

THE  
SCOTTISH  
MOUNTAINEERING  
CLUB JOURNAL



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1890—1990

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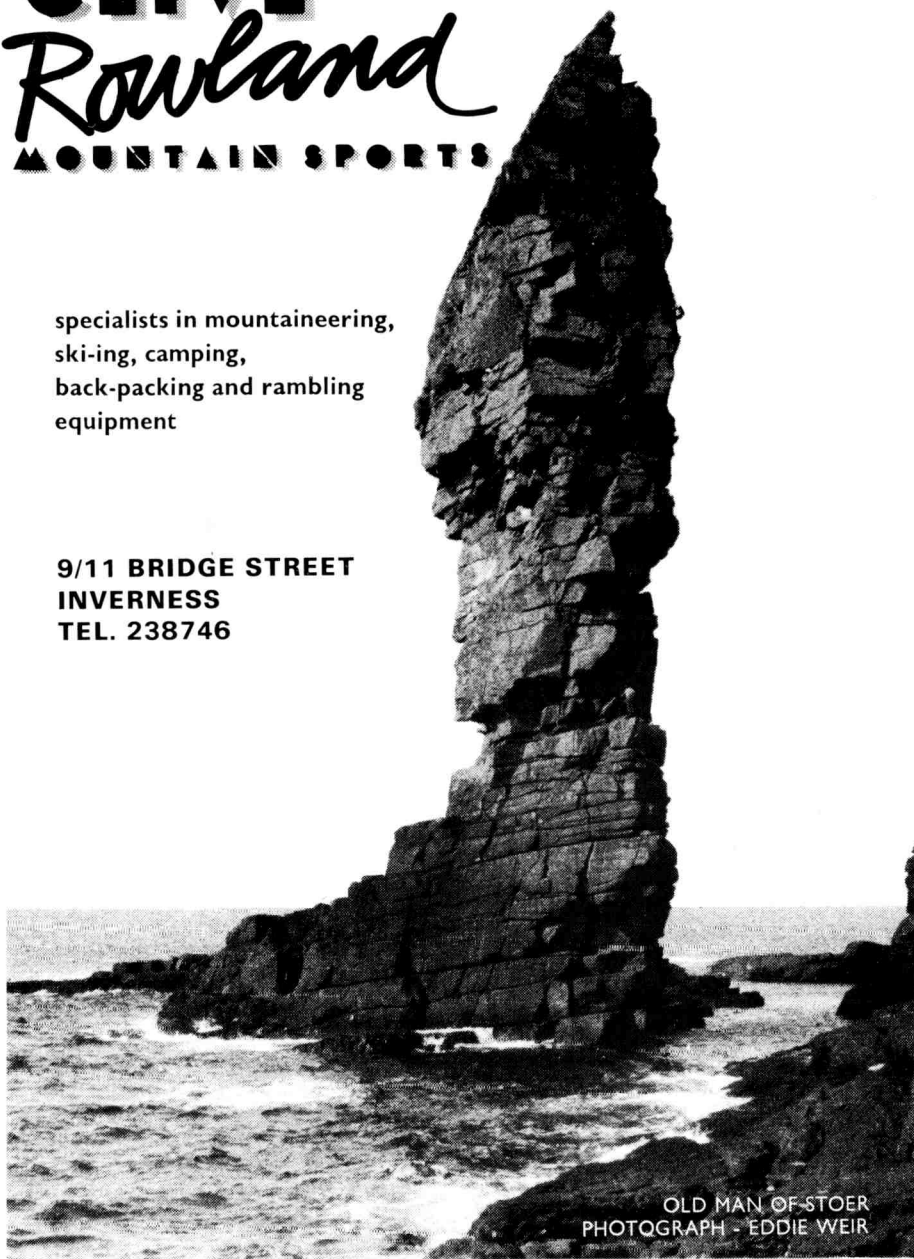
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William Douglas  
2nd Editor of the Journal.

# THE SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL

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## EDITORIAL

### Between The Lines

WE ARE bound to wonder whether Joseph Gibson Stott was fully aware of what he was starting, in January 1890, with the production of the first number of this Journal. That there were some doubters as to its future is evident, as Stott mentions in his opening Editorial, but in defence he pointed out both the richness of the field to be explored, and the numbers within the Club who could till that field. The resulting pursuit of this *'fascinating pastime,'* he continued, *'ought to be the gathering of a great mass of most diversified and interesting information, whose natural channel should be the Journal.'* In this modest prediction, Stott was certainly proved correct.

Indeed, the Journal has arrived at that point in its life where a steady proportion of its output is the outcome of a healthy curiosity with its past, exemplified in this issue by the collection of letters from Stott. Amusingly, this curiosity has even led to a new growth area, with the fertile imaginations of several of the Club's most noted contributors producing beautifully crafted period pieces. These so blur the distinction between fact and fiction that the current Editor is moved to identify what is genuine and what is not.

So we immediately state here that the letters from Stott, moping in exile in the beautiful but not-Scotland country of New Zealand are real; sent to Willie Douglas, his friend and immediate successor as Editor of the Journal. They provide a fascinating peek into the Victorian mind, as well as a slightly uncomfortable glimpse of Club and Journal politics of the 1890s.

In looking back over the 100-year span of the Journal we might be expected to face a problem endemic to all historians. We can read the dates and follow the events, but often hidden from view will be the more personal side; the characters and psyches of the mountaineers who strode, stirred and stravaigned over the hills. Some of this 'character,' as will be alluded to later by a past Editor, is not for public consumption, and has to be gently excised by editorial scalpel, but enough remains to be documented for future seekers. In this braided but unbroken nexus with the past we have

a rich record, as yet one which has been barely tapped. It is this personal aspect that I have chosen to focus on for this editorial. Having gritted our way through the truly wretched politics of the 1980s it has become of even more importance to retain the human touch and to read, as it were, between the lines.

In the pages that follow you will find laid out some of the personal experiences of past Editors, five if we include Stott and Douglas. The 10th, 11th and 12th Editors still on the rope have been prodded into sharing with us some of their secrets, culled delights from the many long and hard nights' work necessary to see a Journal to press. If we could have included the 9th Editor, J.H.B. Bell, we would have spanned back to the ominously dark days of 1936, so that these four alone accounted for half a century of the Journal.

I never met Bell, though I made several poignant visits to his widow, herself a climber and a great character. The meetings enriched me immensely. In the sitting room of what had been Bell's family house, and later their home, an afternoon was spent with his climbing logbooks, the low winter sun pouring in through the window and illuminating the pages with a warm glow. As the handwriting deteriorated towards the end so did his climbing days draw to a close, until at last he remained at home. A few years after reading his logbooks, the same sun glowed through the stained glass of the local church, when Pat Bell rejoined her husband. I had been privy to a love story, just as you will be in reading the ex-editors' contributions, for to edit the Journal is surely a labour of love.

It is an Editor's prerogative to shape the Journal as he sees fit, within the narrow limits permitted by the membership. Dutton, as you will shortly read, had to follow the extraordinary long Bell dynasty, during which time the pages of the Journal had inevitably acquired a dated appearance. Toiling alone in a freezing garret atop a Dundee tenement, with a view of the Tay as compensation (but only when standing on the kitchen table), he recast the entire look of its pages fit for the last forty years of the millenium. He was also master of The Capital Letter, with a Matching Scholarship and Wit none of us can Hope to Follow. I was still climbing into football parks when Dutton was Master, and can only stand back in awe at his Powers of Transmogrification. *'Let no one doubt his art,'* his immediate successor wrote, *'it is easier to turn a Toad into a Princess than a Squirrel MS into an Article!'*

The beginnings of the logarithmic increase in climbing saw the enlistment of Campbell, for some years as doppelganger to the Master and then Editor in his own write. As befit the times, he often ruled with a pen dripping with vitriol, though it could be argued that to be attacked by Campbell was in fact to be one of the favoured. When it came to the Journal, however, he was always right, as when he warned me about sending in some poems. *'I have to be careful about poetry,'* he wrote to me, having being tutored in the Dutton School of Editing for Young Men, and

lucky for me and the Journal too, considering the youthful incompetence of the poetry.

Then Campbell, like all Editors, grew battle-weary, and pushed the ink-stained desk northwards to Aberdeen, where men and rocks are granite both. Brooker had the stamina to provide a run of eleven issues, and was smart enough to parachute out before the copious doings of the new crag rats welled up in the small print. In compensation for parting with the desk, he built up the hitherto obscure Munro cult into a regular feature of the Journal, an albatross of undoubted dimension no Editor dare cut down. From him I inherited a large box file marked *'The S.M.C.J. - Everything the heart could desire or wish for lieth herein.'* To my regret I found its contents of little practical use as, doubtless like all Editors before, I had to find the route myself.

In its continuing record of mountaineering, the pursuit of that *'fascinating pastime,'* the Journal continues to channel diversified and interesting information, whose value can only grow with the years. Stott might have been surprised had he seen the longevity of the Journal, and it would be a bold Editor who would predict a second unbroken century, but we continue as he started, with quiet confidence, the base secret of many a great ascent. And on the way, the Journal will surely continue to produce a richly braided tapestry for the delight of future readers.

Finally, it is a rare privilege to be Editor, and never more so than in its Centenary year. If on occasion there appears to be a faltering in the standard, a slackening of the belay, it is due to working in the shadows of the giants who went before.

## EDITOR THE TENTH

By G.J.F. Dutton 1960-1971

*'One editor will sometimes convey his abuse with more decency, and colour his falsehoods with more appearance of probability, than another.'*

George Crabbe.

I WROTE somewhere that the *Journal* Editor is the Custodian of the Club's fourth dimension. My own spell of duty coincided with a fairly exciting stretch - nearly a snap - of that hitherto decorous parameter. I inherited the Sixties. Their storms of social misbehaviour shook even the S.M.C.; and it was enjoyable to hold the ropes, as things took off above me: as routes, gradings, whole reputations came tumbling down under the irreverent gaiety of the leaders, and clouds of dust billowed from the gratefully outraged (at last!) Club Establishment. Stirring times, and undoubtedly a crisis for our old selves, as for other bourgeois Victorian institutions; one surmounted with much huff, puff and ultimate enjoyment.

It makes a good story, how the Club was shocked into that then modern age, how Marshall, Smith, Haston, Moriarty, MacNiven, Campbell and the rest drove Scottish winter climbing through broken windows into world prominence, dragging a dishevelled but delighted S.M.C. behind them. You can read much about those carnival days in the *Journals* themselves, of course - that's why they were printed - and in Brooker's fine selection from them, but there are many hilarious incidents not written about. I relish, for example, as a symbol of this heady new wine in tough old bottles, an episode in some dim dull commercial hotel among surroundings (although it was the Sixties) furnished physically and mentally as for the Thirties; an episode in which an old and fervently respectable white-collared gold-spectacled Club member - who was dining Campbell and myself there - rose from his Brown Windsor soup and, clutching an emotional napkin, tiptoed to each of us in turn, imparting - with bated breath and schoolboy-shining eyes - the information that he had found, neatly pressed between the pages of some G.H.M. Guide in the Club Library (the Club Library!), as bookmark - a, a, a...French Letter...

Yes, I should like to take you further into that old New Society - epitomised on the hill by Smith's '*The Bat and the Wicked*' and in the Clubroom by MacIennan's '*We Happy Few*.' But:

No; in the rapidly diminishing space I have left, I shall keep to the present Editor's inspired centennial directive, and describe my job at that



rewarding time - as an example of any Editor's job at any time. You will have to imagine the background of ferment in the late Forties and the Fifties, when more and more people, brandishing Murray, struggled to the hills with petrol-rationed motorbike, motorvan or hired bus; a time well evoked by Crawford in the last *Journal* and by Anon in volume xxvii. And you will have to accept the egotistical approach (your Editor demanded my *own* experiences) and the inseparable senile garrulity.

The great Doktor Bell was retiring in '59, and I took over that year as Assistant Editor. The canny J.H.B.B. sniffed imminent upheaval, and among my minor tasks was to assemble a list of old *Journal* articles for publication as a book to illustrate the origin and orderly progress of Scottish Mountaineering until then. (You may have already bought the always-hastily-passed-on idea, 29 avalanching years later.) But I had little time for this: the welter of grubby paper and primitive scribbles - to be crystallised into comprehensible Notes within a month - overwhelmed me.

The following issue was to be mine alone. Bell, that unforgettable pioneer, who climbed with socks on his feet, a nail in his eye and a hammer in his tongue, left me to it, with a cheerful wave of his clay pipe and a succession of pungently perceptive letters on how to deal with Problems. As they arise, as they arise; like the clouds of his puffed Clackmannan shag.

At such an obvious turning-point I decided to update the format: the paper, typefont and presentation. The *Journal*, to survive, had (has!) to remain authoritative amidst the froth of glossy Ephemera that were beginning to surface; which meant that every new route in Scotland, every rockfall, every change in access, had to be documented, and every good expedition by anyone in Scotland, or by Scots abroad, had to be narrated or referred to. Order and clarity were therefore essential, especially in the New Routes and Notes sections. These are, in fact, Scientific Reports, and the technical articles could be regarded as Scientific Reviews; all of which required unambiguous and frequent cross-referencing, and judgement of disputes about Priority - between papers, referees and rope-entangled authors. This would be fun, and much like what I was already being paid to do by day and most nights. (I was not, no Hon. Editor had been, no Hon. Editor remotely expected to be, paid for this his own Labour-of-Clubbable-Love: and if he were, he would soon have cried out that the pay was nothing like enough).

Very well, then; for modern times I chose the dignified 18th-century Baskerville fount as being sufficiently clean for New Routes and not too mechanically faceless for more imaginative contributions. I had to master typographical niceties - vital for visual satisfaction - of 10 on 11-point for text, 9 on 10 for notes. And how much 'leading,' which so markedly alters the whole 'colour' of the page. And the width of margins, narrow ones being so tiring to read. And the choice of paper - I retained the off-white matt, with no shiny dazzle that required snow-goggles. Because many

members bound their *Journal* volumes, and for the sake of continuity, I kept the same page size; and insisted on the binding of each issue (and the width of its inner margin) being compatible with eventual stitching into a cased volume (for the fourth dimension stretches back along the bookshelves). I found the smoky and spirituous recesses of The Darien Press - now long bought, trampled and built over (together with our innocently-entrusted Original Copper Plates) - surprisingly receptive; after 50-odd years they liked to stretch a (little) bit. These things were expensive, and the cry then and for many years was for Economy, Economy, the *Journal* Costs the Club Too Much; yet we demanded that visual quality, every page was conceived as a whole, and I think it paid off. (Perhaps to be remembered these days of a wealthy Trust; *some* latest-technology print faces can be quite attractive, as well as cheap; but they need an equally critical eye).

Undoubtedly, the load was heavy. I estimated that, at the beginning, every third evening from the end of November to the end of March, among screes and pinnacles of paper and books and letters, I would climb and climb until a weary midnight. Climb peaks from Rockies to Hindu Kush, with a great variety of companions, agreeable and disagreeable, some understanding English, some obviously not; endure Antarctica, Andes, Staunings, George Ritchie on Schkelda, baboon excrement on Table Mountain, storm the Fiescherwand, collapse at last on the Upper Baltoro .... In a blizzard of A4 severity I would hammer routes up Aonach Dubh, the Tarneilear Face, Corrie Etchachan, blotted and illegible Nevis cliffs; and no sooner struggle breathless over the final pitch than rack the typewriter back down to the foot of the crag and start again a little further to the north (a scratched Arrow marks the place) and up once more. And in the hail of words, I would pause, lost, uncertain from the author's murky pen whether to traverse *lt.* or *rt.*, and be forced to ribbon down and try that line another night. And on and on. I would, by February, suffer a long series of Accidents, falling through cornices, out of Land Rovers, on to ice axes, forget whistle and torch, wear rubber-soled shoes on verglas, benight beneath boulders, call out unnecessary thousands of shepherds, police, under-employed servicemen, Scouts, dogs and Hamish MacInnes; thank everybody with gratitude, and wish 'em to hell. Then I would attend funerals, Dinners and Meets, several in a night and not easy to distinguish.

It was a great time, climbing year after year with people alive, half-alive, long dead or just dead - especially that sardonic revenant R.C. Smith, and I dearly would like to quote from the vast Unpublishable I amassed; but some years ago I quite unaccountably threw out nearly all of six or so box files of 'S.M.C.J.', including irreplaceable letters from the irreplaceable Smith (his last one, written from 'some Russian mountain,' concluded 'I must stop now, my pencil is half an inch long' ...). Such correspondence was so often fascinating.

For editing, in slanderous circles, implies re-writing. Now, route descriptions usually required condensing (sent back of course for checking)

but articles - despite assertions from some glass houses - I tried to leave alone. Tried; but some were poor tellings of a splendid tale and, when these were 'assisted' here and there, the authors - who had to approve any suggested change, right down to proof stage (and every author was always sent galley proofs, so at least two of us proof-read - printer's or editor's errors in the *Journal* are inexcusable!), these authors, I say, *appeared* duly grateful. In contrast, some articles were so exuberantly written they contradicted themselves - as Patey, on his famous Creag Meaghaidh Girdle, nonchalantly asking the time from some astonished party he had come across, 'because he had forgotten his watch,' and then later in the traverse (or, rather, in the MS) pacing himself by that same timepiece; concerning which, he ruefully confessed 'one often writes things down as they *should* have happened.' Patey's calligraphy was execrable and his contributions increasingly tended to arrive as chaotic ungrammatical first drafts - 'Do what you can with this ...' The Old Man of Stoer was particularly shambolic: 'Thank you for such hard work and excellent rephrasing - so excellent that I quite enjoyed re-reading the article.' And perhaps, perhaps, a slight rebuke from the Master - 'I'm glad you appreciate my lack of skill with a pen.' Patey was more prudent than many with what he sent in - several stanzas of that wonderful *Alpine Club Song* were marked 'not for publication: that which can be sung may not always be fit to print.'

And other censorships. Well, I did - after due argument - delete obscenities, retaining the odd 'bloody' or suchlike to give apical emphasis; so many four-letter words are tiresomely meaningless, the self-gratification of the imaginatively impotent. They age unpleasantly, like litter. Haston dropped such toffee-papers about his thunderous Eiger-North-Face and cried further when they were swept away, but Smith calmly achieved his most cathartically black effects without a single oath. Smith sent in meticulously-finished contributions; his correspondence over any clarification that I thought needed was an education in literary craft. And Smith (and, more surprisingly, Patey) avoided that false 'mateyness' which, to following generations, is so irritating. I preferred surnames and usually gained my point. I thought unhappily of bound volumes of Bills, Dicks and Harrys; maybe Duttons, Buttons and Muttons are as bad, but I believe, from long reading of old climbing literature, that the comparative objectivity of surnames wears better. Perhaps I'm wrong. But I was Editor then, dammit.

An Editor must have a point of view - powerfully agreeable, like Farrar, or staunchly disagreeing, like Strutt. The *Alpine Journal*, in fact, has suffered occasional collapses because of a lack of editorial - not prejudice, not bias, but - creatively purposeful point of view to season the volumes entertainingly. We have been (and still are) relatively lucky that way. My own point of view at that time can, for what it is worth, be gleaned from the *Journal*; but let me insist now that a Club journal like ours *needs* to celebrate its giants, or its pygmies if they're interesting enough. Hills are

very well; we can all climb the Inaccessible, but we will never meet Munro again. Nor will our successors be fortunate enough to meet Slessor or Rubens outside the *Journal*. (Suppose I had written 'Hugh,' 'Malcolm' and 'Des,' there). No question of a Personality Cult. If someone has a Personality, it will out, and should be expressed in print freely for the future's delectation. A 'cult' implies the imposition of a nonentity.

Fortunately, I was soon able to farm out New Routes to permanent regional referees, and later the whole Section to a New Climbs Editor, a key post in the Club, for New Climbs and Notes set our International level. I had the great fortune to begin with J.R. Marshall himself from '63. As these sections grew with the sport, other members progressively honed the technical sharp edge, allowing me to attend to the more leisurely pages - and to my full-time job. Campbell, however, travelled upwards with splendid aplomb, and no loss of execution, from the blade to the handle; and, for my last six numbers, shared both chore and chair, to our own entertainment and, hopefully, that of our hapless readers.

The *Journal* is read with eager disparagement by climbers outwith the S.M.C., and I continued Bell's excellent ruse of bringing them, too, into the front line with a series on Kindred Clubs - contributions by, and about, themselves; historically and psychologically satisfying for both host and guest. Other sections I enjoyed were *Letters to the Editor*, resurrected from the quill and gaslight days: even if I had to write most of them myself I could that way work off tiresome obsessions above improbable signatures such as Anon, Pro Bono Publico, R.S.V.P or C.G.M.S. And S.M.C. Abroad gave a chance for everyone to Cram something amusing in. Perhaps the most notorious section was that which later developed into Smart's incomparable Munrosis commentaries. This began by reprinting Eric Maxwell's list of Completers (as they were then) from the *Grampian Club Bulletin*; Maxwell, the G.O.M. of the G.C., initiated the salty deprecation which alone can preserve humour in that otherwise by now intolerably flogged, but still much ridden, dead horse. And *Book Reviews*. Reviewers returned the books to the Club Library - do they still? Their reward was literary, I explained.

Before finishing, a word on illustrations. 'Bled' photographs - bleeding over the page edges - were part of the new-look of the '60s, but prints can be subject to even severer editorial cuts. These may involve not only surgical removal of margins but of innards. Who can imagine now, for example, that in the photograph of Russians, S.M.C. and (wry) A.C. members, in vol. xxvii (opp.) p. 129, an apparent stretch of windblown tussock covers - like much else in the Highlands - a whole corpus of minor individuals deemed suitable for Elimination in the interests of S.M.C. Journalism? And subject also to editorial graftings: for the photograph (opposite p. 269 in vol. xxviii) of the Late-Glacial North-West has obviously undergone, beneath a cold editorial eye, marked cryogenesis; moreover, the fur-cloaked and spear-bearing representative of the *Smertae*

(though his tribe were indeed reported as early inhabitants by Ptolemy) must engender doubt in all right-minded members. And no, I never used Colour Photographs; we had 'em, good ones, in 1909: old hat.

We'll close with the Cover. It's still the same. Weir and I examined several consumer-attractive photogenic variants in the '60s, but finance wagged its finger. Fingers as dirty as that one can ruin the cover still, discouraging booksellers from carrying stocks. We await some gifted designer - *without* a Processor mind or machine - to give us a cover fit to keep the next millenium worthily in custody.

Note:- I must certainly thank the present meritoriously 4-dimensional Editor for inviting this effusion; but cannot hope to mention all, therefore any, of those whose unselfish advice, rebuke and sheer hard work made possible the Journal from 1960-71. Yet I see I have not marked our changeover to Messrs. Culross for printing during that period, and hereby record our appreciation of the (often mutual) patience which unfailingly sorted out the inevitable production crises - not the least of the Burdens Borne by editors - and of the notable personal interest of R.J. Benzies himself.

## EDITOR THE ELEVENTH

**Robin N. Campbell, 1966-75**

*'The good of the Journal is our only object in life'*

Frank Goggs, 3rd Editor<sup>1</sup>

THERE IS an element of facetiousness in Goggs' remark, but, as is sometimes the case with that form of humour, the reader has the feeling that this is added only to conceal the true zeal of the fanatic. It is doubtful whether Goggs is remembered for his activities as an insurance writer, but who could fail to marvel at his account of a walk from Killin to Fortingall over Tarmachan and Lawers on a wintry Saturday, returning on Sunday via Carn Maig and Tarmachan<sup>2</sup>. Or his day on the Shelter Stone Crag with Raeburn, leaving their bivouac in the Lairig Ghru at 2.40 a.m., making two new routes on the virgin crag by 11 o'clock and cycling back to Kingussie for 4.30 p.m. 'in ample time for a bath and a meal before catching the 5.16 to Edinburgh'<sup>3</sup>. For most of us, like Goggs, the Club Journal provides us with the only secure foothold on the cliff of Posterity. Without it there would be no *Douglas Boulder*, no *Munros*, but mere grass and rocks; with it, we climb over comfortable familiar furniture, occupied by friendly ghosts who point the way and who may, perhaps, welcome us into their fellowship. So it was a great privilege to be asked to help Geoff Dutton, in 1965 or thereby, with 'our only object,' and to assist our more colourable members to find a comfortable stance, fit to preserve them, temporarily, from the plunge into Oblivion.

I was only 23 at that time and far too young for such a weighty responsibility. What literary skills I possessed seemed to work best in the service of belittlement and insult and I soon developed a chronic tendency in this direction, eventually earning the title of 'the SMC's verbal mincer' from Hamish MacInnes after one particularly bloody engagement. Mostly I reserved my venom for outsiders encountered in the Reviews section, such as the Alien Vegetation Subcommittee of the Mountain Club of South Africa, or Showell Styles - whose style of mountaineering I described as 'assiduous pottering,' or Chris Bonington - an altogether amiable and civil man whom I abused cruelly. So it was probably just as well that Dutton kept me pinned down in the small print section of the Journal to begin with, where I could do little serious harm. And I certainly paid a high price for my amusements; the New Climbs and Notes sections in particular called for endless nights of toilsome scholarship and donkey work at the typewriter. In the 1890s Stott and Douglas produced three Journals per year,

from exclusively longhand materials, and never neglected to send out galley proofs to authors or to prepare a page proof for final juggling. Page proofs ceased somewhere in the early Dutton years: galley proofs are only a dim memory now. And yet we struggled to produce one annual number then and, it seems, others still struggle now despite word-processors and electronic publishing. How did Stott and Douglas do it? Perhaps Raeburn's half-hour bath and meal mentioned earlier provides the vital clue: the physicists have clearly overlooked this obvious evidence that time is rapidly contracting!

By 1968 or so I had learned from observing Dutton that so far as the main part of the Journal is concerned, there is a lot more to Editing than the sifting and arranging which the name implies. Our Editor must keep abreast of events so as to know what should be gathered into the record and he must bully the thick-fingered into writing it down. And if they will not do it, he must write it himself! Gradually I was roped into this enterprise, at first as a mere Edinburgh gofer, delegated to poke and prod Squirrels, etc., into reluctant utterance. In 1969 I moved a step further, making an expedition to Glasgow to extract *The Pin* from Rab Carrington, and in 1970 I badgered Allan Austin into telling us about his *Guided Tour* of Clachaig Gully. The second lesson learned from Dutton was the importance of recruiting the Dead. They were ideal contributors: their words could be mangled at will; they returned no galley proofs; with any luck, serviceable copy could be found in a condition acceptable to the printer without retyping. Wonderful! So from beyond the grave we produced Christopher North, Robert Christison, Willie Ling and Robin Smith.

For the record, the other features of my confederate's editorial policy which I most admired and which I sought to emulate were his liberal use of wit as a garnish to every aspect of Journal production, his insistence that contributions (from the Living!) be original, his defence of the traditional format against trumpery innovations of typography and presentation and his absolute embargo on indifferent verse! Dutton's 'touch' was manifest in every corner of his Journals: his footnotes and asides, though rendered in microscopic 6-pt. type, assure the reader that this is a work full of craft and care as surely as do the gigantic illuminated capitals of Celtic scripture. Maintenance of the traditional format is necessary for a number of reasons, the chief of which is that Journal editors must take a very long view, considering not just the present readership's expectations in the way of layout, but those of the generations to come. We can study the Journals of 50 or 100 years ago without feeling that we have made contact with an alien civilisation and without being revolted by ephemeral and whimsical novelties. But it is only necessary to turn to the advertisement sections (where anything went) for these delicate continuities to be shattered. Even the advertisements of the early Dutton Journals have a decidedly dated appearance, after a mere 25 years. So it is vital, in the interest of these continuities, that innovations of format should await a consensus amongst those who produce works intended to endure.

When I took over as Editor in 1972, after serving this long apprenticeship, I enjoyed four happy years, untroubled by issues of policy, and with sufficient confidence to bully, to rewrite and to plug in my own bits and pieces where I saw fit. I also enjoyed the good fortune of Dutton's uproarious Doctor farces, a range of excellent articles by climbers of the day, and Donald Bennet's peerless photographs. The issue that gave me greatest pleasure was without question the JMCS jubilee number of 1975, which not only seemed to make a solid and valuable contribution to the historical record, but which also included a very worthy series of 'normal' articles as well, perhaps most notably Bob Aitken's piece '*Stravagers and Marauders*' - a pertinent reminder to us that our liberties of access are due mainly to the efforts of others wandering somewhere far beyond the Salvationist pale.

Risking a charge of Bad Taste, I will relate two small incidents, both discreditable, which in different ways epitomise the experience of being Editor. The first incident concerns a manuscript received from a member, a teacher of English, describing an important ascent of an Alpine peak. Perhaps the author had been unusually busy, or ill or otherwise distracted, for his manuscript was so execrably bad that no mere tinkering would suffice. So I rewrote the whole thing, only using the occasional (just about bearable) original phrase. I thought - When he gets the galleys, he'll just have to put up with it. And then, when I saw the galleys and compared them with his original, I thought - He'll kill me, so I may as well be hung for a sheep. So I sent him no galley proof. While the Journal was being printed the unfortunate man died in a climbing accident. An ill wind, indeed.

The other incident concerned Ben Humble, a kenspeckle and thrawn character who produced the annual Accident Reports. These were always an editor's nightmare of vilely written insertions and revisions superimposed on a barely legible original typed on a hamstrung instrument which unhappily escaped the munitions factories of the Boer War. Humble, being absolutely deaf and lacking use of one arm, was entitled to more than the normal Club share of eccentricities, and one of these was to enter in italic type whatever he perceived to be the main cause of an accident - *no ice-axe, wearing cheap workboots, informed no-one of his route, idiot fell through cornice*, etc. I considered this a specious and unsound practice and felt, too, that the indignity of rescue or removal was punishment enough for the unfortunates of Humble's record without these gratuitous criticisms of their equipment or expertise. So it came to me one evening after toiling with this awful stuff for hours that I was staring at a report of a Cairngorm accident that included the unhappy phrase 'On Friday 13th.' I don't recall the faintest flicker of remorse as I lifted my pen and marked it for italics!

Let me conclude by endorsing Goggs' slogan. I doubt if anything in my life has been more important than these 10 years devoted to 'our only object,' and it is a pleasure to see it tramping on confidently towards Completion under the able guidance of Ken Crocket. He now joins



Dutton, myself and Brooker as the surviving *fanatici* - 'the frenzied, raving adherents of a temple, inspired by a deity.' Being burdened by three live predecessors, Crocket has to put up with an unusual quota of frenzied ravings, here and elsewhere, from the outwaited temple servants - just as did Douglas, 100 years ago, from the exiled Stott. These admonitions are normally delivered in private, but this year they are on view. Readers should not mistake these devotional utterances for *criticism*: they are merely the grimaces of the *fanatici* at prayer!

## FOOTNOTES:

1. Letter to W. Douglas, 2nd Editor, dated 25th May 1903.
2. F.S. Goggs. 'A Tale of a Two Days' Tramp.' Volume IX, p.229.
3. Harold Raeburn. 'A Cairngorm Climb.' Volume X, p.6.

## EDITOR THE TWELFTH

**By W.D.Brooker 1976-1986**

IT WAS at Lagangarbh in 1975 that Donald Bennet, then the Club Secretary, told me a new Journal Editor was being sought. Although I had already been involved in the Committee for a number of years and survived a term as President he thought I might still have some useful service to give to the Club and would I therefore accept nomination.

This was a weighty matter and I thought it over thoroughly before I committed myself to it. The Journal lay at the very heart of the Club. Shoes once worn by mountaineering figures like Bell and by literati like Dutton and Campbell would take some filling. I imagined a debacle for which I was responsible, the Journal in ruins, and the baying of hounds at the A.G.M. And then I imagined a caretaker situation with some temporary editor who didn't fully appreciate the value of the Journal and its traditions, or even a sub-committee...! Anyway Campbell would no doubt provide a smooth take-over and any essential guidance. With some trepidation I accepted.

During my eleven years in the Editorial chair I saw the Journal as having two main functions; to serve the interests of the Club and also those of Scottish Mountaineering in general. The Journal had always done this but the complexity and volume of 'non-Club' aspects appeared to be increasing by leaps and bounds.

The annual Accident Report which was compiled by that redoubtable warrior Ben Humble is a good example. This was made up from returns by Mountain Rescue teams and was variable in content and reliability, lacking a consistent terminology. Accidents had been increasing as the numbers going to the hills grew and a dependable record was important in developing awareness and understanding of their causes. The Journal was the only publication in which the Scottish Mountain Accident Report appeared, and I considered it well worth it to burn a good deal of midnight oil and enter a voluminous correspondence with Humble and his successors: to improve it and introduce some degree of tabulation. John Hinde now rounds up the returns and compiles the edited Accident List, maintaining a system which allows comparison from one year to another.

My predecessors had already taken on board issues of a defensive or conservationist nature. These were to loom ever more prominently on the horizon of our mountain world and I housed them under the separate heading of 'Barricades,' as their importance deserved. Another innovation was the occasional 'Technical Section' which was to include such gems as Iain Ogilvie's 'Maintaining The Spirit,' and Iain Smart's 'Recent Advances in Arctic Travel.' In other respects I think I left well alone, retaining

the Journal in its traditional structure and form and resisting occasional suggestions for a square shape, coloured cover, and so on. This was not just because 'What was good enough for Stott and the rest is good enough for me,' but because most members actually seemed to prefer it that way.

The Journal as a record of Scottish mountaineering was, and still is, for me an essential, not just because it is our Journal, but also because it will be that of our successors in the same way as the Journal of our predecessors is ours today. Some day a resurrected Campbell may be grubbing around among yellowing S.M.C. pages to find out how it really was in THOSE DAYS and even the most boring parts of the Journal should always carry the stamp of Truth. Otherwise we may be ridiculed even when we don't deserve it.

This raises the question of what should be included in these timeless pages. The answer will reflect the personal views of the Editor and his success in recruiting contributions but must also take account of the Record, not just of Club affairs, new ascents and other achievements, but of events and activities characteristic of the contemporary world of Scottish Mountaineering and of Club members. The specialist role of the New Routes Editor is a vital part of the process and I am very conscious of the debt I owe to Messrs Crocket, Smith and Nisbet in this respect. The essential flavour of the Journal is to be found among the Miscellaneous Notes and it was Smart as Assistant Editor who was responsible for these and sundry other more arduous tasks such as compiling the In Memoriam section. His influence and example ensured the continuity of the distinctive style which had become a feature of the Journal in the Dutton/Campbell era.

Even with all this help there was still plenty of work left for me to do. Once contributions had been gathered editorial processing took place. Sometimes this was no more than annotation for the Printer. Often it involved substantial bouts of schoolmasterly correction (although I never had the ultimate experience of another Editor who once received a letter from a celebrated climbing author saying how much he, the author, had enjoyed reading his, the Editor's, article), and occasionally even the diplomatic hurdle of rejecting a contribution.

Balance of subject content was a desirable objective. My ideal was a Journal with articles including summer rock, winter ice, hillwalking, ski touring, a historical theme and perhaps a scientific/educational piece. There should be an Epic, some verse, plenty of humour, and good fiction. Preference was for Scottish articles but accounts of stirring deeds or experiences by Scottish climbers abroad were always welcome. How close I came to this target it is best left to others to judge. Instead I would say something of what the Editorial chair gave to me in return. What were the dividends from such time and effort as I invested in the Journal.

First there was the pleasure and satisfaction I obtained from many contributions. The act of editing makes one peculiarly close to the content of

a piece of writing and thus more appreciative of what it describes or is trying to convey. So it was that I became intimately involved with the absurd adventures of Dutton's celebrated Doctor, Campbell's ingenious recreation of Sherlock Holmes, Gribbon's ironically perceptive observation of bridge building in Knoydart and Smart's philosophical explorations in the Arctic. I also found myself quivering on icy bulges or under dripping overhangs, dodging cannonades of foreign stonefall and sometimes even exulting on sun-warmed slabs while variously accompanying Messrs Crocket, Mackenzie, Strange, Nisbet, Allan, and others.

As I said earlier the Journal lies at the heart of the Club and its editing keeps one in close touch with what has been happening. Apart from attending meetings of the Committee and the Trust, the Editor engages in persuading Members to make reports on Meets, the Dinner and A.G.M., to disclose what they have been doing Abroad and to write Reviews or obituaries for old friends who have made the Final Ascent. All these activities bring personal contact, or at least correspondence with, an extraordinary number of other Members, of all ages and sorts and from all over the country. It was this privilege which I found the most rewarding while I was Editor. I got to know so many other Members, albeit often, and perhaps just as well, from a distance.

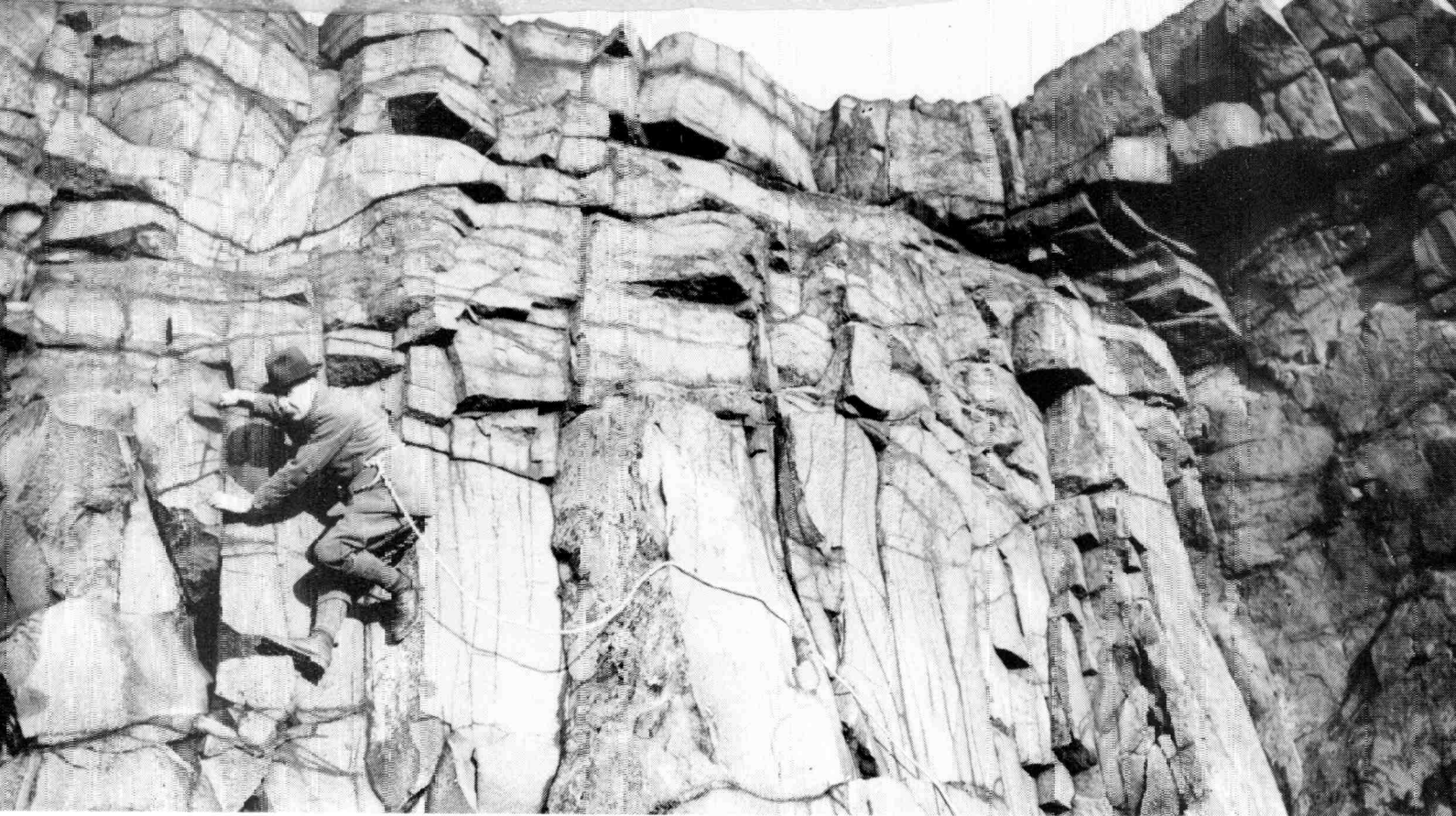
One of the regular items in the Journal is the annual roll of additions to the List of Complete Munroists and when I handed over to Ken Crocket I undertook to maintain the List and its annual updating. There are mixed feelings in the Club about Munroing. At one time widely regarded as a dubious activity hardly worthy of true mountaineering attention it appears to have entered full respectability. It was not, of course, the ascent of 3000ft peaks which raised eyebrows, but peak bagging as an end in itself and the idea that filling the bag completely was an achievement of mountaineering merit. Since this could be done without exposing oneself to significant risk it was clearly a largely Salvationist activity. True mountaineering had to contain some element of the Ultramontane. However anyone who is a Compleat Munroist has clearly accumulated a large measure of hillwalking and scrambling experience from all over the Scottish Highlands, usually in a wide range of conditions. A perusal of the List reveals the names of plenty of mountaineers with impeccable climbing records, many of them Members of the Club.

Hillwalking is now a major recreation and for many it is given a form and direction by the collection of Munros. The List now stands at over 700 and over the year I receive an average of two letters a week towards its updating. This brings me into contact with a large number of people who have been infected by what has appropriately been termed the 'Scottish Disease.' I have learned from this that although a number of Munroists start off with the objective of meeting a physical challenge or even the idea of making some kind of record, by the time they finish peak bagging is less important, and they are into hillwalking or mountaineering as a life style



*Photo: W. Douglas (SMC Archives)*

Stott on cruach Ardrain with that pole.



Harold Raeburn climbing on Salisbury Crags, february, 1920. We acknowledge the Photographic Collection St Andrews University, for kind permission to reproduce this print.

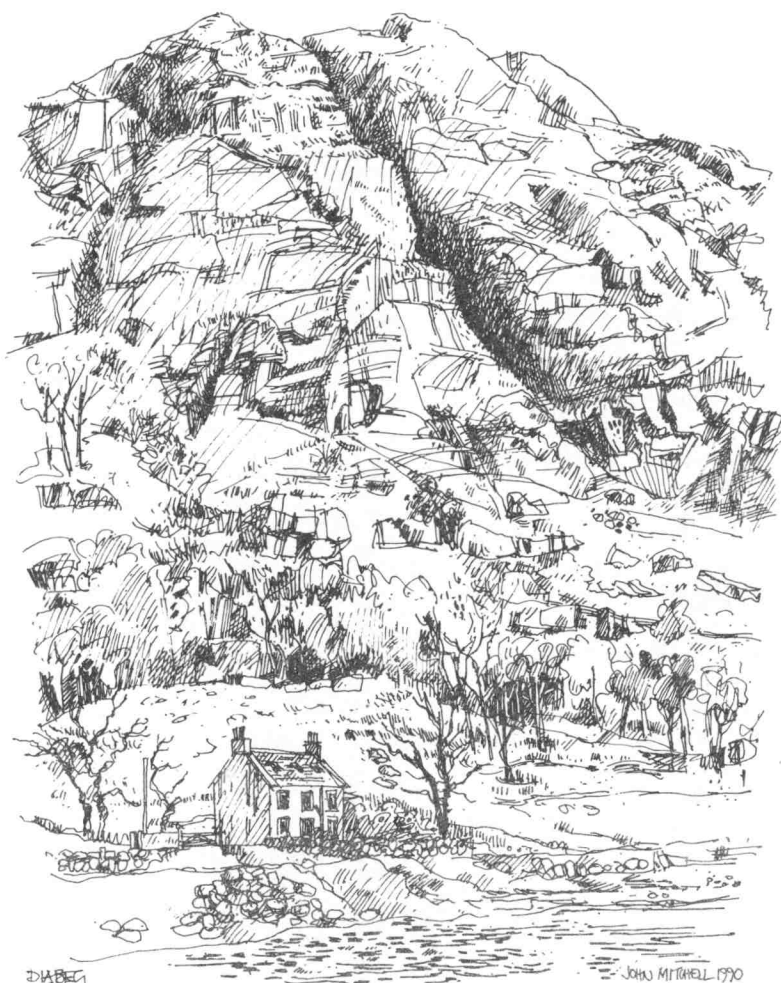
*Photos: Robert Adam*

with its probable adoption as a lifelong activity, just like the rest of us. It has reinforced my long held conviction that the mountain environment dominates humans, and if there is anything distinctive about Scottish Mountaineers it is derived from our mountains and not from our genes.

When the Editorial command reached me to produce something for the Centenary issue it was expressed as 'Tell us what you did for the Journal.'

When I modestly pleaded my inability he switched to 'Then tell us what the Journal did for you.'

And here it is.





## MY DEAR DOUGLAS

Collated by Robin N. Campbell

THE NINE letters reproduced below were written by our first Editor, Joseph Stott to his successor William Douglas, and bound into the page proofs of Volumes III-VII by Douglas. These five special volumes, containing much fascinating correspondence, were donated to the Club Library some years ago by Sir Robert Grieve<sup>1</sup>. The Stott letters are of particular interest in this year of the Journal Centenary because of the fatherly concern he shows for the Journal and for Douglas' stewardship of it. As is often the case with fathers, the emotional mix of pride and shame is strong: Stott masks all such outbursts in a well-turned music-hall Doric. They are also interesting because of the poignant and finely-drawn self-portrait of a Victorian professional man in miserable exile from his friends and beloved hills, and gleans into familial bliss...! Although there is a gap in the correspondence between 1896 and 1899, I suspect that it continued unabated: very likely Stott's letters during this period were rendered insufferable by sentimental effusions occasioned by his marriage.

Stott's activities prior to Formation as Chronicler of the Edinburgh 'Tramps' have been described in an earlier issue<sup>2</sup>. It was at his own suggestion that our Journal was launched in 1890. His stay as Editor was short, ending with Volume I, when he departed to New Zealand as a Bank Inspector with the National Bank of New Zealand. Despite the constant reference in his letters to 'coming home', it was many years before he returned to Scotland and then only for brief visits. However, successive Editors have made use of his early writings, as Douglas did, responding to their vigour and enthusiasm and to the robustness of phraseology with which we are all familiar from our annual incantation of Stott's Club Song. No doubt it will give pleasure to the Shade of Stott to see his words spanning 100 years of publication. As the architect of two of our worthier traditions, he well deserves this posthumous opportunity.

In transcribing these letters I have expanded some of the uglier abbreviations and altered paragraphing where it seemed appropriate: to fit into this issue of the *Journal*, some less relevant passages, e.g. concerning Stott's business career, have been omitted and are marked by the sign [...]. The designations at the head of each letter refer to the page of the bound volume in which the original may be found, and to my catalogue of these Douglas Letters, which I hope to deposit in the Club Library, together with a copy of the complete correspondence, during the coming year. I am grateful to Geoff Dutton for guidance regarding abridgement and to Bob Aitken for advice.

(Volume III, p50. Item 12.)

Dunedin, 8th Feb 1894

My dear Douglas,

I have two letters of yours to acknowledge - the 25th September and 21st December. You say you wish I'd been with Naismith and you in Skye. Well - for your company's sake so do I - but I am a Salvationist - not an Ultramontane - and your pinnacles etc. would not have been so enjoyable to me as they were to you.[..]

Your last Journal is really capital<sup>3</sup> - mostly new ground too. Your criticism of the new verses amuses me. Yes! when you acquire the facility of getting the long lines in up to time - you shouldna "pech" on a long steep slope.[..]

I look forward to seeing Hinxman's pleasant flow of language about "Auchnashellach" some day. What music there is in these dear old names to an exile like myself.

I am uncommonly glad Maylard gave the Cairngorm Club Journal such a dressing<sup>4</sup>. I agree with every word of it. I see McConnochie is now on our Committee. Perhaps something can be done through him to procure



an abortion - or since that is too late - to choke the precocious infant, and bury it in one of its own corries.

Comin' hame was it No' for twa years yet my mannies - but hoot awa that muckle has gane a'ready syne I left auld Scotland; sae the lave o't'll no be lang forbye. An' a maist rampawgin' time we'll hae amang thae same Hielan' hulls when I do come. Hooch! [..]

Yes, Collie's paper is a typically good one. *His* porridge is delicious - there's not too much salt in it; and his meal is of the best quality. The Teallach paper too is very interesting; and well put together considering it is a collaboration. What grand stern scenery it must be judging both from description and photo. Brown and Robertson both write pleasantly (not too much salt) the latter with the advantage of describing a new district - which you should get more information about (W.A. Smith can give it to you).

Penney's paper is pleasant, readable and scholarly. Mind you we're not all able to feast off salt junk washed down wi' saut water a la Munro. Taken all round I congratulate you very much on the number. You'll be well on with another good one I hope by the time this reaches you. I notice that the dinner and the meeting went off well. Nearly all the Committee are East of Scotland men now I see. A compliment to the energy begotten of the East Wind.

I shall go for Malcolm Ross about the N.Z. Journals. Two good ones came out in '93 - and he told me long ago, they would be and were sent to you.

So you captured Whymper for the dinner. I have written a long review of his book for Malcolm Ross. So our speakers beat the A.C. men - well done! I hope you stuck Dent up for his long promised paper, when you met him. So you met old Scully too - a very nice fellow. He was at *Skule* wi' me, when we were callants.

So Munro has gone to the West Indies. I wrote him some time since, and an answer is about due. I thought of you all at New Year time - at "Snug Dalmally" - while I was roasting in Purgatorial heat, in Timaru.

I had a long letter - my annual Essay in fact - from R.A. Robertson by last mail - with much news in regard to various chums. He thinks you go in too much for adulation and imitation of the A.C. Journal, which I agree with him is undesirable. Oor ain doups are broadbased, like oor ain granite hulls - so let us be content to sit on them. By the way, why did you leave the Club balance sheet out of the Journal. I wanted to see how it is flourishing financially. [..]

Remember me with all the heartiness whereof you are capable to all the old pals. I won't mention names as the list is too long. How is the Asthma? Have you quite knocked it out? And look here - that confounded square-headed calligraphy of yours requires far more paper than a couple of pages to allow of a decent letter. Goodbye old chap.

Ever yours  
Joseph Gibson

(Volume III, p110. Item 21.)

Wanganui, 25th June 1894

My dear Douglas,

Thanks much for your breezy letter of 1st April - 'twas like a sough o' the heather from Cruachan. Ross and Mannering out here both read it, and gloried in your enthusiasm. I wish I'd been at Inveroran with that grand party. *You* have become no end of an Ultramontane. I'll be feared to gang wi' ye, when I come hame. I hope Gibson has turned up again. I shall gladly knock my old Schichallion article into shape for you if you send it out. One of the best known hills in Scotland, and it's never yet found a place in the Journal. It's a hill with a history, which you should get worked up.

Sorry to hear the Asthma is still with you. *I* am fitter than ever I was in my life I think. The last few Sundays I've had 30 mile toddles, and not turned a hair. [...]

Your idea of the papers on Mountaineering history is super excellent. Gad it will carry you on until I come home. The first one, while of necessity purely negative, is good.

The Journal<sup>5</sup> reached me on Friday, and gave me a couple of hours reading in the train on Saturday. It is a good number - not the best we've had by a long way, but good for all that. These d——d short papers are like a mutton chop - juicy and good, but not a meal on it. Better a steak off a bullock. Scully writes really pleasantly on Snowdon - didn't think he had it in him. Gilbert Thomson is A1 - as he always is; and Campbell is himself in describing the Meets. Phillip is not so good as usual. But oh Lord where did you get "Secreta Montium" I never liked Browning - and this out-Herods Herod. No more of that claptrap please. As a counter to it, I send you a "bit pome" I picked out of a lady's scrap book in Skye 15 years ago. *It's* no bad. [...]

Remember me to all the dear old pals. How it rejoices me to see the Club flourishing so vigorously - but it's one of the things (not to be there myself) that galls me most in my foreign residence. — Goodnight old man — Ever yours — JGS.

(Volume III, p174. Item 33.)

Wellington, 22nd October 1894

My dear Dougal,

[...] I am sending you a bit screed on Schiehallion. I found an account of it, in one of the back numbers of the Holiday Annual, and adapted it somewhat. 'Twill serve to stop a hole in some future number, as the mountain has not hitherto been written about.

I got the last Journal<sup>6</sup> by the Frisco mail. Very good, but not nearly so interesting as some former numbers. But of course you can't always strike the same level. We shan't see poor Professor Veitch's pen any more, I am sorry to know.

Your paper on Leagach is good, but nothing like the one you wrote on "Sgurr Ban" last September. Wants the swing and go and descriptive power. Phillip is disappointing - does not now write the pleasant papers he did. The "Oromaniacal Quest" is amusing, but so d——nably vague, that but for the note in "Notes and Queries" - you would not know what they'd been up to on Ben Nevis. Coats writes better than he generally does. Maylard on Ben Lomond is good. That idea of yours - the historical review of the chief Bens is excellent.

Well you're in winter now, and thinking I suppose of the approaching days when you'll "go up to the mountains in the snow." [...] I have not been able to do any big walking for a few weeks past, as I have a d——d corn on a toe joint. Must get a new pair of boots to ease it off. The d——d idiot of an hotel porter put my big hobnailers *in the oven*, after a bad soaking a few weeks ago, forgot all about them - cook lit fire, boots ruined.[...] — Ever yours — JGS

[...] Please send me a pair of the wonderful boot-trees described by Munro in last Number.

(Volume III, p246. Item 44.)

Wellington, 7th February 1895

My dear Douglas,

I have various favours for which to thank you. First those beautiful Arran photographs taken with the big camera. They are wonnerfu'. Next the patent boot-trees, which are really good. Next the Cairngorm Club Journal, which always interests me - were it only for their d——d cheek in imitating us so closely. And lastly your pleasant letter of 20th December. [...]

About my photo - the one you have was specially designed to show off the big stick<sup>7</sup>, which is the admiration of the whole of N.Z. Therefore I wore my "bannet" wi' it. No! No! I've still got about as muckle hair on my pow as I used to have at home - that's not much certainly, but better than none.

Glad you like the Schichallion paper. "Want me as Editor!" Get out. You're twice as good as I ever was. You're no end of an Ultramontane; and bring an amount of collateral knowledge to your work I never possessed.

The dinner seems not to have been a big one, but I'm glad it was enthusiastic. The "frozen marrow" idea<sup>8</sup>, will go down to posterity. [...]

Now for the Journal<sup>9</sup>. It is only an *average* number. Let me earnestly counsel you to lay to heart Ramsay's counsel on p. 182 - end of paragraph, beginning "and let me say to you, Mr Editor." There is too much of the "mere Mountain timetable" nowadays. Give us articles like Nicholson's and Almond's - but I suppose they are difficult to get. Even in your own and Thomson's Arran papers - there is too little description; and too much

(no not too much, but too bald and dry) rock-structure narrative. Even Hinxman is not discursive as he used to be. Scully is not bad, but he is not in our first flight of writers. Remember that there are 10 readers of the Journal for its general interest, for 1 who is interested in the height and angle and difficulty of a particular chimney. Take myself out here as a typical example. What I want is a paper - in which I can hear the roaring of the torrent, and see the snaws and the brown heather, and the clouds and scud flying athwart the blue above the rocky peaks - something in fact that will set my pulses beating; and conjure up dear old Scotland; and what is of no particular interest are some of these papers, "all miles, and feet, and minutes, and endless dissection of the unhappy points of the Compass." To me these are really little more interesting than an architect's specification for building a stane dyke.

Munro - from whom I had a letter the other day, is still hammering away at Bartholomew and Co. He is an admirable critic of a severe order.

Why don't you worry that paper - long promised - out of Dent? Collie, now really can make a dry rock climb interesting. Have at him again. Pilkington has not written for ages either. And surely the new men have descriptive talent.

I am very much taken with the idea of a "Climbers' Guide to Scotland." They couldn't find a better man than you for Editor. Put Munro, McConochie and Collie on the Committee anyway - Hinxman too. The time is premature I think; as there are lots of fine mountains that probably none of you have been on - much less surveyed as you have Cruachan - Laoigh, etc. Still if you don't take it up soon - that man Haskett Smith will cut in, and hash the thing badly. But you have a large job my friend: and I don't see how you're going to cover all Munro's tops in one volume. And unless you have really well-written *descriptive* articles on all the better known peaks, you won't get much support from the general public. It should be *well* illustrated - and will necessarily be expensive. 'Twill take a long time I suppose, but put me down for 2 or 3 copies. [...]

I've been out for 3 years now. Another 2 and I hope to be wi' ye a'. You wish me a happy New Year - thanks - "and a wife." No no not the latter. I should give up all my hobbies I fear if I took to such a new hobby as that; and might not even come home. Bide a wee.

Well - my best regards to all the old friends. I am looking forward to a rare good account of the Fort William meet at Easter. Suppose though it won't be out till the September Number - and that will complete Volume III — Goodbye — Ever yours — JGS

By the way - I enclose a cheque for a guinea which will cover two years subscription to the S.M.C. Put 1d stamp on it and they'll cash it, I doot not. Pass it on to Naismith, and tell him one of his jolly letters will be sufficient receipt for it. JGS.

(Volume III, p.308. Item 52.)

Auckland, 29th June 1895

My dear Douglas,

It was a graun' pleasure to get your letter of 17th May, some days ago. It came a bit behind the Journal<sup>10</sup>, which I read and re-read.

It is a good number. Smith writes well, about these latter-day (Saints) Mountaineering Scribes. Maylard's papers are very different now from what they were in the days when he wrote that wearysome yarn in an early number - with the famous "stomach scrubbing heaves" etc. His "Ben Arthur" yarn is well told and interesting. A.E. Robertson seems a distinct acquisition both as an explorer and a writer. The "Rum" paper is not so good as Munro's.

Crowley is a rock specialist evidently. He manages to make a capital enthusiastic yarn out of very little<sup>11</sup>. Never mind about the mistakes in my paper. I only discovered *one*, the "blue leaves" which I had a good laugh at. You must have had a grand meet at Fort William. Only Fraser Campbell is a better Chronicler of a meet than Brown. Perhaps tho' the latter had so much to say he had to crowd it. I suppose, in time, we shall have several papers about your adventures in that grand new district. Very glad to hear the "Guide Book" is progressing so well. Don't let it *all* be too dry, like a Railway time table. Get a little clothing on top of the naked granite. No, the N.Z.A.C. has not bust up. On the contrary it's flourishing - and the past year was a memorable one in N.Z. mountaineering. Mount Cook was topped at last, twice by different routes, (first time by two New Zealanders) and this Englishman Fitzgerald and his guide Zurbriggen did some wonderful ascents. The number of their Journal published the other day is particularly interesting. I can't get one here, or I'd send it to you. I shall write to them about not forwarding to you. There is a new Editor. Ross has given it up. But do *you* write formally to the "Editor, N.Z.A.Club Journal, Christchurch" - complaining, and saying you'll stop sending unless they reciprocate regularly - and that will fetch them.

So you're going to Zermatt. If the weather is good you'll have a rare time I hope. Man Willum you've grown a gran' spieler<sup>12</sup>. Write and tell me about it, when you come back. [...] — Ever yours — JGS

(Volume III, p.364. Item 63)

Wellington, 16th October 1895

My dear Douglas,

Thanks so much for yours of 30th August lately to hand.

Man, the last number of the Journal<sup>13</sup> - the Ben Nevis number - is maist capital. It is indeed a good all round number. I have read it twice - and when it comes back from being bound (it completes the volume ye ken) I'll read it again.

"Righ nam Bian" the King of Bens has at last had justice done him. Hinxman's paper is excellent - Brown's one of the best we've ever had in the Journal - Thomson as usual A1 - and yersel - well ye've improv't a hantle since I used to cut up *your* papers. By Jove, that was a feat of Brown's and Tough's - Weel was the latter named - Teuch by name and Teuch by nature. I don't think I know him - Brown I believe I met at one of the early dinners. You are getting, all of you to be terrific cragsmen. When I come home I shall be frightened - for I am a rank Salvationist.

Who writes your critiques of Alpine literature for you? The last few have been uncommonly well done - as far as I can judge - not having read the works myself. I am interested in Robertson's (whose style I really do like (whether it is *his* or *yours*, or Robertson cum Douglas) note. Sgor na Ciche has long been a mountain I desired to know more about, and to spiel myself. As I once saw it away up Loch Nevis - as I was rowing across - it is one of the finest looking peaks in Scotland. My recollection is that it is very sharp, and seems fairly to overhang - a regular Scur in fact. Go and see it for yourself Dougal; and gie's a real guid airticle aboot it - none of your scrimpy notes. And, you devil, you don't even put it in the index. Why it's better worth it than half the contents.

Apropos of that enlarged photo of the cliffs and corries of Ben Nevis - Howie's, enlarged by the Savile Road people I think they are - if it is really first class, as it ought to be, and would look well in a frame - will you send out a copy to me. I shall have it framed and let people see what we can do in Scotland. I send a blank cheque - which you can fill up for amount and postage - put a 1d stamp on and pay yourself.

Do you remember once admiring something I wrote about Ben Lawers - Glas Maol etc. (high falutin' stuff about mist and sunbeams and solitude, etc.) in the "Holiday Annual." I find I have it here. If I knock it into shape as a Salvationist hymn will you give it a place? It breathes the right spirit anyway, if it chronicles nothing wonderful. [...]

I'm glad you enjoyed yourself in Switzerland. Who was with you? I can quite imagine a difficult home climb is better fun than an ascent with guides there. You seem to have done a lot of work - despite the weather. Switzerland is a delightful country - and you meet such a lot of good fellows there among the Alpine men. But you must try Norway, that's my love. Go to the head of the Lysterford - and try the Maradalstindane<sup>14</sup>.

Yes I got Munro's and Robertson's photos all right - and thought I'd thanked you for 'em. How are these worthies? Jump on their chests when you see them - they both owe me letters. [...] How's the Guide book coming on?

Faretheewell old friend. When you next stand on a hoary Ben with any of the old Brigade, if ye hae a flask aboot ye, just whisper my name, and see if the corries mind o't. Many's the time my thochts are in dear old Scotia with all of you. Best love to all of them - names too many to mention.  
— Ever yours — JGS

(Volume IV, p.72. Item 16)

Dunedin, 14th February 1896

My dear Douglas,

I got your welcome letter of 18th December about a fortnight ago. The worst of your letters is that they are too d——d short. You promise me sequels to them, but they never arrive.

The Ben Nevis picture has not come yet, but is doubtless on its way. Neither has Fraser Campbell's menu. But *that* I don't expect. He is always on the eve of writing but never writes. However he pays pretty compliments in the pages of the Journal, so I must forgive him.

I got the Journal<sup>15</sup> yesterday, and read it through twice. It is a good number. Ramsay is varied and discursive in his Historical retrospect and I am glad that he is to continue in our next. His paper on "Suilven" is all that a climbing paper should be - a model for our younger penmen - witty, with descriptive power that conjures up the scene before you - immensely enthusiastic, straight to the point, and yet *long* enough to satisfy the appetite. So many of our papers are like a small piece of a good omelette - you want a lot more of it.

Jackson is a distinct acquisition to our ranks - a good cragsman, a facile writer, and an artist of high order.

- Of Brown and Tough

Can't get enough -

rare good men both - they must be perfect lizards on rocks (Fraser Campbell's "bloody lizards" at that - if you remember the old Dalmally joke) and they tell you what they have done in right lightsome fashion. My respects to them - I long to meet them. But ech me yon Lochnagar spiel where Brown by a mere muscular contraction shot Tough *two* feet up into the air!! It's fearsome to say the least on't. Truly must his bowels be catgut and his bones of india rubber. Swan writes a paper after my own heart - full of the joy of the hills - Like me, he has no wish to become "a blash o' bluid" on the stanes, so he climbs warily. Campbell is amusing, as he always is. Who is the author called "Auld Reekie?" Yoursel, I doot na? But Arthur's Seat and the Craggs have been considerably exploited of recent years to judge from all you say about them. You've never answered my question as to who wrote most of your "Reviews." They are uncommonly well done.

I'm glad to see your hantle new Members, and to know you're doing so well. Again I say, I wish you'd published the whole Balance Sheet in the Journal, not merely the Surplus.

I am quite with Munro about increasing the subscription, but I think £1-1/- should be enough. I think a Circular might be sent round to members asking them to say "Yes," or "No" - or to make suggestions. Unless the opinion in favour of an increase was heavily preponderant however, I would make no change. We don't want to lose our veterans nor to keep out good men who are hard up. The Alpine Club way is not a nice one - and creates classes. I intended writing to you about this, anyway.

Here's a suggestion about voting<sup>16</sup>- the way we do it in Clubs here. The Secretary sends a printed list of candidates to every Member. It is on a simple slip of paper, made so as to fold up and gum like an envelope.

If the Member wishes to vote for them all he simply seals up the paper and returns it without any marking. If he wants to blackball a man, he simply puts his pen through his name. If he desires not to vote for anyone, he writes "no vote" against the name.

Now as to returning the papers. On the inside of the envelope in which he *encloses* his voting paper - he puts his own name.

The Committee open all the envelopes, make a list of the Members voting, destroy the envelopes and then proceed to open the voting papers. Do you see? They have a list of all the Members who have voted but they don't know *how* anybody voted as all the voting papers are alike, and unmarked in any way. The plan works admirably here. I shall try to get you a specimen voting paper at the Club.

We ought no longer to trespass on Thomson's hospitality; and we ought to have a Club room. And it ought to be in Glasgow. To Glasgow belongs the honour of inaugurating the Club; and it is nearer the hills than Edinburgh. I fancy there is a preponderance of Members too in the West.

I had a nice long letter from Maylard lately, which I answered. I think you might raise a few guineas for the Journal if you admitted a few fly leaves of advertisements.

I am greatly indebted to you for always sending me the Cairngorm Club Journal. It is always interesting, but never up to the standard of ours. Indeed, many of its best and most entertaining papers are those of some of our prominent men.

The literary standard of our Journal is better I think than it was in my day. Whether this is owing to your own rounding up I know not. I think it is that practice in writing has improved some of our former contributors; while new men of note have come forward. You have never yet got a paper out of Dent - and you should get something more out of Collie, about those rock climbs of his about Ben Nevis. How is the Guide book getting on? When will it be out - I suppose you're in no hurry? Remember I'm down for a copy, whatever the cost<sub>17</sub>

We are in autumn here now.[..] I have been crippled not a little for about 3 months past - with gout!! Have had to knock off porridge and beer. But in about 18 months, man Dougal, I hope despite old age and gout we'll plant our hobnailers thegither on some of those grand new ranges opened up by the Highland Railway.

Well well. Good bye. Remember me to the boys. This will reach you just before the Fort William meet. On Easter Sunday I shall drain a mighty cup to you all - even if I have to die of gout next minute. — Ever yours - JGS



(Volume IV, p. 192. Item 53)

Wellington, 10th November 1896

My dear Douglas,

I believe I last wrote to herrainsel (sic) in July; and I believe I had a bit letter frae her since; but I mislaid it. But the other day there cam' the Journal<sup>18</sup>, which recalled the fac'.

Well I don't think much of the Journal whateffer; but it is a summer number, and they're never so good.

Tough and Naismith are good enough; but your paper - she is not so happy as before. It's a short number moreover.

Well, I suppose you've heard the news about me. I have been clean knocked off my perch by a little charmer.

She's all perfection in my eyes - that goes without saying. Some day you'll do the same thing yourself, and then you'll understand. When I come I'll join the old buffers brigade. We'll tow our wives up some of the foot hills - the sunny heathery knowes - and regret our lost lungs and tough muscles. Dougal I'm getting auld, and example is contagious. There's Fraser Campbell done for - and later Frank Dewar. What is there left for me but to follow down the valley. [...]

My old home correspondents are tailing off. It must be two years since I've heard from Lang Robbieson<sup>19</sup> (my malison on his bald head) and a very long time since our own Munro favoured me. I had hoped to get home in 1897, but now another man is in front of me, and 'twill probably be '98. I've not been on a "hull" for years, and my knees are shaky and turned to fat. Malcolm Ross who has had my ice axe for near three years, returned it a couple of nights ago - I'd forgotten its existence.

Aweel aweel - if anyone remembers me give them my love, but I've turned down the valley now, and it doesn't much matter. - - Ever yours — JGS

(Volume VI, p.30. Item 7)

Dunedin, 17th June 1899

My dear Douglas,

I got the May Journal<sup>20</sup> a few days ago. You are certainly a wonderful man for burrowing into ancient history and eviscerating all that has been said about any place. Your efforts on Skye are not the least interesting you have done in that way. What a pity you had such bad weather at Kinlochewe. It is a beautiful district when the elements are kind. The Buchaille paper is interesting to men who know the mountain as a good many of you must now - but it does not interest an outsider. You must have been a bit hard up for material to take such a long yarn about a chuckie stane like "Rob Roy's Putter." Several of the men who can write an interesting as well as an instructive yarn have not been under contribution lately.

I am expecting a few days of Fraser Campbell's company soon. He has arrived thus far on his journey, which has been a very hurried one.

I am a double-barrelled faither the noo, as another daughter was born a month ago. Can't manage a boy - worse luck.

I have nothing for the Journal nowadays - my recollections being exhausted; but if you care for a scrap for a future number I enclose a "sang" which was begun years ago<sup>2</sup>! It goes to the air of "Maggie Lauder" and is partly cribbed. I have never been able to put a chorus to it - perhaps the divine afflatus may come to some of you and supply the deficiency. I would suggest that a correct rendering of its pronunciation and a clear understanding of the words be not the least qualification required from the numerous candidates for Membership frae ayont the Border. [...] — Ever yours — JGS

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. We first saw these letters researching for the book on Ben Nevis; they were then known to the Librarian and a few other club scribblers. We should be doubly grateful that thanks to the vision of Douglas they were safely bound between the solid covers of the club Journal, and that Robin Campbell has now ensured their exposure to a wider audience (Ed.).

2. 'Stott's Mountaineering Club'. Vol XXX, p.257.

3. Vol III, No.13.

4. Maylard's review of the first CCJ, edited by McConnochie, appears on pp.324-6 of Volume II. In fact it is an exercise in faint praise, rather than any sort of 'dressing', although he does ask peevishly why 'a member of the SMC, a member of the Executive, and a worthy contributor to its Journal, should have thought fit to edit what is practically a facsimile.'

5. Vol.III, No. 14.

6. Vol III, No. 15.

7. A well-known ornament of the Slide Collection, Stott with Fellpole.

8. Was the idea that the "frozen marrow" should be served at Club Dinners? As a sorbet, perhaps?

9. Vol III, No. 16.

10. Vol III, No. 17.

11. G. Aleister Crowley, later a notorious practitioner of the Black Arts and known as the Great Beast of Revelation, is possibly our most unsavoury member so far. However, in his brief period of membership he fomented no scandal. He was a gifted writer and Stott's evaluation is typically accurate, unlike that of Secretary Maylard who thundered in a letter to Douglas (Volume III, p.294, Item 50): '[His paper] is horribly egotistical, ungrammatical, and in parts juvenile. It would be a real kindness to the fellow if he could somehow or other get quietly taken down. You editorial gentlemen must know how to deliver the necessary correction.'

12. Meaning 'climber'; usually spelled 'speiler.'

13. Vol III, No. 18.

14. Surely the Skagastolstind, which dominates the Midt- and Stols-maradalen, and overlooks the Luster Fiord.

15. Vol IV, No. 19.

16. The complexities of these voting arrangements will strike the contemporary reader as excessive. Our own procedures were hardly less excessive, being modelled on the barbarities of London Clubland in the days when the measure of a man was what Clubs he belonged to. How things have changed!

17. Not '2 or 3 copies' as in the first reference to this work, when the impulses of the 'spieler' outran those of the Bank Inspector!

18. Vol IV, No. 21.

19. R.A. Robertson, a former fellow-Tramp.

20. Vol V, No.29.

21. The "sang" appeared as 'The Tapmost Elevation' in Volume VI, p.31. One stanza proceeds:-

'Let Switzer boast his mountain host, an' craw o' Alpine story  
Or nigger-loon 'Hills o' the Moon' - they ca' them Ruwenzori.'

It is doubtful whether the present membership, catgut bowels or no, could swallow such a couplet without some discomfort.



BINNEN SHAMS

JOHN MITCHELL 1990

## LEST WE FORGET

Edited by I.H.M. Smart

CLUB HISTORIANS have located diaries of two former eminent members of the Club whose lives were widely spaced in time and in ambient social attitudes but who both obviously enjoyed the mountains in much the same way. A.R.G. Burn was an early member of the Club, the second compleat Munroist and the first to do the Tops<sup>1</sup>. His diaries are lodged in the Archives Department of King's College, Aberdeen. Adam Watson has transcribed sections of the diary which cover the New Year of 1918/19. The sections excerpted here relate how the young and enthusiastic Burn's first step cutting on snow and ice was made under Harold Raeburn's supervision. Raeburn must have been fifty-three at the time, and his refreshingly uncynical pupil in his early twenties.

*Hogmanay and New Year's Day 1918*

*Monday December 31*

Train some two hours late at Stirling so unable to get connexion. Spent morning in MacKay's bookshop and then came on to Callander. Too late now for hill I feared. Raeburn had gone to station to meet me and confirmed my fears. Dark would be down even before I'd got off Ben Ledi and this was nearest hill. We went to Hydro to see if Inglis Clark expected but no word of him. Spent evening in Hotel he telling me lots of his adventures.

*Tuesday January 1*

Grand day, happiest New Year I've ever spent in my life. Raeburn and I got 8.55 to Balquhidder, he going to see Mrs Waters at farm near Glen Ample and I to Hotel to enquire re parcels. Met again and went up small path on right bank of Ample, fording it later. Got milk at Glenample where (new) shepherd can't speak the Gaelic but called out to one Clark who was there first-footing and he had heaps. Said Ben Vorlich = Mhoir Lic. Little snow in Glen. Then we follow tributary stream to bealach between Beinn Mhoir Lic and Stuc a'Chroin. Reached col 12.55, five minutes less than Raeburn's estimate. It was impossible to do the hill as we should have been benighted had we added this 1 hour's delay on.

Examined north-west face of Stuc for a good gully, but could see none. All rocks well coated with verglas giving the distant stob of Stuc a grey pepper and salt look when we were climbing up to col. Our only hope of sport was on snow. Noticed a buttress giving a possible short climb (but an easy one in my judgement). Once past this protrusion we soon reached foot of gully we were to ascend. On way Raeburn had looked at all the gullies but none offered anything like continuous snow. This one was hidden as to its inside until we were right under it, being well closed in by rocks and

only visible sign of presence was gap in rocks and tongue of snow beneath. Raeburn had [all] along expected it to give most snow and so it did.

Raeburn asked me to lead up tongue which was easy zigzag and kicking steps. A bit beyond foot of gully we roped and I was still allowed to lead. Did my best to be worthy of this great honour. Plenty steps now had to be made and with axe. (He approved of my axe, said it was no toy as Maylard had warned - only fault was too much blade and not oval enough handle.) Some of the steps were cut with the pick, those mostly where was ice, but majority were scraped alongwise with blade with a motion something like a cat scratching, a gentle scratch along ice made room for whole of boot. I asked Raeburn to keep careful watch on me for faults but he said there weren't any two or three times when I asked. And when I did do anything wrong he at once showed me proper way. It wasn't obvious at first how to do scratching and I put in too much force. Angle of gully was distinctly steep, lower down it was 47 degrees or 48 degrees by his clinometer, then about half way up it was 46, then 41 - in the two former cases his guess was right almost to a figure.

At the top of the gully, the snow gave way to unmitigated ice and he said it was too hard for me to manage and so he took the lead. He had sometimes said some of my steps were bad ones, not deep enough, but I found that his were ditto, his boot took all floor out and left me to balance on roughish ice slope or else an inch of unstable ice fragment floor. But usually I could romp up his steps faster than I usually go up hill. He kept rope fine and taut and played me up well. Each time I thought that tautness of rope meant I was being hauled up like a sack of coals, but I asked each time and found he wasn't pulling me up but just keeping rope tight in case I slipped. Of course I tried to do same with him when I led hauling in the slack. Rock hitches we almost never had. Nearly always rope had to be put round bottom of axe well driven in. Some of the places I had to lead up were pronounced by Raeburn to be really difficult though not seeming so to me. Indeed had there been less time wasted en route I should have been let lead longer, but I was slow - it is my first time on rope and first time too that I've ever climbed with one of the Club. Certainly the rope was a moral support but I am quite absolutely sure I never came on it and had to be hauled up. Once or twice I slipped in his steps because his own boots had petered them out and worn them thin, but when I did, I shouted him the fact and asked him to keep rope tight. This gave me confidence and I soon got foot enough in to make next step safe or else if needed, deepened step. But in neither case did I get tugged up because had I so been I shouldn't have needed do more than let him haul me beyond bad step without putting my foot into it.

It really was a grand climb and looking down one appreciated the gully more and more, for it looked fine and steep as one ascended. All good things come to an end and so did this gully, in ice slopes which Raeburn got over by his incomparable balance powers, but insisted on cutting a step

or two for me. At the end I thanked him for leading me up, but he said no, it's thank you for leading me. But of course he did the real part of the work. Still I was let sometimes be in a responsible position, having to decide which of two routes up would go best and (as leader) whether I would attempt the climb further or considered the pitch too much in such conditions. Never once did feel any pitch impossible even those Raeburn called really hard. And of course the ice ones were. We descended very quickly, Raeburn looking for glissades but finding few and those short. He is a very quick descender and seems to prefer running down where I'd walk. Went down stream and in rapidly failing light reached bridge for Arivuricardaich and so on to road (5.0). Home in gathering dark.'

After three more days of exhilarating action with the Maestro, Burn ends with a touching expression of his gratitude for a fine holiday with a fine companion:

'It has been a grand holiday. Raeburn so kind and good - a man 'who can walk and talk as us' despite his Caucasus fame. Weather absolutely perfect. Have enjoyed self more than I can tell. I don't think I realize myself how good a time I've had.'

There must really have been a Golden Age when climbing was thus unsophisticated. Who at that time would have thought that the primal simplicity of our eccentric sport would give rise to empires of commerce, bureaucracy, pedagogy and hype. Could these sentiments of Burn really be the seed from which the bright, brittle market-orientated enthusiasms of the current Climbing Glossies have arisen?

Our second diarist writes some forty years later and records the dramatic role-reversal that occurred towards the end of the period. By now fifty-year-olds were students at the feet of the twenty-year-olds, struck silent with admiration, or dumb with choked disapproval, of the bold innovations of an exuberant self-assured younger generation. Nevertheless, those 'juvenile delinquents' were driven by the same self-generated, unorganised enthusiasm as the charmingly diffident Burn.

The following extracts are drawn from a diary of no less a figure in the climbing pantheon than Robin Smith. A set of notes, of as yet unidentified origin, reached the Editor 'by way of the J.M.C.S.' They are in Smith's undoubted handwriting and record some of his climbs in Scotland and abroad from late 1957 to summer 1958. We excerpt here a section which recounts in authentic Smith style events in the period leading up to the ascent of Shibboleth. The Assistant Editor took part in the rescue of Andrew Fraser and can vouch for the authenticity of Smith's account. The rescue was performed before Mountain Rescue had been invented. It was efficient and unportentious. When the rescue party reached the top of Slime Wall proceedings were opened by a swarthy giant of the Creag Dhu leaning over and shouting down into the darkness where the injured Fraser sat on a small ledge with broken leg dangling in space, 'This'll teach you Edinburry laddies to stay awa fae oor wa'. The rescue itself was a model

of self-reliance. Smith supported by top ropes and leaning out from the face took the casualty with broken leg and no morphine across his knees and walked across the wall to the stretcher party waiting at its edge. On the long carry back there was indeed some ribald singing and the Assistant Editor remembers the dour giant of the Creag Dhu stumbling on steep scree and being admonished by J.R. Marshall with the phrase 'Git a haud o yirsel, ye big excitable bastard.' These were hard times; sympathy was practical, not sentimental. Being rescued by your kindred was no humiliation; it was more like warriors carrying off their own wounded from the field. While the attentions of the modern professional strike force is no doubt welcome, its presence signals that the romance of the old frontier with its extra dangers has gone. It is in this frontier context that the shade of Robin Smith speaks to us again. The extract covers unspecified dates in June-July 1958. The title of the piece is his own.

*'Slow times on Slime Wall'*

'The Dormobile went on to Ardgour, where the sun shone for 2 days. Slessor (S.M.C.) threw a piton hammer at them and was embarrassed by the ladies. (SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD YARN) But we would climb the Slime Wall. J. Orwin and I went up Great Gully; swithered and only just decided to try. Went up Pitch I of Guerdon Grooves (fine slabby climbing) to huge block belays. There sat J. Orwin for 5½ hours. I tried the corner on the right - no go, but left 2 runners. All was black and drooling. More swithers. Climbed the crack on the left in socks, using the hammer to knock ice off the holds, and fiddled with peculiar runners at 20 feet. Thought I would have to tension left on a 2" flake which sits in a slot; but all was well, first left then up and right again to force an entry to the big groove. The ice had warmed up into slime, and the bottom of the groove is thin and bulging and I began to have to use pitons, so I left one piton in and climbed down protected. thence slithered down Great Gully and across to Kingshouse. The next day was wet, big laugh caused by Marshall (—y?) solo, peeling from pitons. 7 ft. up. He hurt himself.

Glencoe - - to August Crack for sunshine, thought it was hellish hard, and 2 weeks later found it was new! It was June but we called it July, being between June and August Cracks. Then climbed May Crack (Gt. Gully Upper Buttress) thinking it was new. Tried and failed on the hard thin crack just left. Went down to the big wall, but the big line was all slime.

Climbed Bludger's, Link and Doom Arete (Andrew Fraser took out the 2nd piton - a great rusty nail with a rotted karabiner) to the consternation of Ronnie (Marshall) and Elly (Moriarty) pursuing us. Went left round the edge for the wee hard bit on Doom Arete to a sort of staircase - probably a little easier. Then made Dwindle Wall on Creag na Tulaich, a highly fine short climb.

*Friday.* With Dave Hughes to Aonach Dubh N. Face to corner we had heard about. Just lying at the bottom was Don Whillans' piton hammer - some trophy! I tried ridiculously on the right for ages, because the obvious way looks fearful, but once we got on to it holds arrived very well. We

could only get out 1 of 2 pitons - left from Whillans' 2 retreats in rain. The 1st half took so long we had no time for the 2nd but broke out left on an easy shelf and finished up slabs.

*Saturday.* With Andrew Fraser, climbed the big groove on Slime Wall with 1 piton (removed). Slimey at the crux, but as dry as we'd seen it. Finished up Revelation.

*Sunday.* Came back up Belial and the start of Revelation to the top of the groove, funk'd the straight up pitch, went up Revelation's Flake Crack and back right on the girdle traverse to rejoin the central line. Climbed a fine short corner and on to a good ledge (piton belay). Failed to traverse right to reach the crack springing from the great cave, and finished up the more natural but less aesthetic steep wall and groove straight above.

*Saturday* the day of the great fiasco; with Andrew Fraser, a big attempt at Shibboleth - all-in-a-day. Added a fine pitch from the belay at the foot of the Revelation Crack, going up and right near Nightmare Traverse to the 1st jughandle at 50 ft. - no protection with the crux at the end. Then left and up to a fine little ledge and up an overhang corner to join the Girdle Traverse. Then Andrew peeled while leading the corner we had already climbed. Came down 30 ft. on to a runner, which should have meant nothing, but was rash enough to break a leg. Fabulous rescue operations with 5 top ropes then stretcher etc., and highly helpful co-operation of Creag Dhu, S.M.C., and J.M.C.S. Much singing all thro' the night.'

In less than a decade we will be as far from Robin Smith as he was from Burn, but the pace of change will be even more rapid. After eight further years of suburbanisation of the Wilderness, will a young law-abiding Burn write, 'I was so lucky to get a morning ticket to climb Crowberry Ridge,' or a rebellious, latter-day Smith, 'I was given six weeks corrective training for illegal entry into International Executives Time Share Holdings' Perhaps there will be no Scot left to write a diary. Our small community and the brilliant land it once owned, by then, may be submerged under the legions of Sauron flooding out of Far Harad and Morder-on-Thames.

1. But see Campbell's article on Munro (SMCJ, 1989, 219-27), where in all probability Burn was the first compleatist (Ed.).



## MEMORIES OF THE THIRTIES

By Iain H. Ogilvie

I AM NOT trying to write history. These are personal memories about my climbing friends and companions and what we did in the thirties. I joined the J.M.C.S. in 1930 and the S.M.C. in 1934. In 1939, the war interrupted my climbing in Scotland so I seem to fit the period well enough.

Equipment was primitive in those days. Nobody had thought of wind-proof clothing or Vibrams. We had nailed boots and a hemp rope. That was our lot. The leader tried to get some sort of running belay by passing the rope behind rock spikes and bollards as he went up. Belay loops came in right at the end but not snap links. Transport to the hills was rather primitive too. The new Glencoe road was only completed in the mid thirties. We bounced up by Inveroran and over the Black Mount. My first car was an open Austin 7 two seater, which I bought for £2. It lasted two years. My second was a Morris Minor 4 seater, for which I paid £12. It lasted a bit longer. Nearly every week-end, I found three companions and made for the hills, often to Glencoe. It was 110 miles from Edinburgh and with commercial petrol at 11 pence a gallon and camping, the cost per head was 5 shillings (excluding beer at Clachaig).

My most regular companions were James Marjoribanks, Charles Gorrie, Ronald and Alasdair Down, Ramsay Traquair and Jimmy Stewart. Occasionals were L.St.C. Bartholomew, who taught me the rudiments of mountaineering, Jimmy Hewit, Richard Brown, Pat Baird, Alan Horne, Douglas Fraser, Jim Annand and others. And what did we climb? A comprehensive list would be tedious but for myself, I climbed most of the then standard routes in Glencoe and on Nevis. I did most of the peaks and a fair number of routes in Skye. I also climbed on the Isle of Rum, in Coire Ardair, on the Cobbler and Narnain and I did the traverse of the Arran ridge. I did the Tower Ridge, the Crowberry Gully, the Upper Couloir of Stob Gabhar and many other gullies in winter conditions. We also found time to do a good deal of Munro bagging. I had done nearly half of them by the end of 1939. It has taken me until 1989 to complete them but then they do get rather remote towards the end.

Most of my companions in those days were still in the J.M.C.S. and mostly from Edinburgh but we knew the Glasgow men too and climbed with them at meets.

Without a doubt, the leading climbers of the day were Jimmy Bell and Graham MacPhee. MacPhee was editing the Nevis guide at the time, travelling from Liverpool week-end after week-end. His ambition was to complete all the known climbs and classify them himself. He was frus-

trated by Bell, who was doing new climbs at such a rate that MacPhee couldn't climb them by the publication date.

I once had occasion to look up MacPhee's application for membership of the Alpine Club. I found the entry 'South Face of the Aiguille Noir de Petteret.' In the column intended for initials of companions, he had put his own initials. I was curious and looked up the Guide-book to see if I could find more. There was no record of a route on the face. I wondered if this was an effort to conceal the fact that he had done this formidable route solo, in case the Alpine Club should consider it to be foolhardy. The truth came out some years later, when he said at a lecture. 'I climbed the south face of the Aiguille Noir de Petteret solo, in a towering rage, because my companion, a pure rock climber, refused to cross a glacier. I then wondered how I would get down.' He was indeed a hard man.

Someone once said of Bell, 'The advantage of Jimmy is that any story you invent about him is almost sure to be true.' Well I didn't invent this story and it is true. A party of us set out to do the first ascent of the North Post of Coire Ardair. It was a stinking hot day and soon we were wearing only boots and carrying rucksacks. We had a bathe in the lochan and then three of us got out and got dressed but not Jimmy. He just put on his boots. We climbed unroped for some way, on easy rock at a surprisingly steep angle. The first real difficulty was a smooth water worn slab in the gully. Jimmy was some way up in front. I was half way up the slab and not liking it very much. I called for the rope. It was lowered to me rather grudgingly. With the confidence of the rope above, I did rather better on the upper part of the slab. When I got to the top, Jimmy was on a ledge. He was not belayed. Neither was I. He was taking in the rope with one hand and chucking it down in a heap on the ledge. Standing on one leg, he was trying to put on his trousers with the other hand. 'Ach yer as safe as a hoose.'

Professor Turnbull was a strong climber in his day. We once climbed the central buttress of Buachaille together. He was twice my age and thinking that he was perhaps a bit past it, I remarked, rather facetiously, 'Well you're the senior. You should lead.' He did. No trouble at all.

Another strong climber was Sandy Wedderburn, who did the Mitre Ridge of Beinn a'Bhuird among other climbs. During the war, he became 2 i/c of the Lovat Scouts, who were trained for mountain warfare.

Memories of the thirties would be incomplete without a mention of Sandy Harrison. He was always very helpful to us young climbers. We looked on him as a rather elderly father figure, although he must only have been in his 40s then. I climbed with him several times.

A great feature of the thirties was the Club meets. The maximum turn out was 66 at New Year and 42 at Easter. They were a great social occasion and we climbed a lot and got to know each other. From 1934 to 1939 I went to 8 meets and climbed with 22 different people, whom I would never have got to know otherwise. Then there were the older generation too, who turned out. Glover, Willy Ling, who attended 100 consecutive meets and

died on his way to his 104th, the two MacRoberts, Jeffrey, A.E. Robertson, the first to do all the Munros<sup>1</sup>, Unna, Stewart Jack and Stewart Cumming, who took me up my first rock climb. We got to know them all. What has the Club lost with its miserable turn out at meets these days?

## FOOTNOTE:

1. But see the article by R.N. Campbell. *S.M.C.J.*, 1989, XXXIV, 219-227 (Ed.).



Barns of Dymak

John Mitchell 1990

## SNUG HARBOURAGE

By Peter Warburton

AT SECOND Coast, overlooking Gruinard Bay, I dismounted my bicycle to make a telephone call from the public kiosk. The Red Book, in which I had invested 15/-, was politely firm on the subject: 'previous arrangement is desirable,' and it was already mid-afternoon. The answering voice sounded surprised and distinctly guarded, it inquired of my whereabouts, but made no firm offer of a bed for the next two nights. It would have taken more to dampen my spirits on such a perfect June day and me on my first visit to the North-West. Nothing would ever quite compare with my introductory sight of the Torridon hills from the old path from Shildaig, but this ran it a close second - tonight Dundonnell, tomorrow An Teallach.

Several more ups and downs and then four miles of free wheeling with a following wind. The Inn, I was sure, would be one of those comfortably friendly establishments that had grown out of a farm, something on the lines of the Clachaig - nothing fancy, but good home cooking. I had spent a necessarily abstemious few days in a Torridon cottage, but tonight I would take claret with my dinner.

I pushed open a weather beaten front door and after the outside brightness could hardly see the figure of the Proprietrix at the far end of the hall. She seemed to look me carefully up and down before conceding 'that would be all right' and handing me over to the care of her equally elderly Adjutant. The first thing was accommodation for the bicycle. I was directed to a nearby empty log shed, a lean-to structure of which the escarpment formed a back wall, floorless and notably dank and damp. No matter, the bike would not be there long enough to rust away. Next, my room, immediately inside the front door, with a wash stand, jug, bowl and small towel. Thin, elderly and balding, well worn lino, a bed of uncompromising antiquity, curtains that failed to meet by a wide margin. I put my bag on the solitary ex-dining room chair; it subsided under the weight, having at least one game leg. Ah well, I might have sat on it. Storage facilities consisted of three clothes hooks on the wall, illumination by way of a single bulb of low wattage switched from near the door.

The Adjutant awaited me in the hall, ostensibly in order to show me the dining room; a needless courtesy, but I followed meekly. Once inside that gloomy apartment, she barred my exit, holding the half-closed door by its knob and standing in the opening. Clearly there was a tale to be told. English was probably her second language but if the translation process slowed the narrative, it also heightened its dramatic effect, as did the glittering eye and prophetic air. The preamble was to the point: 'ye'll no be going up the Teallach,' the warning followed: 'people have gone out

and no come back the night, it's happened afore,' but it was the last line that engaged my full interest: 'it happened yesterday.' I asked for details and was told of the man who had left the Inn the previous morning and not returned until noon that day; and where was he now? - 'upstairs, sleeping, ye'll meet him at supper at 6.30.' *Exeunt omnes*.

Supper, alas, was sausage (beef or pork, who could tell?) and egg followed by tinned fruit salad. On the table a pot of tea, also sliced bread (probably delivered fortnightly from a steam bakery in Glasgow; my visit was ill-timed, all the steam had fled), a dish of jam (glutinous in texture, beetroot in colour, indeterminate in taste) and a tin of quite good oatcakes. My supper companion was not talkative, but it was evident that the Adjutant had no intention of leaving us until I broached the subject of An Teallach. It was heavy going: no, he had not hurt himself or been unwell, no, he had not reached the summit, he had simply grown tired and had decided to spend the night on the hill. The Adjutant returned triumphant, bearing a plate of scones which were offered as a special home made treat. I share the average Englishman's respect for Scottish baking and carelessly discounting their luminous yellow hue, took an eager mouthful. It was like the case of the man who innocently assaults his first curry, having previously met rice only in milk puddings. As, gasping, I clutched my cup of tea I detected a fleeting look of sympathy from my companion, who had abstained.

After supper I left my bicycle three miles up the road where I expected to descend the following afternoon, walked back and retired for the night. The mattress was of a type to stimulate thought rather than promote sleep ... Although it had not attracted from writers the extravagant praise that some have lavished on, say, the Cluanie or the Lochailart of earlier years, many have had a good word for the Dundonnell - Baddeley, Seton Gordon, Gardner, Fraser Darling among others. The reliable Baker had found it 'neither large nor luxurious but snug harbourage for a small party.' Of course, that was written in 1932. Then again, perhaps he and the rest of them had been billeted upstairs. There is a well known group photo of a Club meet in 1910 with Sir Hugh looking a shade glum. Could it be that he had occupied this room, was this the very bed Sir Hugh had slept in? Probably not. I expect he arrived early and established himself upstairs. In any case I have never seen a photo of him smiling: Barts did not grin for the camera in those days.

I went in to breakfast with some prepared lines of conversation subtly designed to draw out a further account of the other guest's An Teallach expedition, only to find that he had already left. The weather had changed for the worse - cool, damp air and cloud down to 1500 feet. It rose with me, but only to 2000 feet. Sleet and hail succeeded cold, heavy rain and finally I climbed into snow, only half-an-inch lying, but plastered on to rock that was coated with ice. 'Under summer conditions nothing more than interesting scrambling is involved except for the "bad step." 30 feet of difficult

rock on the south side of the Corrag Bhuidhe top.' I found the going more than interesting much earlier in the proceedings. Arriving at the advertised difficulty I several times advanced a limb experimentally and quickly repented. I adjourned for a cold, wet uncomfortable meal enlivened by speculation as to the practice of the Proprietrix in the matter of missing guests. At some point, presumably, she raised the alarm, but nothing had been done on behalf of the most recent adventurer. In the thick mist, I was not disposed to cast about for the alleged escape route and eventually, after further dithering, negotiated an inelegant, trembling passage of that long 30 feet. Thenceforward conditions and the weather improved rapidly and I was soon steaming in hot sunshine under a blue sky. Glen Chaorachain was all I had hoped for and a good place to loiter. When I got to the road I was dry enough to be spared the dreaded squelch of bottom meeting saddle, an experience to which familiarity can never reconcile the sensitive spirit.

There was excessively fat bacon and egg for supper, followed by tinned fruit salad. I avoided the scone trap and regretted the absence of fellow revellers whose reactions to it might have been entertaining. The Proprietrix had one last surprise in store for the second morning. The bill included two entries that remain unique in all my cycling years: 'Garage 1/-. Garage 1/-.'

*Note by author's solicitor:* My client wishes it to be known that the events recounted herein took place more than 30 years ago. If the Proprietrix and/or the Adjutant is/was, are/were any member's favourite aunt, he unreservedly acknowledges that (a) he quite possibly formed a misleading impression on the basis of a regrettably brief acquaintance (b) these charming ladies may well have been the life and soul of the Mod/ceilidh and (c) that the accommodation and meals provided were in any event truly memorable.

*Author's note to Editor:* You, sir, and that fellow Brooker can consider yourselves fortunate that I have too little faith in the Press Council to raise the matter with them. 'An unusual variety of *M. Sybaritis*' indeed (Vol. XXXIV, 1988, p.141). I tell you I am a hard man, as Centrist Salvationists go.

**ORIGINAL ROUTE**

Nailmarks in the schist  
scar the buttress, whiter scores,  
runemarks in the weathered stone,  
reveal the dialect of holds

when touch interprets grip  
and the problem of ascent  
is related in the braille  
of ridges, where boot scrapes,

above curved and cloudswept voids,  
narrate the course, and loss  
of hob and knuckle  
recorded in grazed rock.

Scratch of passage plots the path  
now vibrams grind wet grit across  
the remnant mica surface  
and pinchgrip whitened fingers cling

or curl in cracklines, read again,  
performed by players whose tread  
across slabs and curtained walls  
follows a braid of original thread.

*Donald M. Orr*

## CRACKLINES

An iron pin fastens  
the folds of kilted rock.  
Its rusted ring stitched tight  
to the seam of stone,  
forged head hammered smooth  
and skirted, as the fields of Achtriochtan.

A sliver of history.  
Flake of men who scanned  
the thin invitations of holds  
and slim stances, measuring their trust  
in a shard of metal bedded  
in split and cross seamed bandings.

The bad rock, grit bloods  
left nothing but cobbled names  
for vertical welts of schist,  
passing their worn nails  
across the ribboned wall,  
arching out in cleated friction.

Climb now in thin soled pressure  
the rock hoard on painted walls  
as fingers find and test again  
holds of coarse grained treasure.

*Donald M. Orr*



## LEIGHTON JOHNSTONE'S 'RESURRECTION'

By W.H. Murray

LEIGHTON JOHNSTONE'S disappearance in the early nineteen-thirties is unique in the annals of Scottish mountaineering. This young partner in an Edinburgh firm of chartered accountants disappeared on Ben Nevis in winter. After several days of intensive search, followed by intermittent search over many weeks, the body remained undiscovered. Thus far the case is not uncommon. It is in accord with the way of the world that his disappearance should have been greeted in the press with banner headlines, whereas the much more remarkable reappearance, nearly six months later, passed off without a paragraph even in the *Scotsman*.

His return was managed quietly. Yet the circumstances raise an unusual problem in medical science. At the time they created other awkward problems, for Johnstone's death had been universally accepted. His wife had not indeed given hand or heart to another, but she had sold both house and furniture and gone off to live in Southern Rhodesia, whence she originally came. Johnstone's business partners had replaced him with a new man with new capital. And so on. These things made his return a harrowing experience for himself and others. The details are long forgotten but the physiological problem remains one of peculiar interest.

On the first weekend of November 1931, Johnstone went up to the mountaineers' hut on Ben Nevis with two Edinburgh friends. Built of red granite, this hut sits 2000 feet up in the Allt a'Mhuillin glen, below the northern precipice. As seen from the hut's door, the riven cliffs stretch nearly two miles. They are by far the most splendid climbing ground in Britain, but this weekend the weather was foul, sleeting low down and snowing high up - so hopeless that Johnstone's companions refused to turn out of their bunks on the Sunday morning. But Johnstone, having driven a long way from Edinburgh the day before, felt unwilling to return that Sunday night without some kind of climb. He was now in his middle thirties - the very age at which a mountaineer commands most stamina.

At ten o'clock in the morning he took advantage of a temporary clearance and set off alone towards the 'Douglas Boulder' - the first, 700-foot tower of the Tower Ridge. His remark on leaving was, 'I'll just go up the east side of the Boulder and down the west.'

It was dark early that night, at about a quarter to five; by which time Johnstone had not returned. At six, his companions set out by torchlight for the Tower Ridge, going first to the west side. They could see and hear nothing. Drift snow was blowing about and a gale rising out of the north-west. Before they could reconnoitre the east flank, a full blizzard drove them back to the hut. It snowed heavily on the mountain that night, which

delayed their descent to Fort William for help; then a sharp fall in temperature iced the roads and delayed the arrival of search parties from Glasgow and Edinburgh.

On Tuesday morning the rescue teams started work on the north face. Tower Ridge was climbed in its entirety (2,300 feet - a nine-hour job), but no trace of Johnstone was found. Parties went to the foot of all the gullies and into the coires, and combed the summit plateau, but even had a body been there it would long since have been covered in new snow. The blizzard renewed itself that night and the search was given up, to be resumed periodically but with fast-diminishing keenness. All mountaineers were fully convinced that Johnstone could not have survived the third night, even had he not died on the first.

After a three-day press sensation the affair was speedily forgotten by the public. At the end of a month, even Johnstone's young wife and his business partners accepted his death as certain. After a disappearance of this kind, and although the circumstances seem to point conclusively to non-survival, a man's property continues under protection of the law and his affairs cannot be wound up for a considerable period. None the less, for urgent practical reasons, Johnstone's business colleagues felt obliged after some three months to take a new partner. After four months, his wife sold the house and furniture, which they had owned jointly and returned to Rhodesia.

Five and a half months had elapsed. Easter had come and gone. On 25th April, J. Allan Grant, one of Scotland's best-known alpinists, went up to the Nevis hut with one companion named Dawson (drowned later in a yachting accident). They arrived at dusk, and brewed up a rum punch - not because the weather was cold (the day had been warm and a spring thaw was stripping the snow off the upper mountain). They were just sitting down to enjoy themselves when someone outside shook the front door. It was a heavy teak door, and the bottom scraped hard on the stone flags of the porch. It is difficult to open if grit lies below it. They could hear someone press and push, and looked expectantly to see who he might be. But no one entered. No further trial was made on the door. Grant and Dawson remained seated, discussing their punch and awaiting developments. A minute later there was still none. Had their ears been deceiving them? Impossible! There was not a breath of wind outside. Grant rose and stepped into the porch. The front door was ajar. He pulled - it stuck - he wrenched hard and the door flew open. A man crouching on his knees against the door-post sprawled over the threshold and collapsed.

Grant and Dawson dragged the newcomer into the hut and set him on a deck-chair. He was apparently uninjured, but pitifully weak and 'wondered.' In person he looked grotesque. Blonde hair hung over eyes and ears to the shoulders. A red beard could not disguise the unnatural pallor of his face or its extreme emaciation. His expression, the bearing of the head, every outward bodily sign, resembled those of a prisoner long immured in

the darkest dungeon, long forgotten, and now suddenly remembered and released. His bewilderment was plain to see - but hardly more than Grant's and Dawson's when they noticed that his nails were as long as a mandarin's. Water dripping to the floor drew their attention to the man's clothes, which were climbing clothes and wet although the day had been dry. Grant saw from the look in his eyes that he was trying to speak and failing. He thought to help him with a mugful of punch, but luckily checked himself in time. It might have killed him. He poured hot water into another mug and stirred in a large tablespoonful of sugar.

'Drink this,' commanded Grant.

The man sipped, then drank. Colour rushed to his cheeks.

'Alan Grant!' he exclaimed. 'It **is** good to see you!'

'What's **your** name?' Even as Grant asked the answer flashed to mind.

'Leighton Johnstone. How long have I been out?'

'Six months,' said Grant, studiously casual.

'Months!' The incredulity in Johnstone's eyes was unmistakeable. His face flushed impatiently. 'Please don't play the goat. My wife's bound to be worried. How long have I been lying there?'

'Lying where?'

'Coire na Ciste.'

It was Grant's turn to look incredulous. 'But you **can't** have been up in Coire na Ciste for six months!'

And so it went on, neither man willing or able to believe the other, until Johnstone ended an apparently mad party by collapsing.

It seemed evident that his great weakness came of starvation. They stripped him and put him to bed with hot-water bottles. He showed no disposition to sleep, so they took turns at night-nursing, feeding him at hourly intervals with hot soup, raw switched egg, and the like, all in small quantity. By the following forenoon he seemed stronger. He and Grant then had another long session of mutual cross-examination. At the end of it, each finally convinced the other that he spoke no less than truth.

Johnstone's report of himself was simple and straightforward. On that bad November morning he had intended going no farther than the notch between the Boulder and Tower Ridge (and so down the west side) when an unlucky weather clearance tempted him higher. Might not a quick, solo ascent of Tower Ridge now be possible? He turned away from the notch and struck leftward up the flank of the great rock ridge. This move brought him on to the narrow crest, which is here horizontal, just below the first upward sweep of the edge. The consequence was that he had a much foreshortened view of the rocks above, which appeared to be freer of snow than they were in fact; for he saw only the steep pitches where little lay, and

not the moderate angles and ledges where it lay heavily. Thus he misjudged the time required for ascent.

All went well as far as the 'Little Tower' (the second tower), but beyond that snow lay thickly and the going grew slow. He had still time to withdraw, yet fell a second time to temptation. Although time-consuming, the climbing hereabouts remained technically easy and the weather no worse than threatening. He went on. At the third or Great Tower, the weather broke with a high gusty wind and snow squalls. Dusk was then falling and the long descent had become an unthinkable proposition. The summit was just five hundred feet above. The trap was set and Johnstone walked straight in.

He had to spend an hour on the eastern traverse of the Tower, where the rocks were in normal winter condition - ice-clad. Thus it was almost dark when he came on to the narrowest edge of the ridge at Tower Gap and again met the wind. The Gap is a cleft between the Great Tower and the final cliff under the summit. By this time a north-westerly gale was blasting over the crest and sounding on the upper cliff like an artillery barrage. From the gap itself came a noise like the rush of fighting shells. The vertical wall on the far side was frosted. Redoubtable fighter though Johnstone always was, he was now a very frightened man, chilled to the bone, and faced with a battle for life. He recognized that 'This was it' and what was asked of him here was firm action. With numbed hands, unable either to feel or properly to see the holds in the last light, and with the wind tearing at his body, Johnstone tried desperately to climb the frosted rocks. Then he fell.

He fell to the windward flank. This flank is sheer near the crest, but slightly less steep on its lower two-thirds, although it remains throughout a high-angle cliff, split by the narrow gully called the West Chimney. It seems unlikely that anyone could fall down it and live, but this day Providence dealt with Johnstone mercifully. The first ledge he struck was heavily banked with snow. He glanced off it at high velocity, struck another, glanced again, then fell towards the lower half of the chimney, which was snow-choked. At this he lost consciousness<sup>1</sup>.

He regained consciousness with the sun shining into his eyes. He was lying on his back in a snow-drift, which had partially melted off his body. He tried to struggle into a sitting position, but strength failed him and he fell back. At the sudden movement, something under him cracked. An instant later he was sitting up to his waist in icy water. The sharp surprise had value, for it made him turn over on to his knees, and although he was quite unable to stand he then crawled two or three yards on to a rock-slab. He lay there and slowly observed his environment.

He was in Coire na Ciste, the coire under the flank of Tower Ridge. Just beside him was the lochan, still largely covered in ice and deep snow. He

had been lying on that ice near the edge. It had broken when he fell back. But how did he come to be here? He remembered climbing up Tower Ridge. He could remember the storm at the Tower Gap. Then all was blank. A full hour passed before he recollected falling off. How long had he been here? Probably one night. A search party would be on its way.

It was the idea of the search party - the ignominy of his *requiring* a search party - that stirred Johnstone to act (not just the instinct of self-preservation). The notion of Leighton Johnstone, a committee member of the country's senior mountaineering club, being rescued with headlines in the press no doubt - that was just not to be thought of! If he couldn't stand he could crawl. Thus galvanized, crawl he did. He spent nine hours crawling, collapsing from time to time, but crawling on yet again, a thousand feet down the coire to the hut by the Allt a Mhuillin.

He had beaten the rescue party! That was his first thought when Grant jerked open the door and he sprawled across the threshold. And then he'd been asked to believe that he'd been out not for a night but for six months.

If we consider the situation from Johnstone's point of view, and remember how he must have felt when he finally realized that for six months the world had thought him dead; when he heard of his wife's departure for Rhodesia and the somewhat delicate relations with his business partners: we may understand better why he had so little thought for the physiological marvel of his survival, and never consented to submit himself to medical investigation, or to reply to letters on that exotic experience. Indeed, the very notion of his being abnormal, a rarity, or in any way a freak, would be to him more than to most people abhorrent. Just two months later he followed his wife to Africa. Since then, no letter sent to him out of Scotland has ever yet won a reply.

And so, we are left with a problem, the answer to which almost defies credulity. What had really happened to Leighton Johnstone during these six months? Any idea that he just wandered around with a blank mind can be ruled out. No one not obviously a tramp - and Johnstone was a man of distinguished bearing - can do that undetected in Lochaber. The whole district had been searching for a missing climber, whose portrait had been seen in every newspaper, local and national. Moreover, Johnstone was quite without knowledge how to win his daily bread save by work. If we accept as true his own statement of his fall and recovery of consciousness, and if we accept Grant's evidence about his condition when he arrived at the hut, then these, taken together with all the other evidence, admit of only one answer.

After the first part of Johnstone's fall, when he was 'sand-bagged' by repeated bumps, he shot down the snow-filled gully, clean over a big ice-pitch below, and glanced off steep snow banked against its foot. He was then travelling extremely fast, for his body continued right down into the coire and fetched up just beyond the lip of the frozen lochan. He was still lying there on the ice, unconscious, when the first snow-storm started. His

body would soon be covered, first by drift and then by new wet snow, which we know froze quickly as the temperature fell. Johnstone was thus imprisoned in ice, in a natural refrigerator, and lay there in a state of suspended animation until the thaw set in in the late spring.

This solution is the only one that fits the facts. It is not a miracle. The device of the deep freeze is nowadays used with success to anaesthetize patients prior to surgical operations. Was Johnstone's experience an extension of that method? Or did he quite simply hibernate like an animal? - that is, not directly through cold but by falling into coma through lack of food-fuel. So great are the human body's powers of adaptation that we should be wary of thinking the conclusion impossible. What other can there be?

#### FOOTNOTE:

1. Incredulous readers might care to be reminded of a similar miraculous escape. Some twelve years later, in January, 1943, Brian Kellett fell from the Tower Gap, while soloing the Secondary Tower Ridge. He shot down the entire length of the West Chimney (now called Glover's Chimney), landing on snow at its foot. He too survived, managing to walk to the C.I.C. Hut unaided. (Ed.).

## BONNIE PRINCE CHARLIE'S LONG MARCH

By Peter D. Brown

### Background to the March

THE SCOTTISH Mountaineering Club guide to the Western Highlands contains a fascinating account of the Wanderings of Bonnie Prince Charlie, following his defeat at Culloden in 1746. Particularly impressive is the passage which describes the Prince's flight through the Redcoat cordon that had been established from the head of Loch Eil to Loch Hourn. Charles's route runs from Loch nan Uamha, near Arisaig, to Glen Shiel, through what is one of the wildest and roughest parts of Scotland, and crosses at least seven major ridge and valley systems lying between the two 'Roads to the Isles.' The journey was over 50 miles long, and involved some 20,000 feet of ascent: the prince's party accomplished it in just over five days, travelling for the most part at night.

Since the description of the route has appeared in the SMC guide for at least 50 years now, I had always presumed that it must have become a popular 'long distance trail,' a sort of West Highland Way of the far west, and followed by hundreds of hardy mountaineers each year. I was therefore surprised to find very little evidence of walkers. It seemed therefore that it would be worthwhile writing up the notes of the trip that I finally made in the summer of 1989, beginning on the exact same day, 17th July, as Prince Charles's flight from Glenborrodale, 243 years ago<sup>1</sup>.

It is not practicable to follow the Prince's route with absolute precision. The records are inexact in places, and open to interpretation in others. I also made a number of minor deviations of my own, mainly to find somewhere comfortable to camp (as opposed to resting in the open like the Prince). The main deviations are listed at the end of the article, following references to some of the various and varying accounts of Prince Charles's journey, to which I have alluded.

The area covered by the march is vast, and in the eighteenth century much of it was inhabited. Now all this country is bare of people and, apart from herds of deer, largely bare of animals. There are few tracks: over half the route wanders over rough moorland or the slopes of high coires. There may have been more tracks in Prince Charles's time, but he would not have had the benefit of the well-built stalkers' paths which, with a few short sections of road, now comprise some 30% of the route. Fortunately, however, he did have the help of men with local knowledge to guide him and his small party.

The prince was also forced to travel for all but the first two days by night and, one imagines, with little more than fitful sleep in between. There is no record of the weather faced by his party on this particular section of his wanderings; but it would be surprising if they were not forced to sleep out in the rain on occasions, and to navigate through mist and cloud in the dark.

By contrast, I had the luxury of a tent and sleeping bag and was blessed by the unusual heat wave of 1989; shorts and tee-shirt throughout. The only problem I had to face was the midges, which gradually increased in number with the rising humidity to a crescendo on the third night out, driving me to complete the march on the fourth day, rather than extending it to the planned five-day affair.

### Away from Glenborrodale

From the very first stepping out of the car at Beasdale, a sense of awe-some loneliness quickly develops. The march does indeed begin with a footpath up Glen Beasdale, with the bootmarks of other walkers clearly stamped upon its boggier sections. But within an hour you would be forgiven for beginning to think that these footprints are imaginary. A gentle rain mists in from behind, and you are enveloped in a world entirely of your own.

The path, such as it is, stops at the Bealach a' Mhama. Time for a bite: but the first midges of the march soon awake you out of your reverie and force you back into action. 700 feet below is Loch Mama. Rough ground, no longer any path. Two miles from the road and railway, the march has really begun.

Slither down the wet heather and boulders to the loch. Gradually a sheep or deer path establishes a meandering presence. Suddenly, a tent! Maybe there are others doing the route. It is after all the anniversary. Maybe MacEachine's Refuge will be swarming with backpackers, like the West Highland Way.

No. The little green tent stands empty of people, like the landscape around it. Suddenly, the sight of a half dozen cows at the end of Loch na Creige Dhuibhe surprises: as I must have astonished them. They were the last domestic animals to be seen for four days.

Up the burn on the right, over the top, and there stands Loch Beoraid. This must be one of the loveliest and least visited in the country: but it still lies less than two miles from the main Mallaig road and railway. Moreover, there is a boat moving on it, and a group of three walkers returning to the road over the path which goes down to Meoble, visions of a great party at MacEachine's Refuge once more.

No need to worry, the bealach is empty. Apart from John coming up to camp the first night with his four children, these are the only people I am to see before Glen Dessary, two days later.



The cave, marked 'Prince Charlie's' on the maps, must I think be the one prepared by Angus MacEachine in readiness for the Prince to hide in; it lies in a wood topped by crazy tottering rock pillars, making the whole area a place of refuge. An entire guerilla army could hide there, lurking under dozens of boulders and deep cracks in the ground. It's a fine place for disposing of careless children - the most obvious, dry, flat camp sites that present themselves turn out to overhang a 100-foot drop. So we camped in the bog at the top of the bealach, and the children complained bitterly of midges and make smutty jokes about bitten bums. Prince Charles was more sensible. He abjured the cave, went down to a house at Meoble, 800 feet below, and climbed back next day. He was also fit. He was also very much on the run by now, having just heard that a party of English ships was already in Loch Nevis, a few miles to the north.

All the same, the bealach is a magic spot, a spectacular, high camp site, with long views down Loch Beoraid, down over the farm at Meoble to Loch Morar and, turning round to the south, to the Moidart hills where the sun was setting late and orange. We knocked back a few whiskies. It was good at last to be on the way.

### Prince Charlie's Long Day on the Long Hill

The next day's route wanders eastwards over the gradually rising, knobby but marshy Glas-charn. Three miles on the map slowly meander into four, or even five. Two-and-a half hours to the summit, keeping carefully along the line of the iron fence that stands there now (a navigational aid denied Prince Charles). The sun is hot, the load heavy, but not too debilitating as the slope is very gentle. Emerging views of Sgurr na Ciche, across Loch Beoraid and Loch Morar, keep up the spirits. A couple of hidden lochans provide tempting camp sites.

Glas-charn of the modern O.S. is shown on the original 1897 O.S. as Sgurr a' Muidhe, which Prince Charles climbed. The modern O.S. marks Sgurr a' Muidhe as a separate peak some distance to the southeast of Glas-charn. I went to investigate the modern version of Sgurr a' Muidhe. Too far to the right to begin with. The better way is to continue to the summit marked 592m on the modern O.S., then head straight down the knobbly ridge, more or less due south, to a subsidiary bealach. At that point the fall-line moves rapidly westward. Above Lochan Sgurr a' Muidhe, I dropped the sack for the return.

From the flank of Sgurr a' Muidhe (modern version) the whole of Loch Eilt is visible, as well as much of Loch Eil to the east, and it is therefore highly likely that the party went there to spy out troop movements. At this stage the party comprised Prince Charles; Captain Alexander MacDonald of Glenaladale; his brother, John MacDonald; a second John MacDonald, Borrodale's son; and one or two retainers who were now and again despatched on errands or 'expresses.' On Sgurr a' Muidhe John MacDonald, 'young Glenaladale,' was despatched to Glenfinnan for news.

The Prince immediately moved on, fast; down to the bealach above Féith a' Chatha, and up to Fraoch-bheinn in two hours. I took four; though this did include a splendid dip in Lochan Sgurr a' Muidhe and an hour's lunch break waiting vainly for John and his family to come up and meet me from Glenfinnan.

Apart from company, the important reason for this rendezvous was for John to relieve me of some surplus weight. My 55-litre climbing sack had served me well for many years, being just big enough to carry everything I ever needed. If it won't all go into the sack, I reasoned, then it's too much. Correctly, it had turned out. But I had compromised by acquiring two side pockets 'for convenience.' To keep cameras accessible, lunch and a little bit of something, I thought. Mistake. Overload. Pockets off, with their contents, and the sack was once more tolerable, back below the pain threshold. I left the sack at the bealach to 'do' An Sutha and Fraoch-bheinn: John arrived at the col while I was away and removed the excess pockets. 'Children refused to come' said the message, darkly.

Charles and the other two arrived at the top of Fraoch-bheinn at 2 p.m., and met a party of clansmen herding cattle. They gave him milk to drink. Donald Cameron of Glen Pean was sent for, to guide the party out of Moidart; but before he could arrive, news came that soldiers were searching the hill they were on, and they left at sunset. Precisely where they descended we do not know: they may have gone straight down over very rocky terrain towards Gleann Donn and Reidh Gorm, thence cutting through directly into the upper region of Coire Odhar, where at 11 p.m. they were lucky enough to meet Donald Cameron who, despite being described as 'an old gentleman,' must have been as hardy as they. Having already travelled some 17 arduous miles, including 6,000 feet of ascent, the party 'walked all night with him,' climbing another 3,000 feet before daybreak.

I did not. My route lay back to the bealach, and down what turned out to be a reasonable path by the Allt Glac a' Bhodaich, veering westwards as it descended, to a sunny riverside camp at Kinlochbeoraid. Another magical spot. Two days out, the fires now well stoked, feet in good fettle. Good to be alive. An early alarm for the morning, which promised to be hot again.

And so it was, but sticky too, unlike yesterday. Off at 6.45, followed by a quick return to retrieve forgotten sunhat. Lucky I noticed, as this faithful garment was to serve as sun, rain and midge protector, flyswat and ovencloth: essential equipment.

Fortunately the path into Coire Odhar is well-built and well-graded. It felt good at last to be moving with some speed. For the first time I began to feel confident that I could make it through to the end. I wondered whether the Prince's confidence, which is legendary, was equally strong at this stage. The party had been on the go since early morning and, in the near darkness at eleven o'clock, before their fortunate rendezvous with

their new guide, Donald Cameron, Coire Odhair must have presented a depressing aspect.

The coire is a vast bowl of a place. Grey and grim even in the sunlight, the emptiness is extreme. A couple of heaps of stones near the foot of the moraine under Sgurr nan Coireachan are the only indication that it may have been otherwise in Prince Charles's time. But it is doubtful if even then the coire was much inhabited.

From the floor of the coire, climb straight to Sgurr nan Coireachan (there can be little doubt that the Prince's route also lay over the summit, though there is no explicit record of it). By keeping right in under the summit I found it just possible to keep out of the ever-rising sun - not normally a problem in this part of the world.

Suddenly over the col to the west appeared the entire Cuillin range, dominating the new view: a dramatic demonstration of how Skye and its overlords, the MacDonalds and the MacLeods, were for so many years central to the life of the Western Highlands. Their failure to support the prince was certainly a great blow to his campaign, and his sojourn on Skye was the briefest of any of his many stops during his five-month wanderings.

### **Land of the Living, Land of the Dead: Glen Pean and Glen Dessary**

The next section of the route crosses two lonely glens that in those days were thickly populated. Some 800 people are reported to have emigrated from Glen Pean during the Clearances, while it is reported that Glen Dessary alone produced 200 fighting men when Prince Charles raised his standard at Glenfinnan.<sup>2</sup> Both glens start at the head of Loch Arkaig, near Strathan, one of the two buildings in the locality which are still inhabited. Redcoat soldiers were active at the head of Loch Arkaig, and indeed were plainly visible to the Prince's party. They therefore needed to cross both glens, unobserved by the soldiers, to reach Loch Quoich, the next valley to the north.

From Sgurr nan Coireachan the logical route for Prince Charles might thus appear to have been straight down to Glen Pean, to cross the river at a point near or above the present bothy, thence into Glen Dessary as high up as possible and so over the Bealach Coire-nan-Gall to Loch Quoich.

According to the accounts, however, it seems fairly certain that Charles's route from Coire Odhar lay due east, along the 'South Glen Pean ridge' to Sgurr Thuilm, and then halfway down the latter's northeast ridge to rest for the day in a hollow which in those days appears to have borne the name 'Mamnym Callum.' Blaikie has Prince Charles reaching 'a hollow running longitudinally through it capable of screening a party who might desire to proceed without being observed.' The north-facing hanging coire could certainly have sheltered the party from the view of soldiers

at Strathan, at least until they emerged near the floor of the glen below the 1000-foot contour. And the hill had been searched the previous day, so the party thought themselves safe. Nevertheless the hiding place seems to have approached the enemy's camps perilously closely.

The modern 1:25 000 scale map introduces yet more confusion and amusement to the exploration. The Carn Mor-Monadh Gorm ridge, opposite, which separates Glen Pean from Glen Dessary, also bears a bealach named 'Mam nam Callum,' just west of the Monadh Gorm summit. This is no less close to Loch Arkaig, and even more visible, than the hollow on the ridge of Sgurr Thuilm. It is doubtful that Charles's party, who would have already travelled 22 miles and climbed 9,000 feet to reach Sgurr Thuilm, would have had time or energy to cross yet another valley and to make yet another ascent before dawn.

It seems, therefore, that they spent their first day of real rest halfway down Sgurr Thuilm (spelt Choileam on the original O.S. map), with Donald Cameron maybe watching his kinsmen coming and going, engaged in what little farming activity the English soldiers had not made redundant by their pillage after Culloden. Perhaps he would have peered down through a copse of birch trees, for there are many ancient stumps high up in the coires which run down to Glen Pean - trees which could have helped screen their descent late in the evening. Charles also knew this particular glen. He had traipsed along the boggy path down to Loch Morar three months earlier, on his flight westwards from Culloden, and he was to travel the same glen yet again on his final escape from Badenoch to Glenborrodale.

Young Glenaladale fortunately managed to rejoin the party in the early hours of the morning, having travelled all night from Glenfinnan to 'wherever Providence directed him which (most happily) brought him directly to the place where the Prince was.' Did he dare to take the easy way via Corryhully, where the Redcoats were doubtless patrolling? Or did he also have to take a circuitous route, perhaps even following the others via Coire Odhar.

### **'Halfway House'**

Although the high point of drama for Prince Charles must have been the crossing of the Redcoat lines north of Loch Quoich two days later, from the mountaineering point of view the traverse of the south Glen Pean ridge must, for at least three reasons, count as the culmination of the trip - at least with the sort of visibility it was my good luck to enjoy.

First is the sheer joy of expansive views into inaccessible parts of the country. Beyond Sgurr Thuilm the Grey Coires and the Nevis range culminate in a superb view of the Carn Dearg buttress of Ben Nevis; Bidean nam Bian stands clear of Glencoe with a stature difficult to imagine from closer viewpoints. To the south and below lies the starting point of the

Prince's adventure, the monument at Glenfinnan. Beyond the railway viaduct, which is plainly visible, the eye swings away, past the Ardnamurchan hills, round to the long view down Loch Morar sealed by the mountains of Rhum; thence to the Cuillins, then a rare view of Ladhar Bheinn and the Knoydart hills brings the eye to rest on Sgurr na Ciche, which is ever-present on the next three sections of the march.

The second feature of the ridge is a definite feeling of 'half way there,' with one of the two major climbs accomplished, and half the height and half the total distance completed by Sgurr Thuilm. All five of the remaining ridges are now visible, even if somewhat distantly in the case of Glen Shiell, if the weather is fine, and if it is not, at least a dry night in a bothy in prospect.

Finally, of course, the two mountains at each end of the ridge represent the only two Munros on the trip (except for the super-fit who decide to include an excursion to Sgurr na Ciche the next day).

A quick slither down between the green moss and black rock to inspect the 'Mamnyn Callum' hollows. Hard on the knees, but at least it's downhill. At this point we have to leave Charles's probable route, as the route over the Carn Mor-Monadh Gorm ridge to Glen Dessary is now covered by conifers. The alternative goes down to the bothy, and the descent via the hollow, taking a slanting line, is a pain; it is much easier to backtrack from Sgurr Thuilm westwards, then descend the pleasantly mossy Coire Dubh straight to the bothy.

The re-ascent, over Monadh Gorm to A' Chuil, is an even greater pain, especially at the end of a long, hot day. For those who don't mind an occasional 'cheat,' go straight down the northeast ridge of Sgurr Thuilm, to the bridge over the River Pean, and round to Glen Dessary by the excellent low level forest track.

This aside, of course, Glen Pean is a delight, backed by the cliff of Craig an Fharaidh overhanging the river. But hopes of an hour's conversation at the bothy were soon dashed. A sleeping bag on the shelf inside, a pair of socks drying without; their owners conspicuously absent. A bathe in the river, a shirt and socks washed out. Lunch in the sunshine while I fell to musing upon the irony of bothies; either the whole human race is there, or there is no one at all.

And sure enough, after sneezing and scratching through the flowers, horseflies and other delights of the summer meadows on Monadh Gorm, the reception committee was waiting at A' Chuil. 'A lot of people staying?' I enquired of a group of sunbathers on the stile. 'Well, I've got ten, and she's got .. is it six?' Inside the bothy, over half the floor was already carpeted with sleeping bags. A dour hillwalker sternly reproached me for missing the 'obvious' forestry track from Glen Pean. Outside again, the spokesman for the sunbathers, clad mainly in plastic map bags and compasses, suggested Kinbreack, another bothy six miles in the wrong direction, at the head of Glen Kingie.

'Bothy folk,' 'bothy culture,' I muttered to myself as two complaining feet stomped off through the bog to find a camp site. A pity really - apart from a couple of cyclists and walkers on the road above Kinlochhourn next day, these doubtless admirable and outdoor characters represented the totality of human contact during three whole days.

Six o'clock. The sun still baking. A wonderful site on sweet grass by the river. No midges. Another swim, another wash of sweaty socks. Dinner in the sunshine again. A wee dram. Visions of an early start, breakfast and a morning's swimming at Loch Quoich before a leisurely afternoon's stroll over the remaining two ridges to Loch Hourn.

Though I didn't know it then, this was to be the last supper. About eight o'clock the heat went slowly out of the sun but not out of the air. By nine the haze was thickening into cloud, sealing in the day's muggy warmth.

I have never encountered so many midges as I did that night. Tent inner tight shut, DMP and DEET on every surface, still they bit. Sleeping bag a pool of sweat. The choice was simple: to be bitten alive or to be stewed alive. Like a mug, I chose both.

Jolted into action by an (almost welcome) suggestion of rain at 4.30, an hour later we were away; and, for all I knew, probably screaming aloud with midge bites. Yes, 'we' had spawned our own company by now: feet and I were three, engaged in a continuing little battle, though carried on for the most part as a friendly, oral combat. My other 'luxury' on the journey (other than the dram, that is) was an old pair of trainers and thin socks. These proved to be no luxury, but an essential item of kit, after an unexplained bruise to one ankle. Alternating them with boots managed to keep the feet going throughout the long, last day.

After the refreshing early morning walk up the excellent forestry track, it was the turn of the boots to struggle up the meadow- bog that ascends the east side of the burn to Bealach Coire-nan-Gall. (Some SMC readers must know a better way - perhaps from nearer to Mam na Cloich' Airde? I would be grateful for suggestions).

Clouds formed and dispersed and reformed in the valleys. Rain threatened and spat, but never really let itself go. Glen Desolate lived up to its name. Not even a sheep was visible. By eight o'clock we were looking down eerily, under a steely grey sky, onto a second bed of white woolly cloud where Loch Quoich should have been. The drips of rain at last seemed to be getting more serious, and the cagoule was dragged out of the sack, for the first time in three days. But only for twenty minutes.

### **Through the Redcoat Lines**

The first 500 feet or so down into Coire-nan-Gall need some care with a heavy load; it must have caused some consternation to Prince Charles, arriving at the bealach at midnight after a day's fitful dozing above Glen Pean. But the route is soon meandering comfortably alongside the burn,

picking up a combination of stalkers' paths on either side, giving a pleasant enough walk down to the head of Loch Quoich.

But there would have been no path for Prince Charles in 1746, and it seems that Coire-nan-Gall was too remote a place, even then, to be much inhabited. The Prince arrived here at 1 a.m., hoping to meet clansmen and to procure sustenance. He had no such luck; young Glenaladale and Donald Cameron were sent off together to find food. Meanwhile Charles hid in a 'fast place in the face of a hill at the head of Lochqhuaigh, to which fastness they came about two o'clock in the morning'. If this place is close to the level of the loch, I have so far failed to find it. On the other hand it has quite possibly been flooded; the loch is 100 feet higher and its western end is about two miles longer since the dams were built at either end.

Glenaladale's record states that his brother and Donald Cameron returned at 3 o'clock with 'only two small cheeses that would not be a morsel to the piece of them' and the news that troops were 'marching up the other side of the mountain.' A pity he did not record which mountain. It was probably Druim Chosaidh, the hill straight in front of them; but then was it not risky to climb it themselves only five hours later. Or did a messenger report that the soldiers had then retired? Or could the troops have been chasing the royal party over from Glen Dessary (unlikely, as it is an arduous march), or even over Sgurr Mor from Glen Kingie? Glenaladale merely records that they could observe a camp in the sunshine at the head of Loch Quoich, and that the troops, who were principally engaged in rounding up 'such of the poor inhabitants as had fled to the hills for shelter,' searched diligently, but without effect, for the Prince.

The head of Loch Quoich, with its twin dams and often low water level, is an ugly as well as a dismal place. A wide jeep-track leads east to nowhere, disappearing after a couple of miles, presumably to rejoin the ancient track below the modern water level to the Kinlochquoich of old.

The route now ascends Meall an Spardain, a spur of Druim Chosaidh. To minimise the amount of tramping up soft grass it is easiest to walk about a mile and a half along the road to a small inlet, above which a rightward-slanting vague rib line leads up due north to a small bealach just west of the easternmost summit (follow the 95 easting on the modern O.S.). Charles may have crossed slightly higher up, to keep away from the Redcoat camps at the foot of Gleann Cosaidh (assuming, that is, that he already knew they were there).

The bealach gives splendid views down Gleann Cosaidh, where the Prince was able to observe the enemy camps. The time would have been between 9 and 10 o'clock (since they started at eight, and we know they moved fast). In mid-July it is not remotely dark until after 11 p.m., so the party must have waited a while before creeping down to pass between two sentries so close 'as to hear them talk distinctly.' Sgurr na Ciche again dominates the view to the south, with Ben Aden providing fine support to its right.

The north side of Druim Chosaidh is rough and rocky. The easiest route down (other than 'cheating' by using the road round the loch shore) follows a series of rightward-slanting shelves, marked by deer tracks and making for a rock rib overlooking the most easterly of the fords in the river marked on the O.S. The descent route taken by Charles and his party can only be conjectured. Did they keep higher up the glen, to avoid the enemy camps? Or were these stationed all the way up the glen and across to Barrisdale? The stream is considerable, and to cross it noiselessly in darkness must have been no easy matter.

What we do know is that the party next ascended Leac na Fearna, straight opposite, and apparently started straight down into Coire nam Beith on the north side; the original O.S. of 1897 shows a track leading down Coire am Beith from Gleann Cosaidh, and this may well have been in existence in 1746. Such a route assumes that Charles crossed the stream of Abhainn Chosaidh near the present ford, and probably also very close to where the troops were stationed. Unless he managed to reach the track which, if it existed then, started at the waterfall to the east of the ford, the ascent of Leac na Fearna would have been a gruelling ascent. In the spring the hillside is soft enough, a mattress of springy grass; by July it has become an Alpine meadow, spread with flowers and long grass that obscure each soft footstep and harbour an abundance of horseflies: perfect for painters and photographers, but a desperate place for mountaineers.

One piece of evidence suggests that the path may not have existed in 1746, or alternatively that the fugitives did not know about it, or that they were not able to make use of it. For it seems that it was on Leac na Fearna that the Prince stumbled over a precipice in the dark, and nearly fell to his death. Glenaladale's account suggests that this occurred near the top of the ascent; the account of his nephew (Borrodale's son) has the fall taking place on the descent. While in most respects the former's account appears to be the most trustworthy, it seems more logical that the incident occurred on the very rough and dark descent into Coire nam Beith. (The second account is also backed up by Donald Cameron).

By now in trainers again, it was just after 2 p.m. when we reached the top and looked down towards Kinlochhourn. A light breeze stirred, the first of the day, just enough to keep the flies and midges at bay for an hour's dozing, catching up a little with the previous night. But the sky remained overcast, the air heavy and basically still. The prospect of a second night's camping in such conditions, especially in the horribly midgy glen above Kinlochhourn, was anything but tempting. The only alternative was to keep walking - to rest was to be eaten.

Fortunately feet and ankles had responded to the exchange dialogue. Feet felt fine, legs OK. We had not dared discuss the issue before now, during the three long climbs: but gradually during this final descent the conviction formed that we should push on further for the night. There is for instance a lochan where we could camp right at the top of Bealach Sgoireadail.



The descent is rough and boggy, and Prince Charles must have enjoyed it at 1 o'clock in the morning, probably, as we have seen, nearly ending his career over a precipice. From the lower part of Coire nam Beith the route is another conundrum. The party passed between two camps on the road below. The SMC's research suggests that they passed just east of Loch Shuibhe in Coire Hoo (Coire na Uamha). If, however, they had known the camps' positions (by their fires, for example, as suggested by Blaikie), would they have dared to continue straight down the road from Coire nam Beith to Coire Hoo? If not, they would have had to traverse out of Coire nam Beith at a high level, crossing two extremely rocky coires to the west, including several wet and mossy slabs twenty feet high and more, all of this in the dark, and now in terrain where their guide Donald Cameron was no longer fully at home. Glenaladale's record suggests that this is what they in fact did, for he says that they went a little bit westward at some point on the descent of Leac na Fearn. Even with the traverse, they would have needed to expose themselves to a mile-long section of open road.

Having finally, or so they thought, made themselves safe 'skulking' in the woods above Kinlochhourn, none of them realised until the next day that they were still 'within cannon-shot of two small camps,' when they saw a party of Redcoats getting in some 'muttons.'

### The Final Escape

The Kinlochhourn road is surprisingly hard on the feet after a long day out. By contrast, the footpath up into Coire Sgoireadail is a joy - especially coming after the three vertical bogs already ascended. Tea was called at five, at a nice midge-free site in the middle of the river bed. A strategic debate was held with feet, ankles, boots and trainers. Two long cups of tea beguiled them into a unanimous decision to go for Glen Shiel the same evening; and to fight in boots. Trainers would follow in reserve, one pace behind, as they were now very smelly. Faithful sunhat sealed the decision by pouring another draught from the billy. And the first midge of the evening stung the party into action fifteen minutes before the official starting time of 6 p.m.

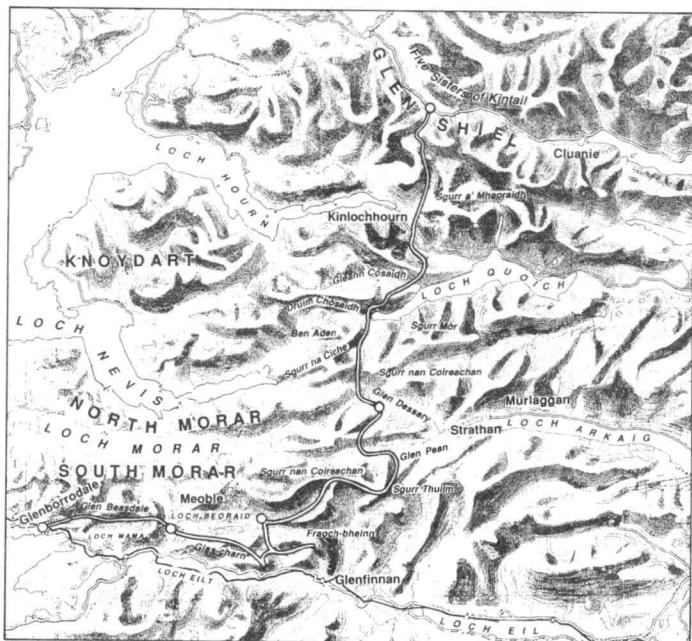
The die was cast. But what a contrast to Prince Charles's ascent, which he found the most difficult of all. According to the SMC guide they 'stumbled up Coire Sgoireadail in pitch darkness.' 'The darkest night ever in my life I travelled,' recorded John MacDonald, Borrodale's son. While it would be surprising if there had not been any sort of a path, none is shown on the 1897 O.S. Certainly the Prince could have had nothing like the conditions under foot provided by the excellent track that serves the glen now. The upper section of this path carves an elaborate roller coaster route through a jumble of twisted cliffs and boulders. No wonder Charles and his party, in the dark and now effectively guideless, had trouble.

Alternatively, Blaikie avers that they must have used the easier path via Coire Mhalagain, to the west, which was then inhabited. This route passes between Sgurr na Signe and the Saddle.

My route lay via Coire Sgoireadail, however. The track clambers quickly to the bealach, below the lochan. Time 6.45. Whether to camp at the lochan (which was a little way above, not quite visible), or to proceed? One more pass, only another 900 feet up. The choice was obvious, really. Below, only one more decision needed to be made: to drop 500 feet to pick up the Glen Quoich path on the other side of the valley opposite, or to make a haggis-footed traverse<sup>3</sup>, losing fewer feet and gaining the path half a mile further up towards Bealach Duibh Leac. Being mean, I hate to lose height; legs agreed heartily, and amazingly feet and ankles complied, both of them.

At the floor of the coire we ran into a high Alpine rock garden, among jumbled boulders that could easily have come from a bothy tumbled years ago. Now only flowers mark the past.

The traverse meets the main path at a cairn where the latter crosses the small burn from right to left. Another half hour's toil, and we were finally seated at the top of Bealach Duibh Leac. Eight o'clock and indeed in celebratory mood. Dark views back over Sgurr a' Mhaoraidh and the south Glen Shiel hills. A dram all round, to feet, to faithful hat, to Prince Charles and to each of his gallant party, to the hills we had left behind, to the enchanting and empty glens, to the sun yesterday morning shining on Loch Beoraid.



Prince Charlie's March from Moidart to Glen Shiel

And a final dram to Glen Shiel, dark down below, to the lowering Sisters of Kintail in front, and to the high hills further east, above Cluanie, where Charles had next to flee. There could be no stopping for him, whatever the rigours of the past five days. A shiver of a breeze from nowhere brought the faint sound of a Piobaireachd; the Urlar that starts and then repeats itself at the end of the lament flooded over the gloomy view. In the ancient Highland culture, every ending is a beginning. The circle was complete.

At last it began to rain. We started the final, twisting plunge down the rough coire, soaking up the rain with joy. A herd of deer fed in a late evening pool; it was their own territory, and they moved away slowly, with the greatest of reluctance. Down we ambled in the rain. If not for Prince Charles, at least for me and my feet the long march was over.

#### REFERENCES:

The SMC guide refers to W.B.Blaikie's 'Itinerary of Charles Edward Stuart,' which is published by the Department of Scottish History at Glasgow University. This proved vital in obtaining a reasonable understanding of the route, with its seemingly odd deviations and timings. The book is based largely upon evidence collected shortly after the 1745 rising by Bishop Forbes and published in three volumes in the 'Lyon in Mourning'; unfortunately only Volume 2 is still available in print. The principal source for the Moidart/Glen Shiel section in the Bishop's collection is a full and detailed account by Captain Alexander MacDonald of Glenaladale, who was one of the first Highlanders to commit himself to the Prince's Cause. This record is followed fairly exactly by Blaikie, in distinction to somewhat more sporadic and differing accounts given by other witnesses, including Donald Cameron of Glen Pean. For instance Donald Cameron's account does refer to mist in one place, but this is not corroborated by Glenaladale's generally more reliable account.

#### Deviations from Prince Charles's Route

The main deviations and omissions that I made from the route probably followed by Prince Charles were:

1. Starting from the road near Beasdale Station (omitting the 1-mile walk from Arisaig House at Glenborrodale).
2. Not descending to Meoble from 'Prince Charlie's Cave' (which I have assumed to be what some of the literature describes as 'MacEachine's Refuge'), but camping on the bealach above.
3. Leaving the sack at the foot of An Sutha/Fraoch-bheinn and returning there, then descending straight down to Kinlochbeoraid (it is possible that the Prince may have taken a more direct line from the top of Fraoch-bheinn to Coire Odhar, though a brief inspection of the terrain suggests he may well have been forced to follow much the same route as I took).
4. There is some confusion and there are several gaps in the records as to how Charles got from Coire Odhar to Loch Quoich. I followed what seemed to be the only logical route which squares with Blaikie, with one exception: a forestry plantation covers his route between Glen Pean and Glen Dessary, and to cross this ridge I was forced to go further west and higher than the Prince, via the two bothies in the respective glens.
5. Loch Quoich is now two miles longer at its western end, and 100 feet higher, than it was in 1746, having been dammed.

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. In 1746 the British still operated the Julian Calendar, which lagged ten days behind the Gregorian Calendar used on the Continent. Since then we have 'caught up' the ten days.
2. H. MacInnes: 'West Highland Walks - One.'
3. The haggis, it is well-known, being counter-clockwise and a very contrary beast indeed, has its right legs longer than its left.

## MAYDAY ON MEAGAI DH

By Philip Gribbon

WE PUFFED and trudged slowly up the snow slope running into the confining walls of an unknown gully in Coire Ardair.

A helicopter was coming up the glen. It held itself high on the hill before it turned into the strong wind that blew continuously but erratically from the amphitheatre of the steep cliffs that formed the edge of the Creag Meagaidh plateau.

A blue sky had penetrated the tattered clouds that travelled on the southerly wind, bringing a brightness to the deep shadows that lurked in the gullies. The sunshine had transformed the spindrift whirls into a gleaming line of snow devils that swirled in a chill fandango and sank down to smother themselves in the high bowls at the top of the Posts.

We were putting our steps into an uncompactable white wool that gave us neither progress nor security. When we stopped to rest and were hunched over our axes we were able to absorb our surroundings: nearby was a boundary that separated the cusped edge of the coire from the distant sweep of the glen and hemmed us within the cliff, a dark black buttress, whose stark brutality was in contrast with the soft mottled blanket of snow spread across the countryside.

The helicopter was an incongruous thing, a squat flying tadpole in bright saffron. Although it was only a machine and had often been our haunting companion on the hills, its ability to perform unusual acts, such as hooking, hauling, swallowing and spewing us out like Jonah from the big fish, made us treat it less like a bosom pal involved in every escapade and more like a witch's familiar that knew our every move and watched us with suspicion. Its sound was filtering into every recess in the cliffs. Its approach thus brought an air of menace that slowly insinuated itself into our consciousness and gave us a vague feeling of irrational anxiety. Bright bird, skipping through the glens, why do you dare to come into our land that sleeps in peace and where we cultivate innocence and practice our irresponsible arts?

We, mere defenceless mortals, felt exposed in our lonely position. We realised that we had only gained the smallest possible toehold somewhere near the bottom of the cliff and that we had a long way to go to achieve our aim to climb to the top. If a few minutes ago we had possessed the brash confidence of a pair of ultramontane mountaineers our sang froid had now suffered an appreciable reverse. We swore that on our next time out we would stick to our salvationist tendencies and just go for the walk and the view, but we realised just as well that we would retract shamelessly and get

ourselves another objective that was both worthwhile and again fraught with uncertainty. However; for the moment we were alone on the mountain. The pair of solo climbers that earlier we had seen moving up the depleted snow scarf draped down Raeburn's Gully would have gone away by now. We knew the night's snow soon would have gone too. Och, what a record warm winter it had been, with the start of springtime coming in January, and that resurrected controversial topic of Lurcher's Gully more awash with water than with snow for the skiers. Perhaps we in our greenhouse world should change from Think snow to Think alternative.

Noisily the stream gushed down a kinky step in the gully bed. Beyond its spray I pulled in hand-over-hand the rope that joined me to Pete Biggar. The hidden helicopter seemed to be maneuvering at random in the lower coire and its sound echoed off the sidewalls of the gully, its beat bouncing, sometimes faint, now loud, then three times it came, a stutter ... burrump ... bump.

How very strange! Staring at each other we tried to read each others thoughts but the whisper of the wind brought no sound to allay our growing unease. They just don't drop out of the sky, do they? Not in front of our eyes, anyway. Ah, yes, they can, anytime, anywhere. Only a year ago, a real big one did, and not so far away: May God rest their souls! Last March too I had heard a similarly spooky big crumph in the Ben's Coire na Ciste and without warning No. 4 Gully had spontaneously shed its cornice and disintegrated in a moving jumble of blocks so that the whole slope was avalanching below us as we watched from our eyrie high up in Green Gully. Was I getting a sort of message?

We just had to find out what had happened. Quickly we chose an easy option, a snow covered slab that might lead to a viewing point on the edge of a rib. Better still it meant we could avoid the next dreepy waterfall in the gully. Scampering up uncertainly with trepidation, on a thinning surface of a dreadful consistency, I reached the edge but couldn't see anything, so struggling on I made for a belay point. Again no view, but a thread for a tape made by an embrace and some tickling round a low block. Eventually a few feet higher up all was revealed, but there was little of significance to see; nothing dramatic such as a lurid display of fireworks, a burning bonfire, some drifting smoke or holes in the bog, nor any dancing mujahideen exultant at having shot a helicopter out of the sky. Merely an imperceptibly misshapen one squatting on its hunkers and stuck right in the middle of nowhere.

It didn't look particularly damaged, it just had a funny peculiar air suggesting that something was amiss and out of the ordinary. Why were there two brown marks staining the bog close by? Were they bump holes? Why did a group of tiny Lilliputian-like figures start to run radially then form a circle round the helicopter? Surely there were too many people to have been carried inside: I was used to seeing little two-man Wessex wave-wafters skimming over the Fife shores. I counted nine people, the same

number as those out on our club meet. However it was too improbable to think that a helicopter would score a bull's-eye in the midst of my unsuspecting walking friends; besides, my club was too small to afford to have its members squashed out of existence, even if we had, with appropriate irony, the people for the situation: to wit, one minister o'the kirk, one trained nurse and two financial advisers. Yet why did they lurk on the perimeter? Did they keep back because they couldn't stomach the bones, the gristle and the gore, or were they afraid of the risk of fire and explosion, or did they just gawk in amazement? Perhaps they had been banned from its proximity by her authoritarian decree. Nonetheless I knew that I was imagining a false reality that was built on my unjustified assumptions of the event.

Let's go on, there's nothing to be gained one way or the other in turning back. Right, the decision is made. Onwards. Thrash at the hill with your axes. Crawl up the snow strips and crawl back down the thin ramps, kneel on a stool and balance on a tuft, use guile and cunning, make a skip and a hop, try this n'that, with a whack, a squelch, another whack and a splotch. Two more pitches were completed, stomping up a snow patch like the well-known white spider while an hour had slipped past. The atmosphere of the drama was diffusing, this happening was growing boringly mundane, but another question grew unanswered: why had it taken so long for the next batch of professional rescuers to answer the Mayday call and to arrive and whisk away their stranded mates and resolve their fresh weekend incident? Why?

It was Pete's turn to traverse into a steep cleft that went all the way to where a cornice would normally form in any other winter. It looked just a runout and then a few metres more to the plateau. A timeless interval went by and then at last a second helicopter came sweeping round a spur of the hillside and cautiously made its approach as it weighed up the wind strength from a streamer of red smoke trailing down the valley. It hovered close, two men dropped out and ran to the shelter of the crashed machine. What would they find there? Would it be poor fragile limbs mangled and slashed in a frayed cage of sharp steel, or would it be a jolly afternoon tea gathering enjoying an emergency party in the comfort of the hull? We kept our idle thoughts to ourselves; our immediate necessity was to worm our way up and out on to the plateau.

Pete climbed carefully up the cleft, with his crampons rasping on the underlying rock and the snow sloughing free from the surface at every step. His continued presence on the face looked far from assured, his adherence seemed mostly by willpower. Superficially unconcerned I played out his rope, sometimes watching him, but mainly constructing a picture to fit what I saw a mile away: had it landed the right or the wrong way up, had the fuselage been flattened and compressed and was the tail buckled and bent, had it spun itself one or three-quarter ways round to present to us a lopped-off undercarriage or a dismembered pattern of severed rotors.



*Photo: J. R. Marshall*

Robin Smith, near enough the time of his diary extract.  
(Yes, we know the top of his head is missing; this would seem typical).





'Jane Naismith on White Nile.'

*Photo: Grahame Nicoll*



The rope came tight in front of me. I unballled my crampons and stepped into the quiet seclusion of the narrow cleft. At last the helicopter would be out of sight and might therefore be out of mind. Now to climb the cleft. It was a matter of where everything goes and where any subterfuge was acceptable. Each step sank down as far as the soggy soil and just had to be willed to stay there. My axes were going in shaft-first through the snow and burying themselves deep in the underlying ground. In order to defy the pull of gravity it needed both arms and legs to spread in a crabwise motion to lighten the load at each point of contact. Once it had narrowed into a chimney the human frame became an optimum security engineered structure, with legs that were twisted and contorted and locked into position, with arms extended and braced on the walls, where a gloved palm acted like the pressure pad of a hydraulic jack pushing on a ledge, and an ice pick hooked on the wrinkles and pulled up on the cracks. It was not reassuring: my nut runners, when tugged, became shattered crack expanders in front of my eyes. My breaths came fast and furious as the physical exertion combined with the mental terror. I ran out to the end, the expected one runout had become two. The rope came tight behind me.

The final short bank of worn grey neve was a reminder of the quality of good winter conditions, gentle axe blows crunching in, reassuringly grasped, moving on tiptoes, up and out ...

We met the winds whistling across the plateau that were damp chill and very unfriendly. They snatched and rattled our gear trinkets, and they even dared to gently raise my helmet and apply a cool sensation to the sparser regions beneath it. We tucked our shoulders into the wind and made an escape downhill to the Window through a broken maze of crampon-blunting stones. In the lowering light we sheltered for a quick pack and a bite, and staggering off with legs in and out of the mantraps hidden between the exposed boulders we flitted hurriedly down a slippery slope towards the lochan.

We came upon the dead helicopter, its silhouette indistinct in the murky gathering gloom. It lay on its right flank in the slushy snow. It was not the expected wee Wessex but a big Sea King; a fact that helped to explain why nine figures had crawled out of its carcass to parade in a circle. It was completely empty; its windowless cockpit was open to the sky, there were strips torn from the fuselage, and all that remained of its rotor blades was a fan of broken stumps covered with a gunge of heather, peat and moss. Poor thing, it was now a spent useless object, its power was gone, its vital spark had been extinguished.

We fled into the darkness to leave behind the debris of a technological desolation, marked with scraps of unidentifiable junk littering the moor, and scented sweetly with the fumes of the fuel as it seeped into the burn. Quickened by the spur of the night winds we stumbled away with a sliver of something unknown in pursuit, a black fluttering lamina flapping at our heels. We wished ourselves in the comfort of the hut or any place that was as far away as possible from the slopes of Creag Meagaidh.

## NEW WAYS ON AONACH MOR

By Roger Everett

I'M ALL FOR the Salvationist tendency. It's a healthy form of exercise, it provides inspiration to visit the wildest and most beautiful parts of the Highlands, and it keeps people off the crags. But perhaps best of all it's increasing popularity spawns the production of ever more numerous walking books, filled with large glossy pictures of the subject matter which, in search of originality, their authors have taken from 'unusual' angles. What better way to hunt for new crags! Simon Richardson realised this long ago; his shelves are full of them, ranking in equal importance with books of more Ultramontane content. Turn to page 74 of *'The Munros'* and you'll see a splendid photograph of one of our highest mountains, complete with an impressive crag sparkling in the morning sunshine. But there was no mention in the Journal of climbing on Aonach Mor. Either in their faithfulness to the nearby social scene of the Ben or through a reluctance to experience the steady 1200m approach, the climbing fraternity appeared to have overlooked the potential of Coire an Lochain. But perhaps the potential had been seen, explored and dismissed as not worthwhile. There was only one way to find out.

A foot of fresh powder early one October had us rummaging in the store, exchanging sticky boots for ice axes and crampons. This was the time to get fit, to rediscover the wild thrills of winter and to explore for future objectives. A trip to the north east ridge of Aonach Beag, taking in Aonach Mor on the way, seemed likely to fulfill our goals, so for the first time we walked up that awesome, desolate slope (now decorated with funny metal things). At the summit of Aonach Mor we gingerly crept to the edge of the east face and peered into the misty gloom, trying to judge the height of the cliff and estimate the climbing potential. Simon hurried to another viewpoint, frustrated that the cliff was managing to stay hidden even as we stood on top. But the cloud was too thick; we would have to come back another day. The long and tedious walk up the Allt Sneachda would have to be repeated with the value of the effort again in doubt.

Two months later we were back, the snow was more in evidence and the ground was frozen. But we lost the race against the descending cloud and could see very little when we eventually found the crag. Determined to achieve a climb after the effort, we picked the most obvious line starting from the lowest point of the largest buttress. The rising storm added increasing interest to the enjoyable hack up steep, well vegetated granite grooves, which gave three pitches of good climbing before the final heave over the fast growing cornice. The battle across the plateau against the gale suggested a theme: *Morwind* (grade III or IV) was our first route on the extensive crags, and there was clearly room for much more.

It seemed amazing that these cliffs, so similar to the Northern Coires of the Cairngorms and so close to the major climbing centres of the West, had remained untouched for so long. The answer may simply be that the proximity of so many excellent winter climbing grounds overshadows these smaller cliffs. But we had grown tired of the queues on the Ben (or frightened of the consequences of gradually ticking the routes, to be left with increasingly awe-inspiring objectives), so we decided to continue the prospecting, not adding to the development of standards in winter climbing but certainly increasing the variety of good climbs available in the middle grades.

On our next visit we were rewarded with a tantalising glimpse of the full extent of the crags before the inevitable storm. Thin icing gave great entertainment in *Icicle Gully* (III), before a short trip round the side of the crag took us to the bottom again. The second route of the day, '*Grooved Arete*' (IV), became increasingly technical on the first pitch and then superb on the second, climbing a steep set of grooves on good turf and torques before an exciting overhanging exit onto the final, easier slopes. That such routes could be found encouraged us to greater efforts. The following week we returned. Again the weather was not on our side, the crags were hidden and we had to work from memory. We climbed the fine '*Force Ten Buttress*' (III/IV) which gave excellent mixed climbing on very friendly rock; every time you needed a good torque placement it was there for the finding. Forced off the most direct line by the eponymous weather conditions we emerged onto the summit plateau in dire straits. Unable to sort out the gear, we descended a little out of the wind. To our surprise, the shelter of the crag induced the ridiculous urge to do another route; '*Jet Stream*' (III/IV), which gave some steep climbing on thin ice, with poor protection, and an eye-punishing exit over the cornice. Later in the season this may become a simple slope with an impossible cornice, a good illustration that this is an early season crag.

The poor winter continued, and for a few weeks even this cliff (with a base at nearly 1100m) was out of condition. Frustration had reached a high point when Simon reported that the forecast was 'not very good, but passable' for the coming weekend. Dossing at the end of the road he revealed (to much laughter) that there had been mention of 80mph winds and finally admitted to gusts of 100mph. I decided to listen to the recorded message myself in future. Nevertheless we were there. The tent only just survived the night and we were reluctant to get up. For once we started the walk in daylight. Crossing the deer fence we became exposed to the gusts ripping across the hillside, forcing a slow upward stagger. Great plumes of snow rose in whirlwinds and it seemed impossible that we would be able to climb. But the strange thing about this crag is its almost unnatural shelter from westerly and southerly gales. Once below the rocks normal progress was almost possible, we found our proposed line from memory, and for some strange reason started up.

The first pitch was far more entertaining than it appeared, with thin ice over smooth rock leading to a fine sheltered belay. The next pitch was clearly going to be the crux, taking a steep corner with a couple of bulges. As Simon worked his way up, slowed by the increasingly alarming volumes of spindrift, I realised that somewhere up there a rather exceptional meteorological entertainment was being staged. It was also getting dark. Adrenaline was high when I climbed through to the third pitch. By now normal caution was a luxury, so I stormed runnerless over more icy bulges to an island belay below the cornice. We stopped to get out the map, compass, headtorches and goggles, fearful of what might be happening on the plateau. Simon led through, soon invisible in the maelstrom. The rope came tight and I followed, becoming aware of the proximity of the top through the huge weight of snow plummeting over the edge, like a dumper truck releasing its sand. We re-grouped at a crawl, marvelled at Simon's fully-laden harness being blown effortlessly away, and then in an appalling state of disorganisation crawled, fell and staggered in a vaguely northerly direction. For a while the issue seemed in doubt, but eventually two very grateful optimists emerged to see the lights of Fort William. 'Typhoon' (IV) was climbed on a day when the wind speed at Cairn Gorm (about 15 minutes flight-time away) reached 138mph.

Our next visit could not have been more different. A full moon, no wind (but not much snow), a crisp trot up to the summit plateau for a sparkling dawn. For the first time a cloudless day allowed uninterrupted views of the crag. The limited amount of snow was in perfect condition, so we spent the day going up and down four times, climbing interesting gully lines which are doubtless more boring in full conditions. If you go there with early November or December frosts you'll have just as much fun on the 'Twin' routes as we did.

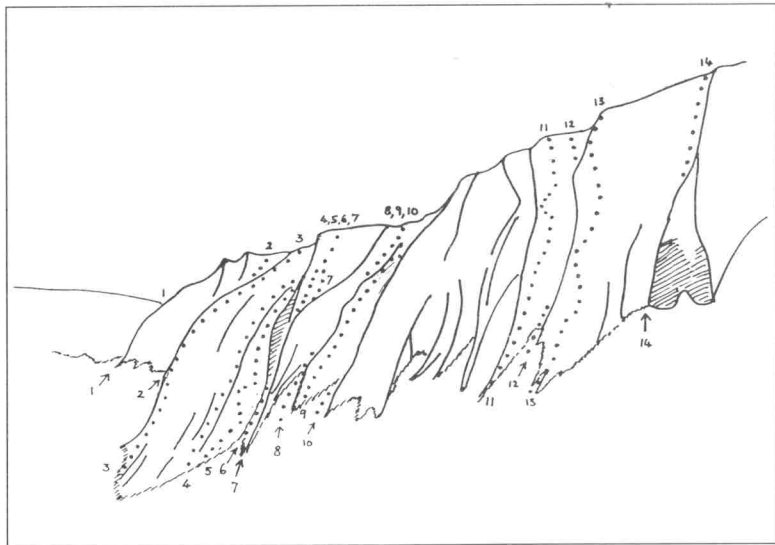
We had still failed to produce a route that was difficult by modern standards, but the arete to the right of 'Typhoon' looked likely to fit the bill. A slabby start rose to ranks of overhangs barring the way to mixed slopes at the top. We had discussed the line often, but suitable weather and conditions had not coincided. Finally we got our chance. The bright March sunshine during the approach was misleading, for unexpected, vicious gusts of wind tore down from the plateau, laden with ice. Pausing to recover from this painful battering, I fell behind Simon, struggling, envious of the youth and burning enthusiasm that carried him towards our long sought goal. But the sky was blue, the cliff plastered white and at last there was the hint of ice in the region of the intimidating overhangs. It was Simon's turn to lead the first pitch of icy slabs, steep bulges and then an awkward overhung ramp to a belay below the overhangs. On my arrival, he reassured me that the route lay not over the overhang immediately above, but up a promising corner just to the right. With poor snow lying on smooth rock, this started the pitch in the expected grade and led to a sizeable roof. A crack over the lip took the tip of my axe at full stretch, but however hard I pulled (even with a cunning knee-lock under the roof) I just

couldn't gain enough height to find a placement for the other tool. The leftward alternative soon went blank, while a foray to the right gained some height with some excellent climbing but then presented more large overhangs, poor snow, smooth rock and no gear. Weakened and wet I lowered to the belay, explaining that the roof above the promising corner would go with a point of aid.

By now Simon was obviously bored and eager for a fight. Going against his own advice, he discounted my suggestion of cheating and excavated a crack in the overhang above the belay. A grunting heave and he was onto a steep slab, crampons scraping desperately for purchase. When the crack ran out, he was forced to use delicate axe placements, edging up to the target patch of turf. Suddenly his tools ripped and he shot off, only to stop about two feet lower as his picks somehow found their own way into the crack he had just climbed. I know it was unfair, but I just couldn't stop laughing!

### Diagram of the East Face of Coire an Lochain, Aonach Mor.

A view of the crags from the arete at the northern end of the coire. The starts of routes indicated by arrows are hidden behind the buttresses to their right.



1. Easy descent gully. 2. Tunnel Vision. 3. Morwind. 4. Typhoon. 5. Hurricane Arete. 6. Left Twin. 7. The Split. 8. Forgotten Twin. 9. Siamese Buttress. 10. Right Twin. 11. Grooved Arete. 12. Icicle Gully. 13. Force Ten Buttress. 14. Jet Stream. Full descriptions are given in SMCJ, 1988 and 1989.

The second attempt was more successful, but took him only to below an overhanging wall which somehow had to be traversed to reach the safety of a snow bay. The solution was a huge reach off a one notch placement; if you're six feet tall and carry 60cm axes feel free to tell me it's easy. I redeemed myself somewhat on the third pitch which involved some wide bridging up an overhanging corner and then a few traditionally thuggish pulls over the last steepening to easier ground. '*Hurricane Arete*' (V) is worth the grade, and probably a few stars as well.

All this excitement had hidden the fact that it was no longer a fine day. The familiar wind was now extending itself, the cloud was down and, as usual in such conditions, it was difficult to tell just how hard it was snowing. The cornice exit was almost impossible, whilst the plateau definitely was. Once more we had to fight just to get down, gear in disarray, gloves soaked, a stagger through hell revisited. This time it had ceased to be fun. I couldn't raise the mental strength to dare the weather to do its worst. As we emerged from the cauldron the air was filled with the deafening roar of close-by thunder, and then shafts of sunlight miraculously rent the clouds. I had a vision of warm, dry rock. For me, winter was over; it was time to revive the sticky boots.

## THE MAINREACHAN SAGA

By Martin Moran

IT STARTED as a smudge of white on a coal-black cliff. We were camping in the Mainreachan coire a few days before Christmas 1985. The approach from Achnashellach was enlivened by a sudden snowstorm, and when the blizzard cleared that evening I took a stroll up the side of the buttress to the top of Fuar Tholl. In the dim reflection of a pale moon the ramp that slices into the heart of the cliff could be discerned as a slab of white. This is the line of the summer route, Snoopy, an HVS no less, but on a crag that juts out far beyond the norms of verticality that ramp offered perhaps the sole chance of a winter breach in its right-hand face.

Back home I checked the guides and journals. As suspected that right flank was untouched in winter. Indeed the only winter route achieved on this awesome tombstone was the winding line of Sleuth on its frontal crest, which MacInnes and party had climbed at grade V during their North-West campaign circa 1970. Yet despite the golden seasons of '86 and '87 I gave the cliff little further thought. Perhaps it was just too fearful a possibility, a vague dream patently beyond my current capabilities, or else I thought it too steep and exposed to ever hold much snow and ice. So while I climbed and explored the mountain's South-East Cliff, the greater plum languished in neglect merely a stone's throw away, over the summit ridge.

January 1988 started dry and mild, but by mid-month winter was slowly edging in over the tops. In the view from my front door in Strathcarron, Mainreachan's neb is ever-present, poking up from the summit sprawl and giving Fuar Tholl its colloquial name of Wellington's Nose. Never having examined the buttress profile in close detail I was persuaded to take a jaunt over the top one cool peaceful afternoon. Clad casually in shorts and training shoes I jogged out to the third (or north-west) peak which looks out directly across the face.

The sudden revelation awaiting there was enough to chill the flesh; the buttress a riot of overhangs and snaking ramps, lightly dusted with hoar, its recesses spewing pregnant bosses of steely ice, which hung suspended above the void. All this on a mountain that was otherwise bare of snow, and with winter hardly begun.

At once appalled and greatly perturbed, I realised how badly I had misjudged the cliff. Mixed climbing of the highest calibre was on offer as soon as the snows arrived. Doubts of personal ability were cast aside. This was akin to finding an Eigerwand on your doostep. How could it have been ignored for so long?

The required snowfalls were borne on a north-west wind towards the month's end, and a chilly phase of weather became established. I was immediately on tenterhooks, but who could I let into the secret, and moreover who could also climb in midweek? Andy Nisbet had the time off from work at Glenmore Lodge, yet was strangely mistrustful of winter sandstone climbing despite having co-authored *Die Reisenwand* on Beinn Bhan.

However the bait on offer proved ample persuasion to draw him west. We embarked from Balnacra in Glen Carron at 6.30 a.m. on a chill and misty morning, climbing over the top where a spare sac was left by Mainreathan's summit cairn. We then plunged down a flanking gully in search of the Snoopy ramp, where I knew we must start. Higher transverse terraces, one of which gives access to Investigator, tempted a premature probe, but our aim was to climb the full 200 metre height of the cliff, hopefully by a route worthy of its challenge.

As far as the prevailing fog allowed us to see, the cliff was well plastered with snow. An easy spiral terrace led left for 30 metres to the tapered foot of the ramp. As we crept along the terrace the ground fell away with alarming rapidity. Ensconced beneath the ramp we already felt exposed and committed.

Thickly plated with ice the ramp would give a grade IV romp, but such advantage rarely if ever obtains. Instead one must scratch and claw for progress on verglas and tufts in the corner, the calves straining at every enforced pause to seek protection. The climbing would be best described as 'skinny' but nonetheless proved absorbing. In a little under two hours I reached an easement at a horizontal break and gratefully strapped myself to a large pedestal up on the left.

The ramp continued rightwards, ending in a steep wall capped by an impending corner which took on a gargantuan scale in the mist. Leftwards the horizontal line led under big roofs which dripped the occasional stalactite of ice but offered no chink of genuine weakness. Faced with equally intimidating alternatives Andy took the left traverse, but a full ropelength of grade III gained only 15 metres of height.

We had now lost our line, and still there was no obvious way up. A peg poked out of a vertical crack 8 metres above. This was probably part of Sherlock, the summer VS, but looked bare and ill-suited to a cramponned attack. I led through left again, but the ledge ended in sloping crackless rocks. Bridged to exasperation I could make no progress either up or sideways. As the hour passed three, a mood of despondency as gloomy as the fog descended. No doubt - the buttress had won hands down today. Tails drooping we reversed part of the traverse then abseiled to the foot of the ramp, whence we could escape the clutches of the cliff.

I had always promised that I would never become obsessive or overtly competitive about first ascents. Was this route so different then, for just



two days later I was back, this time with Simon Jenkins who was up from Dunfermline in advance of two weeks' guiding work with me. Reveille was advanced an hour, and extra supplies of sandwiches packed.

The plan was now clear; finish the ramp, and then, since the corner above looked unclimbable, move right round the buttress as suggested by the summer description of Snoopy.

Cool, clear and calm, the dawn air lent vigour to our steps. A three-tiered cloud sequence massed in the eastern sky. Valley fog choked Strath Bran, slate-grey plates of stratus capped the Fannichs, and above cumulus mushrooms pushed up into the pale blue firmament. Viewed from our descent col the rapier edge of Mainreachan reared stupendous against this blackcloth, lightly hoared and frozen still. We granted ourselves a few minutes of optimistic delight - this time, surely!

Yet as Simon led the lower ramp the clouds closed ranks and enveloped the cliff. The mood of oppression once more took hold, cramping rhythm and checking our boldness. From the pedestal stance I moved back on to the ramp. Snow covered its slabs, in some places lying on verglas, in others masking bare rock, but in the corner it looked thick enough to bear weight. Without protection I kicked steps, making eight metres of rapid progress. At the top of the ramp I stepped on to a thicker snow flute intending to rest there and arrange some runners.

Quite without warning, yet with agonising slowness, the flute cast off its anchorage and with me attached toppled down the ramp. Quickly gathering speed I flashed past a startled Simon who made a suitably dynamic arrest. Personal damage was mercifully slight, a sprained thumb and a bruised ego. However I'd thrown away vital time in my vain attempt to rush. Metre by metre Mainreachan must be climbed with craft and care but now there were barely four hours of daylight left in which to succeed.

Clearing the snow, and scraping out the cracks for runners I reclimbed the upper ramp, but this time with a rightward detour, where a series of dimples were revealed in the snow which looked suspiciously akin to melted footsteps. I had noticed the same features below but passed them off as remnants from my attempt with Andy. Up here no such cosy interpretation could be made. Were we too late? Had the Clown Prince Fowler already snatched the prize, or were these simply imprints from natural snowball slides? Whatever the answer their discovery lent an added air of spookiness to the climb.

Above the ramp a short but ill-protected bridging corner gave access to icy walls and a sloping break leading right and out of sight. Doubtless this was the way of Snoopy, but before starting a glance up left revealed a remarkable possibility. From the foot of the impossible corner a tiny ledge tiptoed left on to very steep mixed ground in the centre of the face. There lay the natural line that would keep us on a direct course.

I belayed at the end of the ledge in a decidedly airy situation, hanging on the lip of the roofs, just 20 metres above Simon despite having done a

40 metre pitch. My appreciation of the exposure was heightened when one of the three anchors unaccountably ripped out as I trusted my weight to the belay, causing a slight swing and jerk. The belay ropes drew lengthening parabolas against the misted void as Simon neared the stance.

The buttress possessed an uncanny ability to cast an Eiger-like spell of gloom and intimidation. A light but incessant snowfall now added to the atmosphere, and at half past three daylight was already fading. Above us further roofs barred upward progress but a vague easement could be discerned on the skyline diagonally left. Simon led through and pawed at the problem for 20 minutes before admitting defeat. In the grip of the situation I could hardly blame him despite the loss of time.

I took up the gauntlet, determined to give the best of strength and spirit to subdue this monster. Steep tricky mixed moves after much snow clearance led to roofs. Here a channel peg hammered to the hilt plus several assorted accessories gave heart for a grunting mantelshelf over the bulge and an increasingly spacious leftward traverse.

Down and away over the abyss, crampons bridged on frozen blocks, axes hooking and tufting on ice smears and tussocks, I pulled out the stops and left protection far behind. A praying position was eventually attained on a turfy ramp, then simple but precarious moves brought my nose hard against a huge cracked block at its top. A Friend ripping out of a verglassed crack left me no choice but to teeter unprotected to the top of the block where a long sling was gratefully draped and duly clipped.

Ten metres above the angle definitely eased. I possessed enough rope but barely sufficient gear or daylight to attempt the crucial moves, while my torch lay down with Simon in our sack. Common sense prevailed, and I belayed from the block. Simon joined me in near-total darkness.

The belay was reinforced and with my harness replenished I set out once more by torchlight, but now the upward drive was evaporating and the chill of night crept in through dampened layers of clothing. A shallow groove above the block offered neither protection, turf or ice, only sloping powdered rocks. I reversed and looked up right but with no better result. Only a high undercut and a lonely clump of moss gave any crumbs of comfort but they were out of reach on an otherwise smooth rock wall. Either way would have been at least grade V by day. So we hung there, two shivering pinpoints of torchlight lost in the mist, desperately close to success but with no option save retreat. Unable even to sit still less lie down on the stance a bivouac could not be pondered, whilst the use of aid was no solution to a route of this quality.

We spun down the cliff in two free-hanging abseils and crept along the entry terrace to safety. Only the long haul over the summit and a knee-jarring descent to Glen Carron remained, our minds filled with dreams of what might have been.

Further attempts in 1988 never got above the valley floor. Two days later on 6th February and again on 5th March, we rose at an ungodly 4.30

a.m. in trust of a fair weather forecast, forced down a big breakfast and drove up the glen only for a blizzard on the first occasion, and heavy rain on the second to commence before we had taken a step from the car. Such are the trials of winter climbing. On 5th March, unknown to us, Rab Anderson and party were snooping around the base of Mainreachan, watching the rainstorm strip the cliff bare. Of the phantom footprints however nothing was heard, and completion of the route remained an inspiration for 1989.

Eighty nine was not a good year for grand winter designs. Thirty inches of rain in January alone, and a virtually continuous hurricane were enough to batter the strongest faith. Yet by mid-February, when most had abandoned hope, regular snowfalls and a dominantly cool polar airflow were developing conditions on the North-West mountains. Ice formed fast thanks to a copious groundwater supply. Provided one could suffer the squally weather there were several days when things could be done, though Mainreachan's steep face needed a steady build-up of adhesive snowflakes rather than the ritual blastings of ice pellets which prevailed.

However an inspection on the 26th revealed snow sticking to the buttress, though varying work commitments kept Simon and me apart until Friday 3rd March. I became distinctly nervous as the week progressed. Temperatures crept up giving daytime melting up to 900 metres, whilst a major thaw and return to sou'westerlies were forecast for Saturday. We had but one day, and the sole chance.

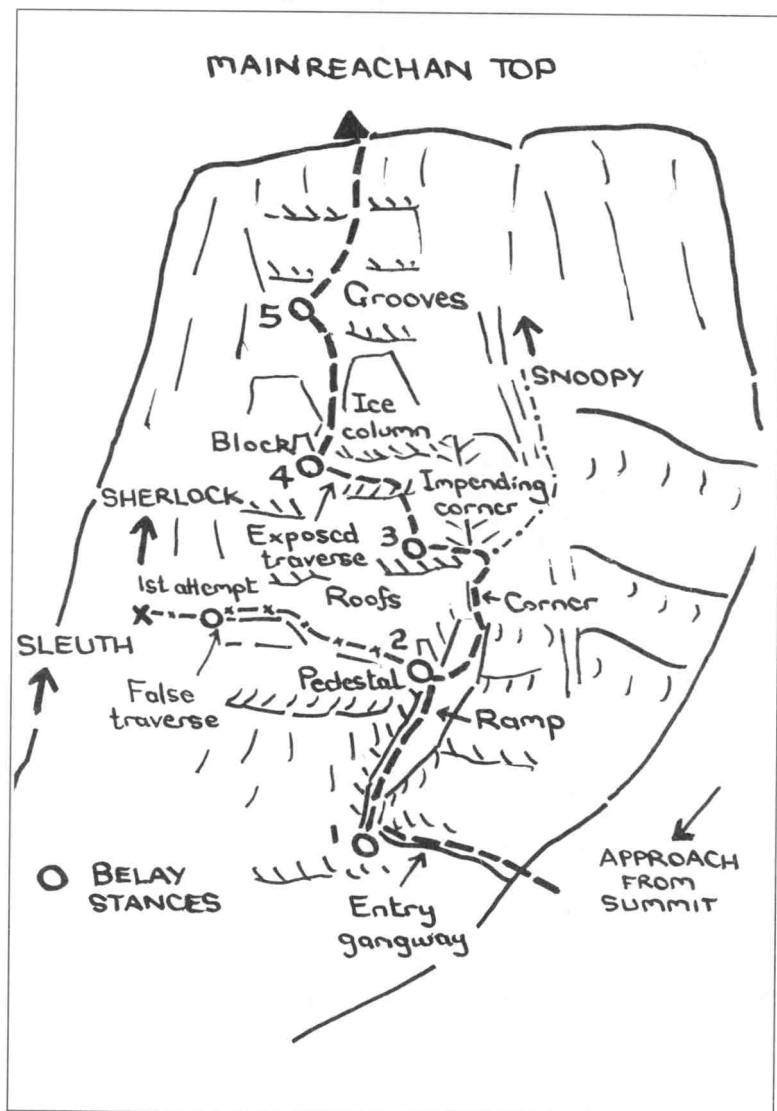
At 8 a.m. on Friday Simon led across to the ramp. The air was clear, the snow crisp, and the buttress in great condition. Yet no sooner was I established on the second pitch than mist wrapped a cloak of warmth around the cliff and an intermittent drip .. drip .. drip commenced from every icicle. Once more Mainreachan was up to its games, conjuring a new trick to shake us off.

As I belayed Simon on the third pitch off the ramp and out of the corner the tension became unbearable. Would the ice and turf hold the frost? Would it rain, and wash the snow away? Yet nothing could be hurried. I followed the pitch mechanically, the spirits dulled and the thrill of last year's attempt lost. In dense mist and thaw conditions the climbing lost its sparkle and my mind was filled with foreboding of that crux 10 metres.

Protruding blocks on the exposed traverse were now loose and ice sheets plated at the blow of the axe to reveal wet seeping rocks. My mittens were quickly saturated and fingers numbed with the chill. At the end of the traverse however I was surprised to find substantial ice streaks which were absent the previous year. Indeed the rock barrier now sported a 5 metre ice column and looked distinctly feasible as long as it didn't collapse.

Simon gladly handed me the lead. Silently pleading with that ice to let us succeed I stepped right from the block and gingerly tested the column. The axe placements held firm, and suddenly the spell of Mainreachan was

broken. A fine peg runner materialised next to the ice. I swung up, hooked the lonely tuft of moss of earlier memory, and mantelshelved into easier angled grooves, neat precise moves in an outrageous position, giving the first surge of joy in a long hard day.



'REACH FOR THE SKY'

Mainreachan Buttress, Fuar Tholl

The cliff still reared its horns above but the overhangs were now split by grooves and ledges. The thaw had slightly abated, the turfs were still solid, and with two and a half hours of daylight left we had ample cause to celebrate. Yet the mental pressure was beginning to tell. I still felt stalked by the spectre of failure. A series of grade III moves without close protection now seemed endlessly taxing. Another belay and still the cliff continued. Out right up a rocky corner, a ledge, another groove.... suddenly I was kneeling on level ground blinking at the snow-caked summit cairn three metres away and feeling the caress of a south-west breeze on my cheeks.

We descended below the cloud into a sweet balmy evening. Loch Carron struck with shafts of setting sunlight, the birds flitting among the birch woods, and sheep shuffling along their tracks. The gentle contentment of the natural world matched our mood. A name worthy of the route and our aspirations was now required. 'Reach for the Sky' seemed appropriate, but for all our trying and our eventual success we knew we hadn't nearly touched it. Perfection in fulfilment, it seems, remains beyond the mortal grasp.

## A HERO'S WELCOME

By I.H.M. Smart

THIS IS a story about a climb long ago when, in Sorley MacLean's immortal line we were 'young and light-stepping without the heart break of the tale,' or at least the tale was just beginning. Our foray began at Linn of Dee on a clear, windless May morning. We set off soon after sunrise light-stepping through the sun-striped woodlands of Glen Lui, scattering the gleaming dew drops from the grass and knocking off a fortune in diamonds from the bejewelled spiders' webs. This was the morning of what was obviously going to be a day of days! Bliss was it on this dawn to be alive but to be young, and on the way to do a mighty climb, was very heaven! In the open strath beyond skylarks were singing their *crunluath a-mach*, tremulous dotted quavers high above in the Van Allen belt of song. With our spirits doing something similar we crossed the Clais Fhearnaig to the old wood of Glen Quoich where the trees are always so alert and watchful; then we climbed the broad shoulder of Beinn a'Bhuird and so on to the summit plateau where colourful burns rising from the ashes of the winter snow frolicked off with the gravity pulling them seawards. For us such boring laws of physics were temporarily suspended and the imprisoned psyche was able to soar a little above the law abiding land. Bright words bubbled out of the springs of the mind and ran about twinkling on top of our thoughts like grace notes ornamenting a happy tune. Duncan Ban MacIntyre must have felt like this when he was on Beinn Dobhrain with his trusty gun Nic Coiseam on his shoulder, the one with an eight-sided barrel and stock of flawless wood he bought in Glen Lochay. Oh, to be able to sing a similar song about Beinn a'Bhuird or even, in my case, Molaidh Beinn Dobhrain in tune.

More to the point, we now descended into Glen Avon and the foot of the Mitre Ridge which we climbed. No need to describe the technicalities here; this has already been done in excellent guide-books. The route, I remember, was serious and about as hard as I would ever wish to climb, but it went well. The lot of the waiting second was alleviated by the view to the north, always the horizon that draws the most, for over it are mid-night-sunny tundras, lonely unclimbed mountains and mysterious fjord lands fraught with wandering, unpredictable bears. Then there was the occasional sight of the heroic leader silhouetted against the blue sky with a fairweather cumulus cloud on his shoulder. And when it was your turn to lead the adrenaline release brought the world into fine focus; the crystals in the rocks twinkled more brightly and the mountains sharpened up their edges.

On the summit of the ridge we celebrated our own jubilant *crunluath a-mach*, the crown of dexterity; then levitating with survivor's joy we returned over the grey-green mossy horizons of the broad, eponymous table land, down the Alltan na Beinne and through the woods of green-helmeted pines, where the trees froze their muscular limbs in mid-gesture while we passed. By the bright-pebbled waters of the singing Quoich we lay for a while under the whispering tresses of a slender silver birch, revelling in the smell of the good clean earth and the heavy pagan incense of thyme. It must surely have been under a tree of such loose-girdled grace that Thomas of Ercildoune fell asleep. Lesser men than we would have succumbed to the sweet seduction that hung in the soft, expectant air and elected to slumber beneath this sensuous enchantress for seven years of murmuring summer playing with the tangles of a wood nymph's hair. Alas, strength of character, a curse we both carry undiminished to this very day drove us on. We proceeded with cat-like tread, springy-stepping our way homeward in the purring warmth of the late afternoon.

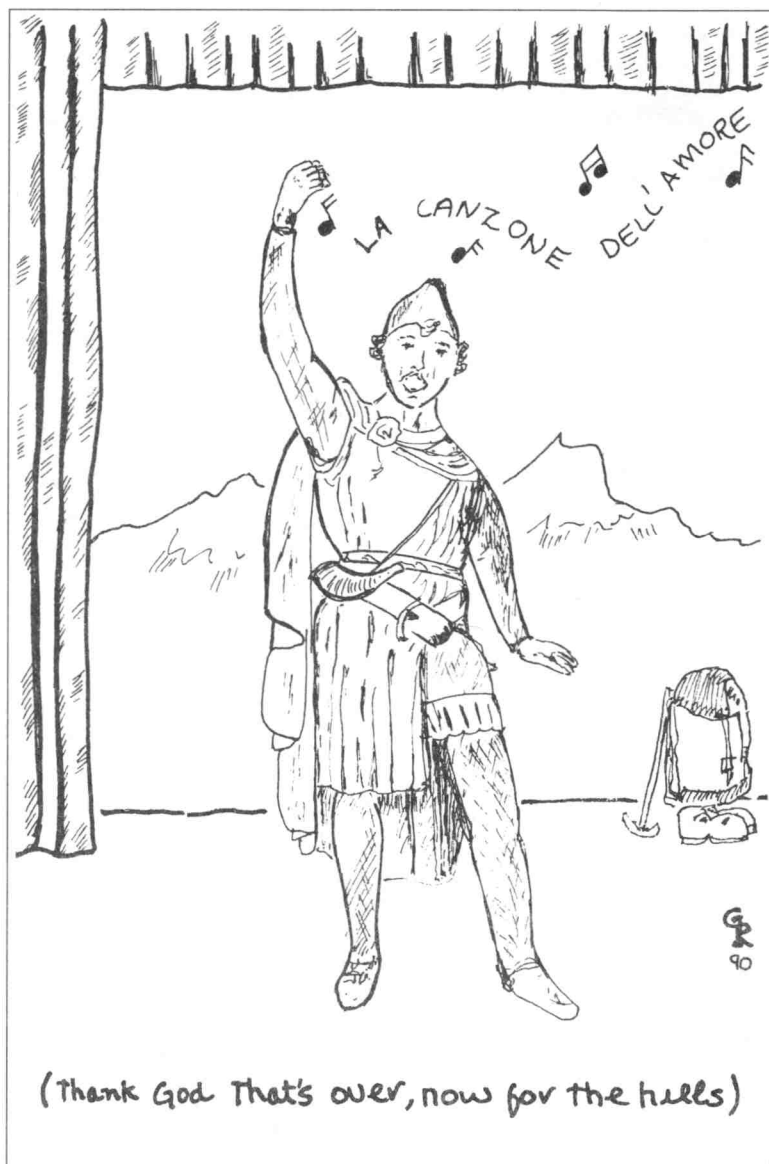
At some point my companion, Malcolm (for who else could it have been but he?) remarked, 'Never mind, when we get home, we'll get a hero's welcome.' A Hero's Welcome! I have only had such a thing once in my life. It was in the old Empire Theatre in Edinburgh when the Covent Garden Company were putting on the Grand Opera 'Aida.' We had been hired as extras and were dressed in the full regalia of the Pharaonic army as depicted in the better sort of Eighteenth Dynasty tomb. We were returning from a victorious war against Abyssinia and marched across the stage bestrung with bows and a-quiver with arrows to the rousing strains of the Grand March, while the chorus girls rapturously sang our praises and showered us with rose petals. I have always looked back wistfully on this episode; it was the summit of my military career. Now the omniscient Slessor had prophesied a similar welcome, the real thing from our own proud families. Come to think of it they had given us a fairly civil send-off; there *could* have been an orchestra playing as we drove away and, perhaps, even a shout or two of '*Ritorno, Vincator!*' - it was hard to remember, so much had been happening of late. When we eventually did arrive home in Glen Shee it was, indeed, latish and long langorous shadows were reclining over the mellow countryside as the day, replete with events, relaxed into the quiet mystery of a luminous May night. It was a gloriously theatrical finale to a memorable day.

Oddly no delegation emerged from the house to greet us. Inside some sort of civil war was in progress. One wifely participant broke off to say, 'Where in the hell have you two been? You were supposed to be back hours ago.'

'We've just done the Mitre Ridge,' said Malcolm bracing himself to receive the expected applause.

'Walking all the way from Linn of Dee,' I added so that the full magnitude of our achievement should be evident and the praise correspondingly unstinted.

'Well, you certainly took your time. Here, you go and see what the children are doing next door; they're breaking something.' 'And you, for goodness sake, go and sort that tricycle. The wheel's been falling off all day. You said you'd do it before you left.'





Later, as we sat supping the soup of anticlimax, we heard about the real struggle that had been taking place that day. Hero status for us, it seemed, was quite out of the question, not even a subject for serious discussion. Perhaps if, like Ramades, we had brought back the gold of a defeated empire we might have got some favourable mention of our absence, but to return from a foray bearing a story about a pointless rock climb, and a long-tressed birch tree, useless metaphors both, instead of a fat roebuck dangling between us from a pole, or even a small rabbit slung from our belt - did we really expect a Hero's Welcome for *that*?

We had obviously misunderstood our role models. Donnchadh Bannan Orainn would have brought back to Mairi Bhan Og not only a fine song but an antlered stag from the Coire Raineach as well; *he* would have *deserved* a Hero's Welcome. The rousing strains of the Grand March faded from our minds, drowned out by the brain-numbing, but biologically imperious music of domesticity. We were deflated and puzzled. Somehow we had fallen off ingloriously at the crux. Yet the guide-book had said the crux was on the first pitch and we had done that well enough. Guide-books obviously knew nothing about real life. Neither did we at the time; we were still young and light-stepping without the heart break of the tale and only dimly aware of the triune nature of women.

## THE SOUND OF MUSIC

By R.G. Ross

SINCE JOINING the climbing fraternity some 20 years ago there has been a whole host of singers, musicians and songs, keeping the hills alive. So I thought of that memorable film, with Julie Andrews and wondered whether if we came a little closer to home, could we say that our hills are also alive with the Sound of Music.

With a club as old as the SMC there must have been a few notable worthies leaving us with a legacy to last another hundred years.

J.G. Stott pointed us in the right direction by putting words to the tune 'Golden Slipper' and giving us the club song.

*'Oh the big ice axe it hangs on the wall  
With the gaiters and the gloves and the rope and all,  
So we'll polish off the rust and we'll knock out all the dust  
When we go up to the mountains in the snow.'*

I'll spare you the other verses, but doesn't the chorus fill you full of emulsion.

*'Oh my big hobnailers  
Oh my big hobnailers  
How they speak of mountain peak and lengthy stride  
O'er moorland wide.  
Oh my big hobnailers  
Oh my big hobnailers  
Memories raise of joyous days, upon the mountainside.'*

In my book it still beats the German climbing club aria.

*'I luv to go a vandering along das mountain zide.'*

So what other songs illuminate our fine hills. A great favourite with myself and all the East coasters, especially in the Aberdeen area, is 'Lachin Y Gair,' written by Lord Byron and really exemplifying this magnificent hill, and perhaps all that is magic about our Scottish hills and heritage.

*'England! thy beauties are tame and domestic  
To one who has roved o'er the mountains afar:  
Oh for the crags that are wild and majestic!  
The steep frowning glories of dark Loch na Gair.'*

Either reading or singing this song constantly makes me want to get out there and head for Glen Muick. You can just about taste the atmosphere that pours out the verses.

The far east of course has produced many fine climbers and musicians of whom Bill Brooker and Tom Patey instantly jump to mind.

I'm told that there is no truth in the rumour that the song

*'Cod liver oil and the orange juice.'*

alludes to Bill Brooker.

*'Oot of the east there came a hardman, oh ho all the way from Braemar,  
ah ha ha glory halleluja, cod liver oil and the orange juice.'*

You can just imagine Bill storming up Eagle Ridge with Tom, singing at the top of their voices.

*'A there my young footsteps in infancy wandered,  
my cap was the bonnet my cloak was my plaid' etc.*

Now who jumps to mind when you hear the hiking song?

*'Oh the wander lust is on me, as tonight I strike the trail,  
for the morning sun will find me on the lovely Lomond vale.'*

Correct first time. Sandy Cousins' mountain walk was a great feat in it's time, and so also was Hamish Brown's conquest of all the Munros. I can just picture Sandy and Hamish strolling down,

*'Glen Falloch, where the mountain breezes blow, and we'll come up in the evening in the valley of Glencoe.'*

Glencoe, the Mecca of the west coaster. Now who hasn't been at the Clachaig or Kingshouse Hotel on a cold winter's evening, with the stars twinkling above you and the snow hard and crisp under the foot, and not been enticed into a heartwarming evening round the roaring fire, to sing songs of heroes of old and unbridled love of Scotia.

Now a night like that in the glen with Eric Moss on the pipes, blasting out *'The Barren Rocks of Aden'* or that sad lament synonymous with the glen, *'MacDonald of Glencoe'* just has to be experienced. It's nice to finish an evening with that old favourite

*'Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut'*

*'We are na fou, we're nae that fou,  
But just a drappie in our e'e!  
The cock may crawl, the day may daw,  
And ay we'll taste the barley-bree!*

It certainly focuses the mind on,

*'While we sit bousing at the nappy,  
An' gettin fou and unco happy,  
We think na on the lang Scots miles,  
The mosses, waters, slaps, and styles,  
That lie between us and our hame.'*

Mind you it's never been the same, since electric fires came in.

I was at a party one night with David MacDonald and he gave a fine rendering of that song *'MacDonald of Glencoe.'* It was sung with great

passion and gusto, and he had us all crying in our beer. However, there's no truth in the rumour that he has a contract out on Robin Campbell.

It's nice to hear the new song '*MacIain of Glencoe*,' sung by Moira Kerr, in Hamish MacInnes' Eagle-eyed view of Glencoe. The glen of course was the home of the MacIains and not the MacDonalds. However I'm told by Hamish Henderson that it was Henderson land before the rest of them. We've a shrewd idea what Hamish would have done with the Campbells.

*'Speed bonnie boat, like a bird on the wing, over the sea to Skye'*

Bonnie Prince Charlie obviously knew his stuff. Some of the best climbing in the world, certainly some of the best whisky and undoubtedly the biggest midges. However it's better known for

*'The Skye Boat Song.'*

Skye of course is synonymous with the MacLeods of Dunvegan, and the club of course with MacLeod of Carseview, piper at many a function from annual dinners to Burns suppers. Ians' latest role is playing on top of the Cioch for another of MacInnes' Eye of Eagle series, I look forward to seeing this new programme and his well kent face complementing the Gabbro of Coire Lagain. Iain's the one with the pipes.

Anyway my favorite personal song of Scotland has to be

*'Come by the hills,'*

it's origin I believe is Irish, but it's been adapted to Scotland.

*'Come by the hills, to the land where fancy is free  
and stand where the peaks meet the sky and the Lochs  
meet the sea, where the rivers run clear and the bracken  
is Gold in the sun and the cares of tomorrow can wait  
till this day is done.'*

*'The Galloway hills are covered with broom, wie heather bells and bonnie  
broom,'*

take us to less exacting hills but nevertheless, very beautiful and enjoyable. The hills around Selkirk were among the first I ever walked on, and all too often I and many others shoot off north to 'The crags that are wild and majestic' and miss out on this beautiful area of Scotland.

*'Wie heather bells and rivers braw, we'll gang it oer the hills to Galloway.'*

It is said that the centre of Scotland is in Perthshire and the precise spot is the hill of Schiehallion. I was most impressed by the song Schiehallion from the folk group Gaberlunzie.

*'The Lowlands the Highlands the borders the Islands, I'll drink to the back  
of Schiehallion,'* meaning of course Scotland.

It is said that the mountain has magical properties and indeed '*Sithach*' (shee-hach) is gaelic for fairy, so Schie-hallion, the hill of the fairies, of Caledonia. The last time that I climbed it was on Iain Burley's last Munro. It was on a wild day, the cloud was down, the snow was heavy on the

ground, and there was magic in the air. It came in the form of a bottle of Laphroaig and a magnificent feed.

Hamish and I sung on the summit:

*'For I'm the landlord, of the pub in Aberfoyle,  
And if your feeling thirsty from a hard day's toil,  
You'll find that it is just the place for whisky and for beer,  
You'll get a Scottish welcome and hearty Scottish cheer.'*

Will Fyffe himself would have been proud of us.

Surely, Torridon's sandstone towers and precipitous cliffs conjure up the name of Tom Patey. Although Tom was from the Aberdeen area and established his climbing career on Lochnagar and the North East cliffs, it is Torridon and the North West that much of his true exploration took place. I can just imagine him spending those long winter nights round a bleezin fire with his accordian, writing those magnificent songs and anecdotes. The Annapurna team losing their,

*'Twenty frozen fingers, twenty frozen toes  
Two blistered faces, frostbite on the nose ..*

*In an Eastern Railway carriage, where the River Ganges  
flows*

*There are Twenty Tiny Fingers and Twenty Tiny Toes.  
Chop chop chop chop chop chop chop chop chop.'*

Almost makes you laugh, especially if you're going to the Himalaya.

However I think he will be best remembered for

*'The Last of the Grand Old Masters.'*

Jock of Hazeldean. You may not know this man, but I do, in fact he introduced me to the club. We still argue away about politics, but Jim Crawford is a great companion and certainly a great folk enthusiast. If he's in a good mood and the Uisge-beatha is flowing ask him to sing *'Jock of Hazeldean'* - it's chust sublime. By the way, who won Govan again?

We cannot forget of course our heritage in the Gaelic language. Almost all of our hill names are gaelic and of course the songs and poems. *'Chi mi na mor-beanna'* - I can see the high hills, is always a favourite, especially since this Munro craze started.

For me songs and music will always be a part of the climbing scene; it makes people happy, it conjures up the imagination on cold winter nights, it bonds friendships and breaks down barriers.

It's been a hundred years since the club started and I hope and trust that J.G. Stott's song will be sung for another hundred years, after all, it's tradition, and what's wrong with that.

So here's to the next hundred years and the songs, with a wee compilation to get you going.

*Years have rolled on Lochnagar since I left you  
Years must roll on till I see you again  
Though nature of verdure and flowers bereft you  
Yet still art thou dearer than Albions plain.*

*So come by the hills of Glencoe or the Cuillin of Skye  
By Arrans fine hills or the cliffs of Dark Lochnagar  
Where the climber can roam by the light of the stars or the sun  
And the cares of tomorrow can wait till this day is done.*

*Live it up, fill your cup, drown your sorrow  
and sow your wild oats while you may  
For the toothless old tykes of tomorrow  
were the Tigers of yesterday.*

Chorus:

*Oh my big hobnailers! Oh my big hobnailers  
Memories raise of joyous days  
Upon the mountain side*

*Slaite Mhath, keep the hills alive and be sure to buy me a Wee Deoch an  
Dorus the next time you're in Glencoe - I might just sing you a wee song  
for the road.*

## THE AGE OF THE CAIRNGORM COIRE MORAINES

By Sheila C. Rapson

IN THE Cairngorm Mountains and on the Lochnagar Massif there are 18 coires that hold moraines (Fig. 1). These moraines are ridges, generally composed of boulders with some sand and gravel, which are made by the bulldozing action of glaciers which formerly lay in the coires and which indicate the former limits of the glaciers. The purpose of this article is to examine the nature and extent of these moraines and to establish the recent glacial history of the coires, in which the moraines play a significant role.

The majority of the Cairngorm coire moraines lie at altitudes of between 900 and 1,000m, with an average altitude of 950m. Exceptions to this are the moraines on Ben Avon which lie between 700 and 770m, the moraines on Lochnagar which lie between 780 to 800m and the moraine in Garbh Coire Mor which is at 1,030m. The moraines on Ben Avon have a larger proportion of fine material than any of the others. In some coires the ridges are small and indistinct, perhaps only 1m high, as in the case of Coire an t-Sneachda, whilst other examples are 3 to 4m high and are very well defined, as in Coire na Ciche. Boulders vary in size from only a few centimetres to as much as 3 to 4m. Some coires exhibit only one main ridge, for example Coire Bhrochain, whilst others have multiple ridges, as is the case in Coire an Lochain (Braeriach) and Coire an t-Saighdeir.

The coire moraines indicate that there has been a period of marginal glaciation in the Cairngorms, when temperatures fell sufficiently for coire glaciers to form, but not enough for the whole of the area to be ice-covered. It is inconceivable that the glaciers which formed the moraines had much of a hand in actually forming the coires because they are much too small. Instead the ridges indicate the lateral and terminal positions of glaciers that have reoccupied the coires subsequent to their formation. Where multiple moraines are present a stepped retreat of the glacier is indicated.

That evidence of marginal glaciation should only be found in high altitude coires in places such as the Cairngorms is quite reasonable when topographical factors are considered. The coires are generally on north or east facing slopes, so receiving the least amount of sunlight possible. The high altitude of their floors also helps to minimise the melting of the snow. Also relevant is the fact that the coires back on to the plateau in every instance. This is very important because it means that the coires can receive a great deal of wind-blown snow from the plateau. Once snow begins to accumulate in a coire the process will, in part, be self perpetuating: the snow will increase the albedo of the coire and so reduce melting further.

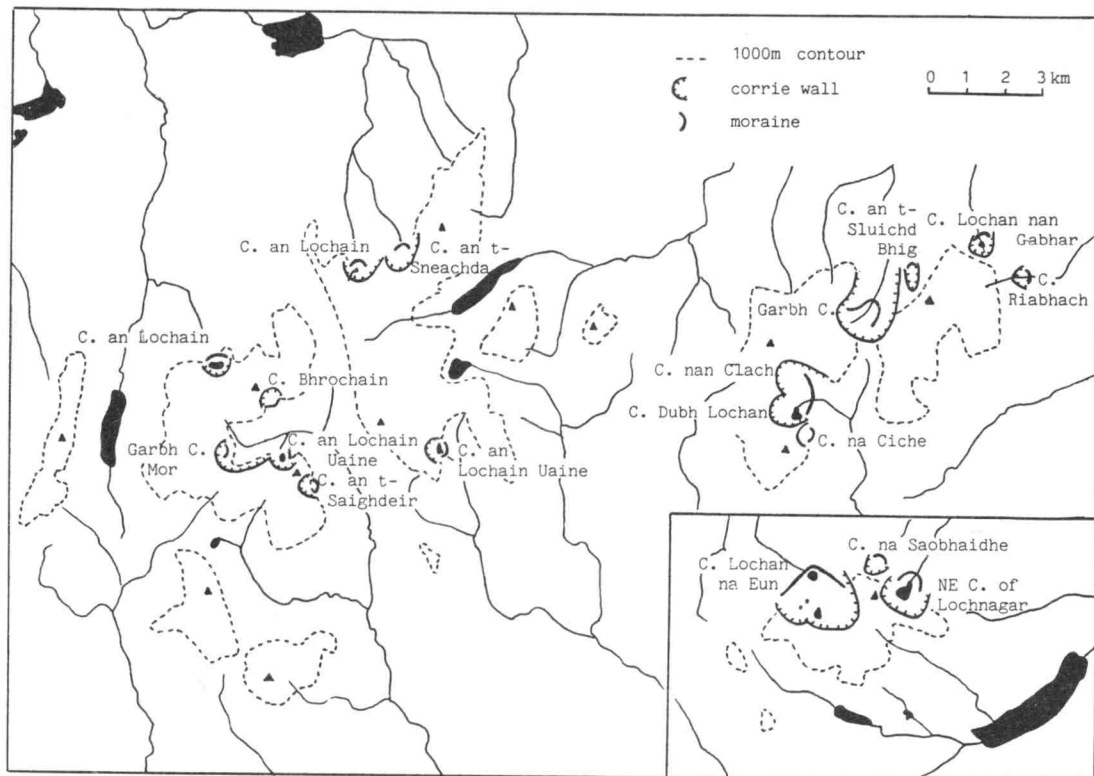


Fig. 1 The Cairngorm Coires containing moraines



Eventually permanent snowpatches will develop to such an extent that they will begin to move and they will become glaciers capable of bulldozing boulders to form moraines. Much of the material that the glacier moves will be rock which has fallen from the coire walls as a result of frost shattering.

There has been much speculation regarding how long ago the coire moraines were formed. It is clear that they must have been formed after the last ice sheet disappeared from Scotland because they could not have survived such a major incursion. This means that the moraines can be no older than 13,000 years, the date at which the ice sheet finally melted in the Highlands. Within this time span it has been suggested that the moraines may be as old as 11,000 years (Sissons, 1979) and as young as 200 years (Sugden, 1977).

With the help of radiocarbon dating and pollen analysis it is now possible to be more precise about the date of the coire moraines. Radiocarbon dating involves measuring the length of time that radioactive carbon in organic material has been decaying since its death. It is a method commonly used to date organic material thought to be younger than about 40,000 years. Ideally the material to be dated should be that which is found incorporated into the moraine ridges; the date recorded would be a reflection of the time at which the plants died and became incorporated into the moraine as it was being built. However, this is not possible in the Cairngorms as there is insufficient organic matter incorporated in the moraines. An alternative is to date organic material that has accumulated inside the moraine boundaries subsequent to deglaciation. A date from matter that has accumulated immediately after the glaciers that formed the moraines retreated will indicate a minimum age for the glaciation. There cannot have been any subsequent glaciation because it would have destroyed the unconsolidated sediments.

The latter approach was adopted during research carried out in the Cairngorms (Rapson, 1983). It was important to sample the peat deposits lying within the moraine boundary in the N.E. Coire of Lochnagar because peat, being made almost entirely of organic matter can be dated very accurately, even when only small samples are available. A tree stump found incorporated in the base of the peat also provided a very reliable date. There are no other peat deposits of any significant depth in the Cairngorm coires and the remaining samples had to be taken from the floors of coire lochans lying inside moraine boundaries, the only other place where organic matter accumulates. Three coires were sampled: the N.E. Coire of Lochnagar (780m), Coire an Lochain Uaine (Ben MacDui) (950m), and Coire an Lochain (Braeriach) (1,000m). As there were difficulties in extracting core samples from the base of the coire lochans only a small quantity of material could be retrieved. In two of the coires, the N.E. Coire of Lochnagar and Coire an Lochain, there was sufficient organic material present for radiocarbon assay.

Information gained through radiocarbon assay could, however, be supplemented by the second dating technique, pollen analysis. It was important when collecting the peat and lake sediments that a core covering the whole depth of the sediment was retrieved in order that the pollen content could be analysed. Pollen is composed of a very hard wearing substance which will last for many thousands of years if kept under anaerobic conditions. Thus when pollen falls on to peat or water it will become incorporated into the sediment and it will survive. By analysing under a microscope the pollen content of a sediment it is possible to identify the type of vegetation that covered the land in the past, and this in turn will give clues as to the age of the sediment.

If a peat deposit or a lake deposit has been left undisturbed since the last ice sheet disappeared from Scotland 13,000 years ago, then it will be found to contain a recognisable sequence of pollen changes. At many sites there has been sufficient sediment for the changes in the sequence to be radiocarbon dated. The pattern of changes that is found in North East Scotland can be summarised as follows. (Note that the dates given are generalised because they do vary slightly from site to site.) At the base of the sediment, where accumulation first began 13,000 years ago, open ground taxa are very plentiful. Above it lies a band of sediment dated to 11,500 years ago, which is dominated by birch pollen. This was replaced 11,000 years ago by open ground taxa once again. 10,000 years ago birch re-established itself, and juniper became increasingly common. Hazel became important 9,000 years ago, and pine followed 500 years later. By around 6,000 years ago alder had arrived, but only about 1,000 years later the importance of trees started to decline dramatically and grasses, heaths and sedges became increasingly dominant.

If the pollen sequences outlined above were found in the coire sediments then it would be possible to date them roughly. This would be particularly useful for dating the Coire an Lochain core which cannot be radiocarbon dated, but it would also be useful as a comparison with the radiocarbon dates from the other two coires. It could be argued that the Cairngorm coires would not produce a comparable profile because of their extremely high altitudes (Coire an Lochain is thought to be the highest pollen site in Britain) and the subsequent effect on vegetation growth. However, this is unlikely because the pollen deposited is almost entirely from outwith the coires. The coires themselves have produced very little pollen because they have been dominated throughout by herbaceous plants which produce relatively little pollen when compared with trees. Instead, the pollen profiles in the coires represent the more productive slopes below. The one exception to this is the N.E. Coire of Lochnagar which is known to have supported pine trees at one stage, although even there growth conditions would have been marginal and so pollen production would have been relatively low.

The results from the radiocarbon dating and the pollen analysis suggest that the glacial episode that formed the Cairngorm coire moraines must in

all three instances have happened more than 6,000 years ago. This is because in all the coires sediments of at least this age were found. In Coire an Lochain Uaine the oldest sediments were found to be in the region of 6,000 to 6,500 years of age. In the N.E. Coire of Lochnagar the base of the peat goes back to 6,000 years and the lake sediments go back to as much as 9,000 years. The pollen evidence from Coire an Lochain suggests that the oldest material is in the region of 6,500 years. The only glacial episode known to predate 6,000 years and postdate 13,000 years is the one known as the Loch Lomond Advance, which occurred between 11,000 and 10,000 years ago and which has been widely identified in the Highlands of Scotland. At sites where Loch Lomond glaciers did not cover the land it is recognised by a band of clay in the sediment sequence. The pollen in the sediment suggests a change from vegetation principally characterised by birch to vegetation dominated by open ground taxa. Where a Loch Lomond glacier has overridden an area, this zone would be missing, and theoretically the oldest sediments would be approximately 10,000 years old. It is therefore surprising that the coire sediments do not date back to 10,000 years. The most likely explanation is that the accumulation of sediment fine enough to be sampled began late because of the relatively inhospitable climate. It then follows that the sediments from the N.E. Coire of Lochnagar should be oldest, as indeed they are, because the coire is at a significantly lower altitude than the other two. The date of only 6,000 years for the base of the peat in the same coire can be explained by the fact that widespread development of peat bogs did not occur in Scotland until that date.

Evidence that the Cairngorm coire moraines date from the Loch Lomond Advance concurs with the views of Sissons (1979). It also agrees with the radiocarbon date of 1,905 years obtained by Sugden (1977) from a layer of peat in Coire Bhrochain. It does, however, require that Sugden's (1977) work suggesting that the moraines date from the Little Ice Age of the 17th to 19th centuries be reinterpreted.

One coire may, however, prove an exception to the above conclusion. The moraine in Garbh Choire Mor lies at a higher altitude than any of the other moraines. Its altitude is 1,030m, whereas the average altitude of the other coire floors is only 950m. The next highest moraine is Coire an Lochain (Braeriach) at 1,003m. It is also different in size and position from the other moraines: it encloses a relatively small area which can best be described as a coire within a coire high up in the Garbh Choire Mor. Given that today the moraine encloses one of the Cairngorms' semipermanent snowpatches, it is reasonable to assume, because of its altitude, aspect and topography, that glaciation would have begun early in the coire, and a glacier that developed would have been larger than those in other coires. Thus it is difficult to attribute the relatively small glacier that is indicated by the moraine to the Loch Lomond Advance.

Other evidence that the moraine may date from a different period is related to its appearance. With the exception of mosses and lichens, vege-

tation has been unable to gain any significant hold on the moraine, whereas all the others are at least partially vegetated. The moraine can be seen to have a much fresher appearance; boulders are angular and unweathered. Although freshness may just be related to the nearness of the moraine to present day freeze-thaw processes, it is likely, when taken together with the other evidence already mentioned, that the moraine in Garbh Choire Mor is younger than the other coire moraines.

Unfortunately there is insufficient organic material within the moraine boundary for radiocarbon dating or pollen analysis to be carried out. The only clue to the age of the Garbh Choire Mor moraine may lie in the size of the lichens lying within the boundary. Lichen measurements are often used in the identification of recently glaciated areas because the thalli are killed by advancing glaciers. Whilst lichens outside the glaciated area will continue to grow, those inside will have to begin to colonize all over again once the glacier has retreated. Until the lichens inside the glaciated area reach their maximum size they will be smaller than those outside the area. The most commonly measured lichen is the yellow green *Rhizocarpon* (map lichen), which lives for 400 to 500 years. If there have been any glacial fluctuations within this period then it will be recorded in the different lichen sizes. In glaciated areas such as Iceland and Scandinavia the event known as the Little Ice Age occurred during the 17th to 19th centuries, and this is shown by the fact that the lichens inside the affected areas are smaller than those outside. During this period temperatures were thought to have been between 1 and 3 degrees Celsius lower than today everywhere in the North Atlantic above 50 degrees N (Lamb and Johnson, 1961). In places such as Scandinavia and Iceland there are historical records of glaciers advancing and encroaching on farmland. In Britain there are reports of the Thames freezing over, and early travellers through the Cairngorm Mountains commented on the amount of snow that lay all year through (Alexander, 1950). However, nothing is known of glacial activity in the Cairngorms, perhaps because the early travellers only passed through the glens and did not visit the coires or the plateau in the winter time.

Measurement of over a thousand lichens both inside and outside of moraine boundaries in the Cairngorms (Rapson, 1983) suggests that a climatic event of some significance has occurred within the last 500 years. Lichens were measured in all the coires that contained moraines on Braeriach, Cairn Toul, Ben MacDui and Cairngorm and in Coire na Ciche and the N.E. Coire of Lochnagar. Apart from the N.E. Coire of Lochnagar and Coire an Lochain (Braeriach) all the coires had lichens which were larger outside the moraine boundaries than inside them. The difference was generally in the range of 20 to 40mm. In many instances the two populations did not overlap, and the remainder only marginally so. The N.E. Coire of Lochnagar showed no size difference and Coire an Lochain showed an inverse relationship to the others. As it is clear from the radiocarbon and pollen evidence that the size differences cannot be related

to the existence of glaciers, an alternative explanation must be found. The suggestion is that increased snow lying inside the moraines during the Little Ice Age caused lichen kill. A quick glance at the area immediately surrounding the semipermanent snowpatch in Garbh Choire Mor today clearly shows the ability of snow to kill lichens. Perhaps the N.E. Coire of Lochnagar escaped influence because of its low altitude and its consequent lack of ability to hold snow. The coires on Ben Avon may also have escaped lichen kill for the same reason.

The question that now remains to be answered is, what are the implications of the lichen kill for Garbh Choire Mor? A tentative suggestion is that the coire, because of its high altitude, accommodated a true glacier during the Little Ice Age, and that the glacier formed the moraine that we see today. The pollen and radiocarbon evidence from the three coires does not negate this theory, because they are all at lower altitudes. The Garbh Choire Mor moraine is 30m higher than any of the other moraines and is thus exempt from the rule that its moraine must be more than 6,000 years old. The coire could have been subjected to a glaciation during the Little Ice Age that was so marginal that it was restricted to that coire alone.

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## **'THE S.M.C. CENTENARY EXPEDITION 1988' SHIWAKTE - CHINA**

**By Des Rubens**

### **Introduction**

CHINA. Land of secrets and secret societies, Western imperialism, the Boxer Rebellion, Mao-tse Tung, the Cultural Revolution, the Great Wall; of frontier conflict and subjugated peoples - and entire mountain ranges still unexplored, of which the Chinese themselves had only the vaguest knowledge. For mountaineers it was and is a land difficult of access, expensive and which has the Chinese Mountaineering Association as a polite but uninformative bureaucracy. We really knew little about this enigmatic country and the little we had heard from those who had been did not inspire us to attempt to climb there.

It was entirely Malcolm Slesser's idea (or fault?) that we went to China. For two years he cajoled Geoff Cohen, Grahame Nicoll and myself and then Stan Pearson, Hamish Irvine and finally Barry Owen into meeting, researching, writing and begging. At the last moment he decided not to come. Malcolm's whole concept of an S.M.C. Centenary Expedition to China was always just possible but was frequently on the verge of being cancelled. We experienced more than the usual range of stress and uncertainty throughout the two year period of preparation.

Our initial researches revealed, unsurprisingly, much in China which hadn't 'been done.' Extended letters to Beijing requesting information about specific areas from the CMA (Chinese Mountaineering Association) were replied to by notes running to a couple of valueless sentences. But eventually we settled on Naimona'nyi, a 25,000 foot peak in Tibet. Our plans centred around this peak for more than a year until March 1988, just three months before we were due to depart. At this time, Malcolm went to Beijing to sign the formal protocol for the expedition. To our dismay (having invested heavily in promotional material), he was informed that the amount of time - and therefore also money - required to reach Naimona'nyi made an expedition in the summer practically impossible. Telegrams were exchanged between ourselves and Malcolm and we settled on the Shiwakte group of mountains near Kongur in Xinjiang Province. The peaks were much lower than Naimona'nyi but were completely unvisited by mountaineers.

We had come across the Shiwakte area in our researches through an interesting article by Sir Clarmont Skrine, an adventurous British consul in Kashgar in the 20s and a predecessor of Eric Shipton in that remote posting. Skrine wrote of wild jagged peaks, of frightening rivers,

hospitable shepherds and forests of tall firs, a rare sight in Central Asia. He also wrote of the joy of exploration and his delight in his summer wanderings in the Shiwakte shone clearly through his writing. However, he had only touched on the range from the Kashgar side. The southern flanks were unknown to him and large areas were marked 'unexplored' on his map. Since Skrine's time, Xinjiang had endured turmoil, revolution and then closure for decades. Only Bonington had briefly glimpsed the range from Kongur in 1981. No other westerner had been anywhere close to the range for more than sixty years.

As the departure date drew closer, it became clear even to the least financially literate of us that Malcolm's optimism regarding the amount of cash slopping around in the Scottish economy awaiting absorption by mountaineering expeditions was not going to be realised. However, support from The Club and The Trust swung the financial balance in favour of proceeding - just. The expedition hereby records its grateful thanks to these bodies. As important as finance was the goodwill extended by the members of the SMC towards the expedition.

And so, on 3rd July, 1988, we boarded a Pakistan International Airways flight to Islamabad, bound for a forgotten mountain range in Central Asia, with permission to climb the 6,150 metre peak of Shiwakte II and one other major peak. We also intended to explore and map the area, in the tradition of the explorers of the earlier decades of this century.

Who were we? Geoff, a gentle statistician and our official leader, was a veteran of many forays throughout the Greater Ranges. His insights into the mysterious ways of the East were to stand us in good stead. Barry was of similar vintage (at least in age), but a relative unknown in SMC circles. In other equally august circles, his name was spoken of with quiet respect. Grahame was a formidable figure on the winter scene and known to the masses through his regular columns in the climbing tabloids. Hamish, the 'baby' of the expedition, came with impeccable credentials in the finest mountaineering traditions, both Scottish and Himalayan. Stan, perhaps still the SMC's most eligible bachelor, was a powerful rock climber as well as a force to watch in the world of finance. I was a reasonable all rounder and unique to the expedition in having produced progeny. This ability alone raised my status amongst the locals we met, where sorrowful expressions were directed towards the expedition as they failed to comprehend how such a fine body of men as represented the SMC in the East could be so sorely unfruitful.

We all shared two further characteristics. First, we delighted in poking our noses into out of the way places - although this trip would be a test of this trait. And second, we enjoyed a well developed sense of humour. This was handy, as butts on which to express this humour were more numerous than those on the floor of an Edinburgh bus.

From Islamabad, we benefitted from the Karakoram Highway, a Chinese built road hugging the great gorges of the Indus, Gilgit and Hunza

rivers. From Sust, the border post and last village in Pakistan, the road winds its way through bleak chasms up to over 16,000 feet at the summit of the Khunjerab Pass. Despite the enormous investment by the Chinese in the road, the only overland link between China and Pakistan, the route was almost devoid of traffic and we had the high pastures and peaks to ourselves. Five hours from Sust, we arrived at the Pirali customs (probably never a popular posting). Here, we adjusted our watches by four hours, as the whole of China runs on Beijing time, a chronological distortion to which we never entirely adapted. Our liaison officer, Kasim, a man of Uighur stock and our interpreter Qin<sup>1</sup>, a young Han Chinese were waiting for us and the first of many discussions took place. The Kashgar Mountaineering Association, under whose auspices we now were, had kindly dispatched one more jeep than we had requested. As vehicle hire for expeditions is vastly expensive, this was no trivial matter. Discussion on this matter continued at Tashkurgan, three hours further on, where we stopped for the night. By this time, the party was rather fragile, being depressed by the East European architectural style of the hotel in which we were obliged to stay along with the traditional Asian plumbing arrangements. They were perhaps the most squalid we had seen anywhere. Grahame's bouts of intestinal disorder (the unlit outside toilets were a particular trial for him) and Geoff's alarming outbreak of spots (diagnosed months after as chickenpox) were the final icing on the expedition cake. In spite of these testing circumstances, several further hours of tedious discussion were soon in full swing and Qin was fully earning his meagre salary. If nothing else, we at least managed to convince the LO (liaison officer) of the nature of the financial basis of the expedition.

The next day our spirits rose, which should have been taken as a portent of dismal times ahead. We were now in country very different from the gargantuan clefts of the Hunza valley. On leaving Tashkurgan, an oasis town and the only settlement of any size between Kashgar and the border, we drove through desert at an altitude of about 12,000 feet. We were soon skirting the flanks of Muztagh Ata, the great Ice Mountain described by the explorer Sven Hedin and so nearly climbed by Tilman and Shipton. I had anticipated a single vast ice cap but the mountain was fractured into several ranges by gorges reminiscent of giant Lairig Ghrus. Shortly after, we crested the Ulugh Ribat Pass and the great range of Kongur and Kongur Tiube lay before us, walling the horizon. It was not long before we drew up at the shore of Karakul Lake, the starting point for our walk in to the Shiwakte group.

We pitched our tents by the shore of the lake, a sapphire coloured gem of rare beauty. The giants of Kongur and Muztagh Ata nurtured a score of glaciers which flowed far down into the desert, giving rise to meltwaters feeding stunningly green pastures. We had arrived in Central Asia, home to a few hundred thousand Kirghiz, nomadic people proud and aloof of their political masters, be they Beijing or Moscow.



## Local Rules

It was as well that Karakul was a pleasant place, as we were destined to pass a week of our precious time there. It quickly became clear that whatever conscientious administrative procedures the Kashgar Mountaineering Association had made in preparation for our visit, they had not extended to the problems of transporting our equipment the seventy miles over the Karatash Pass to the Shiwakte mountains. There were also other serious problems. Money sent by us to the CMA in Beijing had not been forwarded to Kashgar. Communications between the CMA and the KMA did not seem very effective. In fact, communications in general as we experienced them in China were more of the Pony Express variety than that of a modern power. To be fair to the KMA, the CMA probably had little idea of what problems the local Association were to encounter when the protocol granting permission was signed. Anyway, the immediate problems of transportation exercised greatly the minds of the LO, Qin and ourselves over the next few days as we had dealings with the only people who could provide a solution, the local Kirghiz. As their descriptions of the fearful obstacles ahead were transmitted through two intermediaries, the LO and Qin, some details may have been lost. But the meanings of Qin's words were clear enough: 'Local man, he say 'it is impossible for camels to cross Karatash Pass.'

'Local man, he say 'Horse (pronounced 'house') is VER' expensive and house may die and you must pay. Anyway, house may not be available.' But we try our *best* for you!'

It was clear that the locals were not that excited at the prospect of taking us far however many yuan (Chinese dollars) we didn't have to pay them. It gradually dawned on us that some of us and Qin and the LO would have to travel to Kashgar to bring some bigger guns to bear on the locals to persuade them to render assistance. In the meantime, we had by chance discovered that an easier route to our base camp existed, involving an approach from Kashgar, but, annoyingly, official reasons prevented us from using it. Through all these deliberations, it became possible to formulate two hypotheses with regard to expeditions to China dealing with the Mountaineering Associations. These two hypotheses are:

1. Any mistake, or omission, in arrangements involving the expedition and the mountaineering association is never the fault of any Chinese national.
2. Any financial burden involved in correcting the mistake, or omission, referred to in hypothesis 1 is always borne by the expedition.

Geoff and I accompanied Qin and the LO on the six hour jeep journey down the Gez gorge to Kashgar. The most memorable feature of this magnificent ride, winding around the Kongur range, was the dramatic nature of the obstacles blocking the road. We encountered six foot deep mudslides necessitating bulldozers and C.I.C. hut sized boulders which required temporary detours. The fact that at least one of the events leading to the formation of these obstacles had clearly occurred only a minute or

so prior to our arrival on the scene led us to speculate on the chances of our position on the road coinciding with the creation of such an obstacle. This served to while away some of the journey while our statistical training was brought to bear on the problem. The 'falling rocks' warning signs of the U.K. assumed a less threatening perspective.

We passed a miserable two nights and a day in the heat of the fabled Silk Road city. The lack of simple courtesies by the KMA officialdom was a constant source of irritation. For example, we only had a very hazy idea as to what was being effected on our behalf. However, some exertions were apparently made and we returned to Karakul with the Sports Director of Aktur County. This enigmatic gentleman persuaded three Kirghiz to provide us with pack animals at good news official rates which were well within our budget. It was agreed that six horses would be provided for our baggage and the expedition's morale rose for the first time since leaving Tashkurgan.

On the departure morning, the three Kirghiz arrived with two horses and two camels. The men immediately started loading our mound of gear without so much as a by your leave. No explanation. Camels. Camels! 'THE KARATASH IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR CAMELS.' (We had been told how many times) We turned to Qin, or rather, on Qin. Young, friendly, eager to please and likeable, he was not to blame for the present débâcle but he was the only one who understood our language. Qin endeavoured to provide explanations and solutions:

'Maybe some local leader break his promise?' 'Maybe later you can find the WILD COW!'<sup>2</sup> And so on. And unfortunately the Sports Director had by this time disappeared back to the comforts of Kashgar. We debated amongst ourselves. We could either return to Pakistan and salvage some time there or go on in hope.

We went on. We made our farewells to Qin and the LO, who had determined that it would be advantageous to the expedition for them to remain at Karakul. At midday, we began our trek by winding through the khaki brown foothills surrounding Karakul Lake. Before long, we descended into the wide valley of the Konsiver River. The scene opened as we approached the river. A welcome greensward stretched about a mile across the floor of the valley, grazed by herds of yaks and camels. Above the valley floor was an abrupt transition to desert. Finally, there were the blinding snows of the great ice mountains. As we progressed slowly through this grand setting, the southern skyline changed, revealing fine Alpine peaks, unexplored and unclimbed.

Dotted along the valley, at intervals of several miles, were the yurts of the Kirghiz. These round family sized tents were constructed of felt spread over a wooden frame. The smoke from the fire or stove in the centre exited from a hole at the top, which could be closed against rain or snow. Inside, plenty of rugs carpeted the ground, giving a cosy ambience. Food, consisting largely of milk products, was stored behind a screen. The entire structure could be collapsed and carried on a camel.

We stopped at the first yurt for refreshment of bread and curds, which seemed to be the staple food of the inhabitants. The yurt dwellers were blooming with good health, perhaps a combination of this simple diet and the outdoor life. Chubby-cheeked, plum-pudding shaped infants played around handsome women and elderly patriarchs. We and our cameldrivers tucked in to the delicious offerings. These delightful breaks were repeated once or twice a day as we progressed towards base camp. The yurt hospitality system operated rather like a free motel system for travellers. The system presumably evolved to benefit the Kirghiz themselves, who practice a lifestyle based either on transhumance or nomadic wanderings. It is to be hoped that any increase in visitor numbers will not lead to the kindness being abused.

We maintained high spirits for a day and a half, buoyed up by progress, food and scenery. However, immediately upon leaving the main valley towards the Pass, we had to unload the camels for a steep rise of 800 feet. For two hours, we ferried loads up the rocky path under the sun's penetrating rays. The camels were unhappy on the climb even in the unladen state, as their angry howl-like shrieks demonstrated. We then made only a few minutes progress before having to traverse a scree slope. The head cameldriver commandeered our most expensive ice axes as ideal for path widening and the prising loose of doubtful boulders. Again, we toiled in the sun and the thin air. Stan ventured the opinion that had he known he was contributing £2,000 to the CMA to be employed as a path labourer aiding the rural development of the remoter parts of Xinjiang, he might have had second thoughts about coming. Geoff's natural pessimism was well to the fore particularly regarding the number of obstacles inimical to camels between here and basecamp. It was difficult not to share this pessimism as we made little further progress that day. Our three drivers (rather unkindly termed 'the neds') were not the pick of Karakul cameldrivers and the leader was what might be dubbed at home as a 'wide boy' or 'chancer.'

On our third day out from Karakul, our mood improved as the terrain became easier and we progressed steadily. At around 14,000 feet, we arrived at verdant pastures spreading for miles below the peaks and glaciers around the Karatash Pass. Although many hundreds of goats and yaks were busily grazing the area, there appeared to be no one around at all. This was a pity as our three guides had no idea which of the several side valleys was our desired pass. This ignorance did not prevent them from pressing onwards until some way beyond the turnoff when a shepherd was at last discovered who was able to give us directions. After further delay, débâcle, argument, persuading, unloading and carrying with the assistance of two other fine local herdsmen, we succeeded in raising our baggage to the summit of the Karatash Pass. A brief pause amidst the bare and windswept surroundings provided some feeling of achievement before we continued down the stony moraines of the east side. We pitched camp at the first meadows below the pass.

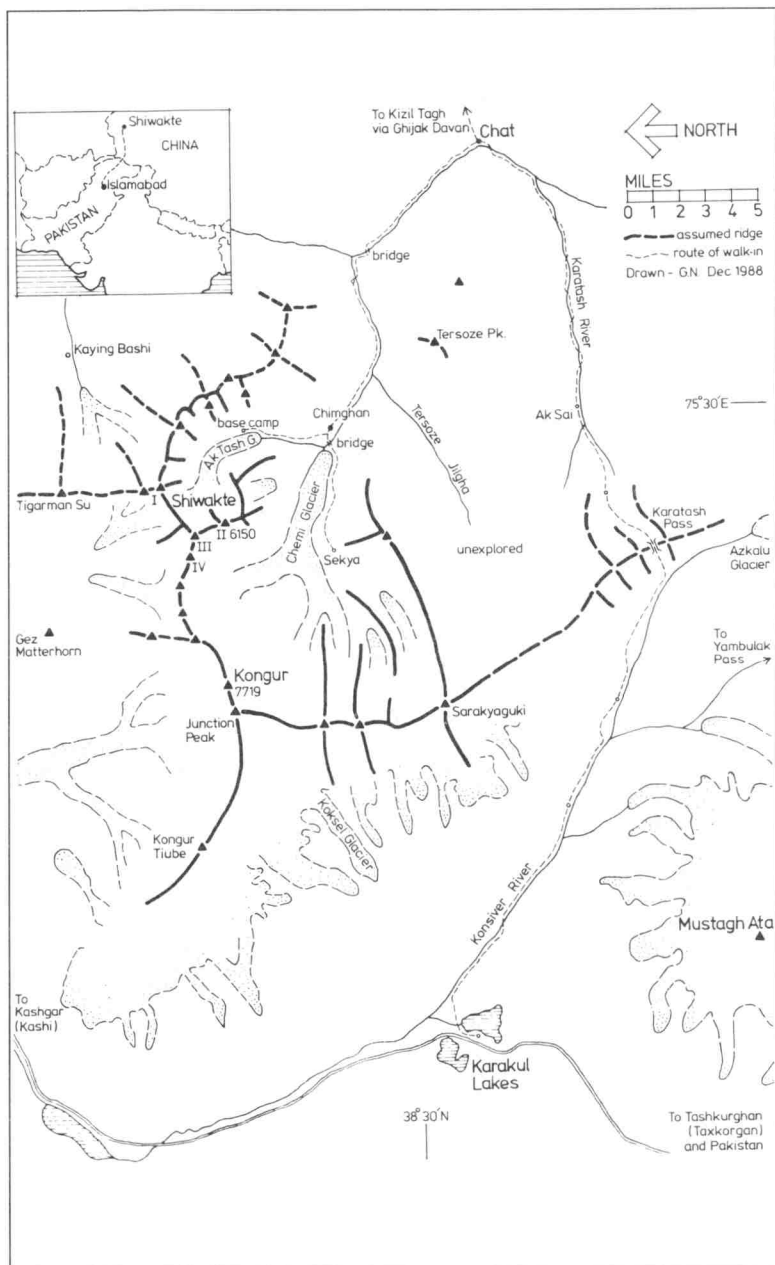
The fourth day brought a further crisis. Our drivers proved as inept at route finding as their beasts were at load carrying and lost much time failing to find obvious shallow grassy slopes. The smaller of the two camels was becoming lame, having cut a hoof on a moraine, and had begun to collapse regularly on all but the most gentle descents. Further unloading was necessary. After only a few miles progress, where we reached a small collection of yurts, the 'neds' had had enough. Despite strictly binding agreements to accompany us to base camp, we were to be abandoned, sans transport, sans LO, sans interpreter miles and miles from anywhere. Well, not quite. The 'ned' leader went off down the valley to secure an expedition saviour. He was away for the rest of the day. We dozed in the sunshine, dreaming of places non-Sinian.

A saviour, one Han Beg, arrived at dusk. Negotiations were not simple, as no one possessed a 'Berlioz English-Kirghiz' phrasebook, but were conducted with goodwill. We did not have much money, not having anticipated any requirement for spending any, and some of what we had - Pakistan rupees - was not highly valued in these remote parts. In the end, a combination of U.S. dollars and IOU's sufficed. Finally, the form of transport was discussed. Six horses were insisted upon and agreed - unambiguously.

In the morning, the arrival of three horses and a single monster camel was sufficient to split expedition opinion squarely down the centre. The issue, once again, was that of going on. On the basis of recent past experience, we would not get to basecamp. Eventually, the beckoning of the unknown overcame doubts. Han Beg was permitted to load his beasts. This moment was a turning point in the fortunes of the expedition and from this hour we moved steadily, if not swiftly, towards our goal.

Hari Beg, our new guide, was a small dark man with a quick smile. Highly intelligent and of some consequence in the local area, Hari treated us tolerantly, like small children. He gave us simple tasks, such as leading horses or following donkeys, which he judged to be well within our capabilities. He was a fine actor. (Acting was a major form of communication between us). Later on in our relationship, he blamed the expedition for the lameness of a horse. His pathos in acting the part of the horse could have earned him an Equity card and provided much amusement. But ultimately, he became a good friend of the expedition, seeing us to base and back. And if the SMC were to confer honorary memberships on non-Scots, I would be the first to propose Hari.

We descended the valley ahead of us for many hours, joining the main valley of the Karatash River a few miles above the village of Chat. Initially green and picturesque, with occasional yurts tucked in behind bluffs and crags, the valley deepened and became more arid as we approached the junction with the main stream. Our descent was enlivened by a score of river crossings, waist deep and icy cold, at which we became gradually more adept. These inconveniences did not bother Hari or any of the locals we passed as they were always mounted on horse, camel or, occasionally,



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donkey. These colourfully dressed travellers did project a certain pride as they looked down upon us, not unkindly, from their handsome beasts. They may have had some difficulty in reconciling our lowly station with our obvious material wealth. Between river crossings, we generally stumbled along in the rear of Hari's Rolls-Royce of a camel, though not too close. It was an ill tempered ferocious beast and Hari's dexterity could have been developed while securing loads, when he was vulnerable to being savaged without warning. However, he brooked no criticism of the animal. It was, indeed, of far superior mould compared to its Karakul brethren and bore vast loads without complaint. Once up and mobile, it was docile, guidance and obedience being effected by a rope attached to a wooden peg driven through the most sensitive part of its nose. (The eldritch screams when this exercise is effected could barely be imagined).

Although we were always kept well away from the camel, we were given responsibilities regarding the horses. Hamish and Grahame were deemed to be the most sensitive regarding the needs of these beasts but we all took turns at leading them. This was a tiresome chore, as the horse always walked either faster than your natural pace, nosing past to push you over the edge of the path into the river, or would keep abruptly stopping to feed, constantly jerking you backwards and jolting your arm.

### River Crossing

We arrived at Chat, a goal of many months, at dusk in the rain. It was a rather dreary village of flat topped mud houses almost deserted in favour of high pastures. The incident of note that took place here was that the main stream, which we had recently waded, without warning increased massively in volume, accompanied by a roar of moving boulders in the river bed and changed colour from light green to grey.

We made easy progress down the main valley, now into our sixth day, until we turned away from the main stream and started up the Chimghan valley, a large branch draining the Shiwakte group and the east flanks of Kongur. Here, Hari Beg made a big mistake, which incidentally demonstrated his ignorance of local geography. He determined to cross the Chimghan river to reach the more cultivated east bank. The atmosphere of the valley was bleak. The river was menaced by arid brown hills now being obscured by one of the afternoon dust storms typical of this part of the world. The ominous black glacial torrent barring our way was patently uncrossable on foot and even on horseback appeared doubtful. However, our luck was (apparently) in as there were some camels grazing nearby. Their herdsman, a gallus chap who would have been at home in Sauchiehall Street, had some time to spare and was willing to assist us.

On the first ferry, all of our equipment plus Barry and Hari Beg were transported across without incident, although Hari was sufficiently impressed by the water not to return to assist the remainder of the party, as promised. From the far bank, he attempted to communicate with us by

shouts and gesticulations the meanings of which were obscure. Some minutes later, the remaining members of the party were nervously mounted on the backs of four camels, all roped in a line and led by the herdsman. Simultaneously, this fellow was leading two unladen horses on a parallel line. Grinning broadly, he urged the reluctant beasts into the current. Quickly, the water reached the bellies of the camels. My own immediate reaction was to draw up my feet as the water continued to rise whilst tightening my grip on the single hump allotted to me. Geoff's condition was more to be pitied, as he had no wooden structure on his beast to help secure his position, and as such was riding bareback, hanging on grimly. Things then started to go wrong. Because of the fast currents the camels were catching up on each other and beginning to form a circle, threatening to entangle the linking ropes. Looking down at the rapidly moving water completely disorientated me as on a fairground ride. As I tried to shift my gaze away from the hypnotically swirling water, I realised to my horror that one of the horses had lost its footing and was bearing down on us, eyes rolling in terror. There was now no longer a smile on the herdsman's face. A leaden chill enveloped my stomach as my mind anticipated the next few moments. The helpless animal would surely pull its fellow under, the camels would have their feet knocked from under them and the expedition would be pitched into the icy maelstrom. The prospects for survival were certainly not to be taken for granted. Very fortunately, from this unhappy moment conditions slowly improved. The rope linking the two horses parted and the stricken animal was rapidly swept away. Order was gradually restored and we reached the bank, white faced but alive. Even the horse was spared, washed up on some shingle a mile downstream.

Shaken by the ordeal, we camped where we were. A catharsis was achieved by constant retelling of the event. We discovered that Hari had been trying to indicate the danger of the situation and telling us to refrain from attempting the crossing until morning.

On the morning following, Barry and I went ahead to select a site for basecamp. The joy of being released from the burden of quadruped nursing was akin to that of spending a sunny day of abandonment on a West Highland ridge after a season's ice climbing. Our high spirits were raised both by our recent escape and by the prospect of a sparkling crystal clear morning. After an hour's steady walking, we rounded a corner and Kongur was revealed. A rampart of ice filled the valley, shining brilliantly in the morning sun. The great east face, the sight of which had eluded Skrine more than sixty years ago, rose before us, some fifteen miles distant, soaring fifteen thousand feet above our present position. If Michael Ward is to be believed, Barry and I were the first Westerners ever to see this tremendous face.

In excellent mood, we pressed on through the deserted village of Chimghan. We then had to decide which of two side valleys to the north would lead to the Shiwakte range, which had not so far presented itself, although the foothills were to hand. Skrine's map was clearly guesswork

for this area. The difficulty of fording the tributary stream of the first valley suggested that it was the correct one. To be sure that our deduction was right, I went on to inspect the next side valley while Barry awaited the others. I returned convinced of the correctness of our original guess but to no sign of the rest of the party. We recrossed the tributary stream with considerable difficulty and retraced our steps, gloomily pondering the possible calamities which could have befallen the others. Past Chimghan village, we discovered muddy evidence that camels had passed that way. We U-turned to a fork and now followed a path on the south side of the main valley. For several hours we continued, gaining a well used track high above the large glacier now filling the valley. A drizzle and low cloud enveloped us as it grew dark and we began to contemplate the bleak possibility of spending the night out, having seen no evidence of the others for some time. At length, we came upon a cosy cluster of yurts and, just beyond, our own familiar tents. Explanations on the lines of errors in geography were forthcoming while a welcome meal was prepared.

### Climbing

Early next morning, we awoke to find ourselves in as spectacular a mountain stronghold as any of us could have wished. We scrambled up a nearby grassy moraine to view Kangur, a magnificent wall of snow and ice. Behind our encampment marched a row of fine Alpine peaks whilst directly across the main glacier rose a savage range of mountains - the Shiwakte group! Our interest focussed on our chosen objective and we debated whether to stay or to travel to our planned basecamp in the heart of the range. Although the present position, known as Sekya, was idyllic, it lacked privacy, with most of the population of Chimghan being just round the corner. Opportunities for nude sunbathing on off days appeared to be limited. We therefore persuaded a puzzled Hari Beg to return our loads to the main valley and ascend to the originally intended site. This process took most of the day. At around 13,000 feet, we crested a moraine and arrived at a level meadow, displacing marmots and birds of prey of vast dimensions. It was an attractive spot, part of an ablation valley known locally as Aghalistan, and just off the Ak Tash Glacier. Apart from a spur of Shiwakte I, the main Shiwakte peaks were hidden behind rocky outliers. There was greenery enough to contrast the scree and moraines overlooking us. Across the main valley, we enjoyed views on to the very fine peaks around the Tersoze Jilgha, a tributary of the Chimghan. Except for a simple bothy style construction housing a family an hour's walk below us, the valley was deserted. We bade farewell to Hari and his beasts and were alone at last. It was three weeks since we had left London.

We now had eighteen days, rather than our anticipated twenty-five or thirty in which to acclimatise, map the area and climb Shiwakte II and one other major peak. However, given the nature of Chinese society, we had perhaps been lucky to reach base camp at all.



On the 26th July, our first full day at base camp, Geoff carried a load up to the head of the ablation valley and far up the Ak Tash Glacier. The rest of us, excepting Stan, who was suffering from an undiagnosed illness, created order at basecamp. Geoff returned late in the afternoon with reports of spectacular peaks flanking the north and west edges of the glacier, which were eventually identified and named, in the conventional and unimaginative fashion, as Shiwaktes I, II, IIa, IIb, III and IIIa. There were no obviously straightforward routes, the mountains being flanked by steep and unstable rock walls and throwing out occasional difficult mixed ridges. However, Geoff had made an optimistic assessment of our chances on the north-east ridge of Shiwakte IIIa and the ridge between IIIa and III. We agreed that Geoff, Barry, Hamish and myself would attempt this route while Grahame and Stan, if he ever recovered, would attempt an easier training peak to the east of base camp.

The Shiwakte IIIa team set off the following day with plenty of supplies, intending to ascend slowly to allow time for acclimatisation. Before long, the eagerly awaited views of the Shiwakte peaks came into view. Geoff was certainly right in his initial assessment. The upper glacier was surrounded by impressive -too impressive, perhaps - walls rising to fine summits. Shiwaktes II and III had perhaps a feasible route apiece, though neither looked entirely straightforward<sup>3</sup>. Shiwakte I looked more promising - a steep couloir followed by a snow ridge with a steeper icy head wall.

For two short days, we made easy progress, until we arrived at a small col below a steep ridge. This obstacle rose determinedly for 3,000 feet as a crest of, first, broken granite, and then icy slopes to the summit of Shiwakte IIIa.

Over the next day and a half, the four of us made steady progress up this ridge. Fortunately, the crest of the ridge generally provided sound rock, a property not shared by the rest of the mountain as frequent and alarming thunderings reminded us. There was plenty to keep the interest of the party, particularly as some of the rock pitches were quite technical and our plentiful supplies had not run to including an overabundance of wires. One or two of the pitches were probably approaching V.S. (the traditional Scottish V.S. older readers will remember) which, climbed with rigid boots, sacks and long run outs helped keep the malaise of boredom from overcoming the party. The day culminated with Geoff leading a difficult mixed pitch requiring a peg for aid. I had been out of sight and sound of the others while Geoff was engaged in the struggle and had become quite cold and ill-tempered. I was beginning to wonder just what kind of catastrophe had silently overtaken my companions when the call came at last. When I finally resumed contact, after a grand struggle up some very steep ground, I saw that Geoff was clearly in his element. His eyes were glowing with the joy of battle. Despite the grim surroundings, my mood warmed to his enthusiasm.

The stars were now shining and the party fell to clearing two inadequate bivouac sites. Hamish and I passed an uncomfortable, though warm, night, lying on our 30 degree ledge. Periodically, harnesses dug into our lower ribs as belay ropes tightened and we slid down the ledge towards the nearby drop. Barry and Geoff, a few yards away across a bottomless gully, fared little better.

A perfect morning found us climbing several pitches of hard ice up to a cornice. Breaking through this obstacle surprisingly easily, I found to my dismay, not the broad avenue of firm snow leading to the summit, about which we had been optimistically speculating whilst sharing belays, but a very startling 4,000 foot drop clear on to the glacier on the Gez side of the mountain. Ahead lay a series of overlapping cornices and the summit of Shiwakte IIIa. Once the party had been gathered together and had begun to discuss the situation, a difference of opinion developed regarding the next course of action. Some of the party raised the idea of going down, others held firm to the original plan. Splitting the party to accommodate both opinions would have been logistically difficult. As those for retreat argued their case, a distinct sun halo appeared, a sign of a weather change, and the noes clinched the debate. Descent then took place in good order with only one notable incident. I had been standing on a crest of snow at the foot of the crux pitch, cursing Hamish (under my breath) for an unfathomably long delay while he prepared to descend. When Hamish at last arrived, he silently presented me with the abseil sling to which I had recently entrusted my life. The blue nylon sheath had been sawn through, leaving only a few ragged white threads. The succession of three heavily laden climbers on the abseil, most of which was free, had proved nearly too much for the sling, which Hamish had had to replace. It was easily the most thought provoking moment since the camel ferry.

We arrived back at base in darkness and in rain. Over tea in the Vango flysheet that served as the kitchen tent, we learned that Grahame and Stan had enjoyed greater success. They had ascended their mountain, which was modestly christened Nicoll-Pearson Peak, being their first first ascent. (This elegant peak was subsequently named Aghalistan III). Arriving at the summit early in the day, they had deservedly been rewarded with perfect visibility and magnificent views of the surrounding area. (Grahame's fine photographs of the east face of Kangur at sunrise were to feature prominently in the post expedition slide shows). They had then gone on to attempt Shiwakte I. (In fact, our paths had crossed as we were descending Shiwakte III). This attempt failed on the first slopes of hard ice. Stan's revolutionary step in crampons unfortunately failed to stay on his boots. They were forced to retreat to base for repairs just as the weather turned hostile.

For the next five days we were pinned down in our tents by a colder version of the kind of weather which afflicts the Glen Brittle campsite nine summers in ten. Despite many bridge sessions, we remained friends and

by 5th August, the weather had improved enough for us to make future plans regarding mountains. As we had only six full days left to us, we decided to maximise our chances of success by splitting into three pairs. Stan and Grahame would again attempt Shiwakte I, a reasonably feasible looking objective. Barry and I would attempt Shiwakte II by the prominent spur which projected toward the Ak Tash Glacier. Hamish and Geoff would also attempt Shiwakte II by descending to the main valley, returning to Sekya and attempting the mountain by its south west face.

Later the same afternoon, Barry and I crossed the crevassed glacier and pitched our bivvy tent below the east spur of Shiwakte II. The previously dry glacier was covered by several inches of fresh snow, a legacy of the recent storms. Early next morning, we made steady progress up the wide gully to the left of the spur crest. However, higher up we encountered deeper snow lying over hard ice. On one pitch, on a fifty degree slope beyond which the ridge levelled off, Barry unavoidably sent down snow which had grown to avalanche proportions by the time it reached me, tied to an ice screw. After I had regained my composure, I was interested to observe the avalanche increasing exponentially below me, so that the entire gully to the width of a football pitch was soon in motion. Eventually, enough snow was moved down to the glacier to have swept away every camel in Xinjiang Province. A few pitches of a more relaxing nature brought us to a snowy platform large enough to build a Raeburn Hut, should one ever be thought necessary. We pitched the tent. Ahead of us stretched about a mile of ridge, corniced in part, culminating in a rock bastion or gendarme which defended the final slopes of the mountain. Geoff and Hamish told us later that this obstacle could not have been circumvented without difficulty. We enjoyed a grandstand view of Shiwakte III, a very fine and difficult peak from this side. Ranges of less formidable but worthy Alpine peaks stretched eastwards towards the Takla Makan Desert. We were very much aware of our solitude. Any rescues would have to be carried out entirely by ourselves, there being no experienced Chimghan team or any other expeditions at hand. In fact, we were completely cut off from the outside world for the month we were in the Shiwakte area, there not being even the exhaust trails of high altitude jets in the sky or the clattering of helicopter rotor blades, a common sound in the busier parts of the Karakoram. Only a touch of green around the moraines near basecamp, contrasting with the fresh white of the glacier reminded us of a more gentle world.

Snow fell during the night and we decided to wait a day, given the nature of the ground ahead. Unfortunately, the weather never regained the settled pattern we had enjoyed on our first days in the Shiwakte. During our second night and following day on the platform, we suffered thickening cloud and increasing snowfall. On our third morning on the platform, after yet more snow had fallen overnight, we became increasingly worried about the condition of the slopes below, particularly as I had not yet forgotten the avalanche on the way up. We therefore packed and descended, without incident.

Grahame and Stan had experienced very similar conditions on their col below Shiwakte I, with the added discomfort that their bodily frames were both an inch or so longer than the groundsheet of their tent.

For a day, we sat around rather dejectedly at base awaiting the return of the final pair. To our delight, they appeared with the news that they had climbed Shiwakte II following a line up the face overlooking the Chami Glacier. Although the route was menaced by seracs for part of the way, the climbing difficulties were not excessive. Unfortunately, their success was not rewarded by views, although they did discover that Shiwakte III appeared a little higher than Shiwakte II. The weather had also been kinder on their side.

Whilst toasting the success of the expedition in an orgy of scone-baking, we discussed how to use the final day and a half left to us. Hamish and Grahame decided to find and cross the Kepek Pass, which Skrine had discovered so many years before. This they did, and Hamish found the energy to descend far down towards the Kaying valley to ascertain if the stands of fir described by Skrine still existed. They did, hundreds of miles from any other such trees. Hamish's brief appearance, before disappearing back up to the pass, must have been very bemusing to the local yurt dwellers.

Barry and I bivouacked with Geoff and Stan near the head of a wide valley above base. On our last day, Barry and I toiled up hundreds of feet of scree to reach the summit of Aghalistan IV from the south, the most prominent peak in the area as seen from our platform on Shiwakte II. The peak had had a very attractive Alpine aspect from the platform. However, north/south differences were very marked in this area - hence the scree. But, any tedium of the ascent was quickly forgotten as we arrived on the summit snows just after sunrise. The heavens were a clear blue. A sea of cloud stretched far to the north, through which a few peaks appeared. We contemplated the Shiwakte peaks at our leisure, with the great bulk of Kangur beyond. The cone of Muztagh Ata was visible some thirty miles to the south west. Our approach route from Karakul to Shiwakte was lost in a maze of mountain ranges, rising occasionally to greater prominence as noble, snow-crested peaks. Through binoculars, we could pick out Stan and Geoff on the steep ice slopes leading up to the coire rim opposite us.

The same evening at base, a wild whoop announced the return of Hari Beg on his steed. The following morning, we commenced our return to Kashgar. We avoided the life threatening rivers of our approach by the simple expedient of using the provided bridges. (Copyright on this information is waived for the benefit of future visitors!). At Chat, Hari was understandably reluctant to cross the Karatash with his beasts. We had reservations about the alternative route as it lay through a forbidden area. But we had no choice as we were completely reliant on Hari and his camel (etc.). So Hari and the bulk of the expedition crossed the remarkably straightforward Ghijak Dawan (Pass) to the town of Kizil Tagh. From

here, the SMC centenary expedition proceeded by coal lorry to Kashgar, where the police immediately impounded the two available passports, taking a dim view of this dishevelled crew emerging from forbidden territory. Meanwhile, Geoff and I with light loads, retraced our steps, river crossings and all, over the Karatash Pass. The morning we crossed, the pass was deep in snow after an overnight storm and had the cloud not lifted, we would have had difficulty in finding the route. However, the weather improved and we descended the far side in good spirits. We again enjoyed wonderful Kirghiz hospitality.

After three long days from Chat, we arrived back at Karakul where the LO and Qin were delighted to see us, even their capacity for enduring tedium having been tested by their thirty-one day vigil in a place with as much in the way of entertainment as a snowbound mountain bothy. Geoff and I were soon reunited with the others in the New Kashgar Hotel. Sadly, we were not able to enjoy much of the Silk Road city, for the police, having somehow lost face, seemed determined to harass us over our transgression into a forbidden area. Our LO had little influence with them and we spent many hours in the police station, answering questions which revealed their ignorance of local geography and listening to passages from the Chinese constitution. Our impression of a colonial situation in this part of Kashgar was reinforced. In the end, we were given a relatively small fine and asked to write an apology. Geoff in particular, as leader, had borne the brunt of the responsibility for preventing Sino-Caledonian relations from sinking to a very low ebb.

Two days later, at Pirali customs, we parted from Qin with genuine regret. He had done his best to help us. Working conditions for him had not been very easy, dealing with a wayward Scots expedition. We then passed through Hunza to Islamabad, recently bereft of its most prominent citizen, General Zia.

A few reflections about the expedition to China. We had had some bad luck, unquestionably. Lack of organisation on the Chinese side had restricted our time and had we had the luxury of a few extra days to reconnoitre the area, we might have made a better choice of base. The climbing routes certainly seemed to be more difficult from our selected site, rather than from the Sekya area. With our experience, it would be difficult wholeheartedly to recommend China at present to a small expedition with limited resources, at least to an area unknown to the CMA. (With this point in mind, it is worth comparing the books of 'Kangur' by Chris Bonington and 'The Shishapangma Expedition' by Doug Scott. While CB writes of celebratory banquets in Beijing, DS' account is of endless tedious energy-sapping argument with the Chinese. Both books are excellent accounts of different types of expeditions in China). On the other hand, despite all the delays, we remained throughout 'a happy band of brothers,' as the Club song goes, the only real hackles arising between partners bidding bridge contracts. If expeditions are, in some degree, about enjoying friends' company in adversity, then we succeeded greatly. From

the mountaineering point of view, it would have been more satisfying if, in the modern idiom of success, we had all climbed Shiwakte II or some other big peak in the area. However, we all enjoyed technical climbing, exploration and the ascent of remote peaks. Throughout the expedition, uncertainty about the immediate future was always to the fore, giving us, in Central Asia, an experience in the best traditions of the SMC.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Pronounced Hathm and Ching, respectively (cf. difficulties for Chinese pronouncing Gaelic).

2. i.e. yak.

3. This was, perhaps, an understatement.



*Photo: Grahame Nicoll August 1988*

The West Face of Shiwakte II (6150m)

## NEW CLIMBS SECTION

### OUTER ISLES

#### **RHUM, Barkeval, South Crag—*The Witness***

60m Very Difficult

A. Matthewson. 27th July, 1989.

Above the Waterslide, an obvious crack splits the big overhang. Start down and left from the crack's base at a rib formed by two slabs.

1. Climb the rib and move right to belay (20m).
2. Step right (exposed) across the top of a poised block and continue up the crack line (10m).

(The lower section of *Broad Buttress* can be used as an approach).

#### **Notes**

The slab forming the left side of *Narnia Arete* was climbed by K.V. Crockett and A. Walker in August 1989 (*Half-a-Gale Slab*, 60m, Severe, and reminiscent to climbing up the dried up wall of a reservoir).

#### **SHETLAND, Ninian Slabs (GR 374196)**

These slabs—jet black and weathered to a mirror finish—provide some interesting easy and middle grade routes. Access is by abseil to a sea swept ledge at the base of the slabs.

—*Windward*

25m Severe

I. Davidson, R. Cookson. 17th June, 1988.

Climb the prominent open corner at the north end of the slabs. Initially easy but delicate to finish.

—*Black Heart*

25m Hard Severe

I. Davidson, R. Cookson. 17th June, 1988.

Mid-way along the slabs there is a prominent blank section. Climb this to reach a shallow groove. Follow this to short steep wall which is climbed directly on good holds.

—*Atlantic Dance*

30m Very Severe

I. Davidson, R. Cookson. 17th June, 1988.

Start as above, but make a long traverse right from the groove out to the edge of the slabs, stepping down at the quartzite band. Surmount the overlap then continue easily to the top. Excellent situations but poorly protected (4c).

#### **Corbie Geo (GR 357172)**

Unusually for the area, the north side of Corbie Geo is a sheet of clean pink granite. A shortage of suitable boulders restricts the number of abseil points to one. Diagonal abseils are possible. The cliff is set at a modest angle, but has the feel of a large crag with superb situations, poor protection, and exposed stances.

—*Future Shock*

65m Very Severe

I. Davidson, R. Cookson. 21st June, 1988.

From the large boulder at the west end of the cliff, abseil for 50m to a small ledge.

1. Traverse right for 30m to a poor stance at the base of a prominent corner.
2. Climb the corner, then follow the thin crack past a sea pink to another poor stance (25m 4b/c).
3. Climb a shallow corner and loose blocks to the top, no belay (10m).

With sufficient rope, the large ledge at sea level may be reached. From here climb straight up to the base of the corner, thus avoiding the long traverse (30m 4b/c).

The much steeper rock to the west of the slabs has not yet been explored.

**Quarf Stack (GR 435354)**

Although not a true stack, there are three good faces on this schist buttress. The rock is very smooth and should be avoided when wet.

—*Distant Storm*

25m Hard Severe

I. Davidson, R. Cookson. 22nd June, 1989.

Climb the NE arete of the stack, moving right at the top. Not easily accessible at high water.

**Grind of the Navir**

The following routes lie to the north of the Grind, and are less prone to being swamped by heavy seas than the main cliff.

—*Restless Flame*

20m Severe

I. Davidson, R. Cookson. 19th June, 1988.

At the centre of the north facing wall is a short blank slab. Climb this then continue up the wall above on small holds. Poorly protected.

There is a descent gully at the east end of this wall. The following two routes are on the buttress to the left of this.

—*Grindstone*

15m Severe

I. Davidson, R. Cookson. 19th June, 1988.

Climb the right edge of the buttress to a niche, then move right and continue up the thin crack.

—*Spray*

15m Severe

I. Davidson, R. Cookson. 19th June, 1988.

Climb the grooves on the left of the buttress to finish awkwardly up the steep corner.

**SKYE****SRON NA CICHE, The Cioch—The Highlander**

46m E5/E6

G. Farquhar, G. Latter. 21st April, 1989.

A *stunning pitch up the front arete of The Cioch*. Climb easy slabs to the arete. Climb boldly up the right side of the arete to an obvious hole (runners in flake to the right). Continue via a thin diagonal crack to a resting ledge (Friend runners crucial, including a 2.5). Move up to a large flat hold on the arete (RP's) and stand on it with difficulty. A tricky mantelshelf gains the upper slabs and easy ground. Belay at the top of **The Cioch** (6b).

—*Soldanella*

60m HVS

S. Steer, A. Tibbs (alts). 22nd July, 1989.

This climbs the crack immediately right of *Petronella*.

1. Climb crack and gain slab above after a move left. Climb slab to belay at the foot of a short corner (30m 5a).

2. Climb the short hard corner and easier ground above (30m 5a).

—*Slanting Crack*

VS

I.C. Halliday, W.A. Campbell. 20th May, 1989.

On the left hand side of *Cioch Gully* proper is a slabby wall.

1. Climb the wall on good holds to a rightward slanting crack. Follow this to its end, then up the wall to an overhanging corner crack. Climb this, then scramble up to a good ledge on the right hand side (40m).

2. Climb a short steep wall above the ledge. Scrambling now leads to where a chimney from *Cioch Gully* is met.

**Notes**

The route recorded as *Prolactin* (SMCJ 1988) was climbed in 1983 by G. Latter and A.N. Other, and may well have been climbed prior to this.

*Amphitheatre Arete* was climbed at Grade III under verglas and powder conditions on 22nd April 1989 by M. McLeod and B. Taylor.



**BLAVEN—Gutter**

82m Severe

I. Dalley, D. McCallum. August, 1977.

This route climbs the trap dyke trending from bottom right to top left on the wall facing the final wall pitch of *The Great Prow*.

1. Climb the dyke, peg belay (30m).
2. Climb the fine crack in the slab to a small ledge (30m).
3. Climb the slab to the ridge (22m).

**South Buttress—Motown**

80m HVS

S. Kennedy, M. MacLeod, A. Scrase. 15th May, 1989.

Follows the prominent steep flake/crack just to the right of a small overhung recess 6m right of the start of *Judas*. The route is always to the left of the wandering line of *Rosie's Stash*.

1. Climb the flake/crack to a roof and move right into a groove which is followed to a ledge (40m 5a).
2. Climb a narrow ramp above before pulling out left onto more broken ground leading to the terrace below the upper corner of *Judas* (40m).

**KILMALUAG, Coastal crag—The Red Baron Flies**

HVS

K. Milne, H. Buxton. 27th May, 1989.

At the left side of the first buttress north of the descent path is an arete. This climb takes a hand-jam corner crack just left of this, turning the overhang by stepping right to reach a good stance. The second pitch continues in the same line towards a notch in the skyline. Some loose rock was cleared on the first ascent, but the whole buttress should be treated with caution (4c).

**NEIST POINT**

The following two routes are located approximately 100m north of the buttress containing *Supercharger* and *Death Pirate*, through a gap in the wall, and down to the shore between a prow and the cliff.

**—Patricia**

18m VS

J. Robertson, S. Wallis. April, 1987.

1. 5m along the cliff north from the descent gully, climb the steep wall on mantels and attain the grooved pod with awkward moves. Climb the twin cracks to reach the top (4c/5a).

**—Bernard's Dilemma**

18m E1

J. Robertson, S. Wallis. April, 1987.

1. 5m left of *Patricia* climb the obvious wide overhanging crack to reach the dubious flake (poorly protected). Further awkward moves bring easier ground (5a).

**Notes**

G. Latter notes that it is not possible to reach the foot of *Death Pirate* by horrible scrambling - original description is incorrect.

**KILT ROCK, Elishader Wall—The Dancers**

32m HVS

M. McLeod, C. Moody. 27th August, 1989.

Elishader Wall has two stepped roofs. Left of the left-hand roof is a left facing corner crack which is very wide near the top. Left again is a corner crack which fades out at two-thirds height. Left of this is a corner crack which gives the route (5a).

**—Ragged Robin**

27m Very Difficult

C. Moody. 27th August, 1989.

The gully left of *Jamboree* gives a through route. Not as bad as it looks.

**Notes**

*Dawn of Time* and *Kilt Classic* are reported to be one and the same apart from the final section.

## NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

## STAC POLLALDH, West (No. 1) Buttress

The main wall of the West Buttress of this mountain now has a number of good hard climbs in a fine situation. The buttress faces the sun and dries quickly.

## -Shadow on the Wall

60m E4

R. Anderson, T. Prentice. 10th September, 1989.

A superb route taking the crackline up the left-hand side of the wall. Start from the ledge just down from *Walking on Air*. Friends 2 and 3 useful.

1. Climb the crackline past an in-situ thread, then on up a large flake and traverse left to belay. Full set of Friends used, large one saved for the top of the flake (30m 6a).
2. The top pitch of *Felo De Se* - thrutch up the fault to a welcome respite then move up left and climb the magnificent corner to the top (50m 5c).

## -Walking on Air

60m E4

T. Prentice, R. Anderson. 26th August, 1989.

A tremendous route giving technical climbing up the crack line and stepped corner splitting the main overhang. Start just right of a small pillar on the ledge, below twin cracks on a very red section of the wall.

1. Climb the cracks with difficulty to better holds, and continue until it is possible to traverse left into a crack and corner. Below the break, a scoop and rib on the right lead to a belay (Friends 3/3.5) in the horizontal break (30m 6a).
2. Step onto the large block and climb to a triangular niche. Climb the crack, passing a poor peg with difficulty, and move up awkwardly into a niche. Follow the stepped corner until it is possible to step left to finish up the wide crack (30m 6b).

## -Mid Flight Crisis

65m E4

R. Anderson, C. Anderson. 2nd September, 1989.

Another excellent route which takes the crackline right of *Walking on Air*, to share that climb's belay before moving off left to climb the prominent crack in the top left corner of the wall.

1. Scramble to the foot of the wall and climb the right-hand of two cracks for 5m (Rock 5 high on right). Move left to the other crack, then up and right (Friend 3.5) before moving back left to follow the crack to the horizontal break. Belay on the left (30m 6a).
2. Step up left and climb a thin crack/groove over the roof to gain a small niche, then step left to a large hold from which a left traverse can be made round into the obvious diagonal fault. Move up to a niche, ancient peg, and pull directly up to reach a wedged block, then climb the superbly situated crack to the top (35m 6a).

## -Plane Sailing

35m E3

R. Anderson, C. Anderson, T. Prentice. 9th September, 1989.

Good climbing up the crackline on the right side of the wall. Start at a short corner beneath the roof at the right end of the wall.

1. Climb easily up the corner and slab, then follow a wide crack to the roof. Pull across leftwards, then move up the crack and take its right branch to reach the sanctuary of the wide crack on *Moine Thrutch* which leads to the top. A very hard direct finish beckons (5c).

## -The Bearded Clam

45m VS

A. Fraser, G. Robb. 15th October, 1988.

Takes the groove line right of *Moine Thrutch*.

1. Start up the groove right of *Moine Thrutch*. After 2m, climb a steep groove to the right to a belay on a wide ledge (15m 4b).
2. Climb an easy wide chimney, then move right and up an awkward groove (30m 5a).

**No. 2 Buttress—Wingless Warlock**

45m E1

R. Everett, D. Gaffney. 9th September, 1989.

Climbs the prominent groove system about 15m right of *Bloodsucker* and about 5m left of the start of *Stakeout*.

1. An awkward steep groove and bulge leads to ledges in the main groove line. Move up to the foot of a very steep crack, then step right to a crack in the arete. Climb this, and its flake crack continuation, to exit right onto the belay of *Stakeout* (25m 5b).
2. Finish up *Stakeout* (20m 5b).

**The Keep—Angus the Arsonist**

45m HVS

G. Robb, A. Fraser. 15th October, 1988.

Start at the corner of the buttress between the south face on the left and the gully heading down from the bealach on the right.

1. Climb a deep crack at the left side of a wide chimney. At the top, move right up a steep groove, then up and left over steps (30m 5a).
2. Climb to and up a prominent steep crack at the top of the buttress (15m 4c).

**Notes**

*Felo de Se*. The second pitch has been climbed free by T. Prentice and R. Anderson on 10th September 1989, and gives an excellent jamming pitch on the prow of the buttress (30m 5c). Overall grade of route E2.

*Expecting to Fly*. Upgraded to E4 6a.

*Jack the Ripper*. Combined with the direct top pitch, this is a superb route, and the best of the earlier climbs. The description in the Northern Highlands guide is considered inadequate. R. Anderson and T. Prentice offer the following as a replacement.

**—Jack the Ripper**

75m E1

Start in the same bay as *Enigma Grooves*, below a grassy corner.

1. Climb the clean wall on the right to a finger crack, and follow this past a wide crack formed by a pillar on the right. Continue leftwards up easier, broken ground to a ledge at the start of *November Groove* (24m 4b).
2. Traverse right and climb cracks in the slabby rib until a difficult step up is made on the arete. Blocks and cracks lead to a belay (21m 5a).
3. The steep corner line above is followed with difficulty until an awkward move left onto a ledge. Finish up the crack (30m 5b). The original route avoided this pitch on the left.

**SHEIGRA, Sutherland**

The cliff is situated on the sea-side of the headland to the north of Sheigra beach. The main feature is a large cave/archway at sea level.

**—Sometimes a Great Notion**

E2/E3

D. Cronshaw, J. Ryden. June, 1988.

1. Belay on a square cut ledge to the right of the big corner right of the cave. Move left round the arete into the corner, runners. Traverse above the lip of the overhang by following a quartz band. From the end of this move up the obvious black streaks. Climb straight up to a small ledge underneath a small archway. Continue up past the archway following black streaks to a shallow groove (crux). Climb directly to the top (5c).

**—May Tripper**

E1

R. Anderson, C. Greaves. 22nd May, 1989.

Climbs the black streak up the wall to the right of *January Man*, superb.

1. From the ledge on *January Man*, move right then up to gain a slender ramp which is followed a short way until moves can be made up left to a spike. Step up right, then directly to the top (5b).

-*January Man*

30m E2

D. Cronshaw, J. Ryden. June, 1988.

Descend the easy angled slabs (from the north) to belay 3m left of the large cave/archway.

1. From the obvious ledge, move up a short left facing shallow corner. Follow the gangway above up left to just below a large pocket/small cave, obvious from below. Climb diagonally right below an impending wall to a tiny ledge. Climb the steep bulging wall above on good holds, initially trending left. Finish directly. Strenuous (5b/5c).

-*Juggernaut*

30m E2

R. Anderson, C. Greaves. 22nd May, 1989.

An excellent route which climbs the crack and arete to the left of *January Man*.

1. Start 4m up the ramp from *January Man* and climb the wall with a step left just above the bulge. Pass the left side of the large pocket, climb the crack, step right, then back left to follow the arete to the top (5b).

-*Sideline*

27m HVS

R. Anderson, C. Greaves. 22nd May, 1989.

The wall and crack just left of *Juggernaut*.

1. Climb directly to a small pocket, step left then up to gain a crack which leads steeply to a ledge. Finish up the wall just left of the corner (5a).

-*Sideslip*

27m VS

R. Anderson, C. Greaves. 22nd May, 1989.

1. Climb the ramp and curving crackline left of *Sideline* (4c).

**BEINN BHAN, Coire na Feola—Flesheater**

220m GRADE V

I. Dring, M.E. Moran. 21st February, 1989.

Takes a prominent diagonal fault line in the steep cliff to the right of *Easy Gully* on the corrie backwall. The line slants leftwards between *Sheet Whitening* and the hanging snowfield of *Crab Nebula*. Good climbing, mainly turf dependent. Start at the foot of the fault.

1. Easy snow to steeper grooves, belay on the left (20m).
2. Go right into the grooves (hard start). Follow the grooves, bending slightly right then back left to a good belay at a cracked wall. This pitch could be split (50m).
3. Climb a short chimney, then continue to a deeper chimney which is quit to a belay on the left (40m).
4. Follow grooves above directly to an entertaining exit onto a good terrace with block belays (40m).
5. Go up the shallow chimney behind the belay, then follow the rocky buttress crest in a fine position to easy ground (45m).
6. Climb the easy arete to the top (25m).

**BEINN EIGHE, Coire Mhic Fhearchair** *Central Buttress, Right Finish*

100m GRADE IV

S. Allen, A. Nisbet. 3rd January, 1990.

This is an easier finish to the right of *Hamilton's Route*.

1. From the crest of the buttress below the final tower, traverse right for 15m until it is possible to climb up right on turf ledges and belay below a short wall on the right (25m).
2. Climb the short wall (crux) and continue rightwards until possible to go left onto easier ground (25m).
3. Go easily up into a short corner on the right and climb it awkwardly to the final crest (50m).

**LIATHACH, Coire na Caime–Coireag Cham (Northern Pinnacles)–Holy Trinity**

R. Anderson, C. Anderson. 4th January, 1990.

152m GRADE IV

Follows the obvious chimney flake and left slanting rampline up the front face of the Third Pinnacle, to the right of *Right-hand Trinity Gully*. Start in the middle of the buttress below a right facing chimney flake.

1. Climb the chimney and move up to belay at the base of the continuation (30m).
2. Ascend the chimney and move up easier ground to belay at the base of another steepening (52m).
3. Climb the steepening, then continue up the edge of the buttress overlooking the gully, and where the rock steepens move left a short way until it is possible to move up to belay beside an embedded block (40m).
4. Step left and climb a right slanting runnel to the crest, where a short move up gains the top of the pinnacle (30m).

Two and a half rope lengths along the Northern Pinnacles gains Mullach An Rathain.

**FUAR THOLL, Mainrechan Buttress–Mainline Connection**

213m GRADE V

R. Anderson, R. Milne. 11th March, 1989.

Takes the obvious open corner line just left of *Enigma* and *Slueth*. The lower section corresponds with the summer line of *Nimrod*, which traverses off at the terrace.

1. Climb the corner over several steep steps to a good ledge. Beware of large loose flake on the second step (49m).
2. Ascend the fault directly above the belay and just left of the corner, then continue in the corner to the terrace (46m).
3. Traverse left and find a belay below the first obvious open groove line (15m).
4. Move up left and traverse right into the groove, which is climbed to smaller twin grooves, the right hand of which leads to easy ground (43m).
5. Easy ground to the summit cairn (61m).

**SGURR NA LAPAICH, (Glen Cannich NH162344)–Lapland Buttress**

J. Lyall, A. Nisbet. 22nd December, 1989.

200m GRADE IV

The buttress lies high above Loch Tuill Bhearnach, and tops out on the slope leading down from Sgurr nan Clachan Geala towards the col before Sgurr na Lapaich. Since the base is at 1000m, it holds snow well. The route climbed close to the crest of the buttress.

1. Starting at the lowest rocks, a V-recess was climbed, followed by moves out left (30m).
2. A series of slabby cracklines led rightwards back to the buttress crest below a steep wall (40m).
3. The wall was climbed by a vertical right facing corner (crux), which led into a wide crack slanting left. The crest was regained on the right (30m).
4. The crest was now much easier and led to the plateau (100m).

**CREAG MHOR THOLLAIDH (Map 19 GR865775)**

This route lies on the other side of the hill from the main crags. It takes a white slab on the north-east side of the valley, in the middle of a slight widening of the valley.

–*The Great White Whale*

A. Fraser, J. Dickson. 18th May, 1989.

80m Very Difficult

Climb the middle of the slab, then the upper slab.

**SGURR AN FHIDHLER—*The Magic Line***

300m HVS

R. Everett, D. Gaffney. 10th September, 1989.

1. Start as for the *Phantom Fiddler* to reach a short corner below the main corner line of *Magic Bow* and a huge jutting block belay (100m).
2. Climb the 5m corner then move up and climb the next wall using a crack formed by the right side of a large detached flake to beneath an overhang. Step right and climb the groove above to belay at the foot of the main corner (30m 4b).
3. Climb the corner to a grass terrace, belay on the left (25m 4c).
4. Step back into the corner line via a small overlap, and continue with a diversion onto the left wall to another grass terrace (*The Magic Bow* goes right here). Traverse the wall left to the arete and climb a short groove to a ledge and belay (30m 4c).
5. Above and on the left is a prominent V-chimney (probably the inverted V cleft on the *Phantom Fiddler*). Climb this, then the slab above slightly rightwards to a fine layback crack inset in a groove in an arete with an undercut start. Climb this to a small roof, step left, then up to reach the foot of a groove with a good crack in its left wall. Climb this to easier ground (50m 5a).
6. Continue easily to the top (65m).

**LOCH ERRIBOL, Creag Shomhairle—*Black Gold***

85m E1

R. Anderson, C. Greaves. 21st May, 1989.

A fine route which takes the obvious black streak in the wall some 45m left of *Land of the Dancing Dead*. Walk along under the roofs to reach a buttress which is bounded on its left by a grassy ramp running up about 30m. Start below a crack at the left end of the wall, there is a diagonal crack to the right.

1. Gain the crack and climb this to a small ramp. Step right and continue to just below a heathery ledge where a move right is made to gain the ledge and a holly bush (21m 5a).
2. Follow a ramp up left and across a roof to the black streak, and move up right into the base of a slim corner. Climb this and continue directly up the black streak to a ledge and tree belay. An excellent pitch on superb rock (37m 5a).
3. Move right to gain and climb a corner system leading back above the belay to reach a small holly bush. Traverse up right to the arete and climb this in a fine position to the top (27m 5a).

Abseil sling left in place on rounded spike, single rope doubled reaches trees below, and from here one long abseil reaches the ground.

—Warm Front

58m E2

R. Anderson, C. Greaves. 21st May, 1989.

Climbs the obvious short bomb-bay chimney and crack splitting the head-wall left of *Hot Pants*. Poor rock on the first pitch leads to better climbing on the second pitch, with fine moves to reach the crack in the head-wall.

1. Climb up broken ground to the bulging crack-line below the bomb-bay chimney. Move up a ramp, then pull right into the crack line, step right, then up into a niche below a bulge. Pull over the bulge and belay (30m 5b).
2. Climb up into the chimney and move out left to swing round the arete. Airy moves gain the crack in the head-wall, and this is followed to easier slabby ground (28m 5b).

**DIABEG, Main Wall—*The Afterglow***

91m E3

K. Howett, G. Latter. 1st August, 1988.

Superb, continually interesting climbing up the centre of the wall, in a similar vein to the adjacent *Wall of Flame*.

1. Start up *The Black Streak* for 5m to a large flake, before breaking out left and up to stand on a prominent sloping hold (RP's in horizontal above). Make a hard move through a tiny overlap to a further horizontal, then continue left through *Northumberland Wall* and follow *Route II* up and rightwards to a grass ledge (34m 5c).

2. Move leftwards up a quartz handrail, then directly up slab to a good hold in the base of a slim runnel (RP's just above). Climb this to some good slots and swing left into a scoop at a thin break to reach good undercuts. Climb past a keyed in block to reach a thin crack shooting out left. Cross this with interest (crux) to good holds (30m 5c)
3. Climb easily to finish (27m).

—*Going Home*

64m E1

G. Latter, K. Howett (alts). 1st August, 1988.

Follows a line parallel to, and right of, *Route 1*.

1. Climb the slab between *The Black Streak* and *Route 1* to a large roof. Break through this above an obvious block, then go diagonally up slightly leftwards to a grass ledge (24m 5b).
2. Pull onto wall on the right via black cracks, and follow a ramp right. At its end take the general line of cracks and slabs and a prominent rib to the top (40m 4c).

**Notes**

*Wall of Flame*. G. Latter notes that the New Climbs Editor's comment in SMCJ 1988 should be ignored as the route is totally independant and bears no relation to *Northumber land Wall*.

*Final Demands*. Led without peg and thread. Peg chopped on lead. Downgraded to E3 5c.

**STRATH ORRIN, Creag a Ghlastail**

The crag faces south east, but nevertheless has a north facing atmosphere despite a base of around 400m. It rises above a stand of Scots Pine and forms a steep face of rock and mixed vegetation, upwards of 120m. It is bisected by a deep wide gully which has an impressively unfriendly right wall and a high massive buttress on the left, bottomed by a long vegetated ramp rising up to the left. Below this, steep mixed vegetation surrounds a clean black slab, and this mixed section ends in a steep clean buttress with a pair of drainage faults on the left of the face. This is bounded by a prominent gully with an initial waterfall pitch. Above this, the right wall of the gully forms the most continuous steep area of clean rock, but can only be reached by climbing the waterfall pitch first. Right of the big central gully, the crag becomes more vegetated and sports a stream that falls in cascades down the face. Descents off the crag are problematic. So far, the best way weaves a line down steep heather shelves below and between broken crags that stretch along the hillside left of the left boundary gully. It is proposed that for identification, the left boundary gully be called Waterfall Gully, and the wide central gully be called Central Gully. The stream that cascades down the face has been called Orrin Falls. The left bank of Waterfall Gully involves escapades up 60 degree heather and wet rock, requiring a high nerve factor. It is capped by steep rock and the only feasible escape (at half height) is along a diminishing ledge where a small tree lies above a shallow gully. It is not possible to approach Waterfall Gully from this side.

The rock is not above suspicion, being a flakey mica-schist may be prone to sudden failure in places. There are undoubtedly areas of good rock, but equally areas of a more dubious nature. Despite the southerly aspect, the crag is quite slow to dry, three days should be adequate except for drainage lines. Protection is by and large scanty, with a scarcity of decent cracks. It must also be noted that climbing is not allowed on the crag from the start of April to the end of August. Given these factors, it remains to be seen whether the crag develops as there are some fine looking lines.

*Approach* - From near the head of Strathconon, leave cars before the bridge crossing the Conon and walk past the keeper's house at Inverchoran. Continue over the pass between Beinn Mheadhoin and Carn na Cre on a landrover track which curves round to the foot of the crag. Allow 1 hour.

—*The Curates Egg*

123m VS

J.R. Mackenzie, R. Brown. 24th September, 1989.

Takes the most feasible line on the crag, the right bounding edge of Waterfall Gully. It is much steeper than initial appearance, and there are inevitable areas of vertiginous heather. However, there are some good moments, particularly on pitches 3 and 4.

1. Climb the flakey slab immediately right of the gully and left of the steeper but more broken skyline rocks to a heather shelf and nut belays (15m).
2. Traverse right under a tottering shelf and then stand on it from the right. Traverse back left on better rock, then follow up and back right via a slab and corner to reach a rectangular heather ledge, belay low down on the right (21m).
3. Climb the bounding corner of the shelf, then straight up to the central fault line above. Climb this steep section on flake holds to an easing and broken ground, nut belays (36m). Scramble up and right on steep heather to a bay with small trees, excellent belay.
4. Climb the steep central break, initially by a recessed jamming crack on the right to a loose chockstone. Step left into a parallel corner and up to a steep exit onto an easy groove. Friend belay on the right (21m 4c).
5. Step onto the rib on the right and climb pleasantly up this to the heather slopes above (30m).

Descend by a longish traverse left across the top of Waterfall Gully, below the top tier of crags, then heather rakes lead back down towards the gully and the bottom. It is possible to avoid the fine central break on pitch 4 by an inferior line on the left, but this leads to a possible heather impasse above Waterfall Gully (This last comment should be noted. J. Mackenzie knows well how to climb heather—Ed).

#### —Ghlastail GTX

210m GRADE IV

G. Cullen, J.R. Mackenzie. 16th February, 1990.

A winter ascent of the Allt a Ghlastail. Follow the burn through the trees to the first pitch, a slabby waterfall. Climb this to easy ground, then a couple of short ice falls to the base of the mid-height slabs. Climb these in two pitches to a bay below a narrow ice hose which forms a distinctive gully when seen from below. Climb this to an amphitheatre below the top pitch, block belay on the arete to the right. Take the superb ice pitch direct just right of the hanging icicles. This pitch can be avoided on the left by a steep ice funnel leading to a possibly large cornice, or a tamer right traverse out of the amphitheatre. Good rock belays and stances. A fine climb whose interest increases with height. The grading assumes the top pitch is climbed direct, otherwise Grade III. Since the base lies at 500m, a week of frost is required to bring the climb into optimum condition.

#### REIFF NOTES

A. Fraser notes ascents of a 9m MVS route on the Pooh Cliff climbing the steep wall left of *Tigger*, *Bear Necessities*, 4b, A. Fraser and J. Dickson, 17th May 1989), and also a route halfway between the Pooh Cliff and Piglet Wall where a right slanting groove in a steep wall gave *The Shield* (9m Severe, Fraser and Dickson, 17th May 1989).

A. Fraser also notes that *Slip Jig* and *Jenny Wren* were climbed by A. Fraser and J. Dickson in July 1986. He also notes that the right corner of the slabs right of *Tystie Slab* was climbed in July 1986 by the same party as above at V. Diff and 30m.

#### GLENMARKSIE CRAG, (Sheet 26, GR 384582)

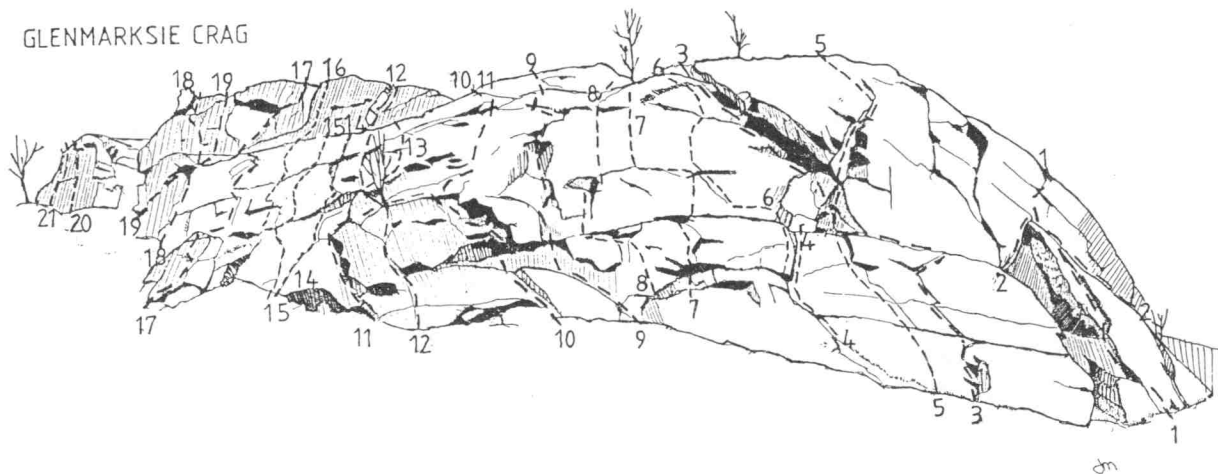
John Mackenzie provides the following guide to climbing on this cliff.

##### History

The first recorded route on the crag was *Greased Lightning* by Ian Ruscoe of the Inverness MC pre-1977. Nothing was then recorded until a spate of climbs in 1979 and 1980, of which the best was undoubtedly *Proteus*. Mike Birch, Robert Brown, Dave Butterfield, John Mackenzie and Duncan McCallum were the prime movers during this period. A couple of years later, Butterfield and Brian McDermott were responsible for three further lines, of which *An Fear Feusagach* and *An Fear Ghorta* were entirely lost under dense vegetation until re-discovery and straightening out at a higher grade in 1989 by Graham Cullen and Mackenzie, being renamed *Selene* and *Sickle Moon* respectively. The third route climbed by Butterfield and McDermott was *Callisto*, originally called *Polish Peacemaker* and graded HVS 5b. These routes were renamed due to some doubt on the original line taken, and major discrepancies in the reported grades. *Callisto/Polish Peacemaker* was thoroughly cleaned by Robert Brown and Charlie White and regraded at VS 5a.



# GLENMARKSIE CRAG



1. Hiroshima Groove 2. Six Trees 3. Greased Lightning 4. Greased Lightning, Direct Start
5. Strategic Arms Limitation 6. Callisto/Polish Peacemaker 7. Deimos 8. Phobos 9. Proteus
10. Dynamite 11. Walk on By 12. Wild Mint 13. Bears Choice Variation 14. Sickie Moon/  
An Fear Ghorta 15. Selene/An Fear Feusagach 16. Sea of Tranquility 17. The Juggler
18. Dog Leg 19. Dog Mantle 20. Small Wall Thins 21. Two Step.

All these discoveries and re-discoveries avoided the real issues of the crag. The ascent of *Phobos* at E2 5c and particularly *Strategic Arms Limitation* at E4 6a by Mackenzie and Brown point to a harder future at Glenmarksie. Scope still remains for some particularly hard looking routes on the Main Crag. The Top Crag was ignored until 1989 when the off-width of *Gristone Corner* was dug out, revealing a taste of what is to come for the future.

### Access and Notes

Best reached by turning west off the A832 beyond Contin (marked Loch Achilty) and parking just before the dam at Loch Luichart where there is plenty of parking space. The crag is reached in 15 minutes by a pleasant walk over the dam and up the hillside, keeping to the right, through birches, arriving below a scrambling groove leading to a rock glacia.

This is a schist crag which is very sound, and cleaning has revealed impeccable rock. New routes here will require wire brushing however. Unlike some of the other crags here, it lends itself to wall and slab climbs which give pleasant middle grade climbing as well as harder routes. The crag is not totally visible from below, and there are routes up to 50m in length. There is no seasonal restriction, and since it faces south east, it gets plenty of sun and dries quickly, being often climbable in winter. The owner of the crag does not object to climbing, but does not want 'heavy' gardening to take place. Please leave all trees and bushes in place and be thoughtful when cleaning routes. Many of the steeper climbs in the central and right hand sections are of a sustained technical nature, an analogy being that if the crag was turned upside down it would be full of incuts! The routes are generally well protected by wires and Friends.

The crag takes the form of a central slab steepening to a wall, bounded on the right by a slab and headwall. Two small crags lie above and to the right. On the left of the Main Crag there is a gully with a small buttress above a rowan tree, and left again a low wall that stretches up the hillside.

The climbs are described going from right to left.

To the centre is an overhanging bay bottomed by a rock glacia with a slanting chimney on the left and a corner to the right. Right again is a slab and headwall.

### —Hiroshima Grooves 31m E1

J.R. Mackenzie, D. Butterfield. 26th April, 1980.

1. Climb the slab right of the corner at a shallow curving groove to reach a nick in the headwall. Climb the V-break and finish up the groove. A well protected airy finish (5b).

### —Six Trees 31m MVS

J.R. Mackenzie, D. McCallum. 30th June, 1979.

1. Scramble to the rock glacia via a little groove, left of the above route. Climb the corner on the right of the bay to a slab and belays (4b).
2. Traverse right across slab to finish past trees, a good pitch.

### —Greased Lightning 35m HVS

I. Ruscoe, IMC Member. Pre-1977.

Takes the fine hanging chimney groove on the left of the bay. Start below this in a hollow.

1. Climb the right hand of two flake cracks to the glacia and belays (4b).
2. Take the crux wall into the chimney and climb past constriction to the top (5a). A fine climb of its type.

### Variation—Direct Start

HVS

J.R. Mackenzie, M. Birch. April, 1980.

Climb a pinnacle left of the normal start to gain bald slab and glacia (5a).

—*Strategic Arms Limitation*

34m E4

R. Brown, J.R. Mackenzie. 26th August, 1989.

The route which took the crag into the eighties; a much talked about line. The severely overhanging groove right of *Greased Lightning* at the back of the glacis.

1. Start in the hollow and climb by the crack left of *Greased Lightning* to the glacis (10m 4c). (Can be avoided by scrambling up the glacis on the right).
2. Climb the strenuous and very sustained corner which overhangs 1 in 4 to a flake at the top on the left. Mantel this (first hands off rest above), and continue up the pleasant slab nose to the top (24m 6a). Adequately protected by wires, the number of which will depend on leader stamina. A very fine route. Care should be taken to keep one rope well right of the groove due to a sharp flake at half height.

—*Callisto/Polish Peacemaker*

21m VS

R. Brown, C. White. 10th June, 1989.

B. McDermott, D. Butterfield. 1982.

A fine sustained route at the top of its grade.

1. Scramble up to the left edge of the glacis below the top pitch of *Greased Lightning*. Step left onto the wall where a technical foot traverse leads left to a prominent crack. The crack is followed over a small overhang in a fine position, and where it bends back right, climb the left arete of *Greased Lightning* to a tree belay (5a). The first pitch of *Strategic Arms Limitation* makes a fine addition to this climb.

—*Deimos*

24m E1

J.R. Mackenzie, R. Brown. 10th September, 1989.

A pleasantly sustained route on excellent rock.

1. Climb the short slanting crack left of *Callisto* to a triangular niche. Awkward moves now lead up right to the crack of *Callisto* (runners). From below the small overhang of *Callisto*, traverse left then climb past a horizontal crack to reach a small ledge. Traverse left to the far end and climb the slab up and right to a recessed corner. Pull over the overlap and climb the slab above direct to the tree (5b).

—*Phobos*

24m E2

J.R. Mackenzie, R. Brown. 19th June, 1989.

Excellent sustained climbing that is constantly interesting. Start right of a central groove (*Proteus*) at a thin crack.

1. Climb the crack to an overhung ramp. Traverse left along this to a small ledge and then awkwardly into the big niche. Step out right onto the wall where hidden holds lead to another ledge. Surmount the overlap above and climb the delicate slab which leads to the same tree belay as *Callisto* (5c).

—*Proteus*

30m HVS

J.R. Mackenzie. 23rd April, 1980.

1. Left of *Phobos* the wall is split by a steep groove. Gain a ramp and step right under a roof, surmount this and climb left rib to step right into niche (crux). Climb up the groove over a small roof, step up right to a shelf, then up left past a flake to a small ledge and (30m 5a). It is possible to climb the pleasant slab left of the upper roof by stepping left. A very fine climb with a concentrated but well protected pitch.

—*Dynamite*

35m E2

J.R. Mackenzie, D. McCallum. 2nd July, 1979.

R. Brown, J.R. Mackenzie. 22nd April, 1990.

The original route followed an inferior line traversing under the roof to belay on the tree (E1 5b). The line described is that which should be followed.

1. Left of *Phobos* is a black recess topped by overhangs. Climb slab corner on the right over an overlap. Step left under overhang and pull over this centrally via thin cracks; possible belays above but a little higher. Climb the pleasant slab directly to the top (5c).

## -Walk on By

36m Hard Severe

D. McCallum, J.R. Mackenzie. 30th June, 1979.

1. Left of *Dynamite* is a wedge with a tree at the top. Climb an awkward pod on the left side of the wedge to a birch tree and belay (10m 4b).
2. Traverse right across ledges to step up at end. Climb the slab direct to ledges. Either walk off or continue up the next route (26m).

## -Wild Mint

45m Hard Severe

D. Butterfield, J.R. Mackenzie, D. McCallum. 18th June, 1979.

1. Climb the right hand corner of the block to gain tree (10m 4b).
2. Step left to reach niche in corner and climb slab rightwards to a break to reach broken slabs and belays (4a).
3. Gain slab groove on left to ledges, go left to steep corner and finish up this by large loose slab resting on top (4a).

A wandering route which takes the easiest line up the cliff.

## -Bears Choice Variation

12m Severe

D. Butterfield (solo). 1982.

Above the corner of the parent route, traverse right 3m then go straight up to a ledge.

Immediately left of the block containing *Wild Mint* and *Walk on By* is a slab which has two very pleasant routes which are less sustained than those further right.

## -Sickle Moon/An Fear Ghorta

24m HVS

J.R. Mackenzie, G. Cullen 25th November, 1989

B. McDermott, D. Butterfield 1982

1. Climb the slanting crack left of the block then up the curving crack in the slab direct to the overhang (RP3 protects). The original way was to move into *Wild Mint* before climbing the overhang, but this is both inferior and much easier. Pull over the overhang and step right, then up a left trending ramp to the overlap. Step right and finish up the crack; fixed belay point (5a).

Concentrated up to the overhang, the climb having a bold lower half. A good route protectable by small wires.

## -Selene/An Fear Feusagach

24m HVS

G. Cullen, J.R. Mackenzie. 25th November, 1989.

B. McDermott, D. Butterfield. 1982.

1. Start a metre right of *Sickle Moon* and climb the wall and left curving ramp. Step over the small overlap and climb direct up the shelves to a crack. The original way climbed the slab just left of the cracks. Instead climb the steep crux slab and finish up a crack which lies left of the top crack of *Sickle Moon* (5b).

A gentle start leads to an emphatic crux, another good route.

## -Sea of Tranquillity

48m HVS

J.R. Mackenzie, G. Cullen. 12th March, 1990.

Probably the most enjoyable route here, on excellent rock which is similar to gritstone on the top pitch. Start as for *Selene*.

1. Climb the leftward ramp to step left below a fine crack in a groove. Alternatively, climb the groove past a bush direct to the crack. Climb the crack, stepping left above the roof, to reach a horizontal break. Step right to the bush and climb the leftward scoop to easier ledges. Climb the corner immediately above (33m 5a).
2. The desperate looking headwall above is split by a thin crack, just right of a shallow scoop. Gain and climb the crack, stepping left to a small break at the top (15m 5a).

The unprotected and tenuous slab left of the scoop on the first pitch has been climbed direct at 5c, a fine but artificial variation giving the hardest pure friction climbing here.

*-The Juggler*

50m HVS

M. Birch, J.R. Mackenzie. 3rd July, 1979.

1. Start at the foot of a tongue of rock, left of the corner which is left of *Selene*. Climb right edge of slab, step left beneath overhangs, then up to pinnacle belay on the left (4a).
2. Step right, climb a wall past heather to block belay on the left (4c).
3. Climb corner above past mantleshelf, step right to heather, then easily left to wide crack and belays (4c).
4. Climb up to inset right corner below big roof. Step round edge to a sloping ledge, crux, and finish up a steep slab.

A good top pitch, but otherwise very vegetated.

*-Dog Leg*

40m Difficult

M. Birch, D. Gilbert, J.R. Mackenzie, 4th June, 1979.

1. The slabs on the left of the Main Crag are bordered by a gully. Climb the rust coloured corner to the right of the gully, past a rose bush, to belays in a wide crack.
2. Climb the wall right of the crack, then left by a horizontal break to gain a niche. A large head of rock (the Dog Head) has a V corner on its right. Climb this to finish, a good pitch.

*-Dog Mantle*

30m Severe

M. Birch, J.R. Mackenzie. 27th October, 1979.

1. The route starts halfway up the gully left of the Main Crag. Traverse right to belays in the wide crack.
2. Climb straight up the wall to a corner left of the large top overhang and finish to the corner (4a).

Left of the gully lies Small Wall, with a rowan tree at its base.

*-Small Wall Thins*

12m Hard Severe

J.R. Mackenzie, D. Gilbert. 23rd September, 1979.

1. Climb the central groove to step left at the top and finish up a slab (4b).

*-Two Step*

12m VS

D. Gilbert, J.R. Mackenzie. 23rd September, 1979.

1. Climb slabs above tree, up crux cracks on left, and finish up *Small Wall Thins* (4c).  
Left of Small Wall is a cleaned area of cracks.

*-Staircase*

9m Very Difficult

D. Gilbert, J.R. Mackenzie. 23rd September, 1979.

1. Climb pleasant rock 3m left of the tree.

*-Kojak*

7m VS

J.R. Mackenzie. 23rd September, 1979.

1. A blank slab lies left of *Staircase*. Gain a ledge on the left, then either left up a thin gangway or right over bald crest at the same grade (4c).

A splendid little problem with no protection.

Below Small Wall lies Lower Wall, a line of good bouldering rock plus several short routes. Near the right end is a prominent overhang.

*-Sideline*

7m Severe

1. Climb the shallow corner right of the overhang (4a).

*-Middle Wall*

5m VS

1. Takes a central line up the wall left of *Sideline* (5b).

*-Bitter Bother*

8m Hard Severe

1. Climb the short layback corner right of the overhang, finish up the top wall, trending right (4b).

*-Clutch and Thrutch*

10m E1

J.R. Mackenzie. 1979.

1. Start below the overhang and climb it. Once on the jutting ledge the top wall is easier. A good safe problem in an alarming position (5c).

Walking past further small walls, and just right of a tree filled corner, is a curved wall with four horizontal breaks.

*-A Touch of Class*

10m E2

J.R. Mackenzie. 1979.

1. Climb the wall centrally using the breaks to a tenuous finish. The best of the routes in this area (5b).

*-Victoriana*

8m Difficult

1. Climb the old fashioned corner to the left, with or without the tree.

Above the Main Crag, to the right, lie two smaller crags, Middle Crag and Top Crag. Middle Crag is immediately up right from the Main Crag. Both Middle and Top Crag can be reached by scrambling up a little corner just right of the Main Crag and then swinging up right over a flake. The crags are then above. This also provides the best descent.

**Middle Crag-Trade Route**

11m Very Difficult

D. Butterfield, J.R. Mackenzie. 26th April, 1980.

1. Climb the slab left of a central groove, exiting right at the top.

*-Central Groove*

11m Severe

J.R. Mackenzie, D. Butterfield. 26th April, 1980.

1. Climb the slab right of the groove, gain groove to ledge and block (4a).

**Top Crag**

This is most easily reached by walking up right from the corner and flake approach as for Middle Crag, and then traversing a mossy slab up right, fine when dry but worrying when faced with a wet descent (possible abseil), or by scrambling up the wide corner left of the slabby arete to the left of *Trade Route* and then walking right to the left end of Top Crag.

The crag is quite impressive for its relatively short height, being undercut by a sizeable roof, and with crack or shallow corner lines cutting through this. It resembles a gritstone crag in the type of climbing, and the rock, once cleaned of the inevitable moss, is mainly excellent. Protection is not a problem on the majority of lines here. The crag forms a good strenuous counterpart to the more delicate climbs lower down. The routes are described from right to left.

*-Gritstone Corner*

12m HVS

J.R. Mackenzie, P. Figg. 30th September, 1989.

This is the right angled corner crack at the right end of the crag. It provides a strenuous problem using a variety of jamming techniques, probably most easily solved by a right arm and leg thrust into the recesses of the crack. A good climb of its type which is often wet. A sense of humour is a prerequisite for success.

-Tiddley

4m

The boulder problem on the wall just left of the left edge of the crag (5b).

### SCATWELL, Upper Slabs

This pleasant outcrop lies a mile along the minor road that connects Loch Achilty to Strathconnon. A layby exists directly below the crag. A five minute walk, skirting either side of the bog, reaches the slabs.

The cliff is composed of a rough granulitic schist, of perfect friction on the slabs but more blocky lower down. The crag is simple in layout, being a sweep of clean slabs bottomed by a long overhang. Shorter but steeper slabs extend rightwards from the main crag. Due to the extraordinary friction, it is quite possible to climb in rain here, providing that areas of lichen are avoided. The crag reaches a maximum height of 30 metres.

-Stranger than Friction

30m VS

R. Brown, J.R. Mackenzie. 8th March, 1990.

The centre of the main crag has two overhanging grooves with a more broken corner just to the right again. A drooping tree lies above the right groove.

1. Strenuous climbing leads to a mantel and the tree (6m 5a).
2. Climb the initially steep slab directly behind the tree, then up and left to a heather ledge. Climb the short headwall via a niche (24m 4c).

Some delectable but unprotected slab padding higher, and entertaining but safe moves lower, make for an enjoyable climb.

## CAIRNGORMS

### NORTHERN COIRES, Coire an-t-Sneachda

The Mess of Pottage-Honeypot

90m GRADE IV

J. Lyall, M. Sclater. 25th March, 1989.

Climbs the left edge of the buttress, finishing by the obvious square-cut chimney. Start on the left at a triangular recess and go diagonally right on thinly iced slabs. Go up a gully and the chimney, passing the capping roof on the right wall (crux).

-Wachacha

90m Severe

S. Aisthorpe, J. Lyall. 18th July, 1989.

Follows a line up the crag to the right of *Honeypot*. Start up a short right-facing corner, moving left where it steepens, then up a crackline until easier climbing leads slightly right to below the top wall. The upper pitch is superb and follows a crack and left-facing corner (8m right of the *Honeypot* chimney), then a bulge and easier crack to the top.

GRADE V

J. Lyall, A. Nisbet. 6th January, 1990.

Climbs a crackline between the start of *Honeypot* and the summer start. Move right and up the right-hand gully to belay below the top wall. The top wall was climbed as for summer, but the pitch was split by belaying on the left before the bulge.

-Pot of Gold

90m GRADE IV/V

J. Lyall, S. Spalding. 26th November, 1988.

Climbs the buttress just right of *The Message*. Climb the blocky chimney (as for *The Message*). Immediately above this, a short traverse right leads to a crack/groove line. Follow this and a short squeeze chimney, then over blocks until close to *The Message*. Climb up right to a large ledge. Climb the centre of the wall above by cracks and shallow corners (hard start), then follow a chimney to the top.

-Mariella

80m Very Severe

S. Aisthorpe, J. Lyall 18th July, 1989

Scramble up easy slabs to belay just right of the blocky chimney of *The Message*.

1. Climb the red groove above, swing left past the roof, and continue up the crackline (45m 4b).
2. Move left and climb slabs and wall to the top (35m).

**Aladdin's Buttress-Salvation**

100m Very Severe

S. Aisthorpe, J. Lyall. 19th July, 1989.

Follows a line of cracks between *Damnation* and *Aladdin's Buttress Original Route* (winter). Start at the base of the chimney at a slabby ramp which leads out left to a prow split by a thin crack. Climb this, then a short wall and slabs to belay on a broad ramp (40m 4b). Break through the overlaps above at some flakes, and climb cracks up the slab (35m 4c). Move up right and on to a block, then climb a shallow corner to the top (25m 4a).

GRADE V

J. Lyall, A. Nisbet. 27th December, 1989.

A good winter route, sustained and surprisingly turfey. Already repeated. On pitch one, a short chimney groove left of the thin crack was taken. On pitch two, the flakes are tempting but both ascents climbed more directly and to their right.

**Fluted Buttress-Sax Appeal**

49m GRADE IV

R. Anderson, C. Greaves. 30th October, 1988.

An alternative start to *Fluted Buttress Direct*, reached by climbing the first section of *Broken Gully* and traversing left to a rib and spike belay. The lower rocks will bank out later in the season. The first line on the left, a shallow groove/corner up the side of the rib, is *Cruising*. Just beyond this, another shallow groove/fault line leads to a belay in an obvious short chimney just before *Fluted Buttress Direct* is joined.

**Coire an Lochain-Torque of the Devil**

107m GRADE V

R. Anderson, C. Greaves. 13th November, 1988.

Climbs the front of the buttress between *Central Crack* and *Astroturfer*. Just left of centre is a slim corner with a prominent short crack on its right wall. Belay just below this.

1. Gain the base of the corner. Climb the crack, then the wall on the right to a ledge. Move right to climb a short chimney, then traverse left beneath a steep wall to belay below a line of weakness (27m).
2. Climb the line of weakness to a ledge and belay (12m).
- 3,4 Move up to gain *Astroturfer* and follow this to its junction with *Central Crack*, finishing up this (68m).

-The Hoarmaster

61m GRADE V

R. Anderson, G. Nicoll, R. Milne. 19th November, 1988.

Essentially a direct entry into the upper fault of *The Overseer*, taking the obvious square cut chimney to the right of that route.

1. Climb to the ledge at the base of *The Overseer* corner and traverse right to the chimney. Climb this, pull out right, and move up to belay at the foot of a short corner (25m).
2. Climb the corner and continue up the obvious fault line to the top. *The Overseer* moves left from a pinnacle just above a narrow chimney (36m).

**Hookers Corner**

52m GRADE V

R. Anderson, C. Greaves. 26th November, 1988.

Climbs the obvious corner round the arete from *The Overseer*, a short way up the *Y-Gully, Left Branch*. Climb a groove and step right to belay just right of the corner.

1. Step across and gain the corner, which is climbed to its top (25m).
2. Finish up the obvious chimney fault, also the final pitch of *The Hoarmaster* (27m).



## -The Deviant

46m GRADE V

R. Anderson, C. Anderson, T. Prentice. 26th November, 1989.

Takes the fault line just right of *Hookers Corner*, gained by climbing the *Left Branch of Y-Gully* and moving left to a ledge.

1. Gain the left end of the ledge and pull up into the fault, which is then followed via a short steep chimney to a ledge, block belay (18m).
2. Move up a short way, then go right and step into a groove which is followed to a steep wall where moves right enable easier ground to be reached, leading to a belay just below the top (28m).

## -Tracheotomy

83m GRADE V

R. Anderson, T. Prentice (alts), R. Milne. 3rd December, 1989.

Takes the shallow grooveline/fault up the left side of the wall left of *Deep Throat*. Start beneath the obvious rib, *Oesophagos* takes the grooveline higher up on the other side of the rib.

1. Gain the groove easily, then climb it up and right to easier ground leading to a belay on the crest beside a large flake (37m).
2. Step back left into the groove and continue directly to the foot of the final tower. Move up left, then back right to climb the crack in the tower to the crest, which is then followed to the top (46m).

## -Deep Throat

91m GRADE V

R. Anderson, T. Prentice, R. Milne (alts). 2nd December, 1989.

An excellent route taking the obvious wide crack through the stepped overhangs up the left side of the pillar left of *Gaffers Groove*. Start just right of *Glottal Stop*.

1. Climb a wide groove and move up to gain the crack which is followed over three roofs, then up to just below a chockstone where a swing left gains the belay (30m).
2. Regain the crack and follow it to the top of the pillar, belay on the far side of the wide gully/fault (24m).
3. Climb the groove above onto the crest, which is followed to the top (37m).

**BEINN A'BHUIRD, Coire an Dubh Lochain, Bloodhound Buttress**

## -Desolation Crack

70m E1

S.N. Smith, G. Strange. 23rd July, 1989.

Climbs a prominent curving crack on the left wall of *Tantalus Gully*. Scramble to below the first pitch of *Tantalus* then traverse left to belay beside a small wedged flake.

1. Go up and left to a grass ledge. Climb a steepening groove and make an awkward move right into a slabby recess. Continue up to belay at the foot of the crack (20m 5b).
2. Climb the crack to a ledge and belay, an excellent pitch (25m 5a).
3. Finish up the fault, with a tight squeeze at an overhanging slot (25m 4c).

**Coire na Clach, Black Crag-Twisted Sister**

35m E2

W. Moir, N. Ritchie, C. Stewart. 15th August, 1988.

Climbs the 'fierce diagonal crack-line' mentioned in the guide (p187). Start down and right of the corner/crack and climb a thin crack to enter the corner which is climbed up and left to the big bay of *Twister*. Finish as for *Twister* up the left side of the capping chokestone (5c).

## -Chocolate Girls

35m E1

N. Ritchie, C. Stewart, W. Moir. 15th August, 1988.

Start just left of *Twister* and climb a crack-line slanting out left to an arete. Climb the arete, then the headwall by a fine jamming crack above (5b).

**LOCH A'AN BASIN, Cairn Etchachan, Lower Cliff—Western Approach Route**

D. McCutcheon, A. Nisbet, 19th December, 1989.

110m GRADE III

An obvious feature of the lower cliff is a series of consecutive left slanting ramps which end at a short chimney just below The Terrace. The ramps have turf but can also ice up. Start left of the lowest point of the buttress (which is next to *Castlegates Gully*, and just left of a mound of huge blocks, where the lowest ramp is clearly seen. Follow three narrow ramps (three pitches), the last pitch including a short right-leaning chimney (appears as a crack from below) which leads to The Terrace. This is a natural start to *Equinox*.

*—The Silent Approach*

110m GRADE IV

Takes a right-slanting line parallel to *Eastern Approach Route*, crossing *Western Approach Route* and finishing in a trough below *Guillotine*, for which the route makes a natural start (inclusive route is Grade V). Start at the left side of the buttress base and climb grooves for 15m to an obvious low ledge below a steep wall. Follow the ledge to its right end, then go upwards trending right to belay as for *Western Approach Route*, between its second and third ramps. Continue in the same line to break through the steep right wall of the ramps by a narrow chimney, moving right and back left to gain the trough below *Guillotine*.

*—Snakebite*

100m GRADE V

J. Lyall, A. Nisbet, 5th March, 1990.

Climbs a corner left of *Nom-de-Plume* and inset into the right side of the pillar containing *Python*. An enjoyable route, being steep, sustained, and co-operative. Start just left of *Nom-de-Plume*.

1. Go up via a wide crack to a ledge below the corner system (10m).
2. Climb a strenuous corner (crux), then curve up left via a squeeze chimney to a higher ledge (15m).
3. Traverse right across horizontal cracks set in a vertical wall, then continue up the corner to the ledge below the final chimney of *Guillotine* (25m).
4. Descend *Nom-de-Plume* a short distance (or perhaps belay lower down), then finish up rightwards on mixed ground, sometimes by an icefall (50m).

This is a logical and slightly easier finish to *Nom-de-Plume* also.

*—The Hairpin Loop, Hybridised Variation*

P. George, A. Nisbet, 1st March, 1990.

90m GRADE IV

Climb the initial fault (only 25m right of *Pagan Slit*, then go directly up the groove above (enter from the left), and up short walls and an easier groove to gain the crest beside the short crack.

**Stag Rocks—Barndance**

A. Ross, M. Sutherland, 18th September, 1988.

50m Hard Very Severe

1. Left of the first pitch of *Flakes of Fear* is another corner. Climb this and the cracks above to a belay ledge occupied by loose flakes (20m 4c).
2. Climb the wall above the belay and a wide crack to a ledge. Step right and go up the fine wall to a triangular niche. Climb the thin crack above this to a ledge (20m 5b/c).
3. Climb the thin crack above the belay to easy ground (10m 5b/c).

Either scramble down left to the gully, or a scramble and a pitch of V.Diff leads to the top.

*—Optical Illusion*

80m E1

A. Ross, A. Nisbet, 9th July, 1989.

1. Climb the first pitch of *Lonesome Pine* (20m 5a).
2. Move left and climb the obvious crackline to reach a deep groove. Move up right at the top of this, surmount the roof, and continue up the crackline to reach easier ground (45m 5c).
3. Climb leftwards up cracks to a roof which is crossed via deep cracks to reach easier ground (15m 4b).

A scramble pitch and a pitch of V.Diff lead to the top.

## -Open Caste 150m GRADE III

D. McCutcheon, A. Nisbet. 20th December, 1989.

The route climbs an obvious ridge just left of *Quartz-diggers Cave Route*. Start at the foot of *Afterthought Arete* and slant up rightwards for two long pitches to belay below the crest and about 20m left of the quartz-diggers cave. The start of the crest is steep and was bypassed by going right and back left to belay near it (30m). The crest was followed to easy ground (30m).

## -Light Entertainment

J. Lyall, D. Bulmer. 25th November, 1989.

135m GRADE III

Climbs the buttress between *Apex Gully* and *Groove and Rib*. Start a short way below *Apex Gully* and traverse right on a low ledge to climb a V-groove. Follow a line of grooves and chimneys just left of the crest.

## -Maranatha 75m GRADE IV

S. Aisthorpe, J. Lyall. 24th December, 1988.

The route starts in The Amphitheatre and climbs the wall right of *Right-Hand Finish*. Traverse right under a large flake and climb to the right-hand and largest of two grooves. Climb this, passing roofs on their left (crux). Just before a wide chimney, go up left by a flake crack to a platform, and finish up a corner.

## Hell's Lum Crag-Beelzebub

I. Davidson, A. Ross (alts), P. Stewart. 30th July, 1988. 115m Hard Very Severe

1. Scramble up *Kiwi Gully* to belay beneath the big overlap, midway between *Big De'il* and *Devil Dancer*. Surmount the overlap (crux) and go up the thin crackline above to reach two horizontal breaks. Move up and traverse right, beneath the next overlap, to belay beneath a shallow left-facing corner (37m 5c).
2. Go up to the overlap, cross it, and go up to the base of the corner. Climb this and continue to belay at the base of the *Devil Dancer* corner. A poorly protected pitch (25m 4c).
3. Move right and go up to a crack. Climb this and continue up the arete to a junction with *Devil Dancer*. Follow this to its belay (28m 4c).
4. An independent finish was made but is very scrappy. Instead finish by either *Devil Dancer* or *Devil's Alternative*, much more in keeping with the rest of the route (25m).

## Notes

**Shelterstone Crag.** An amended description of *Thor* following the FFA by R. Campbell and N. Craig. The second took place when G. Latter and G. Lawrie climbed the route about half an hour behind. Early to bed, early to rise.....

## -Thor

107m E5

R. Campbell, N. Craig. 15th July, 1989 (FFA).

A stunning line, surely giving the best climbing on the crag.

1. Follow stepped corners and traverse right to the base of the main corner proper. Climb this to a small stance at two pegs-same belay as *Run of the Arrow* (37m 5b).
2. Continue up the diedre to awkward RP placements beneath an obvious flake/sidepull above the overlap. Gain a good sidepull in the alcove (good golo and PR) and cross this (crux) to belay on the flake at a clutch of pegs (24m 6b). It is worth leaving the last two pegs in the alcove clipped as backup for the next pitch.
3. Continue across beneath the overlap past a PR to reach a good jug, then a good horizontal and a further PR above the overlap (2F here also). Traverse right with a long reach, and follow a series of rising ledges rightwards, passing a line of Rurps to reach *The Pin*. Climb this to belay (46m 6a).

Abseil descent from two pegs and sling 10m up and left of belay.

**Stag's Rocks.** *Final Groove*, takes the big groove line left of *Final Selection*. (Grade II/III, 60m, J. Lyall & M. Sclater, 5th November 1988).

**COIRE GARBHLACH (Glen Feshie)—Garbh Ridge**

150m GRADE III/IV

J. Lyall, A. Nisbet. 16th December, 1989.

The route follows the crest of the second ridge from the top of the smooth wall of the upper coire. This is just left of a buttress topped by two towers separated by a chimney. The climbing was easy apart from a short left traverse across a steep wall which separates the lower ridge from the upper.

**LOCHNAGAR, Pinnacle Face—Infidel**

60m E3

A. Ross, C. Stewart, M. Sutherland. 12th June, 1988.

1. Start right of *Pinnacle Grooves*. Climb the short wall to a big ledge and surmount a steep flake. Go straight up the slabs above and surmount a bulge to reach a short crack which leads to a sloping ledge about 4m below a large left-facing corner (30m 5b).
2. Step up and left and attain a standing position on a horribly booming flake. Go up the blind crack and climb a shallow left-facing corner (left of the aforementioned large one) to reach sloping ledges. Climb the cracked wall to a small ledge and finish up the right-facing corner above to reach grassy ledges near the Springboard (30m 5c).

—An Saobh-Chreideach

48m E5

A. Ross (unsec.). 17th June, 1989.

1. Start just down left of *Nihilist Direct*. Climb leftwards up a short ramp and go up a groove to gain ledges. Follow *Nihilist* past the mantelshelf to another ledge. Move up left and go up to gain a jug at the base of twin blind cracks. Step across left to the belay ledge of *Infidel* (21m 5b).
2. Move right and climb the blind cracks to the base of the big left-facing corner. Go up this and the left trending cracks above to a good sidepull. Follow the horizontal break rightwards to the base of another corner (crux). Finish up this to gain grassy ledges above the Springboard (27m 6b).

The route was originally climbed in a single pitch (second decided to stay on the ground), but this caused horrendous rope drag. Best climbed as described.

**CREAG AN DUBH LOCH, False Gully Wall—Heart of Gold**

70m E3

A. Ross, M. Sutherland (alts). 15th July, 1989.

Basically climbs the big horizontal roof and corner left of *Masque*.

1. Start at the same point as *Hotblack Desiato*. Go down *False Gully* a metre or so and climb up right to a short overlap below the main roof. Move right along the overlap and go up to a PR. Climb up to the main roof and traverse right to belay at the base of the big corner (15m 5c).
2. Climb the corner and cracks above to a small ledge at the base of another corner (35m 5b).
3. Climb the corner, go right, and scramble up to belay (20m 4a).

(Cleaned by abseil in 1985, but had been wet ever since.)

**GLEN CLOVA, Upper North-west Crag—Taste Me**

46m E4

G. Farquhar, M. McGowan. 10th September, 1988.

Takes the right arete of *The Red Wall*, gained by traversing out from that route.

1. Follow *The Red Wall* right-hand start to its belay, and continue up pitch 2 for a metre or so to a small ledge and belay at the base of the red wall (30m 5b).
2. Traverse out right on detachable sidepulls and underclings to the arete. Climb this to the top (16m 6a).

**Notes**

**Central Crag.** G. Farquhar notes *Empire of the Sun* to be E4 6a and excellent.

G. Latter notes the 2nd ascent of *Cinderella* on-sight without a rest point, and found the route not at all serious.

**Notes (Other Cairngorm areas)**

**Braeriach, Garbh Choire Mor.** A variation start to *She-Devil's Buttress*, going a short way up *Vulcan* and breaking out left on a vague ramp (crux) to gain the original route at the foot of the steep ice groove. (Grade IV, S. Aisthorpe & J. I. yall, 9th April 1988)

**Glen Einich.** The winter ascent of *Einich Rib* has been reconsidered, and is now thought to be Grade IV. The party in doubt were J. Grosset, J. Lyall, S. Lampard, and G. Scott.

**LORN AND LOCHABER****GLEN NEVIS, Secretaries Buttress—Just Passing**

25m E1

I. Taylor, N. Brodie. 22nd June, 1989.

Start at lowest rocks as for *Last Word*. Climb direct to break of *Vincent* and continue up the wall above, via two thin cracks. Finish up *Super-Direct* (5a).

**Galaxy Buttress—Poor Man's Wimpabout**

30m E2

I. Taylor, A. Caren. 9th September, 1989.

Start round the right-hand side of the roof, at a small tree. From the corner above the tree, gain a good hold on the left and swing leftwards into a scoop. Climb up to a horizontal crack and hand-traverse left to gain the crack of *Short Man's Walkabout*. Follow this to the top.

**Pandora's Buttress—Move It or Park It**

27m E5

M. McGowan. 11th June, 1989.

Hard, sustained climbing up the headwall above *Tomag*, well protected by a couple of in-situ pegs. Start at the foot of the groove of *Pandora Direct*.

1. Up broken ground to a short left-facing corner. Climb this to gain the start of the twin cracks of *Tomag*. Move along these until it is possible to gain PR's. A hard move past these leads to an even harder move to gain a small though good pocket. Small holds on the sloping shelf above and an awkward exit rightwards leads to an easy slab. Climb directly up this to belay as for *Flying Dutchman* (6b/c).

**Road Buttress—Lacerations**

18m E3

G. Latter. 22nd May, 1989.

An eliminate line up the blunt rib and slab just left of *No Entry*, avoiding holds on that route. Pull through the bulge slightly rightwards to thin diagonal holds. Move up on these, then a good easy flake in the slab (6a).

**Riverside Buttress—Mice on the Riviera**

E4

G. Latter, P. Farrell. 3rd August, 1989.

The short blunt arete to the right of *Rats in Paradise*. Climbed on its left-hand side.

1. Traverse diagonally across the wall to a ledge on the arete, runners in the thin crack round on the right. Make some committing moves to gain a good flake and easier ground to finish as for *Rats...* (6a).

**Spreadeagle Buttress—Fools Gold**

34m HVS

M.L. Gibb, G. Latter. 7th May, 1989.

A pitch above the ledge at the top of *Rough Diamonds/Assorted Gems*, which can also be reached by scrambling along the grassy ledge.

1. From a nut belay on the ledge, follow the obvious contorted fault past some flakes to gain a slim hanging groove in the easier angled slab above. Pull into this, and ascend the slab, trending slightly rightwards to the edge, avoiding heather ledges on the right near the top. Thread belay on boulder over the top (5a).

**The Space Face—*Dancing on the Edge of Existence***

37m E5

G. Latter. 17th June, 1988.

Follows the original line to finish up the fine flared finger-crack up the true edge, finishing in a superb position.

1. Follow the obvious crack-lines up the centre of the wall, as for the ordinary route, though avoiding the left traverse onto the easy flakes on the arete. Using underclings, gain a small flake and fingerlocks in the base of the crack in the arete. Swing round and layback up the overhanging left wall of the arete, passing a long undercling on the left wall to stand on a good foothold in the crack. Swing back round, passing a further tricky section which enables a good horizontal break to be reached. Climb easily to the top (6a).

**Upper Buzzard Crag—*Forty Two***

12m E4

G. Latter, K. Howett. 3rd July, 1988.

The deceptive overhanging crack-line just left of *So Long*.

1. Up past a small undercling, to lunge for a good hold (RP 2 behind small flake hold just above, F 2 & 3 under overlap). Make awkward moves using good undercling above to reach large flake and nut runners. Move slightly left, then back right to exit on good holds. Pull over and scramble to tree belay further back (6a).

**Phantom Crag**

This crag lies tucked in the trees on the slopes of Sgurr A'Mhaim, midway between Boot Hill and Buccaneer crags. Approach as for Buccaneer, up the right bank of the Allt an t-Snaig, continuing along the plateau for a few hundred metres past Buccaneer, to follow a well worn path down to the foot of the crag.

**—*The First Cut***

24m E6

G. Latter. 4th June, 1988.

The crescent shaped finger-crack splitting the right side of the crag. It provides a ferocious testpiece. Very well protected, it gives a powerful, sustained exercise in finger-jamming, despite its meagre length. Climb the crack with interest to exit on good holds. Finish up turfey ledges and occasional rock to belay further back.

**Steall Hut Crag—*Trick of the Tail***

30m E6

M. McGowan, G. Latter. 1st June, 1989.

A stunning pitch up the right to left diagonal crack/groove dominating the centre of the crag.

1. Climb easily up a short slab leftwards to an old ring peg under a roof. Up the left end into a crack, and follow this to make a hard lunge out leftwards (crux) for a good undercling. Using this, reach a superb block hold in the base of the triangular niche, and climb into this (no hands rest possible). Swing wildly out right to better holds, and up the twin cracks above with further difficulty to a recess and easy ground (6b).

**—*Watermark***

30m E4

G. Latter. 23rd May, 1989.

Steep strenuous and well protected climbing up the diagonal crack-line bounding the right edge of the overhanging front face of the crag. Start just right of the crack.

1. From a small sidepull, lunge up leftwards to a flat hold and gain a hidden incut just to its right. Pull left to good incuts at the back of the ramp, and continue up the crack using good holds on the right wall to move left to a prominent undercut flake. Make a hard move to gain the ledge above, and pull up left to finish up an easy (often wet) corner (6a).

## Notes

## Glen Nevis

The following notes on grading from G. Latter

*Cathode Smiles*, now considered E2 5c.

*Bitter Days*, repeated on a warmer day, E3 6a.

*Overlode*, 6a is thought to be a sufficient grade.

*Ethmoid*, The description in the last Journal relates to The Paunch. The top pitch is 5b.

*Triode* grade confirmed at E5 6a.

The peg on *Centrepiece* (Blacks Buttress) is at about 5m, not 10m.

**Spreadeagle Buttress.** Both *Veiny Fair* and *Chiaroscuro* were climbed in 1986, not 1988.

## WESTERN HIGHLANDS

## ARDGOUR, Glen Gour

A number of routes have surfaced after many years in someone's memory. Memory plays strange tricks. The location of these climbs may well be hard to find. Read on.

The climbs lie on slabs on the west side of Glen Gour, a glen usually neglected in favour of nearby Garbh Bheinn. The slabs are clean rough gabbro split by a number of ledges. The angle is Etive-like, with rougher rock and dubious belays. Follow the track from the bridge, past the ruined dam, up to a ruined sheep fank. A small path continues for a mile or so but the final stretch is over rough trackless heather, 4.5 miles.

## -Outrider

80m Severe

L. Brown, P. Brown. Easter 1972.

Climb the obvious left facing corner.

## -Indian Slab

150m Severe

I. Davidson, L. Brown. Easter 1972.

This route uses the mid height waist to provide a longer outing. Climb up slabs and grooves to the waist. Climb this on small holds to a stance (superb). Continue up slabs to the broad heather terrace.

## -Time Change

100m Hard Severe

I. Davidson, L. Brown, J. Mitchell.

Towards the right end of the slabs is a blank white slab. Climb this to a ledge (35m no belay). Continue up, moving right up the blank slab above to a heathery ledge (40m). Continue up slabs to the broad terrace.

The routes were climbed in (and graded for) big boots.

## BEN NEVIS

## Douglas Boulder-Cutlass

145m GRADE V/VI

A. Clarke, J. Main. 23rd March, 1989.

Good steep mixed climbing, the crux being the 30m corner. A surprising amount of turf.

1. Climb slabby rocks to the foot of the clean-cut corner (45m).
2. Climb the steep corner (30m).
3. Climb the steep chimney, followed by a cracked wall, to gain the *South-West Ridge* (30m).
4. Follow the crest to the top (40m).

**Secondary Tower Ridge—Reprobate's Rib**

150m Very Severe

R. Carchrie, N. Richardson, R.T. Richardson, B. Shackleton, A. Walker. June, 1989.

Climbs the right bounding rib of *Vanishing Gully*, with an 'interesting' crux on the steep tower.

1. Start to the right of *Vanishing Gully* and climb the rib to belay 10m below the huge clean slab (30m).
2. Climb up, then slightly rightwards to below a steep slightly dirty wall. Climb this to belay on a large ledge (45m 4b).
3. Move back left and up to belay on a further large ledge below an overhung corner (10m).
4. Climb the corner to reach easy ground (25m 4b).
5. Scramble to reach the crest of the Secondary Tower Ridge (45m).

**No. 3 Gully Buttress—Tramp**

GRADE IV

M. Duff, R. Nowack. 22nd January, 1989.

Climb the icefall slightly diagonally from immediately right of *Green Gully* and a metre or so right of *Venus*. Reach a snowy ledge and cross this to belay on the rocks. Immediately above is a dramatic left-facing chimney, not visible from below. Climb the chimney and the huge pedestal above to gain a cornercrack. Continue up cracked corners for 10m, moving left on more broken ground to reach the traversing ledge of *Aphrodite*.

**Moonlight Gully Buttress—Gaslight**

GRADE III/IV

M. Duff, R. Parsley 8th February, 1989

Climbs the summer route throughout.

**Notes**

No.3 Gully Buttress. The groove just left of *Quick Step* has been climbed by S. Venables, exiting left at the top. Reported to be hard. No further details.

The description of *Souix Wall* is somewhat misleading, so the following improvement is given. Thanks to M. Shaw, who gave willingly.

**—Souix Wall**

90m HVS

An excellent route on good rock. The climb follows an obvious groove line just left of centre of the steep face, right of *Knuckleduster*.

1. Follow a diagonal weakness up and right. Climb past a large rock fin and up to a square-cut niche (25m).
2. Step left onto the steep wall. Climb this to a crack, then move left onto a small ramp which moves back right to the base of the obvious corner/groove. Bridge up this to below a roof. Move left and back right to a peg belay above the roof (30m 5a).
3. Climb the steep crack above (hard to start) to a small overhang. Pull directly over this on large holds to a ledge and belay (20m 5a).
4. Climb the continuation crack to a large platform (15m). Scramble to the top of the buttress.

Moonlight Gully Buttress. The obvious line at the junction of the front and No. 5 Gully walls gives a good scramble with a 10m overhanging V. Diff crux, and is more fun than flogging up the gully to higher routes.

**CENTRAL HIGHLANDS****CREAG NA DOIRE DUIBHE**

This crag lies above Loch Caaldair, about an hours walk from the Raeburn Hut. It faces east and south. There is a magnificent steep wall which will undoubtedly provide good hard climbs. To the left of this wall is a more amiable area of rock, on which lies the following route. Messrs Crocket, McEwan, Richardson and Walker poked around here a few years ago and climbed two or three lines which are not recorded. The line now recorded may tie in with one of these, but due deference is made to the more experienced mountaineers.



## -Centenary Wall

60m Severe

M. Slessor, I. Smart. 7th May, 1989.

The climb is on excellent rock on the south face, well to the left of the prominent gully in the corner between the east and south faces. The base of the crag rises towards a gully to the west. The climb starts shortly below the entrance to this gully.

1. Climb the steep holdfull wall and traverse right to a rib. Climb directly to a heathery shelf where a delicate traverse right for 15m is required to gain a decent belay (43m).
2. Climb directly to the top (17m).

**AONACH MOR, Coire an Lochain, East Face**-*The Web*

100m GRADE II/III

S. Kennedy, C. Grindley. 25th November, 1989.

Follows the chimney line on the broken buttress approx 30m left of the wide descent gully (100m left of *Tunnel Vision*). Early in the season, the chimney offers a fairly sustained route on ice. The lower section may bank out in a heavy snow build-up.

-*Nausea*

90m GRADE II/III

J. Naismith, C. Watkins. 25th November, 1989.

50m to the left of the descent gully is a frozen waterfall. Climb the waterfall, exiting right at the top. Easy climbing leads to the cornice.

-*Gondola with the Wind*

S. Kennedy, S. Thirgood. 30th December, 1989.

125m GRADE IV

Climbs the buttress just to the left of *Tunnel Vision*, finishing by the steep tower immediately below the plateau.

1. Start up a short groove 8m left of *Tunnel Vision* (the groove may bank out later in the season) to reach a small amphitheatre which is exited on the right (45m).
2. Climb a system of shallow grooves close to the edge of the buttress until below the final tower. Follow a line of grooves spiralling round the right side of the tower to reach a short, steep corner (35m).
3. Bridge up the corner (hard), and pull onto easier slopes. Steep snow leads to the cornice which should be avoidable on the left (45m).

-*Shelf Route*

110m GRADE II/III

S. Kennedy, S. Thirgood. 9th March, 1990.

Follows the obvious shelf to the left of the crest of *Central Buttress* overlooking the gully of *Tunnel Vision*.

Start in a small bay up and left of the lowest point of the buttress (start of *Morwind*). Climb up rightwards onto the buttress to reach a steep groove. Climb the groove to the narrow shelf above, which is followed until a break on the right leads to the crest of the buttress (junction with *Morwind*). Climb to the cornice in one pitch to a break which usually forms at the top of the buttress.

-*Turf Walk*

150m GRADE III

C. Grant, R. Everett. 25th November, 1989.

Start 15m right of *Morwind* at a left slanting gully. Climb the gully to belay in a bay below a right slanting fault line which crosses the buttress. Follow the fault up and right over a few awkward steps to ledges leading rightwards. Step right, then up and back left to belay below steep grooves, left of the central depression. Climb the groove on the left, and its continuation, until it is possible to step left onto the exposed prow, which is followed to easier ground and the top.

## -Colgate Tripper 110m GRADE IV

C. Jones, S. Kennedy. 26th March, 1990.

Climbs the fine line about 30m left of *Tunnel Vision*, Starting up a shallow gully. Characterised by a steep slabby corner at half height (not to be confused with the narrow gully 10m left of *Tunnel Vision*).

Climb the shallow gully by a series of short steps to a large ledge on the left, just below the prominent slabby corner. Climb the steep icefall which forms in the corner above to reach easier ground. A large cornice is avoided on the right.

## -Aquafresh 100m GRADE III/IV

N. Marshall, D. Ritchie. 26th March, 1990.

Climbs the icefall which forms to the left of *Colgate Tripper*. Start 10m left of *Colgate Tripper* and climb to the foot of the icefall. Climb the icefall and continue up mixed ground trending leftwards to a large cornice which should be avoidable on the right.

## -Canal 100m GRADE III

C. Jones, S. Kennedy, B. Williamson. 25th January, 1990.

A number of narrow ribs are seen on the buttress to the left of *Grooved Arete*. The route follows the gully to the left of the second such rib, about 35m left of *Grooved Arete*, characterised by developing into a deep wide gully in its upper reaches.

Start up a short icefall and continue up grooves into the deep gully above. Continue up the gully to a large cornice which was outflanked away to the left.

## -North Buttress 85m GRADE II/III

S. Kennedy, B. Williamson. 25th January, 1990.

Climb the northerly buttress of the coire immediately right of *Jet Stream*, with a prominent icicle forming on the lower section.

The route avoids the steep lower section and starts in a bay on the right approx 20m up from the base of the buttress. Follow grooves up left onto the crest of the buttress. Follow the buttress above to a huge cornice which was eventually overcome by a long leftwards traverse.

## -Lickety Split 130m GRADE IV

G. Muhlemann, S. Richardson. 2nd December, 1989.

A good climb taking the clean cut right-facing corner on *Split Buttress*. Start directly below the gully of *Forgotten Twin*, (which in turn is started up a ramp 10m to the right).

1. A 30m ice pitch leads to a stance below the corner.
2. Climb the corner to a good stance at its top (20m).
3. Climb the steep wall above, passing two small overhangs, to reach an easy rock ridge overlooking the gully of *Left Twin* (20m).
4. Follow this to the final snow slopes and the plateau (60m).

## -Pernille 70m GRADE III

C. Jones, A. Taylor. 27th March, 1990.

Takes a line up the buttress to the right of the deep cleft of *Temperance Union Blues*. Start just right of the cleft and climb into an obvious scoop. Continue up right to a steep left trending ramp leading to a snow bay. Climb a short ramp rightwards and up to the cornice which was avoided by a long right traverse.

**Coire an Lochain, North East Face**

The south side of the coire contains a series of north east facing buttresses, which, although shorter than some of the buttresses on the east face, are less exposed to the sun and therefore tend to stay in condition longer. Skis are useful, both to ensure a sweat free ascent to the plateau, and to act as a convenient belay for the descent (cornices)!

The following climbs are located on the largest of the buttresses on the south side, approximately 100m left of the open descent gully (*Easy Gully*, Grade I). From the descent gully, traverse away left (south) past a series of broken buttresses to reach a small steep buttress. To the left of this small buttress is a deep gully which offers a suitable descent later in the season (Grade I). Immediately to the left of the gully is the most prominent buttress which is characterised by a prow of rock high in the centre, and also by an obvious right angled corner near the right edge. Two obvious parallel grooves will be seen on the front of the buttress, below and to the right of the prow. The name **The Prow** is suggested for the buttress.

—*Stirling Bridge* 70m GRADE V

S. Kennedy, D. Ritchie. 4th April, 1990.

Climbs the obvious right angled corner close to the right edge of the buttress. Short and fierce with a memorable first pitch.

Climb the corner, steep and strenuous, pulling out right near the top. Climb a short groove to a large block belay on the left (well protected). Easier ground leads to a small cornice.

—*The Guardian* 90m GRADE IV

S. Kennedy, D. Ritchie. 28th March, 1990.

Takes the right hand of the two parallel grooves on the front of the buttress.

Start 8m left of *Stirling Bridge* and climb the groove to reach the foot of a prominent flake/chimney. Climb the chimney. A fine pitch. Steep but easier ground leads to a break in the cornice.

—*The Betrayal* 90m GRADE IV

S. Kennedy, D. Ritchie. 28th March, 1990.

Follows the left hand of the two parallel grooves which leads up immediately under the obvious prow.

Climb the groove over a series of small bulges until a small bay is reached immediately under the prow. Steep awkward moves out left lead to easier slopes which are followed to the cornice.

The short corner immediately left of the above route has been climbed at III/IV, as has the groove a short distance further left (III). D. Ritchie, solo, March 1990.

**AONACH MOR, West Face—Solitaire**

400m Difficult

R. Everett. 1st October, 1989.

A traditional mountaineering route in a fine isolated setting, taking a line up the rib to the right of **Daim Buttress**, just left of a deeply inset gully. Approach from the col between **Aonach Mor** and **Carn Mor Dearg**. Contour the hillside to the foot of the face, cross the gully (characterised by a vertical waterfall in its lower section), and scramble to the foot of a prominent clean rib about 20m left of the gully, with a smooth groove on its right and a grassy gully on its left. Gain the rib and climb it to easier ground (20m). Trend left over broken rocks and grass to below the main ridge line. Climb this by as sporting a line as desired (avoid the grassy bits!). Higher up the ridge narrows to give several entertaining steps. The climbing and scrambling continue right to the plateau, just by the summit cairn. Good rock and views recommend this route to aging SMC rock-jocks.

Winter

GRADE II

R. Everett, S. Richardson. 1st January, 1990.

Generally follow the summer line, avoiding the rocky bits.

**AONACH BEAG, North Face—Sellout**

150m GRADE III

R. Webb, S. Richardson. 15th April, 1989.

A left-hand finish to *Whiteout*. Where *Whiteout* traverses right, move left below the steep icefall (*Stand and Deliver*) to reach an ice pitch to the left of a rock buttress. Climb this (30m) to reach easier ground and snow slopes above.

**West Face—Never a Dull Moment**

75m GRADE IV

S. Richardson, R. Everett. 1st January, 1990.

This route climbs the gully to the right of the cleft separating the front face of **Raw Egg Buttress** from easier ground on the right.

1. Climb icy slabs and the narrowing gully above to a bay (45m).
2. Gain the groove in the middle of the bay, just right of an overhanging chimney, with difficulty. Continue up the groove to an awkward leftward exit near the top (30m).

Climbed under light powder, the second pitch was technically very difficult, but safe. Snow banking on the ledges would considerably reduce the difficulty.

**BEINN CHAORACH, Glen Ceitlin Slabs**

See SMCJ 1987, p.497 for detailed description of whereabouts of the slabs. The two existing routes follow lines to the right of the following route.

*—The Whore's Apron* 310m Very Difficult

S. Kennedy, C. Grindley. 14th May, 1989.

The main mass of slab is bounded on the left initially by steep broken ground, and higher up by an obvious corner. This route takes a fairly direct line up the area of clean slabs close to the left edge of the slabs. Avoid any possible escapes up disintegrating rock and heather on the left. No pitches are described as the main interest lies in route finding.

**CENTRAL HIGHLAND OUTCROPS****CREAG DUBH, NEWTONMORE, Great Wall—Harder than your Husband** 46m, E6

G. Farquhar, I. Marriott 21st May, 1988

A sustained and serious outing up the quartz streak in the centre of the wall.

1. Start as for the un-named E5; gain the ledge and continue up the bulging wall to a good fingerjug (about 3m below the traverse into the niche). Break out left and climb the quartz bulges up into the slanting niche of *Rising Damp* (protection). Continue to the girdle ledge then move left to finish up *Mythical Wall* (*The Fuhrer*) (6a).

**Notes**

G. Farquhar reports a free ascent of *Felix* in company with I. Marriott on 21st May, 1988. Pitch gradings are 15m 5b, 30m 4c, 24m 5c.

G. Farquhar also reports a free ascent of *Snoopy* at HVS 4c, 5a, 4b along with K. Greenald.

G. Latter reports a repeat ascent of *Bratach Uaine* and amends the grade to read E4 6a. The arete which joins *Bratach Uaine* where it traverses in has also been climbed (*Snotrag* E6 6b, G. Farquhar May 1989).

G. Latter also sends in a description to a direct line on *Acapulco*, with the large block in the roof being gained direct. No change in the grade, but the move to gain the block becomes the crux. May have been climbed before (G. Latter, S. Cameron August 1989).

**CRAIG-Y-BARNS, Upper Cave Crag—Necrophilia**

37m E5

G. Farquhar (unsec). 31st August, 1988.

An excellent although contrived pitch. Very sustained.

1. Follow *Ratcatcher* to two small saplings, level with the peg on *In Loving Memory*. Step down and traverse horizontally rightwards to the peg (*Sexy Lady* in reverse). Good nut placement below the peg. Step right to join *Morbidezza* at the arete and follow this to the bottom of the large cracked block. Climb the ragged crack on the right, first rightwards, then straight up to rejoin *Morbidezza* by a hard move. Finish up this (6a)

**Notes**

G. Latter notes that *Silk Purse* is as originally graded (E6 6b), by general consensus, not E7 as stated.

F.A. of *The Crossing* was by G. Latter, not D. Cuthbertson.

J. Rait notes having climbed a 12m VS pitch on a small buttress some 600 yards round the path running past Ivy Buttress, away from Dunkeld. The route takes a line through the left of the overhangs, then traverses right then up to the top (*Troglodyte Man* 12m VS).

**GLENCOE****BUACHAILLE ETIVE MOR, Lagangarbh Coire—Infected**

104m GRADE III

M. Garthwaite, G. Suzca. 21st March, 1989.

Follows an obvious rightwards slanting groove, just left of the ice smear which forms half-way along the shelf below the broken buttress below Lagangarbh Buttress. A climb for really bad weather.

1. Follow the groove rightwards to easy ground, belay 3m back (27m).
2. Up easy ground heading for the obvious icefall. Pull over this and belay 6m higher (30m).
3. Move right up a small wall, then right again to easy ground. Climb to belay under a small icefall (30m).
4. Climb the icefall, moving right at the top (17m).

**ALLT DOIRE-BEITH—Afraid to Walk**

17m E1

I. Taylor. 28th October, 1989.

At the highest end of the gorge and on the opposite side from the other routes lies a wall with a perched boulder at its foot. Step onto the wall from the boulder and follow a curving groove to good holds and gear. Gain the next ledge, keeping right of a mossy hollow, then trend left and finish rightwards.

**Notes**

*Dont Talk to Strangers* F.A. by M. McGowan and S. Yates in 1989. (see SMCJ 1988).

**BEINN FHADA, Sentry Crag—Showcase**

50m HVS

A. Tibbs, S. Steer. 24th May, 1987.

Start near the centre of the slab above and diagonally right of a short steep wall.

1. Climb easily up diagonally leftwards to the foot of two cracks (the left one is turf). Climb the right hand crack straight up to a belay (25m 5a).
2. Continue directly to the top (25m 4a).

The tree lined ledge at the top of the crag provides numerous anchors for abseil descent.

—Eugallt

45m HVS

A. Tibbs, D. Saddler. 27th May, 1989.

1. Start at the same point as *Showcase*, and climb that route a few metres until a traverse hard right can be made to the centre of the slab. Climb up and very slightly rightwards to a good runner at 12m. Continue directly to the top. A bold pitch.

**LOST VALLEY MINOR BUTTRESS—Minor Adjustment**

116m GRADE IV

R. Anderson, C. Greaves. 19th February, 1989.

Climbs the obvious groove and corner just up the gully from *Right Edge*, taking a direct line to join that route after its upper traverse.

1. Climb the steep groove on ice to a small ledge and spike. Given sufficient ice it will be possible to climb the corner above directly, otherwise follow a ramp steeply up left round the edge and up to ledges. A short traverse right leads back to the corner and a belay a few metres higher (43m).
2. Continue up the corner, then move right to ascend a short groove and step right below a small roof to gain a snow ramp which leads to a short wide crack and the belay ledge (27m).
3. Continue up easier ground to the top (46m).

**LOST VALLEY BUTTRESS—Directasaur**

162m GRADE V

G. Eittle, R. Anderson (alts), R. Milne.

A good route based on *Tyrannasaur* but taking a much more direct and free line up the complete right edge of the left hand section of the crag, with only the short aided corner of that route in common. Start at the lowest rocks below the edge.

1. Climb a shallow groove just left of the edge, step left and move up to gain a ledge leading back right to the edge. Ascend the steep flake crack then easier ground to belay below the *Tyrannasaur* corner (46m).
2. Climb the corner free to reach snow grooves leading up the right side of a huge block like feature, and continue until it is possible to traverse left to belay on top of the block (30m).
3. Move across right and climb a short groove to regain the crest and snow grooves leading to a belay on the upper rocks (37m).
4. Continue up snow grooves just left of the crest to gain snow slopes leading to the top (49m).

**GEARR AONACH, East Face—Team Ascent**

GRADE III

M. Duff, C. Joint, A. Welton. 23rd February, 1989.

Walk up the Lost Valley on the west bank of the river to where a snow slope over scree runs up to the crag almost at the mouth of the corrie. A rising traverse line over slabs reaches a distinctive chimney line in the centre of the buttress. High on the visible part of the chimney is a large capping chockstone. Climb up to the chimney, up this, and a steep V-groove above in three pitches.

**Notes**

I. Taylor notes that following a recent ascent of the following route, the details below came to light.

*—The Zig-Zag Roof*

25m E1

D. Gunn and party. 1979.

Climbs the roof at the start of the zig-zags. Start below a grassy bulge and climb up to gain a good hold just right of a loose block. Swing up and right, then follow the left side of the arete to belay just above two small trees. Traverse off or continue by *Hairy Kipper* (5b).

**AONACH DUBH, East Face—The Long Crack**

52m GRADE V

R. Anderson, C. Greaves, A. Williams. 25th February, 1989.

Closely follows the summer line in two pitches to a tree, with a long single abseil back to the ground. A short but excellent route requiring a heavy snowfall to bring it into condition, making it a useful alternative when higher routes are under threat of avalanche. On the first ascent, and a previous attempt, there was no useable ice, only a thick blanket of snow. It is conceivable that under exceptional conditions some ice would form, making this an easier proposition.

**Notes**

C. Moody notes that a corner between *Sir Chancealot* and *Blast Off*, running up left to the belay of *Sir Chancealot* gives a VS 4c pitch.

## SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS AND ARROCHAR

**THE COBBLER, South Peak—Deadman's Groove**

130m GRADE V

R. Milne, R. Anderson (alts). 28th January, 1990.

A heavy covering of snow combined with a short cold snap turn this into an intimidating winter prospect which gives a fine modern technical Grade V.

1. Climb *Sesame Groove* and then move up to a thread belay at the right end of a small roof (36m).
2. The summer line moves left here, instead, go up for 3m, then traverse left into the line and ascend it to belay in a fine position at the foot of the upper groove (22m).
3. Follow the groove to easy ground (22m).
4. Move down leftwards then up easily to the top (50m). Interesting descent.

*—Gibber Crack*

64m Very Severe

R. Carchrie, K.V. Crocket, D. Jenkins, G.A. McEwan, A. Walker. 27th May, 1989.

Climbs the obvious crack-line at the right-hand end of the wall below *North Wall Traverse*. Protection is excellent.

1. A choice of routes lead to the foot of the crack proper (13m).
2. Climb the crack, moving right at the top onto easy ground and a belay beneath the upper crack (32m 5a).
3. Climb the upper crack, moving right at its top to join *Slacks/Nimlins*, and a belay at the top of the arete (19m).

**North Peak—Incubator**

110m GRADE V

R. Anderson, T. Prentice (alts), C. Anderson. 3rd February, 1990.

A good route with an excellent technical pitch up the corner above the Halfway Terrace.

1. Follow a shallow groove/fault just left of *Recess Route* to ledges below the bulging crack of the summer line, then move left up ledges and make a stretchy pull over a short wall. Continue to the Halfway Terrace (50m).
2. Climb the obvious corner and move right as for the summer route. Go up a short way then move around left and up to a large ledge (35m).
3. Finish up rightwards to gain easy ground leading to the top (25m).

*—Northern Heatwave*

36m Hard Very Severe

I. Taylor, L. Thomas. 23rd May, 1989.

A climb between *Incubator* and *Recess Route*, starting from the Halfway Terrace. Start left of the Fold at a shallow corner. Climb the corner to a niche, then continue up the rib on the right to a ledge. Finish up a short corner (4c).

*—The Lost Pinnacle*

20m Very Severe

A. Caren, R. Turner, I. Taylor. 15th June, 1989.

This route lies on a curious, though hard to find, pinnacle at approx. 2000ft on the southern slopes of **The Cobbler** (NN256054). Best approach is from the top of **The Cobbler**. Head down towards the junction of two forest roads which can be seen across the glen on **The Brack**. When an area of flat ground is reached, turn left to find the pinnacle. Start at a narrow cave and gain a ledge by an awkward right traverse across a slab. Continue up an arete, keeping on its right side (4c).

**LOCH SLOY CRAGS, Lower Slabs—Hundreds and Thousands**

A. Caren, I. Taylor. 27th May, 1989.

25m Hard Very Severe

Start down and right of *The Mica Boot Route* at the centre of the middle slab. This is directly below three curving overlaps and a small rowan tree on a heather ledge. Climb up to the tree, then continue to the top, passing the second overlap to the right and going through the widest part of the third overlap (5a).

## -Molehill

10m Very Severe

I. Taylor, A. Caren. 27th May, 1989.

Just right of the top of the previous route is a small buttress of excellent rock. Climb the buttress, passing the left end of the small roof (4b).

**Notes**

The route recorded on p.301 of SMCJ 1989 is called *White Meter*.

**CREAG THARSUINN, Sugach Buttress-Metatarsul**

130 GRADE IV

R. Everett, S. Richardson(alts). 16th December, 1989.

Starts on the terrace midway between *Route Sinister* and *Garricks Route*, above their lower sections, below a prominent vegetated groove.

1. Gain the groove with difficulty, then continue more easily to the terrace above. Belay below the centre of the steep upper wall (50m).
  2. Climb the wall via a faint rightward trending fault to easier ground (30m).
  3. Follow the *Original Buttress Route* to the top (50m).
- (Ed's Note-Pitch 1 has certainly been climbed before as a start to *Garrick's Route*. A careful look will need to be taken at pitch 2. The New Climbs Editor does not accept someone else climbing on his favourite crag!)

**Notes**

The buttress left of *Diagonal Gully* gives a mediocre Grade II with a nice wee snow arete between the upper and lower tiers (*Wally Dug Buttress*-Carchie, Richardson, Walker).

**BEINN IME, Fan Gully Buttress-Airy Ridge**

120m GRADE III

N. Kekus, S. Richardson. 27th January, 1990.

The summer route was followed throughout.

**STOB GABHAR-Hircine Rib**

130m GRADE V

S. Richardson, G. Dudley. 30th December, 1989.

A natural mixed winter line following the summer route up the buttress immediately left of the *Upper Couloir*. The rock is friendlier than it appears from below, and with a conventional modern rack of gear good protection can be found. Excellent, technical climbing - high in the grade. Start just right of the lowest rocks below a left slanting groove system.

1. Gain the groove by climbing a steep wall (bold) to a snowy ledge (10m).
2. Climb the groove, stepping left after a vertical section to gain an icy runnel which leads to a belay on the right arete (20m).
3. Above is a steep friable rib bounded on the left by a slabby groove. Climb the groove to half height, and then traverse delicately left across the slab to reach a snow ledge on the left arete. Continue up and right up the vertical continuation corner to reach an exposed stance above (25m).
4. Follow the groove above for 5m before stepping left onto easier ground which leads to the plateau in 70m (75m).

**BEN CRUACHAN, Drochaid Glas, North Face-Stonethrowers Buttress**

S. Richardson, R. Everett (alts). 24th February, 1990.

100m GRADE II/III

Approach from Cruachan main ridge, descending from a point a few hundred metres east of **Drochaid Glas** and then contouring under the north face. Alternatively, from the summit of **Drochaid Glas** descend the north ridge a little, then the obvious easy gully leading to slopes under the east face of the north ridge. The route climbs the buttress to the left (east) of this gully.

Start at the lowest rocks and follow easy snow up a small gully in the centre of the buttress. At the first steepening, step right into the continuation deeper gully. Follow this to a huge jammed block which is climbed by ice forming on its left side. Easy snow then leads to the summit cairn.



*—Into the Fire*

130m GRADE IV

S. Richardson, R. Everett (alts). 4th March, 1990.

This excellent climb takes a slanting line on the east face of the north ridge of **Drochaid Glas**. Start 20m right of an obvious groove system, at a left slanting ramp line beneath smooth steep slabs.

1. Follow the ramp over a few steep steps to a belay at the foot of a groove (35m).
2. Climb the groove for 15m to a huge spike on the left. Swing down left round the arete to a commodious ledge (25m).
3. Step left, climb the left wall of the corner groove for 5m, then swing right across the groove. Traverse right round the arete, then continue straight up to belay below a chimney (40m).
4. Climb the chimney, then continue direct to the crest of the ridge (30m).

In more favourable conditions it may be possible to continue direct on pitch 2, so eliminating the leftward excursion.

**Notes**

**Creag Coire an Dothaidh.** The clean slab and wall left of *The Flasher* was climbed at Severe by R. Reid and S. Richardson on 29th June 1989. A route approximating to the line of *Centigrade* was climbed on 15th July 1989 by J. Beaton, R. Carchrie, K.V. Crocket, and A. Walker, at a good Severe and better than it has any right to be.

**Knapdale, Creag nam Fhiteach.**

*Maneater* - PR removed (good Rock placements close by), grade E3 5c.

*Temptation* - grade E3 5c.

*Captain Ahab* - grade is HVS 5a.

**Glen Croe.**

*Prime Ape* - peg removed following a solo ascent.

*Rock Sculpture* - two pegs removed following an ascent by I. Taylor and G. Szuca in April 1989. Grade is E3 5c.

*Breakdance* - repeated without side runner. Downgraded to E2 5c.

*The Sharp Kiss* - only 1 PR in situ. First one fell out or was removed, last PR removed by G. Latter prior to 2nd ascent. well protected with conventional protection.

*Outside Edge* - thread runner no longer in situ.

*Aftershock* - E3/4 5c, peg justifiable.

**CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN SCOTLAND OUTCROPS****LOCH LOMOND, Rob Roy's Cave—Tree Creeper**

35m E2

G. Szuca, I. Taylor. 31st March, 1989.

This crag lies 1km north of Inversnaid (NN333100). The route climbs the slab left of the holly bush. At a small overlap go left, then right to the top (5b).

**NORTH THIRD (Near Stirling)—Midnight Arete**

50m Very Difficult

A. Fraser, T. Docherty. 30th April, 1984.

North of the dam is a section of cliff separated by an easy Gully. The route takes the arete to the right of the gully. Good.

**BERWICK LAW QUARRY**

This small quarry lies on the southern flanks of Berwick Law a few minutes along the path from the cap park at the foot of the Law. The routes lie in the corner of the quarry first encountered, a steep wall on the left, and a steep red slab on the right. There is a boulder problem traverse of the steep wall. The routes are described from right to left.

*—Old Lawbreaker*

15m E2

R. Anderson, C. Greaves, K. Spence. 9th April, 1989.

The line of old bolts up the steep slab, passing a niche (poor PR) and PR just below the top. Belay stakes in grass just over the top (6a).

The next routes are crammed onto the steep wall. Good gorse bush belay on ledge at the top, fence posts further back.

*—Law and Disorder*

14m E1

R. Anderson, C. Anderson. 25th September, 1989.

The right hand of four bolt lines at the extreme right end of the wall. 3 BRs and an awkward first move for those of a lesser stature (5b/c).

*—Law of the Flies*

14m E3/4

R. Anderson. 18th September, 1989.

3 BRs, and unless you are six foot tall, a jump to pass the first bolt (6a).

*—Jaws of the Law*

14m E3/4

R. Anderson, C. Anderson. 29th April, 1989.

3 BRs, and for those not endowed with long arms, some tricky moves to pass the first bolt (6a).

*—Law of Gravity*

14m E4

R. Anderson. 5th May, 1989.

The left hand bolt line from the ground to the top with 4 BRs, although escape left is possible at the top bolt the aim is not to use the ledge out on the left (6a).

*—Necktie*

14m E4

B. Kerr, R. Young. 9th September, 1989.

The line just right of the arete. 1 BR and 2 PRs to finish up the arete (6a).

*—Fogtown*

14m E3

B. Kerr, R. Young. 9th September, 1989.

The arete, 2 PRs, the first of which is poor (5c).

**AUCHINSTARRY QUARRY—Promontory Runner**

21m E3/4

R. Anderson, K. Spence. 1st April, 1989.

Climb *Blade Runner* to the rest below the small wires, move up right to holds (Stopper 3, Rock 1 or similar RP in short crack on right), and then up to step into the crack of *Promontory Direct*. Good but very eliminate climbing. Side runners in the crack above the flake on *Promontory* (6b).

**ARRAN****CIR MHOR, Rosa Pinnacle—Ne Parl Pas**

76m E2

W. Hood, I. Taylor, B. Williamson. 7th May, 1989.

A line between *Lawyer's Leap* and *Sou'wester Slabs*. Climb *Fourth Wall* to the point where *Sou'wester Slabs* heads up right.

1. Follow a line of pockets up the slab left of *Sou'wester Slabs* to reach a thin ledge. Continue up and right via more pockets to reach a shallow left slanting groove. Follow this to gain a corner, pull into a hanging corner on the left, and climb to a poor stance below a steep wall (36m 5b).

2. Step left, pull through two overhangs, then up to belay (15m 4c).

3. Finish up a wide slab on the right as for *Lawyer's Leap* (25m).

(The Editor has a suspicion that only pitch 1 is new (and that had been all but climbed years ago - rain stopped play). Watch this space for further details..).

## SKI DESCENTS

First, it is worth mentioning an error on Page 121 of the 1988 Journal. SC and NC Gullies under the Glencoe heading refer to North Castle and South Castle Gullies on Ben Nevis, not NC and SC Gullies in Coire nan Lochan.

### GLENCOE

Stob Coire nan Lochan

Boomerang Gully. This was well filled with soft packed snow and gave a straightforward descent to the narrows which required a short slide slip and jump to the easier lower section.

The left hand branch of Boomerang Gully and the face to the left (east) were also skied. The face to the left gives a very fine run directly off the summit of the Stob.

### BEN NEVIS

North Castle and South Castle Gullies—see note above. Both skied on spring snow.

Bob Run. A fine run off the summit of the Ben, first down the ridge then over a smallish cornice into the left hand branch. The line had not been climbed first and was complicated by increasingly deep wind slab break offs. Two very short ice steps were hopped lower down.

Garadh Gully. Soft slab on a firm base. All the pitches were well covered. A fine, if short, descent it gives an excellent continuation after one of the upper gullies.

Moonlight Gully. Spring snow. An alternative finish to No. 5 Gully or can be done on its own. Needs a good fill as the upper section is narrow.

### BEN LUI

Central Gully—neve. The upper section was complicated by white out conditions. The mountain was approached from Eas Daimh and the descent gave a superb run all the way to the River Lochy, non stop apart from one solitary forestry fence. Surely someone has skied this before.

### AONACH MOR

The ski development has made available much fine skiing in the eastern corries. Local skiers have taken full advantage. The descent gully into Coire an Lochain (East Gully) is usually corniced and has a steep start but soon relents in angle. The gully 200m further south has also been skied - it is steeper and more sustained. The run outs are excellent.

### LIATHACH

George Paton has skied 2 gullies here, probably Access Gully in coire Dubh Beag and No. 7 Gully in Coire na Caime.

### AN TEALLACH

Coire a' Ghlas Thuill

Hay Fork 2nd Prong. An unsatisfactory line that had to be entered on foot. Not recommended.

Hay Fork 3rd Prong. Wet snow. A very fine descent that should often be in condition. Originally skied with Richard Mansfield and Chris Forest. Repeated on cold hard pack. Well worth the effort.

Hay Fork 4th Prong. Similar to the 3rd Prong but has a short tight section in the middle which has to be descended on foot.

The Alley. A challenging and well defined line between the Major and Minor Ribs. The upper section is narrow and steepening then a short abseil down a rock wall and short ice pitch gave access to the more prominent lower section. Needs a good fill.

## MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

### ... leavening the Roll of Salvationists with a pinch of Ultramontane yeast...

Robin Campbell has been worrying over some historical inaccuracies for some decades, and writes now to set the record straight.

#### HISTORY IS BUNK.-

**PART I.** In 1964 I wrote a short article about Aonach Dubh, Glencoe (*The Ugly Sister*. SMCJ, xxviii, 13). It was reproduced last year (with all mistakes intact) in the Club's Centenary volume. In the article I claimed that the first route to be made on the South Face of E Buttress was *Hee-Haw*, climbed by Haston and Moriarty in 1959. I went on to say that *Trapeze*, on the same crag, was climbed in 1960 by Marshall and Leaver. This was erroneous: in fact, Marshall and Leaver's route *Trapeze* was the first on the crag, the natural line being Marshall's obvious choice, in 1958. *Hee-Haw* was his second choice of line, and he pointed it out to Haston and Moriarty in the following year.

How did I get this so badly wrong, writing only a few years after the events occurred and enjoying - if that is the right word - the benefits of acquaintance with the principals?

Easily! I worked from the Journals. *Hee-Haw* was reported in 1960 and *Trapeze* in 1961. The description of *Trapeze* lacked a date, but I put that down to an editorial oversight and pressed on. In fact, *Trapeze* was submitted in 1958/59, but the then Editor, Dr Bell, postponed publication on the grounds that the new guidebook was due to appear. In 1961 Marshall took over New Climbs reporting. He knew very well what 'the new guidebook is due to appear' meant and so published his route belatedly.

I offer this note as a correction, since my error has been repeated in various places, including the current guide-book to Glencoe and Glen Etive. It is also a salutary warning: if an error like this can be made working at such close quarters, what hope is there of getting any more remote historical event right?

**PART II.** In an earlier Journal I questioned contemporary attributions of certain winter ascents (*The First Scottish Ice-Climbers*. SMCJ, 1972, xxx, 48) and argued that the first winter ascents of *Crowberry Gully* (Buachaille) and *Green Gully* (Ben Nevis) were due to Harold Raeburn in 1898 and 1906 respectively, and that the first winter ascent of Ben Nevis' North-East Buttress was due to Willie Naismith in 1896. In preparing myself for certain Centenary celebrations I re-read most of the early Journals and am happy to report two further corrections:

(1) D Gully Buttress on Buachaille is currently attributed to Sandy Harrison's party in 1929, but was actually climbed by William Newbigging in 1903 (SMCJ, 1904, viii, 87). Newbigging's note is perfectly clear: '13th October 1903.- Ridge immediately to the left of, and continuous with D Gully. Very easy in the lower part, but on the upper part three clean rock buttresses gave good sport under the very wet conditions, assistance having to be given to the leader at two points.' Newbigging does not exactly spring to mind as one of the early Ultramontane, but aside from this route and the East Ribs route on North Buttress, he made good climbs elsewhere, notably his eponymous route below the First Platform on Ben Nevis and Rose Ridge on Sgoran Dubh.

Recess Route on the Cobbler's North Peak is attributed to Jock Nimlin's party in 1935. In Houston's 1970 Arrochar Guide it is observed that Harold Raeburn climbed the Fold pitch in 1896, while traversing from Ramshead Gully to the top of Maclay's Crack. Possibly this repeats information in Humble's earlier Guide, but I have been unable to verify this. At any rate, there is no record of this climb of Raeburn's in the Journals for 1896, although he did spend a day on the Cobbler North Peak with Tough, exploring Ramshead Gully, but without any successful outcome (SMCJ, 1897, iv, 248). However, Raeburn returned to the North Peak in 1904 (SMCJ, 1906, ix, 54) in the company of 'a large and merry party, including

two ladies' and climbed Recess Route, more or less by the usual line. They began in the grassy lower reaches of Ramshead Gully and traversed right on to the climb, so the party may have followed the line of Incubator, or thereby, as far as the Halfway Terrace. It is odd that this ascent was missed, but one contributing factor may have been Raeburn's invariable and extremely aggravating habit of using 'left' and 'right' from a gully's point of view. Thus, he speaks of 'traversing out (of Ramshead Gully) on the left wall,' meaning the right wall, if you see what I mean.

These two corrections are offered, in the spirit of Part I, as temporary improvements to the historical record, soon to be cast aside by superior scholarship.

*Note by Ed.* We are grateful to R.N. Campbell for the above notes, but comment that the latest guide-book covering Arrochar is aware of the Raeburn partial ascent, Nimlin's party being credited with the first ascent of Recess Route *in its entirety*.

**A Night on Bald Mountain.**— T. Nicholson muses over a nocturnal wander. It all started when idly listening on the Radio to Mussorgsky's well known orchestral fantasy. 'I bet he never spent a night on a bald mountain' ran my thoughts as they went back to a brief visit to Harris in early June 1962.

My wife and I had enjoyed a glorious day on Clisham - at 799m the highest in Harris - and the round of Aonaigh Mhor, Mulla Fo Dheag and Mulla Fo Tuath. The continuing fine weather coupled with the long hours of daylight, tempted me to a lone night walk over Oreval (662m) and Ullaval (659m), lying about 8km WNW of Clisham.

The hills were on enclosed land so I thought it wise to telephone the Factor for permission to go up Glen Meavaig and over his land. He was, perhaps understandably, suspicious of my expressed intention to go at night. 'Have you a rifle or a gun and why go by night?' he asked. I assured him that I had neither and was merely a hill walker, an SMC member, and hoped to enjoy a lone night's walk in perfect weather. Having learnt earlier that he was a retired RN Commander, I mentioned my own old T.A. connection and thus managed to allay his suspicions. Permission was granted but 'mind you - no guns or rifles!'

So, at about 10 p.m., I left my hired car at the junction of the Glen Meavaig track with the main road from Tarbert. The track seemed motorable but the gate was securely padlocked and the loan of a key had not found favour. So up I walked towards Loch Voshimid and after about 2.5km, where the track crossed to the East side of the burn, I struck up NW aiming for the silhouetted gap West of Creag Uisebri. This is a prominent little crag which appeared bigger in the dusk than in the full light of day. A little further, two stags, still in velvet, gazed curiously at me from about 75m away. I gave them an owl's hoot, whereupon they turned and ran.

From the map, it seemed best to continue due North to the col between Bidigi and Oreval but in the dusk the ground appeared steep and broken. This was largely confirmed when seen later in morning light. So I traversed fairly steeply up grass and scree to the ridge south of Bidigi and then continued over it.

By now, it was 12.30 a.m. and I felt ready for a brief rest before continuing. The wind was cool but finding a convenient rock, I put on all spare clothing, drank some hot tea, ate some chocolate and snuggled into the ground. I dozed till 1.30 a.m. It was then slightly lighter. The Plough, Pole Star, Cassiopeia, Venus and some others shone brightly. It was time to move. Refreshed, I dropped down to the col and climbed the rough 150m to the top of Oreval, arriving there about 2 a.m. In the NNE, the sky was already lightening and there was no difficulty in choosing the route further ahead. The descent to the bealach before Ullaval was over grass. To the East, the descent down Caadale Ear looked steep and rocky. The way on to Ullaval was over broken rock and keeping to the ridge crest led over a pleasant little rock eminence - more noticeable in the dusk than by full light of day. At 3 a.m., I reached the top of Ullaval. A fine lonely peak, falling sharply to the East and to the North, commanding a view over scores of lochs and lochans which glistened silver in the misty grey of early dawn.

Again, I found a wind sheltered spot where I dozed till 3.45 a.m. Then, in good light, I made my way down the steep East side to Caadale Ear and passing South of Clett Caudale, regained the track just North of Loch Scourst and so back to the car and in bed, back at the hotel, by 6.15 a.m.

I wonder what is the origin of some of these place names? Caadale Ear and Clett Caudale for instance.

## TECHNICAL SECTION

**Clutching At Straws.**—B.T. Hill writes from ice-locked Canada. If the readers of J.M. Lackie's 'Straws in the Wind' (SMCJ, 1987, 519), remain cynical towards the benefits of ice strengthened by turf, hay and birds' nests, the back-room boffins of World War II were not so circumspect. In what was described as 'another of these mad, wild schemes,' the Director of Programs at Combined Operations Headquarters, Geoffrey Pyke, planned to get even with the German U boats operating in the Atlantic by designing an aircraft carrier made of ice and wood fibre, a concoction thenceforth known as Pykrete.

This immense ice-drome of over 2,000 feet long and a couple of hundred feet thick would contain its own propulsion and refrigeration plants, fuel and aeroplanes, and would withstand the mightiest of Atlantic storms and German onslaughts. Churchill thought the idea was wonderful. Negotiations were made with the National Research Council of Canada, and in the utmost secrecy a small prototype was developed at Patricia Lake, high in the Rocky Mountains, and successfully tested in 1943. The real thing was to be launched at Corner Brook, Newfoundland.

Coincidental with this, of course, was the more logical development of long range aircraft, more sophisticated radar and sonar, and it was through these means that the U boat menace became less of a threat. Operation Habbakuk! as the development of the ice cube was known, was then allowed to thaw a natural death, the skeleton of which can still be seen today by the sub-aquatic hiker.

However ludicrous Operation Habbakuk appears to be today, it still represents the urgency facing Britain at the hands of the German submariners. As a technological concept it hastened the understanding of ice as a material, to be utilised as in the case of spraying snow ice onto offshore ice to increase the strength and thickness for the support of oil rigs, or to be overcome as in the development of icebreakers.

Amongst other schemes of Pykes were the notions of spraying super-cooled water onto enemy battleships, thereby instantly sealing the enemy into frozen immobility; tobogganing bombs and torpedoes down snow covered slopes into enemy tanks; and perhaps with little scientific justification, of placing huge bubbler systems beneath enemy shipping, thereby reducing the specific gravity of the sea sufficiently enough to sink the fleet. It is interesting to note that modern icebreakers utilise hull-mounted bubbler systems to reduce ice friction.

So, for those of you searching for confidence as the scant gully snow runs dry, take heart in the fact that the frozen moss before you is strong enough to build a battleship, and proceed undaunted with cries of 'Tally-ho!'

1. The biblical spelling is Habakkuk.

We are grateful to Mr Hill for the above interesting sequel, and apologise for referring to him in the 1989 Journal as a mere 'reader'; he is, in his own words, more of a 'mundane member' (Class of 1968).

**Scottish Mountaineering Trust Report.** - Due to the financial year of the Trust ending on 31 March and the necessity of meeting the deadline set by the Editor of the Journal, the most recent figures available are those for the accounting year ended on 31 March 1989. All Members will have had copies of these Accounts which were sent out with the papers for the Annual General Meeting and which showed a continuation of the healthy financial position of the past few years. The 'Surplus Added to Fund' was £26,513 but this was after setting aside £10,000 to establish a Grant Fund for projects which were in accord with the objects of the Trust. Much of this surplus was derived from sales of 'The Munros.' Sales of publications have continued to be satisfactory during the current year and a surplus is anticipated. £10,000 will again be set aside for adding to the Grant Fund.

Total assets at 31 March 1989 exceeded £200,000 for the first time and were split fairly evenly between stocks of books and cash and other readily realisable assets. During the year the Trustees made a number of minor changes in the Trust Constitution. Rule 7 was revised to increase the number of Trustees from six to ten of whom four are named Office Bearers of the Club and the remaining six appointed by the Club from amongst its Members. As two of the six will retire each year it is hoped that this will allow more Members of the Club to interest themselves directly in the affairs of the Trust.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Club in December 1989 Members were strongly of the opinion that printing and binding orders for books should continue to be placed in Scotland and the Trustees have taken note of this. As a result of obtaining lower quotations and other savings the forthcoming new edition of the District Guide to the North Western Highlands will be produced entirely in Scotland.

Over the past 18 months the Trustees have either paid or awarded the following grants:-

1. For the National Officer of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland - £3,000 spread over three years.
2. For repairs to the Kinlochhourn - Barrisdale sea-level path - two grants of £2,000 each for two separate sections of the path which were collapsing into the sea.
3. For refurbishing Inbhir Cottage, Achnasheen - £500 to the Jacobite Mountaineering Club.
4. For 'Save the Cairngorms' appeal - £1,000.
5. £1,500 for repairs to the 'Allt a'Mhuillinn' path on Ben Nevis.
6. £1,500 for repairs to the upper constructed section of the Mam Barrisdale Path in Knoydart.
7. £1,500 to repair the path on the Buachaille Etive Mor from Lagangarbh to the Crowberry Water Slide.
8. £500 to defray the cost of 15 Czechoslovakian mountaineers who are visiting Scotland at the invitation of a group of SMC and JMCS climbers.

The Trustees at their meeting in February 1990 decided that the majority of awards made from the Grant Fund should go towards the cost of repairing and rebuilding paths. In each case the award will be topped up by a further grant from the Countryside Commission for Scotland, e.g. a £2,000 grant made by the Trust will attract a further £3,000 from the Countryside Commission.

Bill Wallace.

## MUNRO MATTERS

by W.D.Brooker (Clerk of the List)

This year's List takes up where last year's finished, and is even longer, which surely proves that Munroism is as rampant a condition as ever. (The usual sequence of *Number*, *Name*, *Munros*, *Tops* and *Furths* has been followed).

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (633) John Harrison, 1986, _ _ ;          | (655) David McGill, 1989, _ _ ;           |
| (634) Bill Miller, 1987, _ _ ;            | (656) N.Keith Rutter, 1989, _ _ ;         |
| (635) Maggie Miller, 1987, _ _ ;          | (657) Kenneth Brown, 1989, _ _ ;          |
| (636) John Allen, 1988, _ _ ;             | (658) Douglas A.Anderson, 1989, _ _ ;     |
| (637) Roger D.L.Guthrie, 1989, _ _ ;      | (660) Paul Gillies, 1989, _ _ ;           |
| (638) Frank W.Garforth, 1989, _ _ ;       | (661) Matthew G.D.Shaw, 1989, 1989, 1989; |
| (639) **Ann Wakeling, 1989, _ _ ;         | (662) John Barker, 1989, _ _ ;            |
| (640) Matthew Bramley, 1989, _ _ ;        | (663) Ruth Barker, 1989, _ _ ;            |
| (641) William A.Nimmo Smith, 1989, _ _ ;  | (664) Elsie Middlemiss, 1989, _ _ ;       |
| (642) Allan R.Neill, 1989, 1989, _ ;      | (665) John Coop, 1989, _ _ ;              |
| (643) David E.Purchase, 1989, _ _ , 1988; | (!!!)                                     |
| (644) Jack Ashcroft, 1989, _ _ ;          | (667) J.F.Stuart, 1989, 1989, _ _ ;       |
| (645) Darrell Pickles, 1989, _ _ ;        | (668) Ian Henderson, 1989, _ _ , 1989;    |
| (646) *Iain H.Ogilvie, 1989, _ _ ;        | (669) Anne M.Marker, 1989, _ _ ;          |
| (647) William R.Mowbray, 1989, _ _ , _ ;  | (670) Willis B.Marker, 1989, _ _ ;        |
| (648) James Binnie, 1989, 1989, _ _ ;     | (671) Mike Paterson, 1989, 1989, 1989;    |
| (649) James Brown, 1989, _ _ ;            | (672) Brian McKay, 1986, _ _ ;            |
| (650) Paul Riley, 1989, _ _ ;             | (673) Robert Dale, 1988, 1989, _ _ ;      |
| (651) Innes Mitchell, 1989, _ _ ;         | (674) C.Andrew Scott, 1988, _ _ ;         |
| (652) Leslie B.Aird, 1989, _ _ ;          | (675) Geoff Skeaping, 1988, _ _ ;         |
| (653) Irene D.Aird, 1989, _ _ ;           | (676) James G.Bell, 1988, 1988, _ _ ;     |
| (654) W.Douglas Allan, 1989, _ _ , _ _ ;  | (677) Anne Bennet, 1989, _ _ , _ _ ;      |

- (678) Stuart Benn, 1989, 1989, \_;  
 (679) Peter Williams, 1989, \_;  
 (680) Garth Broomfield, 1989, \_;  
 (681) George Graham, 1989, \_;  
 (682) Iain M. Brown, 1989, \_; 1989;  
 (683) S. J. Henderson, 1989, \_;  
 (684) Nigel K. Saxton, 1989, \_;  
 (685) Derek G. Sime, 1989, 1989, \_;  
 (686) David McAvoy, 1989, \_;  
 (687) Graham Tutton, 1989, \_;  
 (688) Anne H. Lindsay, 1989, \_;  
 (689) Ian A. Jones, 1989, \_;  
 (690) \*David J. Broadhead, 1989, \_;  
 (691) Roderick L. G. Brodie, 1989, \_;  
 (692) Chris R. Peart, 1989, \_;  
 (693) Arnold T. Morrison, 1989, \_;  
 (694) Donald F. Maclean, 1989, \_;  
 (695) John C. M. Blair, 1989, \_;  
 (696) J. Michael Barron, 1989, \_;  
 (697) Michael Thomson, 1989, \_;  
 (698) John M. Uytman, 1989, 1989, \_;  
 (699) Cherie Chapman, 1989, 1989, \_;  
 (700) Terry McDonagh, 1989, \_;  
 (701) Archie Given, 1989, \_;  
 (702) Ellen Sanderson, 1989, \_;  
 (703) J. Kenneth Oakley, 1989, \_;  
 (704) Peter Lomax Yates, 1989, 1989, \_;  
 (705) John S. Alexander, 1989, \_;  
 (706) Michael W. Kelly, 1989, 1989, \_;  
 (707) Robert F. Gibson, 1989, \_;  
 (708) Michael Milmo, 1989, 1989, \_;  
 (709) James W. Stewart, 1989, 1989, \_;  
 (710) Robert L. Cameron, 1989, \_;  
 (711) Alex. A. Hanton, 1989, \_;  
 (712) Richard G. Ross, 1989, \_;  
 (713) Peter Kemp, 1989, \_;  
 (714) George McCall, 1989, \_;  
 (715) W. Russell, 1989, \_;

(!!?) This number is omitted for the very good reason given in *SMCJ*, 1983, xxxi, 389 (or see *Revelations* xiii, 18). The original intention to conclude the List at 665 was abandoned when it became clear that many people would be disappointed and the whole affair had become something of an institution. Even so, we should avoid getting too serious about it and should always keep in mind that it is really just a bit of fun, an enjoyable embroidery on the real business of exploring our mountains. This is not to say that the accuracy of the List does not matter which is why corrections and amendments are made as they are notified. Amendments.—

- (195) Leonard Jamieson, 1979, 1987,  
 1986, and 1989;  
 (321) Alister Sword, 1984, 1988, \_;  
 (375) Robert MacDonald, 1984, \_; 1989,  
 and 1987;  
 (391) Brenda Griffin, 1985, 1989, \_;  
 (392) Mervyn Griffin, 1985, 1989, \_;  
 (445) Alan Ingram, 1986, \_; 1989;  
 (456) Laurence Rudkin, 1986, \_; 1989;  
 (453) Walter Stephen, 1986, 1989, 1988;  
 (467) James Byers, 1986, \_; 1989;  
 (511) D. H. W. Taylor, 1987, \_; 1989;  
 (539) William Harkins, 1987, \_; 1989;  
 (540) Diana Harkins, 1987, \_; 1989;  
 (580) John Green, 1988, 1989, 1989;  
 (592) David Geddes, 1988, 1989, \_;

(259) \*Derek Bearhop has been wrongly credited with the Furths and (510) A. M. Drummond had been given a repeat entry at (561).

**The Definitive Record.**—The Master List hides out in the electronic insecurity of the Clerk's home computer from where its tail emerges annually to be seen in the *S.M.C.J.* by courtesy of the Editor. At longer intervals (the last occasion was in 1984) the entire organism is exposed in editions of 'Munro's Tables.' A new edition is currently in preparation and is planned to appear by the end this year. Hopefully it will include all the above additions and amendments.

**Togetherness is all.**—Husband-and-wife teams are frequently encountered on the hills these days. Sometimes they are clearly sufferers from *M. conjugal*. From this year's List the Millers, Airds, Barkers and Markers have all been afflicted in this way, while the Griffins and Harkins have experienced a continuation of the condition. The Griffins have in fact experienced a clear view from the summit of every Munro but three, which means that they are on the brink of having endured that very rare condition *M. claravistis*. Married Munroists are often in a situation where the husband is already well into the round when the wife begins. This gives rise to the condition of Secondary Munroism so common among males and explains the widely separated Completion dates of some couples. The Crams (8) and (181) and the Robertsons (6) and (469) are examples, with gaps of 39 and 48 years respectively.

**More Family Affairs.**—(667) J. F. Stuart Completed on Ben Hope at the same moment as his son reached his first Munro summit. (648) James Binnie finished on Am Basteir the same day as his wife started with Bruach na Frithe next door. (651) Innes Mitchell had a double celebration having concluded on Beinn Teallach while his father (295) W. A. Mitchell



finished his round of the Corbetts on nearby Carn Dearg. (643) David Purchase had sixteen witnesses to his Completion including a six year old nephew who was on his first summit. This was no doubt to ensure that his Completion was unchallengeably confirmed because he readily admitted to a severe case of *M. documentalitis*.

**The Statistical Attraction.**—This condition was no doubt exacerbated by (643) Purchase being a Fellow of the Institute of Actuaries and led to the maintenance of elaborate data sheets during his Completion. A selection from these reveals that his round involved 152 separate outings, extending over a total walking time of 958 hours and involving 2,692km (1,672 miles) of distance and 171,380m (562,000ft) of ascent. On 31% of the hills he encountered other people within about a kilometre of the summit and on 78% he had a view. Perhaps the Actuaries should be asked to carry out research in order to establish the definitive amounts of ascent and distance required for both a continuous round and for one with all peaks ascended individually from sea level (*M. totoyoensis*). This would give clearly defined targets for aspirants to the record books and allow us all to know exactly where we stand - or fall!

In last year's Journal we mentioned that (590) Gordon Adshead had found 901 points over 900m in the U.K. and visited 850 of them. An actuarial exercise by David Purchase could find only 595! The discrepancy is due to the information being obtained from the appearance of ring contours on 1:50 000 maps in the first case and from Tables in the second. It shows there is some truth in the adage that you can use statistics to prove what you wish and that there is still plenty of room for those who don't care about the actual altitude of a point but rather about what it feels like to be there.

**Long Hauls.**—Although Munroing is not really a field for the making of records it is inevitable that some Completions are notable and that the rest of us are interested in hearing of them. Among such are those of (638) Frank Garforth which extended over 51 years and that of Iain Ogilvie who began with Ben More in Mull in 1927 and finished on Sgurr Mor of Loch Quoich in 1989, thus succeeding in reaching an unprecedented span of 62 years. He modestly ascribes this to having 'lived abroad a lot.'

Others have prolonged their rounds by including all summits which have appeared in earlier editions of the Tables and sometimes by applying their own 'rules' as to how they should be done. (661) Matthew Shaw emerged from the confusion of the different lists with a total of 587 Munros and Tops. His rediscovery of some of the Tops on his list led to a number of highly enjoyable trips to esoteric gems such as Leachd Riach (Monadh Mor). An Socach of Ben Wyvis or Carn a' Bhutha of Carn Bhac. In deciding what to do next he jibs at a second round but is working on his personal variant of *M. elegans* in which as many Munros as possible are achieved by way of a climb. Very few will fail to yield something, 'even if only a grade I gully or scrappy buttress.' Another possibility 'is to make an ascent of every Munro in both summer and winter conditions.'

**Dogged Compleaters.**—Multiple Munroist (69) Hamish Brown has already had one of his canine companions entered as (323) on the List. His dog 'Storm' has also been on the summit of every Munro. Hamish goes in for dogs of modest size, suitable for the rucksack in certain places. My own instinct would have been to have made friends with a much larger dog, like a St Bernard, and trained it to carry my rucksack! The carrying of a 35lb Mountain Bike along the 17hr traverse of the Cuillin Ridge recently reported in the Press would have been a very bizarre and rugged affair indeed and this chronicler would require a good deal of photographiic or other evidence before he believes it. (660) Paul Gillies must be endowed with unusual persuasive talent to cope with his own particular difficulties. Apart from having a wife and four children to placate he does not drive, but still claims he has managed to retain a number of friends who are now looking forward to carrying him to places they actually wish to visit themselves

**The Rewards of Persistence.**—The last summit is for many marked with celebration, although whether this is for joy or in relief I am uncertain. These occasions are usually accompanied by alcoholic hilarity and you can imagine the eagerness with which I recently approached a Monadhliath cairn when I saw a throng gathering there for what was obviously this very purpose. At last!... Alas!... The supply of celebratory liquids was much too limited to allow it to reach any casual droppers in and I had to be content with what remained in my wife's water bottle. (The Ed. is bound to ask at this juncture whether anyone ever heard of

an Aberdonian 'casually dropping in'). Later I was delighted to receive a classy invitation card to attend a champagne reception at NN 604763 for the last Munro celebration of (695) John Blair. Unfortunately it was for the previous weekend! However I struck gold when I was asked to join the final party of (677) Anne Bennet on Buachaille Etive Beag. This was a superb occasion with a kilted piper playing at intervals throughout the day and with such perfect weather that I didn't even mind carrying a share of the champagne up the hill.

(654) Douglas Allan is so popular (or his Completion Party was so popular) that he had to charter a railway train to carry some 80 people to the foot of Beinn na Lap. (671) Mike Paterson admits to the five years he spent on his round being the most enjoyable part of his life so far. He celebrated on Beinn Sgritheall with the aid of three fiddlers and a summit eightsome reel. (657) Kenneth Brown who claims to belong to an organisation called the Ruffy Tufty M.C. (sic), spent three hours celebrating on top of Ben More, basking in brilliant sunshine along with Messrs Macallan, Moët et Chandon and others while the rest of Mull endured beneath the heavy cloud of a temperature inversion. From such experiences is the true quality of life derived. As a result of the celebratory experience I have now gained I draw the attention of all potential Compleaters to a problem they may not anticipate. This is the difficulty of keeping champagne chilled to the correct temperature in summer. Should final summit parties only be held in winter? If not, adequate portorage to deal with the problem should be enlisted.

Sadly, there is a posthumous entry in this year's List. (704) Peter Lomax Yates was only seventeen when he finished the Munros and Tops in less than a year. He was obviously a young man of great promise, but was to lose his life on a mountain in the Jotunheim only four months later.

Lastly, - I am happy to report that (467) James Byers who is an insulin dependent diabetic has gone on to do the Furths and (684) Nigel Saxton who developed diabetes seven years ago was able to climb back from annihilating depression to finish his round last year. The inspiration and challenge he found in the mountains formed the lifeline he needed.

Notification of completions, amendments etc, should be sent directly to W.D. Brooker, 25 Deevue Road South, Cults, Aberdeen. An s.a.e. complete with steam-proof stamp might receive confirmation of immortality via The List.

## SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN ACCIDENTS, 1989

## REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION 1989

*(Geographical Divisions are those used in SMC District Guidebooks)*

REGION	CASUALTIES (of which fatalities are bracketed)				INCIDENTS							Non-Mountain-eering	
	Injuries	Exhaustion/Exposure Hypothermia, Hyperthermia	Illness	TOTAL CASUALTIES	Incidents with Casualties	Cragfast	Separated	Lost	Overdue or Benighted	False Alarms	TOTAL INCIDENTS	Animal Rescues	Incidents
Northern Highlands	13 (4)	1 —	1 —	15 (4)	14	—	2	1	2	2	21	—	1
Western Highlands	6 (2)	3 —	1 (1)	10 (3)	9	—	1	—	4	3	17	—	1
Ben Nevis	13 (1)	2 —	1 (1)	16 (2)	14	—	—	—	2	1	17	—	—
Glencoe (inc. Buachaille)	7 (3)	— —	2 —	12 (3)	11	4	—	1	3	1	20	1	1
Other Central Highlands	11 (2)	1 —	1 —	13 (2)	13	—	1	—	7	1	22	—	1
Cairngorms	31 (3)	2 —	1 —	34 (4)	26	3	4	6	—	1	40	—	—
Southern Highlands	26 (2)	3 —	5 (2)	34 (4)	31	1	2	2	2	2	40	2	1
Skye	8 —	— —	— —	8 —	8	—	1	—	4	2	15	—	—
Islands (other than Skye)	10 (1)	— —	1 —	11 (1)	11	—	2	—	1	—	14	—	—
Southern Uplands	4 (1)	— —	— —	4 (1)	4	—	2	2	—	1	9	—	6
All Regions 1989	129 (19)	15 (1)	13 (1)	157 (24)	141	8	15	12	25	14	215	3	11
All Regions 1988	121 (21)	34 (2)	10 (2)	165 (25)	131	18	7	13	34	16	219		14

## MOUNTAIN RESCUE COMMITTEE OF SCOTLAND

### CAUSES OF INJURIES IN 1989 (where known)

(of which fatalities are bracketed)

### WINTER

(meaning snow, ice or frozen turf underfoot, not meaning just the time of year)

Winter Hill Walking.....Slips.....	9	(2)
Winter Hill Walking.....Walk Through Cornice.....	2	
Winter Hill Walking.....River Incident.....	1	
Winter Hill Walking.....Exhaustion/Hypothermia.....	1	
Winter Hill Walking.....Exhaustion.....	1	
Winter Hill Walking.....Polybagging.....	1	
Winter Hill Walking.....Glissading.....	1	
Winter Hill Walking.....Blown Over.....	1	
Winter Hill Walking.....Avalanche.....	1	(1)
Snow Climbing.....Avalanche.....	3	
Snow Climbing Roped.....Avalanche.....	1	
Snow Climbing Unroped.....Avalanche.....	1	
Mixed Climbing Roped.....Avalanche.....	3	
Mixed Climbing Unroped.....Avalanche.....	2	
Ice Climbing Roped.....Avalanche.....	1	(1)
Snow Climbing Roped.....Slip.....	4	
Mixed Climbing Roped.....Slip.....	1	
Mixed Climbing Unroped.....Slip.....	1	
Ice Climbing Roped.....Slip.....	1	
Ice Climbing Unroped.....Slip.....	1	
Mixed Climbing Roped.....Frostbite.....	1	
Off-Piste Skiing.....Slip.....	1	(1)
Winter Conditions Total (25%).....	39	(5)

## SUMMER

Summer Hill Walking.....Slips.....	62	(7)
Summer Hill Walking.....Slip resulting in Drowning.....	1	(1)
Summer Hill Walking.....Slip (or washed down spate river).....	1	(1)
Summer Hill Walking.....Drowned.....	1	(1)
Summer Hill Walking.....Illness.....	12	(4)
Summer Hill Walking.....Rockfall.....	2	(1)
Summer Hill Walking.....Fall into Gorge.....	1	(1)
Summer Hill Walking.....Exhaustion/Hypothermia.....	5	(1)
Summer Hill Walking.....Exhaustion.....	4	
Summer Hill Walking.....Heat Trauma.....	3	
Summer Hill Walking.....Blown Over.....	2	
Summer Hill Walking.....Jumped off Bridge.....	1	
Summer Hill Walking.....Feet torn and blistered.....	1	
Summer Hill Walking.....Murdered.....	1	(1)
Summer Hill Walking.....Suicide.....	1	(1)
Orienteering .....Slip .....	2	
Rock Climbing.....Slip .....	5	
Rock Climbing Roped.....Pulled off Belay.....	1	
Rock Climbing Roped.....Slip .....	2	
Rock Climbing Roped.....Hold Failure.....	1	
Rock Climbing Unroped.....Slip .....	3	
Rock Climbing Unroped.....Hold Failure.....	1	
Mountain Biking.....	1	
Hot Air Ballooning in Mountains.....	1	
<hr/>		
Summer Conditions Total (75%).....	115	(19)
<hr/>		

<b>Sub Totals</b> —Slips	71	(9)
Avalanche	12	(2)
Illness	12	(4)—All in Summer conditions
Rock Climbing	13	—No fatalities

Mountain Rescue Teams are increasingly worried about the number of injured wearing chamfered heel footwear. The accidents using most man hours are searches for Solo Hillwalkers (usually male).

## ACCIDENT LIST, 1989

Compiled by John Hinde

PERHAPS the most publicised accident of the year was the hypothermia death of an eight year-old German girl on Cairngorm in August. There have been another four fatalities of people under eighteen on Scottish mountains in the last ten years: three of whom were killed by falls and one swept away when crossing a rope stretched across the River Finnan.

I have made a list of the MR incidents involving under 18s.

YEAR	INCIDENTS	EXPOSURE	FATALITIES
1989	25	7 (1 hyperthermic)	1 (8) Aug 13 Cairngorm
1988	20	2	0
1987	28	2	1 (16) Jun 4 Cairngorm
1986	22	0	0
1985	15	1	1 (16) Aug 10 Mamores
1984	21	3	0
1983	19	6	0
1982	18	4	1 (11) Jun 2 Marsco
1981	14	2	0
1980	16	0	1 (16) Jun 20 R.Finnan
1979	12	2	0

Of the fatalities, the two younger children died on family outings. The three 16 year-olds were accompanied or shadowed by outdoor activities instructors or school party leaders. Most of the non-fatal incidents occurred during award schemes or badge tests, but there were several rescues of youngsters stuck on crags or sea cliffs, and there were frightening cases of uncontrollable slides down slopes in polythene bags and other vehicles.

It may be significant that the five deaths all happened in the summer months.

## NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

FEBRUARY 1st Suffering a suspected heart attack, Kevin Brown (27) was flown to Stornoway by Coastguard helicopter from a glen 4 miles ESE of Lochinver.

FEBRUARY 2nd Bristows helicopter lifted John Clelland (25) from a deep gully in Gleann Dubh below Conival, Inchnadamph in fading light and sleet, with a back injury. Aux. C/G also involved.

FEBRUARY 18th Colin Feaver (43) and Raymond Camburn (36) were both injured when blown down in the SE Corrie of Quinag. Uninjured companion went for help (Assynt MRT). Kinloss alerted also. Difficult rescue by RAF Sea King. 24.

FEBRUARY 23rd to 24th Checking 2 bothies along the Gruinard River for storm damage, the walking route of Brian Bilborough (42) was lengthened because a blown-down tree restricted vehicle access. He was benighted at the second bothy when his walking was slowed down by wet snow. Found at 03.00 by Dundonnell MRT. 80.

MARCH 15th approx. Breda Plemic (37) was killed by a fall SE of the summit of Sgurr Dubh (Beinn Lair? Letterewe Forest?). Her ice-axe was on her rucksack and she had no crampons. She had been walking alone and wore chamfered heel boots.

The rucksack was found by chance and a search by Dundonnell MRT revealed her body on MAY 9th. SARDA and RAF Sea King. 108.

MARCH 17th Mike Proben decided iced pinnacles on Conival looked too difficult. Taking an easier route he was avalanched 1,000 feet down a gully. Uninjured, he went down and called out Assynt MRT, RAF Wessex & SARDA for his 2 companions who he thought might be buried. In any case he had the map and compass and they had no torches. They were found descending safe ground by moonlight. 40.

MARCH 20th Bernard Fish, a fallen climber, was uplifted from Applecross to Broadford Hospital by Bristows helicopter.

- MARCH 22nd to 23rd—David Baker (28) and David Wright (26) were unable to find an Award group they were to assess in Coire Lair and Coire Fionnaraidh, Achnashellach. Wright became exhausted in deep snowdrifts. Well equipped, they bivouacked and were found descending by Torridon & Kinlochewe MRT. 147.
- MAY 7th—False alarm. Search by Dundonnell MRT after a tent & sleeping bag appeared out of melting snow on Beinn Dearg (Inverlael). 45.
- JUNE 10th—False alarm. Person reported by a shepherd to be hanging from a rope on Ben Loyal walked off. Assynt, RAF helicopter. 8.
- JUNE 19th—A woman in a party of four tripped and badly cut her leg on Suilven path. The Lochinver doctor went out to treat her and members of her own party helped her to get back. Assynt MRT. 4.
- JUNE 20th—Just west of Loch Assynt, Dr Barry Lynch (37) got lost in mist when walking back to the road after fishing Loch Beannach. Assynt MRT. 28.
- JUNE 26th—Stac Polly. Sybil Gemmell (72) suffered leg injuries and facial cuts when she slipped and fell. Assynt, Dundonnell, RAF Sea King. 7.
- JUNE 29th—Assynt MRT, Caithness MC, and HM Coastguard searched sea cliffs for a man (18) who had drowned when he fell into the sea from a short, cliffy, slope. Found nearby by diver. 340.
- JUNE 30th approx.—Beverly Brown was filming in a hot air balloon in Coire Mhic Fhearchair of Beinn Eighe. Her leg was injured when the balloon, committed to landing, was caught in a gust and the basket was dragged 100 yards along a boulder field. She was flown direct to hospital by a filming helicopter.
- JULY 14th—Matthew Edwards (21), a climber with serious facial injuries, was winched from the foot of The Old Man of Stoer, Lochinver, by Coastguard helicopter. He recovered in Stornoway Hospital.
- AUGUST 18th—RAF Sea King, HMCG helicopter, Dundonnell, Kinloss, Kintail MRTs and SARDA called out to search for Meir Goldberg (19) separated from his three friends, missing overnight from a hill walk near Poolewe. Found cold and exhausted by a keeper. Beinn Airigh-Charr, north of Loch Maree. He was very badly equipped and he had been involved in another epic in the Cairngorms two days before. 530.
- AUGUST 26th—Erwann le Franc (19) slipped on beinn Liath Beag, Coulin Forest and injured a leg. He was found next day by passers by and airlifted by RAF Sea King. Torridon MRT. 37.
- AUGUST 28th—Coastal search for a murdered hillwalker Margaret McConie (51) whose body was found by Police dogs at Tongue. Assynt, Dundonnell MRTs, HM Coastguard and Caithness Mountaineering Club. 224.
- SEPTEMBER 15th—Search of Loch Assynt by Assynt & Kinloss MRTs, C/G helicopter, divers and local volunteers for Steven Salmon (22) found by divers drowned on SEPTEMBER 18th. His father had also been drowned when their fishing boat capsized in a storm. Two friends had survived by swimming ashore. 500.
- SEPTEMBER 26th to 27th—D. W. Bayne (40s) was benighted at the east end of Liathach after traversing the ridge. Self recovery. Search by Torridon MRT. 5.
- DECEMBER 28th—Wearing crampons and traversing the Main Ridge of An Teallach in good conditions of hard neve, Captain Jonathan North (29) was killed when descending Sgurr Fiona southwards in single file in a group of three and following old footprints. On crossing a small snow slope at the top of a gully the snow under his feet broke away and he lost his balance. He held himself at this point with his ice axe, but then let go of his axe and fell 1,300 feet towards Loch na Sealga. It is a mystery why he failed to recover from the initial fall. Dundonnell MRT, RAF Sea King. 45.

## WESTERN HIGHLANDS

- JANUARY 4th—With her husband, descending a path off Druim Coire nan Eirecheanach (South Cluanie Ridge) Janet Durren (58) slipped on wet grass and broke an ankle. Stretchered off by Kintail MRT. 31.

FEBRUARY 28th - Strung out down the hill, a party of eight was descending north from the Five Sisters into Gleann Lichd, from the bealach SE of Sgurr na Carnach into Choire Dhomain. When they were two minutes down the bealach, the spur on their right avalanched (loose snow, open slope) carrying Brian Sutton (29) 100 metres and burying him. Subsequently his companions were able to define an area 30m wide by 100m and his dead body was found by dogs and probe search. There had been strong wind and deep snow on the ridge. Conditions on descending the north facing slopes had been windless, good visibility, reasonable snow conditions. Kintail, Kinloss, SARDA, RAF Sea King. 446.

MARCH 22nd - HM Coastguard helicopter evacuation of Lynne Ward (15) suffering from hypothermia at Glen Affric Youth Hostel. She had been one of ten youngsters on a winter expedition, unaccompanied in bad weather. Kintail. 20.

APRIL 19th - Meall a'Chuilinn, Ardgour. Alex Williamson became separated from his wife, and while still on the hill, contacted a radio ham in Largs. Police and Lochaber MRT were alerted and an RAF Wessex scrambled. Meanwhile Mrs Williamson reached safety unaided.

MAY 9th to 10th - Search by Kintail, Cairngorm, Glencoe, Glenelg, Dundonnell, Skye, Kinloss and Lochaber MRTs, SARDA and RAF Wessex for Vincent Guilfooy (56) missing since MAY 1st. Boots were found and his footprints leading into Dundreggan Reservoir, Glen Moriston. His body was found by divers under 3 feet of water 20 feet out. 849.

MAY 16th - Search by Kinloss and SARDA for Leslie Philips (20) missing overnight. He was found, cold and frightened in Strathglass near Beaulby by RAF Sea King. 72.

MAY 18th - False alarm. Red flares reported. Kintail. 2.

JUNE 16th - The solo pilot was killed when an aircraft flew into the hillside of Beinn an Leathaid, six miles east of Ardnamurchan Point. Weather cloudy with good visibility and a SE wind of 10 knots. Lochaber MRT, RAF helicopter and RN Sea King. 48.

JUNE 26th - John Gillies (69) collapsed on the summit of Moruisg, Glencarron. A nurse was summoned from another group by his companion's whistle blasts and resuscitated him. The local doctor was flown up by RAF Sea King and pronounced the patient dead. Torridon MRT. 10.

JULY 3rd - Kintail MRT called out to search for 2 lads who had separated from a less experienced pair (m 17-18) and then camped without considering that the beginners would be worried about them. South Cluanie Ridge. 22.

JULY 23rd - Hillwalker Stuart Olcock (19) was evacuated from Alltbeith Youth Hostel, Glen Affric, by RN helicopter with his feet in tatters from wearing cheap leather boots not broken in. 7.

AUGUST 1st - Overdue from a traverse of the Five Sisters, Celia Wallace (37) and Steven Linden (27) made their own way down helped by lights from Kintail MRT. 8.

AUGUST 15th - Overdue from a traverse of the South Cluanie Ridge, a pair were helped down the last part of Creag nan Damh by lights from Kintail MRT. 4.

AUGUST 21st to 22nd - Falls of Glomach path from Morvich. Against local advice, Horst Spandauw (62), Hela Sachs (61) and Tomas Sachs (37) set out at 15.30 and got benighted, exhausted and very wet. Kintail MRT. 11.

AUGUST 24th to 25th - Rubha Mor, Plockton. Carrying a heavy rucksack over level but rough ground, Lucy Phillips (17) slipped on wet grass and injured an ankle. Carried out by Kintail MRT next morning. 6.

SEPTEMBER 19th - Deerstalking in Glen Meadail, Knoydart, Armand Back (41) slipped and fell when descending a rocky outcrop in the rain, breaking an ankle. Lochaber MRT and RN Sea King. 12.

NOVEMBER 23rd - Dr Dominic Chin (22) and Paul Windle (22) were benighted on a horseshoe walk over The Saddle. After a late start they were delayed by boot problems, rivers in spate and a lack of torches. Kintail MRT. 11.

DECEMBER 16th to 22nd - False alarm for two German walkers who left a car at Gleann Cia-aig Falls, Loch Arkiga, and walked to the West Coast using bothies. Kinloss, Lochaber and RAF Sea King. 393.



## BEN NEVIS

- FEBRUARY 5th—In storm winds with snow falling a group were practising winter skills in Coire na Ciste below Number Three Gully. Windslab in the gully avalanched bringing down a boulder which struck Michael Kennedy (36) on the thigh. Other climbers carried him down where he was met by Lochaber MRT with an ambulance. 4.
- FEBRUARY 7th to 8th—Lochaber MRT and RAF helicopter were involved when six men were benighted on Tower Ridge. They made their own way down. 12.
- FEBRUARY 15th to 16th—Two men off route on the west side of Tower Gap were benighted and winched off by RAF helicopter. Liam Collins (27) suffered a frostbitten finger. Padraig Cunningham (26) was uninjured. Lochaber MRT. 16.
- FEBRUARY 19th—A party of three had just climbed Tower Scoop and were traversing into Observatory Gully when a loose snow avalanche swept two of them down. One was unhurt but George Wilks (44) had an ankle fractured. He was carried down on a stretcher by Joint Services, Lochaber MRT, Nevis Guides and Plas-y-Brenin. 75.
- FEBRUARY 20th—Leading the first pitch of Smith's Route, Gardyloo Buttress, Jolyon Pickles (20) peeled off and broke an ankle despite the belay holding. A party of guides from Glenmore Lodge saw the incident and put a rope down from the summit, hoisting the leader and his second. They carried him down on a rope stretcher to meet Lochaber MRT just above the Halfway Lochan. 120.
- FEBRUARY 24th to 25th—J. Beaton (20+) and J. Orr (21) were benighted on Tower Ridge but made their own way down. Lochaber MRT, RAF helicopter. 13.
- MARCH 1st—Leading 'All's Fair' (E2) at Poll Dubh Crag, Molly Gibb (27) placed a 'Friend' runner at 30 ft. then climbed on. She fell and the running belay pulled out. She landed on the ground, breaking lower vertebrae. Highland Police. 4.
- MARCH 25th—John Lane (20) and Garry Woodburn (26) were airlifted from the CIC Hut with head and back injuries by RAF helicopter. They had climbed Douglas Gap East Gully on Tower Ridge (or Douglas Gap West Gully, they did not know which), gone over the Douglas gap and then fallen down the other side, whence they walked down to the hut. Lochaber MRT. 19.
- JUNE 8th—Solo hillwalking on Carn Mor Dearg Arete, Fred Newton (72) was killed in good weather by a fall into Coire Leis caused by a rockfall on scree. He was found on JUNE 10th after searches of the Ben and Mamores by Lochaber, Dundonnell, Kinloss, Leuchars, SARDA, RAF Sea King and Wessex. 1500.
- JUNE 21st—Richard Broadmead (20) sat on a 15 ft. boulder in Coire Eoghainn. The boulder slithered 20 ft. down the hill, and when Richard fell off he was trapped by the arm. His friends released him but he was concussed, then recovered sufficiently to walk down with help. Lochaber Team. 12.
- JUNE 25th—Three schoolboys camped with a master in bad weather on Nevis summit on Saturday night. Descending the Tourist Track next day, Stuart Bilsland (13) fell and hurt his thigh. The teacher went down for help then went back up again. When Lochaber Team arrived another boy was slightly hypothermic and was helped down while the injured boy was carried. 60.
- JULY 7th—Bernard Guillaume (47) died of a heart attack near Nevis summit. Lochaber MRT. RAF Wessex. 19.
- JULY 22nd—Accompanied by her husband on Carn Mor Dearg Arete, Margaret Hill (51) slipped and cut her temple, but she managed to walk to the CIC Hut. Two RAF Kinloss MRT radioed for an RAF Sea King which airlifted her. 6.
- JULY 30th—Descending the Tourist Path, Elizabeth MacGregor (52) slipped on loose stones and hurt her knee. She was stretchered down by Lochaber MRT. 20.
- JULY 30th—Descending the Tourist Path, Maria Frutos (31) tripped on a stone, and falling sustained cuts above her eye. Lochaber. 10.
- AUGUST 27th—False alarm. Misunderstanding between hill parties caused by Chinese being in difficulty on scree above the Tourist Path. Lochaber MRT and RAF Wessex. 24.

DECEMBER 29th—Cramponed and roped, but not belayed, John Jones (46) and Simon Fenwick (31) had climbed the chimney above the Eastern Traverse on Tower Ridge. Jones was 40 feet above Fenwick when he was trying to clip in to a piton found in place. He slipped on frosted rock and fell towards Observatory Gully. Fenwick saw the slip and jumped back down the chimney, successfully halting Jones' fall who was left dangling in mid air at the end of the rope, sustaining knee, thigh and hip injuries.

It took 3 hours to prusik, to climb and to be hauled back to the crest of the ridge. Benighted followed and then a completion of the climb at dawn. Lochaber MRT, RAF Wessex. 49.

## GLENCOE

(including Buachaille Etive Mor)

JANUARY 2nd—Without torches, C. J. Lucas (43) and Sek-Ki Leong (21), both male, descended Bidean nam Bian and got cragfast near An-t'-Sron Chasam. Glencoe MRT lowered them down and escorted them off the hill. Campers had been alerted by shouts after midnight. 60.

FEBRUARY 12th to 13th—Three girls (19, 20, 21) and a youth (19) all students, were benighted at The Chancellor when traversing Aonach Eagach from west to east. They descended 1,000 feet to the south and got cragfast. Glencoe MRT lowered them down overnight. An RAF Sea King could not be used because of strong winds. 74.

FEBRUARY 14th to 15th—Three men returning from Sron na Larig could not cross the newly swollen burn in Larig Eilde so they went round into the Lost Valley. Benighted, and not knowing about the bridge deep hidden in trees below them, they spent 12 hours in a storm, until their flashing lights were noticed by a motorist next morning. Terry French (42), hypothermic, was stretchered down by Glencoe MRT then airlifted by RAF Wessex. 48.

MARCH 2nd to 3rd Friends in Lagangarbh Hut got worried when two men were benighted on North Buttress, Buachaille Etive Mor. They were found next day (by Glencoe MRT) moving slowly upwards. They declined any help. Leuchars MRT and RAF Wessex. 210.

APRIL 4th Peter Willcock (63) sustained head and leg injuries when he fell down a snow slope into scree near West Gully on Sgurr na h-Ulaidh. He was not wearing crampons. Airlifted by RAF Wessex. Glencoe Team. 32.

MAY 28th False alarm. A motorist called out Glencoe MRT but people climbing Curved Ridge at midnight had only been using torches, not flashing distress signals. (Buachaille Etive Mor). 2.

JUNE 9th Unequipped for hillwalking, a father and son were traversing Sgor nam Fiannaigh. Stephen Taylor (37) fell 100 ft. into a gully leading to the Great Cave Pitch of Clachaig Gully, sustaining head and ankle injuries. After a difficult winch out of the father by RAF Sea King, Daniel Taylor (16) was left cragfast and was lowered down by Glencoe MRT. 20.

JUNE 18th—One of a party of 11 traversing Aonach Eagach, William Ferguson (45) suffered sunstroke and dehydration. Glencoe MRT. 7.

JULY 2nd—A Frenchman (27) traversing Sgor nam Fiannaigh alone, got cragfast on slabs east of Jericho Wall, Clachaig Gully. It was his first time ever on a mountain and he had no idea what to do. He was lowered off by Glencoe MRT. 18.

JULY 25th On the E. Face of Buachaille Etive Mor, near The Cauldron Pitch of The Chasam, Sue Mannering (31) became so exhausted that she was unable to descend. Winched off by RAF Wessex in very bad weather. Glencoe MRT. 70.

AUGUST 14th Glencoe team searched steep woods of Meall Mor for a mentally ill man (31) later found walking on the Kinlochleven road. 10.

AUGUST 14th A woman suffered head abrasions from a fall on the Pap of Glencoe, then she managed to walk down without the help of Glencoe MRT who were on the above search. Highland Police.

AUGUST 20th to 21st—Angus Airlie (45), Richard Andrew (40) and Evelyn Hill (27) were lost overnight on Sgurr na h-Ulaidh. They were found by RAF Wessex at the Bealach Easan, west of the mountain. Glencoe MRT. 23.

SEPTEMBER 5th to 6th—After completing the Aonach Eagach traverse, a man and his wife with a spaniel called Skip were descending the Clachaig Gully path. The dog fell down a heather-covered hole which widened into a large chamber fifteen down. After a long search the dog was found. A man was lowered by rope, then pulled up holding the wet and dirty Skip who was none the worse for his long night underground. Glencoe MRT. 8.

SEPTEMBER 8th—A block on which he was pulling up gave way when Gordon Cowan (25) was climbing Crowberry Tower on Buachaille Etive Mor. He fell breaking an arm and was aided down by Glencoe MRT. An RAF Wessex failed to uplift him because of swirling cloud and strong wind. 50.

SEPTEMBER 20th—Six campers were trapped in their cars by very heavy rain at Red Squirrel Campsite, Leacatuim, Glencoe. After a RN Sea King failed to reach them because of power cables, a wet-suited Glencoe MRT member reached them using ropes and got them to an island, whence they were airlifted by RAF Wessex. 70.

SEPTEMBER 23rd—Suffering a heart attack on the pinnacles of Aonach Eagach, Lionel Griffiths (65) was lowered off on a stretcher by Glencoe and Lochaber MRTs. When below the mist he was winched up by RAF Wessex. 80.

OCTOBER 10th to 14th—After a large scale search by Glencoe, Leuchars, SARDA, and RAF Wessex the body of James Rogers (28) was found below steep slabs on the North Face of Sgor na h'Ulaidh. He had been wearing bendy boots with chamfered heels. 444.

OCTOBER 15th to 16th—Searches by Glencoe, Kinloss and Lochaber MRTs and an RAF Sea King revealed the bodies of Doctor Graham Watson (46) and his wife Jenny (40) below the North Face of Sgor na h'Ulaidh, both wearing bendy boots with chamfered heels. It was noted by teams that the steep terrain of this accident (very close to the previous accident) was very greasy and slippery, thought to be caused by lichen and heavy rain after a dry summer. 438.

OCTOBER 22nd to 23rd—Benighted on steep, vegetative rock when descending the SW Ridge of Stob na Broige, Buachaille Etive Mor, Doctor James Christie (29) and Dave Smith (28) got cragfast. When they flashed torches Glencoe MRT was called out and lowered them to easier ground. 38.

NOVEMBER 18th—Glencoe MRT searched for two people overdue and found them in the Lost Valley. They also found a second party of five hillwalkers. All seven were benighted because they did not have working torches. 13.

DECEMBER 16th to 17th—Glencoe MRT on standby for two men overdue on the North Face of Buachaille Etive Mor in very bad weather. They turned up safe. 2.

## OTHER CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

JANUARY 12th—Walking from the Centre Top of Beinn a'Chaorunn—on a compass bearing towards the South Top—Terence MacLean (38) fell through a cornice into Upper Coire Ban cutting his face and head and bruising ribs. His companion alerted parties of JSMTC Tulloch on the plateau, who lowered one of their number 180 metres to the casualty on 4 ropes tied in series. Later others went down the ropes and MacLean was suspended in a bivvy bag and lowered down crags and snow to easier ground. RAF Wessex was grounded thrice (at Tyndrum, Glencoe and Fort William) by snow showers. Lochaber MRT. 120.

JANUARY 28th—Engaged on a mountain rescue/filming exercise a RAF Sea King helicopter crashed close to the mountain rescue box in Coire Ardair, Creag Meagaidh. The 9 men on board (5 air and ground crew, 2 Lochaber MRT and 2 film crew) sustained cuts, bruises and abrasions and were evacuated by an RAF Wessex and another Sea King. 23.

FEBRUARY 1st—Colin Turnbull (38) told a shepherd in Coire a'Mhusgain that he was going to Sgurr a'Mhaim by the Devils Ridge. After extended searches by Lochaber, Glencoe, Kinloss, Leuchars, SARDA and RAF Wessex his body was found at the bottom of Steall Waterfall on FEBRUARY 8th by Lochaber MRT. 1,620.

- FEBRUARY 19th—Lochaber MRT and RAF Wessex searched for Stephen Banks (29) after he had fallen 400 feet down the East Face of Aonach Beag after going through the summit cornice. Unhurt he walked out for 3 hours and then hitched a lift to Fort William Police Station. 130.
- MARCH 2nd—Garry Brett was overdue in the Mamores. Glencoe Team. 3.
- MARCH 11th—False alarm. A group of 3 in the Mamores had met a solo walker heading for the Devil's Ridge, and later saw a 300 ft. furrow in the snow below the ridge with what appeared to be a body at the bottom, but did not investigate because of bad conditions. Two days of vain searching by Glencoe, Lochaber and RAF Wessex followed. 176.
- MARCH 24th—Walking on a compass bearing between the Centre and South Tops of Beinn a'Chaoruinn (just south of incident of JANUARY 12) Roger Nicholle (43) fell through a snow cornice. After a 500 ft. fall he was buried up to his shoulders with a hand free and his legs behind him. He managed to get his hands free but could not free his legs. His companion went off for help and Lochaber MRT dug Nicholle out 5 hours after the fall. With frostbitten fingers he walked down unaided. RAF Wessex. 137.
- APRIL 2nd—Traversing the An Garbhanach/An Gearanach Ridge in a gale, Isabel Taylor (33) was blown off and fell 200 feet, breaking ribs and sustaining cuts and bruises. She was winched off by RAF Sea King. Lochaber MRT. 34.
- APRIL 9th—Patrick Kane (39) fell on An Garbhanach, Mamores, injuring an ankle. He was carried down by his party, volunteers and Lochaber MRT from Steall Hut using the Steall Hut stretcher. 4.
- APRIL 15th—When viewing the new ski development on the lower slopes of Aonach Mor, Robert Keery (62) broke his ankle. Wearing wellingtons only 50 feet above the forest track. Lochaber MRT. 3.
- APRIL 29th—Eight people were descending Sron na Creise, Black Mount by a long snow slope. The group leader, James Dunlop (63) had an ice-axe and crampons in his rucksack. He fell down 200 feet of snow on to scree injuring a leg. Glencoe MRT. RAF Wessex. 47.
- MAY 27th—John Buckley (40) jumped off the Three Ropes Wire Bridge at Steall, Glen Nevis, breaking an ankle. Lochaber, Kinloss MRTs. 33.
- MAY 27th—Walking on a path to Corroul Shooting Lodge, Rannoch Moor, Alexander Wilding White (82) broke his leg when his foot went into a hole. Airlifted to Belford by RAF Wessex.
- JUNE 24th—Five teenage girls on a scheme were overdue. They had got tired and camped in Upper Glen Nevis. They were found by Lochaber MRT in an RAF Wessex, but they stayed put and went on next day. 11.
- AUGUST 3rd—Hugh Dorins (36) suffered from an old rugby injury. His leg stiffened and he separated from his companion on Sgurr a'Mhaim, Mamores, not going to the summit and getting benighted on the descent. Lochaber MRT. 11.
- AUGUST 24th—Glencoe MRT on standby for a couple overdue walking from Glen Creran to Glen Duror, Appin.
- SEPTEMBER 30th—Search by Kinloss, Lochaber and RAF Wessex for Tony Rutherford (39) who had bivouacked on Aonach Mor. 100.
- OCTOBER 14th—Creag Bhreac, North Ballachulish. John Robson (16) slipped on steep grass and sprained his neck. He was splinted, stretchered down, then airlifted by RAF Wessex to hospital in Glasgow in case his spine was broken. Glencoe MRT. 6.
- OCTOBER 11th to 14th—Solo hill-walking in the Mamores, Richard Aitken (33) was killed by a fall down the East Face of Am Bodach from near the NE Ridge. He had told another hosteller he intended to do all 11 Mamore Munros so a large-scale search was required by Kinloss, Lochaber, RN and RAF helicopters. 1,460.
- NOVEMBER 18th—James Brogan (45) suffered a heart attack when walking with eight others near the top of a 'T' Bar Tow on Meall a'Bhuiridh, Black Mount. He was stretchered to a chairlift by Glencoe & Leuchars MRTs. RAF Wessex was unable to help due to rain and mist. 77.

NOVEMBER 19th to 20th—A train crew on the Loch Treig line spotted a missing hillwalker and radioed for help. Ann Lochhead (38) was lifted up by RAF Wessex. She had been benighted on Stob Coire Easain after separation from her companion in mist. Lochaber MRT. 134.

DECEMBER 20th—Alastair Angus MacGregor (40) and Graham Mackenzie (39) were found in a refuge near Luib Eilt by RAF Sea King helicopter just before midnight. They had been benighted by icy conditions walking from Corrour, Rannoch Moor, to Glen Nevis. Lochaber. 13.

DECEMBER 28th to 29th—Failing to descend from the Mamores down Coire a'Mhail in icy conditions, David Jones (28) and Ann Waddilove (27) went up on to the ENE Ridge of Sgurr a'Mhaim where they were benighted. They got down at first light unaided. Lochaber, RAF Wessex. 4.

NB—The descent of this corrie is not recommended to any who do not want to go down Steall Waterfall, unless they know at first hand the escape route.—J.H.

## CAIRNGORMS

JANUARY 8th to 9th—Walking alone from Linn of Dee to near the summit of Braeriach, Melissa Whiting (21) was lost in mist and benighted, but she carried on and somehow got to the bealach between Glen Dee and Luibeg Bridge, where she bivouacked. She was found next morning by MRTs but she declined help and she declined an airlift from the RAF. Grampian Police, Braemar and Aberdeen teams. 104.

JANUARY 20th to 21st—A group of 6 split into 2×3 on the Braeriach/Cairntoul Plateau. 3 descended and left 1 casualty at Sinclair Hut, who walked out with Glenmore Lodge MRT. The other 3 were overdue and returned at 1 a.m. Cairngorm MRT. 14.

JANUARY 28th—Ena Black (62) separated from her friend, and then got lost descending from the summit of Mount Keen. Tayside Police.

FEBRUARY 6th—Fitzlloyd Walker (31) and Rachel Chappell (17) were overdue when they separated from the main party and lost the path between Allanquoich and the foot of Beinn a'Bhuird. Grampian Police. 1.

FEBRUARY 18th—S. King (m) and P. Grommasio (f) were unable to surmount the cornice of Jacob's Ladder, Coire an-t'Sneachda, Cairngorm. They were top-roped out, unhurt, by Glenmore Lodge. 12.

FEBRUARY 19th—A party of 5—slightly off course—got on to steep ground in the NW Coire of Glas Maol. Sheila McLeish (29) without an ice-axe slipped on snow and slid the same distance, not being able to brake with his axe. Both were injured but not seriously. Grampian Police, Braemar MRT. 34.

FEBRUARY 27th—A well-equipped climber (m) fell while leading Mirror Direct, Coire an-t'Sneachda breaking an ankle. He was rescued by Glenmore Lodge MRT.

MARCH 18th—Windslab avalanche on the Great Slab of Cairn Lochan below The Vent involved a party of nine. Mountaineers and a Glenmore Lodge party evacuated David Hardie (42) and David Allan from the debris, one with spine injuries, one with bruising and shock. Helped later by Cairngorm MRT. Airlifted by RAF Sea King. 53.

MARCH 18th—Avalanche on the eastern section of the main crag of Lochnagar. Kenneth Robertson (27) was one of a pair climbing Shallow Gully. He was killed by the avalanche; seconding at the time, his rope was broken about 4 feet below his leader's belay. Six other climbers had been on Central Buttress in two roped pairs and one unroped pair. A solo climber triggered the avalanche where Shallow Gully and Central Buttress join. In all: three people were swept down 600 feet to the foot of the crag; one rope of two was swept either side of Central Buttress, stopping with one climber being suspended on both ends of the rope; the other roped pair being unaffected by the avalanche. Martin MacRae (30), Christopher Roper (28), Richard Napier (26), Alan McIntyre (25) and Geoffrey Emerson (23) all sustained cuts or bruises, all but one from the avalanche, and were airlifted by RAF Wessex. Aberdeen, Braemar and Grampian Police MRTs. 90.

- MARCH 23rd—Snow climbing (roped) in Coire an-t'Sneachdsa, B. Williams slipped while safeguarding his son, suffering head injuries. Rescued by Ski Patrol and Glenmore Lodge MRT. Airlifted by RAF Sea King. 40.
- MARCH 26th—At the bealach between Cairn Kerloch and Shillofad (on one of the old Mounth tracks 6 miles south of Banchory) Annie Currie (65) (one of a party of 65) stumbled from a heather bank on to ruts in the track fracturing a tibia and fibula. Airlifted by RAF Wessex. Grampian Police. 8.
- MARCH 29th—A glissader fell near The Pools of Dee, Lairig Ghru, and injured his leg. Rescued by Glenmore and RAF Sea King. 12.
- APRIL 16th to 17th—George (66) and Helen (56) Edwards set out with ordinary bikes to cross from Glen Tromie to Feshie, but got lost pushing their bikes across snowfields and were benighted. Found by ground search. Cairngorm, Kinloss, SARDA, RAF Sea King. 268.
- MAY 21st—Simple slip on scree near The Shelter Stone. A. Kuhl (19) injured his leg. Glenmore and RAF Sea King. 9.
- MAY 28th—Two men descending the W. Ridge of Lochnagar saw it was not the best way down, so they contoured round the top of the rocks just north of Cac Carn Beag. From steep, wet grass and scree Adrian Owens (23) fell 100 ft. on to rocks and was seriously injured. Braemar & Grampian Police MRTs, RAF Wessex. 38.
- JUNE 3rd—Barry Clayton was walking the top path of a gorge near Blair Atholl when he slipped and fell 80 feet into the river witnessed by his fiancée. Recovered by RN diver from Rosyth. Leuchars, RAF Wessex, Tayside Police, Dundee Aeromed helicopter. 440.
- JUNE 4th—A RAF Wessex airlifted Christopher Allen (23) from the foot of Boulder Buttress, Polney Crag, Craig-a-Barns, Dunkeld. When soloing and 30 feet up, it started to rain; the rock became slippery and he fell to the bottom, fracturing his thoracic spine and pelvis. 4.
- JUNE 22nd—Cycling alone to the Beanaid Burn in Glen Einich, Royston Bennett (57) then took short wooden skis to ski the last snow wreaths of Coire an Lochain of Braeriach. He was killed ski-ing down the headwall. Due to the gradient there was no margin for error, and due to the time of year there was no run out. Cairngorm, Kinloss, SARDA, RAF Sea King. 246.
- JUNE 24th to 25th—Ronald Patterson (17) and Jason King (15) were rescued by RAF Wessex from Craigie Thieves (689 metres), Glen Prosen, when Ronald took an anxiety attack and could not continue. Tayside Police. 5.
- JUNE 25th—Without map and compass, and going up Lochnagar about midnight to see the sunrise, Hugh Ramsay (27), Michael Young (15) and Julian Schmitz (15) got lost and went down the wrong side of the mountain. Braemar, Grampian Police. 12.
- JULY 2nd—Leading 'Wigwag' on Stag Rocks, Peter Crane fell (loose rock), pulling out his runners and breaking an ankle. Cliffbound, he was lowered by Glenmore Lodge MRT and winched out by RAF Sea King. 19.
- JULY 14th—Williamina Forbes (23) stepped into a hole when taking a photograph at a campsite at the head of the Dubh Loch south of Lochnagar. She fractured a fibula and was evacuated by an air ambulance from Dundee which made no contact with the MR teams. Scott Sinclair (12) had been left alone in a tent after this rescue and he was rescued by Grampian Police and Braemar MRT. RAF Wessex observing. 56.
- JULY 15th—A male fell and broke a leg at Arbroath and was recovered from seaward by HM Coastguard.
- JULY 21st—After her husband left her on the (snowless) ski slopes of Meall Odhar, Cairnwell, Gisela Loz (52) got lost in mist but made her own way down. Grampian Police and Braemar. 3.
- JULY 23rd—Alastair Duff, aged 'over 21,' slipped and aggravated an old slipped disc injury on the descent to Loch Callater from Jock's Road. Grampian Police and Braemar. 2.
- JULY 25th—Relying on her husband—who carried map and compass—to navigate; when she lost him in mist on Cairn of Claise, Dr Kirsty McKellar (24) was disorientated. She walked down into Glen Callater then over Jock's Road into Glen Doll. Braemar, Grampian and Tayside Police MRTs. 51.

- JULY 28th - Alone on Glas Maol, Nicholas Parsons (30) took a compass bearing which was 180 degrees out. Unable to correct it in mist, he wandered in circles before bedding down for the night. He was found walking on Cairn of Claise by searchers. RAF Wessex, Aberdeen, Braemar & Tayside MRTs. 590.
- JULY 29th - Two persons cragfast at Downies, Aberdeen, lifted by helicopter. HM Coastguard report.
- AUGUST 14th - Helen Mallinson (8) died of hypothermia on the west slopes of Coire an Lochain, Cairn Lochain. She and her brother Peter (11) were found by a SARDA dog after their father had gone for help, and they were evacuated by an RAF helicopter. The father, Volker (45) also suffering from exposure, had been found by Cairngorm MRT (alerted by the wife who had not been on the hill) in Coire Cas. Volker and his two children had walked from Linn of Dee, by Loch Etchachan possibly via Ben MacDui summit where they were lost in mist without a compass. Also involved were Glenmore Lodge and Braemar MRTs. 1081.
- AUGUST 29th - Barbara Holmwood (51) injured an ankle on the Lairig Ghru path in Glen Dee. Grampian Police Land Rover. 1.
- AUGUST 30th - Kinloss and Leuchars Teams and an RAF Wessex called out for two elderly men lost near the summit of Drumochter Pass. They turned up safe but hopelessly lost. 85.
- OCTOBER 8th - A male fell at Arbroath and was evacuated, with head and hand injuries, by helicopter. HM Coastguard report.
- OCTOBER 28th - Collecting rocks amongst the wet, mossy boulders of The Scorie, below The Winter Corrie of Dreish, Glen Clova, John Harrison (57) slipped and broke his leg. He was stretchered out by Tayside Police as an RAF helicopter could not operate due to very low cloud. 40.
- OCTOBER 29th - In good weather a father and son out for a walk in Glen Clova tried rock climbing on Red Craig. Without equipment they got cragfast and were rescued by RAF Wessex.
- NOVEMBER 5th to 6th - Andrew Grundy (47) got lost coming off Ben MacDui and sheltered in boulders in Coire Raibert overnight. Cairngorm, Glenmore, Kinloss, SARDA, RAF Sea King. 144.
- NOVEMBER 12th - HM Coastguard reported a male who fell whilst climbing at Aberdeen who was airlifted.
- NOVEMBER 12th - A Coastguard Cliff Team recovered Kevin Munro (15). He had been cragfast on cliffs near Portsoy Outdoor Swimming Pool. He had a slightly injured hand.
- NOVEMBER 18th to 19th - Search by Aberdeen, Glenmore, Kinloss MRTs and RAF Sea King for Malcolm MacLean (35) overdue from Cairn Lochan of Cairngorms. 120.
- DECEMBER 16th - Kinloss MRT on exercise in Coire an t'Sneachda of Cairngorm were alerted by whistle blasts when three men were avalanched in The Runnel. Bruce Goodland (28) had leg and hip injuries and was stretchered to the chairlift. 66.
- DECEMBER 30th to 31st - Lost on the wrong side of Lochnagar and without crampons and ice-axes, two men were descending steep snow towards the Sandy Loch in mist. Philip Bell (32) fell, unseen and unheard by his companion. Braemar MRT found him unconscious at 04.00 hours suffering severe hypothermia, broken neck, ribs and ankle. They stretchered him down to an airlift by RAF Sea King. He recovered after several weeks in hospital. 225.

## SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

- JANUARY 1st - Having got lost trying to follow a walker's guidebook down the N. Ridge and Stank Glen of Ben Ledi in mist, a party of four went back to the summit and descended the steep E. Face in darkness without torches, getting lost again in forest. Irene Izod (38) slipped on wet grass in lightweight boots and sustained cuts and bruises. Killin MRT. 85.
- JANUARY 3rd - Descending (almost from the summit) the NE Ridge of Ben More in mist, rain and wind, Vicki Rogerson (18) twisted a knee and slowed down her party of eight. Clare Walker (17) became hypothermic. Both were stretchered down in darkness by Killin MRT as weather prevented helicopter flying. 121.

- JANUARY 5th—Killin MRT on standby for William Cadger (52) overdue on Ben Ledi.
- FEBRUARY 5th—On a forestry walk near Lochgoilhead, Audrey Brown (55) fractured an ankle. Arrochar and Strathclyde Police MRTs 12.
- FEBRUARY 12th—Polybagging on snow. One of a party of ten, Jamie McNiven (14) was INSIDE his survival bag and lost control, striking his head on a rock. Coire Ban, Glen Daimh (Glen Lyon). Tayside.
- FEBRUARY 19th—Lesley Wilson (23) received head and back injuries ascending Beinn a'Chuirn, Bridge of Orchy. She was blown over and fell 150 feet on steep snow. Strathclyde Police, RAF Wessex. 20.
- MARCH 4th—Ascending Conic Hill, Balmaha, on the West Highland Way, Reginald Archer (42) suffered a heart attack and was airlifted to hospital by an RAF Wessex. Lomond MRT. 18.
- MARCH 7th—William Manston (29) was bruised from a slide and a fall when descending Ben More in snow, but managed to walk off himself. Killin MRT.
- MARCH 31st—Following a guidebook, 'Walks in the Trossachs,' Eric Anderson (58) got lost after climbing Ben Ledi and attempting to go down Stank Glen from the North Ridge in mist. Killin MRT were alerted and Police found him returning to his start point. The book stated that Stank Glen was indicated by a finger post, but the post is no longer there.
- APRIL 23rd—Grace Scott (57) slipped on the Ben A'n path and injured her leg. She was stretchered down by Lomond MRT. 23.
- APRIL 23rd—Ochils MRT called out for a lady of 71 who had injured her ankle when hillwalking. 9.
- APRIL 30th or MAY 1st—Injuring a leg and his back by a fall off The Whangie, Kilpatrick Hills, M. Kavanagh was flown to Glasgow by helicopter.
- MAY 13th to 14th—Night search by Ochils MRT for five schoolboys reported missing from their planned campsite by an adult leader. Navigation in mist had been at fault. They should have crossed the Ochils from Tillicoultry to Glen Devon, but they were found at Maidens Well. 121.
- MAY 23rd to 24th—Manon Hughes (21) was carried down by stretcher from Loch Oss of Ben Oss by Killin MRT and SARDA. It was suspected that her over-exertion had caused heatstroke and severe dehydration. 78.
- MAY 31st—Robert Airey (42) died on Beinn Dorain. He was found by a party descending and recovered by RAF Sea King on JUNE 9. Strathclyde Police. 6.
- JUNE 1st—A party of 17 was descending Beinn a'Chroin, Crianlarich. Patricia Hotson (47) stumbled and broke an ankle. Companions helped her down to a hill road from which she was evacuated by Land Rover. Killin MRT. 45.
- JUNE 12th—False alarm. Flares sighted. Ochils. 4.
- JUNE 18th—Katie Searle (17) was taken ill during a hike in very hot weather. Ochils MRT. RAF Wessex. 8.
- JUNE 19th—Descending a waymarked route—Stank Glen—on Ben Ledi, Victoria Finlay (56) slipped wearing sandals and broke an ankle. Killin MRT and RAF Wessex. 66.
- JUNE 21st—A sheep was rescued from the loose face of Craig Leith. Ochils. 21.
- JULY 8th—Members of Ochils MRT abseiled into Dollar Glen, fitted a harness to a Black Labrador (11) which had fallen 40 feet, and hoisted him out uninjured. 6.
- JULY 9th—Peter Coleman (8) was found safe after separating from his mother on Dun-na-Cuaiche above Inveraray Castle. Arrochar and Strathclyde MRTs, RAF Sea King. 27.
- JULY 31st—Wearing trainers on The Brack, Silke Crutzen (f15), slipped and injured an ankle. Strathclyde Police, Arrochar. 24.
- AUGUST 3rd—Orienteering in Glen Aray, Inveraray, Derek Noble (21) slipped and injured a leg ligament. Strathclyde Police. 3.
- AUGUST 5th—One of 3,000 plus taking part in an orienteering event in the Queen Elizabeth Forest, Dave Monteith (37) injured his leg from a slip in a steep, wet, forested area. He was stretchered out by Lomond MRT. 7.



- AUGUST 12th—Mary Reid (52) slipped and broke her ankle on steep scree on Ben A'n Tourist Path. Killin MRT reached her and Lomond MRT helped to carry her down by stretcher. 74.
- AUGUST 18th to 19th—Six out of 12 walking from Kinlochard to Cashel reached Cashel and reported the other 6 in difficulties on Ben Bhreac, but they eventually made their own way down. Lomond MRT. 50.
- AUGUST 26th—Ochils MRT, SARDA, Police and RAF Wessex searched likely areas of The Ochils for a woman (40) suffering from an illness, but she turned up at home. 186.
- AUGUST 27th—J. Carter (m27) tripped walking on Conic Hill, Loch Lomond and broke his lower leg. Ambulance crew stretchered him to an accessible place for airlifting by RN Sea King.
- SEPTEMBER 3rd—Mountain biking down The Law in the Ochils near Tillicoultry, Gordon Ferguson (21) ran into two hillwalkers also descending the path. He fell 70 feet into boulders suffering chest bruising. His bike carried on, narrowly missing another descending walker. Ochils MRT, RAF Wessex. 20.
- SEPTEMBER 8th to 9th—John Porter (59) died of a heart attack when walking at Arncliffe, Machrihanish, Kintyre. Extensive search by Police, HM Coastguard. Campbeltown Sierra and RN Sea King.
- SEPTEMBER 10th—In good weather Douglas Tintal was rescued from the South Face of The Cobbler after a fall. With fractured skull, wrists and ankle he was lowered by an MRT and the crewman of a RN Sea King to a nearby saddle. Owing to his injuries he was winched from a difficult position to save time.
- SEPTEMBER 15th to 18th—Extensive search of Fintry Hills by Lomond and Ochils MRTs, SARDA, RN Sea King and RAF Wessex for Marian McLeith (48). She was found dead at the bottom of Loch Laggan by Police divers. 2000.
- SEPTEMBER 24th—Taking a coast path along Loch Striven, George Millen (45) injured an ankle and could not go on. His companion, Simon Taylor (28) stayed with him. Found by route search and evacuated by MOD Police launch. Strathclyde Police MRT, HM Coastguard. 7.
- SEPTEMBER 27th—Douglas Lamb (67) badly injured a knee from a slip on the tourist path on Ben Venue. Lomond MRT. 23.
- SEPTEMBER 30th—Margaret Miller (45) felt unwell when going up The Cobbler by the Pipe Track. She left her party, went down alone, fainted, and was found unconscious by other walkers. She recovered in hospital. Arrochar and Strathclyde MRTs. 20.
- OCTOBER 8th—RN Sea King picked up two climbing casualties, Tony Chester (cuts and bruises) and Simon Cohen (spinal and ankle fractures) from a saddle on The Cobbler. Cohen (20) had fallen when seconding Right Angled Gully (V.Diff.) and pulled off the leader, Chester (23) whose belay had failed. Arrochar & Strathclyde Police MRTs. 40.
- NOVEMBER 2nd—False alarm. Possible hoax. Search of Ballindalloch Moor, Balforn, by Lomond MRT was caused by two red flares. 80.
- NOVEMBER 4th to 5th—Descending north from the summit of Ben Venue, one of a party of four separated and got down to Achray Hotel. The other three, without a torch, got stuck in crags at the base of the hill and were guided down by Killin MRT and SARDA. Kenneth Begg (46), Amit Mukherjee (m34), Susan Dewar (34). 96.
- NOVEMBER 8th—John Reid (12) was walking along the top of Dalreoch Quarry, Dumbarton when he slipped and fell 25 feet to a ledge, suffering cuts and bruises. Stretchered down. Strathclyde Police. 4.
- NOVEMBER 15th—Caving at Paper Caves, Loch Eck, Laura Hughes (21) slipped down a hillside when traversing between cave entrances, hitting trees and a boulder. She sustained concussion and bruising together with a forehead cut below the line of her helmet. Carried out by Benmore Centre. 15.
- NOVEMBER 18th—Following 'The Munros' route over Creag Mhor and Beinn Heasgarnich solo, George Hamilton (33) was killed by a fall to the foot of the crags on the E. Face of Beinn Heasgarnich, high up in Coire Ban Mor. It is likely he had been descending in mist and near darkness. Found on NOVEMBER 21st by RAF Wessex. Killin, SARDA, Leuchars, Lomond, Tayside. 967.

## SKYE

- MARCH 25th - Keith Plowman (28) stumbled on snow descending the SW Ridge of Sgurr Alasdair. Wearing crampons, he failed to brake with his ice axe because of soft snow and fell 250 feet, sustaining chest and spinal injuries and abrasions. Skye and Kinloss MRTs, RAF Sea King. 66.
- MARCH 25th - Solo climbing on Sgurr a'Bhasteir using crampons, Graham Steel stumbled on rocks and fell 300 feet down a snowfield, breaking an arm and ribs and cutting his head and body. Skye and Kinloss MRTs, RAF Sea King. 64.
- MARCH 25th to 26th - Derek Weldon (28) was overdue from a walk between Sligachan and Glen Brittle. He had been spotted by rescuers on another task in Coire a'Bhasteir, and then he had walked in green wellies to Coruisk Hut and Camasunary Bothy, 'phoning in from Strathaird, Elgol the next day. Skye and Kinloss MRTs, RAF Sea King. 256.
- MAY 8th - False alarm. Extensive search of the Cuillin for a couple out walking who were thought to be overdue. 99.
- MAY 8th to 9th - False alarm caused by a fox-hunting spotlight being mistaken for a distress signal. 2.
- MAY 9th - Angus Hull (14) dislocated his kneecap from a slip on grass, when 300 feet below the summit of Healabhal Bheag (MacLeod's Table South). Skye MRT, HM Coastguard and Coastguard helicopter. 28.
- MAY 17th - Coastguard helicopter search of the South Cuillins for 5 missing persons found safe and well. Skye MRT.
- MAY 29th - Descending Coire an Eich of Sgurr na Banachdich, Donald MacKay (59) slipped on a wet stone on the path fracturing a leg. Skye MRT and RAF Sea King. 8.
- JULY 1st - One of six climbing Pinnacle Ridge, Sgurr nan Gilleann, John Fraser (18) slipped on a loose rock and fell 50 feet in good weather, injuring his head and leg. He was winched off by HM Coastguard helicopter together with Colin Martin suffering exhaustion. Skye MRT. 11.
- JULY 14th - Route search by Skye MRT for Jane Marks (32) separated from her companion on Sgurr nan Gilleann Tourist path. She got lost but found her own way down. 14.
- JULY 31st - In good weather Matthew Smith (28) slipped on scree on the summit ridge of Sgurr Mhic Choinnich injuring head, leg and hip. Skye MRT, airlifted by HMCG helicopter, stretchered him to the ridge for winching. 59.
- AUGUST 23rd - Poorly equipped (wearing trainers and a nylon raincoat) Martin Arndorfer (18) was rescued from Glen Sligachan suffering abrasions and bruises, after separating near Loch Coruisk. SKYE, RAF Leeming & Kinloss MRTs, SARDA, RAF Sea King. 357.
- AUGUST 25th - Benighted on the path returning from Loch Coruisk to Sligachan, Judith Green (27), Rebecca Green (3) and Wayne Parkin (27) were found next morning by Skye MTR a half-mile south of Sligachan. 30.
- AUGUST 28th - Descending a slope to get to a lower path at The Prison, Quiraing, Sarah Russell (20) slipped and fell 80 feet sustaining fractures to a collar bone, arm, leg and ribs with bad bruising. Suzanne Higgins (21) got cragfast. Both were winched and airlifted by HM Coastguard. Skye MRT. 18.
- OCTOBER 27th to 28th - Benighted in bad weather when solo walking the Cuillin Coast Route from Coruisk to Glenbrittle, Clive Evans (58) abandoned his equipment next morning and continued unburdened. He was found by Bristows helicopter at Allt na Meacnaish. Skye MRT were route searching. 67.

## ISLANDS (other than Skye)

- MAY 14th - Declan Gilmartin (34) separated from his companions on Goat Fell, got lost in mist and turned up in Glen Sannox. Arran MRT. 15.
- MAY 24th - Thomas Leckie (47) separated from his wife (i.e. went on ahead) on Goat Fell, got lost in mist and turned up in Glen Rosa. Arran MRT. 28.

- JUNE 1st—About halfway up Glen Sannox, Catherine Groves (40) tripped on scree and injured her leg. Arran MRT. 24.
- JUNE 17th—HM Coastguard report. Burra Island (just west of Mainland) Shetland. Fallen male recovered by helicopter.
- JUNE 24th—David Mayne (32) was injured when he slipped on A'Chir Ridge, Arran. Stretcher carry by Arran MRT. Winched by RN Sea King. 106.
- JULY 2nd—Fetlar, Shetland. A female fell and suffered a broken nose and bruising. She was recovered by a Coastguard Team.
- JULY 6th—Loch Dibadale, West Lewis. Two children helped Coastguard helicopter crew search for their missing parents who were out walking. The search had to be abandoned due to increasing fog but the couple turned up later.
- JULY 13th—A woman of 64 was stretchered out by Arran MRT after she injured a leg when she slipped on the Dun Fionn footpath between Lamash and Brodick. 10.
- JULY 16th—RN Sea King evacuated a female walker from a beach on Jura suffering from severe kidney pains.
- JULY 25th—One of a geology party of ten, Stanley Fisher (63) slipped on a path and injured his leg. He was stretchered from Drumadoon Cliff by Arran MRT. 8.
- AUGUST 6th—A woman aged 63 fell when walking at Scalloway, Shetland, injuring her head. She was recovered from seaward. HM Coastguard.
- AUGUST 8th—Mr J. Dixon (60) slipped crossing a burn in Glen Shellesder, Rhum, injuring an arm and cutting his face and eye. Carried out by stretcher, then by boat, by NCC rescuers. 35.
- AUGUST 23rd—Arran MRT stretchered Gwendaline Millar (56) down from the main Goat Fell path after she slipped and injured a leg. 26.
- SEPTEMBER 14th to 15th—A very keen naturalist, Wilfrid Nelson (34) probably saw something of interest on the seacliffs of Bloodstone Hill, Rhum, and went to investigate. He died when he slipped and fell 500 feet. Lochaber MRT, RAF Sea King, NCC volunteers. 100.

## SOUTHERN UPLANDS

- JANUARY 2nd—A woman (45) separated from her own party on Merrick. She got lost in mist but was found by another walker who took her down. Galloway S & RG. 18.
- JANUARY 2nd—Searchers on the above rescue found another lost walker. 18.
- JANUARY 9th—False alarm. Moffat IIRS called out for an elderly male hillwalker who was in fact off the hill. 20.
- JANUARY 26th—Walking dogs at Saughtree, a woman (54) received fatal head injuries when she fell into a drainage system. Police & Tweed Valley MRT. 38.
- MARCH—Roseburn. Moffat HRS assembled to search for boy (8) who turned up. 34.
- APRIL 13th—Search of sea-cliffs at Heathery Carr, near Eyemouth, by Tweed Valley MRT and SARDA, following a Jaguar aircraft crash. 27.
- JUNE 23rd—A party of 28 pupils and 3 adults walked over Minch Moor from Traquair heading for Broadmeadows YH. The first head count at lunchtime revealed that 2 eleven-year-old girls were missing. Tweed Valley MRT (alerted at 6 p.m.) searched with SARDA and an RAF Wessex. The girls turned up at Foulshiels Farm. 34.
- AUGUST—Judith Abrahams broke her leg on Merrick, on a path from Loch Trool. She was stretchered out by Police, an ambulance driver and a walking group. Galloway MRT. 10.
- OCTOBER 21st to 22nd—Three girls and a boy (all 14) survived a night out in bivvy bags and sleeping bags at Glendinning Burn, Eskdalemuir. They had been delayed by a broken rucksack strap and lost because of a navigation error. It was windy and cold with light showers and lightning. They were found safe by rescuers at 0545 Sunday. Police, Borders, Galloway and Moffat teams. 252.
- NOVEMBER 2nd—Search of Maidenbower/Craigs Wood area, Dumfries for a missing 16 year-old lad. Moffat and Police teams, SARDA. 64.

NOVEMBER 4th—Three girls and a boy overdue from an award hike. Moffat HRS found them, one of the girls slightly injured. Poorly equipped for winter survival at Eskdalemuir. 75.

NOVEMBER 11th to 12th—Search by Police and Moffat HRS for a missing 80 year-old man resident at Penport. He was found, by the team, drowned in the River Scaur. 130.

NOVEMBER 23rd to 26th—Police, Tweed Valley, leeming MRTs, RN & RAF helicopters searched NW of Hawick for a missing woman (56). She turned up at her home after sleeping rough. 228.

NOVEMBER 30th—During reconnaissance on Benyellary, Private Dixon's patrol was following a watercourse down through a dense forestry block. He stumbled in the dark and fell into a ravine being totally immersed in a pool, sustaining arm and pelvic injuries and hypothermia. Stretched out by Army and airlifted by RN Sea King. Galloway MRT and HM Coastguard. 52.

DECEMBER 21st—Moffat HRS escorted American victim relatives on to hills near Lockerbie. 20.

## IN MEMORIAM

## A. IAN L. MAITLAND, FRCS

ALTHOUGH well into his eighties, Ian Maitland came to our centenary dinner, and like all of us greatly enjoyed himself. Little more than a month later, he died in a car accident.

Ian joined the JMCS early in the 1930s. He was older than myself and already a surgeon at Glasgow's Western Infirmary, so that we met only at meets until 1936, when he and Ben Humble shared a camp-site with me in Glen Brittle. We divided the long, sun-drenched hours of a June heat-wave between hot gabbro and cool lochans. The memory of those idyllic days is still with me, for Ian was good company. His keen sense of humour came with a dry wit. He was there to enjoy the rocks, hills and friends all at once. He communicated happiness.

Ian was a positively bad rock-climber. When we both joined the SMC in 1945, he had something more positive than most of us to contribute to mountaineering. He gave himself to mountain rescue. His arrival on that scene coincided with its greatest need.

Before the second war, Scotland's rescue service had been primitive. In 1936, the SMC had set up a First Aid Committee and provided four rescue posts (stretchers only). Two more were contributed by the Grampian Club and the Ski Club. And that was all. The few rescue teams needed were rustled up locally or summoned by telephone from the Lowland clubs.

In 1946 climbers faced a different mountain game. The ASCC was formed and one of its first duties was to take aboard mountain rescue problems. Ian Maitland was appointed convener of a new First Aid Committee to take urgent action: lay down basic principles, site rescue posts, prevent accidents, and draft rescue teams. During the next decade he worked hard to develop the service. All was not sweetness and light. His task needed infinite patience and tact in dealing with relations between the Ministry of Health, Police, RAF, MRC England, SCPR, etc., plus many opinionated members of the clubs. Helped most of all by Donald Duff and Ben Humble, Ian set up the new Scottish rescue service that evolved over the years into the comprehensive service we know today. In 1958 our club honoured him with the Vice Presidency. We all gained from his work far more than we understood at the time. Today's climbers are heavily in Ian's debt.

W.H. Murray

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

### New Members

The following 11 new members were admitted and welcomed to the Club in the year 1989-90.

- P. John Armstrong (31) College Lecturer, Edinburgh.  
George Corbet (30) Analyst/Programmer, Glasgow.  
James W. Hepburn (25) Outdoor Pursuits Instructor, Aviemore.  
Michael C.C. Jacob (40) Teacher, Dumfries.  
John M. Lyall (27) Forestry Worker, Kincaig.  
Alan McHardy (48) Mountain Guide, Jemimaville, Black Isle.  
James C.G. MacLaurin (22) Student, Bearsden, Glasgow.  
William W. Marks (54) Armed Services, Dulnain Bridge, Grantown.  
Simon Miller (28) Dental Surgeon, Blane, Stirling.  
Barry R. Owen (41) Outdoor Pursuits Instructor, Edinburgh.  
Alastair D. Ross (27) Fish Merchant, Banchory.

### CENTENARY DINNER - BLAIR ATHOLL SATURDAY - 6th MAY 1989

The sun shone. The hills slumbered in the warmth and the glens were rich in growth and blossom. Nature at least, was set fair for the occasion.

They came to the white castle of Blair from all directions. They came from the slushy depths of Point Five Gully, from the bosky shade of Craig-a-Barns, the sun-warmed slabs of Ardverrick Wall, the bone-strewn screes of Creagh Dubh, the brown hills above Glen Tilt. There came to Blair Atholl a diversity of ages and types, a variety of shapes and sizes but a singularity of gender. The Scottish Mountaineering Club foregathered at the Ducal seat of Atholl.

A hundred years ago there had been but a few, now there were many. Then it had been a great adventure - the hills distant and largely unknown, the moss on the crags undisturbed, the snows of winter unsullied by boot or ski track, the ice virgin and unsplintered. Now the veils have been ripped away, there is no crag or ice runnel too remote to remain unsullied and unrecorded. The adrenaline hunger, the peer group pressure, the improvements in equipment and athletic standards have driven mountaineers up and over the puny hills of Scotland and riven from them almost all their secrets. To the SMC must fall a large part of the blame.

Still, we came to celebrate our predecessors and ourselves, to eat, drink and be merry in the month of May, here in the antler-garnished halls set in the mature parkland of the landed. Clean and clothed, the stravaigers walked up the Ducal drive and in at the front door. After all, they had paid their money.

First there was the matter of the commemorative photograph. This was taken on and around the front steps after some delay as elderly elbows (of note and otherwise) were vigorously plied to claim a place in the historic record, eager to become one of those unobscured unrecognisables preserved in the actinometric amber and chronicled by a number in a diagram.

Grace before the meal was read by Colin Russell, now the longest serving Member having joined the club in 1925. The meal itself elicited the usual mixed reactions - but then you would have to feed some Members from a trough to satisfy them. It was a pretty menu though.

After the Toast to the Queen, President Wallace announced the elevation of Bill Murray to Honorary President of the Club. There was general acclaim; Bill's contribution to Scottish mountaineering, both in deed and in literature, needs no reiteration. Bill's reply spoke eloquently of all that mountains and mountaineering has meant to him.

Heather King of the LSCC then presented to the Club the elegantly rebound CIC log book for the period from 1949-61. A record of both the historic and the trivial, covering a period that saw perhaps the greatest changes that have occurred in Scottish mountaineering. Its crumbling and sometimes almost illegible pages are now stoutly preserved for posterity.

The Toast to the Club was proposed by Bob Grieve, who found in the images of the slide collection a record of changing appearances and activities but a continuity of attitudes and endeavour. The mythological figures of the past were resolved into men much like ourselves.

Robin Campbell once again displayed agile wit and the fruits of extensive research in disposing of Our Official Guests and their Clubs, a lengthy list on this occasion. Ample revenge was exacted by John McLean, enjoying his second dinner at SMC expense in six months. John gave us a brilliant historical resume of the sharp end of Scottish mountaineering in the sixties and seventies. In the process he reminded us of how much we had lost in the deaths of such as Robin Smith and Tom Patey, to mention but two. Mountaineering is a dangerous game (which is why most of us do it) and it was salutary to be reminded that there were honoured ghosts at this celebration.

And so the evening drifted into less ordered conviviality beneath the stag skulls and antlers littering the walls. Their originators too had once roamed these hills thinking themselves free and invincible. Now they are nailed to the landowner's wall. Let us hope the next hundred years brings us a better fate. We may have to fight for it.

Bob Richardson.

### **The One-Hundreth-and-First AGM and Dinner**

Rejected by the cities, driven out into the wilderness like a winter flock of starlings, the SMC made its way again to Speyside. On the Friday night the Aurora Borealis beckoned us north. On the Saturday the scant snow of the Northern coires was kicked and brushed from the rock. Then, in the gathering gloom, about half the total membership converged on the Nethy-bridge Hotel to set the Club's course into its second century.

Bill Wallace was in the Chair as the 101st AGM got under way. Little has changed; we got no further than 'Matters Arising' when there was an attempt to return to former ways. Gerry Peet innocently brought to the meeting's attention the Hut Sub-Committee's response to the LSCC's disquiet regarding the discontinuation of reduced Hut Rates. The Sub-Committee proposed to offer reciprocal free use of Huts to the LSCC and wished the AGM's approval for this generous offer. This apparent magnanimity was ill-received in some quarters where it was preferred to have the old list of Kindred Clubs revived with reduced rates for all of them. The front-line troops (i.e. the Hut Custodians) groaned and seethed but a mutiny was averted when the matter did not go to a vote.

It was no surprise when the question of the proposed ski developments in the Northern Coires surfaced during the Secretary's Report. The Club's position was clarified as it was established that, while not an official objector to the Lurcher's Gully development proposal, the Committee had lodged an objection with Highland Regional Council and the Trust had contributed substantially to the 'Save the Cairngorms' campaign.

More of the now traditional bones of contention were chewed over later in the Reports - notably the composition, role and activities of the SMT. This is not the place to record the details, more to give an impressionistic sketch of the convolutions and disparities of opinion which are endemic to this matter. Many Members have genuine difficulties with the interface between the activities of an amateur Club and those of a charitable Trust with general obligations. Particularly when that Trust is composed entirely of Office-Bearers and Members of that Club and is engaged in commercial activities with a large financial turnover. Much heat was generated, a member was called to order, a return to red bindings and white jackets (for publications not Members) was pleaded for, the use of sweated Chinese labour was deplored, the question of whether or not the Club should use the Trust as its publisher was raised - all over a non-Club publication. It will take steely nerve to be a member of the Publications Sub-Committee in future.

The willingness of Members to have Office-Bearers and activists labour excessively in the cause of tradition and idiosyncrasy was again demonstrated after the Hut Convenor's report when there was a call for records to be kept of Member's hut bed-nights. This was stoutly opposed by the idle Hut custodians, well aware of Members' occasional modesty in recording their presence, not to mention that of their guests (whatever can he mean - Ed.) It emerged during the discussion that the request was a result of the misapprehension that there was a notional element in the Club subscription for hut use (actually there is, but it is a negative element - thanks to the multitude of eager punters who use our Huts). Curly Ross counter attacked with a request for Members to donate cash to the Hut funds.

More serious and less introverted matters were touched on by Malcolm Slesser during his report on the activities of the National Trust for Scotland. We were warned of the two edged sword of possible National Park developments and of an increasing threat to wild camping.

This AGM marked the end of Bob Hillcoat's tenure as Treasurer, a period which has seen considerable expansion of Club and Trust financial activities. The Huts Sub-Committee in particular know the extent to which he has mellowed over the years.

The tabled election of Members to serve on the Trust allowed more of the problems of the Club/Trust relationship to emerge. This problem is going to be with us for some time.

The tidying motion to formalise the presence of ladies as Official Guests at the Dinner, despite it being already a matter of history, flushed out some opposition but was carried on a vote. So ended a complex and varied AGM which among its traditional twists and turns laid down themes which will occupy us for some time to come.

Now the first thing to be said about the Dinner is that, for once, there were no complaints about the quantity of the food - at least none were made in my hearing. This must then be recorded as a joint triumph for the staff of the Nethybridge Hotel and the iron-fisted organisation of the Dinner Secretary.

Bill Wallace's Address to the Club touched on a variety of topics and exploits. The exploits will be recorded elsewhere but his mention of the welcome presence of Geoff Cohen and Andy Nisbet despite the unwelcome attentions of an Alpine boulder and a motorway driver respectively does deserve additional record. Survival is the name of the game. The development of links with Czechoslovakian climbers was also mentioned and, in view of events since, the role of the SMC in the de Stalinisation of Europe may provide the subject for a future thesis. (Anyone for Albania in 1990?).

An extended version of the Club song was sung and for once I have to join the ranks of the die-hard traditionalists.

Bob Duncan dug a big hole for himself in delivering the Toast to the Guests. An excellent, witty, icon rattling performance that may well have landed him the post of successor to Robin Campbell for the Nineties. A veil will be drawn over the Reply. Suffice it to say that any Member in doubt as to the superior intellectual resources of the SMC need not attend other Clubs' dinners to be reassured; he is too frequently presented with the evidence at his own.

After the Dinner there was a showing of two videos. One was a welcome transcription of the film made to celebrate the opening of the CIC Hut. This was a treasure house of landscapes, people, styles and techniques. The demonstration of the correct use of the long shafted ice axe made our modern two fisted sprawling on the snow look ungainly and ineffective. The other was a copy of a French production made on Ben Nevis in March 1989 by Godefroy Perroux. Good in bits with some nice atmospheric shots of spindrift and collapsing ice. Enlivened by two character cameo roles. And so another dinner drifted to a convivial end.

Bob Richardson.

Editor's note: With this issue's AGM and dinner reports, R.T. Richardson has decided to step down as dinner reporter. We will miss his views on these affairs - objective but always entertaining, nimbly hopping along the fence separating sagacity from sarcasm. We can reassure readers that the whimsical nature of the above reports has everything to do with it being his final fling, and nothing to do with a recent cycling accident, from which he has completely recovered. Applicants for the post should be capable of taking long strides over rough ground.





The SMC Centenary Dinner, Blair Castle  
Some of the Assembled Throng before Dinner.

*Photo: R. J. McGuire*



The SMC Centenary Dinner  
Left to Right: The Earl of Wemyss and March, Bill Murray, John McLean,  
Bill McKenzie.

*Photo: R. J. McGuire*

## Dundonnell Meet - 30th June to 3rd July 1989

The Official Version.

Attendance only 3, the President with Douglas Barclay and Jim Donaldson.

The main objective of the Meet was to be a traverse of An Teallach but this was left till Sunday; in the hope of the weather improving by then, conditions on Saturday still being in the process of recovering from a deluge of many hours on Friday.

Beinn a'Chlaidheimh was climbed on the 1st in dry weather with the clouds gradually rising and dispersing and a little sunshine developing.

Sunday was fine from dawn onwards and no time was lost setting out. The approach was made by the route recommended in The Munros and a magnificent day followed, traversing the ridge.

Jim Donaldson.

### The Real Story (from a correspondent)

The Meet was low in numbers but very high in quality of members, consisting of the President, the Malevolent Master of The Tables (retd.) and the Club Auditor.

Arriving early in a downpour that had already lasted several hours the M.M.T. (retd.) was keenly looking forward to a cup of tea but his hopes suffered a setback on discovering that in contrast to the external monsoon conditions the water supply inside the Hut had gone dry. A borrowed kettle of water provided the tea but the water supply could not be restored until the rain eased off a few hours later, when a friendly local man came to my aid. The situation was under control when the President and the Auditor arrived.

The main objective of the Meet was to get the President over An Teallach as he had never done this peak. However, conditions at the start of Saturday were still showing signs of a hangover from Friday and it was decided to leave An Teallach for Sunday when it was hoped the day would be good. It was agreed, therefore, to tackle Beinn a'Chlaidheimh which only the Malevolent Master (retd.) had previously climbed. The summit was reached in improving conditions but river crossings were made with care as the rivers were still in semi-spate after the rain of Friday. Arriving at the top all 3 members of the party were struck by the height of Beinn Dearg Mor which appeared to o'ertop us by at least a couple of hundred feet. Not having any scientific instruments with us we could not make a definite claim of having discovered a new Munro but the Malevolent Master (retd.) is convinced that the O.S. have slipped up and advises all would be 'compleaters' to include this peak in their lists just in case.

All in all the day was a satisfactory one, followed by an excellent evening as the President produced a good malt, sherry of character and excellent wine to celebrate the day's work. Proceedings finished with a firm resolution to make an early start on Sunday if the morning was sunny.

The sun was shining when we woke and everyone was up in time to get away at 8.30. Following the route recommended in the Munros we were soon on An Teallach reaching the first top before the heat became too much. Conditions remained perfect throughout the day, warm enough to sit anywhere at any time in comfort but never so hot that the steep sections of the ridge became exhausting. There were no flies nor midges except for a spell during the descent when flies were bothersome.

It can be fairly said that it was 'a day of Days,' particularly satisfying to the M.M.T. (retd.) and the Auditor who had got the President safely up and down. It was 34 years since the former's last ascent, but the Auditor was the really experienced man, his visits to An Teallach having included being one of a rescue party many years ago, and it was on him that we were putting our final trust in case of emergency! Fortunately, that did not occur although the M.M.T. (retd.) was told when he finally got back to base that the other two were just about to send out a search party to see what had happened to him.

## J.M.C.S. REPORTS

**Glasgow Section.**—Another poor winter season, despite the late climbing in April and even May, meant much practice carrying winter gear with very little to show for it. The plus side was that the ticking of those elusive tops could now be justified, as there was little better to do. It was something of an achievement to arrive back with dry feet even when wearing plastic boots. It was perhaps with relief that late April brought the occasional burst of sun and warm rock to go with it.

For a section that has perhaps concentrated more on winter climbing in recent years, a fair amount of rock climbing was achieved over the summer and not just in Scotland. One party raided North Wales during one of the summer heatwaves and returned home tanned and well content with a week's worth of E grade classics. Even November produced some late season rock climbing for the guests at the London Section's fiftieth anniversary dinner in North Wales. Scottish rock was sampled all over the country while the dry weather lasted. It seems that the training on the Kelvin Hall wall did some good after all.

A few more of the interesting happenings were the attendance of the Cobbler meet by some water-borne members and, as it turned out, an abortive attempt to fly in and climb the Old Man of Hoy on a 'secret' meet. Needless to say another member had sneaked in and done the climb the previous weekend. The flyers got fog bound at Inverness, whilst it was reported, admittedly not on a JMCS meet, that the sailing member had to put down a mutiny during a passage to the Isle of Coll something to do with the crew being unhappy with the weather (Force 6 going on Storm Force 9). Who knows what he was going to climb.

Activity abroad was quite varied, although there was no official meet abroad this year. Ignoring the conventional piste bashers, one ski mountaineer found himself in the Bernese Oberland during an unaccustomed ten day spell of good weather. Another couple of members were to be found running up and down Swiss mountains during the Karrimor International meet while a third joined the Lochaber Section in their meet to the Bregalia. Further afield, one member led a party on the first ascent of the north face of Unnamed Peak 6230m. Where is this mountain? Why, in the Kishtwar region of India.

Late in the season a motley crew (ten members out of a party of fifteen) found themselves drinking native Pilsner beer. As the first part of a Czechoslovakian exchange visit, three weeks in September were spent climbing in the High Tatras and also on the sandstone towers of Adrspach and Teplice. The visit was a great success and something of a cultural eye opener. Little did we know what monumental changes we would cause! Perhaps anticipating another poor winter season, a couple of members spent the closing weeks of 1989 climbing French ice in and around Alpe d'Huez.

The Section continues to have fortnightly meets throughout the year, interspersed with lectures, pub meets and other such social functions. Places visited in the course of the year included all nine JMCS and SMC huts. The whole Club AGM and Dinner was hosted by the Lochaber Section in the Kingshouse. Our own Section Dinner was held at the same venue, where Curly Ross as guest speaker was in good form despite rising from his sickbed to attend. At the AGM Dick Edie handed over custodianship of Coruisk to Sandy Donald after an eventful term in office. Thanks, Dick.

It is with regret that we have to record the death of George Hamilton as a result of an accident on 18th November 1989 on Beinn Heagsarnich. He was last out with the Section only two weeks previously, having been a regular attender of meets for over a decade.

*Office bearers:* Hon. Member, W.H. Murray; Hon. President, Neil Marshall; Hon. Vice-President, Dugald Mackie; President, Charlie Craig; Vice President, Ian Thomson; Secretary, John Morrison, 16 Grosvenor Crescent Lane, Glasgow G12 9AB; Treasurer, Anderson Foster, 9 Ilay Court, Bearsden, Glasgow G61 1RT; Coruisk Hut Custodian, Sandy Donald, 55 Mossmill Park, Mosstodloch, Moray IV32 7SX.

**Edinburgh Section.** The year was welcomed in as usual at the Smiddy, with an excellent turnout of members. Unfortunately, they were not blessed with superb winter weather and had to indulge in a variety of alternative seasonal activities.

There followed a wet, windy, winter season, with weekend meets being optimistically attended by a few stalwarts. Only on the meet to Glen Clova were any winter routes tackled, and then only in far from ideal conditions. In the dark months of the year climbing activities continued to be focused on the Heriot-Watt wall, now sporting new, finery, congealed concrete 'holds' instead of protruding pieces of brickwork. This is definitely the place to be on a Wednesday evening, and features the usual few pairs of tasteful stretch tights, measly chalkbags, rippling, perspiring muscles, and much grunting, writhing, thrusting and puffing as various members, as they say, 'go for it.' One hopes that the prospective/aspiring new members are impressed by all of this.

During the warmer months, this activity transferred, in a less spectacular fashion, to various local crags and outcrops. The several summer and autumn meets were well and enthusiastically attended. Particularly memorable was the meet to the Shelterstone in excellent weather, when The Citadel on the Shelterstone Crag, and Talisman and Dagger on Creag an Coire Etchachan were climbed. The traditional Week Meet was held in Cornwall - an interesting and worthwhile change but rather too far for most to travel.

During the holiday season various members visited Nepal, the Karakorum and North America, where one pair climbed the spectacular Devil's Tower in Wyoming. Bad weather was experienced by teams visiting the Austrian Alps and the Dolomites - those visiting the Western Alps and Pyrenees generally fared better. North Wales was also a popular venue. A couple of our Lycra-clad fraternity visited and enjoyed Buoux. In the late autumn one pair explored rock climbs on the limestone of the Calanques.

A few of our members have opted out of Britain in the '90s for the time being and have decided to take some time out in various parts of Europe and Asia. A former secretary has gone to teach Physics in Oman, taking his climbing gear and new wife with him. George McEwan, our previous Jock's Spot custodian (the one who used to believe in the dynamic testing of winter belay protection devices) has gone, temporarily we believe, to Nepal. The latest news of George is that he has climbed Maya Kanga (5850m) in Langtang, via its unclimbed north ridge.

The AGM and Annual Dinner were held in the Tilt Hotel at Blair Atholl. A long string of groups of members trekked across the various tops of Beinn a'Ghlo on the Saturday in excellent, crisp weather. As usual, for diverse reasons the Club was generally less active on the Sunday apart from visits to Schiehallion and morning ascents of Ben Vraclie. At the Dinner we were hilariously entertained by Robin Campbell.

At the close of the year, a snowless, frost-free Scotland was abandoned by a few disillusioned members. A party of four even went climbing in Spain (and by all accounts enjoyed better weather than on their summer visit to the Austrian Alps). The highlight of their trip was a New Year ascent of the 240m Via Valencianos on the Penon de Isich at Calpe.

The Office-bearers for 1990 are:- *Hon President*, John Fowler; *Hon. Vice-President*, Mike Fleming; *President*, Stewart Murdoch; *Vice-President*, Alan Chow; *Treasurer*, Nigel Suess; *Secretary*, Beryl Leatherland, 57 Charles Way, Limekilns, Fife KY11 3LH; *Meets Secretary*, Jane Murdoch; *Hut Custodians*, Ali Borthwick (Jock's Spot), 2 Aytoun Grove, Dunfermline, and Fraser Fotheringham (The Smiddy), 49 St Valery Place, Ullapool; *Committee members*: Ian Simpson, Rod Dalitz, Brian Donaldson.

**London Section.**-1989 - what a superb year for the London Section! Our 50th anniversary was celebrated in the best way possible - an active year, with well supported meets exploiting generally superb weather, and the timely arrival of keen new members.

Scottish meets included a visit to the CIC, another packed-out Glencoe meet under the auspices of Robin Watts, and a Skye heatwave for our idyllic visit to Coruisk - with routes on Sgurr Mhic Choinnich, Blaven, Coire Lagain, Sgurr a' Mhaidaidh and numerous parched trogs along the ridge.

The sun continued to shine for a return visit to the Yorkshire Ramblers hut at Little Langdale (where bums were bared in the tarns and routes done on Pavay Ark and Gimmer), and for two trips to the South West - a packed Count House meet at Bosigran and a camping meet at St Just - both featured superb granite climbing combined with a gnome throwing contest and the descent of an undersea tin mine. The latter was a strong candidate for the Annual Bicycle Clips Award.. Routes were done at Chair Ladder, Bosigran, Carn Kenijack, and Lands End.

Summer saw more moanings about the heat and included a meet at Cwm Glas cottage, the CC hut in Llanberis pass. Wales continued to dominate the rock year, with visits to Gogarth, and the big mountain crags of Cwm Las, Cloggy, Llech Dhu and Cwm Silyn all in condition.

A September trip to Tarneath, the Lanes Crag and Cave hut near Coniston, signalled the end of the shorts and t-shirts' season, and a return of the dreich - Dow Crag wet (again!), but sunshine on Wallabarrow. With the onset of the windy and wet season, sailing and white water canoeing arrived to liven up the casualty ward of Bangor Infirmary and swell the profits of the local fibreglass merchants.

The 50th Anniversary Dinner included welcome guests from the Perth and Glasgow Sections, as well as the founder Secretary, Ted Zenthon. Notable (apart from the braying of Alistair Gray's pipes and the Section Symphonia, a.k.a. The Trash Can Bashers Big Time Rubbish Band), was the mild November weather and the completion of a number of decent rock routes at Tremadog. The Indian summer closed with two weeks' of perfect weather, with visits to Pembroke, where the sea was still warm. It was still mild enough at the Glenafon Christmas/New Year gathering for rock routes at Cwm Idwal, Tremadog and Gogarth! Party games included 'spot the snowflake,' and 'guess the season.'

Members were also very active throughout the year in assorted 'ad hoc' manifestations, with ascents of The Old Man of Hoy, The Old Man of Stoer, and continued interest in continental rock, with trips to the Mello (twice), El Dorado, Verdun, Langedoc and Jura limestone. 'Proper' Alpine trips were made to the Oberland, Dauphine, Chamonix and the Valais. Peaks ascended included the Finistarthorn, La Meige, Blumlisalphorn and the Tel-listock. Planks appeared for both alpine ski-mountaineering trips and the annual 'Death Race 2000' piste-bashing expedition. A fair bit of Island Bagging went on, with visits to Malta, Lundy, Skye, Arran, Hoy, and one marooning on Careg Goch in the Menai Straights.

Thanks must go to all involved, particularly the meets regulars, Peter Tibbets for his Bumper Fun Monthly, and club elder Robin Watts. Gordon Cameron's term as President ended, and Steve Gladstone takes over his place in the pillory for the next year. Here's to the next 50 years!

*Hon. Secretary*, Andrew Walker, 186 Beccles Rd, Bradwell, Gt Yarmouth, Norfolk. (Other office-bearers are alluded to above, but obviously the Section's dizzying round of climbing meets has made them difficult to pin down - Ed.)

**Lochaber Section.**—Section Report 1989. The Club is alive and well. Membership stands at 60, of which the majority are local and active. The club held meets once a month which were well attended though a lot of club members are on the hill every weekend. There was a good selection of slide shows over the winter. The highlights of the social calendar were the Annual Dinner at the Cairndow Inn, Loch Fyne, attended by 40 members and guests, and a dinner dance resurrected after a gap of six years at the Nevis Bank Hotel in Fort William. Fourteen members spent a couple of weeks in the Engadine Alps, an area we last visited in 1979. Peaks ascended were Cima Di Rosso, Monte Sissone, Monte Disgrazia by the Corda Molla Ridge, Piz Bernina by the Biancograt, Piz Palu and Pizzo Badile by the North Ridge. Ascents were punctuated by several Bacchanalian trips into Italy.

The Club Hut at Steall in Glen Nevis was used most weekends and provided much needed income for the Club's coffers. It now boasts a flush toilet and it is hoped that a porch-cum-drying room will be added in 1990. The Club also possesses a large collection of books and journals which is housed in Fort William Library for the sole use of members.

Club Officials for 1990 are:- *Hon. Member*, B. Bissell; *Hon. President*, D. Watt; *President*, T. Confield; *Vice-President*, L. Houliker; *Secretary*, K. Foggo, 19 Abrach Road, Inverlochy, Fort William; *Treasurer*, M. Harris; *Steall Hut Custodian*, I. Walker, 12 Grange Terrace, Fort William (0397 3512).

**Perth Section.**—Overall membership of the club has remained steady over the past year with 65 members, 6 honorary members and 15 ladies. In an effort to raise the profile of the club an advert has been running in the 'Climber' magazine over the past year. However this does not appear to have lead to any dramatic increase in membership over that period.





In the heart of the Rough Bounds. Note the shielings. The pass leads down to Loch Nevis, and it lies just north of Glen Pean. Cumberland's troops waited to catch the Prince here.

*Photo: Tom West*



'Galdhoppigen, Jotunheim 1989.'

*Photo: Dave Broadhead*



There were 15 meets during the year, which is fewer than last year, however the average attendance remained at 10. This latter figure may be misleading as it does not include the normally high turnout associated with a dinner meet and includes an exceptional low which occurred in July, often a bad month. Hillwalking is still the mainstay of the club's activities however rock climbing venues have been very popular this year. The CIC winter meet normally very popular with climbers was a disaster this year due to the mild winter. There was only one completion during the year.

If last year was a thin one for dinners then this one has made up for it. The club was represented at the SMC Centenary, the Edinburgh, Glasgow, London and Lochaber Section and Grampian Club dinners during the year. Our own Annual Dinner this year was held at the Amulree Hotel and for the first time in many years did not have an associated climbing meet. The speeches were by Bob Milne and John Crombie and celebrated our 60 years as a club. The Annual Joint Lecture with the Perthshire Society of Natural Science was given by Grahame Nicoll on his trip to China. There were three mid-week meets during the winter months which continue to be popular, one was a members slide evening, another a guided tour of Arizona given by Ron Payne and the last a walk over the alps with John Rogers.

The Annual General Meeting was held in Perth in December at which the following officers were elected: *Hon. President*, Bob Milne; *Hon. Vice-President*, David Wares; *President*, Grahame Nicoll; *Treasurer*, Tom Rix; *Secretary*, Ron Payne, 70 Spoutwells Drive, Scone, Perth PH2 6SB. 0738 51412.

## S.M.C. AND J.M.C.S. ABROAD

### North America

MALCOLM SLESSER writes:- Jane and I were fortunate in accompanying the President and his wife during a glorious week of autumn weather in the Wind Rivers, Wyoming. Benefitting from the SMC mafia, we recovered from transatlantic journeying at Jim Brumfitt's hospitable house in Boulder, Colorado, and were introduced to some local rock climbs. We chose to enter the Wind Rivers from Big Sandy, where we hired two horses to convey our abundant food, fuel and climbing gear. These dropped us two miles short of Big Sandy Pass amidst country of unsurpassed beauty. Two carries established camp at 10,400 feet above Lonesome Lake facing the famous 'Cirque of the Towers.' Members past the first flush of their rock climbing prowess should not be put off from visiting this superb area. Though the Kelsey (Sierra Club) guide indicates only hard routes, climbs of every level of difficulty abound. The guide-book merely serves to spice the cake. Routes are most easily followed only after the climb has been done!

Thanks to the President being in top form, the entire party climbed the south ridge of Pingora (11,884 feet, VS crux), and made the classic traverse of the Wolf's Head Arete (21 pitches). Other lesser climbs and peaks were made. Bill Wallace and I pioneered a V. Diff. route up the fearsome looking East face of War Bonnet (12,384 feet), for which the guide book noted only VS routes. The trip ended with a scout into the exquisitely beautiful Clear and Deep Lake valleys under Haystack, Steeple and the Lost Temple Spire. This is an area of fantastic climbing opportunities - a mile of cliffs, and perfect granite. A magnificent and terrifying thunderstorm closed the holiday on September 9th, with a soggy exit to the car at Big Sandy.

CHRIS GILMORE writes:- For once there was a conference in my speciality held near mountains - Seattle to be exact, so I took the opportunity to team up with an American friend, Steve Piccolo, and climb the North Face of Mt Shucksan in the North Cascades National Park. There are no trails in the park itself, and the going is thick undergrowth in pine forest, so that getting to the start of the route was the hardest part of the climb - it took four hours to cover less than 2 miles and I still have the scars!

The route itself was not of alpine north wall difficulty, but involved rather dubious steep snow in a wonderful wilderness environment with not a climber in sight. An unplanned high bivouac in rain which turned to heavy snow gave the climb an unforgettable finish.

DAVE BROADHEAD writes:- Des Rubens and I rendezvoused at San Francisco Airport early in July 1989, heading straight out of town across 'The Bay' in a hired car to spend four days at Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite National Park. Warming up on the aptly named 'Holiday on Rock' (5.8) on Marmot Dome, the following day these same beasts carried off a tasty pair of leather boots casually left at the foot of the fiercely steep 'Deimos' (5.9). Eventually we found the boots, slightly nibbled, then hidden away. In contrast, the classic 'Dike Route' (5.9) on Pywiack Dome provided a more typical example of the climbing hereabout, with long runouts on steep expansive slabs, searching for the shallowest of holds. Feeling the worse for the exceptionally hot weather, I broke the habit of a lifetime and bought a chalk bag before seeking out shade on 'Eagle Dihedral' (5.7) on Pennyroyal Arches, a bit scrappy but we found an almost new Fire rockboot, a perfect replacement for one of my rather worn pair. More searching did not reveal its partner but we did find relief at last from the heat in the idyllic Lake Tioga. Above the lake 'West Country' (5.7) on Stately Pleasure Dome starts from the roadside while our final route 'RCA' (5.8) on Daff Dome turned out to be the most memorable, with a belay in slings and a spectacular mantelshelf to finish.

A brief visit to 'The Valley,' hiking up to Vernal Falls with a refreshing swim in the Emerald Pool above provided some relaxation before the long hot drive down past Fresno into the Sequoia National Forest to 'The Needles,' almost at the southern end of the Sierras. 'The Arch Bitch Up' (5.8) on Dome Rock proved that the drive had been worth while. Most of the climbs here are approached from above and we learned the hard way that tourists misunderstand the large sign at the top of the dome requesting 'Do Not Throw Stones On The Climbers Below' or words to that effect. 'The Needles' themselves are an impressive cluster of granite pinnacles lined along a ridge standing out above the sea of forest. The tallest needle sports a forest lookout station from which the friendly fire watcher pointed out distant Mount Whitney (14,495 feet) highest peak in the 'lower 48,' before we scrambled down a short gully to start 'Inner Sanctum' (5.9) on Witch Needle, another excellent Fred 'knows a good line when he sees one' Beckey route. Across the gully bronzed lads and lasses from 'L.A.' were yo-yoing up and down something fierce on the neighbouring needle. 'Scaatland - great ice roughts yaaah?' Approaching the nearby Voodoo Dome from the bottom for a change involved a long drive from our base at the pleasant 'Quaking Aspen Campground,' then some jungle bashing prolonged by leaving my rope in the car. However, despite its name 'White Punks on Dope' (5.8) was well worth the effort.

Continuing our round of the range we drove over Walker Pass into the Owens Valley to Lone Pine where we collected our permit to climb Mount Whitney. Following a previous visit Des had the magnificent East face of Keeler Needle (5.9) high on his list and with his local knowledge we avoided the common mistake (S.M.C.J. 1989 XXXIV p. 263) of losing the path up to Iceberg Lake. With our work cut out to climb the route in a day we sorted the gear the night before, leaving the tent at dawn to be climbing at six after a second ruthless clearout to lighten our sac at the foot of the first of many pitches. At the band of overhangs we were glad of our bundle of slings tied into etriers and our big 'Friends' on the fierce offwidth above. Interest was maintained all the way up the 1,500 or so feet of this sensational pillar and Des was particularly pleased to find 50 bucks worth of a big Chouinard 'Camalot' just below the top which we reached at four, with time to nip across to the summit of Whitney and give the 'Stars and Stripes' a wave before slithering down John Muir's 'Mountaineer's Route' in a hailstorm.

Back at San Francisco Airport Des and I flew our separate ways, myself to join my wife Moira staying with friends in Carbondale, Colorado. After a day white water rafting on the Roaring Fork River we made use of the excellent local bus service to take us up to Aspen and the nearby Maroon Bells. Immortalised by Ansel Adams' striking black and white portrait, the circuit of this big cousin of Liathach gave a very enjoyable 3 day trip, crossing 4 passes over 12,000 feet linking valleys dotted with lakes, forests and flower carpeted meadows. Despite warnings to the contrary we saw pleasantly few other hikers and a close encounter of the prickly kind with a porcupine nosing around our tent in the middle of the night reminded us of the importance of hanging food bags from the branch of a tree overnight.

Moving on to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, Moira's home for several years, in between looking up old friends we hiked in the Tetons, up Paintbrush Canyon and over the Continental Divide to Lake Solitude, returning down Cascade Canyon. We also nipped down to the Wind Rivers, leaving a car at New Fork Lake we had our first camp at New Fork Park. As well as hanging food well out of reach of porcupines and bears, Moira is always

careful to camp in a spot safe from lightning. A case of once bitten twice shy, she endured some fierce evening storms which I slept through in blissful ignorance. Climbing up past Lozier Lakes and Clark Lake we descended again to camp at Trail Creek Park, moving on again over Vista Pass and Cube Rock Pass to Peak Lake in the heart of the range below Gannet Peak, highest in Wyoming. 'The Winds' is one of my favourite mountain ranges and the walking through this northern section was particularly varied and interesting, though the peaks did not look so inviting to climb as those around the Cirque of the Towers and Deep Lake in the south. Starting to work our way back, we crossed Shannon Pass and camped near Summit Lake before a final day past Palmer Lake and over Doubletop which gave a fantastic view of the crest of the range about to be engulfed in yet another thunderstorm.

On our way home we stopped off for a few days in Boulder, Colorado where we managed an outing to the nearby Indian Peaks, climbing Mount Audubon. Having learned to cope with the permit system in the National Parks I was astonished on arrival at the car park to be greeted by a charming old lady in uniform with a badge announcing 'National Forest Hostess' and a clipboard on which she noted our car number and destination, with the inevitable cheery 'Have a good day.' I wondered how long we might have to wait for a similar system here in Scotland?

## Europe

RAYMOND SIMPSON and his wife Linda skied in Andorra for Easter week 1988, climbing two peaks; Montmallos and the Grand Pessons, and also crossed two passes on the frontier with France. The peaks were attractive and for the most part accessible from high cols. Despite the proximity of the commercial centre of Andorra la Veilla and ski resorts on the Andorra side, we met only two other ski mountaineers. Dave Meldrum, who was living in Toulouse at the time, obtained a marvellous guidebook for us, 'Ski Sauvage en Andorre,' by Guy Pistre (we were informed by a local guide that he was killed by an avalanche recently).

This area is easily accessible via charter flights from Glasgow, and the favourable price of refreshments in this tiny, duty-free country might constitute a considerable health hazard to less abstemious visitors!

At Easter 1989 I did a 150-mile ski tour in the Norwegian Jotunheim with John Ingles, John Eames, Ian Rae and Hillary Smith. Although most visitors to this fine area follow trails marked with birch twigs through the valleys, the mountains and higher glaciated passes afford magnificent ascents and runs of up to 4,000 feet in delightfully dry powder.

We particularly enjoyed a tour over Goldhopigen, crossing five glaciers and involving two abscis. (This was recommended to us by Dave and Moira Broadhead whom we met at the Spiterstullen Hut.)

We also climbed Glittertind, traversed the Memrutind, and skied on two peaks near Olavsbu and Gjendebu. We were impressed by the stature of the mountains, the depth and quality of the snow, and the huts.

Food and accommodation are available in a good network of huts and is paid for on a 'trust' basis if there is no warden. This means that you can travel light for as long as you like without having to descend to 'civilisation' to stock up - could this ever work at the C.I.C.?

There was also scope for mixed routes on some very impressive peaks and faces, while some valleys had enormous ice falls drooling over steep slabs.

DAVE BROADHEAD reports:- The first months of 1989 offered little opportunity for skiing, even in Scandinavia, and my wife Moira and I flew very much in hope over to Norway at the start of our Easter holiday. Good Friday was probably the worst possible day to travel since much of the population head for the hills and services grind to a halt but we eventually arrived in Lillehammer, relieved to find plenty of snow. By way of getting into the swing of things again and avoiding the Nordic masses in the more popular areas we skied north for six days, enjoying the many and varied pleasures of cross-country touring through gentle valleys and across low ridges, moving from hut to cosy little hut in mixed weather, some days in sunshine and blue skies following clearly marked trails while other days tested our navigational skills, relying on map and compass to cross trackless snow in thick mist. Eventually we reached the Cairngorm-like Rondane mountains then moved by road via the town of Otta across to the Jotunheimen. Leaving the road again at Gjendesheim we passed

the summer steamer high and dry as we skied the length of frozen Lake Gjende, leaving the bad weather behind. After a night at Gjendebu hut we continued over to Olavsbu in the heart of these impressive peaks. Taking a day off from touring we climbed Hogvagletindane (2,066 m) in the company of a Norwegian from the hut, one of the few to have discovered the usefulness of skins on skinny skis which enabled us to climb to within a few hundred metres of the top. After a final scramble over heavily frosted rocks we were rewarded with a magnificent view, seeing nothing but snow plastered peaks in all directions. Too cold to sit for long, we were soon back on our skis enjoying the downhill run. Adam Gordon and Helen Geddes joined us at Olavsbu and together we moved on through the mountains, climbing Hinnotefjellet (2,114 m) before descending into the huge snow basin at the head of the Vestre Memurubreen glacier from which we crossed on to the Hellstugubreen glacier which gave a long exhilarating run down to Spiterstulen, a family run lodge and our base for the final few days.

Situated at the foot of Galdhoppigen (2,469 m) (Norway's highest peak) we started next morning fortified by a sumptuous traditional cold buffet breakfast, on top of our normal porridge, climbing Keithaus Topp directly and then on to the summit. Another fantastic view but again too cold to hang around, especially since we wanted to complete the classic 'Rundt Piggen,' a circuit of four glaciers around the mountain. A scramble down the NE ridge took us on to the Styggebrean glacier, exiting through a rocky gap, the 'Porten,' and down a short steep narrow snow gully, thankfully equipped with a fixed rope, leading down on to the Storjvubreen glacier. Another short ski before the next pass with another fixed rope on the short steep headwall for the faint hearted before swooping telemarks (or lots of traverses and kick turns) took us down on to the Illabreen glacier. A final easy pass took us on to the Tverrabreen glacier, leading all the way back to Spiterstulen in plenty of time for supper, well pleased with a superb outing. Yet another cold clear morning followed and for our final day we climbed Glittertind (2,464 m), a bit of a plod via the Steindalen valley since higher up the snow deteriorated into icy knobbles and we ended up carrying skis. However, down the other side the snow was so good that we finished up skiing all the way down to Glitterheim hut where Adam and Helen planned to stay, leaving Moira and I with a long haul back to Spiterstulen. Fit after twelve days continuous skiing, with the right wax on good snow we enjoyed a beautiful evening and a very fast trip back just in time for supper.

RICHARD BOTT spent two and a half weeks in July 1989 with Gavin Swinton, and Frank Yeoman in the Lofoten Islands, in search of sun kissed granite! We returned with white, wrinkly skin and rucksacks full of wet gear to find Scotland had been having the heatwave of the century. Despite this, on the island of Austvagoya we all managed to climb the Svolveargeita (minus the 'Hopp' due to wet weather) and Mygga (300m IV) on Vagakallen. Frank and I found a horrendously loose route out of the south east coire of Vegakallen, while Frank and Gavin made a fine ascent of the superb Vestpillaren of Presten (The Priest), 370m VI A2. Having completed the route at approximately 4 p.m. they were caught out by a storm and, unable to ascend the last 50m of 'scrambling' to the top, had to retreat down the route in high winds, lashed by icy rain. This included reversing a Grade VI traverse before reaching the bottom at 1.30 a.m. and the tent some 21 hours after leaving it. They were, however, down before dark! In the meantime I had climbed Breiddinden which afforded some fine views. Gavin and Frank also climbed the north ridge of Vagakallen (IV).

The last few days were spent at Reine on Moskenesoya where the rain continued almost unabated. The climb up Hermannsdalstinden (1029m) in thick mist involved ploughing through dense undergrowth to reach the foot of the mountain. On the way back Gavin and Frank opted to wade through the sea rather than the undergrowth, while I preferred an extra 6 mile hike south over hills to Sorvagen. I arrived back to find them in the showers at the swimming pool in Reine with two weeks' dirty clothing around them and their long johns off for the first and only time on the trip.

A second day of mid-day sun would have been appreciated in the land of the midnight sun.

A. WALKER and S. SENIOR of the JMCS (London Section) climbed in the Bernese Oberland with John Michel Oberson of the SAC. Routes done: Tellstock South face via Voie des Guides (ED, 800m); Septumania (ED, VI+) at El Dorado; SE Face Thurm II, Salbschein Westgrat (ED); Moby Dick, Grimsel Pass; South Face of the Meige via Pierre Allain Route (TD+, 1200m); Idee Noire etc. at La Paradis, Jura.

PETER MACDONALD and PATRICK MELLOR (Edinburgh) enjoyed a week of fine weather at Lauterbrunnen in early January, during which they made an ascent of the Monch (4099m) by the SE Ridge, followed by an involuntary bivouac in the Jungfraujoeh restaurant. Next day an attempt to bag the Jungfrau before the last train down was frustrated by deep snow, but rewarded by magnificent views down the glacier.

## Cyprus

A.L. CRAM writes:—In May 1989, my wife and I were on the largest of the Ionian islands Kefalonia and, across a narrow strait, its satellite Ithaca, featured in the original brochure by Homer as the home of Prince Odysseus. They may be because of their mountainous interiors and long sea escarpments not capable of development for mass tourism. As recently as 1953, Kefalonia was subject to a devastating earthquake which destroyed all the old buildings, but now substantially rebuilt. The highest point, Mount Ainos, is capped by the domes of a Nato surveillance station, and continues in a long narrow spine crested by rocky outcrops and summits for two or three kilometres with pockets of splintered forest, Abies Cephalonica. The aspect downwards to the blue Ionian sea was like from that summit of almost equal height in Queensland, Bartle Frere, to the Coral Sea. We went out along this spine and the ridge to the North on successive days from the Pass of Agrapides. This pass gives access to the reddish rocky ranges, resembling the Cairngorms although covered with very unstable cobblestones. These are the Kaneas, Etambi and Donati groups, all round about 3,800 feet and over which we walked on different days. Again, east of the pass, under Mount Ainos rise two more hills of about the same altitude which we enjoyed on two more days. Above the township of Sami on the east slopes of Ainos are a number of subterranean lakes, one of which provides the spectacle of Karavomilo where the sea rises from the intake of the Katovathris, where on the other side of the island, the sea flows continuously into the land.

ITHACA. This is a small island of some 95 sq.kms. enjoying a large land-locked anchorage. Aeto, on the other side, is the reputed site of the palace of Odysseus, but all that is to be seen are the ruins of pigsties, presumably where he was obliged to lodge his companions after their metamorphosis into swine by Circe. The highest ground is the Nipitou Group in the North, 2,740 feet, offering good walking. One may also walk to the Cave of the Nymphs (be prepared for disappointment) and the Temple of Apollo. But all is bathed in the luminous blue of the Ionian Sea, the 'fishgiving' sea providing for our expectation when reaching the sea banks.

CYPRUS. The Troodos Group was our objective in September/October. Larger than foreseen, it extended some 40 miles NE to SW. The highest point, Mount Olympus c. 6,422 feet, carries the white domes of a Nato station, as mysterious and unapproachable as the ancient gods, reputed to reside here. A road from Limassol passes discreetly below. Two spurs lead East, from about 5,790 feet and a rough spur out to the North, through splintered groves of Cedars unique to Cyprus. We walked out along these spurs on successive days. In contrast to Mount Ainos, the sea is not visible, indicative of the size of Cyprus. A horrendous scar blights the eastern limit of the northern spur, resulting from the workings of an asbestos mine. On the other side of Olympus, to the west, an agreeable range runs north to the pass carrying the road leading to the noted Monastery of Kykko, now completely restored with its glass mosaic wall pictures repaired, one fears for the benefit of visitors. The range has been cleared of trees and affords a lofty ridge walk up to about 4,626 feet. Once across the pass, a spectacular way leaves behind the Olympus group and opens up the vista of a vast area of spiky-topped forested hills, some 25 kilometres by 15 as far as Stavros tis Psokas, where a herd of the indigenous Moufflon are preserved in a semi-wild state.

We spent a number of exhilarating days walking over these remarkable hills, linked by high ridges. Screens, notable for their extreme length and for instability, hang from the high cols right down to the valley bottoms and demand attention when crossing the mix of damp soil, broken branches and loose stones. The famed 'Cedar Valley' is here, its large trees preserved from felling by the cost and logistics of removal. In early October, the weather changed. One morning, the high tops of Olympus flew a long streamer of cloud, which scattered rain and snow flurries with a high wind. Returning from the coast at Paphos, leaving a grey sea and a gusting wind, I took the new road for Olympus instead of the main road. The route faded into tracks between high stone dykes as the day merged into darkness.

On the steep climb to rejoin the main road above Pano Platres, mist impenetrable to headlights made driving something of a gamble. Where the road ran along the rims of gorges, I was reduced to looking for the road surface on my hands and knees and to scanning handfuls of gravel between my palms, walking on to place a quartz block on the road and driving until orientation was once more lost and repeating this tedious exercise, while oozing rain water and condensation in the driving rain. Eventually, over the road summit and in the lee the cloud thinned and the headlamps began to pick out ghostly trees and verges. My wife attributed the total absence of local drivers to their good sense.

### Himalaya

CHRIS GILMORE visited the Nepal Himalaya in October with Peter Standing and Peter Kaye. They climbed Mera (6,476m) walking in from the tropical heat of Tumlingtar at 500m altitude. This long walk-in greatly helped acclimatisation which was just as well because Mera itself was in dreadful condition. Late monsoon snows had left two-foot deep powder snow covered with a two-inch, breakable ice crust - hard going at 21,000 feet with neither porters nor sherpas. Although the mountain was busy, we were the only ones to succeed in gaining the summit at that time.

After one day's rest, we left our support party again, and crossed the Mera La into the wild expanses of the Upper Hongu Basin - a sort of Lairig Ghru flanked by un-named 6,000m peaks. Nepal contains remarkably little true wilderness: its people are too resourceful for that, but this is a truly lonely, mountain wilderness. After two days, we crossed over the Mingbo La at 5,817m in the same poor snow that afflicted Mera, with Ama Dablam towering above us, and then down to join the busy Everest Base Camp trail, finally meeting up with our support party at Lukla. Even the famous aircraft left on time!

## REVIEWS

**Lightweight Expeditions.**—Rob Collister (The Crowood Press, 1989, 144pp, illustrations, £12.95 - ISBN 1 85223 139 4).

Lightweight expeditions to the greater mountain ranges of the world are becoming increasingly popular as the relative costs of long distance travel become cheaper and the Alps become yet more crowded. Such trips can be as simple as an alpine holiday, yet many end in failure or disaster long before the mountains are reached. Many learn the lessons the hard way, but now there is no excuse because this excellent book points out the potential pitfalls which beset the unwary at every stage. Rob Collister is a veteran of very many lightweight expeditions to most of the adventurous regions of the world and in admirably clear writing he imparts the lessons learnt. This is essential reading to all those who intend planning or joining a trip, and is certainly not without interest to those who in a more theoretical way want to know something of what a lightweight expedition involves.

The author has tried to be controversial at times, pointing out that the increasingly used Diamox (for altitude sickness) is really a 'performance enhancing drug' and therefore unsuitable for the purist. Another controversial idea is that the ultimate form of lightweight expedition, two people leaving the roadhead with all their food and equipment for the duration of the trip on their own backs, is possible even for the larger Himalayan peaks. My reaction is that such an approach would succeed only in increasing the already depressing accident statistics.

Minor quibbles are of the incomplete photo credits, leaving the reader wondering just where exactly are those attractive unclimbed peaks so often featured, and if I were Geoff Cohen I would not feel flattered at being chosen to illustrate some of the harsher moments of life's struggles. In summary, an excellent short book, full of excellent advice on all aspects of expedition planning and practice. Even the experienced expeditioner may find a useful hint or two, and for the first-time it's simply indispensable.

Roger Everett.

**The Cairngorms Scene - and Unseen.**—Sydney Scroggie (Scottish Mountaineering Trust, 1989, 117pp., 9 photos, 12 drawings, £6.95, ISBN 0-907521-25-8).

This book is near to a *tour de force*, not because Syd Scroggie was blinded during the last war and lost a leg at the same time, but by reason of his deep insights. Any reader might feel baffled, before he'd gone far, by the very sharpness of the mountain scenes described, but a full explanation of how that can be is given by Scroggie towards the end:

'If you have been able to see, as I could, then lose your sight, you never cease to conceive of the world except in vivid images - That said, I have discovered that it is not the visual side of things in the hills that constitutes the profoundest aspect of the experience, any more than it is the croak of ptarmigan, scent of heather, the feel of the granite under your fingers ... What draws you there is an inner experience ... which perhaps cannot be fully understood when the physical aspect of things gets in the way when you can see. So there is nothing paradoxical after all that a blind man should want to prowl about the hills.' He adds that he would allow no more than half of one per cent to the hills' visual power to awe and impress; the blind man is without that little amount, but all the rest is as much his as any sighted climber's - 'He is *au fait* with the heart of the matter.'

From my own experience, I can testify to his truth. When landed in prison camps, that entailed a blinding to any outer hill-scene, but a brightening of the inner image. More so for Scroggie. The hills became transparent symbols of real ideals (such as good, beauty, truth), which being real are dynamic. They invigorate his thought, prose, and poetry. One spin-off is that colourful scenes, which most of us might dismiss as 'indescribable,' are here described: the author is able to summon the mental energy to find the words. He paints the wild lands in all the pigments of Nature from dreich greys to the brightest primaries, as if illuminating a manuscript, yet one that we recognize as true to the Cairngorms, down to scent, sound and touch.

He portrays his country's characters with a no less vigorous rightness. Bob Scott, the well-kent keeper at Luibeg, is here in his old richness, as are the MacKenzies of Tullochgrue in Rothiemurchus, and his companions on the hills. His empathy with them all is penetrating, especially his entry into the mind of his teenager son, Jamie, who walking alone from Aviemore to Blair Atholl by way of the Lairig Ghru, Geldie, and Tilt, is overtaken by the nameless fears that can go with loneliness.

Numerous other short stories enliven the narrative, several being ghost stories, for which Syd has a predilection, others to illustrate an argument or point a character, most in some way enlightening, or worth hearing as fun. As in the course of a river, there are several passages where the current weakens and strays into aimless, wordy meanderings, without relevant point, before the current picks up way again. Despite temptation, we skip these ramblings at our peril, for the text is interspersed with wisecracks and truths that crop out with no warning: 'You shut off the stove in Corrou, and the silence rushes in under the door.' Or, 'What's for you will no' go by you' - this in its positive, providential sense, not in negative fatalism. Or, 'If you want to discover comfort you have to come to Corrou.'

Corrou and many other bothies figure large in his tales. He has a genius for evoking the peculiar atmosphere of each and all, both in their primitive years up to the 1930s and in their later, more spartan days, when we have to be thankful that they still exist, even if shorn of their old character.

Scroggie sits on no fences. He is forthright. On tourism he has this to say (I hope for contemplation by the NTS):

'If I had my way, Hadrian's Wall would be rebuilt, manned night and day, and orders given that no tourist be allowed into Scotland. The move to prostitute the beauty of Scotland to this trade in my opinion is the last and most ignominious phase in the history of our decline and fall. At this stage a country becomes a mere corpse infested with maggots.'

From that general exorcism he does except climbers. The rest of that passage is still more stirring, worded generously towards both English and Anglo-Scots, for whose misfortune he has quick understanding. His mind readily detaches from undue national fervour. Being well-read in geology, he is able to refer back to millennia 'when there wasn't even a Scotland as such to worry people whether they belonged to it or not.'

He is less merciful to Adventure Training Schools. 'Glen More Lodge ... is a place dedicated to teaching people everything about the hills except what really counts. It is a kind of fascist training establishment from which intakes emerge to conquer the hills and in so doing, according to theory, conquer themselves. Absent is the poetry ...' etc.

Syd's ethos, by contrast, aims to help growth of insight. After extolling companionship he adds: 'On the other hand, there is a charm about doing a solo on the hills which I have many times experienced in my sighted days ... The beauty of this is that whatever the hazards, and they are really very few, it is entirely up to you. Pay no attention to them when they tell you not to cross the Lairig on your own, for this is the essence of the hills as a personal experience, not in an exercise in navigation or some other inferior aspect.'

To that idea, I say Amen.

Like Unna, he declares anathema on endless provision of 'facilities.' 'Almost better someone should die for want of the Sinclair hut than someone should live due to its existence.' He is likewise unyielding in denouncing the downhill ski-scene on Cairngorm as 'symptoms of mortal social disorder.'

Scroggie is a romantic. My heart warms to him on that score. But one variation he plays on that theme could hardly have been mine: 'What,' he wondered, 'might have been the experience of a Jacobite fugitive from Culloden?' So, he and Gavin Sprott don kilt and cape and set out up the Tilt on a four-day hill-walk, bearing oatmeal and whisky, one machete to cut firewood, but no tent or sleeping bag. One can only add, 'Weel, they ken noo.'

I find only three mistakes worth noting. (1) Kenneth MacAlpine was not the first King of Picts, but of Scots and Picts united. (2) Syd is far out in both his history of the kilt and its early style. (3) The word gillie is spelled that way both in Gaelic and English (and not as ghillie). See any dictionary. The fault is frequent in SMT publications. I know of no other book so free of error on its first printing. Tom Weir, who edits and writes the foreword, has done a good job.

Syd Scroggie, and that other famous product of the Cairngorms, malt whisky, 'gang thegither.' His book is not to be knocked back fast like a mere vodka. Slowly sipped and savoured, it warms the cockles of the heart.

Bill Murray.



Closer to Belloc than Borthwick, this medley of rambling reminiscence and amusing anecdote is set predominately in the Cairngorms, but roves whimsically as far afield as Italy and the Rockies. People figure no less than places, while the author's eclecticism enriches every photograph: here cheek-by-jowl are Bob Scott and Tacitus, Am Fear Liath Mor and mountain warfare, briese blocks and tinker tea. One moment we are bedding down at Altanour, the next we are marching with Montrose and enjoying a dissertation on Highland dress.

Characters abound, but few to stand comparison with Syd Scroggie himself. A pioneering climber in the pre-war years, he was blinded and maimed in 1945 in the closing days of the Italian campaign, while serving as an officer in the Lovat Scouts. After reading history at Oxford he returned to settle in Dundee, and in 1955 set foot again in his beloved Cairngorms - the first of the many strenuous outings that form the basis of the book. Other writers, such as Winthrop Young and Collette Richard, may have overcome similar disability in the hills and set their experiences on record; Scroggie is surely unique in his gaiety and disregard of handicap, irrepressible zest for life, and inner eye for the best in every man and thing.

To read this book is to feel in the soul something akin to Scroggie's delight at the sun's warmth on his back.

Graeme Morrison.

**Waterfall Ice.**—By Albi Sole, Rocky Mt. Books ISBN 0-921102-00-3 (Second Edition).

This is the second edition of a waterfall ice climbing guide to the Canadian Rockies near Calgary. There are 242 described icefalls.

My first reaction was one of jealousy that the Calgary area has so many spectacular icefalls and we in Scotland have only a fraction, and only then every five years or so when there is a freeze to sea level. And then I remembered that every Alpine country has them too. But not to worry; dig inside and find descriptions of brittle vertical ice, avalanches, bivouacs and full day approaches and remember how scared you were when you last climbed genuinely vertical ice (if you ever did).

The description for each icefall is systematically sub-divided into three; approach, route description and descent. The route description generally includes the length and angle of the crux section and often other pitches. For descent, sometimes you can walk off but more often the route is rapelled, either from trees or frequently from fixed pegs or bolts. The routes average about Scottish length with a few around 1,000 ft and half are one pitch (snow is not included in the length).

The approach information is detailed and includes maps but no times. Admittedly conditions will vary but some routine indication would be useful when approaches vary from five minutes to one day. Approach times could be deduced from the maps if one was familiar with the area and the skiing/walking conditions to expect. This is an indication that the guide is not particularly aimed at outsiders. Another example is that no routine description is given as to how often the routes are in climbable condition at their grade. Despite these criticisms my overall impression was favourable.

The introductory section on style should give some thought. The contrast of free climbing versus aid (where axes are clipped for rests or placing protection) is predictable and the Canadians are well known for their pure ethics in this respect. Judging by the icefalls in this book we don't have any steep ice anyway, so we needn't worry. But more striking (so to speak) was the comment that 'a climb where a leader repeatedly bombards the second with ice should be seen as an ascent in poor style.' I thought scabs were the only indisputable evidence of a first ice ascent, and therefore should be encouraged.

I feel I should comment on the grading system (yawn) but only because front pointing has turned ours into a shambles. This book has yet another two-tiered system with an overall grade for commitment (very loosely devised from the Scottish system) and a technical grade for the single most difficult pitch. While this doubles the potential time for pub talk, inevitably there is an overlap in two quoted numbers. So why not simply use the angle and length of the crux section. (A protractor which fits on to the adze would guarantee accuracy, e.g. IV 40m/90 degrees. That gives you three figures to discuss and some factual information).

A look at the grades will be a little humbling; Point Five might only be a III (e.g. Christmas Present III, 3 has a final pitch of 30m of 80 degrees).

For a foreign reader like myself, the 27 black and white photos really let me sample the atmosphere of the area and while one might criticise the quality, (even the publishers) the plus points vastly outweigh this. No number of words can outdo a picture and to me this is the best aspect of the book. The most important omission is the cost of flights from Scotland to Calgary.

Andy Nisbet.

**Argonauts of The Western Isles - Sea Kayaking off Scotland's West Coast.**—Robin Lloyd-Jones (Diadem Hodder & Stoughton, 1989, £10.95, ISBN 0 906371 031).

The dangers of an innocent-looking car park are often not visible. I was rashly loitering in one following the SMC Dinner when the Editor approached. 'You can canoe, can't you?' Being unable to do anything else other than nod assent this book was thrust on me with the instruction to review it by March. Well as it happens I spent three weeks with R.L. Jones many years ago - not on the high seas of the West Coast, but in the Stubai Alps in Austria.

In his book, Robin tells of many a memorable expedition amongst some of our remote and beautiful islands. In the first few chapters he gives some insight on the arduous training for the long days in the kayak. He tells of endless rolling practice and learning rescue techniques. This he calls 'rough water training.' Now the chapters open up to trips to Jura and the Garvellach Isles. There are Big Waves, Force Nine Gales, moonlight nights on flat water, camping on beaches as far away as the Monach Isles, the Treshnish Isles, Lewis and the Uists, sleeping under canvas or rough on the beach on a summer's night.

The vivid descriptions make one feel as though there with the author. Read of the spooky night on a wreck in the bay of his home town Helensburgh, or 'doon the watter' to Paddy's Milestone (Ailsa Craig). Robin has enjoyed his 25 year's plus exploring the West Coast and this is very evident in his book. So gentlemen, this summer, when you are sitting in Lagangarbh with the rain lashing off the new windows and no rock climbing in sight, think about sea canoing and enjoy being wet!

Benny Swan.

**The Islands of Scotland Including Skye.**—Derek Fabian, Graham Little, Noel Williams (1989, Scottish Mountaineering Trust, 406pp., £18.95, ISBN 0-907521-23-1).

The need for a new mountaineering guide to the Scottish islands has long been acute. The previous guide was in two volumes - one for Skye and the other covering the rest. This was always an unsatisfactory arrangement, while one of these volumes was very slim, lacking sufficient detail to be really useful. So this new book should be very welcome. It is also the first of the new series of SMC District Guides; presumably it sets the trend in presentation and content for volumes which are yet to come - so it must be looked at carefully!

What is a District Guide for? What audience does it serve? How is it used? The previous guides sold well, on the whole, and presumably they answered these questions to the users' satisfaction. In presentation at least, the new guide is a very different beast. There are 107 photographs, about three-quarters of which are in colour, mostly very atmospheric and some quite fine (but why do all photographs of Strone Ulladale make it look like a small, English roadside crag?) and quite well reproduced; it is certainly a vast improvement on previous district guides. There are also 23 of Jim Renny's excellent sketch maps - all models of clarity, and the text is usually clear and informative. Why, then, do I like it less than I should?

The answer lies with my questions. A District Guide is thrown in the car whenever I am off somewhere a little unfamiliar or for reading material in tent or hut. It is most definitely **not** a coffee table book, and this tome comes dangerously close. The covers measure 6.75 by 9.5 inches (the old guides were 5.5 by 9); it is very spaciouly laid out, with large print, and its information content per page coupled with a hefty price tag of £18.95 puts it in the glossy climbing book league, which is not where it should be.

The printing is erratic: the Introduction appears to be in a smaller print than the rest of the book (though it's not - Ed.), and the printing intensity varies from page to page with a typeface reminiscent of direct computer output. It gives the book an unwarranted amateurish air.

But what of the content? Bill Murray in his book 'The Islands of Western Scotland' (which serves as a complementary volume to this) estimates that there are 787 Scottish islands, depending of course on how one defines an island. It is good to see so many of them are included here (about 80 for those with a penchant for statistics), even those which might not, at first sight, attract climbers. There are entries, for example, for the Summer Isles, Bass Rock, the Isle of May and Inchkeith. Marketed properly, this range of material should bring the book to a wider audience of tourists and casual walkers which would not normally be attracted to SMC guide books, and it may well prove a popular selling book because of this. As it should, Skye gets the lion's share of space with over one quarter of the book, with Arran next - the priorities are just right for a book of this sort. There is an excellent index of place names and bibliography. The authors clearly have a great fund of first-hand knowledge coupled with a great love of these wonderful places - the wilderness of Jura, the sheer variety of Skye or the wide open spaces of Lewis, and for this alone the book is welcome, but, because of its design, I don't think it will go with me on trips in quite the same way previous guides have done.

Chris Gilmore.

**Langdale.**—D. Armstrong, P. Rigby and J. White (F&RCC, 263pp., £8.95 - ISBN 0-85028-031-1).

Langdale surely needs little introduction, even to members of this club. One of the Lakes' most popular climbing areas, with crags such as Gimmer, Pavey Ark and White Ghyll, it is particularly suitable for the southbound wastrel intent on shunning the dubious virtues of wet rock and midges. This, the 1989 edition, is the seventh climbers' guide to the area, the last being Mike Mortimer's in 1980. According to Dave Armstrong, the overall editor, besides information on routes previously not documented it includes details of over 250 new climbs done since 1979. This alone would make it worth purchasing. With a total of over 700 routes to choose from, ranging in difficulty from steep walks to E6, only the most particular might find little of interest.

Lakes guides I have always found attractive and the current series is in many respects the best yet. Given the high general standard I consider this guide to be a bit of a disappointment, although I concede not always for reasons that have much bearing on its practical use. For example, the cover photo, of the traverse on Pluto, lacks atmosphere and position. Some of the 11 other photos in the body of the guide are better, although it's difficult to believe they were the best available for such a popular area. The print quality is variable, although never illegible. But, and this is where I am revealed in all my nit-picking, picky glory, what really irritates me is the standard of sentence construction and punctuation occasionally in evidence. If commas in the wrong place don't drive you nuts then the chances are you won't mind and perhaps it's not really of much consequence. I think it matters, though, even if just a little.

A more significant shortcoming is in the crag diagrams. They are in two colours, as is standard in the new series, but the scale of reproduction of what are basically excellent pieces of work is too small. Combined with a high route density on some crags and occasional over-shading the result is that many lines are almost impossible to pick out. Lower White Ghyll is particularly bad. Additionally, I believe that a substantial number of climbs are wrongly numbered on this diagram, so be warned. Pavey East is upside down, so go and abseil Sixpence while it's still a legitimate ascent.

Against this there is the sheer bulk of routes already mentioned, described pitch by pitch (with pitch length and if over 4a, technical grade) as is usual south of the border, the superb maps (like the diagrams, by Al Phizacklea), the historical section, which contains the histories from Clegg's 1938 guide onwards and which makes fascinating reading, the graded list and the first ascent list. I know that not every one of those finds favour with all climbers, especially Scottish ones, but your reviewer likes them so they count as pluses. What the economics of huge print runs of climbers' guides can allow...

Considered as a whole, including the mammoth effort which must have gone into putting it all together, this guide, inverted crags, misplaced commas and all, is an absolute necessity for anyone who wants as much information as possible on the Langdale area, in one very manageable and presentable volume. Any perceived flaws certainly wouldn't stop this east coaster digging into his own pocket for a copy. Which says it all, really.

**The Crag Guide to England and Wales.**—David Jones (Crowood Press, £9.95 - ISBN 1-85223-238-2).

This guide is different. It lists all the crags south of the border, giving a map reference, directions and a description, the length of which depends on the author's opinion of the crag in question. No route descriptions are given.

Crowood are fairly new to the climbing guidebook scene and their previous offerings have all had me guessing slightly as to their intended audience. At first sight this guide was no different. Jones sees it as having four main purposes - one, to give an overall impression of the climbing in England and Wales, both to locals and visiting aliens, two, to offer some guidance to every crag in the country without the necessity to buy all fifty or so 'official' guides, and three, to present a 'modern style to climbing,' in other words to turn up at a crag and climb whatever appeals without a route description.

Given the way things appear to be going I can only applaud the latter aim, but I'm afraid nothing in my experience (but then, what do I know?) suggests that climbers are *less keen* on route descriptions now than in the past. Attitudes are at least as competitive now as they ever were, so I can't see many deliberately handicapping themselves by following Jones's preferred style, the on-sight ascent par excellence.

As for the other two purposes, I was initially unconvinced that such a guide would be of much use to a 'local' climber, i.e. myself. I knew where to go, didn't I? But very brief scrutiny reminded me how little I have packed into the last twenty years, how many crags remain unvisited, how little I know. I remember countless occasions looking for somewhere to climb when the obvious choices were out, times when such a guide, which, unlike a definitive climbers' guide, sets out with the intention of making value judgments, would have been really useful. And the other times when, just because it helps to broaden horizons, it would have been fun to have around. I certainly intend to have a copy in the car when next I set off south of the border.

Not that it is perfect. The Introduction and the Safety Notes are a bit confused, particularly with regard to attitudes towards protection, especially bolts. The Introduction mentions a 'new approach' to rock-climbing around the early 1920s, but leaves the reader to infer what this new approach was - my understanding is that it was then that the use of guidebooks became popular and 'unguided ascents' increasingly rare, but the comments about ascents being declared 'invalid' as late as 1978 if Friends had been used for pro (oh, I remember that, as well as Livesey's comments about above-the-head gear!) make me wonder if I really did get the point after all.

The black and white photographs in the body of the text are of variable quality, although some are very good, but unfortunately of uniformly bad reproduction. The maps are adequate, and certainly good enough when combined with the directions to get to the crags with only a road atlas, as the author intends.

What one must bear in mind with this guide is that it is the work of one man. As such it is a remarkable achievement. However, any judgments about the quality of particular crags may not always coincide with yours. Stoney Middleton, for example, is declared to be 'without doubt, one of the greatest crags in Britain.' I can think of a few people who might disagree, not that I'm one of them! Dinas Cromlech is 'the undisputed greatest crag in England and Wales.' Well, I suppose it's certainly a contender, but is it just the cynic in me who thinks that opinion and the following comments about soloing any of the routes in the corner being 'unforgettable and thrilling, and I can fully recommend it,' are possibly related. Och, but why write a book if you can't use it to give your own trumpet a wee blast.

These are minor quibbles. Overall, a very useful addition to the range of climbers' guidebooks, and moreover, one which won't go out of date nearly as rapidly as most.

Bob Duncan.

**The Crystal Horizon - Everest - The First Solo Ascent.**—Reinhold Messner (Crowood Press, £16.95, pp.322, ISBN 1-85223-250-1).

Personally, I have always found Messner's books to be far too intense for my own liking, not revealing much of how the man himself ticks. The Crystal Horizon stands apart from Messner's early writings. As well as providing the reader with a fascinating account of the first solo ascent of Everest in 1980 without oxygen, the reader is also given a rare insight into Messner's innermost thoughts and emotions throughout the period prior, during and

subsequent to his remarkable ascent. The book not only provides us with Messner's own impression but also the thoughts of his only companion, his girlfriend Nena, who accompanied him to Advance Base Camp. The lengthy quotations from her diary provide a good balance to Messner's own writings and reveal much about Messner's somewhat volatile character.

Although the climax of the book is undoubtedly the account of the actual ascent of the mountain, Messner also provides us with a fascinating look at the culture of modern Tibet, the Chinese military occupation and the said destruction of the Tibetan heritage. The initial part of the book gives us a selective history of attempts on Everest from the Tibetan side and particularly fascinating is the account of the solo attempt in 1934 by the Englishman, Maurice Wilson which ended in his death beneath the North Col after a remarkable adventure which started in England fifty three weeks earlier. Wilson's obvious obsession in climbing the mountain is reflected in Messner's own self-determination to succeed forty six years later. Unfortunately many of the brief historical passages are interspersed with Messner's own personal experience which make for heavy impressionistic reading at times.

The highlight of the book is without doubt Messner's account of his four-day solo ascent from Advanced Base Camp, which should make fascinating reading for non-climbers and climbers alike. Far from being the usual account of great technical difficulty, the book is a story of extreme willpower, absolute determination and incredible levels of stamina. A twenty-foot crevasse fall below the North Col, the subsequent escape and the doubts which this installed in Messner's mind add spice. Throughout the ascent the reader is treated to detailed self-analysis by Messner which reveal more about himself than any of his earlier writings which I have read.

All in all, the reader is left with the impression of a man who is the extreme individualist; unable to come to terms with the accepted patterns of life in modern western society. Messner comes across as a man who is able to reach great heights of elation yet at other times is bad tempered, moody and difficult to get close to. The extracts from Nena's diary convey this side of Messner's character especially well.

Certainly the book goes a long way in enabling the reader to understand the motivation and almost unacceptable obsessiveness that has enabled Messner to achieve his many outstanding solo ascents during the past years.

For the Everest guru the book also contains a chronicle and selected reading list dealing with past attempts on Everest. Many colour and black and white photographs are included but unfortunately the reproduction often leaves a bit to be desired. Overall though a recommended read covering mountaineering's greatest solo achievement to date.

Steve Kennedy.

**Exploring the Hidden Himalaya.**—By Soli Mehta and Harish Kapadia. (Hodder & Stoughton 1990, 172pp., £20. ISBN 0-340-50449-B).

Amid the pile of mail which builds up over the summer holidays, there are usually two pleasures to look forward to on arriving home. Putting aside the bills and circulars, the familiar slim blue SMCIJ is devoured immediately, usually at a single sitting while the heftier Himalayan Journal is put aside to be picked through more slowly during the autumn. Inside a dull brown package with beautiful Indian postage stamps, slightly tattered from the long 'sea mail' voyage from Bombay, the front cover is always an enticing black and white photograph and the contents packed with information in the form of a mixed bag of articles, reviews, maps, photos and the unique fold out panoramas. Familiar names and places bring back memories of past trips while unfamiliar ones sow the seeds of ideas for the future.

To celebrate the 'Diamond Jubilee' of the Himalayan Club (in 1998) the current Hon. Editors of the HJ, Soli Mehta and Harish Kapadia (the former now sadly deceased) have distilled the essence of 45 volumes of the HJ into 'Exploring the Hidden Himalayas.' Concentrating on selected areas of the Indian Himalaya, as the dustjacket notes explain '...the purpose of this book is to excite and inspire the climber and trekker...it ignores the 8000 metre peaks as having been more than adequately covered elsewhere... it draws attention to the less familiar and more challenging aspects of the known 7000 and 6000 metre peaks.'

Eight chapters cover an incredible variety of mountains, moving from east to west with the help of 14 maps specially drawn by Arun Samant, showing peaks, ridges, passes and glaciers. The text of each chapter gives a brief but lively history of climbing activity in that area, with plenty of reference to encourage dipping into the appropriate HJ and occasionally other publications for further details, with a useful 'Select Bibliography' at the end of the book. However, the best feature of the book is the 72 photographs, a mixture of black and white and colour from a wide variety of sources. The quality of production of these photos is generally good and each one is accompanied by a concise but informative description. The Frontispiece is a striking rock pyramid, PK 6127m in South Parbati valley photographed by Geoff Cohen, a fitting reminder of the significant level of activity of a number of SMC members whose names appear throughout the book.

Although 'Exploring the Hidden Himalaya' will be essential for any serious armchair Himalayan explorer, George Band, President of the Alpine Club contributes a warm Foreword aimed at the more active, with a timely reminder of the problems caused by expedition refuse. For those unfamiliar with the workings of the Indian Mountaineering Federation and their rules and regulations there is no advice on 'how to do it' but there are occasional mentions of 'The Inner Line' since unfortunately, many of the peaks described lie in sensitive border areas long closed to foreigners. Meanwhile we can only admire the activities of Indian climbers with envy and hope for more peaceful times in the near future. Priced at little more than a bottle of a good malt, those of us selfish enough to wish that some of the Himalaya could remain hidden for a while longer may think this is far too cheap.

In conclusion, this is no Himalayan version of 'A Century of Scottish Mountaineering' nor, as the authors take care to explain in their Introduction, 'a comprehensive dictionary of peaks.' However, as climbing in the greater ranges seems to me to be getting more and more 'packaged' I welcome this reminder that there are still vast possibilities for small low budget parties to explore in the Indian Himalaya and am particularly encouraged by the involvement and enthusiasm of Indian climbers and trekkers in this exploration and the high quality of this book.

Dave Broadhead.

PS. The morning after I finished writing this review, an unseasonal 'sea mail' package arrived, in which I was delighted to find a complimentary copy of 'Exploring the Hidden Himalaya,' sent to all Himalaya Club members. A bottle of malt is back on the shopping list, if only I can decide which. If any SMC member would like further details about the Himalaya Club, please let me know. Slainte mhath.

## Journals of Kindred Clubs

*The American Alpine Club Journal 1989.*

Yet again Ad Carter and his editorial team have produced a Journal which must surely be the most comprehensive reporting of mountaineering anywhere in the world. The Journal is not only an essential reference for the expeditioning mountaineer but a fascinating volume for the armchair mountaineer for 'dipping into.'

In total there are 354 pages, of which articles cover 127 and clubs and expeditions 168 including numerous photographs; mostly monochrome but also several in colour of a very high standard. Inevitably most of the articles relate the successes or failures of some of the world's best mountaineers on the world's hardest routes. Pride of place is given to the first ascent of the Kanshung Face of Everest, but the article which caught my imagination was on the ascent of the Wine Bottle Route on Mount Dickey in Alaska - six days, 1600 vertical metres and 66 hours of actual climbing on 51 pitches - Phew! The last article is on a climbing competition at Snowbird, Utah, a sign of the times perhaps, but is this really worthy of an article in a 'Alpine' Journal?

Readers who have some knowledge of American terms and jargon will no doubt understand more fully some of the reports. For example, what does one make of 'the crux involves making a string of upside down rursps stick into the summit roof while looking at a potential zipper into the wall of a dihedral!'

It is a great pity that the Journal will be read by a few members only - it deserves much wider circulation.

Bill Wallace.

*Berg '89.*

My limited knowledge of three languages (including English) does not cover German so of necessity this short look at Berg is just that – a short look over this heavily illustrated, 272 pp, hard-backed mountaineering compendium. The cost must be impressive, the coverage certainly is. Going through its pages is an interesting trip of contrasts, from pastel shaded prints of alpine churches in the snow to granite slabs rising out of a Korean jungle, the latter complete with toothy grins of the assembled belay party. Koreans seem to do everything in sixes, presumably appeasing some ancient, ancestral god.

The monochromes are not of the quality of the colours, with a few exceptions, probably as some were done from slides. The colours range from the so-so to the superb. Something was not quite right with the colour balance though, until I remembered Agfa and its pastel tonal range, different from the harsher reality of Kodak (which I still prefer, romantic nature notwithstanding). As to the subject matter, how can one lose with the Alps? Dolomitic giants abound, tiny traversing or ascending figures dwarfed by vertical or overhanging, yellow and white walls (wear red for these shots).

The other contrast is in the alternation of mountains and crags, from helmeted mountaineer sticking front points into white, to lycrad climber sticking toes into rock. The ugly sight of massed audiences below competition walls is here, ugly that is unless you are one of the lucky, sweaty ones pocketing prize money. A steep wall is shown, chalk marks at long intervals, climber pinned onto the wall like a moth under glass, belayed cameraman on the right, banner marked off in metres on the left. O.K., climbing does have some competition, probably always has had, but some of us try to avoid it, some of us avoided playing cricket or football or hockey at school because competition was not for us. I suspect that it will go the way that televised snooker has and is going, peaking in popularity at some point in the future.

Three pleasing sights to finish with; two girls climbing something steep together and really enjoying it – go for it sisters! Rural shots of hand harvesting in the Alps, reminding us humbly of our peasant stock (you think not? Go back three generations and be prepared for a surprise). A series of hard boulder problems with the hero wearing good ol' blue jeans, not migraine-patterned lycra (and he was smiling too). A visually interesting production.

*Appalachia 1988, 1989.*

Did you know that GPS baseline measurements using two receivers have attained accuracies of plus or minus one centimetre in 100 kilometres? So tells an article in the 1988 *Appalachia*, on Mountain Metrology. I wish I could tell you more, such as the K2 versus Everest controversy. The most recent height of the latter, by the way, is now 29,029 ft. That this is close to the original measurement of 29,002 is partly luck; that original measurement was apparently based on a single line and had four systematic errors of up to 120 feet in opposite directions! Seek it out in the Club Library and enjoy a good read of this and other articles, such as 'Floating Trembles' by Barry Greer, on the writing of mountain articles. 'Terror of the blank page. Worse than any known case of HAPE,<sup>1</sup> frostbite, or hangover.' This tells the story of the desperate writer who finally asks the editor (a grumpy but sympathetic man) for help. The editor advises. 'Go home,' he says, 'And read the best of the best twentieth century mountain and wilderness prose.' Then follows a short list of such prose to start with. The editor continues, 'You'll find writers you can't stand and writers you like, and finally a writer who uses the language in a way that feels right.' Go over that writer's material slowly, continues the editor, to see how it is put together, then sit down and write. Once, twice, thrice. Put it away for a week then reread it on an empty stomach. Rewrite it once, twice, thrice etc etc. What you will end up with will be your best work, not the words of a nineteenth century romantic, not even the words of the modern writer you like the best, but your own words.

'That's a helluva lot of work' says our poor but now hopeful writer, So is climbing,' responds the overworked editor.

1. A small prize will be awarded to the contributor who makes the best suggestion as to what HAPE is. No overly lewd contributions please, and a selection of the best will be published next year.

Ken Crocket.

Also received: *The Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa*, 1988; *Tararua Tramper*; *La Rivista*; *Deutscher Alpenverein*, 1988, 1989; *Polar Record*, 1989; *Appalachia Bulletins*, 1988, 1989.



*Berg '90.*

This German annual is beautifully produced and its scope covers the entire aspect of the mountains - Historical, Geological, Technical. The '90 edition contents include a large section dedicated to the Oztaler Alps.

An account of the 'Free Solo' ascent of five major Dolomite Walls is enhanced by stunning action photographs, as is the chapter on International Alpinism, concentrating on the Ogre (Karakorum).

The SMC Centenary Expedition to Shiwakte II is noted in the activity lists.

Definitely one for the bookcase.

*La Montagne.*

This French (I can just about get the gist), glossy magazine of the CAF appears quarterly, and includes club news and views etc., as well as offers of Treks, Randonnees (walks), & Expeditions which seem open to all who can afford the cost. I especially read the 'Chronique Alpine et la Montagnes du Monde.'

Doug Lang.

**Yorkshire Gritstone.** Graham Desroy (Yorkshire Mountaineering Club, 642pp, ISBN 0 9515267-0-7, £15.00)

A glance, a flick through the pages, was all that was required to tell that this was My Kind of Guide. Closer inspection didn't disappoint. So impressed was I that I even volunteered this instant (if brief) review to our esteemed Editor.

For the climber with a sense of humour (and surely there are some left?) this must be one of the most entertaining guidebooks ever. How many Technical Notes have made you laugh out loud?

The Introduction sets the tone for the rest of the guide. Here Editor Desroy (responsible also for the Yorkshire Limestone guide, readers of which will have had a taste of what's in store) tries his best to put us off. 'I mean, for God's sake, Dennis Gray climbs here.' Access and Conservation includes the Dummies' Guide to Giving Up Climbing, essentially all the don'ts in the Country Code, all the points made but in a way that will result in this section actually being read.

Even if you never intended going to Yorkshire to climb this book would be well worth the (fairly substantial) price. Its humour and complete lack of pomposity are a breath of fresh air after the intensity of so much in the magazines, reminding us that (the maladjusted apart) rock climbing is something to be enjoyed and even laughed at.

From a practical point of view it seems no less worthy, although I'm afraid I cannot speak with authority, having spent only a couple of days on Yorkshire grit, just after the ice retreated. But the descriptions are well written and seem perfectly adequate, the diagrams (all by Eric Rhodes) are excellent, while graded lists and first ascent lists are also provided, as is a list of 'Graded Sandbags'...An innovation which many will find useful is the use of 'P Grades'. 'The important thing to note is that P does not stand for protection but Prang Potential,' in other words, 'the consequences of a fall'. Grades of P1 to P3 are given; jessies may consider the latter best avoided (and who am I to disagree?).

The photographs are generally very good and reproduced to a very acceptable standard, although ectomorphs might consider the inclusion of one of the embarrassingly over-developed expatriate 'Chimp' Alan Taylor to be in dubious taste.

The cover isn't flexible, as seems to be almost ubiquitous these days, but, according to the section on 'Supplementary Uses Of This Guidebook', is plastic coated, so it should be reasonably robust. If you ignore most of the suggestions, that is... The size of the guide is such that carting it up routes in your pocket isn't really on (unless as a desperate training routine), but for grit that's hardly a problem.

Much as it irks me to further inflate the chauvinistic self regard endemic in Yorkshire men, I have to say that this is, to my mind, one of the very best climbers' guidebooks I have seen, modern but with soul, a great credit to Graham Desroy and the vast team of contributors, and to the Yorkshire Mountaineering Club. They may yet regret their diligence, however, if my reaction is typical. See you at Brimham!

Bob Duncan.



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Articles for the Journal should be submitted before the end of January for publication in the following issue. Lengthy contributions are preferably typed, double-spaced, on one side only, and with ample margins (minimum 30mm). Articles may be accepted on floppy disk, IBM compatible (contact editor beforehand). The editor welcomes material from both members and non-members, with priority being given to articles of Scottish Mountaineering content. Photographs are also welcome, and may be black and white, unglazed glossy prints, preferably 250mm by 200mm, or colour slides. All material should be sent to the Editor, address as above.

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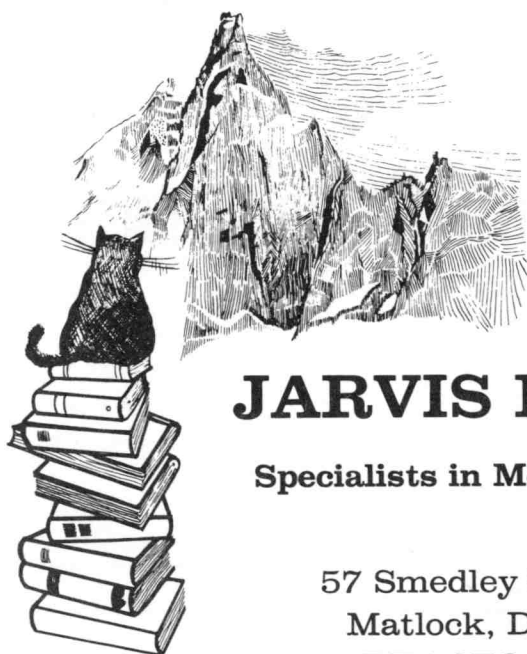
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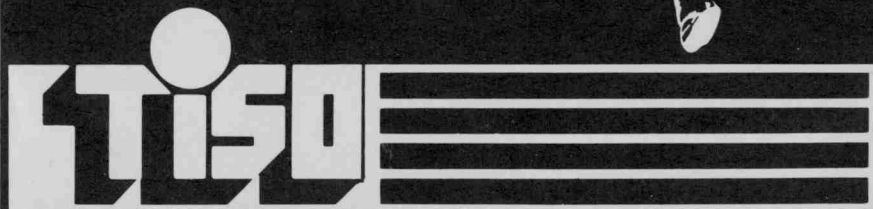
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