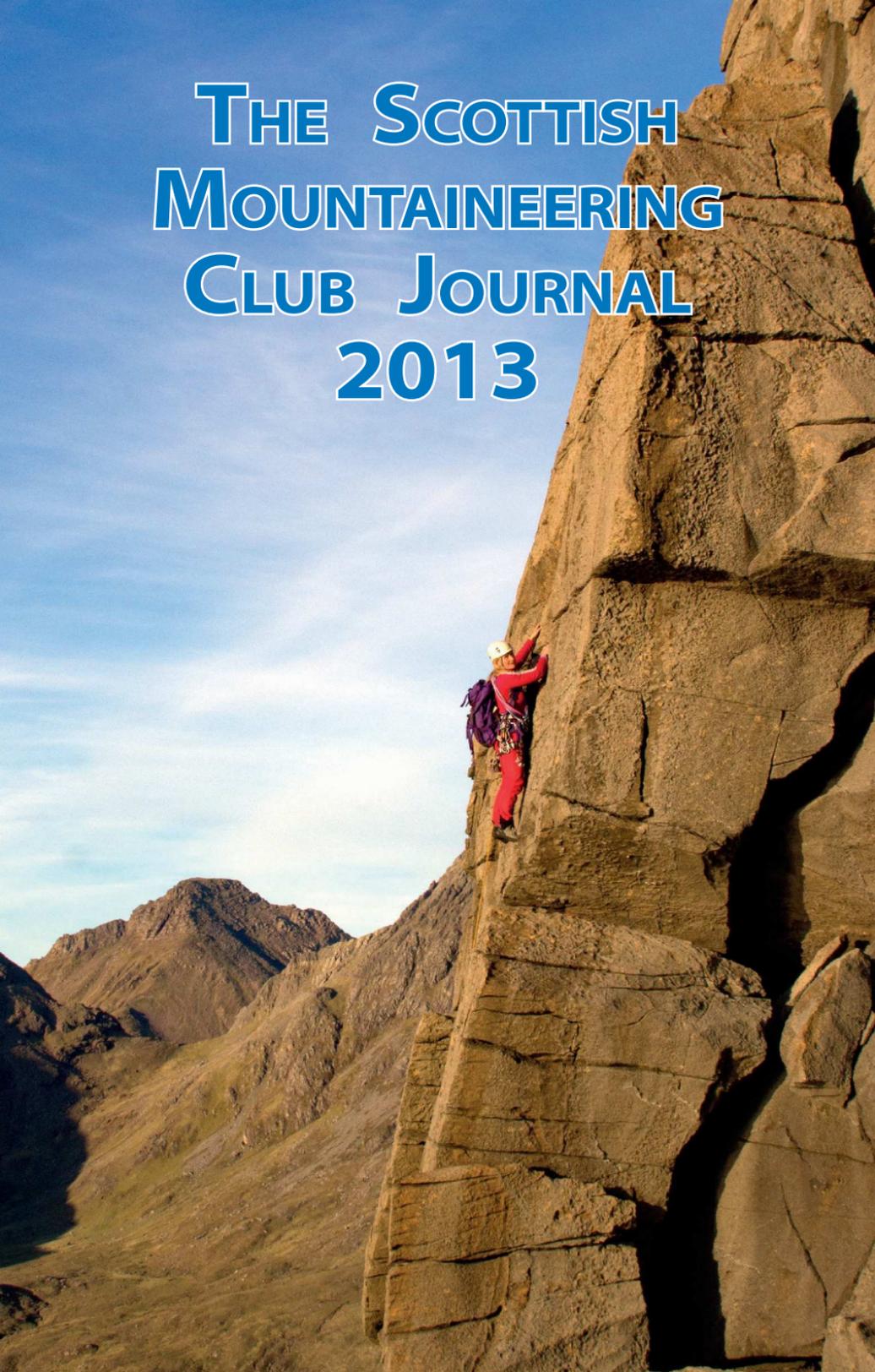


THE SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL 2013



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EDITED BY D. NOEL WILLIAMS

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Front cover: Kathy Tighe on the pinnacle of Giant's Staircase (VS,4b), Ruinsival, Rum. The route, originally done in 1947, will be included in the new Inner Hebrides guide. Photo: Mick Tighe.

Back cover: Peter Biggar on the north ridge of Maol Chinn-dearg (Cluanie). Photo: Roger Robb.

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THE MAZENO RIDGE OF NANGA PARBAT

By Sandy Allan

WE ARE RUNNING on empty, it is 6.12 p.m., Pakistan time, 15 July 2012. Late in the day for Rick and me to be at 8126m on the summit of Nanga Parbat, but that's how it is! I am feeling done in and delighted having come all the way along the Mazeno Ridge. I've been here before with Rick on 10 July 2009 at around 4.30 p.m. crawling in wild wind. On that occasion we had climbed the Diamir Face via the Kinshofer and were checking things out as I was quite certain that if we ever did ascend the Mazeno, then a fast descent would be vital.

We had tried the Mazeno previously, with Doug Scott and close friends back in 1995. Incredibly, the ridge kept calling me, so to fortify my future self-confidence I felt it vital to understand the route down if my nonsensical yearning to climb the Mazeno ridge endured. We had been wandering about along the summit ridge above 8000m since 2.00 p.m. harvesting each small summit. The mist eventually cleared in the late afternoon and in good visibility we climbed up again. I was all but ready to give up but our years of trust and loyalty to each other provided the spark for Rick to push on in front, one more time, to a high point almost next to where we were at 2.00 p.m. A peg, a short piece of aluminium and a length of wire marks the summit.

Situated in the Astore district of Gilgit, Baltistan, Northern Area of Pakistan, Nanga Parbat is the ninth highest mountain in the world. It's the westernmost eight thousander and in 1895 Alfred F. Mummery and his two Gurkha companions reached 7000m on the Diamir face. Mummery eventually died reconnoitring the Rakhiot face. It was on 3 July 1953 that Hermann Buhl soloed to the summit on an expedition organized by Karl Herrligkoffer. In Urdu, Nanga Parbat translates to *Naked Mountain*. Messner of course had his impressive ascents and

descents and fellow mountain guides Steve House and Vince Anderson climbed the Central Pillar of the Rupal Face which was inspiring and buoyed my thinking.

Descending from the summit our footsteps are all but obscured with drifting snow, darkness surrounds us but Cairngorm experience leads me direct to the cave. Rick cannot get our remaining lighter to spark, the half cylinder of butane/propane gas on the Sumo stove seems almost extravagant and certainly useless for now; fortunately sleep came easily.

The Mazeno Ridge is 10 to 13 kilometres in length; it simply depends where you measure the beginning from. I can assure you it's long with at least four significant 7000m peaks along the way, inescapable, and then a considerable distance remains to reach the 8000m plus summit. Doug Chabot and Steve Swanson made the first traverse of the ridge between 12–18 August 2004; they had been acclimatising for ages before making their attempt on the ridge, but the effort left them weak and ill. They descended by the Schell Route and graded the Mazeno VI M4 A13. A two-man German Team also traversed the ridge, but there is little written up about it.

I knew it would not be easy and many mountaineers including myself had hit their heads off this proverbial brick wall. My pal Voytec Kurtyka and the late Erhard Loretan tried, and again gained no new ground, so for me duplication was pointless.

I have often climbed in Nepal and when guiding have climbed with some outstanding Sherpas and for so long now I have been telling them that I had a great route for them. Zarok is one of the best ice climbing Sherpas I have ever seen. I asked them to come along to climb with me and my friend Rick. As normal, cash was in short supply and we needed a bit more money. I decided to ask Cathy O'Dowd along. She lacked confidence about climbing the whole ridge so we decided to take another Sherpa to climb with her as she fully expected to turn back early but wanted to see the place. Cathy raised lots of funds and was responsible for the web site, networking and weather reports – something Rick and I are dreadful at and avoid as much as possible. As it turned out she surpassed her own climbing expectations (which I knew she would) but eventually Cathy and the three Lhakaps, Rangdu, Zarok and Nuru descended after traversing the whole Mazeno and taking part in one aborted summit attempt. Rick and I would not have been in such a position without their outstanding efforts, but like all of us, they too were exhausted. Their descent of the Schell route sounded horrible.

It was a tough call for me inviting my Nepalese pals rather than western climbers, as I knew mountain guides who showed a modicum of interest in my project but at the end of the day, while outstanding climbers, I had only known them in Alpine surroundings. We had not experienced high altitude rough times together, so I decided it was not worth the risk.

Day 1

We embark on the 'big push' having spent one night at 6400m in our acclimatisation phase. Weather reports informed us that we would be climbing into storm conditions about a week away, but we knew that we were never going to get a weather window long enough for this climb. Our sacs were heavy, eight days' food that can stretch to ten maybe. So off we went.

Day 3

On the morning of 4 July we finally stand high on the ridge and had good views down the other side to the Diamir glacier 2500m below us. We can see the tents of other teams tackling the Kinshofer route. In my mind I wish them success, hoping they'll climb high on the Kinshofer, but it transpired that they reached Camp 2 and then went home.

The ridge lies around 7000m with several separate summits. The high points and dips of snow merge, at times it is difficult to judge where exactly we are and how far we have to go. It is cold, the Lhakpas and Rick wear their down suits all the time. I dress in power stretch and a fleece top with very light Gore-Tex pants and wear my down parka constantly! Deep, unconsolidated snow and afternoon mist make for slow progress and when views come, it seems a ridiculous distance along the ridge, the summit of Nanga Parbat is on the very far horizon. It taunts and frustrates our team, some who are probably thinking their leader is a dreamer and potentially insane!

We are moving Alpine style, breaking camp each morning, breaking trail while carrying big sacs, roped into teams of two, everything with us. We have more muscle power and more supplies than either of the two teams that have traversed the entire ridge to the Mazeno Gap before, but even with the outstanding Nepalese we are moving slowly, semi-intentionally, trying to preserve energy in the unconsolidated snow as we know that we are here for the long haul.

Day 4

We are going along well, but Lhakpa Nuru in front has traversed under a rock outcrop and is trying to climb a steep snow gully to regain the winding knife-edge ridge when the sugar snow collapses under him and he falls some 40m. We are all moving together in our teams of two. Zarak is almost in Nuru's footsteps with lots of pooled loose rope... the sliding fall goes on until Zarak gets a grip and Nuru stops. With re-ascent difficult we climb down to him and try to traverse around the snow-and-rock buttresses finding an old accessory cord loop jammed in a crack. We continue on but nightfall catches us in a bad place!

We huddle under a rock overhang, the slope below steep enough that a dropped rucksack has a good chance of landing at the foot of the Diamir glacier! My determination to hack at rocks gets one tent precariously pitched. Rick digs out a natural coffin-shaped cave to share with Rangu,



Rick (left) and Sandy on the Mazeno Ridge. Photo: Cathy O'Dowd.

and Nuru and Zarok curl up half-sitting on an uneven rock ledge. It is a bad night that leads to a short day.

Day 5

We climb steeply up and on just on to a col and bivi again to give everyone time to recover. The next day is our predicted storm day, but we can't get a satellite signal, so have no idea of the updated forecast but what we see suggests high winds. Ahead lay twin peaks, featuring steep mixed ground, narrow exposed ridges and few camping places. We choose to stay where we are and sit out a storm that does not really come but it is windy, it would be pushy to move!

Day 7

Remaining relentless: wind, deep snow, tricky mixed passages, one peak after another after another. The exposure superb: a traverse in the sky with terrain dropping steeply on either side spreading out into views of distant peaks. The ridge winds sinuously like a serpent's back, decorated with curved cornices poised in frozen waves. We pass our 'point of no return', an awkward diagonal abseil to descend a rock wall. Should anything go wrong now re-tracing our steps would be barely possible, we'd be better to press on to the Mazeno Gap.

Day 8

We cross Mazeno Peak, the highest point on the traverse and the ridge

widens and then we stand at the start of the pinnacles, the last challenge between us and the main massif, an obstacle which we know to be the crux. From the Chabot and Swanson report we know it took them 13 hours. It looks so straightforward and I can sense Cathy and the Lhakpas already skipping ahead to summit day. Me, I hold so much respect for the American climbers that I expect a tough time and simply hope for the best.

Day 9

Hours accumulate, the pinnacles are endless, a crenellated twisting ridge dropping ever downwards, getting narrower and more convoluted as part of my team gets ever more exasperated with it. After eleven hours of climbing we reach the Mazeno Gap in the last blush of daylight. Only two other teams have ever got this far, none have gone further.

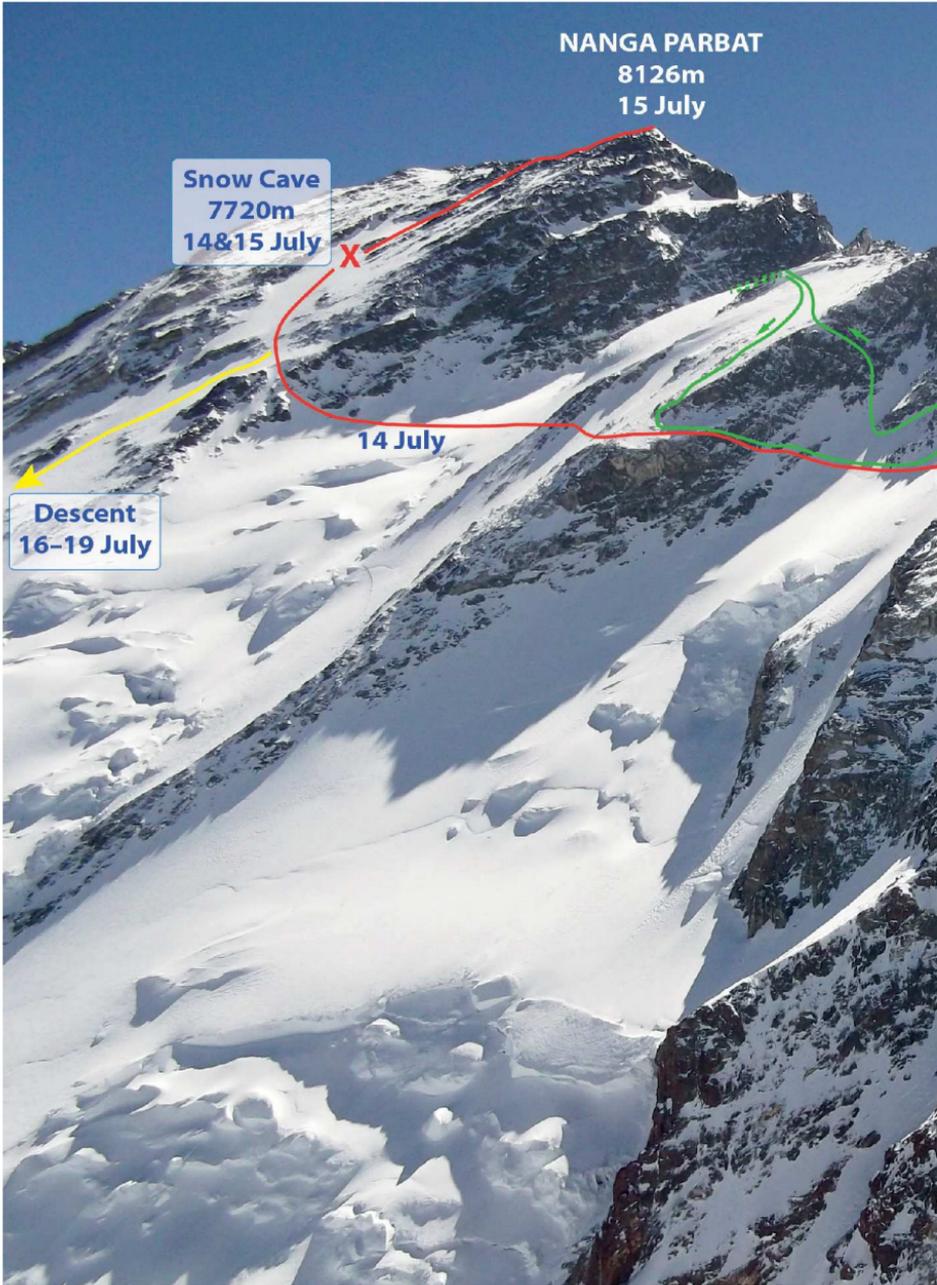
Day 10

Tired, but with a sense of achievement we sleep late and start late, making our way technically up to a high camp at 7160m. This will do for a bid for the 8126m summit, a tad far but we could make it! We know we are climbing into a high wind forecast but food is depleted, one big push to go and perhaps, just perhaps!

Day 11

Up at 11.00 p.m. on day 10, we leave at 1.00 a.m. on day 11, climbing in strong winds. I am tail end Charlie struggling with my goggles, Nuru in front. To Rick and Cathy's disappointment I want to stick to the ridge, seeking a technically cool new line to the summit. As daylight expands our horizon we arrive spectacularly on top of a subsidiary peak with views across mountains to the far western horizon. Sadly this bump is nowhere near the true summit. We are traversing along the exquisite rocky ridgeline that runs between the Rupal and Diamir faces with awesome exposure. From our bump we are forced to down climb diagonally over treacherous mixed ground, sugar snow and loose rock. Nuru is demoralised and Cathy cold and exhausted.

By 7.00 a.m., Cathy and Nuru are at odds, have had enough and they turn back. Rangdu roped with Zarok, and me with Rick, we move together on Scottish grade III/IV mixed ground. I lead, wishing I had two tools but in my rush to get to Pakistan my best tools were in a store in Chamonix, so I was dependent on our Pakistani stash. We climb steeply up rotten rock, then traverse deep snow to another rock wall where Rangdu and Zarok are coming back towards us demoralised and wanting to descend. There was a steep wall in front and we were already too late, no summit today rung in my head and I so regretted being so ignorant about this aspect of the mountain. There was half-hearted talk of another push to the summit. On the long traverse back to our high camp Lhakpa Zarok misses a footing and starts off down the slope, Rangdu tries to



*Nanga Parbat viewed from the start of the Pinnacles, Mazeno Ridge, 10 July 2012.
The ridge is much foreshortened in this view.*



The climbers on the crest of the ridge are Lhakpa Nuru and Lhakpa Zarok. Photo: Cathy O'Dowd.

hold him but is catapulted off his feet and they cascade down the face in a rapid slide. From where Rick and I are standing, the angle appears to run out before dropping off steeply but I am beginning to think that they may not stop. Finally, after around 300m they come to rest metres above the steeply dropping seracs of the Diamir face. They move and stand up, slowly climb back up the face to re-join our traverse. After 18 hours of climbing in fading light we arrive back at our high camp re-joining Cathy and Nuru. There are almost no supplies left. The decision to descend the next day seems an obvious one. The Lhakpas and Cathy make it clear they are going down.

Day 12

I wake up feeling so fine, I want to keep my options open. Zarok and Nuru are almost in a position to strike their bivi tents in preparation for their descent down the Schell route, I call through frosted tent fabric to Rick who shares my optimism!

Grace and acceptance fill my mind as I watch Cathy and the three amazing Lhakpas head down the Schell route on that misty enshrouded day. Déjà vu, did I really see this coming in my planning stage? Their contribution has been immense. As expedition leader and mountain guide, my sense of duty of care and accountability is tangible.

Later we learn that during their descent they actually miss the turning off the ridge to the east in the mist and find themselves abseiling down into the bowl to the west. Rangdu breaks his ankle, and one of the EV2 tents is avalanched upon.

After two days they walk out, climb into jeeps, and drive on into the night, heading for Chilas where they wait for us in the hotel!

We are left with the Satellite phone with a three-quarters-full battery. The food generously left for us amounts to almost a full packet of digestive biscuits, a serving of porridge, some boiled sweets and several gas cylinders. The forecast is reasonable for the next four days. Once they are long gone I realise that I have not got a lighter and they have many. Why had I not remembered to take one?

Day 13

The facts are: We are tired, have little food and we do not have it left in us to repeat the more direct line of the day before and push it on to the summit.

I am a bit disappointed but take the realistic option. We climb up and then try a rising traverse across to the summit pyramid and turn it on the left to join the Diamir face route somewhere above 7500m. We had climbed that route in 2009 and should be able to find our way off on that side. The tent will be a burden so we leave that behind and just take sleeping bags. We impulsively leave the mats behind as well as we think we can descend the normally fixed Kinshofer in a day.

Light snowfall, wind and tiny sloughs have been enough to erase the

tracks on the face and we make slow work of the traverse. Rocky ribs finger down the face, demanding precise footwork with whatever natural protection we can find. We push on breaking trail in deep snow. We share leads on a steeper couloir and I haul myself over a hanging cornice hoping the debris misses Rick. The traverse leads us nearer, onto the Diamir side. Features recognised from our 2009 ascent become visible. It is 5 p.m. and the summit is still in the far distance. Finally, at around 7700m we dig into a snow bank with our ice axes and move into the cave in the dark and eat our last biscuits.

Day 14

It is 6.12 p.m. 15 July, 17 years after our first attempt on the Mazeno Ridge we stand on the summit. We left our snow cave early taking all our possessions with us and found the summit eventually. We now decide we may as well head back to our snow cave.

Day 15

Rick breaks trail at first but it is too slow, I take over for almost the entire day along a seemingly endless downward arc, mist comes in and I take a bearing towards but slightly above the traditional Diamir Camp 4. Rick is behaving out of character but his work yesterday justifies exhaustion and respect. No one has climbed Nanga Parbat in two seasons and we can begin to see why. My concern makes me call our agent Ali to tell him we are descending the Diamir side and to send some valley clothes around for us with fast porters, I also enquire about our helicopter bond! Rick hears my words and realises I am concerned because of him!



Rick Allen (left) and Sandy Allan on the summit of Nanga Parbat. Photo: Sandy Allan collection.

Impressing me, he reevaluates his attitude and digging deep seems to get his act together again. We carve out another snow cave in unpleasant weather. Rick's energy is wasted as his side of the cave collapses in and is useless. My excavations are a bit better and we squeeze ourselves partly in. We try to get a spark from the stove and lighter but it is useless.

Day 16

Again, no water, no food, we shake off the spindrift, rope up together and move, steeply down a slope, crusty in places. It is loaded and unstable; Rick triggers a semi-anticipated avalanche. He rolls as I hold the rope from my solid stance. The slope is perhaps slightly safer now but we know not to assume! Our options are zero, stay and deteriorate or keep descending. We walk the avalanche track until we need to traverse off to the side. Below and to our left is the site of Camp 3. We uncover occasional anchors for fixed ropes and check them to abseil hard ice sections. The old ropes are hopelessly frozen in; we consume time with a 25m abseil on our own doubled rope. At dusk in enveloping mist we arrive on a ridge above the site of Diamir Camp 2. Rick wants to go one way, I the other and my memory is correct! There is no snow bank here so we hack out a ledge, tie ourselves on and begin a long vigil. Sitting on a few coils of rope we climb into our bags! I wish Rick a good night as I pull the draw cords around me in my Mountain Equipment bag. I cannot help but notice that he has not done his vitally important sock change foot care routine for two or was it three nights now! Certainly, I realise that the risk of dropping a boot here would make things awkward, we are both weak, and I wonder, is he as exhausted and frozen as I think he is?

Day 17

The weather continues to hold fair as dawn breaks and we move down to the site of Kinshofer Camp 2. We urgently need to hydrate! Rick falls asleep in the sun; I peel off the last of my down layer changing into my underwear. I awake a slumbering Rick and encourage him to remove his down suit! He does so and we harness and rope up again, I ask Rick to go in front as I'm certain that I have the alertness to hold a fall if necessary! Just above the Kinshofer wall, someone is arranging a belay. We descend to greet Marek Holecek who is soon joined by Djenek Hruby, they are climbing here before trying their new line on the Rupal side. Rick is subdued and hardly speaks; I am smiling as I get the Sumo stove set up making signs asking for a light! His broken English is not helping but he understands my sign language. He takes off his sack, carefully clips it in and hands me a lighter and sugar sweets which I open with my teeth and give a handful to Rick. They share a flask of tea and Hruby speaks good English. My stove is efficient and soon we have lots of water. Rick coughs and splutters, throwing up the initial hasty drink but then settles and starts to communicate. Marek tells us to use any of their food and tents at Camp 1 and is wonderful to us. They climb on, wishing to sleep

for acclimatisation purposes at the site of Camp 2. They have made our descent more feasible; we launch onto the decaying tangle of fixed ropes on the Kinshofer using our fifty metre rope to abseil in 25-metre portions. We continue down climbing roped together down the huge snow/ice couloir below. The bottom of the couloir seems further away than ever as we descend into the night, facing in, kicking front points into ice with semi-frozen toes. Rick keeps stopping and falling asleep. Respectful of our fragility I am glad to stop too and ease my foot pain. Mentally counting seconds into minutes to rest sufficiently, to encourage necessary movement but fearful we slip off. I know and trust Rick, he is exceptional but we are both so wasted! At 11.00 p.m. we stumble over avalanche debris and small crevasses until an illuminated tent appears on a ledge at the foot of the buttress. Three high altitude porters emerge and embrace us. Incredibly, Ali has mobilised them from their beds in Skardu to Camp 1 on Nanga Parbat in 48 hours. They moved continually through the night to be at the camp for us.

Day 18

Five in the morning we descend the glacier towards the Diamir base camp. En route our Sirdar arrives with the cook boy, presenting us with garlands of flowers; emotions bring wetness to my eyes as they pass them over my head and let them hang around my neck. An hour or so later we appreciate the hospitality, drinking tea as we sit on plastic chairs on nature's carpet of wild flowers.

The next day walk out on damaged feet, jeeps then take us to Chilas and our team are united.



Sandy and Rick at Diamir Face base camp complete with floral garlands and some of the Pakistani support team. Photo: Sandy Allan collection.

PREDATORY THOUGHTS

By Greg Strange

IN MID-MAY 1970 Brian Findlay and I made a new rock climb on the magnificent Central Gully Wall of Creag an Dubh-loch. It was at the time of the gentle rush to climb all the obvious lines on the frontal face. Commencing at the foot of *Cougar* we followed the crack system left of *Mousetrap* all the way to the top. As was often the case with these early routes, we had benefited from previous explorations, in this instance by Ian Clough and John Hardie who spent a day and night attempting to climb this section of the cliff. We had also known that Allen Fyffe and John Grieve had used part of the upper cracks on their Catwalk across the cliff during that memorable week the summer before. It was probably youthful naivety that led us to believe our climb might have been as good as *Centurion* on Ben Nevis. However, in our defence, we had between us, already climbed *Dinosaur*, *Mousetrap* and *Goliath* and thought this new climb to be as good as, if not better than these established routes.

At the time we were using Edelrid chest harnesses and 9mm perlon ropes. The chest harness was Mike Rennie's idea, he had first used one while climbing in the Dolomites. It would have been absolutely lethal in the event of a bad fall and only after experimenting by hanging from a rafter in the Gelder Shiel did we discover it would lead to almost instant asphyxiation. The device was immediately abandoned for the newly developed Whillans Harness. We carried a few nuts, Moacs and pieces threaded on rope slings, but mostly we used pitons for belays and protection which emboldened us to press on regardless, even on the occasions when climbing ability failed.

An early guide described our climb as 'one of the best routes on the wall', then by the Eighties it was considered HVS 5a 'in a fine position but easy for the grade' – surely a libellous comment considering its position just below half way in the graded list at the back of the book. What finally put the mockers on it must have been the current definitive guide which says the climb is 'occasionally mossy'. Modern climbers preoccupied with clean rock and multi-starred routes seem to interpret this as a warning to give it a wide berth.

Brian and I made a Silver Jubilee ascent in 1995 with Bill Church, but since then (and for a number of years prior to that) we had neither heard of nor seen anyone climbing the route. This, of course, may be partly due to remote mountain crags being less fashionable nowadays. For various reasons, we missed the opportunity for a 40th anniversary ascent, however I remember at the time noting the climb did not feature in any of the new Scottish selected rock climbing guides (including our own), nor was it listed on-line in the logbook of UK Climbing. Curiously, the

climb is still holding out against attacks with ice picks and mono points. So what happened to our wonderful discovery? Had it all been in our imagination? Would the experience of all these years climbing on a variety of rock types in hundreds of different locations reveal the embarrassing truth that we had seriously over-hyped our climb?

A chance for a rematch arose this May [2012] at the end of an-all-too-rare week of dry weather. Accompanied this time by Rob Archbold we drove, cycled and walked to the Dubh Loch on a beautiful crystal clear morning. The marvellous scenery and the anticipation of what lay ahead seemed to energise the old legs for we were soon standing among the great blocks of granite at the foot of Central Gully. Once assembled on the topmost grassy ledges we had the usual debate about what to wear, carry or leave behind. It was certainly very warm, even hot, yet we knew it would be much cooler once the sun went off the cliff in the early afternoon. Brian opened the proceedings by climbing the damp little corner of *Cougar* before a short steep crack took him up and round to a belay out of sight on the right.

Near the top of the second pitch, I came across a surprisingly well-preserved Lost Arrow piton which I clipped before making the short left traverse to the belay ledge. It was here that Clough & Hardie had spent the night during their retreat in June 1969. A large detached flake occupied most of the ledge and provided welcome shade for my already aching feet. Despite the passage of time the surroundings were familiar. The cliff hereabouts is both curved and convex so it is difficult to see much more than a rope-length ahead, behind or to either side. The view out over the loch and eastwards to the distant uplands of Aberdeenshire and Angus gives a great impression of space and remoteness. Close by on the right, the dark vertical profile of Broad Terrace Wall rises above the long sweep of the Central Slabs, while in contrast across the glen to the left, the tumbling waterfall and pink streaked slabs of the Eagles Rock positively gleam in the full glare of the sun.

Constructing a belay in the cracks above, I was aware of the familiar musty smell of warm granite. It was so dry that the small patches of dark brown moss could be rubbed off by hand. While taking in the ropes, I noticed a slightly paler area of rock on the side wall matching the exact shape of the detached flake now shading my feet. Even here, rings of grey lichen had already formed on the more recently exposed surface. I knew the flake had split from the parent rock at least 40 years ago and mused as to exactly when this event might have taken place. The sound of a female voice close by brought me back to the present. A young couple, through leading, and making good progress on *Mousetrap* were the only other party climbing on the wall that day. Appropriately dressed in shorts, they made an interesting contrast to three rather staid old-timers.

By now Brian was leading the tricky start to the third pitch, just as he had done on the first ascent. He was a little hesitant at first, perhaps



Brian
Findlay on
the 4th pitch
of Predator
27 May 2012

recalling how we had found this to be a second crux following on from the red wall below. Watching him pulling over the bulge, I could not help thinking how the years had flashed by. I had been climbing with my two companions for four decades (longer with Brian), yet it seemed like only yesterday since we first met. Continuous advances in equipment plus easily accessible all-year-round rock climbing had enabled us to maintain a modest standard, perhaps only a few grades below our best in the past.

From a distance, this impressive cliff appears to have changed little since George Washington Wilson took his classic photograph over 100 years ago, yet the exfoliating nature of granite has resulted in significant rock fall on several well known routes, including *Vertigo Wall*, *The Blue Max*, *The Giant* and *Cougar*. (The last only a few weeks after this visit.) Although on a much larger scale, comparisons could be made with the natural devastation seen recently on the Petit Dru in the Mont Blanc Massif of the Alps where Bonatti's famous South-West Pillar has completely collapsed. These are indeed alarming examples of serious objective danger on our 'living mountains'.

I expect you are waiting for a twist to this tale, but no, we successfully negotiated all six pitches and reached the plateau without much stress. No one had a stroke, heart attack or even cramp (at least not on the climb), a sudden gale did not spring up and there was no early evening storm. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, thankfully finding the climbing just as we remembered; excellent, continuous, varied and with good situations. At one point the line is close to *Mousetrap* but overall it felt completely independent. Protection was always good when needed (mostly cams) and we are able to report it is still one of the best HVS climbs in the Cairngorms. Oh! Lest I should be accused of wearing rose-tinted spectacles, we also confirm it is occasionally mossy.

THE CAUCASUS EXPEDITION OF 1913

By Robin N. Campbell

IN EARLY JULY, Harold Raeburn set off with what must count as the first SMC expedition. He was accompanied by his Alpine partner of several summers, William Ling, one of the up-and-coming younger members James R. Young who assumed the duties of photographer, an A.C. friend W.G. Johns, and a young Russian-speaking student recruited in Vladikavkaz, Rembart Martinson. Raeburn also hired a cook, Melitan, supposedly competent in dialects, who turned out to be very unsatisfactory in all respects. The expedition explored the region of the Central Caucasus west of the Mamison Road, before moving to the south side of the range, and making a lengthy traverse westwards to the peaks around Ushguli and Betsho, including Ushba, and concluding by re-crossing the frontier for an ascent of Elbruz. Their wanderings were described – by Raeburn in *SMCJ*, 13/73 (1914), 47–8, in *AJ*, 28 (1914), 87–93, and in his Caucasus diaries in our archives (Items 123–7, 130) – and by Ling in *AJ*, 28 (1914), 131–44, and in his *Diary* (Books 10 and 11). In addition, a version of Raeburn's diary covering their bold attempt on the East Face of Ushba North appeared much later in *SMCJ*, 25/146 (1955), 315–27, together with a long and interesting preface by Editor J.H.B. Bell. The expedition was an ambitious one lasting almost two months. It covered a lot of new ground, and yielded a bag of six or so untrodden peaks. So far as the history of our Club is concerned, it was an enterprise on a scale not repeated until the 1950 Garhwal Expedition. My purpose in giving this account of it is to recognize its centenary, and to evaluate it in the general context of early Caucasus exploration.

In 1913, the Central Caucasus was not quite *terra incognita*, but neither was a visit there like taking a holiday in the European Alps. Although knowledge of the mountaineering possibilities stretched back through 40-odd years to Freshfield's explorations, European mountaineering visits in these intervening years had been few. There were no guides and no hotels; food was difficult to obtain; transport was by horse, or horse and cart; without some Russian or Georgian, communication was impossible. In point of altitude and climbing methods, the Caucasus ranges were rather like the Alps, but in every other respect they were more like the Himalaya: most of the peaks were unclimbed, and most of the maps were bad.

In the Tsaya Valley

Their first targets lay around the Tsaya [Tsea, Zea, Russian – Цей] Glacier, a region lying between the great peaks of the Bezingi to the west and Kasbek to the east, and bedevilled (like most of the Caucasus) by a fluidity of naming resulting from variant transliterations from Georgian

or Russian scripts, and by worse naming tangles. The highest peak in the group, lying west of the glacier, was originally known as Uilpata or Albat-Tau or similar (4649m; Cockin, Holder & Almer, 1890), but was later named Adai Khokh, and has now been renamed back to Uilpata. Another prominent peak on the east side, Kaltber (4405m; W. Fischer's party, 1910), is now renamed as Adai Khokh. On the other hand, Freshfield's party in 1868 applied the name Adai Khokh to a peak eventually climbed by Raeburn's party – Tschantschakhi Khokh, now Chantchakhi, 4461m (Russian – Чанчахи; Georgian – ჩანჩახი).¹ And Maurice de Dechy, a Hungarian who was the first to make an ascent in the region, in 1884, claimed to have climbed 'Adai Khokh', which he also claimed was the highest peak in the group. 'Khokh' simply means peak, and is pronounced with initial and final sound as in Scottish 'loch'.

So Raeburn hoped to solve what he called 'the mystery of Adai Khokh', which he did – to his own satisfaction at least (*AJ*, 28 (1914), 158–64). He argued that 'Adai' was a name applied to the range as a whole by those who lived around it, and different European visitors had mistakenly applied the name to different specific peaks, and he concluded that de Dechy, operating in poor visibility and with a very bad map, had confused a peak which Raeburn named 'Curtain Peak' (4319m) lying between the two branches of the Tsaya Glacier with Uilpata/Adai Khokh. It is certainly not at all clear what de Dechy climbed – although if he did climb 'Curtain Peak', he climbed a much more demanding and difficult mountain than Uilpata – but Raeburn's suggestion seems to have been adopted. To compound the confusion, 'Curtain Peak' is now named Mamison Peak (Russian – Мамисон; Georgian – მამისონი).

The party began by establishing a base below the glacier snout in the Tsaya valley on 7 July. From there they climbed two of the Tsaya Aiguilles bounding the lower glacier on the west side, both new peaks, which they named Tur [Mountain Goat] Khokh, 4030m, and Ullargh [Ptarmigan] Khokh, 4204m. These names (as Турхox and Улархox) have survived on Russian maps and in guidebooks, though without any mention of the 1913 ascents. From these peaks they obtained excellent views of 'Curtain Peak' and Tschantschakhi. They then set up a higher camp on the Tsaya glacier above the first icefall. From there they made an attempt on 'Curtain Peak' from the south branch of the Tsaya. Four icefalls were crossed to reach the upper névé, and the party ran out of time (or steam) at around 4200m (probably lower; their aneroid readings were usually above modern map values). At any rate, whatever the height difference, there were enough obstacles and difficulties in front of them to force the decision to retreat. On a second visit to their high camp, they attempted to find a way into the north branch of the Tsaya via the flanking rocks (the icefall was impassable), but failed.

¹ Searching <google.ru> or <google.ge> with these names is effective in obtaining maps and topo-diagrams, etc., and fascinating besides.

Chanchakhi

They then turned their attention to the magnificent peak of Tschantschakhi, which had been deemed impregnable from the north or east sides. The west side offered the best hope of success and this could be reached from the Tvilisa glacier, with another Kaserne located conveniently below it. After moving to this Kaserne (now in South Ossetia), they established a camp on the Tvilisa at 3200m. Young stayed behind, ostensibly to pursue photography, but a rope of five is slow, and time had become a problem. Leaving camp at 4 a.m. on the 29th, they found their way through the crevasses of the Tvilisa, according to Raeburn by following mice and beech-marten tracks, and were engaged with the summit pyramid by 9 a.m. Their route is hard to follow, but it seems to have worked up a couloir, with excursions on the adjacent rocks, between Tschantschakhi's north-west and south-west ridges, eventually gaining the south-west ridge quite close to the summit, which they reached at 3.45 p.m. Ling produced a Union Jack from his rucksack, Raeburn a Lion Rampant, and a cairn was built on the rocky top. The descent was difficult, and a bivouac in the couloir was required, but the night was short and they safely regained their glacier camp at 8.30 a.m. Ling had some slight frostbite in one foot, which he blamed on his crampons. The party used crampons on every ascent during the expedition.

Ling had the reticence of his times, and his Diary rarely ventures



Chanchakhi's North Face, showing Russian routes. The West Ridge route lies south of the crest for most of the way, as did the 1913 route.

beyond bare factual reports of action. However, on this occasion he was moved to write that 'the expedition was a very fine one, and the mountain quite first class. Raeburn led splendidly and refused to be turned even when further progress seemed impossible. It was hard work for all and Johns and Martinson went very well.'

There is no doubt that Ling's evaluation is correct. This was a first ascent of a very difficult mountain by a route with a current grading of Caucasus 4A. Although Tschantschakhi is not even mentioned in English writing about the Caucasus from that day to this, it has a high profile in Russian texts, and now offers a range of high grade routes. So too does 'Curtain Peak' [now Mamison], which gave the expedition so much trouble and which they did not reach. It offers a similar range of high standard routes on rock and ice. As in the case of the other peaks climbed by the party, there is no mention of the 1913 ascent in Russian texts.

Ingur Valley, Svanetia

Johns now departed for home, and the rest of the party began the long and awkward traverse from Ossetia to Svanetia. Three 3000m passes had to be crossed, and everything had to be carried by horse, since the tracks were unusable by carts. On one pass the horses had to be belayed on the descent. Their first destination was the village of Zhibiani in the Ingur valley, the modern part of the ancient settlement of Ushguli. Raeburn had identified an unclimbed three-topped peak called Nuamkuam (Russian – Hyam-Kyam) situated east of Shkhara and west of Ailama on the frontier ridge. Despite an awkward glacier approach, Nuamkuam (4233m) is not a difficult mountain, and all four of the party traversed its three summits at the first attempt on 9 August, leaving a cairn and a further set of flags.

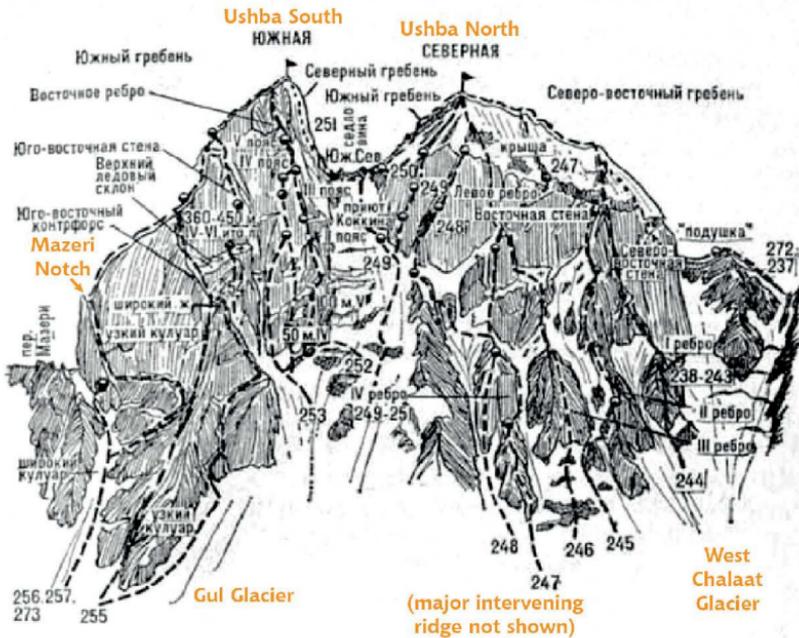
Betsho, and attempts on Ushba

The short traverse west to Betsho was accomplished by 13 August. The larger tent was left there as a base, where Young remained. The others set up a high camp on the Gul glacier below Ushba South. The porter engaged, Muratbi, had previously worked for Godfrey Solly and for the huge 1903 Ushba expedition of Willy Rickmers.²

On Ushba (Russian – Ушба; Georgian – უშბა) two routes were attempted. The first (on the 15 August) involved crossing from the Gul Glacier to the West Chalaat Glacier using a col below Gulba Peak. After descending to the Chalaat it was followed upwards to reach the north-east face of Ushba North. This was an extraordinarily bold venture, since once on the Chalaat's upper icefalls they were on absolutely virgin ground. Raeburn had already determined that the Central Couloir, used

² Willi Rickmer Rickmers was a member of the Club (j. 1904). He was principally responsible for the ski-ing craze within SMC which began about then. His membership was interrupted by WWI, and terminated by WWII.

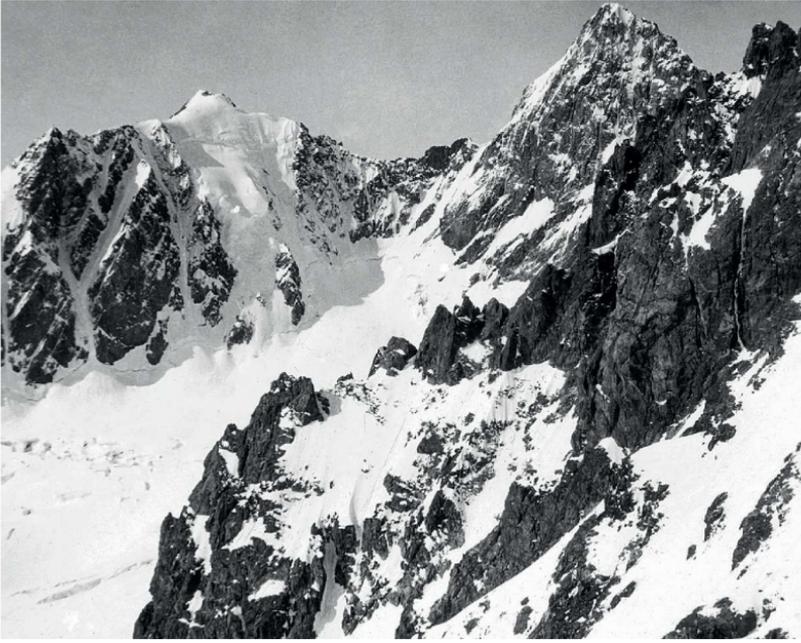
by Cockin and Almer for the original ascent of Ushba North in 1888, was in impossible condition – it had been an exceptionally warm and dry summer, and south-facing glaciers and couloirs were by now reduced to ice, and ravaged by stonefall. So had their attempt succeeded, they would have been obliged to descend by their route of ascent. They climbed to around 4000m on the face and bivouacked. On the following day they worked up below the headwall to about 4300m, but continuation required crossing a stonefall-ridden couloir. Raeburn weighed it all up, even contemplating waiting until late afternoon before crossing the couloir, and settling for a bivouac at the summit. But they turned back. Even so, their second day on the mountain had been 25 hours long when they finally got back to their tents on the Gul Glacier in an exhausted state. After a day's rest at the Gul Glacier camp while Muratbi went down to the valley and back with provisions, Raeburn and Ling – Martinson had had enough – attempted the 1903 Schulze route on Ushba South, which of course would have been its second ascent. However, what is now known as the Cravat (Schulze's 'Untere Schneefeld') was bare ice, ceaselessly swept by stonefall. Returning to what is now known as the Mazeri Notch, Raeburn made a final attempt to ascend directly from there (Robin Hodgkin found a way up from the Notch in 1937), but failed.



Ushba's East Faces, separated by the Central Couloir; with Russian routes marked. It seems likely that the 1913 attempt sought to take the shortest weakness in the headwall (followed by route 245), but the details given by Ling and Raeburn are insufficiently clear to be certain.



*Top: 'Ling, Raeburn & Martinson ignore Shkhara and Nuamkuam'.
Bottom: 'Raeburn & Ling contemplate Shkhara from Ushguli'.
Both photos by J.R. Young, 1913. SMC Image Archive.*



*Top: 'Curtain peak [now Mamison Peak] and Chanchakhi from Ullargh Khokh'.
Bottom: 'Martinson, Johns, Ling & Raeburn at the Tsaya Camp'.
Both photos by J.R. Young, 1913. SMC Image Archive.*

While it might be concluded that conditions on Ushba were just too difficult to have allowed any ascent in 1913 except by the North Ridge (which requires an approach from Russia), the attempt on Ushba North's East Face was nevertheless an admirable and futuristic failure, and almost succeeded.

The routes achieved by Russians on this face date from 1956 onwards, and all were graded 5B or better, and involved three or four bivouacs on their first ascents, suggesting that some form of siege tactics were deployed.

As for the second attempt, it seems remarkable that they should have attempted this exceptionally serious route with no more than a short day's rest. With more time for recuperation, perhaps Raeburn and Ling might have found Hodgkin's line above the Mazeri Notch: it certainly lay within their capabilities.

Across the Dongusorun Pass to Elbruz

After a day's rest the party set off from Betsho on horseback with three pack horses, leaving the large tents behind, and presumably discharging the cook. They travelled west along the Ingur Valley, then turned north into the Nakra Valley en route for the Dongusorun Pass, 3198m, an ancient gateway from Asia to Europe. The horses were shod for glaciers in a village at 1900m. They crossed the pass on the following day, 22 August, and descended the glacier with considerable difficulty (at least for the horses) to the Cossack Post at Terskol, below Elbruz.

On the following day, Young left with the horses and most of the baggage, while Ling, Raeburn and Martinson laboured up to make a camp on Elbruz at 3000m on the Terskol ridge. On 24 August, the party climbed to the East Summit, 5621m, at that time believed to be the higher of Elbruz's two tops. They reached it at 12.25 p.m., and descended all the way to Terskol at 7.30 p.m. As Ling remarked after this ascent of 8000 and descent of 12,000 feet, 'We were quite ready for food and a welcome sleep.' On the 25th they set off down the Baksan Valley, dismounted for the last time at the railhead Nalchik on the 27th, and headed for home.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE ICE KIND

By Curly Ross

LOOKING BACK OVER the years I was wondering what my most memorable ice climbs were and what made them so special. There is no doubt that being with a good companion can make or break a good day out on a climb. However I have to say that ice climbing certainly gets the nerves going a little more than being on rock, perhaps the lack of good runners and belays sharpening the excitement of staying alive.

My first experience of a proper ice climb was in Glen Coe in 1964, while climbing with my inexperienced friend, Geoff Durand. We met up with two rather good SMC members Alfred Mantz and George Chisholm at the Glencoe Youth Hostel. They invited us to join them on a straightforward ice route on Bidean nam Bian, *Central Gully*. It was a lovely crisp clear day and we were rather looking forward to our first ice climb. This was long before front pointing techniques and some people didn't even use crampons, as it was considered unnecessary on Scottish Mountains, however Geoff and I had them just in case. As most people know it is quite a nice trek up to the bottom of *Central Gully* and the scenery is quite outstanding, everywhere was plastered in snow and ice. I remembered that the weekend before a climber had fallen to his demise on a gully to the left of the Central Gully and it was in my mind that the previous week this poor guy had been alive and well going up for his snow climb, just like ourselves. We eventually reached the bottom of the gully, which is a nice steepish snow slope that takes you up to Collie's Pinnacle where the gully divides. There were two guys coming up behind us and one of them had a little slip on a soft patch of ice but managed to stop quickly with his axes, I thought, 'Lucky guy, that could have been serious.' We got to the belay point and got the rope on and stuck our axes in as a belay. We didn't bother putting in a proper anchor on the rock. The time came to rope up before climbing the initial ice pitch. Geoff and I would come up last, so we stood there while Fred and George led off to the steeper section below the ice pitch. Suddenly Geoff slipped for no apparent reason and shot down the other side of Collie's Pinnacle. Having had no experience of braking with an axe he didn't stop. There was too much rope between us, which in hindsight should have been taught. I shouted to George and Fred, but by the time they turned round to see what had happened, they in turn were pulled off the ice. The next thing I felt was this huge tug on the rope and off I went head first down the gully, arms outstretched trying to brake, but I was round the wrong way due to the pull of three other guys hurtling down the gully and onto the slope. Travelling at great speed you have no chance of braking with your hands on hard névé, but you will try anything hoping it will work. Suddenly, I saw what looked like a cliff or rocks coming up fast in front

of me and I remember thinking, 'This is it, I'm going to smash into these.' But all of a sudden, I was thrown up into the air, when the others went over a steeper bit and I landed in a heap beside my three companions. It looked like a massacre on the Western Front around us with moaning bodies and blood all over the place. Fred had bitten his tongue and almost halved it and his false teeth were lying on the red snow. I picked them up and put them in his pocket, saying 'You'll need these later, Fred.' The other two were very dazed and incoherent. George was lying with his head down slope and I managed to slide him round to a comfortable position. He had concussion and a few broken bones. Geoff was in a bad way and was moaning about the pain in his back so I had to leave him the way he was. It turned out he had broken his pelvis and had spinal injuries. My right knee was throbbing but otherwise I felt OK and I decided that I would have to get help quickly, so after a few minutes I sped off down the hill to get the rescue team. I got about halfway down when the leg gave up and I met other climbers coming up the track. I gave them the news and they shot off to raise the alarm. I found out later from the newspapers a Mr Donald Bennet was on another climb nearby and witnessed the event. It transpired that we had fallen about 600 feet. We were all very lucky to survive and make a good recovery.

That however was my introduction to Scottish Ice Climbing and it taught me a few good lessons for the future, though I was very wary of ice climbing for quite a few years and the memory of that day is embedded there for all time. Interestingly, a few years ago I was telling this story to John MacKenzie up at his place in Strathpeffer. For a moment he seemed quite impressed and then said, 'Do you remember the two guys that were coming up behind you?' 'Not really,' I replied, 'it was a long time ago.' 'Well that was me and my friend,' he replied. John was out on a trip from school and he drew a picture in the art class of these four guys shooting down the slope. How amazing was that for a coincidence?

My first meet with the JMCS Glasgow section was to the CIC Hut on one cold and frosty weekend with Bill Duncan. Again, it was really a first big event for me a couple of years after the Glen Coe fiasco. I was not long married and had a weekend pass away from the good lady. It started off badly as we had just left Renfrew, when I discovered that I had left my boots in the house, so back we went. Not a good omen for my first JMCS meet. We had a nice journey north up along the usual Loch Lomond A82, across Rannoch Moor and so to Fort William and the car park where now lies the Fort William Golf Club. For your first time, going up to the CIC hut in winter in total darkness is quite an undertaking with all the usual gear that you require: ice axe, crampons, sleeping bag, food and too many clothes. You know how it is. Then a two-hour slog up the Allt a' Mhuilinn track. Well not so much a track as a quagmire in places, especially in those days. By the time I got to the top of the first

steep section I was pretty knackered. Then came the long flat bog, jumping from tussock to tussock before the final section up to the hut. I was beginning to wish I had forgotten my boots. However the warm glow of the gas lamps, smell of wet socks drying on a line and a recent fry does wonders for your soul. Not my feet soles, for they were pretty red with a few blisters coming up on the heels. I slept fairly well that night, except when the odd late comers came in around 2 a.m., but the adrenalin was still pumping through me. Was this going to be another Glen Coe day?

The early risers were up in the morning and again the smells of bacon and eggs hauled me out of bed. A quick wash of the face, time to get the gear on. Ouch, the heels were still a bit tender, but here we go, I'm tough.

'OK, Curly,' said Bill, 'I'm going off with Iain Burley and Gerry Peet to do a wee climb on the Brenva Face. I think you should go out with Angus MacInnes and a couple of other lads, Jim Bryce and John. You'll be fine. Cheerio!' and he disappeared out the door.

'Well hello, Angus, what do you fancy doing today?' 'The Brenva Face on a wee Grade II called *Bob-Run*,' said Angus and off we went, trudging up Coire Leis to the bottom of the face. I could hear Bill and company whacking away on *Cresta Route*. 'I'm dying for a crap,' shouted a voice, probably Burley. The classic reply from Gerry, 'Bake it and blow it out as stoor.'

On we went to the start of the climb, but no ropes were put on at this point. It was deemed too easy. Pictures of *Central Gully* were coming into my mind. Eventually we stopped on a steep bit of névé, when Jim said, 'I think we should have put the ropes on earlier. This is a bit steep.' 'Thank God for that,' I thought to myself. Off we went up the steepening névé and onto the ice pitches. I was last on the rope and so got the advantage of their steps.

After a couple of hours we got to the top. 'Hooray,' I thought, 'my first ice climb.' 'Let's get back to the hut,' shouted Jim, 'It's getting a bit wild up here and we can't see a thing.' But not for Angus. 'Curly, let's go for the summit, it's a grand day for the top.' 'F***,' I thought, 'I'm out with a head banger.' Off we trugged up the final part of the Arête and on to a windswept summit cairn, covered in hoar frost. I munched on a frozen Mars Bar before Angus said, 'Jim was right, it is pretty wild up here. Let's go down for a brew of tea.' 'Yippee,' I thought and off we sailed into the clouds. Angus suddenly stopped. 'I think that's a cornice!' he shouted. 'Let's get back a bit. In fact I'm not sure we are on the right route.' He hadn't taken a compass reading, so we staggered back for a while then started going down again. Something didn't feel right. The wind was going in the wrong direction. Anyway we kept going down and starting to come out of the clouds. 'Angus, I think I can hear a waterfall!' I exclaimed. 'If you ask me, and I'm no expert on Ben Nevis (I had climbed it by the tourist route years before), that sounds like the

Waterslide in Glen Nevis.’ ‘I think you’re right,’ replied Angus. F***, again. It was back up to the summit, with a long trudge into the clouds and white-out. Finally, we got to the top, again. ‘We’ll take a compass reading this time, Curly.’ And off we shot down the arête to the abseil poles and then down to the hut and a nice warm bed after a bite to eat. I knew I should have left my boots at the house.

Next day the boys were all up for a nice easy day going up *Ledge Route*, but as I had no skin left on my heels I decided on a rest day at the hut and awaited the intrepid climbers coming back in the early afternoon. Then I headed home to a much cosier bed and a great meal from the good lady.

I’m glad to say that my first two ice climbs were perhaps the most exciting part of my introduction to Scottish winter climbing. Most of the rest were not so traumatic. Great climbs with Les Wilson on *Tower Ridge* and *Italian Climb* were fantastic days out. Lochnagar with Charlie MacLeod on the magnificent faces of that mountain, where *Giant’s Head Chimney* and *West Gully* were memorable but without incident. My all time favourite on Ben Nevis with Steve Kennedy on *Point Five Gully* is embedded in my memory. But another expedition, with Hamish Henderson on *Parallel A* on Lochnagar, sticks in my head.

We had a JMCS meet to Lochnagar and had the pleasure of staying in the Queen’s house at Gelder Shiel. It seems that someone left the door ajar and so we trooped in and had a very pleasant night at her Majesty’s pleasure. (Not in a prison.) We decided that a trip up to *Parallel A* would be a good route and set off on the long trudge up to the cliffs. It was looking magnificent with the whole face plastered in snow and ice. As



Charlie MacLeod on West Gully (IV), Lochnagar.

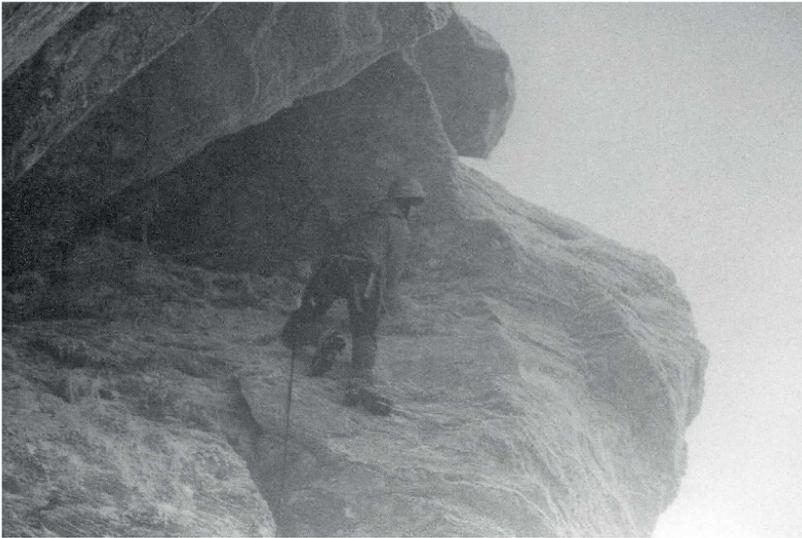
we made our way to the bottom of the route, two other lads appeared to attempt the same route. Off we went sailing up the initial pitches which were in great condition and we made good progress until we got to the crux section. Hamish led off when the other party came up to us. They were a bit inexperienced and I foolishly offered them a line to help them over the crux. To save them a bit of time I left our gear in. I told them to bring it up and I'd collect it later.

They were now obviously out of their depth. As we carried on up the climb, we had to help them continually. It was now getting dark as we approached the final section. I got a deadman into the softer snow 15m or so below the cornice. Our two appendages were now with us for the final assault. It was completely dark by the time I had to traverse left round an ice bollard. The glow from my headtorch was quite amazing as I slowly made my way up to and over the cornice. Hamish said, 'I wish I had had a camera with me.' The torchlight made for a wonderful shot as I edged my way up and over the top. It was in with another deadman and I brought Hamish up and then our two intrepid hangers-on.

It was a great climb and most memorable when Hamish asked the guys for the gear we had left on the crux for them. 'I don't think we have any of yours,' replied one of them. In a flash, Hamish had their sacks open, dumped everything out on the snow and retrieved our gear. 'I think you'll find these are ours.' Then off we sped down the hill for the long jog to the car. Thanks to HRM for the night at Gelder Shiel.

My final memory is of the Arrochar Alps on the hardest route I have attempted. Actually, it was a first ascent of *The Edge of Darkness* with Mike MacDonald, Steve Kennedy and Hamish Henderson. This was a modern mixed rock and ice route with some very technical moves on the crux. We had put up another short route on the face of Beinn an Lochan at the Rest and Be Thankful. A decision was made to have a look at the steep face with an attractive line going up and over an overhang via a corner on the main face near the top. It was getting late in the day, but we reckoned that we could finish it before total darkness.

Mike MacDonald was on top form as he led the way up the steep start on mixed rock and ice. He got into the corner, put in a sling for a tension traverse and then onto the difficult move to get over the edge and on to the final section up to the summit. As he stretched over to the corner, his right hand axe slotted into a little groove. He then had to bring his left arm over and slot his other axe on top of the right-hand axe. He was now poised in an awkward position because the next move required the right-hand axe, which was under the left-hand axe. Here came an amazing move. As his crampons were on solid rock with no great purchase, he had to quickly dislodge the left axe, slip out the right one and thrust home the right one into frozen turf, if there was any. Thankfully, there was and up he went over this difficult corner. I think he deserved a Gold Medal for that move.



Mike MacDonald leads the crux pitch of The Edge of Darkness (IV) on the first ascent.

Next up was Steve Kennedy, who made short shrift of the move. A top rope gives you amazing confidence. Steve got up as dusk was fast approaching. Then it was Hamish's turn. The headtorches were coming out of the sacks by this time, but Hamish made good progress and was up with a few curses on the tricky corner move.

Here I was alone at the bottom of a cliff now in total darkness, except for the headtorch. This was becoming a habit. It reminded me of Lochnagar *Parallel A*. I shouted up, 'Guys, this is really silly. I think I'll miss this out.' Back came the reply, 'You'll not get your name in the book for the first ascent if you don't come up.' Well that settled it, off I started, up the steep rock into the corner. Should I take out the tension traverse sling and karabiner? No chance! I needed them to make it into the corner. I got my axes into the same slot as the others and made the amazing move with great difficulty and I was up and over with a few beads of sweat. I ploughed on up the final slope to meet the masters of the route. 'I have a great name for the route,' I announced. 'How about *The Edge of Darkness*?' And so it was agreed. It was classed as a Grade V but was downgraded to IV because it was a bit short. Try it for yourself and, by the way, if that sling and crab are still there, you know whose it is, thanks.

I have had many other great days on ice gullies and mixed routes in winter. A big thanks to the guys that shared the experiences with me. That's what makes a great day on the hill. 'Oh, my big hobnailers! Oh, my big hobnailers! Memories raise of joyous days upon the mountain side!'

THE CURRIE WA'S – 'CLIMBING WITH A DIFFERENCE'

By David Buchanan

ALTHOUGH NO LONGER fashionable, many readers of this journal will, in the past, have climbed on old railway embankments and similar man-made structures. In Edinburgh we had the Currie Wa's described, somewhat whimsically, by Dougal Haston in Graham Tiso's seminal 1967 guidebook *Creag Dubh and the Eastern Outcrops*.

...climbing with a difference... The routes are short, but very strenuous; except for the girdle traverses, which are long and more strenuous... All first ascents were done by D. Haston, J. Moriarty, and J. Stenhouse.

Many... claim that a climb is unjustifiable if the objective dangers are great. Deadbeats... be warned; The Wa's are not for you...

1. The Water of Leith is a fast-flowing sewer which runs under many of the hard routes...
2. Stonefalls have high incidence before the local urchins' bedtimes, as they have accurate throwing arms, and climbers are their favourite targets. Moreover, if threatened, they always have brothers bigger than you.
3. The one train... is not predictable, and there is a risk of annihilation if one is tiring when it passes.
4. The last and rarest is the sly urchin who gobs over a bridge when you are gripped.

Perhaps sadly, the environment of the Wa's has become less wild since Haston's time. Recently, I took my camera along the Water of Leith Walkway to rediscover the Wa's and document this footnote to Scottish Mountaineering.

I started at Upper Bowling Green Wall – easily located opposite Currie Bowling Club.

'GIRDLE TRAVERSE 130 feet GRADE IV. This is the greatest Wa' classic... it can be multiplied – thirty is the record, and boredom brought this epic to an end.'

Below this I found Lower Bowling Green Wall, by 'descend(ing) wet stairs'. Although this Wa' is very overgrown with ivy, the chimney that provides access can be discerned at the left of the picture. From this it is possible to identify the routes.

'CHIMNEY ROUTE GRADE II... RIGHT ARETE GRADE IV... the right wall of the chimney. LEFT ARETE GRADE III... GIRDLE TRAVERSE 200 feet GRADE VI. Start at the chimney... climbing is thin...'



Upper Bowling Green Wall



Lower Bowling Green Wall – 'descend wet stairs'



Lower Bowling Green Wall – Girdle Traverse



Brick Wall



Tannery Bridge – Left Arete (the sunlit arete on the right)



Tannery Bridge – Spike Wall



Tannery Bridge – Spike Arête



Piggery Girdle

Robin Campbell has shown me a photograph (by Ronnie Marshall) of Haston on the traverse taken from the opposite direction. It shows the wall in prime condition.

Walking west, I came to 'BRICK WALL GRADE VI ... traverse from right to left, without using pipe holes or other such large jugs...'

Further west, I arrived at Tannery Bridge with its collection of seven routes. 'LEFT ARETE GRADE III... a fine layback.'

Opposite this is 'SPIKE WALL GRADE VI (sustained) ... the hardest straight-up route... the birthplace of... handed out leaders—Smith, McLean, Agnew, Gardner, MacNiven, Cambell, Robertson... The crux is near the top.' (Robin Campbell explained to me that 'handed out' refers to the practice of offering a hand from the parapet to a climber in extremis.)

'SPIKE ARETE GRADE VI. Climb straight up the edge. It has a hardish finish.'

Continuing towards Balerno, I at last came to a Wa' that I could contemplate attempting. 'PIGGERY GIRDLE 400 feet GRADE III... the easiest Wa' girdle'

My exploration stopped at this point. Balerno Bridge has been lost to road re-alignment, but all the other Wa's including 'The River Bridges' nearer Juniper Green are accessible from the Water of Leith Walkway, and for those of you who wish to explore them and don't have a copy of the guide, but do have a GPS, the following may be useful.

Currie Wa's Locations

Bowling Green Walls	NT 17892 67412
Brick Wall	NT 17551 67346
Tannery Bridge	NT 17487 67304
Piggery Girdle	NT 17155 67230
River Bridges	NT 19155 68095
	NT 19315 68210
Haston Memorial	NT 18264 67807

I'm pleased to report that having re-acquainted myself with the Wa's I have started climbing them again. After all they are 'the best finger-training grounds around Edinburgh'.

POTATOES AND POPPERS – A CONGLOMERATE ADDICTION

By Andy Tibbs

I AWOKE ONE morning to some ground-breaking news: conglomerate had been discovered on Mars. It is not the rocks of course that are important but the fact that they indicate fast-flowing water once existed on the planet's surface. It was, however, the rocks that set my heart racing. We were bound for Moy Rock, Scotland's conglomerate climbing capital near Dingwall.

A black sky to the west promised some heavy showers as we trudged up the short, well-trodden path to the crag base. As the wind picked up and the dark, threatening cloud descended we set off up *Moy Racer* (F6a), the crag's latest addition. Routes at Moy have been growing like a healthy culture over the past few years and it is now home to some 40 routes. Although the rocks of Moy had been climbed by several routes in the 1970s it is not suited to traditional climbing as the rock is poor in most areas and the gear is suspect too. It was not until Andy Wilby arrived with his eBay drill and a large bag of enthusiasm that the crag started to develop into what is now probably Scotland's most popular sports climbing venue. Conglomerate is best described as like a concrete mix with all sizes of bits mixed in from gravel and potatoes to fridges and beyond. With popularity the routes improved and along with it some new climbing terms were born – both routes and grades had to 'settle', while 'poppers' are small pebbles which unexpectedly pop out of the mix sending the unwary climber into a hopefully brief flight to be stopped by one of the many bolts. *Constant Flux* is a route which has been different each time I have done it and there is a climb called *It's Rock Gym* or to give it its full name: *It's Rock Gym But Not As We Know It*. Never one to cope well with the idea of falling off, I have developed the technique of staring at the offending suspect pebble then shutting my eyes as I start to pull... To dwell on the unsound nature of the rock would however be unfair as most of the routes clean up very well and routes like *Little Teaser* (F6b+) are now considered classics. In fact one day in 2012 I counted no fewer than nine SMC members climbing on the crag.

Sport climbing is definitely towards the fast food end of the spectrum of mountaineering and it is easy to satiate your appetite for routes rapidly with a minimum of fuss. Time is spent climbing, not walking or guddling with gear. The convenience of Moy, location, climbing style, weatherproof nature, and the fact that it is climbable all year round means it can be treated somewhat like a climbing wall. Routes are

El Pison, Riglos. 'Murciana' tackles the main face just right of centre with the pinnacle 'El Puro' to the left. Photo: Andy Tibbs.



BIENVENIDO
RUCOS
BUC



repeated multiple times and further challenges are concocted like ‘The Big Flat Wall challenge’ – six mini classics from 6b+ to 7a+, the ‘Bakers Dozen’ – take your pick of 13 routes from 5+ to 7b+, and an ascent of *Little Teaser* every month of the year.

With strength and fitness improving a goal further afield than Moy was required and where better than the spectacular steep towers of Riglos. A conglomerate Mecca in northern Spain, Riglos is a series of very steep towers up to 300m in height. Climbing began here in 1929 but it was not until after the war that any really significant routes were pioneered. The slender pinnacle of *El Puro* (The Cigar) was climbed in 1953 after several attempts, two of which resulted in fatalities, while the bigger faces on the main towers were not breached until the 1960s. All these routes must have been major undertakings before the modern protection and bolts that protect them today. Riglos’s most famous route



Andy Tibbs follows steep ground on 'Zulu Demente', Riglos. Photo: Jason Walker.

is the 1980's bolt-protected *Fiesta de Los Biceps* which tackles one of the steepest faces in 7 pitches, or less with a long rope and a bold approach.

Prior to our trip with training in its final stages I experimented with the psychological training technique of 'clip drop'. The idea is you lead a bolt-protected climb and after clipping each bolt you leap off, until the top where you (apparently) can't wait to fling yourself off the crag into space. This would, hopefully, address one of my main weaknesses – the fear of flying.

A final secret weapon, the 'gripper clipper', a quickdraw stiffened with duct tape and the gate held open with a post office elastic band was dragged from the bottom of a well-used box of gear and dusted down ready for those reachy clips.

Our arrival in Riglos in mid-September was accompanied by some

unseasonably hot weather. Rafa, a Basque living in Scotland, had provided me with a hit list of routes. Our other information comprised some photocopied articles and some Internet descriptions hastily translated online. After settling in to the comfortable refugio in the village only a few minutes from the climbing, we wasted no time in heading off for our first sample of Spanish conglomerate. In the full heat of the day, our route choice of *El Puro* was wise as a large part of the route was still in welcome shade, while most of the routes are in full sun all day. Back at the refugio, whilst savouring an ice-cold beer we dug out the Internet route translations made at home. *Fiesta de Los Biceps* was on Rafa's hit list and the Internet translation aroused our curiosity even further as the description of the upper crux pitch reads '... from bad to worse, or better! Explosive! Relais full throttle sitting on a giant potato.' We resisted the extra beer which would have made this sound more appealing and instead decided upon *Zulu Demente*, a 300m 7a which we would probably use a point of aid on to reduce to 6b+. This would acclimatize us further to the climbing style and allow us a sneak preview of *Fiesta de Los Biceps* off to the left.

Rifugio breakfast is not until eight and we were waiting restlessly, eager to down our coffees and make the most of the cool morning. The short approach was soon dispensed with and Jason was storming up the bottom pitch, our plan being to climb long pitches and make the most of our 70m single rope. After a brief hiccup on the bottom bulge, when I thought I might deck out seconding on rope stretch if I fell off, we arrived at a massive ledge two pitches up. Above, a trail of chalked holds led onwards up a huge wall of overhanging potatoes. Two gloriously steep pitches of over 50m each followed. A dislodged rock flew from the wall to land in bushes 100m out from the crag base. We were now nearing the top section of the climb and the wall steepened beyond overhanging to verging on the ridiculous. As Jason gratefully employed the gripper clipper to leave a vast vulture roost and disappear over the bulge above, I was aware of the green uniforms of the guardia civil converging on our route from the left. We met at the roost and worries that this was the ethics police coming to tick us off for using a point of aid vanished. With a big grin, I was handed a very long quickdraw and asked to leave it above the bulge as I followed Jason onwards to the top.

Back at the refugio, the barman removed two large pitchers from the deep freeze and the thank god beer had slivers of ice floating in it. We reflected on the day and both agreed that it was hot and that our biceps sadly did not want to party. We consulted Rafa's hit list and decided the following day to go for *Murciana*, a compelling line on El Pison, another of Riglos's towers.

The following day dawned fine again and I was soon battling with the day's rude awakening, which was a long, hot and sweaty corner with a huge distance between bolts – it was sport climbing, Jim... I boldly

marched on with my 16 quickdraws, as I recalled reading something about bringing extra gear for the bottom pitch. My sweating mass finally arrived at the belay and I was relieved to clip in. When we regrouped at the stance, I was not feeling good. I cursed as I fumbled my belay plate and watched in horror as it flew off to the bushes at the cliff base. This called for a team meeting as retreat would now be more difficult as we got higher and the descent also had multiple abseils. Our decision was to continue and we were encouraged by a cooling breeze that picked up over the next couple of pitches. We were in good spirits as we reached the top of the corner system to gaze up at the acres of potato fields above. This was what we had come to Riglos for and we swarmed up in delight treasuring our precious belay plate which was reserved for belaying the leader. Our description for one of the upper pitches read 'up the corridor passing several chimpanzees', so up the corridor we went to battle our way through the upper bulges. Care was needed in this terrain even seconding and I resorted to a point of aid at one point, scared that even a small fall would leave me dangling in space fiddling with Prusik loops. The descent route description was brief, but it did advise us to avoid the dark and the rain, so we hastened down until one final free abseil landed us back on level ground. Heading back for the ritual beer we discussed sampling the other bar in the village but we had by now acquired an unwavering appreciation for the beer pitcher in the deep freeze experience so back to the refugio it was. Dinner that evening was large. As a result of some language difficulties, we had ordered two main courses each.

The hot temperatures did not relent on our final two days. One morning we hurried up *Moskitos* on the Vicera to beat the midday sun. A large boulder feature called El Trono was the highlight of the climb, a true King Edward large enough to host a small dinner party on. On our final day, airport day, we climbed a route called *Sans* which had recently been re-bolted. Our tactic of running out long pitches came unstuck here and we grumbled that the shiny new bolts were too frequent. If we clipped them all we would grind to a halt with rope drag.

And so our Riglos adventure had come to an end. Three days later back in Inverness, I was starting to feel restless and a little irritable so, with biceps itching to party, it was off to Moy for a quick fix of conglomerate. I was soon back on familiar ground, but now sporting my new Riglos T-shirt.

J.H.B. BELL AND THE NOBEL LAUREATES

By Findlay L. Swinton

A FEW MONTHS AGO my younger daughter Liz loaned me her copy of *The Strangest Man* by Graham Farmelo¹. This is a most interesting and lengthy biography of Paul Adrien Maurice Dirac, a British physicist who was awarded the Nobel Prize for physics in 1933, jointly with Edwin Schrödinger, for major advances in quantum theory. Dirac was a most unusual character. His personality was moulded by his domineering father who was Swiss and insisted that the young Dirac spoke nothing but French when in the house. He was a man of very few words, unless lecturing on physics, and was thought to be autistic. Styled the British Einstein, at one point in his career he held the post of Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, the post now held by Stephen Hawking. Hawking delivered the eulogy when a memorial to Dirac was unveiled in Westminster Abbey in 1995.

It transpired that in the late 1920s and '30s Dirac was quite a keen mountaineer. Most of his climbing exploits were in the company of a Russian fellow physicist Igor Yevgenyevich Tamm. He first met Tamm at a conference in Leiden in 1928. Tamm was, by then, an accomplished mountaineer and he introduced Dirac to mountaineering and, curiously, also taught him to ride a bicycle. Dirac admired Tamm's physical abilities; in contrast, Tamm was in awe of Dirac's impressive intellect. In a letter to his wife in 1928² he wrote '... the new criterion is Dirac, and I feel like a little child next to him. Of course, it is much more stupid to compare yourself with a true genius.'

In 1935 Dirac and Tamm, together with other Russian mountaineers climbed Mount Elbruz, the highest mountain in Europe, although Dirac, by far the weakest climber, just made it to the top and had to rest for a day near the summit before he began the descent. More intriguing was the information that both Dirac and Tamm had climbed with a certain J.H.B. Bell.

Tamm grew up in Elisavetgrad (Kirovograd) in the Ukraine and developed an early interest in politics and Marxism. His parents arranged for him to go to Edinburgh University to study mathematics. While there in 1913 he met up with Bell who was studying chemistry at the same institution and they became firm friends, a friendship that lasted many decades. The outbreak of the First World War led to Tamm returning to Russia where he enrolled at Moscow University and changed his discipline to physics. Tamm remained politically active all his life and, after the Russian Revolution, was involved in various skirmishes with

1 Graham Farmelo, *The Strangest Man*, (London: Faber & Faber, 2009).

2 Paul Dirac and Igor Tamm, Correspondence, Part 1, 1928–33, p.8, <<http://cds.cern.ch/record/258359/files/P00020744.pdf>>, [retrieved 19 July 2013].

various pro- and anti-Bolshevik groups. At one point in 1920 he was captured by an opposing group and was about to be executed. He pleaded that he was a simple academic, with little interest in politics. Fortunately, the group holding him had a mathematician in their number who asked him, 'When the Maclaurin series is terminated at the Nth term, what is the approximation?' Tamm gave the correct answer and was spared. Tamm was awarded the Nobel Prize for physics in 1958, sharing it with Pavel Cherenkov and Ilya Frank. The lunar crater Tamm was named in his honour.

The Caucasus 1930

In July 1930 Bell was invited to join a Russian expedition to the region of the Caucasus to the east of Elbruz. The party was to consist of Boris Delaunay (sometimes written as Deloné), the leader, Mixtail Leonovich, Nikolay Pariyskiy, Bell, Tamm and H.M. Kelly, although the last named, a famous English climber, according to his obituary³ reached Moscow but, tired of waiting for permits, returned home. Delaunay, who was some years older than either Bell or Tamm was, by then, one of Russia's leading climbers and one of the first to receive the distinction of being styled Master of Mountaineering, USSR. He was a mathematician specialising in crystallography and number theory and a Professor at the University of Leningrad. He has a 4070m peak in the Altai named after him. Delaunay spoke no English but he and Bell conversed freely in German. The party had planned initially to go to the Tien-Shan but encountered access problems so settled for the Caucasus. Dirac intended to accompany them but failed to get a visa in time.

Although the expedition lasted a month, the actual time spent climbing was the week 15–21 July. The Bell diaries⁴ are quite extensive and cover the trip from Moscow to the Caucasus and back again in great detail. He has comprehensive notes on the flora, fauna and the geology of the districts they pass through, and also shows a great interest in the conditions and lifestyle of the local populations. He attends at least one Communist propaganda meeting. Also recorded in detail are the various personal costs of the expedition.

After a long railway journey from Moscow and after nights spent at the extremely basic accommodation provided by the Society of Proletarian Tourism, the party made their way to the small town of Chegem by the river of the same name and camped below the Chegem Gorge with excellent views of Elbruz. From there their gear was transported by mule wagon and they proceeded to the base camp with views of the impressive peaks of Bashiltau 4171m and Tikhtengen

3 *Fell & Rock Journal*, Vol. 23(2), No. 67, (1981), pp. 236–9.

4 *The J.H.B. Bell Climbing Diaries*, The Grampian Club Collection, The Archive Department, The University of Dundee.



Caucasus 1930, the climbing party.

Delaunay is in the centre, Bell with the pipe is on his left and Tamm to Bell's left, Leonovich and Pariyskiy are on the left of the picture. Photo: SMC Image Archive.

4617m. This was probably in the vicinity of the present Priut 7 Hut. On 16 July Bell, Delaunay and Tamm made an attempt on Tikhtengen. They bivouacked at 3050m but had to retreat the next day because of the onset of foul weather with deep, unstable snow. Before the weather broke they had fine views of Dykhtau 5198m. At a couple of places in his account Bell suggests that July was too early in the season.

On 20 July Bell, Delaunay and Tamm made their way over the Tuiber Pass for an attempt on Bashiltau. After another bivouac, on the 21st, the weather was not too kind but Bell led them on to the summit after a very hard climb. This was the second ascent, as the mountain had been climbed a few years previously by a party led by Delaunay although by a different, easier route. On the descent the weather deteriorated and as Bell writes at one point 'The rope behaved abominably'!

In a letter to his wife later in the year⁵ Tamm wrote:

Still some days later three of us, Mr. Bell included, made a second ascent of a very difficult peak Bashil Tau (4180 mtr). Without Bell

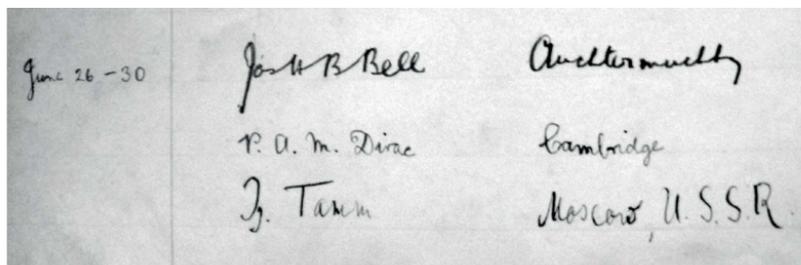
5 <<http://cds.cern.ch/record/258359/files/P00020744.pdf>>, Letter 17, p.43.

we simply could not attempt the ascent, but Bell did miracles – to that date I thought such climbing as he did a sheer impossibility, to be seen only in a movy-picture [sic]. I am not a coward & have 5 years mountaineering experience, but twice during the climb I was inclined to stop & stay back, not having the courage to climb *with the help of the rope*, fastened by Bell above the difficult place, where Bell climbed unaided by the rope! According [to] Bell the ascent was “sehr schwierig”, judged by Alpine standards, more difficult for instance, than the ascent of the Matterhorn.

That was the end of the climbing and the party made their way down the valley to Mestia described as ‘a land of plenty’ compared to some of the settlements they had passed through previously. In Mestia they stayed in comfortable accommodation at the Tourist Base and had a splendid meal at an eating house named Ushba. In the Tourist base they did not encounter the creature that Bell describes as ‘That most ferocious of carnivores, The Great Trans-Caucasian Flea!’ They then continued south, mainly on foot, walking 36km one day through the Ingur Gorge and on 25 July Bell rode on a mule 46km to Sugdidi. Then on to Batum on the Black Sea, by steamer to Novorossisk and back by train to Moscow.

The Trip to Skye 1931

In the summer of 1931 both Tamm and Dirac were in the UK and, after correspondence with Bell, arranged a visit to Skye. On 25 June Dirac and Tamm picked up Bell and, in Dirac’s car, headed north. They had high tea at the Achilty Inn, spent the night at an undisclosed location and next morning the car broke down. A passing motorist, and there could not have been too many of them around at that time, towed them up a steep hill and their car started when they headed downhill and they managed to get to Kyle and the ferry and had tea at Sligachan. They were booked in for a few nights at Mary Campbell’s cottage in Glenbrittle and a copy of their entry in the visitors book is illustrated below.



Signatures of James Bell, Paul Dirac and Igor Tamm in the visitors book – Mary Campbell’s Cottage, Glen Brittle, Skye. Photo: Stuart Pedlar.

Saturday 27th was dull and misty and the three of them failed to find the Window Buttress. They did manage to locate the Inaccessible Pinnacle and Bell and Tamm completed the traverse while Dirac waited below. The three then traversed An Stac and returned to Glenbrittle. Sunday 28th was slightly better and all three climbed the Cioch by 'the slab', by which route is not clear. They descended by the Cioch Gully and found the letterbox 'amusing'.

The weather on Monday 29th was excellent and they headed once again for Corrie Lagan. Bell and Tamm climbed the West Trap Route on Sgumain while Dirac elected to go up the Great Stone Shoot. Bell experienced great difficulties on the Final Tower of the Trap Route and Tamm, on a top rope, managed to avoid most of the difficulties by going round the side. The two of them roped up again for the Bad Step on the Sgumain ridge and they were re-united with Dirac on the summit of Alasdair. All three climbed Sgùrr Theàrlaich and then descended the Stone Shoot. They arrived back at the cottage at 10.30 p.m. The following day they set off back and Dirac's car blew a tyre on the high point of the road between Cluanie and Tomdoun. Repairs were effected and they returned to Bell's house at around midnight.

The Caucasus 1932

In the summer of 1932, Bell was back in Russia. After sailing up the Baltic he met up with Delaunay in Leningrad and they travelled south to the Caucasus by train, as in 1930. This time they headed to an area some 30km to the east and south of the location of the previous expedition. On 20 July they arrived in Nalchik where they joined quite a large 'official' Russian expedition. The chief was another academic, O. Leypunskiy and his deputy was W. Mitnikoff. The large group included Katia Narbut, who was an accomplished and experienced female climber and Beletski, a young, strong 20-year-old.

On the 30 July, Bell and four Russians made the second ascent of Pic Uchebai 4100m, the first ascent having been accomplished some years previously by a party led by Delaunay. A few days later, Bell and Beletski completed the ascent of a fairly straightforward rock peak that is unnamed in Bell's diaries.

The whole party then moved on through the Dykh Su river gorge and over the Nuamkuam pass to enable them to get within striking distance of the imposing peak of Tiutiantau 4550m. On 12 August, Bell and Delaunay, after a bivouac the previous evening, made their attempt. The climb proved to be quite difficult and they encountered an impressive rock tower at 4300m, thought to be the key to the summit. Bell succeeded in surmounting this after a great effort but Delaunay did not feel able to follow him so that the attempt was abandoned and they made their way back to base camp. Bell states that, with a third man, the climb would have gone. That was the end of the climbing. They then made their way,

by a combination of walking and riding, back to Nalchik and eventually to a railhead and thence back to Leningrad.

Post 1932

The bulk of Dirac's existing correspondence is stored in the Archive Department of the Paul Dirac Library of Florida State University⁶, the university where Dirac moved as Senior Visiting Professor after leaving Cambridge in 1971. Contained in the archive are several letters from Bell to Dirac all dated 1938. Two of them relate to a climbing trip to Glen Coe on the last weekend of July. They planned to drive up to Glen Coe after lunch on the Saturday and climb on Saturday evening and on the Sunday, staying at the Kingshouse Hotel. There is no mention of this proposed trip in the Bell diaries so there is some doubt as to whether it actually materialised.

Bell and Dirac were in the Lake District later that year with Eugene Paul Wigner but there is no record of what they climbed. Wigner was Dirac's brother-in-law and was the brother of Dirac's wife, Mancie. He was also a Nobel Laureate in Physics having been awarded the honour in 1963.

I find it quite intriguing that Bell, the gruff, clay-pipe-smoking industrial chemist became involved with no less than three Nobel Laureates. At the time, many left wing Scots, like Bell, were fascinated with Russia before the atrocities of the Stalinist regime became known and he was concerned about Tamm, with whom he had not corresponded for some time. In 1938 he had learned that Tamm's brother Leonid, whom he had liked when they met in 1932, had been the subject of a Stalinist show trial, had pled guilty to 'offences against the State', and was condemned to the Gulags where he later perished⁷. After corresponding with Dirac he decided not to try and write to Tamm in case it would compromise him in some way, bearing in mind Tamm's previous political history.

Bell agreed with both Dirac and Wigner that the Russian show trials were frame-ups although he thought that they were no worse than the ones organised by the English in their colony of India. A suitable sentiment from an articulate, highly intelligent, left-wing Scot of the time!

It is a mystery why there is no mention of the Caucasus Expeditions in Bell's partly autobiographical book, *A Progress in Mountaineering*⁸, bearing in mind the extensive coverage that he gives them in his Climbing Diaries.

6 The Dirac Correspondence, the Archive Department, Florida State University, Tallahassee, U.S.A.

7 <<http://cds.cern.ch/record/258359/files/P00020744.pdf>>. Footnote to Letter 11, p. 34.

8 J.H.B. Bell, *A Progress in Mountaineering*, (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1950).

Acknowledgements

My thanks are due to extended and most helpful e-mail correspondence with Robin N. Campbell, Honorary Librarian and Honorary Archivist of the SMC and to David Stone, the Honorary Custodian of Slides of the SMC for the use of the slide of the 1930 Caucasus Expedition.

Thanks are also due to Stuart Pedlar for the use of the image of the Bell/Dirac/Tamm signatures and to Burt Altman, Senior Archivist at the Paul Dirac Library of Florida State University, Tallahassee, U.S.A. for the use of the Bell/Dirac Letters. E-mail exchanges with Graham Farmelo are also gratefully acknowledged.

This is an extended version of an article, 'When Paul and Igor met Jimmy', which first appeared in the *Grampian Club Bulletin*, No 57 in 2010.

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By an astonishing coincidence the following poem on the very same topic was received just a few days after the previous article. The two authors wrote entirely independently, but both were inspired by reading the same biography of Dirac.

LINES FROM THE RUSSIAN: ANTI-MATTER IN THE CUILLIN, 29 JULY 1931

By G D Morrison

Our *troika* reached the rocky Lagan cirque,
Climbed past its sparkling tarn and gained a slab,
Where now we three sprawled supine in the sun:
Dirac¹, long-limbed beside the compact Bell²,
And thirdly myself Igor Tamm³ as well.

1 **P.A.M. Dirac**, O.M., F.R.S. (1902–84). Theoretical physicist and Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge. Awarded the 1933 Nobel Prize in Physics. Famously wrote: 'The aim of science is to make difficult things understandable in a simpler way; the aim of poetry is to state simple things in an incomprehensible way. The two are incompatible.' Probably autistic.

2 **J.H.B. Bell**, D.Sc. (1896–1975). Son of the manse, industrial chemist, SMCJ Editor and pioneer of at least 64 Scottish routes, who also climbed widely in the Caucasus and European Alps. Sympathetic observer of the Soviet project.

3 **I.Y. Tamm**, Hero of the Soviet Union (1895–1971). Pre-revolutionary Bolshevik, Soviet physicist, chain-smoker and mountaineer. Fellow student with James Bell at Edinburgh University in 1914. Awarded the 1958 Nobel Prize in Physics.

Two days before, we'd broken fast near Strome,
 Then struck our sodden tent and failed to start
 The savant Paul Dirac's new touring car;
 So Bell and I, inspanned like Ural kine,
 Had drawn it up the roadway's long incline.

Whence, lo! it sprang to life and bore us off
 To Kyle and thence Glen Brittle where the *drok*,
 The golden gorse, set off the black shore-sand;
 Vanilla, coconut and melon scent
 Most sweetly with the soft sea-breezes blent.

Though uncollectivised, Miss Campbell's croft⁴
 Gives bed and peasant fare on modest terms.
 (Karl Marx's dialectic not gainsaid,
 I grant the *kulak* grasp is sometimes loose,
 While meriting in every case the noose.)

There having supped and then withdrawn to smoke,
 Like Romans couched replete on our box-beds,
 We'd touched on Engels, Russell, unsound rock,
 The sixteenth Party Congress (just adjourned)
 And why the use of pitons might be spurned.

'Your electron equation pray expound,
 I'd asked Dirac, who seldom speaks unbid.
 'E-squared,' said he, 'is always positive,
 But energy (that's E) when less than nought
 Suggests a sub-sea vacancy be sought.'

But to our climb: now Bell uncoiled the rope,
 Its hempen smell evoking alpine days.
 'The mist has gone, the rock looks largely dry;
 Let's go up Sgùmain by the West Trap Route,
 Where Smythe and I some years ago set foot.'

We left Dirac to day-dream in the sun,
 But pledged to meet him four hours hence atop
 Sgùrr Alasdair, to which he'd surely climb
 The great stoneshoot and tourist route apace;
 And thus our paths diverged awhile in space.

Each crystal of the coarse plutonic slabs
 Bit deep in Bell's soft-iron cleated boots,

4 **Mary Campbell** (d. 1947). Fondly remembered landlady at Glenbrittle.

While my Swiss patent nails though sharply toothed
 Glanced off the gabbro holds with rasping tone,
 And failed to pierce that adamantine stone.

At length the Evil Chimney hove in view:
 'This pitch,' said Bell, 'looks somewhat damp today,
 Yet gives a struggle tough enough when dry;
 I'll now exchange my boots for woollen socks,
 Affording grip upon its slimy rocks.'

As when the Caspian tiger, poised to spring,
 Stares at the rampant bear's high-rearing neck
 And plots the throttling lock and lethal bite,
 So now Bell eyed the unforgiving crack,
 Rehearsing move by move his bold attack;

Then sprang with uncoiled vigour at the rock,
 Found lodgement in the cleft and swiftly climbed,
 Great strength of limb thus matching strength of will.
 The chimney overcome he took a hitch,
 And bade me follow likewise up the pitch.

The rope gave more than moral help, I own,
 The fissure being quite unadorned with holds.
 Crack giving way to ledge above and slab,
 We reached at length the eponymous trap-dyke,
 Where Bell made fast the rope around a spike.

'Observe,' he said, 'this aphanitic trench –
 The fine-grained basalt set in gabbro slab;
 Composed alike and yet of forms diverse,
 The one rock slowly cooled, the other chilled;
 The fractured pluton's faults with lava filled.'

Beyond the dyke a terrace gave respite,
 Tobacco, talk and ease before the Tower –
 Sgùrr Sgùmain's final *direttissima*.
 A single line of weakness breached the wall,
 On which Bell now commenced to give his all.

By turns requiring balance, guile and brawn,
 This unrelenting groove consumed an hour,
 Before he reached a stance and cried 'Come on!'
 Three vain attempts to follow dashed all hope,
 Despite Bell's best advice and tautened rope.

So I untied and sought an easier way,
 A rising northward line that turned the Tower,
 While Bell continued solo on his route.
 From Sgùmain's misty top we hailed Dirac,
 And heard his answer wafting faintly back.

Now Bell and I made haste along the ridge,
 Put best foot forward on the *mauvais pas*,
 And joined Dirac on Alasdair's high top.
 'We've had a frightful struggle on our climb;
 No doubt you passed a much more restful time?'

'It now is clear,' announced Dirac at once:
 'Each particle exists in obverse form,
 Electron matched by *anti-electron*.
 The latter is unseen,' he then opined,
 'Because with *anti-protons* intertwined.'

The cloud-sea lapped about our sunlit peak,
 And stretched away quite level all around.
 'Why, *anti-matter* – capital!' said Bell;
 'But come, we must go down; it's half-past eight,
 And Mary does not like us dining late.'

PAST PERFECT

By Gavin Anderson

IT WAS THE WARMEST, wettest, windiest winter on record. I was standing on the pavement of the Drip Road, Stirling's Western Frontier on a rainy Saturday afternoon in that dim corner of the Sixties everyone's forgotten, before the Beatles, before sex was invented according to Philip Larkin. The road was packed with Rangers' fans, a cavalcade of blue and white scarves, fluttering bravely in the rain, all heading towards Glasgow, all deliriously happy. In reply to my stuck-out thumb, horns were tooted and two-fingered salutations were waved accompanied by words of encouragement. 'Awa and bile yer heid!' was the only one that managed to filter through the fog of verbiage. In my innocence I was wearing a green sweater, knitted by my girlfriend, still not much of an excuse, and telling them would do nothing to assuage their bellicosity. Getting

nowhere, I started to walk, more to distance myself from the depressing row of council houses that lined the road than to get a few yards nearer my destination.

I arrived at that spot where the Drip Road merges into pleasant rural countryside. An old bridge, which had borne witness to a fair chunk of Scottish history, passes over the stream here. Still getting buzzed by the occasional car, I didn't stop. My rucksack, the old fashioned green Bergen, was an unintended provocation. The road became quieter. Only a few cars now; only a few imprecations directed at my birth and choice of place of worship, then I was left to the early evening solitude, and a slow soaking by the drizzling rain.

It didn't last long. A car horn tooted behind me. I ignored it. It was better to suffer in silence than provoke the natives. Suddenly the car pulled up in front of me. It was blue. I tensed up prepared for a confrontation. My ice axe was strapped to my pack. No hope of reaching it if it came to a crisis. A rubicund tubby little man wearing a green sweater and a blue, hairy bonnet – obviously taking no chances in his ecumenical get-up – with a big red cherry on top, popped out. His red bulbous nose precisely matched his bonnet and he, himself was the spitting image of Paw Broom in the Sunday Post, or at a stretch, one of Santa's little elves.

'Where are you going, Laddie?' He waved me over; it was the first friendly gesture I had encountered all day.

'Tyndrum.'

'Hop in!'

The front seats were occupied by the red-nosed man and his wife, so I carefully placed my rucksack on the back seat making sure that my ice axe was well clear of any fabric.

'Careful wi' yon coal hammer thingy ye have there. You're not going to murder us wi' it?' I assured him that I was not going to murder him or his lady, adding that as I couldn't drive, it wouldn't be a good idea. That little sally seemed to go down well, but I think he was really laughing because he was good-natured, and wanted me to feel at ease.

'Well if it's not a coal hammer, and it's not a murder weapon, what is it then?'

I told him that it was for climbing mountains covered in snow. Then he asked me how it was used, and continued asking such questions as revealed him as a complete ignoramus. I kept my patience, counting how far I could get on these hairpin bends between Lix Toll and Crianlarich. Few drivers will risk stopping on this dangerous stretch. Still I couldn't help a touch of pomposity entering my voice, as I pedantically explained that we didn't climb hand over hand up the rope, and no I didn't carry any grappling hooks, nor did I use the axe to do battle with unfriendly beasts. There was something about his ignorance that seemed too awful to be true, while at the same time he struck me as too intelligent to be

that stupid. His wife's patrician profile made clear that she was an Old Girl from one of Edinburgh's better schools. She didn't say much, just smiled encouragingly without a hint of raised eyebrows at any of his wilder suggestions. Surely she wouldn't put up with such a clodhopper? I looked in the mirror, and saw the little elfin fellow chuckling, and it dawned on me he was gently taking the Micky. I thought I recognized him from the climbing press, such as it was in those days so I said, 'Who are you? You're -----, aren't you?' naming a current luminary of the Scottish Mountaineering fraternity. His nose lit up with delight like a bulb on the Christmas tree. 'I was having you on to see if you were an impostor,' he confessed. 'You would be surprised how many you get that don't know one end of an ice axe from the other.' Now, my having been cleared by security, we fell to discussing Ben Lui, tomorrow's objective.

Nowadays, routes such as the *Central Gully* of Ben Lui, or the *Y Gully* of Cruach Ardrain are driven past without comment, hardly considered proper climbs, but way back then, apart from their own intrinsic worthiness, they provided a sound apprenticeship in the art of step cutting, which together with being able to read the trustworthiness of the snow were part and parcel of what was known as snowcraft, not a word one hears bruited about nowadays, though to my knowledge we still have snow. Maybe that's why we hear more about killer avalanches than in former times.

'It's thawing. It won't be any good.' I wasn't too optimistic, and was beginning to wonder why I had embarked on this expedition.

'Since you are the only authentic, honest climber I've come across – whit a parcel of rogues they all are – I am going to grant you my good fortune for the weekend, provided that you can live up to it. My Bona Fortuna has sustained me in the Hindu Kush, in the Garwhal Himalayas, on many an Alpine Nordwand, and here in Scotland.'

'Thanks awfully, but the weather looks really hopeless', I replied trying to sound grateful to the daft old man, while at the same time injecting a smidgeon of realism into the discussion

'Aye, but there will be a hard frost coming on the night, which is going to hold for tomorrow. The gully will be in prime nick. I'll bet my sainted auntie on it. I guarantee a perfect day, and you have my good fortune.'

Dropping me off by the Tyndrum Hotel, he shook my hand, 'I envy you lads doing one of the great classic climbs of Scotland for the first time. You'll have a great day out, a memorable day. Take care, and enjoy yourselves. Remember it's not the difficulty that's important. It's the quality of the ascent that lives on. Ben Lui is not too hard, but it is magnificent.' He rolled out that last word with the true Highlander's inflexion.

'A perfect day.' He said again. I decided to humour the little lunatic, so I said, 'Yes! Yes!' to every one of his heartfelt blessings, and waited till

he had turned onto the road to Glen Coe, then let out one of those mirthless laughs you give when you feel the world has let you down. By then I was swiftly marching to the hotel to escape the rain. It occurred to me that he had neither denied nor confessed to the name I had assigned him.

As per usual, the public bar was packed with locals escaping the rigours of dehydration, and as per usual Strachan, the railway signalman who worked the Bridge of Orchy signal box was holding court. My mate, Rod, was staring dismally into his draught Guinness.

‘It’ll be crap. Everything’s soaking and soggy. We might end up under an avalanche.’ He nodded cheerfully at the black liquid.

‘Anyway I’ve been sitting here for ages. And it’s your round.’ He gulped down a good quarter of a pint and pushed the empty glass at me. I told him about my elfin friend, but all he said was, ‘Why did we bother coming here? All we’re going to get is soaked.’

To cheer him up I mentioned the red-nosed man’s jocular gift of his Good Luck, but he did not find this very diverting.

We camped by the stream in the Cononish Glen; I should say in the trough of Despond, listening to the rain drumming on the flysheet. About midnight it stopped. The wind slowed down and then ceased, and the temperature dropped. The night was so cold I couldn’t get to sleep, and so cold that the burn, which had been tinkling merrily all night trickled more softly and then stopped. My feet were as cold as they had ever been and in the morning there was no respite, for I suffered again as putting on my tricouni-soled boots introduced me to frigid leather and steel. We ate our breakfast of cold beans in the tin, while warming our hands over a mug of tea. The tent canvas, stiff as sail cloth, crackled when we tried to fold it. Our teeth were still chattering, but we were off.

All had changed. The Southern Highlands, normally the recipient of the Great Deluge, was as dry as a miser’s dram. The heather, shimmering under its canopy of frost crystals, crunched beneath our feet, and the muddy path was iron hard. Overhead the black sky gradually turned blue and looking west towards our destination, Ben Lui, reflected in the rising sun, was one great sheet of pink satin gradually turning white; the full moon sat impaled on the horns of the mountain, a wonderful sight and surely a good omen.

It wasn’t our first go. A month earlier we had been foiled by the weather, a tedious leitmotif of that year. We had started up on a windy day, and soon were postholing through thin slabs of ice into deep powder underneath. Bands of damp treacherous snow whose steps constantly slithered away under us broke up the tedium of this trudge.

About half way up the wind wound itself up to its full fury so ferociously, we thought we were going to be blown out of our steps. Scrambling up patches of ice, stabbing at patches of snow and grabbing handfuls of rotting heather we escaped the gully.

Exposed to the wind on the ridge we were worse off. Because of the gale force wind the rope thrashed hither and thither so violently it threatened to whip us off our feet. The wind sucked our breath away, forcing us to move backwards up the hill, not a tactic I would recommend. Then I saw something I had never ever seen. Berserk fountains of snow, whipped up vertically at the cliff edge, were snatched by the lateral wind driving the spumes horizontally flat out, like a jet engine firing up.

Discretion playing its allotted part, we never made it to the top that day, retreating in good order to the snug comfort of the Tyndrum Inn. The Inevitable Strachan presiding over the bar counter paused in the administration of the sacraments to spare us a glance, as we trooped in shaking the snow from our hoods.

‘Well I’ll be jiggered’ – or words to that effect, more pithily expressed in the original – ‘The Ghost o’ Christmas Past. Jings twae o’ them! Time to stop drinkin’ and gang awa hame to the wifie!’ Already primed and fortified against the elements, he sallied forth on the long hike to the Bridge of Orchy, a considerable feat for anyone, but a normal Saturday night stroll for this Tam O’Shanter minus his mare.

A month later it was when we entered the cauldron of the gully. At first the angle was shallow enough for us to kick steps in the névé using our long axes as walking sticks, but soon it steepened and we had to cut our way up. We put on the rope, and tied it to our waist directly with a bowline knot, and belayed with the rope round the waist fastened to ice axes stuck optimistically in the snow. Figure of eight knots, waist harnesses, and deadmen anchors, not to say belay devices were not even a dream into the future. We zigzagged up the slope trying to cut neatly and economically; two side swipes followed by one downward clearing stroke, and a big shelf at the end of each zig or zag to turn on. Inevitably we dug wasteful mini foxholes, alternating with skimped scratches where we had to skip lightly before reaching the security of the next manhole, but at length we got the hang of it and set to it with a rhythm matching the folk songs we were singing – Ye Tramps and Hawkers, and Jock McGraw of the Forty-Twa. When we exhausted our repertoire we just sang the same verses again and again.

The air was still with that crystalline clarity that often comes after a sustained period of rain. Occasionally, just occasionally, the sun would catch the ice chips flying from the blows of the ice axes, which set off little packets of coruscating particles, and our steps were of a hue to match David Hockney’s California aquamarine. In retrospect and far away in time and place from the scene of the action the above sentence in our more clinical age has a mocking tone, but at the time our mood was exalted and you can blame the scenic grandeur, the perfect crisp hard snow conditions, the cloudless sky and the fact that we were young. And why not? All combined to make this a heady brew.

The ground soon began to be far away, and we realised that our lives

rested on staying steady in our steps. It wasn't exactly fear but a keen awareness of danger, more exciting than frightening. As we climbed we passed a man and his son, who said they had waited twelve years for such perfect conditions. How lucky we were to get this perfection so easily.

Looking down we could clearly see our steps. At first hacking away as enthusiastic novices, they looked as if we were doing hefty work with the spade in our garden, then they became tidier, and were more economically placed as we gained experience, till finally they traced up to my stance in a neat spiral of blue dots. Was it my memory from fifty years back or did the late afternoon air and light really colour the landscape sepia brown?

I paid out the rope as Rod neatly cut his way through the cornice, the lowering sun glinting on his axe. 'Come up and see it for yourself!' And there it was in all its picturesque glory, the Southern Highlands, Argyll, Campbell Country, caught at the perfect moment when the sun was about to roll beneath the horizon. It was superb, but needs the eloquent pen of a WH Murray to do it full justice and on that score I will pass.

A couple of hours flew past and we were back at the Tyndrum Hotel. Strachan was still at his post, ensconced in his high chair by the bar. 'Hey, Santas, your elf just popped in. He says can he have his luck back? He fell in the burn today and missed out. Fair drookit he was. He wanted to buy youse a drink, but I said ye were too young and didnae drink. So he bought yin for me instead.'

It had been such a perfect day, we didn't mind our hypothetical drink being snatched away from us, but why was the funny little man still playing this silly game and why would he use Strachan of all people as his emissary? Still it was nice of him to come and check up on us. All in all it was worthwhile humouring him in absentia, some questions did not bear pursuing. We tilted our glasses and replied, 'OK. We hand it back with our thanks.'

The pendulum clock that sat too near the dartboard for its own comfort chimed ten o'clock, chucking out time. Scarcely had we set eyes on our final pint when the rain started drumming on the tin roof. Neither of us relished hitching home in the pouring rain.

APPALACHIAN SPRING

By Ken Crocket

FLYING HIGH over the south-eastern United States, on a clear day the picture below will be horizon-to-horizon wooded mountain ridges. Hidden deep in the heart of the Pisgah National Forest in the western mountains of North Carolina, the spectacular Linville Gorge can be rightfully called the Grand Canyon of the East. Cut by the Linville River, it is 19km long and 600m deep. The centre of climbing here is Table Rock, poking up through the trees on the crest of a ridge, and sloping up from the south end rising to about 120m at the northern tip.

Some 30 years ago my wife and I were based in Cincinnati, Ohio, working on post-doc medical research programs at the University of Cincinnati Medical Centre. We joined the U.C. Mountaineering Club, and during our stay we enjoyed some varied expeditions with the students and others, including not only climbing but 'upside down' climbing, in the huge caving systems of Kentucky. This brief sojourn left us with many good memories: the generosity and kindness of the average American, the landscapes, fireflies on hot summer nights, Californian wine at a reasonable price, a whiskey sour before dinner. Cincinnati even had a good orchestra.

Three decades ago, Aaron Copland was still living, one of a group of American composers who seemed to sum up the whole American picture. I was aware of his music, but being there and subscribing both to the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and the local public radio which played classical music emphasised this part of world music. Other American composers such as Samuel Barber and Charles Ives also made an impact, and the jazz was great too, with live music in many a bar. The fusion group Weather Report became an integral section of our library.

In 1943, Copland was contacted by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation, which commissioned him to write a ballet. The new work would be performed by Martha Graham and her dance company in the Coolidge Auditorium at the Library of Congress. Copland quickly set to work on the music, which would accompany the story of a wedding in rural Pennsylvania. The melodies are primarily original, but towards the end of the work he chose to quote the Shaker song *Simple Gifts*, basing a masterful set of variations on the tune. His jazz-influenced, mainly gentle style falls easily on the ear, while his instrumentation lends itself perfectly to an inner vision of spring in the mountains, so I was intrigued by the opportunity for a climbing trip to Appalachia in the flesh. This was in March, 1982.

I was taking a spell at the wheel, late at night and approaching our turn-off for the mountains when we had a total electrical failure. On a moonless night there is nothing quite as dark as an American night, but

we coasted off an exit and found a safe halt at the roadside. It was not our car, and the owner could find nothing obvious so we decided to grab some sleep where we were. There was a public telephone nearby but we could see nothing else of note. A flat area of grass beckoned and soon all were asleep. Until about 2 a.m. that is, when the public phone began ringing. Larry was working on his Physics Ph.D., and having a curious nature heaved himself out of his sleeping bag to answer the phone. In the morning he told us it had been an obscene phone call, even though we were way out in the middle of nowhere. Larry eventually got his degree and is now an Assistant Professor. He's also well into line dancing, and in the state competitions cuts a fine figure with his cowboy boots and wide-brim hats.

The morning light brought another surprise, as we found, comic style, that we were stretched out on the lawn adjacent to the approach path to a diner, with blue-collar workers heading in to grab their morning coffee and fried breakfasts. They were amused but polite, as we folded everything into the car and the car owner called a local garage. An obscure fuse was replaced and away up into the mountains we continued.

Imagine my surprise and pleasure when I found the rock to be a mica schist, very Cobbler-like, with its intricate and regular folds a copy in miniature of the ridges stretching far into the blue haze of Appalachia. Once tents were up, teams were soon gracing various lines on Table Rock, and I climbed a fine corner-and-arête route with Larry as partner. It was an easy classic, the South-East Ridge, and had fine situations. The evening was disrupted by a call that some of the party had been caught on the cliff by nightfall, and were having a little difficulty in reaching the ground. After the usual scenes of student confusion and mild chaos, they extricated themselves and all was well.

One of the entertaining moments involved a dietary choice within the party; one chap was an enthusiast of Spirulina. This is a human and animal food or nutritional supplement made primarily from two species of cyanobacteria, and was used by the Aztecs. They must have had a sense of humour, as they called it Tecuitlatl, meaning stone's excrement. Our companion was making it into a drink, and no amount of fudging could conceal its origins as a sort of green pond slime. It is rich in protein, but costs about 30 times the price of milk or meat which confer roughly the same benefits. He was so keen on it that a year or so later he hitched to California, where the production company was sited (where else!). He soon returned, disappointed by the impressively laid-back attitude there. I'm uncertain as to its effects on the digestive system, though perhaps Jules Verne was prescient when he wrote in his novel *Master of the World* describing Table Rock as 'rising high above the valley to sometimes belch strange sounds and fire over the little village of Morganton...'

I attempted another route near the first, with another student. The first pitch went well until my nose ran into an overhanging wall. A bolt could

be seen high up, gained by a swing across an exposed and impending wall. My feeling was that doom would also impend and despite the pleas of my young companion we retreated. This was, you must understand, well before climbing walls were invented, and training, should you wish to, hard to arrange. There was a man-made wall in the city, similar to the famed Glasgow Finnieston Railway Wall, and one day I even found myself there on an outdoor programme on cable TV, explaining the delights of climbing to a pretty, blonde presenter. She was game, but her trainers held her back and she expired just below the top. I winced every time her fingernails scrabbled against the unmoved stones. On another trip I watched a local hard climber training. He would climb up, then down, move right, climb up, down, right and so on ad exhaustion. I became exhausted watching him and decided it was time for a whiskey sour. But I digress.

The next day on Table Rock I teamed up with Fletch. He was about a six on the wild scale, where one was your serious, spotty, studious nerd, and ten was best kept on the other side of the freeway. The last I heard, he was an area salesman for New Balance trainers, serving the far north-west coast up Oregon way. We decided on a classic route of the area, *The Prow*, a multi-pitch route in Linville Gorge, which meant descending the ridge some way from our base.

The climb begins up slabby rock, gradually steepening until on pitch 5 an overhang offers several sporting and energetic problems. We enjoyed the sun, the views, and, both being in a mellow frame of mind, ignored



Ken Crocket leading Pitch 1, *The Prow* (5,4).

*Fletch tackles Pitch 5,
The Prow.*



the more sporting options, instead following most climbers by moving left on a ledge below the worst of the overhang before finishing up and back to the main summit ridge. It was probably a reasonable Severe in grade, with variations possible.

It is a quirky piece of musicology that the title of Copland's best known music, *Appalachian Spring*, was not coined by him. Up until the day before its premiere, in the fall of 1944, it was named only as *Ballet for Martha*. Finally, at the last moment, its name was suggested by Martha Graham, inspired by a verse from a poem *The Dance*, by the American poet Hart Crane:

O Appalachian Spring! I gained the ledge;
Steep, inaccessible smile that eastward bends
And northward reaches in that violet wedge
Of Adirondacks!—wisped of azure wands

From our ledge, green ridge after green ridge faded distantly into the blue haze that often coats Appalachia, birds sang loudly, knowing that spring had indeed arrived. There was a suitably warm and peaceful

sunset that night, especially enjoyed following our mild outburst of easy balletic moves on the rippling schistose pitches of *The Prow*. The Rock was sufficiently separated from the flesh pots down in the valleys so that we stayed up on the mountain, where watching the sun descend into the haze was no penalty.

Appalachian Spring is set in the hills of Pennsylvania about 1830, and depicts the celebration of the completion of a house for a newly married young couple. The characters in the ballet suite include a Revivalist Preacher, a Pioneer Woman experienced in wilderness ways, the young Husbandman and his Bride, and a group of four women, Followers of the Preacher. One section involves a dance by the Pioneer Woman, who embodies 'the rocky confidence of experience.' There are, however, two different versions of the suite. Most recordings are of the concert suite, lasting about 25 minutes or so, and giving an uninterrupted sequence, but in the ballet there is a break, in which a dance by the Preacher seems to warn the couple of what the composer called 'the strange and terrible aspects of human fate.' This adds about ten minutes to the score, but imparts to the suite a more sombre mood.

The next day I tempted fate indeed, when a violent thunderstorm burst upon us on the mountain. In Britain, and even more so in Scotland, thunderstorms are relatively unusual, but not so over huge land masses such as America. I stayed in the tent after nightfall, mesmerised by the flashes of light which penetrated the tent walls as an X-ray would flesh; I knew there was a risk, but relied on the trees to divert a strike. I only relented when one of the students nervously entered our campsite in the woods and called me out, to gain the safety of a car.

We sat in the car for a few hours, as the storm majestically moved on, watching its distant fireworks over towns and villages down below. Another car-load of climbers were nearby in the car park, and were playing a piece of music which seemed to fit the dramatic scene. It was some piece of electronic esoterica, and may have been accompanied by the fragrance of some equally esoteric herbal smoke. We asked its name but were never able to find it. This was, of course, in the near prehistoric time before the Internet and its easily searchable universe.

Towards the end of the concert suite, Copland introduces the old Shaker song *The Gift to be Simple*. It was written by Elder Joseph Brackett in 1848:

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
 'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
 And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
 'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
 When true simplicity is gain'd,
 To bow and to bend we shan't be asham'd,
 To turn, turn will be our delight
 'Till by turning, turning we come round right.

Simple Gifts has been adapted many times, including perhaps the best known example by the English songwriter Sydney Carter, adapting it for his song *Lord of the Dance* in 1963. Carter's lyrics were then further transmuted by Ronan Hardiman for Michael Flatley's dance musical *Lord of the Dance*. This last was apparently in ignorance of its origins, with neither authorisation or acknowledgment. To correct many a wrong impression, it was written as a song and was never a hymn. It was also used as a dance song, as the words 'turning, turning' would imply.

We moved down the mountain the following day, with the sun shining again and steam rising off the rocks and woods. We passed several modest wooden homes by the roadside, with spring flowers bursting out of pots, tubs, and in small patches of garden. We turned on the car radio. It was playing Copland's *Appalachian Spring*. The world was happy, the world was good.

Notes: I have several recordings which include the suite. Such a popular piece has been recorded by a bevy of prominent conductors and the major orchestras. I have listed several below, in no particular order. All include other well-known works by Copland. One of these, *Quiet City*, is another of my favourites.

1. Deutsche Grammophon (427 335-2) 1989. Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. This also has *Short Symphony*, *Quiet City*, *Three Latin American Sketches*. 61'27".
2. Nimbus Records (NI5246) 1990. English Symphony Orchestra, William Boughton, conductor. This is compiled along with *Rodeo*, *Quiet City*, *Nonet*, *Fanfare for the Common Man*. 75'15".
3. RCA Red Seal. 82876658402. San Francisco Symphony. Michael Tilson Thomas. Includes *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo*. 76'29". This is the fuller ballet version, lasting 35'52". If your ears have been habituated to the chamber concert version, they might be in for a shock with this darker image.
4. Sony. New York Philharmonic. Bernstein Century. B0000029XG. 1997. Includes *Billy the Kid*, *Rodeo*, and *Fanfare*.
5. Sony Classics. London Symphony Orchestra, Copland conductor. 1970. B00004L8FC. 2000. This can be yours for a whopping £27 plus. It is regarded by some as the definitive recording, conducted by Copland, and remastered as a SACD. With *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo*.
6. Finally, for 69 pence, download it on its own from Amazon as an mp3 file. Boston Symphony Orchestra, conductor Aaron Copland (2011). It is also teamed up as a download with two pieces from Copland's only opera, *The Tender Land*, for £2.07.

EXCURSIONS WITH GIZMOS

By John Allen

Gizmo geeks

Aletschhorn: Swiss Alps, August 1993, with Neil Mather, SMC.

Believe it or not there was a time before the Global Positioning System became universally available in 1994. Hand-held gizmos were called map and compass, and everything else (e.g. common sense, intuition, eyesight) were also thrown into the mix. When Neil and I left the Mittelaletsch bivouac hut at 0415 on 10 August we secretly congratulated ourselves on being ahead of the guided party – an aspirant Swiss guide named Stefan, poor guy, was under test by surly guides as examiners. They still beat us to the Aletschjoch by fifteen minutes; knew a better line, were fitter, or something. At least then we did not come under pressure from behind and could settle to our own pace up the PD north-east ridge.

My diary: ‘Cold wind from NW and snow blown in whirling devils, heavy clouds to NW’, and ‘clouds now swirling around our peak – ominous.’ We slogged up footprints to point 3718m. ‘Strong wind there, snowing and sudden whiteout. We decided to turn back. Retreated down



Neil Mather on the summit of Aletschhorn. Photo: John Allen.

footsteps until they were obliterated by blown snow, and continued whiteout conditions necessitated use of map and compass.' Somehow we lost the edge as we descended, and found ourselves in a bowl, sheltered from the wind, but not right. Felt lost, worried. Then 'Neil produced his altimeter and this virtually clinched our position at about 3700m.' I had never used an altimeter before, and I have to admit how helpful it was. We cut back to the ridge, met the wind again, descended on balled-up crampons, no footprints, with snow turning to wet sleet, then rain. Reached hut by midday, thoroughly wet. 'Weather vile outside.' The guided party then returned, having successfully made the summit, and they went down to the valley. I hope Stefan passed his ordeal.

We decided to eke out our food, stay another night in the comfortable bivvy hut and try again for the Aletschhorn next day. The gamble paid off and we got our peak on a beautifully clear day with exceptional views in all directions. No need for gizmos to find our way this time, though we did have cameras to record the pleasures.

About the turn of the century, there were three of us, sitting at the summit of Ben Lui, just out of the wind admiring the view and chomping through doorstep-size bread lunches, when up floated this new boy, quietly from behind. He too was minding his own business, both ears wired up, mouth about an inch from a plastic water supply, and unable to exchange pleasantries because of other deafening preoccupations. He adjusted the recording device on his right wrist – the left one was strapped with the usual timepiece – and attended to his shapely and colour-coordinated backpack. Windchill had no chance here because Teflon-smooth and shiny garments sleeked away any draughts. Nobody said a word. Then he was away.

I don't know who burst out laughing first.

Then there was the November day in 2001 when Ian Marshall and I went for a round of the Ben Lawers group starting from the Ben Lawers Inn. We were inside our boots and rucksack straps, stomping up the track towards Meall Greigh, by quarter past nine and under a wind that squalled from the north with rapid flights of cotton clouds flowing across the blue above. Quite soon flakes of sleet drifted down, becoming insistent enough to stop us in our tracks to cover up. A stranger to Highland Perthshire caught us up and we fell in together for the rest of the round.

The increased pace of the wind at the summit changed the conviviality of the threesome to individual battles to avoid being blown sideways and stay on course. All the clothing went on, hoods were tightened; mitts and overmitts pulled up. Hot drinks quickly cooled in the cup as we sat behind a non-cairn. The squall of sleet gave way to spectacular views over ground that had been frozen overnight, and stones were now plastered with tiny drifts that made feet wary of trips and stumbles. Then we reached the bealach before Meall Garbh and detoured for a rest to

miss the scurrilous wind.

Ben, it was his real name and not made up just for the Scottish environs, was on a mission and needed facts to write and photos to illustrate. He produced a handset and held it aloft into the wind in a kind of salute. He lowered his arm and could then read off temperature, wind speed and windchill factor: +2°C, 25mph, -14°C. Hmm. Better put my pullover on as well as the outer jacket. I don't know what my guesses would have been but I would certainly not have made a temperature above freezing, nor credited the windchill to be so low.

The clarity of sunlight spread an autumnal glow over many landscapes, near and far. I had never had a view from Meall Garbh on three previous visits, so this novelty was rather special. Particularly interesting was the effect of light and shadow across the crags of Cat Gully on An Stuc, and the pale almost translucent luminosity of lime green on Meall Garbh's summit mound, as sleety snow seemed to have plastered over or painted the grassy profile. I realised how inadequately my camera would render this, and how an artist with oils or watercolours might make a better job of bringing the moment to the viewer in the art gallery. Even better though – be there in person, internalising. A transitory moment, but captivating.

At An Stuc's summit the low-level sun shone patchily around the 360° landscape with angle-lit cloud layers and sky of blue. Then icy rocks brought us to Ben Lawers' summit trig point, a good leaning post against an icy wind. Ben's gizmo again: 0°C, 40mph, -20°C. Before putting on three layers this time, gloves, mitts and overmitts, I thought of taking out my gizmo, holding the viewfinder to my right eye, pressing the trigger, and sending the film for processing with pictures back a week later. Curiously more important was a feeling that rather overwhelmed me at the time, 'a transcendental moment, in which you lose consciousness of your own separate existence: you blend with the landscape, and become part and parcel of nature' (from *The Wilderness Journeys* by John Muir). I kept staring out there, absorbed, and didn't irritate my companions with a request to pose, leaving the camera in the sac.

Kyrgyzstan 2001 – Adventures without gizmos

Remote place, I thought, when invited to join an exploratory mountaineering expedition to this recently devolved province of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Released from the fist of iron that gripped much of northern Asia for sixty odd years of the Twentieth Century, Kyrgyzstan's Tien Shan mountains beckoned because they were beyond the more remote Himalayas, where I had been, and remarkably were available by 2001 to modern exploratory mountaineering because British Airways flew there once a week. Not so remote then. Is nowhere sacred these days? No.

Imagination, fuelled by my earlier studies of Alexander the Great's

explorations across Asia from Greece in the 4th century BC, the Great Silk Road, the Mongolian conqueror Genghis Khan, and more recently the travels of Eric Shipton, began to run wild at the prospect of unvisited valleys, unknown peoples, unseen mountains, and unpredictable weather. In a modern world of easy communications, universal air travel and commercial mountaineering operators, how easy is it to escape? You have to create your own remoteness by pick and mix – pick the air travel, but leave out the commercial mountaineering operators and be selective in the use of mobile communication systems. You don't want a mobile phone tweaking in your pocket when your trigger finger is on the button for the best scene your camera has ever recorded, now do you? But you do want to be rescued if the snow gets a bit too slippery or you are cornered by a tiger, or a border guard with a gun. The only one here that I haven't sampled is the tiger.

In 2001 would-be Kyrgyzstan Telecom had not yet covered the Tien Shan range with phone masts; nor for that matter with air strips. There was one ex-military helicopter but the insurance company had not yet paid up for an earlier rescue, so expect nothing there. They did have some clumsy but durable ex-army vehicles, remnants from the Soviet era, to get to and from the mountains, and plenty of horses for more local transport within the mountains. There was also Shanks's pony when the ground was too steep for horses, or the horse in the herd that you fancied hadn't been broken in yet, or you couldn't catch it out on the open steppes with one of those lariats used by skilled horsemen. Rescue would be self-made to suit the occasion. No problem there, for we had all been in adventurous situations before, and would improvise. More appropriately we had all been brought up without reliance on any modern contrivances other than landline telephones and firework-style flares. Our planning decisions did not include either of these.

Helpfully we could hire two-way radios, and took one (heavy) in the hired ex-army truck for use before the mountains and at advance base camp, and the other (light) for use in the mountains, carried by us or a horse. Unfortunately the lightweight one required a 10m aluminium mast and car battery to function, so we declined to carry it into the mountains. We were back to self-reliance. Excellent. At last in a reasonably original sense of the word we had been able to construct a modern adventure, i.e. a journey or expedition with uncertain outcome. We would walk or ride a horse or both from the point of the emergency until we reached the vehicle, then radio phone our predicament. And fly home. I wonder what Alexander or Genghis would think of that for an adventure.

The expedition suffered no medical emergency. The main valley from which we ascended had stupendously steep sides, with base camp so deeply enclosed that there would have been no certainty anyway of radio contact via satellites if needed. As the date of our return flight loomed,



Base camp in steep sided valley, Kokshal Too range, Kyrgyzstan. Photo: John Allen.

we had to work out a timetable for an exit strategy, and assume that horses and horsemen would rendezvous as planned. The cold hand of approaching winter then played a part, and threw an interminable storm over us, almost burying base camp with snow, and rendering our progress on foot extremely slow. Consequently, we missed the promised rendezvous with horses and men, became incommunicado and had to commit to backpacking everything out without them on a tight timetable, and without knowing whether what we intended was even possible. This was across terrain we had experienced in summer conditions across grassy alpine slopes, ridges and rivers at 3000m with snow only on distant peaks. I can remember many of the details of that narrow escape. From the start, we had contrived a framework that would work for us in 2001, yet now in 2011 use of mobile phone communications and GPS would make that style of adventure somewhat obsolete, or perhaps nowadays irresponsible and gratuitously wilful without GPS now that communications have improved so much in only ten years. In planning such a venture you would now wish to know that the insurance company and the helicopter would function if provoked. There is no need to fabricate adventure based on duff insurance or faulty helicopters, even if the mobile phone can tell the rest of the world of your plight.

Back to our airport city of Bishkek and in front of a television screen, we were at first astonished by and then riveted to the big gizmo. Our month away from 'civilisation' had isolated us from information about the beginning of the next World War. While we were away, Arab terrorists had destroyed the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001, but we had not left our mountain fastnesses until 22 September.

The commonplace world of global television, that ultimate gizmo, with its non-stop coverage of the suicide destruction of the Twin Towers, had passed us by. Departed from our mountain world of deprivation and challenge, and relieved to be unscathed, yet in some shock at re-entry via the 'safe' world of British Airways, we emerged to burgers, eggs, chips and Pringles, and cruised effortlessly over the Middle East and towards the horror of George Bush's War on Terror.

Rannoch Moor, Creise – Gizmo life savers

Creise, above the Kingshouse Hotel on Rannoch Moor, is one of those unsung mountainous piles that people drive past and don't see unless they have to. Thus it is unfrequented; hence attractive for its perceived isolation. Yet it is so easy of access on short winter's days that I have it in readiness for the right moment. This was a day in February 2003, but it was the wrong day for one of my companions.

Three of us had reached the start of Inglis Clark Ridge, by which time the third guy for some reason best known to himself had decided he would solo onwards from where the other two of us were roping up. Then there was a scuffling from above, a short cry, and the third guy was airborne against the sky above, falling, hitting rocks and bumping on down to a snow slope and out of sight about 100m below us. No further sound. A very empty and breathless silence followed. In minutes I was able to reach him, upside down, in a trickle of reddish water wedged between rocky sides, moaning. His mobile phone had fallen out of its place onto the ground right next to him. What a potentially life-saving coincidence! My other companion, Jim Hall, knew how to work this thing (mine was at home as I had not yet learnt how to work it), but got 'No network connection'. One of us (Jim) had to rush down to the Kingshouse, while the other stayed with the stricken and badly broken man. On the way down the mobile did make contact with 999 for a few seconds before the exhausted battery gave up, and eventually a helicopter resulted, and so on. Would he survive? What could we do – move him to be the right way up, keep him conscious to save our anxiety when he kept passing out, keep him warm, even ask what happened? Weeks later he did not know what happened. Maybe the mobile phone saved his life, or perhaps it was the old-fashioned gallop down to the Kingshouse landline that secured the rescue. We will never know.

Ochils, 17 March 2011 – Gizmo games

Just a simple stroll near to home to get the lungs and legs working. I chose an eminence unvisited by many, and on a weekday I would probably see no-one. Plenty of snow on the ground though, and dark squally clouds drove me to put waterproofs on as light rain started. Snow lay covering all hillsides within sight, meaning hard, uphill work to stomp over a deep coverage to the rocky scarp on the east side of

Colsnaur Hill (553m). I took shelter out of the wind.

Under a pile of stones a plastic lunch box, the word 'harmless' on the lid facing the reader, contained a tiny notebook and pencil, and printed instructions on how to join in the treasure hunting game called 'Geocaching'. Born in America since the GPS became available worldwide, this is 'hide and seek' on a global scale. The simple idea is to locate hidden caches, called geocaches, outdoors. Basic membership is free. A visit to the website indicates that most of these hidden treasures are located in urban and low-lying rural areas, but there are sites on hills. The tiny 'visitors' book had pencil entries, some smiley faces and children's names, an obscenity, and weather conditions encountered by surprised finders. I added: 'Not as visually intrusive as wind turbines, memorial plaques on summits or cremated ashes.' The game is not for me, but then I said that about collecting Munros (completed 1991, but not registered officially!) and 4000m peaks in the Alps.

And there's a branch game, CITO – Cache in Trash out – the litter picking branch. Well that's been going for years as 'Keep Scotland Tidy' and only catches on when the John Muir Trust or the tourist board need to draft in volunteers to clean up access routes to the summit of Ben Nevis or Edinburgh Castle respectively. CITO would be a good idea for litter pickers on tourist beaches, but wasted on normal hills because by and large hillwalkers and mountaineers don't drop litter.

Without ranting any further, I feel that I could be approaching the end of my shelf-life, as one gizmo after another makes me feel inadequate. Then I was never very good with a screwdriver. But I can tell the time, and use a map and compass.

In those days, I once left a screw-capped aluminium tin with a note inside 'Kilroy was here', and my name and address and post code. This was in 1970 in a remote valley in a remote part of north-west Nepal, on top of a huge boulder that required V Diff climbing skills. No-one has yet replied. But I've moved house five times since then. Now there's a challenge. One day perhaps...

BREAKING THE ICE

By Mike Jacob

I'm not a vegetarian myself but I've eaten plenty of animals that were.
Groucho Marx

THE YEARS OF THE 1970s were a time of transition; tweed breeches evolved into salopettes of man-made fibre, step-cutting with straight axes succumbed to pecking with curved or inclined beaks, and the design and supply of all sorts of outdoor equipment expanded into a massive commercial – or, more aptly for us thrifty cynics, commercial – process. It was also, for me, a gradual process of introduction to a select pride of climbing lions – as they were perceived by the innocent hill-going herbivores of the grasslands. It is strange how often people's most memorable experiences, both positive and negative, seem to involve the magnetic influence of Ben Nevis and mine are no different. But why now?

I once asked Iain Smart not why he wrote the way he does but why he wrote at all? Basically, his reply was that it was a **need**; an inherent and necessary expression of creative artistry. With publication in the Journal and elsewhere he was lifting his pen and leaving his mark upon a literary lamp-post for others to know that a like-minded spirit had passed the same way. I like this analogy for we, the followers of scents, can sniff the air and think *yes, I recognise that smell, I know that feeling... how strange, for these are my memories too.* This peculiar resonance prompted me to re-visit some incomplete scribblings that had lain untouched through the years. The following is based upon one of them.

I dedicate it to Iain and also Phil Gribbon, my companion in this composite tale, both of whom, without necessarily knowing it, have acted as mentors and motivators to more than one young pretender. I acknowledge, too, the influence of the characters and genies that then inhabited the CIC hut.

Wet Behind The Ears

The insistent *beep-beep* of my new digital wrist-watch woke me at an unearthly hour. Quickly... I pressed the tiny button to silence the alarm, muffled inside my sleeping bag. Five thirty. In the pitch black the only sounds were snuffles, grunts and snores. Fortunately, I had disturbed no-one. I could lie there still, not yet needing to get up and putting off that early-morning test of will-power. I deserved a few more minutes of warmth and rest after a purgatorial stagger up the Allt a' Mhuilinn in the sleet, only a few hours earlier. Plenty of time yet, if anyone else woke I would be ready. I thought of the previous evening... and driving across Rannoch Moor in the gloom, rain lashing the windscreen, wind buffeting the little car and swerves back on to the correct cornering line.

Drizzle as we sluiced down to Ballachulish and then steady, heavier precipitation all the way to Fort William. It was warm and snug in the car, more so in the pub, and I had looked for signs of weakness in Phil's resolve so that I could reciprocate and we could convince each other of the wisdom, safety indeed, of calling it all off, at least for that night. There was none that I could detect. Miserably, I parked at the Golf Club, or was it the Distillery? My memory has now blanked it all out because we alternated between the two, convincing ourselves that the other approach must be better than the dreadful punishment we suffered on each wrongly-chosen route... but it was the same whichever way we went. Once, using ice axes as machetes to fight through the scrub birch and brambles which had taken over the old railway track behind the distillery, we came across a couple of disillusioned climbers who had been there two or three black hours and were totally lost in Time. Once and once only, however, everything was as W.H. Murray described it, where the night air was intense with cold and the peaty bog was a rock-hard pavement leading ever onwards to the 'frozen hills under the slow moon'.

Other people write easily about shouldering their packs and setting off. Such glib words. I tried to pick up my sac... aargh. Try again; this time at full power, resting the cement-like load on my knees at the halfway point, like a weight-lifter's snatch-and-jerk. Then, with a twist of the hip, I succeeded. The burden took my breath away and I staggered off, bent double, after Phil who had already disappeared into the darkness, my headtorch somewhere round my chin. Perhaps I should mention that the choice of gear in those days was somewhat limited, in proportion to the number of manufacturers and outdoor shops. Was there ever a Scottish climber, at least from the Edinburgh area, who didn't have a Tiso sac? This was basically a gynormous canvas bag with two unpadded straps, best suitable for storing prodigious quantities of potatoes in an outhouse through the winter months. It may have been bearable for a broad-shouldered giant but for a medium-sized weakling like me it was truly a millstone of stony discomfort. The straps, taut as metal bands, alternated between biting into my bones and sliding off my narrow shoulders. Phil used a pack-frame but this handy contrivance was inconvenient for climbing so he opted to also carry a day-sac which seemed an unnecessary extra weight to me.

There were no telescopic walking poles in those days but, even had they been invented, they could not have been used because hands were needed either to support the weight of the sac or to shift the constantly slipping straps back into place. My cotton shirt – no wicking base layers then – was soon soaked in sweat so a stop was required to remove woolly pullovers and then, of course, you rapidly chilled as the clammy item became even wetter in the rain. The gruelling and painfully slow climb to the dam continued, breathing difficult under the weight compressing

my rib-cage as each slippery foot of height was gained. Inhaling is only possible because the diaphragm and the intercostal muscles between the ribs together expand the thoracic cavity, causing a lowering of pressure inside the lungs and so air rushes in. As these muscle sheets aren't particularly strong, apparently only a 5–10% higher pressure on our chests can make breathing impossible. Water pressure increases by about 10% per metre depth; consequently, you would be very lucky to get much more than a metre down and still be able to breathe air from the surface, a consideration when you are weighing up your chances of surviving even the shallowest of avalanches even supposing that you were lucky enough to have a providential airway.

After the dam there was a section of decent-enough path at a more gentle gradient but it soon degenerated as we slid from one peat hag to the next black boot-sucking bog. The distant light from the CIC hut, still more than 300m above, disappeared as another outburst of rain turned into icy sleet, searching out gaps in our defences. We had to keep on the move to stay warm, sliding on wet snow patches and stumbling over hidden rocks. I didn't dare stop to open the sac and attempt, with numb fingers, to put on more clothing, for it seemed more logical to just keep going. Nylon cagoules might have kept out the worst of the water but also kept in all of the condensation. And so the unending slog went on and on as we attempted to pick the best route; muddy water sloshed over my boots as I crossed a burn and Phil went up to his crotch in a miry hole. Conditions were so awful that I wouldn't have taken the dog out for a walk, yet here we were sweating, struggling, fighting uphill for over 600m with boulders on our backs when sensible folk were thinking about bed.

Occasionally, I glimpsed again the beckoning light in the distance, like an occulting beacon offering reassurance to a seaman in a storm, a target upon which to concentrate but which never seemed to get any nearer. So it was back to step-plodding and boot-watching in the torch-light. Hood pulled over my head and falling over my eyes, I was aware of another steepening. How much more of this hell? I was using my ice axe now as the sleet had turned to wet snow, large blobs landing on my nose. I was alone in my own world, just trying to put one boot above the other and raise my load. Eventually, however, a stony presence made itself felt as I climbed up. There, in the circle of torchlight in front of me, was a shiny door sheathed in metal that would have done credit to Stirling Castle.

I pushed on the door but it didn't give. I tried again, a little harder... nothing. Suddenly, there was a rattling sound from within as bolts were withdrawn in their barrels and the door inched open. I half-expected a cross-bow to poke out of the narrow gap but, instead, I was given a withering stare by an angry-looking man:

'Yes?'

'Er, I'm with ...'

‘Well, don’t just well stand there. Come in, man, and bolt that door behind you. You’re undoubtedly the last. Christ Almighty, this is Ben Nevis not Everest. What the bloody hell have you got in that rucksack?’

‘Um, a rope... and...’

But he was gone, through a door that slammed shut in one’s face under the action of a powerful spring and the quiet from within was broken by loud guffaws as I got a whiff of whisky vapour. I noticed the double-doors of the drying cupboard, peeled off my dripping clothes and towelled my head dry. Someone came out to retrieve a toasted balaclava from the metal guard above the hissing blue flames. Oh, what a delight that sauna-like black hole was! To enter the steamy warmth of its Tardis-like confines was better than a hot shower. It swallowed any amount of clothing then flamed and grilled it, like a well-done sirloin steak, and served it up hot and dry in the morning.

You never knew who else was already ensconced in the solid hut, so the final hurdle was up the steps to that springy door which, like Cerberus, guarded the inner sanctum. All eyes were turned to scrutinise the incomer but he was unknown and not worthy of any great attention. A slight amount of room was made available at the end of a bench and a large log-book, for entering one’s name and status, was shoved along the table in my direction. I wrote and then hesitated at the next column. A gnarly Glaswegian was observing me:

‘There’s twa sorts of people in this world, pal, members of the SMC and guests... you’re a guest.’

I added the appropriate tag, one of the others. Beneath his silent scrutiny this felt like a kind of metaphorical baring of the neck.

A distant ringing invaded my snug sleep. It stopped, to be followed by one or two quiet voices in the dark. Oh no, I had dozed off. Now an old-fashioned alarm clock had woken everyone. Reluctantly, I released the draw-cord of my sleeping bag and cold air pinned-and-needed my face. Distant noises clarified into the sounds of people searching for clothes and pouring from the bunks. The race was on.

Initiation

I looked out as torch-beams revealed figures in vests and grubby long-johns scabbling around in rucksacks or, clutching brown-paper bags of fatty sausages and black puddings, hurrying to defend a gas ring from all-comers. I knew that I had lost, even at the start. Next to me, Phil stirred in his wafer-thin sleeping bag. Even as I felt around for my shirt he was up, already fully clothed, and had snatched the last ring on the stove. I sank back onto the bunk as he poured two mugs of someone else’s tea and handed one up to me.

I had time to study the First Sitting who now hogged the table near the fire. How did they do it? There was clearly more to the tactics on display than I had naively supposed. For a start, several wore digital watches.



Phil Gribbon on Green Gully, Ben Nevis, 1988. Photo: Mike Jacob.

Phil, who never wore a watch until he acquired a freebie – and never, to my knowledge, used a compass but somehow managed only rarely to get lost – had managed to take the seat nearest to the fire. From the conversations, it transpired that virtually everyone had arrived early enough the previous evening to see where they were going and well before the arrival of the cold front which had accompanied our trudge. They had then enjoyed a large meal with home-made soup and plenty of drink, judging by the number of empty bottles adorning the table. A mystery from the previous evening was also resolved. I had wondered why there were so few vehicles in the car-park. Apparently some of them possessed a magic key which allowed access up the forestry road. Some strange Irish logic of Phil's tried to convince me that mine was the correct introduction to a Club Meet at the CIC hut although, later, we cheated in like manner – to the benefit of Neil Quinn and big Derek Laird on one occasion.

Anyway, they were now well-established in front and from this pole position had the ability to dictate the movements of everyone else. They were visibly relaxed but alert to any subterfuge. A pair of silly novices tried to jump the queue, even skipping breakfast, and spent a fruitless hour searching for their crampons whilst the First Sitting smiled and gave knowing winks. This rank order extended out of the hut to the foot of the cliffs for they would ultimately have first choice of route, be first to the plateau and, if it was timed correctly, be able to be the cause of the benightment of following parties. A relay of nominees kept watch on the Allt – the CIC is well sited for this purpose – to forewarn of the approach of the competition. The other occupants of the hut resigned themselves to a late start or shuffled about looking for missing gear or preparing

their lunchtime pieces. Thus, when the time came for the First Sitting to make a move, they had more than a psychological advantage.

I can't remember what time we eventually left the hut but I do know that one moment the First Sitting were lounging around drinking coffee yet, when I turned around from searching for my food, which had somehow distributed itself amongst the old supermarket wire-baskets on the shelves, they were gone, as was my plastic bottle of fresh milk. A pile of greasy plates and porridgy pans littered the kitchen corner. The hut was surreally quiet, the humble voices of guests and late-risers being heard for the first time from the darker recesses. The porch, which had previously appeared a total chaos of jackets, ropes, ice axes, harnesses, helmets, crampons, racks of karabiners, pitons, ice screws, deadmen and slings of nuts must have been cleared in a matter of seconds. Remarkably, I never lost a single item of gear; a drop of milk was fair game but equipment was beyond the pale.

Rite Of Passage

What a sight greeted our eyes when we stepped outside! A veritable glacier reached down to the hut and the water-pipe was silent; frozen solid, a great stalagmite of clear ice bedecked by crystals of snow reaching up to engulf and stifle its own end. The collection of water thus necessitated the carriage of a bucket into a chasm, down into a crevasse by the side of the hut. Mighty cliffs and complex buttresses, and corries of snow seemed to hang over the hut with hardly any rock in sight. All the wet snow from the previous night had frozen hard and encased the whole mountain in its eagle's grip. Nature held its breath and waited in silence for something to happen.

There can be few places in Britain of comparable grandeur under these conditions and, as the sun started to pick out some of the upper detail in pink, incredibly high above, we could only stand and marvel. We strapped on our crampons there and then. Where we went and what we did is not important in this context but it was a pleasure to have experienced that exhilarating mountain day, and all the others like it, and to have time to linger companionably on the sunlit summit plateau, in the relaxed knowledge that home was not much more than a snowball's fall away. In some ways it was a shame to have to return to the hut but it was a necessary part of the pilgrim's progress.

Initially, it was all quite tea-shoppe-like and ordered. Earl Grey tea, fruit cake and biscuits. A quiet perusal of guide-books, comparisons of routes and their grades, a murmuring of agreement and re-enactment of moves. But, as later parties arrived back, the noise swelled and soon it was time for the gas mantles to be lit, a ceremony which marked a definite change in atmosphere. It was too early to start cooking my evening meal but obviously there was going to be a long queue for the gas rings. Some people had a nap, others read old climbing magazines.

Perusal of the hut-book revealed that I was rubbing shoulders with climbers whose names I recognised from the journals.

I chatted to a friendly Dundonian, who was clearly a respected figure and I was flattered that he even remembered my name. Unaware of the domestic arrangements, a fellow guest nervously enquired as to the whereabouts of a particular frying-pan, half-full with bacon fat.

'So you're the bastard who left that filthy pan,' exploded from a seat near the fire.

'I was just keeping it to fry some meat,' he meekly defended himself.

'Well it's been cleaned. Use vegetable oil next time, it's better for you.'

Thus stirred, the angry-sounding man jumped up and came to the other end of the hut and commanded that we all move. The end of a ladder on pulleys was lowered from the ceiling and he disappeared into the attic to re-arrange its contents and to re-appear with a bottle or two of wine to be warmed for later. Meanwhile, the unfortunate, who didn't possess any sunflower oil, retired to a corner to nibble some peanuts and await his turn, for his audacity had stimulated a mass movement of food preparation. Soon, a delicious fug of fried onion and other appetising smells filled the confines of the hut and the temperature rose to a level where everyone was soon in shirtsleeves. Condensation rolled down the window panes onto solid oak frames, as it must have done for decades.

Acceptance

An hour or two later there wasn't a clean pan or plate to be found and, perversely, this proved to be a lucky break. A couple of us, of necessity, got stuck into the pile of washing-up and this was noticed by the stern, hawk-eyed main man. He came to help and the ice was broken. He really wasn't such an angry person after all... just doing his trying job to make life easier for the mass of unappreciative hut-users, as he enlightened us, and I had to believe him. As the early darkness wrapped its cloak around the little hut and became a full black, starry night, so did everyone inside become replete. We were all bonded together inside a capsule of stone spinning through an Arctic world with polar bears prowling outside.

Those wooden benches with their bum-polished sheen had no backs so the lower-tier bunks provided the necessary support for reclining bodies. Pearls of wisdom would issue forth and these stimulated blunt discussion and good-humoured repartee. Being the CIC this couldn't last, of course. If it wasn't a thundering, blazing helicopter overhead, dropping off the rescue team, then it was a white-faced lassie informing us that her friend lay injured in Coire Leis so off we all set into the night, trailing a stretcher behind us. The casualty was located, splinted, strapped in and hauled back to the hut where it was discovered that the stretcher was too wide to pass the spring-loaded door. This necessitated turning both litter plus unfortunate victim on edge and some intricate manoeuvring before he was placed on the floor for all to view. And there he remained all night,



Phil Gribbon on the plateau of Ben Nevis after completing Green Gully, 1988. Photo: Mike Jacob.

the only hiatus being his desire for a pee and thus a reversal of the earlier performance so that he could relieve himself in the snow. All this drama and excitement seemed a routine part of a stay at this most alpine-refuge-like of SMC huts.

Sunday dawned and the weather held fair. We went and climbed, returned to the hut for another cup of tea, retreated in good order and then, somewhat reluctantly, went home to the plains. It wasn't always like this, of course; the simplest of outings could be foiled and retreat turn into a struggle for existence as vicious blizzards struck the mountain. The canny mountaineer survives because his familiarity breeds respect and I always found that the cliffs got more impressive and the routes more sensational as I became a little more knowledgeable about the mountain's history and intricacies. To my initial impression of fascinated awe were added suspicion and, it has to be admitted, an element of trepidation. On this occasion, the euphoric high was all one could possibly have desired. However, every selfish silver lining has a cloud. Down in that other-world of work, relationships and emotional bonds one's addiction may just well help to shatter more than the ice.

Postscript

The Dundonian, as you may have guessed, was Doug Lang. I later discovered that he was also proud to be called a Doonhamer (a native of Dumfries). On his way to the annual Langdale Meets he would make a detour to the dowdy Queen of the South to visit his mother's grave. I found Doug to be a gentleman, courteous and completely without airs and graces, and I feel privileged to have spent some time with him on the hill. He generously seconded my own SMC application form and I am still shocked by the manner of his death.

MOUNTAIN CAMPS, TRIANGULATION STATIONS AND PLUM PUDDINGS

By Graham E. Little

IT IS SURPRISING that the name Thomas Frederick Colby (1784–1852) is not one that springs to mind when early Scottish mountaineering is discussed, as to this day it is doubtful if anybody has spent as long as Colby and his Royal Engineer surveyors did on a number of significant Scottish hills or undertaken such remarkable journeys between them. The remains of some of their camps are still visible today. However, such occupation was no recreational dalliance but in pursuit of the high quality mapping that we all now take for granted.

One prerequisite of accurate mapping is triangulation, ensuring the integrity of mapped detail by containing it within a ‘well-conditioned’ framework of accurately measured triangles. Put simply, the triangulation process commences with the accurate measurement of a base-line¹ – one side of the first triangle – which together with observed angles, allows all other triangle side lengths to be calculated using fairly basic trigonometry. Although much work is required to identify and establish suitable triangulation stations, the accurate measurement of the angles is also a time consuming process relying upon that rare mountain commodity – clear air! Even when conditions are ideal, there is the need to take multiple rounds of horizontal and vertical angles², to surrounding triangulation stations, to ensure that human error, instrument error and the effects of atmospheric variation can be, as far as possible, eliminated³.

The first triangulation of Scotland, ‘The Trigonometrical Survey of Scotland’, commenced in the first decade of the nineteenth century but observations stopped in 1822⁴, as resources were diverted onto the survey of Ireland where there was a pressing need for accurately mapped land boundaries to address the gross inequalities of the existing land tax regime.

1 The first British base-line (over 5 miles in length) was measured on Hounslow Heath in 1784 under the supervision of Major General William Roy (born near Carlisle in Scotland) who is widely regarded as the father of Ordnance Survey. He died one year before the founding of Ordnance Survey in 1791.

2 Of course, the horizontal control framework needs to be supplemented by a height framework, traditionally provided by a combination of levelling and triangulation, to produce the x, y and z values that are essential to map users. How height values are derived is beyond the scope of this article!

3 The advent of Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) – GPS, the American system, being the best known – facilitates mapping without comprehensive triangulation.

4 Most sources quote 1825 as the cessation of the survey of Scotland. In reality there was probably an overlap of survey activity between 1823 and 1825.



Thomas Frederick Colby, 1837

Artist: William Brockedon

© National Portrait Gallery, London.



But I'm getting ahead of myself – let me tell the story of Thomas Frederick Colby from the beginning. Born in 1784 at Rochester, Kent, to a well-connected military family, he became a cadet in the Royal Engineers, gaining a commission as a Second Lieutenant in 1801 when he was still seventeen. In 1802 he was appointed to Ordnance Survey to assist with the 'Trigonometrical Survey'. His impressive career progress was nearly cut short in 1803 in a serious accident with an over-loaded pistol resulting in amputation of his left hand and a depressed skull fracture (leaving in a prominent scar on his forehead).

By the second decade of the nineteenth century, Colby and his team were well engaged in the 'Trigonometrical Survey of Scotland'. The work was arduous and inevitably seasonal in nature. Although Colby was highly conscientious and determined to produce mapping of the highest quality his pragmatism is evident in a letter of 1818 to William Mudge (his Director):

In the western part of Scotland, from the want of roads and carts, and the extreme height of the mountains, no station can be visited without very considerable expense, and I shall, therefore, endeavour to perform the Survey of it with as few stations as possible by intersections of objects on the mountains, which will serve all the requisites of the map...

As all but one of Colby's field journals were destroyed during Second World War bombing, we must refer to the diaries of Lieutenant Robert Kearsley Dawson, one of Colby's assistants, for a first-hand account. Dawson gives a flavour of their exploits in 1819 and these are probably typical of a survey season:

On the following morning the really laborious part of the business commenced, that of conveying the camp equipage, instrument and stores, to the top of the mountain. Horses were hired for the purpose, and made to carry the packages slung like panniers over their backs, so far as the ground proved tolerably even and firm: but when it became broken and hummocky... there was no alternative but to unload the horses, and carry the things on the men's shoulders... After encouraging the men for a while at the outset of their laborious undertaking, Captain Colby went on to the summit, where he selected a spot of ground for the encampment as near as practicable to the station... He then selected a suitable place for a turf hovel, to be built on the sloping face of the hill, with a tarpaulin roof, in which to make a fire for cooking, and for drying the men's shoes and clothes, and to serve as a place of shelter and warmth for the men in tempestuous and severe weather.

An aerial view of the summit of Beinn an Oir (785m), the highest Pap of Jura. A 'roadway' leads down from the summit to the ruins of the 'Colby Camp'. Photo: Iain Thornber.

The next diary extract will strike a chord with all hill enthusiasts:

It was no uncommon occurrence for the camp to be enveloped in cloud for several weeks together... and in a moment the cloud would break away or subside into the valleys, leaving the tips of the mountains clear and bright above an ocean of mist.

Dawson also remarks:

When... the summit of the hill was free from cloud, every moment favourable for observation was anxiously caught by Captain Colby, and devoted to that service, from sunrise to sunset.⁵

When not observing, Colby embarked upon some mind-boggling recesses, leading his men over mountainous terrain, at a cracking pace, to identify suitable triangulation stations (where cairns and staffs were erected) and associated camps.

Dawson records that Colby, having just receded Inverness-shire, Ross-shire, Caithness and mainland Orkney (walking 513 miles in 22 days), took only one day's rest and then:

Captain Colby took me and a fresh party of soldiers on a station hunt ... Our first halting place was to be Grant Town [Grantown-on-Spey], a distance of twenty-four miles... arriving in Grant Town in about five hours and a half we dined there, and proceeded afterwards along the valley of the Spey, by the high road, to the Aviemore Inn to sleep. The distance travelled by us that day was calculated at thirty-nine miles.

This 'station hunt' concluded with the diary entry:

Returned to the camp on Corrie Habbie [Corryhabbie Hill], having walked 586 miles in twenty two days, including Sundays.

As part of this epic trek Dawson recorded:

Made an attempt to reach the summit of the Coolin Hills, but were completely foiled in the attempt, and that was probably the only instance in which Captain Colby was ever so foiled.⁶

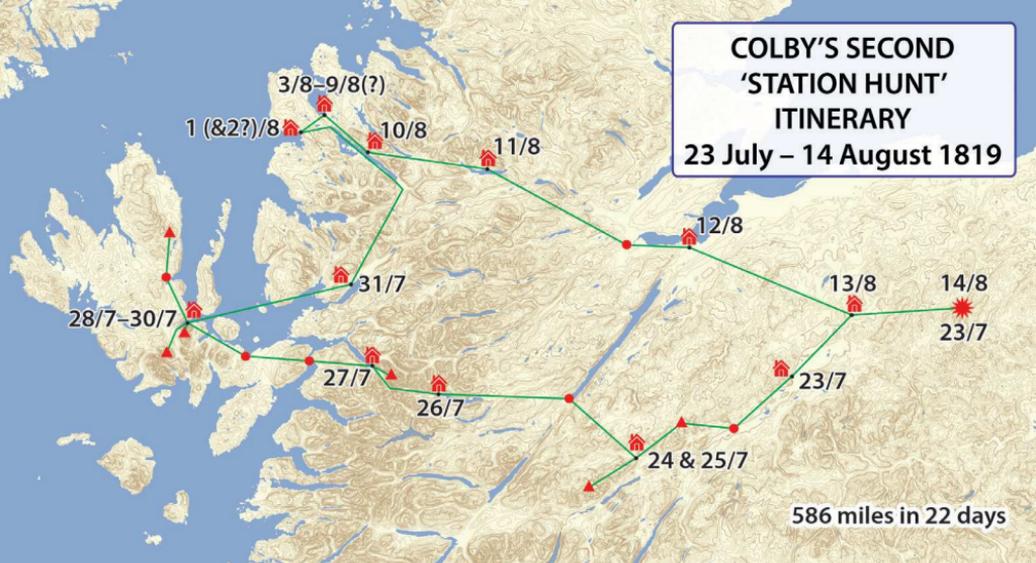
Colby expected a lot of his men but, after some initial reservations, they quickly grew to admire his drive and commitment.

At the end of every survey season, in recognition of the superhuman

5 Colby used The Great Theodolite, a 3-foot diameter instrument weighing 200lb built by the renowned astronomical instrument maker Jesse Ramsden. To improve the efficacy of daylight observations to distant stations, a heliostat (a moveable mirror used to reflect sunlight in a fixed direction) was used. It can be assumed that the most distant stations were observed at night using a limelight (as in the survey of Ireland).

6 Although Dawson does not name the peak, they were almost certainly defeated by the Gendarme on the west ridge of Sgùrr nan Gilleann. This attempt pre-dates the first recorded ascent (by the south-east ridge) by 17 years.

**COLBY'S SECOND
'STATION HUNT'
ITINERARY
23 July – 14 August 1819**



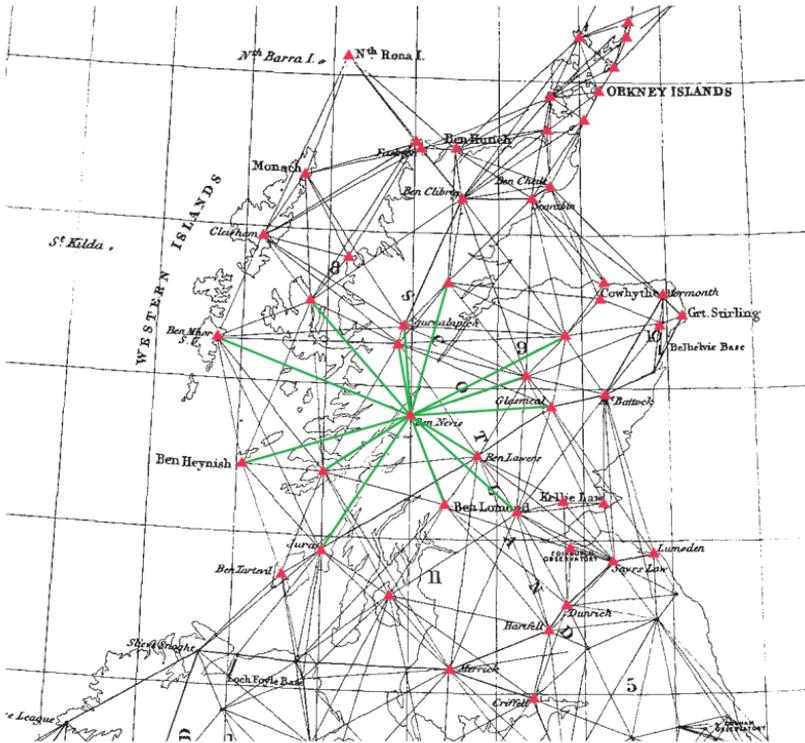
The itinerary of Colby, Dawson et al on the second 'station hunt' in the summer of 1819. Colby is known to have walked 513 miles on the first 'station hunt' which extended as far as Orkney. In total Colby covered 1099 miles in 45 days with one day off in the middle to organise a fresh party.

effort, a grand farewell mountain-top feast was organised with the chief dish being an enormous plum pudding, with the following approved ingredients: a pound of raisins, a pound of currants, a pound of suet etc. to each pound of flour. These ingredients were all multiplied by the number of mouths in the camp resulting in a pudding of nearly a hundred pounds weight that was suspended from a cross beam and boiled for twenty four hours in a brewing-copper. It was consumed at a long table, set out under interconnected tents, and was no doubt washed down with suitable alcoholic beverages.

As already mentioned, the triangulation of Scotland was stopped at the end of the 1822 season and did not recommence until 1838. New triangulation stations were then observed and many of the earlier observations were re-observed to improved accuracy. The fieldwork was completed in 1852 and the results eventually published as *The Principal Triangulation of Great Britain*.⁷ Although Colby had personally participated in field activities in Scotland and then in Ireland, even after appointment as Superintendent of Ordnance Survey in 1820⁸, his personal involvement in post-1838 field activity in Scotland was probably limited (although he was on the summit of Ben Hutig, on the north coast of Scotland, in 1838). However, the term Colby Camp stuck and this term is applied to all such mountain-top structures associated with the 'Trigonometrical Survey'.

7 The re-triangulation of Great Britain, on which modern mapping is based, commenced in 1935 and was completed in 1962.

8 Colby, after promotion to Major General, retired in 1847 after 27 years as head of Ordnance Survey.



The principal triangulation stations in Scotland are marked by a red triangle. The green lines show the bearings taken from Ben Nevis. Details of all these stations can be found in 'Account of the Observations and Calculations of the Principal Triangulation' by Capt. Clarke – see references.

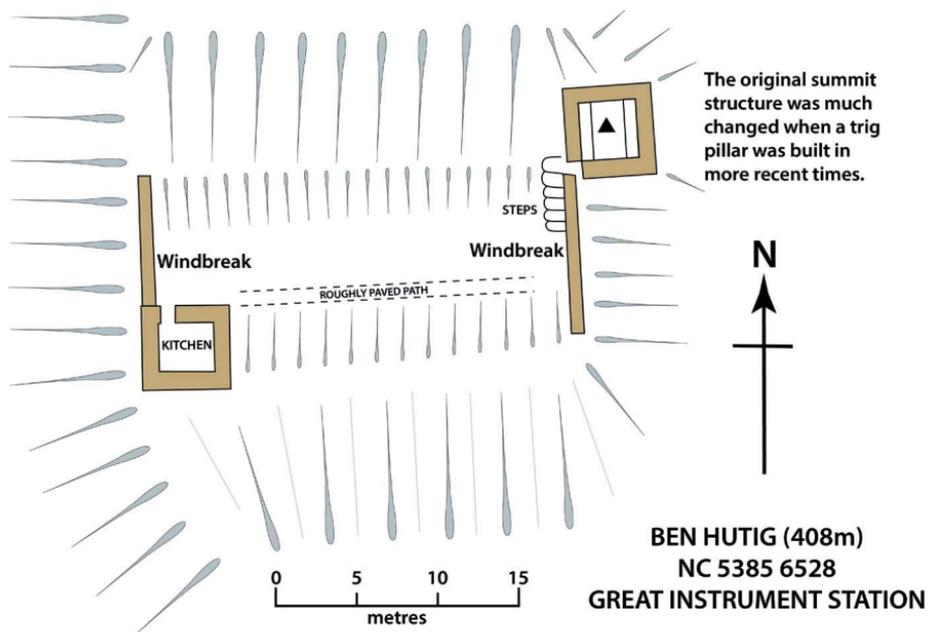
There is no comprehensive record of the number or location of Colby Camps in Scotland, although it is reasonable to assume that a camp of some form was erected at every occupied triangulation station. Remains that survive today vary from very substantial e.g. the massive stone windbreaks on Creach Bheinn, Morvern, to small tumbledown shelters at other locations. Where stone was in short supply, turf seems to have been the alternative construction material. Characteristic of all Colby Camps are tent platforms and a cook shelter. It can be speculated that the more elaborate the structure the longer the duration of occupation due to poor weather conditions. To what extent structures have been altered over the years is another area of speculation.

Opposite top: The kitchen/mess-room, now filled with moss, at the western end of the Colby Camp on Ben Hutig (408m), Sutherland. Photo: Noel Williams.

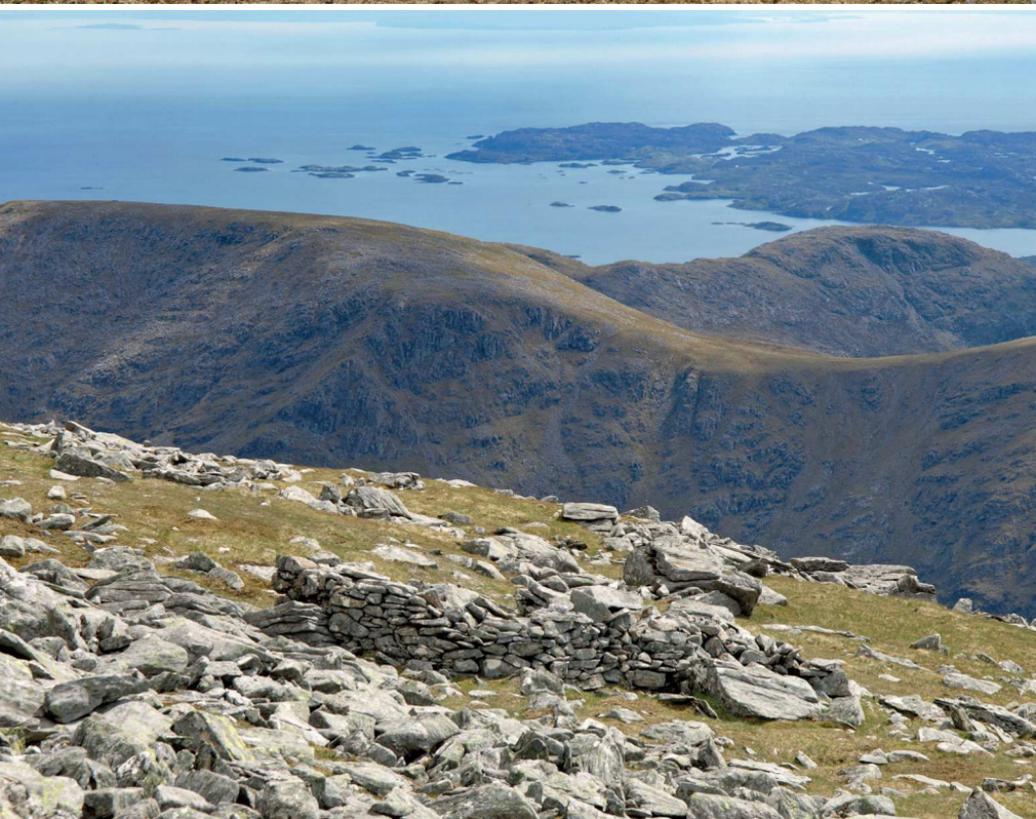
Opposite bottom: Plan of the Colby Camp on Ben Hutig which was occupied by Colby in 1838.

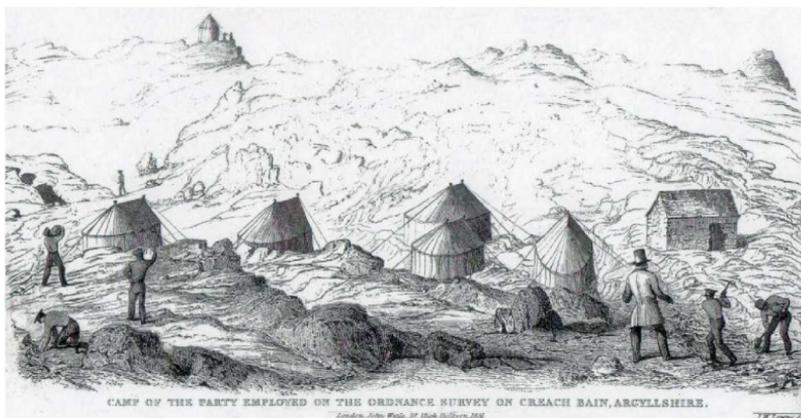
Overleaf top: The fine 'Colby Camp' on the summit of Creach Bheinn, Morvern. Photo: Iain Thornber.

Overleaf bottom: The 'Colby Camp' near the summit of An Cliseam, Harris. Photo: Noel Williams.



The original summit structure was much changed when a trig pillar was built in more recent times.





This etching by J.W. Lowry shows the Colby Camp on Creach Bheinn in Morvern.

It was published in a treatise entitled 'Aide-Mémoire to The Military Sciences', Originally Edited by a Committee of the Corps of Royal Engineers, 1850–1852. Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged, 1861–1862. Vol. III. Paleontology—Zig-Zag. London: Lockwood & Co., 1862.

Good examples of Colby Camps can be found on:

Beinn an Oir (Jura) ⁹	NR 499 750	Altitude 760m
Ben Lawers	NN 637 412	Altitude 1180m
Creach Bheinn	NM 870 577	Altitude 835m
Ben Alder	NN 496 718	Altitude 1130m
Ben Macdui (Sappers' Bothy)	NN 990 988	Altitude 1300m
Mam Sodhail	NH 119 253	Altitude 1150m
Clisham (An Cliseam)	NB 154 073	Altitude 790m
Ben Klibreck (Meall nan Con)	NC 585 298	Altitude 915m
Ben Hutig	NC 538 652	Altitude 400m

In Colby's citation for Fellowship of The Royal Society he is described as 'a Gentleman well versed in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy'. To this pen picture it would be appropriate to add 'he was also a man of outstanding leadership ability, boundless energy and a most competent mountaineer'.

As you navigate the Scottish hills today, give some thought to those early surveyors who walked vast distances to reach sites, lugged loads of heavy equipment to mountain tops, built protection from the elements using local stone and endured camps occupied for weeks at a time whilst waiting for ideal observing conditions – all this to provide mapping for a multitude of applications including allowing those mountain enthusiasts Munro, Corbett, Donald and a host of followers to list, find, climb and tick.

⁹ An important station, allowing linkage of Scottish and Irish triangulation networks.



The substantial ruin of a 'Colby Camp' mess-room just below the summit of Ben Klibrick (962m).
 Photo: Bob Aitken.

BEN NEVIS.

3-ft. Theodolite, R.S.

From 1st August to 14th November 1846. Observer: Corp. WINZER, R.S.M.

Objects.	Bearings.	No. of Obs.	Range.	Recip. of Weight.	Objects.	Bearings.	No. of Obs.	Range.	Recip. of Weight.
Jura	32 16' 10" 63	13	3.91	0.17	Scournalapich .	176 57' 15" 22	50	6.94	0.10
Ben More in Mull	56 41' 57" 25	28	9.47	0.30	Ben Wyvis . . .	194 26' 41" 61	42	7.96	0.11
Creachbheinn .	62 46' 13" 65	18	8.93	0.42	Corryhabbie . .	240 9' 13" 00	14	7.87	0.46
Ben Heynish . .	72 55' 15" 04	23	6.46	0.22	Ben Macdui . . .	248 53' 44" 10	35	10.05	0.20
Referring-object .	81 52' 46" 07	23	13.23	0.68	Ben Amhlair . . .	266 29' 31" 38	19	3.83	0.15
Ben More, S. Uist	111 14' 50" 35	13	9.14	0.90	Ben Lawers . . .	299 59' 31" 59	38	10.63	0.23
Elms Hill	113 48' 43" 16	3	1.87	0.48	Ben Cleugh . . .	311 19' 5" 44	16	7.40	0.39
Storr	138 25' 45" 76	14	5.14	0.25	Ben Lomond . . .	341 10' 43" 04	19	7.55	0.49
Mamsuil	172 30' 10" 01	8	2.94	0.19					

The readings taken by Corp. Winzer on the summit of Ben Nevis from 1 August until 14 November 1846, (from Clarke 1858). Any structures created on the summit were probably destroyed when the Observatory was built in 1883 and the Hotel in 1894. Although bearings were also taken to Creachbheinn, Elms Hill and Ben Amhlair (Ben Alder) these were not used in the final calculations.



Thomas Colby is buried in St James' Cemetery, Liverpool.

Part of the inscription on the impressive plinth reads:

His powerful mind and superior scientific attainments were successfully devoted to that great work with which his name will ever be associated, The Ordnance Survey of Great Britain and Ireland, the charge of which was confided to him by the Duke of Wellington.

Photo: Tim Taylor.

References:

Captain Alexander Ross Clarke, *Account of the Observations and Calculations of the Principal Triangulation*, London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1858.

Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph E. Portlock, *Memoir of the Life of Major-General Colby*, London: Seeley, Jackson & Halliday, 1869.

Sir Charles Close, *The Early Years of the Ordnance Survey*, Chatham: Institute of Royal Engineers, 1926.

Tim Owen & Elaine Pilbeam, *Ordnance Survey – Map Makers to Britain since 1791*, Southampton: Ordnance Survey (HMSO), 1992.

Ian R Mitchell, *Scotland's Mountains Before the Mountaineers*, 2nd Ed, Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2013.

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, Canmore, <<http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/search/>>.

A FOOL IN COIGACH

By Ian Crofton

Who possesses this landscape? –

The man who bought it or

I who am possessed by it?

– Norman McCaig, ‘A Man in Assynt’

FOUR WHOOPERS BOBBED close together by the south shore of Lochanan Dubha. By now, in the second week of April, they should have been half way to Iceland. At least a glimmer of a hint of spring should have come to Coigach.

But it had not, not one bud had burst. Icicles hung by the roadside, the wind still knifed in from the east. Perhaps the snow showers scudding across Enard Bay, picked out by the intermittent sun, had given the swans pause for thought, or at least for what passes for thought in a swan. Perhaps there was a paralysing mismatch between sensory input and internal clock.

Who was fooling who, this midwinter spring?

The evening before, we’d driven north from the club meet at the CIC. The Ben had been glittering in full Alpine fig, iced-up and frozen hard despite the dazzling April sun. But Sunday saw the hut in cloud, and big fat flakes drifted about in the gloom. It was excuse enough for us oldies, out of energy after two fine days on the hill. Down we went – for tomorrow, as someone of astonishing perspicacity once said, is another day.

The gloom followed us north, further than the murk-shrouded Fannichs. As the road dipped down towards Loch Broom, the clouds parted. Blues and golds poured down from the sky. It had been five years since I’d been this far north, forty since I’d first seen Coigach. Too long.

The old familiar peaks unfolded one by one, Ben Mòr Coigach, Cul Beag, Stac Pollaidh, Cul Mòr. Their southern slopes were bare of snow, but as we passed, the northern faces came into view. They were plastered. To find these low-lying sea-bordered hills so wintry in January or February, let alone in April, up-ended all expectations. The time was surely out of joint, the moon a deeper shade of blue.

We stopped the car, got out, peered back. Although the eye from here is drawn to the great prow of Sgùrr an Fhìdhleir, the rock there was black. To the left, though, coming off the northeast end of the summit ridge of Ben Mòr Coigach, a series of whitened buttresses and ridges plunged down towards the Allt Claonaidh. One feature in particular, a buttress bounded on the left by a sharply defined ridge, caught our eye.

A plan began to form.

Ensnconced in the Elphin hut, we pored over the guidebooks. Nothing.



The north-east face of Ben Mòr Coigach with Oslo Buttress just right of centre. Photo: Bob Reid.

Then the journals published after the guide. Nothing. We couldn't believe such an obvious line had not been climbed. Surely Andy Nisbet, if no one else, must have done it? Or maybe the place never saw snow from one winter to the next?

And this was April. Who was fooling who?

The ground past Lochanan Dubha where the whoopers waited for spring was tough to walk. Though the bogs were drier than they might have been, they weren't dry enough to crunch. So we jumped from tussock to tussock and tired ourselves out. Beyond the deer fence, young pines and birch flourished among the lanky heather, and great balls of moss-green moss hunkered on the tops of sandstone slabs, as if they might be trows¹ waiting for nightfall to wake. In other places, blobs of moss hung off the upper lips of peat hags like snotters from an old man's beard.

There was one boulder streaked with orderly bands of pebbles of

¹ **'Trow** The Orkney and Shetland version of a Norse troll. Trows were short, ugly, supernatural and malevolent, and under many circumstances appear to have been invisible. There were hill-trows, land-trows and sea-trows, all of which were capable of inflicting mischief.' Thus Ian Crofton in his *Dictionary of Scottish Phrase and Fable* (Birlinn, 2012). What Crofton (a sloppy scholar if ever there was one) fails to mention is that it is believed by some that the trows penetrated further south, and may still inhabit mounds and bumps across the remoter corners of Sutherland, Caithness and Wester Ross.



The boulder with ancient pebbles. Photo: Ian Crofton.

quartzite and jasper, as if Andy Goldsworthy had passed through and arranged them just so. We were, I suppose, seeing a succession of gravelly river beds from a billion years ago, long before humans would have fished them, long before fish would have spawned in them, long before any creature even dreamt of having a backbone.

Rounding the shoulder of Beinn Tarsuinn we could see what we'd come for: a classic conical buttress, sharpening into a ridge on its left. Looking up from the foot of the buttress, the skyline of the ridge presented a coxcomb of steps and pinnacles. It looked immensely appealing. More importantly, it looked like we might actually be able to get up it.

I followed Bob up a snowy gully on the left of the foot of the buttress to a stance. He led up a chimney, and then on up snow slopes to another rock step. I found an entertaining way up this, zigging this way, zagging that. Then more snow, more steps, more snow, more steps. Some of these steps at first appeared problematic, but there always turned out to be an amenable way up, the axes lodging snugly in the frozen turf, the rock offering a crack or a bridge or a side pull just when one was needed. So it all went smoothly, no heroics, no epics, nothing to report beyond a good time on a great mountain with views north across the most astonishing landscape in Britain. Stac Pollaidh, like a coy young maid, peeked round the side of Beinn an Eoin, while Suilven, the carcass of some long-extinct rock monster, danced the dance of the seven veils in



Bob Reid climbs the chimney on the second pitch. Photo: Ian Crofton.



Bob Reid on the upper part of Oslo Buttress. Photo: Ian Crofton.

and out of wisps of cloud and distant snow showers. From the summit we peered out through clouds to see if we could see the Summer Isles. We couldn't. They too were out of season.

To the west, a bold, indignant raven buzzed a golden eagle. After a while, the eagle soared off after easier prey.

Walking back over Beinn Tarsuinn, we found a second tale of predator and prey. Through the snow along the ridge, weaving in and out of piles of rocks, ran the footprints of a hare, and after the track of the hare, crossing it, following it, never catching it, were the footprints of a fox. If the hare escaped, then the fox would go hungry, its litter die. Smaller quarry, in this late freeze, would be keeping tight in their burrows, the flesh falling off them as they waited for the first green shoots.

The rocks along the ridge, through which the hare and the fox had left their tracks, formed a weird dreamscape: piles of outsized pancakes, old straw beehives from a Brueghel painting, Dali's sloppy watches. And among them, on top of them, behind them, more fat lumps of moss glowering like trows impatient for the dark. But though it was eight it was April and there was plenty of light. So we remained unscathed.

As evening lengthened and we trudged back through the scatterings of pine and birch, Cul Beag pulled a blanket of cloud over its head. Beyond, stretching towards Suilven, the bog lay over the bedrock of Lewisian gneiss like a lumpy duvet. These old beasts of mountains had been in deep sleep for hundreds of millions of years, dreaming each moment while forgetting the moment before, their flanks splitting and shattering onto the screes below.

I too was wrapped in the moment I was in, deep in my dream, oblivious of time, staring at the serrations of Stac Pollaidh dark in outline above the pink and purple ripples of a nameless lochan.

Then with a sickening lurch the ground gave way.

Something pulled my foot from under me.

I fell.

I was sinking.

Ach you fool, I told myself, you've maybe dodged the trows, but now the shug bog's² got you.

The black slop was quickly up to my shin, my knee. I really was sinking.

Then millions of years of finely tuned survival instinct kicked in. Filling the air with expletives, I threw my body forward, grasped for a hummock. I sank my fingers into its grass, its peat, its heather. The hummock did not sink. I wriggled and edged and thrust, like some poor beast in labour. Nothing. One more mighty effort ... Uuuuugh. With a ghastly sucking sound, the downward motion of my legs slowed,

2 'Shoog bog A quaking quagmire, perilous to those attempting to traverse it. To *shoog* is to shake or wobble ...' (Crofton, I., opus cit.)

*The Shoog Bog*

*Photo:
Ian Crofton*

then reversed. Nnnnyyng. Then with a squelch like a wet fart, and a moist peaty burp, I was free.

It was the hardest move of the day.

I breathed a sigh of relief, picked myself up, and tottered up to the road.

At least, I consoled myself, I could shed muck and gunge all over the insides of Bob's nice new Saab.

As the last of the twilight drained from Lochanan Dubha, I looked out for the whoopers. They'd gone.

Perhaps they knew something we didn't.

The morning after, as we watched two great northern's patrolling Gruinard Bay in sun and a cold east wind, I heard the news from home that my old dog, Oslo, had suffered a fatal stroke. In memory of all his years, I named our route Oslo Buttress. Oslo was a big, gentle, swan-necked whippet, white with small brown patches – just like his eponymous buttress. It turned out the glorious unforgettable evening we came down from our climb was to be Oslo's last goodnight.

(For a more measured account of the day's proceedings, see the New Climbs section.)

MAD MEG, WHO SHE?

By Leen Volwerk

ON THE WALK TO the summit of Creag Meagaidh from The Window, you pass a curious feature. It is shown as a tiny contour ring on the OS 1:25,000 Explorer map, but is otherwise unnamed. The feature is a flat mound of earth and rocks about fourteen metres in diameter which bears on its top a conventional cairn. It is a significant structure and in thick mist first-time visitors could well mistake it for the summit. In clear weather, it is equally obvious that it is not the summit, but neither is it a marker with any other obvious purpose. Its impressive dimensions indicate that its construction involved a lot of effort. On earlier visits, I just accepted its presence and assumed that at one time it must have had some purpose. Companions concurred and it was left behind on the way to the top, inscrutable and brooding, like some piece of statuary from a long-gone culture whose purpose was lost in the mists of time.

On asking more experienced hillgoers about the cairn I was told it was 'Mad Meg's Cairn'. Pressed for further detail, they told me that was what it was called; everyone knew that; it was a memorial; she built it; her family built it; she was a witch; she was daft.¹ From this I gathered that they did not know. Time passed, I didn't go up Meagaidh much and the matter was dismissed from my mind.

Then interest was re-kindled last year in discussion with the Hon. Editor about the exploits of Major-General Colby and his men of the Ordnance Survey. In 1819 they went on two epic marches to hunt out suitable stations on various mountain-tops in the Highlands for the first triangulation of the country. On the second of these marches, on a rest day, they went up Creag Meagaidh. In J.E. Portlock's biography of Colby² he quotes at length from the letters of Major Dawson who accompanied Colby on this second outing which started in Banffshire and covered vast distances all over the north including Skye. In this document, an entry refers to Sunday, 25 July 1819 when they were resident at 'Garviemore' (now Garvamore), having walked forty miles the previous day from the Aviemore Inn. 'There being no church in the neighbourhood, we strolled out soon after breakfast.' The 'stroll' took them to the summit of Bui-Annoch, though the description makes clear it must have been Creag Meagaidh.³ Nowhere does the detailed account of

1 The first mention of this name I can find is in Hamish Brown's book, *Hamish's Mountain Walk*, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1978).

2 J.E. Portlock, *Memoir of the Life of Major-General Colby*, (London: Seeley, Jackson & Halliday, 1869), 141-2.

3 D.B. Horn, 'The Origins of Mountaineering in Scotland', *SMCJ*, 28/157 (1966), 161. NB: Ian Mitchell is incorrect when he claims, in his *Scotland's Mountains before the Mountaineers*, that they only climbed 'A'Bhuinneach'.



The cairn on the plateau of Creag Meagaidh, 24 July 2013. Photo: Hon. Ed.

their 24-mile day make mention of the remarkable cairn near the summit. This makes it likely it was not there then. The following day, the party marched over the Corrieyairack to Fort Augustus and thence on to the Cluanie Inn that evening. Folk were hardy then!

This led Noel to further research in early SMC Journals, where he unearthed two nineteenth century accounts of ascents of Creag Meagaidh. The first was by A.E. Robertson in 1893⁴.

On 11th July I left John M'Laren's excellent quarters in the well-appointed four-horse coach which every morning passes Moy Hotel at nine on its way from Fort William to Kingussie. Half-an-hour's smart drive took me down the five miles to Aberarder, a farm-house on Loch Laggan side.

From Aberarder Robertson climbed the entire ridge from Càrn Liath to Creag Meagaidh. He then descended to Moy via the corrie between Meall Coire Choille-rais and An Cearcallach, but he makes no mention of a big cairn.

The second account – under Notes and Queries – was by H.T. Munro himself.⁵ He described an ascent of Beinn a' Chaorainn and Creag Meagaidh on 1 November 1894:

4 A.E. Robertson, 'The Creag Meagaidh Range', *SMCJ*, 3/13 (1894), 23–7

5 H.T. Munro, 'Beinn a' Chaorainn, Creag Meagaidh, and the Monadh Liaths', *SMCJ*, 3/16 (1895), 235–7.

To the north-east(?) of the summit of Creag Meaghaidh is a huge cairn, as big as a house, on the *side* of the hill, the work of a neighbouring farmer, who, unsound in his mind, has for some years past been going up the mountain every day whenever possible to add to it.

Munro finished his day by making ‘an easy descent to Moy’ where he almost certainly stayed in the same inn as A.E. Robertson. So why did Robertson make no reference to the cairn? Well, he does refer to the weather being ‘dull and threatening, and the sky hazy’ and later on it rained, so visibility was not ideal. He came up from The Window and probably passed to the south of the cairn. Of course, being there more than 15 months before Sir Hugh, it’s possible that the cairn was much smaller then.

Be that as it may, the history of the cairn was getting interesting: no cairn in 1819, but work in progress in 1894. Not a ‘Meg’ but a nameless farmer, ‘unsound in his mind’. The non-pc ‘mad’ is explained at least, and ‘Meg’ is probably just an abbreviation of Meaghaidh, the whole being the result of a half understood/half forgotten account heard by some mountaineer or other.

Inspection of a nineteenth century map of the area⁶ showed several clusters of buildings in upper Glen Roy. Could this be where the farmer had lived? We decided this was possible as the present day path to the Dog Falls on the Burn of Agie extends far up the Uisge nan Fichead and would provide a straightforward route via a broad ramp to a shallow col between the cairn and the main summit. Also, the cairn is situated near the northern edge of the summit plateau and so should be visible in places from lower ground on the northern side.

We decided to pay a site visit from the north once the snow had cleared a bit. It would be an interesting walk and who knows what we might find? Before we had the opportunity to check this out Noel had a chance encounter with Mick Tighe, a local mountain guide, and resident of Glen Roy. Did he know of a farmer in the glen who might have been responsible for the cairn? Mick immediately responded that the man who’d built the cairn had lived at Moy by Loch Laggan on the other side of the range altogether! Furthermore, his name had been McLaren and his family had run the farm there. Ah well, at least we had been spared a fruitless foray in Glen Roy. Mick provided another crumb of information. It was rumoured the farmer had used a wheel barrow up there!⁷

This is by no means impossible. Barrows then were made of wood. Such a barrow could easily have been dismantled into over a dozen parts, carried up in instalments, and then re-assembled at the summit. Indeed, looking at the volume of material in the cairn, the transport of earth and

6 John Thomson, *Atlas of Scotland* (Edinburgh: J. Thomson & Co., 1832).

7 Mick Tighe learnt this information – in the 1980s – from a resident of Moy Farm House, Ewan Macdonald, who was in his 80s at the time.



Ewan Macdonald outside his house at Moy.

Photo: Mick Tighe.

rock, particularly the former, would have made a barrow a necessity. The cairn is 44 metres in circumference, with a shallow ditch all the way round it. This would have been the first source of materials for the cairn, the earth and stone dug out and thrown inward to provide a base. There is also a ramp on the south-east side of the cairn where McLaren must have run his barrow up. He clearly intended the cairn to be a major work from the beginning. He was thinking big!

All this information came to light against a backdrop of excellent dry weather, bright sunshine by day and hard frost at night. While I occasionally brooded on this new material, Noel did something useful instead. Spidering his way through ancient archives on the Internet, he unearthed some invaluable census data about the McLaren family over five decades, 1851–1901.

At the time of the 1851 census Donald McLaren, a shepherd, was living in Monzie, Perthshire, with his wife Jane and their eight children.

Donald McLaren	46
Jane McLaren	44
Duncan McLaren	14
James McLaren	12
Donald McLaren	10
Euphemia McLaren	11
John McLaren	8
William McLaren	6
Joseph McLaren	4
Janet McLaren	2

By 1861 they had moved to Moy Farm House.

Donald McLaren	Head	56	Shepherd
Jane McLaren	Wife	54	
Euphemia McLaren	Daughter	20	
John McLaren	Son	18	
William McLaren	Son	16	
Joseph McLaren	Son	14	

Then by 1891 the father and mother are presumed to have retired or died and only three sons of the original McLaren family are resident at Moy Farm House.

Donald McLaren	Head	50	Farmer	
John McLaren	Brother	48	Farmer	
Joseph McLaren	Brother	44		Imbecile
Ann McLaren	Servant	48	Housekeeper	
Lizzie McKenzie	Servant	20	Servant	
Neil McQuarrie	Boarder	24	Blacksmith	
Francis McCann	(Barn)	56	Chimney Sweep	
Alexander McDonald	(Barn)	70	Tramp	

By 1901 the only family member registered at Moy Farm House is 54-year-old Joseph McLaren, who is listed as a 'Boarder' and 'Annuitant'.

So in 1891 the farm was being run by Donald McLaren (50), as head, and his brother John (48). The third brother Joseph (44) was categorised in the frank, non-pc language of the time as 'Imbecile'. We now have an 'imbecile' brother on a farm at Moy. Joseph is not recorded as 'employed' though his two brothers are. None of them had married and at their age this was unlikely to change. All three are recorded as bilingual in English and Gaelic – a bit ahead of most of us nowadays. Also against Donald's name, as head of the household, there are six rooms identified in the farm house 'with one or more windows'.⁸

8 Possibly recorded originally for tax purposes? The 'Window Tax' had been abolished in Scotland by 1851.

The 1891 census extract is invaluable as it builds up a substantial case for claiming that Joseph McLaren of Moy Farm was the mystery cairn builder. The year puts him firmly in place for the reference by Munro to 'a farmer of unsound mind'. We now have a credible picture of an eccentric human being who was capable of building an eccentric structure.⁹

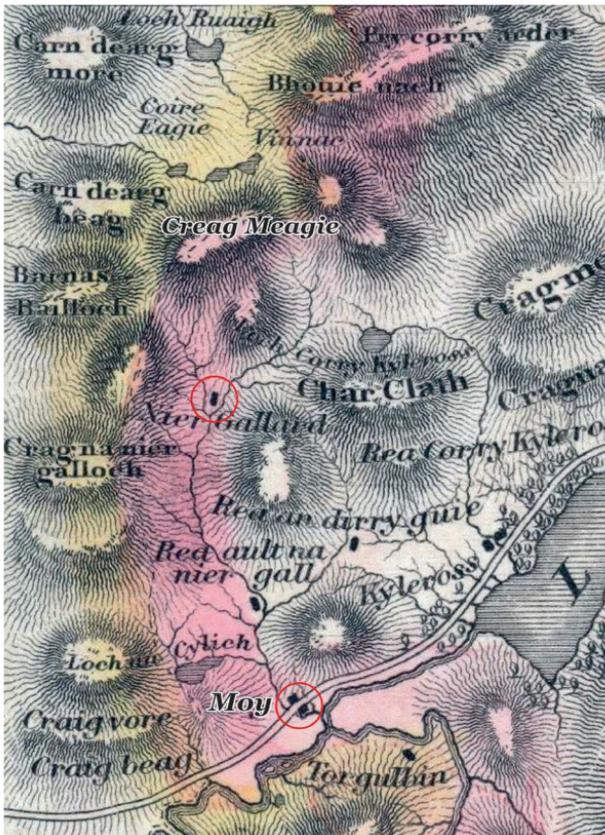
At the same time though, it did nothing to remove one of my principal doubts about the whole enterprise, viz no matter how hardy and fit the men of old were, the journey from Moy to the top of Creag Meagaidh and back is unlikely to have occupied less than five hours. Combined with other daytime demands, this would not have left much time to devote to cairn building. A few snatched hours here and there would not allow enough time to build a cairn of this size. Bearing in mind that the summit is under snow for a significant part of the year, and assailed by bad weather at many other times, there would only be a few months when building could proceed.

This is where Thomson's *Atlas of Scotland* (1832) proved invaluable. Hachures instead of contours were a bit off-putting as was the eccentric naming of some of the hills. How did *Crag na nier galloch* become Creag na Cailliche, and *Nier Gallard* become An Cearcallach for example? Yet the detail drawn is reasonably accurate. Moy is where it should be on the line of the old road and the hillside has three buildings marked. The one furthest east is not of much interest and the one at a burn junction below Creag na Cailliche is very close to Moy and once had a path to it. The access gateway in the stone wall nearby suggests a dwelling at one time, although I could trace little evidence remaining of a building, other than a mossy, reedy mound in a likely location. It was the third one which caught my eye, far up the Moy Burn, *Rea ault na nier gall* on the map. Too remote for anything else, it must have been a shieling: a simple shelter used in the summer months, when traditionally the women and children went up there to tend the cattle and milk them.

In the 1891 census, Donald and John McLaren are listed as farmers and 'imbecile' Joseph has no occupation. None of the brothers was married so there were no wives or children to attend to shieling duties. Joseph would be a possible answer to the problem. Getting under everyone's feet, the summer shieling might well be seen as the ideal location for him. It fits. Joseph could do his tending duties and then wander up to the top, checking the stock on the way, and work on his project doing no harm to anyone.

Noel agreed it was worth a visit so I went to Moy on a splendid morning in February this year when the nights were cold but we were

9 Could the lack of direct reference to Joseph by name in both Munro's and Robertson's accounts be due to some sensitivity on their part? A regard for the feelings of mine host at Moy whose brother it was? Remember that people with intellectual disability then were generally unkindly perceived.



Thomson's Atlas of Scotland (1832) showing the area around Moy Corrie.

Moy Farmhouse and the shieling in upper Moy Corrie are marked by red circles.

enjoying exceptionally warm, sunny weather during the day. I walked along from the long layby to the bridge over the Moy Burn and found that a reasonable ATV track headed up the corrie on the east side of the burn. On the opposite side of the road – on a loop of the old road – were gathered an impressive array of workmen's vans and the men's jolly cries and industrious noises accompanied me as I proceeded up the burn, reflecting that the McLarens would have been amazed by the scale of the development now taking shape on and around the old walls of their humble farm/inn. They would have marvelled, surely, at the prodigal number of windows; no window tax nowadays, obviously!

I concentrated on following the ATV track, suspecting it would lead me into Moy Corrie. It did and I made good progress at first, even finding traces of what must have been a much earlier track. Alas for my hopes! Once I turned the corner in the corrie I found I was walking on snow and sheet ice. The chances of finding ruins of a shieling at nearly 670m were plainly nil. I turned back and followed the track down again, finding a



The remains of the shieling in upper Moy Corrie, 27 February 2013. Photo: Hon. Ed.

side track near the bottom by an old gate, which ran parallel to the road nearly all the way back to the long layby. The walk was encouraging: path in the right place, heading towards where the old map showed a building. I'd be back.

The warm weather and the thaw continued, persuading me to make a return journey four days later. Success! I found the remains of a shieling exactly where the map indicated: on a spit of land between two streams. Only a single course of stones is visible, outlining a building about six metres by three. A smaller ruin is situated a little further down. A stream flows by less than three metres away and a possible built pool is discernible. The snow had only just melted enough for me to find the ruin and the marks of a passing skier were visible on the other side of the burn. The fairly gentle slope above the site would lead easily to the summit. Cairn construction, with this building as a base, would be a viable proposition. Sitting there, I reflected it would be a very pleasant, sheltered spot in summer. On this exceptional February day, my thermometer registered twenty degrees!

Some days later, Noel took a walk up as well. He found the ruin and continued on to the summit which was still deep with snow. He then descended by the south-west ridge and continued down beside the Moy Dyke (another mystery feature!). He reckoned that Joseph could have reached his cairn in under an hour and a quarter from the shieling. This would have allowed him to work for several hours each day in favourable

weather. Like me, he was impressed by how pleasant the ascent route was compared to the elephant trail up the path from Aberarder followed by the loose track to The Window. We were agreed that the shieling was a distinct possibility as a base for Joseph's endeavours.

One question remained: why did he do it? If time hung heavy on his hands, why not just develop the shieling? A second storey? A utility room? A sauna? Enough of flippancy! He built a cairn, in a place where it appears to have neither purpose nor significance.

Having an interest in history, I tentatively offer this possibility: after the Forty-five, Prince Charlie's fugitive wanderings led him all over the place. At one point, he left the neighbourhood of Fort Augustus, travelled through the Corrieyairack Pass by a route above the road to avoid detection and ascended to the ridge of Creag Meagaidh before dropping down to Loch Laggan on his way to Ben Alder and Cluny's celebrated cage. The legend in the Laggan area was that he crossed into Badenoch at The Window and spent the night at Aberarder. Blaikie, however, casts doubt on this¹⁰, as there were military camps within a few miles of Aberarder (at Dalwhinnie and Garvamore) making it a dangerous place to be and putting his host at considerable risk of reprisals.

Blaikie's research was roughly contemporaneous with Joseph McLaren's labours on his cairn. They were both working more than a century nearer to the Forty-five Rebellion than we are now. Legends linger long. In some parts of Asia, even in the twentieth century, villagers would comment to travellers, 'Alexander the Great passed this way' as though it happened the previous year! The McLarens would have heard of the legend. Maybe Joseph thought a memorial cairn on the spot where the Prince passed into Badenoch would be a fine thing to do or perhaps his brothers put him up to it as a joke, which turned serious. It fits, more or less.

Mick Tighe passed on a novel theory from Ewan Macdonald. Queen Victoria had stayed at Ardverike House in 1847 and considered buying the place. McLaren was rather peeved that she subsequently decided to buy Balmoral on Deeside instead. Queen Victoria made an ascent of Ben Macdui (in 1859) and pronounced it wonderful. McLaren's cairn was going to be higher than Macdui and more wonderful so the Queen would come back to Laggan. This does seem a little far-fetched as the plateau on which McLaren built his cairn is 200m lower than the summit of Ben Macdui (1309m). Why didn't he build his cairn on the true summit of Creag Meagaidh (1130m) to make his task slightly easier?

Noel suggests that maybe Joseph was trying to impress a lady friend in upper Glen Roy from where the cairn is visible. Another suggestion I have heard is that he buried something there. If so, it must have been

¹⁰ Walter Biggar Blaikie, *Itinerary of Prince Charles Edward Stuart from his landing in Scotland July 1745 to his departure in September 1746*, (Edinburgh University Press for Scottish History Society, 1897), p67.



*McLaren's Cairn with the summit of Creag Meagaidh in the distance, 27 February 2013.
Photo: Hon. Ed.*

some size! Modern scanning equipment might be useful. The story of the dead horse in the Glenfinnan Viaduct was successfully investigated by such means. Enough of this! Feel free to theorise.

To conclude, the evidence is clear. Joseph McLaren built the cairn. We may not know what motivated him and he may not have been very bright, probably illiterate, but he certainly left his signature on his land. The family farm has vanished, its fields reclaimed by the heather and the bracken, the cattle and sheep are gone from the corries, yet Joseph's cairn is still there to be admired, its summit an appreciated spot for climbers to view Glen Roy and the hills to the north (though not the wretched wind-farms). Is it not time to get rid of the 'Mad Meg's Cairn' tag, a slur on the efforts of a simple man? Would it not be more accurate, appreciative and dignified to make an effort to have it re-named 'McLaren's Cairn'? Surely it would.

IN PRAISE OF BEINNN DOBHRAIN

By Iain Smart

DONNCHAD BÀN NAN ORAN – Fair Duncan of the songs – the Bard of Glen Orchy composed many songs during his long life (1724–1812). Over sixty survive, but *Moladh Beinn Dobhrain* (In Praise of Beinn Dobhrain), his masterpiece, is of particular interest to us in the SMC as we have promoted Beinn Dobhrain to the honourable status of a Full Munro, the 44th highest of that ilk, and pointed out in our Guide that it is easily ascended by following the path from the railway station. Thousands have touched its summit cairn, ticked it off and passed on to the next one, some to be fair, with the same exuberance the Bard expresses in his song – that frank and open feeling of uncomplicated joy that is achieved by many even in these oversophisticated times; others leave their coke cans, orange peel and plastic sweetie wrappers, unaware that they have been insensitive.

Donnchad Bàn's masterwork survives as a song imprisoned in lines of angular type stuck on the pages of a book like a butterfly in a showcase transfixed by a pin. It was composed as a free song by a man unhampered by the tyranny of literacy or weighed down by musical theory, except in so far as its changing rhythms conform to those of a piobaireachd and reflect the changing moods of the weather, the movements of the deer and the joy of the chase.

The Bard sings exuberantly of Beinn Dobhrain, of its brightnesses and glooms with the moving deer and their hunting as integral parts of a patterned landscape. Read as text, it gives the detailed topography of a mountain landscape and the technique of hunting with the description of guns and the slaying of deer with bullets and their pursuit by deer hounds. All this factual information is presented exuberantly and unselfconsciously as part of the facts of life as they were in the Gleann Urchaidh¹ of his time. The poem describes the beauty and the slaying seamlessly. It is not a song for oversensitive aesthetes or intellectual vegetarians with tender minds who think food is made in supermarkets.

1 It is not pedantic to use the Gaelic spelling Gleann Urchaidh, at least in the context of Donnchadh Bàn's works. Gleann Urchaidh with the extra svarabakti vowel between the 'r' and the 'ch' gives a better feeling of un-pansified roughness. Gleann Urchaidh resonates of the land as it was before roads and railways when an indigenous population resided there who no doubt thought that their way of life would proceed unchanged. Glen Orchy which in the deep Sothron dialect is pronounced 'Glen Awkie' – is quite a different place. Glen Orchy/Awkie is a more appropriate spelling for describing the present day land of high speed roads and the most spectacular of railway journeys. Nevertheless between Tyndrum, that most vibrant of frontier posts where travellers can stock up with trade goods, and nether Glen Coe the land still retains a whiff of the elder days.



Beinn Dobhrain from the south (18 February 2013).

Photo: Hon Ed.

According to no less an authority than Iain Crichton Smith, *'In Macintyre what we find is a pagan power that has not been philosophised and analysed into mush.'* It is pagan in the sense that man and his hunting instinct are in direct contact with his environment without any theology intervening.

It is a remarkable song produced in the mind of a genius with his roots in an ancient culture. Ideally *Moladh Beinn Dobhrain* should be heard sung by Donnchadh Bàn himself in the Inn at Inver Oran when it had a thatched roof, earthen floor and fire in the centre. We would be among the foresters, crofters, shepherds and drovers sitting below the peat reek in the roof tree with a dram and a bannock in our hands, all of us innocent of the Beurla, the curiously sibilant English language spoken in the lowlands, but comfortable with the mother tongue we shared with the singer, all of us unaware of the fact that we were backward natives, roughly clothed, living in what would now be regarded as poverty in substandard housing, yet heirs to one of the most ancient traditions in Western Europe.

However, we are two hundred and fifty years too late for that.

Donnchadh Bàn sang in the Gaelic of his time, a language with a rich vocabulary and a supple grammar, a musical language of complex mellifluous vowels allowing assonance and soft consonants liable to lenition, a language pre-adapted for song, as it still is.

In his own words translated into stilted Beurla:

*'tis the speech that is full, versatile
and has the sweetest croon*

*'tis witty, clear, cheery, songful
in the chambers of the inn.*

Moladh Beinn Dobhrain has been translated into English several times, but in English it is unsingable. English is a remarkable language with its own range of subtleties but there are some things it cannot do. In this instance it is too syllabic and lacking in long vowels to express soaring exuberance.

According to Iain Crichton Smith, the song is '*the Gaelic language at its peak. Never again would a Gaelic poet write like this. Never again would the Gaelic ethos allow him to...*' for the supporting social infrastructure of the Gaelic ethos was withering even as he composed. Not that Donnchadh Bàn was aware of this. His several poems in praise of his language are long and eloquent, and full of confidence.

*When the languages diverged
at the great tower of Babel
then Gaelic won supremacy
over every kind of speech.*

Nevertheless, it is difficult for the poets of a defeated culture to be 'exuberant'. *Moladh Beinn Dobhrain* must have been composed before the worst that was to follow.

The post-Culloden mini-genocide may have been politically necessary, but thankfully the suppression of the defeated population was, by modern standards, less than thorough and did not directly affect the lands of Gleann Urchaidh² which lay in Campbell country and therefore on the winning side of the conflict. The Disclathing Act, nevertheless, affected all who wore the Highland garb. The co-operating Campbells were

² The Lord Glen Orchy of the time became the third Earl of Breadalbane. He was no local rural chieftain but a distinguished, Oxford educated, British diplomat and politician: envoy to Denmark, ambassador to the Russian Empire, a Lord of the Admiralty and an MP for an English rotten burgh – all this before the '45. He played a cagey part in the '45 itself, retiring to Taymouth Castle after Prestonpans to keep his country safely quiet. He sent only a token force to Culloden.

Donnchadh Bàn in his role as bard wrote *Oran do Mhormhair Glinn Urchaidh* (Song to Lord Glenorchy) in adulation. It is interesting that this international wheeler-dealer was addressed as 'Mormhair,' an ancient title predating its later equivalent of Lord or Earl. What a contrast! In the Inn at Inveroran he was a Mormhair with a foot in the noble past and in contemporary London he was an agile politician watching his back.

This footnote is not entirely irrelevant. A successor of Donnchadh Bàn's *Mormhair Gleann Urchaidh* was the first Marquis of Breadalbane who honoured our Club by becoming our second Honorary President from 1890 to 1922.

included but being astutely practical they bent before the wind and conformed rather than protested. Nevertheless, Campbell supporter though he was, Donnchadh Bàn was black-affronted and wrote a song of protest, *Oran do'n Bhriogais*, full of treasonable lines criticising the Duke of Cumberland for his fell ingratitude and even ending with a suggestion that if Charles came back,

*red-tinted tartans could be got
and the guns would be forthcoming.*

Somehow his well-wishers in the establishment must have intercepted the song and protected him; he was not alone in resenting the baleful Act.

Thirty years later tartan became fashionable among London's romantic dilettanti and, nudged by the Marquis of Montrose, the ban was lifted for their convenience and also, perhaps more importantly, for increasing the morale of the Highland soldiers required for foreign conquest. Then he sang another song in praise of the old Highland dress, *Song to the Highland Garb*. It is full of righteous indignation, full of good lines:

*When, the London clique deprived us
of all dignity and respect.*

*The obnoxious costume we wore
Made old men of our comely youth.*

More socially destructive was the economically necessary ethnic cleansing of the Clearances, when unprofitable natives, for compelling business reasons, had to be removed to make way for sheep. Stalkers, including Donnchadh Bàn, were replaced by shepherds. By modern standards this cleansing was mild; people were driven to the coasts or abroad rather than killed. It was all very regrettable but needs must when the increasing expenses of the powerful, including, alas, those of the Campbells, have to be paid; it has always been so, an de, an diugh, agus am maireach.

However, there was still a thread of integrity left. He was looked after by the Campbell establishment and he was still able to travel the Highlands an honoured Bard. One account (which I have abridged) runs, 'I remember the warm even respectful welcome with which the Bard and his Mary were received by my father. Donnchadh Bàn was then an old man of eighty years, but stalwart still, hale and hearty. He was dressed in full highland costume. Màiri Bàn Og wore a most becoming and beautiful scarlet mantle of fine cloth. She retained much of that personal beauty which the bard so happily and sweetly described.'

He ended with an appointment to the Town Guard of Edinburgh where he served for a time. Màiri Bhàn Og, an accomplished lady, was an expert distiller of whisky and kept a howff in the Lawnmarket; there must have been some good times there of an evening.

His genius was acknowledged in his time and his songs were written down by others, chiefly by the ministers of Lismore and Luss. Many were printed in his life time and his collected works survive in a scholarly edition by the Scottish Gaelic Text Society.

He made other songs about mountains. His *Cead Deireannach nam Beann* (Final Farewell to the Bens) is a hundred lines of dignified resignation. From one of these lines we doubtless derive the toast at our dinner: 'to the Bens and the Glens', or as Donnchadh put it:

*Chunna mi na gleanntan
'S na beanntaichean a b'aithne dhomh.*

*I looked upon the glens
and the bens that I had known so well.*

Many of his songs may be sampled on the website Tobar an Dualchais. Specifically, a three minute breath of *Moladh Beinn Dobhrain* may be had by just typing in:

<<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/fullrecord/12512/1>>
[retrieved 9 August 2013].

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Dr Anja Gunderlach of the School of Scottish Studies, the authority on the poetry of Donnchadh Bàn, for helpful advice, particularly for putting me in touch with Tobar an Dualchais and pointing out such historical inaccuracies as stating that a poem was 'written' by Donnchadh Bàn.

OLDER BUT NO WISER

By Noddy Bach

THERE ARE MANY spectacular peaks on the south-east coast of Greenland. They are of modest height compared to Alpine peaks, but access to them is not entirely straightforward. Helicopters are available but hugely expensive, so for the impecunious the only feasible option is to approach by sea. Boats can be chartered from Tasiilaq, the only sizeable habitation on the east coast, but pack ice conditions vary considerably from year to year. Each summer the East Greenland Current carries sea ice from the Arctic Ocean, along with icebergs from carving glaciers, down the east coast. Some years it is barely possible to travel any distance up the coast from Tasiilaq.

Douglas Anderson has been besotted with Greenland for over thirty years. He and his wife Andrea have visited in summer each year and, lately, in winter too. They took their two children, Orea and Leif, with them from a very early age. Douglas realised early on that the key to getting about was to have your own transport, so he shipped out a custom-built inflatable complete with outboard motors. The family became proficient at organising the logistics of camping gear, food and fuel. They got to know the area very well and ventured as far north as the sea-ice and their preservation instinct would allow.

In 2003 my daughter Lucy and I joined Douglas and Leif – now in two inflatables – for a three-week trip. There wasn't as much pack ice as usual that year and we managed to get as far north as Kap Japetus Steenstrup before retreating to Nordfjord. Douglas seemed happy enough just to be there and didn't have any great mountaineering ambitions. Lucy and I managed to bag a few peaks including a pleasant hill overlooking Depotfjord. It had a delightful, hidden lochan high up, and above it there was some great scrambling on immaculate gneiss all the way the summit. We had superb views of a much bigger peak behind, but it looked too serious to attempt with my teenage daughter. Further south we also managed to traverse a fine 700m summit on a peninsula between two fjords, Sangmilik and Iliartalik. I was very grateful that, at Douglas's insistence, I took along a short length of 'confidence' rope because we needed it to negotiate two unexpected and rather tricky gaps.

Nine years later, now a pensioner with creaking knees, I joined another Anderson safari. I was again very fortunate to be there when there was rather less pack ice than usual. We were away for almost six weeks and had superb weather nearly all of the time. We visited Kangerittivatsiaq and were astonished to spy a really impressive group of unclimbed gneissose peaks within easy reach of the shore. They were reminiscent of Patagonian peaks though smaller. Oh to be forty years younger! Lo and behold, just over a fortnight after we were there two separate and entirely



Douglas and Leif below some of the (then) unclimbed peaks above Kangertittivatsiaq, 25 July 2012.

independent parties made a number of first ascents in what they called the Mythics Cirque.¹

A week later we started to wend our way back south and, as we motored up Depotfjord, I immediately recognised the south-east face of the peak I had looked at with Lucy. We set up camp and, late in the afternoon, I set off to get some photos of a classic terminal moraine seen on my previous visit. It was left behind by a glacier which over the years has retreated several hundred metres back up the valley. The great curving ridge of debris reminded me of the one on the moor below Coire a' Ghrunnda on Skye. It was difficult to frame it all from the valley floor, so I decided to head up the steep valley side. The weather was rather overcast, so the lighting was not ideal for photography. I decided to press on and ascend the hill I'd previously done with Lucy. It took much longer than anticipated. Either my memory was playing tricks or decrepitude was advancing at an unexpected rate.

From the summit there were superb views of Depotfjord and the large glacier on the western side of the summit. The south-east face of the peak behind me looked more impressive than I remembered. A broad band of dark rock ran right across the face. The brown rock above it appeared better but far from easy. Was it a feasible objective? Earlier in camp I'd looked at the 1:250,000 map – the best available, but there wasn't enough detail to judge. The likeliest prospect seemed to be the south ridge at the junction between the south-east and south-west faces. Once on the summit, I blithely assumed, I could descend the long north-eastern ridge to a snowy col visited with Douglas, Leif and Lucy on my previous visit.

At this point I would have been better to return the same way, but instead I found plenty to interest me descending the western flank. It was after 9 p.m. by the time I'd clambered back along the shore to our camp.

A couple of days later Douglas, Leif and I made a trip by boat round into the neighbouring fjord. At its northern end we ascended a modest hill from which there was a truly splendid 360° panorama – impressive even by Greenland standards.

I slept in a bit the next day and awoke to find Depotfjord filled with cloud. Douglas planned on moving camp the next day, so it was now or never. I quickly packed a light sac and grabbed a few sweets. Andrea cut me some slices of cheese and I was off. I climbed the valley side overlooking the terminal moraine and, with the cloud now quickly dissipating, got the photos I was after. I soon reached the broad corrie below the south-east face. It was quite warm and I filled my water bottle from a delightful rill. Ascending steep scree towards the southern shoulder, the face started to tower above me. Sometimes big faces appear

¹ An expedition report of one group can be downloaded at <<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/media/files/international/2012expeditions/KangertittivatsiaqGreenlandExpedition--FinalReport.pdf>>, retrieved 19/08/2013.



The south-east face of Pensioner's Peak viewed from Depotsfjord.

slightly more amenable close up but this one didn't seem to have any obvious chinks in its armour.

I kept slanting leftwards below a long wall of red/brown rock and eventually reached open ground with views across the south-west face. It was hugely disappointing to see a broad band of steep slabs running across the base of the face. The rock looked excellent, but much too hard for me to solo. My first reaction was to abandon the outing altogether.

Looking to my right I noticed a sloping scree terrace leading across the south-east face. It didn't look an attractive option, but I couldn't see beyond a shoulder and wondered if it might get better beyond. I decided to venture as far as the shoulder. The scree was at the critical angle of rest so I needed to take care, but I gained the shoulder without undue difficulty. The terrace continued, though I could only see as far as another shoulder. The exposure gradually became more scary as the terrace narrowed and the face dropped away beneath me. I stayed high on the top edge of the scree and used handholds on the rock wall above me from time to time. From the second shoulder progress gradually became more tricky and I still couldn't see very far, but eventually came to a place where there was an alcove above. I started up a short corner and soon realised that, having neither a rope nor even a sling with me, this would be very difficult to reverse. For several minutes I remained rooted to the spot and had a conversation with myself. OK, I've not yet burnt my

bridges. Time to go back while you can. I'll be mad with myself if it's easier round the next corner. What will you do if you get cragfast? I might be missing out on a first ascent. You're too old for this much adventure.

Next thing I found myself springing up on a jammed block in the corner and slapping my hands on the gritty slab above – a quick scramble and I'd gained the alcove. I was now committed. Above me I could see the base of the huge band of dark rock which ran right across the face. It seemed to form a barrier to progress and I chickened out of climbing a very narrow ledge slanting up left. However, I was able to traverse round to the right along the base of the rock band to another section of steeply sloping scree. The black rock was more friable and offered less friction. I thought I'd reached an impasse and started to get worried, but by slanting downwards to the right I was able to reascend to another shoulder. I was relieved to find that I could now head up slightly leftwards, albeit on very loose ground. Straight above me there was a major section of wall and although for me it was obviously unclimbable I headed up to the base of it to get a better view.

There was a deep gully to my right. If I descended a short distance, I might be able to get into it, then perhaps traverse across the face along the top of the dark rock band. It looked very daunting, and the right-hand side of the face looked decidedly hard.

Another scree ledge ran off to my left, but it was loose and exposed. Which way to go? Straight up was out of the question, but neither traverse looked appealing. I hesitated before eventually heading off left for a 'look see'. The loose ground was nerve-racking and required constant care, but I gradually crept closer to the left-bounding edge of the face. My heart was in my mouth by the time I reached the arête. It was no surprise to discover that ascending the south ridge was still not an option. However, there was a broad recess on the other side of the ridge with a gully plunging steeply from its lower lip. By crossing the recess I might be able to reach the upper part of the south-west face. I picked my way carefully leftwards. It was loose and demanded my full concentration, but I soon reached the slightly easier ground in the middle of the recess. I continued traversing with care and turned a corner.

To my great joy there was a long, broad scoop running straight up the face above me. After some delightful scrambling on slabby rocks I reached some slightly easier ground where I started to relax a bit. The scoop continued for a long way above me, but it was capped by a band of much steeper rocks. Heading upwards all the time, I kept wondering if there was a way through the headwall. I started to slant towards the left-bounding ridge near the top of the scoop, and was greatly relieved to find it a simple scramble. I broke out onto the edge of the south-west face proper. It looked like moderately easy scrambling ground for quite some distance. The summit ridge was now in view and, although the wall



Looking back across the broad recess to the arête, which was crossed at the level of the snowfield behind.

below it appeared to be rather more exciting, my troubles were over for a while at least. The weather was hot and sunny, and the views across the glacier skirting the western side of the peak were breathtaking. I grabbed a bite to eat and drank half my water.

The slope above was long and loose in places, but I wasn't as fraught as I had been earlier. Towards the top the rocks steepened and the best way was not obvious, but after some absorbing scrambling I managed to break out onto the summit ridge. A small top lay just to my right, but the main summit seemed to lie some distance away to my left along a narrow and exposed arête. A short way up the ridge it was joined by the north-east ridge of the mountain which I'd assumed would be easy and was my planned descent route. In reality it was narrow, shattered and very exposed. There also seemed to be some pinnacles with significant drops so I couldn't contemplate descending that way, especially without a rope.

But could I reach the summit? The arête was coated in black lichen, but on the whole the rock was sound, some of the best of the day. I weaved around several minor bosses of rock and ascended a short corner groove before reaching an easier section that soon led straight to a slightly wider bit of ridge and the surprisingly pleasant, flat summit. The views were superb and I was pleased to find no signs of previous visitors. There was barely a cloud in the sky so at least I had no concerns about the weather. I decided to take a breather for a few minutes and worry about getting down later.

However, I couldn't settle for long and headed off down the west ridge to see how it looked. I didn't get very far before I came to an impossible



The corrie on the north side of the summit.

drop. I returned to the summit and sat down to think over my options. On the north side of the ridge was a large glacier-filled corrie, which according to the map should have been ice-free. The glacier surface looked fairly easy-angled, but the winter snow had started to melt and there were large areas of dry glacier. Lower down it was completely snow-covered again and there was a real risk of hidden crevasses in the transition zone. In any case I couldn't reach the glacier from where I was, and, even if I managed to reach it, I was only wearing trainers and didn't have an ice axe. Just as I was pondering my predicament I was astonished to hear someone whistling and shouting. The sounds seemed to come from the west, but I couldn't see anyone. It was unlikely to be a native hunter. Was there another party exploring in the area? Could it be Douglas? We had arranged to make radio contact at 6 p.m., but it was still only 3.30 p.m. I got my radio out and switched it on. No one was trying to contact me. I'd more or less decided that my best option was to



ask Douglas and Leif to come up the glacier from the north with a rope and a spare ice axe. If I could get down to the glacier they could escort me down. However, I could get no response to my increasingly plaintive radio calls. Douglas must be elsewhere.²

Could I wait until 6 p.m.? I decided to return down the ridge and see if I could access the corrie lower down. It might be possible to descend by the gap between the snow and the rock on the eastern side of the north-north-west ridge. Further down there looked to be a conceivable route back round to the plateau area below the south-west face. The whistling had stopped, so I headed back down the ridge to the top of a scree-filled gully on the north face. It looked a feasible way down, but the scree was extremely loose. It proved to be a nightmare. Part way down the whole

² It was Douglas and Leif whistling. They were on the summit of the same hill that I'd visited a few days before. They'd seen me on the summit and had tried to raise me on the radio, but were dismayed to discover that their battery was flat.

slope avalanched around me. I hadn't been so gripped on steep scree before, and began to think I'd made a huge blunder. But somehow I managed to get down in one piece to the top of the snow. I was pleased to find a good gap between the snow and the rock face, and soon made good progress slanting down in a northerly direction. However, I then turned a corner and found the snow rearing upwards again where it filled a broad recess. The gap had closed and the way ahead was blocked by a wall of clear ice. Picking up a sharp rock I tried to chip out a foothold in the ice, but it was extremely hard. I stupidly tried to kick out a step but only succeeded in hurting my knee. It was hopeless. I looked across the snow slope to my right but it was too steep and quickly gave way to a section of dry glacier. I thought about glissading to the corrie floor using a spiky rock as a brake, and actually sat down on the top edge of the snow, before deciding it would be madness without an ice axe. There was dry glacier below and the serious possibility of crevasses lower down. I would have to go back up the diabolical scree gully.

I was mightily relieved to regain the summit ridge without mishap, but what to do now? My only option was to see if I could descend diagonally across the south-west face. I continued down the summit ridge to the notch where I'd joined it and managed to reverse the awkward section I'd previously negotiated in ascent. Then, instead of heading down the way I'd come up, I set off on new ground slanting down to the right. My knee was still hurting and I had to sit down from time to time, but I made good progress. I knew I couldn't get down the main face because of the steep rocks in the lower half, but might be able to reach the lower part of the west ridge. I crossed a fine stretch of slabs and continued between some large boulders. Then I arrived at the head of a debris-filled gully, which ran in a remarkably straight line directly down the face. It was about 300m long and certainly led to the plateau at the bottom of the face, but it was filled with large unstable blocks and scree. It didn't look inviting, so I traversed across the top of the gully and ascended to a shoulder on the other side. I could now see the west ridge, but it was impossible to reach, and in any case the upper part of it was too steep. It might make a fine climb for someone – the rock was excellent, but my hopes of descending that way were dashed. It would have to be the gully.

I returned to the head of the gully and realised this would require extreme care. There could well be hidden drops which might defeat me. For many years I'd followed a golden rule not to descend gullies I hadn't done previously in ascent. I'd seen too many who'd come to grief in Surgeon's and Five Finger Gullies on Ben Nevis. I would have to break my rule.

The secret would be to take my time. The gully was well lit by the sun and there was plenty of daylight. In normal circumstances the views out across the glacier below to the peaks beyond would have held me spellbound, but I couldn't afford to be distracted by any thought of

aesthetics. The view only reminded me of how far I still had to go and how careful I would have to be.

At six o'clock I called Douglas on the radio as we'd arranged, but I couldn't get an answer. I wondered if he'd had a mishap in the boat.³

When I came to a steeper section I decided not to press my luck in the gully and managed to down climb a long section of rock on the right-hand flank. The rock was excellent and the climbing very enjoyable but the rocks then steepened below forcing me to return to the gully – thankfully below the awkward section. Maintaining a high level of concentration was wearing, and I eventually decided to take advantage of a fine ledge on the left-hand edge of the gully. I sat down for a few minutes and ate the last of my food. So far so good. I felt somewhat restored and set off down again.

The gully itself was still unpleasantly steep and loose so I decided to move out onto some sound slabs on the right-hand flank. To reach them I had to step across a giant boulder. I was no sooner stood on the boulder than I felt it move beneath me. I had a split second to react and pressed my fingertips with all my might into the gritty overlap above me and at the same time jumped my feet in the air. The boulder didn't so much slide down the slab, as skip off at extraordinary speed into space. How I managed to stop myself from following it I shall never know. The boulder bounced once off the slabs below and became airborne again. Much lower down it ploughed into the bed of the gully where it smashed into some other blocks and exploded into countless pieces.

It was fortuitous that I'd just had a rest, because my reactions were

3 I later discovered his battery was on charge.

The slab where the boulder flew off.





Looking down on the lochan-peppered plateau.

perhaps sharper than they might otherwise have been. It had been a close call, and I gave myself a talking to about 'looking well to each step'. I brushed off the quartz grains which had become embedded in my fingertips, and noticed pin-pricks of blood.

The slabs below were wonderfully sound but at the technical limit of what I could solo. I eventually had to return to the gully and could see that it narrowed below me. After negotiating yet another section of steep scree I managed to escape from the gully altogether on the left flank. I still had a long way to go, but as I zigzagged down more open ground, I gradually began to think that I might make it back after all.

By the time I reached the lochan-peppered plateau at the bottom of the face I was completely drained and close to tears. I don't think I was hallucinating, but as I was wandering between the lochans I mistook a large pale boulder for a polar bear. I could have done without that excitement. The sun was now behind the western peaks and our camp was some 3km away. Although there was still a lot of rough ground to descend, I'd soon be back on familiar territory.

Approaching the drop-off into the valley below with its terminal moraine, my radio crackled into life. Douglas was wondering where I was. It was a huge relief to hear his voice. I said I was about 40 minutes from home. The long plod back along the valley at dusk seemed to take forever. I was thrilled to see a silhouette in the distance on the low col above the camp. Douglas had walked there to guide me home.

Back at the tent I regaled the Andersons with the tale of my adventure. They were so impressed that, after we'd eaten, I was let off the washing up. They also said that, no, they wouldn't have come looking for me. I then had too much to drink, but maybe I had an excuse after surviving Pensioner's Peak.

CAIRNGORMS SKI TOURS UPDATE

By Roger Wild

FOLLOWING THE ARTICLE in *SMCJ* 2011, entitled *Cairngorms Six and Eight Tops Ski Tours*, John Inglis sent the following details of the tour he did with Ian Rae over the Cairngorms Six Tops on 17 April 1987.

We carried our skis (I used Fischer Europa 99s and Ian had something similar) most of the way from the Derry Gates to Corrou on the Thursday evening. We set off at 4.10 a.m. from Corrou on the Friday morning (Good Friday). We cramponed most of the way up Cairn Toul, skirted round Angel's Peak and skied on to Braeriach. We then skied down to the steep section above the Pools of Dee, avoided the cornice and cramponed down to the Pools of Dee, skied up the March Burn to the plateau and across to Cairn Gorm where we met Allen Fyffe (does a tour of the Six Tops not count unless you meet Allen somewhere?!) We picked up our rucksacks from where we had left them on the way up, above the St Valery Shelter site, and skied up Ben Macdui for lunch. We had a good run down past Loch Etchachan and sat in the sun opposite Etchachan bothy for a while. We had to carry the skis a short way at the Lairig an Laoigh before the long ski over the Moine Bhealaidh to Beinn a' Bhuird. Skied down to the Sneck and up Ben Avon, returned to the Sneck, skied down past the Clach a' Cleirich and on the west side of the Quoich through the woods, forded the Dubh burn and walked through the Clais Fhearnaig in the dark to the Derry road and the car at 22.25. We made it to the Fife Arms in time for a pint. At that stage in our skiing we had not discovered the joy of skins and managed well with fish scales.

Our times were:

Corrou	04.10
Cairn Toul	05.55
Braeriach	07.20
Pools of Dee	08.45
Cairn Gorm	10.40
Ben Macdui	12.05 – 12.25
Etchachan Bothy	13.05 – 13.25
Beinn a' Bhuird	16.20
Ben Avon	17.25
Derry Gates	22.25

We had the option to opt out at either Etchachan Bothy or to go to the Beinn a' Bhuird Howffs. We carried sleeping bags and food for another day, but the weather could not have been better.



Looking back to Loch Etchachan and Ben Macdui from the ascent of Beinn Mheadhoin on the Eight Tops ski tour in March 2013.



Beinn Mheadhoin summit on the Eight Tops ski tour in March 2013.



*Sunset over the tors of Beinn Mheadhoin on the Eight Tops ski tour in March 2013.
Photos: Roger Wild*

This is the first reference to waxless skis by Six and Eight top tourers. They are still favoured by many skiers.

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More recently, on 31 March and 1 April 2013 I completed a circuit of the Cairngorms Eight Tops in just over 22 hours starting and finishing on Cairn Gorm. The snow conditions were mixed with good cover throughout. There was some very fast going on hard old snow and also some great downhill runs with soft snow on the hard base. The run down from Ben Macdui to Loch Etchachan was superb. Some skinning was tiring on the hard *névé*. The snow on the five kilometres to Beinn a' Bhuird across the plateau from the Lairig an Laoigh was in great condition for Nordic skis.

Timings were:

Cairn Gorm	06.00
Lairig Ghru	07.20
Braeriach	09.50
Sgòr an Lochain Uaine	10.55
Cairn Toul	11.30
Lairig Ghru	12.30
Ben Macdui	14.30

Beinn Mheadhoin	16.00
Lairig an Laoigh	16.45
Beinn a' Bhuird	19.10
Ben Avon	20.55
The Saddle	02.30
Cairn Gorm	04.12

Total time: 22 hours 12 minutes.

ON CALL KAYE – 11 MARCH 2013

By Bob Reid

SOMEONE, (WAS IT Ron in Fife?), stated that had there been a dozen deaths in any other sport or pastime in Scotland, there would have been the highest levels of scrutiny and analysis. He's correct, but you'd imagine BBC News thinks the mountaineering fraternity has buried its head in the sand and ignored all that has been happening. An old boss once told me there's no point poking someone in the ribs and getting no reaction. Give credit where credit's due, the mountaineering fraternity has been solidly poked in the ribs by (among others) the BBC. And the mountaineering fraternity has responded, but little of that response, by its nature, will hit the front page of the newspapers or the main 6 p.m. or 10 p.m. news.

In that very understandable context, I am beginning to wonder whether Kaye Adams has something of a grudge against mountaineering. Or perhaps it is whoever is producing at BBC Radio Scotland for these programmes. Does the Call Kaye team liaise at all, for instance, with the BBC Out of Doors team? You do sometimes wonder.

The last time Call Kaye covered mountaineering she featured Dorothy Grace Elder making some ill-thought-through suggestions about mountain safety. This was closely followed by Newsnight Scotland picking up on the same theme and doing the same post-mortem, albeit with Gordon Brewer being a good deal more sensitive and far better informed.

I was sufficiently concerned about these matters to have written an editorial piece for BBC Out of Doors. Tinged with déjà vu, given I had been involved in similar episodes during the early 1990s, whilst President of the Mountaineering Council. It might still be available on the BBC Out of Doors Website. You can also read what I said at an earlier blog (both recently and in 1994). I phoned the programme several times yesterday to make similar arguments, but the producers would not put me through preferring (it would seem) the more misinformed comment

available.

No one can deny that further deaths in the mountains are tragic and are a cause for concern. I am uneasy about the way this has been handled. For starters, the Call Kaye programme doesn't seem able to make up its mind whether it is serious news or cheery magazine, yesterday covering antibiotics, mountain safety, last night's TV (Shetland) and wishful thinking about last days of freedom (linked to the Huhne/Pryce case). And I must emphasise my main concerns here are about the nature of this journalism, purporting to be 'serious' and 'informed'. Since the first broadcast, virtually all of the published commentary has been to criticise the Call Kaye programme and Dorothy Grace Elder and not to vilify mountaineering. Meanwhile the mountaineering fraternity has redoubled its efforts to get the messages and information out.

Let me explain why I am concerned. So-called facts have been repeatedly put forward as the case for the prosecution, so-to-speak, on these two episodes, based on hearsay, or personal experience, which are utterly wrong. A good producer would have been sufficiently briefed not to have allowed such nonsense to be peddled as fact, even in debate. Let me illustrate.

On Insurance. Kaye repeatedly allowed callers to suggest that 'insurance was required in the Alps'. That is simply not the case. It is not against the law to go climbing or skiing in the Alps without insurance. Folk often do just that, making a calculation that in the unlikely event of a rescue they will pay for it, rather than pay insurance premiums year by year. It is a matter of choice. Clearly, the difference to be remarked upon is that Alpine Rescue is mostly funded by those who have been rescued rather than by the cohort who actually go mountaineering, as in UK. I was at a Mountaineering Club Dinner in Liverpool at the weekend which raised considerable funds for the Ogwen Mountain Rescue Team, a not unfamiliar event. Another difference Call Kaye blithely ignored was the simple fact that there is no National Health Service in many Alpine countries such as Switzerland, although form E111 does cover medical costs within EU states. I fell and broke a rib last year ski touring in France, but the medical help I received was provided free and covered by my E111. So regarding insurance, Call Kaye has repeatedly peddled a fallacy, which just pushes this very serious debate in the wrong direction.

David Gibson speaking today on behalf of the MCofS did brilliantly, but as a responsible, publicly-funded organisation chief, he can't just turn around and say to Kaye Adams, 'That's nonsense' and quote the BBC Charter about impartiality and balance. I'm not sure this programme even qualifies as 'informative, educational and entertaining'. Moreover, the BBC can't excuse itself and say that counter-comment on Out of Doors provides the balance, given the differing listener audience and scheduled time of broadcast.

But it didn't finish there. Call Kaye continually linked this insurance

misdirection to a rescue misdirection.

On Mountain Rescue, we simply have the best in the world. I can't remember if Call Kaye actually said that? My deep respect goes out to the rescuers all the time. On the few occasions I have become involved helping or supporting, they never cease to amaze. It is magnificent to succeed in these difficult, lifesaving missions. (There is a terrific understated tale of rescue heroism on Ben Nevis in the 2012 SMC Journal.) Heavy Whalley and Heather Morning both spoke authoritatively about these issues. But they were faced with misinformed journalistic grilling or having to debate with anonymous members of the public, who were on air because they held extreme views. Of course our hearts go out to these rescuers when they retrieve the victims. It can be a grim task known only to a few of the sport's actual participants. However, the fact that Mountain Rescue Teams are a volunteer-based service, supported by RN, RAF and HM Coastguard Search and Rescue helicopters and emergency services, is a fundamental part of what makes it so great. Rescuers themselves will virtually all tell you exactly this. Dorothy Grace Elder found the exception rather than the rule on this matter:

<http://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkpolitics/articles.html?read_full=11951&article=www.thinkscotland.org> [Retrieved 8 August 2013]

Fortunately Liz Smith answered all of this very well indeed:

<http://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkpolitics/articles.html?read_full=11962&article=www.thinkscotland.org> [Retrieved 8 August 2013]

We also know we have the best military Search and Rescue aircrew in the world. Their rescue (and military) prowess is in no small order down to their involvement in real life rescue. The day that RN and RAF Search and Rescue crews are no longer able to respond to real life public in distress, and have to resort to throwing crash test dummies into the sea to practise rescue, would be a complete and utter travesty. It is not what the rescue services want or what the public deserve.

You will see from what I have written elsewhere that I vigorously believe that there can be no justification offered for mountaineering which excuses death in the mountains and we must do all that is humanly possible to help prevent it. Participation statistics and such other comparisons I will leave to others. However one comparison I have made in the past relates to the RNLI and sea rescue. That is also voluntary and largely subscription funded. However they are not subjected to anything like the scrutiny exacted by the likes of Call Kaye, BBC Scotland News, or any other media for that matter. Why is this? Is it the mountains that make this different? The sea is just as dangerous. Whatever lies at the heart of this...I would not wish such ill-informed coverage upon them.

On Access to the Mountains – I listened yesterday morning while travelling through Scotland under a blue sky, with snowy white mountains on both sides. It was simply spectacular. I tried to imagine how any restrictions could be managed, let alone enforced. It is very difficult to reasonably work this through. Yet for the second time on air Call Kaye mentioned Alpine ski resorts closing lifts or pistes as a blunt counter argument to what many have stated about access restrictions. It is simply not a valid comparison. Of course ski lift operators have to shut in certain conditions because they have a duty of care invoked through the sale of a ski pass ticket. But that doesn't stop the mountaineer, or ski mountaineer, or ski randonneur from heading into these same mountains. That remains a matter of judgement for those involved. Exactly the same applies to pistes and piste marking where territory is apparently closed. That is done to maintain a duty of care, and not to prohibit folk heading off piste. Read the notices carefully and it is clear that this is 'at your own risk' territory and experienced skiers/snow boarders frequently head into these, admittedly, riskier areas. They'll carry transceivers, shovels, avalanche probes and increasingly airbag/avalung devices. They'll understand the risk, manage the risk, and they'll accept the risk.

Call Kaye repeatedly helps others to foster these misconceptions. Does she do this in the name of entertainment? Is it false logic posed to get at some deeper truth? Or has she simply not been briefed well? In which case does a similar degree of superficiality apply to all the Call Kaye back catalogue? I dread to think. We heard Call Kaye ask repeatedly about machismo tendencies in mountaineering – which is a trait hardly ever found amongst real mountaineers. You'll encounter an understated humility in the face of the dangers in mountaineering, combined with a realistic degree of fatalism. The only machismo I could hear was that of the journalists bullish in their desire to perhaps put the matter straight – at least as they saw it.

CINEMATIC

By Mike Dixon

VERY RARELY IS a natural setting done justice to in a feature film. John Ford's films are an obvious exception with the use of Arizona's Monument Valley in several of his classic westerns. These tend to remain in the same location for their whole duration. In most films, the norm is for scenes to cut to ones which bear no close geographical relation to those before or after them. For instance, in the opening sequence of *The Wicker Man* the sea plane flies close to the Old Man of Storr eventually landing plausibly in Plockton but bizarrely via a Mediterranean-looking hillside. Next scene it jumps to Galloway then dots about randomly all over that region. *Local Hero* flips back and forth from Pennan to Arisaig as if they were just down the road from each other. At least both these films have merit. A modern film *A Lonely Place to Die* opened promisingly with some spectacular aerial shots of climbing on Rannoch Wall. After that things went downhill in every aspect, particularly the plot. It even ended up in Dingwall, a town whose most photogenic building is probably its Tesco.

Use of Scotland's Highlands and Islands scenery in films tends to be repetitive to the point of cliché. Glen Nevis and Eilean Donan castle/Loch Duich crop up regularly. Glen Coe has made many a cameo too. Everyone's been there: Hitchcock, Monty Python, Liam Neeson, Harry Potter even James Bond recently to name a few. *Whisky Galore* shot on Barra is a notable exception to the usual filmic flitting but there is another far less well known example of Scottish cinematic integrity.

Shipwrecked 14 miles off the west coast of mainland Shetland lies a constellation of some of Scotland's greatest natural features. The island of Foula measures less than three miles by three, its hills of modest height. Although only one of them exceeds 400m they form a most alluring, mountaineer's skyline. Dark fins of land, like sharks on the prowl, lurk on the western horizon when viewed from the Burra Islands. On a rare, fine evening they might be back-lit by a Technicolor sky, with bands of vividness that you normally only see in a cocktail glass. Under such conditions the whole island seems to have risen and the imagination is fired up too. Given that the stupendous west coast cliffs are teasingly hidden from view and the knowledge that Scotland's second highest lies somewhere out there, only adds to the attraction. Tom Weir¹ came away highly impressed when he visited on his honeymoon but not many seem to have followed in his footsteps, despite his enthusiastic praise for the scenery. The Kame, he thought, was more continuously vertical and awesome than Conachair on St. Kilda. However the route he took to

1 Tom Weir, *Weir's World* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1994).

circuit the main hills meant that Weir would never see the island's greatest cliffs.

Michael Powell is best known for the films he co-directed with Emeric Pressburger such as *The Red Shoes*, *Black Narcissus* and *A Matter of Life and Death*. These are renowned for their expressive lighting and colour, outstanding set designs and original narrative threads. All these strands add up to a filmic magic realism. He later went on to commit professional suicide with *Peeping Tom*, since hailed as another classic by the likes of Scorsese and Coppola, but never a comfortable film to watch.

In 1936, Powell shot his film *The Edge of the World* in black and white, almost entirely on Foula. He was inspired by a Times article on the evacuation of St. Kilda, but was refused permission to film on that spectacular archipelago by the then owner Lord Dumfries. Foula was chosen as a stand-in having the advantage of a ready assembled troupe of extras in the form of the small, indigenous population.

Powell's book² about the filming reveals his tenacity, humour and optimism in working in one of the most exacting of locations. Weather alone caused several epics. Powell appears briefly in the film's prologue with a leggy, blonde honey, in real life his first wife. He quite rightly stayed behind the camera for most of his career, coming across as plummy and wooden. In those days attitudes to wildlife were different. He shoots an eagle for a bit of incidental sport before the main story about the death of an island community begins.

Shetland for me one summer was a replacement for a cancelled Alpine holiday, 4000m swapped for 400m. With the thoughts of what might have been, it was difficult not to feel disenchanting even before setting foot on the ferry in Aberdeen. In my mind I'd conjured up a land populated by fanatical twitchers and beards playing traditional music. But there was one of its islands I'd heard about, ultimately my main reason for visiting Shetland.

Flying out from Tingwall is a good way to appreciate the fjord-like inlets of west central mainland and the sea stacks of Westerwick. Pre 9/11 you could sit in the front seat next to the pilot and watch nervously as he wrestled with the controls through patches of turbulence. Foula's sharp outline is ever beckoning. The toy plane banked startlingly before it prepared to land but then suddenly pulled up. The rough track of a runway had a fire engine haring up and down it with the siren full on. Had we lost an engine or had the undercarriage failed to lower the wheels, necessitating a crash landing? No, thankfully something far more mundane. The runway had to be cleared of a few stray sheep.

The road north passes more of these motley specimens, several scattered houses and a school at Ham. Viewed from the east the hills are noticeably lacking in rock. For stone monkey Johnny Dawes, Foula seemed like 'a gigantic golf course that had been compressed until its

2 Michael Powell, *200,000 Feet on Foula* (London: Faber & Faber, 1938).

smooth greens were angled at 1 in 1.³ Pleasant and shapely but verdant and with no real drama were my first impressions. A nagging suspicion of anticlimax was hard to suppress.

Gaining curving height on Soberlie Hill you suddenly emerge on the brink. An abrupt plummet causes senses to recalibrate with a sudden jolt. To the north is the holed Gaada Stack, a classic icon of Foula. Below is the striking arch of East Hoevdi which juts out from the main face like a stabiliser on a child's bike. The flat North Bank accentuates the feeling of teetering along a skyscraper roof. There is no worn path beside the edge. The grass is slightly flattened, mainly by a herd of ponies which wanders here.

In places you could get down to the sea. The angle of the grass and the ever present moisture would make this very risky. Hugging the edge, the hill rears up and reaches a crescendo at The Kame. This 360m two-tier arête has an upper section which is Dolomitic in profile. First climbed by Mo Anthoine, Ian McNaught-Davis and John Kingston in the late 1970s it was repeated by a team including Johnny Dawes and Dave Thomas in the early 1990s. The latter were unimpressed, having to clear vast amounts of moss to reveal the underlying rock. Dawes performed a cartwheel at one point to demonstrate the lack of steepness and low overall (for him!) technical difficulty. Dolomitic doesn't always mean the best of quality. In recompense they climbed two much harder, quality routes on North Bank and explored some sea stacks.

Cloud rolled in shortly after our arrival at The Kame. Were we to be jinxed at this, the real spiritual heart of Foula? Luckily, a patient, dreamy wait on the edge of the void, entertained by puffins, led to a sight I'd never seen on a sea cliff. Sun burst through behind and projected Brocken Spectres on to the dissolving cloud over the sea. Eventually the thin shroud retreated up the cliffs like a waterfall in reverse and the naked verticality was there to gawp at again.

From The Kame you can make a detour to the highest hill, The Sneug. Simple on the map; in practice you risk the wrath of the Bonxies (Great Skuas). These sinister birds have an air of Hitchcockian menace and will swoop and attack even without chicks to defend. They will quite literally eat baby puffins for breakfast. The Dawes team found No 10 hexes very useful weapons of defence to bonk them back. After two and a half weeks on Shetland, frequently pestered (and often downright scared) by Bonxies, I'd have happily taken a Kalashnikov to them with great relish.

Nebbifield is the sheerest cliff round here; a mini El Capitan, Nose-like arête, soaring 300m to its apex. As yet this feature has only been breached by two routes, courtesy of Dave Turnbull and Crag Jones. The Nose route itself was repeated in 2011 by Dave Brown and partner. Abseil approaches are serious before any climbing begins. A small plinth near the top of Nebbifield projects like a diving board over a shaft of

3 Johnny Dawes, *Full of Myself* (Johnny Dawes Books, 2011).



The 'diving board', Nebbifield. Photo: Mike Dixon.



The 'inverted amphitheatre', Nebbifield. Photo: Mike Dixon.

deep space. If big drops make you recoil you'll probably not get the best out of Foula.

Continuing south, you descend a graceful arc where the next section of Nebbifield assumes the topography of an inverted amphitheatre. It has a magnificent striped curvature, a giant cave at its base and overhangs outrageously in its 200m height. It offers Foula's greatest remaining climbing challenge and will guarantee any takers an awfully big adventure. Anyone climbing here should seriously consider their options if they became cragfast in such a remote spot. Dave Brown was reassured by Magnus the local laird: 'If you get stuck on a ledge you can trust us, we know what to do. Occasionally our sheep get stuck on ledges. We'll use a .22 rifle to put you out of your misery. It'll be more humane than letting you starve.'⁴

⁴ Dave Brown, *Random Rocks: The Nebbifield Nose – Foula – Shetland*, <<http://daveabrown.blogspot.co.uk/2011/08/nebbifield-nose-foula.html>> [retrieved October 2012].

A solitary gannet circled overhead, perhaps on the hunt for a weekend retreat away from all the high rise, overcrowded squalor of Noss. Continuing the descent you arrive at the 'short' Wester Hoevdi, a vertical slice of fractured rock ending as a blocky wedge above a viscous sea. Yet another significant chunk of 150m virgin rock. The waterfall on the east side was the setting for the climbing sequence in Powell's film. Devoid of special effects or any CGI manipulation it has an authenticity and visceral punch absent in many modern, action blockbusters.

From Wester Hoevdi a rising traverse across cliff-sandwiched grass demands caution. This is the home of the largest collection of routes on Foula on the weathered sandstone at Mucklabrek. Here lie climbs of up to 120m, all with a straightforward approach compared with the other venues. A short descent leads to a sheer sided 60m cleft, a real torture chamber of a slit. Once the lair of a mythical beast, the Sneck of the Smallie is now mostly populated by puffins and judging from the smell, the resting place for several unfortunate sheep.

The final hill is detached from the rest and has an elegant conical shape. The Noup has cliffs impressive in their own right, but suffer in comparison with what's preceded them. A gentle saunter takes you back to zero metres. Any tempting shortcuts away from the edge will niggle those restless natives, the Bonxies. The friendly pilot took us the long way back round the cliffs. It was a different perspective but still left us wide-eyed. In 15 minutes we were back on tarmac, in another 15 enjoying a pint in Lerwick.

Later that evening in The Lounge the fiddly bollocks music was in full flow as I replayed the highlights of the day over and over in my mind. If neuroscientists had scanned my brain on Foula no doubt the areas associated with pleasure and aesthetics would have been glowing luridly. But reductionism is never the full story. Furthermore when these highs occur is often unpredictable and the reason I always travel in hope. After that day I developed a penchant for coastal walks and the heights of hills no longer had the significance they once did. I got a similar hit exploring the even smaller island of Ailsa Craig.

Recently I watched Powell's film again, followed by the documentary about a revisit he made in 1978. He took lead actor John Laurie (Private 'We're doomed, Captain Mainwaring' Fraser from Dad's Army) with him and there was obvious affection from both for the film, Foula and its residents. The opening sequences of each film, the latter with aerial colour shots of the great cliffs, had me riveted and goose bumped, testimony to the skill of a director to portray a setting so evocatively.

You can sometimes be disappointed after a return visit to a place which has entranced you first time round. With Foula I'm always afraid the same magic might not materialise. Unlike Powell, I've never been back.

LATE SEASON ROUTES – APRIL 2013

By Stan Pearson

SOME ROUTES SEEM to fall into your lap while others become more of a quest. For instance for me the Bat was done on the first attempt while the Steeple took years and several failed attempts before a successful ascent although both were equally satisfying. Often in winter, the climbing itself is almost incidental compared to the manoeuvring to be in the right place at the right time for an objective.

The Skye ridge became an early objective while still at university. Every summer after exams we headed north for a week on Skye at Glen Brittle and inevitably the ridge was seen as a great prize. After several failed stumblings we made a traverse in good weather and were suitably impressed. Some years later while trying to get fit for some foreign trip we returned to solo the ridge. Various other excursions followed over the years but it was only in the late 1980s inspired by Patey's account that the idea of a winter traverse took hold as an objective.

At that time we were blessed with several good winters and harder routes in remote places took priority, but Skye gradually became a real destination route. Even more than most winter routes conditions are fickle, it requires fitness and the right partner. After several exasperating near misses a clear partner was established and we both became a bit manic about the route. Each winter from January to April it felt like a rucksack was permanently packed by the door but it never quite came to fruition. Then, as it does, family and work intervened, I lived abroad for a while and the Skye ridge in winter drifted from an objective to a place on a vague list of routes that I might get round to some time.

In 2013 we had a period of settled weather late in the season. The idea of the ridge started to drift back into focus but foreign trips were planned. On return from skiing in the Alps the weather was still settled and cold. The web suggested Skye had snow. Perhaps the ridge was not fully plastered in its winter garb but certainly the tops were white. Easter beckoned with family commitments. We snatched a few perfect winter climbing days over the Easter weekend but it only served to fuel ambition.

Conditions were good and the weather was perfect. Rumours drifted down through my nowadays not very well connected grapevine that the ridge had been done and that conditions were good.

Having had a good winter, fitness was OK, but domestic Brownie points were low and work was busy. Two SMC meets meant many people were committed to a trip north to join the President or to the CIC.

Tuesday night found me settled by the phone working through the address book, trying to tempt people to make up the final ingredient, a partner to go with fitness, conditions and a still settled forecast. Many

people were committed to other projects and my frustration mounted before a Rannoch member, John Hutchinson, was tempted but only if he could rearrange various non-climbing plans.

The next day the forecast suggested it would be perfect till Sunday then the weather would break down. Ideally, we needed to pull the trip forward to a Thursday night departure. Several voice mails and e-mails were returned showing interest, but no one was able to get the Friday off. I cancelled everything at work anyway, but felt the opportunity slipping from my grasp. I prepared my sales pitch to John in Glasgow. 'You're always fit, and it's too good an opportunity to miss.' Won over, we became a team and agreed to meet at the Raeburn Hut on Thursday night.

A quick shop for food and a car-load of gear allowed us to indulge in the usual sorting of kit with the usual dilemmas as to where to compromise between safety, comfort and weight. That done we decided to take advantage of the long days by driving to Skye the next morning. A 5 a.m. start saw us driving through mist and rain, just to sow some seeds of doubt, but we need not have worried.

It is not often everything goes to plan, but on this occasion we had all you could dream for. When we arrived on Skye the weather was perfect – blue sky, no wind and cold with perfect visibility. By now the days were longer so the bivvy was likely to be cold but short. John had a friend who had done the traverse a few years ago and provided useful information. We found footsteps to follow from a previous party unseen but their steps saved us a lot of time route finding. They had cleared a good bivvy spot – you always have to take what is on offer with big routes and make the most of it but this time what was on offer was ideal and as we set off up into the corrie at 9 a.m. I was like a wee excited kid with the prospect of actually doing the ridge in winter.

Unusually, there was no noise, no cars, no birds and water was in winter's icy grip with frozen smears in abundance so we made good progress to the snow line around 700m. We had a perfect Alpine day and the seam of good fortune was almost overwhelming. We had a perfect hill to ourselves. At the snow line we enjoyed a second breakfast and donned crampons that would stay on for the day. The view from the ridge on Sgùrr nan Gillean was breathtaking as the ridge stretched away in the distance and it was white. We had winter conditions, game on. The conditions would prove to be varied but for so late in the season it was a relief that they were still wintery. It did look an awfully long way to the Inaccessible Pinnacle.

It had been a while since I was so fired up for a route. Conditions were perfect and we made fast progress. From the top of Sgùrr nan Gillean steps helped route finding but did not detract from the enjoyment as we enjoyed spectacular views scrambling, climbing walking and teetering on front points over exposed ground, even the sacks were not too heavy. All the abs were already equipped, no ropes jammed. We moved quickly unroped, features were passed until we got to Am Basteir.



We had only brought one rope and after some inspection decided against the abseil from the Basteir Tooth, instead roping down into the corrie. This was a time-consuming detour typical of my memory of the ridge, exposed terrain, not very difficult, but the route was uncertain and gear was limited. It did not dampen spirits and with hard névé we were soon back on the ridge proper.

Time drifted by with lots of airy progress, some grade II/III soloing and the occasional use of the rope to climb or abseil a pitch. Around 6 p.m. we got to the lowest point on the ridge at Bealach na Glai Moire. Should we continue up Sgùrr a' Mhadaidh or stop?

Two well-excavated bivvy spots on the snow persuaded us to stop and have a leisurely meal. This is where choices of what to bring were tested. It was cold so with everything we had on, we climbed into sleeping bags, enjoyed the sunset, watched the stars come out and slept. There was no wind. It had been a while since I had had a bivvy on the tops. It was just great to be in the mountains after a perfect day with the prospect of another tomorrow.

Despite an early rise and a meagre breakfast, melting snow for a brew



Just below the summit of Sgùrr nan Gillean, looking south at the treat to come. Photo: Stan Pearson.

and a water bottle for the day took a while. We started the long haul up Sgùrr a' Mhadaidh and got into the warming rhythm of movement on the mountain allowing us to shed layers. The weather was still settled and the views good with only a little cloud. We started to indulge in the thought that this was going to go. It was a good choice to bivvy where we did as we passed a technical section with few comfortable bivvy spots over the next hour. It was good to be on the tops without the usual 900m slog to start the day and we made good progress.

The Inaccessible Pinnacle that had seemed so far away at the start of yesterday now beckoned but we were in for a shock: other people. After the complete absence of human contact, meeting a party of three who had just climbed something up to the ridge around Sròn Bhuidhe broke our isolation. There was also a party of five on the In Pin. Good as it was to exchange comments about our good fortune to be here in the sun the presence of others disturbed the groove we had established of moving together so we decided to miss the summit despite the generous offer of the party at its foot to go first and instead continued.

Again we were lucky. We found running water just before the Bealach



John Hutchinson at the bivvy on Bealach na Glaic Moire, Sgùrr Thuilm behind. Photo: Stan Pearson.

Coire Lagan and even had fifteen minutes where it was easier to move without crampons. Then the mist came in and the wind arrived as had been forecast. A number of parties had been this way in both directions so we had confusing footsteps that seemed to go all over the place and had to feel our way along in the mist. It was now quite atmospheric as we donned the rope for a few pitches in more traditional weather as the mist came and went revealing features and exposure as we ticked off the features along the way to the abseil down King's Chimney. Looking down it I found it hard to believe I had soloed this as a youth even if it was in summer. We now had to continue along in poor visibility but it was not long before we were abseiling into the T-D gap and the last technical difficulty.

A good bivvy in Coire a' Ghrunnda and a slow walk out to Glen Brittle the next morning with mist on the tops added to the satisfaction before a taxi ride back to the car at Sligachan. Everything had gone to plan for two perfect days on the hill and after a wait of twenty five-odd years the winter traverse was in the bag. Not bad for the last winter route of the season or so I thought.

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Two weeks later the settled winter weather has continued into late April. Des Rubens has, I know, long coveted Slav Route on the Ben so we find ourselves at the CIC hut. It is not a route I have ever really considered seriously but I know of it by repute and its reputation for poor



The author on the penultimate pitch of Slav Route. Photo: Des Rubens.

belays so have regarded it as one to consider only in ideal conditions. For Des it has been a long-term destination route so our objective was set.

Again the weather is perfect, the conditions ideal. After a leisurely breakfast we are the last out the hut and amble up to the route with only a modest amount of floundering in fresh snow. Two parties are on Orion but the Ben is fairly quiet and we have no competition for the route. First time placements ease our passage, inspiring confidence and the first two pitches are soon over. Despite or perhaps because of the expected limited gear we make good progress running out 60m after 60m. The perfect weather and excellent conditions don't feel like the Ben at all as we work our way up grooves and steps, admiring the panorama around us. It is a long route and perfect névé is great but it does put some strain on the calves so every belay is a welcome rest with no spindrift to disturb the views. Modern tools and modern ice screws have made such a difference. We actually enjoy some sense of security as we head up to the top of the face. On the summit, Des is as pleased as punch and we bump into some equally happy Irish lads, who insist we share a dram with them while taking in the vista. Heading down in the daylight with great visibility seems so relaxed compared with many descents from the Ben and it gives time to reflect on two great routes in the last two weeks as great examples of what is available in Scotland with this long winter that has just kept giving. As we amble down into Coire Leis with a view to the snow-capped hills to the east, Des suggests perhaps a ski tour could be squeezed in next weekend.

NEW CLIMBS

OUTER ISLES

LEWIS SEA-CLIFFS, Scarp:

Scarp (NA 970 152) is an extensive island, rising to over 300m, its central, northern and western areas provide rough walking. In normal weather expect much thrashing though heather and bog. All of the crags described are sea-cliffs and the best access is to stay close to the coast or to contour around the many bluffs above the lower ground. The authors made a landing on the beach opposite the small island of Cearstaigh on the north coast located at NA 964 167. This is a good landing and camping spot but far removed from some of the best areas.

The rock is mostly Lewisian gneiss, with much quartz intrusion. Along the western and south-western coast there are several promising looking geodhas some with impending walls. The most extensive area with potential is from Tarta Geodha (as yet unexplored) through to the flat headland of Manais.

The most convenient landing and camping place would be on the Manais headland (NA 969 140) which would give easier and relatively quick access to the main areas. There is naturally occurring water on the island but caution made us take our own.

The island was abandoned in 1971, although some of the old houses in the village have been restored, and there is much evidence of previous occupation in many surprising areas, and of the hard and uncompromising life of the inhabitants.

Manais Wall Area:

This extends across three distinct areas, north, main and south. The main area is the most extensive.

Manais Wall North (NA 958 140):

Scramble down to the northern end of the tidal platform.

Keys to the World 22m HVS 5b **. Paul Headland, Keith Archer. 13 Jul 2012. Start from the platform at the far left end of the crag where the two small slabs meet. Climb the left-hand slab to the overhanging corner on the left; surmount this to the second overhang and on to the top.

No Consolation 22m HVS 5a *. Keith Archer, Paul Headland. 13 Jul 2012. From the same start as the previous route, climb the right-hand slab to the black overhang on the right side. Make unusual moves through to the upper cracks. Finish on the left headwall. Constrictive!

Weymouth 22m VS 4c. Keith Archer, Paul Headland. 13 Jul 2012. Starts where a step up needs to be made on the approach traverse. Go up over easy ground to the base of a slabby corner. Climb the short headwall above.

Manais Wall Main:

(NA 958 140) Non-tidal

The first route starts at the left end of the crag, right of the brown wall.

A Girl Called Cecil 17m VS 4c *. Paul Headland, Keith Archer. 11 Jul 2012.
Climb the right-facing corner at the left edge of a large scooped white triangular wall.

Tide Turner 18m HVS 5a. Paul Headland, Keith Archer. 9 Jul 2012.
The scooped white triangular wall is followed in its centre until a move right to a short niche. An overhanging crack above is climbed on layaways.

Cabbage, Sweat and Micturation 18m Severe 4b. Keith Archer, Paul Headland. 10 Jul 2012.
Climb the flake line which borders the right side of the large scooped white triangular wall.

Hard Work Kills Horses 18m HVS 5b. Paul Headland, Keith Archer. 10 Jul 2012.
The double open-book corners. Start on the left and climb to a large ledge at the base of the first open book. Climb this to a second ledge and on to the top.

Land of Milk and Honey 20m HVS 5b **. Keith Archer, Paul Headland. 11 Jul 2012.
Climbs the central right-facing corner of the imposing main wall.

Solarized 24m E2 5b **. Paul Headland, Keith Archer. 13 Jul 2012.
Follow the broken fault-line slightly right of centre in the large imposing wall to an obvious small ledge below the headwall. Traverse right under the headwall to the cracked depression leading to the top, sustained!

Six Pence in the Pie 14m HVS 5a. Keith Archer, Paul Headland. 9 Jul 2012.
Climb through the X shaped cracks direct.

Chapter 109 13m HVS 5a. Keith Archer, Paul Headland. 9 Jul 2012.
Start on the left corner of the light brown slab. Move to the centre and climb to the notch in the skyline.

Calendar Girl 13m VS 5a *. Paul Headland, Keith Archer. 9 Jul 2012.
The bow shaped corner bordering the narrow slab of Rocket Ma-a-an. Climb the corner to the top.

Rocket Ma-a-an 12m V.Diff. Keith Archer, Paul Headland. 9 Jul 2012.
Follow the laid back narrow slab on the left side of the first bay reached from the descent.

Wicket Chronicles 12m VS 4b. Paul Headland, Keith Archer. 9 Jul 2012.
The in-cut crack on the right side of the first bay from the descent. Climb up ledges to the narrow crack. Climb this on big holds to the top.

Manais Wall South:

(NA 960 139) Non-tidal Abseil descent

The first route starts in the black geodha to the left of the main wall.

Donald John MacLennan 21m HVS 4c. Paul Headland, Keith Archer. 11 Jul 2012.

This route is located in the black geodha to the left of the main wall and is on its left wall. Climb the slabby wall of the black geodha following the line of 'cemented in place' blocks. Good gear at half-height.

The following climbs are located on the main wall to the right of the black geodha.

Philosophy of Risk 12m H.Severe 4c. Paul Headland, Keith Archer. 10 Jul 2012.

Climbs the second crack along from the left arete climbed on ledges and finger jams.

Whiff Away 12m Severe. Keith Archer, Paul Headland. 10 Jul 2012.

Climbs the third crack along from the wall's left arete.

Canal Dreams 12m Severe 4b. Keith Archer, Paul Headland. 11 Jul 2012.

Climb the fourth crack along from the wall's left arete.

Caolas Cearstaigh Crag:

Lies directly opposite the small island of Cearstaigh, adjacent to the beach. Access is by walking down from either side.

Caolas Cearstaigh Crag East (NA 962 168):

Scramble down to the eastern end of the non tidal platform.

Don't Fake Life 9m E1 5b *. Paul Headland, Keith Archer. 12 Jul 2012.

The narrow in-cut recess at the left end of the crag, on superb light grey rock.

Number 7 the Beeches 12m E2 5c **. Paul Headland, Keith Archer. 12 Jul 2012.

Climbs the series of short slabs and overhangs in the narrow niche, above a shallow pool. Start on the undercut right side of the pool with a powerful move to start, then traverse the quartz band to the niche, climbed direct.

Ticks R' Us 17m Severe 4b. Keith Archer, Paul Headland. 12 Jul 2012.

The short recessed area immediately left of the central overhang. Start from the toe of the buttress and trend left towards a short head wall. Follow this to the top.

Caolas Cearstaigh Crag West (NA 962 168):

Scramble down to the western end of the platform.

Jacaranda 24m E2 5b ***. Keith Archer, Paul Headland. 12 Jul 2012.

Start at the weakness at the right end of the ledge that runs from the central corner. Pull through this, then traverse easily to the base of the overhanging corner. Move up to beneath the overhang, then move out left. Powerful layback moves on good holds lead to the final finishing corner.

VEINOUS WALL PAINTED GEO AREA LEWIS SEA-CLIFFS

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- 1. Veinous Trap HVS **
- 2. A Step in the Deep Blue HVS **
- 3. Mysterics of the Deep E1 **
- 4. Sea Shepherd VS **
- 5. Fishy E4 **
- 6. Peeping Reaper E3 **
- 7. Seething V Diff *

1. A Crackwork Orange
E2 **
HVS
2. Takeaway
E1
3. Breakout
VS **
4. Wish You Were Here
HVS *
5. Splendid Sun
E1 **
6. Flakeout

EILEAN GEO ÀIRD MÒR M'HANGARSTADH LEWIS



LEWIS SEA-CLIFFS, Painted Geo Area, Veinous Wall (NB 0102 3341):

A topo by Michael Hutton on the previous page includes 5 new routes.

A Step in the Deep Blue 25m HVS 5a **. Martin Kocsis, Mike Hutton. May 2012.

A swinging hand-traverse along the lowest quartz break (below Veinous Trap, 1995) with steep, hard moves to start and steeper, juggy ones to finish.

Mysteries of the Deep 25m E1 5b **. Andy Turner, Mike Hutton. May 2012.

Follow a vague crack in the left side of the recess up to a small roof. Turn this on the left with a difficult move, then climb the wall above to the top.

Sea Shepherd 25m VS 4c **. Andy Turner, Mike Hutton. May 2012.

Climb the crack on the right side of the recess, to the roof. Climb out on the right stepping onto the slab. Follow a right-facing corner to the top.

Fishy 25m E4 5c **. Paul Mitchell, Mike Hutton. May 2012.

Start 3m to the left of Peeping Reaper. Climb to the overlap and fix some dubious protection. Crux moves round the overlap lead to better holds and good gear. Follow the wall above on good crimps, then veer right towards the top on improving holds. A fine route despite the bold start.

Peeping Reaper 25m E3 6a **. Andy Turner, Mike Hutton. May 2012.

Make awkward moves off the ground into a left-facing corner, climbed to a good jug. Step rightwards into an obvious left-facing corner follow this pleasantly to the top.

Àird Mòr Mhangerstadh, Eilean Geo (NB 0130 3345):

A topo provided by Michael Hutton on the opposite page includes the following new routes.

A Crackwork Orange 20m E2 5b ***. Andy Turner, Martin Kocsis. Jun 2012.

Follow a finger crack in the centre of the wall (well left of the following routes) with an awkward move at two-thirds height. At the top of the crack, step out right and follow a groove in the arete to the top.

On the big slab to the right are *Takeaway* (2003) and *Breakout* (1997), then the following route.

Wish You Were Here 20m VS 4b **. Martin Kocsis, Mike Hutton. Jun 2012.

The central line of the slab starting with a steep rising traverse. The holds are perfectly placed and sized; a sublime line.

Splendid Sun 20m HVS 5b *. Martin Kocsis, Rachael Batt. Jun 2012.

A route up the right side of the slab, starting from a good ledge above the high-tide line. Abseil in or traverse from *Wish You Were Here*. The difficulties are short lived, and the protection for it tricky to arrange, but a fine experience.

To the right is *Flakeout* (1997). (Michael Hutton says worth at least **.)

DWS Crag:

This is the next zawn after Eilean Geo. A short abseil in to the left of the routes gains access for the first route. The others can be reached by a short abseil down the right side of the cliff. It is also possible to traverse along the bottom to start all the routes.

Way Out West 15m 6c S1 **. Andy Turner. Jun 2012.

Traverse in from the left on easy ground to reach the break at one-third height. Surmount the small roof on incredible jams and large holds. Pull round (crux) onto improving jams and finish more easily up the twin crags.

Standing on the Edge of Time 15m 6b SO **. Andy Turner. Jun 2012.

Climb the slabby wall/arete on the right-hand side of the large overhung block. Traverse rightwards onto a grassy ledge to finish.

A Grand Day Out 10m 6b SO *. Andy Turner. Jun 2012.

The easiest way up the wall 2m to the right of the large jutting corner.

Crack with a View 10m 6a S0 **. Andy Turner, Mike Hutton. Jun 2012.

The obvious crack on the far right-hand side of the cliff. Never harder than 5a and the perfect warm up. Delightful.

INNER HEBRIDES:

The new guide to the Inner Hebrides and Arran is imminent, so routes on Tiree, Mull and Erraid have not been reproduced here.

SKYE**SGÜRR NAN GILLEAN, First Pinnacle West Face:**

Puffin Billy 160m III,4. Mark Francis, Allan Gorman. 12 Feb 2013.

Start middle open ground below pinnacle, follow 'turfy' ribs to obvious chimnies, traverse slightly left to gain groove system leading through awkward ground to Pinnacle Ridge.

Work-Shy Weekday 160m III,4 **. Matt Barratt, Norman Nicolson, Neil Urquhart. 12 Feb 2013.

Start as for *Puffin Billy* but climb the left-hand of the obvious chimneys direct to the top.

AM BASTEIR, North Face:

Serious Disposition 210m IV,6 **. Steve Kennedy, Andy MacDonald. 10 Feb 2013.

A fine, exposed and serious outing with an energetic finish up the final short pitch of *Hung, Drawn and Quartered*. Follows the lowest of the prominent ledge systems leading rightwards across the face (*North Face* follows the next fault above). Start up the short initial ice pitch of *Deadline*, then traverse right for two pitches along the ledge system. Belay just before a thin section where the ledge narrows. Tricky exposed moves lead beyond the narrowing to a long easier

system of ledges ending close to the upper right edge of the buttress below the chockstone finish of *Hung, Drawn and Quartered*. Surmount the chockstone (awkward but well protected) to finish abruptly on the ridge.

SGÜRR A' BHASTEIR, South-West Face:

Running on Numpty 180m II. Mark Francis, Steve White. 10 Dec 2012.

From Sligachan via the Glen Brittle path, an obvious pinnacle is seen in profile (NG 463 256). Head up Fionn Coire to this. Start at a gully on the left side of the pinnacle over ice steps for three pitches petering out to snow slopes leading to summit. Excellent mountaineering.

SGÜRR A' BHASTEIR, North Face (NG 466 262):

Window Shopping 180m III. Mark Francis, Helen Urquhart. 15 Jan 2013.

Follow the left edge of *Broad Gully*, then go over easy rocks to a barrier wall. Ascend a groove to an obvious slot just left of the gully. Break through this into a lovely turfey groove with a short rock step. Steeper blocky climbing up ribs then leads to the NE ridge.

Executioner's Gully 130m III,4. Cameron Mcilvar, Nathan Adam. 16 Mar 2013.

Lies between *Window Shopping* and *Broad Gully*, and possibly climbed before. Start from 50m up *Broad Gully* at the base of a rib. Move into the chockstone gully and climb it to a block (30m). Continue up a blocky ramp to the next steep wall (40m). Climb a narrow groove rising to the right before pulling over onto easier ground and continuing to another block (50m). Gain the crest of the ridge (10m).

Hubble, Bubble, Toil and Trouble 500m III. Mark Francis, Murdo Nicolson, Norman Mcleod. 19 Jan 2013.

NG 448 246. Follow the right edge of *Waterpipe Gully* to a rock barrier climbed by a left-slanting ledge. Easier ground leads to excellent steep chimneys to finish on top of Sgurr Fheadain.

Telescope Variation: III. Matt Barratt, Gill Houlsby. 19 Jan 2013.

Follow the same line as above but avoid the rock barrier to the right and follow the rightmost chimney/corner system for three delightful pitches.

COIRE A' TAIRNEALAR:

Portcullis Gully 110m III/IV,4. Neil Urquhart, Chris French. 11 Dec 2012.

A pair of long parallel faults lie very close together 100m south of *Arrow Slot*. This route climbs the left fault. Approach via 120m easy snow to where the gully steepens.

A short tricky chimney leads to the base of the deep upper fault. Initial progress up the narrow cleft was made over verglassed rock and frozen rubble. A good pitch with a surprising through route below a spectacular high chockstone. Finish on the ridge.

Note: Climbed on good neve with little ice, it would be easier with a bigger build-up (probably rare), and definitely not recommended if not consolidated.

SGÜRR A' MHADAIDH, North Face:

Slanting Gully VI,7. Doug Hawthorn, Iain Small. 24 Jan 2013.

A complete ascent including the section above Foxes' Rake.

Vixen Groove 140m V,5 *. Spike Sellars, Mike Lates. 21 Jan 2013.

Ascend *Archer-Thomson Route* easily for 50m to a broad bay. *Vixen Groove* is obvious rising leftwards.

1. 40m Enter the narrow groove which opens out after 15m (crux). Turn the rib on the left to reach another broad bay.
2. 40m Climb good ice up and left. The groove above leads to a smaller snow bay below the final steepening.
3. 40m Climb the corner and turn the capstone direct.
4. 20m Finish easily and to blocks on Foxes' Rake.

Dyke Gully and Buttress Route V,6. James Sutton, Ben Wear. Jan 2013.

By the summer route.

SGÙRR A' GHREADAIDH, West Face:

Forever the Bridesmaid 160m III. Richard McGuire, Chris French, Neil Urquhart. 24 Mar 2013.

This route takes in the obvious right-facing corner which bounds the right-hand side of Hidden Gully Buttress. Start about halfway between *White Wedding* and *Vanishing Gully*. Follow thinly iced slabs and grooves for 70m. Trend leftwards linking pleasant ice grooves to the bottom of the steeper corner. Climb this to reach more open ground. An excellent pitch, ice screw runners used. Either continue to the ridge or, if conditions allow, traverse across the top of *Vanishing Gully* and descend.

Note: The upper half of the route including the corner was climbed in 1991 by Neil Urquhart, following a rising traverse from the foot of *White Wedding*.

Something Borrowed... 160m III,4. Richard McGuire, Mark Francis, Neil Urquhart. 28 Mar 2013.

In the Skye Scrambles guide the mass of rock to the left of *Diagonal Gully* is named Diagonal Buttress. There are several narrow dykes running up this face. This route takes the most prominent one, about halfway between *Vanishing* and *Diagonal Gullies*. A very enjoyable route with a bit of everything!

Climb the dyke for 70m over several steep steps, until it narrows to a groove. Either climb the groove or thinly iced slab to the left (unprotected, crux) to a notch which leads to a short snow slope. The crag continues above, so move left and climb a further groove and chimney to the top.

COIRE NA BANACHDAICH (NG 439 218):

Comber Toes 150m III. Mark Francis, Murdo Nicolson; Matt Barratt, Billy Shanks, Norman Mcleod. 2 Feb 2013.

Follow grooves up the left edge of *Banachdich Gully*, through a squeeze chimney, finishing up a lovely blocky rib.

What Numpty Did Next 110m II. Mark Francis, Steve White, Donny Williamson. Mar 2013.

An obvious gully line furthest right on the buttress in the Banachdich Gully area. Two pitches separated by a snow slope, then easy snow leading to gullies ending on the main ridge.

COIRE NA BANACHDAICH, West Face of Window Buttress:

Curtain Call 380m III *. Brendan Croft, Paul Cunningham. 20 Jan 2013.

Start at the foot of the descent gully on the left-hand side of the West Face as approached from the Glen Brittle Hut. Follow easy ground for 100m sticking to the right side of the gully to an open area with a choice of exits. Climb the steep groove on the left (crux) for 35m before escaping right. Follow easy-angled grooves for 200m before joining the final pitches of *Deep Cut Gully*.

Lower Window Buttress:

Perspex Groove 80m IV 4 *. Andy Moles, Iain Murray. 19 Jan 2013.

Follows the obvious slanting basalt dyke right of the eastern descent route on Lower Window Buttress. A groove a few metres right of the dyke gives a good well protected pitch, which leads to easier ground and a belay in the left wall at about 30m. Follow the groove easily to the crest of the buttress overlooking the western descent gully.

COIRE A' GHREADAIDH, An Diallaid:

Branching Gully 260m IV 4 **. Iain Murray, Andy Moles. 20 Jan 2013.

A quality winter line, following the gully directly to where it emerges onto a snow slope at about 150m. Go up the slope beneath the steeper wall on the right for about 40m, where an obvious groove pitch leads to easier ground and the top of the buttress (Diamond Buttress finish?). Potentially a grade easier in very banked-out conditions.

White Pudding 170m III. Mark Francis, Steve White, Matt Barratt. 29 Mar 2013.

On the south side of the corrie is this obvious iced slabby corner behind An Diallaid and across open ground. A stepped corner leads to a steepening, then iced slabs lead to snowfields.

Fish Supper 165m IV,4. Mark Francis, Steve White, Matt Barratt. 29 Mar 2013.

The second gully left of where the An Diallaid ridge abuts the Banachdich slopes. Start at the base of the gully trending left towards an obvious ramp line, doglegging around steep ground and ending on summit snowfields.

SGÙRR THEÀRLAICH, Stone Shoot Face:

Deliverance 50m VII,7 **. Guy Steven, Mike Lates. 4 Nov 2012.

Tackles the striking corner near the top of the Stone Shoot. Start 30m below the top of the Great Stone Shoot by a large pinnacle.

1. 30m Climb the steep corner using the accommodating crack-line to a small alcove.
2. 20m Pull out of the alcove and over chockstones to easier ground and the summit crest.

AN STAC (Coire Lagan):

An Stac Chimney 80m IV,5 *. Mike Lates, Ally Macaskill. 28 Nov 2012.

Follows the summer line using the right wall to turn the narrowest sections. Gain the foot of the chimney by easy snow slopes from the An Stac bypass.

1. 30m Surmount the large chockstone after a very tight manouvre beneath it.

Ascend the right wall for 10m before regaining the chimney which leads more easily to a small bay.

2. 50m Climb the right wall to gain steep cracks before exiting onto a ledge (15m). Re-enter the chimney line which is easy for 20m. The final narrowing was turned by the right wall to a good block belay on *An Stac Direct*. Finish by ascending *An Stac Direct*.

SRÒN NA CÌCHE:

Note: Colin Moody notes that on the diagram on p170 in the new guide, *Atropos* (route 41) is marked in the wrong place and should be just left of *Integrity*.

COIRE A' GHRUNNDA, North Crag:

Slab Buttress III. Neil Urquhart, Chris French. 29 Nov 2012.

Low lying and south facing so often stripped in the sun. Loosely follows the summer route with the higher start from *North Crag Gully* providing an interesting first pitch. Much easy ground between steeper rock tiers. Turfy corners were followed rather than the open slabs, in particular the prominent and slimy groove mentioned in *Skye Scrambles* gave a fine 60m corner. The Diff. corner on the top tier was avoided for lack of snow.

Caisteal a' Garbh Choire:

South Ridge 30m IV,5 **. Steve Perry, Antoni Anderson. 19 Jan 2013.

Follow the distinctive crack until it ends on a stance. Finish up the short steep wall on the left.

CORUISK, Mad Burn Buttress:

Lunatics Wall 110m VS 4c *. Greg Cain, Ferdia Earle, Andy Moles. 17 May 2013.

A very enjoyable route on excellent rock, low in the grade.

1. 40m 4b Take the common start of *Warsle* and *Diagonal*, but a few metres up the dyke above the pulpit, move left to gain a big ramp and follow this easily to beneath a wide vertical dyke.

2. 5m 4c Move up leftwards and climb a left-facing flake-crack to the terrace above.

3. 35m 4b Climb a scooped weakness trending up rightwards to cross the dyke taken by *Diagonal*, continuing fairly directly upwards through a series of bulges and scoops to reach a massive ledge. From here you can walk off or:

4. 20m 4c Take a pick of lines up the wall above the ledge. Again escape is possible from here, or scramble pleasantly to the summit of the buttress.

BLÀBHEINN, North-East Wall, Great Prow:

Jib 125m VIII,8. Iain Small, Simon Richardson. 19 Jan 2013.

The summer line was followed after starting up the *St Andrew's Crack* variation. From the good ledge at the top of the third pitch, a more natural winter finish up a right-facing corner was taken instead of the summer 4b groove.

BLÀBHEINN, Winter Buttress:

Flight of the Colditz Cock 70m V,4 *. Mike Lates, Simon Cunningham. 12 Feb 2013.

Start 10m right of *Sailaway*.



*Willie Jeffrey climbs a new route on delightfully rough quartzite, somewhere on Sleat, Skye.
Photo: Noel Williams.*

1. 25m. Climb a groove of ice rightward to a good block belay.
2. 45m. Climb the icy slab and corner (20m). Thick ice gave good screw protection for the final steepening. Easier ground leads to a block belay.

CLACH GLAS:

Ramp Route II. Matt Barratt, Mark Francis, Donnie Willamson. 23 Jan 2013.
Follow the line of *Ramp Route* (Skye Scrambles, Moderate). Climb the ramp and emerge on Clach Glas! Not to be confused with *Big Ramp II*.

SUIDHE BIORACH:

Overhang Cure 20m E2 5a. Mike Lates, Ian Hey. 25 May 2012.
A prominent large triangular cave lies at the right end of the section that contains *Mother's Pride*, *Hovis* and *Cameron's Climb*. Scramble up into the cave to start. Climb up and right to the roof of the cave before pulling out on large steep holds to gain a ledge 3m above. Finish up the top 5m with care. A stake belay is required.

NEIST, Financial Sector:

Charlie Potatoes 25m E2 5b **. Gary Latter, Alex 'Tam' Thomson. 9 Jun 2012.

An independent direct start was climbed (bold but straightforward climbing), and the route climbed direct up the groove, avoiding moving right.

Cold Comfort for Change 25m E5 6b. Blair Fyffe, Nona Thomas. 5 Aug 2012.
Takes the groove and crack in the front face of the pillar to the right of *Brass Monkey*. Start beneath an overhang on the right. Pull up to this and undercut left to the groove and good crack. Climb this to a band of small overlaps. A good small cam can be placed up and left. Make a hard traverse left to a rest in a slight depression. Step back right using some good undercuts to the main roof above. Layback through this and continue up the crack above to where the pillar is split by a horizontal crack. Traverse right until a final hard move allow a series of ledges that lead to the top of the pillar can be gained. Finish up *Brass Monkey* or abseil off.

Mimic Bay:

Impunity 25m E4 6a **. Gary Latter, Alex 'Tam' Thomson (ground-up). 9 Jun 2012.

The finger-crack in the wall right of *Wok Warrior*. Climb the crack with difficulty to better holds at a hand-crack, then continue more easily. Scramble to finish.

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS NORTH

BEINN DEARG, Glen Sguuib:

Reuben's Groove 300m IV,5. James Edwards, Simon Nadin, Neil Wilson. 24 Mar 2013.

The broad tiered buttress between *Wee Freeze Gully* and *Edgeway*. Start at the lowest point of the buttress to the right of *Wee Freeze Gully*, right of broken ground.

1. 50m Climb turf grooves trending slightly leftwards.
2. 30m Continue up a narrowing chimney groove, passing a jammed boulder and then trend left under the overlaps to belay on the edge.
3. 60m Climb a groove going back right thus avoiding the overlaps, exit left at top and continue up easy ground.
4. 30m Climb directly up the mixed ground above heading for the niche in the skyline. Belay on the right-hand side of a small icefall.
5. 55m Climb the icefall and continuation groove to just below upper snowfield.
6. and 7. 75m Climb straight to the top on easier snow.

Holy Smoke 200m III. Roger Webb, Neil Wilson. 13 Mar 2013.

A route up the buttress on the left of *Fenian Gully* (with *No Surrender* in its centre). Start about 20m left of the start of *Fenian Gully* and climb an obvious discontinuous line of ice for a pitch, and thereafter climb easier mixed ground on the right side of the buttress, always keeping to the left of the gully.

BEINN DEARG, Coire Ghranda:

Rebirth of the Cool 130m VII.7. Guy Robertson, Andy Inglis. 17 Dec 2012

Another high quality icy mixed route based on the big vertical fault right of *Tickled Rib* (left of the wall taken by *Final Destination*). Start at the base of the fault, almost a gully.

1. 30m Climb snow and a short step to below an icicle at an impasse. Climb the ice boss on the left to a turf ramp and follow this for a short way before stepping up onto a parallel ramp and belay in a little cave.
2. 30m Climb through the left side of the cave, then work back right into an open groove left of and parallel to the main fault further right. Climb the groove until possible to step right into the main fault-line, then climb a short crack to a flat-topped pinnacle.
3. 30m Here the fault peters out. Climb up and slightly right from the belay to a ledge and niche. Step down and traverse hard right across a tricky slab into a crack-line. Climb this and continue boldly on turf to a thin ledge which leads back left to below a sharply overhanging iced corner.
4. 40m Move left into a steep crack-line and follow this leftwards to easier ground which leads to the top.

SEANA BHRAIGH, Feich Coire:

Belay Grave Gully 150m II/III. Steven Andrews, Peter Herd. 16 Mar 2013.

The gully line at the back left of Feich Coire. Scramble up over large boulders and possible short icefalls to a snow basin. Climb ice on the right before traversing left following the natural line to a constriction with an overhanging left wall. Ice in the constriction and on the slabs to the right leads to easier ground and the top.

Coire Mor:

The Great Escape 300m I/II. Steven Andrews, Audrey Decou, James Howard. 1 Jan 2013.

The central gully at the far south-west end of the corrie (NH 330 864) gives a good way up on to the plateau and through some nice scenery. All snow except for a rocky step at the bottom. The grade will vary depending on whether the step is banked out or not.

ALLADALE SLABS:

The Gully 300m IV,4 **. Dave Allan, Steven Andrews. 30 Mar 2013.

Following the obvious winter line, the drainage line with ice. Much of it was banked out but still gave some nice climbing in a great setting with a couple of steep sections.

BEN MOR COIGACH, Creag Garbh Choireachan:

(NC 08129 03365) Alt 540m

Approach from the end of the Achiltibuie road at Culnacraig. Take the path near the bridge, moving right from the main path to a smaller one that crosses the Allt Coisiche before the gorge and climb the spur to the level ground at 350m. Move right and up on increasingly exposed ground to the crags which lie right beyond broken ridges.

A narrow gully separates the main crags from the West Ridge (Grade 3 or Moderate) and is one of two lines of descent. Another less obvious gully lies just left of the The Wild West and can be used to avoid the top scrambling pitches above the second tier of crag. The crag is in two main tiers with scrambling above on clean rock. The second tier is most easily reached from the narrow right-hand gully where steep ground leads to a terrace below the tier. The left-hand end of this tier, the Upper Tier, has a conspicuous narrow chimney with a companion corner to the right followed by another series of corner cracks and a buttress that forms an arete. To the right of this the crag swings east overlooking the gully. To the left of the gully the longest section of rock forms a narrow ridge with a conspicuous wide corner crack at its base, the route described below.

The Wild West 80m E2 5c **. John Mackenzie, Andrew McKenzie. 13 Jul 2012.

The best line of the ridge. A fine strenuous series of jam cracks interspersed with easy ground.

Pitch 1 could be avoided by a scramble from the left to a ledge above it.

1. 10m 5c A wide corner-crack at the base needs a Camalot 5 or similar.
2. 5m 4c Jam the corner-crack to a level section.
3. 25m 5a Above are two short corners; the first has a difficult landing with the second much easier. Continue easily to the base of a vertical corner which is right of a chimney.
4. 20m 5c 'Profanity Corner'; The raison d'être of the climb. Climb the widening crack strenuously, Friend 4 or similar size runners, in a fine position to a platform.
5. 20m 4a A short step above the platform followed by scrambling (not included in length) up the ridge and a final avoidable corner to finish.

The Upper Tier:

On the left of the tier is a fine squeeze chimney, very clean and well worthwhile.

The Wedgie 15m HVS 5a **. Andrew McKenzie, John Mackenzie. 22 Sep 2012.

Enter the chimney via the wide crack and squeeze into it. Keep on squeezing to the top, great fun!

To the right of Profanity Corner are corners bounded on the right by an innocuous looking buttress and arete with a conspicuous notch.

The Strumpet 60m VS 4c *. John Mackenzie, Andrew McKenzie. 22 Sep 2012.

The innocuous buttress/arete.

1. 25m 4b 'If the leader was dealt a loose hand by her profligacy, the second dealt a firmer one and made her sound.' Reach and climb the slanting break to the arete and follow this to a ledge. Move left to a corner-crack below a straight crack.

2. 10m 4c The short undercut corner is climbed to scramble to below a clean-cut corner left of a wide crack.

3. 25m 4c Climb the pleasant corner to clean easy rock above to a terrace.

Escape off leftwards to reach the left-hand gully and descend this to a point halfway down, cairn, where the terrace below the Upper Tier can be reached.

BEN MOR COIGACH, Cadh' a' Mhoraire:

Oslo Buttress 285m III. Bob Reid, Ian Crofton. 8 Apr 2013.

The corrie is distinguished by four gullies that separate four large buttresses. It contains the routes *Nero* (in the guide) and *Hyperborea* (SMCJ 2012). To the left (looking up) of the corrie and east of the leftmost gully is a trapezoidal slabby buttress whose leftmost edge forms a soaring ridge direct to the plateau rim. Start at the base of the ridge at a distinctive large cube shaped block.

1. 50m Climb the gully to its right and which leads to the left-bounding gully of the ridge. Step right to a platform at the base of the ridge.

2. 50m Follow chimney lines and steps up and along ridge.

3. 35m Continue via short steps and corners to a 'flattening'.

4. 50m Climb to the base of the next step, an obvious slabby wall.

5. 40m Turn the slabby wall via a shallow gully, cutting back after 10m onto the crest. Continue up a groove to the right of the crest to easier ground and beneath the next step.

6. 30m Ascend a left-trending chimney line with an entertaining step back right at top and progress on easier ground to beneath a final tower.

7. 30m Continue up a fault-line splitting the final tower with two awkward steps and then to top.

Descent is via the northern slopes of Speicein Coinnich, 150m east of the top of the route.

Agrippa Gully 300m III *. Dave Allan. 3 Apr 2013.

The leftmost gully, just right of the buttress with the previous route. Three turfey icy steps in the first 100m led to a fork at 200m where the left branch was taken.

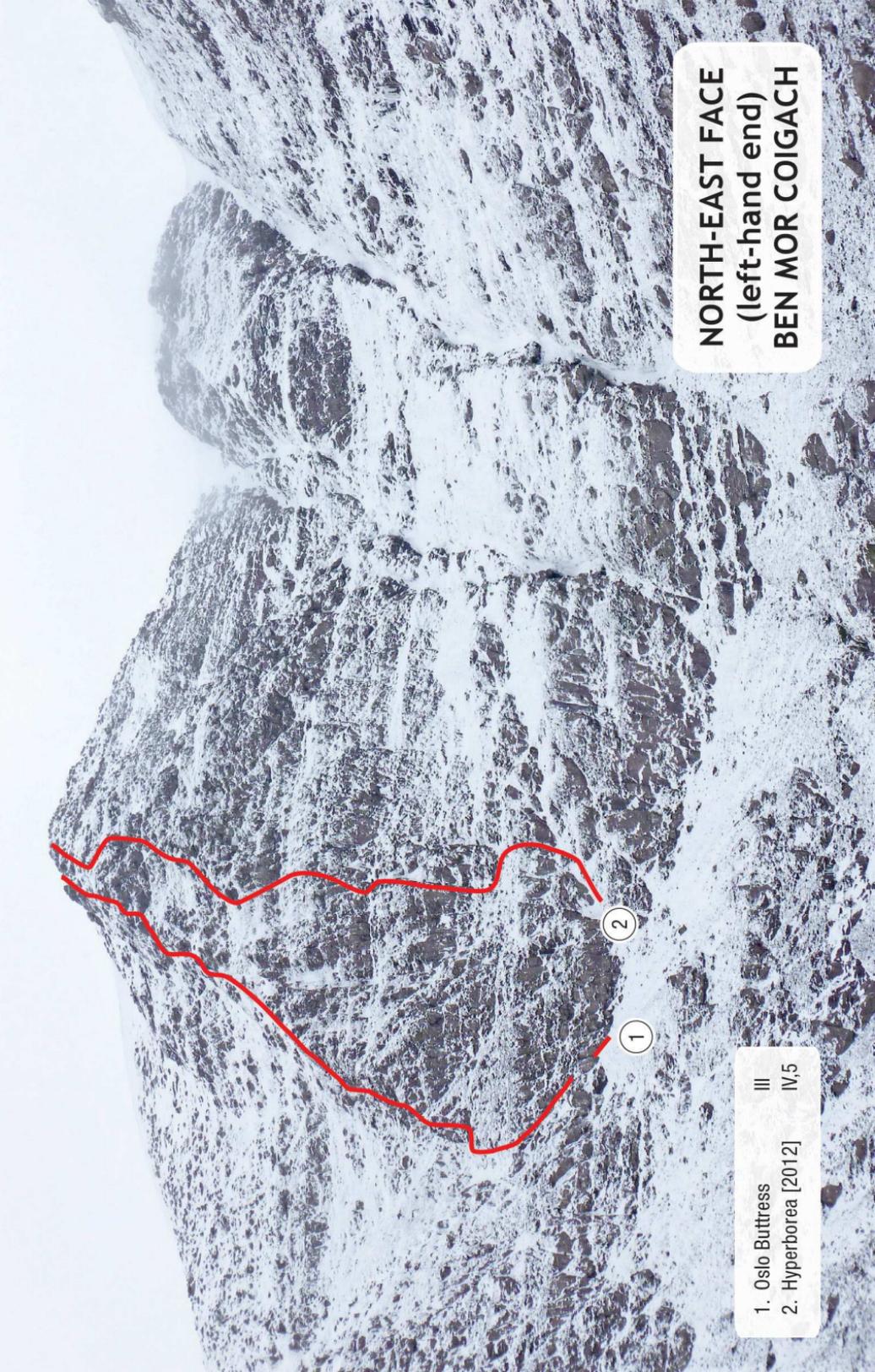
Trajan Gully 400m II. Alison & John Higham. 23 Dec 2010.

This is the third gully from the left and lies immediately to the right of *Nero Gully* (the second from the left). NC 105 049. Four main pitches were encountered on this ascent.

CUL BEAG, North Corrie:

Three Wee Chimneys 150m III,5. Dave Broadhead, Des Rubens. 26 Jan 2013.

This route lies to the left (east) of the col between Cul Beag and its satellite, Meall Dearg. It is about 150m left of *Left Buttress*. Three parallel closely spaced ice lines form. The left-hand one forms a steep pillar of about 8 metres. Above, turf and a further easier pitch complete the climb.



**NORTH-EAST FACE
(left-hand end)
BEN MOR COIGACH**

1. Oslo Buttress

III

2. Hyperborea [2012]

IV,5

Ravens' Ramp 150m II. Dave Allan, Davy Moy. 20 Feb 2010.

Start at the top of the central snow bay right of the icefall of *3Ds* and follow the big ramp up and right. Twenty metres before the ramp ends by starting to drop, climb a groove on the left.

CUL MÒR, Coire Gorm:

The next two climbs are on a little crag at the entrance to Coire Gorm at NB 165 125.

Das ist Gut 60m IV,6 **. Davy Moy, Dave Allan. 24 Jan 2009.

On the west face of the buttress is a 10m wide square-cut groove. Start on the left side.

1. 30m Climb a short step, then move right and climb a turfy slab. Climb a short chimney on the right and belay on the left.
2. 30m Climb the central fault (crux).

Illegal Alien 140m III,4. Davy Moy, Dave Allan. 6 Dec 2008.

This climbs the left-bounding rib of a big bay near the right end of the north face of the buttress. Start at the foot of the rib and climb it passing a block tower on the right. Go up a groove along a narrow arete. Move right, then climb a short gully to easy ground. Climb an easy snow gully for 30m, then the buttress on the right by a groove 1m right of a deep slot.

REIFF, Stone Pig Cliff:

Notes: Michael Barnard thought *Hard Tack* was E1 5c (not E2 6a). Also *Pigs Don't Fly* is strenuous and runout, and was thought more like E2/3 (given E1/2).

Crevasse Wall:

This is just past and at right-angles to Rocker's Cliff. The following lie on the short north facing end of the wall.

The Crevasse 8m H.Severe 4b *. Michael Barnard. 12 Nov 2011.

The obvious wide crack.

Wee Diedre 5m H.Severe 4b Michael Barnard. 12 Nov 2011.

The corner-crack 5m to the left.

Stinking Geo:

Top Quality Chef on Standby 12m HVS 5b. Michael Barnard, Alan Pergusey. 25 Aug 2012.

Near the left end of the wall is an obvious left-slanting diagonal corner. This route climbs a parallel line up the centre of the wall left of the corner.

Call the Emergency Plumber! 12m HVS 5a *. Michael Barnard, Matthew Thompson. 10 Jun 2012.

The left-slanting diagonal corner.

Piss Take 10m HVS 5a *. Michael Barnard, Alan Pergusey. 25 Aug 2012.

The fine steep flake-crack between *Pooh*, *Pong McPlop* and *Blindside*.

Just north of Stinking Geo and west of the Leaning Block Cliffs is a short north facing wall with an obvious rockfall forming a scarred corner.

Ghost Ship 6m H.Severe 4b *. Michael Barnard. 12 Nov 2011.
Climb the vertical crack in the black wall right of the rockfall scar.

Rubha Ploytach:

Cut to the Jug 10m VC 4c. Dave & Sharon Wagg. 27 Jul 2012.
Start just left of *Pretty in Pink*. Climb the flake and wall above to the break. Finish more strenuously up the right side of the arete.

ACHMELVICH, Creag Rodha Mor aka Super Crag (NC 056 236):

The Assyntialist 35m E6 6b/c **. Niall McNair, Iain Small (both led). 25 Aug 2012.

Between (*My Own*) *Personal Mingulay* and *The Pabbay Express*. Easy pumpy climbing, a powerful crux and a fantastically positioned headwall comprises this route. Start as for *Personal Mingulay* and where this route goes off leftward along the ramp, forge straight up the grey striated wall boldly to a juggy break (common to *All Abilities Path*). Make hard moves under the overlap to reach for a small hanging corner on the left side of the overlap and follow the undercut flake leftwards to a good flake-jug. Continue up the headwall on flakes until a thin break below the top is reached. Step right and either tackle the orange block directly (powerful) or step right again into a vague corner (awkward) and so to the top.

Note: The unnamed route in SMCJ 2012 is called *The Heart of Beyond*.

Ramp it Up Direct Start E4 5c **. Tess Fryer, Ian Taylor. 3 Aug 2012.
Start left of *Rodha Mor* at a thin crack. Climb the crack which trends rightwards into the big groove and a junction with the original route.

Moonman 35m E5 6a/b **. Niall McNair, Iain Small. 26 Aug 2012.
Fine sustained climbing up the wall between *The Cullinan* and *Browbeaten*. Start 5m to the left of *The Cullinan* where a thin break slants up and to the left on small holds and flakes until some good breaks are gained. From the top juggy break, make tricky moves up some small left-facing flakes for a few metres until a step right can be made into a black intrusion (common with *The Cullinan*). Move left and continue upwards to a big flat hold. A further couple of moves leads into the break of *Browbeaten*; finish up this.

OLD MAN OF STOER:

Note: Ian Taylor provides a better description for *Tall Stoeries*. On pitch one, the left-facing corner is gained by climbing up well round to the left to reach a break, then traversing the break rightwards into the corner, 20m rather than 30m. On the second pitch it is 30m to a belay on a small ledge above the flake, but another 20m on blocky ground to the top. A good route, but not ****. Right at the very top of the grade with some scrittly rock.

STOER, Clashnessie Bay, Geodh' Dubh, Nightwatch Slab:

(NC 067 320) South facing Mostly non-tidal
An enclosed geo about 200m west of Arch Crag (SMCJ 2010) with an attractive

south facing black slab. From the parking spot opposite the west end of Loch na Bruthaich, cross a stile and head over the hillside to a promontory just east of the small island (Sgeir nan Gobhar). The slab is clearly visible across the geo. It is much friendlier and better protected than it looks. The rock is very rough and clean though a little flaky on the surface. Abseil to a good hanging stance at small ledges near the arete at the right edge of the slab.

The Balloon Snail 16m V.Diff *. Ferdia Earle, Andy Moles. 24 Apr 2013.

From the stance, traverse left across the slab. Make a tricky step to gain the corner and up this.

The Dyson Platypus 14m VS 5a **. Ferdia Earle, Andy Moles. 24 Apr 2013.

From the stance, trend up leftwards to an obvious diagonal crack-line. Follow this to beneath a V-shaped notch in the top of the crag, and finish directly to this.

Just Another Story 13m E2 5c *. Andy Moles, Ferdia Earle. 25 Apr 2013.

Start as for the previous route, but from the diagonal crack, follow a line of small holds directly up the wall above, passing a small circular quartz patch just below the top.

The Clash 12m H.Severe 4b **. Andy Moles, Ferdia Earle. 24 Apr 2013.

From the stance, climb directly up thin cracks and through a big quartz patch to the top.

White Riot 12m VS 4c *. Andy Moles, Ferdia Earle. 24 Apr 2013.

Follow the arete all the way, keeping mostly on its slabby side.

CONIVAL:

Approach via the path up Gleann Dubh to opposite Breabag Tarsuinn but before the South-Eastern ridge (which borders the Garbh Choire). There are several broken ridges with steep steps; this is the middle one (NC 302 194) and near the South-East Ridge.

Explorers' Ridge 300m II/III. John & Eve Mackenzie. 5 Apr 2013.

Steep broken ground (not included in length) leads up and right to a definite steepening where two ridges are separated by a widening gully with prominent icefalls. Snow leads to the less steep but longer one on the left for couple of pitches, then snow to the left-hand ridge which is followed over mixed ground to the top. The climb finishes onto a little ridge which is west of Conival's summit. Well frozen mixed ground on this ascent but probably better under snowier conditions.

CANISP:

The First White Line 200m III. Geoff Cohen, Des Rubens. 6 Apr 2013.

On the north flank of Canisp, in the area a few hundred metres west of Loch na Faoileige. In persistent cold conditions, several easy angled icefalls form in this area. The first reached (most easterly) is bounded by rocks on either side and was soloed to give a pleasant climb. After it petered out, snow slopes were followed to the summit.

QUINAG, Western Cliffs:

Stairway 150m IV,4. Jonathan Preston, Andy Nisbet. 18 Jan 2013.

Roughly based on the edge where the front face turns left into the sidewall of the gully below the fourth col. Start up a shallow gully on the front face and follow it to a prominent pinnacle. Go up the right side of the pinnacle, cross over its col and traverse easily left on the main gully wall to a gully. Climb the slabby wall just left of the gully to a terrace (50m). Finish up a groove at the right end of the wall above the terrace.

Balconic 120m IV,4. Jonathan Preston, Andy Nisbet. 18 Jan 2013.

The sidewall of the gully further up from *Staircase*. Start about one third of the way up the main gully below a big gully on the sidewall. Go up to below the gully, then take a ramp right of it and leading right before returning left to near the gully edge. Go up to a corner close to the edge and left of a steep wall. Climb the corner and slowly easing ground above (50m).

QUINAG, Spidean Coinich, North Face:

Unnamed 400m II. Dave Allan. 25 Feb 2005.

The left-hand of two long easy gullies on the face. The gully mentioned in the guide at the bottom of p224 is the right-hand. The gully consisted of 170m of icy steps, then 230m of easy slopes leading to the left of the summit rock buttress.

QUINAG, Sail Garbh:

Note: The right branch of *V-Gully* gives a formidable looking cave pitch in lean conditions. It would take a fair accumulation of snow for this pitch to bank out. In 2013 Geoff Cohen and Des Rubens traversed 30m right from the base of the cave, ascended about 40m up and traversed back in to the gully. Although the traverse back in was easy, the traverse out was difficult and serious (although it may have been possible to move out more easily from some distance below the cave). At least Grade IV, serious and dependent on good turf.

FAR NORTH-WEST CRAGS, Creag nam Phreasain Challtuinne:

(NC 189 468) Alt 120m South facing

Crag of the Wrinkled Hazel. A line of crags lie a short distance back from the northern shores of Loch Phreasain Challtuinne giving short but varied and enjoyable climbs on good gneiss in a pleasant setting. From the A894 take the minor road towards Tarbet and park beyond Warm Up Buttress (p240 NH North) where there is a layby on the left opposite a fenced sheep fank and approach from the south-east end of the loch, over a small ridge to arrive at the crags; 5 to 10mins.

The longer wall in front seamed with cracks is Hazel Crag, the steep west facing wall and slab on the right, Wrinkled Crag and the red slab and wall at the left end of the crag, Juniper Wall which has a couple of narrow slabs to its right. The one nearest Juniper Wall is Trundle Slab and the bigger and broader one between it and Hazel Crag is Deception Slab. Starting from the right, as on arrival, Wrinkled Crag has a steep west wall with a central crack, and an inset groove to the right which overlooks a fine red slab.

Wrinkled Crag:

Routes are described right to left.

Leac nam Phreasain Challtuinne 12m Severe **. Eve Austin, John Mackenzie. 16 Jun 2012.

Climb the delectable red slab from a small niche direct to the top.

Aperitif 15m HVS 5a *. John Mackenzie, Eve Austin. 26 Jun 2012.

The inset groove gives a pleasing delicacy, protected by smaller wires. The block is fine to stand on but is hollow.

Main Course 15m E2 5c **. John Mackenzie, Eve Austin. 26 Jun 2012.

The crack-line on the steep west face gives an interesting climb on good holds. The lower wide crack leads to an overhung alcove split by a crack which is climbed to a wedged block. Move up and right onto a ramp, crux, to finish.

Hazel Crag:

Hazel Crag has a shallow corner on the left with an offset corner above and initially steep crack-lines to the right and a smooth red slab on the right-hand end, left of a jutting flake, reached by a heather tussle. Routes are described left to right.

Hazel Where Art Thou? 20m VS 4c **. John Mackenzie, Eve Austin. 16 Jun 2012.

Climb the shallow corner on the left of the crag, step right to a ledge then climb the cracked corner on the right to the top, a good varied route.

Old Wrinkly 15m MVS 4b *. John Mackenzie, Eve Austin. 16 Jun 2012.

The straight crack to the right of a slanting grassy crack-line which is more entertaining than it looks.

Oh Nuts! 15m VS 5b. John Mackenzie, Eve Austin. 16 Jun 2012.

The companion crack lies just to the right which has a reachy start but then is easier.

Towards the right-hand end of the wall is a red slab to the left of a jutting flake reached by a heathery scramble.

Post-Prandial Delights 12m E1 5b **. John Mackenzie, Eve Austin. 26 Jun 2012.

Start just left of the jutting flake, move up then step left to the thin crack on the left of the slab which is followed to the top.

Eve O'Stick 12m VS 4c *. John Mackenzie, Bob Brown, Eve Austin. 7 Aug 2012.

Start from the jutting flake and climb up and left to a thin crack and flakes and pleasantly to the top.

Which Hazel? 12m VS 4c. Bob Brown, John Mackenzie, Eve Austin. 7 Aug 2012.

Start from the top of the jutting flake and climb up the brown segmented crack on the right to the top.

Deception Slab:

Moving left from Hazel Crag is Deception Slab, a dark grey wall of interesting rock, steeper than it looks from below. There are two obvious lines, a crack-line on the right and a shallow flake corner in the middle. To the immediate right of the slab is a pair of broken longer ribs. Descent is quickest down the narrow gully to the right of Trundle Slab.

Raggedy Rib 30m Diff. Eve Austin, John Mackenzie. 25 Jul 2012.

The right-hand rib is taken from the base direct to the top, a bit heathery in places.

A Dexterous Move 20m HVS 5a **. John Mackenzie, Eve Austin. 25 Jul 2012.

The crack-line is started from the left and steepens to a distinctive crux at a bulge and then continues up the crack to a slab where the little overhang at the top is taken on the right. Good and quite technical but well protected.

Avoiding the Wrinkles 20m HVS 5a **. John Mackenzie, Eve Austin. 25 Jul 2012.

The shallow flakey corner is started to the right of a wide crack on undercuts and sidepulls to a small niche. Continue up the crux section of flakes to the slab and take the overhang in the middle. Good interesting climbing with adequate protection.

Trundle Slab:

Trundle Slab is the narrow recessed slab to the right of Juniper Wall and close to the descent gully to its right.

Trundle Slab 15m V.Diff. *. Eve Austin, John Mackenzie. 25 Jul 2012.

The spikey slab is climbed in the middle via a recess and a little rectangular overhang to the right of a heathery crack to the top. Not a huge amount of protection but pleasant enough.

Juniper Wall:

Juniper Wall, to the left of Hazel Crag, has a crozzly slab on the left, curiously patterned and a steeper red wall to the right. Routes are described right to left. Descent is down the biggest of two ramps behind the routes.

Hourglass Wall 20m HVS 5a **. John & Eve Mackenzie. 6 Apr 2013.

A good well protected route up the wall to the right of a curving shallow overlap starting in the middle of the wall and finishing up the clean crack.

Juniper Slab 20m Severe 4a. John Mackenzie, Eve Austin. 16 Jun 2012.

This climbs the red slab above the Juniper bush through the cracked overhang to finish up easy rocks to the descent ramp above.

Noughts and Crosses 20m Severe 4a. Eve Austin, John Mackenzie. 16 Jun 2012.

This climbs the crozzly slab just to the left to the overhang and up its left edge to finish as for *Juniper Slab*.

TARBET CRAGS, Brown Crag:

Note: *Light Brown* was thought to be VS 4b by Fiona Reid & Mike Watson.

TARBET SEA-CLIFFS, Raven's Crag:

Left of the main cliff is a shorter wall characterized by a large horizontal roof.

Blue, Red and Grey 20m VS 4c. Michael Barnard. 3 Jun 2012.

On the far left is a red wall cut by a series of left-slanting parallel crack-lines. Start just left of a large boulder and climb the cracks. The rock is generally solid but there are some loose blocks near the top.

Black Choss 20m H.Severe 4a. Michael Barnard. 3 Jun 2012.

The obvious black fault-line has few solid holds.

Bloodsucker 15m E2 5c **. Michael Barnard, Alan Pergusey. 26 Aug 2012.

Climb up to under the roof, then exit leftwards with difficulty.

The wall containing the routes *Thrust*, *Parry* and *Feint* is actually south-facing. Overlooking the descent ramp is a gently overhanging west facing wall. At the far end is a grossly overhanging corner and north facing wall; the following route crosses the channel below the corner, then traverses right under the overhang.

The Big Splash 20m HVS 4c **. Michael Barnard (unsec). 26 Aug 2012.

Low tide required. From a large block in the channel, pull up on good holds then move right and step down to take the less obvious lower traverse line under a bulge (crux). The upper ramp is possible but involves a 5c downclimb. Continue the traverse to the edge, then step up and climb rightwards up the seaward wall to finish.

Balmy Slabs:

White Wizard, Left-hand Variation 20m E3 6a **. Michael Barnard, Alan Pergusey. 26 Aug 2012.

Start left of the normal route, below a thin left-trending intermittent crack-line. Move up, then up and left to a good sidepull in the initial overlap. Reach up for an obvious vertical slot (good small RP just above this), then make hard moves rightwards to join the normal route where it breaks through the overlap. Pre-practiced.

Note: The original start up *Jeepers Creepers* seemed a bit redundant.

Rubh' a' Cheathraimh Ghairbh (NC 183 527):

This sea-cliff is located on the west end of the peninsular north of Loch Dughaill. Park at the end of the Ardmore road and follow the footpath to where it starts to climb up to Ardmore itself. Now follow the north shore of the loch; if the island at the end (Eilean na Saille) becomes visible, the cliff lies back over to the left, 1hr 20mins.

Main Cliff:

Partially Tidal North-West facing

An impressive steep black wall dropping into the sea. Once this is located, scramble down the promontory to the north to view the wall. *Rhinos, Winos and*

Lunatics takes a long rising horizontal break, gained by an abseil to the obvious non-tidal ledge on the right-hand side of the wall.

Rhinos, Winos and Lunatics 30m HVS 4c ***. Michael Barnard, John MacLeod. 4 Aug 2012.

From the ledge, move up to gain the break which is followed round into the next corner, then under a large roof and on into the main corner. Continue leftwards up the break to near the left arete. Move up, then pull leftwards onto the arete to finish.

Back into the Future 30m HVS 5a **. Michael Barnard, John MacLeod. 4 Aug 2012.

The obvious steep fault on the left side of the cliff. Approach by scrambling down the promontory and traversing in under an overhang.

Slow Motion 15m E1 5b * Michael Barnard, John MacLeod. 4 Aug 2012.

Start 2m left of the above and move up to climb a steep left-slanting crack to a ledge. Ignore easier finishes left and right; instead take the steep crack splitting the prow above.

Dancing Days 10m Severe 4b *. Michael Barnard. 14 Jul 2012.

Start just left of the large part of the overhang. A long reach and pull up gains the line of weakness above.

Sea of Joy 10m Severe *. Michael Barnard. 14 Jul 2012.

The crack and corner at the left end of the wall, finishing as for the above.

Jelly Fish 10m Severe *. Michael Barnard. 14 Jul 2012.

Climb rightwards across the wall to an obvious ledge. Finish up the groove above.

Portuguese Man of War 10m HVS 4c **. Michael Barnard. 14 Jul 2012.

Left of the scramble descent is a lightly coloured grossly overhanging wall. Climb the left-slanting ramp line up the wall. Exciting!

Rock, Salt and Whales 35m VS 4b *. Michael Barnard. 14 Jul 2012.

Start at the base of the promontory. Hand-traverse left (feet on barnacles, low tide advised!) to step down into a large slabby cleft. Follow this to the top.

The large cleft of the above becomes a grassy gully higher up. The following two routes lie on the reddish wall on the right-hand side of the gully:

Marmalade 10m H.Severe 4b. Michael Barnard. 14 Jul 2012.

The most prominent corner on the wall has two clumps of grass.

Marshmallow Pie 20m V.Diff. Michael Barnard. 14 Jul 2012.

Start at the right side of the wall below a right-slanting crack. Climb this and the flake-crack above, continuing directly to the top of the crag.

An 8–10m high slabbier wall higher up the gully gives pleasant climbing up a number of lines, all about Severe.

Stoner's Cliff:

Partially Tidal North-West facing

A long steep wall, best viewed from the promontory opposite. The line of *Stone Free* is obvious as a left-right rising traverse across the length of the wall.

Stone Free 40m V.Diff **. Michael Barnard. 14th Jul 2012.

Approach by down climbing to the ledge from near the end of the promontory above. Walk along, then hand-traverse to below the roof. Crawl up the break until past the roof (possible belay), then continue more easily up the traverse line to the top.

The following routes take vertical lines on the wall, gained by scrambling down the slab from the promontory opposite.

Oblivion Express 20m H.Severe 4b **. John MacLeod, Michael Barnard. 4 Aug 2012.

In the centre of the wall is an obvious roof and flake-crack. Start below the roof and move up to climb the flake-crack to the upper roof. Crawl leftwards up the break of *Stone Free*. Once able to stand up, move back right up the fine headwall.

Variation: *Direct Finish* E1 5c *. Michael Barnard, John MacLeod. 4 Aug 2012.

From the top of the flake-crack, reach up for a horizontal break to gain and finish up twin cracks.

The Experience 20m VS 4c *. Michael Barnard, John MacLeod. 4 Aug 2012.

Start a few metres to the right and climb a vertical fault up to the break of *Stone Free*. Step right to finish up a slight scoop.

The Arches:

Partially Tidal Several Aspects

Continuing down the promontory opposite Stoner's Cliff leads to this remarkable feature, a channel cutting in northwards with two arches offset from and at different levels to one another.

Broken Arrow 20m Severe ***. Michael Barnard. 14 Jul 2012.

Start on ledges just above the channel.

1. 8m Climb a diagonal crack underneath the upper arch to the top of the lower one.
2. 12m Traverse left along the ledge to finish up the obvious break in the roof.

To reach the next route, walk over the upper arch and descend off the end of the promontory to ledges at the far end of the steep north face.

Archery 10m VS 4c **. Michael Barnard. 14 Jul 2012.

Hand-traverse left, then climb directly up a small groove and the wall above to the top. Steep and improbable but on positive holds.

Space Cowboy 15m H.Severe 4b *. Michael Barnard. 14 Jul 2012.

Climbs the centre of the north face. Approach by scrambling down the slab opposite. Climb a steep crack leading to the top break of *Broken Arrow*. Hand-traverse right to finish up the obvious corner.

Variation: H.Severe 4b. Michael Barnard. 14 Jul 2012.

Finish directly up the top break.

Creag Mhor:

Tsunami 15m VS 4c *. Michael Barnard. 12 Jul 2012.

Right of the main crag is a short steep wall with an obvious right-facing corner at its top. Start below this at a short red corner-crack. Move leftwards up this, then continue up into the top corner.

Creag Beag:

A few minutes walk past Creag Mhor is this short steep crag with a fine flake-crack left of centre. North facing.

No Quarter 12m VS 4c *. Michael Barnard. 12 Jul 2012.

Climb the flake-crack to finish up the top slab.

Penny Farthing 10m V.Diff. Michael Barnard. 12 Jul 2012.

The vertical fault-line at the right end of the crag.

Big Little Crag:

A few minutes further again is this fine red overhanging wall, also well seen from the Kinlochbervie area. West facing.

Semolina Pilchard 20m HVS 5b **. Michael Barnard, John MacLeod. 5 Aug 2012.

The lefthand line of weakness in the central section of the crag. Climb a left-facing corner to a small ledge. Step left and climb a hanging groove to reach another ledge below a roof. Continue slightly left up cracks in the slab above.

Fish-head Custard 20m HVS 5a **. Michael Barnard, John MacLeod. 5 Aug 2012.

Start 2m right of the above and climb a left-facing corner-crack to a large ledge. Step left, then climb leftwards up the wall to the slanting break, before moving up right to below the roof. Hand-traverse left to finish up the slab above.

Tangerine Wall 20m E1 5b **. Michael Barnard, John MacLeod. 5 Aug 2012.

Right of the above, a steep start up twin cracks gains the ledge below the central groove in the crag. Move up a steep shallow groove on the right before stepping left into the main groove. Continue up this to the top.

The Bervie Nipper 15m E2 5c **. Michael Barnard, John MacLeod. 5 Aug 2012.

On the right-hand side of the wall, take the steep crack through the bulge to gain and continue up the groove above.

The Angler 12m Severe *. Michael Barnard. 12 Jul 2012.

A right-slanting line up the slabbier wall immediately right of the main crag.

Gone Fishin' 10m Severe. Michael Barnard. 12 Jul 2012.

Start a few metres right of the above and climb straight up the wall.

Ridgeway View Crag:

Nagging 15m Severe. Fiona Reid, Mike Watson. 1 May 2012.

Right of *Classic Crack* is another heather choked groove. Ascend the crack system to the right of this.

BEN HOPE:

Gracefall 80m III **. Steve Perry. Apr 2013.

The stream in the lower section of the wide gully between *Brown's Ridge* and *Bell's Ridge*. It leads to the following route.

Hopefall 170m III. Katie Long, Andy Nisbet, Steve Perry. 15 Feb 2013.

An icefall which forms on the left side of the upper section of the wide gully between *Brown's Ridge* and *Bell's Ridge*. After the 50m icefall, 120m of Grade I snow led up and right on to the finish of *Brown's Ridge*. The summit of Ben Hope was gained by following a line of ice (Grade II) left of an easy gully which is left of the difficult step on the upper continuation ridge.

WHITEN HEAD, Mainland Cliff:

Dreaming of Mint Cake 30m E5 6a **. Simon Nadin (unsec). Jun 2011.

Tackles the overhanging crack above the cave to the left of *Mosscheeper*. Pull rightwards through the roof of the cave (Friend 4 on left) to gain good holds and gear at the start of the crack. A difficult sequence leads steeply to a partial rest below the next step in the roof from where more difficult moves gain the less steep wall above. Continue in a more or less direct line to the top, keeping to the left of the final corner of *Mosscheeper*. Well worth the walk?!

BEN LOYAL, Sgorr a' Bhatain, Lower Tor:

Jacobite Gold 75m E3 ***. Simon Nadin, Neil Wilson. 12 May 2011.

A superb route. Start below the obvious snaking crack-line.

1. 35m 6a Climb a corner-crack to gain a small pedestal to the left of the main crack-line. Climb diagonally rightwards with increasing difficulty to access the hand/fist crack. Sustained jamming leads to an awkward exit from where the crack closes. Continue trending rightwards to a final hand-traverse and belay below the continuation crack come corner above.
2. 25m 5b Enjoyable climbing follows a series of cracks and corners until the heathery ground above is reached.
3. 15m Scramble rightwards to finish.

Note: *Top Hat Crack* (SMCJ 2010) has been renamed *Divided Loyalties*.

Sgorr a' Bhatain, Middle Tor:

A previously unclimbed tor midway between the upper and lower and with an obvious square-cut roof at the top of the crag.

Unnamed 25m VS 4b. Dave Allan, Neil Wilson, Simon Nadin. 12 May 2011.

Climbs the corner on the left-hand side of the roof. A short traverse from the left gains the slab below the corner. Follow this before breaking out into the right-hand branch of the corner and finishing above the roof. Pleasant.

CAITHNESS SEA-CLIFFS, Auckengill:

Deal Breaker 8m VS 5a *. Steve Perry, Katie Long. 15 Jul 2012.

Follow a crack 3m right of *Horsepower* through breaks to the top. Sustained.

LATHERONWHEEL:

Note: The shore park at Latheronwheel has been fenced off as a deer farm. The field extends from the stile at the top of the path from the harbour to a point south of the climbing. So far this doesn't affect access for climbers, although the dog walkers of Latheronwheel are not happy. In fact they are meant to be removing the old fence, so it will be marginally easier for climbers; they would follow the line of the deer fence without hindrance.

ORKNEY, YESNABY:

More routes have been received and there is a big backlog waiting to be written up.

ORKNEY, South Ronaldsay, Halcro Head:

There's good climbing in the Rami Geo/Halcro Head area, just north of Tomb of the Eagles.

Approach: As for the Tomb of the Eagles, but head north for a further kilometre along the coastal path, passing Black Geo, to reach the head of Rami Geo (ND 472 851). The north side of the geo is a 200m sweep of gently sloping rock averaging 30m in height. Access is by abseil and an extra rope is required to reach occasional belays. There is a series of good tilted ledges at sea-level though this is not a good place to be in a rough sea. The whole face is seamed with natural crack-lines, mostly on excellent rock, though care is required topping out. Descriptions start from the seaward/eastern end working back inland.

Rami Geo (ND 472 851):

Chabble 25m Diff. Nev Kale, Jim Cox. 13 May 2005.

The first full length crack-line 10m in from seaward corner (broken after half-way).

Cockalowrie 25m V.Diff *. Mick Tighe, Nev Kale. 13 May 2005.

15m left follow the full length crack-line with a prominent left-facing corner at the bottom.

Billy the Priest 25m V.Diff *. Billy Burnside, Simon Fraser. 22 Sep 2012.

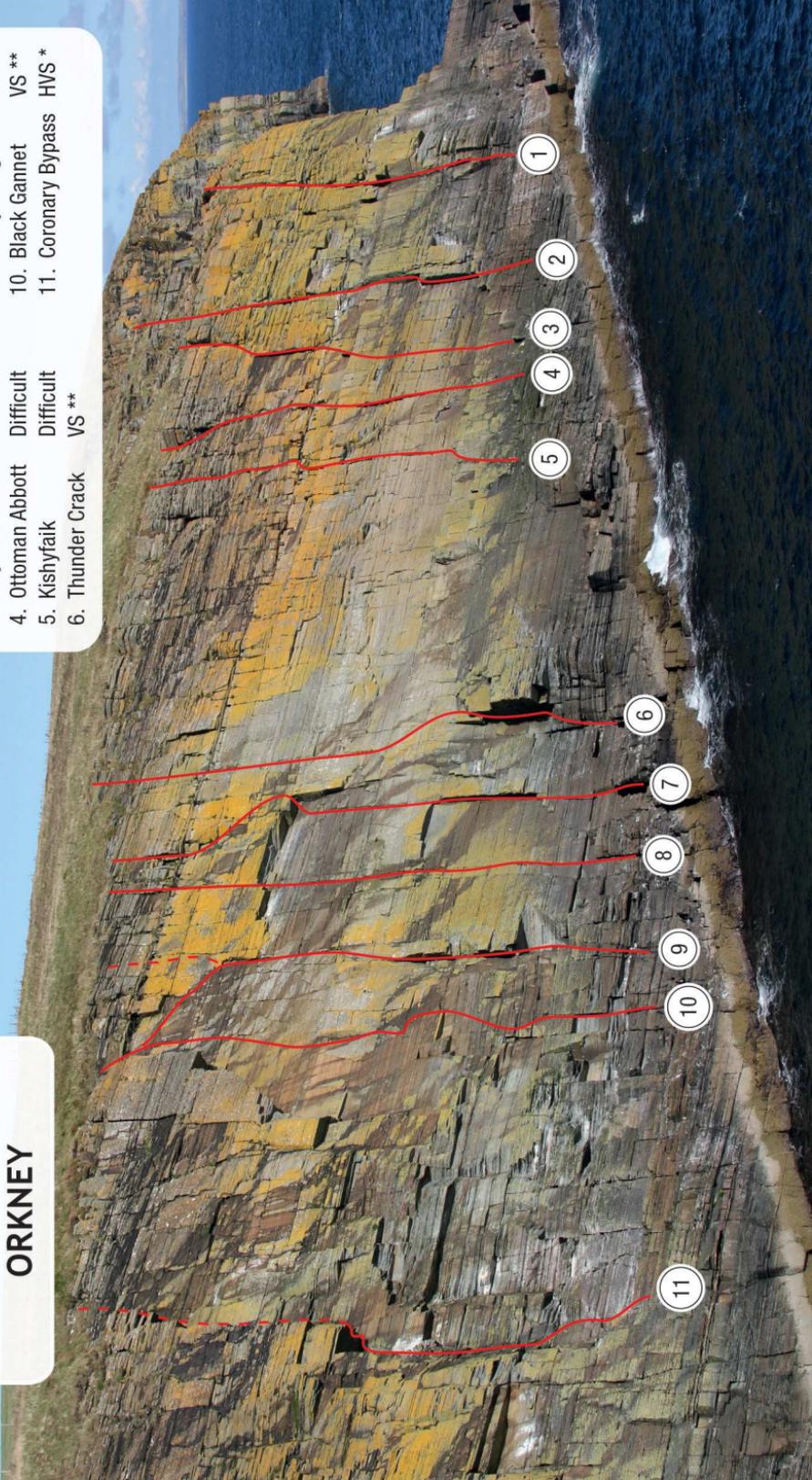
Between *Cockalowrie* and *Ottoman Abbott* is a nice little wall with horizontal bedding plains, which can be climbed almost anywhere. Head up the wall aiming for a small left-facing corner above half-height.

Ottoman Abbott 25m Diff *. Simon Fraser, Billy Burnside. 22 Sep 2012.

Climb the shallow left-facing corner line 10m left of *Cockalowrie*. Continue easily up broken ground, finishing in a prominent corner (poor belay).

RAMI GEO SOUTH RONALDSAY ORKNEY

- | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|-------|
| 1. Chabble | Difficult | 7. Opal | VS * |
| 2. Cockalowie | V Diff | 8. Eagle Ronnie | VS ** |
| 3. Billy the Priest | V Diff | 9. Kirsty Kringlick | VS * |
| 4. Ottoman Abbott | Difficult | 10. Black Gannet | VS ** |
| 5. Kishyfaik | Difficult | 11. Coronary Bypass | HVS * |
| 6. Thunder Crack | VS ** | | |



VS *
VS **
VS *
VS **
HVS *

Kishyfaik 25m Diff. Mick Tighe, Christine Clark. 13 May 2005.
A pleasant crack-line left again.

Thunder Crack 30m VS 4b/c **. Mick & Kathy Tighe. 18 Aug 2012.
Towards the left end of the grey wall is a deep V-recess, climbed to make a tricky exit out right onto a good ledge. Follow a fine grey crack in the wall above.

Opal 30m VS 5a *. Mick & Kathy Tighe. 22 Sep 2012.
A few metres left of *Thunder Crack* is a fine 8m left-facing corner. Climb this and make a tricky but well-protected move through the wee overhang. Turn the next overhang by a right-left zigzag into the finishing recess, which is a little vegetated but still gives good climbing.

Eagle Ronnie 30m VS 4c **. Mick & Kathy Tighe. 22 Sep 2012.
Left again, follow tram-lines up the fine wall crossing a small overhang at one-third height, and a bigger one at two-thirds. Enjoyable climbing, good protection.

Kirsty Kringlick 30m VS 4b *. Mick Tighe, Howard Clark. 10 May 2006.
Start in the one metre wide recess with a small triangular overhang on the right. Climb the recess and follow the crack-line that continues from its right side. Trend diagonally left at the top across a fine dark wall.

Black Gannet 40m VS 4c **. Kathy & Mick Tighe. 22 Sep 2012.
Left of *Kirsty Kringlick*, a big block sits in the middle of the wall at half-height. Climb the wall below and then right of the block before stepping out left onto it. Continue up a delicate slab above with limited protection.

Coronary Bypass 40m HVS 5a *. Mick & Kathy Tighe, Billy Burnside, Simon Fraser. 23 Sep 2012.

An interesting adventure up the corner system right of the second series of overhangs at the left end of the face (birds in nesting season).

Left (inland) of *Coronary Bypass* there is a lot more rock, though whilst it is good low down, the upper half is loose and would require a good deal of cleaning. There is an excellent sea-level traverse of the whole Geo – 200m V.Diff – best done solo on a sunny day in shorts & trainers!

Returning to the seaward, eastern end of Rami Geo and around the corner from *Chabble*, the following routes can be found:

Skraa 20m VS 4b **. Mick Tighe, Nev Kale, Jim Cox. 13 May 2005.
Around the corner from *Chabble* on the east facing/seaward wall. Good climbing with good protection up a slightly recessed wall with an interesting zigzag fault-line.

Kittiwake Corner 20m Severe. Mick Tighe, Nev Kale, Jim Cox. 13 May 2005.
An open-book corner lies 50m right of *Skraa* and leads up to flat-topped pedestal. Climb the interesting corner.

One hundred metres north of Rami Geo is an inlet with two huge sea-caves, which are divided by a central pillar. The following route climbs the atmospheric

**SOUTH RONALDSAY
ORKNEY**
100m north of Rami Geo



- | | |
|---------------------|--------|
| 1. Sea Society | VS *** |
| 2. Kittiwake Corner | Severe |

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pillar in a very spectacular setting, but not the place to be in a rough sea.

Sea Society 40m VS 4c ***. Mick Tighe, Janice Cargill. 9 May 2005.

Abseil from two stakes, lurking in the vegetation, to small ledges at sea-level on the south side of the pillar. Work your way back up the pillar mostly on the left and with generally good protection. The rock is good but with a few loose flakes here and there – the stars are for location as much as quality!

Improbable Wall (ND 474 854):

This is the impressive south facing wall just south of Halcro Head. It is 40m high and 60m wide with a series of overhangs at two-thirds height at the seaward/east end. Looking pretty ferocious from any angle, the wall provides a fine crop of routes at improbable grades. A full rack of cams will find plenty of horizontal breaks and a few wires will locate the odd crack. Abseil from the fence posts up by the stile – extra rope required. There are small ledges at the tide line (guillemot colony in the area of *Bird Society* during the nesting season).

Aanie Onyoo 40m VS 4b **. Mick Tighe, James Armour. 7 Sep 2006.

The fine crack at the left/landward side of the crag finishing up the black corner just below the fence line. It's not as hard as it looks and protection is excellent.

Bird Society 40m Mild VS 4b. Mick Tighe, Callum Forsyth. Sep 2006.

A colony of guillemots set up shop to the right of *Aanie Onyoo* in the late spring/early summer. This route takes a direct line up the middle of the wall, 10m right of *Aanie Onyoo*, and through the colony once they've left. The upper section of the wall is much cleaner and the climb can be started from a good ledge at half-height, above the colony.

Sounds of the Sea 40m H.Severe **. Mick Tighe, Christine Clark. 10 May 2005.

Up the slab to the right of right-facing corner. Break out left through the overhang and up. Good protection.

Copinsay Corner 40m Mild VS 4b **. Mick & Kathy Tighe, Simon Fraser. 23 Sep 2012.

There is a recessed slab at the seaward end of the Improbable Wall. Start easily up a fine right-facing corner and trend right up the excellent slab to finish through small overhangs at the extreme right edge.

SHETLAND, Eshanness:

Note: Gary Latter thought *Foy Corner* to be a superb long pitch, HVS 5a *** or ****.

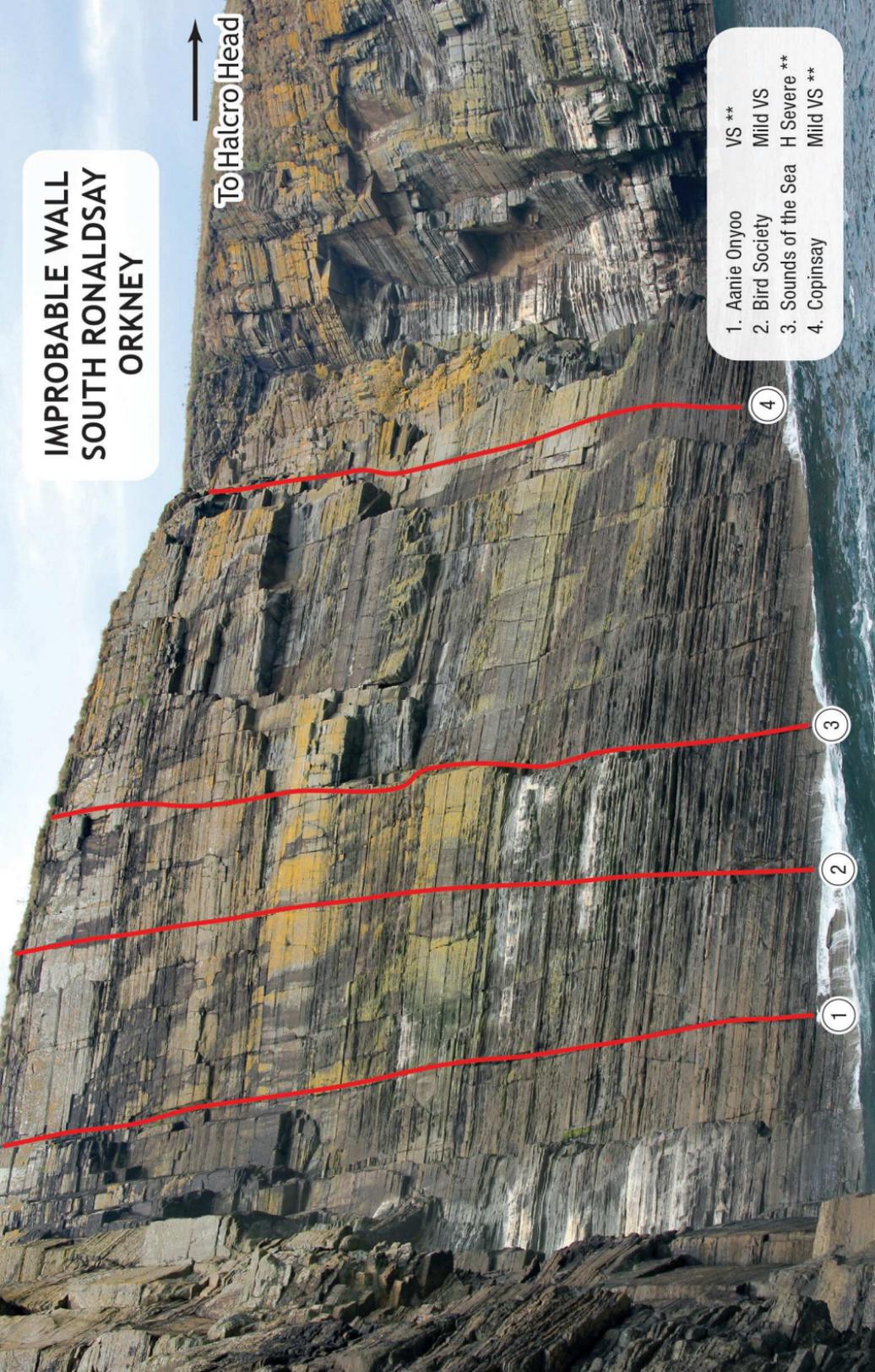
Grind of The Navir:

Navir Again 30m E4 6a ***. Gary Latter. 31 Jul 2012.

A stunning pitch up the west pillar. Start just left of the base of *Da Droiltin Tree*. Climb the arete to a good incut ledge (unprotected, but straightforward), then by a combination of the crack and right arete to a good ledge. Pull out right onto the slab, step left (good Camelot 0.1 in a small pocket) and round to good holds on the slab out left. Continue veering rightwards past several breaks to the top.

IMPROBABLE WALL SOUTH RONALDSAY ORKNEY

↑
To Halcro Head



1. Aanie Onyoo VS **
2. Bird Society Mild VS
3. Sounds of the Sea H Severe **
4. Copinsay Mild VS **

Notes: Gary Latter thought *Ponder* was E4 6a *, sustained crux with fiddly protection. *Two Tone* felt like E3 5c *. *Da Droiltn Tree* was definitely E1 5b.

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS CENTRAL

SLIOCH, Atlantic Wall:

Morgane 240m VII,8. Guy Robertson, Roger Webb. 16 Mar 2013.

Start directly beneath the prominent corner system mentioned in the description of *The Sea, The Sea*. About 10m left of the start of that route is a left-facing corner immediately left of the prow left of its turf start .

1. 30m Climb this corner to reach a terrace belay below the prominent corner.
2. 30m Climb the prominent corner to belay beneath another corner.
3. 25m Climb this corner to another terrace and belay beneath a corner that develops into a steep chimney.
4. 40m Climb the corner and chimney to belay on a blunt easier arete.
5. 30m Climb the arete (common with *Katabasis*) to reach another steep tier belay in an obvious bay slightly right of the crest.
6. 30m Climb an incipient groove on the right of the bay to reach a more defined chimney groove. Go up this and belay below another steep wall on a narrow terrace.
7. and 8. 85m Move right about 20m and then easily upwards to reach the flat top of Atlantic Wall.

There then follows 120m of grade I/II ground to the summit.

Yggdrasil 220m VIII,8. Pete MacPherson, Roger Webb. 29 Mar 2013.

About 15m in from the right arete of Atlantic Wall (*Skyline Highway*) is a very defined open left-facing corner that ends at an overhang.

1. 30m Climb the corner to a good if possibly dubious ledge under the overhang.
2. 30m Take the overhang on the right and gain the continuation corner above. Go up this to reach easier ground.
3. 30m Climb directly to the foot of a steep chimney.
4. 30m Climb the chimney and cross some easier ground to beneath a large flake-crack directly above the chimney.
5. 20m Climb the hugely entertaining flake-crack to reach easier ground.
6. and 7. 80m Continue in the same line to reach the flat top of Atlantic Wall. Continue to the summit (120m I/II).

Note: Both these routes are worth two stars and possibly more.

RUBHA MOR, Mellon Cliffs, Leacon Donna:

Undesirable Variation 6m V.Diff 4b. Mark Collins. 3 May 2011.

This route is on the wall between *Evening Aroma* and *Left Wall*. A steep start (crux) via massive jugs that reaches the mid-height terrace at its leftmost end. Follow this rightwards to its end and exit via the corner above.

Ray the Otter 8m E1 5a. Mark Collins. 6 May 2011.

The arete between *Foam* and *Squid Direct* is hard to start (crux) and leads to slabbier climbing above. Protection in *Foam* lowers the grade.

GRUINARD CRAGS

Note: At Goat Crag, Ian Taylor thought *Twillo Thunder* E5 6a **.

AN TEALLACH AREA, Beinn Dearg Mor:

Flake Buttress 300m VI,6. Simon Richardson, Roger Webb. 24 Jan 2013.

A winter ascent based on the summer line.

1. 30m Start on the right side of the buttress and follow a horizontal turfy break leading out of *Central Gully* to gain easier ground and a good stance below a clean cracked wall on the front face of the buttress.
2. 15m Climb the wall by a shallow left-facing corner then move left to a stance on the left edge of the buttress.
3. 15m Traverse left for 5m along the left wall of the buttress (overlooking the gully of *Deranged*), then climb a short steep groove to a terrace. Belay below a short undercut chimney.
4. 20m Climb the awkward slot left of the chimney, then move right towards the front face of the buttress. Trend up and right to a stance below a steep wall.
5. 20m Traverse right and climb short, steep mossy corners on the right edge before a long reach left gains stacked blocks below a steep cracked wall.
6. 30m Step left around the buttress edge and climb an easy mixed groove to the top of the initial buttress.
7. to 10. 170m Follow the narrow horizontal ridge crossing a narrow neck (70m) to join a gully line curving through the continuation buttress that lies up and left. Follow the steepening gully to gain easier ground and the top (100m).

AN TEALLACH, Ghlas Tholl, Hayfork Wall:

Note: Martin Hind notes that *Hay Heck* (SMCJ 2011) should have been graded VI,6.

AN TEALLACH, Toll an Lochain, Gobhlach Buttress:

Tweener 350m V,6. Brian Davison, Andy Nisbet. 13 Dec 2012.

A route up the face which overlooks *Central Gully*.

- 1, 2. and 3. 125m Start up a line of three chimneys forming the right edge of Gobhlach Buttress. These are in a line with *Lucky Strike*, which comes in above them. They need to be frozen, which is rare, but can easily be bypassed via *Lucky Strike*.
2. 45m On the left just above the top chimney is a slight rectangular recess with a crack-line either side. In the icy conditions, the right crack was climbed but under powder the harder left would have to be taken. After the crack, move diagonally right before a long traverse left on turf reaches the left end of the next tier. Return right above it.
3. 35m Go diagonally right on turf, climb through an overlap into an icy corner and continue right to below a steep chimney. This chimney is just right of a big V-groove with an undercut base.
4. 45m Climb the fine well protected chimney to an easing in angle. Go rightwards to enter and climb a turfy groove, leading to easy ground.
5. and 6. 100m Continue to the top of the buttress.

Corrag Bhuidhe South Buttress:

Fast Track 350m IV,4. Pat Ingram, Andy Nisbet. 10 Feb 2013.

A gully which leaves *Constabulary Couloir* to head up on to the crest of the

buttress. Start up the left side of *Constabulary Couloir* and continue to reach an icefall some 50m up from where the gully wall is fully formed. Climb the icefall and continue up snow to where the gully narrows (45m). Continue up the gully to where it splits (60m). Climb the steep left fork past two chockstones to snow on the right (45m). Go up snow to the crest and finish up this. Climbed in good icy conditions.

Police and Thieves 400m III *. Michael Barnard, Ron Dempster. 6 Apr 2013. A logical line of weakness up the right flank of South Buttress. Approach up *Constabulary Couloir* (not included in route length) to the foot of a short icefall on the left (*Fast Track*). Climb the icefall and continue up the gully above; where this starts to narrow, step right onto a large ledge (60m). Move rightwards along the ledge for 20m, then climb a turfy groove to gain a right-slanting ramp-line. Follow the ramp-line, then continue in a similar line up the snowfield above to finish up the obvious break in the top wall.

Corrag Bhuidhe:

Rongbuk 235m IV,4. Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 18 Dec 2012.

A left-hand line up the triangular buttress containing the route *Potala Buttress*. Start as for *Potala Buttress*.

1. 45m Move left as for *Potala Buttress* but then continue trending slightly left to a ledge. A serious pitch with only turf protection.
2. 45m Continue trending slightly left to reach the bottom left side of a wide shallow depression.
3. 45m Go up the left side of the depression, then go diagonally left.
4. 50m Continue trending left on turfy ground, then snow, to enter an icy gully.
5. 50m Go up the gully to reach snow. Follow this left to reach the crest of the ridge.

Note: Andy Nisbet & Jonathan Preston made a free ascent of *Potala Buttress* on 27 Dec 2012 and thought it V,5.

Lady's Gully Lower Continuation 100m II/III. Brian Davison, Andy Nisbet. 2 Feb 2013.

The fault-line which forms the gully continues down through the lowest tier and makes a very good start when fully iced. This is right of the *Swiss Approach* and the icefall start to *1978 Face Route*.

Note: From high up *Lady's Gully*, twin gullies lead off right and reach the crest between the first and second Corrag Bhuidhe pinnacles. The left is Grade III (Brian Davison, 2 Feb 2013) and the right is Grade II (Andy Nisbet 2 Feb 2013). These add more technical interest and some length to *Lady's Gully*.

THE FANNAICHS, Sgùrr nan Clach Geala:

Slanting Rib 100m III. Richard Higham, John Higham. 26 Dec 2010.

A short rib defines the right side of *Slanting Gully* and is composed of two main steps. Ascend these directly, the first easily, the second with more difficulty. Easy ground leads beyond onto the descent slopes. An alternative finish is to move left and follow the steeper upper section of *Slanting Gully*. This provided 75m of continuous ice on this ascent.

THE FANNAICHS, Creag Dubh a' Gorm Lochain (NH 237 693):

Gormless Gully 250m I. Martin Hind. 27 Dec 2012.

Climb an obvious gully cutting up and rightwards to the shoulder of a spur starting above the right end of Loch Gorm and finishing on the shoulder of *West Buttress*. At a narrowing, the chimney icefall leading up left is the start of *Roseroot*.

Wandering Gormlins 100m III. Martin Hind. 27 Dec 2012.

Near top of *Gormless Gully* a series of short icefalls form on the left-hand side. This takes the upper one leading into a runnel heading up and right of an upper rocky cliff via a narrow gully to the upper slopes. Route length an estimate.

West Buttress Chimney 190m III. Martin Hind, James Edwards. 15 Dec 2012.

Climb an obvious narrow gully right of *Gormless Gully* and keeping to the right avoiding an escape out left halfway up the lower section. Cross a snowfield and climb up through mixed section to finish. One can traverse round left into *Gormless Gully* at half-height to give a Grade II.

SGÙRR MÒR:

Blue Sky Thinking with Right-Hand Start 200m III,4. Martin Hind. 22 Feb 2013.

Start just up from base of *Easter Gully* on its left wall where an obvious icefall forms with an easier ice runnel just to right. The right-hand runnel was taken avoiding the steeper direct start. Traverse left once above the steep start and join the main line where easier ice pitches lead to snowfields above. Finish to the right of a small buttress at a point which can cornice.

Note: The direct start was climbed a few days later by Rob Bryniarski.

Happy Ravens 200m III/IV, 3/4. Martin Hind. 1 Mar 2013.

A counter line to *Gelid Groove*, taking an obvious ice runnel midway between the big ice pitch of *Gelid Groove* and *Easter Gully*. Climb the ice runnel (II) to a snowfield before taking a rising diagonal line to a left-facing groove on the upper buttress left of *Gelid Groove*. Increasing difficulty with the crux near the top.

Note: The obvious line is to take the start of *Gelid Groove* finishing up *Happy Ravens* for a classic grade IV with more sustained climbing than *Resurrection*.

BAC AN EICH, Coire Toll Lochain:

This scalloped coire lies above Gleann Chorainn and presents a steeply graded slope of 200m plus in vertical height. On the upper right-hand side of the north-east face is a much steeper section of about 100m; *Cop-Out Buttress* can be identified by a thin but prominent icefall. To the left of this, past a smaller grooved buttress and nearer the left end of the north-east face is another buttress with a tree, *Horses 4 Courses*, and to its left the spur of Sgurr Toll Lochain which faces due north with one route, *Angels Delight*. To the right of *Cop-Out Buttress* is a wide shallow gully with a solitary ice pitch in narrows at the start where the face starts to swing south-east, *Funnel Gully*.

Horses 4 Courses 100m III,4 *. John Mackenzie, Andrew Mackenzie. 12 Dec 2012.

Approach from directly below and follow broken but steep ground which may

include sections or pitches of ice separated by snow. The buttress has a section of steep brown rock running below it with potential icefalls which could join to form a continuous curtain and would extend the route considerably. The route described takes the icefalls to the right of a large icicle festooned cave which is to the right of a turf funnel.

1. 30m Climb the steep icefall direct to a difficult landing. Go more easily up mixed ground to the tree belay on the right.
2. 25m Move back down and left from the tree and climb an iced groove to reach a slab, thinly iced on this occasion. Move right to a belay.
3. 45m Move back left to the iced slab and climb this to mixed ground and a short steep step which is climbed to easier ground to finish on the plateau.

The lower section of the corrie can form ice runnels in frosty and lean conditions and the best of these can be found right of centre more or less below an open groove which lies left of *Cop-Out Buttress*.

The Narrows 100m II. Dave Broadhead, John Mackenzie. 20 Jan 2013.

A narrow groove starting not far above the loch forms a shallow gully which gave continuous ice separated by well frozen turf with steep sections. It ends on a snowfield band that crosses the face. A good way to reach the routes above and to the right.

Cop-Out Buttress Left-Hand 140m III. Dave Broadhead, John Mackenzie. 20 Jan 2013.

The route starts as for *Cop-Out Buttress* at the groove that runs directly down from the icefall above.

1. 50m An awkward initial ice bulge led up the gully groove over turf and ice to reach a poorish belay on the right wall.
2. 40m Traverse up and left on the ramp to follow the headwall left and then up right to a peg belay below a steep groove and just right of a short vertical icefall.
3. 50m Climb the steep groove to easier mixed ground and a cornice which was small on this occasion.

GLENN AFFRIC, Coire Crom:

Daft Laddie 100m III. Matt Smith. 29 Mar 2013.

The right branch of the Allt a' Choire Chruim west of Meall a' Ghraidh. Start at about 470m (NH 150 203) as Grade I with Grade II or III steps available. Higher, it became more interesting and with less scope for easy options. Finish at a nice wee icefall that might be tech 4 taken direct or 3 left to right.

GLENN STRATHFARRAR, Sgurr na Lapaich, Creag Garbh-choire:

Heart of Glass 70m IV,5 **. Simon Nadin, John Mackenzie, Neil Wilson. 30 Mar 2013

This is the innocuous looking corner to the left and marks the left-end of the crag. The second pitch gives good escalating climbing with a steep and exposed finish. Seconds falling from the top will swing rightwards!

1. 20m Climb ice and a turf bulge to belay below the tree on the left.
2. 50m The icy chimney/gully above gives mounting interest to a very steep shield of ice at the exit; some rock protection to its left. Climb this, then move right some way to good belays.

Hollow Heart 100m V,5 ***. John Mackenzie, Simon Nadin, Neil Wilson. 30 Mar 2013.

This is the route of the crag and forms a narrow straight gully near the left-hand hand of the face. Under normal conditions it is a series of chockstones with thin vertical screens but on this ascent formed a continuous icefall with good belays but limited protection and was high in the grade on the day.

1. 25m Climb an ice pitch to a cramped stance on the left.
2. 50m Climb the near vertical icefall above.
3. 25m Finish easily up the gully.

Plinth Buttress 95m IV,4 *. John Mackenzie, Neil Wilson. 16 Jan 2013.

The central buttress left of *Deer Grass Gully*. Graded for poor conditions of powder and semi-frozen turf. A potentially good line under leaner well-frozen conditions.

1. 40m Climb the left-hand of two left-slanting corners over a chockstone, then up and right to the base of a prominent gully/groove with a small tree on the left.
2. 55m Climb the gully/groove and where it steepens, take a steeper narrow groove on the right to a plinth. If well frozen climb directly up left of an icy slot, but on this ascent a left traverse from the plinth, then up, led to a saddle belay. Another 60m of Grade I ground either left (better) or right leads to more level ground.

SGURR NA MUICE, North-East Face:

Left Pork 200m V,6 **. Dave Broadhead, John Mackenzie. 24 Feb 2013.

Climb the first three pitches of *Pearls Before Swine* to the blockage where the normal route goes right. The left fork climbs up a slab and corner which is devoid of turf and requires a thin coating of ice to be possible. Well worthwhile but probably not often in condition.

1. 20m Thin ice up the slab corner leads into an overhung alcove. Stand on a sloping yardarm to reach ice above. Continue up an ice runnel to a block on the right, a sustained and interesting pitch.
2. 30m Continue up the ice chimney above to a tight exit and continue more easily.
3. 50m Continue up the gully above over minor obstacles to easy ground. The summit is not far above.

STRATHCONON, Creag Ruadh, North-East Face (SMCJ 2011):

Central Rib 120m II/III. John Mackenzie, Eve Austin. 27 Dec 2012.

Somewhat to the right of *Creag Ruadh Corner* and roughly central in the face is a narrow buttress with a prominent groove above its first pitch.

1. 25m Climb the turfey rib direct to the groove.
2. 20m A steep step leads into a bowl which is climbed direct via steep turf right of centre to easy ground.
3. 45m A narrow snow and ice gully leads up just to the right of a rocky buttress.
4. 30m Continue to the top over a short ice pitch in the narrows.

BEN WYVIS, An Cabar:

(NH 442 664) Alt 600m

The south-west face of An Cabar comes into climbable conditions given a low level freeze. Approach via the normal route from Garbat and continue along an

ATV track into the Bealach Mor until below the crags which lies on the western side of the face. The most prominent features are a square buttress with a defined edge and a prominent gully/groove. To the right of these feature and higher up are isolated ribs and shallow gullies. Descents are most easily attained by continuing up to the track on the western ridge.

President's Groove 120m III *. John Mackenzie. 2 Feb 2013.

The well defined gully/groove with a rocky right wall. The gully is a watercourse in summer and forms ice readily being well sheltered from warm winds. On this occasion it gave continuous ice with steepenings but a steeper icicle pitch at two-thirds height was avoided a few metres on the left by an overhanging shelf before the gully was regained and a tight exit up a short steep corner finished the route.

Staggies Gully 75m I/II. John Mackenzie. 2 Feb 2013.

Above and right of *President's Groove* is a well defined gully with a prominent rocky right wall. It is probably Grade I taken up the line of the gully but on this ascent the left wall was a run of ice at Grade II, leading to a cornice which extends around the exit of both variations.

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS SOUTH

BEINN SGRITHEALL:

Broch Inspector 150m V,5. Simon Richardson, Iain Small. 20 Jan 2013.

The south-east face of the north-east ridge of Beinn Sgritheall contains a schist crag, and its most prominent buttress is cut by a chockstoned gully.

1. 60m Entry into the gully is guarded by an awkward constricting groove capped by a chokestone. Struggle through this and continue up the easier continuation gully to a broad terrace.
2. 60m Climb steep turf up the continuation gully and pull through the two capping chokestones above to reach easier ground.
3. 30m Broken mixed terrain leads to the crest of the north-east ridge.

DRUIM SHIONNACH, Mid-Way Buttress:

Vice Cruise 90m III *. Steve Kennedy, Andy MacDonald. 31 Mar 2013.

The broad buttress right of *Mid-Way Gully*, starting about 15m right of the gully at a break in the lower wall. Climb up and right into a prominent fault-line which leads into a left-facing corner which is followed (45m). From the top of the corner, move left and continue directly by a shallow depression leading to easier ground (45m).

Creag Coire an-t Slugain:

Undercover 70m IV,4 *. Steve Kennedy, Andy MacDonald. 31 Mar 2013.

The small isolated buttress immediately left of *Far Left Gully*. Start right of the lowest rocks and climb a steep chimney-groove (crux), then move leftwards to easier ground (45m). Continue up the crest and finish via a nice snow arete (25m).

AONACH AIR CHRITH, Coire nan Eirecheanach:

Manic Depression 130m IV,4 *. Steve Kennedy, Andy MacDonald. 13 Apr 2013.

The right-hand of two prominent parallel buttresses, separated by an easy gully, situated high on the right (west) side of the corrie. Start above and right of the foot of the buttress and climb an obvious groove come gully containing a steep ice pitch at the bottom. Belay left of a roofed alcove at the top of the groove (50m). Continue fairly directly in the same line following a vague depression to reach the crest of the buttress (50m). Finish easily up the crest (30m).

CREAG NAN DAMH:

Fraoch Choire Icefall 150m V,5. Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet. 27 Mar 2013.

A waterfall in the valley which leads up east of Creag nan Damh, and marked as a waterfall at NG 995 116 on the 1:50000 map. North facing. Park at NG 990 131 and follow an old forestry track up through the forest. Turn left at the top boundary fence and follow this for a short distance to meet a stalkers' path which leads to the icefall. Some 90m of Grade II/III ice leads to the 30m crux pitch. This was a helpful shape, as wind seemed to have blown water on to a hanging slab on the left, and was perhaps only IV,5 on the day but would be much harder as a straight pillar. An easier 30m pitch followed. Rock belays.

BEINN FHADA, Coire an Sgarine:

World's End 120m III,4. Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 21 Dec 2012.

A big groove left of the crest of the leftmost (excluding Atta Buttress) buttress is not seen well until high enough up the corrie to be level with the buttress. The groove was iced and the Mayan prediction of the end of the world that day didn't happen. It would be distinctly harder without ice. Climb steep snow to the first step (10m). Climb the turfy lower groove (35m). Gain the big clean V-shape and climb this to a terrace (50m). Go up the left side of a huge block and gain its top. Step left and climb easy turf to the top (25m).

Mayan Gully 150m I. Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 21 Dec 2012.

A snow gully forming the right side of the leftmost buttress might have two short icy steps in lean conditions. Used for descent.

Grandstand 100m III,4. Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 24 Mar 2013.

The buttress right of *Mayan Gully* is *Rumbling Ridge* (SMCJ 2011). This route climbs the gully wall of the ridge. Start just inside the gully and climb a ramp leading up left to a platform overlooking the gully. Continue for a short way, then take a turf groove which leads to the crest, followed to the top (as for *Rumbling Ridge*).

The End is Nigh 120m II/III. Jonathan Preston. 21 Dec 2012.

The buttress right of *Mayan Gully* is *Rumbling Ridge* (SMCJ 2011). This is the gully between it and the next buttress. A steep start, then easier.

Doomsday 120m III,4. Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet. 21 Dec 2012.

The next buttress to the right. Start up a short steep groove with an awkward bulge. The main buttress now has a central heathery groove which curves left over a difficult step before returning right to the crest. Climb an easier groove up the crest leading to increasingly easy ground.

Cataclysm 100m III,5. Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 24 Mar 2013.

A gully right of *Doomsday* often ices but there was little on this occasion. Easy after the first pitch.

Skinny Buttress 100m III,6. Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 24 Mar 2013.

The narrow buttress formed between *Fatties* and *Lightning Gullies*. Start up *Fatties Gully* to reach a recess on the steeper left side of the buttress. Climb this and continue up left to below a roof formed by a wedged block. Pull through the roof (crux by far) and continue left on turf to reach an easy finish up the crest. The crest could be climbed throughout but might feel escapable on to the easier right side of the buttress.

INVERINATE FOREST:

Eas Bhan 60m II/III. Andy Nisbet. 28 Mar 2013.

A waterfall on the Allt an Eas Bhain at NG 974 239, alt 400m. The ice was thin and wet; might be Grade II in better conditions. Approach from Dorusduain up forestry tracks, then fight your way through the last forest to where it is clearly seen.

SGURR NA FEARTAIG, Coire Leiridh:

Boyo's Groove 100m IV,4. Greg Parsons, Stephen Venables. 23 Mar 2013. (see topo)

Takes the left and more obvious of two grooves slanting out right from the upper part of the big deep set gully. Climb easily up the gully and exit right onto turf ledges to reach the start of the groove, which is climbed in two long pitches. Sparse but adequate rock belays and runners.

SGORR RUADH, Upper Buttress:

Original Route 170m V,6 **. David Amos, Andy Nisbet. 21 Mar 2013.

A winter ascent of the summer line up the crest. As noted in the guide, it seems very unlikely that this is what was climbed in 1973 at Grade III. The first pitch was the crux, steep but helpful and generally well protected. The through route was not found but there was deep snow on the route.

MAOL CHEAN-DEARG, Summit Buttress:

(NG 926 500) Alt 830m North-East facing

A steep sandstone cliff under the summit area and just right of the upper section of *Hidden Gully*. The cliff was approached from the summit by descending *Hidden Gully* (which is Grade I, not II) to reach the base of a defined rib on its north side. Traverse north under the cliff. Below the cliff is more broken steep ground and the quartzite cliff with *No Birds* etc. is further below.

Hidden Rib 150m II. Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 28 Nov 2012.

The well defined rib which forms the north side of upper *Hidden Gully*. There are several short steep steps, mostly climbed just right of the crest. Moderate in summer (Andy Nisbet, 22 Jun 2011).

Bald Eagle 100m IV,4. Pat Ingram, Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 28 Nov 2012.

Takes the easiest line in the centre of the cliff.

1. 20m Climb a turfy step in the lowest tier, then traverse right to below a left-slanting line of weakness.
2. 50m Climb the left-slanting line of weakness to a ledge below a steep upper tier.
3. 30m Move right and go up a short steep corner which leads to a right-slanting line, followed to the top.

MEALL GORM:

Note: On an ascent of *Rattlesnake* by Keith Ball & Dave Rudkin in Feb 2013, the corner was climbed direct throughout whereas the original ascent left it briefly. The grade was thought VI,7. This is thought to have been climbed before.

SGURR A' CHAORACHAIN, Far North Buttresses:

Allt Coire nan Arr 200m III. Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet. 30 Mar 2013.

A branch of the main stream which flows down the descent depression (NG 788 430) and can freeze to form continuous ice with four main steps of the grade with easier sections in between and even a through route on ice. The stream continues below where the route started but was not frozen. The first three pitches were all in a gully but the top pitch is more open and wider, and has been climbed before.

BEINN BHAN, Coire na Feola:

Suspended Animation 150m VIII,9 **. Pete Macpherson, Martin Moran. 16 Jan 2013.

A direct line up the steepest section of the big wall on the right side of *Suspense Gully*. Pitch 3 is comparable to the crux of *God Delusion*. Start 10m up the right gully at the first horizontal break in the wall.

1. 30m 8 Traverse 6m along the break and climb a wall to a higher break, then go strenuously over a bulge into a right-facing corner. Break out left to a ledge and ascend diagonally left to a terrace; block belays under a bottomless chimney.
2. 25m 6 Move up under the chimney but traverse 4m right and climb a rather more friendly right-facing corner. Belay 10m higher under a belt of overhangs.
3. 40m 9 Traverse 10m left and climb to a higher ledge. Go up the corner above for 4m and traverse 4m right to a rib; then make precarious moves up to a tiny ledge and continue to a resting hold at a block – an intense passage. Traverse 4m right to a spike and climb the open-book corner directly above on thin hooks to easier ground. Belay 6m higher at a terrace.
4. 20m 6 Climb the corner directly above to a big terrace.
5. 40m Easy ground to the top.

Note: Martin Moran thinks the quickest approach to routes on Suspense Wall is to climb the slopes NW from Tornapress and over the summit ridge (Pt 763m) then drop down *Suspense Gully* to the start, 2hr in ascent. The top of *Suspense Gully* is easily located at a kink in the ridge just before a steeper rise (NG 810 442).

Fleshpot 250m V,5. John Lyall, Andy Nisbet. 26 Jan 2013.

The rib which forms the right side of *Y-Gully*. Start as for *Indigenous* but then traverse left to the base of the rib (60m). Climb a groove in the rib to a steepening. Traverse left to the crest of the rib and climb this to snow. Move back right to a continuation groove (40m). Climb the continuation over a steep and poorly protected section, then take a ramp leading back left to the crest and a snow terrace (45m). Go up the easier rib crest (35m) to an easy finish (70m).

Coire na Poite:

Advice from a Caterpillar 180m III,4. Dave Riley, Rob Reglinski, Rick Hines. 26 Jan 2013.

The deceptively steep buttress to the right of *Teapot* and ending on the A' Chioch Ridge below its main difficulties. Start up and to the right of the lowest broken rocks on the buttress beneath a series of parallel corners. Climb a depression to their left past a short wall and continue via turf steps until beneath a more continuous rocky section. Go up a steep groove then trend right for 15m to a short hard corner (crux). Pull strenuously through this and continue to easier ground and follow this to the top of the ridge.

Haigha 340m VI,7 **. Malcolm Bass, Simon Yearsley. 22 Jan 2013.

An enjoyable direct route up the left-hand side of the buttress cutting across *Adventures of Toad*. The climb is characterised by technical climbing in a series of barrier walls interspersed by easier turf sections.

1. 40m Start 20m right of the foot of *March Hare's Gully* at a right-slanting groove. Climb this and continue straight up easier ground. Climb a short corner to a blocky ledge beneath a steep wall.
2. 50m Climb the obvious narrow ramp on the right for 20m (technical and bold). Go up and slightly left to a snow terrace beneath a steep barrier wall.
3. 55m. There are a series of open grooves in the barrier wall. The next pitch takes the groove third right from the left-hand buttress crest (crux). Climb this past an in-situ peg, a needle shaped block in an alcove, and then a large clump of turf just above this at half-height. Once above the wall climb straight up to the next steep wall and belay below a right-facing corner of creaking flakes. The *Adventures of Toad* traverses in from the left here and continues to the right.
4. 50m Climb the creaking flake-corner for 3m to a good turf ledge. Continue up the fine V-groove with a steep pull out the top, then easier ground to a large snow terrace. Above is yet another barrier wall with a number of grooves cutting through it.
5. 55m Climb the left-trending narrow flakey corner (to the left of a right-tending turf corner with a rock spire at its base). Gaining the flakey corner is tricky, but the corner is steep but positive. Climb easier ground and a 3m steep wall.
6. and 7. 90m The angle eases; climb to the top by a succession of walls and corners. The climbing remains fun.

Silver Machine 320m VI,6. Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 26 Mar 2013.

A mixed line left of *Silver Tear*. Start just inside *Mad Hatter's Gully* where a slabby fault leads out right. Go diagonally right across snow to slabby ground (15m). Climb up on turf to follow a ledge right, then continue diagonally up the

fault (40m). After a steeper step, continue up the fault to its end (50m). Go left up a short chimney before climbing straight up on mixed ground (45m). Continue up towards an upper barrier wall (the top ice pitch of *Silver Tear* breaks through this further right), then move slightly right towards a point where the barrier wall is at its smallest (45m). Go through a short steep tier until directly below the barrier wall (15m). Make steep moves up to a ledge below a turfy open corner. Climb a crack-line and turf some 5m right of the corner to another ledge. Climb a corner above until forced to move right on turf to a terrace (25m). Climb up on turf before moving right behind a pinnacle. Go up a wide crack to the upper snow slopes (25m). Climb these to the top (60m).

A' Phoit:

Bhantage Point 200m III,4. Andy Nisbet. 19 Jan 2013.

A prominent left-slanting fault in the centre of the face between *Bhantasia* and *Beinn Bhan Grooves*. Climbed and graded for well frozen conditions with some ice. Start below the lowest tier and climb the lower continuation of the fault to reach its steepest section at the main cliff. Climb this, steep but helpful, and continue up the fault past one further steep section to where the fault peters out. Finish straight up turfy ground.

BEINN DAMH, Creagan Dubh Toll nam Biast:

Fawn Gully 250m II. Andy Nisbet. 27 Jan 2013.

A left-slanting gully in the centre of the furthest right buttress (but *Creag na h-Iolaire* is further right). Climb this gully, avoiding three steep steps by using its left rib, until it peters out. Go up snow to a final rock band which was climbed diagonally rightwards.

Stirrup Rib 350m III. David Amos, Andy Nisbet. 20 Mar 2013.

The rib right of *Stirrup Gully* gave a natural line up a line of grooves for several pitches before finishing up a well defined but easier crest. Being north facing, it was in condition when some of the east facing routes had been stripped by the sun.

DIABAIG:

Atomic Bimble 60m VS 5a. Ferdia Earle, Andy Moles. 15 Jul 2012.

An unbalanced route and open to variation, but with some good climbing. It takes a fairly direct line up a buttress above the approach path to the Main Wall with a large angular boulder at its base, about 50m before the *Pointless Eliminates* buttress. Start just right of the big angular block at the base of the cliff.

1. 15m 4b Pull on steeply to gain leftward-trending cracks, left of the big open groove in the middle of the lower wall. Follow the cracks until it is possible to traverse right into an overhung niche. Pull over the bulge above on good holds.
2. 20m 4a Climb the left side of the scrappy slab above to a big grassy terrace.
3. 25m 5a Climb an obvious left-slanting diagonal crack in the red wall above (crux) to a big quartz slot. Go up this and trend rightwards onto the slab above. Finish easily.

LIATHACH, Meall Dearg, North Face:

Spring Roll 250m IV,4. Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet. 31 Mar 2013.

A gully system right of *Spring Gully*. Start some 50m right of *Spring Gully* and

climb a snow gully leading right, then go up a large gully to a steep wall with twin grooves above (80m). Climb a chimney to gain the right groove and follow it to a terrace (30m, crux). Move into the left groove and follow it to easier ground near the rib right of *Spring Gully* (50m). Follow the rib to snow slopes above (90m). Continue to the top of Meall Dearg.

BEINN EIGHE, Far East Wall:

Immortal Memory 100m IX,9. Guy Robertson, Jason Currie. 26 Jan 2013.

A top class winter-only route based on the prominent line between *Colgarra* and *King of the Swingers*. Start not far left from the base of the latter route, where turfy grooves and steps lead up left to a shallow chimney.

1. 30m Gain and climb the chimney to ledges, then traverse left to a fine belay below a right-facing roofed corner.
2. 30m Climb the deceptively steep corner to the first roof, take a deep breath, then traverse right and pull over its right side to some turf below the next roof. Turn this in a similar fashion, then climb a steep turfy groove to a semi-hanging stance with a good thread.
3. 40m Continue directly up the crack-line above, go over a bulge, then kinking slightly right to below another roof. Pull directly over this, move up on thin turf, then step right into a corner. Climb this to an overhang, then pull back out left and up into the final trough and so to the top.

West Central Wall:

Shoot the Breeze IX,8. Guy Robertson, Greg Boswell. 15 Jan 2013.

A superb and absorbing mixed route. The first two pitches are as for summer, but on the third pitch instead of returning straight to the arete climb the overhanging grooves directly above the belay which lead back to the arete below the final overhangs. The climbing is extremely sustained and very well-protected apart from a nasty section to gain the arete on pitch 2.

Sail Mhor:

Lightning Jack 140m VI,6 *. Michael Barnard, James Duthie. 20 Jan 2013.

Climbs a three-tiered line of weakness up the centre of the wall left of *Achilles*. Start just left of the base of that route, below a vertical square-cut chimney.

1. 55m Start up a left-facing corner before stepping right then up to climb the chimney. Continue more easily up a turfy corner, moving left then back right and up to gain the terrace. Walk back to belay below a steep left-facing corner leading up to a roof.
2. 35m Climb the corner until a thin move can be made along a good foot ledge. Step round into a groove on the right then move up through a short corner to gain the next terrace. Belay below the continuation fault.
3. 50m Climb the continuation fault to easy ground right of *White's Gully*.

Lucky Strike 85m IV,4 *. James Duthie, Michael Barnard. 19 Jan 2013.

Left of *Lightning Jack* is another line of weakness, a deep chimney which would make a fine prelude to *Cave Gully*. Avoid the lowest tier on the left and move up to below the chimney.

1. 40m Go up an easy snow groove to the base of the chimney.
2. 45m Climb the chimney to easy ground near *White's Gully*.

Cave Gully, Left-Hand Finish 35m IV,4. Michael Barnard, James Duthie. 19 Jan 2013.

Probably not as good but allows the route to be climbed without ice.

3. 10m From the cave belay move left along a break (serious) to gain the crest of the buttress.

4. 25m Go up and left into a turfy groove leading to easy ground.

CAIRNGORMS

COIRE AN T-SNEACHDA, Mess of Pottage:

Spotlight 105m E1. John Lyall, Dave McGimpsey. 11 Aug 2012.

Start at a triangular recess 5m right of *Wachacha*.

1. 25m 5a Take the left edge of the recess to a steep wall, and move up rightwards to flakes glued onto the wall. Move back left and delicately gain the slab above, then follow the right-facing corner to the horizontal cave of *No Blue Skies*. Belay at the right end.

2. 30m 4c Step right across *No Blue Skies* and follow a groove through a break in the roof, then follow the slabby curving groove to ledges.

3. 15m Short walls to beneath twin cracks in the headwall, under the large roof.

4. 35m 5a Follow the left-hand crack for 5m, then move to the right-hand crack and follow this to the large roof. Finish on the right by *The Melting Pot*.

Aladdin's Buttress:

Note: Michael Barnard climbed the fault-line right of and parallel to *Paddy Whack*, gained from the right (50m, IV,5, Jan 2013) but due to a peg and nut in-situ, assumed it has been climbed before (but not recorded).

Fluted Buttress:

Fingers Ridge, Left Start VS. Hamish Burns, John Lyall. Sep 2008.

An inferior start up the left rib of *Broken Gully*, with a delicate 4c section up a crack overlooking the gully. The route continues straight up the rib above the *Broken Gully* traverse.

COIRE AN LOCHAIN, No. 3 Buttress:

Karmasutra 50m IV,7. Ian Stewart, Nathan White. 3 Nov 2012.

A prominent V-corner right of *The Deviant* and left of *Y-Gully Left Branch*. Climb to and up the corner till below a steep overhanging wall. Move right around the arete and continue up easier ground to the top. The grade is for early season powder and would be easier if iced; some may bank out with a big build-up.

Candy Shop 75m VII,9. Guy Robertson, Greg Boswell. Nov 2012.

A worthwhile addition giving a long pitch up the steep wall right of *The Gathering*. Climb up to where *The Gathering* steps left, but continue up for another 10m or so to below a short corner leading to overhanging cracks in the leaning wall (30m). Climb the corner and above, the pumpy crack which turns into a groove system where the angle eases. Continue up the grooves avoiding a final wide crack on the right (45m).



David Moy on The Needle, Shelterstone Crag. (Returning 45 years after making the first 'English ascent'!) Photo: Andy Tibbs.

CREAGAN COIRE A' CHA-NO:

Captain Fairweather 60m III,4. Simon Richardson, Roger Webb. 30 Dec 2012.

A direct line up the rightmost rib of Blood Buttress to the right of *The Blood is Strong*.

1. 40m Climb the right side of the steep lower wall defending the rib and continue up the steep twisting corner above to a good stance below a steep corner-crack.

2. 20m Move up a left into the corner-crack (junction with *The Blood is Strong*) and follow this to the top.

Gallows Groove VI,7. Dafydd Morris, Matt Buchanan. 16 Dec 2012.

Follow the initial narrow chimney of *Arch Wall* to a ledge, then follow the lower of two grooves rightwards across the steep slab (crux) on thin moves aiming for a turf blocky chimney and continue up this to the top.

One Finger, One Thumb 45m IV,4/5. Jon Hubbard, Chris Edmonson, Chris Brook. 9 Mar 2013.

Start as for *Fingers and Thumbs*. When the corner is reached, start to thrutch and twist up the broken twin cracks to the right of it gaining easier ground to finish. Exit on the right of the small snow bowl.

Dive In 60m II. Sandra McCabe, Mark Beecher. 26th Jan 2013.

Follow the open gully to the right of the wall to the right of *Fingers and Thumbs*. Branch right at approx 10m from the top. The top may have a deep cornice hence the name!

CNAP COIRE NA SPREIDHE (NJ 015 050):

Just under the summit of Cnap Coire na Spreidhe and overlooking Strath Nethy lies a small buttress. Approach by scrambling down the south side down a grassy gully.

Nethy Arete 30m HVS 5a *. Gwilym Lynn, Raphael Bleakley, Rik Higham. 19 Aug 2012.

Climbs the right arete as closely as possible. Follow the arete to a short corner and step out left from under the roof to regain the face. Follow the upper part of the arete to finish.

Nethy Crack 30m VS 4c *. Rik Higham, Raphael Bleakley, Gwilym Lynn. 19 Aug 2012.

Climb the first obvious crack about 5m to the left of the arete. Follow the crack initially on its left side before climbing it directly to the top.

STACAN DUBHA:

Thread of Doom 220m III,4. Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 24 Dec 2012.

The line of least resistance between *The Shuttle* and *Atlantis* (SMCJ 2012). Start up a scoop left of the initial rib of *The Shuttle*, moving left and right at a steepening, then moving right to climb grooves which lead to a left-rising snow terrace under an overhanging wall (50m). Follow the terrace up left to a deep chimney which breaks back right through the wall (70m). Climb the chimney,

then up easier grooves above (50m). Finish more easily (50m).

CARN ETCHACHAN, Upper Tier:

Snake Charmer Severe. John Lyall. 8 Sep 2012.

Follow the winter line.

GARBH UISGE CRAG:

Muscovite Chimney 120m IV,4. George McEwan, Allen Fyffe. 23 Feb 2013.

This route lies on the left side of the broad buttress between *Garbh* and *Quartz* Gullies and takes an icy chimney at about mid-height. Start at the lower left corner of the buttress and climb up by short rock steps and snow patches to a prominent outcrop with a vertical right wall. Head up and left into the obvious chimney. Climb this to the top and exit left onto the rib. Climb the continuation groove to the upper snow slopes then the top.

LURCHERS CRAG:

Note: John Lyall & Andy Nisbet made a harder start to *Pinnacle Ridge* on 8 Feb 2013, by starting low down on the *South Gully* side of the ridge and following a line of weakness up left to the crest (50m).

SRON NA LAIRIGE:

Tsar Wars 200m IV,5. Pat Ingram, Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 5 Nov 2012.

Climbs the slabby left face of the buttress with *Polar Bear* up its crest. Near the left end of the base of this buttress is a wide groove.

1. 60m Climb a shallow groove in the crest just right of this, then climb a continuation of the wide groove to reach a steep band.
2. 10m Traverse right to a groove come corner.
3. 30m Climb turf to a bulge, then go over the bulge and continue to an easing. Follow the same line, then move right to belay 10m below a large flat block which lies across a groove.
4. 35m Climb the groove over the flat block, then move left and back right to avoid a smooth section before finishing steeply to a horizontal crest.
5. 65m A buttress on the left leads to an easy crest and final slopes.

SGOR GAOITH, A' Phocaid:

Skinflint 150m II. Andy Nisbet. 29 Dec 2012.

The front face of the buttress right of *Deep Pockets* (*Spymaster* and *Mixed Spice* are on the right wall of the gully). Start at the base of the buttress, just right of *Deep Pockets*. Climb straight up to the left edge of a snowfield, which is bounded by a steep wall on its left. Follow the steep wall up to the right side of a triangular rock shape. Break through the wall using this right side (short but technical for the grade) to gain a smaller snowfield. Finish up a groove leading to easier ground.

Lookout Rib 150m IV,4. Andy Nisbet. 29 Dec 2012.

The rib right of *Spyglass Gully* was surprisingly thin. Start up the rib to gain and climb a prominent steepening groove. Where this peters out, move left on to the crest and follow this to a ramp trending right and leading to easy ground.

CÀRN BÀN MÒR, Coire Odhar:

Where the Carn Ban Mor plateau overlooks Coire Odhar, there are a group of buttresses. At the NW end of the group are three short steep ridges, then next to the SE is a larger buttress at NN 904 971.

Rampletiltskin 120m IV,4. Andy Nisbet. 29 Dec 2012.

Start just left of the base of the buttress. Climb a big easy ramp curving right. Where it peters out, traverse right across two awkward gaps to gain its continuation. Go up this to a steep icefall, followed to the crest and an easy finish.

A' BHUIDHEANACH BHEAG (Drumochter):

The climbing isn't continuous and mostly escapable on the gully sides. However, both gullies provided some very pleasant water ice climbing and great scenery in a very quiet location.

Ski Sunday 120m III. Jonathan Foden, Martin Holland. 31 Mar 2013.

The stream gully line (right fork) leaving Cama' Choire at NN 685 785 contains several waterfalls. The gully may bank out completely in very heavy snow.

1. From where the gully splits take the right-hand fork in two ice steps of 6m and 15m.
2. A horizontal section leads to the main 25m icefall, which is climbed direct.
3. Another horizontal section leads to a 10m icefall.
4. Easy ground and short ice steps lead to the top.

Barrow Boys 100m III. Jonathan Foden, Martin Holland. 6 Apr 2013.

The north facing stream gully leaving Cama' Choire on at NN 6890 7865 is mostly easy angled snow, but contains one stepped icefall at mid-height, and which gives a good 50m pitch. Easier lines possible to the right. The gully may bank out in very heavy snow.

Barrow Boys, Left Fork 50m II. Jonathan Foden, Martin W. Holland. 6 Apr 2013.

From the base of the waterfall pitch on *Barrow Boys*, a line of ice leads up left around a small crag and narrows to a thin gully containing several saplings before finishing on the snow slope above (turf or snow belay). This may be a more reliable alternative if the ice pitch on *Barrow Boys* isn't formed and the main gully can be regained above.

CAIRN TOUL, Coire an t-Saighdeir:

Steadfast Corner 60m II. Simon Richardson. 6 Jan 2013.

The distinctive corner-gully 30m to the right of *Resolute Gully* has a prominent left wall.

Two-Tier Buttress 80m II. Simon Richardson. 6 Jan 2013.

Follow easy grooves up the crest of the broad buttress that defines the left side of the prominent gully in the centre of the crag. This rises to point 1167m on the lowest point on the plateau rim and lies 300m north of the previous route.

Coire Lochain Uaine:

Double Distance 80m IV,4. Roger Everett, Simon Richardson. 27 Oct 2012.

The buttress between the gullies of *Double Helix* and *Double Trouble*.

1. 25m Climb easy steps up the lower slabs to below a prominent left-facing corner.
2. 20m Climb the corner, exit right at its top, then make a delicate series of moves up the wall above to a small stance.
3. 35m Continue up the slab above, and exit up the corner above that leads to the summit of the buttress. Continue across the neck and finish up easier slopes above.

BRAERIACH, Garbh Choire Mor:

Adventure 150m V,5. Sandy Allan, Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet. 4 Mar 2013.

An iced groove immediately right of the arete which forms the right side of the corner system of *Positive Charge*. It would seem to be unusual for the groove to be iced and yet the cornice passable, as perhaps the largest cornice of the corrie forms here. Start up steep snow just left of the Grade I gully which bounds this section on the right (40m). Gain and climb the groove, which has a large spike on its right wall at half-height, to reach an easier angle and a slight rib on the right (50m). Continue up snow and an icy groove to below the cornice (30m). The cornice was large but was climbed (with difficulty) by traversing left over the arete and finishing above the groove of *Positive Charge* (30m).

Jackpot 150m III. Andy Nisbet. 11 Jan 2013.

An iced groove some 10m right of the previous route. It was early season and the cornice had collapsed, so no problems. Start up the Grade I gully for around 30m (depend on build-up) before gaining the groove.

Coire Ruadh, Main Crag:

The Apparition 100m IV,4. Simon Richardson, Graham Dudley. 18 Nov 2012.

The longest line on the cliff following the left crest of the crag. Start at the toe of the cliff below a distinctive right-facing corner-line.

1. 50m Climb the corner to its top by a jammed block and continue up short walls and grooves to a good ledge. A fun 'climb anywhere' pitch.
2. 15m Move up and right past a steep nose to the left-slanting terrace above.
3. 35m Climb a left-facing corner (about 5m left of the distinctive flake passed by *Persistence Wall*), traverse right and move up to the top of the barrier wall above. Move steeply left and finish directly up the crest to the top.

Phantom Cracks 70m III. Simon Richardson, Roger Everett, 11 Nov 2012.

A direct line up the centre of the crag. Start at the same point as *Persistence Wall* and climb straight up the broad corner-depression, which steepens at mid-height.

There are two lines up the broad Birthday Buttress, right of *Phantom Cracks*.

Anniversary Groove 80m III. Simon Richardson. 25 Nov 2012.

About 20m right of *Phantom Cracks* a line of turf leads up via a series of steps and short grooves to a prominent horizontal flat jammed block after 60m. Climb onto this from the left and continue up to an exit in the snow scoop above.

Birthday Treat 80m III. Graham Dudley, Simon Richardson. 18 Nov 2012.
The right-hand line up Birthday Buttress follows the distinctive left-facing corner-line in its lower section. Follow this over a couple of awkward steps to reach a ledge on the left. Continue up a depression of huge blocks to the top.

Lower down the corrie, on the dividing ridge between Coire an Lochain and Coire Ruadh is a small compact crag. The routes are described from left to right.

Enterprise Corner 80m II. Simon Richardson. 25 Nov 2012.
The turfy line up the big left-facing corner bounding the left side of the cliff. The climbing becomes steeper with height and finishes with a steep step on a distinctive triangular block.

Eye of the Tiger 80m III. Simon Richardson. 25 Nov 2012.
A good climb up the prominent line of weakness just left of centre. Follow a series of short grooves and corners trending left where the angle eases. Finish up the right side of a converging triangular corner to make a sudden exit on to the ridge crest.

Tempting Fate 80m V,6. Roger Webb, Simon Richardson. 13 Jan 2013.
The line of steep corners defining the right side of the central pillar to the right of *Eye of the Tiger*.

1. 30m Start at the toe of the buttress and climb an easy left-slanting ramp to reach a terrace and the foot of the corner system.
2. 20m Move right and climb a slabby corner to where it steepens. Hand-traverse left and make a difficult exit onto a ledge. Another awkward step up and left leads to a good stance.
3. 30m Traverse 5m left to gain a hidden chimney that leads to easier ground and the top.

Hostage to Fortune 80m III,4. Simon Richardson, Roger Webb. 13 Jan 2013.
Right of centre is another prominent corner-line. Start at the toe of the buttress and climb easy ground to gain the line of the corner. Climb this more steeply and take the natural continuation trending left to the top.

Coire an Lochain:

Blade Buttress 60m IV,4. Simon Richardson, Roger Everett. 11 Nov 2012.
The prominent narrow buttress diving the two branches of *Y-Gully*.

1. 40m Start at the foot of the buttress and climb a short corner and awkward slabby step on the left flank to enter the prominent corner cutting the lower left side of the buttress. Climb the corner to near its top, exit right onto the crest, then step left across the corner to gain a good ledge.
2. 20m Continue past a prominent flake to reach the easier upper buttress that merges into snow slopes at the top of *Y-Gully*.

The Guardsman 100m VI,6. Roger Webb, Simon Richardson. 4 Nov 2012.
A good sustained route up the prominent left edge of *Derelict Buttress*.

1. 15m Start at the foot of the left edge and climb a short steep left-facing corner and ramp that leads to a narrow terrace. Traverse left across this and belay below a well-defined right-facing corner.

2. 20m Climb the corner, exit right at its top and move up the ridge above to below a steep blank wall.
3. 10m Step right and climb the shallow crack running up the centre of the wall to a steep turf exit (bold). Belay a few metres above.
4. 40m Move up and left on flakes to gain the crest. Step left and climb a steep crack on the left wall (overlooking the gully of *Dishonourable Discharge*) to regain the crest. Move up to the final tower and surmount this via an overhanging corner.
5. 15m Finish easily along the connecting ridge to the plateau as for *Derelict Buttress*.

DERRY CAIRNGORM, Coire na Saobhaidh:

(NJ 027 955) Alt 750m East Facing

This corrie lying near on the southern end of the Derry Cairngorm ridge and overlooking Glen Derry is home to the following route:

Power of Balance 55m HVS 4b. Michael Barnard. 9 Sep 2012.

Climbs the obvious line up the main slab in the centre of the corrie (well seen from Glen Derry). Good clean rock but takes a while to dry. There is little or no protection. Start below the left end of a small grassy ledge. Move up to the ledge then step right and climb the slab past a small overlap to gain the main fault-line on the left. Climb this up through a shallow corner to the bulge at the top. Step onto the slab on the right and pad up to a sidepull (crux). Step back into the fault-line and follow this, finishing up a large flake (45m). To belay continue up heather to the rowan tree (cracks in wall behind this).

BEN MACDUI, Coire Sputan Dearg, Spider Buttress:

Tarantula 45m E2 *. Michael Barnard, John Nelson. 19 Aug 2012.

Climbs the small buttress formed between the corner of *The Web* and a grassy fault further right.

1. 20m 5b Start up a left-facing corner to a ledge, then continue up a fault in the steep wall above to a tricky exit onto the slab (crux). Move up a ramp to the left edge of the buttress then climb through the groove above to the large mid-height ledge.
2. 25m 4c Move up right to climb a line of excellent flake-cracks in the wall above. Continue easily to the top.

Terminal Buttress:

Flame Sky 50m E2 *. Michael Barnard, John Nelson. 19 Aug 2012.

A good sustained route cutting through *The Chute*. Bold and delicate on both crux sections.

1. 20m 5b Climb the arete left of *The Chute* (bold) to belay on top of the jammed block (right end).
2. 30m 5b Move up to climb through the roof to a ledge. Follow the shallow groove above (bold and delicate) to a good horizontal break, then continue more easily up to below the top prow. Climb steeply past the right side of this to finish.

Note: *The Swing* is good and fair at VS but certainly not low in the grade. 4c, possibly 5a (not 4b).

BEINN A' BHUIRD, Dividing Buttress:

Kissy Klub 20m E3 5b. Gaz Marshall. 21 Jul 2012.

A blank slab solo between the two obvious converging cracks in the slab just above the Smith-Winram Bivouac.

Sentinel Buttress 180m V,6 *. Simon Yearsley, Neil Silver. 27 Dec 2012.

A pleasant climb taking the obvious buttress between *Sentinel Route* and *Sentinel Gully*. Start at the foot of the buttress, just left of *Sentinel Gully*.

1. 50m Climb the right-trending ramp line just on the right of the buttress crest for 25m. Pull up into an open corner and at its top, teeter rightwards across a slab to a steep turf wall which is climbed to a belay in a fine position on the buttress crest.

2. 50m Immediately right of the belay is a short steep groove. Pull up this, then move slightly left and follow easier ground up for 5m. Swing right across two difficult ribs to gain the fine bottomless V-groove. Climb the groove with a steep exit and move up to belays.

3. 80m Easier ground leads to the upper part of *Sentinel Gully*. Cross this and finish up the open buttress on the right.

Note: The ascent was in very icy conditions, with heavy rime/hoar on most of the buttress.

MOUNT KEEN, Quartz Cliff:

Although from the 1:50000 map, this looks to be a smaller version of the grassy corrie 'Corrach' seen on the Glen Tanar approach to Mt Keen, on inspection the Quartz Cliff turns about to be a long, 25 to 50m high-angled slab of knobby quartzite providing some very good climbing. Probably best avoided in the nesting season. Generally sound, though with the odd loose flake and block, often vegetated, but with some superb clean sections. Approach in about 1.5hrs by cycling to the Shiel of Glentanar, following a track west to the waterfall, and striking diagonally up the hill via deer tracks in deep heather to the crag, which remains completely hidden until the very last moment. Sheltered and west facing and gets a lot of afternoon sun. Two of the routes were originally climbed in 2 pitches as only a minimal rack was carried in.

The Roaring 25m VS 4c. Iain Young, Trevor Jones. Oct 2011.

As the crag increases in height from the north end, the initial slabs become increasingly clean until they terminate in a prominent arete. Start just left of this and climb up and right to gain the arete at the base of a solid white quartz bulge. Pull over this and then step left to climb a clean slab to a poorly protected finish in a heathery scoop. Significantly more than 25m of rope is needed to belay well back on some blocks.

Heliotrope Wall 50m VS 4b. Iain Young, Trevor Jones. Mar 2011.

The left centre of the cliff is dominated by a fine sweep of clean rock. Start just right of a large detached block at its base and pull on to a ledge/ramp that leads up and left to a steep shallow groove (just right of a bigger left-facing corner). Go up the groove for a couple of moves and then launch up and right across the wall before climbing directly upwards. Runners do appear in some surprising places. Finish via some layback cracks and a smooth scoop, just right of a heathery recess.

This Glorious Land 45m HVS 5a. Iain Young, Trevor Jones. Jul 2011.

Right of *Heliotrope Wall* there is a heathery break up and right of which is a fine high-angled slab split by a system of flakes running up and rightwards. Under this slab is a vegetated, overhung recess. Start on the right of this recess and gain and climb a wide crack on the right side of a huge, alarming-looking block. Move up and leftwards from the top of the block to gain a short horizontal crack (possible belay). Move right from this into a shallow scoop and then climb upwards and just to the right of the flakes to a huge jug below a small overlap. Step right and layback the flake until a move right can be made to finish up the arete on the left of a grassy gully.

LOCHNAGAR, Perseverance Wall:

Ring of Fire 80m IV,4. Simon Richardson. 27 Apr 2013.

A direct line up the third rib taken by the start to *Lunar Eclipse*. Start at same point as *Lunar Eclipse* and climb the right side of the initial slabby wall by a crack and short awkward chimney to gain a higher ramp line. Follow this to near its top and break out right up a hanging groove to exit at the apex of the lower wall. Continue directly up the well-defined rib above that leads to a snow arete and break in the cornice.

Pick Curler 80m III,4. Simon Richardson. 27 Apr 2013.

The rib between the groove lines of *Cumberland* and *Temptress*. Start by climbing the prominent V-groove (crux – ice useful) between *Delilah* and *Cumberland* to reach a snow patch. Cross *Cumberland* and weave left and right between short walls and blocky towers to gain the top of the rib. The final snow slope of *The Gift* leads to the cornice.

Sinister Buttress:

Insurgent 120m VI,7. Roger Webb, Simon Richardson. 16 Dec 2012.

A winter version of *Direct Route*. Start by climbing easy ground to the foot of the prominent chimney, then make a difficult move up and left to gain a vegetated groove. Climb this to near its top, then make a strenuous traverse right over the chimney above its overhanging pitch. Move right across steep ground on the right to gain a prominent overhung corner. The route up to this point is the same as the summer line, which then takes the overhung corner. Instead, continue slightly right and climb a steep left-slanting ramp above to reach easier ground. From here, climb the broad snowy ramp up right, then trend back left beyond the little tower. The easier upper section is the same as the winter line *Terrorist*, which starts further right and climbs the overhung corner.

Central Buttress:

Fancy Free 60m VII,9. Guy Robertson, Pete Benson, Greg Boswell. Mar 2012.

Another excellent short route, with a desperate but well-protected crux, based on the next big groove left of *Footloose*.

1. 20m Climb the first pitch of *Mantichore* (the first pitch of *Footloose* is an alternative).
2. 20m Step down and go horizontally left, then back up to below a short left-leaning corner below the main groove line. Climb the short corner with much difficulty but excellent protection to a belay in the main groove.

3. 20m Climb the excellent sustained groove to a difficult exit out left.

Parallel Buttress:

Parallel Grooves 90m VII,9. Guy Robertson, Pete Benson. Mar 2012.

An excellent variation start to *Parallel Buttress* with three pitches up the obvious grooves in its lower right edge, overlooking *Parallel Gully B*. A hard but very safe crux; the first ascent had useful ice. Start just left of *Parallel Gully B*.

1. 25m Gain and follow the obvious icy groove system, stepping right past a large overhang to a belay 10m above.
2. 25m Continue up the groove with increasing difficulty to get established on a small ledge on the left wall, then pull out left at the top.
3. 40m Follow the now left-trending groove and corner system with continued interest to a junction with the original route at the base of the shelf / ramp overlooking the *Parallel Gully B*.

Tough-Brown Face:

Nevermore X,10. Nick Bullock, Guy Robertson. Apr 2013.

A magnificent and super-sustained route, very strenuous and technical but well-protected on pitch 2, and very tenuous and serious on pitch 5. The start of the fourth pitch is bold also. Follow the summer line throughout, belaying as for *Mort* after the second pitch, then making a short descending traverse on pitch 3 to regain the groove line. Pitch 5 is probably the crux – very tenuous – breaching the roof above the belay, with the only protection thereafter a small clutch of pieces at the top of the groove.

Note: *Mort* was repeated by Greg Boswell, Guy Robertson & Nick Bullock in March 2013, confirming the grade. The technical grade may have increased following the demise of a good foothold on the lip of the roof.

Clais Rathadan:

The Gravestone 30m VI,7 **. Craig Lamb, Findlay Cranston. 5 Dec 2012.

Start at the wide crack below the small tree. Climb this and pull onto a ledge to gain the slab. Climb the slab via a series of crack-lines on good hooks, before traversing right to the small tree at a two-thirds height sloping ledge, sustained but excellent. Gain the ledge via an awkward mantel round the tree. Step up and left, to either escape on the right at VI,6, or traverse left to take on a twin crack-line in the headwall before pulling through the boulder roof at the top, VI 7.

Note: Led by the easier option. One yo-yo.

Coire Loch nan Eun:

Leaning Buttress is the next feature left (east) of Balloon Buttress. It is cut by twin grooves on its front face and the whole buttress leans to the left.

Leaning Tower 40m II. Simon Richardson. 20 Apr 2013.

A steep start gains the left-hand groove, which leads to an exit on the left.

Puzzling World 40m III. Simon Richardson. 20 Apr 2013.

Another steep start leads into the right-hand groove-line. Follow this past a steepening to reach a small snow patch and continue up the impending narrow flake-groove above. When this steepens, step boldly up and right onto the crest

and continue more easily to the top.

The impressive west facing sheet of granite at NO 235 856 is set at a moderate angle and largely banks out in winter. An icefall forms on its right side and provides a straightforward early (or late) season route.

Cac Carn Fall 150m II. Simon Richardson. 20 Apr 2013.

Climb the icefall passing a steeper step at two-thirds height to exit on snow slopes above.

Eun Corner 150m I. Simon Richardson. 20 Apr 2013.

A right-facing corner 50m left of *Cac Carn Fall* provides a straightforward way up the crag when well banked out with snow.

CREAG AN DUBH LOCH, Central Gully Wall:

Vapouriser 140m VIII,8 ****. Guy Robertson, Greg Boswell. 11 Dec 2012.

A stunning winter line cutting up directly through *Vertigo Wall* and finishing up the obvious right-trending slot above the headwall. Brilliant climbing, steeper, icier and more sustained than the original. On the first ascent conditions elsewhere on the cliff were not great, but the route had substantial ice on every pitch. Start a short way down the gully from *Vertigo Wall* where a slab leads right to the start of the line.

1. 10m Make an awkward traverse right across the slab to gain the line proper (may bank out).
2. 40m Climb an icy crack and steep bulge directly, then traverse left across a slab before heading back right into steep icy grooves which lead boldly and with sustained interest to a commodious niche.
3. 40m Climb the icy overhanging chimney above onto snow-ice which leads to a junction with *Vertigo Wall* above the ice chimney on its third pitch. Follow *Vertigo Wall* for 10m but then break out onto the bulging left-hand icefall and follow this up a steep runnel to belay at a huge platform below the headwall.
4. 20m The next pitch is common to the *More Vertigo Variation*. Climb a short ice bulge on the right, then crawl left along the ledge to an alarming swing down onto the exposed edge. Follow more ice up and trend right to the Diving Board belay.
5. 30m Gain the icy slot above and climb this with sustained interest (but good protection) in a wild position to a steep pull out left onto turf. Easier ground now leads up and slightly leftwards to the top.

COIRE KANDER:

Nordwanderer 200m IV,4. Geoff Cohen, Raymond Simpson, Mike Thoules. 10 Feb 2011.

From the lowest point in *Y-Gully*, climb a 30m ice covered slab on the left, cross a snow bay and take the most direct ice line through broken ground to convex snow slopes and the plateau.

Twisted Groove 200m IV,4. Graham Penny, Raymond Simpson. 28 Feb 2011.

From the bottom of the right wall of *Twisting Gully*, an icy V-groove curves up and left to join a long ice pitch. Convex snow slopes lead to the plateau.

GLEN CLOVA, Coire Farchal:

Age Before Beauty 150m III. Simon Richardson, Henning Wackerhage. 1 Jan 2013.

The left-facing corner system to the left of *The Art of Growing Old Gracefully*. Follow easy-angled ice in the corner to a steep step at about 100m. Surmount this via a long reach up a turfey wall on the right to reach easier ground and the top.

The Art of Growing Old Gracefully 150m III,4. Simon Richardson, Henning Wackerhage. 1 Jan 2013.

The prominent gully about 100m left of *Farchal Gully* cutting through the full height of the crag. Climb the lower gully over a couple of steep steps to the final steep chimney. Climb this via a steep crack on the left wall. A good route and possible in lean conditions. Later in the season it may bank out (rare) and become Grade II.

Silver Threads Among the Gold 150m IV,5. Henning Wackerhage, Simon Richardson, Tim Chappell. 10 Mar 2013.

An excellent route taking the crest of the prominent buttress defining the right edge of *The Art of Growing Old Gracefully*.

1. 50m Start just right of the gully and climb the corner-ramp cutting through the left side of the lower wall. Above, continue right via a steep chimney and climb two steep walls to a terrace.

2. 40m Climb the centre of the short impending headwall above and continue through the chimney splitting the giant boulder above. Belay on the prominent terrace.

3. 50m Ascend the headwall by climbing first right, then left up a steep turfey wall to reach an easier gully leading to the top.

Pearls Before Swine 150m III,4. Henning Wackerhage, Simon Richardson. 1 Jan 2013.

A line up the right flank of the *Silver Threads* buttress. Climb the steep fault-line defining the bottom right side of the buttress to reach a prominent break. Continue delicately up and right by a shallow groove to reach a long ledge below the steep final tier. Move right along a ramp and step left into a well-defined finishing gully that leads to the top.

Brains Before Brawn 130m III. Simon Richardson. 13 Apr 2013.

The well-defined gully-groove to the right of *Pearls Before Swine* provides a logical line up the cliff. Start up a steep vegetated groove (crux), then follow the curling groove above to a terrace and a steep exit just right of the finishing gully of *Pearls Before Swine*.

Farchal Ramp 150m III. Simon Richardson. 13 Apr 2013.

The prominent ramp starting from the foot of *Farchal Gully* is the most prominent line of weakness on the cliff. Follow it to below a steep buttress well defined gully that leads right of the buttress to the top.

Pipe and Slippers 150m III. Simon Richardson, Henning Wackerhage, Tim Chappell. 10 Mar 2013.

A line up the centre of the right-bounding crest of the cliff

1. 60m Start near the foot of the buttress and climb a right-trending corner-gully to a terrace. Continue directly up the heathery wall above to a large boulder.
2. 40m Continue up the steep-looking step above via excellent turf corners and short walls.
3. 50m Continue in the same line up the buttress crest to the top.

Unnamed 130m III. Simon Richardson. 13 Apr 2013.

The right flank of the right-bounding crest. Start 30m right of *Pipe and Slippers* and climb a short steep corner to the terrace. Move right and take the short stepped ramp through the wall above. This leads to a second terrace and a well-defined gully on the right flank of the buttress. At its top continue up easier ground right of the buttress crest to the plateau.

Winter Corrie:

Stalingrad 100m VI 6 **. Brian Duthie, Forrest Templeton. 2 Feb 2013.

This route follows the left corner of the wide stepped square-cut groove right of *Sun Rock Blues*. *Moon Ice Jazz* follows a line that approximates the right-hand corner of this feature. The climb has tenuous technical sections and limited protection in places but follows a natural line with some interesting rock. Start at the off width crack to the left of the overhanging overlap at the foot of the feature and about 15m up from the start of *Sun Rock Blues*.

1. 35m Climb this with some difficulty using a crack on the left wall. Break into the off-width and gain the top of the overlap. Move up to the next overlap and cross this. Move right to overcome a second smaller overlap on good ice. Move diagonally left to enter the corner. Follow the corner-line until forced right slightly before breaking back left using icy/vegetated grooves. Belay in a corner with a protective roof beside a large cracked block.
2. 30m Step up left onto the cracked block, then step rightwards over it and follow the groove until a ledge is reached which leads left onto *Sun Rock Blues*. Move up slightly rightwards to rejoin the groove line. Climb up a snow slope to belay just above an obvious flake on a ledge below the final corner pitch. The final pitch can be escaped by moving left onto *Sun Rock Blues* at this point.
3. 35m Move easily up into the base of an overhanging groove and break out right onto a slabby ramp. Move up and right into a left-facing corner system until below an obvious overlap. Follow the corner by climbing over the bulge and continue to a second icier bulge. Climb this to a ledge system which leads leftwards to the top belay at the end of the difficulties on *Sun Rock Blues*. Climb one final undercut bulge before moving up and right to a large isolated boulder. Follow easy mixed ground for 60m to the plateau.

Lynx Variation to Wild Cat Wall 40m IV,4. Bill Church, Brian Findlay, Greg Strange. 24 Feb 2013.

This ice line climbs ramps on the right wall of the introductory gully to *Wild Cat Wall*. Beyond the chokestone, climb a short ice pillar to gain a ramp. Follow this out right, then up and left to a ledge (25m). Continue up right on thinly iced slabs to reach easy ground below the basin.

Grampian Club Buttress 70m IV,5. Kevin Murphy, Forrest Templeton. 29 Mar 2013.

A mixed line up the small buttress between the gully start of *Wildcat Wall* and



Brian Findlay on the *Lynx Variation (IV,4)*, *Winter Corrie*, *Glen Clova*. Photo: Greg Strange.

Pinnacle Gully. Start at the base of the compact area of buttress to the left and below of *Pinnacle Gully*. Follow a groove line, veering slightly leftwards to a horizontal ledge system. From its left end, a corner system was taken over a couple of bulges to ledges below a steep head wall immediately right of a narrow chimney (50m). Climb the thrutchy chimney before moving out left below the capping chokestone (20m, but belay well back). There was an old peg at the base of the chimney.

Note: Raymond Simpson's partner on the FWA of *Diamond Slab* (1980) was Lew Cass.

Corrie Fee:

Frozen Forest 220m IV,4. Robbie Miller, Henning Wackerhage. 10 Feb & 17 Mar 2013.

Start at a right-trending icy groove to the right of *The Wild Places* (as drawn in the Cairngorms guidebook).

1. 40m Easily ascend the ramp to a tree below an icy left-facing corner.
2. 50m Traverse left, climb an icefall and then climb a turfey line just to the right of the large overhanging rock band which splits the face.
3. 30m Traverse left above the large corner on the left onto easy ground on the upper face.
4. 50m Climb the gully line to the right of the buttress to reach a left-facing ramp on the highest buttress..
5. 50m Climb the ramp and then turfey ground to the top.

Clava Direct 265m V.6. Robbie Miller, Henning Wackerhage. 10 Feb & 17 Mar 2013.

Start as for *Frozen Forest*.

1. 40m Easily ascend the ramp to a tree belay below an icy left-facing corner.
2. 50m Climb the icy corner above to reach a ledge for another tree belay to the left of the large overhanging niche.
3. 50m Traverse right on ice into the niche and then up to the steep chimney above. Do not climb the chimney but instead traverse left to reach another groove with trees to another tree belay (common with *The Wild Places*).
4. 25m Climb easily directly to the bottom of the buttress above.
5. 50m Climb corners to reach the top of the buttress and via a saddle reach the bottom of the highest buttress.
6. 50m Climb a left-facing corner and then follow a steep crack on the right to a ledge. Climb an overhang with good hooks (crux). Traverse to the bottom of an offwidth crack and climb this to the top.

Note: Both routes are on the face to the right of *Look C Gully*. The original FA routes crossed each other but the described lines are more logical.

Corrie Sharroch:

Note: Martin Cooper & Elliot Palmer on 30 Dec 2011 climbed an obvious buttress at the left end of the band of crags that form the east facing flank of A Buttress. It is bounded by an obvious gully to the left and a further smaller buttress to the left again. The foot of the buttress is at NO 254 743. Climb the right side of steeper rocks to the top of an obvious ramp that rises across the buttress from the left. From the ramp climb through a hole to exit via a step to gain the crest of the buttress. Follow the crest to an overhanging crack. Climb this or the shorter corner to the left (easier). Follow the crest to the top.

WATER OF SAUGHS (Glen Lethnot), Corrie na Berran (SMCJ 2011 p486):

Note: *S Gully* was climbed by Greg Strange on 19 Dec 1999 and *Pythagoras* by Bill Church, Brian Findlay, Bob Ross & Greg Strange on 6 Mar 1994.

The steep triangular wall mentioned in the description of *S Gully* is dominated centrally by an impressive hanging icefall dubbed the *Berran Appendix*. To its left, below *Isosceles*, is a wide curtain of ice. This was climbed on its right side by Brian Findlay & Greg Strange on 21 Jan 2001 (*Cateran* 45m IV,4).

GLEN PROSEN, Bawhelps:

Walk up Glen Prosen to reach the white glen. Bawhelps is the broken crag on the western side facing north-west. It offers some mostly easy gully lines.

Zig Zag 150m I. Robbie Miller, Henning Wackerhage. 24 Feb 2013.

Start at the top right corner of the snow bay. Climb the clearly defined snow gully, then zigzag up the crag.

Prozac 120m II. Robbie Miller, Henning Wackerhage. 24 Feb 2013.

Right of *Zig Zag* is a left-slanting gully and right again is an icy corner. Climb this for 40m. Above several easy variations are possible.

Pro 100m I. Robbie Miller, Henning Wackerhage. 24 Feb 2013.
Climb the well defined short gully at the right end of the crag.

GLEN PROSEN, South Craig:

Brian's Ramp 75m IV,4. Forest Templeton, Piotr Wisthal, Henning Wackerhage. 20 Jan 2013.

Start just to the right of the large deep corner.

1. 25m Climb up to a squeeze chimney and then climb the slab to the right of the corner.
2. 50m Climb the lower or higher icy ramp and then turfy ground to the top.

Polish Parade 90m III. Robbie Miller, Henning Wackerhage. 27 Jan 2013.

Start to the right of *Brian's Ramp* where there is a turfy line.

1. 50m Climb mixed ground to reach a gully line.
2. 40m Climb the gully line to the end.

NORTH-EAST OUTCROPS

Long Slough:

A Momentary Lapse of Reason 12m E1 5a. Michael Barnard, David Bird. 23 Apr 2013.

Climb the arete left of *Leaning Meanie* to gain and finish up the obvious hanging groove. Good climbing with reasonable protection but with some suspect blocks near the top.

Pink Band Cliff (NEO p119):

As the current guide states, a neglected cliff but hopefully the addition of the following routes will change this and make it a worthy companion to its near neighbour Earnsheugh. The rock is excellent at the base but deteriorates with height but is mostly sound although the occasional crumbly hold will be encountered. It requires similar conditions to Earnsheugh but big seas would prevent climbing here.

Pink Fink 20m E1 5c *. Piotr Wisthal, Tim Rankin. Sep 2012.

Just right of *Frontier Rib* the cliff turns inland a little and forms a slight arete. This route climbs the fine puckered wall and obvious wide crack on the right side of the arete to swing round onto the left side of the arete and a finish up *Frontier Rib*.

Pink Elephant 20m E2 5b **. Tim Rankin, Piotr Wisthal. Sep 2012.

Just right again is a longer crack starting at 8m and leading almost to the top of the cliff. Start up the huge slanting groove. From the first hand slot in the back of the groove, reach out left to jugs on the right edge of the puckered wall. Move up to good hidden pockets above an obvious slot in the lip of a roof (good cam). Use a good side pull to reach left to the base of the crack. Follow the crack with sustained interest until its top, step left and finish past a thin hollow flake with care. Very sustained but well protected.

Tickled Pink 20m E5 6a **. Tim Rankin, Piotr Wisthal. Sep 2012.

Probably the best route on the wall. Climb the huge slinging groove until forced out onto the right wall, then up twin cracks to a jug. Climb pockets to a good break, step left and make a hard move up to a good hold (small cam in break on left). Move up again to a jug below a small overlap. Now tackle the pink band above direct to a good side pull below a roof. Pull over this and move up left to a good break. Finish leftwards. Great sustained climbing.

Pretty in Pink 20m E6 6a *. Tim Rankin, Piotr Wisthal. Sep 2012.

Another good very sustained route. Follow *Tickled Pink* to the good break, then move right into the short hanging corner. Go up this to a rest on the right at the start of the pink band. Move back left to boldly climb the pink band firstly leftwards (0 Friend in slot on left), then right to a good pocket. Continue straight up to better holds and a poor rest before a sustained finish straight up.

Red Band Cliff (NEO p119):

Impregator 20m E1 5b **. Tim Rankin, Russell Birkett. 23 Sep 2012.

Climb the rib as for *Breach Birth* but continue up the edge to a perch. Step left onto a granite slab and climb the steep wall above to good holds at the obvious ledge. Now move right and up to the arete. Climb the steep arete in a fine position to finish. Finishing left from the ledge is easier and less satisfying.

Viper 20m E3 5c *. Tim Rankin, Neil Morrison. Summer 2012.

Climb *Strainer* to a large triangle niche; pull out right onto the wall at a good break, then climb the overhanging wall direct. At its top step right and pull over to the top of the *Arachnid* crack. Make an interesting finish up the left edge of the red band past a superb pocket.

Moth in Molasses 20m E7 6c *. Tim Rankin, Neil Morrison. Summer 2012.

Climb the direct start to *Colander Wall* then follow that route to a comfortable perch. *Colander Wall* now takes the wall on the right but instead climb the thin crack directly above to gain a good break beneath the roof (eliminate but good). Reach out to holds on the lip of the roof, then make desperate moves over the roof and up the wall to finish. Escape is possible below the roof into *Strainer* but this is before the hard climbing. Head pointed.

Orchestra Cave (NEO p126):

Resinate 30m E4 5c *. Tim Rankin, Graham Tyldesley. Spring 2012.

The obvious line of weakness just right of the short sport route (*Mad Cows*) up the full height of the cave and finishing up an exposed hanging groove. Start just right of *Mad Cows* below twin cracks. Climb an easy groove to a ledge, then climb the cracks with an excursion right to start. Continue up the line of weakness above and at its top step out left to the ledge before returning right to steeply gain a line leading right and up into the hanging final groove. Exit out the top left of this to finish. Reasonable protection but often behind resinating blocks on the upper wall.

Little O Wall:

This is the fine wall just south of Orchestra Cave and is clearly seen when using the south approach access to the cave. Unfortunately it seeps for much of the

year and has bird issues during the nesting season probably explaining its neglect for so long. However when dry and bird free, it offers excellent climbing on immaculate rock. The best time to attempt climbing here would appear to be either in a dry spring or autumn. Approach as for Orchestra Cave down the V. Diff chimney and walk south or by abseil.

Choir Boy 18m E2 5c ***. Tim Rankin, Graham Tyldesley. Spring 2012.

An obvious central feature of the cliff is two groove lines separated by a shorter roof topped groove. This route climbs the right-hand line which forms a slot and fine crack higher up. Start up an undercut arete just right of the roof topped groove. Make powerful moves up and through the red granite band, then follow a thin hanging crack to the groove proper at the slot. Continue up the fine crack above to the top. A top quality route very well protected except one bold move higher up.

Berrymuir Head:

A small cliff to the south of the main cliff at Berrymuir Head, west of the Sea Nose. The following route lies on its north wall.

Snappy Crack 10m VS 4b. Gwilym Lynn, James Prowse. 20 Aug 2012.

Climbs the J-shaped crack starting from the left side.

PASS OF BALLATER:

Note: Iain Small on 11 Mar 2012 climbed a route on the wall to the right of *Anger and Lust*, to the right of the E4 direct finish but to the left of *Lech Gates*, probably at E6 6b.

CLACHNABEN:

Various winter routes have been recorded on Clachnaben, but it is not known whether records are complete, so the following may have been climbed before. On 15 Jan 2013, Henning Wackerhage & Simon Richardson made a winter ascent of *Central Gully* (IV,4), and on 30 Mar 2013 Simon Richardson made a winter ascent of *Micro Route* (III,5). On the same day, Richardson also climbed the prominent groove-line left of *South-East Gully* – *Southern Groove* (II) and the turf wall just right of *Fissure Feugh* – *North End* (II).

HIGHLAND OUTCROPS

GLEN NEVIS, What Wee Wall:

Die Another Day E7 6b. Jules Lines (solo). 11 Apr 2013.

The direct finish to *Carpe Diem*. Where the original goes left, climb direct up the bulging wall on tinies to the left of a vertical seam to reach a sidepull on the left. Using this, exit into a scoop. Easier if chalked.

Whale Rock:

Hold Fast, Hold True 20m E(a lot). Jules Lines. 16 May 2013.

The true finish of *Hold Fast* (which is E9 7a!). Where the original traverses off left at half-height, shake out and launch up the wall on distant hidden holds to

reach a flake jug. Follow flakes up and right to finish. Protectionless, although there could be a possible poor skyhook at half-height. The top section is a grade easier than the lower section but far more serious. It probably adds a half to a full E grade and an extra star of quality to the original route. A world class solo.

Caldera Crags:

(NN 170 699) Alt 650m

Tiers of granite slabs of excellent rock quality lying some way up the steep slope directly above the Steall car park. The crags are easily seen from the car park, some way right of the water slide. Approach directly up the slope in 45mins. Most of the lines (yet unclimbed) dry quickly although some are affected by seeps after heavy rain.

Pallor 15m E7 6b **. Dave MacLeod. 26 Jul 2012.

Climbs the attractive smooth lower tier near the right side of the smooth slab. Start a few metres left of an obvious shallow groove. Climb up a few metres on the curving overlap and arrange some cams which will only stop you rolling down the hill if you fall from the climbing above. Step right and climb directly to the attractive crescent feature. This provides good respite and a chance to consider whether you want to commit to the very serious crux above. Continue directly, thin, to reach ledges just below the top. Headpointed.

Wafflin' Blues 15m E2 5c. Kevin Shields. 27 Feb 2013.

The obvious groove to the right of *Pallor*. Climb over a small roof onto the blank slab to finish. Take boots to walk off or pre-rig a lower-off.

CREAG NA H-EIGHE:

Wacky Mullets 12m E1 5a *. Michael Barnard, Graeme Watson. 31 Jul 2012.

A good bold route up the wall between *Woodworm* and *Jaggy Bunnets*. Start at the base of the latter and follow the initial arete to a ledge. Reach up to place a small RP and continue delicately up the wall to below the roof (first good protection). Step back right to the arete and surmount the top bulge.

Hit the h-Eighe 15m E1 5c *. Michael Barnard (unsec). 31 Jul 2012.

Right of the direct start to *Jugs* is a thin crack. Climb this (crux) then continue directly up the steep wall above to gain the block on *Just a Pech*. Finish as for that route.

Note: *Separation* is good, definitely worth a star.

BEN NEVIS, AONACHS, CREAG MEAGAIH

Little Brenva Face:

Grooverider 30m V.6. Pete Davies, Donie O'Sullivan, Ross Cowie. 1 Feb 2013.

A steep rock wall between *Ramsay Gray* and *Right Major* (2011) contains a nice mixed pitch up a steep groove about 5m right of the prominent hanging icicle

that forms here. It was gained by easier angled ground and finished on the big snow field above the icicle, which was followed to join the rest of *Route Major*.

North-East Buttress, First Platform:

Note: Guy Robertson & Pete Macpherson made an ascent of the complete summer line of *Steam Train* in Apr 2013 to provide an excellent sustained and well-protected VII,7.

Orion Face:

Urban Spaceman, Suburban Spaceman Start 65m VII,8. Iain Small, Robin Clothier, Doug Hawthorn. 30 Mar 2013.

An alternative start to *Urban Spaceman* based on the overhung gully defining the right side of the Great Slab Rib. Start as for *Urban Spaceman*, but instead of moving on the crest of the Great Slab Rib continue up the gully to its right. This culminates in a cul de sac that is breached by a thin ice streak on the left wall to reach the top of the second pitch of the original route. On the first ascent, unconsolidated snow in the gully approaching the cul de sac (possibly a normal occurrence), added to the difficulty.

Note: Robin Clothier & Richard Bentley on 23 Feb 2013, started up *Astronomy*, continued up *The Black Hole, Urban Spaceman, Smith-Holt Route*, then two new pitches to reach a point overlooking the Basin. They climbed a chimney left of *Epsilon Chimney*, continued up *Zybernaught*, and followed pitch four of *Space Invaders* to join *Journey into Space*. A long snow slope then led to the summit cairn of *North-East Buttress*. They called it *Shooting Star* 500m VI,6.

Spaced Out 240m VII,7. Iain Small, Murdo Jamieson, Nick Bullock. 6 Apr 2013.

A direct route between *Space Invaders* and *Journey into Space* on the Orion headwall. From the top left corner of the Basin an easier pitch leads to an obvious V-groove in two steps to a good ledge and belay, then a steep corner with a stepped arete and more open groove above that tackles the steepest part of the headwall. Excellent climbing on thinly iced slabs.

Observatory Buttress:

Deadly Presence 330m VIII,7. Iain Small, Doug Hawthorn. 22 Feb 2013.

A serious thin ice route up the wall up and left of the ramp of *Left Edge Route*. The route serves as a natural continuation to *Appointment with Fear* (which joins *Left Edge Route* for its third pitch).

1. and 2. 70m Climb the first two pitches of *Appointment with Fear* to its junction with *Left Edge Route* (normally climbed as a single long pitch).
2. 60m Step left onto the steep left wall, and climb it on thin ice to the *Girdle Traverse* ledge. A serious and committing lead.
3. 60m Continue up the two icy walls above. Another bold pitch.
4. to 6. 140m Finish up the *Direct Finish to Left Edge Route*.

The Wolves are Running 200m VII,7. Iain Small, Simon Richardson. 16 Mar 2013.

A direct ascent of Observatory Buttress just right of *Rubicon Wall* with a steep finish up the vertical headwall. Climbed in rare icy conditions with some poorly

attached ice. The grade assumes optimum ice conditions.

1. 50m Start at the lowest left toe of the buttress and climb a right-slanting ramp onto the front face. Continue up iced slabs to a stance below a steep left-facing corner (taken by *Atlantis*).
2. 60m Climb the wall left of the corner and trend up and right to the terrace of *Observatory Buttress Direct*, which is joined after 20m. Break through the steep wall directly above (bold) and continue up a series of thinly iced walls and slabs to below a steep groove system that cuts through the left side of the headwall.
3. 40m Climb the lower groove to gain a tenuous set of terraces trending up and right. Move left to gain a distinctive groove and climb this on this ice to an exposed ledge at its top. The final ice wall looms above. Step down and left and climb a thin groove in the vertical icefall above to reach easier ground.
4. 50m Easier angled ice followed by snow leads to a good rock belay near the top of the *Girdle Traverse* ledge.

Night of the White Russians 260m VII,6 **. Pete Davies, Tim Marsh, Donie O'Sullivan. 16 Mar 2013.

Icy mixed climbing that links a superb first pitch on the steep right flank, with an attractive icy corner above the depression. Low in the grade as good wires protect the hardest climbing on P1 and the section of serious climbing on P4 is short. Start 20m left of *North-West Face* at the right arete of a steep slab that bounds the left edge of a snowy corner.

1. 50m Climb the arete for a few moves, then traverse left into the centre of the slab. Climb straight up to reach a well defined, right-slanting groove beneath an area of steeper rock. Climb the groove using a thin ice smear. Follow the upper groove direct and belay on the left, where the angle eases.
2. 60m Climb a wide, ice-choked crack up the centre of easier angled mixed ground to reach the *Girdle Traverse* ledge.
3. 45m Move left and climb to the very top of the depression on *Observatory Buttress*. Belay at the base of an icy corner capped by a prominent square roof.
4. 55m Climb the corner to the roof. Move boldly rightwards under the roof on steep thin ice to reach an easier chimney leading to a snow arete.
5. 40m Follow the snow arete to the plateau.

Tower Ridge, East Flank:

Angry Chair 80m VII,8 *. Dave MacLeod, Helen Rennard. 26 Feb 2013.

This route follows steep corners and cracks on the wall right of *Clefhanger*. The wall is often in condition when other buttresses are bare. Start 15m right of *Clefhanger*, below the left side of a snowy recess in the cliff.

1. 25m Climb up snowy ledges to the base of a prominent arete. Just left of this is a shallow corner-crack which opens into a ramp. Climb this passing a dubious flake and belay at the top of the ramp.
2. 30m Step left around a block and climb the steep corner directly above with strenuous climbing. At its top move left onto a ledge formed by a huge perched block (the angry chair).
3. 25m From the top of the block, make a bold traverse along a thin rail to gain the icy ramps 5m to the left. Finish up the ice ramps and belay at the top of the snow slope above. An exit left can be made from here on snow into *Tower Gully*.

Douglas Boulder:

Jackknife, the Off-road Finish 30m IV,4. Michael Barnard, Ron Dempster. 27 Dec 2012.

A more independent final pitch giving a longer route. From the belay above pitch 2 step down left and go up a short crack onto a ledge. Climb the corner at the back of the ledge and continue up through the obvious square-cut chimney above.

Secondary Tower Ridge:

Beggars Belief 190m VII,7 *. Simon Yearsley, Helen Rennard. 16 Jan 2013.

An absorbing climb taking a right-curving line left of *Vanishing Gully*. The climb is quite high in its grade. Start as for *Beggar's Groove* (the chimney midway between *1934 Route* and *Vanishing Gully*).

1. 30m Climb the chimney to a grassy ledge, then the slabby rocks immediately on the right for 10m.

2. 40m The open groove above leads to a large block. Traverse left over the block to a ledge and climb the steep wall 2m left of a brown V-groove. A square flake at half-height provides a welcome runner. At the top of the wall, move diagonally up and left, then straight up to another (slightly booming) block. Cross the short thin slab on the left to belay just short of the arete.

3. 30m Move up and left round the arete, and climb down into the snowy gully (*1934 Route*). Move up the gully for 5m until a short groove lead up to steeper ground. Care with rope drag on this pitch.

4. 40m Climb upwards to reach a wide, right-sloping easy angled ramp. Climb this to its top with a fine belay on the sharp crest.

5. 50m Move down and right and pull up the short steep wall. Climb the vertical crack and then a committing mantelshelf up and right onto a small patch of turf on the blunt rib. Move up a few metres, then follow a well-positioned turf slab rightwards, then up to finish on the traverse line around Little Tower. A precarious pitch.

From the top of pitch 5, it is straightforward to either descend *Tower Ridge* (as on first ascent), or continue up the ridge to the summit.

Secondary Tower Ridge:

No Success Like Failure 110m IX,8. Iain Small, Simon Richardson. 2 Feb 2013.

A sustained and technical mixed route taking the slim elegant corner running up the steep front face of *Rogue's Rib*. It is undercut at its base, and defended by several roofs along its length.

1. 30m Start at the bottom left side of the buttress and climb an easy ramp that undercuts the main mass of the buttress to a point where it narrows and steepens. Above is a possible overhanging direct entry into the groove, but instead, climb a short steep corner to a sloping stance on the front right side of the buttress. (This point can also be reached by climbing slabby ground from the right toe of the buttress – as climbed by Iain Small and Blair Fyffe on 27 Dec 2012 on a previous attempt on the line).

2. 30m Traverse 5m left to enter the groove and follow it, exiting left near its top to bypass a large roof, to gain a small stance.

3. 30m Continue up the groove to a prominent double roof. Levitate through this and climb the groove above to gain a foothold stance on the left.

4. 20m Continue up the continuation of the corner above, then traverse right

across a vertical wall to avoid the capping roof. Step left on to the crest above and move easily up to broken ground at the top of the initial section of the buttress.

From here, either continue up *Rogue's Rib Direct* or descend by abseil. One long abseil from a large block leads to the junction of *Italian Climb* and *Italian Right-Hand*. From here, a second abseil from an in-situ anchor leads to the corrie floor.

Migranya Profunda 120m VIII,8. Tony Stone, Iain Small. 10 Feb 2013.

The overhanging corner-line between *Fat Boy Slim* and *Rogue's Rib*.

1. 30m Climb up and left of the initial corner to a stance. A bold and delicate pitch
2. 30m Continue up to a terrace. Another bold pitch.
3. 60m The final pitch up the prominent groove provides a more relaxing finale to the testing pitches below.

Pinnacle Buttress of the Tower:

Unnamed 190m IV,5. Simon Richardson, Iain Small. 2 Mar 2013.

The zigzag groove system left of *Fatal Error*.

1. 40m Start on the first terrace of Pinnacle Buttress of the Tower midway between *Broad Gully* and *Fatal Error*. Climb a right-slanting ramp to below a deep chimney cleaving the left wall.
2. 50m Climb the icy chimney (steep to start) to its top.
3. 50m Cross the upper section of *Broad Gully* to belay below the central icy weakness in the wall leading up to the crest of *Tower Ridge*.
4. 50m Follow the line of ice trending right to the crest of *Tower Ridge*.

Garadh na Ciste:

Blue Nosed Baboon V,5. Blair Fyffe, Nona Thomas. 9 Dec 2012.

A winter ascent of the summer line. The first pitch is quite bold.

Goodeve's Buttress:

Unnamed 130m V,5. Simon Richardson, Iain Small. 3 Mar 2013.

The attractive narrow icy groove nestling in behind the rib left of *The Gutter*. Facing north and lying high on the mountain it stays in condition late in the season and is resistant to thaw. Start by climbing *Glover's Chimney* for three pitches to belay below the rib.

1. 50m Climb easily up snow and make a steep pull up an impending wall into the groove. Climb this with interest to a belay in a small steep snow bay below a steep wall.
2. 50m Climb up and left for 10m then follow a shallow groove up the left side of the steep wall. Continue up an easier groove above to join open snow slopes.
3. 30m Continue up easier angled snow and mixed ground to the crest of *Tower Ridge*.

No.3 Gully Buttress:

Uranus IV,4. Tim Neill, Keith Ball. 2011.

An iced groove on the left of *Green Gully*, the first line of ice after the narrows in the middle of *Green*, heading out left to belay below the centre of the triangular headwall. The last pitch climbs right of the obvious dark wall on the crest of the comb, linking the snow patches first a little to the right, then leftwards up a

hidden gully to the big boulder on the crest of the Comb.

Note: Rich Bentley, Tony Shepherd & Mark Davies climbed a similar route on 3 Feb 2013, the difference being that they started some 15m lower down *Green Gully* and it went at VI,5.

Tomahawk Crack 80m VIII,9. Greg Boswell, Adam Russell. 29 Nov 2012
A crack-line right of *Sioux Wall*.

1. 25m Start as for *Sioux Wall* and climb up rightwards behind the big rock fin. Then move up and left to belay on its small ledge.
2. 20m Step left and climb directly up the wall above to gain a faint crack-line and onto an obvious midway ledge.
3. 35m Go straight up the technical crack above, eventually moving right once the angle eases and the climbing becomes easier to gain a capped pod. Climb out the top of the pod to the top of the *Sioux Wall* buttress.

Note: Al Halewood, Guy Stephen on 1 Nov 2012 climbed an early season version of *El Nino* at V,6. Their line climbed twin cracks above a snowy ledge just left of its right-hand arete.

Creag Coire na Ciste:

Note: Jim Higgins & Neil Adams linked the two lower corners of *Angels with Dirty Faces* with the upper two corners of *Avenging Angel* on 2 Feb 2013 to complete the logical line of *Avenging Angel Direct* (VIII,8).

South Trident Buttress:

Titan Cracks 100m V,6. Simon Richardson, Helen Rennard. 1 Dec 2012.

The steep cracked pillar between *Poseidon Groove* and *Triton Corners*, finishing up the continuation spur above.

1. 30m Start below the left side of the pillar and climb the steep shallow chimney, step left, and climb a corner-crack above to a terrace.
2. 20m Move slightly right and climb the bulging wall above via a short left-trending ramp and shallow corner with an awkward exit to gain a second terrace.
3. 50m Finish by climbing the a right-facing corner in the rib above and exit left below a steep wall at the top to finish.

The Copenhagen Interpretation 200m VI,7. Blair Fyffe, Helen Rennard. 18 Dec 2012.

A good route up the ramp and wall to the right of *The Minge*. May be significantly more difficult without consolidated snow/ice on the slabs. Start as for *The Minge*. Climb the obvious right-trending icy ramp to a large snow bay (40m). From the top of this climb a short turfy ramp, then pull up left onto a series of hanging slabs. Head diagonally leftwards across these to below a steep crack (20m). Climb the steep crack (crux) to a groove above. Trend up and right across some steep slabs to a slight scoop. Technical moves up and left regains the groove just before the angle eases. It would also be possible to climb the groove directly to this point. Above a snow slope leads to an outcrop above (40m). Continue up easier ground above in two long pitches to reach the crest of South Trident Buttress (100m).

Carn Dearg Buttress:

Olympic Spirit 140m E1 *. Michael Barnard, John MacLeod. 11 Aug 2012.

Climbs a vertical fault-line parallel to and right of *Route I*. Start at the large brownish right-facing corner 3m left of the start to *The Bullroar*.

1. 35m 5b Climb the corner (*Bullroar Direct Start*). Generally well protected but with a bold section in the middle.
2. 30m 4c Continue easily up the grassy groove above; once past the overlap, move up and right to climb a slight steepening to belay level with the base of the chimney of *Route I*.
3. 45m 4c Continue up the fault-line past two steeper sections to belay at the left end of the main overhangs.
4. 30m 5a Move up left then back right to gain a steep groove. Climb this, exiting right, then move up to finish up the final flake-crack of *P.M.*

The Centaur 195m E1 **. Michael Barnard, John MacLeod. 11 Aug 2012.

A right-trending line up the central section of the buttress, giving some good sustained pitches. The main feature of the lower section is the obvious diagonal crack on the left wall of the corner of *Centurion*. This is gained from the left by a rising traverse up the lower slabs. Start down and right from *The Bullroar* (left of *Cowslip*) below a large block propped up against the base of the wall.

1. 45m 5b Climb onto the block then step right to follow a crack to a grassy ledge. Above the right end of the ledge is a fine hidden crack (*Cowslip*); climb this to below the overhang then hand-traverse right into a groove. Downclimb the groove to gain a line of holds leading rightwards then up to an obvious spike (*Red Rag*). Step right and climb a groove to below the overhang, then undercling right to belay on the arete.
2. 20m 5b Climb up into the pod above and continue up the diagonal crack to the top of the *Centurion* corner.
3. 20m 4c Move leftwards up flake-cracks to gain the arete. Follow this to the lip of a big overhang (as for *Centurion*) then step right to belay below a fine three-tiered corner right of *Centurion*.
4. 30m 5b The three-tiered corner gives a quality pitch.
5. 40m 4c Above is a large overhang. Move up to climb the edge on the left then step right and move up through a small upper overlap. Continue up and right to a good grassy ledge below the right end of the upper overhangs (junction with *Route II*).
6. 40m 4c Step right and move up near the edge, continuing up and then leftwards through the upper wall to a ledge. Step left and climb a groove to the terrace at the top.

MAMORES, Sgurr an Iubhair, Coire nam Miseach:

(NN 163 654) Alt 880m West facing

The crag runs diagonally up the west face of Sgurr an Iubhair and is clearly visible from Stob Ban. It runs up towards the summit, then round the corrie rim to where the routes in the Ben Nevis guide are situated. With the crag so obvious, it would be surprising if nothing had been climbed before, although the routes are short. At the left and low end of the crag is a gully, starting just right of the lowest rocks.

Over Yew 100m III. Andy Nisbet. 10 Dec 2012.

The rib left of the gully. Start at the lowest rocks and climb a steep icy groove to

a terrace. Climb the rib, moving to its right side at half-height and overlooking the crux of the gully.

Yew First 100m III,4. Brian Davison, Dave McGimpsey. 20 Feb 2005.

Climb the gully, moving right and back left low down (left and more direct would normally be easier). The gully is mostly easy but with an awkward double chimney high up.

Yewff 100m III. Andy Nisbet. 10 Dec 2012.

A direct line up a turfey fault parallel to and just right of the gully. It touches *Yew First* where it moves right low down but then continues up a shallow groove and corner system.

Down Yew 100m I. Andy Nisbet. 10 Dec 2012.

In the centre of the crag is the most obvious feature, a big shallow gully. Start by moving left on turf to gain the gully proper. There are short steps and could be Grade II if icy.

Pinnacle Rib 100m III. Andy Nisbet. 10 Dec 2012.

The rib right of the gully. Start up a turfey fault just right of a prominent wide crack and climb this to an easy middle section. Continue up right of a pinnacle and finish up a left-facing corner.

Yew Cleft 80m II. Andy Nisbet. 10 Dec 2012.

Some 30m to the right is a striking narrow chimney. Climb a shallow groove into the chimney which is much easier than it looks. Exit the chimney on ice to an easier upper gully. Could perhaps be Grade I with a bigger build-up.

Chock Ice 80m II. Andy Nisbet. 10 Dec 2012.

About 10m right of the striking chimney is a right-slanting gully with two chockstones which gave short pitches.

AM BODACH:

The Dark Toon 120m II/III. Al & Jane Halewood. 2006.

Between the crag with *Solo Gully* and the main crag is this separate buttress. This ascent climbed the crest throughout. A later ascent started up a deep V-groove at the right end of its base. This was gained from the right to avoid a steep step and followed to its top before moving right to the defined crest which led to the top.

Old Man's Ridge 200m III. Andy Nisbet. 2 Dec 2012.

Right of this separate buttress is an easy gully leading to the south ridge of Am Bodach. Right of this and at the left (south) end of the main crag is this well defined ridge. There is a small isolated ridge down to its left which was climbed as a 50m start but is completely optional (not included in length). The crest has many flakes and pinnacles and was followed as closely as possible, but some difficulties can be avoided on the left.

Redbreast Gully 180m III. Andy Nisbet, Duncan Tunstall. 5 Dec 2012.

A gully right of *Old Man's Ridge* has three small steps and one steep step at half-height which was avoided by turfey ground on the right before traversing back in

immediately above the step. Probably Grade II with a good build-up.

AN GARBHANACH, East Face:

Alt 850–950m

There are two main gullies on the face which may have been climbed before.

Left-Hand Gully 120m I/II. Ed Edwards, Dave McGimpsey. Feb 2006.
Steep snow, then a nice narrow steeper bit.

Oak Howe Grooves 40m III,4. Dave McGimpsey, Ed Edwards. Feb 2006.
Climbs the slabby grooves immediately right of *Left-Hand Gully*. Start under the central groove of three and follow it for 20m, then climb up and left to finish up the left-hand groove to easy ground. Another 80m of Grade I leads to the top.

Right-Hand Gully 120m I. Jamie Hageman. 30 Oct 2008.
An easy curving snow runnel.

AONACH BEAG, An Ghaidh Garbh:

Situated at the east side of the corrie, just east of the summit of Stob Coire Bhealaich, is a small slabby buttress with prominent flakes on the right (NN 205 709). The following routes are on the largest section left of the flakes.

Blood Brothers 60m III. Steve Kennedy, Andy MacDonald. 24 Feb 2013.
Start at the lowest point and climb a short icefall up a left-trending ramp. Move right and follow a prominent ramp on the right side of the buttress before moving back left at the top to finish.

Soul Searchers 60m III. Steve Kennedy, Andy MacDonald. 24 Feb 2013.
Start just left of the initial icefall of *Blood Brothers* and climb to a steepening at the top of an open groove come gully. Traverse right onto the buttress edge which is followed via mixed ground to the top.

AONACH BEAG, Central West Face:

Note: On a lower tier below *Broken Axe Buttress* is a 30m icefall which follows ice into a runnel which trends left and reaches a ledge below the main buttress. It offers an additional start to routes on that buttress. Climbed by Brian Davison, 13 Mar 2013.

Glacies Interruptus 220m IV,5. Sandy Allan, Andy Nisbet. 19 Feb 2013.
An ice line right of *Glycerol Gully*. Gain and climb a long iced groove in the buttress right of *Glycerol Gully* (80m). A deep left-slanting diagonal gully now appears unexpectedly. Abseil into it and climb the icefall on the other side (140m). The start was quite steep thick ice but the finish had an ice bulge (crux) followed by an icy mixed section.

Note: The diagonal gully was used in descent – 250m Grade I.

Tardis 180m IV,4. Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet. 28 Feb 2013.
An ice line to the right of *Glacies Interruptus* and left of *Sublimation*, but it only forms above the diagonal gully. Start at the base of the diagonal gully. Climb over snow and sections of lower angled ice to below an ice bulge in a groove

(45m). Climb over the bulge, then traverse right on ice until more ice leads to a snow terrace (50m). Gain an iced slab on the right and climb this towards a big overhang. Traverse left to an icefall and climb this to snow (45m). Climb easier ice and snow to the upper slopes (40m).

Glacial Groove 150m V,5. Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet. 21 Feb 2013.

An ice line down a groove in the rib right of *Sublimation*. Climb ice leading to the base of the groove (50m). Climb the groove to a barrier and exit up its right wall (thin ice) to its right arete. Climb thicker ice up the barrier and up towards a continuation groove (40m). Climb the continuation groove and another ice step to easier ground (50m). Gain the upper snow slopes (10m).

Wingman 170m IV,5. Andy Nisbet. 6 Mar 2013.

An easier option to *Beyond the Call of Duty*, which would have involved 10m of vertical ice and at least Grade V,6 on the day. Start up the right edge of the *Beyond the Call* lower icefall and trend up right to the steep wall containing the standing pillar. Move up left on ice to a shallow iced corner some 10m right of the pillar. Climb this (crux), then move left into the *Beyond the Call* main fall. Follow this over one short step, then break out left on a separate icefall. This leads left, then up, then left again, then up to the top slopes.

Wingbro 150m V,5. Brian Davison, Andy Nisbet. 13 Mar 2013.

Thick ice which forms over the right edge of the steep wall containing the standing pillar then leads to thin ice above. Start at the right edge of the *Beyond the Call* lower icefall, as for *Wingman*, but move further right and climb the thick ice right of the steep wall and which leads to a steepening left of a deep chimney which slants right to join *Osmosis*. Move left and climb the steepening on some turf and thin ice (crux, could be much easier or harder dependent on the amount of ice) to reach a long ice smear. Climb this to a steep wall, then go up the left wall of a left-slanting turfy corner to reach easy ground.

Hidden Corner 150m III. Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet. 28 Feb 2013.

An iced corner to the left of *West Central Route* (which was taken to be the next thick icefall right of *Osmosis*, second right of *Beyond the Call of Duty*. But with a huge amount of ice, it clearly bore little resemblance to the original ascent). Start close on the right of *Osmosis* and climb ice diverging away from it to an overhang. Traverse right and go up on snow to below the corner. Climb the corner to the upper slopes (50m).

West Central Route Variations III. Andy Nisbet. 6 Mar 2013.

Climb direct on ice and snow towards the upper right-facing groove, then move right and climb a separate groove leading up right to snow slopes and the top. Much of this may be the similar to the original ascent but with much more ice. The separate groove is definitely different. *West Central Route* would have been Grade III whatever variations were taken.

Begging for More 200m III,4. Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet. 21 Feb 2013.

A thinner ice line starting some 40m to the right of *West Central Route*. Climb a steep icefall on a lower tier and continue more easily to the base of a groove (50m, 50m).

It is also possible to gain this point more easily from the left. Head up left on thick ice and continue up to rock (50m). Either climb ice up left, then left over a rib and climb a long groove to easier snow (D.McG), or go right up a short chimney, then straight up over ice and up a final iced groove to easier snow (AN) – both 50m.

Facets 200m IV,4. Sandy Allan, Andy Nisbet. 19 Feb 2013.

Another thinner icefall right again. Gain the base of the groove as for *Begging for More*, but this time go up right following the groove and climb ice for two long pitches to the easier upper snow basin.

Scrambled 150m III,4. Brian Davison, Andy Nisbet. 13 Mar 2013.

Mostly ice but some mixed climbing up the rib left of *Poached Egg*. Start just left of *Poached Egg* and climb ice runnels before moving left on to the rib below a steepening. Climb a short corner leading left (or move further left and climb ice) to gain an ice line. Follow this to another steepening. Move left again up a short corner to regain ice and climb this to finish up a steep blocky chimney which leads to the upper snow slopes.

AONACH BEAG, Lower West Face:

The Edge Effect 50m V,6. Simon Richardson, Helen Rennard. 2 Dec 2012.

A mixed line up the left edge of the upper section of *Prominent Chimney*.

1. 30m Start 10m left of the chimney and climb a short steep groove to gain a slim right-facing corner Exit right at the top to reach a terrace.
2. 20m Finish up the steep square-cut gully above.

BEINN NA SOCAICH:

Deception 80m IV,6. Rich Parker, James Thacker. 23 Jan 2013.

Start at an icy runnel on the left of the rounded tower. Climb this to belay at a fork (40m). Take a steepening ramp to the right. An awkward flaring groove (possible turf protection) leads to easier ground above.

STOB COIRE AN LAOIGH:

Note: Steve Addy & Finlay Wild made a variation start to *Taliballan* in December 2012 at IV,5. After the first couple of steps of the normal route, they went further left and returned back right above to the cave belay, thereby missing out what the guide says is the crux ramp (although not everyone agrees this is the crux).

STOB A' CHOIRE MHEADHOIN:

Great Rift Direct Finish 45m VII,6. Brian Davison, Andy Nisbet. 14 Mar 2013.

Central Groove (2000) is not central so has been renamed *Great Rift*. From a cave belay at the top of the steep ice on the original line (IV,5 would be more correct for this), move left and climb a steep iced ramp. Move right over an overhang and climb up to another overhang. Step left under it on to ice, then make steep moves back right above it, and continue to another overhang. Step left on to a rib, then over the overhang, before climbing an easier left-slanting groove on the left. This leads to the top.

Zee Zee Top 220m VI,6. Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 10 Mar 2013.

STOB A' CHOIRE MHEADHOIN

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- 1. Great Rift IV,5
- 1a. Great Rift Direct Finish VII,6
- 2. Zee Zee Top VI,6
- 3. Nagini III
- 4. Slytherin IV,4
- 5. Goblin Gully II
- 6. Parseltongue IV,4
- 7. Alchemy IV,5
- 8. Fat Lady III,4

Start up the easy lower section of *Great Rift* but soon move out right to climb a wide but easy angled ice pitch before continuing up snow to a cave under an overhanging wall (80m). Step down from the cave and traverse ice rightwards to an awkward move up to gain a narrow ledge immediately under the overhanging wall. Traverse this rightwards to an ice smear up a steep slab which bound the overhanging wall on the right. Climb this to snow and move up left to flakes (50m). There is a groove immediately on the right, but instead traverse further right and go up a short ice pitch and snow to a steep ice-filled groove. Climb this with difficulty and a continuation icy groove above (60m). Finish up snow.

Nagini 160m III. Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 10 Mar 2013.

Right of the central groove, which is a very large feature is a buttress. Start 30m up and right from the lowest point of the buttress. Climb a shallow iced groove to reach snow and continue up this to a prominent groove. Climb the groove to snow. Climb this up left to a snow arete then move right to another prominent ice-filled groove which is followed to the top.

Slytherin 150m IV.4. Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 10 Mar 2013.

Start 15m up and right from *Nagini* at a more prominent ice-filled groove. Climb this to snow and touch *Nagini* (50m). Traverse 15m right to another icy groove and climb this to snow (50m). Climb a deep narrow icy groove and continuing ice grooves to the top (50m).

Goblin Gully 150m II. Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 10 Mar 2013.

Between this buttress and a smaller separate buttress on the right is this wide snow gully with a steep section moving left to start.

The following three routes are on the smaller separate buttress on the right. Routes here can continue to the top on 50m of snow or traverse right on steep snow before descending to the buttress base.

Parseltongue 100m IV.4. Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 11 Mar 2013.

In the centre of the buttress are twin iced grooves. Climb the left one to easier ground (50m). Continue up snow and broken ground to the upper snow slopes.

Alchemy 80m IV.5. Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 11 Mar 2013.

Climb the right groove to near its top (50m). Finish the groove and climb snow to rock spikes (30m).

Fat Lady 60m III.4. Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston. 11 Mar 2013.

On the right side of the buttress is a long groove of thick ice. Climb the groove (40m) and snow to the same rock skies as *Alchemy*.

MEALL GARBH, Creagan Coire nam Cnamh:

The Constrictor 230m VI.6. Roger Webb, Simon Richardson. 24 Feb 2013.

The parallel chimney to the right of *Deep Slit*.

1. 30m Start 20m right of *Deep Slit* and climb the lower chimney through a narrow constriction to a deep cave belay.

2. 20m Pull onto the steep wall right of the cave and climb up steep turf to a ledge. Make another steep pull onto the wall above and climb up to a roof.

Traverse below this to regain the line of the chimney.

3. 50m Continue up to a terrace, and climb the continuation groove to belay on the right side of the buttress between *Deep Slit* and *Ping Pong*.
4. 30m Climb the buttress by moving left up a ramp to the crest and then climbing a fine groove to its top.
5. and 6. 100m Two pitches of steep snow lead to the top.

Easter Bunny 140m III **. Jonathan Preston. 31 Mar 2013.

Between *Broad Gully* and *Y Gully* there is a narrow gully like a goulotte. Start 30m right of *Broad Gully*. Hop up the narrow gully, which slants slightly leftwards, for a total of about 100m, including two steep icy bulges low down. Reach a snowfield and a rock buttress. Take either of two parallel short snow gullies through the buttress to easier finishing slopes. No discernible cornice problem.

Note: The route lengths hereabouts don't include the Grade I finishing slopes up to the cornice and *Ping Pong* could arguably be recorded as 200m.

STRATHOSSIAN, Creag na Cosaig:

Ossian Fall 100m III. Brian Davison, Andy Nisbet. 15 Dec 2012.

The stream which is marked as flowing through the crag at NN 423 743 on the 1:50000 map has short steep steps with easy angled ice in between. Low in the grade.

BEN ALDER, Garbh Choire:

No Pain No Train 200m III. Max Folkett, Beth Oxley, Michaela Laxton. 7 Apr 2013.

Start at the lowest point of the buttress, immediately left of the snow gully left of the centre.

1. 30m Climb ice to a snow terrace and spike belay.
2. 40m Climb icy grooves and overcome two steep stepped walls before moving up and left.
3. 60m Climb steep snow to an icy bulge, turn this on the right and move up to a steep wall.
4. 60m Climb steep snow to the right until forced left by an overhang to a gully which gives access to the snow bowl.
5. 10m The cornice.

CREAG MEAGAIDH, Pinnacle Buttress:

The Wasp 130m VI,5 *. Michael Barnard, Neil Redgrave. 16 Mar 2013.

Up and left of *Ritchie's Gully* is a fine ice pillar (The Blue Icicle).

1. 25m Climb the initial steep section of the pillar then trend up and right to belay below a turf line of weakness in the wall above.
2. 50m The turf line of weakness, a bold pitch.
3. 55m Continue more easily to the cornice.

Post Face:

Centre Post Right-Hand 60m V,5 **. Michael Barnard, Ewan Gourlay. 31 Mar 2013.

The obvious steep icefall on the right wall of *Centre Post*, below its traverse. Makes a good alternative to the *Direct*. Climb the icefall (30m) to gain the easy

snow slope above. Sixty-metre ropes may just allow the *Centre Post* belay (ice screws) to be reached; alternatively good turf protection can be arranged on the left at 45m.

Note: The Ordinary goes a little way up the direct until it steepens, then works out right, before traversing right to the snowfield. It eventually moves back left above a rock outcrop.

Inner Corrie:

Moonraker 150m III*. Michael Barnard. 25 Feb 2013.

Climbs the fine two-tiered icy ramp line right of the ice pitch on *Crescent Gully*, finishing as for that route.

GEAL CHARN, Creag Dhubh:

Eagle Eye 80m III,4. John Lyall, Andy Nisbet. 7 Feb 2013.

Start just right of the gully of *Merlin* (SMCJ 2011) and climb steep vegetation and ice to finish up a right-slanting iced groove in the upper wall. The grade will vary according to the amount of ice on a tricky bulge in the upper groove.

Route Beer 115m III,4. John Lyall, Andy Nisbet. 7 Feb 2013.

Start 20m up *Hidden Gully* (the following route).

1. 40m Follow a shallow icy scoop on the left to reach an icy ramp slanting left under a steep wall, and belay on a tree on the crest.
2. 20m Move right from the tree and up steep icy steps to belay.
3. 35m Move left beneath the final icefall of *Hidden Gem* to climb an icy/turfy gully just left of a left-facing corner.

Hidden Gully 110m II. John Lyall, Andy Nisbet. 7 Feb 2013.

The continuation of the *Hidden Gem* gully (SMCJ 2011), by the right fork.

Strange Fruit 120m IV,4. John Lyall, Andy Nisbet. 7 Feb 2013.

Start halfway between *I Scream* and *Neapolitan*, below an iced slab in a recessed section of the crag. This may not normally ice as it was climbed after very windy weather blowing the waterfall on to the slab.

1. 45m Follow the line of thickest ice up the slab, to gain a terrace and move left beneath roofs to a break. This was climbed on weird ice encrusted heather slanting up left.
2. 25m Easy slopes.
3. 50m Climb the next short wall by a wide crack, then move out right and continue up on easy slopes, with one short wall, finishing by a short twisting gully.

GLEN COE

BUACHAILLE ETIVE MOR:

Engineer's Crack VIII,9. Donald King, Mike Pescod. 25 Jan 2013.

Not often in condition. One fall.

Cold Revenge 170m IX,8. Guy Robertson, Nick Bullock. 27 Mar 2013.

A logical link-up on the left edge of the wall, joining *Bludger's* into *Bloody Crack*, with some serious and technical climbing. Follow the first three pitches of *Bludger's*, the third being the hardest, and quite serious stepping round left (60m). Climb the obvious line up and left to the base of *Bloody Crack* (20m). Climb *Bloody Crack*, sustained, technical and bold (40m, crux). Finish up a gradually easing line of corners directly to easier ground (50m).

STOB COIRE SGREAMHACH EAST, Ridge Buttresses:

Open Range 55m IV,5 **. Steve Kennedy, Bob Hamilton. 30 Mar 2013.

To the left of *Eilde Gully* are two steep distinct buttresses, and thereafter a set of lower, less distinct buttresses with a number of grooves before a wide open area (almost a gully). This route aims for a groove situated between two small rock walls (above a triangular shaped snow bay) roughly midway up the buttress to the left of the two distinct buttresses.

Start right of the lowest point in a line below the groove and climb an open groove. Step left at the top of the groove and continue up mixed ground to reach a triangular snow bay. Climb the groove above the bay to reach a further snow bay. Finish up a steep groove leading leftwards from the top of the bay to reach the ridge (an alternative finish up right from the bay is also possible).

Note: *Eilde Gully* was climbed at the beginning of Dec 2012 in lean conditions and found to be a worthwhile Grade III with a steep step near the bottom.

BEINN FHADA, Summit Buttress:

Note: *The Rampart* described in SMCJ 2012 p229, is the same route as *West Rib* (SMCJ 2008, p175).

BIDEAN NAM BIAN EAST, Lost Valley Minor Buttress:

Cutting Edge 50m IV,4 **. Bob Hamilton, Steve Kennedy, Andy MacDonald. 20 Jan 2013.

Essentially an alternative start to *Right Edge*. Approx. 15m right of *Right Edge* is a deep groove containing a small rocky spike (not to be confused with a thin groove immediately to the left). Climb the groove until just above the spike, then follow cracks up the left wall to reach a ledge on the left edge. A natural system of ledges lead up and leftwards into the corner of *Right Edge* which is joined at the top of its first pitch. Finish up *Right Edge*.

STOB COIRE NAN LOCHAIN:

Seattle Grooves 130m IV,5. Harry Holmes, Alex McMillan. 30 Mar 2013.

Nice climbing albeit easily escapable. Start at the lowest rocks on the buttress to the right of the *Twisting Gully*.

1. 55m Climb a snow slope to a short corner. From the top of the short corner follow a snow slope to the base of a steep turfey groove and belay on a loose chockstone.
2. 30m Climb up easy snow to a short icy corner. From the top of the ice corner, snow leads to an icy runnel, climbed to broken rocks.
3. An easy left-rising traverse leads to a steep groove on the left-hand side of a small buttress directly below the top of the corrie. Climb the groove to its top (crux) and step slightly right and climb up the final wall to finish. A cornice may form. (45m)

STOB COIRE NAN LOCHAIN, South Buttress:

Moonshine 110m VI,7 **. Neil Adams, Andy Inglis. 16 Mar 2013.

The obvious slim corner rising above the ramp pitch of *Moonshadow* gives a good, sustained pitch.

1. and 2. 75m Follow *Twisting Gully Right-Hand* to above the icefall, then follow *Moonshadow* (or the parallel groove on the right as on the first ascent) to the base of the steep, smooth-sided corner in the left wall.
3. 35m Climb the corner (crux) and the continuation groove above.

Twisted 110m VII,7 ***. Simon Yearsley, Malcolm Bass. 12 Mar 2013.

An excellent climb taking the two-tiered wall and prominent chimney between *Moonshadow* and *Chimney Route*. The route is not sustained, but gives very good climbing with two bold and technical sections in its lower part, then an easier, superbly positioned chimney to finish. On its first ascent it was climbed under icy conditions. Start 8m below the fork in *Twisting Gully*.

1. 30m From the gully bed, swing out right across the steep wall to gain a series of small ledges. Follow these up and right to reach the base of shallow right-facing corner. Move up this for 3m, then move right and up to gain the terrace.
2. 30m Just right of the highest point of the terrace is a steep crack with ice at its top. Gain the crack from the left and pull steeply onto the ice. Follow the icy groove to below the steeper section of the chimney. Belay on a fine pedestal on the right. The wide chimney of *Inclination* lies round the arete to the right.
3. 50m Continue the prominent chimney and pass under a huge chokestone to finish more easily.

STOB COIRE NAM BEITH:

Dairy Milk 240m IV,5. Andy Nelson, Andy Hogarth, Dave Brown. 2 Feb 2013.

The route is Grade III apart from the crux groove. Approach up *Arch Gully* until almost at the narrows. On the right is the toe of a V-shaped slabby buttress.

1. 40m Ascend this via grooves and snowy ramps to belay on a left-sloping ramp below a short chimney.
 2. 30m Climb the chimney, then go leftwards to below a short wall.
 3. 50m Climb a short left-facing blocky corner, then snowslopes passed outcropping rocks to below a 4m wall with an open corner on the right and a cracked groove to the left.
 4. 40m Follow the cracked groove (crux), then past blocky ground to a terrace and large boulders.
 5. and 6. 80m Pleasant slabby climbing leads to an arete and short steps to emerge on the crest of the buttress separating *Arch* & *Central* Gullies.
- Walk off to the left, assuming conditions allow, or continue to the summit as for other routes.

BIDEAN NAM BIAN, West Top:

The following two routes climb the ribs either side of *The Gash*.

The Pash 140m VI,6. Brian Davison, Andy Nisbet. 12 Dec 2012.

Start up *The Gash* to below its steep chimney section (60m). Climb a direct line up a slight fault in the wall to its left to reach a large flake on the skyline (30m, bold but not sustained). Finish up the crest of the rib (50m).

Incision 120m VI,7. Brian Davison, Andy Nisbet. 12 Dec 2012.

Start as for *The Pash* to below a steep crack-line which is on the right side of the right rib of *The Gash* (60m). This is considerably harder than *The Pash* but generally well protected. Climb through a double bulge and up to turf. Move right and up to more turf. Step left to a short overhanging crack and climb this to an easing. Continue up to a final overhang and the crest of the rib (30m). Go up the rib to join and finish up *The Gash* (30m).

SGÙRR NA H-ULAI DH, North Face:

Double Scoop 80m II. Ewan Lyons. 8 Feb 2013.

The line on the other side of the rib left of *Subsidiary Scoop*. Start up easy snow onto mixed ground, then the icy groove to finish on open ground.

The next two ice lines are seen on the approach to *Red Gully* lower down on the left.

Boom Boom 80m III. Ewan Lyons. 8 Feb 2013.

The iced slab to left of the curving left facing corner in the centre of the steep ground. Climb the iced slab centrally to a belay, follow the icy continuation groove to open ground.

Basil 70m III. Ewan Lyons. 8 Feb 2013.

The icefall 30m left of *Boom Boom*. Follow the line of least resistance until the final step direct to open ground.

CREAG NA CATHAIG:

(NN 039 436) North-East facing Alt 630m

The Dash 130m I. Andy Spink. 10 Feb 2013.

Follow the obvious easy left to right diagonal heathery ramp and shallow gully. Ascended on old neve patches and new soft blown snow.

MEALL GARBH, Coire Buidhe:

Both routes are found on the north face of Meall Garbh (above Loch Creran) and follow iced up water courses starting approx on the 350m contour line. They face north and are unseen until into the corrie. Fun. Escapable. Reached easily by a good estate track from Loch Creran at Druimmavuic.

Dash-Dash 200m II. Andy Spink. 26 Mar 2013.

Start up and left of a large obvious boulder (NN 031 438). Follow water ice up a series of steps.

Dot-Dot 100m II/III. Andy Spink. 26 Mar 2013.

(NN 026 438). Follow a deep stream bed to the left of an obvious spur of land. Easy angled ice leads to a middle steeper section. Pass a tree high up on the left bank. Descent can be made easily down steep grass.

SGURR NA BA GLAISE (MOIDART), North Face:

Summit Gully 260m II. Jamie Hageman. 12 Dec 2012.

A nice line right up the middle of the face with some short icy steps low down



Fiona Murray on Volcane, Meall an Fhir-eoin Beag, Ardnamurchan. Photo: Andy Nisbet.

and slightly longer and steeper ones at half-height. The gully finishes at the summit.

ARDNAMURCHAN, Dome Buttress:

Magma Storm 25m E4 5c **. Kev Shields, Steve Kennedy, Andy MacDonald. 21 Oct 2012.

A serious lead following a line close to the left edge of the slab just left of *Lava Lout*. Start directly below the left edge and climb the edge into the short left-facing slabby corner taken by *Lava Lout*. Climb to the bulge at the top of the corner (*Lava Lout* steps right). At the bulge move left onto the edge. Awkward, thin moves lead up the edge (joining *Subduction Zone*) to an easier finish. The only decent gear is at about half-height at the base of the slabby corner.

Note: *The Rampart* (SMCJ 2012, p229) is the same route as *West Rib* (SMCJ 2008, p175).

MEALL MEADHOIN, Grian Beag:

(NM 4925 6835) Alt 260m West facing

The following routes were climbed by Andy Bain, Jake Thackrey & Dougie Beck on 21 Oct 2012 and are described right to left. The crag is 500m right of Apron Slab and slightly lower down.

Lilly 22m V.Diff.

Climb slabby boulders to a grassy crack and follow flakey holds to a rippled scoop, then scramble to the top.

Warrior Arete 20m Severe 4a.

Previously climbed in 1999. Start just right of the toe in a corner. Climb a crack to an arete and move rightwards, then easily over a slab to the top.

The Baptis 22m VS 4c.

Start at the toe of the crag. Climb the arete directly to a small amphitheatre and the top.

Apostle Chimney V.Diff.

Climb columns and up over broken blocks to the top.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

BEINN DORAIN, Creag an Socach:

Michael Barnard wonders if the alternative finish to *The Sting* has actually been climbed, as it seems to end in a blank wall. This alternative finish does, however, work and because of the in-situ peg, may have been climbed before.

The Sting, Groove Finish 60m VI,6. Michael Barnard, Andy Wilson. 24 Mar 2013.

From the belay above the corner-crack, move up then along a ledge to gain the obvious groove on the right. Follow this until a traverse left can be made up to

ledges (in-situ peg, possible belay). Climb the steep narrow groove in the headwall above (difficult and serious).

BEINN A' CHAISTEAL:

Little Aquila 85m III. Robert Kincaid. 30 Mar 2013.

This is left of *Aquila* (SMCJ 2010), taking a narrower line of drainage ice 25m left at the start.

Pintail 120m III. Robert Kincaid. 30 Mar 2013.

Start as a corner from close to the bottom of the ramp which leads up to the *Aquila* routes. Climb a smear of ice to reach a thin corner. Go up this and into a gully with a dark headwall. Climb the gully to the dark headwall. Go left round the headwall and up the final ice smear.

Wren 130m III. Robert Kincaid. 30 Mar 2013.

Start at the left side of the steep lower wall left of *Pintail* and *Corax*. Climbed the gully line. There are two possible starts the right being two icicles from overhangs (both too thin on the day). Ten metres left of the icicles is the gully line that curves to the right and into a snow basin. Pitch 2 exits the snow basin and takes the icy gully to finish on the grassy slope above the big lower wall.

Note: Robert Kincaid also climbed the left finish to *Corax*, also at Grade III but harder than anything on the original route. The first ascent climbed the right finish.

BEN OSS:

Oss Ghyll 200m I/II. Michael Barnard. 26 Feb 2013.

The prominent gully in the centre of the northern corrie of Ben Oss. There can be a short icy step low down. The grade will depend on how banked out this is.

BEINN UDLAIDH:

Pigs Might Fly 80m V,6. Chris Thorne, Gaz Davies, Will Nicholls. 26 Jan 2013.

Walk up the gully towards *Organ Pipe Wall* passing below an overhanging buttress which is on the right wall of the gully. The route starts in a short open corner and follows an obvious line of weakness up the left side of the overhanging wall, then continues over turfey ledges to the top.

1. 30m Climb the steep line of weaknesses directly to a large platform.
2. 50m Continue up and left across a slab then follow large turfey ledges to a short steep section on the crest of the buttress. Pull through the steepening and continue to the top.

CREAG THARSUINN, Upper Buttress:

Hangover VI,6. Matt Buchanan, Dafydd Morris. 20 Jan 2013.

By the summer route.

THE COBBLER, North Peak, South Face:

Echo Crack 40m VI,7. Stuart McFarlane, John Williams. 7 Dec 2012.

Started up pitch 1 of *Incubator* (winter variation 50m) and belay on the ledge beneath *Echo Crack*.

Silence of the Rams 45m V,6 **. Jake Thackrey, Dougie Beck, Andy Bain. 30 Dec 2012.

This route branches off left where *Ramshead Gully* goes right. Start at the left-hand side of *Ramshead Gully* under *Ramshead Ridge*.

1. 25m Climb up a groove with a wall on the left to a huge chockstone. Tunnel through and burrow right to a terrace and up to a small cave.
2. 20m Traverse left along the terrace and up a blank slab with a crack on its right (crux) to a small alcove. Climb out left or right of the alcove and up over blocks to finish on a large terrace.

Moss Crack Plus 40m III,4. Jake Thackrey, Andy Bain. 27 Dec 2012.

This is the same as the summer line but with a finish up the headwall.

Start 20m from the top of *Great Gully*.

1. 20m Climb up an obvious groove on the left side of the gully wall and over a tricky overhang to the headwall of North Peak.
2. 20m Climb up turf ledges and steps to the summit of North Peak.

BEINN NARNAIN, Cruach nam Miseag (NN 278 064):

Hellenistic 185m IV,5. Andy Bain, Jake Thackrey. 7 Feb 2013.

Start at a groove just left of the toe of the buttress.

1. 50m Climb the groove to a large ledge. Traverse 10m right to belay at a niche.
2. 25m Climb the groove right of the niche to the next ledge and a chockstone belay.
3. 30m Climb an obvious thin chimney and turf ledges.
4. 40m Head up easy ground to small a crag above and belay before a gully with a christmas tree.
5. 40m Take a right angle ramp with a crack and up bulging ledges to a terrace.
6. 50m Climb easily to a large overhang and groove on the right, then climb over turf ledges to the top.

The Lepidopterist 225m III/4. Andy Bain, Jake Thackrey. 23 Jan 2013.

Start 20m right of the toe of the buttress at an obvious groove.

1. 35m Climb the groove to a small wall below an overhang.
2. 55m Head up and bridge up the overhang to gain an open gully and a small outcrop on the left.
3. 55m Climb up the gully by a spruce tree to a huge chockstone.
4. 50m Step out and right to surmount the chockstone (crux) and traverse left along a terrace to overlook *Philosophers Gully*.
5. 30m Take the rightward groove and climb broken walls to the top of the crag.

The Shield Crag (NN 273 065):

A new piece of crag below the Spearhead, clearly visible on the walk up Narnain from the top of Cruach nam Miseag.

Middle Ages 100m V,4. Jake Thackrey, Andy Bain, Dougie Beck. 27 Mar 2013.

1. 35m Climb a prominent crack in centre of the crag up and over a bulge into a small amphitheatre. Climb out and into a gully, then towards a wall and possible block belay on the left (23m). Climb rightwards across a slab into a chimney and climb onto a terrace.

2. 25m Walk along the terrace for 3m onto a rightward ramp leading to an arete. Climb the exposed arete to a good ledge.
3. 40m Descend left for 5m and head up easy ground to a small alcove with blocks and ledges.

BEINN IME:

Gangnam Style 185m V,7 **. Stuart McFarlane, Stuart Burns (alt). 2 Dec 2012.

Climbs the obvious hanging right-facing corner system to the left of *Ben's Fault*.

1. 50m As for *Ma Fault* (tech 4 when not banked out).
2. 25m From the cave belay of *Ma Fault*, break out right climbing the very obvious roofed corner system to reach a terrace. Belay at the foot of the continuation corner.
3. 25m Climb the continuation corner passing two roofs. Belay below a short wall.
4. 40m Climb the crack in the short wall stepping left at the pedestal to reach a thinner continuation crack. Continue up grooves to reach easy ground.
5. 45m Easy ground.

Note: A second ascent thought VI,7.

Naebody's Fault 135m IV,5 *. Jamie Bankhead, Graham Boistelle, Davie Crawford. 24 Jan 2013.

On the buttress north of *Fan Gully Buttress* and left of *Chockstone Chimney* (1999). A good route in good conditions. The route would be IV,4 if the ice bulge on pitch 2 had a bit more ice. Start below a distinctive square-cut flake near the right end of a snow terrace, 30m up and left of from *Chockstone Chimney*.

1. 25m Climb a wall past the flake to a snow terrace. Traverse leftwards to below a short chimney.
2. 40m Climb the chimney and then leftwards up a steep wall and overlap to enter a prominent groove. Climb the groove and ice bulge above.
3. 70m Follow your preferred line up Grade II ground to the top.

BEINN IME, East-North-East Ridge, North Buttresses (NS 261 085):

The ENE ridge of Beinn Ime has two north facing buttresses, the right-hand buttress being an obvious step in the ridge. This is the highest crag in Arrochar and has one existing route – *Lost Highway*. Descent is by the gully between the two buttresses, albeit an abseil may be necessary from the right buttress to reach the col above this.

Left Buttress:

The Darkness Beckons 100m IV,4 *. Andrew Fraser, Ian Magill. 5 Feb 2012.

A good route with a surprising first pitch. A turfy ramp slants rightwards across the middle of the buttress. Gain this from the left by the recessed open groove (45m). Continue rightwards along the turfy ramp, then a higher ramp to belay below an overhung corner (35m). Swing out right onto the steep rib and climb this, then easier ground to the top (20m).

Lane Diversion 85m III,4. Andrew Fraser, Ian Magill, James Dalglish. 7 Apr 2013.

This climbs the vertical fault at the right end of the crag, with a tricky chimney on the second pitch.

Right Buttress:

Highway to Hell 100m III,5. Andrew Fraser, Ian Magill. 28 Nov 2012.

This follows the grassy fault to the right of the deep chimney of *The Lost Highway*. Start 5m right of the deep chimney. Climb up to and turn a prominent triangular rock on the right, then continue up turf grooves (40m). Climb turf steps to the right of steep rocks (40m). A short gully directly above leads to a dead end, exited by hard climbing on the right wall, then easier slopes above (20m).

Innominate Gully 50m I. Andrew Fraser, Ian Magill, James Dalgliesh. 7 Apr 2013.

This is the scenic gully at the right end of the crag. It may be harder if not fully banked-out.

THE BRACK:

A-B Abyss Variation 83m III,4. Martin Holland, Birgit Hauffe. 15 Jan 2013.

1. 8m Start 15m left of the *The Abyss* and climb a left-facing stepped corner to belay at a silver birch tree.
2. 20m Traverse 15m rightwards and move up and right to the flake belay below the corner pitch of *The Abyss*.
3. 55m Step down left and follow an easy turf ramp up and left. At the top of the ramp follow a corner and ledges back right until easy ground leads up and right to a common belay with *The Abyss* in a large triangular wall. Follow *The Abyss* to the top.

Hell Mend Ya 148m V,4. Martin Holland, Steve Langton, Ian McIntosh. 25 Mar 2013.

1. 8m Start 15m left of the *The Abyss* and climb a left-facing stepped corner to belay at a silver birch tree (as per *A-B Abyss Variation*).
2. 50m Move up easily to the highest turf below the slab. Traverse delicately up and left across the slab on turf clumps and ledges to a short roofed corner (gear). Pass the roof on the right and move back left. Easy ground up and left for 25m leads to a belay at the right end of a slightly overhanging wall.
3. 40m Move around to the right and head up turf ramps and walls to a good block and thread below the upper groove/corner of *The Abyss*.
4. 50m Follow *The Abyss* for 3m, then break out right along a stepped ramp line leading to a chimney behind a large flake-pinnacle with a large chasm below (*Chockstone Alley*). Climb the chimney to gain the top of the pinnacle and make a long step across to regain the crag. Short walls and ramps first right then left lead to the top.

BEN CRUACHAN, Drochaid Ghlas:

Jamie's Lum, Direct Finish 30m VII,7. Stuart McFarlane, Andy Clark. 24 Feb 2013.

For pitch 2, climb up, initially back and foot, until committing onto the left wall. Pull right onto a ledge. Above is a steep turf wall, then a bulging rock groove

with ice on its left wall. Pull into the groove above, good rock gear and finally the belay. Easier ground in this groove led to the top.

BEN CRUACHAN, Sron na Isean:

Radiohead Buttress 150m III,4. Simon Richardson, Chris Sleight. 7 Dec 2012. The east face of Sron na Isean is cut by a number of easy angled gullies and ribs. This route takes the most defined central rib.

1. 50m Start below the centre of the rib and climb a steep turf wall on the left to a terrace. Continue up the right-slanting open corner above (crux) to where the angle eases.
2. and 3. Easier climbing on straightforward mixed ground up the broad crest of the buttress leads to the summit ridge of Sron na Isean.

BEN LOMOND:

Inchmurrin 60m III. Davie Crawford, Andy Nisbet. 12 Feb 2013.

Near the left end of the cliff are three parallel faults. The left fault is a gully with a steepening near the top.

Inchcailloch 70m II. Davie Crawford, Andy Nisbet. 12 Feb 2013.

The central fault, an easier turf gully.

Inchconnachan 80m II. Andy Nisbet. 12 Feb 2013.

The right fault is more of a ramp, but really only formed higher up. Start by traversing right to gain the easiest line of turf slanting back left. The upper ramp is easy.

Rowardennan Rib 105m V,5. Davie Crawford, Andy Nisbet. 12 Feb 2013.

Some 30m right of *Endrick Corner* is a rectangular rib with a corner either side. Start below the corner on the right side of the rib.

1. 45m Climb turf ground to reach and climb the corner with a steep and poorly protected bulge near the top. Belay on a small ledge at the top of the corner.
2. 35m Go direct on turf to reach a band of overhangs. Go through the overhang by a turf ledge and continue to a corner. Climb this to a big ledge.
4. 25m Finish more easily through a final tier.

Haith Gully 100m IV,7. Dave McGimpsey, Andy Nisbet. 2 Mar 2013.

A gully with a huge chockstone which lies on the next section of cliff right and above *Rowardennan Rib*. It cuts through but largely exists above the 'main ledge' which runs left from *Coille Ramp* (SMCJ 2011). It is labelled as *Gully H* in the diagram in SMCJ vol 6, no.4, p114 (January 1901). Climb ice to reach the main ledge and climb the shallow gully to reach the huge chockstone. Move left round it, a short technical crux much harder than anything else on the route, and finish up the deep but easy upper gully.

MEALL GHAORDAIDH, Creag Laoghain:

The routes are of quite low altitude. However, being centrally placed in Scotland, ice might form in similar conditions as Beinn Udlaidh.

Springrunner 60m IV,5 **. Des Rubens, Raymond Simpson. 13 Mar 2005.

This icefall is the finest feature of the corrie. It overlooks Allt Laoghain and is

less than an hour's walk from the road. The icefall can be seen from the approach road up Glen Lyon. A 20m pitch leads to the big pitch. This gives 30m of sustained climbing, initially vertical. On this ascent, the pitch was climbed bottom right to top left, where a belay was taken. A few metres traversing completed the route.

Nae Spring Chickens 60m V,6. Des Rubens, Willie Jeffrey, Anne Craig. 7 Feb 2013.

Climb the first pitch of *Springrunner*. Take the left side of the icefall, climbing a vertical step at two-thirds height. An overhung alcove at the finish provides additional interest (this might be avoidable). In the absence of being able to belay on turf, 60m ropes just allowed access to a good rock belay well right of the finish.

The Lyons in Winter 110m IV,4. Willie Jeffrey, Anne Craig, Des Rubens. 28 Mar 2013.

About 15m left of *Springrunner* is a slightly twisting gully line. The first pitch starts below the level of *Springrunner* and climbs a steep spillage of ice over lower rocks. An easy second pitch leads to a fine 40m ice pitch.

A Wee One 60m II. Des Rubens, Raymond Simpson. 13 Mar 2005.

A few hundred metres left and slightly higher than the previous route. A frozen stream with a fan shaped lower section gives a short vertical step and then pleasant climbing up ice left of the bed of the stream.

Pas de Deux 120m IV,6. Willie Jeffrey, Des Rubens. 4 Apr 2013.

About 600m beyond and lower than *Springrunner*, there is an area of crag bounded on the skyline by a ridge with a vague resemblance to the Great Tower of *Tower Ridge*. Before the ridge is a gully. About halfway between the gully and the lowest rocks is an ice pitch beginning 60m above the base of the cliffs. This is accessed by a short pitch and an easy ramp. The 40m ice pitch involved a delicate traverse above steep ice followed by a short vertical section.

Unnamed 130m II/III. Willie Jeffrey, Anne Craig. 3 Feb 2011.

A gully 30m left of *Pas de Deux* is straightforward apart from a steepening at two-thirds height. (NN 503 445).

MEALL DHAMH (near Cruach Ardtrain):

Haggis Bon Bon 70m III. Andrew Wilson, Neil Todd. 1 Apr 2013.

On the first steep crags on the east face of Grey Height at NN 396 224, left of a shallow broad gully. Follow an obvious icy chimney for about 30m which then opened up to icy/turfy steps for 15m. A choice of a couple of short icefalls completed the climb but an easy escape can be made right, under the wall and down the broad gully.

Chockstone Gully 150m I/II. Jim Hatfield, Neill Hunter, Andrew Wilson. 5 Apr 2013.

Much further to the left of that and some 200m right of the highest point of Meall Dhamh, there is a left-slanting gully which is broad and shallow in the lower reaches but narrows to a deep overhung cleft in the upper half. There are a couple

of chockstones in this cleft and the gully abruptly finishes through a narrow chimney.

Pork Pie Gully I. Jim Hatfield, Neill Hunter, Andrew Wilson. 5 Apr 2013.

Left of this again and about 100m right of a large wedge shaped buttress is another left-slanting gully. This narrows in the centre, then opens out onto a broad snowfield and finishes on small promotory of the main ridge overlooking the large wedge shaped buttress.

On Solids 60m II/III. Jim Hatfield, Neill Hunter, Andrew Wilson. 5 Apr 2013. About 50m right of the start of the *Chockstone Gully* and at about mid-height on the crag is a 40m icefall which curves to the right. There is a shallow gully below this from where a belay could be taken on either wall.

Note: The route *Meall Damh Ramp* (SMCJ 2010) was also climbed and found very enjoyable, packed with ice. It was quite a steep II but the steps were short lived.

Note: Anne Craig, Andy Willis & Willie Jeffrey climbed a gully at NN 3982 1720 and 20m right of *Stollen Grooves* (120m I, 18 Dec 2011).

CREAG AN TULABHAIN:

Note: Anne Craig & Willie Jeffrey climbed an unnamed 200m Grade I on 1 Mar 2013 on the north face of the crag seen from road (NN 524 418).

STUCHD AN LOCHAN, Coire an Duich (NN 520 405):

Note: Anne Craig & Willie Jeffrey climbed an unnamed 130m Grade I on 19 Feb 2012 up the largest buttress in the corrie. It looks like an upside down Y with the left branch narrower than the right.

ARRAN

The new guide to the Inner Hebrides and Arran is imminent, so routes have not been reproduced here.

LOWLAND OUTCROPS

GLASGOW AREA, Slackdhu:

Maya 10m E1 5a *. Kevin Woods. 8 Aug 2012.

Immediately left of *Jenny's Lum Arete* is a blank face. Climb the face direct, boldly and without the right arete.

Shadow 12m E3 5b **. Kevin Woods. 1 Apr 2013.

Steady climbing up the unprotected blunt arete between *Rusty Pegs* and the waterfall. Don't fall. Needs dry or sub-freezing weather for the route to dry out.

Note: Both routes were soloed after practice. *Rusty Pegs* is a bit further from

the waterfall than 2m as stated in the Lowland Outcrops guidebook, maybe closer to 4m.

GALLOWAY HILLS, Craigdews:

Bonny and the Goats 55m HVS. Graeme Barr, Stephen Reid (alt). 21 Oct 2012.

Start on Halfway Terrace, just up and left from where *Goathouse of Fleet* finishes, at a clean white wall which has a mossy streak running down it with a thin slanting crack to its left.

1. 30m 5a Climb the crack with difficulty, stepping left at its top, then trend rightwards up easier rock to a rock island amidst the heather.
2. 25m 4c Scramble up heather to a short clean-cut arete and make a strenuous pull up this into a gorse bush, then traverse right to gain a clean weather eroded rib of metamorphic rock. There is no belay so take an alpine stance in a hollow way back from the edge.

Craig an Eilte:

Some 500m down and right of the *Flesh Market*, at the lowest point of the escarpment, is an obvious short gully guarded by chockstones:

Spindrift Gully 70m IV 4 *. Colin Wells, Stephen Reid (alt). 22 Jan 2013.
Climb the gully in two pitches.

Clints of Dromore:

Note: *Dark Slab* pitch 2 (Diff), 35m up the rib above was added by Dan Metcalfe & Michael Paynter, 6 Aug 2012.

Left Flank 55m V.Diff *. Stephen Reid, James Kinnaird. 7 Oct 2012.

Start at the very left edge of the buttress. An airy and exposed route, worth doing despite the heather.

1. 35m Climb up into a square scoop and from its left side follow a left-trending groove, then straight up the left edge of the slab to a ledge. Climb the rib above to just below a heathery bit when an exposed hand-traverse left can be made which enables a pull up to a crack on the right edge of a large slab. Swing onto the slab and climb up to a ledge (round spike belay a metre or so up the broken rib on right).
2. 20m Drop down back to the ledge and traverse left 5m under an easy angled slab to a steeper slab. Climb up just right of this on jugs.

Left Edge Eliminate 55m Severe *. Stephen Reid, James Kinnaird. 27 Sep 2012.

Start 2m right of the left edge of the buttress at a steep, shallow left-facing groove.

1. 35m Overcome the groove, then trend left to the rib and climb it directly to a ledge. Climb the left rib of the groove above and continue straight over the bulge to a ledge.
2. 20m Climb cracks and a flake in the left wall of the rib above.

Central Buttress Eliminate 45m VS 4b *. Stephen Reid, James Kinnaird. 7 Oct 2012.

A serious climb but on excellent rock throughout. Start under a clean, square double overlap in the centre of the lower slab. Climb easy rock to the overlap and overcome it from the right, then continue direct to a ledge. Climb straight up the wall above, just right of a heather groove and 2m left of the white scoop of *Central Buttress*, and keep following this line to a more pronounced crest which is climbed directly to the top.

Pining for the Fjords 45m HVS 5a. Stephen Reid, James Kinnaird. 7 Oct 2012. An unsatisfactory filler-in taking the lower of the two slanting ramps. Start as for *The Comfy Chair* and climb the rib past the good cam slot to where that route breaks left. Step up right and move up another 2m before crossing the heather crack on the left via some hard moves. Carry on up the slab to gain the lower slanting ramp and follow this until forced out left at its top to finish as for *The Comfy Chair*.

South-East Corrie of Milldown:

(NX 5159 8420) Alt 600m South-East facing

This is the corrie to the left of the corrie containing *Biggar Gully* etc. *The Great Cleugh of Auchniebut* is the ravine in the centre of the corrie and which gives a long scenic route in a hard freeze (700m II *, Stephen Reid, Colin Wells 24 Jan 2013). Well to the right of this, three obvious icefalls form near the right side of the corrie. *Middle Piddle* and *Lower Flower* are both Grade II and form on the lower tier of rocks; the latter is 100m long (John Biggar, Stephen Reid, 5 & 13 Dec 2012). Directly above the top of *Lower Flower* lies the spectacular icefall of *Upper Gusher Direct* (55m, IV **, Colin Wells, Stephen Reid 23 Jan 2013) which only really apparent when seen from the left. The main pitch can be avoided by exiting leftwards via the *Easy Way* (III, John Biggar, Dave McNicol, Jonathan Grubb 23 Jan 2013). Just left of this is *Little Flusher* (30m, III, John Biggar, Dave McNicol, Jonathan Grubb 23 Jan 2013).

Craighoar:

Pantomime Hoars 11m Severe. Stephen Reid, James Kinnaird. 28 Oct 2012.

The easiest but wettest route on the crag. Start on the far right and climb fractured blocky rock leftwards to a wet scoop. Move up and step left under the arete to finish directly up it.

Clifton:

Note: The hawthorn at the foot of *Hollowstones Buttress* is no more.

GALLOWAY SEA-CLIFFS, Crammag Head, Little Wall:

This is the short wall of excellent rock just left (north) of the descent gully used to access the left side of the Lighthouse Walls. The routes are described from right to left, i.e. as they are accessed from the gully.

Anticlimbax 14m Mod. James Kinnaird, Stephen Reid, 28 Aug 2012.

The juggy hanging rib just left of the descent gully. The crack come groove to its left can also be climbed at the same grade.

Slingsby's Slab 12m Severe *. John Biggar, Linda Biggar. 2 Apr 2009.

Start from ledges near the bottom of the descent gully and climb a rightward

sloping line up the steep and juggy slab, ideally without bridging over the groove to the right.

Splasher 10m Severe. Linda Biggar, John Biggar. 2 Apr 2009.

From about the same place, climb more directly, passing a grey pillar on the left.

Variation: Splasher Direct 10m H.Severe. Stephen Reid, James Kinnaird. 28 Aug 2012.

Pass the grey pillar on the right.

Fly By Wire 12m Mod. *. John Biggar, Linda Biggar. 2 Apr 2009.

Start a few metres out to sea from the foot of the descent gully. Climb the obvious left-slanting crack-line past the right side of the huge flake (in-situ wire). Fine and steep for the grade. Possibly climbed before.

Crackin' Corner 10m Severe. John Biggar, Linda Biggar. 2nd Apr 2009.

Start below and left of the huge flake about 5m further seaward and climb a short crack followed by a difficult corner.

Crammag Head, Lighthouse Walls:

Note: *Little Flasher* (1999 in the current SMC guidebook) was previously climbed as *Marine Boy* VS 4b * by John Biggar & Linda Biggar in 1996.

Little Flasher/Marine Boy Variation Start. John Biggar, Jason Seaborn. Jun 2012.

Useful in big seas or high tides. Go up the first moves of *Poisoned Ocean*, then make a bold rising traverse across the black slab.

Ocean Patrol 12m V.Diff. * Linda Biggar, John Biggar. 2 Apr 2009.

From the ledges at the foot of *Little Flasher/Marine Boy*, traverse rightwards over the gully, then climb the narrowing ridge. Can also be accessed from the Hourglass Slab area.

The Lookout (Lowland Outcrops p227):

John Biggar has looked into the access issue here and recommends a new approach to The Lookout. Follow the A710 south from Dumfries, through New Abbey and Kirkbean. Look out for a right turn signposted Southwick Church – this is the road up to Clifton Crag. Just after this there is a big dip in the road and a small parking area by the bridge (NX 909 558). Park here, room for two or three cars. Cross the road and walk straight towards the sea. At the top of the (very) steep slope turn right and walk almost exactly 50m westwards. Just here there is an easier-angled ‘valley’ leading downwards. Go down this for about 20m, turn right again before it steepens and traverse steep grass for 20m, then carry on down a small rocky rib for about 20m before a very short, easy scramble down right and an obvious walk down to the foreshore.

FAST CASTLE HEAD AREA:

Wheat Stack 20m Mod. Tom Prentice, Simon Richardson. 6 Oct 2012.

The pyramid-shaped stack situated at NT 862 711 on the east side of Fast Castle Head. Possibly climbed before. Approach by descending steep grass to the bay to

the south-east of Fast Castle Head and swimming 100m to the stack. Climb the south-west ridge, on good rock, to the top. Descend by down climbing the route of ascent.

Castle Hole 20m Diff. Simon Richardson, Tom Prentice. 6 Oct 2012.

The second pyramid-shaped stack between Wheat Stack and the Fast Castle Head. Possibly climbed before. It has a finer pyramid-form, but is not as visible from Fast Castle Head as is Wheat Stack. Approach by swimming as for Wheat Stack and climb the sharp north ridge to the small summit. Descend by down climbing the route of ascent.

Black Mask South 35m VS. Simon Richardson, Tom Prentice. 6 Oct 2012.

The left-hand of twin 25m stacks that form an elongated ridge approximately 100m west of Fast Castle Head (NT 859 711). Approach by descending a steep grassy depression from the cliff-top path and scrambling through rocks at low or medium tide to gain the south side of the stack.

1. 10m Climb easily up to a notch.
2. 25m 4b Move up to an obvious beak and traverse left to a slanting slab that leads up to the south-west edge of the stack. Make and exposed step on to the west face and climb this trending left to reach easier ground and the flat summit. Abseil descent.

Black Mask North 65m VS. Tom Prentice, Simon Richardson. 7 Oct 2012.

The right-hand of the two stacks comprises a double-headed slender ridge. Approach as for *Black Mask South* and cross a narrow channel at low tide to reach the south side of the stack.

1. 25m 4b Climb the left side of the south face to gain a prominent ramp that leads on to the west face. Climb this in an exposed position to gain the sharp crest.
2. 25m Follow the sharp ridge, over the first of the double headed-summits, to reach a col between the two summits.
3. 15m 4a Continue up the final ridge in an exposed position to the second, and higher, top. Abseil descent.

Little Rooks 35m Severe. Simon Richardson, Tom Prentice. 7 Oct 2012.

The big prominent stack marked as *Little Rooks* at NT 853 710 on the OS 1:50000 map. Approach by descending a steep grassy spur from the cliff-top path, scramble through rocks, and cross a channel at low to medium tide. Traverse right along the foot of the south face and make a steep step to gain the easier-angled east ridge. Climb this on good holds to easier ground and the top. Abseil descent.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

THE W.H. MURRAY LITERARY PRIZE

As a tribute to the late Bill Murray, whose mountain and environment writings have been an inspiration to many a budding mountaineer, the SMC have set up a modest writing prize, to be run through the pages of the Journal. The basic rules are set out below, and will be reprinted each year. The prize is run with a deadline of 1 May each year.

The Rules:

1. There shall be a competition for the best entry on Scottish Mountaineering published in the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal*. The competition shall be called the 'W.H. Murray Literary Prize', hereafter called the 'Prize'.
2. The judging panel shall consist of, in the first instance, the following: The current Editor of the *SMC Journal*; The current President of the SMC; and two or three lay members, who may be drawn from the membership of the SMC. The lay members of the panel will sit for three years after which they will be replaced.
3. If, in the view of the panel, there is in any year no entry suitable for the Prize, then there shall be no award that year.
4. Entries shall be writing on the general theme of 'Scottish Mountaineering', and may be prose articles of up to approximately 5000 words in length, or shorter verse. Entries may be fictional.
5. Panel members may not enter for the competition during the period of their membership.
6. Entries must be of original, previously unpublished material. Entries should be submitted to the Editor of the *SMC Journal* by 1 May for consideration that year. Electronic contributions are preferred and should be submitted via e-mail, although double-spaced typewritten hard copies will also be accepted by post. (See Office Bearers page at end of this Journal for address etc.) Any contributor to the *SMC Journal* is entitled to exclude their material from consideration for the Prize and should so notify the Editor of this wish in advance.
7. The prize will be a cheque for the amount £250.
8. Contributors may make different submissions in different years.
9. The decision of the panel is final.
10. Any winning entry will be announced in the *SMC Journal*, and will be published in the *SMC Journal* and on the SMC Website. Thereafter, authors retain copyright.

THE W.H. MURRAY LITERARY PRIZE 2013

This year the judges had a particularly difficult task as there were several strong contenders for the prize. In the end it was decided to make the award, for the very first time, to a verse submission. The prize goes to Graeme Morrison for his unusual and beautifully crafted poem *Anti-Matter in the Cuillin*. The five-line stanza (or quintain) format is a tricky one to choose. Although for example some verses of *The Ancient Mariner* use this format, it is easy to deride because of its closeness to the limerick and the dreaded McGonigal. The rhyming style of the last two lines was also felt by one judge to be strangely reminiscent of the Rupert Bear cartoons. The judges, however, found the 'elevated subject matter agreeably balanced by an unusual verse form and an eccentric rhyme scheme [xxxxaa].' 'I enjoyed the expectation of the rhyme that never came.' 'Rhyme cadence is well maintained and always reasonably constructed. The two lines that rhyme almost always have some kind of significance in sound or meaning.'

It was an extraordinary coincidence to receive a fascinating article (*J.H.B. Bell and the Nobel Laureates*) from a different author on the same theme. This was a very worthy submission, but a very similar version had already appeared in a Grampian Club Bulletin and we presumed it could not be considered for the prize because of Rule 6. It was fortuitous that the prose article gave good support to the poem. The Hon. Ed. also noted that the poem both related to the Cuillin and touched on geology. If this was a device to attract his attention it worked.

There is little doubt that the most impressive mountaineering story told was the ascent of Nanga Parbat by the Mazeno Ridge. What comes over is 'the almost super-human stamina and will power' required to see through this multi-day adventure successfully. To spend so many days at high altitude and still be able to function is something few mountaineers of half their age could manage. This was a truly impressive feat.

Several other articles were particularly well received. *Breaking the Ice* is a well-observed account of the intimidation felt by a newcomer to the CIC Hut in the 'bad old days'(?). The characters seem to come alive once more. *Past Perfect* is also well written and 'creates the most marvellous caricature of Tommy Weir – a wee elf indeed.' *Cinematic* was also regarded as a fine piece of writing about a little known island, told from a novel perspective.

The description of the SMC Caucasus Expedition of 1913 was also very much enjoyed – 'another fine academic piece from Robin Campbell superbly researched and written.' *A Fool in Coigach* is a well-written account, told with a light touch, of climbing a new winter route in the far north-west. It points to further delights at a modest grade still waiting to be discovered in the Highlands. *Potatoes and Poppers* is all about climbing on one of the strangest of rocks. It is amusingly told and wryly written. *Predatory Thoughts* was described as 'wistful, slightly hurt and defensive – all feelings that new-routers have sometimes felt when their "babies" have not been appreciated enough.'

We thank all the contributors for tapping into their creative juices. Please start early for next year!

SCOTTISH WINTER NOTES 2012-13

THE 2013 SEASON was a winter of two halves. The weather until January was characterised by periods of extreme bad weather with gales so ferocious, that mountain travel was sometimes impossible. By contrast, the months of February and March will be long remembered for their superb winter climbing. A settled high-pressure system following a brief thaw resulted in easy going across hard snow slopes, iced-up crags and scores of classic routes in perfect condition. Some of the finest climbing was found on Ben Nevis where many of Scotland's most prized winter climbs, from *Orion Direct* to *Galactic Hitchhiker*, and *Hadrian's Wall* to *Minus One Gully*, were enjoyed by many teams.

Four climbers dominated the season. Greg Boswell was quick off the mark with outstanding new routes such as *Tomahawk Crack* on Ben Nevis and *Vapouriser* on Creag an Dubh Loch, and concluded his season with the highly significant second ascents of *Mort* and *The Cathedral*. Guy Robertson had an exceptional winter that included four new routes graded IX or harder. Guy's ability to consistently find routes in condition, and maintain momentum climbing at the highest level throughout the season, was nothing short of extraordinary. By contrast, Iain Small had a slower build up, but his collection of testing new routes to Ben Nevis stands out – especially as they involved both technical mixed and bold thin ice. Finally, Nick Bullock was only a late arrival on the scene in March, but he soon left his mark with a jaw-dropping series of routes culminating in his magnificent lead of *Nevermore* on Lochnagar.

The long, cold and snowy winter, extending from October through to May, led to a high level of activity across all grades. Predictably, Andy Nisbet stands out as the most prolific activist with an incredible tally of 74 new routes, but many other climbers delighted in discovering new ground. There was a high level of exploratory activity, and new climbs developed in Cama' Choire and on Stob a' Choire Mheadhoin illustrate the remaining potential in many other overlooked corners across the Highlands.

Early Season Blues

After a cold summer and autumn, winter came early with a brief cold snap at the end of October. Only a dusting of snow fell in the West, but the Cairngorms took the full blast of the northerly winds and the high cliffs rapidly came into condition. The Northern Corries were the most logical venue, but Roger Everett and I lucked out with a visit to Cairn Toul, where we climbed *Double Distance*, a new three-pitch Grade IV buttress line in Coire Lochan Uaine. The cliff has seen only a handful of visits, and is only a practicable proposition either very early, or very late in the season, when there is no cornice. Cairn Toul is the most remote 4000-er, and Roger wryly commented to me afterwards that it was good to have got the longest walk of the winter out of the way with the first route of the season!

As snow continued to fall, winter activity switched to the West and the first major new route of the season fell to Guy Steven and Mike Lates at the beginning of November when they made the first ascent of *Deliverance* (VII,7), a striking corner-line on the Stone Shoot Face of Sgùrr Thearlaich on Skye. Lates had been studying this line all summer wondering what it would be like as a winter climb. 'Maybe I'll regret giving this route to Guy if I work hard on the arms and

technique this winter,' he told me. 'But the truth is that it was desperate and I was well chuffed to get up it on a very tight rope!'

The following weekend saw superb weather across the Cairngorms, and Greg Boswell and Guy Robertson added *The Candy Shop* (VII,9) a new two-pitch overhanging crack up the steep wall to right of *The Gathering* in Coire an Lochain. 'It was a pumpy little number,' Greg told me, 'with some awesome moves and worthwhile climbing.' The Boswell-Robertson team is one of the most effective Scottish winter teams at present, so it is reassuring to note that a few summer cobwebs needed to be blown away. Boswell took an unexpected fall at the start of the crux pitch, and more drama followed when one of his crampons fell off and landed next door to Robertson on the belay ledge. Deeper in the Cairngorms on Braeriach, old hands Andy Nisbet, Jonathan Preston and Pat Ingram made the first ascent of *Tsar Wars* (IV,5) on Sròn na Lairige, and Roger Webb and I climbed *The Guardsman* (VI,6) in Coire an Lochain, a sustained four-pitch route up the left edge of Derelict Buttress.

Ben Nevis

Cold and snowy conditions at the end of November resulted in some excellent ascents in Coire na Ciste. Many of the modern classics were climbed such as *Sioux Wall* (VIII,8) and *Gargoyle Wall* (VI,6) on Number Three Gully Buttress, *Darth Vader* (VII,7) on Creag Coire na Ciste and *The Slab Climb* (VI,7) on South Trident Buttress. Over on Pinnacle Buttress of the Tower, *Smooth Operator* (VI,7) also had an early repeat.

The pace increased at the end of the month when Guy Robertson and Greg Boswell made the third ascent of *The Knuckleduster* (VIII,9) on Number Three Gully Buttress. Boswell had repeated this route last season with Will Sim (adding a more direct finish), but this time they took a more direct winter version of the summer crux pitch. Their ascent was remarkably fast as they only started climbing at 11.30 a.m. after being halted by unstable snow conditions approaching a new line in Observatory Gully earlier in the day.

For Boswell this was only a forerunner of things to come, as he returned to Number Three Gully Buttress three days later with Adam Russell and made the first ascent of *Tomahawk Crack* (VIII,9), which takes a line straight up the centre of Sioux Wall. This imposing wall is cut by a number of thin cracks and is ideally suited to modern mixed climbing, but even so, Greg described the climb as 'a funky route with some surprisingly steep and tricky sections.' This section of cliff was already home to the eponymous *Sioux Wall* (the most popular Grade VIII in Scotland) and *Apache* (VIII,9), so the Boswell-Russell addition now gives it one of the highest concentrations of top end winter routes in the country. *Tomahawk Crack* was climbed in perfect style – on sight at the first attempt – and does not follow an existing summer line.

In early February, Iain Small upped the ante another notch with the outstanding first ascent of *No Success Like Failure* (IX,8), which takes the shallow roofed groove running up the front face of Rogue's Rib on Ben Nevis. I was fortunate enough to accompany Iain on this ascent and was astonished at the sustained difficulty and paucity of protection on this beautiful, but very sustained line. Iain had previously attempted the route just after Christmas with Blair Fyffe, hence the evocative name.

The following weekend Small was back on Ben Nevis with Tony Stone. In a vain effort to seek some shelter from the high winds they climbed the impending

corner between *Fat Boy Slim* and *Rogue's Rib*. New route enthusiasts were well aware of this prominent unclimbed feature, but close up it is an imposing and unfeasible-looking line. Iain was typically modest in his assessment after the climb: 'The route was pretty bold and delicate for the first two pitches, and Tony really pushed the comfort levels on the first pitch, even though he appeared consummately in control throughout.' I suspect that in common with the majority of Iain Small's Nevis winter routes, *Migranya Profunda* (VIII,8) will see only a slow trickle of suitors in coming seasons.

Further left, Simon Yearsley and Helen Rennard climbed *Beggars Belief* (VII,7), a winter version of *Beggar's Groove*, and higher up Coire na Ciste, Jim Higgins and Neil Adams linked the start of *Angels with Dirty Faces* with the finish of *Avenging Angel*, to produce *Avenging Angel Direct* (VIII,8) – the first route to fully meet the challenge of the compelling line of overhanging corners on the left side of Creag Coire na Ciste.

As ice conditions moved from good to excellent at the end of February, Robin Clothier and Richard Bentley scored one of the biggest coups of the season with the first ascent of *Shooting Star* (VI,6). This 500m-long expedition links together nine existing routes with two pitches of new ground resulting in the longest climb on the Orion Face. Equally impressive was the forbiddingly steep *Deadly Presence* (VIII,7) on Observatory Buttress by Iain Small and Doug Hawthorn, which forces its way up the vertical headwall above *Appointment with Fear*. Small, who is renowned for his delicate touch on ice, remarked afterwards that this was probably the leanest ice pitch he has ever climbed.

Observatory Buttress saw more attention in March when Clothier teamed up with the father and son team of Doug and Uisdean Hawthorn to make the third ascent of the fabled *Point Blank* (VII,7), which takes the imposing rib bounding the right side of *Point Five Gully*. They were closely followed by Tim Neill and Donald King later that day, whilst next-door, Small and I added *The Wolves Are Running* (VII,7), a bold icy mixed climb taking the vertical headwall to the right of *Rubicon Wall*. More mixed in nature was *Angry Chair* (VII,7) on the steep wall right of *Tower Cleft* by Dave MacLeod and Helen Rennard.

Small and Hawthorn had a superb run of routes on Ben Nevis at the end of March with ascents of *Pointless* (VII,6), *Space Invaders* (VI,5), and *Journey into Space* (VII,5). On 30 March they were joined by Clothier for the second ascent (via a new start) of *Urban Spaceman* (VII,6), a mythical line that was first climbed by Arthur Paul and a young Doug Hawthorn way back in 1983. A week later Small was back again, this time with Murdo Jamieson and Nick Bullock, to add *Spaced Out* (VII,7), a new direct route between *Space Invaders* and *Journey into Space* on the Orion headwall.

The dramatic contrast in climbing conditions over the season, from the perfectly sublime to the absolute impossible, was captured in a route name given by Blair Fyffe and Helen Rennard to a new addition in December. The *Copenhagen Interpretation* (VI,7) takes the prominent ramp, cracks and corners between *The Minge* and *Joyful Chimneys* on South Trident Buttress. 'The name refers to the unusual mathematics of quantum mechanics,' Blair (a PhD Astrophysicist) explained. 'The ephemeral and uncertain world of the sub-atomic particles shows similarities to the transient and uncertain world of Scottish winter climbing conditions. Both worlds, although challenging, and in some ways always alien to us, have an other worldly beauty.'



Peter Davies on the superb first pitch of Night of the White Russians (VII,6), Observatory Buttress, Ben Nevis. First ascent 16 March 2013. Photo: Donie O'Sullivan.

Exploration of Old Haunts

The cold and snowy season allowed a reappraisal of several well-known venues such as Arrochar, Arran and Glen Clova. On Beinn Ime, Stuart McFarlane and Stuart Burns found the five-pitch *Gangnam Style* (V,7), which takes the right-facing corner system to the left of *Ben's Fault* on Fan Gully Buttress. A few days later McFarlane visited The Cobbler with John Williams and made the first winter ascent of *Echo Crack* (VI,7). The south-facing routes on the North Peak are notoriously hard to find in winter condition as they strip fast in the sun, but McFarlane circumvented this by making a very early start following a heavy snowfall the day before.

Also of note was the first winter ascent of *Hangover* (VI,6) on Creag Tharsuinn in Arrochar by Dafydd Morris and Matt Buchanan, and *Silence of the Rams* (V,6) on The Cobbler by Dougie Beck, Andy Bain and Jake Thackrey. Bain and Thackrey continued their Arrochar explorations with three new long routes on nearby Beinn Narnain. Meanwhile, Andrew Fraser, Ian Magill and James Dalgiesh explored the crag on the north side of the North-East Ridge of Beinn Ime. This is the highest cliff in Arrochar and provides worthwhile climbing when conditions are lean.

A major snow storm in late March brought the mountains on Arran into good condition. Stuart McFarlane and I were lucky enough to visit the mountain soon after and were able to add a couple of new routes to Beinn Nuis, including *After The Storm* (VI,5) that tackles the face right of Nuis Chimney. During the same period, Andrew Fraser, Nigel Marshall and Ian Magill added *Power Outage* (II/III) and *White Witch* (IV,4) to the 250m-high north face of Ceum na Caillich. 'It's strange that the crag had been overlooked as it is high, north facing, easily accessed from North Glen Sannox, and probably gives the most reliable conditions in Arran,' Andrew told me afterwards.

Glen Clova is undergoing something of a renaissance at the moment, with a steady stream of quality winter routes added over the past few seasons. Winter Corrie, long regarded as a venue for easy to middle grades, with only one route graded harder than Grade IV, now sports several excellent technical routes including *Wildcat Wall*, *The Tiger Finish*, *Waterfall Buttress Direct* and *Moon Ice Jazz*. This season it saw more additions such as *Stalingrad* (VI,6) and *Grampian Club Buttress* (IV,5) by Forrest Templeton, Brian Duthie and Kevin Murphy.

Henning Wackerhage has been very much at the forefront of the Clova developments with two new routes in Corrie Fee and exploration of Glen Prosen's Bawhelps with Robbie Miller. Most surprising of all perhaps, was the development of Coire Farchal with Tim Chappell and myself. This easily accessible corrie now sports ten routes with pride of place going to the superb Silver Threads Among the Gold (IV,5, which takes the prominent central buttress.

Cairngorms

The first major new route in the Cairngorms fell to Guy Robertson and Greg Boswell on 11 December when they added *Vapouriser* (VIII,8), a stunning five-pitch icy mixed line cutting up directly through *Vertigo Wall* on Creag an Dubh Loch. The route uses a spectacular finish attempted by Henning Wackerhage a couple of seasons before, but as is so often the case, the real crux of the route was being in position at the right time and finding the lower grooves sufficiently iced. Guy commented afterwards that it is transitory climbs like this, which rely on ice rather than snowed up rock, that result in the most memorable Scottish winter



Greg Boswell on the second pitch of *Vapouriser* (VIII,8) on *Creag an Dubh Loch*, Cairngorms.
Photo: Guy Robertson.

routes. ‘The climbing was an exquisite combination of thin ice and steep rock, with a distinctly cerebral element throughout,’ he wrote later on his blog. ‘There simply are not enough adjectives to describe how good this route is – the exposure on the top pitch was quite ludicrous!’

The following day Pete Macpherson and Martin Moran made the third winter ascent of *Steeple* (IX,9) on *The Shelter Stone*. Rather than start up *Postern*, they followed the summer line throughout except for the 5c crux, which was black, so they climbed *The Needle* crux instead. This team are no strangers to high standard routes on the *Shelter Stone*. Two seasons ago Macpherson made the first ascent of *Stone Temple Pilots* (X,9), and last December Moran made a winter ascent of *The Needle* (VIII,8). The first winter ascent of *Steeple* was a landmark ascent climbed in a 24-hour push by Alan Mullin and Steve Paget in November 1999. It set a new standard for Scottish routes of such sustained difficulty, and deliberately climbing through the night redefined the approach to climbing long Scottish winter routes.

The following weekend Dafydd Morris and Matt Buchanan visited *Creagan Cha-no* on *Cairn Gorm* and made a good addition to *Arch Wall*. *Gallows Groove* (VI,7) takes the steep slab and blocky chimney between *Arch Enemy* and *Fingers and Thumbs* and is one of the most technical routes on the cliff. Meanwhile on the other side of the Cairngorms, Roger Webb and I added *Insurgent* (VI,7) to *Sinister Buttress*, the least known of *Lochnagar’s* buttresses. A couple of weeks later, Simon Yearsley and Neil Silver made an enterprising visit to *Beinn a’ Bhuid* where they found *Sentinel Buttress* (V,6). This takes the prominent line

between *Sentinel Route* and *Sentinel Gully* and is the first winter route added to the remote Dividing Buttress in over ten years.

Heavy snow conditions from February onwards effectively curtailed a high level of Cairngorms pioneering activity through the rest of the season, however Guy Robertson nipped into Lochnagar with Greg Boswell and Pete Benson, just before the mid February thaw, to snatch *Fancy Free* (VII,9), the prominent groove-line left of *Footloose* on Central Buttress.

Glen Coe

Early in December, Andy Nisbet and Brian Davison visited the West Top of Bidean nam Bian in Glen Coe to put a long-standing project to rest – the steep unclimbed rib to the right of *The Gash*. Arriving at the foot of the route, Nisbet couldn't resist climbing the wall to its left, which provided a deceptively difficult VI,7 called *The Push*. Davison then led the rib resulting in the steep and serious *Incision* (VI,7). 'Brian was using old axes with leashes,' Andy explained. 'But he had the last laugh when my curly modern ones had the wrong curve to reach a chockstone deep in the crack.'

Later in the month, Donald King and Mike Pescod made the first winter ascent of the impressively steep *Engineer's Crack* (VIII,9) on Buachaille Etive Mòr. This steep two-pitch route on the North side of Crowberry Ridge is rarely in winter condition, but it fell to a well-timed and determined ascent just before the late January high-pressure weather system broke.

In March, Malcolm Bass and Simon Yearsley made the first ascent of *Twisted* (VII,7) on Stob Coire nan Lochan. This superb three-pitch addition, takes a central line up the broad buttress between *Moonshadow* and *Chimney Route*. The most significant winter ascent in the Coe fell to Guy Robertson and Nick Bullock at the end of March when they made the first ascent of *Cold Revenge* (IX,8) on Buachaille Etive Mòr. This serious and committing climb, which is based on the summer routes of *Bludger's Revelation* and *Bloody Crack*, is only the second winter route on Slime Wall.

Northern Highlands

In early December, Andy Nisbet and Brian Davison teamed up with Pat Ingram to visit An Teallach. A recent snowfall and short thaw had worked their magic, and the trio found a line of ice dribbling down a shallow corner-line on the gully face of Goblach Buttress. The 350m-long *Tweener* was graded V,6, but is likely to be significantly harder in powder conditions. A couple of days later, Guy Robertson and Andy Inglis who made an enterprising visit to Coire Grandha's Upper Cliff on Beinn Dearg. *The Rebirth of Cool* (VII,7) takes the easiest line up the steep and complex area of overhanging grooves and bulges immediately right of *Tickled Rib*, another Robertson route from way back in 2001.

The lead up to Christmas was characterised by a combination of gales, sharp thaws and occasional good days, but this period was dominated by Andy Nisbet, who demonstrated his years of experience by consistently outwitting the weather forecast and being in the right place at the tight time. On 18 December he joined forces with Jonathan Preston and Dave McGimpsey for the first ascent of *Rongbuk* (IV,4) on Toll an Lochain on An Teallach. 'This buttress is arguably the second biggest cliff in Scotland, and although there are steeper contenders, it is a surprisingly intimidating face and I love climbing there,' Andy enthused afterwards. Their 500m-long route makes a fine companion to *Potala Buttress* first climbed by Des Rubens and Dave Broadhead in January 1987.

Three days later on 21 December, the threesome was back in action on Beinn Fhada in the Western Highlands. The end of the world was predicted by the pundits, but even so the trio came away with three routes, including the appropriately named *World's End* (III,4), *Doomsday* (III,4), and all on a day with weather so wild that few folk would have considered venturing out.

In the middle of January, Guy Robertson and Greg Boswell made the first winter ascent of *Shoot the Breeze* on Beinn Eighe's West Central Wall. This spectacular summer E2, first climbed in 1992, is described in the current guidebook as 'a stunning route, one of the wildest in Scotland, with a well protected crux and a Troll Wall ambiance.' The winter version is a sustained IX,8 destined to become a future test piece. 'Every move was Tech 8 after the first few metres, and the protection was generally superb,' Robertson explained afterwards.

Two weeks later, Robertson was back on Beinn Eighe with Jason Currie to climb the prominent line between *Colgarra* and *King of the Swingers*. This was untouched in summer and resulted in the sustained and technical *Immortal Memory* (IX,9). 'A completely new winter-only line up the middle of Far East Wall (for me) was hitherto the stuff of fantasy,' Guy wrote later.

Other highlights in the Northern Highlands include the first ascent of *Haigha* by Malcolm Bass and Simon Yearsley, a new 340-long VI,7 in Core na Poite on Beinn Bhan. This route joins *Realisation* and *Wonderland* as the third Bass-Yearsley addition to the impressive Realisation Wall between March Hare's and Mad Hatter's gullies. Also on Beinn Bhan, Martin Moran and Pete Macpherson found the bold *Suspended Animation* (VIII,9), a new four-pitch mixed adventure on Suspense Wall in the neighbouring Coire na Feola. Nearby on Beinn Eighe, Michael Barnard and James Duthie struck it lucky on Beinn Eighe with *Lightning Strike* (VI,6), the weakness left of Achilles, and Roger Webb and I made the long trek in to Beinn Dearg Mor for the first winter ascent of the superbly proportioned *Flake Buttress* (VI,6).

Towards the end of the season Guy Robertson and Roger Webb made the first ascent of *Morgane* (VII,8), a prominent corner-line on Atlantic Wall on Slioch, and Webb later returned with Pete Macpherson to add *Yggdrasil* (VIII,8) up the right side of the wall. Over the last 20 years Webb has authored over a dozen new routes on this remote face, which has a total height of over 400m and can lay claim to being one of the highest cliffs in Scotland.

John Mackenzie had a good run of routes in his beloved Strathfarrar where the amount of ice on the medium level crags at the end of March was outstanding. Pride of place went to the excellent *Left Pork* (V,6) finish to *Pearls Before Swine* on Sgùrr na Muice climbed with Dave Broadhead, and *Hollow Heart* (V,5) on Sgùrr na Lapaich's Garbh Choire. John was accompanied by Neil Wilson and Simon Nadin on the second route, which was likened to a steeper and bolder version of *Two-Step Corner* on Ben Nevis.

Skye

The Cuillin Ridge came into excellent condition during the second week in December and four teams made the winter traverse. Both Scott Kirkhope and Ken Applegate, and John and Ronnie Orr made traditional outings with a bivouac, whilst the Fort William-based team of Guy Steven, Donald King and Kenny Grant, aided by King's intimate knowledge of the route, made a lightning-quick traverse in only 12 hours. The most impressive achievement however was a solo outing by Barry Smyth with one bivouac. The Cuillin Ridge has been

traversed solo in winter several times before, but to do it early in the season, with precious little daylight and long lonely nights, takes a very special resolve.

Cuillin guidebook author Mike Lates organised a highly successful winter meet based at the Glen Brittle Memorial Hut in late January. Conditions were close to perfect, and highlights included *Away from the Crowd* (IV), a new ice line on the southern face of Sgùrr Dearg's West Ridge, and a mass ascent of *Hubble, Bubble, Toil and Trouble*, a 500m-long III,5 on the right edge of *Waterpipe Gully*. James Sutton and Ben Wear made the first winter ascent of *Dyke Gully and Buttress* (V,6) on Sgùrr a' Mhadaidh's North Face, and Steve Perry and Antoni Anderson added *South End*, an attractive looking IV,5 to Caisteal a' Gharbh-Choire. On the final day, Mike Lates and partner visited the North Face of Mhadaidh and made the first winter ascent of *Vixen Groove* (V,5).

The same weekend, Iain Small and I made the first winter ascent of *Jib* (VIII,8), the spectacular E1 corner system left of *The Great Prow* on Blàbheinn, and Small returned a few days later with Doug Hawthorn to make the first complete winter ascent of *Slanting Gully* (VI,7) on Sgùrr a' Mhadaidh's North Face. Lates returned to Mhadaidh with Andy Huntington in mid April to make the long-awaited second ascent of *The Smear*, an undercut Grade V ice route first climbed in 1979 by Doug Scott and Jim Duff.

Repeats

In a seemingly never ending world of harder and harder new routes, second ascents and early repeats are important to reset the gauge. The most impressive run of repeats fell to Fort William based mountaineering instructor Guy Steven. In early November, he made the third ascent of *Archangel* (VII,7) on Ben Nevis with Kenny Grant, and he continued his run of hard Nevis routes with ascents of *Strident Edge* (VII,7) and *Sidewinder* (VII,8) on South Trident Buttress. On 2 December Steven made the second ascent of *The Survivor* (VII,8) on Number Three Gully Buttress with Keith Ball and Ewan Rodgers, and then as the snow level dropped, he turned his attention to Glen Coe with a series of excellent repeats. First off was the second ascent of *Nirvana Wall* with Ball and Grant. This sustained VI,8 takes the striking crack on the Far Eastern Buttress of Aonach Dubh and was first climbed by Donald King and Mike Pescod in December 2003. The following day the same trio made the second ascent of *The Twarf* (VI,7) on Aonach Dubh – an excellent chimney-groove cutting deep into the North Face that was first climbed in winter by Sam Chinnery and Muir Morton in February 2002.

Steven and Ball concluded an intense four days with the second ascent of *June Crack* on Great Gully Buttress on Buachaille Etive Mòr. This route was so little known that it had escaped a modern two-tier rating and is given a traditional grade of V in the current Glen Coe guide. It was first climbed in winter by the formidable team of Robin Clothier and Doug Hawthorn way back in January 1984, which for the cognoscenti may provide a clue to its potential difficulty. 'We all found it very hard and agreed that it was somewhere around VIII,8,' Steven wrote later. 'It's harder than anything I've tried in the past... a cracking route in a fantastic setting!'

Other noteworthy repeats include second ascents of *Scrabble* (VIII,7) in Stob Coire nan Lochan by Adam Hughes, Matt Stygall and Blair Fyffe, *Mistral* (VII,8) on Beinn Eighe by Jim Higgins and Malcolm Bass, and *Steam Train* (VII,7) on Ben Nevis by Guy Robertson and Pete Macpherson. Greg Boswell made the

third ascent of Dave MacLeod's *Cathedral* (X,11) on The Cobbler, earning multiple bonus points for climbing the route in spectacularly rimed conditions.

The biggest repeat of the winter however, was the long-awaited second ascent of *Mort* (IX,9) on Lochnagar's Tough-Brown Face, by the all-conquering team of Greg Boswell, Guy Robertson and Nick Bullock. This seminal route was first climbed by Brian Davison, Andy Nisbet and Dave McGimpsey in January 2000, and had a reputation for great seriousness and only being possible in icy conditions. The second ascent team confirmed the highly serious tag, but dispelled the notion that unusually icy conditions are required.

Nevermore

At the end of the season, Nick Bullock and Guy Robertson put to bed one of the last great problems on Lochnagar with the first winter ascent of *Nevermore* on the Tough-Brown Face. This rarely climbed summer E2 was first climbed by Dougie Dinwoodie and Bob Smith in August 1981 and takes a direct line up the face between *Post Mortem* and *Mort*.

Pete Benson and Guy Robertson were the inspiration behind this climb. Over the past two seasons they made several attempts with Pete Macpherson, but were repeatedly turned back by the extreme difficulty of the second pitch. When Benson finally succeeded on climbing this clean during their third attempt in March 2012 (a pitch thought to be worth IX,10 in its own right), they were shut down by a rapid thaw on the fifth and final pitch.

For their fourth attempt this March, the pair roped in Nick Bullock, but ferocious cold and dwindling daylight forced another retreat from high on the climb. Robertson and Bullock probed the fifth pitch, but both climbed back down unwilling to commit to the difficult initial roof.

On their fifth attempt on 8 April, Benson was unable to join the team, but Robertson and Bullock were highly focused on their goal. Bullock led the challenging second pitch leaving Robertson the crucial fifth pitch. After some hesitation, Robertson pulled over the roof, but then with his last protection below the roof, he fell. With the on-sight lost, he handed over the ropes to Bullock who soon passed Robertson's highpoint and pushed on into the unknown.

'The climbing difficulties above the second overlap increased,' Bullock wrote later. 'There was no more gear until the pitch and the angle eased. I took a long time as the technicalities were brain-ache inducing, stomach churning – the prospect of falling now slowed me – terror was the tang of battery terminals licked.' Incredibly Bullock kept his cool together and a winter ascent of *Nevermore* was finally a reality.

The significance of *Nevermore* goes far beyond Lochnagar and the Tough-Brown Face. The route was graded X,10 – a significant step up from the dozen or so Grade IX first ascents that have been climbed on-sight. Of course, with the prior attempts, *Nevermore* was not the perfect on-sight, and although we have a handful of higher graded winter routes in Scotland, they have typically benefitted from pre-inspection, multiple attempts on the crux pitch or knowledge from summer ascents. In a season that stands out for its superlatives, *Nevermore* was undoubtedly the ascent of the winter. Not only is it technically difficult, bold and committing, but it opens the door to the chilling prospect of on-sight Scottish winter Grade X.

Simon Richardson

100 YEARS AGO: THE CLUB IN 1913

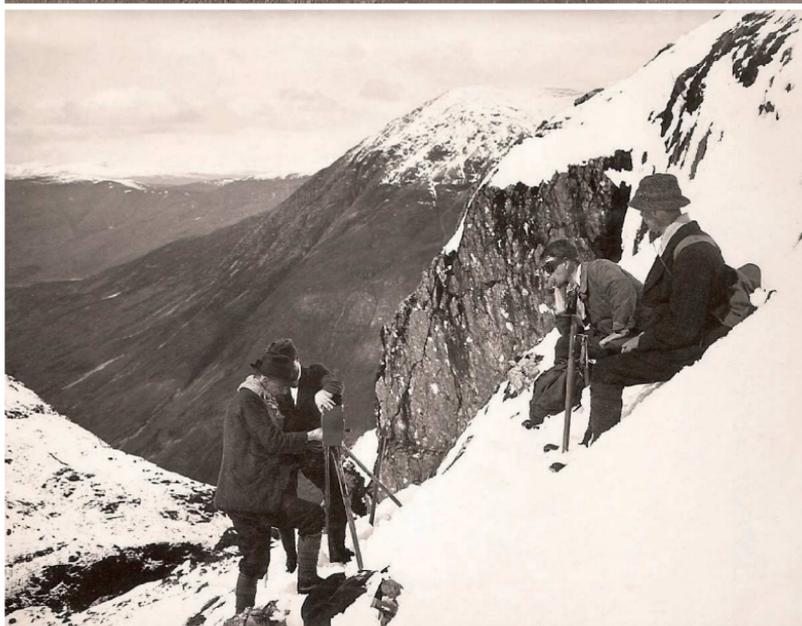
THE 24TH ANNUAL MEETING and Dinner took place on Friday 6 December 1912 in the North British Hotel, Edinburgh, with Godfrey Solly presiding. Treasurer Nelson announced a balance of £170 7s., which together with the Life Membership Fund of £298 7s. 2d., and the still-unused legacy of £100 from the Gaiter Club, brought the Club's total funds to £568 14s. 2d.

Club Meets

The New Year Meet, which extended for 10 days, was held at Fortingall and Killin with 33 members and six guests attending. Only five were accommodated at Fortingall, and some of these made their way to Killin eventually, by steamer. Goggs walked over Ben Lawers from Killin to Fortingall, and returned a few days later by a similar route. Although conditions were cold and dry, there was little snow, and westerly gales prevailed throughout the Meet. No climbs were reported, apart from an unidentified route on Meall Dhamh (Cruach Ardrain) by Bell and McLaren, but all the neighbouring hills were visited by several parties.

The Easter Meet was held at the Station Hotel, Aviemore, with Derry Lodge also available to the 41 members and 10 guests who attended. Heavy snowfalls preceded the Meet, and 'At no previous Meet has the sport of ski-ing claimed so much attention.' Most of this debased activity took place around Drumochter, members taking the train down to Dalwhinnie or Dalnaspidal. However, Arthur and Sang traversed Cairngorm and Ben Macdui to Derry, returning the following day by the great moss and the Glen Einich Hills. Many others, using their unfashionable hobnailers, made the same traverse to Derry, but returned via Cairn Toul and Braeriach. Ling and Edward Backhouse woke at Derry on Easter Day confronted by much new snow, but set about their planned journey through the Lairig Ghru. Strong winds discouraged the map and compass work that the poor visibility demanded. Soon they found themselves high in Garbh Choire Dhaidh. Thinking they were in Coire Bhrochain, they descended a little and cut round to the north. Of course this brought them into Coire Bhrochain. Deciding that they were so high they might as well press on to Braeriach, they were then repulsed by monstrous cornices, and in despair and falling night turned back heading for Derry once more. They eventually staggered in at 12.45 a.m., having fallen in the Dee several times, with every article of clothing frozen. This farcical excursion is well described by Backhouse in the *Journal* ('Midnight Wanderings in the Larig', *J*, 12/71 (1913), 286–90). Thereafter, two days of brilliant sunshine provided opportunities for photographers, and J.R Young took a magnificent panorama of Braeriach and the Sgoran Dubhs, which appeared in fold-out photogravure as frontispiece for the *Journal* for June 1913.

The 1912 AGM had resolved on a May Meet to Knoydart to obtain information for the 'New Guide Book'. While this took place as planned in mid-May, it was very poorly attended, and the weather was mostly bad. A group of five were at Tomdoun, from where they explored Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach, and the Sgùrr na Ciche group; meanwhile a group of four marched to Carnach at the head of Loch Nevis from Glenfinnan. From there they climbed the Knoydart Munros and Beinn Sgritheall, and looked around in the mist for crags, unsuccessfully.



Top: Raeburn, James R. Young, John H. Buchanan, Francis Greig. Clachaig Hotel, 20 April 1913.
Bottom: Cinematography. Greig instructs Raeburn, 20 April 1913.

Spring

In the Spring, the *Journal* recorded little activity. Ling began his annual campaign in the Lake District with a visit to Great Gable with a large party at Seathwaite on 12 April. They set off at 8.05 a.m: Bicknell, Eric Addyman and Ruth Raeburn climbed *Kern Knotts Chimney* and *Eagles Nest Ridge*, while Goodeve, Ling and Raeburn climbed an unidentified buttress route out of Great Hell Gate. Consultation with Stephen Reid produced the interesting idea that they may have climbed the lower part of *Tophet Bastion* (not recorded until 1919), continuing by grassy grooves where that route veers left in search of decent rock. Bicknell, Goodeve and Ling ended their busy day by walking to Keswick for the 6.30 train (*Diary*, Book 12, 57).

An album thought to belong to James C. Thomson – a Team MacRobert stalwart – records a gathering at Clachaig on 20 April in fairly wintry weather. J.H. Buchanan, Stuart Cumming, Francis Greig, Raeburn and James R. Young climbed Bidean *via* an unidentified route on Stob Coire nan Lochan, perhaps on the rocks to the right of Pinnacle Buttress. A deliberate approach to photography (by Cumming) produced an early action shot, and there were also experiments in ‘cinematography’, which unfortunately haven’t survived.

On 17 May, Ling (*Diary*, Book 12, 63) climbed Pillar’s *North-East Climb* with McLaren from his usual base at Seathwaite. This was his fourth visit to the route in the space of a year!

On 15 June Ling was at Seathwaite again, along with Goodeve and Bicknell. They had an interesting day on Scafell Crag, ascending Steep Ghyll to the point where the brand new Girdle Traverse crosses (Herford, Sansom, Brunskill & Gibson, 1912), then following the Traverse leftwards across the Fives Court and Tennis Court on Pisgah into Moss Ghyll, and finishing by that route. As usual Ling finished his day by walking to Keswick for the 6.30 train (*Diary*, Book 12, 65).

The Club Abroad

The highlight of the summer season was the expedition to the Caucasus by Ling, Raeburn and others, and I have dealt with this ambitious and successful effort elsewhere in this *Journal*. Members were scattered far and wide around the globe: Rennie in California on a Sierra Club trek; Howard in the Canadian Rockies with Arnold Mumm; Munro in Algerian Sahara exploring the Aures Mountains, where he had the choice of climbing ‘a mountain of alabaster, or a mountain of rock salt’; Backhouse in Romsdal, climbing the main peaks with local guide H. Nygaard who ‘is willing to follow where led,’ before moving to Øie in Søndmøre where he climbed the Smørskredtind alone, his guide refusing to follow him up its north-west ridge.

Those who went to the Western Alps encountered mostly bad weather, and accomplished little. Farther east the weather was better, and Solly and Corry had some good climbs in the Ortler group, the traverse of the Königspitze (Gran Zeburu) by the Solda (Schrotterhorn) Ridge being their best day. Luckiest of all was Charles Inglis Clark, who went to the Grödner Thal (Val Gardena) in the Austrian Dolomites along with sister Mabel and Miss Eckhardt, another L.S.C.C. worthy. They climbed (with guides) every day for two weeks, and always at a high standard, in the Sella and Sassolungo groups, and paid special attention to the Tschierspitze chain (Piz de Cir). Why? Because next to the Tschierspitze lies the Clarkspitze (Punta Clark), named for father William, who made the first



On Stob Coire nan Lochain, 20 April 1913.

ascent by the Grade IV SW Flank in 1898. They made the third ascent, and it was the hardest route of their holiday.

Summer & Autumn

On Skye, Steeple, Barlow & Doughty continued their Cuillin explorations in August with ascents of the various interesting gullies on the Coruisk side of Sgùrr a' Mhadaidh and Sgùrr a' Ghreadaidh (see *J*, 13/73 (1914), 13–16 and the Editor's paper from last year's Journal). In September, Raeburn visited the Coruisk side of Sgùrr Theàrlaich and Sgùrr MhicCoinnich. He climbed Sgùrr Theàrlaich by its eastern face, and made the interesting suggestion that this might

be a decent alternative when traversing the Main Ridge. Instead of crossing the T–D Gap, or descending into Coire a' Ghrunnda to avoid it, a comparatively short descent from Bealach Coire an Lochain leads to the foot of the face which is then followed in a straight line to Theàrlaich summit (*J*, 13/73 (1914), 58). This option is described and discussed in our *Skye Scrambles* Guide. Raeburn's note continues with a description of a new route (the second ascent) on Sgùrr Coire an Lochain, done along with three strong climbers – John B. Meldrum and the Wallwork brothers. It is doubtful whether this route has ever been repeated. Also in September, James Parker explored what we would now call the Irish Furths, and supplied a detailed description and bibliography for the February 1914 Journal (*J*, 13/73 (1914), 1–12). Finally, in December Mabel Inglis Clark, Mrs Hunter & Henry Alexander made the first ascent of Lochnagar's *Crumbling Cranny*.

The Journal

Highlights of the Journal for the year were, besides those articles mentioned in this or last year's report, a detailed and interesting description of the coast between Fast Castle and St Abb's Head by William Douglas (*J*, 12/72 (1913), 311–21), and a very thorough and scholarly piece by Frank Goggs about 'Argyll's Bowling Green and Glen Croe' (*J*, 12/72 (1913), 323–40 & 344–51). Although titled 'The Bird Cliffs of St. Abb's', Douglas's article deals with the crags and stacks as well as their inhabitants. Goggs's article about Ardgoil describes a region of Highland country still curiously neglected, and it neatly complements Scott Moncrieff Penney's article about Cowal in the previous volume (*J*, 11/66 (1911), 313–25). As remarked last year, interested members can download these Volumes from Google's Internet Archive at <www.archive.org>.

Robin N Campbell

AN DORUS/DORAS GULLY

Further to the article in last year's Journal, John Bennet reports making a solo ascent of this gully in 1986 starting from the JMCS Coruisk Hut: 'Not, if I can recall too difficult, but I was younger then.' He also reports finding a rucsac under the scree which had lain there for ten months. He advertised in the climbing press at the time and it was reclaimed by an Edinburgh doctor.

He also mentions that in Seton Gordon's book, *The Charms of Skye*, published in 1929 there is an interesting reference to the true position of An Dorus, which is quoted below:

From this eagle's perch one looked upon the wild pass across the Cuillin between Sgurr na Banachdich and Sgurr Dearg. The head of this pass has long been known as An Dorus Mòr—in English, the Great Door. It is curious that the position of An Dorus Mòr should have been given wrongly on the present-day maps. In the maps it is marked considerably to the north of Sgurr na Banachdich, so that it is only right that the error should be mentioned before the true position has been forgotten.

RECORD HILL RUNS

Although it is perhaps a little out of place to report hillrunning feats in the *Journal*, two outstanding achievements earlier this year by members of Lochaber Athletic Club do justify a mention.

The first was by Jon Gay who completed the Ramsay Round on 23/24 February 2013 in a time of 23 hrs 18 mins – 4hrs quicker than the previous winter record. He became the first person ever to complete the round in winter in under 24 hours. Jon had attempted the round in winter before and this experience allowed him to capitalise on superb conditions.



Clockwise from top left:

1. View of Loch Treig on Saturday 23 February 2013. Photo: Vivian Scott.
2. Jon Gay on the Devil's Ridge the weekend after his record run. Photo: Tark Gunn.
3. Finlay Wild on Gars-bheinn the night before his 1st Cuillin run, 8 June 2013. Photo: Rob Beaumont.
4. Finlay Wild returning to Glen Brittle after his record run, 16 June 2013. Photo: Suzy Devey.

The second record was set by Finlay Wild who completed the 'standard' Cuillin Ridge Run on 16 June 2013 in a new record time of 3hrs 14mins. He had done the whole ridge the previous weekend in a faster time (3hr 10min), but had inexplicably failed to visit the very summit of Sgùrr MhicCoinnich.

SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING TRUST – 2012

Scottish Charity No. SCO09117

The Trustees met on 23 March and 12 October 2012. During the course of these meetings support was given to R McFarlane – Arctic Norway; Memorial to Craiggallian Fire; Carn Dearg Mountaineering Club – New Hut Glen Clova; R Crawford – Dundee Mountain Film Festival; Mountaineering Council of Scotland – REALrock for Young Climbers; Mountain Bothies Association – Hutchison Memorial Hut; Niall Ritchie – Banchory Academy Alaska Expedition 2012; Matthew Burke – Canyons to Coast, Namibia; Assynt Foundation – Improvement of Access; Jonathan Conville Memorial Trust – Scottish Winter Courses 2012/2013; John Muir Trust – Quinag Footpath.

For the year to the Club AGM in December 2012, the Trustees were DW Rubens (Chairman) (ex officio immediate past President of the SMC), R Aitken, R Anderson (ex officio Convenor of the Publications Sub-Committee), PJ Biggar, WH Duncan, BS Findlay, AD Nisbet (ex officio President of the SMC), CR Ravey, DN Williams (ex officio Editor of the SMC Journal) and D Whalley. With effect from the Club AGM in December 2012 there were the following changes: DW Rubens has retired having completed 2 years as Chairman of the Trust, AD Nisbet as immediate past President of the SMC became the Chairman of the Trust, BS Findlay has retired from the Trust by rotation, CM Jones is a new Trustee and JRG Mackenzie is now a Trustee (ex officio as the President of the SMC). JM Shaw is the Trust Treasurer and JD Hotchkis is the Trust Secretary.

The present Directors of the Publications Company are RK Bott (Chairman), BM Whitworth, SL Jenson, CR Ravey and T Prentice (Publications Manager). CR Ravey (who is both a Director of Publications Company and a Trustee) provides valuable liaison between the Publications Company and the Trust as does R Anderson in his capacity as Convenor of the Publications Sub-Committee.

The following grants have been committed by the Trustees during 2012:–

R McFarlane – Arctic Norway	£200
Memorial to Craiggallian Fire	£200
Carn Dearg Mountaineering Club – New Hut Glen Clova	£5,000 grant and £5,000 loan
R Crawford – Dundee Mountain Film Festival	£1,500
Mountaineering Council of Scotland	
– REALrock for Young Climbers	£2,000
Mountain Bothies Association– Hutchison Memorial Hut	£1,000
Niall Ritchie – Banchory Academy Alaska Expedition 2012	£250
Matthew Burke – Canyons to Coast, Namibia	£250
Assynt Foundation – Improvement of Access	£1,000
Jonathan Conville Memorial Trust	
– Scottish Winter Courses 2012/2013	£1,508
John Muir Trust – Quinag Footpath	£3,500

The Trustees record their gratitude to Brian Findlay (who has retired by rotation) for his services to the Trust. The Trustees also record their gratitude to Des Rubens for his services to the Trust over the previous four years and for so ably chairing the Trust meetings over the last two years.

J.D. Hotchkis

MUNRO MATTERS

By Dave Broadhead (Clerk of the List)

A VERY BUSY YEAR for baggers, this report covers 1 January to 31 December 2012. The List of Munroists continues to grow steadily, while the list of Munros has shrunk again, down to 282. The five columns below give number, name, and year of Completion of Munros, Tops and Furths as appropriate. *SMC member, **LSCC member.

4953	John Fleetwood	2011	5000	Paul Isherwood	2012
4954	Ben Fleetwood	2011	5001	James Miller	2012
4955	Cris Bonomy	2011	5002	Geraldine Ward	2012
4956	Graham Huxley	2011	5003	Dave Lomas	2012
4957	Geoff Tervet	2012	5004	Lesley Houfe	2012
4958	Stuart H. Ralston	2011	5005	Steve Kolodziej	2012
4959	Allison Mackay	2009	5006	Philip S. Hands	2012
4960	James Mackay	2009	5007	Isobel Forrester	2012
4961	John Barnes	2012	5008	James Forrester	2012
4962	Garry Adam	2001	5009	Max Landsberg	2012
4963	John McDonald	2003	5010	John Cameron	2012
4964	Kenneth R. Mortimer	2011	5011	John Haresign	2012
4965	David A. Pearks	2011	5012	Brian Rendall	2012
4966	David Coventry	2011	5013	Theresa McIntyre	2012
4967	Ian R. F. Nixon	2012	5014	David Harris-Burland	2012
4968	Stuart Peters	2012	5015	Thomas Edwards	2012
4969	Colin D. Macleod	2012	5016	Mathew Eastburn	2012
4970	Catherine Pearks	2009	5017	M. E. Tickner	2012
4971	Graeme C. King	2012	5018	Duncan Booth	2012
4972	Steven Reakes	2012	5019	Katie Robson	2012
4973	David Wellby	2012	5020	Richard Robson	2012
4974	Andy Burton	2012	5021	Paul Vokes	2012
4975	Mike Godfrey	2012	5022	Richard Wood	2012
4976	John K. Collard	2012	5023	**Margaret Craig	2012
4977	Colin Matheson	2012	5024	Steveie Paton	2012
4978	Katherine McQuitty	2012	5025	June Davidson	2012
4979	Henry Roche	2012	5026	Geoff Davidson	2012
4980	Peter J. Williams	2012	5027	Tim Hoskin	2012
4981	Derek B. Vance	2012	5028	Peter Blackwood	2012
4982	Neil Ward	2012	5029	David J. Fraser	2012
4983	Nicholas C. Sturgess	2012	5030	Elizabeth Culshaw	2012
4984	Roy Burton	2012	5031	Colin French	2012
4985	Christine Colley	2012	5032	Gerry Carroll	2012
4986	Cedric Colley	2012	5033	Susan Walker	2012
4987	David Bingham	2012	5034	Adrian Jackman-Smith	2012
4988	Richard D. McLean	2012	5035	John Kentish	2012
4989	Sue Carroll	2012	5036	David Watts	2012
4990	Gordon Hendry	2012	5037	Iain Gilbert	2012
4991	Michael McKay	2012	5038	Andreas Ruhnke	2012
4992	David Jones	2012	5039	Graham A. Johnston	2012
4993	Scott Nicol	2010	5040	R. Barry Pottle	2012
4994	Peter Gillespie	2012	5041	Myra Watson	2007
4995	Peter Kilgour	2012	5042	Alan Methven	2012
4996	Neil Batley	2012	5043	Robbie Hitchcock	2012
4997	Julian Cashen	2012	5044	C. S. Peachey	2012
4998	David Farrow	2012	5045	Sally Cook	2011
4999	Peter Evans	2012	5046	Andrew Cook	2011

5047	Mike Whelan	2005	5106	Andrew Bird	2012
5048	Elizabeth Smith	2012	5107	Susan Houstoun	2012
5049	Kevin Palmer	2012	5108	Terry Bradley	2012
5050	Martin M. Campbell	2012 2012	5109	Charles Everett	2012
5051	Stephen Campbell	2009	5110	Bernard H. Taylor	2012
5052	Iain C. Nesbitt	2012	5111	Nick Burley	2009
5053	Alison Cairns	2012	5112	Gavin J. H. Kerr	2012
5054	Carolyn Thornton	2012	5113	Mike Baughan	2012
5055	Philip Thornton	2012	5114	Kevin Howell	2012
5056	Roderick Boyd	2012	5115	Nick Taylor	2012
5057	Robert Phillips	2012	5116	Donald Stevenson	2009
5058	John Mathews	2012	5117	Cliona McCheyne	2012
5059	Antonio Siwiak	2012	5118	Nuala McCheyne	2012
5060	Colin Begg	2012	5119	Diane McCheyne	2012
5061	Antonia Macdonald	2012	5120	Neil McCheyne	2012
5062	Ruth Mitchell	2012	5121	Archie Blair	2012
5063	Nigel Pittman	2012	5122	Margo Moncur	2012
5064	Jonathan Appleby	2012	5123	Ian Moncur	2012
5065	Donald Terry	2012	5124	Neil Anderson	2012
5066	Blair Cunningham	2012	5125	John Usher	2012
5067	Aileen Moir	2012	5126	Richard Charnock-Smith	2012
5068	Alan Brackenridge	2012	5127	Lynda A. Armstrong	2012
5069	Chris Anderson	2012 2012	5128	Peter S. Armstrong	2012
5070	*Rab Anderson	2012 2012	5129	Raymond Campbell	2012
5071	Nick Mattock	2012	5130	Ian M. Rear	2012
5072	Iain Turner	2012	5131	Carol Acutt	2012
5073	Stuart Malcolm	2012	5132	Julie Brooks	2012
5074	John M. Pickering	2004	5133	Stephen Brooks	2012
5075	James D. Davidson	2004	5134	Duncan Priddle	2012
5076	Norman E. Smith	2004	5135	Robert K. S. Gray	2012
5077	Tim Lambert	2012	5136	Sheila Lockhart	2012
5078	Iain Dingwall	2012	5137	Chris Cunnane	2012
5079	Keith Frost	2012	5138	Stewart Huntington	2012
5080	J. Cameron McGeorge	2012	5139	Kurt Adock	2012
5081	George Grant	2012	5140	Peter Bettess	2012
5082	Eric Wilson	2012	5141	Linda Drake	2012
5083	Peter Child	1998	5142	Stephen Drake	2012
5084	Charles McKay	2012	5143	Kenneth T. Milne	1999
5085	John B. Dunn	2012	5144	Jim Allan	2012
5086	Stephen W. Robertson	2012	5145	Edward Jackson	2012
5087	Wanda Rossiter	2012	5146	Mike Ling	2012
5088	Chris Knowles	2012	5147	Alexander Wylie	2012
5089	Neil Kitching	2012	5148	James A. Adamson	2012
5090	Andrew Exton	2012	5149	Bruce Fraser	2012
5091	David McAndrew	2012	5150	Susan McKee	2012
5092	Lucy Gillett	2012	5151	Alastair McKee	2012
5093	Tony Gillett	2012	5152	Janet Hanson	2012
5094	Toby Harling	2012 2012	5153	Andrew Hanson	2012
5095	Russell Browning	2012	5154	Tim Sharpe	2012
5096	Marcia Wright	2012	5155	Dave Palmer	2012
5097	David Smith	2012	5156	Mick McKie	2012
5098	James M. Noras	1980	5157	Mark Hawker	2012
5099	Gerry Feeney	2012	5158	Mike Brinkworth	2012
5100	Michael Field	2012	5159	Arlene Johnston	2012
5101	Henri Shepherd	2012	5160	John E. Mortimer	2012
5102	Jon Shepherd	2012 2012	5161	Penny Curtis	2012
5103	James Boundy	2012	5162	Paul J. Keenan	2012
5104	Jack Gillespie	2012	5163	Keith Entwistle	2012 2012
5105	Tamsin Bird	2012	5164	Peter J. Holder	2012

5165	Joe Mann	2012	5183	David Brown	2003
5166	Steven R. Beaven	2012	5184	Colin Lamont	2012
5167	Richard Lindop	2012	5185	Mark Stephens	2012
5168	Alison Baker	2012	5186	Tim Searles	2012
5169	Mike Baker	2012	5187	Frank Ross	2012
5170	Ian G. Warnock	2012	5188	William Robison	2004 2001
5171	Fiona M. Porter	2012	5189	Paul Lipscomb	2012
5172	John D. Porter	2012	5190	Graham A. Wyllie	2012
5173	David Forbes	2012	5191	Mathew Stewart	2012
5174	Donald Macaulay	2012	5192	Morag Robertson	2012
5175	Gudrun Clapier Edward	2012	5193	Anthony P. Unwin	2012 2012
5176	Ian Edward	2012	5194	Sheila McGowan	2012
5177	Susan Hawkins	2012	5195	Paul R. Wheeler	2012 2011
5178	Ronnie Macpherson	2012	5196	Isobel Jackson	2012
5179	Laurence Morris	2012 2010	5197	Steve Corbett	2012
5180	Mathew Hellewell	2012	5198	Alison McDonald	2012
5181	Steve Miller	2011	5199	Alex Gillespie	1994
5182	Charles L. Kelly	2012	5200	Mary Gillespie	1998

Comparing with last year (shown in brackets) the total of 248 (217) new Munroists comprises 79% (78%) males; resident in Scotland 63% (54%); couples 18% (16%); average age 52 (55); size of Completion party 11 (11); time taken 25 (24) years. Worthy of special mention, 9(6) Golden Munroists this year are Graeme C. King (4971) (53 years), Katherine McQuitty (4978) (50 years), Elizabeth Culshaw (5030) (53 years), David McAndrew (5091) (50 years), Charles Everett (5109) (50 years), Robert K. S. Gray (5135) (55 years), Dave Palmer (5155) (57 years), Mick McKie (5155) (65 years) and Ian Edward (5176) (60 years). As well as an electronic database, I also keep a hard copy in an A4 jotter. Looking back through my first full jotter (started in August 2007) I noted the month of first and final Munro which breaks down as follows:

	START (%)	FINISH (%)
January	2	<1
February	5	<1
March	4	1
April	8	4
May	17	18
June	14	15
July	15	11
August	18	16
September	8	18
October	5	11
November	2	4
December	2	1

Continuing the calendar theme, I have chosen a month by month selection from my postbag as follows:

JANUARY (2 Completions. 4 amendments.)

First letter of the New Year from John Fleetwood (4953) reported his first and second round, along with his son Ben Fleetwood (4954) who for a short while

became the youngest Munroist when he Completed on Ben More (Mull) aged 10 years and 3 months, having started on Ben na Lap, aged 6.

FEBRUARY (5 Completions. 3 amendments.)

Graham Huxley (4956) started his Munro Round with an ascent of Ben Nevis via *Centurion*, while Stuart H. Ralston (4958) started with Stob Dearg on Buachaille Etive Mòr via *Agag's Groove*.

MARCH (0 Completions. 0 amendments.)

Thankful for a lull in letters, an opportunity to work on 'Munro Matters'.

APRIL (7 Completions. 5 amendments.)

Garry Adam (4962) and John MacDonald (4963) both Completed as members of Forfar & District Hill Walking Club, adding their names to an impressive scroll of 34 other members who have Completed with this Club.

MAY (25 Completions. 4 amendments.)

David Welby (4973) proudly reported 'I have completed all the Munros without carrying a mobile phone, nor a GPS instrument and without the use of either a bicycle or walking poles.' Peter J. Williams (4980) reported Completions of Munros, Tops and Donalds, observing 'sadly the Donalds now offer views of some of the most scenic wind-farms in the world.'

JUNE (48 Completions. 18 amendments.)

Fellow Inverness jazz fan Donald Shiach (576) kindly invited me to his Graham Completion on Shee of Ardtalnaig. On the summit, to accompany the traditional celebratory champagne and drams we tucked into biscuits baked by Donald's wife Elizabeth, each with the name of a different Graham iced on. A less happy biscuit munching experience was reported by Sue Carroll (4989) and Gordon Hendry (4990) who Completed on the popular Beinn na Lap but 'missed the last train from Corrou, started walking and after 20 miles had to spend the night in bivvy-bags with one Kit-Kat each, while family and friends were waiting to celebrate with us at Tyndrum.'

Kathryn J. (3144) and Rodger W. Osborne (3145) reported a second Munro Round, distinguished by having climbed every one together both times. Another husband and wife team Margaret (2628) and Rob Pearson (2629) reported their Corbett Completion and having carefully scanned the List assure me they are the 97th and 98th to Complete all Munros + Tops + Furths + Corbetts. Regular correspondent Anne Butler wrote requesting a certificate for her collie, Molly who made the first canine Corbett Completion on Garbh Bheinn.

Mark Gear (384) reported a Contiguous Completion for the second time, finishing his fourth Munro Round on Sgùrr nan Ceathreamhnan and his third Corbett round on Sgùrr Gaorsaic on the same day. Hazel Strachan (3438) reported a much less obvious Contiguous combination, Completing a third round of Donalds on East Mount Lowther at Wanlockhead, followed by a fourth round of Munros on Ben Wyvis, more than 200 miles away.

Michael MacKay (4991) dedicated his Munro Round to the memory of his mate Tam McKay (no relation) with whom he climbed most of his first 183.

'Sadly Tam was knocked down on his push-bike by a careless driver and died from his injuries on 4 March 2009.' John Haresign (5011) had completed all but 5 Munros by 1999 'then developed a condition known as Guillain Barre Syndrome. This rendered me paralysed, with some symptoms of a stroke.... lasting 6 weeks and I had to remain in hospital for a further 10 weeks. Having learned to walk again and after a year of physiotherapy I decided to mop up the rest of the Munros.'

With the registrations steadily creeping up towards 5000, there was some interest in who would acquire this milestone number, including The Munro Society who generously invited the lucky Compleatist to their 10th Anniversary Dinner. Writing a regular 'Active Outdoors' feature in a number of Highland local newspapers, Peter Evans (4999) just missed, and I was pleased to see his picture in print a few weeks later, proudly showing off his Completion Certificate. The honour fell to Paul Isherwood (5000) from Falkirk.

Unsung heroes of the Munro List are of course the many and varied postal workers who collect, sort and deliver the endless flow of letters and certificates. I was therefore particularly pleased to receive a letter from Richard Wood (5022), my regular relief postie and was able to give him a personal explanation of the registration process. Reporting from Jacksonville (Florida, USA) Peter Blackwood (5028) 'would like to make claim to being the first American to complete almost exclusively by "commuting" from the US.' Having accompanied his wife on a two year assignment to IBM Greenock in 1998 he returned home having climbed 51 Munros and flew back to Scotland on 18 trips over the ensuing 12 years to finish the remainder. Peter noted that his grandfather was born in Leadhills and emigrated to the US in 1902. John Kentish (5035) noted that 'over 50 of my Munros were ascended on skis', while Audrey Litterick (1308) reported having skied 55. This set me checking my own ski tally, nothing like as impressive.

JULY (23 Completions. 8 amendments.)

Early in the month I received a surprise invitation from President Nisbet to accompany him on an official SMC heighting of the infamous 'Siamese Corbett twins' in Glen Shiel. Having berated The Munro Society for their heighting campaign, which led to the sad loss of two Munros, I was shocked that this affliction seemed to be spreading to our own Club! When the results of these various escapades were eventually published, the term 'demotion' featured in several headlines, prompting David Batty of The Munro Society to encourage a more positive view of the process as one of 're-classification'. To summarise, Sgùr nan Ceannaichean and Beinn a' Chlaidheimh have been re-classified as Corbetts, leaving a total of 282 Munros. Regarding the Corbett pair, Buidhe Bheinn becomes the sole Corbett and Sgùr a' Bhac Chaolais becomes a Corbett Top. So there are now 221 Corbetts.

Ken P. Whyte (319) reported a remarkable second 'Full House' and becomes the first person to achieve this feat. He made a point of emphasising that 'these are individual Rounds not started before the previous one completed' i.e. strictly Golfer's Method!

Graham A. Johnston (5039) summarised his ideal day thus:

Nice sunny day, stop for a bacon roll

Followed by a cycle into a remote Munro
 Circular route with a good steep climb with a few mild scrambles
 Easier slopes coming down
 Free wheel back to car on bike.

Sally (5045) and Andrew Cook (5046) saved Ben Nevis to last and Andrew kept his promise to Sally to pipe her to the summit. Mike Whelan (5047) found a simple solution to the common family responsibilities versus Munro bagging dilemma, explaining 'twice yearly visits north (from Liverpool) became the pattern mainly involving solo backpacking trips, often dropping the wife and children off at Manchester airport for them to bask in Mediterranean sunshine and me to enjoy the vagaries of the Scottish weather.'

AUGUST (40 Completions 13 amendments.)

Donald Terry (5065) introduced himself as 'a 55 year old dairy farmer from North Yorkshire.....I knew nothing of the Munro until my wife bought me Hamish's Mountain Walk – a great book which was to become "my Bible".' Nick Mattlock (5071) submitted an impressive folio of multicoloured spreadsheets, bar graphs and pie charts showing fascinating details such as 'Munros climbed in a day', 'day of week breakdown' and 'By Month'. He also offered to 'substantiate the Completion with at least one photograph of all 283 summit cairns'. Any suspicion of geekiness was dispelled by his booking the entire Kinlochewe Hotel for the weekend to celebrate Completion on Slioch with 40 friends. At the age of 79, Brian Kitching (2376) joined his son Neil Kitching (5089) for his Completion on Fionn Bheinn which spurred him on to send a photo of his own Completion back in 2000. Munro and Corbett Completion photos are always welcome for the website galleries. Please e-mail a copy to <smc.org.uk>.

For Alan Brackenridge (5068) Completion 'has been a lifelong ambition, which has been difficult to complete as I have spent the last 8 years in Houston, Texas.' A poignant PS notes 'Attached photo of me on the summit of Ben More (Mull), could be anywhere, low cloud and storm force winds, July in Scotland!' Stuart Malcolm (5073) admitted to living in Sweden since 1977, while David Paterson (2968) reported a Corbett Completion, adding 'I live and work in Yunnan Province, Southwest China and I reckon that I have one of the longest commutes to the hills.' He also notes that 'some of my most memorable trips to the hills have been made by canoe and I hope to use this form of transport for a number of the Grahams.' Pete Child (5083) reported a bumper bundle of Completions – Munros, Corbetts, Grahams and Donalds, accompanied on all but the Munros with his partner Peta Jeffrey. I had to write an apologetic letter to Peta explaining that I could not add her achievements to The List until she Completed her Munros and received a number!

Leslie Barrie (1668) observed that 'as with the Munros and Corbetts, the Grahams have given immense pleasure in all seasons over the years with many unforgettable excursions, some stand out epics and also not forgetting some scary moments.' Charles L. Scott (568) thought 'the Grahams were challenging because of the lack of paths made covering the ground much harder. Also not as many linked together meant more ascent per hill. PS I expect I am the first Eire born Grahamist. Your's must be a wonderful part time hobby.'

Former Church of Scotland Minister, John M. Pickering (5074) used his Round to raise around £3000 for the parishes of Errol, Kilspindie and Rait. Keith

Frost (5079) Completed literally single-handed, explaining that 'I have only one hand, my left arm having an elbow joint only.' He found the In Pin particularly challenging, as did Wanda Rossiter (5087) who explained 'I am rather prone to panic with exposure. I climbed down the Inaccessible Pinnacle the same way I went up, rather than being lowered down the shorter side.' Russell Browning (5095) followed his Completion on Fionn Bheinn on 18 August with a trip to Tanzania, where he 'reached the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro on 1 September at 06.48 with an amazing sunrise on Stella Point.'

SEPTEMBER (38 Completions. 5 Amendments.)

Susan Houstoun (5107) wrote 'yesterday I summited Seanna Bhragh from Corrie Mulzie accompanied by my husband Sandy, and sons Mike and Robbie. Mike carried the champagne and glasses and Robbie carried my accordion to the top where we had a few tunes including a jig called Sir Torquil Munro which was written for Sir Hugh's father.' Gavin J. H. Kerr (5112) Completed on Beinn Dorain with another musical family party, noting 'my son Euan is a fine piper and he piped me onto the top.'

Twin sisters Cliona (5117) and Nuala (5118) became the new youngest Munroists, aged 10 when they Completed on Sgùrr Choinnich Mòr, along with Mum Diane (5119) and Dad Neil McCheyne (5120). Their West Highland Terrier called Aonach has only done 224, so no rest for that family quite yet.

Nick Burley (5111) sent a long, interesting and rather crumpled letter, dated 20/4/10 and a covering note dated 10/9/12 explaining 'I was clearing out my cupboards in preparation for a 12 month trip to Nepal & India and came across



Cliona, Diane and Nuala McCheyne on the summit of Sgùrr MhicCoinnich, Skye, (9 July 2012).

the attached letter.’ Another apologetic Nick, Nick Taylor (5115) explained the delay of several months between Completion and writing because ‘I am recovering in the Sheffield Spinal Injuries Unit after breaking my back whilst climbing in the Peak District.’ Having Completed on Ben More, Mull, taking advantage of a spell of fine weather he ‘discovered a small unclimbed crag near Tobermory and did 11 new routes there.’

Lynda A. (5127) and Peter S. Armstrong (5128) were accompanied by a Border terrier Bella on their Completion, third in a line of terriers which have accompanied them on different parts of their Round. Another couple Compleating together, Julie (5132) and Stephen Brooks (5133) reflected that ‘we have learned to navigate, scramble and improved our winter hill-walking skills. We have worn out three pairs of boots and at least thirty layers of clothing and now own three tents of various size and weight and a mountain bike. We have enjoyed being out on the hills in all weather conditions and have experienced some hair-raising moments!’ Stewart Newman (1711) became the 24th Munroist to achieve ‘Full House’ with his Donald Completion on Saddle Yorke. He also reminded me that he has Completed all his Rounds solo. My neighbour Sheila Lockhart (5136) Completed on Stob na Broige, in the company of Martin (Harpic) Hind and ‘celebrated with extremely indifferent tea and scones at the Glencoe Visitors Centre (not to be recommended).’

OCTOBER (34 Completions. 12 Amendments.)

To celebrate their 10th anniversary, The Munro Society held a dinner in Fort William, to which President Nisbet and myself were kindly invited, along with Paul Isherwood (5000) and a number of other guests. We were made very welcome and had a very enjoyable evening. Membership of The Munro Society is open to all Munroists – for more details see <themunrosociety.com>.

Simon Grove (3243) reported a Graham Completion on Beinn Dearg’s east top from Glen Artney, ‘having scaled its west top in 2001 and since discovered it is 1m lower.’ Having endured a purgatorial ascent the same way through long thick grass a few weeks earlier, I was particularly sympathetic to this error. Bring back the sheep! Using Ben Dronaig Lodge bothy as a base to finish a second Munro Round on Bidein a’ Choire Sheasgaich and Lurg Mhòr, Ian Rae (104) was astonished to encounter two separate parties en route from Land’s End to John O’ Groats. He also reminded me that the last time we met was ski-touring in Norway, at Spiterstulen, in 1989.

Kenneth T. Milne (5143) actually Completed in 1999, but waited all this time, until he had done his Tops, before registering. It is never too late! Kenneth is well on his way to his 1000th Munro/Top. Susan (5150) and Alasdair McKee (5151) reported that not only had they ‘climbed all the hills together as a married couple (we spent our silver wedding this year on Sgùrr Ban in Letterewe) and are also both Vegans, so we may be the first Scottish/English Vegan couple to Compleat?’

Golden Munroist Dave Palmer (5155) sent an illustrated report, including some wonderful black & white photos of a party of five 16 year old boys who in 1955 came up from London by train to Aviemore for a fortnight in the Cairngorms. ‘Walking into the hills; through the Lairig Ghru; tenting; bothying; sleeping under the Shelter Stone then camping at Derry Lodge; walking to Braemar for more provisions then back again to enjoy a second week arseing about in the streamsafter fourteen days in one of the most beautiful places I

know, we had only summited three or four big hills.’ Mike Brinkworth (5158) described similar trips more recently, coming up by train from the West Midlands, until after 184 Munros and increasing back pain, he required major spinal surgery in 2005. ‘After months of intensive physio and hundreds of hours of monotonous exercise I was back with the lads in Scotland.’ Another Cairngorm enthusiast, Mick McKie (5156) finally Completed on Ciste Dhubh, his 637th Munro, having climbed ‘Derry Cairngorm 32 times, Lochnagar 38 times, Glas Maol 18 times, Ben Macdui 13 times, Beinn a’ Bhuird 14 times.’

Peter J. Holder (5164) and Joe Mann (5165) ‘are both students studying at the University of Cumbria. This summer we decided to buy a van and Compleat all the Munros in one summer.’ Starting on Mount Keen on 17/5/12 ‘we continually walked all the Munros together until we reached Ben Hope on 17/7/12.’ On Completion Joe was aged 19 and Peter 21, so they believe that Joe is the youngest person to have Completed a Continuous Round. On their return to the Lake District they completed the Bob Graham Round (a classic 72 mile fell run over 24 hours) on 15/9/12 in 21 hours 47 minutes.

One of several friends and acquaintances with only one final summit remaining, Steven R. Beaven (5173) never had a sense of urgency, until his son decided to go and walk the length of New Zealand. ‘With Alexander heading off for an uncertain period, I thought we should have a quick trip and did the Five Sisters as a day out from Comrie.’ Another celebrating son, David Forbes (5173) ‘toasted Completion on Beinn na Lap by opening a 21 year old Knockando single malt kept by my late Dad who died 10 years ago having saved the bottle for a special occasion...the toast was “Dad and the Munros”.’

NOVEMBER (17 Completions. 8 Amendments.)

Having first climbed Mount Keen on Midsummers Day, 1952, Ian Edward (5176) spread his Round over a remarkable 60 years. When Ian’s first wife sadly passed away in 1995 his Munro tally was a mere 3 and he ‘planned as a widower to spend my retirement on the golf course.’ Then in 1998 he ‘met a German lady from Munich who had been a climber and walker in the Alps all her life.’ Ian Completed on Mullach nan Dheiragain in August 2012, then a few days later returned to Mount Keen with his wife Gudrun Clapier Edward (5175), when she became the first German lady to Compleat. Steve Miller (5181) finished his letter outlining his Round by saying ‘it has taken me into the most beautiful and remote parts of this wonderful country with its vast and varied mountain environment, flora and fauna and it’s a great pity to see the mountain environments being industrialised with huge wind-farm developments. Thanks for taking the time to read this and all the good work you guys do.’

Keith Harper (1350) Completed a second Round on Beinn na Lap and asked a lone passing walker to take a group photo. He turned out to be Hugh Munro, from Whitehills, Aberdeen. Keith celebrated his first Round with this poem:

From North to South, from East to West,
I walk in the mountains I love the best,
Through rain and snow I’ve battled on,
But when those midges came I was gone,
Off to the Alps I did go,
To see there mountains in awesome mood,
But back in Scotland, to the land of mist,

To walk in the mountains on Munro's List.

Tim Searles (5186) also Completed on Beinn na Lap and wrote that 'I'd like to recommend the Corrou Station restaurant run by Ollie and Lizzie who took over the lease this summer. They have created a wonderful ambiance, with an extensive bill of fayre, devised using locally sourced produce.' I can heartily endorse this recommendation, having enjoyed an excellent meal there last week. They also offer overnight accommodation, an upmarket alternative to the excellent nearby Loch Ossian Youth Hostel. Graham A. Wyllie (5190) noted that he is the son of W. L. Wyllie (248) and nephew of J. Wyllie (279). Mathew Stewart (5191) reminded me that I had congratulated him personally on his Completion on the summit of Stob Binnein, a fantastic clear autumn day a few weeks previously. Murdo McEwan (2183) was particularly enthusiastic about his Corbett Round which 'I enjoyed more than the Munros. Maybe because they are "less travelled" and with less distinct pathways. I can't think of any Corbetts that I found to be "miserable", but several were certainly invigorating and challenging.' Murdo was very keen to get his Completion date 10/11/12 on his certificate.

DECEMBER (9 Completions. 7 Amendments.)

Someone else with an eye on the calendar and the clock, Steve Corbett (5197) Completed 'on 12/12/12 by touching the summit of Ben Vorlich at 12 minutes and 12 seconds past mid-day.' Paul R. Wheeler (5195) listed the guidebooks he had used but advised 'don't rely solely on the Munros guidebook, use it as one amongst many sources, and sometimes just use maps and your imagination.' Paul also admitted 'I find moths fascinating.... and claim about half the records by 10 km squares in the national database for one montaine moth species.' Alison McDonald (5198) was introduced to Munros by her then boyfriend a few months after they met. He proposed on top of his last Munro, and as well as gaining a husband Alison has also gone on to compete for Scotland as an international hill, cross-country and road runner. Reporting his second Munro Round, John A. Baddeley (1751) also belatedly reported finishing his Tops on the Northern Pinnacles of Liathach almost 10 years after his Completion, mentioning 'I even had a bit of the first-round Talisker saved for the celebration on a stunning day.'

Ron Payne (395) wrote 'It is about time I caught up on my List entry! There always seems to be something else crying out to be done. Particularly for the MCofS!' Ron is now on to his Grahams and having done 80 has noticed 'they are not as easy as their height would suggest.' Brothers Ian (2172) and Alan Clark (2173) finished a second Munro Round together on Slioch, where they had also Completed together, 12 years previously. Alan Don (2872) finished his second Round on Càrn a' Chlamain a few minutes after an unknown lady had done exactly the same. How rare is a Coincident Second Completion? Colin Simpson (920) accomplished his second Round by a variety of approaches including 'foot, bike, rock climbs, winter climbs, ski tours and even sea kayak.'

The final Completion letter of the year came, very belatedly from Mary (5199) and Alex Gillespie (5200) whose fantastic photos of Lochaber will be familiar. Last amendment came from regular correspondent Steve Fallon (1045). 'Just a short note to let you know that I Completed the Munros for the 15th time on 13th November (my 50th birthday).' Many happy returns?

AMENDMENTS

The eight columns give number, name and year of each Completion of Munros, Tops, Furths, Corbetts, Grahams and Donalds.

<i>Num</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>D</i>
2504	*Stan Pearson	1998		2006			
3386	Elke Braun	2005			2011		
674	C. Andrew Scott	1988	1992	2000	1999		2011
3438	Hazel Strachan	2005					2011
		2008					2012
		2010					
1658	J. Martyn Dougherty	1996			2006		2008
810	Martin Wilson	1990		2008	2011		
1526	John Farrow	1995	1995	1998	2012		
2444	Peter A. Haigh	2000	2000	2000	2010		
358	Michael B. Slater	1984	1987	1987			
		1988		2009			
		1990		2011			
		1993					
		1996					
		1999					
		2003					
		2008					
1939	James Leslie	1998	2003				
		2003					
		2012					
3000	Michael Urquhart	2003			2012		
3957	Frances Lawrie	2007			2012		
2991	Ewan James Lyons	2003	2009		2009		
		2012					
2132	Steven Bell	1999			2012		
3461	Tricia A. Chapman	2005			2012		
3462	Adrian W. Chapman	2005			2012		
2845	Alan Green	2002					
		2011					
3112	Bert Barnett	2001	2002	2002	1998	2000	2012
		2001	2009	2007	2007	2009	
		2009					
		2012					
384	Mark J. Gear	1985	1985	2007	1996		
		1996			2005		
		2005			2012		
		2012					
2244	David W. Smith	1999		1999	2012		
2182	Anne Morrison	1999	2012		2005		
2961	Joyce Whitton	1996			2003	2012	
2962	Jim Whitton	1996			2003	2012	
2380	Sara Chapple	2000	2012				

2381	Ian K. Chapple	2000	2012				
1308	Audrey M. Litterick	1994	2009		2002	2012	2005
3144	Kathryn J. Osborne	2004					
		2012					
3145	Roger W. Osborne	2004					
		2012					
2028	Paul Cook	1998			2012		
2251	Mark Dalman	1999	2012				
3545	Andy Sutton	2006			2012		
4688	Helen Thomas	2010			2012		
4689	Michael Thomas	2010			2012		
2346	David Allison	2000	2003	2002	2008		2011
		2012					
2628	Rob Pearson	2001	2001	2002	2012		
2629	Margaret Pearson	2001	2001	2002	2012		
3438	Hazel Strachan	2005					2011
		2008					2012
		2010					2012
		2012					
3526	Michael O'Donnell	2005			2012		
1806	Ross Jervis	1997	2012	2011	2010		2011
486	Peter Bellarby	1987	1987	1987	2000		
		2008	2012				
4193	Ron A. Brown	2008	2012		2010		
576	Donald Shiach	1988			1996	2012	
319	Ken P. Whyte	1984	1987	1987	2000	2000	2000
		2010	2011	2011	2012	2012	2012
2122	Ron Hilditch	1999			2012		
317	*Grahame Nicoll	1984	1993		2001		
		1997					
		2012					
2410	Alan Castle	2000		2011	2012	2012	2001
4768	Roger H. Webber	2011			2012		
2968	David Paterson	2003			2012		
4006	Chris Pine	2007			2012		
3838	Ken D. Sinclair	2007	2012				
3483	Reamon Lenkas	2005			2012		
2394	Annemarie Rutherford	2000			2012		
1609	Robert J. Ferguson	1996	1996		2004		
555	Robin Howie	1982	1984	1987	1986		
		1984	1987				
		1987	1992				
		1990	2012				
		1992					
		1995					
		1999					
		2002					
		2007					
		2012					
1668	Lesley Barrie	1996			2003	2012	

568	Charles L. Scott	1987 2004 2009			1991	2012	1995
3366	Anne Butler	2005 2010 2011 2012			2010		
768	Tony Rogers	1990 2010			2012		
4564	James A. Anderson	2010			2012		
4597	David Chapman	2010			2012		
147	Ron Davie	1976 1982			1994		2012
223	Carole Davie	1980					2012
1711	Stewart Newman	1997	1998	1998	2006	2011	2012
2795	Maria Hybszer	2002			2006	2012	2012
2806	David M.M.Wilson	2002			2011		2009
4643	Stewart M.Murray	2010			2012		
3243	Simon Grove	2004			2008	2012	
1911	Martin J.Almond	1997 2006	1997		2012		
104	Ian Rae	1971 2012	2008	2012	2001		
303	Neil C. Cromar	1983 2012			2001		
1798	Colin P.Watts	1997			2003	2007	2012
2579	Isabel M.G.Watts	2001			2003	2007	2012
3987	Colin Lees	2004 2007 2011	2012				
1365	John A. F. Coull	1984			2008		
4786	John Hall	1999 2012					
1721	Jim Young	1997	2012				
1350	Keith Harper	1994 2012					
4460	Christopher J. Smythe	2009	2012	2012			
1930	Martin Scoular	1998	1998	1998	2010	2012	
1124	Geraldine Newlyn	1992			2001		
4328	Dorothy Stirling	2009 2011 2012			2010		
2183	Murdo McEwan	1999			2012		
1751	John A. Badderley	1997 2012	2007				
395	Ron Payne	1985 2012			1998	1999	
2172	Ian Clark	1999 2011			2002	2006	
2173	Alan Clark	1999			2002	2006	

		2011
2872	Alan Don	2002
		2012
920	*Colin Simpson	1991
		2012
1045	Steve Fallon	1992 1993 2010
		1994
		1995
		1996
		1997
		1998
		1999
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		2004
		2006
		2010
		2012

With some 363 letters safely filed and on their way to the National Library of Scotland archive in Edinburgh, I look forward to reading more as they arrive. Please write to Dave Broadhead, Cul Mor, Drynie Park North, Muir of Ord, IV6 7RP. For a Munro or Corbett Completion Certificate, please enclose an A4 sae (with the correct postage please). See <smc.org.uk> for further details.

Enjoy your hills.

Dave Broadhead
Clerk of the List

FINAL FURTHS – AN OVERVIEW

By Simon Glover

MUCH HAS BEEN written about Munro compleations down the years; but what of the Furths? Inspired by Dave Hewitt's research into Scottish hill list compleations, and his online history 'May The Furth Be With You!'¹, I decided to take up the gauntlet of establishing the location of Furth finishes.

What follows is a brief summary of final 3,000 ft summits 'Furth of Scotland', using spelling of names listed in the 1997 edition of *Munro's Tables*. Prior to this, England has variously been credited with between

1 12/09/2002, <http://www.scottishoutdoors.co.uk/outdoors/columista.cfm@feature_cat_id=27&selectedfeature_id=2699.htm>, [retrieved 12 August 2013].

four and seven baggable peaks, Wales 14, and Ireland between seven and thirteen respectively. The following statistics are based on my list so far of 52 compleaters (which include several SMC luminaries), and spans the period 1929–2012.

Here is the distribution of 47 known first-round finishes:

- 18 Brandon Mountain
- 5 Galtymore, Lugnaquilla
- 3 Beenkeragh
- 2 Carrauntoohil, Elidir Fawr, Helvellyn, Ill Crag
- 1 Caher, Cnoc an Chuillinn, Cnoc na Peiste, Cruach Mhor, Scafell, Scafell Pike, Skiddaw, Tryfan

And of 9 known repeat rounds:

- 2 Brandon Mountain, Scafell, Snowdon
- 1 Elidir Fawr, Foel-fras, Lugnaquilla

Five hundred and forty four listed Munroists (March 2013) have done the Furths, just over 10% of the overall total. However, things are not as simple as they seem. For instance, it is clear that not all completions are reported/recorded, as in the case of Paul Russell (731) who finished on Lugnaquilla, 28/10/1977. It's also known some compleaters report the Furths as an integral part of their Munro round, and this produces different dates.

Finally, not wishing to detract from the admirable work of the Clerk of the List (and his predecessors), it is hoped that the above serves as an interesting introduction to my ongoing research. Anyone who wants to impart their Furth details, or would like a copy of my list, please e-mail <moelfamau555@gmail.com>.

IN MEMORIAM

GILPIN WARD j.1962

BGS (GILPIN) WARD passed away on Monday 19 September 2011 in his 92nd year. He was born in Cumberland where many of his family were associated with the Merchant Navy, but the loss at sea of a near relative effectively de-barred Gilpin from this as a career – thus he became a civil servant, in the Scottish Office, primarily in the Crofters' Commission and later with the White Fish Authority. Gilpin, a very enthusiastic motor cyclist, joined HM Forces at the outbreak of the Second World War and after repeated requests he succeeded in being transferred to become a dispatch rider in Africa – apparently he frequently remarked that it wasn't the Germans who worried him, it was the lions and tigers.



Gilpin was a very enthusiastic mountain man, happy anywhere in the hills, and as comfortable on snow and ice as on rock. In the days of hemp ropes and Woolworth's gym shoes, he climbed extensively in the Lake District before the outbreak of war, including climbing several new (first ascents) routes on the hitherto unexplored crags of Dovedale. He was the first teenager to lead Central Buttress on Scafell. He also climbed on the Isle of Skye in the 1930s when travel was much more difficult and expensive. On more than one occasion he came home unscathed from very serious and difficult mountain incidents.

After the war he climbed all over the UK and in the Alps, completing his Munros and then a second round repeating the mountains and including the tops. He also completed the Corbetts. However steep the slope or bad the weather, Gilpin always had a story to tell and thus you could always hear him coming – he never had a bad word for anyone. Margaret, his wife of many years, predeceased him and he leaves a daughter, two sons and grandchildren.

Gilpin was a founder member of the Carlisle Mountaineering Club after returning from the forces. He was also a respected member of the Inverness Mountaineering Club and the Scottish Mountaineering Club where he held the office of Honorary Meets Secretary for several years. He was a Life Member of the Fell & Rock from 1937, resigning in 2007. He also resigned from the Scottish Mountaineering Club to make room for younger members. The Club's Officers could not convince him that his resignation was unnecessary.

John A. Wood

SANDY REID j. 1979

William Alexander Reid, who died on 26 February 2013 aged 64, was one of the country's best loved doctors. A lifelong socialist, he was not only an accomplished pathologist and teacher, but was as near a polymath as one can find today. He spoke seven languages, studied philosophy, astronomy and physics and understood astronomical mathematics. He was an opera buff and read widely. He was never intellectually arrogant and it was impossible to find anyone who had anything bad to say about him.

He died from heart disease four weeks after retiring, having just returned from a weekend on the mountains. Sandy, as he was known, was one of two brothers born and brought up in Coatbridge. His father died when he was young and he described himself at school as a geek. He was much happier studying mathematics or watching the stars rather than playing football or watching television. He was one of the post-war children who went to a state school and rather than go to the shipyards or steelworks as their fathers had done, broke the mould and studied medicine at Glasgow University. This opened up a whole new world which he embraced with open arms and he became the outgoing happy personality that endeared him to everyone. After graduating in 1972 his first job was with Arthur Mackey, the redoubtable professor of surgery at Glasgow Royal Infirmary. On the professor's last day before retirement, and at the end of the ward round, Dr Reid invited him for a pint in the Cot Bar across the road. Everyone stood back, shocked and waiting for Dr Reid to get a tongue lashing. 'I have been here for over 30 years,' said the professor 'and I have never been in the Cot Bar. On this, my last day, I think I should go.' A great time was had by all and Dr Reid had broken another taboo. He was delighted when, following his house job, he went to study pathology with Professor Goudie, again at the Royal Infirmary. There he was surrounded by a large number of outstanding pathologists who took him under their wing. They loved his cheery disposition along with his excellent analysis and critical powers. His senior colleagues realised the importance of time for discussions not just in pathology and Dr Reid was able to hold his own with them on almost any topic. This was a great period in his life and he was a well-recognised figure in the Byres Road social scene. He was in his philosophy phase and would often be seen pinning an unsuspecting fellow drinker up against the wall demanding to know the evidence for what they had just said. When he started a discussion about whether a beer glass could be called an elephant, he was in a linguistic phase. It raged on with the whole bar taking part. He went off to eat and returned to continue the debate, only finishing it, temporarily, when thrown out at closing time. He was at the peak of his life but was restless and did the unusual thing for a Glasgow doctor and decided to move – to Leeds as senior lecturer in pathology. He liked Yorkshire and it liked him. He almost went native but was making regular trips to Scotland for climbing and eventually the pull became too strong and he moved back to Scotland as senior lecturer and consultant pathologist at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

He did a lot of important research in gastric enzymes for which he was awarded an MD. But his main academic interest was in medical education where he made a number of significant contributions and developed one of the first computer-based pathology courses. He set about revamping medical education. He was in charge of teaching second year for many years and was in part responsible for the high quality of the medical course today. His philosophy was that if the students

did not learn the teachers had not taught. He was on their side and they knew that. He also took a keen interest in their wellbeing. He was greatly adored by his students and the children of his friends. Good doctors come and go; great medical teachers are less common. He was a great teacher and a fine doctor.

But his happiest days were on the Scottish mountains. He was an accomplished rock and ice climber and a member of the Club since 1979. His Black's Arctic Guinea tent could be seen all over the glens and mountains of Scotland. Among many other mountains, he climbed Mont Blanc, the Matterhorn and the Eiger and he also climbed in the Himalayas and the High Atlas. He manfully evaded marriage for many years until he met Sally who was the love of his life. They married in 1999 and spent many joyous days together, especially on the mountains. But their time together was short and he took it hard when Sally died of cancer in 2008. He found solace in travel and threw himself into adventurous treks in Siberia, sustaining frostbite and a broken leg and having to be evacuated with some difficulty on horseback. The worst part of the experience was that he was frightened of animals. He looked forward to retirement and as usual had lots of plans. In preparation he had built an impressive observatory, improved his language skills and planned many trips. Despite requests from his friends he had no plans to improve his cooking or his bread-making. Driving up the side of Loch Lomond on his way to the mountains at 80 miles an hour in third gear on the wrong side of the road, he would often remark that he did not expect to see his retirement. He did make it but for only a short time. He lived and enjoyed his life to the full and crammed that life with glorious achievements and great fun from which we have all benefited. He will be greatly missed. Sandy is survived by his nephews, Alastair and David.

Sam Galbraith

ARCHIE H. HENDRY j. 1944

ARCHIE WAS BORN on 19 March 1919, in Edinburgh. His father, also Archie Hendry, had lost an arm at Gallipoli, and worked in the naval dockyard at Leith. Archie took an M.A. in French & German at Edinburgh University, and worked as a teacher, first at Stirling High School, then at George Watson's School in Edinburgh from 1948. Following retirement in 1984 he moved with his wife Elizabeth, who had suffered a series of strokes, to Comrie in 1990, and remained there until his death on 6 March 2013, aged 93. Despite a troublesome hand tremor, and loss of an eye to cancer, he was still living independently, and driving his top-of-the-range Saab – to fetch wine, and other essentials – in 2012.

Archie is a difficult subject for any biographer or obituarist. He was diffident and retiring to a fault. Although he climbed actively and to a good standard in Scotland and the Alps throughout his life, he recorded almost none of his deeds, and what we know of his climbing we know only through the writing of others. He could scarcely be brought to speak about his own climbs, even if severely pressed!

I encountered Archie in the mid-60s at various Club gatherings, but got to know him a little better at the Thursday lunches in Mackie's in Princes Street and later Crawford's in Castle Street. I lost touch with him when he retired and



*Archie Hendry at Creag Meagaidh.
Photo: Jimmy Marshall.*

moved out of Edinburgh. But in 1994, when President, I initiated an annual Presidents Lunch, and we resumed acquaintance then.

His climbing began in the 1930s with Edinburgh JMCS, and he soon became Secretary. At that time, he was a very bold and able climber, and he added several new routes and variations to the climbs on Salisbury Crag. However, he had the misfortune to endure a bad fall in Glen Coe in April 1939 (*J*, 22/129, 214). He was leading Speirs' Variation on Crowberry Ridge, accompanied by Bill and Robin Stallybrass, when a loose block came away. This resulted in a severe leg fracture, a difficult rescue – in which Bill

Mackenzie and Bill Murray, fresh from the first ascent of Deep-Cut Chimney, participated – and the loss of a knee-cap. Although this had the happy outcome of sparing him from service in Hitler's War, there is no doubt that it stopped him from achieving as he might have done on the high hills. Nevertheless, he was soon back on the crags: in December 1939, Bill Murray made good on a promise to take him up Crowberry Ridge, and by 1943 he was fit enough to make an early repeat ascent (with Jimmy Bell) of the Long Climb on Ben Nevis.

His long-time partner on the rope was George Peat, a civil engineer and decathlete. They became friends around 1940, and remained so throughout life. Through the 1960s, they roamed the Alps, from the Bernina to the Dauphiné. In the mid-70s Peat's sight began to fail, and he soon became blind. We know almost nothing of their climbing, at home or in the Alps, since Peat was just as reticent and self-effacing as Archie. Archie's writing – limited as it was – was deft, witty, and often barbed. In his obituary for Peat, who died in 1995, he wrote, 'We were good friends for 54 years, We enjoyed many companionable silences. He did not let his love of golf intrude too much' (*J*, 36/187, 165). Writing about Charlie Gorrie, he remarked, 'His distinctions included dropping a rock on the head of George Waterson, a well-known ornithologist, and being charged with vandalizing a railway compartment after using the luggage rack as a climbing frame' (*J*, 36/188, 423). Apart from these caustic obituary notices, Archie's solitary contribution to the Club Journal was a piece written in 1945 about a holiday in Glen Coe with Peat in 1940. This holiday was more or less ludicrous,

and Archie gave his account of it the full measure of his wit. Due to petrol shortage, their journey to and from the Glen was a hybrid affair: by car to Crianlarich, then by bicycle to Glencoe. Unfortunately, in Crianlarich Peat reversed the car over one of the bicycles. After unsatisfactory repairs, and following the discovery that the little-used bicycles had no brakes, the journey to Glen Coe proceeded as a mixture of perilous cycling and tedious walking, concluding with the steep descent of Glen Coe: 'Peat had by this time lost all the nails in his left boot and was achieving a purely token braking force by keeping one foot on the front mudguard and pressing it against the tyre. This at any rate supplied the place of a bell, since it sounded like a miniature and illegal siren.' Besides Peat, Archie's companion on many Alpine trips was another old friend – Sybil Washington, with whom, as Sybil Cameron, he had been benighted in the Observatory ruins in February 1939 (*J*, 22/127, 82) after a difficult ascent of Tower Ridge. It seems that Archie and his two great friends made a tricky ascent of the Dom together in 1975, since Archie mentioned it in their respective obituaries. Like Peat, Sybil died in 1995 (*AJ* 1998, 353). Their last Alpine outings, in the early 1990s, were to the Dauphiné.

Although diffident and self-effacing, Archie was an efficient and competent man, and when he joined the Club in 1944 he was soon pressed into service as a Committee Member and Custodian of the Charles Inglis Clark Hut on Ben Nevis. He was a natural choice for this difficult post, since his knowledge of Ben Nevis was very complete. During his visits there in the War years, he got to know both Jimmy Bell – after Graham Macphee the principal guru of Ben Nevis climbing at the time – and the mercurial Brian Kellett, an Englishman who was put to work at Torlundy Forest due to conscientious objection. Kellett blitzed the Ben with many desperately difficult routes, often undertaken alone, and was regarded by Bell and Archie as an unsafe climber. Kellett died in a fall from The Cousins' Buttress there in 1945 along with Nancy Forsyth, a leading light of the Ladies Club, and Archie was among those who found their bodies some days later. In the 1950s, Archie climbed frequently with Jimmy Marshall, George Ritchie and Len Lovat and they had many fine climbs together at home and in the Alps. Jimmy Marshall recalls his introduction to Archie as follows:

Prior to quitting the city for Glencoe [in the JMCS bus], a head count was called and the Meet Convener asked, 'Whae are the auld auld timers at the front?' The first, and well-known, was the vociferous George Ritchie, a great pal and a regular on these trips; but the quiet one, responding as though pained, was Archie Hendry. I was impressed: he had made several bold pre-war balance routes on Salisbury crags, so I looked forward to his company. Sadly the monsoon intervened, and we had only a scramble to the Buachaille cairn and a saturated journey home. Sometime later, on the Saturday Princes Street stroll I met Archie and was offered a pillion ride to the Coe. It was providence – a climber, with transport – and I rushed home, to pack, snack and be ready.

When he arrived, my family were surprised to find him a quiet unassuming man, unlike our usual crowd, but I wanted to get going and be a real biker – cloth cap, anorak and heavy weekend bag. The ride was mind-blowing, the machine like a powerful horse, surging to the throttle, and the journey the first of many in total harmony with the ethos of the day. We had unlimited choice of climbs, summer or winter, inspired by the post-war exploits of Glasgow men on the Cobbler, and the McKenzie-

Murray team in Glencoe. We route-checked many for Lovat's Glencoe Guide and bagged several significant first ascents, without frightening ourselves.

It was at this time that Robin Smith came under Archie's wing at Watson's School. Archie handled what must have been a difficult relationship with young Smith deftly, encouraging him in his climbing while seeking to preserve him from the early death which is often the lot of such Bright Stars. Smith went on to become Scotland's strongest climber since Harold Raeburn until his sad death on Mount Garmo in the Pamirs in 1962, a loss mourned by Archie for every day of his remaining life. Mal Duff was another well-known climber who came under Archie's benevolent influence at Watson's.

In the 1960s Archie became Vice-President of the Club and then President in 1968, when he had to deal with the complications of the newly-formed Scottish Mountaineering Trust. His final service to the Club was a short stint as General Editor of the Climbing Guidebooks in the 1970s. In 1971, he had the rare good fortune to read his own obituary. A well-known national newspaper had noticed the death of Archie's father, and published an obituary of the son instead!

Archie was a great reader, consuming the literature of climbing in English, French and German indifferently. His great love was the Alps – particularly the Dauphiné and Maritime Alps, and in his last years it was books about the Alps – even guidebooks – that he preferred to read. It is a great shame that he didn't write as well as read, since he had many stories to tell and insights to deliver.

Archie was a true friend of Scottish mountaineering, and he served it well throughout his long life.

Robin N Campbell

EDWARD RUPERT ZENTHON j. 1950

(3 July 1920 – 28 September 2012)

EDWARD (TED) ZENTHON was born in London, as was his father, but his mother was born in Inverness and came from a Wester Ross crofting family and brought up to speak Gaelic. It was to her that Ted attributed his lifelong love of Scotland.

Ted was lucky in that his father ran a chauffeuring business and unusually for the period owned several cars and so was able to take the family on holidays to Scotland where Ted developed an early passion for climbing. He was artistic and from about the age of fourteen, kept meticulous illustrated diaries of his climbing and walking holidays and meetings. From his early teens he started going on extensive camping and walking holidays, either alone or, more usually with a companion. These started in the Home Counties, but from his mid-teens extended further afield, to Cornwall in 1936 and then, in 1937, to North Wales with a friend. Here they walked over 200 miles exploring the area and Ted climbed solo on Pen yr Ole Wen, Tryfran (twice), Snowdon and the Ordinary route on Idwal Slabs as well as both the Ordinary and Direct routes on the Milestone Buttress.

Ted played an important part in the exploration of Harrison Rocks and the other sandstone outcrops in the South East of England. His first recorded

occasion was when he visited Harrison Rocks with a number of friends over Easter weekend in April 1938. He continued to climb there for many years and frequently with members of the JMCS. He put up many new routes, but probably his most important contribution to climbers in the South East, was in his collaboration with Ted Pyatt in the production of the guide *Sandstone Climbs in SE England* which was published by the London Section of the Junior Mountaineering Club of Scotland in 1947. Ted, who by then was a Land Surveyor by trade, surveyed all the sandstone outcrops that could be traced in the South East and drew plans of them, while Ted Pyatt wrote the text. Ted's surveys have been the basis for subsequent guide books of the area.

On 19 April 1938, Ted joined the Junior Mountaineering Club of Scotland (Glasgow) Section.

In June 1938, he travelled to Scotland for a JMCS meet, where he met Bill Murray, JKW Dunn, Archie McAlpine, Kerr and McPherson. They climbed Succoth Buttress and Spearhead on Beinn Narnain. Ted then left the JMCS party and walked for the next three or four days until he came to Càrn Mòr Dearg and ascended Nevis via the Arête. From there, he travelled to Drummond, near Inverness, where he stayed the night with his mother's family. On leaving, he walked south to Rothiemurchus Forest and through the Lairig Ghru to Blair Atholl. He was 17 years of age and had walked 160 miles on his own across the Highlands, predominately camping or, where possible, staying in bothies.

On 16 March 1939, The London Association of the Junior Mountaineering Club of Scotland was formed and a Constitution and Rules were adopted. The first Committee comprised WD Short (President), ER Zenthon (Secretary-Treasurer) and AM Smith. The first meet of the Association was held on 23 April 1939, at Stone Farm Rocks, a sandstone outcrop, near East Grinstead in West Sussex – now owned by the British Mountaineering Council.

The first AGM and dinner were held at the, now defunct, Southern Cross Restaurant in Connaught Street, London, on Monday 20 November 1939. Five members were present. On 1 January 1946, at an AGM of the whole Club held in Glen Coe, at the Kings House Hotel, The London Association was accepted as the London Section of the Junior Mountaineering Club of Scotland.

In September, a few days after the outbreak of war, Ted returned to Scotland for his holiday. He lodged with Mrs Downie at Lagangarbh and the following day climbed the east face of Stob Dearg, by way of Crowberry Ledge (Greig's Ledge variation). This was followed the day after by another, unnamed climb up Stob Dearg, plus both the 'A' and the 'B' routes up the North Buttress. On the Saturday he met up with Jimmy Wood and Alec Small and drove with them to Nevis, where they proceeded to the CIC hut and were joined that evening by Bill Murray, G Rogers and B Donaldson. The next morning Alec Small, Jimmy Wood and Ted climbed Staircase and descended Observatory Ridge. The final day, he climbed Tower Ridge Pinnacle with Alec Small. Having returned to Laganbarbh he had no one to climb with, so he soloed Lagangarbh Chimney and Cuneiform Buttress and made the first solo ascent of South Wall Chimney on the Chasm. He later climbed Aonach Dubh via Shadbolt's Chimney and traversed on to Bidian nam Bian. The final days of his holiday were spent on various climbs on Buachaille Etive Mòr.

Christmas 1939, was spent climbing in North Wales and Easter 1940, in the Lake District, climbing mainly on Langdale Pikes. Ted spent his summer holiday that year climbing extensively with Basil Fox on Ben Nevis and in Glen Coe.

While in Glen Coe, they put up a new climb on the North Buttress of Buachaille Etive Mor, called 'Pluto's Pilgrimage', by them, but reduced to 'Pluto' by guide book editors.

Ted was called up for National Service during 1940 and drafted into the Royal Artillery, where he was trained as a Gunnery Surveyor. He was soon sent overseas and posted first to Cape Town, where he met a number of local climbers. While there, he managed to climb several routes on Table Mountain. He also made an ascent of Lakeside Ridge, then the only recorded climb on Lower Steenberg Mountain (1653 feet), in company with Bill Eadie (JMCS) and another friend. This was followed by a solo ascent of Central Wall on the North face of the same mountain. Several years later, on 10 January 1945, he was elected a member of the Mountain Club of South Africa.

The pleasures South Africa were to be short lived and in August 1942, his regiment was sent to North Africa and took part in the battle of El Alamein and the defeat of Rommel's army. They were then moved to Egypt for three months where, although British troops were forbidden from climbing the pyramids, Ted managed to climb the Great Pyramid at Cheops and made a moonlight attempt on Chephren, which lies to the west of Cheops and adjacent to it. He also climbed the Mycerinus pyramid. After Egypt he took part in the invasion of Italy and was involved in several major battles, including the battle for Monte Cassino, one of the most severe of the invasion.

After the cessation of hostilities in Italy he requested a transfer to the Royal Engineers, where he was promoted to Lance Corporal and attached to the 29th Railway Survey Company and spent the remainder of his time in the army, surveying the badly damaged Italian railway system for the engineers to repair. The character of the man was illustrated when he came across a woman who had her lower leg blown off in a minefield. Numerous people were standing around too frightened to help her, but Ted walked straight into the minefield, followed by a first aider, who, when he saw the extent of her injuries, fainted. Ted, however, tied a tourniquet around the woman's leg and carried her to the road. Locals took her to hospital, where she survived.

Throughout the war, Ted continued his practice of sketching interesting crags and mountains and assessing likely climbs and whenever he found the opportunity, he went climbing, either alone, or where possible, with companions. In August 1944, he had a few days leave and hitch-hiked to the Gran Sasso mountains, the highest in the Apennines. He hired a local man as a guide and carrying a heavy pack, containing a week's supply of food, they climbed Monte Portella to the Duca degli Abruzzi hut situated at 7862 feet. They had walked six miles and climbed 4514 feet in under six hours. The following morning, his guide returned home, and Ted climbed to the summit of Corno Grande, 9561 feet. Water was difficult to find and he had to descend to a hotel at about 7000 feet to obtain it. The following day he climbed to Monte Aquila, 8196 feet, Vado di Corno, 6349 feet, Monte Brancastello, 7832 feet and attempted to reach the summit of Monte Prena at 8419 feet, but had to turn back a few hundred feet short of the summit due to the lateness of the day. The following day, he climbed to the summit of Monte d'Intermesole, 8681 feet, via Mont Portella, 7835 feet, and Pizzo Cefalone, 8307 feet.

In 1945, Ted met and married a local girl, Luisa, to whom he was to remain happily married for almost sixty years.

After being demobbed, Ted returned as an assistant engineer with John



*Ted Zenthon in the
Ruwenzori, 1952.*

Mowlem, with whom he had worked before the war. His job took him to various parts of the country, including, Renfrew. He tried to interest his new wife in rock climbing and hill walking, taking her first to Stanage Edge in Derbyshire and then to Glen Coe and Ben Nevis. This was not a great success, as he then started climbing with members of Glasgow JMCS and attended several meets in Scotland. After returning to London, Ted obtained a job as Section Engineer and Chief Site Surveyor with the newly formed Marples Ridgway Partnership and spent four difficult years with them working on a new power station in Poplar.

In April 1950, he was elected a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and on 23 October 1950, he was elected a member of the Scottish Mountaineering Club. He was also elected a fellow of the Faculty of Surveyors.

In 1951 Ted joined the Colonial Survey Service and in March that year moved with his growing family to Uganda, where he worked as a surveyor. In August, with some climbers from the Mountain Club of Uganda, he made an attempt on Mount Kenya. The party suffered from mountain sickness and bad weather almost every day and although they tried several times, they failed to reach the 17,040 foot summit of Mount Kenya by 700 feet. The following year, with Pat Hudson, one of the friends he had climbed with on Mount Kenya, Ted climbed in the Ruwenzori, the Mountains of the Moon. In 1953, again with Pat Hudson, he climbed Mount Akisim, 14,177 feet and then, what was to be his last big climb in

the Ruwenzori, Mount Speke, 16,122 feet. He also made a considerable number of other climbs while in Uganda, which were mainly on rock outcrops.

He resigned from the Colonial Service and returned to England in March 1954 where became self employed as a Land and Engineering Surveyor and settled in Purley, Surrey. During the course of his career, his work took him all over Britain and overseas. He was responsible for many major surveys, including the London Zoo and Avonmouth Docks and in later years, he produced large scale survey drawings of many notable buildings and engineering works in London. He also provided various drawings to WH Murray for inclusion in his book 'Mountaineering in Scotland'. Ted suffered severely from back pain and Menieres' disease, which eventually left him profoundly deaf. He retired in November 1986 and moved with Luisa to the Isle of Wight, where they lived until medical needs and age became too much. In 2000 they moved to Loughborough, to live with their son Alan, where in 2012, he died from a massive heart attack. Luisa predeceased Ted, but he is survived by his children, Ann, Anthony, Alan, Vera and Susan to whom we offer our sincere condolences. They have lost a much loved father and a remarkable man.

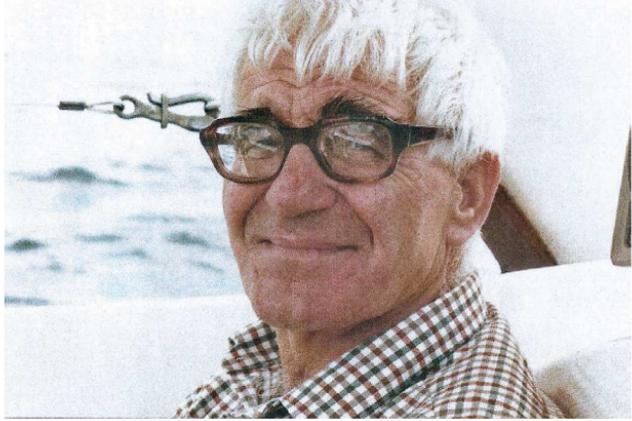
In common with most climbers of his generation, the majority of his climbing was in nails, plimsolls or socks and when he was in the army, sometimes in army boots. Ted's overriding love of the hills governed his life and although he did not climb much in later years, except with family members, climbing always remained his passion. He attended meets of the London Section JMCS until mid 1960 and our 50th Anniversary Dinner in 1996, where, despite his deafness, he stayed up singing songs into the early hours. With his death, we have lost a good friend and our last connection with the founders of the London Section.

Peter Whitechurch
JMCS (London Section)

DONALD McCALMAN j. 1960

A GLASGOW MAN by birth and upbringing, Donald took to climbing in the early 1950s. In his warm obituary for Bill Young (SMCJ xxxix pp214-6), Donald records how he and Bill met at Crianlarich Youth Hostel in January 1952, taught themselves to climb as close companions over several years, and became fast friends for life. With Bill and other JMCSers, Donald did a good deal of rock-climbing on the popular playgrounds of the Cobbler and Glen Coe, amassing a fine record of climbs up to Severe. He had a particular penchant for the airy delights of Rannoch Wall at a time when leaders perforce needed to tread a delicate line between boldness and prudence, since a fall was not to be contemplated. He became President of the Glasgow section of the JMCS in 1954. In those years he also enjoyed three eventful seasons in the Alps, at Chamonix and in the Bregaglia, with Bill but also with Len Lovat and J.M. Johnstone among others. In his sympathetic portrayal of Bill, Donald reveals his own strong but reticent feeling for the hill, marked by quiet but profound enthusiasm and wry humour.

Later in the 1950s, Donald became one of several SMCers to serve with the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey, as surveyor and Base Leader at Hope

Donald McCalman.

Bay, near the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, in 1958–9. Fifteen years earlier, he had been preceded as Hope Bay Leader by Victor Russell, who established the standard sledging routines followed in Donald's time. Donald's 'shift' at Hope Bay also followed on immediately after a party that included such notables as Hugh Simpson and Wally Herbert. Among other lifelong friends from that time was Ron Tindal, who had worked as a reserve warden for the Nature Conservancy in North-West Scotland. Subsequently, in a similar role in New Zealand, Ron was to become widely known as the 'King' of Stewart Island; in later years Donald and Jean visited Ron there. Operating out of Hope Bay, Donald carried out an extensive programme of survey with dog teams, work rewarded with the Polar Medal.

After Antarctica, Donald spent a year in Kenya as a volunteer teacher in the early days of VSO. While there, he took the opportunity to explore Kenya's mountains, and met Jean, who was volunteering as a nurse. On returning to Scotland Donald followed a career in education, in due course becoming an Inspector of Schools. He and Jean were very happily married for 50 years, their family expanding to three children and four grandchildren. Jean herself became a stalwart member of the LSCC.

Donald was a regular attendee at Club Dinners with a gang of his old JMCS friends, and attended the Centenary Yacht Meet of 1997. In mature years he diversified into sailing, skiing and woodwork. After they moved to Speyside in 2004, Donald and Jean became closely involved with the church in Kingussie and Kincaig, and enjoyed winter walking holidays in Madeira. Sadly Donald's last years were blighted by a series of strokes, so that his death in January 2013 was something of a release.

I came to know Donald in 2002, when by judicious leverage through the LSCC Mafia he was 'volunteered' into taking on the role of Honorary Secretary of the Scottish Countryside Activities Council. Donald was the very incarnation of the Ideal Secretary, picking up the reins immediately and operating in a mode so unobtrusively efficient, reliable and good-humoured that we very quickly took him for granted. He gave sterling service for three years, until we finally wound SCAC up, acknowledging with regret that the Council, as a broadly-based purely voluntary umbrella body, was no longer an effective player in a field increasingly

dominated by more specialised and professionalised recreation and conservation bodies.

In a full and interesting life, Donald achieved three quirky points of orographic distinction. During his stint at Hope Base, in the course of climbing most of the local mountains, he made the first ascent of the fine 550m peaklet on the Antarctic peninsula that now bears his name: 'A small thing, but mine own,' he told me with his characteristic modest grin.

He claimed to be the first (and was quite probably the only) person to have played the pipes on the summit of Kilimanjaro during his time in Kenya, no mean feat given the already significant risk of oedema. And he may be the only SMC member to have climbed Queen Mary's Peak, the 2000m volcanic cone that forms the island of Tristan da Cunha. That peak erupted in 1961, the year after his ascent. I think in his quietly humorous and unpretentious way Donald would have liked that.

RA

DONALD BENNET j. 1955

DONALD BENNET, WHO died aged 84 at the beginning of February, was undoubtedly one of the major figures in the SMC, and indeed in the wider world of Scottish mountaineering, throughout the second half of the 20th century. It's a major challenge to do justice, within the modest limits of a Journal obituary, to the activities and achievements of a man as fiercely and energetically committed as Donald was to mountains and mountaineering. Even by the standards of our Club he showed in exceptional degree a catholic and undiminishing passion for mountains, for mountain exploration, for climbing and ski-ing. To those he added a flair for mountain photography, commitment to the dissemination of accurate and authoritative information through guidebook writing and publication, and fierce determination and capacity for sustained hard work in support of conservation of Scotland's mountain country and access to it.

As a most emphatic Scot, Donald sometimes found the fact that he was born in London a source of mild chagrin; but he drew comfort from the ancient aphorism that "being born in a stable doesn't necessarily make you a horse". Raised in Edinburgh, as a teenage schoolboy at Melville College he was already exploring the Border fells, and then boldly ranging much further into the Highlands using those traditional aids, bike and youth hostel. Aged 18, a student of engineering at what was then Heriot-Watt College, he started climbing with the EUMC, and quickly amassed a formidable record of Scottish climbs, many of them with his close friend Dan Stewart. His first visit to the Alps in 1951 yielded a good haul of serious classic peaks. Even his National Service as an engineering officer in the RAF from 1952 to 1955 was turned to good account: an RAF Mountaineering Association expedition to Kulu and Lahoul in the Himalaya gave him the opportunity to make half-a-dozen first ascents of peaks of up to 21,000 feet, again with Dan Stewart. His application to the Club in 1955 is an impressively dense inventory of dynamic activity.

Back in civilian life, Donald took up an instructor post with Outward Bound at Eskdale in the Lakes, at that time under the illustrious leadership of Eric Shipton



*Anne and
Donald Bennet.*

– though in the event, as is now widely known, it turned out that running an outdoor centre was really not Shipton's *métier*. In not much over a year at Eskdale, Donald made many lasting friendships. Most notably, the night he first arrived, tired and hungry, after the dinner hour, he was given a meal by a kindly girl called Anne on the domestic staff, thereby confirming the old saw that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Although tempted by a career in outdoor education, in 1956 Donald returned to engineering as a lecturer at the Royal Technical College, now the University of Strathclyde; he finally retired in 1988 as Reader in Applied Thermodynamics & Nuclear Engineering. His 1971 book *Elements of Nuclear Power* became a standard text that ran through three editions.

From the outset, family life for the Bennets, firmly rooted in Bearsden, was very much an active outdoors affair with a strong SMC flavour. It encompassed boating outings on Loch Lomond with Alan and Evelyn McNicoll, and summer holidays at Lochcarron with cousin Arthur, his wife Mary and their children. One of the boys, oppressed by this relentless round of strenuous outdoor activity, was heard to ask plaintively 'Why can't Dad be normal?' For all that, in different ways both followed Donald's example; John also became a climber and a Club member, Allan a keen cyclist. Donald was always keen to hear of their exploits in different parts of the world.

Throughout those years, and indeed into the 1990s, Donald's climbing career was hugely impressive in its range. Besides the Himalaya he climbed in Greenland, the Rockies, Peru, the Alps, the Pyrenees and Tatras, and Kenya,

often with Malcolm Slessor and Bill Wallace but with a multitude of other Club members. He has the first ascents of about a dozen peaks to his credit. He was a good man to have on an expedition; his compact strength, his drive, his organising ability, his humour in the right company, and his sheer competence were legendary. Bill Brooker is reported to have described Donald as probably the most competent and efficient mountaineer he ever climbed with. And in 1964 when Donald and Ken Bryan made the first ascent of Chainapuerto in Peru, Slessor – hardly a man given to idle praise, as many Club members will attest – described it as ‘a brilliant piece of route finding and determined climbing’. Indeed, dogged determination was one of Donald’s key characteristics; some might even say he could be thrown on occasion.

Donald’s energy was unflagging. I suspect I’m not alone in having chance encounters with him in odd corners of the Scottish hills more often than any other climber of my acquaintance, and certainly any tale of such an encounter is usually capped by another of meeting him at belays or in bothies. The 1991 Journal (34/182, pp622–31) has a whimsical account of one such encounter at Sourlies bothy with Anne and Donald, who appears in the guise of Group Captain Sir D.B. Batten-Willis – a humorous tag which is somehow not entirely out of keeping.

A matching passion was Donald’s enthusiasm for photography, to which he brought a combination of sensitive vision and intense application: painstaking technique in processing black-and white film to his very high standards; and organisational rigour in storing his slides. He used to boast that he could find any slide in his vast collection within a minute. Particularly later on, when their boys had grown up and Anne was able to tackle her own round of the Munros, often in company with Bill and Margaret Brooker, she featured as Donald’s artistically posed foreground figure in a hundred fine mountain views; many of those went on to adorn various SMC guidebooks, guaranteeing Anne a special kind of immortality. Members have sometimes speculated on whether she got a clothing allowance from the Trust for her trademark photogenic red anoraks.

Amidst all this, Donald made time for an extraordinary range of service to the mountaineering community – voluntary work sustained over more than 40 years. From the mid-1950s onwards he gave unstinting service to the Club in a range of roles, most notably as a crisply efficient Honorary Secretary for 12 years. In 1969–70 he was a prime mover with Sandy Cousins in the formation of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland to give a stronger voice to mountaineering concerns and to mountain conservation. The key meetings at which the new Council was constituted were held, courtesy of Donald of course, at Strathclyde University. I was there myself, lurking at the back, a raw student in awe of Donald’s aura of high purpose and dynamism. Later he was to serve as Treasurer of the Council for five years.

In 1982 Donald was appointed to the Countryside Commission for Scotland and served eight years as a Commissioner, a stalwart advocate for recreation and access interests. Indeed access became a major concern over twenty years. He was closely involved in the National Access Forum and its work on the Access Concordat, which did much to foster the climate in which our current very positive access rights could be formulated. Donald’s dogged efforts in working and re-working the Concordat’s wording were crucial to ensuring that it could be accepted and endorsed by the contesting interests in access.

On the same theme, Donald served as a director of the Scottish Rights of Way

Society from 1989 to 1993, and as its chair until 2000. Under his dynamic aegis the Society acquired a professional staff team and its own office; it undertook a campaign of signposting of rights of way across Scotland (not a few of which signs Donald planted himself); and it upgraded and computerised its inventory of Scottish paths. Donald also edited two revisions of the Society's guidebook *The Hill Tracks of Scotland* in a more appealing modern format. Again, all that work helped push forward the cause of public access to Scotland's countryside.

But perhaps the high point of Donald's efforts was in the writing and production of a wide range of mountain guidebooks. He always had an exceptional aptitude for mountain topography and a passion for precision. Robin Chalmers tells the tale of how on a ski tour in the Gran Paradiso, Donald was able to trump the party's guide in an undeclared but fierce little competition as to who could accurately identify most peaks in a wide mountain vista of the Alps. Some of us will recognise Donald's undisguised relish at beating the local man on his own ground.

Donald started writing guides as far back as the early 1970s, with a guide to the Staunings that stemmed from the SMC's pioneering visits. He then took on – among others – the writing of new editions of the Club's regional hill-walker's guides to the Southern, Western, and Northern Highlands. His quietly enthusiastic and authoritative text and his outstanding photographs in these guides were the product of assiduous and systematic fieldwork.

Above all, in the mid-1980s Donald played a central role as editor and contributor in the preparation, collation and publication of the hugely successful Guides to the Munros, and later to the Corbetts. The crisp style and layout was so effective that it was shamelessly adopted in its entirety on the other side of the world, in two guides to the 'Abels', the 1100-metre peaks of Tasmania. When I mischievously showed those volumes to Donald, I confess I enjoyed watching his mingled outrage and reluctant pride at the blatant cribbing of his design.

From 1987 onwards, once he'd retired from Strathclyde, Donald became Production Manager for Scottish Mountaineering Trust publications, responsible for a wide range of guides, histories, and conservation titles. Again he demonstrated his apparently limitless capacity for sustained hard work and painstaking attention to detail; although he was working at home, Anne asserts she saw even less of him than when he'd been at the University. The impressive success of the Trust Publications operation in those years probably owed a good deal to the energy generated by constructive tension between the driving persona of Graham Tiso and Donald, the very personification of irresistible force meeting immovable object. There was a combative side to Donald's character which could emerge on such occasions.

Donald's work in this role was fundamental in confirming the SMC as the respected source of authoritative climbing and walking guides to Scotland's hills. His labours also helped to generate large revenues for the Scottish Mountaineering Trust, and in turn for the benefit of mountain conservation and enjoyment. For all that, Donald did sometimes wryly question the ethics and impacts of guidebook publication; but I think he consoled himself that if it were to be done at all, it was best that it should be done as well as possible.

In deserved recognition of all these efforts, Donald was made OBE in 2001, Honorary President of the Rights of Way Society, and an Honorary Member of the Club.

In June 2001 all this heroic energy and commitment came to an abrupt and

tragic halt when Donald suffered a massively disabling stroke. Many members will still remember the shock and dismay we felt at that news. We'd lost what had seemed a permanent and potent force from the heart of the Scottish climbing community. Back in 1979, Donald dedicated *Scottish Mountain Climbs*, his collection of fine photo-essays, to Anne, who 'kept a light in the window while we were on the hill'. It fell to Anne to keep the light in Donald's life for over a decade by her selfless devotion, unflagging care and extraordinary good cheer. Our sympathy for her, John and Allan in their loss has a sharper edge for appreciating what they went through with Donald in that sad decade.

Donald's personality epitomised a particular Scottish blend: a mixture of pragmatic, businesslike, forthright public action with deep but reserved private passion and idealism.

I don't think any of us who knew him would doubt that he cherished very strong aesthetic feelings for mountains, and particularly for the Scottish hills. I suspect that at the core of his being he subscribed to the High-Romantic, Tennysonian motto of the Outward Bound Trust, which back in the 1950s brought Donald and Anne together:

'to strive, to seek, and not to yield'.

For me there could be no more fitting epitome of the spirit of Donald's life – a life of strenuous enjoyment of mountains, and of selfless service to mountains and mountaineers.

RA

NIGEL MARCUS SUESS j. 1992

I HAVE A WONDERFUL memory of our first meeting. In February 2002 at the MacIntyre hut, Onich, it was breakfast time, and I was looking for a climbing companion for the day. Nigel was slumped in a chair, a bit disconsolate because the Clachaig lecture the night before had predicted level 4 avalanche conditions, forecasting overnight heavy snowfall and strong winds. A Grade I gully without serious wind or avalanche consequences seemed to be an option. Otherwise another sundry walk for the day. In the event we did a route that belied its Grade I status, Vixen Gully, on Sgor na h-Ulaidh with my very short rope, cut from the roll, and three hexes. It was the best adventure of the season and Nigel wrote it up for the *Journal* (38/193, 2002, 35–7); exciting short pitches because of the rope and to maintain verbal and visual contact, devilishly wild spindrift, psychological belays dug out of snow and ice filled holes, icy pitch after icy pitch, nine of them, and on a small mountain, unfrequented, somewhat remote, with a sense of challenge requiring commitment. Even getting off the top of the mountain in cloud was no pushover (guidebook: '...has been the scene of several fatal accidents'). We were down in daylight – after all it was the end of February, and no excuses for benightedness would pass muster back at the hut after a Grade I route.

We had each found a new climbing partner.

But to get back to his start in life, Nigel was born soon after Hitler had been

Nigel Suess.



overcome. His father had escaped from Austria to the UK just in time to save himself before the Second World War began in 1939. You knew that Nigel's early developing years were in Essex (born in Chelmsford on 13 December 1945) as soon as he began to speak; the acquired accent never seemed to bother him, nor should it have, but it belied his devolvement to Scotland. One of three brothers he had early schooling at Woodford Prep and then Chigwell School. As a young man he went on to Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge to read Mathematics where he graduated with a triple First-Class Honours degree. He continued his academic interest in maths throughout his lifetime. After retirement he did a PhD at Edinburgh University in a general branch of maths called 'number theory', his dissertation being: 'Results on the rank of elliptical curves' (year 2000). He first took employment with NM Rothschild, the merchant bankers in London, and there he worked alongside Nigel Lawson, a future Chancellor of the Exchequer. In 1978 he moved to the British Linen Bank, Edinburgh.

He had met his future wife Maureen, a Scot, at the Clachaig Inn, Glencoe.

Initially she moved down to London to join him, but in 1978 the job in Edinburgh beckoned. Most hill walkers or climbers finding themselves based in Scotland would not be able to believe their luck – all those Munros to go for again, and Corbetts and Cobblers and all – an obsession that could seem to stretch to an infinite horizon of mountains. Meticulously planned and relentlessly pursued, he ticked them off on day trips and extended tours, thus methodically contributing yet another statistic for his article in the 2012 *Journal* (42/203, 2012, 86–90) ‘Is the disease coming under control?’, the disease being ‘Rampant Munros, the Scottish Disease’, the title of WD Brooker’s article in an earlier *SMCJ*.

These activities began well before he moved to Edinburgh. He had already completed all the Lake District 2000ft tops (1969–73) and all the Welsh 2500ft tops (1972–5) from home in Essex. He had also begun rock climbing with Maureen. Was she the next influence? She must have reminded him that there were further challenges in the north of the UK. In a concentrated period between 1979 and 1984 he had completed all the Munros for the first time – his second round was completed in 2005. In a one day push in May 1985 he traversed the Cuillin Ridge with his JMCS friend Tom Leatherland. The Irish 3000ft tops were completed by May 1986 and Munro tops were finished off in 1988. Progress towards a third Munro round in his mid sixties were only terminated when the grim reaper dealt a cancer card.

If he hadn’t done much actual rock climbing before doing the Cuillin Ridge in 1985, he certainly would have had a real taste then. About that time climbing in both summer and winter began to feature in his mountaineering and his record as a mountaineer was properly consolidated. Involvement with the JMCS fixed him up with partners, and John Fowler no less; others too, but for the ten or so years from 1990 Nigel and John made forays from Edinburgh to all climbable corners of North Wales, the Lake District and Scotland, and knocked off many classic VS routes.

Other companions in this period included Brian Finlayson, Robin Sinclair, and Eddie Gillespie, the latter of whom Nigel persuaded to join the SMC. According to Eddie, in 1990 Nigel won a writing competition for a magazine/newspaper with an article on the economy of Eastern Europe. He used the proceeds to upgrade his gear from bendy boots and everyman crampons so that he could get up the required harder winter routes and apply to join the SMC. It worked, for in 1992 he was able to fill in the vast spaces on the application form.

After joining he continued to climb with John Fowler, members of the JMCS and Scottish Mid-week Mountaineering Club (did Zero gully). One of these, Jim Graham, remembers an evening sitting with a beer outside the Ling hut after climbing on Beinn Eighe, ‘talking about the history of Scottish mountaineering... and appreciating how lucky we were to be in such a place.’ Having acquired a full set of SMC Journals Nigel was in the process of a reading marathon which he completed from start to finish before he died. Immersing himself in the climbing world of firstly the JMCS and then the SMC, he was also happy to drink with them at Annual Dinners of the former, and then more respectably with half pints and drams at the latter. I never knew Nigel behaving badly; probably a modest toper. Most JMCS student members who threw up eventually grew up, and joined the names in the handbook of the prestigious. Apparently one JMCS event left Nigel so bleary eyed next morning that he banged his head on the uplifted car boot lid and drew blood, just before picking up his infant daughter from the mother-in-law. I am inclined to believe Maureen’s version, despite the

appearance of a Glasgow street fighter. In fact Nigel was an unassuming man who shunned the limelight; a rather private person, shy even, only relaxed in your company if he was sure about taking you into his confidence. On those occasions a dry wit could sum up a point and terminate the need for further offerings with the precision of a maths solution.

Nigel introduced his daughter Clara to climbing, 'pretty much as soon as I could walk'. She continued: 'As I got a bit older, from 14 to 17...I was pretty fearless so would happily bound up VS or HVS that I couldn't remotely contemplate now...Dad was always there to instil confidence.' Nigel the inspiration here. The family took walking holidays in the Alps (Nigel soloed the Breithorn and Mönch, and was joined by Maureen on the Allalinhorn), and even to Yosemite, where Maureen and Nigel climbed Half Dome via the horrendous wire ladder (see 'Snakes and Ladders' by Ian Sykes, *SMCJ* 40/200, 2009, 312-14 for further graphic details). On subsequent visits to the USA they also knocked off several of the easier Colorado 'Fourteeners'. This obsession of American hill walkers, the 14,000ft peaks of North America of which Colorado has 53, seems to go unnoticed in the UK. But then Munro baggers are so insular.

Nigel was as loyal a member of the SMC as there ever was. Most usefully he audited the Club's accounts – an arcane function that many of us can only recoil from, but admire. He invariably attended the Edinburgh Section winter lectures, the Annual Dinner, the Easter meet, the winter CIC meets and others. He wrote articles for the Journal. He did a three year stint as trustee of the Scottish Mountaineering Trust.

In reflection of our advancing years – wonderful that retired 60/70 year olds can just drop a grade or two and still feel the buzz – Nigel and I played out on the lesser crags of Ben A'an, Craig-a-Barns, the Hawkcraig, Benny Beg, Aonach Dubh and Poll Dubh. A recent joyous, breezy and sunny day was on the 2012 SMC meet in North Wales on Outside Edge Route at Cwm Silyn along with James Hotchkis (actually, he's not even 60). There had been three wild wet days before this, with little to show for the long journey from Scotland. Even more memorable was one of the Jaberwocky routes on the Mome Rath Face of Gear Aonach, but I was out of sorts and Nigel led the lot; reliable, steady, and then the driving force through the final overhanging last pitch. Best of all perhaps was a non-descript name, Right Edge route high on Lost Valley Minor Buttress at the end of March 2008. A good winter was receding, but Nigel knew his Scotland and that this would go. Feeling old (heavy sac excuse), I had to heave myself up the Lost Valley, because without knowing it, I had begun a severe bout of shingles, diagnosed soon afterwards in Stirling Royal Infirmary. However, we shared leads, as usual; I remember an intense concentration on belay as the rope snaked out nervously ahead, and then out of sight, so that, as usual, I began talking to it, urging it upwards, bit by bit, almost pushing it until the call came to climb, with my pitch to complete the route.

Nigel had other absorbing interests. Chess was one. While playing with the Bank of Scotland he won the St Andrews prize for being the highest ranked player living in Scotland, despite, he complained, being English. Once when I phoned him he told me that I was interrupting a chess game with a guy who was working out on the space station. Obviously highly intelligent, he was an uncomplicated character, devoid of pretention, even humble. His interest in art led him to try his hand and brush with oils, and I have one of his masterpieces to prove it.

Another interest was bird watching with Maureen, joining others in various European locations in springtime for the migrants. While I was recovering from shingles, he kindly dragged me out to witness a rare European falcon that had strayed, and was temporarily over the river Almond near Livingston. It was my first excursion from home after contracting the illness, and we got the bird. Soon afterwards he shepherded me up Ben Chonzie in my recuperation phase, a compassionate and generous gesture on his part. Without realising it at the time later, I was with him (and Maureen) on his next to last Munro that he so doggedly fought his way up in February 2013. His last was Broad Cairn in April. Two months later on 20 June 2013 he was gone.

Nigel really enjoyed the challenge of climbing, and the association with people of like mind. Despite his innately brilliant mathematical brain, he was just one of us as climber – down to earth. When he had chosen a route, he wanted it just as much as a pioneer. Determined on both hill walking and rock or snow/ice climbing routes once committed, he was yet philosophical in retreat when conditions were not right (e.g. routes with me on CIC winter meets when the weather was dire). For him a route was a job to be done, purposefully. Your part in it was to enjoy the participation, and come home safe. You always knew you would.

John Allen

Frank F. Bonsall (31 March 1920 – 22 February 2011)
Robin L. Plackett (3 September 1920 – 23 June 2009)

ALTHOUGH NOT MEMBERS of the Club, these men each made worthy contributions to Scottish mountaineering, and some notice of their passing in these pages seems appropriate.

Frank Bonsall contributed two short articles to the *Journal* in which he proposed a measure of the separation of mountains – a linear combination of drop and distance, which may be interpreted as the time that it would take a walker obeying Naismith's Rule to reach higher ground, and then used this measure to suggest a principled method of distinguishing Munros from Tops, and Tops from insignificant summits. See *J*, 30/164 (1973), 153–6; *J*, 30/165 (1974), 254–6. These suggestions of Bonsall's played some part in the revisions of *Munro's Tables* that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s.

Together with his wife Carol, Robin Plackett made several ascents on Ben Nevis in 1944 with the redoubtable Brian Kellett, including a bold attempt to reach the chimney of *Sassenach* by means of the traverse from *Centurion* used by *The Bat* (or a similar line). Their most successful climb there was the *Left Hand Route* on Minus Two Buttress. See *J*, 23/137 (1946), 338–40 and *J*, 23/138 (1947), 408–10. Three years earlier, Plackett and his intended, then Carol M. Curtis, climbed the *Direct Route* on South Buttress, Stob Coire nan Lochan in Glen Coe (*J*, 23/133 (1942), 44–5). Also on this climb was Geoffrey C. Curtis, Carol's brother, who became well-known for his pioneering ascents in Arran with Gordon Townend and Kenneth Money Penny.

Both men were distinguished Professors of Mathematics, Bonsall at Edinburgh, and Plackett at Newcastle Universities.

Bonsall occupied himself in the rarified regions of functional analysis, as does our own mathematical member Rob Archbold. Having edited his articles, and

knowing a smidgeon about this topic, I went along to a Seminar by Bonsall at Stirling Maths Department to see what he was really interested in. He talked about the separation of mountains, and the definition of peninsulas and islands! I doubt whether the Stirling mathematicians felt they'd had their money's worth.

Rob Archbold remembers Plackett from his time as a PhD student in Newcastle:

He was Head of Stats – and gave the impression of a somewhat quiet and distant figure. He often wore a black or navy blue beret.

I had done my homework in the Ben Nevis guide. One dark winter's evening I got into the lift which had descended from the 5th floor (Stats) to our 4th floor. Plackett was the only other person in the lift. We stared at the ceiling and then at our feet. As we went past the first floor, I finally plucked up courage and asked 'Excuse me, I was wondering if you are the R. L. Plackett who climbed new routes on Ben Nevis?' His eyes took on a faraway look – the lift started to open at the exterior basement door. He quietly said 'That seems a very long time ago' and strode off into the darkness.

For those wishing to know more about these mathematical mountaineers, there is an obituary of Bonsall here: <http://www.royalsoced.org.uk/cms/files/fellows/obits_alpha/Bonsall%20_VMH.pdf> [retrieved August 2013], and of Plackett in *FRCCJ*, No. 83 (2012), pp. 241–3, and in *J. Roy. Stat. Soc. A*, 173/1 (2010), pp. 265–7.

Robin N Campbell

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

The following mountaineers were admitted to the Club in April 2013.
We welcome:

PHILLIPA M COCKER (52), Retired Teacher, Wilmslow, Cheshire.

ALISON J COULL (45), Government Lawyer, Edinburgh.

STEPHEN R PERRY (41), Offshore Supervisor, Bettyhill, Sutherland.

STEPHEN R SCOTT (61), Yacht Skipper, Watland, Kendal.

JOHN A SPENCER (62), General Practitioner, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne.

The One-Hundred-and-Twenty-Fourth AGM and Dinner

The arrangements for the weekend began with Neil McGougan showing a range of magnificent slides under the title of 'Climbing in the Magic Isles and around Scotland'. The numbers in attendance then grew as members arrived from a short day on the hill and joined the 124th AGM. Amongst the usual reports on the Club finances and the state of the huts was the welcome news that the Club had held a successful Alpine Meet to the Orca Valley in Italy. The club members got on so well with the Hut custodian, that she and her partner were able to join us for the Dinner. Mention was made of the continuing run of talks arranged for the benefit of members in Edinburgh. There was talk of the Northern Section perhaps re-starting with their own series of talks.

Some things never seem to change. Firstly the Club has become very settled in holding its Dinner at the Ben Nevis Hotel and then for the second time in recent years, the Guest Speaker, Peter Gillman was unable to attend. In 2010 he was snow bound in London and this year he had the misfortune to break a leg. Hopefully one day he'll manage to join us.

Despite our presence at the hotel no longer being a novelty, we continue to get a good meal served by efficient staff in surroundings that appear to suit the members. President Andy Nisbet presented a summary of the Club year with special mention going to Sandy Allan and Rick Allen for their multi-day traverse of Nanga Parbat. His duties then concluded with the handing over of the President's regalia to the new incumbent, John Mackenzie. With no further delay he announced his plans for the Preseident's walk and we all retired to the bar.

For a few, the weekend closed with a very enjoyable walk over Stob Ban with the President accompanied by a handful of members and many of the Club guests. The weather was good and many eyes were drawn over to the slopes of the Ben, where it was clear we were probably missing a good climbing day. Anyway we did all get to put our crampons on at one point.

Chris Huntley



Top: Mara Lacchia (Rifugio Pontese Custodian) and Gianni Predan (Italian Mountain Guide) enjoy Glen Nevis with John Temple, 2 December 2012 – the day after the Club Dinner. Photo: Hon. Ed.
Middle: The summit of Ben Nevis, 4 December 2012. Photo: Gianni Predan.
Bottom: Descending Ben Nevis after doing Tower Ridge, 5 December 2012. Photo: Gianni Predan.

Ski Mountaineering Meet, Killin Hotel, near Loch Tay 9–10 March 2013

Scottish Mountaineering Club members present: G Dudley, H Irvine, C Jones, A MacDonald, J Peden, C Ravey, B Shackleton, G Tough.

Eagles ski club Members: A Armstrong, S Bean, L Bryce, D & M Cassidy, P & M Davis, P Elson, J King, T Lawfield, C Marsden, J Turner, M Yellowlees.

Guests: D Coustick, A Goodill, D Howard, A Morrison, M Peden, A & D Powell.

At the west end of Loch Tay the well-positioned Killin Hotel provided our comfortable base for this successful meet although no one, to my knowledge, took advantage of the 2013 salmon fishing season being open!

On the Saturday morning we awoke to a light covering of fresh snow overnight on the higher slopes, but there were strong winds forecast and already present at the lochside. The bulk of the SMC members, by that I mean the greatest number, attempted Meall Corranaich (1069m) in the Ben Lawryers range from the west above Lochan na Lairige. From here it was possible to put skis on next to the cars. However, strong winds and punishing gusts thwarted the summit attempt barely 100m from their target, but by then everyone had been blown over at least once. The Powells & Pedens endured a similar ski up Meall Corranaich but wisely beat a hasty retreat 300m from the top. The ski back to the cars at the 550m contour was very quick and the afternoon was spent slack lining in the hotel car park or cycling around Loch Tay on quiet roads. The two Ann's decided to socialise and take in some culture before ticking off a nearby Marilyn, Drummond Hill (458m).

The southern slopes of Meall Ghaordaidh (1039m) gave some skiing with the summit of the latter being reached by one determined Eagles party.

Four SMC members headed up into Coire Riadhait from the end of Lochan na Lairige up onto the north slopes of Meall nan Tarmachan (1044m) and Meall Garbh (1026m). Conditions were very icy, very windy with poor visibility and at around 850m having decided to cache the skis and climb to the summit, one member of the party discovered he had no crampons! Given conditions, they changed their plans and skied around the head of Coire Riadhait and ascended Meall Glas on the shoulder of Beinn a' Bhuic. This gave an icy, but fine continuous descent down the drainage back into the corrie floor and back to the car. The final walk along the road took them past a couple of foolhardy motorists stuck in a snow drift, so they completed their day helping to recover the stranded landrover!

Saturday evening Pete Davis gave an illustrated talk about the 2012 British Services Antarctic Expedition – Spirit of Scott in the 100th anniversary year of Scott's heroic efforts to reach the South Pole.

By way of contrast, on the Sunday morning we awoke to a light covering of fresh snow overnight on the higher slopes and bright sunshine. Enthused, the bulk of the SMC members carried skis then skinned up Beinn Ghlas (1103m) and Meall Corranaich with firm conditions underfoot/ski. They also found a snowhole during the descent for a late lunch before returning by ski almost to the car park, then drove home in a blizzard.

Anja & Damon Powell, John & Murray Peden, Pete & Megan Davis, Chris Ravey and Tom Lawfield drove round to Invervar in Glen Lyon for an ascent of

Meall Greigh (1001m) from the north. They carried skis to the 450m contour, and then headed for the north ridge, where the wind and visibility became progressively worse. They managed to find the summit with assistance from passing satellites! They descended north-westwards into Coire nam Buidheag and the Inverinian Burn, finding a great descent down hard-packed snow with frequent pockets of fresh powder. Once below the cloud the skiing was 'most enjoyable'. What's more, they were back at the cars well before sunset, or headtorch time!

Graham Dudley, Dave Coustick, Dave Howard and Mike Yellowlees drove up Glen Lochay to ski Beinn Heasgarnich (1078m), only to be denied access at the head of valley at Kenknock farm by large closed gates. The lack of snow low down and the prospect of a long walk swung the decision to head back to Tarmachan and ski the southern slopes. The route traversed the main track and ascended the wide drainage of Allt Tir Artair. They skied up to the base of Cam Chreag and given the icy conditions climbed the last steep section to the summit with crampons. The original clear sky of the morning had disappeared and visibility was poor and again windy. They returned by the same route and had a pleasant ski down hard icy slopes with an occasional veneer of packed powder. Though a very short day, the good thing was they could ski to within 500m of the vehicles.

Team Eagles went to Ben Lawers (1214m). They skinned up to the first col (under Beinn Ghlas), then there was an edgy traverse around the north side of Beinn Ghlas, after which they made their way up to the col below Ben Lawers, cached the skis and continued to the top with boot crampons etc. They also reported a good descent on very hard old snow interspersed with long lengths of fresh soft in the stream beds. They managed to keep their skis on until about 10 minutes from car in what was described as a great day. The weather was pretty fierce on the exposed cols and visibility was limited on the tops.

Colwyn M Jones

Easter Meet, Inchnadamph Hotel, Assynt 4-7 April 2013

The pattern of excellent weather that regular attenders on Easter Meets have come to take for granted continued in 2013, although this year we enjoyed the pleasure of full winter conditions, rather than the warm spring temperatures that has been the case on meets in the recent past. Snow cover was widespread above about 400 metres, ice was abundant in the water courses and views were tremendous. Friday was the outstanding day of the meet for weather, characterized by cold, clear, still and sunny conditions. On other days, the weather was acceptable if not quite so fine. Snow and ice conditions were generally good. Hills ascended over the course of the meet included the three tops of Quinag, Conival, Ben Stack, Ben Hee, Ben Hutig, Beinn Mor Coigach, Cul Mòr, Meall Horn, Càrn Chuinneag (Glen Calvie) and Glas Bheinn. An attempt on the Stack of Glencoul, a formidable adversary, failed due to lack of time.

Good ice conditions at an unusually low altitude gave rise to a number of ascents. On the journey north from the Central Belt, ascents were made of the Eas Anie and of a new Grade V ice climb in the Southern Highlands. During the



Gordon Macnair, Geoff Cohen, Simon Fraser, Des Rubens and Bill McKerrow on the summit of Ben Hee, Sunday 7 April 2013. Photo: Hon. Ed.

meet, ascents were completed in Coire Gorm of Cul Mòr; a lengthy new route made by the president and his wife on Conival; and a first ascent of an ice route on the north flank of Canisp, the first ever recorded ascent of any climb on this mountain. One pair was surprised by the Grade V traverse encountered on the Grade II, 3*, right branch of V gully on Sail Garbh.

All this expenditure of energy notwithstanding, an entry in the meet log recorded that on 6–7 April our Honorary Librarian and Archivist ‘did b***** all’, (although there is little doubt that his formidable energies were being devoted to the services of the Club in a more cerebral manner during this period).

During an evening lecture, Noel Williams educated us on the movements of the Moine Thrust and other mountain building events which took place some years before the founding of the Club. Noel also visited the most northerly ‘Colby Camp’ on the Scottish mainland on Saturday with Calum Anton and he took time to explain to some of us the mysteries of these relics from the early days of the Ordnance Survey [see article in this issue].

The conviviality that has come to characterise this meet was well to the fore for the meal on Saturday evening, with an attendance numbering thirty. A meeting of the minds among different generations is one of the delights of this meet, with spry members in their 80s exchanging views and experiences with raw youths barely into their 60s.

Therefore a plea to younger members of the Club: although the health of the meet is presently excellent, we will need fresh blood to replace those of us whose tumble down the Final Crevasse is rather closer than it used to be. Enjoyment is guaranteed.



EASTER MEET 2013: Front (L to R): Des Rubens, John Hay, Iain Smart, John Wood, Bernard Newman, Jan Newman, Eve Mackenzie, John Mackenzie, Jane Murdoch, Robin Chalmers, Bill McKerron, Roger Robb, Paul Brian, David Stone, Noel Williams
Back: Iain Smart, Stuart Murdoch, Bob Aitken, Gordon Macnair, John Fowler, Simon Fraser, Andrew James, Cam Forrest, Colin Stead, Geoff Cohen, Peter Macdonald, Caltum Anton (Guest), Raymond Simpson, Robin Campbell. Photo: David Stone.

Those members attending this particularly fine gathering were R Aitken, PV Brian, HM Brown, RN Campbell, RDM Chalmers, G Cohen, C Forrest, JRR Fowler, S Fraser, JYL Hay, AM James, PR Macdonald, JR Mackenzie, G Macnair, WS McKerrow, Jane L Murdoch, S Murdoch, RJC Robb, DW Rubens, GR Simpson, IHM Smart, AC Stead, D Stone, DJ Temple, DN Williams and JA Wood. Our guests were C Anton, Eve Mackenzie, B Newman and Jan Newman.

DW Rubens

Geology Meet

Immediately after the Easter Meet at Inchnadamph, four members (Gordon Macnair, John Hall, Simon Fraser and Noel Williams) spent several days – based at the Naismith Hut – examining some of the fascinating geology in the area. They made good use of an excellent guidebook (*A Geological Excursion Guide to the North-West Highlands of Scotland*, Edinburgh Geological Society, 2011). Some of the features seen are shown below:



Top left: Peach & Horne at Knockan Crag.

Top right: A large boulder of Lewisian Gneiss (possibly a mass-flow deposit) in Torridonian strata.

Bottom left: Upper part is Torridonian algal limestone – the oldest rock of organic origin in Britain.

Bottom right: Torridonian 'hailstones' created from a moist cloud of volcanic ash.

Skye Spring Meet 1-8 June 2013

It was a full house again at the Allt Dearg Cottage and for once the weather, on the whole, was very good. People were active every day and some excellent outings were had. Helen and John kicked off by doing three Munros in Glen Shieil on their way, and Tom climbed with Simon Richardson at Ardheslaig. On the Sunday Pippa and Mike Cocker did Pinnacle Ridge.

On Monday there was a mass ascent of Edgeway on Sgùrr an Fheadain. There was some dispute about it being undergraded, though by all accounts no one climbed the steep wall with the hidden jug.

On Tuesday Tom, Peter and Alan between them did Vulcan Wall, Snake and Shangri-la. Former member Willie Jeffrey was also on the island and he reported a wasted day in Coire a' Ghrunnda after failing to find Commando Crack. There seems to be some disagreement about exactly where the line is in different guidebooks. Noel managed to get over halfway up Campbell's Gully on Glamaig, before a stopper pitch forced an exit. The crux pitch is a no go area in summer, but looks like it might be interesting in winter. Helen and John did Window Buttress.

The weather was excellent on Wednesday. Tom and Peter W did Toolie Grooves Direct and James and Peter M did Cioch Corner and Wallworks Route.

Tom, James and Peter M did a (partial!) traverse of the Trotternish Ridge from the Staffin/Uig Road to The Storr on the Thursday, while Mike, Pippa, Eve and John did Hand Jive on Creag Druim Eadar da Choire. Paul and Robin revisited Coire nan Laogh and found a 500ft Diff high on the left-hand side.

There was a mass ascent of the Dubhs on Friday and Tom did further climbing with Simon Richardson including Klondyker and King Cobra. There was other drama, but lack of space precludes any further details...

John Fowler, Tom Prentice, Peter Wilson, Pippa Cocker, Helen Forde and Mike Cocker were present when the photo was taken midweek (by Noel Williams).

Eve Mackenzie (Guest), John Mackenzie, Alan Smith, Paul Brian, Robin Campbell, James Hotchkis and Peter Macdonald also attended.



JMCS REPORTS

Edinburgh Section: I am warming up my fingers writing this piece after a cold and windy cycle ride into work. The newspapers warn of record rainfall in the days ahead. It looks like another quasi-summer to come. But there can be no doubt that the winter which has just finished was a proper winter (and a half). We got months on end of ice in the places where legend told of it forming in the 1970s, places last trodden by the soles of Galibier Super RDs and last hacked about by Chouinard Frost axes, places where for many years we thought the closest we'd get to seeing it would be the black and white snapshots in MacInnes' Scottish Winter Climbs – and other places besides. In the late season it really began to feel that a surfeit of plums had been picked and it was about time, in the proper order of things, that the thaw set in

If summer weather will not come to us, we can always go and find it elsewhere. In any month of the year you are likely to find some of our members in the check in queue at the airport for a flight to somewhere more predictably warm than the UK, anxiously hoping that the weight of that spare pair of shoes and those extra couple of quick draws will not trigger an excess baggage charge and that the contact lenses in their pocket will not be confiscated during the security check. Enduring the nervous tension of pre-flight preparations, parties have been to places all round the Mediterranean, from Morocco anticlockwise to Spain, their sun tans on return provoking envy and inspiring wanderlust in those who had to stay at home.

We always welcome new faces. Please come along to our Monday or Wednesday night activities and meet and climb with some of the existing members. It is probably best to contact Terry Lansdown, the Membership Secretary, beforehand to make sure there has been no last minute change of venue. We go to Ratho on winter Wednesdays and Alien Rock on winter Mondays. During the summer we will be inside or out, depending on the weather; you can see where we are going by looking at our website which also lists our forthcoming weekend meets. Just Google 'Edinburgh JMCS'.

Our huts are available for booking by kindred Clubs; please contact the Custodians whose names are shown below. We have 'the Cabin' in Balgowan, between Laggan and Newtonmore, and 'the Smiddy' at Dundonnell in the North West.

The present committee is: *Honorary President:* John Fowler; *Honorary Vice-President:* Euan Scott; *President:* Chris Eilbeck; *Vice President* and *Smiddy Custodian:* Helen Forde (30 Reid Terrace, Edinburgh EH3 5JH, 0131 332 0071); *Secretary:* David Small (5 Afton Place, Edinburgh, EH5 3RB, <secretary@edinburghjmcs.org.uk>); *Treasurer:* Bryan Rynne; *The Cabin Custodian:* Ali Borthwick (01383 732 232, before 9pm please); *Membership Secretary:* Terry Lansdown (<t.lansdown@hw.ac.uk>); *Meets Secretary:* James Dalgarno.

David Small, Secretary

Glasgow Section: The Glasgow section of the Junior Mountaineering Club of Scotland has enjoyed another very successful and busy year. Currently we have 99 members, 79 of whom are affiliated to the Mountaineering Council of Scotland; there are 62 ordinary members and 37 life/honorary members. Four new members joined in 2012 and two existing members had survived long enough (25 years of continuous membership) to become life members.

There were 24 official club meets in 2012 including a work meet to the fine club hut at Coruisk which provides simple, cheap and accessible accommodation; see the website for booking details <<http://www.glasgowjmcs.org.uk/coruisk.php>>.

The annual general meeting and club dinner was convened at the Kingshouse hotel in Glen Coe on 24 November. The retiring president Matt Munro held his retiral bothy meet in the Ratagan area.

The midsummer night's meet to the Cobbler was well attended considering the cold and mist (eight plus a dog). Some climbing was even done before the traditional cake- and whisky-warmed bivouac. Most members got back in time for work the next day.

In addition to the Coruisk work meet, elsewhere on Skye the July meet in Glen Brittle was popular, including one former member visiting from Canada. Eagerness to climb overcame doubts about the weather, and on the Saturday JMCS members were the only people climbing in Coire Lagan. One member completed a solo expedition of the Trotternish Ridge Traverse as an overnight backpacking trip.

In September four members camped at the head of the Fionn Loch. Determined to make the most of the first dry spell for weeks, they survived three flat tyres, a bruised ankle and the cold winds to make ascents of Balaton, Gob, Red Scar and Dragon.

Overseas trips included around Andermatt in April where the variable weather allowed a small ski touring group staying at the Rotondo hut to witness the abject terror of four local skiers being avalanched just below the summit of the Leckihorn. Luckily all four survived; sometimes locals don't know better!

The Dolomites saw JMCS members make summer ascents of Piz Boe, Catinaccio, Monte Cornetto, Cima Bocche, Monte Cenera, Monte Piana and Monte Paterno, by various walking, via ferrata and climbing routes. A member visited the German Allgäu Alps in September and soloed the Mindelheimer klettersteig; as he had forgotten to take a harness. The fine Hindelanger klettersteig was done in safer style. Autumn rock climbing trips included Costa Blanca and Wadi Rum.

President: Matthew Dent; *Secretary:* Tomoko Iwata (<secretary@glasgowjmcs.org.uk>); *New Members Secretary:* Simon Taylor (<newmembers@glasgowjmcs.org.uk>); *Coruisk Hut Bookings:* Iain Sneddon (<coruisk@glasgowjmcs.org.uk>); *Treasurer:* Justine Carter.

For more information on meets and other events see our website <www.glasgowjmcs.org.uk>.

Colwyn Jones

Perth Section: This has been a busy year for the Perth Section with the usual full programme of weekend meets interspersed with day meets which, of necessity, are arranged closer to home. The weekend meets have ranged far and wide across Scotland. The recent spell of glorious weather produced a memorable meet at Coruisg, where wall to wall sunshine was the order of the day. Conditions were ideal for a mass ascent of the Dubh ridge, followed by a variety of continuations. Most members were so exhausted by this that the Sunday was spent in a shorter day on Sgùrr nan Strì! The meet to the excellent S.M.C. hut at Elphin also enjoyed fine conditions and a number of members enhanced their number of Corbett 'ticks'. Corbett Collectors almost outnumber Munro Baggers in the club at the moment and this has meant that the range of hills covered has been wider than of recent years. Mel Nicoll and Tom Barnard are closing in on the total, helped by the Munro Society's obsession in downgrading fine peaks such as Sgùrr a' Choire Bacholais. Earlier in the year the club held a successful dinner at the Laggan Gaskmore Hotel near Newtonmore (who opened specially for the weekend) and there was a well attended Burns Night supper was held at the Ochils M.C. hut in Crianlarich.

One feature of the last few years has been the emergence of a group who are also keen cyclists, both of the mountain bike and road genres. Galloway provided a suitable venue in July when several bike routes were ridden in the 7stanes Forest, whilst hillwalkers concentrated on the Merrick Hills and the minor but attractive hill of Criffel. Rock climbers have made the most of the dry conditions for their Wednesday evening meets on the local crags, sport climbing is becoming more popular and members have been in the Pyrenees, Chamonix and Saas Grund and Austria over the last few weeks expanding their horizons.

Des Bassett

London Section 2012: Meets were held in North Wales, Scotland, the Lake District, the Peak District and the Yorkshire Dales, and members were active in the Alps, Himalaya and in the USA.

It was a year of mixed activity: climbing, mountain biking, sailing and skiing. Half our meets were held in our hut in Bethesda, North Wales, which has seen significant improvement in recent years and was also used by the Glasgow section. Thanks our due to our long serving hut custodian, Rod Kleckham, to Mark Fotheringham, who coordinated hut works for several years, and to his successor, Ted Wilkins.

While the summer months were largely a wash out, members were active at Gogarth and in the Llanberis and Ogwen valleys. The highlight of the year was David Hughes' 75th birthday celebrations over the August Bank Holiday. Around thirty people enjoyed a range of marvelous Hughes curries on the Saturday evening. On the Sunday, a dozen members, representing three generations of the section climbed on the Milestone Buttress including an ascent of Direct Route by Mr Hughes.

The Scottish winter meet at the Ochills hut in Crianlarich was well attended, and while the weather was mixed, one glorious crisp, cold and sunny day resulted in winter routes. We were grateful to our President in 2013, Chris Comerie, for hosting a meet in the Dent Valley and also to the Yorkshire Ramblers for the use again of their fabulous Low Hall Garth hut in Little Langdale.

The meets culminated with a well attended section dinner in Hartington Hall in the Peak District where Mike Wainman entertained us with slides from the Himalayas. Thanks go to Mike.

On a sad note, we lost Ted Zenthon, our Honorary President and last remaining link to the formation of the London Section of the JMCS (see obituary). Our thoughts are with Alan his son, and the rest of Ted's family.

Officers for 2013: *President*: Chris Comerie; *Secretary*: John Firmin (<secretary@jmcs-london.org.uk>); *Treasurer*: David Hughes; *Glanafon Hut Bookings*: Rod Kleckham (<hutcustodian@jmcs-london.org.uk>); and *Webmaster*: Chris Bashforth (<webmaster@jmcs-london.org.uk>).

John Firmin

SMC AND JMCS ABROAD

EUROPEAN ALPS

Mont Blanc Range 2012

TOM PRENTICE AND I spent a couple of weeks in the Mont Blanc Range during the first two weeks of September. We looked around some unfrequented corners and were lucky enough to climb three new routes. The trip didn't go completely smoothly however, for whilst we were there, we experienced two autumn storms that put down snow to 1600m, but in between, we had clear, cool and stable weather.

We started off by going up to the Comino Hut and climbing on Mont Vert de Gruetta which cleared fast and was in the snow shadow of the first storm that had come in from the NW. This peak has three summits with all of the climbing to date located on the south side of Pte 2810m just above the hut. On 3 September we climbed the SW Spur of Pte 2873m that gave a 300m-long route of Difficile with climbing up to V+. We descended down the gully system just to the west.

Our next new route was on the SW Face of Pointe de la Fouly at the head of the Argentiere Basin. This was bigger more serious affair, but on 7 September we climbed the complex, pinnacled ridge that descends WSW from the highest point. This is left of, and parallel to, the Charlet-Ratheaux Route. The route had 19 pitches up to VI, and although it climbed some easy ground, we felt it merited an overall grade of TD. The next day we made a long and complex descent of the SW face back to the Argentiere Glacier. For a bit of fun, we decided to call it the 'Scottish Route'.

We had time for a quick modern bolted route in the Aiguilles Rouges before the next big storm rolled in from the NW in the middle of our second week. Once again it deposited snow to low levels, but this time it was followed by a bitterly cold NE wind.

This put paid to our third objective (back in the Argentiere Basin), so it was a natural decision to head back to Mont Vert de Gruetta and climb a direct line up the previously unclimbed SW Ridge. Entry to this is barred by a steep rock wall, which provided a difficult five-pitch start to the 300m-long TD route. The spectacular skyline ridge in the middle part of the route was surprisingly straightforward and we gained the summit ridge just left of the 2010 Carletto route on the south face. We completed this climb (after reconnaissance the previous day) on 15 September, and then indulged in the luxury of a bolt-equipped descent of the Carletto. We spent one last night in the hut before descending to the valley and catching our plane home that afternoon.

Simon Richardson

HIMALAYA

The Scottish Zanskar Expedition

31 July–29 August 2012

In 1977, THREE OF US set off from Panikar in the Suru Valley in Ladakh. We were Geoff Cohen, Rob Collister and me, accompanied by Hassan, a local man and two of his packhorses and foals. In four days' walking, we reached the Pensi La, the high route into the old Kingdom of Zanskar, and then had two weeks exploring and climbing new peaks at the head of the long Durung Drung Glacier. At the end of this period, we spent around ten days traversing Zanskar on foot on our route back to the roadhead at Darcha. In the mountains, we were entirely self-sufficient and in the valleys, depended on what we could find to assist our journey. It was a special time. We were young, fit and enthusiastic. We traversed a realm only recently opened up to foreign influences, a pastoral land of deeply Tibetan culture, of monasteries and tiny villages, of a people moulded by their religion and a remote landscape of high mountains, deep river gorges, high passes open only in summer, where the only method of transport was on foot or by horseback.

So it was a strange business for me to return in 2012 after an absence of thirty-five years, this time to explore the Namkha Tokpo cirque, a tributary of the Giabul Nala, situated at the opposite end of Zanskar from the Durung Drung area. We were a formidable team, at least in terms of our age profile! Our president, Andy Nisbet, is a man who needs no introduction here; Geoff Cohen is a veteran of the Himalaya; Bob Hamilton is our recently-recruited-to-the-Club fisherman from Ballachulish; youthful Steve Kennedy who is still only in his fifties – a man who frequents gymnasia; Nancy Kennedy is an aberrant fell-runner; our gallant leader, Susan Jensen brought an American efficiency to bear on the woolly-headed Scots in the enterprise; and finally there was me. We were ably supported by Naveen Chandra, chief of staff and head chef, Chetan Pandey, our Liaison Officer, Mangal Singh and Govind Singh, our High Altitude Porters, Heera Singh (sous-chef and runner) and Tsering, kitchen assistant. You can already sense that any failures on the part of the team were not going to be due to any unmet basic needs.

Due to the roads penetrating far into the recesses of Zanskar, we were able to approach to within three days of our base camp, the road head being at Dordzong, a few hours above Padum in the Lingti Valley. Three days of pleasant walking took us to base camp. Thirty-five years had changed the experience somewhat as there were now a few tea stalls and solar panels and one did meet other travellers. Being accompanied by a horse train comparable in length to the Eurostar emphasised the needs of a more elderly expedition, as contrasted with our solitary horse during our walk out up the Lingti in 1977. However, the rarified pellucid air and the magnificent geography were much as before.

Unchanged also was the experience of basing our camp near the entrance to a valley with all the surrounding peaks unclimbed. At an altitude of 4400m, we settled into a beautiful base camp with an unblemished water supply, situated a mile or so above the entrance to the Namkha Tokpo. Nearby pastures were home to several yaks and an abundance of wild flowers among which were blue Himalayan poppies and edelweiss. Some fine peaks overlooked us and there



*Mama Ri (Point 6150) from the highest camp, a 28-year-old Mountain Gemini tent in foreground.
Photo: Des Rubens.*

were tantalising views of the ground to be explored up the valley and around the corner. Best of all was ‘bedtea’ in the morning and a dram (or so) in the evening. Life doesn’t get much better.

Several days were spent establishing an advance base at 4900m, a few moraine-packed miles above base camp. Around the area of advance base, the valley divided into two glaciers which ran very roughly east and west. We were overlooked by the fine rocky and glaciated peaks of G22 and Point 6150 which were linked by a long, high and challenging ridge. (The ‘G’ nomenclature derived from a Japanese party of the previous year who had visited although not climbed in the area; Pt. 6150 was noted on the Olizane trekking map of Zanskar.)

Andy, Steve, Bob and Susan decided to attempt G22. Geoff and I turned our attention to Pt. 6150. Exploring up the westerly branch of the valley, we moved up the generally easy glacier by a couple of camps to just below a col. It was the best of exploratory mountaineering. The way was unseen from advance base and the ascent route therefore far from certain. As a bonus we had this unvisited mountain stronghold to ourselves, although Govind had helped us carry a load to the first camp. Thereafter we were on our own. We could then see that there was a possible way up a steep buttress to the left of the col at the culmination of the glacier. Above the steep section, there appeared a fairly easy snow arête leading to the summit. After an exploratory foray, and a brush with poor weather, we established our second and final camp just below the col, having decided, in light of advancing age, to establish our final camp quite high. The following morning, unusually, brought perfect weather. In a twelve-hour return trip, we made our ascent. We enjoyed several pitches of serious and exposed terrain above the col,



Des on summit of Mama Ri. Photo: Des Rubens collection.

albeit at the amenable grade of about Alpine AD. Loose rock, a level platform ideal for a picnic and a steady climb on perfect snow to the summit followed. Apart from being slow and generally out of breath, it was as pleasant a time as I've ever had at these sorts of heights. We were pleased to discover that Pt. 6150 was the highest peak in the area. We dallied on the corniced summit for half an hour or so, enjoying the extensive views of the Himalaya and the views to the brown lands of Zaskar to the east. We later named the peak 'Mama Ri', Ladakhi for 'Peak of the Old Men'.

On the same day, Andy, Steve, Bob and Susan made an ascent of Shan Ri (Snow Leopard Peak on account of animal tracks found on the peak) and Scottish Ri, formerly G23. Unfortunately the main prize, G22 was not climbed due to route difficulties, although by the time you read this, this status may have changed as Andy, Bob, Steve and Susan returned to India in June of this year (2013) to attempt the peak from the south-west side. While their perambulations on these peaks is their own story to tell, readers will be excited to know that a fine movie has been made of the expedition by Hamilton-Kennedy Productions, available for showing at SMC venues.

We had several days remaining and were in position to bag a few other fine peaks nearer base camp when Mangal was involved in a crevasse accident. An efficient rescue was set in place and he was fortunately retrieved without serious injury. However, the repercussions of this rescue plus a storm on the penultimate night effectively put a stop to any further ascents.

A few reflections: the Namkha Tokpo cirque and the Giabul Nala area would lend itself to further exploration. Any rock exposed is generally pretty awful and unattractive. North facing slopes of peaks are snow- or ice-covered but much of



Geoff descending exposed slopes towards the col above the final camp. Photo: Des Rubens.

any southerly slopes are clear of snow by August to as high as 6000m. The weather, whilst never very bad, did run to a quite a number of poor visibility days with a few centimetres of snow falling at high levels. It was never very cold.

The expedition acknowledges support from the Mount Everest Foundation, the Alison Chadwick Memorial Fund, the Alpine Club and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland.

A full report of the expedition can be found at <<http://www.mcofs.org.uk/assets/getactive/2012%20scottish%20smc%20zanskar%20reportv2.2.pdf>>, [retrieved 9 August 2013].

Des Rubens

REVIEWS

The Big Eye of Summer: I.H.M. Smart. (2nd edition, Papyngay Press, 2013, 257pp, ISBN 0-9755749-2-2, £8 available from Amazon.)

Self-effacing to a fault, Iain Smart is one of the quiet voices of mountaineering literature. He wants nothing to do with a publishing industry whose first question is not 'Is it good?' but rather 'Will it sell?' His whole endeavour has been to write about what he wanted to write about, in his own way and as well as he could, not caring for the plaudits and razzmatazz of commercial authorship. For him, a friend's small publishing company provided the outlet he needed.

One of the things one notices about Iain's writings is that although almost all his essays and stories concern mountaineering in one way or another, there are almost no descriptions of climbing at all. The fact that a peak was climbed or a route achieved is sometimes mentioned as a kind of afterthought. When he and Malcolm Slessor climb Mitre Ridge all that is said is 'The route...was serious and about as hard as I would ever wish to climb, but it went well.' The rest of the paragraph is an imaginative expansion of the thoughts and feelings of 'the waiting second' containing 'mid-night sunny tundras, lonely unclimbed mountains and mysterious fjordlands.'(p40) It is the internal atmosphere, the contents of the mind which fascinate Smart. The climbing is a catalyst to bring it out. Again, when Iain and a friend set out to climb Mount Assiniboine in the Rockies, although the mountain lends its name and its shadow to the tale, they never even see it, but the vignette of their discovering the log cabin in the forest with its 'aroma of pine resin, coffee and toasted bread'(p62) just before a terrific snowstorm starts, is as striking as if the peak had been scaled. On the *Dark Island*, Iain and John Hay climb the highest peak, 'through mats of chocolate green cassiope, yellow willow, darkly crimson blaeberry and dwarf birch.'(p122) The quality of the experience is everything.

Smart seems to be a materialist. Not, of course, in the sense of a lover of material goods, but rather in the philosopher's sense in which all sensations and thoughts are held to be events in the brain. This metaphysical position comes out in quite a few of the essays but is prominent in what I'd call the fantastical tales *Disobeying the Rules* and *Far Out on the Far Cuillin*. It is explored in more detail in the group of later tales which describe meetings with the Devil.

The two fantastical tales take as their starting points relatively ordinary situations – an unexpected visitor to the CIC and a pleasant day on Gars-bheinn in the Cuillin. The tales are linked also by sharing some of the same *dramatis personae*. From quite credible beginnings things become stranger and stranger. To put it simply, the young men whom Smart encounters (one of whom appears in both tales), persuade him that they have discovered the secret of prolonging physical youthfulness perhaps for hundreds of years. A very old myth in modern guise. They have wonderful potions which can empty the liver of glycogen and catabolise one's fat reserves, eventually enabling our hero to lead the long side of the Theàrlaich–Dubh Gap, Cioch West and Integrity. And to crown it all, in the second tale, the youthful protagonists drive away from Glenbrittle intent on sailing their ship 'through a barrier of treacherous metaphors...' denying in embarrassment that the seemingly satanic thunderstorm which accompanies their going has anything to do with them. I suppose we shouldn't be surprised for

we had earlier been told that they 'wouldn't touch a character like Faust again with the longest pitchfork in the Howe of Alford.'(p57)

Truly, the devil has power to assume a pleasing shape, and indeed he does so as he appears, this time in his own person, in *Midnight on the Chapel Mounth*. This is the first of four stories in which Iain encounters the devil and has long conversations with him. What he has done here is to invent an intelligent partner for something like an old-fashioned philosophical dialogue in some atmospheric mountain, or at least outdoor, setting. Again the brain features largely in the debate.

In *High Noon* we learn that life incurs death as the penalty for continuously attempting to break the second law of thermodynamics. Things become even more complicated when the friends meet again on the Old Brig of Invercauld in *Autumn Glory*. Here Old Nick invites us to see the universe as a 'great river' of matter flowing down to a state of minimal order. This river, we are told, has many back eddies – 'where the current swirls from time to time and goes in the other direction generating order.'(p207)

At the end of what is an extremely involved and fascinating discussion the friends looked down from the bridge onto the waters of the Dee 'flowing over the bright stones of its irregular bed' and their 'superabundant circuitry, without being asked, converted all these signals into a coherent pattern and generated the curious state of being aware.'(p209) A classic statement of the materialist position.

The last story in the devil series is mainly symbolic and atmospheric: it takes us back to midnight, but this time in winter. *Crossroads at Midnight* begins with a kind of power failure well known to most of us: the alternator in the car packs up, the lights and engine fail and Iain is stranded late at night. He has to walk to a 'phone, but at a crossroads the Devil appears dressed appropriately and mounted on a great black horse. He claims, as he has before, to be merely a figment of Iain's imagination, but the horse has left 'real footprints in the frost,' and is quite capable of carrying both of them. Like the Ghost of Hamlet's father there is a nice ambivalence about Smart's Devil. Iain accepts a lift, and they 'galloped under the starlight through dark-dappled woods and over silver fields...The horse knew what it was doing, but was yet responsive to the directions' of the rider. As Satan remarks: '..this is what our superabundant circuitry can do when we learn to control the wild horse of our core program.'(p241) Before he departs he presents Iain with the traditional lang spoon needed to sup with Devil.

In this group of stories, versions of which all appeared in the SMCJ, Iain is essentially using the outdoor setting as a background to the discussion of philosophical issues. This is not to say that the setting in any of these stories is treated perfunctorily, for all the old love of place and skill in evoking atmosphere are here: it's all done so easily too; the reader hardly notices the transition from admiring the landscape to indulging in metaphysics. And the philosophy, of course, is there in the other stories and articles (how could it not be?), it's just that the mixture is different.

What then are we to make of Iain's metaphysics? There is a temptation to ignore them while revelling in the evocative power of his writing. The prose flows so easily that one doesn't attend properly to the philosophy, but I think that to do this does Iain a disservice, for there is an intellectual position here which is coherent, and might be right, but which faces serious philosophical objections.

If I read him properly, Iain is exploring a position according to which all perception, thought and emotion are physical events in the brain and its attendant nerve systems. All those wonderful perceptions of light and colour, vegetation, rock and sky are neural happenings in the 'superabundant circuitry'. This is a brave and uncompromising stance.

A serious objection to materialism concerns the nature of thought. According to the materialist all thought is some kind of physical happening in the brain. If that is so, then at least in principle, it should be possible for the neuro-scientist to identify the cell, neuron, electrical current or whatever which, according to the theory, is the thought. But here are formidable difficulties. For a thought to be identical to a brain process, then everything that is true of the one must be true of the other. However, many thoughts are *of something or for something*. Thus one might be thinking *of* a certain day on Ben Nevis, or one might be hoping *for* a cup of tea: how can a piece of matter, or a physical process, be *of* or *for* anything? It seems that there is a kind of category mistake involved in *identifying* thoughts with brain processes. None of this, of course, means that brain processes do not cause thoughts and feelings, it implies merely that thoughts and brain processes are not identical, just as a candle flame and the light it causes are not identical though one causes the other.

Throughout the book, and particularly in the six stories I have focused on, the brain is given rather a special place. This makes Iain's work with its vast classical background, an oddly modern work. In our time neuro-scientists analyse, scan and dissect the brain with amazing precision and make exciting new discoveries at regular intervals, but the nature of consciousness remains obscure and it is in the realm of consciousness that thoughts and feelings occur. We may speak, as Iain does above, of our brains converting signals into a coherent pattern and generating the 'curious state of being aware', but, to me, the talk of 'signals' is ponderous, and anyway it is the 'curious state' we don't understand.

Danger and discomfort are almost completely lacking in Smart's work. They are hinted at occasionally. There is obvious danger in the crossing of the Pingo Dal river in the Staunings. How unobtrusively Iain captures the feeling of apprehension as the lone traveller approaches the obstacle. *'Maybe it would be better to cross...the river first. It would be easier to relax with this obstacle behind.'* He makes it, but, one suspects, only just: *'After the trembling and the cold sweat had passed...I sat in the shadow of the valley, back against a boulder, in the protection of a sleeping bag...'* (p4) Understatement tells the story. In any case it is not the physical danger which interests Iain here but the mind games played by the high arctic in summer: *'The Big Eye is a well known phenomenon... characterised by sleeplessness and the feeling of being constantly watched.'* The mind usually protects us from *'the pressure of surrounding things: the unknown is sufficiently silvered over to give comfortable reflections of the familiar.'* But when the traveller is alone in a wilderness, *'The silvering begins to dissolve, and bright undefined things come through and create a debatable land of possessor and possessed.'* (p5) 'O let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heavens,' one seems to hear Lear cry. This cruel, naked world, is tellingly contrasted with the comfort of the return to *'the Danish weather station at Mestersvig, back in the kindergarten again with the old familiar pictures on the wall.'* (p5)

This review has touched on only a few of the many themes in Smart's book. There is so much more. It all seems to flow so effortlessly: a sure sign that vast care and effort have gone into the making of it. Because Iain reflects deeply on

all he perceives, he encourages the reader to do so too. This is a treasure house of a book and one to return to again and again.

Peter Biggar

A Guide to Ireland's Mountain Summits: MountainViews. (The Collins Press, 2013, pbk, 123pp, ISBN 9781848891647, £10.99.)

Sir Hugh Munro can hardly have imagined what he started when his *Tables of Heights over 3000 feet* were published in the 1891 edition of this Journal. As I have described in *Munro Matters*, there are now over 5000 registered Munroists and Munro bagging has become a highly respected activity, attracting a wide range of people, good for the body and minds of participants and great for the economy of the Highlands of Scotland. Other mountainous countries also aspire to emulate the popularity of Munro's list, including our cousins from the Emerald Isle. In 1952, Joss Lynam, with help from C.R.P. Vandeleur, created a list of 2,000 footers and in 1997 the former produced a 600m list. Various amendments, updates and other lists started to appear, when just over 10 years ago Simon Stewart conceived the idea of <MountainViews.ie>. With a background in hill-walking and publishing, an open mind and some useful IT skills, his website invited walkers to add to the collective knowledge contained on the site. A decade on, <MountainViews.ie> contains over 5000 comments on 1,057 hills or mountains, with a separate page devoted to each one. With the upland areas of Ireland divided into 60 separate mountain regions, the site is easy to navigate using overview maps, and is interactive so that users can record details of their ascent routes and log the mountains they have climbed.

When I started climbing Munros in the early 1970s, every self-respecting bagger had their personal copy of *The Tables*, a slender much thumbed hardback volume annotated with details of ascent dates according to unique individual systems of ticks, dates, underlining or whatever. With the format largely unchanged, the most recent edition was published way back in 1997 and my own copy is still in regular use as I mop up Tops, Furths, Corbetts, Grahams and Donalds. Sadly there are no plans to reprint or update this, due to lack of demand as people increasingly bought guidebooks for route information and simply tick the hills therein. Showing impressive foresight and imagination over the Irish Sea, this colourful little gem of a paperback brings the nineteenth century list idea bang up to date to interface with a twenty-first century website. To describe this as a guide book is a bit misleading, when it is in fact a collection of lists. <MountainViews.ie> describe 'A family of lists' to interest a diverse range of hill-goers. First there are the '**Quicker-to-complete lists**' collated and recorded on the website, comprising The County Highpoints (27 highest points of the 32 counties of Ireland); *The Local Hundred* (personalised according to where one is based); *The 900s* (aka the 14 Irish Munros/Furths); *The Hundred Highest* (100m prominence spreads the selection over half the total mountain areas.); *The Best 100* (From accumulated ratings by web-site members.) '**Longer-to-complete lists**' are *The Vandeleur-Lynham List*; *The Arderins*; *The Carns*; and *The Binnions* and we are told emphatically 'that mountains in the Irish context start at 500m.'

Apart from a brief introduction and an appendix, this book concentrates mainly on the first two of these more challenging lists, with *County Highpoints* and *Hundred Highest* tucked in at the end. From the back cover we learn that 'In Ireland there are 269 mountain summits that are 600 metres or higher, and with a prominence of 15 metres or more. These are *The Vandeleur-Lynams*. And there

are 404 summits with an elevation of at least 500 metres, with a prominence of 30 metres or more. We call these *The Arderins.*' With a striking selection of colour photos on almost every page, the bulk of the book lists these mountains alphabetically by area. Each mountain entry covers 12 fields, as follows:

Area name; Mountain Name (in English where available); **Alternative Name** (usually Irish, with translation if available); **Height Rank; Sub-area; Classification** (Arderin or Vandeleur-Lynham); **Height; County; 1:50k Map No.; Map Grid Ref; Prominence** (Drop or height above highest col to nearest more prominent summit.); **MV Rating** (0-10 based on MountainViews visitor assessments in seven categories); **Date Climbed** (Space for personal record). In other words a lot of useful information clearly and concisely presented in a very attractive and user-friendly form.

I am sure that this imaginatively produced little book will be very popular with Irish hill-goers. My main concern is that someone will try to do something similar in Scotland, so I hope that our own busy Publications Sub-Committee take note and give this serious consideration, before someone else beats us to it. Meanwhile, the best advice I can offer as Clerk of The List to any bagger is write it down. Be sure to keep a brief record of your hills climbed somewhere!

Dave Broadhead

Jules Jacot Guillarmod, pionnier du K2. Un explorateur photographe a la decouverte de l'Himalaya (1902-1905): Charlie Buffet. (Editions Slatkine, Geneva, 2012, hbk, 152 pp, ill., map, ISBN 978-2-8321-0523-8, € 49 / CHF 58.)

The Swiss doctor and photographer Jules Jacot Guillarmod, born in 1868, was a passionate and accomplished alpinist, and moreover a diarist of Nisbet-like thoroughness: missing only one day between commencement just after his eighteenth birthday and his last entry, six days before his death in 1925. In 1902 he was invited to join the first expedition to K2, organised by Oscar Eckenstein, inventor of the ten-point Alpine crampon. The team consisted of Eckenstein; Guillarmod; two Austrian alpinists, Heinrich Pfannl and Viktor Wessely; Guy Knowles, a rich Cambridge student; and Aleister Crowley, described in one picture credit as 'climber, poet and occultist'. Three years later, despite their opposite poles of temperament, Guillarmod and Crowley joined forces again for an expedition to Kangchenjunga.

This lavishly produced book presents the fruits of a great labour to digitise and refresh the beautiful photographs of these historic expeditions, and bring to the attention of a new generation the painstaking and pioneering records of Dr Guillarmod, whose association with the first exploration of K2 has been undeservedly overshadowed by the notoriety of 'The Great Beast' Crowley. The tale is told straightforwardly by Charlie Buffet, a French mountaineering journalist (he has also written a biography of Erhard Loretan), with the aid of Guillarmod's frequently laconic diaries.

We are told that Guillarmod's love of the mountains was not a sudden revelation, but rather 'a virus contracted in childhood that seriously incubated from the time of his first major climb at age 20'. During the six years of his medical training climbing and photography played a greater and greater part in his life. Once qualified he spent several months in Paris, where he joined the

French Alpine Club and got to know climbers such as Vallot (of the refuge Vallot) and became fascinated by the idea of exploring the greater ranges, particularly in Asia. Compiling his annual tick list his diary records that in 1897 he had already climbed eight 4000m peaks, as well as 44 over 3000m and 249 over 2000m (he would clearly have made an excellent Munroist). He made several attempts to join Himalayan expeditions before being invited to join Eckenstein's expedition in 1902.

The expedition sailed from Venice to Bombay, made their way to Delhi and Srinagar, began the approach march at the end of April and reached base camp in mid-June. Guillaumod's photos of the journey, showing Port Said from the boat, the Dal lake at Srinagar, the bazaars and the camel and porter trains are wonderfully evocative. There are some splendid pictures of the Balti porters, somewhat more ragged but otherwise not very different from those we employed on the Baltoro some eighty years later. The photos of the mountains themselves are not as sharp as one might wish, but are of great historical interest. It is hard to imagine the feeling of being the first ever to see a close-up view of the second highest mountain in the world, yet Guillaumod's photos from the south capture well the awe they must have felt.

Much of the exploration was done on ski. They spent two months above 5700m. They considered the south-east (Abruzzi) ridge would be too steep for laden porters, so they ascended north-east towards Windy Gap (6500m). The highest point reached was about 6700m on the NE ridge, which is extremely long. There was bad weather and one of the Austrians went down with pulmonary oedema. Understanding of altitude sickness was of course rudimentary; seemingly Guillaumod used terms such as 'influenza' and 'indigestion' in relation to symptoms like migraine, appetite loss and insomnia which are so common at altitude.

Nevertheless at the end of the expedition in early August Guillaumod felt well acclimatised and was keen to attempt the Abruzzi. Eckenstein as leader refused, and Guillaumod, enraged, wrote in his diary: 'After two months of deprivation, having endured cold, heat, thirst, hunger, having climbed to 22,000 feet and shown that we could climb further without suffering provided we go slowly, after a voyage of six months including 100 days on foot from Srinagar, having spent more than 50,000 francs, after six weeks of almost uninterrupted bad weather, when fine weather would seem to be re-established for several days and at last offers the expedition the chance to achieve its goal, a brutal, stupid refusal, for no plausible reason, one might say capricious, hidden behind a shallow politeness. Here is our final result, a magnificent shipwreck close to port...'

Several sections of the book are devoted to Aleister Crowley and his relationship with Guillaumod. Crowley came from a strongly Christian family, whose heritage he violently rejected. With a private income he was admitted to Cambridge where he wrote poetry and, according to Buffet, 'tried his hand at various fashionable activities: chess, sodomy, climbing...' His climbs on the chalk cliffs of Beachy Head having brought him greater appreciation than his poetry he joined up with Eckenstein for an expedition to Mexico, followed by more globe-trotting pursuit of oriental religion until the K2 expedition. Buffet is fascinated by the contrast between the precise, rigorous, scientific Guillaumod and the poetic, mystical poser Crowley. They frequently played chess together (Crowley usually won), and they shared the same tent for much of the trip, yet Buffet confesses that he cannot even know in what language they conversed.

After several weeks cloistered in a tent together Guillaumod confided his frustrations to his journal: Crowley's unsavoury pissing near the tent, his grabbing of the best food, his acrid pipe smoke and his general lack of consideration. Yet they clearly did not quarrel entirely for some fine pictures are devoted to the natural hot springs near Askole where the expedition bathed on the return march. A long-haired Crowley is shown in this exotic pool, ringed by fabulous mountain scenery, looking to my mind a fairly harmless beast, though emaciated and sunburnt by two months at altitude. In his own autobiography written twenty years later Crowley described his feeling as he lay in the sulphurous pools as akin to the ecstasy of the pilgrim who has finally arrived at the end of his ordeals.

In April 1905 Guillaumod visited Crowley at Boleskine House near Foyers on the shore of Loch Ness, where the self-styled Laird of Boleskine apparently agreed to lead an expedition to Kangchenjunga that Guillaumod and another Swiss, Reymond, had been planning. According to Buffet, Guillaumod was under the impression that Crowley would provide needed finance for the expedition, being unaware that Crowley had promised to pay Knowles £1000 for the K2 expedition but had defaulted. A photo of the Devil's Kitchen is shown, with five unfortunates climbing out from a gully cave to surmount a soaking chokestone with an apparently large snowbed higher up. In his 1894 SMC application form Crowley had claimed the first ascent of the south-east exit from the Kitchen in the previous year, so perhaps he was keen to show his colleague a fine British gully climb. The Swiss does not appear to have been impressed as his diary is quoted describing the climb as 'une folie' which had cost the life of a young man shortly after Crowley's ascent.

There are fewer mountain photos of the Kangchenjunga expedition, but again some fascinating images of the approach and the people, so completely different from K2 at the other end of the Himalaya: Sikkimese and Nepali porters among the thickly wooded gorges and rhododendron forests. Apparently Guillaumod refused to take a single picture of Crowley on this expedition despite being asked. Difficulties over money arose right from the start and frictions steadily increased during the walk-in. A sherpa slipped and died on the approach and then within three days of reaching base camp three sherpas and one of the Europeans were killed in an avalanche. Guillaumod and De Righi (one of the other European climbers) survived the avalanche but were unable to rescue their buried companions. The accident had occurred during a late afternoon descent of a dangerous snowslope following a violent argument between Crowley and the others.

The book closes with another chapter about Crowley which attempts to debunk some of the myths he promulgated regarding his two expeditions. Buffet takes to task writers such as Galen Rowell, Jim Curran and Greg Child for having too readily believed the account of a self-confessed liar. Whereas Crowley claimed that he alone recognised the Abruzzi ridge as the logical way to tackle K2, but was overruled, in Buffet's account it was Guillaumod and Pfannl who deserve the credit and Guillaumod who personally described the route to the Duke of Abruzzi three years before his historic 1909 expedition. Another apparent myth concerns a fight at 20,000 feet on K2, where most authors report Crowley's story that he threatened Knowles with a pistol to prevent him retreating; Buffet concludes from 'frenetic' research that the story was made up. In accepting a request to review this book for our Journal I hardly expected to read about the Beatles and

the Rolling Stones. But Buffet, who has no time for the avowedly drug-taking, promiscuous 'antichrist' Crowley has perforce to recount the rehabilitation of Crowley's reputation by the sixties rock stars. Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin even went as far as buying Boleskine House!

In sum this is a well-researched and invaluable contribution to mountaineering history, in which our erstwhile member Mr Crowley played a significant if perhaps not wholly creditable part. There are a few minor errors such as locating both his birthplace, and the Devil's Kitchen in Scotland (though not in the same place!), but our thanks are due to the author, the Guillard family and a number of Swiss museums and foundations for pursuing this project to a successful conclusion.

Geoff Cohen

Shipton and Tilman – The Great Decade of Himalayan Exploration:

Jim Perrin. (Hutchinson, 2013, hbd, 412pp, ISBN 9780091795467, £25.)

A successful biography must meet three criteria: information sources thoroughly researched, evidence credibly interpreted and a story well told. On counts one and three Perrin hits the spot. On count two, Perrin's own take on life somewhat flavours the interpretation.

As the title suggest, this is the 'biography' of a decade of mountaineering, the 1930s, seen through the prism of the unlikely partnership of Eric Shipton and Bill Tilman. It is prefaced by the early years of the both subjects, and rounds off with just a flavour of the rest of their lives. From the beginning, theirs was a peculiar kind of friendship, where the younger Shipton was the more experienced mountaineer whilst Tilman a relative novice. Although these two contrasting characters, Shipton, the resilient charmer, and Tilman, the taciturn misanthrope, were very different in many ways, they shared a passion for unencumbered mountain exploration. Their style of mountain travel became, and still is, the litmus test for lightweight and adventurous mountaineering.

Perrin is no dispassionate biographer and through empathy with both protagonists delivers something of his own philosophy, which sits at that difficult interface between being 'part of the establishment' and 'doing one's own thing'. He makes much of their subversive nature which, one suspects, aligns well to his own. However, there is a contradiction in the Shipton/Tilman anti-establishment mythology. Both fulfilled societal expectations: Tilman through distinguished military service in both World Wars and Shipton through his diplomatic postings, and both in taking on the leadership of cumbersome Everest expeditions. Although they were indeed part of the system, they developed and maintained a strong, action-based, individualism throughout their lives.

After describing their early African adventures, the focus of the narrative is on their Himalayan expeditions about which much has already been published. However, through Perrin's return to source materials, this book is rich in 'new' detail. The Tilman/Shipton style was to travel light, to consider their porters as a fundamental part of the team and to subsist largely on locally available food. Even this apparently 'ethical' approach had unintended consequences in that it depleted local food stocks and encouraged a cash economy to develop in remote, relatively, self-sufficient, communities.

Over the years, their pure mountaineering achievements have either been over-

hyped or undervalued. Let's be clear, their achievements were considerable, with attempts on and first ascent of many peaks, including Kamet, 7756m (Shipton with Frank Smythe) and Nanda Devi, 7816m (Tilman with Noel Odell). However, it is in mountain travel that they excelled and, especially with Shipton, the desire to fill the 'blank on the map' became the driving force – he became a proficient cartographic surveyor.

Close climbing partnerships are not always synonymous with close friendships and almost all climbing partnerships seem to reach a natural conclusion. After a decade of mountaineering together did they establish a close and enduring friendship? The answer is ambiguous but there is evidence to suggest that they continued to regard each other as an enigma. Shipton married and had a family whilst Tilman fell in love with the sea. Both died in 1977.

Just as the expression 'conquering' a mountain (so beloved by the popular media) is an anathema, we should be careful just what heroic epitaphs we apply to mountaineers, who climb largely for their own pleasure with no altruistic motivation. However, challenge and endeavour can bring out the best in us and can be an inspiration to others. To quote Perrin: 'With these two men, the journey transcends its physical form and path. It becomes a state of being, that we might all aspire in some part to emulate or cultivate, whatever ways we choose in the leading of our own lives.'

In many ways this is a great book – a fascinating story, well told, which seven decades on still inspires.

Graham E. Little

Here, there and everywhere...The autobiography of Jim Curran: Jim Curran. (Edgebrook Publishing, 2012, 388pp, ISBN 978-1-906148-36-20, £30.) Jim Curran is best known as a mountaineering film maker and writer. His work ranges from a film interpretation of Robin Smith's famous article about The Bat, to expedition books, a biography of Chris Bonington and camera work on a variety of climbing related subjects. His book about the fateful summer on K2 in 1986 is a harrowing but gripping account of how adventure can go badly wrong. Several of his books have been short listed for the Boardman Tasker prize including this one. Author, raconteur, traveller, adventurer, artist... a renaissance man of sorts if you like, but a more down to earth exemplar of the species.

As a mountaineer he would be the first to admit to being a modest performer, but this has not prevented him from enjoying some fabulous trips all over the world. He has been close friends with some key movers and shakers in British mountaineering such as Bonington, Paul Nunn, Ian McNaught Davis, Don Whillans, Mo Anthoine and Alan Rouse. Has a more lowly player got anything worthwhile to say? Without a doubt and because mountaineering is part of a full and richly varied life.

When I first flicked through this book I realised that the big mountaineering trips with the famous names didn't begin until chapter 17 and I wondered about skipping the first section, the 'here' element. In retrospect these are some of the most enjoyable in the book and are very evocative in describing the social history of Britain in the forties, fifties and sixties. He discovers climbing at Harrisons and develops an interest in art which leads to Ealing Art College and eventually to various lectureships in the subject.

He is honest and candid in his appraisal of the failure of several marriages and

relationships and admits to being self centred. Without this selfish streak the life of travel and adventure would have been seriously curtailed. Having said this and despite at times resembling Jason King, John Travolta and Frank Zappa, Curran has been associated with some striking woman, many of whom would still turn heads today.

Throughout the book are some very funny stories and one liners often told at his own expense. It is largely conversational in style and is highly readable. There are sections of seriousness, reflection and despair and the overall mix precludes any dullness. It is well paced and chapters don't feel they've overrun.

Certain chapters revisit material he has already covered in *Suspended Sentences* (1991) but this work contextualises them better in his private life. He is an emotional man who wears his heart on his sleeve. Eventually he is worn down by the deaths of close friends in mountains and by the wear and tear on his body. Depression, prostate cancer and loneliness, knee replacement and the realisation that mountaineering at even a basic level is over, veer the later chapters to self pity. He becomes Falstaffian towards the end and not just because of his expanded girth but more tragically because of the feeling he has been ultimately betrayed by the lifestyle he has dedicated so much to. He is rescued by his rediscovery of art as an area into which to channel his energy and redefine himself.

He is very generous and supportive to his friends and family and values close links with his early climbing pals. Kurt Diemburger and Jim Perrin come in for criticism but even then you do not pick up a trace of bitter malice. He remains on good terms with most ex wives and lovers. When lifelong friend Steve Durkin dies too you wonder if there is any light in the future. I hope there is.

These are not the memoirs of a mystical dreamer. He tells it straight. It's not always a pretty picture. All in all, Jim Curran comes across as the kind of person I would have liked to climb a hill with and of course socialise with in the bar afterwards.

The book is in a splendid large format and full of interesting photographs, all black and white. The fashion crimes of the second half of the twentieth century both in casual and mountaineering wear are fully evidenced. The painting catalogue at the end ensures that for all the enveloping gloom which is building up, it really finishes on a positive high. These are reproduced in sumptuous colour with a laudatory appraisal by Julie Summers. In the main text he may not expound at length about the beauty and savagery of the mountain environment but he can communicate this and much more in a painting. Those of Hoy, the Karakoram, Spain and Mount Kenya leave you in no doubt as to his deeper connection with these arenas. His paintings of Harrison's Rocks acknowledge the significance that small, domestic venues can have on us. For me, he has represented the rock here as a monumental, living entity, the power of these outcrops disproportionate to their lowly height.

The impression I'm left with is of someone who valued the companionship as much as, if not more than the climb or peak to be tackled. The choice of several photographs of friends in portrait mode rather than in more heroic poses confirms this. You cannot help but warm to the man.

Mike Dixon

Judgement Days: Tom Richardson. (High Peak Books, 2012, pbk, 233pp, ISBN 978-0-9532342-1-9, £12.)

The author's stated aim is to reflect on judgements and to try to draw conclusions. He falls short of these worthy but demanding objectives. Narrative dominates analysis.

Over 35 years he has made over 90 trips to the Alps or more distant ranges. He worked on most of them as an assistant or a leader and often as an organiser. It will have given him an insight into the sometimes tacky world of commercial climbing.

The job suits him; he is a round peg in a round hole. His background in management, training, motivation and education honed skills transferable to the demanding but satisfying task of ensuring that a mixed group of clients survived and enjoyed living at least the more realistic of their dreams. He comes over as caring and competent, but most of us would in our autobiographies.

He is ambitious but not unreasonably so. On seven expeditions to 8000ers he never summited. He has never lost a porter, a Sherpa or a client a record which in retrospect must give him more satisfaction.

He did come close to losing a client. Approaching the top of Cho Oyu, on his fourth and last visit to the mountain, he was developing summit fever. At over 8000m he felt himself completely 'in my zone'. His client however was in the death zone. They were moving very slowly and when he belatedly checked his partner looked rough and disorientated. Slurred speech confirmed the onset of acute mountain sickness. They turned back. This is a decision of which he was proud as conditions were perfect and the top less than an hour away. In fact it was almost too late already. An abseil tangle had the client helpless. By the time he was sorted it was too late to reach Camp 2. Sharing crowded tents at Camp 3 and enduring another night at 7500m did not improve him. In the morning he was wandering half-dressed on steep snow in his slick-soled inner boots – an accident waiting to happen and avoided by luck not judgement.

Contrast that with the account by Dickinson in 'The Death Zone' of how Al Hinks and Martin Barnicott turned Brian Blessed round at about 7300m on Everest's North Ridge. Despite the sentiment (it was Blessed's third and last try), despite the financial implications of a failed filming project, despite the fact that he still seemed to be going strongly their brutally realistic assessment of their client's prospects may have saved his life. He struggled to get down to the North Col camp and collapsed there. The guides' years of experience told them that there was a problem. Their judgement was spot on. They were unmoved by special pleading – very professional.

Richardson exposes some of the problems of commercial expeditions to the really high mountains. The pool of potential clients is quite small. The competition between companies to hook those with the money, the time, the motivation and hopefully the ability to cope is fierce. The importance of getting punters to summit clouds the judgement of the guides whose prime duty is to get them down – alive. The awful disasters of 1996 on and above the South Col are surely as grim as it gets.

He is not happy with the bait some use to fish in the client pool. He quotes the brochure of the now defunct OTT outfit he worked for. It states (correctly) that 'Gasherbrum 2 is one of the easiest 8000m peaks', insidiously linking easy and 8000m. Groups are to be 'Professionally Led' rather than guided. Fully qualified guides are not cheap. Would-be trek leaders are relatively cheap (I know I was

one).

In theory 'Professionally Led' means that a logistical ladder is provided but the client has to get himself up and down it. In practice there is both help and advice available and the inexperienced client is going to expect and need both.

There is brief mention of the OTT Everest expedition of 1999 Richardson was not involved but it would have been enlightening to have his insider's comment. A 22-year-old client became separated on the descent from the summit in a storm and vanished. His father brought a private criminal prosecution against the guide (leader?) Mike Smith and a judgement – a legal one in this case – was made. There was no evidence that Mike was in any way responsible. He was not obliged to search for the client at the cost of his own life. An adult is free to risk his/her life. What however of the moral responsibility of the company. Had the distinction between led and guided really been understood? The party was a large one. How large? What was the leader-client ratio? How familiar with the South Col route were the leaders? What warning did they have of the storm? Were there any other parties on the route?

He is understandably reluctant to re-open wounds by examining the conduct of former colleagues and employers, but surely he could do better than state in conclusion that: 'One thing from my whole climbing life and the OTT period in particular for me that is indisputable is that mountains are undoubtedly objectively dangerous places.'

John Temple

Cry Argentina: Saving South Georgia: Ian Sykes. (The Book Guild, 2013, pbk, 312pp, ISBN 978-1846248719, £8.99).

Although there is little of direct mountaineering relevance in this fast moving narrative by Club member Ian Sykes, excepting, of course, the recreation of Shackleton's epic crossing of South Georgia, it is an interesting and sobering read. The plot carries one along with great momentum.

Taking the opportunity of a scrap-metal deal at the old whaling station on South Georgia, the Argentinian military seized the island before the main invasion of the Falklands. British reaction was swift and, though lacking manpower, the quality of the personnel, both military and civilian, was of the highest order. The resistance was further hampered by the fact that much of their equipment was of poor quality or even obsolete. Sykes provides a graphic and gripping account of the struggle to retake the island, even managing to work a love story into the tale. The account of the successful evacuation of British troops from the Fortuna Glacier in atrocious weather is highly dramatic and is a testament to the superb flying skills of the helicopter pilots: a damn close run thing!

Sykes has also done a very good job of depicting the political crisis brought on in London, Buenos Aires and Washington: there are fascinating snapshots of famous politicians in action. He also takes us behind the scenes into the world of minor diplomats and intelligence officers. Attitudes and decisions by officialdom and the top brass in London were often complacent, questionable and sometimes downright dangerous, but the men on the ground and on the sea won the day.

This book is much more than just a pacy, well researched thriller. At its heart is an impassioned cry against the use of violence to achieve political ends. Sykes's

depiction of the psychopathic Lieutenant Astiz is thoroughly chilling and the well substantiated fact that the military junta ordered weekly flights over the Atlantic to throw their opponents to their deaths is a grim reminder of the sort of thing that can happen under totalitarian rule. It is difficult for those of us who live in a democracy under the rule of law to conceive of such a system and the people it can produce. (This reviewer actually worked with an Argentinian and a Chilean who both told of many friends who just 'disappeared'. B.B.). However, all the way through the novel, Sykes maintains a careful balance by comparing Astiz with his naval colleague the morally principled and compassionate Hugo Corti, thereby avoiding the pitfall of one dimensional condemnation of Argentina.

Ian Sykes has chosen a strong story and dramatised it with skill. The writing is admirably plain and straightforward. There are four useful maps at the start identifying the places of action, but a large scale fold-out map might have been better for the reader when engrossed in the drama to save one having to turn back.

Without ever being jingoistic, Sykes quietly applauds the fact that the Union Jack still flies over South Georgia and the Falklands. The human dimensions give the novel a moral depth often lacking in thrillers and the anti-war message, while never simplistic, is clearly apparent. Well directed, the book would make a very good film.

Bruce Barclay and Peter Biggar

Scottish Sport Climbs: Andy Nisbet. (SMT, 2013, 342pp, ISBN 978-1-907233-15-9, £28.00)

It was with a sense of eager anticipation that I opened the SMC's latest book – a comprehensive guide to sport climbing across the whole of Scotland. First impressions are of a rather chunky book bound in a landscape format rather than a conventional portrait format. On closer inspection the format is an advantage for some of the crag diagrams and the chunky size reflects its wealth of illustrations and abundance of routes included. It is also packed with plenty of inspiring photographs. Weight and size should also not be a problem with this book, as with single pitch sports climbs it will never have to leave the ground.

Opening the guide reveals a clear map indicating the climbing areas and these are colour coded making it very easy to flick to the required pages without resorting to the contents page. For anyone not familiar with French sports climbing grades there is a clear grade comparison chart inside the front cover. Each route has a tick box and each crag has a 'recommended tasty bites' section describing where to go locally for refuelling. While the 'tasty bites' may go out of date rapidly or seem a little ridiculous when the local supermarket is recommended it does add to the character of an excellent book.

The selection of crags from across Scotland is extremely diverse and there is probably no other sports climbing guide in the world with such a range of rock types. I confess my heart skipped a beat when Yesnaby (Orkney) glared out at me from the contents page and I was relieved to find it was Yesnaby Quarry and not the fine sea cliffs. Climbing fashions are changing and the popularity of sports climbing is undoubtedly on the rise. This guide will further promote sports climbing and while bolting on the crags included in the book has been accepted by most, the development of future venues requires caution and a large degree of

sensitivity.

For those of you who simply can't wait for the long Scottish summers to pass, the guide also includes the dry tooling venues of Newtyle Quarry near Dunkeld, Leacanashie Woods Crag by Loch Carron, and a couple of routes on the Aberdeenshire coast. Kirrie Hill by Kirriemuir is one of the most popular crags in the book and a decision has been made not to star routes at this crag to avoid over use of certain climbs, an understandable argument which could apply equally to some of the other crags.

Finally, a considerable expense has gone into equipping the routes and nearly all this has been borne by the enthusiastic climbers involved who sometimes raised funds by supplying crag mini guides for a small charge. I look forward to the SMT buying its first bolt and helping financially with the maintenance of some of these climbs. If you have an interest in sports climbing in Scotland then this inspiring book is an essential buy.

Andy Tibbs

The Time Has Come: Ger McDonnell – His Life & His Death on K2: Damien O'Brien. (Cork: The Collins Press, 2012, 194pp, ISBN: 9781848891432, £15.99.)

It's a sad tale, of high altitude enthusiast Ger McDonnell, whose life was cut short on the way down after a successful ascent of K2. It's a biography of course but also a tribute to his life. Whether it's a book I would give to a non-climbing friend or relative, I doubt it, because the title gives away the inevitability of death and one could assume this was the case for all mountaineers.

I enjoyed reading about his life, with each chapter in two halves, starting with the next stage of the expedition and then moving on to the next stage in his climbing upbringing, from early days in Ireland, to Denali and then success on Everest. Most of us started by hillwalking, then rock climbing, then winter climbing, then Alps and finally Himalayas but Ger started immediately on non-technical and high altitude, with Denali and then Everest, then a bad but unlucky accident on K2 before returning for a second attempt.

Of course we're bound to speculate whether he was really up to climbing K2 with so little technical experience. Or did he get sucked into a K2 trap, where someone climbs Everest with all the help of Sherpas and oxygen, then moves on to a much harder proposition? It was his choice of course, so not a criticism, but was he cutting the safety margins so close that when the fixed ropes were cut by a serac fall, he was lost? After all, some of those trapped did manage to climb down. Or did he die a hero trying to rescue others and costing his own life? Of course we'll never know, but the speculation is a key part of the story to mountaineers.

It's a shame it's a biography, and not alas an autobiography, although it does make lots of reference to mostly factual diaries, because it would be interesting to know more of Ger's motivation. He was undoubtedly a strong mountaineer, because success on Everest requires that, despite fixed ropes and oxygen. The tactics for K2 puzzled me slightly, a private expedition but yet loads of rope fixing. Maybe in the end, he wasn't quite a strong enough mountaineer, or he pushed the boat out just a little too far when conditions were warm, but there was also a large element of bad luck.

The final chapters are sad of course, and a bit of an anti-climax, but it is well written from somewhat limited background information.

Andy Nisbet

Three Men on the Way Way: H.M.Brown. (Whittles Publishing, 2013, 160pp, ISBN 978-184995-087-9, £14.99.)

Naturally we would expect any book about three men on a jaunt to be a bit juvenile. So it is here, yet readers might be amused by some of their experiences, chat and quips as they conquer the West Highland Way. I still do not understand the explanation of their private joke about why they call the route the 'Way Way'.

Certainly, though, the book is pleasant to look at and to hold, if heavy for anyone planning to cart it as incremental gear. Its photographs are first class. However, the preface explains that it is not a guidebook, and this leads to a major defect in that neither maps nor diagrams are provided. Nor are the men's ages or daily walking distances spelt out.

The trio's backgrounds are diverse: one a doctor, another a graduate from Glasgow University about to 'change careers', the third a metal worker with artistic and industrial talents from Fife – two Scots, one Englishman. The book has been compiled by Hamish Brown, from the walkers' diaries and taped stories, to which he has added further material. Conversational text in quotation marks dominates the book, perhaps with a view to enabling readers to 'live the walk', but this – for me – is overdone due to the inevitable trivia of man-talk.

Moreover, sensitive readers should note, the trio's language is often far from prim. 'F...ing' is a favourite word, although, if Brown's intention was to keep or introduce a little raciness, why did he not scrap the dots and spell out the word without pseudo, oh-la-la demureness? Fear of distressing the effing SMC hardmen?

The pack-mentality, I thought, perhaps led our trio into displaying uncongenial tendencies as they moved northwards: muttered jibes about others' misfortunes and at those exhibiting propriety by way of accent, appearance or geographic origins (e.g. Edinburgh and London – my only homes for 75 years as it happens) but back to the West Highland Way...

I have long thought of accents as quite fascinating, though presentation of the metal worker's words in Fife vernacular surely makes much of the book inaccessible to most beyond Scotland's boundaries. What was Brown's source material here? Do people who speak in vernacular write similarly? Or was Brown exploiting this for quaint effect? A touch of toff-impertinence?

The book, I would say, portrays the West Highland Way as a mostly miserable experience, for a variety of reasons, in no small way thanks to the 'f...ing midges', a regular combination of words throughout. Additionally, there is the sheer toil of tackling hills and bogs, the dodgy weather and a lack of beds. If I've got it right, this necessitates the pre-dumping of food stores while you cart a tent, unless all gear is somehow transported ahead, thereby leaving participants sufficiently unencumbered to walk far enough to get a roof over their heads. Of course, a bit of suffering makes good material for any book!

At 100 miles the West Highland Way is short by European standards, say of routes in Austria and the Pyrenees. Mark you, tales from there seldom get readers excited about more than distant views either, so Brown's alternative

conversational approach is an interesting idea. Only historic pilgrimage routes offer more than just pretty countryside and mountains. Accommodation is readily available in their spawned villages, towns and cities where ancient buildings abound. Moreover, hairy-legged heathens can gain 'spiritual fulfilment' of a sort rather different from that imbibed by Brown's pilgrims.

Many will find *Three Men on the Way* a jolly little book, even though it would be better without some of its truly trivial trivia and redundant words. Perhaps it should be read on completion of the journey, when Brown's trio's experiences could be compared with readers' own. That said, a preview of the book's photographs might be what is needed to inspire aspirants. Would their impressions of amazing views match up to those extolled by the trio? Surely.

Jimmy Cruickshank

The East Highland Way: Fort William to Aviemore: Kevin Langan. (Third edition, Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2012, pbk, 187pp, ISBN 978-1-908373-40-3, £9.99.)

Here is an adventurous author who has concocted a new walking route through the Highlands that will serve as a link between the West Highland Way and the Speyside Way. He has done the walking, got his photos, and written the definitive guide book, altogether a noble and worthwhile effort.

This is primarily a walkers book for those who like to keep to the low ground and are content to trudge through interminable conifer plantations and tote up the miles covered in so many hours. The walk will not be the premier objective for a mountain stravaiger who relishes the wide open spaces with its far vistas and the long striding journeys over the high tops.

However, for those on this trekking trip this guide will serve them well. There are many maps, profiles and photos. They are as numerous as the pages in the book. Much useful information is given for example on the times and distances for the daily stages, the diversions and other attractions, and the places to stay overnight ranging from bothies, hostels, and hotels to the B&Bs to be found along the way. There are semi-ruined cottages for emergency shelter and to sneak into out of the rain, some of which, such as the fey Chlinaig on the Braes of Lochaber or Baldarroch in Glen Banchor, might someday be partially repaired for the use of passing itinerants.

If you wish, you could use a tent at the wild camping spot squashed beside the main road near a waterfall on the River Pattack. Incidentally the true and more spectacular Falls of Pattack, the scene of a suspicious contemporary accident, lie 2km further up the river close to an excellent track leading over to Ben Alder Lodge on Loch Ericht. This track is joined further up by another fine track leading out of the Ardverikie estate. An alternative open mountain route, which avoids the vehicular track that runs along the southern shoreline of Loch Laggan, leaves the book route almost 2km after Moy bridge. It goes by the twin lochs of Lochan na h-Earba opposite the climbing cliffs of Binnein Shuas, and joins the track cutting through the forest well above the Ardverikie castellated pile that featured in the *Monarch of the Glen* TV series.

Some other alternative choices for the route come to mind. They, like everything on a good route description, require the relevant and essential OS maps. For example, there are several attractive but convoluted sections littered

with grid references and one needs the maps to follow the twists and turns of the recommended route. One such section is by the attractive Spean Bridge left riverbank and another is the open moorland deviation above Cluny Castle, the first of which can readily be avoided by a pleasant parallel farm road and the second by going a few metres further along the A86 and following the estate track northward up into Strath an Eilich and into the outlying valleys of the Monadhliaths

There is the question of how many alternative route variations to provide but for those who tire of those ranks of trees that enclose nearly 40% of the way it would be wise to either cycle the route in occasional big bite-sized bits, or where the labyrinth forestry tracks proliferate and you get lost in the trees you can escape quickly on your bike.

Two delightful options are given for the approach to Newtownmore. You can go from Laggan village either by Strath an Eilich and down lonely Glen Banchor under the shadow of the unnamed Craig Dubh or follow the winding backroad that goes down Glen Truim.

There is the vital first impression to be made when starting from Fort William in order to avoid hypnotising the walkers when they are plunged into the Leanachan forest for a long steady trudge close to the A82 to Spean Bridge. It might be better to take a more scenic if longer way by turning west at Torlundy and follow the minor road close to the Caledonian canal in the trench of the Great Glen.

There are many interesting inclusions, with their many photos, such as the historical attractions of Jacobite skirmishes, WWII commando memories, Pictish forts and lost townships. Diversions to wildlife park, folk museum or sculptural figures are suggested, and you are encouraged to seek the native wildlife along the way so that with your hawk-eye persistence you may be lucky enough to tick them off the list.

The text is generally free of errors in spite of some very original spellings, though for interest the reader may wish to delve into the historical section to learn how the Jacobites tried to seize the throne from the Old Pretender. How different life might be if the country had a different royal family line nowadays.

Try the big way, the East Highland Way – the Spean-Spey Way. Plan your route before you start, and enjoy the days. It is a long way on the West Highland Way from Glasgow and onward on the Speyside Way to the Moray coast. Be up for the new challenge of a real long distance hike. Appreciate it, and then take a wee rest.

Phil Gribbon

ERRATA

Some typos have been identified in the 2012 Journal:

Page 135 Bottom left caption should read David Shortt.

Page 251, ninth line, there should not be an apostrophe in Shadbolts.

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Bookings can be made to stay at any of the five Club Huts by contacting the relevant Custodian.

CHARLES INGLIS CLARK MEMORIAL HUT, BEN NEVIS

Location: (NN 167 722) On the north side of Ben Nevis by the Allt a' Mhuilinn. This hut was erected by Dr and Mrs Inglis Clark in memory of their son Charles who was killed in action in the 1914–18 War.

Custodian: Robin Clothier, 35 Broompark Drive, Newton Mearns, Glasgow, G77 5DZ.

e-mail <cic@smc.org.uk>

LAGANGARBH HUT, GLEN COE

Location: (NN 221 559) North of Buachaille Etive Mor near the River Coupall.

Custodian: Bernard Swan, 16 Knowes View, Faifley, Clydebank, G81 5AT.

e-mail <lagangarbh@smc.org.uk>.

LING HUT, GLEN TORRIDON

Location: (NG 958 562) On the south side of Glen Torridon.

Custodian: John T Orr, 8 Fleurs Place, Elgin, Morayshire, IV30 1ST.

e-mail <ling@smc.org.uk>.

NAISMITH HUT, ELPHIN

Location: (NC 216 118) In the community of Elphin on the east side of the A835.

Custodian: Andrew Tibbs, Crown Cottage, 4 Crown Circus, Inverness, IV2 3NQ.

e-mail <naismith@smc.org.uk>.

RAEBURN HUT, LAGGAN

Location: (NN 636 909) On the north side of the A889 between Dalwhinnie and Laggan.

Custodian: Clive Rowland, Inverene, Links Place, Nairn, IV12 4NH.

e-mail <raeburn@smc.org.uk>.

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A History of Glenmore Lodge

APPLYING FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

The following notes are provided outlining the principles by which climbers may be admitted to membership of the Club.

The Committee does not lay down any hard and fast rules when considering applications but considers each case on its own merits. Candidates must be over 18 and have experience of mountaineering in Scotland in both summer and winter. This experience should have extended over a period of at least four years immediately prior to application and should not be confined to just a single climbing district.

The normally expected climbing standards include:

- Experience of winter climbing including several routes of around Grade IV standard and the ability to lead climbs of this level of difficulty.
- Rock climbing experience including climbs of Very Severe (4c) standard and the ability to lead routes of this level of difficulty. In considering applications, emphasis will be placed on multi-pitch climbs in mountain locations.
- The ascent of at least 50 Munros of which at least one third should have been climbed in snow conditions.

In short, the candidate should be able to show – by producing a detailed list of climbs – that they are competent to lead a variety of outings in the mountains of Scotland in both summer and winter. The technical standards specified refer to applicants currently active and may be varied at the discretion of the Committee for older candidates provided that the applicant's routes reflect a reasonable standard for their time. Climbing in the Alps and elsewhere is taken into consideration. Candidates who do not fulfil the normal qualifications listed above but who have made special contributions to Scottish mountaineering in the fields of art, literature or science may receive special consideration.

It is essential that each candidate, before applying, should have climbed with the member proposing the application. It is also desirable that a candidate should be introduced to a member of the Committee before the application is considered. Application forms must be obtained on behalf of candidates by members of the Club who may not propose or support candidates for election during their own first two years of membership. The annual membership fee is £40.00 (£30.00 for those aged 65 and over) which includes the Club Journal.

A fuller version of these notes for members wishing to propose candidates is available from the Club Secretary who is happy to advise candidates and members on any aspect of the application process. Please contact John R R Fowler, Honorary Secretary at:

e-mail: <jrrfowler@tiscali.co.uk>

tel: 0131 226 4055.

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INSTRUCTIONS TO CONTRIBUTORS

The Editor welcomes contributions from members and non-members alike. Priority will be given to articles relating to Scottish mountaineering. Articles should be submitted by 1 May if they are to be considered for inclusion in the Journal of the same year. Material is preferred in electronic form and should be sent by e-mail direct to the Editor. Most common file formats are acceptable – PDF, Open Document Format (odt), Rich Text Format (rtf), Plain Text (txt) or MS Word (doc/docx).

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