

THE
YORKSHIRE RAMBLERS'
CLUB JOURNAL
1976

Edited by
A. B. CRAVEN

VOLUME XI · NUMBER 37

CLOGWYN CLIMBING GEAR

OF SNOWDONIA

ARE THE DESIGNERS
AND MANUFACTURERS
OF

CLOG

WIRESLING

NUTS

CONDUCTED TOURS OF
OUR WORKS BY
APPOINTMENT
TEL : LLANBERIS 551

CLOG

WIRESLING

NUTS ARE

MADE FROM WIRE

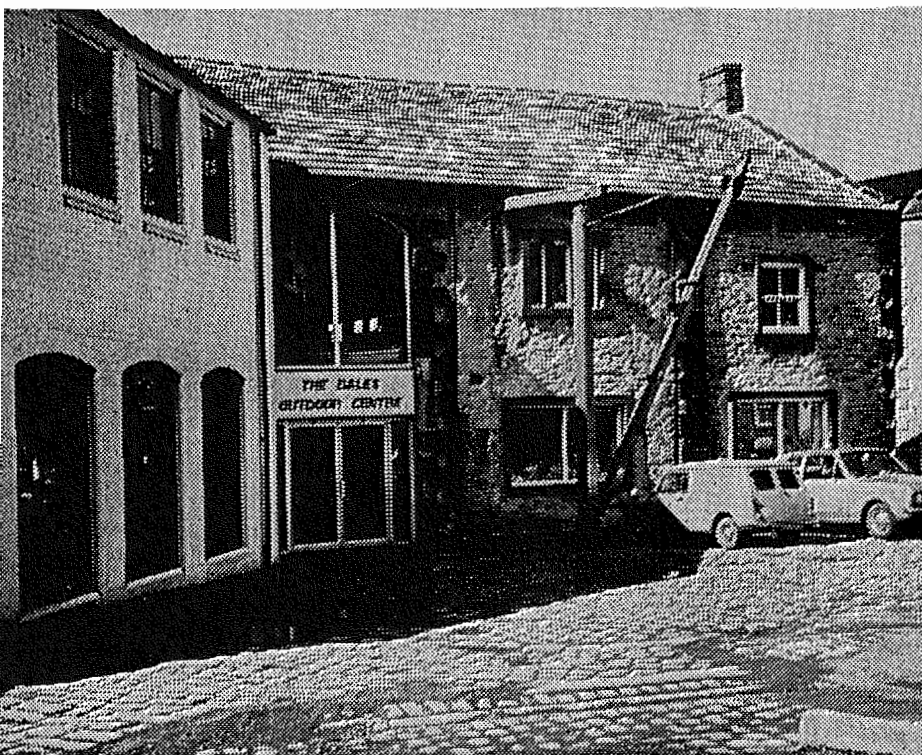
ROPE SPECIFICALLY

MADE FOR THE PURPOSE

by **JOHN SHAW LTD.**

OF WORKSOP

TEL : 3321 TELEX : 54-232



THE DALES OUTDOOR CENTRE LTD.

Coach Street, Skipton, North Yorkshire, BD23 1LH
Telephone Skipton (STD 0756) 4305

THE SUCCESS OF ANY OUTDOOR VENTURE DEPENDS ON GOOD
PLANNING AND THE SELECTION OF THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT.

- We specialise in Mountaineering Equipment and stock the very latest Climbing Gear.
- We carry a comprehensive range of Boots, Ruc-Sacs and specialised clothing to meet all requirements.
- The Tents and Camping Equipment we stock have been specially selected for the all year round camper, Backpacker and for Expedition use.

IN AN EFFORT TO ASSIST YOU, WE HAVE NOW PRODUCED A 40 PAGE FULLY
ILLUSTRATED BROCHURE CRAMMED FULL WITH INFORMATION WHICH
COULD ADD TO YOUR SAFETY AND MAKE LIFE EASIER.

To obtain a copy send 50p which also covers postage.

Open 9.00 a.m. - 5.30 p.m. Closed Tuesdays.

karrimor

numéro



en Europe

The people who make lots of sacs, packs and
tents. Karrimor products have accompanied climbers
and backpackers all over the world.

'75 Gear Guide Now Available . . . 24 pages of information,
advice and equipment in full colour. Demand
made last year's equipment digest a collectors item. Don't be
disappointed this year, send now to :

Karrimor Products Ltd.

Avenue Parade, Accrington,
Lancashire, England

OUR INTERESTS ARE YOUR INTERESTS

EXPERIENCED ADVICE AND
QUALITY EQUIPMENT FOR
THE RAMBLER, CLIMBER,
MOUNTAINEER & SKIER AT

CENTRESPORT
40 WOODHOUSE LANE
LEEDS LS2 8LX
TEL. 31024

THE CLIMBERS SHOP
COMPSTON CORNER
AMBLESIDE
CUMBRIA
Tel. 2297

ROBERT LAWRIE, LTD.

Alpine and Polar Equipment Specialists

54 SEYMOUR STREET,
MARBLE ARCH, LONDON,
W.1.H 5WE

Telephone: 01-723 5252

Telegrams & Cablegrams:

Alpinist, London, W.1

Business Hours:

Mon., Tues., Wed. and Friday: 9 a.m. - 5.30 p.m.

Late closing: Thursday, 9 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Early closing: Saturday, 9 a.m. - 12 noon

**ALL CLIMBING
CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT**

PLEASE WRITE FOR DETAILS



VIBRAM MONTAGNA

Says all you need to know about

QUALITY and RELIABILITY

Look for the **SOLES** with the **GOLD LABEL**

SPARTH HOUSE

MALHAM, YORKSHIRE

TELEPHONE: AIRTON 315

Alan and Gillian Cooper

RESIDENTIAL

LICENSED

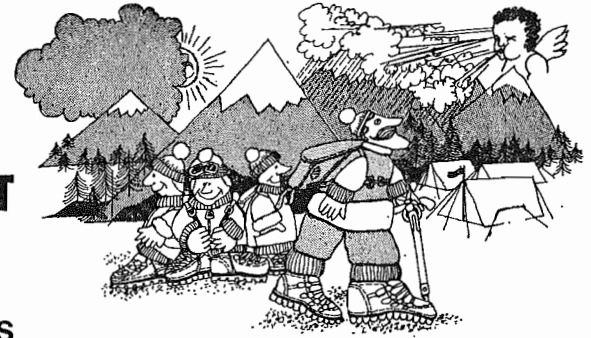
BOOKED PARTIES FOR HIGH TEAS, LUNCHES

CARVING BUFFETS and DINNER PARTIES

DANCING

Winter Weekend Parties at Special Rates

OUTDOOR PURSUITS EQUIPMENT



for family
and schools

Hiking, Backpacking, Mountaineering and Skiing

**Cleveland
Mountain
Sports Ltd**

98 Newport Road,
Middlesbrough,
Cleveland. TS1 5JD

**0642-
48916**

LARGE STOCKS OF 'PREMIER' CARBIDE LAMPS, SPARES AND HELMETS

ALL GOODS ARE SENT BY RETURN OF
POST. FREE LIST SENT ON REQUEST.

CASSWELLS LIMITED

MIDSOMER NORTON

BATH BA3 2HR TEL. 41331



it's worth coming to Snowdonia!

... if only to choose your
equipment from the up-to-date,
reasonably priced selection
at the Joe Brown shops.

joe brown
CLIMBING & CAMPING EQUIPMENT

MENAI HALL, LLANBERIS, NORTH WALES. Tel: 327
THE CLIMBING SHOP, CAPEL CURIG, N. WALES. Tel: 205

THE YORKSHIRE RAMBLERS' CLUB JOURNAL

Vol. XI

1976

No. 37

Edited by A. B. CRAVEN

J. A. Medley

HAWAZA RANGE, looking north from CHERNEK



Contents

	Page
The Hard Way to Lalibella	GEORGE B. SPENCELEY 113
A Journey Through the Semyen	JOHN A. MEDLEY 130
Yorkshire Ramblings in California	S. A. GOULDEN 139
Those Blue Remembered Hills	D. J. FARRANT 143
Nova Scotia and the Drakensberg	D. A. SMITHSON 151
Becking Pleasures	W. D. CLAYTON 162
Messrs. Dawson, Townend & Co.—Pioneer Potholers	S. A. CRAVEN 170
The Greatest	H. L. STEMBRIDGE 173
First Alpine Route; Gran Paradiso	H. A. LOMAS 180
Sulitjelma '75	S. V. BUGG 183
Kindred Club Journals 188
In Memoriam 191
Club Meets: 1972-73, 1973-74, 1974-75 193
Club Proceedings 1973, 1974, 1975 198
New Members, Resignations and Deaths 201

Illustrations

Hawaza Range	J. A. MEDLEY Frontispiece
Near Sankober	J. A. MEDLEY 126
Near Ras Dashan	J. A. MEDLEY 127
Shamba Kiti's Village	J. A. MEDLEY 142
Sierra Nevada	S. A. GOULDEN 143
Sierra Nevada	S. A. GOULDEN 158
Drakensberg	D. A. SMITHSON 174
North of Sulitjelma	S. V. BUGG 175
Last Feeding Point, Long Walk, 1974	B. E. NICHOLSON 190
Malcolm Drummond Bone, David Christopher Haslam 191

End pieces drawn by HAL YATES

Published by The Yorkshire Ramblers' Club

THE
Yorkshire Ramblers' Club Journal

Vol. XI

1976

No. 37

THE HARD WAY TO LALIBELLA

by G. B. Spenceley

EVERYONE HAD SAID "You must visit Lalibella." but then realising when I should be there, had added, "But of course it's not possible in the summer!" The "big rains," which fall over the Ethiopian Highlands in July and August and on into September, completely cut off this ancient capital from the outside world. The tiny airstrip that has improbably been levelled out in this uncompromising mountainous landscape becomes a sea of mud. The ubiquitous DC 3 that at other times drops its daily load of tourists can no longer land, and there is no road to Lalibella. Rain, knee-deep mud, swollen rivers, bandits and a dozen other hazards all vividly described, would make an overland approach unthinkable; or so I was told. It seemed a pity. Sometimes described by that outworn expression as one of "the seven wonders of the world" Lalibella, with its unique cluster of rock-hewn churches, did seem a place worth making an effort to see.

The Ethiopian Highlands rise up from the surrounding desert like cliffs from the sea. Nowhere in Africa is there a mountain mass so vast, so remote or so uniformly high. Defended by the huge ramparts of the escarpment, cut off from the outside world, this is the Amharic homeland in whose mountain fastnesses there has flourished—for more years than in Britain—an ancient Christian kingdom.

Central in these highlands is the ancient monastic town of Lalibella, once called Roha. In the eleventh century there arose here a new dynasty, that of the Zagwe kings. One of these was called Lalibella, after whom the old capital has now been named. It was at his command that the eleven monolithic rock-hewn churches were built—one man's twelfth-century dream of a New Jerusalem in Ethiopia.

Although thousands now come to see these churches, tourists are a new phenomenon to Lalibella. It is only in recent years that the daily Dakota has dumped its motley collection of sightseers and the priests and beggars and an army of guides have grown rich on the pickings. Before that one had to walk there, or at least ride a mule, and there were few who would so venture; for many years no one came at all. The first European was the Portuguese priest, Alvarez in 1520 but he wrote little of what he saw, fearful lest his story be disbelieved. After that Lalibella lapsed into obscurity for more than three hundred years until visited in 1868 by the German explorer, Rohlfe. Still very few followed: two or three Frenchmen, an American and, in 1925 Rosita Forbes, the first British visitor. Although fully in the wet season, I hoped to follow in their footsteps.

There can be few countries that contain such diversity as Ethiopia, and already I had seen much of it. In a disintegrating bus of ancient vintage I had plunged 8,000 ft. down from the temperate plateau of Eritrea to the torrid plains of the Red Sea, passing in a few hours through three climatic zones. In a 'plane even more ancient than the bus, and nearly as decrepit, I had hopped across the highlands from one almost washed out landing ground to the other. This was, of course, the tourist trail through Axum, Makelle, Gondar and Bahar Dar, the so-called "Historic Route." There were no tourists, however, on my next flight. This was west almost to the Sudan, in a cargo 'plane in which I crouched uncomfortably amongst crates and protesting sheep. Naked spearmen unloaded the 'plane at the last jungle airstrip. I was told to contact Alek, the Greek, the uncrowned king of Gambella, and he it was who arranged for me to travel down the Boro river in the Red Cross boat. At Itang, half-way to the border, I found a solitary British V.S.O. worker selflessly tending the still warring Nuers and Anuaks. There were crocodiles and hippos in the river, naked hunters paddling dug-out canoes, and at night one heard the beating of drums; it was all rather romantic and I felt like some nineteenth-century explorer. This was still pagan black Africa and a world away from the ancient culture of the Ethiopian Highlands.

Back in Addis Ababa I planned my trip to Lalibella which, in spite of pessimistic warnings, I was anxious to attempt.

From the capital I went 300 miles north on an Ethiopian bus; there can be few more uncomfortable ways of travelling. No bus departs before it contains at least half as many again as it was intended to carry, seemingly with all their worldly possessions. From dawn to dusk we shuddered and groaned hardly with halt across plateaux, down escarpments, over plains. I sat on the back seat along with eight other people. The man in the middle rested his rifle across his knees, the muzzle jabbing my stomach. Firearms are a prestige symbol in these parts, bullets a form of currency.

I was making first for Bhati, to visit the great market of the rift border where the Gallas from the escarpment edge mingle with the nomadic Danakil of the desert. Lean and handsome, with lances and broad double-edged knives at their hips, they stood unsmiling beside their camels, the proud inheritors of yet another culture. Of all the people of Ethiopia, the Danakil (or, more correctly, the Afars) have the most sinister reputation, for killing is still the royal road to honour and glory.

But there were more usual ways of dying than by the Danakil's knife, for the rains had failed and there was famine in Wollo Province. In the country every road was lined with the carcasses of cattle; only the vultures grew fat. In the towns every corner held its cluster of suffering humanity, too weak, too resigned even to beg; cholera, typhus, enteric fever raged rampant. I bent over the shrouded form of a child stretched across the road. "You can't do anything," they said, "she'll be dead in the morning." Life is cheap and death they saw all too often.

For the equivalent of twenty pence I found a bed in a sleazy hotel and the next day continued north to Waldeya. This is half-way up the scarp and the nearest point by road to Lalibella, which lies another hundred miles or so across the highlands to the west. It is a typical ramshackle town of tin-roofed houses, Arab shops and Amharic drinking dens each side of a muddy street. On this day it was jammed with lorries, for a landslide had blocked the road ahead, not an unusual occurrence in the "big rains." This road runs like an infected sore through the land, for, with its attendant veneer of modernity, has come a commercialism and greed absent in the unprogressive highlands. The usual hordes converged upon me, beggars,

pedlars and schoolboys. It is estimated that only five per cent of the population ever go to school; in relatively remote rural areas such as this it must be much less. But whatever the proportion, they are an intrusive minority. Pushing themselves to the fore, scattering the importuning mass, the literate youth of Waldeya took charge of me. At previous places I had learned to evade such attention, either by ruse or rudeness, but now I was grateful for their assistance for I needed an interpreter. They secured me both mule and muleteer and, after prolonged negotiation, agreed upon the price. It was to cost me twenty-five Ethiopian dollars (five pounds) for a march that could not be less than eight days. I was told I must estimate another dollar a day for food, which I was assured was enough for the needs of my muleteer and myself.

I had neglected to buy provisions in Addis. No doubt inspired by my readings of Wilfred Thesiger, I nourished some foolish notion that I could also "go native," eating only the local food. It was anyway now too late to change my mind. There may have been shops in Waldeya but I could find no food even remotely titillating to a western palate. But a tumble-down shack, smelling like a neglected public lavatory, turned out to be a restaurant, where they killed and cooked a chicken. I managed to chew my way through half of it and the rest I took with me. By then we were ready to start, and never before had I ventured off into wild places so ill-equipped, so ill-prepared or so ignorant of what lay ahead; my only concessions to civilisation were a pair of boots and a sleeping bag.

My muleteer was called Makonnen and he was now resplendent in blue cotton shorts and jacket bought on the strength of my advance payment. No doubt this assumption of Western dress was a prestige symbol, but I was sorry he had abandoned the more graceful *shama*, the usual toga-like garment. He brought with him a porter called Gabra who was to carry my pack. Of all the muleteers of Waldeya, Makonnen was the only one bold or foolish enough to attempt the journey; all the others had talked about heavy rain and unfordable rivers. I could only hope his prudence was not over-ruled by his poverty and need; anyway he had an open, honest face and he looked sturdy enough. But one should be a judge more of mules than of men for this sort of journey. The drooping head

and scraggy frame of this poor ill-fed animal was not exactly encouraging. The comforting illusion which had so far bolstered my resolve, that when overcome by exhaustion or heat I could ride, was now utterly shattered. I tenderly coaxed the mule's neck in sympathy, an action which caused astonishment and howls of laughter from the crowd around. Someone handed me a stout stick.

Escorted by the youth of Waldeya we made our way through the town, ignoring as one somehow must, the prone famine victims by the way, to a place where those with strength enough to reach it, were being fed by the Ethiopian Army. Waldeya, half way to the plains, is on the edge of the famine belt; the highlands to which I was going, although often in abject poverty, were not stricken with famine.

We followed a well-worn track rising gently towards the mountains, amongst many returning from market, their donkeys laden with the produce of their barter. From the number of times Makonnen repeated the word, 'Lalibella' it was obvious he was being asked where we were bound. Already beginning to wilt under the fierce midday sun I no doubt cut a sorry figure and they looked at me in disbelief. Frankly, I was already beginning to think of Lalibella myself with some disbelief, or at least of my capacity ever to reach it. Unusual for the wet season was a cloudless sky from which the sun blazed vertically down on my already weary, dried up frame. I suffered torments of thirst. It was a measure of my disorganisation that my goat skin gourd lay empty somewhere at the bottom of my sack, and to drink from the torpid trickles of chocolate coloured water was unthinkable. Such places are the usual latrines in this land. Then, just as I felt I was about to collapse with heat exhaustion, relief came unexpectedly. At the crest of a hill, squatting under an acacia tree, sat a filthy ragged woman with an equally ragged child in attendance. Beside her was a large earthenware jar of *talla*. Taking this to be the Ethiopian equivalent of a roadside pub I collapsed nearby, frantically pointing to the jar. I had tasted *talla* before. It is a kind of beer made from barley and the leaves of the *gesho* plant. Someone had told me that fermentation should kill the bugs and I was relying on *talla* to save me from dehydration. I had not been told that it could rarely be produced

in these poverty stricken areas. It was gourds all round and in spite of its muddy appearance and unspecified floating matter I have rarely drunk with more delight. But an hour later I was just as thirsty.

The way was now downhill and I was invited to mount my mule, a relaxation I had hardly thought possible. Indeed the mule was sturdier than it looked and I was able to ride much of the way, but rarely and only briefly uphill. I was perched on a wooden saddle with stirrups too narrow for my boots. The pommel was a solid upright piece of carved wood which on all steep descents, of which there were many, I thankfully clutched. I was soon to gain great respect for mules; they suffer not at all from any sense of exposure but will boldly walk along the lip of some fearful abyss and descend crags where a scrambler would step with caution. They must never be steered for they know better than their rider the route to take and will not easily be deflected from their choice. I quickly learnt to have complete faith in their unerring judgement.

But this was an easy gradual descent and I could sit back and enjoy the grandeur of the scenery, as well as effortless travel. Ahead, beyond the valley into which we were now descending and beyond another valley after that, there was a long line of mountains. Many, characteristic of the country, were flat-topped descending in tiers of basalt cliffs, but there were more isolated summits, bolder and finer in feature, which even on my map—the Michelin Map of East Africa—were shown as named mountains well over 4,000 metres high. From this distance it seemed an uncompromising line but I knew that somewhere we must cross this barrier to reach Lalibella. And so we pleasantly travelled, only Gabra, my rucksack on his head or perched on one shoulder, and of course my mule and Makonnen, making any muscular effort.

But I knew this tranquil travel would soon be interrupted. At the bottom of the hill lay a challenge; indeed a hazard, where I would be struggling in an element quite unfamiliar; a hazard about which all my counsellors, both European and Ethiopian had issued stern warning. The valley into which I was descending contained the River Tiku Wiha, the first of four great rivers to cross. That all day the sun had shone from a cloudless sky had not made me forget that this was the time

of the “big rains.” It may not rain all day or even for several days, but when the storm does break it is sudden, dramatic and furious, and the rain is certainly “big.” In a few minutes a trickle becomes a torrent and the rivers, already swollen, become unfordable. I knew the state of the rivers would leave the issue of each day’s travel much in doubt and ultimate success problematical.

Thinking of all this, I got myself worked up into a state of apprehension but it was all something of an anticlimax. The river was fast indeed, but less than thigh deep. Makonnen, who was later to prove more timid even than I, committed himself to the water with little concern. I followed more hesitantly and clung to my mule’s girth strap for support. Really it was no problem at all, but I knew a storm anywhere in its upper reaches would have made it a very different matter.

The long climb up from the river was steep and there was still enough heat left in the sun to add to my thirst and fatigue. At every *tukul* I called for *talla* but Makonnen ignored my pleadings and hurried on, eager it seemed to reach some particular village. We continued even after night-fall until the barking of dogs warned us of some settlement. Thankfully we turned off the track towards a cluster of *tukuls* whose outline I could vaguely see against the sky. There were strange calls either of challenge or greeting and a figure appeared with a firebrand. The *tukuls* were conical and thatched, typical of the country, but in the centre of the group there was a rectangular structure of mud brick walls—a more prestigious dwelling into which I was ushered. This was the headman’s home whose duty it was to shelter and feed the passing guest, a levy being made from the villagers according to their means.

I groped my way into the hovel and sat on an earth platform at the back. The only illumination was the glow from the dung fire, in the centre of the floor; the atmosphere was thick with smoke, the smell pungent. A massive earthenware jar of *talla* was brought in by one of the women of the house. It was poured out into conical horn goblets the woman first sweeping a cupped hand of it into her mouth—an unailing custom where the traditions of poisoning die hard—and with a bow I was offered with both hands the first goblet. With both hands I received it as etiquette requires.

While we drank, a small boy held up an oil lamp made from an empty can, leaving us from time to time in order to refill our horn goblets. Meanwhile the woman stirred the fire into life. She was handsome, with the well-cut refined, even delicate features common to her race. She wore the usual off-white *shama*, a fold of it concealing hair and half her face. Also concealed by the garment, making her look like a hunchback, was a sleeping child strapped to her back. She busied herself with the preparation of food.

Ethiopia's national dish—almost her only dish—is *injera* and *wat* which is taken for breakfast, lunch, tea and supper. *Injera* is made from the cereal *teff*, ground between stones into a fine flour, and then baked in a large saucer-shaped griddle pan. In appearance and consistency it is exactly like foam rubber. On its own, *injera* has an uninspiring taste but the main body of the meal is *wat*. *Wat* can be almost anything, animal or vegetable, but giving it its distinction and marking its quality is the sauce in which it is prepared. This is made from berberi or peppers, red or green, chilis and other spices and herbs all prepared with loving care, dried or cooked, peeled and pounded.

After lengthy preparation a basket-work table was set before us on to which, folded like a napkin, were placed large circular sheets of *injera*. Ladles of *wat* were poured into the centre. Urged by my host I took a handful of *injera* and used it to soak up the *wat*. The effect was devastating. My mouth caught fire and I was left gasping. It was so hot that even with relieving gulps of *talla* I could take only a little and not at all satisfy my hunger. Not for the first time I wondered at my folly in boasting I could go native. Later, on another journey, I was to learn the *Amharic* for "not hot wat," an invaluable expression that should be in every phrase book. Had I known it earlier, I should have been saved much pain.

But the worst ordeal was yet to come. It was not only of swollen rivers that I had been warned; my counsellors had told horrifying tales of *tukul* denizens. Rats, fleas, bugs and even lice were the accepted companions of every dwelling. But by Ethiopian standards this home was spacious and clean and, indeed, had I not accepted the saddle cloths to ease the hardness of the floor, all might have been well. Foolishly I

took them; after all had I not an ample supply of insecticide? Liberally I dusted everywhere; down my shirt, over my hair, in my sleeping bag, on the floor. Thus with some confidence I settled down. But my confidence was short lived. Soon an army of foot-loose vermin invaded my bag; twin allied armies indeed, both fleas and bugs, regardless of all defences, hell bent for blood and my discomfiture. My body began to prick all over as if suffering from some dreadful skin complaint, and sleep escaped me totally.

At the first glimmer of grey dawn the woman of the house roused herself from the floor and fanned the fire into life. More *injera* and *wat* were produced but the *talla* jar was now empty, and without liquid I could eat little. The thought of an unending diet of foam rubber and fiery sauce and more tormented nights in *tukuls* so appalled me that I would have welcomed some natural calamity—earthquake, flood or landslide perhaps—that would have compelled retreat. But no such event offered excuse and, without loss of pride, I could but go on and suffer more. In contrast to my sorry self, Makonnen and even the mule seemed well fed and rested, eager to be off.

The way was downhill, often so steeply that the muscular effort of simply sticking on the mule's back as it launched itself down slopes of 45 degrees was so great that scrambling would have been easier, certainly on the nerves. But I was anxious to save my undernourished legs for the mountain wall ahead, and anyway I didn't want Makonnen to see what a coward I was.

The river at the bottom was wider and deeper than the last but, happily, less swift. A passing fellow traveller sensing my hesitation relieved me of my bag and returned across the river, giving me support, a natural act of courtesy for which he sought no reward. Now we mounted up the terraced hillside where humpbacked cattle struggled with primitive wooden ploughs. Small boys urged the cattle over the stony ground with long whips. Even as high as 10,000 feet, this fertile soil will produce crops of *teff* and *durra*, beans and barley. The cracking of whips is a competitive sport among the children; the sharp report carrying far across the valley was a sound that broke the silence of the mountains on every day of the journey.

Clusters of *tukuls* clung to the hillside looking like thatched mushrooms. Had we called at any they would have shared with us whatever meagre food and drink they had to offer, as is the custom. But now after a morning of travel our thirst and appetite were far from meagre; Makonnen's as much as mine. He kept pointing to a larger village up the hill and repeating the word *talla*. We were following an age old caravan route along which there is the occasional hostelry offering rest and refreshment to passing travellers. The village for which we were now making contained such a place, a mud hovel kept by an aged crone of indescribable filth but, to my joy, offering *talla* galore. It was like liquid mud but at that moment it seemed the most glorious of God's or man's creations. My thirst satisfied, I was able to share the *injera* and *wat* that followed.

Caravan route or not, few foreigners pass this way. My arrival here nearly caused a riot. All the *tukuls* emptied as the villagers rushed to see the strange being that had come among them, the children fighting each other to get to the fore. The door of the hovel was blocked by staring faces while a group of the more privileged children were permitted in. They squatted on the floor motionless, as though hypnotised, staring speechless, their eyes wide with wonder.

The high pass that we must cross to enter the Tekassi watershed had been in view all day, and all day I had wondered how we could reach it. From this village, basalt cliffs soared up a full 4,000 feet seemingly offering no easy line for a mountaineer, let alone a mule. Indeed so it proved, at least by the direct route. Our track contoured the mountain slope to the foot of the gorge where a herd of lion-maned Galada Baboons fled up the rocks. We halted here, and there was much discussion and what seemed contemptuous glances at me as if they doubted my ability to go further. At last a decision was made and Gabra beckoned me after him, pointing straight up the steep side of the gorge. Makonnen took my pack and led the mule out of sight. Gabra bounded barefoot up the rocks with almost the same agility and speed as the baboons; I laboriously followed. It was a scrambling route too rocky for mules and too steep for me to keep pace with Gabra.

It took me over two hours to reach the crest of the ridge

where at some 12,000 ft. it was pleasantly cool. I collapsed thankfully on the turf with a great longing to lie in the sun and sleep. It seemed we must be hours ahead of Makonnen but Gabra urged me on, beginning the descent of the long valley ahead. Where was Makonnen? I wondered, and for a moment I feared some treachery. Perhaps by now he was on his way back with all my money and I was to be disposed of in some secluded corner. I suddenly remembered one of my European advisers, with a vast experience of Ethiopia, warning me of such dark deeds. I felt a flash of fear, but then a distant call was heard far to the right and Gabra directed my gaze to a tiny figure and a mule descending a tributary valley. I felt ashamed for having doubted their loyalty.

Soon we joined company and for a while I could ride, now descending the long deep valley that in a day and a half of travelling would lead us to the great Takazze Gorge. At this height it was all pasture lands where small boys tended flocks of sheep and goats. They fled at the approach of such a strange being, eying me curiously but warily from a distance. Lower down the valley we came to small groups of *tukuls* where we sought *talla* but they were so poor they had none to offer, only a handful of stale *injera*, which without liquid I could not swallow. My thirst on this journey was an almost endless torment. It was no ordinary thirst produced by hard exercise, but a profound bodily need to replace what had been sucked out of me by the power of the sun. Food, too, I needed but there was none that my stomach did not repulse.

But the sun was not with us all that day; thunder rolled in the distance and dark clouds covered the mountains. The storm broke with dramatic intensity and we rushed to the nearest *tukuls* for shelter. Grudgingly it was offered after an exchange of angry words. The women and children were hustled away to another house and the men sat before us, staring with menacing eyes, clutching, as if with evil intent, their *dulas*, the stout sticks which, for lack of a more lethal weapon, all men carry. Even Makonnen was ill at ease and we departed before the rain had stopped. In all my journeys in Ethiopia, this was the only case of open hostility I was to meet, but it was probably induced more by suspicion than maliciousness. Suspicion and fear of the foreigner are tradition-

al in remoter Ethiopia but discourtesy is rarely shown. Usually a smile and a few polite noises from my limited vocabulary would ease the initial tension and evoke a warm response. The most important word the visitor should learn is the greeting *tenastalin*. I used it to everyone I met and every passing traveller, and it was always received with the customary low bow repeated several times.

An overcast sky gave welcome relief from the sun, but the hard packed dusty track on which we had been travelling was now a ribbon of mud, so deep and glutinous that even the mule floundered. I had to walk or rather wade, and our pace was pathetically slow. Darkness fell long before we had reached the large village for which we had been making, and Makonnen led the way to a group of *tukuls*. There was no exchange of angry words this time, but smiles of welcome and gracious bows.

The head of the household was splendidly handsome with the deep-set eyes, aristocratic features and proud bearing that distinguishes so many of his race. He received me with the utmost courtesy and led me by the hand into the *tukul* where I was seated on a flat stone by the fire.

It was the usual conical straw *tukul* but larger than most. It needed to be. I never did find out how many people lived there; perhaps eight or nine adults and rather more children to whom my arrival must have been the funniest thing that had ever happened. It was very crowded; a tight knot of humans encircled the fire in the centre, elsewhere there were animals. Along the whole of one side stood a row of cattle; on the other side were sheep and goats. Innumerable hens roosted on shelves all round the *tukul*. The smell of animal urine, dirty clothes and unwashed bodies was asphyxiating. The thought of spending the night there filled me with horror. Not for the first time I wondered how a people so noble in manner, so fine in feature, could spend the whole of their lives in such filth and squalor.

But what they lacked in cleanliness and comfort they made up for in the warmth of their welcome. The *talla* was soon flowing and there was more *injera* and *wat*. I was so hungry that I had lost some of my earlier distaste for this unending diet. But sleep I needed as much as food, and there seemed

little hope of that. What small space there might have been at the back was now taken up by the mule which had been led in for fear of hyenas. Eventually, after hours of talk and more *talla*, a small space was cleared for me on the floor. Everyone else simply wrapped their *shamas* more tightly round themselves, curled up and promptly fell asleep. But I, jammed up between cocooned bodies, so tightly that I could neither move nor fully stretch out, did not sleep, or so at least it seemed. And then, of course, there was another army of fleas to add to my general discomfort. I welcomed as never before the first light creeping through the cracks which signalled the end of a night so awful.

The whole family came to see us off, the head of it accompanying us a little way, a common courtesy in these parts. I had pressed money on his wife, but she would not take it. An empty tin would have been an acceptable reward, but I had none to offer; all I could do was attend with pills and plaster to those in need. There had been another storm in the night, but the track had nearly dried out and we made good speed to the village of Kulmask. Here I enjoyed beakers of *tedj*, a kind of honey mead and a rare luxury in rural parts, and fresh eggs with my *injera* instead of over-spiced *wat*. For the first time since leaving Waldeya, hunger and thirst were moderately satisfied.

What out-of-season Lalibella could offer a weary traveller I did not know, but even with the usual tourist amenities closed, it must be a haven of comfort in comparison with what had gone before—at least I could expect some familiarity with Western ways. Lalibella now loomed large in my mind, no longer for the wonder of its rock-hewn churches, but for the promise of uncramped, uninfested beds, unlimited drink and acceptable food. It was still far away, perhaps thirty miles, but I was determined, as far as it was within my powers to direct, and my muscles to permit, to reach it that night. Somehow Makonnen got the message and managed to replace his own exhausted mule with one more sturdy.

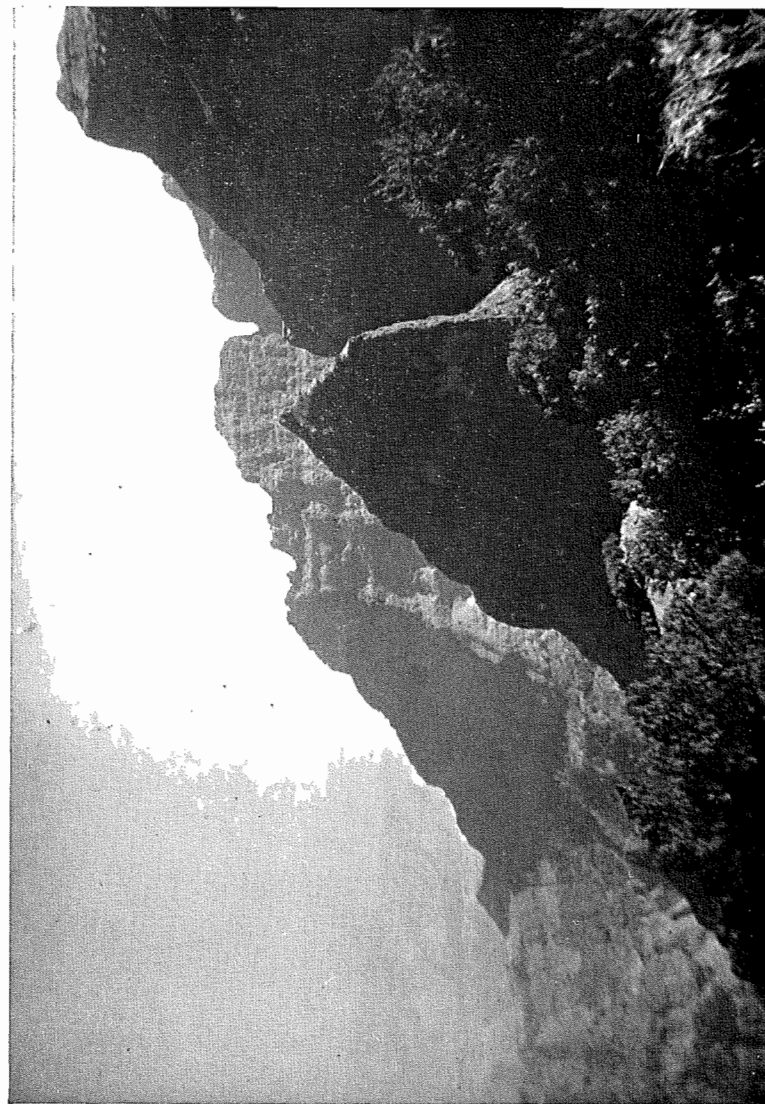
But besides time and distance and my own physical limitations, there was another major obstacle that might shatter my yearning for the luxuries of Lalibella. A few miles ahead, the valley down which we had been travelling—which on its

own supported a substantial river—was joined by the much greater Takazze. Its steep sided gorge we could now see with an occasional glimpse of the foaming ribbon in its depths. I knew this hazard had been on Makonnen's mind too for there had been much talk of the Takazze, and Gabra had been sent on ahead to recruit assistance.

We could hear its ominous roar long before we reached it, and, when we did reach it, I wanted to turn back, the perils of this barrier completely ousting from my mind all my earlier longings for the delights of Lalibella. The river swept down between cliffs a good 200 yards apart, so obviously swift and seemingly deep, it did not seem possible that one could commit oneself to this relentless force and resist its power. My imagination worked overtime and I thought of myself entering the White Nile, somewhere below Khartoum as a decapitated, mutilated trunk. I think Makonnen had a similar idea, for he showed no enthusiasm to go further.

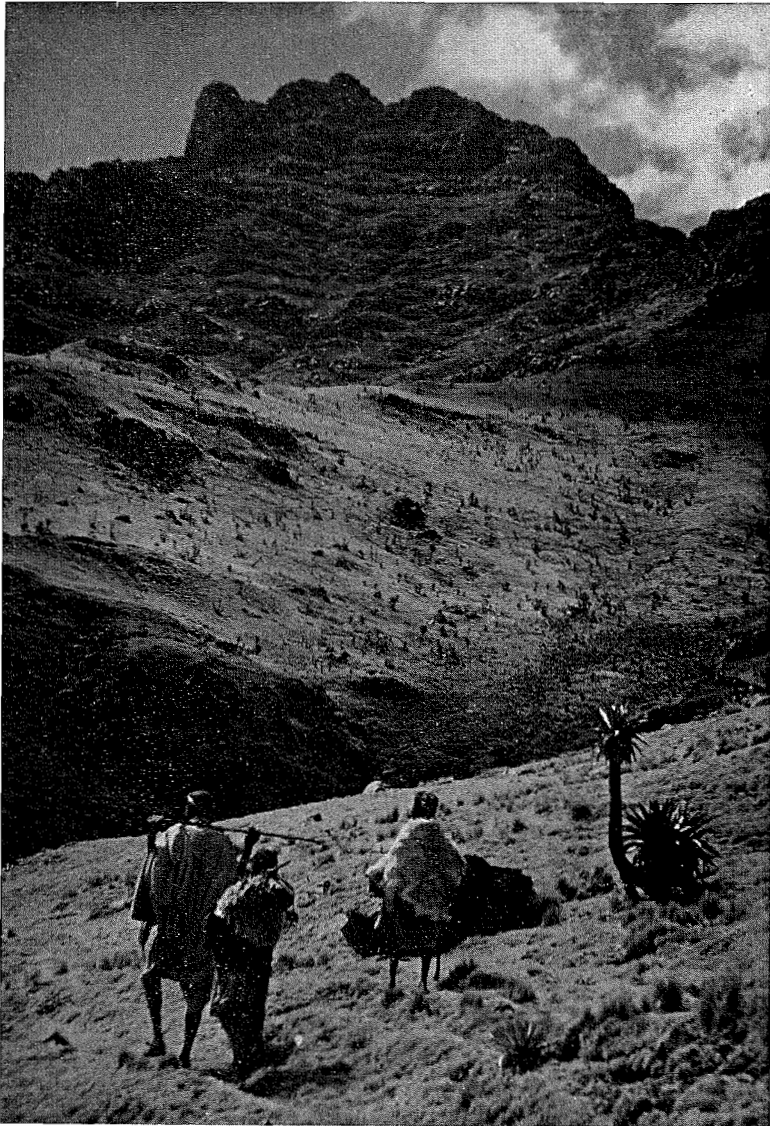
Indeed, here the expedition would certainly have ended but for the complete fulfilment of Gabra's mission. Beside him on the river's bank stood a group of sturdy, naked men—professional river crossers. For them the torrent offered no threat to offset their anticipation of the rich reward they would receive, and indeed would fully deserve, on the far bank.

There was something of a hiatus while an obviously nervous Makonnen protested with the river crossers and I looked at the rushing waters with increasing doubt. Then, either to convince Makonnen or bribe me, one of the men grasped his *dula*, snatched my precious camera bag, balanced it on his shoulder and, as calmly as if wading the Cam at Cambridge, launched himself into the torrent. I watched horrified, as much concerned, I confess, for the safety of the precious burden perched so casually on his shoulder, as for his life. Thigh deep, he met the full force of the current, immediately to be swept down with it, but somehow, either by strength or skill, miraculously maintaining an upright position. Nonchalantly, with a sort of dance-like motion, he pranced downstream, giving way to the current but with each stride making some progress across until in quieter waters he could change course and work back to land safely on the opposite bank. I was mightily impressed. Now it was my turn and I tried to assume an air of



J. A. Medley

NEAR SANKOBER



Near RAS DASHAN

J. A. Medley

confidence I certainly did not feel. Two stalwarts encircled my waist, I their shoulders, to which I clutched frantically as I was half carried, half propelled across the mid-stream fury of the current, my legs hardly touching the river bed.

We landed 200 yards downstream and my relief was boundless. I walked back a little way to watch the struggle of the others. It gave me some smug satisfaction to see that their hesitation and fears were no less than mine had been, indeed Gabra twice broke away from his supporters and floundered back to the safety of the shore. Only with a third man supporting and pushing from behind was he at last urged across. The mule was the bravest of our party; half a mile down river in deeper but quieter waters both guide and animal swam across.

Now it seemed that nothing but the limits imposed by the daylight hours and my own endurance, could prevent us reaching Lalibella that night. We made good progress, I sustained for the time being by the rest and refreshment at the village, Makonnen no doubt encouraged, as I was also, by the prospects of finer fare in the fleshpots of the town ahead.

Almost at the crest of the next ridge Makonnen suddenly halted. A short distance away, outlined clearly against the sky was a line of four mounted men, each heavily armed, rifles slung across their shoulders, over their chests bandoliers of bullets. *Shifta*, I thought, and Makonnen thought this too for he was visibly agitated. But there was no escape, they had seen us. They were waiting for us, our paths would soon converge. You cannot travel far off the road in Ethiopia without hearing stories of *shifta*, they are armed bandits living beyond the law who murder and rob the unwary traveller. Ethiopia has a long tradition of them; some have become almost folk heroes, feared yet respected, the stories of their deeds spoken of in every *tukul*. Among the many horrors and perils of the journey with which those of greater experience had tried to discourage me, the threat of *shifta* had been given some prominence. I had been comforted by the knowledge that nowadays they rarely kill, at least not white men, but I had heard stories of recent travellers left helpless, stripped both of possessions and clothes. Not unnaturally I suffered a very uneasy feeling as we completed the remainder of the way to the crest of the ridge and the waiting men, thinking all the time of my folly

in not listening to the counsel of those wiser than myself. But if they were *shifta*, and this I will never know, they were very nice ones. They may have looked like a gang of rascallions—many Ethiopians do anyway—but their friendship was genuine. They smiled and bowed, they shook hands and with innate courtesy they shared food and drink. Perhaps they were a bunch of Robin Hood characters—as some *shifta* are said to be—and thought me poorer than themselves; perhaps after all they were just a group of the more affluent returning from some function in a distant village.

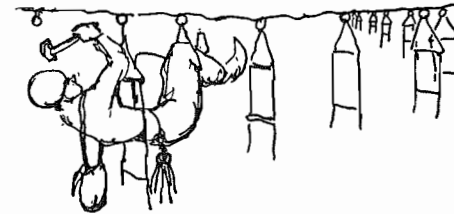
A long descent, another river to cross, a further climb and we reached the crest of the final escarpment. I could now ride, which was a mixed blessing for we followed narrow paths contouring the cliff, the mule unconcernedly walking on the lip of some fearful void. Darkness fell but we could continue, first in the light of the moon and later in the illumination of almost continuous lightning. A stationary storm was poised over Lalibella, whose roofs we could now see and our entry, the first by strangers since the onset of the “big rains” some two months earlier, could not have been under more dramatic circumstances. The rain helpfully held off until we were at the first dwellings, then it came in such a torrent that we were forced to seek shelter in the nearest *tukul*. Thwarted within yards of that imagined haven of all good things, I was again crouching in some smoky squalid overcrowded hole, eating more of that abominable mess which for too long had been my daily diet and which politeness would not permit me to decline. But storms of such intensity cannot last and after an hour or so we could leave.

Lalibella now boasts a hotel, certainly no splendid place but of basic Western standards. As expected this was closed but I had trusted in some reasonable alternative, more modest perhaps but at least with some modicum of comfort and cleanliness. All that Lalibella could offer was the local bar, a fearsome and filthy den with what purported to be a bed in some dark hole in the back. And to satisfy that gargantuan appetite all I was offered was an apology for an omelette and more square feet of foam rubber, washed down with cups of *Katikala*, the local hooch that undiluted burns throat and stomach like fire and turns legs to water. Even so, poor food and foul

bed notwithstanding, it was a marked rise in the standard of my living and I slept long and well that night.

Next day a priest took me round the eleven rock churches. It is certainly a remarkable spot, the more so as this is no dead city like Petra but a living place of worship where that strange archaic faith of monophysite Christianity is practised as fervently today as it was nine hundred years ago when these enormous edifices were being quarried and carved from the living rock. Now with the tourists gone, Lalibella had more fully returned to its true monastic self.

I would willingly have lingered longer but for the fear of delay on the return journey. And indeed we were delayed, half a day before we dare cross the first river and even longer by other diverse difficulties. But these need not concern us here, for although in worse weather and slower, the return was very much a repetition of the outward journey. If there was a difference it was in myself. I had not relished the rigours of the return march but wondrous are the powers of man's adaptability. Slowly, if painfully, I was becoming an Ethiopian. To live in filth and squalor, tortured by a thousand pests, to sustain ones self on a repetitive mess of *injera* and *wat* had surprisingly become less of a trial. I was adapting; or was it simply that I was so hungry that I could eat anything, so exhausted I could sleep anywhere. Whatever the cause I did perversely enjoy the return, feeling some smug satisfaction in having made a journey that almost all had said was impossible, and perhaps more pertinently, having proved myself, however modestly and if only to myself, in a strange environment amongst an alien people.



A JOURNEY THROUGH THE SEMYEN

by J. A. Medley

THE HIGH SEMYEN of Ethiopia lie near the equator; a serrated tableland at about 12,000 ft. with its main peak, Ras Dashan, being the highest mountain in Ethiopia. To the east and north there are escarpments that fall to the gorge of the Takazze—many miles of remote and exciting precipices. This river is the boundary between the provinces of Gondar and Tigre which must still be among the most inaccessible regions of the whole country. The western edge of the plateau on the other hand is easily approached from the main road between Axum and Gondar, and especially from the town of Debarek.

To traverse the Semyen eastwards from Dabarek is to descend the escarpment, cross the Takazze, and trek through western Tigre to Makalle. This is a fascinating journey, the first part of which is largely tourism; the second part contains a considerable ingredient of exploration. To cover the whole is to recapture some of the experiences that evidently made Dervla Murphy's journeys *In Ethiopia with a mule* so rewarding.

In recent years George Spenceley has made a practice of travelling through remote Ethiopia, including a notable expedition to Lalibella in the rainy season of 1973. A Y.R.C. party to do the High Semyen traverse seemed an excellent idea; in the event the only Y.R.C. man who could join George was myself, but we were accompanied by Eric Arnison, the ex-President of the Fell and Rock who has recently added to his achievements in the Alps some notable ascents of the mountains of Central Africa.

We arrived in Addis early on 7th April, 1974 and spent the rest of the day exploring the city. A capital founded some eighty years ago as the "new flower"—"addis ababa"—of Ethiopia, I found it surprisingly like a large new town in Australia; the same pleasantly warm, dry, sunny weather, the styles of public building, and especially the eucalyptus trees. It was Palm Sunday, and the people in the streets looked relaxed, happy and for the most part prosperous. Yet there were also plenty of police to remind us of the political instability. There were beggars too; not as obtrusive as elsewhere in

the country, but enough to emphasise that the pleasant features of the city were likely to be atypical of Ethiopia as a whole. In the bars, the prices, the customers, the telly, seemed perfectly familiar, but outside, after nightfall, the streets were empty. Apparently one could drive but it was not safe to walk. New friends told us that the risk of mugging was a recent feature in Addis, and we got a lift. My personal inclination to attribute these deteriorating standards to the influence of the telly rather than to political factors was tempered by the discovery that the chaps who drove us on one of the evening's cross-town journeys were Eritreans of the Liberation Front; they were very ready with most conversational leads but not with references to bridge-blowing in the north.

The next day we flew to Gondar in an Ethiopian Airlines DC 3, over the hills and valleys through which flows the Blue Nile. Prevailing impressions were of the clusters of settlements on the hilltops with the inevitable threshing circles and of the extreme physical discomfort of the air pockets. (The local conditions are such that afternoon schedule flights were discontinued, and the only DC 3 ever lost was, it seems, broken by air turbulence). There was a welcome respite flying over Lake Tana. Gondar airport buildings are delightful, rather like a disused country railway station converted into an exotic tea-garden, and there was a special welcome for George from the official in charge and VIP conveyance into town.

Gondar, the ancient capital where a series of seventeenth-century rulers each left behind his own castle, was in a ferment. There had just been a head-on clash between the police and Gondar's principal judicial officer, and the latter had been killed under spectacularly violent circumstances. Retrospectively, this incident became a landmark in the revolution that was about to break. In our single day in Gondar we saw something of the incoherent revolt that followed; youths on strike from school were milling around in the streets with no leadership and no plan. One noticed particularly that youngsters with a few words of English, whose immediate intuitive reaction was to beg, entirely forgot to do so in an eagerness for conversation. This happened in other places too but never to the same extent as in Gondar.

The long ride to Debarek in the bus which was packed with

country people wearing the *shama* and many carrying firearms, took us another step towards the traditional Ethiopia. But we were still tourists; Europeans had travelled on the bus before but not often. At Debarek, ensconced in the town's main hotel (at 20p per night) we confronted the problem of organising mules and supplies for the Semyen traverse. To hire mules for a return trip to Sankober or Geech would have presented no problem, for this would have been an ordinary tourist trip to an area which is being opened up as a National Park. The traverse into Tigre is a different matter; nobody was willing to go so far. At this point we had a stroke of luck for which the students' strike was responsible. We were sought out by Yerga Teshome, fifteen years old, who spoke English well and who had during the previous year accompanied an Englishman, Rupert Gray, from Debarek to Lalibella. In fact we had heard of him from an English Education Officer in Gondar and had discussed the possibility of his coming with us as an interpreter. In the event he did, and in addition to interpreting behaved most admirably as an executive negotiator. With his help, and with considerable consumption of meeting-time coffee and tea with various middlemen managers and principals of the Debarek market, we finally departed with three riding mules, a pack mule and a pack horse, aiming to reach in four days the village of Beyada on the far side of Ras Dashan. Thence the animals, with two muleteers, would return to Debarek, leaving us to make what arrangements we could for the onward journey across the Takazze into Tigre.

The first two days were a very pleasant and comfortable trek with overnight stops at two camping sites of great natural beauty that are gradually being transformed into permanent resorts of the Semyen National Park. The first was at Sankober, astride a broad ridge which is really a western spur of the plateau. First we went over rolling country meeting countless parties of farming people taking animals or skins to market at Debarek. Presently this changed to narrow mule trails across steep slopes, and we gained some initial acclimatisation at about 10,000 ft. and confidence in the sure-footedness of the mules.

Early the second morning we skirted the edge of the deep ravine known as the Abyss and crossed the plateau eastwards

to Chenek. This was a grazing tableland with settlements such as Geech. Villages are at the tops of precipices and mountain-eering is in reverse. I had imagined that the whole terrain might resemble the Grand Canyon in Arizona, and indeed there are similar features. but the overall impression given by the Semyen escarpments is less splendid, partly because of the colour of the rock, and partly because of the more undulating and less broken character of many of the lower foothills. Also we may not have seen the escarpments to best advantage. We had to by-pass Geech and the northern tip so as to keep to our time-table. With hindsight, we should have allowed at least one more day.

We followed the shallow depression formed by the Balayos river where there was a profusion of the tall and spectacular mountain lobelia, and arrived at Chenek on the precipice edge. From here the northern skyline, with the curious flat-topped *amba* of Howada and the deeply cleft ridges to its right, was most impressive. But the most memorable thing about Chenek was its wild-life and, in particular, the sightings we got of the Walia Ibex, of which perhaps only about a hundred survive. Taking the expedition as a whole, Eric must have been satisfied with the many rare creatures he caught sight of, and especially the magnificent Lammergeyer vulture.

Next day (12th April) we climbed to the Buahit ridge and thence dropped some 5,000 ft. down a long grassy valley, past blue gums and candelabra trees, across a branch of the Maysaha river. We continued eastwards up the opposite valley to Ambika, a group of three or four *tukuls*, a climb of some 600 feet through some spectacularly broken basalt dykes. At Ambika we had company, a German expedition to Ras Dashan, with many attendants and very elaborate arrangements. They had their own field kitchen and did not, like us, eat Ethiopian meals in the *tukuls*. The following day we made a particularly early start. Vegetation became progressively more sparse, and presently we were among bare and shattered peaks with stone shoots reminiscent of the Cuillin ridges, though on a less impressive scale. The summits of Ras Dashan form a group of three of these peaks. We left our animals and equipment to be taken on by the muleteers and climbed the central, highest peak. The going was not difficult, but slow because of the

altitude, for we were still not fully acclimatised. The highest point of the Ethiopian Empire is a satisfactory sharp and pointed top and we had some splendid clear views.

Soon the descent was south-eastwards by gentle slopes and before long we had caught up with our caravan. But the rest of the day seemed a very long trek. Bayada was reached quite late, a well-populated green area in a particularly arid part of the plateau, with the land falling away to the south. We were met by a large turnout of spectators and a highly suspicious policeman in an Italian greatcoat. Bayada is the seat of the regional Governor, and we were led to his compound. He greeted us with great dignity and hospitality, a tall and imposing figure in one of the few really white *shamas* we ever saw. We were allowed to put up our tent in the compound and bidden to a meal in the Governor's house.

Since Addis we had progressively de-Europeanised our eating habits, first in camp cooking and adoption of *talla* or *korifi* as our main drink, then (as in Ambika) by eating by the fire in the *tukuls*. By now we were well used to the staple diet of *injera* and *wat*, the very highly seasoned pancake made from *teff*. But now (it being Lent) we were offered it in enormous amounts as virtually the sole item. The not-so-hot *wat alletcha* would have been more to our taste but of course we could not bring this to the attention of our host, so here we were, in his large and magnificently tidy *tukul*, with the prestige carpet and more utilitarian fire-arms on the mud walls, the Governor sitting on his elaborate baked earth, skin-covered bed urging us to continue to eat. Eventually young Yerga must have said directly what was anyway obvious and the *wat* was whisked away. Was he offended, we wondered, for we were utterly dependent on this man's good will if we were to continue our journey? Soon afterwards neither the Governor nor his wife appeared to be in the room. Would he come back? What about the *Katikala*, a locally distilled spirit that was to have rounded off the entertainment? A minor official led us home, explaining that it would be in order to thank the Governor in the morning.

Early next morning (Easter Sunday), our paid-off muleteers and the animals left for Debarek, and we now had to strike a satisfactory bargain with the Governor and his licensee. We

did not get away until late the following Tuesday. Because of language difficulties we were never quite sure of the terms or the reason for Yerga's anxieties. There were evidently problems and we tended to be suspicious. Subsequently we realised that there had been a genuine shortage of suitable mules, that there had been no profiteering whatsoever and that Yerga himself had advanced a loan to the expedition on the security of property belonging to one of his relatives. The loan, in turn, was needed as an insurance against the possible loss of the mules. When Makalle was reached everybody was repaid in full without any question or charge to the expedition.

The enforced stay at Bayada was nevertheless rewarding; we got to know the local Sub-Governor and his family (who on Easter Monday gave us the most wonderful breakfast imaginable of freshly killed and cooked meat, the Administrative Secretary, the school teacher, all the children who spoke any English—never before had there been any English-speaking visitors—and, less happily, the numerous sick, who were importunate for medicine. We saw at first hand something of the ordinary life in relation to justice, education, industry, leisure and health. We had wonderful hospitality in addition to the object lesson in business ethics already referred to.

From Bayada we struck north-east, hurrying to get to Lowry with as little night travel as possible. There was now a different aspect to our movement; our appearance would be unfamiliar and our reception less certain. We were accompanied by a capable young man called Mahomet—at the insistence of his father, who owned the mules—together with two assistants. Also the Governor provided a compulsory armed escort and there was a trader with four hides for Makalle market who travelled under the security our party provided. We were never intercepted by *shifita*; whether we met any or not is uncertain. It is quite possible that the succession of village communities through which we were to pass during the next few days really do regard strangers as legitimate prey; certainly our companions said that the hospitality that we actually received would have been something very different had we not been accompanied by friends. One also got the impression that our party generated considerable fear in individuals whom we met on the way. The evening journey to Lowry, for in-

stance, involved considerable detour and enquiry at isolated dwellings, for we were looking for a particular *tukul* where we would expect to find a local chief. People whom we approached seemed too frightened to be friendly.

It was midnight when we got to Lowry, and tired as we were a meal was produced for us, and it was extremely difficult to refuse. Our host was a most kindly local Governor—here we also met for the first time Shamba Kiti, who was to become a great friend during the ensuing days. He was policeman, part-herdsman, from a small community down the escarpment towards the Takazze, and the next day he took us there.

We started early; we saw that we were at last on the edge of the escarpment and for the first hour or two we enjoyed some of the most magnificent scenery of the whole expedition. Soon we started our descent. The mule trail traversed backwards and forwards over ridges and foothills and down steep slopes, and we were thankful that the weather had remained dry. We reached Kiti's village at last and camped there, still several hours short of the Takazze. Earlier the temperature was distinctly cool at night and we had needed the tent to keep warm; now we felt that we would be stifled unless we slept in the open.

There was a great deal of curiosity about us; we were surrounded by wide-eyed children who had never seen Europeans before, as well as by their parents. Again with the adults one sensed a tinge of apprehension but Kiti saw to it that we were well looked after.

I found the next day the most gruelling of the whole journey. An early start to avoid the heat was not possible as we had first to be entertained at another *tukul* and extra time and a detour were required. We were also held up by the breaking of one of the harness straps, which resulted in George getting a superficial but unpleasant cut on the head. After several hours of traversing foothills we at length arrived in the valley bottom which presently ran out to the Takazze. There was water here and lush vegetation. The temperature must have been well over 100° F. and it seemed a long time before we reached the river and forded it, wide and fast-flowing on a shingle bed, but nowhere (at this season) more than two feet

deep. Two hours' slow climb in the evening light up the eastern slopes brought us to a settlement, differing considerably from any that we had seen in Gondar province. This was Messaza, quite large and built almost entirely of round, single-storey stone houses, with almost flat roofs. Our arrival brought everybody out, but there was no one clearly in charge and for some time it was uncertain whether we were welcome. We were extremely tired, hungry and thirsty. Eventually we were shown a shed, open at one side, where we slept. We dined off honey, the only food that was available, and very expensive. We later learned that because of the absence of the "little rains," conditions were fairly desperate. There was a mother who was clearly going to lose her baby because of lack of milk, and we provided her with some of our powdered milk. But beyond this temporary help there was little we could do.

We moved on eastwards, and the composition of our party changed again. A "man with a gun" from Kiti's village now returned, and we were accompanied instead by the Chief from Messaza. For the next two days there were two prominent landmarks—the flat-topped mass of No-Ai-Amba and its only slightly less spectacular neighbour—Mascal. Beyond No-Ai-Amba was a small town named after the mountain, where we arrived as night was falling. It had been a long day through the semi-desert and we were glad to take a quick meal from our own reserve food stocks and lie down in our sleeping bags in the large compound of the police station. Mahomet, Kiti and their henchmen were on all occasions magnificent. Unlike Yerga they spoke no English—none at all, but their introductions and dispositions could not have been more effective.

The next day brought definite indications that we were moving out of the wilderness. This was limestone country and we climbed a very green irrigated valley traversed by fast-running water channels. There was a church hewn out of the rock in the right-hand valley wall, and we passed by with reluctance. Thereafter we were on the open plain, greener than in previous days, on mixed limestone and sedimentary rocks. A well-kept church in the midst of nowhere was a reminder of how central is the influence of Coptic Christianity in Ethiopian rural life. This was reinforced by our meetings with priests. We avoided the heavily pressed hospitality of

one large company, for according to Mahomet, we must. We did, however, take *talla* and coffee at the hands of a charming and imposing man who lived in a large and well-built stone house and treated us with every kindness.

As we moved eastwards building standards continued to improve, and the next village, Guiget, was really well constructed. Many of the stone-built houses were two-storey, with roofs of slate or corrugated iron. There were shops. Once again a local policeman befriended us, and he had unusual difficulty in keeping the local youngsters at bay, whose attention and begging was more aggressive than anything we had previously encountered. We got to know a medical dresser who had visited the U.K. He had many interesting things to tell us, and gratefully received a gift of most of George's remaining drugs.

One more day's march, one more bivouac, and we were within three hours of Makalle. We went in on the morning of 23rd April, along with the many parties of people trudging to market. Here in the grounds of the Ambra Castle Hotel, where George had stayed before, we took leave of our Ethiopian friends and with some sense of shame and self consciousness reverted to European living. We had been very kindly welcomed by the Indian lady who runs this admirable hotel, but after a bath, a shave and a change of clothes, I was taken for a newly-arrived stranger and had to be re-introduced.

We had some days remaining to be spent in Makalle and Eritrea; they were intensely interesting, but mainly in relation to social and political matters in advance of the approaching revolution. It is preferable to conclude with a backward glance towards the Semyen and the magnificent people we met there.



YORKSHIRE RAMBLINGS IN CALIFORNIA

by S. A. Goulden

IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT to make a story out of my exploits in the climbing arena since I came out here. What with the weather (too hot in summer and too much wet snow in winter) and the distance (300 miles to Yosemite) the urge to climb seemed finally dead. We family-toured Yosemite Valley and the few roads that cross the High Sierra, taking the well engineered tourist trails to suitable vantage spots. But these were usually hot and dusty. Crowded Yosemite is a myth that any veteran of recent years in the Lake District will put into perspective. Thousands visit, but the place is so massive and intimidating that the vast majority daredn't leave their cars, let alone the camp-sites. The scale literally swallows them. The recent attempt by an entertainments conglomerate to take over the park service agency puts the mental approach in context: it is like some massive film set. The cliffs are too high to appreciate, the moods too varied to assimilate and the whole thing very smooth. You will correctly infer that for all its fame, it doesn't appeal to this alien. So we take visitors there and that's been about it.

But the Sierra Nevada is not Yosemite and the Sierra Nevada is not the whole of mountaineering in California. When the family returned to England last year for a transfusion of European heritage, time seemed to hand, and my boots looked as though they needed some exercise. Yearning for something I could recognise, an assault on the Matterhorn was planned. As with all good European things, America has to have one of its own, and the Matterhorn is no exception. Just for once, the New World has the smaller of the two, and it makes a hard weekend trip, with 600 ft. of steep snow and rock. Situated on the north east end of the Sierra, it involved a long drive but once planned there was no stopping.

We arrived at the foot of the trail at 1 a.m. The trail starts at 7,000 ft. and the temperature was 30°F. sometime in July at the same latitude as Sicily! We slept in the car and started out bright and early with our heavy packs, heavy because we didn't know what to expect.

After several well-graded alpine-type hairpins we got off trail into ten foot high bushes. That's what happens when you try to be clever. We eventually found the trail again where it entered a gradually sloping hanging valley that rose from 7,800 ft. to about 8,000 ft. in two to three miles. At 8,000 ft. the snow started, soft and slippery. Remember that the sun is hot in California, and we had had a short fitful night. Remember I hadn't climbed for well-nigh twelve months. Remember that we're carrying climbing gear (for the rocks), ice gear (for the glacier) and winter camping gear ('cos we didn't know better). Forgive me for packing in at 9,000 ft. in a beckoning little coppice of pine trees and going to sleep for about two hours. Nature has its ways.

After a brief meal it was 2.30 and we both felt we ought to move upwards, although we lacked conviction. A ridge of loose glacier moraine looked more inviting than the snow, and more in the desired direction, so we struggled on. At about 9,500 ft., round a corner in some dwarf juniper, we found a beautiful little glacier melt pool. It was too pleasant to leave so we made an early camp, and played in the snow and on the small cliffs around. For the first time we could see the Matterhorn Peak, right at the head of the glacier. As the sun set, the peak was lit with an orange glow that made it stand out from the surrounding jagged peaks. We were committed to getting up, even if it took all day.

We started out at 6.0, travelling light. The snow had frozen to be ideally kickable and the first thousand feet up the glacier were ideal, even if they did take two hours. The sun came up into a cloudless sky but we kept in the shadow until the final snowfield below the peak, where we had no choice. By the time we were halfway across, the snow was so soft as to offer no support until we were almost sitting on it. It took a long time to reach the north-east couloir, our chosen route. The snow there was soft also, but one learns to swim up hill in wet snow, and it was easier than on the more horizontal snowfield below. We didn't rope up until about half-way up the three to four hundred ft. glacier, when my partner lost about a hundred feet in a minor slab avalanche. After that we moved one at a time on the rope, not for protection but to give an excuse for a rest and to ensure our hard-earned gains against gravity.

Finally we gained the ridge, and good rock led to the top and lunch. It was twelve noon.

The view from the top was typical of the Sierra Nevada. Rolling hills out to the west, jagged cliffs and edges to the east. The rock changes colour every few miles, first red, then white, later black. It is easy to walk the Sierra Crest by keeping west of the hard stuff. The eastern arêtes offer some very hairy prospects.

At one o'clock we started down, taking the tourist couloir. After 200 ft. of rock we were on the snow again, and had that delightful experience of tobogganing virtually the whole of the 2,500 ft. to the campsite on our backsides. We were back in camp at two, cooked a rapid meal and shouldered our packs for the descent at three. Authentic glissades down to 8,000 ft. made short work of the snow at the price of a few tumbles, and we were back at the car by 4.30. Twelve hours to get up and two and a half to get down! Such is the power of gravity.

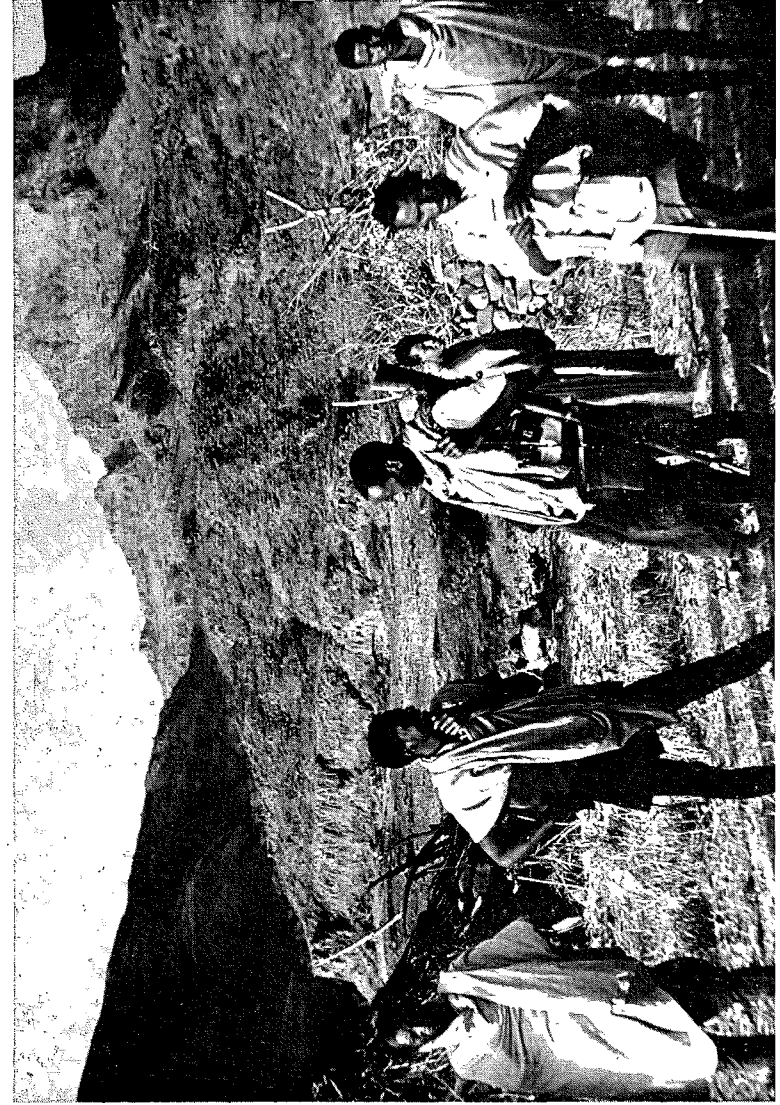
That trip was nearly a year ago, and the family leave for England in June, so I'm thinking again.

Of course there have been other happenings. The San Francisco Bay area has many rock outcrops for playing on, but nothing like Almscliff or Ilkley. Since my son joined his school climbing club most of these have been visited but only the Pinnacles is worth talking about. Half of an ancient volcano on the famed San Andreas Fault and about 150 miles south of San Francisco, the Pinnacles National Monument is moving north at about two inches per year. The pinnacles are the old volcanic plugs left where the softer lava has been worn away and vary from twenty to five hundred feet of exposed rock. The rock is mostly very granular, like Cairngorm or Arran granite, and it weathers in a most peculiar way. In the gullies, the rain leaches out all the solubles, leaving a very crumbly rock that offers no protection and little pleasure. On the faces the sun is the major force, vitrifying the rock so that it becomes incredibly tough. As most of the routes start in the gullies and then move onto these steep granular faces where most of the holds are pebbles or friction, the mental transition is frightening—as they say out here, it blows your mind. After two days we had the measure of the place and we were beginning to

enjoy ourselves. Not so the others from the school club, who went to explore some igneous caves.

Here, as in many things, the Americans seem to specialise. They are either smooth-rock climbers, or friction climbers, or crack climbers. If it doesn't suit, they pack up and go home. The general mountaineer doesn't seem to exist out here. Hopefully, we can alter things somewhat, at least in the school district.

The snow in the Sierra improves for climbing as its quantity declines, and after the summer we are planning a number of trips. Come the winter, we intend to join the cross-country ski bandwagon. It could be fun. Feels like something is waking up again.



J. A. Medley

SHAMBA KITI'S VILLAGE

THOSE BLUE REMEMBERED HILLS

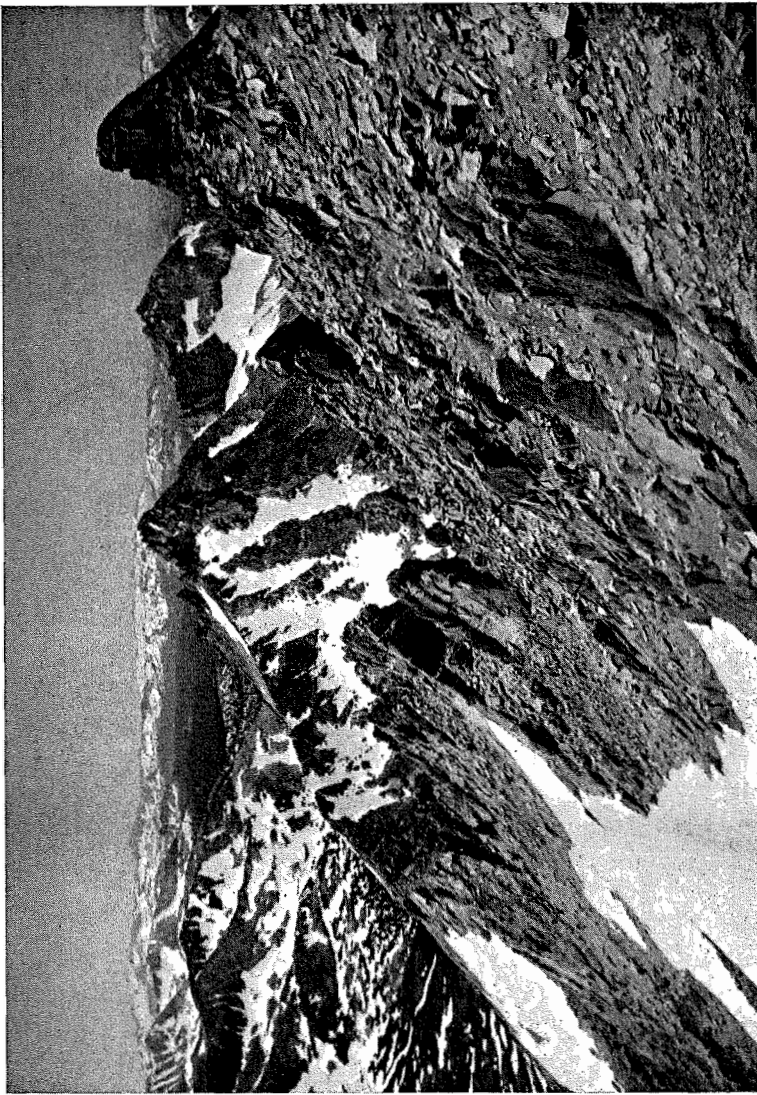
by D. J. Farrant

DOWN THE AGES many reasons have been advanced for climbing mountains: in Biblical times, as in Classical Greece, the mist-shrouded summits seemed the most appropriate residence for the Gods and mortal men ascended in a spirit of awe and trepidation. Himalayan expeditions have been asked not to climb the last five feet of their mountain to avoid a trespass on the dwelling of the Holy One. John Hunt quietly asked Hillary to leave a crucifix on the summit of Everest; on the last Sunday in July over fifty-thousand devout Irish men and women will climb the holy mountain of Croagh Patrick to hear Mass on the summit. On the other hand, men have built beacons on mountain tops to warn of invaders (a recent survey showed that only twelve summits would be needed in Britain to flash a message from John o' Groats to Lands End) or have made ascent easy by the provision of railways and cable-cars, or have built cafés and observatories in the clouds.

We have done most of these things in Britain for a variety of motives, some sacred and some profane, yet a decisive answer as to why we seek the summits is as fleeting as a Brocken Spectre or the Grey Man of Ben Muich Dhui.

In the nineteenth century Sir Hugh T. Munro, Bart., of Lindertis, compiled a set of tables in which he classified the 3,000 foot tops in Scotland, divided them into separate mountains and mere tops (coming up originally with 283 and 538) and ascended most of them personally. Unfortunately Sir Hugh died before his revision was complete and the work of record passed into the capable hands of a number of distinguished members of the Scottish Mountaineering Club. When the tables were re-classified, the totals became 276 and 544. These were added to by the "discovery" of Beinn Tarsuinn in Wester Ross and by the addition in the last couple of years of Beinn A' Chlaidheimh and Ruadh Stac Mor in the same area as the result of the new ordnance survey.

This will probably destroy the concept of collecting Munros because all the measurements on the new maps will be metric. To complicate the issue further, the S.M.C. keeper of records, Eric Maxwell, died a few years ago and no obvious successor



S. A. Goulden

SIERRA NEVADA

has come forward to assume this responsibility. The Scottish Mountaineering Club still publish annually in their Journal a list of those who complete the Munros (some 120 now) but in a recent letter to me their Secretary, Donald Bennet, doubts whether the records will continue, especially after the metric conversion. Furthermore, now that the two new Munros have been discovered, does this invalidate the success of the previous mountaineers who are now dead or too old to complete the new course?

Such arguments are of course purely legalistic and are nothing to do with the reasons why Sir Hugh with his tidy mind amassed his list in the first place and even less to do with the reasons why people try to climb them all. There is surely much more of a seeking after the places of the Gods than a mere desire to see one's name in the record books.

In the Journal of 1966 I contributed an article on a holiday in the Highlands at Easter 1965 and mentioned then the ascent of Mullach Nan Coirean in the Mamores as my first Munro. Little did I realise what I had set in train during that memorable week that varied from a fortunate escape in a fall on ice on the Ben to an idyllic day on An Teallach when I discovered a new kingdom. If I were to be allowed a type of "Desert Island Discs" wish at the end of my climbing career, I think I should ask for that day over again. I have never climbed An Teallach since for fear the spell might be broken.

This introduction to the Scottish hills was followed by the supreme wisdom of taking a job in Edinburgh and thus being able to get away into the Highlands at the first opportunity. From there the memories blend and blur—and to chart my progress exactly I can refer to my climbing diary—but I prefer to linger on some of these memories and leave the facts and figures until later.

There was a blazing Torridon Easter in 1966 when for ten days we basked in glorious sunshine whilst the snow beneath us was crisp to the cut. A memorable traverse of Beinn Eighe began with eagles in the glen and ended with an exhausted descent many hours later into the dark chasm of Coire Mhic Fhearchair. An ascent of Beinn Alligin provided a view so diamond-sharp that Harris and Lewis seemed but offshore

islands and the eye quested for St. Hilda which comes into vision on the rarest occasions.

A June weekend of sun and splendour on Ben Alder; the round of five hills above Culra Lodge that ended with a weary trudge off Beinn Bheoil and down to the burn beside our camp site. We lay contentedly for an age in the sparkling water and happily found the cans of beer that we had cunningly left there to cool all day. This was the occasion of my hundredth Munro.

There was the first visit to Skye: and it rained. We were caught in the most terrifying thunderstorm I have ever seen as the whole face of the Cuillin flamed orange and black in the smoky twilight and lightning flickered between the pinnacles—Götterdämmerung indeed. When the calm came we were eaten alive by the midges; we sought the tops and I got gripped on the gendarme on the West Ridge of Sgurr Nan Gillean. The second visit to Skye: we were flooded out of our bivouac; we drank whisky in a friend's caravan at ten in the morning and still to some extent under its influence climbed the Cioch in the afternoon; Glen Brittle was flooded out and we fled in despair. The third visit to Skye and still it rained but at last at mid-day it cleared and we went to climb the east face of Clach Glas. This is a continuously interesting piece of route-finding rock work that ends magnificently with the summit cairn as the final handhold. The rain disappeared, the mists rose and the incomparable sweep of the Cuillin ridge swelled into the sky. The next day there was a walk across the moor from Sligachan to the Pinnacle Ridge of Sgurr Nan Gillean—one of the most marvellous ways to climb a mountain, continuously testing and revealing; we stood on the summit with two senior citizens who disclosed a wondrous thing, that one was 67 and his friend 79—the Gaelic name of the mountain means "The Peak of the Young Men;" perhaps it is true that it is in the mountains that one finds Shangri-La, or Tir-Nan-Og. The best wine was saved for our last day: the round of Coire Lagan. We began with an ascent of the Window Buttress, tricky to start with and then a grunting pull up an awkward corner to climb through the window; then on to Sgurr Dearg and down to climb the Inaccessible Pinnacle. I had longed to do this; what a position, what a sensation of

exposure, but lovely, easy rock with firm holds at a decreasing angle. Ten minutes work and we were there. We continued the traverse over Sgurr Mhic Coinnich and Collie's Ledge (not as frightening as it looks), onto Sgurr Thearlaich and finished on Sgurr Alasdair to complete the day. I lay in my sleeping-bag that night in a state of utter contentment.

The very writing causes the memories to flood back without need of reference. Dalwhinnie in a February blizzard when we could not see and were given a lift through the pass on a snow-plough; staying one April in the old school house at Kinloch Hourn that still contained the equipment from its last use in the 1920's and then being snow-bound because the car could not negotiate the hill until the thaw.

There were four visits in a couple of years to Glen Shiel that contained a number of magnificent days. Two of them on the Cluanie ridge, a superb November morning on Beinn Sgriol when the first winter snow was on the ground and when the stags were roaring in the glen as if to answer the cries of the circling eagles on the summits, an epic traverse of Beinn Fhada on a day after a torrential storm that ended with the most dangerous river crossing I have ever attempted at the head of Glen Lichd.

Then there were three Easter holidays at a cottage in Glen Affric. The first year gave us superb weather and provided glorious days on Carn Eige and Mam Sodhail, the Strathfarrar ridge and Sgurr Na Lapaich. I remember sitting beside Loch Toll A' Mhuic at the end of a beautifully sunny traverse of the Strathfarrar hills, talking to my young companion about the way in which the beauties of the earth can strike to the heart. I thought of Gustav Mahler, who sensing the approach of death, poured out the quintessence of his soul in "Das Lied von Der Erde," in a passionate elegy of farewell to the world he loved so much. There was another day too on Sgurr Na Lapaich when we climbed up the long south-east ridge in ever sunnier and warmer weather until at last we sat in the summit shelter still in our shirt sleeves and lazed for half an hour. The second year in the region was a harder one, trying to find ways to some of the remoter peaks and succeeding in reaching Beinn Fhionnlaidh (Affric Lodge—Mam Sodhail—Carn Eige and straight on), An Riabhachan and An Socach (the road

beyond the Monar Dam that leads into Gleann Innis An Loichel), and what our limited Gaelic had transposed into Sgurr nan Chrysanthemum (there is a forestry road up there too that takes you to Athnamulloch and permission to use it is usually granted out of the tourist season; this allowed us to do the round of Ceathreamhnan and Creag A' Choir' Aird in about 8½ hours). The third year in poorer weather had as its highlight a safari by Land Rover into the remote parts of the Attadale Estate to climb Lurg Mhor and Bidein A' Choire Sheasgaich, being honoured with the company of a Scottish climber whose last day on the hills had been on the south-west face of Everest. We were kindly given permission by the owner to use the estate road to Bendronaig Lodge, which makes the ascent of this remote pair of hills relatively easy, but the road is thrilling and only a vehicle with four-wheel drive could possibly negotiate it.

By this time I had notched up over 200 Munros and had got to the delicious stage of being able to count down rather than upwards and had by now learned to live with my wife's very justified and forbearing observation that it was easy to plot where our next few holidays would be. So the list dwindled until I was left with twenty in the Wester Ross area. A summer trip to the Fannichs took care of nine of them and I came to the New Year of 1974 with only eleven remaining.

I have been so fortunate with Easter weather in the Highlands that I hardly dared hope for success in this respect once more as four of us set out at the end of March for The Smiddy, the beautifully appointed J.M.C.S. hut at Dundonnell. Once again, however, we struck gold. There was a splendid day on the Beinn Dearg range from Inverlael that enabled me to see only my third dotterel. The following day, 1st April, was a fascinating expedition up the private road to Rhidorroch Old Lodge (by kind permission of Major Scobie) to wander into the wild and find Seana Bhraigh. I lived up to the spirit of the day by falling head first into a burn before the first hour was up, but eventually we tracked down this lonely peak—a feat of navigation I should not welcome in mist. The northern corries of the mountain are a revelation: deep, riven clefts, shattering drops and a scale comparable with the corries of Beinn Eighe or Liathach.

Then there were six, so I staked all on a half-term trip to Shenavall at the end of May. We were a goodly company: two pupils of mine with strong endurance records on the hills, Rory, a timid little skeltie whose only complaint was a river crossing, and his master, a Church of Scotland minister. I felt that most eventualities had been provided for. We walked in over the moor on a miraculous Friday evening. The tops of An Teallach were flecked with tiny clouds, pink streaks dappled the sky and the cuckoos were calling in Strath Na Sealga as we came down the rocks to this remote and uninhabited kingdom.

The following morning we set out with high hopes to do the full round of six peaks and almost succeeded. The weather seemed to favour us as we struck up the ridge of Beinn A' Chlaidheimh but on the long section across to Sgurr Ban it suddenly turned vicious and the mist and rain swirled in, ruining our views for the rest of the day. Nothing daunted, we continued over the fine conical peak of Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair, along the sharp ridge of Beinn Tarsuinn to the head of the glen and then up the slopes of Scotland's remotest mountain, A'Mhaighdean. There the original ordnance surveyors lost their courage, and though there is no actual mention on the map of "Here bee dragons" the details are woefully inaccurate. In the mist not only could we not see the magnificent mountain scenery that we knew lay all around but nor could we get our bearings. We tried to find our last objective, Ruadh Stac Mor, but appeared to be plunging down a rocky hillside well below any imaginable col and felt it safer to cut our losses and return to the main glen. We could undoubtedly have completed the round but nonetheless felt utterly drained of strength when at last we returned to Shenavall, only minutes less than twelve hours after we had set out.

The next morning, despite rain and cloud, we were not to be denied and took a fail-safe course to the elusive Ruadh Stac Mor. We found the steep red slope implied by its title and eventually emerged on the summit plateau and reached the shelter of stones around the trig. point. There was a spell of rejoicing and congratulation, photographs were taken in the mist and a secret bottle of whisky for a celebratory dram was produced from the rucksack.

What does one feel when the goal is achieved? Tired and happy, undoubtedly, but in my case no desire like Alexander the Great to sit down and weep that there are no more worlds to conquer. There are faults in Munro-bagging of course: one can merely climb separate peaks without regard for the topography of the area—how absurd to climb Spidean A' Choire Leith without completing the summit traverse of Liathach over the Fasarinen Pinnacles; one can ignore anything below 3,000 ft.—how foolish to turn the back on Suilven, Quinag, Stac Pollaidh, the Cobbler, or never go to Rhum or Arran; one can climb everything once and nothing twice—how shortsighted not to want to return to Nevis, Torridon, Skye I feel, though, that the prime value of climbing the Munros lies in one's acquaintance with every part of mountain Scotland. In my case this has served only to sharpen my appetite and to cause me to seek to return to as many of the wonderful places with which I may now justly claim kin.

In Elgar's Enigma Variations there are two themes: the musical one that the composer offers in various settings to identify his friends and the underlying enigmatic theme that is surely the harmonizing bond of friendship. Thus do I associate my mountains with my friends and my final answer to the question posed in the first paragraph would be that I climb for the sake of companionship and find in the mountains the perfect spiritual setting.

APPENDIX: FACTUAL INFORMATION ON THE ASCENT OF THE MUNROS

Year	Munros	Days	Hours	Miles
1965	9	6	48	51
1966	20	13	89	97
1967	54	27	156	238
1968	34	17	109	139
1969	42	29	166	251
1970	38	20	122	192
1971	27	17	93	158
1972	24	15	94	174
1973	20	10	65	115
1974	11	4	34	54
TOTALS:	279	158	976	1,469

Time taken :

Friday, 16th April, 1965 to Sunday, 26th May, 1974—
9 years, 1 month, 10 days.

Companions :

55 different people whose aggregate of Munros in my
company is 456.

**NOVA SCOTIA AND THE DRAKENSBERG**

by D. A. Smithson

AN ENGINEER was said to be an expert when he was fifty miles from home, but now the distance has to be greater perhaps because the engineers are smaller. My boss telephoned me in Sweden to ask me to start work in Nova Scotia as soon as possible. The job could last from one to five years and lets say four weeks to sort out your personal problems and conclude the Swedish contract. I made it to Canada in five weeks complete with wife, children and dog.

The normal activities of living, like work and finding houses and furniture require more time when overseas. Also a sense of uncertainty and a lack of security make families stick more closely together so that even self-centred and domineering males, like all Yorkshire Ramblers, cannot easily leave their families.

For the first six months I did nothing more than take a few walks in the forest and take frequent camping trips with my family. This included the whole summer period with a week's camping in the White Mountains in U.S.A. as the nearest I got to climbing. I do, however, have a certificate as "A Master of the Mountain" for driving up Mount Washington.

It was some time after this that I conceived the idea of spending a weekend canoeing, Red Indian style. As a result one Saturday in September, 1974 we set off at 06.00 hours: two cars, four people, two canoes and enough camping gear to stay out until Sunday night.

We motored about 150 miles to Kejimikujik National Park which is all lakes, rivers, trees and hiking trails. The autumn in Canada is quite unbelievable. The colours as seen in some Walt Disney films are really true. There are dark green evergreens and then maple leaves from pale gold to brilliant crimson. The whole range of colours is displayed with each tree being predominantly one colour. Even hundreds of miles of motoring does not dull the wonder at the colours and sitting quietly away from the bustling world one is awed.

We off-loaded the canoes, sleeping bags, food etc., near Big Dam Lake and took one car to Jacques Landing where we hoped to finish on Sunday evening. I stayed to guard our

equipment and watched two other people start the "carry" through the forest to the edge of the lake. This they did in two stages. First the canoe and then their rucsacs, paddles etc. It took them about ten minutes for the return journey. When I reported this to my companions we agreed to carry the canoes complete with gear for this first short portage. This was our first mistake. The trail was narrow and winding and the dimensions of the canoes made them very difficult to handle in the upright position. It reminded me of the struggles to carry a rolled bed mattress only the canoe was heavier and hard.

After taking photographs we launched ourselves onto the lake. First we had an experimental paddle up and down and back. Then we loaded our gear in and set off to explore the wilderness. Down Great Dam Lake we went, through the narrows and on to a Park Warden's cabin where we had lunch. As we travelled we managed to identify the camp sites in the trees, and find the coloured marker identifying the start of our portage past the rocky outlet of the lake. The cabin was neat and well maintained but unoccupied. Looking through the windows showed it to be a two roomed all wooden cabin with a stove and two beds.

We then crossed the lake to the start of our first real portage of about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile. Now we confirmed our view that there is no painless way to carry a canoe even when empty. The two fishermen relaxed by trying to catch breakfast off some rocks. They caught no fish but one fell in, so three of us thought the pause worthwhile. The journey continued down a slow moving river through low-lying marshy ground with a backcloth of trees of every imaginable colour. The silence could be felt. We managed to pole and paddle the canoes past the next portage and camped where the river joined the next lake.

Camping and cooking is only permitted on certain sites where fireplaces, rough tables with benches and cut firewood are provided. These facilities are necessary to avoid serious forest fires and to prevent people chopping down all the trees near the fireplaces. We lit a fire, made coffee and baked potatoes and onions. As it grew darker we drank more coffee, passed the rum bottle and talked and talked and talked. We had had a great day full of new experiences which could be related to past experiences.

We slept under the trees with a ground sheet pretending that no one had told us that bears were on the move. We woke to a dull drizzly day which disappointed us after the sunshine of the previous day. After breakfast we set out across Frozen Ocean Lake which was about a mile and a half against a stiff breeze. The next portage was essential for us to gain entry to the river but a more experienced pair of canoeists demonstrated how to paddle through the white water. We paused to fish and then continued paddling along the river in the rain. Fortunately the trees protected us from the wind. At the next portage we floated the canoes with equipment whilst one person walked and the other waded. This was followed by more river and a small lake before the longest portage called Coade's portage.

We cooked lunch in the fireplace provided before starting the portage. Coade's portage is about half a mile long over a ridge and at the top of the ridge there is a sort of goal post to support one end of the inverted canoe so that the carriers can rest without lowering the canoe to the ground. This is a natural way to take the weight of a canoe being carried by a single person. We found the carrying of a canoe 17 feet long hard work even for two of us. The problem is not so much the weight as the awkward shape and we always ended up with sore shoulders and stiff necks even with short carries. The usual problem is that if the weight is supported in relative comfort, then the neck had to be strained to see the way through the trees. We used a 17 foot canoe because we had no experience of canoeing and a big canoe is more stable but heavier. I would consider a 15 foot canoe big enough for all normal expeditions up to a week.

Following the river down to the largest lake, Kejimkujik Lake, was uninteresting but this may have been because the weather was overcast with increasing wind. This wind began to worry us because even on the river it was making waves about six inches high and our freeboard was about nine inches. On the large expanse of the lake the waves would be larger. We therefore chose to carry the canoes over a peninsula instead of paddling round the point. This was safer but more painful.

Our route across the lake was almost at right angles to the

wind but to avoid being swamped we had to keep the canoe in line with the wind. Added to this we had to paddle strongly when exposed to the wind to avoid being blown ashore. We could all swim, and we all had life jackets so the chances of drowning were small but it was cold and the overland route is made very arduous by dense forest and marsh. By carrying across the base of Indian Point we avoided being exposed to the wind and waves for the first mile. The waves were about eighteen inches high so we spent about two hours paddling hard in a South Westerly direction so that we drifted in an E.S.E. direction which was the route we wished to follow. We abandoned our attempt to round the next point to Jacques Landing, turned our backs to the wind and ran the canoes onto a beach where there is a roadway about a mile from the car.

After that we had only to retrieve the cars, load our equipment and drive back to Halifax. We had had a wonderful adventure in magnificent scenery with the outcome reasonably in doubt. Luckily the party was a happy one of people determined to get the most fun possible. I did not go canoeing again for the season was over and winter too close.

But winter provided a different venue and when my family returned to U.K. just after Christmas they gave my Swedish ski and boots to a friend returning to Nova Scotia. I did not feel that I should overburden my friend but I regretted not having my duvet, breeches and gaiters. However, a nylon boiler suit with cuffs added made a very effective overall. Later I managed a visit to U.K. and equipped myself with gaiters, breeches and spare mitts.

I found that the Canadian Youth Hostel Association organised many outdoor pursuits including the provincial ski racing and the marathon. The ski racing for Nova Scotia is centred on the C.Y.H.A. hostel at Wentworth, about 100 miles from Halifax. Skis and boots were available for hire at the hostel and at an associated shop in Halifax. This shop also hired out canoes, sleeping bags, rucsacs etc. At the Wentworth hostel there is a large area of forest with ski trails and it is closed to the skidoer. Because of the general freedom of access in Nova Scotian forests skiers have to share the trails with the skidoers and the trails are made difficult for the skier. The

skidoer is a creature in human form who travels forest trails and lakes on petrol driven, noisy, smelly machines with two short ski at the front and a friction belt drive at the back. Once a creature of this type has passed, the trail is spoiled for the skier until more snow has fallen.

My first day of ski-ing was close to a disaster. I hired ski, poles and boots. I borrowed a frame rucksack. And finally chose a narrow trail winding through the trees. The boots, chosen large to avoid cold feet were too large, and the hook release on the rucksack strap had a habit of becoming unhooked with fatal effect on my normally delicate balance. I was ski-ing in slacks over pyjamas and a pullover over a pull-over and had not yet realised how cold and deep the snow of Canada can be. I finished the trail exhausted, wet and bruised having taken most of the day over a "good half day tour."

For the next three months I skied two days each weekend and also a single half day, mid week when we were sent home early in case the roads were impassable by tea time. I don't remember a great deal of bad weather but occasionally the cold was so intense that ski-ing in a slight wind was painful. In March I got soaked to the skin when out on the Saturday but a fall in temperature produced good ski-ing conditions on the Sunday.

I had many good times with good company. We skied at Kejimikujik National Park and on the Sunday I followed our canoeing route to the warden's cabin and returned via a hiking trail. We visited Prince Edward Island which is noted for its beaches in the summer and as the inspiration for "Green Gables." The weather on this occasion was perfect and I was introduced to the Brookvale Ski Resort which truly catered for cross country ski-ing as well as downhill. Almost every second weekend was spent at Wentworth. Not only on the C.Y.H.A. trails but also on the other side of the Wentworth valley near the downhill slope where we prepared a 25 mile marathon trail.

The preparation of the Nova Scotian Marathon Trail was an interesting experience. The trail used in previous years had been very dependent on an old logging road which unfortunately has been put back into use and is ploughed in the winter, which makes it undesirable for ski-ing. The local

experts decided that a route should exist from Wentworth to Debert using some trails, some lakes, open lanes formed by streams and some bushwacking. I don't know the origin of the word bushwacking but the skiers used it to mean travelling through the forest which involves cutting branches and bushes to form a clear trail. It was interesting to see these experts find a route through a forest where visibility is 10 to 20 yards. Where I was totally dependent on a compass the experts used aerial photographs and moved confidently from lake to stream using changes in types of trees as guidance. The confidence arose partially from the ability to follow ones own trail back to the beginning but I never heard of this happening.

My first experience of helping with the new trail was very much of a support role. We took two cars to Debert and followed mapped trails for about six miles into the forest. This made a set of tracks to guide a party of experts over the last part of the route and also provided us with a great day's skiing. The experts started from two points each of which could be escape routes to the main road from the completed marathon route. One party finished at the end where we were waiting and the second party started nearer the beginning and finished where the first party started. Both the expert parties did about 15 miles of route marking with tape and cutting branches where necessary to make a suitable trail. Both parties had a hard day and did not feel that the best route had been found and marked. Another day a party failed to find a suitable route for the first part of the route and so for the 1975 marathon the length was reduced to about 20 miles.

The marathon was to take place on a Sunday so on the preceding Saturday I joined a party making guidance tracks, tying additional marker tapes and re-routing where improvements could be made. We left Wentworth at about eleven o'clock and made good progress on the early part of the route. One major re-routing was a total failure and involved us in about two hours of ski-ing. In the end we finished ski-ing in the dark and reached the waiting car at seven o'clock in the evening. After that the ski-ing of the marathon was easy even though I joined the early morning party which consisted of the organisers of the marathon. Over a hundred people completed the route covering a wide range of ages and skill. One

of the most notable was an English girl who had just learned to ski. She fell in a stream after about five miles but finished the whole route with frozen clothing. The real heroes were the party near the half-way escape route. They made soup all day and then finished the route with the last party of the organisers complete with stoves and pans.

A week or two later on a good day with blue skies and low temperatures a party of us skied from Wentworth and found a route for the first few miles so that we now had a completed marked route from Wentworth to Debert. It was a very long day and late in the season when the roads were clear of snow. However, in the forest using an inverted ski pole we could not probe the full depth of the snow. On days like this we could never get off our ski in comfort so normally we even ate lunch standing on ski. Very early on I learnt to re-wax one ski whilst standing on the other to avoid floundering about in deep snow. We used the first escape route down to the road but then had a long boring time ski-ing alongside the road on poor snow.

My last weekend in Nova Scotia was Easter weekend and I went ski-ing on Cape Breton Island with a party of friends. We stayed at a farm and though the ski-ing was not exceptional the location was. To start off with the farmer had not ploughed his road because he did not own a car so we left the cars about a mile from the farm and skied in. On leaving the farmer, John Gardner, loaded our luggage onto a sledge and harnessed the horses.

John and his family had emigrated from the United States where both he and his wife had been teachers living on a smallholding. They bought this farm because it was the best they could afford which would enable them to revert to a simpler but harder way of living. They were very nearly self-sufficient on the farm but their eldest two boys had left to start their own lives as a farrier and a coach builder which reduced the labour force available to do the farming. One of the two remaining children, both girls, is shortly to enter a veterinary college and then I think John will have to modify his way of farming.

The food was marvellous. A home fed, home killed, home cured ham of enormous size provided the basic meat but to

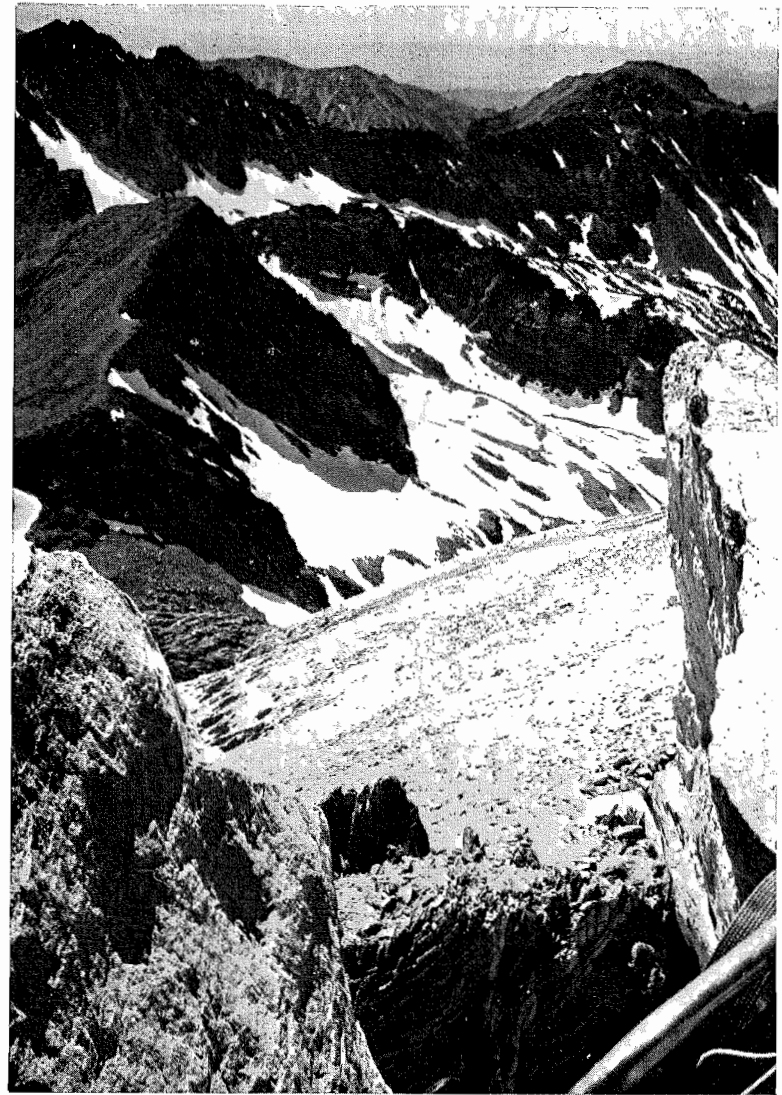
this was added a great variety of sauces and preserves. Not to be forgotten was home made bread, doughnuts and herb tea. Also evenings of talk about literature and contrasting different ways of living. We also enjoyed an evening of American country dancing in the kitchen to gramophone records and John's instructions. Imagine twelve people trying to dance in an English suburban kitchen.

I then went home to my family in England for four weeks. A period spent enjoying the love and comfort of home and preparing to leave for South Africa. The intended programme was for me to leave my family at home for three months during the initial stages of a contract based in South Africa but involving a visit to Canada.

So I moved from the end of the winter in Canada to the beginning of winter in South Africa. From wet cold with snow and sleet to absolutely dry cold at 5,000 ft. with almost continuous blue sky and sunshine. There is also a very great change in social attitudes in these two affluent countries.

On arrival I made contact with a member of the F.R.C.C. Dave Hughes, with whom I had exchanged letters whilst in Canada. This was a very good move and led to some great evenings of drinking and talking. However, the weekend after we met Dave nearly killed himself falling down a gully in the dark which was most inconsiderate of him. His recovery coincided with my departure to Canada for a few weeks and my return coincided with an onset of arthritis in one of his legs: a rather painful way of avoiding climbing with me but he entertained me royally and gave me a lot of good advice.

I spent most of my mountaineering weekends in the Drakensbergs at recognised holiday centres but there is a lot of rock climbing in the Magaliesbergs which are much nearer to Johannesburg. The Mountain Club of South Africa does not publish climbing guides and make them generally available. Details of climbs are published in its journals but the problem is to locate the crags described. There is a firm and active objection by landowners to hordes of trespassers so the Mountain Club uses only word of mouth and meets to communicate the location of climbing. In some cases the Mountain Club has paid large sums of money for the right of access and the access is limited to card carrying members.



SIERRA NEVADA

S. A. Goulden

The net result is that an introduction to the Mountain Club is essential to readily discover the true extent of climbing in South Africa. For the casual visitor the recognised holiday centres in the Drakensbergs are probably the most suitable in Northern South Africa.

Some years ago I motored to Cape Town for a few days with my family and can still recall some magnificent mountain scenery. Table Mountain is a very special and readily accessible mountain but there are plenty more within a hundred miles of Cape Town.

Most of my weekends in the mountains involved encouraging a business associate to go to places to which his spirit wished him to go but which made his flesh cringe. There is a noticeable effect on a man used to walking on rolling hills and moors when he becomes involved with steep mountains up to 11,000 ft. We did not do more than scrambling but had some wonderful days out starting at about 5,000 ft. and occasionally crossing a summit.

The Royal Natal National Park and the Cathedral Peak area were the only two areas we visited but they abound with real mountains with a different character from any European mountains. The general colours were pale. A pale blue sky, pale rust coloured dusty earth, light brown rock and faded green grass. However, some of the wild flowers are brightly coloured and where the earth is wet it is a rich brown colour and the grass is green; picking wild flowers is illegal. Occasionally we saw herds of deer and groups (packs I think) of baboons which makes the mountains definitely African in character. On one occasion we watched a wildebeeste, from a safe distance, jumping and bucking on the open veld. These animals have been re-introduced into the Royal Natal National Park quite recently. Then there are dassies (rock hyrax) which look to me like fat tail-less rodents as they play among the rocks.

Almost the whole of this mountain region has an exposed rock band at about 7,000 ft. which is only about 100 ft. high but is virtually unclimbable without artificial aids and this is probably the reason for a quite extensive system of well marked paths. Once when wishing to descend from a ridge we followed a stream leading towards a distant valley with a

wide path along it. Unfortunately the path was a tourist route to view the spectacular waterfall formed by our stream falling free for about a hundred feet. Our route had to be at right angles to the stream, over a saddle and down a chain ladder to reach the path down to the hotel. The interesting climbing is in the top 1,000 ft. or so of the peaks and is quite extensive.

In general the hotels are cheap but badly heated. They have large airy, rather old fashioned looking rooms very suitable for the hot periods of the year but almost impossible to heat. Ladies sometimes keep their overcoats on for dinner and the compulsory tie and jacket of the men can cover a multitude of vests. However, they only cost about R.9 a day (£5.30) including evening meal and packed lunch.

Proper maps are not readily available and should be purchased in somewhere like Johannesburg. The Royal Natal National Park have a booklet with a map showing the paths and a two inch to the mile map has been privately produced of the Cathedral Peak area. The only shop selling the map does not open until mid morning. The best guide to the mountains that I found were the sketches in a book published under the auspices of the Mountain Club of South Africa entitled "The Drakensberg of Natal" Price R.10.

I liked the Cathedral Peak area best but one must accept that there is no choice in accommodation. There is one camp site, one hutted camp and one hotel. I did not visit the camp site and the hutted camp was fully booked when I enquired. A hutted camp consists of a number of rondavels (round thatched huts) with centralised open air cooking facilities. Guests bring their own food and have it cooked by black servants or cook it themselves if at all complicated. The cooking facilities normally consist of a roofed area with a large wood fired stove which provided four hot plate areas and hot water on tap. The hotel consists of a central dining and drinking building based on the original farm house and a series of little cottages providing bedrooms and bathrooms. Within the hotel grounds are also a swimming pool, tennis courts, bowling greens, childrens play areas and stables. Most of the guests spend the majority of their time inside the grounds or within two miles of the hotel.

The hotel is at 4,820 ft. and the surrounding peaks at about

10,000 ft. At about 6,500 ft. there is a cleverly routed and clearly marked traverse path which can provide two good days of walking. We discovered an extension of this path which was not marked on the map and provided a good route down. We had spent all day scrambling up a stream bed and fighting our way through thorn bushes to try to reach a pass. If we had known of the path we would have reached it.

The following day we became associated with two strong young men intent on climbing Cathedral Peak. The hotel had lent them an old frame rucksack containing food and drink for all of us on the assumption that we would wish to travel together. They waited for us once or twice and finally left our sandwiches and mugs of water for us. After eating I continued after them and finally passed them as they were abandoning the rucksack a few hundred feet below the summit. They offered me a drink and I discovered that in addition to four enamel mugs they had carried a gallon of water, two pints of milk and a two pint flask of coffee. I was very impressed.

Other than mountains South Africa has the wild game reserves, outstanding among them the Kruger National Park. Then there is the Blyde Canyon, the Ostrich farm, the Transkai, Swaziland market, the Indian Market at Durban and the mine dancers near Johannesburg on Sundays. Many more unfamiliar sights than North America has to offer. They have even got television now but sets are R.1,000 each.



BECKING PLEASURES

by W. D. Clayton

AT ONE TIME OR OTHER, most mountaineers have indulged in a mild form of Becking, usually at the end of a hard day on the hills when wet through: sloshing through streams cannot then make any appreciable difference to the water content of boots or clothing. This state, if conditions are mild, gives most people a guilty sense of light hearted enjoyment, but, if in company, this is not usually admitted and only betrays itself by an unnecessary prolongation of the crossing of a stream and an emphatic clumping of waterfilled boots for the next hundred yards or so.

The guilty feeling has been instilled in the majority of us from the days of early childhood, when the basic pleasure of stamping through puddles of water and getting shoes and clothing soaking wet, was met by swift parental displeasure and rebuke. Gradually other forms of socially acceptable play were encouraged and getting wet-through deliberately was only condoned when in a swimming costume or in the bath. Thus one of the most enjoyable sensations, that of intentionally getting wet-through, fully clothed, is lost forever to the mass of people.

British mountaineers, of course, through the fortunate vagaries of the climate, have frequent opportunities to reassess the position and to those who feel stirrings of pleasure when wet-through I recommend 'becking' or 'beck-bottoming' as it is called by one of our kindred clubs.

Becking, in its broad definition, involves following up, or down, a mountain stream contained within high gully walls and overcoming all obstacles encountered, such as waterfalls and deep pools, by climbing and swimming, without leaving the main stream passage. This definition will no doubt be disputed by some whose aim seems to be to follow a gorge through at stream level while actually trying to keep dry: this is of course a heresy and its adherents should be encouraged to leave the gorges and gills to the connoisseur.

Unfortunately good sections of mountain streams, sufficiently long and deep and enclosed by steep rock walls, are comp-

aratively rare south of Scotland and the Scottish ones seen, with one or two notable exceptions, have only been viewed in near arctic conditions when the observing party did not feel justified in self indulgence. Some choice becking trips have taken place during various club meets over the last few years, as well as one or two private ventures. Although not all chronicled, the following suggestions will give some guidance to beginners and perhaps some warning to other members to avoid the small nucleus of enthusiasts within the club.

One of the finest introductions to the sport is the upstream route through Hell Gill, which is situated three miles north of the Moorcock on the right-hand side of the Mallerstang road. A rough track crosses the railway and proceeds to a semi-derelict farmhouse. Cars may be left at this point, together with spare clothing, towels and other revivalist trappings. The start of the limestone gorge section is immediately behind the shippin by the stream. After the first small waterfall the walls immediately close in and for the whole length of the gorge remain vertical-to-overhanging and the gorge is narrow enough to be jumped across at one or two places. The stream gradually becomes deeper and more constricted, with undercut walls the further one proceeds. The crux is a circular pool, about twenty feet deep, with smooth undercut walls and a water shute at the head, down which all the stream is funnelled. The move up the shute is difficult at any time and virtually impossible if the stream is anything above normal flow. It involves a combination of fast swimming on the approach, bold take-off out of the water and total indifference to epidermic erosion. It is claimed that useful tips can be gleaned by watching seals, dolphins or salmon. A party of members in May 1971 tried the expedient of standing on one another's shoulders but gave up when the third 'tier' sank beneath the surface. The water shute was eventually overcome by one of the club's fitter pot-holers who conjured just enough friction for the purpose. He then lowered a length of waist-line to help the other members of the party who were still thrashing round the pool, trying to keep their heads above water, despite wearing boots. Just beyond this point the gorge ends and the stream emerges on the open fellside where one can then walk down to the start, or, better still, turn about and retrace the whole

route. This has the advantage of keeping one out of the wind until the last possible minute.

Another good expedition is in the Nidderdale area and involves following How Stean beck upstream first through the tourist section of the gorge and then through a long canal-like section ending in a fairly high waterfall, giving a total of one and a half miles. On the August Meet in 1971 a party of eight members were inveigled into undertaking this trip. Incidentally this is the highest number ever persuaded to take part in one of these sessions and must mark either an all-time high (or low) of club members' judgement and commonsense. At the start, we were accosted by the custodian of the tourist section, who demanded five pence per head before proceeding further. He was entirely deaf to our arguments that we were not availing ourselves of his carefully constructed scenic paths and walkways. Only the Meet Leader's assurance that he would be paid on our return pacified him. After a few waist-deep pools and small waterfalls the tourist section was left behind and the party was confronted by the first deep part of the gorge. Here R. H., who had naively rolled up his climbing breeches, was suddenly aware that he was going to get more than his boots and socks wet. A guest also found that conventional swimming strokes are of less avail when fully clothed and wearing heavy boots. The remainder of the party were intrigued to see how far he managed to swim with the top of his head a constant one foot below the surface, before finally reaching shallow water and surfacing. He did not appear to relish Becking and on reaching the top of the gorge disappeared and has not been seen on a Meet since. The end of the gorge is again the crux, with a ten foot waterfall, almost unclimbable, even with the help of a rope and passed only by a tricky stomach traverse. How Stean Gorge to be in prime condition needs to be in half-flood, as one or two of the lower pools are apt to be rather placid in the summer and the water needs a bit of 'Bant' behind it on the waterfalls to ensure a sustained trip.

In the Lake District, as is only fitting, Becking involves a larger degree of climbing skill. The club is very fortunate in this respect as within a couple of miles of Low Hall Garth is Tilberthwaite Gill. This is a most enjoyable climb, mine

and becking outing, again with the crux at the very end. Following the path up on the left-hand side of the gill, the start is where the stream makes an abrupt right-hand turn between high vegetated cliffs. From this point on, the stream bed is followed up through a series of deep pools and high waterfalls, climbed mainly on the right-hand walls. The gill then unfortunately opens out slightly before the junction with a stream entering from the left. Just beyond this point is the final waterfall, giving a fine, wet climb of about seventy-five feet of very difficult to severe standard, depending on the volume of water descending. If you cannot get up you can always claim that the stream was in flood. Below the waterfall, for the pot-holing element, there is the entrance to a quite extensive mining level leading off from water level and connected by means of aven like rifts with the upper workings. From the top of the last pitch it is possible to return direct to the club hut in about ten minutes and the luxury of a fire and hot shower, so it is worth an initial walk to Tilberthwaite instead of driving round.

Piers Gill, an early classic gully climb, is also to all intents a becking trip, especially if no attempt is made to avoid the stream bed. It has been described in a kindred club journal as an ideal trip, for a large jolly climbing party in summer, a description it is hard to better. This trip has been thoroughly enjoyed by a Y.R.C. party twice in the last three September Joint Meets at R.L.H. On both occasions it was just possible to overcome the volume of water over the crux waterfall pitch although on the last one this did involve a timely shoulder, from the cave immediately under the fall, to enable the leader to stem the downward thrust of the stream.

Again, on this occasion, a newly-joined member was persuaded to join a party of four including one Rucksack Club member. After all the others had waded through the initial pool and climbed the first small waterfall, he mentioned that his rucksack contained all the food, and how should he keep it dry? He was invited to climb up the side of the fell, hand over the rucksack, return to the bottom, wade the pool and climb the centre of the fall. This he did, in a trance-like state, only reviving on contact with the extremely cold water. A wild look came into his eye and he was last seen soloing an

extremely unpleasant route up the containing wall of Piers Gill. A valiant effort, but he will never make a confirmed Becker. He has recently taken up a job in the United States, purely for business reasons, we are given to understand.

In Derbyshire, becking is a matter of improvisation and the rules must be bent considerably to ensure a good day's outing, as with one exception there are no true gorges worth mentioning. An original crossing of Bleaklow and Howden Moors from the Snake Inn to the Flouch Inn was contrived in the summer of 1972. The idea was not to take one's feet out of a stream or water the whole way. A start was made up Lady Clough stream, then by way of the long culvert under the road and so up Birchyn Clough which provided some fine waterfall pitches, although no depth of water was encountered. Some unusual antics were involved in finding out the deepest quagmires between the last grough out of Birchyn Clough and the first slight feeder of Nether Reddale Clough. Going through the peat pools, instead of round them, seemed strange at first and against all carefully learned bog-trotting know-how. A brief interlude in the Alport soon washed all trace of peat from boots and six feet above the boots. A crossing via Ravens Clough to the river Westend followed with similar problems on the highest stretch, but no lack of wet peat. From the Westend, the route went via Upper Small Clough to the Upper Derwent, then over Howden Moors, following the feeder between Horse Stone and Crow Stones Edge to Near Cat Clough and so down to the Porter, and more waterfalls and deep pools. At this point the whole party was extremely clean, and extremely damp, and developing embryonic signs of gill growth. A mistake was made here of trying for perfection by following up a very dirty, small, overgrown channel through the plantation which ultimately disgorged us on the road opposite our objective but in what a state! It would have been better if we had taken the sporting finish and swum the length of Langsett Reservoir. One consolation, the crowded bar of the Flouch cleared like magic as we stood with our first pints. So did we when the Landlord smelt and saw the state we were in. We were shown the door with scant signs of hospitality and even denied the use of the old horse trough outside.

As an example of the superb possibilities of becking in

Scotland, the following event occurred during the Club's Whitsun Meet in Glen Brittle some years ago. Two members, after a very prolonged two-day assault on the Skye Ridge traverse decided to treat the following Wednesday as a rest day and made tracks for the fleshpots of Portree. What optimism: the day was only saved from being a disappointment by a conducted tour round Talisker Distillery. Needless to say, the after effects required some dissipating on the return journey. A chance remembered remark about there being a deep gully containing a fine underwater arch in the upper right-hand branch of the River Brittle led the two in question to park the car on the steep hill leading down to Glen Brittle and walk across to the old track which goes over to Sligachan. A little way up the river a fine round pool was found, about twenty feet deep, with a high waterfall at the head. After a swim the rocks at the side of the fall were climbed and a fine canyon section, containing very deep water, was followed upstream for about half a mile until the mythical underwater arch was clearly seen. A climb down the containing walls led to a stance immediately above the arch. The water was remarkably clear and a beautiful light green colour; typical snow melt water without the usual icy coldness. A very deep dive enabled both of them to pass beneath the arch and so downstream between gleaming white walls of rock which had the appearance almost of limestone, but in reality were water-smoothed granite. Progress was made with the minimum of effort, a deep or shallow course being maintained in the water by merely planing with the arms and fingers whilst passing beneath the containing walls which were undercut on the corners to a fantastic degree. We finally emerged at the head of the high waterfall overlooking the pool from which we had originally started. A magnificent trip and incidentally, the quickest way of sobering up either of the party has ever known.

For the enthusiastic becker one commodity he cannot get enough of in his chosen stream is water. The cry goes up, if only this waterfall was in spate, how much more demanding its ascent would be and how much more entertainment would be provided should one of your colleagues slip from the lip of the fall. This type of thinking eventually leads to the ultimate

step taken in this sport—winter becking. Then all the streams are in flood condition and the faces of the party are indescribable on first contact with the basic element! Three Y.R.C. members were introduced to winter becking way back at a very wet Hill Inn Meet by a chance remark of Francis Falkingham of the Gritstone Club. He said Ling Gill should be quite a sight in full flood and the three in question went there and gaily set off up the side of the gill with the intention of climbing along the walls as far as possible without getting wet! The bottom of the gill was completely covered from wall to wall by a turgid brown flood and the air filled with the booming sound of the first waterfall. The first section was traversed with the party only getting wet to the knees and after a few minutes this was not unpleasant as we then could no longer feel our feet. At this stage a long branch was cut down to facilitate probing and to supply mutual support—with the inevitable result. After the initial shock, the party decided to carry on up the gill as once wet we had little to lose. Progress from here on was a matter of clawing our way along the walls, on handholds, with our feet occasionally touching the bottom. The last bit was a series of leaps from boulder to boulder. At the bridge we stripped off, wrung out our clothes, re-dressed and made record time to Gearstones, the Gritstone Club Hut, where luckily the stove was glowing cherry red. Winter becking certainly brings home knowledge of the amount of exposure each individual is capable of withstanding. In case the above sounds rather grim, the three involved spent nearly the whole time in hilarious laughter and it provides one of the most vivid and enjoyable memories—in retrospect. The sight of W.C.I.C. with an armpit bursting with cold water on grasping the top of the waterfall will remain an indelible memory.

Hell Gill has also been attempted as a winter becking trip, following the January Meet at the Marton Arms in 1974. Again the regulars took part together with two other members and a guest. Apart from nearly drowning one member, and another losing his boot in the bottom of the gorge, it was a good expedition. The guest proved an exception to the usual form by keeping up with the leaders right to the final pool. This was a seething cauldron of white water and there was no

possibility of proceeding further. It will be interesting to see if the guest turns out again.

Finally, whether hard climber, walker or pot-holer, have a break from the rigours of your chosen sport and join us on a becking trip, preferably in winter. You can always recognise an enthusiastic becker by the look in his eye.



Messrs. DAWSON, TOWNEND & CO.—
PIONEER POTHOLERS

by S. A. Craven

THE FOLLOWING NOTES by Dr. Craven of the Craven Pothole Club were stimulated by the photograph, "Y.R.C. at Diccan Pot," which was printed with P.C. Swindells' article "The Golden Age of Potholing," facing p.82 in the last number of the Y.R.C. Journal. The photograph was taken from one of the Club's extensive collection of early 3¼ x 3¼ in. glass slides.

Mr. Swindells' (1973) article in the last Journal of the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club was full of interest; and especially so was the illustration "Y.R.C. at Diccan Pot" which was previously published the other way round by Swindells (1970). The original photograph was taken in the 1890's by Mr. T. C. Bridges who had a photographic shop in the late lamented Swan Arcade in Bradford.

In the 1890's, there was a group of Bradford men who caved apparently independently of the Y.R.C. They included Harold Dawson, grandson of Mark Dawson sometime Lord Mayor of Bradford; William Townend, his brother-in-law; Charles H. Wood, the Bradford City Gas Engineer; John E. Wilson, the local Secretary of the Yorkshire Geological and Polytechnic Society; and Robert F. Dawson, a monumental mason. Wood and Wilson married sisters of William Harbutt Dawson of "History of Skipton" fame. I have no evidence to suggest that the above three Dawson families were related.

Just how much caving these men did is not clear, because they left very few records. They certainly descended Alum Pot at least five times (Dawson, 1894; Wood, 1897). Cuttriss (1900 or before) writes about Hunt Pot, "I believe that this was first completely descended by Dawson of Bradford in 1897," i.e. one year before the first Y.R.C. descent.

There is some evidence that they descended Gaping Gill. When I called on Townend's son in January 1972, he readily volunteered this information without any leading questions from me. Townend's obituary writer (Anon. 1952) records that Townend was Managing Director of Mark Dawson and Son, Ltd., of Bradford; that he was an enthusiastic potholer when

a youth; and that he was on the first expedition to descend Gaping Gill. On 4th February, 1896 Wilson delivered an illustrated lecture at Skipton on Gaping Gill. The report of that lecture (Anon. 1896) states quite clearly that Wilson has descended with two others using a rope ladder.

Harold Dawson (n.d.) wrote and published anonymously between 1892 and 1895 a thirty-three page guide and map. In it he listed most of the well-known caves at the top of a page, with large spaces underneath and opposite—presumably for the reader to enter his own observations. This pamphlet indicates that by 1895 they had caved little apart from Alum Pot. I know of only one surviving copy, which may be seen at the Harrogate Reference Library.

It seems that they were well equipped (Anon. 1895). They are reported to have "wire and stout hemp rope" and "ladders of the same materials." The wire rope ladders were cut into 14 or 15 ft. lengths, and joined together by "dog-clasps." For lighting, they experimented with a ten-candle-power electric bulb, but soon discarded it in favour of a "good wax candle." They also had, and this brings me back to Mr. Swindells' illustration, a camera.

Several of their photographs have survived, and are in the possession of Townend's grandson, Mr. William R. Townend, of Harrogate. One of them is identical with Swindells' (1973) picture but unfortunately it has no caption.

There is no record in the Y.R.C. Journals, Annual Reports, newspaper reports or collection of manuscripts that Dawson and his friends caved with the Y.R.C. They must have known of the existence of the Y.R.C., because that Club's early cave explorations were reported in the Bradford newspapers (Anon. 1895a). Similarly, Dawson made no reference to the Y.R.C.

Finally, I ask you to study carefully the illustration in question. It is of the entrance to Lower Long Churn Cave, with Wilson's Cave in the background. This caption error is understandable, since Hutton (1781) mistook Lower Long Churn for Diccan Pot. This confusion was perpetuated by many other writers during the nineteenth century. The gentleman nearest the camera is holding a ladder of the traditional wood and hemp rope design. The other ladders in the picture are of a less heavy construction, compatible with wire rope. The

Y.R.C. did not have wire tackle at this time; nor did its members meet at Alum or Diccan Pot before July 1900 (Craven, 1971).

This is why I believe that Mr. Swindells' illustration is of Harold Dawson's Bradford Party. How it came into the Y.R.C. collection remains a mystery.

REFERENCES:

- Anon. (1895) Bradford Observer for 9 Dec., p.4.
Leeds Mercury Weekly Supplement for 14 Dec., p.10
(1895a) Bradford Observer for 17 Sep.
(1896) West Yorkshire Pioneer for 7 Feb., p.5 (Skipton)
(1952) Yorkshire Observer for 22 Jan. (Bradford).
Craven, S. A. (1971) "Chronological list of cave explorations in the Craven area by the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club"—typed MS. in the Y.R.C. Library, Central Library, Leeds.
Cuttriss, S. W. (1900 or before) MS. note No. 48 (Y.R.C. Library).
Dawson, H. (1894) The Chronicle No. 5 pp. 75-78 (Settle).
The Chronicle No. 6 pp. 101-102 (Settle)
(n.d.) "Craven Caves within 6 miles of Ingleton"—pamphlet in Harrogate Reference Library (Ref. Y.796.52.CRA).
Hutton, J. (1781) A Tour to the Caves p.45 (reprinted 1970 at East Ardsley).
Wood, W. (1897) The Gentleman's Magazine 282 303-309
Swindells, P. C. (1970) Trans. Cave Research Group 12 (4), 299-303.
(1973) J. Yorkshire Ramblers' Club 11 (36).
75-87 (Leeds).



THE GREATEST

by H. L. Stembridge

"A FIGURE OF GLORIOUS LEGEND, a hero of a golden age, a living personality, full of life and vigour and joy, an active Yorkshire Rambler, and THE GREATEST." The words are those of Ernest Roberts, a man not usually addicted to superlatives, and the figure to which he refers is William Cecil Slingsby. As 1976 is the centenary of Slingsby's remarkable ascent of Skagastölstind perhaps it is an appropriate time to recount the climb briefly, for it has already been vividly described by Slingsby himself ⁽¹⁾, and then to write a few words about the man, his influence on our Club, and his impact on his contemporaries.

Slingsby first saw Skagastölstind from the Sognefjord in 1872 when he was twenty three. "I shall never, as long as I live, forget my first view of Skagastölstind, the grandest European mountain north of the Alps," he wrote, "our guide told us it was the highest mountain in Norway, that it had not been ascended, and that no doubt this was impracticable. Can it be wondered that I determined, if possible, to make the first ascent?"

In 1874, accompanied by his cousin, he made the formidable first traverse of the Horungtinder, the only unexplored region of Jotunheim. The weeks spent in the mass of wild and rugged mountains seamed with glaciers acquainted him with the surroundings of Skagastölstind, and a return visit the following year increased this knowledge. So when Slingsby with his companions, Emmanuel Mohn and Knut Lykken reached the saeter at Vormelid in the Utladal on July 20th 1876 he had a clear picture in his mind of how they would attack the mountain on the following day.

Present day mountaineers in Jotunheim, accustomed to ease of travel, comfortable hotels and strategically sited Tourist Club huts, must find it hard to imagine the difficulties, dangers and hardships endured by those early pioneers. The lack of accurate maps, the often trackless valleys and lower slopes where a way had to be forced through juniper and dwarf birch, the danger of crossing swollen streams because

(1)—Norway, *The Northern Playground*

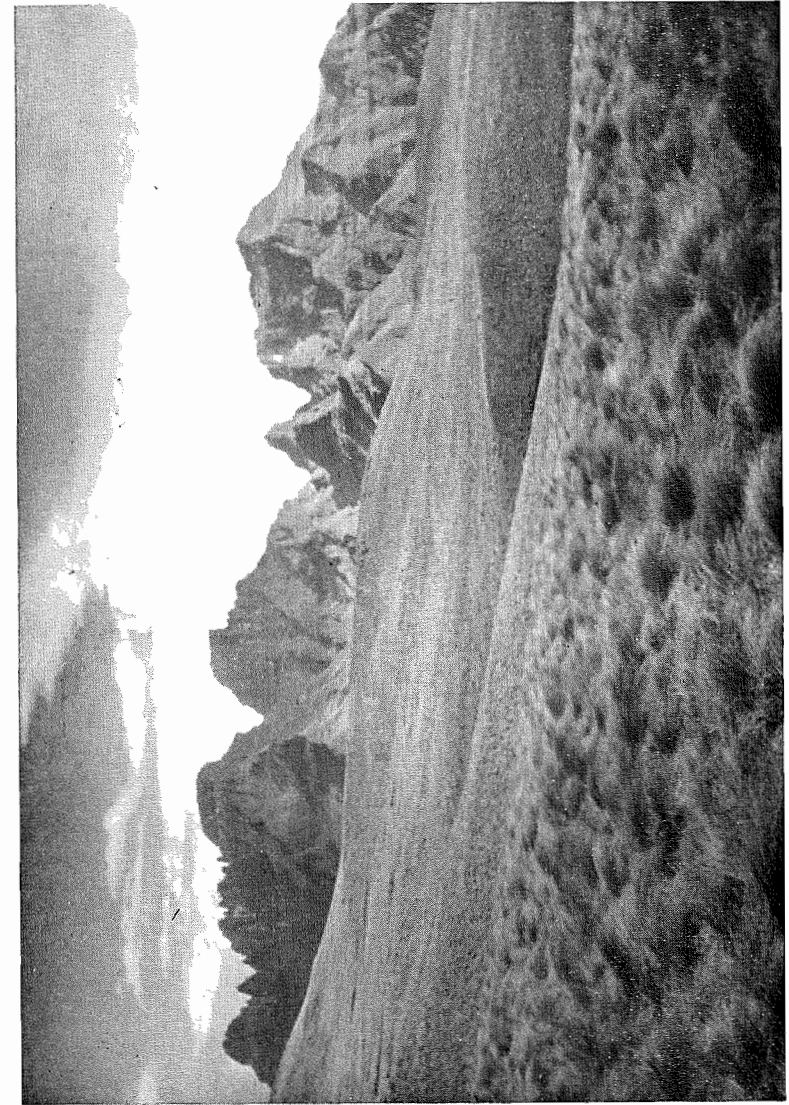
bridges were a rarity, the discomfort of staying in saeters where beds were few and had to be shared with other people as well as fleas and where food was meagre in the extreme, deterred all but the most determined.

After an uncomfortable night at Vormelid, due partly to the hardness and narrowness of the bed which he shared with Mohn and partly to excitement at the forthcoming attack, Slingsby crept from under his sheepskin coverlet at three o'clock on the morning of Friday, July 21st. Despite his eagerness to be off, one thing or another delayed the party and it was seven before they left. It was not an auspicious start, the clouds were down and the weather unpromising. After a week's continuous climbing Knut was tired and pessimistic and Slingsby had to carry far more than his fair share of food and equipment.

Vormelid is only 1,600 ft. above sea level and 6,200 ft. as the lark flies, below the summit of Skagastölstind, but they gained height quickly and soon reached a small combe headed by a large glacier, the Maradalsbrae. Here they turned west, crossed a buttress and dropped into another valley, where, because visibility was less than twenty yards, they built several cairns to guide them on their return. Climbing a second ridge, 3,276 ft. above Vormelid, they were, momentarily, above the clouds, and enjoyed a splendid view of the serrated ridges of the Midt Maradals and the Dyrhougstinder. For one brief moment they saw the summit of Skagastölstind rising remote, ethereal and apparently inaccessible from a sea of cloud.

The way ahead was far from straightforward. A scramble down 1,500 ft. of rugged crags and a painful mile over horrible debris to the flattened snout of the Midt Maradal glacier at the actual foot of the peak still left them 4,396 ft. below the top. Here they lunched in sunshine and for the rest of the day the weather was fine. Above them "a much steeper and wider glacier, descending like a cataract of ice from the heights of the eastern range skirted the south-eastern walls of Skagastölstind and ended abruptly at the top of a line of crags, 60 or 70 feet in height, over which the terminal seracs fell." (2) This glacier, which is believed to be the natural way to the summit, was subsequently named "the Slingsbybre."

(2)—Norway, *The Northern Playground*



D. A. Smithson

DRAKENSBERG



S. V. Bugg

NORTH OF SULITJELMA

Climbing the crags by way of a gully and a spur of smooth steep rock, they reached the right bank of the Slingsbyre where fresh bear tracks led them through an intricate maze of crevasses before disappearing. Above them the glacier narrowed and step cutting was necessary, through some seracs. Fortunately there was no danger from avalanches or falling stones. Nearing the top of the glacier, where it was about 500 yards wide, an enormous crevasse stretched from one side to the other. The western end was partially blocked with snow and Slingsby got across but a 12 ft. wall of névé on the far side repulsed two attempts to climb it, the snow being too soft to hold his axe. Retracing their steps they found a substantial bridge close to the eastern edge and made good time up the steepening glacier until the debris from a snow avalanche enabled them to cross the bergschrund at the head and get on to the rocks.

They were 1,114 ft. below the summit, it was nearly 5 p.m., Mohn and Knut, neither of whose boots had nails, had found the glacier very trying and needed a rest. Slingsby, burning to get on, untied and climbed alone the 600 ft. snow slope that lay ahead. It was steep, partially frozen, and needed great care. In an hour he reached the col, later to be called Mohn's Skar, 518 ft. below the top of Skagastölstind.

The sight before him could not have been more discouraging. The skar finished abruptly against a huge tower of gabbro, the "topknot" of the great peak, "a narrow face consisting of smoothly polished and almost vertical slabs of rock" which could not be turned to right or to left, "the first 150 or 200 ft. appeared to be the worst." (3)

He felt he was beaten, yet when Mohn and Knut eventually reached the skar he immediately appealed to them to join him in the attack. Both refused. Nowhere is Slingsby's greatness as a man and a mountaineer more exemplified. The apparently insuperable difficulties stimulated and delighted him and he set off alone. It was no foolhardy enterprise for there were certain things in his favour, he was perfectly fresh, the weather was fine, the rocks were sound and the strata sloped the right way. Against this every ledge was veneered with ice which had to be chipped away meticulously.

(3)—Norway, *The Northern Playground*

Several times he was all but beaten but in little more than half an hour he was at the top, or what from below appeared to be the top, for a sixty yard long knife edge separated him from another summit a few feet higher. Guarded by three gendarmes and an awkward gap this edge caused him some trouble. Reaching the true summit he built a small cairn, placed his handkerchief in a conspicuous position under one of the stones and sat in sunshine enjoying the view. It was 6.53 when he began to descend the N. E. face, and the rocks to the skar, bereft of sun, were bitterly cold and difficult. His friends had already departed and his solo descent of the steep 600 foot snowslope, now frozen hard, needed supreme concentration, but in less than an hour he joined them at the top of the Slingsby glacier.

All were weary but Slingsby, elated by the success of the venture, was freshest and he led the others through the intricacies of seracs and crevasses. The 1,500 ft. climb up the crags above the Midt Maradal Glacier taxed them severely but they reached the ridge in twilight at 11 p.m., the surrounding peaks still rose tinted by the setting sun. But it was dark by the time they reached the Maradal and impossible to avoid tripping over the roots of birches and junipers, however "we arrived at the saeter all right a little after 1 a.m. when we found the elder girl awaiting us. She soon got a roaring fire of birch logs going, made us coffee and liebig, and did all in her power to make us comfortable.

"Then we slept the sleep of the weary until the sun was high in the heavens" (4) and no wonder! They had been going for eighteen hours and had climbed nearly 10,000 feet, almost entirely over untrodden and difficult terrain, culminating in a severe rock climb. Slingsby led throughout. "Such was the first ascent of what is usually called the finest mountain in Norway." (5) The climb will remain an epic so long as mountaineering stories are read or told (6) and did much to stimulate the interest of Norwegians in their own mountains.

For Slingsby it was only a beginning and by 1904, when *Norway, the Northern Playground*, was published, he had

(4)—*Norway, The Northern Playground*

(5)—*Norway, The Northern Playground*

(6)—G. W. Young

spent fifteen seasons in Norway and there was hardly a mountain district that he had not explored. Nor were his expeditions confined to Norway. In the Alps where "he climbed for some dozen short seasons, generally without guides, he formed one of a now historic group who inaugurated a new era of difficult climbing." (7) His chief companions were Mummery, Collie and Hastings and they made many new ascents including the Dent Du Requin.

Slingsby's attempt on the Aiguille du Plan by its icy northern face with Mummery and Ellis Carr in 1892 was an almost superhuman epic. For a whole day Mummery cut up the grim ice wall and as darkness fell they sat out the night "on a frozen bracket in space" (8) (There were no "pieds des elephants" or modern belays in those days) and Slingsby supported them until dawn. The following day they were forced to retreat and to Slingsby "fell the task—always exacting but trebly so after such a day and such a night—of recutting the descending ice steps for all a long day down the ice precipice." (9) Long afterwards Mummery wrote (10) "I can see the swing of Slingsby's axe as, through the day that followed, he hewed our way ever downwards . . . I can still hear him saying as we scrambled over the bad bit, a more than perpendicular wall of ice—'It certainly is a glorious climb.'" "Slingsby, we know, would have said that with a smile in his beard and a rallying flash of his alert blue eyes upwards at the others on the ice slope." (11)

At home he eagerly accepted the challenge of British crags. Brought up in Craven he naturally served his apprenticeship on local gritstone edges like Crookrise and Simon's Seat, but very soon graduated to the Cumbrian and Scottish crags, where at least two "Slingsby's chimneys" testify to his pioneering spirit.

In Norway Slingsby used skis when hunting bears, (incidentally he hunted bears with Grieg) as they were used habitually by the Norwegians to get across country in winter. His alert brain saw the potential of ski-ing as a sport and he not only got the Norwegians interested but is believed to have been

(7)—G. W. Young (8)—G. W. Young (9)—G. W. Young

(10)—*My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus*

(11)—G. W. Young

the first to take ski to Switzerland and start the sport there.

Few men impressed his contemporaries so much as Slingsby. He possessed that splendid combination of courage and strength with a passion for beauty and a chivalrous spirit that reminded them of the Knights Errant or the heroic figures of the first Elizabethan age. "He made a romance of living, but it was a romance built only of the finer realities that constitute chivalrous adventure . . . An ardent lover of his own countryside, its dales and rocks, its archaeology, traditions and dialect, equally appreciative of all natural beauty and good humanity wherever he may find it. He enjoyed good literature, painting and music with the same genuine enthusiasm. For a mountaineer he had the ideal equipment, a magnificent physique, exceptional hardihood, grace and ability, an unerring judgement and an imperturbable coolness and courage. Above all he had the gift of infecting others with his quiet confidence. No climbing accident ever happened to any party to which he belonged, no big expedition in which he shared ever failed of success." (12)

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of Slingsby's interest to the Y.R.C. He was made an Honorary Member in the year of the Club's formation and elected President at the first Annual General Meeting. His ten years as President (1893-1903) were crucial, teething troubles were overcome and the Club's status as a leading mountaineering club established. Although, in later years, he became President of the Climbers' Club and the Fell and Rock Climbing Club, as a Yorkshireman the Y.R.C. was his pride and joy "The welfare of the finest mountaineering club in England (excluding the Alpine Club) is of very special interest to me," he wrote.

Slingsby was then at the height of his power, making great climbs in the Alps as well as Norway, his companions, the cream of the alpinists of the day. His enthusiasm was boundless and infectious. He gave the first public lecture organised by the club, it was on "Rock Climbing and Snowcraft"—and he got his friends to lecture in Leeds and created tremendous interest.

His outstanding articles in the early issues of the Y.R.C. Journal would make anyone want to climb in Norway and

(12)—G. W. Young

they helped to set the high standard which the journal has subsequently maintained. The editor was bombarded by him with suggestions; Slingsby might criticise or congratulate but he would always stimulate. "If the Journal were to fall off in a literary or sporting manner the Club itself would fall off," or "I advise a good 'cave' paper . . . but not a single view of any finnickin', twopenny ha'penny rocks in Derbyshire or anywhere else."

Fortunately the Club possesses many of his letters written as President. "The impression one gets from his letters is that of an exuberant personality bubbling over with boyish vitality and enthusiasm. His letters appear to have been dashed off in a whiteheat of energy, the bold flamboyant writing galloping all over the pages and almost off them." (13)

Slingsby died in 1929 aged 81. Although it is fifty years or more since he visited Norway his name is remembered and revered there wherever mountaineers gather. So also to mountaineers in Yorkshire, and particularly in the Y.R.C. he remains an inspiration, the GREATEST of us all.

(13)—J. G. Brook (*Y.R.C. Journal* 28)



FIRST ALPINE ROUTE: GRAN PARADISO

by Harvey Lomas

IN THE SUMMER OF 1974 I was asked whether I would like a mountaineering holiday in place of my usual caving expedition. So, along with Glyn Edwards, Peter Standing and Audrey Lamb I went out to the Alps. We met in Chamonix, arriving by various routes, in my case by French rail, sleeping on top of my gear in the corridor of the train.

Glyn and Peter wanted to do some routes on Mont Blanc, particularly the Old Brenva and we spent several days camping on the Col du Géant. But the weather deteriorated and drove us down to the Gran Paradiso, some 25 miles down the Val d'Aosta. We pitched camp at the foot of a valley leading up into the Gran Paradiso. The peaks rise to about 12,000 ft. and have some splendid middle grade routes which my two expert companions seemed to think suitable for my initiation. They selected Mummery's Route, an A.D. which follows the South-West ridge of the Torre del Gran San Pietro from the Calle di Money.

The day after our arrival the four of us, in the late afternoon walked up to the Money Bivouac Hut at an altitude of 2,872 m. It was very pleasant and enjoyable walking through the wooded Valmontey Valley, circumnavigating giant boulders, beside an emerald green stream flowing down from the glacier. The Valmontey is a blind valley with the Gran Paradiso peak at its head, but we cut off left up a steep zig-zag path for about 2,000 ft. It was a hot day and the going was steady until the Chalets du Money allowed a snack and a short rest. By now the whole of the Gran Paradiso had come into perspective. Again the path followed a steep moraine bank—just a slow methodical plod, with an occasional view high above of a little yellow speck which was the Bivacco Money.

The hut was situated on a large grassy ledge below a rock pass. It had eight bunks and plenty of room to move about and getting water necessitated an exposed snow traverse across to a gully. Later a party of Italians arrived, which made things a little uncomfortable, though they were pleasant company. In the evening low banks of cloud drifted in obscuring the

fine view. Plans were made and gear carefully sorted out for the early start in the morning.

So—my first Alpine route in the morning I thought to myself—no more talking or reading about it, young man! I could hardly sleep for apprehension, waiting for the alarm bell at 03.30 hours. Bodies rose, feet and arms in motion. But Peter opened the door and snow came blowing straight into the hut. We all reversed our movements, getting back into our sleeping bags. We went down to the valley because we didn't have enough food for a longer stay, leaving our equipment at the Money Bivouac. The route back followed the moraine bank down to what we thought just small "scrub." The whole Valmontey valley teemed with steinbocks and chamois. When we reached the small "scrub" it was about twelve feet high in the form of dense thickets with long malleable branches which curved around the feet and the more one struggled the more one became entwined like a fly in a spider's web.

We returned to the Money bivouac after two days, with more food. The walk up seemed a lot easier and was done a lot faster. Having established ourselves we watched with apprehension a party of four climbers coming up the path, followed by a party of two, followed shortly afterwards by a party of six. At 03.30 hours a phenomenal number of arms, legs and bodies seemed to be moving around. I went outside into that early morning silence that prevails among mountains with the breezes whispering below. The sky was a clear lake of stars and our little world was set in motion: the murmuring of the stove as sacks were packed and soon the three of us were plodding up the first snow slope to the Money Glacier. As we walked across the Glacier the sun rose turning the sky to azure with puffs and lines of violet cloud. The south-west ridge of the Torre del Gran San Pietro stood serene across the wide deserted glacier. Soon we reached the climb on to the ridge: according to Glyn "just a snow slope and a bit of scrambling." I followed up the slope and was dragged up a chimney with only frozen boulders for holds. I was given to understand that I had to get used to conditions like this.

In a fresh breeze and a fine situation we moved along the ridge, with the occasional snow traverse from one rock pyramid to the next, sometimes in mist, all the time gaining height.

We roped up, with me in the middle, and moved fairly quickly. There were fine views southward over the northern plain of Italy to the big cities of Turin and Genoa, and northward to the great Alpine chain and the somnolent bulk of Mont Blanc. Spells of rock-climbing and snow plodding alternated until we reached the summit which at the time was in cloud.

We chose a well-worn route down, on the south side of the ridge. My faith in the two veteran Alpinists was put to the test when, with me in the middle like a Yo-yo they began to argue and to consult the guidebook as to which way we should go. Eventually they chose a route back to the ridge up a loose chimney and over leaves of rock which were peeling away. I was relieved when the Money Glacier lay in front of us at the bottom of a wide snow gully. In the morning the going had been relatively easy but coming back we were sometimes knee deep in snow, and I understood that this was something else I should get used to. Crossing crevasses also proved a little more difficult.

When we returned to the hut the Italians were still there, chatting away and making preparations for returning to the valley. Evening came and sunlight warmed the rocks. We all sat outside and viewed the Valmontey with its surrounding mountains and the glaciers slipping sublimely into the valley below.



SULITJELMA '75

by S. V. Bugg

THE PRIME OBJECTIVE of the expedition known as *Sulitjelma* '75 was to produce a geological map of the area North East of Sulitjelma, in Arctic Norway.

The team was composed of four undergraduates from University College, London, (U.C.L.) with assistance from Dr. Roger Mason and Mike Chambers, a graduate from U.C.L. It is usual for undergraduates at U.C.L. to undertake six weeks field mapping in the British Isles, and submit their work for assessment, the results counting greatly towards the final degree. However Andy, Gary, Mark and I felt that mapping in little known country, geologically speaking, would be more enterprising and satisfying.

Hence, after nearly a whole year of tedious planning, we set out on the afternoon of August 5th from a house in the copper-mining village of Sulitjelma. We were heading for our camp-site, fourteen miles away, just over the Norwegian-Swedish border. Our route took us up a well marked path to some disused mine buildings, and then across a steep grassy hillside. From the disused mine buildings we were in very thick mist, but the path was well marked with red 'T's' painted on upturned rocks. At the top of the steep section of path we came to a raging torrent. We could not see the far bank, and it seemed unlikely that the path crossed the river, so we followed the river upstream. After a short while it became apparent that we had lost the path. Not in the slightest perturbed we fixed our position on the map, or so we thought, and continued on a compass bearing. At 8 p.m. I refused to walk any further, since we were clearly lost, and suggested putting up the tents. The following morning dawned clear and sunny—enabling us to locate our position on the map. We were a mere fourteen miles south-west of where we thought we were, with a mountain chain and the Sulitjelma glacier between us and the point we were heading for! Still undaunted we shouldered 80 lb. packs and walked towards the Sulitjelma glacier, gaining access to the ice by means of a snow ramp, a small tributary glacier and finally a short rock wall. Crossing the glacier took an exhausting six hours. Finally we reached

the col beside Suliskongen, the highest peak in Arctic Norway, and could see down the far side to Lake Stadak, our ultimate objective. The descent from the col was quick, almost too quick as we very nearly walked over a cornice. Eventually we descended the steep back wall of the corrie on a snow slope, and then walked across the moraine to Lake Stadak.

By the time the tents were pitched it was well past midnight, but the sun still shone, if only weakly. The following day Andy, Mark and I returned to the village, following the correct route, to collect more food and equipment. In the meantime Gary and Mike moved the camp from the west end of Lake Stadak to the permanent site, at the east end. A day later the three of us returned to camp once again after an eventful walk in thick mist.

The camp was now well established and fully stocked. Before we started working, however, we decided to build a bridge across the river separating the camp from the area to be studied by Andy and Mark. Stepping stones were ruled out, since the river was too deep and too fast, so we opted for a rope bridge. I waded across to the far bank to look for a suitable anchor. The only possible site was in a small gorge, where I could get half-way back across the river by using stepping stones. Mark attempted to join me, by leaping ten feet across foaming white water. He very nearly made it, but not quite! Gary hauled him out on the end of a climbing rope—very cold, wet and bedraggled. Bridge building ceased, and Andy and Mark waded the river each day to get to and from their areas.

For the next fortnight we fell into a routine. Up by 7.30 a.m. to get breakfast, dubbin boots, work on maps, and then finally out into the field by 10 a.m. When mapping we worked on our own, often miles apart, and miles from the camp. Sometimes one felt very isolated and intimidated by the stark craggy peaks towering up above us. Some days were too wet or misty for work in the field, so we festered in tents—reading, writing and playing cards. At 6 p.m., whether we had been out or not, we started cooking the evening meal, a fairly lengthy procedure. Sometimes the gas cylinders had to be heated before the pressure was high enough to produce a flame sufficient to boil water.

At the end of the first fortnight, Gary, Mike and I returned to the village. Gary and I were collecting more food and Mike was to start work on his Ph.D., working in an area further to the south. While we were away Andy and Mark took advantage of a sunny day to climb Suliskongen. By all accounts the route was excellent, providing a good mixture of scrambling and climbing on snow and ice.

Gary and I once again returned to camp carrying loads of at least 80 lbs. The route from the village to the camp was a distance of about fourteen miles and took in a small glacier. The average time for the journey was eight to nine hours with packs, and five to six hours unladen.

The second fortnight of the expedition continued in the familiar routine. The weather deteriorated day by day. More days were spent festering in tents waiting for gales to blow out. The nights were becoming longer and colder. On one starlit night we were treated to a fabulous display of the Northern Lights—great curtains of green were cut by rapidly moving bands of purple light, a memorable sight. Towards the end of the fourth week Dr. Roger Mason came out to the camp and was treated to some of the worst weather we experienced. He had planned to spend some time with each of us in our areas. Instead he spent most of the time sitting in tents drinking coffee and talking about various geological topics.

The final fortnight of the expedition began. Mark and Andy left for the village for more food and gaz returning three days later, after an exhausting round of all night parties. The day after they returned Roger Mason left.

The weather became bitterly cold. The small lakes and streams froze over. Each day the snowline moved down the mountains, until one morning we woke up to find our tents totally covered. Working in the field became a painful test of determination. In the morning one would have to put on boots coated inside and out with ice, and then walk through snow drifts, sometimes stepping into snow-covered pools of water or small streams. Once in the area to be mapped one could spend perhaps twenty minutes taking readings with a compass—chronometer and writing a few brief notes before becoming so cold that it was necessary to walk about for a while to warm up.

Fortunately this cold spell lasted for only a week or so, and we were able to do some full days' work before the expedition finished.

Exactly six weeks after we left the village of Sulitjelma we were preparing to return there. On Sunday, 14th September we cleared up the camp-site and started our return journey. Our first problem came ten minutes after leaving the camp-site. Gary fell in a river we were wading. He was not only completely soaked, but damaged a knee in the fall. However some first-aid and dry clothes soon put matters right. Then it began to rain. After an hour's walking we were all soaked; none of the waterproofs were a match for the lashing gale that was blowing us on our way. Our next problem was another river, normally one easily crossed, but now transformed into a foaming torrent. Since the alternative to crossing the river was a very lengthy detour, we waded across.

The next leg of our journey was a fairly soggy plod to the foot of a small glacier. We stormed up the hard snow slopes and on to the flat surface. Here we took things more easily, since compass navigation was required, due to low clouds. Andy and I were strolling along in deep, wet snow talking about Andy's favourite person, Beethoven, when suddenly I was on hard ice streaming with water. I slipped and fell, as did Andy. Mark appeared out of the mist and somehow found the sight of his two prostrate companions floundering around rather amusing. In turn we found it amusing when Mark unintentionally joined us. Gary was last to arrive, and refused to come on to ice to help us, until Mark stood up and then fell over with a cracking noise as his head hit the ice. Gary rushed to Mark's aid, and, predictably, fell over. Mark indicated the source of the cracking noise—a plastic cup strapped to his rucksack had shattered.

We soon had crampons fitted on and safely negotiated the rest of the glacier. The final leg of the journey was all down hill, and completed very quickly.

Once back in the village we set about making up for our six weeks' isolation. Fresh bread and milk, hot water and bottles of beer were all much appreciated, and consumed in great quantity. The following night a party was organised by the young people in the village in our honour. At 4.30 a.m.

the last group left for their homes, in order to be back before their fathers came off the night shift at the copper mine at 5 a.m. At 10 a.m. we were woken up by sun streaming into the bedroom. We decided to take advantage of the sun, and spend our last day in the mountains.

At 11 a.m. we were on our way, perhaps more than a little bleary-eyed, to the top of Vardetoppen (5,870 ft.). This splendid peak was snow-covered, and from the direction we were approaching, had a perfectly pyramidal shape. Our route lay up one of the steep ridges, and involved a great deal of scrambling. From the summit we could see Suliskongen, our old camp site, and other familiar features. East from the summit was a narrow, castellated ridge, leading to Stortoppen. Regrettably we had neither time nor equipment to traverse this ridge, which undoubtedly would make a fine winter route. To the north the ground dropped vertically to the glacier we had crossed only a few days previously. To the south we could pick out our route of the first two days, and were able to see where we had gone wrong. Having spent some considerable time on the summit taking photographs of the view and of each other, we descended to the village, returning as night fell. The expedition had finished.

Members of Expedition: Andrew Griffiths, Gary Brisdon, Mark Fey and Stephen Bugg.



KINDRED CLUB JOURNALS

The Journal of the Midland Association of Mountaineers.

1973-74. Vol. V No. 4.

The Midland Association of Mountaineers' Journal can always be relied upon to furnish interest and entertainment, and this issue is no exception. However, a more serious note is struck in the editorial which deals with various threats to the environment. Our members will remember that the M.A.M. President, F. R. Robinson, dealt forcibly with this matter in his remarks responding to the toast of Kindred Clubs at our dinner this year. Obviously the Midland Association of Mountaineers and its officials take this issue seriously. As usual, M.A.M. members have ranged far and wide in their activities from Greenland to Patagonia. In view of the hefty report on Mountain Training which we have just been invited to study, Michael Hall's amusing skit, *Profound Report* has become both topical and relevant. Mr. Hall must be gifted with second sight. A good selection of photographs complete a journal of unusual interest.

J.G.B.

Journal of the Craven Pothole Club. 1974. Vol. 5 No. 2.

Appropriately, the Craven Pothole Club Journal is mainly concerned with activities underground, and in this connection we notice articles by two of our members, John Whalley on his caving exploits in Canada, and Dave Judson on the more serious topic of cave conservation. All who know and frequent Gaping Gill will be interested in Richard Glover's well informed article, *G.G. Some Underground Controls of Development*, and in the report of the 1974 Gaping Gill meet dealt with by Peter Rose. The indefatigable Stephen Craven has been doing some detective work on a mystery lake in Stump Cross Cavern, and Albert Mitchell has recorded his findings. Mr. Mitchell has also produced an absorbing piece of historical research in his account of the Ingleborough Cave Book, which was mentioned in a Y.R.C. Journal (No. 5. 1903) and then apparently disappeared until 1939. To get away from caves, D. Allanach and friends did the *Dom-Taschorn Traverse—Almost*, and Hugh Bottomley in his search for the ideal island found that Arran was not quite good enough. In all a very good journal, well up to the standard we expect from the C.P.C.

J.G.B.

The Rucksack Club Journal. 1973. Vol. XVII. No. 2

This issue of the *Rucksack Club Journal* might almost be named a "Munros Number" as those numerous Scottish tops seem to have an obsessive attraction for Rucksackers. Don Smithies gives us *Munros, A Personal View*, and after reading Tom Waghorn's *Munro's Mountains*, we were not really surprised to turn over to find the opening

sentence of John Mills's *Anticlimax* to read, "I climbed my last Munro, Ben Alligin, on a calm but cloudy day last July." All of which makes those of us who can only boast a mere handful of Munros in our pockets slightly envious, if not guilty. By way of a change, and going a little higher, Brian Cosby has been attending to the 4,000 tops in the Alps, his article, *The Waiting Game*, being illustrated by his own dramatic shots of the Grands Jorasses and the Grand Gendarme on the Lenzspitze. For the encouragement (or discouragement) of others with similar ideas he appends a list of the 4,000 metre summits and the tops over 4,000 metres. John Allen was busy on and around Mont Blanc, and Mike Edwards on the Corderilla Blanca. Back to Scotland again where Taffy Davies navigated his Merlin Rocket in and out of the West Coast. In conclusion, it was sad to read the obituary of Fred Heardman, the uncrowned king of Edale.

J.G.B.

The Alpine Journal. Vol. 80 No. 324. 1975.

Ascents on the American continent from Mount Burney in Chile to Mount Dan Beard in Alaska? Yalung Kang, Kangbachen, Changa-bang or half a dozen other major Himalayan peaks? The Pyrenees, the mountains of Sinai, Majorteqe in Greenland, or Astronomy on Ben Nevis? Eric Shipton or Doug Scott? Alpine thunderstorms, continents in collision, or mapping by side-looking airborne radar? The range of articles is intimidating, the standard enviably high, the plums too numerous to pull out. Perhaps of particular interest to members of this club are the articles by J. D. Hanwell on *Eighty years of British Caving* and by Philip Brockbank of the Rucksack Club on *Moorland Marathons*.

A.B.C.

The Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal. Vol. 30, No. 166. 1975

1975 is the Jubilee year of the Junior Mountaineering Club of Scotland, and this number of the S.M.C. Journal is largely devoted to the celebration of the Junior Club and of its first fifty years. The recollections begin with contributions from founding members and cover each section of the club to the present date. They make fine nostalgic reading—about such things as tricounis, and 120 ft. leads without runners. They chronicle interesting social changes like the effect of increased private transport. They also leave no doubt about the vigour and quality of the club or about the increasing standard of achievement of its leading members, and augur well for the next fifty years.

A.B.C.

The Fell and Rock Journal, No. 64. Vol. XXII (No. 11). 1974.

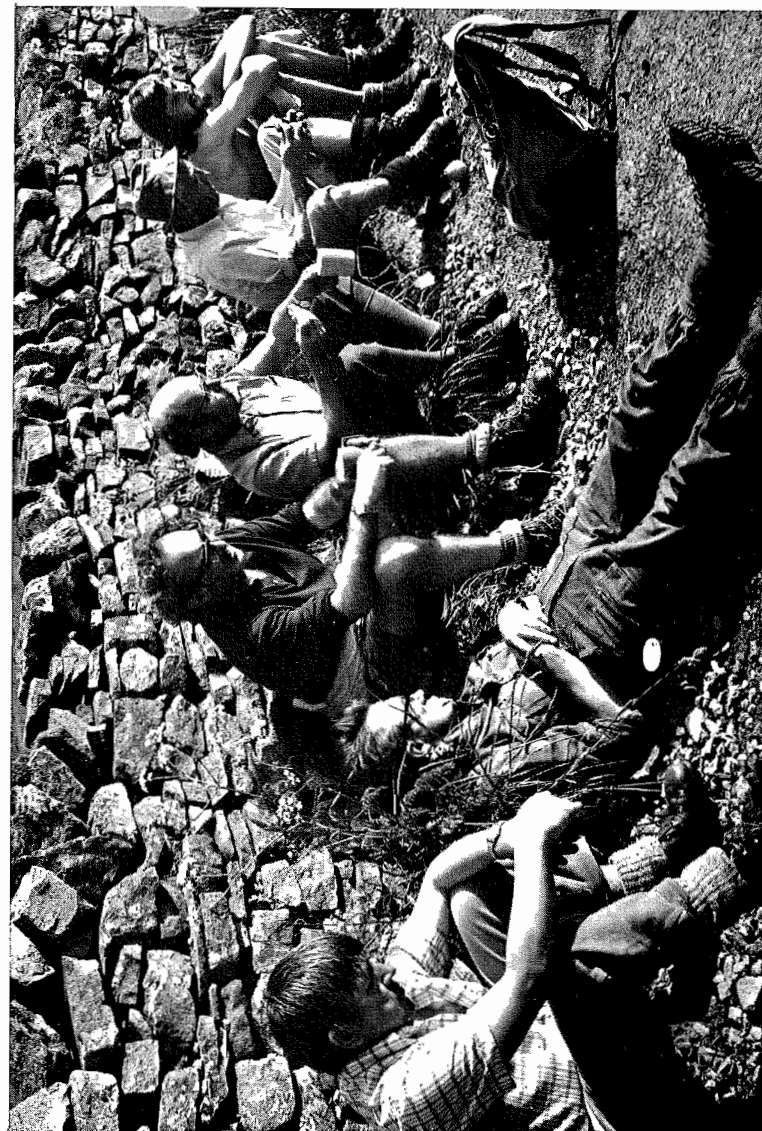
George Sansom at 87, remembers Wasdale before the 1914-18 war and climbing with Gibson, Hazard, Botterill, Brunskill and Herford; in contrast John Cook discusses ski-ing in Scotland using a helicopter

in place of a ski-lift. Margaret Duke writes of New Zealand, Eric Arnison of Australia, Paul Ross of the Salathe Wall (El Capitan), David Hughes of the Transvaal; Angela Faller writes of routes which she wanted to do but for which she had to wait, sometimes for years, K. Bennett of a week in Skye, Miles Burbage of a holiday of singular storm and stress in the Alps and Dolomites. To round it off Ian Bowman is back at Brackenclose trying to cope with the gamesmanship of two seasoned Yorkshiremen.

A.B.C.

The Librarian also gratefully acknowledges the following journals:

Alpine Journal, 1973, 1974
 Appalachia, 1973, 1974, 1975
 Appalachia Bulletin, 1973, 1974, 1975
 Bristol University Speleological Society. Proceedings, 1973, 1974, 1975
 Cairngorm Club Journal, 1975
 Climbers' Club Journal, 1973-74
 Craven Pothole Club Journal, 1973
 Deutscher Alpenverein. Mitteilungen. Jugend am Berg. 1973, 1974, 1975
 Fell and Rock Climbing Club Journal, 1972
 Gritstone Club Journal, 1972
 Himalayan Journal, 1971
 Japanese Alpine Club Journal, 1972, 1973
 Lancashire Caving and Climbing Club Journal, 1970, 1972, 1974
 Leeds University Speleological Association Review, 1973, 1974
 Mountain Club of South Africa Journal, 1972, 1973, 1974
 National Speleological Society Bulletin (U.S.A.) 1973, 1974, 1975
 National Speleological Society News (U.S.A.) 1973, 1974, 1975
 Rucksack Club Journal, 1972
 Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal, 1973, 1974
 Société Suisse de Spéléologie—Stalactite, 1973, 1974, 1975
 South Wales Caving Club Newsletter, 1973, 1974
 Spéléo-Club de Paris, Grottes—Gouffres, 1973, 1974
 Spéléo Club de la Seine—L'Aven, 1972, 1973
 Spelunca, 1973, 1974, 1975
 Swiss Alpine Club Bulletin, 1973, 1974, 1975
 Swiss Alpine Club Review, 1973, 1974, 1975



LAST FEEDING POINT LONG WALK, 1974

(G. A. Salmen, J. A. Medley, W. R. Lofthouse, J. H. Sterland, A. B. Craven, G. Edwards)

B. E. Nicholson

IN MEMORIAM

MALCOLM DRUMMOND BONE (1935-1975)

Malcolm Bone was born in 1904 and entered the chemical engineering profession after qualifying at the universities of London and Leeds. He joined Imperial Chemical Industries in Cheshire in 1929, but was almost immediately transferred to Billingham, on Teeside, where, with the exception of the war years, he spent his working life. He started his career at Billingham under the direction of Alexander Rule, an old member of the club. It was Rule who, while he was President in 1934-36, introduced him to the Ramblers.

In those far-off days before the war, Malcolm was a very active potholer and fell-walker; he was generally to be found at the legendary Gaping Gill meets of those years. He also took part in at least one of the expeditions organised by the club to continue the exploration of the caves in County Fermanagh, explorations which had been started by Brodrick and Rule before the First World War.

In the years between 1939 and 1945 Malcolm was in charge of Government "Shadow" Factories in Glasgow and in South Wales and he also worked at a factory at Heysham, in Lancashire. After the war he returned to Billingham, where he remained until his retirement in 1965.

After his retirement he and his wife divided their time between England and France: from spring to autumn in an old farm house at Salviac in the Dordogne, winter in a cottage above Low Row in Swaledale.

Malcolm was a Life Member of the Club. His membership spanned forty years and, as Mrs. Bone wrote to the Secretary "The Y.R.C. had been a great and very happy part of his life." He was always interested in the affairs of the Club and willing to take responsibility, and what he undertook he did meticulously.

He continued to attend meets whenever he was in England. He organised highly successful ones himself—notably at Bolton Castle in Wensleydale and at the Buck Hotel, Reeth, in both of which his local knowledge was most advantageously used for the benefit of members. He presided with genial expertise over the preparation of the President's punch, and over the serving of wine at Club meets at Low Hall Garth and Low Stern. He was a much liked and much respected figure in the Club, an unassuming man and a staunch friend. He had already booked for the 1974 dinner when he fell ill in France. He returned to England but reluctantly had to forego the dinner. He died on the 13th January, 1975. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

G.S.G. E.C.D.



Malcolm Drummond Bone



David Christopher Haslam

WILFRED BOOTH (1947-1975)

After joining the Club just after the last war, Wilf soon became a cheery and popular attender on potholing Meets. His first Meet was probably the very wet Disappointment Pot descent from a camp at Clapdale.

Strong and powerful, his happy grin will be remembered as anchor man on the heavy sisal lifelines used on the long ladder climbs in Ireland in 1948. He was even accused by some of his ungrateful clients of inflicting grave injury by over-pulling.

His work subsequently took him to the Midlands, and he had not been active for many years.

S.M.

DAVID CHRISTOPHER HASLAM (1955-1975)

The hills and mountains have been a great influence in the short life of David Haslam. He was born near to the Cleveland Hills; he has lived, walked, climbed, skied and camped amongst them and now he lies buried in the little churchyard at Kirby in the shadow of the same hills.

Born in 1933, he was educated at Yarm Grammar School, and went on to King's College, London, where he qualified in Law. Later he set up his own practice as a solicitor in Middlesbrough. On December 18th, 1975 he died after a long illness.

David's life had so many facets; he had the capacity to work hard and the capacity to enjoy life to the full. He also had the capacity to adapt himself to whatever life offered to him. Many will remember that through his illness which lasted nearly a quarter of his life, he never lost hope and always had a smile.

Rugby and cricket he played well, he found a natural aptitude for sailing, he climbed to a good standard, he was a strong walker, he potholed with enthusiasm and found great pleasure in simple camping.

My own personal remembrance will surely be in the Alps; he was a good companion on the high mountains. We shared there the joys of success and the frustrations of failure. We experienced a remarkable degree of compatibility in climbing together, anticipating each other's movements and thoughts during an expedition separated by 120 feet of rope.

David considered himself highly honoured to be invited, along with his father, to join the Club in 1955. He took part in every Club activity and acknowledged that his membership had helped him in many ways over the past twenty years. He made his mark in the annals of the Club and will not be forgotten by his contemporaries who enjoyed so much his friendship.

F.D.S.

CLUB MEETS

1972-73: 14 weekend meets were held during the year; the average attendance was 28. In addition there was held the Annual Dinner and the Ladies' Evening.

The 80th Annual General Meeting was held at the Hotel Majestic, Harrogate, on the 18th November, 1972. The 59th Annual Dinner followed, with the President, A. B. Craven, in the Chair. The principal guest was S. H. Cross, now of Ambleside, formerly of the Old Dungeon Ghyll. Twelve kindred clubs were represented, eight of them by their presidents. 167 members and guests were present—a record attendance. A magnum of champagne was presented to the Hon. Treasurer to mark his 21st year in that office. The after-dinner meet was held at Kettlewell where 80 members and guests congregated at the Racehorses Hotel, with a substantial fall of snow on the fells, and thick, damp mist at low level: the potholing party at Dow Cave had drier conditions. The Christmas Meet at the Buck Hotel, Reith, on the 8th-10th December, saw 41 members and guests deployed over the Swaledale moors in worsening weather, and subsequently enjoying traditional Christmas fare, an illustrated talk on the Dordogne by Malcolm Bone, and on the Sunday a guided tour of the old lead mines. The New Year Meet was attended by 59 members and guests at the Hark-to-Bounty Hotel, Slaidburn. The pleasures of navigation on the Bowland moors was once again enhanced by the roughness of peathags and tussocks and the opacity of the mist. Two caving films were shown by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Warden after an excellent dinner. At the February meet at Low Hall Garth there was a record attendance of 52; the weather was unpropitious, with low cloud and rain; after dinner Tom Morrell gave an illustrated talk on an adventure course for college students in the Arizona desert. The late February meet in Glen Etive is now almost traditional. For 26 members and guests excellent weather amply justified the long trip by car—parties were out on Bidean, Buchaille Etive Mor, Stob Ghabhar, Stob Dearg in sunshine and snow showers. 26 members and guests again assembled for the late March meet in Mallerstang, centred on the Westmorland Education Department's hut at Outhgill. Both edges of this dramatic valley were traversed and one party got as far as High Cup Nick. The Easter Meet from April 20th-23rd walked the "Dales Way," a newly established long-distance route from Ilkley old bridge to the Lake District. 9 members took part, of whom two ferried the camping gear and food, and the rest walked. In May 7 members and 1 prospective member met in Edale, Derbyshire, and pursued routes between Edale and Hope, over Bleaklow and Kinder. For the Spring Bank Holiday the Club made its third visit to Rhum. The attendance was 41. Mixed weather did nothing to curtail activity—traverses of the main ridge, rock climbing on Barkeval, Allival, Trollval, Ruinsival, the sighting of eagles and mermaids, the study of

shearwaters and sheep ticks. The Long Walk in June was designated "Carrog to Cader Idris" and followed a direct East-West line over the Berwyns and the Arans. Twenty members and guests attempted the walk and four more gallantly supported them. Thick cloud enveloped the route from Aran Fawddwy onwards. The first party reached the last feeding point at Cold Dor at 20.50 having covered 38 miles. Cader Idris had been long shrouded in mist and the prospect of completing the route had also faded after a long, hard, de-hydrating day. But it was a fine route, worth re-doing. A pot-holing Meet in July saw 15 members and guests at Lowstern Hut for a rather aqueous meet. Bull Pot was descended on Saturday and Whitewell Pot on Sunday. Two members canoed from Sedbergh to Melling and welcomed the abundant water, others were less enthusiastic on Ingleborough and Pen-y-ghent. The August Meet was a high level camp at Scoat Tarn. The first group of six left Wastwater at 10.40 p.m. on Friday, and pitched camp at 12.45 a.m. Four others set off later and arrived very much later via Black Sail and Pillar. Climbing on Pillar Rock and Black Wall, and walking on Red Pike, Scoat Fell, Pillar and Haycock occupied a fine day and well into a moonlight night. Sunday was wet. The traditional joint meet with Wayfarers and Rucksack Club members in September was attended by 24 members, divided between Robertson Lamb Hut and Low Hall Garth. Climbing parties were out on Gimmer, Bowfell and Scout Crag—walkers on Allen Crag, Glaramara and the Pikes. The early October Meet was held at the Climbers' Club Hut at Helyg. 14 members and one guest had an energetic weekend in perfect weather. Ropes were out on Cynr Las, Glyder Fawr, Tryfan and Idwal, walkers on the Carneddys, Moel Siabod, the Snowdon horseshoe and Tryfan, with Brocken Spectres and Glories. The late October Meet was at Egton Bridge with 21 members and two guests present. On a fine autumn Saturday members sampled the variety of the Cleveland Way between Ravenscar and Kettleless. On Sunday the rain held off long enough for climbing on the Wainstones.

1973-74: 12 club meets were held during the year; the average attendance was 27 excluding the Dinner and the Ladies' Evening.

The 81st Annual General Meeting was held at the Hotel Majestic, Harrogate, on the 17th November, followed by the 60th Annual Dinner. The President, B. E. Nicholson, was in the Chair; the principal guest was A. J. J. Moulam. 133 members and guests were present; 66 of these attended the after-dinner meet at Malham. The first meet of the year was held at the Grove, Kentmere, on the 7th-9th December, 1973. 49 members and prospective members attended; no guests were allowed. Saturday started with a powdering of snow and mist on the tops. After lunch there was sunshine and long views from both sides of the Kentmere horseshoe. Dennis and Margaret Driscoll provided a Christmas dinner of the usual superlative quality, which is only

exceeded by the superlative nonchalance with which they do it. A presentation was made to Margaret as a token of the Club's appreciation of the Driscoll's hospitable catering both at the Grove and for even longer at Low Hall Garth February Meets. For the first meet of 1974 the Club returned to its traditional potholing area. 55 members and guests assembled at the Marton Arms, Ingleton, for a highly successful weekend—good weather, good walking and potholing, good service, elbowroom at dinner and space for the after-dinner talks by John Middleton and Sid Cross. At Low Hall Garth in February, attendance was again limited to members only, and with 45 present, all the alternatives of accommodation were stretched. Torrential rain and low cloud ensured a full drying room too, but failed to inhibit activity outdoors or at table. It is becoming almost a tradition for members to arrive at Glen Etive on Thursday night instead of Friday. Those who did so this year found themselves sharing the hut with another (and mixed) club until Saturday morning. Saturday started fine and tailed off before noon catching parties on Bidean, the Buchaille, Aonach Eagach, the Clach Liathad ridge and as far afield as the Mamores. Sunday was a day for masochists. But two members who stayed on had a remarkable day on Tuesday on Clach Liathad and Meall a Bhuirhd. Only four members and one prospective member turned out for the Easter Meet at Ferist, Roy Bridge. In superb weather on successive days the meet climbed the north-facing corrie of Beinn a Clachair, most of the Munros on the north side of Loch Laggan, and the nearer peaks of Stob Choire Mheadhain and Stob Choire Easain. The May meet was switched to Lowstern because of access restrictions at Birks Cave. 17 members and 6 guests attended. One caving party bottomed Long Kin East Pot, negotiating the big pitch by single rope; a second party went into Easegill Caverns in quest of the elusive Easter Grotto. Sunday saw groups climbing on Attermire and Norber. The Spring Bank Holiday Meet retreated from the rawness of the Loch Mullardoch dam to a more sheltered camp site four miles down Glen Cannich. 20 members and guests had a most enjoyable and varied week—high winds, rain, hail, snow and some sunshine. Affric, Cannich and Strathfarrar and intervening tops were visited from various directions. One party of six claimed 11 Munros and 17 tops during the week. The Long Walk took place on the weekend of 21st-23rd June and followed the boundary of the former North and West Ridings from Coverdale to Mallerstang. It was based on the Cumbrian Education Department's hut at Outhgill. Some 30 members and guests walked and a further nine did a sterling job in maintaining feeding points, ferrying cars and providing the evening meal. A demonstration of becking in Hell Gill was much enjoyed on Sunday by a full dress circle of observers, and also, more strangely, by the undressed participants. The high level camp in August was held at the cave on Dove Crag. 13 members faced consistently inclement weather, "like sleeping behind a waterfall" as the

President remarked. 25 members and guests represented the Club at the joint meet in September with the Wayfarers' and Rucksack Clubs. 12 of the Y.R.C. including the President were at the Robertson Lamb Hut, the others at Low Hall Garth. The President's party traversed High Street and walked "out of the Lakes" to the head of Ullswater. One Low Hall Garth party climbed on Gimmer, another did the circuit from Great Langdale via Bowfell to Scafell Pike and back via Gable and Esk Hause. Sunday's weather induced a working party. The Welsh Meet in October was billed at Cwm Glas Mawr with overflow at Ynys Ettws. It turned out all overflow since the key to Cwm Glas Mawr could not be found. Despite low cloud and hail storms ambitious assaults were made on Snowdon from two sides. One climbing party rendered assistance to a damsel in distress on Craig Yr Ysfa, two others were rained off on Carrog Wasted and Dinas Cromlech. 18 members and 3 guests were present.

1974-75: 13 Club Meets were held during the year with an average attendance of 25. This excludes the Annual Dinner, the Ladies' Evening and Working Party meets at both huts.

The 82nd Annual General Meeting was held at the Cairn Hotel, Harrogate, on the 17th November. The 61st Annual Dinner followed. The retiring President, B. E. Nicholson, was in the Chair and the principal guest was David Cox, immediate Past President of the Alpine Club. 140 members and guests were present, and over 70 of these turned out for the after-dinner Meet at the Racehorses, Kettlewell. Fine weather was enjoyed on Buckden Pike, Great Whernside, Horse Head Moor, Pen-y-ghent and by climbers on Hardwick Scar, and potholers descended both Slets Gill and Dowkerbottom Cave. The Christmas Meet was again held at the Grove, Kentmere, where the Driscolls appeared to outdo all their previous successes. 47 members and guests enjoyed their bounty after the Kentmere round, climbing on Buckbarrow and a route from Wet Sleddale back to Kentmere. After dinner Eric Arnison and George Spenceley gave a talk with slides on their journey through Ethiopia. The venues of the January and February meets were reversed this year because of difficulty in booking for January in the Ingleton area. 34 members and guests therefore gathered at Low Hall Garth on the 10th-12th January. This was the 21st anniversary of Dennis Driscoll's communal catering at Low Hall Garth. There was water everywhere in the Lake District when the meet started and it rained throughout the weekend. Pavey Ark was a waterfall: endeavour tended to be limited. The February Meet was held at the Marton Arms, Ingleton. 49 members and guests were present. Cloud was low and thick: two members did the traditional "Three Peaks' Walk" and others found the tops of Gragareth, Great Combe and Brag Hill as well as Ingleborough and Whernside. Unrecorded potholes were bottomed on both days. Sixteen members and three guests travelled to Inbhirfhaolain, the Grampian Club Hut

in Glen Etive in late February. The first four who arrived on Thursday are believed to have spent the next night in an igloo on Bidean. A later party viewed the igloo, en route to the top, another traversed the Beinn Ceitheinn and Stob Bubb massif, another the fine ridges of Sgurr Dhearg and Sgurr Dhonuill, another Stob Coir 'an Albannaich and Meall nam Eun; but the skiers had the best of the day. The Easter Meet was based on the Ben Alder bothy; 8 members and 4 guests attended and had a highly successful meet on Ben Alder, Beinn Bheoil, Sron Coire nan Iclaire, the Aonach Beag ridge, Beinn a Chumhainn, Meall a'Bhealaich, Sgurr Choinnich, Sgurr Gaibhre, Carn Dearg. The April pot-holing meet at Lowstern was devoted to the Lancaster Pot—Easegill system. One party started down Lancaster Hole, the second party down County Pot in the Easegill system. The two parties met and crossed over in a successful and strenuous trip. The Spring Bank Holiday Meet returned after an interval of ten years to Loch Nevis. 16 members and 2 guests went in by boat from Mallaig. The weather was superb for the whole week. The isolation of the site was matched by its grandeur and beauty. Three younger members spent the week climbing on Luine Bheinn and Ben Aden. All the Munros within reach, including Ladhar Bheinn, were topped as well as several lesser heights. A memorable week. The Long Walk in June was based on Low Hall Garth. The support party numbered 6 and the walking party 20. The route covered the Coniston Fells, Harter Fell, Hardknott, Scafell and the Pike, Great End, Glaramara, High Raise, the Langdale Pikes and back to Low Hall Garth. Four completed the route on a day of sustained heat. The high level camp in July was again at Scoat Tarn. The attendance was small (7 members and one guest), and cloud and rain persisted until lunchtime on Saturday. Half the meet walked over Scoat Fell and Pillar, Haydock, etc., the other half tried Black Crag in all its north-facing wetness. On Sunday rain persisted all the way back to Yorkshire. Potholing in August was based partly at Lowstern and partly on a camp in Dentdale. Ibbeth, Crystal Cave (Barbondale), Nettle Pot and an un-named new cave were descended. 10 members and one guest took part, On the last weekend in August 20 members and guests met at Low Hall Garth. There was climbing on Dow, Gimmer, White Ghyll, Great How Crag and Dove Crag and walking on Bowfell and the Crinkles. For the joint meet in September 18 Y.R.C. members stayed at the Wayfarers' hut, and 12 more at Low Hall Garth. In sunny, warm conditions parties were out on the Coniston Fells, from Pike o' Blisco to Bowfell and in Patterdale on Catstye Cam, Stybarrow Dodd and Sheffield Pike. Climbers enjoyed the sun on Gimmer. For the Welsh meet in October, 30 members and guests assembled at Helyg. On a bright, crisp morning most of the meet deployed over Tryfan, Bristly Ridge, the Glyders and Y Garn—some climbed, some walked, some did both. Sunday was equally clear and crisp; the walkers were on the Carnedds, the climbers on Glyder Fach and Tryfan. A well organised and most enjoyable weekend.

CLUB PROCEEDINGS

1973: The week-end meets were: January 12th-14th, The Hark-to-Bounty Hotel, Slaidburn; February 2nd-4th, Low Hall Garth; February 23rd-25th, Grampian Club Hut, Glen Etive; March 30th-April 1st, Mallerstang; Easter, April 19th-24th, the Dales Walk from Ilkley to Low Hall Garth; May 11th-13th, The Church Hotel, Edale; Spring Bank Holiday, May 25th-June 3rd, Rhum; June 15th-17th, The Long Walk, Carrog to Cader Idris; July 13th-15th, Lowstern; August 17th-19th, High Level Camp, Scoat Tarn; September 14th-16th, Joint Meet with Wayfarers' and Rucksack Clubs, Robertson Lamb Hut; October 5th-7th, Helyg, N. Wales; October 26th-28th, The Horseshoe Hotel, Egton Bridge; December 7th-9th, The Grove, Kentmere. Average attendance at Meets was 28. Total membership was 198, made up of 167 ordinary members, 1 junior member, 26 life members and 4 honorary members.

The 81st Annual General Meeting was held at the Hotel Majestic, Harrogate, on the 17th November, 1973. The following officers were elected for the year 1973-74: President: B. E. Nicholson; Vice-Presidents: A. J. Reynolds, J. G. Brook. Hon. Secretary: E. C. Downham; Hon. Asst. Secretary: J. Hemingway; Hon. Treasurer: S. Marsden; Hon. Editor: A. B. Craven; Hon. Asst. Editor: D. P. Penfold; Hon. Librarian: J. G. Brook; Hon. Huts Secretary, W. A. Linford; Hon. Hut Wardens: Low Hall Garth, F. D. Smith, Lowstern: J. T. M. Teasdale; Hon. Auditor: G. R. Turner; Committee: R. Harben, J. Gott, G. Edwards, P. C. Swindells, W. D. Clayton, C. D. Bush. The 60th Annual Dinner followed at the same hotel. The Principal Guest was A. J. J. Moulam, President of the Climbers' Club. The President, B. E. Nicholson, was in the chair and Kindred Clubs were represented by D. P. Read, Alpine Club; T. Noble, Wayfarers' Club; J. S. Stewart, Scottish Mountaineering Club; D. Smithies, Rucksack Club; J. Bloor, President, Gritstone Club; R. Edlington, Midland Association of Mountaineers; R. Allen, Climbers' Club; D. W. Appleby, Oread Mountaineering Club; A. Champion, Craven Pothole Club; F. Moulson, President, Bradford Pothole Club.

133 members and guests were present; the after-dinner meet was held at Sparth House, Malham, and the attendance was 66.

On the 4th April, Tony Waltham, Deputy Leader of the 1972 Expedition to Ghar Parau in Iran, gave an illustrated talk on the expedition at the Bankfield Hotel, Bingley.

1974: The week-end meets were: January 11th-13th, The Marton Arms Hotel, Westhouse, Ingleton; February 8th-10th, Low Hall Garth; February 22nd-24th, Grampian Club Hut, Glen Etive; March 22nd-24th, Low Hall Garth; Easter, April 11th-16th, Fasgadh, Fersit, Roy Bridge; May 3rd-5th, Lowstern; Spring Bank Holiday, May 24th-31st,

Glen Cannich; June 21st-23rd, The Long Walk, Coverdale to Mallerstang; August 9th-11th, High Level Camp: the Cave, Dove Crag; September 13th-15th, Joint Meet with Wayfarers' and Rucksack Clubs, Robertson Lamb Hut; October 18th-20th, Ynys Ettws, North Wales; December 6th-8th, The Grove, Kentmere. The average attendance at meets was 27. Total membership was 202, comprising 170 ordinary members, 1 junior member, 27 life members and 4 honorary members.

The 82nd Annual General Meeting was held at the Cairn Hotel, Harrogate on the 16th November, 1974. The following officers were elected for the year, 1974-75: President: J. B. Devenport; Vice-Presidents: J. G. Brook, J. P. Barton; Hon. Secretary: E. C. Downham; Hon. Asst. Secretary: J. Hemingway; Hon. Treasurer: S. Marsden; Hon. Editor: A. B. Craven; Hon. Asst. Editor: D. P. Penfold; Hon. Librarian: J. G. Brook; Hon. Huts Secretary: W. A. Linford; Hon. Hut Wardens: Low Hall Garth: F. D. Smith, Lowstern: A. Hartley; Hon. Auditor: G. R. Turner; Committee: J. D. Armstrong, J. Gott, G. Edwards, P. C. Swindells, W. D. Clayton, C. D. Bush.

The 61st Annual Dinner followed. The Principal Guest was A. D. M. Cox of Oxford. The retiring President B. E. Nicholson, was in the Chair. Kindred Clubs were represented by F. Solari, Alpine Club; M. Hartland, Bradford Pothole Club; R. R. Hodgson, Craven Pothole Club; H. S. Thompson, Fell and Rock Climbing Club; B. Sheard, Gritstone Club; J. B. Rhodes, Rucksack Club; C. D. Milner, Wayfarers' Club; J. A. Wood, Scottish Mountaineering Club. The attendance was 140 and over 70 of these turned out for the after-dinner meet at the Racehorses Hotel, Kettlewell.

1975: The week-end meets were: January 10th-12th, Low Hall Garth; January 31st-February 2nd, The Marton Arms Hotel, Westhouse, Ingleton; February 21st-23rd, Grampian Club Hut, Glen Etive; Easter, March 28th-April 1st, Ben Alder; April 18th-20th, Lowstern; May 2nd-4th, Low Hall Garth, working weekend; May 16th-24th, Spring Bank Holiday, Loch Nevis; June 6th-8th, Lowstern; working weekend; June 20th-22nd, The Long Walk, Lakes Western Fells; July 11th-13th, Scoat Tarn, High Level Camp; August 8th-10th, Lowstern; August 29th-31st, Low Hall Garth; September 19th-21st, Joint Meet with Wayfarers' and Rucksack Clubs, Robertson Lamb Hut; October 10th-12th, Helyg, North Wales; December 5th-7th, Egton Bridge. Average attendance at meets, excluding working parties, was 25. Membership was 196, consisting of 173 ordinary members, 29 life members and 4 honorary members.

The 83rd Annual General Meeting was held at the Cairn Hotel, Harrogate, on the 15th November, 1975. The following officers were elected for the year 1975-76: President: J. B. Devenport; Vice-Presidents: J. P. Barton, W. R. Lofthouse; Hon. Secretary: E. C. Downham; Hon. Asst. Secretary: J. Hemingway; Hon. Treasurer: S. Mars-

den; Hon. Editor: A. B. Craven; Hon. Asst. Editor: D. P. Penfold; Hon. Librarian: J. G. Brook; Hon. Huts Secretary: W. A. Linford; Hon. Hut Wardens: Low Hall Garth: F. D. Smith, Lowstern: A. Hartley; Hon. Auditor: G. R. Turner; Committee: J. D. Armstrong, C. D. Bush, P. C. Swindells, D. J. Atherton, M. P. Hobson, J. A. Varney, R. E. Pomfret (co-opted).

A Special General Meeting followed immediately on the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting. Rule 10 was amended. Subscriptions were raised to £6.00 p.a. for ordinary members, £3.00 for junior members and £2.50 for members living abroad for the whole of the club year. Rules 3 and 19 were also amended.

The 62nd Annual Dinner followed at the same hotel. The Principal Guest was Tom Price of Bingley, Yorkshire. The President, J. B. Devenport, was in the Chair. Kindred Clubs were represented by P. Boardman, Alpine Club; A. N. Husbands, Climbers' Club; F. R. Robinson, President, Midland Association of Mountaineers; J. Pritchard, Vice-President, Wayfarers' Club; A. Stewart, Rucksack Club; J. Bloor, President, Gritstone Club; R. R. Hodgson, Craven Pothole Club; C. R. Radcliffe, Oread Mountaineering Club. The attendance was 140 and at the after-dinner Meet at Sparth House, Malham, 79 were present.



NEW MEMBERS SINCE JOURNAL No. 36

1973

Anthony George Barnes Thomas Bowker Stephen Victor Bugg
Alton Hartley David Laughton Norman McKie
Alan Rowland Walton John Christopher Whalley

1974

Christopher Bauer Peter A. Burns Roy J. Denney
George P. Postill John H. Sterland

1975

John D. Casperson Peter D. Clarke

RESIGNATIONS

1973

David John Bowes Brown Anthony J. Margetts

1974

John Lythe

1975

Wilfred J. Anderson Richard J. Arculus Keith Malcolm Barker
B. Martin Nonhebel Jack Ratcliffe Peter Alfred Warsop

DEATHS

1975

Malcolm Drummond Bone Wilfred Booth
David Christopher Haslam