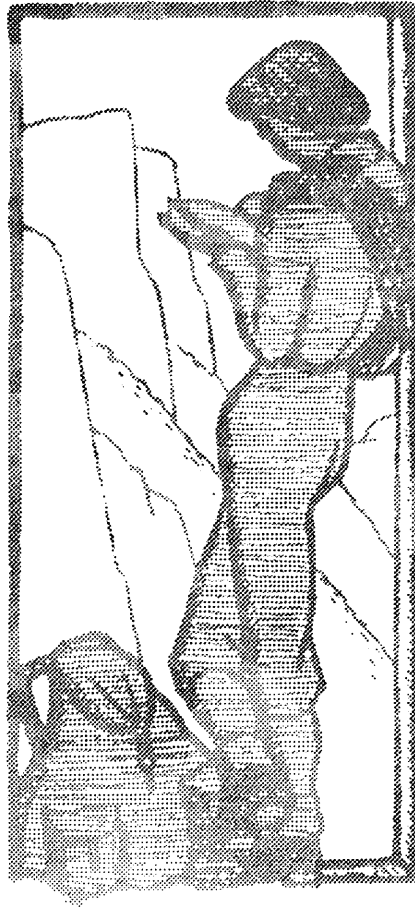


# THE PINNACLE CLUB JOURNAL



No. 23  
1994~1996



**THE PINNACLE CLUB JOURNAL**  
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**No. 23**

*Edited by Chris Stretch*

# **THE PINNACLE CLUB**

*Founded 1921*

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*Cover Picture: Design for the Club bookplate, by Miss J. Tebbutt, 1947.*



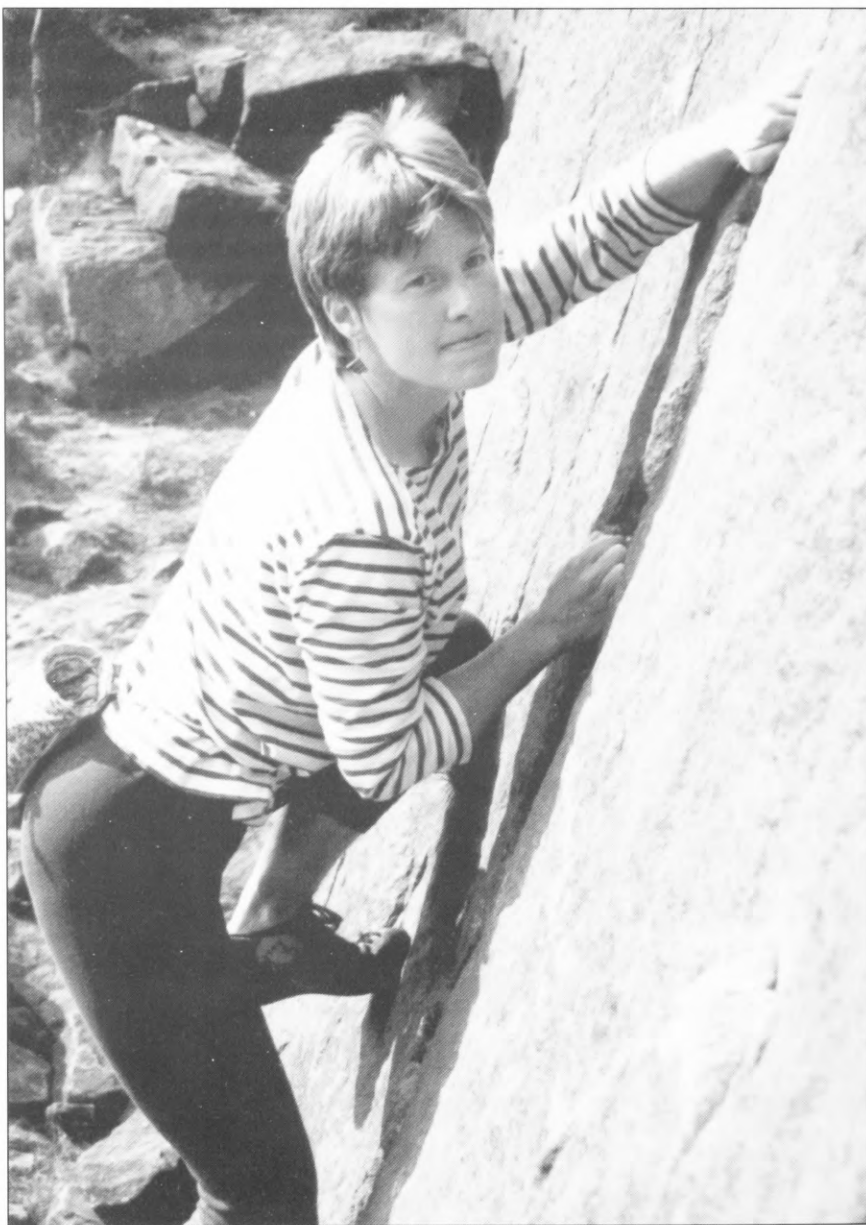


Photo: Fred Reynolds

*President 1996: Louise Dickie*

## BEGINNINGS

### *Shirley Angell*

By rights Denise Wilson ought to be writing this! It was she who drew our attention to the Pinnacle Club news which was printed in the Rucksack Journals in 1922 and 1923 and she went so far as to photocopy it for our delectation. The Rucksack Club was one of three clubs who kindly gave us journal space until we could blossom with our own Journal (in 1924); the others being the Alpine Club and the Fell and Rock Climbing Club.

Len Winthrop-Young and Pat Kelly, as President and Secretary, divided the work between them. Len wrote for the Alpine Journal, Pat for the Fell and Rock Journal and Len put both their names to her account for the Rucksack Journal. Pat Kelly had to write and remind her about her article on January 13th, 1922:

"Mr Scott says the Rucksack Journal is being held up because our promised two pages have not been sent in. Can you do this so as to reach Mr Scott by Tuesday a.m. (& send me a p.c. at the same time saying you have sent him the article)? If not, shall I send him something?" (How's that for a careful accommodating secretary)?

Len came up trumps, as you will see below, and on Feb 24th, 1922 Pat wrote:

"I have just seen a copy of the Rucksack Journal. Your two pages on 'The Pinnacle Club' are excellent, - far better than what I wrote for the F&RCC which I sent to Chorley last October, and wrote at white heat, as he told me he had only a day or two before all the matter must be in the printers' hands.....Chorley must be awfully sick of the delay! Who would be an editor? Still we must find one, - sometime!"

Two months later, Pat was dead, but the members who produced the first Journal in 1924 were filled with her own eagerness and tenacity. Meanwhile, our 75th Anniversary gives us a good excuse for reprinting Len Winthrop-Young's article in full. How much have we changed in 75 years?

## THE PINNACLE CLUB

*This Club has been the outcome of a steadily growing conviction among many women who have mountaineered of recent years in our own Islands, that it was desirable to have a centre - social, educational and advisory - for women and girl climbers; especially in view of the increasing number who were taking to the sport individually, either by themselves, or with other girls equally inexperienced, or in mixed parties with men.*

*Certain of the men's Clubs, in a very liberal spirit, have recently thrown open their membership to women. The privilege has been highly appreciated, and it is the conviction of the founders of the Pinnacle Club that their new organisation will in no way diminish the number of women who will continue to avail themselves of the privilege, nor the good-fellowship with which the common interests and activities, to which they have been admitted in these Clubs, will continue to be upheld.*

*But it is obvious that there are a number of problems and considerations peculiar to the conduct of a sport undertaken by the sexes in company, or by the women and men members of a Club separately, about which it is a matter primarily for the women among themselves, to establish sound doctrine, and with which the administration of a men's Club, or of a joint Club, can not be expected to deal.*

## BEGINNINGS

*There are, again, a number of girls without available masculine relations in the climbing world, who are anxious for information and for suitable introduction - both to the mountains and to their denizens.*

*There are a number, on the other hand, who are ready to take their chance of what they may find, either of climbs or of company, but to whom advice and what may be called "countenance" may yet be of service.*

*Further, there are known to be many women (as there are many men) who will only climb with their like, and who have hitherto lacked a means of discovering such companionship for their climbing.*

*There has also been another, and a very strong inducement, of a more technical character. In climbing with men, where "the best must lead", women have little opportunity to master, or to enjoy, the finer points and sensations of the art itself; to learn the business of finding their climbs, of steering a mountaineering course, or of exercising judgment and responsibility in the actual climbing. To meet this general want, the new Club makes a special feature of the training of its beginners, both in route-finding and in technique; and in order to maintain the standard, it supplies an energetic central criticism - free from the polite restrictions imposed by differences of sex - of the methods and the capabilities of all its members.*

*The Inaugural Meeting of the Club was held at Pen-y-Gwryd on March 26th, 1921, and the enthusiastic support which the Club has since received is an additional indication, if any were needed, of its original desirability and of its present service.*

*It already numbers over 60 members. It has a thriving organisation. It has held a number of successful Meets in the British hills; and a number also of its members have been encouraged to make successful expeditions to foreign ranges.*

*For full membership a high qualification is demanded: the knowledge of, and a past experience in, general mountaineering conditions, and the ability to lead and to direct rock ascents of a moderately difficult order.*

*It also has established a class of Associates, consisting of those whom it makes its business to train and to assist, so that they may become leaders in their turn, and of those who, although inspired by a sincere love of climbing and able to act as sound members of a party, yet may never attain to the final degree of skill or strength required of a leader; but whom it would be unjust to exclude from participation in the advantages of a women's club only upon that score.*

*If the Pinnacle Club prove the success that it is hoped, and that its start promises, those who are responsible for its creation, and for its traditions, are confident that the sounder basis of technical equality and of greater ability to "share and share alike" in the mountaineering partnership, which it will give to its members, must increase, rather than detract from, the ideal comradeship of men and women on the hills, and at the same time that it will provide a nucleus of opinion and training, technical and social, by means of which a number of women and girls of the best sort - i.e., those who love climbing - may find their own feet on the mountains, and meet there with their own like!*

ELEANOR WINTHROP YOUNG, President.  
E. KELLY, Secretary.

*Copies of Shirley Angell's book, Pinnacle Club, A History of Women Climbing are still available from specialist bookshops, distributed by Cordee, 3a De Montfort Street, Leicester, LE1 7HD.*

## SOME VENERABLE MEMBERS WRITE...

*Val Hennelly*

In my capacity as membership secretary in 1994 I wrote to our honorary members whom we had not heard from for some time.

It was a pleasure to receive their letters and learn of their enduring affection for the club and its activities.

Here are some extracts for your own pleasure:-

Jennet Campbell (née Seth Hughes) remembers the hut, as it was, with humour:

*I always come up to North Wales two or three times during the year & usually drop in at the hut to see how the improvements are getting on. I was at the hut opening in 1932 & was small enough in those days to climb through a top window when, after the official speeches for the opening, we found we were all locked out! I think the problem of water inside the hut has been solved. One time, when we were a large family party there & the rain was slashing down outside, I amused my two grandsons by making paper boats for them to sail on the pond by the fire.*

Mrs T. A. Andrews (who was Berta Gough) wrote:

*I am still very interested in the Club. As you see I am in a Rest Home and am very happy here. I am 90 years old and find it difficult writing but I hope to receive any Pinnacle Club articles.*

Rosalind Hill was very self effacing, but obviously still has an indomitable spirit. She wrote:

*My own activities are, as Gray said "the short and simple annals of the poor" & not very interesting. I used to climb a lot with Christina Barrett, who was a much better climber than I was, & a bit with Brenda Ritchie (now alas both in a better place). In 1978 I started having lots of fractures and was told I'd got osteoporosis, which rather knocked me out of major activities. I still go out to Austria every year & stagger up hut paths with a stick & every possible help from any ski lift I find. But this explains why I am not in touch with younger climbers.*

*In private life I'm a Professor Emirita of London University, a keen (though rather stiff & awkward) gardener, & keep five cats, one of whom is sitting on my knee & determinedly helping to write this letter.*

Ada Shaw wrote:

*Although I no longer get to Meets I always look forward to receiving and reading the reports of meets in the handbook and also the exploits of members in the journal.*

*I joined the club in 1949 (the same year as Gwen Moffat) and was on the same meet when we were climbing on Lliwedd and it was discovered that Gwen was pregnant, she was also climbing in bare feet! I have very happy memories of the Hut.*

*I have very much enjoyed the current Journal and found the appreciation of Dorothea Gravina most interesting. I recall a Dauphiné Meet - we had a lovely time and I came back with Dorothea, a very entertaining journey! It was not long after the ill-fated Cho Oyu expedition and we visited various people en route connected with the expedition. On that Meet Dorothea was in fine form and astounded Giles (our guide) by being able to keep up with him! Ah, happy days!*

Joan Cochrane wrote:

*I used to come to the dinner but haven't for some time - having had some falls I can't do more than go for short walks.*

## SOME VENERABLE MEMBERS WRITE...

*I often think of the times when I used to come to meets and do good climbs. I have had four hip operations which doesn't help. I enjoy reading the journal, and hearing about the other members' activities. An old friend bought the three small islands in the Outer Hebrides & I went up there from time to time. We stayed on Mingulay, but went to Barra & Pabbay & I took a lot of photos of the sea birds, going along narrow ledges and I still have many of these and look at them from time to time.*

*There was a small island about 50 yards from Mingulay & I could see there were interesting birds there, so I undressed and put my clothes and camera in a bag and swam over holding them above my head. It was well worth it as I got some of my best photos there.*

*To get to the islands we had to go to Barra & then on the Lighthouse boat. It used to go over once a week in the summer & about once in 2 weeks in the winter & take them supplies. The day we were supposed to come back there was such a wind that the boat couldn't come in. I'd taken enough food for my friend & I & my 2 West Highland dogs but it was about a week before we were rescued. The two shepherds who lived over there had a fair amount of flour and we lived on scones & that was nearly finished by the time the boat was able to get in. We had a terrible crossing back. I had to lie on the deck & hold onto the two dogs. When we got back I was handed a letter 'via Interpreters' office and the address was "Chris badly (?), male fox, moving swiftly, cockney hand cart, land of the macs" I don't think they'd do that now!*

Marjorie Wood sympathised with my pursuit of our less active members and wrote:

*I became secretary at the end of the war & we had all drifted about, as we could not have meets for five years & I wrote to people asking them to come to a Yorkshire meet & quite a few turned up from Scotland & London & it became quite a popular meet. I miss the Club meets & members.*

*I still get news of the Club from Anne Wood my niece in Skipton but she has not been to any meets this year. However she will give me news from her Handbook. Yesterday Anne took me up to Austwick near Ingleborough to see the parachuters (?), there were so many I couldn't help but see them.*

Vera Picken wrote:

*In October 93 my first hip replacement (1972) began giving trouble for two months.*

*It subsided but I now need a stick and have to be very careful not to do anything that would trigger it off again. The left replacement was done in 1979 so both are very old.*

*We moved here (Stirlingshire) from Cheshire in 1964 but my husband who had so looked forward to the move died in 1966 when he had a coronary. At 85 I find that many of my ties with the PC have been broken by death. Long standing members with lost contacts probably do not want to resign but all too likely have disabilities eg mine &/or transport difficulties etc. We used to have a Yorkshire walking meet in the Autumn which attracted some older members including myself, but that was abandoned about 1990 when the leader died.*

*I would like to tell you what a great pleasure it was to attend the AGM and dinner of the PC this year owing to the kind thoughts of Gwen Moffat who made it possible, and was most helpful. No doubt others members are also doing this and always have if they live near each other. In my case though Gwen's invitation came right out of the blue & I think she was wonderful.*

*I receive the Journal and do enjoy reading what the members have been up to and what prospects have opened up since the club was formed (hemp ropes and nailed boots in the 30s).*

Eileen Healey wrote:

*Yes I am still very interested in the Club, I receive the Journal which I read with great pleasure. I am particularly thrilled at the wonderful work being done on the hut.*

*I am afraid I do not get to many meets nowadays as my climbing days seem to be over, I try to attend the dinner meet each year to keep some sort of contact. One of these days I may submit a short article to the journal if I can get around to writing it.*

I hope that you have enjoyed reading these reminiscences.

Earlier this year we had a 75th anniversary meet at the hut and several of our honorary members attended and enjoyed the revelries. The strength of the club is the bonds between the members and their enjoyment of the hills, whatever their age or firmness of body.

*(Sadly, two of these members, Mrs Andrews and Joan Cochrane have died since this correspondence with Val. Eileen Healey's article is on page 52).*

## MEET ON THE LEDGE

### *A fiasco in three parts by Fred Reynolds*

#### Part One: The Great Escape

"This is not going to work," said Louise. "Christ, I hope not," said Penny. She looked pale. "The tyrolean seems a much better bet. I don't know what Angela can be thinking of. Where is she, anyway?"

"She's looking for anchors for this 'continuous loop of rope' she's been going on about," Chris informed us. "She's very keen."

"You'll have to tell her, Fred. Put anyone in that and it'll go straight to the bottom," said Louise.

She was right. We couldn't possibly contemplate taking to the water as things were. The Old Man of Stoer might only be twenty five feet away from the mainland but in Angela's inflatable it would be twenty five feet of unmitigated peril-on-the-sea. Angela waved cheerily at us from the rock platform opposite the Old Man. We waved back and turned again to the boat. There was almost a conspiratorial air about our little group, huddled closely together.

"Angela, you'd better come over," I called. "We have a problem." She arrived looking concerned. "This is the best it will do and it's not really good enough," I explained. "I think perhaps the tyrolean..."

Angela flung herself across the sagging dinghy and applied mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. There was a brief valedictory flourish and the dinghy began a rapid and dramatic demise. Angela stood back, horrified, as her twenty year old dinghy ended its days with a subdued raspberry. Penny and Louise, in at the death, pointed to a one inch diameter hole in the dinghy's side.

"A puncture! God, what a shame," they chorused. Sabotage, I thought, silently ecstatic. To have died on my birthday would have been beyond the pale.

#### Part Two: The Adventure

The team set about constructing a network of anchors for the tyrolean. Penny would swim across with the rope, and she paced up and down, identifying suitable departure and landing points. The best place for the tyrolean was over the narrowest part of the channel, but here the sea was at its most intimidating, smashing against the rocks. Further to the right, where the channel was wider and partly protected from the breakers, a safer crossing looked possible. Despite the longer swim, it was the wiser option.

Penny plunged in, wearing a tightly knotted Tesco carrier bag around her waist for extra buoyancy. Halfway across she suddenly went under. Fearing she'd been caught by some lurking oarweed, we held our collective breath and hoped Penny was doing the same. She recovered quickly, as did the culpable Val, who was lying face down. She'd been concentrating on paying out the rope carefully, and had been laid low by a patch of bladderwrack on the rocks.

It wasn't long before the tyrolean was in place and I was announcing, with more determination than I felt, that I was ready to go across. With Chris firing away on the Olympus, I clipped in, swung my legs up and over the rope and set off backwards. Numerous jokes had been made about the tyrolean going down with a fully racked climber attached, so all the gear was coming across in haul sacks. Lightweight, I would sink more slowly, thus allowing more time for a rescue. This was what my friends said but how could they know? Had they practised?

Pursued by the belief that my life was in the hands of untried amateurs, I shot across the tyrolean like a monkey across a pole. I fixed the safety rope as a shuttle, and the first sack was



*The author announced she was ready to go across...*

soon coming across with a change of clothes for the shivering Penny. The rest of the team came across in a superb display of technical expertise and whilst they secured everything for the return, I scrambled round to the Old Man's seaward face. If the tide was low enough, we could approach round the back and avoid the 5a entry pitch; fair enough on a route given Hard Severe. We wanted to maximise on our chances of a fast, problem-free ascent.

I returned with the good news that the way was clear, and the team was on a roll. In our minds, the tyrolean was the greatest hurdle and it was now behind us. We skidded round on the weed-covered rock confident of summit success. Adopting an orderly queue system, the three sets of climbing teams were soon storming up the stack. It all passed without incident until I began the fourth pitch (and our third), described as an easy exit pitch to the top. I found myself bridged across an unnervingly steep groove.

"This is a bit stiff for a ungraded pitch," I called back, miffed at this glitch in our progress. I moved up a bit higher and stepped onto an enormous ledge that virtually ran the breadth of the face. Perhaps this was the easy ground the guidebook

described. A quick reconnoitre along this ledge told me all I wanted to know. I was certainly on easy ground, but there was no way I could get off it, not without climbing harder than I cared to and very much harder than Hard Severe.

Penny took out the guidebook and read through the description. It didn't make sense. Everything matched up to our present high point but nothing after. Retreat was too disappointing to contemplate and I quickly dismissed the idea. Carrying on meant tackling difficult rock, and so I tracked back and forth across the ledge, deciding which of two nasty-looking possibilities I disliked the least. On the left, the steep groove from which I'd just emerged reared into an overhang, although a traverse left on merely bulging rock held the promise of ultimately easier ground on the arête. Across to the right lay a ramp which cut back across the face; it sprouted two rusty, flaking pegs at its base, presumably to make the steep entry moves more palatable. Once on the ramp, I would probably be committed to continuing with only the pegs for protection.

Left seemed best, but a little foray onto the impending rock quickly sent me scuttling back to my ledge. These moves needed more conviction than I could muster. Feeling increasingly inadequate, I returned to a subdued and serious-faced Penny. Only minutes before, she'd been brim full of the adventure of it all and grinning from ear to ear. Louise had joined her on a guano-covered fulmar's ledge and the two were sitting squashed together at one end; the fulmar's egg sat self-consciously at the other. I knew their impassive expressions hid boredom.



## MEET ON THE LEDGE

"So what's the score, Fred?" asked a hunched-up Louise, carefully avoiding any tone of criticism and, just as carefully, wiping green slime from her left rockboot.

"Well, there's no exit," I mournfully replied, "nothing that isn't hard, anyway. We must have gone off-route but I really don't know how."

As Penny re-read the route description, I glanced across at the mainland. Silhouetted against the sky in an almost unbroken line, the tourists stared back at me, waiting. We hadn't moved for ages. Surely they must have switched off their camcorders by now.

I began to feel quite indignant towards the crowd on the clifftop. Having a personal fiasco recorded for posterity was embarrassment of the highest order, and there seemed bugger all I could do about it. My despondency increased when Penny offered revealing information from the guidebook that she'd been studying assiduously, flicking the pages to and fro.

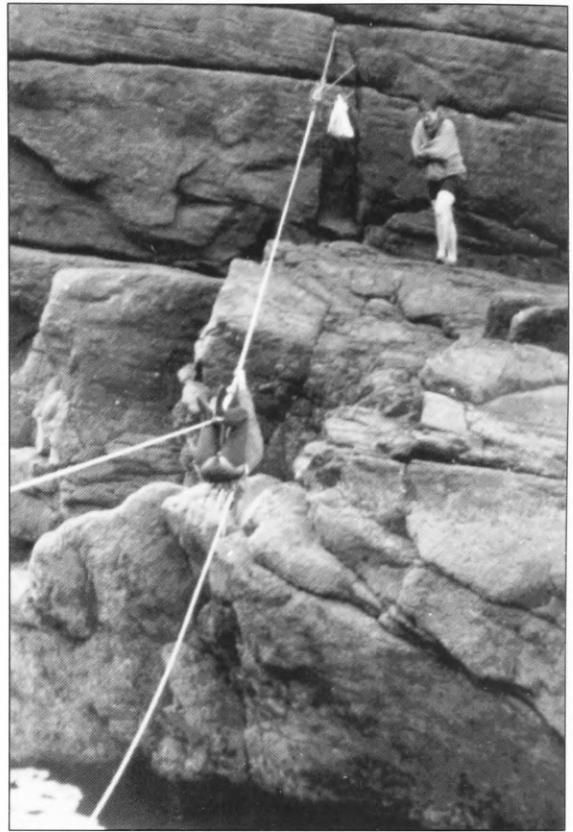
"Yeah, I've got it. I know where we are. This an E1, and the ramp over there is an E2."

"Great," I groaned, and looked down the cliff, completely backed up with climbers.

Every ledge worthy of the name had someone on it. Actors trapped on a stage and with a sell-out audience to boot. Dear God.

Penny joined me on the ledge, took one look at my face and said nothing. She traversed across to the ramp, and called back to say that it might go with some judicious pulling on the pegs. Meanwhile, her moving had resulted in an unblocking of climbers further down the line and (unknown to the two of us) others were making their plans to resolve the situation. Angela had come up from the back where she had been champing at the bit, unable to understand that there was a problem "just with a Hard Severe" (well, we'd all got that problem). As the recognised Climber Most Likely To Succeed she was given the task of putting a rope on top. Louise would follow. As Penny and I prepared to tackle the ramp, Louise shouted up to tell us of the new plan and offered to take up a rope for us. Such was the measure of our confidence that we all but snatched her hand off. Penny agreed to give the ramp her best shot whilst we waited.

Belayed to two good Friends, I worked myself into a positive mood, ready to encourage. Penny was soon "ooh-aahing" with apprehension on the awkward moves at the start of the ramp. Her voice then acquired an altogether more anxious tone. She was obviously as stressed as the pegs she had just clipped. "Just watch me. This is awful," she gasped, trying to spread her weight economically between the two crumbling metal stumps. "I'm watching you. Go on." "No you're bloody not. You're looking at Angela and I'm about to die!" shrieked Penny, desperately wishing she was two stone lighter. "I need all your attention and your left knee NOW!" she rampaged.



*...to join the shivering Penny.*

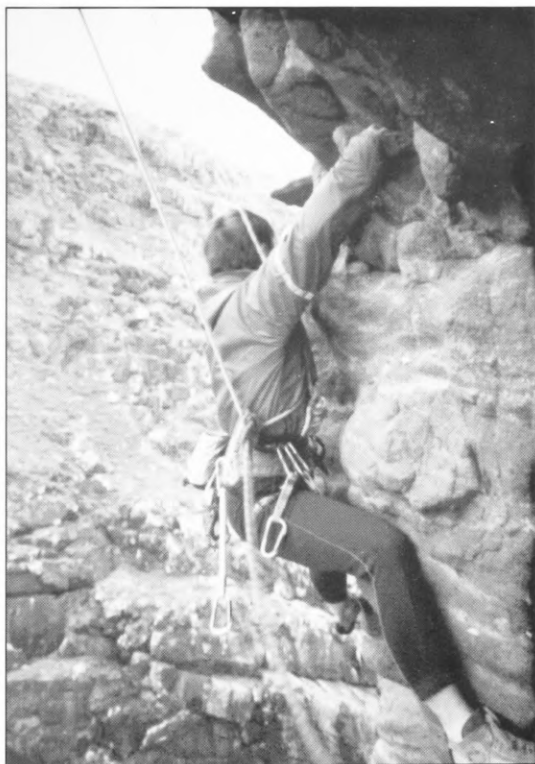
Guilty as well as inadequate, I swivelled around to provide the extra foothold and Penny gratefully stepped down. The greyness around her gills told me she had experienced quite enough of the ramp, thank you, so that was the end of that. Short of throwing in the towel completely, our only course of action was to tag onto the new lead pair. I had watched Angela carefully work her way left underneath the overhang, pause a couple of times on the bulging rock, then swing out of sight. It had looked hard.

Removing the gear from the scene of our failed operations, we trundled back to the other end of the ledge and peered down at Louise.

"You'll definitely have to take one of our ropes," I said, "we can't get up the ramp."

Louise was soon bridging up the groove, but stopped when she saw that the ropes weren't going in. Despite several shouts from the three of us, nothing moved and Louise's shoulders slumped in resignation. "I can tell this is not going to be my day," she said, and made the first move across the traverse. At this point the ropes rapidly shot in.

"Ooh, unhelpful," I murmured. The ropes were now directly above and behind her and tight as hawsers. Further progress leftwards was out of the question; she would have to go straight up, over the most bulging rock. After muttering something about petards, Louise began a series of energetic manoeuvres which involved hoisting herself up on her arms as far as possible (not far - negative ape factor), and then exhorting a totally unresponsive Angela to "Pull!" Penny and I glanced at one another. Louise's voice sounded uncharacteristically thin and weak, but perhaps it was just the extra strain on her diaphragm. Wise not to comment, we telepathised to one another. We added our voices to the request for upward mobility but, sadly, it was not to be had. I was amazed Louise kept it up so long.



... the ropes shot in... tight as hawsers...

Feeling more relaxed as the limelight had been off me for a while, I thought that the situation might benefit from the injection of a little light banter.

"You know, she's just not pulling when you're pushing. Poor timing in your team, I'd say. You just need to synchronise your efforts," I suggested.

Oh dear. It was Louise's turn to mislay her sense of humour and not be in a rush to find it, and she responded with a withering glance. I shrank back on my ledge and Penny quietly advised me to shut up unless I could say something useful. There was an awkward silence; Penny and I stared at the mainland rather than keep staring at the yo-yoing Louise. I wondered about creating a diversion for the crowd and was just about to suggest the same when Ms. Dickie slowly pendulumed across our view, looking distinctly tight about the jaw. In fact, face set in concrete would not be overstating it. She'd had to let go, of course, and now hung disconsolately in front of us about five feet out from the rock, turning slowly. Any tourists who hadn't already switched their camcorders back on now did so.

## MEET ON THE LEDGE

We probably could have grabbed Louise's legs with a bit of lateral initiative but I doubted we could have got her in and onto the ledge, not with Angela in such an intransigent frame of mind. In any case, that would only increase the number of people stuck on the ledge to three. It was obvious; Louise would have to prusik. Nothing was said, but the air hung with inevitability. Nothing happened so I decided on a prompt. As Louise came round on one her circuits, I said brightly, "What a bonus! Looks like you'll have to prusik."

No answer but then, as her back was towards me, I assumed she was merely being polite. I waited until we were face to face once more and tried again. "Come on, Louise, you need your prusiks." "I haven't got any," came the reply after a long pause and a triple toe-loop.

"What do you mean, you haven't got any?" I spluttered incredulously. "What have you done with those I gave you this morning?"

"I think Chris has got them," Louise replied. Hanging onto her composure by the well-known ploy of under-reacting, her tone of voice suggested that it was no more inconvenient than forgetting to bring paper hankies.

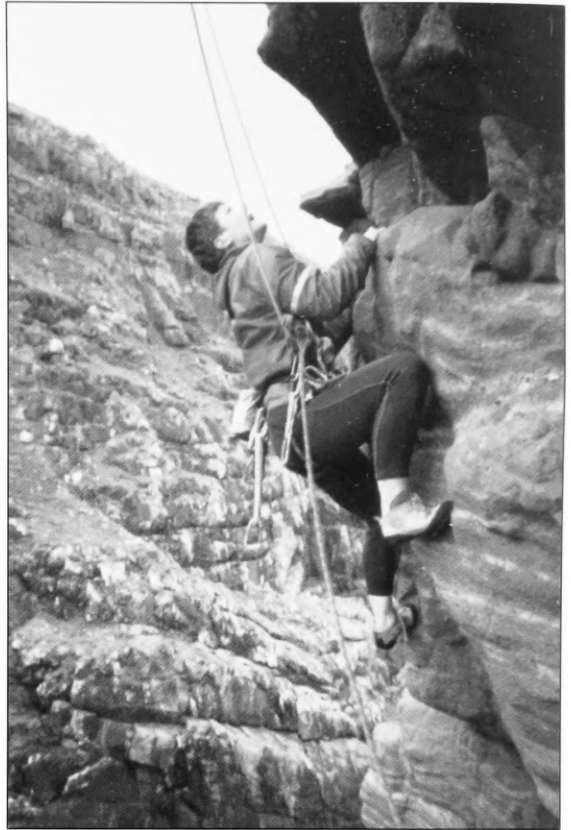
"Oh, right," I said, faintly.

Louise's climbing crisis was taking place in front of two of the most compulsive raconteurs in the Pinnacle Club, and she knew it. We all knew it. The next few moments were spent absorbing the ramifications of this state of affairs. Then, call it what you will, altruism, camaraderie in the face of adversity, female bonding, but the Hand of Friendship was finally extended and it held two prusik loops.

"Here, you can borrow mine," said Penny, "I'm sure Fred and I can manage with a pair between us if we need to."

Penny and I now became helpful, patronisingly helpful. The unfortunate Louise was subjected to a welter of information about prusik knots and their use, interspersed with little bouts of disagreement between Penny and myself over technical application. Amazingly enough, out of the veritable cat's cradle of 5mm cord that inevitably resulted, Louise constructed something that worked, and she soon legged it out of sight, no doubt thankful to be away from the awesome twosome.

Redundant once more, Penny and I reconsidered our situation. Continuing upwards meant climbing on the single rope being trailed by Louise. We could run into the same difficulties as she had trying to go left, and end up having to prusik over the same ground. The rope was going in, and fast. We had to make a decision.



*...exhorting Angela to "Pull!"*

"I'm not going over that overhang prusiking on a single rope," said Penny gazing at me steadily. She made a sawing action with her hands and then ran one across her throat. I considered she was being a touch melodramatic and mounted a protest.

"Louise only got in a mess because the ropes got stuck. We could probably climb it on a tight rope."

"I'm not going, Fred," said Penny, making it quite clear the matter was not open to discussion. I could go on my own, I reasoned, but that would leave Penny to retreat alone. Not a good idea.

"Okay, let the rope go," I said regretfully. "We'll go down." Penny climbed down the groove, threading the rope through the pegs as she went to protect my descent.

As I turned to wave goodbye to the crowd on the cliff top, two ropes flew down past me. It was the summit pair preparing the abseil and they'd thrown down the ropes in the wrong place. I shouted down to Penny but she was already rolling her eyes. A few moments later, and for the second time that day, Louise swung into view hanging from a rope. I tried smiling at her but she probably sensed I was going to give her bad news.

"You should have come down the arete. You'll be hanging too far out to make the next abseil point from here."

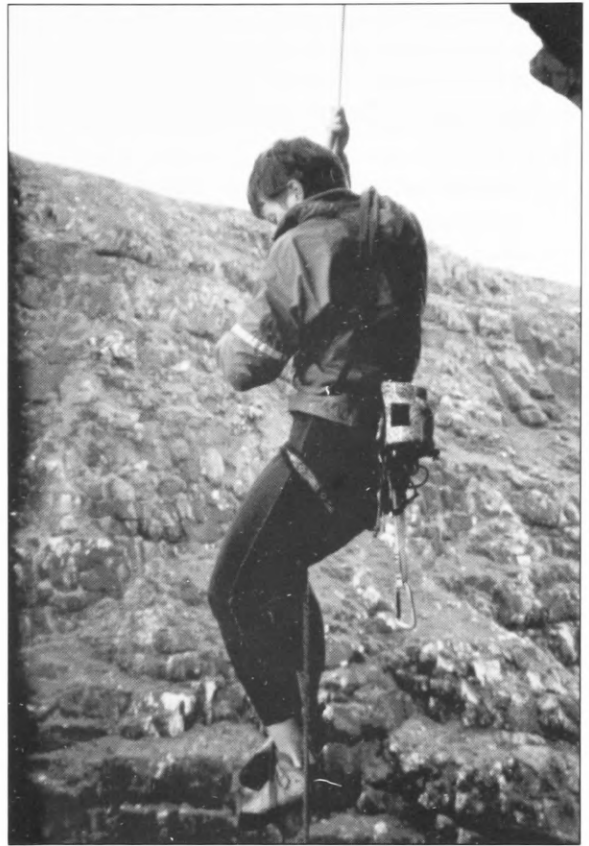
We both looked down at the two ends of the rope waving freely in space about ten feet off the bottom.

"You could get Val to pull you in, and then set up another abseil from her ledge," I suggested, feeling another crisis might be approaching.

Making no response, Louise continued downwards past Val and I finally cracked. My friend was going to die. Louise would shoot off the end of the rope, take one bounce on the rock platform and then land in the sea. A voice I only just recognised as my own, wavered down the rope to her.

"Oooh...Louise...don't!"

Penny added her concern. "I don't think you should, Louise..." "It's okay Penny, we know what we're doing," she replied in confident tones. Chris quickly abseiled down a separate rope, firmly grasped Louise's feet, and assisted her to make a grounding on the stretch. (I was gratified to discover later that Louise did have a fleeting picture at this juncture of being catapulted back up the stack on the end of a 150 foot rubber band. There are times when the human mind is capable of believing anything.)



*...Ms. Dickie slowly pendulumed...*

## MEET ON THE LEDGE

I resumed my descent and joined Penny on the fulmar's ledge. She suggested she lower me down to the next abseil point so as not to weight the belay pegs any more than necessary. As I tentatively stepped back off the ledge, a dark shadow loomed above me. It was Angela. I was about to inform her of the abseil difficulty when I realised I was witnessing yet another prusik contretemps.

"Angela's prusik is jammed. She's stuck," hissed Penny. Flustered, I hauled myself back up.

"I can't go down with all this going on. It's all too much," I wailed.

"There's absolutely nothing you can do. Just go down," ordered Penny.

Angela was revolving in space, pulling on the rope to unload the prusik protecting her descent. Slowly, she began to make painstaking progress towards Val. Relieved, I carried on with the lower, descending into a scene of frenetic activity, all to the end of getting us to the bottom of the stack without more ado. (Val had been on this ledge for too long watching the debacle taking place above her. She arrived just as Louise first swung into space and immediately locked into the belief that she was about to be involved in a major epic. She had veered between two possible nightmares; either the whole team would get benighted on the stack or, lashed to her ledge, she would drown as the tide rose remorselessly around her. Yet another of the team to suffer under the power of the human imagination.)

The tide was quite high, so speed was of the essence. We wrapped ropes and gear about our persons as tightly as possible to avoid them dropping into the water as we took our turn on the tyrolean. I was the last to leave. Pulling hand over hand on the rope, I could see the whole of the landward face, every piece of rock which now held a story.

### Part Three: The Post Mortem

"Fat lot of use, knowing that now," I grumbled at Marlene, who was clutching a photodiagram, "why didn't you show us that this morning?"

I'd already berated the guidebook editor for his part in ensuring that throughout the day we had been climbing one pitch behind the one we thought we had been on. I felt no compunction about dragging other people into the circle of responsibility.

Angela was scuffing the grass with her feet. She hadn't got over her boat, I could tell. I wondered whether she suspected anything.

"It'll all be on video, you know," said Penny, "do you think they'll be able to make out any faces?"

"Oh God oh shit oh no oh dear," intoned Louise.

"Well, at least you were doing something. They probably think everyone climbs like that anyway, swinging about on ropes. It was so bloody obvious that I was stuck".

"Yeah Fred, cocked up your big day," grinned Penny, "I mean, a Hard Severe...."

I glared at her. She didn't need to rub it in. No wonder Penny was still in good humour. She hadn't actively contributed to the fiasco and had swum nobly. She'd come out of it not at all badly. Not so the rest of us. Angela had lost a dear friend and Val was feeling that she'd over-reacted about the chances of a benightment that far north in summertime. Louise and I were coming to terms with our feet of clay and Chris was still searching for the missing prusiks. Still, these things happen, don't they? It wasn't all doom and gloom, I rationalised. We'd excelled at the tyrolean and put two on the top. No-one had perished courtesy of sea travel Soper-style, and we were all still speaking to one another.

Weren't we?



## A HOT SUMMER SAGA

*Helen Jones*

What does summer 1995 mean to you? After one of the wettest springs on record, waves of heat rolled over Britain. Blue sky followed hot starry night. In Scotland, people fell victim to heat stroke, whilst in the hills and mountains of England and Wales the rock was dried and burnished by the sun. Rock climbs on north faces and on high fells found a new popularity; there were queues for routes on Cloggy and Gable. These unusual conditions couldn't have come at a better time for me. I was off work with what the doctor referred to as "an anxiety state". Kind friends encouraged me to get out climbing and although I felt very wimpish I thought a bit of gentle exercise might cheer me up and help to restore me to some kind of sanity.

In late June Ann agreed to come to the Lakes with me, in spite of the state I was in. She didn't really know what to expect and even insisted on carrying my rope for me, as if my problems were physical not mental. We walked up to Pavey on a beautiful summer day. Ann was fancying Cruel Sister, but I, rather selfishly, hoped she would change her mind. She did, and led confidently off up the first pitch of Arcturus instead, clipping the dubious peg and moving smoothly across the thin slab. To allay my fears, she said it was easy, but when my turn came, I teetered across the minute holds with heart pounding and legs shaking. Then it was my lead! Horrors, could it really go this way? Some of this Lakeland rock had probably not been climbed on since last year and the green covering left by a wet winter and spring disguised the normal polish which highlights the way. Anyway, after an awkward pull round, I managed to inch my way slowly upwards, feeling very wobbly. The belay, when it came, was very welcome. The next route, Aardvark, I followed on a very tight rope. Twenty-four hours later, on Dow, a similar scenario unfolded. Ann led Pink Panther in great style, then pointed me at Leopards Crawl. I struggled across the first pitch, feeling it deserved every bit of its grade, while Ann, ever helpful, suggested I needed to speed up a bit on (mere) HVS. I did follow this advice. The following week, on a roasting Castle Rock, I was so slow on an HVS (Agony) that I abandoned it altogether and did the E1 next door. It seemed like a miracle. North Crag Eliminate was wonderful. On such days, when everything suddenly comes together, the joy of climbing a good route can actually make one laugh with pleasure. These are times to be treasured, and rolled round the memory in years to come.

Our next trip was to Wales. One of the reasons why it's great climbing with Ann is that she always has a game plan ready. One of the many routes is selected off her hitlist and something suitable included for her partner. This approach is very good for a wimp like me and usually leaves me floundering for excuses why I shouldn't try this or that. This particular weekend, it was to be Big Groove for her and Strand for me. What did I think? Well, I had to confess to a private ambition to lead Strand and though I was far from certain that I could do it, I was very happy with this plan. We sneaked out of the Pinnacle Club Hut early, while much negotiating of routes and partners was still in progress. It was a brilliant day. We set off down the horrid path to Gogarth main cliff. Some way down I realised that, in my haste, I had forgotten my chalk bag. Back again, up the crumbling path. More haste less speed. It was too warm a day to do without chalk. As we passed below Strand, now in the shade, I looked up at the cool sweep of rock: I really wanted to do that route. There was no-one about on the upper cliff and conditions were perfect, but the tide was low and Big Groove beckoned. On we scampered; only to be held up on the traverse by a pair of old bumblebees who had overtaken us when I went back for my chalk bag. We rounded the corner. Oh no! someone was already on Big Groove. Worse still, the bumblebees were heading for Pentathol, which shares the same start. Swallowing our chagrin, we opted for Hypodermic instead. Hours later, back at our sacks, we were hot and tired after the route and the long scramble up and down near vertical grass and gorse. We lay back and enjoyed the warmth

## A HOT SUMMER SAGA

and the view, took long drinks and lingered over lunch. Did I still want to have a go at Strand? Resolve was definitely under attack but, yes, the urge was still there. Down that beastly path again. At the bottom of the route, a second watched his partner tackling the crux, a third of the way up. Another pair waited. Disappointment again. It was so hot. The sun blasted onto the cliff; it was no place to hang around. Then the other pair moved off up Park Lane - Doomsville, so the way was clear: I would at least have my chance. I rarely remember much about climbs. I can recall moving swiftly up the bottom third, finding it quite straightforward. Then came a hard, thin section, where the sudden unwillingness to place gear told its own story as I pulled through using small footholds. At the time, I didn't know this was the crux. I was very conscious of the crack bulging above and wondered whether my rapidly ebbing strength would hold out. At the bottom of the bulge, where the crack splits, I struggled to get in balance, to get gear in, to stay on. I got the sequence wrong. once. twice. I was very tired. Then, magically, feet and hands sorted themselves out in the right order and I was up. It hadn't exactly been a stylish ascent, but I had done it. I looked down and saw the huge grin on Anne's face. What a route!

Back in the Lakes over the next few weeks there were lots more good ticks. I followed Angela up Cruel Sister, ready for it this time. What a joy it was; brain-tickling moves, layaways and pull-ups on perfect dry rock. There were leads too, and people started asking what was on my hit list. I didn't really have one; I had achieved most of my climbing ambitions and more, but there was one route above all which had become a real obsession. I had abseiled down the Corner when it was wet. The thought of leading it horrified me. Failure could not be contemplated, but seemed the most probable outcome. It didn't even appeal to me; I just wanted to get it done before I hung up my boots. With all this at the back of my mind, I engineered a visit to Wales for our next trip. The summer heat wave was at its peak. The south side of the Llanberis Pass was like an inferno, the crags empty. We climbed in the shade, on the Mot, on Cloggy. Every day ended with a plunge into a river or lake.

By the third day, a cunning plan had formed in my mind. I would steal up on the Corner by the back door. I persuaded Marlene to come to the Cromlech early in the morning, before it was too hot. No, not to do the Corner, but to attempt Left Wall. We were not the first to arrive on the platform at the bottom of the crag - three lads were gearing up at the base of Right Wall. We had met them the day before on Cloggy, they were nice lads. We wished each other luck. Carefully we prepared. According to the guidebook, Left Wall is the most fallen-off route in the Pass, an outcome often made even more traumatic because the second has opted to take a comfortable stance in the middle of the slab. We took no risks and tied Marlene firmly down for an upward pull, even though this left her sitting in a seepage channel. So to the route. The first fifteen metres or so are quite reasonable, and confidence begins to grow. At the beginning of the crack, the climb begins in earnest, but protection is everywhere. In it goes, too good to miss. Steady upward movement, more gear and then the crack moves rightwards. A look down at the gear. What will be needed in the top crack? What if I've used it down below? I'm tiring now, uncertainty creeping in. Oops, what have I done? feet in the wrong place, hands straining, the next jug out of reach. Damn, mustn't waste energy. Another try, and another. Defeat is staring me in the face. This isn't even the hard bit. Then Marl gives me a bit more slack and suddenly I'm up and in the niche. Bliss, a rest for the arms. "Go on Helen", shouts one of the Right Wall team. A look up reveals the top crack disappearing into the distance. More encouragement from across the Corner, "There's some fixed gear at the bottom of the crack". I look up again. It's miles away. Tentatively I move out of my safe haven. The crack is thin now, footholds smaller. This is it. Let's get some gear in quick. It's good. Now I'm at the fixed gear. The top is still a long way off and I'm sure it gets harder than this. Carefully work out sequence, must stay in balance, keep the weight on my feet, more gear. I don't remember any more until I find myself looking at the finishing jugs. Don't get excited

- stay calm. A lovely layaway and here are the jugs! I've done it. It was brilliant. Marl followed up, climbing magnificently, although she could have wished I had not used quite so much gear.

Back on the platform, Angela was wondering whether it was too hot to do Right Wall in the midday sun. The crag was like a storage heater, only a strong wind made being there tolerable. She practised a few moves. It was very hot, but the alternative of going down and flogging back up later in the day did not seem a happy prospect, even though there would be some shade by then. It was now or... Angela moved beautifully. I felt very privileged to be holding the rope. It was impossible to guess the difficulties by watching her, she looked so confident. There wasn't much gear either. I noted, somewhat idly, that the rope zig-zagged alarmingly, even more so when some gear fell out. The potential for rope drag was a problem, but there was no alternative. It could be awkward abseiling for the gear, though! At the crux, Angela lingered. From below, her stance looked relaxed and easy. Little did we know. The footholds were miniscule and a long reach was needed to make the moves past the porthole. A fall was unthinkable, since the last bit of gear was way below, on the ledge. Finally, the courage came. Helped psychologically by a cunningly placed bit of gear, the moves were sorted out and Angela was up. A great lead indeed. Communication was, by now, impossible because of the wind, but it suddenly became apparent to my heat-fuddled brain that I was expected to follow. Suffice it to say that my attempt was not in good style and at one point I learned what it felt like to pendulum. However, it was great fun to do the route on the bottom end of the rope and I emerged over the top very tired, slightly bruised, but grinning.

Two days later we were back at the Cromlech. I did lead the Corner which, although awkward at the top, wasn't really a bit like I had imagined. I finished off with Cemetery Gates while the Cromlech was still relatively quiet. Most of the routes on the Cromlech see their queues on summer weekends. They would, perhaps, not be seen as any big deal for some, but for me doing the Corner has laid some kind of ghost and for Angela doing Right Wall was very special. Maybe I should mention that the average age of the partnership on these ascents was 57 years! So in the end it was a very good summer and I look back with fond memories of the people who helped to make it so.



## BUMPS, BACKPACKS AND BANANAS

*Hilary Lawrenson*

"Be nice to me next week in Scotland, please, I think I'm pregnant". Here was the excuse I had always lacked for trailing behind in the hills, for refusing to do a winter climb when the conditions are appalling, for eating more than Jim. Of course the midwife would prefer not to hear that I soloed a grade 2 winter climb, rather than rope up on a grade 3/4, but luckily she seemed to have a policy of not quizzing me on my activities, as long as I was healthy. I found it better not to mention climbing after seeing her reaction when I asked about my friend (honest!) finding her harness uncomfortable. On the subject of harnesses, the secret is to dig out your old Whillan's harness and rig it up with a sling to extend round the bump.

As long as it feels right for you there is no reason for giving up climbing other than the difficulty of finding ever easier angled crags to accommodate the protrusion. Overhangs get a bit like hard work after 5 months, scrunching up is uncomfortable at 6, by 7 months you are really limited to easy angled rock like Rhylstone, the Roaches or Windgather. The one advantage I found was the benefit of an extra pair of hands and feet on the E4 arete, Edgehog, in Glen Nevis, which I seconded at 5 months.



Cartoon by Sue Logan

The main problem is other people and their attitude to any form of exercise in your 'delicate' condition. I was ticked off at work for cycling to work, carrying boxes, climbing on tables, let alone rock climbing. What would my colleagues have said if they had seen me on the Spring Bank Fell & Rock Family Meet, 4 weeks before son Kit was due, carrying Grace (nearly 3 years old) up Rannerdale Knotts, Buttermere, in the backpack? I found a splendid account in Gwen Moffat's *Space Beneath My Feet* of her experience as an aspirant Pinnacler climbing on Lliwedd on an Easter Meet. She declined to go on the July Alpine Meet not, as everyone assumed, because her husband could not manage without her, but because she would be having a baby. She describes the consternation of the assembled Pinnacles spreading over Lliwedd, as they imagined the baby appearing there and then and how were they to get her off the cliff?!

Having said all that, the running/cycling books that I have read all present a much more "can do" image of the pregnant woman; running on the beach the day before the baby is born, even cycling 10 miles to the hospital to give birth (stopping en route to help a small boy adjust the gearing on his bike)! I am soft: I gave up cycling when I finished work 8 weeks before the babies

were due; I confess to finding the 500 feet of uphill to and from work rather hard going by then. I had to go climbing 5 weeks before Kit was due because I had offered to lead a Pinnacle Meet at the Roaches and I could not let a weekend away go by without slipping in a route after the rain. You do not actually see too many greatly pregnant women climbing, so it is fun to see the surprise on people's faces, but I did find the bump got in the way a bit by then.

I shall not dwell on the birth bit, except to say that a climber may have more stamina to cope with the exertion, but you need it because the strong, firm muscles in your nether regions are not conducive to easy labour.

So, is there life after birth?

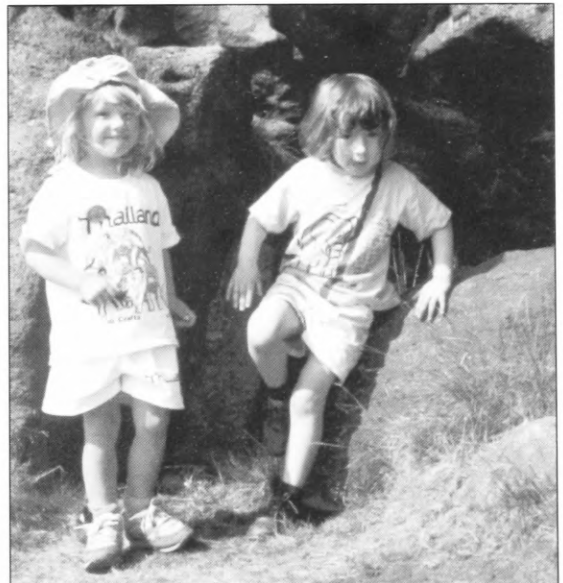
After the initial shock of being exhausted, mind-boggled, weepy, flabby and unable to get out of the house before 4 in the afternoon, things do improve slowly. Those with obliging babies and a lot of determination (not in my case) get climbing again within a few weeks. Gwen Moffat left her week old daughter under a boulder (with a passing babysitter) while she nipped up Hope and Holly Tree Wall at Idwal. A friend of mine, whose babies slept in the day and fed at night, was out seconding E2's at Burbage after three weeks. In crowded situations it is worth investing in a helium balloon to attach to the baby - they are easily mistaken for a pile of clothes and trodden on. A colleague at work once described the following scenario: very small baby at the foot of Stanage, man (presumably the father) belaying at the top of Wuthering, a route which involves extraordinarily wide bridging across a gully to get onto the face on the left; calls down to woman climber in said bridging position, "What's that doing to your stitches?" Ouch!

Once things have settled down a bit and you can actually get out before midday, life opens up again. Here are some of the places my friends and I found amenable in the Sheffield area ...

Burbage Boulders - mums boulder while babies sleep or grovel in the peat. Short climbs, so babies do not have to be separated from mum for too long. Watch out for inquisitive sheep. Stoney Middleton - we used to put the pushchairs face to face so the babies entertained each other. This method usually broke down just as we reached the crux. Horseshoe Quarry - would have been similarly accommodating, both at a pushchair or toddling stage, but for the quarry inspector who would not let us stay. He did seem intrigued to find two women and babies picnicking there.

Once the children are mobile it is handy to recruit a retired teacher as an extra climbing partner so that there is always one person on the ground to make sure the wee ones do not kill themselves.

There follows a relatively sane period when you can stride out with a nice comfortable backpack; go for the best - something like a MacPac Possum is worth every penny. On the hill the challenge really starts when the child no longer fits in the backpack. You either need a similarly pint-sized friend to egg them on or you take out dental insurance and keep up a perpetual bribe of sweets. Terminology is important - Grace, at 4, will happily "go climbing" or "climb a mountain" (do not be too ambitious), but is much less keen on "going for



*Grace Lawrenson (right) and friend*

## **BUMPS, BACKPACKS AND BANANAS**

a walk” The main difficulty for the adult is maintaining gyroscopic stability, no mean feat sometimes, given the slowness achievable by a young child. I imagined that I would become an expert on flora and fauna, looking at books while the child walked slowly on, but the reality is you are so busy chivvyng and inventing reasons for going faster that you dare not stop because forward motion will dwindle to a slug’s pace. Our most successful technique for rapid progress is to launch ourselves down a good slope yelling “Bananas!” and running as fast as we can. Anything over about 6 miles or 3,000ft is only achieved when the children are absent.

Rock climbing is best with another family or with no family at all. A Good Day Out (especially with the father) becomes a rarity. More often than not we each go climbing with someone else and pass on the doorstep.

If you are going with the children you pack for 2 hours, walk slowly to the crag, chase endlessly after kamikaze toddlers, slip in a quick route, then leave early before the children get tired and ratty. Sigh, when will the little angels be old enough to leave at home?

The Pickle Club (sic) highlight of the year is the Easter Family Meet at Cwm Dyli. You do not have to have children to come on the meet; the first time we went Grace was the only child there. It might seem a drawback to be on a meet where someone might cry in the night, but you are still more likely to be woken by Loud Snoring. The meet this year actually enjoyed a few days sunshine, when we could mooch around the hut without subjecting the poor children to mammoth hikes. They were at their happiest messing around making stone factories by the river or just wandering out the back, falling in streams and running after sheep. Other traditional activities include egg decorating and rolling, bunny hunts and tunnel walking in Beddgelert, windy trips to the seaside and, of course, egg hunting and eating galore.

To most members Cwm Dyli would be unrecognisable. The floor is polished to a fine sheen by crawling babies; saucepans, lids and toys litter the entire building; the hut echoes to the sound of tears and laughter in quick succession, of “Keep away from the fire, please”, “Oh no, NOT the coal!” and the sickening thud as yet another skull lands on the slate floor.

Yes, we do pine for those long, late days on the crags and hills; we resent climbing partners (without children) who want to return home while there is still light in the sky, but Grace and Kit persist in being amazingly cute and, after all, someone has to do their bit for the future of the Pickle Club.

## WEBB'S WONDERS

*Catherine Stynes*

Fortified by the good food at the Wordsworth Hotel (and a certain amount of house red!) Pamela Holt and Catherine Stynes duly signed up when the list of first ascents involving PC members was circulated at the Annual Dinner in January 1996.

Our mission was four routes in Pembroke - all on the north coast. We already knew where two of them were - and each had done one of these. No problem.

After achieving a successful diary match by sacrificing the May PC meet at the Gower we met up at St Petrox and were greeted by clear skies and sunshine on the Saturday morning. No excuses.

Having parked at Whitesand, a pleasant walk along the coastal path and some intelligent use of the map brought us to the top of our first objective - Trwyn Llwyd Slabs. However as it was the first visit for either of us we had to spend the obligatory half-hour reading the guidebook, peering over the edge of the cliff, matching descriptions - along with several other parties appearing out of nowhere also clutching guidebooks. Eventually all were satisfied - we were in the right place; everybody else went to climb on another cliff.

Corner Slab route is the first route recorded in the North Pembroke first ascents list and was first climbed in 1966. It is graded Severe. Catherine led the first short pitch and followed the route description spurning a wide grassy ledge to belay at the base of the corner. A slimy semi-hanging belay on dubious placements was her reward for this exactitude. Pamela led through smoothly up the corner to reach a large overlap. Here the route produces its sting - a hand traverse on good holds but out of balance due to the overhang. After the pull-through easy climbing led to the top. One down three to go.

Along the coast to Craig Coetan which, surprisingly, we had to ourselves. Two routes to do here. Pamela led Silmaril (Severe 4a), first climbed in April 1968. It follows a similar line to a number of routes starting in the same place and time was spent ensuring we did the right route! It probably deserves its star if only for the interesting move mid-route. To the right of the descent Catherine led Coetan Buttress - V Diff which received its first ascent in 1967. This was very pleasant with sustained interest at the given grade. Three down - one to go.

Having made good progress towards our objective we awarded ourselves a day off in the South. This was spent doing an extensive recce of the south and west faces of the Castle and all the bits in between! To confirm the accuracy of our survey we opted for Cocktail Wall. Pamela, after considering the merits of propelling herself downwards into green slime and potentially the sea, decided against Pina Colada and opted for Black Russian or something thereabouts. For completeness Catherine led Harvey Wallbanger - a nice line on the cliff even if only a Diff. Time and tide were now moving on and we dashed back to Saddle Head for Blue Sky (VS 4b). Many have enthused about this route including those PC members who tackled it in May 1995. Running late we thought we might be pushing our luck but reached the start dry of foot. As second Catherine was wondering if this state would continue as we waited for the preceding pair. However we were not to be the last on the route - Steve and Pete from Northampton arrived with a squelch as Pamela prepared to lead off. Pete and Steve soon elevated themselves up the route and helped Catherine move up our ropes as the waves came ever nearer. Catherine moved up just as the waves met at the foot of the cliff. A magnificent route - deserving the three stars. Pete seconding some time later got his just desserts and appeared at the stance with water dripping off his helmet; the rest of him was also a bit wet!

## WEBB'S WONDERS

So back to the North coast and real exploration. We were looking for Narrow Zawn - part of Pencarnan Slabs. Walking from St Justinian we wrestled with a guidebook written from the other direction. The coastal path is very pleasant here and the sun shone; the only drawback was the bitter edge to the wind. We tried very hard to match the unappealing cliffs we passed with the guidebook and were forced to the conclusion that some of them did have routes on them. It took a long time to locate our particular slab which bears Narrow Zawn Slab (Hard Severe 4b). We couldn't believe it. Of all the routes on all the cliffs .....we had to choose this one. The approach looked quite reasonable but the top was festooned with lichen obscuring holds (if any); the middle of the route was the source of massive seepage which continued downwards following the line we should climb. So we didn't. We had a jolly good look. Our replacement route was Seal Slab (Severe) a delightful and technical slab with traverse and crack to boot. It lived up to its name too as we were watched at close range throughout by a large and ancient seal who looked as though he had seen it all before.

So technically we didn't do all four routes but we entered into the spirit of things and had a good few days in sunny (but cold) Pembroke. And the PC member who was involved in all these routes? The guidebook says Mrs B.Webb, better known to us, we understand, as Kate.

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## HEART OF THE SUN

*Sue Logan*

We drove through showers towards Croyde, but gradually the rain cleared, leaving fleecy clouds racing across a bright blue sky and the sun dazzling our eyes as we strove for our first glimpse of Baggy Point. Out on the bay white horses raced each other for the beach, developing into thundering waves which pounded the shingle with a roar and a rattle. We were heading for the Heart of the Sun, an appropriate name with or without capitals, since the huge 300 foot slab featuring this climb is tilted at an angle guaranteed to extract maximum value from the sun's rays at any time of the year. On a previous visit we had climbed Pink Void, adjacent to Heart of the Sun, and as we scrambled down the steep grassy bank to the boulder beach, I recalled the heat, sweat and raging thirst of that occasion.

As we picked our way across the boulders, I eyed the oncoming waves with slight suspicion; the frothing white foam leapt and danced mockingly as if to throw out the challenge: "We've beaten mighty King Canute - lesser mortals beware!"

"How far up the beach does the tide usually come?" I queried. Andy replied reassuringly that it shouldn't come in much further than its present position, so we uncoiled the ropes near the foot of the climb and Andy prepared to start the first pitch.

After eyeing the approaching sea, he decided to start a few feet further up the beach, so I obligingly moved up with him; he started to climb and all went well until I happened to glance at the coils of rope now lying slightly lower down the beach. To my dismay the waves were beginning to lap hungrily at the rope. Looking up I saw that Andy was poised at the overhang in a very precarious position and a few anxious moments passed before he was safe and I was able to gather up the ropes and shift them higher up the beach.

Highly relieved, I was then able to give Andy my full attention as he climbed slowly and carefully, savouring every move, towards the crux of the first pitch. At this point the slab becomes a bulge, split by a very thin vertical crack. He spent some time examining this and I began to get a crick in my neck which I relieved by swivelling my



*Cartoon by Sue Logan*

## HEART OF THE SUN

head from side to side. Just as I was in mid-swivel, something white appeared at the edge of my vision, something white and foamy and decidedly menacing.

“Oh no!” I moaned as Andy, in total oblivion, negotiated the bulge with great style and a grunt of satisfaction. When climbing, he has a certain aura of “genius at work” and one hesitates to interrupt him with such trivia as the imminent threat of engulfment, but a soggy second is not much use, so he had to pause again while I scooped up the ropes, this time climbing to a ledge several feet off the ground where I settled myself in reasonable comfort and laughed in triumph at the waves. It was not to be the last laugh, however, for when Andy had belayed and taken in the rope, my legs were covered in splash marks and the sea was doing its merry dance only inches below my feet!

Climbing the first pitch, I began to feel the warmth of the sun on my back and all anxiety melted away as I concentrated on the moves, arriving at the belay in a glow of satisfaction. What wonderful climbing! In answer to my query, Andy indicated the next pitch with a nod of the head, saying “Over there”. “Over there” turned out to be a long, exposed traverse across a seemingly blank expanse of rock. Apparently there was a crack to be gained eventually, but this was not visible from the belay. My glow of satisfaction ebbed rapidly as I set off, realising belatedly that not only was the line rather vague, but also that there was a severe shortage of runner placements. I retreated to the start of the traverse and a swooping seagull screamed at me mockingly as I attempted to fumble a tiny wire into an even tinier crack. Saying a fervent prayer I teetered, tiptoed and trembled across twenty feet of rock, greeting the eventual crack with the emotions of an exile returning home after a twenty year absence (you know the feeling).

Cramming a generous assortment of nuts into the lovely crack, I zoomed upwards, only to be brought to a grinding halt by.....the crux!

“Oh no!” I wailed, “I can’t do this!”

“Yes you can” came a voice from below.

“Go for it!”

“Idiot!” I thought savagely, as I thrust another nut into the crack.

But it transpired that I could do it, so I did and, feeling mightily pleased with myself, I settled quite happily into a rather painful hanging belay.

The final pitch caused some confusion as to the correct route but no serious problems other than a heart-stopping moment as Andy’s foot slipped on a smooth patch of black rock, and soon we were both at the belay, buffeted by the wind, but happy and satisfied. Andy glance down and, following his gaze, I saw that the sea had completely filled the small bay. Of the boulder beach there was no sign at all.



## AVALANCHE

### Key Proudlock

It was a soft crack. Nothing more. The sound a damp twig makes when you step on it in a wood. With an amazingly gentle sound the layer of new snow detached itself from the headwall of the gully. I was puzzled at first. Why was I no longer making progress up the slope? Why was I sliding slowly down? Then, as Alan's cramponned foot approached my head, I understood. We were being avalanched.

We had laughed and joked in the minibus about the beauty of the fresh snow. "It is a day for cross country skiing in the valley," I had commented and Alan had agreed. But he was being assessed for his winter MIC in the Cairngorms and I had come along to be his guinea pig, his client. The day had been chosen long ago by other authorities and he had travelled all the way from Wales. We would go climbing instead.

There were four of us; Alan, myself, Bill, another guinea pig and Richard the assessor from Glenmore Lodge. We made the familiar trudge to Corrie an t-Sneachda following the other parties from the Lodge, carrying the heavy sacks with all the winter gear, swopping the ropes from time to time.

From the Toblerone Stone where we stopped to gear up you could see the start of our climb, Aladdin's Mirror Direct. It was a route I had dreamt of for a long while. A friend had guided two clients up as part of his Winter Guides' Test and had regaled me with a graphic description of the climb. To this day there is a wonderful picture of him, encrusted in snow and climbing with style, taken en route, hanging in the Lodge. And now, I was to do the route myself.

The first section is a gradually steepening snow gully that curves rightward. The real climbing and crux of the route is the short icy step at the headwall. You could see the ice glinting invitingly and the spindrift funnelling down from the gully above.

It was Thursday. All week long we had been digging pits, doing sheer tests in the snow to evaluate the avalanche risk. But we had been slow and all over the valley we could see other teams beginning the climb up to their routes. They



Cartoon by Sue Logan



## AVALANCHE

must have tested it; it would be alright; we needed to get underway as the winter days in the Cairngorms are short.

We roped up for the easy section so Alan could show off his ropework. Bill kept giving Alan looks of incredulity. Only later did I learn he thought it was folly to climb and would have turned around had he been on his own. He kept expecting Alan to call a halt. I was blissfully unaware of these currents. After all, I was on a Glenmore Lodge course. I was safe, wasn't I?

The gully steepened and narrowed. The snow was soft but Alan broke trail well, leaving firm footsteps. Richard had taken to the shoulder of the gully which the wind had scoured clean of new snow. He was a bit higher than we were. Alan was within five feet of the ice and the safety of a rock bely when the soft crack came.

In slow motion we begin our sleigh ride. I think about Graham, my husband. What right do I have to endanger his happiness in so selfish a pursuit as winter climbing? The snow rolls me over on my face. Will I suffocate? The rope wraps itself around my leg and pulls tight. Will I break my leg? The gully curves, but straight down would take us over a small rocky cliff. Which way are we going? The ride accelerates and then slows.

"I am all right!" I shout. Richard runs towards us, his walkie-talkie ringing, a look of horror on his face. We are all whole; bruises and scrapes, lost axes, but nothing serious. The radio is the Lodge. Someone was watching through a telescope at Loch Morlich and has rung to say one of their groups had been avalanched. Their call was through before Richard reached us. I think of all the times I have gone behind a rock to pee in this corrie and wonder who was watching then.

No one knew what to do next. Alan offers tuition on icescrew placement. We walk over to a patch of ice and try, but everyone is a bit bemused. Eventually I realize I cannot get warm and mild shock is setting in, so we set off down the valley.

The avalanche lasted only seconds; it was minor and we all walked away. However, the effects lasted a long time. On the way home I found myself driving timidly, unsure of my own judgement. My confidence in myself was shattered and it would take a long time to rebuild, affecting my life in many ways, not just climbing.

Slowly, I came to understand that I had abdicated responsibility for myself because I was on a course. I had paid no heed to my own mountain sense because I trusted in those I saw as more experienced. In resuming responsibility for myself I learn to control my fear and realize the responsibility always was mine, even when I let it go.

# **AVALANCHE**

## *Gill Nisbet*

**WUMPH!**

Bowled over by a wall of snow.

What happened?

Shit! This is it, the real thing!

Falling, bumping.

On my front - must try and ice-axe brake.

Keep your feet up! - you've got crampons on.

It's working, I'm braking - but the snow's coming over me!

Maybe it's better not to brake - try to stay on the surface.

On my back now - a rather bumpy bum-slide.

Oh no! I haven't got my helmet on!

Can't see anything, just feel the buffeting and hear the rumble.

**WOOPS!**

Now I've left the ground - like shooting off the end of a slide.

Must be those rocks - hope I don't hit anything!

Back on the ground - still OK.

When is it going to stop?

Must keep my feet up, my legs are getting twisted.

Sudden stop!

**RELIEF**

I'm still alive! Wonder if I can walk?

Take your time, pull yourself together.

"Yes, I'm all right. Thanks."

Great, I can walk - a few twinges, but OK.

Now - what's happened to the others?

## **'DOWN', BUT NOT YET 'OUT'**

### **Stella Adams**

*I sought Penny Clay's consent before I submitted this particular trip down memory lane. To my lasting regret, she was put into a position where she had to deal with quite hideous injuries. This is a tribute to her calm efficiency. It is worth noting that in the aftermath of the accident, as she had sustained no injury, she did not benefit from the endless attention I received, so had little opportunity to work through the trauma that was inevitable. It is to her great credit that she continues to take risks and continues to climb.*

I was more engrossed in making upward progress and getting on with the day's sports plan than really appreciating the polished nature of the climb. As my fingers lost contact with the rock, my only thought was, "I'm not going to survive this fall."

I didn't feel the landing, but consciousness returned quickly and panic set in. From the amount of blood that was draining down the back of my throat I knew I had serious injuries.

Penny behaved heroically, first making me comfortable and then soloing out up the polished chimney to alert the coastguard and rescue team.

She reappeared, I heard her first, calling from the cliff top to reassure me. I needed that assurance. While she was gone I had been struggling to remain conscious and terrified I would die before she returned.

Within minutes, the coastguard and then the RAF chopper arrived.

Someone else took control; expertly the paramedic assessed my injuries and carefully loaded me onto the stretcher. My next worries were all about the competence of the pilot: would he be able to winch me from the boulders without swinging the stretcher into the adjacent cliffs.

He managed it! I was swung into the helicopter and given oxygen.

Arrival at the hospital was like a dream, but very reassuring. A large team rushed to take charge of me, each making their own careful checks. There were the usual examinations of blood pressure, eye dilation and questions that demand coherent answers and someone with an inch tape round my waist shouted readings every minute or so. I realised this crude, but crucial, observation would alert the team to any serious internal bleeding. By this time I'd been stripped naked; my bloody clothes cut from me and the pieces put in a bag to be given to Johnny....I was glad I had not died. It would have been an awful moment unpacking that parcel.

Before too long, the emergency procedures gave way to X-rays, brainscans and assessment.

Luckily for me, visiting the hospital was a member of a pre-eminent facial surgery team attached to Swansea Hospital. They agreed to take responsibility for me and as soon as suitable qualified staff were found to accompany me I was despatched, by ambulance, to Swansea.

For the third time in as many hours I thought that I would die. Three or four times during the journey the ambulance was halted and I spewed up an alarming amount of blood.

At Swansea I was put in a small room close to the desk in the head injuries department. I remained cocooned for the best part of three days. I'm not sure if it was the drugs or the shock, but I felt at ease and, though I was constantly observed and wired up to three or four drips, I imagined myself foetus-like, awaiting the next stage of the treatment.

As soon as it was possible, the maxiofacial team set to work on a four hour operation to rebuild my face. And a good job they made of it, too.

Mr Sullivan, the consultant, was so pleased with his handiwork that he brought teams of students and colleagues to examine the results. I owe him and his team a debt of gratitude.

After the operation, before I was fully conscious, John had arrived. He stayed two nights: the first in the hospital ward, the second at the C.C. Hut.

I was content to know that my injuries, though numerous, would all eventually heal and I would be fully mobile again in a matter of time.

Having been cocooned for three days, only tolerating the gentle nursing being done to me, I was awake at last and on the road to recovery.

I already had to get out of bed and move about to prevent any other nasties from taking hold. I was given a pair of crutches to walk with as I had broken my hip. Using crutches with broken ribs, collar bone and clavicle is not the easiest task, but it was crucial to get my hip moving again, so from a slow and painful start I was soon expertly moving around the ward, and less dependent on other people.

During the remainder of my stay in hospital I sprained my back through continually struggling to sit up and get in and out of bed.

Soon it was time to travel home. John reappeared with all the cushions we owned and a number of blankets. At home I was met by my sister Mary and my brother-in-law. They were greatly relieved to see the extent of my good health and healing. They stayed that weekend and returned for many weekends to our house to keep me company during the following year.

Being at home was quite a shock. I was weaker than I ever imagined and completely unable to look after myself. My mobility was severely limited. I could not lie flat, so after an uncomfortable and restless hour or two in bed I transferred to the settee for the next seven weeks.

We reorganised the furniture in the front room, creating an evening/night-time area at the TV end and a day-time area by the bay window. This afforded me comfortable nights and extra daylight as well as a clear area to 'exercise' in. We had to remove all but one, weak, lightbulb because of the damage to my eyes. For several weeks I was forbidden to step down into the 'sun lounge' whilst in the house on my own! Fortunately, the rest of our bungalow is on one floor, so I could wash etc. independently, though I depended on John for bathing and having my hair washed.

I had a small repertoire of exercises which I worked through each day and my main entertainment was the radio. I was not bored and had plenty of visitors. My friendly and supportive neighbours gave assistance and company. Whilst on crutches I could not carry drinks etc. and I lacked the stamina to get lunch as well as perform other daily chores of dressing and washing.

John was a great source of support; he never doubted that I would make a full recovery and could see no reason why I would not be able to achieve the same standard of climbing as before.

I was not so sure and my doubts were well founded. I thought at the time that it would take about two years to overcome the physical problems - and it did! I wondered, after such a time lapse at my age, could I really expect to be agile and strong enough to recapture what I had lost? And there were other doubts. Although I could not imagine not climbing, I was not sure I would have the confidence to lead climbs and that for me was, and is, the essence of climbing. If I couldn't get back to leading, would climbing lose its thrill for me? And then, what about the companionship, based on mutual dependence and respect, that comes with climbing? What about the places visited and the situations, both physical and emotional, to which climbing leads and which are so fulfilling for me? In my heart of hearts, I could only imagine that I would overcome any problems, either physical or psychological, rather than give up the rewards gained from climbing and the companionship of so many friends. That decided, though, I still had so far to go.

During the following weeks and months I had many appointments to keep; a specialist appointment each week, to keep a check on my facial injuries, and two physiotherapy sessions.

'DOWN', BUT NOT YET 'OUT'

After three weeks I went to the hydrotherapy pools four times a week, so my days became very full. I gradually became more mobile and the terror of descending the steps outside our house was overcome and I was free to accept the challenge of walking outside alone!

My first real walk was along Scout Scar with a neighbour and then followed a carefully planned programme of longer walks, taking in rough ground, hills and stiles! I was accompanied on all my early walks by a very patient neighbour who, although seventy years old, was extremely fit. I can remember not being able to catch up with a party of elderly people out walking. I noted at the time that my inability to clamber nimbly over stiles was the main reason for this. However, soon I could hold my own, not only outside; I was starting to overtake the more elderly and infirm patients at the hydro pool too, a measure of great progress.

At first, I avoided crags, I couldn't imagine not climbing, but as the activity was completely beyond my ability, I concentrated on hiking. I went back to work in mid-February, but returned to hospital in June, for further operations on my shoulder and foot. This second convalescence coincided with the beginning of a long, dry summer and I was more quickly mobile than I had expected. At Whit, while watching an ascent of Diabeg Pillar, I had been completely inspired and had resolved to focus on climbing fitness as soon as possible, but I was to find that I was very frightened around rock.

My first visit to a large crag was to Gimmer. I did not intend climbing and had just accompanied Johnny on the walk up. Standing below the crag made me feel very vulnerable. I was terrified of rockfall from above and anxious to be away from the foot of the rockface. My first weekend away from home without John was to the PC meet at Coppermines, Coniston. Though the weather was good and Dow was dry I did not wish to initiate my new climbing career bumbling about on a very crowded crag. I soloed Low water Beck, which was frightening enough! and then carried on around Coniston Old Man, Brim Fell and Dow Crag summit. From the top of the gully I could enjoy the achievements of the climbers below and felt in contact with friends, but I was glad I had not undertaken to climb that day. I needed a quiet uncrowded crag on a mid-week day to try out climbing.

This was Raven's Langdale, with Chris Stretch. I was terrified. I still had very limited mobility in my right shoulder, but it was the terror of sliding off the large footholds (on a route I had previously soloed many times!) that made me demand a very tight rope. After the first time, things could never be so bad, or so I thought! But I continued to need a tight rope as well as a lot of care and encouragement on the descents and I'm very grateful to the friends who, with Johnny, gave me that support and helped me back to climbing. The next step was starting to lead.

The new climbing wall at Penrith opened up in October, so a group of us regularly climbed there. I improved from a tight rope to some lead climbing over the winter of '94-'95 and I was determined to start leading rock climbs the following summer.

We had holidays in Mallorca at Christmas and Gorges du Tarn at Easter and I led some quite respectable routes. Progress was not even; at Tremadog in the Spring I had to be top-roped up the initial scramble of Christmas Curry and then teetered up the first pitch, which seemed polished and exposed and not at all the easy positive climbing I recalled. I could not believe how different climbing walls are to the 'real thing'. But, still, my confidence grew and by the time the hot summer of '95 arrived, I was ready to take advantage of it.

A series of PC meets in the Lakes coincided with the good weather and I revisited and led a number of classic VS's. On one memorable day, Maureen Foster and I went to "look at" Eagle Front. A gripping start led to the intimidating pitches above, and eventually to the top. We both felt great and I realised that, eighteen months after my fall, I'd got back to climbing at the sharp end.

# MISS BENNET IN THE LAKES

## A. Lady

*As all Jane Austen fans must know, the heroine of Pride and Prejudice is forced at the last minute to abandon plans for a trip to the Lake District, and has to settle for a visit to Derbyshire and a chance meeting with the hero instead. However, recent research by Jane Stedman has unearthed this hitherto unknown fragment of an earlier, unpublished version of the famous romance. Literary experts have suggested that Miss Austen was persuaded by friends, or by her publishers, to re-write the final chapters in the form which is now generally accepted. The following extract begins with Elizabeth and her Uncle and Aunt approaching the Lakes for the first time....*

Every object in their journey to K\_\_\_\_\_ was new and delightful to Elizabeth. Again and again she rapturously thanked her uncle and aunt Gardiner for including her in their tour of pleasure to the Lakes. Their way north had led them through Derbyshire, where they had duly admired the beauties of Pemberley House, and where Elizabeth had luckily managed to avoid a meeting with its proud, disagreeable owner, Mr Darcy.

After the bustle of arriving at the inn, Elizabeth and her aunt were watching, from their chamber window, the coaches and carriages which passed continuously in and out of the yard. A chaise with post horses drew up and the occupants, a lady and a gentleman, alighted to refresh themselves. "Good gracious, Lizzy!" exclaimed her aunt, "Is not that your sister Lydia?"

Elizabeth stared in the greatest astonishment. "No, it cannot be," she declared, "My sister Lydia is at this moment in Brighton, under the care and protection of the Colonel's wife." "If I had not certain knowledge to the contrary," went on her aunt, as the couple in question resumed their seats, "I would almost believe that the young man is our friend Mr Wickham. However, they are both of them hundreds of miles away in the South."

Aunt and niece stared at each other in alarm, and the servant was sent for, who assured them that it was "probably another pair of runaway lovers on the way to Gretna Green," adding the information that "we get a lot of them at this time of the year." Elizabeth was forced to put the mysterious lady and gentleman out of her thoughts as the next few days were to be full of exertion and activity of the most demanding and interesting kind.

They drove out every day to visit the celebrated beauties of the Lake country: rocks, mountains, rivers and woods were admired in their turn; the ladies exclaiming and delighting in every fresh prospect that opened before them. The weather continuing mild and dry, Elizabeth and her aunt were free to ramble about in the open air, while Mr Gardiner indulged his passion for fishing.

Having both purchased a pair of stout boots from one of the many shops in which the neighbourhood abounded, the two ladies determined to attempt a much longer walk than any of their previous excursions, and accordingly set off from the inn at an early hour. They planned to ascend a lofty prominence which, the landlord had assured them, was known to be "an easy day for a lady". A few hours of steady walking brought them to a small mountain lake, where they sat down to rest their weary ankles and refresh their eyes with the beautiful objects surrounding them. "My dear Aunt! What delight, what felicity is this!" cried Elizabeth, gazing around her in the liveliest pleasure, "We shall walk here all morning!" She soon added: "And the best of it is, there are no gentlemen to plague and to vex us." Her aunt's reply was lost, however, as at that moment both ladies were startled by a loud splashing and hallooing from the middle of the lake and a gentleman, or rather a portion of a gentleman only, appeared from under its surface.

## MISS BENNET IN THE LAKES

Elizabeth and Mrs Gardiner were about to turn away in confusion, regretting that the servant had been sent back to the inn, when they heard themselves addressed in the following manner: "Good God! Ladies! I am undone...er...that is to say...Miss Elizabeth Bennet! I might have known it! What the... that is, I am all astonishment! And what, pray, brings you to this part of the country?"

Mr Darcy's confusion, for it was he, had given Elizabeth time to overcome hers and she was able to reply with tolerable composure: "You should not be surprised to see me here, Sir, since you must know that I am an excellent walker."

Mr Darcy's tall, handsome person and noble bearing were not diminished by his swim, but to Elizabeth he appeared exactly as before: arrogant, overbearing and continually turning up when least expected and most in the way. Her eye happened to fall on a pile of clothing left on a nearby rock and, struck with a sudden idea, she gathered up her courage and the garments alike and thus addressed her noble enemy:

"Can you deny, Sir, that you have deliberately been the means of separating my dear sister Jane from your friend Mr Bingley, knowing them to be head over heels in love with each other?" "Certainly I do not deny it," he cried, "and now, Madam, you will do me the honour of returning those garments and continuing your walk." He bowed coldly to Mrs Gardiner.

"Not so hasty, if you please!" returned Elizabeth, warming to her work, "unless I receive your promise to undo all the mischief you have wrought between those two lovers, and to do all in your power to promote their happiness, I shall indeed proceed on my way and take these garments with me."

In vain did Mr Darcy threaten, cajole and grind his teeth. Elizabeth and her aunt were implacable, where they knew themselves to be right. At length Mr Darcy was induced to be reasonable, and a promise of hurrying his friend towards an early proposal was extracted from his unwilling lips, a moderate breeze which had lately sprung up perhaps assisting his reflections.

"My dear Lizzy," exclaimed her aunt, as they continued on their way, "do let us get on, otherwise you know, we shall miss the best of the day." Elizabeth readily assented. "Gentlemen are all very well in their own way," she reflected as she lifted up her eyes to the peaks that lay before them, "but after all, what are men, to rocks and mountains?"

# THE PENSIONER AND THE PAINTER

## *Real Silky*

It was late summer, and the pensioner and the painter had ten days in France at their disposal. Life was supposed to be relaxed nowadays, so a mad rush to the south of France was out - there must be something closer at hand. Being of a turn of mind marginally more practical than artistic, the painter turned to the reference books. Brittany sounded nice, and in particular a sea-cliff called La Pointe de Pen Hir. Their ferry was Portsmouth to Cherbourg, so it looked an easy run, as indeed it proved to be except for the Newbury bottleneck - and certainly much less hassle than the M25. The car didn't break down, the ferry stayed upright and didn't run onto any sandbanks, and the grey skies and occasional drizzle were judged ideal for travelling. Only the odd navigational problem marred the overall smoothness of the trip, and the painter was forced to concede that retirement appeared to have mellowed the pensioner even in these sensitive matters.

The nearest town to the crag was Camaret-sur-Mer, a sort of Breton St Ives offering fishing, yachts, seaports, artists and a flourishing tourist industry. The annual Interceltic Watersports Festival (which appeared to have included every form of waterplay ever thought of plus Celtic music and Highland Games) had only just finished. On the old fort on the mole a plaque commemorated a commander who in 1694 had repulsed an attack on Brest by combined English and Dutch forces. Neither the pensioner nor the painter could instantly call to mind precisely who was on the English throne at the time in question, nor indeed why the English and the Dutch should have combined to attack the French at all, but research on their return revealed that the incumbent at the time was that dual monarch William-and-Mary, which of course explained everything.

The spacious two-star municipal campsite at Le Lannic, an easy stroll from the front, was divided into coloured zones for caravans, big tents, small tents, groups, etc. etc., plus blue for 'Les Canadiennes'. For no discernible reason the pensioner and the painter were classified as 'Canadiennes', although other British (not to mention every size and shape of tent) were scattered throughout the other colour zones. The drizzle had stopped, so basecamp was established without too much trouble at about 200 ft, though one tentpole broke when putting the tent up. Once again the pensioner kept his cool and bashed a trimmed-off tentpeg into the two broken ends to effect a temporary repair.

Meanwhile the painter was positive the sea was just the other side of the road at the back of the campsite, so after a light supper of cold chicken and salad (but no wine due to lack of forward planning), a short walk of a couple of miles along the coast took the pair past and through and into various ex-2nd World War fortifications until they reached the enormous Cross of Lorraine that marks the top of the crag. (OK, perhaps it wasn't put there for that purpose, but it's certainly impossible to miss). Also revealed was an equally enormous car park at the base of the Cross, so they walked back along the road to check that this, indeed, led to the campsite.

In the morning the weather continued to improve, and the time had almost come for peering over cliff tops and working out where everything was. But first the painter suggested a visit to the Syndicat d'Initiatif and the local supermarket (wine). In her perfect French, she requested "Un topo des escalades de la Pointe de Pen Hir, s'il vous plait", and a single photocopied sheet of paper was produced - a few lines of text, a couple of blurry photos and a tiny map with numbers from 1 to 10 relating to the text was to be the extent of their guidance. Fortunately, the supermarket did them rather better.

Half-an-hour later the pensioner stood under the crag eyeing it suspiciously. The section the



## THE PENSIONER AND THE PAINTER

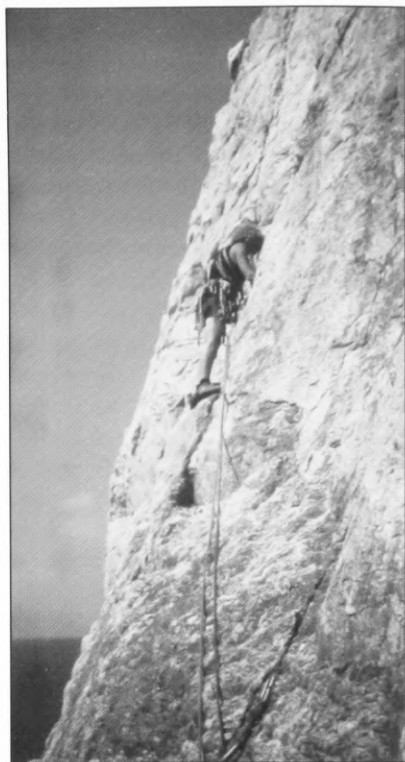
pair was standing under looked not unlike Chair Ladder, seamed with cracks and pillars, supposedly VD-VS-climb-anywhere territory about 200ft high. An easy path had led down - no nasty abseils for this section - to a large sunny platform directly underneath the buttress. The painter wandered on down to barnacle level (unlike Pembroke, where the tide is always either high or on its way in, here it was going out and low) and peered round the corner looking for one of the few identifiable routes - the highly recommended hanging groove of Aphrodite (6a).

At sea level was a short, well-bolted black wall. The local climbers were very proud of these bolts, which were made of a special corrosion-resistant alloy. Above this black wall rose a second tier split by a bolted crackline, and on its left was the hanging groove of Aphrodite, with a wide bottomless chimney beyond. Further left again was a steep corner giving on to a magnificent slab. Seduced onwards by an easy-looking ramp, the painter wandered across to see if access was as easy as it looked - a traverse line past an old peg led to the corner, so there was certainly access to the upper reaches of the slab, though a steep zawn separated the lower section from the rest of the crag. Retreat down the ramp proved a bit more problematical, but the descent was duly achieved.

Back at the platform the decision was taken to start with a good-looking crackline in the easier section. The rock was immaculate, the friction amazing, and all the bits that appeared at first sight to be simply stuck on proved to be firmly attached. Warned in advance about the lack of in situ protection on the easier routes, the pair had sufficient gear with them and natural placements (plus a few slightly dubious pegs from an earlier era) proved to be more than adequate. At the top the pair emerged among the tourists and found themselves the targets of cameras and videos. Six or seven routes can probably be made on this buttress - the pensioner and the painter did four, all in the VD-VS category and all delightful, particularly the left and right arêtes.

In the afternoon, the Dalles des Raisonnables (pour les débutants - no.1 on the scrap of paper) was located on the other side of the headland. This was fully bolted and children were being top-rope on four of the half-dozen routes, but two were still free. At 5pm precisely the competition ceased (no overtime here) and pensioner and painter had the slab to themselves. Beer and a formal Calvados tasting completed the first day. Next morning the pair rose to the sun glinting on a sparkling blue sea, and arrival time at the crag seemed to have drifted a bit. "I'd like to have a go at that big corner I spotted yesterday" said the painter, "I want to get a good look at that big slab." The corner went fairly easily at about 5, and from this viewpoint the pair had an excellent view both of the big slab and of two climbers on Aphrodite. The leader made it look easy, but the second fell off twice. In the afternoon, La Dalle de Paul, a slightly harder beginners' slab, was located on the far side of the next headland (no.2 on the scrap of paper), with four good bolted routes at about 4/4+.

On the third day, the sun duly glinted on a sparkling sea, and fairly well into the morning the pair agreed it was time to hit the big slab. On the first route, the painter inched left from the



*The painter, near the crux, on La Dalle de Cristaux de Quartz, Pte. de Pen Hir*

corner crackline to about halfway across the slab, before climbing straight up, while on the second route a lower line was taken to an exposed position on the left edge. Both routes were delicate and delightful - the protection just adequate and the rock superb - mostly 4+ with perhaps the occasional touch of 5. Possibly one or other (or bits of both) of these routes coincided with Le Soleil Rouge (no.7 on the paper).

The fourth day dawned; the sun glinted and the sea sparkled as enticingly as ever. The pair had located the abseil point for the remaining, harder section of the crag. From here (rather late in the morning) they watched a French climber inching his way with frequent rests up the upper section of the wall to the right of the abseil line, using no fewer than 17 pre-placed tie-offs. Close inspection of the scrap of paper suggested that this could be Mécanique Orange (7c) and from above the minute chalky holds looked totally inadequate for levitation of any sort. The whole area (nicknamed 'the cauldron' by the pensioner) looked a lot steeper and harder than where the pair had hitherto been climbing. According to the paper, there was an easy way out, La Voie des Cristaux, but would they be able to find it?

They decided to hedge their bets - the painter would descend on a single rope, leaving the pensioner at the top for escape purposes, if necessary. The rock looked much easier from the bottom, and the pensioner was duly persuaded to come down and join the painter on a big ramp giving access to the rest of the crag. A cosy, secure-looking ledge, well away from the sea, was spotted down to the right at the foot of a slabby wall, and on further investigation, was identified as the stance at the top of the first pitch of La Voie des Cristaux. This proved to be an absolutely delightful route up a slab overlaid all over by small crystals which glinted in the sun. These were absolutely solid and gave marvellous friction. The pair immediately abseiled back down and the painter descended to sea level to climb the first pitch of Voie des Cristaux, a corner crack line mostly concealed by an awkward bulge near the top. Apart from a difficult step up on barnacles into the bottom of the crack, however, the pitch went easily, with some delightful bridging. From the stance a second route was worked out the the slab's left edge and proved both delicate and exposed, but again no harder than 4+.

It was their final day at Pen-hir. As usual the sun and the sea were doing their thing, and the pensioner was complaining about the lack of suffering. Perhaps if they descended into the cauldron and worked out a new exit route they could find some loose rock or unpleasant climbing? Too late now, the pattern was established and a zigzag line of least resistance was worked out up the centre of the wall through interesting bolted territory. The painter did manage to worry a bit about the stability of some enormous blocks she climbed over, but everything stayed in place. The route ended up a steep overhanging corner on enormous jugs, giving the usual photographic opportunities to the current crop of tourists.

It was all too much. The only way to break the habit of all this decadence had to be to leave for a less idyllic spot. They would decamp in the morning, before they could once again be tempted into enjoying themselves. To increase the likelihood of some proper holiday suffering, the pensioner and the painter decided to return to the scene of a previous failure in Normandy - when they had utterly failed to locate the elusive Rochers de Montjoie and the Petit Cascade area in the vicinity of Mortain.



*Grimper Entre Mer et Ciel: the Painter on the Pointe de Pen Hir*

## THE PENSIONER AND THE PAINTER

On this occasion, the pair found the Petit Cascade area instantly (something to do with the signposts all over the towncentre and the map on the Notice Board at the Mairie). But fortunately things started to go wrong at this point, and they totally failed to find the very pleasant farm campsite they had stayed at twice before. However, as the municipality of Mortain offers camping adjacent to the town hall at a very cheap rate for up to 48 hours, with tiny but good facilities, this didn't matter as much as it might have done.

After dinner a study of the map outside the Mairie revealed the name of the Rochers de Montjoie marked on the hill on the other side of the town, so the pair decided to walk up and try again to find the missing crags. (The mystery of the missing campsite was solved when they realised they had been looking on the wrong road.) This time, the rocks were finally located, barely visible through the trees. For some reason, the rock has been stripped of in situ protection, removed from the guidebooks and allowed to revert to the wild.

In the morning, a trip to the Syndicat d'Initiatif provided an expensive little guidebook to the Petit Cascade area - all of two minutes' walk from the campsite. Although the rock was quartzite, it was darker, dirtier and much less pleasant, not to mention harder, so they hardly enjoyed it at all. As a finishing route, the painter suggested a climb up the very spectacular Aiguille. This was almost enjoyable, but fortunately various problems arose on the descent.

There appeared to be two options available for abseiling - one a solid looking semi-circular ring in the centre of the Aiguille's top and the other a ring through a frayed wire hawser, much nearer the edge. The solid looking ring was duly selected and when the painter came to follow the pensioner down, she took pains to shift the knot in the rope over the edge, to facilitate pulling the ropes through. To no avail - when the pensioner pulled on the rope nothing happened, and it seemed to be stuck fast. For almost the first time on the holiday, the pensioner lost his cool, while the painter idly contemplated the horizon and decided that if the worst came to the worst she could always ask three French climbers nearby if she could borrow their rope and reascend the pillar. However, combined tactics eventually started the rope moving, and with rests every ten hauls or so in consideration of their advanced age, both ropes were eventually successfully retrieved.

Almost the final problem of the holiday now presented itself. An ongoing contractual agreement between the pensioner and the painter stipulated that one meal per holiday should be eaten out. For some reason the pensioner had rejected all the delightful cafés and bars of Camaret and it had been decided that this meal would be procured in Normandy, but most unexpectedly Mortain proved to be a café-less desert! The only available option appeared to be the carry-out platters of Fruits de Mer offered by the local Poissonerie on a 50 minutes notice basis. The pensioner was not quite sure what these platters might consist of, but decided that the risk, when set against the cold shoulder treatment, would probably be worthwhile.

A prolonged absence ensued, but in due course the pensioner arrived back at the campsite bearing an enormous polystyrene dish packed with ice and piled high with prawns, crayfish, whelks and an enormous crab. The dish was wrapped in transparent paper and decorated with an enormous pink bow (possibly due to a slight misapprehension on the part of the pensioner about the meaning of "emballage"?) and he had been cheered by the local populace as he walked back through the town. It was absolutely delicious, and a campsite may well be the optimum location for such a messy meal (though be warned that wasps also appear to have a taste for shellfish).

And that was about that. The next day the weather duly deteriorated and painter and pensioner made their way gently north to Cherbourg, pausing briefly for a plate of mussels at Quettehou. Another decadent holiday was over.

## A Spanish Convalescence

### *Dee Gaffney*

My previous climbing holiday with Roger had ended with the words, "Watch out" and then, in slow motion, I saw his figure hurtling down and down, the ropes flapping, past one runner, past another...and suddenly I was ten feet up in the air, almost level with Roger who dangled upside-down miserably, clearly in need of some running repairs.

Six months, one operation and five plastercasts later, Roger was keen to see whether having a screw holding his wrist together would enable him to climb, so I selected Benidorm from teletext options. In a last-minute excessive expression of empathy for his injuries, I acquired whiplash damage so that my left shoulder stiffened up and I had difficulty turning my head to see critical holds on the left. However, we had bought the tickets so we set off in hope with lots of reading material as insurance. We crammed onto a plane with noisy Glasgow wifies and seats designed for Lilliputians.

It was March, and we left Glasgow in snow and rain, with rucksacs full of thermals, gloves and hats. These remained folded and untouched, as fate apologised for the cruel trick of leaving a slippery hold on the previous route and tried to compensate by providing six days of glorious sunshine.

Sella received our first visit. We'd first been there in 1989 and I was as nervous going there as visiting a childhood friend. People change and long anticipated reunions are often a disaster but Sella had increased in charm. The drive was a joy - once the highrises of Benidorm were behind us, the winding road, the terraces of ripe oranges, the colours, smells and heat radiating off the brilliant limestone made the cold of Glasgow seem unreal. We wandered through the Medieval cobbled village of Finestrat looking for bread and Fanta. Below the crag we woke Jose, the Spanish custodian of the refugio, to buy a topo.

The crag forms the left flank of a hillside with olive groves, and near the crag are pine trees with birds busily twittering and getting on with the important tasks of life like finding food and nest building. Only the bolts gave a hint that this was the twentieth century. Our first route was Marion, one of the few multipitch routes and with all the pleasures of unfolding views as we gained height. Puig, with its distinctive notch was visible behind us and a splendid jagged ridge slowly appeared between us and it. From the last chain, the top of the route proper, we scrambled to the summit of the ridge to gaze in admiration at El Divino behind. We climbed with the sports rope after that - the first time that I'd used single rope technique. I led Desbloquee Que No Es Tanto which roughly translates to the very apposite "Get a move on because it's easy," but was a little nervous when it came to making the clips with a handful of slack.

Despite the hot days, it was cold at night. Our bargain apartment was huge, with tiled floors, and rapidly radiated away the heat it gained during the day. But we knew the Pinnacle Club solution to this. We huddled around the open door of the oven with the controls set at 250°C. A bottle of wine helped too. There were six beds in the apartment and by using all the blankets provided we were quite cosy at night.

Next morning, we got to Dalle D'Ola just before the sun did. This crag is just above the building site of Altea Hills. Not much building progress seems to have been achieved in six years but it amazes me that the hillside is sufficiently stable to build anything at all. But the crag, which is so unpretentious that many parties fail to find it, is forty meters of splendidly firm limestone, with edges that shred the fingertips. I kept expecting to see blood in my chalk. We had the crag to ourselves, apart from the birds and lizards. The route finding is made very easy as the bolts are covered with colour coded spray paint. Difficulties do not correspond to ski-route coding, and I failed to get off the ground on a green but did manage blue and yellow. The surrounds of the Dalle

## A SPANISH CONVALESCENCE

have some of Spain's most spiky vegetation. There is an tough looking plant with big fanshaped leaves that many botanists can name, (I can't). Close up, it is covered with vicious hooks which explains its survival after years of climbers pushing by. Before our fingers got too sensitive, we nipped down to Toix West to catch the evening sun and I seconded the long imaginatively named Another Green Route.

As the metal in his wrist was behaving beyond all expectations, Roger was eager to try it out on an E3 on the Peñon Ifach. Fortunately this was only one pitch as I had not brought any jumars. Afterwards, we intended to climb Diedre U.P.S.A., a magnificent ten pitch corner from the sea to the summit. It's always cold on the sea front at Calpe. Our intention to climb in shorts and T-shirts moderated at the car as we shivered while putting our harnesses on. I hedged my bets and wore leggings and carried an extra top. After the rope holding for the first pitch of Via Manuel, I was concerned that a queue might have built up on our chosen route but we were still the only party on U.P.S.A.. The nearby, equally popular, but easier Valencianos had a continuous stream of people on it.

Our first few stances were all two person alcoves and in the full glare of the sun. The climbing involved bridging, good solid hand and finger holds, and every move was fun - from the cactus plant at the bottom to the trig point on the top. After five pitches, we popped out of the only dank bit of the route at the top of a pinnacle in an icy sea breeze. Chris Craggs grades the next move from 4c to 5b depending on height. After several false starts I found the key hold by going back as far as I could and looking for the chalk daubs. Some of the rock on this pitch was so eroded that there were large holes through it. It was a bit like climbing a gruyère cheese.

Next came the famous diagonal abseil. It's only about 10 metres, but the drop appears infinite and my adrenaline levels soared. Carefully I checked I'd done up my harness (can't be blasé even after seven pitches). Carefully I looked at the available tat to thread (about 20 previous parties had been even more cautious than I and there was so much good quality tat you could stock a climbing shop with it). Carefully I threaded my sticht plate having chickened out of using my figure of eight. Then I rechecked my harness, rechecked my sticht plate, undid the belay and launched into nothingness. I'd like to report that it was not frightening at all, after all that build up. But it was. It was absolutely terrifying and thinking about it weeks later, my heart still pounds. But it was exciting. I crawled along the ledge on wobbly legs to the next belay. The last two pitches had more super climbing and splendid rock architecture and then we unroped, put our complaining feet into more comfortable trainers and scrambled up to the summit for the view. The boats at the pier seemed directly below us and the sun gleamed on their white decks. We could see the old lagoon behind Calpe with a flock of pink flamingos.

The walk down is on the north side of the headland, which is always cool and surprisingly damp. Many lovely spring plants were in flower, I was only sorry that I'd no idea what they were. We walked through the access tunnel built over a century ago to create a walking route to the top. At Calpe we celebrated a wonderful climb with a meal in a real fish restaurant, initially discovered by Sally Macintyre and me on a very cold New Year's day several years before. I had never seen a whole cuttlefish before.

Next morning our injuries caught up with us so we decided on a walk. I had, for review, a copy of *Mountain Walks on the Costa Blanca*, so we selected the Agulles de la Serrella which looked interesting and also involved driving somewhere new. We would have found the start of the walk from the town of Cuatretondeta, had it not been for a friendly local who was so insistent that we go and talk to the town's one English speaker that we thanked him profusely and escaped. On the alternative start to the walk, which we found unaided, we strolled through almond and cherry groves with all the trees in blossom. By luck, rather than judgement, our ascent was on the north side of the Sierra, so it was cool and delightful.

We could see an impressive collection of oddly shaped pinnacles on the hillside above, and our description said to make for the "Chesterfield spire" The pinnacles looked miles away, but the path was good, and the cultivated terraces gently gave way to sweet smelling pine forest. Having debated which could possibly be the "Chesterfield spire", we suddenly saw it and there could be no doubt. However, if you'd never seen Chesterfield cathedral, you'd remain puzzled by the name. Close up, the spires were smaller than I'd thought, but no less interesting. There were trolls, caves, rings, arches, prehistoric monsters, chess pieces and goblins. The shapes kept changing as we walked by. A bit of a scramble and a relatively painless trip across scree brought us to the summit. There was no-one to be seen and we enjoyed the extent of the hills, the occasional blue reservoir, the cultivation below, and the sea.

Next day was very different. Wet, thick sea mist wrapped me entirely and I felt like the only person in the world as I stood on the alcove above the waves. Eerie sounds emerged from the mist - the odd shout, a ghostly boat going from one unknown location to another. We were on El Dorado on Toix sea cliff, which takes a deep crack from the sea up an improbably steep wall. We'd started in the morning at Toix East, with its lovely views of the Peñon but as it got too hot, we'd decided to be more adventurous. The end of the road for Toix sea cliff is a desolate spot, a paradise for car-robbers. A useful trick with a car in Spain (or anywhere) is to leave it empty of valuables and then leave the window open because broken glass makes a mess and it wastes good climbing time explaining what happened to the car hire company. Unfortunately, the car that was already there before we arrived had been "done over" and broken bits of the passenger window were scattered all about. This contributed to my feelings of unease about the location.

The sun shone as we arrived but we could see the mist arriving like a blanket, flowing over the sea and totally sealing us off. The introductory pitch left the friendly beach on a diagonal so that the two main pitches of the route looked down directly into the water. I was sure the submarine rocks were watching malevolently, and didn't look too closely for fear of what might lie there. The second pitch brought us to the alcove where I cowered as Roger disappeared up the crack above and the atmosphere continued to menace. Eventually the ropes indicated that he had found a belay so I prepared to follow up. The dampness was such that my hands, covered with chalk looked as if I'd dipped them in wet plaster. My right hand slipped off the rounded hold but a sudden burst of adrenalin meant that I avoided any weight coming on the rope.

Suddenly the sun broke through and the route seemed easier. Bridging to good footholds, the handholds seemed much more secure when warm and dry. It was easy. I began to really enjoy myself. Suddenly, it all changed. The crack ran out and I was forced onto the steep left wall. At this point the rope stopped being taken in and the mist returned. The holds became visibly smaller and slippier. Had Roger fallen asleep? What was happening? Terrified as I started to barn door, I grabbed at the only friendly looking thing I could see - a tie-off. I was instantly sorry because the rope was being reassuringly taken in again and with a little more thought and less panic, I'm sure that particular piece of cheating had not been necessary. The sun came out for the abseils, two airy free descents, but after U.P.S.A., they were a real pleasure. As it was still warm on the beach I had my first dip in the Mediterranean before a few beers in the setting sun.

The last day already. There were too many choices but we opted for our favourite crag, Sella. It was still sunny and today we could climb till we dropped as saving energy for tomorrow was unnecessary. It was amazingly hot. We were forced to seek climbs in the shade. Abruptly, mid afternoon, without any warning, low clouds rolled in from all directions, and the other parties slowly disappeared. But not us. We climbed until it was too painful to contemplate putting the boots on for yet another ascent. Then, slowly and with regret, the rope went back into the rucksack for an unknown period of time, and we drove back trying to remember every detail of the view to sustain us through the wet end of the Glasgow winter.



## EVERYONE ALWAYS SPEAKS ENGLISH

*Chris Stretch*

The two Swedes passed us at the start of the scramble up to Via Valencianos. I knew they were Swedish, because we were climbing near them at Sella the day before. On my way past, in search of route 1, I'd asked the tall one, who was belaying his friend in glasses, "Which route are you on?" "Some 6a," he'd replied, in English, as a matter of course. I didn't preface my question with, for example, "Do you speak English?": one simply presumed and it was mutual. As Pete and I struggled up our 4+, I heard them talking in Swedish. When the friend came down, he was babbling, the way you do when you've been frightened. He referred to something as "impossible to surmount," and I think he was talking about his feelings on the climb, rather than the climb itself.



*The author on Via Pany, Peñon Ifach, Costa Blanca*

Something about the way everyone always spoke English irked me; it was humiliating. So when we caught up with them at the bottom of Via Valencianos, I said, "Which route are you going to do?"... in Swedish. I saw them trying not to show surprise and they answered in Swedish, asking if we'd done the route before. I said we'd started it before, and abbed off because there were so many people on it. I told Pete what they were going to do and there were some minutes of silence while we all geared up.

Then the tall one spoke, in English, "So how come you speak Swedish?" Not a question we ever asked of the Swedish, Norwegian, German, Dutch or Spanish people who all spoke to us in English on this holiday. We never said, "So how come you speak English?" This may sound disingenuous about a 'minority' language like Swedish, but even Spanish people, on a weekend outing on Via Pany, tried to talk to us in English.

Anyway, in English, I told them I'd been married to a Swedish man for a while. "No good?" the tall one ventured, fixing me with a blue, Scandinavian stare. Pete sniggered. Their company on the climb was pleasant and though English was spoken throughout, I understood

their comments to each other and they knew I did. Comments such as, "What in hell's name..this is completely smooth," from the second in glasses, at the crux. "England," the tall one boomed at Pete, who was preparing to lead the pitch, "a number two Friend here."

When the second got above the crux, he spoke down to Pete, "England, do you want a hint?" "Yes," said Pete, "Yes." "There is a hold here," he pointed and then vanished behind the bushes. On the slabs above, the scent of spring flowers was heady in the warm sun, particularly from a yellow, pea-type plant - kidney vetch? A Norwegian came up and joined me on my stance and spoke in English as he took out his snuff. "This is a funny climb," he said. The sea far below us sparkled and the gulls wheeled and cried. "Do you mean odd or good?" I asked. "Oh, good," he said, "good."

The form of address adopted by the Swedes had worked quite well, so I decided to try it as I wavered on the last pitch of climbing; the cracked grey slab. Pete, au cheval on top of the fragrant slab, had suddenly disappeared in rising sea mist. Out of sight, but audible above, the tall one was belaying his friend on the first of the final easy scrambling pitches. "Sweden," I whimpered, "what did you do here?" He pointed out a bolt I'd missed and bade me goodbye.

When we got to the top, they'd vanished. We ate our lunch amid the guano and gulls. On the way down, the flowers were wonderful: catchfly, mallows, spurge, sweet alison, grey leaved cistus, field gladioli, orchids... As we drove away from the Peñon, we saw the Swedes, sitting outside a café, facing the harbour and the afternoon sun. They didn't see us; it looked like they were sharing a joke.



## A VIEW FROM THE BERTHOL HUT

*Julie Carter*

I see this clearly now  
- up here where things are simple.  
Blue sky, making no apology  
for it's blueness.  
No veils and clouds to hide behind -  
no excuses.

These strong rock characters,  
which stand around us now,  
don't bend down to avoid the wind.  
An unrelenting gnawing eats into their substance.  
Ice, sunshine, water ...  
The rock falls, the ice falls  
like leaves from a tree  
or the shedding of tears.  
These are the events of life  
we cannot complain at.

These strong rock characters  
which stand around us now -  
If we could have anything to say to each other  
it would be a communication  
of the necessity to accept our situation.  
We must find within each of us  
what is beautiful.  
Beaten, broken,  
struck by lightning,  
but not bending down to avoid the wind.

## HALF-WAY TO PARADISE? SKI-TOURING FOR FOODIES

*Margaret Clennett*

It had to be Italy this year: after 3 Easters of unsatisfactory weather and indifferent food we needed at least a guarantee of gastronomy. I'd recently read about fantastic food in the Gran Paradiso huts, so our venue was fixed. The serious eating started in a comfortable hotel at Arvier, just down the road from Courmayeur, and we had high hopes of the Mario Bezzi hut, our first destination.

It was Easter Saturday, and the hut, when we eventually reached it, seemed full to overflowing, despite having been recently extended. Our gastronomic research had been accurate, and despite there being 200 hungry skiers, the staff served everyone a quality feast of soup, pasta, beef with asparagus, salad, cheese and fruit - all with a smile. Even Val, our veggie, was catered for. To accommodate this and other similar gargantuan offerings we had to go on the hill. Our day on the Truc Blanc went well, and we had a lovely descent on superb snow. The Grand Traversiere summit was not to be ours though; poor route-finding, my own lack of speed, and the prospect of a long traverse above intimidating terrain resulted in a strategic retreat after 5 hours out, down snow which was already unpleasantly heavy.

Now the hut was nearly empty, all the locals having gone back to work, and we decided to cross over to the Rifugio Benevolo to try a new range of cuisine.

We skinned up the lower valley to the glacier tongue on crisp snow, and below a cloudless sky. This, we told Val, was what ski-touring was all about, sun hats, T-shirts, and sparkling snow, not bumbling around in wind, mist and whiteouts, which was all she had encountered on her previous two trips. The line up on to the glacier was short but steep, and we decided to put on crampons. Alas, as Annabelle was fumbling in her sack a small black object slipped out and bounced away into infinity. A shriek of anguish; it was her silk sleeping bag liner, never to be seen again.

We'd forgotten how heavy it was to carry skis as well as everything else, and were glad when the angle relented enough to transfer them to our feet again. Now we were on a wide glacier plain, with elegant peaks all around, shining in the sun. At the head of the glacier was the shapely Becca della Traversiere, its flanks patterned with innumerable squiggles from descending continentals who'd been skiing since they could walk. We'd decided to give the peak a miss, and cross directly via the Bassac Derre col, but were somewhat disconcerted to find only one descent track on the other side, given the popularity of the Becca from both the Bezzi and Benevolo huts. After some dithering, we slid gingerly over the col. No fancy jump-turns for us, but long traverses with kick-turns, and wonderings about avalanches or hidden hazards. At the bottom of the slope it became apparent that aesthetics, not hazards, were the reason for the lack of tracks; everyone goes over the mountain and down a broad col on the other side, but at least we had left our mark.

We continued down. On a somewhat unpleasant section Annabelle became frustrated with her sack. "I'm going to throw it down - just catch it please." Despite its erratic course over some bumps, we did. The afternoon sun seemed to grow hotter as we descended, and we realised we were tired. The terrain was changing now, and it seemed as if we would have to go uphill to get across a ridge. A look at the map confirmed our fears; there was a nasty twenty minute slog ahead. Val cursed loudly as she fiddled with her skins-one of the top retaining clips had come off. Some imaginative handiwork with a prusik loop, and the skin was temporarily repaired. A fast party overtook us on the uphill, their snatches of conversation being the only English we'd heard on the hill, and soon disappeared again.

Now the real horror show began. Below was a convex slope which we just felt had to be steep. At each turn rocky outcrops and an alarming number of crags came into view. The hut was

## HALF-WAY TO PARADISE? SKI-TOURING FOR FOODIES

nowhere to be seen, and the route was not obvious. All we could do was follow the tracks and be thankful that the weather was clear. The snow was turning to ice, nasty granules which made a menacing sound as you slithered over them. Manoeuvres became tricky, with disastrous, if not terminal consequences if you got one wrong.

How many times have you stood on a hill or ridge and known that somewhere you should be able to see the hut? It inevitably turns out to be further away, in an unexpected direction, or, if you are ski-touring, much closer than you had thought, but with a frightening vertical interval to descend. We could see it now, a long, long way down, but far too close for a comfortable descent. We zig-zagged on, round boulders, above and below cliffs which were insignificant from a climbing viewpoint, but which were high enough not to want to fall over. A pause to establish there were no alternatives, then a stomach-turning icy schuss across the top of a bottomless gully. Eventually we found ourselves in a series of narrow, icy gullies, unable to see each other if more than a few yards apart. Here it was everyone for herself; turn, ski a few feet, turn again, for what seemed an interminable time. At last I could see Val at the bottom, on the other side of a snow bridge across the river, the hut only a short distance off.

On level ground at last, we watched Annabelle, still in the gullies. Then a purple blob came bouncing and sliding in slow motion down the slope. Her sack. It nearly stopped as the ground levelled above the stream, then slithered down again, with a final bounce over the lip out of sight. Visions of it being recovered in hundreds of years time, or being washed downriver appeared all too vividly, but when Val clambered over the boulders in the stream bed she found it wedged, and not even wet. Annabelle insisted that it had slid away during a particularly awkward kick-turn...

A final struggle through soft snow, and after 10 hours on the go we were at the Benevolo. Outside was an ominously large stack of skis; we hadn't booked, and the hut was full. The warden said we'd have to go down to the valley, but of course we could have a drink first. Some kind person must have had a quiet word with him, to the effect that he'd seen us descend, we were obviously totally incompetent, and whoever sent us down could be done for unlawful killing, 'cos we'd never make it.

They found room for us at the second sitting for dinner ( the huts had twice as many beds as sitting places), and gave us camp beds and a blanket each in the dining room after everyone had gone to bed. Even though there had been many people around not long before, the room was soon cold, and despite wearing salopettes and duvets with our hoods up the chill coming up from the floor stopped us sleeping, exhausted as we were. Still awake at 3.00a.m. I heard people come in (they had walked up from the valley), lie down on benches and promptly start snoring. At 5.00 the warden told us some people had left early, and, literally hot-bunking, we had the bliss of 3 hours sleep.

A rest day, an ascent of the Punta Palettaz, with what for us was a reasonably stylish descent, and then the nightmare of a ski down to Rhemes Notre Dame. I exaggerate; only the first part of the descent was a nightmare, with soft, hollow snow hiding glacially cold streams. We'd never have made it on the day of our crossing from the Bezzi without a broken limb or two.

We were nearer in kilometres to the Gran Paradiso, and maybe next time we'll actually get there. With all that wonderful food and brilliant ski-touring we are definitely going back.

## A SHORT TRIP TO ITALY IN OCTOBER 1995

*Val Hennelly*

This is an account of a trip that Paul and I had last Autumn, after being stuck in the UK all through the hottest summer for years. We had only one week available and wanted somewhere hot, easily accessible and different. Margaret Clennett had spent a Christmas at Sperlonga and Gaeta and these seemed to fit the bill.

We flew to the Leonardo da Vinci airport Rome via the Charles de Gaulle (no direct flights from Birmingham) and picked up our Renault Punta. We were advised at the airport that if we drove south of Rome we were likely to have the car stolen and so we set off with trepidation. This feeling was not lifted by the sight of two accidents within 1 mile of the airport and a complete inability to understand the road signs. The latter problem was eased when we realised that we'd arrived at a different airport to that we were trying to navigate from, although the entire holiday was characterised by U-turns at junctions which were never sign-posted in advance.

We had arrived with no more information than that there were sea cliffs at Gaeta and more climbing at Sperlonga. Sunday morning was therefore spent browsing around Gaeta, looking for something that resembled a climbing shop, but in a pokey newsagent-cum-tobacconists we found *Lazio Verticale* our passport to freedom. We had been given this title from correspondence on the Internet and it was supposed to be out of print. It was in Italian of course with crag photos to aid route location. This does not necessarily help on sea cliffs so we bought a dictionary as well.

The sea cliffs at Gaeta are easy to spot from the Serpao beach; rising dramatically at the southern end and topped by a monastery. Our first direct attempt through the monastery brought us to a locked gate and so we reversed us and the car and tried another approach. This involved a complete circuit of the Army installation on top, peering down several 60° scrubby slopes and finally bingo we were there.

'There' was identified by the location of 3 ring bolts under a bush and we confidently declared we knew where we were and set off on the first of three abseils down a dramatic overhanging chimney of Dolomitic character. The presence of an ascending climber on the arête comforted us that there was a way up (at 6+ by the looks of it). Each abseil point was well equipped with a backed up ring bolt. At the bottom it was quite easy to be sure we knew where we were and we set off up Spigelia (5+, 130m). This was a magnificent introduction to the cliffs, starting up a wall with a Kipling Groove type hand traverse on it, but its best feature was a magnificent corner 45m long that formed the 3rd pitch.

As sea cliffs go it was a very unthreatening spot. Dead calm sea and a continuous stream of boat traffic from one side of the headland to the other. The cliffs are a tourist attraction because they have a huge through cave that has biblical origins according to the legend in the monastery. It is also possible to pay at the monastery and walk down to the cave from the other side.

The next day we went to Sperlonga, the location of which was obvious when driving north as it towers above the road. There was also a café under the crag which advertised itself as 'the Sperlonga Climbing Centre'. Several days later we finally found this place open, and it did indeed sell some climbing kit and have some general information. It also sold the more recent guidebook *Icaro*, but this is less detailed than *Lazio* and relies on low quality pencil drawings of the crags which do not compare to the photo diagrams in *Lazio*.

The crag at Sperlonga is easy to get to and consists of several tiers of bolted limestone. Climbs vary in length from 20m to multi pitch. It faces south east and in October was very hot. After a couple of climbs we decided that it was just too hot, and so we hit the Med and the beer. Very

## A SHORT TRIP TO ITALY IN OCTOBER 1995

civilised. Lesson learnt. The next time we went there we were on the rock by 8.00 a.m. and back in the sea for 12.00 and then back on the rock for 3.30 p.m.! The best route we did there was Sade (6, 45m) but there was lots of high quality climbing which we only had a taster of.

On our final day at Gaeta we tried to locate the top of one climb without success. I was convinced that we could not approach without trespassing in the Monastery garden, but we weren't too sure of our translation. This was however confirmed by the second ever pair of climbers we met at Gaeta who said that the monks will give permission if requested. By then we had had a delightful climb up the chimney that formed the abseil route, unlikely at severe but very good. So we went to the beach instead.

After Gaeta we moved north to Terracine to climb on Monte Leone. The climbs here are situated on two tor-like protrusions atop a hill. This was the worst walk in of the holiday, being steep (if you're unfit), very screey and through woman scratching scrub. My advice is: wear long trousers and shirt, not shorts and vest, and you'll suffer less damage.

The bolts on this cliff were of a more ancient vintage than Sperlonga or Gaeta and it felt more serious for that. We had two days there with some good climbs, the best being Dory (5+, 30m) and some failures. We felt the grading system was not quite consistent with those further south.

In the off season it is easy to get motel type accommodation and most of our holiday was based at the Rock Garden Pensione in Gaeta. £33.00 per night secured three beds, en suite and cooking facilities. There appeared to be lots of camp sites along the coastal strip but it was difficult to tell which ones were open. The food everywhere was good. We'd recommend the mozzarella sandwiches, available from the numerous Mozzarella di Buffalo bars along the coast; and trusting the proprietor of your hotel/eating place when he offers you the house pasta. If you want any more info or a browse at the guide then let me know.

## SHIPS IN THE DESERT

### CLIMBING AND EXPLORING IN THE WADI RUM AREA OF JORDAN

Cathy Woodhead

The only person in the world who knew where we were going was a small boy who spoke no English and had been sitting watching us pack our rucksacks by the tent. We used the usual sign language of flailing hands and pointed up the wadi and then towards the summit of Jebel Rum, to show that we would be climbing from this area up the sides of the mountain block and then traversing the top to the summit. There was no one else to tell. So with no arrangements for rescue services, search parties, informing next of kin etc., Andy and I set off on our adventure towards the aptly named "The Dark One"

Someone has described the area around Wadi Rum as a desert with vast sandstone battleships up to 15 km long; some over 1500 m high. Jebel Rum is by far the largest, but there are over 30 others; each longer than a kilometre. The sides are very steep and the summits can only be gained by rockclimbing.

We had had two days getting used to the area. The first day we followed a route of about 2 km that cut through from one side of Jebel um Ishrin via the Canyon of Rakabat um Ejil (or the Neck or Narrows of the Mother of the Calf). We set off with Henry, a traveller we met on the bus from Petra that same morning. He only had some leather shoes with the soles half off, and since the climb mentioned was Grade 2 we wondered how he would get on.

Using the invaluable *Treks and Climbs in Wadi Rum* by Tony Howard we crossed the desert from the Rest House and half an hour later arrived at Goat's Gully, a small gully with a large overhang on its right. It was crucial to find the right spot in order to find the way in through the barrier of rocks. We soon became used to the small cairns of stones that marked the route, and using these and Howard's description we passed into an amazing world of cliffs, with the most exotic shapes you can imagine. There were sandy bottomed stream beds, rocky steps and bushes with tiny, sweet smelling, white flowers. It had rained two weeks before and we were lucky to find tiny flowers dotting the arid landscape.

But now it was good to be protected from the sun by the high walls of the canyon. At one point we came to a large boulder blocking the ravine, and were astonished to see a rifle suddenly emerging from the bottom of it. Since it was waving about dangerously we ducked down. The arm and body that squeezed through the small gap belonged to a local guide accompanying a group of Israeli trekkers. He was equally amazed to see us! Eventually the far walls of the canyon opened up, and we were amongst the bushes of a wadi. The sun was soon blazing in and there was little protection. To return to the Rest House we headed south to circumvent the southern tip of the massif. We made small dashes from one rocky outcrop to another until the sun had lost its ferocity and we could set off across the open 6 km back to Wadi Rum village, collecting twigs for our campfire on the way. That evening we found Lawrence's well. The sandstone of the battleships sits on granite and in places springs occur at the junction of the two rocks. Lawrence of Arabia visited this area and wrote sensuously about bathing in the spring pool. We were glad to soak our feet there.

Next day we did a rockclimb up the East Ridge of Jebel Fara Ranayim (1460m). This route had some Grade 4+ pitches. We had all managed the Grade 2 the previous day with no gear at all. This ridge proved harder and we were glad of our small rack of nuts and friends. Some moves felt to be VS, but it wasn't long before we were soloing anything below this grade, and often in trainers. The heat and sun were very strong, perhaps surprising since it was only half way through March. Happy was the climber who found a belay in the shade.



*The author in Wadi Rum*

Over the tops of the battleships there is a layer of pale, more resistant, sandstone (for non-geologists this protects the underlying softer rock from erosion) and these have become smooth rounded domes through which deep ravines called siqs have been cut by episodes of torrential rain. Friction on these domes is very good and since they go on for miles we soon learnt that trainers were good for carefully padding up and down them. The siqs required more effort, and we frequently had to abseil into them and search the dry bottoms for cairns to mark the way up the other side.

This was the training we had given ourselves before setting off to climb Al Thalamiyyah - also called the Dark One, the Place of the Djinn. The route was originally explored by the Bedouin and Howard describes it as a 'continuously interesting, unusual, extremely long and complex route'. We packed sleeping bags, 6 litres of water, snack food such as biscuits, nuts and apricots, windproofs, woolly hats, thermal tops, trainers for the domes, head torches, matches, two ropes, minimal rack of gear, helmets, sun glasses, camera, harnesses and guide book.

It is hard to describe how it feels to be in such a place, it is so different from anything else. The ravine the route follows up the side of the massif is so deep in places that at times it feels a bit like caving. The idea of descending the route became less and less feasible so intricate was the passage we took, and so knobbly the rock, let alone the dubious nature of abseil points. Still we carried on up and up. At a couple of places committing moves with minimal gear had to be made (not really our sort of thing). At most ledges a small cairn marked the way forward; sometimes these were ambiguous, and sometimes not even man-made!

The coolness of the air was a godsend, but I became more and more alarmed to see wisps of cloud floating above the crevice, in what had been a completely cloudless sky. These siqs I felt would fill with water if it rained and we could be trapped. A year before I had experienced a

biblical flood in the Todra Gorge of Morocco so I knew these things can happen. This worried me more than the climbing, so between us we eventually arrived at the Black Wall that marked the top of the climb. All that remained was to traverse the top of the massif for about 4 km to reach the bivvy site.

It had become quite cool, and there were at least three big siqs to cross. One involved following an overhung terrace for 1500m before getting on to a huge ridge of domes that stretched for over a mile. Eventually we arrived at the Desert on the plateau. There were no footprints anywhere on Jebel Rum - all having been obliterated by the previous rain. We took a compass bearing in the gathering gloom and were delighted to stumble across a huge ledge under a massive overhang. We collected firewood and kept as warm as we could as the temperature up here was pretty cold. The sunrise over the desert and surrounding massifs was spectacular. Route finding to the summit of Jebel Rum presented no problems and we descended Hammad's Route back to Rum Village by lunchtime - still carrying three of the six litres of water we set out with.

To make a change we hired camels the next day to take us to Barraah Canyon. We were glad to get off these shipwrecks of the desert as they looked rather underfed and moth-eaten. At the canyon we met hospitable Bedouin, explored the ravines, found a Nabeteian dam, and were shown inscriptions of camels and strange symbols like horse prints with a line cutting them in half. After one more climb on Jebel Rum, namely the amazing Eye of Allah, we left for Aqaba in the back of a pickup and were soon at the Diving Centre with its brilliant coral reefs. From here we crossed the border to Eilat and thence to Jerusalem. Three nights were spent in the Old City before we caught our return flight from Tel Aviv. Not a bad trip really for a fortnight's holiday and £214 flights. And I've not even begun to tell you about Amman, Petra or Hebron.



# THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

*Eileen Healey*

A year or two ago I was at the Pen y Pass car park on the afternoon of the club dinner and I found myself filling in time by walking down to the hut instead of up to some high pinnacle, and thought how times had changed. I wondered when I had last been up some high mountains and decided my tough walking career had finished the year we went to the Galapagos Islands. We booked a package trekking tour. I feel self conscious in this journal describing a package holiday, but it is forbidden to land on the uninhabited islands without a guide, even if we had wanted to pioneer.

We flew to Ecuador and spent a night in Quito before flying on to Guayaquil and so to our starting point, the Isla San Cristobal. This is an inhabited island and we spent some time finding the sealions and birds before embarking on our boat, the Orca, and sailing that night to our next island. We were a very happy party of eight English people and the boat was manned by the captain, the cook (who had just been on a course on salads and the food he produced from his tiny galley was superb), two seamen and our guide, a native of the Islands who had travelled extensively. He was the perfect guide; so knowledgeable and keen to pass on his experience.

The next morning we landed at the most southerly island, Isla Espanola, where we walked among the birds and reptiles. The blue-footed boobies were raising their young. They lodge their eggs on top of their large blue feet, which apparently act as a splendid heat exchange system to keep the embryo chick cool in the heat of the equatorial day. These birds are so unused to humans that they have no fear and we had difficulty stepping over them as they stood unconcerned all along the path. There was a colony of waved albatross with bare ground nests in each of which sat a rather helpless big fluffy chick patiently waiting for the return of its parents from an ocean forage. The parents may be away for days or even weeks and when they come back they regurgitate huge quantities of partly digested sludge into their hungry offspring. Reptiles were represented in abundance by the marine iguanas which lie in heaps but, after warming up in the sun, crawl about all over the rocks and slither in and out of the sea. The seashore was the home of the sealions who were raising their young and they allowed us within a few feet, even when nursing a pup, without indicating any distress. When we swam with them they seemed to enjoy our company, chasing round and round us, perhaps trying to show us how swimming should be done. If there was a bull about we avoided him, for the bulls were quite aggressive.

Our next call was at the island of Floreana, where we anchored at Post Office Bay. For many years whalers had left messages here and there is still a barrel on a post for this purpose. The idea has been taken up by tourists. Tim had recently been made a governor of our village school and he sent two postcards to the children; one he stamped and sent via an official postbox, the other he put unstamped in the barrel, and this was the one which arrived first!

Our next stop was the largest Island, Isabela, where we were to trek. A ride on a lorry to the end of the road at Santo Thomas and we set off through the scrub to the camp site near the rim of the huge caldera, Volcan Sierra Negra, where we met up with our tents, brought up by horses. We camped under trees which caused condensation at dawn and dusk, making us think there was a heavy rainstorm in this arid country. In the afternoon we explored the volcanic activity on this side of the caldera. The next was our big day, when we crossed the caldera. There were no tracks and the lava was very rough; sometimes it was breakable crust, rather like snow but not so kind. We had been advised to take leather gloves, but I found them too hot in the temperatures on the equator. After many exhausting hours we reached an old sulphur mine from where a path led up to the rim of the caldera, where we found that our tents had already been pitched and our supper was on its way.

The next morning the mist was still about and I found it most eerie. The views the day before had been superb as we looked from the tangled lava of the crater down over the vegetated hillside to the sea beyond and the distant neighbouring islands. We walked down to the road. There was a pony spare at this stage and I am ashamed to say that it was this Pinnacle Club member who was considered to be most in need of a lift. A swim in the sea and views of the frigate birds swimming in the crystal-clear water and we returned to the Orca. We had another expedition to make on Isabela, but our kind guide decided we should visit a few more islands first to give our blisters a chance to heal. We landed at Isla Santa Cruz where, at the Darwin Research Station, they are breeding the various different giant tortoises to release eventually on their original islands. On many islands tortoises were eliminated by seamen, who would pack the ships' holds with the living animals, which survived and provided fresh meat for up to a year.

Our next trek was up the volcano Alcedo. We made sandwiches to last twenty four hours, had a gallon of water each, and were landed on an isolated strip of coast at three o'clock in the morning. We stepped ashore into a colony of sea lions grunting and snorting at us as we found our way up the beach in almost complete darkness. This was the beginning of a four thousand foot climb to the rim of the caldera where we pitched camp. The very early start was to avoid climbing in the heat of what proved to be an absolutely scorching day. In the afternoon we walked along part of the rim towards the fumarols, passing innumerable tortoises. Some were so huge we were told it would take six men to lift one. Back to camp for sandwiches and cold water, but a most memorable evening and the views the next morning with the red sky and the mist over the huge caldera were a Galapagos special.

A leisurely descent to pick up the Orca and then on to Isla San Salvador to swim, this time with the fur seals. We visited the nesting frigate birds; some still had their red breeding 'balloon'. We saw the rarer land iguanas. Everywhere we went the birds had been remarkable: the flash of red as the frigates mobbed the boobies, trying to get them to release their beakful of fish; the herons so stationary you could almost touch them; the Darwin finches not at all easy to identify; the vermilion fly catcher who would not stay still long enough to be photographed and the mocking birds which would come up to peck at your boot laces. We visited the island of Seymour and Rabida, where there are Opuntia trees with girths larger than could be encompassed with outstretched arms. They grow until completely top heavy and then just fall over.

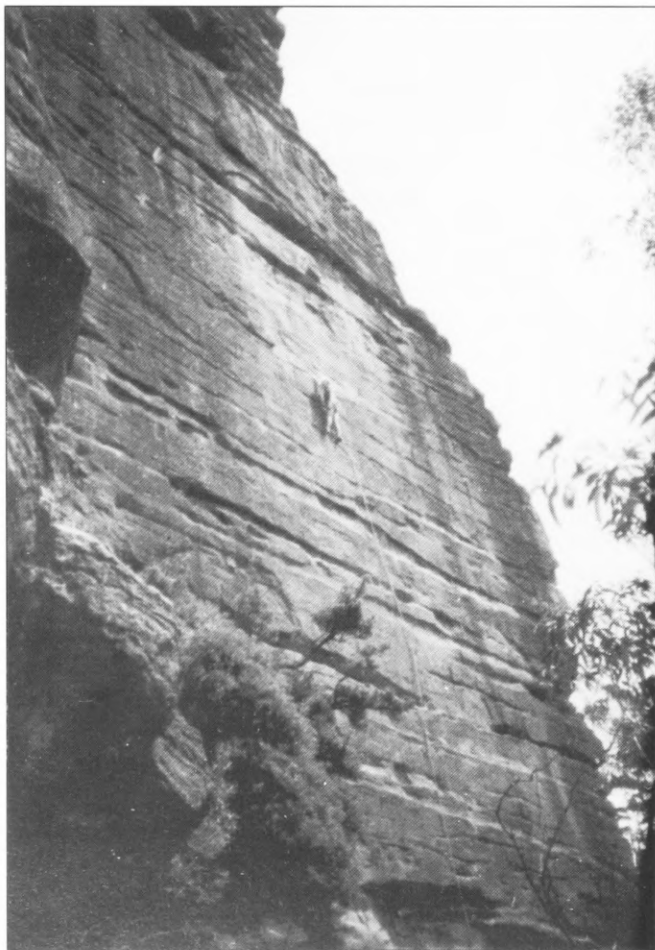
There were so many other treats: the dolphins riding along on our bow wave; cruising through an immense shoal of leaping pamploa and colourful Sally Lightfoot crabs everywhere. It was wonderful, but best of all were the nights on the rims of the caldera larger than any other caldera in the world apart from Ngorongoro in Tanzania. The Galapagos were once called the 'Encantadas', which is translated as the 'bewitched' islands. Their effect on visitors is certainly profound. I have had memorable moments on the summits of many mountains much higher and more challenging than the volcanoes of Isabela, but my feelings have never been more profound than they were when I stood on the rim of Sierra Negra after the sun had set and looked out over the beautiful and natural wonderland of the Encantadas.

## TIME OUT DOWN UNDER

*Angela Soper*

One of the best things about being a New Age Pensioner is visiting the southern hemisphere in our winter. So, before leaving for Chile in January, I must keep my promise to record some highlights of the 93-94 trip to Australia and New Zealand, when several other Pinnacles also migrated in that direction.

Marlene and I made Thailand our first stopover, to sample exotic sport climbing on the shores of the Andaman sea, where steep cliffs of limestone rise from the beach and disappear into the jungle, with caves and huge stalactites. The sea is warm, waveless, and very buoyant; we explored the headlands and islets just by swimming. Our home was a simple bamboo shelter under the coconut palms, our dining room the open air restaurant on the beach, and our transport the 'longtail' boats skilfully handled by the Thai boatmen.



*The author leading Cosmic Country (21)*

M went straight to New Zealand but I visited Australia, invited by climbing friends who live near Sydney. Through them I discovered the sandstone crags of New South Wales, the finest being Cosmic County in the Blue Mountains. Walking through the bush to the crag we saw a lyre bird with a great jewelled tail. We spent a weekend at Boroomba rocks near Canberra, multi-pitch climbs on scary granitic slabs with long run outs, like Scottish routes. But the scene was totally Australian, kangaroos, gum trees, noisy parrots and camp fires.

We climbed at Point Perpendicular, an impressive sea cliff named by Captain Cook. The climbs are on the highest tier and reached by abseil; some are bolted, others protected with big Friends in horizontal breaks, and the rock quality is variable. Australian grades became meaningful; 22 was a challenging lead for me.

Christmas Day saw us in Tasmania, walking to Frenchman's Cap, a quartzite peak with a steep and serious face; the walk alone is a major challenge. It goes through rain forest, crosses several deep rivers

(recently bridged), and negotiates miles of swampy plains, gaining and losing a lot of height on the way. My lightweight equipment got strange looks from serious bush-walkers, but my trainers were fine and I didn't even pick up any leeches. No climbing came of it though, just several days at Lake Vera hut sheltering from torrential rain.

Tassie was a special place, not to be missed. One evening at dusk we went to a lonely beach to see the fairy penguins. It was nearly dark when they came surfing in from the sea, hundreds of small birds heavy with fish, and waddled over the shingle into the bushes, where their young waited in the nests to be fed. In the morning the parents would go out to fish again ..... until the nesting season is over.

Back in mainland Victoria it was important to visit 'the best crag in the world'. By today's standards Mt. Arapiles isn't that good, though the rock is sound and there are hundreds of climbs. The much photographed route 'Kachoong' is world class, and I did it with encores, but the cutting edge has moved to the awesome Taipan Wall on Mount Stapylton in the Grampians. It was good to meet Louise Shepherd again, running her own climbing school at Arapiles and deeply committed to conservation.

In January I flew to New Zealand, and hitch-hiked from Auckland to Wellington, to see the country and meet the people. The church at Rotorua was a fine example of Maori woodcarving, it was normal to have hot springs in your garden, and the Youth Hostel had its own naturally-heated pool. Most of the mountaineering is on the South Island, where it was easy to pick up the 'scene' - first at Payne's Ford then at Christchurch climbing wall. Local climbers were so hospitable; I had a choice of homes to treat as my own.

Brede Arkless, now living and guiding in the Mount Cook area, was in the middle of her busiest season, but we enjoyed a day climbing at Wanaka, on the way to Mount Aspiring. Brede had met the Wilsons and Jean when they crossed the Copeland Pass, and she also told me that Paula Turley (Irish climber who came on the PC International Meet in '83) was living at Mt. Cook Village. Paula is married to Kiwi Andy McFarlane, then working as a Ranger, they have two sons, and when I was there she was expecting baby Naomi. Paula and I made an overnight expedition up the Hooker Valley to climb the Dazler Pinnacles and when we got back Jay, an American doctor, had arrived to climb ice with Andy.

It was too hot for ice climbing, not even freezing on the summit of Mt. Cook at 3754 m, so Andy, Jay and I, with Anton, an off-duty guide, drove south to fjordland to walk into the Darran Mountains. These are rocky and very rugged, like a big version of the Cuillin with tougher vegetation and even more rainfall. Two cols and several hours later we were in a comfortable bivouac under a huge boulder, surrounded by peaks, crags and waterfalls. Next day in miraculous weather Anton and I climbed Sabre Peak by a direct line up its north west buttress, some ten pitches with a crux of 19, and lingered on top, picking out all the peaks of fjordland and Mount Aspiring further away. Sabre has no easy way up (or down!) and was first climbed only in the 50s. Back at the bivvy our food and sleeping bags had been ravaged by keas, fierce wild parrots but a protected species. We threw stones but they were not easily frightened away.

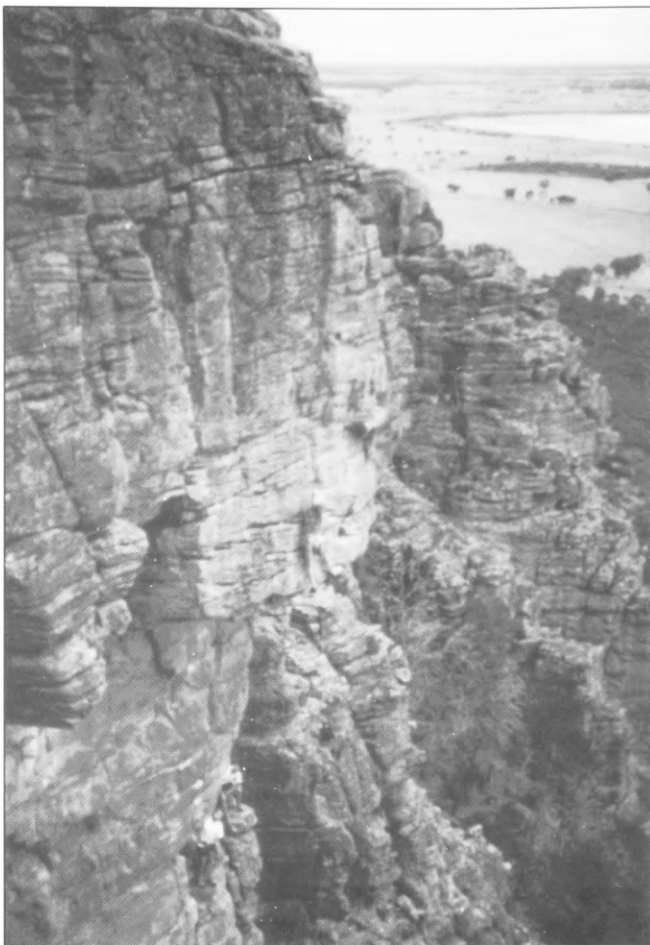
Later on Jay needed a partner for Mt. Cook, which is too dangerous to solo. Paula rightly thought her boots would fit me, so I teamed up with him for an unexpected opportunity. In 1991 the east face of Mt. Cook fell away, a reminder that this is the most rapidly uplifted range in the world. But people have started climbing there again, and it is normal to fly up to the snow plateau under the east face of Mt. Cook, using the ski-plane as one takes a téléphérique in Europe. The light aircraft at Mt. Cook airfield do a thriving trade in scenic flights for Japanese tourists and a more dangerous one in landing climbers on the plateau. We shared with four other Americans and it was worth every penny.

## TIME OUT DOWN UNDER

Plateau hut was heaving with people of many nationalities, several of whom had summited on Everest. We intended to climb Zurbriggen's route, which follows the right edge of the east face until it joins the normal route at the summit rocks, some 5000 feet of ascent overall. At midnight there was an exodus, everyone roped and wearing crampons for the heavily crevassed plateau. In the dark Jay and I were the first to find a safe approach to Zurbriggen's, and soon were climbing over fallen séracs. Only one team followed us; the rest took the normal route up the Linda glacier. We moved together up the 50° snow, belaying only across the occasional tricky section. Our route choice in the dark was good, and the snow reasonable, so we made steady progress as day dawned. Several rope lengths up the summit rocks added variety, and now there were people from the ordinary route, some already going down. Hot and thirsty, we pushed on to the summit, or at least to the highest safe point rather than the tottering séracs that cap the unstable east face.

We looked down on Mt. Tasman and all the other peaks and glaciers.

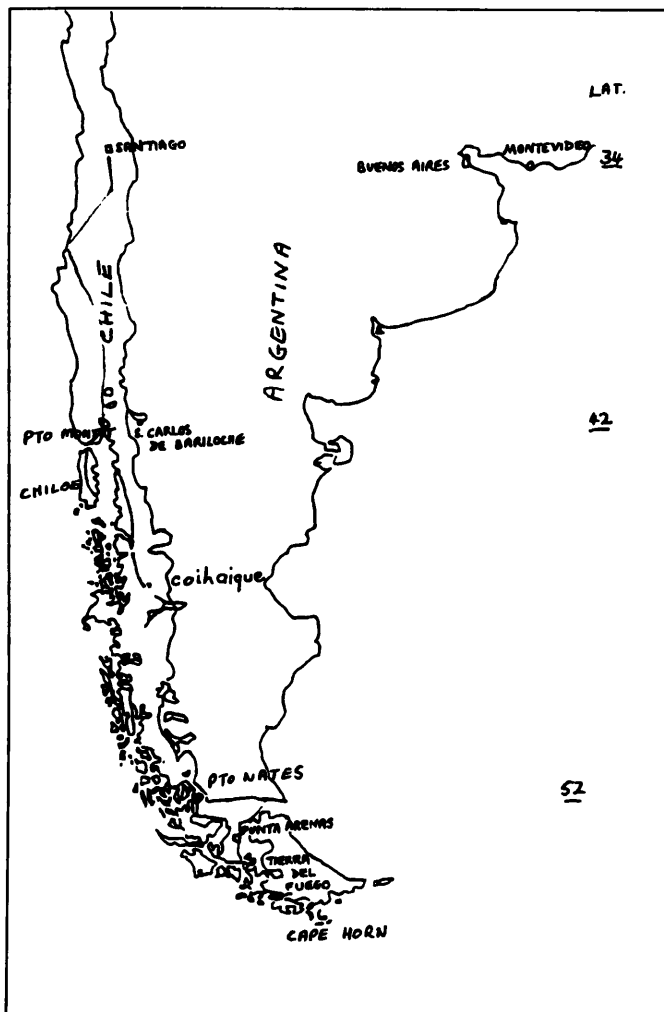
The west coast spread out below, with big rivers emerging from the rain forest into the ocean; it was very exciting. Then followed the serious descent, tedious plodding through the deep snow of the Linda glacier, keeping crampons on in case either of us fell through. The path around the lower crevasses was so contorted that I wondered how anyone would ever find it after fresh snow or in poor visibility. Still roped together after 17 hours we regained the hut for celebrations, in hope that the planes could still land next day on the even softer snow. They could, though only to carry four people at a time. So I started my journey home.



*The author leading Kachoong (21)*

## JOURNEYING IN PATAGONIA

*Marlene Halliwell*



Lying on a silver beach in the tropics a couple of years back, Angela said, "What a marvellous way to escape the British winter - how about South America in two years' time?" So on Christmas day 1995 Geoff and I found ourselves at Santiago airport, keeping our fingers crossed while we waited anxiously to see if our bikes had arrived. Ten out of ten for the airlines - three flights later they were wheeled towards us across the tarmac - it had all been so easy. The bikes had been a last minute idea, as we would have two weeks in Chile before meeting Angela at Bariloche in Argentina for some rock climbing. We bought two second-hand mountain bikes the week before we left and tied small rucksacs (bought from the market for £3 each) onto the rear rack for panniers. Our large climbing sacks were secured on top with bungy cords. Having all the weight on the rear doesn't make for a very stable machine, so a wobbly start was made from the airport, heading south for 1000km down the Ruta 5 to Puerto Mont. From there we would cross a pass over the Andes to Argentina - should just be able to do it comfortably in two weeks.

We had been unable to purchase a decent map in England and had no pre-knowledge of Chilean roads. Ruta 5, the Pan American highway, is the only paved road heading south and takes all the traffic - cars, trucks, horses, carts and pedestrians. Every few yards on the grass verge are memorial shrines to the victims of crazy driving. We found the whole experience altogether too nerve-wracking and soon abandoned 'death highway' and took to the minor roads. Unfortunately these spread out in a herring-bone pattern; east to the Andes and west to the Pacific coast. We first tried an easterly direction, but a gravel road, temperatures in the nineties and a high pass only gained us about 25 km in our intended direction. Three days later we decided westwards towards the coast might be an easier option. This zig-zag route, combined with hitching in trucks and the odd bus journey when we hit Ruta 5 finally brought us to our destination and also brought us into contact with many friendly and helpful people and gave us a valuable insight into the lives of Chileans outside the main tourist centres.

## JOURNEYING IN PATAGONIA

The area south of Santiago to the Chilean Lake District is mainly rural and combines great farms and vineyards owned by a few wealthy landowners with a population of poor people living in scattered villages. There are no official campsites, so we mainly camped wild. Even in isolated spots we always asked permission, as tiny shacks which looked uninhabited would prove to be home to a farm worker and his family. Occasionally we spent the night with a family who had a 'spare room' and this invariably meant sharing the bed with bugs which feasted enthusiastically on me, though eventually I did seem to build up an immunity! One room was decorated with a poster of the Union Jack and the Iron Lady herself - we found the Chileans to be very pro-British.

Our hikes were standing up well to the rough roads, but we made a habit of collecting bits of wire or scraps of truck inner tubes to use as repair kits. The pannier racks were carrying far too much weight and they constantly had to be reinforced with bits of wire. Geoff's tyre blew out after hitting a large stone going downhill and we had to line the inside of the tyre with a piece of truck inner tube. Fortunately this made a good repair which lasted the rest of the trip. Another time my chain snapped, but a resourceful mechanic riveted it back together with the aid of a sledge hammer. On New Year's Eve we had a major disaster - Geoff's gear cable broke. As a temporary repair, we wedged a piece of wood against the changer, keeping it in middle gear. We were close to the small village of Contulmo, so a short detour was made on the offchance of finding a bike shop. Bikes are very widely used in this part of Chile and even in small villages the general grocer often stocks tyres and a few spares, but no such luck here - the main form of transport seemed to be oxcarts with wooden wheels. We soon attracted a small crowd ready to help and an American who lived just down the road proved to have the very gear cable we needed in his tool box.

After a bottle of wine and a Sunday lunch of roast beef, it took little persuasion for us to stay and spend Hogmanay in the large hotel in the village - a huge, rambling, ramshackle, wooden structure supporting a vast tin roof and sprouting a forest of metal chimneys. It looked ready to fall down, but had obviously seen former splendours. We were entertained by the owner, Eduardo, who was renowned both for his guitar playing and his haunting songs. The New Year was celebrated with Auld Lang Syne, which we had to repeat several times and New Year's Day was spent relaxing in the orchard. This had been a lovely, unexpected rest.

The next day found us climbing another steep pass, but as the road was paved we were able to cycle all the way up. Unfortunately, the descent down the other side was rough gravel, so instead of whizzing down we had to pick our way carefully round the potholes. The scenery made up for the road, however - we were riding through lovely eucalyptus trees between banks of orange lilies and white daisies. We had a good run that day, but by 2pm the sun was overhead and beating down on us mercilessly as we progressed slowly along another unpaved section - time to hitch. A large delivery truck stopped for us and the bikes were hoisted up into the back. Unfortunately I had forgotten to bring the map into the cab with me and Geoff's 'Spanish in 3 Months' let us down badly, because after about an hour we realised we were heading north on Ruta 5. Warily we cycled back south for another 30km, then gave up and caught the bus to Pucon.

Having travelled west as far as the wild Pacific coast, we were now in the Lake District, which straddles the Andes between Chile and Argentina - a very scenic area of lakes and volcanoes; several with perfect snow cones and many still active. We had wanted to climb Volcan Villarica, but two days' heavy rain dampened our enthusiasm. Sudden eruptions are quite frequent in this area and in 1971 the small town of Conaripe had virtually been wiped out. We camped just outside the town on the volcanic ash and my very vivid imagination kept me on the alert all night! We finished this section of the trip at Puerto Varas and left the bikes in the care of a family there.

There are several passes across the Andes into Argentina, but the most scenic is the combined bus and boat trip - unfortunately a tourist trap and therefore very expensive. We broke the



journey at the Chilean frontier at Puella, on the eastern shore of the emerald green Lago Santos and camped in the garden of the gendarmerie. This gave us the chance to enjoy this remote spot at our leisure, instead of being rushed through with the other tourists.

We arrived at Barioloch two days before Angela. Our rendezvous, though very vague, proved to be spot on - we found her at the local climbing wall! Four hours hard walking with heavy packs brought us to Refugio Frey, at the eastern end of the tiny, shallow, Laguna Toncect. Good camping spots can be found all along the southern side of the lake, which is surrounded by a cirque of tottery-looking granite pinnacles and towers averaging around 2,000m high. We had a topo, but local knowledge is helpful in making the most of the climbing, which on the most frequented towers is on excellent granite. Most routes have some bolts, or pegs and abseil points, but Friends and nuts are essential. Angela totally bemused the young Argentinians by floating up and down the crags in her usual style, dressed in tiny shorts. On our last evening we had a 'total liquidacion' of our climbing gear and were amazed at the interest generated. It was a complete sell-out - now we were pounds lighter and dollars heavier!

We were now ready to move down to Southern Patagonia. It was possible to get to Puerto Natales, the jumping-off point for both the Torres del Paine and Fitzroy, by either a long bus journey through the pampas, a four day boat trip through the fiords down the west coast of Chile or along Chile's Carreterra Austral. Angela went off across Argentina and managed to stay ahead of us for the rest of the trip, but as we still had the bikes, the Carreterra Austral was an alternative not to be missed. This is an unpaved road which heads south for 1000km through dense rain forests, past glaciers and snowcapped mountains, turquoise lakes and rivers and spectacular waterfalls - this must be one of the best long distance mountain bike tours in the world.

As we had jettisoned our climbing gear, the bikes were lighter and better balanced and we were counting on being able to buy some food at the tiny settlements which were conveniently spaced along the road about 60km apart - the distance we hoped to cover daily. The first two days' good weather encouraged us on our way, the road becoming rougher and steeper as we





## JOURNEYING IN PATAGONIA

climbed above the blue waters of Lago Yelcho, past hanging glaciers and through virgin forest of bamboo and hardwood trees which formed an impenetrable mass of luxurious green vegetation, through which we caught glimpses of humming birds feeding on the nectar of the huge fuschia bushes which lined the road. Our staple diet throughout Chile had been lardy muffins. We were able to buy them, freshly baked, all along the way, as well as eggs, cheese and honey.

On the fifth day we came to our steepest pass. It had rained heavily during the night and was still quite damp the following morning. As we cycled up the road, we passed a volunteer international youth group whose task was to cut down the encroaching bamboo and giant gunnera plants, and to divert the streams which were a constant threat to the road. The clag was low and we only caught tantalising glimpses of mountains and glaciers through misty sheets of rain. At the end of the day a landslide ahead necessitated an unexpected halt at a tiny hamlet. The sole hospidaje was already crowded with stranded travellers, but a huge fire, plenty to eat and impromptu music provided a lively evening.

Our last day - only 75km to go! Fortunately the road surface was easier, but at no time could there be any let up in concentration or any relief from the bone-jarring ride for wrists and arms which were just as tired as our legs. We were now passing through wide valleys, where the hillsides were covered with fallen trees lying like grotesque bleached skeletons, a sad reminder of attempts to clear the land for grazing by the early settlers. There was still a feeling of pioneering times around here - men wearing wide brimmed hats and ponchos were riding around on beautiful ponies and stores in the small villages still had hitching rails outside. What a wonderful sight at the end of our last day to see Coihaique 10km away on the valley bottom - we swooped joyously down the only paved section of the whole route.

We sold our bikes to the Chief of Police, which paid for our flight to Puerto Natales in Southern Patagonia. Torres del Paine National Park is only 80km from Puerto Natales, and a dawn start in a rickety old bus brought us to the park entrance, where we had our first glimpse of the three huge towers rising dramatically from the wind-burned pampas. We camped beside a picturesque horseshoe lake in the Rio Paine valley and a pair of condors swooped and glided overhead as we had our evening meal. During the night, gale force winds blew in true Patagonian style and kept us awake, and the following day we had to battle against strong headwinds as we climbed a small col. Rainbows arched into the lake as squalls of rain swept down from the mountains. We took refuge in the Refugio Dickson for a couple of hours, then pushed on up the Rio de los Perros, through beautiful, ancient beech forest and camped at the river junction in a very sheltered spot, where the continuous roar of the river soon lulled us to sleep. The river crossing here had been tamed by two logs lashed together, with a rope handrail to steady my trembling progress.

After further steep climbing up to a col, in heavy clag and strong winds, we came suddenly over the top and realised that the grey ahead was not clag, but an enormous glacier. We were looking down from above on a fractured mass of ice, which filled the entire valley and beyond, seemingly to infinity. The way down was tiring, as it went steeply through woods and we had to climb over many giant fallen trees, but we soon had a fire blazing and a brew was followed by pasta, then by the drying of socks and trainers.

The next day was pleasantly short, as we wanted plenty of time to spend around the glacier. We spotted several parrots chattering away in the trees and every now and then the path emerged from the woods to give wonderful views of the blue glacier and icebergs floating in the lake beyond. We crossed several steep, scree-filled gullies and finally emerged at the place where the glacier calves into the lake - a towering mass of blue ice caves and tunnels - an incredible sight.

Our food was running out, as we had only managed to buy crackers and honey at the last refuge. We were feeling very hungry, and nearly two months of continuous strenuous exercise, with a lot less food than normal, seemed to have caught up with us, so we left our packs behind to walk up the Francis valley. The views were absolutely stunning, with clouds pouring off the top of the Paine Grande. The higher we climbed the more amazing the views became, with a range of jagged pinnacles high on the right, stretching from the Cuernos. We emerged from the trees into the remote upper basin, where we just sat and gazed in wonder - it was so immense. As we retraced our steps, avalanches were pouring off the massive snow and ice wall of Paine Grande. What a superb day!

Our lack of food decided our exit route, via the Rio Grey to the park administration centre, where we were sure of a bus back to Puerto Natales that day. We followed the southern shore of Lago Pehoe, a beautiful turquoise lake with magnificent views of Paine Grande and the Cuernos, where we saw herds of guanacos, rheas and circling condors. From Puerto Natales to Calafate in Argentina is 300km across desert-like pampas, and because of the unsurfaced road takes about seven hours by bus. After an overnight stop at the YHA, another dawn start along more dusty roads took us to the Los Glaciers National Park. The Park's major attractions are Cerro Torre and the legendary peaks of Mount Fitzroy. As soon as we left the bus, we had to shelter behind a building and dig into our sacks for our thermals - a Patagonian wind was trying to blow us back the way we had come. This was the first time we had felt quite so cold, but here the wind was blasting straight off the southern ice cap.

We set up camp just below the moraine wall at the edge of the forest, and then climbed the moraine ridge hoping for a view of Cerro Torre, but it was hiding in cloud. During the night a terrific snowstorm, which lasted all through the next day, kept us in our tent. I had a good book and Geoff just slept and slept. The following day the snow had stopped and with the tent almost dry we headed out to Fitzroy, via an enjoyable short cut passing the twin lakes Madre y Hija. Views of Fitzroy were beginning to appear, and the clouds finally cleared late afternoon - absolutely stunning. We camped in the woods, where eagles strutted around like farmyard cocks.

On day 5 we walked round to the Refugio Piedro del Freile, past superb granite crags by the side of the Rio Electrico, a very wild valley which attracts atrocious weather. After strong winds and torrential rain during the night, the whole valley seemed to be running with water, and the track was completely submerged as we made our way back to the roadhead. Plastic bin liners made a good substitute for Goretex cags, which we had decided against bringing in order to reduce weight.

We were almost at the end of our three months' trip. We didn't make Tierra del Fuego, but we did have time to visit the penguin colony at Punta Arenas before flying back to Santiago, which was still sweltering in the nineties. With two days to spare we took to the hills, to the small village of Banos Morales, which has some popular thermal baths and several fresh water springs, from which you can enjoy a refreshing cup of agua minerale con gas, completely free.

## MS-PLACED MOUNTAINS AN ACCOUNT OF THE BRITISH WOMEN'S KARAKORUM EXPEDITION 1994

*Penny Clay and Mary Twomey*

July 16 and four women sat in a garden in Manchester surrounded by heaps of gear: blue barrels, ropes, crampons, ice tools. We were called the British Women's Karakorum Expedition and the Karakorum (or Karakoram, we couldn't decide how it should be spelt) was our destination. Wet Scottish weekends had been idled away with plans for this trip. None of us had climbed in Pakistan before and for two of us this would be our first time in the Himalayas. Now, in the practicalities of packing, those whisky soaked evenings and hazy visions of "What will it be like?" were retreating rapidly. This was it - we were really going!

We, the team, were Julie Carter, Penny Clay, Wyn Clayton and Mary Twomey. Two pairs who, until some five months earlier had never met. The age range between oldest and youngest was twenty years and each of us brought to the team our own motivations. Some of these were only half-formed and vaguely shared yet they were firmly defined in the snowy shapes of our objectives. We hoped to make ascents of Mitre Peak (5945m), and the unclimbed south-west ridge of Sceptre (5800m) and Crown Peak, unclimbed, height unknown, all located on the Aling Glacier, north-west of Hushe. It all seemed quite straightforward written on paper. The only difficulties we could foresee were the unknown factors of the weather and our own performance at altitude.

An air of unreality pursued us from Manchester to Rawalpindi to base camp on the Aling. The term 'base camp' seemed open to debate as an arbitrary stretch of moraine, indistinguishable from all the other random heaps of the stuff, was where we chose to locate it. We had been in Pakistan a week and were learning fast. First, get out of 'Pindi as quickly as possible. Lesson number two: an inexperienced sirdar is worse than no sirdar at all! This laconic creature proved to be worth his weight in Scotch mist when the porters went on strike; an event which had been prophesied with some relish by more seasoned colleagues back in the UK, but that didn't make us feel any better. The sirdar's air of impenetrable insouciance was eventually ruffled and the strike resolved when one team member (who shall remain nameless) burst into tears of frustration!

The landscape in which we found ourselves was disturbingly reminiscent of an early episode of Doctor Who. Walking was too ambitious a term to describe progress on this frozen sea of choss - it was impossible to make it down to the toilet without risking a twisted ankle. In fact, none of us would have been surprised had the good Doctor himself suddenly staggered into base camp with hordes of steely eyed Cybermen hot in pursuit.

Our first foray saw us labouring up the eastern branch of the glacier. Sceptre and Mitre stood high on a snowy plateau above a tumble of ice-falls which formed an imposing barrier between two different worlds. The word 'moraine' ran around in our heads in an uninvited mantra, rolling off our tongues, laden with expletives. As we bivvied at 4300m and 4600m, our minds rushed ahead of our bodies, longing for the reliable crunch of snow underfoot, until the purgatory of the interminable moraine was exchanged for the short-breathed efforts of digging a bivvy in the snow at c5100m below the Sceptre-Mitre col. The singularity of the landscape was impressive: from constantly shifting waves of shattered rock to sweeping expanses of snow; from unbearable and inescapable shimmering heat to the welcome donning of down gear as the sun set and water bottles froze.

Our ascent of the eastern icefalls was the first recorded by a British party since the original exploration by the RAF thirty-three years earlier. 5am the following morning saw three of the team high on the summit ridge of Mitre Peak, having followed the RAF line of ascent on the west face. We were perched on steep but steady snow and ice reaching about 65°, dubiously eyeing the

ridge to the summit. Its extravagant cornices resembled the semi-successful efforts of a novice chef at a Baked Alaska. Adding to the air of instability was the state of the snow, which had deteriorated considerably over the last 100m or so. It seemed to possess the adhesive qualities of ball-bearings liberally laced with large pockets of air. Like the RAF before us, we left the summit to itself and, not unrelieved, headed swiftly back to the bivvy.

Base camp was by now moulding itself to match its title. A hefty dining table and chairs were constructed from the abundant building materials available. These edifices were constantly refined until at mealtimes we sat regally enthroned as if ready to re-enact some ancient pagan ritual. Here we discussed what our time on the col had revealed to us - the true location of the real Crown Peak. It stood out of sight from the main glacier and appeared to be over 6000m. Previous expeditions to the main Aling Glacier had mistaken what we realised was Portcullis for its regal neighbour. Portcullis had, we knew, been attempted by the RAF from the eastern side. Our proposed lines, however, lay on its western flank. So, setting our minds into moraine mode once more, we set off to establish a bivvy from which to view our routes.

As we flattened out an attractive stretch of iced gravel, we reflected that our climbing skills were far less valuable than our dry-stone-walling techniques. It seemed somehow faintly ludicrous to at last be standing in front of the mountain, a photograph of which we had been studying for the last few months. Unlike our by-now rather dog-eared picture, Portcullis was somehow bereft of the snow cover for which we had hoped. The weather was warm and avalanches of snow and rock poured down the couloir which had been unsuccessfully attempted in 1991. As we retreated into our bivvy bags to shelter from the advancing sleety rain, we looked forward only to descending to base camp.

Time was trickling away from us and as the weather windows grew shorter, the glacier took on a desert-like bloom. Tiny flowers and mosses blossomed with the rain and one final return to the Sceptre-Mitre col was planned. The south-west ridge of Sceptre had been abandoned by the RAF in favour of an ascent by the east ridge from the col. Three hard days slog and, once again, we were breaching the barrier of the icefalls and, Kafka-like, entering a metamorphosed world. A trip to the top of the col revealed the unclimbed north ridge of Mitre. We had no intention of trying to change its status either. Its huge cornices swirled and twisted as if contorted into some fantastic dinner party *pièce-de-résistance* by a demented chef. An ascent up to c5350m on Sceptre's south-west ridge showed the route above as straightforward.

Reassured, we returned to the bivvy ready for an attempt that night. Lulled perhaps into a somewhat blasé state by our trouble-free ascent of Mitre, it seemed a cruel blow when the weather started to mank in from the west. As the fresh snow built up on our bivvy bags, so our hopes of an ascent fell. First light saw us retreating disconsolately, not able to relax until we had negotiated the ever menacing and newly disguised woman-eating crevasses, for the last time. As we lost height and the snow turned to rain we could think only of the comfort of dry tents and hot cups of tea.

Safely ensconced once more at Base Camp we could reflect on our attempt. Should we have tried it anyway? Had we been too cautious? Of course there is nothing new in being stymied by the weather, but familiarity doesn't always ease the disappointment. The porters had arrived and it was time to go home. Back to the real world? We couldn't decide.

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## TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED

*Julie Carter*



*Sula Peak, showing couloir*

Last summer I spent eight weeks in Baltistan with Mandy Glanvill. We arrived in Hushe on the 5th of July, Mandy's birthday. Having left our house less than 3 days earlier, we had done our shopping and were raring to go. Such an efficient start surprised us, it must be a record we thought. After that point it is difficult to recall very much which went to plan. As it turned out we spent a week in the tent trying to survive and stay sane throughout atrocious weather in a pretty remote situation on the Aling glacier. We emerged with the sunshine but 5 days later we beat a hasty retreat from near the summit of Sceptre peak (5900m) as lightning and thunder signalled the return of storms and another week's enforced confinement at base camp.

Creativity and resourcefulness were highly valuable qualities in such a situation and thankfully Mandy excelled. The pages of my diary were slowly turned into a stock of board games and a pack of cards. Despite being 'see through', the cards provided hours of entertainment. One day the storms abated enough to allow a snow cock stalking expedition but the highlight was watching ibex at close range.

Faced with no prospect of improvement and a week to wait for the porters we decided to distract ourselves with the challenge of carrying all our own gear down the glacier. Karakoram glaciers are notorious and this was/is the biggest sea of choss you can imagine. We had 4 porter loads - 2 each! I could not lift my load but, helped into a standing position, I could make forward progress. At least twenty yards passed before I had to stop for digestive emergencies (from both ends!). It took us 3 days to stumble to the end of the glacier which was about 6 miles. Mandy had 2 huge plastic barrels strapped to each side of her sack and my load gradually disappeared into

them as every time I fell over she took pity on me. Our local friends in Hushe were more than amazed.

In the end we went for a wonderful trek through alpine flowers and impressive rock scenery to the very pleasant K7 base camp. We had never intended to go there but had been enticed by reports that Sulu peak (6200m) might make a good climb. It had an impressive couloir which looked long but I decided to give it a go. We set off from the bivvy at about 4900m at 1 a.m. Within half an hour we were on the snow. The true size of the features around were becoming apparent and the whole thing was a lot bigger than it looked. It soon steepened. Mandy returned to the bivvy and I set off with both our axes. Provided the climbing was OK the difficulty would be in getting up and down before the sun came into the couloir around 10 a.m. I set my watch alarm to go each hour so I could keep a track. By 5 a.m. I reached a rock band and after that it was front pointing all the way. I tried to get into a good rhythm and I was very well acclimatised. The hardest thing was keeping concentration, since it was steep. My alarm went as I reached the foot of a daunting chimney. 6 a.m. so I thought I was doing well but I looked and it was 9! I could see the summit less than 100m away. I climbed the awkward chimney, went to the summit, turned around immediately and exactly reversed the moves downward. I could not have stopped otherwise I would I have been too scared that I could not down climb it. Instinct had taken over. Front pointing back down to the rock band was hard as the inch or so of snow on the surface had turned soft and placements were now in the hard ice underneath. At the rock band I could stop for a drink and soon I was down. I could not have done it a second faster.

On the trek back, as we stepped off the last bit of glacier and onto a good path, I reflected on the fact that we did not have any more dangers ahead and that we had survived safe and sound. A few hundred meters further on the path was blocked by a burning tree which had just been struck by lightning.



*Mandy carrying on the Aling Glacier*



## A TRIP AROUND ANNAPURNA

*Christine Sheard*

November 1994 saw Shirley and I off to Nepal, packaged! The last time I was packaged was 1960, when I went on an Austrian Alpine Club Rock and Ice Course, since then I have been free range, as it were. Ignoring the opprobrium from husband and son, "ecological damaging, taking advantage of the third world", etc. I went and thoroughly enjoyed it.

We had decided on the Annapurna Circuit. I have always wanted to see the Himalaya and this walk provided a good introduction. We accompanied an organised climbing group to the Chulus. Included was a walk up to their high camp in order to acclimatise for the Thorang La, (5415m) and the option of 'doing' their first peak. We were then to continue round the circuit, accompanied by a sirdar and porter and utilising lodges.

Our flight was not uneventful. Fog at Karachi resulted in a diversion back to Dubai, thus we arrived at Karachi late for the connection to Khatmandu. Fortunately, it had been delayed for us, but the crew had gone awol. We left a number of hours later, when a crew had finally been assembled, and arrived at Khatmandu in the dark. For this leg of the journey I sat next to the captain who was to pilot the return flight. When the landing was imminent he grasped my hand and, transfixed by the altimeter, we said prayers to "Allah the Compassionate and Merciful". He confided the fact that they did not like landing here in the dark, particularly as they had 'lost' a plane two years before.

When we arrived it was the middle of Diwali; they have a different name for the festival in Nepal, but the celebration was still a festival of light. Candles and fairy lights were everywhere, so arriving in the dark was lovely. This introduction to Nepal was entrancing, and we were treated to 'carols' outside the hotel. We did not have time to spend long in the capital, but were whizzed to the required tourist spots of Bhaktapur and the Bodnath Stupa. As a budding art historian, I did not have long enough and have made a promise to myself to revisit such delights at leisure.

We started the walk from Ghorka and in some respects it was the loveliest part of the walk; it missed the new road in to Bessi Shar and the way led through beautiful villages. The lasting image is of warmth and colour as we wended our way through paddy fields. Wooden swings and ferris wheels for the children were seen at intervals, all being well used during the three day holiday.

Cactus hedges, bananas, monkeys, bright yellow fields of what I took to be mustard provided the brilliant foreground to the backdrop of mountains. Houses decorated with patterns made of dung paste on their outer walls, men



*Shirley and Gelu, our Sirdar, in the Khali Gandaki*

using the age old method of manufacturing mud bricks, uniform clad children wending their way home from school, singing and chant counting with children who curiously surrounded us on one campsite - these are the sights and sounds which are stored in my memory.

We entered the Marsyandi Khola at Bhulbhule and followed the true left bank of the river most of the way, so avoiding the dusty road that is being pushed up the valley. I hope not too far. Men were shouldering bundles of polythene piping for irrigating hill paddies, new village pumps, shops with material for saris,



*The author and Gelu, Tilicho Pass to Peak*

everything you need. At Chame you can buy supplies, films, toilet rolls, most of the necessities for trekkers, including woollen gloves, hats and jumpers. One American girl we kept meeting had complained that she thought she was going "trucking" not "trekking". I wonder if she made it.

Above 3000m the weather we encountered was good, but every afternoon the higher tops to the north of the Annapurnas were engulfed in mist. This was regarded by the leaders of the climbing party as unusual for the time of year. About the time we were at Pisang thirteen German climbers and climbing porters were killed on Pisang Peak, 6091m.

Once the Marsyangdi River swung NW we were in the rain shadow of the Annapurnas and into country which had Tibetan style stone buildings, mani walls, chortens and prayer flags. Hinduism had gradually given way to Buddhism. The landscape was wintry with pine forests and fields piled with stones, the overall colours being brown, soft ochres and the dark green of the pines. The white of the snows was only appreciated if you looked upwards. From Pisang onwards, the high mountains were more apparent and when we camped at the foot of the Chetajit Khola we looked into the massive cirque leading to the ridge between Annapurna 4 and 3. The scale was breathtaking.

From our campsite just above the Hongde airstrip we climbed this side valley. At home I had worked out that it was going to be a long, long, climb to the base camp for the Chulus and it was far over the recommended 400m a day above 3000m. I worked it out to be approximately 1300m. This was done in a day and I felt it was too much, even with the aid of Diamox. I suppose a small party wanting to climb in the Chulus might find a place to camp midway.

We spent a day at base camp acclimatising and then flogged up another 800m or so to the high camp. There we enjoyed magnificent panoramas along the range of 6000m peaks to the east and the Annapurna massif to the south. I can only say it was superb and worth the climb, even though we did not do the peak, but had a lazy time at the high camp, soaking up the view.

It had been our intention to do the easier Chulu peak but I, for one, had been quietly revising my itinerary on the way up. I had worked out that to climb this somewhat uninteresting hill and then go straight down to base camp for the night and then continue over the Thorang La to Muktinlath without a rest day was a bit of a tall order, in spite of acclimatising. Also it was continuing to cloud over in the afternoons and if I had been in charge I am sure my concern would have been to get up and down as fast as possible.



## A TRIP AROUND ANNAPURNA

The morning of the ascent I blundered about over foul blocks in a decidedly lethargic fashion and was rather relieved to find that Shirley, not using Diamox, had a touch of altitude. So we decided to give the mountain a miss and not jeopardise the trek which was the main object of the exercise. We had quite a way to go in the time. The others returned absolutely knackered, so we felt justified, and set off down after another rest day. At this height the ground had the appearance of being barren, but we were walking on carpets of sedum so in Spring it must be a marvellous sight. Lower down the Chetajt Khola the hillsides were clothed with juniper and berberis. A photograph of the Annapurnas from there in Spring would be beautiful.

We reached the valley and walked to Manang, the regional capital, and enjoyed the bliss of a tea-house and a bed. This is by far the best way to do the circuit; camping is rather like visiting the country in a self contained bubble, the tea houses were far more sociable. We were definitely in the land of the mani wall and chorten; unfortunately we had missed the Bhuddist monastery at Braga. Now the valley had changed character, high mountains all around. When we reached Phedi, at the foot of the Thorang La, we found two lodges. We stayed at the higher one, which was crowded and apparently the first one was OK and less busy.

We set off for the pass at about 6.30 a.m., in windless, perfect conditions, no problem. Some enterprising Nepali had built a 'cafe' almost at the summit, so cups of lemon tea were drunk whilst enjoying the superb views of the Chulus and Annapurnas. A fine excuse for a rest! At the summit chorten the view to the east was quite a contrast with the brown desert towards Mustang and Tibet; a panorama which included the Daulaghiri range and the distant village of Muktinath, our goal for the day. After a long descent we reached it and enjoyed a tour of the Hindu and Bhuddist shrine. After the arid, tiring walk it seemed an oasis of peace, with water cascading from the 108 animal-headed water spouts. Here, inside the temple, was the flame of natural gas curtained by a spring of water which makes this place the second most revered site in Nepal. A beautiful spot.

On reaching Muktinath we booked in at our hotel, which sported a roof top restaurant with views of the local police card school and into a courtyard where the family were in the process of butchering an animal, possibly a goat. Not for vegetarians this. Everything was being used and everyone was included; the children were being given raw liver to eat and then the stomach was inflated and, with squeals of delight, they chased this environmentally friendly balloon up the dusty road. The bowels were stuffed with meat and the sausages hung under the rafters of the roof to dry : fair shares for the birds too! Who needs Tesco's? I am sure the life is far from idyllic, but on a warm, sunny day, after a wash and laundry session at the pump, it seemed it.

The Kali Gandaki is a whole new story, another experience in itself. The deepest valley in the world, it has a profound sense of the miniscule; tiny dots turned out to be horsemen, or mule trains heading towards Jomsom or Tibet. It was the main road which saw centuries of trading, an ancient salt road trending north to south between what were the high kingdoms and India. One day I expect it will be tarmacadamed. It was the road where I encountered a mule in the middle of a swing bridge over a rather deep gorge. A memorable experience, a mule will not alter its course for anybody. Fortunately, its brothers were already across. Unfortunately, this was the road that took me home far too soon. It's a trip I can recommend.

## A Short Day in the Tien Shan

### Chris Watkins

One of the books that had a big effect on me when I first got interested in mountains was Eric Shipton's *That Untravelled World*. In part of this he describes being based in Kashgar and spending his week-ends exploring the Tien Shan, it sounded so romantic and so very exciting. Well it does not seem quite so exciting, but I now found myself exploring the Tien Shan during my week-ends. Living in Almaty, the capital of Kazakhstan, has added a different dimension to my week-ends and holidays. The most amazing thing is leaving home in the morning to climb or ski on 4,000m peaks and be home for afternoon tea.

Various Pinnacle and other friends have been to visit me which has been a real bonus as a foreign capital can prove to be a lonely place without your mates to share a good crack with. However, I think it is very doubtful that they would have travelled 5,000 miles for the pleasure of seeing me, if it had not been for the allure of mysterious foreign peaks. Anyway I have loved them all coming to visit and I hope the steady stream continues. They all have their own stories to tell but I will recall one on my days at an ordinary week-end.

I was to climb with this English guy whom I had recently met. He brought his girlfriend which at the time did not seem too bad, but in fact had significant implications on the day. We were climbing above Chimbuluk, our local ski resort and had chosen a route which we thought looked about 3 or 4 pitches, but in fact turned out to be at least 7 and harder than it looked at first sight. We set off very early and it was cold but we decided that later it was going to be roasting and that we would not take any gear but allow ourselves the luxury of climbing without a sack. The sun was slow reaching this north facing crag and soon we were shivering and it was hard to stay motivated, as we blew on cold fingers. However things started to warm up by the time I was leading the second pitch and the sun was tantalizingly getting closer. Sadly, just as the sun reached us, so did the clouds that had steadily been building for the last couple of hours.

The third pitch found Andrew leading across a quite tricky traverse, with very little protection, but good climbing - I was suitably impressed. Now it was my turn again and I led off on what turned out to be a truly superb pitch and one on which I nearly didn't succeed. There was very little gear and as we really didn't have any idea what the grade was, it felt very necky pushing up into the unknown. At one point I was on a narrow ledge wanting to go up but the gear was one small wire at waist level and I could see no sign of anything above me. So I was in that familiar position of 'can I, can't I?' I then spotted what was a kind of downward hanging flake with a small gap behind it. Some very skillful (if I may so say) manipulation eventually succeeded in establishing an acceptable piece of protection, higher and bigger than the last (a stonker in comparison - a number 2 rock!). So I began to inch up, at every step (figuratively speaking) hoping it was not going to get harder, but all the way there were great positive hand holds which allowed me to perform the delicate ballet demanded of the feet. This was one of those pitches that you let out a big wow as you top out of; it was one of the finest I had led and on discussing it, we reckoned the sustained climbing with only a handful of runners pushed it beyond the grade I have previously led. I was elated, and as I sat on the belay ledge I began to think of all the routes that I had thought were beyond my reach, and now might be possible; I could hardly contain my eagerness to get back to Britain to start venturing on to new ground. We eagerly climbed on, but were beginning to suffer the odd shower and thinking how stupid we had been leaving our rucksacks behind.

Climbing in a three, one of whom was inexperienced, had made progress very slow and time had just zipped by. It was now 6pm and we had started the route at 8.30 am. Normally I would

## A SHORT DAY IN THE TIEN SHAN

have been very thirsty if not ravenous, but I seemed OK. We were belayed on the side wall of a big corner and it was my turn to continue up this corner, I traversed round but the moves ahead looked even beyond my new found height of leading ability, I ventured in another direction but it felt wrong and after much hesitating another 45 minutes had gone. Maybe I was getting tired. Time for decisions to be made.

At this point I came to my senses, we may only be climbing just above the road but the start of the route was at 2,600 metres and it was in a big mountain range, what were we thinking of treating it like Tremadoc? Better start playing safe and get ourselves out of here - the sun still had not come out, but the clouds were now clearing. So began our descent. Three abseiling, one of whom needed a safety rope, took time and I was getting anxious. We then of course got the rope stuck and were perched on a narrow ledge - the very one where earlier I had spent aeons finding my little bit of protection. However there were two pitons off to the side that we could abseil off of .....if only we could get the rope. I was just resigning myself to prusiking up when Andrew managed to spring it free and incredibly it then came through very easily. Sighs of relief all round.

I instantly was down the next pitch in the gathering gloom (no summer light to midnight here as in Scotland) and quickly found our next anchor - a collection of bushes. But what was taking so long, Esther was not coming and they didn't hear my questioning shouts. At last she appeared over the edge and I breathed a sigh of relief, we would just get the last abseil set up before it was dark. But what now, Andrew was screaming something I did not know what, she was shouting at me and at him, me yelling at her to keep moving. The safety rope was jammed up somewhere, she was hanging on a very steep section unable to untie the safety rope and of course no knife. I started to climb up the pitch with a prusik on the ab. rope as my safety line, it all felt ridiculous and I realised this was getting out of hand. Eventually she sussed to get her weight off of the safety and on to the ab. rope, untied and started moving downwards.

So all together again in the dark, on a wide grassy terrace at the top of the last pitch, rope round the base of a number of bushes, well that should hold! I waited until last and eventually was on my way. I was going slowly moving the knot down with me so that it was not going to jam up amongst the bushes but, as one who was not tired might have suspected, by the time I got to the edge of the cliff the rope would not run - too much friction round all my bushes. Prusik back up the mud and crud, re-thread around one bush and try again. Down into the murky depths below, a short spin out of control across the muddy slope, scraping legs on unseen foreign objects and I was down. We were all safe and Esther had survived her first epic.

We reached the car at midnight. I think only climbers can know how easily time can be lost. It certainly gave me a jolt and a reminder that we are talking **big** mountains and must treat them with respect. As I lay that night thinking on the day, yes frustrated at not finishing the climb, but we'd had a great mountain day in the Tien Shan. Almaty is not such a bad place to live.

## **BIRTHS**

Hilary Lawrenson and Jim  
A son, Kit Thomas, July 1994

Rebekah Beadle and Robin  
A daughter, Carrie, July 1994

## **DEATHS**

Phyllis Jackson 1993  
Eleanor Winthrop Young 1994  
Kay Hewins 1994  
Anne Dickinson 1994  
Mrs T. A. Andrews 1994  
Joan Cochrane 1995  
Joyce Beard 1995  
Margaret Darvall 1996

## OBITUARIES

### ELEANOR WINTHROP YOUNG 1895 - 1994

On the flyleaf of our copy of the history of the Pinnacle Club my mother wrote - for once almost legibly - that she wasn't happy about the frontispiece, a large picture of herself, the first president - "Mrs Kelly was the real heroine of the Club." This is of course true, but also expresses a lifelong modesty about her own climbing achievements. She came from a family in which mountaineering was part of life and only special feats were talked about or recorded.

Len was born in Yorkshire, in the village of Carleton-in-Craven, the youngest of five children of Cecil and Alizon Slingsby. For her first eleven years, before going as a boarder to Queen Margaret's School, Scarborough, she lived in a paradise never quite regained, running wild on the moors with her brother Laurence, or scrambling on the fells under the attentive eye of her father. All the children learned mountain manners, the two youngest were natural climbers.

It was here that she first met Geoffrey Winthrop Young, when she was seven and he was twenty six. Cecil Slingsby, the "Father of Norwegian Mountaineering", had long been a hero to Geoffrey, who was now drawn to the whole family, with their liveliness and vivid good looks. They remained friends and in their teens Laurence and Len were invited to the meetings at Pen y Pass and introduced to rock climbing in Wales. After leaving school and - supposedly - studying Domestic Economy in Edinburgh, Len started to train as an actress with the Liverpool Repertory Theatre; quite a daring thing to do in those days; and although this career was cut short it was important in her life, adding a powerful and flexible voice to natural poise. Then, in 1917, the two people she loved most were struck down; Laurence killed in France; and Geoffrey severely wounded in Italy, his left leg amputated. When he returned to England they were married, in April 1918.



Their life together lasted forty years, a loving companionship in which all interests were shared. Geoffrey learned to walk and climb again, the Pen y Pass parties were re-started. Len joined the Fell and Rock Club and helped to form the Pinnacle Club. In 1926, by then the mother of two young children, she delighted her father by climbing Skagastölstind, on the 50th anniversary of his first ascent. Later she traversed Skag and climbed other peaks in the area - through the 20's and 30's, up to 1939, she climbed in the Alps with guides, family or friends.

Their home became a centre for aspiring mountaineers and for the encouragement of the young. All this suited Len, never much interested in the "homes and gardens" part of life. She loved travel, planning meetings, supporting causes, above all variety. This restlessness affected our family life, for she found it difficult to live anywhere longer than four or five years.

In the early part of the second world war, when my brother was in the R.N.V.R and I away at school, she grew impatient with inaction and joined the F.A.N.Y (having lied about her age) and drove lorries in convoy. "It's hard on her," said my father when she had to come home, "she should be at the head of a cavalry charge." She did, however, find a sympathetic task in 1941, editing Cecil Slingsby's "Norway" for Blackwell's Mountaineering Library.

Inevitably, because of the gap in their ages and because she lived to be nearly 99, she had many years without Geoffrey and missed him all the time. As long as she could she continued to travel the world, twice visiting Norway in her eighties and making a speech at the centenary banquet in Turtagrö in July 1976. She would go miles to attend meetings and was sought out by those wanting to share in or learn from her memories.

At her best she was wonderfully buoyant, sure of the goodwill and interest of others; thus she made friends wherever she went. "I do wish," she said in old age, "people wouldn't say I'm wonderful, I'm not! I do what I like doing" - and she went on doing it, in spite of increasing lameness. In her nineties she insisted on negotiating our steep staircase in Norfolk, using the sitting method for the descent. When all movement became difficult she fought boredom and frustration with gallantry, but inner rage. Mercifully the final loss of memory moved her into a dream world where all those she loved were alive together; in a way she got back to Carleton and the dales and fells.

*Marcia Newbolt*

## OBITUARIES

### **ANNE DICKINSON**

*Joined 1988*

Anne Dickinson died after falling from easy rocks approaching a climb at El Chorro in Spain in November 1994. This was her first visit to Spain, a winter hot rock break slotted into the busy agenda she had created for herself in a year off between study and the Bar.

Anne had a tremendous energy for life. She played hard and worked hard. She had given up teaching to study Law at Lancaster University, graduating in the summer of 1994. She had the offer to go to the Bar in the Autumn, but decided to defer it for a year to get back to her climbing. She also intended to improve her fiddle playing, get back to dance and was committed to working as a volunteer for the Citizens Advice Bureau.

In the main, Anne was a mountain lover; occasionally she would go cragging on the roadside, but given a willing partner she would often prefer a high mountain crag even if the weather was better by the road. In Britain she spent her weekends in the Lakes more often than in Wales and she was also a member of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club. In winter, she was a devotee of Scottish Ice and in May always made a pilgrimage to North West Scotland.

My first climb with Anne came about through a chance meeting in Torridan; we started to walk into the Coire Mhic Fhearcair at midday and topped out on the Central Buttress at ten thirty at night. It was a wonderful introduction to her enthusiasm and her steadiness under the pressure of failing light and difficult route finding. The Big Top on the East Face of Anoch Dubh was the route of the holiday for Anne; a superb, bold lead. Days on the hills with Anne were memorable because her liveliness could add spark to the dampest day and enhance the finest; you were always guaranteed a wide ranging conversation and debate to distract you from the miles or to banter on the stances and her love of the mountains in all their forms and moods always shone through.

In the Summer she moved home to a field in Argentière or elsewhere in the European Alps and would spend as much time as she could climbing there. She juggled people and plans with verve to extract the maximum rewards from her days in the mountains. She had ascended many of the classics in the Mont Blanc range, including the Frendo Spur and the Forbes Arête. She was back in Argentière in the summer of 1994, and I remember her satisfaction when, by coincidence, several friends gathered at the bivouac ledges above the Albert Premier Hut one clear night and chattered about life and the world and routes to be done. The glacier shone in the moonlight and Anne was in the place she loved.

*Val Hennelly*

## BOOK REVIEWS

### NORTHEAST OUTCROPS

*compiled and edited by Neil Morrison.*  
*The Scottish Mountaineering Trust, 1994,*  
*ISBN 0 907521 41 X*

Like any recently published guide, this is “an essential addition to your climbing library” ...if you are going to be doing a lot of climbing in the north-east of Scotland. It gives extensive coverage of the Aberdeen seacliffs (although, to echo the familiar gripe of every intrepid newcomer, some of the access directions are less than crystal clear), which are a paradise if you like your climbs short and brutal, or long and brutal in some cases. There are some kinder options if you look for them (I can vouch for Floor’s Craig and Fulmar Wall); and some even catch the sun at certain times of the year. However, in general, the gems of the north coast, Logie Head and Cummingston, have a bigger range of reasonably-angled climbs.

What the guide also covers is Glen Clova, one of the area’s better-kept secrets, thanks to it being left out of Kevin Howett’s (almost) comprehensive guide, *Climbing in Scotland* (Constable, 1990). This is nearer my idea of paradise: beautiful, red, generally excellent granite, a real mountain crag feel and only fifteen steep minutes from the road.

What it doesn’t cover is Huntley’s Cave, which I find strange, as Grantown is very much in the northeast, the crag is an outcrop and whichever existing guide it appears in is very out-of-date. Wisdom/rumour has it that it is in fact a highland outcrop and will therefore be featuring in that long-awaited volume. (Don’t hold your breath). It also does not cover the recent bolting activity on the cliffs north of Arbroath, until recently an extremely well kept secret, but now becoming more accessible by locally published topos, which should be available in Tisos in Dundee.

However, if you are unable to exist without bolts, it does include the Angus quarries, replete with atmosphere, rubbish and some particularly choice graffiti. They are also steep and fingery (Ley), or in the case of Balmashanner, ridiculously steep and probably fingery if you are able to do anything harder than the “easy” bucket-jug climbs.

My major criticism of the guide is the difficulty of finding your way around it. There is no index to the climbs, nor to the bewildering number of coastal crags, which would help those without a photographic or geographic memory capable of dealing with the author’s Aberdeen-centred perspective. Locating where precisely the amazing photographs were taken is an amazing undertaking. Similarly, there is no first ascent list, although some of the information is there if you sift through the historical bit. All in all, good coverage of a varied region, but requiring careful reading and a degree of navigational skill!

*Tess Fryer*



## **BOOK REVIEWS**

### **PENNINE WAYS: EDALE TO KIRK YETHOLM FOR THE INDEPENDENT WALKER**

*by John Gillingham: maps by Jeremy Ashcroft.*

*The Crowood Press, 1994,*

*£17.95, ISBN 1 85223 841 0*

This book has been compiled to provide alternative routes to the now sadly eroded Pennine Way. As it is for the "independent walker" I am at a loss as to the reasons for publication, other than money spinning. An independent walker presumably buys her own OS maps for the route and is capable of sorting out her own alternatives. A book such as this will ensure that the lesser known ways will be used by the not-so-independent person, thus bringing more trods into being. I have strong reservations about highly detailed walking guide books; "turn left at the next stile" etc. etc..

However, after debating with some walking friends on this particular issue, I realise we must bow to the inevitable. After all, one does use detailed climbing guide books and walking and trekking guides are useful in areas where maps may not be as accurate as ours. The Pennine Way may be "foreign parts" to some. I recently met an American backpacker on the clints below Penyghent who seemed to have strayed involuntarily from the straight and narrow and discovered a delightful path which I often use. I assured him that it connected with the recommended P.W. and he continued happily, able to enjoy an as yet not too bootmarked path. One must, perhaps, accede to the need for such books to peruse and enjoy.

As I read through the book I noticed one diversion, Laddow Rocks to Standedge via Dovestones Edge, followed the route of one of my afternoon walks above our house. I used this to vet the accuracy of the description and the map provided. The text is slightly inaccurate in indicating that Long Lane takes the walker to the summit of Alderman, "the top crowned by a huge obelisk" This war memorial is approximately 3/4 mile to the NW of the summit of the Alderman, but the independent walker should be able to sort this out and the ground is relatively benign. I hope there are no such discrepancies on more serious terrain. However, having (until our local leisure people decided to signpost an Oldham Way), been able to walk this little bit and not meet a soul, I have to admit that the blow by blow account to get the party through low-lying fields and back to the summit of Standedge is good.

I hope the author's solution of alternatives to alleviate the erosion problem of the original route does not in itself extend the problem to the ways he suggests. Our moors are now becoming tamed by the sad march of the paved way and the wellmeaning signpost: a sequel to Tom Stephenson's dream that he could not have anticipated. However, one can appreciate the dedication and enthusiasm which has produced this volume and the historical snippets provide interesting reading during the long winter nights. Useful information is provided on accommodation, shops and the necessary maps and there are many beautiful photographs to inspire the walker. The size of the book precludes it from the rucksack, but no doubt the enthusiast can spend many a happy hour with maps and pencil planning the trip.

*Christine Sheard*

**TRAINING FOR ROCK CLIMBING***by S. Bollen.**London: Pelham, 1994,**£14.99, ISBN 0 7207 2034 6*

At last, I thought, a book on how to push your standard up, or at least get the old one back, without going climbing four times a week. Motivation at my bedside. Alas no: Bollen makes it clear that "there is no panacea, no routine that is guaranteed to turn any ageing V.Diff leader into a competition superstar".

He assumes a level of aerobic fitness based on regular weekly exercise, such as jogging, before you even start 2 or more training sessions per week. Even so, he says that "any training programme will need 3-4 months of dedication to see much in the way of improvement". Hopes dashed, I decided to read the book anyway, and it is actually very motivating, even if you don't put in the level of commitment he thinks is necessary to get better.

Areas of training covered include warming up, flexibility, gym work, climbing and mind training. The text is easy to follow and there are helpful illustrations of the exercises described. The book is intended for both men and women, novice climbers through to superstars, and generally makes realistic assumptions about what people can and can't do with their bodies. There is, however, a gem in the section on pull-ups: "(Try) hanging from full stretch, pull up and lock off. Swing your right foot up to touch the bar on the right, lower it and then swing your left foot up..."

All the exercises described are specifically geared towards rock climbing; the stretches described will help your technique so you are less dependent on strength and power and gym routines must imitate climbing movements as closely as possible. The chapter on mental training is excellent, especially for couch potatoes or people who can't fit Bollen's schedule into their own. It looks at goal setting, relaxation, concentration, visualisation (while safely on the ground, rehearse the crux moves and then they won't be so frightening or hard when you actually get there) and being positive.

The only chapter probably not relevant to health-conscious Pinnacles is Nutrition. This is the nod towards the special needs of competition climbers or junk food addicts. A substantial chapter at the end covers the prevention and treatment of injuries, not surprising as Bollen is the medical advisor to the BMC. So - this book won't make me an E2 leader just yet, but if I were to join the happy band of "retired" members with lots of time to climb I'd certainly buy it and then - who knows! For anyone who wants to do something towards improving their climbing performance it is well worth studying.

*Margaret Clennett*

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

### **WALKING THE GALLOWAY HILLS**

*by Paddy Dillon.*

*Cicerone Press, 1995,*

*£7.99, ISBN 1 85284 1680*

This pocket-sized guidebook offers detailed descriptions of 40 hill walks in the Galloway ranges, with black and white and coloured photographs. A map is provided for each walk, although I would have found a map of the whole area useful for planning a walking holiday. The author obviously knows and loves these hills, and includes a lot of historic and natural history background. At £7.99, it would be worth getting hold of this book for a visit, of any length, to this lovely part of Scotland.

*Jane Stedman*

### **FEAR AND FASCINATION: THE 100 BEST ROCK CLIMBS IN ENGLAND AND WALES**

*by Geoffrey Odds.*

*Crowood Press, 1994,*

*£18.99, ISBN 1 85223 607 8*

'Fear and Fascination' is such a wonderful title for a book on climbing that I volunteered to review it before anyone else had chance to draw breath. Having acted in haste, I then had the opportunity to repent at leisure. This is just a book of climbs selected by the author and constitutes a personal view of the best climbs in Great Britain: we've seen it all before.

Regrettably, the title appears to have exhausted the writer's entire stock of creativity; a foray between the covers reveals as much fascination as a wet Monday night in Workington.

First of all, I leafed through the book - as one does - looking at the photographs. There are some nice colour pictures in the centre of the book, but the majority are a dreary grey and, I suspect, monochrome prints from colour originals.

Then I proceeded to the prose, which fails utterly to engage the reader, let alone stimulate her. I found my eyelids drooping and the book slipping out of my grasp as I ploughed through the pedestrian phrases and wearisome waffle. Apparently the author is an accountant and he would be well advised to stick to numbers; he is clearly ill at ease in the world of words and pictures.

*Sue Logan*

**THE HIGH TATRAS**

by Colin Saunders and Renata Narozna.  
 Cicerone Press, 1994,  
 £14.99, ISBN 1 85284 152 4

At first glance this seemed an interesting guide, packed full of information, but as I read through it, I found it increasingly irritating. Initially, it annoyed me by being patronising to the walker: giving very basic information, as if it was an introduction to walking. It advises me on how to carry my rucksack as well as what to carry. Do people taking their children on a walking holiday really need to be told to start them on easier walks first before tackling harder ones? Surely walkers know that scrambling involves hands and feet? Come on, I buy a walking guide for information on the country of location and its walks: I buy a technical guide to advise me how to walk!

OK, so I got off to a bad start, what about the info on the walking routes? This is divided into two sections; one for Slovakia and one for Poland and these are each subdivided into two, covering Route Suggestions and Path Descriptions. The Route Suggestion sections give a suggested route choice which may involve an amalgamation of paths, while the Path Description sections simply describe the paths.

I found it difficult to marry the two together, even in conjunction with my map (ordinance survey type-not included), but the individual path descriptions were useful. I found that using the path descriptions and the map, I could quite well plan my own route, linking up the paths, but I accept that some people like complete routes suggested for them and the Route Suggestions may be a helpful indicator.

The information on local regulations is useful - visas, roads, facilities etc. The guide tells you of routes that are only allowed (by authorities) to be done with a guide unless you are a climber and can prove this (e.g. by having the correct equipment in your sack). The information on local services and accomodation is also good, including telephone numbers: certainly a bonus when planning routes, booking etc.

Despite criticisms the book does give a general guide to the walking in the area and certainly would be a help in planning a trip, in view of the supplementary information it contains. Having worked in Eastern Europe myself I do appreciate the difficulties involved in gleaning information and presenting it in a workable form and this guide certainly has had a lot of work put into it to try and achieve this. It is a shame it was spoilt for me by the condescending attitude it takes towards the average walker in the sections on equipment and preparation and I'm afraid the text was not particularly inspiring. I did not get the "I must go there" feeling after reading it.

*Chris Watkins*

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

### **50 BEST SCRAMBLES IN THE LAKE DISTRICT**

*by Bill O'Connor.*

*David & Charles, 1995,*

*£15.99, ISBN 0 7153 0069 5*

I suppose you can't have everything: a book with so many top quality colour photographs isn't going to be a handy size. So this is a book you will probably consult in advance and leave behind on the coffee table when trying the routes.

These are divided into the North Western, North Eastern and the South Western Fells. 33 are described, of great variety and interest and the superb photography really does inspire one to go out and try them. The text is good, too, with sufficient detail, helpful little maps drawn by Al Phizacklea and interesting snippets of local history.

*Chris Stretch*

### **THE TARNs OF LAKELAND VOL. 1: WEST**

*by John and Anne Nuttall.*

*Cicerone Press, 1995,*

*£8.99, ISBN 1 85284 171 0*

This is a handy size, modest looking, paperback with plenty of drawings and maps done by John Nuttall himself. These impart a simple and unassuming air to the book, which I assume is deliberate, but some of the drawings struck me as so uninformative as to be irritating. Pictures of the landscape, fine, but a tractor loading timber? Anyway, the book contains a wealth of information about some little known tracks and, indeed, tarns I'd never heard of. The sort of book which would help you choose a walk on a rainy day and guide you through areas which you thought familiar, but hadn't actually walked through, yet.

*Chris Stretch*

**CLWYD ROCK***edited by Gary Dickinson.**Cicerone Press, 1993,**£14.99. ISBN 1 85284 094 3*

This book has the usual convenient features of handy size and plastic cover, introductory notes and local information. I enjoyed also reading the first ascents listed after every crag.

Despite the fact that steep limestone isn't my style, I have sought out a sufficient variety of crags to sample, in order to assess the usefulness of the guide. Being new to this area, I found the directions to the crags adequate, although the references to 'left' or 'right' turns I found exasperating as it wasn't always absolutely clear from which direction I should be travelling. Surely compass points are less confusing? I would have welcomed some more map scales on the various sketch maps/crag diagrams, as this absence led me to misjudge time taken to move from one crag (or section) to another.

Generally, the route descriptions were good - well, good enough to identify the climbs initially, and accurate enough to fit in with the climbing. Up to VS (I haven't attempted anything beyond that), the grading seemed consistent. However, no route lengths are given at all; although there is usually some indication of the maximum height of the crag in the introduction, the absence of this information on every individual route means you cannot plan to get away with one rope doubled - a nuisance on single pitches and pretty useless for traverses/girdles. And, call me traditional, but surely the route description is incomplete without it?

So, all in all, a useful although not outstanding guide.

*Fern Levy*

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**BOOK REVIEWS****NORTHERN HIGHLANDS, ROCK AND ICE CLIMBS, VOLS. 1 & 2***Edited by Roger Everett, SMC, 1993.**Vol.1 - Knoydart to An Teallach - ISBN 0 907521 33 9**Vol.2 - Strathfarrar to Shetland - ISBN 0 907521 40 1*

These are the long-awaited updates to the two SMC Northern Highlands guides of 1969 and 1973. More than twenty years of exploration and development that the Scots have kept discreetly under their crash helmets! Nearly 800 pages as against 300 - what a wealth of possibilities this guide opens up. Here is the detail we need to flesh out the lists of crags in Tom Prentice's *Climbing Guide to Scotland* and enlarge on Kevin Howett's selected climbs in *Rock Climbing in Scotland*. This mammoth task has been carried out by Roger Everett, husband of our ex-editor Dee Gaffney (so I have to watch what I say). No doubt the length and complexity is the main reason for the twenty-one year wait and I do not, of course, hold Roger personally responsible!

One small quibble to get out of the way - how about a general map showing the locations of the various sections in relation to the area as a whole, as given in Kevin Howett's guide? Roger knows where everything is, and in most cases I have some idea, but then I lived and climbed in Scotland for many years. A newcomer (and in particular an English newcomer) would have to do some serious searching to locate some of the less well-known crags, and it would have been comparatively easy to include this information on the maps inside the front and back covers. Also, I wouldn't have minded an index - it's always nice to be able to look things up! But having got the complaints out of the way, the diagrams and crag photographs are clear and helpful.

Anyway, here are the old, comparatively well-known favourites such as Beinn Eighe, Carnmore, the Cioch of Applecross and Fuar Tholl, dating from the earlier waves of exploration, but here too are all those crags we've noticed when walking, or from the car, and wondered about, which those dedicated Scottish climbers have been beavering away at ever since the 1970's. Lots of sea-cliffs too - here are the Reiff sea cliffs which are (or were by the time this review appears) the venue for the Spring Bank Holiday meet in 1995. And here too are Shetland and Orkney, and scope for a whole sea-stack holiday! I love the Northern Highlands (except for the midges), and I'm quite happy to accept the long walk-ins so frequently necessary if there is going to be something worthwhile at the end. Particularly beautiful is the fabulous country north from Ullapool to Sandwood Bay, with its shapely isolated peaks set among numberless small lochans - well worth a visit even without the climbing. But here we also have a wealth of (by Scottish standards) roadside crags, so don't just head like a lemming for Skye, impressive though the Cuillins are - the campsites are likely to be full anyway. Head north, ladies, and take a walk! May and June and sometimes September are most likely to give good weather, but no season can be guaranteed midge-free, so take a midge-net and some Jungle Formula, and have a great time.

*Sally Keir*

**WALKS AND CLIMBS IN THE PYRENEES***by Kev Reynolds.**Cicerone Press, Third Edition 1993,**£14.99 ISBN 1 85284 133 8*

Don't go buying this guide if rock-climbing is what you're after. Although it's called 'Walks and Climbs', it in fact covers only walks, peak ascents and central section of the Haute Randonnée Pyrénéenne or HRP (the Pyrenean High Level Route). For rock-climbs the current English guide book is Derek Walker's *Rock Climbs in the Pyrenees* (very limited), but there are also several good local Spanish guide books available in some areas.

However, for walks, paths and peaks this book is an excellent introduction to this magical area. I have only visited the Pyrenees briefly twice, but I hope to spend much more time exploring in the future, and this will be what I use for my planning. I also happen to have designs on the Pyrenean High Level Route, so it will come in useful for that as well! (For the benefit of other aspiring long-distance path walkers there are two other routes running the length of the Pyrenees, both a bit easier than the HRP. These are the GR10 on the French side and the GR11 in Spain).

I do think the maps could be better - the Spanish Editorial Alpina series is not marvellous (though you do get a written section with each map, covering local history, topography, etc.), and it would have been useful if the area maps in the book gave more detail to compensate for this. In particular, I would have liked the map of the Pyrenees inside the back cover to have shown the location of the chapter sections in relation to the range as a whole, instead of just showing the major peaks.

The coloured prints are beautiful and give a good impression of the area. The route descriptions seem to be clear and detailed (though of course I haven't attempted to follow any of them yet). The introductory sections on National Parks, flora and fauna, history, etc. are interesting and informative (though I doubt if the recommendations for mountaineering clothing have been updated since the first edition!) There is also some useful travel information such as the prevalence of radar traps in the area and the address of French State Railways (for discounts).

To sum up, go there! If you want to climb, take the Derek Walker guide, but look for a local guidebook when you arrive. If you want to walk and explore, take this book. In particular, for climbing I would recommend the Encantados area, covered here but not in Walker, and with an excellent local guidebook. This is an enchanting granite area, suitable for summer and autumn climbing, with routes from 10m to 1000m and grades from 3 to 9. If you're interested, get in touch and I'll let you have guidebooks and map details.

*Sally Keir*



## **BOOK REVIEWS**

### **MOUNTAIN WALKS ON THE COSTA BLANCA**

*by Bob Stansfield.*

*Cicerone Press, 1995,*

*£9.99. ISBN 1-85284-165-6*

This useful book is more than a guide to walks in the Costa Blanca region. There is a complete tourist guide to the area - in fact the Walking Routes section does not begin until p.50. Personally I do not find detailed information such as the diet of Spanish chickens of any great value, but this lengthy introduction illustrates the author's deep conviction that Spain and the Spanish way of life are as important as the walks themselves.

I had been to the Benidorm area many times climbing, and always wondered about access to the tops of the hills. The book's descriptions enabled me to thread my way through cultivated fields to the hillsides above. The book is full of inspirations for interesting and exciting trips. The walks are varied with respect to lengths and difficulties and are clearly described. Each route has a sketch map which includes a table with category, time, distance and ascent. The times allowed for the walks are mostly generous, particularly when the path is rough or non-existent.

If you intend to go climbing to the Costa - buy this book too. It will provide an attractive alternative if your rock boots are too painful or if it rains or you just want to explore more of Spain. If you have relatives or friends going there - buy them a copy. It will enhance any holiday.

*Dee Gaffney*

**SELECTED ROCK CLIMBS IN BELGIUM AND LUXEMBOURG**

by *Chris Craggs*.

*Cicerone Press, 1994,*

*£12.99. ISBN 1 85284 155 9*

This guidebook fills a gap for climbers who travel frequently to Europe. Almost half of the book is devoted to the seven main cliffs at Freyr. Three other large Belgian crags are included, as is Berdorf in Luxembourg. The information is clearly laid out and includes how to get there and where to stay. Chris has made a good selection of the better, south-facing crags in pleasant surroundings. He gives a summary table of the climbing available. The majority of the routes described are grade 4-6a. Of the 496 routes included, 96 are grade 4, 148 are grade 5 and 92 are 6a. A translation into English grades is given with descriptions of individual climbs.

The easy access from Britain along relatively quiet (and free) motorways makes this an attractive area for a quick jaunt or a stopover on a longer holiday. Luxembourg has the cheapest petrol and diesel in Europe and the climbing is certainly worth a visit. Unlike the other crags in the guide, Berdorf is sandstone, of excellent quality. It has been one of the best kept secrets up until now and has a wide variety of quality climbs of all grades.

The layout, photographs and descriptions in the guide are quite inspiring and make the cliffs look very inviting. At the more popular venues, especially parts of Freyr, the majority of the lower and middle grade routes tend to be very polished and could be busy on a weekend. Many of the cliffs in Belgium have been bought by the Belgium Alpine Club. In order to 'manage' the environment, a permit system is in place, so it is wise to travel with some documentation of affiliation to the BMC. At the cliff, many of the descents have been up-graded from a mud slide, to ladders or steps, and much of the old 'in-situ' gear is being replaced.

This guidebook provides useful information about a delightful and infrequently visited area of Europe and a handy guide for the keen rock climber.

*Stella Adams*

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

### **WINTER CLIMBS, BEN NEVIS AND GLENCOE**

*by Alan Kimber.*

*Cicerone Press, 1994,*

*£14.95, ISBN 185284 1796*

This is the 5th edition and updates the one which appeared in 1991.

There are two main improvements incorporated in the new guide, new diagrams have been drawn by Kevin Howett and the development of climbing on Aonach Mor, which has been encouraged by the ski lift access, has been covered.

Kevin's drawings are detailed and easy to use. They offer a clear picture of the different faces of the Ben and are supplemented by actual photographs. They make finding your way around these vast faces easier and are a decided improvement on the 1991 versions.

The introduction includes additional information on diagnosing snowpack stability which is bound to be useful if the winters continue to be as windy and as avalanche prone as of late.

*Key Proudlock*

### **LAKELAND HIGH TARNS**

*by John Drews.*

*David & Charles, 1995,*

*£17.99, ISBN 0 7153 03341*

This is a hardback, coffee table style book, whose most salient features are its photographs. It selects 18 circular walks to high level tarns in the Lakes encompassing the well known and the obscure. The text describes the views and settings for each route in some detail and is supplemented by a sketch and directions. The text alone would not inspire me to any of the walks; however, the photographs would.

John Drews is both author and photographer. The pictures communicate clearly his love of the Lakes and the striking beauty of tarns of all descriptions and sizes. They are taken at different times of day and throughout the seasons capturing moods and rhythms, making me remember fondly days I have spent in similar conditions.

It is easy to hurry by small tarns on our way to crags or summits. This book encourages us to look at them with new eyes, conscious that they, too, are worthy of our attention.

*Key Proudlock*

## **ROCK CLIMBING TECHNIQUES**

*by Steve Ashton.*

*The Crowood Press, Paperback Edition, first published 1989, revised 1995,  
£10.99, ISBN 1 85223 904 2*

I read the first edition of this book some years ago, when I was an aspiring climber and, on revisiting it, I remember how I found the author's descriptions of his early climbing exploits quite fascinating, while some aspects of rope technique were rather confusing.

The book's style is best suited to the aspirant and beginner and I am sure that is the market the author is aiming at. It would be a good introduction, used in conjunction with practical experience with a climber who is also a good teacher.

Although recently revised, it makes little of the fact that today most young people are more likely to come from a background of 'climbing wall' experience than from scrambling/hill walking. The author could have made more of the importance of the transition from climbing wall to the 'real thing', as the experiences are so different.

Aspects covered are seconding, leading, training, equipment, climbing and rope techniques. In the chapter on Personal Equipment, 'jeans' are mentioned as acceptable for early climbs. I feel that as leggings are commonly worn today it would be more appropriate to suggest these than jeans. Also a photograph of a greater selection of modern rock boots would be welcome here.

Abseiling, prusiking, escaping the system, rescue and first aid are touched on briefly in the chapter Emergency Rope Technique and the final chapter entitled Special Topics covers aid placement and climbing; sports climbing, competition climbing, 'hot rock', alpine rock and solo climbing. The diagrams of knot tying are very clear, but the French Prusik/Autoblock is omitted. The summary at the end of each chapter is a useful condensation of the main facts.

There is an appendix on grading, a glossary of climbing terms, a bibliography of guide books, magazines and some technical books and a few useful addresses. Conclusion: a good introduction for those with germinating ideas of wanting to climb or beginners. The autobiographical fragments are very descriptive regarding the feel of the rock and the exhilaration and obsession of climbing.

*Maggie Ingram*

## BOOK REVIEWS

### ICE WORLD - TECHNIQUES AND EXPERIENCES OF MODERN ICE CLIMBING

by Jeff Lowe.

*The Mountaineers, 1996,*

£19.95, ISBN 0 89886 446 1

This book will be of interest to anyone who has done some ice climbing as it gives an insight into the extremes to which this sport can be taken. It is not really an instructional book but rather gives ideas about what can be done and how that might be achieved. The emphasis is definitely on modern extreme ice climbing. It is obvious from the start that this is an American book and the first, general information, section, which describes the different types of ice encountered and the American grading system, is not very relevant for us, although a few Scottish routes are mentioned for comparison.

The second chapter is about the development of ice climbing methods and equipment; from Alpine shepherds in the 16th century to present day extreme climbs. It is interesting to note the early use of a curved pick by Heckmair on the N face of the Eiger in 1938, also using 12-point crampons designed by Grivel. Reference is also made to the 'recalcitrant scots who ignored the use of crampons for 40 years!' However once they adopted crampons, Scottish climbers led the world in the difficulty of routes climbed during the 1950's. (This was before front-pointing was used and climbs still required much step-cutting.) The Americans were slow to catch on to climbing in general and it wasn't until the 1970's that they were able to equal the hardest Alpine and Scottish climbs. At the present time it is those nationalities with plenty of accessible frozen water falls who are at the forefront of this branch of the sport - the N. Americans and the Alpine nationalities.

'One Man's Froshite - the Ice Experience' is a much more interesting section, consisting of personal tales of a variety of ice climbs. These include summer ice-fall climbing in Colorado - a training ground, like cragging, for longer mountain routes. The description of the ascent of the Hungo face of Kwangde in Nepal is very enjoyable. Here Jeff touches on the mental aspect of climbing, which is a theme running through the book. He describes reaching an "uncommon state of equilibrium" when he achieved a "freedom from animal fear" despite being 100 feet above reliable protection, with his ice-tools slicing through insubstantial ice, thousands of feet up a Himalayan peak! (Perhaps it was the altitude!) 'Octopussy' describes extreme 'mixed' climbing - involving linking sections between icicles with climbing on bare rock, using dry-tooling and incredible gymnastic moves. This is pictured on the front cover of the book and it is pertinent to note that he is wearing neither rucksack nor gloves. The chapter about clothing and equipment is very sensible and doesn't go overboard about clothing (as you might think it would).

The next section is the meat of the book and is entitled 'The Cold Dance Review - Basics of Climbing Ice'. It is extremely well illustrated with lots of fantastic photos showing some weird and wonderful climbing. It starts off with basic alpine climbing techniques - you can learn the French technical terms for the various ways of using crampons and axe. Moving on to waterfall ice, the terminology is much more flamboyant - we learn the technique of monkey-hanging and when you get tired you can take a frog rest! There is also the 'gorilla grunt' and to climb onto free-hanging ice from overhanging rock, what about the 'orangutan-hang'? The final section describes a selection of 16 climbs from around the world. It seems rather superfluous giving topo diagrams and fairly full route descriptions, but it gives a taste of different types of climbs in different areas. Of the 16 'World Classics', 7 are in N. America, 2 in Peru, 2 in Scotland (The Shelter Stone and Ben Nevis), 3 in France and 2 in Nepal; and they range from short bolted ice climbs (yes - sport ice climbing!), to serious mountain routes in the greater ranges. A word of warning here - unless your 6th sense is infallible, if you went up Ben Nevis with only this description of the descent,

you'd be in serious trouble! This is a well-written and well-produced book with many outstanding photographs. It is not very relevant for the Scottish winter or Alpine climber, but it is interesting to see what extreme ice climbing is like and how far the limits are being pushed. The spectacular photographic climbing sequences in particular are a real eye-opener to what can be done using ice- tools.

*Gill Nisbet*

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

### **THE MOUNTAINS OF TURKEY**

*by Karl Smith.*

*Cicerone Press, 1994,*

*£14.99, ISBN 185284 161 3*

This guide book was started several years ago after several longish visits to Turkey by Karl. He had visited the areas covered in the book, and learnt to speak Turkish, but he had no photos of the beautiful Kachar Mountains in N.E. Turkey. The reason for this was that they were completely covered in thick mist whilst he was there. When Karl and I visited Turkey in August of 1992 for a trekking/climbing holiday we were very lucky to have some superb weather and hence the book has some very nice photographs to finish it off.

The guide includes information on the Kackar Mountains, Mount Ararat, Lake Van area, the Aladag Mountains, the Toros Range plus smaller isolated areas.

I have enjoyed reading the book for this review. Karl covers so many interesting little details. For example the small bakery under the tiny hotel in Barhal, near Yusefeli; information on the hot springs baths in Ayder plus a history of the area and information on festivals and the transhumance of many people in the mountain areas of Turkey. Guide books to any area, unless containing real misinformation, are always useful in planning a trip. You need to know where to start your trek, how to get there, what to expect etc. and this book is ideal for familiarising yourself before a visit or encouraging you to go there. Many areas are covered and Karl has taken pains to give a feel for what you can expect. I remember trekking around the Julian Alps with a guide book that only contained facts. I wanted to know where would be nice to go, what peaks had fine views and so on. Karl gives this



*The reviewer approaching the Aladag Mountains*

The ease of getting to Turkey was highlighted for me by the fact that we left Gatwick one evening and were camping high in the Aladag Mountains by the end of the following day. As with so many countries where owning a car is a rarity, buses, minibuses and taxis abound all over Turkey, and hiring a donkey is not out of the question. Another good point about Turkey is the history. We visited incredibly remote, deliberately hidden, ruined Georgian churches, an ancient Ilittite site and, not to be missed, Istanbul.

Detailed maps of Turkey are not particularly good and the ones in the guide leave something to be desired, but then Karl could not be expected to survey the whole area! The route descriptions with 'do this', 'do that', do not make very interesting armchair reading, but I daresay that they would be what you need when out there. The book also has no index, which limits its use as a reference book. But it is a useful size, and it is covered in plastic, so it is designed for use in the mountains.

On the question of equipment, Karl says you don't really need a rope for the routes in the book. We had full rockclimbing gear that we lugged all over Turkey and never used. Also we wore fell running trainers. I would suggest that walking boots would be preferable, unless you do not mind wet feet, and also an ice axe would have meant that we could have explored many of the very attractive snow filled gullies that led to the peaks in the Kackar Mountains. Instead we were forced to scramble up the very weathered ridges.

The guide costs £14.99 and if this is the difference between getting a trip together and going to have a look for yourself, then it is money well spent.

*Cathy Woodhead*



## **BOOK REVIEWS**

### **WEST MIDLANDS ROCK**

*by Doug Kerr.*

*Cicerone Press, 1995,*

*£7.99, ISBN 1-85284-200-8*

This is a slim volume which may possibly be called more accurately Shropshire Rock. The name West Midlands suggests the rocks may be close to Birmingham but in all honesty if you've driven the minimum hour from there to get to these climbs you might as well keep going to Snowdonia!

This is however the second edition, the first having sold out several years ago. I own a copy of the first edition and there are not many changes in the second. The main difference is that Gary Gibson has written the section on Llanymynech having put up several new routes there recently.

Despite there not being much rock in Shropshire there are some gems. With this new volume in hand I went back to Llanymynech and had a fine autumn day on Black Wall and Blind Faith. The first at E2 felt precarious because of the lack of gear the second at VS gave a unique outing up rock that looked about to topple but was very solid really..... The route descriptions and crag diagrams were sufficient to navigate around the quarry confidently. I have also climbed at Pontesford and walked the Stiperstones; both are included in the book along with other esoteric venues.

So a well researched book, although the softback cover is probably a bit vulnerable to heavy wear, or damp days. If you are climbing very well there are lots of new hard climbs at Llanymynech and Ness Cliffe and for a taste of history and beauty Pontesford is a very pleasant spot for a day out with the family or novice climbers.

*Val Hennelly*

### **BRITAIN'S ALPINE RIDGES (SNOWDONIA AND THE LAKE DISTRICT)**

*by Robin Ashcroft.*

*The Crowood Press, 1996,*

*£12.99, ISBN 1 85 223 929 8*

The description of this book as "a guide to 45 of the most exciting mountaineering routes in Snowdonia and the Lake District", is not one I would quibble with.

Robin Ashcroft has chosen routes which in his opinion "had a character and atmosphere similar to that of an alpine ridge". Included are many well known classics as well as some less popular routes.

The author provides detailed information for each route, although I must admit I haven't checked the accuracy. However, the book is not a suitable size to take on the hill, but would be a useful reference back at base, when searching for some inspiration for a day out.

*Louise Dickie*

**THE HILLWALKER'S HANDBOOK***by Steve Ashton.**The Crowood Press, 1996 (revised edition),**£12.99, ISBN 185223 903 4*

I think this book is too ambitious; it tries to introduce hillwalking to beginners and to extend the experienced walker's domain into more adventurous and technically demanding areas. In my opinion it falls between two stools.

The basic sections did not have enough detail and substance for the real beginner wanting to transfer from rambles in the countryside to hills and mountains. At a more advanced level (scrambling and winter walking), the information was so dense that only prior experience would allow the reader to make sense of the detail, and put it into perspective.

The rope-handling sections puzzled me - convoluted instructions in a solid paragraph, instead of step-by-step instructions served to obscure rather than instruct; tying-on and belay methods more suited to 'pitching' on rock climbs than protecting/reassuring on scrambles; no mention of direct belays; black and white photos with poor contrast between the rope and clothes. The winter section made no mention of recent classifications of boots and crampons.

The language in the body of the text was more descriptive than instructive, and so came over as too stilted and pretentious. The only saving grace in making this anything like a handbook were the summaries at the end of the sections; these were excellent. One wonders what purpose the intervening text served. A disappointing offering from an author whose guide books I have found both useful and interesting.

*Fern Levy***THE ROPE***by Terry Gifford.**Red Book Press, 1996,**£6.95, ISBN 0945 980 27 6*

I was touched, I enthused, I empathised, I cried, I smiled, was puzzled, thrilled at flashes of recognition. In other words, I responded to the poems emotionally rather than intellectually - would Gifford consider this a vote of approval? I hope so, as I did very much enjoy this collection.

The poems range from snapshot impressions of climbs/crags/climbers to longer narrative/diary-type accounts and so the pace and rhythm of the book maintains interest. Many of the poems cover people and places I don't know; family, friends now sadly dead, holidays hot-rocking or cold-climbing. A short accompanying note setting the poem in context would have helped me appreciate them even more. I suppose the poet wishes his poems to stand on their own; as the reader I was moved to want more.

*Fern Levy*

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

### **MOUNTAIN WEATHER; A GUIDE FOR SKIERS AND HILLWALKERS**

*by William Burroughs.*

*The Crowood Press, 1995 ISBN 1 85223 877 1*

I've always had a hankering after understanding the weather better than I do. Each time, I have delved into a book full of optimism that I will achieve this, and each time I have emerged from the experience confused. With the exception of the red skies morning and night rule (which I have known since my vocabulary first extended into using whole sentences) I have never managed to retain any information long enough to be of use on the hill. Well, I got further with this one than with many, but by Chapter 4 I was once more struggling. The words get harder and longer (okay, technical) but would you be able to hang onto the meaning of "saturated adiabatic lapse rate" and "dry adiabatic lapse rate"?

By the time I had completed Climatology in Chapter 5 and Weather Forecasting in Chapter 6, I was feeling depressed. Glumly I read exciting statements such as "the analyses of snow conditions for the winter half of each year since 1980/81 for various regions in the northern hemisphere are set out in Table 6.1." Table 6.1 looked rather like the Chamonix Aiguilles stood on end. Mr. Burroughs admits that pulling together a lot of data of how the weather influences the enjoyment of mountain activities makes for a lot of statistics. He tries to include summaries of the implications in the text but I nevertheless found myself skipping through whole chunks because of the tedium.

The last chapter "Putting it all together" actually does do that quite well. If you had only time for one chapter, this should be the one as it will provide useful information to help you book the right place for your ski trip.

Mr. Burroughs does spend a long time coming to conclusions that you think he could have come to much earlier in the book. The higher you go, the more snow there is; south facing slopes lose their snow quicker than north facing ones; it's generally colder in January than in April and the days are shorter, are all principles even the less scientific minded amongst us have grasped. Mountaineers could spend their money more wisely; despite its subtitle this book is essentially for skiers. There is some useful information on clothing and snow behaviour but you can get that elsewhere.

There's a glossary of terms at the back. My favourite is "Windproofing: the extent to which a fabric permits air to pass through it. The value for 100% windproof garments should be  $0\text{cm}^3/\text{cm}^2/\text{sec}$ ." Just state the obvious, Bill. For avid statisticians there's an appendix full of data on temperatures and precipitation levels throughout the mountainous world. Did you know that with the exception of Mount Cook N.Z., the rainfall (or equivalent) is almost twice as much at Ben Nevis as anywhere else? Tell me you're surprised.

*Fred Reynolds*

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