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CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE FIVE CAIRNGORM RIDGES	
By Andrew Nisbet	121
'THE WALL' By Gary Latter	126
COLD FRONT By R. D. Walton	129
IN SEARCH OF 'A REAL CLIMBER'	
By D. F. Cassidy	132
'FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA'	
By Iain A. Robertson	140
IN THE FIRING LINE ON MONT GRUETTA	
By Sandy Allan	148
BECAUSE WE WERE THERE By G. J. F. Dutton	150
CLOSING THE BOOK By H. M. B.	156
AT BEN NEVIS OBSERVATORY By John S. Begg	157
CLOSE TO THE WIND By Graham Little	164
THE BREATH OF THE GODS	
GETTING THE WIND UP By P. W. Gribbon	167
AN IGNOMINIOUS RETREAT By D. G. Pyper	169
AN UNEXPECTED BLOW By David J. Broadhead	170
INCIDENT IN ARRAN By W. D. Brooker	172
A WINDY NEW YEAR By R. N. Rutherford	172
WIND PHENOMENON ON GOATFELL	172
TWO TALES OF MUNROSIS	
A MUNROIST'S TESTIMONY By Roger Stonebridge	174
THAT ELUSIVE FINAL MUNRO By Ivan Waller	175
LETTER TO THE EDITOR	177
NEW CLIMBS SECTION	
NEW CLIMBS	178
MISCELLANEOUS NOTES	196
HOW MACFARLANE SAVED THE GRID	199
TECHNICAL SECTION	
SHELTERED HOUSING ON ARRAN By Ian Angell	202
SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN ACCIDENTS, 1984	203
IN MEMORIAM	
GEORGE ELLIOT	215
KENNETH MACRAE	216
D. H. McPHERSON	216
DR ALASDAIR R. WILSON	217
GEORGE ROGER	218
PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB	220
J.M.C.S. REPORTS	221
S.M.C. AND J.M.C.S. ABROAD	223
REVIEWS	232
KINDRED CLUBS	236
OFFICE BEARERS	237

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May 1984

Torr na H'Iolaire, Carnmore

Photo: Grahame Nicoll

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THE FIVE CAIRNGORM RIDGES

By Andrew Nisbet

THE five Cairngorm ridges in a day was one of those appealing ideas which was never likely to happen because the lazy side of my character is usually dominant. That is, until I mentioned it to Charlie McLeod, who doesn't have a lazy side and always rises to a challenge. Unwittingly I had become committed. His enthusiasm was even more remarkable considering he thought it was twice as far as it actually was.

The ridge bagging theme was started by Derek Pyper and Davie Reid who, in August 1960, set off from the Gelder Shiel and climbed Lochnagar by *Eagle Ridge*, Beinn a' Bhuird by *Mitre Ridge* and Ben Macdhui by *Snake Ridge*, afterwards descending to Derry Lodge. The trip took 16½ hours. Not to be outdone, Malcolm McArthur and Sandy Paine added *Sphinx Ridge* (Braeriach) and *Robert's Ridge* (Sgoran Dubh Mor) over a weekend.

The most appealing feature of the expedition was the combination of rock climbing and hillwalking. Though fit enough, neither of us are fell runners so we couldn't hope to match something as fast as the Four Cairngorm Tops. This particular route involved rock climbing at a standard we could manage to solo (just) so we had the best chance of setting a record. The other advantage was that in choosing something new, we had only to succeed in order to set the record. But really we were more interested in doing the ridges than setting the fastest possible time.

Since the outcome was in considerable doubt, we decided to make things as easy as possible for ourselves. We would sleep in the corrie of Lochnagar, choose a date near midsummer and start as early as possible. We discovered later that Pyper and Reid went to the three summits as well as doing the climbs, but the summits had never occurred to us and the last two are a long way off the route. The most crucial factor was that the weather

should be as dry as possible, both for the climbing and the boggy sections in between. We were lucky that the Spring of 1984 was particularly dry so we set the date for the 20th of June and prayed for a dry, calm and not too hot day. Dawn Strickland and Mike Slater, from Marshall's shop in Aberdeen, had offered to bring our sleeping gear down from Lochnagar and collect us from Aviemore (if we got that far!) while Charlie's wife Moira would meet and feed us midway. As the day approached, the weather deteriorated and the forecast was for frequent thundery showers, the first rain for a fortnight. Since rain would be the death knell we decided to postpone for a day, despite the inconvenience. Moira was on night duty and the only possible meeting place was the Hutchison Hut at midday; Mike agreed to wait in Columbridge till eight that evening, so we had the basis of a schedule. Starting *Eagle Ridge* at 4.30 am and allowing half an hour for each climb, Naismith's rule had us at the Hutchison Hut at 2 pm and Coylumbridge at 10.30 pm. Upping the speed to 4½ mph to allow for jogging the downhill changed the times to 11.50 am at the hut and 6.45 pm to finish. This seemed more promising, and with an hour extra for getting tired at the end, we would meet Mike in time. Charlie wasn't so confident!

We arrived at the Glen Muick car park at 10 pm on the Wednesday night; it had clearly been dry all day but now the sunset was threatening with towering, purple-tinged shower clouds. A cold wind was sweeping in drizzle from the west but we had to take our chance on it passing overnight. We kept an even pace up the familiar path to the corrie. It was cold and the daylight limited but we had to carefully conserve the energy stored over the the last two days. The drizzle passed and left us stumbling around the corrie in near darkness looking for the howff among the huge lichenised boulders, with every potential entrance half obscured by deep blaeberry. The howff wasn't where we remembered and it was a relief to find it at midnight. Expecting to hear the patter of rain at any moment I slept without apprehension. Just in case it stayed dry, the alarm was set for three thirty. A strong gust of wind woke me and I was startled to find it clear and daylight outside. Had the alarm failed? Amazingly it was only three o'clock. I knew now that all the preparations were for real; in half an hour the effort would begin. I lay restful but wide awake till the alarm rang. At 3.45 the sun appeared over the horizon and the gentle pink light was a contrast to the cold gusty wind. At four we quit our sleeping bags and hurried off, thankful for the sun as our tracksuit bottoms and teeshirts had seemed somewhat optimistic. Plodding up the boulders towards the route in the first sunshine was reminiscent of the moraine approach to an Alpine route, with anticipation of a long exciting day but without the haunted feeling of hostile

surroundings. Charlie was ahead and with a whoop, held up a nut and two krabs just melted out of the snow.

“Going to keep them?” I asked, thinking how carefully I’d reduced the weight to be carried down to cagoule, PA’s, a bar of chocolate, map and compass only. He seemed surprised at the question as he put them in his sack. We put on PA’s and crossed 30 feet of snow to the first pitch. Last year at this time the corrie was still quite full.

Eagle Ridge was bone dry despite the recent rain. After all the fine weather, the rock was still warm and the sun seemed quite strong for 4.30 am, still shining in underneath a black cloud which had capped the summit. The climbing was enjoyable and effortless; we were obviously well psyched-up. The passage of many crampons had scratched off all the lichen on the key holds and the granite had reverted to its roughest pink. We emerged on to a misty plateau a minute ahead of our allotted half hour, took a quick bearing and headed off for the Sandy Loch. We dropped below the mist very soon and looked down at the slabs of Coire Loch nan Eun. Still unsure of our schedule, it was irritating having to slant down over steep wet ground, and to jog through tussocks and peat hags round the loch, when it was obviously better to have followed the ridge on the right. But it probably cost us no more than ten minutes in time on the way down to the Ballochbuie Forest, though maybe more in energy.

Neither of us had been in the forest before and we expected to get lost. A tiny cairn almost overgrown by heather was the first sign of a small path and a great relief. We jogged gently downhill on cushioning pine needles, then faster as the path became a road. We guessed two junctions correctly and reached Invercauld Bridge in warm sunshine, 25 minutes ahead of schedule on a section where we expected to lose time. We both had aching knees but plenty of energy. The next section, nine miles to the Garbh Choire of Beinn a’ Bhuird was familiar both to us and others who have plodded in to Classic Rock’s most remote routes. Glen Slugain was friendly and pretty as ever and without big packs, the landmarks seemed to pass with amazing speed. I was still on a high and Charlie was worried about burning ourselves out. We cruised out on to the moor with the Beinn a’ Bhuird panorama suddenly in view. Things weren’t so cooperative here; showers were building up in the west and as cagoules were donned, our optimism and energy drained away. The high and low points of the day occurred within an hour.

By the time we reached the Sneck we were wet, pessimistic and struggling to keep the feeling in our fingers. Teeshirts and cagoules were proving insufficient at 3500 feet and we still had to

cross the plateau. Now we were only thinking as far ahead as the Hutchison Hut and a brew. Another shower arrived as we were changing into PA's at the foot of the *Mitre Ridge*. The start was to have been our technically hardest pitch (Hard Severe) but the Cairngorm lichen is so slippery in the wet that even V.Diff. can become VS. We settled for the winter start but even that was looking doubtful as we struggled with numb fingers and hot aches on the initial Moderate traverse. The ridge was a battle of nerve after our casual progress so far. The vegetation, more abundant than I remembered, made itself very obvious as we grovelled about on our knees unwillingly to trust PA's on moss. So too did the long drop into *South-East Gully*, something you tend not to notice till you think about the prospect of experiencing it. Fortunately the rock was beginning to dry at the crux layback corner and afterwards became progressively easier. The final crest was delightful and our spirits rose at the prospect of a long descent to the Hutchison Hut. The route had taken a harrowing 45 minutes but it's amazing how adrenalin will warm the body and dispel tiredness. It was a long easy jog down from the summit of Beinn a' Bhuird, almost floating against a strong headwind. The Western Cairngorms were hidden in thick cloud which was spitting out visibly heavy showers in our direction. Even though the adrenalin was wearing off, we seemed to reach the hut very quickly, 45 minutes ahead of the schedule.

The hut was empty and cold and we had to resist eating our last Mars Bar in case Moira didn't make it. We'd just decided to leave at twelve when she and friend Margaret appeared on the horizon and arrived on time. She made us a most welcome brew and more food than we could eat or even carry. As we gorged ourselves two old friends arrived quite by chance. We promised them a fortune if they could guess which routes we'd done that morning. Not surprisingly, it was a safe bet. Revitalised, we left for Coire Sputan Dearg at 12.35. The rock seemed drier now but just as we arrived at *Snake Ridge*, it rained. This could have been disastrous, as the route is mostly friction work. Scary teetering up a slabby whaleback led to the crux bulge. It was a great relief to find the fierce little layback had been protected from the rain. It still took two tries, the first trying to convince myself it's really only Severe. I'm still not convinced, but better protected parties say yes. Hang upside-down, go for a hidden jug and it's all over. Not so in the wet; the friction slab above was fairly marginal with a totally committing toe-jamming sequence where the best use for your hands was crossing your fingers. It was even worse watching Charlie; he reached the top with staring eyes. And then it snowed!

It was a long way down to the Lairig Ghru, over 2000 feet

with a detour to avoid the boulder fields. It seemed even further back up against a funnelled wind to the Garbh Choire and we needed an unscheduled rest at the wee bothy. The snow patch at the bottom of *Sphinx Ridge* is the most permanent in Britain. *Sphinx* used to be graded "Very Difficult up to July," after which a smooth nose appeared out of the snow and prevented the ascent. In late June there was 500 feet of steepening snow and a mercifully small bergschrund to reach the rock. I chose to climb the snow in PA's rather than running shoes. Just as we reached the rock, again it rained. With my footwear already changed I rushed up the nearest wall, much steeper than it looked, as always. Charlie was too late; the rain was heavy this time and he had to find the proper route, not so easy in the mist. From a series of slimy options, he chose a slimy corner and moaned about it till his foot slipped off just after reaching a jug. That shut him up! Each route was turning out more hair-raising than the last; our battle with time was fast becoming one of survival. The last pitch was horrible; each loose hold had to be unearthed from the grime and moss left by the winter's snow. Charlie was left hopping on a ledge after one of the holds hit him on the foot before plummeting into the mist.

We emerged on to the plateau in driving hailstones at 4.30 pm. It was hard to even look up, let alone navigate. But we hit the path exactly. "Skill or luck?" asked Charlie without faith. We were still in with a chance of making Coylumbridge by eight and belted down out of the mist into Gleann Einich. It was pleasing to meet someone and impress him with our day so far (only when he asked, of course). We crossed the glen, running through the river (it was impossible to get any wetter) and now very tired, struggled up the other side to *Robert's Ridge*. No it didn't rain this time; in fact it didn't seem to have rained at all down here. Instead the first pitch of the route had fallen down and demolished the fine tree which was the key to entering a chimney (also disappeared). Since *Robert's Ridge* is the best route on Sgoran Dubh Mor, it gives you an idea what the rest are like! We almost gave up, till I scrabbled up moving vegetation on the left, then was forced to cross the rockfall scar to rejoin the route. Last time here I quite enjoyed myself. Now every flake and ledge felt dangerous (they probably are) and I gibbered my way up to The Anvil, an unusual flat-topped pinnacle with a hair-raising reverse mantle-shelf down on to a knife-edge ridge to finish. It was six o'clock, and 13 ½ hours from the the foot of *Eagle Ridge*.

It would have been nice to take a seat and contemplate our success, but time was still short with eight miles to go. We started towards Coylumbridge at a run, surprising ourselves that we still could, and met Mike at half past seven.

Despite the original idea, it seems futile to call it a record when circumstances lost us so much time. Anyway, the planning and execution of the trip was sufficiently entertaining without the competitive element. Future aspirants might be advised to make the round longer or harder, not faster. One could add Talisman quite easily, or not so easily, a route on Creag an Dubh Loch or the Shelter Stone Crag. How about a mildish VS version, with *Black Mamba*, *Pinnacle Face*, *Hourglass Buttress*, *Djibangi*, *Grey Slab* and *The Citadel*? Think about it, but don't share your thoughts with Charlie!

Schedule

	<i>Time</i>	<i>Time Elapsed</i>
Eagle Ridge (bottom)	4.30	—
(top)	4.59	0.29
Invercauld Bridge	6.15	1.45
Mitre Ridge (bottom)	9.00	4.30
(top)	9.45	5.15
Hutchison Hut (arr)	11.08	6.38
(dep)	12.35	8.05
Snake Ridge (bottom)	13.20	8.50
(top)	13.40	9.10
Garbh Coire bothy	15.00	10.30
Sphinx Ridge (bottom)	15.50	11.20
(top)	16.30	12.00
Robert's Ridge (bottom)	17.30	13.00
(top)	18.00	13.30
Coylumbridge	19.30	15.00

Total Distance 37 miles, 9000 ft of ascent

'THE WALL'

By Gary Latter

THE FIRST moves come easy, though they should do as I've done them often enough. At about 15' an arm lock provides a rest of sorts, feet bridged wide apart and the first runner is placed — a bombproof hex. in a shallow quartz scoop.

A dip in the chalkbag, ten deep breaths to get the blood pumping the essential oxygen to the muscles, and the previous high point is reached. The moves themselves prove to be not over

technical, but following in rapid succession as they do, trying to rest on 6a moves, place runners, even chalking up becomes a fight against gravity and muscle fatigue. Another 10' or so and a second runner is rather hastily placed. By this time sweat is starting to flow readily and it becomes almost essential to chalk up between almost every single move, such is the finicky nature of the climbing.

Unsure of the last runner placement, or perhaps a lack of the total commitment required on such a hard and sustained route, forces me to 'take a flyer,' though fortunately the runner is a good one and a great deal of relief shows in my face when a possible thirty footer (and near groundfall) turns into a mere slip. A lightning fast lower to the ground, back to the horizontal world and a short rest, both physically and mentally, allows the fingers a chance to straighten out and the heart to slow down to a more realistic rate.

I am confident that I can do the moves, at least up to the half-way point, where the short slanting crack will definitely provide some good nut placements and a comparatively good resting spot. At about 40' a fearful glance downwards sends a shiver up my spine – the last runner has come out, and the result of a ground-fall from this height does not bear thinking about. I decide to go for it, though I get a touch of the shakes on the way, and at one point a fifty-footer looks so close – too close for comfort! After what seems like a million moves (more like a dozen or so), the foot of the crack is eventually reached.

First one Friend is thrown back as far as possible, then another, closely followed by three or four really good nuts. I'm definitely taking no chances now that I've got this far.

I let go of the rock, not caring, knowing that the runners will hold. Once again solid ground is reached and I just 'flake out.' Totally spent, I don't even possess the energy to utter a word! After what seems like an eternity I open my eyes to see the progress that I've made – the ropes thread up the apparently holdless and featureless wall, hanging free about ten feet from the base of the rock. My forearms feel like lumps of lead, and I've lost the feeling in my fingers altogether.

I decide that a good rest is on the cards before I give it another attempt. Recuperating and 'psyching up' for what, for today anyway, has got to be the final attempt, I try to work out in my mind the next series of moves.

I set off again, the moves firmly implanted in the grey matter, together with the presence of chalk on all the proper holds and the added advantage of what is effectively a top rope, making it a real pleasure, a total physical workout, no overloading of the

nerves with the fear of taking a monster fall. Powering up the rock, feeling in complete control, getting all the sequences right, continuing unfaltered, really getting the rhythm going now, a fluid and dynamic approach, pausing only intermittently to ensure a liberal coating of chalk on the fingertips, which by now are sweating profusely.

In no time at all the top runners are reached and easily bypassed, the crack providing a few meaty jams and a welcome rest for the fingers, though the arms still have to do their stuff. A rock-solid stone is slotted in at the top of the crack, but I can't hang about here all day, so with a final dip in the chalkbag, which makes the sweet smell of Friar's Balsam pervade the air, I push on.

The difficulty continues unabated, the rock still as steep and unrelenting as ever, the moves more akin to a climbing wall situation, though somewhat steeper and in a much more compromising position. The sharp knobbly holds are by now starting to shred my fingers to pieces, and I realise I've got to step into overdrive, with no chance of a second try should I mess up the moves or burn out. A distant voice from below urges me on, coming from my patient and ever alert belayer. Not that it makes all that much difference anyway, as I really am determined to get up this route, having put this much effort into it, not to mention months of hard training.

By now I'm looking at a thirty footer, with no runner placements in sight. Should I try to reverse the moves, or bail out? Nah, keep going, nothing to lose. After a particularly hard and problematic section a thin hairline crack appears, something to go for. When I reach this, I find I can't take either of my hands from the rock in order to place a wire or two. A couple of feet more and a comparatively good hold is gained, from which I select a couple of 'tinies' and eventually manage to wangle them into the crack. Psychological runners in the truest sense of the word. They might slow me down but its extremely doubtful if they would hold a fall, even a short one.

Putting such thoughts to the back of my mind and instead concentrating on the rock ahead, I'm really pushing the boat out now, at the limit of my endurance, really can't hold on for much longer. Quickly trying to shake some more blood into my fingertips, I really give it my all. So near and yet so far. Twenty feet of easy though fingery climbing to go. Gasping for a breath of air, I've never done anything as strenuous or sustained as this before, and probably never will. Fast and furious now, not even stopping to chalk up, putting all my energy into getting to the top. Just about there. Hand finally grappling for something to hold on to.

Anything. A large clod of that ubiquitous Scottish heather provides the final and much sought after handhold. A last desperate struggle and I'm up.

COLD FRONT

By R. D. Walton

WHEN THE flames on the bothy fire burn low and the wind noise lessens for a bit, someone is pretty certain to refer to him. When the night is dark and noisy and the gusts of rain or snow come and go, people's thoughts turn from the warmth and company to the contrast with what those who venture outside in the storm may encounter in winter's dark daylight or by night.

There were five of us, in the early years of the war, waiting to go off to the Forces. The winter was long and cold and depressing. It seemed a good idea, when thoughts of Easter arose, to plan something that would get us away from the wartime city drabness and might even be useful. So, after some discussion it was agreed – a walk in the Cairngorms, sleeping 'Out' in the sense of not taking tents but using bothies or shelters. The route was to be Aviemore, Clach Bharraig, Shelter Stone, Corrour, Glen Einich, Aviemore, taking in, we hoped, Cairngorm, Ben Macdui and Braeriach en route.

The afternoon train took us warmly and comfortably to Aviemore. We stepped out to the shock of intense cold and darkness. Snow and ice covered everything. After a few steps from the station the stars were the only lights to be seen. Ice axe points rang on the road. The icy ruts were tricky. We were aware of trees, but torches were too precious to use. There was no moon. The snow on Loch Morlich showed only as a slight greying of the darkness. We left the road and started along the track to Cairngorm. The burns were frozen hard – not a trickle – but the going was rougher and steeper. It was a welcome relief to stagger in to what there was of the pony shelter at Clach Bharraig. It was, of course half full of snow, but the roof was fairly complete and there were only a few gaps in the wall planks. Some heather on the floor, primuses, supper, boots off, sleeping bags and we were soon all quiet.

It had been a bitter cold night – boots like cast iron – a somewhat chilly breakfast and then glimpses of a watery sun over the

hills. We moved slowly up the track on Cairngorm. Hazy high cloud sheet showed that the weather was changing. By the time we reached the cairn it was dull and when we moved on the first glimpse of Loch Avon was dark and gloomy. We sidled down to the right and reached the frozen loch with its wriggly lines of snow. Walking and sliding we got to the end of the loch and made for the Shelter Stone. By now there were light flurries of snow floating gently downwards. Tom was first at the entrance – put down his pack and crawled in. Then a yell and Tom's feet, followed by Tom, shot out again. The inside was again full of snow and the entrance a dim, icy slope. Some snow clearance and a thick layer of heather, then ground sheets made a good start to housewarming, and five bodies, five candles, five primuses soon pushed up the temperature. A tattered notebook indicated that we were the first visitors since the New Year. Five people and five primuses imply a five course meal – more or less – and we were soon comfortably warm and well fed. The wind had risen, but the sounds disturbed us little.

The morning was dull and grey – clouds touched the crags above us. It did not take long to reach Loch Etchachan, smoothly snow covered. We marched straight across it and on to the curving ridge that leads up to the Macdui plateau, and, if you can find it, the cairn. We hoped to do so before going down to Corrour. We were now in the cloud; the wind was rising and the snow was blowing horizontally from the west. Progress became a struggle in a whirling whiteout wilderness. Footsteps disappeared in seconds in the soft blowing snow. A slight easing off warned us that we were near the edge of the Coire Sputan Dearg and should start going west, but still uphill. We put on the rope and strung out. Heads down, into the wind, balaclavas leaving the least possible chinks. Difficult to know if we were still really going up, floundering in the deep soft snow, on and on, – we should be curving to the right, but who could tell? A brief huddle. Retreat.

Definitely easier with the wind behind, but the whiteout is even more treacherous. Kerr was our youngest and lightest and was now leading – I was second and Dick third. Suddenly there was no one in front of me and two almost simultaneous almighty tugs on my rope from in front and behind: Dick was doing his stuff. We pulled Kerr back up over the soft snow edge. It looked grim and black below, but he was in soft snow and had only suffered a rope jerk and swallowed some snow.

Map reading, compass consulting and even rational thought are difficult in a Macdui blizzard, but we were either lucky or good at them. We reckoned we had come back too far to the east.

So we reversed the rope, went back a little west and turned south down the steep slopes towards upper Glen Dee and Corrou. We came out of the blizzard a little upstream from the bothy and were soon crossing the river, stumbling on the ice coated stones in the still running trickles of water. And then we were in the comfort and quiet of Corrou. We were again lucky – there was still some firewood and we were soon drying off and cooking.

It seemed a long time later that we were sitting round the fire, tired but warm and relaxed. A voice came out of the quietness ‘Tell us, Kerr, what made you go over the edge instead of looking where you were going?’

A long pause. Kerr spoke slowly, as if still a bit dazed –

‘I think – I – the man in front was waving me on –’

‘The man in front was waving you on?’

‘Yes’

‘What was he like’

Another long pause.

‘He was big – and dark – and he waved his arms to me –’

Quite suddenly Kerr came to – ‘but I was the first on the rope!!’

Next morning a stocktaking of provisions and the weather suggested that two further days over Braeriach to Glen Einich and out to Aviemore would be too much. Discretion prevailed. We toiled up and over the Lairig in more driving snow and wind, glad to come down to the comparative calm of Rothiemurchus and grateful for the relief of food and drink in the hotel at Aviemore.

They say round the bothy fires in the winter evenings that when the Grey Man has picked his victim he does not readily relinquish him.

Kerr became an air gunner in the R.A.F. He was stationed at Dyce. His squadron was sent, with many others, on a bombing mission to north Germany. During the night a cold front moved east with unexpected speed, swept down from the Cairngorms and out over the North Sea. It met the returning planes struggling back, some damaged, some short of fuel. The deadly weight of ice from the glazed frost of the cold front finished off many of them. The icy fingers of the Grey Man have a long reach: Kerr was in one of the planes that did not return.



ROUHA FROM SPANNA. JOHN MITCHELL 1985.

IN SEARCH OF 'A REAL CLIMBER'

By D. F. Cassidy

An apocryphal tale of one man's quest of the ultimate

ALTHOUGH the symptoms had manifested themselves sporadically over the years the infection really took hold about four years ago. Then he started rock climbing and caught what he firmly believed to be the scent. His wife knew, before they married, that he occasionally went off to the hills and bashed a man called Munro. This was different. He might bash himself. Still, as long as he didn't bash her let him get on with it.

He was a man of purpose, our hero, an anthropologist. Searching for that most elusive of the human species. 'A Real Climber.' His name was Don and it was a source of delight to him to reflect on the happy coincidence which had blessed him with the same Christian name as legendary figures such as Don Whillans and that other chap of whom he had sometimes read, Don Fawcett. The similarity in name was bound to lead in time to consideration also of the similarity in ability, technique and tenacity. Don was certainly tenacious but his was a tenacity and style more reminiscent of Don Quixote. Thus he has come to be known simply as The Don.

Just as Don Quixote had his Sancho Pansa so our hero found his in C.M.C. C.M.C. is not to be confused with the S.M.C., the B.M.C., or any other similarly august body. Indeed, the Don often wished that C.M.C. was a more substantial body, the disparity in their weights being of particular concern to the Don on his occasional (sic) trips into outer space. Having grasped, as they thought, sufficient of the rudiments, they visited that gnarled old sentinel of Glencoe, Buachaille Etive Mor. Its scabby flank loomed awesome and intimidating. Crowberry Tower, Rannoch Wall et al rose up in challenge from W. H. Murray's famous pages. Just looking at the hill the Don had to swallow every so often to keep back that subtle bubbling blend of excitement and fear to which he is now addicted. Of course, then most of his swallowing was misdirected as they found it impossible to reconcile the picture in the guide with the hill before them.

The guide was old certainly, W. H. Murray's first edition, but unless the forces natural and geological had negotiated some new productivity deal with Mother Nature it seemed unlikely that the topography should have been so radically distorted in the time available. They now know that had they been sat in the

car park above Jacksonville instead of on the Glen Etive road, all might have made sense. But then. Well then they were green. Embarrassingly green. Greener than the cover of that guide which was in truth rather faded. The route planned was the *North Face Route*. They had been going to rely on the description in *Classic Rock* borrowed from the local Library but then C.M.C. had remembered an old friend who he thought had once been a climber. They went to see him. The Don was immediately cast under the spell of this sage, a veteran of a bygone era when men were men and 6a was the number of the tram to Govan Cross. How the Sage had lovingly fingered that battered volume, his voice thrilling to recite the names; *Satan's Slit*, *Shattered Crack*. The Don was enthralled, understanding little but imagining much. He felt sure that this man would give him some clues that would put him on the right trail. His heart beat a little faster as he visualised himself closing on his quarry. Perhaps the Sage was once himself a Real Climber. He was obviously no longer active but at least a stuffed specimen helps you identify the live animal when you see it. C.M.C. set himself the practical task of getting them out of the house with the guide, as politely as possible. It was clear to him that as well as enjoying the opportunity to recall his climbing days the Sage was understandably concerned for the safety of his beloved guide. The Sage, being a sage, had for his part perceived that their ineptitude would expose it to considerable risk. Still they were bound to do most damage to themselves. He had many epics to tell but let them go, if their rope stretched that far, they would be repaid in kind by some future generation. Anyway, the Police were sure to return his guide if the worst came to the worst.

On the Glen Etive road the windows of the car were soon as steamed up as the occupants as they tried to resolve the contradiction between sketch and hill. The Don finally pronounced that it was all due to a trick of the light caused by the peculiar qualities of the mist in these Northern parts. This mist was presently flirting about the 3,000 feet level and The Don was, as we shall shortly learn, to have ample opportunity to study it at close quarters and 'in depth.'

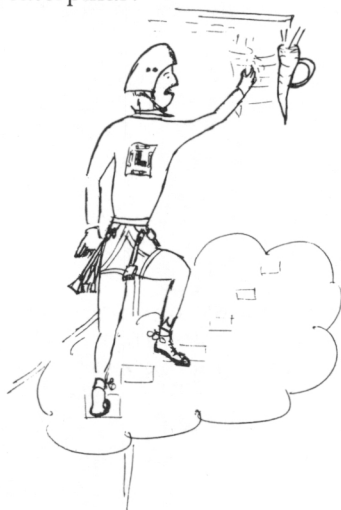
C.M.C. set about looking for a path. The Don quickly lost his patience. He would have none of it. No. Absolutely no. He fairly stamped his foot in rage. This was to be a *direttissima*. The route was on Central Buttress. There was the hill. Fix your eye on the centre and go for it. Simple.

Of all mixed routes the *direttissima* over mixed bog, scree and heather being the most difficult, it was later, much later, after endless toiling, traversing, countless consultations, contem-

plations and comparisons of guide and crag that C.M.C. spotted a yellow helmet. The Don, who had for some time past been sunk in sullen reverie, sprang to life. Yes, a helmet and, what was more, underneath the helmet a figure. Sure enough a tell tale coloured strand led down to another whom they approached and ascertained that he, with his companion, was engaged in climbing the *North Face Route*. O happy day!

It might be thought that our story was ended here. Surely the Don had now found the beast he sought. But no. He was not convinced. True, there was a certain superficial resemblance, the little rubber boots, harness, helmet and other accoutrements. And yet for all that there was something missing. The Don knew this. Knew it instinctively. His quest was like the hunt for the Yeti. Most people doubt the existence of the creature but those that possess the necessary mental attributes for belief are able to pronounce on its dimensions, eating habits and shoe size with a conviction usually found only in politicians. Thus the Don denounced the specimen before him as a mere cardboard cut out, like the character in the Peter Foulweather ads.

In fairness to the climber he had been standing there a long time. This was the Don's first taste of Caterpillar climbing. A chain of climbers form on a route and movement is observed to pass in ripples down the several sections of the composite body. Occasionally it concertinas and then the head lurches forward as sheer pressure of bodies on the belay below forces the leader upwards (the crux). The Don and C.M.C. formed the tail end of this particular caterpillar.



'The Jug Handle Pitch'

The climb itself was fairly uneventful except for a farcical little episode when The Don started treadmilling on an easy angled slab leading to a short wall somewhere in the mist above Heather Ledge. It had started to rain and the slab had become rather greasy. In his innocence, The Don had, in good faith, placed his right boot on the slab. It slipped, so he brought his left one in to replace it. It in turn slipped. In came the right. The left. The right. What had started as a walk and turned into a canter was rapidly deteriorating to a gallop. The Don's panting eventually transmitted itself to C.M.C. who, after careful assessment of the situation, concluded that his friend required assistance. Accordingly, he gave an almighty heave which plucked the Don off the slab, up the wall and onto the stance. 'Farce is a cruel thing to those engaged in it.' The Don, far from being grateful to his friend, felt doubly wronged. He rounded on C.M.C. and berated him for (a) not perceiving his predicament sooner and (b) pulling so hard that he had nearly split the Don in two. The Don did not possess a sit harness at this time and the yank had imposed severe restrictions on the dimensions of his waist. C.M.C. denied that he had been anything less than vigilant at all times. As a conciliatory gesture he was prepared to concede that in his concern for the Don's safety he might have been over zealous in his hauling. He solemnly undertook to be less so in future. The Don eyed him suspiciously and was not placated.

If there were any Real Climbers around that day it was impossible to spot them in the mist. The Don, refusing to accept defeat, spent some time crawling round on his hand and knees in search of some trace. Finally they fell into D Gully and dropped out the bottom in the early hours of next morning.

Perhaps a year later they were up on the East face of North Buttress doing some sprint training. The Don had the idea that they needed to move faster to have any hope of catching a Real Climber. Up *Crow's Nest*. Up *Hangmans*. Down. Up *Brevity*. Up *Garrotte*. Down. Eventually they ended up *Shattered*. During a brief lull in these proceedings the Don had entered into conversation with a passing climber called Jack. (An unfortunate name for a climber really. Jack, you will recall, is the one who fell down and broke his crown). Jack told the Don that he was on his way round to Slime Wall to watch two friends who were climbing there.

Slime Wall. The name alone made the palms sweat. Must be a dank forbidding hole. They were better off where they were in the sunshine. However, that chance meeting set the Don thinking. Perhaps Slime Wall might be where he would find a Real Climber. It takes more bottle to climb in dank forbidding holes. The theory seemed to receive some support when The Don

read J. H. B. Bell's much maligned dictum that 'any fool could climb sound rock. It took skill, cunning and guile to climb loose and vegetatious schist.' The Don resolved to reconnoitre Slime Wall.

Sometime later they viewed it from *Great Gully Buttress*. It did not look at all vegetatious. As clean as a whistle in fact. That was the problem. It was cleaned too regularly. Water sluiced down every feature of the bottom section. Where on earth did the routes go? They were persuaded to search elsewhere for a while.

Gradually, by degrees, they were drawn back. In mid May they trailed up to *Great Gully* and stood in the chilling shadow of the Wall. Winter's grasp still lingered there in a great finger of snow wedged in the gully bed. It was cold. The sweat from the walk in soon turned to chilling damp. Very cold. They crept up the left side of the Wall by *Bludgers Revelation* and tiptoed round the Revelation Flake. For all their stealth, the Don did not track down his quarry that day but he felt he was getting closer.

Afterwards and at a suitably safe distance he stated his intention to return and try a more direct line. The obvious line. *Shibboleth*. So it was that they came once more to Buachaille Etive Mor, now a familiar crusty friend. It had perhaps grown a little smaller with age. Perspectives changed with time, experience. Respect deepened for time served. Each ridge and gully had their proper name. They knew exactly where they were headed and how to get there. That much had changed since their first visit but the sky was grey as it had been then. Mist hovered disconcertingly around the top of Crowberry Tower. The Don having read Judges Chapter 12 had taken the precaution of practising his pronunciation.

In *Great Gully*, no need to debate where the route was. The famous groove of the second pitch is etched in black. The trick is to know whether the etching is damp, wet or in spate. They did not have the experience to discriminate. To the Don it seemed to have a decided glisten. C.M.C. was not in the least concerned. He was not leading the second pitch. He had, of course, an interest to see that the effort expended in humping the gear up to the Wall should not be for nothing but in consideration for his friend he kept this to himself as much as possible. He calmly supped his tea while The Don fretfully scrambled up and down the edge of *Cuneiform Buttress*, trying to discern just how wet it was; tactfully concurred with his companion's observations that the groove had a certain sheen and was, in short, no help at all. The Don felt drops of water. C.M.C. also felt them. Was it rain or merely moisture from the face? Was one any better than the other?



August 1984

Bruce Kerr on the Sword, Carnmore Crag

Photo: Grahame Nicoll



Argu-t 1984

Photo: Grahame Nicoll

Bruce Kerr on Balaton, Carnmore Crag

What to do? Certainly from higher up the edge of *Cuneiform* the groove seemed less like an oozing sore. Sounds of footsteps in the *Gully*. Another two climbers toiling up. The scales tip. If there were any real climbers up there the Don wanted to be first on the route. He voiced it quickly, softly. They would have a look. In such inconsequential moments is catastrophe conceived.

Halfway up the second pitch the Don decided he didn't like what he was looking at. Just above him, about level with the top of his head, was what looked like a Cloggy No. 2. In years past, leaders chancing upon it in its virgin state would have clipped in gratefully, enchanted. Alas no longer; its allure had long since faded. The nut remained, tarnished brown and haggard, but in its corruption the more obstinately wedged. The wire however, hung like some aged, faithless harlot on one side by its last strands. An odious thing, it still beckoned but its depravity being now unconcealed, sense recoiled.

The first pitch had been a scrambling imprecision, as for *Guerdon Grooves*, *Apocalypse*, etc. Then the crack at the start of the second pitch had been easy enough – damp perhaps but a runner at the top had made the thought of the traverse left across that nasty blackness less committing. He was just having a look after all. Across on the other side of the Wall the moves up to the groove looked positively wet but edging up and right he spied a peg. Closer acquaintance, unfortunately, only confirmed his initial suspicions. It was an excellent example of its type. Unfortunately, its type was the rotten rusty type. The circumference of the eye defined by the most delicate rim of corrosion. It would not tolerate abuse. The Don threaded a sling and hoped.

The dampness readings were a continuing source of concern. To avoid the horror of stepping in certain of the larger puddles, he had a brief affair with the wall to the right of the groove. He got hold of a good flake out there and hung while he tried to dry each foot in turn on the calf of the opposite leg. There was a mounting pressure on the bottle as he realised this was a position of some strain. To avoid the cork blowing off, he was obliged to swing back into the groove. The left boot landed in the puddle. Splash.

So now here he was. The aged faithless harlot before him and his foot in a paddling pool. Caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. A runner of his own improved the view upwards and reduced the depth of water below. The only thing was that to make progress he decided he had to have his right foot where his left one was. Splash. Wipe the left boot again. Move up and try to do the same with the right. Eventually on to a small ledge and there is another peg, a much healthier specimen altogether.

The length of the pitch given in the guidebook being totally inaccurate, it took a little time before the ledge with the peg was correctly identified to be the recognised stance.

C.M.C. led through to the Revelation Flake on the third pitch. The climbing was easier but still demanded concentration. The Don felt slightly betrayed when at the top of the groove he was tempted to come straight across to the stance. He believes this is none too easy but then he has a capacity to make a fuss over the simplest things. Anyway, he had no time to dwell on the matter. Ahead of him lay the jug-handle pitch.

A pitch described by reference to one hold, naturally excites, at least in those sufficiently discerning, a certain disquiet as to the proportions and indeed existence of other holds. In those less perceptive the donkey syndrome comes into operation 'The hold' becomes 'a carrot.' The Don(key), therefore, peeped round from the belay in search of his carrot. He pulled back quickly. Not a sign. He had very definite ideas about the size of carrot he deserved and he was dismayed to say the least. A nascent frown, preceding tears, was dispelled when he recalled he had seen 'a small roof.' Another peep round for confirmation. Yes, 'a small roof.' The guide book said the jug handle was under a small roof. So. So it must be so. The guide book said so. So up he went.

Two feet from the stance he could place as many runners as he wanted around the Revelation Flake. C.M.C. mindful that he was belayed below it reminded him that the Flake resounded like a dinner gong. The Don countered by reasoning this a distinct bonus. The Rescue boys would here of a fall before it was intimated in the S.M.C. Journal. He placed his runner. Leading diagonally up in the direction of the small roof he imagined he saw a faint line of weakness. Unfortunately, his imagination could not stretch the line fully to the roof. Seeking reassurance and encouragement he told C.M.C. of this line of weakness. Out of sight on the belay, C.M.C. allowed his eyes to follow his eyebrows to follow his head skywards as he thought 'Here we go again. Playing at real climbers.' The effort of restraining himself from telling the Don where exactly his weakness was did not allow him to give anything more than a grunt by way of acknowledgment. Nevertheless, the Don started trending left to right up his figment in pursuit of the carrot. The holds sloped left to right in sympathy. There was no runner to improve their dimensions nor any sign yet of that jug-handle but he was now committed to his illusion.

He had set out with expectations exceeding those of a little boy on Christmas morning. In his dreams the jug had assumed fantastic proportions. He saw himself embracing it, even crawling

inside a little hole at the back but he was now a lot nearer the roof and still there was no sign of it. He was just beginning to doubt the existence of Santa when he was reproved by a loop of rope wagging at him just where his imagination ended. His affections were diverted momentarily from the jug. However, when he got to the rope he found that Santa had a sense of humour. The rope was not as he had reasonably hoped attached to a peg or a chock. It had instead with inordinate patience been threaded through a crack, tied off and jammed by the knot. This was a legacy of a craft long since overtaken and abandoned on the motor-way of progress by the hardware revolution and micro-chock technology. The Don was unable, for the moment, to appreciate it for its historical worth. Conscious only of its limited value as a runner, he clipped it to the relic. It was the only thing on offer. Although he did not have the means to test he doubted if micro-chock technology could provide anything better.

He was now at the end of his line but he was rewarded for the effort of a step right by some positive holds which grew to a crescendo as he reached the jug under the roof. It was not the jug of fantasy but that no longer mattered. There were plenty more of generous size about. A solid runner under the roof and his joy was unconfined. His exuberance carried him straight over the roof and joy upon joy, there not fifteen feet ahead was the belay peg. Belief in Santa was firmly re-established.

The roof above the belay was pummelled flat like the brow of a boxer so that it hardly resembled a roof. Likewise the corner at the start of the next pitch and above the terminal pitches ran together indiscriminately until they spilled quite unexpectedly on to the top. The Don was plenty chuffed. He was convinced this was the nearest he had yet come to 'A Real Climber.' Ecstatic and quite delirious he skipped off in the direction of Raven's. C.M.C. shook his head patiently, slowly coiled the rope and made after him before he did himself too much damage. Of course, the Don was deluded. It was over twenty five years, a quarter of a century, since the Real Climbers passed that way. But if you ever follow them remember to tip your hat to Robin Smith.



'FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA!'

By Iain A. Robertson

THE IDEA that had gestated in my mind was of a high-level walk across Scotland, from the easternmost extremity to the westernmost extremity. This general proposition allows for considerable variation in the route that might be chosen, and in my case it was purely idiosyncratic involving those hills and passes for which I had a personal preference. It was certainly not the most direct route, nor that incorporating most Munros, nor any other specific criteria. The scope for singularity in such enterprises is great and forms one of the attractions, both in planning and execution. The starting and finishing points were, however, immutable – the lighthouses of Buchan Ness and Ardnamurchan. I had originally expected to do the trip solo, but John Rogers volunteered to accompany me, which, as well as providing welcome companionship, probably stiffened the resolve to see the project accomplished. Although travelling together, we were each self-sufficient in terms of food, tent and other equipment. Members of our respective families had agreed to bring supplies of food and clean clothes to convenient points where our route crossed arterial roads, and so we did not have to carry more than five day's food at any one time. That we did the trip in 1983 during what the newspapers subsequently described as 'the warmest July for 300 years,' was entirely fortuitous.

The first of the chosen hills was Bennachie; and I had decided that the most interesting way of getting to it from Buchan Ness would be to follow the coast south to the estuary of the Ythan, and from there strike inland. Thus the first two days involved no 'high-level' at all, though they were not without interest. On the day that we set out there was a haar, and we were pursued down the coast by the boom of the Buchan Ness foghorn. The haar rendered the Bullers of Buchan invisible, but if anything, enhanced the Gothic atmosphere surrounding Slains Castle. The sun was dispersing the fog by the time that we reached the Sands of Forvie nature reserve so that we had some opportunity to view the wildlife. It is an area of dunes and tussocks, not unattractive, and quite different from anywhere else we passed through during the trip. The second day was entirely on metalled roads; from Newburgh to Chapel of Garioch, and the sun beat down mercilessly all the day. In the late morning, Pitmedden House provided garden seats and orange squash – I have a vague recollection of flowers in a formal garden as well. Back on the road, the book that I was reading was in danger of turning to pulp as drops of perspiration rained down

on it. At mid-afternoon the 'Oldmeldrum Arms' emerged from the haze; we approached it with the single-mindedness of desert travellers approaching an oasis, not even a plaque to the memory of a native of Oldmeldrum, described thereon as 'the father of tropical medicine,' could detain us. The barman stood at the door watching our approach with passive gaze.

'Are you open?' we croaked.

'Naw, we're closed,' he said.

Then, perhaps sensing our desperation;

'Oh, but I'll gie ye a drink though.'

We ordered four pints straight off. Inquiries at Chapel of Garioch resulted in the offer of a campsite in the grounds of Pittodrie House, 'just vacated by the Rhynie girl guides.' During that evening there was satisfaction in gazing at the distinctive outline of the Mither Tap of Bennachie rising beyond the trees that verged on our campsite, for the Lowlands of Buchan were now behind us and the start of the 'high-level' walk proper was at hand.

The next morning the weather was a repetition of that of the previous day – hot and hazy. Although not the highest top of Bennachie, the Mither Tap is the dominant one, and as we approached it over heathery slopes, the bulk of the great tor and the surrounding fortifications became more impressive. Though lacking the altitude to be in one of the canons of 'the collectable mountains,' yet it was quite worthy of being the first hill of the trip. After a pause on the summit during which we could distinguish little about us through the haze, we continued our traverse of Bennachie by the less frequented Oxen Craig and Watch Craig, and then descended for another road section from Keig to Montgarrie. Of the two Keig was the more interesting as it had (a) a licensed grocer, and (b) topless sunbathers. Beyond Montgarrie are the Correen Hills, of which Lord Arthur's Cairn is the highest. The whole area has a network of farm roads and other tracks, and at about 1100 feet, just beyond the last farm, we set up camp for the night. That evening the weather had turned thundery, and there was much rumbling among the hills further to the west, but we escaped with a shower of rain that lasted a mere half hour – the only rain we had until the trip was completed. The rain cleared the atmosphere, and the rest of the night was calm and still with only the faintest murmurs of civilisation drifting up from the Howe of Alford below. The only other sounds audible were the calls of curlews, peewits and oyster-catchers.

The next morning we followed a track the mile or so that led to the top – where there is indeed a large cairn – then across further moorland through an enormous colony of gulls and so down to the village of Lumsden. The Ladder Hills beyond Lums-

den do not feature prominently in Scottish mountaineering literature; this is not surprising as their charm probably lies more in the glens that give access to them than in the hills themselves. However, for our purposes they provided the highest level route to the main Cairngorms lying west beyond the Lecht. Forming as they do the watershed between those rivers such as the Deveron which flows north into the Moray Firth, and the Don which flows east into the North Sea, the Ladder Hills provide in clear weather pleasant views over the 'whisky glens' and beyond to distract one from the rather tiresome going, consisting largely of deep heather interspersed with deeper peat hags. As we were not blessed with clear weather, I will comment no further apart from observing that for country so apparently devoted to the shooting of grouse, there were remarkably few to be seen. The gulls we saw in the colony on Lord Arthur's Cairn must have outnumbered the grouse we saw on both the Correen and Ladder Hills by several thousand to one.

The Lecht and Cock Bridge were reached on the afternoon of the fifth day, and a telephone call that evening ensured that food and clean clothing were delivered to us on the following day. By the time that this was accomplished it was mid-afternoon, and so we confined ourselves to walking the seven miles or so over into Glen Avon where we camped on the bank of the river beneath the northern corries of Ben Avon. As the guidebook notes, the northern face of the mountain is the finest. The next morning we selected the ridge that forms the east side of the corrie containing Lochan nan Gabhar – one of the green coloured lochans characteristics of the Cairngorms – for our ascent to the plateau. This ridge proved a good viewpoint from which to see the adjacent corries, and it had a discontinuous spine of granite outcrops which one could wander over or around according to one's whim. The day was both cooler and clearer and from the plateau we could look back over the country that we had traversed as far as the Buck above Lumsden, as well as viewing the hills to the south from Lochnagar to Beinn A'Ghlo. The descent to the Sneck showed the extent of the snow remaining in the corries of Beinn A'Bhuird; then, as we walked west over Beinn A'Bhuird and the Moine Bhealaidh, we had before us the panorama of the main Cairngorm plateau, stretching from Derry Cairngorm to Bynack More. As the fitful sun of the morning had given way to an afternoon of continuous sun, we opted to camp that evening by Loch Etchachan, the highest campsite of the trip. It was also one of the stillest nights, the wind dropping almost entirely, but the morning dawned with most of the tops shrouded in mist. This put paid to a tentative plan to diverge from the planned route to take in the four 'four-thousanders,' and so from the top of Ben Macdui we dropped

down into the Lairig Ghru by the spur that is marked by a cairn in memory of the crew of an Anson aircraft that crashed there in August 1942. A steepish descent over boulders concentrates the mind when one is carrying a large pack, the normal adjustments to balance are just not enough, as we both discovered. The rescent up on to Cairn Toul and into the mist again was also something of a grind, albeit for different reasons. The requirement for 'high-level' meant that we next had to head toward Gaick, and so our route off Cairn Toul was down by Loch nan Stuirteag – gulls audible but not visible – over Monadh Mor and down to the Feshie/Geldie watershed where we set up camp.

After the grandeur of the main Cairngorms, the hills of Gaick seemed somewhat pedestrian. However, on the next day the weather was a quite remarkable combination of sunshine and clear atmosphere. Specifically, my route for that day was: An Sgarsoch, Carn Ealer, Beinn Bhreac and Leathad an Taobhainn, which meant I was virtually skirting that upper section of the Feshie where it flows easterly, then north-easterly before turning back upon itself to flow eventually into the Spey. As I tramped my way over an unending succession of peat hags, I was rewarded with a constant backdrop of the Cairngorms, while to the south the Perthshire hills could be seen to their termination above Rannoch Moor, with Ben Cruachan distinct beyond the Moor. Further round; the Ben Alder group Creag Meagaidh and the Monadhliaths completed the horizon. Also, in almost continuous succession herds of red deer came into view, paused, and then trotted off. The last part of the day, after crossing the line of the Minigaig near its highest point, involved a descent to Gaick Lodge by the glen of the Allt Gharbh Ghaig, a spectacular gorge with a stalkers track gouged out of its wall. John had been off on his own that day doing some of the Atholl hills farther to the south, and when we met up in the evening he claimed to have been talking with a female ghillie in a bikini. As well as being a contradiction in terms, I felt that this may have been a riposte to my topless sunbathers at Keig whom John had failed to spot, being too deeply engrossed in his book. Sometime during this, the ninth day of the trip, we passed the half-way point in our journey.

The next day was a short one, ten miles or so to Dalwhinnie for food and clean clothes. Gaick Lodge by Loch an t-Seilich is hemmed in by slopes which rise with uniform steepness to the surrounding plateau. Our route followed one of the many stalker tracks that radiate from the lodge. We zig-zagged interminably upward until at last we reached the high ground where we crossed over a hump graced with the name A'Mhairconnaich, and so down to the aqueduct from Loch Cuaich that led us gently to Dalwhinnie. As at Cock Bridge, we dined that evening at a hotel.

Eating during the trip consisted of four or five days of dehydrated foods prepared individually in camp, interspersed with some excellent meals enjoyed at hotels adjacent to the replenishing points. We did not, however, stay in any of the hotels, sleeping in the tents every night until the trip was completed.

A late morning start from Dalwhinnie allowed another shortish day. The requirement of 'high-level' took us along the ridge of the Fara which provides a delightfully airy walk down the west side of Loch Ericht. The weather, although not sunny, was quite clear and we had the opportunity to inspect our route for the following day beyond Loch Pattack, as well as looking down the length of Loch Ericht. It was on the Fara that we met two Austrian youths, one wearing green wellies, making their way across country from Kinlochleven to Dalwhinnie. We later discovered that they had been nonplussed to find no resident warden or food for sale at the Culra Bothy. That evening we camped beside the path to the Bealach Dubh, just beneath the Lancet Edge, which, though not the termination of the ridge that lies to the north of the Bealach Dubh, is its most interesting means of access. That evening we met a geologist, camping nearby, who was engaged in preparing a geological map of the area. He told us a tale about a helicopter that had been engaged by the Ordnance Survey to lift a load of sand and cement to the top of Ben Alder. On the appointed day, however, the helicopter had gone adrift in the mist and the load had been deposited on a sub-top of Ben Alder at some distance from the actual top. Could it be that the pilot did not have an accurate map?

The next morning the tops disappeared into the cloud, so that the Lancet Edge, Geal Charn, Aonach Mor and Beinn Eibhinn were a navigational exercise – more successful than that of the Ordnance Survey helicopter. After descending to the Uisge Labhair, we re-ascended on the south side to take in Sgor Gaibhre and Carn Dearg to the south-east of Loch Ossian. By the afternoon the cloud had lifted from these tops and we had limited views to Rannoch, though the higher hills remained shrouded. We then descended to Loch Ossian near the youth hostel, walking on from there to erect the tents on 'the road to the Isles' just beyond Corrour Station. That evening, as a purely extra-curricular activity, we climbed Leum Uilleim which rises from the moors south-west of Corrour Station.

The next two days, which were to see us to Fort William, provided quite outstanding weather conditions. On both the sun shone from an almost cloudless sky, and the visibility was such that the view was bounded only by the ultimate horizon. To have such weather conditions on what were probably the most scenic

ally spectacular sections of the trip was indeed fortunate. To start with there was the walk to the foot of the Grey Corries. The descent from Corrour Station to Lochtreighead presents varied and unfamiliar views of the Mamores, Ben Nevis and the Aonachs. From Creaguaineach Lodge, the start to the Lairig Leacach is unusual in that, for the first half mile or so, it is confined within a rocky gully, almost a dry gorge. Thereafter, the glen opens out and the path proceeds by the Allt na Lairige, which has many fine pools and waterfalls. A strong urge to stop for a swim was kept in check by the incessant attention of clegs which infested the glen.

The Grey Corries brought a difference of opinion within the party. John went for Stob Ban as the Munro outlier, while I preferred the true eastern termination of the ridge at Stob Coire na Ceannain. This latter is a narrow ridge enclosing a south-east facing corrie and it makes a pleasant ascent. The party united again on Stob Choire Claurigh and the rest of the day was taken up with the magnificent traverse of the Grey Corries. The ridge itself is set off on either side by fine corries and subsidiary ridges, but on this particular day it seemed as if the better part of all Scotland's mountains were on view. From the perfect detail of the Mamores across Glen Nevis to the far hump of Ben Wyvis; from Wester Ross to Perthshire, an army of hills was ranged for our inspection, upstanding and outstanding – a memorable sight. The late afternoon found us at the col that separates the Grey Corries from the Aonachs, and here we set up camp. That night there was an almost-full moon which hung over the Mamores, illuminating them splendidly and throwing shadows across the face of the Aonach Beag immediately above our tents.

The next morning our approach to Aonach Beag was dictated by the necessity to avoid the snow patches that still filled some of the deeper gullies. But once on the southern shoulder of the mountain we tramped up the rim of the eastern corrie, surely as wild and remote a fastness as any in the Highlands. The particularly bald and mossy summit brought the full extent of Ben Nevis into view, dominating the landscape both by its bulk and its grandeur. A quick detour to Aonach Mor (this was one of the few occasions when we were able to dump the sacks), and then a descent on steep grass to the foot of the east ridge of Carn Mor Dearg, where fortunately we came upon a spring. The day was almost without wind, and on the successive re-ascents I confess that the heat was really getting to me despite my Downs-type sunhat (a knotted handkerchief). On the Carn Mor Dearg Arete we met a garrulous gentleman from Worcestershire who enthused that, 'all this was much superior to the Malverns.' When I at last hauled my sack on to the summit of Ben Nevis, I found it quite thronged. The

world and his wife and bairns disported themselves in the scantiest of summer clothing, consuming gallons of fizzy drinks, and generally congratulating themselves on having reached Britain's highest summit – which they were well entitled to do considering the heat and the condition of some of the upper stages of the tourist track. That evening we booked into the Glen Nevis campsite and enjoyed our first shower for fourteen days, Fort William being reached on the fourteenth day of the trip.

The requirements of 'high-level' should have led to a crossing of the Corran Ferry, or a hike over the moors to the north of Loch Eil. But I had hills that I particularly wanted to climb on the west side of Loch Shiel, which precluded the former, and I could see little merit in the latter; and so the next day, after further supplies had been delivered, we took the road to Glenfinnan. No more need be written of this walk, save that we only reached the end of Loch Eil that day, and did the further five miles to Glenfinnan as a preliminary to the next day. This marked another parting of the ways as John planned a more extensive traverse than I, and I also wished to fulfil a long-held ambition to visit Glen Aladale.

The day was sunless, though by no means cold when I reached Glenfinnan. The route on to Beinn Odhar Mhor and Beinn Odhar Bheag beyond it is less than obvious, involving 'down' as well as 'up'; however, they are both hills of character and they command good views over and beyond Loch Shiel. The prospect to the west that day was obscured by cloud. The next hill, Beinn Mhic Cedidh has had fame thrust upon it by its recent elevation to Corbett status. The cairn is as yet minute, but it will no doubt grow with the visits of the faithful. My two Corbett stint for the day completed, I descended over grassy slopes into Glen Aladale where I pitched my tent by the burn some two miles up from Loch Shiel. The glen is a quiet place, difficult of access except by boat down the loch, and given over to forestry, though not all the ground is planted. It appeared very little visited as the path was quite overgrown when I walked down in the evening to Glenaladale House which stands deserted. The glen has the genuine feeling of remoteness, and I was glad to have passed that way.

The next day was the last among the hills. I climbed over the Bealach of Coire Mhoir and down Glen Glutanen to the Bealach na Lice, and from there down Glen Moidart to Assary where I met up again with John. The glens Glutanen and Moidart are really one glen, but they are constricted at the Bealach na Lice by a narrow gorge which, like a wasp-waist, divides the whole into two parts. In upper Glen Moidart there are the extensive ruins of the old settlement of Ulgary. Although upper Glen Moi-

dart is mountain country, the scenery becomes more lush as one descends to sea level and the lower portion of the glen is dense with rhododendrons. There followed a road section to Acharacle, where we left the main road which continues along the south side of Ardnamurchan peninsula, to follow the track along the north coast. That evening we reached Gortanfern on the track to Ockle; part of this track is being improved to 'forestry road' standard. Gortanfern was the most midge-infested campsite of the entire trip, which ensured a quick getaway the following morning.

Ardnamurchan, despite considerable encroachment by the tourist industry, retains much character, and this is probably best seen along the less-frequented north coast. The last section of the track before Ockle is like a transplanted stalkers track winding among the low hills. After Ockle one is in almost continuous sight of the sea, but the weather that day was again dull and hazy, and the furthest we could see was the outline of the island of Muck to the north. That part of the route from Swordle through Kilmory to Faskadale, where there is a fishing station, is metalled road. Beyond Faskadale there is a marked path across what was, during a previous geological age, the roots of a volcano, which explains the many outcrops of gabbro in the area. From Glendrian we took the path to Altnaha, and from there positively the last ascent of the trip over the Bealach Ruadh – all of 400 feet high – to Achnasaich and the final two miles of road to the Ardnamurchan lighthouse. The very minute that we reached the lighthouse it started to rain. Thus ended our trans-Scotland walk.

Any feelings of achievement were perhaps slightly diminished by the knowledge that we still had a further six miles to walk back to Kilchoan. But there was certainly a feeling of satisfaction; we both grin broadly from the photograph that we had taken standing in the rain in front of the lighthouse, and I even managed to persuade John that we should take bed and breakfast that evening. Then there was the bottle of wine that we had with our dinner at the Kilchoan Hotel, so we must have been feeling good. I do not seek to proselytize, but there is much to be said for being free to take off to the hills and keep on going without the necessity of returning to a car, hut, camp or whatever. It is a different facet of the mountain experience, and it allows even the most familiar hills to assume a fresh role as links in an extended chain of mountain episodes.

The statistics of the trip in round figures: 250 miles, 42,000 feet of climbing and eighteen days from lighthouse to lighthouse.

IN THE FIRING LINE ON MONT GRUETTA

By Sandy Allan

INDOLENTLY dossing in Chamonix, we required something to revive our neglected bodies. Mark suggested the north face of Mont Gruetta and my mind flicked back through pages of old Alpine Climbing bulletins. The first and only recorded ascent was made by Jean-Paul Bougerai and Andrey Morz from the 31 July to the 2 August 1971. ED mostly free at grades III to VI, with several mixed sections and artificial pitches from A1 to A3. Rapidly packing and borrowing 'Friends', slings, pegs and a green, Barrhead - registered Austin Allegro we moved up to Snell's field in search of a driver. Mike Scott sat like Buddha, but in a plastic palace, and said that he would help.

Accelerating out from the darkness of the Mont Blanc tunnel the tyres squealed on the hot tarmac, and just in time we reversed to show our passports to the Italian frontier guards who obligingly lowered their rifles in recognition of our belated cooperation. Departing again, another bottle of wine was uncorked as we roared up the narrow road twisting along the Val Ferret. Then we were alone with two rucksacks. Darkness dropped as we walked up the path, the fresh scent of wild flowers overcoming us so much that we lost the way and had to thrutch up a gloomy wet chimney. Eventually, guided by some higher authority, we stumbled across the path which led to the Triolet hut, and crashed out.

At 10 am next morning, we sat on the Triolet glacier watching the stonefall. Our alternative was the Gogan/Rara route on the Leschaux but as we were considering a huge rockfall thundered down its stupendous face. On the Gruetta, only the first few pitches seemed to suffer bombardment so once through those we would be sheltered enough.

Strapping crampons to boots half way over the rimaye probably reflected our rush to escape from the hurtling stones. Mark's unrepeatable but well known phrases as his crampon straps came adrift received only a satirical laugh from me which set the mood for the next few hours. Once over the dirty grey ice we removed our crampons and plastic outer boots to feel sure-footed in our EBs. Then came some hard-to-protect pitches over rock slabs laid bare by the intensity of that year's 'good' summer.

Intermittently falling rocks meant that we could time our moves to coincide with the pauses, hoping that the ropes would not be struck. Many moves now to think about; up a diedre to a belay on some 'wild country' rocks below an overhanging wall.

Fortunately it was Mark's turn to lead, a necessity as far as I was concerned. Leaving his sac he rose like a bird, impressively fast and with only two points of aid. His cheery summons came from above as rocks subsided below my feet and I hung from the belay while my footledge rumbled down the mountain side. Feeling glad to be over the technical crux we carried on for several pitches to an iced-up crack and couloir system. Here I slipped gracefully on my EBs until I saw a bivouac ledge out to the right and realised it was 4 pm and brewing time.

When Mark came up I abdicated the wee ledge to hack some ice to melt. While he brewed I went higher to arrange some more protection for sleeping. Soon we heard a rumble and saw rocks cannoning down the couloir. It proved an ideal channel for the boulders hurtling past our feet with sounds reminiscent of a five-man bobsleigh team. Little stones bounced up and brushed us but the bigger ones stayed in the couloir providing entertainment rather than terror.

Once secured in our sanctuary of enveloping down and Gore-tex we slept fitfully, being aroused by drizzle and small stones thudding into our sleeping bags. I heard a beauty strike Mark's crash hat covered head. We fell off our ledge innumerable times, rudely awakened by the jolt of tightening security ropes. Against these odds we willed ourselves to sleep.

Light came in. Mist swirled fresh wetness on our equipment. It was cold but the stove hummed warmly and prepared us to face the new day. Mark led off as I scurried around the tangle of ropes, retrieving the protection. We climbed together and estimated one more yellowish wall remained between us and the top. I did not want to lead my pitch of the wall when it came to it but Mark encouraged me by saying that it was not good for a fellow to get into the habit of seconding (or at least, words to that effect!) Reluctantly I yielded, and of course enjoyed it, all too soon reaching easy ground and the simple summit ridge. Quite superb, we agreed but low cloud rushed in, thunder rolled and lightning struck, so we suppressed our desire to scramble the last few metres to the summit.

The normal descent described in the Guide Vallot looked desperate to us so we took a plumb line down the South face. We soloed, but soon had to rappel amid cascades of hailstones down overhanging walls with extensive areas of smooth slab. As I slid down the last rappel I was amazed to find Mark had started a brew. We lay there, curled foetally, sipping tepid water, with black holes on either side of us disappearing between the glacier and the rock wall. Then as lightning seemed to pass between us Mark noticed my pale face and conceded it was time to go.

The Gruetta glacier was also good value. High up the crevasses seem to traverse its complete width. We had to abseil from ice mushrooms and flit like fugitives among its turbulent seracs until we emerged on to the moraines and descended to alpine flowers and the sound of cowbells.

BECAUSE WE WERE THERE

By G. J. F. Dutton

OUR SPORT is frequently misunderstood. We are not socially irresponsible. We go out of our way to help others; if there is no alternative. Take one evening when the Doctor, the Apprentice and I were relaxing by the bar in the unlovely hamlet of Kilmoggie – that last hitch of the Industrial Belt – after a pretty hard day. The Apprentice had led three V.S. first ascents; and I had followed with drawn breath, adhering by the resultant suction. The Doctor, fresh from some meeting or other, was running us back. Not to be outdone, he tried a new route home, and got lost. We found ourselves in Kilmoggie and stopped at its single repellent hostelry for a belated celebration.

The Doctor was examining bottles for the next order when a boy's head poked round the door; stared at us; rotated, and howled ear-splittingly backwards: 'They're *here!*'

He approached, stepping over the sacks, rope and assorted gleamery which we uncharitably thought safer with us than in our car, whose boot would not lock that day.

'You climbers?'

We assented, with equal lack of grace; he appeared highly predatory.

He revolved once more; and shrieked: 'They're *so: climbers.*' Then, to us, 'Come awa out.'

Mesmerised, we went out, the Doctor testily shaking his head and putting away spectacles.

Out there, a small group. Locals. A sort of delegation. A determined-looking wifie, well-endowed with shoulders and chest, disengaged herself and, accompanied by heads and eyes, marched up to us.

'You climb, eh?' We nodded. 'Then folly me.'

Ah, well; Fate had taken over. We followed. The rest fell in behind, muttering.

We turned down a small carboniferous lane. At the bottom, another crowd, larger. They parted, and we trailed through, the wifie striding in front. Then she halted and bellowed ahead:

'Here, Annie, I've brocht them Annie. Here's climbers for ya.'

Annie, an auld happit-about craitur five feet high and three feet away, raised keen – very keen – eyes to us. 'They'll help ye, Annie, they'll help ye.' All at ten decibels, for Annie was deaf; and then, fiercely, at ten and a half, to us: 'That right, eh?'

The Doctor summoned together all his professional bravura and replied briskly and with a dreadful gaiety, 'Of course, of course. Now,' bending towards Annie, 'what's the trouble?'

'I canna get it doon', she croaked, 'canna get it doon . . .'

The Doctor, with conclusions automatically oesophageal, laid a kindly hand on her shoulder. 'We'll have a look at it, then: let's go into your house.'

'Whit for ma hoose?' screeched Annie, eyes rounded, 'it's no 'n ma hoose!' The Amazon was more explicit. She grinned savagely. She smote the Doctor's shoulder. 'Up there, Chairlie, up there . . .' and raised her arm skyward. Reality was awaiting us.

Our gaze followed, and encountered a huge, a vast, tree. A sycamore of so straight and unhindered a trunk we had taken it for a pit-head lum. Above, far above, it blossomed into a billowing head of foliage. Once, it had paged the long-demobilised Kilmoggie Castle.

'What's up there?' asked the Doctor, like us prickling with horrid suspicion.

'Ma caat,' wailed Annie, 'ma caat . . .' and the appalling certainty dropped on us with eighteen claws. And dug in.

'Get it doon fer her,' demanded the first wifie, 'ye're climbers.' Voices from behind – 'Aye, ye're climbers, get it doon fer her.' An objectionable voice: 'Aye, and be some bluidy use fer once.'

But it was a terrifying tree. The Apprentice mumbled about the Fire Brigade. 'Fire Brigade? We canna get the Fire Brigade. It's twal mile th'ither side o Balweemie pittan oot fires.' 'Aye, fires stertit by campers,' spat out another wifie, evidently in the B & B business. They were not really hostile, just rightfully resentful of our intense desire to be elsewhere. Fortunately, we did not suggest the Polis. But we continued to dither. To strengthen a sense of commitment, the boy and some companions dumped our gear, looted from the bar, below the trunk. 'There y'are.'

Murmurs of approval. Multiple despatch of spittle.

Annie grabbed the Doctor's unsteady arm. 'Mebbe ye're no used tae climban trees, eh?' He looked gratefully at her. 'There's ladders. . . ' – she turned round – 'Pit thae ladders thegither,' she yelled. A formidable crone, and crafty.

The bole soared bald for forty feet. What ladders could reach that far? And a sycamore, the Doctor explained, was a very *unsympathetic* tree; the devil to climb. Horrible. Meanwhile, we searched the canopy. Helpful fingers pointed out various invisibilities. The Apprentice maintained that a beast bold enough and brainless enough to climb up there was equally well equipped to climb down again. 'Ah, but cats, cats,' sighed the Doctor, '... particularly young ones. Is this a young cat?', he asked Annie, playing for time.

'Na, na, an auld yin: Tammas.' Tammas had done this before, when the Fire Brigade was not otherwise occupied, and his retrieval had become a local classic. Two firemen, it seemed, finished up in hospital. The outcome of his second expedition was therefore awaited with interest.

While the several ladders were being lashed, hammered and cursed together, the Rescue Team was disputing Honours. The Doctor emphasised that advanced modern techniques were required, and therefore the Apprentice was the logical choice; he himself would be worse than useless. The Apprentice, while conceding the latter point for most situations, compared a tree with the vegetated routes so beloved of the Doctor; our affair on The Craggie still rankled. He explained it was ideal for the Doctor – '... Vegetation all round, like a sea-stack of leaves, an Old Man of Chlorophyll – perfect.' 'No, it's purely. . . '

'Wheesht!' roared a large elderly man beside us. Sibilances rippled away. Hush.

We heard the wind beating the upper branches. Then a yowl; a small windblown yowl, but undeniably from a cat. Up there. Damnation.

'Here y'are, Jimmy!' cried our companion, slapping the Doctor's long-suffering shoulder. A gang of youths, who would have been better employed climbing the thing, were pushing a wavering company of ladders up the trunk of the tree. Four ancient wooden eight-footers, tied in line with minimal overlap. They collapsed drunkenly, and began to slide slideways. They were hauled back by knotted washing-line. A large splinter fell heavily, not from the tree.

'Jump on them, lads, it'll haud them doon!'



Ladhar Bheinn from the east, Rhum in the distance

Photo: Donald J. Bennet



The Tarmachan Hills, summit of Meall Garbh

Photo: Donata J. Bennet

Some of the gathering mistook our hesitation. 'Ah, ye'd like fine tae climb it straucht aff, eh? Mair the thing, like? Na, na, tak the ladder 's far as ye can. There's plenty climban fer yese efter that!' True.

The Apprentice trod the scaffold first. With a succession of slings, he bound the lower ladders to the trunk. They protested wheezily. When he ran short of slings an old body took a knife to our two 50 metre coils. This drove us all up the rungs, clutching equipment. We spiralled the ladders with precious kernmantel.

It was terrifying. Quite vertical. Rounded exiguous rungs, some missing, others rotten, slobbered against wet bark (rain had arrived to watch, as well). The trunk was much too broad to clasp, the ladder sides were loose and slippery. Looking down, the eye bounced off the bole and plunged into a flutter of white faces. . . Surely the whole thing was toppling. . .

Above, the Apprentice, unconquerable, had left the topmost rung and was jerking one sling up the greasy pole inch by inch while leaning out from another. Then he clipped into the upper sling and repeated the process, coaxing the lower one above the upper. He pressed against pitons, deep into secondary thickening.

Some fifteen feet were ascended this way, and darkness was closing in. Then, after two shots, he lassooed the lowest bough, fixed a line, and jumared aloft. Murmurs. Approbation at last. The Doctor called up to reserve the first coconut.

I reached the top of the ladder, sea-sick. Then a cry from the Apprentice - 'There's the brute!' And the rope whisked away. I hung out to watch. He was advancing, on hands and knees, along a large horizontal bough, preceded by the cat walking backwards. Each time he stopped to fix a runner on the branch above, the cat stopped. When he resumed, the cat resumed. The bough got thinner, and bent downwards. Both contestants began to wobble, but continued grimly towards the end. Clearly the Rescue would not come off; the Apprentice or the cat, or both, almost certainly would. If the cat - and, judging from the hate on the Apprentice's visage, that seemed likely - then lynching would ensue; enough rope, plenty of branches. So I, at centre of communication, managed to convey the logical (and convenient) solution that now the ropework was fixed, The Doctor, with his kind cat-loving heart, should replace the venomous Apprentice.

The cat, perched on a bouncing spray of twiggery, surveyed the resulting gymnastics without comment. Darkness had fallen, and we were smokily floodlit from below by an old roaring breakdown van. Drama was intense, as the Doctor, slithering desperately despite clinkers, edged towards Tammass. Employing all his vegetatious skills, he wriggled from fingertips to bootlaces.

We could not hear his blandishments, but they probably resembled those squandered on the climbing dog of Arran (a day of pleasure compared to this).

The branch dipped further. The Doctor began to slip. He shuffled backwards. His face was pale and petrified in the lamp beam; shining black branches scampered about him, sluicing water. Rain pelted.

It could not continue. It did not. The bough suddenly cracked and bent double, the Doctor, head down, heels up, swung under and wrapped himself about it like a newly-licensed sloth. The wee beastie, now below him, summoned its remaining lives and skedaddled upwards. It prepared to crampon daintily across his white streaming face. It paused, sprang at the bergschrund – and the Doctor grabbed.

He caught the cat, but lost the bough. He hung upside down by his knees for a long millisecond: and then gracefully slid off into the air.

Terylene twanged, we heard a snap above wind and engine, and a couple of runners broke free; twigs and leaves fluttered through the beam. But he stopped, spinning well below the bough and thirty feet above the ground. He was still clutching a small black object which even at that distance radiated fury.

We expected applause; or, at the least, pity and terror. But no. A degree of censure.

‘Auld fule fell aff!’ (the Doctor, not Tammass). ‘Sayan they wis climbers. . .’ ‘Micht hae killt the beast. . .’ ‘Should hae left it tae the young lad. . .’ ‘I telt ye, they’re no. . .’ Annie, however, was peering up with a diabolical grin. ‘Hey, Tammass, Tammass!’ she cried. Tammass was no doubt longing for the relative security of a broomstick.

We faced logistics. The Apprentice explored, wreathed in ropes. He appeared and vanished among ebony branchwork, trailing ghostly loops through snatches of floodlight. Beneath him, the Doctor twirled, with his outraged burden. Tammass had lost dignity; and hell hath no fury like a cat so bereft. He held the creature now close, now at arm’s length. Either way, he was being rapidly abraded. He could not be pulled up; and he could not abseil while acting as male nurse.

The Apprentice therefore threw down a length of light line for the little one. The Doctor was to tie him on it and lower him to Annie’s bony grasp. This proved difficult, Tammass being a bonnie fechter and wet and slippery. ‘Round its bloody neck!’ roared the Apprentice, thoroughly fed up. But humanity prevailed, and a sort of Tammass splint was conjured by the Doctor and his foe secured, tail wrapped tight like a muffler.

Then the bulb blew in the floodlight. Pandemonium. When light returned it revealed a smaller rotating object below the larger one. Tammass, no hand – or paw – at abseils, had stuck. His line was jammed under the sodden capstan of coils above the Doctor. The Apprentice could not help, for his own branch was splitting. He retreated and tied the Doctor to a higher limb. But that didn't get Tammass down, and until that object had achieved its owner's skinny bosom we dared not descend ourselves.

The Doctor, from his gyrations, shouted for the crane of the breakdown truck; Tammass, counter-gyrating below, joined in through tail. At top elevation, the crane might just . . . Smoke and fumes, roars; a bold figure swarmed up its hiccupping vertebrae and held out hands. About five feet short . . . The Doctor *could* cut the line; but if Tammass missed, he would be sure, that night, to break his neck.

The figure smote its brow, scrambled down and vanished into the crowd, which was boiling up to an Ibrox. He reappeared carrying a great salmon net, doubtless veteran of many another night. On tiptoe at full stretch of crane he could just tickle the enraged Tammass' toes.

'Right!' And the Doctor leaned over and sawed at the line. A fearful hush. The motor paused and the beam flickered.

Then, plop! He was landed. Right in the net. Deafening cheers, hoots, screams, whistles . . . Goal. Everybody stormed the pitch.

Well, we got the Doctor down, too, eventually. But no one stayed to watch. They bore Annie and the tightly-knitted Tammass off into darkness. Fortunately, they left our light on.

We shouldered gear and trudged up the lane. We were sore, soaked, and the bar would be shut. A door opened and a blaze leapt out, the truck driver after it. The Doctor thanked him for his light. To our surprise, he enveloped us all in an ample grasp.

'Come awa in, boys, come awa in, we're aa waitan on yese . . .'

And they were. A memorable night, till late early morning. Unlimited food, drink, music and song. The salmon-netter buttoned an accordion wonderfully, the Amazonian wifie – a Higgins in more itinerant days – gave splendidly belligerent renderings of *The Blantyre Explosion* and *The Donibristle Disaster*; the Apprentice of course indulged to wild applause in *Great John MacLean*, Annie herself piercingly to even wilder in *Andra Lammie*; the Doctor tried out his new reel 'Black Diamonds' on a borrowed chanter bent like a pit-prop – there were marvellous stories and some scarifying wit – but I remember little. I do remember how

they plastered the Doctor's slashes, scratches, bites and bruises with an emotional rhetoric of iodine. 'Terrible, terrible.' 'It's thae *claws*; an thae *teeth*.' 'An he *needna* hae done it.' 'He did it fer Annie.' 'No fer the bluidy cat, onywy.' . . . Tammas, rebuilding dignity, had sought his dubious blanket. We asked how he had so badly mauled the firemen that they had to go to hospital. 'It wisna Tammas.' Had they fallen off their ladders, then? 'Na, na.' What? 'They wis jist fou.' They had fallen out of their fire engine's door, waving unbelted as it roared away after the previous Kilmoggie Gathering. 'Three weeks in hospital, man. Aa fer auld Annie's Tammas. . . But they get *paid* for it, ken; they're no like Climbers. . . .'

See what I mean?

We slept on the salmon-netter's bed till six o'clock.

©GJFD

CLOSING THE BOOK

We considered the perfect murder:
An icicle for weapon, one to leave
No fingerprints, no betraying chemicals,
Nothing lying hidden in the scree.
Little did I think it would be used on me!

Too many Buachailles, too many Bens; you
Grow careless and imagination frosts its roots.
The fatal blizzard usually catches the climbers unawares,
Avalanches are what happens to other people,
An icicle in the heart is much less dramatic:
It doesn't hit the news or even the SMC Journal list.
Nobody notices the clinkered climber aging past
Peching on the rough track down to Lagangarbh,
Nobody sees the icicle buried in his heart
Or notices the water melting into his veins.
His smile is a grimace but it hides the pains.

I tried to pull the fatal weapon out, constantly,
But there was nothing to grip. I never saw it strike.
The Season's accelerating pages (blood-time, life-words) ran out.
Only the blurb's angled propaganda remains
And the colourful cover. Look well! No time for tears –
It's too late, always, so make a route of your years.

H.M.B.

AT BEN NEVIS OBSERVATORY*

By John S. Begg

This is the concluding part of the account written by a young man in 1898 about his experience of living on the Ben.

III. – PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

THERE is a peculiar, and in my eyes an excellent custom at Edinburgh University, that those who have graduated Master of Arts with Honours in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy are given the chance of spending one of the so-called summer months – June, July, August, and September – at the Ben Nevis Observatory, in order to relieve the regular staff, who need their holidays as badly as most people. I took advantage of this kind provision of my University, and it was arranged that I should act as observer throughout September of 1896, along with a more experienced fellow-student. On 1st September I left the Low Level Observatory at Fort William about nine A.M. with the assurance that, if I was in at all good form, I should reach the summit about one. As it happened, I was not in good form, and consequently I cursed the apparent endlessness of that stony bridle-path, with its successive zig-zags up the mountain side, long before I reached the large, broad plateau which one has to cross before facing the last stiff few hundred feet, named from the builder of the Observatory MacLean's Steep. However, I did arrive at last about four o'clock feeling more dead than alive, and much too tired to take any interest in my surroundings other than to ask where my bedroom was. Next day my duties commenced, and it was arranged that throughout the month my companion should take the long night watch from eight P.M. to four A.M. inclusive, as well as the two, three, and four P.M. observations. I was to take the rest, so that we had each our twelve observations daily, though there is little doubt that I had the more enviable lot of the two.

THE INEVITABLE TOURIST – June, July, August, and September are the months during which the tourists climb the mountain, and their name is legion. I am quite sure throughout September we had on an average from fifteen to thirty per day. If they wanted refreshments they did not get them from the Observatory, but at a so-called hotel, a wooden erection open during the summer months only – for it is quite buried in snow

*A slightly abbreviated version of John Begg's account appeared in the *Cairngorm Club Journal*, Vol. 2.

in winter – with four small bedrooms to enable tourists, if they choose, to stay all night to see the sun rise. Unfortunately, they usually arise only to say, 'We viewed the mist and missed the view.' With so many people coming and going and with plenty work to do also, the month passed quickly, but without special excitement.

ADVICE TO CLIMBERS – One piece of advice I may offer to any reader who should ever intend climbing the Ben, and wishes a good view – Don't go up in August, which has been, with only one or two exceptions, a month with large rainfall, much mist, and little sunshine. I was at some pains during my stay on the Ben to draw conclusions from the fourteen years' observations as to the best week on the whole in June – the best month – for visitors to ascend the hill, and I found that the week from the 18th to the 24th of June inclusive was on the average the warmest, driest, calmest, clearest, and sunniest, though I am sorry I cannot guarantee a good view even then.

The first half of September, 1896, was mild, but in the middle there came a change; winter was on us, and for the last fortnight the snow was never of the summit, frost was frequent, and the mean temperature was just a trifle above freezing point. Between six and seven one evening towards the end of the month my friend was standing on the Observatory roof when he heard a cry coming from the foot of MacLean's Steep. He and the cook at once set off to see what was wrong, and found at the foot of the steep three ladies, one of them over sixty at least, bent, and old-looking, and quite exhausted. She had determined to get to the top, and had left Fort William that morning, with her companions, about nine o'clock. My friend managed to put some spirits in her in both senses, and got her safely to the top, where she spent the night in the hotel, and was 'as fit as a fiddle' next day.

A CHARMING SUNRISE – It was about this time, too, I had my first experience of night duty, and a charming one it was.

My companion had gone down to spend a farewell evening with the gentleman who was observing at the half-way hut, and, as he did not return quite when I expected, I had, of course, to take duty till he turned up. Luckily it was a beautiful night; though in September, the summit and for a considerable distance down the hillside was white with snow, the sky was cloudless, the wind light, and the moon full. To keep myself from falling asleep between observations I alternated cups of strong coffee with strolls down the hill-side in the moonlight. After the six A.M. observation I mounted to the flat top of the Observatory tower, and, wrapped in a rug, for it was freezing hard, I waited for the sunrise, nor had I to wait long. The east grew brighter and brighter, till I was rewarded by the sun's rim appearing and shooting across

a ray of greeting to me, first of all things animate or inanimate throughout the length and breadth of Scotland. It gave me a curious feeling of kinship to the sun; he seemed so really to be smiling and shining on myself alone as I stood there in the calm stillness looking down on billow after billow of green hill or rocky mountain top stretching for mile after mile into the far-off horizon. Then for the next few minutes I observed the white snow on the summit turned to the most delicate pink. The other snow-clad peaks around me still looked cold and forbidding, untouched by the warm sun; but first one and then another received the impress of his rosy finger-tip, and seemed to grow kindly and warm at the touch – a lovely scene, indeed, and I thanked my companion, on his return, for extending his time so opportunely.

THE NORTHERN CLIFF – Before leaving on 1st October I had taken such a fancy to the place that I had volunteered to return in the middle of October and take ordinary observer's duty till Christmas, an offer which was accepted by the authorities, so that after a fortnight's holiday 17th October found me again on the summit after taking about six hours to ascend. I had gone somewhat out of my way in order to get a fuller view of the magnificent cliff which forms the northern side of the mountain, dropping from the summit sheer down to a depth of from 1500 to 2000 feet. Both the summit cairn and the Observatory are situated within a few feet of this precipice, and, by looking over the edge of a wooden landing-stage built on its very brink for the purpose of tipping over the Observatory refuse, one gets a thrilling idea of its awful height. On this particular day in October its whole face, as I saw it from a spur of the Ben opposite to it, presented a weird and Arctic appearance. Alternate snow, thaw, and frozen fog had transformed its face into a white sheet, relieved in its monotony by gigantic icicles and huge light green slabs of ice, all shining dazzlingly in the bright sunshine.

AN UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCE – Just a few days after returning I had rather an unpleasant experience. As I have said, on the north side of the mountain is a perpendicular cliff; the west side has a comparatively gentle slope, and is the side from which the ascent is usually made; the south side again is fairly steep, and towards the S.E. dips into a huge precipitous cauldron-shaped hollow. After two-o'clock dinner, having three hours to spare before my next observation, I thought I would take a stroll down the south side. I got down a good bit all right, finding the snow soft and capable of giving good footing, when, without any warning, I found myself on a much harder snow-slope, where I slipped my foot, fell on my back, and slid. The exasperating thing was that there was nothing apparently to stop me sliding till I should pop at a nice speed into the uninviting cauldron down below.

However, as I was sliding quicker and quicker, wildly trying to plunge my ice axe into the hard surface to check myself, I espied right in my course the providential jagged top of a narrow rock sticking up above the snow. As I was sweeping past this I hugged it with my right arm as I never hugged anything before or since, and I gathered so much momentum that I swung right round it; but I was safe, though I had still that hard, cold, forbidding-looking slope to ascend. It was fortunate, indeed, I had my ice-axe with me, as with it I had to cut steps all the way up the slope until I reached the soft snow again. It had taken me, I suppose, less than half a minute to go down that slope; it took me an hour to go up.

MY FIRST GALE – In the end of October I had my first experience of a bad gale. I was awakened as usual in time to take the five A.M. observation, but, when I got outside the porch, I found I had something to battle with. The wind was northerly, and came in gusts. The result was that I would bend forward with every muscle strained to resist a gust of, say 80 miles an hour, when the wind would suddenly drop, and I, of course, would drop too, flat in the snow; also, the soft fresh-fallen snow was blown in blinding, swirling sheets of drift all round me, so that by the time I reached the thermometer-box I was practically blind, and had to tear lumps of icy drift out of my eyes before I could see by the aid of my lantern where the box was.

A WINTER THAW – The first week of November, 1896, was brilliant, cloudless skies, and air very dry; but the fortnight in the middle of the month was one of the most disagreeable, as regards weather, one could imagine. With the exception of one day throughout that fortnight we never saw more than ten yards in front of us; thick, soaking mist; with the temperature mostly above freezing point; heavy showers of rain and sleet, and occasional gales from the S.E. reaching one day a velocity of 100 miles per hour. The house too leaked badly and the floors both of the office and kitchen were pretty much covered with basins, pails, &c., to catch the water. That fortnight would indeed have been a wearisome one had it not been that we had loads of work to do, and when we got tired of that, a good library or a game of cards to resort to. However, about the 23rd, the mist rolled away, and once more we revelled in the sunshine. Such a revolution, in fact, did this delightful change in the weather work in our spirits that we got excited, threw sea boots at each other, and ended by dancing on the roof the Highland Fling. Never did I realise before how true were the words of the preacher – ‘Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.’

ABOVE THE CLOUDS – The mist, though it had left us, did not disappear, but sank below the level of the summit, and for the next few days we scored over our low level friends. For we were perched entirely above the clouds which stretched like a white billowy sea uninterruptedly round and below on every side, as far as the eye could scan, and that, in clear weather, is about 100 miles. At times the sheet of cloud sea would sink somewhat so that the other mountain tops of Scotland, east and west and north and south, peeped through the islands in the sea; at other times it would rise till Ben Nevis alone of Scottish peaks kept its head above the snowy billows, and then indeed we felt that in splendid isolation we held the highest office in the United Kingdom. During these few days the weather at Fort William was raw, cold, and overcast with occasional drizzle, while we were revelling in a brilliant sun, shining from a perfectly clear and hazeless sky, through air so dry that the snow disappeared quickly by evaporation. The weird beauty of the night time under such circumstances I shall never forget, and I shall do my best to describe one particular scene. I had just taken the 7 p.m. observation and the air was so delightful that I took a constitutional up and down the observatory roof. The lightest of southerly airs blew gently and caressingly, and prevented the stillness of the whole scene from becoming oppressive. Above, the sky was cloudless; below, the clouds were sinking like great white lakes into the hollows between the hills. From the bosom of one of these lakes to eastward rose the moon, and while it was rising the upper half was as gold, while the half still in the cloud was red as blood. But not till it had risen quite above its white bed and shone with all its pale splendour in the opal sky did one feel the full charm of the scene. Over all the clear blue island mountain tops around it seemed to cast a fairy-like shimmer; and in that calm and impressive stillness, far, far above the noise and feverishness, the sin and misery of man, cut off from it all by those white sheets of cloud, amid the everlasting hills, bathed in the soft ethereal moonlight, one's spirit felt linked to the eternal and at rest.

ON BEN NEVIS: A MEMORY

My heart the beauties of the night enthrall,
 A dream of tenderness and pure delight;
 Round me below the fog-lakes slowly fall,
 Yet linger in the valleys, pure and white.
 Calmly the moon on her pale splendour shines,
 And casts o'er all her opalescent shroud;
 Mountain and hill stand forth in softest lines,
 Peeping like myriad islands through the cloud.
 Blest is my soul to know this tranquil hour,
 Earth with its sin and strife is far away;
 Love seems the essence of the eternal power,
 Life is no riddle but a harmony.

In the next day or two the clouds below gradually dispersed, and November ended with cloudless weather above and below. There had been so much sunshine, fresh weather, and dry air throughout the month that when December opened the boulders were showing through the snow on the summit – an unusual occurrence for the time of year.

FRESH MEAT! – On 28th November a pony was brought up almost to the summit with, among other things, thirteen legs of fresh mutton, which were a great treat: so much were they appreciated, in fact, that we had them for breakfast, dinner, and tea, and polished them off at the rate of one per day!

VISITORS IN THEIR CUPS – On the morning of the 29th November, between five and six, while I was sitting in the office, I was startled by a tap at the window. It was, of course, quite dark outside, but I took my lantern and went out when I found two men standing shivering outside the window; they had not been able to find the door, so I took them in and gave them breakfast, and thereafter one of them told me – the other had gone fast asleep in the chair – that they had been drinking at Fort William the night before, and while in their cups, had made a bet with their companions that they would climb the Ben. The unfortunate narrator had frequently to break off his story and leave the room as his drinking, combined with the excessive exercise of climbing, had sadly upset him, otherwise I have no doubt he would have fallen asleep too like his now snoring companion. They had been guided by the marks of the ponies' hoofs where the path was covered with snow. They had certainly won their bet and left, feeling all right, about eleven a.m.

THE RAGGED IRISHMAN – Thereafter, during that day – a Sunday – four or five other visitors ascended the hill, the most interesting of whom was a ragged Irishman, a workman at the Ben Nevis water works, who having heard that the observers wore out their old clothes on the summit, came all the way to beg for an addition to his own wardrobe. He was so good-humoured and light-hearted that, after giving him a substantial meal, which he ate voraciously, we each presented him with an article of clothing, my contribution being a really respectable semit. No sooner did his eyes rest on it than he turned to me and said – 'May the Saints bless you, sorr, but oi wunder if ye have a pair o' drawers to match this bee-ootiful shirt.' He almost deserved them for his assurance, but I had none to spare. He promised the next time he came up to bring with him a bottle of whisky in return for our kindness. The observers have not seen it as yet.

THE BEN IN APRIL – I returned again to the summit in the beginning of April, 1897, for a few weeks, and found the obser-

vatory practically buried, i.e., no jump was required to reach the surface of the snow from the roof, and the summer hotel was invisible. April is often one of the most wintry months on the Ben, and it will give the reader an idea of this when he knows that for the first three weeks of last April the temperature never once rose above freezing-point, and the weather was stormy with much fresh snow. Whenever it cleared at all, we all set to work and dug out the windows so that we might enjoy daylight till the next heavy fall came on, when the windows at once got blocked and we had to resort to lamplight, sometimes for days together. On the 21st, however, the weather cleared, temperatures rose, and till I left in the end of the month the weather was of that perfect kind previously described. The roadman was now able to ascend the hill with letters. His arrival is always hailed with joy and excitement as, owing to bad weather, the observers are sometimes five or six weeks without letters or newspapers, though if any important letter is lying below it can be wired up.

A MOUNTAINEERING FEAT – During this spell of fine weather, we had the good fortune to witness a wonderful mountaineering feat. At the western extremity of the northern cliff the hill takes a sharp bend and another cliff runs out to the north-eastward, and at this bend of the V-shaped precipice there is therefore an almost perpendicular narrow corry or gully running right down for about 2000 feet. Up this, with ropes, ice axes, and all the other paraphernalia of the Alpine climber, came three members of the English Alpine Club. It certainly seemed a rash and foolhardy experiment, but their coolness and courage were rewarded after six hours hard work by their reaching the summit in safety, when the four of us greeted them with a hearty cheer and all-round hand-shaking, and finished up with a merry meal in the observatory kitchen. The most intrepid members of the Scottish Mountaineering Club had declared this feat to be impossible, so it must have been with considerable chagrin that they read in the papers next day of the success of their English friends.*

FAREWELL TO THE BEN – The sun by the end of April shines, of course, pretty strongly, and the last day I spent on the Ben before coming down I shall remember always as one of the most delightful of my life. How charming it was to sit on the dry, powdery snow on a sun-exposed slope, lazily dreaming away the time, basking in the sunlight, and enjoying the glorious view to the west; the calm expanse of Loch Linnhe, in the distance the jagged

* *Tower Gully* was ascended on 25th April by Hastings and the two Haskett-Smiths. The following day Hastings and W. P. Haskett-Smith climbed *Gardylloo Gully*, so the obvious inaccuracy may be because Begg confused these events. In any case the version in the Cairngorm Club Journal diplomatically omits the last sentence altogether!

peaks of Skye, the green hill-tops elsewhere rising through the soft blue haze, the peace and stillness and quiet harmony of everything; no sound saves now and then the croak of a raven, or the bark of a fox, or far, far down in the smiling valleys, softened by the distance, the plaintive bleating of the lamb for its mother, the horse call of the red deer, or the subdued murmur of some distant waterfall. Could anything be more soothing, more inspiring, more refreshing to mind and body? True, there was a charm in returning to lower levels, a charm in the varied colouring after the perpetual white glare of the snow, a charm in the old familiar sounds and sights of a country springtime, a charm too in seeing fresh faces of men, and more particularly of women; but when all is said, the impressions which I bear with me always of my few months on Ben Nevis are amongst the most delightful of my life, thanks not only to the unfailing kindness and courtesy of all those officially connected with the Observatory.

Twice since I came to these parts I have climbed Ben Rinnes from Aberlour, and both times I have been rewarded (or so I fancied) by a glimpse in the far distance of the great north-eastern face of Ben Nevis. Born as I am a Scot of Scots, loving as a true Scot does this dear land of mountain and the flood, I am not ashamed to say that, as I gazed on that far-off speck, which for four busy, happy, months had been my home, the tears rose to my eyes as I remembered the strange feelings of awe, tenderness and of quiet content, which so often possessed me as I gazed from its lofty summit on scenes of fairy loveliness, the beauty of which no prose can express.

CLOSE TO THE WIND

By Graham Little

'A brief lapse of concentration is all that it takes,' Derek explains. 'When she's sailing close to the wind a deviation of a mere fifteen degrees is sufficient to do it,' he elaborates. Right on cue, the boom comes careering across the cockpit at a height and velocity imminently injurious to anybody in its path. 'Yours Truly,' with impeccable reactions, reduces his six-foot-plus stature to a mere nothing.

After several days of reefing down the main, taking in on the topping lift, and other strange procedures, I really began to wonder what it all had to do with rock climbing. Even the terminology was totally alien – ropes had become ‘sheets’ and ‘painters,’ slings had become ‘lashings’ – and although falling about all over the place wasn’t a completely unknown experience on climbing trips, on this particular trip it had become the norm!

Back in Glasgow I’d been utterly convinced by the theory Derek expounded: no messing about with cars, no need to line the coffers of ‘Cal-Mac,’ no long trudges with big sacs and, perhaps most importantly, no need to suffer agonies in damp, midge-filled tents. We’d just sail into the nearest bay, in Malindarra, take a leisurely stroll to the crag, do a route or two, then wander down, with the sinking sun, to bottles of wine and real food. It all sounded too good to be true!

A stiff north westerly and cloud-cloaked hills kept us on the lee side of the Small Isles, sorties ashore being confined to coastal climbing and trout fishing, for a couple days. Then without warning, the cloud dramatically dissipated, the mountains of Rhum vibrant in the flawless blue sky, the undulating spine of the Long Isle perfect on a hazeless horizon.

‘Let’s go to Orval,’ I blurt out, enthusiasm visibly welling up inside me. Derek is already packing the hill food. From a relatively safe anchorage in Harris Bay, we head for the boulder beach in a small rubber dingy. The few minutes of inactivity give me time to contemplate the wisdom of our proposed venture. Perhaps setting out at four in the afternoon, on a two hour walk, to attempt a ‘hopelessly loose.’* unclimbed pinnacle is carrying our new found philosophy a trifle too far!

‘Sod’s Law’ is certainly operating to great effect. As we reach the bealach, weird tendrils of mist appear and thicken, chilling our sweat-drenched bodies, soon spreading to envelop all in a clammy, grey shroud. I swear its the only cloud remaining in the whole of the Western Isles.

Orval Pinnacle is a sensational, thirty metre high finger of basalt, pointing blasphemously at heaven and separated by a gap from its extensive parent cliff (rising to one hundred metres on Orval’s N.W. flank), the inverted mirror image of itself. Its height, situation and tapering symmetry make it a most desirable climbing objective, its uncompromising angle and superficial looseness providing a considerable deterrent.

I reach the base of the pinnacle ahead of Derek and have time to stand and meditate. The monolith towers over me, its impreg-

* *The Island of Rhum* by Hamish M. Brown (Page 59)

nability brazenly displayed, the great spire greyer than the mists that swirl about it.

'I'll need to do something about those long legs of your's,' Derek jibes on arrival. I prepare a belay well out of stonefall range.

A shallow groove on the right flank, just down from the neck, gives steep but relatively easy climbing for nine metres to a small ledge on the outward face of the pinnacle. Half expecting the whole pinnacle to disintegrate under my weight, I'm quite relieved to find the many loose flakes are 'hand removeable' and often reveal reasonable holds.

Fixing an assortment of 'so-so' runners, I ease up the vertical face, losing contact with Derek and committing myself to the frightening exposure. A few metres gained and as I move up, a foothold disintegrates sending large slivers of rock crashing to the scree below. Desperate, poorly protected, moves and a pull left take me to a tiny ledge, good nut runners and a rest.

The midst thickens, pregnant with moisture, despite the rising wind. The final eight metres look formidable. I balance up quickly, concentration lapsing, hoping to outclimb the dampness. A micro-nut runner and I pull upon small untested flakes. One sheers off without warning. My feet shoot off the lichened rock.

I fall and fall then crash onto the ledge, bouncing out into space, close to the wind. It takes so long I know I'm going to die. I impact the rock again, no longer falling; spinning, spinning in a web of rope and pain, flashes of brilliant light confusing my vision. Oh God, the joy of pain, the joy of existence! A burning knife is jabbing into my hip. 'Get it together,' I scream to myself. 'You've got to climb!'

I shout to Derek but he can't understand. Somehow I climb back up to the second ledge realizing I've fallen over ten metres. Only one runner has come out. Why did I fall so far.

Gripping the rope in my teeth to relieve the pain the rope drag is aggravating, I regain my high point. On the right arête are a jumble of impossibly poised splinters. I pull left, the greasy rock doing its best to commit me to the void. I stand on the impossibly exposed left edge just two metres from the top. I want to cry. I want to go down.

Derek has come back into view between the inside edge of the pinnacle and the main cliffs. A keen wind rushes through the gap. My left arm is leaden. There are no runners. Standing on fragile flakes, pulling on damp, rounded holds, I heave my battered carcass onto the metre wide flat summit.

There is little elation, just an overriding desire to get down. My long sewn sling won't fit round the summit. I untie my other

small sling, cut through the big one (thanking providence that I've brought my penknife) and join them together. A sacrificial crab and down I slide, lifting the runners, all in a daze. The lowest two had pulled off, hence my long fall.

Terra firma, the deck, congratulations, a can of beer, more pain. A long, last glance at the pinnacle and we head for the boat, Derek laden with all the heavy gear, myself limping behind. 'The things I've got to do to slow you down, Little,' he jokes. I laugh, but not for long; it hurts too much! It's a long walk to Harris Bay. I arrive in the half light.

Rob has prepared a gargantuan feast. We all consume vast quantities of liquid pain killer and gorge ourselves on grilled trout in butter. 'It's the most difficult mountain summit in the British Isles,' I joke, then realize it's probably true! Sleep is an alcoholic haze, numbing the pain.

I spend a day playing with my daughter, Abigail, on the boulder beach of Harris, in the burning sun, her hair glinting silver gold. Like a cripple, I crawl around, marvelling at the intense colour of sea anemones, holding pounded pebbles, so smooth, so warm.

The purple and yellow sunset over the Rhum peaks, echoes the vast bruising on my swollen, fractured hip. As we glide out of the bay under full sail, it feels so good to be on board, secure in the soothing motion of the sea.

I think of a beautiful spire of grey rock. We sail back to the mainland, still close to the wind.

THE BREATH OF THE GODS

There are windier places than the Scottish Highlands. In Adelie Land in the Antarctic the average wind speed throughout the year is said to be 60 mph! However our mountain playground is the scene of much boisterous behaviour by Mother Nature. Here are a few examples.

GETTING THE WIND UP – P. W. Gribbon

There is nothing exceptional in a high wind on a hill. It's a common experience to be buffeted and dumped, to go crab-crawling and to lie prostrate.

We sat in the hut. The great outdoors was having a prolonged period of unpleasantness. We were indolent and lethargic and

even spiritually debilitated. We had no thoughts of routes. Every hour the chopper man forayed outside to check the lines anchoring the machine on its snow pad, but no one with any sense moved on to the mountain. It needed a diet of high moral fibre to counteract the tedium of our continual hut lurking. Let's go for a wee walk.

We were wafted up Allt a' Mhuilinn with the north-west wind at our tails and we were whisked up the Coire Leis slopes to the long arête leading to the summit of Carn Mor Dearg. There the force of the wind was spinning into a vast eddy and curling back on the southern flank of the arête, and sometimes there was some shelter in the lee. We trod carefully, tripodally with axes, ready to run and crouch and scamper erratically onwards. The arête had hidden quiet corners in a dip in the snow or the back of a rock. It wasn't an escape beyond the pale of reason. We knew that the arête led to the open broad and gentle slope rising to the summit. Ay, there was the rub.

When we forsook the shelter of the last rocks, we walked blithely with our eyes open on to an expansive and innocuous sweep of mountain. We were on to a frozen wave of bleakly polished ice, colourless, lifeless, windswept. Only a brisk stamp uphill with our crampons biting the surface, we thought. With a sideways cant, we were compensating the vectors of the wind. Nonetheless we had a problem: how to get up the slope. Leaning and moving, we were going sideways across the icy slope on an unwanted traverse line that took us away from the direct line of the crest. The only answer was to stop and lock, going nowhere.

We were wedded to the slope, hanging on picks fractionally inched into ice, teetering alarmingly on crampon tips. What next? Nothing. Cling on and wait. In front was the obvious slope leading up the crest. A few yards to go, it was so near and yet so far. Behind, under my heels not seen but felt with some disquiet, was the long snow slope that arched and steepened towards the gullies that were furrowed between sharp spines of stones. A few feet to safety, a thousand feet to oblivion. Whose was the choice?

The wind had blown for hours; it was an unrelentingly cruel wind, shifting infinitesimally and offering only a fractional respite in mere morsels of a knot. We would have to snatch the right moment to move. We waited, counting the ice grains a few eyelashes away in incessant sound, the lash of whips, cracklets and spicules. No need to communicate, the plan was known by instinct. We clung and hunched into our innermost cores, womb-hidden and nurturing under tight control our microcosm of instant vital being. We waited perhaps for ten minutes, it could have been longer. Time passed without meaning. Wait, hang on, survive . . . then a break . . . Go!



Photo. D. Fabian

On the first ledge of the Orval Pinnacle, Rhum, F.A.



Skye: Bruach na Freithe

Photo: Hamish Brown

We were flung up on the wings of the wind. Up and over the crest, the sound tearing over the horizon, and we went down, ever downwards, running free and wild, until with a sudden timidity we turned about to face the slope and to start kicking cautiously into the unknown corrie. Drained of adrenalin, we stopped to consider our position.

The upper slopes of the Aonachs merged into the mist. We would have to contour home on a long low level circuit around the flanks of Carn Mor Dearg. We weren't going to complain. There was a time to hold our peace, with thanks.



AN IGNOMINIOUS RETREAT – D. G. Pyper

On January 4th, 1983 I was nearing the end of my Munro tally and on the way back to Aberdeen from Kinlochewe it seemed a good idea to deal with the recently promoted Sgurr nan Ceann-aichean near Achnasheen, having already done its near neighbour Moruisg. The weather was quite good, grey and dull with high cloud, but without even the faintest breeze. In fact, the stillness was oppressive.

I leave the road thinking that it should not take long to rattle up and down this upstart. I'll probably be in the pub before afternoon closing. After about an hour I am about 200 feet below the summit plateau. That's good, a wee breeze from the south-east to get rid of the sweat. Another 100 ft and it is no longer so good. My anorak goes on. Where the hell did that wind come from?

I'm on the snow that drapes down from the plateau and it is frozen hard so the axe is needed. This wind seems to be growing stronger by the minute. It's a struggle removing my pack to get the axe without losing my footing. Axe gripped firm, off I go. Just another few feet and I'll be able to toddle along to the summit.

But drawing level with the plateau I am hit by a blast of air that throws me back down about 6 ft. Leaning further forward with expectancy and axe at the ready, I try again. I reach my former high point and meet the same unrelenting blast. It becomes a hands-and-knees affair, hauling across the horizontal snow. I hope nobody is watching these ridiculous antics. I begin to realise how serious the situation has become when my body lifts off the snow and my only remaining contact with the mountain is the pick of the axe. I decide the game is up and its time to get to hell out of here, but the problem is to pull the pick out of the hard snow when the rest of me is airborne. The choice is to hang on until the body parts company with the axe at the arm sockets or to extract the pick and be blown away. The decision is taken for me when the axe comes out and I find myself in a sprawling heap 30 ft down the slope. My interest in this summit has dissipated and I waste no time in retreating to the car and the security of the pub.

Even hardened locals who had seen it all were crowding for a space at the window to view the storm and this seemed to alleviate the self-reproach I felt at having just failed on a wee Munro. Reflecting over my pint I realised that the only thing that went according to plan was catching the pub before closing time.

AN UNEXPECTED BLOW – High winds in the Monadh Liath

– David J. Broadhead

1984 came roaring in with high winds and deep snow. Having narrowly escaped the clutches of the Highland weather after Hogmanay, it was with some trepidation that Anne Macintyre and I drove North again on the evening of Friday 20 January. Relieved to find the A9 black all the way to Newtonmore, we joined Dave Morris, looking forward to a weekend of cross country skiing. With such an abundance of snow we were spoilt for choice of possible tours. The weather forecast had sounded optimistic, so it seemed an ideal opportunity to satisfy an old ambition. Skiing almost from Dave's front door we planned to cross the Monadh Liath, spend the night out in a bothy then follow the Findhorn down to Tomatin.

Saturday dawned fine and although the morning radio forecast promised a strong southerly wind later in the day, we continued with our plan, confident that with the wind behind us we would make rapid progress. Roger O'Donovan had been in the Findhorn only a week or so previously, so we telephoned him about suitable bothies just before leaving. Speaking from Glenmore Lodge he warned us of a poor weather forecast, with conditions already very severe on Cairngorm. Unperturbed, we

stepped out into the sunshine and skied up Glen Banchor and around into Glen Balloch.

The morning passed quickly as we slowly climbed to the bealach between Carn Ban and Carn Balloch, slightly lower than 900 metres. As we entered the mist we were aware of the wind at our back picking up a little, but since it was pushing us in the right direction we were more concerned with staying close together in the poor visibility. On the broad bealach the deep snow had been blown clear and we were laboriously picking our way between iced rocks when suddenly the wind seemed to take us completely by surprise.

The three of us were literally swept off our feet. Like skittles, we were bowled over almost simultaneously. Looking around, I saw the others in the same undignified sprawl as myself. After a couple of unsuccessful attempts to stand up again, with a heavy sack on my back, skis on my feet and a long stick in each hand, frightened to let go of anything which might blow away, I felt ridiculously immobilised. Still wearing his skis, Dave crawled across and we considered our situation, shouting in each other's ear. It was tempting to struggle on, lured by the lee side of the hill and shelter in the glen below, despite the perils of ski-ing down unfamiliar ground in a near white out, driven uncontrollably by the wind, the possibility of missing the bothy in the dark and a long hard day tomorrow.

Sensible judgment prevailed when Anne joined the discussion, indicating that one of her ski sticks had been snatched out of her hand, leaving us with no alternative but retreat into the teeth of the a gale. In our present position skis were more of a hindrance than a help, so Dave suggested fastening all three pairs to one rucksack, out of harms way. Still lying flat on the ground I strapped the sack plus skis to my back then with the help of the others fought my way up onto my feet. Clinging to each other we struggled into the gale, a bizarre pantomime performance, Dave's powerful six foot plus pulling and Anne pushing while I staggered between them, battling with the wind for control of the ungainly load on my back. Fighting for every step, we slowly made our way off the bealach and down. Less exposed, the edge wore off the gale as we lost height and waded through deeper and deeper drifts of snow until we were glad to be able to put our skis back on our feet.

With every step forward the prospect of a night out (or worse) receded and as the adrenalin wore off we became more aware of the physical discomfort of ski-ing straight into the blizzard. Two of us without goggles or an adequate face mask had a particularly unpleasant time with crusts of ice building up over faces and eyes.

My cheeks were chapped for a few weeks after. However, by the time darkness overtook us we were in the shelter of Creag Dubh and almost home. When the Cairngorm Chairlift anemometer recorded 161 mph (S.M.C.J., 1984 XXXIII, 55) just after 8 pm, we were sitting in front of a roaring fire, a happy outcome to our little epic. It was not until next morning, listening to the radio, we gradually learned of the seriousness of the blizzard which had trapped thousands of people all over the Highlands. We were particularly saddened but not surprised when we heard of the five people out on the hills who had not been so fortunate.

INCIDENT IN ARRAN – W. D. Brooker

In 1949 the spacious days of amateurism were still with us and at Easter I had organised a week's climbing in Arran free of charge by arranging for myself and a school friend to act as mountaineering instructors on an Army Cadet Force course. From the unaccustomed luxury of our officer's (temporary) quarters at Lochranza we had taken a group on to Caisteal Abhail. The wind had been building up to a gale as we crossed Ceum na Caillich and the full blast struck while we were on top, making us cower among the summit blocks. Dashing across an exposed space to secure a small cadet who appeared to be in imminent danger of being blown away I was myself knocked over by a gust and when I grabbed hold of a rock as an anchor my whole body fluttered for a few moments like a pennant streaming in the wind. It was both bizarre and disconcerting.

The other oddity on that occasion was the loss of our rope (well, His Majesty's rope, really). This was a military item, khaki in colour and made of a glossy manilla fibre. It was what was known in those days a 'full weight' and of fairly massive dimensions. This rope was still brand new and had not been softened by use so it formed a rigid circular coil rather like a motor car tyre. Another gust picked this up and sent it bowling and bouncing down the mountainside with great speed. Aberdonian instincts prompted immediate pursuit but thoughts about the comparative intensities of military enquiries into the loss of army cadets and of ropes intervened and we attended to our human responsibilities and never saw the rope again. It didn't really matter since we had our own 'half-weight' nylon for the actual climbing. Or perhaps it did, because one of those cadets is now a minister in Mrs Thatcher's government! If only

A WINDY NEW YEAR – R. N. Rutherford was at the 1921-22 New Year Meet in Arran. It was his first S.M.C. Meet and attended by illustrious former members such as W. N. Ling, W. Inglis

Clark, J. S. M. Clark, E. C. Thomson and J. H. Bell. His diary has this brief entry for January 1st: 'Bus to Corrie, up Glen Sannox with MacLean, Scott and Thomson. Blown flat on Suidhe Fhearghas. Crossed Saddle into Glen Rosa. Rained all the time!'

He further writes:

I haven't read my 'Climbing Log' for many years but what memories it brings back! What memories of these men once famous in mountaineering! I was there on the invitation of J. H. Bell (not J. H. B. Bell) who had climbed with my uncle, R. G. Napier. I remember conversations with Ling and Inglis Clark in the evening. The latter told me about his first ascent of a mountain, I've forgotten the name, in New Hampshire and how a shepherd and his wife gave him shelter that night. Jack came from Paisley, and was very good to me. As for the incident on Suidhe Fhearghas I can well remember how all four of us were fighting our way, using our axes, against a tremendous wind. Suddenly I found myself flat on the ground. I rolled over but could not see any other member of the party. Like me they had all been blown flat. The wind eased slightly and when I sat up I caught sight of the others beginning to move. No one was hurt but we were lucky not to have been at the summit of the mountain.

Perhaps the wind experience to cap them all is described by W. Inglis Clark in a note to the Journal (1923, XVI, 266) about that same New Year Meet. This reproduced here in full.

WIND PHENOMENON ON GOATFELL – At the recent New Year's Meet, at Brodick, a succession of hurricanes rendered mountaineering difficult. Among other excursions was one to the summit of Goatfell, when a series of wind vortices swept down the slopes, tossing members here and there. Owing to the slight sprinkling of snow, the passage of these cyclones was made visible, each circle of wind raising a margin of snow like a wall some feet in height. But the most interesting thing was that each large circle, revolving, say, at 40 miles per hour, had on its margin five vortices, as shown in the diagram, where the velocity seemed more like 100 miles per hour, and at each of these a pyramid of snow was raised to a height of perhaps 30 feet. The whole circle with its satellites had a rapid movement down the mountain face. To those who were able to look, the sight was an awe-inspiring one. Some of the members were in advance of the writer and, as the circle bore down on them, one could see them brace themselves to resist it; but if by chance they encountered a secondary vortex, resistance was in vain, and they were tossed about with resistless force. No doubt these wind movements accompany every violent storm, but in this case the whirlwinds were rendered plainly visible

owing to the snow. The writer could easily recognise the part of a circle in which he chanced to be, but when in the secondary vortex, he was thrown certainly more than 20 feet in a fraction of a second.

TWO TALES OF MUNROSIS

A MUNROIST'S TESTIMONY – By Roger Stonebridge

The author is a brand new Munroist, having compleated on Ben Lomond in February, 1985. He explains himself with this confession.

WHEN in the spring of 1978, my black labrador dog and I, trotted and panted up to the cairn on the summit of Sgorr Ruadh, little did we realise that this was the BEGINNING!

Living as we do in Lochcarron, surrounded by magnificent hills, it was easy during that first summer to visit all of the local tops. It was from these tops whilst admiring the views of hills and ridges fading into the blue haze that first plans were inadvertently made. Simple questions really; 'I wonder what the view is like from there?' 'That looks steep and interesting, I wonder if I could climb it?' 'I bet its a grand walk to get there.' 'Next weekend I shall go.'

Enjoyment improved with fitness, the seasons changed bringing renewed interest, better gear was purchased. I read books, S.M.T. guides and magazines. I travelled further afield and started 'ticking them off' in Munro's Tables. At first ambitions were moderate go for 50, go for 100, get to half-way. Once half-way the commitment is made.

I received instruction in basic rock climbing, to build up confidence to tackle Skye ridge. The Munro's on Skye were in turn used as the experience necessary for summer holidays in the Pyrenees. I bought cross-country skis for touring. Then had to have instruction in downhill ski-ing to learn technique and to build up confidence for Munro bagging ski-tours in the Cairngorms, Glas Maol hills and Glen Lyon hills. For nights out on the hill, I started with a two man tent, then a one man lightweight, now its just 'sheer luxury' in a Gore-Tex bivvy bag. Walking, scrambling, climbing, ski-ing, camping, all factors contributing to the full enjoyment of the Scottish highlands.

For each hill day I have kept scribbled notes about the weather, the route, the company, nature, etc. During the long winter evenings of the past few weeks, using these notes, I have really summarised and listed everything. From these listing some interesting totals have emerged. For my round of Munro's, bagging Tops where possible and convenient I have: –

Spent	184 days on the hill over 6½ years
Walked	1625 miles
Climbed	175,000 metres
Driven	25,000
Spent	51 nights out, camping, bivouacking, bothying
150	were clear on the summit
77	were in icy conditions
170	were unaccompanied
my dog	'Cudubh' has done 194.

I know many think that we Munro Baggers are crazy! But I am looking forward very much to finishing-off the Tops, with 44 to go (my age). To enjoying re-visiting many of the summits, in different seasons, by different routes, maybe with a view next time? To keeping fit by being on the hill as often as possible.

I climbed my 277th alone. I wanted it that way. A celebration was held in Lochcarron later, where it was easier for friends and family to gather and I could thank them for all the support and encouragement so necessary.

THAT ELUSIVE FINAL MUNRO – By Ivan Waller

'Existing Munroists who are fit and well will be expected to do the new Munros and Tops as soon as possible as the accomplishment of this objective presents no insuperable task.'

Munro's Tables

Ever since 1925 when I was 18½ years old and first climbed Schiehallion, I have enjoyed walking and climbing in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, but I was 62 before my wife gave me my first copy of Munro's Tables and I studied the mysteries of this book for the first time. I found that I had about 40 of these 3000 foot (914.4 metre) mountains to my credit plus a similar number of tops, the satellites surrounding these heavenly bodies, which altogether added up to 543 summits, though now reduced to 517.

Ten years later we were on Broad Cairn together above Loch Muick when I realised that I was exactly half way, and round the bend so to speak without a moment to lose. This was odd because up till then it had never occurred to me that I would ever be able to do them all, but two years later on 8 June 1980 I traversed Lurg Mhor in thick mist and arrived on Bidein a'Choire Sheasgaich to become No. 207 in the list of Munroists and to earn a fizzy celebration which my wife had waiting for me in the van down in Attardale.

Little did I suspect the machinations which Munrois had in store for me. I remained in fact very pleased with myself until one day watching the Lake District Mountain Trial, I met Neil Mather and Stan Bradshaw who were running in this 17 mile fell race, and they told me that they also had compleated that summer but they of course had done the Tops as well, so off I had to go again, a poor pedestrian with 58 to climb. It was during the following year 1981 that the second edition of the Metric Tables was published and the newly introduced twin summit of Ben Lui became my final Munro Top. The weather was perfect, it was the day after the Royal Wedding which I had watched on the television in Tyndrum and my celebrations amply covered both events.

Did I say final? Yes, but I soon found that another Top had crept unannounced into the tables, Carn na Con Dhu, 3 km out along the north-east ridge from Sgurr nan Ceathreamhnan towards Loch Mullardoch. I rode up on my scooter, set up base camp near the Cluanie Inn, walked in to Alltbeithe Youth Hostel in Glen Affric, made an early start on Sunday morning when there was no deer stalking, to climb my latest final on 13 September 1981 and was rewarded on my return to Alltbeithe by the vision of the Warden's girl friend sun bathing in the nude.

A year went by during which I climbed two fine Welsh 3000'ers which I had missed out, Elidir Fawr in the Glyders and Yr Elen in the Carneddys. In the autumn I joined one of Hamish Brown's very good parties to do the Irish Munros (note the 'e' as in the Irish whiskey). After Lugnaquilla and Galtymore for starters and two superb courses on Macgillycuddy's Reeks I celebrated my final summit for the Grand Slam on Brandon Mountain together with Matthew Moulton, another $\frac{3}{4}$ century old compleater and the others on 11 October 1982.

There followed a year of resting on my laurels and doing a few nostalgic Lake District rock climbs, but the lull was soon broken by my discovery of a Top I had missed which had sprouted from 911 to 916 metres, Creag na Caillich at the Killin end of the Tarmachan ridge. Furthermore a brand new Munro, Beinn

Teallach north of Tulloch Station had been promoted from Corbett status. Ever on the trail I did these two finals in May this year 1984 using the West Highland Line and the Killin Post Bus, youth hostels and a night on the waiting room floor at Tull-och. Soon after this I went with my wife to Glen Shee and did yet two more final Munros which I had had on my conscience for several years, ever since Jim Donaldson had told me that although I had stood many times on the summits of the Cairnwell and Carn Aosda on skis, they did not count because I had used the ski-lifts! Two hours sufficed to make an honest old man of myself, only to learn that Sgurr a'Choire Bheithe, a remote Corbett in the Rough Bounds of Knoydart had started to rear its head to Munro status, and there it waits.

In the meanwhile by way of an insurance against more new Munros and Tops appearing I am doing the 'Metros,' the name I have given to the Scottish summits between 900 and 914.4 metres. The word refers to metrication and has nothing to do with the motor car or the Paris underground railway. One of the additions to my original list of the Metros has the apt but ominous name of Finalty Hill.

Finally

THE END

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

In the article on Handa last year I said that Donald Macdonald who made the first crossing to the Great Stack later on fell out with the kirk and went off to North Rona; which information I have learnt to be untrue, though so repeated in most sources. The exile was a Malcolm Macdonald. He actually initiated the Handa raid, but being too old, got Donald Macdonald, then 26, to lead it in 1876. It was Malcolm Macdonald who went off into self-imposed exile and died, aged 67, in 1885. Tom Weir, who passed on this corrected information, noted the graves of the two shepherds on a visit in 1984 – 100 years on from their luckless landing. Bill Murray, in the 60's, met a retired schoolteacher in Dunoon, who was the son of Donald Macdonald, and heard from him the story of his father's climb. Just as errors became accepted (like the Ben Alder Cottage myths) or Caulfeild always gets spelt Caulfield, there has been this mix-up of Macdonalds. The above I hope sets out the truth of the personalia involved. Yours etc.,

Hamish M. Brown.

NEW CLIMBS SECTION

QUESTIONS OF ETHICS

The Editor has received a letter from Graham Little containing pointed objection to some remarks made by Gary Latter in his article 'The Hard Rock Route to E 7' in the 1984 Journal. Latter has delivered a spirited reply. Considerations of space (and editorial diplomacy) preclude publication verbatim but the bones of contention should be mentioned.

Latter takes the view that the excessive use of aid (and that means almost any aid) demeans the cliff and that the use of bolts for direct aid is totally unacceptable. He claims that the aid being almost entirely dispensed with subsequently proves his point.

Little maintains that one bolt does not constitute an 'aid extravaganza' and that aid can be justified if, as has been the case so often in the past, it leads to creation of a fine route which can be enjoyed later, even if the aid is later reduced. He also claims that when pegs are removed they may leave behind the 'holds' which make a free ascent possible. He claims that when aid is used on a first ascent it is declared and its use is less of a blemish on the purist ethic than the elitism and snobbery which scorns those that pull on the odd runner and may not aspire to E 7.

The question of climbing ethics is an important one for any publication which records first ascents, if only so that the conditions under which they are achieved are understood. Climbing ethics are never absolute, but alter with time, location and technological change. Not so long ago the use of bolts or even pegs by American Climbers to provide frequent and regular protection was strongly disapproved of over here, and crampons, while alright for the Alps, were seen as a kind of cheating aid which reduced the challenge of Scottish snow and ice, the scale of which was already limited by nature. Should ethical considerations not only care for contemporary climbers but also take into account those who will follow in a later generation? How acceptable are some of the methods utilised today in pioneering new rock? Should we accept practices used in France – and increasingly South of the Border? Has modern technology created such levels of protection and safety that 'the cannon's mouth' must now be sought by even more exotic means? These are all questions which relate to ethics in Scottish climbing. We invite comment and debate, if only to find whether a consensus exists.

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

CARNMORE, Grey Wall – *Break In*

65m, Hard Very Severe.

A. Tibbs & A. Winton. 1st August, 1984.

Start at the right end of the Grey Wall at a prominent chimney. Climb the chimney for 7m then break out left onto the wall by a short hand traverse. Climb the wall above and trend left to a good stance below a leftward sloping groove, (30m, 4c). Leave the stance on the right and climb cracks to reach a 'V' groove. Climb the groove breaking out left to finish up the crack above, (35m, 5a).

Lower Wall – 999

125m, E1.

A. Tibbs & A. Winton. 2nd August, 1984.

A short way left of the *Balaton* recess is a corner immediately to the right of two huge red flakes. Climb the corner to the large roof. Turn the roof on the left and climb the crack above. Easier climbing leads to a belay, (33m, 5b/c). Traverse right to a rib overlooking the *Balaton* recess. Climb the rib and finish up the obvious hanging curved groove of *Dandelion Days*, (40m, 4c). Continue easily to the Central Bay, (52m).

– *Sword Direct Start*

E2.

A. Tibbs & A. Winton. 3rd August, 1984.

Start at the right end of the ledge at the top of the pale grey slab of *Dragon*. Traverse right for about 3m on the lip of the overhang then climb up and right to gain the main line, (5c).

SLIOCH, North-West Face

The North-West face of Slíoch has three obvious gullies. On the right is *Easy Gully*, in the middle is *Starters Gully* and on the left is *Surprise Gully*. These gullies define two buttresses, Main Buttress on the right and Stepped Ridge on the left. *Surprise Gully* is bounded on the left by a ridge composed of three pinnacles, and left again is an easy-angled hidden gully.

– *Easy Gully*

300m, GRADE I.

S. Chadwick. February, 1981.

Climb the easy-angled gully to the shoulder, then traverse right and up the face to the finish.

– *Starters Gully*

350m, GRADE III.

S. Chadwick & A. Smailes. February, 1984.

Climb the open gully by any one of three funnels. The best line is the right-hand one and takes in a steep chimney. The gully continues to a col formed where Stepped Ridge joins the main face. Traverse easily left for 60m and climb a gully for 100m to just short of the West Summit of Slíoch.

– *Surprise Gully*

350m, GRADE II.

S. Chadwick, B. Findlay & G. Strange. March, 1984.

Climbs the left-hand of the three obvious gully lines. After a long deviation to the right to avoid a large boulder choke, the climb continues to a col with a 50m drop into the hidden gully mentioned above. Below the col, traverse right from the gully for 40m, then take the open face for 150m to the top.

– *Pinnacle Surprise*

200m, Difficult.

I. Davidson & S. Chadwick. May, 1984.

The col up to which *Surprise Gully* runs is the termination of the ridge composed of three pinnacles. This route is the ascent of the lowest pinnacle.

Start at the lowest rocks left of *Surprise Gully* (cairn). Follow short walls and grooves to the foot of a steeper buttress. Move up and left to the edge of the buttress where exposed moves lead to a groove above. Follow the crest of the ridge for a further two pitches to reach the surprisingly abrupt and airy top of the pinnacle.

Descent is via the South side to a col, followed by an abseil down the left (North) branch of the gully.

LOCH ERRIBOL, Creag Shomhairle – Bardo Thodol

87m, E1

G. Cohen & G. Macnair. 1st August, 1984.

An excellent companion route to *Land of the Dancing Dead*, taking the big slab to the left of that route. Start 8m left of *Land of the Dancing Dead*.

Climb blocks passing overhang to gain slab, 7m. Traverse left and go up and left to small ledge. Go right, then directly up to a stance on the slab at the bottom of its right-bounding corner, (30m, 5a). Climb the slabby corner, traverse left under roof till near left edge, then go up to steep crack and follow this leftwards to edge, then go up short wall to comfortable stance, (27m, 5a). Climb up to steep crack and follow this leftwards to edge. Go up short wall in fine exposed position to ledges, (30m, 5a).

At the left hand end of Creag Shomhairle there is a steep smooth grey wall left of a large red recess. This has the following two climbs.

– *Mistaken Identity*

65m, E1

D. Jamieson & G. Nicoll. 11th August, 1979.

Start from the right-hand end of the terrace below the grey wall. Climb a line of clean cracks. Move left near top of cracks past loose flakes to ledge and recess, (35m, 5a). Climb leftward-slanting crack in upper wall; some vegetation, but good climbing, (30m, 5b).

– *The Row of Trees*

65m, E1.

K. Spence & G. Cohen. 11th August, 1979.

Start near left end of terrace below grey wall, some 20m left of *Mistaken Identity*. Climb around lower slabs and traverse right to below obvious recess (20m). Climb up into recess and through overhang with difficulty on loose rock. Continue up and left more easily to top, (30m, 5b).

GLAS BHEINN (Loch Carron) – *Slab and Groove*

150m, Severe.

G. Cohen & D. Rubens. 26th May, 1984.

At the right hand side of the crag is a slabby corner just left of a gully. Climb this for 90m (Diff) to a grassy terrace. The slabby corner continues from here to the top of the cliff, and to its left is a deep groove, entrance to which is barred by a wall with overhangs. Follow the slabby corner for about 6m till above the first overhang then traverse left across the wall and climb through the second overhangs to reach the groove. Follow the groove to the top.

– *Clean Compromise*

172m, Hard Very Severe.

G. Cohen & D. Rubens. 26th May, 1984.

Start at centre of crag below a groove with an overhang at 12m. Climb the groove to below the overhang, then go right and up easily for 9m. Climb steep shallow groove on good holds to stance, (42m, 4c). Move right along ledge, climb up slabs, a steep wall and then a rib to a slanting grass terrace, (42m, 4c). Go up terrace to the white slab of *Black House*. Climb this on the left and continue up to a ledge below steep wall, (27m, 4b). Climb steep wall to gain short groove on right. Climb this and overhang above on the right, strenuously. Continue up short walls and grassy ledges, (36m, 5b). Continue to top, (25m).

Note – The start of this climb may be common to *Adul Suli*. A more direct variation is possible on the third pitch.

BEINN a' MHUINIDH, Little Buttress – *Refuse Cruise*

50m, Very Severe.

D. Rubens & S. Pearson. 16th September, 1984.

This is the rib right of *Miscellany*. Climb easily up to stance below and just right of rib, 10m. Follow rib directly to overhang; break left through this to top, 40m.

LIATHACH, Coire na Caime – *Titanium Gully*

200m, GRADE IV.

D. Rubens, G. Macnair & G. Cohen. 21st February, 1984.

An obvious narrow line about 200m left of *Vanadium Couloir* gives a good climb.

Coire Dubh Beag – *Chi Squared*

450m, GRADE III + .

D. Rubens & A. N. Other. Winter, 1984.

The watercourse just before the entrance to Coire Dubh Beag on the approach from Glen Torridon. Consistent climbing on water-ice apart from the crux at a band of crags high up. Above the crux the more interesting left fork was taken. Climbed during a long cold period.

– *Umbrella Fall*

226m, GRADE IV.

M. Fowler & P. Butler. 1st April, 1984.

The obvious ice fall left of *Poacher's Fall*. A fine crux pitch.

Ascend the lower buttress via a curling groove line to a ledge line which could be gained from slopes on the right beneath *Poacher's Fall*, 120m. Move out right on steep ice to continue up right and belay below very steep ice grooves leading to a huge ice umbrella, 22m. Ascend the acute angled icy corner and avoid the umbrella on the right, 24m. Easier climbing to a sudden easing of the angle, 60m.

BEINN ALLIGIN

The following route takes the most northerly of the ridges which form the North-East face of the Horns.

– *Backfire Ridge*

200m, GRADE II.

S. Chadwick & G. Powell. February, 1981.

Climb the ridge left of the triangular face, direct. Straight-forward except for three short rock steps.

In the corrie above Loch Toll nam Biast there are two gullies which form at the col between Sgurr Mhor and the northern Horn. The righthand is short and uninteresting. The left branch is longer and entertaining in early season but later banks out. This is *Backyard Gully* 150m Grade I/II soloed by S. Chadwick, 15th April, 1984.

– *Diamond Five*

225m, GRADE IV.

S. Chadwick, G. Livingston & G. Strange. 10th February, 1985.

Takes a line up a deep cleft on the triangular north-west face of the most westerly Horn above Toll nam Biast. The route often has a good ice build-up after a few days of freezing weather even when snow build-up is negligible.

Climb ice steps direct to shelf below corner, (33m). Climb short corner on left and up easier ground to below short ice-fall, (36m). Climb ice-fall and up easy ground to deep wide cleft, (36m). (The 10m ice-fall directly above is unclimbed). Climb left wall (peg runner) and traverse left to snow slope; narrow ice gully above, (45m). Follow snow field to back wall, (30m). Climb final corner to ridge, (45m).

BEINN DAMH, *Craig na h'Iolaire* – *Aetos*

200m, GRADE III.

I. Crofton & G. Coplan. 3rd March, 1984.

This route takes the left edge of the steep part of the buttress, bounded on the left by an open gully. It appears to be in the vicinity of the summer route *Aquila*.

Climb through the first tier at its lowest by an easy chimney to the right of a steep wall. Climb next band by left-slanting ramp to easy ground. Continue up to two chimneys. Climb the right-hand chimney, and then the arete on the left, to finish up the top of the left-hand chimney. More easy ground leads to a steep corner-crack. Climb this and more easy ground to the final tier, climbed by an open chimney.

BEINN EIGHE, *Triple Buttress* – *Eighe and Spoon Race*

258m, GRADE IV/V.

P. Thornhill, C. Watts, T. Saunders & M. Fowler. 9th April, 1983.

Takes the occasionally prominent right trending ice-streak on the left side of the central wall.

Climb the big pitch in SC Gully, (45m). Easy ground (passing a gully on the right leading to a broad terrace) leading to a belay at the foot of an icy chimney on the right, (90m). Ascend the chimney and continue to a very steep icy section about 12m high, climb this (crux) to a stance/belay, (48m). Climb easier ground trending right to the top, (75m). (The relationship between this and A. Nisbet's two routes is uncertain).

STAC POLLAIDH – *Release the Bats*

163m, Very Severe.

G. Leslie & A. Fraser. 5th May, 1984.

A varied and interesting route, taking the easiest line on the lower wall of No. 2 Buttress, continuing by the upper arete and headwall. (The upper arete appears to have been climbed with 1 point aid – SMCJ – 1957 p.157).

Start at left toe of buttress, 2m, right of the gully separating No. 2 Buttress from the Western Buttress (cairn). Climb steep crack for 5m, then step left onto gangway, which is followed up left to edge. Move right along ledge to belay in corner (26m). Climb corner to ledge, then up rightwards – sloping, hidden chimney to belay on ledge (17m). Take groove above (crux) stepping left where it divides. Step back right round awkward corner to belay beneath tower on arete (20m) (about 7m left of prominent pinnacle). The tower is turned on left via easy slab and ledges to belay beneath second tower (17m). Turn this slightly on left via short, strenuous crack. This leads to the upper, level arete, which after an awkward descent, leads easily to final headwall (40m). Climb crack on headwall, immediately left of aretes continuation (33m) then finish up slabs (10m) to belay at cairn on top of 2nd buttress.

CHNO DEARG; MEALL GARBH, East Face

Details of previous winter routes on this cliff appeared in SMCJ 1977, p.177. An unclimbed central gully was mentioned; no longer unclimbed.

– *Stalactite Gully* 200m, GRADE IV.

A. Nisbet & Miss B. Clough. 13th January, 1985.

This gully is an obvious feature in the centre of the highest section of cliff. It has two caves. The direct exit from the second cave now a short overhanging ice pitch (crux), but with a high runner in the roof of the cave. The rest was easier and gave a fine route overall.

– *Ossian Gully* 150m, GRADE III.

S. Kennedy & G. Rowbotham; M. Stringer & S. Thirgood. 12th January, 1985.

This is the obvious gully about 50m right of *Broad Gully*. Climbed on continuous water ice with a steepening at two-thirds height.

FANNICHS

SGURR NAN CLACH GEALA, East Face – *Cuilleag Corner* 150m, GRADE IV/V.
C. Maclean & A. Nisbet. 18th January, 1985.

This route takes a discontinuous line of corners on the right side of Number 3 Buttress. Climb vegetated slabs to belay underneath the corner system (45m). Enter the corner by a thin slab and short steep wall (45m). Go up the corner to a big roof. Traverse right immediately underneath the roof and go up ice into a fault on the right edge of the buttress. Climb the fault past two steep sections (45m). Continue up the fault to the easy ground common to all routes on this buttress.

The precise line and the overall difficulty will depend on the amount of ice present.

AN COILEACHAN, Garbh Choire Mor – *The Ramp Tramp* 200m, GRADE IV.
C. Maclean & A. Nisbet. 19th January, 1985.

The left side of the coire is a long and somewhat featureless slabby wall. The aim of the route was to climb a shallow depression towards the right edge of the wall, just left of a very steep section. In fact the final line took two ramps going diagonally right across the depression and above the steep section. Scramble up slabs and vegetation to start under the depression.

Go diagonally left to reach the first ramp. Follow it to its end (60m). Above this ramp the depression is barred by a smooth barrier wall but at the very end of the ramp there was just enough vegetation to allow access to the next ramp above. Follow this to broken ground, then go straight up to the top.

APPLECROSS

SGURR a' CHAORACHAIN, S.E. Cliff

This cliff is above and right of the six buttresses forming the so-called S.Face. It presents a steep face above a gully which runs down to the road about a mile below the layby for *Sword of Gideon* etc. but the cliff is in fact best approached from No. 1 buttress. The cliff is well seen from a distance on driving up from Loch Kishorn, just after a right-hand bend at 808 405.

— *Rig-Veda* 97m, Hard Very Severe.

G. Cohen & S. Brener. 10th June, 1984.

This is a recommended climb in fine position. Start at a line of corners directly beneath the steep upper wall of the cliff, about 20m (?) left of the gully. About half way up the upper wall a small undercut nose can be seen with a short wide crack on its right. The line goes directly up corners and grooves to this.

Climb grassy corners to terrace, 18m. Continue up black cracks just left of corner to belay on grass terrace beneath upper wall, (36m, 5a). Climb directly above belay, with an awkward move at 9m. (a possibly easier alternative is a crack a little further right). Continue up groove on good holds to undercut nose. Step right to gain chimney and climb up more easily; pass large wedged block and climb steep crack to terrace, (36m, 5a). The wall above or the corner on the left (25m, 4a).

At the left hand end of this cliff is a steep clean wall with a very prominent deep diedre above two corners (left of an enormous block). This gives the line of:

— *Pommel* 60m, Very Severe.

D. Rubens & D. Broadhead. July, 1984.

Climb crack into right-hand corner and climb corner, 25m. Climb slab and arete on right to easier ground, 35m.

BEINN BHAN, Coire Nam Fhamhair — *Gully of the Gods* 196m, GRADE V.
M. Fowler & S. Fenwick. 3rd April, 1983.

The unique overhanging central gully splitting the crag gives a tremendous climb.

A combination of back and foot/bridging on ice leads to an excellent ledge on the right, 27m. Climb the back of the gully for about 5m then back and foot out to the main ice streak and follow this into a very steep and difficult ice groove above the main overhangs. Pass the final capstone on the right, 39m. Easier to the top, 130m.

— *Der Rise and Shine* 120m, GRADE IV.

A. Saunders & B. Simmonds. 3rd April, 1983.

Takes the best and most obvious line on the opposite side of the corrie to *Gully of the Gods*.

— *Great Overhanging Gully* 180m, GRADE IV/V.

M. Fowler & P. Butler. 17th March, 1984.

Takes the chimney/gully 50m right of *Gully of the Gods*. Extremely steep.

Climb to below overhangs, 21m. (Excellent peg belay on a ledge to the right before the chimney). Up the chimney to the overhangs — surmount these free on ice and continue over an awkward bulge to a cave stance, 36m. Climb to beneath the chockstone and use a threaded sling to gain Nisbet's traverse line. Continue up left to belay 5m left of a dry overhanging pitch, 36m. Move left and ascend to another ledge, 12m. Use two pegs to reach deceptively hard tuft-climbing leading back right to the gully bed, 12m. Surmount the overhang to belay below the final chimneys, 12m. Climb the grooves/chimneys and a cornice to finish, 50m.

Coire na Feola — *The Acid Queen* 150m, GRADE IV/V.

D. Dinwoodie & C. Maclean. 8th February, 1984.

The slender ice-fall which often forms in the left-hand recess of Suspense Buttress. It is usually accompanied by an icicle mass hanging up on the left and a twin strip of thinner ice running up just to the right.

The ice-fall was climbed in two pitches starting up a short chimney and snow funnel. The ice at the top was thin and this will normally be the crux. A right traverse then easier grooves lead in 90m to the top.

Coire Toll a'Bheinn — *Threatening Behaviour* 220m, GRADE IV.

S. Fenwick & P. Thornhill. March, 1984.

The largest buttress in the corrie, on the left at the back, has an obvious pinnacle

at its centre. Some way to its left an obvious streak of snow and ice comes down the buttress, trending leftwards in the upper part into a well-defined gully.

Climb icy slabs for 45m, then easier ground to a steep ice pitch which provided a way up a steep rock band. Above this steep ice for 15m led to the upper gully. This contained short ice steps (90m).

– *Breach of the Peace* 220m, GRADE II/III.

P. Thornhill.

To the left of the main buttress is a broad easy gully useful for descent. To the left of this is another buttress, split on its left hand side by a very obvious straight and narrow corridor of snow, well-defined by rock walls on either side. At the time of climbing, it provided somewhat tricky steps but possible could bank out to grade I.

– *Indecent Exposure* 285m, GRADE IV.

S. Fenwick & N. Bankhead.

Climb the central buttress direct heading for obvious snow-ice gully which leads to pinnacle high on ridge. At top of steep chimney traverse right across right wall to enter upper section of right hand gully which is taken to the top.

ACHNASHELLACH

FUARTHOLL, South East (Summit) Cliff – Tholl Gate 180m, GRADE V/VI.

M. Fowler & A. N. Other.

Takes the obvious line of ice streaks in the centre of the cliff 50m right of *Fuar Folly*. Start at the obvious place somewhat right of the ice streaks line.

Mixed climbing trending left and then right (ice) leads to a horizontal ledge line. Traverse left about 10m to belay below the obvious ice streak (36m). Mixed climbing leads to an overhanging black wall. On the first ascent this was covered with organ pipe icicles which collapsed and necessitated a peg for aid to gain the ice above. Steep thin ice for 15m leads to a good ledge, serious, (33m). Steep and fine icy corners on the right to a good ledge, (36m). Ascend diagonally right on deceptively hard ground, (not obvious from the foot of the route), (30m). Continue right; easy after initial steep step (45m).

ANTEALLACH, Bidein a'Ghlas Thuill – Stale Mate 300m, GRADE III/IV.

K. Schwartz & J. Mount. February, 1983.

There are two obvious lines left at *Checkmate Chimney*. The one nearest and leading towards it is reached by a snow slope and followed throughout with a finish over mixed ground directly above.

DIABEG

From Diabeg village an imposing steep wall is visible underneath the approach path to the main cliff. At the top left of this wall is a large inset slab, right of which is the highest part of the wall. Between the slab and wall is formed a sharp arete, which provides the second pitch of the following route.

– *Dire Wall* 35m, E1.

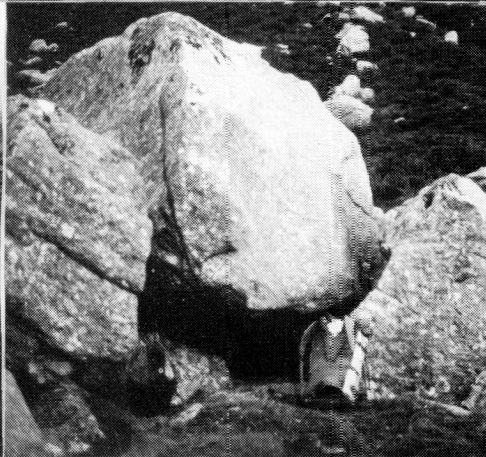
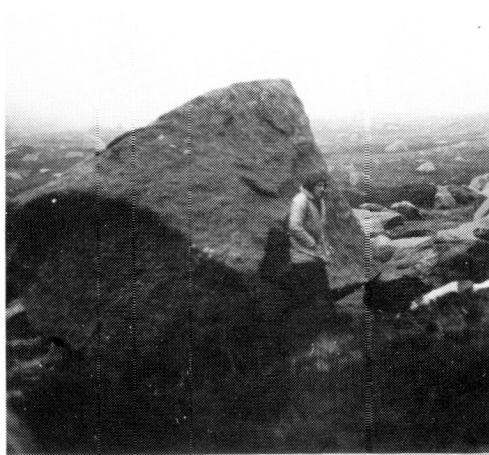
A. Nisbet & R. F. Allen. May, 1984.

Climb a crack in the centre of the wall until possible to traverse left to the top of a shallow overhanging corner which comes up from ground level. Climb straight up to the base of the arete, (20m, 5a). Climb the arete, (15m, 5b).

(Murray Hamilton has reportedly climbed a direct line on the wall, probably starting at the same place).

MAIN CLIFF

On an ascent of **The Black Streak**, R. McHardy climbed the crack direct (E1, 5b). This seemed the logical (and easiest) way to go. A. Nisbet and R. McHardy climbed the cracked wall between this route and *Route Two*, later discovering that it had been climbed by a party from Northumberland the previous summer (1983). These two routes and *Route Two* are well-protected and highly recommended.



a. Ficinn Coire – Cir Mhor

c. Coire na Ciche – Cioch na h'Oighe outer

e. Coire na h'Uaimh – Cir Mhor

b. Coire a'Bhadrain – Meadow Face

d. Coire na Ciche – Cioch na h'Oighe inner

f. Coire Daingean – A'Chir



A canine Munroist contemplating his completion

Photo: Hamish Brown

— *Northumberland Wall* 65m, E2.

Climbs the wall between *Route Two* and *The Black Streak*. The wall contains an intermittent crackline which fails to reach the ground. Start at a left-facing corner left of the line of cracks.

Climb the corner and its capping roof, then traverse right to gain the base of the crackline. Follow the crackline, which deviates right and back left (crux) at a bulge, to the middle ledge. A sustained pitch, well-protected if large numbers of small wires are carried, (30m, 5c). Climb a continuation crackline between *Route Two* and *The Black Streak*, gained from the right. The second gained the crack more directly, but this would be unprotected and at least a grade harder, (35m, 5b).

GAIRLOCH, Ravens Crag (GR 714795)

The rock on this crag is good, faces south and dries very quickly. It provides a pleasant low level alternative to the verticality of Tollie.

Access; Just up from the Shieldaig Lodge Hotel, a farm track fords a burn. Follow this for 1½ miles until the loch is gained. The crag will be in profile view on the right. Routes from right to left.

— *Hydro Hek* 48m, Hard Severe.

G. Powell & S. Chadwick. July, 1982.

Start at the right of the crag, beneath a large shield of rock on the upper wall.

Climb the crack system for 2m and step left to easier ground. Up and belay beneath the shield of rock, (24m). Step up and right onto diagonal fault then mantle shelf onto face. Move left up the face to the top.

— *Badachro* 48m, Very Severe.

G. Powell & S. Chadwick. August, 1982.

Left of *Hydro Hek* is a wall with a letterbox slot at half height.

Climb thin cracks until it is possible to move left to slot. Up through overlap fault to belay, (24m, 5a). Climb series of short walls to top, (24m).

— *Lonmore* 63m, Hard Severe.

A. Smailes & S. Chadwick. June, 1983.

Start at centre of crag beneath the diagonal crack in the upper wall.

Up heather depression and wall above, to ledge by tree, in situ peg belay, (24m). Climb to base of diagonal crack and follow this past raven's nest, round bulge to belay, (33m). Up cracked wall to finish.

— *Joy* 54m, Hard Severe.

S. Chadwick & K. Anderson. September, 1982.

Begins just left of the lower wall of *Lonmore*.

Up heather rake to gain the shallow groove left of the wall. Belay as for *Lonmore*, (24m). Up 6m and move right over cracked blocks to tree. Climb the diagonal groove system above to top, (30m).

— *Charlstone* 54m, Severe.

S. Chadwick & H. Emerson. August, 1981.

Left of the top diagonal crack of *Lonmore* is a blank wall, then a further short crack and break in the top wall. Begin directly beneath this.

Directly up slabs via easy ledge systems to belay on heather terrace beneath cracks, (30m). Move left up cracks, then back right and up via water worn depressions, up easier wall above to top, (24m).

— *Lucy* 51m, Very Difficult.

S. Chadwick & I. Davidson. September, 1984.

Left of *Charlstone* there is a right to left diagonal weakness/groove in the slabs.

Directly up to start of grooves, and climb it until just short of final steepening, (21m). Up final section of groove and over short wall above to belay, (15m). Up heathery wall to top, (15m).

CREAG MHOR TOLLAIDH, Upper Crag – *The Bug*

65m, E2.

C. Maclean & A. Ross. May, 1983.

The original line tensioned rightwards into *Knickerbocker Glory* (SMCJ, 1975). The route is now free and independent.

Climb the crackline to belay on a ramp beneath a bulging nose, (35m, 5b). Follow the crack over the nose and up to where it bends left, move left and go up the continuation crack to easy ground, (30m, 5b).

NOTES

Guttersnipe in Coire na Feola of Beinn Bhan (see SMCJ 1983, p.364) was apparently climbed on 30th December 1981 by M. Fowler, S. Fenwick & M. Lynden and was called *Sheet Whitening*.

Beinn Eighe, Coire Rubha Staca – R. Archbold and G. Strange note an ascent of *Chockstone Gully* at Grade III on 7th April 1984.

Loch Torridon, Diabeg – C. Moody reports that *Easy Does It* (SMCJ 1984) is the same route as *Boabs Corner* SMCJ 1983).

Creag Mhor Tollaidh – With reference to a note by Paul Nunn in SMCJ, 1983, R. Allen and A. Nisbet climbed the corner left of *The Handrail* in May 1981, finishing by bridging past the tenacious heather, which did not affect the climbing as there were adequate hand holds on the right wall. It therefore seems unreasonable to doubt the validity of the first ascent. HVS (5a, 5a) was the grade.

HEBRIDES

ISLE OF RHUM

TRALLAVAL, West Peak – *Malindarra*

60m, Difficult.

G. E. Little. 30th June, 1984.

This route takes a line of short corners on the wall/buttrass flanking the south side of Trallaval's west peak, directly below the summit. Start in a grassy bay to the left of the gully descending from between Trallaval's twin peaks. A prominent band of lighter rock skirts the base of the wall. Climb corner system, without deviation, to the summit.

– *Orval Pinnacle*

30m, E3.

G. E. Little. 18th July, 1984.

This sensational pinnacle (described in Hamish Brown's guide as 'hopelessly loose') gives a serious and exposed climb. On the first ascent many loose flakes, of various size were thrown off but some unstable rock still remains. (see article on p.164).

Start at a slight groove on the right hand side of the pinnacle, just down from the 'neck.' Climb the groove (4a) to a small ledge on the outward face of the pinnacle. Climb the face, with a move left to gain another small ledge (5b). Continue up the face, with a move onto the left edge, to gain the small flat topped summit (5b).

NOTE: A long sling placed around the 3m circumference summit was used for abseil. This will eventually require replacement.

SKYE

SRON NA CICHE, Coir a' Ghrunnda

The following route lies on the prominent buttrass between South Crag and Thearlaich Buttress at NG 447200. Where the Glen Brittle path meets the glacia/slab

barrier climb upwards to the left. Scramble to an obvious slab which is easier than it appears from below; on the left side of the slab is a crack which bounds the right side of the buttress. Left again is an overlap and a wide flared groove with a crack in the corner, a large horizontal flake at its foot and two large flakes at its top; the route takes this crack.

— *Vagabond Crack* 142m, Hard Very Severe.

B. Molyneux & R. Reeve. 28th May, 1984.

Easy slab climbing leads to the horizontal fault, (30m). Step left onto ledge, and make awkward move up onto the ledge of the large flake, (12m). The crack. After initial difficulty ascend and finish steeply over doubtful flakes to belay on slab. An excellent pitch, (40m, 5b). Step left to arete and climb easily to the top, (60m).

COIRELAGAN — *Bastinado, Variation* 12m, E1.

D. Dinwoodie & C. Maclean. 25th July, 1983.

Climbs the obvious groove and jam crack right of the normal crux, (5b).

The Coich — *Erotica* 24m, E3.

D. Dinwoodie & G. Livingston. 27th July, 1983.

Goes up the small frontal face of the Cioch, taking the obvious crack-line. Start and finish by easy slabs. The top crux part of the crack is well protected with a rest on a ledge out to the left, (6b).

BLAVEN — *Eventide* 60m, Severe.

M. McLeod & C. Moody. 7th August, 1983.

A face lies above the south-east buttress running parallel to it. At the right hand side of the face is a short steep chimney.

Start at a grassy bay below chimney about 15m above a large cave. Climb wall to chimney, up chimney and crack continuation which bears left finishing after a bulge.

NEIST POINT, Lighthouse Area — *Westcoastin* 27m, E2.

D. Dinwoodie & C. Maclean. 12th November, 1983.

The first main chimney-groove west of the foghorn. Sustained crux section, (5b).

— *Westagain* 27m, Hard Very Severe.

C. Maclean, D. Dinwoodie & M. Hamilton. 12th November, 1983.

The next main chimney-crack west again.

— *Neisty Beisty* 27m, E3.

D. Dinwoodie and Others. 13th November, 1983.

A crack and groove line left of the above. The groove is characterised by undercut blocks and flakes and lies left of an obvious crack, yo-yoed, (5c).

THE ORGAN PIPES

The following routes are on a cliff for which the name 'The Organ Pipes' has been suggested. For access go about 4 miles north of Uig and take the road signposted 'Camus More.' Follow this and take the first turn on the right (just before a cattle grid); park at the end of the road. Go down the field to the cliff and on the left (due west) a pillar can be seen forming a natural arch with the main cliff. A further hundred yards to the west a sea stack can be seen. An easy descent can be made a further fifty yards west.

— *The Mitre* 27m, Severe.

J. Moffat & C. Dale. 2nd April, 1984.

The sea stack; take the cracks in the east face, keep to the left side of the face.

– *King Canute*

48m, E2/3.

J. Moffat & C. Dale. 3rd April, 1984.

Takes the seaward face of the pillar that forms a natural arch with the main cliff.

Climb the slender face (just over a metre at the narrowest) to peg runner, move up awkwardly then move around the right arete to flake foothold, climb up to good jugs, (35m, 5c). Climb the crackline to the top, (13m, 4b).

CAIRNGORMS

LOCHNAGAR – *Tough Guy*

120m, GRADE V.

C. Maclean & A. Nisbet (first 3 pitches and escape ramp). 18th December, 1984.

B. Davison & A. Nisbet (alternative start and true finish). 26th December, 1984.

The natural way in winter was different but still close to the summer route. From the foot of *Tough-Brown Direct* climb a short wall (maybe banked out) and descend leftwards down a shelf onto the front face. Start at the base of this shelf.

Go up, then left to gain and climb a crackline which passes a roof on its right and leads up to a huge block belay (30m). Behind the block is a corner. Make one move up the corner, then exit round its left rib to the rockfall scar. Traverse under this and climb its left edge to reach the long ledge. Go rightwards up the long ledge to its end, (30m, two old pegs here). Swing left and go up on thin vegetation, then take a thin crack slanting leftwards (crux) to reach the escape rake. The thin crack is immediately right of the summer crux. Go up and left to a big flake which leads out left (on summer route). It was heavily verglassed so a circuitous route on the right was taken to its top. Belay on left (35m). Continue diagonally left into the trough and finish up this.

Alternative Start (60m): Climb the first pitch of *Mort*. Traverse right along the grass terrace and crawl behind the huge block. Continue rightwards to the huge block belay.

– *The Argonaut*

200m, GRADE VI.

E. Todd & C. Dale. 17th March, 1984.

Start at the snow recess to the left of *Black Spout Wall* (summer route) that is just to the left of the huge rectangular recess between *Route 1* and *Route 2* of Black Spout Pinnacle.

Climb the right hand groove with an overhung block at about 3m. Follow the groove until an exit is made onto the slab; tension across to a mossy groove on the left (could go free with a thicker glaze of ice). Follow this to a snow arete, belay, (43m). Climb the wall directly above the stance until the corner groove on the left can be gained, up this to roofs, traverse right to spike belay, (18m). Make an awkward move right to a small recess then go up overhanging cracks. Directly above these exit rightwards and follow the fault rightwards to short wall, belay, (15m). Follow the rightward trending groove finishing by a V chimney to exit onto a snowy gangway below the 'Inhospitable Crack' (45m). (This is the first belay for *Route 2*). Continue as for *Route 2*.

NORTHERN CORRIES, Coire an Lochain – *When the Wind Blows* 105m, GRADE VI.

W. Todd & C. Dale. 1st March, 1984.

Follows the initial groove of *Bulgy* to below the double roofs, then traverses left to finish as for *Gaffers Groove* summer finish.

Start below the groove just to the left of *Savage Slit*: up this to a square cut overhang/recess, over this to a mossy groove below the double roofs of *Bulgy*, belay, (42). Descend the groove and traverse left from its base through overhangs, up a shallow groove to an overhang, through this and the continuation groove to the corner on the left, belay, (18m). (Junction with *Gaffers Groove* summer line). Up corner groove to top, (45m).

– *Ventricle*

GRADE VI.

C. Maclean & A. Nisbet. 27th December, 1984.

A technical testpiece with difficult sections separated by big ledges. The initial overhanging crack was climbed, then a traverse right to pull into a hidden groove just

beyond a huge old peg. Above this the line was two consecutive overhanging 'V' grooves (one aid-point in second) left of the slabbier summer line. The summer line was now rejoined for its main groove pitch. Instead of climbing the last summer pitch (the wide crack), a chimney in the next bay to the right was taken.

NOTES: Hunt Hill, Glen Esk – *Eagles Fall*. This name is suggested for the ice-fall which forms on the left side of the Eagles Crag above the Falls of Unich (Map Ref 385805). The ice-fall was climbed on the 27th January, 1985 by B. Findlay and G. Strange, 90m, GRADE IV.

BEN NEVIS

Moonlight Gully Buttress – Gaslight 90m, Very Difficult.
G. Adam & N. Muir. 19th July, 1984.

Climb buttress between *Right Hand Chimney* and the right hand edge to below the large roof. Step into *Right Hand Chimney* to bypass the roof. Traverse right above roof to gain right edge of buttress. Climb edge to top.

Douglas Boulder – Militant Chimney 180m, Very difficult.
G. Adam & N. Muir. 20th July, 1984.

The main feature of this climb is a chimney/crack between *Direct Route II* and left hand chimney.

Climb small buttress directly to grass terrace, belay 5m left of start of *Left Hand Chimney*. Climb straight up knobby wall, then up grooves to belay on right of ledge. Climb corner/chimney to ledge. Continue up smooth slabs above to join other routes to top.

– *Direct Route III* 180m, Very Difficult.
G. Adam & N. Muir. 20th July, 1984.

This is an indifferent route just left of *Direct Route*. The route starts in the bay 'where the groove steepens to form an open chimney' of the *Direct Route*.

Climb clean slabs and walls to a groove (avoid easy ground on left), continue up to a steep wall then go round leftward rising ramp, up to ledge below loose corner. Climb groove and corner on left then traverse right. Finish up broken ground to top.

South Trident Buttress – The Rattler 75m, Severe.
G. Adam & N. Muir. 11th August, 1984.

Start about 15m left of *The Groove Climb*. Climb chimney to ledge, (27m). Step over top of chimney onto groove/crack to reach ledge. Climb steep wall on large holds to large ledge, (33m). Climb corner/flake to top, (15m).

No. 3 Gully Buttress – The Banshee 120m, Very Severe.
G. Adam & N. Muir. 11th August, 1984.

This climb takes a line between *Souix Wall* and *Thompson's Route*.

Climb corner/chimney to belay on ledge, (may be same belay as *Souix Wall*). Climb narrow corner with crack for 9m, move right a short distance, then up grooves and walls to overlook *Thompson's Route*, belay above black corner. Continue up broken corner above to the large platform. Climb directly up to top.

– *Direct Route* 120m, GRADE V/VI.
M. Duff & J. Tinker. 16th March, 1985.

Start at an icefall to the left of Number Three Gully Buttress. Climb this and the obvious chimney/groove above, then grooves to reach the foot of the icy corner. Climb this and an easier pitch to the cornice.

– *Sod's Law*

GRADE V/VI.

J. Tinker & M. Duff. 19th January, 1985.

Start at the ledge below the chimney of *Route One* (on this occasion, reached by the direct start to *Route Two*). Move left 5m and make a hard move up a steep crack to reach a turf line. Follow this to below overhangs, then traverse right into the top pitch of *Route One*.

Garadh Butress – *Vanishing Glories*

105m, Very Difficult.

G. Adam & N. Muir. 12th August, 1984.

The main feature is the prow of rock at the top of the buttress facing the Trident Butresses.

Start 8m left of a small black cave on the lower buttress. Climb up fault to terrace, belay 10m right of blank corner, (42m). Climb leftward rising fault, then up mossy groove until arete on left can be climbed to a ledge, move along ledge to belay in crack below the right hand corner of the prow, (42m). Climb up corner/crack to top.

– *Point Blank*

300m, GRADE VI.

M. Duff & J. Tinker. 4th March, 1984.

Climbs the buttress immediately right of *Point Five Gully*. Climb a steep groove between *Left Edge Route* and *Point Five* to a snow patch. Take the groove above, as for *Left Edge Route*, but go on up the slabby corner for 10m to a poor stance. Go down and slightly right to enter a prominent steep groove/chimney. Go up this with a move onto the right wall, then back by a bizarre move into the groove. Continue up this to an overhang, then across a slabby wall left to the retaining wall of *Point Five*. Enter *Point Five* by hard moves, then up 5m and back on to the buttress to a spike belay. Take the groove on the left, then short corners trending right. Easier to summit.

NOTE: After the short third pitch of *Point Blank*, it is possible to keep to the edge overlooking *Point Five*. This has been done previously by D. Wilkinson & Partners, but they started up *Left Edge Route*. A continuous ascent of the edge would give a superb route.

GLENCOE**STOB COIRE NAN LOCHAN** – *Unicorn*

GRADE VI.

C. Maclean & A. Nisbet. 24th January, 1985.

On the first pitch the corner was followed direct (one nut for aid, one rest). The next two pitches took the summer route up the corner (one rest on each). Due to darkness the final pitch was avoided; a traverse left for 15m was made beyond a bottomless corner to climb a back and knee chimney with a difficult entry (last pitch of *Tilt?*).

The cliff was plastered white with powder but there was no ice.

– *Spectre (Alternative Start)*

GRADE IV.

M. Duff, M. Garrett & R. Nowak. 1st February, 1985.

Climb the shelf below the original start. Continue up a chimney and the shelf above (50m). Step up and left round and cross a slab to join *Spectre*.

– *The Art of Zen*

GRADE VI.

I. Kennedy & M. Duff. 18th February, 1982.

Start at a chimney just right of *S. C. Gully*. Climb it to a pedestal belay on the left. Follow ice-glazed rock back right to corner, up this passing a small roof to below large overhangs. Vertical verglass on left wall to reach over roof, right through roof to a very steep groove; follow this for 20m to a stance. Right to reach last pitch of *Central Grooves*.

NOTE: We understand that the first ascenders abseiled off from the top of pitch 2. Pitches 1 and 2 of *East Face Route* (SMCJ 1983) appear to be the same as pitch 1 of the above route, Ed.

STOB COIRE NAM BEITH – *The Corridors, alternative direct start*

M. Duff & S. Picknett. 3rd January, 1985.

GRADE IV.

Between the original start and the direct start is a narrow chimney. Follow this to belay ledge.

AONACH DUBH, North Face – *Two Shakes*

250m, GRADE III.

M. Duff & A. Greig. 24th January, 1984.

Takes the buttress right of *Findlay's Rise*. Start up the diagonal gully running right from a snow basin below and right of *Findlay's Rise*. Move onto the buttress on the right and take a diagonal line to a terrace. Go right 30m and climb the headwall by the turf 'V' groove.

– *The Twarf*

120m, Very Severe.

M. McLeod & C. Moody. 21st May, 1984.

To the right of *Fall-Out* a short chimney leads to 'V' grooves. The left groove was taken after which there was a choice of routes.

The difficulties are short-lived but the rock is better than neighbouring routes.

– *Fingals Chimney*

GRADE V.

J. Moffat & C. Dale. 25th March, 1984.

Not a natural winter route but a classic line giving four hard pitches.

LOST VALLEY, Minor Buttress – *Left Edge Route*

76m, GRADE III.

J. Moffat & C. Dale. 25th February, 1984.

Start to the left of *Chimney Route*. Follow the obvious gangway up left for 43m. Belay below a short corner. Up this to top.

NOTES:

Buachaille Etive Mor, Great Gully Upper Buttress – *June Crack Direct* was reported in SMCJ 1984. C. Moody notes that he climbed it on 5th July, 1979 with M. Orr and that as it avoids the guidebook crux it had probably been climbed before.

THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS**BEINN AN DOTHADH, Creag Coire an Dothaidh** – *The Firebird*

K. V. Crocket & A. Walker. 16th February, 1985.

170m, GRADE III.

Start about 30m, up and left of *Salamander Gully*, at an icefall. (See SMCJ 31, p.59, 1976). Climb the icefall, then an easy angled scoop to below a rock buttress. Thread through the buttress, finishing via rightwards ramp seen from the approach.

A shorter gully further left again was also climbed; at II/III.

ARROCHAR**BEINN AN LOCHAIN, Loch an Restil Face** – *Toad*

400m, GRADE III.

K. Schwartz & G. Moffat. February, 1983.

Start right of lowest rocks directly below summit. A very narrow 30m ice gully is followed by wider gully. One further obvious pitch and snow slopes give access to the obvious diagonal shelf rising left to right across the whole face. Left across shelf to easy-angled ice fall (partially climbed earlier, i.e. steps encountered) leading to large 'V' shaped cascade which is turned on left via cave pitch. Mixed ground above to summit.

The diagonal shelf mentioned provides an easy GRADE I ascent/descent.

On Beinn an Lochain there is a small impressive crag at GR 222 086 with several ice-falls. The state of build up can be seen from the road in Glen Kinglas.

— *Benylin*

60m, GRADE III/IV.

W. Hood. 28th January, 1984.

Obvious gully on right hand side of face. The right hand finish was taken.

GLEN FYNE — *Fyne Falls*

69m, GRADE III.

W. Hood & R. Turner. 19th January, 1985.

This is the waterfall facing north-west directly above bridge at GR 228 159. The fall runs into a hydro collecting dam (not marked). The frozen pool gave access to the base of the fall.

THE TROSSACHS, Achray Wall

G. E. Little writes, 'This short though impressive crag is situated 300m N.E. of the Achray Hotel, at the roadside (Grid Ref: 504 066 1:50,000 Sheet 57). There are half a dozen, or so, routes but the two described are the best and the longest. Protection is not easy to arrange but 'top roping' is facilitated by numerous sturdy trees at the top of the crag.

This crag was not depicted on the latest 1:10,000 Ordnance Survey Map but this serious omission has now been rectified!

— *The Bow*

25m, Hard Very Severe.

G. E. Little. 25th June, 1983.

Start at open groove at lowest point of the crag (facing the road). Climb the groove to niche, up slabby ramp, to the left, then climb trending rightwards to the top and tree belay.

— *The Arrow*

22m, Extremely Severe.

G. E. Little & P. Linning. 14th August, 1983.

This route climb the vague hanging groove to the right of *The Bow*. It is of high quality and very strenuous. A peg for protection is in situ high up, (5c).

Climbing on this crag can conveniently be combined with a day on Ben An, although the climbing is of a much more serious nature.

ARRAN

CIRMHOR, Lower West Face — *Lawyer's Leap*

126m, Hard Very Severe.

B. Davison, S. Kennedy, N. Morrison & A. Nisbet. 29th May, 1983.

Takes the line of the large curving corner between *Fourth Wall* and *Sou'wester Slabs* which develops into an overhanging wall in its upper part. Climb the first pitches of *Fourth Wall* to the point where *Sou'wester Slabs* diverges right, (48m). Climb directly up slabs by a series of thin layback cracks to reach the corner proper. Climb to the top of the corner and pull onto the overhanging wall above (peg in situ) before making committing moves out leftwards onto the slab above. Continue up slab to belay, (39m, 5a). Six metres above is the junction with *West Flank Route*. An independent finish was made by traversing ten metres right onto a large area of slab which was climbed directly to reach *South Ridge Direct*, (39m).

Upper East Face — *True Grit*

85m, E1.

C. Maclean & A. Nisbet. 5th May, 1984.

Just left of *Minotaur* is a prominent line of flakes, which is the route. An obvious line, but this rock is gritty. Start below and left of the flake-line (10m left of *Minotaur*).

Climb a grassy corner until a traverse right across a slab and a short crack leads to the base of the flake-line. Climb a decaying jutting flake, a cheval!, (crux, independent protection), then the main flake to its top, (40m, 5a). Go slightly right, then up on thin flakes and left to a grass tongue directly above the belay ground. Trend left to a good ledge to belay, (35m, 4c). A slab and short overhanging corner leads to the Pinnacle crest, (10m).

– *Skydiver Direct*

80m, E2.

C. Maclean & A. Nisbet. 7th May, 1984.

The original route *Skydiver* was somewhat extraordinary and is now superseded by this direct, free line. One of the best climbs in Arran, very exposed but always well-protected.

Left of *True Grit* is a big arete topped by a huge lug of rock. Start just left of the arete, via a corner and pull right on to a tiny stance on the arete, (15m, 5a). Climb the superb twin-cracked corner above to a sloping stance under the roof, (15m, 5b). Make a contorted move into the groove behind the lug and follow it to another small stance beside a detached flake (good nut placements in a crack on its right), (10m, 5c). Stand on the flake and climb a crack to a horizontal break. Move right to reach a flake. Climb the flake and twin roofs above to a recess. Pull out right and up slabs to a good ledge (common with *True Grit*). Finish up the same overhanging corner, (40m).

South Face – *Stirrup*

80m, E2.

C. Maclean & A. Nisbet. 5th May, 1984.

Takes the crackline left of *West Flank Route* – a fine pitch with a very tenuous section. Start from the stance between the two West Flank chimneys (most easily reached by pitch one of *Hammer* – 20m, 4b).

Traverse left on undercuts and climb the crack till it peters out. Two pockets are the key to the upper continuation, (20m, 5c). Climb the slab left of *West Flank Route*, then join it. Follow a layback corner which is the lower continuation of the *South Ridge* layback, (40m, 4b). Finish up *South Ridge*; Lovat's variation is the logical line.

COIRE NAN CEUM – *Pegasus*

40m, Hard Very Severe.

G. E. Little & R. J. Little. 9th July, 1983.

This enjoyable one pitch climb follows an obvious line of weakness near the left edge of the main face.

Start below narrows of gully (*Ardito*) left of main face.

Traverse horizontally right to blocks. Go directly up to surmount block overhang at narrowest point (crux). Move right and climb crack line, with knobbly rock, to grass ledge. Step right and up short rib to belay.

– *Achilles*

45m, E3.

G. E. Little (unseconded). 29th April, 1984.

This spectacular one pitch climb takes a central line, on the pale grey wall, right of *Ulysses*.

Start 6m to the right of the start of *Ulysses* at the highest point of turf ledge. Climb wall to gain easy leftwards facing flakes. From the top of these a second and fragile flake system can be gained by difficult moves on the left. This leads, by a long stretch, to two parallel horizontal weaknesses. Traverse left, with considerable difficulty, along these for 7m, to a rightwards facing flake at foot level. The blank wall above is climbed using one bolt for aid (in situ) and gives access to a crack and flake system which leads strenuously to the top. Precleaned by abseil, (6a).

NOTES

Ulysses, SMCJ 1983 p.381 is 54m long, i.e. two pitches 26m (5c) and 28m (5c). The published version suffers from some arithmetical ambiguities!

C. Dale notes that *The Bluff* should probably be graded E1, 5b when it is climbed totally free and that *Bogle* (E2, 5c) dries out more quickly than one is led to believe.

SOUTHERN UPLANDS**NOTES**

G. E. Little notes that *The Highwayman* (SMCJ 1983 p.382) was first climbed by G. E. Little and J. Dykes on 12th April, 1968.

OUTCROPS

DUNGLASS, By Strathblane – Overlord

30m, E1.

G. E. Little & A. Savage. 21st January, 1982.

This route takes the prominent nose formed by the junction of the E. and N.E. faces.

Start 10m to the right of *Dunglass Corner*. Climb shattered rib into scoop and up to peg runner (in situ). Move left and up to below bulging rock. Move up then right (5c) to gain corner crack. Wend through bulges, step right and up to belay.

This route was originally climbed with one point of aid, at the crux. This was eliminated by P. Linning and G. E. Little on 7th July, 1983.

NOTES

The new guide to **outcrops in Southern and Central Scotland** is about to be published. The following is an account of the highlights of 1984/85, by Gary Latter. The routes are all included in the guide.

With most of the established outcrops in Southern and Central Scotland being fairly comprehensively worked out over the last few years, it wasn't surprising that the discovery of a fine abandoned quarry bowl at Cambusbarron, near Stirling would stimulate interest.

Tony Kay and Ron Cowells climbed the striking S-shaped crackline in the centre of the face at the tail end of 1983 to give the quarry its first route – *Big Country Dreams* (E3 6a). During 1984 over a dozen routes were added, most of which gave excellent hard climbing, mainly following prominent cracks and grooves. Craig Macadam added *Visions of Monaco* (E3 5c) left of the original route, along with *The Purrblind Doomster* (E4 6a) further right. This last route was later led without its in situ protection by Kenny Spence, who then went on to add *Quasi Pulls Through* (E3 6a) up the steep reddish groove just right, sporting a long reach for a good hidden hold on the crux.

Murray Hamilton made an appearance with *Formica Crack* (E3 – 6a) up a prominent hand crack, along with a sustained pitch up a crack and groove on the far right at E4 6a, and the right bounding corner of the face which became the quarries easiest route at E1 + 5c.

Duncan McCallum climbed *Oink Oink* (E2 + 5c) and the fine testpiece *Both Ends Burning* (E4 + 6b) up a well cleaned fingercrack splitting a featureless wall. The awkward grooveline on the left extracted a *Quantum Grunt* (E3 + 6a) from Gerry Pedley, the start of this route being made slightly harder by the unnatural disappearance of a small tree. The last route of the Summer was Gary Latter's *Power of Endurance* (E5 6b) up the impressive wall on the left.

On the Glasgow and Edinburgh outcrops, attention focused on some of the last big lines in the quarries. At Auchinstarry, *Bladerunner* was climbed direct and without the peg runner by Latter, making it a better and more independent line at E5 – 6b. Chris Dale soloed a bold line up the left hand side of the Mascarade wall to give *High Dive* (E3 + 5b), whilst McCallum climbed the 'last great problem' of the quarry up the blank looking wall rising from the pool which became *Surface Tension* (E5 – 6b) on which he pre-placed a crucial peg runner.

In the East, the pool at the foot of Lennie Quarry was drained in the Summer, making access to the foot of the routes much easier and consequently resulting in a renewed interest in the place. First route to fall was Hamilton's excellent find *Hard Contract* (E5 6b) which tackles a fingertip crack up a short smooth wall, and is said to be one of the best routes in the area. The obvious grooveline just right of this provided an E3 6a to Latter, entitled *Eliminator*. Rab Anderson followed the thin vertical crack at the extreme left end of the face to give *White Tide* (E2 5c), and Dale climbed the central grooveline with a couple of peg runners – *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (E3 + 5c).

McCallum created a fairly controversial pitch when he placed two bolts and a peg on the stunning central arete of the face. Despite the in situ protection, the route is still said to be a very bold proposition as the peg runner is very poor and would probably not hold a fall – *Staying Alive* (E5 6a).

Latter realised the potential of the previously overlooked crags in Glen Croe (Arrochar) when he discovered *Pockets of Excellence* (E5 6a) up the intricate bulging groove line to the right of the central groove line on the first crag from the road.

In the South West, on Meikle Ross, Derek Austin succeeded on the prominent first crack and overhanging groove on the steepest part of Fox Craig – *Corridors of Power* (E3 5c). Macadam added the first of a number of eliminate routes on the Little Zawn with *Sunshine Superman* (E4 6a) which offers sustained climbing up the wall next to *Mellow Yellow*.

On the now quite popular granite crags of Clifton, Austin produced *Beyond the Terminator* (E3 5c) and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (E4 6a) up a bold arete, the runners at the crux being too poor to stop a ground fall. Macadam countered with *Toddamundo* (E4 6a) which is now direct and complete and thought to be the best route on the crag.

THE BRACK, Elephant Gully – A little history

In these days of comprehensive guide-books and instant communication it is difficult to imagine that three parties could climb the same route over a span of six years with both second and third parties believing that they were making the first ascent. Janet Adam Smith has kindly provided information about the following ascent.

‘On the 21st of May 1910, George Buchanan Smith, whose father was an early member of the SMC and who later became a member himself (he was killed in 1915), finished an exam at Glasgow University and caught the train to Balloch. From there he cycled to Arrochar where he met James Wordie (who later became famous as a polar explorer) and another fellow-student. On the following Monday they walked to Glen Croe and climbed up to the crags on the north face of The Brack, having chosen ‘a big chimney on the right-hand portion of the cliffs’ as their route. In a letter to his father, George Buchanan Smith describes in accurate detail what can only have been an ascent of the deeply recessed gully eventually named by its third ascensionist, Harold Raeburn, as Elephant Gully. Before leading the conventional second pitch, George tried to climb a crack in the vertical, right-hand wall, using the ‘overlapping of the crack for handhold’ – he gave up after ‘standing on Wordie’s head for about five minutes.’ Having removed ‘wet moss’ and having been intrigued, as others since, by the ‘curious funnel of loose stones’ of the last pitch, he assumed that his party had made the first ascent. In fact the gully was first climbed in 1906 by A. C. McLaren and two of the Shadbolt brothers – the same McLaren who made the first traverse of the Cuillin Ridge with another of the Shadbolts – but their summary description in the SMCJ would have been easily missed, (SMCJ 1906, IX, p.144 and article p.20-24).

Four years later Harold Raeburn also assumed that he was making the first ascent. In an article, characteristically appreciative of all aspects of mountain scenery, Raeburn describes its exploration by his own party, (SMCJ 1912, XII, p.209). They found the same ‘moss drapery’ on the right wall of the first pitch and the same ‘long, slanting tunnel’ lined with ‘superabundant loose stones’ of the last pitch, and only realised that theirs was not the first ascent when they saw a cairn – the one made by Buchanan Smith’s party – close by the top of the route.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

Congrès International de Médecine de Montagne. – Chamonix Mont-blanc, France. 22-24 March, 1984. – *Our representative on the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland, Dr Alastair MacGregor sends us this report: –*

Having booked a skiing holiday in Chamonix I discovered there was a major UIAA medical commission congress, an '*L'Eplusement en Altitude*' – debility of altitude. I sought financial support from a pharmaceutical company but unfortunately this fell far short of what was required to cover the extra expense of going earlier and the congress fee. The SMT generously agreed to meet most of the outstanding expenses.

The congress was organised by Dr Jacques Foray of the Chamonix Hospital Mont Blanc and was held in the suitably named 'Majestic' – a converted Victorian Hotel near the tourism office. The congress took the form of formal lectures in the mornings and afternoons with illustrated posters depicting small studies and on interesting cases of various factors of altitude medicine. In the evenings short seminars with three speakers were held lasting up to midnight. There was also a small trade exhibition in adjoining rooms.

There were 23 UIAA member nations present and with the obvious multi-lingual variation in those present, 'simultaneous' translation of the lectures had been arranged in 6 languages. Unfortunately the translation was poor in content and audibility and frequently out of phase with the slides being projected by the lecturer. The darkness for the slides precluded any significant notes being taken. Fortunately a book on the proceedings of the conference will be available in English free of charge to all those attending and £140 for those not at the conference! The copy I receive will belong to the SMC.

The first morning was taken up with biochemical sources of energy and how these were affected by altitude. Generally one was left with the impression that many of the experiments were stating what was already known by regular high altitude climbers: – you lose weight and undergo muscle loss at altitude. The afternoon session contained detailed molecular studies on how blood cells adapted to altitude and was above the head of this observer and everyone else he discussed it with. This was followed by an excellent series of lectures on altitude pulmonary and cerebral oedema. Charles Clark (UK) introduced a new concept of ultra high altitude cerebral oedema – occurring at greater heights than 7000 m in apparently well acclimatised individuals, many of whom have been at altitude without any previous problems. The aetiology of this condition remains obscure but intercurrent infection (? sinusitis), sleep hypoxia (low oxygen in blood) and the generally debilitating effect of prolonged exposure to high altitude all play apart. The resulting cerebral oedema is noted for its severity and rapid onset often associated with blindness and not always preceded by pulmonary oedema, making it difficult to anticipate and treat successfully.

New evidence was presented suggesting that the high volumes of cold, dry air breathed at altitude had a contributory role in the development of pulmonary oedema, including a thermal injury in the lungs similar to that seen in burns' victims. Following from this it was suggested that breathing warmed humidified air (not oxygen) may have a short-term beneficial/preventative role in treatment of pulmonary oedema. The use of acetazolamide was generally felt to have no significant place in the prevention of acute mountain sickness/pulmonary oedema in serious mountaineering expeditions.

The first evening had a fascinating series of presentations along the theme of what makes a successful high altitude mountaineer. The Soviet's medical representative, E. Grippenreiter, discussed a variety of tests used to predict which members of a Soviet Everest expedition were likely summit candidates. The tests proved nothing because two climbers, almost rejected as summit material, made successful ascents. This was followed by a paper on the personal physiological characteristics of six élite high altitude climbers. This was presented by Dr O. Oelz – Reinhold Messner's regular expedition doctor. He showed that this élite group were 'no fitter than average national team marathon runners.' Extrapolating Messner's sea level physiological parameter to the summit of Everest, showed that it was physiologically impossible for him to survive on the summit without oxygen. Dr Oelz was sure of his figure but stated that there was an unquantifiable facet to Messner's character related to his drive and ambition which enabled him to achieve the physiologically impossible.

The morning of the second day was devoted to formal presentations of the scientific posters. However, the organising committee had negotiated up to 70% reduction in ski-lifts for the morning, resulting in 95% of the congress being on the Aiguille du Midi/-

Vallee Blanche. Having there suffered the effects of altitude the afternoon was devoted to the biochemical mechanism of altitude debility and frost-bite. The latter subject was expertly dealt with by the congress organiser – surgical consultant in charge of the Chamonix Hospital, Jacques Forey. He dealt with the cause, effect and management of frost-bite, succinctly suggesting the best treatment being avoidance. He advocated the use of simple common sense procedures – gentle digital rewarming, rehydration, adequate asepsis and surgical fasciectomy of stretched tissues. He and the conference were generally dismissive of vasodilators and Arvin – viper venom! He and other continentals favoured humidified hot air/oxygen rewarming of hypothermia victims. This method was pioneered by Dr Evan Lloyd of Edinburgh but has been dismissed by UK ‘experts.’ However, there is evidence to suggest it has a use in moderate – mild hypothermia where the victim is conscious. During these presentations it was suggested by a member of the crack Alpine Rescue Organisations that aggressive cardiopulmonary resuscitation should begin as soon as possible in profound hypothermia even in the field situation. This is contrary to all current recommendations but several documented cases of proven cardiac arrest, lasting over 2 plus hours, were quoted, the victims being successfully resuscitated.

In summary, the congress made mountaineering history being the first gathering of the world’s experts on high altitude medicine. The stimulus of such a meeting can only add to our pursuit of knowledge and understanding of high altitude medicine. There appeared a watershed developing, separating the theoretical physiologists in the laboratories of Geneva, Innsbruck and Milan from the young aggressive medical men, outstanding mountaineers in their own right, who were more interested in field knowledge gained in the Himalayas and the Andes. This observer is grateful for the chance he had to be present at this meeting.

The Compleat Eleat. The following tidal wave of compleaters has been received in the usual disorder along the time dimension. No apology or even sympathy is offered to misplaced members of this now far from exclusive club.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| (323) Ketchil San, 1971, -, -, 1969; | (354) George J. Borland, 1984, 1984, -; |
| (324) G. P. Deasy, 1979, 1983, 1983; | (355) Ian Milne, 1984, 1984, -; |
| (325) *Neil Mather, 1980, 1980, 1980; | (356) Janet A. Davies, 1984, -, 1982; |
| (326) Chris. P. Jackson, 1981, -, -; | (357) John D. Davies, 1984, -, 1982; |
| (327) R. S. Logan, 1981, 1981, 1981, | (358) Michael B. Slater, 1984, -, -; |
| 1984, 1984, -; | (359) Alf Barnard, 1984, -, -; |
| (328) A. G. Hayley, 1981, 1981, 1981; | (360) Charles Alexander, 1984, 1984, -; |
| (329) Donald Lamont, 1981, -, -; | (361) K. W. Deas, 1984, -, -; |
| (330) Hugh Lyons, 1982, 1983, 1965; | (362) Hugh Lyons, 1982, 1983, 1965; |
| (331) James Gallacher, 1982, -, -; | (363) David Binns, 1982, -, -; |
| (332) Stephen Bateson, 1983, -, 1983; | (364) Brian Dick, 1984, -, -; |
| (333) Jack Winters, 1983, -, -; | (365) Nigel M. Suess, 1984, -, -; |
| (334) J. G. M. McCreath, 1984, -, -; | (366) D. Ashton, 1984, -, -; |
| (335) Graeme Carracher, 1984, -, -; | (367) Gillian Mather, 1984, -, 1984; |
| (336) Stephen T. Ramsden, 1984, -, -; | (368) W. M. Morrison, 1984, -, -; |
| (337) Robert Rae, 1984, -, -; | (369) J. M. Souness, 1984, -, -; |
| (338) Margaret Rae, 1984, -, -; | (370) A. R. Sutherland, 1984, -, -; |
| (339) Robert H. Morton, 1984, -, -; | (371) Helen Donnelly, 1984, 1984, -; |
| (340) Eric L. Furness, 1984, -, -; | (372) *Donald J. Bennet, 1984, -, -; |
| (341) J. F. Fedo, 1984, -, -; | (373) J. N. S. Neill, 1984, -, -; |
| (342) Alice Simons, 1984, -, -; | (374) **Pat Ransley, 1984, -, -; |
| (343) Tim Simons, 1984, -, -; | (375) Robert H. McDonald, 1984, -, -; |
| (344) Iain K. MacLeod, 1984, -, -; | (376) Simon Stewart, 1984, 1984, -; |
| (345) John Burdin, 1984, -, -; | (377) Neil Stewart, 1984, -, -; |
| (346) J. N. S. Neill, 1984, 1985, -; | (378) William A. Bain, 1984, -, -; |
| (347) Howard Ashton, 1984, -, -; | (379) John G. Wallace, 1984, -, -; |
| (348) Ken Davies, 1984, -, -; | (380) Tom Stewart, 1984, -, -; |
| (349) David C. Culshaw, 1984, -, -; | (381) J. T. Robertson, 1984, -, -; |
| (350) Ian D. Clark, 1984, -, -; | (382) Roger Stonebridge, 1985, -, -; |
| (351) George Keeping, 1984, -, -; | (383) Martin Moran, 1985, -, -; |
| (352) John Howard, 1984, -, -; | (384) J. M. Gear, 1985, 1985, -; |
| (353) Robert H. Morton, 1984, -, -; | |

The following have added even more lustre to their escutcheons by compleating the Tops and/or Furth or doing the Munros proper twice.

- | | |
|--|---|
| (16) *C. V. Dodgson, 1951, 1951, 1952; | (216) Jeremy Fenton, 1980, 1984, 1982; |
| (76) Matthew Moulton, 1980, 1982 & 1982, | (275) D. C. Phillips, 1982, 1982, 1983; |
| - , 1982; | (260) Geraldine Guestsmith, 1981, 1983, |
| (106) John Gillies, 1971, - , 1982; | - & 1984, - , - ; |
| (143) A. E. Law, 1976, 1983, 1983; | Also, |
| (215) D. Alastair Baird, 1980, 1981, 1982; | (327) R. S. Logan has done the Corbetts |

The following excerpts are from this year's correspondence:

(375) R. H. MacDonald did 235 summits alone, including his last one – stone cold sober; (333) Jack Winters comments that he found the Munros the easy bit – it was much more of a struggle to get his name recorded on the list of the Eleat.

(351) George Keeping did all of his on foot in one long march eschewing the aid of bicycle or canoe. He did use ferries, however. No one has yet compleated on foot including swimming the Sound of Mull and Kyleakin or Kylerhea. George continued his long march over the Border to finish off the English and Welsh 3000 foot peaks.

Beinn Teallach has been trodden flat by the rush of compleaters who heard about its elevation to the Peakage by an efficient bush telegraph. (355) Ian Milne records that he met three other people on Top who he hadn't met for 10 years. They too were bent on adding it to their list.

(207) Ivan Waller has confirmed his compleation by adding Beinn Teallach, 59 years after he began in 1925. This however, was sheer opportunism and the record for the longest compleation should probably remain with (171) F. Wiley, which took 57 years, (SMCJ, 1979, xxxi, 443).

Munros tempus-maximus is the equivalent of Russian roulette and requires a steady nerve not to compleat sooner than is absolutely necessary. Who knows which year will bear the fatal cartridge?

Munros tempus-brevis is a much more hectic affliction, the most extreme case being that of (383) Martin Moran, who took only 83 days for his motor assisted compleation.

(358) Michael Slater wonders if he is the first Scottish retailer of mountain equipment to compleat – surely a dig at someone here? (369) J. M. Souness and (368) W. M. Morrison compleated simultaneously on the same hill. (370) A. R. Sutherland may be the first man born and bred in Sutherland to compleat.

Now here is a real record. (371) Helen Donnelly made a *monetary donation* to the Tables in gratitude for all the enjoyment she has had from compleating the round. The Malevolent Master of the Tables immediately started to think in terms of a mandatory registration fee from all aspirants. He has been made to desist, however, as only good should come from such an act of spontaneous appreciation.

(16) *C. V. Dodgson, who is now 76, has written an interesting account of a lifetime's hillwalking during which he has climbed every hill in Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland over 2000 feet, some 2349 tops in all. last year he traversed Liathach from East to West including the Fasarinen Pinnacles, in ten hours. In similar vein (191) P. H. Cooper (whose exploits were noted in SMCJ, 1980, xxxii, 74) writes to say that he has done the Munros and Tops a couple more times as well as the Corbetts, Donalds and Tops, the 2000 foot mountains and tops of England and Wales and the County Tops of the British Isles (as per 1974/75 revised County boundaries). These may surely be termed 'superslams.'

Finally Hamish Brown writes to say that his dog Storm compleated the Munros on January 3rd, 1985 to become the second canine Munroist, the first being his previous four footed friend (SMCJ, 1978, xxxi, 292). Hamish himself has compleated his seventh round and has now been to every summit in summer, winter and alone. He concludes 'I think I can retire now. Don't anybody ever give me another dog.'

More Munroopathy – Common compleating or *Munros vulgaris* is a benign condition. The sufferers usually manage to live socially useful lives and do not require treatment themselves although their spouses may benefit from occasional sedation. However, more and more florid forms of the affliction are appearing and the first text book on Munroopathy is imminent. There has been considerable correspondence over the last year from worried

Munrochondriacs who fear that the benign *vulgaris* condition may turn into something worse. For example, *Munrosia alphabeticus*, *M. ordinalis* (*ascendens* or *descendens*), *M. nocturnal*, *M. solensis*, *M. gallopans* and *M. hyperdocumentalis* have all been mentioned. These complications of common compleating are self explanatory. Perhaps the one with the worst prognosis is the gallopans form (galloping Munrosia as it is known among the laity) in which the patient tries to do as many Munros as possible without stopping and as quickly as he, she or it can. Treatment for any of these conditions is an up-hill business.

The state of the Tables – It has been argued that the Munros are by definition those mountains that appeared on Sir Hugh's original list and that no change is possible. Divine Providence, after all, stopped even Munro from revising the list. We have pointed out elsewhere (SMCJ, 1981, xxxii, 180) that if the Munros were finally counted the glamour (in the old Scots sense of that word) would vanish and both they and the people who climb them would be the less for it. Instead of fossilising the list the present uncertainty keeps everyone on the hop and the Munroist must be a crafty hunter as well as a plodding pedant. Nevertheless, we can't help feeling sympathy for one correspondent who wrote after going back to do Beinn Teallach, 'I hope you will not spring any more such surprises as I have been transferred to London.'

Metrication has had the beneficial effect of muddying the issue. When the Malevolent Master of the Tables wrote to the Ordnance Survey to enquire about the height of Sgurr a' Choire-bheith in Knoydart which is given as 914 m, they said that they no longer calculated heights to the first decimal place. Since a Munro is 914.4 the status of Sgurr a' Choire-bheith will not be known until a private expedition (such as that recounted in SMCJ, 1974, xxx, 232-237) sets out to determine this vital information. Till then no Munroists can sleep easy. Similarly who can tell what may happen to the Ross-shire Beinn Dearg? It was once 914 m, too, but in those days the OS had still some decimal places left and Beinn Dearg's was found to be less than .4. Beinn Dearg has only to breathe in a bit and it could be back in the Tables. So why not do everything over, say, 2995 feet to mak siccar? Well, one correspondent has written to say that he did Beinn Teallach some time ago when it was a card-carrying Corbett. Would he need to ascend it again after it had become a Munro in order to count towards the Munro total? The Master of the Tables is inclined to think, yes. Also, a precedent has been set by (327) R. S. Logan who writes 'Incidentally I had done Beinn Teallach as a Corbett. I have yet to do it as a second time as a Munro. I intend to do it in the next month or so.' Clearly for the purists all new elevations to the peakage require to be reclinbed in the full glory of their Munrohood.

Finally Tim Harrison has been seeking new candidates for the Tops. He has located one on Ben Starav and writes 'The offending object is Stob an Duine Ruaidh (NN125411), height 918 m (this is only shown on the 1:25000 map NN04/14). It is separated from its neighbour to the north, Meall Cruidh (930 m, Top 450), by a reascent of 66 m from the col at 852 m. Another (un-named) has been detected on Sgurr nan Ceathreamhnan (Glen Affric), 'approximately a mile north of Stuc Bheag at 052253. The 1:50,000 map shows a 910 m contour and the 1:25,000 one at 914 m. The altimeter read 917 m and the ascent from the bealach to the south was about 40 m.'

In Geoff Cohen's seminal article 'Some Unsolved Mysteries of Munroology' (SMCJ, 1979, xxxi, 423-424) the question was raised as to the location of the centre of gravity of the Munros – taking weight as proportional to height over 3000 feet. (191) P. H. Cooper has written to say that he has calculated the centre of gravity (if that is the right word) to be at Grid Reference NN370921 which is close by the River Roy near the natural bridge.

HOW MacFARLANE SAVED THE GRID

In response to a number of requests we include this epic, a popular party piece by a Senior Member. J. C. Donaldson introduces it with the following exaplantion and apology: –

'How Macfarlane saved the Grid' was conceived during the winter of 1951/52 and in view of the lapse of time some explanation of the circumstances of its birth might be useful to readers who have come on the scene since the fifties.

The JMCS, Glasgow Section, decided during the autumn of 1951 that to enliven the annual dinner there would be a contest for the appointment of Club Bard. Contestants had to make up and deliver a poem or ballad with a mountaineering connection and this ballad was one of the entries.

At the dinner it was prefaced by a statement that it was a work of fiction and that any similarity between the names of characters in the ballad and those of actual persons was pure coincidence, adding that my good friend Stanley Stewart had kindly consented to act in my defence in the event of there being any actions for libel. My good friend had agreed to do this without seeing the ballad.

The characters in the ballad did indeed bear the names of well known members of the SMC or JMCS, and I hope it is not too late to tender my apologies for the liberties I took with them.

In 1951 the nationalisation of the production of electricity was still fresh in peoples minds and this provided the setting. Percy Macfarlane was a natural choice for hero as he had been secretary to the Clyde Valley Electricity Supply Co. and continued in the same office with the South West Electricity Board. Hamish Hamilton, thinly disguised as Lord of Motors, besides being a celebrated climber, was equally well-known for the speed with which he drove to and from the mountains. I might have been more careful in my treatment of Len Lovat if I had known to what high office he was destined. Only a Club of the character and standing of the Creag Dhu could have dared to carry out the onslaught on the Grid. Finally, there was in 1951/52 no ski lift on Meall a Bhuidh so the ballad does have a prophetic note.

Tribute was, course, paid to Macaulay for the inspiration drawn from the Lays of Ancient Rome and perhaps I should explain how the two lines about state and party get a bit mixed up in the ballad. In 1951 the committee of the JMCS held their meetings in the backroom of the State pub in Sauchiehall Street, suitably refreshed by a pie and a pint.

I

MacFarlane P. of Croftfoot, by the nine volts he swore,
That the great lines of pylons should profit show no more;
By the nine volts he swore it, and named a vesting day,
To send electric current out in national array.

II

And as that day departed,
And night was drawing on,
Cried Percy, noble hearted
With loin-cloth girded on
'Let all be for a party
It shall be at the State,
Where we shall eat right hearty,
And drink beer by the crate.'

IV

And while he stood there spouting
At bodies on the floor,
Outside there was a shouting,
And clamour at the door,
And in there burst one crying,
'This dastard crime forbid!
The Creag Dhu Club is trying
To steal the Scottish Grid.'

VI

'And even bolder raids are planned,
To take in all the Grid,
And daily will attacks be manned
Our pylons cut, and booty hid.
And when their schemes are fully fledged
And carried through without mishap,
What little yet remains they're pledged
To sell abroad - as scrap!
And now down Falloch pours a horde,
To seize the South West Scotland Board.

III

There soon the guests were plastered,
Yea, some were on the floor,
But Percy - who had mastered
The art of drink before -
Stood up with sober mien
To say a thing or two
'bout pylons now in being.
But Oh! the guests were fu'.

V

'They've moved the Loch Sloy Power house
Up to the River Coupal,
And they've stolen scores of pylons,
To light the climbs on Buchaille.
Then on Meall a Bhuidh
A skilift is projected
And from the richer skiers
Much profit is expected!'

VII

'MacFarlane,' cried the Chairman,
'Gae summon thou the Board.
We maun hae a Council
To mak' terms wi' this horde.
And telephone to London
To speir what should be done.
And Percy, mak' it urgent,
Or the Board is all undone.'

VIII

Stout Percy gasped and gristled
At the thought of terms to seek.
With rage he fairly bristled
As he rose again to speak.
'Their van will be upon us,
While we sit talking here.
No Council hold. No terms discuss,
Ha' done wi' swilling beer!'

X

'The narrow road by Lomond
Comes winding all the way.
Above it on the hillside
Let us our force display.
And I will lead a forlorn hope
Before the Board's army.
Now - Who will follow on my rope
And save the Grid with me?'

XII

But Hamish, Lord of Motors,
Arose before them all.
And said 'I'll stand by Percy,
Whatever may befall.
I'll drive him up Loch Lomond,
I've been that way before.'
And Percy thanked him kindly
Though he knew his car of yore.

XIV

Len Lovat, also present,
Of legal vintage too,
Was last in accent pleasant
To say what he would do.
He said he was a lawyer
And prepared to act as such.
'But I'm really much too busy.
Your case I cannot touch.'

XVI

Then straight against that great array
The gallant pair went forth,
Ready to hold the narrow way
That comes down from the North.
And Percy on the hillside,
And Hamish down below,
Met the Creag Dhu host in battle,
And dealt them blow for blow.

XVIII

And now, when'er in Glasgow
The folk switch on the light,
And in each little bungalow
Sit by the fireside bright,
They bless the good MacFarlane,
Who saved the Grid that day,
Who brought the light again,
And gives them bills to pay!

IX

And nobly spake MacFarlane
In language truly great:
'To every man upon this earth
Grid cometh soon or late.
And every man may get it
(Though paying through the nose),
So wherefor should we let it
Be stolen by our foes?'

XI

But when the words of Percy
Were heard in that back room,
There fell a sudden silence.
The silence of the tomb.
Then some said 'No, no violence,
'The law'll tak this in hand.'
And others wanted money
Before they'd join his band.

XIII

Then out spake Stanley Stewart
A legal man was he.
'I grieve to see how few art
The men who go with thee,
And I would give thee succour,
And save the Grid and more.
But I cannot hold my liquor
And must lie here on the floor.'

XV

'MacFarlane' quoth the Chairman,
'Go forth and Creag Dhu quell.
The Board will pay your fare, man,
And Hamish's as well.'
But Percy, looking whiter
Than any sheet by far,
Asked: 'Will it be all right Sir,
To use my comrade's car?'

XVII

For Hamish cleared the Lomond Road;
His car the Creag Dhus scattered.
He drove as if the Highway Code
Was not a thing that mattered -
And Percy on the mountainside,
The enemy he battered,
His volleys turned the battle-tide,
That mighty host he shattered.
Then was the Creag Dhu rout completed
And their presumptuous plans defeated.

XIX

And all who climb on Buchaille
Give honour to his name;
And no one passes Coupal
But hears the great man's fame.
For on the mountain's summit
A statue was erected,
And on it this inscription
As by the Board directed:

XX

'Here stands aloft forever,
Let no one this forbid –
The man who failed us never,
MacFarlane of the Grid.'

TECHNICAL SECTION

SHELTERED HOUSING ON ARRAN

By Ian Angell

(see illustration facing page 168)

ARRAN climbing is a frustrating business. 10 miles across the water yet restricted by Cal Mac's timetable, which appears to be designed to prevent any reasonable weekend. Once there all crags seem to require a 3 hour walk, usually through Glen Rosa's bogs or worse and back again. No convenient SMC huts, official and officious camp sites. 'You are asked not to camp past here but if you do you will be charged as if you weren't.' But the climbing is superb and the rock is granite and granite means a multitude of boulders under crags and boulders mean bivouac possibilities. Arran habitués will no doubt have their preferences already, but for others who are tempted a few hints may be usable.

Fionn Coirre – *Cir Mhor South Face*. The most popular climbing on Arran and thus the most likely to have available sites occupied. The best boulder lies directly below *South Ridge*, a cube on edge with two leaning faces, on or other of which protects from most weathers. Some stone walling has been done to help. Other sites abound especially family sized accommodation across the main burn on the slopes of A'Chir.

For those unable to make the final rise into the corrie there is a large boulder between the path to the Saddle and that to Cir Mhor, shortly after the junction. Rather subterranean for any but worst weathers and not easy to find in dark or cloud i.e. when you want it.

Ben Tarsuinn Meadow Face – *Coire a' Bhradain*. Excellent boulder with some good walling to help. Right under the face and just above the meadow itself. In comfort it fits two good friends, who need to be if it rains. Water supplies are good.

Cioch na h'Oighe. Two good boulders. The first is on the lip of Coire na Ciche coming up from Sannox, under *Midnight Ridge*. Plenty of room for two but more building work is needed to protect from the worst of westerly driven rain. If this prevails a more professional storm-proof version exists further into the corrie near the foot of *Ledge three*. This is probably the best in Arran and the corrie is only ¾ hours walk from the road.

Coire nam Ceum. Not actually sampled but the boulder field crossed to reach the crag has plenty of potential.

Coire na h'Uaimh – *Cir Mhor*. A superb corrie. The obvious largest boulder provides reasonable shelter and a magnificent night time view down Glen Sannox across Bute and the Cumbraes. Another large boulder 30 yards further into the corrie and near the foot of some rock slabs give better shelter but less comfort and view.

Coire Daingean – *A'Chir*. The one night spent here resulted in the wettest morning retreat, so no recommendations are given. This was the penalty of assuming a glorious evening would last but there are boulders a plenty. The best is probably near the back of the corrie under *Boundary Ridge*.

To those unconvinced by these visions of paradise, the following may help sort out your feelings.

Advantages

Near crag – first on route.
No tent to carry.
Will not blow down.
Fresh air, view, mountain feel etc.
No temptation to visit Ormidale.

Disadvantages

Close to crag so no excuse for not climbing.
Bivouac sac to carry.
Not water-proof – rain invariably creeps down overhanging rock.
Not midge proof.
May be occupied.
Exposed to fresh air, view, mountain feel etc.
No temptation to visit Ormidale.

SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN ACCIDENTS, 1984

This year the total number of incidents is slightly greater than in 1983 but remains the same if we deduct those alerts which turned out to be false alarms. The number of casualties is down somewhat on the previous two years, although a total of over twenty fatalities remains too high. The *simple slip* be it on grass, rock, or even a path, remains a major cause of accidents to hill walkers, while steep snow and ice slopes collect their annual tally of about a dozen victims who failed to carry or effectively use axe and crampons. Unusual this year is the large number of incidents arising from faulty navigation, often coupled with poor timing. In fact we have omitted a number of occasions when rescue services were alerted because people were overdue but safe return occurred before the rescue began. Readers of the reports will also notice that exceptional wind conditions were partly responsible for no fewer than five deaths in the Cairngorms, in one case the victim being blown off the Fiacail Ridge.

Non-mountaineering demands on the rescue services were greater than ever before. Teams gave assistance with five aircraft crashes, the succour of snow bound motorists, searches for missing persons, and carried out animal rescues. The latter included two dogs and no fewer than 65 sheep, although it must be admitted that this included one flock of 50! As usual, we record our thanks to the various rescue services for the valuable and sometimes disagreeable tasks they perform and to John Hinde who has gathered the accident reports together and produced the edited lists on the following pages. Unfortunately, information is not available to give full details for all incidents.

Dr W. A. Reid of the University of Leeds Department of Pathology has been making a study of mountaineering fatalities which occurred over the last five years. He has discovered four male deaths which were omitted from the accident returns and so never appeared in the statistics! These were on Sgurr nan Gilleann (2.6.79), An Teallach (26.1.80), Beinn Alligin (18.8.81) and The Loch Duntelchaig crags near Inverness (5.6.83).

SEASONAL/ACTIVITY DISTRIBUTION (where known)

	<i>Summer</i>	<i>Winter</i>	<i>Total</i>
Hill walking	61	43	104
Scrambling	4	2	6
Climbing	15	6	21
Skiing/Ski touring	—	4	4
TOTALS	80	55	135
	59%	41%	

CONTRIBUTORY CAUSES OF SOME ACCIDENTS

Poor timing	13	Slips on snow/ice	12
Navigation	27	Glissading	3
Separation	7	Ice axe/crampons	6
Slips/stumbles	22	Avalanche	3
Blown over	1	Climbing/scrambling falls	
		on snow/ice	5
		on rock	13

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION 1984

**The geographical divisions are as used for SMC District Guide Books.*

REGION	CASUALTIES (of which fatalities bracketed)				INCIDENTS Actual Rescues Other Call Outs						Non-Mountain- eering	
	Injury	Exhaust/Exposure Heat Exh./Frostbite	Illness	TOTAL	With Casualties	Cragfast	Lost	Overdue or Benighted	False Alarms	TOTAL INCIDENTS	Casualties	Incidents
Northern Highlands	8 (2)	2	—	10 (2)	9	—	2	5	—	16	1 (1)	5
Western Highlands	2	1	2	5	5	—	1	1	1	8	1 (1)	1
Ben Nevis	8 (2)	—	1	9 (2)	7	—	—	2	3	12	—	—
Glencoe	14 (3)	—	—	14 (3)	12	2	—	—	1	15	—	—
Other Central Highlands	6 (1)	—	—	6 (1)	6	—	2	4	—	12	1 (1)	2
Cairngorms	12 (4)	15 (7)	1 (1)	28 (12)	19	1	10	11	8	49	8 (7)	18
Southern Highlands	13 (1)	3	1 (1)	17 (2)	15	—	2	3	3	23	—	3
Skye	9	—	1	10	10	—	1	2	1	14	1 (1)	2
Islands	2	—	—	2	2	—	1	—	—	3	3 (2)	1
Southern Uplands	1	2	1	3	2	—	—	3	—	5	3 (2)	5
All regions 1984 Totals	75 (13)	23 (7)	6 (2)	104 (22)	87	3	19	31	17	157	18 (15)	37
1983 Totals	88 (19)	19 (4)	17 (5)	124 (28)	106	11	7	17	9	150	19 (12)	23

ACCIDENT LIST, 1984**NORTHERN HIGHLANDS**

- APRIL 11th – Two lads (both 15) became separated from the rest of their party in Strath-rusdale, Easter Ross. Took wrong route. Found safe next day. Northern Constabulary. RAF Sea King search. 12mh.
- APRIL 16th – Male (23) fell through a cornice (Dundonnell area) in white-out conditions. Walked to safety. Northern Constabulary. 3mh.
- APRIL 16th – Eas Chual Aluinn, Kylesku. Walker (m24) slipped on wet snow and sprained ankle. Walked out. Assynt MRT. Northern Constabulary. 24mh.
- APRIL 16th – English climber. Fell 30 feet on to snow, unhurt. Sgurr nan Clach, Fannichs.
- APRIL 22nd – Man (34) broke a leg on Ben Wyvis. One companion stayed with him while another went for help. Airlifted to Raigmore, Inverness by RAF helicopter. Northern Constabulary. 4mh.
- APRIL 22nd – Cioch of Sgurr a'Chaorachain, Applecross. Night search for two missing climbers by RAF Leuchars MRT using pyrotechnics. Climbers turned up safely. 6mh.
- MAY 20th to 21st – Missing hillwalker (m34) got lost in the hills in the Dundonnell area. Sheltered under a boulder and made his own way down next day. Thick mist. Northern Constabulary, SARDA, RAF helicopter. Dundonnell MRT. 58mh.
- JUNE 23rd – Hillwalking couple (over 60) became tired, and male had slight leg injury. Evacuated by helicopter from Strathchaillach, Sutherland. Police 4mh.
- JULY 7th – Hillwalker (m60) fell 150 feet on An Teallach. He suffered lacerations and shock. Dundonnell MRT. RAF Lossiemouth helicopter.
- JULY 19th – Fatality. Experienced hillwalker (f29) fell down scree which led to 500 ft. vertical drop on Am Fasarin Pinnacles, Liath. She was accompanied by an experienced male hillwalker. Torridon and Kinlochewe MRT. RAF helicopter. 70mh.
- JULY 24th to 25th – Local man (86) got lost on a long walk from Drumbeg near Lochinver. Found next day by RAF helicopter. Assynt, Dundonnell, RAF MRT's., SARDA, HM Coastguard.
- JULY 29th to 30th – *Hay Fork Gully*, An Teallach. One of two men (35) slipped and fell 150 feet breaking his leg, with head and body cuts. Winched up by RAF Sea King and airlifted out. Dundonnell MRT. Police 50mh.
- AUGUST 3rd – Two men (40, 35) fishing hill lochs got lost in mist. Found by Assynt MRT at Gorm Loch Mor. Police and MRT 47mh.
- AUGUST 16th – Hillwalker (f62) slipped and injured her ankle at Sandwood Loch, Kinlochbervie. RAF helicopter rescue. Police 4mh.
- AUGUST 22nd – Hillwalker (f67) fell on path in Gleann Dhubh, Inchnadamph and cut her head. Able to walk out aided. Assynt MRT and Police. RAF helicopter recalled. 18mh.
- SEPTEMBER 28th – Fatality. When accompanied by her husband, woman (26) fell from the top of Eas Chual Alluinn when attempting to photograph the 658 feet waterfall. Body recovered from trees 250 feet down by RAF Lossiemouth helicopter. Assynt MRT.

WESTERN HIGHLANDS

- MARCH 24th to 25th – Hillwalker (m23), accompanied, slipped on ice covered by several inches of snow on Sgurr na Carnach, Five Sisters of Kintail (near the bealach with Sgurr Fhuaran) sustaining an open fracture of his lower leg. Companion splinted leg and went for help. Five members of RAF Leuchars MRT were airlifted from hills of Glen Affric to Glen Licht House and attempted to reach him. They had to bivouac till first light because of white-out and avalanche danger, reaching casualty at 0800. An RAF Lossiemouth helicopter attempted evacuation and succeeded in dropping a stretcher on the ridge. Team stretchered casualty to an accessible site for airlift. Strong winds. Also Kintail MRT. Northern Constabulary. 300mh.

- APRIL 10th to 11th – Hillwalker (f24) broke her arm in a fall near Loch Morar. Her companion helped her to Oban bothy then he went to Glenfinnan for help next day. Airlifted by RAF Lossiemouth helicopter.
- APRIL 17th (not included in 1984 statistics) – Hillwalker found partial skeleton of a man (c.40) near Loch Quoich. Possibly died in 1979.
- APRIL 22nd to 23rd – Teams called out to search for walker near Loch Cluanie, Kintail. Turned up safe in the morning having been unable to navigate off safely. RAF Leuchars and St. Athan, Kintail MRT, SARDA. 100mh.
- APRIL – False alarm. Adult male German failed to rendezvous with friends at Sourlies Bothy. Lochaber MRT searched all possible bothies. Meanwhile police located him in Germany. 36 mh.
- JULY 12th – Hillwalker (m37) diabetic, took ill in Loch Mullardoch area. Taken to hospital by helicopter. Northern Constabulary. 3mh.
- AUGUST 1st – Hillwalker (f50) became separated from her husband and got lost on hills to North of Loch Mullardoch. Found by helicopter (RAF Sea King). Police 4mh.
- AUGUST 29th – Walker (41) attempting Five Sisters Ridge, Kintail east to west. He was too exhausted to finish by the last peak (Sgùrr na Mòraich) and so descended by Sgùrr an t-Searrach and got benighted on very steep ground. Torch signals were spotted and he was escorted down. Mild exposure. Police and Kintail MRT. 23mh.
- OCTOBER 28th – Hillwalker (m47) airlifted by RAF helicopter from Sloch on Ardnish Peninsula (Sound of Arisaig) with a suspected heart attack. Police 2mh.

BEN NEVIS

- FEBRUARY 3rd – False alarm. Four male Italian climbers found at CIC Hut. Due to language problems their landlady had expected them back the same night. Lochaber MRT and SARDA. Northern Constabulary. 12mh.
- FEBRUARY 5th – Three walkers spent Saturday night in Nevis summit shelter having ascended Tourist Path. Navigation error on descent took them into *Five Finger Gully* on Sunday. Man (23) fell 600 feet into the main junction and got himself down to raise alarm. The other two men (23, 22) fell at the same time but only 200 feet. They also got themselves down but two hours behind so they met Lochaber MRT, who carried one over the river, in Glen Nevis. Various injuries were a fractured jaw, a dislocated shoulder and a knee injury.
- FEBRUARY 7th – False alarm. Two male climbers found at CIC Hut. Café owner had expected them back that day. Lochaber MRT. 9mh.
- FEBRUARY 19th – Fatality. Solo ice climber (m19) intended to climb *Comb Gully*, but the climb was too busy with other parties. Was seen to fall from top (crux) pitch of *Glover's Chimney* to the bottom. Another climber was on site immediately, followed soon after by others including a doctor. He was alive at first but later died. Lowered down to Coire na Ciste and airlifted by RAF Leuchars helicopter. Garron tracked vehicle used by Lochaber MRT. 40inh.
- FEBRUARY 21st – Party of five men benighted climbing *Waterfall Gully*. Help not required. Lochaber MRT. 28mh.
- MARCH 3rd to 4th – Two men got off route climbing *Observatory Ridge*. The leader fell 40 feet unhurt and was held by belay. They were heard by other climbers on *Tower Ridge* blowing SOS on a whistle. They were benighted. Five Lochaber MRT members went to CIC Hut on Saturday night and saw them at first light. The team was called out Sunday morning but the pair abseiled off unaided. 80mh.
- MARCH 18th – Fatality. Body of man (23) found at Castle Coire Junction by 3 members of Lochaber MRT en route to do a training climb (*Castle Ridge*). The solo climber had fallen from *Raeburn's Buttress* (probably *Boomers Requiem*) and had been stopped from going all the way down the combined *Castle Gullies* because two ice-tools attached to him – had hooked in the snow slope like anchors. Fit and experienced he had soloed *Zero Gully* and *Comb Gully* the day before. His crampons were very worn and blunt. Lowered down to Allt a' Mhuilinn and evacuated by tracked vehicle. Lochaber MRT. 50mh.

- APRIL 3rd – Party of three including victim (m15) (first week on the hills) had one ice-axe between them. They ascended Càrn Mòr Dearg intending to traverse CMD Arête to Nevis summit but they got tired and went down towards CIC Hut from the arête. The boy without crampons or ice-axe slipped on ice and slid 400 feet into the corrie sustaining a broken arm and a dislocation. Carried to hut by two climbers in the area. Stretchered out from CIC by Lochaber MRT assisted by climbers from the hut. Victim's friends retraced their steps and came back up to the hut. 30mh.
- JULY 18th – Hillwalker (f60) stumbled descending Tourist Path and struck side in the kidney area on a sharp rock. Fair amount of pain, but she managed to limp down till met by Lochaber MRT. Stretchered off. 12mh.
- JULY 25th – Hillwalker (f62) jumped off a very small mound near Steall Ruin, Glen Nevis. She went over on both ankles, breaking one and spraining the other. Carried out by stretcher. Lochaber MRT. 7mh.
- AUGUST 1st – Hillwalker (f55) on Tourist Path (ascending) reached first zig-zag above Youth Hostel, had chest pains and collapsed. Stretchered down by Lochaber MRT. Detained overnight in hospital. Lochaber MRT. Police 13mh.
- AUGUST 17th – False alarm. Tourist reported a girl (c.20) with a male companion who had sprained or broken her ankles near Nevis summit. Lochaber MRT searched by various routes but did not locate her. 20mh.

GLENCOE

- JANUARY 2nd – Girl, (19) with companion, descending North Face of Stob Coire nan Lochan towards the lochs, slipped on wet rock, breaking an arm, with cuts and facial bruising. Glencoe Team called out but she had made her own way down. Fell 50 feet. 20mh.
- FEBRUARY 7th to 8th – West Face, Aonach Dubh. Two men (52, 33) climbed *No. 6 Gully* and then traversed the ridge. Intending to descend by the same route(!) they overshot in a white out and became cragfast descending *Dinner Time Buttress*. Raised alarm with torches and were led off in the small hours by Glencoe MRT. 64mh.
- FEBRUARY 19th – Man (56) soloing *Reverend Ted's Gully* on Lost Valley Face of Geàrr Aonach in good weather. Slipped on ice and fell 200 feet breaking ankle and chest injured. Stopped on a ledge 400 feet up gully. Airlifted out by RAF. Glencoe MRT. 40mh.
- FEBRUARY 19th – Fatality. Party of eleven descending west from Am Bodach on Aonach Eagach Ridge. Woman (26) (presumably unroped) fell 750 feet down the north side of the ridge sustaining multiple injuries. Died during RAF helicopter evacuation when on oxygen. Glencoe MRT. 32mh.
- FEBRUARY 27th – Mountaineering student (25), last man in a roped party of three in *Deep Cut Chimney*, Stob Coire nam Beith. Fell 3 feet dislocating knee(!) Lowered by companions. RAF helicopter. Glencoe MRT. 38mh.
- MARCH 18th – One of two men descending (22) *Broad Gully*, Stob Coire nan Lochan slipped and fractured an ankle. Stretchered down by Glencoe MRT. 45mh.
- MARCH 24th – West Face, Aonach Dubh. *No. 6 Gully*. Snowing, strong easterly wind. Two climbers, (m21, 19) swept down 600 feet by avalanche of loose, wet snow. Elder uninjured, younger broken leg and ankle. RAF Leuchars helicopter. Glencoe MRT. 24mh.
- APRIL 17th to 18th – Fatality. Solo walker overdue (m41) from traverse of Bidean nam Bian and Stob Coire nam Beith. Night search by Glencoe MRT negative. Found dead next day at the foot of *Summit Gully*, Stob Coire nam Beith having fallen and slid 1,500 feet. RAF Leuchars helicopter. Glencoe and RAF Leuchars MRT's. Northern Constabulary. 245mh.
- APRIL 23rd – Fatality. Two experienced men (both 39) ascending *Summit Gully*, Stob Coire nam Beith, in soft snow and hot, sunny weather. They took left fork 200 feet from top, which looks easier, though the right fork is the normal, easy route. Leader fell off when he ran out of handholds 20 feet up a rock slab. Both fell 750 feet when second's belay failed (ice axe belay in soft snow). Leader killed outright. Second injured but made way down till met by other climbers who helped him. Body evacuated by RAF Leuchars helicopter. Police and Glencoe MRT. 39mh.

- APRIL 26th – Accompanied walker (m25) broke leg descending Gleann a'Chòlais. Northern Constabulary. 2mh.
- MAY 28th – Experienced walker (f53) walking with group in floor of Lost Valley. Foot caught between rocks when she was crossing a dried burn. She fell with foot still trapped, fracturing fibula and spraining ankle. RAF Leuchars helicopter. Glencoe MRT. 25mh.
- JULY 6th – Leader (m19) of a rope of three climbing *Clachaig Gully*. Slightly off route on a 20 feet pitch and pulled on a loose rock which came out. He fell 15 feet and the rock hit him on head, injuring him. He was well equipped but had no helmet. RAF Leuchars helicopter. Glencoe MRT. 30mh.
- AUGUST 25th – Leader (m32) of a party of two, gully climbing above the Lost Valley, slipped and fell 10 feet. Got stuck on a ledge in the gully despite having only slight arm injuries. Taken off the ledge by Glencoe MRT. 30mh.
- NOVEMBER 4th – Man (21) cragfast on *Curved Ridge*, Buachaille Etive Mor. Rescued by Glencoe MRT. Police 4mh.
- NOVEMBER 30th – Male climber injured leg in Glencoe area. Walked out. RAF Leuchars helicopter returned to base.

OTHER CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

- JANUARY 7th – Man (33) glissading in gully to SW of E peak of Ben Crauchan, *wearing crampons(?)* Fell when his heel points dug in. Spiral fracture of lower leg. Stretchered off by Strathclyde Police teams. 57mh.
- FEBRUARY 15th – Hillwalker (m64) tripped and fell 700 feet when descending a snow chute on the ridge of Sròn na Creise. His arm and ribs were broken, and he was concussed. Walked off by Ballachulish JSMTc and Glencoe MRT. Evacuated by RAF Leuchars helicopter with companion. 34mh.
- FEBRUARY 19th to 20th – Fatality. Experienced ski-mountaineer missing on Meall a' Bhùiridh (m44). Glencoe and Lochaber MRT's searched next day and he was found dead beneath the Cam Ghleann face, either having been blown over by the high winds, or lost control on the steep, icy slope. Head injuries from 800 foot fall. Stretchered off by teams. Two RAF helicopters on search. 330mh.
- FEBRUARY 19 to 20th – Mamores. Lochaber MRT and RAF helicopter search for five missing students who turned up safe and well. Delayed by two without crampons.
- FEBRUARY 24th to 25th – Downhill skiers lost off piste. (m21 f19). On Meall a' Bhùiridh when weather closed in. Attempt to return to top of ski-lift ended near top of Sròn na Creise. Search that night called off for bad visibility. Searchers next morning saw the girl 'shoot out' of the bottom of an avalanche which occurred in a gully near the top of Sròn na Creise. The man had been above the avalanche. Both airlifted out by RAF Leuchars helicopter. Glencoe and Lochaber MRT's and 5 SARDA dogs. RAF Kinloss MRT. 265mh.
- MARCH 24th – Two hillwalkers (m21, f19) lost in bad weather. Found on Sròn na Creise by helicopter and Glencoe MRT. Northern Constabulary. 17mh.
- APRIL 23rd – Strathclyde Police (Oban) MRT called out for an overdue walker (m20) missing on East Ridge of Ben Cruachan. Good weather but he had been unfit, and there was a misunderstanding about a rendezvous with his companions.
- JULY 15th – Search for three children (m12, 12, f8) missing at Ardoch, Glen Brein, Fort Augustus. Located by RAF Sea King. Kinloss MRT recalled.
- JULY 22nd – Youth (14) fell a short distance on Aonach Mor injuring his shoulder. Airlifted from Allt Daim by RAF Leuchars Wessex.
- JULY 22nd – Boy (14) camping beside Allt Daim (burn in glen between Càrn Mór Dearg and Aonach Mór) slipped on wet rock when going for a swim. Slight head injury and shoulder dislocation. RAF Leuchars helicopter evacuation. Lochaber MRT. 3mh.
- AUGUST 3rd to 7th – Dutchman (32) on solo hillwalking/camping expedition. Set off on Friday 3rd to walk from Dalmally to Beinn nan Aighenan. About 14.00 hours he was ascending the SE side of the mountain by the Raven's Burn on the opposite side of the glen from Glenkinglass Lodge. The bank gave way and he fell 40 feet into the burn,

fracturing his left femur. He pulled himself out of a pool on to a rock slab where he was able to make food and drinks from his rucksack, but was unable to climb the bank. Good weather lasted for two days but then the rain swelled the burn and on Monday evening he was swept at least 70 yards downstream. He pulled himself out and crawled to the top of a bank. About 09.00 hours Tuesday he saw two stalkers approaching the lodge and attracted their attention. Evacuation by RN helicopter and Strathclyde Police MRT's. 17mh.

CAIRNGORMS

- JANUARY 1st to 2nd – Two men (22, 20) started late on *Aladdin's Mirror*. Coire an t-Sneachda (1400 hours). Hard snow with poor cover. Weather got worse and they climbed slowly as one was not very competent. Finished route in dark and failed to navigate off the plateau. Good bivouac gear and they stayed successfully at the top of Fiacail a'Choire Chais. Found by rescuers. Cairngorm, Glenmore, RAF Kinloss MRT's. Police, SARDA, RAF helicopter, tracked vehicle. 220mh.
- JANUARY 3rd to 4th – Walker (m18) snowbound by blizzard at Corndavon Bothy, Glen Gairn. Grampian Police and Braemar MRT's. 51mh.
- JANUARY 1st to 5th – False Alarm. Hillwalker (m26) snowbound by blizzard at Corrouth Bothy, Lairig Ghru. Not alarmed as he had food and he was not due out till 6th, *but* he was reported missing by an over-anxious mother! Grampian Police and Braemar MRT's. 51mh.
- JANUARY 5th to 6th – Solo climber (m24) did a route in Coire an t-Sneachda, but he had no map and compass and got lost navigating off plateau. Found by RAF Sea King at Bynack Stables. Cairngorm, Glenmore, RAF Kinloss MRT's. 264mh.
- JANUARY 6th to 7th – *a displaced person?* Poorly clad member of Mendips Rescue Team (m33) with poor waterproofs, no equipment except boots, no rucksack or food went up Lairig Ghru in afternoon. He had read the word 'icy' on the Ski Run Board as a weather forecast. With no map or compass he went up to March Burn and descended to Loch Avon thinking it was Coire an Lochan, then walked a further 20 miles to Tomintoul. Cairngorm, Glenmore MRT's, SARDA, RAF Sea King, tracked vehicle. Northern Constabulary. 140mh.
- JANUARY 15th to 16th – Leader (46) and six lads (15 to 17) climbed *The Couloir*, Coire an Lochain and then got lost on plateau. All the students' rucksacks had been left in Jean's Hut. Failed to navigate down Lurcher's Ridge back to the hut. Eventually went down Strath Nethy and reached Bynack Stables at 01.00 on 16th. Stayed there till 07.15 rather than reporting at Glenmore Lodge by the track past the Green Lochan. Cairngorm, Glenmore, RAF Kinloss MRT's, SARDA, RAF Sea King, tracked vehicle. Northern Constabulary. 207mh.
- JANUARY 20th to 22nd – Fatalities. On 20th four walkers (all men 24, 21, 19) failed to locate Jean's Hut and camped. Weather deteriorated on 21st. Either tent blew down(?) or they decided to abandon it and walk out(?) In terrible conditions of high wind three died of exposure, one by one en route. The fourth (21) walked out on morning of 22nd exhausted. Cairngorm MRT could not get there as they were either trapped at Drumochter or snowbound at home. Glenmore, RAF Leuchars, RAF Kinloss MRT's, SARDA, RAF helicopter, RN helicopter. Northern Constabulary. 300mh. *Two of the bodies were found by air search and the other by dog.* Wind strengths over 60 mph were recorded, and gusting to 90.
- JANUARY 20th to 22nd – Fatalities. Instructor (m29) and student (m36) intended to snow-hole in the Féith Buidhe on Friday and howf under the Shelter Stone on Saturday. Large scale searches and probing were carried out next Monday and Tuesday by upwards of 100 rescuers from Aberdeen, Braemar, Cairngorm, Glenmore, Northern Constabulary, Grampian Police, helicopters, RAF Kinloss and Leuchars, SARDA accounting for well over 2,000mh. The two had died from hypothermia and were found by a party of four from JSMTc on Thursday morning on the rim of Coire an t-Sneachda 50 metres south of Fiacail Couloir so it might be assumed they managed to walk exactly one mile from the snowhole site before being overcome by the desperate conditions. They were found roped up, one in a sleeping bag.

- FEBRUARY 4th to 5th – Hillwalker (m26) tried to reach Hutchison Hut from Braemar via Derry Lodge in deep, soft snow. Snowholed 2 miles north of Derry Lodge and struggled back to the 'phone at the Lodge next morning. Grampian Police and Braemar MRT's. 6mh.
- FEBRUARY 12th to 13th – Carn Aosda. Skier (m39) got lost in mist on piste west of A96 Devil's Elbow Road. He skied into Glen Baddoch and went upstream almost to the bealach, where he snowholed, and was found next morning at 03.40 by Glenshee Ski Staff in a Snow Piasta. Ski-ing downstream would have brought him to the main road. When he went missing it was not known if he was west or east of the A96. Large scale searches by Puma, Sea King and Wessex helicopters, Aberdeen, Braemar, Gordonstoun, Grampian Police, RAF Kinloss and Leuchars, SARDA, Tayside Civilian and Police Teams. 460mh.
- FEBRUARY 19th – Fatality. Man (23) scrambling on mixed snow and rock, up *Fiacail* Coire an t-Sneachda, killed when he was blown off and fell 500 feet into boulders. Carried ice-axe on rucksack. No helmet. Party of three had stopped to put on crampons. RAF Airlift. Glenmore Lodge MRT. Cairngorm on standby.
- FEBRUARY 26th to 27th – Lochnagar. Two men (24, 20) climbed *Pinnacle Gully 2* and *Parallel Gully 'A'*, getting benighted on the latter, descending to Glenmuick at 0230 and not reporting in. Two friends had raised the alarm. Aberdeen, Braemar, Grampian Police MRT's. 28mh.
- MARCH 2nd to 3rd – NE Gale. Mountain student (m17) became separated from his four companions in a blizzard near the Lairig an Laoigh track, below the NE Face of Bynack More. Companions could not find him, so he got into a sleeping bag and a polythene bivvy bag, which slid off downhill into soft snow away from his rucksack. Stayed there and so did not have his torch and whistle to attract searchers, whose flares he saw 250 yards away. Found at 08.25 next morning by RAF helicopter in better weather. Braemar, Cairngorm, Glenmore, Grampian Police and RAF Kinloss MRT's, SARDA, tracked vehicle. Northern Constabulary. 382mh.
- FEBRUARY 27th to March 4th – Couple (42, 39) overdue from a bothying expedition. Spent two nights at Faindouran Lodge in a blizzard. (1st to 3rd). Found safe on Stables Road, Invercauld, Braemar. RAF Wessex searching. Braemar and Grampian Police MRT's. 68mh.
- MARCH 9th to 12th – False Alarm. Two boys (both 15) enjoyed a backpacking expedition in the Sidlaw Hills till their camp fire was spotted by a farmer. They had not told anyone! Searches by police and a RAF Wessex.
- MARCH 16th – Cross-country skier (m48) fell descending Beinn a'Chaoirinn dislocating his shoulder. Helped to Fords of Avon Bothy and airlifted by RAF Sea King. Braemar, Grampian Police and RAF Leuchars MRT's. 61mh.
- MARCH 22nd – Fatality. Man (22) missing. Equipment and sleeping bag found in Ruigh-aiteachain Bothy, Glen Feshie on March 25th 1984. Extensive searches were carried out over two days amongst debris and danger of large, avalanches by Cairngorm, Kinloss and Leuchars MRT's, SARDA dogs and RAF helicopters. Several avalanches near rescuers, some of them triggered by searchers. Over 1,000mh. Body was found at Coire Domhain, Mullach Clach a' Bhlaìr, by hillwalkers on April 29th. (This man had survived a 700 foot fall on January 2nd 1983 after being avalanched from the cornice scarp of *Bob Run*, Coire Leis, Ben Nevis).
- MARCH 25 to 26th – Four girls (20, 20, 18, 18) walking from Glendoll on a horseshoe route via Bachnagairn and Stables Hut to return to Glendoll by Capel Mouth track were slowed by deep soft snow, and forced downhill towards the dangerous Moulzie Burn. Lost in darkness and snowholed. Safely recovered by rescuers after midnight. Braemar, Grampian and Tayside MRT's. 227mh.
- APRIL 3rd – Fatality. Cairngorm. Body of woman (47) found in Coire na Spreidhe by a walker. Dressed for hillwalking she may have been there for up to two weeks. Thought to have died from exposure.
- APRIL 10th to 11th – Three males (48, 13, 13) lost in snow showers between top of Kilbo Burn (Glen Doll) and summit of Mayar. Found by teams at 03.00 next day suffering from exposure. Airlifted by RAF Wessex from their shelter behind a boulder. Tayside MRT's. 173mh.

- APRIL 11th – Woman (27) glissading in crampons(!) down north side of Cairn Toul just above Lochan Uaine. Intending to brake with axe she rolled over on to front and crampon points caught in hard snow. Sustained fractured fibula. Walked down to Garbh Choire Bothy, but she had to be evacuated by RAF helicopter next day. Braemar and Grampian Police MRT's. 15mh.
- APRIL 24th – Woman (19) walking across headwall of Coire Cas, Cairngorm. Sustained knee injury and bruising after 300 foot fall. Sea King helicopter evacuation.
- MAY 13th – Four rescued from sea-cliff stack east of Portknockie, Banffshire by RAF Sea King.
- JUNE 3rd – Search for woman (45) overdue on hillwalk in Coire Cas. Found on Cairngorm summit late at night. Evacuated by RAF helicopter. Glenmore, Cairngorm, SARDA, Northern Constabulary. 38mh.
- JUNE 20th – Serviceman (19) slipped on rough ground and broke leg. Airlifted by RAF. East Face of Stob Coire Sputan Dearg, Ben Macdui.
- JUNE 27th to 28th – Party of fourteen led by an experienced adult crossing Lairig Ghru south to north, camped at Corrou and children got cold and wet, lacking sleep. Left at 06.00 to continue the crossing. Two female children succumbed to exposure exhaustion at Pools of Dee. Camped and eventually airlifted by RAF helicopter. Glenmore Lodge. 2mh.
- JULY 8th to 9th – Woman (28) unable to keep up with her brother during a hillwalk on Clachnaben, Banchory. Found fatigued next morning at Glen Dye Lodge. RAF Leuchars helicopter forced down in thick mist. Aberdeen, Braemar, and Grampian Police. 114mh.
- JULY 26th – Walker (51) overdue attempting 4 x 4,000 feet tops of the Cairngorms. He got lost. Glenmore Lodge MRT. Police. 9mh.
- JULY 26th – Fatality. Hillwalker (f51) accompanied by her husband and friend died of heart attack on Lairig Ghru path. Evacuated by RAF Leuchars helicopter. Glenmore Lodge MRT. 6mh.
- JULY 29th – An old lady slipped and broke her arm whilst walking on a forest path over Meall a'Bhuachaille. Helped down by Glenmore Lodge MRT. 4mh.
- AUGUST 11th to 12th – False Alarm. Two girls had left gear at Revoan Bothy but stayed with friends elsewhere. Police and Glenmore Lodge MRT. 5mh.
- AUGUST 15th – Father and son, novices, lost in good weather in Strath Nethy. Glenmore MRT. 1mh.
- AUGUST 18th – False Alarm. Experienced hillwalker (28) was last seen on Cairngorm with a big rucksack. Helicopters, MRT's and mountaineering friends searched for him a week later. He turned up safe after 3 weeks missing. 480mh.
- AUGUST 23rd – Mother and two sons on Cairngorm Plateau. Son (18) separated and returned safe but overdue. Good weather. Police and Glenmore MRT.
- AUGUST 26th – Two youths (15, 15) separated from a group of thirteen near the head of Coire Kander and went over Carn an Tuirc back to the main road (Cairnwell). Returned home without notifying anyone. Search by RAF Leuchars helicopter. Grampian Police and Braemar MRT's. 10mh.
- SEPTEMBER 23rd to 24th – Fatality. Exchange cars were left at Coylumbridge and Linn of Dee by two parties (seven) traversing Lairig Ghru in reciprocal directions. Alarm was delayed till cars had reached Perth because each party thought the missing pair was with the other group. At 0520 woman was found suffering from exposure near the path on the Carn a'Mhaim shoulder. Her brother (57) was found dead, by RAF Sea King 1 ½ miles north of Corrou Bothy, at 0750. Both were evacuated by helicopter. There was heavy rain and sleet, cold with strong NW wind. Their waterproofs were not suitable for such conditions. They had been walking north to south. Grampian Police and Braemar MRT. 108mh.
- OCTOBER 1st to 2nd – Two male hillwalkers (39, 22) intended to do a circuit from Glen Doll via Loch Muick and Fafernne. Got lost in mist and benighted. Survived night in bivouac bag. Found at 11.40 next day by teams on Càrn an t-Sagairt Mór (north of their intended route). Walked back to Glen Doll with searchers. Tayside and Braemar MRT's, Grampian and Tayside Police teams. RAF helicopter. 350 + mh.

OCTOBER 13th – False Alarm. Two men reported overdue from a three day Cairngorm traverse the day before they were due to return. Found by helicopter search in a tent in Glen Feshie. Aberdeen, Braemar, Cairngorm, Glenmore Lodge and Grampian Police MRT's, SARDA. 200mh.

OCTOBER 20th – Male sprained ankle in Strath Nethy. Evacuated by Landrover from Bynack Stables. Glenmore Lodge MRT. 4mh.

NOVEMBER 18th – Man (27) sprained ankle descending An Socach to Glen Baddoch. Slip on flat, wet rock. Rescued by RAF helicopter. Braemar and Grampian Police MRT's. 24mh.

DECEMBER 27th – Fatality. Second man (41) was inadequately belayed to a deadman at the top of pitch 1 of *Spiral Gully*, Coire an-t'Sneachda. Leader (30) fell without runners from 50 feet above, and belay failed. Both fell 300 feet. Second man (wearing helmet) was killed outright. Leader (no helmet) escaped with superficial injuries. Flown out by RAF. Cairngorm and Glenmore Lodge MRT's. 14mh.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

JANUARY 6th – False Alarm. Red flare reported by motorist in Beinn Each and Stuc a'Chroin area, north of Callander. Searches negative. Killin MRT. 28mh.

JANUARY 22nd – Twelve TA soldiers missing overnight from exercise in Fintry Hills. Found safe, having spent night in a barn, by Lomond MRT leader.

FEBRUARY 18th – Casualty (59) was one of four descending unroped, steep-névé east of Ben Lui summit. Tripped over crampons, failed to brake with ice-axe and fell 60 feet sustaining cuts and a broken arm. Stretchered off by Killin MRT. 144mh.

FEBRUARY 19th – Two SARDA members were walking/climbing on summit ridge of Beinn Achaladair. One dog slipped over the edge of the NE corrie, and, though unhurt, was having difficulty getting back. The dog's handler (m31) fell 600 feet when attempting to rescue it, crashing into frozen avalanche debris, dislocating a femur, fracturing a clavicle and thumb, with cuts and bruises. Stretchered off by Oban and Dumbarton Police MRT's. There was a happy ending as the dog was recovered safe by SARDA men four days later. 55mh.

FEBRUARY 19th – Fatality. Casualty (44) without crampons was one of three descending a steep, snow-ice slope on NE slopes of Ben More, Crianlarich. Overbalanced and fell 800 feet. Unable to brake with ice-axe which was torn from his grasp after a short distance. Evacuated by RAF Leuchars helicopter. Killin MRT. 60mh.

MARCH 24th – False Alarm. Five girls from a youth organisation, on expedition test in the Glen Falloch area, returned home shortly after they had started, without the knowledge of the assessor. Killin MRT and SARDA. 15mh.

MARCH 25th – North Face of Ben More, Crianlarich. Party of three traversing steep snow triggered off a large avalanche, probably windslab. All three swept down although unroped. Uninjured girl helped man (23) – fractured skull – and woman (21) – broken leg – before she alerted Police. Both stretchered off. Killin MRT and SARDA. Injuries might have been worse if they had been roped. 154mh.

MARCH 25th to 27th – Two boys (14, 12) on a camping/walking expedition in the Lomond Hills of Fife. They planned to be out for three nights, but unfortunately the parents got concerned when weather deteriorated on second night with sleet and strong winds. Police searched vainly and found them next morning. On that night boys had been lost without shelter or adequate survival gear one mile north of their tent, afraid to move. Both suffering from exposure. Fife Police. 160mh.

APRIL 1st – SE Face of Ben Lui. Party of three without crampons descending very steep névé, when all three slipped and fell. Two braked with their ice-axes, but the third (25) lost control and fell 100 feet on to a ledge breaking her leg. Crag Search, cliff lower and stretcher carry by Killin MRT. 204mh.

APRIL 7th to 9th – Fatality. Hillwalker (m70) died from illness on steep grass on slopes of Beinn Dòrain, Bridge of Orchy, Heart attack. Large scale searches on 8th and 9th by Dumbarton and Oban Police, RAF Kinloss and Leuchars MRT's. Body located and evacuated by RAF Leuchars Wessex helicopter. 265mh.

- APRIL 29th – Fallen male climber taken from The Cobbler to Alexandria by RAF Leuchars helicopter.
- MAY 20th – Ben Glas Burn, above Glen Falloch. Two Lomond MRT members returning from Beinn Chabhair heard casualty cry for help. Man (34) had fallen 60 feet breaking an ankle and dislocating his foot. Between them they carried him 1 mile to valley and took him to hospital by car. 6mh.
- MAY 29th – Two men (81, 50) missing on walk from Brig o' Turk to Balquhiddier. Glen Finglas, search started but they turned up at Loch Lubnag, having lost their way (probably on Ben Vane). Killin MRT. 24mh.
- JUNE 1st to 2nd – Eleven girls on Award expedition got lost on north side of Ben Venue, Trossachs, as darkness fell. Wet and miserable they bedded down for the night without tents. Found early next day by sweep search with SARDA dogs. Killin and Lomond MRT's. 96mh.
- JUNE 25th – Hillwalker (m61) in a party of sixteen going from Dalmally to Tyndrum. Caught his foot in a hole on grass slope just north of Ben Lui. Fractured ankle. Stretchered off. Killin MRT. 64mh.
- JULY 8th – False Alarm. Walker on Beinn Heagsarnich. Misunderstanding about parked car. Killin MRT. 20mh.
- JULY 25th – Two males (34, 16) missing between Tyndrum and Crianlarich, last seen between Ben Lui and Ben Oss. Turned up in Glen Falloch (seven miles off course) as search was starting. Killin MRT. 12mh.
- AUGUST 7th – Ptarmigan, Ben Lomond. Woman (27) fell 30 feet over crags sustaining chest injury. Woman companion went down to alert Police and then went back on hill with Police officer. RAF Leuchars helicopter evacuation. Lomond MRT. 72mh.
- AUGUST 16th – Camping at almost 3,000 feet on Meall na Dige (a top of Stob Binnein) youth (18) accidentally spilled boiling water over his feet. Unable to walk. Stretchered off by Killin MRT and SARDA. 162mh.
- AUGUST 22nd – Hillwalker (f58) collapsed from heat exhaustion at bealach at top of Brig o' Turk – Balquhiddier path. Carried off by Killin MRT. 33mh.
- NOVEMBER 24th – Male badly injured by a fall on the East Ridge of Arrochar Ben Vane. Slipped on wet grass. Night evacuation by RAF Leuchars helicopter. Arrochar/Strathclyde MRT's.
- DECEMBER 26th – Walker slipped when descending near path on Ben Lomond. He was at 1,500 feet on steep grass. Broken ankle. Stretchered off. Lomond MRT. 60mh.

SKYE

- JANUARY 15th – Three climbers taken out from head of Loch Scavaig by lifeboat when one of them (f24) became ill. Police 16mh.
- FEBRUARY 24th – Search for two climbers (m30, 20) overdue. Turned up safe at Coruisk Hut. RAF Rescue team, SARDA, Northern Constabulary. 4mh.
- APRIL 25th – Man (29) glissading in Coire a' Bhasteir could not brake with ice-axe in wet snow and fell through a waterfall. Head and knee injuries. RAF helicopter was called but he managed to walk down. Northern Constabulary. 11mh.
- MAY 20th – Man (37) unroped, traversing ledge in gully ¼ mile from summit of Bidein Druim nan Ramh. Fell 30 feet when handhold came out. He landed on soft snow. Minor leg injuries. Flown out by RAF Lossiemouth. Unroped. Traversing ledge. Skye MRT and Police. 35mh.
- JUNE 9th – Climber (21) on *The Jib*, East Face of Bla Bheinn. In an awkward position he held on till his arms gave out, then fell 20 feet injuring arm. Rescued by RAF helicopter. RAF Leuchars MRT. Police 28mh.
- JUNE 17th – Two lads (16, 15) overdue in the Cuillins. Skye MRT and Police. 2mh.
- JULY 8th – A slip on wet rock when descending the *South Buttress* of Sgurr Dearg caused a youth (16) to fall 20 feet on to scree, where he rolled a further 30 feet. Punctured lung and bruised limbs. Airlifted by RAF. Skye MRT and Police. 28mh.

JULY 24th – Hillwalker (f26) received severe facial injuries and a broken leg when she fell 120 feet into the Lealt Gorge, Tote, near Staffin. She slipped when taking photographs. HM Coastguard and local rescuers took her out of the gorge and then she went to hospital by helicopter. Police 6mh.

AUGUST 8th to 9th – Party attempting to cross Main Ridge from An Garbh-choire to Coire a'Ghrunnda went over Dubhs Ridge by mistake in mist and descended slabs of Coire' an Lochain to the head of Loch Coruisk. Youth with cut knee (which happened prior to navigation error) evacuated by private yacht from Loch na Cuilce with radio cooperation from HM Coastguard, Oban.

AUGUST 24th – Two girls were scrambling on the West Ridge of Sgurr nan Gilleann when the ground gave way and they fell. One (21) suffered cuts and bruises but they walked down aided by Skye and RAF Leuchars MRT's. RAF helicopter used. Police 24mh.

AUGUST 26th – Climber (32) fell on *Cioch Buttress*, Sron na Ciche and fractured his ankle. Carried down. RAF Leuchars MRT on exercise in the area. Skye MRT. Police. 39mh.

SEPTEMBER 7th to 8th – False Alarm. Search called off. Couple went to Sligachan from Coruisk for a drink and returned via Elgol!

SEPTEMBER 11th – An Cròcan, on north shore of Loch Brittle. Solo man (60), negotiating ledge on this unfrequented coast. Large rock handhold gave way. Fell 20 feet into ravine breaking leg. Climbed out after several hours. Lucky to be found by passing hillwalkers. Skye MRT. RAF helicopter. Police. 15mh.

SEPTEMBER 14th to 15th – Man (54) finding the normal route on Sgurr nan Gilleann difficult, turned back. He slipped on rock descending and fractured a femur, also cutting his head. Found next day by Skye MRT. Evacuated by RAF helicopter. 90mh.

ISLANDS

JUNE 24th to 25th – Carsaig, Isle of Mull. Search for hillwalker (f20) who got lost in mist when out with her dog. Found safe. Helicopter, Strathclyde Police MRT's. and local volunteers.

AUGUST 14th – North side of 'The Saddle' bealach between Glens Sannox and Rosa, Arran. While climbing a steep hillside with a large party, a man (58) sustained a head injury when a boulder rolled down on him. Stretched out by Arran MRT. Good weather.

SEPTEMBER 3rd – Woman (27) climbing sea cliffs at Esha Ness, North Mainland, Shetland, fell 60 feet into the sea. Multiple cuts and bruises. Pulled out by one of her two friends. Auxiliary Coastguards. Helicopter evacuation. Police 6mh.

SOUTHERN UPLANDS

JANUARY 14th – Party of girls delayed by deteriorating weather near Moffat. They turned up safe. SARDA.

JANUARY 16th – Two Shepherds (male 70, 66) overcome by blizzard. One had fallen into a burn. Found sheltering behind a dyke on top of Scroof Hill, Innerleithen, suffering from exhaustion and hypothermia. Tweed Valley MRT, Police, RAF Wessex helicopter, SARDA. 160mh.

JANUARY 23rd – Shepherd missing from Upper Chatto Farm. Dose of insulin overdue. Turned up safe. SARDA.

FEBRUARY 25th – Cairnsmore of Carsphairn. Group allowed school-children to sit on cagoules and glissade down a steep slope on frozen crust. Girl (15) was injured when she hit a rock. Airlifted out by RAF. Police and Galloway S&RT. 44mh.

JULY 25th to 26th – Man (71) and woman (51) benighted when traversing ridge from Loch Trool to Loch Doon due to a late start. Hot weather. Galloway S&R Team. Police. 4mh.

IN MEMORIAM

GEORGE ELLIOT

GEORGE ELLIOT the climber: 'he is dead then. . . big boned and hardy handsome. . . ' These words which I have borrowed from Gerald Manley Hopkins, came into my mind when I heard that George Elliot had died. He passed away on the 15th August, 1984. Big boned he was and handsome in a rugged manly way. His sturdy stocky frame, his square-cut jaw, his terse manner of speech and his weather-beaten face all bespoke a man of vigour and action. A man, once met, not easily forgotten.

His interest in out-door activities which was wide, narrowed down to two in particular for which he never lost his enthusiasm. Rugby and Mountaineering. As a forward he played rugby for Boroughmuir F.P.'s. for a long number of years, and continued to follow the fortunes of his club and of Scotland in the international field, to the very end. But it was climbing that George loved best of all and nothing gave him greater joy than a day on the hills.

The most of his long life was spent working for the shipping firm of Salvesen of Leith and no doubt it was this connection that sent him off to visit Norway, Sweden and Finland. At this time his companions were Jimmy Robertson and Ben Horsburgh and with them and others he was walking and camping in the Pentlands, the Moorfoots, the Borders and the Highlands. In 1928 we find him travelling from Edinburgh with Robertson to Fort William by a Sunday excursion train, to make the ascent of Ben Nevis. It was his first Munro and the start on the long road to complete the list.

He had become a member of the JMSC influenced maybe by George Williams who was his half-cousin and had extended his interest to rock, snow and ice climbing. By 1931 he had acquired the necessary qualifications and moved into the SMC. He was a regular attendee at club lectures and functions, served on the committee from 1937-45, was custodian of slides from 1935-45 and was acting librarian during the war years 1940-45. 1938 saw him complete his Munro list and he stands now as No. 7 on the list of Munroists, his friend Robertson occupying 6th place. With a group of younger climbers he had introduced and encouraged, he found delight in climbing from camps, huts, bothies and Youth Hostels. In the winter he would organise mini-meets, with the dwelling of some shepherd or gamekeeper as a base.

On another occasion having bought a high altitude tent he went off with the same group into the Cairngorms in the depth of a severe winter, to establish a camp high up on Braeriach. The weather was atrocious but they survived. An account of this epic by one of the participants appeared in the Journal.

In 1940 he married and in Chris his wife he found the perfect partner, who not only shared his outdoor interests but also an interest in music and the arts. He only paid one visit to the Alps, in the early days, to the valley of Sass-Fee with Robertson, where they climbed some peaks with a local guide.

Organization was the name of the game for George. With limited holiday, his forays into the Highlands for Munros were planned with meticulous care and military precision. In the attempt to avoid wasting time, nothing was left to chance, details were worked out and itineraries produced which when backed by George's determination to make them work proved trying to lesser mortals whose mutinous instincts were aroused. However they were a long-suffering bunch and he survived. Through Salvesen he had a contact with the managerial staff of British Ropes and when after the war they intended to introduce nylon rope to the climbing world they enlisted his aid. He was provided with a rope and a 16 mm cine-camera and requested to take some shots showing Viking rope being used on a climb. This was done and a short film showing him and George Williams climbing on the First Pinnacle of Sgurr nan Gilleann was taken. They must have been among the first to use nylon rope for climbing in this country. He nearly lost his heart to Skye and here as nowhere else, he was happiest and it is against the background of the Cuillins that I place my most cherished memories of him. In all weathers he was an imper-perturbable character and on rock and snow a reliable and steady companion. He had a vast acquaintance-ship among the brotherhood of the hills. He was a convivial man. He loved a Ceilidh and round the fire would produce his double-sided mouth-organ from its linen bag to give us renderings of Scottish tunes.

Another writer wrote this, '... the first SMC (member) we'd ever found was George Elliot, and he was walking in a daft-shaped hat under the Pap of Glencoe, shaped just like his hat, and there was snow on the Pap... and there was snow on George's hat... and if you squinted you couldn't tell the difference except that the Pap stayed still and George's hat went up and down and up and down.' Those of us who knew him intimately will miss him and feel that the hills can never be quite the same without the familiar figure.

We extend our sympathy to his wife.

KENNETH MACRAE

KENNETH died as a result of a fall in the Lake District in the early Autumn last year. He was of that breed of Scot who is held in the highest esteem by all with whom he came in contact. His integrity, his habit of hard work and his meticulous attention to detail, as well as his happy nature and cheerfulness, even in situations of difficulty, were a byword among his companions.

By profession a most distinguished Edinburgh solicitor, he had a great many interests throughout his long life. From 1951 to 72 he served as Organising Secretary of the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland at a time when countryside administration was undergoing considerable change. He played a leading part in the discussions which eventually led to the formation of the Countryside Commission for Scotland.

For many years he was Secretary to the Incorporation of British Architects, of which he was created a Fellow upon his retirement. He also served a term as Treasurer of his own professional organisation, The Writers of the Signet Society.

In the mid thirties he joined the 4/5th Battalion of The Royal Scots and during the 1939-45 war he became a Gunner, serving in the North-West Europe Campaign, 1944-45, during which he was Mentioned in Despatches, finishing as a Major.

His name first appears in the Record Book of the JMCS, Edinburgh Section, in 1949 and although he did not become a 'tiger' in the same way as did many Members of the Section of that era his knowledge of the Scottish Mountains was considerable.

He was a delightful companion in the hills, being a lifelong gatherer of interesting facts about Scottish History, not surprisingly since he was an Honours graduate in History at Oxford. At the same time he was just as happy on his own and made many memorable journeys alone.

Soon after he joined the Club he became in turn a member of the Eastern District Committee and the Club Committee. He then became the Secretary of the Eastern District and latterly its Convener. Edinburgh Members would all agree that he was the driving force behind their group and the one who organised virtually everything that went on in the District for a good number of years.

Perhaps the piece of service to the Club which gave him the greatest satisfaction was his appointment as Representative to the Council of the National Trust for Scotland. In this role his charm, wisdom and commonsense were greatly appreciated by all those he met at meetings, discussions and visits to Trust Mountainous Properties. In 1983 he was honoured by being invited to become a Member of the Trust Executive Committee.

The greatest joys of his life were his marriage, for very nearly fifty years, to his dear Margaret and the happiness brought to them both by their daughters, Fiona and Christine and their respective families.

The hundreds from all walks of life who packed St. John's Church in Princes Street on 25th October for Kenneth's Memorial Service indicated in abundance their respect for this very fine and gallant gentleman.

W.M.S.M.

D. H. McPHERSON

DUNCAN McPHERSON died in July 1983 at the age of 77. After obtaining a 1st class degree in civil engineering at Edinburgh University in 1928 he joined the LNE Railway for a 3

year pupillage in their bridge department, including a year spent assessing the bridges on the West Highland line particularly between Crianlarich and Fort William. He joined the JMCS in 1928 and was climbing in all seasons on Nevis and, by the end of his pupillage, had ascended nearly 100 Munros, just short of half under winter conditions.

As a rather unique double he and his father, Sir Hugh McPherson, both applied for membership of the SMC and were elected in 1929. Together they had celebrated Duncan's graduation in 1928 with an ascent of Mont Blanc by the ordinary route from the Grand Mulets. In 1929 he also helped resuscitate the Scottish Ski Club.

After two years with consultants in London responsible for the extension to the Piccadilly Line, he went out to India for 13 years' service in the Madras and South Mahratta Railway Co., for the last six years as their senior bridge engineer. Here he led a very active life at work and in leisure hours flying a light aircraft, sailing dinghies, walking, taking part in social events, and making four tours in the Himalayas.

In 1941 he had 7 weeks in Kashmir trekking 20 miles a day, from Srinagar over the Zoji La to Leh and back over the Kardung La (18,000 feet) to Skardu and thence to Srinagar, about 600 miles in all. 1942 saw him trekking in Sikkim with Bill Risoe. 1943 gave 21 days' splendid skiing at Gulmarg, while in November 1944 with Reggie Cooke he attempted the then unclimbed Chombu (20,872 feet) in Sikkim. As sirdar they had the redoubtable Angharkay plus two other Sherpas and some porters. Camped at 18,200 feet on a plateau below the final ridge, an overnight snowstorm left drifts of 20 inches outside their tent and covered the mountain endangering their descent route. So regretfully they retreated, wisely as the storm continued and at the Himalayan Club hut at Jha Chu (15,000 feet) where they spent the night, another foot of snow fell.

After his marriage to Joan Staggs in 1945, Duncan returned to Britain, becoming head of the Civil Engineering Department at University College, Southampton, and in 1954 joining James Williamson, consulting engineers at Glasgow, retiring as a partner in 1969. He contributed to the design and construction of the power stations at Kincardine, Cruachan, Wylfa (Anglesey) and Longannet.

From childhood Duncan had an enthusiasm for the Borders, Highlands and the West Coast. For many years he attended club meets, and after his return to Scotland in 1954 regularly ventured in the hills. Becoming interested in the old paths he felt more could be done to protect them. Always practical and considerate he joined the Scottish Rights of Way Society of which he was the very active Honorary Secretary for 12 years, negotiating with proprietors and their lawyers, putting up marker posts and rechecking the paths.

His own high standards in everything he did, his technical interests, love of travel, music and the visual impressions of landscape made him a welcome companion for many of us on the hills, and in the evenings gathered round the fireplace or sipping tea in his motor caravan.

A complete record of all Duncan McPherson's trips can be found in the Manuscript Department of the National Library of Scotland.

J.M.H.

DR ALASDAIR R. WILSON

ALASDAIR WILSON died in April 1984 in his 75th year. He had been a member for over 52 years, preceded by several in the JMCS. He had the advantage of second-generation membership, apprenticed to his father Dr Andrew Wilson, himself a long-term member, in the Alps and Scottish and Welsh hills. At school in Switzerland, he had instruction in skiing and on ice and snow. He became proficient in the French and German languages, garnering in course of his scientific translations, exceptional technical vocabularies. He absorbed a European outlook, broadened into an international conspectus by study in America and by collaboration and correspondence with foreign scientists. He was tutored in mountaineering, both at home and abroad by now near mythical climbers such as L. St. C. Bartholomew, Sandy Wedderburn, A. J. Wigram and P. D. Baird, as well as others in the CUMC, which he joined while at Cambridge. Academic distinction led to an outstanding scientific career,

with recognition as a savant in mycology. He gained a European and international reputation from publication of some 50 papers in the field of plant diseases. He lectured at the Universities of St. Andrews and Dundee. His colleagues in Europe and elsewhere remember him as a supportive and warm personality, as a deeply religious person, who had a lifelong interest to integrate and preserve European cultures. After retirement he purchased Dunnet Head House, Thurso, grandly situated on the cliffs near the lighthouse and converted it into a delightful home, exploiting the unique prospects over northern seas.

We met at JMCS Meets in 1928, at Ladher Bheinn and Glen Brittle and had rooms in student Hall in Edinburgh. A mutual interest in motor-cycling led to climbing trips in the Lakes, Glencoe and Skye. As an example of his presence of mind, while romping along the old road to Auchnaschellach, his side-car chassis broke away, at a corner with a 6 foot dry stone embankment, he opened the throttle, the 1000 cc twin Harley Davidson gave instant response and bounding from impact with the grass verge, touched down in a soft bog, upright with the rider still in the saddle. Both undamaged, he continued on the journey. He enjoyed the stirring night sprints through Penrith and Abington to Edinburgh, at the end of hard days on Pillar and Gable. Between 1928 and his departure for America in 1933, he accomplished some 50 Munro ascents, nearly always under winter conditions and by a climbing route. In Glencoe, he led the *Crowberry Ridge* (twice) and *Central Buttress*. I did the *Churchdoor Buttress* and other climbs with him. He was one of Sandy Wedderburn's CUMC party, so grievously delayed by mounded snow and ice formations on Aonach Eagach, as to be overtaken by white-outs and eventually blackouts, who had to inch down the north side. He made the standard winter ascents of that era in Coire Leis of Nevis, with our member Dr (later Professor) W. Blackwood and, with him, the Lui Couloir and, with addition of Sandy Wedderburn, winter climbs at Arrochar, including the *Jamblock Chimney* and *Spearhead Arete*. He had crossed all tops in the Cuillin Main Ridge with standard climbs such as the *Pinnacle Ridge*, *Tooth*, *Gap*, *Cioch* as well as Clach Ghlas-Blaven.

In 1930, he ascended 6 peaks in the Silvretta, including Piz Buin and the Gross Litzner. In 1931, we spent a number of weeks around Arolla and Zermatt on lesser peaks and went on to the Aiguille de la Za, Pigne D'Arolla, Mont Blanc de Cheillon, the Dent Blanche and the Matterhorn. Descending the last in a violent electric storm, we met the only other persons seen above the snowline, two young Germans above the Solvay Hut, who had made the first ascent of the North face. In 1932, at a CUMC Meet in Horungstinde, in Norway, our party made the 21 hour traverse of the splendid ridge of the Skagastolstinder-Vesle-Centraltind-Styggesdalstind-Gjertvastind and ascents of the Ringstind, Dyrhaugstinder and with Wedderburn, the Midtmaradalstinder. In 1938 and again in 1948, with David Munsey, CUMC, who died recently, he did a number of alpine climbs, but the only names to come down are the Matterhorn and Mont Blanc. Like many of his generation, the war excised 10 years of his active climbing life. He continued scrambling and hill walking until recent time.

He had a physical 'presence,' a certain hauteur and French of the Academie sort. An old SAC porter, at the Bertol Hut in 1931, undertook to use his skill to replace the tricky edge nails of the period. When returning the well-serviced pair of boots he inquired the whereabouts of 'le Milord Anglais.' *Autres temps, autres moeurs*. Very many years later, at the same hut, I overheard a nubile Gnome demand of an English party, whose hygiene and manners she justly deemed to be sub-standard, to remove themselves to 'l'écurie.'

A lively and questing intelligence, equable temperament and cultivated good manners, combined to make him an enlivening and agreeable companion, whether in conversation or in the adversity frequently encountered among mountains.

A.L.C.

GEORGE ROGER

A member has drawn attention to the fact that in the obituary for George Roger in *SMCJ* 1984, XXXIII, 90 no mention was made of his Alpine activities. He writes 'George Roger

had a long career as an alpinist fostered perhaps by the fact that his chemistry master was Mr Hill, the survivor of the O. G. Jones' accident on the Dent Blanche. Among the fine courses done by George were the Forbes arête on the Chardonnet, the Biancograt on the Bernina, the Bietschorn, Weisshorn and Matterhorn. On an off day once he walked from Zermatt to the summit of the Theodul Pass and back eschewing mechanical contrivances. On another occasion when visiting a 'flu-stricken Geoffrey Winthrop Young for the first time his opening gambit was to ask Winthrop Young if he had ever gone back to the south face of the Täschhorn. The choler produced by this question brought GWY back to life. This route had almost finished GWY off and is described in a purple passage in his book. To George the Alps meant at least as much as Scotland.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

New Members

The following new members were admitted and welcomed into the Club in the year 1984-85.

Derek Andrew Bearhop (23) Postgraduate, Dumfries
Robin Clothier (26) Nurse manager, Kilmarnock
Brian Shand Findlay (37) Insurance claims official, Aberdeen
Martin Hind (27) Crane operator, Glasgow
Robert Rogers Howard (24) North Sea diver, Dunbartonshire
Harry Logan (26) Graphic designer, Edinburgh
Kenneth Jonathon Johnstone (30) School teacher, Glasgow
James Laughland Morning (30) RAF Physical training instructor, Ballachullish
Graeme D. Morrison (28) Industrial chemist, Edinburgh.

Thirteen other candidates were deferred until September due to a hiccup in the arrangements for consideration of their applications.

AGM and Dinner, 1985

THE Annual General Meeting and Dinner were held at the Nethybridge Hotel in Speyside and both were judged highly successful. First of all there was for once plenty of room and ample barspace, the latter remaining open until the sma hours so it was just as well that many members had accepted the Hotel's very reasonable terms for bed and breakfast.

Most of the AGM was carried through with speed and in an orderly manner. The routine reports and nominations of new office bearers were received and rubber stamped by a docile membership. It was not until the Beneagles whisky scholarships were discussed that things really got going. One speaker (who admitted that he himself drank) nevertheless spoke at length about the social and health evils of drink and opined that it did not become the Club to have any corporate association with money derived from the sale of a known poison. Many supported him. Others were baffled at the concept of turning down free drink and thought that whisky, by the standards of this wicked world, was a fairly innocent source of mountaineering money, besides being the national drink. It was obvious that this latter group was left a bit breathless by the high moral tone of the dissenters' arguments and were unable to mount any effective counter arguments. The meeting then became enjoyably confused. Several motions were voted on and then declared procedurally wrong. Eventually a compromise motion was proposed and legally carried. It ran to the effect that the Club should accept the offer of free booze after the next Annual Dinner but decline it thereafter and that the Beneagles award should be administered not by the SMC but by a committee drawn from Scottish Mountaineering Organisations of which the SMC should be one.

A brief interlude then ensued during which any feelings of guilt which might still have smouldered were effectively damped by the hospitable libations of the donors of the Beneagles award (who also turned out to be the proprietors of no less a product than The Macallan!).

It was the best attended dinner on record and was accommodated in a room of the right proportions – neither too big nor too small, and warm withal. The President and the top table were piped in by Iain McLeod. The meal that ensued was good and well and smartly served. The Club song was sung by Stan Stewart backed by lead guitarist Curly Ross. The Club responded magnificently in the choruses. Then followed an updated version grafted on to the hardy perennial stock of the original. This seems to have become a continuing, if intermittent tradition (established originally by Tom Patey with his teutonic tour de force 'Ach, Mein Grossen Boten').

The speeches were for the most part brief, clear and to the point. Professor Slesser surveyed the Club year, Geoff Cohen gently dissected the guests. John Forsythe of the Irish Mountaineering Club replied on their behalf. Nigel Hawkins of the John Muir Trust spoke of the aspirations of that body and perpetrated two jokes. Michael Thomson,

Managing director of Peter Thomson of Perth, presented his firm's cheque for the Ben-eagles mountaineering award to Alastair Reid for his expeditionary visit to the Karakoram. Finally Professor Slessor passed on the gold badge, and historic ice-axe to Tom Weir, our next President. Curly Ross sang out the retiring President with a fine rendering of 'Dark Lochnagar.' Afterwards almost no one wanted such an enjoyable evening to come to an end and the informal exchanges continued for a long time.

New Year Meet 1985

No New Year Meet was held this year.

Easter Meet 1985 – Glen Spean

THE Easter Meet was held in the Glenspean Lodge Hotel and was attended by 20 members and 6 guests.

The weather was mixed – a glorious Sunday but otherwise rather misty and slightly moist at times.

The following excursions were made: –

Meall Chuaich; Aonach Eagach; Creag Meagaidh, Stob Poite Coire Ardair and Carn Liath; Garbh Bheinn (Ardgour); Stob a'Choire Mheadhoin and Stob Coire Easain; Beinn Teallach; Meall na Teanga and Sron a'Choire Ghairbh; Stob Ban; Carn Dearg (one of the Glen Roy trio); Creag Pitridh; Sgurr a'Mhaim, Sgor an Iubhair, Am Bodach, Stob Coire a'Chairn and An Gearanach; Aonach Beag by the North East Ridge; Cruach Innse and Sgurr Innse; Creag Dhubh (Glen Spean); Ben Dubhchraig.

One member also found time to go boating on Loch Quoich and two to ski in the Cairngorms on the way up.

Present were: Members: – President T. Weir, G. Cohen, T. B. Fleming, R. G. Folkard, M. G. Geddes, C. C. Gorrie, J. N. Ledingham, I. D. McNicol, Sir James Marjoribanks, J. R. Marshall, H. H. Mills, I. H. Ogilvie, D. W. I. Piggott, D. Scott, C. G. M. Slessor, I. H. M. Smart, W. T. Taylor, W. Wallace, I. M. Walker and B. G. S. Ward. Guests: – R. Allen, J. Broadfoot, I. Cumming, C. Furneaux, M. Furneaux and O. Turnbull.

It was a most enjoyable and successful meet and the presence of a fair number of younger members and guests was encouraging to those claiming only to be young at heart!

G.W.

J.M.C.S. REPORTS

Edinburgh Section. – There was a total of 31 Meets throughout the year, 18 weekends, 4 day Meets and 19 Wednesday evening Meets at local outcrops.

The year started with its traditional Meet to the Smiddy but atrocious weather forced everyone off the hill. This trend continued in January when the Club failed to reach Glen Clova due to heavy snow. The remainder of the year was more successful with excellent Meets to Glencoe, Torridon, Carn Mor (annual week Meet), Creag Meagaidh, Ben Nevis, Shelter Stone etc. The Meet attendances were generally lower than the previous year. Some members of the Club visited the Alps. Successful ascents of Alphubel and Mt. Blanc de Cheilon were made but climbing was restricted due to poor weather and early heavy snowfalls. The weekly winter evening Meets to Heriot-Watt Climbing Wall again proved very popular and continue to be a source of new club members.

Renovation work continued on our hut, Jock's Spot, at Newtonmore. The extension is nearing completion thus providing toilet facilities etc. Gas lighting and cooking facilities are now available until such time as the club can raise finance for electricity. Priorities

for the coming year will be roof repairs, internal walls, new sinks and wall units. The hut is now available for use by other clubs.

The Annual Dinner was held in the Killin Hotel and we were pleased to be able to welcome Bill Wallace as the guest speaker.

The year was concluded as it began at the Smiddy but with excellent weather for a change and the opportunity was seized to climb many of the fine peaks in the area.

Office Bearers – *Hon. President*, M. Fleming; *Hon. Vice-President*, W. M. S. Myles; *President*, F. Fotheringham; *Vice-President*, R. Dalitz; *Treasurer*, A. Carver; *Secretary*, G. D. Lee, 265 Rullion Road, Penicuik, Midlothian EH26 9AW.

Glasgow Section. – Most Meets organised during the year took place with the familiar locations on the Ben, Glencoe and Skye remaining the favourite haunts of Section members. Winter Meets, while usually well attended, tended to coincide with weather that was unsuitable for climbing although there was the odd exception. Climatic inclemency did not, however, deter the ever-keen hard-men of the Section from notching up a respectable number of routes. This level of activity continued during the spring and summer when the best possible advantage was taken of the glorious weather. The autumn saw several members reach ever nearer the magic goal of 277, although the actual summits of several well-known Cairngorm hills continue to elude some of this band.

The Club Hut at Coruisk enjoyed a successful year; maintenance carried out in May ensured that it remains quite the smartest hut in Scotland! Unfortunately attempts to upgrade the water supply proved doomed to failure and the installation of a jacuzzi will have to wait for another year. The fact that it was the 25th anniversary of the hut did not pass unnoticed with a celebratory meet there in September and a social in Glasgow in October. The latter occasion saw twenty five years of the hut revealed to an appreciative audience. The contributions of the inimitable Alan Thrippleton and his successors as Custodians caused much hilarity when several skeletons were exhumed from long-forgotten cupboards.

Mountainous activities abroad were perhaps on a lesser scale than in previous years although members were to be seen in the Bregaglia (and briefly in the Bernina), Zermatt, Chamonix and the Kaisergebirge.

The annual dinner was held at the Bridge of Orchy Hotel where members and guests enjoyed a particularly memorable speech from Jimmy Marshall before participating in the usual post-prandial badinage. Our other extra-mountainous activities included our usual series of lecture held in conjunction with the SMC (Western District). 1984 also saw the amicable resolution of the constitutional difficulties which have beset the Club over the past few years. This was a great relief to all members.

Although total Section membership remained much as in the previous year, 1984 saw an increase in the number of active members with some Meets becoming almost embarrassingly well-attended. This, coupled with an increasing number of prospective members, augurs well for the health of the Club as it enters its diamond jubilee year.

Office Bearers: – *Hon. Member*, W. H. Murray; *Hon. President*, John Grant; *Hon. Vice-President*, Alastair MacGregor; *President*, Neil Marshall, 48 Netherblane, Blane, Glasgow G63 9JW; *Secretary*, Dugald Mackie, 9 Ilay Court, Bearsden, Glasgow G61 1RT; *Treasurer*, Benny Swan, 8G Swallow Road, Fairley, Clydebank G81 5BW.

Inverness. – *Office Bearers* – *President*, Steve Travers, 11a Island Bank Road, Inverness; *Secretary*, Patrick Duncan, Top Flat Right, 17 Duldal Road, Dundee.

Lochaber Section. – The club membership has remained stable now for several years at around the 60 mark, of which the majority are local and active.

Outdoor Meets have been held monthly throughout Scotland, staying in huts, bothies and camping. The visit to Lewis for sea cliff climbing on the westcoast has now become an annual trip with plans in 1985 to visit the Flannan Islands.

Slide shows have been held throughout the winter months and were all successful and well attended.

For anyone contemplating joining the club facilities of which they can avail themselves are the free use of the club hut at Steall and an extensive library of mountaineering books, journals and guide books, and of course good company at the meets.

Office Bearers – *Hon. President*, D. Watt; *President*, W. Munro; *Vice-President*, I. Sutherland; *Treasurer*, J. Davidson; *Secretary*, L. Houliker, 13 Treslaig, Fort William (03977 633); *Steall Hut Custodian*, I. Walker, 12 Grange Terrace, Fort William (0397 3512).

London. – *Secretary*, John Turner, 7 Relko Court, Epsom, Surrey, (03727) 28560.

Perth Section. – Current membership stands at 67, an increase of 8 on last year. There was also an increase in the numbers of female associates. There were 17 Meets held throughout the year ranging from Shenevall in the North to Arrochar in the South coupled with visits to Rhum, Skye and Mull. Generally the Meets were well attended with the Grampian Club hut at Inbhirfhaolain again proving the most popular.

The Annual Dinner was held in April at the Clova Hotel with accommodation in the bunkhouse. Bob Milne, in his first duty as Honorary President, recounted his early experiences with the Section.

The Joint Annual Lecture with the Perthshire Society of Natural Science was held in the Art Gallery, Perth in January. David Baker was our guest speaker and gave a very well illustrated lecture on 'The Canyons of the American South West.'

The mid-week slide evenings were again organised by Jeff Banks. These included Tom Rix 'Furth of Scotland,' David Wares 'Outdoors Abroad,' Iain Robertson and John Rogers 'Buchan to Ardnamurchan' (see article in this Journal) and Nic Bullivant with his multi-screen presentation 'Ben Nevis.'

On the local scene the Section participated in the Mountain Mind Quiz and supported the highly successful Dundee Mountaineering Film Festival.

The Annual General Meeting was held in Perth in November at which the following office-bearers were elected – *Hon. President*, Bob Milne; *Hon Vice-President*, David Wares; *President*, Ron Payne; *Vice-President*, Lou Kass; *Treasurer*, John Rogers; *Secretary*, Joe Stewart, Flat 1, Duntrune House, Duntrune, Dundee (Tel. Kellas 391).

S.M.C. AND J.M.C.S. ABROAD

The Alps

JOHN STEELE writes – 'I spent 2 weeks at the end of April 1983 in the Swiss Alps, ski mountaineering in an area just east of the Grand St. Bernard Pass. In a period of unsettled weather I completed the first half of the 'The Little Haute Route' – Verbier to Arolla. This tour uses the Mont Fort Hut, the Cabane Dix, the Cabane Vignettes, and traverses the Rosablanc and the Pigne d'Arolla. I also made a round trip of the impressive Bouquetines Group, using the Cabane Bertol and the Bouquetines bivouac, including a traverse of the Tête Blanche. Sad to report no ice climbs were recorded due to the unstable snow conditions. I now have a comprehensive slide set compilation covering the Alpine Haute Route. Anyone who would like to see it should give me a ring.'

writes – 'In the company of Mrs V. A. Goldingay I had a very successful three weeks in the Swiss Alps, from July 14th, to August 4th. The first ten days were based in Arolla where there was a refreshing lack of 'les Anglais.' The weather was for the most part brilliant and the routes climbed there were the Dent de Tasalion N.E Ridge of L'Eveque and inevitably the Pigne D'Arolla. Our attempt on the Aiguilles Rouges ended at the hut with 4" of new snow which fell overnight.

From Arolla we moved on to Neuchatel to meet some Swiss friends and spent a day climbing with them in the Jura on the Arete Des Sometres (50-80m) near Le Noirmont, where four good IV-V routes were done on steep, sound limestone. We then moved on via Interlaken to the Furka Pass area, spending a day climbing at Handegg in Eastern Switzerland. This is one of the places the Swiss keep quiet about (vast sheets of perfect rock 500-1000m high). The show piece Eldorado was described to me by one 'Des' 'rope-boy himself' Grey as 'knocking El Cap. into a cocked hat.' We climbed two routes, the Chatzenpfad (V) and the Engeliweg (V +) on a thing called the Steinegg (Storwegg). From here we moved over to the Grimsel Pass area where we had fun and games on the

Galenstock (3543m) descending in the teeth of a thunderstorm. The whole area looked excellent for the expert and novice alike.

Our last few days were spent in the Zinal area, using the Cabane Montel; superbly situated for a whole group of 4000m peaks of which the Dente Blanche and the Obergabelhorn (4063m) form part. Our final peak was the Trefithorn (3527) which looked straight in to the North Face of the Obergulehorn.'

The following report of the JMCS London Section Meet in the Alps has been received – The following attended: John Steele, Mike French, Gordon Cameron, Steve Senior, Steve Gladstone, Andrew Walker, Roger Harvey, Peter Turner, Gavin Jordan, Robin Watts and Family, Brian Sullivan and Family, Alistair McKeeman and Friends.

Most were involved with the classic traverses, Petit Dent de Veivesi (a good training route) The Traverse of L'Eveque (IV), the Traverse of the Pigne D'Arolla and Mont Blanc Du Cheilon, The Traverse of Mont Brule (serious owing to bad weather conditions and the laughably loose rock) The Aiguille de la Tsa by the Bertol hut route (a 5 hour slog for a 30 min. climb) and the Tsa (again) by the Tsarmine ridge (IV. 17 hours). John Steele and Mike French attacked the classic North Faces with ascents of NW Face of the Douvres Blanches, both North Faces of the Petit Mont Collon a couple of traverses with the prols, and finishing up with the classic North Face of the Pigne D'Arolla, with Andy Walker making a third on the rope.

There were a few minor injuries, Steve Senior grazed his knee on the first day on the glacier, and by the second week it had become septic and inflamed. He returned from his trip to the hospital with his leg in a half plaster cast, a bucket full of pills, and an annoyed look on his visage. Alastair McKeeman arrived at the Vignettes hut only to have a tooth break, and he was forced to return to the camp for a visit to the hospital, his face swollen like a balloon. Peter Tibbetts was afflicted by a condition called tetany and had to go down to the hospital for a 'cheque' up.

Apart from these minor incidents, the meet was a complete success.

Majorca

DES RUBENS was abroad a lot recently and tell us –

Because of a compromise, I found myself in Majorca with my wife Jane in October. During our stay, we made an ascent of the island's highest peak, Puig Maior, 4,736 feet. We ascended the NE ridge from a col at 3,000 feet on the Calobra road. The ridge gave a pleasant walk around a coire rim, with a couple of exposed severe pitches over a fine nose. As on Kanchenjunga, the summit was untrodden (by us), though in this case due to a military installation unaccountably unmarked on our tourist map.

Though boasting several fine Munros, hillwalking has not yet taken off in Majorca and paths are non-existent or overgrown. Full leg cover is advisable due to scratchy vegetation. While probably not worth a special visit, there is plenty of scope for rockclimbing and the south side of 'The Puig' has a fine campanile. The seacliff scenery on the NW coast is magnificent.

U.S.A.

DES RUBENS writes – 'In early July 1983, Ian Dalley and I flew to Los Angeles for a three week tour of the California Sierras. At that time, with the £ at \$1.50, flights for £360 and car hire thrown in at £60 per week, we were able to lead a carefree existence, clocking up the miles in our cruise control Oldsmobile. Having negotiated the LA freeways, we found ourselves next day winding through Yosemite National Park bound for the high meadows and granite domes of Tuolumne. Although only passing through, it was impossible not to stop and photograph 'The Valley' with its tremendous granite walls and graceful waterfalls, swollen by meltwater. Like the Matterhorn from Zermatt, overexposure still fails to prepare one for the magnificent reality.

Another hour's drive took us up to the Tuolumne Meadows. Here we were slightly taken aback to find the snowpack, after a winter of record snowfall, still ten feet deep

under the pines and the official camp sites closed. Our solution was to drive over the Tioga Pass to camp at 9,000 feet just outside National Park territory. From our tent we could look over ice bound lakes, limitless snowfields and the wide views of the High Sierra. Though pleasing, it was rather different from the sunny flower decked meadows we had anticipated. However, despite frosty nights, we had four wonderful days. Tuolumne is a magical, undeveloped land of giant glaciated domes, sparkling blue lakes, meadows, pristine forests and superb climbing. Moreover, Ian and I had the place to ourselves, the locals seemingly unused to snow in July. Particularly outstanding climbs were *West Crack* (5.8), a single 400 foot vertical crack, North Face of Fairview (5.9) and *The Dike* (5.8), an unprotected slab engendering sweaty palms. We also romped up the white granite of the *Great White Book* (5.6), *The Hobbit* (5.7) and the *Water Cracks* (5.7). One day, we so far forgot our penchant for roadside crags as to walk up to climb the *SE Buttress* 5.4) of Cathedral Peak, whose first ascent was made in 1869 by John Muir, now rightly revered as patron saint of the conservation movement in the States and to whom so much is owed for the present unexploited state of the Sierras.

We now dropped down to the Owens Valley on the steep eastern side of the range, exchanging ponderosa pines and Alpine meadows for desert sagebrush. On our journey south down the range we passed Mono Lake, another of California's many natural wonders. This unique alkaline lake, with its abundant food supply, is breeding ground for most of the Californian gull population and millions of phalaropes. Sadly, its existence is threatened by LA's insatiable demand for water and, as the run off from the Sierras is siphoned off, its level drops yearly.

After the roadside cragging of Tuolumne, our traditionally Scottish love of long walk-ins asserted itself, and, obtaining permits from the ranger centre at Mammoth, we set off for Minaret Lake. The walk was satisfyingly lengthened by blocked roads, deep snow, river crossings and a navigational error, forgiveable in mountaineers more used to misty moors rather than deep forests. By dusk, the thinnest sliver of a new moon was rising over the towers of the Minarets. A roaring open fire succeeded in keeping off marauding bears and other native carnivores and we slept content under a myriad of stars. On the following day we climbed the fine corners and walls of the steep *South Face* of Clyde Minaret (5.8) to make the 3rd ascent of the peak that year (according to the summit register). But even at 12,000 feet, we were baked on black walls until the sun left the face after midday.

We continued our tour southwards to the Palisades, the most Alpine area of the Sierras with several 14,000 peaks and a few small glaciers. We had now adapted to the cloudless weather which stabilises over the range during the summer and no longer commented on the curious lack of wind, rain and storm. Dispensing, therefore, with tent and stove, we walked in from the roadhead above Big Pine to bivouac by Big Pine Lake No. 3. On the following day, we made an ascent of *Dark Star*, a climb which, in Scotland, would be called North Buttress. Nevertheless, as the longest climb in the Palisades, it gave a fine variety of pitches, from steep dihedrals and chimneys to soaring aretes. Its artificial sections, graded A3 in Steve Roper's guide, went free at about 5.9 or 5.10. On the day after, we retreated from an unclimbed line on the east face of Mount Sill, vertical holdless granite proving too time consuming, even for a naturalised Aberdonian, perhaps due to a lack of grass ledges.

Our next visit took us up to the Whitney portal, from whence we walked up to the east face of Mt. Whitney, the highest peak (14,494 feet) in the lower 48 states. We bivouacked in the grand eastern corrie, in a setting that would compare even with Lochnagar. Here were the finest high altitude walls that we saw in the High Sierra, the *Keiller Needle* (5.10A3 in Roper) looking particularly worthwhile. Predictably, for the first and only time, the weather didn't behave and we endured a miserably windy bivouac, before climbing Whitney by the fine *East Face* route (5.4).

We took a day off from climbing and drove the 100 miles from the highest point in the States to the lowest, in Death Valley. We sampled the heat, visited Zabriskie Point and admired the remarkable colours of the rocks. Another 'not to be missed' attraction. Then we drove back northwards for hundreds of miles through the empty Nevada desert to end up at Lover's Leap, a roadside crag near Lake Tahoe. Here, we climbed the classic *Traveler's Buttress* (5.9) with its remarkable horizontal sills and a horribly strenuous chimney of a type of width presently unavailable in Scotland.

After our first encounter with a rattlesnake, which passed off peaceably, we then made another marathon drive back over the Tioga Pass to Yosemite. Despite our earlier intentions to avoid the heat and the crowds of the 'Valley,' we felt we couldn't leave without attempting a route in the area with the world's second finest granite crags. The routes we did proved great classics, though lacking the grass, loose rock, wet moss and grimy cracks of some of the better Scottish crags. By choosing starting times carefully and with a valley floor temperature barely touching 80°F, we remained pleasantly cool. We started on the east face of *Middle Cathedral* (5.9 A1), enjoyed a long day on the *Steck-Salathe* (5.9) of the north face of Sentinel and finished up on the enjoyable *Royal Arches* (5.6 A1). Only on the last pitch of this last route did we meet another pair of climbers, our first encounter of the holiday. From our ever changing positions on three routes, we were always aware of stupendous scenery of the valley – El Cap, of course, Half Dome dominating the valley head, Yosemite Falls, the world's second highest waterfall, Lost Arrow Spire and the great expanse of Apron slabs.

Sadly, that was the end of the trip. As well as memories of some grand scenery, we were also impressed with the pristine state of the National Parks and the High Sierra. I could not help making comparisons with our own threatened Scottish uplands, where the conservation of the last fragments of ancient forest and the most vulnerable plateaux have not, even now, gained full protection from developers.

[The editor was in the Northern Sierras with his wife during the same period and was equally impressed with the standard of conservation maintained, sometimes in the face of heavy usage. In addition to Yosemite and Tuolumne, they visited the Mammoth area, in the Inyo National Forest. Mammoth itself, is a major ski centre and is an upmarket Californian equivalent to Aviemore. Like Aviemore it has a highly scenic hinterland, with pine-grit lakes. These are dominated by a prominent little peak called Crystal Crag which gave an enjoyable 700 foot scramble on splendid granite.]

U.S.S.R.

DES RUBENS as a recipient of the Sang Award visited the Caucasus last summer. He writes – 'Dave Broadhead and I had been postulating plans for a visit to the USSR for some time. As no one known to us had exactly raved about the Pamirs, we decided to opt for the Caucasus. These mountains, though historically of great interest, have been neglected by British mountaineers in recent years. Our researches showed only one British party¹ in the last few years, though post war visits by McInnes² and Hunt's party³ are well documented. There was activity between the wars, our own J. H. B. Bell visiting the range twice. Achievements by Austrian and German teams in the 30's paralled the events taking place in the Alps at that time. The Caucasus' Golden Age was during the closing decades of the last century when, after the last Alpine summit had fallen, the local tribes were pacified by the Imperial Russian Army and the range made available to Alpine Club members. Naturally, they bagged most of the highest summits (although the culmination of this era was the traverse of Ushba, the most difficult mountain in the range, by a German party in 1903).

The range has now been open on a regular basis to Westerners for ten years. Any mountaineer who can find the \$800 (1984) can attend. Even at £1 = \$1.40 (June 1984) this is not cheap and the Soviets, in demanding payment in dollars, seem unaware of the recent problems of sterling. Having paid up, no other expenditure is required (other than travel to Moscow – £200 ap. from Heathrow 1984) so the 23 day trip is reasonable value for money.

The area available to us in 1984 was the Baksan Valley. This large valley runs North-east for about forty miles from the main dividing range and includes some twenty miles of the main watershed. Several major tributaries debouche into the Baksan, of which the Adyr Su and the Adyl Su are the best known. Among the finest mountains are the twin peaks of Ushba (15,453 feet), Shkelda (14,173 feet), Jailik, Dongus-Orun and finally Elbrus (18,481 feet), Europe's highest.

Early in the year, I sent off a simple application form and received a prompt telegram in reply, followed by a letter requesting payment which would, I was told, release an official letter of invitation, required for visas. Our immediate action in transferring our fee was followed by several months silence. Only after bombarding the Camps Directorate in

Moscow with telegrams did we eventually produce the required response, three days before the departure date. Furthermore, we travelled to Moscow a few days before the official starting date, involving us in entanglements with Intourist too tedious to relate here. In the end, of course, all was well and we gained a glimpse of the Russian bureaucratic mind. Our initial few days in Moscow showed us some of the disadvantages of independent travel in the Soviet Union, but nevertheless provided us with fascinating insights into local life.

On the appointed day, we telephoned Mr Monastyrski, the Director of the Camps, who sent Marina, our interpreter, round to collect us and see us safely to Hotel Sport, a modern establishment in the Lenin Hills area of the city. This place was frequented by a depressing number of track suited athletes, some from allied countries. This favoured elite were prescribed especially tasty high protein diets, which we admired while awaiting our pleasant but more mundane fare. Barters with the catering staff involving caviar and digital watches (where do they replace the batteries?) also served to while away the mealtime hours. Early on the 24th July, our group flew to Mineralnye Vody, a spa resort north of the Caucasus. After many hours delay, due to torrential rain, we eventually reached our hotel at Cheget, about four miles from the head of the Baksan Valley, the coach driver skilfully negotiating several Grade IV landslides. The weather continued very bad, which was just as well as we spent most of the following day being introduced to our Soviet hosts and their organisation. This last was fairly large and rambling but fortunately was very helpful at getting folks like us onto the hill by getting chits signed quickly, transport to roadheads organised and food from the central store. Apart from ourselves, there were present a mixed bag of nationalities from the Communist Bloc and Western Europe, a brace of Japanese and solitary English and US representatives. It quickly became clear that the abilities of the group were equally disparate, but that most had designs on Elbrus. This was strongly encouraged by the Soviets and we had initially to take a strong stance against Elbrus in favour of some of the many lower, though more interesting peaks.

Our 'advisers,' Gena and Yurgi (who fortunately answered to George) having ascertained that we definitely didn't at present wish to climb Elbrus, found us an attractive training peak in Jantugan (13,000 feet). Next day, we set off in heavy rain up the Adyr Su valley to bivouac at the Green Hotel (Curiously: Green Hotel = Green Bivouac, Cheget Camp = Cheget Hotel). It should be said that the Soviets have not stooped to such unsporting ploys as weather forecasting but we were informed, as I have found common in parts of the world not too usually frequented by Westerners, that weather of this unpleasantness was unusual hereabouts. Later, the rain ceased and Jantugan appeared as a magnificent icy fang dominating the valley.

We continued our walk up through beautifully scented pinewoods to reach the Green Hotel, a delightful meadow just below a glacier, sheltered by a dormant moraine. Many aluminium coloured tents were scattered about, characterised by a lack of modern fasteners and an abundance of polythene sheeting, suggesting to us that the weather was not as unseasonal as we had recently been led to expect. We were immediately welcomed by a group of 'Alpinistes' who thrust loads of tea and stew at us. It became a feature of our visits to any popular camping spot (there are no Alpine style huts in the Caucasus, except on Elbrus) that we were always made warmly welcome, so much so that we never had to cater for ourselves in such places. We stayed up until midnight with our hosts, who were good company, discussing topics from Scottish rock-climbing ethics to Russian literature (and vice versa). It interested us that our female hosts were shipbuilding engineers from Leningrad and of a type of Slavic beauty not often portrayed in the western press. Gear was also mutually fascinating. The boot and rucksack revolution has not yet taken place in the USSR and indeed, many of their garments seemed water absorbent rather than water repellent. The presence of many fine specimens of nailed boots gave an old fashioned air to the Russian teams, where the joys of being in the hills still seemed to take precedence over the modern competitive spirit.

On the following day we were away at 4 am to complete our peak by a fine PD route, well within the official control time. Unfortunately our hoped for views of Ushba were dashed by rapidly moving cloud. But we did clarify our knowledge of the local geography, useful as no maps or guides were on sale in the hotel lobby. Some views of the great 5,000 metre peaks of the Bezingi area were obtained some thirty miles distant, notably Dykh-Tau and Shkara. It was obvious that peaks in the immediate area offered

some magnificent mountaineering, mainly of a high order of ice and mixed faces and ridges and some serious traverses, a form of mountaineering to which many of the highest mountains obviously lent themselves. The only exception to this jagged maze of peaks was Elbrus itself, which we had seen for the first time, flushed pink, at dawn, a volcanic bulk of enormous dimensions whose twin summits were, nevertheless, not without grace.

After a fine afternoon tea back at the Green Hotel, we were back at Cheget by dusk. The hotel, which lacked any comfortable social centre but catered for bored teenagers who fed slot machines all day, contrasted so strongly with the outdoor life that we were out on the hill again as soon as possible. On the next day, we walked for eight hours up the lovely Adyl Su valley to attempt a 1,000 metre Argentiére type face on Ullu Tau Chana at the head of the valley. This attempt failed after about 10 metres in the face of high temperatures and falling rocks. Our hosts had been so concerned at our attempting this 5B (Russian grading) route that they had sent along three advisers to watch us through a telescope from the valley floor. It was obvious that, after our retreat, they thought poorly of the whole business and our position in the league table, quite high after our rapid ascent of Jantugan, slipped a long way. Moreover, we had not yet expressed any interest in Elbrus.

We regained some credibility by traversing the peaks of Dongus-Orun and Nakra. Two horribly unpleasant bivouacs, one involving water and the other snow, were endured on the two attempts we made on this traverse. Our persistence was rewarded in the face of constantly poor weather by the ascent of the fine *North-east ridge* of Dongus-Orun (D), bivouacking (see above) on its summit. From over 14,000 feet, the view from our icy bags in the morning was beyond compare as, on our first really good day of clear skies and deep cold, range after range of the central Caucasus stretched before us in the ghostly pre-dawn light and we saw Ushba, one of the world's great mountains, for the first time. Luckily, the rest of the day remained clear as we traversed several large features in the long descent from Nakra, some of which proved interesting navigational challenges even in good weather.

We now turned our attention to Ushba. Two short days brought us to a camp on the Ushba plateau below the north ridge of Ushba north, some 3,000 feet below the summit. I was intrigued by the behaviour of George and Gena, who accompanied us as far as the Plateau. Although they conscientiously warned us from time to time on such mountaineering hazards as balled up crampons, they were quite content to ascend the Ushba icefall, whose density of large crevasses was considerable, unroped. I became even more intrigued when they later took the trouble to warn us about a recent fatality befalling a lone Russian in an equally horribly crevassed area which we were about to visit.

When we arrived, some Spaniards were abandoning an attempt on the mountain saving us the trouble of excavating platforms. George and Gena were admirable hosts whose enormous sacks had brought up copious quantities of fresh tomatoes, apples and cognac to while away the rest of an indifferent day. In the evening, we were treated to some great views of Shkelda, though our own peak remained elusive. On the following day, deciding that poor weather now was preferable to appalling weather later, we climbed the *North ridge* of Ushba North (D) leaving at the unAlpine hour of 8 am. The climb would undoubtedly have been magnificent had we been able to see anything. Instead, the technical difficulties of steep ice and exposed ridges with fresh snow had to suffice. Dave later discovered that no ascent of this peak by a British party had been recorded since pre Revolution times, so our satisfaction at gaining the summit in such indifferent weather was increased. Our main regret was that we were unable to make a traverse of the twin peaks of the mountain. We returned to some grave handshakes from Czecks who had also set up residence on the plateau, then descended the icefall the following morning, accompanied by fine blasts of wind on the crags above.

We now had four remaining days. I was keen to attempt another 'face nord' while Dave, slightly guiltily, had aspirations towards 'The Big E.' We compromised by doing both and on the afternoon after coming down from Ushba found ourselves plodding up a dreary moraine in the rain to bivouac below the *North face* of Ullu Kara Tau, a peak near Jantugan. It precipitated on and off throughout the night, but at dawn it cleared sufficiently, the temperature was below freezing and we decided to 'go for it.' Although George had recommended this fine icy wall to us, he had omitted to mention the 2,000 foot ice fall barring the foot of the face. We made a very rapid ascent over avalanche debris and under seracs, surmounting one or two Grade IV ice pitches. The upper 2,000

feet consisted of a gradually steepening headwall, which we climbed on improving neve and lowering temperatures as the weather began to clear for the first time in several days. Even the upper part was threatened by some seracs but we were eventually able to move out onto a beautiful arete which brought us to the summit ridge after six hours of TD climbing. Another approaching storm robbed us of views as we crossed a plateau to hit off the descent ridge, 3,000 feet of PD down climbing to the Kashkatash Pass. Our final descent of the crevassed glacier in deep snow was reminiscent of winter conditions.

In the morning, we descended to Cheget and a couple of hours later were on our way up to the Priut hut on Elbrus. Mechanical uplift is available to within an hour of the hut, situated at about 13,500 feet. We passed the remainder of a misty day in this pleasant place, chatting with some friendly East Germans, who were visiting the Caucasus by illegally overstaying their transit visas. These unfortunate mountain enthusiasts find it very difficult to visit high mountains in either the East or the West.

For the summit day, we were away by 2.30 am by the light of a full moon. We reached the east summit nearly 5,000 feet higher just after sunrise with the thermometer at 5°F and a gale force wind, forcing us to lie prone in order to make the obligatory radio call. Nevertheless, we had the pleasure of gaining a magnificent view of the range, as, unlike the other foreign teams who had made earlier ascents, we enjoyed perfect visibility. We are now able to trace imaginary dotted lines over many of the mountains which for so many months had been names from books or journals. By 9.00 am, we were on the higher west summit, marked not by an honest cairn but by the red flag and the hammer and sickle. (Where was the bust of Lenin!). By this time, the wind had dropped and we were able to enjoy the view to the full. Also, unlike on Europe's other highest summit, we had the mountain to ourselves, as we were the only team to make an ascent that day. It is worth noting that, while the ascent is fairly straightforward, the mountain is devoid of shelter and that strong winds and low temperatures are common.'

Notes 1. We found no hindrance in attempting any climb we wished, though we had occasionally to be strong minded.

2. Radios are carried by all parties and check in times are decided at outset.
3. Control times are given but are generous. Failure to return after expiry, unless the safety of the party has been ascertained by radio, will precipitate rescue.
4. Fortunately, there is no helicopter rescue service. (The mountains are still peaceful).
5. There being no Tiso branch in Moscow, gear is hard to come by and much local gear is homemade. Russian mountaineers are keen to acquire boots, harnesses etc. In return, they have an abundance of titanium ice screws, but not much else.
6. All food is provided, but chocolate, pasta and packet soup are worth taking. Vegetarians would have a hard time at low altitudes.
7. No weather forecasts are available, though curiously there is a meteorological research station on Elbrus.
8. No maps or guides are readily available.
9. No huts exist, (except on Elbrus).
10. Finally, there is plenty of scope for all abilities of mountaineers, though in view of facilities mentioned above, more 'mountain sense' is required than in the Alps. Soviet mountaineers, particularly in bivouac areas, are extremely warm towards Western mountaineers.

References: 1. AJ 1981 P 126

2. McInnes 'Look Behind the Ranges'

3. Hunt & Brasher 'The Red Snows' Hutchison 1960.

Sweden

D. J. BROADHEAD writes - 'Sarek National Park, Sweden is Europe's largest wilderness. Wild, unspoilt fjell country. Mighty mountains, glaciers, deeply carved valleys. Enticed

by descriptions such as these, the 'Scottish Sarek Expedition 1984' left Glasgow airport on March 23, flying to Bodo, Norway, well North of the Arctic Circle, the temperature well below zero. Apart from the headed notepaper, Dave Kirkland, Dave Morris, Anne Macintyre and myself had a pair of cross country mountain touring skis each, food and fuel for twelve days, an alarming amount of gear and a 'pulk' (small sledge) to help carry it all. A bus ride took us inland to Sulitjelma village, then three days on ski across the border to the edge of Sarek. Crossing featureless rolling country and broad frozen lakes, this long approach made the prospect of bad weather rather serious, particularly on the return. However, our worst weather was experienced on the first day, just as we were finding our feet. A cold and very windy version of baptism by fire, our frostchapped cheeks bore the scars for the rest of the trip when the weather was generally good.

With a Wild Country 'Super Nova' tent, a geodesic dome which fitted the four of us very snugly, we were completely self sufficient, although as it turned out we were able to use several comfortable huts. Approaching via Pieskehaurestugan and Tarra-luoppalstugan huts we crossed a broad pass of 909 m into the Sarvesvage valley, the mountains hidden by thick cloud. Following this valley down as far as the upper reaches of the birch woods we joined the Rapa valley where at last the clouds lifted, revealing the impressive peaks and corries all around. In brilliant sunshine we climbed up to Mikkeltstugan hut, in the heart of the massif and at the foot of Sarektjakka, at 2,089 m the highest peak in the area. We were carrying crampons and axes with the intention of attempting a peak, though our busy schedule only allowed one climbing day. Unfortunately this turned out very misty, so instead we turned west and began the long return by a more northerly route, following the Alkavagge valley to Alkastugan hut.

Leaving the Sarek peaks behind, two days of perfect weather took us to Staloluokta and Sarjasjaurestugan huts, crossing back into Norway with a day to spare, allowing a short detour into the Sulitjelma range. This little massif sits astride the frontier, with the Blumansisen ice cap to the north and an extensive system of glaciers to the south surrounding some dramatic peaks. From a camp at about 1000 m on a glacier pass we swapped skis for crampons for the first time and climbed the shapely Vardetoppen (1722 m). From below, the traverse to Stortoppen (1830 m) had looked attractive, until closer examination revealed that this would be a long and serious route. On our return it was interesting to discover from Per Prag's informative 'Mountain Holidays in Norway' (published 1963) that 'this long and razor sharp arete . . . has never been traversed.' Satisfied with a fine view from the top, next day we enjoyed our final ski descent of almost 1000 m back to Sulitjelma village on April 6. Having skied over 200 kilometres in 13 days we enjoyed a very successful trip and the unique experience of the Arctic wilderness in winter.

The Himalayas

1984, Joint Anglo-American Karakoram expedition

SANDY ALLAN was with this expedition, led by Mal Duff and Burt Greenspan.

The Mustagh Tower (7274 m) was climbed by the Brown/Patey route made in 1956.

Porters were not used on the ascent and tents were used as follows:

30 June	Base Camp	4500 m	
	Camp 1	4900 m	
	Camp 2	5600 m	Fixed ropes used from Camp 2
	Camp 3	6200 m	to Camp 3 on the col.
(bivouac tent)	Camp 4	6500 m	
29 July	Summit reached by Mal Duff and Tony Brindle		
30 July	Summit reached by Jon Tinker and Sandy Allan		

Australia – a postscript

The ubiquitous A. L. CRAM is one of the Club's most indefatigable travellers – and among the most avidly read contributors to SMC Abroad. In response to a raised editorial eye-

brow at the absence of 'nasties' in the account of his Australian travels which appeared in the last issue he sends the following: 'The whole Coral Sea from the Torres Straits down to near the south of Queensland is infested with 'box jellyfish' which trail strings of biologically poisonous tentacles. Contact with these causes intense pain, shock, paralysis and frequently death. I saw one young woman rescued from the sea and lying on the beach with four or five whip like scars across her shins, thighs and stomach, brown in colour and being dosed with the antidote ammonia undiluted by a lifesaving team. She was unconscious and soon died. One man told me of a single strand across his arm that was so painful that he felt he would have cut his hand off had he had a weapon in such a frantic state he was in. Curiously, out at the Barrier Reef, 200 kms off shore, one could bathe unscathed. Inshore one can see blue sharks, curiously small, as one expects better things, a mere six feet long and slim but I am told capable of slashing wounds from rows of thin sharp ribbon like 'teeth.'

Perhaps because, my wife and I were inured to snakes in Africa, we hardly mentioned those we came across in Australia. All one can say is that where you expect them they are absent and in bleak and barren places, scorched by the sun, there they are. I thought they were less aggressive than the mambas, cobras, puff adders and the like in Africa. But then mammals in Australia are not aggressive, if one excepts Aborigines and here the unwritten story which one hears orally is not very comforting. One has to watch for the stinging tree in the forest with its large furry leaf and raspberry like fruit. Contact can cause a very painful sting lasting two or three days, yet it looks so attractive and innocent. I have had a few stings pushing through thick scrub downhill, teaching one to look out. Washing in water brings up the sting which can cause shivers. Black widow spiders and 'tunnel web' spiders have awesome reputations. One often sees the tunnel web in the bush. The gigantic web of the Golden Orb large spider is not uncommon. The strands are mucous sticks and sticks. In the Daintree River are very large crocodiles, sea and freshwater species. It is said they molest swimmers and the answer is not to swim in these rivers, or near the mangrove swamps they frequent. A good deal of Queensland Coast is mangrove swamp preventing access to the sea. Some very poisonous species of snake do inhabit the widely differing environments and one sees them slide away, sometimes with a nasty backward glance. The best tactic in Africa as in Australia is to thump the ground with a stick as one walks along. As my wife has pointed out to me, 'You don't want to see snakes, do you?' A difficult question to answer truthfully.

It is hardly possible to describe the teeming and very lovely birdlife, the butterflies, especially the Large Mountain Blue, the lizards and the flowers, not to mention the animals. If one stops still in the rain forest for half an hour everything begins to come out of the undergrowth and of course every species is different from those in Europe. When one considers the length of the Komodo dragon as about 10 feet, it is surprising to find the Australian perentie at over 8 feet and 6 foot goannas are common among the trees.

The taipan is possibly the most deadly snake in the world and its bite is said almost invariably to kill. Milked it can produce enough venom to kill 200 sheep as opposed to 31 lethal sheep doses taken from the Indian cobra. Fortunately this snake withdraws in the forest but the tiger snake is more aggressive and also lethal. Six feet long, I have sometimes seen it slide into thickets. Vipers are also venomous and sometimes seen sunning. There is also the lethal 'copperhead' and the 'death adder' a short stout snake often seen lying on warm rocks. Snakes inhabit every part of Australia and noisy walking and slow gentle movements when a snake is visible serve to protect one. Snakes do however keep down the rat and rabbit plagues. From time to time I have noticed large rock pythons. Mambas and cobras in Africa will stand up and threaten one and once or twice I have had to kill one, bracing itself for a jump, with a shot gun. In my personal view, however, nearly all snake bites have resulted from human beings chasing snakes with sticks or not standing still when confronted.

Two other features one does not much hear about outside Australia are the long dingo fences, to keep dingos in the North out of stockland and the quantity of kangaroos, put this year by the Minister of Environment at 21 million when he granted licences to cull 2 million. An unhappy experience is to observe the corpses of kangaroos along some road verges killed by cars. A large kangaroo hit by a car can override the bonnet and break away the windscreen and arrive kicking in the driver's seat, so that today outback trucks and cars have high 'kangaroo catchers' made of course in Japan. Of course some

years ago dead sheep killed by cars were all too common sight in this country.

Should any Member contemplate visiting Australia I could let him have some maps, unobtainable outside that country. I have also some maps and guides to loan if anyone is thinking of going to the Picos de Europa in Spain.'

REVIEWS

'A Chance in a Million?' – *Scottish Avalanches*. – By Bob Barton and Blyth Wright. (Scottish Mountaineering Trust, 119 pages, 39 line drawings, £4.95). – If you have already been avalanched, you can read all about your incident in this book. If not, you should read it before it's too late. Its distinctive contribution to the literature on the subject is to assemble all recorded information on Scottish avalanche accidents, many in anecdotal form. It analyses them and their causes, and points us towards ways of improving the odds. Because of their extensive experience, especially whilst instructing at Glenmore Lodge for the past eight years, there can hardly be two better qualified authors for this task than Bob Barton and Blyth Wright. The only qualification they lack is that they do not yet seem to have been avalanched themselves.

Their brief history of avalanche accidents in Scotland soon demolishes the 'Chance in a Million?' perception of the odds. The facts speak for themselves and the figures show a general rising trend. Avalanche accidents represent about 10% of all winter accidents on the hills. In the four winters 1975-79, 21 avalanche accidents were recorded, 10 being fatal. The winter of 1981-82 took the heaviest toll – 10 accidents, 3 being fatal. An average of two to three persons is involved in each accident and two in every three are injured or killed.

The authors debunk some common misconceptions. More avalanches are triggered by their own victims than are started by cornice collapse. Contrary to popular belief open slopes are by no means safe – at least one third of reported accidents have occurred there rather than in gullies. One bewildering accident in Coire an t-Sneachda occurred when a 20° slope released a 15 cm thick windslab of area about 5 metres by 8 metres; six victims were hospitalised and one died from his injuries, despite wearing a safety helmet.

How do we react to all this? Bob Barton and Blyth Wright warn us off a fatalistic philosophy. Although a proportion of avalanches do not obey the conventions they describe and are in our present state of knowledge unpredictable, the majority of high-risk situations can be readily identified and avoided. Their purpose is not so much to alarm as to alert, and to enhance our enjoyment of the hills.

With the possible exception of one Figure and the irritating use of abbreviations such as 'TG met,' the chapter on the anatomy of avalanches is nowhere too technical. The illustrations so clearly drawn by Dudley Evans help in the careful build-up of a basic understanding of how avalanche conditions develop, especially windslab – potentially the greatest threat to mountaineers and off-piste skiers in Scotland. Throughout the book, anecdotes make compulsive reading and include many very well-known names. Time spent in studying the misfortunes of others is put to good use in the final two chapters: how can we improve the odds?

Much useful advice is given on observing the weather record and examination of snowpits. Vital inferences are occasionally emphasised in heavy print and this helpful feature could well have been extended. Any but the most systematic reader will find himself having to refer back to related points made in the previous chapter, to draw up his own mental check-list.

If this book is the sell-out it deserves to be, climbers may even enjoy their off-days next winter, in heavy discussions of snowfall history and wind transportation, and digging snowpit cross-section all over the slopes. Conclusions and advice are all the more impressive for being not lightly given. For instance, the authors hesitate to commit themselves on whether an avalanche victim should hold on to his ice axe or not. It is a factual and fascinating book which makes us re-assess our attitudes to snow conditions and risks.

R. A. H.

Until comparatively recently there was a widely held belief that 'Avalanches don't occur in Scotland.' In their book, Bob Barton and Blyth Wright explode this myth once and for all. This is the first publication devoted purely to Scottish avalanches and as such is a most important addition to the literature.

Both authors are professional mountaineers currently on the staff of Glenmore Lodge. Between them they have many years of experience. Also, since Glenmore parties have not infrequently been avalanche fodder, they have had unique opportunities to observe and report on the accidents and the events leading up to them.

The book is in four main sections. The first is general and historical and sets the scene so to speak. There follows a long chapter on avalanche anatomy and the sequence of events which terminates in an avalanche. The third section offers sound practical advice on assessing avalanche hazard, what to do if caught in an avalanche and how to conduct a search for avalanche victims. The book concludes with a slightly depressing analysis of several Scottish avalanche accidents. Slightly depressing because the reader is left with the disconcerting thought that 'there but for the grace of God go I!' There are five useful appendices including a chronological list of recorded Scottish avalanche accidents from 1925 to date. It seems clear from the text that the type of avalanche most likely to cause an accident in Scotland is windslab. It is also the most difficult to predict and the most likely to kill or maim.

Barton and Wright have demonstrated that avalanches pose a very real threat to winter mountaineers and skitourers. There is evidence to show that avalanche accidents are increasing as more people use the mountains in winter. (Even as this review was being prepared newspaper headlines reported the death of a lone young skitourer in an avalanche on Ben Wyvis).

As with all accidents, prevention is of paramount importance. In order to prevent avalanche accidents mountaineers have to be educated to recognise the hazard and avoid it if possible. This book will give the reader a good basic knowledge of Scottish avalanches. It is clearly written and well illustrated. It should be widely read by the mountaineering public including hillwalkers.

My only criticism concerns the title which I feel is inappropriate. Someone browsing through titles in a bookshop might easily miss the subtlety of the ? after 'A Chance in a Million' and conclude that any risk as remote as that was not worth bothering about. In fact the book deserves a place on the bookshelves of every climber, including SMC members, a number of whom have been featured in the accident statistics. At £4.95 it is a bargain.

D.R.G.

Cornwall – West Penwith. – By Pete O'Sullivan. (Climbers' Club guidebook, £6.95).

This new guide covers all the rock-climbing in the West Penwith of Cornwall and replaces two previous guides and a later supplement. This obviously means a vast amount of superb climbing in one book, in fact 800 routes of which 200 are new since the previous guide-book but all within a volume that is still not too bulky. But perhaps this is the guide's weakness, in packing all these routes in the contents themselves have been trimmed down. It contains an introduction, a history, a sparse first ascent list and little else. The route descriptions themselves have been pared down, sometimes to such an extent they are difficult to follow (*Raven Wall* is an example of this, the guide doesn't even mention that it follows a huge corner for much of its length). Routes of one pitch, no matter how long or short, are all described in one paragraph rather than in standard CC form and this gives these routes the look of less importance. Climbs of Severe and above are given technical pitch grades but again not all routes have these magic numbers. This seemed especially so with older climbs in less popular areas, in Kittiwake Zawn for example no routes have technical grades in spite of the fact that some are fine climbs. It would seem that not everything has been checked out.

In a sea-cliff area such as this the approaches to the foot of the cliffs is of prime importance and here the guide seems reasonably clear. The maps are good, clear if a little lacking in detail but the 28 photo-diagrams (especially commissioned for this book we are told) are another matter. Some, such as those of Chair Ladder, are reasonable; others such as for Carn Barra or Gurnard's Head, are a waste of space, white lines on a featureless black wall. The decision to use these is all the more surprising when the author himself has produced a fine cliff drawing in the front of the guide. The action photos which do make you want to climb in Cornwall.

On the grading side some of the more obvious mistakes have been rectified but still some routes appear undergraded (some would say all Cornwall routes are undergraded). The usual star system is used to denote merit, again plenty of scope for disagreement but here there seems little correlation between text and star, The Curtain Raiser for example is 'A splendid climb,' but rates no stars whereas Bishop's Rib, A splendid route' rates three!

All in all this guide gives the impression of being hastily produced and relying heavily on the previous guide's opinions. It also seems slanted towards the harder climber, especially those who know their way about already. Those with more modest aspirations will find their climbs treated in a fairly off-hand manner and little guidance given as what to go for apart from the well known classics. Still for those who wish to climb in the sunny south, it's still less than 1p per climb.

A.F.

Mountaincraft and Leadership. – By Eric Langmuir
(Scottish Sports Council/Mountain Walking Leader Training Book, 361 pages and many diagrams, £9.00).

This is an important book in that it is the official handbook for the Leadership Training schemes and will be used widely beyond them.

It is much longer than its predecessor, perhaps twice as big, and contains more information. But the material is presented in a more readable manner which takes more space. This is not a manual compiled by a committee, but committee influences and the constraints derived from its role as the official handbook for the Leader Training schemes have had their effect. The section on security on steep ground completely ignores the existence of equipment such as nuts and even slings so that is of limited practical application. Paradoxically modern gear items make their appearance in the section on snow and ice and will presumably contribute further to the proliferation of pitons which bristle from so many of the classic rock climbs which make popular winter routes today. There are a number of instances of this kind of confusion in the book and criticisms may be made of many detail points. Not all would agree completely with what appears to be a non-selective bibliography and includes items of doubtful value such as the original BMC leaflet on Mountain Hypothermia, nor with the recommendation of a 9 mm rope for hill walking protection, nor with the diagrams and advice on ice-axe braking, nor with the failure to mention the hazards that surround the wearing of crampons except that they 'can cause problems.'

The difficulty really is that the book does not confine itself to mountain walking, and scrambling. It overlaps into other sectors of climbing and this may confuse the readership for which it is primarily intended. However, there is an abundance of excellent advice in this publication, most of it delivered in pleasantly readable form. The sections on navigation, mountain weather, access and conservation and thoughts on party leadership are likely to be especially useful. All in all it is very good value and likely to be a great success.

W.D.B.

Ascent – The Mountaineering Experience in Word and Image. – Edited by Steve Roper and Allen Steck. (Sierra Club Books £16.95). – 'Since it's inception in 1967, Ascent has undergone numerous changes.' Thus begins the introduction to this 175 page, big glossy hardback, destined to grace the bookshelves alongside the other biggies of recent years. This the journal of the Sierra Club has now 'completed its metamorphosis from annual journal to full-fledged book.'

Of the seventeen essays only ten are non-fiction (i.e. climbing articles) and three of them refer to Denali or Mount McKinley.

Certainly the emphasis on fiction writing adds a new dimension to the pages of a climbing journal, and most of these fiction articles would stand on their own in any type of book. Personally I feel prospective buyers might be disappointed at the lack of pure climbing essays. There are some superb colour photographs of Denali and California bouldering, along with excellent black and white shots of Patagonia.

One essay is all about a Glasgow granny aged 75 years who goes climbing! Included are two mediocre photos of the Ben. One point all you Munroists should check is there are 543 of them according to the author – back to the drawing boards?

I have mixed feelings about this book, it certainly is well produced, but I would have preferred more climbing at this price.

B.S.F.

Eric Shipton: The Six Mountain-Travel Books: – (Diadem, 800 pages, 106 plates and a few maps, £16.95).

This anthology is a bargain buy because these books are long out of publication and are difficult to obtain.

When I started climbing in the fifties Shipton's writings of lightweight and hazardous trips provided me with a few bits of 'easy going' during a 'waist deep' plod through many boring expedition books. He seemed like a kindred spirit, not relishing a crammage of humanity on the hill.

Shipton writes "With a wistfulness, perhaps tinged with sentimentality, I think of the leisurely days of a few hundred years ago, before life was so hectic, before the countryside was spoiled by droves of people, and beauty itself so universally exploited as a commercial proposition."

At a total cost of less than £300, Shipton and his companion of many trips, Bill Tilman battled their way up the Rishi Ganga Gorge – which had repelled many previous expeditions – to enter for the first time the inner sanctuary of the Nanda Devi basin. After extensive exploration and mapping of the area, they were faced with the daunting task of getting back out with a very limited food supply. So limited in fact, that they were forced to exist on bamboo shoots for the last few days before reaching a small village.

But throughout all the hardships there was always appreciation of the beauty of the surroundings.

Through these books you can share Shipton's exploits in mountaineering and exploration – executed in the purest fashion.

D.P.

Scottish Mountain Footpaths. – a reconnaissance review of their condition, by R. Aitken, (Countryside Commission for Scotland, £3.50 + £1 p&p) – This is a very thorough examination of development and change in mountain footpaths as a result of the passage of feet aided by natural processes. Perhaps because it lies outside the remit of the study the effects of the estate bulldozer on existing paths is largely ignored. Even so this is a valuable and informative piece of research focussing on a couple of dozen well known locations as examples which represent the range of conditions and problems. Most of the factors involved and their detailed applications will contain few surprises to readers of the Journal, but here they are set down in a structured form which gives a coherent picture of the whole situation.

The need for action before the problems become more serious is convincingly put and it is encouraging that the Countryside Commission for Scotland has already decided to undertake a programme of management trials under the direction of Bob Aitken. Scottish mountain users will welcome the CCS' involvement with a problem area which the NTS has already entered in the management of its mountain properties. One of the serious obstacles which lies ahead will be the funding of protective measures. Many of us would see the financing of remedial work by landowners and others as a far more productive form of expenditure by the CCS than the vogue for establishing routes like the West Highland Way where much of the money is spent on legal fees and facilitative measures rather than on the ground.

W.D.B.

The Ridiculous Mountains. – By G. J. F. Dutton, (Diadem, £7.95).

This is a collection of the hilarious short stories about 'The Doctor' which have appeared in the Journal over the last years or so, together with some additions. The improbable, yet believable adventures of this larger than life character either have you addicted or leave you cold. However, the tales are delivered with such an economy of phrase and realism of background that you find yourself in situations that have an air of familiarity and among characters that you feel you have met before. A splendid book to dip into when you want to relax.

The North East Outcrops – edited by D. Dinwoodie (Scottish Mountaineering Trust, £5.95).

This is the latest guide to climbing on the N.E. Coast, its predecessors being the Etchachan guidebooks of 1960, 1969 and 1978. The new guide is not only expanded in

its coverage, dealing with a variety of small inland crags, but is much enlarged by the huge increase in routes it contains. There are still a few gaps like Bennachie or the sea cliffs near Portsoy, but this is an excellent guide, well illustrated by maps and diagrams and containing enough material to occupy even the most active climber for a very long time.

Journals of Kindred Clubs

Among the publications of kindred clubs we have received those from the French, Italian and German Alpine Clubs. Of these *La Montagne* and *La Rivista* are the most impressive, with their magazine style and abundant colour photographs. The latter has a less glamorous approach which is less commercial and probably nearer to our hearts than that of *La Montagne* but both make one wish for fluency in French and Italian so that one might fully appreciate the taste of 'Un Salade Greque' and find the answer to the question 'Is the Frequenter of Via Ferrata a True Alpinist?'

The Pinnacle Club Journal, 1982-84. – illustrates the wide range of activities and places which are enjoyed by its membership and the good rock climbing standards they reach. A pleasant journal in traditional style. Civilised, not unlike our own. The centre pages fell out too.

The B.F.M.C. Journal No. 2. – is the second issue from the Braes of Fife and has an enjoyable mix of articles, poems and drawings which reflect the character of this lively club together with its doings on the hills, on the crags, on ski and in the Alps.

The Midland Association of Mountaineers Journal 1983/1984. – Not having encountered a M.A.M.J. for a number of years it was a pleasant surprise to discover this edition is not dominated by crag-rot articles which seems to be the case with a number of other publications.

Pieces on Lundy, Gogarth, Verdon and the Etive Slabs cater well for the rockclimber, while those who look to the higher ranges can enjoy the Garhwal Himalaya, Mount Kenya, the High Atlas and two articles on mountaineering in North America.

All in all, a well-balanced journal, the only criticism being the poor-quality illustrations, but it is understandable that high printing costs have prohibited a more lavish production.
D.P.

Also received have been *The Tararua Trampler* from New Zealand, *Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa, 1983*, *Polar Record No. 140*, *The Appalachia Bulletin, Berg, 1985*, *Scottish Ski Club Journal, 1984* and *The Tuesday Group, Alps 1984*.

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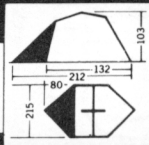
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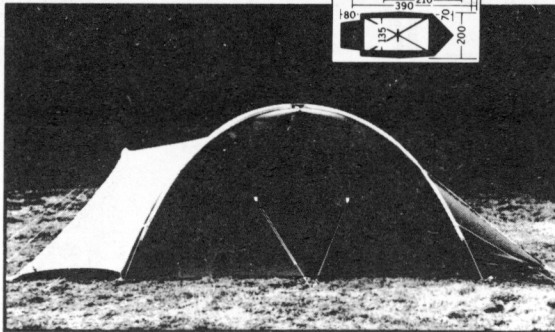
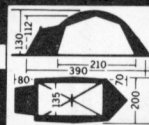
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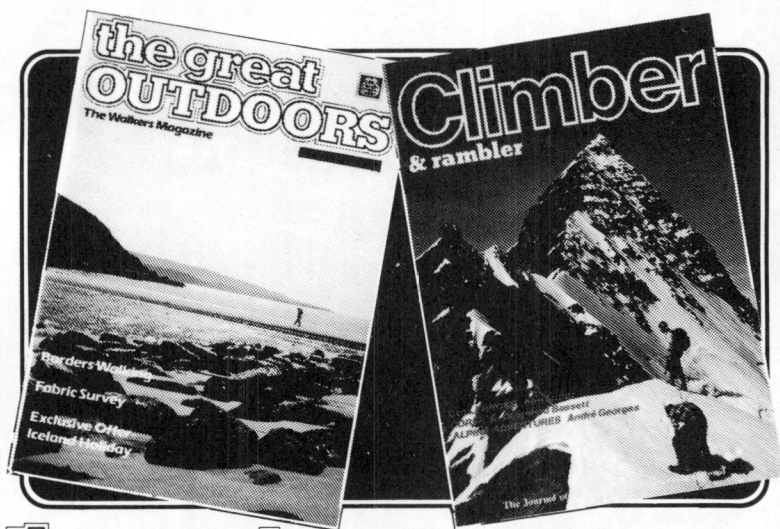
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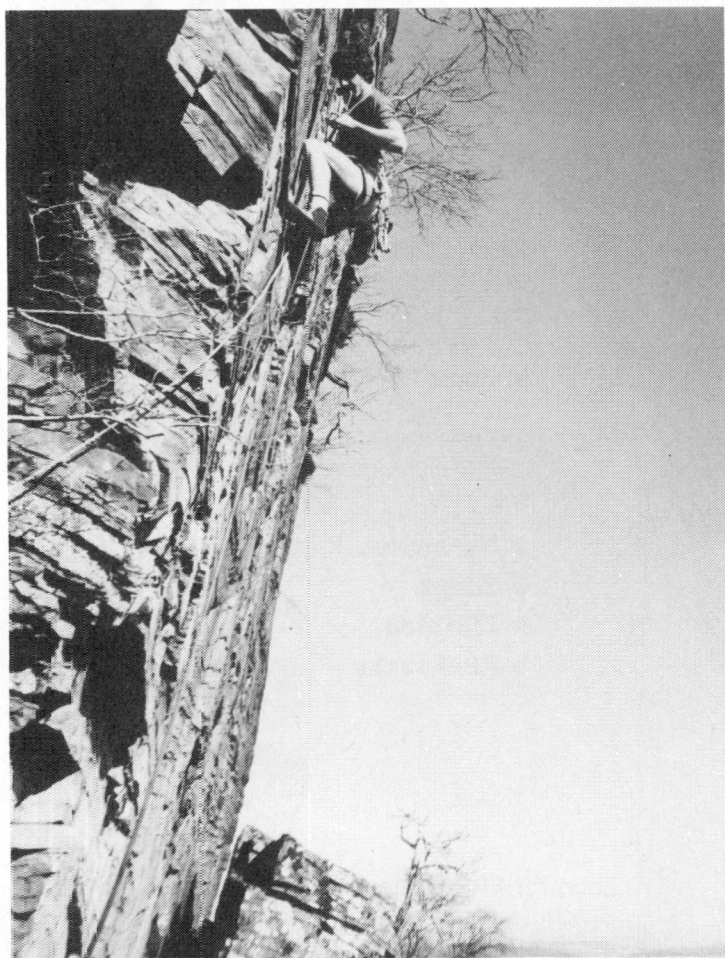


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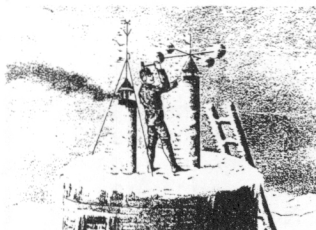
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