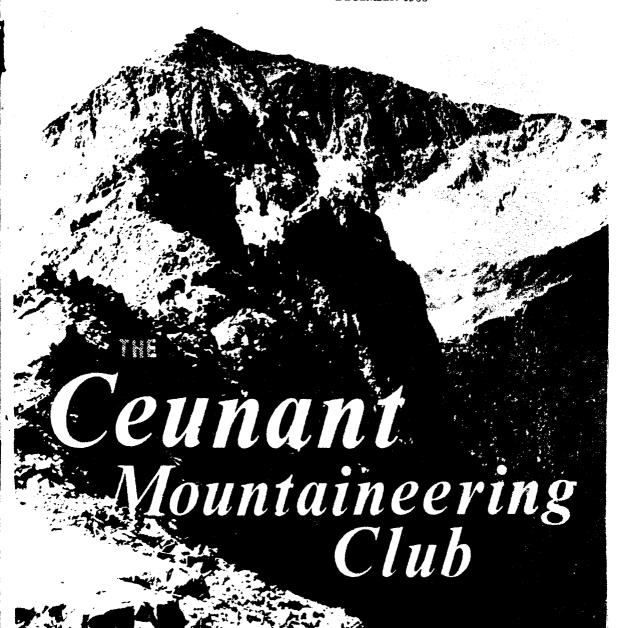
IN HE WAY SS IL HE TI'TI HE RR

DECEMBER 1965



In place of the Editorial for this issue, we pay tribute to one who wrote so many Editorials – Ivor D. Corbett – whose passing on the 13th October 1965 after a brief illness was not only tragic in itself, but also a very great loss to the Club.

Ivor joined the Club circa 1959, and although no great mountaineer or hard rock climber he soon proved that he was happy just to be in the hills. He had walked in the hills for years before he came to the Club and used to enjoy staying at the Pen - y - Pass hotel on his weekends in North Wales. He had a store of knowledge to impart to anyone interested on the geology and history of Snowdonia and many other parts of Wales. During his holidays he often visited the Alps and had been as far afield as N. Norway.

A measure of his worth was to be found in his ability as Editor of the News Letter. He started his duties as Editor by editing the Christmas issue 1960 and remained Editor right up to the time of his death. His Editorials were not always in agreement with the views of others, and often, in order to promote discussion in the News Letter one found oneself victim of his criticism. Ivor was adamant in his views that a club was a group of people working together for their common interest as a whole and not purely individuals who had a common interest, his Editorials often had this underlying theme. He worked very hard indeed to keep the production of the News Letter up to four issues per year. He would even give up his visits to the Club on Wednesdays or weekend meets to complete an issue of the News Letter and all this despite ill health which had dogged him for many years.

Not much can be said about Ivor other than what is known about him and his activities with the Club. For he was one who kept himself very much to himself. Little is known of him and his other interest of Astronomy, only that he was very knowledgeable on this subject and was a keen member of a Birmingham Society of Astronomers.

In his work as an Accountant he was progressing very successfully in the field of computers, and was preparing to give lectures on this subject at the English Steel Corporation Centre, Ashorne Hill, Leamington.

Ivor leaves a widow and baby son, our heartfelt commiserations go out to Joan and Neil and also Ivor's family. Ivor and the Editorials we associate with him will be sadly missed. We as a Club can only be thankful that we had a chance to know him, if only for a brief span.

III.ANBERUS - TYNILON

A good Meet attended by twenty members and guests. Those who drove through to the cottage, without stopping for fortifying refreshments in Llangollen were rewarded with an excellent sunset over the Snowdon Horseshoe. This in itself was enough to convince one enthusiastic club member that the bleak face of Dinas Mot looked inviting. He was last seen scrambling eagerly towards the cliff base wearing a look of acute determination.

Saturday dawned fine and dry, several people making frantic endeavours to obtain pre-alpine fitness, strode off in the direction of Snowdon, whilst others contented themselves with a days climbing on the three cliffs. Four members had an excellent day climbing the 'Diagonal' and 'Direct' routes on Dinas Mot, finishing with 'Main Wall' in Cwm Glas. The evening entertainment was very limited, the main drinking venue being the Vaynal. This place has finally lost all of its original character, and the majority of people it now caters for would appear more at home in some bar on the promenade at Blackpool.

Sunday saw the arrival of another fine day. The Daffern protege Neil, (looking very much a mini-Michelin man draped in his extra light weight climbing Rope), lead a group off over Glyders whilst others again climbed in the pass. This area was rebuked by several people who considered it far too "grotty" a place to spend the day which must lead one to consider whether the pass as a climbing area is not losing its original appeal through "over popularity". To be able to experience solitude whilst on a cliff, is to my mind a very essential feature of the sport.

To obtain this feeling of isolation, a very determined band set off to climb the Pillar of Elidir, which lies below the summit of Elidir Fawr. Unfortunately they were all overcome by the previous days exertions and finished by festering the day away in complete lethargy on the shore of some obscure lake. D.J. Stokes.

CLUB JOURNAL . . .

On sale on Wednesdays (5/-) or by post (6/-) from:

A.M. DAFFERN

17 KINROSS CRESCENT BIRMINGHAM 22A.

Ideal New Year present for climbing friends!

For the uninitiated, the valley of Cwm Cowarch runs north from Dinas-Mawddy and is about four miles in its entirety. Craig Cowarch is situated at the head of the valley and it is here that the majority of climbing exploration has been made. A guide book for this crag is available and the club itself has produced condensed versions of this which are obtainable from the club library.

This was the second Meet the club has held in this area, unfortunately the attendance was far below that of the first. Perhaps a rather cynical point of interest here. The Wednesday prior to this meet a members evening was arranged at the Cambridge. In all there must have been forty or more people present, out of these only seven members were able to attend this club Meet.

The 'Stafford Mountaineering Club' have built a splendid hut which is situated in a marvellous position at the foot of the crag. This will I am sure be a tremendous asset to the area during future years. Unfortunately the huts official opening was not until the following weekend, so all concerned on the Meet camped in its vicinity. The weather throughout the whole week-end was excellent if a little windy. A walk to the summit of Arran Fawddwy was the decision made by the majority of people on the Saturday, returning via Draws Bach and Dyrysgal. On the Sunday some did a similar walk whilst others climbed on the South Buttress of Craig Cowarch.

It is a great pity that the meet was so poorly attended as this is a tremendous area for both walking and climbing. Let us hope that on future Meets to this Cwm a greater effort from members will be forthcoming.

D. Stokes.

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A FINE DAY - P.B. Hopfinger

When Roger and I met in Innsbruck we were hoping for three weeks of good weather in order to climb some of the many peaks in the area around the Zillertal. After a week, however, we had only had one day's good climbing and for the rest of the time we had been trailing round from hut to hut, or we had just sat around kicking our heels.

It was with mixed feelings then, that late one evening we left the Dominikus Hut for the Olperer Hut which lay about 3,000 ft above us. The walk was easy so it only took us one and a half hours steady going until the hut came into sight. The Olperer Hut is a very pleasant one perched on the shoulder of the mountain at about 7,500 ft and it has a magnificent view of the Slegeistal, right over to the range of mountains forming the Austro-Italian border.

We found on entering the hut, that it was very full but the Warden obligingly made up beds for us in the passage-way. We were then provided with a "Bergsteigeressen", and as we were eating we were delighted to see the peaks, which had been shrouded in mist for a week, slowly unveiling.

At about 4 am. I awoke, and crawled out of my short narrow bed, feeling surprised that I had so many muscles in my body to become cramped. As I staggered to the window, the view took my breath away. As far as the eye could see, jagged peaks were showing their heads through a pure white tablecloth of cloud. With a little gentle but concentrated persuasion Roger came to the window to join me and when he saw the marvellous weather and the view, he too felt the fever to get going, so, as we stood there we planned our day, choosing as our objective the Olperer (10,800 ft) which is one of the finest Zillertal peaks.

By the time we had breakfasted on bread and jam with strong black tea, the sun had risen and as we set out up the slopes away from the hut, the frozen patches of snow, indicating a hard frost 3,000 ft above us, were glistening in the early sunshine. For a while we followed a narrow cairned path and then set off across the bottom corner of the glacier towards the lower part of the first ridge. Shortly after reaching the rough stony ridge we passed two German climbers, but pausing only to greet them briefly we climbed on up the ridge to where it merged with the snowfield.

We sat down for a few moments, drinking in the magnificent panorama before us. We could identify many peaks for miles around us, to the east the Tauern, the Gros Glockner and the Gros Venediger, to the south the Marmolata and other southerly Dolomite peaks. We stayed for a while looking at the view, with the mountains raising their heads through the snow-white blanket of cloud, but after a while we continued across the upper snowfield at a good pace. Although the slope was steep, the ideal snow conditions enabled us to kick steps up the slope until we reached the lower part of the summit ridge.

To gain access to the ridge, one must traverse under it for some

way until reaching a row of spikes, and then scramble over some boulders to reach the bottom of a short steep chimney. The chimney is quite exposed and has a few bits of ironwork hammered into it which, in the dry rock conditions, were quite unnecessary. We soon scaled the chimney and then scrambled up the ridge which is of about mod. diff. standard.

By this time we could see the summit, but a very imposing overhanging block barred our path. However there was a line of spikes leading up the centre, so we duly climbed up, and when we had conquered the block, we saw to our amusement that our route ended in an exposed 8 ft wide gap. After a little contemplation we decided to reverse the block and work our way round the side of it. This was quite easy and after about five minutes, regretting our wasted efforts, we found ourselves sitting at the summit. From there we looked past the snow-crystal iced cross across the ridge towards the Western Alps, the Wetterstein and the Karwendel. By this time even the Dolomite rock towers were clearly visible, with the sky a clear blue above us.

We had been sitting at the top for about half an hour when the Germans whom we had passed earlier caught up with us, so we had a big "Bergheiling" session, and then they produced large quantities of good hot mint tea from a Thermos flask.

As we sat there the cloud layer over the valley began to break up and as the clouds separated they drifted over the mountainside towards us. As visibility was fast decreasing, we decided to make our descent so we roped up and moved off together down the ridge. The chimney was as little trouble to reverse as it had been to climb, so soon we were moving down the snowfield in short glissades over the rapidly softening snow.

An hour later we were running down over the morraine towards the hut it had taken us just over one and a half hours to make our descent. After eating our dinner we spent the remainder of the day sunbathing and lazing around the hut. We had had a good day's climbing and the whole aspect of our holiday had changed - there seemed to be purpose in life again.

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Gill Daffern.

Imagine, if you will, a valley 12 miles long but only a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile wide trapped by vast red walls 4,000 feet high which fold three times into cirques down whose unrelenting walls cascades thunder. Imagine, also, a valley of flowered meadows, pines and chestnuts, blue lakes and sombre grey mountains profusely decorated with snow. Both of these valleys, so different in appearance, are found in the Pyrenees whose charm lies in one word - variety. The common denominator is the sun hotter here than in the Alps, but, like all mountain regions, it can storm too.

And the Pyrenean sun is sometimes too much of a good thing to sun-starved Britons on holiday. Temptations to siesta in the greenery of south facing slopes in Spain had to be overcome as a bed of nails could not be more painful. The grass is akin to cactus and for the same reasons. More often than not we glimpsed the landscape through a haze of sweat and weariness. But there were compensations, mainly little things at our feet like the jazzy black and yellow lizards; the perfume of wild Pinks as we passed; purple crocuses starlike on the pastures; raspberries ready to eat; yellow thistles three feet in diameter spread on the ground like sea anemonies and waiting it seemed to me to trap my unwary foot and swallow me up.

It might be wondered what we could do with an 18 month old baby in a range like the Pyrenees. The easy but frustrating course would have been to stay in the valleys but instead we took him into the mountains and to the very summits. Leaving the car in one place we wandered forth with a bivvy sheet fortified with pastic for Tony and myself; a small tent, foam-rubber mattress and sleeping bag for the baby and food for five days at a time. Between us we carried over 100 lbs which included Neil in his papoose. The first two days we crossed the Port de Marcadeau 8,400 feet, climbed both of the Muga Peaks and most of the time we found it hell.

On the third day enjoyment seeped through our misery. We were on the last leg to the Col de Brazata 8,700 feet when we were hailed by a shepherd who conveyed that the col was both difficult and dangerous and that he could guide us across an easier pass to the Ara valley. By happy coincidence it also led down to his cabane. We were not too drunk to leave at the end of a well-timed thunderstorm or to accept a night's lodging on flea ridden sheepskins. These Spanish shepherds were a tough lot and could walk the legs off any mountaineer.

The usual get-up was a floppy wide brimmed hat framing a face burnt black by the sun, a cord jacket slung casually over one shoulder, espadrilles and the inevitable staff. Two snappy orange dogs with protruding teeth ran at their heels and sometimes a mule lumbered behind laden with blankets and that most important commodity - vino.

The first important mountain we climbed was Monte Perdito 11,007 feet the highest in the central Pyrenees. It has two small glaciers, is built up of white limestone which resembles snow from afar and although a fascinating mountain lacks the breath taking quality of the highest alpine peaks which seem to belong more to the sky than the earth. We approached the peak from the Ordesa Canyon described in the first paragraph, bivvied by the Goriz Refuge and were on the summit by nine the next morning. Other climbers were fairly surprised to see a baby appear up the final steep wall of snow-ice. On return to the refuge Neil was given a celebration ride on the guardian's mule and deluged with chocolates and biscuits. I would add that he was often given such things by passing mountaineers and sometimes we benefited too.

Perdito signifies 'Lost' and it is comparatively an insignificant mountain. On the other hand Vignmale 10,820 feet is a truly beautiful peak which towers far above the surrounding massifs. Fortressed by 4,000 foot walls on three sides the only weak link is the glacier that falls down the fourth side to the Ossoue Valley towards Gavarnie. We reached this village from the Goriz Refuge via the Breche de Roland 9,200 feet and the ice grotto Casteret, enduring en route two nerve-shattering thunderstorms. We ended the day in the depressing dripping pines below the Cirque, ate an expedient meal of spaghetti wallowing in oxtail soup and crept reluctantly into wet sleeping bags. The following day in continuing mist and rain we ascended the Ossoue Valley. By then our sleeping bags plus everything else were saturated. This included Neil's nappies and we were reduced to using substitutes. However, Vignemale had a pleasant surprise in store, for just below the glacier are the Bellevue Grottoes. Count Russell, a 19th century eccentric, had a passion for the mountain, so much so he leased it for 99 years. He desired to make his home here and engaged workmen to cut out three grottoes in the steep slabs below the ice at 9,000 feet. Nowadays only one cave is usable, the others being a lavatory and a dustbin. There was just room to pitch Neil's tent and a ledge for cooking upon.

Dawn came; a golden pyramid framed in the doorway. Wetness and

cold forgotten we made all speed to the mountain's top. I remember the steep snow slope rising out of clouds billowing and silver, the final bastion of red rock and the sardines for breakfast on the sharp summit. Then, after the exhilaration of the climb came the weary walk down the 8 mile long Val de Gaube into the realm of tourists, culminating in a dizzy descent by chairlift to the Pont D'Espagne and the awaiting car. It was still in one piece after 10 days absence and ready to take us to the 'Accursed Mountains'.

The Maladetta Mountains in Spain boast the highest peak, the largest glaciers and the queerest hydrology in the Pyrenees. The glaciers of the Nethou and Maladetta are adjacent, divided by only a rock ridge, and yet the two rivers born of the snows flow down to the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic respectively.

The capricious Nethou torrent empties with a roar into the Trou de Toro, the Hole of the Bull. Further down the Esera Valley a feeble stream appears and flows quietly down into the Spanish Plains. But, not surprisingly, this is not the Nethou Torrent as Norbert Casteret the celebrated Speliologist proved conclusively by means of flourescen. The Trou de Toto river passes $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles through the main range to resurge at the Gouel de Joueil, the Eye of Jupiter which is the main source of the Garonne.

There is a motorable track to the resurgence from the squalid village of Las Bordas and from here a long, long climb to the Col de Picada 8,216 feet, a descent of 1,800 feet to the Esera Valley and a further ascent of 700 feet to the miserable Rencluse Hut - all of which took $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours without stops. We felt doubtful of our ability to get up the Pic D'Aneto 11,168 feet as the glaciers were in a bad state and we noticed other climbers were equipped with axes and crampons of which we possessed neither. However the weather put an end to all speculation.

One by one the peaks were blotted out by the advancing storm. At 8pm. the first lightening struck, the sky turned a menacing purple shade, torrential rain hammered down unceasing in its fury. Fortified by vino and fruitdrops we crammed into one sleeping bag sacrificing the other to the lake beneath us. By 10 pm. this too was saturated as was all our belongings except a change of clothes for Neil which was stuffed under my clothes next to my skin. At midnight Neil awoke and was rescued from a sizable puddle. Thus we spent the hours of darkness: myself sitting under a rock nursing the bay who miraculously slept, while Tony walked round in circles during which

time the soles of his boots peeled off completely. At 11 am. we moved into the Refuge but it was such a dark Hole and the muleteer assured us the storms were likely to persist, that we decided to return to the car. This we did in a mere $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours bombarded as we were by the icy shrapnel of hail.

But is not life made interesting by contrasts? That same evening we installed ourselves in a hotel in the fashionable resort of Luchon, bedded Neil in an old fashioned iron cot, ate all set before us in the restaurant and slipped at last into the soft enveloping warmth of clean sheets.

The muleteer was right and at length we drove over the snowy Port d'Envalira into Andorra and - sun, while the storm passed on to the French Riviera where it caused much havoc. The main Valley is very commercialised but the rest of the country is untouched. The maps reflect this for where mountains are concerned they are wildly inaccurate.

Coma Pedrosa 9,742 feet, the highest peak in Andorra was our objective but after three hours hard going we found ourselves sitting astride a sharp ridge with the chosen peak miles distant across a gorge and two peaks between on the watershed ridge. It took six interesting hours to get there and the only difficulty came at the end in the impenetrable black battalions of pines guarding the green softness of Arinsal.

Then, eastwards. Mont Canigou stands alone. It rises from peach trees to gentians, from the blue Mediterranean to snow. It makes its own weather; in late afternoon clouds encircle the mountain leaving the topmost pyramid clear. At sunset the wind rouses itself and at first sighs softly in the pines; then when the stars glitter in the ebony sky the wind shouts urgently making sleep difficult. At dawn all quietens down as wind and clouds depart.

A road, sandy and gutted, climbs 4,100 feet in 10 miles to a height of 6,888 feet, but we found it utterly terrifying as the slopes of the Taurinya Gorge are precipitous. I suppose Canigou is a real tourists' mountain as jeep excursions run from the town of Prades to the road's end and from here a mule track winds to the summit. But, before the peak is dismissed from your minds, let me say that in many ways it resembles Snowdon for on the east face there is a huge bulging grey cliff akin to Gloggy and just as dark and sheltered from the sun's light.

In conclusion, there is only one drawback to the Pyrenees and that

is the arrogant Spanish Civil Guard, who patrol the frontier and strike, if not terror, much resentment in the hearts of climbers be they French, Spanish or English. We were often asked why we had taken so long in getting from Point A in France to Point B in Spain, but they could not realise we carried 60lb packs while they carried merely loaded rifles. Frankly the best way to avoid interrogation is to avoid the Guard altogether, i.e. hide behind a rock until the marching feet have passed by. Or, alternatively, like some English Scouts we met take their photographs and while they are still under the influence of self conceit make a quick getaway.

FINDING THE ROUTE By Roger Lavill

"Left, right, what a disgrace, or he may go straight up and fall flat on his face.".

This season was not a great one for those who went to the Alps. Long periods waiting in huts then moving centre and perhaps wasting the only good day in a week.

I had been in the Catinaccio for a day or two and carried up a fair pile of food from the valley to avoid the rather expensive and uninteresting fare at the Stella Alpine shop. I had left a metre of new snow behind in the Zillertal but now the weather was fine and I was anxiously waiting for Robin to arrive. I managed a short climb with a fellow whose mate seemed to like a few days rest between climbs. This was the Traverse of the Vajolet Towers which is quite fun. When I arrived back at campsite dry with the dust of the Gartleshutte, sure enough Robin was installed and was gaily making a mental inventory of the pile of food I had carried up. He had a tin of stewed steak and coffee amongst his provisions - riches indeed in Italy.

Fairly late the following day we went to do the Piaz crack on the Punta Emma. We left the bar early that evening intending to have a look at the Steger route on the Catinaccio to-morrow. The weather in the morning was grim, however. A bit later it cleared and we set out for the S.E. face of the Punta Emma. We were soon up the initial pitches and out onto the face. We hadn't been entirely happy about the weather since the beginning and sure enough on one long pitch when I was about half-way up there was a loud clap of thunder. I hurried but it was raining hard by the time I had finished.

Robin climbed quickly to join me and swept past with me shouting instructions to him because I had done the route the previous year. At the top of this pitch we were at the bottom of a long chimney which I knew reached the top of the difficulties in about 300 ft. It was snowing now and water was pouring down the chimney. We didn't think the position was very serious and were each trying to look glum although we were really enjoying it all in a masochistic sort of way. We tried to smoke a cigarette but Thor had other ideas and directed a new cascade so that our fags burst out of flame. Our attempts to eat cheese rolls were no less futile. We waited about an hour in all for the storm to subside but by this time I was in real fear of actually dissolving and decided to press on. A few feet of bridging led into the chimney which was an absolute Niagara. After about 130ft. I found a niche in the back of the chimney and knocked in a peg. Rob came up and this time the rain was ceasing although the chimney was still pouring since it drained a large scoop higher up. Two more pitches and we were up. The sun was shining and we rang out our socks.

The next day we were more lucky and on the way to the E. face of the Catinaccio at 5.30 am.. We saw another party behind us so quickened our pace but they headed in a different direction. We actually had the route to ourselves! We wasted no time, however and started on the first difficult pitches. These involved very pleasant steep bridging with more than enough protection from pegs. After about 3 of these we heard voices from the scree below, we soon had a German pair behind us. We were following lines of pegs because I had left the guidebook behind. So far so good but now alternatives began to present themselves. The line which had seemed so straightforward from below now proved to be a number of parallel lines. It was our follow the pegs policy which led to our first deviation from the 800 - 900 feet easy section and we continued up corner after crack and groove after chimney at a pretty sustained standard. We eventually arrived on a large scree covered ledge which ran for a considerable distance in either direction across the face. Above this was a long and very steep wall which only seemed to merge into a system of overhangs about 500 feet higher. We searched for signs of progress but found nothing convincing. Suddenly there was a roar and a torrent of stones came crashing down the huge basin between the Central and South summits on our left. High above we could see the large chimney which I new the route finished up. This was more or less directly above but I was sure we should have been approaching

it from the left.

We wandered about giving shouts of unfounded optimism whenever a piece of bleached sweet wrapper or cigarette-end was found. We tried the wall in several places but there was nothing to encourage progress. Working further left we were slowly able to gain height and eventually came across pegs but these had bits of sling on them which betrayed their use as abseil points. We were on a route alright but this one went down. I belayed at these pegs and Robin came up. He continued very determindly. Some way up he came on piton which enabled him to make a hairy move into a groove on the left which overhung but boasted a very old wedge with a piece of wire twisted through it. Using this for aid he moved onto easier ground and gave a cry of relief saying it was "All over bar the shouting". I hadn't seen the pitch beyond the first peg whence it disappeared into the groove and thought it a good piece of route-finding on Robin's part.

More straightforward climbing brough us to a steep wall. This was the other feature besides the top chimney which Iknew about and had in fact claimed to have found it some five or six times in the last 500 feet. But there was no doubt this time because there was a line of pitons in it for protection. We climbed this and were in the final chimney which seemed strenuous to me at the end of a long climb but it went very easily and I arrived on the summit ridge greeted by icy blasts of wind. Robin had just spotted the two Germsn. They had just appeared over the first 500 foot section! We put on cagoules and scrmbled up to the summit, removed the book from its aluminium cupboard inside the cross and scribbled our names in it. We recognised the names of several friends in the book and this made me feel strangely at home. The way down (Ordinary Route) is a pleasant descent and we were more than pleased that no abseil fiddling was called for. Down the last bit of groove to the Refugio Passo Santner and the Gartleshutte again. What on earth does that word mean?

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THE BIG LEAN OVERS . . . Peter Holden

Two of our (Robin Costello and myself) ambitions for this year in Derbyshire were to climb "The Big Plum" in Chee Dale and "Mecca" with the "Prow" finish on Ravens Tor, Mill Dale. We were able to realise these ambitions and in doing so we had two days out which will remain forward in our memories for a long time.

For the "Big Plum" we left Birmingham early on one Saturday morning and arrived in Derbyshire under a cloudy sky and soon there was a steady precipitation of rain. By the time we were walking up to the bottom of the cliff the rain was quite heavy and everything was looking evil and sinister from the previous spell of bad weather, the buttress with the route on looked most impressive being tall, predominantly black and wet. This was a little disappointing for us and we had a discussion as to what best to do. After consideration, we decided that we had come a long way just to walk in the rain so we concluded that we might just as well get wet climbing as walking, and anyhow was there not a large roof to keep us dry?

The first pitch which should normally be "free climbed" in the main was awkward because of the slime on the rock and we thus had to use etriers occasionally. The last few feet, up to the roof being especially difficult because of the slime. The belay under the roof is in a fault which crosses the whole cliff and being a crawlway two feet high by about three feet deep, in which one has to lie down. Now on this particular day it was a little unfortunate because the bottom of this slit was covered with two inches of slimy mud in which we had to lie whilst belaying. Not the most comfortable, or homely, of places and when we were both lying in this gunge we talked over for some while the merits of carrying on or crawling off the cliff. Eventually we decided to carry on and had to spend some time in pathetic efforts trying to clean the mud off the equipment and boots - all rather difficult whilst one was actually lying in the stuff.

The roof pitch was superb climbing for about fifteen feet horizontally, all the pegs and bolts being in position and it was just a matter of moving from one to the other, although this can be rather strenuous especially as a body suspended in etriers has a natural tendancy to spin, this having to be counteracted. The positions on the lip of the roof were terrific, with rather a lot of space below ones backside, and there the climbing was particularly strenuous for a few feet whilst the transition from under the roof to being on the vertical wall above was enacted. By the time I had reached this position there had been a dramatic change in the weather and we were now enjoying clear blue skies. The next few feet to the belay were mixed, free and artificial, and rather enjoyable. The next pitch was fairly straight forward pegging and landed us on a grass ledge. The route was finished by an excellent rock ridge of about severe standard, rather a fine way finishing such a good route. A long rest was

enjoyed in the sunshine on top, then a pleasant walk down the dale to end an enjoyable day, not quite the end because the night was spent bivouacking on Windy Ledge at Stoney Middleton. The next day was spent in glorious sunshine on the cliffs doing some very fine free routes, notably, Pendulum and The Flakes.

For Mecca and "The Prow" we rose early in Birmingham one Sunday morning, and for me it was one of those mornings after a previous nights party and I had managed only two hours sleep, not ideal big route preparation. We were on the cliff for eight o'clock and mine was the first pitch, beginning with very strenuous pegging out of a cave at the base of the cliff, then extremely long reaches between golo's on an overhanging wall. This was a little too much for a complaining stomach and I thought that I was going to have a bout of illness, but fortunately all I could manage were a few good belches to relieve things. The condition of the equipment in situ was very bad with some golo's completely missing necessitating long reaches to the next one, and those that were in were bent and had pieces of nylon tent guy line hanging down to which one tied on with unbelieving hope at first, but gradually one accepted the precarious nature of things.

The "Piece-de-resistance" of this first pitch was the fact that the last golo below the belay was missing completely and I was faced with a blank wall embellished with three lonely golo holes. Not having a stardrill or golo's this was a little perplexing, but I did have a golo peg, but unfortunately the diameters of the shaft were a little greater than the holes so all I achieved on trying to insert it was to burst the holes open. Life was getting a little trying and I became desperate, but by getting as high as possible in my etriers I was able to reach a hold on the rock at ultimate stretch, unfortunately it broke off under pressure and I slumped back onto my etriers whilst it crashed to the ground. The next possibility I tried was to insert a peg into a crack which nearly did not exist, but all I achieved was to break off one square foot of what appeared to be part of the solid face. Then I spied a tiny hole in the rock with an eighth inch thick pillar of limestone dividing it and through this I managed to thread my thirnest piece of perlon, never believing that it could possibly hold me. As applied pressure the minute pillar flaked off its front and I thought that we had had it, but luck was with us and I was able to stay on it long enough to insert a peg and move on to it and then to the belaw peg. This last manoeuvre had wasted at least an hour and an awful lot of nervous energy,

Robin was then able to join me at the belay peg and we sat around in our etriers sorting out the gear for the next pitch, which began with a horizontal traverse for twenty feet and then up to the main roof of "The Prow". We knew that from thereon the main difficulties had to be overcome and looking up we were more than a little impressed with what we saw. Robin started the next pitch which was reasonable on the traverse but when he reached the point where he had to move upwards again he found that the golo's had been broken off at the head and all that was left looked convincingly like a bent nail projecting from the rock. Discouraged by this he looked around for somewhere to place a peg, but after a couple of abortive attempts he gave up and again brought his mind to bear on the remnants of the golo's. By great cunning he was able to tie a thin piece of perlon round the 'nail' and bent the end of the nail up against the rock. Then by careful manoeuvring he was able to move into this absurdity and do likewise with the next one which was in an equally bad condition. This again was all rather time consuming and a drain on Robin's nervous energy. In contrast to Robin struggling I was happily belayed in my etriers contemplating the view and hauling up chocolate biscuits from Kate on the ground. The sun was then on me and life was very enjoyable with just the occasional adjustment of the tope being the only task required of me.

After these bad golo's the situation improved although the pegging was rather awkward and Robin moved on to the belay under the final roof. As I began to follow this pitch half a dozen Club Members arrived at the bottom of the crag, and lay down on the grass and sunbathed whilst watching us exerting ourselves, though it was rather pleasant to be able to chat to them. When I reached Robin at the belay we sorted out the equipment again and discussed the final pitch which looked much more intimidating than we had imagined. There was no equipment in situ to confirm the route and we were a little dubious about the roof which looked loose, but on inspection the possible escape routes on either side were less inviting so we had to face up to going over the roof. By now the situation was really exciting; we had climbed up over one hundred feet of overhanging wall and were then well out from the base of the cliff and the rope swung below us well clear of the rock. We had been on the cliff some hours by then and were extremly thirsty, hot and quite tired.

Fortunately we were surprised to find that the pegging under the

roof was good though very strenuous and awkward because of the constant battle to prevent oneself from spinning. By the time I reached the lip of the roof I was very tired indeed, partly because I realised that I was hammering every peg securely home as a precaution against falling off and pulling pegs out and then being left without the strength to recover the situation. Even though I was extremely tired at that stage and therefore not able to relax properly when I thought of the seriousness of the situation I was able to enjoy the climbing in such a superb position when the scale of things, perhaps, seemed a little exaggerated, life dangling by a thin thread over a huge chasm. The wall above was gained by the insertion of a wooden wedge and with much relief I was able to stand again in my etriers after a few more pegs. The last few feet to the top seemed to take an agebecause I seemed to be thinking very slowly, too tired to decide on where to actually place the pegs in what was quite loose rock. The inevitable last few feet of free climbing came and with the ropes dragging madly I struggled up these and tied on gratefully to a tree. Being able to relax on a belay at the top of a good route is a very fine thing, one is elated by having got over the difficulties of the route and the nervous system can relax and the tension drains away leaving the mini to revel in the pleasures of the route and the surroundings and life seems very worth living because the cares and worries of the world have been extinguished for the day.

This moment was made more perfect because Pete Hay had scramb-led to the top with liquid refreshment for my parched throat and I gulped down both my share and Robin's before I pulled in the ropes and prepared myself for Robin climbing up to me. Robin finished this last pitch in about an hour and we sat on top discussing the many incidents of the climb and telling each other what a glorious days climbing it had been, and both having great respect for the climbers who had made the first ascent.

Having collected all the gear together we walked back down to the bottom of the cliff and inspected what we had just done, we then strolled up the road and enjoyed a drink at the local pub.

A days exercise like that has quite an effect on one physically and mentally. We were both very tired that evening, of course, and Robin was in quite a bad way with cramp, suffering from a spasm about every ten minutes, this was rather awkward because he had to drive the car home, and needed periodic stops to get out and walk round.

I myself was so tired after having had almost no sleep and much alcohol the night before that I can hardly remember the journey back and for the next week I suffered from a continuous desire to fall into bed.

Now that we have climbed these two routes the air of mystery surrounding them has vanished they are now no longer routes which we just used to hear legends about conjuring up impressions in our minds of immense difficulty and great physical effort required in overcoming them. The mental image has been brought to reality and we now know exactly what they are and what they demand of one to get up them, unfortunately they will never again have that same magnetic attraction which they once held for us, but they will both remain great climbs by the standards of English climbing, to be enjoyed by us, I hope, in the future for their own sake, instead of to satisfy an ambition.

In fact Robin has been back to The Big Plum with Roger Lavill and repeated the route in excellent conditions in two and a half hours and enjoyed it immensely.

By way of a post script I would like to add that a third ambition was realised recently when I went up to High Tor Matlock andclimbed Castellan with Roger Lavill. This was the last of the big routes in Derbyshire which we knew of only by legend and wished to climb. But with our improved technique and mental approach, and due to the fact that a lot of the pegs and wedges were in situ, the route was not so much of a gripper as we had previously thought and we enjoyed climbing it in glorious weather — though the technicalities are still there and the climbing positions are often awkward but superbly situated. This was our first climb on High Tor and we were most impressed and hope we can encourage others to go back and enjoy some of the many other routes there.

MATATIN W ALLI

The earlier sunshine had raised our hopes and led us on in an expectancy of shirtsleeved, casual, summer climbing, and, indeed, on Dinas Mot it had been so. But now on the way up to Cwm Glas the dark, heavy clouds were already touching the summits of Crib y Ddysgall and Crib Goch, silently floating over the empty cwm, driving away the placid life world of sunshine, and bringing instead the dead hollow world of impersonal movement, or - at least - so it seemed to me, conditioned by the morning sunshine.

Main Wall had, for a long time, been an ambition of mine, and naturally, in looking forward, I had framed the occasion in perfect conditions; experience having no say in the matter. Of all the climbs in Wales that I could attempt, Main Wall was probably the finest. I had heard much of it. I wanted everything to be right, and did not even consider that it would not be so. As I watched the mountains disappear under the cloud blanket, the earlier desire for movement and action gradually faded; the excitement and vigour was gone, replaced by an empty useless feeling. Reality - these clouds - with all their latent threat - had struck a body blow. I crumbled under its effect.

The sunlit world is a personal thing, glad of your existence, welcoming movement, talk, life, the air itself is alive. Everything strives together for harmony, and each facet of breeze, light, movement and life, a compliment to each other; the whole is complete. But with an unexpected change you become the victim of an unliving world, indifferent, even hostile to your fate, your movement is a discord in its own empty internal strife. Enclosed in a small sphere of mist horizons there is nothing, only the green wet rock stretching upwards and unknown past the mist ceiling. The grey black clouds, heavy in their menace, are the neutralisers of light and shadow, the damp ashes of a dead fire.

Under the cloud I felt the huge crag brooding, waiting: he and the elements, allies, looking down on those who dared to intrude.

We uncoiled the ropes in an atmosphere of mounting tension - for two of us, anyway - hurrying, under the darkening sky.

There were four of us, split into two parties. The two who had previously climbed this climb before were together and went ahead of us. The open corner up which the route lay at the start was a natural water channel, already streaming and covered with green slime. Everything was greasy, dirty, cold. The others went ahead; I was the last.

Alone, on the ledge, I watched the cloud base creep lower over Crib Goch. The pinnacles were already completely out of view; the breeze became stronger and more erratic, coming in gusts and falling back again, whispering, sighing, disappearing. I put my hands in my pockets for warmth. The first drops of rain began to fall. I could not break the spell. My cloud of cloom had grown, exaggerating everything. The rocks glistened, metallic, stretching upwards to the unknown. I hated these long waits - the mind is left to wander unchecked. The vast cliff face impressed itself on me, seeming impossible, bristling with overhangs between which our route must somehow find its way. I sank deeper and deeper into the dark cloud of my own making. Everything fused, moving sluggishly, lacking definition, submerged by the overall overwhelming feeling of insignificance. Nothing. The world would rotate slowly on, would not even know of me, forces beyond me moving. There was no comfort here, everywhere I looked, nothing, no life, I could only shrink closer to the dripping rock for shelter. I would receive no help from the world, it was up to myself, and I was useless, powerless. The nagging doubts about my competence in the rain at this standard, I could not ignore. Water dominated the world. I sank deeper and deeper into the black turmoil.

A jerk on the rope signalled me at last an end to this killing wait. The climbing, to begin with, I did not find technically difficult, but my fingers objected to the cold wet rock, and I did not have much faith in my feet staying friends with their slippery partner. Gradually, however, warmth was returning, stimulated by unnecessarily energetic movements. Climbing as fast as I could, I moved forwards, needing a change of scene, desperately curious about what lay ahead.

It was a long pitch, but soon over, and now it was my turn to lead out across a delicate traverse and up a steep groove. The traverse I managed sketchily, but the groove was black and streaming, and was, I found, the hardest part of the climb. I struggled so far, the water

running down my arms, and then I was stuck, in that position, my arms above my head - water channels. Everything was racing, images insane, fading, changing, my mind sinking, falling away, swirling in empty turmoil. I looked away out across the Cwm, across the sky and shale, but received no answer, only the silence of emptyness, wind whisper, an eternity of time, an eternity of sounds passed. The solution lay with myself alone. I knew it was not really the technicalities, the dead weight of my gloom was dragging me down. The spell had to be broken, it had lasted too long. The course facing me could not have been more clearly defined, in contrast to the vague and vacuous thoughts which had submerged me. The struggle was mine alone, against mine own worst enemy, myself. Suddenly, for the first time, I saw things clearly; I moved at last.

The ledge I arrived on was a perfect belay position, set in the middle of a vertical wall, an eagle's perch, about one foot wide and perfectly flat. The rain had stopped without my realising it while I was still in the groove; it had not even lasted very long, and out here the rocks were clean and dry. The lower rocks were probably dry only rarely, water usually draining on to them. Ha! The rain had been nothing. I slouched casually against the wall, watching Dave climb the groove, and - I am glad to say, climbing being a competitive sport - having difficulty in the groove, but he soon joined me. We climbed on, the exposure increasing all the time.

The rock was really fine, sound, dry, rough and, above all, steep. Another upward traverse led to a pointed perched block, and on round a corner overlooking the dark gully that flanked the right-hand side of the buttress. I climbed this block with difficulty and balanced awkwardly on the top, being pushed out by the wall above the block. Looking down I caught my breath - it was here, at this point, that the very real exposure, which had been increasing progressively as we gained height, reached a climax. Under my feet there was nothing, but the gulley bed four hundred feet below, which the rock here overhung. Anything falling here would have an uninterrupted passage all the way to the groond. I paused for a while, then moved on quickly, excited, exhilerated, glorying in my position, in the air, between heaven and earth. The distance above, the distance below, they could be equal. I could not comprehend the

scale of things, I did not care. On, quickly upwards, deliberately pushing my body away from the rock, touching lightly with fingers and toes, courting gravity, laughing my heels at space. The breeze was gradually lifting the clouds of Crib Goch. Freedom.

Joe Brennan.

FORTHCOMING

IMMEETISS

DECEMBER 31st - JANUARY 2nd -	Patterdale Camping.	Leader Peter Holden.
JANUARY 14th - 16th -	Carueddau Camping in	Cwm Eigau. Leader Dave Stokes.
JANUARY 28th - 30th -	Llanberis Tynlon.	Leader Bill Yale,
FEBRUARY 11th - 13th -	Borrowdale Camping.	Leader Basil Jones.
FEBRUARY 27th	Millstone Edge. Day	Meet. Leader Arthur Becker.
ANNII AI DINNED MADCH 10th DOLDADADN HOTEL (Note change of data)		

ANNUAL DINNER - MARCH 19th - DOLBADARN HOTEL (Note change of date)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - WEDNESDAY 16th FEBRUARY

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