be nearly vertical and bad ice. Brian balanced up on the steep ice and placed a poor peg in the overhanging crack. He was only 15 feet from the end of the hard climbing. I thought we had done the crux and relaxed. Andrew called down from his comfortable vantage point that we had a surprise in store.

Brian soon discovered the surprise, and placed another peg. What looked like a steep, but easy, iced up crack, was an overhanging groove with very little ice. He carefully inched up the overhanging crack and placed a poor nut only five feet from the end of the pitch. It was at this point that the Polish climber had placed his tools into good ice on a wide flat ledge. But that was yesterday. Yesterday was cold. Today had been nice and sunny, and now the sun was shining on the ledge. The ice was gone and only a thin layer of soft snow lay on the ledge. The Pole had crossed this section by attaching a fifi hook to his axe, clipping in his harness, and hanging from it while he placed the next tool. But with the thaw, we couldn't even get a tool placement.

The traverse going left five feet to the end of the pitch had another complication – the corner. The wall below the traverse was slightly overhanging and devoid of ice. Five feet to the left, the corner had only a thin crack the width of an ice pick running up it. Nothing looked easy. Brian decided to try straight up.

By this time, I was cold and staring at my feet. Suddenly I heard a great scraping and the rope became loose. An instant later it was pulling me off my feet. Brian was hanging only ten feet above me. He had hooked his tool in the snow but it didn't hold. In the fall that followed, the nut and one of the pegs had pulled. If the other peg had pulled, he would have had a long fall. Clearly it was my lead. 'So much for Alaska,' Brian said. But we weren't defeated yet.

I was taller than Brian, so the chimney was easier to bridge. Even so, my left foot slid through the verglas at full extension, while the right foot was jammed in the crack at full stretch in the other direction. I had one consolation, the rope came from above. I placed my tools into the wide crack. They were half jammed, half stuck in the ice and solid. In no time, I reached the ledge. I too had trouble getting onto it. I had hoped to be able to stand, but everything was tilted outward. Everything, except the peg that had stopped Brian. It was tilted downward at a frightening angle. It had almost come out.

I replaced the pulled peg and struggled upward. I could only hang briefly in the overhanging crack as I tried to place a better nut. Finally it went in – a bombproof lodgement. With security re-established, I surveyed my options. The traverse was indeed bare,

and looked desperate. It seemed that outside the corner there might be an icy slab. It looked worth a try. I climbed down a few feet to try to tension into the corner.

Leaning into the corner, I placed my Sabre into the thin crack, and held myself with one hand as I pulled up to place my other tool. The tools were only hooked into chipped holes in the ice. My feet were placed on tiny ledges on the bare rock. This certainly wasn't ice climbing. It was the epitome of winter climbing. My tools were hooked into a thin icy crack, my feet were teetering on tiny crystals of rock. Only the weather was good.

I tried to place one axe around the corner on the slab, but my other axe popped off its little perch. After a fun swing out of the corner, I tried again. This time I tried to hook my tool onto a tiny ledge. But the ice had melted here also and wouldn't hold. Another swing. The third time, I was ready to try anything.

I placed my tool high in the crack, with one foot on each of the overhanging walls of the corner. I held myself on one arm and moved up the crack. I placed another tool higher. I was only four feet below the belay ledge, but the crack stopped short of the top. I noticed the ledge on the outside lip of the corner was at shoulder level. From here, it looked wide enough to place a foot. Whilst holding myself on one tool, perched on a nick in the ice in a thin crack, with feet placed on tiny crystals on the overhanging walls, I hooked my heel at shoulder level.

The position was comfortable, but not very stable. The crowd that had gathered below was amused, but I couldn't move, tried to pull onto the ledge and fell. This swing was longer. Brian had had enough of my antics and was re-motivated. It was his turn again.

He proceeded relatively easily up to the top pegs and nuts. Andrew had decided to leave his grandstand seat and jumar back up his ropes. Time was getting on. We had one more attempt before dark. Brian delicately climbed up to my nut and placed a yellow painted peg. This peg will be a souvenir for the next ascent party, since I couldn't remove it. With this better protection to relax his mind, he relaxed his body as well. Carefully and smoothly, he reached the top of the overhanging crack and balanced himself on a small rock his tool found a hold on. This time he made it look easy, skillfully making the awkward move onto the traverse ledge. Somehow he managed to balance across the thin ledge. In another minute, he was at a belay.

To save time I followed a time-honoured Aberdeen tradition for following desperate routes, and mechanically levitated up the pitch. I wasn't even interested in looking at the rock, only in getting up. This short pitch had certainly been one of the hardest that either of us had done. Brian had done both the Link and Crypt on Lochnagar, and felt this was even more difficult.

I led off up the easier ground to the top of the Pinnacle. There we could relax and look across the corrie. We gazed back down the route and knew that this was the *Epitome* of Scottish mixed climbing.

ANOTHER SCOTTISH CLASSIC

By Adam A. Kassyk

'THE times they are a-changing' and yesterday's test-pieces become today's classics and the trade routes of tomorrow. Climbers change, attitudes change, and the myths of one era are replaced by the legends of the next. I guess it happens to each generation, but you really only become aware of such a change if it is symbolised by some significant event, or if a once unattainable climb is brought within reach of an ever increasing number of people. The latter development is occasionally viewed with disfavour, perhaps because what was once the preserve of the few becomes accessible to the many, but that is surely a good thing if routes of high quality gain wider appreciation.

Anyway, 'You gotta go with the times' as Smith himself once said, and so we did. It took long enough but eventually we found ourselves standing humbly at the foot of the wall, looking up at the great big hanging groove of Shibboleth, wondering what secrets it held. Today the sun wasn't shining on our side of the mountain: shadowy grey walls loomed all around, not giving any secrets away. The rock face seemed so vast you couldn't pick out any details, apart from the groove itself. The constant drip from the melting snow in the gully, and the general gloom would have completed the traditional atmosphere of oppressive solitude, were it not for the half dozen other teams grunting up the gully behind us. We'd been up Raven's the day before, and seen from its depths the angle of the wall was enough to provoke an uncomfortable feeling in the pit of the stomach. The reputation was beginning to get to me, and I felt nervous. I don't know if Matthew was nervous. I don't know if he's ever nervous, but he hadn't complained when I said I wanted to lead the big groove pitch. He usually wants all the cruxes for himself, but then so do I.

The first pitch is just an introduction, setting the scene, leading up to a ledge below where the wall gets really steep. I collected the gear from Matthew, and looked up at the line. I didn't feel particularly strong or confident but at this point it was a bit late for

second thoughts. The change from relaxed climbing to commitment came a bit too quickly, straight off from the belay. At least that means nerves are forgotten and the mind is concentrated on the assortment of problems ahead. The line was obvious, but the climbing was not, and it took time to work out the right sequence of holds to use. Sidling along and teetering up, always following the general line of weakness, heading for the big groove. It's such a superb natural line, very tenuous to start with but getting more pronounced with height. What also became more pronounced with height was the lack of protection, and progress slowed considerably as the self preservation instinct prevailed. Although very steep the climbing was balancy as well as strenuous, and each step had to be worked out carefully, no rash moves, no mistakes. The sense of commitment increased but I could see something to go for. Eventually it all fell into place and I achieved a semi-resting place, a couple of dubious runners and a slightly more relaxed frame of mind.

Despite the dry conditions the groove was still wet; it must be a really prominent drainage line. The impending wall above was proving something of an obstacle; I couldn't really see what to do and the wet footholds didn't help. Below, Matthew was growing impatient and complaining of the cold; other climbers were setting off on their respective routes and there was another team on the first pitch below us. Somehow you don't expect much company on Slime Wall. A sign of the times? Shouts of abuse echoed up from the gully to shatter the mountain silence. Although impossibly far below they seemed to provide the necessary spur and I cracked it, swinging, bridging, screaming up into the groove. A sequence of really exhilarating steep bridging moves led to a fantastic stance in the groove, a tiny footledge with sheer space all around. What a position; the exposure was already tremendous, the ropes hung clear of the rock, and I could lean out on my anchors and savour the situation.

I took in the ropes, and relived each move as Matthew came up steadily, then wondered about the way ahead as he led on through, up the groove. It looked easier above, and anyway the problems were now his. I leaned back and relaxed momentarily. Down below the other team were already established on the big pitch: it turned out to be an itinerant Aberdonian and his transatlantic sidekick. I could see a pair of glasses bobbing about on the celebrated crux moves, and an intent expression on the face behind them.

Up above Matthew was out of the groove and somewhere on the wall beyond. The position was amazing: I could see his feet outlined against the sky, apparently supported by very little; one of the ropes, runnerless, hung giddily far out in space. He assured me that it was quite easy (that's what he always says) but it didn't look very reassuring. However, when I came to follow it turned out beauti-

fully delicate and technical, and I became more aware of the quality of the clean, light grey rock. Makes you wonder where the wall got its name The difficulties were as much of route finding as of pure technicality, the problem one of finding the best combination of holds and the easiest line. Though still very steep, and demanding a high level of concentration, the climbing was very enjoyable and I realised that after the seriousness below the quality of the climbing was at least as high as the excitement level.

We'd decided that as I'd led the groove pitch below, Matthew would get the fourth pitch, which also has a considerable reputation for seriousness. Should be just his style, I thought smugly as I lashed myself to numerous belay points, and leaned out from my foothold stance over the void. To the left the cliff was broken by the flake line of Revelation, but that didn't detract from the smooth grey wall above, not vertical, but not far off. I paid out the ropes as they inched out I had plenty of time to think about falls, failures and worse, the way you do when your leader isn't making progress. My turn to get cold and impatient. But I wasn't doing Matthew justice, because normally he'd have made short work of it. I could hear him muttering how badly he was climbing, and how easy it really was. The Aberdonian-American alliance were hot on our heels now and the air was tinged with competition and even the occasional uncharitable comment about climbing ability. I could see some runners but I sensed they were purely psychological as Matthew wasn't throwing himself at the problem in his usual determined manner. I was beginning to think that I would have to take another turn in front, a prospect that wasn't really appealing as I felt I'd used up my fair share of nervous energy lower down; I'd already started to relax mentally and it would have taken some effort to achieve the frame of mind necessary to concentrate on leading. My attention was distracted by a young lady on Guerdon Grooves, then more banter from the pair sharing the limited footspace below, then the ropes started to move out again. A change of tactics and the impasse was avoided; the air of tension eased and I realised that the route was in the bag, the difficulties more or less over.

The call 'off-belay' soon came, time to get moving again. Obviously a lot of the impact and excitement is gone when you're second, but it means you can concentrate on the quality of the climbing. I found it absorbing, picking a line up the wall, plotting a course from one hold to another. There's not really much detail to follow until at the top the line goes left and up a slab to the belay. The pitch was over too quickly, and it was almost with disappointment I reached Matthew. A superb pitch. We exchanged a few words, I collected the runners, and ran out another rope length. Although still very steep, and the exposure ever more impressive, the character of the climbing changed noticeably. The difficulties eased and in contrast to the delicate nature of most of the climbing

below, the occasional jug appeared for a swing above the void. I sneaked past various rightwards possibilities that might have led to further delights on the impressive headwall; we felt we'd done enough and the true finish could wait till another day.

Another long pitch, and I was joining Matthew in the sunshine on the rubble-strewn ledges of North Buttress. The fulfilment of a long standing ambition, a time for mutual self-congratulation. Then we went clattering down the screes of Great Gully till we had a grandstand view of the wall. Still featureless and grey, but now we knew some of the secrets, there's the desire to come back for more. Join the queues . . .

BEN FESKINETH – A LOST MUNRO?

By J. C. Donaldson

IT WAS impossible to give details of Ben Feskineth in the 1981 edition of *The Tables* as the information available was very sketchy. The position of this mountain is still not clear, but as rumours of its existence may be circulating it has been decided to make public such facts as are known.

During the summer of 1980 the writer came across a copy of a *Guidebook to Scotland* published by Adam & Charles Black. This was the 19th edition published in 1872. It contained a page which named the principal peaks of Scotland and, as good Edinburgh men, Messrs. Black had seen fit to include Arthur's Seat in the list, albeit the lowest eminence of all. But, somewhat higher up the list, appeared the entry – Ben Feskineth, Perthshire, 3530 feet and immediately there was the electrifying thought that there might yet be another Munro discovered neither by Munro nor the Ordnance Survey and that not even Colin Philip nor Hamish Brown had come across it during their perambulations of Scotland. Investigation became of the utmost importance.

The book in the writer's hands had belonged to a Mr George Burnet who, it was easily ascertained, died shortly after 1900 at not a great age. His copy was the special 'Pedestrian's Edition' and there is a note in it by the publishers that a 'few copies have been printed on thin paper for the use of pedestrians.' From this it seemed reasonable to assume that he was an active mountaineer and as such might well have been an early member of the Scottish Mountaineering Club. A thorough search of the *Journals* right up to 1900

followed but there was no record of Burnet as a member. However, at the Dalmally Meet of 1894 a guest of the name of Burnett (two T's – but the *Journal* Editor has never been immune from error – no initials given) attended, apparently as the guest of either Tough or Brown, being out on the hills with one or both of these celebrated climbers on each day of the Meet. He never figures again in the pages of the *Journal*.

But, like the dog that failed to bark, the significant feature of this Meet may be that Munro himself was not present. Surely, if he had been there Burnet would have mentioned this mountain that was listed in his book but not in Munro's *Tables*, in which case the mystery might have been solved there and then.

There followed some months of inaction broken only by a moment's excitement when a climber was encountered who claimed to have actually climbed Ben Feskineth. But the euphoria quickly subsided when it was established that he really meant Ben Heasgarnich. Now, the heights of the two peaks are the same and it did seem possible that confusion might have risen in Black's mind but, as a visit to the National Library Map Room quickly showed, this was not the case. Along with their guidebooks Blacks had commissioned Mr John G. Bartholomew to produce a set of maps of Scotland with a scale of 4 miles to the inch. They are beautifully drawn maps and that of Perthshire, while it shows a croft called Feskinninch at the foot of Loch Lyon, clearly names Benheasgarnich (sic) in its proper place. There is no Feskineth, while the O.S. map for the same period has a different name for the croft.

The next step was to find out what help the National Library itself could give. Two editions of the book were made available for inspection, one being the same edition as had already been seen, the other the 15th edition published in 1861. This earlier edition also mentioned Feskineth but gave its height as only 3521 feet, which was at least evidence that by 1872 recognition that some mountains were capable of changing their height (*S.M.C.J.*, 1977, xxxi, 191) was already established. In neither edition does Ben Heasgarnich appear in the list of principal peaks. In both editions the editors invited corrections, but while in 1861 they offered to send a free copy to anyone returning a guidebook annotated with corrections they did not do so in 1872. One assumes that the offer was withdrawn having been found to be too expensive. But it is reasonable to suggest that someone must have pointed out that they had the height of Feskineth wrong in 1861. Otherwise it would not have been changed. But if the height was corrected why not the name if that was wrong? The index to the guide is no help, although comprehensive it includes neither Feskineth nor Heasgarnich.

The likely explanation of the mystery may well be that Feskineth is really Heasgarnich but as the possibility of another Munro is

involved a decision one way or another cannot be lightly made.

Another explanation that has been put forward relates to the astonishing rate of growth of the mountain already referred to — nine feet in only eleven years. Perhaps like a mushroom its rapid burgeoning was followed by a brief maturity and equally rapid collapse. Who knows, perhaps only The Doctor can provide a satisfactory solution to the problem? If he could be persuaded to lead a team of investigators suitably qualified for so important a matter, readers might expect a report in a subsequent *Journal*.

To finish on a lighter note, Black's Guide provides much practical information within its pages. Of particular interest to climbers are the prices charged for coffee and whisky: sixpence for a cup of the former and threepence for a glass of the latter in 1861. But by 1872, while the cost of coffee was unchanged the price of whisky had doubled! — 'O MIHI PRAETERITOS REFERAT SI JUPITER ANNOS.'

route

we made a route on last night's mountain.
from the ruin picked out
a single buttress, set it,
twelve hours' rock and ice,

white from the ruck of the dark.
can now look back and trace it,
drifting star to star
across the cold lumber,

committed, all construction over.
can enter the hut and close the door;
beside the fire
rejoin the peace of transience.

IN THE STEPS OF BIG JOHN

By Paddy Buckley

IAIN Mor am Posda – Big John the Post – emigrated to Australia after the great famine of 1846-48. The hardships of those three terrible years were relieved in Wester Ross by the actions of Lady Mary Mackenzie, widow of the 12th Laird of Gairloch. She started a programme of roadmaking, from which the able-bodied men of the district could earn enough, either in wages or food, to support themselves and their families. 'This great work,' as her son Osgood called it, gave that remote area its first highways. In 1847, Osgood, then only five years old, cut the first peat on the road that was to link Gairloch with Kinlochewe.^{1a}

Neighbouring landowners followed Lady Mackenzie's example, and in the course of time, the Destitution Road was built from Poolewe, through Aultbea, Gruinard, and Dundonnell, to join the Ullapool to Garve road at Braemore. Because of this work there was not the same degree of poverty and starvation in this part of Wester Ross as in Skye and the Western Isles, where the famine forced many to leave their homes. The new roads opened up the country, eventually making it possible to deliver the mails by pony and trap. It was this last development that caused Big John to emigrate.^{2a}

For Big John was the last of the post-runners; the last of those remarkable Highlanders who carried the mails on foot between Poolewe and Dingwall.

From comparatively early times, the tiny port of Poolewe handled most of the trade and traffic with Stornoway and the Western Isles. A postal service between Stornoway and Poolewe was started in 1756, and the postal route onwards to Inverness, by way of Loch Maree, had been established by the end of the 18th century. In 1791 two runners were employed to carry the mails from Poolewe to Inverness, a distance of 72 miles. Their pay was £3 a year, with an extra 4/- for wallets and 6 bolls of oatmeal, worth £4-16. (A boll contains 140 lbs, giving a daily ration of meal of 2½ lbs.^{3a})

During the early part of the 19th century, the Mackenzie family stayed at Gairloch during the summer months only: the rest of the year they were at Conan House near Dingwall. 'When we squatted on the west coast,' wrote Dr John Mackenzie 'our nearest post-office was 60 miles away in our county town (Dingwall), and our only letter carrier was one of my father's attachés, little Duncan, a bit of kilted india rubber, who, with a sheepskin knapsack on his back to keep his despatches dry (for Mackintosh waterproof had not

been dreamed of then), left the west on Monday, got the 60 miles done on Wednesday, and returning on Thursday, delivered up his mail to my father on the Saturday, and was ready to trip off east next Monday; and so all the five months of our western stay, doing his 120 miles every week! I never heard of his being a day off work in many a year. And what a lot of news was extracted from him, ere he got away to his home on Saturday evening. When we retired to the east, the natives left behind us got their postal delivery the best way they could.^{1b}

'The natives left behind' were perhaps more numerous than Dr Mackenzie realised. His nephew Osgood took a more considerate view. 'Imagine the letters and newspapers for the parish of Gairloch and Torridon with about 6,000 souls, and the Lews with a population of nearly 30,000 inhabitants, all being carried on one man's back in my day.'^{2b}

However, the burden was shared. The post from Dingwall was carried alternately by Little Duncan and Rorie MacIennan. Little Duncan was probably Donald Charles Mackenzie, the father of Big John. Subsequent post-runners were William Cross (descended from one of the Loch Maree ironworkers) and an unfortunate young man called M'Leay who was found dead about a mile from the inn at Achnasheen. 'In his hand were a piece of bread and a bit of mutton, which his sister, who was a servant at the inn, had given him just before he left.'^{1c}

In 1819, after ten years of difficulties and frustrations the road from Dingwall to Strome Ferry was finally completed.⁴ The post-runners now carried between Poolewe and Achnasheen, a distance of nearly 30 miles, and they made their journey twice a week. In 1824 they were paid £8 a year and 10 bolls of oatmeal.^{3b} In 1843 the road had reached 2 miles beyond Kinlochewe, ending at the small pier at Ruadha na Fhamair, the Giant's Point, on Loch Maree. At last, in 1850, the road reached Gairloch, to link up with the existing road between Gairloch and Poolewe. Along it came the mails, carried now by pony and trap. After almost sixty years, the work of the post-runners was at an end.^{2c}

Their efforts deserve our attention. 120 miles a week is nowadays a very respectable training target for a top-class athlete. The post-runners made their journeys in all weathers, carrying their loads of up to 50 lbs over rough and boggy ground, through wild and lonely hills. Their route went along the east side of Loch Maree, giving them one of the loveliest and most spectacular journeys in the Highlands. Their greatest achievement however, was to establish a regular route across Creag Tharbh – the Bull Rock – a line of steep crags so difficult and complicated, that very few travellers in modern times have been able to retrace their footsteps.^{3c}

'Where the skirts of Ben Lair* descend steep into the water, the scenes are often peculiarly original as well as grand. In one place in particular, the remains of a fir forest, in a situation almost incredible, produce a style of landscape that might be expected in the Alps. Immediately from the water's edge, a lofty range of grey cliffs rises to a great height, so steep as almost to seem perpendicular, but varied by fissures and by projections covered with grass and wild plants. Wherever it is possible for a tree to take root, there firs of ancient and noble growth, and of the most wild and beautiful forms, are seen rising above each other, so that the top of the one often cover the root of the succeeding, or else thrown out horizontally in various fantastic and picturesque modes. Now and then some one more wild and strange than the others, or some shivered trunk or fallen tree serves to vary the aspect of this strange forest, marking also the lapse of ages and the force of the winter storms which they so long have braved.'^{1d}

That was how John MacCulloch described the Bull Rock at the beginning of the 19th century. It doesn't seem to have changed since. Thomas Pennant had looked at the crag from a rowing boat in 1772 and was more succinct.

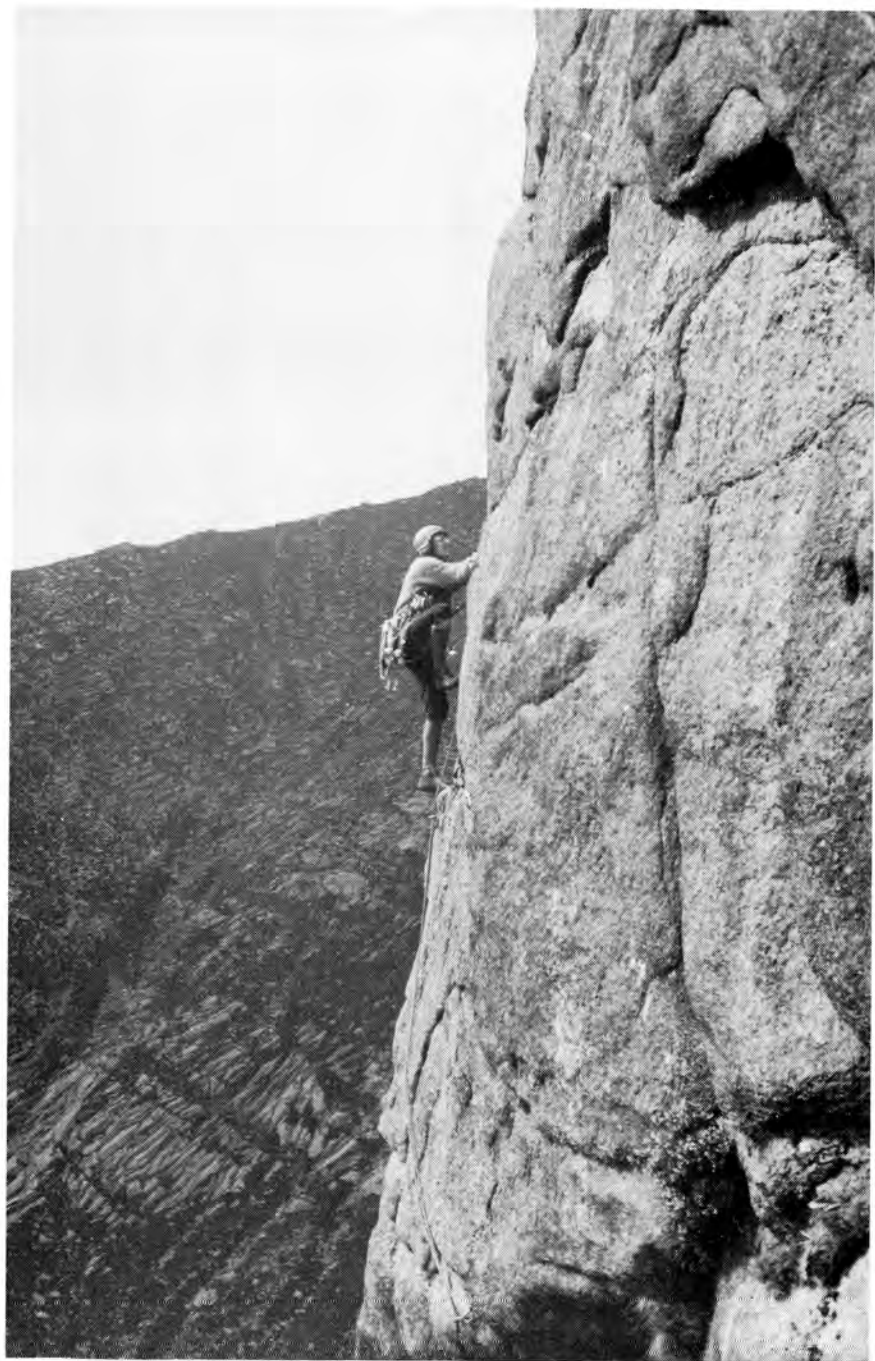
'Pass beneath a high rock, formed of short precipices, with shelves between, filled with multitudes of self-sown pines, making a most beautiful appearance.'^{1e}

Osgood Mackenzie once took a party from Inverewe to visit the Bull Rock. 'In more than one part of it, we could let ourselves down and pull ourselves up only with the help of our stalwart stalker.' He retells the story of 'the Post Office overseer from London who was sent to Stornoway, and following Big John on foot, fainted en route. Big John managed to carry the fat official on top of the mail-bag for several miles till he reached Ardlair.'^{2d}

Clearly the Bull Rock is no place for the inexperienced and inept, and even those who are skilled in travelling over rough ground may find here an exhaustive test of their abilities. According to local records the post-runners' track went 'through the Rock,' – not above it, and certainly not below it. Only the faintest trace of their footsteps is left and no modern map has marked their course.^{1c}

When the Letterewe Estate men visit Ardlair, they usually go by boat. Charlie Littlejohn, who has been a stalker at Letterewe since 1955 was unaware of the original passage through the Rock, which never went above 500 feet. The stalkers avoid the steepest part of Creag Tharbh by keeping above the tree-line, which extends about 1200 feet up the side of Beinn Airigh Charr. Their variant leaves the original on the hillside above Funeral Point (opposite Isle Marce) and climbs to a broad sloping terrace which leads to the top of the zig-zags overlooking Rubha Chailleach (Witch's Point), and

*On old maps, Beinn Airigh Charr was always called Ben Lair.



July 1979

Graham Little on the first pitch of Rhino, Cioch na h'Oighe

W. Skidmore



Photo: Hamish M. Brown

Goatfell and Cir Mhór from Caisteal Abhail

thence by overgrown but beautifully made woodland paths to Ardlair. The zig zags and the woodland paths were constructed in the latter half of the 19th century, and thus were unknown to Big John.

The only evidence that a way through the Rock ever existed is in the 1902 revision of the 6-inch Ordnance Survey. Curiously, this section of the route was missing from the original Survey of 1876, and less surprisingly, has not been included in any subsequent editions. In the woods around Ardlair House there is a network of paths, all still traceable and usable despite being overgrown with whin and heather and blocked by fallen birches. Most of them have been omitted from the modern OS maps. But they are shown on the 1902 map and so is the post-runners' route through the Bull Rock.

If you transcribe that route on to the modern six-inch map, which has contours, you will see how skilfully the post runners found their way through so complex an area. And if you take that map (or more practically, the reduced version at 1:25,000) onto the slopes of Creag Tharbh, with a compass and a good eye for a natural line, you should, with patience and an ever increasing admiration, be able to walk in Big John's footsteps.

The rest of his route along Loch Maree is easier to find: there are paths, and they are shown on the modern maps. From Poolewe there are two ways to Ardlair, one using a private road past Inveran, and the other a right of way through Kernsary. The latter variation has been condemned, unfairly, by W. H. Murray as 'the roughest track I have ever walked in Scotland, surpassing the worst I have known in the Himalaya.' If you share Murray's opinion, you should go no further: the postie's track is not for you. From Letterewe to Kinlochewe there is a good path and few obstacles, for the post-runners inherited a track that had been used since 1607 by charcoal burners and iron workers.¹⁴

If you travel between Ardlair and Letterewe, you will no doubt admire the hillcraft and stamina of those who carried the mails. You will also understand why it was not possible to carry the post on horseback: the terrain is too difficult for any large animal other than goats or deer. Certainly it is impassable to cattle.

Yet Dr Haldane has suggested that the cattle coming into Poolewe from the Hebrides, were driven along the east shore of Loch Maree to Kinlochewe; that is, through the Bull Rock. His map of the drove roads is unambiguous in this respect, and is clearly in error.⁵ Certainly Poolewe was the main port of entry from the Western Isles, and cattle were swum ashore to be driven across the hills to the markets in the south. By 1820 the tryst at Muir of Ord was established, and cattle landed at Aultbea and Gruinard were driven there by way of Strath na Sheallag. This practice was confirmed in 1868 during litigation between Hugh Mackenzie of

Ardross and Dundonnel, and Meyrick Bankes, who owned the estates of Letterewe and Ardlair (69,800 acres valued at £2,463 per annum).⁶ But it is unlikely that cattle landed at Poolewe would have been driven along Strath na Sheallag. It is more probable that they would have used the old route to Glen Carron via Kernsary, along the east side of Beinn Airigh Charr to the grazing meadows at Strathanmore (NG 945764); with a choice then of either turning south along Strathan Buidhe to Letterewe and Kinlochewe, or continuing south-east through Gleann Tulacha to Strath Chrombuill. According to Ian Bowring of Inverasdale, it is also probable that on occasions cattle were driven from Poolewe over the Tollie Pass and along the west side of Loch Maree. But no drover in his right mind would ever have attempted to take his herd across Creag Tharbh.

The Bull Rock was no place for cattle. How then did it get its name? According to Dixon, there is a rock lying in the loch at the foot of the main cliff which resembles a bull. Unlikely? More probably the origin goes back to pagan times when bulls were sacrificed to the pre-Christian gods. For just to the south of Creag Tharbh is Isle Maree, a name derived from Maelrubha (Maruve, Mourie), the Irish saint who lived at Applecross from 573-722. Even as late as 1678 bulls were sacrificed on the island 'in honour of Mourie.' Isle Maree has a holy well, whose waters are reputed to cure the insane.¹⁸

'An idiot girl was taken to the island, obliged to drink of the well, then ducked in it, and subsequently towed round the island after the boat, and bathed in the loch after midnight. The unfortunate result was that the poor imbecile girl became a raving lunatic.'⁷

Myths and superstitions are interwoven: deeds grow into legends and gradually lose some accuracy. The men who were living at the time of the post-runners and cattle drovers are all now dead, and the evidence of their way of life has, like their footprints, almost vanished. But their achievement remains. The valleys and hill-sides where they travelled have scarcely changed – not yet at least.

The stewardship of Colonel Whitbread, who bought the estates of Ardlair and Letterewe from the Marquess of Zetland in 1947, has been marked, thankfully, by a general absence of 'improvements.' Some minor afforestation of the former sheep-moors above Kernsary is the only large evidence of change in the landscape. His treatment of Ardlair was less commendable. The great house, re-built by Mrs Liot Bankes in the 1860's, using the finest materials, was de-roofed in 1948 – to save paying rates. The billiard table and the grand piano were taken to Letterewe, and local entrepreneurs moved in secretly to prevent any further deterioration of the fabric and furnishings.

The bigger part of the Whitbread estates was put up for sale in 1977, and eventually bought by a Dutch business man, Mr Van Vlissingen. He made a road into Ardlair from Kernsary, took down the gutted shell of the mansion, and built again in a contemporary style. Ardlair has the loveliest setting in the Highlands, and the new house is worthy of it. The road to it, however, is an unsightly and badly engineered scar, which will take years to heal.

So progress is coming to Loch Maree. On the west side a wide new road has been built, and the sound of traffic carries across the water. In Slattadale, the Forestry Commission has created a picnic site on the west shore, and water-skiers have been seen on the loch. Early in 1978 Ross & Cromarty District Council in a curious mood of kite-flying invited the North of Scotland Electricity Board to re-open their plans (shelved in 1965, probably for good) for a hydro-electric scheme, involving Loch Maree, Loch Fada and Fionn Loch.

Twice every week, in sunshine and in rain, Big John carried the mails on his back on a 60-mile beat through the hills of Wester Ross. He walked in peace and solitude, and he could look across the lovely shining waters of Loch Maree to the incomparable outlines of the Torridon hills. His pay was £8 a year.

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NEARLY 200 YEARS OF AVALANCHES IN SCOTLAND

By R. G. W. Ward

(Rod Ward has been engaged in a research study of Avalanches in Scotland at the Dept. of Geography, University of Aberdeen).

'Destructive avalanches have started by the most trifling accidents. The experienced mountaineer learns to judge snow conditions with marvellous accuracy and becomes so confident of his opinion that he will risk his life on his judgement.' – F. A. Collins, *'Mountain Climbing'* (1923).

'Remember this, my friends: the avalanche does not know that you are an expert!' – André Roch (1979).

INTRODUCTION

In the 1924 edition of the *Geographical Review*, a paper entitled 'Avalanches' by Andre Allix listed three Scottish 'papers' as being amongst the 50 most important contributions on the subject up to that time. These were articles on snowcraft by Naismith (1893), Raeburn (1905) and Maylard (1902), all of them in the *Journal*. Since that time, Seligman's extensive researches excluded, no substantial works on avalanches have come from Britain as a whole, and from Scotland (where the problem is greatest), in particular. Instead a large number of mountaineering books and journals have contained passing references to avalanches, and many conflicting views and ideas have been expressed. As we approach the 1980's, nearly a century after Naismith's original contribution, we are at last beginning to reach some consensus about avalanches in Scotland, at least as far as the existence of various types is concerned. What should be done about them is likely to remain a matter of debate for some time to come. The following paragraphs outline the development of 'avalanche thinking' in Scotland over the last one hundred years, bringing us up to date with the present problem of how best to tackle the increasing number of avalanche accidents. Inevitably in such a brief treatment, a large amount of generalisation must be made in order to simplify what is in fact quite a complex history. I hope that I have avoided any misrepresentations which may follow as a consequence.

AN EARLY START

Our story begins very nearly 200 years ago on New Year's Eve, 1800. The disaster that overwhelmed Captain Macpherson and his friends at Gaick Lodge is well-known: the interesting thing for my purposes is that whereas the Captain passed into legend, along with

the devil who wrought the destruction, the avalanche passed on into obscurity, or perhaps remained in it. It was not until C. T. Dent produced his book 'Mountaineering' in 1885 that avalanches began to re-emerge, even though they were dismissed as an extremely small risk;

'if the mountaineer will take the trouble to use his intelligence and see where and under what conditions they occur.'

Naismith and Wilson, both writing in 1893, were a little more cautious about how easy it was to spot avalanchy snow, and with the formation and growth of clubs like the Scottish Mountaineering Club and Cairngorm Club, avalanches rapidly came to the attention of those climbers who read the journals they issued.

AYES AND NAES (Fig. 1)

In spite of the publicity given to avalanches by early numbers of the S.M.C.J. and C.C.J., the climbing fraternity divided into two groups – the believers and the sceptics. Possibly one reason for the scepticism of many was the fact that most had alpine experience, and felt it was unrealistic to give Scottish avalanches the same name (and implicitly, status) as alpine ones. Be that as it may, those whom I have called sceptics held one or more of the following views:

- (1) that avalanches do not happen at all in Scotland;
- (2) that avalanches are rare in Scotland;
- (3) that Scottish avalanches are not genuine avalanches, unlike their alpine counterparts;
- (4) avalanches, on the whole, constitute a very minor hazard.

All of these views appeared very early on and persisted until about 1950, from which time it is probably fair to say that only the uninformed general public have held them. In 1896 G. G. Ramsay wrote in the *Journal*:

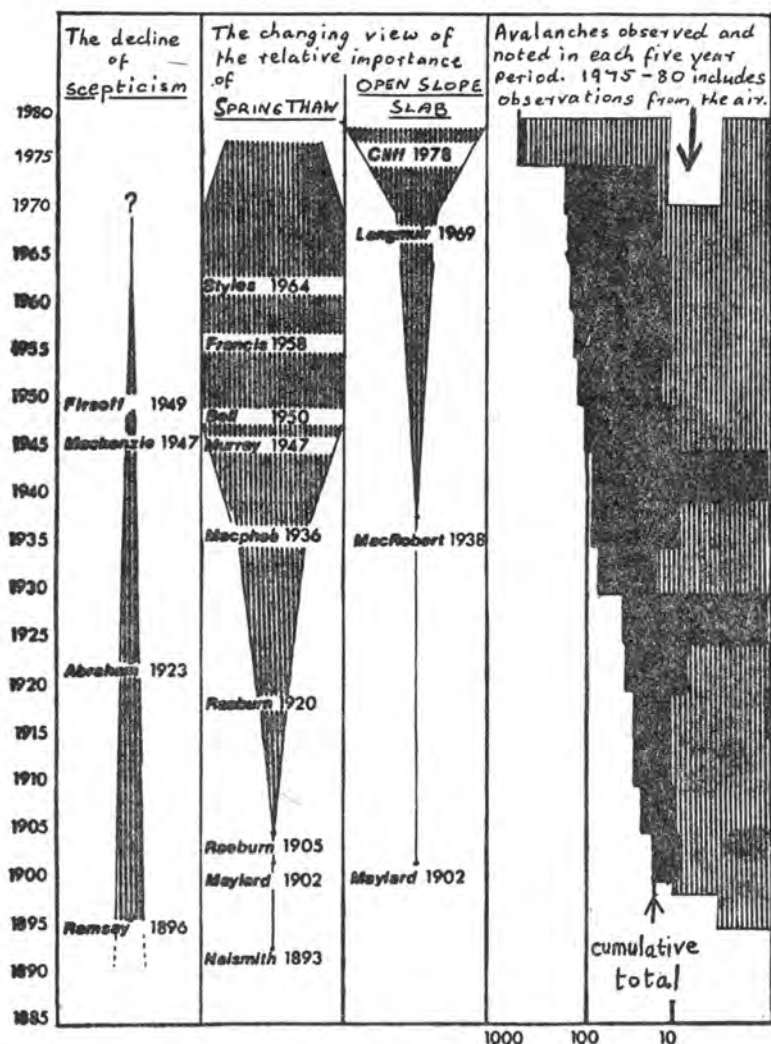
'We have . . . practically no avalanches in Scotland'

and in the same year W. Brown drew the important distinction (C.C.J., II, 1-8):

'In April this year a party was twice struck and almost carried away by a genuine Swiss avalanche in a gully on Creag Meaghaidh.'

By 1923, G. D. Abraham was writing in his 'First Steps to Mountaineering' *'at very rare intervals the latter (i.e. Avalanches) have been experienced on Ben Nevis,'* and in the 1947 *Journal* W. M. Mackenzie wrote:

'Avalanches are rare, although I cannot say I haven't seen a wet snow avalanche, because I have, but it was a very small one. In snowy weather I have never seen a powder snow avalanche such as one sees falling from . . . the Jungfrau.' (Indeed the only occasion when a dry airborne powder avalanche has been reported in Scotland was in January, 1979, on Ben Nevis).



Probably the strongest expression of this type of scepticism, and also one of the last, was the following quotation taken from V. A. Firsoff ('On Foot and Ski in the Cairngorms'):

'A large avalanche is a rare happening in these mountains (i.e. the Cairngorms) and I have never seen one yet, though I have heard of some from people whose experience in these matters I am inclined to doubt.'

Concurrent with the detractors, avalanches also had their ardent protagonists; particularly Harold Raeburn who said in 1905:

'That large and dangerous avalanches do often fall is patent to anyone who visits the great north-east corries of our higher mountains in late spring.'

It is not clear why he particularly singled out north-east corries, unless he had Ben Nevis or Lochnagar (and certainly not Creag Meaghaidh) in mind. More importantly, he, along with Maylard in 1902, was the first to place an emphasis on spring avalanches, unlike Naismith beforehand, whose view was rather more holistic. The dominance of the spring thaw avalanche became a major theme in the vast majority of climbing literature for the next 50 years after Raeburn's 1905 article, a theme which can be traced through the writings of G. G. MacPhee, W. H. Murray, J. H. B. Bell and into the 1960's in Showell Styles' 'Modern Mountaineering.' At the same time the avalanche hazard was narrowed down to become a problem of cornice collapses at the heads of gullies. Open face avalanches have only recently come into vogue.

A little ironically it was Maylard who first described a slab avalanche in 1902, at the same time as he emphasised wet spring avalanches. Windslabs waited in the wings until 1938 when H. MacRobert, in a very progressive *Journal* article, warned skiers on open slopes that:

'Windslab and soft snow avalanches in the earlier months and wet snow avalanches (often caused by breaking cornices) in the later months are to be guarded against.'

(MacRobert was possibly the first to assert that any kind of alpine snow could potentially be found in Scotland. Although he may have been wrong, he thereby avoided the complacency of others who automatically assumed that Scottish snow was invariably much safer than alpine).

Unfortunately the windslab remained in some obscurity until the late 60's when it was championed by Eric Langmuir, and since that time it has assumed the dominance once enjoyed by the spring-thaw avalanche, at least among the climbing cognoscenti if not the public at large. In 1978 P. Cliff wrote in his booklet 'Mountain Navigation':

'The most common avalanche is the windslab, which forms on lee slopes.'

Whether or not this is true, it is a fact that the recognition of windslab avalanches as a major hazard has brought avalanches back out of spring gullies and the exclusive realm of the climber. It is now commonly acknowledged that hillwalkers and skiers are also at risk from avalanches in Scotland, and not just the folk in the Grade IV gullies.

WHAT NOW?

To summarise; 'avalanche thinking' in Scotland has developed slowly and has been characterised by a good deal of disagreement, both about the amount of hazard avalanches present, and about the dominant type of activity. It is probably fair to say that at present:

- (1) windslabs are considered to be the most important danger;
- (2) wet spring avalanches and cornice falls are thought to be more predictable and therefore less dangerous;
- (3) open slope avalanches are recognised as a major hazard.

To this list may be added the danger of direct-action avalanches, both loose snow and soft slabs, which fall during or just after a storm. Although probably common, they present little hazard since most people keep away from the hills in stormy conditions.

How best can we view this knowledge? C. T. Dent's words that avalanches are an extremely small risk: *'if the mountaineer will take the trouble to use his intelligence and see where and under what conditions they are likely to occur,'* still find an echo in the feelings of climbers today. In 1967 G. Tiso wrote:

'There is an avalanche danger in Scotland and competent climbers should be able to recognise the signs and symptoms.'

Be that as it may, it remains a fact that avalanches catch out both the experienced and the inexperienced, the cautious and the incautious. In February of 1979 an avalanche struck a group of children who may arguably be regarded as the innocent. The increase in avalanche accidents over the last 5 to 10 years may be a sign that our existing knowledge is insufficient, and that it is time we obtained some systematic, precise and detailed data about how Scottish snow behaves. The very variability in the opinions expressed in the preceding paragraphs demonstrates that experience is not really enough. Not only that, but experience is gained rather than passed on, whilst a set of principles based on scientific analysis can be learnt by heart.

Unfortunately, the cost of providing a set of principles is very high. In the alpine countries, avalanche research is a high tech-

nology, labour intensive long term programme, with precise data going back almost half a century in Switzerland for example. In Scotland we have scarcely started to collect systematic data: in view of the working conditions, the labour involved and the cost would be enormous. Furthermore the extreme variability of our winters would require, as a guesstimate, a bare minimum of 10 years supply of good data.

Depending on your point of view, the question that needs to be asked is either:

- (1) is the danger from avalanches sufficiently high TODAY to justify scientific research which may not produce viable results until 1990?;
- (2) will the danger from avalanches in 1990 be sufficiently high to justify starting a scientific research programme today?

Whilst that is being debated, Fred Harper and his staff at Glenmore Lodge have taken the initiative of providing avalanche seminars for interested skiers and climbers, so that what we know already can be disseminated. Why not go along it may save you from an accident!

SUNSET

Sunset leaves no footsteps on the sand
 Nor shouts goodbye, nor waves her icy hand.
 Sunset stands ethereal, a naked body in a pool
 Which we behold as we are made, both wise and fool.
 Sunset gives no kisses, lights no star
 And all her robing, wonders of our eyes, are.

HAMISH M. BROWN.

SNOW VARIABILITY AND AVALANCHE RELEASE

By R. G. W. Ward

IN THE accompanying article which deals with how opinions have changed over the last hundred years or so, I summarised the contemporary view as emphasising the danger of windslab avalanches, particularly on open slopes, and as recognising too, the danger from wet snow avalanches and cornice falls in Spring.

In this article I want to ignore the question of hazard, and concentrate on the types of avalanche we get in Scotland, and the weather conditions that give rise to them. The treatment will be pretty brief, and the bibliography at the end will provide sources for further information.

If snow was a uniform substance; that is if all the crystals had the same form, if the density was always the same, if it didn't take so many different forms like ice, rime, slush, windslab, powder, etc. . . .; then avalanche studies would be much simplified. Take dry sand for instance – it always avalanches in the same way, the slope angle at which it will start to avalanche is remarkably constant – its behaviour is, in short, predictable. If snow was like dry sand, then it too, would show far greater consistency in how and when it avalanched. The reason why avalanche studies are so complicated is because snow is so extremely variable. One expert has said it is the most complicated material known to man. This variability arises in two places: in the atmosphere where snow is being formed, and on the ground, where it is changed by metamorphism. The latter is the process which destroys the original forms of the deposited snow crystals and gradually converts them into new forms – usually into rounded grains of ice.

SNOW IN THE AIR

It is commonly held that no two snow crystals are exactly alike, and it is probably true. From its very formation, when a water molecule first attaches to an ice germ, snow is variable. Good, readable, accounts of what happens in the atmosphere can be found in *Scientific American* magazine – it is sufficient to say here that even before it begins to fall, and long before it reaches earth, snow has become extremely complex. Ed Lachapelle puts it like this:

'Snow crystals begin as minute ice particles which have formed around condensation nuclei in the atmosphere. These nuclei may be dust particles with favourable molecular structure, or even minute crystals of sea salt. If these ice particles exist in an atmosphere with an excess supply of water vapour (supersaturated air),

they will continue to grow. When they reach a critical size they begin to fall. Depending on the conditions they encounter in different layers of air during their descent, they may continue to grow, may stop growing or may experience a succession of growth patterns. What arrives at the ground can be a simple product of the initial ice crystal formation, or it may be the result of a complex life history. The latter is especially true if the growing snow crystal is caught in an updraught and recirculated through the cloud.'

By the time snow reaches the ground, it is so varied that two Japanese workers, Magono and Lee, have recognised 78 different kinds of snow. (Actually, they recognised 77 kinds and called the rest 'miscellaneous'). Another Japanese, Ukichiro Nakaya, tried to unravel this complexity by compiling his famous diagram, which is shown in Figure 1. The main point to notice is that as the temperature falls, the kind of snow crystal formed changes. It follows that if we know how cold the air temperature is (and we can guess it reasonably well), we know what the snow crystals are like, at least initially.

How important is this? It's important for two reasons. First, most avalanches occur during or immediately after a heavy snowfall, and are called direct action avalanches. We know this is true overseas and it seems fair to suppose it's true also in Scotland. If the snow that falls has star-shaped grains, these interlock and are more prone to form soft slabs than, say needles, at least in still conditions. Platy crystals, or needles, on the other hand, compact more readily, particularly needles, because they fall in warmer air. So the kind of crystal that falls affects the likelihood and type of direct action avalanche.

The second reason is that the kind of crystal, and the temperature affects the ease with which metamorphism takes place. Crystals which are moderately rimed, for example, are very spiky, and these spikes give points of contact where bonding can occur. Very round crystals, however, particularly hail, may form dangerous layers of 'ball bearings' in the snow, upon which an avalanche may slide. Wind drifted snow, so common in Scotland, may suffer rounding of its individual grains, especially if blown for some distance across a plateau before being deposited on a lee slope. It is also important to know the temperature subsequent to snowfall, since as it gets colder, snow takes longer and longer to stabilise. The quantity of a fall is another vital matter as the most important factor causing avalanches is a too sudden increase in the weight of snow.

SNOW ON THE GROUND

Snow is very unstable, especially near the freezing point. All the time water molecules leave the surface of ice grains and form a mobile vapour which moves around the mass of snow. Some ice

grains disappear completely, and others grow. The thermodynamics are extremely complicated and imperfectly understood, but in a crude way we can classify changes into four main kinds. These are:

Equi-temperature or destructive metamorphism

Temperature gradient metamorphism

Melt freeze metamorphism

Pressure metamorphism.

All of these processes occur in Scotland. However, the end product of temperature-gradient metamorphism, i.e. depth hoar, almost certainly never develops here, at least not as a result of the temperature-gradient process. It may occur in a unique way, as a result of a process termed radiation-recrystallisation, which is capable of producing depth hoar grains in as little as 24 hours, but this process has only recently been recognised, and no one in Scotland has looked for it.

Without wishing to go into snow metamorphism in detail I shall characterise the relationships between weather, metamorphism, and avalanche potential in Scottish conditions.

(i) We have already mentioned direct action avalanches during snowfalls but these may also occur during periods of heavy drifting as lee slopes are overloaded with blown snow.

(ii) Typically in Scotland there is an alternation between freezing and thawing which has two effects: it gives rise to several ice layers in the snow, and stabilises it quickly. Dominant metamorphism; melt-freeze and equi-temperature.

(iii) During a cold spell, snow becomes brittle, water vapour migrates less easily, and bonds form slowly. If such a spell follows fresh snowfall, or heavy drifting, then avalanche risk from soft to medium hard slabs is very high. Dominant metamorphism depends on the thickness of the snow cover. In thick snow cover equi-temperature is important but very slow. In a thin snow cover temperature-gradient metamorphism occurs, but is very unlikely to produce depth hoar.

(iv) In spring we get the melt without the freeze. The ice layers become important as they impede free drainage of the meltwater and consequently act as sliding layers, with a layer of soaking slush above. Avalanches are common.

(v) Some special effects are worth mentioning. Air cavities can form beneath ice crusts, which results in booming noises when the support fails. I have heard this once. During a cold night, surface hoar crystals grow at the surface, which are extremely beautiful and very fragile. If covered by a fresh snowfall they may form a sliding layer, with something like a soft slab above.

(vi) A word about cornices. To my knowledge not more than six

or seven scientific papers have been devoted to cornice studies, and the most comprehensive of these was as long ago as 1968. Consequently, our ignorance of cornice behaviour exceeds even our ignorance about ordinary avalanches. It is well known that cornices collapse spontaneously during thaw conditions; it is perhaps less well known that they do so even when it is cold, specifically during or after periods of drifting. It is as well to avoid cornices at such times, as they can easily collapse under the weight of a big boot. It follows from this that a climb in cold weather is not necessarily safe if it follows blizzard conditions; that is, if the cornice itself is a new creation. Cold weather may toughen up old cornices which have lasted through several weeks and days, but the same is not true of new cornices. More than that however, is impossible to say. Cornices pose lots of interesting questions, which so far have not been answered.

In summary, we can make generalisations about avalanche hazard in Scotland, based partly on Scottish experience and partly on ideas borrowed from overseas. However, without some long term studies of Scottish conditions, involving several people working full time, more precise predictions about how great the avalanche risk is on any particular day, will never be within our capabilities.

Just to conclude this short article, I would like to express my thanks to the S.M.C. and all readers of this *Journal*, who have assisted me in my research over the last three years. A fuller, but non-technical account of these studies will (I hope) be made available at Glenmore Lodge within a few months of this publication. Anyone interested in reading further is welcome to look there.

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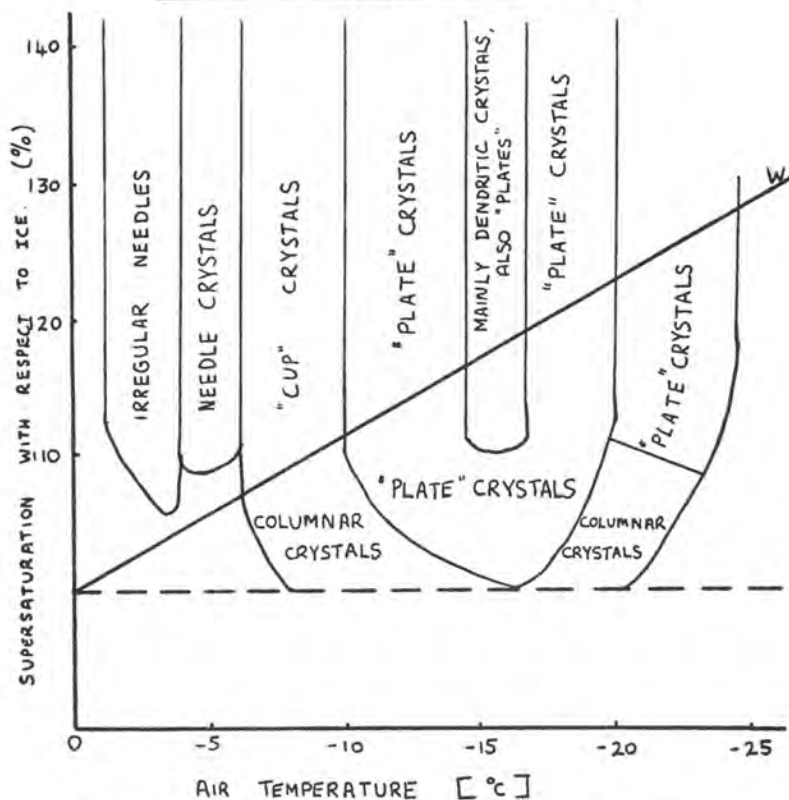
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(Hard to obtain unfortunately: the best article on cornices available - try inter-library loan or the U.S. Forest Service at Alta).

FIG 2: SNOW CRYSTAL TYPE AS A FUNCTION OF AIR TEMPERATURE AND SUPERSATURATION.



'W' GIVES THE SATURATION VAPOUR PRESSURE IN
RESPECT TO SUPERCOOLED WATER

(AFTER NAKAYA 1954)

NEW CLIMBS SECTION

SKYE

COIRE A' GHRUNNDA—*Cuckoo Groove*. 58m. Very Severe.
D. Atkinson, R. Atkinson & D. Formstone. 4th May, 1980.

This route is on a small buttress on the left of the path up to the South Crag of Sròn na Ciche just before the final scree ascent to the main crag. The buttress is marked by a slabby ramp on the left and a deep chimney on the right. It has a lower tier of slabs and a steeper upper tier, with a conspicuous two stepped groove right of centre. Start at a grass-topped pedestal near the middle.

Climb straight up for about 6m then work rightwards towards the break at the top of the slabs. Step right to an overhung stance and belay (33m). Work left under the overhang until it is possible to pull over it into the groove. The first step of this is taken direct, the second turned by a rib on the right which leads to the top (25m).

—*The Stag*. 78m. Very Severe.

S. C. Allen & P. Darbyshire. 24th May, 1979.

On the S.W. flank of Sgùrr nan Eag, overlooking Coir a' Ghrunnnda, and opposite the South Crag of Sròn na Ciche is a steep gabbro buttress (O.S. Sheet 32, G.R. 450194). The name *Antler Buttress* has been proposed. The following route starts left of centre and about 13m right of a shattered gully.

Climb the crack and slabs above to reach a stance at 38m (peg belay left in place). Climb the crack above (40m).

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS (NORTH)

BEINN DEARG, Glensquaib Cliffs, West Buttress—*The Ice Hose*.

I. Dalley, D. Nichols & G. Strange. 7th April, 1979. 300m. GRADE IV.

This is the prominent ribbon of ice on the slabby north face of West Buttress. The icefall was climbed direct to reach easy ground in about 140m. Here the *Silken Ladder* joins from the right before veering up rightwards to climb the dividing spur between the north and west faces. However, the natural line led leftwards by the wide shallow gully of *Eigerwanderer* to reach the plateau near the top of *West Rib*.

COIGACH, Sgùrr an Fhìdhleir—*The Nose*. 320m. GRADE V.

N. D. Keir & R. A. Smith. February, 1979.

Snowfall and six weeks frost brought this low cliff into unusual winter condition. A magnificent setting.

Two staggered icy corners set high on the cliff, around 30m to the left of, and apparently level with, *The Pale Slabs*, are direction aids. Take as straight a line as possible to reach and climb first the left hand one, then the right.

The climbing is mostly up icy grooves except for one particularly problematic and possibly difficult-to-locate pitch through the rightward curving band of overhangs, which was breached by a left ward leaning jam crack and subsequent short traverse left.

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS (SOUTH)

BEINN A'CHAIERGEIN MOR, Carnmore Crag—Wilderness.

M. Lawrence & D. Mullin. May, 1980. 83m. Extremely Severe (E3).

The smooth wall left of Carnmore Corner is characterised by a crack slanting from bottom left to top right. This route uses the base of the crack as a belay, and the main pitch climbs the wall above the crack.

Start about 10m below and left of *The Corner*, where an obvious traverse line ascends left to the base of the crack. Belay just to the right, on a small ledge. Move into the groove on the left and traverse steeply out onto the face. Continue in the same line to the base of the crack (19m). Climb the crack for a few feet, then pull out left onto the face. Traverse left and slightly upwards for a few feet to a recess. Move right and up to a thin crack. Move up this and continue to join a slight groove line going up and leftwards. (This groove line is about 3m left of the interrupted crack directly above the belay at the end of pitch one). Follow this to a scoop, pull into this and climb onto the wall above. Climb twin cracks to belay at the base of a corner (38m). Climb the corner, and the thin crack above to the top (26m).

The route was climbed on-sight, without yo-yoing, on a single day.

APPLECROSS, Sgùrr a' Chaorachain Anonymous Gully. GRADE III.

N. D. Keir & G. Muhlemann. January, 1980.

The climb is prominent on the usual approach to the Cioch. At the start of the Mid-Way Terrace, *South Gully* rises to the neck behind the Cioch, while a longer left fork, the climb – whose real name may lie deep in some old S.M.C.J. – strikes directly up to the first top on the connecting ridge.

After an initial steep ice pitch, there was a long easy section leading to a rock cul-de-sac devoid of the necessary ice curtain. Recourse was, therefore, made to the snow-covered rocks of the 'upper connecting ridge' to gain the first top. Then over four others to the plateau.

BEINN EIGHE, Coire Mhic Fhearchair, Eastern Ramparts—*Corniced Arête.*

A. Nisbet & N. Spinks. 18th May, 1980. 70m. Very Severe.

Start at the same point as for *Cornice Groove* but climb the arête on the right for 10m. Make a short traverse right and continue up and right to a good stance below and just right of a small roof. Climb the crack on the left side of the roof and straight up to a larger roof comprised of huge blocks. Climb this on large jugs to finish.

—*Olympus.* 80m. Very Severe.

A. Nisbet & N. Spinks. 18th May, 1980.

The line climbs a vague scoop on the wall some 12m right of *Corniced Arête*. Start at the beginning of *The Upper Girdle*. Move right and back left above the initial roofs to reach ledges. Go left onto pale rock, then climb up and right to reach a small flakey ledge below a steepening in the wall (belay). Climb the wall and a shallow corner on the right before swinging up leftwards onto a ledge beneath an obvious 6m flake crack. Climb this, move 3m right and finish up the wall above.



Photo: P. Hodgkiss

The New Playground?

The Cobbler – North Peak from South Peak

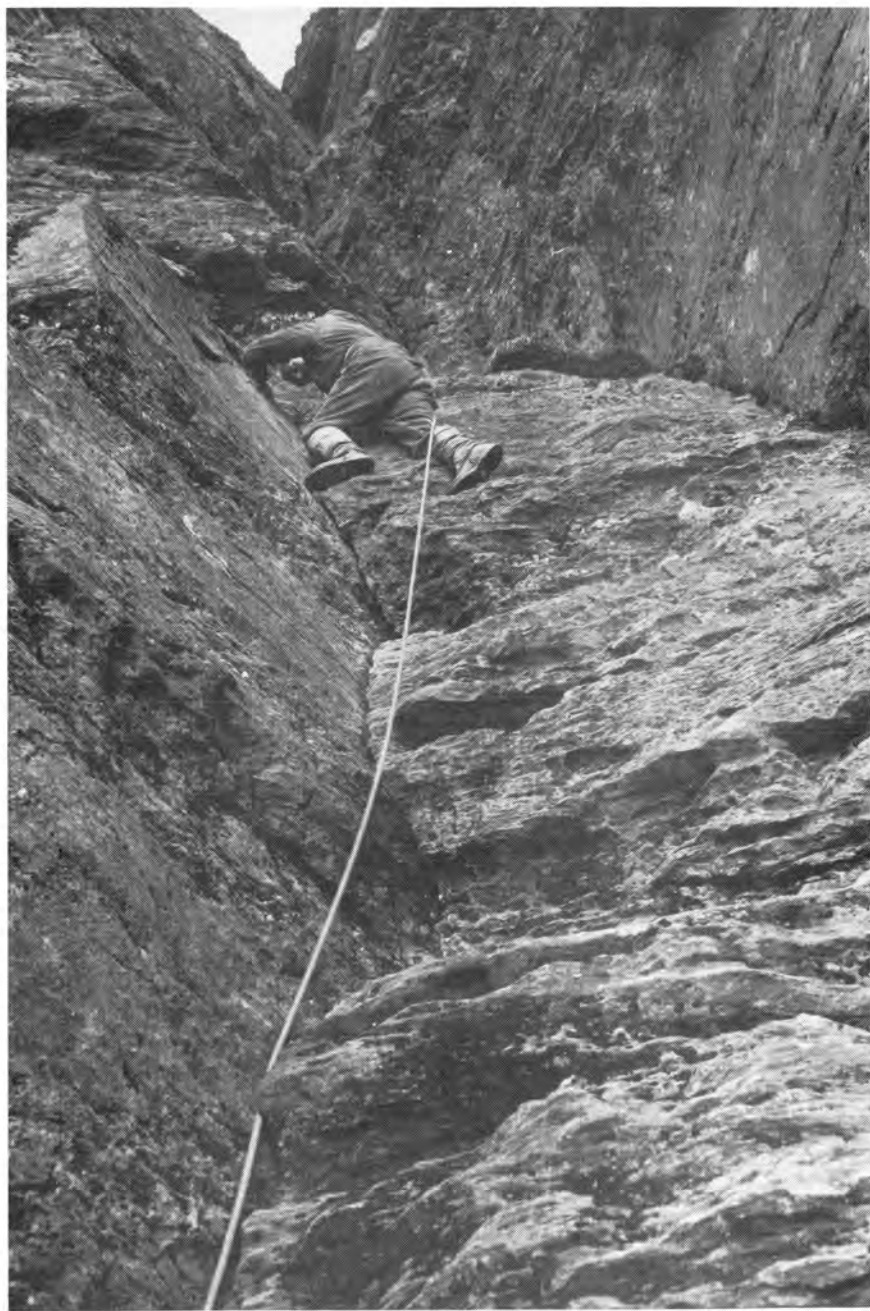


Photo: P. Hodgkiss

A Cobbler Classic – Right-Angled Gully

—*Simpleton*.

A. Nisbet & N. Spinks. 17th May, 1980. 120m. Hard Very Severe (Aid).

The route follows a vague crack-line parallel and just right of *Samurai*. Notable features are a large protruding block on *The Upper Girdle* just to the right of the route, two overhangs just above *The Upper Girdle* (a square overhang on lower left and a more triangular one on the upper right), and just above the triangular overhang a steep corner with a small roof. Start 10m right of *Samurai* and climb the wall below and left of the protruding block (close to the start of *Shang High?*). Above *The Upper Girdle* climb between the two overhangs passing the triangular one on its immediate left and continue up the deceptively leaning corner (one nut for aid at the small roof). Finish by a steep, crack-seamed tower which is formed between the recessed finishes of *Samurai* and *Shang High*. (An inferior route to the previous two, which are good though short).

—*The Pale Dièdre*.

B. Sprunt & G. Strange. 18th May, 1980. 100m. Extremely Severe (E2).

Start close to *Boggle* at foot of vertical crackline. Cairn. Climb crack directly to overhangs at 24m. Move left and go up and right to below the pale dièdre. (Mostly as for *Boggle*). Climb dièdre and finish up easy groove on right.

Far East Wall—*The Reaper*.

B. Sprunt & G. Strange. 17th May, 1980. 90m. Extremely Severe (E2).

This route climbs the vertical crackline on the grey wall left of *Sundance*. Start at large detached flake directly below crack. Climb up leftwards then go straight up groove to ledge (12m). Climb left-leaning groove to reach prominent horizontal fault. Traverse this right until below crackline. Pull onto wall, continue traversing right then climb straight up to better holds. Move left into crack and climb to belay in niche (24m). Go up right into shallow corner. Move further right, then zig-zag to finish up obvious chimney.

—*Nightcap Groove*.

B. Sprunt & G. Strange. 17th May, 1980. 45m. Hard Very Severe.

The short prominent groove on extreme left of wall, left of *Sidewinder*.

BEINN A' MHUINIDH, The Bonaith Donn—*Aquila*.

N. Bielby & Miss B. Nicolson. 20th September, 1980. 146m. Very Difficult.

50m to the left of *A Walk on the Wild Side* there is an overhung bay above the path. The route starts below the overhang and ascends the open convex wall above.

Exit leftwards from the bay and ascend a large pinnacle flake (visible from the path) (24m). Climb straight up slabs (24m). Ascend diagonally rightwards to a rib bounding the left wall of a large bay. Climb this rib then the open face above on rough solid rock (98m).

LOCH TORRIDON, Diabaig.

These cliffs are at NGR 802595 and the climbs provide a useful wet weather alternative. From Lower Diabaig follow the coastal path towards Alligin. The path levels out about 60m above sea-level after going through a fence; then drops down again. There are cliffs above this section (see *Upper Corner*) but the main cliff is the terminating wall, running up the hillside and facing towards Inner Loch Torridon, ten minutes from the road, on perfect gneiss and often dry. *Route Two* is particularly fine.

—*Route One.*

73m. Very Severe.

E. Grindley & J. A. Austin. 3rd August, 1975.

About 10m left of the chimney a rightward facing corner leads up to a big roof and holly tree. Start a metre or so right of the corner.

Climb the wall to the right of the corner until possible to traverse left to the holly. Step left from the holly onto the face and climb it to a grassy ledge (35m). Easily up above the ledge for a few feet to an awkward scoop with an overhang at the top. Over this and up leftwards a little, then climb cracks to the top (38m).

—*The Black Streak.* 70m. Hard Very Severe.

J. A. Austin & R. Valentine. 9th August, 1976.

Start just left of the corner of *Route One*.

Climb a very thin crack 2m left of the corner with a couple of moves left then back right in the middle. Continue to join *Route One* and up to its stance (32m). Climb directly above the belay to the overhang where an excellent hand-rail leads up left to a crack in the broad black streak. Follow this crack (38m).

—*Route Two.*

69m. Hard Very Severe.

J. A. Austin & E. Grindley. 4th August, 1975.

Start about 22m left of the chimney directly below the right end of a long grassy ledge.

Climb to the right end of the ledge and pull up into a thin crack on the right. Follow it, then go up to a grassy ledge. Make a rising traverse across and up to the right to a grassy ledge below a long steep wall crack (36m). Climb the long crack direct, awkward at 10m, over an overhang at 5m to a ledge at 30m. Belay a little higher (33m).

—*Route Three.*

87m. Hard Very Severe.

J. A. Austin & E. Grindley. 3rd August, 1975.

Start as for *Route Two*.

Climb to the ledge and walk leftwards to a tree belay near the ledge's end (20m). Go back along the ledge for a metre or so; then make a hard pull over a steep little wall to gain a short grassy gangway sloping right. From the top of the gangway climb up and slightly right to gain the prominent black crack in the over walls. Traverse 5m right to the stance at *Route Two* (36m). Traverse left into the prominent crack and climb it, over an obvious bulge, to the top (31m).

—*Gamlmachain's Crack.*

75m. Hard Very Severe.

J. A. Austin, C. Rose & R. Valentine. 10th August, 1976.

Start at a wide open chimney at the left end of the face; 10m left of *Route Two*.

Grassy cracks just right of the open chimney lead up, trending right to the first stance of *Route Three* (27m). Directly above the belay and over a bulge. Step left to a good holly at 6m. Traverse slightly right to cracks which are climbed to a grass ledge. Belay at its top right corner (25m). Go up to the right for a few feet and climb a very thin crack until it fades. Step right and climb its continuation (23m).

—*Charlie's Tower.* 90m. Very Severe.

J. A. Austin, C. Rose & R. Valentine. 10th August, 1976.

This route lies on the next crag around to the right. Start about 5m from a prominent stepped corner containing a sapling.

Directly up the wall to ledge and block belay (21m). Climb the short wide crack on the left (8m). Climb the crack above trending slightly left up a steep tower, using a good crack (21m). Directly above the belay to gain a crack and groove system (40m).

—*Upper Corner.* 42m. Very Severe.

J. A. Austin, R. Valentine & J. Ratcliffe.

Just right of the tallest wall on the lower crag (above the path) is a corner with an overhanging right wall, starting from the left end of a terrace. Scramble up to the right on grass below the tall wall. Vegetated rock to the terrace (15m). Up the corner, then traverse left to a thin crack in the wall. Up this until it joins the corner proper for a finish (27m).

WESTERN HIGHLANDS

SGURR A'MHUILINN, Creag Ghlas, West Buttress—*Sweet Charity.*

J. Mackenzie & D. Butterfield. 15th May, 1980. 115m. Hard Very Severe.

Right of the central rib (the *Lizard*) is a long slab, seemingly more climbable than the others. Climb slab to small ledge, step right to steep edge then up this and crack round edge (crux) to heather niche and peg and nut belay (33m). Climb corner (16m). Surmount heather rake in corner above, at top descend into grim chimney (33m). Gain raked slab right of chimney past flake, then up corners to the top (33m).

Some interesting climbing with desperate heather.

GLEN STRATHFARRAR, Sgùrr na Muice—*Pigsty Gully.*

J. Mackenzie & C. Norman. 19th March, 1978. 300m. GRADE II.

Left of the bealach between Sgùrr na Muice and Fearstaig are firstly an obvious gully (*Trotters Gully* - S.M.C.J. 1978) then a more shallow gully with a prominent cleft top. Minor pitches run up to the cleft which is often blocked by a large cornice.

CAIRNGORMS (NORTH)

BRAERIACH, Garbh Choire Mór—*Phoenix Edge.*

R. J. Archbold & G. Strange. 7th July, 1979. 120m. Very Severe.

Phoenix Buttress has a narrow leaning left wall overlooking *White Nile*. This route follows the defined crest between this leaning wall and the broken ground on the right flank. Start about 30m up from the lowest rock where the true crest starts. (The normal buttress route also starts at this point). Climb a corner and continue up slabs and grooves close to the edge to reach a large platform (45m). Climb slabby wall immediately left of perched block. Continue up leftwards until a short groove leads to a belay above piled blocks (22m). Climb corner and slabs to easy ground.

CAIRN ETCHACHAN—*Crevasse Route.*

GRADE IV.

S. Kennedy & A. Nisbet. 13th January, 1981.

The summer route was followed, free.

—*Equinox*.

GRADE V.

S. Kennedy, N. Morrison & A. Nisbet. 14th February, 1981.

The summer route was followed, free, providing an excellent, sustained route. Some minor deviations were made in the middle section.

—*Boa*.

GRADE V.

S. Kennedy, N. Morrison & A. Nisbet. 15th February, 1981.

A start independent of *Guillotine* was made. Start up ledges left of *Cuillotine*, leading past a porched block to a belay in a corner. A corner crack on the right rib of the corner (nearly overlooking *Guillotine* start) was taken to regain the summer line, which was then followed.

CREAGAN A' CHOIRE ETCHACHAN—*Stanley*.

A. B. Lawson & T. Ryan. 18th May, 1980.

60m. Hard Severe.

This route takes the first conspicuous corner on the upper slabs to the right of the grassy gully right of *Enigma*.

Scramble up grass steps to a corner below and to the right of the main corner. Climb left-trending corners and walls to below main corner (24m). Climb the corner until a move right into a niche can be made. Continue to a large block and then traverse left to a flake in the corner and so up to a ledge (21m). Traverse right and up parallel corner (15m). Scramble to plateau.

—*Red Scar Route*.

GRADE IV.

S. Kennedy, N. Morrison & A. Nisbet. 8th December, 1980.

Starting at the foot of *The Corridor*, follow the summer route avoiding its crux (slab traverse left) by a turf pull-up just to the left. The natural winter line in the upper section at the top of *Original Route*.

BEINN MACDHUI, Coire Sputan Dearg—*Pilgrim's Groove*. GRADE V.

E. Clark, S. Kennedy, N. Morrison & A. Nisbet. 22nd February, 1981.

The summer route was followed to the 'large grassy depression.' The 'continuation chimney' above, normally an icefall, was very thin and two alternatives were taken. The first involved following the Variation Finish, until a tension traverse gave access to the top of the continuation chimney. The second (on a top rope) used no aid, moving right onto *Lucifer Route* and back to *Pilgrim's Groove* as for that route.

CAIRNGORMS (SOUTH)**CREAG AN DUBH LOCH, Broad Terrace Wall**—*Last Oasis*. GRADE V.

A. Nisbet & N. Spinks. 30th March, 1980.

A superb and increasingly steep ice climb when in condition. On this ascent the approximate summer line was followed, including the left trending finish (2 points of aid). Rapid thawing conditions prevented a more satisfactory, direct finish up extremely steep ice, which would have avoided the aid moves.

Central Slabs—*Trunk Line*.

N. D. Keir & H. M. Towler. 1st April, 1979.

450m. GRADE III/IV.

This is a sprawling girdle high over Central Slabs, approached from the Broad Terrace entry.

From the *Hanging Garden*, descend diagonally into the *Labyrinth*, not far below the steep upper pitches of the Direct Route. Climb a steep break to reach *Labyrinth Edge* at a point immediately underneath the rock fringe crowning the *Sea of Slabs*. Cross the Slabs to an icefall draped over the rock fringe. Climb it, then head diagonally up right to reach the final groove of the *Pink Elephant*.

—*The Pink Elephant.*

R. Anderson & R. Milne. January, 1980. 335m. GRADE V.

Follow the summer line up to and over the overlap into the *Dinosaur Gully* after which climb a long pitch up an iced groove and rib system about 12m right of the gully to terraces. Climb an ice pillar to reach the terrace below the *Sea of Slabs* and thereafter follow the summer line to the top.

On this ascent the bottom section was under deep powder, while the top section was heavily iced, giving a long serious route.

Central Gully Wall—*Dragonfly.*

R. J. Archbold & G. Strange. 11th May, 1981. 90m. Hard Very Severe.

Climb up rightwards below the big curving roof of the *Bower-Lang Route*. Start approximately 10m right of *B-L Route*, below and right of a rowan sapling. Go up rightwards over first overlap. Continue up right, then traverse left and break through short walls (passing old peg and sling). Traverse right, then climb up and left to belay at spike, below and just right of left end of the curving roof (30m). Traverse horizontally right across slab to grass patch. Move further right then go straight up to overhang (12m). Continue traversing below roof then climb obvious corner to pedestal on *B-L Route*. Continue to the *Caterpillar* by this route.

LOCHNAGAR, Parallel Buttress Group—*Parallel Buttress: Left Edge.*

R. Anderson & M. Hamilton. 9th March, 1980. GRADE V.

The summer route was followed.

Black Spout Buttress—*Epitome.*

GRADE V.

J. Fijalkowski & R. A. Smith. 8th March, 1980.

GLEN CLOVA, Bassies (Hill of Strone)—*Hogmanay Gully.*

320m. GRADE III.

A. J. Thomson, I. D. Shepherd & S. F. Cameron. 31st December, 1979.

This gully is characterised by an icefall midway up the open hillside between Whitehaugh Bothy and Corrie Farchal. (Corrie Farchal is the corrie S.E. of Winter Corrie and the burn issuing from the gully joins the R. South Esk at No. 296745).

The bottom icefall gives a good pitch which can be avoided. Thereafter the gully is followed, including some short pitches.

Corrie Farchal—*Farchal Gully.* 160m. GRADE II/III.

A. J. Thomson & I. D. Shepherd. 3rd February, 1980.

This climb ascends the gully in the middle of the craggy backwall of Corrie Farchal first crossing the ice-band which forms round the lower section.

Corrie Fee—*Hooker's Joy.*

GRADE III/IV.

A. Lawson & A. Smith. 12th January, 1980.

The approximate summer line was climbed.

LOCHABER AND BADENOCH**BEN NEVIS, Observatory Ridge, West Face—*Interstellar Overdrive.***

R. Anderson & I. Kennedy. 12th April, 1980. 330m. GRADE V.

This climb follows a rib and groove system between *Pointless* and *Point Five Gully*.

Climb the left hand rib of *Point Five* to belay below a wall. Move right across the wall to immediately above *Point Five*. Follow a groove running leftwards to a chimney which is climbed to a belay on top of an enormous perched block. Climb a corner and ice wall above to a ledge. A groove on the right which trends back left is then climbed to meet *Pointless* above the chimney. Easy ground leads to the summit.

Secondary Tower Ridge—Faulty Towers.

T. McAulay & N. Muir. 2nd April, 1980. 155m. GRADE II.

Take the first icefall just right of *West Gully*, Douglas Boulder. Climb the obvious chimney and gully then trend slightly rightwards and climb steep gully to gain the crest of *Tower Ridge*.

Raeburn's Buttress—Continuation Wall.

B. Dunn & D. Gardner. February, 1977. 180m. GRADE IV.

The summer route is followed with the initial slabs and narrow chimney providing two steep ice pitches. A short ice step above the chimney leads up rightward to a steepening snow gully which finishes on the broad ledge of the *Girdle Traverse*. From here traverse up and right onto *Baird's Buttress* and climb this in two pitches to the top. (From the *Girdle Traverse* ledge it is possible to traverse left easily to the hanging corrie above *Cousin's Buttress*).

North Wall of Castle Ridge—Purgatory Wall.

M. Geddes & C. Higgins. 8th April, 1979. 330m. GRADE V.

This route climbs the steep wall to the right of *Lobby Dancer* (see *S.M.C.J.* 1979, xxxi, 411), initially directly then leftwards to gain a ledge line traversing the wall diagonally right, then back diagonally left to finish directly at the left end of the wall.

Start midway along wall and climb grooves to beneath a steep wall. Traverse left to small chimney, climb this onto slabs, continue left then direct to large ledge. Traverse ledge rightwards, descend short section then climb a wall. Continue traverse until possible to join ledge line leading back diagonally left. Follow traverse line, passing under headwall in one rope-length, then across to snowfield overlooking the upper section of *Lobby Dancer*. Climb short, steep cracks to belay, finishing in one pitch to the top.

CREAG DUBH, (Newtonmore), Waterfall Wall—Offspring.

R. Anderson & M. Duff. 13th October, 1978. Hard Very Severe.

Climbs left hand edge of slabby wall to the left of *Smirnoff*.

—*In Between Times*.

Extremely Severe (E1).

D. Cuthbertson, M. Duff, K. Johnstone, J. Small. 14th October, 1978.

Takes a direct line up the slabby wall left of *Smirnoff*, going through the overlaps at the two obvious breaks.

CREAG MEAGHAIDH—1959 Face Route Direct. 240m. GRADE V.

D. Cuthbertson & T. Prentice. March, 1981.

Climb short steep ice wall just right of normal route. Follow this to a point where it trends left. Continue up grooves and steep tapering icefall, then corner to top (120m from the junction).

GLENCOE

BUACHAILLE ETIVE MOR, Creag a'Bhancair—*One Step Beyond*.

126m. Extremely Severe (E5).

R. Parker & P. Whillance. First Pitch: 28th May, 1980.

Second Pitch: 29th May, 1980.

Takes the obvious leftwards slanting fault line, right of the central overhanging red wall. Start at a tree below corner.

Move up left to a small ledge and poor peg runner. Traverse left a few feet to another poor peg runner, then make difficult moves up and left to reach better holds. Continue up on widely spaced holds till a short traverse left leads to a ledge and peg belays below a prominent groove (24m). Climb the groove to grass ledges then easily up right to the peg belay below *Carnivore Direct* (27m). Finish as for *Carnivore Direct* (75m).

The route was cleaned by abseil. All pegs were placed whilst climbing and left in situ.

GEARR AONACH, East Face—*Sundance*.

90m. Very Severe.

K. V. Crocket & S. N. Smith. 18th May, 1980.

Climbs the wall between *Persuasion* and *Rainmaker*. Start below a short chimney on the wall immediately left of *Rainmaker*.

Climb the chimney, go up and left behind blocks to the left edge, follow short walls to large ledge and belay common to *Rainmaker* (35m). Above are two roofs. Follow the chimney of *Rainmaker* for a few metres, then traverse left between the roofs. Continue up the wall on good holds to belay (35m). Finish by a choice of routes; on the wall above, or left to finish up the corner of *Persuasion* (20m). Belay further back.

North Face—*The Slot*.

160m. Very Severe.

K. V. Crocket & S. N. Smith. 24th May, 1980.

Immediately right of *Footpad* on the upper section of this face are two prominent chimneys; this route climbs the wider, left-hand of the two.

Start as for *Perambulator* (see below), the *Late, Late Show*, or *The Kneepad* and climb to belay on the main girdling ledge (50m). Two small adjacent corners lie on the wall above; the cleaner, left-hand corner is taken by *Footpad*. Climb the right-hand corner to belay at the back of the cave below the chimney (25m). Climb the chimney, passing roof and moving onto left wall then edge, follow groove above to ledges, move right to belay (40m). Easier rock to top (45m).

—*Perambulator*. 170m. Hard Very Severe.

K. V. Crocket & S. N. Smith. 17th May, 1980.

This route finds a breach through the steep wall left of the upper section of *The Kneepad*; climbing the chimney and crack above and in line with *The Kneepad, Direct Start*. The chimney is further right than the two more obvious chimneys seen from the approach.

Look for an upright boulder below the face, behind which a grassy gully slopes up and right. This gully is left of the *Late, Late Show*, and well right of *Preamble*. Follow it in two pitches to the main girdling ledge (70m). Traverse the ledge rightwards as for *The Kneepad* to belay on the skyline (10m). Climb the wall on good holds, move up and left into corner and follow this to block belay below chimney (25m). Climb chimney, over bulge, then steep crack above to tree belay on left (25m). Easier rock to top (40m).

STOB COIRE NAN LOCHAN, Summit Buttress—*En Garde*.

G. Rooney & I. Dalley. 19th May, 1980. 90m. Hard Very Severe.

Takes the obvious ramp parallel to and above *The Duel*.

Start as for *The Duel*, climbing to a belay on the left above the break in the overhangs (36m). Follow the ramp and then climb a crack to a belay below an overhanging chimney (39m). Climb the overhanging chimney (15m).

AONACH DUBH, North Face—*Sentinelles Rouge*.

84m. Extremely Severe (E2).

D. Cuthbertson & K. Johnstone. 17th May, 1980.

Climbs the obvious red slabby wall left of *Tober*. Start at the next obvious break below and left of *Tober*. Traverse left to beneath roof, turn this on the right and enter groove which is followed until a line can be taken up the slabby wall on the right to gain a left rising overlap. Follow this then ascend wall to belay under a downward pointing flake (42m). Above and right are two steep hanging grooves; traverse right and climb the right-hand groove and continue to a belay on *Tober*.

—*Eldorado* (Variation Finish).

Extremely Severe (E3).

The first two pitches of *Eldorado* were climbed free. From the belay at the end of the second pitch climb the obvious groove (the second and most obvious groove to the left of *The Clearances*) until an obvious traverse leads right to peg belay on *The Clearances*. Traverse left and climb rib to top.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

ARROCHAR—The following three routes are on a crag on the south flank of Beinn an Lochan above the bridge where the B828 crosses the Alt Glinne Mhoir. The name *Slabby Crag* has been proposed.

BEINN AN LOCHAN, Slabby Crag—*Edge*.

38m. Very Severe.

G. E. Little. 24th August, 1980.

The crag is split into two unequal parts by an obvious chimney (*Black Chimney*). Start at a shallow groove 6m left of this. Climb groove for about 5m, then move right and up to a flake. Climb up then move right below bulging rock to chimney edge. Up grassy crack to ledge and straight up edge to top and large block belay.

The route was precleaned by abseil and climbed solo with a back-rope.

—*Sidewalk*.

33m. Severe.

G. E. Little. 12th October, 1980.

Start at an open heathery corner 13m left of *Black Chimney*. Climb a slabby wall to ledge. Move left and up wall to heather ledge. Climb slabby rock and broken ground to top.

This route was climbed solo without a rope.

—*Point Counter Point*.

G. E. Little. 12th October, 1980.

42m. Hard Very Severe.

Start 5m left of obvious vegetated crack in the main face. Climb centre of slab wall to heather ledge. Continue up mossy wall and vegetated rock steps above to belay on iron stake a short distance back from the edge of the crag.

The route was precleaned by abseil and climbed solo with a back-rope.

THE BRACK—*Edge of Extinction*.

88m. Extremely Severe (E5).

P. Botterill & P. Whillance. 19th May, 1980.

This very serious route starts at the overhanging recess of *Mammolh*. Climb the recess and crack above to a ledge at 12m. Move on to the wall just right of the edge (poor rimp runner) and climb diagonally right to a flake. Up the steep wall above on small holds to a ledge below a prominent hanging corner. Using a peg runner climb the corner exiting left at the top to ledges on the edge. Step down left to peg and nut belays (43m).

Take the right side of the edge for 6m to a small ledge, then climb a ramp left of the edge until it merges into a steep wall where various poor peg runners can be placed. Climb the wall leftwards to a ledge and continue up until good holds lead back to the edge at 27m. Surmount the overhang above on its right, step back left on to the edge and climb easily to the top (45m).

The route was inspected by abseil. The peg runners were placed while climbing and left *in situ* (apart from one placed by hand!).

THE COBBLER, Centre Peak—*Lobby Dosser*.

65m. Very Severe.

T. McAulay & N. Muir. 13th June, 1980.

(Scottish).

The start is about 40m from the Centre Peak – North Peak Col, below a large cave on main face. Climb up to the main overhanging face, go up right of small buttress, swing out right onto face and climb crack to belay. Climb the two cracks and corners above to belay at large block. Climb directly above keeping left of a hollow to climb overhang, traverse left and up groove to top.

North Peak—*Moonlight Arête*.

81m. Extremely Severe (E1).

D. Cuthbertson & K. Johnstone. 23rd May, 1980.

Climb the obvious groove in the arête to the left of *Whether Wall* (39m). Climb the left arête of *Right Angled Groove*; at one point moves have to be made up the left wall (42m).

—*Rest and Be Thankful*.

45m. Extremely Severe (E5).

D. Cuthbertson & K. Johnstone. 25th May, 1980.

Climbs the wall left of *Club Crack*, starting at the foot of obvious groove to the left.

Ascend groove to its top, traverse left then step down to good hold. Traverse approximately 3m left then ascend to good foot hold, continue up then step right and ascend to poor horizontal break. Ascend leftward on wall above to reach good ledge. Ascend wall then easily up right to thread belay (36m). Climb wall above at its highest point to top (9m).

The route was cleaned and inspected by abseil and yo-yoed twice.

South Peak, North Face—*Rusholine*.

78m. Extremely Severe (E5).

D. Cuthbertson & K. Johnstone. Summer, 1980.

Climbs the obvious groove in the arête left of *Deadmans Groove* gaining an obvious crack slanting to the right. Start by scrambling up to the left edge of the N. Face at a groove in the angle where the face cuts up to the left. Ascend to a ledge, traverse left then back right to enter a groove, climb this passing a dubious flake to enter a steep groove which is climbed until possible to traverse right to gain an overhanging groove. Climb this and pull over bulge to gain crack which is followed to a small foot ledge and belay (39m). Step right and climb groove, pull left over bulge then continue up rib to top (39m).

Cleaned by abseil.

BEINN AN DOTHaidh, North East Coire—*The Upper Circle*.

S. Kennedy, N. Morrison & A. Nisbet. 10th January, 1981. 200m. GRADE III.

On the left wall of *West Gully*, beyond *Taxus*, is a prominent ramp. Gain the ramp by a short hard corner, then follow the ramp in three pitches, going right at the top of the third pitch to gain a platform. To avoid a short vertical wall, traverse down and left round a corner into a small gully which leads back right to a saddle. A variety of possible lines now lead to the top.

—*The Garden*.

210m. GRADE II/III.

S. Kennedy, N. Morrison & A. Nisbet. 10th January, 1981.

This route follows the vegetated buttress between *Taxus* and *The Upper Circle*. Start 15m above *Taxus* and climb up left onto the crest. A line is then followed left of the crest to join the small gully of *The Upper Circle* which is then followed to the top.

Creag Coire an Dothaidh—*The Professorial Seat*.

180m. GRADE III/IV.

Down and right from *Salamander Gully* is a slabby corner starting above an iron fence post. Climb the corner encountering a hard groove at 30m, to belay in a bay (45m). Continue up the corner, exiting right at the top (21m). Follow a groove above to a snowfield. Go rightwards up this then back left across an obvious ice ramp to finish as for *Salamander Gully*.

BEINN DORAIN, Coire an Dothaidh—*Kick Start*.

N. Morrison & R. Stewart. 21st December, 1980. 120m. GRADE III.

This route and the following one lie on the same cliff as *Scorpion* (*S.M.C.J.*, 1977, xxxi, 183). At the lowest point of the cliff a curving line leads to a horizontal ledge cutting across the cliff at half height. Follow this line to the ledge, traverse left along this to a groove which leads onto a rock ramp and the top.

—*School Daze*. 150m. GRADE II.

D. Claxton, N. Morrison & R. Stewart. 27th December, 1980.

On the right of the main cliff is a buttress of more broken ground. Climb a difficult pitch at the junction of the main cliff and subsidiary buttress. Thereafter follow a snow ramp onto a snowfield which leads into the finishing gully.

ARRAN**CIOCH NA H'OIGHE, The Bastion—*Abvaxas*.**

G. E. Little & R. J. Little. 26th May, 1980. 105m. Extremely Severe, Aid.

The following route is alleged to be a very fine climb in a spectacular situation. A large quantity of aid was used.

Start directly below the right-hand end of the prominent arched overhang in the centre of The Bastion (between *Armadillo* and *Rhino*). Traverse leftwards and slightly upwards to the left end of the arch. Move left around edge with one point of aid to base of yellow, roof-capped corner. Up this, tension right then climb with the aid of one peg (in situ) to a right traverse and then up to belay on a small ledge (27m). Climb diagonal finger crack to a narrow sloping shelf. Cross this with two points of aid, at end, to a vertical waterworn groove. Climb this with one nut for aid near top, to a small sloping rock ledge and bolt belay (27m). Cross very narrow, exposed, ledge, starting with three pegs for aid to a niche and bolt belay (11m). Up crack (decomposing rock) to a hole. From a nut on the right of an undercut flake, tension left and

climb to a tiny ledge. Climb crack with two nuts for aid to a heather patch. Follow narrowing slab ramp leftwards to join the easy grass groove on the final pitch of *Armadillo*. Climb this to belay on ledge four (40m).

The route was precleaned, the second belay bolt placed by abseil and was attempted on more than one day.

A'CHIR, Glen Iorsa Face—*Iorsa Cracks*.

67m. Severe.

J. E. Sim & J. W. Robertson. May, 1980.

Start 6m right of *November Chimney* at an obvious crack. Climb the crack and then turn to ledge and belay at 16m. Climb the layback crack for another 16m to belay. Continue up the crack to its top, move left, then climb a short slab to a small ledge (19m). The scoop above contains another crack which is climbed, move left onto the arête at 5m then straight up to finish (13m).

CIR MHOR, South Face—*El Dee*.

32m. Very Severe (Scottish).

T. McAulay & B. Swan. 28th May, 1979.

This route lies on the same buttress as *Calibans Creep*. Climb up slabs to the right of that route; gain a ramp sloping up from right to left to beneath an inverted triangular block. Climb a small crack on the left of the block, over bulges, to gain a small ledge. Traverse hard left to avoid a loose flake, climb above on small ledges then up groove to belay.

OUTCROPS

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

We have received information from John Mackenzie that a group of hortophiliacs have unearthed various outcrops in the Northern Highlands over the last 10 years or so. Of the 34 routes named and described the earliest was done in 1965, with another two or three following in 1970-71. However, the bulk of their development took place from 1978-80. Mackenzie himself was involved in all but one of the routes and lists no fewer than sixteen, collaborators, the principal being M. Birch (10 routes), D. McCallum (5) R. Brown (5) and D. Butterfield (4). It is apparent that anyone who visits Mackenzie in his Highland hold incurs an inescapable obligation – to be 'gripped on the schist' at the whim of his host. We reproduce his manuscript almost in full and with his comments:

Ravens Rock.

For reasons of conservation, this impressive schist crag must not be climbed on from May to July. It lies a mile west of Auchterneed Station on the Dingwall to Kyle line and five miles from Dingwall. Access can be gained either by walking along the track or else leaving cars at Auchterneed Hamlet and walking west along a private road to join the line a quarter mile short of the crag.

The crag is extensive and stretches for 600 metres. Facing north there is a great deal of vegetation and all the lines needed cleaning prior to ascent, as will future routes. The cliff is in two parts. The top overhanging section of blackish rock has a table of grass which slopes down below it to a shorter overhanging wall. The top crag stretches westward and attains a height in excess of 100m where it breaks into a series of grass ledges. Beyond lie roofs and cracks bordering a steep buttress which is in turn bounded by corner. A black wall beyond is cut by a ramp and further steep walls lead to a vertical roof-topped corner. A white wall and black wall separated by a tree crowned ledge diminish in height westwards where the crag outcrops through dense vegetation.

The escape route off the climbs lies behind the white wall and takes the form of a shallow gully, easy but vegetated.

The climbing is on very steep but generally sound rock which has had areas of loose blocks. Unclimbed lines may be superficially unsound. Nuts are well suited to the rocks and pegs are rarely needed.

Starting from the left end of the crag, which has hardly been touched, the number of routes multiply towards the cleaner right-end.

To make the first climb gain the grass table from the right to reach a minor jutting buttress beneath the great top wall. This small buttress has a central chimney.

Bone Idle.

14m. Hard Very Severe.

Climb the thin crack right of the chimney to gain ledge on right; traverse left to finish up chimney.

A long section of unclimbed crag stretches to the great central buttress. The next line takes its left corner.

Scorpion.

51m. Mild Very Severe.

Follow the corner to climb either slab or crack to gain fine cave formed by blocks. Belay. Step onto yardarm and climb overhung groove (crux) to mossy slabs and tree belays. Needs much more cleaning.

Tombstone Buttress.

70m. Extremely Severe (E1).

This fine climb takes the centre of the buttress. Start in the gloomy pit at the bottom right.

Climb black crack and roof above to slab. Go left across slab to chockstone and so to tree crowned ledge. A wall leads to a thin grass terrace. Go left to *Tombstone* and belay. Climb steep crack above to reach large block. Use the diagonal crack to traverse right and finally hand traverse to corner and spike. Up corner to belays by ledge. From ledge step left to crack splitting blocks and belay in *Scorpion* cave. Finish up *Scorpion's* last pitch. Recommended.

Obituary.

42m. Extremely Severe (E1).

Start in the recessed corner of *Tombstone Buttress* and climb cracks on left to large roof. Traverse left to gain front of buttress and continue to thin crack. Up this (crux) to follow holds leading to a cracked bulge on the right of the buttress. Climb the exposed crack and bulge to belay below third pitch of *Tombstone Buttress*; finish up this. Recommended, an excellent line.

Going right past the black corner and wall lies a long slab ramp.

The Sting.

102m. Hard Very Severe.

Up slab to gain niche; surmount crux bulge on spikes to gain ramp. Follow ramp, taking the easiest line to small trees and belays. Climb easier cleaned slab to below overhung niche with tree above (arrow). Climb bulge and corner behind tree on vegetated rock, step right then up wall of cracked blocks to tree belays. Climb the steep awkward crack to a large birch tree to finish in the descent gully. A most enjoyable route which needs cleaning on the third pitch. Recommended.

Roots.

66m. Severe.

To the right of *Sting* is a broken parallel groove. Climb it and traverse onto a good ledge and belays. Step up right onto a prominent spiky block (crux) and traverse a good slab rightwards. Near its end climb a cleaned wall to belay on *Sting* below its third pitch. Escape right along a vegetated ramp to gain the descent gully. A bit artificial but some pleasant climbing.

Shortly.

15m. Hard Very Severe.

Right of *Roots* is an overhanging wall. Start below trees and gain right slanting line, surmounting crux bulge beyond treelet to go right to finish. Needs more cleaning.

Raspberry Traverse.

45m. Severe.

Right of *Roots*, past the overhanging wall is an obvious corner. Climb it then go left and up short wall (crux) to belay below trees. Traverse right around corner and continue to small gnarled tree in an exposed position, to go up and left past niche to tree belays and scrambling above.

Jacobite Wall.

48m. Extremely Severe (E1).

Right of *Raspberry Traverse* is a steep wall bordered on the right by a grass mound which hides a fine cave.

Start left of cave and up steep wall past curious flake, step left to corner and up to ledge (crux) and flake. Step up right to long ledge and traverse right to break. Go up left to gain crack and up to small tired tree and belays in crack behind. Climb easier cracked corner to finish as for *Raspberry Traverse*. Recommended.

Kingfisher.

51m. Hard Very Severe.

Start at the raised grass mound and up short wall to follow crack to treelet, go back up left and mantleself onto unhelpful slab (crux). Step up right and then directly up wall, which eases after the initial moves, to belays well left of the big roof along ledge. Follow a diagonal line up the overhanging head wall in a good position, starting at the left by blocks to reach jutting ledge. Step left to finish up short wall to trees above.

An excellent and popular line. Recommended.

The Croak.

51m. Hard Very Severe.

Climb the steep corner right of *Kingfisher* which gives some awkward moves to reach a sloping grass ledge, belays at back. Climb cracked slab to swing round edge and tree belay above. Climb wall above tree, finding the easiest line, to top.

A good first pitch, the last pitch needs cleaning and can be avoided by traversing off right. Recommended.

Fancy Tickler.

30m. Very Severe.

To the right of the *Croak* is a steep wall split by three cracks. Climb the short left one to grass ledge and tree belay. Climb the thin crack right of the arête, crux, to trend left to tree and belays as for *Croak*.

Well protected and sustained.

Close to the Edge.

48m. Hard Very Severe.

Climb the central crack in the wall, crux, tree belay above. Gain a ledge and go up and right to niche, exit from this to step right and up a crack to ledge and tree belay as for *Croak*. Finish up the mossy wall as for *Croak*, or escape right along ledge.

Pleasant, well protected climbing.

Ravens Horror.

12m. Hard Very Severe.

Climb the third crack which lies centrally in the wall to a jutting hold. Traverse out right along to edge and up to tree belay. Poor protection.

Ravens Squawk.

90m. Mild Very Severe.

The length excludes easy ground.

Climb the slab and corner which lie right of *Ravens Horror* to the ledge and tree belay. Gain the ledge and climb the wall just right of the niche of *Close to the Edge*, to gain old peg belays in alcove. Climb up to the crack in the roof above and exit left of sapling. Move mossy wall direct to gain the descent gully. Scramble across gully to the back tier of cliffs. Climb on set smooth slab and step across a bigger slab to tree. Easily up descent gully until a shallow groove on right is climbed to heather ledge. Traverse along this to vee crack and exit.

An artificial ramble with some enjoyable moments. Loose rock on pitch 3 needs cleaning. The first route on the crag.

Archenemy.

To the right of *Ravens Squawk* is a cleaned slab with a crack splitting a steep wall above. Climb the crack to small tree and niche. Move right to ledge (crux), then along corner and up this to finish. Very deceptive and recommended as a painless introduction to the crag.

The Corner.

15m. Very Difficult.

Up slab, then up right corner.

Rejector.

18m. Mild Very Severe.

An amusing problem right of *The Corner*, where a slabby V-groove lies right of a short steep wall. Up wall to enter groove, awkward, then easily to top. Traditionally climbed in unsuitable footwear.

The wall to the right has a short V.Diff. groove. Walk round the edge to an open chimney.

The Chimney.

10m. Severe.

Climb the chimney, exit left, swing back right to finish up a corner.

Cavalcade Wall.

18m. Severe.

Climb the descent gully (which lies beyond *The Chimney*) to near a fallen tree, below which is a white wall with a central niche. Climb up past niche to level with tree then exit left.

There are many short problems to the right on the small outcrops.

Ravens Rock Quarry.

This lies a quarter mile beyond Ravens Rock, heading west. It is very loose and gives some climbing on the smooth slab on the right.

Pad Slab.

30m. Severe.

Towards the right of the slab to a tree crowned ledge. Gain this and up slab and groove above the tree to top, trending left.

The slab has been climbed direct and has several lines. The corners to the left are about V.Diff. in standard.

The centre of the quarry provides a 33m GRADE IV ice climb *Centre Fall* when frozen.

Red Rock.

A small but imposing schist crag $\frac{1}{2}$ mile east of Ravens. It is best approached by a break in the forestry plantations near the end of the road. Possibilities are limited due to its triangular aspect but has one central climb. Like Ravens there is no climbing from May-July.

Red Wall Grooves.

33m. Very Severe.

The centre of the face has a prominent curving groove line. Start from the ledge below where a mass of ivy festoons the left side of the roofs above.

Climb up to roof and traverse right to a break then step left to a ledge and belays on the right. At the left end of ledge go up to holds and up the crux wall trending slightly right past jug to enter niche. Continue up the curving groove to the top.

An exciting climb, appearing larger than it is. Recommended.

Glen Marksie Crag (Inverness Sheet GR. 384581).

A good solid schist crag which lies near Loch Luichart in Ross-shire. It is on a spur of Sgùrr Marcasaidh which lies north of Strathconon. There are no restrictions regarding climbing on this cliff.

Approach. Drive over Loch Luichart dam and park the other side. The path up the hillside is followed for 500 metres, the crags being visible from the roadside. The crag takes the form of a steep slab steepening to a central wall and bordered on the right by a slab and headwall. Two small crags lie above and to the right.

On the left of the main face the crag has a steep gully and a small buttress on the left rises above a rowan tree. Left of the tree the rocks are little more than 10-15m but of immaculate quality, giving numerous climbs. *Small Wall*, above the rowan tree has been climbed by a number of lines up to Very Hard standard.

The first climbs described lie on the *Main Face*.

Dog Mantle.

30m. Severe.

The route starts from half way up the gully separating *Small Wall* from the *Main Face*.

Traverse right to belays above in wide crack. Go straight up the steep wall to a corner left of large overhang and onto top.

Dog-Leg.

43m. Very Difficult.

The slabs right of the gully are bordered by a rust coloured corner with a rose bush.

Up past bush and flake and mossy ledges to gain belays in wide crack as for *Dog Mantle*. Climb wall right of crack (as for *Dog Mantle*) then step left by horizontal break to gain niche. A large head of rock (*Dog Head*) has a vee corner on its right. Climb this to finish. A good top pitch.

The Juggler.

33m. Hard Very Severe.

Start right of *Dog Leg* where a tongue of rock comes low down and is bounded on the right by a corner.

Climb right edge of slab to step left beneath overlaps then up to large block belays on left. Step right then up steep wall to mantleself, go left to block belays. Climb corner above part mantleself, step right to heather, then easily left to wide crack belays as for *Dog Mantle*. Climb up to inset right corner below big roof. Step around edge to gain sloping shelf (crux). Climb steep slab above to finish.

An excellent top pitch and recommended despite vegetation lower down.

Walking past a vegetated slab lies a wedge of rock with a tree crowned ledge above.

Wild Mint.

52m. Mild Very Severe.

Climb right-hand corner of block past roof to gain tree. From the tree step left and gain niche and climb slab rightwards to a break to reach broken ledges on left. Gain slab groove on left to ledges, from there go left to steep corner and up this to finish by large loose slab resting on top.

Walk on By.

36m. Very Severe.

Climb the pod on the left side of wedge to the tree and belay. Traverse right across ledges to step up at end. Climb fine bald slab directly (crux) to reach niche of *Wild Mint*. Finish up this to escape right at ledge. Recommended.

Dynamite.

36m. Extremely Severe (E1).

To the right of the wedge is a black recess topped by overhangs.

Up slab corner on right to surmount overlap. Step left and gain sloping ledges on left (crux). Finish by climbing *Walk on By's* fine slab directly above. Recommended.

Proteus.

42m. Hard Very Severe.

Climb the groove right of *Dynamite*.

Gain the ramp and step right under roof. Surmount and climb left rib to step right to gain niche (crux). Up thin groove above to roof and climb over this. Step up right to gain a shelf, then go up left past thin flake foothold to a small ledge. Step up right below upper slab. Climb upper slab directly.

Recommended, a very concentrated first pitch which is well protected.

Greased Lightning.

45m. Hard Very Severe.

The central wall is split by a prominent slanting groove. Start below this in a hollow where a heather bush lies below a zig-zag crack.

Surmount flake and climb cracks above to glaciis and belay in corner. At back of glaciis is a corner crack, up this to step left (crux) to gain open chimney. Up this past constriction to top and exit left to tree. Two excellent pitches which are well protected. Highly recommended.

Direct Start.

Hard Very Severe.

Climb the pinnacle left of the normal start to gain bald slab and glaciis.

Six Trees.

31m. Mild Very Severe.

Right of *Greased Lightning* is a slab and corner. Up slab and crux corner, to gain large slab and belays. Traverse more easily right below headwall to finish.

Hiroshima Grooves.

31m. Extremely Severe (E1).

Start right of *Six Trees*, below the big slab and climb up slab to below nick in headwall near the corner of *Six Trees*. Surmount overhanging wall above to break and finish up this groove.

To the right and above *Main Face* there is a crag, *Middle Crag*, which offers short slabby climbs and further to the right still is to be found *Top Crag*. It has an extensive overhanging face bordered on the right by a pinnacle which has also been climbed.

PASS OF BALLATER

(Description by Brian T. Lawrie).

The outcrops of the Pass of Ballater are briefly mentioned in the series of rock climbing guides to the Cairngorms (Vol. II). Since the publication of that guide they have been further developed and provide the only worthwhile outcrop climbing on the east side of the Cairngorms, until one reaches the extensive rock climbing of the Aberdeen coastline. They are a particularly useful retreat for climbers washed off the cliffs of Lochnagar or Creag an Dubh Loch. The climbs of the Pass are easily located on its north side (5 mins. from Ballater) and provide generally hardish climbing on solid clean granite. The climbs vary in length from 8-25m.

Viewed from the road the cliffs are in three easily distinguishable sections, each separated by a wide gully. The Western and Central sections provide most of the climbing but the Eastern section does have some desperate short problems.

The Western section is sub-divided into two tiers.

The upper tier comprises of steep walls and cracks. A broad terrace wanders along the bottom of this section and a prominent feature halfway along is the large corner of *Little Cenotaph*. The lower tier, below the terrace has a large slab on the right bounded on its left by an impressive wall, distinguished by a vertical quartz seam running up its right edge.

The Central section contains the 'big routes' of the Pass. The huge corner on the left capped by a big roof is the fine, free line of *Anger and Lust* which replaces the aid route mentioned in the guide.

In the centre of the wall is the obvious groove line of *Bluter Groove*, another aid route now partially free climbed. These two climbs are the most prominent features of the Central Section.

Western Section—Upper Tier.

The routes are described as being *left* or *right* of *Little Cenotaph* which is located roughly in the centre of the Tier. All the routes are about 8-11m long.

Little Cenotaph.

Very Severe.

Climb corner by wide bridging.

Direct Finish.

Hard Very Severe.

Continue up corner, rather than escaping right.

Peels Wall.

Extremely Severe (E3/4).

Just left of *Little Cenotaph* on the frontal face are some large boulders. Step off the largest boulder to gain an undercut flake and strenuous crackline. Finish straight up or out right by obvious horizontal crack.

Fingerwrecker.

Hard Very Severe.

Just left of *Peels Wall* is an obvious crack. Climb this (no cheating from boulders) and gain a corner. Finish by deep cracks of *Original Route*.

Original Route.

Very Severe.

About 10ft left of *Fingerwrecker* is a corner. Awkward entry. Escape left or finish by pleasant deep cracks.

Right Hand Crack.

Hard Very Severe.

Left Hand Crack.

Mild Very Severe.

Two obvious vertical cracks well to the left of *Original Route*.

Pink Wall. Very Severe.
Sustained climbing on the right wall of *Little Cenotaph*.

Hoodie Corner. Very Severe.
Right of *Pink Wall* the first feature is this slim elegant corner – poor protection.

Black Custard. Hard Very Severe.
Right of *Hoodie Corner* a black streak descends from an overhanging apex. Follow streak and quartz fault up to and over overhang.

Misty Wall. Hard Very Severe.
A fine wall a few feet round the arête from *Black Custard*. Climb wall right of the arête to reach horizontal break. Using side pulls above break climb to the top.

Descent.
There is an easy descent right (facing) from the top of *Little Cenotaph*.

—Lower Tier.

Razors Crack. 8m. Severe.
An interesting little S shaped crack near left-hand edge. Obvious feature.

Lucky Strike. 18m. Very Severe.
Right of *Razors Crack* there are some indefinite lines. The crags begin to steepen and the first major feature 12-15m (40-50ft) to the right, is a big black corner. Climb the corner and finish behind a tree.

From the foot of *Lucky Strike* an obvious line of flakes slant diagonally up and right to meet. A corner high up on the wall (pegged initially, this is the final section of *Pretzel Logic*).

Pretzel Logic. 18m. Extremely Severe (E2).
Start at a groove well right of line of flakes and left of the prominent quartz groove on the edge of the buttress (see intro.). Enter groove move up and then hand traverse rightwards across a shallow ramp to reach the base of a finger crack (crux). Pull into crack and continue up for 9-10m (30-35ft) till a sloping ledge is reached. Climb corner at back of ledge.

To continue traversing right brings the climber into a large crevasse below the best section of slab (see intro.).

Slab Route. 18m. Very Severe.
From the crevasse gain a little tree on the left and then move up to the large overlap. Traverse left to a resting place (runner). Move back a few feet right and surmount the overlap (awkward). Gain prominent tree and climb slab behind on small holds.

Central Section.

The highest part of the crag, with routes of 18-22m.

Anger and Lust. Extremely Severe (E2).
Sustained and recommended. This is the line of the big corner on the left of the crag. Bridge up corner and finish sensationally via deep crack in large roof.

Initial Grooves.

Very Severe.

About 9m down from *Anger and Lust* the first feasible looking line is a thin corner with a block in it. Climb corner to a ledge. Finish by obvious capped corner on the right.

Eastern Slant.

Severe.

An obvious slanting line which starts behind a large flake 6-9m left of *Bluter Groove*. Alternative finishes.

Bluter Groove.

Hard Very Severe.

On the frontal face lies this 'big line,' originally pegged. The lower half, a great challenge, is unclimbed. Gain the crack in upper section by a traverse from the right across some flakes (poor peg runner).

Hangover Wall.

Hard Very Severe.

Obvious shallow groove line which starts just above flake traverse of *Bluter Groove*. Awkward to gain groove. (Poor peg runner).

REGIONAL NOTES

Skye

J. Mackenzie reports that several new routes have been climbed in Skye this summer by various parties. These will be recorded in the forthcoming S.M.C. selective guide for the island.

Northern Highlands

Ben Mór Liath Fannich—A route finding difficulty . . . *Downward Bound* S.M.C.J., 1980, xxxii, 52), is on this mountain and not Garbh Choire Mór.

Stac Polly—West Buttress—J. Mackenzie records improved descriptions for the following two routes with Direct variations:

Enigma Grooves Direct.

108m. Hard Very Severe.

Climb rocks left of *November Grooves* to below a steep corner crack (45m). Climb corner crack and chimney above to gain a platform (39m). From platform follow easy wide chimney to smaller platform on left below narrow chimney bordering a slab (9m). Climb strenuous chimney past chockstone to old peg, climb crux crack to top (15m).

(The last pitch was climbed by P. Goodwin & J. Mackenzie, 18th August, 1979).

Jack the Ripper.

110m. Hard Very Severe.

Start just right of *November Grooves* at a cairn. Climb wall above this, go left to climb crack to belays behind wide crack on the right. Climb up left, to left crack, to poor belays in *November Grooves*. Traverse right to slab rib, climb this following thin cracks (crux) to small ledge overlooking east wall. Climb shallow corner above (loose block) and finish by climbing crack (36m). An upward traverse leads left into *November Grooves*. Either finish up this or from a good ledge climb wide crack to flake. Step left and up slanting crack to ledge then up little corner to top (15m).

This last pitch makes the climb independent of *November Grooves* apart from a short chimney section.

Western Highlands

Loch Hourn: An Caisteal—In August 1980, B. McMillan & G. Strange climbed the narrow central sweep of clean slabs (presumably somewhere between *Battlement Slab* and *Portcullis*). The line followed was fairly direct and passed just right of the obvious wet break in the upper overlaps. 180m of pleasant V.S. climbing.

Cairngorms

Ben Macdhuil: Coire Sputan Dearg—G. Strange notes a winter ascent of *Black Tower* at GRADE IV with R. Smith on 10th November, 1979.

Braeriach: Garbh Choire Mór—Sphinx Gully.—Concerning this route (see *S.M.C.J.*, 1980, p.57) Adam Watson writes: 'Pat Baird and I climbed this gully on 31st October, 1954, in winter conditions, on hard snow, with verglas on the exit rock beside the tower on *Sphinx*. No more than GRADE II.'

Càrn Etchachan—We note a winter ascent of *Pagan Slit* by M. Fowler and friend. Subsequent ascensionists give it GRADE IV.

Creag an Dubh Loch: False Gully Wall—Meantime.—In late May 1980, Archbold & Strange climbed the wall well to the right of *Falseface*. Starting in a prominent slanting fault the line followed a corner to gain a grass ledge at 24m. At this point the intermittent rain became continuous. Thus faced with the choice of using a retrievable point of aid to ascend the steep wall above or using an irretrievable point of aid to retreat they naturally took the former action! The climb is very short and would probably be just Extreme without aid in the dry.

Coire Kander—A Long Line.—We note an ascent of the obvious curving recess (by C. Brooker, N. Mollison, A. Nisbet, N. Spinks & E. Clark at GRADE III in January 1981), mentioned in the Lochnagar/Creag an Dubh Loch guide. It offered short steep ice pitches. The pitch at the point where the gully curved right was bare so ice was followed on the left until a traverse right over a rib could be made to enter the upper part of the route.

Glen Clova—I. Shepherd reports that the large gully directly behind Whitehaugh Bothy (No. 300743) is a well established route called *Whitehaugh Gully* and is GRADE I/II.

Any improvements? . . . J. Thomson notes that aid is still required on his route *Vindaloo*, though two points less than previously. He also reports three Severs which we have filed.

Lochaber and Badenoch

Ardverikie Wall, Binnein Shuas—There is an error in the new Lochaber and Badenoch Guide on page 159. Pitch 2 is 36m not 30m and pitch 3 is omitted. It should read 'Climb the slab and overlap to flake belay (30m).'

Ben Nevis—Some slight confusion may have been caused by the recording in the Ben Nevis Supplement Guide of a winter ascent of *Continuation Wall*. This ascent is in fact correctly described in the 1979 *S.M.C.J.* as *Boomer's Requiem* (C. Higgins & D. McArthur). *Continuation Wall*, though starting alongside *Boomer's Requiem*, then diverges considerably, and the routes are entirely independent of each other. A description of *Continuation Wall* is given in the *New Routes* section.

D. Gardner notes a variation start to *Raeburn's Bultress*, along with C. Higgins & A. N. Other. From just below the bifurcation climb up and right on steep ice to a shallow corner and chimney. Belay a short distance below the '... traverse right into a chimney gully ...' of the original ascent. This variation provides a good, long pitch.

Astral Highway—Rather than midway between *Epsilon Chimney* and the *Second Slab Rib*, it is left of centre, i.e. the groove to the right of *Epsilon*.

We note a route by C. Higgins and partner between *Astral Highway* and *Orion Direct* but still await a full description.

Binnein Shuas—P. Main & J. Picken report that the obvious corner/gangway to the right of the *Fortress* and below *Hidden Gully* gives a vegetated 50m. Severe.

Southern Highlands

Creag Tharsuin—T. McAulay notes that *Slab and Groove* gives a 'nice wee climb' at about GRADE II when well plastered with snow.

Glen Lednock: Balnacoul Castle Crag—We note that P. Bilsborough & I. Duckworth have made a free ascent of *Sunburst* (previously unreported). The route, 27m E1, starts as for *Moonraker* and climbs the obvious thin crack and its continuation on the right wall of the chimney.

Craig y Barns—We continue collecting routes for publication in a forthcoming guide.

Arran

Free in Arran—We note a variation to pitch 3 of *Bogle* climbed by J. W. Earl & P. Stewart. This free climbs the crack a few feet to the right of the original line (which now also goes free).

Aid in Arran—The rumour that Graham Little is emigrating to Canada, like Rowe before him (see Arran Notes, *S.M.C.J.*, 1975, p.393) is untrue. His creation *Abraxas* (New Routes Section) can only be described as route-bagging.

TECHNICAL SECTION

RECENT ADVANCES IN ARCTIC TRAVEL

By I. H. M. Smart

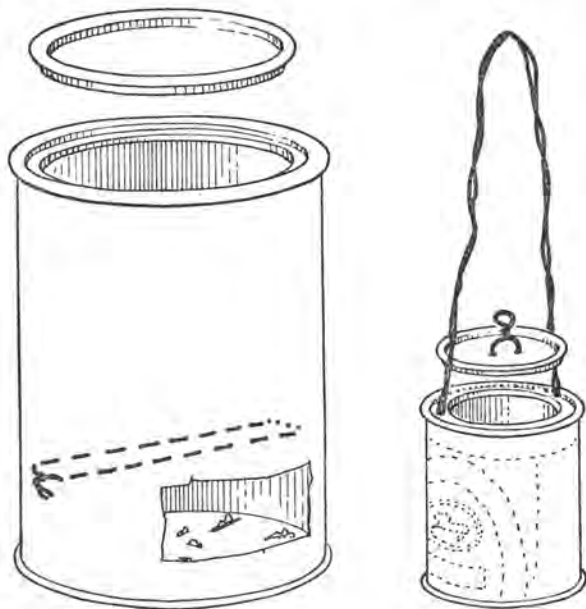
MOUNTAINEERS visiting the High Arctic may find the following observations on the statics, metaphysics and thermodynamics of travel in this area useful.

(i) *Statics*. I was able to spend a 24-hour cycle alone on top of a mountain during the course of an expedition to Hochstetter's Foreland, a seldom visited area about 75°N on Greenland's East Coast. The peak was well situated to command a view of a textured landscape of icecaps, fjords, rolling tundras and the sullen ice of the Arctic Sea. Freed from the problems of movement (the curse of conventional mountaineering) awareness is increased of the changing light and proper attention can be paid to what happens when flat transparent noon changes to the deep, dense light of the unsettling evening sun. Midnight, of course, is the crux, when time, light and land hang between evening and morning. Much happens about this time if you have been following what has been going on. On no account miss an opportunity to spend a com-

plete rotation of the earth on some remote vantage point at a high latitude. For anyone who can remain still for hours on end it is an informative experience.

(ii) *Metaphysics*. In a previous *Journal* some of the problems of travelling alone in the everlasting daylight of an Arctic summer were pondered on (*S.M.C.J.*, xxxi, 1977). Solitary travel in an empty landscape, devoid of human history or artefact is for a time an invigorating experience. There is a spring in the step and a liteness of thought as body and mind move unencumbered. But after some days changes take place. Insulation against the unknown wears thin. That which is there has to be faced without the shell of metaphor and myth that normally protect us. For a while you can survive tortoise-like, looking out from under a carapace of consciously strengthened metaphors. You can regenerate the protective forces by reading a book, or thinking about some interesting problems, or deliberately setting yourself a methodical task. Eventually, however, it happens; you are left alone with the Big Eye. Nothing is left between you and what is there. Look back and every metaphor can be seen from the other side and can be seen to be wrong. It becomes urgent to get back before the door slams shut. Only people who know what they are doing can spend forty days outside. There are techniques to increase your survival time but as these cannot be expressed as symbols or metaphors they cannot be written about. There can never be any guide books to this branch of mountaineering and by definition you must climb alone and unroped.

(iii) *Thermodynamics*. Travellers in remote sparsely vegetated regions who are able to adopt to a changing technology may be interested in the following apparatus for elevating 800 ml. of water to boiling point in about 4-6 minutes (depending on wind velocity) using the solar energy trapped in about 400 grams of twigs, foliage or animal dung. The apparatus is illustrated in the figure below.



To make an Ecofreak Stove first obtain an empty tin such as a 1½ lb. powdered coffee tin. Mark a rectangle 4 x 6 cm. with its long side parallel to and 2 cms. above the base of the tin. Punch a hole with a pointed knife in the centre of the rectangle, then cut along the diagonals to each corner. Fold back the triangular pieces of the saltire so formed to form an aperture into the interior of the can. Next make six radial slits in the bottom of the can and prise them apart to allow a through draught. Finally puncture the can with the tip of a nail twice on each side in the positions indicated and thread a loop of wire through the holes to form a hammock for the water container. The water container is prepared from a 2 lb. syrup tin according to the classical pattern developed by antebellum workmen. The details can be worked out from the illustration.

To use the tundra burner or ecofreak stove fill the bottom of the stove with *small* twigs. Insert some tinder into the door and light. When the flame gets going rotate the can so that the doorway faces the wind and place the stove on three or more small stones to allow access of a draught to the perforations in the bottom of the can. After use the small amount of ash can be scattered back into the soil. The stove underwent proving trials in Greenland this summer and worked successfully for a month without deteriorating. Standard practice was to start collecting small pieces of twig or musk ox dung, and maybe an old lemming nest for tinder ten minutes before making camp. A full bag usually provided enough solar energy for two billys of boiling water, the first cup of coffee being ready before other, less technologically advanced, explorers had finished setting up their archaic stoves driven by non-renewable fossil energy. Students of this sort of situation will immediately grasp the possibilities for repartee advantage given to the possessor of an ecofreak stove.

For carrying, the billy is inserted in the stove and the lid of the stove applied. The whole is then carried in a polythene shopping bag to prevent soiling other items in the rucksack. The bulkiness of the stove is only apparent as the inside can be packed with other wrapped articles such as packets of soup or bars of chocolates.

Use of the stove does minimal damage to the environment and enables almost all packing material, old clothes, used reading material and increasingly worthless pound notes to be converted into useful heat.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SIR—Had I known that the dinner held in the George Hotel, Edinburgh, on the 6th December, 1980, was to be the last great occasion of the Club, I would have undoubtedly cut short my recent visit to Nepal.

The decision to abandon the time honoured reception-lecture-A.G.M.-dinner for a mere dinner and A.G.M. in some inconvenient hostelry, is one that those of us who treasure the very special atmosphere of the S.M.C. will regret for ever. One should not lightly tamper with fossil institutions, and ours is a fossil institution. It is respected for that, and we join the Club recognising it as such.

For years the Club has been under attack from within, as various liberal, but woolly minded members have sought to open membership to women. I was glad to hear that the Trojan horse tactics of letting the L.S.C.C. attend our annual dinner was defeated, though one notes that the womens' libbers are gaining ground. However, the ultimate folly, which I fear will have the same effect in the end, is to abandon our time honoured form of reception, lecture, A.G.M. and dinner. It was a form, and therefore an occasion that made the first Saturday in December a very special one – so much so that in my own case I have made journeys over two thousand miles to be there. The

occasion was quite unlike any other. It was far better than the Arctic Club's annual dinner (as a self-perpetuating oligarchy it has no A.G.M.), infinitely better than the amorphous, boring Scottish Ski Club dinner. It had none of the committed urge to get drunk so visible at many a lesser mountaineering club dinner. Foreign mountaineering friends (forced to belong to mixed clubs) used to listen with envy as I recounted our affairs.

Our annual occasion provided a chance to meet the women folk under civilised circumstances, and to be hospitable (at modest cost!). Over the years the lectures have brought us some wonderful moments. Who will ever forget Graham Nicol's account of the post-war Aberdeen school, or Hartog's lecture on the Mustagh Tower, Ken Crocket's slides or Hugh Simpson's last minute appearance to give the crossing of Greenland. The whole affair lasted twelve hours, offering a wide variety of sensations, and more often than not a continuing party in someone's home. There was time to meet old friends, time to drink (but not in the rugby club sense), time to be polite, time to plan new forays into foreign parts, time to feel one was part of a very special group of people, held together by a common bond. The S.M.C. has always had this feeling that it was a Club one could grow old in. It wasn't all that easy to enter and the fly-by-nighters and geriatric immigrants were successfully turned away. But once in . . . It was a Club, if you like, where the geriatric delinquent (a category into which I myself fall, and many of my friends) could feel at ease.

The new arrangement, as envisaged by next year at Coylumbridge will be no Great Occasion, and certainly more expensive. Whereas in the past practically every Glasgow or Edinburgh member turned his house into a free bed and breakfast, at Coylumbridge we are almost destitute of members and added to the cost of dinner will be an overnight hotel bill. Whereas in Edinburgh or Glasgow (or even Stirling) a man could get to the dinner by public transport, at Coylumbridge he cannot.

What sort of occasion will evolve out of this new arrangement? Firstly, it will gradually choke off the older members (and you too, young man, will eventually be old) greatly damaging the esprit de corps, if not eroding the whole social base of the Club. Secondly, we may lose some of the guests from English clubs. It's a long way, and are we going to meet their hotel bills?). This would be a pity. To the English the S.M.C. is a thistle, to be grasped with care, and they as much as we enjoy the cut and thrust of toasts and replies to Kindred Clubs. Over the years I have heard some beautifully turned insults at S.M.C. dinners. It's not an art form we wish to lose, for we are amongst its greatest exponents, and devoted patrons. And thirdly, I fear that the event will slide away into a typical provincial mountaineering club debauch, fun maybe, but not an Occasion. After all, for a debauch, one needs women.

MALCOLM SLESSER.

SIR—Editorial concern for balance has led to me being asked to make a response to Malcolm Slessor's vigorous plea for a return to former practice over the Dinner and Reception arrangements.

I suppose that I was asked because I was a vociferous proponent of change during my term on the Committee but change usually occurs only when the climate is right for it. The Committee believed so and was supported in that belief by a majority of those present at the last A.G.M. Perhaps if he had been there himself the result would have been different as he has an entertaining although not always constructive talent for bringing his wit to bear with devastating effect on any issue which he feels threatens the traditional practices and attitudes of the Club.

Had the proposed change been thrown out we would have been obliged to continue with arrangements which had become increasingly unsatisfactory.

The most likely prospect was a perennial visit to the George leading to increased discontent among a significant proportion of the membership and a geographical distortion of the nature of the Club. You may dispute the last point. It is my own opinion and not that of the Committee of which I was a member but I can support it by recalling the very distinctive differences between the functions held in the St. Enoch Hotel and those in the George in former days. Regional bias is undesirable in a national club. A further element to consider is the growing practice among some members who come to Edinburgh for the Reception and A.G.M. only, then proceed to private dinners with friends and acquaintances. Leaving this aside, I know that many members voted for change although they had a preference for existing arrangements but they recognised, as the Committee has for some time, that the facilities required by us for our composite function were no longer available in the Glasgow area.

The Committee has now won the support of the A.G.M. for a flexible approach to future arrangements. It may be that the old practice can continue at the George in alternate years with a moveable feast in between. It may be that a December storm will demonstrate the unwisdom of straying out of the central area and easy communications, which could then lead to a reconsideration of the date of our A.G.M. and thereby make it feasible to re-establish the former practice.

I hope that the arrangements for 1981 will be treated as an experiment and not become fixed in their turn into unvarying practice. In any case, the attendance at the next A.G.M. should include a higher proportion of truly active members and this can be no bad thing. As for Slessor's plea that the Cowlumbridge venue will involve overnight hotel bills I suggest this is unlikely, unless by choice, and especially for such as Slessor. No set of arrangements can meet the requirements of the full membership. The all-day function was attractive to members in the Edinburgh and Glasgow areas but I'm not convinced that many of those coming from further afield found much advantage in it.

I'm confident that the social function in October will attract more wives than the Reception did, if the intentions of my friends in the West of Scotland are anything to judge by. It will also avoid the embarrassment and expense of turning them out at 5 p.m. in Edinburgh.

JIM CRAWFORD.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

Grand Prix Langlauf.—Tim Waller reports that 'Scotland's grand prix langlauf, The Six Tops Of The Cairngorms In A Day, has at last been repeated by Etchachan Club members, G. Boyd & G. C. Keir, after an interval of 18 years since A. Watson romped the route and told his story (*S.M.C.J.* 1963, *xviii*, 348). But, on this occasion, it was done for the first time in a west-east direction, a distance of some 34 miles, taking 18 hours 40 minutes. Known previous attempts had faltered for lack of a long enough interval of settled conditions whose rarity makes this trip a serious undertaking for the lightly laden skier. Therefore, it is remarkable that the run was scooped in what turned out to be a 24 hour cold, but calm and clear, weather window in an otherwise very stormy, snowy period just before Easter. Indeed, a rescue helicopter was out looking for a piste skier lost the day before! But more remarkable still remains Watson's solo effort in a faster time, with an earlier mode of cross-country equipment and a heavier sack. Wonder how Ned Gillette (the Jean Marc Boivin of light-weight 3-pin Nordic skiing) would find it?'

Feats on foot.—The lesser tour of the Four Tops was made in record time by Mel Edwards on the 9th July 1979. His time from and to Glen More

Lodge via Braeriach, Cairn Toul, Ben MacDhui and Cairngorm was 4 hours 34 minutes 8 seconds – some 7 minutes less than the time set by Eric Beard in 1963. In September 1980 he made another round trip run from Glenmore Lodge to MacDhui in the following times: Cairngorm, 49 minutes; MacDhui, 1 hour 25 minutes; Glenmore, 2 hours 41 minutes.

Cool on the Cuillin.—The traverse of the Cuillin Ridge is a winter route badly out of condition in the summer when drinking water is scarce and scree unprotected by névé. This is the opinion of S. N. Smith who presents the winter passage as a mere dawdle. He writes: 'There have now been well over half a dozen winter traverses of the Ridge and most find the excursion to be most enjoyable, in fact so much so that one party bivvied three times; this seems to be taking hedonism to rather great an extreme. The best plan seems to be that adopted by Colin Grant, Ian Fulton and myself in February '79. We pitched our tent at Sligachan and set off early the next morning so that the summit of Sgùrr nan Gilleann was reached at dawn. From here the Ridge can be admired while you get your breath back.

'Abseiling down Naismith's Route on The Bhasteir Tooth is always fun and is no less so in winter. There follows various interesting Grade III pitches which, like all the other steps should be soloed, the ropes only being used for abseils. This plan means that three is a good number because two men can each carry 150 ft of rope while the third carries the stove and a few packets of biscuits.

'We bivouacked at Sgùrr Thormaid which is a reasonable half-way point although other parties have gone further.

'Most parties (ourselves included) miss out the Inaccessible Pinnacle to get to grips with the sections that lead to the King's Chimney abseil and later the Thearlaich-Dubh Gap. At the T-D Gap forget MacInnes's rope tricks and just scramble down the gully into Coir a' Ghrunnda and then back onto the ridge and so eventually to Garsbheinn. The B.M.C. hut can then be reached in time for tea.

'On returning to our tent at Sligachan, we discovered the police had removed the entire contents to Portree. Since a note of our intentions had been left behind, the reasons remain obscure.'

This incident illustrates that although we may enjoy better protection on a climb than our predecessors, off it there are new hazards of which they never dreamed.

Park Rangifer.—At the end of January a party of three were joined by a reindeer as they left the Cairngorm car park en route for Coire an t-Sneachda. The friendly quadruped was rewarded with a sandwich and responded by staying with them all day. This included the ascent of Fiacaill Couloir (Grade II/III). This was done unroped and although in fairly easy condition, was not made any easier by the occasional attempt by Rudolph to take over the lead, punching his forefeet into the soft ice. The day was ended by an impressive ungulate descent of Fiachaill Coire Cas with all four legs splayed out in a controlled slither.

If the M.C. of S. can be persuaded to provide the right training for further development along these lines, potential is clearly considerable. Willing trail-breakers and load-carriers are always an asset and their availability could lead to a considerable increase in the use of the C.I.C. Hut by senior members of the Club.

Panoramic Views.—Members may be interested to hear that the fourth edition of the Ben Nevis Panorama produced and drawn by Chris Jesty is now available. Based originally on a panorama by Shearer, it has been recalibrated against photographs and redrawn. It is well printed, costs 60p and is

available from him at Sunlyn, Allington Park, Bridport, Dorset. A Snowdon panorama is also available. Mr Jesty seems to be a bit of a character and members may have come across him here and there driving an old motor caravan or operating a taxi in Aberdeen.

Compleat Munroists.—The following have reported that they have completed the Munros:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| (206) Archie Mitchell, 1973, —, —; | (224) Stanley Grant, 1980, —, —; |
| (207) J. R. M. Lubbock, 1976, 1979, —; | (225) Alan L. Brook, 1980, 1980, |
| (208) P. D. Binnie, 1977, —, —; | [1980; |
| (209) Fergus McIntosh, 1979, 1980, 1980; | (226) M. W. McCue, 1980, 1980, |
| (210) Christopher Bond, 1980, —, —; | [1980; |
| (211) Tom Rix, 1980, —, —; | (227) Donald Mill, 1980, —, —; |
| (212) I. H. Chuter, 1980, —, —; | (228) Alan Gately, 1980, —, —; |
| (213) Ivan Waller, 1980, —, —; | (229) Stan Bradshaw, 1980, 1980, |
| (214) B. David Batty, 1980, —, —; | [1980; |
| (215) Patricia Batty, 1980, —, —; | (230) John Howarth, 1980, 1980, |
| (216) W. Ross Napier, 1980, —, —; | [1980; |
| (217) Ronald Leask, 1980, 1980, —; | (231) C. R. Knowles, 1980, 1980, —; |
| (218) Sue Jardine, 1980, —, —; | (232) Trevor Ransley, 1980, —, —; |
| (219) D. Alistair Baird, 1980, —, —; | (233) Peter Edward, 1980, —, —; |
| (220) Jeremy Fenton, 1980, —, —; | (234) Sheila Cormack, 1980, —, —; |
| (221) Raymond Hutcheson, 1980, | (235) Anne McGeachie, 1980, —, —; |
| [—, —; | (236) George McGeachie, 1980, —, —; |
| (222) Ronald Crawford, 1980, —, —; | (237) R. W. J. Webster, 1981, —, —; |
| (223) Carole M. Davie, 1980, —, —; | |

In addition (198) S. R. Palmer has completed the Tops and the 'furth' and is now 1979, 1980, 1980. Also (102) P. Edwards and (198) S. R. Edwards have both completed the Tops and the 'furth' and should now read 1971, 1980, 1980, and 1979, 1980, 1980 respectively. (55) I. A. Robertson completed the 'furth' on January 2nd 1981, (73) Andrew Fraser is now 1967, 1980, 1977, and 1978, —, —. Fraser alludes darkly to the dread condition of *Chronic Munrositis*. It is infectious because his next door neighbour (94) R. Armour also suffered from a second attack of Compleating the Munros in 1979. (76) M. J. Moulton is a bad case and in 1981 contracted his fourth attack of compleating. (62) H. M. Brown has developed galloping *Munrositis* and is now in the throes of his seventh attack having compleated his sixth round in 1979.

The following 'records' have been extracted from the correspondence: (209) F. McIntosh may be the first to have compleated the trilogy solo. (206) A. G. Mitchell compleated his round on Blaven 'on the centenary of the early ascent by Willick and on the bicentenary of Johnson and Boswell's visit to Broadford.' (55) I. A. Robertson was the fourth person from Perth to record his final ascent of the Munros and the 'furth' in the famous log book in the hotel at Pen-y-Gwryd.

(222) R. Crawford made his final ascent accompanied by pipers. He himself wore a kilt and 'nothing else besides drink.' (225) A. L. Brook has a head for figures as well as heights. He has compiled a list of all the tops over 2,000 feet in Great Britain. It lists 409 mountains and 1,626 tops. The list took three months to copy in ink. (217) R. Leask may be the first master mariner to compleat. He finds Sibelius and Bruckner most suited to our mountains and when his ship comes in his ambition is to have Bruckner's Fifth Symphony played in Coire Ghrunnda and to stage Wagner's complete Ring cycle in the Quiraing.

In all the letters there is expression of the pleasure and interest that has been derived from collecting Munros. Memorable storms and sunsets, people and incidents are nostalgically recalled as if it is better to collect than to compleat.

Theoretical Munroölogy: the Clandestine Factor.—We have alluded in a previous *Journal* (*S.M.C.J.*, 1979, *xxxi*, 422) to the fact that there are increasing numbers of compleaters who do not report their felony to the Authorities. Many compleaters tend to be diffident about reporting their achievement as there has always been doubts in sensitive minds about the respectability of Munro-bagging. Since the number of the Elect passed the hundred, frank compleating has become less prestigious and a cult of Super-Elitists has grown up whose members do not sully their achievement by having their names recorded along with the vulgar masses. (They are alleged to recognise each other with a secret handshake). However, we in the Lyon Court of Munroölogy are concerned in maintaining complete records and until our investigators track down all clandestines and take their confessions, we are publishing a method whereby overt compleaters can estimate their true numbers in the ranks of all the Elect and get a better idea where they will stand on the day of judgement that will surely come.

Our mathematical consultant advises us as follows: Let y be the number of clandestines and x the number of frank compleaters. Postulating that the number of newly compleated clandestines, dy , and newly compleated frank reporters, dx , is proportional to (a) the number of reported Munroists and (b) the number of circulating clandestines then

$$\frac{dy}{dx} = kxy \text{ and hence } y = Ae^{\frac{1}{2}kx^2}$$

Now from our records the first clandestine to be discovered should have been about (170) and the second about¹ (190). Thus, $y = 0.062e^{0.000096x^2}$. Therefore a reported Munroist given by us the number x is actually $x \times 0.062e^{0.000096x^2}$. So if your number happens to be, say, (250) then $y = 41$ and your actual number will be (291).

Theoretical Munroölogy: the statistical approach.—In recent years it has become apparent that the Munros go up and down and have a lateral movement, i.e. they change their heights and map references. The summit of a Munro therefore probably traces a sub-circular path over the years, perhaps linked in some obscure way with the erratic wandering of the magnetic poles. Those near the boundary of 3,000 feet, therefore, are constantly entering and leaving the Tables. Thus the number of Munros is a statistical concept and there never will be a final perfect *Table*, only a series of *Tables* constantly brought up to date by indefatigable Editors. Indeed it may not be possible to climb all the Munros unless you do the tops as well, for the first Munro you climbed when you were young may have dropped out of the *Table* valid for the time of your final ascent and have been replaced by one or more summits that were only *Tops* in your youth. Our mathematical adviser is currently embarking on a theoretical study to see if there is a way of predicting the number of Munros that are actually present at one time. We hope to have further information in our next issue. If you have to resort to statistics then this is an admission that the group is fundamentally uncountable and in the next section we consider a better approach.

Theoretical Munroölogy: the metaphysical approach.—Counting a set of semi-magical entities such as the Munros is a metaphysical problem as an arithmetical solution cannot be arrived at without destroying the magic. Consider the following parable about the magic pigs of Cruachu by an Irish research worker of the ninth century.

'... out of Cruachu came these pigs. Wherever they would be counted, they would not stay, but if anyone tried to count them they would go to another land. They were never completely counted; but 'There are three,' said one; 'More, seven,' said another; 'Eleven pigs'; 'Thirteen pigs.' In that

way it was impossible to count them. Moreover, they could not be killed, for if they were shot at they would disappear. One day, however, Queen Maeve counted them and they were never seen again.'

The moral of all that is if you go too far in counting the Munros by administrative *force majeure* the magic will go: all that will be left will be piles of rock crawling with youth leaders, earnest schoolteachers and sadim organisers of one kind or another. That is why if you find Ben Feskineth you must not tell anybody.

Some Expedition Reports.—We have a report of the *Pinnacle Club Lahaul Expedition* which climbed fourteen interesting looking peaks in the corner of North India between Nepal and Pakistan with the suitably engendered name of Lahaul. The expedition was, of course, entirely female (the Pinnacle Club has high standards – males are not permitted to join). As a number of the expedition live in Scotland the expedition qualified for the Sang Award and obviously put it to good use. The total cost of the expedition for eight people and liaison officer was £4,989 of which £4,089 was raised from the personal contributions of the participants. The leader was Sheila Cormack, 12 Greenfield Crescent, Balerno.

The three-man *Annapurna II Expedition* 1979 report is a brief summary of an expedition that will appeal to our members. It was an attempt to make an Alpine style attack without oxygen, porters or fixed ropes. A proposed new route was abandoned when it was avalanched comprehensively and their base camp swept away. They reached 23,500 feet on the original route before progress was stopped by persistent high winds. The members were: Paul Moores, Alan Burgess and Adrian Burgess.

A brief report from the 1980 *Nanga Purbat Expedition* tells of the trials and tribulations of climbing the 'Rupal Face,' the largest rock and ice wall in the world. Strained communications and bad weather prevented reaching the summit when all but there.

SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN ACCIDENTS, 1980

ACCIDENT reports for 1980 have been gathered and refined by John Hinde, currently chairman of the M.R.C.S. We are grateful to him, to the Mountain Rescue Teams and other Rescue services for the efforts they make to help those in trouble.

The total number of incidents is about the same as over the last three years. However there is a slight increase in actual casualties and the number of fatalities is the highest since the early 1970's. Particularly noticeable is the continued increase in winter climbing falls, notably on Lochnagar where there were two double fatalities. As opposed to this, accidents to hillwalkers due to slips on snow and ice are down on previous years suggesting that persistent stress on the importance of the axe and its proper use may be having an effect. The first Scottish ski touring fatality took place this year. Chauvinists will be reassured to know that for the two thirds of incidents where nationality is given, the rules established by B.H.H. are still being followed. '45% involving those from outside Scotland' is firmly within the limits of 'Humble's First Law.'

70% of incidents involved hillwalking activity and 27% took place when climbing was being done.

57% were in summer and 43% in winter conditions.

Excluded from this analysis are at least sixteen incidents in which mountain rescue services were called on. Among these were two involving straying downhill skiers, one to a deer stalker, several missing mental patients and one apparent suicide, the last involving a two-week search. R.A.F. helicopters were used on at least 36 occasions.

As usual we append a table or two for those with statistical interests.

SEASONAL DISTRIBUTION

<i>Type of Incident</i>	<i>Summer</i>	<i>Winter</i>	<i>Year</i>
Hillwalking slips or stumbles	25	9	34
Climbing falls	5	11	16
Total Hillwalking	50	26	76
Total climbing	11	19	30
All incidents	62	47	109

PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF SOME INCIDENTS

Poor timing	5	Rockfall	2
Navigational error	6	Abseiling	2
Equipment inadequate or ineffective in use	6	Glissading	2
		Avalanche	4
Drowning	2	Cornice collapse	1

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

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

REGION	CASUALTIES (of which fatalities bracketed)				INCIDENTS Actual Other Rescues call-outs					Total Incidents	Non-Mountaineering
	Injury	Exhaustion Exposure	Illness	Total	Casualties	Cragfast	Lost	Overdue or Benighted	False Alarms		
Northern Highlands	3 (1)	-	-	3 (1)	3	-	-	-	-	3	1
Western Highlands	4 (1)	-	1 (1)	5 (2)	4	-	-	2	1	7	3 (1)
Ben Nevis	16 (1)	-	3 (2)	19 (3)	18	2	-	7	-	27	-
Glencoe	16 (5)	-	1	17 (5)	15	-	-	1	-	16	-
Other Central Highlands	10 (2)	-	-	10 (2)	8	-	-	1	-	9	-
Cairngorms	10 (5)	3 (1)	1	14 (6)	10	1	1	2	-	14	6
Southern Highlands	10 (1)	2	2	14 (1)	12	3	1	1	3	20	4 (1)
Skye	8 (1)	-	-	8 (1)	8	-	-	-	1	9	-
Islands (Arran)	1	-	1	2	2	-	-	1	-	3	-
Southern Uplands	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	2 (2)
All Areas	78 (17)	5 (1)	9 (3)	92 (21)	80	6	2	16	5	109	16 (4)

Accident List

*This list omits most of the incidents of a non-mountaineering nature. Those which have been included are marked * and do not figure in the statistics.*

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

MAY 13—Woman (50) Potts fracture of ankle. Lost balance when moving from rock slab caught her foot in a crevice. Alone on Beinn Eighe (Mountain) Nature Trail. Several hours before being found. Team out from 21.00 to 23.59. (NG 989650). Torridon M.R.T.

JULY 21—A 21-year-old geology student, working alone on the West face of Quinag during a geological survey (on which he had already been for ten days) fell down a steep gully and was killed, sustaining a skull fracture and body injuries. The weather had been good. Next day's search was hampered by the position of his body under an overhanging rock and by the wearing of dark clothing, but he was found at 11.45 hours. (NC 197295).

Assynt M.R.T., Dundonnell M.R.T., R.A.F. M.R.T., 2 S.A.R.D.A. dogs, helicopter R.A.F. lowered down to suitable helicopter landing site. 486 man hours.

SEPTEMBER 10—West end of Fionn Loch in Assynt (NC 117186). Hillwalker (52) injured his ankle jumping across a stream in spate. Assynt M.R.T. carried out two-stage rescue by boat down the loch, followed by a 2-mile stretcher carry in darkness. 57 man hours.

WESTERN HIGHLANDS

FEBRUARY 10—Ladhar Bheinn, Knoydart. Party of three descending steep slopes below wide snow gully in Coire Dhorrcail at 17.00 hrs. Reasonably experienced but no crampons. Misty, mild; soft snow thawing to expose frozen ground with ice clicks. Two slipped and slid or bounced several hundred feet, sustaining bruises, cuts and sprains. Walked to Barrisdale Bothy. Evacuated by visiting friend's boat next day to Kinloch Hourn.

MAY 22—Streap, Gleann Dubh Lighe, Loch Eil (NM 947862). One of five geologists on a survey (male 22) in very good weather. Went to look into the top of a very steep narrow gully on a steep hillside. Slipped and fell 40 feet. Head injuries and broken ankle. Very tricky helicopter evacuation from gully using 200 feet on winch cable. Lochaber M.R.T. 4 man hours.

EARLY SUMMER—Benightment. Man (35) went out for 'an hour or two' on hills near Li on South shore of Loch Hourn. Glenelg M.R.T. spotted a fire at NG 824078 next morning.

JUNE 18—Male hillwalker (57) got detached from a group of five and went down wrong side of ridge. Luinne Bheinn (NG 868008). Returned 22.30 hrs. to Barrisdale, Knoydart. Mist, rain, very cold.

JUNE 20—River crossing fatality. Allt Coire Thollaidh, Glen Finnan. (NM 921855). Outward Bound student (16) one of a party crossing at a ford at the 'Public Footpath' signpost. She failed to keep her grip on a rope stretched across the burn, then another student failed to keep his hold on her wrist and she was swept downstream. Very heavy rain. Lochaber M.R.T., S.A.R.D.A. 18 man hours.

JULY 12—Solo hillwalker (59) died of cardiac arrest in fair weather on ridge between Sgùrr Thuilm and Sgùrr nan Coireachan, Glen Finnan (NM 928877). Detailed route and card left. He was found two days later and his dog had been guarding his body all that time. He was found during a preliminary search of the ridge by Lochaber M.R.T. members on board R.A.F. Leuchars helicopter. 54 man hours.



Photo: Hamish M. Brown

Stac Lee of St. Kilda



December 1980

The 2,000 foot sandstone wall of Wadi Rum, Jordan

Photo: W. D. Brooker

SEPTEMBER 7—*Woman (68) died of heart attack at top of Prince Charlie's Monument, Glen Finnan. Due to the narrowness of the internal spiral stair, she was lowered down the outside of the tower on a stretcher by Lochaber M.R.T. 10 man hours.

BEN NEVIS

JANUARY 13-14—Two men (26 and 21) set out in mist to climb No. 2 Gully Ben Nevis. They climbed Italian Climb(!) and were benighted below the Great Tower of Tower Ridge. After ascent and descent of various routes they descended Tower Ridge into Observatory Gully next afternoon. Very high winds - snow showers. Lochaber M.R.T. 8 man hours.

JANUARY 26-27—Two very experienced male climbers (31 and 32) attempted to climb N.E. Buttress in excellent weather. Cragfast at Man Trap (*yes, really!*) Stayed till winched off climb by R.A.F. helicopter next morning. Lochaber M.R.T. 32 man hours.

FEBRUARY 12—Male hillwalker (26) slipped descending scree on Carn Dearg N.W., above Halfway Lochan. Badly torn knee ligaments. Lochaber M.R.T. 63 man hours.

FEBRUARY 15—Male hillwalker (29) in a party of four, slipped wearing vibrams - descending Abseil Posts, Coire Leis. Equipped with ice axe. Broken ankle. R.A.F. helicopter. Lochaber M.R.T. 4 man hours.

FEBRUARY 17—Party of four climbing No. 5 Gully. Woman climber (23) fell breaking a wrist and ribs. Equipped with ice axe, crampons, rope. Very windy with rain showers. R.A.F. helicopter, Lochaber M.R.T. 10 man hours.

FEBRUARY 17—Party of three climbed Point Five Gully and went to top of No. 4 Gully. Frenchman (27) fell through cornice and sprained ankle, unable to walk. Snow in bad condition. Very windy with heavy showers. R.A.F. helicopter (still in Fort William from rescue 1½ hours before) uplifted five of Lochaber M.R.T. but could do no more because of bad weather. Others walked up. Casualty stretchered down. 60 man hours.

FEBRUARY 21—Party of two decided to climb No. 3 Gully Buttress as gullies were liable to avalanche (good weather, but mild). Both swept from top of first pitch by small avalanche. Man (28) cracked a leg bone. Other uninjured, went for help. Lochaber M.R.T., R.A.F. helicopter. 10 man hours.

FEBRUARY 23—Party of two at second pitch of Zero. Gully in good condition. Youth (16) decided to abseil off as one of his crampons kept coming off. Abseil piton failed and he fell to bottom, breaking wrist and leg, and sustaining facial injuries. His partner was lowered down by climbers who had been above them on the route. Lochaber M.R.T., R.A.F. helicopter. 8 man hours.

MARCH 8—Party of four men (42, 37, 32, 26) climbing Observatory Ridge in two ropes of two. Approximately one third of the way up, leader (37) fell, pulling second (42) off also, as belay peg came out. Both fell on to the Hadrian's side of the ridge. Both were hanging on to the rope which had snagged round a boulder preventing them falling further! The other two descended and managed to pull 37-year-old back on to the ridge, but could not do the same for 42-year-old who by this time had reached a stance. As the weather was now bad with heavy snow showers, they decided to stay put and await rescue even though they had plenty of rope and pegs, etc.!

Lochaber M.R.T. members went to summit while others went to C.I.C. Hut. It was established they were not hurt only stuck and rescue planned for first light. Next day two members were lowered from summit plateau to the party on two lines, each 1,300 feet long. An R.A.F. helicopter arrived at the same time, and by excellent flying skill in bad weather winched all four aboard, using 250 feet of winch cable to reach the lowest man. The two M.R.T. members then continued their rope descent to the bottom. 255 man hours.

MARCH 15—Party of two men (both 25) climbing Pointless in good weather. Leader reached up, placed both axes, but his foothold gave way and he fell. He pulled his second off also (both belay ice screws, one tied-off, had failed) and both fell 200 feet to bottom, then slid another 800 feet down Observatory Gully. Walked to C.I.C. Hut. Leader with scalp, ankle and knee injuries was carried down from C.I.C. by Lochaber M.R.T. 35 man hours.

MARCH 21—Very experienced male hillwalker (44) had a fatal heart attack 359 feet below Càrn Mòr Dearg Arête. Party of three going up S.E. Ridge of Nevis from Meall Cumhann col. Good weather. Carried down by Lochaber M.R.T. in very difficult conditions of icy slabs and waist-deep powder snow. 90 man hours.

MARCH 27—Man (24) set out to climb Gardyloo Buttress in good weather. Another party saw avalanche from G.B. and thought he might be in it. Lochaber M.R.T. party with dogs investigated and saw light on N.E. Buttress. He had climbed Minus Two Gully but crampon broke and slowed him down. Returned to C.I.C. at 03.30 hrs. Lochaber M.R.T., S.A.R.D.A. 80 man hours.

APRIL 7—Two men (43, 40) fell from first pitch of an unknown route near Point Five Gully. Good weather. Ice gave way. One had sprained ankle. Other had friction burns to hands and arms. Assisted to C.I.C. by other climbers who started to carry him down from there. Lochaber M.R.T. 20 man hours.

APRIL 12—Man (28) with companion had climbed Point Five Gully and was descending Càrn Mòr Dearg Arête en route to climb Zero Gully. Slipped on C.M.D. Arête, went over on ankle, breaking tibia and fibula just above boot. Lochaber M.R.T., R.A.F. helicopter. 20 man hours.

MAY 4—Youth (16) in summer gear slipped on wet slabs of Glen Nevis Waterslide in bare feet. Concussion. Broken arm. Lochaber M.R.T. 15 man hours.

JUNE 22—Master (31) and pupil (17) climbed Tower Ridge in heavy rain showers wearing PA's and not carrying sacs or boots. Intended to descend to tents at C.I.C. by No. 3 Gully, but got down to Youth Hostel 8 hours overdue. Team helped party of seven down from C.I.C. Lochaber M.R.T. 36 man hours.

JULY 6—Frenchman (26) fell off path in Nevis Gorge going to Steall. Fell 50 feet and got scalp wound. Taken down by other tourists. Good weather.

JULY 8—Man and son (age 4) overdue from walk up side of Glen Nevis Waterslide. Found safe descending at 21.45 hrs. Lochaber M.R.T. 12 man hours.

JULY 9—Man (44) (accompanied) slipped on slabs of Glen Nevis Waterslide in good weather. Wearing training shoes. Fell 40 feet fracturing pelvis, with finger and scalp injuries. Evacuated by R.A.F. Sea King helicopter. Lochaber M.R.T. and S.A.R.D.A. 10 man hours.

JULY 13—Dane (57) (accompanied) died from cardiac arrest when ascending Tourist Path (NN 132722). Hot weather. Carried down. Lochaber M.R.T. 18 man hours.

JULY 14—Man (53) (with fixed left hip and left leg 3" short requiring surgical boot) went up and down Ben Nevis by Tourist Path taking 17½ hours in good weather. He had been accompanied by wife and son but he had been so slow that they left him on way up, met him as they were descending and left him again. Met by Lochaber M.R.T. at about midnight still at 2,000 feet and he insisted on walking down. 48 man hours.

JULY 24—Fair weather by day. Heavy rain and wind at night. Search by Lochaber M.R.T. for German (54) long overdue on West flank of Nevis. Had separated from son. Poorly equipped. Underestimated time required for route. 40 man hours.

JULY 25—Man (56) wearing plimsolls slipped on wet slabs and broke ankle. Glen Nevis Waterslide. Good weather at time but torrential rain during recovery by Lochaber M.R.T. 18 man hours.

AUGUST 6—Woman (44) wearing vibrams slipped on greasy slabs. Fatal injuries to head and neck. Good weather. Glen Nevis Waterslide. Lochaber M.R.T. 22 man hours.

AUGUST 7—Man (68) taken ill on Nevis Tourist Path (NN 135719). Over exertion? Ascending from 7H but became very sick and could not walk down. Good weather. Lochaber M.R.T. 24 man hours.

AUGUST 26—French girl (18) fell when running down Nevis Tourist Path (NN 162713). in very good weather. Cut below knee. Lochaber M.R.T. 48 man hours.

NOVEMBER 8-9—Tower Ridge Ben Nevis. Fair weather but cloud base 3,000 feet. Snow and ice cover on top 1,000 ft of Tower Ridge. Two men climbers (28 and 26) set off after mid-day without ice axes or crampons. By nightfall they were just below Great Tower. Climbed Tower next morning but verglas at Tower Gap defeated them. Abseiled down East side and climbed Tower Gully. Leader just below top when Lochaber M.R.T. found them and gave them a top rope. Missing pair were accompanied by another pair and all four were benighted. 70 man hours.

GLENCOE

JANUARY 19—Lost Leeper Gully, Gearr Aonach. Two women climbers (33 and 23) roped. Double fatality. Probable leader fall pulling second down also.

JANUARY 19—Stob Coire nam Beith. Woman (20) lost control glissading snow slope. Badly twisted knee.

JANUARY 26—Man (45) in party of five. He had given rope protection for his own party and one other person descending from Am Bodach to Aonach Eagach. Slipped himself when descending without protection and fell 200 feet. Died from injuries four days later. Glencoe and Leuchars M.R.T., R.A.F. helicopter. An alternative version of this accident says that the climber was held by his companion on the rope but fractured his pelvis in the fall. His death in hospital was from a blood clot and not associated with his climbing injuries.

JANUARY 27—Coire nan Lochan. Woman (25) slipped on hard snow descending path. Lower leg fracture. R.A.F. helicopter.

MARCH 9—Twisting Gully of Stob Coire nan Lochan. Two men (43 and 25) caught in small avalanche. One with head and shoulder injuries. One uninjured. R.A.F. helicopter.

MARCH 17—Two men (35 and 34) benighted Stob Coire nam Beith. No injuries. R.A.F. helicopter.

APRIL 5—Am Bodach, Aonach Eagach. Man (19) ascending steep scree into a gully corner. Large rock fell from gully wall. Knocked him down scree for 100 feet. Broken arm, cuts and bruises. R.A.F. helicopter.

MAY 16—Lost Valley. Male. Attempted to stop day bag sliding over edge of gully, and so lost balance and fell 70 feet into river bed. R.A.F. helicopter.

MAY 20—Stob Coire nan Lochan. Youth (16) one of party glissading small snow patch. Fell over drop of 10-15 ft. Head and spinal injuries with lower limb paralysis. R.A.F. helicopter.

MAY 24—Big Top, E Buttress, West Face, Aonach Dubh. Leader (22) traversing on double rope. He fell backwards and one of the ropes broke. He fell 150 feet. Fatal head injuries. R.A.F. helicopter.

MAY 24—Two walkers descending from Aonach Eagach. Woman (24) somersaulted off small rock buttress and rolled down scree for 300 feet. Serious head and back injuries. R.A.F. helicopter.

JUNE 12—Little Boomerang, Aonach Dubh. Second man (21) in party of two had just completed climb. Slipped and fell 50 feet. Stopped by rope. Elbow and spinal injuries. R.A.F. helicopter.

JULY 1—Lost Valley. Woman (49) slipped on wet rocks crossing burn. Upper lip badly split.

AUGUST 1—The Graduate and Zig-Zags, Gairr Aonach. Instructor with several students missed intended route up the zig-zags, attempted to ascend The Graduate, decided this was impossible and went off to find an alternative route. Meanwhile two students scrambled 70 feet up The Graduate and fell off in separate incidents. Male (49) fatal injuries: other male cuts and bruises. Male (10) accompanied instructor and was cragfast during rescue of injured male and body recovery. R.A.F. helicopter.

AUGUST 20—A Chailleach. Woman (48) slipped on wet grass. Broken ankle.

DECEMBER 28—Aonach Eagach. Illness. Man (28) needed aid to get down. Omitted to take insulin injections resulting in insulin deficiency.

CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

JANUARY 12—Centre Post, Creag Meagaidh. Two men (21 and 19) did climb with snow in good condition on lower slopes. They got off route at top. On easier ground, above a large ice bulge, the snow gave way and leader fell, dragging second off. Fell about 800 feet. One had both legs fractured and leader had both legs with compound fractures, broken wrist and ribs. Lochaber M.R.T., R.A.F. helicopter. 36 man hours.

FEBRUARY 9—Man (19) mistakenly descending steep ground in attempting to find top of Easy Gully, after a party of two had climbed South Post, Creag Meagaidh. Fell 600 feet into Easy Gully. Heavy rain showers below 2,500 feet – snow above. Multiple injuries. Companion found and descended Easy Gully. First Scottish winter climb. Lochaber M.R.T., R.A.F. helicopter. 400 man hours.

FEBRUARY 18—Two men (19 and 18) got lost in darkness and mist on Creag Meagaidh plateau after climbing Centre Post. Came down at Brae Roy Lodge next afternoon. Lochaber M.R.T., S.A.R.D.A., R.A.F. helicopter. 100 man hours.

MARCH 8—Man (47) walked with companion from Kinlochleven to summit ridge, Binnein Mòr (NN 223654). Slipped and stumbled over edge. Fell 700 feet. Fatal. Lochaber M.R.T. 56 man hours.

MARCH 17—Raeburn's Gully, Creag Meagaidh. Party of seven or eight climbing gully. Small slab avalanche took three down but two stopped after 20 feet. Man (37) fell 500 feet. Broken pelvis and ribs. Lochaber M.R.T., R.A.F. helicopter. 45 man hours.

MARCH 17—Party of three men (46, 30, 28) climbing on to ridge of An Garbhanach (NN 187667) were about to traverse beneath cornice when it avalanched and they were carried down 500 feet. Got themselves down to Steall Cottage but two could not walk next day and were carried down. Severe bruising and broken ribs. Lochaber M.R.T. 30 man hours.

APRIL 6—Aonach Beag (NN 200722). Man (25) slipped descending steep ground. Slid 100 feet down snow slope and broke ankle. Partner went to Roy Bridge(!) to get help. Found by R.A.F. helicopter. Lochaber M.R.T. 60 man hours.

JUNE 14—11.00 hrs near Taynuilt Peak, Ben Cruachan (NN 064306) experienced climber (25) with two companions, scrambling unroped up an easy gully, climbed on to a slab of rock which dislodged and caused a considerable rock fall from above, which killed him by crush injuries to chest and back. Evacuated by stretcher. Good weather. Oban Police M.R.T., Strath Police Outdoor Instructors and Dumbarton Police M.R.T. 52 man hours.

AUGUST 7—Climber (19) seconding a low angled greasy slab on an outcrop at Kingussie, known as Creag Bheag (NH 749015) during drizzle. Slipped and penduled causing knee injury. Lowered down. Stretchered out. 12 man hours.

CAIRNGORMS

JANUARY 8—Three men from Outdoor Centre (30's) bivouacked on plateau rim near the top of Red Gully, Coire an t'Sneachda. They had been seen near top of that gully at 15.30. Night search and next day search by teams, S.A.R.D.A. dogs and helicopter. Found descending near Goat Track. They had survived a bad night despite inadequate equipment, by making some sort of shelter, huddling together and not depleting energy. Cairngorm M.R.T. 100 man hours.

JANUARY 17—Exhausted junior soldier with irregular heartbeat. Cairngorm M.R.T. member stretcher skied with him for $\frac{1}{2}$ mile till snow conditions made this impossible. Officer then made him walk out despite being warned of risk. Coire Laoigh Mór, Cairngorm. 3 man hours.

JANUARY 19—Black Spout Pinnacle, Lochnagar. Two men (36 and 33). Leader fell from 70 feet on first pitch. Three runners failed and he fell to bottom and also 70 feet down steep approach. Temporary unconsciousness, forehead lacerated, severe body bruising. Both wore helmets. Grampian Police, Braemar M.R.T. and R.A.F. helicopter. 25½ man hours.

JANUARY 19—Overdue - Coire Kander. Three men and one woman. Made their own way out before alerted teams left base.

JANUARY 20—Two male climbers (27 and 22) had decided against climbing Parallel Gully 'A' Lochnagar. Then swept from steep approach by powder snow avalanche. One swept short distance, stayed on surface was found by other climbers. Shock, collapsed lung - broken rib. Other found by rescuers at lower end of debris 8½ hours after avalanche. He had been swept 400 feet. Fingers of both hands were protruding from snow. Unconscious, hypothermia, femur fracture, frostbitten hands and fingers. Grampian Police, Braemar, Aberdeen M.R.T.'s. 220 man hours.

MARCH 2—Double fatality. Two male climbers (42 and 38) roped together, fell to foot of Raeburns Gully, Lochnagar. Probably caused by an initial fall, and failure of a dead man belay (which was found attached to the intact rope). They had no ice screws. N.W. gale at time of accident, cold with spindrift. Well equipped and clad. Deaths due to head injuries and exposure. Both were wearing unnamed helmets in good condition. Evacuated by stretcher and snow-trac. Grampian Police, Braemar and R.A.F. Leuchars M.R.T.'s. 154 man hours.

MARCH 8—Experienced ski-tourer (30's) found dead in Lairig Ghru, on slopes below Srón na Lairig of Bracriach. He had possibly skied over the edge in a white out. Last seen three days before at Sinclair Hut. No route card left. Cairngorm M.R.T. 162 man hours.

MARCH 20-25—Double fatality. Two climbers roped together fell to foot of Parallel Gully 'A', Lochnagar. Man (22) head injuries probably died immediately. Girl (24) with compound leg fractures, bandaged one injury and got into a poly-bag. Probably belay failure. No route plan left. Date of accident not known but probably the 21st March. Reported missing 24th March. Bodies found and evacuated 25th March. Snow-trac, aircraft and S.A.R.D.A. used. Man's helmet (Compton) fractured at front and chin strap stitching. Girl's helmet (Compton) three fractures top. Two fractures back right. Grampian Police, Braemar and Aberdeen M.R.T.'s. 204 man hours.

MARCH 29—*Man and woman skiers (20's-30's) survived a bivouac in Strath Nethy after missing Ptarmigan Ski Tow in severe white-out conditions. They had also survived a descent of steep, avalanche prone slopes, N.N.E. of Cnap Coire na Spreidhe. Found after large scale search started. Cairngorm M.R.T. 99 man hours.

MAY 17—Hillwalker (66) overdue in hot, clear weather. Walked from Cairngorm Car Park. Got tired. Found next day at Corrour Bothy by helicopter. 28 man hours.

JUNE 26—*Glider pilot took off from Feshie Bridge. Enveloped in cloud and lost. Fortunate to land on flat ground in Glen Dee $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Corroir Bothy. Found by helicopter next morning. Cairngorm and Grampian Police M.R.T's.

JULY 23—Man (33) and nephew (13) near Lochnagar summit in cloud, making for burn (Glas Allt) were shown the way down but did not use their map and compass, and descended N.W. Coire of Lochnagar instead. Both fell (15/25 ft) down a large wet rock slab. Nephew had head, leg and body injuries. Uncle went to Braemar for help. R.A.F. helicopter with Grampian Police and Braemar M.R.T's found boy at 19.10 the same day (mist had cleared by then). 30 man hours.

AUGUST 6—Hillwalker (58) fractured ankle by stumble in Glen Avon (NJ 035034) near Fords of Avon Bothy. Evacuated to Tomintoul on 8th August by stretcher. R.A.F. Kinloss M.R.T. 110 man hours.

AUGUST 6—Hillwalker (15) one of a party of four Venture Scouts suffering from influenza and exhaustion, dropped slightly behind his party in the Lairig Ghru, where the Allt a' Choire Mhóir crosses the path. Found by an independent walker. Party reunited and treated casualty in a tent. Evacuated by Argo-cat and Landrover to hospital. Detained one week. Grampian Police and Braemar M.R.T's. 152 man hours.

AUGUST 31—Rocks near foot of Raeburn's Gully, Lochnagar. One of three youths scrambling got cragfast 70 feet up. Not equipped for climbing. Other climbers talked him safely down. M.R.T's alerted, but not used.

DECEMBER 30 to JANUARY 2—Hillwalker (20's) fitted with a 'Pacemaker' heart battery died in a severe blizzard on 1 January, 1981, near the March Burn, Lairig Ghru. He was one of a party of three young men who bivouacked by Loch Avon on 30 December having failed to locate Shelter Stone. On 31 December in a severe blizzard they went up Coire Domhain heading for a plateau crossing and descent to Jean's Hut. However deceased fell into March Burn up to his waist so companions dragged him down March Burn into Lairig Ghru, where he died after a second night of bivouac. They had tried to erect a tent and failed as the blizzard got even worse. Two survivors, one with frostbitten hands, walked out to Glenmore late afternoon 1st January. Body found and carried out on 2 January with a helicopter pick up for last $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Cairngorm and R.A.F. Kinloss M.R.T's. 121 man hours.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

JANUARY 18—Hillwalker (54) killed by 100 ft fall on S.E. ridge of Ben Vane, Arrochar (NN 287095). Vibrans. Slipped while walking with two others. Unable to break his fall with his ice axe. Cold—little snow but frozen vegetation and verglas. Evacuated alive by Arrochar M.R.T. and staff of Arrochar Outdoor Centre. Died next day. 76 man hours.

JANUARY 19—M.R.T. member slipped on Cruach Ardrain, Perthshire. Broken leg. Evacuated by R.A.F. helicopter.

JANUARY 20—Glen Whinnel, Ochil Hills (NS 891992). Experienced man (69) broke ankle. Slipped on an icy patch of a frozen grass slope. Ice axe. No crampons. Ochil M.R.T. 20 man hours.

FEBRUARY 3—Hillwalking couple (29 and 26) were cragbound for $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours on Beinn Dubh, near Dalmally (NN 257288). Hard snow and ice. En route to Ben Lui. They were raised on ropes by an experienced group of climbers who happened to be in area. Oban and Dumbarton Police M.R.T's alerted. 32 man hours.

FEBRUARY 24—False alarm on Cobbler. Cries of 'Help' and whistle blowing not reported by hearer till following evening. Search. Nothing found. Arrochar and Strathclyde Police M.R.T's. 35 man hours.

MAY 4—Solo male walker (35) slipped clambering on loose rocks. South Face Torry Hill, Ochils (NS 877977). Ankle and back sprains. Stretchered out. Good weather. Ochil M.R.T. 10 man hours.

MAY 5—Seven girls cragbound on Dumbarton Rock. Raised individually on ropes by Dumbarton Police M.R.T. Good weather. 6 man hours.

MAY 21—Hillwalker (18) lacerated his knee and forehead. Slipped crossing scree with two others and rolled 50 feet. Arrochar Ben Vorlich (NN 318100). Evacuated himself. Dumbarton Police M.R.T. alerted. 6 man hours.

JUNE 8—Kilpatrick Hills, How crag, near Bowling, Dumbarton (NS 454746). Good weather. Climber (42) sustained leg, back and chest injuries. He fell 60-100 feet after a slip when descending steep rock. He had abseiled from an iron fence post to a stance and had intended to retrieve his rope and abseil further. Rope stuck when he tried to pull it down, so he decided to climb down and fell. Dumbarton Police M.R.T. 12 man hours.

JUNE 14—Female climber (41) leading Recess Route, Cobbler, in wet weather. She fell 60 feet when about 100 feet from top of route. Held by male second who lowered her to bottom of route. Compound fracture of leg. Carried down. Arrochar M.R.T. and Dumbarton Police M.R.T. 60 man hours.

AUGUST 8—Kilpatrick Hills (NS 434772). Two youths (16, 17) returning from a fishing trip got stuck on top of Hang Craigs, near Dumbarton. Caught by darkness and unable to find way down cliff. Signalled with torches. Dumbarton Police M.R.T. led them off. Good weather. 7 man hours.

AUGUST 29—Party of four hillwalkers had climbed Ben Ime and agreed to separate. Three descended individually to Rest-and-be-Thankful. One man (57) went down to Loch Sloy and said he had slipped and fallen 200 ft. Shaken but uninjured. Heavy rain, mist. Arrochar M.R.T. and Dumbarton Police M.R.T. turned out but did not go on hill. 8 man hours.

SEPTEMBER 6—Girl (16) in a party of twelve training for D. of E. Award collapsed from exhaustion. Coileasan Glen, Ardgartan Arrochar (NN 231019). Rain. Carried down by Arrochar and Dumbarton Police M.R.T's. 45 man hrs.

SEPTEMBER 8—Two walkers separated on Stob nan Eigreach, E. side of Loch Lomond (NN 337145). One vainly searched for his companion, descended to Inverarnan and raised alarm. The other man (31) walked out to Crianlarich. High wind, wet. Dumbarton and Lomond M.R.T's called out. 30 man hours.

SEPTEMBER 9—Youth (17) with appendicitis, and a girl (17) with slight exposure carried down from an expedition campsite in Gleann Uaine, Arrochar (NN 265094). Outdoor Centre party (Ardroy). Heavy rain, wind, mist. Arrochar and Dumbarton Police M.R.T's. 45 man hours.

OCTOBER 12—Leader fell and fractured pelvis 30 ft above start of second pitch, Gladiator's Groove, S. Peak, Cobbler. Two runners placed (first a chock then a Friend). Both failed. Fell 50 ft first on to ledge then a further 10 ft. Lowered by second down Ardgartan Arête. Wearing PA's. Good weather. Carried down by Arrochar and Dumbarton Police M.R.T's. 100 man hours.

OCTOBER 26—Alva Burn, Ochils (NS 883987). Hillwalker (63) fell crossing burn when walking with dog. Despite badly injured leg (fracture immediately below knee) dragged himself 60 feet up to path where he was found by walkers. Stretchered out (vert. lower on Zig-Zags). Good weather. Ochil M.R.T. 30 man hours.

NOVEMBER 23—Lochan nan Cat, Ben Lawers. Experienced hillwalker damaged her ankle by a stumble, following a slip on grass. Tayside and Moffat M.R.T's.

NOVEMBER 27—*Lomond M.R.T. located a 72-year-old man who had been missing from his home near Balfron for six hours on a very cold night. Treated for severe exposure. His body temperature was 25°C when found and he stayed

unconscious for almost two days but he has since recovered. Not a mountain accident but worth recording as condition of casualty was almost beyond hope and yet he survived. 25 team members, 22 police and others. 140 man hours.

DECEMBER 14—Meall Tarsuinn (W. of Sma' Glen). Experienced male hill-walker (49) in party of five suffered heart attack. Tayside and Police M.R.T.'s.

DECEMBER 20—Missing woman (41). Car found at Inveruglas, Loch Lomond, three days after she went missing. Underwater and immediate hill area search. Not yet found. Dumbarton Police M.R.T. and S.A.R.D.A. 150 man hours.

SKYE

APRIL 12—Cliff at Camus Malag, Torrin (NG 582194). Instructor (31) fell 30 feet when abseil point came away from rock face during abseil demonstration. Minor injury to arm. 2 man hours.

MAY 4—200 feet above foot of Great Stone Shoot, Sgùrr Alasdair. Boy (13) fell 50 feet when running down the scree to catch up an adult. R.A.F. helicopter evacuation to hospital. Cuts and bruises. Detained three days for observation.

MAY 12—Casualty (60) was descending Sgùrr Sgumain (NG 445205). Stood on a loose boulder, and went over heavily on his left ankle. Helped by his two companions into Coire Lagan and then evacuated by R.A.F. helicopter. Broken bone in foot. 2 man hours.

JUNE 10—Centre Peak, Bidean Druim nan Ramh. Two climbers (both 19) attempting main Cuillin Ridge after a bivouac on the ridge. One retired and the other carried on. Later, his hands slipped from their holds and he fell 40 feet down a gully sustaining hip laceration and knee injury. His whistle distress signal was heard by a Portree doctor also climbing on Bidean Druim nan Ramh! Helicopter evacuation. 6½ man hours.

JULY 14—During heavy rain on Sgùrr a Ghreadaidh a student (25) lost his foot- and hand-holds, slid down a short distance and became cragfast (NG 443237). His shouts for help were heard by a man climbing below him, who went down and alerted the team. However, the student came down unaided and uninjured before M.R.T. left Glenbrittle. 3 man hours.

JULY 20—One of two lads (both 15) walked up the Allt a'Choire Ghreadaidh (NG 414 228) fell 15 feet into it. When climbing a slab a piece of rock had given way and he lost his grip. Compound fracture of tibia and fibula. Stretched down by hostellers and M.R.T. leader. 7 man hours.

AUGUST 1—One of nine well equipped climbers had descended into Coir-uisg to camp after climbing Inaccessible Pinnacle. Student (19) slipped at the foot of a scree-slope (NG 454 222) lacerating his legs, body and head and bruising his back. Helicopter evacuation. 7 man hours.

AUGUST 11—Tourist (43) (Scottish) fell 10 feet into Allt Daraich, near Sligachan (NJ 493295) and was uninjured till two French tourists tried to rescue him with a rope. During hoisting he swung and sustained scalp laceration and possible hip fracture. Extracted by M.R.T. 2 man hours.

AUGUST 19 to 22—Hillwalker (65) based at Sligachan failed to return on a day of heavy rain and low cloud. After three days searching on S.E. shore of Loch Brittle (NG 401175) he was found drowned. He may have fallen into a burn, or been swept away trying to cross a burn. R.A.F. helicopter and Rescue dogs used. 538 man hours and 60 by R.A.F. Stafford.

ARRAN

MAY 29—A'Chir Ridge. Male walker (38) in a group jumped down 5 feet and fractured ankle. Good weather. Stretcher lowered for 300 feet. Carried out. Arran M.R.T. and Police. 185 man hours.

JULY 2—Youth taken ill near to Caisteal Abhail (NR 965442) in good weather. High temperature, laboured breathing, abdominal pains. Eventually unconscious. Evacuated by R.N. helicopter. Arran M.R.T. 15 man hours.

JULY 26—Man (59) separated near An Tunna (NR 968361) from companion in wet misty weather. Benighted. Walked out next morning. Arran M.R.T., Police, S.A.R.D.A. 48 man hours.

SOUTHERN UPLANDS

JULY—Three hillwalkers (woman and two children) poorly equipped. Wrong descent from Three Brethren, Galashiels area. Tweed Valley M.R.T. called out.

OCTOBER 10—*Lady (82) keen walker despite age and heart condition died of exposure just north of Peebles. Found by search dogs near Peebles Hydro next day. Tweed Valley M.R.T. and S.A.R.D.A. flown in by R.A.F. helicopter. Also neighbouring teams and R.A.F. Leuchars involved as all were engaged in a 'Shell' training exercise. 120 man hours.

IN MEMORIAM

ROBERT ELTON

On 30th August, 1925, twenty-one mountaineers assembled under the Narnain Boulder. Arthur Rusk presided over the meeting lying in his sleeping bag; the Junior Mountaineering Club of Scotland was founded. Thereafter, the whole Club ascended Ben Ime in dirty weather. There were at the meeting a number of mountaineers who later took important activity in the administration of the Senior Club. Among them were E. C. Thomson, Rutherford, Hutcheson, Parry, the Speirs brothers and ROBERT ELTON.

Robert joined the Senior Club in 1926. Much of his early climbing which included snow and rock climbing and hill walking, was done in the company of Thomson and the Speirs. They were frequently in Glencoe and Ben Nevis; he and the Speirs did the first ascent of Speirs variation of the Crowberry Ridge. All his climbing life, he was a regular attender of the New Year and Easter meets, and on expeditions he was always well in the van. At later meets, he had the pleasure of having his son Christopher as his guest.

He also climbed in the Alps, and at the age of 71 he climbed in the Atlas. His pleasure on that expedition was enhanced by the sight of masses of beautiful flowers which he saw for the first time.

Robert took an active part in the administration of the Club. He was auditor, custodian of slides, vice-president and in 1978 he was asked if he would act as president. Once before he had been asked to act as president and for business reasons had to refuse the honour. He had had heart trouble and before accepting the office, he consulted his doctor who said he could safely accept. Unfortunately, the doctor was too optimistic, and he did not see his period out.

Robert Elton was born in 1901 in Langholm, the son of a solicitor; and went to school in Dumfries where he was dux of the Academy. He led an outdoor life and appreciated natural science. When he left school, botany was an attraction; but he became a C.A., apprenticed in Glasgow, and after qualifying was in a Glasgow office for some years. In 1933 he had an offer of secretaryship in a paper-making company near Edinburgh. He was a most able accountant, and later as a director of the company, he more than once visited Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

He and his wife, Jean, were enjoying the company of musical people in Glasgow; they had some hesitation in going east. However, they were at once welcomed into the Edinburgh musical world and enjoyed it all their lives.

Robert's retiral from business enabled him to give place to his love for botany. He made several botanical excursions to the mainland and islands of the Near East: sometimes with archeology included. At home, in spite of a knee injured in a motor accident, he scoured the Scottish hilltops in search of rare plants; some of his photographs are very fine.

All this still gave him time to act as treasurer of a most successful Oxfam shop in the south side and of the Edinburgh Italian Society. For a time he served on the Penicuik Town Council, and in the 1939 war he commanded the Penicuik Home Guard.

A.H.

JAMES E. BOTHWELL

We regret to record the death on 14 November, 1980, of JAMES E. BOTHWELL at the age of seventy-five. Although he became a member of the S.M.C. in 1938 his climbing activities were almost exclusively associated with the Cairngorm Club of which he became a member in 1927. He was a Vice-President of that club in 1937-46, Secretary and Treasurer 1949-62 and President 1962-64. He continued as an active member almost to the date of his death and the high esteem with which he was regarded is evidenced by the fact that the Committee intended to nominate him for election as Honorary President of the club at the Annual General Meeting in November 1980.

A solicitor by profession he was Secretary Treasurer and Librarian of the Society of Advocates in Aberdeen from 1967 until he retired from that post in February 1980.

A keen chess player he represented the Bon-Accord Chess Club on many occasions. A life-long member of Queens Cross Church, Aberdeen, he acted as Session Clerk from 1963-68. His services to the Forces Help Society and Lord Roberts Workshops were recognised by the Award of the M.B.E. in the New Year's Honours of 1950.

Eddie Bothwell was a quiet and unassuming man but he was also a man with varied interests and of a sociable and friendly disposition. He always had a smile of greeting for acquaintances as well as friends and maintained a lively interest in the mountain doings of those much younger than himself. He is greatly missed by his many friends.

A.L.H.

JOHN G. CARRUTHERS

JOHN CARRUTHERS died on 28th December 1980 after a long illness. He was a member of the Club for almost fifty years having joined in 1931.

Most of his climbing was done in the years from 1924 to 1936, in snow in the winter and on rock in the summer. He was no peak-bagger, indeed he always maintained he was a lazy climber by which he meant that he was disinclined to toil long distances to climb an uninteresting lump of a hill just because it was over 3,000 feet.

His other activities (he was a scratch golfer) restricted his summer climbing to an occasional day in Arran or Glencoe and, most important to him, his annual visit to Sligachan. A long reach and an athlete's sense of balance made him an able leader on the Cuillin rocks. In winter he was always looking for snow to give an added interest to the mountains of Argyllshire and Perthshire.

Those who climbed with him and, in particular, those who shared his Skye holidays will recall with gratitude his unfailing good humour, his ability to laugh and to make others laugh at discomfort and his absolute dependability on a climb. He was a very good companion.

J.W.D.

LOUIS M. HILL

LOUIS M. HILL died suddenly aged 78 on 11th November, 1980. He joined the S.M.C. in 1954 and was a life member.

He had been a member of the Grampian Club since 1946 and served two terms as president – the second for the club's golden jubilee in 1977.

Louis climbed extensively in Scotland, the Lake District and the Alps, where he had several seasons with Jim Bell.

In his hey-day Louis was an enthusiastic hill man, equally happy on rock or snow. One of his regrets was that he did not complete the ascent of the Munros. Although unable to climb in later years, he enjoyed walking among the hills until quite recently.

A fluent, witty speaker, Louis made a sound chairman. He enjoyed music, bridge, wine and a good story.

His working life was spent in the jute business, in which he was widely known. He was a former director of Low & Bonar Group Ltd., Dundee, and retired twelve years ago.

He leaves a wife, son, daughter and grandchildren in whom he delighted.

D.G.

PROFESSOR GORDON MANLEY

PROFESSOR GORDON MANLEY died on 29th January 1980. He had been a member of the S.M.C. since 1937, when he was introduced by Harry MacRobert; many members will associate his name with the 'Snow Book' kept at the C.I.C. Hut, in which he asked climbers to record the seasonal shrinkage of the semi-permanent snowbeds at the foot of Zero and Point Five Gullies. However, Gordon Manley was known to a much wider public as an eminent geographer and meteorologist. His academic career was crowned by nearly twenty years as Professor at Bedford College in the University of London, but it was characteristic of him that in 1964, at an age when most men are thinking only of retirement, he returned to his native and much-loved North of England to establish the pioneering Department of Environmental Studies in the new University of Lancaster.

Most of Professor Manley's mountaineering was undertaken over fifty years ago, and at present only sketchy notes of his activities are available. During the 1920's he climbed widely in England and Wales, with Basil Goodfellow among others. In 1926, as a member of Wordie's Cambridge Expedition, he made some ascents in East Greenland. All his life, however, he took the opportunity to climb or ski wherever he travelled, in the Alps, the Pyrenees, Norway, and North America. He was a regular visitor to the Lake District, while his seasonal visits to Observatory Gully were usually made the occasion for one or two additions to his tally of Munros. Into his seventies he listed 'travel among mountains' as his recreation in *Who's Who*.

He contributed a few pieces to the *Journal* (xxi, 366-367; xxv, 334-341; xxx, 4-15) which show him mainly as the objective meteorologist. In that field he was a master, and his work in mountain weather recording, in statistical analysis, and in the compilation from disparate sources of the world's longest historic series of meteorological data, earned him the respect

of his academic peers. But he also possessed an almost poetic feeling for the subjective effects of weather, a feeling which pervades his classic *Climate and the British Scene* and gives it much of its character, charm, and readability. His description of the aesthetic effect of snowfall on mountains bordered on the lyrical; he could even relish 'the remorseless exhilarating grandeur of those November curtains of rain borne across Sty Head.' It is regrettable that he did not find the time to give full expression to these feelings in relation to the Scottish mountain scene; the *Journal* would have been the richer for it.

In the early 1970's I corresponded briefly with Professor Manley, and had the good fortune to hear him lecture and to talk with him afterwards. His lecture was a splendid, and utterly engaging, rambling discourse, full of eclectic erudition and sprinkled with literary references and quotations. In conversation he displayed a wry but sympathetic understanding of the vagaries of human nature, and a lively enthusiasm for new ideas and for mountain landscape. It was clear that he was proud of his long membership of the S.M.C. The Club, in its turn, can be proud to have numbered among its members an eminent academic whose approach to the mountain scene, like that of the early pioneers, harmoniously combined scientific curiosity and understanding with a deeply-felt Romantic sensitivity.

R.A.

DONALD N. MILL

DONALD MILL was a deep one in our Scot's sense: a man of many talents, fearfully organised, determined, yet at the same time reserved and sensitive. I have skied and climbed with Donald in places as varied as the Polish Tatras, the High Atlas and the Himalaya, as well as at home, so his death at the age of 49 came as a shock. We all thought his young wife Christine had improved him no end in their years together! The pair of them were coming out from Knoydart on that memorably wet 2nd of January last and Donald was swept away and drowned in the Allt Coire na Ciche. Typical of Donald's compartmental life, their two-year-old son Jamie had been left in Edinburgh with a grown-up son Peter (from a previous marriage) and when Peter phoned to inform Donald's business partner it was to find he had never been mentioned.

Donald was an Edinburgh chiel, son of a Procurator Fiscal. He discovered the Scottish hills as a teenager. Diaries have been kept back to those days and recently he had had a great deal of enjoyment in helping Christine complete a biography of Norman Collie. He was a fastidious book collector. In the early fifties he was a member of the E.U.M.C. and climbed regularly with Donald Bennet who writes: 'Donald was a very competent mountaineer and a tough, determined character who expected his pillion passengers to suffer without complaint.' Bringing in New Year on top of the Ben, a moonlight traverse of the Aonach Eagach - these are memories of those days. With Dan Stewart a weekend on Garbh Bheinn gave several new routes: Dirk, Scimitar, the Direct Start of the Great Ridge, a variation on Leac Mhór. Mill maps and diagrams were used in Bill Mackenzie's 1958 *Skye Climbers Guide*.

Donald Mill was an architect and based in London. Since 1962 he had worked with Sir Denys Lasdun, becoming Junior Partner in 1975. He was highly regarded professionally and had worked on such famous places as the National Theatre and London University, and I.C.I. and I.B.M. buildings. For Liverpool Sports Centre he designed one of the first climbing walls, a design which was much copied elsewhere. He was a magnificent architectural photographer and had hoped to move back to Edinburgh in a few years to work for himself. Doing everything thoroughly being a Mill trait he recently decided to complete the Munros - which was done in 1980. Donald could be difficult. He did not tolerate fools gladly. He was not easy to know - and so

the more missed by those who did know him.. When Eric Shipton was dying of cancer in a London hospital Donald made several visits just to chat and cheer, a gesture which was typical. Our sympathies go to Christine and Jamie, and to his earlier family; we will miss Donald's Jiminy Cricket presence.

H.M.B.

NANCY GIRVAN

The death of NANCY GIRVAN, who with her sister Hannah kept the hotel at Inverarnan in Glen Falloch, has been heard of with dismay by the many members of the Club who enjoyed her friendship. Inverarnan under Nancy became known after the war as the winter headquarters of the western S.M.C., but long before that, through the nineteen-thirties, it was the most favoured haunt of the J.M.C.S. Glasgow. We thought of Inverarnan not just as a Highland inn with good food and comfort at low cost, but as a club in the ideal sense – a home from home. Nancy made it so by unfailing kindness to all, by her inexhaustible patience with young climbers – she once rose at 4.30 a.m. to make breakfast for Bill Mackenzie and me when our winter goal was Garrick's Shelf on the Crowberry – and her suppression of all reproach at our late returns (which could be late indeed). In short, she liked mountaineers and made them welcome despite heavy penalties. We in turn thought the world of her.

Nancy died in February after sudden illness. None of us will again know hospitality like hers. The departure of Nancy and Hannah from Inverarnan in 1971 marked the close of an era. They are associated still in our hearts and minds with the happiest days of our lives.

W.H.M.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

Easter Meet 1980 – Glen Affric

THE Easter Meet held at Glen Affric Hotel was attended by 21 members and 8 guests.

The weather was superb throughout with plenty of snow. The following ascents were reported: Beinn Achaladair, Sgùrr na Fearstaig, Sgùrr Fhuar-Thuill, Creag Gorm a' Bhealaich, Sgùrr a' Choire Ghlais, Càrn nan Gobhar, Sgùrr na Ruaidhe, Sgùrr na Lapaich, Mam Sodhail, Creag a' Chaoruinn, Càrn Eige and along ridge to Sròn Garbh, Tom a' Choinich, Sgùrr nan Ceathreamhnan, An Socach, Mullach Fraoch-Choire, Càrn Ghluasaid, Sgùrr nan Conbhairean, Gairich, Beinn a' Bha'ach Ard, Sgùrr a' Phollain, Sgor na Diollaid, Meall a' Mhadaidh.

Present were: *Members* – President Elton, B. Fleming, R. Folkard, B. Fraser, C. C. Gorrie, J. N. Ledingham, R.C.S. Low, I. D. McNicol, D. H. McPherson, J. R. Marshall, H. H. Mills, M. Morrison, T. Nicholson, I. H. Ogilvie, D. Piggott, G. S. Roger, W. T. Taylor, B. G. S. Ward, C. B. M. Warren, T. Weir and F. R. Wylie; *Guests* – J. Bell, C. Cox, C. Elton, D. Folkard, N. Hetherington, J. Nicholson, O. Turnbull and M. Ward.

The L.S.C.C. also held their Easter Meet in the glen and we were very pleased to see so many of them at the hotel and on the hills.

It was a most successful and enjoyable meet and we thank Mr & Mrs Mackenzie and their staff for looking after us so well.

New Year Meet 1981 – Dalmally

THE New Year Meet held at Dalmally Hotel was attended by 15 members and 3 guests.

Despite somewhat inclement weather the following ascents and other activities were reported: Ben Cruachan in a fierce northerly gale, Beinn a' Chocuille, Beinn Udlaidh, Beinn Liath Bhreac, traverse of hills to the south of the Pass of Brander, walk up Glen Cononish and rescue by Ian McNicol of a motorist trapped in floods on 2nd January.

Present were: *Members* – H. M. Brown, W. L. Coats, B. Fleming, J. N. Ledingham, W. Myles, H. H. Mills, I. D. McNicol, D. H. McPherson, I. H. Ogilvie, D. Piggott, G. S. Roger, I. H. M. Smart, C. B. M. Warren, T. Weir and F. R. Wylie; *Guests* – N. Hetherington, R. Hollingdale and D. Livingston.

We were very well looked after at the hotel with fine hot baths and excellent meals. A good time was had by all.

Reception, A.G.M. and Dinner, 1980

YET again we went unwillingly through the revolving doors to what was to be (though we knew it not) the Last Reception. Not that it was not an interesting lecture and the subsequent buns excellent but it was Edinburgh and the George Hotel yet again. But to take things in their proper order.

Cairns Dickson gave an interesting and well-illustrated account of a small expedition to Conway's Ogre in the Karakoram. A three-man team got rather more interest than they expected when a rescue had to be organised for a Japanese down a crevasse on a neighbouring peak. Although Cairns was prevented by illness from joining the summit bid on their chosen mountain, his two companions' bold choice of line was well shown on their slides. Their ascent to within 50 metres of the summit before being turned back by unstable ice has to be counted a victory. The possibilities for similar small teams in that area appear to be immense.

Little did the ladies know afterwards as they sipped their tea and nibbled their cakes that even this token gesture to their existence was soon to be ruthlessly excised by the grizzled chauvinists around them. If we do have Receptions in future they will not be allowed to contaminate the sacred male rituals of the Annual Function.

The Annual General Meeting was competently and firmly chaired by the acting President, Bill Skidmore, who opened the proceedings with a brief tribute to Robert Elton. Business went smoothly through the reports where the new initiative on the publishing of guide books received general acclaim. In general the reports were clearly and ably presented and met no adverse comment although the retiring Huts Convener got a bit of stick for telling members they couldn't expect to stroll into the C.I.C. Hut at will. Suitably chastened, he is now doing penance as C.I.C. custodian. The Office Bearers were elected as proposed and a well-deserved Honorary Vice-Presidency was bestowed on Jim Donaldson.

We then moved on to more broken ground with the two motions concerning the Annual Function. The previously affable Skidmore gave a hint of the steel straight away by limiting speakers to one attempt on each route – much to the consternation of those who adapt modern rock-climbing techniques to meeting procedure.

The motion to add the Ladies Scottish Climbing Club to the list from which Dinner guests may be selected was immediately recognised as the thin end of a very fat wedge (rather odd symbolism in the circumstances) and the trusty champions of our heritage leapt to the ramparts. The Chairman kept a firm grip on things, allowing speakers their singular say but disallowing

that old counter-mine 'the direct negative' and even finding time for a delicate bout of procedural fencing with Peter Moffat (nobody else understood it but it seemed to be a win on points for Pete). The old sexual fires burned fiercely – your reporter's notes include the quotation '... the L.S.C.C. representative would not be willing to submit to one hundred members of the S.M.C.' I may have got this wrong or out of context, but it was said with some authority. The wedge was finally and firmly knocked back by forty-five votes to thirty-five (those of you not present would do well to ponder these figures – the ramparts need repointing).

The second motion 'that the Annual Function be an Annual General Meeting followed by a Dinner' aroused much less heat and, although opposition was voiced, it was carried by a large majority thus removing any taint of female participation from the Annual Function. However, in conjunction with the result of the Extra General Meeting of 1975 it opens up some remarkable possibilities – you may yet have to literally vote with your feet. The Meeting concluded in ample time for a cooling (if expensive) pint before dinner.

This was the most expensive dinner yet but it must be admitted that the food was palatable, if insufficient in quantity for healthy young appetites. The speeches were excellent, especially Paul Brian's skilled stiletto work on the guests, for whom Peter Whillance demonstrated that rock apes are not necessarily inarticulate. Skidmore's brief spell as acting President had clearly gone to his head as, although he willingly handed over the ice-axe to Neil Quinn he clung desperately to the badge. Another notable event of the evening was that the Club Song was led by Bill Wallace, accompanied (several paces to the rear) by a pianist who will wish to remain anonymous. A rousing performance caused the usual consternation among guests and new members, but when will we get a pianist to do it justice? This post is not something to be decided at the last minute – to the consternation of the unfortunate victim. A suitable Official Appointment should be made and adequate rehearsal insisted upon. The detailed and effective performance of ritual is especially important in societies under stress. If we do not adequately safeguard our inner rites we may yet hear a soprano lead.

R. RICHARDSON.

J.M.C.S. REPORTS

Edinburgh Section.—A retrospective view of 1980 will show that it was a year of rather mixed fortunes. After the traditional 'seeing in' in the Smiddy up on Dundonnell the winter conditions were rather poor with meets consequently rather poorly attended. Spring came in with a total about turn and the Lake District was the subject of several raids, numerous routes being done. Enthusiasm was running high and the week meet to Rhum was attended by about two dozen people. The weather for the week was excellent and although it was only May the 'Rhum Midge' in all its mammoth glory was out in force and making the most of the J.M.C.S. visitors. This in no way detracted from the overall pleasure of the meet. The sea cliffs were visited, many crags were climbed upon and the ridge received numerous traverses, even one at night so that the shearwaters could be seen returning to their nest burrows.

Then the Rains came.

It was about this time that perhaps the most important event of the year occurred – this being the acquisition of Jock's Spot. This is not a nasty skin ailment but a rather desirable hut just to the west of Newtonmore. The building is basically sound but even after a year of determined work parties there is still a great deal of work to be done on it.

A number of Club members were in the Dolomites in the summer where much to their surprise they experienced better winter conditions than they had had in Scotland.

Throughout the year there was a steady influx of new blood and their company enlivened the Skye, Mamores and the Glen Tilt meets.

The Annual Dinner and Annual General Meeting was held in December at the Loch Erich Hotel, Dalwhinnie, and new committee was appointed.

Office-Bearers - *Hon. President*, Mike Fleming; *Hon. Vice-President*, J. Fowler; *Vice-President*, Joyce Durham; *Hon. Member*, I. M. Ogilvie, O.B.E.; *President*, N. Grant; *Treasurer*, K. McCulloch; *Hut Custodian*, (The Smiddy, Dundonell), Jan Clark, 13 N.W. Circus Place, Edinburgh, EH3 6SX; *Secretary*, Sandy Bruce, 59 Balfour Street, Edinburgh, EH6 5DP.

Glasgow Section. The early heatwave in April and May 1980 produced some memorable weekends with creditable performances on rock by several members but the quasi-eternal monsoon then took a grip and rapidly dampened the burst of enthusiasm and activity.

Foreign exploits over the past twelve months have had variable success rates: Alistair McGregor was 'on call' again in Nepal while Peter Cairns found his way to the Maritime Alps in September. Pete Hodgkiss was again active in the Alps and Martin Lawrence made an ascent of Mont Blanc on Christmas Day with the Glasgow University M.C.'s Centenary Expedition.

Our working meet at Coruisk Memorial Hut was very successful and, despite being only a normal two-day weekend, the walls inside and out were completely varnished or snowcombed by a dozen members in various states of undress. Plans for installing Alpine bunks at this year's work meet are proceeding well.

The Annual Dinner was again held at the Kingshouse in October with Davey McDonald taking the honours for humorous after-dinner anecdotes against strong competition from several others. The Burns Supper was a great success being attended by 50 members and guests with traditional fayre, speeches and entertainment at The Maltings, Duntocher.

The Friday evening lectures continue to be well attended and there have been some very interesting and informative subjects in this year's series. The annual photographic competition is again imminent, this year's judge being W. H. Duncan. A full programme of meets is being organised for the coming twelve months to most of the popular venues with a few new ones included for good measure. Generally the section is in fine fettle and intends to remain that way despite all external influences which may try to change the situation.

Office Bearers - *Hon. Member*, W. H. Murray, O.B.E.; *Hon. President*, John Gillespie; *Hon. Vice-President*, T. Bryan Fleming; *President*, Coll Findlay; *Treasurer*, Peter McNiven; *Vice-President*, and *Coruisk Hut Custodian*, Davey McDonald, 18 Old Dalnotter Road, Old Kilpatrick, Glasgow; *Secretary*, Colin Garthwaite, 17 Ashcroft Walk, Lennoxton, Glasgow, G65 7EN.

Inverness Section.—The membership has remained stable and healthy this year although, with the area north of the Caledonian Canal to draw upon, we are disappointed that we cannot recruit more.

Many of the Section have traded in their 'Terrors' for cross-country skis this year but in view of the winter conditions this season some have turned to the purchase of fishing rods. In addition to our regular home meets to the major climbing areas of Scotland, some members have extended their mountaineering activities to the Austrian and Italian Alps last year and in June 1981 two are going to visit Canada. In an ambitious programme they

intend to climb Mt. Foraker and the N.W. face of Mt. Hunter with problems of remoteness, high altitudes and low summer temperatures.

The highlight of the year was the return visit of the Augsburg Mountaineering Club in which they sampled the delights of Glencoe and Skye. Augsburg being in Bavaria, the Germans were not accustomed to our 'maritime' climate and had no genetic resistance to midges or Scotch Mist but felt quite at home partaking of our national beverage(s). The Aryan propensity for midnight bathing at Glenbrittle in freezing rain to escape the local insect life was quite remarkable.

The Section's Annual Dinner at Invereshie Hotel, Kincaig, in May was its usual gastronomic success but this report ends with a plea for other Sections to send guests. To this end the Annual Dinner will now be held in the autumn to avoid clashing with the whole club Dinner and A.G.M.

Secretary, Neil Lawford, 1 East Croachy Cottages, Aberarder, by Inverness.

Lochaber Section.—1980 has been a quiet year for the Club after the excitement of the Alpine meet in 1979.

The usual round of winter meets have been well attended by members, and often bad weather with the result that most ascents have been in the local bars.

The slide shows held over the winter covered a wide range of topics from Canada, Jannu, Annapurna to the members' slides of the Alpine meet to the Engadine.

One of the facilities of the Club is its library, which besides possessing nearly all the S.M.C. *Journals*, extensive guides both home and abroad, also has a wide range of mountaineering books to which it adds regularly. It is also building up a slide library of climbs and views in Scotland from slides donated by Club members.

Looking to the future we hope to hold another Alpine meet in 1982. This time to the Dauphine.

The Club committee has always kept a watchful eye on proposed industrial developments in the Highlands. Proposed ski-ing developments and nuclear waste disposal amongst other topics have come under discussion at committee meetings this year.

Office Bearers — *Honorary President*, D. Watt; *President*, J. Paterson; *Vice-President*, N. Hitch; *Secretary*, L. Houlker, 3 Treslaig, Fort William, Telephone Corpach 633; *Treasurer*, H. Campbell; *Steall Hut Custodian*, E. Kay, 22 Glenloy Street, Caol, Fort William, Telephone 3320.

London Section.—The past year has been of more significance to the Section than usual; particularly in light of the increased activity of new members and the substantial hut improvements that have been carried out on our cottage in Bethesda, North Wales.

There were nine meets, two of which changed venue during the course of the year.

The President's meet in January was well attended and had plenty of snow, providing good mixed conditions. Section members were also active on the other winter meets in Wales during February and March, and the conditions on the trip to Lochnagar enabled some good routes to be done. The weather continued to be fine giving a dry, sunny and warm Spring. Easter was also blessed with glorious weather which as always happens, eventually comes to an end, this year in the middle of our meet to Cwm Glas on Snowdon. The monsoon lasted throughout the summer causing us to move the planned meets to Derbyshire and Skye back to the shelter of Glanafon. The rain however turned to snow by the October weekend in Wales and ice axes were being wielded once again.

New members continued to join the Section, but only represent a fraction of the large number of enquiries we receive. Our regular monthly pub meeting in London provides a meeting point for prospective members and enables them to get to know committee members as well as organising future climbing weekends. The Section membership stands at 67 with prospects of growing in the coming year.

Finances were at a low ebb because of the major hut improvements carried out during the year. Much of the outhouse has now been plastered and rendered and made watertight. We now have a fully operational super de luxe shower. Ten years of planning; one weekend installing. Other substantial repair work will be undertaken in the near future, assuming sufficient funds can be raised.

Individual Section members' activities during the year ranged from climbing on Mount Kenya, ski-ing in Norway and the Alps, to taking part in the Karrimor Marathon. Section activity was brought to an annual height at our A.G.M. and Dinner, again held at the Waterloo Hotel in Betws y Coed. The service we received was up to its normal high standard, although the manager had the neck to close the bar one hour before breakfast was due to be served next morning!

Office Bearers – *Hon. President*, J. Della Porta; *President*, P. Whitechurch; *Treasurer*, D. Edmunds; *Hut Bookings*, B. Wheeler; *Secretary*, H. Jordan, Waytes Cottage, Layham Lane, Keston, Kent.

Perth Section.—This year saw the Section in very good health. Membership increased by 4 to 68 and the number of meets increased to 5 day meets and 12 weekend meets. The Annual Dinner was held in the Fife Arms Hotel, Braemar. The highlight of the year was the long weekend to Inverey, Knoydart, where we were received with open arms by the locals – the humans invited us into their club, the midgies and the clegs feasted on new blood.

The Joint Annual Lecture with the Perthshire Society of Natural Science was given by Mr Douglas Anderson of the Jacobite Mountaineering Club. He delivered an excellent, illustrated lecture to a capacity audience on his experiences sailing to Tierra del Fuego and climbing some of the peaks there.

The Section was well represented at the Annual Dinners of our fellow Sections and at that of the Grampian Club. Representatives were also present at the Special General Meeting of the M.C. of S.

Our own A.G.M. was held in Perth in November at which the following office-bearers were elected.

Office-Bearers – *Hon. President*, Chris Rudie; *Hon. Vice-President*, James Anton; *Hon. Members*, Walter Pethers, David Wares; *President*, Tom Rix; *Vice-President*, Leonard Moss; *Treasurer*, John Rogers; *Secretary*, Joe Stewart, Flat 1, Duntrune House, Duntrune, Dundee (Kellas 391).

S.M.C. AND J.M.C.S. ABROAD

The Alps

John Steele (J.M.C.S. London) writes, 'In late April Robbie Cargill accompanied me to the Alps to attempt the classic High Level Route (Haute Route). We drove to Geneva where we stayed the night with Geoff. Sutton. He had just returned from a ski trip and advised of the conditions in the high mountains, describing the best route to take. We started from Argentière, a village just above Chamonix, and stayed at the stylish Argentière Hut, whose icy panorama must rival even that of the C.I.C. in winter. The following morning we crossed the Col du Chardonnet and climbed onto the large expanse of the Trient plateau. A superb run brought us swooping down past the Aiguilles

Dorées and Trient Hut to the narrow Fenêtre du Chamois. Having roped down the other side we made our way in soft snow to the attractive village of Champex in Switzerland. We reached Bourg St. Pierre after a short bus ride that evening. The next day was spent climbing on skins up to the small Valsorey Hut, perched under the mighty Grand Combin. Pre-dawn saw us struggling up the icy slopes of the Combin onto the Plateau du Couloir, obviously not a place to hang about as it lies beneath the icy runnels of the Combin. Another superb run from the Col de Sonadon down the Durand Glacier and out onto the Fenêtre Glacier led to the Chaurion Hut. So far the weather had been glorious, as it was the next morning when we set off up the long Otemma Glacier. However before we reached the Col Collon on the border with Italy, the clouds had beaten us to it. We skied down to the Vignettes Hut and sat out the next day in a whiteout before descending to Arolla, eventually going back to collect the car which had been left in France. Two days later, we were back on the Arolla Glacier but the weather again turned us back for good.'

Another gerontocratic ski outing was held in late April, 1980. This time in the Vanoise. D. J. BENNET, A. R. BENNET, W. D. BROOKER, D. R. GRIEVE, R. HILLCOAT, D. G. PYPER, J. S. STEWART, J. M. TAYLOR and Neil Mather (Rucksack) crossed from Pralognan to Val d'Isère via the Col de la Grande Casse, calling at the Felix Faure, Laisonnay, Plaisance and Col du Palet refuges. The latter two were particularly attractive and well equipped DIY huts. En route they variously ascended on ski, Mont Pelve, Pointe du Dard, Pointe de la Rechasse, Sommet de Bellecôte and The Pointe de la Vallaisonnay. Subsequently J.M.T. and N.M. made the ascent of Pointe de Mean Martin from the Refuge de Fond des Fours above Val d'Isère.

RON HOCKEY and PETE HODGKISS with Stan Clough (F & R) were camped in Val di Cogne for most of July last year. Locals commented that Spring snow, after a bare Winter, had continued falling until June. We saw some of the results at first hand. The Praderio Biv in the Valpelline had been only recently obliterated and the debris spread through a $\frac{1}{2}$ ml length, by an avalanche from the N. face of the Dome di Cian. Another bivouac hut – the Antoldi at the head of the Valeille south of Cogne – was occupying its third site some 1,000 ft above the first: both first and second had been destroyed by avalanches. Glaciers in the Gran Paradiso region, normally dry and well-seamed, were blank snowfields and the higher routes were too time consuming to be enjoyable. The traverse of the Torre di San Andrea from the Valeille to the Valnontey makes a fine day on one of the lower hills: mainly rock with some good climbing on sound gneiss high on the E. Ridge, and mainly snow on the West – about AD. The route up the well-defined E. Ridge above the Antoldi Biv. is not given in the West Col guide.

North America

BILL WHEELER (J.M.C.S. London) was in America during August 1979 and writes, 'During a three-week holiday in America with an Army expedition, ten days were spent in the Tetons National Park, Wyoming. Base camp was set up at the American Alpine Club Climber Ranch at Moose from where several trips were made into the Park. Peaks included Grand Teton (13,770 ft) by the Owen/Spalding route from a camp on the saddle between Grand and Middle Teton. Buck Mountain (12,900 ft) by a route on its south face and Cube Peak (7,950 ft) by the South Ridge. The weather during the stay was very humid with some very spectacular thunderstorms which curtailed more ambitious routes. A trip was then made to Yellowstone National Park, followed by a drive to Colorado Springs and on to the Garden of the Gods. Finally, Pike's Peak (14,110 ft) was ascended by car! A journey was then

made back across the States to Washington D.C., from where we caught a flight back to the U.K.

For any parties contemplating a trip to the U.S.A., I would recommend they visit and climb in the Tetons. The facilities at the A.A.C. Ranch are excellent as is the hospitality. The Park has climbs of all standards and offers much in the way of hiking. The Park is controlled by Wardens to whom applications must be sent before permission is granted to climb. This is to ensure certain areas are not over crowded, avoids queuing on routes and allows for speedy action to be taken should an accident occur.'

South America - Peru

BOD BARTON and ALLEN FYFFE write, 'In June 1980 we visited the Cordillera Blanca, spending about four weeks in the mountains. We climbed in three separate valleys from a base in Huaraz, which fully lived up to its reputation of being the Chamonix of the Andes.

'We first investigated the Quebrada Rurek and the S.E. face of Nevado Shaqsha (5703m). This offered a fine route, but we were put off by the steep granite slabs, which made the approach to the face a difficult and devious affair.

'We next visited the Q. Paqtsaruri to look at the southern side of Nevado Copa (6188m), but several days of stormy weather and very high winds persuaded us to climb something lower and less committing. We climbed the S.E. ridge of N. Bayococha (5460m) which looked straightforward, but which proved to be far from easy with its typically Peruvian cornices and snow conditions.

'Our time seemed to be running out fast, and we headed for the Q. Santa Cruz, knowing that this was likely to be our last sortie. We had a base camp at the junction of Q. Arwecocha and Q. Santa Cruz within easy reach of such impressive peaks as Kitaraju, Tuallaraju and Allpamayo. We climbed to the Alpamayo Kitaraju col (5200m) in a long day and next day broke trail in deep powder snow to the bergschrund at the foot of the S.W. face of Alpamayo (5947m). The following dawn saw us back at our high point beneath the impressive flutings of the face. We climbed the face in five hours, encountering Alpine winter conditions of very low temperatures, hard black ice in the troughs of the flutings, and fragile bottomless snow on the crests. As we started down the N. Ridge, thick mist rolled in and the descent became a nightmare of treacherous snow and difficult route-finding. The 'lightweight' style of our ascent had included leaving bivi gear on the col, so we were forced to climb into the night, until we thankfully regained our sleeping bags at 2.30 a.m.

'After a couple of days rest, we returned to the fray to attempt the unclimbed S. face of Pukajirka Sur (6039m). The face itself appeared quite feasible, but the approach was through a complicated and difficult icefall, and this provided some hair raising climbing. We bivouacked about 600m below the summit, reasonably confident of success, but that night the threatened storm broke and by morning everything was feet deep in new snow. Going up was out of the question and the descent through thick cloud was hazardous with the substantial threat of avalanches above and newly covered crevasses below.

'We did not have time for a second attempt on this route and it was frustrating to have to leave when we were fit and well acclimatised, feeling that our five weeks out of Britain was the very minimum time needed for a worthwhile trip to this area.

'We are grateful for the Sang Award which helped to make this trip possible.'

Africa

STUART SMITH writes, 'ED JACKSON and I were climbing on Mt. Kenya during part of September 1980. We hired our porters at Naro Moru River Lodge and then walked in by the Sirimon Track via the Liki North Hut where we based ourselves. From here we first did a couple of training/acclimatisation routes (N.E. Face and Ridge (Grade IV), on Pt. Dutton, 16,025 feet, and 'Window Ridge' (V and A2), on Pt. Peter, 15,605 feet) before setting out for the N-Face Standard Route (IV sup.) on Batian, 17,058 feet. For this we started in the afternoon and bivouacked in the 'Amphitheatre' below the main difficulties. The excellence of the climbing above was fine compensation for the nauseous gully below.

'After walking up Pt. Lenana, 16,355 feet, we did the N.E. Pillar Route (V sup. and A2) on Nelion, 17,022 feet, which gave fine sustained climbing. The night on the summit was spent quite pleasantly in the 'Labonar' shelter and, if nothing else, it was a change to be away from the Kami Hut rats. We then had a frustrating day on an indifferent route, the N. Ridge of Batian, reaching the 'Amphitheatre' and retreating in a snow-storm. The holiday was now coming to its end so we moved round to Two Tarn Hut, on the south side of the mountain, from which we climbed the Diamond Couloir (VI) spending another night on the summit of Nelion.

'The walk down the Teleki Valley under the weight of enormous sacks was only made possible by the prospect of thick steaks and beer at the River Lodge.'

Himalayas

GEOFF COHEN sends in this account of a seven month stay in the Himalayas, 'Should one write about remote places thereby encouraging other people to visit them? There seems to be an inescapable tension between the natural desire to talk or write about where one has travelled and the desire to preserve the remoteness of wild places and save them from popularisation. It could be argued that the most logical course to take for a person who cherishes remote places is to refrain from going there at all. Without taking such an extreme position it does seem to me there are better and worse ways of visiting mountain areas and of writing about them. The travels of Fritz Kolb, for example (described in *Himalayan Ventures*), who went to the mountains as an impoverished ex-P.O.W., must have had minimal impact on the areas he visited; it would have taken several thousand such expeditions to equal the impact of a single one of the big expeditions of the 1950's. I cannot claim to have resolved the dilemma, but I hope that by writing in the arcane recesses of this *Journal* (see *S.M.C.J.*, 1977, *xxxi*, 197), I will not be inflicting an excessive degree of popularisation on the areas I visited. In any case this heart-searching may be irrelevant since the apparently irreversible forces of development and urbanisation are having an effect in many Himalayan regions which outweighs that of the mountaineer or tourist.

'Having got that off my chest, what can I say about seven months of travelling in the Himalaya? I had thought of drawing attention to some aspects of low level Himalayan mountaineering the potential of which has hardly been appreciated. For example, low-level rock climbing, winter waterfall climbing or Himalayan Munroism*. For the latter I would tentatively propose the following definition of a Himalayan Munro: a mountain between 12,000 and 16,000 feet in height with a *separation* (see *S.M.C.J.*, 1974, *xxx*, 254) of at least one hour. The summit should be well above the tree-line and

*Cohen has already made a substantial contribution to Theoretical Munroölogy at home in *S.M.C.J.*, 1979, *xxxi*, 423 - *Editor*.

possibly there should be a restriction to mountains without glaciers. I am well aware of the deficiencies of these criteria and wonder indeed whether it is possible to frame a suitable definition for such a diverse mountain area. Still, I have derived such enormous enjoyment from peaks of this kind that it seems worthwhile popularising their pursuit. I would add that some of them display a degree of Oriental elusiveness of which any home-grown Munro would be proud. As for rock climbing it can only be a matter of time before the first 'rocknasts' come, P.A.-clad, to etch their lines on the sides of valleys such as the Langtang. For those who enjoy climbing in the authentic mountain atmosphere in good weather, close to the campsite, on unclimbed buttresses of whatever size of steepness, I can hardly imagine anything more satisfying than a holiday in a crag-lined upper Himalayan valley. On the other hand aficionados of Scottish grass climbing need not feel left out - it is in the gorges of the Himalayas that the future frontier of vegetable mountaineering undoubtedly lies.'

If the true purpose of these Notes is to inform, then I feel bound now to get down to the 'we did this then we did that' type of report.

'In October 1979, DAVE BROADHEAD, Anne Macintyre, Dick Isherwood and I went to the Jugal Himal in central Nepal. The six day walk in along a ridge past the pilgrimage lochans of Panch Pokhari was exceptionally fine, in spite of late monsoon snowfalls. We pitched base camp on the Lingshing glacier on the 16th and by the 26th we had climbed our objective Dorje Lakpa (22,929) by its West ridge. Good weather and snow conditions helped us, the route being fairly straightforward though with some steep and exposed cramponing up a rim of nevé on the crest of the ridge. A few days later Dick and I climbed Urkinmang (20,180) by its E. face, coming round on to the N. face near the top. This climb gave us two strenuous days, first because of crags guarding the lower icefalls and then on account of dangerous unconsolidated snow on the face itself. A cold wind at the top gave me some frost nip.

'Early in November we all crossed the range by what we thought was Tilman's col, to join the Langsisa glacier and then return to civilisation down the Langtang valley. The pass we crossed (about 17,400 ft, at the head of the Balephi glacier, between Urkinmang and Fluted Peak) was not in fact the one crossed by Tilman in 1949 - he crossed the col directly below the W. ridge of Dorje Lakpa from which we had started our climb. However our pass was a very dramatic cleft, with impressive faces on the W. side, and it was enlivened for us by stonefall which injured Anne (fortunately not too badly) and by Dave's succumbing to an illness which later turned out to be hepatitis. Trekking down from Langtang in perfect mid-November weather with ethereal views of Langtang Lirung and Gnesh Himal could hardly have been bettered.

'After a week in Kathmandu Dick and I set out for Rolwaling while Dave and Anne went convalescing round the Annapurnas. Leaving the road to Tibet at Barabise we crossed a wooded ridge and after five days entered the Rolwaling Khola. The weather deteriorated as we climbed up the valley, but on the 28th November we established a base camp near the glacier lake Tsho Rolpa at about 15,000 ft. A day later it began snowing; and when it stopped after 24 hours there was 3 foot of snow around our tent where before there had been just a dusting. We waited a few days for this to settle then made an attempt on Tsoboje (21,900) by its S.W. ridge which rose immediately above our camp. We carried the tent up to about 17,500 ft over a pleasant rock ridge (now smothered in snow). Then, after a day wasted through a route-finding mistake we climbed another pleasant rock ridge to a dramatic icy bivouac at about 19,500 ft. Next morning a harmless grey cloud frightened us with threats of another big snowfall and we scuttled back down. In spite of our failure and the fact that we should have pressed on, I found this experience of winter mountaineering in the Himalayas very rewarding - the

sense of remoteness was quite extraordinarily strong, but it did make us wary of pushing the boat out too far. We had originally planned to cross the Tesi Lapcha pass to Sola Khumbu, and so on 10th December with about three days' food we set off in that direction and struggled through the deep snow on the moraines of the Trakarding glacier to the foot of the pass. Again threatening weather, and the thought of being trapped high on the pass with no food, made us turn back. Dick seemed to resent having to lump our own 60 lb loads through the most infuriating collapsing snow whereas in summer time trains of German grannies get taken over the pass. I never saw any of their skeletons but can vouch that the active moraines make it a dangerous route. On our return we just walked over the frozen lake well out from the boulders that came bounding down the screes on to the ice, splattering out for a few hundred yards.

The rest of December was spent exploring the cake shops of Kathmandu, and from January to March I saw a little of non Himalayan India by bicycle, train and bus. Two hill stations, Mount Abu and Kodaikanal, particularly impressed me with their beauty. The former has a mountaineering school and boasts some rock climbing.

In mid-April I did a short walk in Kumaon from Gwaldam to Ghat in the Nandakini valley. The hills were still deep in snow above about 12,000 ft but gave fine walking reminiscent of Scottish spring time. The forests were magnificent and the local Garhwalis very friendly. Towards the end of the month Dave and I met up again in Delhi and travelled via Dehra Dun, Tehri and Ghuttu to the Bhillangana valley which leads up to the S. side of the Kedarnath-Gangotri range. Se spent about a month in this area with mixed success as a faulty stove and some heavy snowfalls hampered our activities. We climbed Ratangrian (c. 19,000), explored the Bhartekunta and Khatling glaciers, and reached about 20,000 ft in an attempt on Phating - the most impressive peak in the area. The biggest epic was our walk out westwards to Uttarkashi road. From the upper Bhillangana we crossed a pass of about 15,000 near some lakes called Shastru Tal, but then got trammelled in thick virgin forest in the gorge of the Pilgun Gad. It took us three days to cover 6 miles, during which time we virtually ran out of food and had to laboriously climb 3,000 ft up the side of the gorge and then plunge all the way back down again. Our bulky loads were not really suited to crawling through thorny, tangled undergrowth, squeezing through bamboo thickets and slithering up and down steep earthy banks. When we finally reached the first village, Pilang, the inhabitants treated our story with some incredulity, especially as our Hindi was not up to explaining our motives for this kind of thing!

In June we went to Joshimath and visited the Valley of Flowers (made famous by Smythe and now a great tourist attraction) and the lake Hem Kund (14,500 ft) which is sacred to the Sikhs. Later we trekked over the Kuari pass and beneath Trisul, finishing with another walk down the Nandakini valley. Dave then departed for a trip round Himachal Pradesh while Dick joined me for some more climbing. By the end of June when we returned to the Valley of Flowers it really lived up to its name - potentillas, cranesbill, primulas and blue poppies being especially memorable. In spite of indifferent weather we had a successful two-week campaign. First we climbed Rataban (20,230) by its N.W. face which gave 1,000 ft of interesting mixed climbing followed by an easy snow ridge. Then we crossed over to the Khulagarvia glacier and climbed Nilgiri Parbat (21,240) by its N.W. face - a long easy-angled snow route. Unfortunately monsoon weather prevented us from getting a view from either of these summits though we did see a little of Kamet, Mana and other peaks to the North, and of the Badrinath peaks to the West. But in the course of a month in the Joshimath area we never once saw Nanda Devi.

Dick and I now hurried overland, via the appalling Indo-Pakistani railway frontier crossing near Lahore, to rendezvous with Des Rubens in Rawalpindi. At the third attempt we got our flight to Skardu on 16th July,

delighted to escape the heat and the onset of Ramadan. A jeep took us along the Indus and Shyok to Khapalu and thence *through* some rivers to the entrance to the Hushe valley which runs North and is dominated by Masherbrum at its head. Turning right (W.) above Hushe we established a base camp amongst the wild rose bushes beside the Chogolisa glacier. A few days later, having carried a camp further up the glacier and having been overwhelmed by the huge and apparently impossible N.E. face of K6, we turned our attention to an unnamed peak of 21,700 ft on the N. side of the glacier a little to the E. of K7. This attracted us as one of the few mountains in the area feasible for a party as lightly equipped as ourselves. A narrow side glacier took us to the foot of its E. face at about 17,000 ft. This face led through 2,500 ft of alternating rock bands and snow slopes on to the N.E. ridge from where an apparently straightforward line led up to a serac region below the easy summit slopes. We rather underestimated the mountain. Each of the first three rock bands, though short, involved climbing of Scottish Grade IV standard and consumed a lot of time, especially as we were three on a rope. The first night we managed to find a tiny sheltered platform for the tent, but the next night, having left the tent behind, we found ourselves huddled by a pinnacle on a ledge barely big enough for two, with extremely impressive drops on either side of the ridge. The moonlit views of Chogolisa were awesome. On the third day Dick and I reached a bivvy below the seracs at about 20,500 ft. Des having abseiled back down to the previous ledge since his lack of acclimatisation was telling. Finally, bad weather added to the fact that we now had no sleeping bags, tent or food (all having been left lower down the mountain) persuaded us to abandon the attempt though not far short of success. Two jammed abseil ropes and a dropped camera-case completed the rout, and it was a very relieved and chastened party that stepped back on to the glacier after five full days on the face.

We next attempted Drefekal (21,150), a shapely but easier peak up a glacier branching South off the Chogolisa glacier. En route we discovered messy traces of a Japanese expedition who had also left fixed ropes on the climb. The approach was long but easy and only the last 700 ft of the mountain were tricky; but here soft snow over unreliable rock slowed us up a lot. We were lucky to have a perfect day for the climb and the views from the summit for all the great peaks of the Karakoram exceeded anything any of us had ever seen. After some abseils in the dark we ended up having an extremely cold bivouac at about 20,800 ft from which my toes are only now recovering. Our further plans in the area were cut short by the discovery that our base camp had been rifled of food and gaz, and by the desire of the authorities for us to disappear forthwith. The apricot season was now finished and crossing the Shyok on a zak (a raft of inflated skins) provided the last thrill of the trip. Des then went to Swat for a weekend while Dick and I wound our separate ways in India.

My last two weeks were spent on a solitary trek in Himachal Pradesh, and were as enjoyable as any of the whole year. The shepherds I kept meeting were so hospitable that I hardly touched most of my food – being treated to such delicacies as goats' testicles freshly cooked over the camp fire! I crossed from Manali via the Kali-Hen pass to Bara Bangahal where I got involved in some unexpected feasting. From there a little-used route known as the Shah Nala gave me an exciting pass over to Lahul. After a day in Kyelang I came back over the Rohtang pass and so to Delhi and Edinburgh.

DAVE BROADHEAD, another exponent of the latter day Great Game sends us this report. His path in the sub-continent crossed that of Cohen but the accounts are complementary. 'Our travels in the Indian sub-continent continued in 'up country Ceylon' with an ascent of the celebrated Adams Peak (7,420 ft). This shapely peak is Sri Lanka's second highest and the stiff 3,000 ft climb is made by hundreds of pilgrims every night during the tropical

winter. The sacred object of their pilgrimage is a foot shaped imprint on the summit rocks, thought to have been made by Buddha, Lord Shiva or even Adam, surrounded now by a temple. Cold and shivering in shirt sleeves and saris, the climax of the ascent was the spectacular sunrise. We were lucky to have chosen a perfect day to watch the rising sun casting the conical shadow of our peak miles across the misty rolling forests below. To facilitate what must be one of the world's most popular mountain climbs, concrete steps, hand rails and electric lighting all the way up reduce the rigours of the ascent, replacing the iron chains which once facilitated the scramble. Another interesting example of the consequences of the invasion of a mountain by 'the masses.'

'Travelling around India one is never far from hills and mountains of some size or shape such as the Nilgiris, the Western and Eastern Ghats, but after almost three months of continuous travel and sightseeing we were delighted to be back among the Himalayas again with boots and rucksacks. Approaching Darjeeling from Calcutta at the end of March, a short trek along the Indo-Nepal frontier took us to Sandakphu where we enjoyed another spectacular sunrise, revealing four out of five of the highest peaks, including Everest. Unfortunately cloud obscured views of the high tops as we continued by road to Kalimpong and Gangtok, and thence to Assam. In the new hill state of Meghalaya we were surprised to find that the scenery around Shillong really justifies its reputation as 'Scotland of the East.'

'A long dusty train journey across the arid pre-monsoon North Indian plains took us back to Delhi. Anne flew back to the Scottish spring, almost as hot and dry, while I was joined once more by Geoff Cohen, lean and fit after a winter's cycle tour further South and a couple of weeks' trekking in the Kumaon hills. After a brief shopping expedition in New Delhi's 'Super Bazar' we were bound for the hills again to start the long planned 'Spring Campaign.' Travelling by train to Dehra Dun, then a couple of bus rides took us to within sight of the eternal snows, part way up the Bhilangana valley. A four-day walk up the valley with the assistance of four porters established us at a base camp above the Khatling glacier with enough food for three weeks. By way of getting re-acclimatised we climbed Ratangri, a peak of about 19,000 ft and Geoff had enough energy to solo Rudugaira which he described as a 'Himalayan Munro' of about 17,000 ft. Moving further up the Khatling Glacier we established a high camp in the hope of attempting Jaoni or one of the Gangotri peaks, but our plans were thwarted by a heavy fall of snow. Feeling fitter we attempted Phating peak (6905m) whose magnificent rocky summit towered above the surrounding peaks, skirted by glaciers and ice-falls. After four days of strenuous going we had still to reach the difficulties of the summit pyramid, so with only one day's food left we reluctantly turned back.

'The climbing finished we walked out of the valley without porters, carrying our gear ourselves and following a different route over a 10,000 ft pass. Descending, we discovered the foolishness of not following an established path, spending three days struggling a few miles through a thickly forested gorge. The trek soon took on aspects of an ordeal, particularly after we ran out of food, and it was a great relief to reach ever-encroaching civilisation again. Looking back on our struggles in the jungle it was reassuring to have found such impenetrable wilderness only two days' walk from the nearest road.

'After a few days feeding in Dehra Dun we headed back into the hills again in the company of an Indian friend. Roads now penetrate deep into most of India's Himalayan valleys and access by bus is relatively easy. Unfortunately bus rides are usually uncomfortable and for us seldom uneventful. Originally built for strategic reasons roads have opened the sacred Himalayan shrines to the masses and the hazards and discomforts of the arduous trek which once took several months from the plains can now be compressed into

a bus trip of a few days. Leaving the mainstream of Hindu pilgrims just beyond Joshimath, we followed the well maintained tracks of the more affluent Sikh pilgrims climbing with impressive determination up to Sri Hemkund Sahib (4,329m). Most popular at weekends, their goal was a small lochan situated in a rocky corrie. A relatively recent discovery, it is believed that Guru Govind Singh once spent time meditating here, and in celebration of this a modern gurudwara or temple is under construction. This enormous unearthly structure of concrete and girders shows the lengths that people will go to spoil a beautiful spot. Visiting Cairngorm on my return the sight of the 'day lodge' under construction reminded me of the gurudwara except that the latter offers tea and shelter free of charge. Just around the corner, a couple of hours' walking took us into the famous 'Valley of Flowers' immortalised by Frank Smythe and now advertised by the Indian Tourist Board. At the beginning of June we were a month or so too early for the finest floral displays though there was still plenty to see.

'From Joshimath we made a pilgrimage of our own, over the Kuari Pass, back along the route followed by so many illustrious mountaineering expeditions in previous generations bound for Nanda Devi and beyond. With the monsoon approaching, heavy cloud deprived us of the famous view from the pass. Except for the occasional trekkers and shepherds the route is hardly used any more and in places overgrown. Expeditions now jostle with pilgrims on the buses and trade with Tibet finished years ago. We rejoined the evergrowing road system at Ghat, returning by bus to Joshimath where Geoff and I finally parted company. With the expiry date of my return ticket approaching I wanted to see more of the hills further west, in Himachal Pradesh, while Geoff was eager to get back to the rigours of climbing, heading back up the 'Valley of Flowers' with Dick Isherwood.

'From the wilds of Garwhal a couple of long bus journeys took me via Simla onto the lush Kulu valley. With the weather getting wetter I bought an umbrella and enjoyed a few short treks up side valleys, visiting Malana village and Beas Kund lake.

REVIEWS

Calculated Risk.—By Dougal Haston. (1979; Diadem Books, London. £4.95).

Whatever critical remarks may be made here or elsewhere about this tedious novel, it should be borne in mind that Haston left no indication that he intended to publish it and so a charitable view would be that it would not have appeared, had he lived.

The novel is a thinly-disguised autobiography which deals with the entry to the inner circle of great (his word, naturally) climbers of a young Scottish climber, John Dunlop (or Guess-Who?), who is fished out of the provincial backwater of Scottish climbing by one Jack McDonald (an American living in Laysan and not unlike the late (great, of course) John Harlin. These two heroes power their way up the west side of the Walker Spur in winter, brilliantly rescuing two 'amateurs' en route and return in triumph to Chamonix, the plaudits of the press and the hot embraces of some very understanding young girls.

For those who would wish to know what Haston was 'really' like, this novel will provide one answer — namely, arrogant, ambitious, self-centred, contemptuous of those whose abilities were less or whose aspirations were lower and possessed of an attitude to women which adds a new dimension of meaning to the concept of male chauvinism. However, it may reasonably be suspected that he was not quite so unromantic and brutal as John Dunlop. Surely more than the extrinsic motives of money and fame or the tawdry

intrinsic one of personal ambition were involved in Haston's pursuit of High Places. At least we must hope so, for otherwise mountaineering has lost its way.

There is a limited amount of material of climbing interest in the book. It is perhaps entertaining to speculate about the line Haston had in mind in his (Dunlop's) solo ascent of the right wall of Ossian's Cave. Some of the technical aspects of solo-climbing and of the craft of keeping dry and secure on a long Alpine winter climb are laid out in an instructive way. Finally, it should be said that the book reads reasonably well, given the appalling content. Perhaps he might have done well eventually.

R.N.C.

Mountaineering.—By John Cleare. (1980; Blandford Press, Colour Series. 169 pages. £3.95).

When a kenspeckle, respected name like Cleare appears on the cover of a book such as this, the reviewer is tempted to give a philosophical sigh and give it an easy ride. The temptation should be resisted. Any fast buck offering on our noble sport should be recognised and treated for what it is.

There is nothing new or stimulating anywhere in this disjointed collection of text and photographs (some good) and the only questions raised by its existence are uncomplimentary ones. Who is the book aimed at? What is it for? I could answer none of these.

One suspects that the author found himself lumbered with a pile of unused coloured photographs on file and succumbed to the idea of building a quick book around them. This is fine and can, sometimes, work. Not here.

Cleare tries hard to pull it all together but fails because the stringing together of some photographs in the style of 'The National Geographic' along with a rather 'Readers Digest' text is no way to enhance the fine literature of the sport. The result is no more creative nor illuminating than the doubtful publications mentioned.

The low price is too high.

W.S.

A Guide to Trekking in Nepal.—By Stephen Bezruchka. (4th ed. 1981; Cordée. 256 pp., 9 maps. £4.95).

I approached this book, as I approached Nepal itself, with some trepidation as to the effects of tourism and commercialisation. But the opening page declares 'Nepal is there to change you, not for you to change it Make your footprints with care.' And the foreword by Hillary contrasts the Khumbu he first saw in 1951 with the ecological and cultural deterioration he finds there today, and appeals to the reader to help save Nepal. (From whom?). The philosophy seems right.

The author gives us sensible advice on bargaining and portage rates, on how not to offend against local customs (for example by eating with the left hand or by throwing rubbish into someone's hearth), on 'disposing of body wastes' and on not giving out medicaments. This is in addition to the useful information that one would expect in such a guide — on food, weather, equipment, simple Nepali phrases, and short sections on natural history and anthropology. Stephen Bezruchka is a doctor who has worked in Western Nepal, so naturally his comments on health care are thorough (though I was surprised by his personal treatment for diarrhoea — one tetracycline tablet!).

The main popular treks are described: round the Annapurnas; Helambu and Langtang; Everest base camp; as well as slightly less well known ones such as Jumla to Rara, Khumbu to Rolwaling and Khumbu to Ilam. Plenty of excursions are mentioned and physical features, shelters and times are described in detail. From comparison with my limited personal experience all

seems accurate, including the sketch maps. Altogether we have a workmanlike guide which can certainly be recommended to prospective trekkers.

I remain uneasy. Who will read this guide? Perhaps only nice, enlightened people (like us!) who recognised the dangers to Nepal already. Meanwhile the damage to the forests, the soil erosion, the marginal agriculture and the destruction of the traditional way of life will all continue apace; while Western trekkers come to enjoy the wonderful scenery. There is something paradoxically distasteful about tourism, especially in poor countries, and the mountaineer or trekker partakes of it, however much he would like to kid himself otherwise. Is trekking partly to blame for deleterious developments in Nepal – for replacing traditional generosity with exploitative attitudes – or is it a force for good, bringing money and employment to poor, remote parts? The question is far too complex for a glib answer. It is a clash of worlds, and the individual can only try to keep sight, through the confusion, of the values he holds important.

There is one other aspect to a guide such as this. The author quotes Havelock Ellis: 'The Promised Land always lies on the other side of a wilderness.' To me it is the antithesis of wilderness to have a guide which tells me that I will reach here in half an hour, then climb up there in forty minutes, follow this ridge, cross that stream, stay in that hut. *Chacun à son gout*; but I shall not read this guide on my next trek, though I may delve into it with interest afterwards.

G.C.

The Big Walks.—Compiled by Ken Wilson and Richard Gilbert. (1980; Diadem, 256 pp., 125 black & white, 112 colour, illustr. £16.95).

After *Hard Rock* and *Classic Rock*, could the trilogy be completed with *Easy Rock*? Not likely, no percentage in that.

Instead Ken Wilson has turned his attention to the hillwalkers – and there are plenty of them.

He has enlisted the help of Richard Gilbert to produce a book, in the words of the latter: 'A practical guide with enough information for the walker to follow the suggested route on the map and to plan his day.'

The book comprises selected walks with accompanying photographs and text describing each trip in great detail.

The photographs are superb, not only for the printing quality, but for the thoughtful choice of unusual views of well known hills. So much so that the text is a slightly annoying interruption when turning over to the next glorious view. I suppose one could get around to reading the articles eventually.

It would have been much more desirable to have story captions identifying the plates with scant descriptions of the particular walk or scramble. The space saved would have allowed for more pictures – or, alternatively, a cheaper book.

With all due respect to the special contributors, I feel step-by-step accounts of the trips are unnecessary.

This type of book should be presented in such a way as to provide a taster. That is the charm of the S.M.C. District Guides. They give, without frills, a basic description of a mountain walk, and it's up to the individual to go ahead and enjoy it – and be surprised occasionally.

One previous S.M.C.J. reviewer, when referring to the cost of *Classic Rock*, said: 'It is more than can be asked from even your favourite aunt.'

In order to obtain a copy of *The Big Walks*, all one's aunts plus some other relatives, would need to pool their resources.

D.G.P.

Ascent 1980 and Ascent 1976.—Edited by Allen Steck and Steve Roper. (Diadem; 272 pp. and 128 pp. £6.45 for 1980, or £6.95 together).

This is a launch of the new *Ascent* as a special offer along with the 1976 edition. Both are in soft cover but strongly bound and in large format. They are generously illustrated, sometimes with superb photographs, the earlier edition all in black and white. The 1980 edition has a number of outstanding colour illustrations, particularly those showing the contrasts between the russet and ochre walls of Colorado and 'the elfin towers' of an Alaskan fairyland, The Cathedral Spires.

They are strongly North American, both in content and in the flavour of their writing. Here and there are pieces which stir the imagination and make the palms itch for rock, or even sweat with apprehension. The 1976 edition is the weaker, in this reviewer's judgement, with heavy and failing humour in 'Poontanga' and symbolism too obscure for his limited comprehension, in 'Resurrection.' The 1980 version is better, although it too has its grey areas, such as Mark Twain's 'Conquest of The Riffelberg,' which must have been tedious even in its contemporary setting. Nevertheless here are some splendid contributions such as the climbing assessment of some Californian skyscrapers and the excellent reviews, to say nothing of those magical Cathedral Spires.

All in all a pretty good offer from Diadem.

W.D.B.

Lochaber and Badenoch, Rock and Ice Climbs.—By C. Stead and J. R. Marshall. (1981; Scottish Mountaineering Club; Clarkson & Sons Ltd. 211 pp., 30 photographs, 28 diagrams, 3 maps. £5.95).

This is the second in the new series of Scottish Rock and Ice Climbing Guides, and it has clearly benefited from the decision to switch the printing from West Col to the local firm of Clarkson & Sons. The most obvious improvement is the attractive flexible cover which should make for easier usage, particularly on the crag. Furthermore, the price has been brought down.

Of the six books projected for this series, this one has easily the most obscure title, and this may possibly retard sales south of the Border. Even the average Scottish climber may well be unsure what, apart from Ben Nevis, is covered. With the book in your hand the answer is still not obvious at first sight, but a careful reading of the contents reveals that the companions to Ben Nevis are Garbh Beinn of Ardgour, the Pollidubh Crag of Glen Nevis, Binnein Shuas, Creag Meaghaidh, and Creag Dubh of Newtonmore. This combination provides a wealth of summer and winter climbing, and is particularly valuable in that good low-level crags are included.

Browsing through the guide has been a pleasure. The comments about quality, often to be found in the opening paragraph of a route description, are very worthwhile, particularly with regard to the lesser known routes. The now common E-gradings (E1, E2, ...) have been introduced for the harder rock climbs, and there is a tentative Grade VI winter climb (The Shield). The regional maps and crag diagrams seem very clear (though it's hard to be sure with these until you really get down to using them). The geological notes contain some nice touches of detail, as in '... surprise blocks of schist are to be found, such as the overlap at the top of the penultimate pitch of Ardverikie Wall ...'

As in the Glencoe guide, there are several black and white photographs. Inevitably in this medium, the winter shots tend to look the better. My own favourites were Minus One Gully (being told it's the first ascent undoubtedly helps in capturing the atmosphere), Vanishing Gully, Ritchie's Direct, and Oui-Oui (trees and all!). The opening pictures of Percussion and Butterknife set a high standard that is not maintained by all of the subsequent rock

shots. The action shots on Cárn Dearg Buttress hardly do such a mighty crag justice, and it was disappointing to find no picture of the Buttress in its entirety.

Following last year's review of the Glencoe guide, I should perhaps comment on the debate concerning selective versus definitive guides. The main advantages of the selective guide seem to be that more crags can be covered and the climbs mentioned are all worthwhile (at least in the opinion of the author). The disadvantages are that some good routes are omitted and that it's difficult for the would-be pioneer to know what's been done before. One possible compromise would be to select routes for description and then at the end of each section list the names of all other routes together with very brief references. Thus, for example, after the section on the Orion Face one might have: Neglected Route (Bluebeard's Guide to Ben Nevis); Forget-me-not (S.M.C.J., 1982). This would take up relatively little space and would benefit not only the user but also the next guide-book writer. It might even boost sales of back numbers of this *Journal*!

In conclusion let me say that this is a well-prepared and stimulating guide to a good variety of fine climbing areas. I strongly recommend it.

R.J.A.

Kindred Club Journals

The Alpine Journal, 1980. 272pp.—Flattering comments from previous reviewers of the A.J. apply equally well to the present edition. Well worth stealing from the Hon. Librarian (or even buying if you're beaten to it!).

S.N.S.

The Cairngorm Club Journal, 1980. 70pp. *Edinburgh University Mountaineering Club Journal*, 1980. 59pp. *Midland Association of Mountaineers' Journal*, 1979/80. 80pp.

The main thing these three journals have in common is their physical size.

In the E.U.M.C. J. interest is maintained throughout with a world-ranging series of light, racy articles culminating in a generally bawdy review of club exploits. If climbing is about enjoyment then the 'Yummicks' would appear to be the most successful climbers represented here.

By way of contrast the *Cairngorm Club Journal* is dull. Having to deal with the 'Gorms may be considered by the sceptic to be an inbuilt handicap and this journal will only reinforce that opinion. The only redeeming feature is Nisbet's excellent article, 'Cairngorm Climbing - A Contribution' which is of extreme interest (not to mention HVS or even maybe Grade VI).

The comprehensive mixture of articles in the M.A.M. J. ranging freely from Scotland to other (less important) world centres perhaps reflects the dearth of mountaineering in the Midlanders' own back-green. Those articles featuring over-seas ranges provide some practical information and food for thought for the family man planning his next holiday. Others include the standard 'no-hold-apocalyptic-grip-up' account of a rock-climb; a worrying tale of a rescue on the Ben and the subsequent demise of one of the rescuers; a book article along the lines of 'Desert Island Mountaineering Books' which is worth reading just for a quote from a climbing primer that 'the climber should never place more than one foot onto the hold already occupied by both hands'! In the same article the S.M.C. District Guides get a hearty pat on the back (could the General Editor please reveal if this man is 'in our

pocket'?) but in the final list of his favourite eight books the misguided contributor places *H . . . 's Mountain Walk* three places above *One Man's Mountain*!

Such erosion of our sacred institutions must be stopped!

S.N.S.

The Chester Mountaineering Club Journal, 1980.—A rather unwieldy format but with lively and entertaining contents suggesting a parent club of similar character.

Other journals received and acknowledged here are *The Canadian Alpine Journal*, *New Zealand Alpine Journal*, *Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa*, *Appalachia*, *Tararua Trampler*, *Polar Record*, *Rivista Mensile*, *Deutscher Alpenverein*. We regret that these cannot all be reviewed.

W.D.B.

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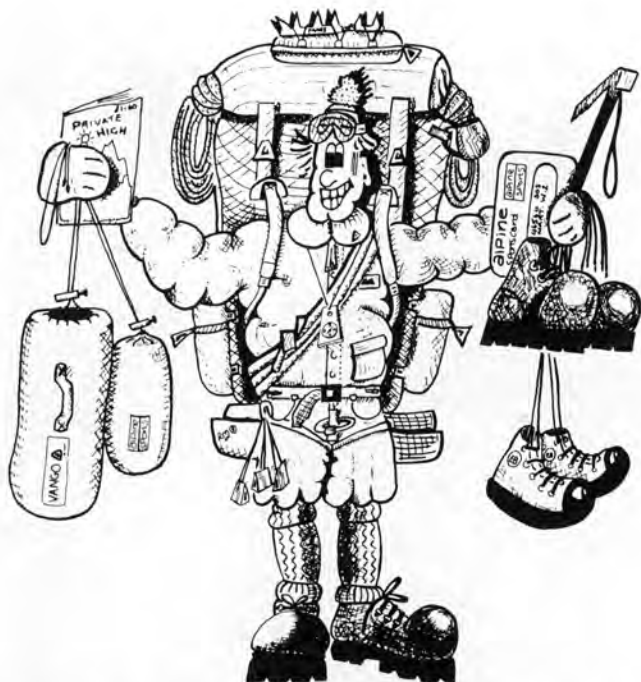
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