

# THE PINNACLE CLUB JOURNAL

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## THE PINNACLE CLUB

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*President 1973—Denise Wilson*

## PEN-Y-PASS

*Eleanor Winthrop Youug*

A GOOD deal has been written through sixty years or so about Pen y Pass, the place, the gatherings there and the effect on a large number of people — climbers mostly, but also others who came perhaps to walk and some even to look on at our activities.

Geoffrey Young wrote about it in several of his books, but chiefly in his contributions to the excellent *Mountains of Snowdonia* (Carr and Lister), and later in that fascinating book I read constantly, *Snowdon Biography*, by Geoffrey Young, Geoffrey Sutton and Wilfrid Noyce. Some early numbers (pre-1914-18 War) of the Climbers Club Journals give aspects of the Pen y Pass parties at Easter and Christmas by other writers, noted generally for their literary gifts and wit, and mountain lore as well.

What is there left for me to tell? I have so great a distaste of falling headlong into the trap of repetition. I am not attempting to give detailed accounts of our gatherings. That would take far too long. I am afraid I will have to slide and skip over much matter, but do remember it can all be seen in the books already mentioned, and looked up in the Pen y Pass book, at present with my son in Germany, started by Geoffrey Young in 1907. So let me fall back on a quotation from one of the most popular songs of the day and say: "I'll do it *my way*".

To begin with some account of the Rawson Owen family (no relation to the old family formerly at P.yG.). And here I am greatly indebted to my good friend of some forty-five years, Winnie Owen, daughter-in-law of Mr. Owen of Pen y Pass, who married his only son Owen Bach. She helped so long at Pen y Pass and turned up looking like a real Duchess for the occasion of the opening of the big Youth Hostel in 1971. Her husband still looks after, and I think owns, the Car Park at Pen y Pass, which year after year gets more crowded with every sort of vehicle. Winnie, her husband and their son Rawson — lately at Liverpool University, where he distinguished himself — live in a handsome house down at Llanberis.

I quote from a letter received lately from Winnie Owen: "Mr. & Mrs. Rawson Owen were married in 1903; that is when Mr. Owen came to Pen y Pass. Mrs. Owen (his first wife) went there

about 1899 or 1900 as Miss K. Pritchard. She managed the Hotel herself. Mr. Owen joined the 14th King's Hussars at the age of 18 in 1894 and did service for well over two years later when the Boer War started in 1899. He was awarded the Queen Victoria Medal for his part in the relief of Ladysmith, and the King Edward VII Medal for service in South Africa. He was discharged in 1906. Mr. Owen returned to the Army for the period of the 1914-18 War. He was wounded twice and again awarded Service and, I think, other medals. Mrs. Owen again managed the Hotel during those years, aided by her cousin Miss Jones'' [who later was so well known to and liked by all our friends there. E.W.Y.]. "Mr. Owen served for five years abroad in the Second World War and has these medals also". Mrs. Owen died shortly before the Second World War, but Mr. Owen lived on until 1962 and his Memorial is in the Porch opposite that of Geoffrey Young, his friend of so many years and almost exact contemporary.

The first meeting between these two men took place "about 1896", wrote Geoffrey Young, who was climbing on the buttressed rock on the road between P.yG. and P.yP. Greetings were exchanged, but they did not meet again until very early in the present century, when Geoffrey first visited P.yP. in 1902.

Now to go back in time for Geoffrey's first impressions of Pen y Pass, seen as a boy not quite ten years old on a walking tour with his father:

"On the first walk through North Wales [in 1886] with my Father and elder brother George, we came out of the dark Snowdon chasm over the ridge of summits under Crib Goch. As I was pushing ahead in thick mist, amongst ghostly crags, a cold gust blew a gap in the cloud under me and I was looking down over a desolation of precipices to where one sun-ray shone upon a patch of grey and white cottages at the head of the remote Llanberis Pass. The glimpse made a consoling human contrast with the immense surroundings of descending column and crag and scar, and it has stayed in my memory even when the cottage later grew into familiar Gorphwysfer and Pen y Pass, and the misted nearer surroundings became the favourite walk of my later and limited years''. So this was Geoffrey Young's first introduction to Pen y Pass.

After that first coming to the Snowdon region in 1886, he was quite often with his father and brothers at P.y.G. Later when Marlborough schooldays were over and he was freer, he started going to Ogwen, to the Snowdon Ranger, and then I note: "1st party at Pen y Pass 1903". By then Geoffrey, always an extremely sociable person and longing to introduce friends to the climbing which was his passion, came with small groups of friends, and, I gather, their climbing and scrambling activities ranged from Tryfan, where Geoffrey had the first climb on Gashed Crag, to the Glydders Fach and Fawr, the Devil's Kitchen of course later, the Snowdon Range particularly, exploring the cliffs of Lliwedd in the wake of J. M. A. Thomson, Idwal, Craig Yr Ysfa and the lot. So much was truly virgin ground. May I quote Chris Bonington? (if he will allow me; at the time of writing well up on the West face of Everest. Good luck to him and all the party): "There is a magic about our first few climbs — one's introduction to the hills. A road-side cliff seems huge and mysterious, a comparatively easy route holds a delicious terror compounded of the unknown and inexperience . . . . This spirit of fresh new adventure must have been even stronger in the early days of the sport of rock-climbing, born in this country towards the end of the nineteenth century. This perhaps was the real "Golden Age" of British climbing when techniques were being evolved from scratch . . . . , and perhaps most precious of all, when only a handful of people were on the hills and even fewer ventured onto the crags". So true this! and it is a good reply I feel to those whose comparisons, if not "odious", are often ridiculous, when these marvellous modern "tigers" laugh at those early adventurers who led the way.

From 1903 then onwards, the parties grew each year, and also this led to Christmas gatherings as well. The company in those days was of necessity made up of Cambridge and later Oxford undergraduates of Geoffrey's age, a few scattered dons, several Civil Servants of many distinguished grades. No parsons, I think — they could not have come away at Easter and Christmas; and those who had this mountain fever were apt to go to the Alps when they could afford it, take jobs as chaplains and so on.

In this period, from 1906 up to the First World War, these gatherings took in a few women, girls then, notably Cottie Sanders,



better known as the novelist Ann Bridge; Geoffrey's cousin Edith Stopford, undergraduate of Newnham College, and an excellent climber. She left part of a skirt (which was worn in those days) on a rock on the Roof Route on Lliwedd. In 1910 there was a splendid Easter party, darkened however by the first tragic death, that of Donald Robertson, when, weak from an illness, he fell on the East Gully of Glydyr Vach. Geoffrey led the Girdle of Lliwedd that season, with George Mallory. My young brother came, a promising climber, and Laurence Slingsby, there for the first time and still a schoolboy at Charterhouse. It is noted in 1910: "The parties are increasing, and the last one took over all the three shacks outside, two cottages, and all the Hotel".

Easter 1911 was my first coming, and here I must correct Geoffrey who says "Cecil Slingsby" (my father) early came to join us!! *Not so*—I am really glad to think that my brother Laurence, two years older than me and firmly in charge, took me up by special invitation to us both that year, while our parents were away in Italy. They came later, in 1913, at the end of a party. My father had been greatly occupied with climbing first in the Lakes, and then very much in Norway and the Alps. This party (1911) I can never forget. Such a galaxy of stars as possibly never met again there, and as I was a very young and rather shy teenager, it was indeed exciting. Professor Farmer, Oscar Eckenstein, Dr. Karl Blodig, George Mallory, a talkative son of Professor Gilbert Murray, two high-up Civil Servants, and the particular and unforgettable Irish group who had sailed over on one of their yachts; led by Geoffrey's cousin, Page Dickinson, they were active in the hills, irrepressibly witty and amusing, and three of them, like my brother, fell in the War. The Irish party, led by Conor O'Brien, Page Dickinson and James Duncan (a very celebrated Dublin social card), Frank Sparrow and Julian. The last two also fell in the Great War. No party there has ever been quite so successful in its way, I think. All were keen climbers. All were witty and amusing, kind and most of them original. Conor and Page remained with us until about 1929. Some suggestion had been made by one of the Dublin party that "Willie Yeats, the poet, be asked as he was keen to come". However, as one of the party said: "Willie was apt on the rocks to see shapes of even "small elephants and queer figures", so I wouldn't trust him"—in all sobriety too! So he never came. I

remember doing a “real climb”, Gashed Crag, with my brother and Geoffrey, and I suppose more on the W. Peak of Lliwedd, Dinas Mot and others on Tryfan.

I forgot to mention some queer episodes of my first 1911 party. There was the “lunatic” man who arrived pale and wan from the top of Snowdon and demanded from Mrs. Owen “a carving knife with which to open a telegram”. Years later recalling this I was laughed at in the hall, but a voice behind me finally said in no mean Irish accents: “She’s right. I was there and saw it”. *Conor O’Brien!*

Also there was a gallant rescue on the Parson’s Nose of a very City-clad gentleman from a Lancashire town—with, I remember, a gold watch—who offered a pound later to his rescuers, of whom I well remember Mallory was one. And I can never forget Dr. Karl Blodig’s Austrian voice echoing over South Snowdon with “Die Wacht am Rhein” (three years before the Kaiser’s War!).

In 1912 and 1913 there were large and interesting parties. In 1913 there was Robert Graves, a schoolboy still, and Aldous Huxley even appeared once, and though prevented by near blindness from climbing, he enjoyed himself very much, or so he told me some thirty-five years later. Arnold Lunn, just engaged to Mabel, joined the party, and Claude Elliott, engaged to Gillian — and so many more of that age!

But Pen y Pass for the purpose of this gathering closed down in 1914, until we awoke it at Easter, 1919. And I *can* take credit for this! And am not ashamed to do so! After the finish of the Austrian-Italian War, and after meeting Geoffrey who returned after losing his leg while driving an ambulance on the Italian front—we were both in this War Zone and went to Trieste and other places together we spent the winter 1918-19 in Florence where we stayed with the hospitable Sir Walter Becker at the Val Salica outside Turin in his magnificent palatial home there; we fell really ill with the prevailing “Spanish flu”, and were tenderly nursed by Lady Becker. Whilst convalescing on the balcony in the spring sunshine I suddenly said to Geoffrey: “Let’s start Pen y Pass parties again”. “Oh no”, he said, still under the shadow of the horrible flu, “it’s no good—so many are killed, and who is left?” He referred not only to the war but to several mountain casualties, like Donald Robertson, Hugh Pope, and H. O. Jones, who had been of his

party. But I insisted and said: "I'll start making a list", and so that is how it happened. And we filled the hotel and shacks and three cottages, to the Owens' delight, and that was the Easter of 1919—I think Mallory's last visit was 1920, because after that came Everest.

The twenties indeed saw some splendid gatherings, particularly 1921—"a great gathering"—and 1922. But 1922 was saddened for all by the death of Mrs. Pat Kelly over above Ogwen. I seem to remember in particular those eminent Cambridge scientific "giants" in '22—a bit much at times, with their large figures filling up the hall and the place resounding with their jokes and arguments. Lord Rutherford, Sir Charles Darwin, Aston Fowler and our own great friends to be, Adrian and his fiancée Hester.

1926 "Full to the brim" is noted—"all the outlying buildings and rather more cars on the spot now!" One day a curiously attractive figure in deer-stalker hat and green clothes blew in, saying: "Please may I join your party?" This was the young Crown Prince of Liechtenstein, that tiny kingdom. He is now the rather elderly reigning monarch, or so I believe. I met a large grandson of his recently, and regaled him with stories of his grandfather's activities on the rocks—and an elder amused member of our party saying: "That young man climbs well—with his voice too!" He sang Austrian ditties while climbing, which amused us a lot.

1927 saw the arrival in our party from Paris of the celebrated Paul Chevalier and Henri de Segogue. They added greatly to the scene, and I can never forget our delight with their highly-coloured jackets and our first sight of ZIPS! We were glad to have those lively Frenchmen!

The later Twenties brought special younger friends from the lively Cambridge climbing lot—Longland, Cuthbert Wakefield, Bobby Chew, Freddy Spencer Chapman, Ivan Waller, and the original and ever-amusing and helpful American Coleman Williams. Also, joining us from Helyg, Wilfred Noyce, Alan Hargreaves, Menlove Edwards and others of their stature.

Our last real party before the war was at Easter 1939, a queer time full of rumours of war, but memorable to me and others for the cheery photographs taken by Basil Goodfellow, who, alas, so untime-



ly has died just recently. It was a friendly, gay and rather “family” party.

During the Second War, Geoffrey and I came to Pen y Pass several times and were privileged to watch and *listen* to the practices of “Mountain Warfare” round the Snowdon area. Mr. Owen by then had agreed that he must put up blackout curtains, but was enraged by this order. At Christmas 1939, we had a family party there, and his lights blazed out down to Llanberis and beyond.

In the years after the war, so much climbing history was being made by more and more brilliant groups of climbers, and the age of this last lot of “Tigers” was well under way. But Pen y Pass was not for them, and had failed by now as a hotel, mostly owing to Mr. Owen’s increasing age and bad health. Also so few of the new vigorous climbers could afford hotel prices—and no wonder!

As has been several times written, the new age of climbing in the Snowdon area really began with Pigott’s climb on Cloggy—and Longland’s! The following year, in Summer 1928, I think Geoffrey and I had realised for long that changes must come. We used to visit Pen y Pass and walk together on the high ridges and on the “Little Tops”, we both greatly loved as his right, “good” leg ceased to function and support his pegleg which had brought him so much victory in the Welsh hills and the Alps.

After his death in September 1958, I went a few times on my own to Pen y Pass. The spell of the mountains there was still strong, tho’ Pen y Pass itself became strange and I knew my using it must stop. But I know that I shall be grateful for all the years and the magic of that particular world.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### *Note.*

I have purposely not tried to give anything like all the names of the celebrated climbers and personalities of all those years. They nearly all appear in the two Snowdon volumes, by Carr and Lister, and Sutton and Noyce. Besides I commend people who are interested to read *Mountains with a Difference*, by Geoffrey Winthrop Young (Eyre and Spottiswoode). There is more that I would love to say, because I remember so much, and Pen y Pass has meant very much in my life in all its aspects. I can only wish it well still in its new setting.



## MOUNTAINEERING ON SKI

*Angela Faller*

**I**F you think of skiing as a good way to travel over snow, then ski-mountaineering is for you.

Don't worry if you're not a downhill expert, because relatively little time is spent skiing downhill. Touring won't make you into an elegant skier. It will accustom you to all kinds of snow and even ice. To go up high mountains on ski you need to be as fit as to go on foot or, better still, more so. If you like the idea of 'apres-ski' round the glowing stove of an Alpine hut, then why not have a "season" early in the year . . . . ?

Take the usual equipment for a snow peak in summer—ice-axe, crampons, duvet—as well as skis, sticks and skins. Wear warm, practical clothing, especially gaiters and *comfortable* boots. Your boots may have flat soles or vibrams, as long as they fit your bindings; and touring bindings grip the boot firmly when skiing downhill but let the heel lift when skinning up. Unless you can plan a route between guarded huts and villages, all food must be carried. And don't forget to carry a rope in the party, also brewing gear, maps, compass, altimeter, and first-aid kit for people and skis.

Obviously ski-mountaineering is very like climbing!

I have spent the last two Easter holidays ski-touring in the Alps.

Like climbing, I took it up by chance. When the invitation came to try the High Level Route from Chamonix to Saas-Fee, I told the others, honestly, that I could hardly ski at all. This objection was over-ruled and I consequently found myself in Chamonix just before Easter 1971 with Robert (a climbing friend), Dick Sykes and Robin Richards (whom I'd never met before).

After practising for a morning on the Grands Montets pistes the four of us left the top cable car station for the Argentière hut. We began to tumble straight away — the heavy sacks and untrodden snow upset even the experienced members. As I couldn't manage parallel turns on the piste I didn't attempt them with an extra thirty pounds on my back. On the Argentière glacier we put on skins, my first opportunity of using them, and shuffled slowly up to the refuge.

Dawn saw us climbing steep, icy slopes to the Col de Char-donnet, wearing crampons and carrying skis. There were tracks to



follow and other parties were setting out, mostly making a circuit back to the Chamonix valley. The sunrise was more dazzling than in summer and behind us the north faces of the Courtes, Droites and Verte were frozen into immobility. Progress was hard work but satisfying; I was glad I could at least keep up on foot. From the col we could see the Grand Combin and Matterhorn, our objectives within the next few days, if all went well.

My moment of truth came with the first descent. The others were specks in the distance and still I stood on the col shouting uselessly, "Wait for me". Two minutes later I landed in the snow at their feet! We skinned up to the Fenêtre de Saleina, from where we digressed to climb the Aiguille de Tour, and in the late afternoon crept, shattered, into the Trient hut, which turned out to be unguarded.

Next day seemed easier; I enjoyed it more and worried less about holding up the party. Delay was caused not by waiting for me but by the descent into the Val d'Arpette, where we had to belay each other and wear crampons. There were now eight of us; we had been joined by a German doctor with his young daughter, and two Englishmen, Mike and Graham. Once on ski, the descent of the Val d'Arpette was delightful. It led first between snow-plastered slopes (might they have avalanched?) and then through pinewoods to the village of Champex. The season there was over and the nursery slopes waterlogged; later in the year one would have to walk where we had skied. Buses took us to Bourg Saint Pierre where the High Level Route crosses the Great St. Bernard Road. We all bought provisions, booked in at a pension, and went out to feast on fondue and raclettes.

Unfamiliar mountains followed. There was the disturbing spectacle of men and dogs searching for recent avalanche victims. A struggle against a powerful snow-bearing wind up to the Valsorey hut perched high on the Grand Combin. The inevitable waste of a day in bad weather and two nights' accumulation of ski-mountaineers (including Geoff Sutton and John Cross) piled up on top of each other. Miraculously, a clear, starry night. And a very early start for the crux of the whole route, the Plateau de Couloir.

Somehow I was the first away by torchlight and somehow I stayed in front. The way was very steep but there were bucket

steps in good snow. A narrow break in the cornice led onto the plateau, as level and icy as a skating rink. With just my ice-axe I could have held it against an army! I waited there in the shadow of the Combin, watching the Mont Blanc range shimmer in the morning sun, while the 'army' from the hut inched towards my vantage point and climbed onto it one at a time.

Next the Chanrion hut, a pretend wash in the snow, sore heels and sunburned faces from skinning up glaciers. The Cabane de Vignettes above Arolla, again very crowded. Its log-book suggested that as a guideless British party we were a rare phenomenon. Expensive bread, cheese and spaghetti to supplement our depleted rations. Twenty miles next day to Zermatt. Three cols to cross.

It was a wonderful cold day. We overtook several parties on the moonlit ascent to the Col de l'Eveque. The webbing straps on my skins broke and I nearly had frostbitten fingers sewing them up. Down, and up again to the Col de Mont Brulé. And at last we gained the Col de Valpelline and stood surrounded by great peaks, the Matterhorn, Dent d'Herens, Dent Blanche. Many, many photographs. Zermatt in the pine trees, ten miles away. Perfect snow at first, then deep powder. The Continental parties, in their element, overtook us again in a flurry of snow. Terrible icy ruts. But we skied into the town, as near as made no difference. Smooth tourists goggled at my unkempt and laden figure. Little did they know I was the proudest girl in the world.

At the Hotel Bahnhof Frau Biner hoisted the Union Jack in our honour. It felt marvellous to have a hot shower and a good meal, but clean clothes would have been welcome too. Zermatt and the weather gods were celebrating Easter. We sunbathed on a brown alp, newly freed from snow, and it was dreamy.

But the journey was not yet finished. Tracks like crazy tram-lines led to the Monte Rosa hut where people were sleeping on the tables. We climbed Caster via the Felixjoch and skied down an exciting crevassed glacier. And on the last day we crossed the Adlerjoch, climbed the 4000 m. Strahlhorn, and skied into Saas-Fee as the fine weather broke, with strange, ominous streaks in the sky.

Easter 1972 was so different!

This time Robert and I teamed up with Mike and Graham, whom we met on the High Level Route. Robin was busy and Dick (who is an excellent skier) was traversing the whole of the Alps with

Alan Blackshaw's party. We wanted to explore the Bernese Oberland, climbing as many peaks as possible en route between huts.

We were delayed for several days at our base, a 'dortoir' at the hamlet of Blatten in the Löschental, by persistent snowfall. Just as we thought of forgetting the idea and going to a conventional ski resort the weather improved, so we prepared to leave early next morning for the Hollandia hut. This must be the most deceptive slog in the Alps, for we could see the hut all the time we were approaching — yet it took eight hours of skinning and we never stopped for long. When we arrived, only the winter-room was open; we lit the stove and made inroads into our rations for four days.

On Good Friday we climbed the Ebnefluh, an ideal ski mountain. As we skinned up its snowy flanks we were surprised to see figures already skiing down. The sound of a small 'plane solved the mystery; people were being air-lifted onto our mountain. Of all the cheek! Clouds rolled in as we reached the summit but we had a super run down on firm snow. In the afternoon the guardian arrived by helicopter and opened the Hollandia hut for the summer season.

Our next objective was the Jungfrauoch, to which we had sent provisions (by train) for the rest of the holiday. We decided to go via the Lauitor rather than the Konkordiaplatz so that we would avoid the many "downhill only" skiers and also have the opportunity to climb a peak. As we climbed to the col the wind was nearly blowing me over and the cloud came down while we were threading our way round crevasses and across snow bridges. We considered retreating but decided that either side of the col would be tricky, so we might as well head for Jungfrauoch and our box of goodies.

By this time we had a complete white-out and the descent was steep, crevassed, and totally unfamiliar. Robert and Graham tied the rope between them and side-slipped down very carefully one at a time. Mike and I followed equally slowly, homing on the trailing rope. In such deep powder snow, crevasse rescue was unthinkable. Instinct and good luck guided us round huge crevasses; we never had to retrace our steps. We all had a strange sensation of floating. I fell over several times because I had stopped without realising it.

At last the angle eased. An ice cliff loomed to one side, a rock buttress to the other. We took a bearing from our estimated position

to the Jungfrauoch, knowing that to enter the complex we had to find a small tunnel entrance in a cliff half a kilometre wide and two kilometres away. It was snowing harder all the time and visibility was negligible. At least we had a shovel with us to dig an emergency snowhole, and plenty of food and clothing . . . . But we didn't need them. Moving in single file, following the compass except to avoid crevasses, to our everlasting amazement we went straight into that tunnel. Talk about 'Open Sesame' !

We were stormbound at Jungfrauoch over Easter. Later, we attempted the Mönch, half-heartedly, unsure about avalanche danger, and didn't get very far. Then we skied down to the Konkordia hut with replenished loads. At the Konkordia everyone had to 'park' his skis on the glacier and climb three hundred feet of ladders up the rock spur. There was good fun when the lady guardian cocked our packet of stew; it fed us — and ten hungry Germans!

Snow fell throughout the night. We were first down the ladders (quite gripping) and the first across the col to the Finsteraarhorn hut in the fresh snow (utterly exhausting). And who should we meet there but the big British Alpine Traverse party, eight of them including Dick. Early next morning we all set off for the Gross Fiescherhorn and were well on our way when the stars faded into a rosy sunrise. Nevertheless none of us reached the summit before the bad weather forced us back. Someone dropped a camera which was buried before it could be found. A B.B.C. camera team led by Mick Burke arrived, but there was nothing for them to film. Eventually the big party, who were travelling from east to west, trekked off to the Hollandia, while we, time running out on us, escaped from the Oberland down the Aletsch glacier.

Two ski-touring holidays.

One in glorious weather, the other with snow every day.

One with perfect visibility, the other needing compass and altimeter all the time.

One wearing crampons regularly, the other not at all.

One where we did all we intended and more, the other only half the time spent in action.

Both memorable. For the adventure and the company and the ruggedness of it all. For the purity of the mountains under winter's snow. And the apple blossom bursting out to welcome us back home.

## BEACHCOMBING

*Margaret Darvall*

I LIKE cliffs above my beaches: the best cliffs go straight down to the sea with nothing but rocky ledges between. But I'm a beachcombing climber and spend half my time watching other climbers (so do some outcrop addicts) or seals or birds or the sea, or just pottering with half an eye on possible routes.

I must have started when I was about three, on sandstone at Studland and then limestone at Winspit, and had a first try at ice technique with bare feet on wet seaweed. But then there was a long sad gap before I got to Cornwall, and the first time I had a leg in plaster and could only see enough to make me determined to go back, and I did. I watched Peter Biven and Trevor Peck make a first ascent on Bosigran Face and heard Nea's tales of her earlier dramas there, and discovered Commando Ridge, Porthmoina, Carn Lês Boel, Porthgwarra and the Wicca Pillar, as well as the wild and lovely hinterland of West Penwith. There was one splendid day when a long and devious rope (mostly Pinnacles, but led by Ian Morin and including Charles Marriott with a niece and nephew) found what we called the Lichenous Tower on the face beyond Carn Lês Boel, which seemed to be a first ascent. The lower part was broken and worked out according to individual fancy, but the last pitch was a good, steep crack, with the hardest move appropriately at the top. The strange and frustrating thing is that we have never been able to find it again.

Dorset was home ground. One of the first climbs I did was the Mupe Bay Traverse: "1 mile. Difficult", according to the guide book. I heard John Cleare (and I never expected him to bother with a Diff.) say it was one of the best climbs in Dorset. There are many variations according to tide and it is often not possible to complete the mile; the sea is always splashing a few feet below. There are delightful fossil ledges just above, so sheltered that Dorothea and I enjoyed a bathe in a pool on one of them on a December afternoon. You never see a soul once you step round the corner from Lulworth Bay—except far out to sea. There are dramatic cliffs nearer Swanage, particularly Boulder Ruckle, where you abseil down the first section and there is no way back except up a Severe. Once you are down, there is a long stretch of cliffs to explore, out of sight

## BEACHCOMBING

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and earshot of any cliff top crowds. Jac Sagnier, who once came with us on a Meet, was fascinated to see a tent perched part-way down a cliff and took a photograph of it.

I should like to go back to Lundy outside the nesting season, to try some of the climbs which were out of bounds when we were there. The main problem was route-finding, as it was hard to identify the cliffs from above, but the birds and seals and the life of the tiny, remote island make it a perfect place for beachcombers.

I hankered after Gower for several years and the extension of the M4 brought it within reach. A cold and windy Easter wasn't the best time to try it out, and again it was difficult to identify routes; many were accessible only at low tide, but there was surprising solitude and wild country, and miles of cliffs worth looking at again.

I found some tempting rock near Tossa on the Costa Brava, when I'd only just started climbing and had ill-fitting slippery sandals and a vehemently non-climbing companion. Corsica has splendid rock near the sea, all colours of the rainbow and so rough it tears your skin off.

Nea and I didn't think of taking a rope or boots to Ibiza and wished we had. We found interesting scrambles, which gave us private ledges for sunbathing, and there were all kinds of possible lines we might have tried out with a rope and better footwear.

I am told there is rock-climbing at Capri and that should be good beachcombing country too — if you can escape the tourists. I am still looking for new beaches, but I have found enough already to keep me busy — or happily lazy — for a long time.



## A STRIKING ALPINE HOLIDAY

*Denise Wilson*

A NECK-CRANING peer upwards at the cloud-weathered Aiguilles, followed by an exhilarating train-ride up to Montanvers, so that the children could set foot upon a glacier. This expensive detour via Chamonix was just to satisfy my nostalgia as an exiled Alpinist, and to give me a chance to impress my children by pointing out peaks I had climbed. Then back to reality with a plunge through the Mont Blanc tunnel into Italy, accompanied by more boasting about previous traverses over the top. The mountains gradually getting smaller and the weather quickly getting hotter until at last we arrived in the Alpes Maritimes.

Our first impressions of St. Martin-Vésubie were disappointing—the campsites were small and crowded, the valley heavily wooded and enclosed, and to crown all, it was raining! Just like home! We could only blame it on the mountains when the children complained bitterly, saying that they thought it was always sunny in the South of France. All our friends who had recommended the Maritime Alps as an ideal place to combine a climbing and family holiday must have had burning ears as we tried to find somewhere to pitch the tents which wasn't under a "Camping Interdit" sign. However, we all cheered up once we were established at Madonne de Fenestre at a very unofficial and idyllic campsite, above the tree-line at about 7000 feet, and surrounded by superb mountains.

According to the West Col guide to the area — which was our bible — there seemed to be plenty of easy walks over cols, passes and peaks which we could attempt with all the children. There also seemed to be some interesting routes to be done with adults, once the other two families arrived. Our first few explorations with the children confirmed this, and even the least interested members of the family enjoyed the walk up to the Lac de Fenestre. There were many beautiful flowers to pick, ranging from late summer blooms in the valley to the earliest flowering gentians, and snowdrops peeping through the snow on the higher slopes. The walk was also enlivened by our having to make our way gingerly across a snow-filled gully where the steps were in imminent danger of breaking off into the valley below. We crossed the gully many times during the holiday and the route took a higher and higher line each day, but we never actually saw the steps (and presumably the tourists on

them) disappear down the slopes — much to the children's disappointment!

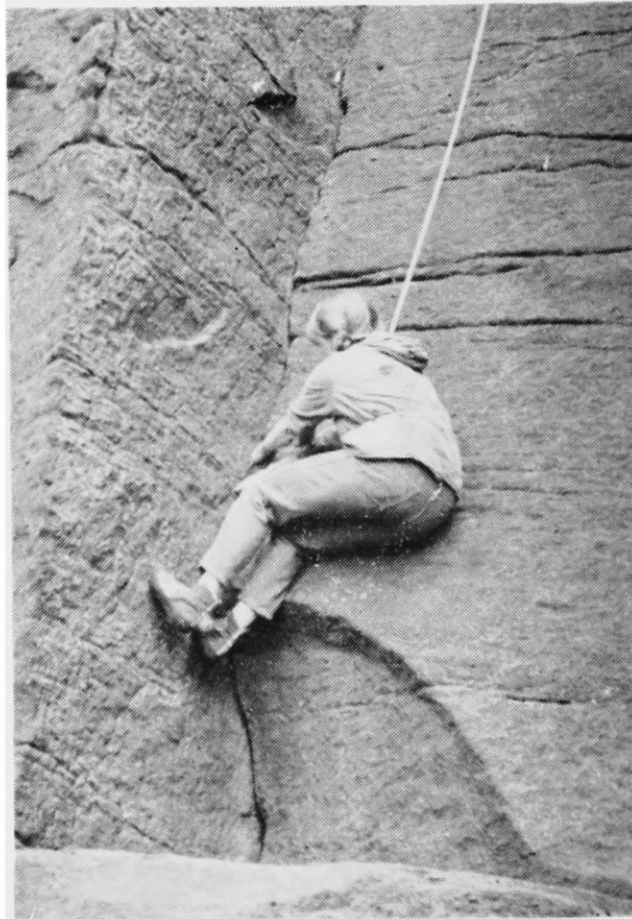
An added bonus on the second day, when we went with the Foster family up to the Col de Fenestre on the frontier, was to explore the old gun installations and other relics of the war, and to eat lunch with one foot dangling in France and the other one in Italy. Another day we had a pleasant walk southwards over Mont Caval and back via the Cinq Lacs, with many stops to collect wood for the evening bonfire. So far the tracks had been very well marked and not very arduous, involving ascents of only a few thousand feet. This gave the children plenty of free time in the afternoon for the main business of the day, which was to gather bilberries and make friends with the numerous goats, cows and mules who appeared to have a right of way through the middle of our tents.

We then decided that it was time to be more ambitious and try one of the harder peaks. After much deliberating, we chose Mont Ponsett which was about 10,000 feet and graded F — a fitting birthday treat for our eldest, who hates going uphill unless it is on horseback! We drove her on with the promise of a week of swimming in the Mediterranean and a riding holiday in England in recompense. Then came the crunch — all the beautiful paths ended at cols and lakes, and if you wanted to actually climb a peak you were on seemingly virgin terrain, with loose rock and vegetation to cope with and no reassuring blobs of red paint to guide you. On the credit side, we hardly ever saw another climber on a mountain, and we did see several chamois and marmots and found gentians and edelweiss growing right up to the summits. In spite of the loose rock, the children were keen to climb more peaks, and so with the odd adult-only day on some of the harder routes we managed to cover most of the area in less than two weeks.

We had our moments — such as, when four competent mountaineers felt totally inadequate and unable to hold safely onto all six children when we suddenly emerged onto a knife-edged arête at the summit. Needless to say the children weren't at all concerned as they gazed down the sheer drop of several thousand feet on each side! Another day on Mont Colomb we found ourselves on very loose rock and had a tricky half-hour dodging falling stones and scrambling up soft snow. In contrast three of us had a superb day

traversing the main peak of the region — Gelas — with interesting climbing all the way and giving superb views towards the Swiss Alps.

Altogether it was a most successful holiday with a total bag of a dozen peaks, at least six of which were climbed by children aged between 5 and 12 years. Although, when we had read the description to Mont Colomb: “A pleasant walk amid striking rock scenery”, we hadn’t realised that the true interpretation was that we would be struck by the rocks as well as by the scenery!



*Dorothy Wood on gritstone*

*Photo: Christine Sheard*

## LA DOLCE VITA

*Angela Heppenstall*

“ROME — how lucky you are!” was the usual reaction to my announcement that I had to leave my nice job and the familiar pastures of the British hills in order to join my husband where he was posted abroad. I wasn’t quite so sure and viewed the whole proceedings with some apprehension, an apprehension which was unjustified at least as far as mountaineering experiences were concerned.

The Rome climbing “scene” centres around the C.A.I. (Italian Alpine Club) which has a section in Rome. Every Friday night Roman mountaineers foregather at the headquarters, in theory, to discuss past happenings and arrange future events. To the uninitiated outsider it is Italian (or should I say Roman) life at its most chaotic. Firm arrangements to do anything are never made — any appointment is apparently always confirmed by telephone at the last possible minute, and in any case at 9 p.m. the whole gathering removes itself to the street where the more important decisions — like where to go for the communal spaghetti or pizza — are made. Perhaps an hour or so later amidst the haze of food and wine, some constructive suggestions for the weekend’s climbing might emerge, as on the first time I encountered the C.A.I. This was during a short visit to Rome, and I understood no Italian, so that at the end of the evening it really was news when I was informed that Alan and I were joining a party which was spending the forthcoming Easter holiday in the Alburni mountains.

The Alburni is a little explored mountain area near Salerno and roughly five hours’ drive from Rome. It is a high wedge-shaped limestone plateau flanked on either side of the highest point by spectacular cliffs and towers, reaching 1000 ft. in height in certain places and boasting a solitary rock route. The attraction to Alan therefore was in exploring these cliffs for potential “lines of weakness” and in doing so we had many enjoyable and worthwhile walks. I imagine that the plateau has been used from time immemorial as a grazing ground and so there exist numerous mule-tracks, which rise from the primitive hill villages and thread their way through chestnut groves and rock-faces to reach the high plateau. Such paths were more than useful to us and on our return visit in the autumn led us to some situations with fine colourful

views. Postiglione, the village we used as a base for these activities, is a typical hill village with its old men, the women in black with the loads on their heads, and narrow streets leading up to a castle-like building at the highest point; except for our invasion, a few cars and the daily bus to Alerno, life could have been the same for hundreds of years! Accommodation in the area is to be found at a so-called "motel" run by a seventy-year-old American-Italian who left the village at eleven and returned some fifty years later to retire.

This trip was probably rather out of the ordinary run of C.A.I. activities, which are normally carried out nearer to Rome. Nearest to Rome is a limestone outcrop on Monte Morra offering two to three pitch routes at a variety of standards, and some nice climbing. It was here that I first gained acceptance as a climber in my own right and not just as "la moglie". For more serious climbing the obvious choice is the Gran Sasso d'Italia. This group lies between L'Aquila and the Adriatic coast and is reached in three hours from Rome. It consists of a main ridge — part of the principal divide of the region — which has several peaks varying widely in character: some are rounded and grassy, others have interesting-looking summit ridges; many of them are flanked by great faces of rock descending into the valley. The highest and most interesting mountain in the range does not lie on this ridge but on a side-ridge. Corno Grande, which reaches a height only a little short of 3000 m., is the highest mountain in Italy outside the Alps (apart from Etna), and together with Corno Piccolo offers the greatest concentration of rock-climbing possibilities in the area. Both mountains have several most impressive rock-faces, offering climbing of Alpine dimensions — in fact the "Panetone" is so vast and so remote that climbing there must have something more than Alpine seriousness. The Italian outlook on climbing is an Alpine one too, with greater emphasis placed on speed than on technical skill or protection techniques. Indeed they do cover ground of up to severe very efficiently, but show great reluctance to do anything out of the ordinary or to participate in any event which could not be described as a "gita sociale". I only met one Italian woman, Chiaretta, who consistently led routes of reasonable standard, but we were beginning to interest some of the girls in the idea of forming a "cordate femminili". Certainly whenever I was known to lead anything, however easy, I was regarded almost as some special phenomenon.

During my short stay in Italy we managed several visits to the Gran Sasso and as well as doing some of the conventional routes Alan and I did some exploration of the considerable areas of untouched or rarely visited rock still remaining. A return to the Gran Sasso is a must on our list, for as well as worthwhile routes still to be done, the area offers much to the walker or scrambler, and for winter there is the complete traverse of the area on skis, crossing L'Aquila side of the massif via Campo Imperatore — a high basin flanked by the main ridge, over the main tops and then down on the Adriatic side at Prati di Tivo. The area is provided with accommodation for the mountaineer in the form of a hotel at Campo Imperatore, the Rifugio Franchetti belonging to the Rome section of the C.A.I., and other huts. From these centres several days of activity are possible. It is also possible to approach the mountains from other villages in the valleys.

Once the autumn passed we began to focus our attention on other areas of the Central Appennines, in particular the Monte Velino group. We made many exploratory hill-walking excursions into this area — another high limestone region consisting of a network of ridges incut by attractive and sometimes spectacular valleys, again boasting large and barely touched rock-faces. These were studied by us only from a safe distance. It is very difficult to give an impression of the seeming vastness of this area, but enough to say that as the snow increased we realised more and more how useful skis would be for covering the distances. Chiaretta and several of the C.A.I. were real enthusiasts for ski-mountaineering, and I felt this was something I wanted to do. Encouraged in this view by Chiaretta, by plain stubbornness and by an unwillingness to be left out, I persuaded Alan that I wanted to take part in the ski-mountaineering course run by the C.A.I. every year, so we equipped ourselves with skins and in the few weeks before the course I learned to snow-plough, kick-turn and just generally keep going somehow in most snow conditions. The outing I did join was something of a fiasco — the intention had been to traverse the Velino group starting from one of the regular ski centres. The party was however large, of very mixed ability and fitness (I was to my immense relief worst in neither respect) and the weather was bad too. In the end, after we had taken a wrong route quite early on, it was realised that the original tour was out of the question and a circular tour back to the



resort completed instead. Co-operation from the resort officials enabled the coach to be retrieved and we were all transported by the resort minibus to find the coach and a good trattoria in the next village. Despite the high level of hard work required on this particular outing we both felt we had learned a little and that we should like to have another go — with the proviso that we would eventually need to buy touring bindings for our skis. It was shortly after this that my activities came to an abrupt halt, but Alan did a ski traverse of Monte Viglio, another of the Appennine mountains not far from Rome.

Despite the chaos, outings with the C.A.I. were fun, not least for the communal invasion of the local trattoria at the end of these days. Quite how the local innkeeper coped I cannot start to imagine — but then I'm not Italian!

I have concentrated on describing areas with which I became most familiar, but there are other groups which we had hoped to visit, notably the Maiella which is good for ski-touring or high-level walking in spring, Viglio offering a good summit ridge, and the Rietini offering good piste skiing. As well as that, the lower hills nearer to Rome offer good walking in wild primitive country. There are also at least two other rock outcrops which I never visited — one at Gaeta, a sea cliff, has obvious dual attractions until the sun becomes too hot.

My last memory of the mountains of central Italy is of a different type. Towards the end of my convalescence I went back to Rome to organise our removal and we paid two final visits to the Appennines. I was enjoying an inactive status, so my walking was limited to reaching the hut and the spare time was easily filled, since the snows had just cleared and the hillsides were a mass of flowers. For once, it was a joy to have time to stand and stare (or photograph).

For anyone wanting to combine a tourist holiday with fresh mountain air in unusual country, I would recommend this area. The C.A.I. publish two guide-books (The *Gran Sasso*, and The *Central Appennines* as well as pamphlets on some other areas, e.g. Alburni). If an added inducement is needed, let it be a truly Italian one — Abbruzzi cooking is really very good!

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*Angela Heppenstall leading Heaven Crack on Stanage*

*Photo: Ian Roper*



## THYANGBOCHE— A DAY ON THE ROAD TO EVEREST

*Dorothea Gravina*

“GOOD morning, where are you going?” “Everest Base Camp”. “And you?” “Everest Base Camp”. “Where are you going?” “Base Camp”. Everyone is on the road to Everest Base Camp at 18,000 ft., it is the international IN-THING. The hardy ones walk up from the Chinese road, about 12 days from Kathmandu to Namche Bazar, up and down, up and down thousands of feet every day. Most of the package tours fly up to Lukla just below Namche. Now there is to be a big airfield above Namche — one can guess what that means. Half the population of California was on the road, some in splendidly equipped parties, others with nothing, not even shoes, just bare feet!

Accompanied by my sherpa Pinchu (glorious name!) and a porter we had come up the hard way, sleeping in sherpa houses, on the floor with the family, cooking on their open hearth, quite the nicest way of all to travel. Occasionally the report was “too many fleas” and my little tent was pitched outside. It had poured with rain almost every day and some days we had swarms of leeches. But now we had reached Thangboche at 12,600 ft., we had paid our respects to the Head Lama, and my tent was pitched by the chorten on the ridge; an excellent spot to observe the never-ending fascination of the comings and goings, Tibetan traders in their long black cloaks with their yaks, every sort of permutation of cross-breed of yak and cow, a herd of goats, some sheep, tourists and monks, holy men and wanderers in every sort of garb, a gaily furnished horse or two.

It would be a pity if life was suddenly filled with dull moments but so far there seems little danger of that happening. I woke suddenly in the night to find my tent collapsed on top of me; struggled out of my sleeping bag, fumbled around for my sandals which promptly broke, crawled out of the wet, cold debris into a white world — the weight of snow had pulled out the tent pegs, a good 2” had already fallen and it was still coming down. Banged the pegs in firmly again and crept thankfully back into my sleeping bag, taking all my clothes in with me. Pinchu appeared at dawn to see how I was faring. We decided to stay where we were and he brought me a steaming mug of tea.

Presently a familiar figure hove into sight through the falling snow, complete in his Burma campaign hat and rubber boots. It was of course Dawa Tensing who had come all the way up from his house to rescue me. He used to live in one of the Monastery houses where everyone passing through would visit him, but he got fed up with it, "Too much men!" and moved down to a valley below where he lives in peace on his own land.

No hanging about, I hardly had time to get into my "feathers" as Dawa always calls duvets, before my tent was struck, rucksack seized and off we went in the pouring sleet and snow down a very wet and slippery woodland path, over little rivers and seas of mud, to Dawa's nice little house with white and blue windows and his Tibetan prayer flag flying over all. We groped for the usual ladder in pitch darkness and up we went, all dripping, into a cosy little room with two windows, a good fire and a great welcome from his wife. Soon we were all sitting round the fire, I was installed in a folding chair, my boots taken off and a rug given me for my feet.

Dawa made a touching little speech, that we were welcome to stay as long as we liked, that his food was our food and all that he had was ours.

Later in the day, after we had eaten, Dawa brought out his "letter file", the most wonderful jumble of letters and photos going back over his whole life as a sherpa and Sirdar and encompassing most of the famous expeditions in which he had taken part. Also a much prized box of books which people had sent him, all the hoarded treasures of his long and exciting life.

I needed a bush and put my boots on to go out into the great open spaces, but Dawa presented me with a handful of loo paper and conducted me to a mysterious door at the top of the ladder with a sort of sack curtain inside. There was an enormous hole in the middle of the floor, surrounded by piles of hay and piles of litter below where the cattle lived. Very practical. I took my life in my hands in the middle of the night and was thankful to accomplish this perilous journey without falling through the hole.

When I got back I found Dawa had been out to his garden in the rain, had put some earth in a tin and stuck in a selection of flowers, calendula, marigold and a pansy, which he placed on the table beside me. One could go a long way to find such courtesy and thoughtfulness.

After our meal of course the chang flowed freely, in lovely little Tibetan silver cups, also Tibetan tea made in the brass bound plunger, with salt in it. And then long talks of old times and old friends, and the fire glowed, reflected in the brass cooking pots; and all around us the little treasures of their hard-working lives, and much joy and happiness and mutual understanding in our companionship there in the heart of the Himalayas, surrounded by the great shining white peaks soaring into the sky, remote and awe-inspiring in their grandeur.

## LOOKING AT CRETE

*Pat Daley*

**W**E were there! We landed at Xania Airport on a bright fresh morning. Winter was left in England and here the Spring was well advanced.

It was our first package holiday, and we were expecting a lazy fortnight. That's what we thought! We hadn't been with the Ramblers before.

There were 18 in our party, and Costis was our Tour Leader. A superb organiser, he worked hard at showing us Crete. We travelled round by coach or local bus, or sometimes it was: "Today, we walk". He liked us to be ready to go by 9 a.m., but this was not always easy . . . .

The Greek breakfast was a simple affair of American-style toast, peach jam and a sort of Madeira cake, and luke warm Nescafe, but it was very slow in coming. Costis would say: "There is always trouble with the breakfast, but why do you worry? This is Greece!" But he still shooed us onto the coach.

Crete is very mountainous. The country is wild, romantic, beautiful. The tortuous roads wind through valleys and over prickly hillsides, occasionally passing through villages which are a scatter of flat-topped white houses. In western Crete, the scenery is dominated by the distant domes of the White Mountains, still carrying the winter snow.

Probably one of the finest expeditions in Crete is the walk through the Samaria Gorge. This is a long, very deeply-cut defile running north to south, from the Plain of Omalo to a fishing village on the South coast. The upper part is fairly wide; above the pine trees the tremendous limestone walls, seamed with ribs and gullies, rear up towards the white peaks above. Lower down the gorge is only about 12 feet wide at the narrowest place. In summer when the river is dry it is possible to get through and reach the sea; it is said to take 6 hours' good walking, but most people camp or sleep out around the deserted village in the gorge. One has to be taken by boat to Chora Skfion, having arranged some sort of road transport back to Xania, which is a long way.

We couldn't go — it was too early in the year — but we went to see it and walked part of the way down . . . .



One day we walked up a very fine gorge between two villages. "8 miles", said Costis, "it will take 2 hours". Being experienced walkers, we thought it would take longer! Costis and the children arrived in two hours flat; the rest of us straggled in 1½ hours later. We had been too busy bird-watching, taking photographs, looking at trees and rocks and seaching for the tiny cyclamen on the banks.

They had the picnic ready at the village cafe when we arrived. Early most mornings Costis went to the market and bought bread, cheese, meat, octopus, tomatoes, cucumbers, oranges and stuffed vine-leaves. With sun and blue sky, what more could anyone want?

There was a funeral in the village that afternoon. Everyone was there, from the bent old ladies in their black to the children, who stood around the opened grave. Some of us went too. The women offered us biscuits and nuts, so we felt we were welcome. While the people were in church, we heard the most unearthly groans and cries as if from a tormented soul — eventually we realised they came from the donkey in a nearby field . . . .

When the old lady had been laid to rest, the men returned to the cafe, the children to play, and we packed our bags and walked up through the olive groves and down a beautiful terraced hillside to the next village. Our coach met us there and took us back to Xania, in time for a quick ouzo before going to dinner at the taverna by the harbour.

Xania is a picturesque old town, the oldest part being Venetian. We were sorry to leave, but Iraklion, although less attractive, had much to offer. Knossos was only 3 miles away! In a delightful situation with a wonderful climate, life must have been good 4,000 years ago in the Minoan palaces. Now the yellow oxalis grows round the ancient walls excavated and partly restored by Sir Arthus Evans. Seeing the precious and beautiful vessels and works of art in the Archeological Museum, one realised what a very civilised and artistic race the Minoans were. They were also peace-loving . . . .

One day — the wrong day — we went to the Plateau of Lasithi. There was heavy rain as the coach went up the steep mountain road, but a shaft of sunlight appeared as we reached the col, and a rainbow spanned the valley behind us. The plateau is high, flat and fertile, but waterless. The 10,000 windmills we had come to see were not working. Their sails were furled — it was not necessary.

for them to pump water from the ground as it was pouring out of the sky.

Much of what we saw merges into a colourful kaleidoscope of memories — there was the village whose partisans captured the German general, fields of flowers, a first dip in the Mediterranean, oranges straight from the tree, the Good Friday parade which appeared to have equal representation for the Church and the military, the Byzantine frescoes in the ancient church near Kritsa, the medieval kitchen in the Arcadi Monastery — fortunately, I just missed seeing the monks slaughter a goat!

I don't have very clear memories of the night I drank too much *retsina*. Working on the first page of the phrase-book, I had reached *Yassou* and *Yassas*, 'Cheers', and made the mistake of overworking it! My glass was continually refilled . . . . but I felt great!

Crete was an unforgettable holiday for us; we loved every minute of it. Perhaps we shall see it again sometime . . . .

## WELL MET ON SELLA

*Shirley Angell*

“**I** HEAR”, said my father’s friend, “that you went to the Dolomites with an Indian doctor. What was Ian thinking of?”

I must confess that a main incentive for writing about the L.A.C. Meet is that it enables me to pass on that splendid remark.

I had met Meena only once before but her presence gave a gaiety to the journey out and her visa-less Indian passport added just that extra touch of suspense which is necessary to preserve interest when crossing Europe by train. Neither of us could make head or tail of the bus timetables at Bolzano, so we drove up the Sella Pass in style, in a taxi.

How kind everyone was, and what a lovely evening. We took photographs of the view in case it had vanished by morning. Great walls of rock towered nearby and fairy castles shimmered in the distance. Everything looked unclimbable, but I viewed it with the eye of faith, hope and charity.

Other members of the meet began to appear, poor Barbara, the meet leader, with her leg in plaster. We all had the first evening meal together then gathered to hear what our plans were and to meet Ron and Dave, our guides, also Pete, a friend of theirs and Tom, an old friend of the L.A.C.

There were sixteen of us altogether, but Elspet and Grizel had come for the company and the walking. Those of us who wished to climb had ambitions ranging from mod. to V.S. — amazingly, we were all catered for.

The first day we went on a Via Ferrata to find out how fit we were. Some were fitter than others, but we all enjoyed some marvellous glissades down the other side and Alwine, Eveleigh, Meena, Tom and I crossed a stream swollen to a torrent by melt-water. Tom emerged as the hero of this expedition, not least because he had carried a rope in his sack all day and now put it to good use.

Tuesday was a rest day, so we stormed the First Sella Tower by a very pleasant grade IV route, then had the afternoon free. I climbed with Dorothea and Dave.

When we reached the top, the Second Sella Tower came into view and we counted twenty-six people on the face. I had been wondering what to do on an ‘unguided’ day and the answer was now pretty obvious. In fact Meena and I followed Dave, Livia

and Eveleigh up it the next day, but we spent so long over breakfast that we caught sight of them only twice.

We had just reached the summit when we heard Ron, who was leading a party on the Third Sella Tower, shouting advice to Dave — “It’s a long abseil: you’ll need a safety rope!”

Meena and I looked at our single 150 foot of fairly elderly rope. ‘He’s joking’, I said. We went all the way down in expectation of an abseil. Dave, of course, had taken his party down the other side.

Two climbing days stand out as specially memorable. The first was the traversé of the Fünffingerspitze. This is a magnificent grade IV route with fairly intricate route-finding, guidebook time 7 hours, and our party included Nea and Dorothea.

Nea needed a stick to walk round to the beginning of the climb, but once on rock she climbed magnificently as always. This climb was most enjoyable, in perfect weather and company, but I rank the best moments as after the final abseil, which was in full view of all the trippers at the Demetz Hut. Nea took her stick from Dorothea, who had been carrying it in her rucksack, and the pair were greeted by eager fans who asked them their age and made them pose for photographs. Alwine complained that she was a grandmother too, but no one took any notice of *her*.

The second day was near the end of the holiday. We had all gone to the Cinque Torre, where the routes are fairly short, and Ron promised me a grade V when the others had had a climb. The weather was thundery and I was on pins lest the storm should break before we were on rock. However, the afternoon arrived and so did Ron, and we went round to the Via Miriam. I suppose this is mild V.S. with a fairly hard move near the bottom.

Wisps of cloud were threading their way round the nearby peaks when we started, but we had reached the final pitch before the storm broke. I was carefree at a belay. It was only a little storm, not very near. Just rather wet. Eveleigh and Meena, who were cheering us on, had sheltered behind a rock.

Ron stopped climbing. He needed windscreen wipers on his glasses. This cost him five minutes and made him very annoyed. Still, we knocked an hour off the guidebook time.

The climbs are not the only part of the holiday that I shall remember, nor even the splendid walks, such as the Boé or the tour of the Sassolungo. Pictured in my memory is Alwine's deluxe tent, which she and Margaret had taken three hours to pitch, surrounded by Alpini. It was in the middle of their camp, but she refused to move it. The thought of pitching it again was too much for her. Dorothea was camping, of course, and Esme had a neat dormobile. All were renowned for their hospitality in providing cups of tea for hotel dwellers.

There is so much I am missing out: Toni, the charming, pasty-faced teenager who waited at table; the lashings of wine; the thunderstorm that fused the lights for the night; Meena in a sari; coffee and cake, and visiting at Canazei; wonderful evening meals that I hadn't had to cook!—Which brings us to our final celebration dinner.

It had rained all day but the whole party went out nonetheless, Meena and I being rather abstracted and writing things down on spare bits of lunch paper as we walked along. This was because we were composing appropriate songs to commemorate our last evening. I wonder that Margaret, Barbara and Ron were not abstracted too, for they made excellent speeches after the meal, putting the final touch to a gay and happy fortnight.

## A MISCELLANY OF INCIDENTS AND PLACES

*Jo Fuller*

**I**T WAS raining again, the snow was fast disappearing and the unlivid-in, crumbling Inverlair Lodge in which we were camping looked utterly dejected. A group of five decided that an excursion to Aonach Beag to look at the East Face was preferable to remaining in the damp building and so we departed to the car-park at the foot of the Waters of Nevis, where it was still raining steadily. The falls were in spate and were magnificent. Glen Nevis widens above the falls and by the time we had reached this point the rain had ceased, the clouds moved rapidly across the sky and partially cleared to reveal ragged patches of blue and sunlight. We chased the sunlight up the steep slopes of saturated grass, peat and moss and eventually reached the shrinking snow which was now dazzlingly white.

On the high col just to the south-east of the summit we held a conference on the possibilities of the weather remaining fine for two or three hours; we decided to take a chance and then plunged down into the deep firm snows which were safely cradled in the cold shadows of this big dark face. It was very impressive. We contoured below the rocky buttresses which were separated by fields of snow and slanting gullies which bulged with ice, and we picked out an interesting line which would lead us up to the summit. Steps were kicked in the very firm snow up steep slopes, across a wide gully and onto a rib, where we scrambled up rocks and kicked up the snow crests which were glistening in the sun.

Below the final buttress we rested and put on mittens, because the wind was now blowing hard and plumes of snow swept effortlessly up past us, over the cornice and gleamed white and flimsy against the heavy solid grey of the clouds beyond. The last section demanded complete concentration, and after leaving the rocks, the final hard snow would only yield to the toes of our boots. The wind blasted us when we stood up on the gentle slopes which lead to the summit. I skidded on the ice-glazed surface, sat down involuntarily, strapped on my crampons and struggled fiercely to gain the last few feet. A thorough soaking was once more inevitable.

A few days earlier, before the snows had really begun to disappear, we had set out in heavy rain for the Steall Hut, and by the time we had all crossed the swaying wire bridge, the sun was out

and anoraks were shed. A great deal of effort was required to gain the summit of An Garbhanach, one of the Monroes in the Mamores. The hillside seemed endless, almost vertical to me, and I only began to enjoy the ascent when we started to kick steps up a long, long snow-field. The ridge which links the main peaks of Na Gruagaithean and Binnein Mor curves round in fine horseshoe form and is very narrow and in places rocky. The thick covering of snow made it a great trip, and we were able to see far across Scotland, because although the clouds were thick and grey, they were well above the top of Ben Nevis.

A casual challenge broke the silence as we descended Binnein Mor, and expecting a unanimous acceptance, I replied with enthusiastic allacrity, but found that I was the only other member of the party who thought we should add Binnein Beag to our list of Monroes for that day. The two of us left the ridge, broke through the cornice and rapidly descended the smooth snow-bowl down to the col as the others sped gleefully away towards an earlier supper. It was nearly dark when we returned to the car-park on that particular evening.

It seemed that the darkness of the night would never yield to even the dullest of grey dawns as the three of us sat and shivered on the Cuillin Ridge just below the summit of Gars-bheinn. Stephanie grunted and we decided to let her have breakfast, because we had insisted that sleeping-bags were non-essential and that she would really enjoy her first bivouac, but it had been cold and now we were shrouded in mist. Fortified by hot coffee, squashed jam sandwiches and bits of cold crispy bacon, we strode off into the greyness singing some unidentifiable ditty and slithered on wet rocks. The mist persisted. We stood at the bottom of the Thearlaich Dubh Gap and gazed at the dank exit crack which disappeared upwards into the gloom. Niki indicated the route, passed the rope to me and said that she would take a photograph, whilst Stephanie, wearing my gloves, had already well belayed herself. To argue would have been pointless.

The mist persisted most of the day, adding a new dimension to our adventure, but we persevered, despite doing one wrong bit

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*Jo Fuller*

*Photo: Ian Roper*







twice, and finished the traverse by dancing a jig on the summit blocks of Sgurr nan Gilleann in glorious sunshine. Darkness only caught up with us as we staggered across the last stretch of moorland to the Sligachan Hotel and a long cool drink.

Two days later, we lounged on the summit of Blaven where the rocks were warm and dry, and we rested our aching limbs in the heat of the late August sun. We had achieved our lofty perch by way of a beautiful severe slab route up the Central Pillar, and we had had the mountain to ourselves all day. Before us to the west and north stretched the lengthy complicated serrated outline of the Cuillin Ridge, and away to the east we looked down onto the mainland's indented coastline. It was very still, clear and wonderfully quiet.

Two summers ago, the quietness, emptiness and wildness of one small part of the N.W. Highlands so beguiled me that I set off from the Torridon area with light camping gear and a great deal of food and headed for Dundonnell. The following few days were extremely hot, darkness only lasted for a few hours, and I was able to explore happily most of the mountains within this region. They all differed in character, shape and structure. Footpaths and tracks were infrequent and the problems with which I was faced were numerous, interesting and varied, and did not allow my mind to lapse into a passive state.

After a long day on Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair, Sgurr Ban — the summit of which is composed of gleaming white stones — and Beinn Tarsuinn, I moved my gear along the shore of Lochan Fada, under the crags of Beinn Lair, where I met some huge wild goats with arrogant countenances, to Carnmore. There was no one else there. The crag looked superb in the late evening light, and very early the following morning a thin veil of mist imperceptibly drifted upwards from Fionn Loch and Dubh Loch as the heat gradually increased. The area is a magnificent combination of distinctively shaped mountains, deep valleys which cleave the steep hillsides, huge crags with vertical walls, dark corners and in some cases gently inclined slabs, and a wonderful collection of lochs which mirror this wild scenery.

The walk over to Shenavall leads one into the very wide, flat-floored Strath na Sealga and it is from the shores of Loch na Sealga

that the south-south-west walls of An Teallach rise so very steeply. As I plodded wearily over the last rise before dropping down to Strath Beag and Dundonnell, I met two highlanders with fishing rods. They seemed surprised, but after exchanging a few words we rested on the soft green turf and all enjoyed a glass of whisky before resuming our journey. There is a fine hotel at Dundonnell and I consumed a dainty afternoon tea in the elegant and comfortable lounge which was bathed in warm sunlight on that occasion.

I recall another more recent occasion when a walk with a Climbers Club member almost ended with a cup of tea. It had been dark for four hours and we had made our way down from Scafell Pikes to Langdale in the inky blackness and thick mist, and to celebrate our safe passage down Rossett Ghyll, we paused to make some tea. Unfortunately the teabags were missing, but the hot water from the thermos tasted suprisingly good and, now we were well below the mist, our surroundings could not have been bettered as the night air was mild and soft.

It appears to be a question of making the most of one's environment and resources!

## THE EASIEST 4,000m PEAK

*Sally Westmacott*

OUR spirits lifted as we walked across from the station at Zermatt to the Bahnhof Hotel — Paula was obviously expecting us as she had pinned up the Union Jack on the front door. It wasn't until several hours later that we discovered that the British Alpine Ski Traverse party had only just arrived, having failed, like ourselves, to get up anything in the Oberland because of bad weather.

That first evening in Zermatt we all supped together and we met the few members of Alan Blackshaw's party that we didn't already know. Their adventures were recounted to us with great gusto by Hamish Nicol who was the doctor on the party and it dawned on us that none of them had actually risen yet to the dizzy height of 4000 metres. The main party was supported from the valley by David Gore and Gerry Finch and they decided that evening to pull a fast one and to get themselves, the support party, to 4000 m. before any of the main party. Meanwhile the three of us, Colin Taylor, Mike and I also had designs on the Breithorn, mainly because it is now easily accessible from Zermatt in the day, and also because I had never actually stood on the summit. When Mike and I had climbed the Younggrat three years previously we had finished the route in a storm and had descended in a hurry, so I still had this gap to fill in.

We all set off on the first cable car the next morning, and after putting on our skins plodded uphill from Theodul Pass. Gerry Finch dropped behind as he had trouble with a ski binding and also was going slowly because of an arthritic hip. As we rose towards the Breithorn Pass we could see a few other parties coming up from Italy and we soon joined a large beaten trail. Gerry had told us not to wait as the weather was obviously going to clag in later on, so Mike suggested that Colin, David and I go on while he soloed up the Klein Matterhorn and waited for Gerry. This seemed a good idea so the three of us continued on, stopping for a bite to eat just before we began the steep rise up towards the summit ridge of the Breithorn. Here we were overtaken by some Italians, few of whom seemed to be properly equipped or in cohesive parties — several appeared to be alone with no axes or crampons.

On we went, zig-zagging up the steepening slope until we felt it was too much of a struggle to keep our skis on. When it gets to

## THE EASIEST 4,000 m PEAK

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the point of crossing my skis and falling over every time I try to do a kick turn on a steep slope, then, as far as I am concerned, it is time to park the skis and turn into a climber. The snow was good and there were adequate steps already kicked. We reached the ridge and looked along it. It looked rather narrower than I expected, having always heard that the Breithorn was the easiest 4000 m. Alpine peak, and we decided that it would be wise to put crampons on and rope up. At this point Colin noticed an unhappy-looking Italian, completely alone, and with no axe or crampons and asked him if he wanted to join our rope. The chance was eagerly seized and we roped up with Colin and myself at either end and David and the Italian in the middle.

We proceeded along the ridge, which was icy in places, to the summit where we were forced to wait for other parties coming along behind us. The ridge was too narrow for two ropes to pass and because of the enforced wait I donned my duvet, and later on was very glad that I had done so. When the stream of other parties had finally joined us on the summit, we started to make our way back along the ridge. Colin and I had a quick word about the order of the party for the descent and we agreed that he would be more



*Sally Westmacott—Monta Rosa in the background*

*Photo: Colin Taylor*

valuable as back man and I would lead. David had never been up a mountain before and we knew nothing about the Italian.

I was walking gently down the ridge when suddenly, with no warning, I was skating down the icy cliff to the south, on the Italian side. It happened so unexpectedly and so quickly that I didn't realize what had occurred, and my main feeling as I shot downwards was one of extreme rage. The fury gave way to worry as I seemed unable to brake myself. Every time I felt the pick bite into the ice, a tug at my waist pulled me off downwards again. I began to wonder how far I would go or if I would end up in a heap at the bottom, but after what seemed a long, long time, the rope tightened and I stopped. I still couldn't make out what had happened and feeling slightly dazed and very annoyed, finally got onto my front-points (actually a pair of Michael's — how I blessed them!) and surveyed the situation.

I was about sixty feet down the cliff and above me, spread-eagled on the ice, was the Italian. He had slipped on an icy bit on the ridge, and, as the newspapers say, had plunged overboard, whipping me off from behind, and also pulling David off. Colin, showing great presence of mind, had not followed us down into Italy, but had leapt, in classic fashion, over the other side into Switzerland and had held all three of us. He now looked like Chad — all I could see of him was a nose and two eyes peeking over the ridge, holding the unfortunate David who had the full weight of the Italian dragging at his waist. He looked highly uncomfortable and was unable to move. I front-pointed up the ice to the Italian and cut him a large step so that he could stop dragging David off, and having done this then started to cut a line of large steps for him to use. At this point I heard a hail from above, and there, thank heavens, was Michael. He had come along the ridge alone, Gerry having failed to make the summit, and, as he explained afterwards, was interested to see us practising ice techniques! It was only when we didn't appear to be moving very fast that he realized we were in trouble.

I was fast losing my patience with the Italian. He *would* not stand on his feet in the steps and still assumed a mackerel-like position on the ice. He obviously was not only frightened but hadn't a clue how to use his feet or even his ski-sticks which he was

still clutching. I showed him how to stand up and how to use his sticks to help himself, and found myself swearing at him in about four languages, none of which he seemed to understand. Perhaps it was just as well.

Michael meanwhile was cutting steps down to David and then on down to meet my line of steps, and somehow, after getting the Italian to move up a little, Michael and Colin got David back to the ridge. We then bullied, talked and, as it seemed to me, winched the Italian back up, with Colin still belaying us. He must have been getting very tired and also bored with all this. We finally all collected on the ridge feeling more than somewhat shaken. The thought of going on down that ridge with the Italian behind me, ready to pull me off again, was to say the least, unnerving. So he was made to sit down, *à cheval*, with Michael walking behind him ready to grab should he decide to do a repeat performance. The ridge seemed endless to me but I consoled myself with the thought that the Italian must be getting frostbitten in an interesting and unusual place.

Once off the ridge we unroped and made our way down to the skis, and the Italian put his on quickly and disappeared off into Italy without a word, not even a goodbye! We were speechless at this and grimly set about trying to get off downhill as quickly as we could. The cloud which we'd noticed building up earlier was now coming in fast and speed was essential. David was ready first and he told us he'd go on ahead. We all must have been so shocked and dazed that we didn't stop him and he skied off — and then the cloud really came down.

We picked our way downhill — no one could have called it skiing — onto the Breithorn Pass and there it was whiteout. I have very poor vision in fog so I elected to stay at the rear with the compass and let Mike and Colin do the route-finding. The only trouble was that we couldn't tell if we were going up or downhill or on the flat. It was like being in a vacuum of cotton wool. Faint tracks came and went and I felt that being on the Breithorn in a whiteout was getting to be a bit of a habit. We had descended after the Younggrat in similar conditions, but at least on this occasion we didn't have a thunderstorm as well.

We proceeded cautiously and I was getting very worried about David. We didn't know where he was and he had no high mountain experience. Suddenly the mist thinned a little and we heard a hail. It *must* be David. It was. He had gone downhill too soon and after running into unfamiliar crevassed country had sensibly put on his skins and walked up again to the plateau to correct his mistake. What a relief it was to have the party together again, *minus* the Italian! We skied on down, the visibility improving all the time and eventually came out below the cloud and could see the Theodul Pass. Thank God. It looked as if we might get back without a bivouac. We skied down to the lift where I collapsed having had enough and said I'd meet the others at the bottom. They still had enough energy to ski down. I tottered out of the lift into the street and met the rest of the party as planned. Over a reviving beer I remarked to Colin that he had saved the party from disaster. "Well", he said mildly, "I always had wondered of this business of jumping over the other side of the ridge really works — and it seems to".

## MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

THIS can only be a most incomplete and partial summary of members' activities over the last two years. From some members I have considerable detail, from others none at all, while inevitably, I do not have a list of every member's doings.

I have, for instance, virtually no information about members' activities in the British Isles; this no doubt reflects the modesty of members. Because of this, this list of activities is concerned mainly with Europe and further afield. I might mention, however, that this year both Angela Faller and Jo Fuller have completed the Skye Ridge. Members have, in a general way, been active on every conceivable climbing ground in Britain, from the far north of Scotland to Harrison Rocks to Anglesey. Members have also taken enthusiastically to skiing, especially to ski-mountaineering, as two articles in this Journal show. Hilda Tyler was skiing at Fornigal in the Pyrenees, Barbara Spark at Gertzens, near Innsbruck, Barbara James at Kirchberg in Austria.

On members' activities outside Britain I am relatively well-informed.

### 1971:

Barbara James again had a most successful Alpine season with her husband Ron. They did a number of 1st female and/or 1st British ascents, as follows:

Allgau Alps (with Ron)	Rote Fluh, S. Diedre (VI/A1, 1st British)
Karwendel (with Ron)	Kleiner Lalatcher, N.E. Diedre (VI, 1st British)
Dolomites (with Ron)	Tofana di Roses, S.E. Face, Pilastro (VI/A2, 1st British woman)
(Leading)	Fünffingerspitze, Traverse (IV)
(Leading)	Cinque Torri, Torre Grande de Avernau, Via Franceschi (VI/A1, 1st British woman)
Urner Alps (with Ron)	Graue Wand, S. Wall (VI/A1 1st British woman).

Barbara Spark spent the summer of 1971 in Peru with 4 other girls, including Molly Porter. They climbed 8 peaks, of which 5 were first ascents. All of them were over 16,000 ft., and the highest



was 17,500. Barbara is very enthusiastic about the area.

Nea Morin, Margaret Darvall, Sue Long and Alwine Walford were in Jugoslavia, on the meet of the Rendez-Vous Haute Montagne.

Anne Shepherd was on an A.A.C. course in the Stubai Alps. She found it very good and very helpful, and would recommend it to any Alpine novice.

Joann Greenhow was in Central Switzerland with her husband Colin. They did a number of routes, including:

Gross Buelenhorn, S. Ridge, and descent by the N.W. Couloir

Klein Buelenhorn, S.S.W. Wall (V)

Dammaswillinge, South Pillar (V + )

Bergseehijen, South Ridge (IV) ("excellent route from good hut")

South-East Pillar (V/A2) ("Like Pillar Rock with pegs")

Grandschijen, South Wall (V + /6 - ) ("Good free-climbing low down")

Gletschhorn, South Ridge (III)

Graue Wand (VI) ("following Ron & Barbara James")

Feldschijen, West Ridge (V) (probably a 1st British ascent).

Jo found this a quiet and lovely area, with good rock, some snow and friendly people.

In the summer of 1971, Dorothea Gravina travelled by bus to India and spent three months in Nepal, walking to the Everest base-camp (an article on this by Dorothea appears elsewhere in this Journal) and then to Pokhara. She walked past Annapurna and Dhaulagiri to Tukucha, and climbed Dambusch Peak (nearly 20,000 ft.). She then went on to S. India, mostly by bus, then on to the Seychelles and by cargo-boat to Mombasa. She visited Tanzania, Zambia, Victoria Falls, Rhodesia, Capetown (and did some climbing on and around Table Mountain). She got back to Europe in July 1972 and went off to the Alps: the Dolomites for the L.A.C. Meet (see below), Zermatt and finally Chamonix, where she soloed the Ordinary Route on Mont Blanc.

**1972:**

An L.A.C./P.C. Meet was held this year in the Dolomites, led by Barbara James with her husband Ron. The P.C. members attending were: Nea Morin, Margaret Darvall, Eveleigh Leith, Livia Gollancz, Alwine Walford, Shirley Angell and Meena Aglowal. Among the routes done by P.C. members were the following (from information supplied by Barbara James):

1st Sella Tower, West Ridge (IV + ) D.G., N.M., S.A., M.A.

Amferer Route (I) A.W., M.D., S.A., M.A.

3rd Sella Tower, S.W. Face (III) M.D., A.W.

Clavazes, S.E. Face, Ramp Route (IV) S.A., D.G.

Fünf-fingerspitze, Traverse by S.W. Ridge (IV) M.A., S.A., N.M., D.G., M.D., A.W.

*Cinque Torri*

La Torre Grande de Averau, West Face (II), N.M., E.L., L.G. Via Miriam (V) S.A.

Cima Ovest, West Face Direct (IV), M.A., M.D., D.G., A.W., N.M.

Torre Inglese, S.E. Face (III), E.L., L.G.

Kleine Ferneda, West Ridge (I), N.M., L.G., M.D., S.A., M.A., D.G.

An article by Shirley Angell appears elsewhere in this Journal.



*Dolomite Meet 1972*

*Photo: Dorothea Gravina*

Angela Faller had a most successful season, indeed a very successful year. At Easter she was ski-touring in the Bernese Oberland and climbed the ~~Ebnertuh~~ <sup>Ebnertuh</sup>. Her summer was spent in the French Alps, where she had fine weather and did the following routes "with various (strong) partners":

N. Ridge of the Peigne  
 Contamine route on the Moine  
 Cordier route on the Courtes  
 Mer de Glace face of the Grépon  
 Old Brenva  
 N.E. Pillar of Les Bans (Dauphiné)  
 Frendo Spur  
 Midi-Plan traverse (solo).

Angela also sailed round the Western Isles of Scotland and landed on Mull, Rhum, Skye, Soay, Eigg and Iona.

Joann Greenhow was with Colin in the Alps, and they did the following routes:

From the Lamsenhuttenturm:

Lamsenspitze, Schwarzer Riss (V). Jo comments on the area as a whole: "Wonderful scenery but desperate, vertically-stacked shale on N. Face routes. The 'Berg-watch' graded all routes at VI+ and laughed like a drain at the guidebook description, "Some loose rock". The retort to "Do many folk get hurt?" was "No, no, just *det*".

In the Dolomites:

Cima Piccolissima, Preuss Cracks (V) (in boots and duvets, just like Glencoe in February)  
 Cima Grande, Comici N. Face (VI)  
 Yellow Edge (V+)  
 Cima Piccolissima, Little Cassin (VI)  
 Punta Fiamma (V).

Barbara Spark was in the Bernina Alps with John Cheesmond. They did 8 routes in the Berninagrat, including the Eisnase on the

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*Janey Taylor leading Christmas Curry*

*Photo: Christine Sheard*





Piz Scherzen and the N. Ridge of the E. Peak of Piz Palu. They then went to Chamonix, where they did the Old Brenva and the Forbes Arête on the Chardonnet.

Anne Shepherd was in the Dauphiné with the Lancs. C. and C.C. She did the Pic Coolidge, the Pavée and the Aiguille Rouge.

Denise Wilson and Peggy Foster, with their respective families, were in the Alpes Maritimes. They found it ideal as a family area and would highly recommend it. They did several routes of varying standards, some with the children (an article by Denise appears elsewhere in this Journal).

Stephanie Rowland did a couple of routes with her husband Clive: the Forbes Arête on the Chardonnet and the Wildspitze (Oetztal Alps).

Jane Taylor was in the Pyrenees for 10 days with her husband Colin. They climbed on the Pic du Midi d'Ossau and the Marboré. A delightful area, with the most friendly people, and some excellent routes, if sometimes a little loose.

## OBITUARY

### EVELYN WORSLEY LEECH (1929-1971)

WITH the sad death of Evelyn Leech the club has suffered the loss of one of its most devoted and outstanding members. She joined when it was still quite a small affair, and I think it is true to say that with her coming the club took on new vitality and purpose. Her tremendous enthusiasm and drive resulted in her finding and obtaining for our use the club hut, and this must be her greatest memorial, for it was, to the last, dear to her heart and is inseparable from her.

Some amongst us have lost a very dear friend and companion, a loss which can never be replaced. In my own memories of early climbing days, Evelyn always seems to be there, coaxing me (or someone else) up a difficult pitch, or presiding over meals at the hut, or with a paint-brush in hand whitewashing the walls. And above all, what good company she was, such a fund of anecdotes and such an immense and gay sense of humour, a wet day became a pleasure.

We grieve, but are grateful that we had the privilege of being her friends.

ANNETTE WILSON.

The above brief Obituary of Evelyn Leech is doubly poignant, for it was written by Annette only a few weeks before her own death. Annette, who joined the Pinnacle Club in 1933, only a few years after Evelyn, was one of her oldest friends.

I did not come in contact with Evelyn Lowe, as she then was, until 1939 when I met her for the first time through an introduction from G. R. Speaker. We climbed together on Lliwedd when Evelyn took me up Central Chimney Route. Having married and lived in France for ten years, I had scarcely done any climbing in North Wales and I was tremendously impressed by the route, the mountain, and above all by Evelyn's climbing. From then on we climbed together off and on for many years whenever we had the opportunity, but events made this difficult — the war, of course, then Evelyn's marriage in 1941 followed so soon by the tragic death of her husband in a yachting accident; then the gradual decline in the health of her mother offset by the joyful adoption of her daughter Antonia in 1950. Then in 1956 came her move from Macclesfield to Dorset.

Nevertheless we did manage to keep in close contact and my admiration and affection for Evelyn grew with the years. She was indeed an altogether splendid personality — one of the world's givers in every sense and with an enormous capacity for affection and enthusiasm. Her integrity made her accept for herself only the very highest standards in all she did and her shining courage never faltered to the end.

Evelyn began scrambling and climbing early in life, for her childhood home was at Pont-y-Pant in the beautiful Lledr valley where she roamed the nearby hills. She tells us in her article *Forty Years On* written for the Jubilee Journal that "There was I living just the other side of Moel Siabod . . . while these people (Pat Kelly, Len Winthrop Young, and others) were meeting at Pen-y-Gwryd and bringing the Pinnacle Club to life" (1921). The only original member of the Pinnacle Club whom Evelyn did not meet was our founder Pat Kelly, killed in 1922. It was at the Easter Meet in 1932 when returning from climbing Lockwood's Chimney that Evelyn spotted the possibilities of the little cottage in Cwm Dyli. With characteristic promptitude and decision she started negotiations with the North Wales Coal Board and the hut was officially opened seven months later, on 5th November that same year. It is now our high hope that it will eventually prove possible for the Club to become the owners of the Hut, so that it may remain a lasting memorial not only to our Founder, but also to Evelyn who loved it so dearly and to which she gladly gave so much of her time.

Evelyn was a very remarkable climber who certainly never realised her full potential, mainly because she devoted so much of her climbing time to taking out beginners or others less good than herself. She was a grand companion in every way — superb in a tight corner and always the first to undertake any unpleasant task, doing it so naturally that it often passed unappreciated by others. In the mountains, as in life generally, she was at her best in bad conditions; when things got really tough she would call on her adrenalin which never failed to answer her call—

"Adrenalin, Adrenalin,  
My favourite tippie next to Gin".



I shall never forget hearing from her — and she could tell a wonderful tale — the story of the come-back she made after a year's enforced rest owing to a strained heart apparently through hauling some hefty beginner up a climb. For her come-back she chose Longland's on Cloggy which is still now a V.S. climb; her companion was Penelope Seth Hughes. While leading the overhang above the crevasse stance Evelyn felt all strength draining from her arms. She called urgently to a party of men above for a top rope, but this came down without a loop and had to be pulled up again. Finally a loop came down just in time for her to slip one arm through and shout for it to be held tight. But the rope remained slack and she had to jump for the ledge where she landed half over the edge, to be hauled back by her companion.

Lliwedd, I think, was her favourite mountain. The lie of the strata results in an absence of thank-God holds, and the awkward pinch holds and delicate balance moves suited her down to the ground. Lliwedd in bad conditions brought out all Evelyn's superb technique. One of her favourite climbs was the Direct on Glyder Fach which she climbed with unparalleled ease and panache. To watch Evelyn leading the Final Crack was a revelation.

I often think back to 1947 when we had a marvellous holiday together in Skye. Two of us were war widows and Evelyn had only recently lost her husband and none of us expected to enjoy that holiday much. It was my first visit to Skye, but Evelyn had been before and knew her way around and the holiday was as near to being perfect as it could be under the circumstances. There was one hair-raising descent around 11 p.m., coming down from the Inaccessible Pinnacle where we had stayed too long musing and contemplating. We thought we'd take a shortcut back to camp straight down from Sgurr Dearg into Coire Banachdich and in doing so we ran into difficulties, but then, sure enough, Eve's adrenalin came to our rescue.

Among Evelyn's climbs in the Alps were many ascents in the Engelhörner; at Zermatt the traverse of the Matterhorn, Hörnli—Italian ridge, North ridge of the Weissmies, Portjengrat, Rimpfischhorn and part of the High Level Route leading a Pinnacle party in 1949.

The Club's last farewell to Evelyn took place at the Anniversary Meet on the 6th November, 1971. A party of Pinnacles, including Annette and many old friends, joined Antonia and her fiancé Lieutenant Commander Anthony Cook and Mrs. Anne Crichton, Evelyn's devoted neighbour and friend; together we drove up the beautiful Lledr Valley and there, near Evelyn's old home at Pont-y-Pant, beside the stone hut in a part of the grounds that Evelyn had always kept for herself we buried the casket containing her ashes. In our climbing clothes we merged into the beautiful autumn colouring as we stood grouped around the spot which Evelyn herself had chosen. The casket was buried deep in the warm earth and each of us helped with our hands to cover it with leaves and moss. It was a deeply moving moment in its utter simplicity and finality. As the last handfuls of earth fell Anne spoke the words of the old 16th century prayer:—

Oh Lord support us all the day of this troublesome life until the shades lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work done. Then Lord, in thy mercy, grant us safe lodging, a long rest, and peace at the last.

NEA MORIN.

#### EVELYN LEECH — A Postscript

It was a warm July day but cloudy. I hadn't been to Llan-sadwrn before. 'Look', she said, pointing through the small picture window and coming to look herself: 'No, you can't see them today'. She had put that window there because the view was the peaks of the mainland: Snowdon and the rest.

She was very ill but her conversation and her spirit were as vital as ever. We were on the Rothorngrat: 'I hold the guide's record for it', she said. She had arrived in Zermatt without money, and a guide who knew her asked her to climb with him for fun on his day off. I think they stayed at the Trift Hotel, in any event they went up that awful moraine to the Frühstückplatz and across the glacier to the foot of the rocks at a phenomenal speed. Then he said she could rest: 'We have beaten the record'. 'Well', she said, 'if we'd beaten it that far I said we might as well break the record to the top'. They did, leading through.

I wish I could remember the details but I was thinking like an editor: what a marvellous story, this *must* be for the journal. I didn't notice details. I was also enjoying her recall and her imagery. She was enjoying it too.

They came down to Zermatt but somewhere parted company so that she reached the town alone and, exhausted, she collapsed in a welter of dust and dirt and sweat on the terrace of a select hotel. She described its occupants, mostly English, all askance. She was brought wine and she was very thirsty. She was brought lots of wine and was most happily drunk when her friend (a Pinnacler?) found her and led her away.

I begged her to write it up for me when I should become editor. She smiled and said nothing. Even telling me about it had tired her.

So the last memory perpetuates her strength and happiness: on the Rothorngrat then, on all mountains always. I have never known anyone who so epitomised the quality of *joie de vivre*.

GWEN MOFFATT.

## ANNETTE WILSON (1933-1972)

Annette was secretary when I joined the Club in 1939, and remained so till 1950, right through the war years and beyond. She was a committee member for several other periods, and auditor from 1937-1940 and from 1957 onwards.

The Club was a very important part of her life and she gave a lot of her time to it, and regularly attended meets. She was very kind and helpful to new members, as well I remember. Before I went to my first meet at the Dow Crag hut, I was put in touch with her and she gave me much useful information with regard to climbing equipment, nailing of boots and so on. After the meet she suggested that we should go to the hut together at some future date, and this was the beginning of many happy climbing holidays together. Although I was such a raw beginner she insisted that I should share the leads. During the war we would take our bicycles on the train, or else my motor bike, and in this way we were able to get to the hut from Bettws with all our gear, including food for a week.

She was a very neat climber, and much preferred slabs to chimneys. On one occasion she, Phyl Jackson and I were doing the Needle's Eye climb on Gable, and Annette was third on the rope. Phyl and I were through the Eye and took in the slack, but no Annette. She hadn't liked the look of it so had unroped and found an alternative route more to her liking.

She was a slight figure, and considerably shorter than me, but although she never gave the appearance of hurrying I had to trot (almost) to keep up with her.

During the last few years of her life she had several spells in hospital, but she always bounced up again and was eager to get back to the hills, or to play golf which she had taken up on her retirement. She was always most enthusiastic about anything she tackled.

When I visited her in hospital for the last time she was full of plans for the future, mainly about a shopping spree she was going to have. I think that she must have known that this was not to be, but she enjoyed planning it just the same. This was the last time I saw her. She will be much missed by her many friends, and this will be the first Christmas that I will have spent without her for over thirty years.

JOAN COCHRANE.

MARRIAGES

Angela Kelly — Alan Heppenstall (C.C.) .....	..... July, 1971
Antonia Leech — Lt. Com. Anthony Cook .....	..... August, 1972
Sue Long — Stuart Gibson .....	..... August, 1972
Jo Palmer — Colin Greenhow .....	..... March, 1972

BIRTHS

To Pat Henry (Wood), a son, John, born .....	..... March, 1972
To Helen Jones (Goodburn), a son, Robert	
William Goodburn, born .....	..... December, 1971

## REVIEWS

ONE MAN'S MOUNTAINS by Tom Patey. Gollancz, 1971. £3

The main part of *One Man's Mountains* centres on the Scottish hills and many fearsome climbs both in summer and in winter are brilliantly described. There can be few, if any, mountaineers with such a bewildering number or wide variety of Scottish climbs to their credit — and the talent to describe them.

With few exceptions the contents have been published previously in Club journals or periodicals over the period 1953-1970—the year of the author's death in a climbing accident. Mountaineers will welcome having these articles collected in one volume; they show an astonishing variety both in style and content and a striking freshness and spontaneity, perhaps due in part to having been written immediately after the event.

It would be hard to pick out all the high-lights — there are so many. But two outstanding descriptions are of the first winter ascent of the Cuillin Ridge — remarkable for its drama and pithy humour—and the Craig Meaghaidh Crab-Crawl, another fine dramatic chapter telling of the solo ascent of the Girdle Traverse of the cliffs of Coire Adair — 8,500 feet long. At the time the guide book description read “the longest potential climb in great Britain . . . it still awaits its first complete ascent”.

“A Short Walk with Don Whillans” is full of typical Patey humour and at the same time a penetrating thumbnail sketch of his companion and his methods of getting his own way. The author recreates the vastness and desolation of the Eiger Nord Wand which stands out more grimly for the background of ghoulish humour.

The foreword (by Chris Brasher) gives the impression that the filming of the Old Man of Hoy was an important event in Tom Patey's career. To a mountaineer I would think it about the last thing one would call to mind when remembering Tom Patey. He enjoyed it, yes; but the author himself puts the Old Man of Hoy in perspective: “When I signed on with Chris Brasher for his vintage Spectacular, unlike Faust, I was not consumed by hell-fire; I enjoyed a pleasant holiday in Norway at the expense of my ill-gotten gains. Nobody is going to carry a banner for Telly climbing, but one has to admit that the rewards — although hardly spiritual, mystical, aesthetic or even ethical — are quite substantial”.

Normally blow by blow descriptions of climbs tend to be boring, but with Tom Patey there is never a dull moment. One is literally breathless after reading the account of the attempted winter ascent of the huge 5,000 foot high Trolltinder Wall — almost to the top and then the retreat to a bivouac (without any equipment) still 2,000 feet up that frozen wall — 29 hours on the face . . . ugh !

The chapters on the Mustagh Tower (1956) and Rakaposhi (1958) are of great interest — particularly the former. It is refreshing in these days of giant expeditions to read about a successful first ascent of an all but 7,000 m. peak by a party of only four men with minimal expense.

In the section entitled 'Satire' there is some skilful debunking of personalities — but as the author puts it "Caricature is the highest form of compliment". Rather than be left out, most personalities will prefer to figure in this section — and no one is likely to sue.

In the last section headed 'Verse', the "Song Lyrics" obviously lose enormously without the music and the ambiance. Few of them stand up to being set down starkly in black and white and one at least — 'Annapurna' — would surely have been better left out.

The illustrations are remarkable—highly dramatic and original, but their effect is largely spoiled by being reproduced on paper with a yellowish tinge which dulls their brilliance and gives a murky impression. If there are to be illustrations, surely it is worth reproducing them to the best advantage.

NEA MORIN.

CLIMBING by James Lovelock. Batsford 1971. Price £1.70

Yet another handbook for the would-be climber. One wonders how many more the market can stand. This one is by no means the worst of its breed, but there is not enough original material to place it high on my booklist.

The basic climbing manual has been padded out, firstly by a sketchy chapter on how the sport began, and secondly by a section on where to climb in Britain. The latter is little more than a list of the major crags, and as a full list of climbing guides is included as an appendix, seems superfluous.



Mr. Lovelock writes clearly and with enthusiasm about the basic techniques, but is hindered by a lack of pictures and diagrams. For instance, only one knot is shown of the half-dozen mentioned in the text, and there is nothing on the correct positioning of different types of piton.

The sparsity of illustrations is most marked in the chapter on snow and ice. I needed to read the paragraph on braking several times before I even recognised the method I use.

Mr. Lovelock is most entertaining when not restricted by the technicalities. His most valuable contribution is on safety, survival and first aid. Apart from the problems I would have in getting off the ground after the breakfast suggested (only once in the book is a woman mentioned), it is very salutary to have these periodic safety reminders.

Not therefore a great book, but a fairly workmanlike introduction for the beginner.

ANNE SHEPHERD.

THE BLACK CLIFF by Jack Soper, Ken Wilson and Peter Crew.

Kaye and Ward 1971. Price £2.50.

If any cliff both reflects the current climbing advances and acts as an inspiration to the top climbers of each generation to make those advances, it is Cloggy. No other cliff can match it for grandeur, mystique and the quality of its climbs.

In *The Black Cliff*, Soper, Wilson and Crew have produced a pictorial and historical account of the climbing on Clogwyn du'r Arddu from the early visits of the Abrahams to the present day. This is a fascinating book, delving into much climbing folk-lore and reproducing first-hand accounts of the first ascents of important climbs. It is the photographs, though, which convey best the atmosphere of the cliff, and for which the book will be memorable.

For any climber, *The Black Cliff* will be compulsive reading; and for any non-climber interested to see why people want to climb, these photographs, combined with the accounts of key figures in each generation, should provide the basis of an answer.

JANET ROGERS.

## JOURNALS RECEIVED:

CLIMBERS' CLUB JOURNAL 1970-71

CAMBRIDGE MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL 1971-72

FELL AND ROCK CLIMBING CLUB 1970

LADIES' ALPINE CLUB JOURNAL 1972

LANCS. CAVING AND CLIMBING CLUB JOURNAL 1970

MIDLAND ASSOCIATION OF MOUNTAINEERS JOURNALS 1970, 1971-72

SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL 1972

MOUNTAIN LIFE No. 4.

Climbing club journals do not change. Some of them indeed seem almost fossilised, so beautifully do they conjure up a past era.

Not all, however. The SMCJ has timely editorial warnings about the onset of officialdom and the need to defend the freedom of mountaineers from petty restrictions and curtailments; Chouinard is amusing on typical Scottish climbing; Cousins gives a totally enthralling account of a long hill-walk from Cape Wrath to Glasgow.

The FRCCJ is once again enlivened by Allan Austin — 'secret cragging' again, but with a difference. Ian Roper's superb photos add considerably to the Journal's interest.

The LACJ ranged far and wide — I particularly enjoyed Dorothy Pilley-Richards on a Sunset Climb.

John Lawton looking back in the LSCCJ was interesting, as were Ray Colledge on the North Face of the Grosshorn, and John Harwood, new-routeing in California, in the MAMJ.

Don Whillans' incredible account of the 1972 German Everest Expedition totally dominates this number of the new BMC publication, 'Mountain Life'.

Where is the new young blood of the CC? Certainly not writing in its Journal, from which the Club appears to be relaxing gracefully into middle age. As the country's major climbing club, surely it has not forgotten the need to attract the young? Peter Steele, however, was compulsive reading on the ills to which the International Everest team succumbed.

JANET ROGERS.

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