

# CEUNANT



C E U N A N T

M O U N T A I N E E R I N G

C L U B

N E W S L E T T E R - NOVEMBER, 1968.

Cover Photograph -

S k y l o n, Carreg Wastad,

by Ken Wilson.

### E d i t o r i a l . . . .

Not much to say really - but I'm glad to see that my appeal for material for the newsletter in the editorial of the last newsletter has stirred some members into picking up their pens and producing articles without the usual prodding and bullying I generally have to administer.

I would like to apologise to anyone who didn't receive a copy of the June issue as it was late going to the printers and by the time it was ready I had temporarily retired from working for a living so as to spend the summer on holiday in Norway, so I wasn't around to distribute it and had to lumber Roger Bennett with the aforementioned task.

Country members wishing to contribute articles for future editions of the newsletter can do so by forwarding them to the following address:

D.A.Irons, 57 Reservoir Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham. 29.

Mary Kahn asks anyone who has a book or magazine on loan from the club's library to return it as soon as possible as the size of the library has diminished somewhat and a new and complete list of books that the club owns needs to be compiled.

Dave Irons

(Publications Editor)

### Forthcoming Outdoor Meets:

Wintours Leap	→	December 1st	-	R. Clark.
Buttermere	-	December 13th/15th	-	D. Irons.
Rhinogs	-	January 17th/19th	-	J. Brennen.
Stannage	-	February 2nd.	-	D. Irons.

## The Climbing Scene .....

(Notes by Robin Kirkwood).

The idea for these notes is not new for the club. Ten years ago Mike King used to write notes and comments for the early editions and since seeing these old News Letters, I have liked the idea and wish to see it continue.

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Joe Brown has started to make crash helmets in the back of his shop. He expects to be ready to start selling in a couple of months, but he has already a very large order book.

The rumours about a British Standards Specification for crash helmets are both true and untrue! I don't know any details of the test except that the crucial figure is 120 ft/lbs. The helmet that came nearest is the 'Romer' (Spelling ?) Special which withstood 90 ft/lbs. Joe Brown expects to pass this figure easily and hopes he might achieve 120 ft/lbs. He admits that little can be done for the sides, which on average, can stand 45 ft/lbs. (60 ft/lbs. for the 'Romer' Special). He thinks he might match the 'Romer' in this.

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Hiatt Angles are suspect. Ken McLaughlin of Frank Davies's Mountain Shop, I hear, has examples on display that have split down the spine.

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The large roof on the Cima Ovest has been climbed by four Germans early in June this year. The Americans led by Royal Robbins have been attempting this for several years.

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Harry Richards has become a Dad. Kay gave birth to a baby girl in July. She will be called Dinah.

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It is rumoured that Denny Moorhouse of Clog Climbing gear, might start producing a smaller version of the Moac chockstone, threaded with a wire sling. He also hopes to produce an alloy carabiner and a prussiking device soon.

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There is still no sign of the Snowdon West guide book, but yet another Cloggy Guide has been issued, using the numerical grading system, introduced in the Climbers Club Bulletin of 1964.

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Don Whillans is rumoured to be writing a book.

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A short article in the Daily Telegraph, recently informed the public that the 'new' development of climbing on Gogarth, has given a stern boost to Welsh climbing, which was in the 'doldrums'.

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Cliff Phillips of Birmingham, known to several members, has put up a climb on Dinas Bach with Eric Reynolds. He has also 'managed' the Bonnatti Pillar on the Dru this year.

\* \* \* \* \*

Whilst the writer was climbing in the Dolomites this year, he found a snag with tied off pegs. The snag only exists for penniless climbers who regard pegs as gold and loathes to leave or drop one! Tied-off pegs are not usually attached by the eye to the tie-off loop. If the peg comes out, the loop may slacken and loose the peg, which tinkles away to the scree. The writer suggests that a few lengths of old boot lace would come in handy to tie the eye to the loop, allowing plenty of slack to keep any pull on the loop and not on the eye.

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Eric Jones and Mick Coffee (Tiger), both known to several members of the club, have recently made the sixth ascent, the fourth this year, of the boldest on Cloggy.

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B o r r o w d a l e - October '68 - Some notes.

Attendance: 12 persons (8 members, 1 prospective member and 3 guests).

The party, as usual, camped at grange - arriving on Friday night. Saturday was grey and overcast but everyone was up by noon and outclimbing. Pete and Angela Holden and Ken Hipkiss on being informed that a sheep was cragfast on Goat Crag (which is the highly vegetated hillside behind the campsite) promptly decided that that was to be their venue for the day and that rescuing the sheep was their prime objective. This they managed not without difficulty and apparently some hilarious and precarious climbing manoeuvres. They also did one climb, The Peeler (VS).

Andy Dowell, myself and Malc'Cunliffe went to Gowder Crag with the intention of climbing Fools Paradise, but on arriving at the bottom of the cliff we found that the route was already booked by a party of five so an alternative had to be found and Voodoo was chosen and ascended but was found to be loose, rather dirty and on the whole not very worthwhile although fairly difficult.

Another group visited Shepherds Crag and climb on (of course) Brown Slabs.

The weather on Sunday was similar to that of the previous day, though a little brighter in the afternoon - the afternoon being spent by most people of our group on Castle Rock of Triermain which is one of the better and cleaner of low Lakeland crags. Three parties did Overhanging Bastion; the Ian Smith - Ken Hipkiss party also did Zig-Zag, while Andy and I climbed the short, but steep and good Direct Route on the South Crag for our second route.

The Holdens remained in Borrowdale and climbed on Black Crag. Troutdale Pinnacle was done by Roger Clark and Alex Morrison who made a cine film of the ascent.

Dave Irons  
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## Three Days Upwards ....

We arose at 4 p.m., breakfasted and drove to Fiva Farm. Here Dave and I waved goodbye to Derrick and Angela and set off along the river towards the Trollveggen - for our intention was to climb the Rimmon Route on the Trollind Wall. The climb had been ascended four times before our attempt and the usual time taken, after the first ascent, was two and a half days.

As for all long climbs our main concern was whether the weather would remain fine long enough for us to reach the summit. We were optimistic (climbers have to be by necessity) although we were carrying enough food for at least 5 days - but set against this we only carried 4 - 5 pints of water.

The first difficulties encountered were the birch woods between the river and the bottom of the scree slopes - we were soon sweating as we struggled through the tangled undergrowth and clambered over boulders and the maze of fallen trees - rather like the worst approach difficulties encountered at Tremadoc - but longer and with the penalty of carrying a heavy rucksack on one's back. Eventually we escaped on to the scree slope - we had been looking at this slope for three weeks and dreading the thought of plodding up it. Fortunately it turned out to be large scree in the main and progress was not as difficult as first imagined - spurred on by the views of the magnificent walls reaching above us 4000 ft. from base to summit. We studied the lines climbed to-date. Firstly the Norwegian Route - an excellent line, spoilt only by the fact that escape is possible at half height into the summit gully of the East Pillar. Secondly, French Directissima - still to be climbed without fixed ropes - anything is possible with seige tactics and modern equipment - let us hope that future developments break away from this rather out-dated method of climbing. Thirdly, the Rimmon Route taking the centre of the wall to the most obvious feature - the summit gully. An extremely serious route in the upper half because of the difficulties of retreat. Every credit must be given to the Rimmon lads who first sought out this line of least resistance up the wall and had the initiative and boldness to take up the challenge and who broke down all the myths of invincibility of the wall. We were mere mortals who had been shown the way - but even though the route was made and the difficulties known we were still impressed by the great wall above us, which as we neared its base revealed some of its secrets - it is not completely blank but is streaked with fantastic grooves winging upwards and disappearing into the overhangs and wall which looked absolutely blank from below.

After 2½ hours of determined plodding we reached the first of the snow slopes - covered with grit and stones from above and rather unpleasant - soon we were sorting out equipment and roping up at the bottom of the introductory buttress.

An easy traverse leads to the centre of the buttress where the real difficulties begin. We had not loosened up and the sacks felt very heavy - the climbing seemed extraordinarily hard and we were pleased to find an old fixed rope on the first AI pitch, which we gladly prussicked up and then followed the dirty, gritty ground, relatively easy to the snow patches at the base of the wall proper. Here we found plentiful running water and this will always be found at this place.

Because of the unusual dryness and warmth of the summer the snow patches had shrunk abnormally making a huge wet cave at the base of the wall and we were left gazing at the first pitch 50ft. above our heads. Fortunately a perfect crack was also uncovered to the left of the original start which was overcome with alloy wedges and chokes, a wooden wedge and some pegs - excellent climbing, AI & VI. From the top of this pitch we climbed a

steep wall which was more difficult than it looked which brought us back to the original route. A long traverse of 5 brought us to the bottom of the first big artificial pitch. This pitch, the left-hand wall of a huge diedre - The Nick - and with all the pitons in place proved to be enjoyable AI. One more pitch brought us to the bivouack site below the Great Wall, at 6 p.m. Although we still had 3 hours of daylight left we decided to spend the night in comfort and in a place where retreat would still be possible in the event of bad weather.

The ledge was large enough for us to lie down on, and with discreet removal of unnecessary to the scree below we were able to install ourselves comfortably. With time to spare we slowly prepared our bread and jam and followed this with Norwegian brown cheese eased down with lump sugar. From our beds we could contemplate the route ahead - The Great Wall - a vast sweep of vertical rock fissured with superb cracks - bounded on the right by an overhanging groove containing several large roofs and capped by a huge overhanging prow - really impressive - we stared, searching for signs of the route, but the scale is such that we could not even see the wedges never mind the pitons.

That night the weather worsened and rain threatened and must have occurred high above us because we were bombarded by huge drops of water from the overhangs hundreds of feet above our heads. I was a little dispondent because the idea of retreat in the rain was repulsive and I so much wished to go on upwards, but the thought of being caught in bad weather high up on the face was a further worry.

We buried ourselves in our polythene bags and slept for a few hours. We awoke in the dark and peered down into the abyss and could see a campfire in our campsite and my thoughts went to Angela and the others sitting around the fire, brewing tea and no doubt wondering of our progress.

Eventually 4 a.m. came and we decided to rise and eat - more bread and jam and cheese. By 5 a.m. we were climbing again, pitched straight away on to grade 6 rock - a very difficult rising traverse to the small ledge beneath the Great Wall - an excellent pitch. Now we were in the centre of a huge diedre which the Great Wall forms the left hand side of - the exposure was now really felt.

To gain the Wall there is a piece of  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " tape, 20-25 feet long which one has to climb down, hang on to the end of and at full reach clip into the first piton and then make an awkward transfer into etriers. A crack line is then followed on pegs and wedges to a small stance. This pitch had one nasty surprise when I dislodged a huge block which dropped just clear of me, grazing my hand, and thundered down the huge diedre until it fell clear and crashed into the seracs below. I had no wish to follow suit.

The wall was climbed in four magnificent pitches mainly artificial but with some very hard free climbing in the middle on rock that varied from perfectly sound to horrible loose - all very steep and strenuous.

I will remember those four pitches for many a year, particularly the free climbing - hand jamming in magnificent cracks - awkward, strenuous and very steep but just what we had been dreaming of and planning for. The climbing was full of interest and incidents; an example being gaining the second belay - particularly difficult because when I stood in an etrier on the last peg its head began to move down and I quickly retreated to the previous peg. With a few blows

of my hammer I tried to make secure the offending piton, but I was still not satisfied. When it again took my weight it moved but I decided to press on free climbing to the stance - this was hard and overcome by the rather desperate measure of reaching for the loose end of a piece of nylon and I could not see whether it was secure or not, and hauling on this until I could stand on the minute stance. A nasty few moments, but the climb went on upwards and we had a long way to go.

Whilst Dave was climbing I contemplated the continuation of the tremendous diedre we had left - it would make a magnificent climb - 4000ft. of vertical or overhanging rock, mainly artificial climbing and requiring much time.

Escape from the wall was made by a difficult traverse left to a huge black chimney "The Black Gleft" which proved very hard to climb with sacks on our backs. A short, loose hard crack led to a small ledge where we launched standing up. Above this was another ledge with a superb flake crack curving up for 80ft. We decided to sack haul here because of the nature of the climbing - magnificent rock which we revelled in climbing unburdened with our sacks. A short 20ft crack (6 sup) and a long easy pitch led us to the central Basin - a natural depression with an excellent bivouack ledge - there was no snow at all contrary to the guide book suggestions. It was 6 p.m. and we wished to bivouack above the Narrow Slab - 250ft. of grade 6 climbing to complete in about 2½ hours. The climbing was tremendous with plenty of pegs and if one cared to look below the slab swept down, finished abruptly and then there was a long drop down to the screes. But we did not have time to contemplate as we were racing against time. The first long pitch went well and we were soon off up the second pitch until high up this I came to a blank section where much time was wasted attempting to tension across the slab to another piton - not only time consuming but also very strenuous. Eventually I overcame the gap by inserting the end of a thin blade piton into a small crack and tying it off using the sling for aid until I could clip into the next insitu peg then continued by difficult climbing to a small and spectacular ledge on the edge of the overhangs above the void. By now we were both exceedingly tired and had trouble with muscles locking tight. One more pitch to the bivouack - a verticle 50ft. groove of 6, what a relief it was to overcome this and reach the small bivouack ledge. Thankfully we hung our climbing gear to various pitons and after 16 hours of continual effort we arranged our gear and dressed for the bivouack (I looked particularly cute with long red socks and white long combs pulled over my trousers, a red cagoule and topped out with a rather natty green balaclava).

We ate well and sipped a little more of our precious water and relaxed on our 3ft. wide ledge. I hung over the 2½ thousand foot void because we lay diagonally and the ledge narrowed at my end - though we were securely tied to the pitons.

The night was fine and we enjoyed superb views over the mountains and down into the valley where we could see the lights of farms and the cars on the road. We rose at 4 p.m. and were climbing by 5. The first pitch seemed incredibly difficult in the condition I was in and I had to use a few extra pegs. Now we were at the bottom of the Exit Chimneys and we decided to climb these in short pitches and sack haul. The climbing was very good - quite hard on very wet and greasy rock - the sack hauling was extremely hard work, particularly on the first pitch because of the cramped stance or lack of stance. A somewhat amusing incident (in retrospect) happened on the third pitch which went something like this. The first excuse - because of the sack hauling we were climbing on one rope and hauling with the other, ending with great confusion on the belays; because of the tactic required and the fact that both ropes had been reduced to the same colour. Now when I had climbed 75ft. of this pitch I complained that the ropes were dragging - I required of Dave the reason and after a little perplexed sorting out he gave me the rather interesting reply that I was tied on to both ends of the same rope! An unfortunate error which obviously had to be rectified - fortunately I was able to traverse to a detached flake and perched on its top while I manipulated the ropes so that I could carry on.

The next pitch was very difficult climbing - requiring the



negotiation of a very hard overhang, which was solved with the aid of a sling. One more difficult pitch up this chimney (now a groove) and a nasty moment when I pulled a piton out but somehow managed to remain in contact with the rock, and then we reached the Summit Gully and easier ground.

Unfortunately this easier ground of grade 4 climbing and scrambling was shattering because of the continuous movement with rests only at belays. It began with solid, compact rock and good climbing but degenerated as the gully grew bigger, into loose blocks and snow patches, very unpleasant and dirty. After 450ft. the gully steepens and divides, the route followed the left hand crack, we had a much needed rest at this point and lunched. We were both very weary now and all we could think of was attaining the summit ridge and leaving the wall behind then descending to the valley to comfort and friends.

The next 250ft. was hard graft on very wet rock, often greasy with a little snow to be cleared from holds - all making the climbing hard and much care was required. We kept the sacks on our backs even for a 6 sup. pitch and thus I had to use a sling for aid and place an extra wedge (ajammed nut sufficed originally) to overcome an awkward overhang, and then good steep climbing of 5 brought us to a ledge beneath an 150 ft. snow slope. This looked easy and I prepared to kick steps straight up the middle of it, unfortunately this was fresh snow on ice and I quickly had to gain the edge of it and start hand jamming in the gap between the ice and the rock and cutting steps with the peg hammer for my right foot. Back to difficulties and I was glad to find a couple of cracks for pitons. This pitch brought us to a huge cave formed by an enormous chockstone which we had to climb under. Again the snow was much lower than normal and we had to gain the chockstone by some very hard climbing and then squeeze through underneath.

Now we could see the ridge less than 200ft. above us, the way appeared to be marred by large overhangs except for a steep slab leading out to the left. The weather had worsened again and there was a strong cold wind and snow, we were tired and the climbing was very nerve racking where a traverse was made beneath a roof on small holds on the slab and here the rock was very friable. This pitch was very difficult for Dave to second because of the awkwardness of taking the karabiner out of the last peg whilst trying to prevent himself from penduluming across the slab towards me. The last pitch was much easier than it looked - avoiding the overhangs and there we were on an easy ridge 300ft. below the summit of Trollryggen.

I do not remember that we felt any great elation, just relief at having put all the difficulties behind us and the knowledge that after the scramble to the summit we had only to descend and within two hours we would be at Stigfoss where the car would be waiting to pick us up and return us to the valley and the luxury of our camp.

It was 4 p.m. The ascent had taken 36 hours of actual climbing time spread over 3 days. We were tired, dirty and hungry - the latter we eased by having a good eating session, then we packed away the gear and set off for the summit and then down, down, down.

Peter Holden.

## A Grand Day on the Hills .....

I was clawing my way up a decayed and crumbling crack. Sweat was running down my forehead into my stinging eyes. All around me a green mist withered and swirled as though alive. The blue and yellow ribbons that were my ropes hung lazily down for a hundred feet below and dissolved into a greyish fog, which in itself was nothingness. There were no runners only the yellowy brown fangs of rotting rock which crumbled into dust upon touch. I was giving way to despair when suddenly there appeared a large shining piton just above me. With the renewed hopes of a drowning man spying a piece of flotsam, I continued my attack upon the crack.

Up and up and up I climbed for who knows how long and how many hundreds of feet but the elusive peg was still only just above me. A large grey hawk-like bird materialised out of the mist and began to circle around above me. I could see the malignant slits that were its eyes watching me, glinting with lust with the knowledge that soon it would be able to gorge upon the poor wrecked thing that was once a man. I climbed for hours and hours the only things in the world were the peg, the crack and the bird, the latter two dissolved into the mist and the only thing left was the peg and my outstretched hand grasping at this tiny thread of life, when suddenly it was in my reach !

"God ! it's made of cardboard", I screamed as I fell away from the crack.

"Cardboard ! cardboard ! cardboard !" screamed my echo.

"Cardboard ! cardboard ! cardboard !" jeered the bird as it came twisting down towards me.

"Cardboard ! cardboard ! cardboard !" mocked a thousand voices in my head as I slowly floated down, down, down into the grey fog below.

But what was happening ? The fog had transformed into a spitting caldron of white, hot larva, which hissed and bellowed with the voice of a hundred furnaces; the whole surface heaved and tossed like a boiling sea of red and white oil paint, which gurgled and spat as the trapped gasses struggled to the surface and exploded into the air. I was about to die, already I could hear the clanging of the ambulance bell as it hurried to my grave. Then all was gone and nothing remained except the darkness and my thumping heart.

"Morning, Ken".

"Christ, Tom, what time is it ?".

"Three o'clock".

"That's it then, I'm in hell. That's the only place where one has to get up at this hour".

"What's that ?".

"Oh, never mind".

"Been dreaming ?".

"One could say that, I suppose. I knew I shouldn't have had all that cheese and froggy wine last night. Well, it's either that or I'm going slowly round the twist which is not surprising with all this waiting around for the bad weather to break".

In a remote corner of the bivy-cave the ambulance ticked away gently to itself content that its evil work had been done.

Reassured by the friendly throb of the petrol stove, I cast my mind back to the previous day and to the events that brought us up here on the Plan de l'Aiguille. We had just finished discussing the finer merits of the young ladies we had just seen lying in the sun by the Chamonix swimming pool when the whole atmosphere was spoilt by Tom suggesting that we should go climbing as the weather looked as though it might be good for a couple of days.

"Well, Tom I don't know about you, but I fancy doing the Rebuffat Route on the south face of the Aig du Midi. That suit you ?".

"Well, I would prefer the Frendo spur on the north face as it is over three thousand feet long and half rock and half snow and ice, it should be a good day as it is not very hard and quite pleasant".

"Tell you what, then, we'll catch the last telepherique up to Plan de l'Aiguille and bivy, get on the spur early and do the route and bivy in the telepherique station on the summit, then descend to the south face next morning and do the Rebuffat Route. O.K. ?".

"O.K."

And that is how we came to spend a very uncomfortable night shivering in a 2' x 3' snow-hole, 400' from the summit of the north face of the Midi !

There came a stirring from another corner of the cave which came from two British lads who were going to do the Brown Williams route on the Blaiteire. After breakfast we wished each other luck and departed in opposite directions.

After  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours we crossed the Pelerins glacier and started on the rock spur, which went quite easily for about 1500ft. or so and arrived at the start of the snow and ice pitches which rose up before us for about 1500ft. The view from here was really fantastic as huge hanging glaciers protruded out of the snow either side of the spur. The light from the sun had prismatic effects as it was defused through the ice into a kaleidoscope of colour. The air was still and Mont Blanc was wearing a shroud of cloud, which gave the whole setting an unreal and ghostly atmosphere. Such are the moments in mountaineering that will be etched into one's memory for ever. All the hard work and cold will be forgotten and only the wild beauty will remain, stored away for reflection for a period of depression, when one has to face the harsh realities of modern day living.

We became so engrossed in cutting steps that we were not really conscious of the rapidly deteriorating weather until large flakes of snow began to fall lazily around us. I remarked to Tom in a rather nervous voice, "Christmassey, in't it?". As Tom was the ice-man, he did most of the leading on this section, whilst I stood and thought.

After an hour or so things began to look more and more serious as the weather had turned really bad and every time Tom ran out a full length of rope and cut himself a small stance in the ice from which to belay, the wind driven snow had completely filled the steps that he had laboriously cut which forced me to recut completely new ones, as it was impossible to see or feel where his had been. This task became increasingly difficult as more and more fresh snow fell, as one first had to clear away the snow from the steep ice then cut your step or handhold in the ice below. Another hazard was the fact that although it was snowing quite heavily the temperature was still warm which made conditions very wet and slippery, which necessitated backing large bucket steps to make progress safely and lack of adequate belays made us extremely cautious in all our movements as, for without a doubt, if one of us had slipped we would have fallen about 2000ft. down to the Pelerins glacier below as a French party had done the previous week. As we were on the apex of the spur, the wind tore at us from both sides making our faces sting as the snow was driven into them with quite considerable force. There came times when all I could make out of Tom was a blurred shadow above me and I could hear his asthmatic breathing as the air was sucked through clenched teeth as he fought with the wind

and altitude in his upward progress. After about 700ft. of this, I suggested that I should do some leading as my feet were becoming completely numb with standing around on the cold ice, so I set off on the next ice pitch. I had only gone about 80ft. up the steep ice when I decided that one handhold that I had just cut was not quite adequate and just another chip would make it fine, when there came a crack and my ice axe decided to break in two. I just managed to catch the head and stop it falling down the slope and to quote our famous/infamous after-dinner "rambler" thought,

"That's bloody great !"

However, by using the head of the axe like a dagger I managed to complete the pitch and Tom joined me where he remembered that just before setting out, he had thrown a couple of ice screws into the sack; and after digging about, came up with these screws. We lost no time in getting them firmly secured into the ice which gave us the only really good belay of the day. A couple more pitches and we arrived at the foot of the final rock wall which was plastered with snow but according to the guide book, this could be avoided by climbing the extremely steep ice slope to the right. However, this would require at least another four or five ice pitches and in our present condition we did not cherish the idea so we plumbed for the rock finish. Unfortunately we did not fully realise the extent of the conditions that prevailed on the wall; as well as the snow all the cracks were completely filled with ice. As Tom had done his wack on the pitches below it was now my turn to do the leading. The first pitch went quite easily but the second was a chimney which was covered in ice either side up which I started to climb. I was clipped into a peg cleaning out the snow from an overhang above me when the ice behind me broke away and my back fell against the rock below it, causing a diversion of the icy water from down the rock into my neck, which gave me rather cold and soggy underpants which was not very pleasant. Eventually we arrived at a snow-ice shoulder about half way up the wall. From here a wide crack ran diagonally rightwards up towards an overhang which boasted a peg and sling and so we thought this must be the way up. We were soon to find that this was not the case as the difficulties were repulsive and the peg and sling must have been used by retreating parties that had made our mistake and we did likewise. It was soon apparent that we would be unable to reach the summit that day and so we proceeded to make a bivy hole on the shoulder, as the ledges above us were an unknown factor and we did not want to chance anything.

After an hour or so we had cut out a reasonable hole in which to hide. As soon as we got installed, Tom "fine fellow that he is" got the petrol stove going and was preparing hot soup and tea which brought us back to life whilst I watched from the back of the hole. I was vibrating so much that I was worried that the fillings in my teeth would work loose and fall out ! I shall not go into the agonies of that night only that it was quite memorable. As nights spent bivying in the high mountains last for at least four weeks, we were very glad when at last the dawn broke and with it, the warmth of the sun as the weather was quite reasonable. With the sun, came an alarming feeling of lethargy which we struggled to pull out of. When at last we sorted out the frozen slings and unearthed the ropes from the snow that had fallen in the night, we set off diagonally left which appeared to be the correct way. We indulged in much cheating on the final two pitches, i.e. slings on pegs, etc. as snow clearing operations would be impossible without them. These final two pitches I found very difficult as the skin had long since disappeared from my fingers, reducing them to swollen pads of pain and I did not like to think what was happening to my toes. After much struggling and swearing, we eventually staggered on to the top of the Aig du Midi where it promptly started to snow again. We were filled with an over-riding sense of joy and achievement brought about by the very bad conditions and, in fact, to quote Rebuffat "Tom and I were very happy" and managed to joke between ourselves by saying "pity Mr. Holden wasn't here. He would have loved it", and with that we staggered into the haven of the telepherique station and the exuberantly priced coffee and buns but we felt sure it would be worth it.

Ken Hipkiss.

## STIGHORN - A Reason for Climbing ....

We arose at 4 a.m. to a view of thick cloud obscuring everything above 2,000 feet. For once the claustrophobic presence of the Trollryggen was replaced by a tenuous veil of water vapour that did not feel quite so oppressive.

The previous evening Peter Holden, Derek Grimmett and I had decided to do the West Wall of the Stighorn, a 2,000 ft. grade V inf. route high up in the Isterdal some few miles away.

Despite the gloomy nature of the weather we decided to drive round 'for a look', as previous experience had taught us that the valleys could be filled with thick cloud whilst a few hundred feet above the mountains were bathed in hot sunshine. When we reached the car park at Stigfoss we still could not see the Stighorn and we stood around peering indecisively into the gloom.

Eventually we decided that having risen at such an ungodly hour we might as well go for a walk and try and find the face. The walk was straightforward, over grass and boulders bringing us, within an hour, to the scree slope below the West Face.

Just at this moment the clouds parted and retreated rapidly giving us a perfect view of the route. The West Face is some 2,000 ft. high and formed in the shape of a huge decapitated triangle. The lower 1,500 ft. are composed of steep overlapping slabs topped by some 500 ft. of vertical rock peppered with overhangs. Cutting through the upper section was a large diedre. Our route took the left side of the face, meandering upwards to the steep upper section, and then moving leftwards across the steep section avoiding the overhangs to finish up easy ground leading up to the summit.

A short plod up scree and then over snow brought us to the face. Peter led the way up the initial 200 ft. of solo climbing until we roped up for the more serious climbing.

A pattern of responsibility was soon established; Pete led, I belayed him and Derek, whilst Derek removed any pegs that had been used.

The climbing was a tremendous succession of pitches, mostly in the mild severe category with a few very severe sections and several pitches of difficult standard. Every pitch had something of interest in it and even the easy ones managed to produce the odd awkward move. At no point did the climb revert to broken scrambling.

By climbing in the early morning we avoided being in the sun, which can be quite merciless and make climbing more of an effort than a pleasure. We were, however, able to reap the benefit of the sun bathing the peaks all around us affording a tremendous view of snow capped mountains stretching for miles in all directions.

Some 1,000 ft. of climbing brought us to a large grassy ledge below the final steep wall. Here we had lunch and were in a perfect position to discuss the Irons versus Holden Party Finnan Peak Controversy (Details from Editor) with complete impartiality.

Lunch finished we started on the final section. This went up to the overhangs and then traversed left across them and finished up relatively easy rock to the summit. The traverse, at about mild V.S. standard, was an exercise in exposure followed by a superb steep tower on large holds. For me this was one of the finest pitches I have ever climbed, possessing a delicate balance of exposure, position and technical interest. Even the most jaded 'Road-side crag rat' would consider the effort to reach this point worth-while. From the belay, above that pitch, it was easy to look down into the valley and feel a contemptuous pity for those people who could or would not appreciate the intense feeling of living life to the full that such climbing can give.

Three further pitches of III and II, with a nasty little corner sneaked in to keep us on our toes, followed leading us right to the summit cairn and the end of the finest rock climb I have ever done.

We rested for a while on the summit and then descended via a short ridge, a snow slope and a walk along the Troll path back to the car. An hour later we were reminiscing over a huge brew of Derek's much coveted Ridgeways' Earl Grey tea.

R. J. F. Bennett.



## LYSKAMM . . . . .

We squelched into the little Oberland hut, soaked to the skin. With a triumphant leer at the festering occupants, I delved into my dripping sac and produced two enormous bottles of wine. One must be an opportunist to climb in the Alps, and WE made use of the bad days. I uncorked and poured myself a large glass of rich, red, alcohol free grape juice. The Swiss opposite tittered. I assumed my well practised nonchalant look; surely the ignorant peasants knew that all English climbers are teetotal?

If it hadn't been raining so hard in town I wouldn't have had to struggle Myopically round to the supermarket with my specs in my pocket. A summer of 'ifs'. I thought only of the fine spell and our only real climb. We were at the Monte Rosa hut. On the first fine day I struggled through thin-crusts, powder snow up Pollux. Hazel was, sensibly, too indisposed to come. Another fine day, with improving snow we had a fascinating tour of the crevasses of the Felik glacier.

I semi-woke at 2.30. The third fine day the warden had overslept. I banged about and he raised himself; at 3.15 we were stumbling up the moraine to the Grenz glacier, nearly an hour late. It was a beautiful cold night and we went up the glacier in fine style. Unfortunately, I forgot to navigate and dawn found us in the midst of a horrible ice fall, surrounded by great tottering seracs. I woke up suddenly and found we had forgotten to rope up. Eventually we found our way out of the maze, debouching dramatically in front of two other parties who were plodding sedately up the glacier. My unconcerned look came in useful; early morning is the best time for a little ice practice surely.

Now we were on the upper plateau. I turned off right, towards the Lyskamm face. The sun was already on the seracs at the top. I tried to go faster. The snow became softer and deeper. I went up to my neck through a snow-bridge. The crevasse was enormous and my sang-froid wilted. Not even the English practised crevasse rescue before sun-up. I waded on through deeper and deeper snow and swam up to the bergschrund and into the sun. The face above looked superb. 7 a.m. 2 hours late. If only the warden hadn't overslept; if only we hadn't lost the way; if only there hadn't been this terrible snow below the face.

We could at least have a look. I brought Hazel up and crept trembling across the scantily bridged 'schrund. Above there was well consolidated snow on ice. The situation changed immediately; we could now move together. If it continued and if we moved quickly all the way, we could make it. If. We had only been out a week; I had done one climb, Hazel none. I ran out 150ft., brought Hazel across the 'schrund, and we continued up, moving together with all the rope out, kicking and stabbing. We gained height steadily. The shallow rock rib loomed up. It was snow covered and I ignored it in favour of the couloir on the left. It became very warm; I looked at the enormous seracs above left and sweated. Soon the snow became thinner, and I had to work hard, kicking through the ice. No great technical difficulty, but a wonderful position, and the first slip would have been the last. Ahead was the steepest part, probably only 60 degrees, but here was deep powder on hard ice. I kicked and stamped mightily and won through to better ground where a rising traverse left above the ice walls made me aware of our position. I brought Hazel up and hammered her axe into the snow ice (it was one of those axes). We moved steadily for two more rope lengths. Here was bare ice, and I had to use an ice screw. I hammered my ice peg into a crack in the rocks above and went up to the top. It was 11.15 a.m.

It's been an effort remembering details of the climb, but the sensation of being on that beautiful summit remains; poised on the edge of a great curving, white gullswing between Italy and Switzerland. The Lyskamm is a very fine mountain. It was cold, so I put a runner on the summit cross and retired to a sheltered hollow before bringing Hazel up. We burst into tears - almost.

Robin Costello,