

JOURNAL OF THE F.M.C.

1950–1990

Editor: Dave Earle

A literary celebration of the Fylde Mountaineering Club's
40 years activity



BOUQUETS AND BRICKBATS

I WOULD like to thank everyone who helped in some way in producing this the 40th Anniversary Club Journal. I have tried to distil out the essence of the Club over the last 40 years, and by charting its progress have also mapped out the way mountaineering has gone in the same time span. The one echoes the other quite closely, which is as it should be, as the Club has always been in the mainstream, and very much in the forefront of British Mountaineering. I have endeavoured to leaven history with a very large dollop of funny stories and I have tried my best to produce a magazine that is very readable, informative and entertaining, as it touches on various aspects of the Club's history. I hope you like the format chosen.

By necessity the first 20 years, whilst I was still in the 'smoke', are not dealt with in the same detail as the second period but I received great help from Jack Jowett who provided a wealth of information pertaining to the early days and who also loaned me several Club journals. Alan Bell also kindly loaned me some early literature and was also kind enough to interrupt his frantic lifestyle to provide two excellent articles to complement Jack's story of the Club bridge. Ex-member Bill Comstive went to a great deal of trouble to provide very detailed information on the early days which was most useful. Due to the passage of time there must be errors and omissions about the early years of the Club. I have done my best to keep these to a minimum. It must be said though, if you ask three old-timers about an incident you will get three slightly different stories, so there is plenty of room for controversy.

I would like to thank all those who produced articles for the Journal, but especially those who wrote them within a reasonable time span. Mary Aspin's article was the first to be received, followed by Cathy Baron's description of what it was like to be a Junior. These were written so long ago the authors must have been wondering for months what happened to the Journal. Perhaps it was just a dream. Roger Brookes holds the record for the longest time to produce an article. Asked in February 1989 and reminded constantly, I received a document labelled "first provisional draft" in April 1990. It rapidly became the Authorised Version. Dave Wood and Martin Dale weren't far behind either, unfortunately spilling the production over into the summer months which I was desperate to avoid for obvious reasons. Andy Blaylock failed to produce an article about the Club's involvement in the U.S.A. Suffice to say it is considerable.

The cover is taken from one of the earlier Journals, and was drawn by Brian Knutton. As it summed up the Club it seemed fitting indeed to revamp it. I would like to thank John Parker for his excellent work in turning my matchstick men drawings into recognisable and amusing life forms, which help break up the text. Both he and John Wiseman put in an enormous amount of effort in checking the typescript but the inevitable remaining errors are entirely my responsibility. They also gave much appreciated encouragement towards the end when life got tough and the articles still weren't appearing. I would also like to thank my typesetter Phill Hadfield for the professional way he dealt with the layout and for the abundant advice given. I trust this has resulted in a very professional-looking magazine that will be a credit to the Club.

D. A. EARLE
Editor

RICK REEVE SPEAKS TO THE NATION ON THE ART OF DECLINING GRACEFULLY

OF THE many varied pieces of Club-related correspondence that have cascaded through my letterbox some fell noiselessly by the wayside and could be disregarded. Others hit the doormat with a dull thump and required a Club response of varying degrees. But occasionally one hit the carpet with all the impact of a descending brick, such was the magnitude of the problems created, or the work generated by a simple letter. One such note was from Roger Brooks seeking Club support for his essay into guide book production. Another, from Rick Reeve, suggested the production of a Club journal, which has involved this writer in a considerable outlay of time and effort.

Anticipating the amount of work involved I was somewhat dismayed when my Committee decided to take up Rick's idea and explore the production of a Journal, but thought up a wizard scheme to kill the idea stone dead by offering Rick Reeve the chance to edit his own baby so to speak. His letter declining the opportunity to spend a year working his socks off to implement his own brilliant/ball ache of an idea was a classic of its type and I undertook to produce this journal during my sabbatical only if I could reproduce part of his smooth, svelte, sinuous letter as my first article. One suspects Rick, like Houdini, could wriggle his way out of anything.

D. A. EARLE (*Editor*)

"THE Committee's offer of the editorship is generous but one that I must decline for the sake of the journal itself. I believe that the editor must be centrally located and seen regularly by the majority of active members. One of the main jobs of the editor will be to inspire, extract, chivvy, cajole and persuade the members to supply readable material. This can only be done if the editor is part of the Club's milieu; down at the pub, dropping in homes, etc. The editor must be a good chaser, to follow up leads and suggestions: for example a pub conversation with Martin Dale might produce an idea for an article on France or the U.S.A.

Unfortunately, I get little chance of mixing socially with a great many members [but he knows a man that does – *Ed.*] so therefore I regretfully decline the committee's offer.

May I say, though, that there is someone who over the years has impressed me by his discriminatory and literary skills, as well as his knowledge of the Club's life. I refer to Dave Earle. His wide travels, romantic prose and poetry, broad popularity with the old and new alike, make him a favourite. He's lost some of that Cockney twang and replaced it with the thud of his adoptive region so many readers will be happy and regard him as a skilled communicator. He is also interlocutor [one who has a dialogue with – *Ed.*] with the ladies' section – a voice which must be heard nowadays.

Yours Sincerely

RICHARD REEVE"

Thanks a million me ol' Cock Sparra.

I do hope I have been able to live up to the task set me by the above in some small way, though persuading and extracting information from members proved considerably difficult – much has been left unsung and unrecorded.

THE FYLDE MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

IN THE Autumn of 1950 an advertisement was placed in the Evening Gazette by a group mainly from the C.H.A. Rambling Club, calling a meeting at the Old Grammar School on Raikes Parade to discuss the formation of a mountaineering club. This inaugural meeting was chaired by Jack Jowett and adopted the name of Fylde Mountaineering Club. The founder members had been using the Holiday Fellowship Chalets at Wall End and were J. Baron, R. Buckley, Miss I. Hacking, Miss O. Hawksworth, G. Kay and J. Jowett. Thirtyfive people attended the inaugural meeting of which R. Legge, G. Dawes, A. Cannel, F. Pendlebury, Miss D. Shaw (soon snapped up by Jack Jowett), H. T. Jackson and Jack Fairburn were the most notable.

The C.H.A. element dominated the Club during the first two years, resisted by those who wanted to be independent rather than an arm of the C.H.A. Matters came to a head at a stormy 1952 A.G.M. when all the committee resigned and Ray Legge found himself in the Chair, which was quite a hot seat. There being nothing fundamentally wrong he set about the job of pulling things together. Eric Lomas ran pot-holing meets and four members acquired skis.

Sunday coach meets were held once a month and were initially the mainstay of the Club. Slide shows and lectures were held midweek during the winter months, which together with the Annual Dinner held at the O.D.G., provided the social side of the Club. Spontaneous singing at table was led mostly by Dennis Wildridge, and Jack Jowett, the driving force behind the Club, produced his pantomimes for after dinner entertainment.

'Ambulance Meets' soon supplemented the coach meets, which seemed to consist solely of pushing recalcitrant vehicles up and down various roads when they stopped working, which appeared to be often.

Local socials as now met with variable success. The Cleveleys and Blackpool R.A.F.A.'s were tried along with the A.E.U. Rooms, the Veevers Arms and the Blackpool Grammar School Gymnasium, where brownie points were lost by turning it into an indoor climbing wall. Many new members came from the Y.H.A. and included Bill Comstive, who arrived early on the scene, Alan Brown and Margaret Ormrod, and a few years later another group arrived in the shape of the Rice-Jones sisters, Pete Roscoe, Tony Whiteley, Alan Bell, Tony Richardson and Mike Hornby, who was sadly to be killed on The Ben on Boxing Day 1956. Only a fortnight previously the Club had handed over the Macbeath Memorial Bridge in memory of a popular Chairman killed motorcycling home from the Alps. The bridge was a symbol of the Club's respect and love of a man who had done so much for the Club and was a friend of everyone in it.

In 1956 the Club acquired Little Langdale cottage, the pivotal problem overcome being the securing of the bank loan by Bill Comstive and John Mackeson. The former's uncle stood guarantor. The latter was the 'Club' lawyer. The Club had tried to buy or rent the H.F. huts in Great Langdale to no avail, and a deal for the Kennels in Great Langdale fell through at the last minute. It had acquired a taste for having a hut in the Lakes from its experiences with the H.F. property at Wall End Farm. The Club had access to six wooden chalet buildings between October and March for a few years and these proved very popular.

Jack Jowett and Bill Comstive, in Jack's Morris Minor, spent many weekends scouring the Lakes for property. One damp, drizzly Sunday in early spring they stumbled upon the cottages in Little Langdale. These were condemned and might be sold by the owners, the Lakes Country Cottage Association. Bill wrote and was told that they were not at present for sale but he received a letter some weeks later from Porters & Sons of Ambleside offering all these cottages for £1,200, a considerable sum in those days. The position so far from Great Langdale in an age without universal transport, was a great worry but it was evident there was no likelihood of property in Langdale itself.

The Committee were very divided on the issue. The matter went to an Extraordinary General Meeting at the Veevers Arms. It was a close-run thing but it was eventually decided to try and purchase Newhouses and the Club has never looked back. Long-term interest free loans of £150 were made from members which covered the deposit. The two outside cottages were sold to members and on 8th December, 1956, final completion took place at Ambleside.

Improvements had to be made to sanitation and drainage which were undertaken by H. T. Jackson, the 'Club' Architect. Calor gas cooking and lighting were installed and the cottage furnished with eight two-tier bunks and sundry folding tables and chairs purchased from the Preston M.C. (for £1. 10s.).

Sunday coach meets declined in proportion to the increase in vehicle ownership and weekends spent at the huts. Membership trebled after Newhouses was established, and there was some upheaval as a new and vigorous membership challenged the old. From about 1963 the Club went through a bad patch due mainly to 'hut squalor', it being the norm to have to wash up the previous weekend's pots on arrival Friday night. Many of the older members resigned but Jack Jowett soldiered on and gradually restored a more reasonable balance.

EDITOR

With thanks for notes from Bill Comstive and loan of Journals from Jack Jowett and Alan Bell.

EARLY DAYS

EVEN during the first year of the Club some coach meets had to be cancelled, although many were over-subscribed. Five official meets were held at the Wall End Huts before they were handed back to the Holiday Fellowship. Much climbing was done in the Langdale Valley, both on these meets and over the Whitsun period when the Club stayed at Raw Head, visiting Gimmer, Raven and Pavey. Hot sun meant afternoons in Stickle Tarn before the descent. Instruction was received in the recovery of injured climbers from the crags and in first aid.

The early '50s saw plenty of sun, and the rock climbing potential was soon realised with many novices rapidly becoming proficient. J. D. Wildridge was probably the best in the early days of the Club and has new routes to his credit in Borrowdale. He also took up pot-holing with Eric Lomas and these two became a force to be reckoned with. Eric was only 17 or 18 at the time but a super keen pot-holer who later diversified into climbing and skiing. Together with Alf Cannell they discovered and explored Heron Pot. Denis went to the Falklands eventually and Eric moved to Canada where he has done very well for himself. He has always kept in touch and was over here a little time ago, catching up on old friendships.

Early Journals talk of impressions of a first climb by M. F., on Dove Slabs. What a wonderful place to be taken for one's first taste of rock climbing. Holds used by the leader seemed miraculously to disappear, in the time-honoured way that they do, by the time the second arrived, but the confidence inspired by the briar-smoking Mr. Wildridge soon won the day.

Alf Cannell writes of a trip under Ireland, describing a trip down Michelstown Old and New Caves, both providing stiff days out, before moving on to Lisdoonvarna in Clare. Here lay the next objective, Poullangollum, an immense active water cavern over five miles in length; then the longest cave in the British Isles with an entrance shaft of 120ft. A link was made with Poullnelva and the river followed until it disappeared under a curtain of rock (never to reappear?).

John Mackeson describes several walking holidays in Eastern Switzerland with his young family, staying at the lower altitude huts owned by the T. V. N. The Toggenburg Valley provides a good centre for delightful summer walks through dramatic scenery as does Santis and the Lake Constance area. The Bernese Oberland was also visited.

Sandy MacBeath found himself in Zermatt in August 1953 with the R.A.F. Included in the party was Tony Smythe and Dr. T. Graham Brown of Brenva fame. Castor and Pollux were climbed from the Bétemps Hut. The Trifhorn was climbed amid dramas and traumas with falling rock. A 3.0 a.m. start found five R.A.F. ropes on the Matterhorn. Rival ropes could be seen above being pulled, pushed and cajoled by their guides. A super day was had by all. The Alphubel was ascended via the Tasch Hut to round off an excellent mountaineering experience in Switzerland.

Eric Lomas enthuses over the traverse of the Dyrgangstind by the North-South Ridge, one of the classic routes of the Jotunheim Mountains of Norway. The rock is mainly a superb gabbro forming sharp ridges and gendarmes, and the mountain is surrounded by Europe's greatest glacier, the Jostedalbreen. Nearer home but on similar rock, members climbed the glorious long routes offered by the Island of Skye, enjoyed the famed post office tea of bannocks and pancakes, and strolled along the flower-strewn coastline in the evenings, watching the seals at play.

In 1955/56 the skiing fanatics were beginning to gain the ascendancy although ice axes were still to be seen in profusion in due season, 16 members attending a February meet in the Grampians. Parties visited Norway, The Dolomites, Austria and Switzerland as well as the length and breadth of the U.K. There were now 61 members, a new record. New routelets were put up on Ellet Crags near Bay Horse and Windy Clough Crag, Quernmore.

The Freestons describe a tour across Canada, mainly following dirt and shale roads, not through any perverse wish to suffer but because the Trans-Canada Highway had not then been built. Banff, as always, proved the high point of the trip, together with Jasper. Kootenay National Park also proved very attractive.

P. Silcock describes an F.M.C. trip to the Austrian Tyrol, bagging a peak or two in superb weather. It was noted that the lady members did not disappear into the snow, unlike the heavier males, and that Alpine Huts serve anything you want in the shape of sustenance whenever you want it. Having just been denied a cup of tea at 2.50 p.m. last Sunday at Far Sawrey one can see we have made little progress in the last 35 years, in spite of 10 years of Thatcherism and market place economics.

A weekend trip to Snowdonia was undertaken by coach, starting Saturday evening (most people worked Saturday in those days. I'm sure Mrs. T. wishes we still did!). Some members slept on the bus, some bivied, and the top end of the market stayed at Idwal Cottage Youth Hostel sleeping on the table with three others. Some went walking on Tryfan whilst others climbed on the Idwal Slabs or Milestone Buttress. The author recalls having to strip down to his underpants on a previous attempt at Monolith Crack but even then bulk was the barrier to his achievement.

As an indication of its strength the pot-holing section were out on 12 weekends between March 1955 and January 1956. The Beginners Meet to Bull Pot was enlivened by heavily iced roads which caused motorcycles to travel sideways and cars to collide with each other and surrounding walls. Lancaster Hole was descended a month later in order to explore the Graveyard and Stump Cavern sections; impressive for the unbroken silence and eeriness of the surroundings. Echo Hole, on Lead Mines Moss, was visited at Easter, but Quaking Pot gave as good as it got so a more pleasant trip down Gearstones Cave (voted cave of the year) rounded off the Bank Holiday. Derbyshire gave our intrepid troglodytes a tough time with much unsatisfactory weather, the 'wringer' in Giants Hole finally wringing out all their enthusiasm. 1956 opened with a tour de force down Bull Pot, Hidden Pot, Hellot Pot and Cow Pot.

Harold Jackson writes about a highland crossing of the Alps from Italy to Austria without guides, map or food. He relied, and survived, by rationing his boiled sweets. To cap it all he spent one night in a burnt-out haunted hut. It's real Boys Own Paper stuff and well worth reading.

The 1956-58 Journal finds Gordon Waldie describing an epic retreat down the Plateau de Trient above Chamonix in conditions more akin to his native Scotland, having traversed the Aiguilles Dorées. Three hours of effort managed to produce an igloo of sorts in which they survived the night. The dawn was magnificent and their clothes crackled with the cold as they made their way down the Glacier du Tour.

The 'dyed-in-the-mud' Troglodytes describe some of their travails which seemed to consist of the descent of extremely rickety rope ladders followed by a search for new caverns. A likely-looking mound hiding the biggest undiscovered system in England was attacked with vigour. Entry was effected into what proved to be the rib cavity of a rather long-dead sheep. For their pains the tunnelling team were then made to stand under a nearby waterfall before being allowed to rejoin the main party. Later on, when reaching a stream passage, some of the group removed their socks and placed them in their pockets. Dry socks would improve the

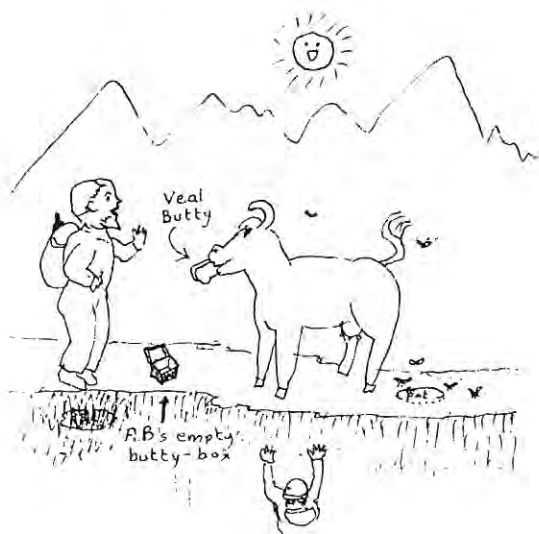
quality of the walk out. This manouvre proved ineffective as the stream later became neck-deep. The Ferrett proved extremely effective at negotiating most of the party through the narrowest of passages but the Fat Man stuck fast and had to be abandoned to his fate. One pot-holer had forgotten to bring a change of clothing and thus entertained the users of the Queen's Yorkshire Highway by marching along wearing only boots and bathing trunks whilst simultaneously providing a hearty meal for sundry ferocious insects.

Pete Roscoe took up the writing of poetry and went to the Dolomites. He was impressed with the gorgeous Italian women but not the quality of the rock. Meanwhile, on the home front, members were looking forward to his imminent removal to the Armed Forces. His alarm clock would no longer be going off in the middle of the night and everyone was looking forward to a good night's sleep at the huts.

A. Carolyn Ivins was asked to join the Great Britain Athletic team who were visiting Poland. The towns proved shabby and little progress had been made in clearing the debris of war, but the people radiated hospitality. The water system as described makes the Chester Hut plumbing seem normal. The Stadium, in contrast, was an athlete's dream come true and the swimming pool, tennis courts and indoor ice rink were used to good effect. There were also plenty of opportunities for sailing. Compared to the towns, however, the poverty in the agricultural areas was shocking. Overall, the Poles proved a spirited, brave and courageous nation. They must be looking West, yet again, with terrible trepidation as I write these notes.

Bill Comstive describes his first guideless Alpine trip, centred on the Berliner Hut in the Zillertal Alps above Mayrhofen, and Harold Jackson shares with us the experience of rock climbing in Cornwall. He stayed at the Count House, Bosigran, owned by the Climbers Club. The haunted dormitory was fearlessly occupied by our intrepid hero but he failed to be disturbed by the long-dead sea captain, unless that is, he resembled a rock climber who has not washed or shaved for a week. Enid Taylor gives us an insight into the delights of Torridon, with its magnificent mountain days and superb fishing, accommodation being the old Youth Hostel at Inveralligan.

The final report from the 1956-58 Journal features a tale of such drama and courage that one hesitates to describe the incidents on less than parchment or vellum. It features Alan Bell and describes his desperate fight for life somewhere deep in the Alps. This apparently is one incident he did not write a song about. All day long Nev Adams and he fought and struggled to gain their peak. Suddenly, all Austria was at their feet and they were at peace with the world. But not for very long. On the descent path they heard the sound of metal on metal, growing louder by the minute.



From around the bend in the track, lumbering towards them, solidly and invincibly, came a cow. Alan was panic-stricken. Give it a sandwich, said Nev helpfully – the bovine munched happily. Their way was still blocked and the supply of sandwiches fast disappearing down the gullet of the cow. There seemed no escape. Swear at it, suggested Nev, but this had no effect. Shout at it in German, came the next idea. Alan could not speak any German but one word came into his mind, the name of the next valley. "Girshnitzal", he roared at the recalcitrant beast. It recoiled, turned tail, and thundered off toward some pines. The way was clear and our heroes were saved.

Apart from the top elite, already mentioned at the start, the Club had many good all-round mountaineers in its midst. Sandy Macbeath, Jack Jowett, Pete Blacow, Nev Adams, Alan Bell, Tony Iddon, Gordon Waldie and Ray Legge were all very active mountaineers with the Club, as well as others mentioned above. From these a group of hardmen emerged, consisting of Doug Brown, Ken Croasdale, Tony Hargreaves and Mike Hargreaves. They were known as the Beating Hearts, though whether this was due to their effect on the ladies, or the effect of steep rock on them is not, at this stage, remembered. It is recalled that the Beating Hearts plus Gordon Waldie and Jack Jowett, were benighted on the Dolomites when Jack could not remember the way down. Another party came to grief when Jack described the descent route to them the wrong way round!

From time to time the Club organised a mass ascent of the Three Peaks for the Plebs. No rushing about trying to beat the clock. Everyone took their time and did it how they wished, over the full weekend. Pete Roscoe was once seen travelling down Borrowdale by car having hitched a lift. Alan Bell provided sterling service doling out brews and breakfasts from his tent at Thirlmere until he was eaten out of house and home and exhausted into the bargain. Latecomers got short shrift from Alan! Garry Standige has always spoken with awe and terror of a cup of tea made for himself and Gordon Aspin on this trip by J. J. Ever resourceful, and with supplies dwindling, Jack made it with rice pudding instead of milk. It was horrendous. The sequel to this was that Gaspin marched round to Queens Walk on his return home and lectured the Jowett family vehemently on the correct way to make tea (so what he makes of Mary's idea of a good cuppa is anyone's guess!!).

10 YEARS ON

DISTILLING out the essence of the Fylde M.C. during the first half of its life, whilst I was still 'down South', was always going to be difficult. Members still around from those heady days, extremely helpful though they have been, were by and large unable to lay down sufficient ideas to make a coherent story, however interesting and amusing their many anecdotes.

Salvation, such as it is, came in the shape of the Club Journal, for the years 1959 and 1960, which gives an indication of the breadth and depth of the Club's mountaineering experiences a mere 10 years after its formation, before the greater freedom of travel and longer holidays that we now take for granted.

The two Easters found the Fylde M.C. in Scotland, in larger numbers than is now the case. Black Rock Cottage was visited where the previous Easter had also been enjoyed. Parties were out every day on the ski slopes and on the winter routes provided by the Buachailles and the Aonach Eagach. Another party were ensconced at the C.I.C. hut and spent the Bank Holiday ticking off routes on the Ben, though the ladies present were afraid to go out in the dark for a pee after an evening of ghost stories. The Green Mossy Man it seemed was Lochaber's equivalent of Fearlas Mor of Macdhuì. These ladies had already been put out by sexist discrimination when the Fort William Lobster Pot had offered them only one egg with their repast whilst the big hairy males of the party had been given two each. One member spent an afternoon wandering around the Nevis plateau in a whiteout with his map, compass and guidebook safe and warm in someone else's rucksack. It's amazing what doesn't change much over the years. Meanwhile life member Legge, family and friends were skiing at Aviemore for the week where I suspect things were a little more rustic than they are now.

Easter 1960 was held in the main at Derry Lodge, up the hill a bit from Braemar, a fine centre long since denied to climbers. Twentythree people plus equipment were shoehorned into three cars and a van for the journey North, arriving at the Devil's Elbow at about 8.00 a.m. No Golf GTI's in those days. From here skiers and walkers dispersed into the hills for a day's entertainment before repairing to Braemar and Derry Lodge. Gullies were climbed and skis humped onto the slopes of Ben Macdhuì. A lady member broke her ankle and had to be carried off the hill back to the Lodge; something else that has a familiar ring. Every credit that the Club managed its first fairly serious incident without calling on outside help. The only habitation near the Lodge was the cottage of the legendary keeper Bob Scott, who could tell many a fine tale. On the last day he presented Ray Legge's children with a magnificent pair of stags' antlers.

The Jowetts meanwhile were mounting yet another offensive against the Dolomites with ascents of two of the Sella towers, the Piz da Cir, and a traverse of the Marmolada in wintry conditions. The party found the huts first rate, most of them providing meals at very reasonable cost. No guides were employed and no pitons used!! Heaven forbid that it should be any different.

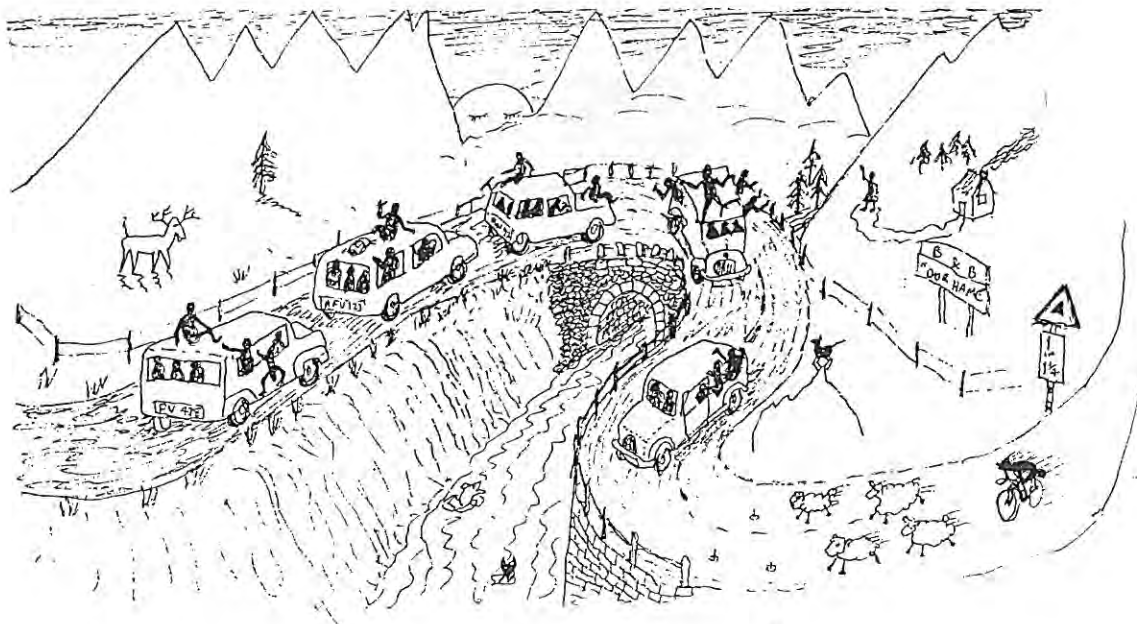
Meanwhile the Alps proper were being enjoyed by several other groups of Fylde members. Five men and a lady – Gordon Waldie, Doug Brown (still fell running), Carolyn Ivens, Brian Wilson, John Mackeson and A. Bell (still skiing) – were walking and climbing their way across the Valais Alps taking in such delights as the Pointe de Zinal, the Zinal Rothorn, the Tête Blanche and the Aiguille de la Tsa. One of them was no doubt writing a song about it. Chamonix was visited by Ken Croasdale, Glyn Rodgers, Dave Baker and Mick Hargreaves, camping at Montenvers and climbing the Petits Charmoz, Aiguilles de Blaitière, Dent du Requin and Le Cardinal.

Ray Legge became the first F.M.C. member to complete the Skye ridge in one trip, early in 1959, but he was soon joined by many more. In contrast the Austrian pistes of 1960 were occupied by many F.M.C. members, quite a few of whom are still active in this field. The same people managed a few weekends skiing in Glenshee, presumably before the 'greenhouse' effect took hold.

Pot-holing, too, had its devotees and a very active team clocked up numerous descents including County, Lancaster, Jingling, Alum and Penhygent. Additions to the Lancaster Pot system were discovered and explored, thanks to the considerable experience the members had of the area and to the dry summer of 1959, during which half the party got lost! Rowton and Jingling Pots were explored after a spell of wet weather and gave fine sport.

Still in the dark one gentleman from Rossall School describes moonlit trips over Goatfell in January after rock climbing on the Rosa Pinnacle. The action later moved to Glencoe where the usual round of ice climbing was followed by a moonlit traverse of the Aonach Eagach, presumably in search of W. H. Murray.

D. A. EARLE



The Club Bridge

All members who frequent the Newhouses Hut, Little Langdale, will be aware from the photographs on the Common Room wall of the Sandy McBeath Memorial Bridge, and of the tremendous effort that went into building it. The story behind the photographs now follows.

EDITOR

THE Committee were unanimous. A permanent memorial in the Lake District should be erected in memory of our Chairman, Sandy McBeath. He was loved and respected by everyone. A former officer and athlete in the Cameron Highlanders who had fought in the trenches of World War I, and after his retirement had taken to mountaineering and potholing with tremendous vigour and enthusiasm, until that fateful day when, whilst returning from the Alps, he was killed in a road accident.

The suggestion was that a first aid box should be placed on Esk Hause but this was vetoed by the Planning Board who then came up with the alternative idea that we should replace the bridge over Oxendale Beck which was in a dangerous condition. It was, in bad weather, an important link between the lower slopes of Bowfell and The Crinkles where, in flood time, Hell Ghyll became a raging and impassable torrent. It is used by both walkers and shepherds and is in an idyllic position. Sandy would have liked it. The scheme was adopted and donations came in readily.

Our club architect was a stalwart character called Harold Jackson, also a former Army man, who always wore his puttees in the mountains. He was a perfectionist and insisted that this bridge was to be a permanent and lasting memorial to our friend.

The first job was to find the two main spars which had to be massive oak beams. By a stroke of luck we found the very things in a demolition warehouse by the Lancaster quayside. Perfect, except that they were 10 inches too long. Well, they may as well be exact so we left instructions for the beams to be cut to the precise length. They cut 10ft off and our search began again.

The nails had to be of copper so they wouldn't rust. A plaque was made which was to be placed on a 6ft-high boulder. The problem was in drilling the four holes. Especially as there was no electrical plug point handy!

In the end, a special stonemason's drill was borrowed and, even with this, we had to drill in relays for hours in order to make the necessary holes.

The bridge was finally completed and, to our surprise, representatives from the local Council, the Planning Board and the Westmorland Gazette turned up for the opening dedication as, one by one, we slowly walked over the bridge, looked down at the torrent below and the mountains above where we had climbed with Sandy and felt sure that the bridge would last for ever.

It was not to be, however. A few years later, one of the most disastrous storms in memory broke over the Lake District. The valley was flooded. Cattle were drowned, houses flooded and our bridge was swept away by the tremendous onslaught of water and rocks. We couldn't believe our eyes. There was nothing there. Even the boulder with the plaque had disappeared. It was eventually discovered two hundred yards downstream. The plaque was still there but scarcely legible. We removed it and kept it in readiness for the New Bridge.

Work started once more. The local farmer suggested a new position where he said the floodwater would never reach the bridge and also offered the use of his tractor to haul up the main beams as far as possible. On one condition. That there would be a horizontal spar placed the exact height of a sheep's eye from the ground. Surely he must have been joking. But no – he was serious. Why a sheep's eye? And how high is a sheep's eye? Well, the farmer explained, the idea was to prevent the beasts getting vertigo when crossing! (I still have difficulty in believing this). The deal was struck.

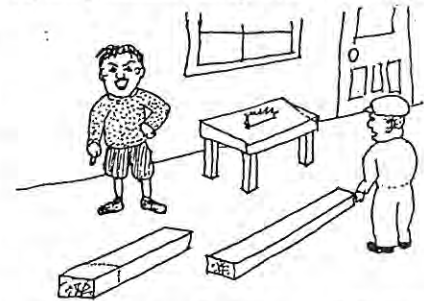
Our new architect was a Frenchman called Pierre, who enthusiastically applied himself to the work. There was one more snag. A large rock protruded onto the approaching path. It had to be removed.

"This is a job for Albert," pronounced Pierre. He was right. I agreed. Pierre had sacked him from the painting work at the new hut on account of most of the paint going onto the floor but this boulder job was right up his street. Albert was big and strong, a good man with a crowbar, if not a paintbrush! He moved it. By now the main beams had been hauled by the farmer as high as possible but there still remained a quarter of a mile of uphill work to get them to the site. This was done on the shoulders of F.M.C. members as is shown on the photograph in the hut at Newhouses.

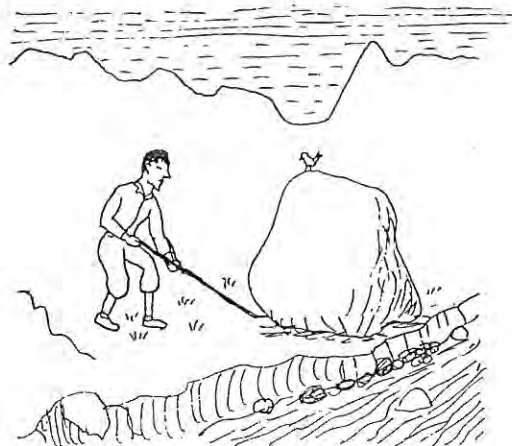
The battered plaque was placed on the handrail. Sheep now cross with a smile on their faces and countless walkers and climbers cross the bridge when returning to Langdale after a day on the hills.

Some time later, we received a congratulatory letter from the Planning Board asking if we would like to carry out the job of replacing the bridges in Tilberthwaite Ghyll.

We politely refused.



I said 10 inches not 10 FEET!



JACK JOWETT

CLUB DINNERS and the WILD AND WOOLLY DAYS OF J. J. PRODUCTIONS

THE first Club Dinner was a fairly inauspicious affair with a dozen or so members eating at the Unicorn in Ambleside. At 9.00 p.m. they found themselves turfed out onto the street as the bar was wanted for a second sitting. In addition the Club held an Annual Dance in Blackpool which was considerably more successful. It must be remembered that at this time, transport was very thin on the ground and Blackpool-based events had great appeal.

The Annual Dinner then moved to the Old Dungeon Ghyll, where it rapidly went from strength to strength and soon became a tour de force. Entertainment was provided in the early days by individuals or small groups. The Dance of the Cygnets was performed by Gordon Heywood, Tony Iddon, Les Lord and Pete Blacow after some initial hystronics by Tony Iddon, who refused point blank to go on without his beak, which had become mislaid. Gordon also featured in the riotous "Three Little Maids From School". The very worthy Bill Comstive, a hard-working and long-serving Club Secretary, gave a magnificent impersonation of a St. Bernard dog, even more remarkable from one who was inclined to take himself a little too seriously at times. There was plenty of singing at table led by people like Dennis Wildridge.

Eventually these separate acts welded themselves into a continuous plot under the auspices of Jack Jowett. The first ever "J. J. Production" was performed at the Veevers Arms where the Club then met and featured the Wild West. It was voted an instant success, at least by the performers and a pantomime was featured in the ensuing Club Dinners for many years to come. I have never actually seen one of these pantomimes as I have always been taking part so I have no idea how they came over. There was, however, plenty of audience participation and they were huge fun to be in. Alan Bell, busy as always, seldom made any of the rehearsals except for a few minutes now and again but it never seemed to make any difference. His finest hour, it is said, was as a North-West Frontier Mountie. Dave Sharples and Freddie Wilson were magnificent in a St. Trinians play. Freddie was one of the regular stars. Certain thespians starred only by their amazing inabilities. The unique Brian Greenwood, having forgotten his one line, "enter", became known throughout the rest of time as 'The Oracle'. With a considerably greater handicap to overcome Lurch, as he was then known, put huge amounts of effort into being able to pronounce his line, "Don't be vulgar, Prudence". And he nearly got it right!!

Perhaps the best title ever was "The Ascent of Elsan", a skit on the "Rum Doodle" book, and played out somewhat irreverently in front of an august Himalayan climber who just happened to be the guest of honour that year. "Mountaineering Through the Ages" also featured at one Dinner with Mick Tolley as a resplendant Britannia. He is very good as a pantomime dame and I have always fancied him since seeing him in one of Jennie's basques whilst playing the part of Eskimo Nell. I'm sure the real thing couldn't be so wondrous to behold.

Roy Nisbet, the Prince of Darkness, featured in one epic as the Minataur, of Greek legend, dressed in a horse's head borrowed from Ted Eaves' school, part of the Midsummer Night's Dream props. This head was not allowed to be lost sight of under any circumstances so Dorothy Jowett agreed to carry it back to Little Langdale after the festivities. The road proved to be long and steep and the head became heavier and heavier until it was abandoned half hidden behind a wall for collecting later. It proved something of a point of consternation for early morning motorists until its successful recovery.

The ladies joined in from time to time; Ann Mallock, the Club Siren, playing the Munchie Munchie chocolate bar girl in one episode. Not to be outdone, they all teamed up one year to put in a "J. J. Production" of their own featuring people like Maureen Adams and Jean Clayton doing a revue of "That Was The Year That Was." "Big Tramping" Ida Smith impersonated Pete Roscoe and Lynn Wilson took off the "Munchie Munchie" girl, so we don't have to read too much into that aspect of Club politics!! Girls will be girls, I suppose!

Another pantomime to feature before our days at the Old Dungeon Ghyll came to an end, concerned a team of prospectors searching for uranium. "It's your anium I'm after", was the oft repeated catchphrase. The end came in about 1968 with a huge bout of degenerate behaviour exacerbated by half the staff being away on the hill, carrying out a very difficult rescue. People who were not then Life Members and who now set great store in protecting the Club's morals, were involved, with others, in climbing round the light fittings (perhaps this incident has altered their attitudes). Sid Cross said enough was enough and we were out on our ear.

A very quiet Dinner Meet followed at the Wasdale Head succeeded by the Sun at Troutbeck, notable for its raw sausages, a missing bottle of whisky, and Lurch playing the part of a baby, falling out of his cot and off the table. The King's Head at Thirlspot provided the venue one year and J. J. Productions continued to provide entertainment for a little while yet. I suspect my first part was that of Cinderella, a role I have never quite managed to shake off. Frank Lord was a resplendent Prince Charming, the like of which Hollywood has never quite been able to live up to. One year found us all dressed up in potato sacks as Monks of High Renown doing the Himalayan Yeti Stomp to the strains of Dark Town Strutters Ball. During the twirls Lurch would always manage to go the wrong way and remove half the cast from the stage. He was so natural he was always a star. The New D.G. found us in Roman mood. The writer was Mark Anthony with Millwall F.C. shield, and Lurch as his Cleopatra. Ray Varley was a page with the longest trumpet ever seen and the evil Keith Lockett as Constipacious, tried to alter the plot by attempting to beat the hero in what should have been a carefully staged fencing dual in time with the "Hall of the Mountain King" music. Things got a bit hectic. The New D.G. was also notable for the great meringue hurling contest. They had all gone wrong and could be chucked about with the management's blessing.

The Scafell found us as Stone Age men working in the axe factory in Great Langdale. The staff here were really wonderful and enjoyed it as much as any of us. Luigi, the Head Waiter, took it upon himself to provide all the cues. J. J. Prods eventually faded from the scene, to be replaced by a very creditable attempt by Mr. and Mrs. Sharples, with friends. But the bubble had burst and the magic had evaporated. Without anyone willing to put in the large amount of work necessary to make the Club pantomime a huge success it seemed better to dwell on our memories of such wonderful times.

After the Scafell Hotel decided to close for the winter we eventually ended up at the Derwentwater Hotel, Portinscale, where after some successful Dinners they decided we could not drink beyond 11.00 p.m. We cancelled with three weeks to go; the committee drove round the Lakes knocking on doors and discovered the Waterhead, where we stayed until the decision came to seek out our roots.

D. A. EARLE

EARLY IMPROVEMENTS TO LITTLE LANGDALE

AS AT the date of purchase the facilities at Little Langdale were fairly basic, if just about adequate, to maintain life, so to speak. Enormous amounts of effort were put into all three cottages to bring them up to scratch and to persuade the authorities to remove their closure order. Any of us that followed on from those heroic days owe a huge debt of gratitude to those early pioneers of the McAlpine Mountaineering Club. I have noticed it gets into the blood of some and one has to be really firm with them otherwise they would commit the entire life of the Club to hut construction and reconstruction, but I digress. Moderation in all things on a sound and healthy base laid down in the first 20 years of the Club has served us very well.

One outside cold water tap served all three cottages, which together with minimal or non-existent drainage, made life unnecessarily tedious, and in winter unpleasant. A number one priority was to install plumbing and drainage. The plumbing was carried out by ourselves and the drainage was installed under the supervision of local builder Albert Bowness, sometime relative of Donald, who has looked after our needs in more recent times. The drainage pipes run under the slates in front of the cottages. The Health Inspector's name was MacAdam. He used to arrive complete with a billiard ball which he used to insert in the pipes to check if sufficient drop existed. It is said that this ball only used to arrive at the other end because it used to be blown there by Dorothy Jowett, who can carry out all sorts of mischievous projects whilst continuing to look absolutely prim and proper – a very useful skill.

Lighting was by paraffin lamps downstairs and candles upstairs, a system which is not without its dangers, as Hampton Court Palace found out recently to its cost. Butane gas lighting and cooking was installed throughout the cottages, funded by Jack Jowett who came up trumps in these tricky financial days.

There was a communal washhouse round the back which was demolished to make way for the toilet block built by Albert Bowness. To defray costs the Club did as much of the humping as possible and also put in the necessary plumbing. This replaced the earth closets, known as the two-seater trainer, which was held in such high esteem by the Club, but in abhorrence by poor old MacAdam. Still, the new toilet block brought a gleam to his eye and the necessary certification to the Club, after connection to the septic tank in the field next to the hut.

The end cottages, restored to a higher level than that of the Club hut, received a full habitation certificate and No. 2 Newhouses received a lesser, but still sufficient, award to win the day and preserve itself for posterity as our servant but mainly as a much-loved friend.

As has been mentioned, many of the fixtures and fittings came from the Preston M.C. who had a room at the back of the Black Bull at Coniston. The landlord was a tyrant and wanted them out post haste, hence their offer to sell us their equipment at a knock-down price. Jack went round to see this landlord with a view to collecting Preston M.C.'s belongings and found him to be as nice as pie until Jack mentioned he was a climber and the nature of his visit, at which mine host went berserk. Included in these belongings was the present safe at Langdale and the locals were treated to the sight of a gang of youths removing a safe from the back of a pub by sliding it down a ladder on a pulley system and disappearing into the night with it. They did not bat an eyelid.

Electricity came late to Little Langdale, arriving in 1964, and occasionally disappearing from time to time, leaving us marooned with candles and bottled beer. Some locals were for it, and others against, though I am sure no one would elect to be without it now. Ray Jackson organised a team consisting of Derrick Smith, Brian Osborne, the late and much-loved Freddie Wilson, and Les Lord. All three cottages were done at the same time, finalising the fundamental transformation of a terrace of three condemned cottages to something approaching heaven on earth.

D. A. EARLE

THE SIMPLE PLACE

*There's a pretty little privy, standing silent in our dale
Where we used to seek seclusion after quaffing too much ale.
Full many a happy hour we spent in dignified seclusion
Whilst the solid iron bolt secured the door against intrusion.*

*Its walls were hewn from solid rock and stood for countless
years.*

*They yielded countless climbing routes, from Diffs to Mild
Severes.*

*A robin nested 'neath the eaves and reared her tiny young.
She didn't mind the earthy smell of good old British dung.*

*For round the house grew many a rose of beauty most
profound,*

Cultured by the richest soil that graced the rocky ground.

*Two seats were there for friends to share their healthy
recreation;*

To read awhile, or rest awhile in quiet contemplation.

*This little paradise, this seat of Mars, this sanctuary
sublime,
Had stood for centuries intact, and stood the test of time.
Simple and modest in her ways, with nothing to offend,
Until a Health Inspector came, pronouncing her
condemned.*

*So the builders came, with concrete blocks, and built a
brand new loo
With plastic seat and chromium chain, all shining stark
and new.*

*A solitary seat was there in frigid isolation;
Enough to give the occupant a bout of constipation.*

*In winter all the waterworks were frozen into ice;
In summer all the paper was devoured by the mice.
Oh many and many a tear we shed and many a mournful
song
For that simple place of bygone years that never did go
wrong.*

*So the workers are oppressed by the tyrants of our age.
Let us rise and pull together in our wrath and in our rage.
We shall keep our old earth closets; down with ballcocks
and with drains,
For we've nothing much to lose, friends, save our chromium-
plated chains.*

JACK JOWETT

LITTLE LANGDALE 1970 TO DATE

THE adulation of the crowd rang in my ears as I left the 1970 A.G.M., clutching a piece of paper on which the then Booking Secretary, Brian Wilkinson, had written 'Belly Stove'. Gaspin had done a good job maintaining the status quo at Little Langdale while the Club's time, money and resources went into the building of Stair but now it was the turn of the Langdale hut to be improved and I apparently, although still fairly fresh from the Old Kent Road, was the man to do it. The first priority seemed to be to get some heat into the building.

The cold grey light of Thursday morning was somewhat different to the heady promise of Wednesday night. I looked blearily at Cherry and then at the note. 'Belly Stove?' What on earth was a belly stove and where would you buy one. Someone had said they were something to do with cowboys. Where better to start looking than Lancashire's own answer to the Wild West, Fleetwood? To my amazement and relief 'Trawler Supply' could obtain just the thing and what's more they were locally made at Lytham.

I was summoned to collect our new incendiary device and an ox of a man casually tossed it into the capacious boot of my car. It was not so casually removed. I could barely lift it, such was its weight, and between the pair of us we could make little impression on it. It sat in the boot for some time – commuting backwards and forwards to work.

Once installed it proved just the ticket. It was easy to light providing it was clean and empty to start with and gave out plenty of heat once it had got going. It was eventually poked to death and a replacement could not be found, hence the present gas fire.

Butane gas was used in the kitchen. This had the disadvantage of covering everything with soot. Pots, pans, surfaces, sinks and the towels were impossible to keep clean. Many of the fixtures were ripped out and either cleaned or replaced and propane gas was installed which burns cleanly and is in use today. A considerable amount of work was done to the sink and draining board area, new surfaces were put down on all cupboards, shelving and food racks. All the windows at the front of the building were pretty rotten and were replaced. Standard windows could not be found of the correct size. The cost of custom-built frames was considered far too expensive in the context of the times as we still had the 'Great Debt' to consider (the building costs for Stair) and so standard size windows were purchased which were larger than the existing frames. A considerable amount of time and effort went into installing them, together with a skylight at the top of the stairs. They admit a lot more light to the building but spoil the outside proportions of the hut, which is very regrettable.

A new front door was fitted, and a bench seat installed in the common room. Considerable damage was being inflicted to the fabric of the building so the beams in the common room were boxed in to prevent the up and coming climbers from traversing round the walls. I never cared for this boxing in but it certainly had the desired effect.

The dividing wall between the two dorms was crumbling out of existence and I, for one, didn't want any females peeping through to see what little I had to offer. So it was demolished and replaced. Replacement beds were found from Preston prison and each bed was provided with a new mattress and two sets of mattress covers. The bug-ridden horse hair mattresses were ceremonially burnt. Cherry was a great help in regularly laundering mattress covers and tea towels so the hut was always clean and tidy.

I had for some time pondered if it were possible to gain access to the outside toilets from the hut as, apparently, had Rick Reeve. I asked Mick Tolley to do a drawing to assess the situation, but whilst awaiting this vital document I mentioned my ideas to Peter Roscoe, recently returned from Canada. Never one to beat about the bush he passed up and down outside the building for a bit, came back inside and announced "Just about here will do". Plaster was knocked from the wall, stones were removed and we found ourselves peering, somewhat like Lord Caernarvon and Howard Carter at the tomb of Tutankhamen, through a slot into the wood shed. It would be a simple matter to break through from there into the toilet block itself. We now had a commitment.

Breaking through a 3ft thick wall was arduous in the extreme and not a little dangerous. Several times we nearly lost the hut and even car jacks came to the rescue on occasions. The Club owes considerable gratitude to the small band that toiled so long for this very worthwhile improvement. Concrete floors were laid, roofs were repaired and altered, the wood shed was provided with sinks, electric and plumbing to become the washroom, the coal shed became the drying room and we had direct access to the water closets. All in all a supreme achievement and a magnum leap forward in the quality of facilities the Club had to offer its members.

After this work we needed somewhere else to keep the coal as we still had the belly stove. I ordered a commercial coal bunker, and explained that delivery would be down a very narrow lane. I suggested that the firm send the smallest van they had and, if necessary, the bunker could be taken down in sections on a skate as it was downhill all the way. All this advice was to little effect as the firm sent the largest vehicle it could find. It jammed tight round the bends at the top of the lane and could thus no longer move forwards or backwards. No local could get their cars either out or into the valley and anyone that had to do shopping and the like either had to climb over the offending wagon or leave by footpath. It was eventually removed by heavy lifting gear that had to be brought up from Milnthorpe. Not a day to forget in a hurry.

After I became Secretary D. Duck provided a shower for the hut and eventually replaced the dying belly stove. A considerable amount of money was then spent refurbishing the kitchen 15 years on from its last major refit. I distinctly remember the then Chairman Barrie Crook taking a vote on the spending of this money at the start of the Committee Meeting before we supped too much ale and would vote for anything. It has proved to be money well spent. We have now carpeted the floor area of the dormitories.

Again, the Club's thanks to all those who have contributed to maintain and improve its property over the years.

D. A. EARLE

THE ACQUISITION OF THE LAND AT STAIR

THE Club had enjoyed many weekends in the Northern Lakes in the '60s, either in Borrowdale or camping in the Newlands Valley close to the Swinside Inn, at sites long since closed down by the Planning Board.

As funds and ambition were beginning to grow again after the purchase and restoration of Newhouses, Little Langdale, together with the realisation that Club huts were indeed a very good thing for the F.M.C., members started to look at the far end of the Lakes with a view to obtaining a second property in the National Park. It soon became clear that Borrowdale was already well stitched up and had little to offer an impecunious climbing club but that the Newlands Valley might well be the answer to our prayer.

Quiet and shy, this sylvan vale was tucked away out of sight of, but very near to, Borrowdale. The main stream of tourist development had passed it by but it did hold a precedent in the shape of the Gordon Walker chalet, at which members had stayed from time to time. Our kudos with the Planning Board was high after the work done on erecting and re-erecting the Club bridge in Great Langdale and was further enhanced by our work with them in running their Mountain Schools, a tradition which lasted with us till the late '70s.

The Board were approached for help and advice and they referred us to Lord Rochdale at Portinscale, who was the major landowner in the area. An appointment was made and Alan Bell, Jack Jowett and Peter Roscoe went along to see what could be achieved on behalf of the Club.

Meeting a tall and distinguished-looking gentleman in the drive they immediately started bowing and scraping and tugging forelocks until they discovered he was only the gardener. Lord Rochdale proved very approachable, helpful and considerate but it soon became clear, as they pored over his maps, that the piece of land most suitable belonged to Dick Graves, the farmer from Skellgill, so our dynamic trio were despatched forthwith to see him with a view to purchasing a damp wooded copse, of little commercial value.

Farmer Graves' initial dourness soon melted as the trio, ushered into his kitchen, explained the reason for their visit, and a deal was struck, subject to planning permission, for a very reasonable price. Being well in with the Planning Board paid handsome dividends as outline planning permission was readily granted for the F.M.C.'s second hut. Finance was the usual worry but again the Planning Board steered us in the direction of a little-known charity, helped and assisted by the British Mountaineering Council.

This resulted in Peter Roscoe, in his usual style of 150% commitment, going down to London and bullying the Secretary of the Duke of Edinburgh's Playing Fields Association, or some such similar name, into giving us a 50% grant towards the building costs at Stair. It is thought that we were probably the first mountaineering club to obtain funds from this charity to build our 'Pavilion', and I suspect we may well also have been the last. Certain conditions as to the type of facilities made available were laid down, all highly desirable anyway, together with stipulations about the number of cubic feet of air per bed. This resulted in Stair being eight times the size of Little Langdale for the same number of beds, and having an unheatable common room; problems which have been gradually solved over the years.

Harold Jackson, entirely at his own expense, drew up some excellent plans for a two-storey Swiss cottage which was costed out at about £4,000, an enormous sum in those days. Tony Hargreaves, a pupil architect of Harold's, persuaded the Club to commission him to design a more affordable edifice and the present building, however ugly and insensitive to the environment it may be, is the very functional result of his labours. But with the delay caused by the re-drafting of plans, and the escalating costs of labour and raw materials, how much money was actually saved by abandoning Harold Jackson's Swiss chalet and replacing it with a telephone exchange cum public bog is a moot point. Hindsight is a wonderful attribute. Being well in with the Planning Board was even more essential.

At the end of the day, however, the positive and forward-thinking F.M.C. committee had provided the Club with yet another superb Hut in a magnificent part of the country. The Club had been given a tremendous amount of flexibility with which to organise its activities, as one hut can be kept for families, functions, etc., or both huts can be made available for special events like the hut-to-hut walk. In addition, once the great debt had been eliminated, the Club had created a magnificent source of revenue, with which it has coasted along ever since.

D. A. EARLE

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HUT AT STAIR

THE land had been purchased, finance had been agreed with our banker, members had donated or loaned, interest-free, money to the Club and the plans had been agreed. There had been some hassle with the layby, designed to allow vehicles to pull off the road whilst opening the gate, but the way was now clear.

Builders were appointed from the Lake District and Club member 'Powerful' Pierre Allois, the epitome of the dapper little Frenchman, undertook the task of Clerk of Works on behalf of the Club. After some initial site clearance Pierre, accompanied by Mick Tolley and Pete Roscoe, set out the position of the building on the ground. The site was then handed over to the construction company and Pierre visited the site every few weeks to iron out any particular difficulties. Work commenced in the late summer of 1968 and the shell of the building was handed over to the Club in 1969. The Contractor completed the plumbing with the assistance of Club members and Derrek Smith organised the installation of the wiring along with his electrical friends. Buying a hut without electrical circuitry certainly saves money but has the disadvantage of having no facilities for cooking or heating. It was just like camping in a large stone tent. Derrek thought the spartan conditions would soon toughen us up and turn us into mountaineers of the true breed but was eventually prevailed upon to do something about the internal temperature. The solution to our woes came in the shape of a poster of an electric fire around which we used to huddle to keep warm whilst we ate our gruel by candlelight. Derek also used to lead the rock climbing trips to Shepherds, starting at 6 a.m. and returning to start a full day's work at 10 a.m. or so, just as the crag was filling up.

The triple storm-force windows soon showed their inadequacies when Ray Varley was discovered covered in snow whilst sleeping in the gent's dormitory on his Lilo, before the bunks had been constructed. The snow hadn't even melted, such was the temperature.

Pierre had wanted Alpine bunks but the committee turned this disgusting French idea down flat. Though if the likes of Barbara Sealey had been around then instead of Rodney Waller, the decision may have been different. Anyway Pierre set to and designed the present (original) bunks which were built by a Club member who worked for Parkinsons. They remain a lasting monument to the skill and professionalism of the pair of them.

Club members provided the original cupboarding and fittings in the kitchen which lasted well but were eventually replaced by the existing kitchen, built by John 'Basil Brush' Hargreaves, the laughing joiner, and friend to many in the Club.

As well as all the internal fixtures, fittings, furniture, etc., the Club also undertook to carry out all necessary painting. Now Pierre was a bit of a stickler on the old painting lark. You were either akin to Leonardo da Vinci and were allowed near his baby, or you were banished to the far corners of the earth. The Duck was one victim. I can still picture the rage in Pierre's eyes as he watched in complete disbelief as Donald plunged a 4in. brush deep into a pot of white gloss and advanced menacingly towards one of Pierre's treasured window frames, with paint pouring off the bottom of the brush. "NON! NON! NON!" raved Pierre as he leapt up and down in rage and horror at the advancing apparition. Mr. Nichol was banished to 'other duties' along with such other Club notables as 'Mad' Albert, who spent all day shovelling stones from one part of the car park to another, a job which I am sure he did very well. Finally, 'Dad' Whiteley moved in with his team of apprentices and laid the flooring.

Since the hut was officially opened, a few more beds have been sneaked in; the common room was made smaller to make it easier to keep warm, and there have been several moves to double pitch the roof. Pierre for one hated the single pitch roof but costs were at a premium. The insulation in the roof has been greatly improved through the good offices of Gerry Senior and more insulation was placed under the windows. A recent innovation is the bin store which is totally successful in preventing the covering of the Lake District by litter removed from our bins by scavenging animals.

The latest improvement is the provision of fire doors. By and large the original internal design has worked extremely well. It would be nice to have a real fire in the place but part of the planning conditions require us to protect the screening trees at all costs. None may be removed, no fires may be lit and we are not allowed a chimneystack, as part of the rules.

I for one would not want to look at the Fylde Mountaineering toilet block at Stair. I remain incredulous that planning permission was ever granted. It certainly pays to keep in with the right people.

D. A. EARLE

TRUSTEES

EVERY now and again some mischievous member raises the question of the Club's Trustees, knowing full well the problems that will be caused to the current committee concerning this most dark, hidden and mysterious side of Club life.

So what do these shadowy figures from the past actually do, and who are they? When the Club began moving into property, the Banking Institutions required us to nominate certain responsible people to deal with the acquisition and disposal of land and property, and to stand as guarantors in case of disaster.

The original Trustees of the Club appear to be Alan Bell, John Cooper, Geoff Dawes and Jack Jowett, and the Trustees for the Stair Hut were Harold Jackson, Ray Legge and Peter Ray. Since our properties are now fully paid for and are well loved and well looked after, these worthy public-spirited members can sleep much more easily in their respective beds. Over the years one can forget their existence as committees come and go, until a reminder brings us up short.

We need to maintain a knowledge of the Trustees as they still have one important function. None of the Club's properties can be disposed of without their agreement. This means that no asset-stripping Thatcherite can join the Club and then vote with colleagues to dispose of the cottages and divide up the profits, as people who sweat blood and tears obtaining these priceless huts have the final veto on any such scheme.

We wrote to all the Trustees a few years ago, so as to bring our list up to date. Geoff Dawes declined, as he felt he was no longer in touch with the Club, but wished us well. We received no reply from John Cooper and Peter Ray but George Parker and Derrek Smith agreed to take their place as Trustees. All others were delighted to continue to serve; and to maintain links with the Club.

Perhaps the most remarkable reply came from Capt. H. T. Jackson, now living near Rugby. He was very much alive and well and still an active mountaineer. He had been up the Monte Rosa at the age of 75 but now at 87 he had had a little bit of a non-mountaineering accident which was likely to curtail his days on the hill a bit. With remarkable people like this in on the ground floor, when the Club first got going, it is no wonder we made so much progress so quickly during our first years.

D. A. EARLE

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

I AM often asked, what is it that those members listed on the syllabus have done, to be vested with the highest honour that the Club can bestow. It seemed sensible therefore to try to discover and document it for the journal. This proved difficult. Whilst some of the broad reasons remained clear, I am sure many of the smaller points and detailed nuances have become lost in the mists of time. The accompanying monographs provide, therefore, only the briefest sketch of the service given to the Club, in its several aspects, by these worthies.

What did become clear through my research was the very thin dividing line between those who did receive the Club's accolade and many who did not. The more one enquired, the more one comprehended the tremendous effort that had been put into establishing the Club in the early days by a small but very dedicated and enthusiastic team.

Bill Comstive received considerable praise for his efforts in establishing the Club and the Langdale Hut. The Mackesons came over as a team that fought long and hard on behalf of the Club. Alan Bell, too, proved to have given exceptional service but there were many more.

So whilst you read these accompanying monographs I would also ask you to remember and give thanks to all the others who so selflessly laid down the foundations of the Club as we now know it. – *Editor*.

MR. AND MRS. J. COOPER

MR. AND MRS. R. J. LEGGE

FROM the very outset the Fylde M.C. was blessed with star quality members whose depth of vision for the future was matched equally by their boundless enthusiasm and their abilities to carry out their decided ambitions.

Almost immediately the Coopers and the Legges, amongst others, realised that what the Fylde M.C. needed to weld its embryonic membership together was a club hut in the mountain environment. Thirty years or more before Mrs. Thatcher's property owning democracy and with a membership of barely 35, this was a very bold move indeed. Considerable energies were poured into scouring the Lakes for a site, dealing with all the legal work, raising the finance, and carrying out a considerable amount of repairs and improvements.

In only a few years the Fylde M.C. was going from strength to strength built on the rock created by the likes of the above. So much so that the Club was able in a very few years to consider a second home in the Lakes. The flexibility and the income that two prime site properties give us is absolutely priceless, and must never be undervalued.

When Cherry and I moved up in January 1969 the Club was about to receive the shell of the Newlands hut from the builder. We both realised the tremendous legacy handed on by the pioneer Fylde M.C. members under such inspired leadership and it is up to all of us to nurture and enhance that legacy further, for the generations to come.

Ray Legge designed the Club badge and Gordon Stanley made the Club shield which hangs in Little Langdale. This has lately been restored by Don Nichol.

EDITOR

MR. AND MRS. J. JOWETT

KNOWN almost universally as "J.J." Jack was one of the founder members and guided it through its first years, as Chairman. During the first year he met and married Dorothy. If he had quit then he would have done well enough out of the club but fortunately he continued and enhanced his membership, serving in high office most of the time and being very actively involved with the mountaineering side of things in its widest spectrum.

Always an interesting and amusing companion, Jack is tremendously lively and always a pleasure to be with, both on and off the hill, but in addition has put in enormous efforts to lay the foundations of the Club and to bring it to the fulfilment of owning two excellent huts. He owns the longest-running meet, "In Search of Snow", and wrote excellent articles about the club's activities for the local press which always began "It was a white world", even if it was a lecture at Blackpool or a summer trip to South Wales.

For many years he used to produce a Club pantomime at the Annual Dinner known as "J.J. Productions". I never saw one as I was always part of the cast but they were a complete hoot to be in and if the audience only had a tenth of the fun that we did it must have been well worth while.

Jack had a certain reputation as a navigator which he used to work at very hard. I particularly remember one coach meet to the Howgills when the party marched backwards and forwards over the same ground all day, reducing the height of the Calf by several millimetres. On another occasion as we left Thornthwaite Beacon a party was just starting its sandwiches. When we returned again out of the mist they were just finishing them. Jack was a navigator during the war out in Italy. It was always rumoured that he took part in the bombing of Coventry under the mistaken impression that it was Milan. He still leads walking holidays in Italy and is a Dolomite specialist but his lecture ending with nudes on some Italian beach is always worth a second look. The commentary is of course, as with most things Jack does, hilarious.

When Cherry and I first moved North, Jack was wanting to start a Junior Section but had no one to assist. We gladly allowed ourselves to be roped in as full time members. The Junior Section operated very successfully and with great enthusiasm until the Club, in a panic about liability, voted it out of existence, but not until it had given us the terrible trio of Dale, Dunhill and Clarke and a fair smattering of delightful young ladies known as J.J.'s "early developers".

It is sad but inevitable that Jack no longer gets out with the Club as much as we would like by a wide margin. However, he can be tempted out of retirement occasionally and a recent beer, bangers and beans meet proved highly entertaining with a beer-sodden Jack staggering out of the kitchen at Stair to announce to the multitude gathered in the common room that "the beans were nearly ready". These particular beans were an extraordinarily long time coming, a situation that deserved scientific investigation but which may have been linked to the rapidly emptying barrel of Marstons unfortunately situated in the kitchen.

What Dorothy makes of all this we cannot know but we do know that she has ably and enthusiastically supported Jack throughout his membership of, and service to, the Fylde M.C. She does occasionally terrify me by pouring large quantities of alcohol into me and then asking very searching questions about the future of Little Langdale but by and large is a pretty good sort. She holds one of the ladies' fell race records because she once stopped at the top of the hill for a rest/sunbathe and nodded off for an hour or two!

So to Jack, and Dorothy; walker, climber, pot-holer, skier, raconteur, poet, playwright, occasional inebriate, piano tuner and enthusiastic worker for the Club, we give thanks.

EDITOR

PETER ROSCOE

BORN locally, Peter joined the Fylde M.C. early in its history and has remained one of its most active mountaineers. He has held high office often, and is a past Chairman and Hut Custodian of note. He was involved in the purchasing of land at Stair for the new hut, and has put in an enormous number of hours at working parties, always at the sharp end and always with plenty of positive ideas. Peter never does things by halves and expects the same standards from others.

Not unjustly called the "Bergfuhrer" Peter's forceful character had always been used to good effect either working extremely hard for the Club or in the pursuit of mountaineering in its widest spectrum. He is always the first on the scene if anyone is in trouble and spares no effort to organise whatever is necessary. He is generous to a fault and would give away his last penny if he found a need greater than his.

His efforts to reform and acquire a new image were sadly destroyed by an outside party on his first and only attempt. His polite and patient explanations of the rules of pool to the pub drunk on a Sottish winter meet resulted in a punch on the nose and eviction to the car park. Such was the excellence of the weekend's weather the frozen blood (not Peter's) splattered all over my car, remained there for the whole weekend.

Peter has long represented the Club on the British Mountaineering Council and was able to give the Hagshu team much welcome advice and support. The Fylde M.C. has always been a large part of Peter's life and he was very proud a few years ago to receive Honorary Life Membership, long overdue. He remained a very forceful climber, and one always had a very full day out with Peter climbing to the limit. Many of my very best days on the hill have been with him. There are few others I would choose to traverse the Cairngorms with in a blizzard.

We were all saddened by the recent tragic death of his wife Sheila who had done much to support him in his endeavours both for the Club and on the hill. She had been a very active fell walker for many years and I have always treasured a traverse of the Aonach Eagach with the Roscoe family.

EDITOR

GEORGE PARKER

DESCRIBED in a Newsletter as the climber's "chunky friend", George has always been one of the most well liked and respected of the Club's Elder Statesmen, with his affable easygoing nature and sound judgement in times of crisis. His weighty presence lends itself superbly to the function of the Club Anchor Man to whom we can belay in times of trauma.

Born in Manchester he first took up cycling as did so many of the F.M.C.'s first members. He later graduated to climbing and joined the Cromlech Club who had a hut in Nant Peris, and Manchester Y.M.C.A. with an excellent hut at Nant Mor. All his early climbing was done in Wales.

George moved to the Fylde in 1967 and almost immediately took up the duties of Club Treasurer, a post which he held until about 1980. Nobody knew how he kept the Club solvent at the same time as supplying himself with cars of ever increasing luxury, such is his genius.

He is always very welcome on meets and it is a great loss to the rest of us that he is unable to make as many trips to the hills with us as he would like.

George has always been ably supported by his wife Audrey to whom the Club also owes a debt of gratitude.

EDITOR

THE SOCIAL SYLLABUS

THE social side of the Club has varied enormously, going from extremely active in the early days, to moribund. Over the last few years there has been a minor renaissance and the Wednesday night slide shows are, by our recent standards, very well attended.

It all started at the Blackpool Grammar School Gymnasium, where we were thrown out for using the equipment in a dangerous and illegal manner. What else could you expect from a Mountaineering Club? Outdoor climbing continued using the trees at Fleetwood Grammar School. A room at the R.A.F.A. Club, Cleveleys, was an early venue and it was here that J. J.'s Italian Evening started. Dorothy made the spaghetti, D. Malleliu sang Italian songs and J. J. showed his slides. What would Martin Dale make of it all, I wonder? The culmination of the Italian Evening was at the Carlton Memorial Hall where Italian dress was the order of the day, so to speak. Freddie Wilson arrived with a white stick and dark glasses as a Venetian Blind and Anne Mallock was stunning as Lucretia Borgia, no doubt much to the dismay of her many rivals. It seems that the Fylde M.C. was thick with lovely young ladies in those days, a situation that certainly needs restoring. Music and wine followed and the whole event ended with the dance of the Tarantella, the steps of which had been learnt from a library book. J. J.'s neighbours had been treated to the spectacle of the Fylde M.C.'s leading lights practicing this complicated dance for weeks before the event.

A great number of slide shows and other events took place at the Carlton Memorial Hall before we moved on to other venues which included the Veevers Arms. Howard Somerville, from the 1924 Everest Expedition, was a member of the same Congregational Church as Jackie Fairburn and through the latter's overtures came and showed his own lantern slides. Reg Ainsworth, M.B.E., of the Cave Rescue (my, how it pays to keep in with these boys) and Gritstone Club, entertained us with slides featuring not only the Pennines Underground but also such notables as Arthur Dolphin. Gladys Sellars, still around today and writing for National Magazines, was another regular lecturer as was Alf Gregory. When the man himself was away on an expedition he still allowed us to borrow his slides and project them ourselves providing they were returned the same evening. One night, anxious to return them in good time, Jack Jowett was dumbfounded to find no one would answer the doorbell in spite of the residence being obviously occupied. It seemed that the daughter of the house had been thrown out by her mother who then treated every battering of the front door as a demand to be let back in by her wayward offspring. It took a phone call to explain the situation before the slides were snatched back through a barely opened door. Another fund-raising event was to get money to replace Little Langdale roof. It has not yet fallen down and successive committees have now drunk away the Little Langdale Roof Fund. Dr. Madge was a regular contributor. He was medical adviser to the Mountain Rescue Committee and had a son at Rossall. He held some fairly controversial views but was one of the very first to realise the tremendous use to which dogs could be put on searches. The Club ran a series of lectures at the Claremont Hotel, another early venue, on Mountain Safety. Dr. Madge used to illustrate one of his talks with pieces of a hairgrip and a human skull which his bloodhounds had been instrumental in finding on a couple of searches.

The Club was represented at certain exhibitions in Blackpool through its links with the Lake District Planning Board and the Voluntary Warden Scheme. Other socials took place at the homes of members, mostly in the form of Garden Parties, and always to raise cash for the Club. The homes of the Muirs, the Mackesons, the Jowetts and Gordon Waldie were prominently featured. Jumble sales also loomed large in the Club's repertoire of fund-raising activities of which something has been written elsewhere in this Journal. They were amazing affairs. It was incredible what people would buy, what two dear old ladies would fight over, how much money we made, and how much ladies' underwear we had left over at the end of an evening, which on one occasion required a ceremonial burning.

The Club put on many public lectures as fund-raising events, either for ourselves or for some other worthy cause. These lectures were usually at the Blackpool or Thornton Libraries or St. John's Church at the back of the Alpine Centre. Most used our own home-grown material. They were always a sell-out. One in particular featured a large number of Club members who had been allocated 10 minutes each to show their very best work, the pictures being projected by Peter Blacow. J. J. was determined that this event was going to be 200% successful and became very dictatorial about which slides he considered to be worthy of inclusion and which he did not. His own show was honed to perfection and culminated in a magnificent sunset on the Rosengarten. The very first slide into the projection gate proved to be this particular world-beater and Jack had to give his entire lecture backwards as every slide was in reverse order. Bonington appeared a time or two, unlike Don Whillans who on one occasion did not. He did make up for it later though. George Band lectured on Kangchenchunga, the sacred mountain, and failed to convince Jackie Fairburn that certain footsteps apparent on the slide were not in fact there. Ian Clough's talk on Annapurna was held at the Blackpool Library. His wife, Club member Nicky, gave what proved to be the last evening mountaineering lecture at the Library before incipient Thatcherism closed down all municipal culture.

The Club eventually moved to the Blackpool Rangers Club House. This should have been a good venue but somehow never quite worked for us in spite of considerable improvements forced through at committee stage by the likes of Derrek Smith who worked tirelessly for the Club on this project. We had Paul Nunn and Don W. on several occasions and the very popular (with some) Gentleman's Evenings. Strippers and Wandering Walter provided much of the entertainment with audience reaction providing the rest. Dave Laycock and Derrick Smith produced some fireworks on home brew evenings. The Junior F.M.C. also met there and it provided a firm but slightly dilapidated base from which to operate the Fylde M.C.

We eventually moved to the Victory, a large pub in Counce Street, Blackpool, with a very dubious clientele. I must have been about the only male member not propositioned at some time or other. Whether I just looked unable to afford it, or whether no Lady of the Night could be that hungry to go with me I know not. Still, we liked the more convivial pub atmosphere and I soon found myself negotiating with John Chadwick, an ex-Junior F.M.C. man, for a room at the Buccaneer. This proved very popular indeed and the Club gradually began to build up a bit of interest in the social side of things again. Sadly, Boddingtons decided to knock down our room, after many happy and settled years there, and I found myself trying out all sorts of strong beers to test out whether or not premises were suitable for my Club. We alighted on a very unexpected establishment, selling the world's worst beer, Greenall Whitley. The Breck Sports and Social Club sold the new Greenall real ale and kept it in excellent order. The bar was warm and comfortable and the room very adequate if a trifle noisy at times. Committee meetings, too, were held in these very pleasant surroundings and by and large the whole set-up worked very well for us. The Wednesday night slide shows are now very well supported by a wide spectrum of members and I suspect things have not been this good since the very early days.

Socials take the usual form of slide shows. We have a good variety of visiting speakers but also put on many shows of our own, all of remarkable quality. In recent memory the worst show ever was a talk on the Dolomites by a visiting speaker, every slide of which was either over-exposed or out of focus or both. It was so incredibly bad it was really well worth seeing and we have the Duck to thank for the experience although he rather uncharitably tried to foist the blame on to the long-suffering Louise Fortune, our pint-sized Social Secretary. The funniest shows featured Andy Blaylock, who gave one of the most hilarious commentaries the

like of which hadn't been heard since Bill Comstive described a slide of a beautifully developed young lady as a photo of a nicely-formed cumulus. Donald entertained us by describing how many of his pictures would have been improved had they been taken facing the other way round or at the opposite time of the day. Deborah Mabbett's talk about her trip to the Para Olympics was an inspiration.

The protector of the Club morals had always declined to allow me to show my pictures so I turned one of my talks into a photo quiz. These have proved a popular feature ever since and I too am now allowed to project the odd slide. The Annual Photographic Competition has shown that a great deal of talent exists in the Club which is more than can be said for the judges, many of whom have given some very strange decisions!! One member keeps demanding his 'prize' for an over-exposed slide with sloping horizon of Tarn Hows which was inexplicably chosen by some demented worthy as the finest work on offer that particular evening. These competitions have given us all a lot of good-natured fun.

The Club still dabbles in the odd Public Lecture, usually at Poulton. Alan Rouse gave us both a super lecture and one hell of a fright as we had only sold about three tickets before the night. We have put on several shows to raise money for Mountain Rescue which have made several hundred pounds each. These were home-grown affairs featuring people like myself, Mick Tolley, Andy Blaylock, Kev Stephens and several others. During one show we had a monumental disaster resulting in all the slides having to be fed manually into an automatic projector in time with the accompanying music. A nerve-wracking experience for all concerned. We also had the pleasure of listening to John Allen through the background noise of a rock drill.

The latest public lecture by the renowned John Beatty was organised almost entirely by Peter Roscoe and proved yet another huge success. The Club owes a debt of gratitude to all those members who have borne the brunt of organising or taking part in these lectures, and to those who support us.

The outdoor socials consist of climbing on Tuesdays and Thursdays and Boozy Bike Rides on Wednesdays. We have not quite recovered from one meet leader who organised everything down to the last second. The Fylde M.C. were non-plussed at being asked to take part in a synchronised drinking contest and being told to cycle at twelve-and-a-half miles per hour.

Like most things in the Club everyone found their own level and a convivial time was had by all, and still is.
Happy Socialising.

D. A. EARLE

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

I HAVE always been amazed how well our Annual General Meetings have been attended but one of the strengths of the Fylde M.C. is the considerable interest shown in it by the ordinary members. These days A.G.M.s are lively but comparatively peaceful affairs with the climbing section fully integrated and having a very large part in the running of the Club.

It was not always so and during the early seventies the Club was run by a committee which had little in common with the wild and truculent active section. The annual clash of interests was held at the Blackpool Rangers Sports Club in those days and after a particularly ill tempered meeting Rick Reeve produced the "Annual General Football Game" which follows. Many of the characters are self evident but Keith Lockett married Cherry's sister and became a respectable human being, Bill Crowshaw devoted himself to singing for his supper, the Station Sergeant at Fleetwood resigned to look after his sick wife and Chris Heald and Peter Latimer (of unpaid swine fame) left for Yorkshire. Chris was always being held up to me as the shining example of how the climbing male should behave so I was certainly pleased to see the back of him! Though Pete Lat was a sad loss from the Club's active mountaineering scene.

Then we have another chance to read Eddie Craig's "A.G.M. buttress, 35th ascent", surely a classic of English Literature. We have yet to enjoy(?) the ultimate speed climb of the one pint A.G.M. but it is certainly a lot more pleasant to have such a happy and convivial rope these days, though I suspect that all 46 of us would test the breaking strain even of a chunky George Parker. Climb carefully, stay happy, and keep working together. – *Editor.*

TROUBLE ON THE TERRACES OR THE ANNUAL GENERAL FOOTBALL GAME

CHEER leader Sprocket supped another pint, saw the light at the end of the tunnel, signalled, and staggered forward waving his T-shirt, onto the pitch. The game had already begun before the ref had blown his whistle; the two teams came out of the tunnel kicking the ball around, dribbling, and lining up for crosses. Various new rules such as hand-ball, perpetual on-side, and holding down the ref in a full Pretzel for the early part of the game were accepted as normal. The crowd loved every minute.

Very soon the older, more experienced players began to control the game. Jack Inflammable came very near to scoring after a neat delivery and a diving header into the far Post. The crowd screamed for more; the ref had by this time crawled out from the ruck of players that were on top of him but very quickly returned when he realised that his uniform had been removed. The game thundered on; players were strewn everywhere, the ball even went missing for a full 15 minutes. A minute before half-time Frank Gawd made the second of his nimble-footed streaks, for which he is famous, down the left wing – only this time he had the ball. First one, then the whole opposing team at once, melted at his heels. Mr. Invincible – a blur of orange Borg swept down to the corner flag; he turned on sixpence and chipped the ball into an empty goal-mouth. The field was deserted; in disbelief this on-loan warrior beat the ball to the near-side post (Borg molten by now) and headed it home. Where was the team, where was the goalie, the ref? All gone; the terraces silent, deserted ranks of concrete, only the convoluted sound of Slade's latest atrocity, issued forth from the tannoy's spout. Lord, Gawd had scored and nobody there. During this interlude our Frank chalked-up (!) 8,500 goals; just then, at the far end of the pitch, a sozzled Sprocket staggered and swayed out of the tunnel. Fresh Boddington's foaming at the corners of his mouth, stale Boddington's glistening in the sweat on his brow, he bowed and collapsed. Another figure staggered forth from this dark orifice and collapsed on the edge of the field like a demented ant. Suddenly, a huge cloud of recycled Boddington gas blew out of the tunnel, hovered threateningly over the arena – and then burst spreading players and spectators over a wide area.

The game quickly recommenced for the second half. The crowd were raging, seething, spitting oaths in every direction; in fact, everyone there was covered in oaths. Pete Glasgow, after playing a stolid game in defence, brought down the opposing side's 'Invisible Striker' with a nasty slicing tackle. Unfortunately, it was in the box. The ref, at knife point, had no hesitation in pointing to the spot. Vic Folley looked despondent. It had been a Draconian (cruel, harsh) tackle. Bill See-saw hated to see his forwards butchered so. Methodically he swivelled backward like a Toreador and then cruised over the ground gracefully and blasted the 'casey' into the top corner of the net. A real sizzler! Martin Braille, in goal, didn't see a thing. Running back to the centre of the field, in that shambling gait we have all come to recognise so well, and being kissed by his mates, Bill had a wide grin and his moustache was not pointing up.

With the score long forgotten, the Bar Room Spoilers XI threw in their search and destroy weapon. It's called the 'Narke' and looks like a normal man except for a blonde wig.

The Desk Top Scrubbers XI could find no answer to this extra player for he was all over the field and, although he never touched the ball once he did much to confuse the Scrubbers' defence. Shortly before the end he brought himself down with a swift kick up the backside. Ref Gerry Junior was looking the other way at the time so the 'Narke' had to carry himself off. The last that was heard of this ace-pro was that he was given a free transfer to another club; yet old magician Andy Funmill remarked afterwards that there would be little future in the game now that the set of portable goal-posts had gone!

Within minutes of the end Trainer Norris leapt up and joined in the match; immediately on the ball he produced a cracking left foot shot for goal. It blasted the netting into 'tattered banners', scuttled up the terraces and collided into an observing policeman who, crystal-like, shattered and, Greek legend-like, splintered into the complete contingent of the Dagenham Girl Pipers (Fleetwood Section), who raced across the field and chased our stalwart trainer out of the ground.

Out of the confusion and uproar rose up two players who hitherto had had a quiet game: Well Heeled and Lorimer, with calculators fresh with batteries, they stepped forward for the Scrubbers XI. They discovered the magic which had set alight the Yorkshire World Cup Squad. Playing it square to Heeled, Lorimer gave the two Jacks the dummy and found himself in space; the game was reaching its climax; the Spoilers had one answer to this, he came from the back of the pack and covered the park like a giant: Derrick 'Bite Your Legs' Quiff, the Roy Gratrix of so many A.G.F.G.s. Vic Folley went in to intercept but 'Bite Your Legs' put in a punishing, studs-up tackle and Vic's forward progress faltered and died. The crowd were spitting and seething again and threw £15 worth of toilet rolls onto the pitch. Lorimer was still holding the ball in his hands when the crowd surged forward; a mass of figures spilt onto the pitch at the far end. Lorimer booted the ball high into the air; the wind caught it and it blew directly up the tunnel bursting the Boddington's air-lock at the far end. Sprocket was revived, he lifted his head out of the mud but it was too late – both teams, the crowd, and a whole cast of idiots thundered over him and into the tunnel. When the dust had settled and silence had fallen he stretched up, bleary-eyed and staggered down the tunnel again.

RICK REEVE

A.G.M. BUTTRESS, 35TH ASCENT

WELL, here I am again, butterflies dancing in the old tum, but I tell myself it's a good night for a climb and no sense in hanging back; forty-six of us on the rope and some time before 8 p.m. we're off.

The grassy approach slopes go easily enough, chairman's address and the usual reports slip by underfoot without anyone getting ruffled and by the time we reach the foot of the climb proper I'm feeling a bit more settled myself.

It doesn't last. The first problem, Chairman's Chimney, stares us in the face and I feel the shakes coming on. Still, some sort of attempt has to be made; failure at this stage means total humiliation. Once again Barrie Crook holds the key, good old Barrie. Anyway, we're off the deck now and commitment is the name of the game. Which reminds me of the job in hand. I look up and there it is, Committee Wall, smooth and featureless and stretching up a long way, but at least it's free of ice this year. I swallow hard and make a start . . . it goes . . . great.

Most of the pegs from last year remain on the difficult bits though Dave Westby seems to have dropped out. Anyway we hammer in Piton Roscoe and climb on. All the rest are still there – Martin Dale, Dave Greenhalgh, John Wiseman, Don Nichol and Phil Caley. Dave Earle wobbles disconcertingly but finally takes the strain. We're going well now but just when we start to get complacent some loose Roscoe comes whistling down the crag suggesting the Treasurer might need some protection and we put in a chunky friend, George Parker.

Suddenly we have a choice of routes, something that doesn't often happen, and I'm climbing on new holds, Andy Blaylock and Tom Knowles. Then Dave Westby comes to hand and finally a couple of stiff pulls on Mary Aspin's jugs and I'm on the stance . . . wow! (Dave Earle can't handle this and ropes off in disgust).

We take a breather and have a look around; everyone seems O.K., but there's a long way to go yet and the next pitch is waiting patiently. Any Other Business Slabs. Odd pitch this, sometimes the angle seems steeper than others and has been known to cause trouble.

This year it seems in fairly good condition and apart from a few snags in the rope, poses no real problems.

One or two of the team propose to increase subs – a move we haven't tried for years – but the party vote overwhelmingly to stick to the route as it is and we climb up safely. The next few feet bring problems however with a few squabbles about the best bivouac spots in Scotland and when they should be used. I gathered some people have taken to staying at Pontins at Loch Leven outside school holidays and that this isn't allowed, so it's back to the C.I.C. Hut next year.

Then just as I thought the climb was easing, we hit it, or do we? No one seems sure. Everyone on the rope knew it might be there but up till now nobody dared voice an opinion. Does it exist or doesn't it? The mythical Stair Porch Overhang. Debate has raged for some time about this last great problem, thought to have been discovered by the famous Wrea Green guide J. D. Sealey, but never confirmed. Now we cling precariously to the rock directly beneath it. We think? We can't climb over it if it isn't there and we can't climb through it if it is. People start getting impatient and action results. Gerry Senior says it was kicked down ages ago and if it wasn't he's quite prepared to kick it down now and we should stop wasting time. Then with an almost detached air of confidence Piton Roscoe takes the lead and suddenly the difficulty seems to be below us though no one understands quite what was done and if the Porch Overhang might still be there lurking in the inky depths.

Anyway we find a good ledge and take a breather. Jack Jowett has a kindly word with Social Sec. Donald Duck, and reminds him of his epic lead at the Teanlowe Centre, Poulton, last November asking if we can expect more of the same in the future. Donald masterly acknowledges this accolade but frankly admits that climbing to that standard is really a bit beyond him and such was the mental and physical strain involved that even now, months later, he has still not made a full recovery.

There's also a bit of discussion about how many people we have on the rope. Barry Crook can't see why we should be canvassing for a bigger team when we could be getting more out of the team we've got. Still the problems are all beneath us now and we casually ascend the remaining pitches. We all assemble at the top, no one missing and for another year we coil the rope.

N.B.: Although A.G.M. Buttress was climbed in fairly good style, aid in the form of copious quantities of alcohol was again used throughout. The Buttress therefore still awaits its first true 'free' ascent. However, by the nature of the climb and those taking part, it is expected to be many years before this aesthetic ideal is attained.

EDDIE CRAIG



POT-HOLING

THE F.M.C. developed a potholing tradition from the word go. Eric Lomas, recently back from Canada for a holiday, seems to have been the first leading light and his initial momentum was ably carried on and considerably expanded by the characters in Gordon Heywood's article that follows.

Since those times pot-holing has always maintained a presence, with Mick Tolley probably being the "Oldest Speliologist in Town". Never a majority sport, it has none the less maintained its place in the Club calendar and I for one have had many enjoyable trips underground with the small but hardy team of enthusiasts that has persisted to the present day. There was always the added attraction of a shower with Barbara Sealey of course, after Paul Reid had dragged my protesting body through yet another system. I can still see his trunk-like arm appearing out of a waterfall, Arthurian like, grabbing me by the scruff of the neck and pulling me through the offending curtain of freezing water with a cheerful "Well, that wasn't so bad was it?" It was probably better than dying of exposure where I lay – just.

Paul later moved South. He took up instructing and diving but is now back with us.

We later acquired Peter Llewellyn who has a great deal of experience in mine exploration as well as pot-holing proper and we have been both privileged to make an early repeat of yet another newly discovered section of the Lancaster Pot/Ease Gill system with him, and fascinated to be given several magnificently interesting excursions through the lead mines of Alston. Peter's full knowledge of the history and techniques of operation of these mines, and the location of many types of underground machinery almost took one's mind off the unmarked 300ft shafts, rotting timbers and collapsing roofs.

And so we come to the latest leading light in the F.M.C. pot-holing hierarchy, Steve "Ball of String" Halton, who may well have spent more time underground than any other member owing to his sometimes circuitous approach to discovering the exit. Still, his club Dinner was very tasty last year at the O.D.G.

Equipment always takes a battering on Club pot-holing trips and by and large the Club tries to go fifty-fifty with the pot-holing section on replacement of ladders, etc. The original rope ladders were made by Gordon and his friends many moons ago. These were eventually replaced by home-made electron ladders which are much lighter and only about a quarter of the size. The rungs were made at work by, I believe, a Mr. Peel, and Gordon and others purchased and fitted the wires. These ladders served the Club in good stead for very many years and there may even be one or two left in the Club's tackle. If not, they have only recently been pensioned off.

Pot-holing literature seemed very thin on the ground; no verdant pastures and iridescent swifts down there I suppose but Gordon's article admirably captures the flavour of the heyday (if you will pardon the pun) of the Fylde Mountaineering Club's pot-holing section. – *Editor*.

Bullpot Farm

When mulling over the date of the heyday of the pot-holing section of the F.M.C., it seems incredible that it turns out to be a lifetime ago – thirty years in fact!

In those days Norris Scar lived at Bullpot Farm, 1,000ft up on Casterton Fell, high above Kirkby Lonsdale. To begin with he was not very friendly and treated us with great suspicion. However, the silver-tongued Mike Peel gradually won him over and we eventually got to know Norris very well, even on occasion helping to castrate his sheep when he was short-handed!

Around 1959 Norris took the opportunity to move lower down the fell to Gale Garth Farm and agreed to let Bullpot to a nucleus of six keen potholers from the F.M.C. for the princely sum of £2 10s. 0d. a month (£2.50 to our younger readers!) This was funded from our own pockets and in order to recoup our outlay, we charged other members and guests a small sum to cover expenses.

The farm was absolute luxury. The days of emerging cold, wet and filthy to go back to a tent and boil a billy were over. Bullpot boasted the most amazing bathroom with a huge bath fit for a king. No less than three muddy pot-holers could bathe at the same time – for no other reason than to conserve hot water, I might add! Halcyon days indeed.

These were exciting times for the pot-holing fraternity. Great things were being done in the Lancaster Pot/Ease Gill system and keen F.M.C. pot-holers spent many months finding the through route, often staying underground for the whole weekend. Charges at this time for the use of Club equipment were 1s. 0d. (5p) for members and 2s. 6d. (12/2p) for guests.

Weekends started in Kirkby Lonsdale at the Green Dragon (now re-named the Snooty Fox). After a good night and a few pints the hair-raising drive up the fellside to Bullpot began. This was when the F.M.C. climbers cum pot-holers came into their own. At the time my vehicle was a Bedford van with a roof rack and my intrepid passengers would climb out of the sliding doors, do a full traverse of the van and climb back in through the driver's door – all whilst travelling at 45-50 miles per hour! Happily I can report we never actually lost anyone!

After the pub an excellent way to sober up was to do a round trip of the Bullpot of the Witches before retiring to bed, where one lady learned to abseil without actually utilising the rope.

Many memories have been stirred, but one in particular stands out. It was New Year's Eve and we held a party at Bullpot, the guests of honour being Norris the farmer and his wife, who presented us with a lamb which we roasted whole over a huge open fire.

Weekends were usually rounded off by meeting up at the King's Head on the A6 with the F.M.C. climbers and rambles on their way home from the Lakes.

Eventually, through lack of support, we were forced to pull out of Bullpot and this gave the opportunity to the Red Rose Caving Club to take it over. They achieved great success as, thirty years on, they are still going strong and Bullpot is still at the centre of pot-holing activity.



I could get through here easy –
30 years ago!

GORDON HEYWOOD

ON AND OFF THE PISTE

FROM very humble but incredibly enthusiastic beginnings, and with no uphill transport and extremely inadequate equipment, skiing rapidly took off in a very big way with the founder and very early members of the Fylde M.C. One favourite venue for this, the real sport of kings, was on the upper slopes of Harrison Stickle. In those days, as you will read, skis were enormously long and cumbersome. Bill Comstive tells of one incident when he was descending by Dungeon Ghyll, after a super day on the ski slopes above, carrying his skis diagonally across his shoulders in the fashion of the day. Suddenly the wind sprang up and caught Bill well and truly off balance. He spun round and round like a demented windmill as the skis developed a malevolent mind of their own, desperately trying to avoid plummeting into the abyss of Dungeon Ghyll or being dashed against the cliff on the opposite side of the path. All very frightening stuff. It is rumoured that Alan Bell, who was following, used the sight of this gyrating windmill as the inspiration for a song but I am sure there is no truth in such malicious gossip!

As for the inadequate bindings referred to, some ladies would have given their eye teeth for such sophisticated technology. In order to attach Dorothy to her skis, Jack developed the Jowett Mk I Superbinding which seemed to consist of bits of old car tyre nailed to the skis into which the boots were fitted. With so much flexibility to be taken up before pressure was applied anywhere near the edges, changing direction or stopping by any other method than by poleaxing one's body into the snow, was all but impossible. I suppose it was slightly more healthy than having one's legs removed by piano wire; the obvious other choice.

The length of these olde worlde skis needed to be seen to be believed. The first time Mary Aspin was allowed to go skiing after she had started her family, Gordon presented her with his old skis, dug out of the loft, all 220cms of them. I remember being overtaken by an ancient pair of skis so long that they did not appear to have an occupant. Eventually, Mary appeared, passed a few pleasantries, and then another 100yds or so of ski trundled past until eventually she was clear of me. As I was struggling to control 165cms worth of planks I was doubly impressed, especially as she had not been out skiing for some time. All these years later I still haven't really got the hang of it but it's really great fun whizzing about on the white stuff, zooming from bar to bar or even getting completely away from the noise and clutter of the piste and re-entering the mountain world from which so many downhill men seem to have become divorced.

Let us now join our authors and carve a turn through the delights of snow. Alan Bell, that most enthusiastic of skiers, gives us an insight into those heady pioneering days, before he and his family started clocking up the B.A.S.I. instructor points. Alan's enthusiasm is legendary and he has waxed lyrically to countless friends about the delights of Kirkstone the previous Sunday, even when these people have just returned from such places as Zermatt! I once met someone in the post office, looking particularly glum. It seems that they had just met Alan and come to realise that they had missed a full weekend skiing in powder snow up to their necks on the slopes of Skiddaw. They were greatly relieved to hear that when I had passed Alan and Christine they were on a piece of snow about half the size of a football pitch and it was raining. Still, I am quite sure that to A.B. it was the whole world.

Still on the subject of enthusiasm we explore one man's discovery of the white sport and how it changed his life; one of a trilogy of 'biblical' epics. We follow this by getting back into the mountains at their most profound and finish off with Eddie Craig's hilarious description of a Gordon Heywood ski holiday and of his early attempts to master the intricacies of ski control. — *Editor.*



SKIING — THE EARLY DAYS

By ALAN BELL

THE winter of 1989 was one of the mildest on record, with very poor snow conditions throughout the Alps and Scotland. When, in late February, the snow did fall in the Cairngorms, it came in abundance, and chasing it, came the crowds.

Overcrowding on the ski slopes in Scotland is now a major problem, with hordes of skiers on the snow from dawn to dusk. After spending one morning queueing, instead of skiing on the White Lady, Christine and I set off to trek over the Cairngorms massif.

It was a cold clear day, little wind, crisp snow. A good day for the hill, as they say. As I plodded up the mountain it seemed as if I had spent all my life with a rucksack and skis on my back, forever hunting and searching for perfect snow and a long run — since the very first day I put on a pair of skis in Great Langdale, in the winter of 1954/55.

In those days the F.M.C., in the winter, would rent the wooden H.F. Huts situated in a field near to the famous Wall End Barn. There had been a heavy snowfall and I borrowed a pair of skis from the then Club chairman, Sandy McBeath. The skis were long, 215cm, made of hickory, and with Kandahar bindings — all-leather straps and a steel heel spring to hold the boot down (climbing boot — not ski boot). Kandahar bindings were so named after the invention by expatriate Brits in the Afghan town of Kandahar in the 1930s.

For several hours I walked up, and then fell down, the hill — and I was smitten. Sandy McBeath offered advice on technique, for he, like many a member, had learned to ski in wartime. Ray Legge, for instance, was taught in the Trudos mountains in Cyprus. [When Dave Westby, another Trudos man, wasn't even a gleam in his father's eye! — *Ed.*] Jack Jowett, not well known in skiing circles, blames his lack of style on being taught by a Greek ski instructor, who had difficulty in speaking Greek, let alone English! However, in compensation, this instruction, by the way, was translated by a delectable Italian nurse!

Bill Comstive was one of the first of the post-war skiers, and together with his great friend Alan Brown, he skied on the Lakeland fells and in Scotland, at Killin, the then popular ski area [presumably on Ben Lawyers — *Ed.*].

The Scottish Ski Club opened the very first T-bar lift in Glencoe in 1955, and this became the Mecca for the growing numbers of keen skiers.

In 1958, Gordon Waldie, a member of the Scottish Mountaineering Club and a fine climber, mountaineer and skier, who had joined the F.M.C. whilst working at the I.C.I. in Thornton, organised the F.M.C.'s first club ski weekend in Glenshee. Legends were made on that weekend. We used a cottage called Tigh Na Coille, which became known as Lochan Dubh Beag (little Blackpool). We walked up the hills and skied down them. We made friends with the Dundee Ski Club, and were invited to their Saturday night dance. The stories from that weekend are told still, and people still approach me on the hills with the phrase, "You were at the Drumore Hotel in '58". I was, and what a time!

In those days of course, not everyone had transport. Getting to the mountains meant organising lifts and much hitch-hiking, or use of public transport. (I once hitched to Glencoe, complete with skis, for the weekend).

In 1959 the first road was built on the Cairngorm, to develop the ski area of Coire Cas. Prior to that, to ski meant camping at Glenmore, with a two-hour walk onto the hill, to Jean's Hut (a refuge built to the memory of Jean, who perished in a blizzard in 1947). From there you could walk up to the White Lady and ski down. The number of runs depended upon how fit you were! In the 1960s the economic growth, coupled to the growing demand for outdoor leisure time, produced more ski areas being developed in Scotland and the Alps.

Equipment was changing too; ski safety bindings were introduced by Marker and Tyrolia of Austria. Skis changed from wooden to metal and plastic. With improved equipment and improvement in ski techniques many skiers, myself included, got to grips with a basic understanding of how to ski [!-Ed.].

In 1960, I organised the first F.M.C. Club holiday to Austria. Four of us, Gordon Heywood, Billy Haywood, Dave Ivins and myself, went to Kitzbühel. Within four years, the ski group had grown to over 40, and skied in Austria and Italy every winter. (Gordon Heywood has carried on the holiday idea right up to 1990). [but was unable to provide any snow!-Ed.].

Over the years the Club has attracted a great many individuals and characters of great style. Many became skiers and their adventures on skis produced many amazing stories – all too many to relate now. Suffice to say, that Tony Iddon (Henry's dad) persevered with skiing all his life, and enjoyed himself thoroughly, even though he couldn't turn – he spent all day traversing the mountain, from top to bottom, with a kick turn at the end of every traverse!

In 1961, I put on my skis outside the cottage in Little Langdale, on Sunday, 17th November. Since that day I have skied on the nearest Sunday to the 17th every year – with one or two exceptions – 1989 being one!

When I stand on a mountain these days I can see skiers crowding the slopes where once I carved turns in splendid isolation. I only hope all who ski now get as much pleasure out of the mountains as I have done. For I have been fortunate enough to see skiing develop into a sport available to all, with a huge interest in cross country skiing. I also hope all those who come to ski come to love and care for the mountains they use.

THE CONVERSION OF ST. JOHN THE PAINTER AND DECORATOR

(Or how John Sealey, on the road to Glencoe, discovered the elixir of Effortless Mountaineering)

And it came to pass that as St. John drove along Loch Lomondside there came a great blinding flash. And a voice spake to him saying fear not, for thou has not hit the wall, nor hast thou forced someone into the ditch. But I am the Way, the Truth and the Light. Follow me and thou shalt inherit the Utopia of Effortless Mountaineering.

Arise ye before the cock crows for the eighth time and tie two great planks of wood to thy feet and seek ye the everlasting stairway unto the Heavens by the smell of the diesel. And take not of the grape, or of the hop, or of the barley during the day but seek ye refreshment only at the Brew Shops dedicated to St. P.H.R., patron saint of tea drinkers.

And on the first day, St. John rose before the appointed hour, and was the first up, and the multitude were amazed and marvelled at this phenomenon. And St. John told them that he had been shown the Way, and he girded up his loins with garments which had belonged to St. Raf, patron saint of upside down skiers, saying these shall be my inspiration. And he went forth and found the everlasting stairway and marvelled at the ease with which he ascended the hill.

And he took not of the grape, nor of the hop or barley, but skied down only unto the brew shops. And HE smiled on St. John kindly and provided pretty maidens to delight his eye as an added bonus and St. John, and his disciple St. Fred, were grateful saying, these are much improved on the usual Amazons found on the hill.

And on the second day St. John again rose before the cock crowed for the eighth time, even though the clag was down and the rain fell copiously. And the multitude were sorely tried. And they attempted to reason with him saying remember thou the good times we used to have together and of the festering and taking of the hop at lunchtime.

But St. John spake angrily to them, and smote them with his tongue (even unto his disciple St. Fred in whom the light was waning in direct proportion to the increase in wind and rain) saying fester not in thy smelly pits oh idle brethren; oh lazy swine (letters of resignation to the Secretary, please), but follow me for I have been shown the Way. But this time the multitude were dumbfounded.

And he went forth and sacrificed more of his shekles on the altar of the Everlasting Way, even those which he had brought to pay for his Great Feast.

And on the third day, in even gloomier weather, St. John rose again even though it was not opening time and the multitude knew he was truly converted.

D. A. EARLE

THE DRYING OUT SESSION

SO FAR, he concluded, it had been one hell of a holiday. Non-stop boozing on the bus all the way to the resort. Bars both on-piste and off, open 'till you fell over. Supermarket beer at 35p a litre and cheap plonk. But tonight was going to be different. The mid-holiday drying out session; no early evening dash to the pub and no late drinking.

He went out onto the balcony and gazed across the pistes to the mountains shining in the unearthly glow of the moonlight, almost as if lit from within. Each diamond spire was etched savagely against the black sky whilst overhead the Milky Way tumbled and spiralled across the heavens. The stars shone brightly, reflecting the sparkle of myriad soaring ridges. The cold stung him but the beauty of the scene tore at his soul.

He announced his intention, packed a small sack with emergency provisions, collecting his touring skis from the locker and ventured into the night. After the bustle of the day the stillness and the silence were profound. The swish of his skis did not intrude and the squeak of the snow echoed the emptiness. His breath curling soundlessly upward was the only other movement.

He entered the wood and its folds silently and gently embraced him. Playfully he tapped the branches with his pole and the snow exploded, sparkled in the moonlight and fell softly to the earth without disturbing the utter silence of his world. Eventually he emerged from the woods into the harsh flaring world of the upper snow slopes, glittering like silver. Below him he could see the pistes where he had struggled for so long in a vain attempt at learning to ski.

Never had so much time been lavished on one individual by his friends with so little effect. Slow, clumsy and awkward, he was still struggling from the pupa of 'Stem Christies'. Yet up here his spirit soared in unison with the peaks and ridges. He was master in his own world. A mountaineer able to move freely and safely in his chosen environment both physically and spiritually.

He passed into the inky shadow of a steep crag which brooded menacingly over him. He knew that in the present viciously cold conditions he would be safe from stone fall and that it had already avalanched its recent snowfall. As he emerged into the moonlight the sparkle from the snow almost hurt his eyes. Slowly he continued to climb up the huge snow bowl and eventually traversed across to the top of the big drag lift. From here he knew a long easy run led down to the alcoholic rendezvous. He took stock of the situation.

On his right the crags under which he had come glowered cruelly like a knight in icy armour, hunched against the rage of winter. On his left rose a slender, elegant spire shining like a spear in the moonlight, a study in etched silver, poised between heaven and earth and defying the blackness of the sky. A stillness pervaded his soul and held him spellbound. The graceful beauty entered his heart and sent his spirit soaring to where the mercurial blade leapt against the night in magnificent unity and true beauty.

In front of him, on the other side of the dark trench of the main valley, the bulk of Mont Blanc, diamond cut by the ravages of time, and supported by the steely spires of its satellites, floated mysteriously upon a gossamer of cloud.

At once both apparent and real, savage yet peaceful, the jutting bones of some earthly corpse yet a vision of such deathless beauty as lives in the mind for ever.

He reflected on its many epics and tragedies and especially on Bonatti's retreat from the central pillar of Fréney. It seemed impossible now in the utter peace and tranquillity of the night to imagine storms of such murderous ferocity.

The spell was broken by the warm glow of the little village nestling in the folds of the hills like a babe in the womb, protected from the harsh outside world and full of expectant life. He removed his skins, locked down his heels, and set off down the piste, slowly and inelegantly. He smiled to himself as he reflected that there was no one around to notice his poor style and concentrated on absorbing the view. Gradually the surrounding hillsides pressed in upon him and eased him towards the village.

In the bar the festivities were in full swing. The exercise had given him a thirst and he soon passed the number of pints he would have consumed had he arrived with the others. Eventually, most retired and he moved into the restaurant area with Tom to enjoy the excellent jazz session and a few more pints. The warm glow at the bottom of the glass reflected his spirit as he viewed the clarinetist through his alcoholic haze.

The final cable car took Tom back to the tower block below. He spent the last hour alone. The cold 'pression' fizzed like the music until 2 a.m. found him outside struggling with the skis. He half wobbled, half snow-ploughed down the easiest run he could locate and eventually found his way back to his apartment.

It had been one hell of a moonlit ski tour and one hell of a temperance session.

DAVE EARLE

SUPERMAN OF THE SLOPES

OR A PILLOCK ON THE PISTE

IT WAS early morning in La Plagne and the summit snows of the Dôme De Bellecôte shone in the first rays of a sun slowly burning its way upwards in a cloudless sky.

Meanwhile, two thousand metres below, in the apartments of ski resort Plagne Bellecôte, primitive life was already astir. Tom Carroll, stomach and bladder pressing, blundered inelegantly from room to room, whilst the bog playfully eluded him. Other occupants of room 326 lay transfixed in horror, contemplating the possible sequences of this particular high stakes game of hide and seek and willed the aforementioned Mr. Carroll on to success. All that is except the editor who, as is his wont at this time of day, lay peacefully asleep in his pit, blissfully unaware of the drama being enacted close by.

Sadly, wherever you are in the world, morning always starts about the same time and anyway skiing lessons booked for 9 a.m. had been paid for in advance and even French Francs should not be wasted. The editor made it; washed, breakfasted and suitably attired he assembled with the others of his ilk, that is the non-skiers of the party, on the nursery slopes, and waited to be told how to do it. What a happy band we were. Derek, the solicitor, Alan, the drinking man's socialist, Tom Knowles, who would have liked to, and Jackie, who wouldn't; not forgetting Terry our enthusiastic instructor.

That first morning went well. We did simple little exercises like lifting the front end of our ski and then lifting the back; we slid short distances, had to bend down and touch our toes, then our knees, then our chest, then our heads. We bent our knees and stood up again. I also did a lot of falling over and skiing into snowdrifts, but then I did that all week.

Terry, our instructor, seemed suitably impressed and soon had us higher up the slopes on a more demanding little practice area. It was about this stage where I began to realise something was wrong. Clearly I had had the misfortune to hire a faulty pair of skis. Could there be any other explanation for the fact I was patently unable to turn in the direction I wished, or indeed any direction; for the fact was that I was unable to stop by any other means than by running into something and was still falling over?

For some obscure reason Terry still remained ridiculously enthusiastic and for the next three days dragged us all over the resort whilst my skis continued to let me down badly and I still kept falling over.

In the evening we sampled the delights of this purpose-built resort, which included beer at £1.80 a pint! Suitably imbibed on this stuff our self-styled guru, Tom Carroll, lectured us nightly on the benefits of Thatcherism, Roman Catholicism, procreation, the evils of marital infidelity and why we should all buy sheep in the Falklands. I think I preferred falling over!

Also fondly remembered is a talk he gave on pig farming in Denmark though on that occasion someone else got the bacon. Round about Thursday, however, things were beginning to change. I had been thinking thoughts like upper torso to the fall line; hips to the slope; bend the knees; stick the pole in and turn as you come up – always remembering to counter-rotate. On the easy bits I was even managing to remain upright. So off I went on my own, determined to get it together. At the top of my chosen run I watched a group of Froggy brats, eldest about five, receiving instruction. There must have been about 20 of the little beggars all skiing faultlessly in a crocodile formation. I set off; things were going O.K., style rubbish, but I was getting down. Then I came to the mogul field. Moguls, for the uninitiated, are snowhumps formed by the turning of skiers on steep slopes. They can cause problems. But not this time. I unweighted; I might even have counter-rotated; anyway, I turned and turned again. I had control, master of my own destiny and my skis. Then it happened . . . I crossed my tips – crossing your tips is a bad scene. Once you've crossed your tips that's more or less it – there's really nowhere for you to go; progress stops, suddenly.

I crashed down hard and lay there, decidedly undignified, head down and skis in the air, still crossed! I rolled over slowly. The Froggy brats came skiing past, still faultless, still in perfect formation. Their spindrift wafted in my face and a tear rolled down my cheek. Hitler was probably right about the French, whatever he said about them, he was probably right.

At moments like that lesser men may well lose heart but not the editor. Though I never did quite get it together, I struggled on for the remainder of the holiday, generally suffering further humiliation like falling off Pomalifts in front of large crowds and falling off my skis in front of anyone who happened to be around.

However, all was not in vain and I can say that I was undoubtedly a whole lot better at the end of the week than I was at the beginning. You couldn't say I'm a skier, but you couldn't say I'm not. I had a great time and I didn't actually break anything. Some things got twisted and some things got bruised but nothing got broken. The piste will see me again.

The holiday just referred to was a week in the French Alps, organised by Red Guide Ski Tours, Dickson Road, Blackpool (free plug!) who run coach holidays to various ski resorts throughout the season. About a dozen F.M.C. members went on this particular trip and all enjoyed themselves. Travelling by coach saves a few bob and overall represents good value. Accommodation was excellent as was the weather and snow conditions. The resort offers an amazing number of shops and facilities and even English papers, one day old, were available, all of course at a price. The supermarket sold all sorts of goodies but due to the self-catering nature of the apartments, the editor usually frequented the frozen food department. Thank God for frozen pizza. [Not if you were part of the Eddie Craig culinary team! I was sick of it!–Ed.].

EDDIE CRAIG

FOLK SINGING AMONGST THE MOUNTAINS

OR THE LEGEND OF THE 'DO-RUM DAY' MEN

AT ONE time folk singing was inextricably bound up in mountaineering. Ropes, rucksacks and guitar cases littered the corridor of the Salutation Hotel as the revellers sang their way through the current repertoire. Quite a few of the hardest climbers sang together as a recognised folk group after the day's grimping was done. Two Geordies who had the Swinside Inn wouldn't serve you unless you were part of the singing team and we often drank and sang our way into the early hours in remote Scottish pubs at a time when they 'closed' at 9.30 p.m.

The Fylde M.C. soon produced its own home-grown talent out of this musical mêlée. Those that claim to have suffered whilst they learned their craft did not suffer in vain and we inherited some fine musical talent. Alan Bell and Brian Osborne formed one half of the very successful "Taverners" folk group which entertained us for many years. Alan Bell now has his own band featuring one or two other Fylde M.C. members such as Bill Crowshaw, and Brian still does the odd solo spot or sings with his daughter Elaine. They both write fine songs, one of which reached the top of the hit parade in a musically discerning part of the world.

One raw, damp winter morning a couple of years ago Edward Craig (who?) and I were walking down Great Langdale. He reckoned we had suffered enough and had earned a lunchtime pint. We tumbled into the steamy, smokey bar of the O.D.G. Hotel. In the corner two fiddles spoke lyrically to one another, backed by a mandolin. Other instruments joined in from time to time to create an exquisite musical whole. It was like stepping back in time to a previous polyphonic age. Pete Shotton, whose Langdale pedigree goes back as far as the last ice age, came across to us.

"Tom Carrol would have liked this," he said.

We all agreed. – *Editor.*

ONE MAN'S STORY

By BRIAN OSBORNE

IT HAD been good on the crags that early August day. Hot weather, dry rock and good companions. We finished climbing about 8.00 p.m. then walked slowly from Great Langdale and over the pass to our small camp on the shore of Blea Tarn [don't try camping here today—Ed.]. Mike soon had a brew going, then we lay back and relaxed, quietly discussing our day's activities.

The previous night a part of eight lads from Ripon in Yorkshire had arrived. They had rolled up in an ex-Army lorry and pitched camp about 100yds away from us. Before long they had a campfire going and on it a cauldron of 'soup' – with everything thrown in!

One of the lads produced an old battered guitar from the back of the lorry and started to play and sing an old jazz number called "House of the Rising Sun."

The year was 1956 and our taste in music was, to say the least, varied. Although 'pop 1956 style' featured most prominently we did have some knowledge of a few jazz numbers and some 'folk'. This latter mostly learned from campfire song books. We asked the lads if we could join them and offered to throw our rations of bacon, sausage and beans into their 'soup'. Before long we were invited to sing and inevitably a song swapping contest developed between Lancashire and Yorkshire.

We adjourned to the Three Shires pub which was run in those days by Mr. Arthur Scrivens. With some reluctance he allowed us to sing in the old back bar. This was a small room, the walls decorated at that time with matchbox covers collected from all over the world. Arthur's hand-drawn Youngers mild went down a treat that night.

We spent the rest of that summer weekend with those Yorkshire lads. A friendship developed between myself and one of them, Ray Jones, which lasted 20 years until Ray moved from Ripon to Canada where unfortunately I lost touch with him.

Many stories similar to this could be told of friendships born through the love of folk music. Nostalgic songs played and sung in the Lakeland pubs by amateur musicians over the years. Pubs like the Three Shires in Little Langdale; the Britannia at Elterwater; Royal Oak, Portinscale; O.D.G., Great Langdale; The Sun in Coniston, and many more.

Lakeland people colour their style of music with a variety of songs, especially hunting songs, many of which tell the story of local events. Folk clubs in the Lakes tend to run mainly during the summer months except in the Border areas like Kendal, Ulverston and Cocker mouth.

One excellent group that played and climbed together for a number of years was called "Knotted Cord." One of their songs, written by John Reay and Terry Haworth, and called "Lakeland Pubs," has a lively tune and lists no less than 13 pubs in 10 Lakedale Dales! So there's no lack of places to go.

Folk music IS alive in Lakeland. If you should come across it in your wanderings listen to it, join in if you can, but most of all, keep it alive.

I hope it will give YOU as much pleasure as it has given me.



LAKELAND PUBS

JOHN REAY and TERRY HAWORTH

*There's those who like to run at the fells
There's those who like to walk,
There's those who like to look at the view
There's those who sit and talk.
But when it comes to the end of the day
And the evening starts to pale
You can all have a sup in a grand old pub
In any Lakeland Dale.*

*If Buttermere it is your wish ,
You can have a drink at the Bridge or Fish,
If Ennerdale you've just walked round
You can have a drink at the Fox and Hounds.
But when it comes to the end of the day
And the evening starts to pale
You can all have a sup in a grand old pub
In any Lakeland dale.*

*At Wasdale there's the Wasdale Head
And another called The Screes.[†]
There's a welcome fire at the George the Fourth
When Eskdale starts to freeze.
But when it comes to the end of the day
And the evening starts to pale
You can all have a sup in a grand old pub
In any Lakeland dale.*

*In Dunnerdale there's the Traveller's Rest,
It's grand there I've been told.
In Langdale there's the Dungeon Ghyll,
The new one or the old.
But when it comes to the end of the day
And the evening starts to pale
You can all have a sup in a grand old pub
In any Lakeland dale.*

*In Lowswater there's the Kirkstone Inn,
In Coniston The Sun.
In Troutbeck there's the Old Queen's Head,
In Grasmere there's The Swan.
And when it comes to the end of the day
And the evening starts to pale
You can all have a sup in a grand old pub
In any Lakeland dale.*



THE GOOD OLD DAYS

ONE of the many marvellous things about the Fylde M.C. is the way in which so many members who have moved away to distant lands have always kept in touch and maintained a keen interest in the ongoing activities of the Club.

One such old-timer is Peter Blacow who, hearing of the gestation period of this Journal, was sufficiently moved to put pen to paper to share with us the idiosyncrasys of early mountaineering days. When I see people like Martin Dale prancing about in fancy tights I too long for the smell of damp tweed, double ventile jackets that actually kept the rain out, light years before Goretex, hemp ropes that were so stiff you could climb up them, and Bergan rucksacks that had a pulley wheel built into them so they always remained vertical and did not throw the wearer off balance. I, too, can remember winters when the snow was always so bone-hard you could wear tricounies as a matter of course.

But enough of such wonders and delights as we join Peter in a good old-fashioned bout of melancholia. — Editor.,

THE GOOD OLD DAYS?

WHEN I think back and remember the 10 very active years (1955 through 1965, when I emigrated to the U.S.A.) I spent as a member of the F.M.C. (and as a Committee Member for several years and Secretary for two years) and, from time to time, look at all my slides and photographs of that period, one tends only to remember the GOOD things which happened; the memorable climbs, magnificent trips to Scotland and the Alps (for both climbing and skiing). Most of our photographs were taken in good weather. We REALLY DO try to forget the unforgettably-miserable times we had in the mountains pursuing what was to us at that time 'a way of life'.

Were they REALLY the 'Good Old Days'? Maybe we should try to remember some of the Not-So-Good ones. Try to remember, for example:

- when the only clothing available for climbing was something that had belonged to some unfortunate member of the Armed Forces during World War II, and was so well camouflaged that anyone more than 100yds. (metres?) away completely vanished into the landscape. And it DIDN'T keep you warm.
- when the only sleeping bags available were also of WW2 vintage, weighed something approaching 50lbs each (or so it seemed when you had to carry one for any distance) and moulted feathers EVERYWHERE. And they DIDN'T keep you warm.
- when the only tents we had DIDN'T have integral groundsheets — they were always memorable in torrential rain. And they DIDN'T keep you warm.
- when our solid-leather, steel-nailed boots were of such solid and rigid quality that they were only fully worn-in by the time they were worn out (those were the days of never-to-be-forgotten blisters and sore feet). And they DIDN'T keep you warm.
- when the few cars which were owned by a few fortunate (unfortunate?) members were so unreliable that the owners often spent most of the weekend in the Lakes rebuilding them for the journey home. And one such car DIDN'T have a heater — THAT DIDN'T keep you warm. We spent a lot of time shivering in those days. [When it was really cold your breath froze on the inside of the windscreen every time you breathed out, thus causing the road to disappear. Heaters were £10 19s. 6d. extra in those days.—Ed.]
- those early journeys to Scotland in the winter and at Easter in the same unreliable cars, and before the days of ANY Motorways, and usually in raging blizzards — the winters DID seem to be worse then [or better, depending on your point of view —Ed.].
- when the only ropes available were made of hemp (NO, you COULDN'T smoke them!) and which went completely rigid when wet and then weighed about 1lb. per foot.
- having to wash at the tap OUTSIDE the front door of the Club Cottage in Little Langdale (our only water supply in those early days), even in the middle of winter — I don't remember that we washed much then.
- the occasion when the use of the two-holder privvy was discontinued, thus ending many years of contemplative companionship — and frozen bums.
- trying to find your way back to your tent, somewhere in Great Langdale, in a drunken stupor in the pouring rain in the pitch-blackness of a December night, following the Club Dinner at the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel.
- trying to enjoy a good (?) day in the hills the day AFTER the Club Dinner.
- and, finally, vivid memories of F.M.C. Coach Meets (to wherever) and riding all the way home, cold and dripping wet because you'd forgotten a change of clothes — more shivering.

All of the above, together with all of the GOOD things, are what we remember at this time. And we also remember those early-days companions who are no longer with us — they will never be forgotten.

My name is Peter Blacow — most of you won't know me.

Make the most of every moment you spend in the mountains — the good AND the bad — some day you'll have memories like mine. Oftentimes the seemingly BAD moments are the most memorable.

My very best wishes to you all.

PETER BLACOW
Montreal
Canada

TONY IDDON

IT HAS been said the English are a race of eccentrics and individuals, much addicted to strange pursuits such as exploration, mountain climbing, and skiing. If this is the case, then certainly the Fylde Mountaineering Club has been peopled by many. It was my good fortune to become friends with one of them. His name was Tony Iddon.

Tony was Blackpool born and bred. He lived over his father's chemist shop in Layton Square and attended the old Blackpool Grammar School along with other Club members Peter Blacow, now living in Canada, and Peter Hedges, the dentist. Of his early years I know very little as I became friends with him around 1955.

Apart from Jack Jowett, on his sidecar and motorbike, and Ray Legge in his Ford, Tony was the only person who had access to a car – his father's – a green Morris Oxford, registration No. JAO 515. As he had to work on a Saturday, three of us would meet him in Layton Square at around 6.30 p.m. before driving up to Great Langdale. The car had no heater. We sat in sleeping bags and in the winter it was my job to scrape the ice off the inside of the windscreen! Tony always wore an old overcoat, a demobilisation coat from the Army, and together with his flat cap and cigarette in mouth, he drove us away on various adventures.

On being demobbed from National Service, Tony had gone on a cycling holiday in France, and whilst in a pâtisserie, had his bike stolen, with all his money, clothes and passport. He eventually arrived back in Blackpool clad only in cycling shorts and clutching the remains of a French loaf! From that day on Tony avoided France and the French like a plague. Years later this aversion to France was to hinder my navigation, when we drove to Zermatt for the weekend!

Yes, the weekend.

By then he owned a frog-eyed Sprite – registration SBU 896. With the hood down we left Blackpool on a Thursday evening, and driving turn and turn about, drove to Southend to fly to Ostend, on to Germany, then down into Switzerland. We parked the car at Brigg and took the train up to Zermatt, where we arrived around 7.00 on the Friday evening. In the days before motorways that was no mean feat. On Saturday morning we went up the Gorner Grat railway, then traversed a long ridge in an effort to climb the Stockhorn, but gave up due to the weather and altitude. Instead, we walked back down to Zermatt, trying to find the two trees that are always used in photographs of the Matterhorn. That night we met a group of Canadian climbers just back from the Matterhorn and we ate and drank with them until dawn.

Out on the first train to Brigg and into the car and away, we arrived home on the Monday evening. No one would believe our story. However, we had sent our postcards, just in case!

Tony had a great passion for travel, languages and photography. He used to trek over the mountain ranges of Norway. On one train journey Tony shared a carriage with another walker, and the two engaged in conversation in halting Norwegian, only to find after several hours they were both English! And by far the strangest adventure he had was in Norway.

Becoming lost on a high pass, he dropped below cloud level to find himself in the wrong valley. Being tired he saw a high mountain farm and went down to find shelter. He was welcomed by an old farmer and his wife, who fed him and then kept him talking into the small hours; for he was the first outsider they had seen since a German ski patrol had passed them in 1943. Next day, the last Tony saw of them, before he climbed back into the clouds, was the two solitary figures waving goodbye, far below him.

At some time in his life Tony had fallen and injured his head, resulting in a lack of balance. His way to get over stepping stones was to take a great run at them in the hope he would get over before falling in. He always fell in. The lack of balance didn't help his skiing either. He would set himself in a classic Austrian skiing stance, slide a few yards, then fall over; up he'd get and start again, but he enjoyed himself immensely.

There are many other tales to tell of Tony and no doubt other members who knew Tony have their own stories to tell of him, for he enjoyed life and living. I can still see him as I write, old overcoat, flat cap and cigarettes.

Now, his son Henry is also a keen Club member. He, too, likes travel and photography and I guess he'll have his share of adventures and laughter, as did his father, Tony Iddon.



ALAN BELL

DAVE 'FINGERS' MORRIS

DAVE joined the Club in 1962 whilst still at school, and was introduced to rock by Club members. This set his life-style from then on. He really enjoyed climbing and joined forces with Wig, another character, and they quickly began to work their way through the grades. We climbed as a rope of three a lot in those days and one of the major objectives then was Kipling Groove on Gimmer. It was then one of the hardest routes in the valley. I missed this ascent, even after a 90-minute trip from Blackpool to the foot of Gimmer (no M6 then). I arrived to see Wig seconding up the top pitch. The news was round the valley in rapid time and Dave was in the limelight (times change). The fact that after only a couple of years Dave was willing to try the hardest routes was then quite impressive. (They seem to do it in months now). I remember another time when the three of us had completed Communist Convert on Raven Thirlmore, and Brian Wilkinson was so impressed he bought the lads a drink. This, too, was impressive! [It still is!—Ed.].

It was also about this time when Dave acquired his nickname. Not, as one might think, from one-finger pulls on overhanging rock, but from a night-time incident in the hut. We only had Langdale then. The window at the back of the gent's dorm had twin opening lights and as the loo was then out of the front door and then round the back (hut improvements do work), the norm was to perch on the window-sill to relieve bladder pressure. On the night in question Dave was on the sill and there was about 6" of fresh snow (we need improvements to winter). Unfortunately for Dave, Brian Wilkinson was in the bunk by the window and, being woken by a cold draught, he kicked the window shut, on Dave's fingers, and deposited him in the yellow snow below. As Dave was only

wearing underpants he took the shortest route back by mantleshelving onto the window-sill, pushed open the window, took hold of the mullion and was about to pull himself in when Brian awoke again, swore, and kicked the window closed once more. Dave gave up and walked round the front to find the door bolted!! He was eventually let in and his fingers bandaged in the morning. The nickname stuck, though many didn't realise its origin.

The pace of improvement continued, resulting in some impressive ascents. One was when Dave took Lurch and I up Icabod. At that time there was a peg to aid a traverse right on the first pitch!! When Dave clipped this, the weight of the rope broke the peg. A small brass nut was placed but Dave didn't trust this so he freed the move—possibly the first free ascent of this route. In the afternoon of the same day we also did Central Buttress, picking up Workington Sid for his 30th ascent, on the way. He wanted to second it one more time before leading it, but that's another story.

Dave went off to Salford, did a degree in economics, and began lecturing at Whitehaven College. Wig, during this period, was in transition from machinist at B.A.C. to barrister, and that again is another story, so Dave began climbing with John Yates. This did Dave a power of good as John is perhaps one of the most naturally fit and talented climbers I have known. To keep up, Dave had to try much harder and was soon leading some impressive routes—Dinosaur, Winking Crack and T.Rex on Gogarth, Our Father and Adjudicator Wall in the Peak, etc., etc. The list was impressive then, 15 years ago, and would still be so today.

Dave always enjoyed both winter climbing and the Alps, so this new technical ability was transferred there. Ascents of the West Face of the Dru, the Central Pillar of Freney and finally the only ascent that year of the North Face of the Eiger, were carried out in good style. Dave and John climbed as a close team with some gripping tales, but always of trust in each other.

His death, falling down some steps in the dark in Ambleside (cold sober), was tragic, cutting short the life of perhaps the best all-round mountaineer the Club has ever had.

MIKE TOLLEY

[In my 21 years in the Club I have never met anyone more likeable than 'Fingers'. He was always enthusiastic, and a friend to tyro and tiger alike.—Ed.]

ANDY BLAYLOCK

"BRAKEBLOCK" was his nickname in Scouts; hard to believe, isn't it, that this lunatic character was once a Scout, a patrol leader no less!? It was in fact through Scouting that young Andy was introduced to mountaineering for he spent several years in the troop led by Dave Laycock and myself.

What can you say about Andy? Likeable nutter, superb rock climber and presenter of hysterically funny slide shows. His throw-away offhand lines and comments such as "This is a camp site (pause), only . . . well, it isn't really!" have his audience falling off their seats and choking on their beer.

A resident now of Sheffield, he still turns up at Club meets, usually bringing with him all manner of strange artefacts, such as duck calls, old car horns, enormous specs, or Groucho Marx masks. It is on these meets, after a few pints, that Andy often becomes obsessed with cleanliness. He can be seen heading for a dormitory full of people trying to sleep, armed with a dustpan and brush or mop and bucket, declaring that the place needs a good clean! Who says there are no characters in the Club these days. Keep it up, Andy.

D. NICHOL

[He also plays a mean 'Blue Grass' banjo, and throws an impressive party if recent photographic evidence is anything to go by. His iron nerve has proved useful both on such epics as 'El Cap' and also some rather ticklish electrical repairs at Little Langdale. A thoroughly pleasant and useful chap to have around.—Ed.]

ALBERT AYRES AND EDGARINA

WHEN "Mad" Albert first joined the Fylde M.C. his delightful spouse Edgarina was incarcerated in the Bastille having been trotting round Europe with an International Gang. As the TV screens were full of action ladies like Honor Blackman at the time it did not take much imagination to visualise the Fylde's own leather suited siren. For that is what it was hoped she would be.

The reality proved to be somewhat different. At last the great day arrived and next Wednesday we could all look forward to meeting this special lady. No doubt parts were washed that had not seen the light of day for weeks and aftershave was liberally splashed about in salute to this wonderful creature. The reality was something of a shock. Edgarina proved to be lively, charming and as bright as a button, but she also looked like a button. About 4ft high and 4ft wide she sported an enormous bright red duvet and a green ribbon in her hair and bore a striking resemblance at times to an animated tomato. So much for the Fylde Fantasies.

When Cherry and I moved to the Fylde, Albert and Edgarina were at the Rangers Club, where the F.M.C. then met, on our first visit there. We had walked across the fields from Poulton so Albert was insistent that Northern Hospitality drove us home, or as it turned out, nearer our graves. 65 mph down Poulton Old Road, rattling about in the back of an extremely decrepit Mini Van like peas in a drum, proved fortunately to be a unique experience and one I have so far managed to avoid repeating. But throughout the journey we were both fascinated by what proved, on explanation, to be the vehicle's en suite facilities, but which bore a marked visual resemblance to a large metal funnel sticking out of a hole in the floor.

Albert, like me, hated passengers with weak or small bladders or who consumed vast quantities of tea before a journey [sorry dear]. Passengers were expected to brace themselves as best they could as the British Motor Corporation projectile hurtled along such twisty roads as the A76 to Arran and deposit their excess excreta into the receptacle without hosing down the accompanying sleeping bags, ropes, etc. Not an easy task. The ladies were even less pleased with these time-saving arrangements but as they complain about anything, their protestations fell on very deaf ears. A sharp bend near Thornhill proved particularly disastrous on one trip. Surviving the trip North must on occasions have given Albert a false sense of his abilities. An attempt on the Etive Slabs springs to mind. Scorning the ropes used by the other combatants Albert set off at great speed. About 40ft up he ran out of momentum. For an instant he was poised among his peers, they gravity gradually took command. Slowly at first his PAs left a black streak on the rock. As he accelerated down the crag he managed to spin round and sit down on the granite to increase surface

friction. Smoke and flames poured from his bottom and he spent the remainder of the holiday walking round dressed in tatters. It is rumoured Mike Penn uses the same tailor. Albert had a 15-year-old apprentice called Brick Wall who got tied on to the sharp end if things got really tough. Being half the size and half the weight he would only fall half as fast, so the theory went. Master Wall should have paid more attention at school to Italian gentlemen throwing things off towers but he certainly clocked up a fair selection of necky leads to his credit. The Duck, too, was an erstwhile climbing partner and reports filter through of a flying duck being expertly fielded from the Knight's move on Tryfan. This was of course before he bought his sticky magic boots. What a pity Sir Peter Scott wasn't there to capture it in oils.

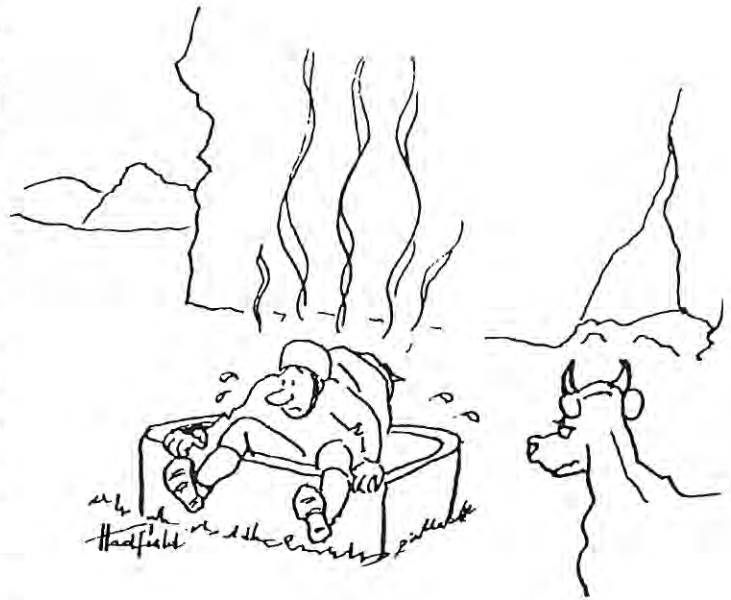
Albert ran out of momentum on another occasion in Scotland after marching us down the Old Road to Ba Bridge fom Black Rock Cottage at about 8 mph like a demented Duke of York. One by one people collapsed and gave up until at Ba Bridge there was only me, Albert and Rodney Waller left. "To the Summit!!" he screamed and charged off into the blizzard like Grange Park's Herman Buhl. Two thirds of the way up he collapsed into the snow demanding to be left to die. We dragged him to the top and dumped him in the ski lift. For the rest of the holiday he got up at 5 p.m. and went to the pub. Even Dave Cundy hasn't managed to get up that late.

At home Albert sailed fairly close to the wind as far as the law was concerned. On the crag he could easily be mistaken for a scrap metal merchant such was his avaricious nature. Always short of money, it was widely rumoured that he hit upon the perfect crime. The idea was to rob himself and claim on the insurance but things went wrong when he forgot to take out a policy. It would seem that he still lives on the edge of the law. Donald saw him in a garage not so long ago and said "Hello Albert", like you do. Albert dropped the petrol filler pipe, leapt into the van and drove off at horrendous speed without even bothering to see who it was.

We last saw Edgarina at the Folk Club. She had her nice new man with her and he was whisking her off to South Africa where he had a farm. It seemed a fairly large step in the right direction.

Albert no doubt continues to traverse over the roofs of quickly moving vehicles and does dreadful things with his false teeth!

EDITOR





RODNEY WALLER

PROBABLY the saddest case that has ever passed through the annals of the Fylde M.C., his eccentricities nevertheless made him the sort of member you never forgot. He is still to be seen shambling round Blackpool, hands stuffed firmly in pockets, shuffling along like an enebriated Charlie Chaplin with double the pathos and none of the funny side.

A brilliant mathematician he nonetheless was quite unable to communicate at basic level with his fellow members and human beings, the terms not necessarily being interchangeable. Conversation was usually by a series of grunts which could improve to a barely comprehensible gabble if he was really confident in your company.

He took a young and impressionable Duck on his first meet and committed a most strange ritual of relief upon the rope before commencing the climb. Fortunately for himself and everyone else's gear the Duck was not so young and impressionable ever to have repeated this ritual to bless anyone else's gear. Don got his own back as the flying duck leading a column of drunks down the single track on Glen Etive at great speed. In the passenger seat, clutching on for grim death, our erstwhile mathematician could only mumble over and over again, "If I live through this I will live for ever". So far he has been proved right.

Rodney was always part of the great unwashed, in spite of the very best efforts of his mother to force him to hand over his dirty washing for cleaning and to make him take away a toilet kit. Rodney lived on a steep hill and one day as I set off having just collected him I became aware of a burning stench. Being a pessimist I knew this signalled the clutch burning out and stopped the car to investigate. I was surprised that outside the car there was no smell, especially round the clutch housing, but inside it was stronger than ever. The focal point proved to be the passenger footwell; it was summer and Rodney had his sandals on.

Rodney was an expert at travelling light, and had living off the land down to a fine art. He seldom took any food away with him either, relying instead on his trusty tin of curry powder. If he liked the look of what you were cooking he emptied his tin into your cooking pot, thus rendering it inedible for anyone else but Rodney; a sort of culinary piracy. He wasn't afraid to help himself to dessert either as we found out to our cost. Cherry had made a huge chocolate cake for the whole meet on a Brackenclose, Wasdale, weekend. But when we got back from the pub, having looked forward to this treat all the way home, we found the cupboard almost bare. Just sufficient remained to identify it as Cherry's chocolate cake, and to match the teeth marks to Rodney.

Another Wasdale incident needed all his mathematical brain to get us out of trouble. Waiting in the hall to go into the Club Dinner Rodney was fascinated by the oak panelling and the little hidden cupboards. As he opened one of the doors it fell off and slowly, one by one, like something out of a cartoon film, all the other panels fell off. It took all his mathematical skill to work out the sequence in which they fitted together and a large team to hold them in place before we tiptoed into the meal, leaving the wall to the mercy of some other curious and unsuspecting diner.

His mathematics came in useful once on the motorway after something jammed on the car. We had waited for ages for assistance and Rodney just moped about on the hard shoulder, bored, disinterested, and unhelpful. But on the command, "Rodney, if we don't get this sorted NOW we will miss the pub," he organised a system of levers and cured the problem in a trice. He did not, of course, soil his own hands.

Extracting the fare from Rodney was at times difficult especially if he had converted it into Hartley's at the current rate of exchange. Subsequently he was dumped in the middle of nowhere on a number of occasions and left to walk home. At least he didn't have to struggle back with a mountain of gear to cope with.

Like others he had a great yearning to drive and subjected me to the disturbing experience of watching my own car being driven down Eskdale whilst I was on the fell. On another occasion he discovered he suffered from tunnel vision when he drove Albert's Minivan into a bright red Ribblesdale bus which he simply hadn't seen.

He could be a pain, though, and after disturbing one Club lecture the Club heavy took him outside to inflict a thorough drubbing on him, presumably in order to preserve the good name of the Club. Only the intervention of Jenny Tolley prevented a disaster. — *Editor.*

DAVE SHARPLES

ALWAYS amongst the most well liked of members, Dave has been an active participant in the Club for many years and still maintains a considerable interest in its affairs. He was lucky to survive a trip to the Ben when with Garry Standige and a frozen compass he marched about for hours in a whiteout. Whichever way the compass was pointed, that was North.

As a young man he suffered terrible head injuries after a motor scooter on which he was a pillion passenger was in collision. From the word go the Club rallied round and input a tremendous amount of effort into his rehabilitation. At the time I moved North in 1969 he was out of hospital but quite unable to talk coherently. The technique was to guess what he wanted to say, repeat it to him and wait for a nod or shake of the head. He tended to totter about a bit in those days and acquired the nickname 'Lurch' which he bore with equanimity. Every year saw an improvement and he was soon climbing again.

Still a bit tottery on his pins he got us banned from several of the less discerning of the Lakeland hostelrys, giving as he did the appearance of someone under the influence of about 15 pints. After one such disaster at the Swinside Barbara Sealey was smart enough to dash into Keswick and purchase a large box of chocolates for the landlady Mrs. Bell to unblot our copybook, but everyone was very understanding and soon these problems became a thing of the past.

Amazingly he started climbing quite soon after leaving hospital. He had a well deserved reputation of climbing extremely slowly and as one of his regular partners I can certainly vouch for that. He used to have the odd attack now and again on the crag and would hang on with one hand whilst he shoved copious quantities of pills into his mouth with the other. It was all pretty frightening to the second but he never fell off whilst climbing with me.

He was soon leading quite hard routes which was just as well as his jumbled brain couldn't work out the choice of holds on easier routes. If it was Hard V.S. with just one small hold to hang on to, that suited him fine. He just hung on to it with a prodigious strength that was well before its time. When I first started climbing with him I was always looking forward to reaching the big ledge on which he had stood for threequarters of an hour or the massive hold upon which he had pulled up his whole body weight repeatedly. Invariably these were not there when one arrived at the longed-for resting place. Instead one had to fight very hard just to stay attached to the rock in a place where he had hung for an afternoon.

The longest time we spent on one pitch to my knowledge was about four hours, on Left Unconquerable, although I left someone else holding the rope for a bit while I went and did a couple of routes nearby. The route was eventually climbed in fine style by Dave and a little less stylishly by me.

Eventually his ambitions began to outgrow the available partners. During one frustrating day at the Etive Slabs he offered to take Cherry up a particularly fearsome route. "Just lean back on the rope and walk up the rock while I pull the rope in," he said cheerfully. Cherry declined her chance to do an E2.

He was always noted for his sartorial elegance on the crag. Not for him the garish rock wear of the young upstarts but a tweed jacket of discreet quality, collar and tie. I think at first he just forgot to change into his mountain togs but it soon became a cult in its own right.

We were in the Scafell Hotel one afternoon when someone arrived almost speechless with the news that someone was climbing the Tomb on Gable Crag whilst wearing a suit and tie, and with a young lady in tow. It didn't take us long to work out who those two were. David had always been a mountaineer of the true breed and loved the big and remote crags generally and Scotland in particular.

It wasn't long before Jennifer, dentist and relative of Frank Lord, was powering up 1,000ft E graded routes in the back of beyond behind Mr. Sharples.

The active section have always been hostile to ladies who might take away their friends, and this little lady was a threat indeed (after all, we have seen what has happened to Martin Dale). Curtly dismissed at first as Lurch's 'leg iron,' she proved anything but and supported him on many worthwhile expeditions to the hills. But in some ways the lads were right and sadly David drifted away from the Club, for a complex variety of reasons and we no longer see his big beaming smile as often as we would like.

It was always Dave's ambition to be able to drive again and he would often try to take over the driving of any vehicle in which he was a passenger. One would suddenly become aware that the pedals had acquired a life of their own as one of his long legs worked its way forward from the back seat, or two big hairy arms would suddenly take over the steering either side of yours. Eventually he got his wish as his improvement continued apace. He used to share a purple Morgan with Jennifer, sweeping up to Grasmere wearing a long yellow scarf and flying helmet, with the 'lid off' the vehicle.

He was always a complete knockout when taking part in Jack Jowett's after dinner pantomime and could always be relied upon to dance in the opposite direction to everyone else, generally knocking people over left, right and centre and jumbling up all his lines. He always stole the show. It has been a pleasure to spend much of the last 20 years in his company. — *Editor*.

KEITH LOCKETT

KNIGHT ERRANT TO THE S.B.C.

IN SPITE of coming from a good home Keith was soon in the vanguard during the hard driving and hard drinking days of the wild and woolly Seventies. If he had lasted the pace I am sure that he would easily have seen off John Tattersall's motoring record but unfortunately for us, and fortunately for the rest of the motoring public he fell in love, became sensible, and disappeared from view. Thus are some of the brightest stars, rocketing heavenwards in rapid ascendancy, extinguished before their time.

Never amongst the top climbers, he soon discovered his knees and elbows technique was far better suited to pot-holing, after which he never looked back and became one of the Club's keenest and most active speleologists, making frequent trips to the Bull Pot area, either with the F.M.C. or an associated group of affluent inebriates known as the S.B.C. Most Club pot-holing meets were punctuated with epic tales of derring-do on tarmac, tough days underground and even tougher evenings in the Green Dragon, later to be known as the Snooty Fox.

One weekend while I was going through my 'I don't want to live' phase my prayers were nearly answered on three occasions just on the way up to Kirkby on a Friday night. The most amazing was reversing over a crossroads between two cars coming in opposite directions, just like a Keystone Cops film, only for real.

He could also be a bit deaf as, on another occasion, he completely ignored our hysterical entreaties that a right angle bend was approaching at 80 m.p.h., confident he could bounce the car off the warning chevron sign halfway round the bend, a procedure which he carried out with aplomb. On another occasion he was less lucky when he collided with the local laird's car on the way down from Bull Pot Farm, blocking the lane for hours. A suggestion that he put castors on the roof of his car nearly came in useful after some epic two-wheel cornering during a race with John Sealey. Not a man to lack nerve John nevertheless closed his eyes on a number of occasions and was always amazed on opening them again to find that Keith was not bouncing down the road on his roof.

If Keith didn't drive by halves he didn't drink by halves either. Like others before him he had had a good night in the Wasdale Hotel before going on to Brackenclose. Spurning all good advice he insisted on sleeping on the top of a three-tier bunk. With the room going round, and at such a height, there was no way in which he could get back down again, so he spent the night spraying all and sundry from his eyrie in the rafters. I remember Dave Sharples and Fred Snalam did the honours the following morning in making the place shipshape again. That may have been the same weekend that those two used combined tactics to hide Donald's pipes 12ft up on one of the roof beams.

It was also tradition in the '70s to drink over at the Prince of Wales at Grasmere on a Saturday night where there was a disco and girls, not that anybody seemed to make much progress in that direction. Mr. Lockett's progress home though was once disturbed by the necessity to be ill halfway up Red Bank. I was not used to coming across people lying in the middle of the road at 1 a.m. and very nearly ran over him. I do recall being impressed by his handbrake though, holding the car on an icy 1 in 4 hill.

It was after one of these Grasmere 'do's' that we found a certain Mr. Crowshaw fast asleep in the bog with the w.c. cradled in his arms!! That's what I call house trained. At least he got back to the hut that night, which is more than he managed from the Swinside Inn once. Leaving the pub early on a horrendous night for weather, he turned left instead of right and staggered off to Braithwaite where eventually he had sense to shelter in a barn. We had a devil of a job scouring the valley for him when we got back and found he was missing. It was obvious he might not survive the night out in the open. We were quite pleased to see him Sunday morning.

Keith did manage to fit the odd trip in up the hill but was unfortunate to choose a day with the then unknown quantity of a

newly returned Peter Roscoe. The objective was Scafell and Keith set a cracking pace, determined to grind the old man into the ground. He expected a long rest at the end of Mickleden but did not get it as Peter kept going. Never mind, thought our intrepid hero, he is bound to collapse halfway up Rossett Ghyll so I'll get a break soon. Peter didn't stop at the top of Rossett either and 'Sprockett' as he was then known, collapsed by Angle Tarn, unable to go further.

For such an intelligent bloke he seemed slow to learn from his mistakes and once went to Chamonix with Peter where, by all accounts, they spent the fortnight hurling rock at each other. It was here Keith made his move for Mug of the Year, awarded for his ascent of the Frendo Spur "because there was a storm coming in." He just beat the storm by minutes, enabling him to collect the mug personally.

Never afraid to push the boat out he pioneered the Fylde M.C.'s trips to the Himalayas travelling by train and bus on the adventure of a lifetime, all on a shoestring budget. The train was taken to Istanbul, along the route of the Orient Express, where he took local buses to Teheran. He was probably the last Englishman to see the Shah of Persia as a week later the Ayatollah took over. Afghanistan was an adventure with a 9 in 10 chance of disappearing on some routes and the Khyber Pass was traversed in the back of a lorry to Peshawar in Pakistan. The train was taken to Lahore and then a bus was used to get to the Indian border. Katmandu was reached by train via Delhi and a bus was used to reach Pokhara where he trekked to the Koligan Dhaki, passing the exit of the Annapurna Sanctuary. Returning to Katmandu with a bit of knee trouble he hired a bike, which he said made the bikes on Arran look like £1,000 racing machines, and spent a fortnight or so exploring the valleys round Katmandu before flying home to a well-earned retirement.

He still gets out occasionally and recently had some time in the U.S.A. on business which he put to good use on the fell. —
Editor.



PAUL CLARKE, MARTIN DALE AND ANDY DUNHILL

POSSIBLY the unholy trinity ever to be visited on a mountaineering club, these three joined the Junior Fylde M.C. round about the same time, very early in its existence and immediately became amongst the keenest and most active members. They attended the indoor meets at the Rangers both regularly and enthusiastically and took part in practically all the outdoor meets.

Rock climbing was uppermost in all three minds and after a trip to Fairy Steps, quarry climbing soon featured large in their lives and, where possible, still does to this day. It was during one of these early trips to Wilton that Paul Clarke's younger brother wanted to know what that 64-year-old man (me) was doing married to that young girl (Cherry). He has not been seen since. The trio soon started to lead rock routes and however apprehensive the adults might have felt, they had to be given their head. In a matter of months they were going away for rock climbing holidays. Andy was soon disappointed with severe routes of notoriety, finding them too easy and like all three was leading fairly hard routes practically every weekend and holiday from an early age.

Beer featured to a certain extent during the Junior F.M.C. days but being young and keen on the rock it was always imbibed in moderation though one or two have made up since for their slow start. Most weekends the local bobby used to call in to the Three Shires for a quick chat with the locals and invariably on the way out he would look directly at our trio and say, "Good Evening Gentlemen." As long as they knew he knew and were prepared to behave themselves he for one wasn't going to cause unnecessary problems. Excellent policing that unfortunately wasn't carried on by the two thugs who replaced him.

Of the three, Martin is the one who has never left home. His mum must despair of ever getting rid of him, but help may yet be on the way. He has devoted himself to steep rock and the demolition of large quantities of beer. He has been locked into more pubs than most of us have had hot dinners. At one time noted for his appallingly bad taste in very loud music, he has now moderated under the influence of the opposite sex (I always knew we would find a use for them sooner or later) and has become quite the Club gentleman. The heady days of walking around Stair banging loudly the pan on top of his head are sadly missed by some, but not by all.

Martin has been one of the most active members for very many years climbing and new routeing throughout the U.K. and lately abroad and has developed a talent with the pen. Several of his articles are printed in this Journal. He never really recovered from the attentions of Miss Leslie Days and now under the regime of Paula may well fall. It was always interesting to watch the battle of Stair between Miss Days and the rest of the active section over what Martin did or didn't do at the weekend. He has served for many years on the committee, most frequently as the Club's permanent Vice-Chairman. Mark's recent accident has at last pitched him into the limelight. He has coped well and committee meetings always close before last orders.

Easy-going and affable he remains one of the best known, most active and most liked members of the Club and we have all marvelled as, over the years, his shoulders have trebled in width to cope with the demands made of them.

Paul Clarke moved away to Leeds a few years ago and has gradually lost touch with the Club. Leeds' gain is our loss and Paul is sadly missed from his place on the active section of the Fylde M.C. Always the moderate of the trio he blossomed rapidly into a first-class mountaineer and was a credit to the Club on all counts. He has climbed extensively both here and abroad in all disciplines and soon absorbed the romance of the mountains as a perfect foil to his undoubted abilities on very steep ground. This comes over very well indeed in his writing which is both beautifully descriptive and thought-provoking, and it has been my pleasure to reprint some of his articles here.

Andy Dunhill set out to be the world's greatest anti-hero from an early age. Unfortunately he always let himself down by politely asking if he could smoke in my car and by carrying out innumerable acts for the common good such as collecting green shield stamps to get the Club some new pots and pans; in days of financial stringency a very useful contribution. It came as no surprise to me when he threw off his teenage rebellious days and matured into a first-class human being. From the Junior days onwards his abilities on rock were considerable and his talents on steep ice no less so. He has dabbled slightly less on the new-routeing front than have Martin and Paul but has nonetheless matured into a first-class all-round mountaineer. He took part in the Club's first Himalayan Expedition and made a very creditable ascent of one of the local peaks after the main objective had been abandoned. In days of yore he was the provider of great sackfuls of soup cobs, rejects from work. Two teams would battle the night away with these projectiles until the ammo was spent. Heady days.

Andy obtained a degree in Urban Land Economics and work has led him around the country. At one time he formed part of

the Club's Bristol contingent and now lives in Newcastle. Like Paul we no longer see him as often as we would like but every now and again he puts on a curry for us at one of the huts. Andy is the first person to have shown me that curries can actually be edible. His culinary talents are considerable and an Andy Dunhill catering meet is not to be missed. Quietly and without fuss wonderful food is produced and an excellent evening is enjoyed by all. – *Editor*.

ALAN BLACKBURN

A QUIET, pleasant and unassuming lad Alan is nevertheless well worth avoiding at all costs. He carries a great big black cloud with him wherever he goes and it is always worthwhile enquiring of meet leaders as to his likely presence before committing oneself to that longed for weekend. His greatest achievement to date is to bring rain to the Arizona desert after a drought of three and a half years; so much in fact that it was thought to be the equivalent of the last 50 years rain in just a few days.

In contrast to the days of yore when climbers drove beat-up Mini Vans at incredible and dangrous speeds, Alan drives the latest GTi Turbos at a very gentle pace, and your granny would feel quite happy and at home sat in the passenger seat for a trip down Glen Etive, or similar treat.

Alan is an experienced, competent and widely travelled Alpinist and is an ideal companion for the hypochondriac as he is able to supply all manner of pills and potions in unlimited quantities at trade prices.

EDITOR

MR DONALD NICHOL

K NOWN only as "The Duck," Donald was born a Yorkshireman. His legendary reluctance to buy beer is exceeded only by his enormous ability to spend huge sums of money every weekend with little, if anything, to show for it. Indeed his spending abilities are so prodigious that he is the only person I know whose cheques have a sell by date of the first of the month!

For every piece of climbing equipment you own, Donald has six. He lives in half a room of a 3-bedroomed Semi looking out over a sea of equipment, books and records. Consequently he needs a pantechnicon and a team of porters for a weekend away in the Lakes and a Pandoro Wagon for a month in the Alps.

One wet day we hope to go through his huge rucksack just to see what is really in it. I suspect it will be a bit like an archaeological dig with layers of equipment going back to the year dot. At the bottom will be a woggle as Donald was a Brussel Sprout. Those legendary feet have trod the boards in Gang Shows nearly as often as they have the fells.

Donald joined the F.M.C. in 1967 and immediately set about making a good impression being rolled around outside Brackenclouse, by Dave Laycock, in an acute stage of electrolytic imbalance. To reinforce this good impression he later repeated the scenario at the Old Dungeon Ghyll, again with Mr. Laycock, who it seems can seriously damage your health. A kind-hearted soul dragged him down the fell and dumped him in the outside loo of the O.D.G. where David eventually found him. What a reunion it must have been. One of our best ever Mugs of the Year.

Donald has even more trouble with Time than he does with alcohol and is notorious for his lateness. If he turns up on the night as arranged you can count yourself lucky – because he hasn't always. Two hours overdue is the Duck equivalent of being "on time," the record to date is being three days late for a Cluanie meet. As custodian for Langdale, Donald has been as conscientious as any and extremely industrious. None of this however prevents every committee meeting starting with a sweep to predict Donald's time of arrival; nearest prediction to actual time of arrival takes all.

Oblivious of tempus fugiting Donald bumbles round the hut for hours getting ready for the fell. He is handicapped in this apparently simple task by the plethora of gear which accompanies him. I once counted five changes of footwear between him getting up at 7.30 a.m. and being ready at 11 a.m. Having Donald as a friend is like being married to Cherry with none of the advantages except that his pipe is good for midges in Scotland. I say pipe, but it really should be in the plural. We once found seven pipes on, in, and around his person whilst on the hill.

Even slower are his rectal movements. Donald consumes his own body weight in food every day, mainly stuff purchased from "B & M Bargains". Indeed should you ever see Donald looking particularly ill a call to your stockbroker to offload your B & M shares should be made before calling the ambulance. Camera equipment shares should also be returned to the market, but I digress. So slow is his rate of egestion and so great the bulk to be removed that he is required to sit astride the throne for what seems like hours to those either unfortunate enough to be in the queue, or waiting to go on the hill. Some meet leaders have forbidden entry until all the rest of the meet's bowels have been voided. This excellent practice should be formalised in the rules and guidance for meet leaders which the Committee draws up from time to time. Recent scientific tests at a hut in Wales have shown that up to three visits are needed after a night of Banks's Mild.

Donald has always specialised in driving vintage vehicles at great speed. He started with a Minor 1000 with which he used to terrorise the local constabulary in Glen Etive, and moved up to a new sports car. Ever since his vehicles have got older and older and he has recently swapped his 'S' Reg. Viva for a 'P' Reg. Allegro.

Being stunningly better looking than the writer, he recently acquired a 23-year-old girlfriend with big boobs, but was reported to be unable to take the strain, complaining over his shovel of sexual exhaustion.

Whilst accepting the broad thrust of what has been written, Mr. Nichol is concerned that new members who do not know him may draw the wrong conclusions about him from the article. He has asked me to point out that a greatly distorted picture of him has been presented. I agree. It is far too kind. He remains of course considerate and thoughtful and one of the hardest working Committee members. – *Editor*.

DAVE EARLE

BORN in the Big Smoke, Cockney by birth, naturalised Northerner by choice, recently made a Life Member, and currently Vice-Chairman, 'The Earle' has been with us since early 1969, serving in every office except Treasurer and Booking Secretary, and rarely taking a back seat.

His talents, quite apart from his all-round mountaineering skills and organisational abilities, are almost legendary. I refer of course to certain character traits which will come as no surprise to anyone who knows Dave well. There is of course his ability to run a modern car, take umpteen Alpine ski holidays, collect books and still have enough spare cash out of his un-Civil Service pittance to purchase CDs by the score, not to mention the odd (very) garish, deranged, designer sweater. Incidentally, he seems to manage more holidays than the average schoolteacher [and at a time when he wants them.—*Ed.*]. How does he do it? [fiscal and timeous organisation—*Ed.*].

There is, too, his capacity to survive a gruelling day 'on the hill' on only a packet of [very cheap—*Ed.*] biscuits, although his pleading, begging, doggy looks often soften his companions' hearts sufficiently to cause them to donate extra goodies (there's a great acting talent hidden somewhere in his persona, I suspect). Let us not forget his camel-like qualities with regard to liquid refreshment. Rarely does he carry a drink with him, he merely 'tanks up' when the opportunity arises, although once again it is not unknown for people to take pity on him and share their drinks.

In fact, bodily contact with water is something Dave tries to avoid when out for the day. Such is his aqua-phobia that on hot days, whilst his companions go 'skinny dipping' in a tarn our Dave, when forced to remove one sock, dips his big toe cautiously in the water, pronounces it too cold, and retreats to safety [but then I've never been with Claire—*Ed.*]. I've never known him to take a shower at the huts, either!

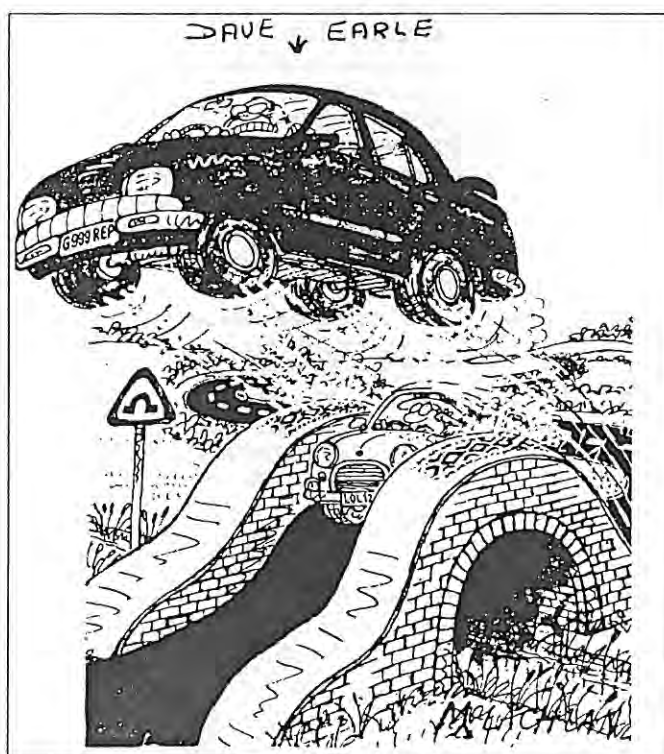
Returning to the subject of food, Mr. Earle's tastes could be described as being as bizarre as his taste in sweaters. Chocolate spread and treacle are two items he seems addicted to and he makes a mean crême caramel. Despite being a keen mountain photographer [and national award winner—*Ed.*] and presenter of excellent A. V. shows, Dave has never mastered the art of winning Club competitions with pictures taken from the A82.

A Vivaldi fan and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic groupie, mechanical dyslexic, chairman of the local branch of the Maggie Thatcher Depreciation Society [I hope you are all paying your Poll Tax—*Ed.*], life with Dave could never be described as dull and boring. Being a front seat passenger in his car is anything but. It's quite a gripping experience; something akin to finding yourself on a rock climb a couple of grades higher than anything you've done previously! One has the chance to closely examine the rear bumper, rear lights and rear number plate of anyone that gets in his way, listening all the time to an endless tirade of insults and abuse hurled at the unsuspecting driver in front. [Fondly remembered are two little old ladies who stopped, actually on the A82, to look at the scenery, stopping progress due to oncoming traffic. Their happy smile and cheery wave were returned with interest—*Ed.*].

Recently, however, Dave's friends have felt some concern that certain personality changes may be signalling the possibility that he is going through a mid-life crisis or male menopause [the earth only moves for me on earthquake days—*Ed.*]. Once only ever seen clad in tatty Edwardian-style kit, he now sports the latest in high-tech gear, but much more worrying is his recent penchant for getting into ladies night attire (photographic evidence supplied on receipt of a S.A.E. and cheque for £50). Nothing unusual about this, you may say. Ah, yes, except that the ladies are not wearing it at the time!

I could go on but this isn't meant to be a biography. In conclusion I would just like to say that despite all I've written some of my happiest hours 'on the hill' have been spent in Dave's company [once he's got ready—*Ed.*]. Cheers, mate – don't ever change.

D. NICHOL



This appropriate cartoon courtesy of Girescope Magazine.

JOHN TATTERSALL

I HAD heard mention of John before I had the pleasure of meeting him but I was still not prepared for the reality. Like an affable "Wild Man of Borneo" in looks and temperament he had an extraordinary capacity for shifting beer. The first time we went to a pub together he ordered three pints which I thought a bit odd as there was only the two of us. He drank the first while the second was being poured, demolished that, gave me the third and ordered a fourth. He hasn't let up since.

He had at one time an interesting driving record and matched his arch rival Joe Giblin in the vehicle writing-off stakes, car-for-car. In a recent interview at the Thatched House he denied having written off seven cars but lots of knowing nods, winks, and other symbols of agreement from the audience signified these incidents were still fresh in their memories.

The most interesting was the writing-off of a Mini Van on the Isle of Arran. He had just picked up two hitch-hikers and, being a geologist of some note, was busy explaining the formation of the raised beach along which they were driving when the Mini Van ended up on the actual beach 30ft below. The hitch-hikers decided they could do without Geology 'O' level and staggered off into the night. I also remember a Reliant Robin driven at great speed stuffed full of climbers which nearly rolled over on a number of occasions.

An incident at a roundabout in Newcastle involving the tipping over of a Transit also springs to mind. He also had a motorcycle combination and I well recall hurtling around the Lake District stuffed into the sidecar and climbing fairly hard routes in all sorts of horrendous weather. The sort of experience one feels one ought to have had but wouldn't actually go out looking for again!

John was never afraid of bad weather and most of my epics outside Scotland have been with him. Critical of the indolent attitude of the then Active Section who would only leave our centrally heated huts in the most perfect of weather, he once drove from Leicester, where he was working, to the A.G.M. to recommend removing the roof from Stair to reactivate the climbers with a bit of fresh air. No action was taken but a valid point had been made.

He sometimes had difficulty in remaining in contact with the rock and I can still remember travelling up Shepherds Crag at what seemed to be twice the speed that he was falling down it. One day I was climbing with Garry Standige at Castle Rock of Triermain. Round the corner we heard the unmistakable sound of falling bodies. We rushed to investigate and found Mr. Tattersall hanging from a belay and a Mr. S. Halton and a certain Dr. Death from the Alpine Centre gently tick-tocking across the crag on the ends of their respective ropes, though who was climbing where before the fall I cannot now recall.

As well as many hair-raising incidents on the hill I have also enjoyed some of my most sublime mountain experiences with John. He was always a poet, musician, and a lover of the full mountain experience. A typical "Tattersallism" was a decision to climb Fool's Paradise one fine January night. I climbed with Rupert and John led the following rope, with I think, Steve Halton. As I sat on a belay ledge in almost total darkness with just the dim glimmer of Derwentwater for company, the sound of John's whistle floated up out of the darkness. A beautiful slow gallic air, poignant, profound and unforgettable. More musical climbing took place in the Cathedral at Little Langdale. John had always wanted to peg across the roof and as a gullible Cockney I got roped into yet another madcap venture.

John had a very large portable music machine which was set up on the ground, the tapes being changed by the everlasting stream of visitors as required. Hanging in étriers from a bolt in the roof, in total darkness, slowly spiralling round and being blasted by Beethoven, Sibelius, Planxy and the Chieftains was yet another of those experiences that stay with one for ever.

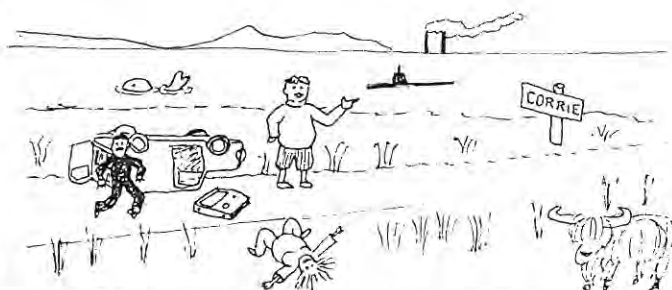
Another of those full mountain experiences which fluctuated between the hair-raising and the sublime was the winter ascent of Chock Gully, grade 4, on Dollywaggon. Failing to get a response for a partner in this madcap affair, he picked on me being both very small and extremely naive. Large hairy arms emerged from pits all over Stair offering me all manner of sophisticated ice gear, as long as the respective owners could stay warm and safe in bed. We started at 9 a.m., finished the route at 9 p.m., and just made last orders which in early January made an interesting affair. Most of the route was climbed by moonlight in calm and cold conditions and we only got up because we could not get back down. The total concentration heightened the appreciation of every centimetre of this superb route.

Another legend relates to climbing in the Eden Valley. The second became jammed under an overhang. During the rescue and recovery operation John ended up in the river and the second was made to walk back to Newcastle.

Always a man prepared to push a route to the limit and slightly beyond, John always knew when to back off, which saved his life in a major pot-holing tragedy involving Newcastle University, where he was studying geology.

He worked on the A9 between Drumochter and Calvine and has been involved in geological work on many motorways. His last job in the U.K. involved work on the Conway Tunnels through the end of the Carneddau, for which he invented the Tattersall Bolt, now much renowned in civil engineering circles. He has since been working abroad and the Club has been denied his larger than life approach for some time. He recently arrived on my doorstep one Friday on a weekend trip from Hong Kong, looking for someone to climb and drink Hartleys with. Absolutely typical of the guy. He set off back east the following Monday. His geological knowledge comes in very useful. Two-thirds of the way across the Cathedral roof he said, "No further" and abseiled down. Two years later the next section of roof fell in.

He is always a handy man to have at a party, especially if you are just about to fit double glazing as he can save you the trouble of removing the old window. He was kind enough to perform this service for John Sealey, though I presume it was not at John Sealey's third-floor flat where the incident occurred! He was always very good with children and used to be great with people like Tom Carroll's kids and my nephew. He is now married with one boy, has a house at Poulton and keeps in touch with us whenever he is home. At least he now has someone to leave his electrically heated jacket to; probably the ultimate secret weapon in winter mountaineering, though young John will have to grow a bit yet before he can take on his unique Dad's mantle. - Editor.



And up there, is the finest raised-beach in the U.K.

THE JUNIOR F.M.C.

NOT long after Cherry and I moved North Jack Jowett told us that it had long been his wish to start a Junior Section of the Fylde M.C. but he needed support. We gladly accepted the challenge and along with other members on an ad hoc basis did the necessary work to keep the youngsters active and interested.

The Junior Section had its own constitution and committee made up of elected Junior members with a bit of gentle overseeing from Jack and myself. They organised their own indoor and outdoor syllabus plus joint meets with the Senior Club. It was a pleasure to enjoy the delights of mountaineering with such a band of enthusiasts. All manner of theoretical and practical training was given at the Rangers Sports Club before the Senior Club assembled there and a few of the older ones would stay on for a quick half. They got found out one night when Phil Ward, their form master, appeared on a special F.M.C. night with a smart "Good Evening boys." Pints were rapidly downed and junior members scampered quickly into the night hopefully remembering the compass work we had been trying to drum into them.

There was plenty of time to practice what we had preached and the Juniors were very active on the hill with day meets by hired minibus and weekends away. It was not long before they were finding their way over the hill without help and leading rock climbs. Pot-holing, too, formed part of the outdoor fare of the Junior Club though one trip down Bar Pot did go on a bit. It was nevertheless a stimulating, interesting and exciting experience and many of the participants continue pot-holing up to the present day.

Eventually several Club worthies decided to panic about 'In Loco Parentis' and liability. Very sadly, for both Senior and Junior Clubs in my view, a motion was forced through at an A.G.M. which wiped out the existence of the Junior Club. The first victims were coach meets which lost 15 – 20 supporters overnight. The hardcore of Juniors were looked after as best we could and eventually formed the core of the most active section of the Fylde M.C. for many years, and to a certain extent still does.

Unlike the Senior Club there were lots of pretty young ladies in the Junior section, known as Jack Jowett's 'Early Developers.' Thank goodness for Welfare Orange Juice and Radio Malt. They were not purely decorative but took a full part in the Junior Section. One such lady, Cathy Baron, tells what it was really like, in the following article. – *Editor.*

THE F.M.C. – JUNIORS (1969–1972/73)

FAMILY holidays were usually in the Lake District, walking and climbing come rain or shine. We all loved the area and my parents, Jim and Olive Baron, had known them for many years; walking with the C.H.A., Y.H.A. and the F.M.C. They used to entertain us with tales of weekends away with F.M.C. members and have many photos that bring back pleasant and funny memories!

Eventually I became a Junior member of the F.M.C. and made many new friends. We went walking and climbing and were taught about the many aspects of the countryside. Each meeting the Senior members helped organise tuition in mountaineering, orienteering and many other subjects. It wasn't all brain work; we had a good social calendar and had many an interesting event over the years.

Most weekends we travelled up to the Lakes. Each visit taught us something new and gave us a lifetime of memories. One such memory was a day of orienteering – we were split into groups and given a map, a compass and instructions. A senior member accompanied each group for guidance and to keep count of the heads. We all took turns and for the most part the correct path was taken. The only person who led us astray was the Senior member! (No names mentioned but he's usually in tune!!) [This bears out what has been said elsewhere in the Journal.–Ed!].

The F.M.C. has a cottage in Little Langdale and one wintry weekend a band of foolhardy people arrived with anticipation and optimism. We had a sing-along evening and the usual ghost stories were told. In the early hours nature called and with boots on and armed with a torch the journey into the wilds was taken [outside loos in those days–Ed.]. If you've ever stayed there, then you'll know the record (in seconds) for the time taken! The weekend saw a variety of activities – abseiling, climbing, pot-holing, snowball fights and how to warm up cold hands and feet in record time. An adventurous weekend, one that formed new friendships and consolidated old ones.

A divergence from walking and climbing over the fells and mountains was the charity walk across Morecambe Bay. We arrived to Force 9 gales and were told that passage across was in doubt. An hour later we were told to "Go" and at a very fast pace we were off. A hundred yards to go and a little voice said "Run!" – the sea was at our heels. Jumping over and in puddles we made it with seconds to spare. Laced coffee and a change of clothes later a jubilant band set off home. Another well organised and successful trip with the Junior F.M.C.

My years with the Club gave me enjoyment, experience and many happy memories. I would recommend the Fylde M.C. to anyone who's slightly insane, a bit of a masochist and has a good sense of humour. There are many of us about! May the Club go on for years and bring enjoyment for many.

CATHY BARON

Photograph
by the Author
depicting
Jack Jowett,
Pete Horsley
without fuzz,
and a Junior.



A TALE OF SUIFORMES (unpaid) and CREDITORS (paid)

THE Club has always had difficulty in persuading some of its members, or more accurately would-be members, to pay their annual subs in reasonable time. In today's financial climate this puts certain committee people to a considerable amount of effort and wastes a lot of what is after all their own leisure time in chasing up miscreants but is not financially disastrous for the Club.

Some people regularly pay so late that when the demands for next year's subs comes round they (probably genuinely) believe that they have recently paid and must therefore be up to date.

The financial climate in the early Seventies was however very much harsher. The Club had gone into debt to obtain Stair, a very far-sighted and sound policy which has paid handsome dividends ever since, the very antithesis of Thatcherism. Each of us owes the bold investigators of this move more than we can ever repay. However, the Club owed money both to its members who had been generous to provide interest-free loans, and to the banks, and financial stringency was the order of the day.

Centre stage were those members who, like now, refused to pay the very reasonable membership fees. For every pound not received the Club paid out another twenty pence in debt charges. In desperation the then newsletter man read the riot act to the Club in no uncertain terms. Unpaid swine were to be struck off. With the written word unable to put in the inflection of humour that was obviously intended, all hell broke loose. Both paid and unpaid swine wrote in their droves to complain. We lost a few long-standing members who I felt were being remarkably sensitive for a mountaineering club and shifted a fair bit of dead wood. But the term "unpaid swine" had entered F.M.C. lore well and truly. Pete Lat was by and large unrepentant and why shouldn't he be? But to try to take the sting out of the situation I penned the little ditty that follows:- "The Parable of the Unpaid Swine", which like all wongs of that nature tries to point out a few home truths; like we have a perfectly good postal system which could easily be utilised by those not fortunate to meet up with George Parker on Wednesday evenings.

And what happened to the Great Debt itself? Attack was on two fronts. A maximisation of income from the huts was one. Whilst we sat in the rain at Buttermere over August Bank Holiday rich Southerners were pouring vast sums of money into our coffers at Stair. The short-term inconvenience has been vastly outweighed by the long-term gain and at least gave us the bouncing wall game whereby Super Heroes set out for Gatesgarth camp site from the Fish Inn at 70mph. About halfway home they would completely lose the sequence of bends and end up swerving right instead of left and vice-versa, thus writing off both sides of the vehicle. If this sort of entertainment was too dull there was always folk singing with Alan Bell at the Kirkstile Inn to round off a good day on the hill.

Sometimes, being a Bank Holiday, it rained a lot. I remember waking up one very wet night and thinking I must be camped on the A1, so much traffic was churning past the tent after being washed out. Lurch had nowt to wear home but his caggy. But Danny Tolley towing a boat about on the end of a bit of string backwards and forwards across the huge pond inside Dad's tent, while Mick struggled to de-pitch, thought the whole thing was great.

The other source of income was from Jumble Sales. These were horrendous affairs that took place inside the grim portals of Raikes Parade Hall. They were popular with the customers though. I could never imagine why anyone would want to go to a "Jumble" as Frank Lord used to call them, so I took scant notice of the advice to leap to one side on opening the doors and for my pains I was trampled into the floor by a dozen little old ladies all fighting each other to be first at the bargains. After one sale we had so much ladies' underwear left that a ceremonial burning took place at the Rangers Club where the F.M.C. then met. This was commemorated in a song written by Jack Jowett and sung in duet at the Club Dinner with Peter Roscoe. It seemed to have a million verses and a chorus something like "What a sight we saw that night of ladies' underwear". We certainly saw life. — Editor.

THE PARABLE OF THE 'UNPAID SWINE'

And it came to pass that he who was in charge of Newsletters spake angrily with a loud voice saying, verily, it is easier for 300ft of Kernmantel rope to pass through the eye of a needle than for an 'unpaid swine' to inherit the Kingdom of Little Langdale and Stair. Therefore go ye at once and seek ye 56 Winchcombe Road, Cleveleys, and throw yourself before him and offer him gifts of £1.75 or £2.75 so that you may be redeemed. Or seek ye a tall red iron cylinder with a mouth that does not speak, and place inside your gift so that it may reach him, and you too shall inherit the Kingdom of Little Langdale and Stair.

And there was a great weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth and the multitude was very angry. So he who was in charge of Newsletters spoke more gently to them and told them of the moneylenders and of the vast profits they were making from us and how their profits would be drastically reduced if we all paid our subs in time.

And the multitude were duly repentant and they made their way each and every one of them, even unto 56 Winchcombe Road, or they sought out a red cylinder. And all were saved.

DAVE EARLE

RECIPROCAL RIGHTS

OVER the years the Club has negotiated the use of other clubs' huts by our members. We hold a key for each of these huts and any member may book space in any of these huts through the appropriate booking secretary, collecting the key locally from our own booking secretary. The arrangements have proved mutually very beneficial.

VAGABONDS MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

A Liverpool club that have a hut above the Llanberis Pass at Nant Peris, handily situated for that den of iniquity the Vaynol Arms. They are a lively and jovial lot, have taken part in many combined meets, and are well known to our members. Our paths crossed when Rick Reeve obtained a post at Maghull on the outskirts of Liverpool. He joined the Vagabonds M.C. as well as remaining a member of the F.M.C. and immediately realised the clubs could be mutually supportive. Older members will remember the little sentry box outside with its compulsory cement tin, the contents of which required burying at the end of the weekend, and a large, malevolent, and extremely magnetic piece of slate painted "Hit Me" which livened up the vehicle manoeuvres. Eventually the Vags obtained a small grant to provide an inside loo from the Sports Council who promptly sent a 'bigwig' up from London to open it and present them with a wonderful aluminium plaque to commemorate the event, all of which must have cost many times the original grant. After a considerable amount of work had gone into improving the inside the owners have taken the cottage from them and the Vags are at present sorting out alternative accommodation further up the road. We wish them every success. (But this saga continues and the Vags are still in residence).

CHESTER MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

As befits that noble city the Chester lot are, by and large, a little more refined. Colin 'I'm not happy' Green was the member who obtained a post at 'Deva' and brought the clubs together. The hut is situated above Llanberis town at the top of a very steep hill, and a further hut is in part of the Plas y Brenin sports complex at Capel Curig. The plumbing takes some handling if you are not mechanically minded. By the time you have got halfway through the sequence of opening tap A, and closing valve C and waiting eight seconds before opening valve B and then draining tap C you may well become demented! Chester keep threatening to carry out a major rebuild but to date the hut looks the same to me.

CLEVELAND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

Perhaps the most extraordinary letter I ever received as secretary was from the above club, who I had never heard of, thanking me for my enquiries about reciprocal rights and agreeing to them. Their name didn't even appear on the B.M.C. list at the time so I couldn't have written to them whilst sleepwalking. I have always held two members high on my list of suspects!! However, the Club had nothing to lose and a hut on the other side of the Lake District might well come in useful from time to time. It is ideally situated for boaters and canoeists, and indeed it has been used by them, and also for winter mountaineering, being under the high eastern crags of the Lake District. The last time I stayed there the hut was shared with the Ladies Rossendale Ski Team which made for a very convivial evening.

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON GRADUATE MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

Known as the 'Ugly' M.C. for short they own a fine piece of property in Derbyshire, ideally situated for climbing on either gritstone or limestone or for walks in either the Dark Peak or the White Peak. The negotiations through a mutual friend of Carole Waterhouse had a long and tedious gestation period but now it is up and running it gives members an excellent opportunity to visit a different and very pleasant area and stay in excellent accommodation. I have always been surprised the ladies meet have never visited this sylvan area.

D. A. EARLE

A MEET LEADER'S LOT

SOME time between Easter and Whitsuntide a brightly coloured card lands on the doormat. It is of course the Committee's latest sports plan and alongside each bright idea is listed the Committee Member designated to take charge of that activity. Climbing clubs, being fairly anarchistic in concept, do not thrive on too much organisation. One boozy bike ride leader found out the hard way when they told the gathered multitude they had 12 minutes to drink their beer and sixteen minutes to get to the next pub. A sit-down strike soon sorted that problem out.

Normally all a meet leader needs to do is rally support, organise transport, ensure the place really is booked, that we have a key, and make sure that new members are looked after properly. A coach meet leader's lot is rather different as Donald explains.

I had only just finished explaining to the gathered multitude on Raise where I thought the meet leader might be when the cloud lifted to reveal Donald's distinctive form marching along the wrong ridge towards Wythburn church. Hoots of laughter all round except from one new member who wasn't used to this kind of irreverence, especially in the dangerous environment of mountains. "It's only Donald", we said. "Don't worry". But he was not put off. "We must do something to attract his attention". Always happy to oblige, Gerry Senior and I and a couple of others linked arms to give a rousing chorus of the old Scouting song "We are riding along on the crest of a wave". The unfortunate new member collapsed with shock at our hilarity and indifference. Meanwhile the Duck stopped, looked about him and lit his pipe. He looked around again, muttered, turned around and set off in pursuit of his meet, but don't just believe me, read on. – *Editor*.

RYDAL TO THRELKELD COACH MEET

A MEET LEADER'S LOT (or "A Meet Leader at the Tail")

I WAS not intending to commit my sins and failings to paper – however, pressure from certain quarters who would like a second chance to take the 'Michael' have forced me to put pen to paper! [And now a third time – *Ed.*]

So here it is folks – the article you haven't been waiting for, uncensored.

Mistake No. (1) Trying to run a coach meet when everybody was doing something else! Well, how was I to know? Forty phone calls resulted in eight positive yes's (sorry about that). Still, I ended up with thirtyfour on the coach; about par for the course.

Mistake No. (2) Trying to wake up a certain family at 7.50 in the morning in time for the bus (the laws of libel, slander and the Official Secrets Act prevent me from naming names!)

Mistake No. (3) The coach didn't stop at Rydal [due to the neglect of the meet leader – *Ed.*] with the result that yours truly and the Marathon Party, after much deliberation, decided to walk back along the road for a mile in order to ascend Nab Scar.

Mistake No. (4) All went well until around Fairfield when the Monsoon struck (hardly my fault but meet leaders get blamed for everything – Well, this one does anyway!)

Mistake No. (5) The second Helvellyn summit, the weather mainly misty and damp. The party sets out for Raise, the Dodds and all points north. All that is except yours truly who is mending a puncture on his heel!

Mistake No. (6) 'The Big One!' (or 'how the meet leader lost his party') Now it can be revealed! The Meet Leader, now several minutes behind his party, set off at high speed to catch up. The path started to descend and so did yours truly until, switching on his brain, a sudden feeling of doubt and panic hit him. Surely something was wrong; surely he couldn't be heading for Thirlspot? Oh yes, he could! Map and compass were dug out (might as well use them if you're going to carry them!). As the map was lifted from the rucksack so the cloud was lifted from the mountain revealing yours truly heading for Brown Cove Crag!

Mistake No. (7) 'Trying to catch up'. The scene, all of the Dodds except the last one. The weather clear, the Meet Leader could be seen first rushing then staggering along, smoke and sparks belching from pipe trying to keep up a full head of steam! Always one summit ahead, the rest of the party watching enthralled through binoculars!

Mistake No. (8) Finally on the last hill the Meet Leader was reunited with his party (good of them to wait, he thought). And so down to Threlkeld. Several routes were taken through the quarries down to the main road. Where was the coach? This could be the biggest slip-up yet (Meet Leader loses party then Meet Leader loses coach?!) Dire threats about sending yours truly off on his own to find the said coach were being muttered. Eventually, however, the coach was found and set off minus two passengers who decided to let the coach find them by waiting for it at a bus stop! (very clever).

Mistake No. (9) Having been deprived by unco-operative drivers of boozing time on the previous three coach meets, yours truly had negotiated with the coach company and driver for an hour and a quarter at the Hollies. It just goes to prove the old adage that you can't please everyone all the time. Not in the F.M.C. you can't! "Too long". "I've got to get home!" "Half an hour would have been long enough!" "I didn't want to stop anyway". These and other complaints echoed in the Meet Leader's ears, but with a pint of Thwaites in his hand and time for at least one more, the aforementioned ears were well and truly closed!

D. NICHOL

WORKING PARTIES

ONE of the great strengths of the Club in the past, and it is nice to see its resurgence in recent years, has been the willingness of the ordinary members to roll their sleeves up and beaver away for the common good. Hut custodians can dream, plan and organise but they cannot undertake the vast projects of improvement that have been part of the Club's history on their own, nor can they single handedly keep the Club's huts clean and in good repair. Support comes in the shape of working party meets, usually two per year at each hut. Members are encouraged, chivvied or forced, in order of preference, to turn up in great numbers to clean, paint, repair, and improve the cottages. Many are the superb *Club* meets that we have enjoyed with a big team at the huts enjoying the banter, the leg pulling and the beer. Sometimes things have been tough but mostly the work meets have proved very enjoyable. With enough willing helpers and good organisation there can even be time for the hill, the reward for keeping on top of the work.

One of my earliest memories of the Club was sitting in a freezing cold Stair Hut warming ourselves round a poster of electric fires nailed to the wall, before the electricity supply had been installed by Derrick Smith. We had run out of paint and had just enough left to paint "Edgarina Lives" on the end wall of the common room. Good working party literature seemed to be very rare. I suppose making thousands of spiders homeless doesn't give you much to be proud of and plumbing the depths of the septic tank hardly brings out the W. H. Murray in one. However, the tremendous amount of work achieved by the Club's Working Parties over the years cannot go completely unmentioned, so we proudly present "The Cleansing of the Temple of Stair", by that little-known author Mr. S. Smith to commemorate all those (un?)willing helpers. – *Editor*.

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE OF STAIR

REDDY-EDDY-FICE, that horrible looking commie from Bispham – gave directions to make the 'ut look good. First he beckoned unto the windows and lo! they were clean, like.

Secondly, His glance came upon the area known only for its legendary cordon-bleu type concoctions and yet again more hallowed ground became a hell-hole for insects and germs alike. And they did disappear.

Tertiary, His justification came into use in an area tread by the wary few – the toilet! And lo! yet again those Saints of Cleanliness, Spick and Span, arrived on the scene and their wings did sweep the disease and infection from that place.

Fourthly, but not in the least last, the only haven left for semi-retired climbing types came under His keen, unrelenting eye. In this forsaken place did the most excessive excommunication take place. Layers were stripped bare, bedding was rid of grossness, light inducing sheets of Silica were washed clean and the place where feet tread was scrubbed and swept so as to accommodate His most holy and flawless soles.

Finally, the Great Lord cast His eye afar and put out the light inducing sheet devices His gaze came to rest upon the hallowed Hill of Swinside, beckoning sublimity and there upon the thirsts of He and His Followers were quenched.

RONGFAD
Scribe to the Holy One

THE ALTERNATIVE MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

IT HAS always been a fact of life that the current 'Active Section' consider themselves as the only members doing anything on the hill. To be fair this sort of attitude is at a very low ebb these days but at one time was very strident and vociferous. But have the Club 'has beens' really given up for good or have they found other paradises to explore? If they have they certainly kept them very much to themselves. Articles describing really interesting meets which I knew very well had taken place were extremely thin on the ground. As far as literature was concerned the Club's geriatrics have all but disappeared into a Black Hole . . . but not quite. The following article by Derrick Smith, one-time expert on home-brewed beer, and now a renowned authority on Scottish malts, does at least give a hint that there is life after families and after 40, and reminds us of the alternatives to rock and ice. I remember seeing a photograph of the 58 Bodkans piled up on the beach and a pretty impressive sight they made, too. The locals were impressed with them and some were pressed into service to be bartered or otherwise used as currency (one Bod can = 20 groats). – *Editor*.

THE BODKAN MEET

SPRING Bank Holiday saw quite a large contingent of members, friends and children, 31 bodies all told (and 58 Bodkans) taking the MacBraynes ferry from West Loch Tarbert to Port Ellen on the Isle of Islay.

The main attraction of Islay are its coasts, with long, sandy deserted beaches, and stretches of high rocky cliffs; wonderful seascapes with the Atlantic constantly roaring on the West Coast. The bird life is continually interesting, Islay having a greater variety than almost any other place in Britain. Most mornings we were awakened by the sound of eider ducks cooing on the beach, and frequently we watched from the tent the butterfly-like terns plunging straight into the sea from heights of 60ft or 70ft.

Highlights of the holiday were two trips across to the neighbouring Isle of Jura. The first for the trek to the northern extremity to view one of the largest whirlpools in the world, the Corrievecken; a memorable sight which you hear long before it becomes visible. Half a mile wide and more than a mile long of swirling, seething, foaming water.

The second day on the island was by an eight-strong party to climb the Paps of Jura, a strenuous day out involving miles of trackless moor, and 5,500ft of uphill, some of which is up what must be the longest and steepest scree slope in the country. The rewards of sitting on the tops of these three isolated mountains in such wild and magnificent surroundings, will stay with us all, and be talked about for years to come.

No visit to Islay would be complete without a look round one of the island's eight distilleries. We toured the one on Bowmore to see the stuff being produced, and came away glowing from the effects of large nips of twelve-year-old malt whisky.

N.B. One Bodkan = over three and threequarter pints of Boddingtons Best Bitter.

DERRICK A. SMITH

ANTI HEROES WE HAVE KNOWN AND LOVED

FROM time to time problems of discipline arise occasionally in the Club, usually related to excess noise and a dearth of washing-up activity at the Club huts. I have always felt a swift and well directed kick up the pants is the remedy of choice but committees usually drag these events out too long.

Adverse behaviour becomes ingrained in the system and eradication becomes as painful to one section of the Club as its persistence is to the remaining members. Everything therefore becomes unpleasant. With this in mind Eddie Craig produced the article which follows to take the sting out of the situation. He also, I well remember, produced a new and exciting Board Game, called "Banning". The details of play are now too hazy to relate meaningfully, which at least shows it is happily some considerable time since it was last used, but the general gist of it was that if you managed to ban one of the world's great anti-heroes like Andy Dunhill you only scored a measly 5 points, although if you managed to ban the likes of Jack Jowett you could expect to score a thumping 50 points! The winner of course was the person with the most points.

In the event it was the Club that won and it has not looked back since. – *Editor.*

TOM GIBLIN'S SCHOOLDAYS, OR "WHACKO!!"

THE story so far . . .

Twin Spectacles of shame and scandal haunt the corridors of beleaguered but stately Fyldesleigh School, a little-known down-market public school somewhere in England.

Matron is pregnant and a group of third formers have been disciplined following jolly japes in the tuck shop after lights out. Humble Tom Giblin, son of a humble country squire, has been expelled and rumours of victimisation are rife. Humble Tom is bald and wears . . . spectacles.

The school's beleaguered but stately bald bespectacled headmaster, Dr. Crook, and his beleaguered but stately board of governors are in a quandry. What if their new disciplinary measures should rebound on them; what if humble Tom is caught in the tuck shop; what if matron's baby should be bald and bespectacled? Meanwhile other matters are pressing: Open day approaches; balding, but not bespectacled Clark minor of the third, a bright exam prospect, has run amok with his catapult and taken pot shots at staff and old boys alike.

Now he stands in the corridor outside the head's beleaguered but stately study. What is to be done?

Read on . . .

Your beleaguered but stately, hirsute and clear-eyed Newsletter editor – E. Craig

It was, as they say, a tight squeak. As lonely as an aid climber in the Stony Cafe, I was definitely out on my own. One couldn't even put this predicament down to a test of modern technology, not a friend in sight, no cheering cracks of encouragement. The situation looked grim.

What a fool to break such a fundamental rule. I had no right to call myself a mountaineer. I who, up till now, had had a career as white as the snow which settles on Pete Roscoe's flat 'at and bright as John Sealey's metal wedges. Ahead it looked as dark as the inside of Dave Earle's wallet.

At times when I'm high above protection and the end looks near, I like to cheer myself up by singing little songs or imagining myself in much worse places – like a Donald Duck social evening or something really horrible. None of these worked now; there seemed no doubt that I was for the high jump.

What confronted me was not a pretty sight! It looked smooth like Barrie Crook's (or my) forehead and as upright as Dave Westby's mast at dog-watch, ugly like Frankenstein but without the bolts. Like Llyn Idwal no birds flew overhead, no wise man ever set foot in this bent distorted dale. You may be a star on sunny Caley Crag but Craig-y-Greenhalgh is dank and depressing, split only by infinitives and the bold lines of Age, Ready-Eddie Go, Eddie Get Your Pun and Kiss Me Hardy.

"Paul Clarke you have got yourself COMMITTEE'D. Have you anything to say on your behalf that might get you out of this predicament?"

It's a fair cop but society's to blame?

"Not good enough".

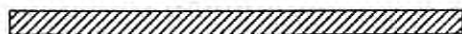
BANJO!

"That'll do nicely" (and keep the noise down).

P. CLARKE

POET'S CORNER

The following has been included partly for completeness and partly for sentimental reasons. Terry was well aware of the abhorrence with which very many in the Club viewed the dreaded poetry. He had a very mischievous sense of humour though and I am quite sure that he had a great deal of fun putting together the following epic tale of love, drama, jealousy and climbing, knowing how we all would suffer. His sense of fun, and his enthusiasm for the hill is sadly missed. So we can now all turn over with McGonigall for the Climbing Lochinvar. – *Editor*.



THE CLIMBING LOCHINVAR by T. T. O'NEILL

(After Sir Walter Scott – a long time after!)

*Oh, young Tom McLeod came out of the West
Of all the ace climbers he was the best
For after six pints of the most potent beer
He could still make short work of a 'Very Severe'
So light on his feet, so strong in his arm
He thrilled all the girls with his manly charm.*

*He was tall, he was dark, he was lithe, he was slim
There was not a torrent he could not swim
He could dance the gavotte, the reel and the twist
There was scarcely a maiden he had not kissed
He was expert at cooking haggis and tripes
And even played Beethoven on the bagpipes!*

*But alas! The maid to whom he'd given his love
Was to marry another, a spineless young blood
Who rarely indeed looked at a cliff
And who'd never led more than 'Moderately Diff'.
Our hero decided he'd never forsake her
So he went to the wedding disguised as a waiter.*

*Boldly he entered the Rockhopper Hall
'Midst climbers and campers and hostellers all
Then up spake the bride's father, his hand on his rope
"Clear off, Tom McCleod, you haven't a hope,
My daughter's to marry an Alpine Club member
Who's at least enough money to keep up her suspender".*

*"Fear not for your daughter, this morning", Tom said.
"I come but to see her before she is wed.
And to ask if this gathering I may enhance
By persuading the lady to give me a dance".
And though father scowled so reluctant was he
He could not do anything else but agree.*

*So Thomas then offered the fair maid his arm
And though his blood mounted he still kept quite calm
As they danced to the music he whispered his plan
"We'll run off together as soon as we can".
For as they progressed round the high-polished floor
He was steadily edging her nearer the door.*

*In a flash they were gone and quite out of sight
On his tandem they rode away into the night.
But before the bride's mother could say "How romantic!"
Father was given to bellowings frantic.
His curses and oaths were not fit to be heard
Whilst the poor craven bridegroom ne'er said a word.*

*Quickly a party set out to pursue
O'er mountain and moorland they simply flew
But Tom, to escape the inevitable wrath
Had craftily chosen a most cunning path
It led to the foot of a very hard climb
Which had turned back the experts time after time.*

*But being a 'tiger', and inspired by love
He took his girl in his arms and shot right above
In his climbing ability he'd placed his reliance
And from a stance up above he roared his defiance
"Come up and get her" from his perch Thomas cried.
"That is if you want her as daughter or bride".*

*The bridegroom got started up the great cliff
Exhibiting the usual stiff upper lip
But he very soon started to quake and to squeal
When he realised that he was going to peel.
He faltered, he slithered, his knees turned to jelly
He then lost his grip and fell down on his b.... stomach.*

*Father was furious; he stamped on the ground
And for some good climbers he looked all around
But there were none present who'd risk life and limb
In attempting a climb with aspect so grim.
Father looked so frustrated, then said with a frown,
"I'm not beaten yet, I'll send for Joe Brown".*

*So pleas and entreaties were sent by the score
To him who regards XS as a bore.
Father directed him: "There are the villains".
Replied Joe: "It looks hard. I'd best consult Whillans".
But even these two after giving their best
Could not get as high as our lover-boy's nest.*

*Everyone seemed to be thwarted and baffled
And as for the bridegroom he just stood and waffled
So Father agreed his daughter should wed
Young Tom McCleod, of whom it was said
Passionate love made him walk through the sky
That's how he managed to clamber so high.*

*So the episode ended in rejoicings and laughter
But Thomas did not live happy e're after.
That pretty young thing he'd taken to wife
Turned out to be the plague of his life.
She'd a passion for hats and ran up large bills
And would not allow Tom to go climbing the hills.*

*But the call of the mountains would not be denied.
If he could not climb then he would ride.
He'd combine his ascents with a crafty career
Which would help keep his wife and pay for his beer
So he secured a position, free from the rain
Shovelling the coal on the Snowdon train!*

PIONEERING

IN DAYS of yore, a long time ago, when some people still thought the world to be flat and that travelling across the oceans could only bring disaster, young Rafferty knew different. He had heard of a wonderful pair of islands on the other side of the world, full of mountains, sea lochs and skiing and resolved to make the journey there to see for himself.

Lacking the fare he tried to get himself arrested but in those enlightened times Mrs. Thatcher had not yet brought back transportation so he had to make do with an assisted passage to Australia for eventual o/t to Kiwi land! And so one day, with only a red and white spotted handkerchief, a Building Design Partnerships T-shirt and his draughtsman's pen he set off, telling no one except his mum. We eventually received the communication that followed.

One day, unannounced, he re-appeared on the F.M.C.'s doorstep, married the only lady member worth having and disappeared back to the Antipodes. From this we could only conclude that the only females out there were woolly with four legs. Since Rafferty pioneered the trail several members have made the journey. Some are still out there and others have returned, enriched by the experience. Andy Blaylock enthralled all of us with his slide lecture at the Breck Club of his travels and experiences. Quite the most entertaining, amusing and informative night since Donald chose to explain why his slides would have been better taken facing the other way or at a different time of day. But then in his own way Donald is a pioneer, too. – *Editor*.

COOK AT CHRISTMAS '74 (From our Roving Correspondent Raff)

THE weather, which had been churning out cold fronts for two weeks solid, finally abated and the Southern Tasman filled with an anti-cyclone on December 23rd. To avoid the drudgery of slogging up the Tasman Glacier and up through the bush to reach the hut, we flew up to the Grand Plateau by ski plane (lazy Kiwi habit). Twentyfive minutes after leaving the valley 5,500ft below we reached the Plateau Hut to find it full of Japs practising seige tactics! After a sleepless night spent listening to avalanches peeling off Caroline and the East Face we left the hut at 4 a.m. with the Japs besieged in their bunks. It was far too bloody warm, the route across the Plateau and up the Linda Glacier, though straightforward, was a real grind in deep wet snow. From the head of the glacier a traverse across a snow shelf beneath a huge dubious ice cliff (crux) led to a mixed ridge which, with only minor difficulties, led us to the summit at 10.45 a.m. Superb views from the top of the Pacific, the Tasman, the Southern Alps and the Canterbury Plains. An uneventful descent, straight past the seiging Japs and down to the valley for Christmas, warm beer and young nubile Aussie tourists. During a later clearing in the weather we did a traverse of Mount Sealey (not named after Mr. Guinness/Cider himself!)

PETE RAFFERTY

NORTH WALL CURRIES

THE passage of time was brought home to me recently when the present Newsletter Editor asked, after the publication of my article entitled 'The Technology of the Septic Tank', what was a North Wall Curry.

Throughout the Seventies and possibly in the early Eighties it was the tradition of the active section to culminate the Saturday Night activities with the production of the meanest, nastiest and most objectionable food offering that could be made with the available ingredients. Just about everything went into these festering stews and more besides, plus heaped tablespoonsful of curry powder to the point of being inedible by normal people. But the active section used to woof these down on Saturday nights for a decade or more so they certainly became a large part of Club life and spilled over onto the midweek climbing scene, whereby climb and curry meets got large numbers of members climbing together in the quarries and then stopping off in Preston for a curry on the way home. The vindaloo men were easily discernable by their large jugs of water.

Two tales of North Wall Curries may hopefully stand re-telling. One Saturday night Cherry and I were the first back to Stair, eventually followed by an extremely drunk Lurch (now known by his proper name of Dave Sharples) who announced he was going to make the evening's curry and staggered into the kitchen. The initial crashing and banging ceased and an ominous silence then prevailed like when little children are up to no good.

Due to his highly intoxicated state we decided to visit the kitchen to ensure all was well; that he was not incinerating the hut or doing damage to himself. We found him stirring the steaming pot with all the absolute and total concentration of the truly drunk and announced to us that tonight's was going to be the curry to beat all curries. As there was no smell of cooking we peered inquisitively into the steaming bowl to discover that he was religiously stirring a bowl of boiling water in which floated a bay leaf, and a tin of unopened curry powder bobbed up and down.

We left him to it and started to wonder what had happened to the rest of the team who had left the Swinside Inn with Lurch. Just then they arrived giggling, and we were surprised to find that two of them were wet through. Apparently Lurch was being supported by Paul Clarke and Chris Heald, one on each arm, due to the state he was in, when, somewhere near the river, he started to get agitated and wave his arms about. Unfortunately for the two gentlemen attached to his arms Lurch's super strength catapulted them over the hedge and into the river. The silence after the double splashdown was fortunately broken by two sets of laughter from the middle of the river but it took quite some time for the two unfortunates to be recovered and generally sorted out. Meanwhile, Lurch, who was quite oblivious to the mayhem he had occasioned, staggered on and eventually bumped into the hut.

On another occasion at Cwm Cowarch in mid Wales it was decided to make a North Wall Curry so savage it overhung by 15° to the vertical. It proved so inedible that huge quantities remained, still throbbing, in the pan on Sunday morning. It was spooned out onto the field outside the hut much to the delight of the local sheep who rushed towards this offering of food with much enthusiasm. Ten feet away from the smouldering pile they stopped dead, sniffed the air, and scampered off as fast as their four legs would carry them. It was even too much for their undiscerning palates.

D. A. EARLE

TRAVELLING

A CONSTANT theme of the time that I have been in the Fylde M.C. has been the steady expansion both of ambition and location. There has been a veritable explosion of new places to climb right across Europe, especially as the Rock Athletes became divorced from the high mountains and sought fulfilment on warm dry rock anywhere they could find it.

Few people have done more than Paul Clarke to set their stall out to gain the maximum of leisure time possible. And he has used it well, not only ascending hard routes throughout the climbing world but also absorbing the feeling and the culture of wherever he happens to be. This well-rounded view of things comes over very well in his article on the Verdon which follows. Lyrical, descriptive, and not a quadratic equation in sight. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I did. — *Editor*.

A PERSONAL VIEW OF THE VERDON GORGE

A SUPERB climbing and walking area in the Provence region of France. Grenoble looked its usual affluent self. In the high Alps the winter snows still stand. The Vercors change from gold to silver as the moon replaces the sun. It's Sunday night. The streets are quiet, the only people in evidence are a pair below the cliffs of the telepherique waiting, tired and attired for skiing, for the none too frequent buses. A leisurely coffee then off again over starlit hills. The venue had been Cornwall but the inclemency of the weather, a telephone call, a dash to Newcastle for my passport and it became changed to the Gorge du Verdon in Provence.

Two o'clock in the morning, and we slipped into the sleepy market town of Castellane and into the entrance of the gorge, the moonlight embracing the limestone walls and making it seem ten times its depth. The van slides deeper in, our necks crane to take in the full scale of the place. As the road climbs out of the gorge, it reaches the compact village of la Palud, at this time of the morning dark walls hung together around an old church and chateau. Up goes the tent and a vow to return, after a hitch-hiking visit eight months previously, is fulfilled.

I always feel there is an advantage to arriving in any place at night. The morning comes with light filtering in through curtain or canvas, and the full light of day reveals sights long thought of at their morning freshest. So it was in an orange glow through the tent walls that I awoke to the sound of familiar voices. "Hey, that's Andy's van, isn't it?" So I stuck my head out, "Mornin' Stuart. Don't these Cornish talk with funny accents?"

"You mischievous b.....d! I thought you were supposed to be going to Cornwall". Dragging my pit I joined Andy, Christine, and the cool morning sunshine, for breakfast.

Later on in the day we drove up to the Belvederes above the Falaise des Escalles, and for the first time glimpsed downwards to the turquoise blue river 2,000ft below. The sunshine burnt, and all around the mountain hills of Haute Provence lay covered in their distinctive semi vegetation. Most distinctive, however, and soon to become very familiar, was the scent of this partial forest, spicy and alive, warm and fragrant. Livesey has described his feelings for the area as akin to a love-affair — which seems an over romanticism — until you have been there. I fail to see how any person with a degree of sensitivity could fail to be moved by the medieval grandiose beauty of the place.

Further along the clifftop we located the situ bolts and joined two young Austrians for a 600ft flight through space accompanied by numerous butterflies which flitted about our heads to match the feelings in our stomachs. The landing is an afforested terrace perched halfway up the cliff and fading into over-hanging rock to left and right. A green oasis, though one without water as your throat begins to tighten with thirst, and apprehension. A short wander rightwards brought us to the base of a prominent prow, the Eperon Sublime, which we followed via slabs and cracks, wild traverses into thin air, and airy walls back to the clifftop, my own personal romance with the gorge by now consummated into a happy marriage.

We had been delayed on the route by catching up with some Swiss lads, missing so much being dependent on etriers yet they enjoyed their personal style, their own affair. The delay gave plenty of time for reflection, and I couldn't help my feelings of stupidity as the previous day's travel had shattered my already dented views of a bland khaki France. The dry summer dust and the brashness of Chamonix soothed by the greenness of spring.

At nights, the atmosphere in the Cafe at la Palud was interesting and alive, with French, German, Swiss, Austrians, Italians, Dutch, Finns, Norwegians, and so many more people who had travelled from America and the Eastern Bloc united by an interest to feel alive in moving over vast sheets of rock as freely as possible, but with boring talk of routes thankfully absent. Competitive people yes, but how much more friendly than the route tickers in the dark corners of the Bar Nationale. How many times I cursed my limited two languages.

We climbed all week, apart from a rest day, and yet though the routes were hard and good, it doesn't seem very important now.

Variety, they say (cornily) is the spice of life, so off we went to St. Tropez (a couple of hours away). Following the coast round to Antibes for two days frolic in an altogether different world. Expensive clothes, shops full of coloured boiler suits, expensive drink, cheap food, big boats, and lots of small fish covering the pavements in a green and silver sea. And now the weather started to change; dinner-time and the mistral sends the less hardy of the sunbathers on a small beach near Juan-les-Pins heading for the environmental constancy of their hotels. As evening approaches, we are at the pinnacled 12th century church of Guerdon, and snow starts to fall. Pass follows pass, and the snows gather at la Palud, five inches of snow fell in three hours. People return from epic retreats from the cliffs. Some don't return until next day, worn and frozen.

In the bar that night everyone is there. Forced away from the usual campside bonfires early by the snow. The place heaves, the landlord and his wife with their two ageing helpers soldiering through demands for wine and beer. Some Germans lead a healthy chorus in the back room. The English fall about laughing loud at tales of false bravery and awkward situations. I sit quietly watching the candlelight play on the face of a beautiful German girl. Each time we pass, we smile 'hello' like tongue-tied children at school, and I add German to my vow to learn Italian.

Later, outside, Andy and I fight a Northumberland team at snowballs, falling around and laughing like a bunch of drunken kids, but not in the least ashamed as an old French woman watches on more than a little amused.

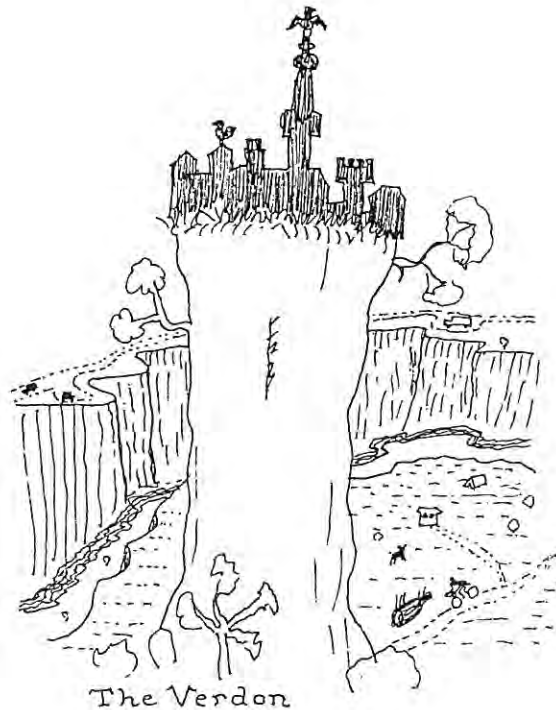
The morning thaw is heralded by snow crashing out of the trees. Everywhere is white and like a chocolate box cover. A Sheffield University team frolic almost naked in the snow and heat. So very hot, so very white, brilliantly so. We go for a walk up winding tracks and flowered fields of receding snow, up to a village perched raven-like on a white pinnacle. Why is it here? Perhaps inspired by nearness to God, the village clings to the fringe of an ancient and ruined Church? One can believe that theory on a day like today; it's like stepping back in time yet a war monument centres the town and shows that the troubles of the world penetrate even to here.

The time has come for us to leave the Verdon. I don't believe it pays to stay in one place for too long lest familiarity spoil the fascination, so we head off for another jewel – Cassis. Other climbing areas were to follow, but that is another story.

Our last climbing day in the gorge was to take us to a less visited area. The omnipresent turquoise river, white rock, fragrant trees, and everywhere a carpet of yellow primroses, about which flit yellow butterflies. I remember sitting waiting and collecting one of these butterflies in my hand, as I watched spring-loaded lizards scamper across the rocks, and knowing this is not a place one can tell about; just advise a visit.

Little in the way of climbing or walking is described here, though the area abounds in both. For that I need make no apologies, for is it not the nature of the area, in which these activities take place, which is of primary importance?

PAUL CLARKE



COFFIN CLIMBING

TURNING a suffered purple body, bent double with repeated spasms, I coughed and coughed and coughed; great gobs of flem, lung lining, bits of breakfast and old teeth were spattered over the snow. I looked towards the summit of Ben Nevis despairingly and a deep hatred of all smokers flooded through me. I had smoker's cough and I DON'T EVEN BLOODY WELL SMOKE!

I made myself very ill at a tender age by smoking grain-filled straw and ever since have considered smoking to be a vile, anti-social and barbarous habit and yet I always seem to be saddled with nicotine-addicted climbing partners.

My first companion on rock was Steve who was a committed 60-a-day man. Not unusual in the glorious polluted '60s, when smoking was a man's game and didn't harm your health. The harder the route, the more Steve smoked. A very hard route was never finished because invariably night fell before he could wheeze through the required number of fags. I graded routes in those days as 5, 10, 15 fags or unsmokable. Steve also spat repeatedly when gripped and my helmet still bears the tobacco stains. I didn't climb with Steve for very long.

Graham was more refined and liked to perform on rock with a certain style and elan. One day at Tremadoc whilst indulging in a rather too demonstrative exhibition of rock ballet he fell off and, much to the admiring audience's delight, was engulfed in a plume of blue sulphurous smoke. Moral: falling climber should not carry box of matches in pocket.

Over the years I have spent many a long evening, not in the pub where I should be, but groping down some appalling walk-off in the dark – inevitably torchless. Without exception this is the result of climbing with a nicotine addict. Contrary to expectations, smokers can walk as fast as normal people but when they get to the foot of a climb, looking grey and emitting a noise like shingle drawn down the beach by a heavy sea, they slump down despairingly, fumble for the life-giving weed, light up and pass out for the next 30 minutes. Gradually consciousness is regained and the route is attempted but the performance is repeated at each stance: wild-eyed and drawn he collapses onto the stance, belays (those who don't inherit the immediate belay responses die at an early age), reaches for his fix with trembling hands and again goes into coma. This side-show can be pleasantly diverting, even amusing for the non-smoker, particularly on warm, drowsy days when both climbers may gently slumber away the afternoon. But, when it's filthy wet and cold and your turn for the lead, fag-time at stances can be exasperating, if not infuriating. However, the temptation to throw the offending drug into the void is not advisable: your partner may quickly turn into a raving maniac intent on murderous revenge or, more likely, a weeping leave-me-here-I-can't-go-on wreck. Neither condition is likely to speed up your advance to the pub.

The inevitable accompaniment to Smoke-Gets-In-My-Eyes is the wracking cough. Strung out on a delicate move or hanging weakly from an insecure ice-hammer, it is not comforting to know that the desperate rasping coughs and death rattles projected from below are those of your trusty companion. Bent double as with terminal convulsions he repeatedly jerks the rope, completely insensitive to the jibbering jelly poised precariously above.

Bob, a friend of many a smoke-filled adventure, is fortunately not a cigarette smoker but he does have a weakness for pipes. Whilst not as offensive as cigarettes, pipe smoking is much more of a rigmarole, involving lots of bits and pieces and a particular technical expertise incomprehensible to the layman. Now Bob is a great chap to be with in the hills but he is totally and completely disorganised: something is always left behind. It may be the bivi-bag, the stove, the food, but as long as the pipe smoking equipment is with us, we can manage. Forget the smoking gear and you might as well pack up and go home.

Typical of the trauma invariably associated with Bob is the following episode, played out on the 5 hours walk up to the Promontoire Hut in the Dauphiné Alps. Bob, starting yet another doomed "I'm giving up smoking" campaign, has vowed to make it to the hut without a pipe stop. After three and a half hours, the withdrawal pains are too much and he collapses: "Can't go on without a pipe". Rucksac is opened in smirking anticipation. Hand rummages around in sac. "That's funny". Rucksac pockets are investigated: Bob smiles as matches appear. Further rummaging with just a hint of desperation. "I'm sure I put it in the sac". Numerous pockets in absurdly ill-fitting salopettes are patted and then opened. "My God, where is it?" Rucksac is again resorted to and the top items are flung out. Suddenly a great sight of relief and the pipe, miraculously intact, is produced triumphantly.

Two of the three vital ingredients have been found and I heave myself for the final act of the oft-repeated drama.

Once again the search is commenced. Rucksac rummage, no tobacco; rucksac pockets, no; pockets, hat, underpants, no. "Oh, my God, Oh my God" is repeated over and over again like some primitive dirge. All personal pockets are fervently emptied and finally the entire contents of the carefully packed rucksac are dragged out and hurled to the ground in a last despairing panic. I start to cry quietly, resigned to walking back down all those thousands of feet.

Suddenly, a great roar of delight and the tin of tobacco is produced from a Dachstein mitt. "Funny, don't remember putting it there," he says as his eyes close onto a nicotine heaven. I quietly sob into the snow.

The nervous strain, not to mention the clouds of secondhand tar-laden smoke inhaled, of years of climbing with nicotine addicts, was finally brought to a choking head, by four days enforced encampment in a snow-bound, smoke-filled VW Dormobile on Rannoch Moor. Mick and Rick survived and may, when time has healed the wounds, feel up to recounting the sordid saga. I was permanently disabled with a permanent smoker's cough and, so help me, I'll throttle the next person who patronisingly says, "You know, if you only smoked a little less . . ."

DAVE ARCHER

The miscreant, I suspect, was Rupert – *Editor*.

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE WEED

One very noticeable phenomenon of the present active membership of the F.M.C. is how few smoke. Whether this is part of a conscious effort towards greater fitness by today's rock athletes, or merely a sign of the times is open for discussion. It is very obvious however that apart from the ladies and Donald's pipe, very very few active members now indulge in smoking. An extremely welcome trend.

It was not always so and the accompanying article by Dave Archer alludes to the times when men were men and weren't afraid to cough their guts up at the foot of each route, and on many of the stances.

EDITOR



TO TRAIN OR NOT TO TRAIN

ONCE upon a time, not really all that long ago, providing one was reasonably fit, had a head for heights and a bit of natural aptitude, virtually all the rock routes in the country were well within the grasp of most people. But even climbing with new-fangled nylon, climbers still sought more and more protection in an effort to reduce the risk factor to absolute zero. After a misspent youth picking over the Bricklayers Arms engine shed's fishplates searching for discarded nuts to drill out and convert to life-saving apparatus, the market was flooded with 'artificial' nuts (if there can be such a thing) of various shapes and sizes.

Climbing was at a crossroads and in a dilemma. Protection, whilst obviously desirable, was reducing severe courses to mere rambles compared to the amount of commitment shown by the pioneers in putting up such routes as Scafell Central Buttress. The sport's answer was an explosion of new routes of previously unimagined difficulty. The impossible had all but been done to death. Suddenly everyone was starting their climbing careers at the point we War Babies had terminated ours.

But as in most things in life there was a price to pay. Climbing at today's present Algebraic standards requires previously unheard of amounts of finger strength and arms like the proverbial gorilla's. Those of us who knew Martin Dale as a sweet and slim youth have watched in horror as almost daily he has expanded from the waist up, his shoulder width increasing in size by some 75% and his arms doubling in length.

This is not however the result of some terrible genetic disorder caused by the most radioactive sea in the world but has been deliberately created by training. Such is the amount of pure physical finger and arm strength required by these climbs in the modern idiom that unless one is in the absolute peak of physical fitness and in constant training for the types of moves needed, the climbs become impossible regardless of technical ability.

Thus the name of the game these days is constant training; several days a week to maintain a position of superhuman strength. This accounts for the plethora of internal climbing walls now available and the considerable use to which these facilities are put by the present day hardmen. But the Fylde M.C. has always had a secret weapon in reserve in the form of the Rochers Rouge de Bispham. Our superstars have been cutting their teeth on these for years, which may well explain the club's forward position in the hard climbing and new routeing stakes. And all this time I thought it was something to do with Hartleys.

As you will see – one man's meat is another man's poisson as 'Outraged' lets fly. It is to be hoped that some sort of compromise can be arrived at in the true British tradition. The more sensitive of Club members who worry about the good name of the Club may reassure themselves that 'Outraged' probably lives under the shadow of the Bleasdale Fells with his posh bicycle and fancy ski wear. I suspect he also played the part of 'Disgusted Member' after a 1988 trip to Scotland. – *Editor*.

CONCRETE CORNER

LES ROCHERS DE RED BANK

BISPHAM Cliffs? Ee, I walked up 'em last weekend wi' me 'ands in me pockets". Most people think you're mad when they hear that you've seriously been climbing on Bispham sea cliffs, but much to their surprise reasonably good quality climbing actually does exist down there. For the past few months now people have been disappearing down off the Prom sporting EBs and chalk bags. Tourists have been scared out of their wits as pairs of white hands and then bodies have appeared over the top. Joggers have stopped their jogging, staring in disbelief, often turning round and running backwards. The Council workmen who work there during the day must have been baffled by all the little white marks appearing high up the walls. Regulars at the Bispham Hotel must fear that the pub lounge is turning into a climbers' bar!

At the top of Red Bank Road, Bispham, cross the Prom and go down a car ramp to the left of the toilet block as you look out to sea. At the bottom of the ramp turn left and there you are. A wonderful escarpment reaching 20ft in height. It's no Gogarth, no Tides or Abseil descents here, but it does give excellent fingery climbing. A good training ground. However, under heavy seas the crag is affected by spray and oversize waves. The cliff is actually just a wall. Nicely off vertical, it is made up of various sized blocks of rock giving quite a lot of small natural holds. The gaps between the blocks also give small holds in places. A low profile is best kept when approaching the cliff, although no one has been reprimanded yet. The best times to go are usually at night but, due to the usually nasty wet and windy weather, tourists are very few and far between. Even during the day the only people about are the odd pensioner walking the dog and maybe a jogger or two. Courting couples and sunbathers only come out when the sun shines!

The climbing is really of a go-anywhere nature. Traversing moves tend to be hardest so if you're looking for hard stuff try traverses. There are recognised routes but I won't bore you with descriptions because they all look the same until you've been a few times. Chalk seems to be a necessity especially as your finger ends soon wear thin and sweat a lot. There are problems all the way along the wall but the harder, better ones are found on the three highest sections with the best ones on the highest area. "Tension" takes the left hand side of this wall and is probably the hardest route here at 5c. A more reasonable alternative is the right hand side, just left of a thin crack in the upper wall. This is "Sigh and Explode" and it actually has a couple of big holds on it. The hard move is still about 5a and it's right at the top. This route has been done using only one leg (foot). Between the two is another hard but straightforward route technically. "Dark Thing" is just pulling on finger ends and no move is harder than the next. 5b seems right. At the right side of the wall are some of the longest routes. Starting on the ground and then venturing rightwards above the steps. "Goo Goo Muck" 5c (the thin crack) and "Heaven Up Here" 5c are hereabouts and have not yet had second ascents.

There are lots more routes worthy of mention but many are just variations and they are purely climbing by numbers. The finest expedition on the crag is definitely the traverse. The 7000ft of Wah! is sheer digit torture. Fingers soon turn to butter. It is pretty sustained with the hard bit at 5c and has not yet had a complete crossing. Two falls seem usual. No need to worry though; your feet are never much more than two inches above the ground. More serious stuff is "Martian Dance" 5c which is a right to left diagonal line on the highest section. Also unrepeated; it took lots of falls before it was done.

I don't think the regulars at the Bispham Hotel have to fear an invasion by climbers unless the crag gets over-exposure in the climbing mags. It has given us a lot of fun and friendly competition this summer but over indulgence does have its pitfalls. Finger ends become very painful and blood has been drawn on several occasions. It can make picking one's nose a very painful task.

(Guidebook/Diagrams available from the author - Price: 1 or 2 pints).

MARTIN DALE

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

"How Green Was My Clifftop"

Dear Sir,

In reply to your recent article "Les Rochers de Red Bank", I was appalled to read of a growing band of what can only be described as loud-mouthed, drunken yobbos, flocking to the quiet, sedate and, may I say, beautiful cliffs of Bispham. Of course, this was bound to happen with the increasing popularity in vandalism of the countryside. I am speaking of those already desecrated areas of the Lake District, Wales and Scotland.

However, as spokesman for the Bispham Conservancy Action Group, I feel I must speak out. The cliffs of Bispham have been untouched and much loved by the indigenous people of Bispham for many many years. They provide valuable nesting areas for gulls of every description and the wild flowers and moss which grow there provide an aesthetic appeal unrivalled in the North Fylde area. Now they appear to be threatened by your members and their EBs (eroding boots) and chalk. Dash it all, they will probably be bringing their axes and hammers with them next! Empty beer cans and remnants of butties will litter the Promenade and no doubt, the gulls will choke to death on the abandoned cigarette butts. I suppose once their popularity reaches a peak, you will want to build one of your confounded huts in the area, with all the debauchery and terrorism that goes with it. The Bispham Hotel will no longer be a sanctuary for the quiet, unassuming resident of Bispham, but a beer-swilling brothel and juke box emporium. Come the winter season, your compatriots the 'après ski set' will invade the slopes of Anchorsholme swigging bottles of Martini and building their lifts, left right and centre.

No Sir, this has got to be nipped in the bud, before it gets out of hand. Will you please inform your members that if I or any of my fellow conservationists spot them vandalising our beautiful countryside, they will be reported to the military who, I hope, will deal with them in the appropriate manner. Yours, OUTRAGED

COULDN'T AFFORD THE LIFT? YOUNG MAN





Above:
Jimmy Barron on the Pinnacle
Route, Tryfan
Photo: B. Bradley



Above:
Mid 50's version of the Golf G.T.I. Brian Bradley's motor
cycle lashed to the mast of the Skye ferry
Photo: B. Bradley

Below:
The opening of the Club Bridge. Tenant farmer Harold Jackson,
J. Jowett, Head National Trust, Bill Comstive, Chairman Planning
Board, Planning Board member, Planning Board member, Denis
Wildridge. In background: Dorothy Jowett, Greta Wolstenholme

Below:
R. Freeston abseiling off Tarn Crag,
Langdale





Above:
Kathleen Bradley emerging from Long Churn
Photo B.Bradley

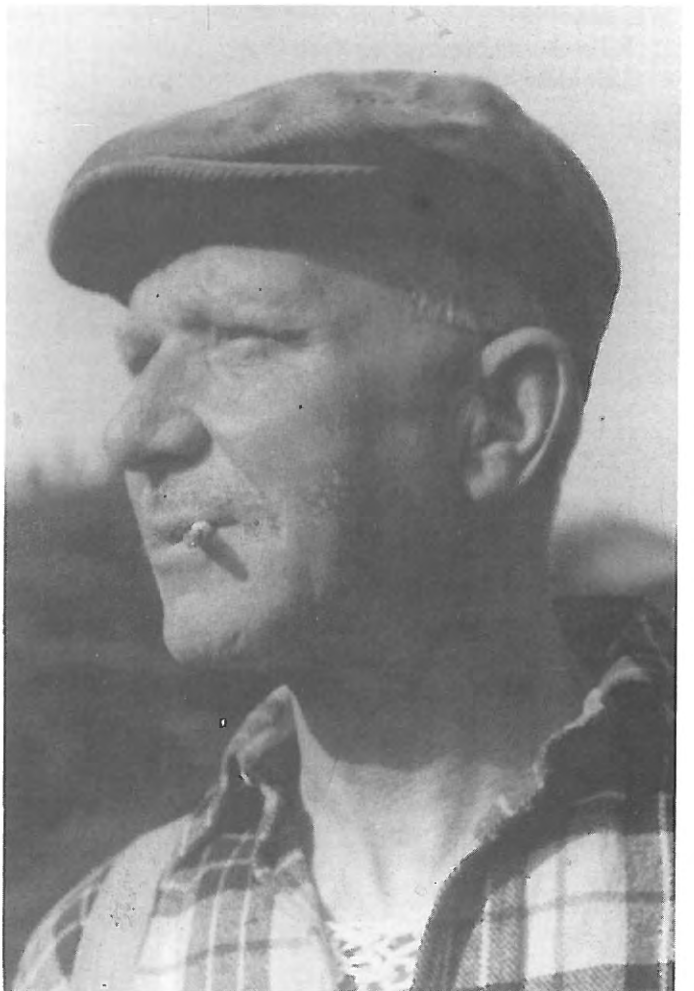


Above:
Our patron and his wife. Mr & Mrs J.Jowett
Photo: B.Bradley

Below:
Eric Lomas
Photo: B.Bradley



Below:
"Sandy" MacBeath





Above: left to right
 G.Denner, R.Conway, T.Iddon, P.Blacow, R. Gower
 Kirkstone Pass 1963



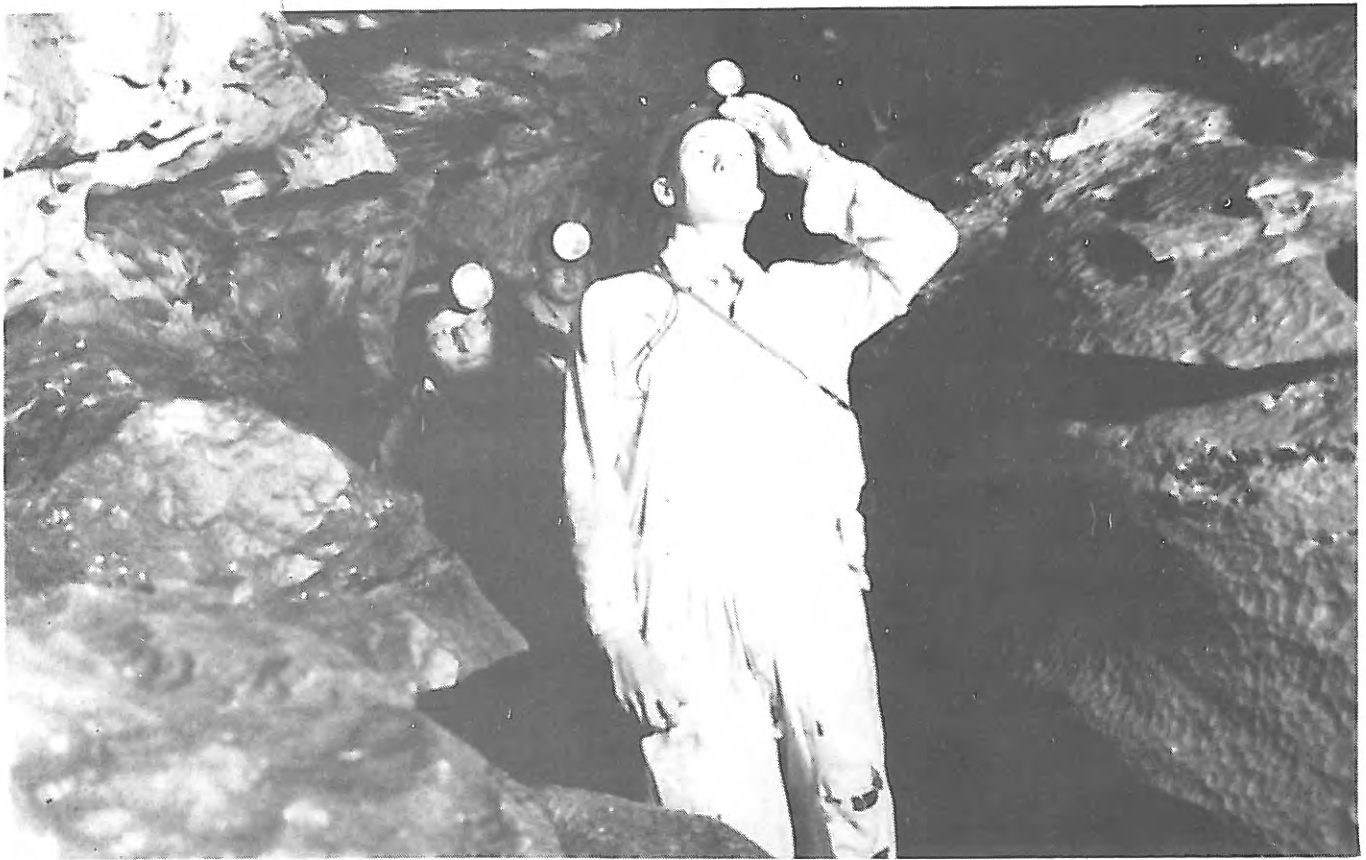
Left:
 Ray Legge, Ski Tow - Raise



Below Left:
 Alan Bell

Below:
 Jack Jowett and P.Forbes
 Glen Shee 1958





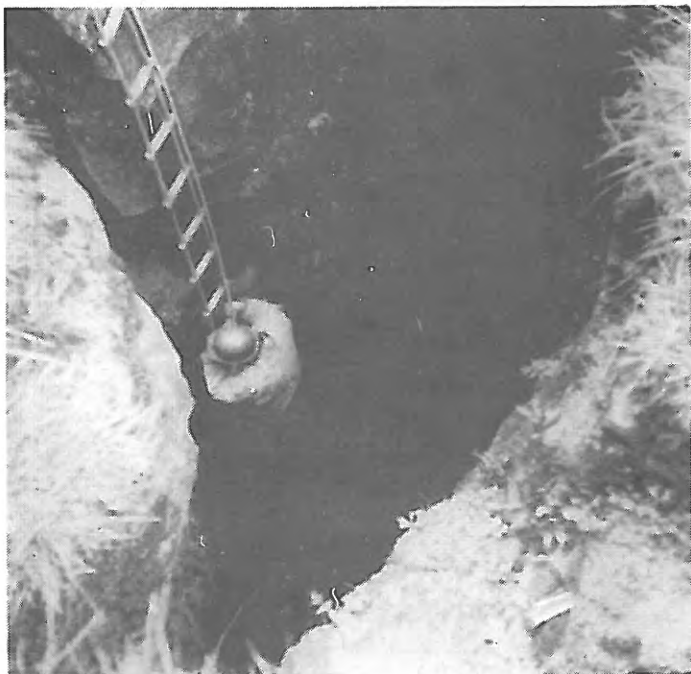
Above:
A party in Jingling Cavern early 50's
Photo: N.Scott



Left:
Babs Kilner, Joyce Claire Foster & Maureen Adams

Bottom Left:
1st Pitch Sell Ghyll Pot

Below:
The Cathedral, Michelstown New Cave
Photo: G.Stanley





Above:
An early Club Dinner



Left:
The Alternative Dinner
Left to right: B.Hughes, Carolyn, D.Jacobs, D.Brown,
G.Heywood, R. Holmes (above), 1960

Below:
Left to right: Carolyn, Heppy, D.Brown, J.Peel &
K.Croasdale outside Little Langdale Cottage 1960



Above: Work commences on the installation of the
septic tank summer 1958





Above: Alan Brown and Bill Comstive after a hard days skiing in the Cairngorms Photo: W.Comstive

Below: The Fell Race gets under way from Little Langdale with the start of the tiny terrors Photo: M.Dale

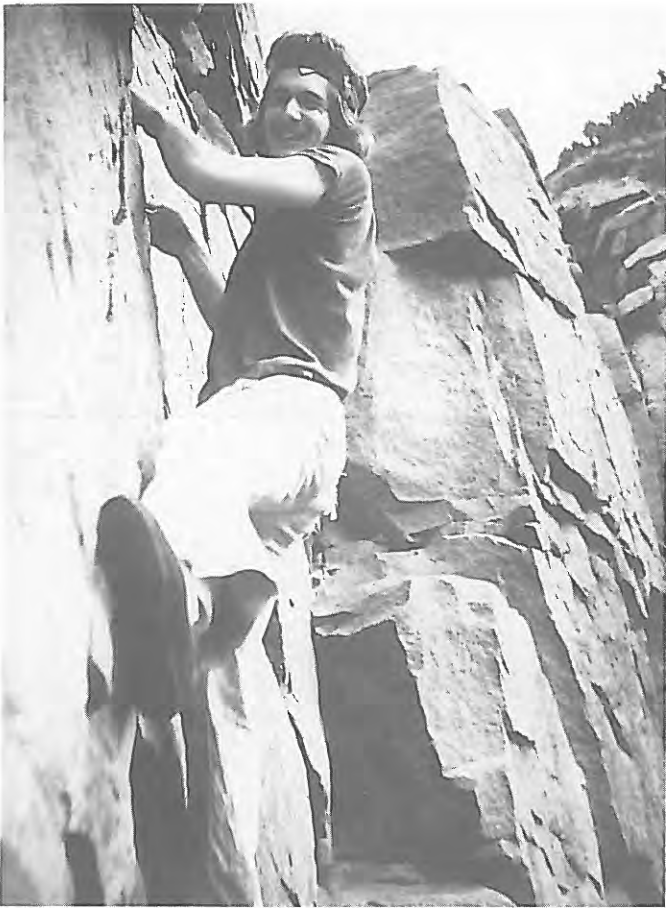


Above: Billy Haywood, Carolyn Ivens, Keith Jones, Douggie Brown, Dave Boardman, Brian Hughes



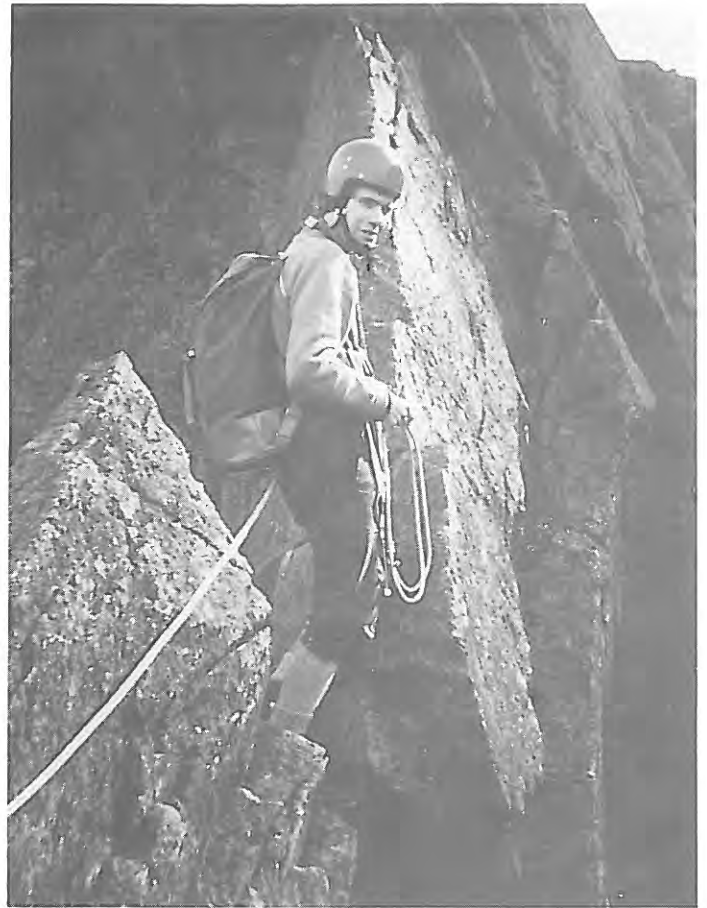
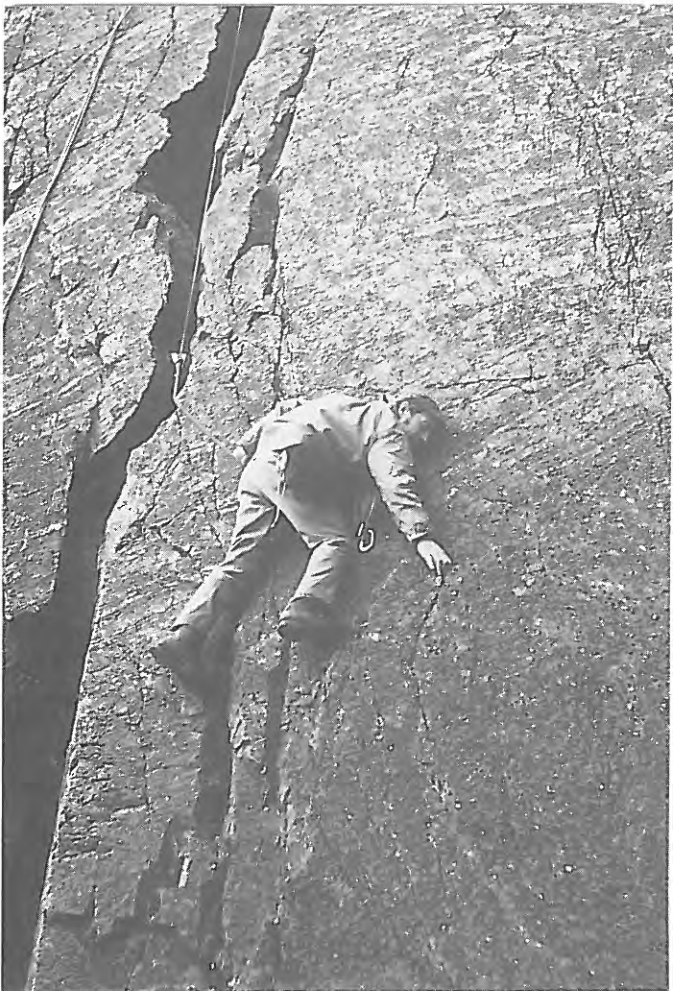
Right: Tony 'Dad' Whiteley cuts an elegant dash in the costume of the day, 1960





Above: Robin "Rupert" Greenwood demonstrates his prowess at Wilton on a Thursday evening meet. Photo: D.Earle

Below: Peter Roscoe, Leader of the "Flat Hat" brigade on Kern Knotts. Photo: D.Earle



Above: Peter Latimer, Big Mountain Man, on Scafell Pinnacle Photo: D. Earle

Below: Ray Varley (left) Barbara & John Sealey "On Top of the World"Photo: D. Earle





Above: Peter Rafferty on Grey Crag,
Birkness Combe. Photo: D.Earle

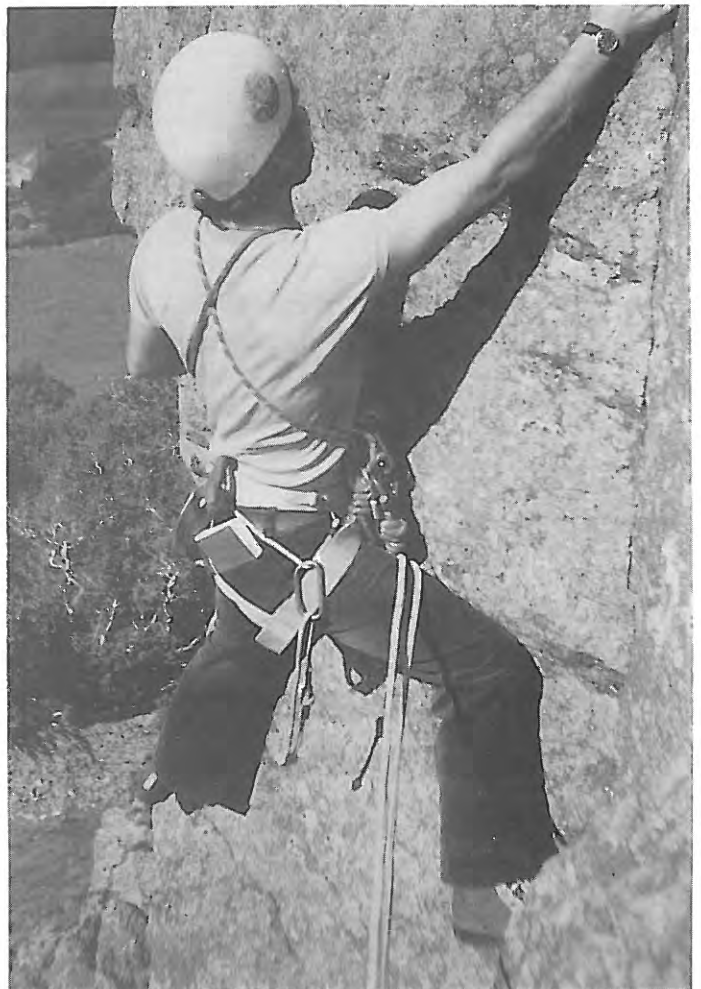


Above: Deborah Mabbett on the Yellow Slab, Tryfan
Photo: D.Earle

Below: Dave Sharples on Three Pebble Slab,
Froggatt. Photo: D.Earle



Below: Gary Standidge on Castle Rock of Triermain
Photo: D.Earle





Above: The lads on Lundy, (featuring "Popeye")
Photo: M.Dale

Left: Donald "The Duck" Nichol contemplates his next hour of contemplation. Photo: D.Earle

Bottom left: Gerry Senior climbing on Shepherds Crag
Photo: D.Earle

Bottom right: The Raft Race runs aground.
Alan Peel (top), Mick van Gulik, Simon Fenna and Sean "Physco" Smith. Photo: M.Dale



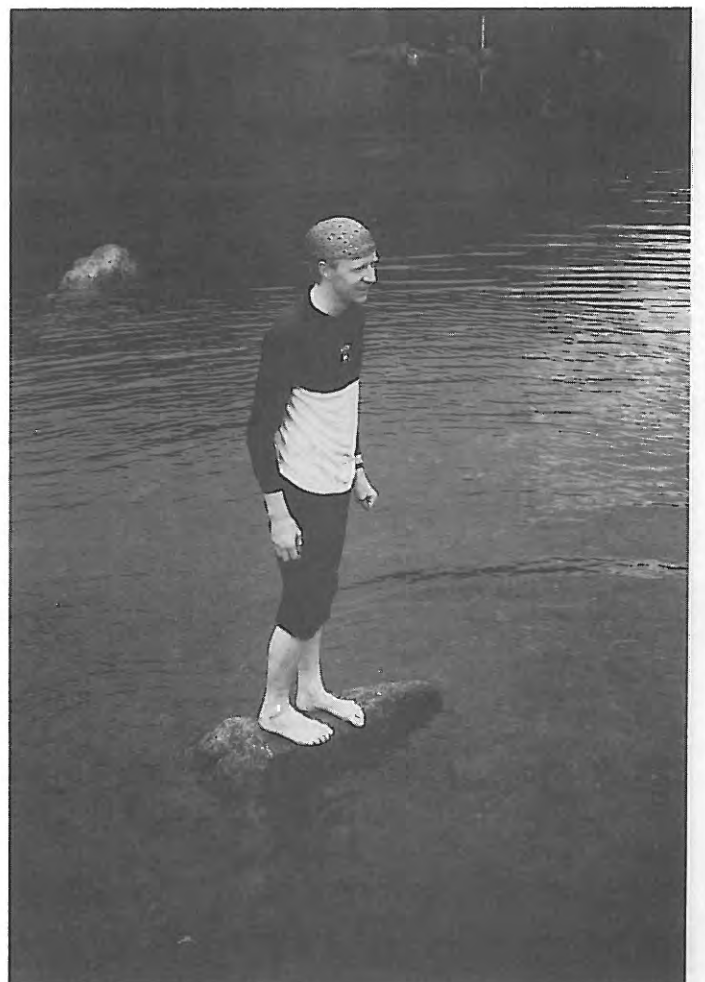


Above: Tom Carrol taking a break from ski touring on Broad Cairn. Photo: D.Earle



Above: Dave Cundy on Stanage Edge
Photo: D.Earle

Below: Use Wizzo for squeaky clean climbers. Andy Dunhill demonstrates. Before - photo D.Earle, After - photo Kevin Stephens





Above: The trilogy of Dale (top), Dunhill, and Clarke, at Little Langdale. Photo: courtesy of M.Dale

Left: Lord Edward's Eleven (+3) outside the Lodge at Cluanie Photo: courtesy of C.Iken

Below: John Tattersall demonstrates the latest in survival suits. Do you want to live that much?
Photo: S. Halton

Below: The Editor tries out his new bunny suit
Photo: J.Wiseman



Right: The Hagshu team outside Little Langdale. Mark Jackson (left), Simon Fenna, Andy Dunhill, Alar Peel, Stuart Gasgoyne, and Roger Brookes.
Photo: M.Dale

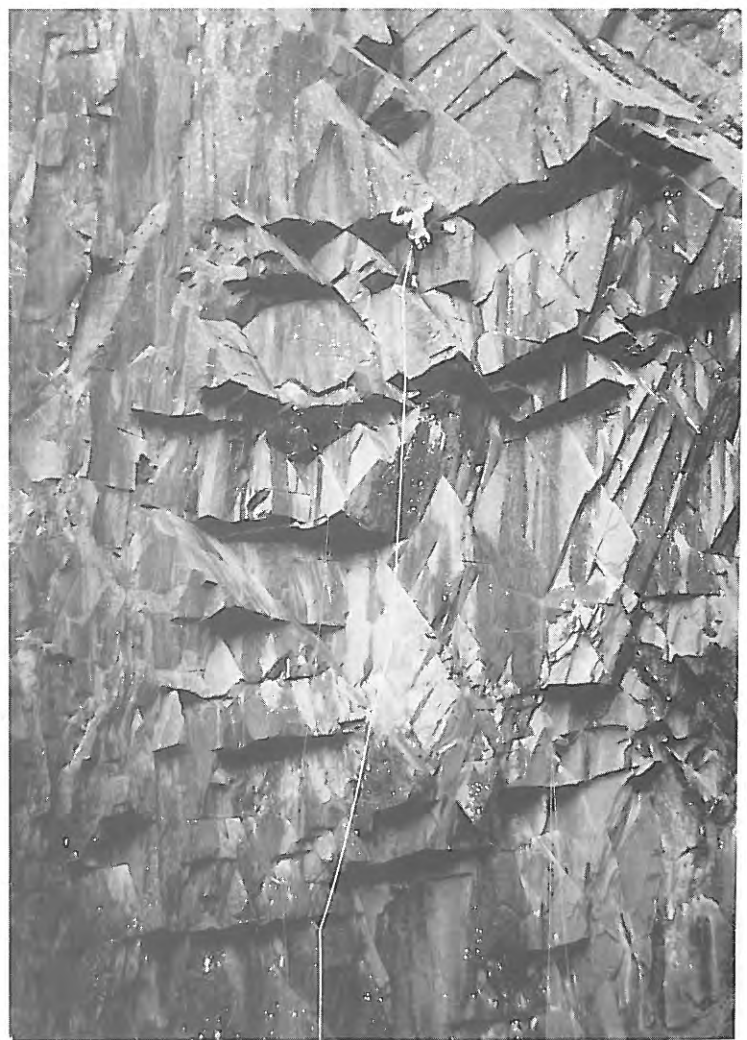


Centre right: The Fylde Mountaineering Club's answer to Thatcherism, demonstrated by John Wiseman (left), Kevin Stephens, John Cushnie and Roger Brookes.
Photo: M.Dale



Below left: Working party at Little Langdale. Glen Shirley and Phil Morris on the ladders.
Photo: M.Dale

Below right: The state of the art - Martin Dale on slate
Photo: K.Stephens



EASTER IN SCOTLAND

THE weather, like the actual date of Easter, can be very variable at this time of year. A late Easter has every chance of being perfect with blue skies, sunshine, reasonably cool temperatures and snow on the tops. The daylight lingers late at this time of year and gives every possibility of some very memorable days out on the magnificent peaks and ridges of the area. The early Easters can unfortunately be blessed with more varied weather. Showers race up and down the lochs pursued by rainbows. Hills appear and disappear as bursts of hail sweep over the tops and the sea flashes with silver as the sun dances over its surface. If the wind and rain do preclude a visit to the high tops Scotland offers many more opportunities for enjoyment as you look out over mercurial sounds, silver-shot lochs and glowering peaks. Read on. – *Editor*.

THE LAID BACK APPROACH TO MOUNTAINEERING

CONFESSIONS OF A FAILED MUNRO BAGGER AND HOW TO DO NOTHING WITHOUT REALLY TRYING

AS A serious hill climbing expedition, its validity was, I suppose, always in doubt. It wilted before the wind, creaked from lack of commitment and finally floundered completely and deliciously in coq au vin and cote de Rhone. But more of such things later; first the beginning.

A sudden and unexpected change of plan gave me an empty Easter programme and a phone call to the Legendary Tartan Cockney seemed in order. Could he, I enquired, find me a secluded spot somewhere on the West Coast of Scotland where I might recline in quiet contemplation with the sea before me, the hills at my back and perchance even the odd Munro that might be ascended. He was, of course, more than equal to the task.

On Friday we journeyed north and a lunch stop at Callander gave the first hint that all was not well. The Editor lost two games to one at pool and the Secretary regaled him with misty-eyed memories of a poor but happy Millwall childhood when the family would gather round the Joe Davis Junior Snooker Table in order to keep warm. They set fire to it. That evening, however, things suddenly began to look brighter.

With the intention of pitching somewhere on the coast near Mallaig we stopped at Arisaig for tea and discovered . . . "Jacque's Place".

Jacque's Place is difficult to describe, mostly I suppose because it defies description.

A small cafe sitting neatly on a corner where the glen finishes and the ocean begins it has a menu, English and French, Eat In or Take Away that could put the Ritz to shame. Coquille St. Jacques, Meringue Chantilly, Rabbit Chasseur, St. Jacques Provencal, Venison in Port, Petit Danois, Mille Feuilles; what's Mille Feuilles? What's any of it?

The Editor was struggling to come to terms with all this, or rather failing to come to terms with all this when he was further staggered by the waitress who informed him that he was only looking at the Day Menu and promptly presented him with the Night Menu which was like the aforementioned only more so. This isn't the kind of thing you expect in Arisaig dammit; what's hapening to the Highlands? Nevertheless, we promised ourselves a feed later in the holiday.

We pitched further up the coast in bright evening sunshine, though dark cloud hugged the tops inland and a strong wind blew straight from the Arctic. A state of affairs which persisted throughout that Easter weekend and provided more than sufficient excuse for the ensuing lack of activity. Munro summit cairns I must confess went happily unfrequented. Not that we attained a state of total idleness, there were I remember, a couple of walks, one coastal and one by Loch Morar when we must have covered at least seven miles, though this latter was only achieved after some hard driving by the secretary who had the time of his life crossing off eiders, mergansers, goosanders, black guillemots, divers and herons in his little birdspotter's book.

As if to compound our good fortune in the evenings we found a series of very acceptable bars. One in Mallaig featured the local Police Sergeant who played a squeezebox and even sang the odd Alan Bell ditty.

Without doubt, however, the high spot was the night we dined at Jacques. The Editor chose the Coq au Vin whilst the Secretary opted for Venison in Port, washed down by a bottle of Côte de Rhône. We watched the sun set beyond Tir Nan Og. Somewhere men were returning after a day on the hill; somewhere men were welcome to it – the laid back approach was triumphant.

Only on the last morning did the wind drop. We stood on a white beach and gazed to a far horizon where Rhum and Eigg floated mysteriously on a pale blue sea. The sun warmed our shoulders; we were unanimous, it was a good trip.

On the way home I vaguely remember a suggestion that we might knock off Ben Lomond, presumably to give the whole thing some sort of credibility. The idea was, of course, swiftly vetoed and instead we enjoyed a leisurely sunlit drive through Moidart, Sunart and Ardgour.

Readers of this little piece should not assume that the Editor no longer takes any interest in mountains; indeed they still occupy a large part of his thoughts. But now ridges bear a striking resemblance to long banana splits, glaciers are made of Ice Roch Brune and every peak is topped by a Meringue Chantilly . . . just the way it should be.

EDDIE CRAIG

THE DREAM

AS A serious piece of heaven on earth the Western seaboard of Scotland can have few peers. An exquisite necklace of bejewelled mountains shot through with a filigree of sinuous lochs each displaying the subtlety of shades of molten precious metals with the changing light. All in perfect scale and harmony. Jewels beyond price.

Not all jewels are born equal. Some shine with an unsurpassed brilliance and the Cullinard of the west coast must surely be the Loch of Heaven, Loch Hourn, its Barrisdale bay and the peak, corries and ridges of Larven, spelt Ladhar Bheinn, rising from its southern shore. Added charisma is given by its isolation and the most rewarding approach by far is the 6–7-mile walk along the shore from Kinlochhourn and the ascent by the north-east ridge arching like an arrow to the proud summit. This perfect mountain experience can be rounded off by an overnight camp on the shores of Barrisdale bay.

Such a jewel is not to be wasted in dull or mediocre light but saved to be enjoyed in the most stunningly clear northern light that Scotland is able to produce. Larven had been reserved for the perfect day, a three dimensional dream. Would the reality, after a long wait, fail to live up to expectations?

It was Easter. We were trapped in a time warp on the A74, the endless action replay of the journey north. Our dream machine at the prescribed 70 mph.

Familiar Glencoe was reached and pints sipped in that superlative of Scottish Inns, the Kingshouse. In view of the poor weather forecast the journey north was terminated by an overnight camp in Glen Etive.

Slowly the daylight penetrated my subconscious. That warm, glowing, almost back to the womb sort of light that makes orange tents such a splendid retreat from life's storms, both elemental and spiritual. And there was no sun. My shift lagged body could lie here in clear conscience recharging itself.

Raff broke the news gently. We were camped in the morning shadow of the Buachaille. Beyond, the world was hot, very very clear, and with not a cloud in the deep blue dome of the sky. There was no wind. All around us the Etive giants stood naked. Every crag, furrow, corrie and ridge bared to our gaze, etched by the morning sun and enlivened by the sparkling clarity of the air. It was the perfect day.

Almost in a frenzy the tent was struck and we set off to Fort William, a late breakfast and some last-minute shopping. Beyond Invergarry we turned off the Skye road, past the daunting 'No through road after 22 miles' sign and we had a commitment to Knoydart, that land of superlatives.

The scenery of Glen Garry, down which we now drove, is pleasant rather than spectacular. The few remaining mature scots pines give the lie to what once was. With the trees destroyed, the rivers and natural lakes dammed, and the latest intrusion – a power line, which mercifully manages to avoid Kinlochhourn, though only just, man has little to be proud of here. His inhumanity to man seems rivalled only by his inhumanity to nature.

Beyond Loch Quoich the road descends a steep and narrow ravine of tumbled boulders, birch and rowan, to the flats of Kinlochhourn. ARCADIA had been reached. Before us the glassy, deep greeny blue waters of the loch lay quite still, steeply enclosed on both sides by craggy tree girt hillsides tumbling into the water; hillsides alive with the fresh translucent greens of spring. A scene outstanding in its simplicity and its beauty. Fiord like in its quality. There is no finer place in Scotland.

Quickly we sorted out enough gear for one overnight camp and shouldering our burdens, we clanked along the stone causeway that had been built out into the loch round the initial rocky bluffs that dropped so steeply into the deep placid waters. The smell of the sea permeated our lungs and the sounds of the birds echoed from the fiord-like slopes. The gently mobile seaweed added colour and movement to the shore.

The path wound on and we indignantly discovered that it climbed over rather than round several rocky headlands. Magnificent remnants of the Caledonian forest framed stunning views both up and down the loch. Superb mountains crowded round the head, each trying to shoulder out its neighbour while in front of us the north-east corrie of Larven together with its attendant ridge arcing to the summit grew in stature. The normally dark and brooding cliffs were benign in the afternoon sun and the ridge inviting.

The quality of light on the loch was bewitching and its flat mirror-like surface reflected the glorious scene to perfection. It seemed like some vast stained glass window echoing the heavens with a subtlety and translucence that man could never hope to emulate. No mullions or transoms needed here for support; the whole scene shone with an unimpeded brilliance.

The magic roller coaster ride ended at Barrisdale bay, the path dropping down to the track between the Big House and the pier. The best camp site had a 'no camping' sign, incongruous in its isolation. It looked, and we chose to believe, it had been washed up from the sea, and pitched the tent accordingly. The preceding collar work demanded a brew but we were surprised to find in this, the wettest place in the U.K., the streams were practically dry.

It was half past four on a superb afternoon. Larven still beckoned us across the bay, its corrie reflected in the still, tranquil waters of Loch Hourn. Weather like this in these parts was almost unique. It couldn't last and the prize was there for the taking. A night out on the hill would be exhilarating at best, uncomfortable at worst, as the next Atlantic front jostled its uncompromising way down the loch, shrouding the hills in its damp veil. We set off.

As we walked past the garden of Barrisdale House the afternoon sun shone through the daffodils with magnificent brilliance, creating a sea of shimmering colour contrasting all the more with the sombre hillsides. Time is indeed relative. With those flowers alone we had stepped back two months compared to home. The silence of the house and grounds and of the ruined cottages and lazy beds were deafening. Here no children laughed and played, no crofters tilled the land. They had long since been evicted from that which they had loved and had wrest from uncompromising nature. We trod carefully, wary of their ghosts and treasured memories.

We passed through a large herd of deer, part of the new regime, skirted the bay, located the stalkers' track and entered Coire Dhorraicill. The dream involved traversing the N-E ridge, high above the furnace-like corrie. Curse the dream. A lone pine, presumably especially planted for the purpose, gave a lovely foreground for Ben Sgritheall that looked so well across the deep blue mouth of Loch Hourn and a welcome excuse for a photographic stop. The grind to the ridge seemed interminable, but gradually the view opened out. Previously invisible peaks appeared and finally we were there.

We revelled in every convolution of this airy coxcomb and of the stupendous views. Beneath us in the corrie schistose cliffs lay savagely delineated by the westering sun, their mural precipices bent and buckled by their journey through time. Across the Minch Skye, Rhum and Eigg rode at anchor like mediaeval galleons. Such treasured lands.

It was very late in the evening when the ridge led us to the summit. It was still hot and there was no wind. We lay the map on the ground by the cairn and began the enviable joy of identifying all that we surveyed. Many well-loved friends were there. The Torridon peaks, the Kintail ridges, the Ben; as well as myriad lesser known peaks. The astounding peaks around the head of Loch Nevis, Sgurr Na Ciche and its satellites particularly caught the eye and brought back memories. For nearly an hour we let our eyes feast on this kaleidoscope of shape and colour from our eyrie, poised as Rebuffat so aptly puts it, between heaven and earth. Sinuous sea loch and mountain. Mercurial minch and island. Each and every part a joy to our hearts.

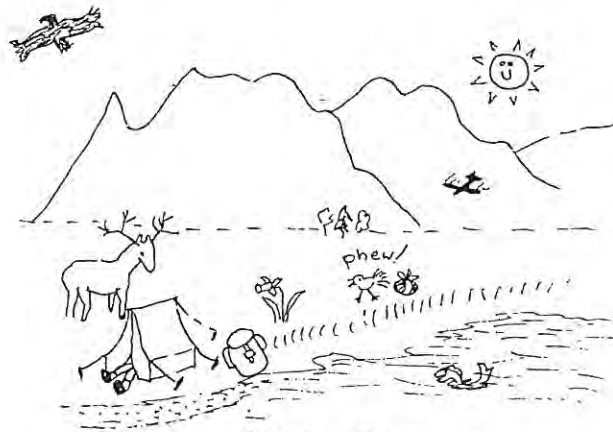
Night was already advancing out of the valleys to meet us and we reluctantly set off south-east along the summit ridge. We turned the crags of Aonach Sgoilte on the Mam Barrisdale side, no heroics in the gloom for us, and made our way in the dark down the slopes of Stob Na Muircraidh. The track down past Barrisdale House was located and followed back to the tent, tired but with feelings of excitement, exhilaration and supreme contentment that only a first-class day out on the hill can give.

We were still sat by the tent in the silence of the night when the moon rose. Not the harsh, cruel moon of winter but a huge dun-coloured orb, flooding the earth with a soft warm gentle light, the shrill piping of the oystercatchers in contrast, welcoming this false dawn. Mountains and loch emerged from the cloak of darkness and crowded round us, steeper now than they were. The shimmering incandescence of the moonlight on the water led the heart and mind to Skye. Gradually even the most educationally sub-normal of the oystercatchers recognised this imposter for what it was and silence again pervaded everywhere.

The following day dawned just as fine. We elected to 'have a look' as they say at the other two Murros in the area, and the late afternoon and evening was spent lazing about and exploring the foreshore. A boat by the pier provided magnificent photographic material. Foodless, we decided we could not forsake this place and it was not until the following late morning that we made our leisurely way back to Kinlochhourn, the car and the food box, on which we fell ravenously.

The afternoon was spent exploring the northern shore of Loch Hourn and its approaches which gave us equally fine views, that from the little memorial high up, a short distance along the loch being exceptional.

D. A. EARLE



Easter Time at Barriesdale

THE ALTERNATIVE EASTER

CLIMBING AND DRINKING IN THE SOUTH-WEST

AS ROCK climbing became more and more divorced from mountaineering the search was on for warm dry rock. It had to be approached by a downhill walk, be surrounded by pubs which never close, selling good beer, and be blessed by the finest climate that the United Kingdom can provide.

It was found in Devon and Cornwall. True, it can still be cold and windy in late March but the weather there is nothing compared to the blizzards sweeping the North which can set in for days if not weeks, and any indifference soon blows over. The weather can change dramatically for the better when the sun pops out. Craggs dry and warm up quickly and a holiday atmosphere is soon restored. At other times it can be sub-tropical.

It is easy to see why these meets are so popular with the lads, what with the superb rock, comparatively good weather and the freely flowing beer. Phil's article captures the almost festival atmosphere of the Cornwall experience and then Martin puts the boot in with some heavy grimping experiences to remind us once more of the wealth of good rock to be had at the end of the M5. — *Editor.*

IN SEARCH OF H.S.D.

EASTER IN CORNWALL. "HOLIDAY STYLE DRAMAS" WHICH NEARED REALITY

AFTER a 'hastily swallowed dinner' the 'C' team (Phil and Mike) left Preston with Martin and 'having safely driven' to Bristol, got lost looking for the Royal Oak only to find it was inexplicably called the Wellington. The Broughton team welcomed us with open throats so we 'had several drinks' in the aforementioned pub.

Phil, Dave and Joe landed later 'having suffered dishwater' in Cheltenham. Thursday saw us at the Dewerstone where climbing was done on the first of many 'hot sunny days'. The nature of the climbing resulted in some 'horribly scarred digits' from inexpert jamming.

A diversion to sample 'Helston's special drink' at the Blue Anchor and a mad rush to St. Just in time for 'high speed death' at the Star. Once established at St. Just, the routes, pubs and drinkers fell thick and fast. The climbing and weather were superb but much more interesting were the 'combat and survival' techniques involved in camping with the Fylde lads. Our neighbours were more than a little worried by Simon 'waggy tail' Fenna's occasional 'nam flash backs' and his unusual interpretation of the F.T. Index.

The Cornish pubs have a nasty habit of locking the doors bang on closing time with the customers still inside. Favourite for such antics was the Miners Arms with a jovial landlord and 24-hour pastie service.

Apart from the spectacle of a nude poseur swimming among a flock of seals (which are, it must be stressed, strictly carnivorous) there was a sporting attempt at the first 'horizontal sky dive'. This entailed leaping from the back of a Renault 4 at over 30 mph. Success was marred by the lad's subsequent arrest at the Cornish border under suspicion of smuggling the tarmac embedded in his hands!

Despite the heat, we climbed every day on granite (Bosigran, Chair Ladder, Carn Les Boel, Zaron Kellys, Pordenock Point, Carn Barra) and greenstone (Tater du and Carn Gloose).

Towards the end of the week, the teams tired of the same pubs and moved up the coast to Hartland, pausing to climb either on Carn Crowla or Pentire Head. Friday morning was spent at Hartland Quay, lunchtime gorging on cream teas, afternoon on an exciting but abortive attempt to find Exmansworthy and evening hunting the Dale after he conned us into taking our cars down a tank testing track. The day was completed at 1.30 a.m. with a multiple rendition of the 'Hartland Stagger Dance' back to the tents, certain ladies having enjoyed an eight-hour session in the Anchor.

A weekend at Baggy Point in sunshine on slabs. A delight of routes ascended from the merest severes to the azo dyes (E110-121) of the climbing world. To mention route names would be nothing but an ego trip for those involved, so here goes . . . (At this point the writer's rapidly swelling head finally exploded, the transcript having been found under a heap of gore in his living room. H.S.D. actually stands for Hicks (very apt) Special Draught.

PHIL MORRIS

CORNWALL (AND DEVON) '83

THE last-minute arrangements and big route talk typified the pre-Easter Thatched House session as, under a glaze of Bodingtons, big cigars were being smoked.

The meet leader had come up with the inevitable last-minute transport saviour yet again. Friday saw us speeding down the M5 towards Bristol with only one thing in mind — BEER! And the burning question was whether we were going to get any. As usual Bristol's hidden jewel provided it. 11 p.m., just as most pubs are closing, we hit the Bristol Bridge Inn for the warm-up night. Warm? It was boiling! Pints of ale such as Marstons, Pedigree, Wadworths 6X were consumed against a backcloth of steamin' rhythm 'n' blues from a local band. A doss at Andy Dunhill's guest house for the night sealed the occasion.

The first day's venue was to be Haytor. Stuck on top of Dartmoor and exposed to everything God can throw at it, is this excellent protrusion. The meet leader wanted a brew but the lads wanted rock, and rock they got. Very cold rock indeed! Andy Dunhill retreated off the classic Aviation (E1 5b5b) with very numb hands, whilst the other lads, led by Mark Broughton, managed Raven Gully (sev) before also becoming bereft of feeling in the extremities. Martin Dale showed the way with rapid solo ascents of Raven Gully and Vixen and Ann (HVS) keeping warm in the process. The lads were soon engrossed in the many boulder problems and easier routes. So were the tourists, with which the area abounds. The sun came out and everyone was happy, even the meet leader

who went for a brew. That evening the team found the Blue Anchor in Helston and only the lack of pasties saved them from getting spingoed (again). Instead they settled for an overdose of H.S.D. in the Star at St. Just, where the whole team assembled.

The next day saw a very keen bunch follow Mr. Dunhill in search of Zennor Cliff. After initial lethargy and scepticism, the sun came out and the team got into action. Most people completed the 1923 route (V.Diff), the fine Royal Forester (VS) and Sheep Crook, Black Dog (VS) on the upper crag, whilst Andy Dunhill, Mick Tolley and Joe Giblin (who?) chose to plumb the depths of the adjacent Zawn. Several routes were done emerging from the depths, worthwhile if only for the trundling which was in abundance. In fact it's a wonder there's any crag left! Everyone ended up doing the excellent and aptly named 'Going to the Sun' (VS) which started with a brilliant traverse pitch into the deep Zawn, just above the high water mark before going for the sun in two good pitches. Phil Caley and Paul Reid meanwhile climbed an excellent corner pitch from the sea-washed platform by the name of Charlie Farley (VS). Whilst all this was going on Dave Sharples and Tony Welsh, both accompanied by their respective wives and wives to be, had been ticking off two classics of Bosigran, Suicide and Bow Walls (E1 and E2). Dave commented that they were OK whilst Tony had an entirely different opinion.

On the Monday the highlight of the trip to a very crowded Chair Ladder was probably spotting John Sealey sporting a very phallic camera. Although routes like Detergent Wall (HVS), South Face Direct (VS) and Red Wall (H Sev) were done, the place was like Blackpool Prom on a bank holiday. John Hargreaves and Rick Reeves showed up and bagged Flannel Avenue (Sev). Mick Tolley and Joe sneaked off to Pordenack Point, an excellent little crag which provides good, if short, crowdless routes. After a night in the First and Last and the Star, Pordenack Point received more attention. Turning back from Lands End without paying the £1.50 per head, we parked and proceeded on foot, hoping for some aggravation. We didn't get any and carried on, just managing to drag Phil past the cafe. The brilliant and continuously interesting Not Much (VS) proved most popular but the aptly named Friends gave stiff competition with good friend protection. The crack housed another kind of friend, the Kamikaze Shrimp, who threw themselves at you every time you stuck your hand in the crack. Quite unnerving at first acquaintance. Alan Peel lived up to his name on the fine-looking Stoneboom (E1). Andy Blaylock led the first pitch, a long horizontal hand traverse with a runner at the start and one at the end. Alan came a cropper about halfway across and went for his 'peel' of the week. The lads were unlucky on the technical groove above as the ever threatening clouds dumped their load on the crag, forcing them to abandon their attempt. Phil got his brew, Tom Knowles and Andy Dunhill returned from their coastal walk and everyone retired to the pub.

Wednesday saw rain in abundance so it was shopping in Penzance interspersed with plenty of brews, beers and games of pool. Quite a lot of the team set off home. The following day saw a rapid packing up job as a very heavy hail bout struck. A wet Bosigran prompted a move up the coast to Devon and Hartland Point. The sun came out and a quick look at Screda Point, Hartland Quay, fuelled the enthusiasm for the following day. Dave Sharples wasn't impressed however and left to do some sightseeing. The enthusiasm was dampened however as the day dawned showery. The first hour was spent sat in a cave at Screda watching the rain wet the crag. Phil fancied a brew but a good plan was formulated and the 'A' team went for Wreckers Slab (VS), a classic sea cliff mountaineering route. The 'B' team tackled the horrendous descent and beat the tide to the excellent Gull Rock. Both crags were in the vicinity of Morwenstowe. After completing Wreckers, the 'A' team met up with the 'Gull Rockers' who'd bagged a couple of good VS's, and headed back to Screda Point to finish the day off in fine style. A line of sharks' teeth jut out into the sea, each one providing routes of varying difficulty. Alan, Steve MacDonald, Mark, Paul and Andy all ascended the Rohn (VS) which Martin had soloed the night before, on the farthest shark's tooth. On the main cliff, which is a long blank sheet of slab about 90ft high, Alan and Phil climbed L'Imbecile (VS) up the right hand edge whilst Martin, Paul and Andy did the Tourist Trap (E2) climbing directly up the blank slab to a peg, then joining L'Imbecile by a very delicate traverse which provided the crux. Both these routes belayed on hugh grass mushrooms which were so solid people even abseiled off them. After a memorable sunset, the next move was no problem. Sporting suntans, the whole team assembled in the excellent Anchor Inn to swill down lots of Ushers.

The 'after hour' activities brought the pub into the top ten chart easily. A disco raged in the back room 'til 1 a.m. and what's more, so did the beer. The locals' tribal dance was a bit wild and resembled a fight more than anything but everything stayed within the realms of sanity and we left with the news that there would be another 'bash' the night after. The following day was spent at Foxhole Slabs where just about everybody enjoyed a sunbathe on a slab which just wasn't wide or high enough. Mozambique (VS) up the left hand of two cracks, gave the sort of climbing that you wish would go on for ever and ever and not just 90ft. A boulder problem start led to a hard pull into a perfect finger crack up the glistening white slab. Good runners, too; sheer pleasure! The right hand crack proved a different kettle of fish though. Easy climbing led to an overlap with a knife-thin crack running upwards to a slightly wider fingertips job. The HVS 5b grade seemed a joke as an absolutely wild series of pulls on nothing brought the half decent upper crack into play. After everyone had waltzed up Mozambique with comparative ease, Angola proved a show stopper as after Martin's lead, only Mark managed to follow cleanly. Alan and Andy also did the route, losing finger ends in the process. Martin, Paul and Steve climbed a new route up the left arête, involving some airy laybacking above your runners, Zimbabwe (VS). After climbing the scary White Messiah (HVS) on the upper slab, Martin and Alan decided to try the very thin, almost not there crack between Mozambique and Angola. Due to the shortage of good pro they settled for a top roped ascent. After several falls Martin succeeded, to be followed more successfully by Paul and then by Alan. Any takers? Another night in the Anchor proved essential. Bar and disco extension 'til midnight this time - Lundy trippers think on. The following day was spent at Dyers Lookout under the shadow of the mighty Earth Rim Roarer II. One wonders how long it will be before Pat Littlejohn will have to come back and climb the third version. With the sharks' tooth of Blisterin Barnacle tantalisingly out of reach in the sea, two diagonal crack lines on the landward slab were ascended, the top one by Martin and Mark, Spring Surprise (HVS) and the bottom one, A Winter's Tale (VS) incorporating a marvellous swinging peel by Alan, Steve and Paul. A walk to look at and suss out the other crags on the coast finished off the day.

The end of an excellent meet was spent as it began, at Andy Dunhill's 'restaurant' in Bristol, where the whole team enjoyed an excellent curry. The day after proved too wet for the proposed visit to the Avon Gorge so we headed home up the M6. Full marks to Steve MacDonald, who hitched all the way from Blackpool to Lands End; there's keenness for you. Also, cheers for the doss and the curry, Andy.

MARTIN DALE

CLUANIE LODGE

AN EXCITED Barrie Crook told with great enthusiasm of his discovery of a shooting lodge purporting to sleep 15 which was available to let. Situated at the head of Glen Shiel it encompassed a superb quarter of Scotland. Nothing for the rock climbers nearer than Torridon (that's another tale) but hundreds of miles of superb ridges all around. It was quickly snapped up on behalf of the Club. Several excellent articles have been written about the Cluanie meets as all the participants are very venerable and very literate. I have chosen Barrie's account of the first meet partly for historic reasons and because it puts the building in perspective. Then John Parker enters the fray with a description of an excellent week spent in fine weather.

Every holiday is rumoured to be the last Cluanie meet as it is being sold off, but by some miracle of Highland organisation and hospitality so far it has always still been there the following year ready, willing and extremely able to play host to another week spent in good company on the Western Seaboard. The story in 1989 was no different but we did sense that this time it might be for real, although we may yet be able to pull something out of the fire.

Eddie Craig has adopted Cluanie as his own personal meet and crusade. He slips easily into the mould of relaxed but debonair Highland Laird and blends with the Victorian gentility of the place. Giving the Wisemans a guided tour of the lodge, with glass of wine in hand, and all the manners and bearing of a country gentleman, he was immediately nicknamed Lord Edward of Cluanie by the children, and for me the name seems very appropriate. Join me now for a fortnight in the company of a Highland Gentleman and friends in a superb part of Scotland. – *Editor*.

CLUANIE LODGE – MAY 1982

WITH what must qualify as the booking coup of 1982 a dazed and disbelieving group of F.M.C. members found themselves occupying as good a doss as they are ever likely to come across.

Cluanie Lodge, an elegant reminder of a bygone era, sits proudly on a wooded promontory on the southern shore of Loch Cluanie and was our very agreeable home for a memorable week.

The first half of the week was spent exploring our pleasant surroundings – one double bedroom, four twin bedrooms, and five single bedrooms, two lounges, a dining-room, and last but not least three bathrooms. There were two fires, one for cooking and one for providing everyone with a constant stream of hot bath water. Most of the furniture and ornaments were collectors' items; if we had pinched a few I'm sure we could have financed the proposed extension at Stair.

Despite these magnificent surroundings and the cool showery weather we were occasionally shamed into doing something. Though exactly what you did depended largely on which 'team' you joined. Forming the vanguard were the 'A' team, Barbara, Pam, Martin and Raff representing the uptight 'what time did you start, what time did you finish and how much did you do?' approach to mountaineering. On the other hand Eddie Craig ably assisted by Dave Earle formed a very laid back 'Z minus' team which operated on the principle that the hills will still be there tomorrow and believing that they should be savoured, spent a casual two days on each Munro. The rest of us slotted in, somewhere between these two extremes and we all enjoyed ourselves immensely.

The first day on the South Kintail Ridge was enough to kill most people off. From the Lodge we ascended Creag a Mhaim and then traversed west across a further five Munros with views of ridges galore to the north and south. There was still a lot of snow in the gullies (on May 23rd) and the ridge was corniced. Having reached Sgurr Beag in descending cloud there was a rebellion and nobody could be persuaded to undertake Creag nam Damh, the seventh Munro. We descended northwards and finished off wading streams before we attained the road. Kath had to be dissuaded from doing a suicidal hand traverse across a gorge, perhaps she is thinking of retaining 'the mug'. Brian, one of the gentlemen of our party, distinguished himself by successfully crossing a stream only to fall in on returning to rescue Liz. The route was generally considered a rather hard start to the holiday; some never recovered.

There were two expeditions to Garbh Leac and Mullach Froach Choire, two Munros with a knife-edged connecting ridge. Peter and Pam pioneered it, and Dave Earle, George, Christine and myself did it the day after. We set off in pouring rain and were machine gunned with hailstones on the first summit. Eventually we were rewarded by the weather improving and a panorama of mountains including the unmistakable Ben, whilst far below we could see upper Glen Affric, one of Scotland's most beautiful. We returned in the tranquillity of a western evening and we witnessed the West of Scotland at its sublime but ephemeral best.

The Saddle Group was considered a worthwhile day. Christine, Liz and Dave Greenhalgh ascended Sgurr na Creige (the easy ascent) with difficulty, whilst the 'A team' plus Gerry, George, Eddie, Dave Earle, Brian and myself went for the Forcan ridge. Poucher's account exaggerated the difficulties, which are about equal to Striding Edge. We all descended by Sgurr Leac nan Each and walked down the lovely glen into Shiel Bridge where George and myself drank five pints of real ale at 70p per pint. there was no climbing across the floor to reach the loo on this occasion. We were bundled into a car and driven up the glen to the sound of Sky at full volume. [Plus Dave E. and Eddie, I suspect. – *Ed.*]

Incidentally, Poucher was observed on two occasions in Invershiel. He is now a 'wizened old git' still sporting red socks and has traded in the classic Jaguar 2.4 for a red BMW 320 which never does more than 20 mph.

The Five Sisters of Kintail was tackled from Loch Cluanie by the A team who did it in appalling conditions and from halfway down the glen by the rest of us who failed to do it. The ascent to the ridge from the gap between the trees must be the most demoralising steep slope in Scotland – 3,200ft at an average of 45°. Having attained the ridge and walked along to Sgurr nan Spainteach there was another rebellion in the appalling rain and eventually all retreated to Kintail Lodge, just as the weather improved. Not to be beaten Eddie, George, Liz – who did really splendidly on this holiday, and myself, repeated and completed the walk on the last day, whilst the others drove through Glenelg to Arnisdale on Loch Hour and explored remote Glen Arnisdale. Five golden eagles were seen in one day, and Pat excelled by showing the geological features to the less educated.

Most of us hope to return. Loch Hour and Ladhar Bheinn are awaiting to be explored, whilst the Cioch Nose at Applecross awaits a clear day and clear route description. Even Sligachan is not too far away. It will be nice to sit in the morning room again and watch the mist drift across the hills or amble round the grounds of the house and watch the birds and the visiting herd of deer. The west, even in a wet week, has a unique quality which once experienced beckons the wanderer to everlastingly return.

BARRIE CROOK

CLUANIE MEET REPORT

"IF YOU attend one F.M.C. Meet, make sure it's the Cluanie one", was Derrick Smith's advice during the Festive Season. Thanks to the 'hut' and the weather he was probably right. In the end, supervision of offsprings' involvement with 'A' and 'O' Levels precluded attendance by both our halves so Jenny remained at home and I enjoyed the privilege of being chauffeured by the Photographer to the Highlands, Dave Earle.

On the way our first bag was a sunny, warm, popular Ben Lomond; but all the tourists disappeared on our pathless descent over Ptarmigan. Then yards of film were exposed during the long summer evening's journey north.

Next morning I was able to appreciate the promised qualities of the 'hut'. Barrie Crook deserves a Leather Medal (at least) for discovering this palatial base amidst the best the West Highlands could offer. The shooting lodge was rented from a peer of the realm who can be counted amongst the club's benefactors in charging what amounted to £2.00 per diem per person – incredible value for stately living. Lots of space – except in the kitchen where things became exciting if everyone began catering together. As Sunday dawned cloudlessly a team comprising the Fell Runner, the Photographer and myself began an audacious attempt on the Sgurr na Ciche-Sgurr an Fhuarain ridge – a most remote line of Munros south of the Quoich Reservoir. Thanks to the extreme heat around midday, I almost expired with heat-stroke but as the sun went down I staggered to the further end of the range and rendezvoused with the others by omitting a couple of tops. The Fell Runner raced the remaining dozen miles out of Glen Kingie to relieve our back-up, the Meet Leader no less, who had spent his day on Gairich. He had only a further half hour to wait after closing time before the Photographer and I staggered across the Quoich Dam to the finish of a 24-mile 14-hour day. Meanwhile the Excise Man and his lady glided on Loch Cluanie by canoe while the Canoeer himself watched as he ambled over the tops just east of the Lodge. At supper time two Enthusiastic Hillmen had arrived via the densely populated summit of Gt. Brit – The Ben.

Monday – another hot, sunny one, though not as airless as the Sabbath. Quoich side saw another assault by the peak-baggers. The Enthusiasts enticed me to Gairich – a nice rest day of only 14 miles. The Meet Leader did Sgurr Mhor while the Fell Runner and the Photographer went over Sgurr Mhaoraich to enjoy an aerial view of Kinlochhourn. N.B. A feature of this area is the network of excellent stalking paths leading effortlessly to the high places. Meanwhile back at Loch Cluanie saw further water sport. The Exciseman had commissioned one P.H.R. to construct a skeg on his vessel. Total loss of this enterprise resulted in the Exciseman canoeing in circles for the remainder of his holiday.

Tuesday – another fine if hazier day was spent towards Torridonia from Glen Carron by mainly solo detachments involving the Meet Leader, the Fell Runner and I using one motor based at Achnashellach. The Photographer essayed a coastal walk between Letterfearn and Glen Elg. The Enthusiasts continued to be attracted by the Quoich side and bar at the Tomdoun where they celebrated their ascent of the twin Munros of Spidean Mialach and Gleouraich. In the afternoon it began to rain.

On Wednesday the weather had broken! Nevertheless our energetic be-tighted Fell Runner knocked off a hefty chunk of the Sisters ridge. The Enthusiasts conducted me on an easy 16-mile nature ramble to one of Prince Charlie's caves, but the Meet Leader and the Photographer probably got the best of the weather at Pretty Plockton.

The Exciseman and the Canoeer wandered round Loch Hourn to Barrisdale.

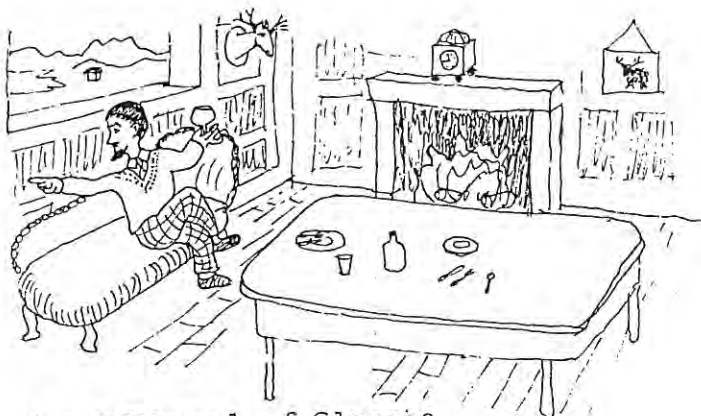
Thursday promised better things. So, as the Photographer combed another stretch of shore between Kyle and Plockton, the Enthusiasts climbed Ceathreamhain with myself in tow and the Fell Runner scurried amongst us picking off a few extra Munros while experiencing driving snow and incipient frostbite. The sailors repeated their Loch Hourn-Barrisdale outing but this time with the canoes.

Friday saw all the Munro-bagging fraternity returning to Achnashellach to mop up singly or in pairs the Munros they didn't manage to bag on the Tuesday.

On Saturday the end of term mood was further exacerbated by the low cloud and heavy rain of the early monsoons of a Highland summer. In summary, everyone had a great if busy week with lots of weather. The latest news on the 'hut' is that the Lodge and shooting rights are being sold to the Rothschilds and last year's occupation may well have been our last. Let's hope not!

Members present: Eddie Craig, Dave Earle, Pat and Brian Nelson, John Parker, Martin Pickup, Barbara, Jane and Gerry Senior, Derrick Smith and Tommy Turner.

JOHN PARKER



Lord Edward of Cluanie



bath-time, Cluanie Lodge

STACKS OF STACKS

A NAUTICAL TRIP WITH THE CLUB ORNITHOLOGIST

AS IF the climbing potential of the mainland of Scotland isn't daunting enough, all along the Western and Northern Coast savage and dramatic pinnacles of rock jut from the boiling ocean. When the higher crags are out of condition it is often possible to have an excellent days rock climbing on their verticalities with the gulls wheeling round your head, the ocean fretting and sucking at the base of the stack, and space everywhere.

So settle back in your armchair while Mick Tolley takes us on a unique trip up the West Coast seeking out the sensational sea stack experience. – *Editor*.

A BACK STAGGING TRIP!

ONE of the reasons I like going to the Thatched (a well-known hostelry in Poulton) on Wednesday evenings is that I never know quite what I expect to let myself in for. The normal run of things is a trip to the Lakes or Wales but on other occasions a greeting across the bar has been followed by "I've just bought a boat, are you coming to the Isle of Man this weekend?" which gave a whole new dimension to being gripped [I agree, and you cannot just ab. off a boat in a force 10 if you don't like what is going on – *Ed.*].

On this occasion John Hargreaves approached me with the idea of a few days in Scotland; those few days were extended to 10 and the following weekend saw us on our way, heading for Ullapool and all points north and west.

One of the good things about climbing with John is you always have a good time. Over the last seven or eight years that I have climbed with him I have never had a bad day; wet perhaps, but always enjoyable. Ten days with John in an area I had not really been to was a complete bonus to the summer climbing plans, and as far as objectives were concerned I wasn't bothered in the least as I knew John would have it all lined up.

This sense of euphoria lasted until about lunchtime on our first day out. We had travelled up to Kinlochbervie and walked over towards Sandwood Bay but veered off west towards Am Buachaille (approx. 200ft of sandstone sea stack). It was raining slightly but this was not mentioned as we had only come to rig up a line from the mainland to the foot of the stack. The channel is about 20ft wide and the guide book warns of a 'seaweed hazard'. The object was clear enough, as was the solution, to swim! John stripped off and pulled out of his sac a lifejacket. Adorned with this he plunged in and was soon on the other side where I threw a rope and we then transferred dry gear and equipment over. I then had to follow with an amused audience of puffins on the mainland cliff watching. Once across it seemed silly not to make a start on the climb itself. This we did and three pitches later of extremely steep, loose, badly protected and smelly rock, we were on top. The climbing though not technically hard (Scottish VS) is very intimidating with holds that break off in your hand with alarming regularity. This accounted for one of John's ropes having to be cut short after one rock fall. Also on these stacks live a great variety of sea birds who are excellent to watch but unfortunately do not take kindly to intruders! Most of the gulls if threatened just fly away and if you are too close to their offspring will fly close, shriek and eventually a bowel discharge will occur (yes, they shit on you from a great height).

Now all of this is acceptable and part of the game but the fulmar petrels spoil this. These birds who never seem to flap their wings produce a chick that seems to be about twice the size of the parents. It sits on the ledges, no nest at all, and the parent bird leaves it to defend itself. This it does by throwing up over everything that threatens it, and not just once but several times. They seem highly skilled and have a range of about 3ft to 4ft. When nearing a ledge containing a chick it is obvious by the state of the rock and the smell. To suddenly pop one's head above the ledge level is disastrous as a stream of foul-smelling regurgitated fish and bile is more than likely to catch you square between the eyes. This can be most offputting if one is also gripped. To get over this a series of decoys was arranged; a sling thrown near the chick from as far to one side as possible, a waving hand with head well below ledge level or best of the lot a detour! Having thrown up a couple of times the chick then needs time to recharge. During this period desperately quick mantleshelves are done on puke-covered ledges with frightened eyes keeping a close watch on the Fulmar chick. The stench from these birds contaminated our clothes for the rest of our holiday.

Having obtained the summit the next objective was to get down – simple on abseil, except everyting on the top was loose! After trundling several large blocks and still not finding anything solid we had to make do and tied off to about four pegs (mostly in place – just) and a few blocks and inched our way down to the base, where we had to strip off again and swim back, followed by a stroll along Sandwood Bay around the loch and back to the car. Another esoteric day out.

The main objective of the trip had been cracked, what next? Just south of Cape Wrath there are two stacks marked on the map. An investigation was called for. So the next day saw us at Cape Wrath (we met Dave Earle at the ferry) admiring steep cliffs. The two stacks were duly found and one, a mere step across a wet rock and we were on it and up it solo, easy. The other was vertical, banana-shaped, made of pink pegmatite, 120ft high, nowhere less than vertical, a very nasty swim away (not a long swim but too prone to wave surge) and to all signs UNCLIMBED. It had to be done!! We sat and looked and and discussed it; perhaps an abseil down the landward cliff and then throw something across onto the base, pull oneself across, climb the stack and then tyrolean back to the mainland from the summit. Plan A laid (there was no Plan B). That night we slept at Dave Earle's and borrowed a grappling hook!! (No Stack Bagger should be without one) and filled our sacs with all our hardware. The next day found us again opposite our foe with Dave along to take pictures. I set off down the abseil with the grappling hook tied on to a spare rope. At the end of the abseil about 6ft above the waves I hung on a clogger and frantically hurled the grappling hook across at the stack, hoping I would knock it down and we could go home. Eventually it caught and I pulled my way across, followed by lots of gear and John. The line chosen had looked hard but went quite easily at about MVS and on superb rock. The summit had no signs of any previous ascent. GREAT!! Whilst I was admiring the view and sunbathing, John had pulled in the abseil rope so it stretched the 80ft from us to the mainland and said, "Right, it was your idea, across you go". About 15 minutes later and with a great deal of psyching up I eased my weight onto the rope and started pulling myself out over the drop. Now normal mountain exposure I can just about cope with, but this all-round space and insecurity got to me. It took me four or five quick looks before I could look straight down and I was definitely not happy. John followed with a great deal of whooping and with great aplomb; it did not seem to bother him one bit.

So the score so far was S.B.C. 3, Sea Stacks 0.

The weather was now quite good so the next day was spent doing a route on Creag Dionard, a seven mile walk in, a 900ft route and a seven mile walk out. We got back down just in time for a pint.

The next day was a rest day so we had a trip to Handa Island and gaped at 400ft of sandstone sea cliffs and the Great Stack of Handa. You need a boat to get at this one, so it will have to wait.

Another easy day followed, after a monster booze-up in Ullapool, with a HVS on Rhue Point (some rest day!).

The following day was again wet so off to Stoer Point to look at the Old Man of Stoer. John had already done this, but said he would like to do it again. (He didn't tell me he had his eye on a new line). As on Am Buachaille there was a sea channel but after our grappling success we tried again, this time tying John's hammer onto a rope and throwing it over. On the third go it caught, we pulled it tight and tied it off, then a quick trip across clipped onto the rope. We were both soon across and starting up. A fairly hard traverse got us onto a platform, followed by beautiful slab climbing and an off width crack to reach a large ledge at about half height. Above were the signs of Fulmar chicks, so up, detour, traverse with chick puking on legs and off onto the very steep backward face. Here the ordinary route comes from below and traverses right across the face to reach an easy ramp but John belayed part way across on a ledge (a diving board). He then went straight up an overhanging crack, up a steep open corner and thence onto the top fulmar-covered ledges. Brilliant rock and situations plus a small appreciative audience who applauded when we stood up on a very narrow summit. The descent was a 130ft abseil into space, with John hanging on the end of the rope for about 10 minutes before safely landing on a 12in wide ledge. A further 50ft abseil brought us to the base to find two young Swiss lads who had just tyroleaned across our rope. Unfortunately for them, the tide had come in and one lad finished up tyroleaning under water. We hastily gathered our gear and using their rope rejoined the mainland.

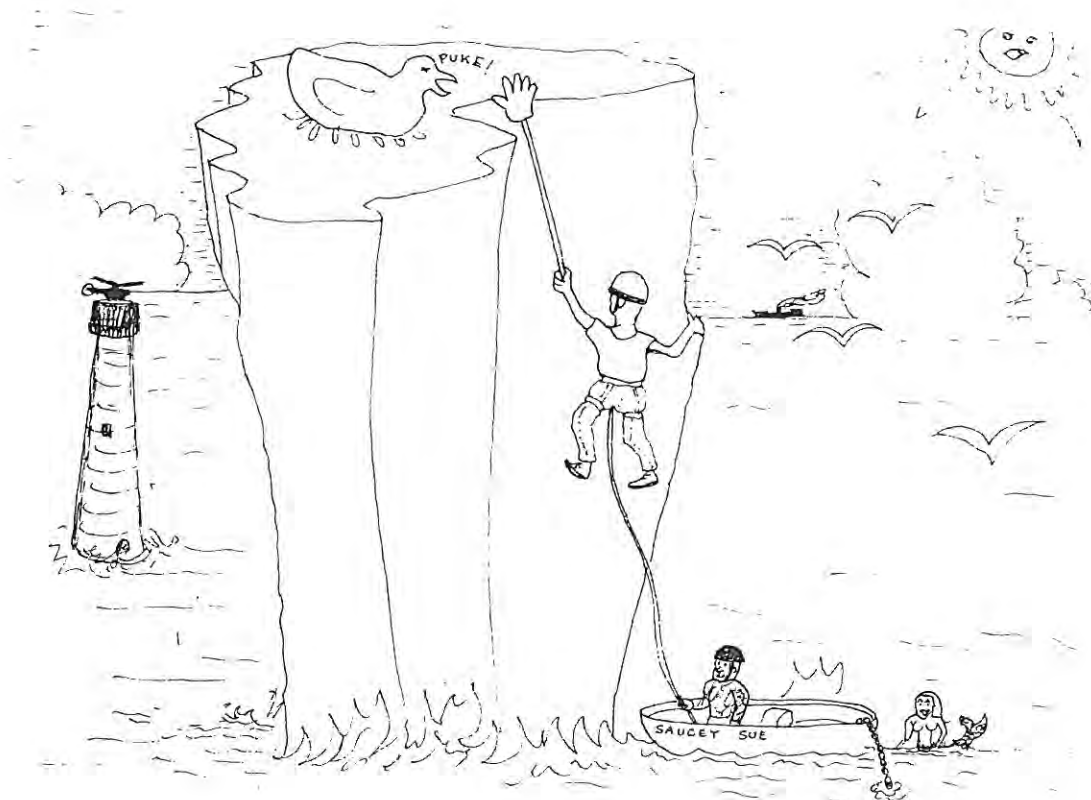
S.B.C. 4, Sea Stacks 0.

The last day was spent in ascending the Nose Direct of Sgurr am Fhithleir, a VS which is spoken of with some respect (read the S.M.C. description in the Northern Highlands Guide; it's frightening) and is 1,000ft of sandstone. As we walked in it threw it down but we weren't going to let that spoil our day, the Phantom Fiddler would be done. Basil led using all his mountaineering skill and guile (we cheated here and there) and after eight hours of continuous, difficult and worrying climbing we reached the top. A few minor trundles, a great deal of whooping and a run back down the glen finished off an absolutely unforgettable few days.

I think I will pop to the Thatched now!

M. TOLLEY

SUMMARY: Ten days of Midges, Loose Rock, Cold Water, Wind, Terrible Beer plus being shit and puked on in North Scotland.
THREE STAR RECOMMENDATION!



SCOTTISH WINTER CLIMBING

OUT of the mists there seems to condense from the firmament a wonderful vision. Insubstantial at first in this land of shifting mists and subtle light it pours its exquisite beams like streams of silver across the Sounds. Gradually shapes condense from the ethereal vapours and the mountains take on substance and form. As the light moulds them, the shapes become shot through with colour, both searing and subtle, as the swirling mists dictate. Icy buttresses cleave the clouds, and fluted ridges arch skywards, a filigree of gold in the rush of dawn. A land of shadows and spires, of haunting mists, and of the savagery of ice-crowned castles, pitiless gullies of glistening ice, and brutal unyielding buttresses.

Without a doubt, played against such a backdrop, Winter Climbing is the finest by far of the various disciplines of mountaineering. The limited daylight hours give an urgency to the proceedings that an E16 boulderer could not hope to understand, and the fickle nature of the stratum ensures that the successful completion of the route is always in doubt. Mix in a bit of minimal and often dubious protection and one has a day of heart-stopping potential. The mind and the limbs operate at a supreme intensity of concentration for hours on end, enhancing the feelings of tremendous exhilaration and relief as one hacks through the cornice and emerges onto the sanctuary of the summit plateau, often well after dark. The climber stands at the gates of heaven and a profound stillness and a great peace comes upon his mind. The mountains and he are one. The mountain pours out its light upon him like a benediction and consecrates him to its service.

The first article, by Bill Macrae, a gentleman of the true breed, admirably captures the feelings for the fells and the nuances of the light that this supremely beautiful corner of the world engenders.

The second and comparatively brash article by Roger Brookes, with its staccato effect, successfully reflects the restless thump of ice axe and crampons as an ice climber earnestly tackles one of the finest winter routes to be had in the country.

EDITOR

REMEMBERING ROUTE MAJOR

IN THUNDERBALL, just after James Bond has almost been wracked to pieces on a health farm traction machine by an agent of the unspeakably evil S.P.E.C.T.R.E., Ian Fleming wrote, "The body retains no memory of pain. Yes, it hurt, that abcess, that broken bone but, just how it hurt and how much is soon forgotten by the brain and the nerves. It is not so with pleasant sensations, a scent, a taste, the particular texture of a kiss. These things can be almost totally recalled."

As you probably know, nowhere is this principle more apt than in mountaineering. And so it was a poorly prepared McCrae, both physically and mentally, who stood in the Cairngorm car park that morning. He remembered only the good times. Front-pointing on perfect green ice or topping out on a sunlit plateau after a satisfying climb. The times of exhaustion, dehydration, pain and fear were all forgotten after a three-year break from Scottish winter climbing.

The first nagging doubt came when I lifted my rucksack, slung it onto my shoulder, trying to look like a veteran and promptly thought "My God, what's in this?" These doubts were confirmed when Mick 'I'm-so-unfit-and-pass-me-another-sandbag' Tolley sped off into the mist with me gasping for breath in his wake. Eventually, the plateau was reached and we began trudging across. As we approached the descent into Loch A'an the cloud level dropped below us and Macdui and the tors of Ben Mheadoin and Bynack More stuck up like nunatacks through the surface. The sun was dazzling and we stood staring, gobsmacked.

Soon after, the cloud dispersed completely and we dropped down and contoured round towards Carn Etchachan. There was not a breath of wind and we geared up quickly and began soloing. At this point came my first valid contribution to the day's proceedings. The party ahead of us continued too far along the easy ramp line which starts the route and Mick 'I-was-climbing-in-Scotland-when-you-were-wearing-short-trousers' Tolley wanted to follow. After a heated discussion in which the phrase 'local expert' featured heavily, I persuaded him back on route. However, from here on things went downhill. The famous chimney pitch was hard and only succumbed after much clanging, scraping and grunting from Mick 'It-just-needed-a-determined-approach' Tolley. The problem was that, contrary to what we had expected, snow conditions were not good. On this north-facing crag there had obviously been no freeze/thaw and the rock was covered with perfect powder. No verglas or even frozen turf. Indeed, in many places the rock was bare. It was when I came to follow in my new footfangs that my troubles began.

Two pitches later the crux was reached and had to be ignominiously handed to Mick 'Don't-think-you-are-going-to-be-allowed-to-forget-this' Tolley. However, he soon had no cause to be supercilious as his terrordactyl clanged down the crag, followed by unprintable oaths. I was then able to make my second and final contribution by loaning him my spare, thus ensuring that I had a weapon in my armoury for the micky-taking to come.

Three more pitches and another good lead by Mick 'Why-can't-I-do-this-in-summer' Tolley brought us to the plateau. So engrossed had we been that we were amazed to find it was almost 4 p.m. The climb behind us, thirst and hunger took over and we gulped down Mars bars and tea from the flask.

We wandered back across the plateau and one of the most vivid orange sunsets I have ever witnessed in Scotland began. My exhaustion really told now and the slight slope up to Fiacaille a' Coire Chais had to be done in 100-step sections. We rested at the Fiacaille cairn, absorbed in the sunset and our own thoughts. The gloom gathered and on one side the headlights of the piste-bashers looked ridiculously out of place, whilst on the other the cliffs and the wilderness managed to appear both menacing and beckoning at the same time.

To return to my original point, by even a few hours later, certain memories and sensations had begun to fade and as I sit at my desk writing this now, the theory is completely proved. For all the unpleasant memories are gone. No matter how hard I try, the exhaustion, pain, the ignominy, the thirst, cannot be recalled. Yet the memory of the good parts, the cloud inversion, the spectacular situation on the crag, the technical climbing, that first mouthful of tea, can be brought back almost perfectly and if I close my eyes I can see that last view before we came down off the plateau at the end of the day. The cliffs stand out starkly from the otherwise white hills and in the half light they seem somehow closer and larger, whilst behind them a dull red glow gradually fades as darkness falls.

BILL MACRAE

POINT FIVE

BEEP-BEEP, Beep-Beep, Beep-Beep'. It's 6.45 a.m. and time for someone else to get up, but not me. It feels cold in the C.I.C. hut this morning and has been snowing outside. I snuggle deeper into the warmth of my Redline. Gradually the hut rumbles into action as bleary-eyed and stiff-limbed climbers begin their daily routine once again. Kettles boil, tea is made, and porridge stirred. After the regulation brew in bed I decide to get up; the hut having warmed up somewhat by now.

With breakfast over, people begin to gather thoughts and equipment together. The routes we have talked over and dreamed about now assume an altogether different character in the grey coldness of morning.

"What are you doing today?" I am asked by a fellow climber.

"We haven't decided yet," I coyly reply. It was the same answer I gave yesterday when there were two parties on the route and there was plenty of spindrift. Then we had sneaked off to the Little Brenva Face and had it to ourselves; today there were no excuses – it had to be Point Five.

Having made the decision we opted to take only one rucksack between us, the leader carrying all the gear and the ropes. In this way we hoped to be able to move faster and more easily whilst on the route. So we set off, Mark with the sac and myself with all the hardware, trussed up like a chicken and jangling like a gaoler.

By now the cloud had lifted to reveal the icy grandness of Britain's highest mountain. The sheer size and scale of the place is almost Alpine; where else can you find a 1,000ft ice route which starts halfway up the cliff? The approach to Point Five is up Observatory Gully, a Grade 1 snow plod through some magnificent scenery, Tower Ridge being just to your right and the Orion Face to your left. As the angle steepens out come the ice axes then next the crampons till a few hundred feet below the gully proper we decide to gear up on a convenient ledge. We don't want a repeat of yesterday's fiasco on a fifty degree slope at the base of a vertical ice pitch where we nearly dropped everything, including ourselves, in the struggle to gear up.

The glistening whiteness of Point Five's icefalls goad us on as we first scramble over mixed ground, then French point elegantly on perfect névé till the powder at the base of the gully is encountered. We flounder on up and eventually reach the first stance and belay where we uncoil the ropes and prepare to do battle with this icy giant. It will be the first Grade 5 that either of us has attempted, though the first pitch looks easy and Mark offers to lead this one. Ten minutes later it is my turn to climb and we are soon both below the second pitch. Now our roles are reversed as I set off on what proves to be the crucial pitch. Above me rose a slightly overhanging wall of ice which looked hard but possible, that was until I saw the first spindrift avalanche come pouring right down its middle. I placed an ice screw and traversed leftwards to an icy groove between the rock wall on the left and the overhanging ice. It was then that my problems began. After a few steep moves up this near-vertical shallow scoop, I came to a dead halt. The ice had run out on the groove; above and to the left was only snow-covered rock – no placements here, whilst to my right was the edge of the overhanging ice. Teetering on my front points with only one axe in at chest height, I began to feel very insecure. What I really needed was a runner but there were no cracks at all in the rock and the nearest decent ice was way over to my right where I daren't reach. The situation was serious since my last ice screw was 20ft below and to my right; the prospect of a 40ft fall onto the ice of the first pitch was not exactly inviting.

My calves were beginning to scream by now and there was only one thing to do – tie into my one rather poorly placed tool and try to place an ice screw. Fumbling with clumsy mittens I clipped in and gingerly lowered my weight onto the axe hardly daring to breathe. It seemed to hold all right and freed both my hands to fix a runner. First I tried jamming a nut between the edge of the ice and the rock, but the gap was too large so it had to be a screw. Reaching as far to my right as I safely could, I made a hole with my hammer in the ice. Next I inserted a drive-in by hand till it stayed there by itself; then I gently tapped it in; it seemed to be taking so I hit it harder. Then it happened – an ominous crack appeared between the screw and the edge of the ice which I had just been using as a hand-jam. "Blast and damnation," I cursed, as my only hope of a runner came out in my hand. I hit out at the cracked icicle and sent two large blocks of ice careering downwards almost to the bottom of Observatory Gully. Mark later confessed that he expected me to be following them any minute!

Every cloud has a silver lining, they say, and the disappearance of the offending icicle had left a smaller crack between the ice and rock beneath, enabling me to fix a nut runner. Psychological protection indeed considering the fate of the last piece of ice, but just enough to give me the confidence to try the moves. I reached out far to the right and slammed in the beak of my 'Vulture'.

With this as my sole point of assurance, I bridged up between the rock and the edge of the ice, crampons scraping and sparking along the way. To say I was gripped would have been an understatement but I was totally committed now as I reached over rightwards for some higher placements. "Oh, Christ! it's dinnerplating", the falling ice nearly dislodging my feet. After a few dodgy moments, I trust my tools and haul myself over the bulge and onto easier ground. If that's Grade 5, I thought, then this is going to be one mighty epic!

I had to search for a belay, finally finding a small crack high up on the gully wall into which I fiddled a small hexentric. After backing this up with an ice screw and the hammered-in pick of my axe, I signalled to Mark that I was safe. After such a fight, even at this early stage of the route, I knew that nothing was going to stop us now. However, I couldn't help feeling pleased when Mark asked for a tight rope, confirming that the pitch had indeed been hard.

Mark declined the next pitch and we swapped over the belay. We would have to get a move on if we wanted to avoid benighting, so I confidently attacked the ice above, stopping only briefly to place the odd drive-in. I began to really enjoy myself, perfect placement after perfect placement allowed one to really lean out on one's tools. This was ice climbing at its very best and I ran out a full rope length to the top of the famous ice chimney, which was superb. Mark was not quite so lucky; he got all the spindrift that I had missed but still enthused about the climbing.

The fourth and final hard pitch lay ahead and looked reasonable and fairly short. Being cold from standing belaying, I talked Mark into letting me lead it but was surprised by its steepness and after 80ft had to put in a second ice screw to protect the final vertical groove – so much for being short! One last pull landed me at the belay in a snowy bay, the source of those damned spindrift avalanches which had nearly smothered me on that last bit. Mark came up quickly despite having a struggle with one of the ice screws, the bane of ice climbing seconds.

Having overcome all the major difficulties, it was almost as if we had entered the inner recesses of the mountain's defence system and were fair game for her ally – bad weather. The wind began to rise, the sky darkened and the temperature plummeted. The ropes froze like steel hawsers and so did all our slings; my gloves were like cardboard, even the gates of the krabs were seizing up. But we were enjoying the additional challenge as we led through pitch after pitch, mostly snow but sometimes ice, till we broke through the final cornice in a howling gale. Strangely the summit plateau was as calm as a lake is flat, the mountain had finally surrendered and allowed us to eat our meal in peace, sitting on top of one of her most prized possessions – Point Five Gully.

ROGER BROOKES

SMASH AND GRAB

FAST cars and motorways have in recent years shrunk the United Kingdom. Journeys that would have taken five to six hours can now be done in two-and-a-half hours and the impossible has become the feasible. Thus many areas that previously remained untouched and inviolate can now be ravished by the Northern hordes in the course of an ordinary weekend, so hugely widening the scope of climbing possibilities available from the Fylde.

The Club has been quick to exploit this situation resulting in many forays to grab the plum routes of distant areas in the course of an ordinary or marginally extended weekend. The Club Peter Pan is often in the vanguard of these trips, mopping up routes from 'Hard Rock' at the many and varied climbing centres that the home front has to offer.

Just off the M5, Cheddar Gorge broods menacingly, its verticality all but shutting out the winter sun. At one time climbing was only allowed in the high side valleys but now it is generally accepted that routes on the main walls above the car parks may be climbed through the winter – while all the tourists are safe from falling rocks sat round the box watching Coronation Street!

So belay yourself firmly, grip the edge of your chair, and let Martin Dale take you up the route of the same name. You'll need a steady head and nerves of steel as it is 400ft of very vertical limestone, wet and greasy. With bending pegs, and aching arms the outcome is in doubt until the last. – *Editor.*

WHERE EDDIE YATES AND HILDA OGDEN MEET ON MONDAY AND WEDNESDAY NIGHTS AT HALF SEVEN (OR) STREET ILLEGAL (PART 2)

By MARTIN DALE

FOUR pints of the foulest ale that Gloucester could offer didn't do much to combat the cold penetrating through an already deflated bishop. The doss, a low cave behind a bench, wasn't much good either. The roof dripped in several places and it didn't have a door. All these circumstances added up to an early rise as soon as the sun came up. Gaz, who couldn't cope with dripping ceilings and chose to brave the elements should there have been any, thrust a brew into my hands and I sat up and banged my head on the very low roof of the doss. A coach full of French tourists, mainly girls, rolls by and we soon wake up, jumping around waving our arms like lunatics.

We are here on one of those smash and grab raids that Mick Tolley's so good at organising. It's a Friday in late March and we're here hoping to meet Eddie Yates and Hilda Ogden on the Street before the weekend rush and the after-Easter autograph ban. The team is Mick Tolley, keen as ever. He's here to bag another Hard Rock route and spur on a slightly lethargic youth. The Shavers' here out of winter hibernation with a young upstart called Gaz Nuttall. He's already bagged Eddie's and Hilda's autographs in his pumps!

We sort out the gear and pack up. Mick takes the first pitch. We're off, but are we? Thirty foot up the wise old man of the team decides that muddy 4b is not for him. He lowers down off a convenient peg to the boulder-strewn car park. I set off at about 11 a.m. It turns out to be the mange pitch of the route. A wide crack affair with nasty wet footholds. Certainly not easy for VS. The only other team in the gorge decide that they don't like loose rock and scuttle off into the darker areas. Shaver and Gaz fight with the right arête of the car park. The muddy pitch ends at a muddy ledge with no belays. A hanging stance below a roof is the solution. Tolley arrives at the stance already smirking with that familiar grin. "Didn't like that at all nob," he says. He ties down on the muddy ledge and I set off up the groove. Right a bit and over an awkward bulge, up easily to the start of the real nasties. A slim groove leads to a roof and then another groove runs up to a horribly overhanging chimney. The slim groove's OK, hand jams lead out left round the roof, bridge out way over left, the jams lead to lay back holds, stuff a friend in and pull into the groove on poor jams. Close one that.

A short rest, runners and I move up to the next set of bulges. Gaz reckoned that was the most technical section of the climb. The crack had now widened to house brick size and no pro would go in. I'm sweating a bit here but several delicate strenuous moves bring a wire into play. A half rest here before the overhanging chimney-groove. I move up and a good nut goes in. A quick dip in the bag of courage and pull, pull, pull. Feet doing nothing much. I manage to jam my shoulders across the chimney, another good nut and then swing out right, strength failing and feet airborne. I'm on the belay ledge, a nice stance like an armchair without arms. On peg and nuts, legs dangling. The old man thrutches upwards with that grin on his face again. The exposure begins to grip.

Above, more solid graft for the arms. A jamming crack which gives no jams soars up for 20ft to a roof and a peg. A rest here would be nice but there's no chance of one. The way above blocked. A traverse left is the alternative. Blocked at the other end by an overhanging nose – The Shield. I reach left, fix a nut then launch out across the void. One foothold enables another nut placement. Change feet, my God, you could see your face in that foothold. I storm across to the Shield where some tat snakes from a crack. I'm really pumped and Mick realises this as the rope goes tight with no warning,



the sling comes slowly crawling out of the crack as if to say 'go home climber'. Arms splashed I react with what little power is left and zap a friend in. I'm technically off. My little upward movement showed me why the Shield is called the Shield. Two massive holds on either side are grasped and a quick pull brings me to a precarious bridge below the stance. Safe? Not with my ropes crossed and powerless arms. I'm soon sorted though and relaxing in the Shield bar of the Rovers with Eddie Yates and Hilda Ogden, two pegs and a block. Albert Tatlock? Tolley climbs faster than I'd expected and we're soon swapping bar stools. This desperate manoeuvre takes ages.

A step right and a long pull and the final groove is gained just like I'd imagined a pint of Newton and Riddleys to be like. Bubbling with overhangs but fizzing with protection possibilities, a true keg groove. Below Mick hangs from the stance dropping stones into the car park. They don't touch as they sail down onto the already stone covered bay below. The groove, easy at first, soon turns nasty and fierce and a hard pull left brings a welcome rest and a good thread. Above an overhang bars access to a good crack snaking upwards for an eternity. A side step right and a hard pull on small holds and the vicious no fun overhang is overcome. The groove above leads to a good jamming crack with in situ pro. Steady moves upwards and my arms are beginning to complain again. Several particularly taxing moves with cramped hands painfully jammed to the hilt bring a good friend and then a peg into action. I'm really zapped. The peg bends so I move up and throw my house brick into the crack above but it just doesn't want to go in just right. Fiddling about hanging off jams, the nut finally bites and I collapse onto the rope. "I'm really Frank Zappa'd, Mick," and the cheese and tomato arrives with a jolt. Minutes pass as I assess the ground above. Fast moves on good jams lead to good jugs on the edge of the belay ledge. Shades of pitch 2; legs come flying off and a high kick is necessary to get my right foot on something. Actually getting stood on the ledge is more technical though. A hard lay away move on tired limbs is really taxing but I'm there, absolutely splashed. If the ledge were big enough I'd have laid down. The 2ft sized ledge is small comfort, good belays though. Mick starts climbing, the big black clouds stop threatening and start precipitating. I shout to Mick to hurry. Because of the overhanging nature of the rock he doesn't believe me but the next pitch is slabby and it's getting wet fast. Mick pulls on some gear and storms up the pitch. I gaze down as a bunch of school kids wander past. The inevitable Hi Di Hi, Ho De Ho shout follows and a large stone zooms downwards to show them why they shouldn't be standing around. Mick's up and realises why I'm shouting "rush".

The rain eases and so does the angle but the final pitch isn't easy and it must be climbed fast. Retreat from here would mean plenty of abseiling, swinging and humiliation. A nasty layaway move cannot be rushed. The rain steadies again and the move's made. Several more scary moves on wet holds lead to a sapling. The rain begins to pound down and it looks like a horrendous lurch for the sapling is on. One move further and good strong grass holds bypass the tree and it's all over. Verticality over, I tie into a tree and get the winch out. It's really pissing down now but I couldn't give a monkey. The pitch is really wet and the wise old man struggles. As he appears the rain stops. It's 5.30 p.m. We've been down there for hours on the highest limestone wall in England. We're wet but happy. A desperate descent and we're off to the pub to get badgered on Hall and Woodhouses, but that's another story.

SUMMARY: An ascent of Coronation Street 400ft EI, 4b, 5a, 5a, 5b, 4c; Cheddar Gorge by Martin Dale and Mick Tolley.
- March 27th, 1981.

SHEFFIELD SHUFFLERS HIT TRUE GRIT

AT THE time of Haskett Smith the tiny nucleus of rock climbers then active on the crag were all members of the upper classes with time and money to burn. Working class people were ground down in the fields and factories for six very long days and on the seventh they went to church to thank God for their lot. Gradually, as trade unionism took hold, hours worked were reduced, a little progress was made on pay, and machinery was introduced which took some of the sheer hard graft out of earning a living.

Working people were then, too, able to lift up their eyes unto the hills as had the aristocracy before them. The renaissance was nurtured, amongst other areas, in the Derbyshire Peak District surrounded as it was by Industrial Conurbations on all sides. The affluent travelled by train, the comfortably off (by comparison to the times) travelled by bus, and the poor walked. But gradually, more and more frequently the rasp of nails and the sight of hairy hemp was heard and seen throughout the gritstone edges of the area. Here men, to whom the Lake District might well have been a foreign country, could climb on a Sunday.

Such was the large catchment area of potential crag rats that the Derbyshire Peak soon became the forcing ground for routes of unprecedented difficulty. Here the Joe Browns and the Don Whillans learned and plied their craft at a time when transport was becoming more readily available. Soon working class climbers were travelling to the mountainous areas of the United Kingdom and putting up new difficult routes in a league of their own, taking over the mantle of crag exploration from the middle class university types who had previously had the field to themselves.

The advantages of location that places like Sheffield enjoy remain unchanged today. Surrounded by crags on three sides, many easily reached in minutes, and a choice of limestone near at hand, Sheffield continues to offer a major attraction to grimpers either as a place to work or a place to study. At any one time at least half a dozen to a dozen F.M.C. members can be found in residence in and around the city.

Andy Lewandowski has long lived in Sheffield and found a willing partner in Roger Brookes plc. Roger probably holds the Fylde M.C.'s record of being the oldest member to start his first job as he trotted from one place of learning to another in order to maximise his climbing potential. And what is he doing with his 10 years of knowledge? Surveying the footpaths of Leicestershire. If there had been any justice in the world it would at least have been Norfolk or some such god-forsaken place. Still, without him we wouldn't have a guide book to Malta so I suppose every gripe has a silver lining! Paul Clarke, I expect, pushed him close but my four glorious years on the dole are made to look extremely small beer.

What follows is an account of a typical gritstone day. The routes are harder than they once were, but new lines are still being pushed through. The enthusiasm and the companionship of the rope remain the same. – *Editor.*

ONE DAY LAST SUMMER by ROGER BROOKES

THE phone rings. It's Andy – the arrangements are made and visions of routes and moves flash before my eyes . . . Quietus, Twikker, Edge Lane, Vena Cave In. The following morning is bright and sunny. It's going to be another 'hot one'. Andy arrives and we debate the sports plan. Stanage Edge is to be our first venue followed, hopefully, by a brew at Grindleford Caff.

I had an obsession with leading Vena Cave In. The guidebook describes the route as 'a real heartstopper' up the right wall of the chimney. Poor protection and long reaches between equally poor breaks make it a serious proposition. We both think differently, however, and have brought a host of friends and tri-cams to prove the point. [Sounds like a bypass operation to me. – *Ed.*]

Out comes the Friars Balsam; I like the smell as much as anything, but it does stop the hands from sweating. I don't chock, harness and EBs and rack all the friends that we own between us.

The first few moves are shared with that classic HVS Right Hand Tower. Soon, however, the first move 'proper' appears. I back off hastily, in goes a No. 1 friend and I am now able to make the move – a high step up using a poor layaway. The next two breaks provide further friend placements and reasonable holds. "This is going well", I think to myself, but I had not bargained for the next move – at full stretch I am still inches short of the next break. "What's needed is a bit of oomph", says Andy. "You've got to push yourself beyond the point of control", I tell myself as I prepare for yet another go. Once again I reach for the sky but this time I 'grow' sufficiently to just reach a sloping hold – now pull or be damned. That was hard; climbing this is rather like friction climbing for the hands!

Now I am at the crux and the final ubiquitous rounded break is definitely out of arm's reach. What's more, a fall from here would deposit me in the bed of the chimney on the left. Cunningly it has risen sufficiently to render my lower runners obsolete. I spend ages fiddling a friend into a very dubious placement but eventually have to resign myself to the move. "You'll have to E4 it", is the advice from below.

The crux consists essentially of three horizontal breaks, one on which you are standing, one at chest height and another 4ft higher. The idea is to somehow reach the top break and get your feet on the middle one. There are, however, no intermediate footholds and only one tiny fingerhold that is of any use. I reach for the solitary handhold with well-chalked fingers; next I swing my right leg up into the chest-high break. By using a combination of pulling with my right hand and pushing down with my left I gain enough height to reach the upper break. "Great, done it", I yell, and I am at the top, grinning and squinting in the bright sunshine.

Andy climbs quickly and efficiently until he reaches the crux where he comes to a standstill. Several attempts and two falls later he traverses, slightly right, muttering about lack of reach and being out of balance. He invents an even more bizarre move than mine and eventually succeeds in gaining the break. He enthuses about his 'short man's alternative'.

Next we try another Gibson route on the same buttress, Tempyska; "More climbing on distant holds", says the guide. After a technical start, Andy finds he cannot reach the next break. Several goes later a runner pulls as he is retreating and he is deposited back on mother earth. He hands me the sharp end of the rope. I decide to fix an illegal runner high in an adjacent route. After testing this out I feel confident enough to 'go for it'. Two strenuous palm pulls later and I'm committed. I struggle to fix a runner. My arms are beginning to scream now, but at last I discover a poor hand jam which enables me to reposition the friend. After that the rest seems easy, as the angle relents somewhat and good runners appear.

With seven E points in the chockbag, I suggest that perhaps a brew would be in order but Andy has other ideas. The virgin arête on Left Hand Tower looks ripe for the picking. Andy spies out some cracks for wires at 20ft and proceeds to clean them out while

I boulder around on the lower part of the route. It's going to be hard, and unprotected till after the crux. We take turns soloing up to that move and retreating; eventually I 'ave a go, barndoor, and fall to the ground just missing some nasty boulders. Andy has another attempt and discovers the key to the problem – a poor layaway hold on the left. He comes back down for a good rest. I try this new method but lose my balance and wing my way earthwards – I land awkwardly and injure my foot. It's all up to Andy now; we can't leave this chalk here without finishing the route – the jackals are waiting. Andy moves smoothly up to the crux, gets the hold, pauses then slaps the arête thus preventing a backwards fall as he stands up. I pass him the rope and some wires and the route is finished off, not without further interest though. I nearly fall off seconding when a pebble breaks underfoot; this is hard, feels like 6a to me.

We retreat to Grindleford Calf and we discuss the name and grade of our new route. We arrive at 'Slap 'n Spittle' and the grade? E3 5c. We now head for Millstone in search of more 'points'.

I point Andy at 'Erb' which proves more problematical than expected. Whilst Andy is climbing my foot begins to hurt until I can hardly walk. A painful ascent follows and I realise that I will have to retire injured. I hop, stagger and slide down the rocky path to the car and we head off for some big brown painkillers – the sort they sell in the Grouse Inn!

THE LAKES THREETHOUSANDERS

AS A well balanced individual who has always managed to combine the many and varied delights of mountaineering in an interesting and diverse whole, with nothing to excess, it has always disturbed me that lurking within the Club has been a tiny but very distressing minority of masochists. Rather than enjoying the finer points of life they spend all year training so that they can go on a 46-mile walk all over the Lake District, presumably viewing the scenery through a haze of agony and torment.

It seems the Committee is powerless to stop such disgraceful and anti-social behaviour and indeed one of the miscreants was in fact a member of the then Committee. Worse, as will be seen, they were actually aided and abetted by a very senior official indeed, the balding and extremely irresponsible Mr. Crook. Not only that but it seems they delayed their departure till so late in the morning that they ran the risk of disturbing ordinary Club members going about their normal business of a well earned lie-in. This selfishness was compounded by walking round the circuit so quickly that they arrived back at the hut just after closing time, subjecting decent members to a disgusting display of crawling round on their hands and knees to the accompaniment of screams of agony. The disgraceful situation was not helped by one of them being a woman whose time would surely have been better spent cleaning the hut out.

And still this infestation flares up from time to time. June 1989 saw Glen Shirley, Jon Trevorrow and Avril Whittaker pounding round the absurd circuit. At least I felt I had got my own back when I was greeted on Sunday morning by the sight of Mr. Trevorrow perched on a stool grilling his breakfast bacon, such was the agony of standing up. It's just as well for the Club that he boggled off to Boggle Hole when he did. If Avril didn't walk so damned far and so fast I might be able to catch her up with sufficient breath left to be able to ask her to marry me. So I've no choice but to get into strict training with this sensible and most worthwhile objective in mind. In the meantime perhaps she will let me try out some of her night lingerie to add to my photographic collection. It might take her mind off the stupid idea of walking 46 miles again. – *Editor.*

THE F.M.C. THREE THOUSANDERS MEET

AT 6 p.m. on 12th June, 1982, the happy band of Pam Ashton, Pete Rafferty, Eddie Craig, Eric Maymon and myself strode into Keswick in high spirits and excellent condition having completed the F.M.C. Lakes Three Thousanders Meet in 12 hours. No, let's be truthful, literary licence can be taken too far. It was gone 10 p.m., we were pretty knackered (but still going strong) and we had taken over 16 hours. A brief report of how we got there is given below.

The sunshine was dappling the fells at 5 a.m. as we prepared for a 6 a.m. start and it quickly became obvious the most difficult part of the day might be getting the editor out of his pit. It seems he was working even harder than usual at his 'laid back approach to mountaineering'. You may have noticed this approach – it involves recce'ing Munros for a day or two from the beach or pub and then playing crazy golf instead. He damn near worked too hard at it as the rest of us were in the car park when he managed to stagger from the hut, swigging his pint of milk and looking distinctly more 'dragged through a hedge backwards' than 'laid back'. Whatever happened to the Ed. Craig I used to know?

We set off from the Moot Hall at eight minutes past six and by quarter past, as we retraced our steps after a wrong turning, it began to look as though the second hardest bit might be finding our way out of Keswick. The sun shone; here and there wisps of cloud caressed the fells; and before 7 a.m. Pam (and Raff) were down to their bikinis – roll on midday! I pushed the pace a little down Borrowdale anxious to be safely past The Scafell before opening time. However, at Seathwaite there was no way I could get them past the sign declaring that "leas, ices, sandwiches", etc. were on sale within. There had already been talk of lynching the Meet Leader so I resigned myself to the fact that anticipated completion time of 12 to 15 hours was optimistic. Pots of tea, ice-cream, choc-ices, scones, sausage rolls, teacakes, etc., later, we set off up Scafell. Unfortunately, by this time, cloud had rolled over the higher fells but it cleared from the top the instant we arrived and we lazed in the sunshine for a while enjoying the seaward views. The Pike remained clagbound. Two down, two to go.

Predicted time for Scafell Pike was between noon and 2 p.m. We arrived at approximately 2.30, Ed via Foxes Tarn and the rest of us via Broad Stand and the foolhardy but heroic rescue of a nearby crag-fast sheep.

On again to Stake Pass via Esk Hause and Angle Tarn – still going strong. The ascent of High Raise doesn't look much on the map – ugghh – don't be fooled. We regrouped on the summit but quickly moved off, teeth chattering.

In view of the small number taking part (evidently most F.M.C. members are well balanced, sane individuals), it was decided to carry our own food, etc., and not have 'feeding stations'. However, Chrissie Ikin and Barrie had volunteered to be at Wythburn at 3 p.m. to give us support. There was no sign of them (at 6 p.m.) and we made our way along the track but, round the corner, there they were, cheery and very welcoming. Unfortunately, they had just polished off the hot drinks they had brought for us. Still, the cold rice pudding, Milky Ways, etc., went down a treat.

By this time, the enjoyment had begun to go out of the walk a little – we had already covered 34 miles and approx. 8,500ft of ascent and still had to climb up and down Helvellyn and walk along the road to Keswick (approx. 12 miles and 2,600ft of ascent – a fair day's walk still to go).

In deference to the physical and mental condition of the party, Eric declared that we would take it easy up Helvellyn – nevertheless we reached the summit in under an hour and were sitting in the bar of the King's Head at Thirlspot in well under two hours. It's perhaps as well he didn't think we should press on at all speed. A couple of pints went down nicely and we were soon marching swiftly down the road, minds wonderfully concentrated on fish and chips.

Total time taken including stops, 16 hours and 18 minutes. Distance – 46 miles; approx. 11,000ft of ascent and descent.

Amazingly we were all able to get out of bed the next day. At lunchtime Eric and I were sitting quaffing our pints in the Kings Arms at Burton in a self-satisfied, laid back sort of way when Ed re-appeared beaming happily. He looked even more self-satisfied than we felt. Had he managed to seduce the serving wench, or (more likely) been seduced by her? Had he just bumped into W. A. Poucher in the car park? No, it was a far more magnificent achievement; he'd managed the four steps from the gents, without assistance.

Thanks to all those Club members who offered or gave assistance, in particular Barrie and Chrissie, Liz and Kath, Gerry (who was prepared to be at Seathwaite at 4 a.m. if we'd opted for a midnight start), Glen Shirley (a sub-12-hour superstar) for advice on logistics and Guy Duxbury who provided telephone cover from his Threlkeld home in case anyone should retire.

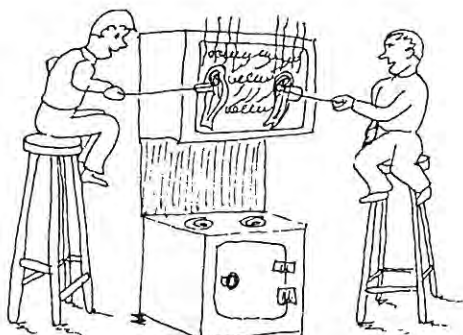
Also thanks to Raff for providing splendid certificates for the Team. He did a very professional job (courtesy of B.D.P?) and I intend to commission him to do me a "This is to certify that Martin Pickup has climbed Everest" certificate and perhaps one for Annapurna.

After such a blissful (or should it be blisterful) experience we are now eager to try further epics and the following are possibilities for future expeditions:-

1. Orrest Head, without sherpas (if we can park near enough).
2. Gummers How from the ice-cream stall.
3. A two-day backpacking trip from Rydal to Grasmere via Loughrigg Fell.

If anyone should hear me planning anything more strenuous than these or hear the words "Bob Graham" mentioned, please administer tranquillisers and send for my Analyst.

MARTIN PICKUP



HUT SWOP MEETS

AT ONE time the Fylde M.C. were fairly parochial and disinclined to visit places other than Langdale, Borrowdale and the Ben/Glencoe area. Once the reciprocal rights arrangements had been implemented it was decided to run hut swop meets whereby the hut that normally would have been reserved for Club members in the Lakes was let out to either Chester or the Vags and we used their huts in Wales. As a ploy to encourage Club members to visit other areas it proved very successful and hut swop meets are now amongst the best attended, though to avoid one club feeling aggrieved if they fielded a far larger team than the other, hut fees are paid to one's own club.

We had a fairly interesting hut swop meet two or three years ago when the Booking Secretary, in an almost unique error, completely forgot about one that had been arranged. Mr. Penn and myself were assured by the great man that we were the only two booked into Little Langdale and drove up to the Lakes looking forward to a really quiet weekend. We were somewhat nonplussed to find about 15 vehicles parked outside the hut but knew in our hearts that these belonged to the Polaris Club who had obviously quite mistakenly come to the wrong hut. What can you expect from Southerners? We were even more nonplussed to find on opening the door that the hut was jammed full of Chester people on a hut swop weekend. That night about 25 other F.M.C. members turned up and we had people shoe horned in everywhere. Thank goodness Joyce Foster at Achille Ratti was kind enough to put up many of our members.

The Chester meet leader's troubles were not however yet over. After taking part in a rescue on Coniston Old Man during the day he found himself three hours after dark with six of his meet missing on various Lake District fells. He still clearly remembers the meet.

On a mountaineering note we had many superb hut swop meets in Wales both winter and summer. The following beautifully written account of a summer trip to the Chester hut is typical of very many first-class weekends to the Principality. – *Editor.*

CHESTER HUT MEET, 1983 By MARTIN DALE

STORMING down to Cerrigydrudion in winding, tree-lined R.A.C. rally roads, we burst out onto orange moors with pencil-sharp horizons. There was Snowdon in the distance, lying like a sleeping dinosaur in the gold sky of the beginning of time. Tryfan with its spikey ridged tail. White clouds thinned out on the horizon with the tangerine sky glistening and, clear below, only slightly obscured by the barman's fingers clasping the glass containing a different world – a much superior brew! The king of bitters, Marston's pedigree, slid effortlessly down the throats of the spearhead of the Fylde M.C. North Wales Assault Team.

The beer in the Queens at Cerrigydrudion was up to scratch and the conversation was full of Dave Earleisms describing the magic scene which unfolded earlier on the journey. A large crowd of members and friends converged on the Chester Hut. From the keenest rock athlete to the beginner, the walker, the pisshead, the plasterer, even Civil Servants and gardeners in abundance! They were all there.

Even before 10.00 Saturday morning, Mark Harding had taken a lob on the first pitch of Great Wall, Cloggy. Such ridiculous times to be on the crag have not been known since the day of Pete Latimer and Pete Rafferty (who?). Martin Dale and Frank Pearson, the Preston Gardener, were next on the scene and set about the first pitch of West Buttress Eliminate. Mark, not upset by his flying start on Great Wall, settled for an ascent of Daurigol followed by the rarely done Pinnacle Flake with his Chester companion, Clive. Pete Crosby, Nick Harmes and James Greaves were just beaten to Great Slab/Bowshaped by Glenn Brookes and Psycho, and had to settle for Longlands. Also late for the fray was Phil Caley and Friend, who suffered with rickety innerds, on Chimney Route. Making good time on West Buttress Eliminate, Martin and Frank were confronted with the awesome Walsh's Groove. [Walsh had the advantage of not being able to see it through his bottle-thick glasses—Ed.]. A real legs 'n' arse affair which just went on and on, topping out at the same time as Pete Crosby's team. From the Crevasse Stance, Glenn and Psycho were seen having problems on the Bowshaped Slab crux. But looking the other way, the Preston Team of Dave Parker and Bobby Windsor were storming up November in fine style. Phil Caley teamed up with a spot and also climbed November which was becoming something of a trade route. The Three-Man Team then did Great Slab getting a great view of Martin and Frank who settled an old score on the hilariously thin Bow Right Hand.

Whilst all this was going on Tom Knowles, the other gardener (green specialist) ascended Snowdon twice whilst doing the Horseshoe arse about face and surely showed bravery surpassing any shown on Cloggy all day by risking a pint of lager in the Summit bar. Dave Earle, looking for superlatives, with Tom Carroll and Andrew Ollerton, completed the slowest Horseshoe in history – 14 hours! The Chairman and his lady accompanied by George Parker, spent the day on Craig yr ysfa in the Carneddts. Chrissy walked up Carnedd Dafydd and other hills in the area whilst Barry and George dispensed with Amphitheatre Buttress.

Meanwhile back on the Clog, the sun was staging another spectacle. The most beautiful skyscape you could imagine unfolded to the west. Anglesey was silhouetted in a blaze of orange with the whole coastline spread north to south and the hills, razor sharp and dark in contrast. Eventually, for fear of missing out on a pint, we made our way down. Looking back we could see Pete Crosby, Nick and James clearly picked out on the horizon coiling their ropes. A silver crescent moon rose above the cliff, its light reflecting off the Llyn, setting the seal on a tremendous scene no camera could hope to capture.

Still dressed in hill gear, there was just about time for a pint in the Victoria before weary bodies slept ready for the morrow.

The cool grey light of the Llanberis dawn soon turned golden and the fat old sun rose from his bed in the east. Mark and Clive set off for Cloggy again, followed closely by Phil and another Chester youth. The rest of the climbers decided on an easy walk to Dinas Mot, except for the Preston pair who chose the secluded Crafnant Valley for their climb of the day. Pete and Glenn were soon at work on the Direct with Sean along for a ride, whilst Nick and James set off to tackle the Cracks. Martin and Frank sloped off round the corner to the further reaches of the Plexus Buttress to have a go at the Windmill. Dave Earle and Tom Carroll, Tom Knowles and Andy Ollerton went Carnedding whilst Barry, George and Co climbed and scrambled on Tryfan. The horizons yet again were sharper than ever, and the sun shone all day. The Cloggy party had a mixed day with Mark and Clive bagging West Buttress Eliminate, but Phil had second thoughts on Bloody Slab due to lack of protection. On Dinas Mot Pete and Glenn finished up Western Slab. Rick and James picked flowers on Bluebell Cracks and Frank, now a physical wreck, has seen enough of windmills to last him until his next trip to Holland! Martin was not finished though and greedily bumped up the day's star count with a rapid ascent of Diagonal with Glenn.

The sun was setting in the west again as we picked Tom up at Capel and the Dinosaur lay sleeping once again. Golden glows filled the faces of the lads as they clutched their pints of golden Sam Smith's in the Golden Lion, Frodsham. For they knew that this one had surely been one hell of a golden weekend.

THE MEET LEADER

FAMILY MEETS

YET another advantage of having two huts is that the Club can set aside one of them every now and again for use by families, whilst keeping the other free for members to use in the normal way. The advantages are obvious. The delicate brains of its active section are not disturbed in the early hours of the morning by hordes of mini Ghengis Kahns looking forward to yet another exciting day and similarly the said G.K.s can slumber on peacefully in the evening at one hut while the enebriated rabble make whoopee at the other end of the Lake District.

The enthusiasm of youngsters is however infectious and I lost no time borrowing nephews and sundry children from work to get in on the act. What with pillow fights, football, cricket, tag, jumping in mud, looking for frogs, exploring the quarries, ice creams, and a lot of fell walking followed by an hour or two in a convenient beer garden, these were meets not to be missed. For further details read on. John Wiseman spills the beans. – *Editor*.

FAMILY WEEKENDS

FAMILY weekends have existed for years. When we started, generations had gone before us, grown up, and moved on. On our first family weekend at Langdale our family was the youngest and could not keep up so we played with slates on top of Lingmoor whilst the rest did one of the classic walks for families, over to Side Pike, the O.D.G., the New D.G., the ice cream shop in Elterwater and back to play in the ford. Before long, children learn to map read with leading questions like: Is that hotel a pub? Does it let children in? I digress; the Sunday was spent damming a stream in Tilberthwaite then wandering up the stream jumping from rock to rock. With entertainment like that the family wanted to come again.

In those days you had to book onto a weekend long in advance, they were so popular. On good days the high fells were the target but on indifferent days other entertainments had to be found. Forest walks; great fun to shake a wet branch, or a whole tree, onto passing people! Try jumping into mud; if it is done right it goes splat in all directions and none lands on you. If you don't do it right you end up stuck or leaving your welly stuck deep, as Martin Nash found out one day! Once taught, the kids got very good at such things; they had good teachers, Tony Farrell and Dave Laycock among others.

One time of year was special – winter – with the chance of snow. In a good year we took the sledges into the fields near the cottages. One extraordinary day we slipped and slid round to Derwent to find the lake frozen and people walking on it. If the snow was more elusive we had to go to the hill tops to find it and bivvy-bag down a slope, which could be painful if you hit a rock. Snowballing was ever present, starting in the dark on Friday night given half a chance.

Many memories remain of those weekends, such as Dave Laycock hiding behind a wall or mound and throwing snowballs 'blind' at us – he hit us – something he rarely did when he could see the target. Of being struck by high winds on Halls Fell ridge so that lighter people had to be held down; we about-turned quick. Of cars that went backwards during the night; of mysterious letters hidden in walls; swimming in Rob's Hole; Stephen Pickup getting himself and everyone else wet including (and especially) his dad.

Special mention must be made of the extras, people like Gerry Senior, who still enjoyed some family weekends even though his children had grown up, and Dave Earle who does not wish to miss out on any type of meet. He came having 'borrowed a child'. Small and hairless he might be but it was a con to pass Garry Standige off as an infant (he even wanted to pay half fare for him!). Still, to be fair they were soon lying in a ditch near Stair one Friday night hiding from the person who was 'on' as they tried to get back without being caught. First prize that night must go to whoever 'hid' behind the phone box blissfully unaware of the fact they were in the full light of the one and only street light in Stair!

So our children have grown up and we can no longer go. The next generation are setting their own stamp on the weekends. However, with two plastic sledges in the garage, we don't have to stop sledging or throwing snowballs!

JOHN WISEMAN



LADIES' MEETS

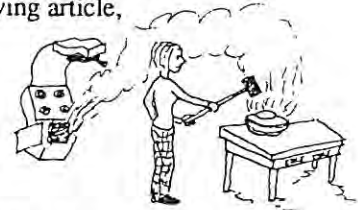
ONCE upon a time, a long time ago, a new type of meet appeared on the Syllabus in black and yellow; Ladies' Meets. It was made clear that the ladies did not have exclusive use of the huts on these particular weekends but that the published dates were merely something for them to work towards. Nevertheless, for some considerable time the 'active section' of hut users gave these meets a pretty wide berth. Not being afraid of anyone however, the Editor was determined not to alter his lifestyle in the face of this new breed of meets and his visits to the huts coincided quite frequently with ladies' meets; indeed during the heady days of unemployment he practically lived at the huts.

For his pains he was eventually adopted as an 'Official Lady' and in time presented with a set of ladies underwear at one of the Club dinners. So what were these ladies like? A few were already mountaineers in their own right, some would be hard put to find their way to the nearest coffee shop, and one found it difficult beyond measure even to find the Lake District (sorry Liz!). But all were very keen to be out on the hill and all proved to be delightful company. After the monothematic algebraic conversations of the climbing section it was quite pleasant to be able to converse on different levels over a wide range of subjects though it must be admitted that I did become a bit of an expert on Labour in the non-political sense. Some were small and pretty, others were tall and graceful and pretty. All had more hair than Martin Dale even if they could not climb as hard and all brought a pleasant and different form of fun to hut life.

My fondest memories of ladies' meets will always be 'the arrival of the biscuit men'. Chris Ikin and others had been chatting up a group of reps from a national biscuit firm one Saturday night in a pub in Windermere safe in the knowledge that at 11 o'clock they would be able to drive back to Little Langdale out of harm's way. Unfortunately for plan A one of these reps had actually stayed at Newhouses so after the ladies' hasty departure Langdalewards they made some rapid arrangements for food and drink and set off in pursuit. I remember seeing these guys marching into Little Langdale with a silver salver full of sandwiches and a crate of beer and thinking that God hadn't entirely forsaken me. After an hour or so of harmless fun they departed as quickly as they had come minus the beer and food. A very pleasant evening. Ladies are now at last fully emancipated and arrange their meets informally off the syllabus in the same way as the active section arrange theirs. Try one, I might see you there.

But for the view of ladies' meets from the female point of view Mary has supplied the following article, telling the story how it really was.

N.B. The Club now owns sufficient and trustworthy cookers. – *Editor.*



LADIES' WEEKENDS

LADIES' weekends had their origins nearly 20 years ago in a steadfast belief in the old adage 'What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander'. After several years of joint mountaineering activities in both fell and rock the future generation of walkers and climbers began to make their appearance. Well, you can't have all those boozy Saturday nights at various Lakeland locals after an 'epic' on the hill (Saturdays were always 'epic' by 10.30 p.m.) without the inevitable consummation.

For some couples this represented a very severe curtailment of mountaineering activities, jointly endured by some; but for others, well, *he* carried on while *she* stayed home – enough was enough. What was needed were ladies' weekends when she went on the hill and he changed the nappies.

The idea was seized upon with glee by half a dozen delighted ladies who turned up for the first weekend at Little Langdale. The total absence of any of the male members of the club indicated either universal support or collective shock. However, that situation was not to last. For motives best known to himself, whether to strike a blow for the rights of emasculated males or simply to find himself a lady, a solitary male began to make regular appearances on subsequent weekends. This did have certain advantages. Having spent much of our time following our menfolk to the local crags our route-finding tended to take us along the beaten tracks. In return for tolerating the presence of this singular male we got many a guided walk.

Things were not always sweetness and light however. On one occasion, absorbed in conversation on High Stile, we were brought to an abrupt halt by the unrepeatable bawling and shouting of the said 'guide'. It seemed that we had failed to take appropriate cognisance of a temporary whiteout and, totally ignoring his initial protestations, were going round in circles. [Could this be me? – *Ed.*]

Perhaps the most popular walks on Ladies' weekends are the various horseshoe walks such as Fairfield, Kentmere, Grasmere and those in the Newlands Valley. It's practically against our principles to lose height once we have gained it and these beautiful walks have been done in all seasons and in all weathers.

Efficient waterproofing is definitely a necessity although there do seem to be limits on how long the most sophisticated gear can remain impervious to several hours of incessant rain. A November valley walk from Stair to Buttermere, motivated by prospects of a fortifying beverage at The Fish, resulted in a forlorn and bedraggled group eating soggy butties in the lee of the ladies' toilets. The pub was obstinately shut; probably due to lack of business. An optimistic suggestion about the possibility of getting a taxi back was met with the contempt it deserved and with the air of martyrs to the cause we squelched our way back to Stair.

The efficient drying facilities at the huts are certainly appreciated. Would that the same could be said for the electric cookers, which tend to be rather unpredictable depending on the latest cast-off to be installed. One unfortunate member returned one day looking forward to a succulently braised pork chop which she had smugly put in the oven before departure. She was greeted by the appalling sight of two blackened and charred enamel plates practically welded together by the unremitting heat resulting from a faulty thermostat. The pork chop had been well and truly cremated.

Over the years members have continued to arrange ladies weekends although they no longer appear on the club syllabus. They are organised by Jennie Tolley and anyone interested should contact her. You don't need to be super fit; a sense of humour and an intimate knowledge of where to find the best farmhouse teas will do.

MARY ASPIN

CATERING MEETS

AT A time when Club activity was at a very low ebb the Committee decided to organise some meets around our own huts. These rapidly became popular and continue apace today. As an added incentive food was often provided, with a knock-on benefit that all club members sat down together and the club spirit was greatly enhanced by the ensuing mix of disciplines (macho man to drunk) round the same table.

The catering stakes soon got out of hand with Pete Roscoe and Barbara Sealey outdoing each other on every meet, much to everyone else's advantage. Andy Dunhill's curry meets were well worth attending. Previously I had just considered curry to be an inedible mess and it was quite a revelation to find it interesting and varied. A superb evening in Little Langdale with 26 round the table springs readily to mind. Lately, Paul Taylor has moved in on the catering front with his 'Bean Feasts'. Your own loo roll is not an optional extra, and with Donald around it may pay you to bring your own commode (there is an interesting idea for a new style of meet). Pete Roscoe upped the stakes again recently with his own exclusive gourmet meet. So study the syllabus and get yourself down to one of these hut meets, circulate, and have fun. This is what an ordinary member thinks of it all. – *Editor*.

DAVE EARLE'S GOURMET MEET

WELL, this particular meet was rather special. As not only was this meet well organised by the Chief Gourmet, Dave Earle, it also clashed with Martin Dale and Donald Duck's respective birthdays.

Martin started getting into the swing of the birthday mood on Friday evening. Doing the rounds of Ambleside's pubs, starting at the Golden Rule, passing on to the Unicorn, then on to the Salutation. Several were downed in there, followed by one in the White Lion, the Royal Oak, the Sportsmans and finally finishing back at the Rule. Of course, Martin never drinks alone! Helping him celebrate were those other great Larrupmen, Al Peel, Sean Smith and Steve Swindells.

Most people were already at the hut by 11 p.m. In rolled Martin and Co, merry to say the least! Then began Round 2 of the session! Out came the whisky, brandy and beer cans from the carry-out. By 1.30 a.m. most people were in bed. The hut was so packed that even the kitchen floor was utilised.

Saturday morning arrived far too early for some people. Thick heads abounded so bottles of aspirin were quickly administered along with pints of tea to wash them down. Sean Smith, Steve Swindells and Mark Planner were feeling rather adventurous by declaring they would like to go for Bowfell Buttress in the pouring rain. Unfortunately the attempt failed. Sean, Steve and Mark had to retreat – to the pub, of course! Most people festered around the tea and gear shops of Ambleside. Dave Earle and Donald Nichol did some hill walking then went into Ambleside for the epic shop for the giant cook-out.

At 5.30 p.m. Dave started preparations for 23 suppers. By 7.15 tea was ready to be served. The first course was French onion soup with French bread, followed by pork in cider, sprouts, carrots, creamed and roast potatoes. The meal was a credit to Dave Earle; a delicious meal indeed, accompanied by some excellent wine provided by Pete Roscoe. There was ample wine because many of the guests had brought their own also.

The main course was followed by creme caramel (raw liver in blood! – *Ed.*) precariously transported from Dave's house all the way to the hut. Only God knows how it survived the journey intact. This was followed by cheese and biscuits and coffee.

After the meal the presentation of the surprise to Martin and Donald. The cake was produced, the candles were lit, then Martin and Donald were called upon to cut the cake, blow out the candles and pose for photos. Donald gave a speech and Martin, who was well and truly in the mood for laughs, so much so that he decided to give us all a mannequin parade of the shopping he had just acquired that afternoon. Very snazzy hooped tights, pink and black hoops! Really the tops in crag fashion, although the lad may have to wait until next spring to give them an airing.

After the supper some of the ladies and gents went up to the Three Shires for the last hour or so. The ones who stayed behind at the hut finished off the wine and did the dishes.

People got off to bed earlier than the previous night.

Sunday morning dawned and quite a few people started out early for the hills. It was another lousy day. The climbers were rather fed up and so to compensate they went into Ambleside visiting the café and then the climbing wall at Charlotte Mason. Some of them via the Golden Rule, of course.

To sum the weekend up, Dave's meal was great. The company equally enjoyable. I hope it's not too long before there's another gourmet meet (careful, Carole). The only thing left to say is "Thanks Dave and all the other people involved who made the meet a great success".

CAROLE BAMBER

COACH MEETS

NOT for many a long year have coach meets enjoyed any great popularity with the Fylde M.C. They had a bit of a renaissance whilst the Junior F.M.C. existed as it provided an 'In House' team of about 15 to supplement those interested from the main club. Since the Junior F.M.C. was wound up coach meets have limped along at three or four a year to provide a basic need for a small caucus of members. In some ways it is a pity because coach meets provide the opportunity for the very best of club meets with ample chance for members to mingle both before and after the hill day. We have had very many excellent coach meets over the years and made ample use of the facility of getting off the coach at one end of the country and getting back on again at the other.

The Club's thanks are certainly due to those meet leaders who have worked so hard chivvying the members to take part. I do not recall anyone wishing they had not been on a particular bus meet. They have always been such fun on and off the hill. I do remember, however, with some amusement, a mini riot when certain upstanding club members decided they were being asked to leave the bus at a point they considered was not the 'Official' start of the Dovedale Derbyshire walk.

All this trauma has led to a dearth of good literature about coach meets so I have chosen a small ditty written by a new member on her first ever meet with the Club. That it is by Deborah Mabbett makes it a bit poignant and touches on another fragment of club history but her infectious good humour and enthusiasm shine through and the Club is shown as an amusing collection of individuals (though I never did know why I became the 'Oldest Swinger in Town'). Except for P.H.R. and one or two others we never did learn to use a map and compass. – *Editor*.

THE F.M.C. AS SEEN BY A NEW MEMBER

EIGHT o'clock prompt and the coach set off again heading for the Langdales and willing to pick up any person who was foolish enough to be wandering the streets dressed in waterproof garb, carrying a large sac containing mainly food and sporting the latest style in size 10s. Approaching St. Walburgas and a bleary-eyed character stepped out dressed in the aforementioned manner, clutching her breakfast, a cheese doorstep, proceeded to crawl onto the bus and settled easily to her job of coach organiser (Big Liz, I suspect. – *Ed.*).

Next stop Poulton, where we picked up the 'Oldest Swinger in Town' and a few others and then on to the Hollies where I began to get rather alarmed. Where was our meet leader? What sort of club was I hoping to join? (Maybe they won't have me after reading this). [No chance! – *Ed.*].

Still we carried on. At the Little Chef where a brief stop for eight No. 15s, nine No. 14s and one No. 49 were ordered. The two young waitresses were last seen arguing as to who the smooth-talking ladies' man fancied most.

Arriving at our destination we donned appropriate garb and grouped up accordingly, some looking like walking hardware stores. [Could this be J.D.S. – *Ed.*].

The expedition was underway and the group wound their way up Mickleden to Rossett Gill. They went in search of paradise and found howling biting winds and snow. Soon the path disappeared and whilst the 'small man with the flat hat' who is chief promoter of the R.A. Alpine holidays was assessing with great deliberation the whereabouts of the party we did the most sensible thing in this situation, had our lunch. The plan was to aim for the nearest peak by the most strenuous route, chose a number like 162 and set off.

Meanwhile not a 100 miles away the advance splinter group attempting the Langdale Horseshoe spent half their time being shown the way by a couple of walkers and then after leaving them proceeded to become lost and came down to their surprise at Mickleden.

A further splinter party climbed Stake Pass in the rain and when on the summit were dismayed to learn that the youngest members of their group had little faith in their abilities in map-reading with the visibility down to 5yds. The plan to descend was met with relief and interspersed with a play in the snow.

Then tragedy struck in the form of cramp; well, it was an excuse for the former client of the chief masseur to repay the soothing, warmth-giving treatment. The client's technique was not good enough though.

The motley crew turned back, the blizzard closing in, the snow transforming one person into a unicorn and the scene was Sickle Moon, no, that was last Wednesday this was Esk Hause, or was it Great End, or could it be Allen Craggs?

All-in-all my introduction to F.M.C. with its variety of members, the old swinger, the little man with the flat hat, the masseur, the sunburn inflicted, the person advertising ski wear, the gentleman and the lady who suggested a ski lift similar to that on Rivington Pike should be installed to help her 'climb' higher, was a memorable occasion. I thoroughly enjoyed my introductory day as I understood everyone did when we chatted over a drink on the way back.

D. MABBETT



THE FELL RACE/RAFT RACE WEEKEND

HELD at Little Langdale, this weekend has long been popular with members and has become a real Club meet, mustering plentiful support from a wide spectrum of members. All sorts of unlikely contenders materialise out of the mists of time and do their bit to earn beer and hot dogs. A festival atmosphere often pervades the whole weekend. At one time we also had support from the Vagabonds and other feats of strength and daring used to take place after the main events such as tug-of-wars through the ford.

In good climbing weather the timing of events can be adjusted to allow for rock climbing. Long summer days amply allow for both. The raft race can provide great fun with all sorts of craft taking to the water from a Le Mans start at Little Langdale Tarn to the footbridge at the ford.

It is always nice to see some of the Club's real fell runners turn up for this event, often on their way to an afternoon event elsewhere, so we get the chance to renew old acquaintanceships. One such gentleman, who we see far too little of, always arrives in a Fiat roller-skate. If we all drove these amazing vehicles the car parking problems could be solved as about 25 of them would fit into the car park!

As an 'official' parent I always enjoy seeing a fair sprinkling of the Club's younger generation up and taking part in the Club's activities. It must be healthy for them to be introduced at an early age to beer, mountains and the superb companionship that they provide. I don't like being beaten by them though and I haven't spoken to the Reeves' children since July 1982.

Sometimes with the right crowd present, ie all consenting to the frivolities taking place if not actually taking part in them, the weekend can be truly superb. The hut siege of 1986 mentioned in Martin Pickup's article which follows was a case in point, in which teams of savages were repulsed by those inside the hut. Mike 'early to bed' Penn was amazed to see a broom handle come through the dorm window operated from the top of a siege tower and deftly remove a defender from the top bunk. He presumed he was dreaming and nodded off again! - *Editor.*

THE F.M.C. FELL RACE - A BRIEF HISTORY

by MARTIN (The Toad) PICKUP

THE Fell Race was first run in 1978 and has been held every year since. It was the brainchild of Doc Robin Norris. It is rumoured that Doc only got into fell running as it gave him an excuse to wear Di's fishnet tights. Sadly for the fetishists among us they proved to be insufficiently stretchy and Doc's partner had to tear them from his legs halfway up the first hill in the Karrimor Mountain Marathon - I wonder what the other teams thought? Anyway Doc decided that a handicap event might go down well with the Club. He organised the first two events and then unfortunately moved away from the area.

The race is usually held around the second Sunday in July and the original route has remained unchanged from that devised by Doc. Approximately four miles and 900ft of ascent (See map and route description at the end of this article).

After Doc's departure Eddie Craig took over the organisation for the 1980 and 1981 events. Barrie Crook did the honours for 1982, '83 and '84 and I have organised things since. Organisation involves flagging and de-flagging the course, deciding the handicaps and, most important, arranging the beer and hot dogs. With regard to the handicapping the most critical pointers are an ability to ignore all manner of feeble excuses - piles, smokers' cough, varicose veins, etc. This must be coupled with skills in assessing degrees of deathly pallor, size of bags under eyes, beer gut, etc.

The first event attracted 29 entrants and the race has proved popular ever since. In 1985 there were 39 runners and the average has been over 20. Dorothy Jowett can claim the slowest ever time (unrecorded) in the inaugural event when she carried on up the track towards Wetherlam and sat down and had a sleep in the sunshine. In a similar vein that arch competitor Kath Fielding has been known to pick pretty flowers on the way round. At the sharp end however, Stamina is drunk; warm-ups, stretches, etc., are indulged in and pre-race nerves keep the Little Langdale septic tank working overtime.

A trophy - the Jack Fairburn Trophy - was provided in 1980 and is awarded each year to the first over the line (not necessarily the fastest). In 1981 Eddie was nearly 'drummed out of the Brownies' when he arranged the race on a Saturday much to the chagrin of Pete Roscoe (The Bergfuhrer) who couldn't attend. Ed promptly handed over the future organisation to Barrie Crook (of balding bespectacled fame) and sadly Mr. Roscoe's flat cap hasn't been seen at the race since.

The race has introduced quite a few members to the joys of fell running and many of the climbing lads turn up regularly to enjoy a good thrash - some do the race as well.

The Course Records have been as follows:-

<u>Year</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
1978	Robin Norris 36.30	1978 Barbara Sealey 58.04
1979	Robin Norris 34.30	1980 Barbara Sealey 46.47
1986	Martin Pickup 33.49	1988 Vivienne Broughton 46.32

Most years - water level permitting - a raft race has been held over the same weekend. There are few (if any) rules with a Le Mans start from Little Langdale Tarn and the finish under the footbridge at the ford. Craft have included bin bags and empty Boddy bottles and the Golden Duck Award is presented to the winner at the Annual Dinner.



botanical pursuit

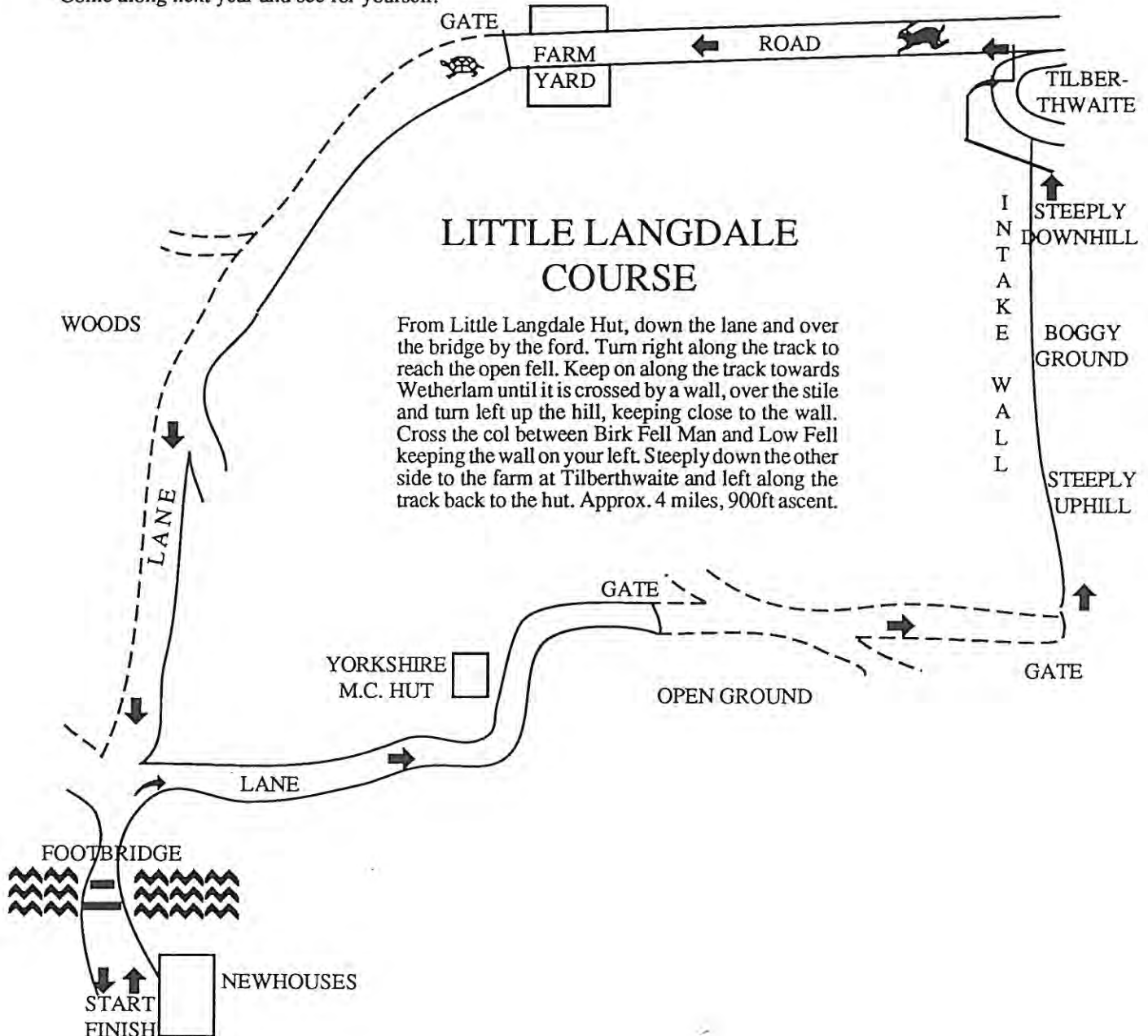
The Fell Race Roll of Honour is as follows:-

Year	Handicap Winner	Fastest Runner	Time
1978	Dave Archer	Robin Norris	36.30
1979	Dave Earle	Robin Norris	34.30
1980	Barrie Crook	Chris Thistlethwaite	34.50
1981	Pamela Ashton	Martin Pickup	36.10
1982	Sue Reeves (& Ben & Jessica)	Martin Pickup	35.54
1983	Mark Harding	Mark Harding	35.25
1984	Liz Rawcliffe	Martin Pickup	37.50
1985	Debbie Greenland	Tony Welsh	35.00
1986	Simon Fenna	Martin Pickup	33.49
1987	Mike Penn	Alan Peel	35.55
1988	Don Nichol	Michael Dagger	36.20
1989	John Parker	Martin Pickup	34.04

In all, approximately 100 different members and 15 guests have toiled round the course over the 12 years (one person 12 times - guess who!). Long may it continue. MARTIN PICKUP

In penning this article the memories crowd back - Martin Dale galloping from the start showing his cheeks - not a pretty sight; Stu Gascoyne's technical yawn after crossing the line; Dave Earle like a young Adonis, resplendent in Belgrave Harriers vest [I wish it were true-Ed.]; Chris Ikin at Robs Hole looking sensational; Eddie Craig immaculate in running gear by Rohan; Big Liz thundering down the Tilberthwaite track; paths turned to streams in 1981; stifling heat in '82 and '83; the nightmare hut seige of 1986.

Come along next year and see for yourself.



FELL RUNNING

By MARTIN PICKUP

"TOAD the Terror . . . The Lord of the lone trail . . . The miles were eaten up under him, as he sped he knew not whither, fulfilling his instincts, living his hour, wreckless of what might come to him." The Wind in the Willows – Kenneth Grahame.

Pre-Amble

A few issues ago, the Editor [Eddie Craig] referred to the fact that he had not had any articles from the Fell Runners in the Club and said, "What a modest lot they must be". Of course, he knew damn well modesty didn't enter into it – not in my case, anyway. If there had been anything to crow about he'd have been the first to hear.

The truth is, I am to fell running what the Editor is to Fleet Street (or big wall climbing or cordon bleu cookery or piste skiing – the list is endless). In short, a trifle insignificant. I usually finish in the last third of the field and have never yet managed to beat the first lady! I suppose my main claim to fame is that Ross Coates once knocked me down in the Blisco Dash. She was on her way down and I was still plodding up.

However, every dog has its day.

Introduction

Last Autumn I was doing some Armchair Mountaineering when, glancing through some race results, I realised that in almost every race I only needed to improve by approximately two minutes per mile (a mere seven seconds per hundred yards) to finish in the first 10. My times for my training runs have gradually improved by about one minute per mile. How could further improvement be achieved? Flexi-time now allowed lunchtime runs and by concentrating specifically on hill running it could be possible. If I could manage to RUN up all the hills my times should improve dramatically. Well, there was only one way to find out and last winter saw me keeping at it as hard as any Olympic hopeful. Before reading further, the reader is recommended to obtain a copy of the stirring Vangelis theme music to 'Chariots of Fire', switch on and settle into a chair. Ready? Now read on.

The Race

The Kentmere Horseshoe Fell Race – 11th April, 1982

A watery sun shone down on Kentmere and the valley seemed, at first glance, to be its normal quiet self – the smoke rose straight from the farmhouse chimneys and the clouds were well clear of the fell tops. But look closer and a bustle of activity is detected; around the village hall and in the fields below the farm figures move purposefully. More cars arrive and disgorge their tracksuited occupants. The second event in the 1982 British Fell Running Championships is about to take place.

I had arrived in plenty of time, trotted to the bog, collected my number (nerves of steel, that's me) and was now trotting down the lane for a warm-up. I fell in behind two runners in Clayton vests, John Reade and Sean Livesey. This could be interesting.

"Don't go off too fast, Sean. Just keep it steady till we hit the Fell and then you can pass as many as you like."

Now Reade had been sixth in the '81 Nevis and fifth in last year's championship and might just be a man to listen to. I decided there and then to try and stick with them for as long as possible. Ten past one, the start was at 1.30. Back to the car to rest and to keep warm before jogging to the start. I felt good, only three pints last night, honey butties and staminade for breakfast – fit as a butcher's dog. This time I was here to race not just complete the course.

The start is in the field below the village hall and begins with a two hundred yard uphill dash to a 6ft hole in the wall.

"Get back; get back."

To fell runners everywhere this instruction means 'shuffle forward'. I had managed to get up front with the Hard Elbowed Brigade when the starting pistol fired. Eyeballs out to try and reach the gap before the 318 others. Not too bad, I must have been about 30th through and was reasonably in touch with the leaders. A mile or so later we left the road for the open fell and I still felt comfortable (well not actually physically sick). The path steepened and I kept telling myself I could keep running. "It's not as steep as Parlick. Pretend Jan Leeming is running in front, in a backless dress . . . with a slit skirt . . . and stockings and suspenders . . . and pink . . ." I digress. It's all psychological – count five hundred double paces and then do the same again with the other leg.

By the time we had reached Kentmere Pike I'd caught up with her and I felt her shiver as I tore the flimsy dress from her lithe body – wrong story, start again.

By the time we had reached Kentmere Pike I was last of the leading group of 13 which included John Wild (Cumbria Fell Runners and RAF Cosford), John Reade, Mike Short (Horwich), Dave Cartridge (Bolton), John Broxap (Keswick) and others I couldn't recognise through my steamed-up specs.

Wild and Broxap pulled away a bit on the fairly level stretch to Nan Bield Pass and I hung on to the others. A number of sheep trods contour round towards The Pass and I found myself on a particularly good one a little higher up than the rest and managed to gain a few places. Surprisingly, as I reached the rough descent to the Pass only Wild, Broxap, Short and Reade were in front. Now, I have always felt I was pretty fast on the rough descents (bloody stupid some might say). The secret is to ignore the other runners and spectators, just watch the ground and hope for the best, and if anyone is in the way 'poop poop' like the demonic driver, Toad. I'd never been in a position to see the good lads descending before and they didn't seem to be hanging about but I quickly caught Wild – mincing about like a girl guide. He seemed a little surprised at my 'poop poop'. Perhaps it was a bit cheeky, him being current British Fell Running Champion and all, but he should have got out of the way a bit quicker. At the Pass shelter I was 20yds or so ahead and had gained on Short and company.

It was a different story on the way up the other side. The cheers of the fell walkers we passed helped, nay forced, me to keep running but Wild went past everyone and pulled steadily away on the drag up to High Street. By this time it was really hurting and I took a look round to see where the chasing group were. This action, in itself, suggested that I'd given up the race and it was now about survival. The descent past Thornthwaite Beacon revived me and it would have been nice to have time to look at Windermere stretched out to the south. At this point I realised there were two more steepish descents where I might make up

ground and the Garburn Pass track itself is too rough for the sprinters to have it all their own way. I contoured round Froswick with John Reade and Mike Short and we could see Wild ahead of Broxap, less than two minutes in front. I had to walk a bit going up Ill Bell and this let the other two get ahead again. A quick swig from the summit marshal's flask and on. As I began the descent I saw the others ahead – I could hardly believe my eyes. All four of them were following the wall down towards the summit of the Pass. Surely they knew that the check-point is well to the east of the summit and by far the quickest way in such dry conditions was to bear left and cut across to the Gully? I was still in with a chance. The realisation sent the adrenalin going and I went across the dry marshland like a rat up a drainpipe [Could that be the rat I've been smelling for most of this article! – Editor]. Down the steep, tricky gully section and there was the Pass and Kentmere. I daren't look round but I was sure I was in front; "Mustn't make a mistake now". Along the rough boulder-strewn track, almost panic-stricken. Groups of spectators clapping all the way now. On to the tarmac and two hundred yards to go to the finish field. I heard more clapping behind and looked round to see Wild closing fast, but I'd reached the field gate. Down the hill, along the tapes – I could hear him right behind and forced myself to sprint – beaten him by a midge's. We shook hands and I collapsed in a gasping heap, people were slapping me on the back.

"Hey – come on mate, wake up. The start's in five minutes."

"Eh! What! Oh! Right – must have dozed off. Yawn! I feel knackered."

And now the reality.

Official results, Kentmere Horseshoe – 12 miles, 3,300ft of ascent. 319 starters plus six ladies.

1st	J. Wilde	1.20.49	(Course record)
2nd	J. Broxap	1.23.50	
3rd	J. Reade	1.23.56	

F.M.C. Positions:

201	Paul Garner	1.49.44	(B. Crook please note for
222	Martin Pickup	1.52.31	handicapping purposes).
262	Brian Wilkinson	1.59.27	

Sue Parkin won the Ladies' Race in 1.46.46

In addition to Paul, Brian and myself, Eric Maymon and George James have been seen in various fell races recently.

Conclusion

The statistically minded will be able to calculate that I again finished in the last third of the field and failed to beat the first lady. It is obvious that all the others heard about my training, saw the threat and increased their's correspondingly. I am applying to Gale's and Staminade for a refund and may stick to fantasizing over the BBC News at weekends in future. Apologies are offered to J. Wild, etc., for any unintended libel in the foregoing.

8TH ANNUAL F.M.C. FELL RACE

QUOTE: "Gasp gasp. It would have been O.K. but somebody put a ruddy great hill in the way." – unknown (possibly Sean 'Psycho/Ten Pint' Smith 'The Gazelle').

Saturday night at the hut must have been like the Black Hole of Calcutta or Custer's Last Stand – bodies everywhere. Thank God I had an excuse for not stopping – I'd lost my glasses in the murky depths of Rob's Hole during the Raft Race and had to go home for my spare pair (thanks to George James and Sons for recovering the originals).

Sunday dawned grey and miserable and threatening clouds looked down on Little Langdale. The car park and lane were jammed with cars. The miserable weather meant that the climbers had no excuse for not competing and some even began to appear enthusiastic. Thus it was that a record field of 38 assembled for the race.

Somehow, as I struggled with the handicaps, I couldn't help thinking some of these honest-eyed young lads were trying to pull the wool over somebody's eyes. Could it be me? Suspicions were confirmed when lean, fit Sean Smith set off down the track towards Wetherlam like a graceful gazelle, poetry in motion. The intention of the handicapping was that everyone should arrive back at the cottage at 12 noon. As it turned out 19 of the 38 arrived between 11.58 and 12.02. Only five beat the handicapper by more than two minutes and the remaining 14 were victims.

Congratulations to everyone who turned out, particularly Debbie Greenland, overall winner (but I won't be as kind to 'unknown quantities' next year); Tony Welsh, who was the fastest on the day and probably equalled the course record; and vet George James, second fastest in 36 minutes. Other notable performances were from the Norris Twins aged nine, 48 mins, 55 secs and 53 mins 32 secs; Henry Iddon and Martin Dale, over four minutes faster than their previous performances and Dave Earle, five minutes faster than his last run.

Thanks to helpers Andy Dunhill (gate), Phil Caley (start/finish), Gill Llewellyn (gate and hot dogs), Ed. Craig and Dave Earle (helping with flags).

Unfortunately the 'official' Pickup kitchen clock decided to play up. I'd fought tooth and nail with the wife for it to give the Event a bit of class – sick! It had been used previously and had given no problem but alas, this time, its minute and second hands didn't seem to be synchronized. The result was that some people who timed themselves with their own watches differed by 30 seconds or so from official time, whilst others agreed with it. Tony Welsh timed himself at 34.30 thus equalling Doc Robin's course record from 1979. The validity of Doc Robin's time is itself in doubt as the race was not timed to the second that year.

Many apologies and needless to say it will be done properly next year.

'Official' times and placings are given over the page. Beer and hot dogs were provided after the race and the rain held off until it was time to collect the flags. All in all, a very successful event and some very fast times considering it was very warm and all these climbers claim never to have run in their lives before.

Handicap Placing	Name	Handicap Time	Actual Time	Actual Placing	Handicap Placing	Name	Handicap Time	Actual Time	Actual Placing
1	Debbie Greenland	26.00	51.00	26	19=	George James	36.00	36.00	2
2	Stu Gascoyne	29.35	36.35	3	19=	Mark Broughton	36.00	40.00	7
3	Simon Whittaker	31.00	44.00	15	21	Henry Iddon	26.10	43.10	12
4	Paul Greenland	31.15	38.15	5	22=	Simon Fenna	26.50	49.50	24
5	Roger Brookes	32.00	39.00	6	22=	Steve Sherrington	36.50	43.50	14
6	Pete Llewellyn	33.00	43.00	11	24	Martin Pickup	37.00	37.00	4
7	Martin Dale	33.20	43.20	13	25	Vivian Broughton	37.32	52.32	27
8	Mark Jackson	33.25	40.25	8	26=	Wendy Welsh	37.35	62.35	32
9	Don Nichol	33.35	46.35	19	26=	Andrew Norris	37.35	53.32	29
10	Ed Craig	33.45	40.45	9	28	Kevin Stephens	39.08	46.08	18
11	Alan Peel	33.50	40.50	10	29	Glen Brookes	40.03	53.03	28
12	Patrick Norris	33.55	48.55	21	30	Trudy Hoydle	40.18	65.18	33
13=	Ben Lovatt	34.00	59.00	31	31	Di Norris	40.24	55.24	30
13=	Sean Smith	34.00	49.00	22	32	John Crahan	42.26	49.26	23
15	Tony Welsh	35.00	35.00	1	33	Liz Rawcliffe	43.50	78.50	34
16	Dave Earle	35.40	45.40	16	34	John Denmark	47.50	47.50	20
17	Barrie Crook	35.45	50.45	25	35	Sue & Sara Denmark	57.25	82.25	35
18	James Greaves	35.50	45.50	17	36	Kath Fielding	82.00	107.00	36

MARTIN PICKUP (Organiser)

RAFT RACE

BANDS again played and bunting once more flapped gently in the breeze. It was the day of the F.M.C. Raft Race. The course had never been in better shape with the river a foot deeper than usual, running dark and swift. There was a huge turn-out for this event, making full use of the wettest summer in living memory (for some at least!). Tired of falling off lilos in the deepest parts of the river and thoroughly disliking water in any shape or form, the vice-chairman leapt at the chance to be deputy starter when the willowy Mary Aspin discovered she would be in Cornwall at the time of the event.

Seventeen craft were lined up en echelon a short way into the tarn with the contestants lined up about 50 yards away. Four hopefuls had failed to make the start which was delayed as long as possible but eventually the coldness of the day decreed warming activity had to commence.

The starter's gun echoed round the fellsides and the ground throbbed to 38 pounding feet. A maelstrom of spray enveloped the proceedings as craft and crew were hurled into the river. For the first time a couple of two-person craft were being tried out and results of this experimentation was eagerly awaited. They proved to be much faster through the deep water and team Greenland led the field by miles as they swept under Slaters Bridge, paddling furiously.

At the rear of the pack Martin Pickup ("Just call me a trained administrator") was having epics of his own and made a fairly determined effort to feature in the Mug of the Year stakes. Showing all the planning and foresight of his craft he had set off wearing his spectacles but had not taped or otherwise fixed them to his person. Thus when he turned turtle, the rest of the tail-enders were able to watch them sink serenely to the bottom of the deepest part of the river, about 10ft below the surface. Here they became the subject of much attention and a focal point for snorkel divers throughout the North-West. They were somewhat undeservedly reunited with the trained administrator some days later. But I digress.

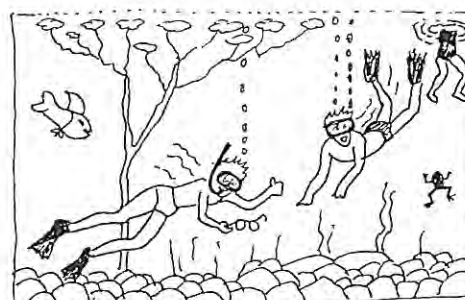
As the main body swept under the bridge the last four climbers sprinted across the field with their craft and sportingly joined the race at the proper start line well down on the main field with just a few sinkings and deflations bobbing about Rob's Hole. Every credit to Martin Dale who managed to catch up and overtake some of the field.

The focus then switched to the Finishing Line at the ford. First into view was the Team Greenland raft being furiously overhauled through the shallow water by Sean Smith on his more conventional craft.

He was beautifully rammed against a rock and jammed against the bank a few yards from the finish as he tried to overtake Debbie and Paul in a really exciting finish, and there was still only seconds in it at the line. Tony Welsh proved a strong contestant in a firm third place and the second of the two-person craft, crewed by Andy Dunhill and Wendy Welsh, was fourth.

A massively supported and very enjoyable weekend was, I am quite sure, had by all with an equally stunning turn-out for the Fell Race and some fairly stunning times. The Club's thanks to all those who took part and to those who supported and assisted in making a momentous weekend of fun, frolics, beer and good humour.

DAVE EARLE



Here's his specs!

THE "MUG OF THE YEAR"

MOST Mountaineering Clubs have an award for the most brainless exploit of the year. Ours is no exception and the Annual Dinner usually sees the handing over of a very battered pewter mug by the incumbent, who has the delightful task of keeping tabs on all the moronic mountaineering exploits throughout his year 'in office', enabling him (or her) to choose the next victim.

A history of the 'Mug' does not of course give a fully comprehensive list of dumbells, as to be awarded this fine prize one has first of all to be found out!! Tom Carroll and I kept mum and our fingers crossed for a whole year once, but fortunately for us the beans were never spilled. Tom had discovered ski mountaineering with all his usual enthusiasm and was anxious for any opportunity to dabble in this sport of kings.

The atmosphere in the Thatched House was therefore electric when I arrived one Friday night after my evening shift. It was snowing heavily and all around the white stuff lay deep, crisp and even. Excitement mounted as we planned a traverse of the Bowland Fells. Saturday dawned fine and clear with deep snow in the heart of Poulton. I carried my gear round to Tom's and together we dug out the Land Rover. Engaging 4-wheel drive we set off bubbling over with enthusiasm, only to drive out of the snow at Great Ecclestone. In front of us were green fields and heather-clad mountain tops!! What a disaster; what a let-down! What luck that we weren't found out.

If I remember correctly, an entire meet once made a very serious bid for the Mug. Top of the charts at the time was a group called "The Pirates", and unbelievably, they were being featured over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend at the Brodick Community Centre on Arran. Absolutely great. Our lads cheerfully stumped up the seemingly modest entrance charge and made their way inside. They were a little puzzled at the venerable age of most of the audience but having read their Prebble they put it all down to the Clearances and Highland depopulation.

The scale of the disaster was only revealed when the familiar (to some) strains of Gilbert and Sullivan wafted through the hall. Our brave lads had to sit it out until the interval before they could make their escape. After such an experience they needed several pints of heavy to recover.

Another reason why the "Mug of the Year" roll of honour is not fully representative of the Club's notable events is that sometimes the incumbent is unable to summon up the courage to award the Mug where well deserved. Such an incident occurred recently when an Honorary Life Member tumbled round the Dolomites on his skis for a week, removing his ability to walk. He later compounded this by falling off a scramble above the Kirkstone Inn, ending up on crutches yet again. A parrot would have been a suitable award in the absence of the Mug, passed to a much less deserving case on the grounds of self preservation.

Mr. Donald Nichol agreed to outline a brief resumé of this part of the Club's chequered history. Unfortunately for me, the Journal, and any other persons in his immediate vicinity the Duck chose to write his ditty in verse, if you can call it that. Members have been driven insane as the Duck practiced his recitation upon them and the Editor contemplated suicide on reading his final draft.

Donald's poetry is so bad it defies description and belief, and proved worse by a factor of 10 than anything McGonigall ever wrote. I stand more chance of enjoying the favours of Felicity Kendall than the Duck has of becoming the new Poet Laureate. Still, I have done my best to tidy it up a bit without destroying the essence of Donald's literary masterpiece. It only remains for you dear reader to adjust the rhythm of this magnificent work to the call of the double crested pochard as you struggle to make sense of it all. – Editor.

P.S. Readers blessed with an iron constitution may see the original poem on receipt of a suitably sized stamped addressed envelope and five current beer tokens.

THE SAGA OF THE MUG

*In a car park in Derbyshire, the mug was found,
A little battered, no longer round.
Found by the Chairman, a bloke called Tolley,
For whom speech-making was very unjolly.
I've a great idea, our Mick, he thought.
And so to Club Dinners the mug was brought.*

*First to receive it was a chap called Lockett,
Known to his mates as cheerful sprockett.
He saved up his sheckels to go to Khatmandu,
Trekking to Everest he had planned to do.
But down the steps of the airplane he did fall,
Which did his ankle no good at all.*

*Now this is not all, for our brave lad Lockett
Not at all certain the award was in his pocket
Determined to be really sure
Set off to climb the Frendo Spur.
The mug was his, it had to be,
For the next of this epic is history.
The weather forecast was exceedingly grim
And so he set off at 2 p.m.*

*The next mug is thought to be
A man whose name begins with G.
Whose epic began at the Old D.G.,
Clobbered by a lad whose sport was Rugby.
Returning to the hut he was rammed by a tree.*

*So the first of the ladies, one named Kath,
Set out one day along the path,
To walk over Crinkles and descend to Langdale,
But alas in error she discovered Eskdale.
The Mountain Rescue were called out
To drag Hells Ghyll and listen for a shout.
But safely back, if tired and chastened feeling,
Came our dear Kath, surnamed Fielding.*

*Another lady herself (and others) did frighten.
Her name, of course, had to be Iken.
Driving home from Braemar one foul freezing night,
With a mighty yellow snowplough she did pick a fight.
As she rammed it there was a fearful loud clang,
And yet all survived this terrible prang.
The journey continued without further hitch
After the 2CV had been hauled from the ditch.*

Next was a man name of Barrie Crook.
Set out to drive to the distant Ling Hut.
The journey began after attending a party
At the home of a friend named Ray Varley.
On the hills they had a wonderful day
Till finding the hut key was still at our Ray's.
The thoughts were there of breaking in but,
No easy thing to do at this stout hut.
Like Fort Knox it was, secure as any bank.
You couldn't force entry, not even with a tank.
A phone call, salvation, a bearded geologist had a key.
To the pub – bearded men; at least fifty.
And so they slept out, not a happy thought,
Three men and Big Liz in one Ford Escort.
Next day they drove to Drum na Drochit,
To return at last with spare key in pocket.
But this epic is not yet done,
For on the way back there was yet more fun.
Navigated by Liz to the Kyle they did roll,
And there they ran out of petrol.

T'was then the turn of one D. Duck
To win the mug was to be his luck.
One New Year's Day, Great Langdale their aim,
The Duck and friend, Dave Laycock by name.
The O.D.G. beckoned, the weather being dreer.
What option but to imbibe several more pints of beer,
And to wait in hope for the weather to clear.
All should have been well, but a friend at the bar
Would between pints proffer "Isle of Jura".
Chucked out at last, onto the hill,
Off they set to fight their way through,
Laycock went one way, the Duck the other,
Not feeling at all well, Oh dear, Oh brother.
Eventually he collapsed in a drunken heap
Upon that mountain so high and so steep.
Rescued, dragged down, dumped in the bog.
Talk about being as sick as a dog.
Crawled out; laid down on the car back seat,
Very ill, the drunken Duck did sleep.

A joint award then, J & B.
The crisp winter snow they declined to ski,
So a local trip, Nicky Nook it would be,
But it seems a map they never took
For they got lost around yon Nicky Nook,
Yet conditions in the Lakes were ideal to ski
So for this they received the Mug you see.

Around '84 came then our Kevin
Had several goes at getting to Heaven.
"Aurora", Dove Crag, was the place,
Where knackered and with ashen face
No strength remained to clip his gear
(Maybe due to last night's beer?)
He jettisoned it down the crag,
Retaining only his trusty chalk bag.
Who needs gear, he was heard to scoff,
At that very moment he fell off.
He also launched himself in space
From a climbing wall, with much apace.
Onto the deck he did leap,
Crashing in a broken heap.
His injuries now he displays so proud
As he recounts his exploits to the crowd.

Then Bill McCrae, that canny Scotsman,
Searching Fishers for cheap flotsam,
His eyes lit on a Grampian guide,
Bought this bargain with great pride;
That is until he looked inside.
It was an Aussie Grampian guide.

Taylor and Woodsie were the guys,
In '86 picked up the prize.
Off in the snow to climb Ben Eighe,
They were out some time, in fact all day,
Their ladies though began to worry,
Perhaps for the Rescue Team they should hurry?
But the heroes returned, everyone could relax,
But drove off in the dark, left behind their sacs.

Take heed young crag rats, of the tale of Rob,
And never go climbing with "Chamonix Bob".
Ryan Loch matter Ridge on the Aguille du Plan,
Benighted on a belay that night they did hang.
Twas later next day came the bitter pill,
For their desperate route was on the wrong hill!

A cautionary tale is that of John Cush.
In the Glasshouse Bar 10 pints did he rush.
Cycling back he took a short cut,
But his bicycle wheel went into a rut,
And our poor John bounced along on his nut;
Or rather on his face to be precise,
The result of which was not quite nice.
No work, no teeth, for three long weeks,
Hiding his face from scared kiddie's shrieks!

The current mug's Steve Halton, who edits our newsletter.
We all knew he couldn't spell, but at caving we thought him
better!

Green, greasy Gasgill Pool sump was the place
Where the luckless Steve really sank without trace!

Several others, regrettably nameless,
Had other exploits, equally brainless!

Finally I must apologise for the quality
of the preceding verse
It was meant to be just like McGonigall
but it's probably a damn site worse!

D. DUCK

[It certainly was!! – Ed.]

THE F.M.C.'S ANSWER TO DOUG SCOTT

A HERO BEFORE HIS TIME

AS I read thousands of pages of Club Journals and newsletters trying to distill the true nature of the Club through a selection of representative articles, one such tome stood out head and shoulders above all others in its clamour to be heard. A tale of such courage and valour that mortal men can just gasp in astonishment at one man's fight to live. A single-handed retreat from the icy cliffs of Fairfield by one slight figure, desperately injured, during the depths of a winter's night. A tale of boldness in the face of adversity; a feat of derring-do that astounds the reader in its fearlessness, its bravery and finally its compassion. A man driven onward only by thoughts of the Mug of the Year waiting for him in Patterdale.

I can only be referring to Rick Reeves' fight for survival. Truly a Fylde Hero before his time, it gives me great pleasure to present the following article from the erudite and mischievous pen of Eddie Craig, if only to get my own back for being lumbered with producing the Journal. – *Editor*.

RICK REEVE LIVES

IT NOW befalls me to relate a story of heroism of such proportion that I fear my humble pen can scarce do it justice. Rick Reeve having spent the day alone on the crags of Fairfield was returning down the ice-bound slopes of Grizedale to a pre-arranged rendezvous with friends in Patterdale. Having descended so far, Rick, with the unerring instinct of a natural fellsman, judged conditions to be such that progress could safely be made without the use of crampons, removed the said items and thereafter promptly slipped and broke his ankle.

And so begins an epic worthy of "Boys' Own Paper" at its most inspiring.

With freezing darkness fast falling and in such pain as can only be imagined, our hero splinted his injury with ice axe lashed by climbing rope to the broken limb and began a desperate crawl on hands and knees towards the distant lights of far-off Patterdale, giving forth the F.M.C. Alpine distress call as he went.

Meanwhile back at civilisation, the rest of the party mindful of the lateness of the hour, the coming of night and the passage of time generally, began to get alarmed. The mountain rescue were alerted (again) and Mick Tolley, heedless of his own safety, set out at their head to search the dark frozen mountains for his friend.

Fortune, they say, favours the brave; God helps those who help themselves, and so it was on this occasion. Rick's call was heard. Mick found Rick or Rick found Mick and what a scene it must have been. (Sorry about that). Can we picture their manly embrace in that moment of high emotion? Do we want to picture their manly embrace in that moment of high emotion? Or any moment for that matter!

Anyway in no time at all Rick was on his way to hospital and all was well . . . or was it? The tale of his hospital treatment is another story altogether. But see the lad himself for that one. You can't miss him, he leans a bit when he walks.

EDDIE CRAIG

LUNDY

IN THE early Sixties I had arranged to visit Lundy with Tony Wilmott but the Foot and Mouth Epidemic caused us to be asked not to go.

Since then the Granite Island, in the Bristol Channel, riding at anchor 8–10 miles offshore from Ilfracombe, has become part of the F.M.C. repertoire. During the spring months Lundy is strictly for the birds but once they fly their nests the sea cliffs become inhabited by a different population: Climbers. The island features on the club syllabuses every other year. Accommodation is varied, to suit all pockets, and access used to be by helicopter, expensive but quick; but is now by boat, slower but cheaper. If memory serves me correctly, one member managed to get off the island when all forms of transport were grounded due to very high winds, a feature of the place along with the superb rock climbing and general situations, by breaking his leg. When the rescue helicopter was knocked 50 yards sideways as it came out of the lee of the cliffs they wished they were back with the lads in the island's pub, which brews its own excellent beer.

We now get a sample of the Lundy experience. This first-class article from the illustrious pen of Paul Clarke, gives a very real taste of the climbing situations the island provides as we make a privileged ascent of "Antiworlds". – *Editor*.

ANTIWORLDS

EVER since I saw the picture of a solitary climber poised on a wall gazing upwards along the line of Antiworlds, I had been haunted by the idea of doing the route, so obviously a compelling line. Having once descended into the spectral gloom of Deep Zawn that mysterious poise provokes much room for thought; the realisation dawns that only by climbing out there will you find out what lies in the groove searing through the roof above and binds such a spell.

We climb Quatermass, a perfect crack line out to the left from where the views across the upper wall of Antiworlds reveals nothing but smoothness and adds to the mystique. Returning to the Barn I lie awake listening to the creaking with which we are haunted at night. The sound which could be a footstep on the stair or the slow swing of a body on a stretching rope. At least I share this haunting with the others but I am furthest from the stairs.

The coming of daylight raises the spirit to exorcise both ghosts. Mike is awake and about, so, hurrying breakfast, we make off across the moors in haste but are soon brought to a halt when faced with that first wall. Tension out onto it, says the description, and we, presumptuous in the extreme, thought it would blanch at our arrogance. We return to the cliff top via The Serpent and arm ourselves with pitons and hammer. Black tools for a black deed.

Even with the necessary peg belays it takes a bold heart to swing out across that wall into the cracks beyond, which open wide and lead you on like an opening door into the dark cold crypt, then slam closed as you stare the devil in the face.

The quizzical look, the unsure poise. The groove like an open mouth, a solitary fang of blood-red granite hangs there and dares you to approach. Daintily, you creep up to that fin leaving all protection behind as it hypnotises and stills you with its influence.

A hundred feet below, Mike has been joined by some of the others on their way to do Quatermass. "How's it going Paul?" calls Bob, and the sound of his voice snaps me out of a trance. Here's a piece of rock to climb, no more; no malevolence. Swing up and plant my feet well to pin groove and fin apart, they won't snap me. Edging slowly up that colossal tooth until its very width necessitates letting go of its edge and the passage is barred. Panic rises as the walls crush the will, squeezing and expelling. Black tendrils creep up from the inky water below and drag my body from the friction holds. Only a leap and swing pulls me from their inevitable grasp.

After wrestling with the diabolic below, Mike finds the savagery of the groove above provides him with some room for thought and it costs him a fall before he can break out onto the wall above and up which I must now find my way.

After the darkness below the ethereal follows. You float there above the void and bask in the brilliance. Follow a superb line of black and white to the warm world of grass and sunshine above.

In the dead of the night I lie awake and contented – until the creaking phantom disturbs my reverie. Beneath my pillow lies the hammer awaiting its use in the second exorcism of the day.

PAUL CLARKE

THE WORLD OF NEW ROUTES

WHEN the Club was formed, most new rock climbs were put up by people able to spy out a line from below and climb it on sight, placing protection as they went. As the natural lines became more and more scarce, climbers began tackling steeper and steeper rock in their quest for new routes, helped by a revolution in the protection racket. As devices became more and more efficient, climbers were able to move to situations that gradually went from the improbable to the downright unbelievable.

This move onto extremely steep rock has however necessitated a complete turnaround in ethics. Whether this is a good thing for the sport is for the individual to judge, but in the situation now prevailing the rock being ascended is so steep it cannot usually be climbed without first being cleaned off, and often protection is pre-placed. The protagonists claim that anything less would create unjustifiable risks.

Our own Martin Dale takes us into the esoteric world of first ascents with a blow by blow account of the Fylde M.C.'s small contribution to the new route tally (Malta always excepted, of course!) and explains why it could never be much greater. His terse and clipped literary style amply echoes the feelings of drama in very steep places, of the uncertainty of the outcome, of fear and loneliness at the end of a rope, and of the inevitable falls and rivalries.

Whilst you inch your way through the heart-stopping heady dramas that he unfolds and try to come to terms with the new ethics, I shall settle down in the garden and sharpen my tricounies. If there is time, and I expect there will be, I shall also oil the hickory shaft of my Alpenstock.

I found the article to be quite uneditable but it does give a very full account of the F.M.C.'s contribution to the world of rock. God be with you. – *Editor.*

FYLDE NEW ROUTE ACTIVITY – HISTORY AND ETHICS, ETC.

EVER since man first climbed mountains he has been drawn towards ascending virgin territory, always looking for challenging ways. The new line. The Fylde M.C. has been no exception. Its members have always been pioneering, searching new areas. Initially, new climbs were done for pleasure and mostly left unrecorded. Indeed, in its early days, the Club was most prolific underground, where its potholers and cavers explored many new holes. In later years, as climbing standards have risen, members have become more and more involved in the ascents of increasingly difficult new routes, not just on our Lakeland crags, but throughout the British Isles and abroad, bringing the Club quite a reputation in the climbing world.

In the early days, if a virgin crack was spotted, or other likely line, and you were feeling brave, you would attempt to climb it from the bottom to the top, placing your protection as you went. You would remove any loose rock or vegetation with your hands and if it got hard you would maybe pull on your protection and stand in it to gain height. In those days it didn't matter about style, the main thing was to get to the top first. Banging in pegs was commonplace. It is fairly likely that our members active in the early '50s ascended many new routes on local outcrops and quarries but left them unrecorded. We read of gritstone experts, George Parker and Frank Lord, to name but two, and in the recent Lancashire guide of how Alan Atkinson (Preston M.C.) and his friend from Blackpool ascended many of the obvious routes on the recently re-discovered Thorn Crag in the Trough of Bowland. Throughout the '60s and early '70s members were content to work their way through the existing routes in the guide books. Some teams were always involved in early reports of new routes. It is almost certain that around this time, Dave Morris and Dave Sharples, more affectionately known as Fingers and Lurch, climbed the wall right of the cave in the Cathedral near Little Langdale, probably with some aid. Dave and Dave, along with Mick Tolley, Fred Snalam and later Andy Dunhill and Paul Clarke, did many early ascents of classic routes in the Lakes and further afield.

As the mid-seventies Lakes boom began to roll, Paul Clarke moved to Ambleside to attend Charlotte Mason College and soon got involved in the new route scene. It was Paul Garner, however, whose name appeared in the guide books first for a new route he did on Yew Crag, Eskdale, in 1974. The route, Aegis HVS, was probably found by chance, climbed on sight, and is described as "a short but enjoyable pitch on clean rock". Fairly minor, you may think, but I bet Paul doesn't think so! Clarkey cut his teeth in 1975 on a free ascent of Route 1 on Upper Falcon down Borrowdale. Originally thought to be very hard – 6A between good bits of gear, the route unfortunately does not see much traffic, being slightly overshadowed by the neighbouring Dry Grasp. The grade has settled out at a well-protected E2,5C two stars.

Paul later that year climbed a rib on White Ghyll Great Langdale, but saw it only as a variation and did not claim his find. Ed Cleasby came along in 1977 and soloed a difficult independent start and then continued up the rib, calling it Ethics of War, and grading it E1.5B. The route was soon the centre of controversy because it was claimed Cleasby had no right to name his route, having only added a variation start. However, it soon gained in reputation for being the easiest E1 in Langdale and pleasant to boot. The grade now stands at a more reasonable HVS, 5A one star. Paul continued his new routeing in 1976 with a good addition to Shepherds Crag in Borrowdale. Stone Tape HVS, 5A started life as a variation to Little Chamonix. It climbs the very deep groove and head wall (above the traverse of the slab just before Little Cham's 'Saddle' belay.) A lower pitch was added later by the Lakeland Jackal Jeff Lamb.

There then followed a lull in the Fylde's involvement with new route activity for two or three years. Members seemed to be happy once more repeating the glut of new routes put up in the Lakes and other areas in the early seventies. This period saw the emergence of the infamous Robin 'Rupert' Greenwood, who did a lot of early repeats around this time. Also a quiet but keen Roger Brookes started climbing seriously. He spent much of his time climbing in the local quarries with his brother Glenn, who was then the better climber, often accompanied by their father. In 1977 they added a couple of routes to the esoteric Trough of Bowland Quarry. Owl Stretching Time VS gets a star, and Deceptive Bends HVS two stars, and also the accolade of "best route on the crag". Roger and Glenn continued beavering away in the quarries for some years until Glenn discovered beer and women and more or less gave up climbing. Roger, on the other hand, has emerged as one of the Fylde's most prolific new routers. The other prolific new router, Paul Clarke, always had his finger on the Lake District pulse. In 1978, whilst climbing on Pavey Ark, he decided to have a go at a line he'd spotted left of Golden Slipper.

His partners on Digitalis HVS, as the route became known, were Mick Tolley and Martin Dale. The first pitch was a bit scrappy but the second up the slab left of Golden Slipper's main pitch was excellent. Surprisingly, the route only got a mention in the 1980 Langdale guide which described it as a poor route. However, it is there for all to do in the new guide. In 1979 Paul had another good year for new routes when he climbed a couple of pleasant routes on Gimmer Crag, Dancin' Barefoot HVS and Dream Merchant VS. Both lie on the area of rock left of Gimmer Crack. Paul and Andy Dunhill were both friendly with Jeff Lamb, one of the Lakes'

new route gurus. Paul accompanied Jeff on the first free ascent of The Graduate E3 6A, up on Deer Field Crag, Far Easedale. This required many falls from Jeff to eliminate the final stubborn aid point. The guide books have been unfair to Paul over the years and again he is known as P. Smith on this occasion. In the same year, Andy had a good day out with Jeff on High Crag, Buttermere, where they put up two new routes. Nebuchanezzar's Dream E1 5B and Quest For Wisdom E2 5C are both fine routes on the right hand side of the crag. High Crag was to see more Club new route activity later.

1980 and 1981 were the years of the Slate Boom. Hodge Close became the new arena and new routes fell daily. They tended to be very bold affairs with little or only poor protection. Clarke was there again and made second and third ascents of many of the hardest routes before setting about creating his own. In 1981 he climbed a counter-diagonal to Stiff Little Fingers, Alternative Ulster E3 6A. Unfortunately, most of this fell down in 1983 along with two other routes. However, Paul's other route in the Quarry remains. Rarely repeated because of its scary nature, Play For Today E2 5C lies left of Live Theatre and was climbed with Joe Giblin. Roger Brookes was also active in Hodge, seconding Paul on a number of occasions and also adding his own route for connoisseurs of the loose and dangerous. Chance Encounter VS lives up the opposite side of the hole from the other routes – enough said. All this activity in the quarries led Paul and Roger to explore the possibilities in the Cathedral just down the lane and over the ford from No. 2 New Houses. An obvious ramp line to the right of the hole attracted their attention. After an abseil clean and top rope ascent, Clarke led the pitch, placing a couple of peg runners. The grade was E3 5C. The name, Going Underground. Roger seconded the pitch and that was that for now. There was a lot more potential here but there needed to be a further protection revolution before it could be tapped. The route lay without a repeat for at least six years. Paul was not only active on slate. In 1980 he climbed a new route on the remote Dale Head Crag down the Newlands Valley. The Butterfly Collector E2 5C was a line he'd spotted on his early days whilst fighting up the adjacent Dale Head Pillar.

In the next few years there again followed a lull in Fylde new route activity, possibly because the main activists moved to other areas, Paul to Bath, Andy to Sheffield, Bristol and then Newcastle, and Roger to Sheffield and then Bangor. Many of the obvious lines in the Lakes had gone and new routeing moved to the smaller outcrops and towards the open walls. Variations and aid eliminations made most of the news. Routes were becoming too hard and bold to climb 'on sight' from the bottom upwards. Instead, arming yourself with a wire brush, trowel, yard brush, etc., you abseiled your intended line, cleaning as you went, and maybe trying the odd move, looking for devious protection, all before actually climbing the route. The launch out on a route such as these without first cleaning and inspecting the line could often be suicidal. In 1985 a new figure emerged on the new route scene. For years Martin Dale had been climbing in the Lakes, along with the earlier activists, but in 1985 he began to spend nearly every weekend there and soon began sussing out new rock. He actually had a 'little black book' of possibilities amassed over the years. Unfortunately, many of his lines had been picked off by the locals but a few remained. He kicked off with a route on the recently developed Blea Crag above Easedale Tarn. Whilst soloing a few of the other routes on the crag an obvious arête stood out to the left of the groove of Simon Says. It was impossible to clean from that route and with no rope Dale set out to solo it with wire brush in teeth. No Flange For The Poor E2 5B gives excellent, delicate climbing according to the new Langdale Guide. A few weeks later Dale was back, this time on Pavey Ark with Roger Brookes and Al Peel. Martin had his eye on a line to the left of the classic Brackenclock. Whilst Roger and Al climbed on the East Wall he went about cleaning the route. This can be a laborious process as he was to find out. One abseil for a look showed the lower slab may go but where to go on the upper headwall? Dale worked on the upper pitch, which took a finger crack, then a steep wall leading into a scoop, before the final blank and bulging headwall, but there seemed no way up it direct and the moves to the right were wild and very dirty. He cleaned off all the lichen and dirt and checked out the protection. There was a good RP2 at the top of the scoop if you could hang on to place it, then he uncovered a small incut finger jug way over to the left which would also take a Rock 2. That was the way! Testing out the reach, he could only just manage at full stretch off a couple of eyeholes. After cleaning, the route needed a good sweep and then it would be ready for an attempt.

Roger held the ropes as Dale attempted the first pitch. High side runners on the left gave a bit of confidence and then an awkward sequence brought good holds and the belay of Brackenclock within reach. Brookes followed, proclaiming the pitch 6A. Al Peel had a go but his mind was on other things. This left the second pitch, which seemed knacky and hard. Dale pulled through the finger crack, climbed up to the scoop and managed to place the RP2. On his way down for a rest he noticed another possible placement he'd missed before. Immediately a bomber RP sat in it. Martin was up, stretched left, just about got it, and pulled over onto the belay. Rock Around The Clock E3 5A, 5C was in the bag. The guide gives it a star and states: "A difficult boulder problem pitch leads to an excellent sustained pitch up the fine wall above". Dale added a lower pitch later in 1988 whilst Andy Dunhill and Kevin Stephens were attempting the route. That was it for 1985 but Dale was back on Pavey in 1986 for another new route. 1986 proved to be a big year for the Club's new routeing activities in more ways than one. The year started well with one of the best new routes being done in April, using a new method of new routeing – nicking someone else's! At the end of April a large team went up on to High Crag, Buttermere. Most people set about climbing the routes on the Buttress but Steve Swindells had noticed a clean-looking bit of crag over to the left and went to investigate with Paul Reid. They returned later having bagged, unbeknown to them at the time, the first ascent of Foul Play HVS 5A **. Everyone wandered over to take a look and many more members repeated the excellent pitch up a steep crack in the face. The right arête also looked appealing but much harder. Martin Dale attacked it but was stopped just short of the finishing crack by an almost suicidal lack of protection. Unfortunately, a top rope was used for a move or two which robbed him of another first ascent.

It wasn't until some time later that Dale recorded the routes in the Pack Horse new routes book and it transpired what had happened. The cleaner had done his work in the dead of winter and then left his routes to climb in the spring. We were under the impression we were doing early ascents. So Steve and Paul were granted a first ascent without the cleaning effort and Martin narrowly missed out on the first ascent of Executioners Song E3 6A **. A good start to the year but better was to come up on Pavey..

Clarke had pointed out a lump of blank looking rock to Martin back in 1978 when they climbed Digitalis. Paul's usual comment came out. "There you are, Nob, get up there and make a name for yourself". The line lies up Jack's Rake to the left of a VS called Roundabout Direct. During the Indian summer of October '86, Martin decided to have a look with Andy Dunhill. Andy abbed first, declaring the crux impossibly blank but he continued down to clear the lower pitch with his bare hands. Martin wire brushed the upper part. There was certainly a lack of protection but there were a few holds. The pair only had time to clean the route. Martin then soloed the lower pitch and it went dark. They thought they would have to leave the route until 1987. The next weekend was wet then, miraculously, at the back end of October, came the perfect day. Dunhill slipped up the initial pitch and then Dale continued up the wall to below a small groove. A fair RP here spurred him on. The last pro for some distance but easier ground above the groove led to the belay. A short, pleasant top pitch and it was done. Book Of Reasons E3 5C gives good climbing but with a very poorly protected crux. The same day the boys witnessed the second ascent of Martin's earlier route, Rock Around The Clock, by Dave Armstrong, who confirmed the grade. 1986 also saw the arrival of bolts on Lakeland slate. They had already been used extensively on Welsh slate, but when the first were used in Hodge Close by Paul Carling on Limited Edition, a new era opened up, one which Fylde members were to take a major part in during 1987, the year slate climbing in the Lakes became popular all over again.

As early as 2nd May, the lads were out doing things when Martin Dale, with Al Phizacklea, made the second and third ascents of Limited Edition, then E5, after a dinnertime session in the Rule. The potential of the Cathedral Quarry was obvious to several F.M.C. members, not least Roger Brookes. He had already been involved in several new routes in Wales on the slate and possessed a bolt kit. He had already cleaned a line to the right of the window and was hungry to get it done. Dale and Brookes, along with Simon Fenna, sneaked up one Thursday night in July for a long weekend of activity. On Friday they went to Dow where Martin cleaned and inspected a line between Balrog and Abraxas. The rock was very steep and cleaning the upper half of the route was very difficult. Again the way was not clear, so Dale brushed off the lower pitch. Having done that he worked on the problem on a shunt. The moves wired, he soloed the pitch up a benign little groove at 6B. This section of rock was to be the scene of another attempt later in the month. Slightly disheartened at not being able to complete the route, the boys retired to the Cathedral. Roger finished putting in the bolts and then in the fading light went on to lead the route. Starting up the rib to the right of the hole the route takes in a couple of bolts whilst traversing left above the cave lip in an impressive position before the crux moves into the obvious bottomless groove. This is eventually quitted on the left for a fine flake crack which takes natural gear and leads to the top of the crag. The following big pie-making celebrations gave the route its name, "Night Of The Hot Pies" E2 5C. The route apparently takes a similar line to the one done many moons ago by Fingers and Lurch. With modern gear the route grade is now probably E1 5B although this has led to arguments. A couple of weeks later another slate happening was to spark controversy. Martin Dale abseiled down an arête in Hodge Close to the right of Sasquatch and cleaned the route with a view to placing a couple of bolts for an ascent. The weather during the rest of the weekend prevented this and with the return of Roger's bolt kit to North Wales it seemed like the route would have to wait for a while. That same weekend Martin and Roger did manage a couple of exploratory abseils in the Black Hole. The potential was definitely there. They vowed to return before local interest was aroused. The next weekend saw renewed activity up on Dow. Dale returned for another attempt to clean his line left of Abraxas, this time with Al Phizacklea. A peg and thread were placed but hangovers, crowds and cold won the day. The pair retired to Hodge, where Martin did the second ascent of Hoof Hearted, then also E5, now E4 6B. Phizacklea's interest in Dale's cleaned arête to the right was also kindled.

Roger returned to Black Hole in late July to add a companion route to Hot Pies. The route starts up Hot Pies and enters its main groove but where Hot Pies quits left, Roger passed another bolt by wild laybacks and undercuts up the continuation of the groove. The line then takes in another bolt on the pleasant finishing slab. Rog, however, got into hot water with the Fell and Rock for the name, which was amended to An-Alabuse E3 5C before it could go into the new Scaffell and Eskdale guide in 1988. Brookes' partners on the route, which was climbed in poor, damp conditions, were the Maltese lads Simon Alden, Noel Toledo and A. Warrington..

1987 had a poor summer and the Cathedral escaped further routeing. Phizacklea stepped in and placed a peg and three bolts in Dale's arête in Hodge and then attempted the line with Bill Birkett. Neither could lead the route; in fact they both failed to top rope it as well. Several weeks later Al broke the news to Martin, who wasn't very happy and made Al apologise and promise to leave the route until after he'd had a go. The following weekend saw them both at Hodge for the attempt. Dale tried, fell off low down, and then bottled out on the top crux and run-out. Phizacklea also failed again on the top moves. They both deliberated over placing another bolt. Due to the poor rock, they decided to bang one in. They then both lead the route and Beaver Patrol E3 6B was born. The route has since lost some holds low down and probably gained a grade in the process.

1988 appeared and it was definitely Cathedral year. A working weekend in May allowed Martin Dale and Roger Brookes time to clean and place bolts in two lines on the Saturday afternoon. On Sunday they were ready. Dale tried his first. Up the rib of Hot Pies to its first bolt, then a step right before long reaches on good holds bring the next bolt into reach and then the crux. A difficult lay away sequence enables a standing position to be gained and better holds lead to good ledges to the left of the Geireagle-like ramp above Going Underground. Some difficult and unprotected moves up the ramp lead to the last bolt, a step right and awkward move round a nose bring the easy finishing groove in reach. Roger followed with a bit more difficulty, then Trevor Atkinson, who had arrived, followed the pitch, with frantic bicycle movements, to pass the crux. The grade settled at E3 6A and the name Rim Fister has since been changed by the F & RCC to Rim Fisher. Over the last couple of years the route has proved very popular and the consensus of opinion is that it is probably 5C.

Roger's route, on the other hand, proved more stubborn. On his first attempt Rog struggled with the first barrier of overhangs right of Going Underground. Another bolt was needed. Once it was in, Roger managed the fignery 6A moves to pass it. Easier climbing then led to the next roof and bolt and impasse. Roger attempted this just to the left but the moves proved too hard. He was forced into Going Underground for a move then immediately bridged back right above the bolt. The difficult climbing continued. Roger, climbing inspirationally, managed to push on to the next hold on the right where you can have a rest on a sloping ramp for your feet. Above lies a groove. Attaining it proves problematical and very on-off. There then follows a run-out to just below the top. An incredible pitch, which proved the hardest in the quarry for some time. The name however left a little to be desired - Ring Piece Activist E4 6A. The pitch has three 6A sections. The middle bolt has been passed direct on a top rope at 6B and Martin Dale, who lost all contact on the top moves, was heard to comment, "6A My Ring P..... Pull, Roger!"

These activities interested other Club members and in June Kevin Stephens cleaned the left hand groove above the window. He placed two bolts, the lower one for a belay. He sussed out the continuation of the traverse from Hot Pies and found some natural gear placements. He blagged Dave Cundy to hold his ropes on the Saturday for his first attempt, which ended just short of the belay below the groove. Kevin was determined though and returned the following day, fortified by a night in the Golden Rule. This time he made the difficult moves round the rib guarding the groove and brought across his second, Phil Morris. The back and foot groove proved wierd and the pull round the final bulge taxing. The route however was in the bag. A unique climb with another bum name - Orifice Fish E3 5C. Most of the routes received second ascents around this time from Club members or locals, Al Phizacklea accounting for a couple. Strangely, the locals did not step in to claim any of the obvious remaining lines. Roger re-climbed Going Underground, which had lost its protection pegs and consequently gained a grade, now thought to be E4 5C. Brookes had his eye on another line. In the top right hand corner of the quarry there lies a triangular slab, hanging above the overhangs. Its right hand edge forms a perfect flake crack, the last pitch of the old aid route, Pacific Pilchard Wall, which crosses the blank back wall of the quarry. Roger cleaned it and decided it shouldn't be too bad. A bolt at its foot provides a belay and an old peg halfway provides something to aim for. Roger dispensed with the pitch quickly, mainly because it was hard, very thin for the fingers, but taking excellent wires for protection. He was seconded by Phil Morris, whose hippy days provided the name - Hot Tuna E2 6A. The pitch received its second ascent almost immediately from Club members Andy Blaylock and Mick Van Gulik.

Whilst all this was going on, Phil Morris managed to slip up Newlands to climb only the Club's second new route in the valley. He had previously attempted the route which lies up grooves between Pinnacle Wall and Brandywine on Grey Buttress but was thwarted by dirty rock. He returned and cleaned it up from above then lead the route with Dave Laddiman seconding to produce Space Rats In Grey, a pleasant E2 5C. There must surely be more scope up Newlands for new routes if Club members were able to spend more time up there ferreting about. Also in July in Langdale, Mick Van Gulik climbed a controversial new route on Raven

Crag. Mick sussed out a line directly up the shield of rock avoided by Armalite, which led up the gully on the left of Middlefell Buttress. The controversy arose when Mick decided to place a peg runner in Armalite to protect his lead of the bold shield. The name of his route gives you an idea of the lead, Perfect Head E4 5C. Mick gets a severe telling off for his peg in Armalite in the history section of the latest Langdale guide. The reason being that Armalite was climbed without a peg and is not now as committing a lead, still E4 though. Food for thought and another twist in the wonderful new routes game.

In August, the scene shifted back to the Black Hole, where again it was Roger and Martin who were cleaning new lines. Roger's lay up the slab left of Hot Tuna. He spent a long time working out the moves and trying not to place too many bolts. Martin, meanwhile, was having fun trying to place good bolts in the area of overhangs right of Ring Piece Activist. His futuristic line linked together a series of small grooves and ramps running from left to right into space towards the main central groove of the left side of the quarry. Roger attempted his line using a belay on an abseil rope from the bottom left hand edge of the slab. A pre-clipped bolt just to the right showed that the pitch was not going to be a pushover. Roger took several falls trying to pass this and eventually resorted to a quick pull on it. He continued to a peg and then encountered further difficulties. Dale, in the meantime, had conned local Richard Kirby into holding his ropes on his now ready line. The first section follows a slab face guarding the overhanging central groove. A sharp pull over the roof brings a tough little step right to better holds. An awkward corner lands you at the bollard and a possible belay above 5C climbing with poor gear. Suddenly, there was a large clatter and barrel load of abuse. Roger had fallen a long way past his top peg runner. He brushed himself off and decided to leave his route for a better day, or climber. Martin continued up the easy slab which slopes off to the left. A fierce pull into a bottomless groove follows, using a convenient shot hole. Here you can clip the first bolt and contemplate the very improbable ground above. A delicate step up and right, hands on poor holds under the next roof and then a balancy grope over, may find you the solution. If it does, a bolt follows and also a rapid pull and rock over in an incredible position will land you on the slab above. Moves up and right into the main groove, some natural protection, then the final slot-like roof and Darklands E4 5C will be in the bag. A real three star slate trip. The Vector of slate was what second Richard described it as. This ended a good day in the hole, which also saw Andy Dunhill and Andy Blaylock repeat Ring Piece and Pacific Pilchard Wall, Hot Tuna and Rim Fisher.

The day after saw the same teams doing battle with Martin's two Pavey Ark routes. Dale added the lower pitch to Rock Around The Clock at 5C solo whilst Dunhill and Stephens attempted the second pitch unsuccessfully. Brookes and Blaylock also had a refusal on Book Of Reasons. Both routes still await repeats by Club members. That more or less rounded up 1988 for new routes. One other happening of note was Al Phizacklea's lead of Dale's line on Dow left of Abraxas. Al was on strike for months from Vickers during 1988 and picked off many new lines including Abracadabra at E4 6B. Another route pilfered from Dale!

1989 was a relatively quiet year. The locals moved into Black Hole armed with plenty of fire and a bolt gun and picked off most of the harder remaining lines. The question of protection being placed on existing routes reared its ugly head briefly when a bolt appeared on the traverse of Orifice Fish. However, this appears to have been accepted as it is now the best place to take a stance. Roger Brookes was again active though, climbing a series of grooves which bisect An-Alabuse to give Black Hole Boys E3 6A, Roger obtaining a second from a visiting party of climbers. His other project left of Hot Tuna was also climbed by the locals at E5 6B, obviously why Roger was falling off! This brings a close to new route activity by Club members in the Lakes, however there are plenty of lines left and the next decade could see a renewed onslaught by F.M.C. activists. Let's hope so and also hope that good style prevails.

Fylde new routeing has of course not been confined to the Lakes. From Lands End to John o'Groats members have been involved in new route activity. From the north, Scotland has its Fylde new routes. On the Aberdeen sea cliffs there have been several new routes done by Tony Welsh, Andy Dunhill and Mick Tolley, including Killing Moon E1. Dunhill and Tolley were also active in the Glen Nevis area where they ascended Nobs Up North HS on one of the outlying crags. That most Scottish of members, Bill McCrae, was in on a number of first ascents on the sea cliffs of Skye, mostly with Lakes lads. John Hargreaves, better known as Basil Brush, Fred Snalem and Rick Reeves, Dave Earle and Mick Tolley have all been involved in some hair-raising stack grappling over the years. Moving south we have Northumberland, where Paul Clarke was very active in the seventies, whilst at Newcastle. He now lives in Leeds and has been very active on grit and limestone, slightly overshadowed maybe by his friend Paul Greenland. On the grit, Clarke's main contribution was probably Silk Cut E3 6B at Brimham, which he worked on on a top rope before making the lead. This is common practice on grit routes which are often protectionless. The Greenstick, as he is known, led Every Man Has His Niche E4 6B, which climbs out of the right side of Almscliff's famous niche. The pair have been responsible for many other short routes and problems. They have also been heavily involved in the new Yorkshire grit guide, Clarke and Gary Nuttall actually discovering a new crag in the process. They have also been very active on the white stuff, however it was mainly the Greensponge who has been responsible for the better routes. Tremelo E6 6B, Thin Lizzy E5 6B and Third Party Only E5 6B all at Malham, being the main ones. Paul has also made some very impressive on-sight flashes and quick Red Point ascents of some of the harder routes on Yorkshire limestone. Moving down into Derbyshire, where the Fylde has always had its representatives living in Sheffield, Andy Lewandowski and Roger Brookes have been the main activists, mainly on grit. Roger and Andy are responsible for many problems at Bell Hagg, but the main new route lies on Stanage. Andy's Slap'n'Spiule E4 6A down near Terrazza Crack on Cleft Buttress stands out and gets a star. Slipping down into Leicestershire, Roger Brookes was active for a time recently, climbing several new routes in the quarries there. Over in North Wales, Brookes was again involved in the initial slate interest in the Llanberis quarries. He had a bolt kit and used it to good effect climbing Remain In Light E3 6A, the Great Curve E2 5C and Silver Shadow E3 6A. All good routes. On the slate, though, it has been ex-member Nick Harms who has surprised everyone. He has really turned the place inside out in his search for routes and he's come up with some very impressive stuff such as A Ring In Ureas E6 6C, Prick Up Ureas E7 6C, Cwms The Dogfish E7 6C and the excellent True Clip E6 6B. In other parts of Wales, Mick Tolley crops up on a route on Gogarth's Main Cliff, just! Sunstroke HVS is one he'll always recommend you to do. Phil Morris has also been active in the Moelwyns. Over on the limestone and sandstone surrounding Chester, Mark Harding has left his mark. In the Bristol area that man Paul Clark surely had something to do with a few new routes in his time in the area. Down in North Devon the Club has made many forays onto the crags of the Culm Coast over the years but have left their finds unrecorded. One good route on Foxhold Slabs has still been left out of the new guide. The last place the Club has been active has to be Lundy Island. However, even over five trips to date the Club has failed to grasp the true potential of new routes to be found, usually content to make early ascents of the existing ones. A couple of routes do stand out, however. On the Club's first visit Roger Brookes and Phil Caley climbed a route on Alpine Buttress imaginatively called The Brick Wall E2 5C. Rarely repeated, it does get a star. At the other end of the island lies A Night Out With Doris E1 5B, climbed by Kevin Stephen and Andy Dunhill. This is supposed to be good. Most new routes are though, especially in the eyes of the first ascensionists. Well, that's a quick round British trip of Fylde new route activity old and new.

New rock does still exist; even new crags. Fylde members will surely continue to figure in development, if only on the fringes. Most new rock is so steep these days, it will only be climbed after concentrated effort. Most new route activists are full-time climbers, training for rock climbing and able to take days over a new line. Bolts have now been accepted on slate and limestone

and the accepted method of ascent is from the top downwards. In other words, put your protection in from above, then try and link them from the ground up until a clean fall-free ascent or Red Point is achieved. Other rock types suffer from varying techniques. Gritstone routes are usually climbed after extensive top roping, as getting it right first time is often a matter of life or death. Only volcanic Lakes-type rock and granite hold out as usually being climbed from bottom up; again through only after extensive cleaning and runner placements.

I feel the way forward for new routes in the Lakes may well lie with the Red Point ethic, but instead of bolts, pre-placed protection placed from above, then linked from below as with bolts. The gear would then be removed after the ascent. Of course there is also the "leave it until someone better comes along" argument. In this instance though the better man could well come along to a pre-placed route and climb it from bottom up, placing the gear on lead.

There are lines left in the Lakes which would yield to the last approach. Whether there's Fylde lads, or girls for that matter, out there now or in the future who'll be good enough to climb them is anyone's guess. I'm sure though that there'll be a few out there trying. The Fylde's new routeing history will go on and on, no doubt, and come the next journal there's bound to be another chapter on the Club's activities.

MARTIN DALE

MALTA GUIDE BOOK

ANOTHER weighty tome which crashed through my letterbox with the impact of a paving stone was a letter from Roger Brookes. He wrote asking the Club to finance his new wonder project, a rock climbing guide to the Island of Malta. He had so far failed to gain any monetary assistance from the various guide book associations, commercial interests, or the British Mountaineering Council, and required about £700 to get this idea off the ground and into the shops.

"We don't need this", I thought to myself, but dutifully brought the matter to the attention of the committee at the next meeting. To my dismay it was decided to explore the matter further and Roger was invited to attend the next meeting and put his case. He arrived with a carefully researched and impeccably costed package that was a credit to him. A considerable amount of work had been put into this project to very good effect and it came over as a quality product to which the Club could put its name with pride. Whether you felt that there was actually a market for this guide was quite another question, but the product itself shone with excellence.

Very much against my wishes the committee agreed to go ahead and finance this insane venture. I could see no reason why the world was waiting for this publication; after all, climbers wore hairy britches and climbed in the cold and wet. I mentally wrote off several hundred pounds of the Club's money and wondered what the A.G.M. would make of it all. I was even heard to mutter that I would eat my hat if we sold more than a couple of dozen copies, a statement which was to have reverberations later.

But times they were a changing, and the Malta Guide sold like hot cakes. In an amazingly short time we reached break even point and since then profits have been rolling in, some of which were donated by the author to the Dave Whitmore fund. I was made to eat my hat at the Club dinner and delicious it was, too, in every sense of the word. It was a pleasure to be wrong.

Now Roger tells the full story from the inside. – *Editor.*

MALTA NEW CLIMBS

By ROGER BROOKES P.L.C.

IT WAS a warm and sunny afternoon as I gazed out to sea; the water gently lapping the base of the cliff. High above, Andy stood balanced on a pristine white slab fiddling with a runner. Nothing unusual about that, I hear you say, except that it was the middle of winter, we were on a new route, and there wasn't even anyone else around. For this was Malta in December 1983 on my first visit to the island. Little did I know then that I would end up writing a climbing guide to the place, nor that eventually it would be the Fylde Mountaineering Club's first international publication, either! This is the story of how 'Malta New Climbs' came into being . . .

THE IDEA

After returning from Malta, having done one new route and seeing the potential for many more, I decided to return the following year. This time I came well equipped with extra ropes, jumars, wire brushes and all the paraphernalia needed for preparing modern new routes. Andy Lewandowski and Nigel Brookes (no relation) were my climbing partners and together we amassed around 30 new routes over a two week period, despite uncharacteristically bad weather. We also had the good fortune to bump into some other English climbers who introduced us to the local Maltese lads. Route information was exchanged over a beer or two and Simon Alden told me of his hopes of putting Malta on the rock climbing map. By the end of the trip I had decided that Malta really needed a new guidebook to supplement the old-fashioned out-of-date Royal Navy guide.

I put the idea to Simon and asked if he would help. Luckily for me he agreed instantly, and the project was born. All that was needed now was to climb some more new routes, write them all down, and produce a new guidebook . . . or so I thought!

THE NEW ROUTES

Climbing enough new routes to fill a small pocket-sized guidebook proved to be the easiest and most enjoyable part of the whole exercise. Between 1983 and 1987 I visited the Maltese Islands no less than five times, climbing nearly 60 new routes with various partners including Andy Dunhill, Andy Lewandowski and Stuart Gasgoyne from the Fylde Mountaineering Club. In addition, various other British climbers recorded details of routes they had done in a new climbs logbook kept by Simon Alden on Malta. Finally, I also had letters published in the British climbing press asking for details of any routes people had climbed in Malta since publication of the Royal Navy guide in 1971. This, in fact, yielded some interesting information. I even had a 'topo' diagram sent to me by two Italian climbers!

WRITING THE GUIDE

It's one thing scribbling first ascent details in a new routes log; quite another transforming them into something that everyone can read and understand! The significance of this statement did not really hit me until I started trying to put the first tentative draft of the guide together. I had my own neatly typed route descriptions in one format plus several other people's information in another format, as well as various hand-written notes, rough diagrams, photographs and photocopied log-book pages! On top of all this I was receiving new information for inclusion almost every other week. How to put it all together proved a major headache, until I hit upon two ideas. The first was to use a layout for route descriptions, etc., that had been tried and tested in a British guidebook already. The second was to take up an offer of a word processor at Sheffield Polytechnic, courtesy of 'Scanner' Cram, a computing colleague of Stuart Gasgoyne.

From then on it was a matter of creating files, page-breaking, editing and consulting menus, etc. I don't know how many hours I spent in front of that computer screen but it certainly seemed like a lifetime some days!

FUNDING THE PROJECT

By 1986 I had the bulk of the information on computer in a form most people would recognise as a guidebook. I also had several maps, diagrams and photographs for inclusion. The one thing I did not have, however, was the means to pay the printing

and publication costs involved. Unsuccessful approaches had been made to the Maltese Tourist Board, the Royal Navy Mountaineering Club and the British Mountaineering Council and on more than one occasion I nearly abandoned the project altogether [Heaven forbid!—Ed.].

It was at this stage that I approached the Committee of the Fylde Mountaineering Club for help. A thorough discussion of the merits and demerits of supporting such a project took place over two committee meetings before the Club finally decided to fund and publish its first mountaineering guidebook. I was both relieved that I would not have to worry about finding a backer any more, and overjoyed that my work had not been in vain. I could now concentrate on putting the finished product together. The only condition was that any monies the Club put into the project would be repaid by the initial sales of the guidebook. After that any profits would be split fifty/fifty between the Club and the authors.

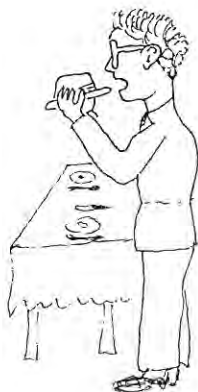
PUBLISH AND BE DAMNED!

After six months more work I was ready to take the manuscript to the printers on Malta (they were far cheaper than any in Britain). A few frantic last-minute loose ends, such as the list of first ascents, and the index of climbs, were tied up in Sheffield before I left for a two-week climbing trip to the 'friendly isles'. During this 'holiday' Simon Alden and myself amalgamated my manuscript with his diagrams, before we delivered the completed work to the printers. Oh, I almost forgot; we also did some great climbing, including some more new routes which did not quite make it into the guide!

In April 1987 Malta New Climbs was published, adverts were placed in the climbing magazines and I gave several slide lectures on Maltese Rock. Then the difficult task of distributing the guide began. Initially, I sold small numbers of books to any climbing shop that would take them. Several other Club members also helped in this onerous task. Later, however, as demand increased, the mountaineering publishers Cordee took over the distribution side of things.

Would the guide sell enough copies to recoup the printing costs and make Dave Earle eat his hat? The answer was a resounding YES. In 1988 break-even point was reached and passed, to show a modest profit for both the Club and the guidebook writers. 1989 was even better, with total profits to date amounting to over £300.

I would like to think that the Club's confidence in the project and in myself has more than been proved. I would hope that should another similar opportunity to support a mountaineering publication ever occur equally enthusiastic backing would be given to it [I'll get another hat—Ed.]. I for one am indebted to the generosity of the Club and the vision [!—Ed.] of its officers who helped me to achieve my dream. Malta has been put on the rock climbing map for an ever-increasing number of British climbers and standards there have risen to E.S. or more. This is due in no small part to the efforts of many in the Fylde M.C.



THE HIMALAYAS

THIS, the greatest mountain range on earth, had long remained far more mystical than real to the true-born Lancastrians, and others, that made up the Fylde M.C. No one could have imagined in the early fifties, as they potted round the Lake District in Minor 1000s and motorcycle combinations, looking for a spot to convert to a mountain hut, that the travel revolution, linked with undreamt of affluence and holidays would one day shrink the world, that the Club could field a Himalayan expedition.

Over the years, members were able to spend much greater amounts of time in the Alps and other great ranges, climbing routes of increasing difficulty. The base line of competence and experience on snow and ice mountains continued to grow, along with better transport links and more time and money, both here and abroad.

Eventually, our members began trekking in the greater ranges and they, and others, brought back an ever-expanding wealth of experience, so much so that this country was soon able to mount small-scale trips to some of the less severe parts of the Himalayan chain. Drawing on this fund of information, Club members at last felt able to rise to the challenge of the greatest mountains on earth with every chance of a safe return to the Fylde.

As part of the fund-raising activities the British Hagshu Kishtwar Expedition 1987, as it became known, sold its story to the local papers. We were treated to the banner headlines, "Fylde Heroes Tackle Death Peak", which did little to allay our fears for our friends. Himalayan climbing has a fatality rate of about one in eight and the entire previous Kishtwar expedition disappeared without trace. Still, we set about with a will, raising funds and the ball was soon rolling. They made a creditable attempt on the hill, absorbed the most incredible experiences, and all returned safely, enabling the rest of us to make "Fylde Hero" jokes for some time.

Andy Dunhill has provided the most excellent article that follows, which gives all the thrills and spills of the Club expedition to the Himalayas in very readable form. – *Editor*.

THE BRITISH HAGSHU KISHTWAR EXPEDITION 1987

AT LAST we were there! After twelve months of talking about it, six months of planning, and two weeks of hassle in India already behind us, we had set up our base camp below our very own Himalayan mountain.

A DREAM

Stuart Gasgoyne and I first talked about an expedition to the Himalayas in the spring of 1986 but for a long time that was all we did – talk. Over the next few months the team began to take shape; Alan Peel, Roger Brookes, Mark Jackson and Simon Fenna, and then we all talked about it.

Stuart knew someone who had been to an area called Kishtwar in Northern India a few years earlier, and recommended it as a good choice for a first expedition. He was able to help us with a lot of information and we decided to do that area. By December 1986 our objective was chosen – Hagshu, 6,330m. We had stopped just talking.

An application was made for grant assistance to the Mount Everest Foundation (the secretary is Bill Ruthven), and a formal application was made at a price, of course. Hagshu is a smaller Himalayan mountain and the fee was \$600. We began researching other expeditions to see how they had approached the organising of a trip. Planning had begun for real and it was no longer a dream.

None of us had ever been on such a trip before and we all agreed that it should remain that way. The planning process became a learning curve. We had to work out what to take – gear, food, medical supplies, etc., and how to transport it from the back room of my house to a base camp somewhere in the middle of the Indian Himalayas. If you take too much the cost of moving it becomes prohibitive, but if you don't take enough you risk disaster. In the end we probably took too much but at least we made it to the mountain and back in one piece.

A substantial amount of work was involved in trying to motivate sponsors to donating money; persuading gear manufacturers to sell equipment at heavily discounted rates, or free if you are lucky; scrounging free food samples directly from manufacturers; packing the gear and air freighting it to India. The two or three months before we left England were probably the busiest of our lives. My house resembled a combination between a post office sorting depot and a British Telecom switchboard. We all lived in different parts of the country and met periodically to make sure everything was working out OK. Most of us argued; Stuart went to sleep. The rest of us wondered whether he would go up the same mountain as us.

INDIA

On 8th August 1987 the planning and preparation in England came to an end. Alan, Roger, Simon and I flew out to Delhi and Stuart and Mark followed a week later – the adventure had begun. If any of us thought the problems would end on leaving England they were mistaken. Sitting in an airport lounge you have time to think and to worry that after all the planning and frustrations we had gone through, would there be a major problem; had we forgotten something of vital importance; would it storm all the time; would we become ill; or would we even find the mountain?

Delhi can be a nightmare or a fascinating experience. Al and Simon spent the week acclimatising to the heat, which usually meant diving for the nearest air conditioned cafe, and sorting out the transport for our next stage of the journey. Roger and I had the unparalleled experience of retrieving the gear we had sent out by air freight. If ever you send air freight to India make sure you consign to yourself and not to anyone else, but particularly not to an organisation rather than a person. The experience of Delhi Air Freight terminal can only be described as character building. We succeeded eventually and loaded the whole 600kgs and us into one taxi.

Delhi had its moments, though. Al tried to communicate with the locals; Roger ran around looking for good deals; Simon couldn't cope with the hassle; Stuart barely noticed the difference; Mark maintained his boy racer appearance and I felt at home in the squalor [!!–*Ed.*].

JOURNEY TO THE MOUNTAIN

After Stuart and Mark arrived we left Delhi and headed north to Jammu, the last major town on the edge of the foothills of the Himalayas. This pleasurable overnight journey was by air conditioned coach – it had no windows!

In Jammu we employed the services of an Indian trekking company to arrange our transport to base camp, including further luxury coach travel to the end of the road. The trekking company also organised the mules to carry our gear, porters for the last stage of the walk into base camp, and a cook boy for the duration of our stay. This was probably more expensive than organising things ourselves but it did undoubtedly reduce the hassle.

A week later (two weeks after the four of us first left England) we arrived at base camp. The trek in was fascinating. The initial stages were through heavily wooded and mountainous areas but with a reasonably high population. In each village we walked through we became the main attraction and everyone wanted to talk to us and have a photograph taken. If you enjoy trekking then a trip to the Himalayas, whether it be in India or Nepal, is a must.

HAGSHU 6300m

The porters had gone and there was only us with our cook boy and Ashwini (a representative from the trekking company, I think) and also our liaison officer Yogi and lots and lots of mountains. The first few days were spent acclimatising, as we were already at 12,000ft, and making a reconnaissance of the mountain.

As far as we were aware the mountain was unclimbed and there had been one British attempt two years earlier from this side. They had established an advance base camp in a corrie another 2,000ft higher and had then attempted the mountain by an obvious gully line. This appeared to be the best option and we established our advance base camp in the same place at a little over 14,000ft directly below the obvious gully line. I then promptly, and stupidly, got badly sunburnt and Simon and I spent the next seven days sat around at base camp waiting.

Al, Stuart, Roger and Mark set off to make an Alpine-style attempt on the mountain. As this was the south face of the mountain it was necessary to climb during the night because the hot sun in the daytime began to melt the snow and there was a risk of avalanche and stone fall. They climbed to the top of the gully in two nights. On reaching the top of the gully at around 17,000ft they dug a snow hole where gear was left during the final attempt on the summit.

The summit rose a further 2,500ft to 3,000ft above them. They set off in excellent weather, crossing a shallow glacier basin to reach the south-east ridge of the upper part of the mountain. This they climbed to a point just below a rock band only a few hundred feet from the summit. They had under-estimated the time needed to reach this point and unfortunately there was no easy way around the obstacle. Having left most of their equipment in the snow hole at the top of the gully, and with darkness approaching, they had no choice but to descend. After spending the following night sleeping and resting they had to decide whether or not to make another attempt on the summit or to descend. Finally, and largely through exhaustion, they decided to descend. This proved to be a fortuitous decision as a significant storm blew up that night and their descent down the gully became a serious proposition with some avalanches.

Advance base camp was eventually reached safely and after a good sleep they came down to base camp hungry and tired, and with Mark feeling ill. The morning after the storm everywhere was white with three or four inches of snow having fallen, even at base camp. Al, Simon, Mark and Stuart only had a few more days left and in view of the bad weather and their state of exhaustion they decided to leave, and porters were sent for. Roger and I had a little more time to spare and we decided to stay on alone.

Team photos were taken, goodbyes were said, the gear was packed and we agreed to meet up again at home, and the others left satisfied with their attempt on Hagshu.

CHIRING 6,187m

Roger and I had rested for a few days and the weather had improved, although it was noticeably colder. It was mid-September. We were no longer an expedition but just two people in a tent, at least three days walk from the nearest road. There was no room for error.

Rather than making another attempt on Hagshu, we decided to change our objectives to Chiring, another mountain in the same valley. This mountain had been attempted, and nearly climbed, by two British climbers (one of them died in the attempt) some six or seven years earlier. We knew that their route had not proved too difficult and decided to follow it. We packed away food for six days, climbing gear, sleeping bags, etc., and staggered off towards the mountain.

The approach to Chiring was simple enough; straight up to the head of the Nullah (valley). It is hard to believe that we got lost and wasted half a day. An advance snow hole was established below the mountain where we left some food. Again we had to climb the lower section of the mountain, which was a gully, at night because it was also south facing and prone to avalanche and stone fall. Having reached the top of this gully, which was straightforward, we traversed around a few small buttresses to reach another gully line. This ultimately led up to below what was the obvious difficulty – a 300ft rock step.

Our luck did not seem to be holding out, as potentially serious storm clouds were building up. After much discussion and prevarication (mainly on my part) we started to abseil down, but spent so long arguing whether to descend or not that the storm passed and we returned to dig out a snow ledge and bivvy below the rock wall.

The next day was fine and proved to be a short one as we climbed only 1,000ft to the base of the final snow field, which again had to be climbed at night. We established a bivvy and went to sleep for the evening. At around 1.00 a.m. we set off up the final 2,000ft snow field to the summit of the mountain, reaching it at 7.00 a.m. on 17th September.

We made two errors. From below, the mountain appeared to have only one obvious summit, but in fact was a series of summits and we had not followed the line leading to the highest. There was no more than 100ft difference. Roger was beginning to suffer from the early stages of frostbite and we could not risk spending another night out at that altitude. We had climbed to the south summit of the mountain and that was good enough. The second error was to have climbed the summit ice field with only one rope instead of two. This made the descent to our bivvy and gear more difficult, particularly where we had to abseil—a lesson learned the hard way!

I will always remember standing on the summit of the mountain in a sea of peaks, with a perfect blue sky and brilliant sunshine, but sub-zero temperatures. It gave me a feeling of frailty and insignificance, knowing that a change in the weather could make all the difference. There were no people, no cars, no houses, no cablecars; just mountains.

We descended the mountain and returned to base camp without incident, happy, satisfied, and exhausted.

THE TREK OUT

It was now time for us to leave and make our way back to civilisation but we had two problems – only a little money left and we were running out of food. We packed up our base camp and spent a day walking out to the main valley. I struggled with the heaviest sack I have ever had in my life. In a nearby small village we were able to sell an old rope and some other gear in exchange for food and the services of a porter. We decided to trek out to the north, crossing the main greater Himalayan range over the Umasi La (pass) – Large into the Zanskar region. The trek took four days and we arrived in the town of Padum with no food and less than £1 in Indian money. Fortunately we met some European people who were able to exchange sterling for rupees and we sold some more equipment to give us enough money until we reached civilisation and a bank.

Having eaten relatively sparsely for several weeks, and having had to ration ourselves over the previous ten days, we went berserk and ate everything in sight. This was another lesson learnt the hard way! We both made ourselves ill from over-eating and food poisoning. The second night we spent in Padum was the low point of the trip for Roger when he spent a large part of the night on his hands and knees in an earthen toilet (two holes in the ground) being sick and suffering from the shits at the same time – even more character building. The journey to Srinagar was interesting – a 30-hour journey in the back of an open truck along a pot-holed dirt track in the scorching hot sun.

CONCLUSION

This expedition was really six friends on their first Himalayan trip. I believe we all learnt more about ourselves and about life, preparing for and during the expedition than in anything else we have ever done. We all consider ourselves extremely lucky to have had this opportunity. We have prepared a full expedition report giving all the detailed information about preparation and planning and if anybody would like a copy please contact either the Secretary of the Club or myself.

ANDY DUNHILL

SUN ROCK

CLIMATIC change, linked to changes in attitude to rock, and affluence led wider horizons, has transformed the rock climbing scene. No longer do climbers struggle on damp greasy rock throughout the eight worst months of the U.K. year.

Instead, these birds of paradise, in their gaudy modern plumage, fly south to the sun in search of their own paradise of warm dry rock which they find in plenty. Dave Wood gives us an amusing and very detailed insight into the world of Sun Rock. – *Editor*.

HOW POPEYE TOWED THE U.K. TO THE MED

DOWN far below in the safety of the river bed, a young couple celebrated their post-Franco freedom. It was an entirely separate world. And from their belvedere viewpoints, the tunnel walkers, safe only from the invisible trains, could be excused for failing to notice the splendour of the gorge that is El Chorro.

A shaft of sunlight cast variegated patterns on a daring spider walk – a pencil line on a page of white limestone. Lumps of concrete held together only by fear led, for the bold in spirit, to the wondrously green waters of Los Pantaros.

A Tolleyism drifted down from on high, almost lost in the roar of the train through the tunnel.

"Mageek!"

"See you in El Chorro amigos!"

Threading its way through the lemon groves of the Guadalhorce valley, the train reaches its destination, the beautifully white Andalucian town of Antequerra – some 20 miles from the idyllic setting and limestone pinnacles of El Torcal. The pinnacles of the Puig Campana seem much larger tonight. They contribute to the sharkfin which overlooks Finestrat and dominates the spaghetti western landscape below. It's March 1990, a year since El Chorro, and the stars look very bright at midnight in Spain from 3,000ft. Why do the Fylde boys always set off at midday?

Below, in downtown Benidorm, the barman in the particularly loud music bar will be re-assembling his ear drums after a heavy night on the hard rock. So it is with Paul and myself, lashed to the hard rock of the Puig Campana, listening to the Major's sneezes reverberating around the streets of Finestrat in the valley below and wondering what had provoked our visits to Spain in the first place.

Occasionally, members are given to statements of monumental import. Such was the case in 1985 at St. Victoire, east of Aix, and worshipped by Cezanne. Recovering from a particularly arduous day on limestone, the peace was broken by Mr. Reid, who, arranging his Popeye-like forearms into a comfortable position, proffered his opinion on the nature of enforced climatic change. "What they ought to do with Britain," said Paul, is to hook it up to a bloody great barge and tow it into the middle of the Mediterranean."

Absorbed by the magnitude of such an undertaking, the assembled company fell into quiet contemplation. It was felt that the hops and ultimately the quality of the Hartleys, would not survive the adventure. Nonetheless, the implications occupied the quiet moments of thought during the rainy months which followed. If the mountain will not come to Mohammed?

Roger Brookes certainly had it in mind to go to the mountain, or at least the crag, in exploration of the out of season climbing on sun-soaked islands. His pioneering activities with Andy Lewandowski and the Maltese locals are well publicised in his guide "Climbs in Malta".

On the friendliest of islands, the enjoyment of climbing on varied, interesting and boltless sea cliffs, is marred only slightly by the litter-strewn environment and the Maltese pastime of rabbit shooting at dusk. Visiting climbers may find a strategically placed old 'High' or 'Mountain' to be some insurance against the partially sighted, or frustrated, marksman! Nearby lies the pleasant island of Gozo, where in addition to climbing, there exists beautifully clear waters for swimming and diving.

Back on the Campana, the seventh ring of the Finestrat church bell ushered in the dawn. Down in the breakfast bar of Benidorm, the conversation flowed freely. A couple of elderly pensioners on a 'Young at Heart' holiday were expressing surprise that their entertainment at the Ariel Park included a simulated live sex show. Evidently some entertainments officer had a mischievous sense of humour.

We had been lucky enough to witness the traditional end of winter celebrations by watching the stupendous fireworks and eating paella cooked by the Calpé villagers in a giant 20ft diameter pan. Sadly, we had missed the burning of the <fallas>, the crazy caricatured figures rising up to 30ft. These are so huge in Valencia that they have to dampen down the houses to reduce the fire hazard.

Before departing sin city, the occasion demanded a visit to the Hotel Los Pinós – past the bar, scene of exploding bullets and much Easter 1986 mayhem, to the old hotel. There it stood, derelict and betraying not a trace of the courageous exploits of yesteryear when Tom Knowles gallantly risked displaced vertebrae to assist an intoxicated senior citizen. No more to witness the Major's ministry of silly walks around the pool!

Travelling along the coast on the autopista (motorway) the bolt-rendered wall of Dalle d'Ola soon comes into view. A little further the road passes the friendly, slabby wall of Toix West before crossing the Mascarat gorge, scene of numerous lunatic bridge jumps (los pantelos completos 6C) and venue of Stuart Gasgoyne's close encounter with the Spanish police. Shortly the Penón-de-Ifach becomes visible. Dominating Calpé, this huge plug of rock offers routes from hard severe to middle extremes, including a splendid HVS on its south-western face. After a brief encounter with loose rock on Diedre UBSA, four good sound pitches of bridging, laybacking and chimneying up huge flakes, lead to a steep headwall and a cave above. A diagonal abseil is followed by a balancy pitch which exits through a final chimney to glorious views and a refreshing sea breeze. Down below and overlooking the luxury pads of Maryvilla can be seen the short but fingery walls of the Sierra-de-Toix East, regularly visited by the Edwards' International School of Climbing [not Menlove I take it—*Ed.*].

About four hours away and close to Valencia, lies the sleepy, medieval village of Chulilla. Perched on a hill at the mouth of a gorge and flanked by 50 metre limestone walls, the village looks a picture postcard. It is Easter 1990 and the sun is shining. Could we really have spent Christmas here waiting for the rain to stop and for Phil to chat up his dream woman?

Finding a place to stay in Spain is not particularly difficult since most towns have reasonably priced hostels or hotels. However, arrive at 10.30 p.m., as we did, and the choice is a little restricted. The rock shelf where the young Manchester lad spent Christmas would be free but who wants to live in a hole. " 'Caves I Have Slept In', smallest book in the world", my friend John had said to the lad, everyone laughing outrageously.

It seemed we would have to investigate the isolated hotel by the river. Perhaps the rigours of the journey would justify just one night of comfort. The three thousand potatoes a night deal for the room seemed reasonable in view of the exceedingly comfortable surroundings and 30 metre pool heated by natural 20°C spring water. This same spring guaranteed a full hot bath in 15 seconds and contained enough trace elements to fortify the system. Attempts to locate its source led us along two miles of canals and into man-made tunnels on the side of the gorge.

Two days of climbing and sunbathing at this superb spot saw eight routes (HVS to E2) ticked off with Que Cosas Tiene Mi Novia (6A French) receiving particular attention from Paul Taylor. Apart from the natural lines, like Annie Hall, a 45ft HVS overhanging layback crack, most of the routes are on compact, often fingery, limestone. Consequently bolts are invariably the only form of protection. This sits easily with Spanish ethics which seem to favour having fun on the rock. I recall with amusement an occasion some two years ago on the Ifach when the Fylde whoop was taken up enthusiastically by a group of locals laying siege to Pavlos Magicos (a wrongly graded E1). Also, because there is an abundance of warm road-side crags, female climbers are perhaps more in evidence than at home.

Meanwhile, back at the hotel, the evening's entertainment is being provided by the antics of the 20-strong film crew. For the last two days they had been trying to conceal the fact that they had been filming a press release for the new Ford Orion. We appeared to enjoy a peaceful co-existence, except for the early morning noise, which provoked a little wind-up on day three when our cameras were very much in evidence. It wasn't until the hours of darkness that they returned the cars and helicopter to the watchful eye of the armed security guard.

Our last day at Chulilla dawned bright blue. The clarity of light resembled that experienced during a Christmas in Majorca. But no more for us, unfortunately. We were to wend our way back quietly to Alicante through orange groves and the peaceful valley and crag of Sella, scene of our starting point.

Since schedule was cheaper than charter we had flown Iberia on a special deal. Checking in at 7.50 a.m. for the 8.15 a.m. shuttle to Barcelona we got the last two standard class seats. The Major had to travel first-class. Sitting up front, rope on knees and wedged firmly between two newspaper-reading businessmen, I was sure I could hear him muttering, "Pile of choss, give me Denham anyway, now there's a crag".

The following Club members have enjoyed sun-rock and I have been privileged to enjoy some of their company:

Andy (blue grass) Blaylock; Glen (George) Brookes; Roger (Who said it wouldn't be a sell-out?) Brookes; Paul (It's only HVS!) Clarke; Martin (Bananas) Dale; Andy ('I was the first to put that Edwards boy in his place) Dunhill; Stuart ('It's safe Andy, you can come out!') Gasgoyne; John (Major) (Anybody want to buy some gear?) Hickman; Tom (Those old ladies certainly are heavy) Knowles; Jeremy (Have claw hammer will travel) Levey; Andy (Next time give me a car that goes round bends) Lewandowski; Phil (Party pooper) Morris; Paul (May the belly be with you) Taylor; Mick (The picture they said would never be taken) Tolley; Nils Tremmel.

INFO SHEET: CLIMBING AND WALKING IN SPAIN

Climbing

Both mainland Spain and Majorca have a vast quantity of rock which is climbable. For the most part the rock is steep limestone although good granite (Pedriza: 'On the Edge' 16) and good conglomerate can be found (Montserrat: High 50). The rock tends to be fingery, compact and bolt-protected except for easier or long routes where natural gear is needed. A full list of where to climb can be found in Mountain 113. Below is a selection of places I have visited which can be recommended:

- *El Chorro – 1hr from Malaga (see On the Edge 15).
 - El Torcal – near El Chorro. Picturesque limestone pinnacles.
 - Sax – very atmospheric – one hour from Alicante.
- *Sella – secluded crag, 25km from Benidorm.
- *Peñon de Ifach – overlooking Calpé (see Mountain 112).
 - Sierra de Toix – East and west; near Calpé (see Mountain 112).
 - Mascarat Gorge – Scene of bridge jump (see Mountain 112 High 50).
 - Dalle d'Ola – a suntrap. 8km from Calpé (see Mountain 112).
- *Chulilla – a beautiful place. 1hr from Valencia.
 - Montanejos – steep and hard. 2hrs from Valencia (see Mountain 115).
 - Ping Campana – very big. Dominates Benidorm.
 - La Gubia – (Majorca) best inland crag on the island (see High 53).
 - Alora – (Majorca) Excellent spot for exploring (see High 53).

(* I have guidebook to these places. Also visitors are recommended to buy Sun Rock.)

Walking

Access can be found to many of the tracks which criss-cross the old terraces. However, the dedicated walker would probably enjoy a trip to Majorca which boasts 30 or so summits over 3,000ft. The mountains, which are commonly linked by ridges, sometimes attract a covering of snow in winter months. Two good books give detailed information: Walking in Majorca by June Parker and 12 Classic Hikes Through Majorca (Vol. 3) by Herbert Heinrich. The latter is an excellent little volume full of good illustrations but is only available in Majorca. I have a set of military maps covering the island which can be copied.

When to go

October through to April unless you're going for the sunbathing. Christmas is warmer near Alicante than the islands and can give wonderfully clear views. The days tend to be longer than back home in winter and there are no midges! Usually in spring the countryside and crags abound with wild flowers and herbs. Very good for a botanist gourmet.

How to go

Charter flight from the large tour operators is probably the best bet, although Iberia, Spain's national carrier, is competitive at certain times of the year. Christmas and Easter are usually booked in advance. Don't expect cheapo offers.

Where to stay

Camping is available along the coast. Package deals are probably the cheapest but restrict the venues. Hostel accommodation can be obtained for between £4.50 and £6.00 per night.

How much

Accommodation is still quite a bit cheaper than at home. Supermarket prices are about the same as are drinks in a bar, but with bigger measures. Spain is unfortunately rapidly catching up with the rest of Europe. Also the weak Pound purchases fewer pesetas. Nevertheless, off the beaten track, away from the coast, a good time can be had for a modest outlay.

D. WOOD



MOUNTAIN ACCIDENTS

AN unfortunate but inevitable part of mountaineering is the ever-present possibility of accidental injury or death. However many precautions are taken the risk can never be completely eliminated. However careful one is there will always remain the chance of being overtaken by disaster. Mountaineering is, and will remain, a high-risk way of life. The dangers can be moderated by commonsense behaviour but they can never be completely removed.

The Club has been witness to accidents on the hardest of routes, on a walk round the lake, and on every aspect of mountaineering in between. Some accidents are caused entirely by bad luck, most though are occasioned as the risks courted come home to roost. In a few instances just one dramatic event causes problems, such as the breaking of a vital hold. More often though a sequence of events builds up towards disaster with the inevitability of a Hitchcock horror movie. No one event or incident on its own would prove to be particularly deadly but the cumulative whole can sometimes unleash a holocaust.

Two articles follow, interspersed by some personal comments. The first is by Gordon Waldie, and was published in an early Club journal, and the second was written by Joyce Foster-Kent specially for this particular Commemorative edition. Both analyse in such detail the events that led up to two major tragedies in Scotland that one finds oneself desperate to intervene to prevent disaster as the cards, one by one, are stacked up against the combatants. — *Editor*.

"BLIZZARD"

by GORDON WALDIE, S.M.C. and F.M.C.

ON THE night of December 29th, 1951, the Central Highlands of Scotland were devastated by a storm of ferocity unknown in living memory. Now this was a Saturday evening, the start of the New Year festivities, and many Scottish climbers were keeping the fine old custom of foregathering in lonely spots in the mountains to celebrate Hogmanay. With this intention then, a party of four men and a girl were climbing slowly up a snow-field glen, the Uisge Labhair, which falls down the western flank of Ben Alder to Loch Ossian . . .

It was Friday and I impatiently hoped for an early start to my holiday. My boss, a stickler for time-keeping, was intrigued by the job I had taken in hand; strengthening a pair of ex-W.D. snow shoes. He asked for a demonstration. So shouting "Mush!" I clomped a circuit of the workshop at 4.00 in the afternoon, made a theatrical exit and was not seen again for five days. We were off. The little Ford chugged up to Glasgow where Calum suggested a mild diversion to "Oklahoma", then the toast of the town. Thus the last three seats in the orchestra stalls were filled but in those ex-W.D. boom-days, climbers were easily distinguished from tinkers by their karabiners. We eventually reached Crianlarich.

Our Saturday peak was Ben Dubhraig, mostly ice and boulders and in the evening we boarded the West Highland train to join five friends. Our party, now eight strong, was heading for Corroul, a lonely halt beyond Rannoch Moor and the highest on the line. From there we would take the track by Loch Ossian, climb up the Uisge Labhair, strike eastwards for the bealach before Ben Alder and descend the Uisge Alder to Loch Erich by whose shores stands the deserted Ben Alder cottage. A distance of some twelve miles and a great inspiration on Calum's part to think of such a fine place for Hogmanay. Every man with a bottle of good whisky in his rucksack and no one to bother us.

But now we learned that a university climbing club was heading for the self-same spot. Perhaps a dozen or more noisy folk. And now the crowning blow: on this same train were four men and a girl, members of a small climbing club, also making for Ben Alder cottage. But Calum still had a few cards. As the train slowly climbed over Rannoch Moor, we laid our plans. The keeper from the Corroul Lodge would likely be down at the station with his lorry collecting a week's supplies and the mail. We would rush out of the train, cadge a lift in the lorry and put four miles between us and the other prospective tenants of the cottage.

Now this was no ordinary train. For one thing it was the last transport northwards before Hogmanay and it was packed with roistering Highlanders. Excepting the few sober-sided climbers, every man jack from the two men at the front to the wee man at the back appeared foo. Then as the train drew in to Corroul we discovered to our confusion, that the Crianlarich stationmaster had taken the precaution of locking every door. Through the window half of us filed, onto the line beyond the tiny platform. Rucksacks and skis were being thrown out when the train suddenly started and moved off into the night, nicely splitting our party and gear. It was here we discovered that pulling the communication cord has precious little effect on a train's speed when the driver has his vacuum pump full-on and the fireman is firing into his fifth ton of coal. The summit lay but a mile ahead and Ford William's pubs close at nine. An assault party rushed the Guard's van and spun the big wheel to bring the West Highland express to a grinding halt. We jumped out into the snow and trudged back to Corroul. But our lift had been lost to the rival party. We could now only walk to the Youth Hostel by the Lochside. It was a brilliant night, crisp and clear with the snow crackling underfoot. The hostel was crowded to the rafters; only the warden and his pals occupied bunks but I was glad of a corner of the floor; I wasn't even a member.

The wind might have increased slowly in force whilst we slept. But suddenly everyone was wide awake as a window crashed open and a blast of snow-laden air swept through the crowded room. There was little more sleep for anyone that night as the building rocked and the storm-driven crescendo deafened our ears. Dawn came slowly and still the blizzard raged. Our party was sick of the crowded squalor and by mid-afternoon set off along the lochside track, which was covered by fallen trees. The waters of Loch Ossian, driven into dense spray a hundred feet high, raged in great waves and now the snow changed to sleet, driving into our backs and soaking us to the skin. I was blown over several times; my rucksack, heavy with food and the luxuries of conviviality, even contained a dismantled rifle and ammunition. I had been daft enough to swallow Calum's tales of living off the land. We reached the keeper's house, tired and chilled, and sought his permission to stay in the bothy. He was in a bad humour but eventually agreed and then proceeded to light a grand fire for us. He had advised the other party to spend the night here but they had declined and had carried on up the glen. We wondered how they were faring in such weather as we settled into dry clothes before our fire . . .

The previous evening, it appears, they had travelled in the keeper's lorry to the head of the loch and brewed a billy of tea in the shelter of the woods before shouldering their rucksacks. Ben Alder's cottage lay eight miles away and they intended to reach it in one march. But the Uisge Labhair was deep in drifted snow and they found the work most punishing. Their rucksacks were filled with weighty foods and luxuries, a pressure cooker, canned vegetables and climbing gear. Snow shoes or skis would have been invaluable in that deep snow. Barely two miles had been covered when two of the men and the girl decided to halt for the night but the others would not agree to this and elected to carry on with their journey. The bivouac party, though close to a sheep fank, made

no attempt to build or dig a shelter and put on none of the woollens and wind-proof clothing which they carried. Nevertheless it was not an unpleasant night for them. The others must have found the going increasingly exhausting as they climbed the glen, hoping to strike the correct bealach.

Towards morning the weather rapidly became worse and at about five o'clock the full force of the blizzard struck the bivouac party. They lay huddled together, wet through, for hours until they realised that they must move away. By dawn they decided to try and rejoin their friends and so with the storm driving into their backs they started up the glen. They had eaten nothing. Presently they met the others who had failed to find the bealach and now had turned back. One, greatly distressed, had abandoned his rucksack and was being helped down by his stronger companion. Perhaps at this moment the seriousness of their position was now fully realised. All the rucksacks were abandoned as they turned to race their way back to safety. But soon after this the distressed man collapsed and died. The others reached the bivouac site but the two men who had spent the night here could go no further. The girl stayed to comfort them as they lay at the foot of a gully but at last she saw that they too, had died. One of them was her husband.

The fourth man had continued alone and the keeper's house and safety lay less than a mile ahead when he, too, collapsed and died. The girl did not see his body as she passed alone down the Uisge Labhair and there must have been little strength left in her when at last she came to the keeper's house.

It was two o'clock that afternoon when the keeper burst into the bothy with news of the girl's return. Scarcely believing his story, we climbed back into our wet clothes and leaving the warm fire behind, set off into the sleet and half-light of the still-wild storm. We were barely clear of the sheltering woods when we discovered the first body and in the gathering dusk had nearly abandoned our search, when the little gully below the sheep fank revealed two more bodies, half-hidden under the slush and storm water. We covered them with our capes and returned to our bothy. Our two strongest men left to summon aid from the hostel and pass the news down to Fort William by the railway telephone. I well remember that night, lying on the bothy floor by the door, listening to the dying storm moaning softly through the pines. I slept but little.

One might well ask if all this could really happen in these islands; how could men perish in but one night of storm. Admittedly they made mistakes of management of rucksack loads, of clothing, in their choice of bivouac. They separated when they should never have done so. They fought a blizzard and dissipated their energies instead of sheltering. Women's evident superiority over man in withstanding exposure is a sobering thought for the superior sex. The inability of the human frame to face the ferocity of a winter's blizzard was the final blow against this ill-fated party. I have sometimes wondered how this tale might have read if our party had won that lift in the keeper's lorry . . .

A.G.W.

MOUNTAIN ACCIDENTS

I HAVE never forgotten borrowing a book about Scottish Mountaineering from the library shortly after moving North. In it was a photograph of Ben Nevis in winter on which someone had entered, with obvious loving reverence, four crosses and the names of four young men from the Lancashire area. I often wondered what cataclysmic event had caused those names to be etched in the cold clear air above the Ben with such tenderness.

I later met Tom Carroll who oft times used to talk as if he had just returned from having a pint in Fleetwood with a drinking partner whose name seemed very familiar to me considering I had never met him or come across him in any way. Mike Hornby was spoken of as though Tom had only just left him, such are the ways the heart and mind struggles to cope with indescribable loss and torment. It was not for some time that I was able to place the name on the photograph as that of Tom's cherished friend.

Joyce Foster-Kent has kindly undertaken to write this, the most difficult article in the Journal. I am very grateful to her and she has done an excellent job. The history of the Club would not be complete without it, forming as it does a most major and catastrophic event. It reminds us, too, of the knife edge upon which we all balance when we take to the fells and of the terrible consequences that may overwhelm us when things go wrong. And we think, too, of other Club members, or our other friends outside the Fylde M.C., who have been killed or grievously injured whilst taking part in that passion for the beauty and exhilaration of High Places. We are saddened that they are no longer with us, or are unable through injury, to enjoy the drama and the timeless ethereal beauty that awaits above the tree line.

No one who has not experienced an Arctic storm on the tops can begin to imagine the murderous ferocity entailed. The wind sucks the very breath out of the body. The noise is unbearable, like having your head inside a biscuit tin that is continually being battered. It is virtually impossible to see, or to stand against the onslaught and the pain endured from the stinging spicules of ice is excruciating. Deafened, blinded, battered, and exhausted the body collapses gratefully into a deep and profound sleep, overwhelmed at last by peace and serenity, whilst outside the storm rages on. - *Editor*.

TRAGEDY ON THE BEN

By JOYCE FOSTER-KENT

IN THOSE days, the Old Dungeon Ghyll was Mecca. The Langdale Lads, from Lancashire and Yorkshire, met most weekends, thriving on tales of Arthur Dolphin and Kipling Groove, with news of Joe Brown in Wales, and the Creag Dhu in Glencoe filtering only slowly. The Alps were at the dark side of the world.

The weather had been cold and dry for a couple of weeks, and good winter conditions and routes on Great End led to plans for 'The Ben' over the Christmas holidays. It is hard to remember all those years ago, just how young we were, inexperienced but supremely confident, unheeding of the dangers.

So off they went, hitch-hiking to Fort William. Tom Carroll was 21, Michael Hornby was 19 and both of them members of the F.M.C. Jeff Bond, from Bolton, was 19, Ivor Sumner and Frank Weardon from the Blackburn area, were both 20, and Frank had been invited to go to the mystical Himalaya the following year. The brew lad was Barry Timmins, from Cleveleys, just 15 years old.

They camped by Lochan Meall an t-Suidhe, part way up the Ben. Christmas Eve dawned a beautiful day after a very cold night, so they decided to do South Castle Gully, left of Castle Ridge, a sensible choice. But unaware of the shortness of Scottish days,

only three days after the shortest day of the year, they set off late and with five climbers. Barry was to stay behind and prepare dinner for their return. By the time the route was completed it was dark. Being unsure of the descent line, and it being a fine, starry night, they decided to bivvy where they were, ill-clad and without bivvy gear. They were on the back of Carn Dearg with the ground dropping steeply away. They dug a snow-hole and watched the lights of Fort William twinkling below them as they huddled together for warmth, and sang to keep themselves awake. At first it was O.K. But the wind got up, the stars disappeared and it started to snow; a 100 mph blizzard struck suddenly. Just before dawn, with three of them delirious, Tom and Frank were unable to prevent Mike from stumbling away and disappearing into the darkness. Tom never forgave himself for this.

When it came light on Christmas Day, it was decided that Frank would stay on the mountain to look after Ivor and Jeff, who were quiet now; they did not know where Mike was, and Tom would go for help. In his weakened state, where the wind had whipped the snow from the ice, Tom stumbled and fell, lost his axe and rolled and slid 400ft down the mountain. Bruised and stunned, it took him a long time to stagger to the police station, where he pleaded to go back with the searchers to show them the bivvy position. He was taken to hospital where he collapsed with exposure and exhaustion. The police went up in fading light but were unable to locate them, this being before the days of Mountain Rescue Teams and search dogs. And so the other four faced another night out on the mountain.

On Boxing Day morning, the R.A.F. Leuchars Mountain Rescue Team went with the police and found the bodies. Frank had only been dead three or four hours, having survived the second night. Ivor and Jeff had died early on Christmas Day, and Mike's body was found 1,400ft below, near the foot of Nordwand Route in the North Wall area of Castle Crag.

The accident made front page headline news for several days in the national daily newspapers. The church in Fleetwood was crowded for Mike Hornby's funeral, and members of the F.M.C. formed a guard of honour to the graveside. A very different Tom had come home from hospital, and whilst it didn't take long for him to recover from the physical suffering of the ordeal, to those who knew him well the mental scars took a long time to mend. Mike's father, Bill, took up hill-walking in an effort to understand his son's obsession, and the waste of his young life. Thirty years on, Mike's sister Molly, Tom and I planned a trip to Carn Dearg which never took place. Tom died.

It was the worst accident in British mountaineering history. It prompted the erection of the present shelter on the Ben, a lifesaver for many. In the intervening years, the accident was forgotten by all but a few, until the fairly recent tragedy in the Cairngorms, and then Tom suffered again. And he is gone now. Who knows if they are all together again, and our other mates from other mountain accidents, raising hell, in some Heavenly Mountains somewhere?

R.I.P.

Mike was my first boyfriend, and Tom the best friend I ever had.

DURING my researches for the Club Journal I came across a most poignant poem by Hugh Alexander Barrie. The author was a young undergraduate obviously acutely sensitive to both the sublime and the savage aspects of the mountains. It was written whilst he and a companion were trapped by ferocious weather in the Corroul bothy, in the midst of the Cairngorms during the New Year period 1927/28. He must have been profoundly aware that his life hung in the balance. They took advantage of a lull in the weather to dash back over Braeriach to their quarters in Glen Einich. Alas the lull was only temporary and as they staggered down the slopes of Braeriach towards safety they were overcome by a storm of unimaginable ferocity. His companion's body was found two days later near the main path but the author's remains were discovered several months on further up the hill. His personal effects included the recently written poem which so moved the local landowner that he occasioned the building of a small memorial which included some of the lines from it.

As you read the extract that follows and remember friends and companions either killed or disabled on the hill I hope it will remind you of the unparalleled joys and contrasts of mountaineering that they enjoyed, and that you gain comfort from the memory of their companionship and shared experiences.

*Bury me not, I pray thee,
In the dark earth where comes not any ray
Of light, or warmth, or aught that made life dear,
But take my whitened bones and
Find me a windswept boulder for a bier
And on it lay me down,
Where far beneath drops sheer the rocky ridge
Down to the gloomy valley, and the streams
Fall foaming white against black beelling rocks,
Where the sun's kindly radiance seldom gleams;
Where some tall peak, defiant, steadfast, mocks
The passing gods; and all the ways of men forgotten
So may I know
Even in that death that comes to everything,
The silent swish of hurrying snow,
The lash of rain; the savage bellowing
Of stags; the bitter-keen knife edge embrace
Of the rushing wind: And still the tremulous dawn
Will touch the eyeless sockets of my face,
And I shall see the sunset and anon
Shall know the velvet kindness of the night,
And see the stars.*

EDITOR

END PIECE

WHEN devising the format for this Journal I decided not to include recent Newsletter articles, obviously still fresh in people's minds, but concentrated on resurrecting stories of quality from further back in the Club's history. However as I received over a dozen requests for my recent article 'A Mountaineer's Guide to Non Achievement' to be included in the Journal at all costs I have, with reservations, reluctantly decided to accede to these requests. The sentiments expressed certainly seemed to strike a chord with people and hopefully it will make a fitting end to the Journal, reminding us of the full spectrum of joy, and wide experiences gained from mountaineering in all its aspects. The exhilaration of moving safely up steep rock, the traversing of airy ridges in winter conditions; the quiet contemplation that goes with fell walking on summer days and the appreciation of the wildlife with which we share the beautiful mountain environment. The swish of skis on snow. And finally the tremendous camaraderie which seems to permeate every activity of the Club in particular and mountaineering in general. Even days out on the hill with dear old Pickup.—Editor.

CONFESSIONS OF A NON MUNRO BAGGER OR THE MOUNTAINEER'S GUIDE TO NON-ACHIEVEMENT

OH DEAR; it's nearly that time again. Cluanie I mean. I suppose Pickup will be there again, trotting up everything listed in his precious tables like a demented administrator, clad only in his shorts and wellies and clutching his trusty alpenstock. I really admire his fitness and dedication, I just doubt his sanity. Since two books were published almost simultaneously providing picture book ascents of the Munros for the world's two-legged sheep, everybody and his wife/dog has been running about like demented ants, ticking things off. What is it all about? What does it all mean? What on earth is there to be gained by rushing up boring hills in the rain and mist (or even worse, good hills in the rain and mist) just to tick them off on a list? Is it really an achievement to have visited 270 summits, many of them tedious in the extreme, in the pouring rain? Scotland provides so many opportunities of enjoyment. Superb coastal scenery and magnificent through walks for when the tops are misty and all manner of magnificent hills of all altitudes to be enjoyed and savoured when conditions are good. A full spectrum of joy, adventure and romance. And what do we do with it. Plod up Fionn Ben in the mist instead of having a cracking day on the coast or exploring Inverewe Gardens.

Nobody in his right mind, not even the infamous Mr. Penn, would set out a list of 270 ladies over 5ft. 5in. to seduce, many of dubious quality, to the exclusion of all else. It defies all reason to think that the delights of the Avrils and Claires of this world would be ignored on the grounds of lack of height until the list was completed. Why treat mountains any differently. Some, like some ladies are superb and inspirational, others dull as ditch water. At least we all get the chance to enjoy the inspirational hills. Should inspirational ladies be nationalised for the common good?

Somewhat stung after being harangued continually for my laid-back approach to Munro-bagging (30 years intensive mountaineering and the end barely in sight) after last year's Cluanie meet I too reached for a copy of Butterfield and looked up the description of some of the hills I had ignored for repeated ascents of such treasures as the Torridon Hills, Skye and the mighty peaks of the far North-West. Meall Cuaich, "a boring hill with an equally drab outlook". "Rounded featureless hummocks". Meall Buidhe "This undistinguished mound". Meall Ghaordie "Quite the dulllest hill in the Southern Highlands". Need I go on? I'll tick off A.A. British Villages. At least they are hand picked for their charm and beauty (in fact I'm doing quite well on those). Munro's tables are O.K. for the locals who are up there all the time, as a guide to something different now and again, but an indicator to hills that might be suitable for an ascent on ski, but to the Sassenachs with limited access I say cast aside your tables, open your eyes and your maps, and re-discover the true joy and romance of mountaineering.

I tramped up in a little hollow just below the summit cairn and decided to sunbathe for an hour or so under a cloudless sky. The sun was warm and calm and very very still. Below me the silver-shot loch wound its sinuous way into the hills. Beyond it, over the moor the Ben and its satellites marched their icy way across the horizon. To the left the Glen Coe summits stood like sentinels on the Buachille. It was strange to see so many friends from this unusual angle. To the right Ben Alder bulked like a giant. Mr. Cooke's cottage was just visible by Loch Erich and the rim of the world was marked by the snowy crest of the Ben. Life was good and it was pleasant indeed to be able to lie here absorbing the peace, beauty and tranquillity of the mountains. Tears fell from my brutalised and care-worn soul.

"Pickup" announced the arrival to the recumbent and disinterested audience of one. It seemed churlish to point out that I had visited over 200 different Munro summits in superb conditions so I nearly mumbled a few suitable words of encouragement. It transpired that he had only started collecting Munros last July and as it virtually hadn't stopped raining since last year in mid-June after Cluanie, it meant that the previous 79 had been done in conditions that had ranged from superb to appalling. Not for him the joys, pleasures and the quiet contemplation of mountaineering. "Yes," he said, "at times a primeval struggle against the elements with little reward at the end of the day except another summit ticked off. Achievement!! and against all odds. He glanced around somewhat incomprehendingly at the view, and marched on." Achievement: All day, every day, I'm having achievement rammed down my throat at work. I don't need it.

I closed my eyes for a moment in quiet contemplation of the general scene and focused my attention on the Ben. The memories came flooding back of the magnificent rock climb Centurian with Dave Archer and Mick Tolley willing me to fall off all the time. I had a cup of tea at the C.I.C. hut.

I had a cup of tea at the Cam Mor Dearg Arete with P.R.H. The mist gradually lifting all around us, revealing first one part of the mountain, until the whole of the North face was revealed to us in its winter glory. Dancing along the Mamore ridge in the sunshine. These are the sort of things that make up the joys of mountaineering. You can keep your Meall Ghorms.

"Pickup" was affected the Ben faded and I found myself up before the Beak in the guise of Falconcrest, my most hated rival. "Pickup," he said, "the computer printout shows you only achieved 4.2 Munros this weekend, compared to 7.4 last." I was on the carpet and I had to think fast. "I was ill sir, I had a bad attack of the 'flu and Pickup had double pneumonia and his leg fell off and he still managed 7.4 Munros," barked the reply. "Pickup" was affected the achievement standards you will find yourself sacked from the Ministry of Munro Bagging and down to the dole. "Pickup" was affected the achievement standards you will find yourself sacked from the Ministry of Munro Bagging and down to the dole. "Pickup" was affected the achievement standards you will find yourself sacked from the Ministry of Munro Bagging and down to the dole. I realised it would be pointless to complain. I looked at him gloomily and thought of the time we

spent watching the wagtails down by the river and observing the dipper feeding her young. The loch had been burnished gold and the cloud shadows drifting silently across the hills had captivated the heart. I decided he wouldn't understand and anyway he had no computer box on his achievement printout for such affairs. He wasn't a bad old stick really. No doubt the Permanent Secretary would soon be down on him like a ton of bricks if things didn't improve. I was dismissed from his office.

I awoke to find the evening shadows coming to meet me. I hurried down to the loch hoping to spend an hour or so looking at the red throated divers that nested on one of the islands. Stuchd An Lochain hadn't been such a bad Munro after all.

P.S.: I've only got 40 to do. If I go away every weekend from now to Christmas I could get them cracked. If anyone fancies a boring weekend by the A9 give me a ring.

DAVE EARLE

