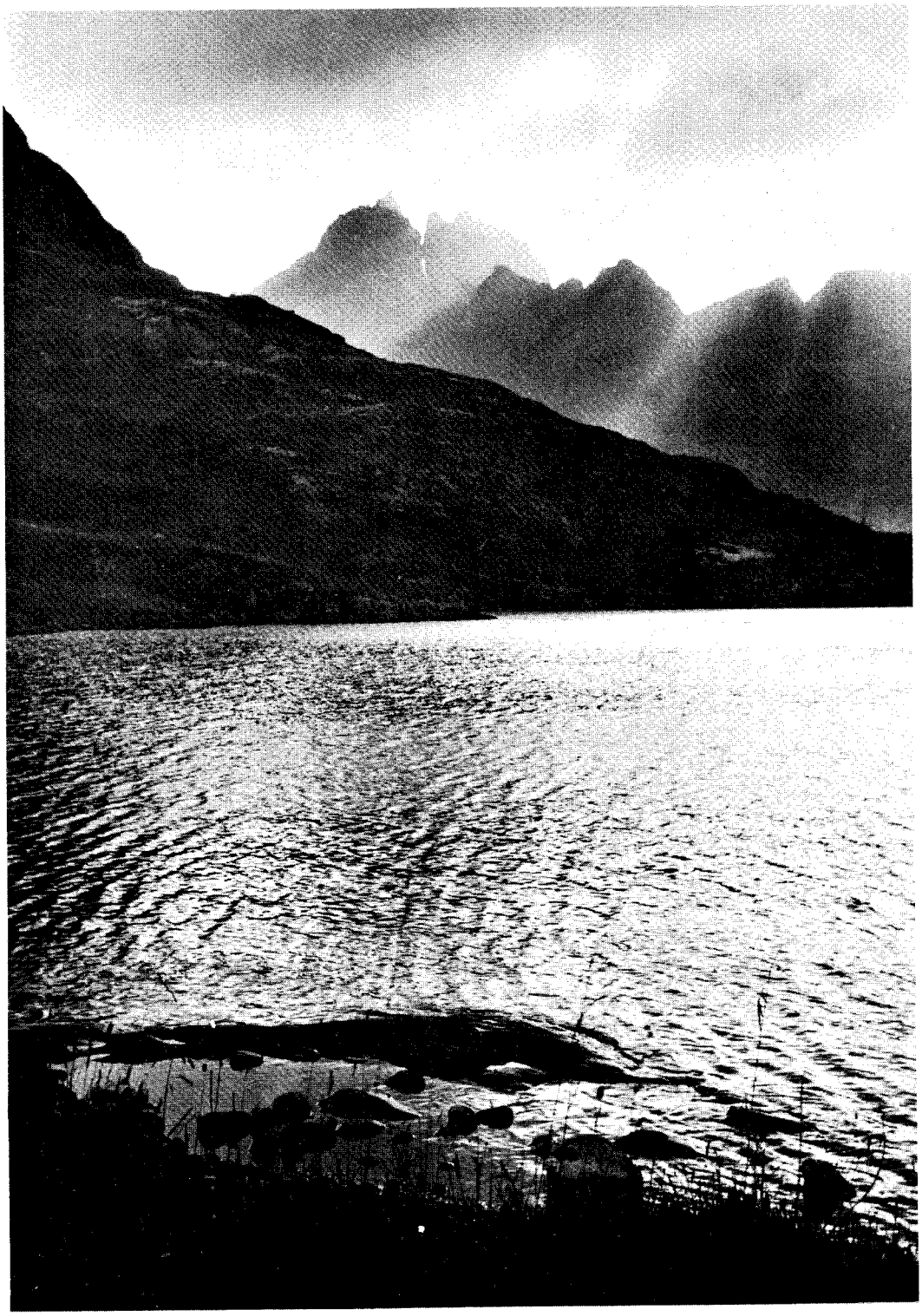
CEUNANT MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL 1965

edited by TONY and GILL DAFFERN



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C O N T E N T S

I L L U S T R A T I O N S

Cartoons and line drawings by

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F O R E W O R D

Mountaineering is now established as one of Britain's National Recreations. It is no longer the sport of a few rich men of leisure but rather the pastime of many people from all walks of life.

There is a great deal written in the mountaineering world of Himalayan Giants and Grade VI climbs; and much of it makes inspiring fireside reading. Most of us will never reach such heights of nerve and skill, but with a little encouragement could put more into our climbing than we do now.

This Journal has been produced to record the modest experiences of a small section of the mountaineering community in the hope of stimulating further interest in this sport.

The articles cover a variety of subjects; some are deliberately humorous; some describe hard climbs and first ascents; others take the reader on explorations further afield.

Thanks must be given to all those who have devoted so much time to producing this Journal, especially the authors of the articles and the editors whose "brainchild" it is. Thanks also to Rosemary Daniell for re-typing all the copy.

MIKE KERRY

C L U B H I S T O R Y

by

Mary Kahn & Tony Daffern

Dr. Johnson defined a club as "an assembly of good fellows meeting for a common purpose". One such club is the Ceunant Mountaineering Club. It was inaugurated more than ten years ago under its old name of The Birmingham and District Group of the Mountaineering Association.

In the spring of 1953 Pete Tongue, a member of the Mountaineering Association, received a letter from J.E.B. Wright, suggesting that a local members group of the Association should be formed. After discussions between Pete and other members in the area an inaugural meeting was held at the Friends' Meeting House, Bull Street in the autumn of 1953. All those invited were members of the Mountaineering Association. The first committee meeting was held in February 1954 at the Digbeth Institute under the chairmanship of Keith Holdsworth.

The Group constitution was a rigid one and hampered rock climbing activities. Only members who were certified as competent leaders by the Mountaineering Association panel of Training Officers could lead on club meets. In 1956 the M.A. decided that only those who had passed Intermediate training courses could remain members of the Group and gave the remainder until January 1958 to obtain passes. The majority of the Group, deploring this restrictive attitude, decided to secede from the M.A. and form a separate club.

The Ceunant Mountaineering Club was formed on the 9th May 1956, the name being taken from the cottage, Pen Ceunant, which had been transferred from the old Group. The object of the new Club was to "provide facilities for the pursuit of mountaineering in all its aspects" and the constitution, though more flexible than the previous one, still hampered rock climbing activities. Members were classed either as 'Grade A Competent Climbers' or 'Grade B Mountain Walkers'. A 'Grade A' member had to be able to "act safely as leader or second on V.Diff. climbs" and a 'Grade B' member was not allowed to climb on club meets unless he was led by a 'Grade A' member and had the meet leader's permission. One present club member, while soloing Diffs., leading V.Diffs. and following Severes,

was only granted Class B membership, by a rather inactive Rock Climbing Sub-Committee. At the 1957 A.G.M. common sense prevailed and the offending clause was removed from the constitution.

Perhaps the most memorable events in those early days were the weekends at Pen Ceunant and the coach meets. Pen Ceunant was transferred to the new Club from the old Group and, under the wardenship of Brian Ruston, became a very comfortable retreat. It was a friendly establishment, though more primitive than Tyn-Lon, with tea in bed in the morning and sing-songs round the fire in the evening. The Friday night dash up the hill from the coach to secure the best beds was excellent training for the weekend activities.

As the only private transport in the Club was John Urwin's old and somewhat unreliable van, coaches were used for most weekend meets. Sometimes the Club had a coach to itself, but more often than not shared one with either the Stoats (Birmingham University) or the Cave and Crag Club. Though a rather expensive and relatively slow means of travel, coach meets were very popular, the rather boring journeys being livened up by free for alls, poker schools and the Stoats' excellent repertoire of disgusting songs.

The first three Annual Dinners were held in Birmingham at the Crown, Corporation Street; the Imperial, Union Street; and finally the White Horse, Congreve Street, where the antics of one of our distinguished guests caused the demolition of half of the gents toilet. It was decided after this to hold future dinners in Wales.

Indoor Meets were held at the Friends' Meeting House, Moseley, once a fortnight and it is to the great credit of the organisers that there were very few meetings without an outside speaker on some subject related to Mountaineering. One of the early Meet Sheets included South Georgia Expedition, Trevor Jones Talking, Norway, and Slides of North Wales and the Lake District.

1957 was a most depressing year. Many of the original members were dropping out and very few new members were coming along. Membership at the beginning of the year stood at 59 and was only 60 at the end. It was realised by the majority of the Club that changes would have to be made and the Club brought up to date and in line with rival clubs. We were fortunate that at the A.G.M. in 1958

John Knight was elected Chairman. The next two years have proved to be the most progressive in the Club's short history and there is no doubt that this was mainly due to John's quiet guidance.

Early in John Knight's reign the Club became affiliated to the British Mountaineering Council, thus achieving recognition in the world of mountaineering clubs and paving the way to official representation on the Council's Committee.

In April two observant members, we believe they were Stan Storey and John Urwin, noticed an empty property in Nant Peris and on making enquiries found that it was for sale for the princely sum of £150. An appeal was made for £220 to be on loan from members and such was the response that by mid-May and after some Arab-type bartering the cottage was ours for £130. It was a superb piece of one-up-man-ship over several rival clubs who did not move quickly enough. Possession was gained just before the August Bank Holiday and a party of stalwarts set to with great will to demolish as much of the inside of Tyn-Lon as they possibly could. This was followed by many arduous weekends of re-plastering, drainage construction, plumbing and decorating, until finally the cottage was ready for occupation during Whitsun 1959.

Another innovation, this time sponsored and edited by Mike King, was the Newsletter, which was first published on the 4th June 1958 and contained in the first lines of the editorial a quotation from Sir Ernest Shackleton's Editorial on the "South Polar Times" to the effect that the contributions by all its readers was essential for the success of the paper. The Newsletter is still going strong now after 7 years and 24 publications.

It was at this time that the climbing standard of the Club began to improve and one member in particular did a great deal towards raising the standard and inspiring others to greater effort. This was Dan Davis, who in less than a year from starting to climb was leading the hardest of the pre-1951 routes in the area. By 1959 there were several other members regularly climbing V.S., all inspired by Dan. There was now more private transport in the Club and coach meets unfortunately had to be discontinued. Mini-buses were hired and there were many exciting and eventful trips to and from North Wales and the Lake District.

In 1960 Colin Coleman became Chairman and carried on

John's good work. By now the work of the past few years was showing reward and there was an influx of new, keen members. An inspiring Outdoor Meets programme was produced and most of the meets were well attended. Colin Coleman introduced the 'Three Thousanders' meet and more camping meets were included.

The Annual Dinner was held for the first time in North Wales at the Dolbadorn Hotel and the party was so well behaved that we were invited to come again next year.

One of the schemes put forward to attract new members was that the Club should meet in more pleasant surroundings and so a room was hired for an experimental period every Wednesday night at the Cambridge Public House. This proved to be so popular that the Friends' Institute was soon abandoned in favour of the new venue.

The highlight of the year was the organisation of a public lecture by Eric Shipton in the Midland Institute. Tickets were sold to other clubs and at the door, and a reasonable profit made on the venture.

1961 saw Mike Kerby installed as Chairman. Although the general climbing standard of the Club did not improve during this year, camping meets were well attended as more members, both young and old, bought the necessary equipment. In November 1961 we gave up Pen Ceunant and it was taken over by one of our members, Ken Reynolds, who has now carried out extensive modernisation.

The next year of Mike's reign was a better one with more new members coming along and Mike Connelly and one or two others climbing at quite a high standard. The first dance was organised and though not very well attended, was a social success if not a financial one. The demand for membership was increasing and as our numbers are limited to 100, Prospective Membership was introduced.

The Tyn-Lon loan was finally paid off in 1963, five years ahead of the estimated repayment time; the Club is now firmly established in the mountaineering world and provided we can still continue to attract keen, young members there is no reason why we should not continue to flourish for many years to come.

THE MEIJE BY THE SOUTH FACE DIRECT

by

Dick Cadwallader

The wooden refuge at the foot of the Meije (13,087 ft) has two communal beds for sixteen people. The night we were there the hut contained thirty-nine boisterous Frenchmen, Mike Connelly, Mike Richmond (a surveyor on leave from West Africa) and myself. It was unbearably stuffy; I had dozed only for a couple of hours when Richmond, acting as 'support party' woke us with hot cocoa and biscuits. Picking our way between the sleeping forms on the floor we went out into the moonlight. The air was crisp and clear; it looked like being a good day.

Descending a steep, loose gully took three-quarters of an hour, then we were on the glacier, cursing over frozen ropes and crampon straps as we fumbled in the darkness. For the next hour only the crunch of crampons and axes in the frozen snow broke the silence. We felt a curious, tingling excitement about the climb ahead. By 4 a.m. the sun was splashing the higher peaks with gold as we reached the bergschrund at the foot of the face.

As we had seen from the hut the previous evening, the route takes an almost direct line up the centre of the face with just one possible escape route, a wide shelf across the mountain about two-thirds of the way up. Crampons and axes would be useless from now on and we gave them to Richmond to take back to the hut.

Crossing the 'berg' proved a delicate business, the snow bridge being extremely thin. Safely across we turned to watch Richmond descending the glacier, feeling very much alone on the face.

Several hundred feet of moving together brought us to the start of the face proper. A cry of "Stein" and looking up after the stone had fallen we discovered two helmeted climbers just above. They were German students who had bivouaced at the foot of the mountain rather than face the crowded hut. There was trouble with route-finding here, the guide book being far from explicit. Each party, afraid of being delayed by the other, set out to take the lead by different routes. Mike and I managed to get in front and there we stayed. The sun was just warming the rock and our

chilled fingers when, at about a third of the way up, the difficulties increased sharply.

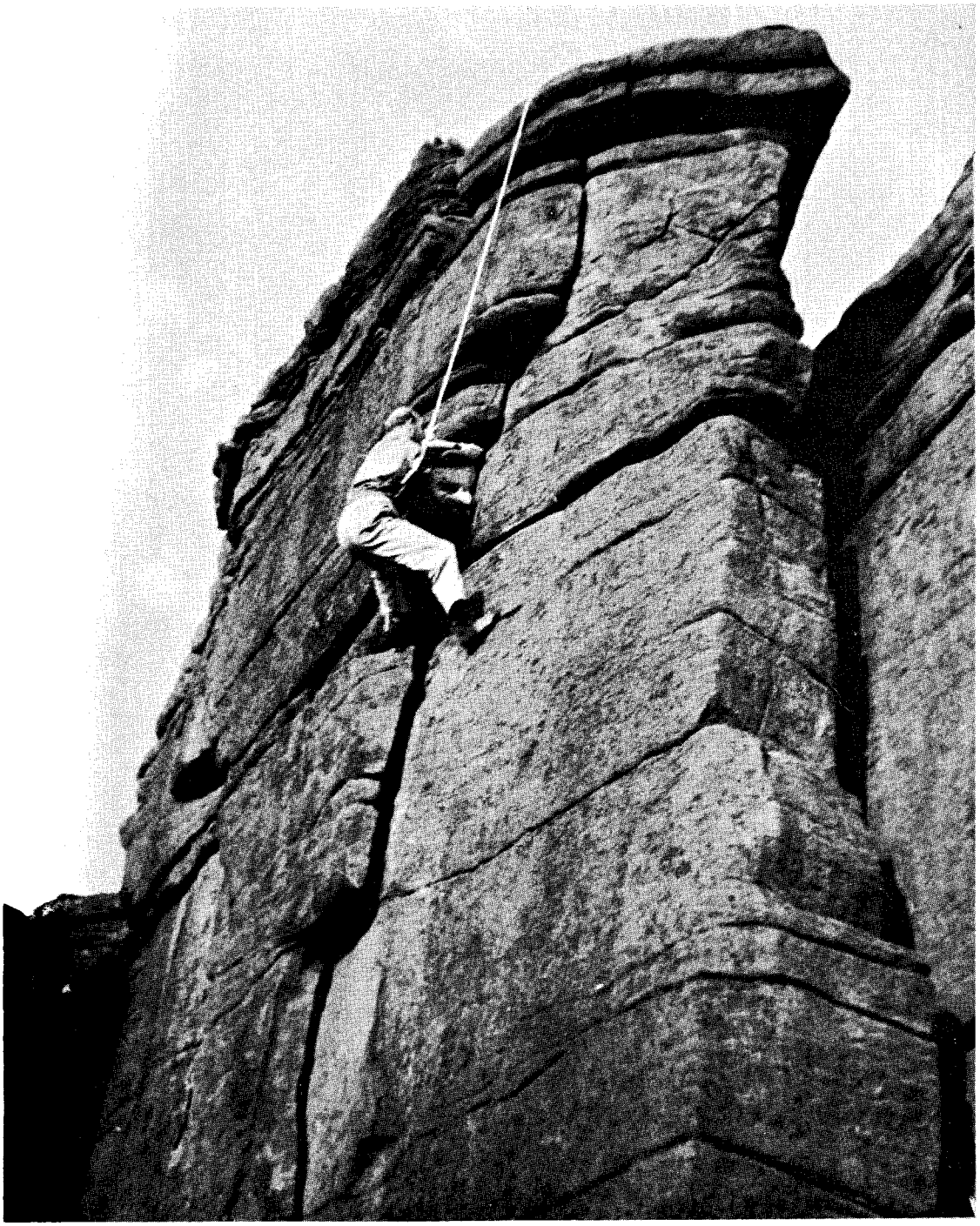
Mike led, handjamming up a strenuous, vertical crack with a delicate 'pendulary mantleshelf' at the top of it. The Germans were just behind and asked for a top rope on this pitch. It was now my turn to lead; I found myself below a smooth overhang. 'Ca va pas.' Reversing this pitch was difficult, one of the holds having broken off beneath me on the way up. There was nowhere to put a peg, I could only hope Mike had a good belay. My last few feet of descent to the belay were done at a more or less constant acceleration of 32 ft/sec/sec. Luckily the stance was quite a large one. Mike tried another route while I belayed him from the bottom of a cold, dark chimney with chunks of ice falling on my head. Looking up I discovered Mike doing an extremely complicated manoeuvre beneath an overhanging block at the top of the chimney. Pulling outwards on a sling doubled through a peg until he reached full layback position, he loosed the sling with his left hand in order to gain a hold on a ledge level with his left ear. Transferring his right hand to this hold he mantle-shelved upwards. I was glad when it was over. Easier going brought us to the shelf two-thirds of the way across.

The sun was very hot now as it was mid-day. We rested and drank some of our precious glucose water (thoughtfully prepared by Richmond) from a wine gourd. This gourd we renamed 'the Werter Squerter' in memory of a friend's Birmingham accent. There was a fine view of the Dauphine area from here, the sky appearing a dark purple through our tinted snow glasses. No sign of our German friends. We discovered later that they traversed off and descended at this point.

We lost a lot of time looking for the way here. Finally, flinging ourselves at a doubtful looking crack we followed a line of pitons to the right route again. The climbing now became delicate and exposed; the downward glance met nothing until the glacier below.

The rock was hot to touch; our sacks became very heavy; again we lost time looking for the route - for <u>any</u> route that would go. There remained only six hours to finish the climb and get down to the hut.

Hoping the top was near we suddenly discovered a further five hundred feet of vertical rock before us. Mike looked round and grimaced. I shrugged - at this rate



DAN DAVIS, RIGHT UNCONQUERABLE, STANAGE T.Daffern.

we would have to spend a night on the face. Luckily a ledge ran upwards to the left and was easier going. It was still strenuous, however, and when one led each hoped to hear the cry "we're up". Getting there first was the least important thing. At last, squirming out of a narrow chimney, I found Mike sitting on the arete and we scrambled the last fifty feet to the summit.

It was 5 p.m. and we had been climbing for thirteen hours. There was little to say. Extremely tired, we ate and dozed for an hour before setting off down. It was not a simple walk off. The sun was again touching only the peaks, which seemed like boats floating in the deepening purple of the valleys, as we stumbled down.

By nine o'clock we were only a third of the way down; we could see nothing more so we decided to call it a day. Huddled together in a small scoop in the rock the night was long. I envied Mike his ability to sleep; I had my revenge by eating all the chocolate.

Dawn came, but we were too stiff to move until the sun reached us. At about 5 a.m. we set off again, reaching the hut at about 8 a.m. to find Richmond waiting with a welcome supply of food and hot drinks.

MACSTIFF'S TRAVERSE

by

Ian Mason

It was in early September when I found I could take a few days off, so promptly ejecting the accumulated rubbish of the last six months from the back of the Land Rover, I slung my camping and mountaineering gear in and set off for the Western Highlands with the minimum of delay. I was just past Stirling when I spied ahead of me two figures laden with rucksacks which my trained eye immediately informed me were shapely young women and that judging by their boots they were also bound for the mountains. In obedience to the rigid principle of a lifetime I pulled up smartly and they clambered in. They were from Manchester and as I had surmised, were bound for Glencoe or the Western Highlands if they could make it. On being informed that this was my own objective they decided to make only the overnight stop in Glencoe (which is my usual practice on the way up) and to continue with the transport I could provide.

Like myself they were both hillwalkers who enjoyed an occasional rock climb when opportunity, inclination and a leader with sufficient patience were available, which in my own case is not all that often. I was rather surprised when they expressed the same views as they both had very much more than their fair share of glamour and curves in the right places. When I remarked on this, as my advancing years make it possible for me to do without offence, the dark-haired Barbara began a long and complex explanation which apparently involved the love life of about eight different people. This was cut short when we saw another figure on the road ahead of us, making the hitch hikers' sign with monotonous regularity at intervals of about thirty seconds. I got the impression that the owner must have a built-in mechanism to do this, like a marker buoy at sea with a flashing light.

Brenda, the blonde, exclaimed "I suppose it IS human! - are you going to give it a lift?"

This remark was quite justified as any really nervous motorist would have speeded up to pass in haste what appeared at first glance to be a monster out of a horror film, but which on closer inspection proved to be an

extremely tall young man enveloped in a gas cape, ex-army, ranks, for the use of, large size, which gave him the general aspect of a very much oversize edition of the Hunch Back of Notre Dame. With fearless abandon and a trust in the athletic ability of two sturdy young passengers to protect me, I pulled up once more and signalled the apparition to get in through the back of the vehicle. What little we could see of him beneath the cowl of the gas cape told nothing, for he was heavily and untidily bearded, while a thatch of straw-coloured hair which matched, or nearly matched his beard escaped in profusion from the shelter of the cowl. He wore thick steel-rimmed glasses which revealed nothing of the eyes behind and as far as getting any impression of the owner was concerned we might as well have tried to judge the character of a car owner driving his vehicle through a haystack with only the head-lamps visible.

He exclaimed loudly, "Gey goo ah yeh. Wull ye be for Achnasheen?", which I rightly took to express thanks and a desire to get to Achnasheen. With rather mixed feelings I realised I had at last met one of my fellow countrymen who had either a cleft palate or whose parents had been music hall comics. His efforts to divest himself of the gas cape were catastrophic and when he had got this wedged over his head and jammed in his rucksack behind, we got out to help him as he appeared to be in imminent danger of suffocation. However, the neatly coiled full weight rope on his rucksack produced a more respectful attitude in both myself and my young passengers and with him installed in the back we went on our way.

Conversation was difficult, but there was plenty of time and the need for an interpreter did not make itself felt so acutely as it might otherwise have done. By studious application we learned to understand him, discovering that he too was bound for the Western Highlands and would be delighted to have a lift all the way. He was very reticent as to which part of Scotland he hailed from, but confessed to the honoured name of MacDuff and on hearing that we all liked rock climbing in moderation, i.e. mods. and diffs., he promised to take us on "a most interesting climb". I will spare the reader any more of his accent which subsequently proved to be phoney and not the result of a cleft palate.

In Glencoe we camped for the night and following my usual practice for a one night stop did not bother to pitch the tent, but chatted to the two girls as they erected

theirs. My help was obviously not required for they had the tent in position with the gear in it and a kettle on the stove in about four minutes flat. I have a put-up bed in the Land Rover which balances on the bulkhead behind the seats and which anyone with iron nerves and the ability to lie absolutely motionless all night can sleep in comparative comfort. MacDuff was still struggling with his Government surplus bivvy tent when we started serving tea and it was at this point that Barbara, who had an irreverent attitude to life generally, christened him "MacStiff". It was then after ten so we all went to bed, the others being quite prepared for a daybreak start which with luck would give us few hours in Torridon in the daylight. We did in fact make good time and arrived without further incident, enjoying a short walk to the first peak of Alligan before supper.

In the morning we set out for the climb promised us by the redoubtable MacStiff. The two girls were now calling him this to his fact and I hadn't the slightest idea whether he realised this or not. I was also a little uneasy about his abilities as a leader though he appeared to know what he was talking about and seemed to have bags of confidence. He referred to the guide book constantly as we set out for the foot of the climb which involved a long walk round the north side of the mountain, after we could get the Land Rover no further, though at least it did cut down our walking time quite a bit.

MacStiff kept referring to the guide book and ultimately led us to a gully up which we scrambled without difficulty, commenting on the fortunate fact that it was on the east side of a projecting buttress and so placed that it caught the sun which shone from a cloudless sky and made the rock pleasantly warm. I began to feel that my vague uneasiness about MacStiff was unjustified, particularly as we were only on a pleasant scramble and hadn't even roped up yet.

About two hundred feet up on a wide platform our leader waited for us to join him. We did so and roped up; Barbara following him, myself next, Brenda last. Four on a rope was unavoidable in the circumstances and according to MacStiff quite convenient as the climb consisted almost entirely of a traverse with short pitches. Barbara expressed the opinion that there was not enough romance in his soul to plug an inadequate fingerhold in the rock and had offered to come walking with me while he took Brenda alone on the climb, but he had insisted in taking all four of us. We waited while he stepped out on to the path which he informed us later dwindled into a delicate traverse across the buttress.

I realised that whatever his shortcomings he certainly had the soul of a mountaineer for he was quite obviously frothing over with excitement like a glass of bad beer. We obeyed his stern injunctions to wait on the platform though as far as the first pitch was concerned we could all have walked along it quite safely unroped and with our hands in our pockets as it was only a grassy ledge about eighteen inches wide, inclining upwards at about ten or fifteen degrees across the rock face.

MacStiff disappeared round the curve of the buttress and in a few moments shouted for the second to come. I paid out the rope while Barbara followed him, then went along myself. The ledge remained the same width, the main hazard being the large tufts of grass, heather and other luxuriant foliage with which it was overgrown. I joined Barbara and MacStiff upon another wide grassy platform big enough to park a Corporation 'bus. Brenda quickly followed and MacStiff set off again. We could see that the ledge now began to narrow though it was still anything between six inches and a foot wide. MacStiff began to tear heather, grass and other assorted greenery out by the roots, grumbling all the while about the neglected state of the climb. I suggested that we probably hadn't really started the traverse proper yet and that he might as well leave the offending vegetation where it was and let us clamber over it. But he insisted on continuing his gigantic gardening operations, so we leaned against the rock basking in the sunlight. MacStiff vanished round a slight curve in the rock face but we could still hear the earthworming operations going on. We drowsed pleasantly, eating raisins and biscuits.

For a long time there seemed to be no further rope needed. Barbara said "He hasn't thrown any stuff down for ages. Do you think he's all right?" Repeated shouts produced no reply, so finally filled to the bung with frustration we decided to organise a following-up party. I belayed Barbara to a spike, untied Brenda, then tied her on again close to her friend, tied myself on to the end of the now vacant end of rope and proceeded cautiously along the ledge. I was rapidly rewarded with a view of MacStiff clinging to the rock face like a barnacle with both hands and one foot, while with the other he fended off the repeated attacks of a large ram, which, equipped with a magnificent pair of horns, was trying to bounce him off the ledge. Fortunately at this point the ledge was at least a foot wide and MacStiff had found a deep crack for one foot and a couple of really good jugs for his hands. By great good fortune I had a copy of that excellent newspaper "The Scotsman" in

my pocket. I had intended to read this as we lunched at the top of the climb, but I now realised that I must sacrifice my intellectual activities if MacStiff was not to become a fixture on the mountain and a valuable breeding animal die of old age or frustration. I extracted a sheet of the paper, rolled it loosely, lit a match, set fire to it and with my blazing torch before me and another unlit but in readiness cautiously by-passed MacStiff and made a rapid pass at the noble creature's snout with my fiery weapon. The beast was evidently a non-smoker for it immediately turned, displaying an enviable agility and departed snorting loudly in a disapproving manner. I lit my other torch and followed it, noting with some surprise that it passed up a gully, under a large wedged boulder and so out of sight. I hadn't sufficient rope to follow it but it seemed to me that to creep up the gully under the boulder must be a natural route to the top.

There was no sign of the delicate traverse ahead; the ledge just meandered on upwards, its width nowhere less than

six inches and the vegetation more luxuriant than ever, including some promising young trees that would have fetched several bob each had we been able to transport them back to Birmingham. As they were almost certainly fated to be torn off the ledge by MacStiff, who had indeed begun to move forward with his spectacles flashing in the sun, I did toy with the idea of trying to make the expedition pay, but discarded it in view of the obvious disadvantages of our two mile walk back to the Land Rover carrying two saplings apiece. It would, however, have been a nice touch to treat the locals to part of the famous scene from Macbeth where each soldier carries a tree. I abandoned this cultural project also with the ashes of "The Scotsman" and we resumed our former positions on the rope.

This time the two girls and I sat on the ledge with our feet dangling over the edge while MacStiff continued his devastating progress as a bulldozer in the jungle. Clods of earth, tufts of grass and heather, the odd saplings or so continued to pour over the cliff with monotonous regularity, while we kept a sharp lookout below in case any other climbers should have been ill advised enough to visit the same spot. When the next move forward took place and there was still no sign of the ledge turning into a delicate traverse I suggested to MacStiff that we crawl up the gully under the boulder and see if we could find a route on to the ridge. I pointed out that we could borrow picks and shovels from the village and return the next day to clean up the ledge with these mechanical aids if he felt his conscience required him to leave it in good condition. He received this suggestion in stony silence and continued to fight his way forward. The two girls were now laughing almost continuously at, sotto voce, remarks they were exchanging with each other and from these I concluded that they no longer had any great opinion of MacStiff either as a man or as a route-finder. Indeed some of the remarks were so unladylike that I burst out laughing myself.

Once more the ledge meandered round a slight projection on the rock face and MacStiff disappeared from view. We continued our conversation, giving thanks for the warm sun which made the expedition very pleasant indeed. Suddenly we noticed the absence of further sounds and the cessation of earth moving activities. Eagerly we awaited the signal to move forward on to the traverse which we had fought so hard to achieve and for which we had sacrificed Scotland's national newspaper and MacStiff's dignity, not to mention the ram's. The signal did not come. Impatient and reckless as ever, I strolled along the broad surface of the neatly

cleaned-up ledge round the bulge, to be faced with a further projection below which broadened the ledge considerably. I circumvented this also to find our gallant leader standing on a grassy platform from which the rock dropped away sheer on three sides and rose equally sheer on the fourth against the mountain. Joe Brown might have found a route up, but I could see nothing that looked like a handhold or a foothold and it was fairly obvious that MacStiff had reached the same conclusion. Mumbling into his beard about badly written guide books, possible rock falls destroying the route, he led the way up the gully under the boulder from where we found an easy path on to the ridge.

As we gained the ridge we met two young men who greeted us politely and showed some disposition to linger in which they were encouraged by the two girls. "Which way have you come up?" enquired one of the young men. "Up there," replied Brenda pointing, "the traverse isn't it? Comes up under the boulder."

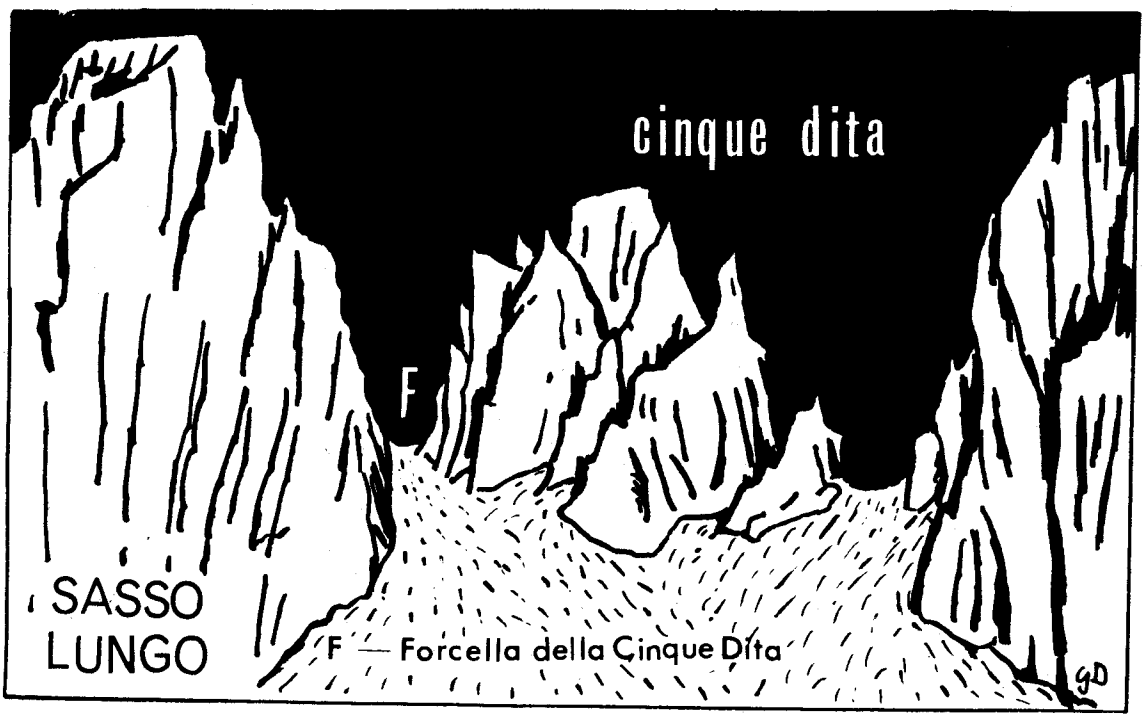
The two young men burst out laughing. "That's no traverse - it's a sheep track," said one of them "used to be used a while back for walking off from one of the climbs, but they found a better way down further on. The traverse route you mention is three or four hundred yards away. But anyway it's a fine view you get from the path. We must take another walk down there sometime."

We spent the evening pleasantly enough together in the nearest local, but MacStiff was very silent and in the morning we found that like the Arab in the poem he had folded his tent and silently stolen away.

A L P I N E D A Y S

by

Peter Holden



During the summer of 1964 I spent three months wandering round various mountain groups in Europe, travelling on my own and meeting climbing friends here and there. The following is an account of two days in the mountains of two countries, each differing in the character of the mountains and in the type of climbing. My companions for the first day were four lads from Cheshire whose acquaintance I had made in the Dolomites. The second day I had no companions but my own thoughts.

The peak to be enjoyed the first day was the Cinque Dita (Funffingerspitze), a shapely peak in the Dolomite tradition with a very steep blank looking face contained by steep ridges rising from a col on either side. The route to be followed started from the left hand col, traversed the skyline over the summit to the right hand col. The actual climbing time according to the guide book was eight to nine hours.

We rose at eight o'clock and collected together our equipment. It was a glorious morning without a cloud in the magnificently blue sky when we set off for the Forcella della Cinque Dita which was reached with much effort up steep scree until three hundred feet of soft snow brought us on to the col in under two hours. This col commanded a superb view of the centre of the Sasso Lungo group and we were quite taken aback by all the huge pinnacles and minor peaks which bristled up from the huge rock masses, all of them a beautiful yellow against a deep blue sky.

At the col we sorted ourselves into a party of three leading a rope of two. I was in the first party and the only member with a rucksack, which was padded out with two pairs of Masters entrusted to me by the others. The first pitch was steep but had good holds and a peg for protection. The second pitch was steeper and slightly harder, partly due to the fact that the leader had strayed off route necessitating a variation on the third pitch to bring us back on route. After these good pitches we were able to move more easily round three huge pinnacles by a series of long run outs to a gap from which we could look down a smooth face dropping over a thousand feet. From this exposed position we had to climb a wall and gain a narrow ledge on the face, this pitch being almost severe standard and protected with pegs. The situations for the next two pitches were quite dramatic, following ledges first on one side of the ridge and then on the other; alternating between great exposure and warm sunshine and less exposure but no sun and a cold wind. The final pitch up to the summit was very good, of about severe standard, quite strenuous and awkward with a rucksack, but very well protected with two pegs at the crux.

After a short rest on the summit, during which we satiated ourselves with the excellent views and imbibed a little of the water we were carrying, we began to think of the descent, a series of abseils down the ridge to the col. The first rope's length landed us at the top of an icy gully down which we were supposed to abseil. At the end

of this abseil we had to pendule across the gully and then traverse out on to the opposite wall, all of this protected from the abseil point above. This was accomplished after much struggling by the first four. The last man (muggins) was supposed to be protected by number four from the stance on the far wall. Unfortunately number four threw down his end of the safety rope, severing all connection between us. This meant that I had to abseil down with the safety rope hanging down the gully below me and then climb up, unprotected, to the crowded stance above, pulling in the abseil rope as I went.

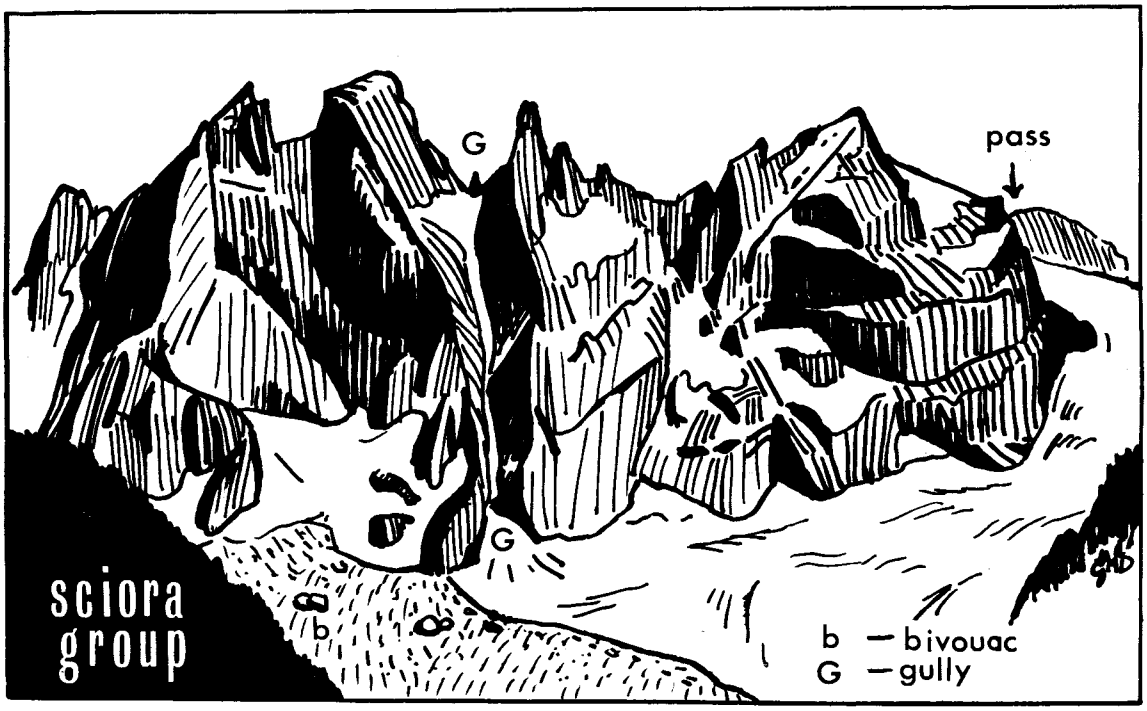
The next abseil was 120 feet requiring two ropes. This took a long time and we nearly froze in a biting wind as well as feeling rather insecure as there was no room to tie on at the belay. One more 120 foot abseil brought us to a col, below which was a huge smooth slab which three of us climbed down as we were so cold. The climbing was difficult but quicker in the end and we arrived at the next abseil ring far ahead of the others and armed with only 120 feet of nylon for what was described as three long abseils to the main col. Being impatient, we pressed on and were fortunately able to climb down the few feet from the end of the rope to the next abseil ring, from which we could see a ledge apparently 60 feet below. The rope was thrown down and I ventured down on it only to find that one end had been caught by the wind and was wedged behind a flake. This halted me about 20 feet above the ledge in a position of slow strangulation. Feeling something ought to be done I climbed up the slightly overhanging wall until I had slack rope, then jumped clear and managed to pull the rope through by my fall until I was only 10 feet above a pinnacle. After a repeat performance I was able to stand on the pinnacle, release myself from the rope and collapse on to the ledge. The second man down also managed to lodge the rope behind the flake but I was able to climb up and release it.

From this col I found a reasonable way down to the main col and waited for the others in the hut at the top of the Teleferic which was to take us down to the Sella Pass. It had been an enjoyable day, though a lesson in climbing as a party whose combined strength was weakness.

My second day in the mountains was spent alone in the Sciora Group near the Val Bregaglia on the Swiss-Italian border. I had carried a week's supply of food and bivouac equipment up to the Sciora Hut with the hope of meeting some English climbers, only to find when I arrived there that I was the sole Englishman in the area. Not wishing

for the luxury or expense of the Hut I rummaged around all the large boulders until I found an excellent place for a bivvy - the overhanging side of a boulder walled round as a sheep pen; small enough to be cosy, with shelter from the weather and an excellent view of the north-east face of Piz Badile.

The weather was superb the next morning, so after breakfast I collected my equipment together and looked round for something interesting to tackle. There was a wide choice, but I decided on a large snow gully splitting the Sciora Group which looked quite near and would provide a good day's sport and would also enable me to reconnoitre the area as I had no map or guide book. I set off at 8 a.m. across a boulder field and the glacier and soon came to the snow cone at the bottom of the gully. Here I put on my crampons because it was obviously going to be steep, hard snow.



With crampons biting well I moved directly up the snow cone to the rimaye which was a little difficult to cross as I had to descend into it, climb out on rock and continue on the rock until the gully proper could be attained.

The snow in this gully was very hard being north-facing. Height was gained by securing the point of the ice-axe ahead and stepping up - a continuous movement where the angle was less steep but in the steeper places a brief halt was taken whilst re-positioning the ice-axe. With a very full sack on my back and the continuous movement I found it all very hard work, and very warm when the sun appeared over the top of the gully. By the time I was half-way up the gully I was very much in the need of a rest. A sort of seat was found on a projecting rock and I recovered strength whilst contemplating the view. As I had gained height I began to appreciate that it would be a long way to slide down and thus quickly came to the conclusion that the gully would be no use as a route down when the afternoon sun had softened the snow for a couple of hours.

The top of the gully fanned out just below a shattered rocky ridge and was scored with the paths of many rocks that fell late in the day. I moved up the last two hundred feet as quickly as I was able to in my shattered condition and only relaxed when I reached the rock which was even more shattered than I was. A hundred feet of climbing and I was able to relax properly on the ridge after cramponning up two thousand feet of steep snow in a little over two hours. My ankles were very tired indeed and I was glad to remove my boots.

After half an hour's rest, I found that the weather had deteriorated so I made a resume of my position. The view was the most impressive mountain panorama I have ever seen: miles of glaciers, flanked by precipitous mountain walls topped with jagged ridges, led to one splendid peak after another. Unfortunately all this was swiftly disappearing into a sea of cloud and I had to decide what to do. The gully I had ascended was uninviting in descent and rather an unimaginative retreat; the ridge on either side looked a little too ambitious for the solo mountaineer. Thus I was left with the snow gully on the opposite side of the ridge and which led in about five hundred feet to a snow field above a glacier. Which glacier? Did it connect with the top of the glacier I had come up from? I decided to explore and began to descend the rotten rock to the snow. On reaching the snow my doubts were confirmed - it was dangerously soft after receiving the sun all morning and

I was forced on to the rock wall. Keeping to the rock on a reasonable downward course was difficult and the climbing became a little too serious to be enjoyable. Half-way down the gully, much against my desire, I had to retreat on to the snow and had great difficulty in preventing myself from taking an undignified trip down to the bottom. Eventually I reached the glacier and was able to search for a way back over the ridge to my bivouac.

Once on the glacier proper all I could do was follow it round a bend to its head which was a steep wall of rock separating it from the glacier I wished to reach. I could see the higher glacier as a large ice wall on the left easing to a snow slope on the right, from whence a snow gully descended cutting into the wall and becoming a waterfall in its lower half.

As I approached the rock I chose my line, which was a diagonal fault tending across to the waterfall 200-300 feet up. The rimaye was easily crossed and I began to climb across very enjoyable rock until there was a blank in the line where the climbing became delicate on friable rock. I was glad to be over this section, although the difficulties did not ease much when I reached larger holds which were rather loose. Soon I crossed the waterfall to some very smooth slabs, ascended them until I was forced into a chimney down which the water was pouring and I got wet and cold. After climbing in and around the water for a couple of hundred feet I chose a line to the left, up slabs leading to a snow slope, rather than follow the water to the snow gully which would have been soft and probably corniced.

This snow slope led me on to the glacier. By this time I was surrounded by mist and had to make a guess as to where I was. Guessing I was on the right-hand side of the glacier I crossed to the left-hand side, which I remembered as having looked safer, and descended amongst the crevasses until I could confirm my position by a fleeting glimpse through a hole in the mist. Eventually I reached a trodden path which led me off the glacier and reached my bivouac boulder very tired after an excellent mountaineering day.

AVON GORGE

by

Mike Manser

It is surprising that Avon Gorge, offering routes on limestone of every standard and demanding all techniques that might be used in rock climbing, remains so neglected by Midland climbers. It is sufficiently close to Birmingham for comfortable day trips and there are none of the lung searching, ten minute approach marches necessary for most North Wales climbs.

Although pioneered initially by F. G. Balcombe, many of the easier routes were first achieved by local children. Most of the climbs date from around 1950 when J. Ward of the Army Mountaineering Club, G. J. Sutton and climbers of the Bristol University Mountaineering Club including H. Banner, Dr. L. J. Griffin and B.G.N. Page explored the more obvious lines and established some of the better known climbs.

The late Mike Harvey who was particularly well known around here left many fine climbs, amongst them one which has never been repeated - the ascent of Exhibition Slab by bicycle.

No attempt at a guide book explanation of the climbing areas is to be made, it being sufficient to appreciate broad divisions into the Suspension Bridge Buttress, which pillars the Clifton Suspension Bridge itself, the Amphitheatre Cliffs, the Main Wall area and the Sea Walls forming the seaward limit of the climbing areas.

Responding to an invitation from our man in Bristol, (Desperate) Dan Davis, several summer trips were made to this area, discovering the delights of the fine open climbing and its unique character. Holds of the "thank --- for that" variety are few, it being necessary to rely on sloping footholds, though these afford ample friction even shortly after rain, and confidence is soon inspired.

On warm summer weekends continuous interest for the second is provided by the competitive driving down the Suspension Bridge Straight and by ships passing in the River Avon. The loud sirens of these ships reverberating from the Gorge are likely to startle the inexperienced

climbers. One can almost imagine a Puckish Captain longing to see the human spider dangle at his command.

Shortly after the Great Central Route which starts from the Exhibition Slab had been achieved, eyes were turned in the direction of the magnificent Main Wall area. In the process of relating guide book to Cliff, a cultured and friendly voice under an extending academic brow enquired if any assistance was needed.

Cultured Voice: "Yes, know the place like the back of my hand. What are you actually looking for?"

Climber (turning appropriately impressed and grateful gaze): "Well, actually we're looking for Mercavity Cave."

Cultured Voice: "Oh! Good Heavens, yes! It's just over - (falters) - Let's have a look at your guide book a moment. Now - er - have you done much here yet?"

Climber (accepting rapid change of subject tactfully): "We did Great Central Route yesterday."

Cultured Voice: "Oh! G.C.R., yes. I'm sure you did. Of course we (indicates embarrassed wife trying unsuccessfully to hide herself) haven't been doing much here recently. Been doing real mountaineering as opposed to rock climbing you know. Still, I can put you in the picture on most of the climbs."

Climber: "We were thinking of doing Malbogies."

Cultured Voice (snorts): "Oh! Good Lord! Absolute waste of time."

Climber: "Well, Malpractice then?"

Cultured Voice: "Not worth the time. Rocks rotten. No-no I wouldn't bother with them."

Climber (losing interest and patience): "I expect you have done most of the climbs here. What would you recommend on Main Wall?"

Cultured Voice: "Well, I haven't actually done any of the climbs. Still I can tell you that you'll have to watch yourselves on this rock - a quick shower of rain and the whole cliff goes black with water. If there are a dozen parties climbing you will see a dozen parties abseiling immediately. Friction becomes negligible."

At this the climbers muttered excuses and rambled off in the direction of Main Wall. After a successful ascent of Malpractice the climbers returned, passed Morning Slab and heard an agonised (but cultured) scream for a top rope.

Shortly after this encounter the writer of the current guide, Dr. John Nixon of Bristol U.M.C. came hotfoot by bicycle from the town on hearing that climbers were on one of his favourite routes. His dynamic personality and enthusiasm were obvious as he talked of the climbs and yard by yard descriptions were given generously as he pointed out one climb after another. Further conversation revealed the existence of a Girdle Traverse and John's desire to make a second ascent if he could find a suitable partner. Plans were then made to put a four man party on two ropes on the climb, comprising Dr. John and Dan Davies, Mike Connelly and myself.

The Girdle takes in many of the finest climbs on the wall and would delight even the most sophisticated with its variety of problems. Slabs, walls and cracks are spiced with the delicate tension traverse and even rock engineers would feel the sting in the tail of the final pitch. The Girdle was for both of us the climax of an exciting season which had included several of the Brown Excesses, the Girdles of Gimmer and White Ghyll and the famous Corner on the Cromlech. It would be Mike's most serious lead both in technical difficulty, length and overall seriousness. Starting and finishing with pitches of hard V.S./Excess standard, with some 13 pitches to cover, the climb took us 13 hours during which time neither of us smiled very much.

The first pitch takes the line of Bon Bogies on the extreme left hand edge of the Main Wall, tending diagonally right on small sloping footholds to a comfortable niche and piton belay. An abseil then takes the climb to the top of pitch one of Malpractice, one of the easier V.S. routes on the Wall and follows pitches two and three of the same climb. We led through the easier sections and I received an undignified rap on the nose for the unwise use of a

loose handhold on the unstable pitch three. Reversing a few feet of the last pitch an obvious line diagonally downwards is followed to a traverse using pegs and wooden wedges to a stance at the top of pitch one of Malbogies where the overhang is climbed to a narrow ledge and piton belay. This half of the climb had occupied about seven hours and we decided to break for the day, climbing Malbogies to the top.

The start of the second day was made by a long abseil to the top of the overhang where a traverse tending right is followed by an abseil and pendule from a piton belay. At this point Mike put in an additional peg and descended to a spike and étrier belay on the slab below. Having gone through the contortions necessary to get into an abseil sling on a five-inch ledge in a vertical wall, I found that the additional peg could be comfortably removed with thumb and forefinger. The abseil and pendule from the remaining wafer piton were made with some trepidation. Pitch three of Mercavity is now taken up the smooth nose where complete trust must be placed on friction holds, by a hard severe traverse to an uncomfortable belay on an ants' nest sprouting a strong thorn bush. Belayed at this point, I had opportunity to appreciate the sudden change in the character of the rock from carboniferous limestone to a strange mixture of sand and limestone with quartz intrusions.

Mike came through to lead the final pitch which takes an ascending line to the top of the cliff. Etriers are vital here and surmounting the technical difficulties of this pitch with about six hours of hard climbing already achieved was a magnificent achievement on Mike's part. The third party which may by now have accomplished a similar trip round the wall may be sure that at least part of the climb constitutes a second ascent. The ledge whose rock structure I had been idly contemplating during Mike's ascent crumbled and went crashing down to the bottom of the cliff as I set foot on it. However, by strenuous efforts from above I was hauled up to Mike at the top. In spite of the natural feeling of exaltation at completing the climb, I think we both felt a profound sense of relief that such a prolonged period of tension was at last over.

When the D/S 'Lyngen' docked at Tromso in North Norway the Midland N.W. Spitsbergen Expedition came to an end. The members split up and returned to England by diverse routes; Harold Manison after a four day wait caught a trawler Newcastle-bound; Mollie Taplin and Joe Porter hitched down Route 50 into Sweden; Jim Kershaw, Tony and myself boarded a Coastal Steamer for Bergen over 1,000 miles to the south. It was the fifth day of drizzle when we left and we were very glad to be leaving Tromso with its stuffed sodden polar bears decorating the streets for the benefit of tourists. All Norwegian towns and villages are miserable places when it rains.

In the evening of the next day as the boat wove between a maze of islands called 'the Lofoten', the sky cleared of clouds and the warm vivid blues and greens of land and sea were a revelation to us after the stark whiteness of the Arctic. Pointed rock peaks rose in profusion from every island, their elevation emphasised by the occasional white wooden house and the square of green field at the water's edge. For Tony and I the temptation to disembark proved irresistible. Feeling rather guilty we waved goodbye to Jim at Svolvor, leaving him with the unenviable task of getting three tons of Expedition baggage back to Birmingham.

This was not my first sight of the Lofoten. I had visited Svolvor, the capital of Austvagoy Island, the year previously after a five week walk across Sweden. The only peak climbed on that occasion was Floya, I regret to say a Sunday afternoon stroll for Locals by the ordinary route. We also climbed the Goat Pinnacle, the most famous climb in Lofoten and well worth doing if only for the sensational leap from the higher horn to the lower one, with, should one miss, an immediate internment in the graveyard 2,000 feet below. The most popular climbing area is in the north of the island where lie the Chamonix Aiguilles of Norway; 4,000 feet of rock needles and small steep glaciers squashed between the channels of the Raftsund and the Oyhellesund. Nearly all possible routes have been worked out by British and Continental climbers in recent years and as we were definitely not in the Joe Brown class, we felt we could achieve nothing new here. However the island of Moskenesoy, 100 miles to the south, seemed suitable for our purposes.

It is a large island almost cut in half by Kirke Fiord. The mountains to the north of the fiord are mentioned in Peter Prag's "Rock Climbs in the Lofoten Islands", but those to the south are, with few exceptions, not referred to. Why? Magnar Pettersen the guide thought this lack of knowledge was due only to the remoteness of the peaks. He himself had not been there but he had heard they were without doubt fine looking peaks with one way up only. To whet our appetite further, the fiercest, most controversial whirlpool lurked at the southern extremity of the island. A village called A was the southernmost community and was obviously the place to aim for. But how to get there? Nowadays there is no problem: a bus runs along the newly constructed road between Svolvor and A via the islands of Vestvagoy and Flakstad. Ferries and even a suspension bridge convey buses and passengers between islands. Buses are an innovation to the Lofoten people whose usual transport is boats and bicycles, and

brown paper bags are provided for all. However, on our first visit three years ago the only way of reaching A was by the slow ungainly cargo vessel 'Rost', destination Bodo on the mainland. At our request the 'Rost' hove-to half a mile from shore and watched by passengers and crew alike we rope laddered over the side into the insecurity of a pitching rowing boat sent from the harbour. In less than thirty minutes we had the tent pitched alongside Avand. Children in yellow oilskins spread the news of our arrival round the houses like wildfire.

The mountains surrounding the lake demanded our immediate attention. The three main peaks are Mandern, Gjertind and Megaldalstind, the latter two linked by a long impressive ridge. At either end of the horseshoe rise the two smaller peaks of Anstabben and Tindstind. Although only 3,500 feet in height the mountains are oddly shaped and reach from sea to summit in a single sweep of glacial slab, sometimes overlaid with vegetation. The 'Hanging Gardens' are an interesting feature: extensive carpets of luxurious moss adhering to loose vertical rock faces. Snow plastered in winter, the mountains retain snow in the gullies and corries even in summer. Gjertind, the highest peak in the vicinity has two lines dedicated to it in Peter Prag's Guide - all thoroughly misleading. A beautiful twin headed peak it deserves a whole page of the guide. Three Norwegians, one of whom made the first ascent of the Goat Pinnacle, climbed it as late as 1920. Only one further ascent is known.

We breakfasted on bilberries from the lower slopes of Megaldalstind. The biggest, tastiest, juiciest berries grew high up in the corries and from here it was but a short step in terms of feet to the ridge between the peak and Tindstind, but wet gullies where the rope was in frequent use prolonged the effort and regrettably in the process my anorak pocketful of bilberries stewed. The ridge, though narrow, was unremarkable and so was the summit, a flat stony one with a cold most blowing over it. We could almost have been on the Carnedds. Despite the fact that the adjoining ridge to Gjertind was invisible and that we had not eaten or slept for nineteen hours, we quite suddenly made up our minds to attempt the peak by this unknown route. In the first rush of enthusiasm the lowest point on the ridge was swiftly reached; incongruously covered in fine red grass waist high. Suddenly the mist rolled away to the north disclosing a giddy view of Atlantic breakers below to our right and an equally disquieting sight of a switchback ridge ahead. Hand-in-mouth traverses across the moss

GOAT PINNACLE, SVOLVOR G.Daffern.

WEST RIDGE OF GJERTIND, LOFOTEN G.Daffern.

gardens and five or six pitches of V.Diff. standard on the crest brought us to the mountain's North Face where most unfortunately the ridge petered out and we were faced with a vertical ascent up choss, for there is no other word to describe the final thousand feet of loose slabs knitted to the core of the mountain by curly green moss. Seven hundred feet higher we were pushed on to the more stable East Ridge. Each rock pitch went fairly easily until when a mere 25 feet away from victory we were stopped by an overhang. Reconnoitres to the right and left, limited by sheets of holdless slabs, revealed no crack in the final tower's defence. An hour's combined tactics brought no result and rather than make a desperate tour de force without a belay in the half light of dusk, we decided to give up the attempt. Perched as we were on the apex of the peak a slip would have resulted in a two thousand foot fall down either the north, south or east faces - take your choice. We descended the easier south face to Avand without incident, coinciding with rain and the blinding blackness of night. After three hours stumbling along the steep southern bank of the lake we reached the tent in a state of fatigue satisfied at length by egg soup, curried fish and stewed bilberries.

Three years later we stood again below that final overhand, this time armed with slings, pitons and a hammer. Despite terrible weather we made good time up the south face and east ridge. Alternating squalls of torrential rain and hot sunlight together with a fierce wind made conditions unfavourable for a second ascent. Gleaming, dripping black slabs steaming in the strong sunlight created a Turkish bath atmosphere before we were plunged once more into the icy breath of another squall. All the while two golden eagles circled the peak slowly. Alas - despite artificial means, standing in slings, we rose only five feet higher and no more. Obviously dry rock and a ladder are called for. Continuing bad weather prevented further assaults, although a quick reconnaissance to the gap between the two summits via a steep snow gully from the north revealed a probable route for the future, possibly the original route. In both our failures we had been compensated by views of the south-west coast stretching down to the Maelstrom. This view alone made both efforts worthwhile.

However, we did climb three other peaks. Mandern's apparently formidable east ridge was without difficulty but very long and is perhaps a first ascent. From the summit the west ridge of Gjertind could be seen in its entirety. The ridge rises out of the sea in an ascending array of pinnacles culminating in the second summit

separated from the summit by a 300 foot gash impossible to reach except by abseiling perhaps. Anstabben was an easy climb but considerably enlivened by gulls and terns dive-bombing us from out of the sun. Stovla to the north has a formidable reputation, although it is difficult to see why. Once found, the climb is straightforward. However the east face boasts a huge amphitheatre flanked by two jagged ridges. After this last ascent, steady rain and a trudge across bogs and rivers ensured we were thoroughly wet by the time camp was reached. The tent having survived two months in Spitsbergen had succumbed to Lofoten rain. It was at this point that the inherent friendliness of the people of A came to the fore. Despite other similar offers we removed camp to Roald Thuv's fishing shack. A fire dried our clothes and milk and sandwiches from his wife filled our stomachs.

The Lofoten people are a most civilised and contented community: is it because of their continuous struggle to live in harmony with a harsh climate; the constant strain of drawing fish from the sea day and night even in the freezing months of the winter; their remoteness from big cities - so called civilisation? Whatever the reason, there is no envy, selfishness or boredom; no teenage problem or outcast of old people. Everyone, whatever his job or means is important. Unfortunately there are signs of the young people moving away from the islands to the big towns like Mo or Narvik, to easy money and excitement other than that of a rough sea. In the islands themselves the other world is infiltrating by means of tape-recorders, transistor radios, winkle-picker shoes and diaphanous chiffon headscarves. But the smooth voices of Elvis and Cliff try in vain to still the raucous screech of seagulls and the thunder of the surf.

Asbjorn Lorenzen was the first person we met; a long-limbed blond Viking, silver medallist in Scandinavian Athletics, now turned fisherman with a wife and three children aged three, two and one. He had spent some years in Gourock on the Clyde and was intensely interested in anything relating to Britain. But could we please explain the Profumo Affair? Who was this Christine Keeler? Needless to say his present opinion of British politicians is fairly low. However, since that particular discussion we have learnt of the Norwegian Government's collapse.

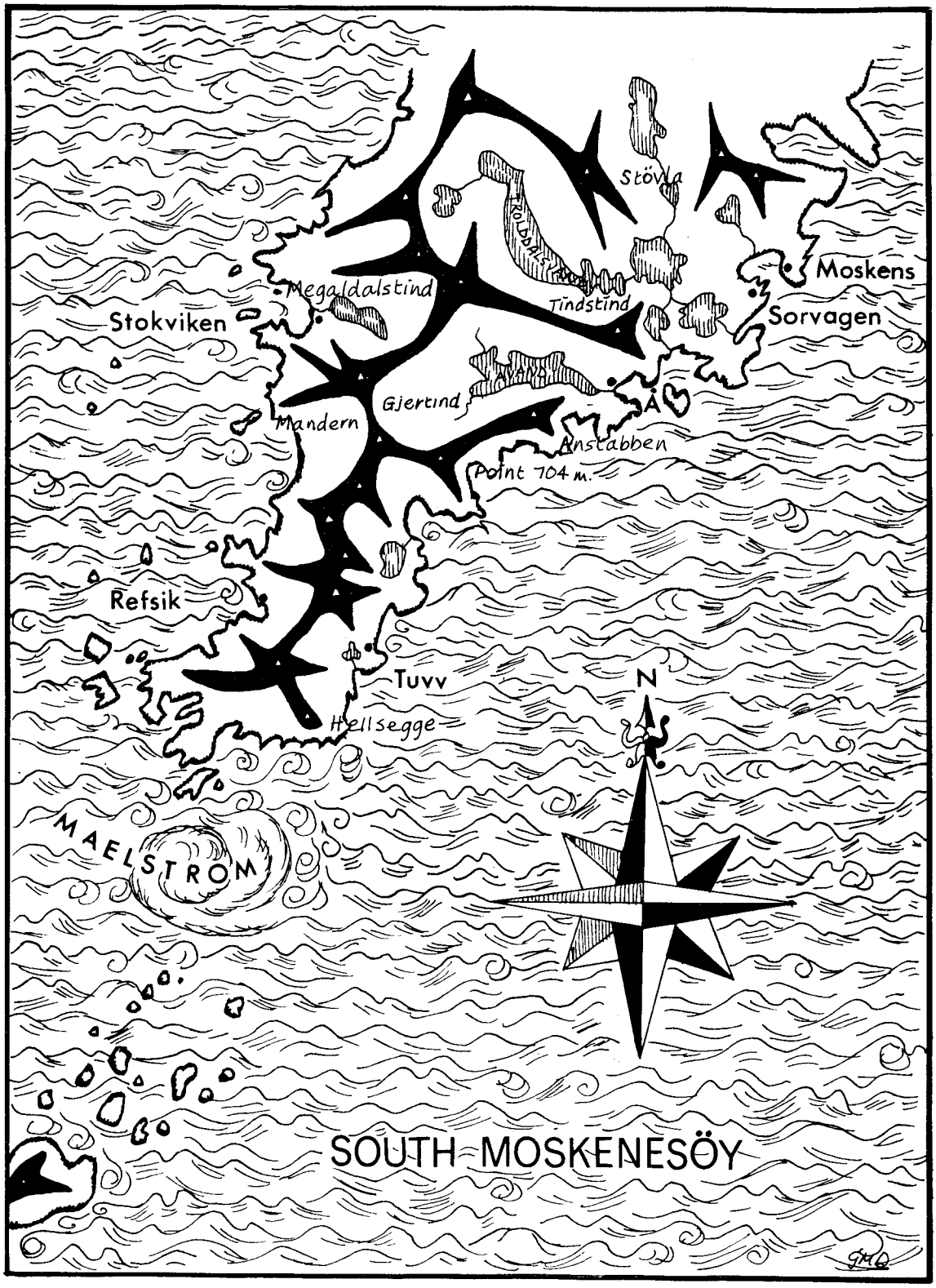
Oddvar Bvedding, Asbjorn's curly headed brother-in-law was equally energetic and had to date seven children. His generosity was also staggering; regularly eggs, fish,

potatoes and wine were brought to the tent regardless of the weather. His English was limited to "Good-day". On hearing I was an artist a slow enigmatic smile creased his brown face, so I don t think the word means the same in Norwegian as in English. Nevertheless all linguistic troubles were overcome one night at a party when illegal home distilled wine was produced out of the cellar. At four a.m. we tottered back to camp hardly aware that a gale, the worst of the year, was blowing.

Roald and Ray Thuv, hardworking fishermen, had crossed the Atlantic during the war in their boat 'Hellsegge' in order to join the Norwegian Resistance. Our visits to their houses were made memorable by the fact that they offered us food other than fish. A huge chocolate cake and rose wine stand out in my memory.

Ellingson the Grocer was the most cod-like person we saw; white, shiny faced, grey-eyed, always immaculately dressed in a light grey overall, he was continually apologising for the lack of variety in the store unless one was prepared to pay extortionate prices. For instance tomatoes were six shillings per pound and tinned fruit seven shillings per tin. It was much better to gather our vitamin C in the form of bilberries and crowberries from the hills. Potatoes, fish and eggs are the usual diet, with thick lentil soup for special occasions.

Vestfiord is the most prolific fishing ground in all Norway. The season starts in February when masses of cod are swept into the channel by the warm waters of the Gulf Stream. In the summer, the slack season, the fish is hung to dry on racks and smells abominable. By night, the smell extinguished, it glows a luminous emerald green. In the afternoon school children are occupied in threading cods heads together in preparation for export to Africa. Fish properly dried resembles wood rotton with woodworm and is eaten raw by tearing strips off it and chewing it like tobacco until it is soft enough to be swallowed. It is considered a great luxury - it is the Lofoten people's main Christmas dish. However, let it be said that there are grades of dried fish. Oddvar s job is to smell it into grades. The best goes to the United States, the mediocre to Italy and the worst to Africa where they are reputed to build huts out of it. Equally obnoxious to our minds were the fish balls and fish cakes produced at the factory, now bankrupt. Even a respectable English cat turned her nose up at them.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MAELSTROM
SOUTH-MOSKENESÖY

On a red September evening we accompanied Roald and Ray on a twelve-hour fishing trip to the Maelstrom. We joined eight other boats from Moskenesoy in Vestfiord. As the last light fled the sky a floating line was flung overboard and we moved slowly north allowing the line to unwind until the net that was attached went over the side. Then we turned in a wide semi-circle and returned to the buoy. Both lines were winched in, drawing the nets first slowly then quickly towards the boat. Several hours of such manoeuvres had little result except for tangled nets and cross words with a neighbour. Roald at last located the fish stream under the cliff of Hellsegge rising sheer above the Maelstrom. Owing to the large number of giant jellyfish brought aboard and the necessity to wear thigh-length boots and leggings which I hadn't got, I was relegated to the galley to brew kettle after kettle of black coffee the consistency of syrup. One hour before sunrise we got under way for A. Tony took the wheel while Roald and Ray gutted the fish, flinging the entrails to the excited gulls following. We returned to camp carrying between us a huge pink halibut that fed us for three days.

To see the controversial whirlpool in action was our last objective on Moskenesoy. It is said to be caused at times of high tide and strong winds when waters from Vestfiord sweeping through the channel between Moskenesoy and the isle of Moskens meet an oncoming flood from the Atlantic. In legend those sucked down find themselves in the Norwegian Atlantis of Utryst. The hero of Edgar Allan Poe's tale 'Descent into the Maelstrom' is supposed to have viewed the turbulance from 'a sheer unobstructed precipice of black shining rock some 1,500 or 1,600 feet from the world of crags beneath. The mountain upon whose top we sit is Hellsegge the Cloudy'. He goes on to describe the whirlpool. 'The edge of the whirlpool was represented by a broad belt of gleaming spray but no particle of this slipped into the mouth of the terrific tunnel whose interior as far as the eye could fathom it was smooth, shining and jet black wall of water inclined to the horizon at an angle of some 45 degrees speeding dizzily and went round with a swaying and sweltering motion and sending forth to the winds an appalling voice, half shriek, half roar such as not even the mighty cataract ever lifts up its agony to Heaven.'

As recently as 1951, K. Westcott Jones took a journey up the Norwegian coast in the month of January. He subsequently wrote a book entitled 'To the Polar Sunrise', one chapter of which is devoted to Maelstroms. His argument

that the Moskenes Maelstrom is a fallacy was based solely on the fact that Poe's cliff was unscaleable. His informants were people living on the mainland at Bodo who had seen the cliff from a distance of twenty miles from the steamer bound for Svolvor. He himself had made no attempt to reach Moskenesoy and speak with the fisherman of A to whom the Maelstrom was hardly a fallacy but something to be avoided except at slack tide and in calm weather.

We persuaded Roald to take us to Tuvv in the south just under the cliffs of Hellsegge. Here Asbjorn had a summer residence which he said we could use. From Hellsegge we rowed ashore between rocks with a heavy sea breaking over them. The summer residence, a shack thirty yards from the shore and half a mile from the lake, was just large enough to house two bunks, a table and bench, a stove and the inevitable tins of coffee beans and coffee grinder. For three hot days we led an idle existence - reaction from past energetic wet ones: we fished in the lake; untangled nets; made jam from bilberries gathered from the hillsides; in the evenings as a huge pink moon rose above the surface of the sea we took the boat out, but there was nothing to compensate for the dangerous passage through the rocks to deep water and we were reduced to eating cockles from the shore. In September darkness comes quickly and we ate our evening meal of rice and fish by the light of a candle. Through the window of the shack we watched the moving panorama of lights from the fishing boats and later on spectacular displays of the northern lights.

On the fourth day we climbed Hellsegge which proved very easy from Tuvv though cliff-bound on the other three sides. A wide mossy gully led to the summit plateau which was broad, flat and covered with red and white spotted toadstools recollecting Grimm's Fairy Tales. At the culminating point was a cairn. We leaned tentatively over the edge of the cliff. The channel lay not 1,500 but 2,400 feet below us. Keeping close to the rocks minute fishing boats were making their way round to the west coast. Despite hot, calm weather and slack tide a strong wind seemed to be whipping the surface of the sea. 'To the right and left as far as the eye could reach there lay outstretched like ramparts of the world lines of horribly black and beetled cliffs whose character of gloom was the more forcibly illustrated by the surf which reared high up against it with white and ghastly crest howling and shrieking for ever. Just opposite the promontory on whose apex we are placed and at a distance of some six miles out to sea there was visible a small, bleak looking island. About two miles nearer the land rose another of smaller size, hideously

craggy and barren and encompassed at various intervals by a cluster or rocks.' This description of Poe's is so exactly that which we saw with our own eyes that it is clear he must have seen the Maelstrom from Hellsegge's summit and was so impressed that the tale, not entirely fictional, resulted from the visit. The story was written well over 130 years ago when maps of the Lofoten were non-existent. Consequently only local people would know that the cliff called Hellsegge was easy to climb from Tuvv though appearing impossible in other aspects. Unfortunately Tony and I had no further opportunity to see the whirlpool in action for the next day we were rescued by the 'Havella' and taken to A. Asbjorn and his wife Mildred met us half way in their own boat and escorted us into the harbour where another small reception awaited us. Next morning, when mist and rain shrouded the mountains, we boarded the 'Rost' for Bodo and from there resumed our journey home.

THE ENGLISHMAN ABROAD

by

John Daffern

To be more specific, I refer to the English climber in the Alps. He is easily distinguished from fellow climbers of other countries, quite apart from dress, language, size of tent and the like. He has habits which are derived from the somewhat haphazard ways that characterise his climbing at home. These ways are perfectly suitable for his local climbing, in fact it is this climbing which has evolved his way of life. There is normally no need in Wales or Lakeland for an early start. A leisurely breakfast, a read of the guide book and a slow amble off to the crag after securing a few biscuits and a bit of chocolate for the day's meal; that is fair enough. But there is a hangover from this attitude when he gets to the Alps. He realises, of course, that he is among big peaks and that early starts are necessary, but however good his intentions he is likely to waste precious time simply because he is not used to hurrying. I hasten to add that this does not include the experienced alpinist and the 'hard man' of today, but it is true of a great many people who decide to go and try their hands at the alpine brand of climbing.

What is the importance of all this? In one word: TIME. Time is the vital factor on a classical alpine peak. The climber must be beyond certain danger points by a certain time of day, or risk being caught by stonefall or avalanche. He is concerned about the changes in the state of the snow, and of snow bridges over crevasses. He needs an allowance of time for change in weather or a mishap, either of which could be most serious when he is a long way from help. Not the least of his worries of a late return must be that of facing an irate hut guardian, who might have put into motion the wheels of an exorbitantly expensive professional rescue.

Let's take a climb then and see where the dangers of time-wasting are lurking. First of all comes the walk to the hut. No one hurries here and rightly so. Another party we will watch is non-English (perhaps Swiss). We will call them 'A' party, which makes us the 'B' party. We have all day for the walk to the hut, carrying a heavy rucksack and energy has to be conserved for the climb next morning. But the time-wasting begins that evening. We dump our gear

on the metratsenlager, take out the food and get a meal; so far so good. 'A' party likewise. But now we diverge. We find the once crowded hut suddenly less crowded. We spread out along the table, chat and perhaps consume a bottle of vino. Someone notices it is getting dark, looks at his watch - 8 p.m. "Goodness, it's early yet". We sit and chat. The guardian seems to be staring at us.

Meanwhile the 'A' party, up to room before dark, all kit carefully sorted out, rucksack packed - 8 p.m. "Goodness, it's late". Into bed, out candle. Later, arrival of 'B' party and general disturbance. Later still all is quiet at last. One of 'A' party becomes suspicious and leans forward and closes the window again.

Next comes the early morning start. The guardian wakes us in the dark. Up gets 'A' party. We, having learnt about early starts, get up too. 'A' party pick up their equipment and disappear downstairs. We get partly dressed and follow hard on their heels. Of course we can't win. We may not take long over our meal, but the odds are that habit will assert itself and breakfast will draw out a little longer. We now, of course, have to go back upstairs and sort equipment - "Where's that glove?" "Curse these candles - they make shadows everywhere." An hour could easily be wasted in this way. 'A' party does not even have to return upstairs; they simply start off.

'A' party makes steady progress up the moraine to the glacier. Here they stop to put on crampons. Length of stop: 4 minutes.

'B' party also make steady progress up the moraine. We stop to put on crampons. Time taken to put on crampons: 4 minutes - good going. Time taken to decide whether to use crampons at this stage: 6 minutes; to wait while someone adjustsstraps: 5 minutes. Length of stop: 15 minutes - which seem like 5.

On the glacier we make steady progress, except for a few stops of 2 or 3 minutes each - one to put away torches as it gets light, one when No.1's gloves need adjusting, and so on. Crevasses occasionally appear in front of the leader without warning and it takes a little time to decide whether to go left or right.

The same sort of thing troubled 'A' party on this section earlier in the day, but there was no call for a stop and the rhythm was maintained. Those little adjustments

were made at the second breakfast place. The leader was always looking well ahead and planning the route, changing course early where a crevasse threatened, and making the many lesser decisions as to the route without loss of time.

We now find it necessary to put on the rope. To uncoiling, sorting out, deciding on positions, amount of rope between climbers and measuring same: 15 minutes. 'A' party have it all worked out beforehand and uncoil and step into predetermined loops: 4 minutes. We are now ready to continue.

If you have been on such a climb you will probably remember this sort of thing happening: No.1 stops "just for a second" say, to adjust an ice axe sling that has got under his glove or become twisted. In a few moments he is ready but then No.2 says "wait a tick" and shortens a rucksack strap. This involves taking off the rucksack and No.3 seeing this, sits on his axe and takes off his rucksack. The leader now notices that there is no hurry for him to be ready to move and engages in the task of cleaning his snow glasses. Somebody brings out some chocolate and throws a piece to each of the others (note they are keen to do it right and stay at rope's length while on a snow-covered glacier). After a few minutes groping in the snow, another piece is thrown and this time reaches its target. After a short bout of photography the party packs up and is ready to move. They may think they stopped for 5 minutes but if they timed themselves they might receive a shock. It could easily have been 20-30 minutes.

Obviously plenty of time can be lost at official stopping places without realising it, and our party is no exception, but it is the less obvious wastage of time that we are more concerned with here. The next question is how long do we take between the end of the break and the starting off? With 'A' party both these events happen together, simply because as each one stopped so the rope was neatly coiled and sitting places arranged so that no-one did any stepping-over of ropes. I have seen antics from parties trying to extricate from second breakfast stops and disentangle themselves that would have made any music hall double-act green with envy.

No comes what is often the part of the climb in which a great amount of time is lost by English parties. Moving roped together over fairly easy rocks is where lack of practice shows up most of all. 'B' party are slow, moving jerkily, one person or another always seems to be holding

up the proceedings. Whenever things get steeper there is a tendency to move one at a time. This is only due to lack of practice and to the use of methods which are correct to use at home. However, different mountain ranges require different techniques, and in the Alps one of the safety rules is speed.

We pause half-way up the rocks to pass a cheery word to 'A' party who, telling us it is not far to the top, bound onwards and downwards to the hut.

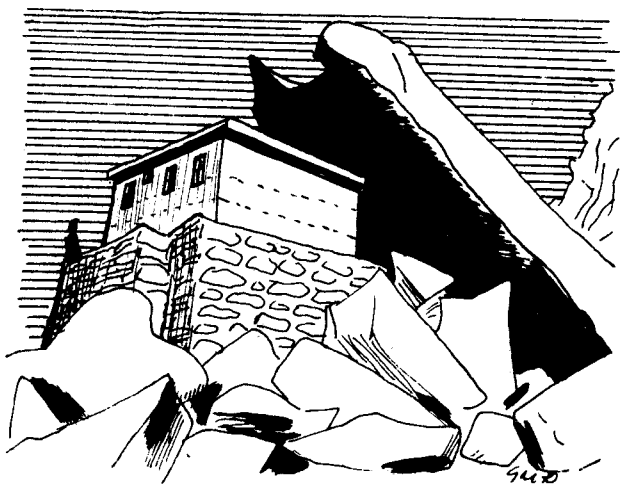
We will now give ourselves our due, for next comes a couple of harder pitches on which we feel really at home. Actual climbing time for party: perhaps 15 minutes; for 'A' party it took as much as 30. Belay fixing, lengthening of rope, sorting, etc. - 'B' party: 20 minutes; 'A': 5.

The rest of the story is similar. The descent involves an even greater loss of time owing again to lack of practice of this necessary art. There is even more one-at-a-time movement and fixed belays seem to be needed on many more occasions.

The above is an imaginary climb by persons of low Alpine standard and I am not suggesting that any party makes all these mistakes, merely that the dangers are there. It represents the ascent of a high peak by a route of about 'Peu Difficile' grade. The guide book time may be 5 hours up and 3 down. A summary of these times would work out like this:

Ascent		Approximate loss of time
a)	Scheduled departure	1.00
b)	Fixing crampons	.10
c)	Halts on glacier	.15
d)	Roping up	.10
e)	Second breakfast	.15
f)	Moving off again	.10
g)	Moving together	1.00
		3.00
Descent		
b) c) d) e) and f) g)		1.00 1.30
	Total	5.30 hours

Therefore, to the guide book time of 8 hours one adds time for normal stops - say 2 hours, plus the above 5½ hours, equals 15½ hours. This must bring one's return close to evening, with little or no allowance for the unexpected, no allowance for slow moving on deteriorated snow and no margin of safety where objective dangers are concerned. I have known many parties like the 'B' party but if you check guide books and find, for instance, that you equal or beat their times for walking up to a hut but do not equal their times for a climb, then there is something wrong; so look out!



F I R S T I M P R E S S I O N S

by

Joe Brennan

Late one Friday night two figures, weighed down with huge sacks, left Llandudno station and headed towards the low hills along the coast past Conway. This was to be our first weekend camping, our first introduction to the hills. The previous week, bored with the repetitious trivialities, we had suddenly thought of camping and so, after borrowing the required amount of money, bought a tent, a spirit stove and two rail tickets to Llandudno.

It took us two hours to pitch the tent that night. We had not thought of such things as a torch, a groundsheet or knots in the guy lines. Our food was sufficient for only one day. Fortunately the weather that weekend could not have been better and the sight of huge mysterious mountains further inland was enough to stimulate our imaginations and make us forget our discomforts. These mountains we would have to visit and explore for ourselves.

That was the beginning. Other weekends followed in which we learned a little about mountains and the art of camping. It was later that we became interested in climbing as something to make up for the feelings of disappointment when the mountains of reality failed to measure up to the mountains of imagination. We went in search of a country that was wild, untamed and beautiful. Our heads were filled with the romantic ideas that the imagination conceives before experience can curb its wilder wanderings. It was inevitable that we were to be disillusioned. We did not go to the mountains to see the crowds of sensation seekers in the Llanberis Pass or to hear the noise of the Snowdon Railway that destroys the peace of the mountains on a fine summer's day. It was a shock to find the mountains so popular and the crowds so hard to escape. However, all was not a disappointment for we did find occasional tranquillity and a land that was certainly beautiful. But the image of large areas of wild country, free from the sights and sounds of civilisation, which in our ignorance we had sought, was not realised.

Therefore, denied the pleasures of visiting and living for short periods in such a land, we turned to rock climbing. This sport certainly seemed to have the

excitement and challenge that the mountain areas themselves could not provide for us, criss-crossed as they were with roads and other works of man.

We learned how to use a rope and how to trace the lines of weakness up the cliffs that before had seemed so featureless and terrifying. They were no longer the playground of madmen. The jargon of the rock climber began to have meaning. A whole new world was opened; the feeling of satisfaction after completing the hard move, the overcoming of what was to us difficult rock, of gaining height and looking out over the hills from what seemed vantage points in the very sky itself. It was only now that our satisfaction was complete; the mountains could be climbed, their crags scaled and places could be visited that were previously inaccessible to us. We were getting to know the mountains in their every aspect. We began to understand the meaning of the phrase "freedom of the hills".

As the months passed, so our appreciation of the mountains grew deeper. Moments were experienced that will live long in memory; the sudden brief glimpse of a valley through the mist; a day spent climbing in the shadow of Sron na Ciche and the view, on reaching the crest of the ridge, of the Outer Hebrides silhouetted against the last rays of the setting sun. It is moments such as these, as pleasant in recollection as in actual experience, that help to give mountaineering a depth and raise it above the merely physical aspect of the sport that some rock climbers cannot or do not wish to see beyond.

Gradually, as this world of mountaineering becomes known, small doubts began to grow - doubts about ourselves and other climbers. Had we really captured the true spirit of the sport? Did we not sometimes enjoy climbing on the cliffs of Llanberis in front of the gaping tourists who seem so much a part of the place in summer? Was self-glorification part of the attraction of mountaineering? There seemed a remarkably high proportion of climbers whose interest in mountains extended no further than the rocks they climbed on. One could only suppose that their enthusiasm would endure only as long as their youth.

But these thoughts are small when compared with the whole. From mountaineering we receive satisfaction, fulfilment, challenge and something worth striving for in the improvement of our standards, however modest these may be.

CLIMBING OUT OF CREVASSE, SPITSBERGEN G.Daffern.

MOUNTAINEERING IN SPITSBERGEN

by

Tony Daffern

It was the search for unclimbed peaks, in a reasonably accessible area, which took us to Spitsbergen.

West Spitsbergen is the largest island in the archipelago of Svalbard, and is situated approximately halfway between northern Norway and the North Pole. It is a land of snow, ice and rock; the slowly receding glaciers carving long mountain ridges which are broken up by the frost into a succession of crazy, toppling pinnacles and treacherous scree slopes.

The climate, in spite of the high latitude of seventy degrees, is relatively mild during the summer months and in spring the pack ice is driven back to expose the whole of the coastline. For four months the sun never sets and combined with the warm southerly winds can raise the temperature to as much as seventy degrees Fahrenheit.

We were a party of six: Harold Manison, Mollie Taplin and myself from Birmingham, Gillean Howarth and Jim Kershaw from Manchester and Joe Porter from Loughborough. We spent seven weeks climbing and travelling in an area of North West Spitsbergen to the south of Magdalena Bay which had been visited only once before by an Austrian climbing party in 1925, which climbed a number of peaks to the north of the bay. The interior was almost untouched and good maps and information unobtainable.

We travelled to Tromso via Bergen where, after four hectic hours ashore, we sailed along with two physiological expeditions on the S.S. Lyngen for Spitsbergen. The Lyngen was a small, friendly ship and the crossing calm and uneventful. We created rather a bad impression the first night on board when, owing to a slight linguistic misunderstanding, we ordered twice as much of the fizzy and expensive Norwegian beer as we really wanted and spent most of the night finishing it off. After two days we arrived in Longyearby, residence of the Governor and the largest settlement. Two days later we sailed into Magdalena Bay.

The Bay is six miles long by two miles wide and is surrounded by groups of peaks, separated one from another

by glaciers Many of the glaciers are inactive and have withdrawn a few hundred yards from the shore, leaving behind piles of dirty glacial debris. The others are still active and end in magnificent ice cliffs which rise a hundred and fifty feet or more from the water in a maze of shattered, tottering pinnacles Every few minutes with groanings and gratings several tons of ice fall into the water causing tidal waves to reach the shore near our camp two miles away. In hot weather the turquoise waters of the bay would be littered with glassy blue icebergs gradually drifting out to sea with the tides.

The main feature of the bay was the Waggonway Glacier. Two miles wide and very heavily crevassed in its lower half it stretches some nine miles inland to become lost in the vast snowfield which feeds the numerous glacier systems of the area. The Waggonway was so named because rocks falling from the ridges in an upper cwm of the Losvik range are carried down by the glacier in two parallel lines which, when viewed from a distance, give the impression of cart tracks.

There was no Arctic Stillness in Magdalena Bay. Apart from the noise of the falling ice there was a constant screeching of Seagulls, Guillimots and Little Auks to be joined later by a pair of Arctic Skuas and a flock of Arctic Terns. The Lyngen anchored in the lee of a small promontory on the south side of the bay called Trinity Point. This landing place is the burial ground for trappers and seamen who lost their lives on this coast. Most of the bones from the very shallow graves have been buried under a stone memorial erected in their memory.

After dinner on board we were landed by the Lyngen s motor boat together with our two thousand pounds of stores and equipment, and set up our base camp in the shelter of an enormous rock called Deadman's Stone.

A few hours later, just after midnight and in brilliant sunshine, the Lyngen slipped out of the Bay leaving us over a hundred miles from civilisation.

Our first object was to find a route into the interior along which we could take five weeks' supply of food and

equipment. With this in mind Mollie, Joe and Jim set out the next day to investigate a route which we had spotted during a trip round the bay in the Lyngen's motor launch. The rest of the party remained to complete the setting up of Base Camp.

The route which resulted from this reconnaissance followed the shore line of the bay over a chaos of large boulders for nearly two miles and then climbed up the side of a steep lateral moraine to the Franklin Glacier. At the beginning of our stay the glacier was covered by a foot of hard snow which allowed them to reach a col in an hour and a half, which gave a good view of an easy route into the interior across a large crevasse-free snowfield.

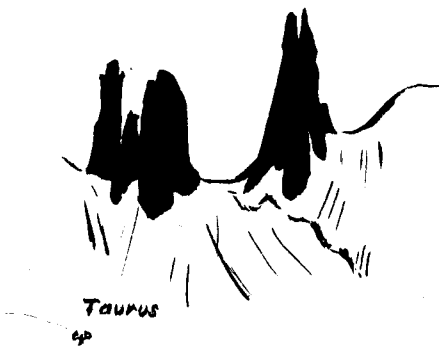
As there was very little point in going any further inland at this stage, it was decided to climb one of the peaks flanking the col. Easy scree slopes led to a top with three pinnacles. A cairn was built on the highest of the three and the peak named Jabberwocke after the Alice-in-Wonderland character. From the top there was a fine view of the interior and of hundreds of tempting peaks.

The next day Jim and Joe started to make two sledges out of driftwood and packing cases (the ones we had ordered had not been delivered on time). The rest of the party explored the area to the south-east of the camp, the objective being a prominent peak believed to be unclimbed and which would give a clear view of the interior peaks which we planned to climb on future days. We started out for this peak about mid-day and took a route which led up one side of the Gully Glacier, ice cliffs to the glacier. In contrast with the Franklin Glacier it was very crevassed with a good covering of soft snow. Harold, the 'Crevasse King' went through to his waist several times.

There was no reasonable way up the peak on the side we were approaching so we travelled round on snow to the south and tackled a very steep scree slope which led to the top of the summit ridge. The scree was very loose and we climbed in line abreast to avoid knocking boulders down on each other. We were glad to reach the ridge which we followed to the summit, climbing over or traversing round numerous spectacular pinnacles. On the top we built a cairn and then, with the help of a plane table, identified the surrounding peaks on our map and made sketches of likely routes up the more impressive ones.

The mountains typify a country still undergoing

glaciation. Spitsbergen is as we would have imagined Norway to have been ten thousand years ago. The country is divided by the more important glaciers into a series of large mountain masses each with its own system of peaks, ridges and smaller glaciers. All the glaciers are receding and many are no longer active. They lie dormant in the valleys, their surfaces scarred by melt streams instead of crevasses, the snouts disappearing into a mess of boulders and mud. The snow on the surface melts completely during the summer months leaving bare ice which makes sledging very difficult.



The higher mountains and those further inland have permanent snow on the top, while those near the coast remain bare during the summer. In many cases the actual summit is in the form of a rock pinnacle protruding from the summit snows.

Much of the rock we encountered was loose and friable, forming shattered and sharp rock ridges and endless scree slopes. The ridges were broken up into countless pinnacles with deep gaps between them and sharp drops on either side. These pinnacled ridges, though providing exciting climbing, were not the easiest or quickest way to the summit and many hours could be wasted in attempting them.

Snow-filled gullies proved to be the easiest and safest way up most of the mountains. The snow was nearly always firm enough to kick steps in and occasionally hard enough to need crampons. Most of the snow had been in the gullies since spring; there was little danger of avalanching and at no time did we see a snow slope in a dangerous condition in this part of Spitsbergen. Falling stones from the ridges were a source of danger but fortunately were far less frequent than expected.

The reconnaissance over, our next job was to move our five weeks' supply of food and equipment to the temporary camp we planned to establish on the col at the head of the Franklin Glacier. This had to be done in two stages; first by manpacking to the edge of the glacier and then by sledge to the top. The manpacking was by far the worst job and it would take as long as two and a half hours to cover the two miles of loose, steep boulders. We became quite expert at boulder-hopping with a heavy load, using a pair

of skis, tied across the top of the load tightrope-walker fashion to keep in balance. However, this was a dangerous practice and we could not afford to risk a broken limb with help so far away. Harold, the strong man of the party, took the two heaviest items, our sledges, across the boulders.

During this period two of the party succeeded in locating a suitable inland camp site about five hours unladen time from the base, at the foot of a peak called Kaffetoppen. Later Joe, Gill and myself, carrying the Base Tent and fuel, skied to the site and established camp.

One morning we were surprised to see a large white luxury liner sail into the bay. It proved to be the Ariadni, a German cruiser which visited Iceland, the Pack Ice, Spitsbergen and Norway. Our first visitor was the official photographer who was about the only person not to take a photograph of us. He was followed closely by the ship's doctor who, having scrutinised us carefully, gave the go-ahead for the landing of about two hundred passengers. For the next hour or two we had no peace. I know now what a caged animal must feel like. The tourists offered us chocolates and oranges and must have wasted hundreds of feet of film. Harold, never missing an opportunity, quickly made friends with a director of a German beer company, who asked if we were short of any supplies. A crate of beer was duly sent ashore. Another of Harold's acquaintances, a member of the crew, invited us back on board and we were given a meal of ham and spinach in the crew's quarters. In spite of their friendliness we were glad to see them go.

On a rest day from manpacking two more peaks were climbed. First a prominent peak overlooking the Waggonway Glacier at the southwest end of the bay. The summit was reached with little difficulty from the Franklin Glacier, but due to bad weather suddenly coming down, the prominent pinnacle overlooking the bay was never climbed. As the peak was one of the main features of the bay it was decided to name it Magdalena Peak. The second peak was to the south of the camp and the summit consisted of two peaks joined by a short ridge. The ridge was reached by a snow gully on its northern side, and the higher of the two summits ascended by the way of the narrow, broken ridge. The lower of the two summits looked very difficult as the summit consisted of a very large, smooth, twisted granite block. It was observed that this mountain, named Ripsaw because of its jagged shape, could be climbed more easily from the south.

N. W. SPITSBERGEN
LIEFDE BAY
MONACO GLACIER
Le Mur
Le Moine
Red Pike
GLACIER LOUET
Chaine de Lapparente
LILLIEHOOK GLACIER
Suilven
GLACIER BEQUEREL
SMEERENBURG GL.
Loovik Mts
WAGGONWAY GLACIER
Petterson mts
Kaffitoppen
Mt Rotges
FRANKLIN GL.
Tabberwack
Bandersnatch
Lyngen P.
Molar
Frucostind
Reindeer Peak
Ripsaw
GULLY GLACIER
Snow Idon
No. 7. GLACIER
No. 6. GLACIER
MAGDALENA BAY
▲ - CAMPS

At last we were ready to move to the col camp. Our first attempt at sledging was a failure. After spending a considerable time loading the sledge and lashing everything firmly on, we took up our pulling positions and heaved. The sledge ran for a few feet and turned on its side, spilling its contents on the snow. First lesson learned: don't try and start off with the sledge lying across a slope. We reduced the load by half, lashed it on more firmly and started off again. This time we were successful, though the sledge was still overloaded. By the time we had taken two loads up the glacier it was obvious that we were in for some bad weather.

We had been lucky in choosing one of the hottest years for a long time and had few really bad days. The weather alternated between fine and stormy periods with great regularity, though the fine periods became shorter and shorter as the time went on. At first we had over a week of really glorious weather, then three or four bad days were followed by another shorter period of fine weather. In good weather fog, formed by the dying Gulf Streat meeting the cold Arctic Ocean, could be seen above the sea a few miles from land. If this dispersed and we could see the horizon then we knew that the bad weather would be with us in about twenty-four hours.

We were confined to the camp on the col for three days during which most of our gear got wet. On the afternoon of the third day three of us climbed the peak opposite Jabberwocke by a most enjoyable snow gully on the northern side. We descended down easy scree slopes to the camp. This peak we named Bandersnatch.

The next two days of mixed weather we spent drying out, mending a broken sledge and in taking two loads of food to the Kaffetoppen base. We had one more day's climbing from col camp, and two parties climbed a total of three peaks. From one peak, a conspicuous pinnacle, we saw the Lyngen steam into the bay on her fortnightly visit and decided to name it Lyngen Pinnacle. We hoped the First Mate would remember to pick up the post from our post box, which was probably the most northerly one in the world at that time. As with most ships in similar services, the Lyngen was a floating post office having her own franking stamp. The summit was

very small and sharp and we had great difficulty in building a cairn. The descent was down steep slabs to an almost level ridge of snow, which we followed south to the main summit, Reindeer Peak, where we built an enormous cairn. I stopped for a while on this summit and wrote a postcard to Eric Byne. Another addition to his expedition correspondence album. The cairn we built seems to have been overlooked by a party of Swiss climbers who climbed the peak some weeks later and named it the Briethorn. From the summit we could see across to the peak opposite, a spectacular snow peak with a very fine eastern ridge, and were amazed to see three tiny black figures moving diagonally upwards across a very steep snow face towards the summit. Shortly afterwards the mist came down and we did not see our friends reach the summit of this fine peak named Molar.

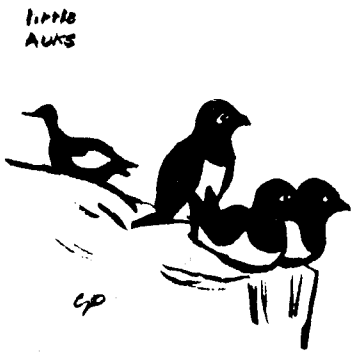
From col camp we decided to set up a temporary camp at the foot of the Losvik range, the largest group in the area. As the heavily crevassed Waggonway Glacier had to be crossed we only took enough food for a short stay, leaving the rest behind in one tent on the col. The crossing of the glacier proved easier than we had anticipated, the only obstacle being a steep snow bank about a hundred feet high, down which we lowered the sledges mountain rescue fashion. We sledged directly across the glacier parallel to the crevasses, which were just visible and set up camp in a small cwm looking directly down the Waggonway to Magdalena Bay. It was here that we had our first experience of camping on ice. To put a tent up it was necessary to use a peg hammer. This had the effect of splitting our bulldog pegs down the middle; though once in they felt really firm. Unfortunately the effect of the sun and the tension in the guy lines forced them out of the ice within a few hours and the peg hammer had to be used again for knocking them in. Another effect was that, as the ice on the glacier melted, the tent would be left on a pedestal several inches high. The poles would tend to sink into the ice, even though they were placed on large stones, reducing the headroom in the tent by about a foot. The only remedy was to move the tent every few days.

The first peak we climbed from this camp we called Lucifer because of its twin-horned summit. It was a straightforward ascent, first up snow slopes and then on rock, and gave us the opportunity of examining the northern side of Mount Losvik. It was quite obvious from the steep rock and hanging glaciers that this side would not go. The next day we made our first attempt on the peak, choosing a steep snow gully leading to a sharply pinnacled

ridge about a quarter of a mile from the summit. When we eventually reached the ridge we found the going very difficult and eventually had to abseil into an ice gully to get ourselves out of an awkward spot. As we had been going about twelve hours we decided to retreat down this gully. After several hundred feet of steep ice we emerged in a large snow gully leading on to the southern ridge of the mountain; a possible way to the summit which we decided to try the next day. The following day was fine and Jim, Gill and myself reached the ridge, via the snow gully, in three hours. This ridge was much easier and a dozen rope lengths and a steep thirty-foot crack led on to the summit block. In a small rusty tin on the top we found the names of a German expedition which had climbed the peak on the 20th August 1925, and added our own names. The Germans had named the peak Monte Dolores.

During the next few days four more peaks, all in the Losvik range, were climbed and named Castle Peak, Taurus, Aries and Avalanche Peak. The latter was so named after Jo and Gill who had climbed it, had a very narrow escape from falling rocks while descending a gully.

During the first part of our stay we were always accompanied on our climbs by a host of small birds known to ornithologists as Little Auks, and nicknamed by us, Idiot Birds. They are short, dumpy, featureless birds, black except for a white shirt front; their black, beady eyes being hardly distinguishable from the rest of the head. They would squat on sloping ledges watching us as we climbed and often, looking up, we would see several rows of them following our movements with apparent interest. As we approached they would slither off, fall a few feet until they became airborne and then fly round and round in ever decreasing circles, chuntering continuously. Every so often they would try to frighten us away by a very realistic imitation of falling stones, which they produced by a small flock of them flying very fast down the gully and missing our heads by a few inches.



Having climbed the main peaks in the Losvik Range it was time for us to move on to the camp at Kaffetoppen, and it was on the journey there that we had the expedition's only accident. Three of us were dragged by a heavily laden

sledge sixty feet into a crevasse. The trouble began when, sledging across a bare ice surface, one of the sledge runners broke, with the effect that every time we hit soft snow the sledge would stick and would have to be lifted out. This slowed us down a good deal and the rest of the party had gained several hundred yards when the mist came down. The accident occurred crossing a large snow bridge. The sledge stuck and when Harold went back to free it, broke through the snow and both he and the sledge fell into the crevasse, pulling Gill and myself in with it. We were literally 'plucked into the crevasse' and had no time to use the quick release straps on our sledging harness. Fortunately we landed on a snow ledge about halfway down the crevasse, our only injuries being minor scratches and bruises. The inside of the crevasse was very beautiful. Behind us was an overhanging wall of blue-green ice, with water continually dripping from huge icicles poised threateningly above our heads. In front was a wall of soft snow, which over the years had fallen into the crevasse and which was now draped by a cloak of ice formed by the melting water. Above us the hole in the pure white snow dome, through which we had fallen, let in occasional streaks of sunlight which penetrated the depths as if in a sun worshippers' temple. Below, the crevasse continued downwards, changing in colour from green to dark blue until the bottom was lost in a line of inky black. On either side the crevasse stretched out, an endless chasm, from five to twenty feet wide at our level, festooned with icicles and draped with loose snow. An awe inspiring sight.

Though we were not to know, our friends were lost in the mist, and we had to get ourselves out. This was achieved at one of the narrower points by back and footing: on one side the smooth ice wall and on the other loose snow. It took five and a half hours for the three of us to get out and haul up all the gear which could be salvaged. The sledge we left behind and we manpacked as much gear as we could manage to Kaffetoppen. After living and travelling among crevasses for several weeks we had tended to become over-confident and not quite as careful as we might have been, and it was this feeling, just like moving over easy ground at the end of the day, which led to this accident. For the rest of the trip we revised our sledging procedure and arranged to release our sledging harnesses very quickly if necessary.

From Kaffetoppen we climbed a shapely peak opposite the camp by an easy snow gully. As we climbed this early one morning we called it Frucostind, Norwegian for Breakfast Peak.

For the last two weeks of our stay we decided to split up into two parties. One party was to climb peaks to the north and east of the Lillihook Glacier, while the other was to take the remaining sledge and travel as far inland as possible and climb any interesting peaks on the way. As both parties were to be away from base for twelve days and all their food and equipment would have to be taken with them, a whole day was spent repacking and paring down the weight. The climbing party left at nine o'clock one evening shouldering enormous packs.

One of the features of climbing in the Arctic is that there is no fear of being benighted. On a fine day the sun shines for twenty-four hours and often the best time to climb is at night when the sun is at its lowest and the snow firm. We slept well, but I don't think quite as heavily as usual, as we found that whatever time we turned in or however hard a day we had, we would sleep for twelve hours.

The climbing party climbed a total of ten peaks on the seven days the weather was fit for climbing. One of the best peaks was Swithland, which involved several hundred feet of step cutting up a steep ice gully topped by a large cornice. The face rises from about 500 feet above sea level to a height of 3,300 feet.

The sledging party set out the following morning in brilliant sunshine and made good time on crisp snow, reaching the Lillihook Glacier with very little difficulty. About half-way across the glacier, which was very crevassed, the mist suddenly came down. To navigate in such weather, amongst the maze of crevasses, was almost impossible, so we sat down and brewed up. After an hour the mist was thicker, so we picked the widest possible space between two very large snow-covered crevasses and pitched our tents. We were there for two days.

At last the mist lifted and we probed our way cautiously across two miles of glacier. A small subsidiary glacier took us over a pass in the Chaine de Laparente to the head of the Louet Glacier. Down below was the vast Monaco Glacier, the largest in the area, which we had hoped to cross. As we were behind schedule we left the sledge and our packs in a prominent position at the top of the Louet Glacier and went down to the Monaco Glacier, where we took photographs and made sketches of the peaks around us.

We made one abortive attempt to climb a peak, the Moine (Monk), on the sledging trip, and because of thick

mist ended up on the top of a spectacular rocky pinnacle about half a mile from the summit of the Moine and about five hundred feet lower. The only way down was the way we had come up, and as the weather was worsening we had to abandon our attempt. The Moine was climbed by the climbing party a few days later from the Lillihook Glacier side.

Several days of bad weather followed and we started back for base. The Chaine de Laparente was re-crossed by a high snow col to the north of the Moine, the passage further north being blocked by a narrow, jagged, vertical wall of rock between three and five hundred feet high called Le Mur. Travelling quickly on firm snow we made unexpectedly good time across the snowfields and passing north of the Set de Seu, camped for the night within half a day's journey of Kaffetoppen. Fortunately we had a day to spare as it snowed heavily all the following day. Our first snowfall.

The weather was a little better when we rose the next morning and we started out hoping that the mist would clear. It did clear long enough for us to see that our proposed route was not feasible and for us to find an alternative route that was. We came down the glacier between the Kaffetoppen and the Petterson groups in thick mist and had great difficulty in locating our camp. The others arrived back a day late, causing us some anxiety, and we started to make our preparations for moving back to Magdalena Bay.

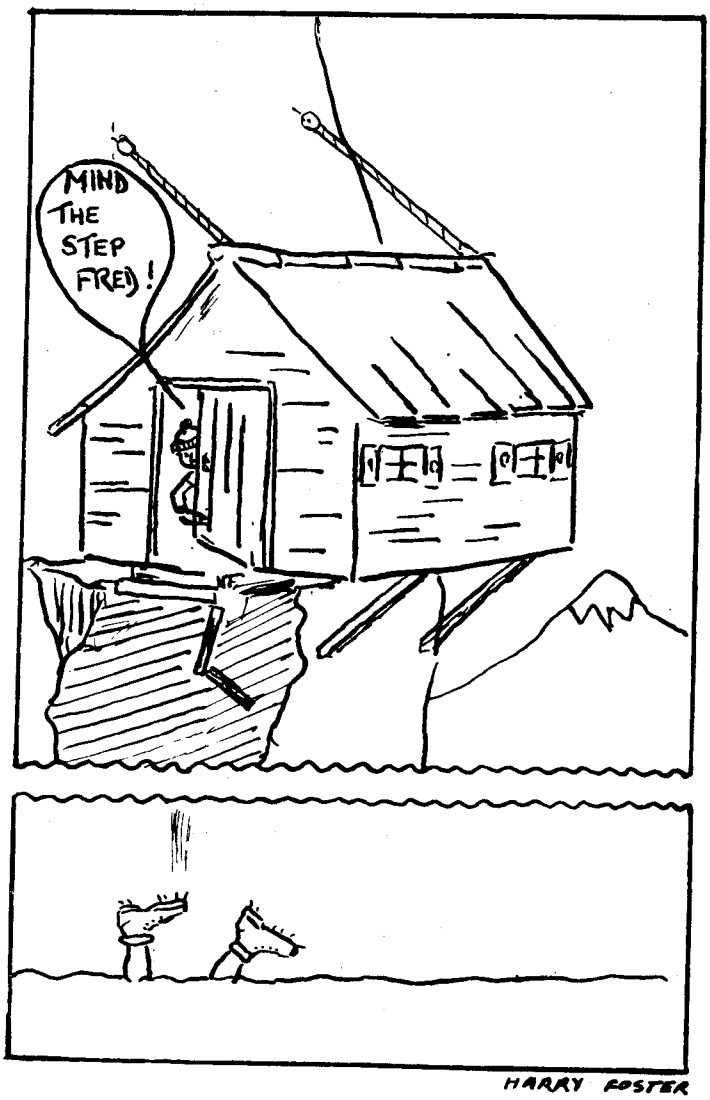
When we arrived back at base we found that a Swiss Expedition had arrived at the bay and set up camp on the promontory. There was no one at home then, but two nights later some of the members returned from inland. They had hired a rowing boat which they used to get to the peaks on the other side of the bay. We exchanged greetings and invited them to our tents for a brew and ships biscuits. They in turn invited us to a meal the following evening. We sent Mollie across to ask if we could borrow their boat for the night. She was offered a cupful of brown liquid which she, not knowing it was rum, swigged back in two large gulps. Surprised and impressed, they lent us the boat. Four of us, starting at 4.30 a.m., rowed across the bay and climbed a peak called Mount Rotages, possible a second ascent. We arrived back at camp about noon, breakfasted, and then had a few hours sleep until it was time to dine with the Swiss.

The next day the Lyngen sailed into the bay and we began our journey home.

SLEDGING IN SPITSBERGEN G. Daffern.

List of First Ascents

Suggested Name		Approximate height in feet
Jabberwocke	(Presguile Hoel Range)	2,130
Bandersnatch	" " "	2,050
Snowdon	" " "	2,210
Magdalena Peak	" " "	2,740
Ripsaw	" " "	2,560
Molar	" " "	2,970
Lyngen Pinnacle	" " "	2,120
Reindeer Peak	" " "	2,550
Frokost	" " "	3,100
Lucifer	(Losvik Mountains)	3,050
Monte Dolores (2nd Ascent)	"	3,540
Castle Peak	" "	2,640
Avalanche Peak	" "	2,415
Aries	" "	
Taurus	" "	2,910
Suilven		2,900
Swithland		3,180
Wenlock	(Chaine de Lapparente)	3,280
Red Pike	" " "	3,740
Charnwood	" " "	3,130
Malvern	" " "	3,380
Mendip	" " "	3,320
Mount Worthington	" " "	2,980
Mount Dilemna	" " "	
Le Moine (2nd Ascent)	" " "	4,000
Mount Rotages (2nd Ascent)	(Presguile Reusch Range)	2,660


MIND THE STEP FRED!
HARRY FOSTER

A PEAK IN THE DAUPHINE

by

Tony Fowler

"Just a short slog up yon peak tomorrow - ideal practice for a hard day the next day - says 'difficile' in the book of words."

So begins the sad tale of the five foolish foreigners - or the 'faux pas de cinq grimpeurs'. The good book provided a glowing, if meaningless, description of the route complete with sketch - the whole route could be seen from the front of the Refuge - assuming we had the right peak! The route indicated a late start and an early completion with easy work in between. "Oh! How are the mighty going to be fallen!"

Cheered by the thought of an enjoyable, short, easy route in promised good weather, the party purchased a couple of bottles of some exceptionally 'ordinaire vin' that evening and consumed it with speed after the evening 'nosh-up'. True to form, the more 'vin' downed the shorter became the route for the following day until, at a reasonably early alpine hour when we retired to our communal bed, it seemed that the following day's route would take about three to four hours to complete - a pleasant doddle!

With this in mind we sank into a deep 'vin-assisted' sleep, not stirring even for the odd bodies bundling into our communal bed - let it be said that the 'vin' worked wonders with Anglo-French relations, usually strained around dossing time.

"Curses on the early birds - twittering at this unearthly hour" - a heaving duvet seen by the light of a torch, a muttered French oath with a strong English accent! The clanking of crabs and axes, tramping of feet on boards, the slam of a door, then silence and back to sleep for our valiant grimpeurs.

Around 7 a.m. these brave intrepid Englishmen struggle out of their bags, dress - impeccable as ever - to prepare for their easy day, only to find that one of the party is down with the dreaded "Dauphinoise mal-de-tum-tum', and feels that to leave the safety of the Refuge would prove inconvenient, perhaps even disastrous. Undismayed, the remaining five press on, struggling, fighting every inch

of the way, until they reach the door of the Refuge, then onwards and upwards. Two hours later, having made a completely new track up the mountainside, they reach the snow - about one hour after the sun!

Crisp firm snow, perfect for kicking steps in - not so lucky our gallant grimpeurs - they plough up through the soft soggy pudden-like mass, steps are out, it's a trench right up to the top that's needed. The kindly sun, shedding its warming rays on our already overheated grimpeurs, serves to bring them nicely to the boil.

"Hell, will this snow slope never finish?" Three or four steps, a pause to sweat, then on again - "easy day be d....d." Now Fairy Feet takes the lead - of all the crafty so and so's - you step into his footprints and through you go, up to your yob-hat in soft mushy snow. A glance upwards - the col still seems a mile away - if only the sun would go in or the breeze get up. Anoraks round waists, ropes chaffing shoulders - blessed relief - off yob-hats and the little breeze there is cools the fevered brow. What looks like a trace of a yawning crevasse is crossed direct, to avoid a tiresome slog around it. Relief once more, now the zig-zag upward route relieves the right leg and places the strain on the left, but the relief doesn't last - worrying as to whether or not the muscles are already torn to shreds takes up another hundred feet and then the col at last.

Five sweating, groaning, mumbling figures sink down in the snow of the col - gasping for breath and mumbling curses into their whiskers, they rest. After five minutes or so, each having suitably impressed his neighbour as to his state of fatigue, the figures stir and begin to look around - one slowly meanders to the other side of the col to admire the view and squats down on the lip of a beautiful snow cornice, from which advantageous position he showers invective on several microscopic dots barely moving over the glacier below him. Feeling thus relieved, he rumages in his British type sac for a gourd and chocs, and on finding them is immediately joined by four apparently half-starved mountain friends - ignoring the cornice in their quest for food and drink.

Soon, however, the party move off - ever upwards, though slowly now, as each picks his own way from one 'bastion of tot' to the next. The good book says 'rochers faciles et mauvais' - which roughly translated would seem to be - 'the rocks are easy when they are stationary'. Problems abound, but in retrospect who could withhold a

chortle at the sight of one of our valiant grimpeurs, scaling nimbly up a 'roche mauvaise' which is on its way to the glacier. Consternation amongst his four mountain friends - our earthbound grimpeur has the gourd and chocs! Ah! - he leaps from his 'roche mauvaise' pleasantly surprised to find his new perch holds firm - then once more upwards to rejoin his four mountain friends.

Along the ridge, decayed and crumbling, up and over a gendarme, too totty to linger on - onwards along the ridge, leaving the gendarme swaying in the breeze. Three of the party trot on ahead, leaving the remaining pair to travel at their own pace, bombarded by dust and rocks from above. Not far now to the summit - here the ridge loses itself in the flank of the mountain, as do our two groping grimpeurs. "Hark! Can it be the gurgle of a gourd?" Our two wandering friends follow the sounds of gurgling and munching and eventually come upon their feeding friends, before whom they prostrate themselves in a plea for 'vin' and chocs.

By now the sun is high and our five valiant souls lie sunning themselves, completely oblivious it seems to the passing of time or of the problems facing them in descent. The hut can be seen down in the valley, the view is wonderful, the sun warm and the air still - peace reigns on the mountain top. One thing only serves to stir our friends from their siesta - the ever-decreasing size of their resting place - every deep breath serves to dislodge yet another piece from their lofty perch, comprised as it is of perched blocks. Soon our friends are on the move once more, this time onwards and downwards. Loose rocks are descended with care by all but the last man, who insists on keeping his comrades alive to the danger of falling debris.

The rocks soon disappear at a snowfield perched on the mountainside - our friends must cross - they have no choice. What a beautiful snowfield - soft, moist, smooth, dripping in the heat of the mid-afternoon sun - but hold! This seems to ring a bell with our mountain friends - 'ideal conditions for crossing' or perhaps 'not ideal conditions for crossing'. Undismayed, they unrope and proceed to plough a neat, deep furrow across it, one by one, each one praying for a hard frost, having suddenly remembered his mountain lore - their luck holds, as does the snow, and off they doddle down the easier rocks, releasing tons of debris as they progress. Soon, alas, our fairy-footed friends are halted by an outcrop - but

"what be this 'ere?" - a ring in the rock - surely not for tying up a boat - a cow perhaps? No. Once more memories of the good book flood back - 'abseil' - 'rappel' - 'rope down' etc. Off they go - rush for mid-position - first one down, with help from party, much relieved - second and third men quite chuffed. Fourth man wonders if piggy ring really was meant for a cow, last man down remarks on stretching properties of nylon - having in his mind's eye a vivid picture of his 'comrades' dividing his pegs and crabs and slicing his rope into four pieces - four into 120 feet? Enough - terra firma at last!
A pleasant standing - sitting glissade provides welcome relief for their leg muscles but perhaps tends to dampen their ardour. One more rock outcrop and then - off down the glacier - Oh! Woe is they once more - a yawning rimaye blocks their descent - pause, whilst one of the party excuses himself on medical grounds and the remainder draw icicles for the privilege of being first across.
'Twinkle Toes' wins - ice axe in for belay, run and jump by 'Twinkle Toes' - "steady" - alas, too late - not enough slack - still, he was going well when the slack ran out. Haul him out, try again - up and over, and over, and over, and over - one over, all over. On the down slope of the rimaye, five grumbling grimpeurs consider the snow too hard for glissading down, then change their minds one by one and proceed in line astern on their downward way. Speedy? Yes. Damp? Yes, but that's all behind them now - they are soon down where glissading is easy, where one merely sits, stands or lies, and heads towards the hut.

The last 200 yards of ice and snow are passed over in a very few seconds, one of the party being forced to do the splits to avoid a split in the ice - 'shades of Hades! Quicker above the ice, colder beneath!' Once more a new route is forced down the scree to the stream, then, at last the Refuge and greetings from a horribly healthy, completely rested mountain friend! "Had a good day?" Oh, for a few healthy oaths - but, no strength to spare. Off with boots, socks, breeches etc., meal by the light of a lamp in the dining room - thirteen hours in all, for a loss of about 8 lbs apiece and a touch of the 'Dauphinoise mal-de-tum-tum'.

'Rochers faciles et mauvais' - must make a note of it for next year - I or II when stationary, VI or VII when moving!


THINK WE'LL MAKE IT BERT ?
HARRY FOSTER

THE CHASM

by

Mike Kerby

It was raining. In fact for 'flaming June' it was raining very hard indeed. The six climbers were sitting in the doorways of a sodden group of tents bemoaning their fate and trying to decide what to do that day. The Chasm?

They had motored up from the Midlands the previous week. Desperate Dan, whose name bore no resemblance to his climbing ability, was the most experienced of the party. Next was Chalky White, sometimes known as Four Eyes because of the enormous pair of horn-rimmed spectacles he couldn't see without. Mike the Motor was something to do with the Motor Industry, while Daddies Sauce Pearce had been so nicknamed because he appeared to eat everything with lashings of a popular brand of sauce. Knocker Hay was a comparative newcomer to the climbing world, whereas Mike the Fish had been knocking around the mountains for years and had never been able to get up anything more than a Diff. without a struggle.

The Aonach Eagach Ridge had fallen beneath their twelve pounding feet. This was nearly a tragedy in itself, for it is usual for all great mountaineers to carry map and compass, but they had neither and relied purely on the direction of the wind to guide them. When one of those very sudden Scotch mists came down they nearly descended the wrong gully to end up in Kinlochleven instead of Kingshouse.

Agag's Groove had proved a thrutch to some of the less experienced of the party. It was nerve-racking to all when a particularly Scottish Scot had imitated with screams and crunching of bones the death falls of all uncertain climbers that would dain to set foot on the dreaded Buachaille. This pleasant fellow had then proceeded to use Desperate Dan's hand as a foothold for a large tricouined boot - on the very crux of the climb as well!

Abraham's Ledge on Crowberry Ridge Direct had been sensational in the extreme. Fish had been absolutely sure that a slip there would have meant the undertaker picking him up out of the back bar of the Kingshouse. He nearly proved it as well - "Thank you full weight nylon" had been his prayer.

With the inclement weather now a definite twenty-four hour shower, things had fallen a bit flat. Four Eyes had been awakened during one of the nights by a large rat, no doubt sheltering from the rain who had, it seemed, been absolutely fascinated by Chalky's great eyes peering at him through his glasses. He had left rather hurriedly though when a size twelve boot rushed towards him at the speed of an express train. A visit to a dance in Kinlochleven had proved a bit of a diversion for the locals. In fact, they had been quite taken aback by the appearance of six scruffy climbers; some with knees poking through faded jeans, others with ex W.D. trousers and plimsoles, a couple with climbing boots and shorts and all with some sort of beard from a full set down to a comparatively young one of a few days' growth. Fish, in the hope of perhaps attracting a fair Scots lass, had at least worn a tie - rather incongruous with tattered flannels and toe-less pumps. The local lads had in their turn provided a diversion by seemingly devouring half bottles of Scotch in the Gents. Was this their method of getting up courage to dance? - Who knows?

After these highlights of the week the rain was now putting a stop to their activities. The suggestion of the Chasm - something we can really tell the other members of the Club about when we get home - had been agreed upon, but nobody at the moment was in the mood for moving.

"It says it can be climbed in the rain and wet conditions", said Dan, who had been thumbing through volume one of the Climber's Guide to Glencoe and Ardgour. "We can't possibly get any wetter than we are now."

Glances were cast at the pools of water surrounding the tents. Fish wasn't saying anything, he was too busy staring blankly at his air mattress now rocking gently on the surface of the pool of water in his tent.

"It must be a magnificent climb. It has sixteen pitches in all, excluding a few minor ones, and is 1420 feet long in its entirety."

"Sounds quite interesting," said Chalky enthusiastically, "Oh! Come on - we can't just sit here all day."

Once a move had been made the morale of the party seemed to have a sudden lift and despite the increasing fury of the rain they headed off towards the Chasm,

talking quite eagerly about its prospects. They hadn't been going for very long when Fish observed that "Two into six goes three you know."

The others looked a little amazed at this sudden burst of intelligence, but were soon enlightened further when it was pointed out that if they intended to climb in three ropes of two people each, someone had left a rope behind. Fish being the weakest member of the party was right at the back even at this early stage. So, for his pains, "About, quick march" were his orders. He set off at a rapid pace with vile curses at every step.

Arriving back at the track which appeared to run along a water-course in the general direction of the Chasm, the others were nowhere to be seen. As is typical, they had not bothered to wait.

"Press on I suppose. Hope to find them later, this IS impressive." The water-course had now deepened into a rock ravine about twenty feet deep strewn with large boulders and stretching away from this was a great cleft in the face of the mountain. Fingers of low cloud clutched and poked at this enormous crack. The only sound was the rushing of water cascading down its numerous rock steps.

The feeling of awe and desolation was dispelled by a cheery shout from ahead.

"We'll all be killed." It was Dan. He had been elected to be the overall leader on this climb and was to have Fish as his second. He had hung back so as to guide him to the start.

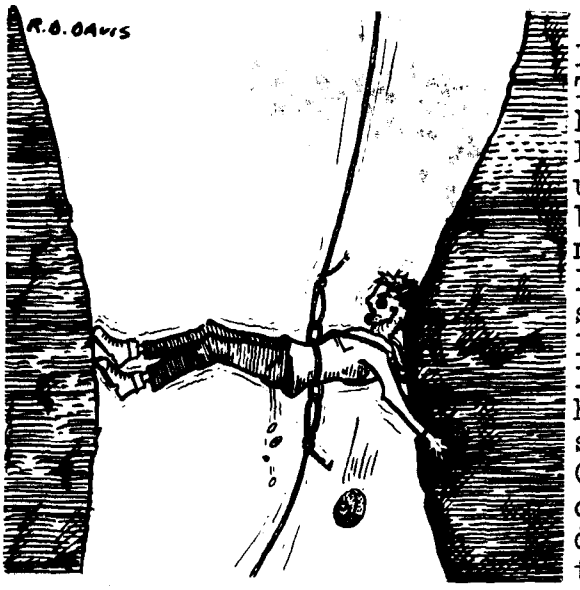
"Isn't it terrific?"
"I'll say."
"I think we're going to have a good day's climbing."
"H'mmm - Where are the others?"
"Gone on to the Boulder Pitch."

The Boulder Pitch was the first pitch of any consequence, but number four on the actual climb. The party were all assembled at its foot. It was a gully proper - steep sides - a large boulder for its roof. Dan set off and was soon seemingly thrutching at the gap between the boulder and the left hand wall. A puff, a grunt and he was gone. A few minutes later a heave on the rope informed the Fish that, even if he was dismayed

a few years before when he had been sitting with Daddies Sauce at the junction of the Glencoe and Glen Etive roads. A taxi had drawn up and stopped; the occupants descended; two were obviously American - cameras, binoculars, the lot. The other, apparently a local, was talking. The Americans stared at the massive cone of the Buachaille far above them.

"This is the most deadly mountain in the whole of Great Britain." The local had paused for his words to sink in. "More climbers are killed on this mountain every year than in the rest of the British Isles put together." There had been a silence during which the three had returned to the taxi and driven off, the Americans no doubt very impressed. How they had both laughed at this conversation, but now Fish had mixed feelings. He hoped it wasn't one of Buachaille's bad days.

A sudden movement dragged Fish back to earth, the others had risen and were now preparing to move off again. As they progressed the rock scenery about them became more and more impressive. At times they were almost closed in by sheer walls of rock that seemed to threaten to come together and crush them at any minute. Then, suddenly with absolute contrast there was a great open amphitheatre, silent except for the rushing of the water and the howling of the wind. Surely the Dining Room of the Devil himself? Rock, pools, waterfalls, boulders of all shapes and sizes followed one another in profusion.



The Converging Walls Pitch now presented itself. This was afterwards to be known as Fish's Folly. Dan led this in rather an uncertain manner. From below it appeared he had mastered the powers of levitation. Fish made a start. A struggle up the left wall to a small ledge, a fight to maintain his balance, then another short prayer thanking the One above for the security of the rope as he nearly dropped into the bed of the gully twenty feet below.

by the appearance of the place, he had no option but to climb. With fins flapping a start was made. Progress was slow, even slower when the top of the pitch was reached. No handholds. Lord! Who suggested this? Thrutch, grab. Ah! - a handhold had now conveniently appeared - a heave, a gasp and it was all over. Strains of the Scot's screams on Agag's were now echoing in the Fish's ears and his gills had taken on a whitish hue.

"Only twelve more pitches to do Mate" was the comforting comment from Dan.

Four Eyes now followed, making much better weather of it. Daddies Sauce and Knocker Hay felt that the alternative on the right was more to their taste.

Dan, being first up, was now the proud possessor of a full weight nylon sling and screw karabiner. These he had found hanging rather forlornly round a flake of rock above the Boulder Pitch. Fish thought it a bad omen - always a bit on the superstitious side was Fish. An increase in the fury of the rain at this moment definitely confirmed his thoughts.

A greasy, damp hundred foot slab pitch now confronted them. Not much time was wasted on this, although all the party agreed that they had felt insecure on it - bits of rock coming away when least expected. Pitch followed pitch. A struggle on another hundred foot pitch and a further wetting from the water bubbling over the top.

"Never known anything like this before. Didn't like that last bit?" said Mike the Motor.

"Well, WE're about half-way up now," added Dan.

The rain had stopped. Shafts of sunlight entered the Chasm hinting that it was a good time to stop for lunch. They sat down and admired the view of the tents in Glen Etive far below, while the shadows of the clouds ran races across the slopes of Sron na Creise.

"It's fantastic," said Knocker Hay, "there must have been a devil of an upheavel to form this lot."

Glances were cast around at the precipitous sides towering above them; the ceaseless gurgle of water lulled Fish into reverie. His thoughts wandered back to the time

Equilibrium now maintained, very strange techniques came into play. "Straddling or back and foot work" was the guide book recommendation. Obviously only a method for giants, for Fish was now in a very precarious position - using the hairs on the back of his neck as a friction hold on the right wall and the tips of his toes on the left wall to progress upwards. His efforts were accompanied all the while by invective suggestions as to the doubtful parentage of this pitch.

"There are soom good handholds on the right wall" was offered up from below.

Good holds indeed! Two microscopic identations were what one was supposed to pull up on and thus gain the right wall. Fish achieved this finally, his gills now bleached until they were almost transparent and his throat dried up from the horror of the last few exertions.

"Never want to do that bit again," he croaked.

"Aye. It was a bit difficult."

A dirty, wet chimney and crack barred any further progress. Much time was wasted in furtive attempts by Dan, Mike the Motor and Chalky. It was Chalky who finally tamed it. The advantage of his great height, six feet five inches in all, was made use of.

"Surely we must be getting near the Devil's Cauldron?" said Knocker Hay inquiringly.

"Yes, I think that's it just ahead," replied Dan.

What a place it was. Vertical walls towered upwards dripping with water, black as the proverbial 'grate' and cold even at this time of year. Whatever the way out, it didn't reveal itself very readily.

"That's the Direct Route, I think. Fearsome isn't it?"

"Looks definitely impossible to me."

"Where are we supposed to go?" asked Fish who was quite put off by the appearance of the place and was already looking round for marks of a cloven hoof to confirm his suspicions that the Devil himself was lurking somewhere in the shadows.

The South Wall was considered to be the best route out for the party, the easiest according to the guide book. Dan started up and was soon about to pull up out of the Cauldron when progress was halted by a short smooth wall. Minutes ticked away. Another move was made, then a return to the original position. More minutes ticked away in time to the water dripping from above.

"Looks a bit difficult."

"Sure it's the right way?"

"Must be. Can't see any other way out" commented Dan.

Fish opened his mouth to speak, thought better of it, so joined the others in staring up at the motionless figure above them. A good hour passed.

"There's no security at all," shouted Dan.

"Look, it's getting late. Try banging in a peg. Try one of mine," suggested Chalky.

The bangings echoed from wall to wall, seemingly mocking their futile attempts on this final pitch. Fish's thoughts climbed back down to the sight of that sling and karabiner they had found eleven pitches below. "Lord, fancy having to go back all the way down there again - getting dark now too."

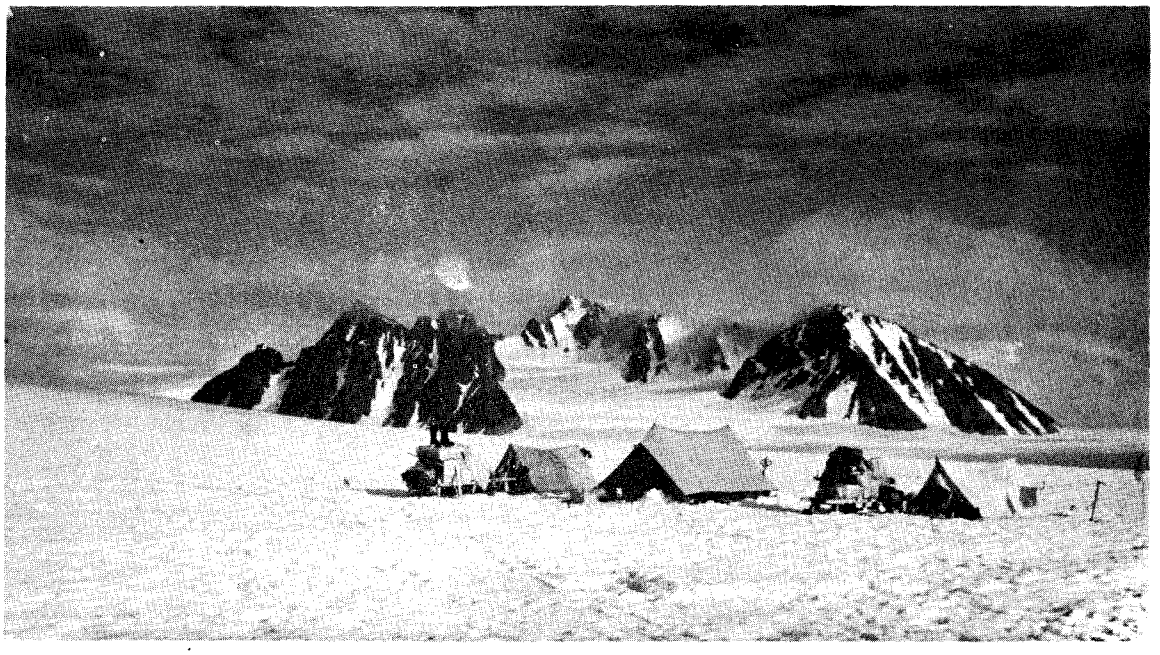
The click of a karabiner gate closing roused him from his thoughts; he looked up to see Dan make another attempt at this 'mauvais pas' - still no go.

Fish had to speak. The activity and continuous rain had made itself felt upon them all. All were shivering with cold and had lapsed into silence, breaking it occasionally to utter a staccato comment of encouragement to Dan above.

"Look, the guide book says you should get on to a ledge on the right wall, then traverse round the corner. Perhaps you had better try that."

Dan, thankful of trying something else, moved off. A sigh of relief rose from the upturned faces as he disappeared from their sight.

TYN LON G.Daffern.



COL CAMP, SPITSBERGEN G.Daffern.

"All O.K. now," rang down from above.

A bustle of excitement ran through the party. Chalky followed up in order to remove his peg. Desperate hammerings and moans. "One of my best Italian pegs. Shall have to hammer it in as I don't think it's going to come out." Once more the sound of hammerings reverberated round the walls of the Cauldron - but not so mocking now for morale was high.

Half an hour later the party finally emerged more than somewhat relieved but nevertheless pleased that they had achieved something of a route on the last day of their holiday in Glencoe. The first stars were just showing as they ran down towards the Glen Etive road. It was too late to get a drink - the lights of Kingshouse had just gone out. "I really enjoyed that," said Fish. "Glad I suggested that we should do it."

A R O L L I N G S T O N E

by

Dick Cadwallader

The O.A.S. caused me a lot of trouble in France in 1962. When I was hitch-hiking from Dunkirk to Geneva in the March, plastic bombs were going off all over the place. Not only were motorists reluctant to stop and pick up strangers, but the police had set up numerous traffic checks and I was an obvious target for questions.

"What is your job?" - "No job."
"Where are you going?" - "To climb mountains."

The red-faced portly gentlemen in baggy blue trousers shook their heads in disbelief, the neat moustaches twitched. After careful examination of my passport I was allowed to pass; several pairs of sad, bloodshot eyes watched me out of sight.

Two medical students took pity on me and conveyed me to Paris, where I stayed in their flat for a few days.

Arriving in Geneva a week later, I was unceremoniously turned out of the railway station where I was trying to sleep, and had to take refuge with a Swiss family to whom I was directed by the local accommodation bureau. It rained heavily for the three days I spent looking for work. In desperation I walked into the smartest hotel I could find and asked for a job. Half an hour later I was in the kitchen washing up and there I stayed 10 hours a day, 6 days a week, until June.

The washing-up room was called the 'Office'. It contained the manager's pride and joy - a monstrous, clanking, humming robot which gobbled dirty dishes at one end and spewed them out, semi-clean at the other. When this giant was working at top speed it needed seven slaves to tend it. The most colourful character in the Office was Kurt - a German of somewhat uncertain mental stability. It needed only a whisper of "S.S." and Kurt would run and hide in a corner until the danger had passed. The worms troubled him very badly. He used to explain that he had a little man inside who climbed up to ask for his food, and although always eating, his bones seemed about to

pierce the skin. One day while Kurt was carrying a try of clean champagne glasses, a small Sicilian boy crept up behind him and shouted "Der S.S. kommt!" The glasses were all broken and I got Kurt's job as glass-washer.

I was now in a private little corner with a little machine of my own. I began to cultivate the acquaintance of the waiters and they brought me large amounts of food returned from the dining room. This meant that I no longer had to fight for my food with the Italians in the staff kitchen. The wine was always of the best quality and the last few hours of every evening now passed very quickly. Soon I moved into a room in the hotel which I had to share with a fat Greek cook who was constantly chewing garlic. My clothes at once became impregnated with the smell and I am still reminded of the hotel each time I wear a certain coat, though it has been cleaned several times since.

By June it was unbearably hot in the servants' quarters and sleeping at night was impossible. We re-arranged our day; swimming at night after work; sleeping beside the lake in the morning before starting work.

Geneva is full of lost souls of one kind or another. Our favourite meeting place was a café in the old quarter of the town. La Clemence could have been the model used by Van Gogh for his painting of a cafe at night with yellow light flooding out on to the cobbled streets. Apart from the usual collection of artists and poets the following were just a few of the people commonly encountered beneath its roof:-

Larry . . . . American, physicist, frizzy beard, cigars, never washed, young girls.

John . . . . Portuguese, lawyer, Van Dyke beard, pebble spectacles, rampant communist.

Tush . . . . American, trying to write plays, supported by his mistress who worked in a bank.

Jeannine . . . Argentinian, journalist, came to write an article about the clientèle and became one herself.

Garry . . . Jugoslav-Australian, sports cars, luxury flat, gay parties.

Charlie . . . East German, continual interrogation by police about how he gets so much money.

In April I had the misfortune to break a finger in my right hand and could not work for a month. The time passed with the help of a group of American beatniks. We used to tour the bars in Geneva. The Americans would sing and play guitars and I wandered round with my arm in a sling and collected the money.

I joined the Geneva section of the Swiss Alpine Club and whenever I was free on Sundays went out with the members of the section. Unfortunately it was too early in the season to do any serious alpine work although we spent a lot of time on Mont Saleve, a 3,000 foot mountain not far from Geneva. The west face of Saleve is a vertical cliff with about 1,000 feet of climbing possible. There are several routes of Grade VI standard. Bonnatti, Rebuffat and Lambert are numbered among those who consider the cliff worth a visit. As Geneva is only a two hour drive from Chamonix it is worth considering when the weather around Mont Blanc is continually bad.

At the end of June I left the hotel and went to Chamonix with two German friends. We planned a very easy climb to begin with. Thanks to a late start for the hut and my map-reading we found ourselves at the wrong refuge at dusk. It was impossible to make up the lost time next day, unfit as we were, and at noon we turned back still 2,000 feet from the top. My friends went back to Geneva and I to camp in a wood near the Montenvers station at Chamonix.

Neboje was a Jugoslav veterinary student whom I met at this camp site. After a day of crampon and step-cutting practice on the Bossons Glacier, we teamed up with George Wallace, the secretary of the Glasgow University Mountaineering Club, to climb the north face of the Aiguille du Midi. There was an abundance of new snow on the route and progress was slow, especially as we were three on the rope. At mid-day we reached the steep top section, where the nevé was hard and steep; here Neboje became ill. Through the middle of the afternoon we toiled up an ice gully, keenly aware of a wall of séracs directly above us. Safely past the séracs, darkness came when we were only 150 feet from the top. George led a 30 foot wall of near vertical ice with only the light from his head-torch. This brought us to a ledge of rock about 2 feet wide and 5 feet long where we spent the night. George and I passed most of the time assuring Neboje that he was not going to die.

Putting on our boots in the morning gave some alarming moments; my feet hung over the edge of the shelf, my boots were frozen stiff and my fingers numb with cold. A dropped boot would have meant losing a foot from frostbite. Although we were only 100 feet from the top, it took three hours to get there as we had to abseil back down the ice wall and make a long traverse in order to pass an enormous rimaye. Needless to say we descended by the teleferic.

Two days later George and I did the Mer de Glace face of the Grepon without incident. Friends of ours had tried it while we were on the 'Midi' but new snow had barred their way. Attempting another route they found themselves having to retreat 200 feet below the summit. This meant 200 feet of abseiling; next time we saw them both they had gaping holes in their anoraks and sweaters.

The north face of the Aiguille du Plan was my next climb, under the guidance of Les Brown who was on the expedition to Nuptse a couple of years ago. We spent the night before the climb in an abandoned teleferic cabin. The climb was immensely enjoyable; the route going straight up an arête and then the middle of a hanging glacier. We cut the last steps to the summit at 1.30 p.m. - two hours longer than Tom Carruthers who had done the route a few days before.

All the British climbers in Chamonix were anxious to uphold the reputation for fanatical cleanliness enjoyed by the inhabitants of these isles. Consequently, every fortnight half a dozen of us would march down to the local baths and have a shower. It was a pity that the French chose to hold Bastille Day on July 14th. It so happened that on this particular day we chose to take our shower. After waiting for half an hour some enterprising person took the matter seriously and telephoned the police; he also telephoned the tourist bureau, the Chef des Bains and the mayor. The mayor was out leading a procession round the ice rink but his wife sent a messenger to him. The mayor sent a message to the Chef des Bains, and he in turn sent a little old lady in curlers to let us in. The eager hordes rushed forwards, for half an hour there were sounds of frantic splashing and scrubbing, punctuated by snatches of 'Nellie Dean' and 'The Road to the Isles'. We emerged pink and steaming, no longer obliged to cry "Unclean" as we passed along the streets of Chamonix.

Mike Richmond was a surveyor from West Africa and we passed several rainy days together in the cafés and bars

THE DANCING BEAR

Brimham Rocks
near Harrogate

LION ROCK

Dovedale

BOWERMAN'S NOSE

Dartmoor

by Gill Daffern

THE SPHINX

Situated at the base of the Sphinx Ridge, the Napes, Great Gable

LADY OF SNOWDON

A rock formation on the slopes of Snowdon above Lyn Peris. It is best seen in the early morning or late evening from the Dinorwic Quarry

THE DEVIL

Formed by the reflection of rocks on the west shore of Lyn Idwal

THE REST DAY

by

Pete Hay

A dance in the valley - an ideal excuse for a day off, especially as our student friends were going and had offered us a lift back. The morning was fine with no clouds on the tops, as always happens when you don't go climbing. We took a quick limbering-up walk to the glacier in the morning and then caught the first (and last) bus down to Ness. It seemed rather a long journey but the Norwegian company and scenery distracted our attention.

The bus stopped outside a small wooden building and we gathered from the driver that this was where the dance was being held. A throaty roar, a cloud of dust, then silence. We looked around. So much for the village: a hut by the fjord, three houses by the road and two farms on the hillside. We suddenly began to doubt - this couldn't be the place, there's nothing here. Perhaps Mike's Norwegian with an Anglo-Swedish accent wasn't so good after all, or maybe the students were fooling us - they did have a strange sense of humour.

Well, it was no good just standing there - the dance didn't start until 10 p.m. and it was only three in the afternoon, so we strolled along to the nearest house. In the garden there was an old man bent over his spade who grunted when we hailed him. Of course, he was one of the minority who didn't speak any English. So was the woman sitting on the step. The rattle of bikes turned our attention to the arrival of two young girls. Things were looking up! However, they made out that they didn't speak English either - yet we had been told that it was the main subject at school. Anyway, with the aid of a conversation phrase book they confirmed that there was a dance in the wooden hut that night.

The next problem - food. Having got home the fact that we wanted something to eat they directed us to a farm. Our knock shattered the oppressive silence and made us feel guilty of our intrusion. Three knocks and four minutes later an old woman suspiciously half-opened the door. No English again but Mike, in a flash of genius, remembered the word 'Smørgasbord' which softened her glare

and she pointed down the road growling "Luster". After walking six miles we arrived at Luster - a cluster of houses. On enquiry we found that the large, rather derelict looking building was a sort of hotel. We seemed to be the first customers that year by the empty smell of the place, but the magic word 'Smørgasbord' produced several varieties of bread, cheese, meat and fish paste and three large glasses of milk.

At seven o'clock we were back in Ness again. What could we do for the next three hours? We spent an hour wandering around and looking at the scenery; an hour skimming stones on the fjord; and the remaining hour perched on the wall inspecting the gathering locals.

At last the doors opened; we paid our three kr¢ne and filtered into the main room dimly lit by the reflection of the evening sunlight on the water. Well, it was one up on Portmadoc - they had a band of sorts: accordian, saxaphone, piano and drums; and there was no waiting for the pubs to close - they never opened.

An energetic start was made with a Norwegian dance - a cross between a polka and a Highland fling, so we retired to the benches by the window. As usual we immediately got involved with the inevitable drunk. Hoping to shake him off by saying that we were foreign proved to be a mistake. For the next half-hour we were plagued with all his schoolboy languages. Eventually we tore ourselves away, plucked up courage and got on the dance floor. The 'chatting up' went even worse than at the Locarno - "Shnaka die Engelst?" "Nie." Smiles and silence. After three attempts we retreated to the corner to watch and wait until midnight for our student friends.

When they arrived we were taught the energetic traditional dances and quickly learnt the more intimate moon-dancing in the quieter room below. It was just like the travel brochures - soft music, the sunset on the fjord and beautiful girls. However, at 2.30 a.m. the evening was rather spoilt when our friends told us they couldn't give us a lift back as they hadn't been able to get one of the two cars. The first bus wasn't until late afternoon. The distance, we were told, was five miles, so we set off walking much to their surprise.

After an hour we found that the end of the fjord was still not in sight and we knew that there was still over

3,000 feet to rise beyond that. We were tired but knew that we couldn't be walking that slowly or in the wrong direction. Once again we began to doubt our friends' idea of a joke. Suddenly it dawned on us - there are six English miles to one Norwegian mile - no wonder they had looked surprised when we casually said we would walk. This realisation cheered us up no end - we had already walked over 25 miles that day and the dance had left its mark on our fitness. Even though it was still light the air was very cold, so we decided to kip down in the next barn. If you have ever looked for a cosy barn on a cold night you know what happened to us. Farmhouse after farmhouse, cottage after cottage, but no convenient barn. There was one but but on our preliminary scouting we disturbed three Scandinavian Hounds of the Baskervilles who helped to increase our walking pace somewhat.

The dusty, flat, stony, rubbed road wound on hugging the edge of the still and silent fjord. Gone were the attractions of a foreign land, the majestic scenery, the atmosphere of Peer Gynt. All that mattered now were feet, food and bed. Oh! for a pair of boots - but no - Woolworth pumps with no toes and soles, worn by Sundays' training on'grit'. Our emergency rations consisted of one and a half packets of glucose- tablets between us, which worked out at one each per hour. How I looked forward to that hour - I measured the length of the journey in glucose tablets, not miles. At first we stopped at half-hourly intervals for a rest or moan, but later we found that it was easier to keep going as our movement was automatic and not controlled by our tiredness.

Eventually after 20 miles that horrible fjord was behind us but the road began to rise. Almost simultaneously we came across a workmen's hut on the roadside which Mike and myself staggered into and slumped on some wooden boxes. Brian with a brave "To rest is not to conquer" disappeared round the bend. Sleep came immediately, but an hour later the hardness and cold had fought it away. While lying there deciding whether to get up or not, my eyes ran over the contents of the hut and came to rest on the upside-down red writing on the boxes. 'Danger - Explosives' is not difficult to translate in any language, even from that angle. Mike was obviously used to sleeping on boxes as my shouts and prods took some time to wake him. We made a hurried departure. A few hundred yards up the road we came to where a bend was being straightened by blasting - obviously Norwegians don't keep their dynamite under lock and key.

The old routine was resumed: one front in front of the other, one bend after another. A car passed by but the response to an enthusiastic thumb was a scowl. The road snaking up the hillside made us marvel at the drivers who negotiate these hairpin bends by reversing until the back of the vehicle is a few feet over the edge of a small concrete kerb and a huge drop. We were glad we hadn't noticed how steep it was on our way down.

On, on, on, up, up, up, no views now, only trees clinging to rocky slopes hiding everything but that never-ending road. Suddenly at mid-day it ended. We heard goatbells and waterfalls and saw the glaciers, the snow-clad mountains, and best of all - camp. It had been a 'rest day' we will never forget.

D O L O M I T I C N O T E S

by

Roger Lavill and Peter Osborn

After two or three years in Britain, the focus of a rock-climber's attention is nearly always drawn to that relatively small area in the South Tyrol known as the Dolomites. Some scanty knowledge will have been gained from climbing classics such as 'Gervasutti's Climbs' and Buhl's 'Nanga Parbat Pilgrimage' which tell of routes ahead of their time and leave one in awe of the area and the seemingly indestructible men who have dared to climb in it.

A vague decision having been made to make 'The Dollies' the next year's venue, literature more descriptive of the area will have been perused and later maps obtained, then a guide book or two. These are very pleasant times - planning your own small expedition even if you find you cannot follow up your intentions completely. This preparation is worthwhile too; time is very precious for those who can make this trip only once a year and half an hour with a friend who has been before can save days of unnecessary delay on the spot.

We made use of cheap transport by rail to Innsbruck made available by the National Union of Students and this proved very successful. Since we were camping and were going to be away for a month a considerable amount of gear had to be carried. This was where planning really paid off and we were able to make ourselves really comfortable in most situations.

After a couple of days' delay in Innsbruck waiting for tickets for the return journey and lazily admiring the Karwendelgebirge, we were off over the Brenner Pass to Bolzano. A lightning dash for the last bus to Vigo di Fassa and we were bound for our first climbing region - the Catinaccio or Rosengarten. This rapid progress after the initial delay in Innsbruck was so pleasant that we forgot to change enough money into lira. Our fears of having to return to Bolzano were dispelled on learning of a bank in Pozza - only a few kilometres away. We camped on a hill overlooking the Fassa valley.

Next day, after a trip to the bank and several shops for goodies, we set off to walk to the Gardeccia Hut which is a good centre for the Catinaccio and Vajolet Towers. After only an hour or so walking, however, a storm blew up and we quickly wrapped ourselves up in Egyptian cotton for the night. These thunder storms, violent and spectacular, are a feature of the Dolomites. They generally pass over fairly quickly but it's not much fun being caught in one on a climb as we later discovered.

We walked up to the Gardeccia Hut in sweltering heat the next morning. There were good camp sites there, water and a small shop for odds and ends. The walk up to the Vajolet Hut was steep so we stayed below.

The south face of the Stabeler Tower is a good climb which can easily be done in a few hours. It is mainly Grade IV and makes a good start; there is a tricky initial overhang and a good diedre higher up; we thought it was well-marked and protected. As we climbed the clouds parted periodically to reveal the Alberto Hut below the Towers with its parapet of noisy Italians. The descent is an interesting series of long, sometimes free, abseils down a gully. Interesting, that is, if you are wearing only a shirt over a badly sunburned back. Rain arrived expectedly on the morrow and bound us drinking vino and playing table soccer in the Stella Alpina, a hut with a more amenable bar near the Gardeccia.

Since our ratio of days/climbs so far had unity as its denominator, we set off next morning determined to do something despite the cold drizzle. After a second breakfast at the Vajolet Hut we walked over to the Punta Emma as its Piaz Crack seemed the best bet under the prevailing conditions. Had the conditions continued to prevail we should have been right in our choice, but some way from the top we were literally flushed down again by another thunder-storm. The descent was vile as we tried to find cracks for humming abseil pegs behind the curtain of water which covered the cliff. The good weather followed the storm as usual but we had to spend the day drying out. We thought we must have our timing wrong; nevertheless we dutifully set off again for the same cliff, but this time to try the south-east face. This turned out one of our best choices and the weather was excellent. It is Grade V with some fine exposed leads and a well-positioned crux.

We left the day after for the Sella Pass with backward glances towards our soccer opponents who were trying a new

route on the Catinaccio in the groove about one hundred feet left of the Di Francheschi golo route. When we met them later they told us they had been successful. They reported it to be Grade VI and above and said they had written it up in the Vajolet log book. Transit to the Sella was effected as usual by the Societa Automobilistica Dolomiti with a pause for shopping in Canazei. On arrival at Rifugio Sella we found it was not a hut at all but an hotel complete with dicky-bowed waiters and a juke-box in the bar.

Setting up camp among the boulders behind the Refugio we were blissfully unaware in the darkness that a large proportion of the Italian Army had done the same. Their presence was brought home to us in the morning when we woke up to find that we had been safely guarded during our sleep by a machine-gun post twenty feet behind our tent. We decided to ignore it and perhaps it would go away. This policy proved to be the right strategy because two days later it had disappeared without trace. Our first day was wasted since there was no shop even for basic provisions. So an eventful trip was made to Selva, where we managed to purchase the necessary provisions, get them and ourselves sprayed with tar and be given a bag of apples by some girls as compensation.

After these episodes we managed some climbing. The north wall of the second Sella Tower proved more difficult than expected since it seemed the English guide book reporter had somehow managed to miss 200 feet of the climb when he did the route. There are false lines of pegs to wander up too, should the desire arise. The traverse of the Sasso Levante was accomplished the next day - up the south face and ridge and down the east-north-east ridge. Two routes in two days, things were beginning to look up. It was not to be, however, - I caught a bad cold and Pete got the usual gut trouble. This meant only one more route at Sella before it was time to move on again.

Of all the areas in the Dolomites the Tre Cime di Lavaredo is the best known. The numerous exciting photographs of the three north faces give only a small impression of their actual magnificence. The view on a fine evening from the Locatelli Hut is dangerously inspiring. You do the Carnici route in two minutes flat, then the Direttissima; Swiss-Italian Couzy follows to give one of the finest half-hour's climbing possible from any hut terrace. Once under the cliffs reality clangs

into place sharply as the eye follows roof after roof and the head tilts further and further backwards.

There are good camp-sites on the other side of the Cime at the Lavaredo Hut so we stayed there. The north faces are only half an hour's stroll from here, over the ridge and there are good climbs on this side too, as well as the main descent routes. Our Sella football opponents arrived on the following day after an epic in the Civetta area. They spoke very highly of the routes and huts. For us they recommended the route on the Cima Piccolissima, a classic chimney climb of Grade V. We found this very straightforward with comfortable bridging most of the way and as there were German and Italian parties behind we climbed quickly. We managed to gain on them eventually in spite of their carefree and dangerous belaying technique. The descent from the summit into the Dulfer Couloir is tricky and involves downward wanderings on V.Diff. rock to find the first abseil ring. After this it is easy but alarming if there is another party close behind, but of our former competitors we saw no more.

We found our friends tackling the last few gallons of a giant bottle of acetic Cianti they had threatened us with from our first acquaintance. We gave in to their offer of finishing the bottle and with much screwing up of faces, quenched our thirst.

Our next route, they dictated, should be the Dulfer route on the west face of the Cima Grande which had been described by such superlatives as "absolute belter", "ding-dong" etc. It is a large corner which starts in the couloir between the Grande and the Ouest. After excursions on the left wall of the couloir to avoid ice which must be almost permanently present, we came to the bottom of the corner. As usual Pete boldly climbed the first pitch which was superb bridging work of a high standard but with good protection from pegs. Similar pitons followed with hardly a move below Grade V. The final pitch - a wide, deep chimney which was climbed facing outwards with a view down the corner, landed us on a terrace. As we did not know the Cima Grande we thought this must be the Band which traverses the whole mountain and which must be followed round to the ordinary route southwards which is the way down. As we traversed we realised our mistake. This wasn't the sort of place you could "drive a Keswick 'bus along" as our friends had promised. We traversed back, climbed a chimney and found

the real ledge, unmistakable once you're there because of litter, bivouac walls, etc. The weather looked threatening so we hurried down, passing several roped parties in "how not to do it" poses on the way. We just made it before heavy rain began. This we readily agreed was the best route of the holiday and would be the last. The weather was not to be fine again until we reached Dover, via Salzburg this time.

Writing this article has brought to mind the situations, some funny, some serious, which stew in the mind occasionally bubbling to the surface to produce sudden spontaneous fit of mirth or cold shiver and make such a holiday worth every little sacrifice and inconvenience in preparation and execution.

REMINISCENCES OF SNOWDONIA

by

Ivor Corbett

I first came to Snowdonia in the Easter of 1955 with a party of members of the Birmingham and District Group of the Mountaineering Association, later to become the Ceunant Mountaineering Club. We had planned to travel up in an extremely doubtful looking van purchased by Tony Hammond for the purpose and nicknamed "the unguided missile". Due to a last minute delay I had to call off from the party and travel up the following day by train. This proved fortunate from my point of view, for the "unguided missile" broke down a few miles the other side of Wolverhampton and, despite the wholehearted attention of two Polish gentlemen who happened to be around, had to be abandoned. The erstwhile passengers arrived in the Pass a day late, via public transport.

I had been mountaineering before, if you could call it that. Two years previously, a couple of friends and myself covered large areas of the Lake District in appalling weather, dressed in sports flannels and carrying walking sticks! Although dressed more like a climber this time I was somewhat apprehensive of going out with these obviously experienced and tough experts. Fortunately, however, no-one was in any hurry and I finished the week-end with wind more or less intact.

The weather was dull, with heavy overcast cutting short the valley walls. My first ascent to the summit of Snowdon was through thick cloud, a situation which has been repeated many times since on mountains in various parts of Europe.

Despite the dull weather, or maybe because of it, I was captured immediately by the magic of Snowdonia. The clean tang of mountain air; the grim towering cliffs disappearing upward to unseen and unimaginable heights, the roaring torrents which carved up the valley walls and flowed under the road in a tangle of rocks. I was delighted by the castle ruins that abound the area, reminders of the grim days of mediaeval strife, and have subsequently devoted a great deal of time to visiting the awesome fortresses of Caernarvon, Conway, Harlech, Beaumaris and others.

This is the land where imagination runs free and the ghosts of the ancient princes of Arfon and Arllechweed seem to be lurking behind every boulder; an ancient land, unchanged in spirit for a thousand years. The words of Tennyson came easily to mind on that first occasion,

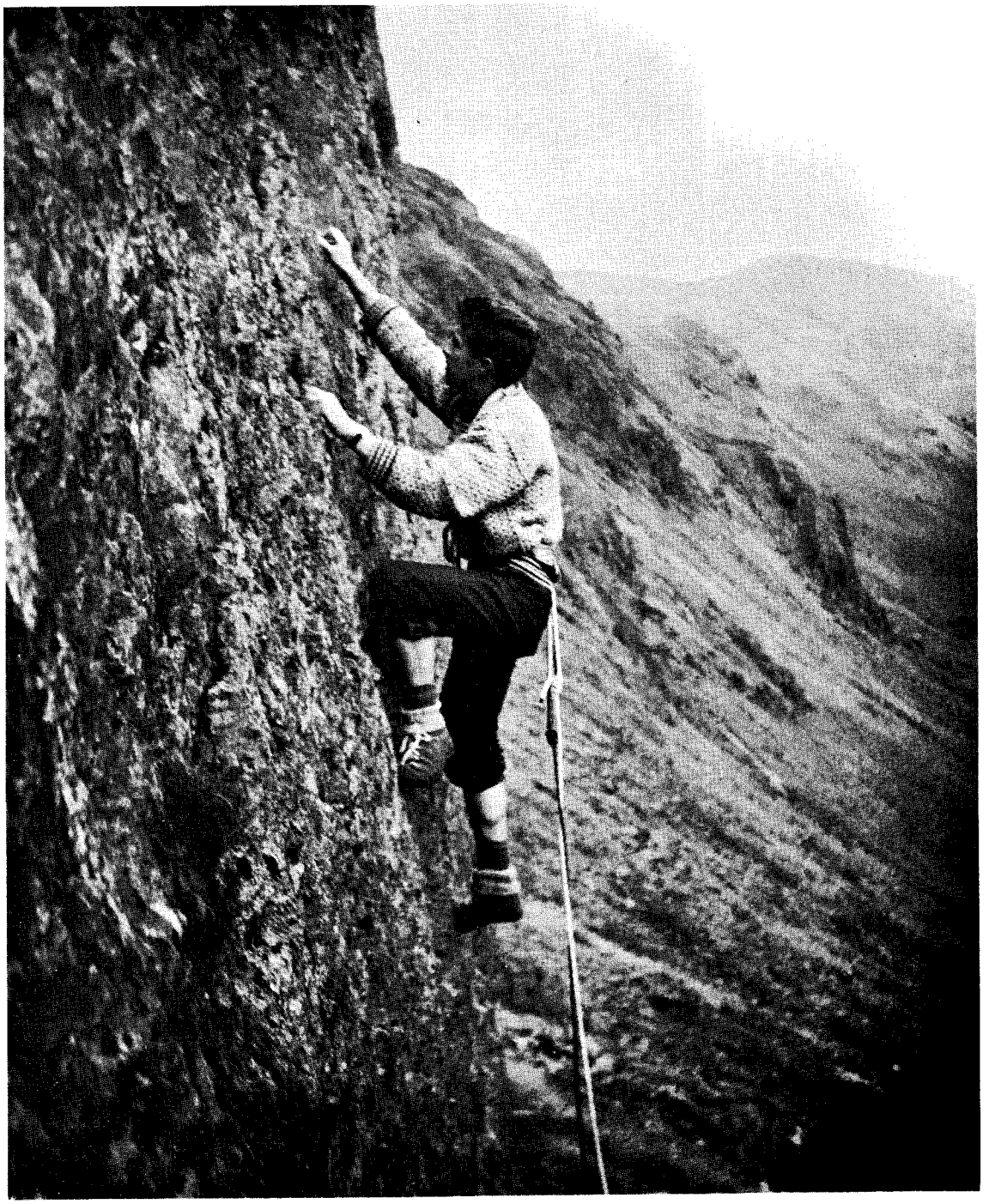
"The splendour falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story;
The long light shakes across the lakes
And the wild cataract leaps in glory"

Since that cloudy, half-hidden introduction to Snowdonia I have seen its vividly changing scenery under every type of weather. One remembers most easily the freak conditions, the effects that take you by surprise. For instance, while descending the snow-covered slopes of Pen-yr-Oleu-Wen in gathering darkness on a late afternoon in December, the sun sank below the horizon and the rocky cliffs of Clogwyn-Mawr behind Capel glowed brilliant crimson against the darkening sky. We tried to photograph it but the exposure was hopeless, and anyway no photograph could have done justice to that astonishing sight. On another occasion, having reached the summit pile of Glyder Fach in thick mist and intermittent drizzle, I heard a great roar of wind and the cloud on the summit seemed to take off in a vertical direction. Behind and above was still a swirling mass of wet cloud, but in front appeared a magical view of the top thousand feet or so of Tryfan, girdled with soft white cloud and backed with blue sky.

Almost the first thing that impressed me about the mountains was the friendliness of other mountaineers. All the reserve that causes one to travel hours on a train without speaking a word to fellow travellers seems to vanish. From my first trip up the Pyg Track everyone I met hailed a cheery greeting.

My favourite staying place was the Gorphwysfa Hotel at Pen-y-Pass. It suited my temperament, particularly in those early days. Perched at the highest point of Llanberis Pass surrounded by the finest panorama in the British Isles, one had the impression of being completely cut off from civilization, with no telephone or wireless, and postal delivery only twice a week. Here in the company of people whose only interest was mountaineering, one could relax in absolute peace and forget the outside world.

I suppose my impression of the remoteness of the



CLIMBING IN NORTH WALES R. Pugh.

place was heightened in those days by the length of the journey. To get there by public transport involved two train changes, two bus changes, and if I went up when the Crosville winter service was in operation (which was 10½ months of the year) a seven mile walk to finish off with. The 3½ hours it now takes to get there by car seems to have brought it more into the twentieth century.

I have frequently met up with the Services in Snowdonia either in the form of boy soldiers tracking their way round the tops with map and compass, or the mountain rescue people who do such valuable work and get some training at the same time. My most amusing recollection of the P.B.I. happened when three privates and a corporal from a T.A. camp at Conway volunteered (if that is the right word) for a walk over Snowdon with two officers. It was a bright, sunny day and I had set off early for a round trip of the "Horseshoe". I first saw the Army party ahead of me on the lower reaches of the Pyg Track, where the captain in charge, complete with peaked cap and baton, was attentively examining an Ordnance Survey map with a compass. After some deliberation the party moved on and eventually took the path leading to the Crib Goch ridge. I have never tried mountaineering in army boots but it has always seemed to me that they are not the best things for dealing with smooth rock. While they slithered and scrambled up the steep rock slope to the left I caused some profanity from the ranks by taking the hidden move round to the right. They followed and for a while all was well. Near the Crib Goch summit they caught up with me, the captain steadfastly in the lead. He peered round in imperious fashion and said "Excuse me, how far are we from the hotel?"

In broad clear daylight and with map and compass he thought they were on the Pyg Track!

I was surprised at the ease with which one can get lifts. On many occasions people have stopped and offered me a ride as I have been trudging up the Pass. I recall one occasion getting a lift from a doctor who was on his way to a patient in Bangor hospital. He was English, but his wife it turned out, was Welsh. Just past Pont-y-Cromlech we came up behind that exasperatingly familiar sight - a flock of sheep on their way to the lower valley in the charge of two shepherds. It was only a small flock and after a few minutes the doctor leaned out and said, "I say, can't you move them into one side? I'm in a hurry". The man at the rear of the sheep shouted in Welsh to his friend standing on the wall. His words, according to the doctor's

wife were "It's only another of those Saxon tourists, let him wait!" Whereupon the lady stuck her head out of the window and delivered such a harangue in high speed Cymraig that the offending youth turned pink from the neck upwards. The sheep were moved over.

It has been said that those mountains which lie outside the central region of Snowdonia are neglected, and in my case I am afraid that is so. If the weather is remotely suitable for mountaineering in any form, I can seldom be drawn away from the 3,000 foot region. Most of my acquaintances with the remainder of North Wales: the Rhinogs, the Arenigs, Anglesey, etc., have been made in pouring rain through the windscreen of the car when there was nothing else to do.

I don't know how many times I have been on the summit of Snowdon or "done" the Horseshoe or scrambled up the north ridge of Tryfan, but my first solo Horseshoe excursion remains in my memory. The weather was magnificent and after a glorious day's scrambling I arrived on the bluffs above Pen-y-Pass just around tea-time. The afternoon sun was casting hazy purple shadows across the walls of the Pass and away in the distance could be seen the Menai Straits and Anglesey. Down by the causeway were five tents of varied hue and a thin trail of blue smoke indicating a meal in preparation. Below me the tourist traffic jostled and hooted its way over the summit of the Pass as it had been doing all day, but that didn't matter. By moving over a bit it couldn't be heard. I decided to stop and finish off my sandwiches and lemonade.

To the right the mighty sweep of the Glyders glowed in multiple shades and led the eye downwards across the floor of the valley to the soaring pyramid of Crib Goch. Snowdon itself, still flecked with the remains of the winter's snow, stood supreme. A puff of smoke from below the summit filled one with revulsion. Whoever could think of putting so ugly a thing as a railway in such a place? Beyond Snowdon, like a flowing wave frozen as it was about to break, stood Lliwedd, where towering walls have beckoned to the climber since climbing began.

This then was Snowdonia, and to the heather-clad eastern slopes of Glyder Fawr I thought it was the most wonderful place on earth. Although I have since visited many larger mountain ranges and admired many famous mountains I have not changed my opinion.